# Arcana: North Carolina's Sole Lesbian Bar Fosters Community and History Amidst National Trend



Arcana, located on West Main Street in Durham, North Carolina, is the state's only known lesbian bar. Opened in 2015 by Erin Karcher, Arcana is tucked behind some of Durham’s popular restaurants and identified by a circular sign across from the railroad tracks. The bar’s interior is dimly lit, adorned with antique furniture and local art, and offers an array of themed craft cocktails.

Arcana stands as a part of a rare breed, with only 33 lesbian-specific bars remaining in the United States, according to The Lesbian Bar Project. Despite being the only one in its state, Arcana fosters a welcoming atmosphere for its patrons, offering activities like burlesque classes, craft nights, and queer dance lessons. Its monthly “Dyke Night” events often draw large crowds, underscoring the community's desire for such spaces.

The bar serves not only as a place to get a drink but as a community hub and symbol of LGBTQ history. Amidst ongoing political challenges in states like North Carolina, bars like Arcana continue to be significant gathering spots for LGBTQ individuals, providing a sense of belonging and safety.

Other lesbian bars in the South include The Lipstick Lounge in Nashville, Tennessee, and My Sister’s Room in Atlanta, Georgia. Across the country, these bars vary from cocktail lounges to dance clubs, but all offer LGBTQ individuals spaces to be themselves.

Krista Burton, in her book “Moby Dyke,” explored 20 lesbian bars across the U.S. and noted a distinct sense of Southern hospitality in LGBTQ bars in the South. Her findings suggest that while the narrative of "dying lesbian bars" prevails, the community-based culture of these spaces remains strong.

Although the landscape of LGBTQ bars is changing with shifts in gender identity and sexual orientation labels among younger generations, figures like Christa Suppan, owner of The Lipstick Lounge, believe the spirit of such bars will endure. Maintaining these spaces involves creating welcoming environments where the LGBTQ community can thrive, even in regions where this might require more effort and resilience.