

**Dismantling the Architecture of Othering:
Queer Reclamations of Space**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

This thesis positions itself around the opposing forces of architectural normativity and queer spatial production. It investigates heteronormativity and its spatial manifestations, in order to engage in the practice of *queering* space as an act of resistance. By researching the heteronormative order, and typologies such as the public toilet and the private home, it seeks to demonstrate architecture's complicity in the process of *othering* queer bodies. Applying a norm-critical perspective to spatial phenomena, it encourages architects to divest from contributing to this form of spatial violence. Next, it explores the act of *queering* as a contestation of the normative order through design. Continuing to investigate various facets of heteronormative spatial production, six design explorations consider *the body* through a multi-scalar approach. As the site where queerness is initially produced, *the body* is where all contestations must begin. Throughout the whole document, this thesis seeks to question, reveal, subvert, and *transform*.

Acknowledgments

Thank you so much to everyone who helped me with this thesis. Thank you to my thesis advisor Piper. To my classmates and friends Thompson and Ania. To the many wonderful reviewers who offered insight. And most of all to my partner Aly. I could not have done this without you.

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1.1 - The Construction of Heteronormativity

Appendix 2

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Appendix 3

Supplementary information for:
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RE: Book Design

This book seeks to challenge Western ideologies that dominate architectural practice not only through its content, but also through its *design*. Beyond a mere aesthetic decision, the relentless use of pink is a commentary on the field's predilection for repressing the use of colour. For too often, architecture has favoured its absence, particularly in the form of 'whiteness.'

The whitening of architecture, far from trans-historical, was part of the modernist manifesto.¹ The modernist architect known as Le Corbusier, with his "routinely authoritarian," and "often explicitly eugenic and fascist impulses," advocated to make this practice compulsory.² He proclaimed:

Whitewash is extremely moral. Suppose there were a decree requiring all rooms in Paris to be given a coat of whitewash. I maintain that that would be a police task of real stature and a manifestation of high morality, **the sign of a great people.**³

Le Corbusier is "but a tip of the vast iceberg of whiteness."⁴ As stated by Mark Wigley, author of *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, "there are endless, quieter, ultimately more controlling and insidious celebrations of whiteness in other hands."⁵ **As part of a long historical trajectory, the aesthetic regime of whiteness "became the unconscious default setting of everyday life."**⁶

Although the use of colour never went away, it has been "airbrushed from the design canon."⁷ Deemed unprofessional, there is a "visual and manneristic disallowing" of this practice.⁸ As maintained by designer Adam Nathaniel Furman, **design education "brainwashes students into rejecting colour, pattern, and ornament."**⁹ This entrenched bias favours "minimalism" over "chromatic joy,"¹⁰ which frequently results in the rejection of the "gender-being aesthetics" associated with queer spaces.¹¹ The refusal of colour in the field of architecture is a wider phenomenon linked to Western ideology.



Figure 1. Villa Savoye, designed by Le Corbusier (1929).

Coining the term "**chromophobia**" and authoring a book with the same title, writer David Batchelor explains that the West is haunted by a "fear of contamination" from colour.¹² It associates colour with 'excess,' 'irrationality' and 'chaos.' In contrast, a lack of colour, or whiteness, is understood as 'neutral' and 'serious.' Renouncing colour, the Western psyche favors the monochromatic, the grayscale, the black-and-white. **Colour poses a threat to Western aesthetics, because it is relegated to the realm of the other.**¹³ This "'foreign' body" usually includes "the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological."¹⁴ Encapsulating this sentiment German writer Johann Wolfgang van Goethe once wrote:

Savage nations, uneducated people, and children have a great predilection for vivid colors [...] people of refinement avoid vivid colors in their dress and the objects that are about them, and seem to banish them altogether from their presence.¹⁵

In order to protect whiteness, **this system requires that colour be 'controlled,' 'classified,' 'ordered,' and 'contained.'**¹⁶

For this thesis, it has been imperative to reject the aesthetics of whiteness on all levels and embrace colour throughout the entire process. I chose to highlight the colour pink due to its significance to queerness. During the holocaust, Nazis forced 'homosexual' prisoners (a group that included gay/bisexual men and transgender women) to wear pink triangle patches.¹⁷ Previous iterations of symbols included the letter 'A', which stood for *Arschficker* ("ass fucker").¹⁸ The subsequent use of pink correlated with society's changing perceptions of the colour, and its increasingly feminized connotations.¹⁹ While it was originally intended as a badge of shame, the symbol was reclaimed during the AIDS crisis; now pointing upward, it was accompanied by the slogan "Silence = Death."²⁰ **The triangle, and its associated colour, have since become symbolic of queer liberation and pride. As such, the use pink a continuation of this tradition.**

All that is normative must be questioned, including the standard thesis document design. While there are many ways that this work could be continued, I begin by unabashedly using colour throughout.



Figure 2. Concentration camp prisoners wearing pink triangles on their uniforms (1938).



Figure 3. An edited photo of a white sculpture in a white room (*Winged Victory of Samothrace*, Louvre Museum). When Greek statues were rediscovered during the Renaissance, they were revered for their whiteness. However, this "whitewashed" vision of Classical Antiquity is "false."²¹ Archaeological evidence, starting in 1888, has revealed that these statues were in fact painted in "garish colors with multiple patterns."²² Given Greece's importance to Western ideology, this information was long suppressed.

Prologue

Over the course of my architectural studies, it became increasingly evident to me that we were being taught to reproduce a certain order. By training its students in what it deemed to be 'good' design, the discipline encouraged formulaic outcomes. Trying to break out of this box was not met with enthusiasm. If the work you produced what not recognizable in the terms in which they had been trained, the professors could not pass judgement. Unable to assess value, the system of merit falls apart. Best to encourage us to just stick with the status quo. Questions already had formulated answers, which were prized and celebrated. One needed to look no further than the established canon, composed almost exclusively of white men, for precedence.

How many students left school with a deep admiration for the Modernist Movement? Idolizing Le Corbusier, and arguing for the merits of Brutalism? How many felt superior to the lay person, paternalistically claiming to better understand their spatial needs, all while mocking their lack of aesthetic refinement? Taught that architecture is "a passion, a vocation, a calling,"¹ how many left with grandiose ideas of what constituted an architect? By designing exactly what they had been told to design, how many reproduced spatial violence, without even thinking twice about it?

The kinds of spaces I appreciated the most were not taught in school. They were considered outside of its realm, and *other* to the canon. How could I reckon with the fact that I was taught to design spaces that did not serve me, and to ignore the ones that did? Was it because these kinds of places could not be designed? At the time, I did not know where to look for answers.



Figure 1. Collage of white men architects in white rooms and/or with white models.

Rather than continue with my undergraduate classmates into the master's program, I decided to work in the field and reflect on the profession. Before investing in more schooling, I wanted to determine if architecture was a good fit. Primarily dealing with high-end residential, I found that everyone seemed to want the same *product*. I could not help but think, was this *really* what people wanted? Or was it only what they *thought* they wanted? Was I tapping into the architect's sense of superiority, thinking that I knew better than them? How could I criticize these people for seeking out 'good' design? Were they not doing what they were supposed to? Was this not exactly what architects wanted, people deferring to their vision, not questioning the merit of what they designed? All I knew for certain was that the spaces I was contributing to were not the ones I wanted to be in.

One day, at a used bookstore, I came across architectural critic Aaron Betsky's 1997 seminal book *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*.² My excitement waned as I discovered his understanding was largely limited to spaces associated with white middle-class gay men. Stating that "the goal of queer space is orgasm,"³ he proposed an architecture that considered sexual experience alone. While Betsky's work was certainly ground-breaking, as it was one of the first publications considering the topic, the queer spaces I engaged with were not *just* about sex. That was only one aspect among many. I could not help but think, there is *something else* going on here. I could not quite put my finger on it yet.

I began searching for material on this topic, initially not succeeding in finding much. The few student projects I located often oriented itself towards band-aid architectural 'solutions,' proposing things such as LGBTQ+ homeless shelters in response to vast societal problems. Although I did not believe that architecture could be *the* answer, as it was frequently suggested by people in the field, I came to see the potential of spatial analysis as a lens for understanding social relations. Perhaps, in this way, my architectural education could be of use.



Figure 2. The first picture in Aaron Betsky's 1997 book *Queer Space*. He primarily studies the spatial production of the demographic shown above.

Determined to learn about queer space, I made it a practice to do research. Somewhere in the mid 2010s, my repeated internet queries began yielding results. Using 'queer' as a key word in thesis databases did as well. I had even located a doctoral thesis. Its author, Olivier Vallerand, frequently wrote elsewhere on the topic, including most recently on *ArchDaily*.⁴ Each discovery led to another. I found an entire journal was dedicated to the subject. Titled "Trans-Bodies / Queering Space," *Footprint* 11, no. 21 (Autumn/Winter 2017) included so many new voices speaking on a variety of topics, notably Colin Ripley on housing and Joel Sanders on public toilets.⁵ Mentioned in its pages was "trailblazer" Lucas Crawford who had published the book *Transgender Architectonics: The Shape of Change in Modernist Space* earlier that year.⁶ I encountered the work of far more than can be named. As luck would have it, *there had been a veritable surge of writing on the topic*. Creating folders upon folders, I collected an abundance of material that I did not yet have the time to engage with, nor yet have the capacity to comprehend, until I would take up my studies once again.

I began my masters in the fall of 2020. While the pandemic has been detrimental to queer people, increased digital mobility allowed for connections previously unthinkable. In addition to the wealth of textual resources I had collected, I was now able to attend lectures across the globe. Among them was the series titled "A Queer Query," organized by David Eskenazi at SCI-Arc, which included a presentation by Jack Halberstam on the topic of deconstruction.⁹ Through social media platforms, I was able follow the work of newly formed student groups dedicated to exploring the topic and sharing their findings online.¹⁰ A variety of organizations emerged there as well.¹¹ This network was an invaluable resource, keeping me informed on the most up-to-date material.



Figure 3. Prototype for "The Garden for Romantic Crossovers," by TAKK Architecture.

Most recently on my desk is the 2022 book *Queer Spaces* [(notably with an 's' at the end this time)]: *An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories* by Adam Nathaniel Furman and Joshua Mardell.¹² Beyond its iridescent cover, the content is a testament to how far the production of knowledge on the topic has come. Explaining that "growing up queer means experiencing the destabilizing absence of a broad and accessible queer history, most notably, in our case, in relation to spatial design," the book's authors sought to remediate that gap.¹³

Right now it seems as though we are at a turning point, more so than ever before, with an influx of people *queering* the field of architecture. While the introduction of queer theory into architecture dates back to the 1990s, the subject was left nearly untouched for decades. Never before has there been as much momentum as there is right now, with a proliferation of insight for future queer architects to keep building on. By engaging with this topic, I am overjoyed to take part in the collective reassessment of this field.

This thesis year provided me with the greatest opportunity, as it allowed me to dedicate myself to deepening my knowledge regarding the spatial production of queerness. Throughout this process, I have felt empowered to interrogate architectural norms, while exploring alternate ways of creating space. I am incredibly grateful to have gone through this journey, and to have put some of my seemingly endless thoughts on paper. However, this thesis goes beyond personal inquiry. I hope it can provide insight to future students who seek to dismantle the status quo of the built environment while exploring new ways of thinking, being, and living. The following is my contribution to the endeavour of *queering* architecture and *transforming* our spatial reality, for myself and *others*.



Figure 4. The spine of the 2022 book *Queer Spaces* by Adam Nathaniel Furman and Joshua Mardell.



Figure 5. Rendering from Bartlett School of Architecture student Andrew Riddell's project "Lipstick on a Pig" (2021). Captioned "What will the Neighbours say? Flamboyant aesthetic choices read against more conservative counterparts."



Figure 6. Rendering from Bartlett School of Architecture student Andrew Riddell's project "Lakewood in Drag: Challenging the Heteronormative Ideal" (2020).

Introduction

“What subjects are considered to be too complex for architectural design, and are therefore rejected as excessive or unnecessary to its aims?”¹

- Peg Rawes

Architecture is not *neutral*. It is the conduit between ideas and material ordering of reality. It has a power it often denies. Within the practice are embedded presuppositions of all kinds, including the question of who does and does not belong. To a great extent, spatial organization is informed by, and contributes to, the hierarchical ordering of humanity. Operating within structures of domination, the discipline projects and legitimates power relations in the built environment, to the detriment of people deemed ‘other.’ To ‘other’ is to treat one group of people as “essentially different” and “generally inferior” than another, in order to “propagate group-based inequality.”² The field of architecture is deeply enmeshed in the process of ‘othering.’ From it has emerged entire typologies designed to construct and maintain ‘othered’ identities. Architects are often complicit in producing instances of violence against these ‘non-conforming’ bodies, by intentionally or unintentionally implementing these industry standards. By design, those who fit within the normative order often fail to see it in operation. Consequently, the harm they generate goes unacknowledged, or is vehemently denied. This practice has been normalized and, consequently, largely insulated from being questioned.

While spatial practices undoubtedly have the ability to constrain, they also have liberatory potential. Certainly, there are strong mechanisms in place that incentivize contributing to ongoing normalization processes. However, not all spaces conform to this impetus. In spite of normativity, some space is ‘queer.’ Or, in an act of contestation, some space is ‘queered.’ In the face of deterministic spatial conditions, agency is exerted. Through a process of ‘queering,’ spatiality beyond the normative is developed. It is *reclaimed*.

Outlining what is meant by ‘queer’ is of particular importance. This word is commonly used as an umbrella term for people whose gender and/or sexuality do not conform to the norm, encompassing those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.³ In the context of this thesis, ‘queer’ is not regarded as an identity, but rather as *a contestation of the normative order*. David Halperin, queer theorist and founder of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, defined ‘queer’ as “*whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant,*” explaining that if it were an identity, it would be “*without an essence,*” as “*there is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers.*”⁴ Calling attention to normativity, “it does not seek to institute some new norm large enough to accommodate itself.”⁵

Unlike terms associated with conventional identity politics, ‘queer’ refuses a static definition; “in the case that queer in any sense is something, it claims to be the floating and undefined, that which opposes all attempts to define what that something is.”⁶ Proponents of the term insist that its description “must never be finalized, circumscribed, or unitarily representative.”⁷

In his anthology *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Michael Warner, who is considered one of the founders of ‘queer theory,’ describes the field as “the project of elaborating, in ways that cannot be predicted in advance, this question: What do queers want?”⁸ Rather than revolve around “who is queer and under what conditions,” it is about their desires, which are “in no way necessarily stable or universal.”⁹ Judith Butler, another ‘queer theory’ founder, explains in their book *Bodies that Matter* that if the term ‘queer’ is to be “a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings,” then it must remain “that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes.”¹⁰

The open-endedness of 'queer' cannot be overstated. Failing to recognize its expansiveness reduces the critical insight it provides. As warned by Carlos Jacques in the article "Queering Straight Space: Thinking Towards a Queer Architecture," there is always the "risk" of falling back upon the notion of queer space that refers only to a particular identity or experience.¹¹ This must be avoided at all costs, as it would "empty the concept of queered space of its radical potential."¹²

This formulation of 'queer' allows for coalitional efforts beyond the boundaries of identity. Framing it in terms of *relationality*, as *a position relative to the norm*, enables discourse to surpass the realm of sexuality and gender. As explained by author and activist bell hooks, 'queer' is "not about who you're having sex with, that can be a dimension of it, but queer as being about the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live."¹³ Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, a professor of black diaspora studies, expands on this further in her article "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic" in which she reconsiders the Middle Passage. In it she writes:

Queer not in the sense of a "gay" or same-sex loving identity waiting to be excavated from the ocean floor but as *a praxis of resistance*. Queer in the sense of marking disruption to the violence of normative order and powerfully so: connecting in ways that commodified flesh was never supposed to, loving your own kind when your kind was supposed to cease to exist, forging interpersonal connections that counteract imperial desires.¹⁴

Tinsley's formulation of 'queer' as '*a praxis of resistance*' is precisely what this thesis explores. **To 'queer' is to resist normativity in all its forms.** Moreover, as scholar of gender and sexuality Janet R. Jakobsen explains in the article "Queer Is? Queer Does?: Normativity and Resistance," **to 'queer' It is to create "a set of relations different from the binary oppositions defined by the norm."**¹⁵

With this discussion of resisting, what exactly is being resisted must also be defined. The norms discussed in this thesis are those of the heteronormative regime. To put it briefly, as the concept will be expanded upon in great detail further along, heteronormativity is characterized by binary sex/gender/sexuality system. It presents itself as a naturally occurring phenomenon, despite its constructed nature. As a normative structure, certain bodies are put forward as 'normal,' with the rest cast as 'other.' These designations entail differential treatment, which is compounded by discriminatory spatial processes. 'Queer' emerges as a challenge to heteronormativity, providing tools for its dismantling. As stated by Warner, **"heteronormativity can be overcome only by actively imagining a necessarily and desirably queer world."**¹⁶ The construction of this 'queer' world, like the term itself, is ongoing and ever changing.

The aim of this thesis is two-fold; it is part research, investigating the spatial implications of heteronormativity, and part exploration, engaging in the practice of queering space as an act of resistance. It is a transdisciplinary project, in which the complexity of the social, the historical, and the spatial are understood as inseparable and interdependent. When engaging with this document, it is crucial to remember that, as stated by writers Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas, "queer is something far more lived, experienced, enjoyed and suffered than it is theoretical."¹⁷ While this thesis largely operates on an academic level, it discusses spatial production that has real consequences for real people. Using my own queerness as a lens, I strive to convey the material in the most comprehensive manner possible.

The first section, titled “**Understanding Heteronormative Space**,” introduces the contextual basis of this thesis. In order to counter the heteronormative regime, it is fundamental to understand how it operates. I conduct a historical genealogy in order to call into question its ‘timeless’ nature. The construction of the ‘abnormal’ is indispensable to the formulation of the ‘normal.’ Throughout, I demonstrate that the latter is only so in relational terms. I trace key tenets of heteronormativity, such as the binary concepts of ‘sex,’ ‘gender,’ and ‘sexuality,’ in a project of de-essentialization. As previously mentioned, heteronormativity has spatial implications. Through two case studies, “*the public toilet*” and “*the private home*,” I exhibit how architectural typologies developed in tandem with heteronormative ideologies. Knowledge structures prevalent within architectural education and practice continue to enforce these harmful legacies. The dominant normative order has deeply influenced our built environment, however it does not go unchallenged. People can and do disrupt its intentions, as I will elaborate upon in the following.

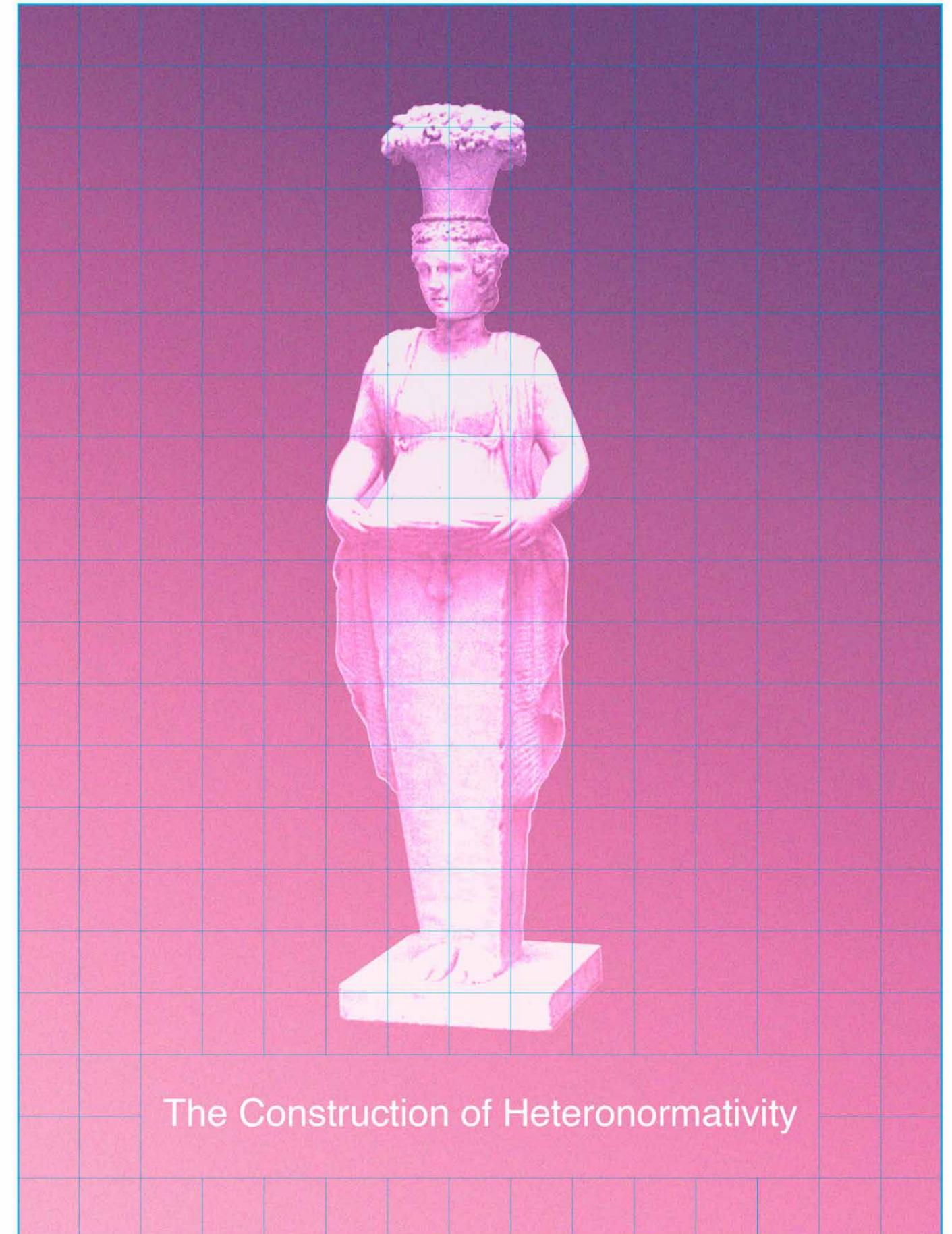
The second section of the thesis, titled “**Exploring Queer Space**,” begins by examining the process of *queering*. Looking to the work of others for guidance, I outline common strategies used to combat normativity and reclaim space. With endless possibilities in sight, I begin my exploration by formulating a series of prompts that elicit brief design responses. Each is presented in the form of a question that links back to the body. The body is chosen, because it is from this *site* that queerness is *produced*. Architecture may appear physically separate from this entity, however, everything it accomplishes ultimately comes back to this scale. As such, the body is *the* primary site of contestation.

Expanding in scope, the questions are as follows: what is the *body*? what is the layered *body*? what is the shared *body*? what is the protected *body*? what is the worshipped *body*? what is the transcendent *body*? That said, this thesis does not aim to answer any question. In fact, what is ‘question’ and what is ‘answer’ tend to blur together.

Exploratory in nature, this document compiles various attempts to apply a norm-critical perspective to spatial phenomena. As part of an evolving discourse, it is far from steadfast. The content could always be further developed. Each project hints at other potential derivations. By taking a multi-scalar approach, I have endeavoured to address various facets of this vast topic.

As a final note, I would like to emphasize that, while considered from a queer perspective, this thesis advocates for the end of *all normative orders*. **Queering is not just about queerness, or being queer, but is in fact a method of dismantling.** It is inherently intersectional; by combatting the imperative to designate bodies as *other*, this approach encompasses the interests of all *othered* bodies. Moreover, it seeks a better future for humanity *as a whole*; normativity harms each and every individual in some form or another. As such, queering may be employed by anyone seeking to unmask and unlearn the power structures in their surroundings. This methodology proves fruitful for going beyond the current paradigm and experiencing the potentiality of the future. Queering is a powerful tool that can be mobilized in service of *reclaiming* space from normative regimes. I encourage everyone to participate in this *liberatory* venture.

Part One //
*Understanding
Heteronormative
Space*



Playlist:

Let's Talk About Gender Baby by Planningtorock

Mehcinut by Jeremy Dutcher

Royal Road by Twain

Little Boxes by Malvina Reynolds

I'm Gonna Be an Engineer by Peggy Seeger

Samaritans by IDLES

What Makes a Man by Charles Aznavour

Glad To Be Gay by Tom Robinson Band

More Women by Saâda Bonaire

I Was Dancing in the Lesbian Bar by Jonathan Richman

Who Wears the Pants?? by Soko

Dear Diary by CJ Run

Erase Me by Quinn Christopherson

Cisgender by Shamir

I Would Die 4 U by Prince & The Revolution

They / Them / Theirs (Acoustic) by Worriers

Gay Agenda by Shamir

Nonbinary by Arca

Chosen Family by Rina Sawayama

Marea (We've Lost Dancing) by Fred again.. & The Blessed Madonna

Vaccines Made Me Gay by GRLwood

Human Drama by Planningtorock

The Construction of Heteronormativity

As the term *heteronormativity* suggests, this regime involves the imposition of *norms*. Normativity designates what is 'normal,' which it sets as a standard that is expected of, or required from, the general population. However, in doing so, it must also define the 'abnormal,' or the *other*, against which it counterposes itself. As explained by transnational feminist theorist M. Jacqui Alexander, heterosexual sex, even if dysfunctional, "assumes the power of natural law *only in relation* to sex which is defined in negation to it ([i.e.] what natural sexual intercourse is *not*)."¹ In other words, the 'unnatural' is *indispensable* for the formulation of the 'natural,' as these terms only function in *relational* terms. "The production of the valorized norm," as expounded by queer migration scholar Eithne Luibhéid, "is intimately tied to the *abjection* of queers and queerness."² As discussed previously, 'queer' encompasses all that is "at odds with the *normal*."³ Beyond being a mere negation, it acts as a *contestation* of the normative order. Moreover, it is "a praxis of resistance," which creates "a set of relations *different from the binary oppositions defined by the norm*."⁴ **Given that the goal of queering is to subvert norms in order to create a better world, it is important to understand what these norms are. This knowledge is critical for their dismantling.**

When presented with the 'abjection' of queerness, there is a frequent inclination to turn to history to demonstrate its enduring presence. The work of scholars who excavate queer lives from a past that the present tries to erase is undoubtedly important, beyond what words can express. This practice offers visibility, thereby broadening the available cultural models through which people are empowered to understand their own queerness, and then enabled to define themselves beyond the dictates of the heteronormative order. However, it is not through this method that I will proceed. The impetus is not to 'prove' that other identities existed beyond those broadly accepted in society. They did. Thanks to the queer historians who devoted themselves to this task over the course of the 20th century and into the present day, this information is already available to those interested.⁵ Rather, I engage in a different historical pursuit, as *only* investigating queer identities may have the unfortunate consequence of reifying the 'naturalness' of 'normal' identities. Therefore, **this thesis operates under the premise that normative sexes, genders, and sexualities also require historicization.** Given that these heteronormative concepts present themselves as 'natural,' they often go unquestioned. This leaves the 'unnatural' to defend itself as

being equally worthy of this status. However, this equality is *unachievable* under this model. Forming a binary, one acts as a 'center' encompassing both the 'positive' and the 'neutral,' while the *other* only as the 'negative' through which the former gains its 'legitimacy.' It is an *inherently* hierarchical structure. Therefore, **until the 'normal' is dismantled, the 'abnormal' will remain as such.** The goal is to then reveal heteronormativity's construction, primarily through historical genealogy. This exercise will of course feature *othered* identities through this process, but the emphasis is on *the lack of fixity* exhibited by those that are granted the status of 'normative.' It will be demonstrated that the principal tents of heteronormativity, the concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, are far from 'eternal truths' as they have changed drastically over time. Through a comparative study, these categories will be exposed as "socially constructed, historically specific, and culturally contingent."⁶ Categorization as an ideological tool of heteronormativity will be discussed, and repudiated.

When conducting this inquiry, an unwaveringly linear development would present an oversimplification given that various conceptualizations of the body have historically co-existed. As explained by cultural theorist Stuart Hall, there is no homogeneous "law of development" that ensures the even distribution of a concept over every facet of society.⁷ There are inevitably tensions and contradictions generated by the "uneven tempos and directions" of historical development, as will be made evident in this text.⁸ There is no objectivity, Hall explains, "only universal intersubjectivity;" it is a plurality of 'selves' that compose our reality.⁹ Hence, concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality have their own local histories and internal dynamics, each deserving of their own investigations in order to give them justice. Even still, there is such a depth of diversity, beyond what is possible to comprehend. Alas, the details of heteronormativity are complex, and cannot be filled out in all their subtlety here, but the bare outlines are worth setting out. Though not complete, the material presented should suffice to advocate for the rejection of enshrined essentialism in all its forms.

As the first order of operation, this text begins by defining heteronormativity in greater depth. It outlines theoretical concepts which are integral for understanding how it remains the dominant ideology and methodologies that are necessary for exposing it as such. Subsequently, it traces the origins of the concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, which are located in a long lineage of Western thought. To do so, it goes back to ancient Greece, which is regarded as the foundation of Western civilization.

By returning to the root, the goal is that no heteronormative assumptions are brought forward in contemporary analysis. Key moments in the articulations of today's conceptualizations of the terms are noted, with an emphasis on colonization as a pivotal moment. While the focus is on heteronormativity, this regime converges with other normative efforts, such as white supremacy, which are revealed to be mutually reinforcing. As such, the concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality cannot be understood in isolation, given that they are constitutionally intersectional. **A principal aim is to impart knowledge regarding processes of norm creation, and the harm they perpetuate. More specifically, it will be to demonstrate how heteronormativity has cemented itself as the organizing principle of society, denying legibility to multitudes of experiences. The ultimate outcome is to encourage reflection on the purpose of *othering*, and advocate for a different reality.**

Defining HETERONORMATIVITY

*"Concepts that have proven useful in ordering things easily achieve such an authority over us that we forget their earthly origins and accept them as unalterable givens."*¹⁰

- Albert Einstein

*"The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots."*¹¹

- Michel-Rolph Trouillot

'Heteronormativity' is the emergence of heterosexuality as an *identity* along with the "range of normalizing discourse and practices that presume that heterosexuality is *natural* and *ahistorical*."¹² This regime creates the impression that heterosexual relations are "the elemental form of human association, [...] the very mode of intergender relations, [...] the indivisible basis of all community, [and] the means of reproduction without which society wouldn't exist."¹³ The concept of heterosexuality is unintelligible without those of 'sex' and 'gender.' Normative sexuality equally requires a normative sex-gender alignment. Characterized by *binary sex/gender/sexuality* system, heteronormativity only naturalizes sexual attraction

between a 'man' who has a 'male' sex and a 'masculine' gender, and a 'woman' who has a 'female' sex and a 'feminine' gender. By dehistoricizing these categories, it essentializes them, giving the impression that they are 'natural.'

To illustrate with one example, in the United States of America, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996, defined marriage as the union of one 'man' and one 'woman' on the basis that this arrangement was 'common sense.'¹⁴ As a federal mandate, DOMA effectually barred 'same-sex' marriages from being legally recognized nationwide. The accompanying U.S. House of Representatives Report explained the reasoning behind this legislation:

To discover the 'ends' of marriage,' we need only reflect on this central, unimpeachable lesson of human nature: we are, each of us, born a man or a woman. The committee needs no testimony from expert witness to decode this point: our engendered existence, as men and women, offers the most unmistakable, natural signs of the meaning and purpose of sexuality. And that is the function and purpose of begetting.¹⁵

Presenting heterosexuality, and by extension 'men' and 'women' that are presumably 'masculine' 'males' and 'feminine' 'females,' as if it were a 'natural' concept, needing no evidence as it was simply 'common sense,' *is the epitome of heteronormativity.*

Alas, all sexualities can be located "in the terrain of society, history, power, and its contestations."¹⁶ As Eithne Luibhéid, who has published multiple books on the intersections between queer lives, racialization processes, and immigration control, states, "sexual identities and categories are *never* transhistorical, essential, fixed and self-evident but rather are *constructed* within social relations that change over time and by location."¹⁷ As a normative order, heteronormativity creates the "historical, social, political, and economic conditions," under which particular identities become "available, thinkable, livable, and desirable – and, conversely, unthinkable, unlivable, and undesirable."¹⁸ Indeed, in order to position itself as 'natural,' it also must formulate the 'unnatural.' It is through the mechanism of the binary that it gains 'legitimacy,' by hierarchically ordering itself above the *other*, it insulates itself from being questioned.

Repeatedly presented as 'natural,' heteronormativity is so ingrained that it becomes difficult to prove to people that it is otherwise. They look at bodies and they *know* what categories they 'belong' to, not realizing that they have been *marked* as such. Everything they see contributes to this confirmation bias. As activist Riki Wilchins notes, "once we see gay, black, female, or transgender people, it's hard to imagine that they weren't always there."¹⁹ The notion of binary 'sex' is particularly engrained. As Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis who notoriously played an influential role in "stabilizing, publicizing, and normalizing the new heterosexual ideal,"²⁰ is often quoted: "When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is 'male or female?' and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty."²¹ The immediate 'certainty' of difference is seen by Freud as "*proof* enough of its existence," constituting binary 'sexes' as "simply [...] a metaphysical *fact*."²² Wilchins explains this phenomenon: "We imagine the cultural discourse about them just popped up in response; rather, *it was the discourse that created such identities in the first place.*"²³ Indeed, once a discourse is in place, its effects are hard to surmise. Through "discourse and knowledge production," the normalization process makes these categories seem all the more 'real,' beyond merely being socially ascribed roles.²⁴

As a recent example of this in action, a Harvard study declared that the brain "notices race and gender before all else," as test subjects were capable of categorizing faces as black/white and female/male in a mere 200 milliseconds.²⁵ Ruminating on possible explanations for this phenomenon, the key researcher posited that "sex and race can be important things to *know* about another person, so it would make sense that as soon as you see another person, you *need* to [perform this categorization]."²⁶ The matter in which they speak about these categories reveals that they see sex (or gender – the article confounds these two terms and uses them interchangeably) and race as being *inherent* to these bodies, rather than as social constructions imposed on these bodies through processes of sexualization and racialization. *Knowledge* of a person's sex (or gender) and race is said to be critical "*especially in contexts in which those differences should change the way in which you interact with them.*"²⁷ By assuming the 'naturalness' of race and sex (or gender), this person unintentionally reveals the true incentive behind the formulation of these categories as 'natural,' *to justify differential treatment.* This study, while ostensibly presenting race and sex (or gender) in essentialist terms, simply reveals how quick people are to classify bodies with historically contingent concepts that are embedded

with hierarchical implications. These binary constructions emerged in a time and place, but assumptions such as these reify them as 'natural,' and consequently reinforce the oppressive status quo. Through repetition, they become 'common sense.'

This heteronormative lens informs the dominant worldview. It through its pervasiveness that heteronormativity is granted the title of 'hegemonic.' As explained by socialist writer Raymond Williams, 'hegemony' is "a whole body of practices and expectations," that shape perceptions of one's self and one's world.²⁸ As a "lived system of meanings," it is constitutive and constituting, meaning it is "reciprocally confirming."²⁹ It enables confirmation bias such as outlined above. A hegemony does not "passively exist as form of dominance," rather it has to continually be "renewed, recreated, defended, and modified."³⁰ Essentially, it adapts in order to remain the dominant ideology. **Accordingly, one of the key methods through which heteronormativity achieves its supremacy is by claiming a monopoly on 'common sense.'** While what constitutes as 'common sense' also changes drastically over time, it remains perpetually 'common sense' at any given moment. Despite all their permutations, the principal tenets of heteronormativity remains practical knowledge among the populace as a result of this mechanism. As such, 'common sense,' is a powerful tool to have it in repertoire.

Repudiating 'COMMON SENSE' through discursive strategies

"Every philosophical current leaves behind a sediment of 'common sense'; this is the document of its historical effectiveness."³¹

- Antonio Gramsci

Given that 'common sense' is foundational to heteronormativity's dominance, it is crucial to understand this construct. Commonly defined as "good sense and sound judgment in practical matters," some dictionaries also note that it is based on "a simple perception of the situation or facts."³² The sense of which philosopher Antonio Gramsci has elaborated the term elucidates why 'common sense' is not 'good sense' or 'sound judgment' in the slightest. As argued by cultural theorist Stuart Hall, the theoretical perspectives presented in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* are particularly

useful in the "analysis of racism and related social phenomena."³³ Hall writes that, despite "his apparently 'Eurocentric' position," Gramsci proves to be "one of the most theoretically fruitful [...] sources of new ideas, paradigms and perspectives in the contemporary studies of racially structured social phenomenon."³⁴ And, seeing as they intersect, this holds true for the study of heteronormativity. Among the concepts Hall attributes great importance is that of 'common sense,' which Gramsci distinguishes from 'philosophy.' Conceived as two ideological levels, the effectiveness of the latter depends on the former, and its ability to occupy "everyday consciousness."³⁵ Described as "fragmentary and contradictory," 'common sense' is composed of bits and pieces of 'philosophy' that entered the popular thought of the masses.³⁶ As a result, one's conception of the world may contain "Stone Age elements, principles of a more advanced science, *prejudices from all past phases of history* [and] intuitions of a future philosophy."³⁷ Beyond its lack of coherence, 'common sense' can also be characterized by its evolving nature. Quoting Gramsci: "Common sense is not rigid and immobile but is continually transforming itself, *enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life.*"³⁸ One ideology is not abruptly replaced by another, instead, one conception of the world is *gradually* displaced by another. It is internally reworked and transformed, in ways that may be *imperceptible* in that given moment. While what is considered 'common sense' may differ drastically from one period to another, it "creates the folklore of the future, *that is as a relatively rigid phase of popular knowledge at a given place and time.*"³⁹ Given its apparent stasis, this 'practical knowledge' is perceived as *reliable*. As explained by Hall, 'common sense' "represents itself as the *'traditional wisdom or truth of the ages,*" however, it is, in fact, "deeply *a product of history.*"⁴⁰ Because 'common sense' occupies the "taken for granted" terrain, it is against this ideological level that 'philosophy' "must contend for mastery."⁴¹

*In order to put forward "new conceptions of the world," one "must take into account, contest, and transform" 'common sense.'*⁴² Ideologies, embedded in concepts such as 'common sense,' are disseminated not only through the "state," but through "civil society," which includes, but is not limited to, educational systems, religious institutions, cultural organizations, social structures, and the built environment, as will be discussed in the case studies regarding the '**public toilet**' and the '**private home**.'⁴³ These various sites of political and social antagonism are "integral arenas of struggle," through which these ideologies can also be questioned.⁴⁴ As Gramsci explains, "what matters is the criticism to which such an ideological complex

is subjected;” *it is through denunciation that a “process of differentiation and change” becomes possible.*⁴⁵ A hegemony cannot “passively exist as a form of dominance,” because it is continually “*resisted, limited, altered, and challenged by pressures not at all its own.*”⁴⁶ As stated by Luibhéid, heteronormativity is “*an unstable norm which requires anxious labor to sustain.*”⁴⁷ Given that it evolves in order to reinstate its supremacy, resistance is an ongoing process. Through its adaptive mechanism, heteronormativity risks revealing its inconsistent nature. Upon closer inspection, its core identities are not as fixed as they might seem. Gramsci draws attention to the *contradictions in consciousness* between “conceptions which are affirmed verbally or in thought,” and “the world which manifests itself, however fleetingly, in action.”⁴⁸ Often, what heteronormativity outlines as reality does not line up with how the world actually presents itself. When bodies do not fit neatly into categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, the legitimacy of these categorizations is called into question. **It is at the margins,** as elaborated by Wilchins, **that “discourse begins to fray, where whatever paradigm we’re in starts to lose its explanatory power and all those inconvenient exceptions begin to cause problems.”**⁴⁹ It is through these instances, the ones that heteronormativity perpetually tries to hide, but through the mechanism of change is unsuccessful in doing so, that this regime loses its status of ‘common sense.’

NOTE: The remaining research for this section has been relocated to the back of the document. For an in-depth overview of the following, please consult the appendix.

To provide a brief summary, the analysis begins by defining sex, gender, and sexuality. In order to locate how these categories came to be formulated as binaries, it returns to the roots of Western civilization. As stated by Jacques Derrida, the language of Western metaphysics carries within it “presuppositions of all types.”⁵⁰ Following Audre Lorde’s assertion that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” *dismantling* requires a thorough investigation of the ontology propounded by the West.⁵¹ Uncovering the mythoreligious origins of the Western concept of ‘truth,’ which was initially employed by those in positions of power to “construct reputations, support political claims and thus create social order,” it is demonstrated that, following its ‘rationalization,’ “*truth remained the prerogative of particular types of men.*”⁵² Subsequently, the

Western predilection for ‘sameness’ is discussed. As stated by John Gowan, “the philosophical tradition, at least from Plato on, *has always favored the concept of the same;* i.e., the aim of philosophical thought *has been to reveal the essential characteristics that two things hold in common.*”⁵³ Reflecting on how this modality results in “tendency to see the world’s complexity in terms of simplistic binaries,” it emphasizes the structural implications of Western thought.⁵⁴ Characterized by a “compulsion to create totalitarian forms of knowledge,” it presents a procession of “transcendent truths,” declaring them true “for all people, in all societies, and at all times.”⁵⁵ It is demonstrated that, while this declaration remains consistent, concepts declared as “universal and certain” go through a variety of permutations.⁵⁶

Following this exposition, a tracing of the binary concept of ‘sex’ is performed. As stated by Ahmed Ragab, this term refers “*not to a fixed ‘biological’ category that remains coherent throughout history but to a historically contingent category*” rooted in a specific discourse “that was produced and dominated by particular groups whose claimed expertise was the human body.”⁵⁷ The first elaboration on binary sex is discussed. Developed by Aristotle, the theory was in service of creating a hierarchy, asserting humans as superior to all other creatures. Far from the dominant discourse, the predominance of spectrum-based understandings over the following millennium is summarized. Following the rediscovery of Greek texts via the crusades in the 13th century, the emergence of the concept of ‘sex’ as constituting ‘opposites’ is chronicled. With this approach garnering recognition in newly founded universities, the period’s scholars began advocating that “all humans were one of two sexes – male or female — with nothing in between.”⁵⁸ However, as stated by Leah deVun, when “authorities spoke of ‘discerning’ a sex that already existed in the body, *they were not describing any corporeal reality but rather the effects of their own ideology.*”⁵⁹ Knowledge, asserts Foucault, “is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.”⁶⁰ Indeed, simultaneous to the theoretical and legal articulations of binary sex, the field of surgery offered their services for the “*correction of nature.*”⁶¹ While this reshaping of bodies may seem fitting for the period (medieval), deVun emphasizes that this “science of sex resembles our own modern one in some startling ways.”⁶² Drawing ties to the contemporary moment, the common pediatric practice of intersex genital mutilation, which has accelerated in recent history despite advocacy efforts, is discussed. As stated by Monique Wittig, “there is nothing abstract about the power that sciences and theories have to act materially and actually upon our bodies and our minds, even if the discourse it produces

is abstract.”⁶³

Subsequently, the emergence of ‘sex’ as a tool for *othering* is reviewed. At a time where “Christian kingdoms were under great pressure,” categories of sex that did not conform to the binary of ‘male’ and ‘female’ were projected onto various populations it wished to control.⁶⁴ Illustrations of “monstrous races” were integral in the definition of what Europeans viewed as “civilized cultural practices,” while “establishing antipathy towards bodies and desires at odds with a European Christian ideal.”⁶⁵ This discussion critically leads into the historical period that saw the initiation of colonial efforts. Given that “*colonialism could only exist at all by postulating that there existed a binary opposition into which the world was divided,*” it is the catalyst for the widespread imposition of the heteronormative regime.⁶⁶ The suppression of two-spirit Indigenous identities by colonizers is emphasized. Moreover, all Indigenous identities, including those that are seemingly analogous to ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are distinguished from the colonial construct of the gender binary. As explained by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “I understand the word *kwe* to mean woman within the spectrum of genders in Nishnaabemowin, or the Nishnaabe language. [...] It is different than the word *woman* because it recognizes a spectrum of gender expressions. [...] *Kwe* does not conform to the rigidity of the colonial gender binary, nor is *kwe* essentialized. [...] *Kwe* has the capacity to be inclusive of both cis and trans experiences.”⁶⁷ The abundance of Indigenous interpretations of the human experience, and the efforts to reclaim this understanding, is highlighted

Further implications of colonialism are discussed, such as the simultaneous development of sciences of ‘sex’ and ‘race.’ For instance, 19th century theories of evolution alleging that “hermaphroditism is primitive” sought to ‘demonstrate’ that “the higher the anthropological development of the race, the stronger these contrasts between man and woman.”⁶⁸ This ‘science’ informed the colonial efforts to contain “gender trouble” in the “body of a racialized other.”⁶⁹ As part of these elaborations, ‘sexuality’ comes to feature more prominently in this discussion. The “simultaneous efforts to shore up and bifurcate categories of race and sexuality” were also “deeply intertwined.”⁷⁰ An overview of settler sexuality, as regulating sexual relations in service of reproducing the dominant order, is provided. The development of a ‘normal’ sexuality enabled the imposition of ‘deviant’

sexuality on colonized populations. Non-procreative activity is increasingly punished, as “nations depend on sex.”⁷¹ Tools to manage sexuality are further analyzed, including eugenics as a method of maintaining ‘racial purity.’ Particular emphasis is placed on the pathologizing of newly formed sexual identities. Chronicling the emergence of the terms ‘homosexuality’ and ‘heterosexuality’ in the early 20th century, it locates the instances that contributed to contemporary understanding. While both emerged as ‘perversions,’ it was determined that that sexual activity between ‘men’ and ‘women,’ even simply for pleasure, still *implicitly* included a reproductive desire. Meanwhile, homosexuality, defined as ‘same-sex desire,’ was deemed pathological in its absence of reproductive potentiality. As stated by Jonathan Katz, ‘sex-difference’ became “the basic distinguishing features of a new linguistic, conceptual, and social ordering of desire.”⁷² This began what he characterizes as the “heterosexual epoch,” in which the idea of “two sex-differentiated eroticisms, one normal and good, one abnormal and bad [...] would come to dominate the [contemporary] vision of the sexual universe.”⁷³ Heterosexuality, coming into existence less than two centuries ago, came to be seen as “an immutable fact of nature – a naturally given norm.”⁷⁴ Attempts to ‘convert’ homosexuals to ‘normal’ sexuality are recounted.

As it is now in the domain of recent history, a brief overview of the criminalization and subsequent ‘liberation’ of homosexuals is recounted. Homonationalism, as an imperative to assimilate to the norm in order to be granted a narrow form of acceptance by the state, is also discussed. Pink washing, as the use of Western ‘acceptance’ in order to justify further colonial efforts, is equally touched upon. The instigation of a new moral panic around gender and sexual minorities is noted. Reiterating that heteronormativity is far from ‘common sense,’ this regime is firmly established as a contingent construction. **The continuation of this long legacy of binary logic denies legibility to human variance and limits the range of human expression. By creating the imperative to conform to the norm, it removes agency from all bodies.** Finally, the investigation concludes that, while exposition is key in understanding the functioning of normative orders, this knowledge must then be used to *dismantle* them.

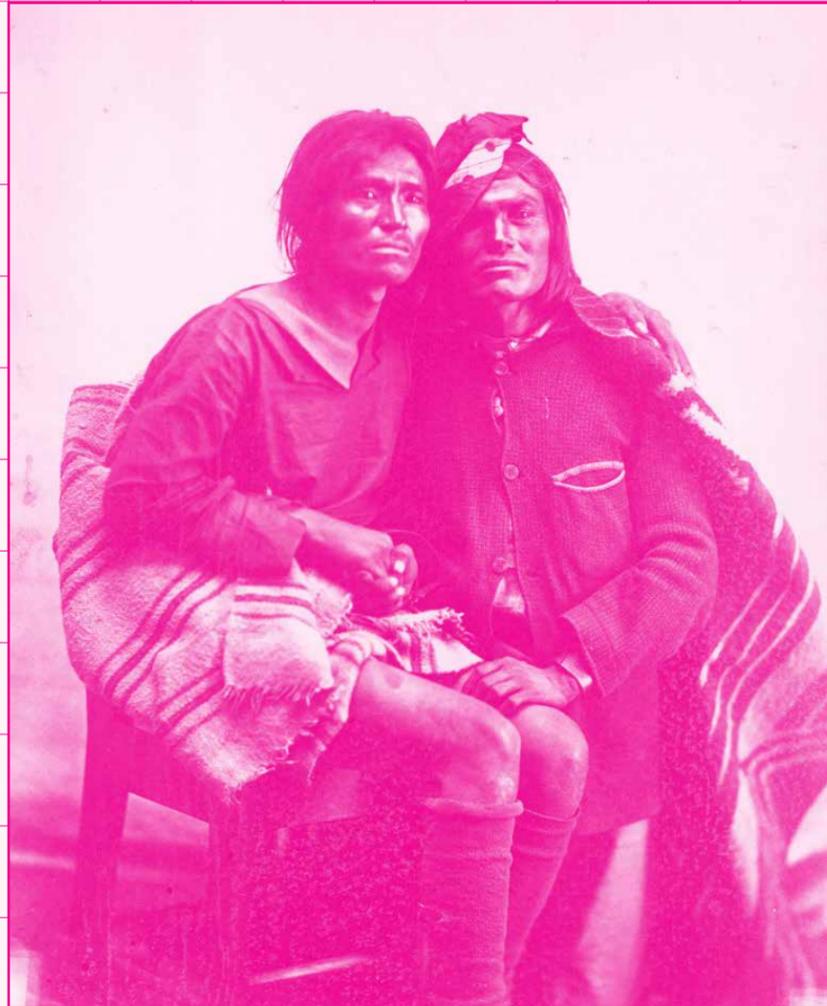


Figure 1. Navajo couple (circa 1866).

(Incomplete) list of Two-Spirit identities:

- Kokwi'ma [Acoma];
- Ayagigux', Tayagigux' [Aleut];
- Haxu'xan [Arapaho];
- Kuxa't [Arikara];
- Winktan [Assiniboine];
- Yaawa, Brumaiwi [Atsegwi];
- Aakí'skassi [Blackfoot (Siksika)];
- Aakí'skassi, Saahkómaapi'aakíikoan [Blackfoot (Southern Peigan)];
- Nudale asgaya, Nudale agehya, Asegi [Cherokee];
- He'eman, Hetaneman [Cheyenne];
- Hatukiklanna, Hatukholba [Chickasaw, Choctaw];
- Agí [Chumash (Ineseño)];
- Aqi [Chumash (Ventureño)];
- Elha, Warrhameh [Cocopa];
- Napêw iskwêwisêhot, Iskwêw ka napêwayat, Ayahkwêw, Înahpîkasoht, Iskwêhkân, Napêhkân [Cree];
- Bote/Bate/Bade [Crow]; Winkta [Dakota (Santee Sioux)];
- Ma'kali [Flathead (Interior Salish)];
- Athuth [Gros Ventre]; Miati [Hidatsa];
- Ho'va [Hopi (Pueblo)];
- Iwap kuti [Huchnom];
- Ikoueta, Ickoue ne kioussa [Illinois];
- Quariwarmi [Inca];
- Nok'olhanxodeleane, Chelxodeleane [Ingalik];
- Sipiniq [Inuit];
- Kwit [Juaneno];
- Monaguia [Karankawa];
- Hu'yupž [Kawaiisu];
- Kokwi'ma [Keres (Acoma)];
- Kok'we'ma [Keres (Laguna)];
- Tw!inna'ek [Klamath];

Kapatke'tek, Titqattek [Kootenai];
 Warharmi [Kumeyaay];
 Kok'we'ma [Laguna];
 Winkte, Bloka eglá wa ke [Lakota (Teton Sioux)];
 Cuit [Luiseno (San Juan Capistrano)];
 Uluqui [Luiseno (Mountain)];
 Suku [Maidu (Mountain)];
 Osa'pu [Maidu (Nisenan)];
 Mihdacka [Mandan];
 Ilyaxai', Kwiraxame [Maricopa];
 Waupeengwoatar [Miami];
 Nde'isdzan [Mescalero Apache];
 Geenumu gesallagee [Mi'kmaq];
 Osabu [Miwok];
 Alyha, Hwame [Mohave];
 Tai'up [Mono];
 Walusa [Nomlaki];
 Sx'ints [Nuxálk];
 Nad'ée'/ nadleeh, Bá/ bah [Diné (Navajo)];
 Agokwa, Okitcitakwe [Ojibwa (Chippewa)];
 Mixu'ga [Omaha, Osage, Ponca];
 Mixo'ge [Otoe, Kansa (Kaw)];
 Wik'ovat [Papago (Tohono O'odham, Akimel O'odham),
 Tüdayapi, Moroni noho Tüvasa [Paiute (Northern)];
 Tüdayapi [Paiute (Owens Valley)];
 Tüwasawuts orMa:ai'pots [Paiute (Southern)];
 Panaro bobum pi [Patwin];
 Ku'saat [Pawnee];
 Das [Pomo (Northern)];
 T!un [Pomo (Southern)];
 M'netokwe [Potawatomi];
 Keknatsa'nxwixw, Tawkxwa'nsixw [Quinault];
 Coya [Salinan];
 St'a'mia [Sanpoil];

I-coo-coo-a/ Äyá'kwä' [Sauk, Fox];
 Tuva'sa [Shoshone (Bannock)];
 Tübasá, Taikwahni tainnapá', Waip:ü sunwe/ taikwahni
 wa'ippena' [Shoshone (Lemhi)];
 Tuvasa [Shoshone (Gosiute)];
 Tubasa waip [Shoshone (Promontory Point)];
 Tainna'wa'ippe/waip: siŋwa, Nüwüdücka [Shoshone
 (Nevada)];
 Xa'wisa [Takelma];
 Kwido [Tewa];
 Lhunide [Tiwa (Isleta)];
 Gatxan, Wncitc [Tlingit];
 Kanâ'ts' orMaḥana'ax, Mi'yuuta [Tsimshian];
 Huiy [Tübatulabal];
 Tuwasawits [Ute (Southern)];
 Clele [Wailaki];
 Wós [Wappo];
 Shiange [Winnebago];
 Ik!e'laskait [Wishram];
 Lô'ya [Yana];
 Tonoo'tcim [Yokuts (Kocheyali)];
 Tono'cim [Yokuts (Paleuyami)];
 Tonochim/Lokowitnono [Yokuts (Tachi)];
 Tono'cim [Yokuts (Michahai)];
 Tongochim [Yokuts (Yaudanchi)];
 Tai'yap [Yokuts (Waksachi)];
 Elxa', Kwe'rhamé [Yuma];
 Aranutiq, Tyakutyi [Yup'ik (Alutiiq (Chugach))];
 Akhnuchik [Yup'ik (Alutiiq (Koniag))];
 Anasik/Yuk allakuyaaq, Uktasik [Yup'ik (Siberian)];
 Aranaruaq, Angutnguaq [Yup'ik (Kusquqvagmiut)];
 Wergern [Yurok];
 Muxe [Zapotec];
 Lha'mana, Katotse [Zuni]

reduced to...

1492: "berdache"

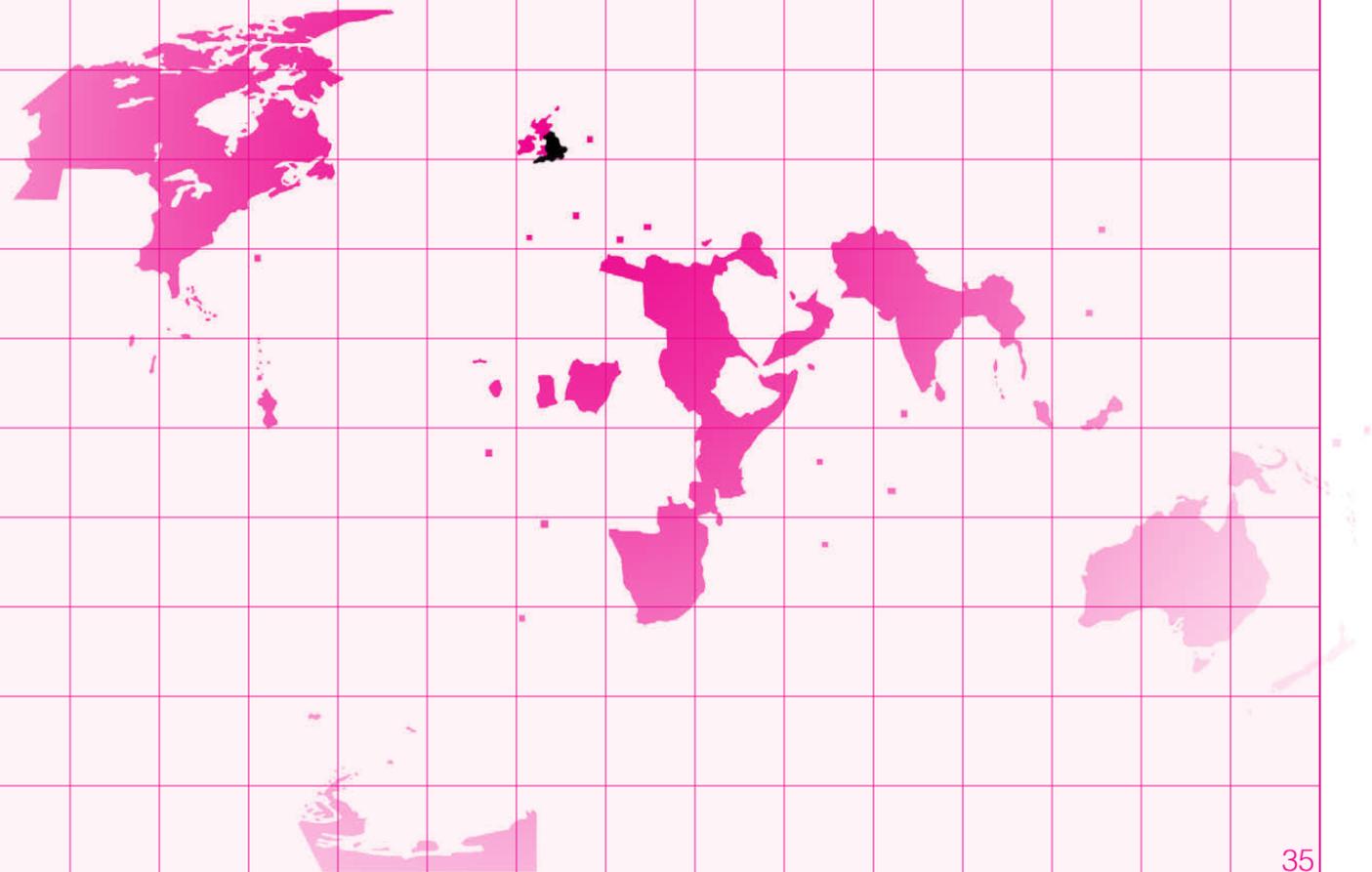


Figure 2. "British Empire and Imperialism."

Valboa wirfft etliche Indianer/ welche die schreckliche Sünd XXII.
der Sodomen begangen/ den Hunden für sie zerreißen.



VALBOA auff derselben Keyß gegen den Bergen zu/ vber-
windet im Streit einen Königschen in der Insel Esquaragua / vnd schlägt
insampt vielen Indianern zu todt: Darnach als er in ein Flecken kommen/
sibet des Königschen Bruder vnd etliche andere in Weiblicher Kleidung/dar-
ob er sich sehr verwundert / vnd forschet dieses Handels ein vrsach / da wirdt
er berichtet / wie das der Königscher / welcher erschlagen / vnd all sein Hoff-
gesind mit der schrecklichen Sünd wider die Natur vergiffet gewesen. Hierab ist Valboa er-
schrocken / das dieses so gar abscheuliches Laster zu diesen Barbarischen Völkern kommen/
vnd befehle man solte sie alle die an der Zahl bey vierzig waren / nemen vnd seinen Hunden
die er pflegt mit sich zuführen / fürwerffen / auff das sie sie zerreißen. 23. Cap.

Lij Indianer

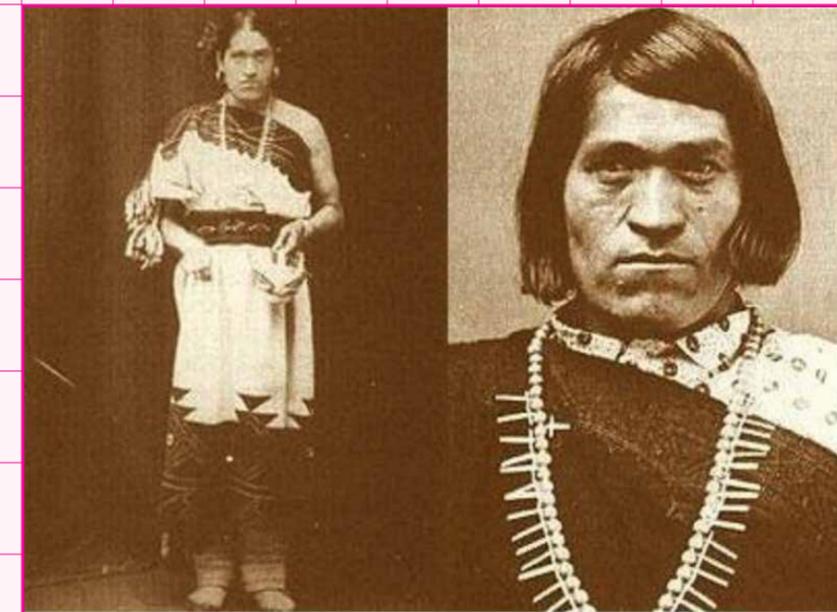
Figure 3. "Balboa throws several Indians, who have committed the terrible sin of the Sodomians, to the dogs to be torn apart" (1594).

“[They are] corrupt men, who have long hair and wear short skirts like women [...] They are morally quite perverted, and most of them are addicted to sodomy.”

- Jean Bernard Bossu (1750s)

“Males assume the dress and perform the duties of females, while women turn men and mate with their own sex.”

- Edward Denig (1830s)



O berdache Whe-Wa, da tribo Zuni, Novo México-EUA, foto de 1879.

Figure 4. Description of Whe'Wa using derogatory language.



Figure 5. "Raid Upon a Fancy Dress Ball" in *The Illustrated Police News* (1880).

"About nine o'clock cabs began to arrive at the hall, the occupants being **young men**, who in most instances brought portmanteaus or tin boxes with them. A considerable number were in female attire and among the costumes were several low-bodied dresses. In all 47 persons entered the building, and of these 22 were **dressed as women.**"

"The company were engaged chiefly in **grotesque dances**, such as are familiar at low-class music-halls."

London Evening Standard, September 27, 1880.

"They danced some strange kind of dance, in which they kicked their legs about a great deal; [...] In addition to the persons dancing, there were others sitting on benches round the room who engaged in the same **indecent practices.**"

"[...] **one of the foulest and most disgraceful orgies that ever disgraced any town.**"

"[...] **to be kept in penal servitude for a term not exceeding 10 years and not less than three years, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.**"

The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle, October 1, 1880.

**How Homosexuality
Endangers
Your Children!**

Are your children really threatened by homosexuality? Are the more than 8,000,000 actual or potential homosexuals in the U.S. a personal danger to your home life? For the frank facts—for the shocking answers—don't miss the "New Moral Menace to our Youth" in

SEPTEMBER **Coronet** Now on Sale

**What New Moral
Menace Endangers
American Youth?**

Is homosexuality a real danger to American youth? What are the frank facts about homosexuality in the U.S.? For the shocking answers, read "New Moral Menace to our Youth"—the most comprehensive survey ever to be published in a national magazine—in

SEPTEMBER **Coronet** Now on Sale

**AMERICA'S MOST
INSIDIOUS
MORAL PROBLEM!**

The enticements of perversion lead thousands of our youths into degeneracy—crime—vice. Coronet prints the *truth*—a survey of homosexuality more thorough than any ever before published in a national magazine. Read "New Moral Menace to our Youth" in

SEPTEMBER **Coronet** Now on Sale

**DEGENERATES—
DANGEROUS THREAT
TO OUR YOUTH!**

CORONET reveals the alarming facts about this moral problem touching our government—this insidious form of vice that may corrupt our own children. Read this frank discussion about degenerates—"New Moral Menace to our Youth"—

SEPTEMBER **Coronet** Now on Sale

Figures 6-9. Coronet Magazine newspaper advertisements (1950).

**HOW TO
SPOT A
POSSIBLE
HOMO**

YOU can and will meet them in London's Bond-street, Tokio's Ginza, Rome's Via Veneto, Glasgow's Sauchiehall-street, the Road to Mandalay, and the street where you live...

Vassall, the spy, was a homo. He lived like one, he acted like one. Yet here, in the formal, carefully chosen words of the Tribunal's report, we are told by Lord Radcliffe and his two assistants:

"So far as we can see, nothing short of active police detective work would have offered any clue to the fact that he was a practising homosexual."

Later on they say: "The Russians, indeed, had caught him through his homosexual proclivity, but the volume of evidence that we received convinced us that at that time, just as in the later years in London, there was nothing either in Vassall's conduct or conversation that indicated even to a sharp observer a man addicted to homosexual practices."

Almost unbelievably it seems they are right. One or two people Vassall worked with thought he was a bit effeminate. Some even nicknamed him "Vera." But neither his bosses nor the officials picked to vet him ever appeared to mark him down as a homo, and a dangerous one at that.

If it is really true that in this day of frankness grown men, professional men, men of the world, cannot spot a homo when they see him, I think it is high time we had a short course on how to pick a pervert.



Vassall, a spy and homo—a gilt-edged specimen of his type.

Basically, homos fall into two groups—the obvious, and the concealed.

OBVIOUS: Those who dye their hair, touch up their lips, and walk with a gay little wiggle could be spotted by a One-Eyed Jack on a foggy day in Blackwall Tunnel.

CONCEALED: They wear silk suits and sit up at chi-chi bars with full bosomed ladies.

Or they wear hairy sports jackets and give their wives a black eye when they get back from the working men's club.

THEY wrestle, play golf, ski and work up great knots of muscles lifting weights. They are married, have children.

THEY are everywhere, and they can be anybody. How then are we ever going to pick them out?

I have been discussing them with a psychiatrist and others who have made a keen study of the problem. Quite clearly EVERY man of the types listed here is NOT a homo, but you will certainly find that the queers fall into these categories. They would be on my "suspect list." I wouldn't tell them my secrets.

1—**THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN**, unmarried, who has an unnaturally strong affection for his mother.

2—**The man who has a consuming interest in youth.** He is ready to give ALL his spare time to working and talking with boys or youths.

3—**THE CRAWLER.** The 'umble man, the man who is always saying he's nothing and everybody else is marvellous, the man with the fixed and meaningless smile on his face. A prime suspect.

4—**THE FUSSY DRESSER.** When one, two or three button jackets are in he is the first to wear them. His shirts are detergent bright, his tie has the latest knot and is always just so, and he can never pass a mirror or a shop window without a sly glance at himself.

5—**THE OVER-CLEAN MAN.** His cheeks are

**The Admiralty,
the Foreign Office,
and M.I.5 don't
seem to know... so
the Sunday Mirror
offers them some
useful advice**

Figure 10. "How to Spot a Possible Homo" in The Sunday Mirror (1962).



ON THE ADVICE OF MY ATTORNEY
I DENY EVERYTHING !!
DENY EVERYTHING, even if it does not seem to have anything to do with the arrest, and even if it makes you sound stupid.

Figure 11. "S.I.R Pocket Lawyer" (circa 1964).



Figure 12. Protestors picketing (1965).

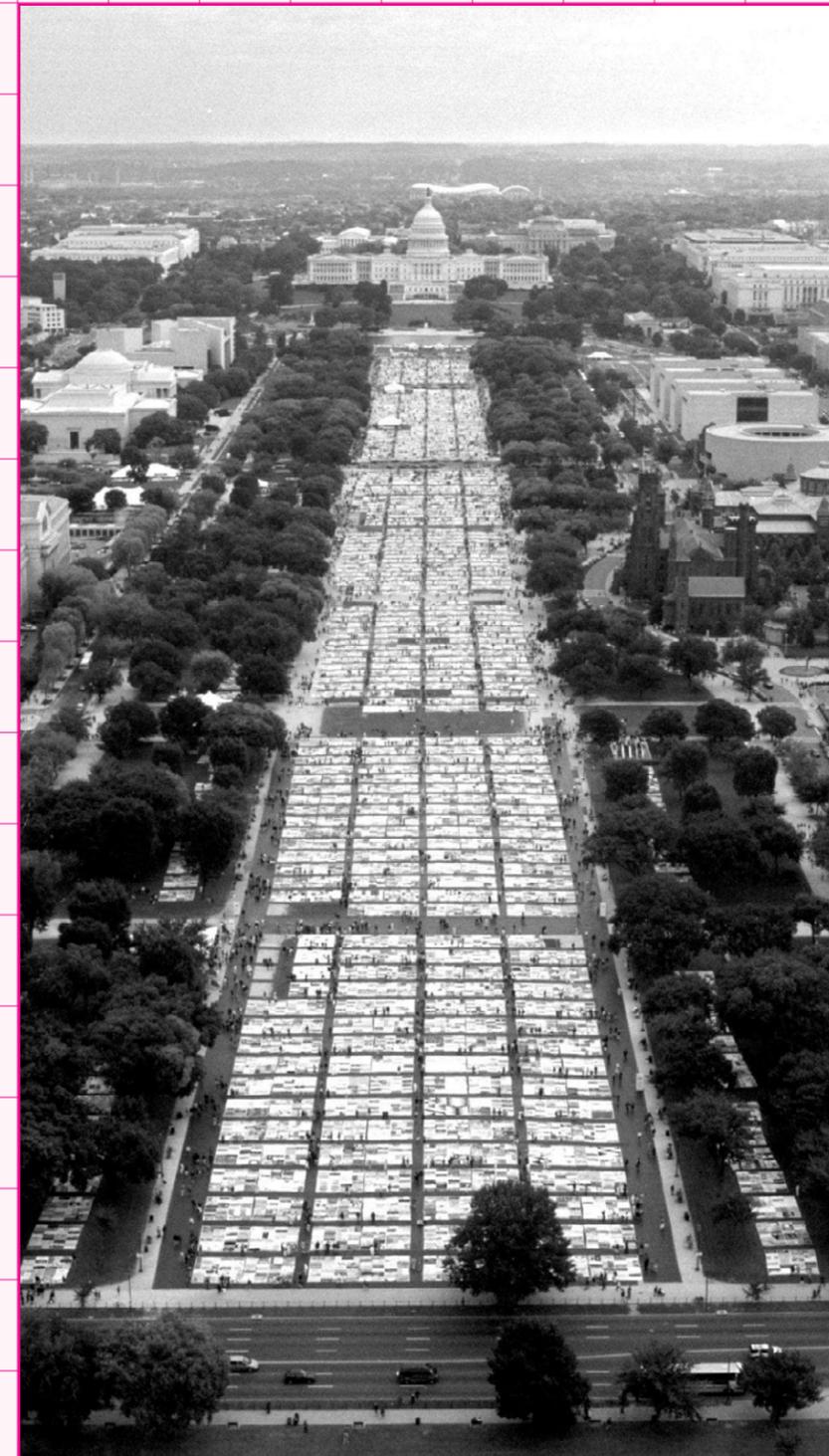


Figure 13. AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington, D.C. (1996).

And what does this have to do with architecture?

As stated previously, **architecture is not neutral**. Heteronormativity is deeply embedded in our built environment. Key architectural typologies developed in tandem with this ideology. Implemented as industry standards, they generally go unquestioned by design professionals. Their acceptance as 'common sense' reaffirms the supposed naturalness of the heteronormative regime. In the following, I have demonstrated the integration of this normative order into architecture with two case studies; 'the public toilet' and 'the private home.' I chose these examples because they demonstrate the ways in which this phenomenon manifests in the *everyday*. Indeed, most individuals interface with these typologies on a regular basis, without questioning the norms they perpetuate. While the public toilet and the private home are particularly exemplary of its extensiveness, it must be noted that the heteronormative order manifests itself spatially *in many other ways*. The insights derived from these investigations can be applied beyond the typologies in question. For instance, the conversation regarding the public toilet is pertinent to any space divided along binary notions of sex and/or gender, which is a spatiality commonly found in the design of schools, residences, dormitories, shelters, prisons, reformatories, hospitals, places of worship, sports facilities, etc. Subsequently, that of the private home can be extrapolated to other forms of inhabitable space such as apartments, condominiums, townhouses, etc. Moreover, it may be applied to the notion of privatized space in general. **By tracing the development of these typologies, both case studies reveal the imposition of norms onto the body, as an everyday occurrence, via mechanisms instituted by the built environment.** This exposition advocates for *the end of normativity* in architectural practice.

“The history of the modern public toilet can be interpreted as one of ever-increasing separation, suppression, and hetero-sex-gendering in the name of moral propriety, safety, health, and hygiene.”¹

-Dara Blumenthal



The Public Toilet

Case Study #1 - THE PUBLIC TOILET

Architects routinely rely on a set of standards when designing public toileting facilities. **Divided along a binary, these spaces tend to accommodate heteronormatively defined ‘men’ in one and ‘women’ in the other. This, of course, presents an issue to *everyone in between*.** While the question of access has become more broadly acknowledged, with an increasing number of architects including at least an additional single-user option, the ideological function of the binary model remains intact. Out of curiosity, **I began asking people when they thought public toilets became ‘gendered.’** Over the course of this thesis year, **the most common answer was generally ‘forever’ or ‘at least a millennium.’** Some believed this reflected a fundamental division in society, based on immutable biological facts. Others reasoned that society had not considered transgender existence until recently. Even more thought it was just an unfortunate reality of longstanding oppression. **All were surprised to discover that the first ‘gendered’ public toilet only appeared less than 200 years ago.** By projecting ‘gender’ onto the built environment, this precedent played a significant role in naturalizing its binary composition. **It is now ‘common sense’ that public toilets should accommodate ‘men’ and ‘women’ in *separate* facilities. Moreover, embedded in these designs is the presumption that *it has always been so*.**

The assumption of binary accommodations is so ingrained that even Rem Koolhaas, who dedicated an entire book in his *Elements of Architecture* series and suggested that the toilet “might be the ultimate element,”² *does not address how these spaces historically came to be ‘gendered.’* The very first image in the book is an artist rendering of the first spatial manifestation of the public toilet in the West captioned “communal pleasure: *men* converse while defecating [...] *men* clean themselves with sponges on the end of sticks [...]”³ Repeatedly referring to ‘men,’ both Koolhaas and the person who reconstructed the scene made the same assumption as those who I informally interviewed; that these shared facilities were only for members of one ‘sex’ because toileting spaces have

been divided since time immemorial. Despite the lack of mirrored ‘Ladies’ and ‘Gents’ provisions, how the opposite ‘sex’ conducted their business in this scenario goes unaddressed, demonstrating a bias towards an understanding of ‘man’ as the universal subject. While it may be argued that Koolhaas’s treatise concerns itself with more practical aspects, if the goal was to “look under a microscope at the fundamentals of our buildings,” then a meaningful discussion of ‘gender’ would be *required*.⁴ **The separation of the population into binary ‘gender,’ and the subsequent normalization of this division, is the fundamental role of the modern public toilet. In this task, it might actually be ‘the ultimate element.’**

All of these assumptions serve to reify each other, until the ‘gendered’ composition of architectural typologies, such as that of the public toilet, go unquestioned. Or, as the current culture war in the United States of America adamantly proclaims, that *they must absolutely remain so* as the dissolution of this form would result in unspeakable horrors, notably towards women and children. However, the alleged concerns with safety, proven baseless time and time again, are merely a ruse, *as the ultimate concern is the continuation of the ‘gender’ system. Heteronormative society has a deep-seated attachment to the ‘gendered’ public toilet because the provision of two toileting facilities supports the belief that all persons can be neatly categorized as ‘male’ and ‘female,’ while significantly impeding a cultural understanding of identities outside of this paradigm.* Sociologist Spencer Cahill, in a 1985 article titled “Meanwhile Backstage: Public Bathrooms and the Interaction Order,” explains that this common practice “gives our public life a kind of segregative punctuation that serves to reaffirm and re-establish difference between the sexes *despite almost continuous contact between them.*”⁵ He expounds that “every time we enter a sex segregated bathroom [...] we display our sex-identity to the audience-at-large and *reaffirm its importance.*”⁶ Moreover, this daily act serves to construct the notion that there is an *other* ‘sex.’ Due to the hierarchical organization of the binary ‘sexes,’ one is constructed as requiring protection, quite paradoxically, *from and by* its counterpart. Meanwhile, **the normative population’s investment in the oppositional categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ renders the restroom as an unsafe space for people who fall outside of this norm.**

‘Gender’ separation has become such a naturalized phenomenon, that it is only when this norm is threatened that the ideological function this typology provides is put on full display. As Patricia Cooper and Ruth Oldenziel explain in their article “Cherished Classifications: Bathrooms and the Construction of Gender/Race on the Pennsylvania Railroad During World War II,” public outcry about the desegregation of restrooms, along the lines of both ‘gender’ and ‘race,’ reveals “deep fears about sexual mixing, transgressing social boundaries, and ending recognition of gender differences.”⁷ **Cultural anxieties around the loss of gender separation arise due to fears about the *instability of gender itself.*** In his 1998 book *Female Masculinity* in which he discusses ‘the bathroom problem’ and the danger of perceived ‘gender deviants’ in ‘gender-policed’ zones, Jack Halberstam argues that **“the bathroom, as we know it, actually represents the crumbling edifice of gender in the twentieth century.”**⁸ In a period when traditional gender roles are not as fixed as they have been in the past, **the fight to maintain the binary separation of public toilets is imbued with the symbolic desire to maintain the ‘purity’ of ‘gender’ categories. It is actually the fight to maintain the heteronormative order.**

Architects are contributing to the maintenance of this regime. As I have observed my classmates integrate ‘gendered’ toileting spaces into their designs, despite the design brief actually stating that all facilities should be ‘unisex’ and ‘must be provided in a quantity as appropriate to all public and private areas,’ *I am continually reminded about how standard this practice is in the field of architecture. This is the profession that ultimately draws up these plans and make them a reality.* With the knowledge that they are doing so or not, they actively contribute to the production of spatial violence. Thus, **the normalization of this typology must be contested.** All assumptions about the eternal status of the ‘gendered’ public toilet must be thrown out. To do so, we must look back, as that allows us to move forward. **The following case study outlines the history of the public toilet in the Western world, highlighting key moments that contributed to its spatial composition, while demonstrating how various ideologies have been embedded in this typology, and proliferated through its continued implementation. By returning to the past, this narrative seeks to demonstrate that the public toilet can have a different future.**

Common latrines: the first architectural manifestation of public toilets in the West.

The gendered landscape of public toilets is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of Western toileting practices. While many believe that this binary division is ‘common sense,’ this perception is the result of centuries of *social conditioning*. The reality is that the public toilets of today embody very different values than those of the past. **The first architectural manifestation of the public toilet was in the form of communal latrines**, with the earliest archeological evidence tracing back to the third century BCE, as part of the Roman empire’s sanitation system.⁹ **These spaces housed long marble benches with holes accommodating multiple simultaneous users, with no partitions between individuals or groups.** Performing all evacuative functions seated, Romans would clean themselves with sea sponges attached to sticks which they would wash in the flowing water that ran through a channel on the floor. Variations on this typology proliferated through Europe. For instance, the 16th century Hampton Court Palace contained a latrine known as the “Great House of Easement” that could accommodate 28 guests in one sitting.¹⁰ Furnished with oak plank benches with holes at two-foot intervals, a chute transported the waste matter down brick culverts into a moat which led into the Thames. Medieval cities commonly built latrines over bodies of water, and even the smallest of them had no less than four seats.¹¹ As explained by scholar Dara Blumenthal, author of the book *Little Vast Rooms of Undoing: Exploring Identity and Embodiment through Public Toilet Spaces*, **despite having “the legal right and the social custom to excrete in the street or anywhere they pleased, in plain sight of their community, indoors and out,” Europeans chose to visit latrines “precisely because they were communal.”**¹² Alexander Kira, author of the seminal book *The Bathroom* published in 1966, notes that **excreting was “an activity to socialize over,”** and “not only for the lower classes,” during most of Western history.¹³ **This architectural typology was not erected with the intention to divide the population in half, but rather to bring people together for a social purpose. The use of communal latrines remained common in Europe well into the 1800s.**¹⁴

The first flush: no thanks, we’re fine!

When the first Common Era flush toilet was invented in 1592, the technology was not met with enthusiasm.¹⁵ Its fixed nature was a strong factor in its dismissal. Along with the latrines, chamber pots were commonly employed to contain waste matter. At the time, members of the royalty would be presented with a close-stool (consisting of a chamber pot inside a wooden box with a lid), which would be removed from their presence when they were finished.¹⁶ Unenthralled by this new device that could not be moved, the royals also found the arrangement uncondusive for holding a conversation, with most preferring to keep company with the “groom of the stool,” a coveted position they generally granted to a high-ranking courtier.¹⁷ For the rest of the population, receptacles for human waste proliferated throughout a variety of spaces and were used at one’s leisure regardless of the social setting.¹⁸ Lacking a prescribed location, these apparatuses held no architectural significance. As a 1589 law demanding that “*no one, whoever he may be, before, at, or after meals, early or late, foul the staircases, corridors, or closets with urine of other filth, but go to suitable, prescribes places for such relief*” suggests, the use chamber pots may not have been as regimented as some would have liked.¹⁹ **The freedom to do as one pleased would continue to diminish, with the transient nature of the ‘toilet,’ and the common practice of excreting in the company of others, coming under attack with newly acquired modesty.**

I’m shyyyyy! Construction modesty as a new imperative for privacy.

While modesty is emblematic of the Victorian Era, its foundations were laid in the 16th century with the emergence of “new instruction manuals, schoolbooks, and court regulations” that dictated proper behaviour.²⁰ **These historical records demonstrate early attempts to instill ‘bodily shame’ in the name of ‘decency.’ Requiring the development of “new bodily habits, attitudes, and practices,” this moral imperative was “not automatically welcomed, supported, or embodied and certainly not adopted without conflict.”**²¹ As the body became a vessel of shame in the cultural imaginary, individuals had to consciously learn “a new way of being embodied” and



Figure 1. Conjectural reconstruction of the latrine Area Sacra di Largo Argentina in Rome (circa 2nd-3rd century BCE).

Communal Latrines



Figure 2. Latrine at Ostia Antica in Rome (circa 2nd-3rd century BCE).



Figure 3. Wooden latrine at Hempnall's Hall in Suffolk (circa early-18th to late-19th century).

First Flush

1592

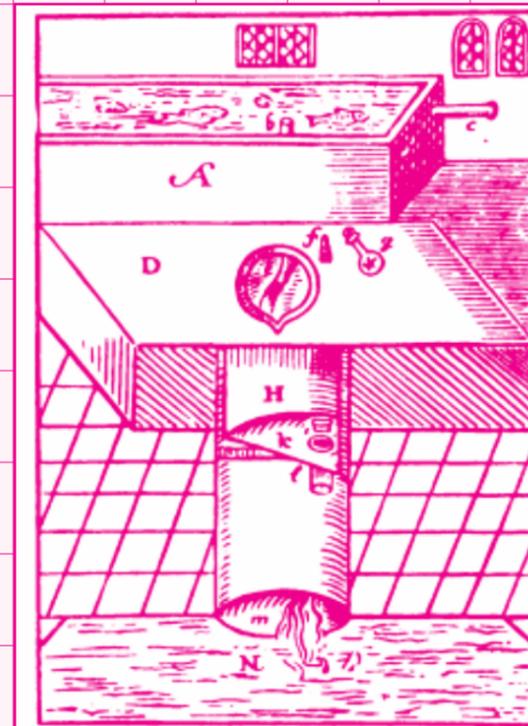


Figure 4. Image from Harrington's book *A New Discourse of a Stale Subject: Called the Metamorphosis of Ajax* (circa 1592).



Figure 5. François Boucher's *La Femme Qui Pisse ou L'Œil Indiscret* (circa. 1742–1765).

be “cognisant of their actions” in order to avoid “social awkwardness.”²² Over time, it became “increasingly inappropriate” to speak directly about bodily functions, especially pertaining to toileting practices, which are distanced through the “employment of euphemism.”²³ As evidenced by the substantial reduction in text in subsequent editions of etiquette literature, for example, the same passage in *Les règles de la bienséance et de la civilité Chrétienne* by Jean-Baptiste de La Salle is reduced from 208 words in the 1729 edition, to 74 words in the 1774 edition, **“much that could be and had to be expressed earlier is no longer spoken of” due to successful social conditioning.**²⁴ Once proper protocol was embodied in the populace, to explain the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ way of executing evacuative functions in an instruction manual would be “shocking.”²⁵ Achieving ‘common sense’ status, this guidance was no longer needed. **What was once viewed as “natural and inevitable,” was now required to be “hidden and ignored” by all.**²⁶ **Over the next centuries, “the blurring, distancing, and ‘quieting’ of the toileting body” would only increase.**²

To offer an example of the contents of an instruction manual, *Les règles de la bienséance et de la civilité Chrétienne*, before it was substantially reduced, decreed that **“It is never proper to speak of the parts of the body that should always be hidden, nor of certain bodily necessities to which Nature has subjected us, nor even to mention them.”**²⁸ Most parts of the body were included in what should be ‘hidden,’ as it declared that “It is part of decency and modesty to cover *all* parts of the body *except the head and hands.*”²⁹ Parts of one’s own body were not even to be touched: “You should care, so far as you can, not to touch with your bare hand any part of the body that is not normally uncovered.”³⁰ Seeing or touching those of others was also prohibited: *“it is far more contrary to decency and propriety to touch or see in another person particularly of the other sex, that which Heaven forbids you to look at in yourself.”*³¹ **Increasingly internalized, these directives came to be the ethos of the epoche that saw the birth of the gendered public toilet.** The Victorian Era saw a distinct shift in the *“frontier of embarrassment,”* with the populace going through great lengths to hide distressing bodily functions.³² To illustrate with but one example, a popular close-stool type played a tune when its lid was lifted, diverting the user’s attention from the act of excreting while alleviating the possibility of being heard.³³ As the normalization of bodily shame was the result of a long trajectory, its gradual adoption likely gave it greater staying power.

Is this really about what they say it’s about? ‘Hygiene’ as a colonial tool.

Lawrence Stone, known as the “historian of the changing order”³⁴ for his work on the internal structure of ‘family’ in early modern Britain, contends that the development of these new behaviours had nothing to do with “problems of hygiene and bacterial infection,” given that these terms were “never even mentioned in the conduct books,” but rather with conforming to “increasingly artificial standards of gentlemanly behaviour, which were internalized in the young at an early age.”³⁵ For instance, in *Galateo: or, A Treatise on Politeness and Delicacy of Manners*, the author Giovanni della Casa states “It does not befit a modest, honourable man to prepare to relieve nature in the presence of other people, nor do up his clothes afterward in their presence. Similarly, *he will not wash his hands* on returning to decent society from private places, as the reason for his washing will arouse disagreeable thoughts in people.”³⁶ Ultimately, **the goal of this movement was “to create a culture in which the elite, the gentleman and the lady, were clearly distinguished by a whole set of immediately recognizable external behaviour traits.”**³⁷

‘Civility,’ defined as “civilized conduct,” connotes formal “courtesy” or “politeness.”³⁸ Devised to demarcate *“the civilized from the uncivilized,”* it involved the codification of acceptable behaviour.³⁹ Increasingly, this construction required the “physical withdrawal of the individual body and its waste products from contact with others.”⁴⁰ It also came to emphasize the importance of ‘hygiene,’ or at least the appearance of it. Heightening the visual differences between social classes, personal cleanliness became a “very visible mark of being ‘genteel.’”⁴¹ As the popular precept “Cleanliness is next to Godliness” suggests, only those in the upper echelons could meet this standard.⁴² As architect and urban planner Robert Fishman remarks in his book *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, it was increasingly advanced that different strata of society “required” physical segregation due to “differing personal habits [...], especially over personal cleanliness.”⁴³ As this book title suggests, the implications of ‘hygiene’ had broad implications, which will be further explored in the case study on ‘the private home.’ It must be noted, **the arrival of the adage “the lower classes smell”⁴⁴ did not signal changed physical conditions, “the odour of stale sweat [...] had been taken for granted for millennia,”⁴⁵ but rather that new social perceptions had firmly taken hold.**

Constructing Bodily Shame

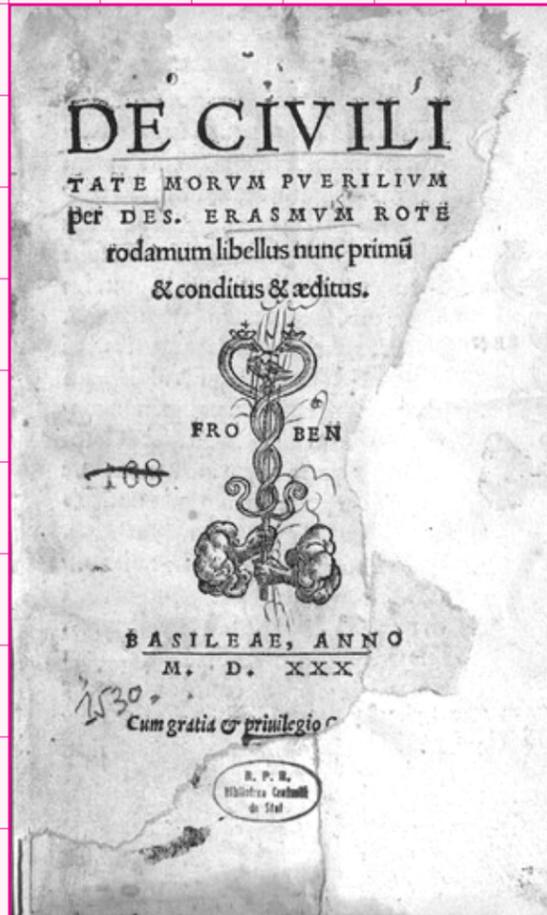


Figure 6. *De civilitate morum puerilium*

"It is impolite to greet someone who is urinating or defecating"

"A well-bred person should always avoid exposing without necessity the parts to which nature has attached modesty. If necessity compels this, it should be done with decency and reserve, even if no witness is present. For angels are always present. . . . If it arouses shame to show them to the eyes of others, still less should they be exposed to their touch."

"To hold back urine is harmful to health. [And regarding farting or passing gas:] If it can be purged without a noise that is best. But it is better to be emitted with a noise than it be held back."

Excerpts from "the first book of etiquette for children," *De civilitate morum puerilium* by Erasmus (1530).

G A L A T E O:
OR,
A T R E A T I S E
O N
P O L I T E N E S S
A N D
D E L I C A C Y O F M A N N E R S.
A D D R E S S E D T O A Y O U N G N O B L E M A N,

Figure 7. *Galateo: or, A Treatise on Politeness and Delicacy of Manners.*

Excerpt from *Galateo: or, A Treatise on Politeness and Delicacy of Manners* by Giovanni Della Casa (1558).

"[It] does not befit a modest, honourable man to prepare to relieve nature in the presence of other people, nor do up his clothes afterward in their presence. Similarly, he will not wash his hands on returning to decent society from private places, as the reason for his washing will arouse disagreeable thoughts in people."

Excerpt from "Brunswick Court Regulations" (1589).

"Let no one, whoever he may be, before, at, or after meals, early or late, foul the staircases, corridors, or closets with urine of other filth, but go to suitable, prescribes places for such relief."

Excerpts from *Les règles de la bienséance et de la civilité Chrétienne* by Jean-Baptiste De La Salle.

“much that could be and *had to* be expressed earlier is no longer spoken of.”

1729 edition

1774 edition

“It is a part of decency and modesty to cover all parts of the body except the head and the hands. You should care, so far as you can, not to touch with your bare hand any part of the body that is not normally uncovered. . . You should get used to suffering small discomforts without twisting, rubbing or scratching . . .

It is far more contrary to decency and propriety to touch or to see in another person particularly of the other sex, that which Heaven forbids you to look at in yourself. When you need to pass water [urinate], you should always withdraw to some unfrequented place. And it is proper (even for children) to perform other natural functions where you cannot be seen.

It is very impolite to emit wind [gas] from your body when in company, either from above [burb] or from below [fart], even if it is done without noise; and it is shameful and indecent to do it in a way that can be heard by others.

It is never proper to speak of the parts of the body that should be hidden, nor of certain bodily necessities to which Nature has subjected us, nor even to mention them.”

“It is part of decency and modesty to cover all parts of the body except the head and hands.

As far as natural needs are concerned, it is proper (even for children) to satisfy them only where one cannot be seen.

It is never proper to speak of the parts of the body that should always be hidden, or of certain bodily necessities to which nature has subjected us, or even to mention them.”

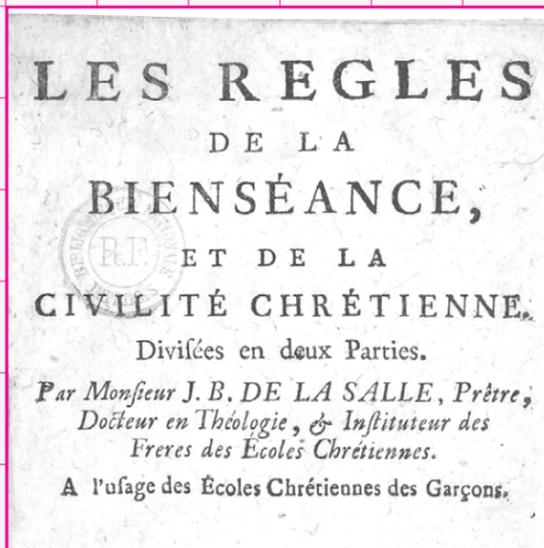


Figure 8. *Les règles de la bienséance et de la civilité Chrétienne*.

Excerpt from *Directions to Servants* by Jonathan Swift (1745)

“I am very much offended with those ladies, who are so proud and lazy, that they will not be at the pains of stepping into the garden to pluck a rose, but keep an odious implement, sometimes in the bed chamber itself, or at least in a dark closet adjoining, which they make use of to ease their worst necessities; and, you are the usual carriers away of the pan, which maketh not the chamber, but even their cloaths, offensive to all who come near. Now, to cure them of this odious practice, let me advise you, on whom this office lies, to convey way this utensil, that you do it openly, down the great stairs, and in the presence of the footmen; and, if any body knocks, to open the street-door, while you have the vessel filled in your hands: this, if anything can, will make your lady take the pains of evacuating her person in the proper place, rather than expose her filthiness to all the men servants in the house.”

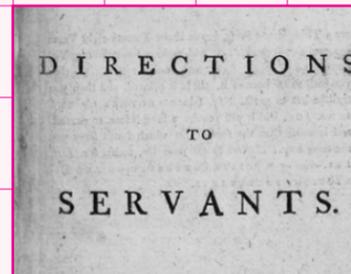


Figure 9. *Directions to Servants*.



Figure 10. *Hand plucking a rose*.

**From 'natural
and inevitable'...**



Figure 11. *Pissing Woman* by Rembrandt (1631).



Figure 12 *Pissing Man* by Rembrandt (1631).

**...to 'hidden
and ignored'**

Excerpt from a private correspondence written by the Duchess of Orleans (1694).



Figure 13. "Portrait of Henrietta Duchess of Orleans"

"[T]he multitude of people who . . . in the street, produces a smell so detestable that it cannot be endured."

Unmentionable . . .

The construction of cleanliness served a purpose beyond its alleged preoccupation with 'hygiene.' Repugnance was integral to the process of 'othering.' As anthropologist Mary Douglas contends, **"nothing is in itself dirty; rather, dirt is that which is not in its proper place and upsets order."**⁴⁶ She explains further:

Where there is dirt there is *system*. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity.⁴⁷

Following this line of thought, the metaphorically "dirty" body is seen as "out of place," because it "transgresses the orders of respectability and respectable places."⁴⁸ Adding on to this understanding, Julia Kristeva maintains that **the object provokes disgust because "it exposes the border between self and other."**⁴⁹ **This was a border that Europeans were increasingly preoccupied in defending, at home and abroad. Their colonizing exploits reinforced the importance of being clean, as the concept was integral for developing and maintaining a hierarchy with those they sought to colonize.** Given that they denigrated these populations on the basis of 'hygiene,' "perfect bodily cleanliness was expected" among Europe's elite.⁵⁰

While the general population of colonizing nations could not be considered 'clean,' even by the standards of the day, as a doctor writing in 1801 remarked, "most men resident in London and many ladies though accustomed to wash their hands and faces daily, neglect washing their bodies from year to year,"⁵¹ they purported superiority over those they colonized on the basis of cleanliness. **Historical records show that Indigenous populations were often described as "dirty," in order to 'legitimize' a 'civilizing mission.'**⁵² To give but one example, the following Procter & Gamble advertisement for Ivory Soap, dating from 1885, illustrates the equation of Indigenous bodies with dirt:

We were once factious, fierce and wild,
In peaceful arts unreconciled
Our blankets smeared with grease and stains
From buffalo meat and settlers' veins.
Through summer's dust and heat content

From moon to moon unwashed we went,
But IVORY SOAP came like a ray
Of light across our darkened way
And now we're civil, kind and good
And keep the laws as people should,
We wear our linen, lawn and lace
As well as folks with paler face
And now I take, where'er we go
This cake of IVORY SOAP to show
What civilized my squ[*]w and me
And made us clean and fair to see.⁵³

Soap, an agent of cleanliness, is credited with granting 'civility' not only to colonizers, but to the colonized. The imposition on the latter is moreover construed as a positive, regarded as an effort to bring this population into the fold. It is only through colonial expansion that the European sanitation model would become the 'standard.' Western toileting practices, by no means offering superior hygiene than methods in other societies, became so widespread that their exportation has been dubbed "sanitary imperialism."⁵⁴

'Hygiene' and heteronormativity: a potential for mutual constitution?

Recall that, parallel to this moment, Europeans are also casting Indigenous populations as gender deviants, while alleging superiority because of their adherence to the binary gender that they have constructed. As with cleanliness, there is no reason for them to claim this title on the basis of their own populations. Rather, Europeans are containing their own 'gender trouble' in the *other*. It is by creating the opposition that they come to embody these constructs. This hierarchical ordering is the result of an "intense overhauling" of people's understandings of and attitudes towards "their own bodies and the bodies around them."⁵⁵ Once engrained, Europeans mobilize the apparent lack of 'hygiene,' and heteronormatively defined sex, gender, and sexuality, in the *othered* population to 'justify' their political rule.



Figure 14. *National Conveniences*, satirical print by James Gillray (1796)

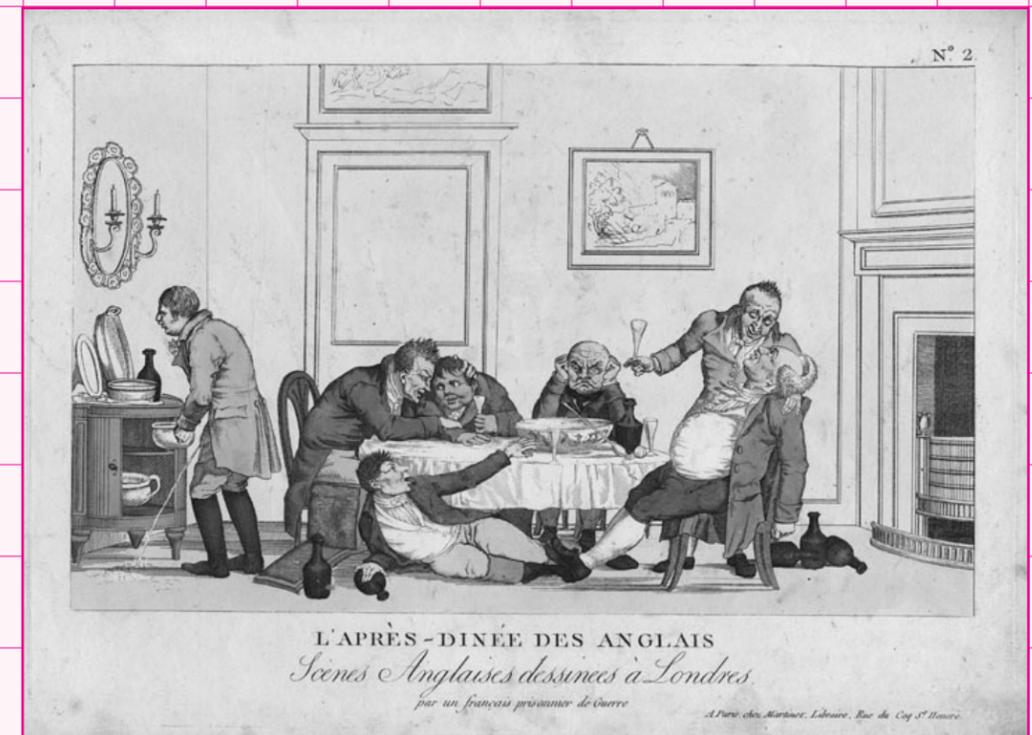


Figure 15. *L'après-dinée des Anglais. Scènes Anglaises dessinées à Londres*, satirical print by Aaron Martinet (circa 1805-1815).

By design, the concepts of ‘hygiene’ and heteronormativity both provide a mechanism to differentiate bodies for differential treatment. Beyond this similarity, they offer each other *mutual constitution*. Requiring the distancing of the toileting body, ‘hygiene’ increasingly required *distance between the ‘sexes.’* Meanwhile, *this separation further polarizes these entities, thereby legitimizing further separation.* With the increasingly strict prohibitions on bodily display, particularly between the increasingly rigidly defined ‘sexes,’ *the impetus for sex-segregated toileting facilities arises.* Newly developed ‘modesty’ requires architecture to re-enter the picture. As Alexander Kira, author of *The Bathroom*, states: “Technology is to a very large degree a variable that can be speeded or slowed according to the social and cultural demands of an era.”⁵⁶ **Projecting these concepts onto the built environment would provide further mutual constitution, thereby naturalizing them, and their shared architectural typology.**

How eccentric, how fun! The first (temporary) sex-segregated toileting spaces emerge.

The earliest known example of a western sex-separated toileting space was a temporary installation that occurred in 1739 at a Parisian ball.⁵⁷ Different cabinets were allotted for the ‘sexes,’ demarcated with the inscriptions ‘*Garderobes pour les femmes*’ and ‘*Garderobes pour les hommes*.’ Temporarily housing close-stools for the event, these spaces were attended by chambermaids in the former and valets in the latter. According to sociologist Sheila Cavanagh, **this was seen by the guests as “sort of a novelty - something eccentric and fun.”**⁵⁸ While more precise details about the physical layout of these temporary spaces remains unknown, she contends that they were clearly intended to implement some form of gendered propriety. Furthermore, it was meant to indicate “class standing and genteel respectability.”⁵⁹ Beyond this example, there are very few historical documents that hint at this kind of arrangement. For instance, a political cartoon from 1788 depicts a group of women in a communal latrine in a manner that suggests that this location could have been a designated space, but with no supporting evidence the matter is inconclusive.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, **this century decidedly saw at least one notable effort to “accentuate sexual difference and to project its difference onto public space.”**⁶¹

Gendered facilities: the second architectural manifestation of public toilets in the West.

Believing that “the *civilization* of a people can be measured by their domestic and sanitary appliances,” sanitary engineer George Jennings became strong advocate for the implementation of public facilities after he ‘revolutionized’ flush toilet technology.⁶² Having convinced Prince Albert that the indelicate subject should not go ignored, he was granted permission to install his soon-to-be patented flush toilets in London’s Great Exhibition of 1851.⁶³ **Virtually untouched since its inception, the technology was revived at the end of the 18th century when it was deemed *more urgently in need.*** Significantly advanced by Jennings in the mid-19th century, and rapidly approaching the 1885 version from which “*all subsequent Anglo models derive,*” the flush toilet *had not yet had a public application until this event.*⁶⁴ The case for ‘retiring rooms’ won, Jennings installed what he dubbed ‘Monkey Closets’ off each refreshment court. **Boasting the world’s first public toilet facilities with modern flush toilets, the Crystal Palace is also widely regarded as instituting the first gendered washrooms.**⁶⁵ In her book *Bathroom*, architectural historian Barbara Penner writes that “among many other *wonders*, the exhibition featured public conveniences *for the use of both women and men.*”⁶⁶ While the exact layout is unknown, it was seen as a “breakthrough moment.”⁶⁷ As stated by social historian Julie L. Horan, author of *The Porcelain God; A Social History of the Toilet*, since the day the chamber pot went into the closet, it developed into “yet another agent for separating the sexes.”⁶⁸

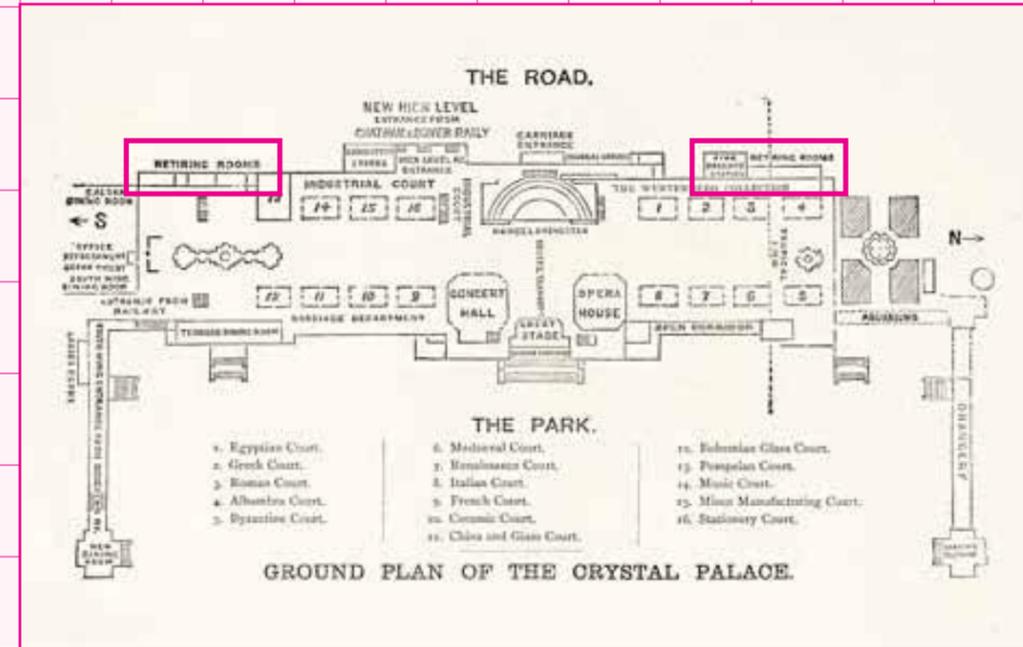
In what has been described as a “radical” move in modern analysis, most notably by Penner, the Society of Arts, which was the organizing body of the Great Exhibition of 1851, backed the installation of the retiring rooms in the Crystal Palace, “boldly” stating in a report that such provisions relieve “the sufferings which must be endured by all, *but more especially by females* on account of the want of them.”⁶⁹ It has been argued that, prior to this moment, accommodating the needs of ‘women’ had never been considered, since “it tacitly acknowledged and legitimized the right of women to leave the domestic sphere and to move through the city streets.”⁷⁰ While lauded in the name of ‘feminism,’ the fact is that, other than the ‘pissiors’ (open-air urinals) installed a few decades prior in Paris, *public toilets were not provided for anyone at the time.*⁷¹ **While the Victorian elite may have had qualms about conducting business in front of others,**



A caricature, dating from **1788**, depicting of a group of 'women' in a communal latrine (most likely Faro Ladies), with a handbill advertising 'cures' for venereal disease, suggesting that the usage of such spaces was associated with vice.



A **1799** poster with the word "indecenty" below a 'woman' peeing on the side of a building.



1851
First
Sex-Segregated
Public Toilets

most people continued to excrete in the streets. It was common for 'women' to use "portable glass, leather, ceramic, or wood urinals" which allowed them to "urinate anywhere, at any moment, without staining their heavy, layered clothing."⁷² Even without these aids, 'women' still urinated in public, "but simply risked wetting their clothes."⁷³ **The lack of dedicated facilities for 'women' prior to this event was not "a cynical ploy to keep them close to home as they were unable to travel far,"⁷⁴ but rather because these spaces were not yet architectural convention.** This 'cynical ploy' was yet to come! Political and intellectual historian Linda K. Kerber notes in her article "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History" that "one of our culture's *presuppositions* has been that men and women live in separate spheres."⁷⁵ She explains that overreliance on the metaphor of the 'sphere' by 19th century historians influenced their successors regarding "what to study and how to tell the stories they reconstructed."⁷⁶ While it had been a "figure of speech," it emerged as a "trope" that had the effect of "*predisposing them to find arguments that made use of familiar language persuasive.*"⁷⁷ Imposing this notion onto the past before it became socially relevant is sure to skew one's perception of certain events.

Effectively, **the proverbial 'urinary leash' could only become a factor in this discussion after it became standard to use public toilets above all other methods of relieving oneself.** As such, the gendered washrooms of the Great Exhibition of 1851 cannot be considered a 'feminist' success story by any means. This was not a question of 'legitimizing' the public presence of 'women' at a time of "widespread adherence to the ideology of the separate spheres."⁷⁸ Rather, **this installation was an experiment in projecting binary gender onto a new architectural typology in order to 'legitimize' this construct. It is only as dimorphic concepts, arranged in a hierarchy, that each 'sex' could even be ascribed different spatial experiences in the first place.** By defining these entities as diametrically opposed, and thereby *needing* separate accommodations, the spatiality of one or the other could more easily be *augmented* or *reduced*. Simply put, this was a *template* for the elaboration of 'separate spheres.' The public toilet was one of many at the time, as other previously benign spaces were gaining gendered connotations, most of which have been deemed no longer necessary in the West. **Embedding heteronormative concepts into the built environment was a powerful move to naturalize them and insulate them from being questioned. Providing separate provisions**

for 'women' did not subvert this order, it was integral for the creation of this order. As it will be discussed further, the proliferation of gendered public toilets would successfully transpose the notion of the 'domestic' into the 'public' as a method of keeping 'separate spheres' *intact*. First, it had to become a necessary part of everyday life.

Selling the vision, at a time where no one wants to talk about shit.

As stated by Penner, **"a particular model of sanitation and hygiene was 'sold' internationally."**⁷⁹ She continues: "World expositions, hygiene fairs, model dwellings, trade catalogues, bathroom showrooms, Hollywood films – the entire modern apparatus of sales and promotion – *are central to the story of the bathroom* and extend it beyond physical space or the discourses of engineering and production."⁸⁰ She explains that, **from the 1850s onward, the British, and then subsequently Americans, were "the two most influential shapers of modern bathroom culture."**⁸¹ Indeed, the gendered retiring rooms of the Great Exhibition of 1851, complete with flush toilets, were deemed a "popular success," with 827,820 people reportedly paying a penny each to visit the facilities.⁸² This architectural typology would become standard that reigns today via its widespread dissemination.

However, **the implementation of this model did not occur immediately, as "bodily restraint, silence, and individualisation choked the topic."**⁸³ Despite the fact that "bodily functions [were] still a feature of the public landscape," meaning that there was "excrement literally on the street," **for the Victorian elite "the subject was so indelicate [that] the problem was not admitted to exist."**⁸⁴ There are varying accounts of where and when the first freestanding public toilets ("facilities conceived of and built solely for the purpose of human excretion") came to be, but most narratives speak of the trials and tribulations of the ordeal.⁸⁵ For instance, Jennings, offering to supply and fix appliances around London free of charge, complained when his proposal was rejected:

"[The] Gentlemen (influenced by English delicacy of feeling) . . . preferred that the Daughters and Wives of Englishmen should encounter at every corner, sights so disgusting to every sense, and the general public suffer pain and often permanent injury rather than permit the construction of that shelter and privacy [...]."⁸⁶

There was a growing conflict between the Victorian elite’s desire for an “ever-increasing individual self-managed, and quiet bodily etiquette” and their willingness to “break this ideal etiquette” in order to “implement an infrastructure through which bodily management could occur.”⁸⁷ Holding political power, they had to authorize the use of funds for these projects. Ultimately, modesty’s transformation of bodily needs called for structures in which acts could be completed in private, while hiding all evidence from public view.

You didn’t hear? Public toilets come in two, and we’re only building one. You’re not invited! Limiting spatial possibilities through lack of provisions.

Once the use of public toilets was established as the norm, and laws further criminalized public excretion, then having access to these facilities became imperative for conducting a public life. It is at this point in time that the unequal provision of these gendered spaces would become an issue, thereby limiting participation in society. Records show that some of the early permanent public toilet facilities, appearing in the latter half of the 19th century, “comprised of two classes of toilets, for gentlemen and the masses.”⁸⁸ Interestingly, these accounts seem to suggest that all bodies that were not ‘male’ were grouped together as ‘othered’ bodies. Meanwhile, other documents distinctly discuss the provision of entirely separate structures for ‘men’ and ‘women,’ creating a “clearer binary” between the two.⁸⁹ Several others detail instances where facilities were provided for ‘men’ only, *neglecting to include its counterpart*.⁹⁰ Significant mobilization occurred to rectify these omissions, but these efforts were not always successful.⁹¹ **By defining these spaces as exclusive to one or the other, this dictated that if the proper provisions were not provided, toileting actions could, ostensibly, not be conducted.** Limiting public toilet access was not conducive for the social mobility of ‘women,’ particularly those among the Victorian elite on account of the modesty required of their status. Occurring simultaneously as the elaboration of the domestic sphere through the “Cult of True Womanhood” (which will be discussed as part of the discussion on ‘the private home’), **this was a statement on the appropriate role and place for ‘women,’ again those among the Victorian elite, in society.**⁹²

Winning the right... to do a natural body function.

The movement to win the right for ‘women’ to have public toilet access is often characterized in a particular way. The framing makes it seem as though ‘women’ never had this right in the first place. However, going beyond this moment, it is evident that **‘women’ had the right to excrete in public for most of history. The right of people with specified body ‘types’ to relieve themselves in an indiscriminate manner was revoked through the machinations of the gender and civility.** While the provision of facilities for both ‘men’ and ‘women’ is generally seen as a ‘win’ in the historical record, and a testament to the efforts of the women’s rights movement, it is worth interrogating that narrative. Particularly because, in recent times, the ‘gender criticals’ (also known as Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists) have reclaimed the separate provision of toileting space as the *goal* of these campaigns.⁹³ Rather than simply campaigning for *somewhere to go* at a time where facilities were barred to them, ‘women’ allegedly demanded sex-segregated spaces “out of a desire to be away from men.”⁹⁴ As will be demonstrated, **the conditions in which these spaces were mandated reveal that they were granted paternalistically, in order to construct ‘women’ as inferior beings in need of ‘protection.’ This infantilization would factor in many discussions, including many that would limit the rights of a variety of marginalized groups. In fact, it would even re-emerge to limit the rights of ‘women’ in the latter half of the 20th century.**

Required by law: framing ‘women’ as perpetual victims.

The first law mandating that toilets be separated by ‘sex’ was implemented in 1887 in Massachusetts, with most other states following suite by the 1920s.⁹⁵ As explained by legal scholar Terry Kogan, this was in response to women entering the workforce during the industrial revolution. Legislation required that “water closets shall be provided for females, *where employed*.”⁹⁶ Separate restrooms were to be “plainly so designated,” and barred from use from any “persons of the opposite sex.”⁹⁷ **What might seem like the ‘legitimization’ of their presence was in fact entrenched in sexist ideology.** Fueled by “social anxieties” around women in public,

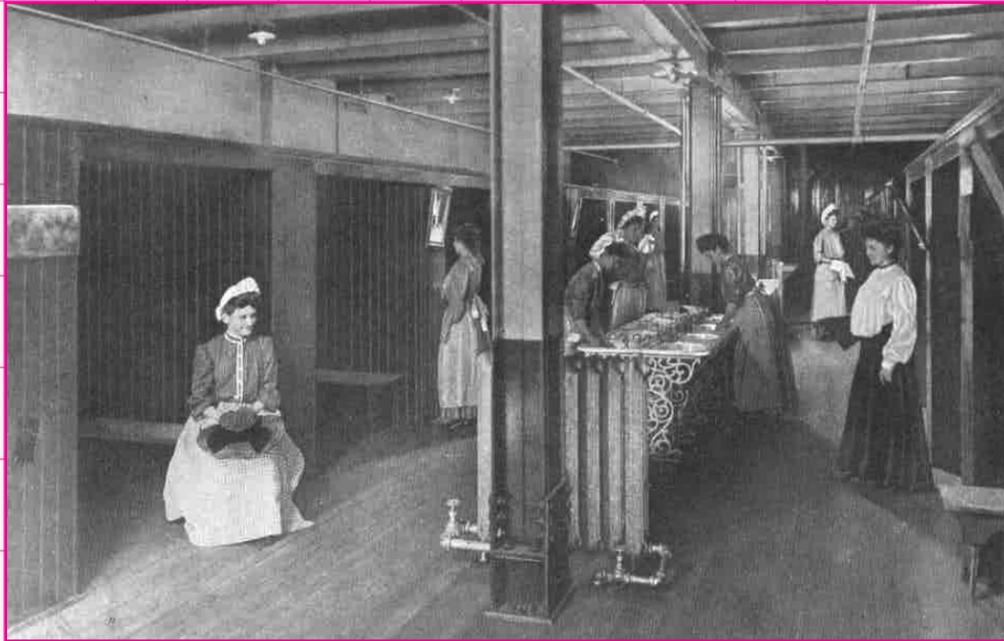
scientific 'research' was undertaken to "prove that the female body was inherently weaker than the male body."⁹⁸ Among the 'discoveries' were that "a woman's body is unable to withstand stains, fatigues, and privations as well as a man's."⁹⁹ Informed by these 'facts,' legislators enacted laws, such as the "*act for the preservation of the health of female employees*," in order to 'protect' women in the workplace.¹⁰⁰ This included prohibiting certain jobs, limiting work hours, mandating rest periods, and *requiring the use of segregated washrooms*.¹⁰¹ Sex-separated restrooms provided "a protective haven . . . where a woman could seek comfort and rest when her weak body gave out on the job."¹⁰² The suggested layouts were "designed to mimic the comforts of home – think curtains and chaise lounges."¹⁰³ The idea of the domestic sphere could then continue to exist in the cultural imaginary, even while 'women' were out in "this dangerous public realm."¹⁰⁴ As Kogan states: "**Sex-separated public restrooms convey subtle, yet potent messages about the nature of gender and gender difference . . . [and] foster subtle social understandings that women are inherently vulnerable and in need of protection . . . while men are inherently predatory.**"¹⁰⁵ This notion would be mobilized repeatedly, as will be elaborated upon further.

The "sentimental vision of the virtuous woman ensconced in her domestic sphere" was a "myth," bearing little resemblance to the social reality of the 19th century.¹⁰⁶ However, architecture offered tools to create this *illusion*. Kogan notes that, while restrooms were ultimately chosen for this task, nearly every other space was enlisted first, using the example of Boston's Tremont House Hotel to illustrate. Designed in 1829, many scholars have noted its influence on American public architecture of this period.¹⁰⁷ The hotel contained a "ladies' receiving room," a "ladies' drawing room," a "ladies' dining room," a "gentlemen's receiving room," a "gentlemen's drawing room," a "gentlemen's reading room," and a "public dining room," effectively separating the 'sexes' within the public sphere.¹⁰⁸ As the first major building in the US to have indoor plumbing, the hotel boasted of eight single-user toileting spaces. **These toilets were not gendered.** As Kogan declares, "*the importance of this fact cannot be overstated.*"¹⁰⁹ **As one of the first American buildings that "consciously translated and transformed the separate spheres ideology into an architectural plan," it is indeed notable that there was "no automatic association in the architect's mind" that required the gendering of these facilities.**¹¹⁰ Over time, this would be one of the few gendered typologies to remain, as a result of mandated implementation.

Once it had occurred to Americans to gender toileting spaces, its proliferation was not guaranteed. As stated by Kogan, "the ragtag of late nineteenth century factory toilet laws cannot begin to account for the omnipresence of sex-separated public restrooms in contemporary society."¹¹¹ **By embedding itself in building codes, the typology would exponentially expand its reach.** Through this mechanism, it became a requirement for building facilities to be configured this way, the legacy of which can still be felt today. Private construction industry groups began drafting building codes, intended for implementation by governing bodies. Offering a standard that alleviated the need to undertake technical research, these documents outlined minimum requirements for fire, health, and safety in building construction. **In the midst of this "highly technical code," sex-separated toilets were included under the guise of a "neutral health and safety standard."**¹¹² Recall that 'hygiene' required separation of the toileting body, particularly from those of the 'opposite sex.' Furthermore, now 'safety' for 'women' required transposing the domestic into the public. Though ideologically driven, these constructions came to be seen as 'common sense.' Thus, the 1927 Uniform Building Code came to mandate the provision of separate facilities in buildings "where both sexes are accommodated," which were to be "conspicuously marked 'For Women' and the other conspicuously marked 'For Men.'"¹¹³ Updated every three years, the only changes that were made were to apply this to "virtually every type of public building."¹¹⁴ In the late 1990s, the newly formulated International Building Code featured these requirements as well. Generally remaining static since its inception, one notable alteration to the toilet section of American building codes occurred in the early- to mid- 20th century. **Again, under the guise of a 'neutral health and safety standard,' they required separate toilet facilities for another group. Stating "Where negroes and whites are accommodated there shall be separate toilet facilities," the laws required the later to be "marked plainly 'For Negroes Only.'"**¹¹⁵ Far from 'neutral,' building codes inevitably embody "a society's moral, political, and social values."¹¹

Hiding everyone from each other: partitions please.

Documents indicate the emergence of partitions at the end of the late 19th century.¹¹⁷ Now "properly screened," facilities provided more privacy "to both men and women with regard to their bodies and bodily functions."¹¹⁸ In 1913, a sanitary engineer decried the "close proximity of the fixtures separated only by a thin board partition, far from soundproof,"



1877

**First
Law Requiring
Sex-Segregated
Public Toilets**

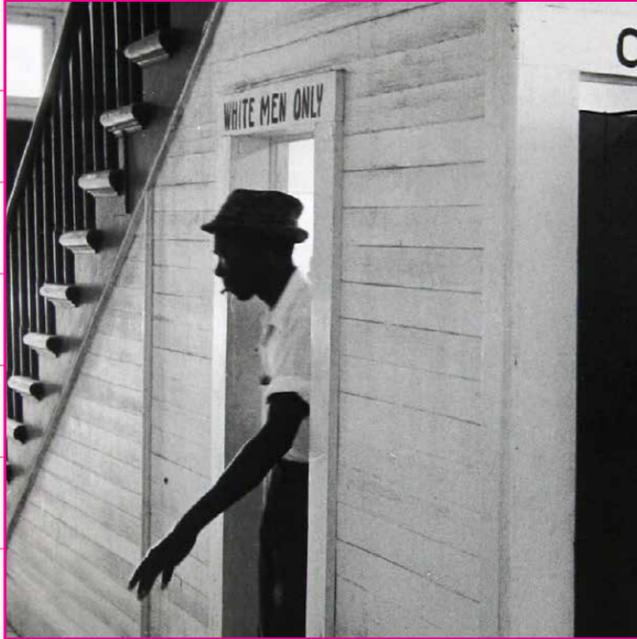
Building Codes

Uniform Building Code (1927)

§1305 "Every building shall be provided with at least one toilet. Every building and each subdivision thereof where both sexes are accommodated shall be provided with at least two toilets located in such building and one toilet shall be conspicuously marked 'For Women' and the other conspicuously marked 'For Men.'"

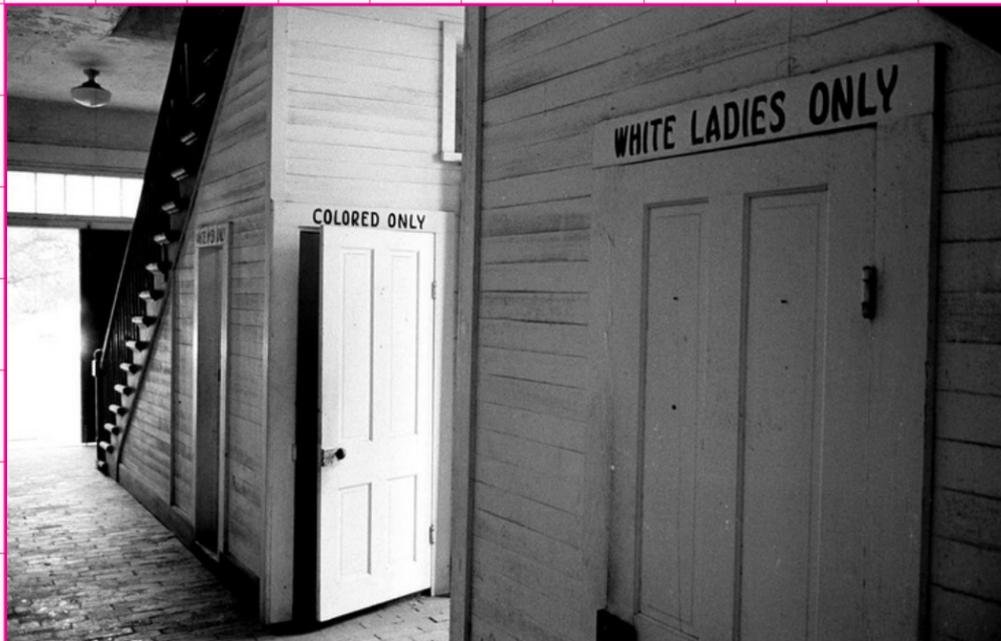
Southern Standard Building Code (1945)

§2002.1 ". . . . The number [of toilet facilities] provided for each sex shall be based on the maximum number of persons of that sex that may be expected to use such building at any one time. Where negroes and whites are accommodated there shall be separate toilet facilities provided for the former, marked plainly "For Negroes Only."



**Jim Crow
Laws**

1877 - 1965



stating that without this “common approach” these facilities would be “morally objectionable.”¹¹⁹ Other than in settings such as prisons, and perhaps the military, some effort to provide **“privacy ‘from everyone’” is now generally expected.**¹²⁰

‘Hygiene’ exposing its racist roots once again: the case of racially segregated public toilets.

When discussing the history of public toilets in the context of the U.S., it is integral to highlight its relationship with anti-black racism. **Under Jim Crow laws, black people were forbidden to use ‘whites only’ restrooms, drinking fountains, and a variety of other public accommodations. Many of the justifications provided for the segregation were similar to those justifying sex separation, such as “protection of a certain group, privacy, cleanliness, and morality.”**¹²¹ By segregating facilities, the message was put forward that white people “would be degraded by the contact with the blacks.”¹²² Prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, laws specifically addressing the racial segregation of public toilets were widespread, dictating that “where colored persons are employed or accommodated’ *separate* toilet and lavatory rooms *must* be provided.”¹²³ **Highlighting the belief that dimorphous sexual differentiation was an ‘achievement’ of the ‘white race,’ public toilets frequently only offered three categories: ‘white men,’ ‘white women,’ and ‘colored.’** In addition to the having to use “separate but [un]equal” facilities, black people were often confronted by the prejudice of having no ‘colored’ restrooms the buildings they frequented.¹²⁴ This was particularly problematic as this group was, in turn, disproportionately criminalized for carrying out basic necessities in public.¹²⁵

As historian Eileen Boris notes **“the toilet and bathroom, places for the most private bodily functions, became sites of conflict; their integration starkly symbolized social equality.”**¹²⁶ Indeed, access to the facilities was fundamental for public life. To deny this access was to deny dignity. Spaces such as the public toilet figured prominently in the American civil rights movement, with many acts of civil disobedience occurring in these venues. White people defended segregated spaces with violence. Samuel Younge Jr., the first black college student to be killed as a result

of his involvement in the black liberation movement, was murdered in 1966 by a white gas station owner *for trying to use a ‘whites-only’ restroom.*¹²⁷ Note that this was two years after the Civil Rights Act was enacted.

For decades upon decades, racist state officials invoked fear among the white population about “sexual contact and predation,” in order to ‘justify’ racial segregation.¹²⁸ Rumours about sexual harassment and assault created the impression that white women needed to be ‘safeguarded’ from black men, who were characterized as “sexually deviant monsters.”¹²⁹ This perception was the main driver of public executions during the lynching era and continued to be used as an excuse to enact violence against black men during Jim Crow.¹³⁰ **These unfounded prejudices were used to invoke physical-separation laws as a method of ‘protecting’ white individuals, and in particular the white women who had been constructed as victims, from *perceived* “danger or discomfort.”**¹³¹ The impact of this reliance on anxieties about sexual exploitation can still be observed in the disproportionate number of wrongful convictions, and the enduring “powerful racial stereotype” of “black men as ‘violence prone.’”¹³²

Another common mongering tactic was speculating about the spread of disease. **Maintaining racially segregated restrooms was allegedly “to make sure that blacks would not contaminate bathrooms used by whites.”**¹³³ After the 1941 signing of Executive Order 8802 which prohibited “discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government,” **white women refused to share bathrooms with black women, equating “social equality with sexual disease.”**¹³⁴ Claiming that racial integration would “cause them to catch syphilis from shared toilet seats and towels in public restrooms,” this group engaged in numerous labor strikes and walkouts to resist Fair Employment Practices Committee policies.¹³⁵ Similar arguments were made during the 1954 conflict over integrating Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas. Following the enrollment of the Little Rock Nine in 1957, an Arkansas newspaper blasted the question: “Because of the high venereal disease rate among Negroes . . . [will] white children be forced to use the same rest room and toilet facilities?”¹³⁶ **To stoke fears, flyers were distributed with “uncontested medical opinions” that “girls under 14 years of age are highly susceptible to disease if exposed to the germs through seats, towels, books, and gym clothes.”**¹³⁷ In an interview, a white student reported “Many of the girls won’t use the rest rooms at Central, simply because the N[****]’ girls use them.”¹³⁸ When the City of Memphis

“voluntarily integrated certain facilities” in 1963, it “expressly reserved” the right to maintain segregated restrooms, introducing “proof” that “the incidence of venereal disease is much higher among Negroes . . . than among members of the white race.”¹³⁹ Rapidly approaching the date that the landmark legislation would be invoked, the court rejected this injunction, stating that **“no scientific or reliable data [had] been offered to demonstrate that the joint use of toilet facilities . . . would constitute a serious danger to the public health, safety or welfare.”**¹⁴⁰ False claims around the spread of disease would re-emerge in efforts to ‘protect’ the interests of a different group over another.

Can we kick homos out though? Unforeseen issues with the binary model.

With arguments all too similar to those used to justify racial segregation, the subsequent moral panic villainized gay and lesbian public toilet usage, again on the basis of sexual assault and contamination. It was repeatedly argued in American courts that homosexuality “is marked by . . . a disproportionate involvement with adolescents and, indeed, a possible relationship to crimes of violence” as well as the “transmission of . . . diseases.”¹⁴¹ With the socially prohibitive atmosphere surrounding homosexuality, public toilets had emerged as a venue for gay men to have consensual anonymous sex. Police would monitor these cruising spots and make arrests. These occurrences were sensationalized in the media, with some names, such that of Walter Jenkins, chief of staff to President Lyndon Johnson, who was arrested in 1964, making international headlines.¹⁴² This form of coverage exacerbated the issue.

Conservative rhetoric frequently depicted gay men as “child molesters,” casting public toilets as “sites of sexual danger for young children.”¹⁴³ In 1954, a leaflet with tips “to protect children against crimes involving sex perversion” was distributed to over 80,000 schoolchildren.¹⁴⁴ It included the following directive: **“Never wait or play around toilets. Always leave immediately.”**¹⁴⁵ With similar instruction, the 1959 film *Boys Beware* was shown in high schools throughout the 1960s. In the video, a narrator ominously explained “public restrooms can often be a hangout for the homosexual,” then recounted with alarm “Bobby and his friends hadn’t noticed the man who had been in the restroom when they changed.”¹⁴⁶ By treating the restroom as a “safe space,” they allegedly opened themselves

up to predators who relied on this “mistake” to “carry out their crimes.”¹⁴⁷ **The message was clear: “Boys had to be on guard when they entered public restrooms, vigilant against the violent, sexual dangers that lurked there.”**¹⁴⁸ In a 1964 congressional investigation report, people were warned of the “menace of gay men” in public toilets, as this group “posed a threat to the health and moral well-being of a sizable portion of our population, particularly our youth.”¹⁴⁹ **It continued, stating that homosexuals were “more dangerous” than the child molester.**¹⁵⁰ Alleging that those victimized by the latter recover “from the mental and physical shocks involved,” they claimed that the scenario with the former was altogether different, as homosexuals were believed to “reach out for the child at the time of normal sexual awakening . . . to ‘bring over’ the young person, to hook him for homosexuality.”¹⁵¹

Beyond scapegoating children, American legislators sought to limit the employability of homosexuals for similar reasons. **Arguing that (straight) employees should not have to be “subjected to unwanted sexual scrutiny” when using common toilet and shower facilities, laws sought to prohibit homosexuals from various forms of employment.**¹⁵² Given that the gendered nature of these public spaces enabled contact with this ‘undesirable’ group, they uncited fear around unwanted advances and sexual assault. While “discriminating against one group in order to accommodate the prejudices or discomfort of another” is unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause, this was not a deterrent for several decades.¹⁵³ Requests to end bans on homosexuals in various sectors of federal employment were repeatedly rejected on the basis of the “apprehension” other employees (again, straight) would feel in their presence.¹⁵⁴

The emergence of AIDS caused a dilemma for the health profession. Having uncovered evidence that affluent white men were sexually abusing their daughters, doctors had altered their contamination theories.¹⁵⁵ **Refusing to link incest as the cause of concurrent infections of members of ‘respectable’ families, medical textbooks began disseminating “untested speculation” that sexually transmitted infections arose from “nonsexual contacts with other females or objects.”**¹⁵⁶ By the 1980s, public health officials were “scrambling to calm fears that the HIV virus could be spread through the use of public restrooms.”¹⁵⁷ While the ‘lavender scare’ more or less subsided, another moral panic would emerge.

Equality? No thanks! Women prefer it this way.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a proposed amendment to the U.S. constitution, was to guarantee equal rights for all American citizens *regardless of sex, ending all legal distinctions between 'men' and 'women'*.¹⁵⁸ By 1977, it was ratified by 35 states, only requiring three more states to approve its passage. Opponents began warning of 'dire' consequences. **ERA was chiefly argued against on the basis of, as one might have guessed already, the possibility that it would result in the end of gendered public toilets.** Phyllis Schlafly, a key detractor, campaigned against the ERA throughout the 70s, handing out "freshly baked bread and apple pie" to state legislators.¹⁵⁹ She warned of a "dystopian post-ERA future" which included military women, gay marriage, and unisex toilets.¹⁶⁰ This vision also included "homemakers driven into the workforce by husbands free to abandon them."¹⁶¹ The ERA "which had been sailing to ratification," failed.¹⁶² Through their influential STOP ERA campaign, **women stopped equal rights for women.** Reflecting on this turn of events, legal scholar Joan C. Williams notes: **"One of the ironic messages of the E.R.A. is not to underestimate the power of 'bathroom anxiety' in pushing the country to the right."**¹⁶³

With the misinformation regarding disease more or less out of the way, this round predominantly revolved around questions of safety, which had distinct racial undertones. As segregationists had once claimed with racial integration, **it was put forward that unisex public toilets would "grant black men sexual access to white women."**¹⁶⁴ Along with energizing conservative women, this also "rallied their husbands to protect their wives and daughters from the dangers of sex-integrated bathrooms."¹⁶⁵ Illustrating this sentiment, a legislator stated: "I ain't going to have my wife be in the bathroom with some big, black, buck!".¹⁶⁶ Another one announced at an anti-ERA rally: "I've had enough civil rights to choke a hungry goat. I ask for victory over the perverts of this country. I want the right to *segregate* my family from these misfits and perverts."¹⁶⁷ Pamphlets brandishing the rhetorical question "Making all facilities coed?" listed the 'consequences' that would arise should ERA pass.¹⁶⁸ At the end of these pronouncements, they asked: "*Do you want the sexes fully integrated like the races?*"¹⁶⁹ **Invoking "unfounded fears about sexual contact and exploitation," public restrooms were mobilized to halt progressive legislation.**¹⁷⁰ As one article paternalistically asks, "If women could not retreat to the privacy of their own restrooms, where could they be safe from the dangers of the world outside their homes?"¹⁷¹ Alas, women were denied equal rights, for their 'protection.'

As in the previous case with racial segregation, the provision of public toilet facilities for the binary 'sexes' were not 'separate but equal.' As one article illustrates with an example: "When nature calls for male members of the House of Representatives, they only have to walk steps to answer," meanwhile "the women have to walk off the House floor, through what is usually a sea of tourists in Statuary Hall to reach the ladies' restroom."¹⁷² In this major power center, a closer facility was not installed until 2011.¹⁷³ Enduring longer lineups and waiting times, along with having to potentially travel greater distances, **women began to call for "potty parity" laws.**¹⁷⁴ **Their preferred solution involved the "equitable provision of separate toilet facilities for men and women."**¹⁷⁵ It was discovered that, while restrooms may be the same size, urinals took up less space than stalls, offering "more excreting opportunities to men than to women."¹⁷⁶ Moreover, once features such as "fainting couches, full length mirrors, and vanities" were added, the ratio got "even worse for women."¹⁷⁷ After a Californian senator witnessed his wife being "stuck for over half an hour" in a theater restroom line of "more than 50 women" when the "men's room [was] nearly empty," the first 'potty parity' law was passed in 1987.¹⁷⁸ Along with the uproar over Denise Well's 1990 arrest at a concert for using the facility designated for 'men,' this law influenced other states to follow suite with similar measures.¹⁷⁹

Had equality been achieved through 'potty parity'? In an essay titled "On Not Having the Opportunity to Introduce Myself to John Kerry in the Men's Room," Mary Anne Case, a professor at the University of Chicago Law School, argued that **equality would never be attained if sex-segregated restrooms persisted.**¹⁸⁰ Case had been particularly struck by John Kerry's admission that a "surprising" number of 'men' took the opportunity to introduce themselves in the restroom during his 2004 presidential campaign.¹⁸¹ Reflecting on this moment, she wrote of this "opportunity I will never have."¹⁸² Further research revealed that **a "significant amount" of "active networking" takes place in men's restrooms.**¹⁸³ Among her findings included instances of "junior male lawyers" getting assigned major cases as a result of restroom conversations with "senior male partners".¹⁸⁴ Addressing other fields, she stated that the reason "male journalists" complained that 'women' had an unfair advantage covering Hilary Clinton was "because each is projecting from his men's room experiences."¹⁸⁵ Cases also pointed to venues that prohibited the presence of 'women' to preserve their "male clientele's 'hallowed freedom to pee' when and where they wanted."¹⁸⁶ For instance, the Bohemian Grove, "the ultimate men's power club," defined the ability of members to urinate freely together as "both the core of their bonding experience and the principal reason why female members would be unthinkable."¹⁸⁷ As Case suggests, perhaps the sex-segregated nature of public facilities was not conducive to equality.



Anti-ERA

1970s



Excuse me, where are we supposed to go? Transgender and gender non-conforming people and the public toilet.

The binary nature of gendered public toilets presents many issues for those who defy this form of categorisation. Transgender advocacy groups questioning this architectural typology began to emerge in the early 2000s.¹⁸⁸ Initial efforts were often tied to securing inclusive facilities on university campuses. Establishing the Restroom Revolution in 2001, a group of students at the University of Massachusetts organized into four committees concerned with publicity, protest, legal issues, and higher education precedents.¹⁸⁹ **Highlighting that the restrooms were not accessible to all demographics, one of their flyers read: “Do you know that you are sitting in a seat of privilege?”¹⁹⁰ Another asked, “Were you subject to harassment when you walked in? Were you asked to leave?”¹⁹¹** As stated by political philosopher Perry Zurn, this served to “throw bathrooms themselves, as much as bathroom culture, into uneasy relief.”¹⁹² Other students at the University of California started the initiative People in Search of Safe and Accessible Restrooms (PISSAR) in 2003.¹⁹³ Equipped with a check list, they assessed, documented, and mapped every single facility on campus. **This data was used to great success, resulting in the redesign of existing toilets, and the implementation of policy ensuring that all future university buildings would feature accessible gender-neutral toilets.** While detractors alleged that the activists behind these movements were “*using a petty issue like bathrooms as a medium to throw their lifestyles in the face of every-day students,*” they were not doing this on account of a “desire for attention.”¹⁹⁴ It was a quest to gain access to public space. **The incredible efforts of these groups inspired many similar actions.**

Other groups sought to address this issue by creating databases of safe places to pee in society at large. Finding themselves all facing this same issue, a collective of activists banded together to launch safe2pee.org in 2005.¹⁹⁵ Inspired by the Boston Relief Map, its reach went nation-wide. Collecting thousands of entries, it offered a crucial resource to members of the queer community. As of 2012, a new group picked up where they left off, keeping this information accessible through the app TranSquat.¹⁹⁶ When this subsequent iteration passed out of functionality, Refuge Restroom declared that it was “pick[ing] up the torch” in 2014.¹⁹⁷

Preserving the database’s first 4500 entries, the site grew exponentially. Still in operation, it now provides this resource internationally. Writing about site maintenance, “that invisible and time-consuming form of labor,” communications scholar Andre Cavalcante explains that digital care structures are often taken-for-granted.¹⁹⁸ **Sites such as the ones noted above emerge “in response to gaps within the official structures of everyday life,” and “struggle to remain viable.”¹⁹⁹** Cavalcante notes that the designers and engineers of Refuge Restroom are unpaid and are generally part of an underemployed group. The disappearance of its past iterations speaks to the “ephemeral and unstable nature” of digital technologies within the “contemporary media environment.”²⁰⁰ Cavalcante explains that, while these sites are “valuable partners in the struggle for the ordinary,” they can be “elusive and ultimately unreliable – here one day and gone the next.”²⁰¹

In order to secure public toilet access, formal legislation was sought out. In 2013, a landmark case granted six-year-old Coy Mathis the right to use the restroom that aligned with her identity at her Colorado elementary school.²⁰² According to the Transgender Legal and Defense Education Fund, **this was the “most comprehensive” ruling ever supporting the rights of transgender people to access facilities “without harassment or discrimination.”²⁰³** As one of the first high-profile transgender rights cases, it credited with setting in motion several others in years following. The passing of progressive legislation was met with considerable backlash, unleashing what are now dubbed the ‘Bathroom Bills.’ In 2016, North Carolina signed into law the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act (also known as HB2) to pre-emptively void local anti-discrimination ordinances.²⁰⁴ HB2 outlined that **individuals were required to use the restrooms and changing facilities that corresponded to the sex identified on their birth certificates.** While HB2 was partially repealed in 2017, **this bill set the precedent that bathroom access was a state concern, and that usage could be mandated on the basis of ‘biological sex.’** Defining the term ‘sex’ as “an individual’s immutable biological condition of being male or female, as objectively determined by anatomy and genetics at the time of birth,” **this law sought to erase the reality of trans and intersex embodiment, thereby undermining their participation in society.**²⁰⁵ This was only the first of many similar discriminatory laws to come. The following presidency saw the reversal of a wide range of Obama-era policies, including initial protections for transgender individuals. Subsequent ‘Bathroom Bills’

Restroom Revolution

2001-2002

DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE SITTING IN A SEAT OF PRIVILEGE?

The Mission of the Restroom Revolution is to advocate for safe, accessible restroom facilities for our campus community. Currently, many people do not have access to such facilities--particularly those whose gender identity or appearance does not conform to societal expectations. People who do not appear traditionally male or female risk harassment and violence in sex segregated facilities. The Restroom Revolution affirms the right of all people to have access to safe bathrooms.

Stop by our table in the Campus Center Concourse to learn more about Restroom Revolution.

WERE YOU SUBJECT TO HARASSMENT WHEN YOU WALKED IN?

WERE YOU ASKED TO LEAVE?

The Mission of the Restroom Revolution is to advocate for safe, accessible restroom facilities for our campus community. Currently, many people do not have access to such facilities--particularly those whose gender identity or appearance does not conform to societal expectations. People who do not appear traditionally male or female risk harassment and violence in sex segregated facilities. The Restroom Revolution affirms the right of all people to have access to safe bathrooms.

Stop by our table in the Campus Center Concourse to learn more about Restroom Revolution.

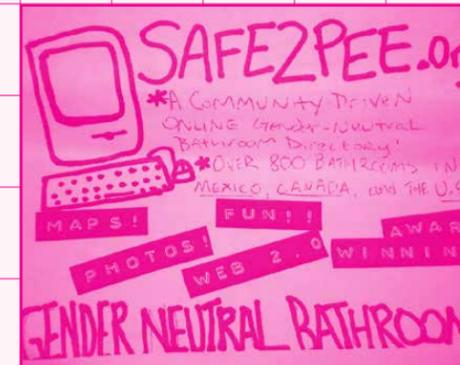


Figure x. Activists of the initiative People in Search of Safe and Accessible Restrooms (PISSAR).

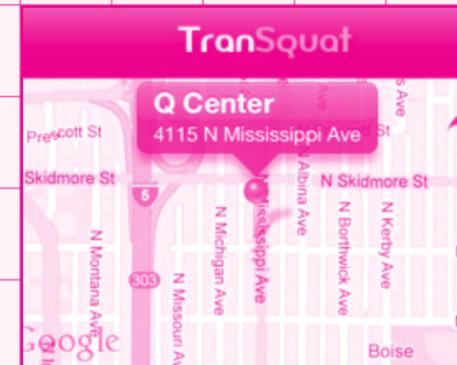
PISSAR

2003-2004

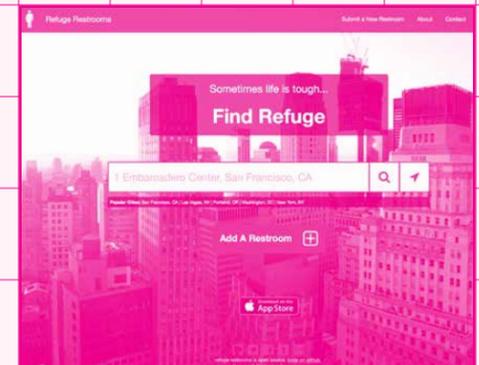
Safe2Pee.org (2005-2014)



TransSquat app (2012-14)



Refuge Restrooms (2014)



proposed a variety of invasive measures to ensure adherence to the law, which ranged from police checking identification to adults inspecting the genitals of children.²⁰⁶ In some cases, being found ‘guilty’ of being in the ‘wrong’ facility could result in substantial fines, or jail time.²⁰⁷ To add insult to injury, bills in several states proposed that any (cisgender) student who encountered another student who was not of the same ‘biological sex’ in a shared facility should receive damage reparations for “*mental anguish*,” with schools in question liable for failing to prevent these forms of interaction (aka having inclusive policies).²⁰⁸ ‘Bathroom Bills’ continue to wreak havoc on queer lives today.

You can’t use the restroom because..... Further baseless moral panic in the public toilet conversation.

In an attempt to justify this victimisation of a marginalized population, the same tired arguments make yet. another. comeback. **Proponents argue on the basis of safety for women and children, claiming that these groups will be susceptible to various forms of predation should public toilet usage not strictly adhere to ‘biological sex.’** As illustrated by one advertisement, which resorts to a transphobic characterization, a politician asks: “Should a grown man pretending to be a woman be allowed to use ... the same restroom used by your daughter? Your wife?”²⁰⁹ However, as many organizations were quick to note, **there is not a single documented case of a transgender person attacking a cisgender person in a public restroom.**²¹⁰ Given that there is no denying this fact, proponents of these laws allege that these measures will prevent the entry of pedophiles, voyeurs, exhibitionists, and a variety of other sinister characters from entering these sacred spaces. No reputable source has recorded instances of ‘men’ disguising themselves as ‘women’ in order to commit atrocities in public bathrooms, existing only as fictitious accounts on known fake news sites.²¹¹ Unfortunately, there are a few examples of the gendered nature of the public toilet providing a false sense of security, enticing women to flee to these isolated spaces where men subsequently follow them for nefarious reasons.²¹² As these instances show, ‘men’ don’t even need to disguise themselves as ‘women’ to enter – if they want to, they will, regardless of the signage on the door. Moreover, these proposals

ignore the presence of multiple laws that would *already* criminalize these occurrences if they were to happen. Alas, **police records indicate no surge in concerning behaviour that would warrant the imposition of the proposed measures, revealing that these bills are the result of a moral panic rather than a veritable concern with safety.**²¹³ Nonetheless, politicians will insist that “it’s about protecting the kids.”²¹⁴ Appealing instead to homophobic impulses, the likely well-meaning author of the article “A Conservative Defense of Transgender Rights” writes: “If child predators using your kids’ bathroom is your concern, you should be worrying about the male predators in the boys’ bathroom right now, not the male predators who might claim to be transgendered to get into the girls’ bathroom.”²¹⁵ In all evidence, the scene that has been conjured to justify these laws is a fabrication, with absolutely no factual basis. **Safety is not the true concern. As stated by sociologist Kathleen A. Bogle, “Moral panics” are often “a way of expressing a fear that you already have.”**²¹⁶

In these discussions, the US is general the focal point. However, it must be noted that **these attitudes also exist in Canada, and people have attempted to mobilize unfounded fears surrounding restroom usage to limit the rights of minority groups.** For instance, **when the Canadian parliament sought to include ‘gender identity and gender expression’ as protected categories under the Human Rights Act and Criminal Code in 2005, this discourse was used to successfully deter several iterations of the bill, ultimately delaying the implementation of this amendment until 2017.** NDP MP Bill Siksay introduced the first bill in 2005 (Bill C-392),²¹⁷ the second in 2006 (Bill C-326),²¹⁸ the third in 2007 (Bill C-494),²¹⁹ and the fourth in 2011 (Bill C-389).²²⁰ Liberal MP Hedy Fry introduced the fifth bill also in 2011 (Bill C-276).²²¹ NDP MP Randall Garrison introduced the sixth bill again in 2011 (Bill C-279).²²² Finally, this last attempt passed to a second reading in 2012.

The transcripts of the proceedings are telling. Conservative MP Dean Allison explains that this bill had been “dubbed the ‘bathroom bill’ in certain quarters,” as “creating a right to gender identity and gender expression would likely result in men who are in gender reassignment therapy having access to girls’ bathrooms.”²²³ He continues: “the bill would also give special rights to those who simply consider themselves to be

transgendered, the door would be open to sexual predators having a legal defence to charges of being caught in a women’s washroom or locker room.”²²⁴ Reflecting on this fabrication, he states: “I find this potentially legitimized access for men in girls’ bathrooms to be very disconcerting.”²²⁵ After concocting a scenario with an imaginary victim, he concludes: “It is *unconscionable* for any legislator, purposefully or just neglectfully, to place her in such a compromising position.”²²⁶ The following year, in 2013, the Conservative party were continuing the discussion along these lines. Demonstrating the insidiousness of Canadian politeness, which often leads to the impression that Canada is a more tolerant nation, Conservative MP David Anderson opines:

I want to state, as I did last time, that I am cognizant of the need to protect all Canadians from discrimination and hate crimes. *I am proud of the fact that Canada is recognized internationally as a country that is deeply committed to the principle of human rights.*²²⁷

However, he follows up by saying: “but I would argue that the bill does not achieve that end.”²²⁸ Among the many that argue that the “current legislation already protects transgendered Canadians,” and that this bill “raises murky legal issues, *like the bathroom question*,” Anderson adds that “I do not think we can just brush off people’s concerns.”²²⁹ Another Conservative MP, Rob Anders, voted against the bill on the basis that “it is the duty of the House of Commons to protect and safeguard our children from any exposure and harm that would come from giving a man access to women’s public washroom facilities.”²³⁰ He also presented a petition with thousands of signatures “on behalf of the riding in Calgary West” that was “in opposition to Bill C-279, otherwise known as ‘the bathroom bill’ that would give transgendered men access to women’s public washroom facilities.”²³¹ In 2015, Conservative Senator Don Plett introduces three amendments to the bill *which exempted public bathrooms and changerooms from its protections.*²³² **After several years of debate, Bill C-279 ultimately died when the 2015 federal election was called.**

In another attempt by NDP MP Randall Garrison, the seventh bill was put forward in 2015 (Bill C-204).²³³ Finally, eight times is the charm, the Liberals put forward “An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code,” also known as Bill C-16, in November 2016,

which passed in the House of Commons by 248 to 40 votes, and then the Senate by 67 to 11 votes with three abstentions.²³⁴ **It became law in June of 2017.**²³⁵ When the bill finally passed, it was met with a “storm of criticism” from dissenters who argued that it would protect sexual predators from prosecution.²³⁶ Jim Hughes, the national president of the Campaign Life Coalition, warned: “Imagine a young girl — your daughter or granddaughter — goes into a washroom and finds a man there, how is the young girl to determine whether or not the man in the bathroom is a ‘peeping tom,’ a rapist or a pedophile?”²³⁷ A Canadian conservative lobby group called REAL Women released the following statement, asking “What about women who don’t wish to share the restroom with a disturbed male?”²³⁸ **Once again, it must be reiterated that these are baseless and fundamentally transphobic accusations.**

In reality, **transgender and gender non-conforming people are at a higher risk of violence when using gendered public toilets.**²³⁹ As stated by Kogan, **“the only solid evidence of any such attacks in public restrooms are those directed at transgendered individuals.”**²⁴⁰ While portrayed as damsels in distress, this is frequently at the hands of cisgender women. Numerous articles detail instances of cis-women harassing and/or assaulting trans-women attempting to use the restroom.²⁴¹ Or in other cases, of their husbands carrying out these tasks *at their request.*²⁴² Sheila Cavanagh, author of *Queering Bathrooms*, writes that **“those who are ill at ease with transgender and transsexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or intersex people are, ironically, posing questions about their own safety, rights to privacy and access to public washrooms facilities.”**²⁴³ She continues: **“While there is a complete lack of evidence to substantiate any actual infringement on the civil liberties of people who are conventionally gendered and cissexual, such persons are, nevertheless, territorial and defensive about the gendered composition of the toilet.”**²⁴⁴ Indeed, there has been no link between trans-inclusive policies and bathroom safety.²⁴⁵ A study conducted by the UCLA School of Law’s Williams Institute found no significant change in the number of crimes since the passage of various laws that enable inclusive public toilet usage.²⁴⁶ **Inciting fear around safety for women and children is what it has always been, a method of maintaining power structures. The framing of queer people as a threat is an intentional political project.**



Bathroom Bills

2016 - ongoing



Do I look like I belong in women's facilities? Republicans are trying to get legislation passed that would put me there, based on my gender at birth. Trans people aren't going into the bathroom to spy on you, or otherwise cause you harm, #wejustneedtopee. Trans lives matter!

@PatMcCroyNC It's now the law for me to share a restroom with your wife. #HB2 #trans #NorthCarolina #shameonNC



Beyond ‘inclusion’ into the gendered landscape: the current public toilet model needs to go.

Gendered public toilets subject transgender and gender non-conforming people to embarrassment, harassment, assault, arrest, and possibly even death. A cursory internet search reveals news articles relaying instances that include all of the above.²⁴⁷ The statistical evidence is equally abhorrent. A landmark study by the National Center for Transgender Equality, which included 27,715 respondents, **found that 24% of transgender Americans had their presence in the restroom questioned, 12% had experience verbal harassment, physical assault, or sexual assault when attempting to use the restroom, and 9% were denied access entirely.**²⁴⁸ It must be noted that, while this is the largest US survey of transgender people undertaken, **its findings were released in 2015, prior to any ‘Bathroom Bills’ being put forward, and before the issue of access came to national attention.** The situation is believed to be much worse due to these factors. Also of note, this data only reflects the experiences of those who *dared* to use a public toilet over a prescribed period of 12 months. This is a significant detail as the treatment outlined above often leads these individuals to “do their best to *forego* use of public toilets *altogether*.”²⁴⁹ Indeed, **the study found that 59% of transgender Americans refrained from using public facilities for fear of confrontation.**²⁵⁰ It goes without saying that disciplining the body in this manner is not required of the normative population. The inability to satisfy essential physiological needs, such as relieving oneself, has negative health effects. Accordingly, **the study found that 8% of transgender American reported having developed urinary tract infections, kidney infections, and other kidney-related problems as a result of avoiding, or not being granted access to, the facilities.**²⁵¹

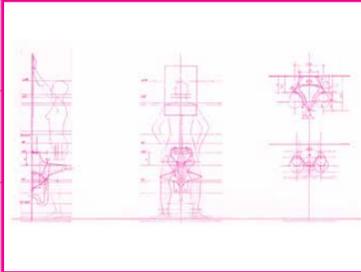
Other surveys found much higher numbers on all fronts. For instance, the UCLA School of Law’s Williams Institute, offering data for Washington D.C. in 2013, found that 68% of respondents experienced verbal harassment and 9% physical assault, with 18% being denied access entirely.²⁵² Moreover, 31 % reported that verbal harassment and/

or physical assault and/or denied access affected their education, 13% their employment, and 54% their health.²⁵³ **Going well beyond avoiding toilet usage, the survey also found that “problems or expectations of problems” regarding gendered public facilities impacted participation in public life, with 58% of respondents reporting that they “avoided going out in public” entirely.**²⁵⁴ Further research has shown that preventing transgender people from using public toilets has negative mental health impacts, leading to a higher risk of suicide.²⁵⁵

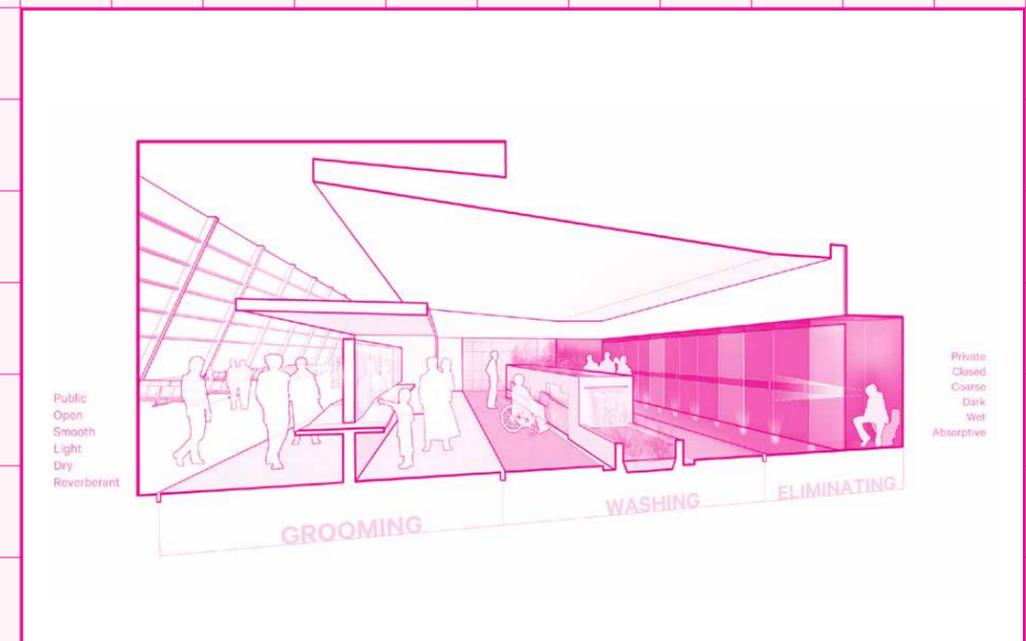
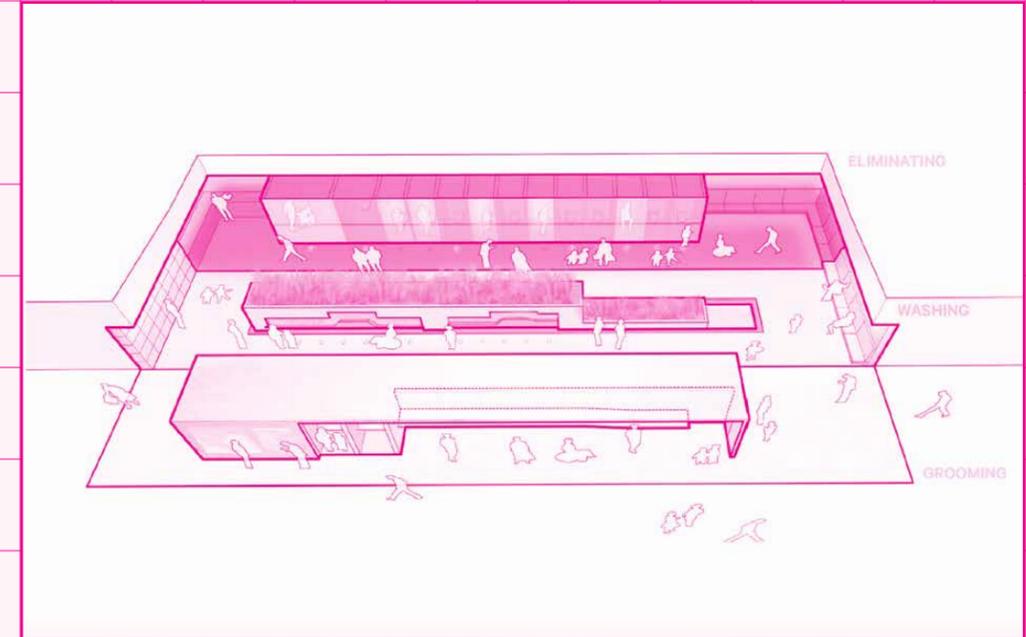
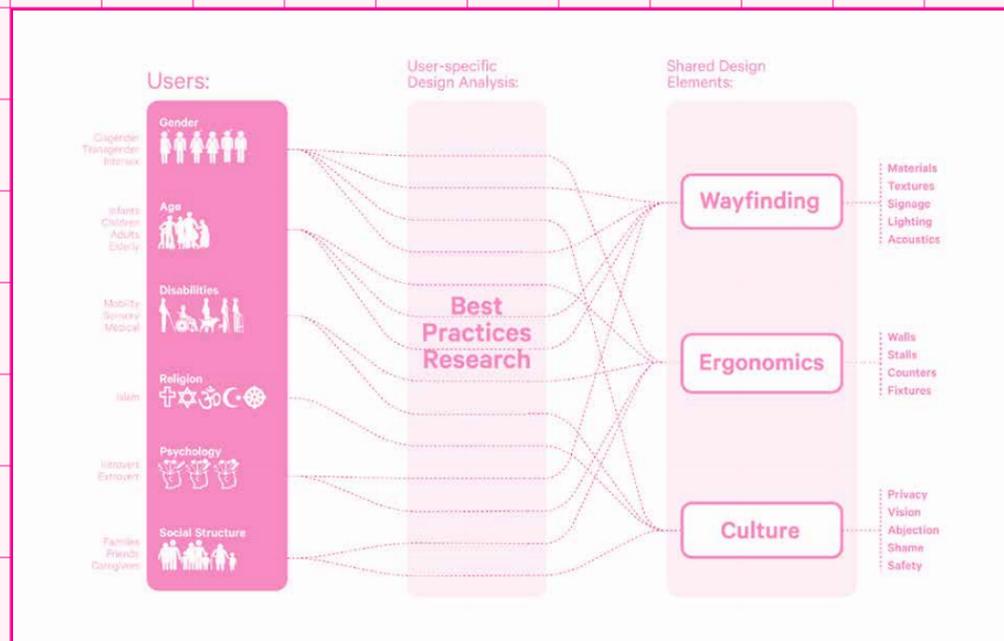
Things could be different! New designs for inclusive public toilets.

Current public toilet design amplifies socially constructed difference, and unnecessarily so. Architects are completely capable of creating spaces that “encourage or discourage social cohesion.”²⁵⁶ In fact, **many groups are re-imagining what public toilets can look like already.** For instance, architect Joel Sanders, transgender historian Susan Stryker, and legal scholar Terry Kogan launched *Stalled!*, an open-source website which offers lectures, workshops, and design guidelines for the implementation of gender-neutral facilities.²⁵⁷ Explaining that the single-user approach spatially isolates non-conforming individuals and excludes them from shared space, the group advocates for a multi-user solution “*which abolishes the binary*.”²⁵⁸ **Demonstrating that access for all is more than possible, these designs preserve engrained social values such as privacy, while accommodating the needs of “a wide range of differently embodied subjects of varying ages, genders, and disabilities.”**²⁵⁹ Successful lobbying by *Stalled!* resulted in an International Plumbing Code amendment that allows for shared restrooms.²⁶⁰ Now it is simply a question of ensuring these spaces are in the plan! In another example, architect Yolande Daniels took to reimagining all standards, by redesigning fixtures and clothing so that all people can pee standing up.²⁶¹ **There is no reason to keep implementing the gendered public toilet, when there are solutions that cater to immediate change, and others that push our imagination beyond our current paradigm.**

Yolande Daniels



Stalled!



Guess who's back, back again.

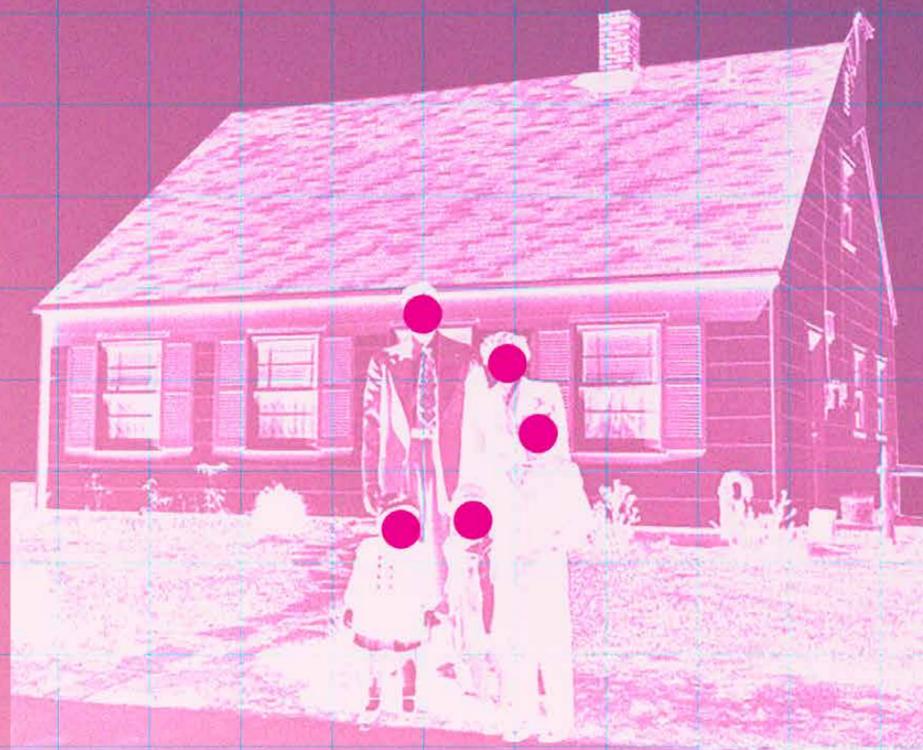
While providing inclusive public toilets can be instrumental in eliminating discrimination against those perceived to be in the 'wrong' space, this practice is not the norm. In fact, there are moves to ban gender-neutral facilities altogether. Recent proposals in the US and the UK endeavor to prohibit the inclusion of gender-neutral toileting space, *even as supplementary additions to the binary model.*²⁶² Legislators are attempting to make the exclusive installation of 'single-sex' toilets *compulsory* because the inclusive model is perceived as to threaten the binary. While preventing this dissolution is their motive, one can already imagine the stated reasons. **The same tired arguments are back again! Women, and those who allegedly argue on their behalf, argue that these spaces are not safe.** While they take no issue using undesignated facilities on planes, trains, and buses, as well as using accessible single-stall restrooms to conduct the eliminatory functions they find more embarrassing, the concept of using a gender-neutral toilet is seen as inherently dangerous. To characterize it as such, they rely on erroneous statements. For instance, a US federal court judge claimed: "*Across societies and throughout history, it has been commonplace and universally accepted to separate public restrooms [...] on the basis of biological sex in order to address privacy and safety concerns arising from the biological differences between males and females.*"²⁶³ As this lengthy account has gone through the efforts to show, this simply is not true. **This sentiment is the result of an ongoing ideological process, which only manifested itself spatially in the form of an architectural typology less than 200 years ago.** Statements such as these fail to provide evidence, relying on 'common sense' assumptions. **What would be more historically accurate to say is that physical separation has been mandated on the basis of unfounded fears of sexual contact, predation, danger, and discomfort, in order to create and maintain social differentiation. It is not the inevitable result of 'biological' reality of 'sex,' but embedding of this ideology in the built environment that makes this construct seem natural.**

Architecture as a conduit for ideology, or as a tool for change.

The sex-segregated public toilet, despite what many might assume, is not a typology that has existed since time immemorial. Toileting practices have changed drastically in the history of Western society. Time has irrevocably revealed this lack of fixity. **Architecture, far from 'neutral' in this ordeal, has offered its services in the quest to differentiate bodies for differential treatment. This collusion can no longer go ignored. Architecture's role in this social engineering warrants a conversation.** By designing spaces for specific groups, architects may intentionally or unintentionally contribute to a project of exclusion. Barring access to spaces that are required for the performance of basic necessities is unconscionable, but this practice continues unfettered. While the public toilet has been mobilised against a variety of people, most recently the typology is being used to victimize transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. The reasons given for continuing to implement the binary model echo those used to 'justify' separation from people of different races and sexualities, and are equally as unfounded. **Architects that continue to delineate spaces divided by binary sex/gender categories, despite the evidence presented above, enable the targeting of this group, by design. The 'standard' public toilet is irremediably a site of violence for these people.** This is not an unfortunate consequence, *but rather a key factor in its inception. It cannot be overstated that to proliferate this typology is to be complicit in the harm it engenders. It is to actively contribute to the heteronormative regime.* This historical genealogy has demonstrated the architectural typology of **the public toilet has been subject to great change, and that, insofar as it is unstable, it is malleable. While the public toilet currently "accentuate otherness," it does not have to.**²⁶⁴ *There is no need to hold on to this device, or whatever ideological functions it provides. Its changeable character should be embraced and acted upon.*

“The problem of queer housing remains persistent and recalcitrant because the *house* – the single-family house and by extension apartments, condominiums and the like – is a central structure of the heterosexual hegemony, the *primary architectural expression* of heteronormativity.”¹

- Colin Ripley



The Private Home

Case Study #2 - THE PRIVATE HOME

As seen with the case study on ‘the public toilet,’ heteronormative assumptions have been engrained in the built environment. This phenomenon can equally be observed in the design of the private home. While it is instrumental for reproducing normative order, this typology has largely been neutralized in architectural practice. Jack Halberstam, an academic who has written extensively on this spatiality, explains that **“the heteronormative cultural field is shaped to encompass the home as if it lacks nothing.”**¹ Indeed, for those who conform to social norms, it may appear so. However, as design educator Colin Ripley points out **“there is no place in this monoculture for queer bodies of any kind,”** maintaining that **“for queer people, the suburb is an extermination camp.”**² The private home, he elucidates, is designed “to produce and maintain the idea of the nuclear family *as a concept and as a social construction*, not to serve [...] the needs of their bodies.”³ Intersectional feminist scholar Sarah Ahmed, in an essay on “Queer Phenomenology,” describes this ‘family’ as **“an absence of other kinds of bodies.”**⁴ Given that heteronormativity is concerned with “the *renunciation* of what it is not, and also by the *production* of what it is,” this ‘absence’ is “*as important as what is present.*”⁵ Formulated as a tool of the heteronormative order, the nuclear family *renounces* nonnormative bodies, while *producing* normative ones. The private home *is vital for the performance of this two-fold task*. As stated by Lucas Crawford, a scholar who explores the intersections of queerness and architecture, “the very idea of a *home* is grounded in the hetero-normative structure of the family.”⁶ Effectively, by *assuming* heteronormativity in its users, this architectural typology proliferates this order to the extent that its pervasiveness goes unnoted. Accordingly, Ripley asserts that **“the single-family house and by extension apartments, condominiums and the like – is a central structure of heterosexual hegemony, the primary architectural expression of hetero-normativity.”**⁷

Summary of Research

Again, as with the public toilet, this typology emerged as a result of colonialism. Notably, in early contact histories between “the old and new worlds,” colonizers interpreted the “nomadism of the hunter-gatherer” as “an index to their savagery.”⁸ Allegedly, “to wander aimlessly without a fixed point of departure and return indicated a lack of civilization, which legitimized colonization as a process of civilizing the savage.”⁹ Essentially, the perceived “failure to permanently settle” and thereby “own the land” was used to ‘justify’ its expropriation.¹⁰ While the notion of land ownership was integral for the dispossession of Indigenous land, the private home had not yet materialized. Rather, it would emerge as a mechanism for Europeans to further *otherize* the population they were attempting to colonize.

Recall the goal of instituting ‘civility’ was “to create a culture in which the elite, the gentleman and the lady, were clearly distinguished by a whole set of immediately recognizable external behaviour traits.”¹¹ In doing so, “the civilized” were differentiated from “the uncivilized.”¹² Consequently, ‘hygiene’ not only formed the impetus for the public toilet, but also that of the typology in question. Significantly, the ‘upper classes’ expressed a desire to distance their living accommodations from the ‘lower classes’ due to a “great divide of disgust.”¹³ The concept of ‘hygiene,’ conceived to produce polarization between populations, required ‘privacy.’ As elucidated by Georges Duby, author of *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World*, there was no medieval Latin equivalent to this word; during this period, ‘privatio’ meant “a taking away.”¹⁴ For this reason, historian Peter Smith describes ‘privacy’ as “the ultimate achievement of the renaissance.”¹⁵ Alas, this newly developed value became ‘common sense,’ informing an architectural typology that naturalized the heteronormative regime.

The trajectory of the private home and the attitudes that brought it into existence is perhaps best summarize by the following excerpt. Written by journalist Edwin Lawrence Godkin in **1890**, the treatise outlined ‘privacy’ as one of “the rights of the citizen.”¹⁶ While conceding that it was a “phenomenon of the present day,” he argued for its legislative protection.¹⁷ To make his case, Godkin wrote:

Privacy is a distinctly modern product, one of the luxuries of civilization, which is not only unsought for but unknown in primitive or barbarous societies. The savage cannot have privacy, and does not desire or dream it. To dwellers in tents and wigwams, it must have been unknown. The earliest houses of our Anglo-saxon ancestors in England, even among the Thanes, *consisted of only one large room* in which master and mistress, and retainers, cooked, ate and slept. *The first sign of material progress was the addition of sleeping rooms*, and afterward of ‘withdrawing-rooms’ into which it was possible for the heads of the household to escape from the noise and publicity of the outer hall. **One of the greatest attractions of the dwellings of the rich is the provision they make for the segregation of the occupants. All of the improvements, too, of recent years to the dwellings of the poor, have been in the direction, not simply of more space, but of separate rooms. The old proverb which says that ‘Poverty makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows,’ is but the expression of the universal desire of civilized man to have within reach a place in which he can, when the fancy seizes him, be alone, and out of the reach of society.** In no way does poverty make itself more painfully felt by people of refinement or cultivation, than in the loss of seclusion and the social promiscuousness which it entails. **To have a house of one’s own is the ambition of nearly all civilized men and women**, and the reason which most makes them enjoy it is the opportunity it affords of deciding for themselves how much or how little publicity should surround their daily lives.¹⁸

NOTE: The remaining research for this section has been relocated to the back of the document. For an in-depth overview of the following, please consult the appendix.

To summarize, I locate the emergence of the private home in late-18th century London, where the desire for ‘privacy’ among the city’s merchant elite instigated the spatial separation of ‘work’ and ‘life.’ Historically, in European households, “everyone, all the time, was on public display.”¹⁹ While further subdivision ensued throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, ‘privacy’ remained relatively unknown as “interlocking suites” required passage through one room to enter another.²⁰ Corridors, a circulation

strategy that first materialized in the 17th century, was a significant development for the creation of 'private' spatiality.²¹ Notably, the bedroom emerged as a dedicated space during this period.²² Over the course of the 18th century, bedrooms came to occupy the upstairs, leaving the ground floor for business.²³ Significantly, **multi-property ownership became accessible to a limited class of individuals as a result of wealth derived from colonialism.**²⁴ Going beyond vertical separation within one structure, this group began conducting 'work' in the city, and 'life' in the countryside. As a result, *single-function* and *single-class* districts were formed. **By the late-18th century, the earliest modern suburbs had developed on the outskirts of the political capital of the British Empire, defining the "essential suburban image for all subsequent development."**²⁵

It must be emphasized that, for all this discussion of the development of 'privacy,' **the concept was reserved for a limited segment of society.** As the upper-classes privatized their spaces, it was common for the lower-classes to crowd their entire household into a single room.²⁶ Moreover, while the former had individual bedrooms, the latter crammed as many as possible in the same bed.²⁷ This setup was believed to be a main cause of their alleged "loose morality."²⁸ However, in these living conditions, privacy was "neither a practical possibility nor, one imagines, even a theoretical aspiration."²⁹ Again, the concept was constructed to justify superiority over, and separation from, this group. The resulting architectures from this imperative continue to carry out this intention.

Once reserved for the elite, the private home would come to dominate the middle-class ideal in the 20th century. Taken up forcefully in post-war America, **it remained reserved for a limited segment of society.** As Ripley has suggested, the private home was "to produce and maintain the idea of the *nuclear family* as a concept and as a social construction."³⁰ This social grouping, despite its appearance of being so, is neither 'natural' nor 'ahistorical.' Notably, the nuclear family emerged in the same period as the private home. Ripley expounds that "the relationship is even deeper than simple common origins, but is *implicit, constitutive and constructive.*"³¹ He maintains that "as much as the industrial suburban house is a product for the nuclear family, the nuclear family is a product of the industrial suburban house."³² Historical analysis of the formation of the contemporary notion of family reveals it as a tool of the heteronormative order.

Increasingly isolated, a new form of family was developing among the merchant elite in London. The term had yet to acquire the modern definition of "a small group confined to immediate blood relations."³³ However, with the separation of 'work' and 'life,' familial relations between various groups eroded. Characterized by "an emphasis on the boundary surrounding the nuclear unit," this new entity would come to be known as "the closed domesticated nuclear family."³⁴ In the early 19th century, James Mills wrote "the group consisting of a Father, Mother and Children is called a Family."³⁵ The fact that this "conscious definition" needed to be articulated "is in itself significant."³⁶ The constitution of the 'family' became 'common sense.' As writer Tina Gianoulis notes,

One significant characteristic of the family in modern society is that the cultural idea of the family remains firmly established even when many actual families do not resemble it. In other words, people remain quite loyal to the current idea of what a family is supposed to be, even in the face of a wide range of evidence that many—indeed, most—families are simply not like that.³⁷

According to Marxist thought, this family is an indispensable "apparatus" to the bourgeois order, as **it functions as an "anchorage point" for private property while reproducing the "ruling ideology."**³⁸ In *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Frederick Engels links the "monogamous family" to the "bequeathal" of private property.³⁹ As a self-perpetuating system, it ensured, to the greatest extent possible, the transfer of inheritance. Indeed, it was the "propertied class" that was chiefly responsible for the enactment of a 1753 Marriage Act which "aimed at keeping the family unit a publicly witnessed and controlled entity."⁴⁰ Such measures assisted in the development of a "closed, and increasingly wealthy, caste."⁴¹

Architectural historian Mark Wigley asserts that "marriage is the reason for building a house."⁴² Mutually constitutive, the private home "make[s] space for the institution."⁴³ He states that "the physical house is the possibility of the patriarchal order that appears to be applied to it."⁴⁴ Dolores Hayden, who has authored several books on the gendered nature of the private home, describes the architectural typology as a "container for female unpaid labor" that strengthens "patriarchal authority."⁴⁵ Indeed, as asserted by Engels, "the modern individual family is founded on the open

or concealed domestic slavery of the wife.”⁴⁶ Critically, the development of the private home created the conditions for gendered spatiality, thereby reaffirming the project of defining binary gender. The formulation of ‘private’ space was indispensable for the creation of the ‘public’ against which it positioned itself. The division of the “masculine/rational/urban” world of work and the “feminine/natural/emotional” world of the family was not possible prior to the separation of these domains.⁴⁷ In other words, **the emergence of the private home instigated separate sphere ideology.** Notably, during this period, there was a developing distinction between “a man’s work and his family.”⁴⁸ For the “male head of household,” the home became a place to retreat from, and renew for, work – and the “true wife” was at its center.⁴⁹ Wigley explains that “the virtuous woman becomes woman-plus-house or, rather, woman-as-housed, such that her virtue cannot be separated from the physical space.”⁵⁰ The adage “a woman’s place is in the home” summarizes this period well.⁵¹ The private home, and the nuclear family, led to an increasingly hierarchical relationship, elevating the role of the husband, and subjugating that of the wife. Subsequently, the only “valid education” ‘women’ could now receive was in “home enjoyment.”⁵² Contrary to prior times, contact with “either the business or the social world” was now deemed “degrading” for women.⁵³ Financially dependency was integral to the maintenance of the institution of marriage.

Once again, it is important to note that these gendered relationships were class-based. Recall, once again, that civility instituted gender propriety to create class distinction. As historian Marlene Legates notes, the “Cult of True Womanhood” of the 19th century was meant to distinguish between the “virtuous woman of the upper classes (whether by merit or birth)” and the “loose woman of the lower orders (whether by choice or circumstance).”⁵⁴ This distinction was an “attempt” by the bourgeoisie to “consolidate their precariously won prosperity and security against the ‘outs’ of society.”⁵⁵ The new image of ‘woman’ was largely conjured up by the Evangelical movement which “took hold with special strength” among London’s bourgeoisie.⁵⁶ Also known as the “ideologists of the closed, domesticated nuclear family,” Evangelicals maintained that the most “secure” path to salvation was the “beneficent influence of a truly Christian family.”⁵⁷ Claiming that they were “naturally more disposed to Religion than men,” Evangelicals instituted ‘women’ as the “principal guardian of the Christian home.”⁵⁸ “Salvation itself” thus depended on the creation of binary notions of space and gender.⁵⁹

(R)eproducing the heteronormative regime

Ample discourse exists on the gendered nature of the private home. However, *it is not only a gendered order that it reproduces.* As stated previously, the typology was developed in service of colonialism. Beyond developing a rigid gender binary, it instituted *white supremacy*. Indeed, the promotion of the private home in post-war America had distinct racial implications. The typology was not only intended to proliferate the nuclear family, but the *white* nuclear family. **Federal financing for suburban development included racial restrictive covenants (a practice known as ‘redlining’), as well as denying housing to unmarried ‘women’ and childless individuals.**⁶⁰ Some neighbourhoods even mandated a minimum number of children.⁶¹ With the goal of ‘nation building,’ the family was “increasingly shaped by the intervention of governing agencies.”⁶² Due to concern about the declining birth rates of the white population, eugenics rebranded as ‘marriage counseling’ during this period.⁶³ Various policies were instituted to maximize white procreation, while minimizing that of *others*. Notably, the sterilization of racialized people was enforced on a massive scale. **Notions of ‘biology’ were mobilized for white nationalism.** Caretaking was defined as the biological role of women, with their duty being to reproduce and care for the future white generation.⁶⁴ **Scientists devoted unprecedented effort to identify and ‘fix’ homosexuals in order to preserve the “future of the race.”**⁶⁵ Recall that this newly instated identity was pathologized for its lack of *reproductive* purpose. As stated by sexologist William Robinson in 1914, “every sexual deviation or disorder which has for its result an inability to perpetuate the race is *ipso facto* pathologic, *ipso facto* an abnormality and this is pre-eminently true of homosexuality.”⁶⁶

The emergence of the ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual’ binary restructured social categories, creating sharper distinctions between what was deemed the ‘norm’ and the *other* with the goal of instituting the heteronormative regime. Significantly, “transient men, out-of-work men, and men who lived beyond traditional family structures were of particular concern.”⁶⁷ **Conversion therapy was developed to induce the non-normative population to participate in the reproduction of the normative order.** For instance, psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, in his seminal

1886 book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, recounts a number of sessions with “homo-sexual” clients where he attempts to convert them to “hetero-sexual normality.”⁶⁸ Patients with “psychical hermaphroditism,” defined as “erotic desire for both sexes,” were seen as the best candidates for conversion and were therefore subjected to “especially severe moral censure” when they continued to follow their “same-sex desires.”⁶⁹ Krafft-Ebing urged his patients to seek hypnotism, hydrotherapy, and faradization (application of electric currents), and prescribed “coitus” with the “opposite sex.”⁷⁰ **Numerous treatment reports end with “wedding bells,” or at least “thoughts of marriage.”**⁷¹

As a result of the development the private home, and the nuclear family it proliferated, non-normative “patterns of life” were constrained by widespread “prejudice, criminalization, and institutionalized exclusion.”⁷² This architectural typology assumes “a certain lifestyle” and delimit “the social relationships of the inhabitants.”⁷³ Its design, structure, and layout all reflect and reinforce “notions of hegemonic heterosexuality, nuclear families, and men’s, women’s, and children’s gendered roles and relations.”⁷⁴ As such, **the private home is irrefutably a ‘heterosexualized’ space.** As Ripley expounds, all housing “is designed and constructed from within that hegemonic tradition, using models that assume heteronormativity in its user.”⁷⁵ He maintains that **“even if the client for a new house is, for example, a gay couple, all decisions made in the design are made from within a straight tradition.”**⁷⁶ Moreover, all materials are “sourced and processed from within an exploitative colonising regime of resource extraction.”⁷⁷ He asks rhetorically,

And what would be different anyway? Wouldn’t our hypothetical gay couple want the same things as everyone else: a master bedroom with ensuite bath, a guest bedroom or maybe a room for the kid, a yard where they can sit out and a patio for barbecuing, a living room with a huge TV...⁷⁸

As this trajectory has demonstrated, a combination of government policies, architectural design, and deeply ingrained social norms have naturalized the private home, and the heteronormative order it (re) produces, to the detriment of all *others*.

Queer conclusions on ‘the private home’

While I presented alternatives for the public toilet, in most cases, attempting to ‘include’ nonnormative bodies in a normative structure is futile. As expounded by Ripley, **“queer housing is a contradiction in terms.”**⁷⁹ Since the private home was developed with normative users in mind, he contends that **“not even a queer architect can design a queer house.”**⁸⁰ While seemingly well intended, “the provision of decent housing can only bolster the bourgeois nuclear family.”⁸¹ Given that the private home was built to reproduce the heteronormative regime, Ripley “problematizes the very possibility for queer inhabitants to appropriate, and thus queer these spatial units.”⁸² Indeed, it is an *irremediable* architectural typology. Halberstam contends that **the “language of repair” is only deployed for “liberal purposes” in an effort to “shore up the status quo.”**⁸³ Offering an example of “generative negativity,” he quotes cultural theorist Fred Moten who argues that racialized society is “incorrigible.”⁸⁴ Stating that “what it is that is supposed to be repaired is irreparable,” Moten declares that **“the only thing we can do is tear this shit down completely and build something new.”**⁸⁵ **When faced with *irredeemable* spatialities such as the private home, it becomes evident that they need to be *dismantled*.** This conclusion opens up the discussion of the second part of this thesis.

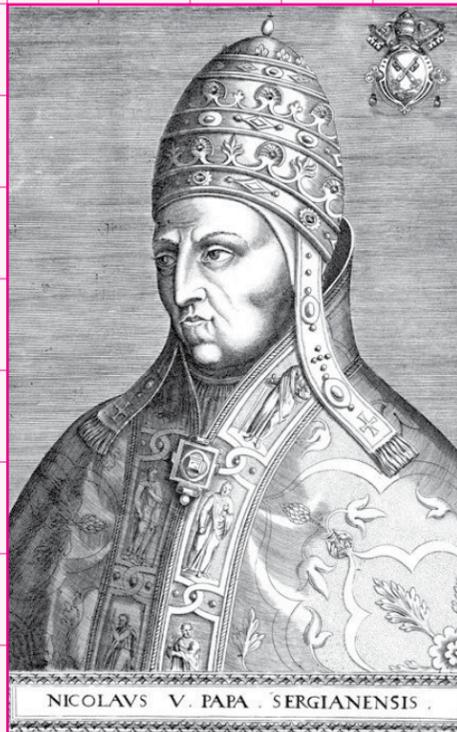


Figure 1. Portrait of Nicolaus V Papa Sergianensis, the pope who issued first Bull in 1455.

Doctrine of Discovery & terra nullius



Figure 2. Pope Alexander VI's Bull (1493).

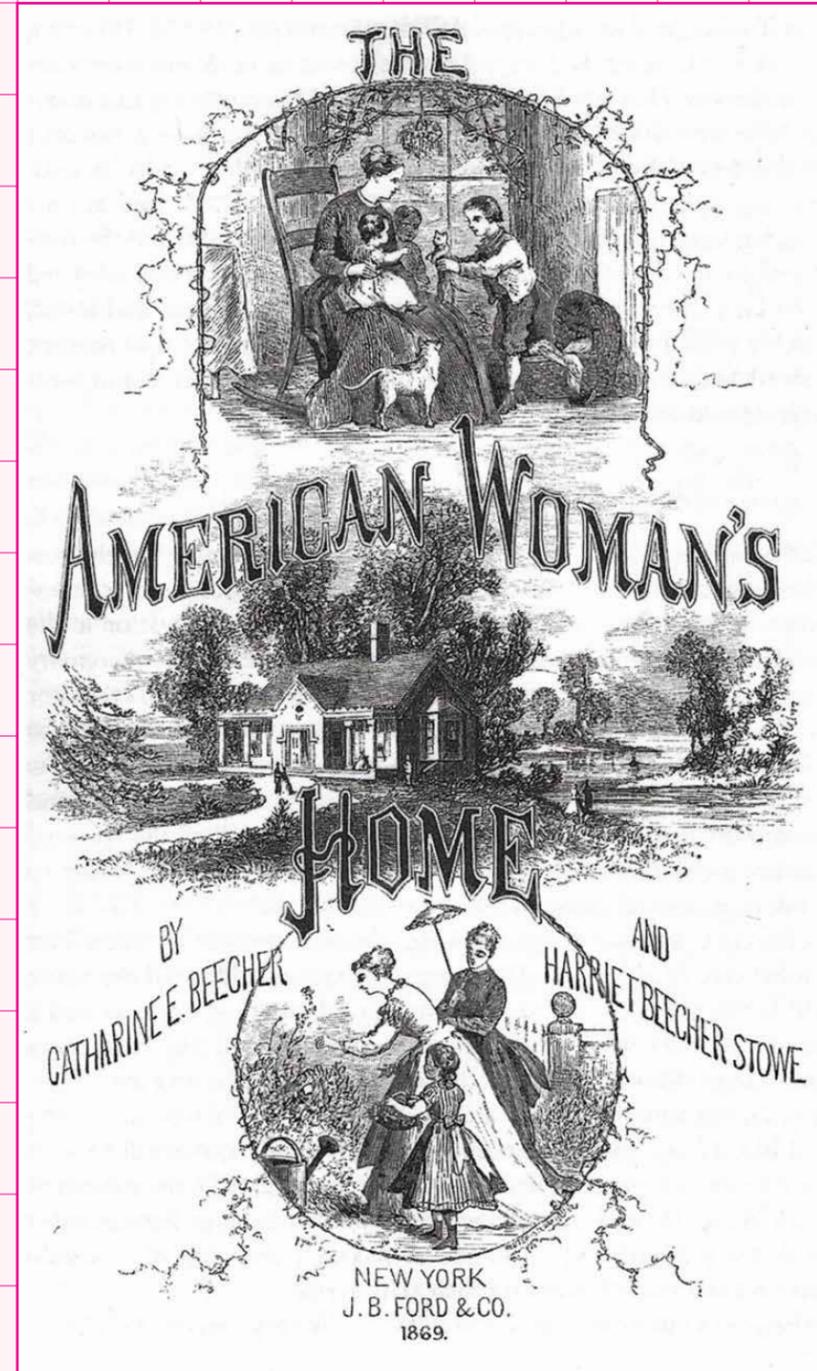


Figure 3. American Woman's Home (1869).



Figure 4. *It's a promise!* (circa WWII).



Figure 5. *Women don't leave the kitchen!*

RESTRICTIONS

The use of this property is restricted as follows: -

1. No person or persons other than of the Caucasian race shall be permitted to occupy the above described property.

Only Members of the Caucasian Race

One of the important features of the Building Regulations at Highland Park reads as follows:

"The buyer agrees that no estate in or possession of the said premises shall be sold, transferred or conveyed to any person not of the Caucasian race."

This means that when you buy a homesite in this properly Regulated home place, you will forever be assured of desirable neighbors. Only members of the white race can buy or hold property in this beautiful restricted residence park.

Figures 6-7. Racial Restrictive Covenants.

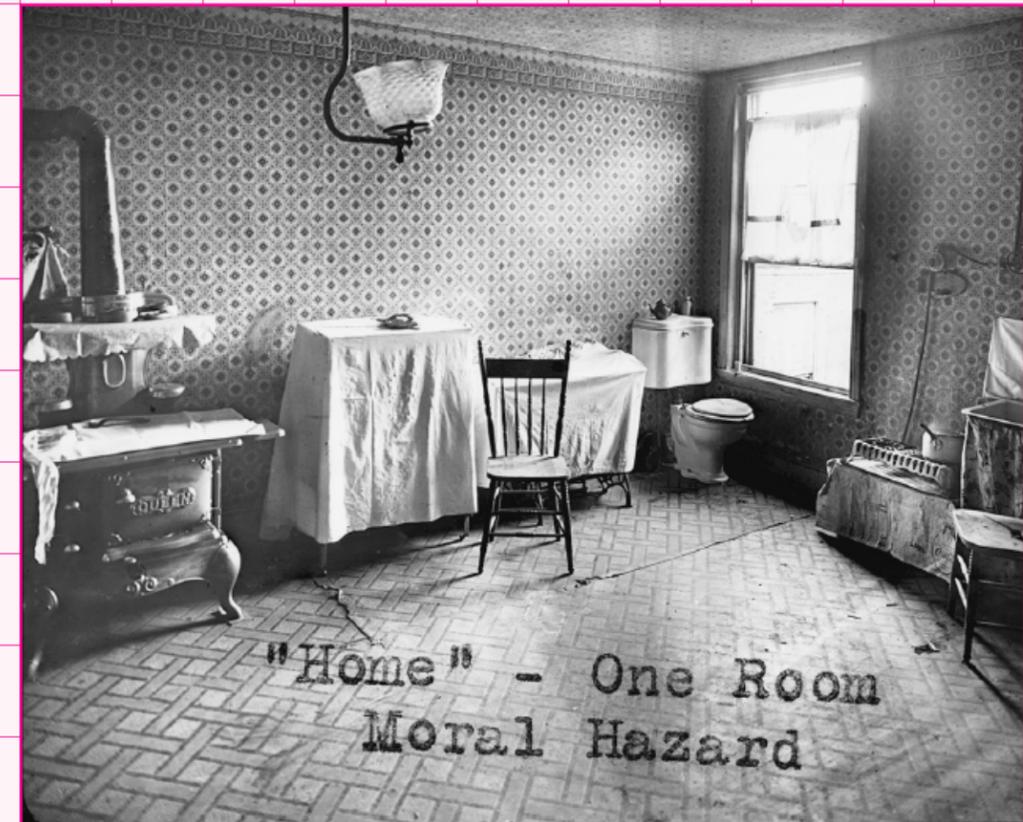


Figure 8. Moralizing image of a black household.

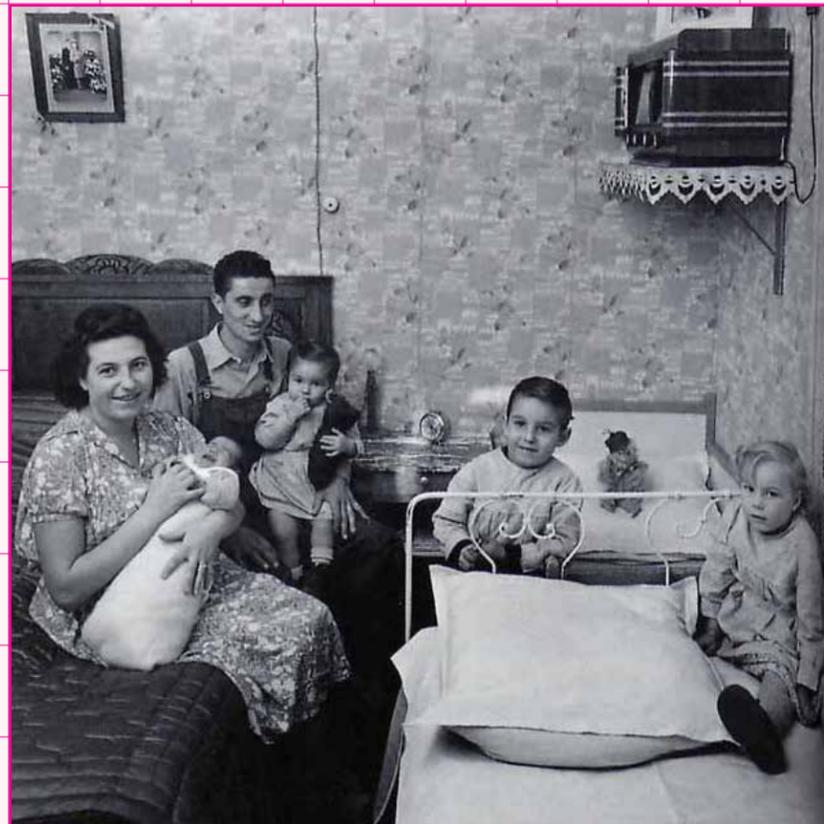


Figure 9. A crowded bedroom.

A Subdivision Dedicated to
LARGE FAMILIES ONLY!
Open Today **MARY-RIDGE**
 (10,100 WEST ON ST. CHARLES ROCK ROAD)
 "SALE OF THESE HOMES ARE RESTRICTED
 TO FAMILIES OF FOUR OR MORE CHILDREN"

3-BEDROOM BUNGALOW
\$2750

- 3 Bedrooms
- Living Room
- Large Kitchen
- Complete Bath
- Garage in Basement

\$275
 CASH DOWN

\$2236
 PER MO.
 Including Taxes and Insurance

HOMES ARE DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR LARGE FAMILIES ONLY
 Approx. 1/4 Acre of Ground With Each Home

Macadam Streets — Complete Sewers — Gas — Water and Electric. SHORT WALK TO 1 CAR FARE ANYWHERE IN ST. LOUIS. Free School Bus to Public and Parochial Schools for 1940 and 1941.

NOTE: We Reserve Right to Pass on Eligibility of Applicants. These homes will not be sold for speculation.

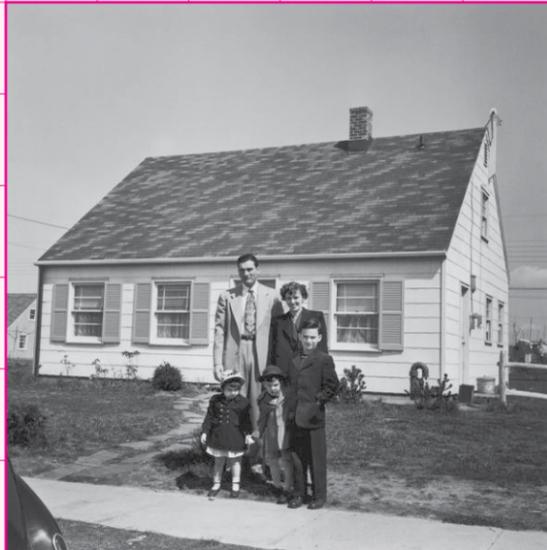
LOCATION: South Side St. Charles Rock Rd., 1 Mile West of Woodson Rd.

● Quality Materials Supplied for These Homes by the Following Firms: ●

Missouri Petroleum Products Co. 8930 Ladue Rd., Parkview 3502	Mueller Furnace & Boiler Co. 4246 Forest Park Blvd., Franklin 1630	St. Louis County Tile Co. 8862 Ladue Rd., Parkview 1800	United States Gypsum Co. 1047 Big Bend Rd., Sterling 2700
Missouri Floor Co. 8860 Ladue Rd., Parkview 2266	Ball Lumber & Supply Co. Ladue Rd. & Terminal Tracks, CA. 3200	Victor Shade Co. 6129 Page, Cabany 2368	Ceco Steel Products Corp. 1220 Spruce, Central 2460
Mechanics Iron Works 628 Edmund, Franklin 6113	Volz Fire Clay Co. 3800 Page, Winfield 1544	Hartenbach, Henry C., Inc. 301 S. Grand, Jefferson 9520	Wabash Portland Cement Co. Detroit, Michigan
Modern Window Mfg. Co. Parkview 1800	Carr-Trombly Mfg. Co. 3014 N. Second, Central 6076	Ruberoid Co. 9215 Riverview Dr., MUIberry 2280	

WESTRIDGE CONSTRUCTION CO.
 10,100 WEST ON ST. CHARLES ROCK ROAD

Figure 10. Large Families Only!



STAGED!

“The perfect scene of house and nuclear family is not just presented once, but three times, with the Levey family in front of three houses”



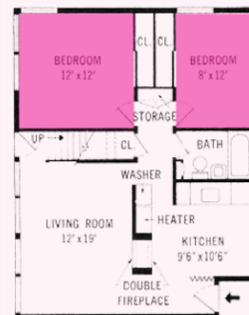
“So this is not simply a snapshot, not a memorialising of the arrival of the new Levittowners for the family scrapbook, but a staged and carefully repeated photograph, designed and produced to clarify and emphasise exactly the relationship between the house and the family. **This photograph is a manifesto.**”



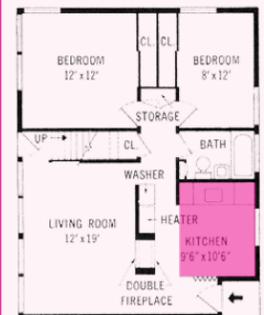
Figures 11-13. Truck supervisor Bernard Levey standing with his family in front of his new Levitt-built home. Times three.

“The house is designed to produce and maintain the idea of the nuclear family as a concept and as a social construction, not to serve the needs of the actors in that family drama, or the needs of their bodies.”

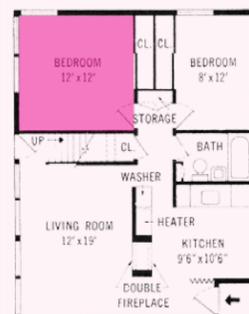
Part of the Plan



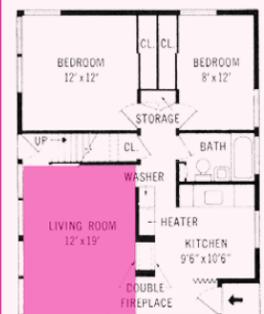
◀ Bedrooms crystallise the family structure.



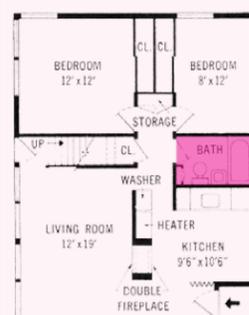
The kitchen reifies gender roles. ▶



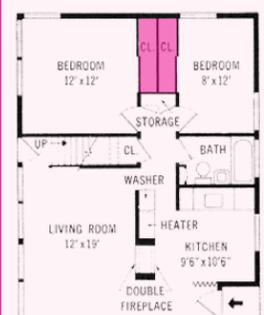
◀ Sexual functions are isolated and stabilized.



The living room delimits social relationships. ▶



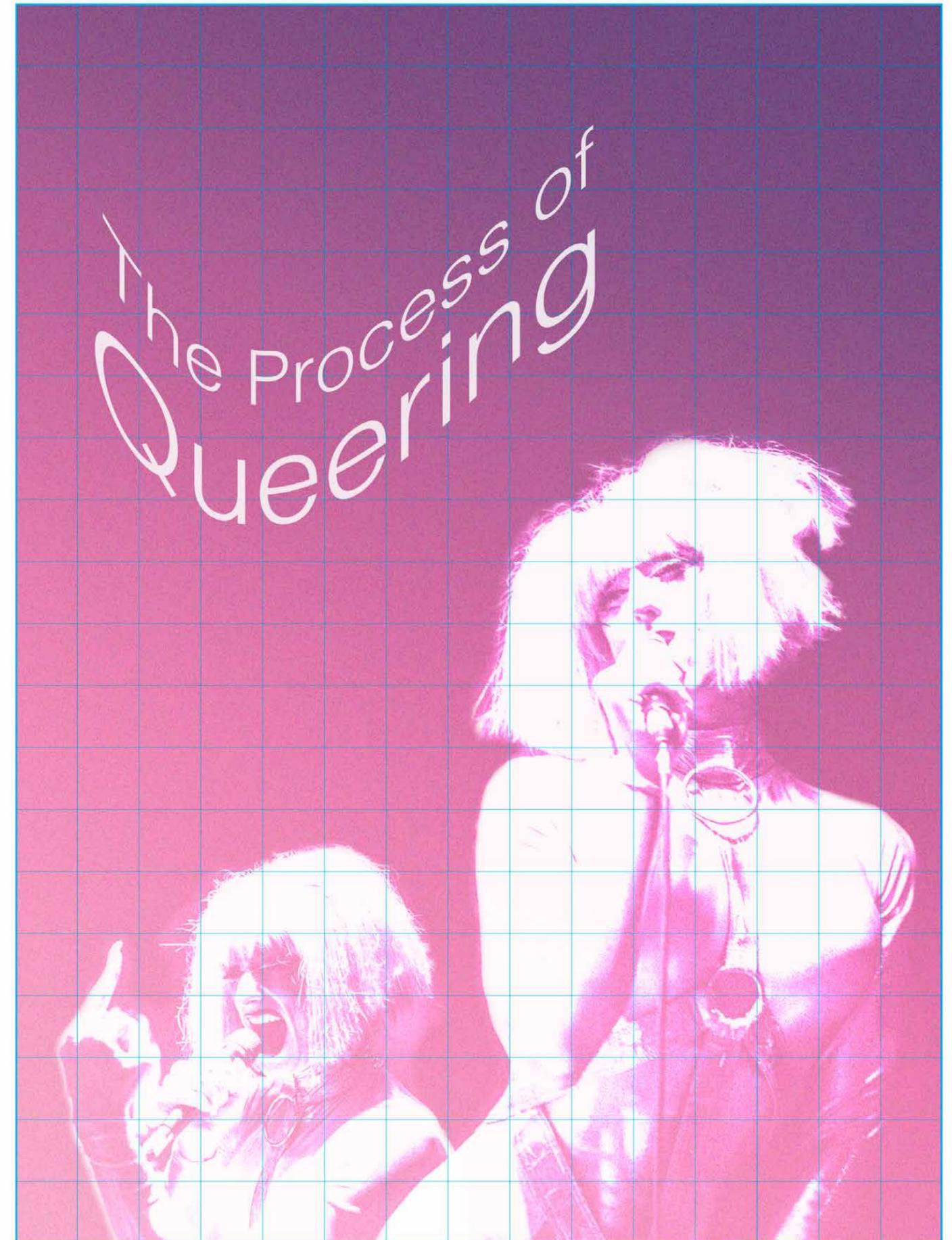
◀ The bathroom hides bodily functions.



You know where to find us. ▶

Figures 14-19. Overlays on a Levittown house plan.

Part Two //
*Exploring
Queer
Space*



2.0 The Process of Queering

In the introduction to this thesis, 'queer' was described as a term "without an essence."¹ The process of 'queering' similarly eludes formalizing its characteristics. Its power lies in understanding constraints and potentials created by spatial structures, and *not producing a fixed outcome*. Performing a two-fold operation, 'queering' challenges the normative "behaviours, rules, expectations and situations framed by the built environment," while generating "a set of relations different from the binary oppositions defined by the norm."² In doing so, it highlights the liberatory potential of spatial production, and points to the possibility of a better future. Given that the following six explorations engage in 'queering,' the term will be further qualified.

Expanding on queer space

As with the discussion regarding the term 'queer,' it is important to distance that of 'queering' from the constraints of identity. Illustrating the subtleties that this distinction entails, designer Adam Nathaniel Furman, author of the book *Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories*, lamented in an interview that "nowadays you can be a gay architect, but you can't do queer architecture."³ As their statement suggests, **the queer identity of an architect, or of any person who engages in spatial production, does not necessarily correlate with the outcome of queer space**. At times, people that hold marginalized identities even contribute to the normative orders that authored their debased social position. To offer but one example, Philip Johnson, the most prominent gay architect of the 20th century, aligned himself with fascist regimes which were decidedly not very queer-friendly.⁴ As such, any attempt to formulate a theory of queer space solely based on the identity of a collection of individuals (of which mostly architects of a certain demographic are considered) is futile.⁵ Inevitably, this pursuit will reveal a range of architectural output, *which may or may not reflect a contestation of the normative order*. For this reason, *it is imperative that the process of queering not be fixed to any particular identity*. In fact, if it were to be characterized by anything, it would be its *lack of fixity*.

Likewise, expanding one's approach beyond notable personalities to consider the spatial production of an identity group will not yield an accurate representation of queer space either. To illustrate, in his book *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*, architectural critic Aaron Betsky writes that "Queer space is, in fact, in danger of disappearing."⁶ He explains that, beyond the devastation caused by AIDS, "now queers often want to be *normal*;" withdrawing "into their homes, the suburbs, and anonymity," they "adopt children, dress like their neighbors, and even disavow the presence of a communal culture."⁷ He adds that, when they do come together to celebrate their pride, "these festivals and parades have lost their intensity, their obnoxious difference, their *queerness*."⁸ Betsky's alarmist reading is tied to viewing queer space as exclusively related to the spatial practices of an exceedingly *specific* demographic. He admittedly only concerns himself "middle-class white men."⁹ The phenomenon he is describing, known as 'homonormativity,' is absolutely a concern.¹⁰ There certainly exists an incentive to adapt to the normative order, by upholding values associated with heteronormativity, in order to gain social acceptability. However, this behaviour is typically associated with people that, while queer, hold various privileges which they use as leverage. Grouping together all gender and sexual minorities, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community *is far from monolithic*. While some of its constituencies are notable for their assimilationist tendencies, this does not reflect the entity as a whole. As such, it is only by associating queer space with a singular identity group, especially the one that Betsky considers, that one might have the impression that it is '*disappearing*.' The remedy is not to take into account the spatial practices of additional identity groups. **In order to locate queer space, one must look beyond the framework of identity altogether. These socially constructed categories have changed drastically over time, which is why queerness, and its associated spatiality, must be understood in a relational sense.** Recall that it is defined as 'whatever is at odds with the normal.' Given that it is positioned *relative to the norm*, it cannot be subsumed into the normative order. Existing as its contestation, queerness will endure for the entire length of normativity's reign. When considering this *relationality*, it becomes evident that *queer space is not in danger of disappearing at all*.

As the previous example suggests, it is integral to differentiate queer space from gay-oriented architecture. It cannot be reduced to a collection of buildings found within a gaybourhood. Moreover, the assumption that it only exists in these enclaves *reaffirms the binary construction that queering contests*. This inclination presents a dichotomous divide between straight and gay worlds, obscuring the many ways the boundary between them is *blurred*. It is imperative to emphasize that **queer space is not limited to places formally designated as such; it can exist anywhere and everywhere**. As stated by architectural educator Olivier Vallerand, “queer use of space” occurs “in both *expected* and *unexpected* places.”¹¹ The employment of the word ‘use’ is notable. Indeed, any interpretation of queer space that exclusively considers the built environment itself will fail to grasp the concept. At times, these “physical aspects of our communities reflect only *incomplete adaptations of spatial archaeologies of repression*.”¹² As noted by architectural writer Evan Pavka, most of the “disparate structures” *used* by queer people are “*not actually conceived by the communities they serve*.”¹³ These repurposed “existing typologies of building,” explains Pavka, “become queer *only in the sense that they are activated, inhabited and transformed by queer-identifying individuals*.”¹⁴ Consequently, without its occupants, they are just *normal* spaces that are indistinguishable from the rest of the *normative* built environment. This begs the question; can any specific architecture typology be understood as exclusively queer? Perhaps not. Historian George Chauncey goes so far as saying that “there is no queer space,” rather “there are only spaces put to queer uses.”¹⁵ Again, the foregrounding of *usage* is notable. As explained by Vallerand, “**space is queer not by itself, but in relation to a subject, to another.**”¹⁶ Effectively, the notion of queer space goes beyond the physicality of architecture, as it cannot be fixed to a particular form. Given this lack of constraint, it can manifest anywhere. Through this understanding of queer space as *relational*, it becomes apparent that **all space can be queered**. As the writer Christopher Reed affirms, “no space is totally queer or completely unqueerable.”¹⁷ **The process of queering embraces this potentiality.**



Figure 1. The rainbow pylon in Northalsted (FKA Boystown), Chicago.



Figures 2-3. *Putting in breasts* and *Applying make-up* by Ailo Ribas (2020).

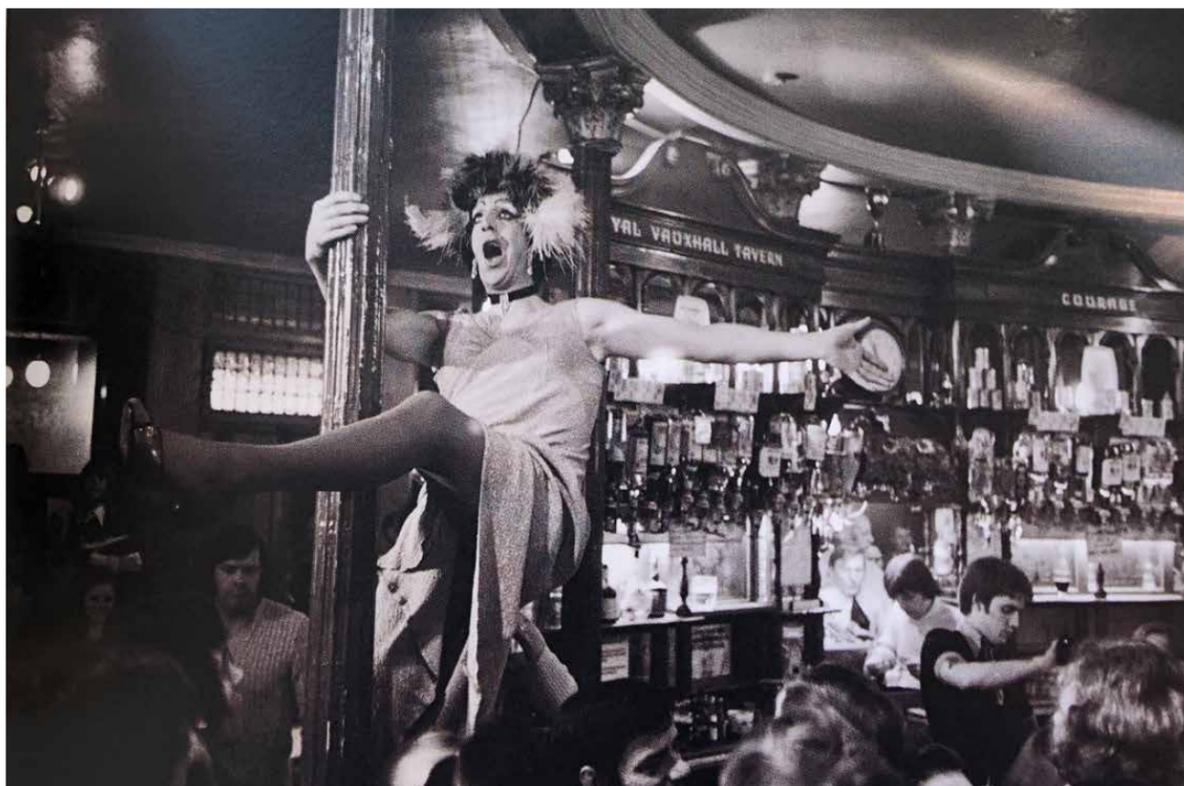


Figure 4. Drag show at Royal Vauxhall Tavern, England (1977).

Indeed, due to its lack of fixity, queer space can materialize in any scenario. It may be built from intersubjective relations such as “verbal, non-verbal, and physical interactions with others.”¹⁸ Given that it arises from relationality, queer space often contains a temporal aspect. Reed, while contending that “queer space is the collective creation of queer people,” argues that it is not completely *ephemeral*, stating that this “doesn’t mean it disappears when we leave.”¹⁹ Even though it is not tied to any particular architectural typology, evidence of its existence is in abundance. Perhaps, in some cases, only to those in the know. As Reed contends **“traces remain to mark certain spaces for others – to their delight or discomfort – to discover.”**²⁰ Indeed, by leaving its trace, queering transcends merely ‘repurposing’ heteronormative architecture. *It acts as a performative challenge to this form of materiality by instigating a new reality.* As stated by designer Jaffer Kolb, queerness is *“a reconfiguring agent.”*²¹ Elio Choquette, in the article “Queering Architecture: (Un)Making Places,” explains that **the occupation of these spaces, and their subsequent transformation into places, becomes “an act of transgression, of resistance to a world**

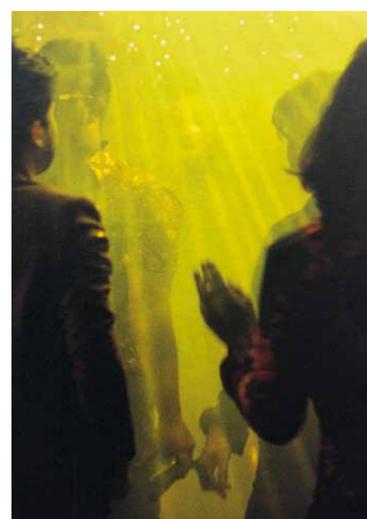


Figure 5. Pop-up queer space, Bangladesh.



Figure 6. Kissing on train platform, Mexico.

that constantly tries, at best, to confine queerness to the margins, and at worst, to eradicate it completely.”²² For this reason, as suggested by architects Benjamin Gianni and Scott Weir, queerness “is more a *strategy* than a space.”²³ Reed describes queer space as *“imminent,”* choosing this term as it designates “to loom over or threaten, it means ready to take place.”²⁴ He states that “fundamentally, *queer space* is space in the process of, literally, *taking place*, of claiming territory.”²⁵ Similarly, as part of the 1994 *Queer Space* exhibition at the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York, contributor Brian McGrath’s installation statement proposed that “‘queer space’ exists potentially everywhere [...] it is the individual’s *appropriation* of the public realm through personal, ever-changing points of view.”²⁶ Despite his criticizability, Betsy also offers one attempt to redefine queer space as an *act*, declaring that **“queer space is not a place: it is an act of appropriating the modern world for the continual act of self-construction.”**²⁷ In all of these formulations, there is a notion of *reclaiming* spatiality from the normative order and *subverting* it in the process. By queering the built environment, spaces that foster queer *agency* emerge.

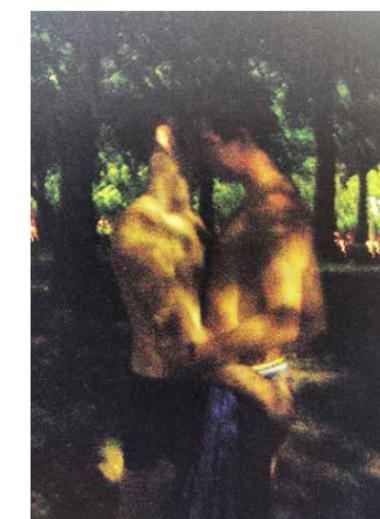
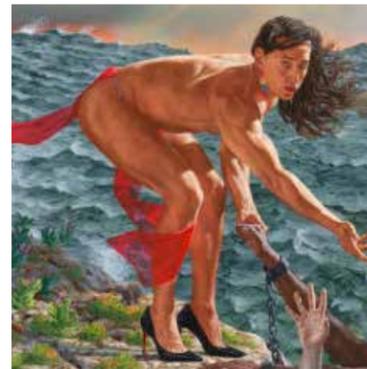
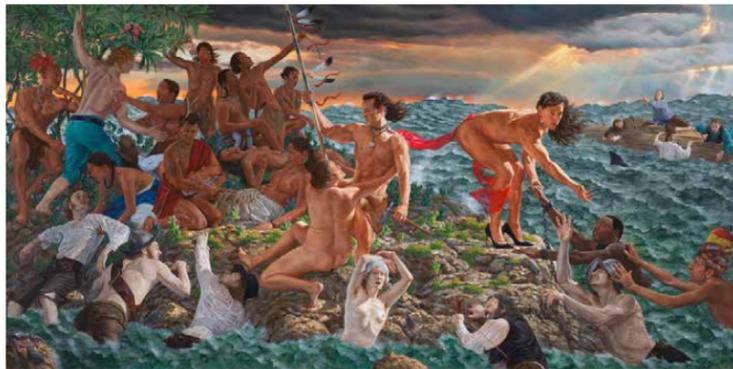


Figure 7. Kissing in Aterro do Flamengo park, Brazil.



Critical intersections in dismantling the architecture of othering

This discussion of 'queering' draws parallels with post-colonial theory's elaboration of 'appropriation.' This term is used not in the sense of 'cultural appropriation,' which encompasses situations in which "members of a majority group adopt cultural elements of a minority group in an exploitative, disrespectful, or stereotypical way."²⁸ Rather, in post-colonial scholarship, it is described as "the ways in which the dominated or colonized culture can use the tools of the dominant discourse to resist its political or cultural control."²⁹ Taking over "aspects of the imperial culture [...] that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities," this form of *resistance* involves "acts of *usurpation*."³⁰ By employing this strategy, "post-colonial societies are able to intervene more readily in the dominant discourse, to interpolate their own cultural realities, or [...] describe those realities to

Figures 8-9. *Welcoming the Newcomers* by Kent Monkman (2019).

Figures 10-11. *Miss Chief's Wet Dream* by Kent Monkman (2019).

a wide audience."³¹ In the context of so-called Canada, an analogous term is 'indigenization.' By identifying "opportunities for indigeneity to be expressed," it "incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing and doing," thereby recognizing the "validity of Indigenous worldviews, knowledges and perspectives."³² Ojibwe film programmer Jesse Wenthe, in an article discussing the potential of this tactic, offers the contemporary examples of Kent Monkman and Jeremy Dutcher. Monkman, a Cree two-spirit artist, recreates European masterpieces and "completely changes their meaning by inserting Indigenous people."³³ Often featuring his "gender-fluid alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, a shape-shifting, supernatural being," Monkman's paintings "confront colonial injustice, challenge received notions of history, advocate for social change, and honour the resistance and resilience of Indigenous peoples."³⁴ Dutcher, a Wolastoqiyik two-spirit musician, uses opera, a key part of the Western classical music tradition, to convey the traditional singing styles and songs of his community. Dutcher's first album, featuring archival recordings and sung entirely in Wolastoq, won the 2018 Polaris Music Prize. Regarding this "different lens," Wenthe states: "When I see those things, I am seeing the future. You are not seeing Western culture obscure Indigenous culture, you are actually seeing Indigenous culture at the *forefront* within Western media."³⁵

While post-colonial theory presents culture, and particularly "imperial language, its discursive forms and its modes of representation," as the most "potent" for appropriation, and the examples of indigenization point to how this may be accomplished in this realm, these concepts are equally relevant to spatial production.³⁶ I have brought them into this conversation for several reasons. Of course, queering is inherently intersectional. Its primary task is to combat the binaries implicated in heteronormativity, which is a colonial construct that disavows human variance *in all its forms*, not just along axes of sex, gender, and sexuality. Going beyond the specificities of this order, it recognizes *normativity* as the root



Figure 12. Photo of ethnographer Frances Densmore collecting songs from Blackfoot chief Ninna-Stako (1916).

Figure 13. Cover of Jeremy Dutcher's album *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa* (2018).

cause of *othering*. No matter how one self-identifies, as part of a gender and sexual minority group or not, it is the imperative to portray certain bodies as 'normal,' while casting the rest as *other*, that must ultimately be combatted. However, I mention this not to amalgamate culturally specific strategies under this term, as this may inadvertently obscure variances that are to be honoured, but rather to indicate similarities that may foster coalitional efforts. Appropriating, indigenizing, and queering are all acts of *resistance*. Each one contests processes of differentiation that entail the marginalization of *othered* populations. By refusing the mechanisms that place them at the margins, they mutually reinforce each other's dismantling efforts. As another equivalence, appropriating, indigenizing, and queering all *claim space* in the dominant order. While the notion of 'claiming territory' may have negative connotations, it must be noted that, from this positionality, it is effectually a *reclamation*. Moreover, **in this context, claiming territory is not a colonial act, but rather a destruction of colonial hierarchy. It marks a disruption to the violence of this normative regime, and not a replication of its devices. This strategy affirms the humanity of those marked as *other*, without seeking to impose this designation on anyone else.** As explained by Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, who writes about queerness from within Nishnaabeg thought in her book *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*,

*Queerness provides for and celebrates variance, including straightness, whereas heteropatriarchy sets out to destroy, control, and manipulate difference into hierarchies that position white, straight, cisgendered males as normal, and everyone else as less.*³⁷

As a final comparison, appropriating, indigenizing, and queering all strive for *liberation*. Not only for those who are *othered*, but for everyone. By dismantling the architecture of *othering*, they advocate for a better future for all of humanity.



A future oriented project

Returning more directly to the discourse pertaining to queering, it is imperative to emphasize its implied futurity. **Queering does more than take a position on the normativity of the built environment. Rather, it creates a spatiality in which queerness can thrive.** Beyond the moments of reprieve it offers, queering constitutes a *liberatory act* paving the way to a *better future*. This “expanded strategy of interrogating place” not only refuses “the very binaries inherent in the building,” *it suggests that a queer world is possible.*³⁸ As stated by the curators of the traveling exhibition “Cruising Pavilion,” **queer spaces are “laboratories for political futures [...] central to understanding new ways of thinking, living, loving, meeting and belonging.”**³⁹ Similarly, Pavka concludes in his article “What Do We Mean by Queer Space?,”

Figure 14. Club in an aeroplane hangar, run by a local queer collective, Argentina (2021).



Figure 15. Category: Bizzare.



Figure 16. Queer crowd taking over street corner, Argentina (2019).

In the end, locating a permanent, stable and material queer space may not be possible. *But that's the point.* It's in the revisiting of these pasts and presents, through a variety of strategies, *that allow a glimpse at the potential of queer futures* — even if [...] they are only a small fraction of the many ways queer individuals and communities navigate space.⁴⁰

As such, engaging in the process of queering can offer insight into what the future *could* hold. In the present, **it creates queer space that**, as put forward by radical geographer Doreen Massey, **“is fluid and subversive, a place of freedom, and multiplicity.”**⁴¹ By and of itself, this concept does not need to offer much more than that. It is up to individuals to mobilize its potentiality.



Figure 17. Decor at Loverbar, Puerto Rico.

An aesthetic challenge to heteronormativity

As a final note before addressing the explorations, I would like to call attention to the ways that queering presents an aesthetic challenge to the heteronormative built environment. As academic José Esteban Muñoz states:

Often we can glimpse the worlds proposed and promised by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic. **The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity.**⁴²

Certainly, attempting to identify a “queer design aesthetic” is yet another futile task.⁴³ Focusing on this element is as much of a “trap” as limiting one’s understanding of queering to a particular identity.⁴⁴ Inevitably, there is a range of output that cannot be essentialized. However, even without a prescribed aesthetic, queering challenges those entrenched in design norms.



Figure 18. Category: Bizzare.

Summary of Explorations

With this understanding of the process of queering, I can now introduce the explorations that I have undertaken. Far from prescriptive, *the following exercises are not meant to advance that there is a particular way to 'queer' architecture.* They merely represent the efforts of one individual to pursue this quest. As the designation of 'explorations' suggests, they are *exploratory* in nature. Continuing to interrogate heteronormative spatial production, these investigations go a step further than the case studies found within the 'Understanding Heteronormativity' section. **Probing for alternatives to the dominant normative order, they are concerned with asserting spatial agency.** They are premised on the belief that one must do more than point out normative orders in order to overcome them. Formulated as a series of prompts, each exploration is presented as a design *question* that elicits a design *response*. While they expand in scope, the body remains foregrounded. Relating each query back to this scale highlights the positioning of the body as *the primary site of contestation*. Effectively, it is from the materiality of the body that heteronormativity dictates its material reality. All forms of spatial violence ultimately return to this entity. As such, queering seeks to abolish this occurrence. By taking a multiscalar approach, I endeavored to tackle various facets of this vast topic. Each exercise in its own way point to the possibility of *other* ways of existing, suggesting a different future than the one that has been outlined by the heteronormative regime. **These explorations question, reveal, subvert, and transform.**

2.1 What is the *Body*?

Exposing the imposition of the *normal* body as a design standard, this exploration seeks a relational understanding of the body.

2.2 What is the *Layered Body*?

Analyzing the ideological functions and spatial implications of clothing, this exploration thwarts heteronormative layering of meaning onto the body through another layer.

2.3 What is the *Shared Body*?

Questioning the impetus to privatize the body and its functions, this exploration engages in deconstruction, opening the most private architecture up to new experiences.

2.4 What is the *Protected Body*?

Investigating the spatial behaviours that construct the queer body as a target, this exploration uses mechanisms innovated by heteronormativity against itself.

2.5 What is the *Worshipped Body*?

Reflecting on the abjection of the queer body, this exploration appropriates religious space for queer joy.

2.6 What is the *Transcendent Body*

After considering numerous difficult spatial circumstances endured by the queer body, this exploration emphasizes instances of world building. Inspired by three case studies, it engages in open-ended creation.



2.1 What is the Body?

“Bodies are simultaneously imaged, hidden, and produced by the design of built worlds.”¹

- Aimi Hamraie

“What body, and what desires, do you build into your designs?”²

- Lucas Crawford

By asking ‘what is *the* body’ rather than ‘what is *a* body,’ I seek to illuminate how the specific has reigned over the non-particular. *The* body is far from ‘neutral.’ Constructed over hundreds of years, this figure has been ‘normalized’ and, consequently, largely insulated from being questioned. While its features remain “unmarked,” *the* body represents a “white, European, nondisabled, youthful, and often masculine figure.”³ Embraced by the architectural project, it has secured itself a key role in informing our built environment. **Disguised as universal, *the* body forms the basis from which all our standards are derived.** As a result, it is privileged with access, which reinforces its sense of belonging. The choice of this figure is thus deeply embedded in notions of power. By tracing *the* body back to its origin, it becomes evident that forms derived from the past, and systems that uphold them, need urgent re-examination. **Any attempt to deconstruct current architectural practices will necessarily require a deconstruction of *the* body. In a constant state of unbuilding and rebuilding, bodies constructed as *other* now offer potent conceptual frameworks.** Through a process of queering, *the* body will undergo *transfiguration*.

Summary of Research

NOTE: The remaining research for this section has been relocated to the back of the document. For an in-depth overview of the following, please consult the appendix.

To provide a brief summary, I trace *the* body back to its Greco-Roman origins. After overviewing Vitruvius's goal of embedding the proportions of an idealized figure into the built environment, I locate the resurgence of this project during the Renaissance through the works of Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci. I then emphasize the historical period that shrouded the specificity of *the* body with the language of science. While previous iterations were dismissed for promoting "antiquated truth claims about bodily proportions," as stated by critical disability studies scholar Aimi Hamraie, new positivist standards of knowledge "premised upon the validity of statistical data" reproduced essentially the same figure.⁴ In doing so, the canon of 'perfect proportions' was transformed into a "normative prescription."⁵

In the 19th century, anthropometry emerged to inform new racial sciences.⁶ Defined as "the scientific study of human body measurements," its "initial, direct application" was to fabricate 'proof' of the 'inferiority' of "nonwhite, disabled, poor, and 'feeble-minded' people."⁷ The analysis of "raw materials of physical variation" was mobilized to construct a binary between "Sameness and Otherness" which was, of course, hierarchical.⁸ 'Statistical data,' notably rate of occurrence, was used to designate bodies as either 'normal' or 'abnormal.' This information supposedly confirmed the "moral and aesthetic truths" of 'normal' bodies, while providing "conclusive and comparative evidence" of the alleged "degeneracy" of those deemed 'abnormal.'⁹ Far from 'objective,' the findings of this pseudoscientific inquiry were entirely contingent on the social attitudes at the time. Nonetheless, the methodology it developed was granted enduring legitimacy.

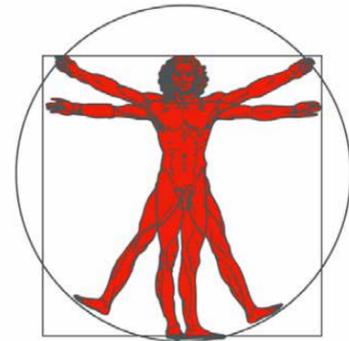


Figure 1. *Vitruvian Man* by Leonardo da Vinci (1487).

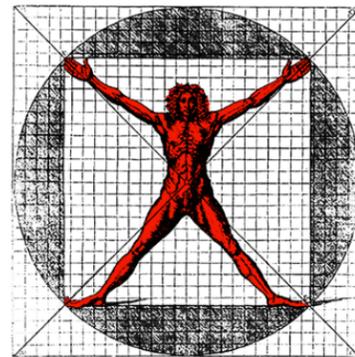


Figure 2. *Vitruvian Man* by Cesare Cesariano (1521).

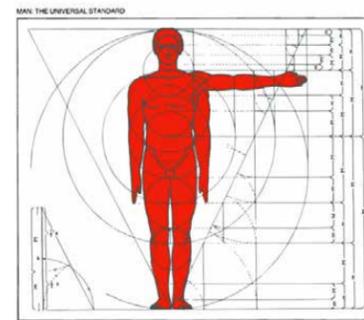


Figure 3. *Man: The Universal Standard* by Ernst Neufert (1936).

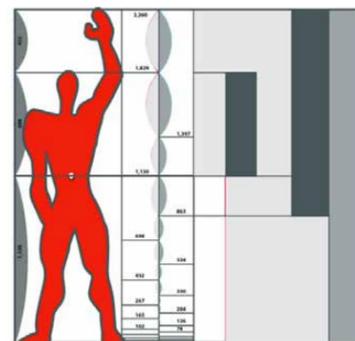


Figure 4. *The Modulor* by Le Corbusier (1948).

After discussing how *the* body was rendered 'scientific,' I highlight the simultaneous development of 'normality.' As noted by curator, writer, and researcher Sofia Lemos, this period saw a "symbolic shift" where the word 'normal' went "from the language of geometry to that of biological matter."¹⁰ Previously referring to "right angle' surfaces," the term was ascribed the contemporary meaning of "constituting, conforming to, not deviating or differing from, the common type or standard."¹¹ It was later joined by its etymological counterpart 'abnormal.' No longer "abstract definitions rooted in science," these antonyms transitioned to everyday consciousness.¹² Significantly, as demonstrated by scholars in comparative literature, 'normality' gained an "inherent morality" in the process.¹³ Forming a binary, the 'normal' was deemed 'good' while the 'abnormal' was deemed 'bad.' This hierarchical arrangement demanded that the population align itself with 'normalcy.' **Instead of 'accurately' describing the populace, 'norms' coerced bodies to conform to what was determined to be 'normal,' which was not always possible, by design. Ultimately, the efforts to 'normalize' *the* body through 'empirical' research created a system in which bodies that did not, or could not, resemble this *specific* body were marked for marginalization.**

This pseudoscience was taken up by the 20th century "biological and social movement" that strove to 'improve' the 'human race,' also known as *eugenics*.¹⁴ For this project, racism was "an ideology of progress."¹⁵ Indeed, the ploy to medically correct the 'human body' was embedded with problematic beliefs about race, sex, gender, sexuality, ability, etc. The goal was "to cull supposedly defective bodies from the population," which included all bodies that did not resemble *the* body.¹⁶ **I draw attention to this movement, because it was taken up by modernist architects with force.** Instead of building for people, they wanted people to adapt to their buildings. Espousing the evolutionary hypothesis that design could 'correct' the body, they began implementing this ideology in the built environment. **Under the guise of "human betterment," modernist architects institutionalized exclusionary practices that remain embedded in the field of architecture to this day.**¹⁷ In order to promote their procedures far and wide, they produced professional handbooks

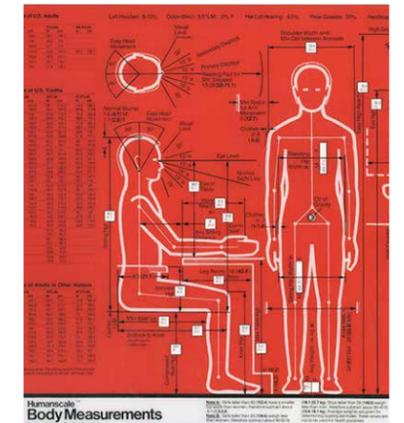
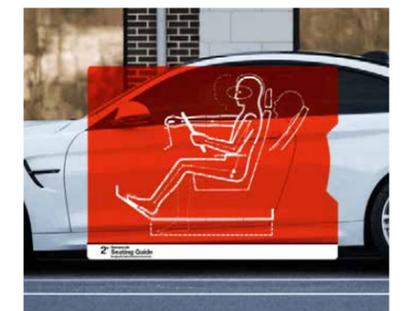


Figure 5. *Humanscale* by Henry Dreyfuss Associates (1974).

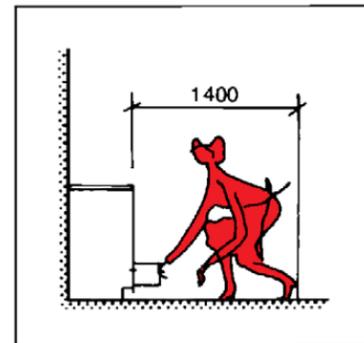
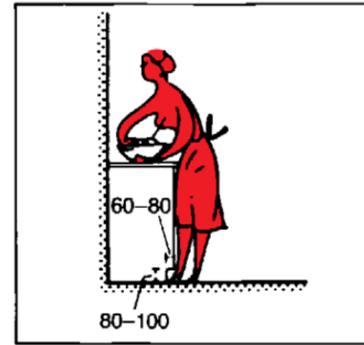


Figures 6-8. "Possible applications."

which presented *the body*, with its “unmarked race, gender, and disability status,” in a manner that “communicated their intended use as universal figures.”¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, the numerical values associated with the figures they alleged to be ‘average’ “did not match any anthropometric data available at the time.”¹⁹ While proclaiming “to simplify design,” standards only streamlined spatial production for *the body*.²⁰ As stated by architectural researcher Sarah Gunawan, reference manuals “pervade architectural education and practice and necessitate critical examination of the spatial discriminations they perpetuate.”²¹

I offer an overview of key treatises, including *Architects' Data* by Ernst Neufert, and *The Modulor* by Le Corbusier. Neufert, who authored what is commonly referred to as the ‘Architect’s Bible,’ headed the standardization department of the Nazi Party.²² Included on Adolf Hitler’s “God-gifted list,” he was considered indispensable in the project of building of the Third Reich.²³ While the details of Neufert’s life are often ignored, I demonstrate how they are implicated in the standards he developed. I then turn to Le Corbusier, who, along with his fascist tendencies, was a major actor in the global effort to enact eugenic ideology through urban planning and architecture.²⁴ As architectural historian Fabiola López-Durán delineates, he deployed various techniques to achieve “the perfecting and whitening of man.”²⁵ Le Corbusier’s beliefs are inseparable from his work, and yet, they are often denied.²⁶ Alas, both versions of *the body* are emblematic of white supremacy.

Subsequently, I review efforts to ‘diversify’ standards. Espoused as a significant advancement in equality, ‘Joe’ was joined by ‘Josephine.’ I note the pair’s resemblance to ‘Normman’ and ‘Norma,’ statues commissioned by Robert Latou Dickinson. While the former vice-president of Planned Parenthood is credited as a major contributor to the study of ‘female’ sexuality, he harboured eugenic motivations. Purporting to represent the ‘average’ American of each ‘sex,’ Normman and Norma were exclusively based on the measurements of members of “a white racial group” between the ages of 21 and 25.²⁷ Placed on exhibition, they were meant to inspire “self-improving subjects,” who reproduced ‘wisely.’²⁸ Note that ‘interracial’



Figures 9-10. A figure in a dress in the kitchen, in Neufert’s *Architects’ Data*.

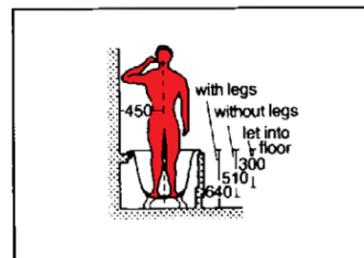


Figure 11. The ‘universal standard’ standing in a bathtub.

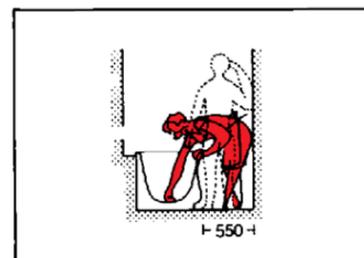


Figure 12. A figure in a dress cleaning a bathtub.

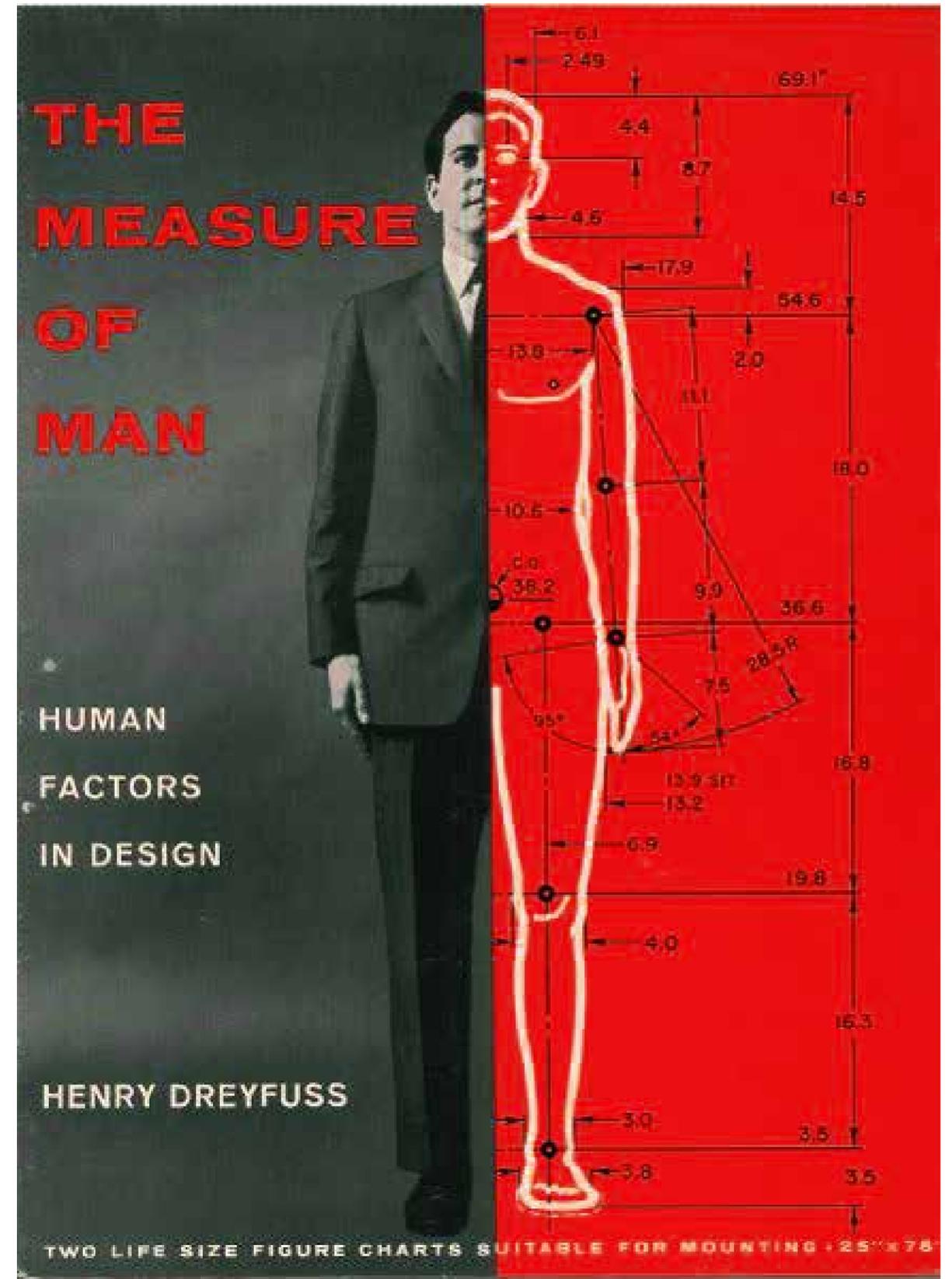


Figure 13. *The Measure of Man: Human Factors in Design* by Henry Dreyfuss (1959). In 1993, the title was updated to *The Measure of Man and Woman: Human Factors in Design* to be more ‘inclusive.’

marriage was not only discouraged, but illegal in the U.S. during this era. Henry Dreyfuss, the creator of Joe and Josephine, also relied on a limited segment of society. Using military data, a field notable for its lack of diversity at the time, he extrapolated population-scale generalizations. In the guidebook *The Measure of Man: Human Factors in Design*, he writes “our job is to make Joe and Josephine compatible with their environment” through the process known as “human engineering.”²⁹ Stereotypical gender roles determined which figure would be accommodated in what circumstance. **The addition of the body’s counterpart did not expand spatial possibilities, rather it reified an inequitable built environment.** I emphasize that the exclusion of vast segments of the population *was not incidental* in these analogous elaborations. Rather, in both cases, these figures were created in service of “eugenic world building.”³⁰ While ‘unmarked,’ they were *specifically* raced, sexed, gendered, sexualized and embodied. Embedded in architectural practice, these *specific* figures informed a built environment that excluded all *others*. Claiming neutrality, or even ‘progress,’ allowed this practice to go unquestioned.

The designation of ‘normal’ is, in actuality, a value judgement. Disguised as ‘average,’ the standard bodies in reference manuals were based on a limited sample of humanity. That being said, **averages are merely “mathematical calculations;” they are not, and never will be, “representations of existing, living bodies.”**³¹ Even a veritable ‘average’ of the entire population would not be any more useful than that of *the body*. As explained by Léopold Lambert, editor-in-chief of *The Funambulist*, **any such figure would not “represent anybody’s body,” but would rather constitute “an unreachable state of normality.”**³² The belief that the built environment should cater to any sort of ‘average’ is fundamentally flawed. It conflates what has been deemed as ‘normal’ as ‘universally applicable.’ Reality is far more complex. Such an oversimplification only benefits those who approximate the norm, to the detriment of all *others*. Consequently, **by implementing standards calibrated to the “mythic average user,” architects sanction the enactment of violence towards bodies, “with an intensity proportional to [their] corporal difference from the norm.”**³³

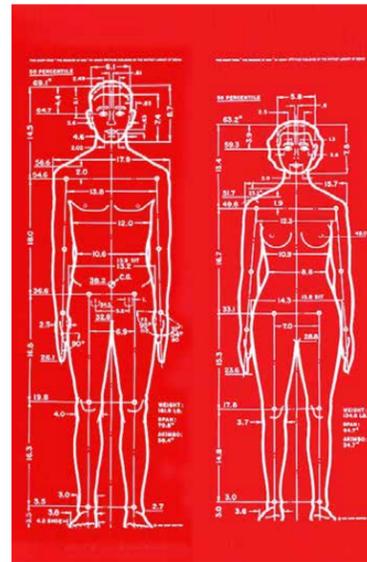


Figure 14. Joe and Josephine by Henry Dreyfuss Associates (1974).

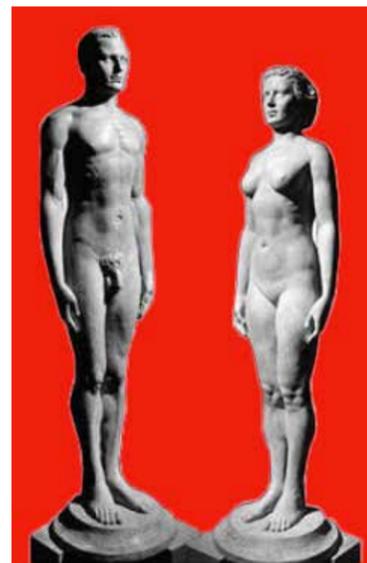


Figure 15. Statues of Norman and Norma (1943).

To illustrate, I discuss the longstanding marginalization of people deemed ‘disabled.’ As stated by Carol Thomas, a sociologist of health and illness, “being disabled was an entirely socially caused phenomenon.”³⁴ Shifting the emphasis from *bodies* onto *the social constructs that restrict them*, ‘disability’ is the result of “a society where the concept of the norm is operative.”³⁵ Correspondingly, ‘disablism’ refers to “the social imposition of *avoidable restrictions* on the life activities, aspirations and psycho-emotional well-being of people categorized as ‘impaired’ by those deemed ‘normal.’”³⁶ **Given that it is “primarily caused by environmental barriers,” architects are deeply implicated in the production of ‘disability.’**³⁷ Hamraie notes that the addition of wheelchair users in guidebooks were not “an indication that well-intentioned architects had simply sought out better information about users.”³⁸ Rather, it was a legal obligation. They add that, despite shifts in the content of statistical data, “designers had continued to imagine the average body through a default habit of perception.”³⁹

Alas, “‘configuring’ prototypical users” remained a process of collecting ‘statistical data’ in service of producing “objects” or “tools for designers to use.”⁴⁰ Merely representing ‘averages,’ these figures once again failed to represent ‘real’ bodies. While their integration in reference manuals “seemed to suggest that architects could finally design with a range of users in mind, not as an afterthought but throughout the entire design process,” they were still emblematic of a normative order.⁴¹ In fact, *this semblance of inclusivity had the effect of solidifying norms*, albeit beyond that of *the body*. As Lambert explains, “the very idea of including wheelchair users, handicapped or elderly within this mean of rationalization, however thoughtful and progressive, is problematic as it attempts to *normalize* what is, by definition, *failing to respect the norm* - that is the very idea of categorizing somebody as ‘handicapped.’”⁴² He does, however, concede that “it nevertheless helps us to question further a potential transgression to the universality of the norm.”⁴³



Figure 16. A contestant in Cleveland Health Museum’s competition to find the living embodiment of Norma. Of the nearly 4000 entries, only a minute percentage approached the ‘average’ dimension of the statue. No one matched the chest, waist, hip, and height measurements.

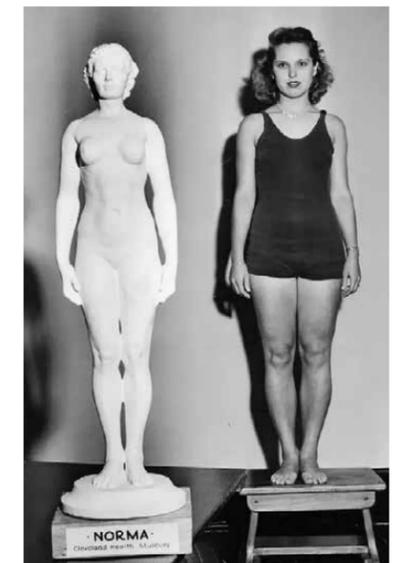


Figure 17. Martha Skidmore, winner of the contest. As the participant with the closest approximation, she was granted the title of ‘Norma, Typical Woman’ along with a \$100 US war bond.

Neutralized through repeated implementation, the spatial arrangements promoted in reference manuals are now *common sense*. Trained to only anticipate normative bodies, architects “came to create buildings and public spaces with particular inhabitants in mind.”⁴⁴ Over time, it became increasingly difficult for them to imagine spaces “that was neither calibrated to nor productive of dominant bodily norms.”⁴⁵ Explaining how professional handbooks have impoverished architectural creativity, Lambert states that **“the precision and illusory exhaustiveness of dimensional combination of the body and architecture, however useful, elaborates an imaginary limited field of possibilities.”**⁴⁶ Standardization, hidden in plain sight, “exclude the contributions and participation of people all around the world.”⁴⁷

The field of architecture has largely ignored inconvenient truths, because acknowledging them would require changing practices with problematic legacies. Dealing with this inheritance is challenging, as it is deeply embedded in the processes that create our built environment. Standards are often more than suggestions, as they have become enshrined in code. However, turning a blind eye continues to privilege normative bodies with spatial access and belonging, to the detriment of all *others*. The violence perpetuated by the field of architecture must be acknowledged. Beyond that, it must be addressed. As stated by Federica Buzzi in the article “‘Human, All Too Human’: A critique on the Modulor,” “to various degrees, **this norm is harmful for all the bodies: although favouring some over others, it generally introduces a restricted notion of what accounts as human.**”⁴⁸ Indeed, normative orders harm us all, even those among us who embody a “white, European, nondisabled, youthful, and often masculine figure.”⁴⁹ All bodies are subject to change. All will age. Considering the moment we are born, to the day we die, it becomes evident how little ‘average’ bodies reflect the human experience. And yet, they are used to inform the spatial conditions of our world. I conclude that *the body*, and all normative notions of bodies, must be *dismantled*.

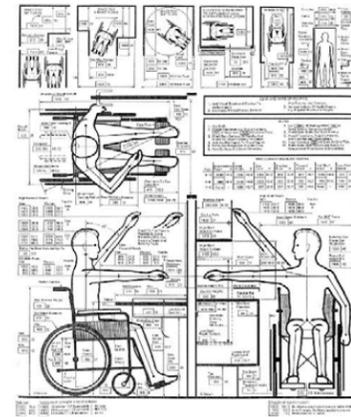


Figure 18. Wheelchair user in *Architectural Graphic Standards* (1981).



Figure 19. *Modulor* by Thomas Carpentier (2012).

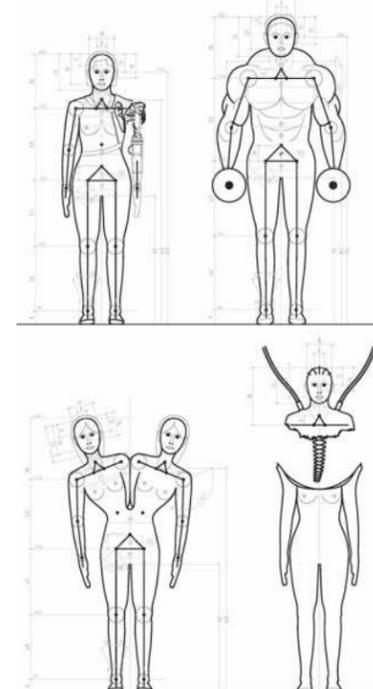


Figure 20. *Measure(s) of Man: Architects' Data Add-On* by Thomas Carpenter (2012).

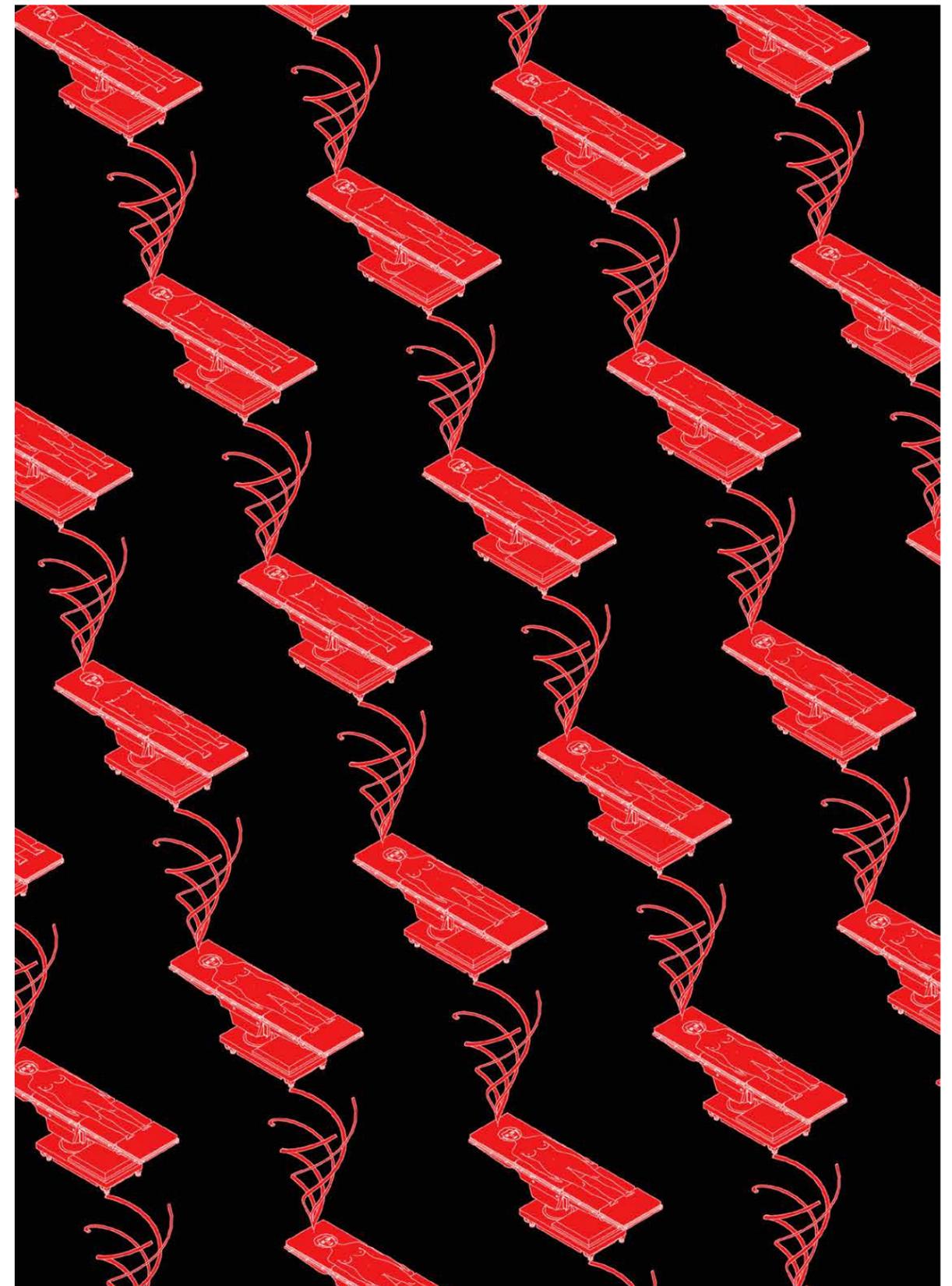


Figure 21. Drawing of normative bodies.

Queering *the* body: Towards the concept of relational and fluid bodies

As stated previously, any attempt to deconstruct current architectural practices will necessarily require a deconstruction of *the* body. Academic Jack Halberstam suggests that the trans body offers a blueprint for the dismantling of binary understandings of bodies. Rather than represent the “non-normative against which the normative” can be discerned, it highlights that the fact that **“all bodies pass through some version of building and unbuilding.”**⁵⁰ While transitioning is often reductively described in terms of “a wrong body replaced by a right body,” Halberstam maintains that this process “dismantles the system that metes out rightness and wrongness” altogether.⁵¹ As Lucas Crawford expounds in *Transgender Architectonics: The Shape of Change in Modernist Space*, **it is part of “heteronormative mythology” that everybody is “naturally stable and fixed.”**⁵² The notion of “being born ‘in’ the wrong body,” he explains, relies on “the very binary system of gender that trans-embodiment” challenges.⁵³ Moreover, this “particular spatial model of trans reaches its climax at the cost of accepting discourses [...] that devalue transgender in the first instance.”⁵⁴ Taking a position similar to that of Halberstam, he asserts that **“trans people are successful in shattering the illusion” of bodily coherence “even as normatively gendered people work hard to maintain this illusion.”**⁵⁵ By unmaking the frames through which the trans body has been viewed, it becomes evident that all bodies are “fragmentary and internally contradictory.”⁵⁶

The trajectory of *the* body has revealed sustained efforts to produce a fixed notion of what constitutes as a body. Crucially, modernist architects, by standardizing designs calibrated to this *specific* body, enabled spatial violence towards nonnormative bodies *at an unprecedented scale*. As stated by Halberstam, they “believed that form followed function, and sought to impose a rational order upon *an irrational existence*.”⁵⁷ Trans bodies reveal how far *the* body is from reality. Offering “an extensive vocabulary for expressing unbecoming,” trans embodiment equally registers as a “form of becoming.”⁵⁸ Exemplifying “the

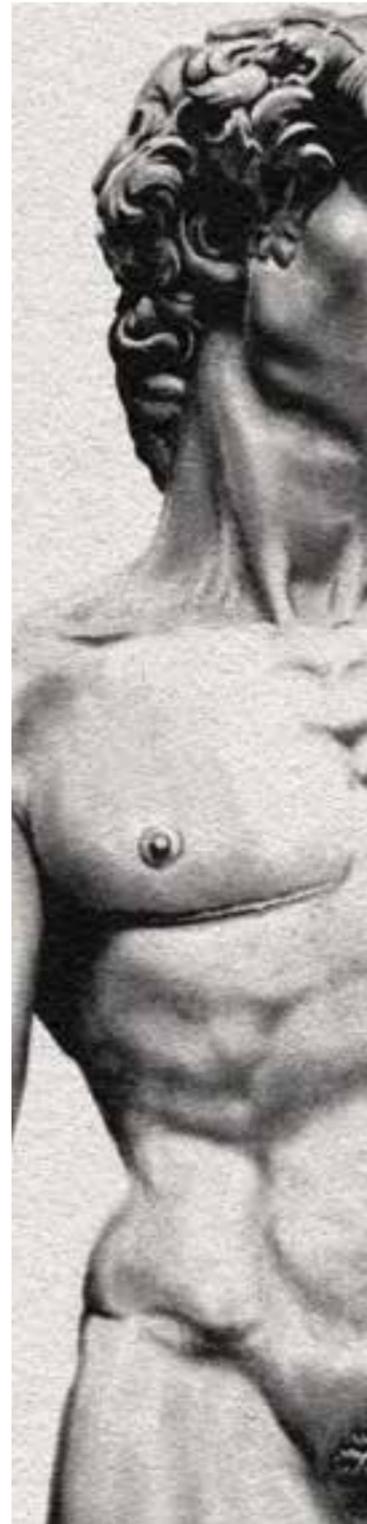


Figure 22. Reinterpretation of Michelangelo's statue of *David* by Theodore Purdy.

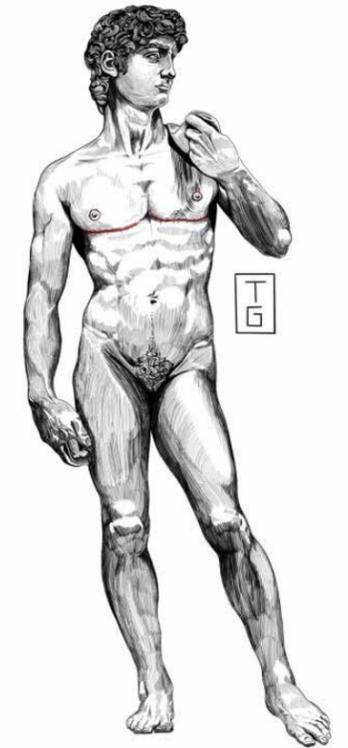
growth of new margins,” its defiance bodily cohesion allows the proliferation of so many other ways of being.⁵⁹ This expansion of perspective has immediate repercussions for architecture. Halberstam explains:

Over the past few decades [...] conceptions of gender have changed irrevocably, from binary to multiple; from a centering of physical embodiment to the spatializing of identities; from definitive to fractal. And as new genders have been formed, old genders have also been destroyed. **Gender ideologies that once facilitated intuitive connections** — between the home and the maternal body, or the skyscraper or the gun and the male body, [...] and so on — **are now thoroughly disarranged.**⁶⁰

He asserts that debates registering the “*mismatch* between bodily forms and the built environment,” such as those about trans bodies and the public toilet, are “only the tip of a large and quickly melting iceberg.”⁶¹ In this “new landscape of gendered life,” Halberstam observes:

Disorientation is no longer the terrain solely of those who veer from the straight and narrow. More and more, it names a shared experience of life lived in the collapse of foundational fictions about identity — lived alongside a slow but perceptible declassification of knowledge, a movement away from the 19th-century project of ordering, typing, and cataloguing, and towards a 21st-century vision of *multiplying, confusing, and unsorting.*⁶²

By exposing the ideology of *the* body for what it is, as profoundly anti-human, trans bodies highlight the necessity for an architectural concept of a body that is continuously changing. For far too long, the built environment has only served bodies that approximate the norm. Alas, no body embodies the norm, as it is a fiction. The illusion has been shattered, and it is time to move on. **Rejecting standards allows *the* body to change.** This act of rebuilding has no destination, rather, like ‘queering,’ it is about embracing



Figures 23-24. Reinterpretations of *David* by Michelangelo and *Bacchus* by Caravaggio, both by Theo Golden.

THE BODY

2.1 The Body

Given that bodies defy cohesion, this design exploration does not preoccupy itself with creating new standards for design manuals. Recall that queering calls attention to normativity, and “does not seek to institute some new norm large enough to accommodate itself.”⁶³ The goal of this exercise was to visualize a *fluid* and *relational* idea of the body. Downloading ‘standard’ bodies, I explored the dynamism that they are denied, then combined them until all boundaries dissolved. **Through metaphorical representation, this film depicts the one thing that all bodies will do over time; change. No longer forced to remain the same, the body has the freedom to build, unbuild, and rebuild itself.**



Figures 1-5. Video stills from “The Body” showing a fluid and relational body.



Figure 6. Concept drawing #1.

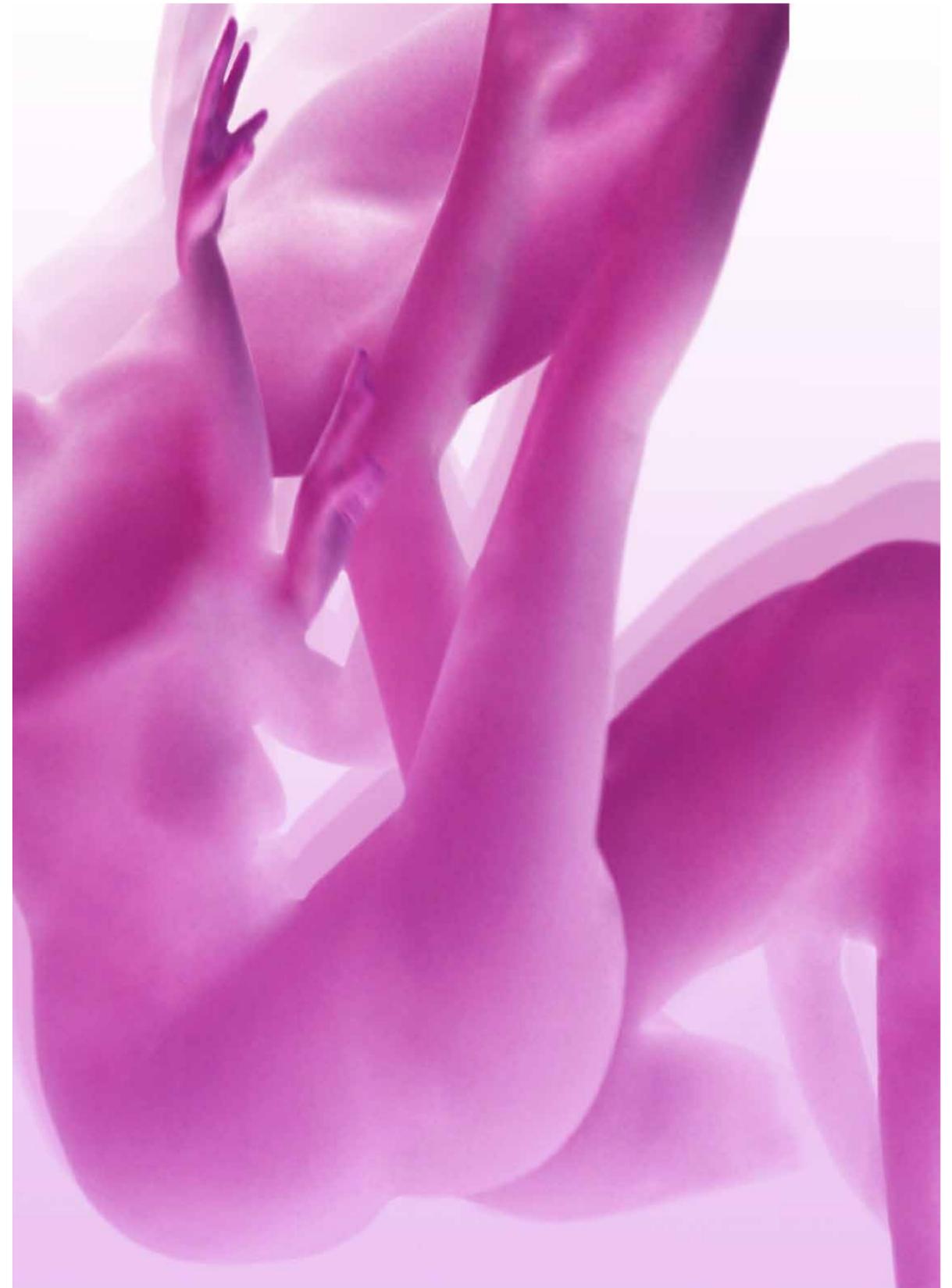


Figure 7. Concept drawing #2.



Figure 8. Concept drawing #3.



Figure 9. Video of "The Body," accompanied by the song *HUMAN* by Sevdaliza.

2.2 What is the Layered Body?

'Stickiness' is a consistency that "neither has the firmness of something solid, nor the flow of something liquid."¹ Sarah Ahmed, a scholar who wrote the book *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* and specializes in feminist, queer, and critical race theory, offers a conceptualization of this term that elucidates the ways in which meaning is layered onto bodies. She conceives 'stickiness' as "a condition of binding" rather than an inherent property of a surface.² Through "an act of bringing together," it attaches connotations to material and immaterial entities, which are then accumulated and sustained.³ This layering is part of a historical process. As explained by Ahmed, 'stickiness' is "an effect of surfacing, [...] an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs."⁴ When bodies are "imprinted with histories of discourse," they are marked unevenly, causing some to become 'sticky.'⁵ As a result, they are layered with meaning, while others are not. Through repetition, "ontologically different entities," are linked via "a chain of transferred stickiness in a history of becoming sticky."⁶ Consequently, bodies are grouped together for no reason beyond sharing a characteristic that is understood as having meaning. Moreover, what 'sticks' is erroneously seen as intrinsic. Through this mechanism, imposed meanings become essentialized, leaving 'sticky' bodies to be categorized and subjected to a valuation process. This appraisal has tangible consequences; bodies that conform to normative scripts are rewarded with safety, access, and belonging, while *others* are marked for marginalization. The imperceptibility of this 'sticky' operation only serves to naturalizes discriminatory behaviour. Additional factors, beyond the physicality of the body, are used to justify this disparate treatment. Namely, its packaging. Artefacts, such as clothing, are equally susceptible to 'stickiness.'

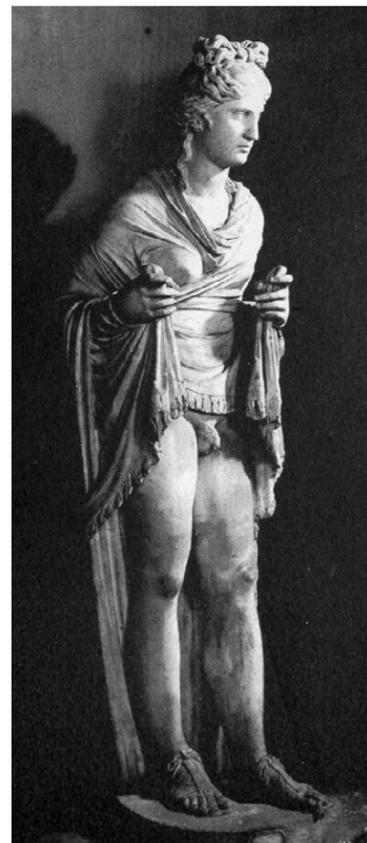
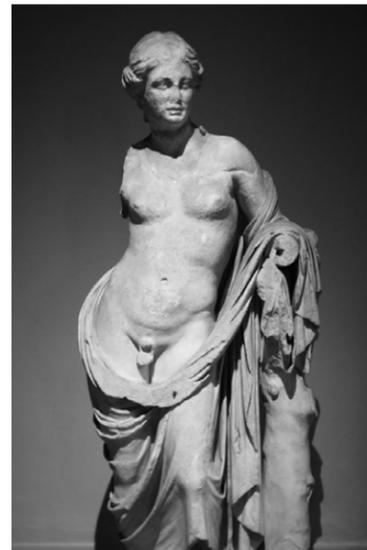
Clothing, in a sense, is the architecture closest to the body. The relationship that it has with its enclosure is undoubtedly a spatial one. This layer profoundly shapes the body's experiences of space, as well as its ability to interface within it. What one wears informs how one is perceived



Figure 1. Musician Jayne County in a dress made from condoms (circa 1960s-70s).
Figure 2. Cult statue of the Ephesian mother goddess Artemis (replica of a 6th century BCE version). The globules on the chest are commonly assumed to be breasts, however they represent testicles. Castration was a common worshipping practice.

by others. Similarly, it informs how one perceives oneself. Embedded in these assessments are value judgements, determining what is and isn't permissible. As such, one's attire can dictate what spaces one has access to, and under what conditions. For instance, failing to ascribe to dress codes, formal or informal, can limit one's entry into spaces, be it a professional setting or a nightclub. Clothing can establish how much space one takes up, in both a literal and figurative sense. It can aid or restrict one's capacity to physically move through, or remain in, certain spaces. Visually suggesting how one should be treated, it can influence one's quality of existence. Social norms can communicate how one should act in one's clothing. Or, limit one's freedom to choose what to put on in the first place. They might suggest that one to try to blend in. Alternatively, if one stands out, that one should face the consequences for doing so. **Clothes not only cover the body, they also shape it. The clothed body acts as an identity marker, rendering one's social position recognizable. The garments it wears offers the contextualization required for differential treatment. By layering meaning onto the body, clothing fashions a variety of spatial experiences for its wearer.**

Gender, as explained by Riki Wilchins, an activist who founded the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) and authored several books on gender theory, is "a language, a system of meanings and symbols, along with the rules, privileges, and punishments pertaining to their use."⁷ Within this gendered lexicon is clothing, offering its services as a tool of communication. Throughout history, clothing has been integral in the formulation of social categories, including that of heteronormatively defined gender, and by extension, sex. In the event of "proximity or contact with something sticky," a process of signification attaches signs to objects.⁸ Mutually constituting, bodies and various clothing items became gendered by way of this transference. As clothes got 'stickier,' they were increasingly implicated in gendering. Laws emerged pertaining to their use. Dressing in ways that confirmed gender roles was valorized; those who contributed to the status quo were rewarded with social belonging. Meanwhile, those who opposed these legislations engendered consequences.



Figures 3-6. This reoccurring pose in sculpture depicts 'Anasyrma,' which is the gesture of lifting a skirt or tunic. This action was associated with certain religious rituals. Regarded as an 'apotropaic' device, it was believed to avert evil influences and bring good fortune.

As there is a strong link between one's attire and social hierarchy, engaging with clothing in ways contrary to the norm denies it of this power. To do so hints at other ways of being and may even bring about new realities. Given clothing's potential to upend social order, attempts to regulate who can wear what are perhaps unsurprising. There is a long history of dress codes, with some informal, and others enforceable by law. Continuously evolving, these regulations are tied with the social and political ideals of the day. **For the heteronormative order, dictating gender presentation has been of utmost concern.** In the following history, the work of historian, activist and author Leslie Feinberg has been integral for gaining an understanding of the importance of this layer for both reaffirming heteronormativity, and for contesting it.

A history of sacred ritual

There is an even longer history of what historians have deemed 'cross-dressing,' a practice which can be traced back to the Stone Age.⁹ Cognisant of how modern interpretations are laden with bias, it is necessary to deconstruct this term. 'Cross-dressing' is defined as "the wearing of clothes designed for the opposite sex."¹⁰ The use of the word 'opposite' is notable, as it connotes diametric difference, with one "being the *other* of a pair that are corresponding."¹¹ Embedded within this terminology is the assumption of heteronormatively defined binary 'sex.' To cross, in this case, is to go from 'male' to 'female,' or vice versa. While this phenomenon is frequently described in historical accounts, historian of sexuality Jonathan Ned Katz notes, "we do not usually name and speak of the strong desire to dress in the clothes of one's own sex."¹² Indeed, the notion is embedded with normative assumptions. The suggestion that these 'cross-dressers' might have actually been transgender is generally met with criticism.¹³ However, while it may be 'anachronistic' to assign them this identity, *it is no more so than assigning them a binary 'sex.'* These people existed long before this category had been



Continued: These statues were common during the Classical Antiquity period (8th century BCE to 6th century CE).

formulated as such. *To impose these constructions onto ancient civilizations only serves to naturalize society's current understandings. For the purposes of this essay, 'cross-dressing' is to be understood not as 'crossing' from one binary 'sex' to another, but rather as the practice of adorning oneself in a manner that disrupts the heteronormative order. It is still a form of 'crossing,' but one that emphasizes the defiant act, and not the imposed categories.*

What can be surmised from early historical artefacts is that donning certain garments conferred special powers, granting access to ceremonial space.¹⁴ These "priestesses" worshipped the "Great Mother," described by Greek historian Plutarch (46-119 CE) as a "hermaphroditic deity *in whom the sexes had not yet split.*"¹⁵ Often, the role included 'castration.' Despite there being no biological imperative to dress in a certain way, contemporary analysis would characterise these rituals as consisting of 'males' donning 'female' clothing. There is no way of knowing if that is how these people understood this custom. Looking beyond our heteronormative paradigm, these ancient practices suggest something altogether different than a binary understanding of bodies. Perhaps there was more fluidity when it came to clothing and its associations. Whether or not it was understood as 'cross-dressing,' this ritual was not considered abject as it is now, but rather sacred.

A history of suppression, and ongoing celebration and rebellion

Increasingly this practice came to be interpreted in ways similar to its modern signification and was met with varying degrees of concern. The earliest edict against 'cross-dressing,' and its associated body modification, appeared in the Torah as part of the Book of Deuteronomy (circa 11th to 7th century BCE).¹⁶ The edicts read "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a



Figure 7. Funerary relief of a gallus ('eunuch priest') of the mother goddess Magna Mater (mid 2nd century).



Figure 8. Statue of another Magna Mater gallus (late 2nd century).

woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God," and "He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter the congregation of the LORD."¹⁷ As a brief aside, while it is true that Judaism has "recognized nonbinary persons for millennia," with the Talmud being lauded for including up to eight genders, this recognition of human diversity was unfortunately executed in order to assign each category the legal rights associated with 'men' and 'women,' which were not on equal footing.¹⁸ By regimenting clothing choice and restricting bodily autonomy, these laws sought to abolish the commonly performed rituals as part of a campaign against the Syrian mother goddess Atargatis. During ceremonies, as explained in modern historical accounts, her followers "assumed the role of the opposite sex, just as their Greek counterparts did."¹⁹ Given that 'cross-dressing' was integral part of the worship of the "Mother Goddess," Judaism forbade 'men' from "using makeup, wearing brightly colored clothes, jewelry, [...] or shaving their pubic hair."²⁰ Other patriarchal religions, such as Christianity, would later dictate hair lengths, asking rhetorically "does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory?"²¹ The passage further states that "it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head."²² While there no explicit references to 'cross-dressing' are made in the New Testament, other passages demand modest attire for 'women.'²³ When conferring different spatial privileges to the 'sexes,' religious law needed to contrive visual mechanisms for differentiation. As can be observed in many religions, this tactic prevails to this day.

There have been many other notable attempts to regulate 'cross-dressing,' many of which were highly contested. Festivities often centered around this practice, creating spaces of transformation that threatened the dominant order. For instance, in Greece, the shape-shifting god Dionysus had long been celebrated with 'cross-dressing.'²⁴ Later known as Bacchus, the festivities were taken up by the Romans around 200 BCE.²⁵ The status of this

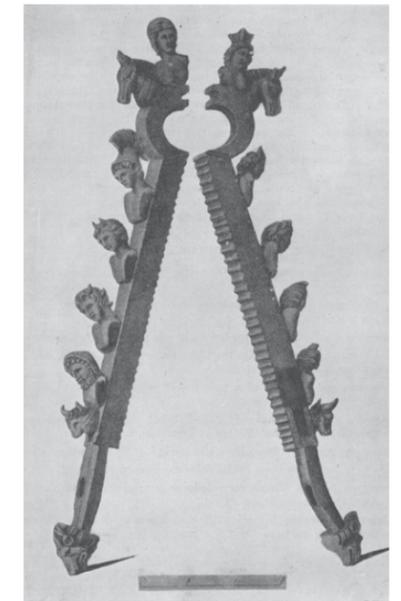


Figure 9. Romano-British castration clamp used in the rites of the mother goddess Cybele (circa 2nd or 3rd century).

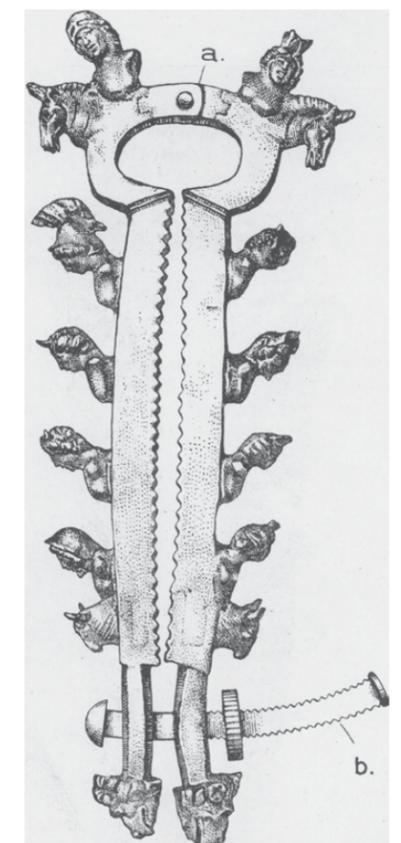


Figure 10. Conjectural restoration of the same castration clamp.



Figure 11. *The Roses of Heliogabalus* by Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1888).

double-being, once believed to be doubly powerful, was downgraded to “effeminate, an increasingly despised gender expression” by Rome’s Christian ruling class.²⁶ By 186 BCE, the Roman Senate banned “*bacchanalia*,” as the “pleasure-centred festival” was reputed for its orgies.²⁷ Beloved by the people, these rituals endured even after Christianity became the state religion in 342 CE.²⁸ As part of a successive effort to outlaw ‘cross-dressing,’ an edict brought forward in 390 CE sought to punish “those who basely abandons his own sex” with death by fire.²⁹ This engendered dramatic resistance; following the subsequent arrest of a famous circus performer who was “well-known for his femininity,” people rose up in rebellion and killed the head of the militia in Thessalonica, the capital of the Roman province of Macedon.³⁰ Unfortunately, Emperor Theodosius the Great demanded a collective punishment, which resulted in the death of over 3000 people at the hands of Roman soldiers.³¹ However, ‘cross-dressing,’ particularly as a celebratory act, refused to subside.

In his 1776 book *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon writes that the Roman emperor Elagabalus “abandoned [herself] to the grossest of pleasures [and] affected to copy the dress and manners of the female sex.” Despite the derision that frequently features in these accounts, pertinent information about this person can be gleaned. For instance, according to the 1927 book *Roman History* by Cassius Dio, Elagabalus identified as a woman, referring to herself as “lady,” “queen,” “wife,” and “mistress,” as well as obtaining “female genitalia” from her physicians. As public historian Grace Tang notes, Ancient Rome “featured a myriad of, what could be understood, both then and now, experiences that transcended sex and gender norms.”

The persistence of ‘cross-dressing’ continued to incite a slew of religious attempts to regulate the practice. Another notable effort included the following decree by the Council of Constantinople in 691 CE:

We forbid dances and initiation rites of the ‘gods,’ as they are falsely called among the Greeks, since, whether by men or women, they are done according to an ancient custom contrary to the Christian way of life, and we decree that no man shall put on a woman’s dress nor a woman, clothes that belong to men.³²

In later centuries, the Catholic Church would demonize these rituals by linking them with ‘witchcraft.’³³ Meanwhile, it demonstrated many instances of hypocrisy. Priestly garb, composed of “floor-length gowns, bright colors, jeweled rings, and other adornments” descended from ancient ‘cross-dressing’ “priestesses.”³⁴ Priesthood was even referred to as “putting a boy ‘into skirts.’” Furthermore, the Catholic Church frequently canonized ‘women’ who ‘cross-dressed’ throughout the Middle Ages.³⁵ This was despite official documents discouraging this behaviour, such as the 9th century decree stating:

If women who chose chastity in the cause of religion either take on the clothes of a man or cut their hair, in order to appear false to others, we resolve that they should be admonished and criticized, because we consider that they err through a great ignorance rather than zeal.³⁶

Joan of Arc, who was also eventually canonized in 1920, was burned at the stake in 1431 by the Inquisition of the Catholic Church.³⁷ This was ultimately due to her clothing choices rather than her role in the siege of Orleans, which is a fact often dismissed.³⁸ In contemporary accounts, she is commended for her brilliant military leadership, which helped birth the nation-state of France. At the time, it was not her role in this watershed moment that brought about her demise. The English urged the Catholic Church to condemn her for ‘cross-dressing,’ with King Henry VI declaring:



Figure 12. “Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination” exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 13. German painting of Saint Wilgefortis.



Figure 14. Portrait of Joan of Arc in war costume. (17th century.)

It is sufficiently notorious and well-known that for some time past a woman calling herself Jeanne the Pucelle (the Maid), leaving off the dress and clothing of the feminine sex, a thing contrary to divine law and abominable before God, and forbidden by all laws, wore clothing and armour such as is worn by men.³⁹

Joan of Arc's testimony, as part of her defense, revealed how deeply these clothing choices were to her identity. Moreover, she claimed that her mode of dress was ordained by God. When given the opportunity for salvation on the condition of wearing 'women's' clothing, she declared: "for nothing in the world, will I swear not to arm myself and put on a man's dress."⁴⁰ In response to this refusal, the court pronounced: "you condemn yourself in being unwilling to wear the customary clothing of your sex, and following the custom of the Gentiles and the Heathen."⁴¹ Despite 'cross-dressing' not being a capital offense at the time, it was for this crime that she was ultimately executed. Over the course of her short-lived life, the clothing Joan of Arc wore granted her access to spatial opportunities reserved for the intended wearers of these culturally specified garments. With them, she could bypass the role outlined for her by society, and command troops. Threatening the supremacy of religious rule, the accusations stated that she "seduced the Catholic people, many in her presence adored her as a saint ...even more, they declared her the greatest of all saints after the holy Virgin."⁴² Highlighting the power of clothes, it was Joan of Arc's choice of attire that inspired reverence among the peasants, for whom 'cross-dressing' remained an integral part of festivals well into the 16th century.

'Cross-dressing' was a *pattern in rebellion*, just as much as it was part of celebration. There are many accounts of rebel troops that were composed of "armed male peasants, dressed as women."⁴³ This phenomenon was "surprisingly frequent," with numerous reports



Figure 15. *Joan of Arc in Battle* (Central Part of *The Life of Joan of Arc Triptych*) by Hermann Stilke (1843).

Later portraiture notably accentuates the chest and includes a skirt. This, of course, was not historically accurate, but rather reflected the times.



of 'crossed-dressed' insurrections across Europe.⁴⁴ Regarded as an element of pride, several among the leadership highlighted their 'cross-dressing' by adopting "female titles," or collectively naming their group in these terms.⁴⁵ To give one example, a 19th century Wales band called themselves "Rebecca and her daughters."⁴⁶ Numbering in the thousands, they received widespread popular support for their efforts in eliminating of toll barriers. Various 'crossed-dressed' groups fought to ease the plight of the peasantry.⁴⁷ While a lot of writing has rationalized the 'cross-dressing' practices of 'women' who dress like 'men' as a method of social climbing, instances of 'men' dressing 'women' have left these authors puzzled. Similarly dismissive of the relationship between clothing and identity, the latter are explained away as availing themselves of "a convenient disguise."⁴⁸ However, evidence shows that these traditions were deeply rooted in their belief systems; just as 'cross-dressing' was a vital part of their festivals, it was also incorporated in their battles against the ruling class, who sought to eliminate this counter-hegemonic practice.⁴⁹

Figure 16. Illustration of the "Rebecca Riots" from the *Illustrated London News* (1843).

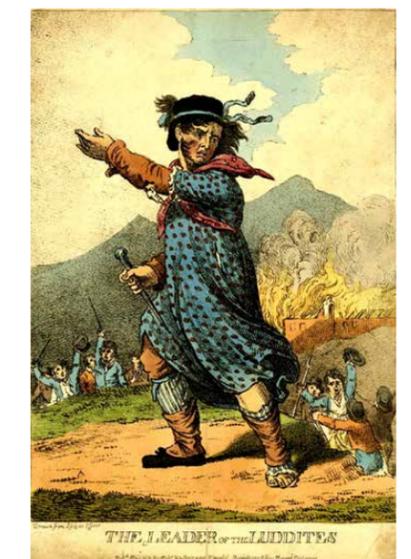


Figure 17. Engraving of Ned Ludd, "The Leader of the Luddites" (1812).

A history of polarization and cataclysmic change

Through centuries of sustained effort, 'cross-dressing' slowly moved underground. This practice increasingly occurred in 'private' spaces. Throughout Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, gatherings that featured 'cross-dressing' were common, attended by those *in the know*.⁵⁰ Accounts of police raids were equally in abundance, particularly in England.⁵¹ Among these records is a report detailing that "many of the habitués took on female appellations as well as female dress," and that some of them were "so well disguised" that outside observers were "unable to detect their sex," highlighting clothing's important role in the heteronormative regime.⁵² This perceived lack of congruency led to several high-profile arrests, which were sensationalized in the media, such as in the case involving English theater performers Stella Boulton and Fanny Park in the 19th century.⁵³ To engage in 'cross-dressing' in a public-facing manner became riskier due to escalating forms of punishment. For the many whom this practice was an integral part of their identity, there was a greater impetus on 'passing.' Given the suppression of anything and everything beyond the imposed sex-gender binary, it was best to go undetected.

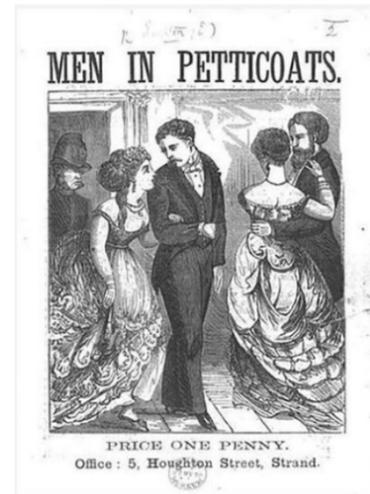


Figure 18. Sensationalist magazine (1870).

Figure 19. "Raid Upon a Fancy Dress Ball" from the *Illustrated Police News* (1880).



Since the heteronormative worldview requires that humanity be divided into 'men' who have a 'male' sex and a 'masculine' gender, and 'women' who have a 'female' sex and a 'feminine' gender, it strove to make these differences clearer cut. In European society, clothes were increasingly used to emphasize 'sex,' and more specifically to portray 'male' and 'female' as *opposites*. Over the course of several centuries, idealized aesthetics for these overarching categories were fashioned. First appearing in England during the 16th century, the corset was used to "smooth and redistribute flesh."⁵⁴ By the 19th century, the garment was mass-produced in Europe and its colonies, "no longer [taking] its dimensions from a specific wearer, but rather the reverse."⁵⁵ Pre-determining "the ideal shape of a woman," the restricting apparatus produced

Figure 20. "A Retrospective of the Boulton and Park Case" from the *Illustrated Police News* (1870).



Figure 21. Photograph of Fanny and Stella (circa 1870).

an hourglass figure no matter the true proportions of the wearer.⁵⁶ To further emphasize this illusion, the corset was paired with an equally cumbersome crinoline.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, clothing for 'men' similarly introduced a level of shaping. Influenced by military dress, garments included stitched padding to define the chest, elaborate the shoulders, and create an erect posture. Furthermore, set back armholes made the wearer "draw his shoulders back and throw out his chest."⁵⁸ This trajectory resulted in two contrasting 'male' and 'female' silhouettes. This artifice remains firm in the cultural imagination to this day.

The asymmetry in dress was intentional, to connote passive versus active social roles.⁵⁹ 'Women's' clothing was traditionally an expression of 'men's' wealth, as the ensembles were not made for physical activity. Given the attribution of agency to 'men's' attire, it is no coincidence that, as 'women' were afforded more liberty, they adopted stylistic elements from their wardrobes.⁶⁰ One of the many rights that the suffragettes in the UK and the US fought for was the authorization to wear pants, a custom that did not become socially acceptable until well after the Second World War.⁶¹ Over time, 'unisex' emerged as adapted 'menswear' signaling this attire as standard, and 'womenswear' as *other*. Despite the variation of who wears what, particularly now, gendered stereotypes have been firmly established. As immortalized in the ubiquitous public toilet symbols, 'men' are designated with a pictogram that is typically used in a variety of other settings as a 'neutral' figure, while 'women' are identified through the *addition* of clothing. Across several fields, design has been key in visualizing the binary separation between the 'sexes.' This polarization did not bode well for gender variants.

Parallel to the development of two diametrically opposed clothed bodies, Europeans began imposing their vision of the world through colonization, which of course had massive spatial implications. As noted in the section on 'the construction of heteronormativity,' colonizers made frequent commentary on the clothing



Figure 22. Getting dressed (19th century).

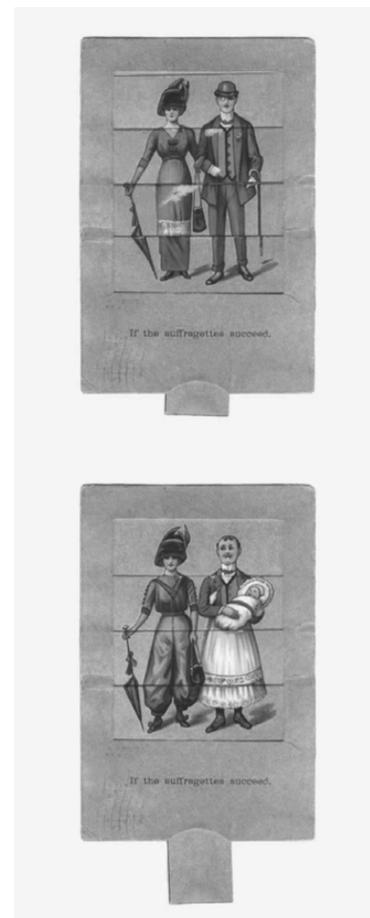


Figure 23. Metamorphic Anti-Suffrage Card (1900).

choices of the colonized.⁶² Despite similar occurrences back home, what they perceived to be 'cross-dressing' was among the reasons used to 'justify' their presence on stolen land. Denying occurrences of 'gender non-conformity' among the Europeans was a tactic of white supremacy. Associating this 'perversity' with those they racialized was a dehumanizing maneuver used to sanction violence against these people. Meanwhile, in another moment of hypocrisy, colonial conditions enabled settlers to engage in the very practices they denounced. The predominantly 'male' mass migration, of which included those displaced by colonization such as indentured workers, created "spaces of possibility for cross-gender practices."⁶³ Many settlers went to the colonies for experiences "unobtainable in Europe."⁶⁴ In certain contexts, notably performances, these practices were justified among settlers on the basis of racial 'superiority,' as they embodied sexual differentiation, while the 'sex' of *others* was "illegible or indistinct."⁶⁵ Unfortunately, as explained by queer theorist Judith Butler, 'cross-dressing' "may well be used in the service of *both* the denaturalization *and* reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual norms."⁶⁶



Figure 24. Caricature of San Francisco's Inaugural Ball (1895).



Figure 25. Newspaper clipping from National Police Gazette (1858).



Figure 26. British soldiers interrupted during a drag show rehearsal by a German Raid (1940). This photo series, censored by the British Ministry of Information, came to public attention in 2018. During the war, the Army Special Services produced, published, and distributed handbooks for soldier shows as drag was deemed "a necessity, not a frill."



Figure 27. Lithograph captioned "The Man-Monster, Peter Sewally, alias Mary Jones, &c&c Sentenced 18th June 1836 to 5 years imprisonment at hard labor at Sing Sing, for Grand Larceny" (1836).



Figure 28. A police van with some of the ninety-nine arrested for wearing women's clothes during a raid on a New York City ball (1939).

Regulations on clothing went beyond imposing normative gender. Notably, other clothing laws specifically outlined what could be worn by different groups of racialized people. To cite one example, American laws in the 1700s made it illegal for black people to dress "above their condition."⁶⁷ Dictating attire was one of the many avenues used to keep marginalized identities marginalized. Legacies of this anti-blackness exist, with 'dress codes' still influencing mobility. Whether it is embedded in notions of 'professionalism,' or proper apparel for various other settings, clothing items associated with black people are specifically targeted.⁶⁸ This can have the effect of barring this group from participating in a variety of spaces, and spatial practices. While the gendering of clothes had huge implications on the traditions of various racialized populations, who were overwhelmingly targeted in the application of anti 'cross-dressing' laws, their intersectional positions subjected them to further regulatory measures.

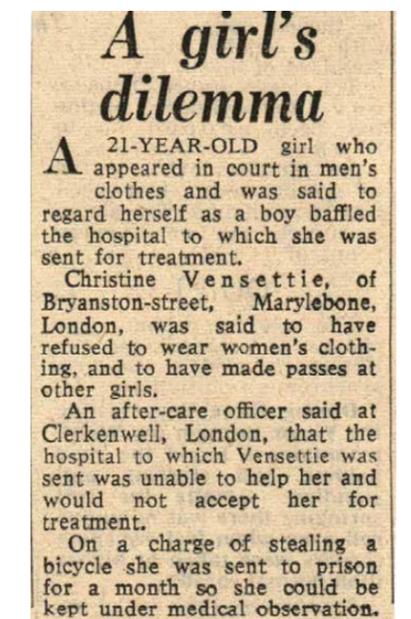


Figure 29. A newspaper clipping from the News of the World (1961).



Figure 30. A person being arrested for wearing women's clothes during a raid on a Manhattan ball (1962).

Decidedly, once established, colonial society took a stance on gender variance among its settlers. These occurrences were generally blamed on contact with other races.⁶⁹ Among other charges, 'cross-dressing' was again deemed a social issue in need of regulating. Starting in the late 1840s, a wave of legislation in U.S. cities specifically targeted gender presentation.⁷⁰ A plethora of municipal ordinances made it illegal for people to appear in public "in a dress not belonging to his or her own sex," enabling police to enforce normative genders on the population.⁷¹ Ratcheting up, this enforcement reached a peak in the 1960s. In fact, it was *the* impetus for the Stonewall Rebellion, which is credited as the catalyst of the Gay Liberation Movement. Standard procedure for raids included lining up patrons, checking their identification, and verifying the 'sex' of those suspected of 'cross-dressing,' generally through invasive measures, then arresting those deemed to be presenting a misalignment.⁷² While several uprisings occurred over the years, the one in 1969 was the one that went down in history.⁷³ The Mattachine Society, which was a national gay rights organization founded in 1950, published a newsletter a month after the several days long riot offering the following as an explanation for the event:

If 'it' breaks laws, arrest action is ahead

HOUSTON (AP) — Richard Anthony Mayes, 25, who has been arrested five times here for wearing women's clothes, says he was kicked out of the police chief's office when he asked for an end to arrests until he could undergo a sex change operation.

Mayes, who prefers to be known as Toni Rochelle, said Police Chief Herman Short refused to listen to him when he asked for some means of identification to keep officers from arresting him.

When asked about the incident, Short replied, "We aren't in the business of issuing 10 cards to queers. If 'it' breaks the law, 'it' will be arrested."

Mayes said he began receiving female hormone shots in December and will undergo a sex change operation early next year at the Stanford Medical Center in California. He said the institute requires any candidate for the operation to take hormones and live as a member of the opposite sex for a year before surgery.

Mayes said he is a transsexual, one who has the physiological identity of a female but the body of a male.

"Chief Short doesn't realize the difference between a transvestite, a homosexual and a transsexual," Mayes complained.

Short replied, "I just don't see what 'it' has to do with me."

Mayes arrests have come under city ordinance forbidding members of one sex to wear the clothes of the opposite sex. Mayes said he wanted Short to issue him some kind of identification he could show officers so they would stop arresting him before his operation.

"I've probably spent \$1,000 in legal fees and bonds since I've begun taking the hormones," Mayes said. "If this keeps up I won't have any money for the operation. It's going to cost \$3,000 and, to be frank, I haven't saved a penny."

Speaking of Short's attitude, Mayes said, "He doesn't understand and he won't listen."

Figure 31. A newspaper clipping from the *Brownwood Bulletin* (1972).

It catered largely to a group of people who are not welcome in, or cannot afford, other places of homosexual social gathering. The Stonewall became home to these kids. When it was raided, they fought for it. That and the fact that they had nothing to lose other than the most tolerant and broadminded gay place in town, explains why.⁷⁴

According to Dick Leitsch, who was the executive director of the Mattachine Society of New York at the time of the event, "the 'drags' and the 'queens,' two groups which would find a chilly reception or a barred door at most of the other gay bars and clubs, formed the 'regulars' at the Stonewall."⁷⁵ "By common agreement," drag queens and trans people of colour started the rebellion.⁷⁶ As they were more visible, they had long been the target of in-group and out-group scrutiny. The plight of this group was subsequently neglected, as the movement they kickstarted chose to champion the rights of the "more palatable and more gender-normative" in order to achieve mainstream success.⁷⁷

While, in the context of the Western world, most laws explicitly banning 'cross-dressing' are no longer enforced, implicit 'dress codes' continue to influence what people wear today. Retaining ownership of meaning, garments are categorized as either 'women's' or 'men's' regardless of who is wearing them. Consequently, people continue to be perceived as 'cross-dressing,' even if their attire *is* in alignment with their identity. This can have dangerous consequences, as those who dress in discordance with what others believe to be their 'sex' are often subjected to violence. Campaigns villainizing people's clothing choices exacerbates this issue. As seen in the case study of 'the public toilet,' misinformation is spread, with detractors claiming that 'men' will begin dressing as 'women' to gain access to gender-exclusive spaces. Negative visibility, particularly in the media, serves an educational purpose for bigots, who learn to "clock" people, making any discernable incongruencies all the more precarious.⁷⁸ This all results in the limiting of spatial access for transgender and gender non-conforming people, to public facilities, and by extension, to public space in general. Reducing this group's spatial reality in turn reduces its participation in society.



Figure 32. The 'shocking' photo featured in the 1949 copy of LIFE magazine is of former U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1884 wearing a dress. At the time, it was the norm to dressing all children in white dresses. This bleachable garment allowed easy access to diapers. Typically, it would be worn until age 6, also the time of a child's first haircut. The desire to immediately gender a baby at first sight only arose around WW1, with the promotion of pink and blue as gendered colours.



Figure 33. 'Women's' section in a clothing store, with the 'men's' section in the background.

A history of contemporary subversions

Because of the link between clothing and hierarchy, it is in the heteronormative regime's interest to control this layer. As stated by Wilchins, our society expends "a tremendous amount of cultural energy keeping gendered meanings intact as well as continually policing, moving and redesigning them."⁷⁹ Like with bodies, the connotations ascribed to clothing are not absolute. This is permanently unstable territory. Over the centuries, what is worn by who has changed so drastically. History has shown that no garment is inherently tied to any 'type' of body. To restabilize the binary, boundaries are continuously shifted. Gendered meanings are re-erected. In turn, they are enforced. Despite their amorphous histories, the categories of 'women's' and 'men's' clothing are fixed in society's imagination. But this does not limit the imagination of all. **While clothing has long been an accomplice of the heteronormative regime, it has also displayed its liberatory potential throughout history. As much as clothing has been mobilized to restrict the lives of queer people, it has been continuously redeployed as a mechanism of agency.**

Clothing exists as *artifice* on the body, *exaggerating* its features. The meaning it layers onto bodies is only ephemeral and can be supplanted. Dispelling assumptions about identity through clothing has long been part of the queer tradition. Over the course of the 20th century, these disruptive practices have emerged as an aesthetic phenomenon known as 'Camp.' As elaborated by writer Susan Sontag's in her seminal essay "Notes On 'Camp,'" this sensibility is characterized by extreme levels of artifice and is used to critique or comment on various topics.⁸⁰ It is not "a natural mode of sensibility, if there be any such," rather, its "essence" is "its love of the unnatural."⁸¹ Among the subjects it engages with is that of gender, which Sontag describes as "prone to Camp sensibilities because its style is strongly exaggerated."⁸² Composed of "theatricality, aestheticism, artificiality, exaggeration, incongruity, humor, parody, and twisted irony," Camp has "proved a vital resource for theories of eccentricity, social

"We're all born naked and the rest is drag."

-RuPaul



Figure 34. RuPaul during Foxy Lady era (circa 1996).

stigma, leisure, unorthodox sexuality, and subversion of gender identity."⁸³ Allowing for an assortment of contradicting ideas to exist in the same realm at once, this sensibility promotes "form over content, or aesthetics over morals."⁸⁴ Sontag theorizes that queer culture legitimizes itself by engaging with playfulness rather than condemnation, thereby dissolving the outrage of moralists. Queer theorist Judith Butler, who elaborated gender performativity theory, would likely agree, stating that "laughter in the face of serious categories is indispensable."⁸⁵ Moe Meyer, author of *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, goes as far as saying that queer identity is inseparable from Camp.⁸⁶ Through its performative critique of gender, Camp aesthetic produces other ways of being. By highlighting, exploring, and remaking stereotypes, it demonstrates clothing's malleability.

Given that gender is performative, *all* gendered expressions could be understood as a form of drag. As famously stated by drag queen RuPaul, "we're all born naked, and the rest is drag."⁸⁷ The art form of drag, in its parody of gender, has been another essential tool in deconstructing a binarily gendered reality. From the earliest of drag queens, such as William Dorsey Swann, an enslaved African American who was the first person to proclaim themselves as the "queen of drag,"⁸⁸ to the cultural sensation it has become today, drag continues to fashion new realities for queer people. Constantly evolving, the scene is increasingly recognizing drag kings and other gender-nonconforming performers who have been at its margins. While drag has been propelled into mainstream with shows like RuPaul's Drag Race, its widespread acceptance is also met with conservative backlash. Recent motions to ban drag in the presence of minors in Texas, on account of it being 'inappropriate sexual content,' is a reminder that drag *remains a political act*.⁸⁹

Performance has been used to push the boundaries of gender in many other ways. Along with drag, a prominent feature of queer nightlife is the presence of people dressed as "intimidatingly outlandish" as possible.⁹⁰ The aesthetic imperative is "all about dressing up rather than dressing down."⁹¹ Androgynous high camp expression involves



Figure 35. Photo of Jack Brown, commonly used in publications related to William Dorsey Swann (1902).



Figure 36. Gottmik, the first trans man to compete on RuPaul's Drag Race (2021).

“beautifying yourself in quite an extreme way.”⁹² As with their Ballroom predecessors, Club Kids “sought to push the boundaries of mainstream society even further and *create a world that was truly their own*.”⁹³ Among those involved in the “pinnacle of New Romantic decadence” was Leigh Bowery, a performance artist, club promoter, and fashion designer, with his larger-than-life persona.⁹⁴ Asked what he hated the most in others by the Guardian, Bowery replied: “The urge to categorise: if you label me, you negate me.”⁹⁵ The fluid gender expression of this movement created inclusive spaces that celebrated a variety of identities. Centering queerness, events such as the alternative beauty pageant ‘Miss Flesh,’ with its slogan “thank you for not being heterosexual,” elevated the status of the non-normative.⁹⁶ Building this world contributed to the fostering of a sense of pride, helping to reinforce positive queer visibility to this today.

Alternatively, performances can play with anonymity, as artist Nick Cave does with his ‘Soundsuits.’ He constructed the first piece of this series in response to the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers in 1991.⁹⁷ The widely shared video that captured the instance of brutality, and the subsequent acquittal of the perpetrators, sparked outrage among the African American community, and ultimately led to an uprising that lasted six days. Reflecting on his vulnerability as a black gay man, he pondered “what do I do to protect my spirit in spite of all that’s happening around me?”⁹⁸ After the event, he started gathering twigs, “something that was discarded, dismissed, viewed as less. And it became the catalyst for the first Soundsuit.”⁹⁹ Critiquing racial injustice, these sculptures play with the notion of hyper-visibility. Offering protection to those whose humanity is too often denied, these Soundsuits provide an armature against society’s biases. The series, composed of over 500 costumes, feature layers of materials, such as sequins, beads, buttons, feathers, flowers, toys, etc. Cave’s Soundsuits are both “playful” and “deadly serious.”¹⁰⁰ Overtime they have grown from a protective shell to an “exuberant expression of confidence that pushes the boundaries of visibility.”¹⁰¹ They “demand to be seen.”¹⁰²

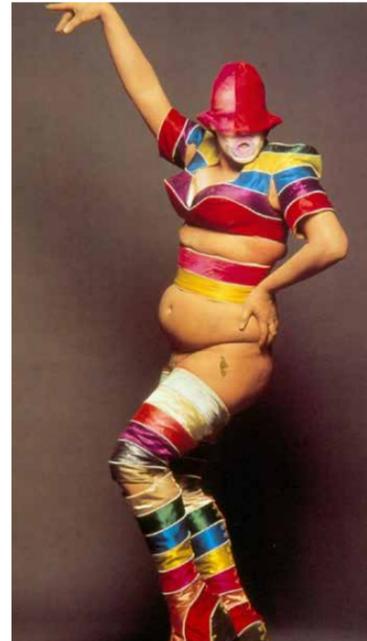


Figure 37. Portrait of Leigh Bowery (circa 1993-94).



Figures 38-39. Soundsuits by Nick Cave.



Figure 40. Soundsuit made from twigs by Nick Cave.

A history of healing past wounds and showing people the way

Beyond those involved in performance art, queer people regularly adorn themselves in ways that set them apart from the dominant culture. By expressing themselves in this manner, they engage in self-actualization. It allows them to show their inner most selves. Living their best life allows them to connect with other likeminded people. Or inspire others to do the same. Unfortunately, doing so also can attract unwanted attention. Reframing the violence that queer people face when showing their true colours, activist Alok Vaid-Menon, a proponent of the movement to de-gender clothing, explains that these actions are a result of the aggressor's insecure sense of self.¹⁰³ As stated by actor Billy Porter, who known for using fashion as a political statement and as an expression of queer joy, "that hatred you feel when you see us having the audacity to live a life without compromise, that hatred is for yourSELF."¹⁰⁴ Without an "unshakeable and irrevocable sense" of who one is, seeing others who do have that knowledge can spark outrage.¹⁰⁵ Vaid-Menon urges cisgender people to understand that this fight is for the benefit of all, as the gender binary hurts everyone; these fixed ideas of "what it means to be a man or a woman make it difficult for people to find out who they truly are."¹⁰⁶ They elaborate:

"That's why they repress us as trans and gender-variant people — because they've done this violence to themselves first, they've repressed their own femininity. They've repressed their own gender nonconformity. They've repressed their own ambivalence. **They've repressed their own creativity.**"¹⁰⁷

Positive change will ensue when cisgender people are "ready to heal from the ways the gender binary has affected them."¹⁰⁸

Queer people, by refusing the heteronormative regime, have had a positive impact on countless individuals, whether they identify as queer or not. To



Figure 41. Alok Vaid-Menon (2020).

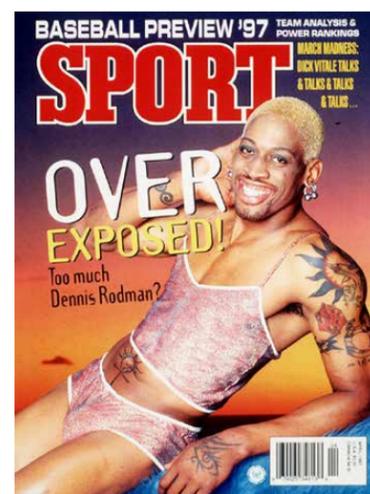
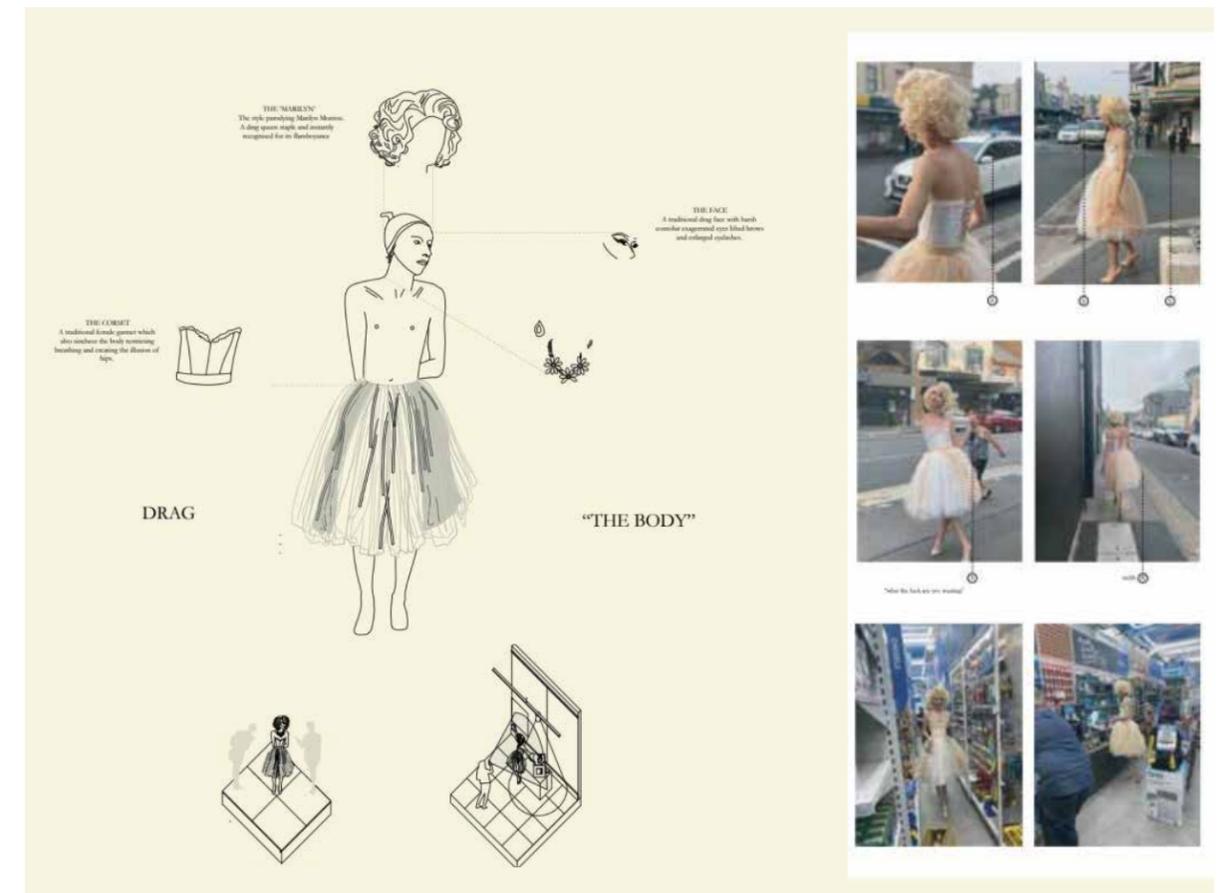


Figure 42. Dennis Rodman on the cover of Sport Magazine (1997).

illustrate with one example, basketball star Dennis Rodman, who is ostensibly straight and alleges having had relations with thousands of women, credits LGBTQ people with saving his life. Shortly after a suicide attempt, Rodman encountered queer people living on their own terms, which inspired him to do so as well. Instead of suicide, he experienced a "metaphorical death" and "the new Dennis" came out.¹⁰⁹ Rodman recounts that he "started going to gay clubs" and "started going to drag clubs."¹¹⁰ He continues:

"When you talk to people in the gay community, someone who does drag, something like that, they're so fucking *happy*. They hold their head up so high every fucking day, man. They're not ashamed of shit. They're not trying to prove anything, they're just out there living their lives."¹¹¹

Figure 43. Excerpts of Eloise Humphrys' project "Spatial Politics: Costume, Architecture and Thinking Queerly" which explores the queer spatial experience of a drag queen in the city. They note that the costume "generated interest and evoked recognition, but it also created friction."



Being in these spaces, it dawned on Rodman that he could dress however he wanted to. He explains: “I guess it kind of made me have a sense of awareness of, like, man, I used to dress like this as a kid. Wearing a dress made me *feel* good. You know?”¹¹² Along with being recognized as the “greatest rebounder in basketball history,” Rodman garnished attention for his ‘cross-dressing,’ as he began boldly asserting himself on and off the court.¹¹³ In his biography he writes: “It seems that people feel threatened when an athlete does something that is not considered manly, it’s like they’ve crossed over some imaginary line that nobody thinks should be crossed.”¹¹⁴ While sports remain conservative even today, queer expression inspired him to cross that line back in the 90s. Beyond Rodman, a similar effect can be seen with the clothing choices of people such as Harry Styles, Young Thug, and Kid Cudi, among others.¹¹⁵ While they may not be always be credited, queer people, through their subversion of the gendered meanings attributed to clothing, *create new realities for all*. **Whether it be by the cultural icon or by the everyday person, all efforts to refuse the gendering of clothing are important. The impact that living authentically has on others may be incalculable, but it is assuredly vast. Denying normative imperatives enables so many different ways of being.**



Figure 44. An image from the cover of the syllabus from the ‘Queer Space’ course at the University of California (1992).

THE LAYERED BODY

2.2 The Layered Body

Clothing both indicates and produces gender. As its historical trajectory has demonstrated, it also possesses the ability to redefine gender. Through investigating the ideological functions and spatial implications of clothing, I became interested in exploring its transformative potential. What one wears has the ability to reshape social perception and give rise to a plethora of spatial possibilities. Through intentional engagement, this act confers agency. Clothing has co-opted as a gender marker, but it could be so much more than that. Evidence has shown that it can be a tool, used to deconstruct the connotations it has been ascribed. **Gendered meaning is layered onto bodies, and I propose overturning that layer with another. For this design exercise, I have been constructing garments that subvert the gender binary.** While each piece proposes a different way of doing this, they all highlight clothing as a performative challenge to heteronormativity.

1 – **SHROUD**

2 – **ARM**

3 – **EXPOSE**

4 – **PARODY**

5 – **PLAY**

6 – **INVENT (Build Your Own Body)**

SHROUD

Inspired by artist Nick Cave's 'Soundsuit' series, **SHROUD is designed for escaping the confines of identity.** To shroud is "to hide from view."¹¹⁶ When donning this outfit, all identifiable traits are obscured. Outside viewers are unable to impose any form of categorization onto the person enveloped within. Cave describes this transformative moment, which he experienced with his own pieces:

When I was inside a suit, you couldn't tell if I was a woman or man; if I was black, red, green or orange; from Haiti or South Africa. I was no longer Nick. I was a shaman of sorts.¹¹⁷

Shrouding every part of the body that has been marked with social meaning can be freeing. The wearer of *SHROUD*, swathed in over 200 feet of hand-dyed pink tulle, is offered a moment of reprieve from the harsh world. Cave, describing a similar sensation, explains: "It's protecting, it's isolating, it's shielding."¹¹⁸ However, he also warns:

There's a sense of feeling liberated but you also have to understand that being in a soundsuit [means having] to surrender a part of yourself.¹⁴

Indeed, to shroud also means "to wrap a body for burial."¹²⁰ Despite its jovial appearance, *SHROUD* embodies a sense of loss. The freedom it brings is conditional on self-denial. By shielding the wearer from the pain of identity, it also denies them the joy of boldly being one's self. However, slipping on this outfit could offer the stepping-stone they needed to live authentically. Even with the condition of anonymity, the colourful shell transfers its exuberance within. *SHROUD* emboldens, allowing personality to shine through.

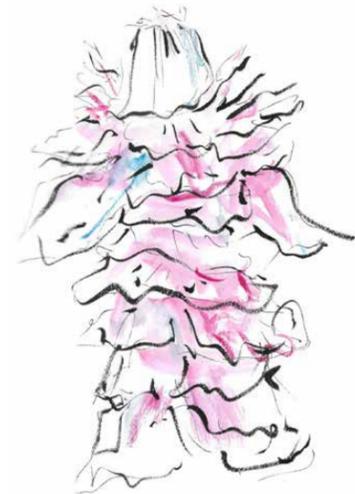


Figure 1. Concept drawing of *SHROUD*.

Lyrics:

How to Dress as Human by Laura Les

How to dress as human?
What, like a skirt and like, some heels?
Now I look stupid
Is this how every human feels?
Better go with Vans
I'm never gonna pass
I should stay home
Why did I make plans?

Drunk in the bathroom
Messing with my skirt
I got hair in my tights
And nothing in my shirt
If I paint on some lips
Will they come off with a kiss and tell?
(and tell)

[...]

I'm never gonna pass
I should stay home
Why did I make plans?
Better go with Vans
I'm never gonna pass
I should stay home
Why did I make plans?
Better go with Vans
I'm never gonna pass
I should stay home
I'm never gonna pass
Better go with Vans
I'm never gonna pass
(And tell)

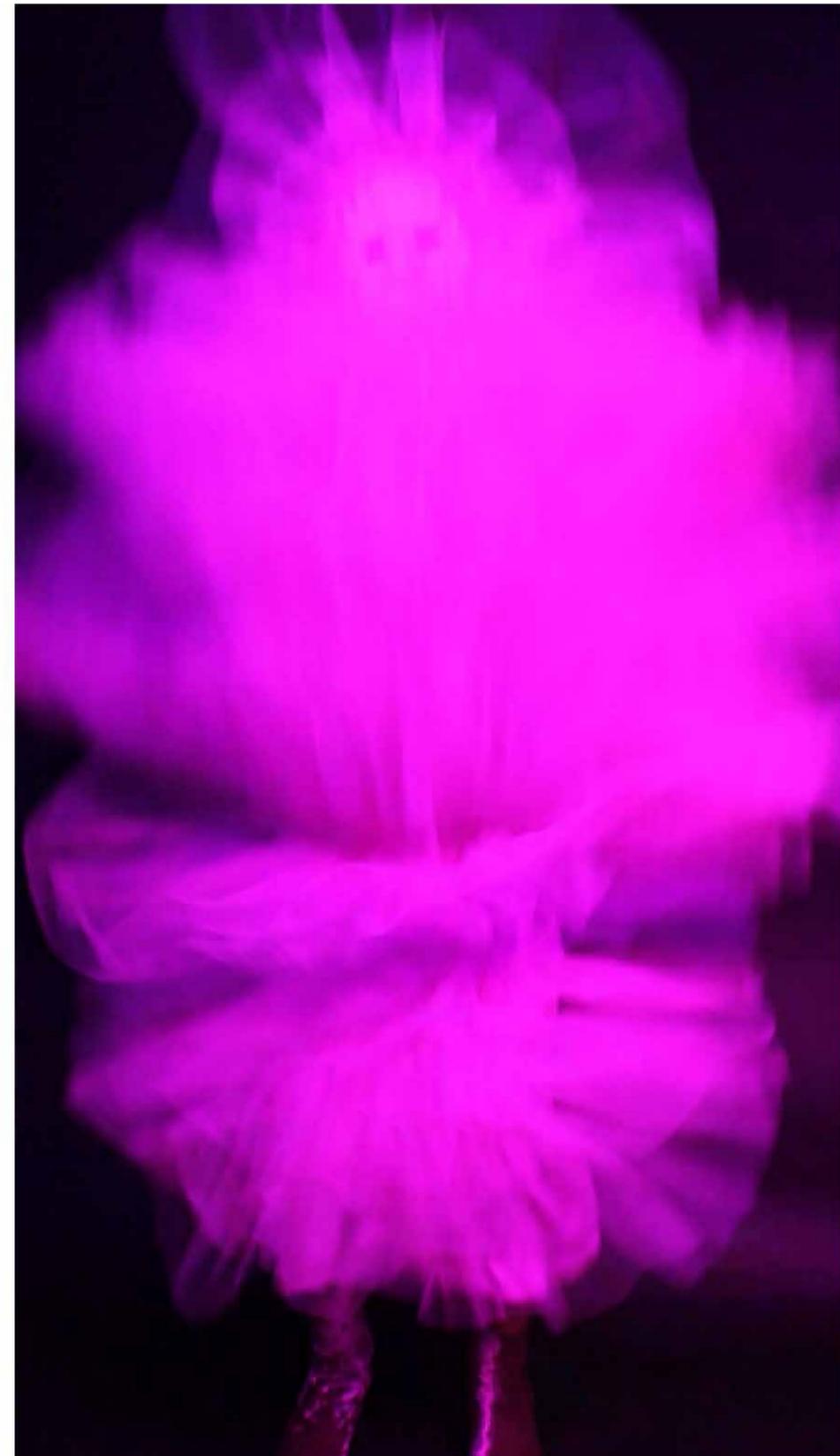


Figure 2. Video of *SHROUD*.



Figure 3. Photo of *SHROUD*.



Figure 4. Photo of *SHROUD*.



Figure 5. Photo of *SHROUD*.



Figure 6. Photo of *SHROUD*.

ARM

On first glance, it may not be apparent that *ARM* engages in biomimicry. However, it was influenced by “aposematism” in nature.¹²¹ Advertising to potential predators that one is not worth attacking, this sentiment is conveyed through “deimatic” displays.¹²² Deriving from the word “to frighten,” this defense mechanism is designed to be intimidating.¹²³ Unleashed when provoked, it leaves the prey unscathed. Similarly, *ARM* visually signals that the wearer should not be messed with; consequences will befall anyone that comes near.

Riddled with spikes, *ARM* draws visual cues from the queer punk scene. Also known as “queercore,” the subculture critiques oppressive mainstream society while rejecting assimilationist tendencies.¹²⁴ A predominant method of displaying discontent is through an anti-establishment aesthetic. The materiality of the clothing is often associated with sexual practices labelled as transgressive such as S&M.

Signaling a power dynamic, ***ARM* is a form of defensive architecture.** While it allows its wearer to experience the world unbothered, this armature is inherently reactive.



Figure 7. Concept drawing of *ARM*.

Lyrics:

Transgender Dysphoria Blues by
Against Me!

Your tells are so obvious
Shoulders too broad for a girl
Keeps you reminded
Helps you to remember where you
come from

You want them to notice
The ragged ends of your summer dress
You want them to see you
Like they see every other girl
They just see a faggot
They hold their breath not to catch the
sick

Rough surf on the coast
I wish I could have spent the whole day
alone
x3
with you
x3

You've got no cunt in your strut
You've got no hips to shake
And you know it's obvious
But we can't choose how we're made

[...]

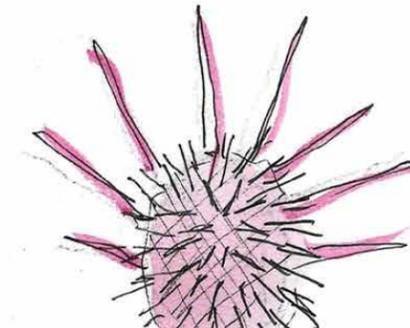
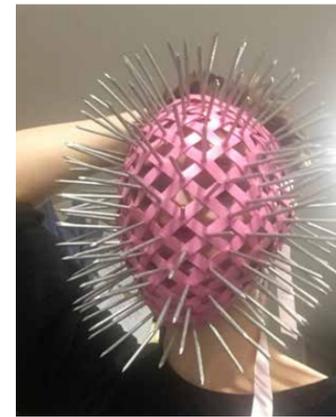


Figure 8. Drawing of *ARM*.

EXPOSE

As its name suggests, **EXPOSE** lays bare parts of the body. In doing so, it disregards the regulatory mechanisms that impose social meaning onto them. As a result of enduring gendered connotations, different bodies are subjected to different standards. Varying levels of undress may entail consequences for some, but not others. Ignoring these unwritten rules can attract unwanted attention. *By exposing oneself, this outfit enables the wearer to expose these double standards.* Body parts and items of clothing that binary gender has attempted to claim ownership are contrasted. Through deconstruction, EXPOSE rejects their attributed meanings.

Differing from all the other 'Layered Body' pieces, this one is not entirely handmade. Starting from a secondhand two-piece suit, strategic cuts are made in order to expose the wearer. The signature pink features in the ensemble via dyed body hair, and accessories such as leather rosebud pasties. Finally, a plaster mask with pastel googly-eyes hides the identity of the wearer from oglers.

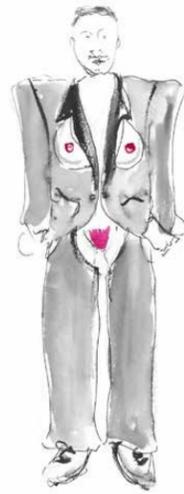


Figure 9. Concept drawing of *REJECT*.

Lyrics:

Gay Agenda by Shamir

[...]

You're just stuck in the box that was made for me
And you're mad I got out and I'm living free
Free your mind, come outside
Pledge allegiance to the gay agenda

Don't underestimate the power I keep
If you can't keep up, then you're not for me
Pray as much as you can, there's no hope for me
I will see you in hell, I will be bringing the heat

You're just stuck in the box that was made for me
And you're mad I got out and I'm living free
Free your mind, come outside
Pledge allegiance to the gay agenda

[...]

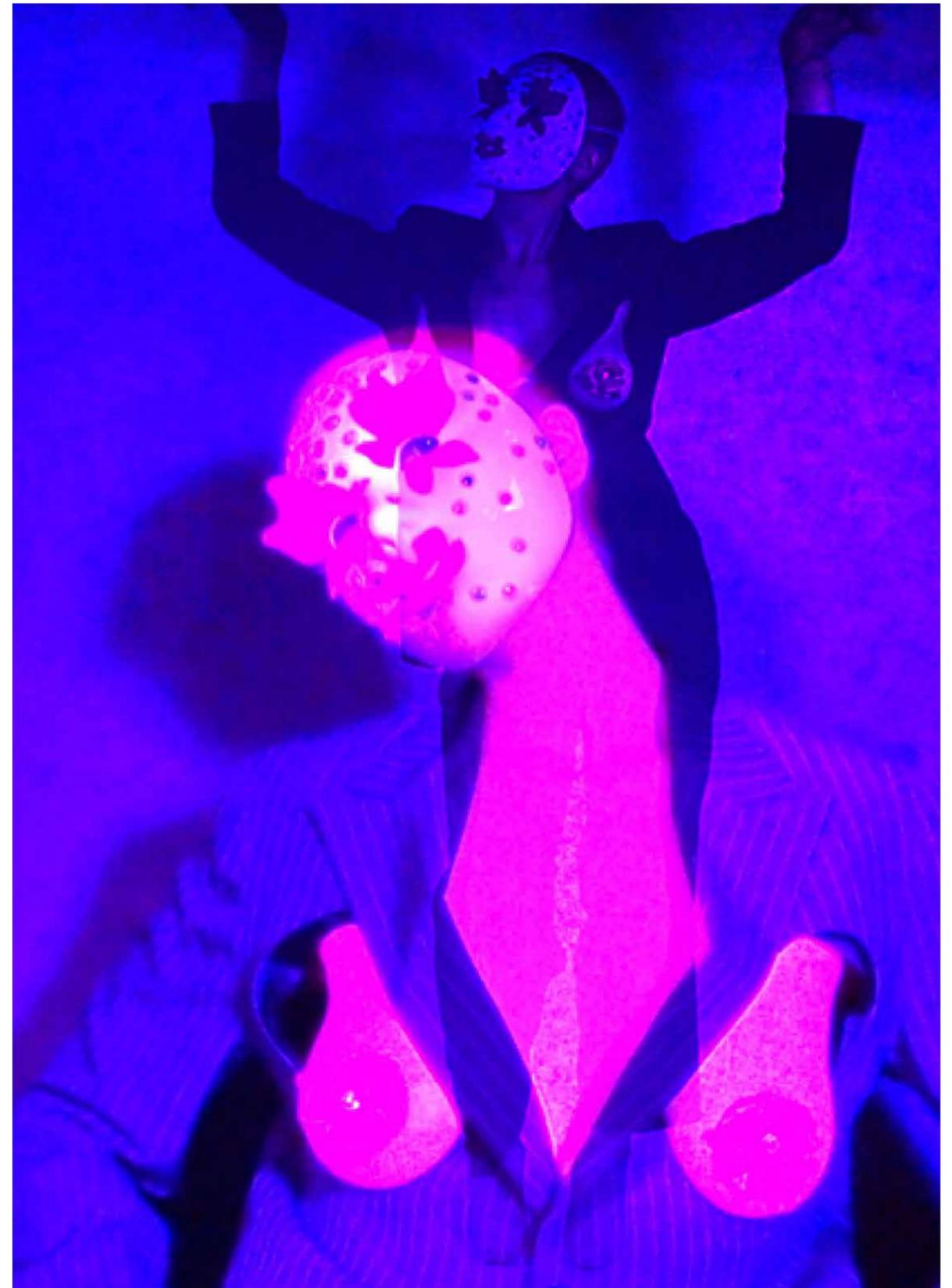


Figure 10. Video of *EXPOSE*.



Figure 11. Photo of *EXPOSE*.



Figure 12. Photo of *EXPOSE*.

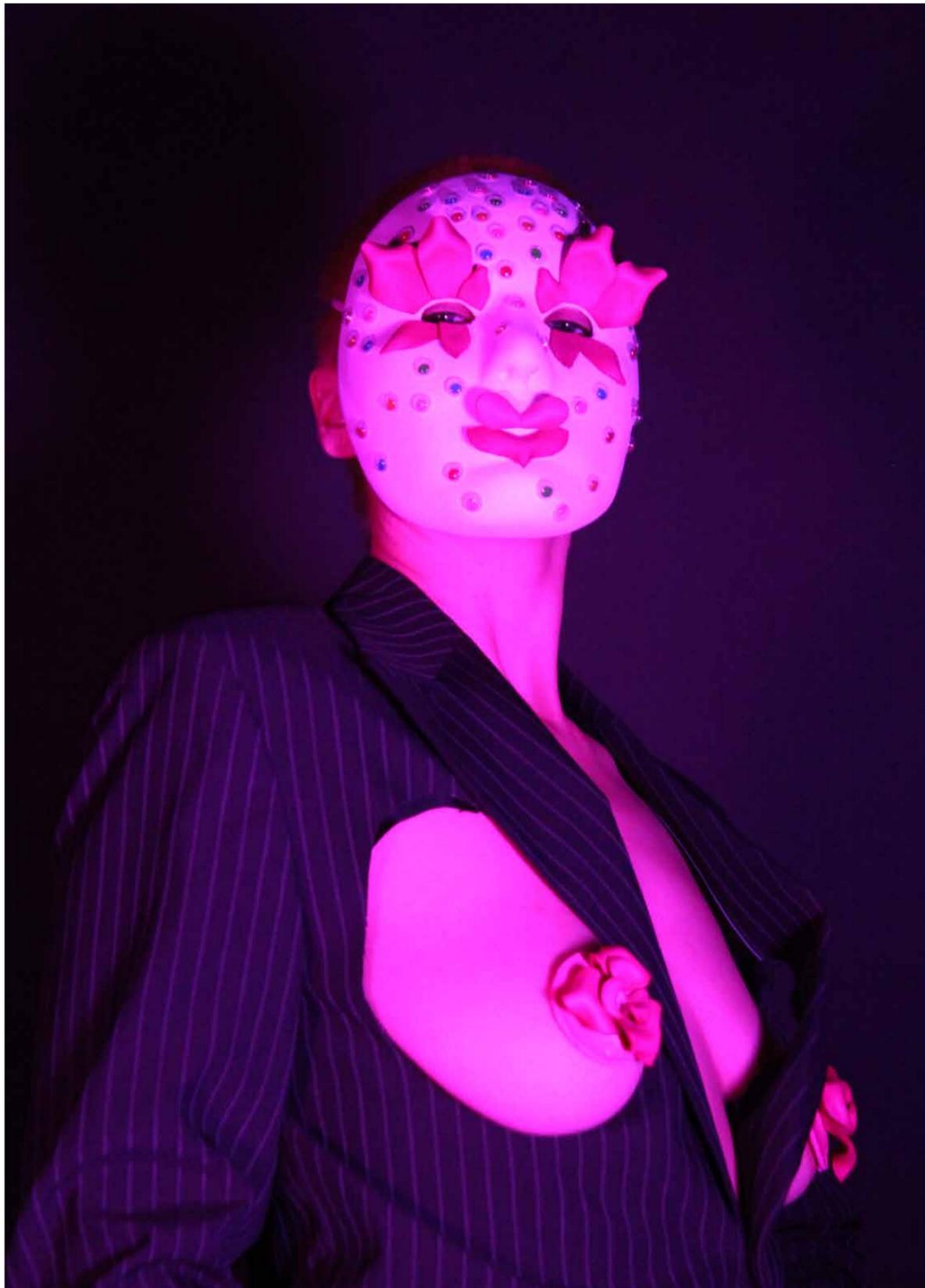


Figure 13. Photo of *EXPOSE*.

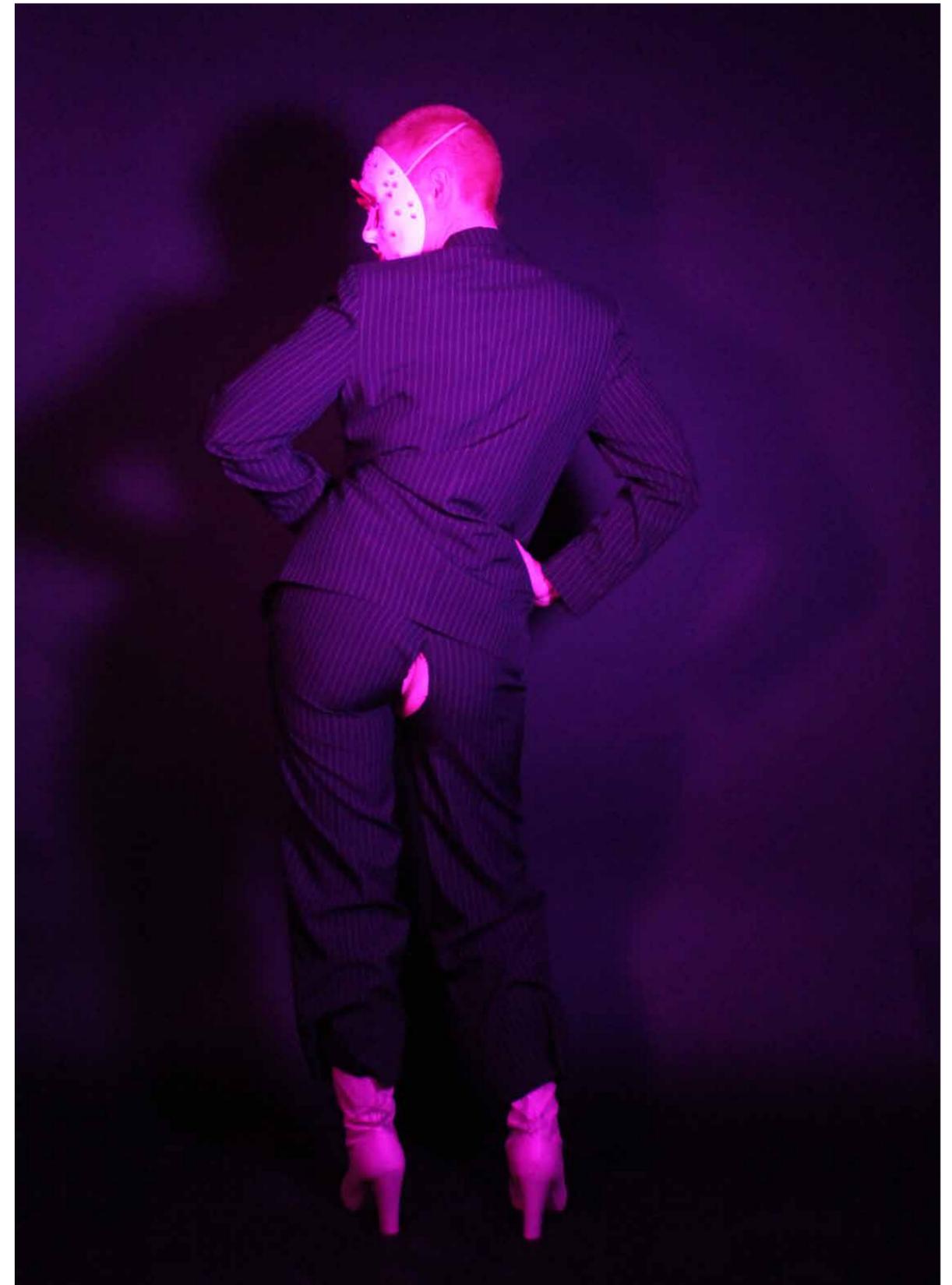


Figure 14. Photo of *EXPOSE*.

PARODY

Engaging in the queer expression of 'camp,' **PARODY** highlights the clichés and stereotypes of the gendered world. Parodying the fact that clothing is used as a gender marker, it mixes and matches various elements to confuse their associations.

Various parts of the body are accentuated to render a silhouette typically considered 'feminine.' An hourglass figure is created through illusion; the chest is projected upward due to corseting, the waist is minimized via exaggerated angles, and the hips are extended outward with prosthetic additions. The outfit reinforces this messaging more subliminally, by using materials from the domestic realm. Composed of curtains, upholstery, and pillows, it recycles their connotations. All of the above are contrasted with typical 'masculine' features. The widening of the shoulders, and the addition of a lace mustache, is more subtle. The codpiece, however, firmly establishes the disjunction with heteronormatively defined attire.

While operating within the realm of commentary, this outfit allows the wearer to look fabulous at the same time. By crossing boundaries, new forms of expression are explored. **Gender is performative, and PARODY is all about it.**



Figure 15. Concept drawing of *PARODY*.

Lyrics:

Good Evening, Tennessee by Houston Kendrick

[...]

I'm not what you're used to
Unfamiliar with what the normals do
I'm a pink boy painted blue
You know you've all been lied to
[...]

Aim the clicker at the screen
You are watching my TV
Broken antenna, viewing my dreams
Cherry pie's on the table with the rising steam
Settle down, child, I'm tryna see

I am so genuine, feminine, do I confuse you?
When I wear my skinnies and Timberlands
Does it behoove you to boo-hoo?
This ain't YouTube, this is my tube
We don't buzz around that bullshit
That's what flies do
Queer boy with a wet drip, pushing white coupes
Glide through the room just like I'm wearing Mike's shoes
This shit ain't because of you
Did this shit despite you
I might mess around and steal your chick just to spite you

Good evening, Tennessee
Tuned in to my TV
It's a new kind of royalty
It's a beautiful travesty
x2

[...]

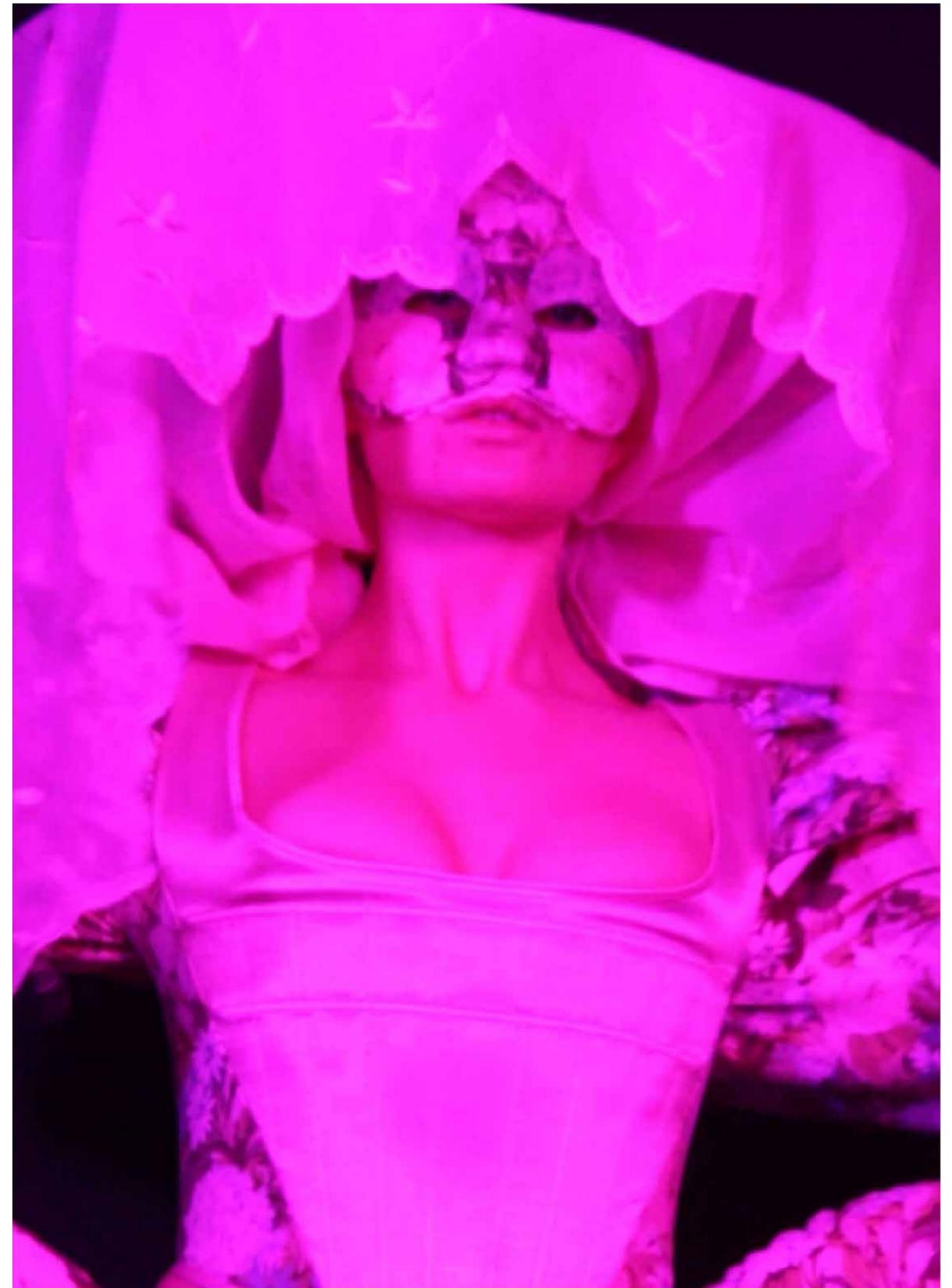


Figure 16. Video of *PARODY*.



Figure 17. Photo of *PARODY*.

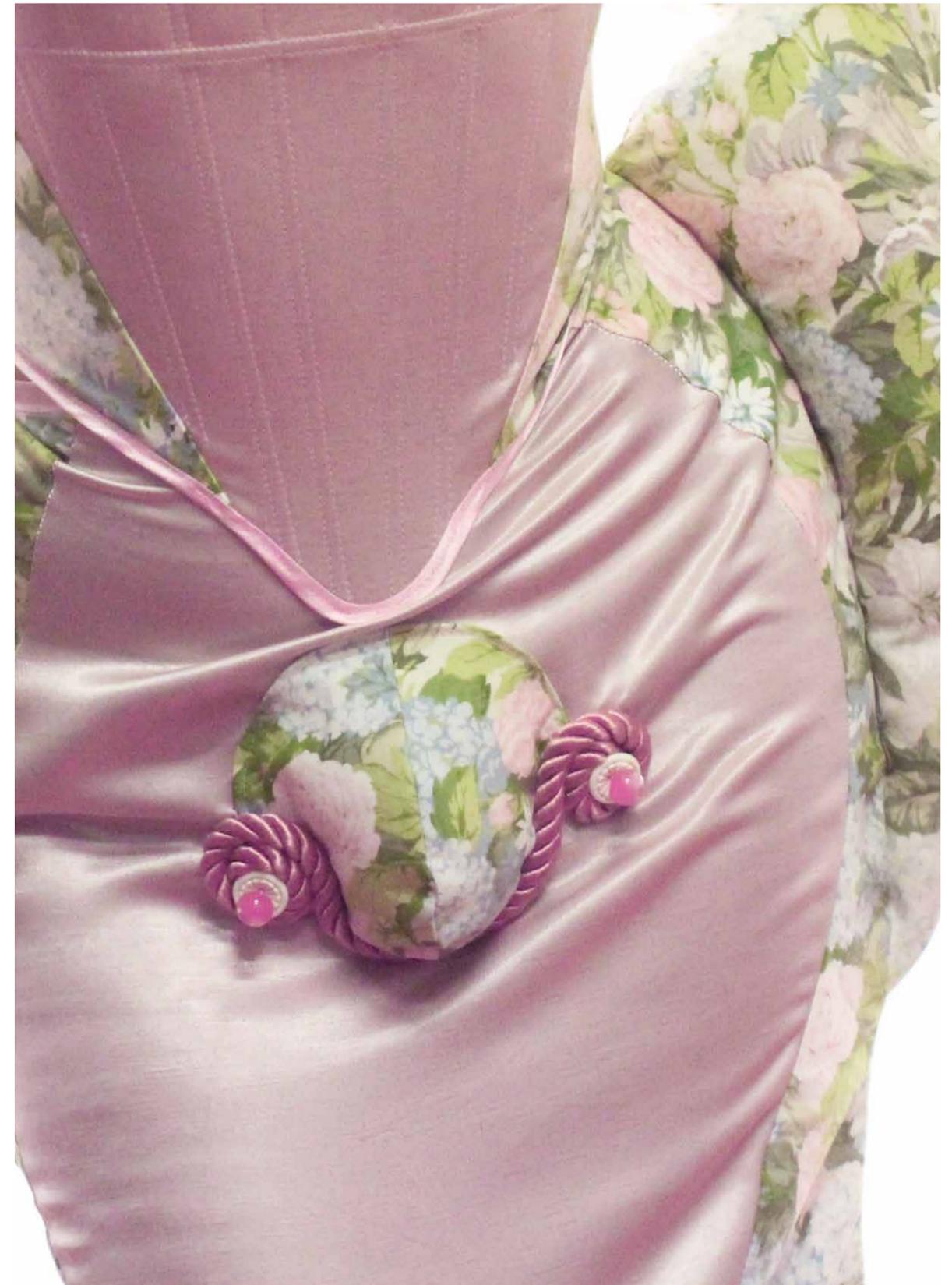


Figure 18. Photo of *PARODY*.



Figure 19. Photo of *PARODY*.

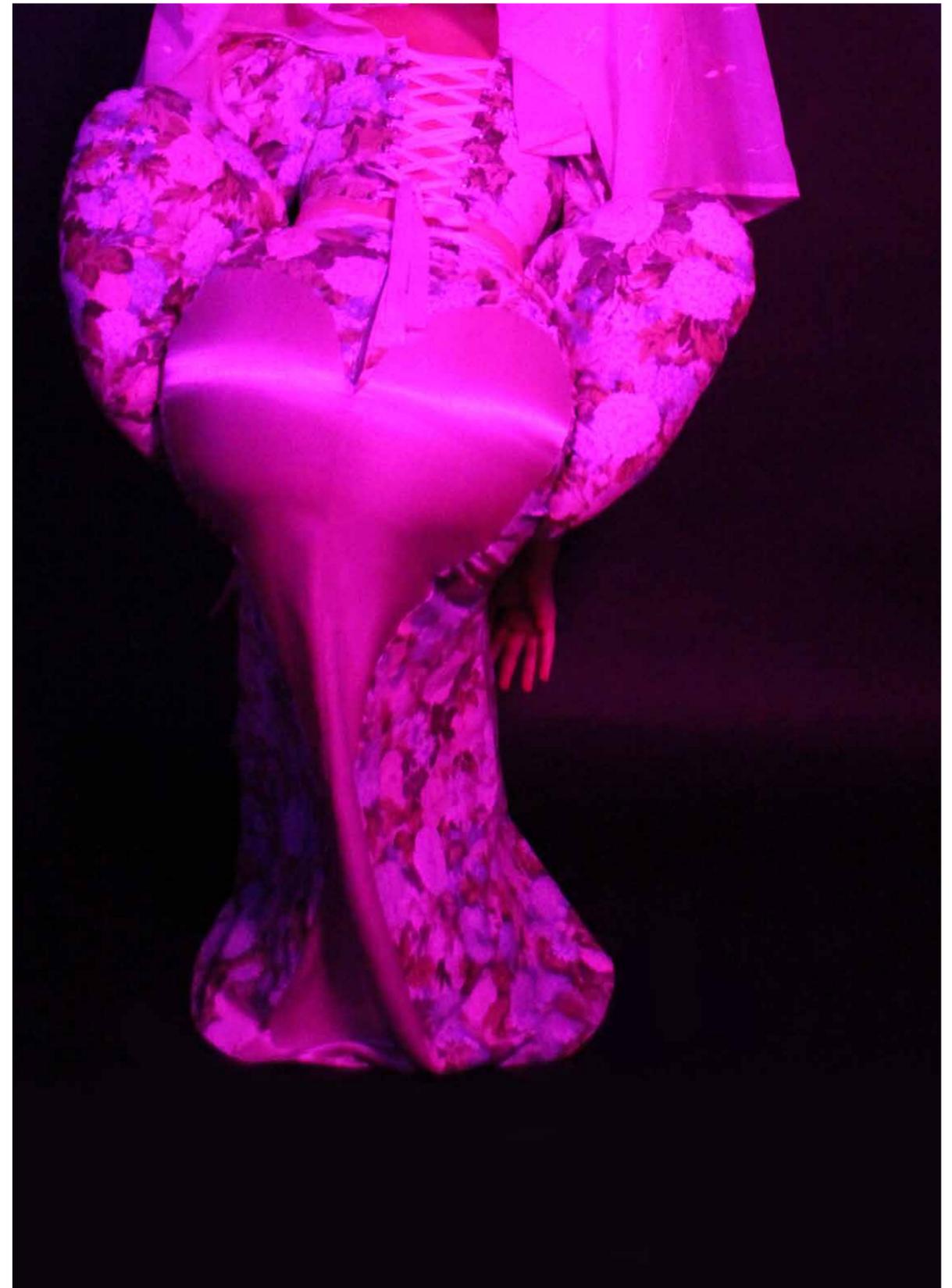


Figure 20. Photo of *PARODY*.

PLAY

PLAY resumes with a campy trajectory, going one step further by considering the concept of the 'grotesque' body. Characterized by an aesthetic of exaggeration and excessiveness, grotesqueness culminates in "the transgression of the boundary that encloses and delimits the human body."¹²⁵ Conjured in defiance of the regulated social order, it first appears at "ritual spectacles, fairs, carnivals and the like."¹²⁶ Beyond a device for satire, the 'grotesque' is "a body in the act of becoming."¹²⁷ As explained by philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin:

It is never finished, never completed; **it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body.** Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world.¹²⁸

How a body is categorized as 'grotesque' is defined through norms. Focusing on bodily functions such as "copulation, birth, growth, eating, drinking, defecation," and bodily "protrusions, cavities, and orifices" including "the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose," the 'grotesque' delves into the socially unacceptable.¹²⁹ By employing this methodology, ***PLAY* grants bodily organs their agency.** Building and creating a new body is explored as a fun practice with subversive potential.



Figure 21. Concept drawing of *PLAY*.

Lyrics:

Brand New Face by Lynks

I don't like my teeth so I go to the teeth store
Buy myself some new teeth, now I like my teeth more
But my teeth are in my lips, and they're an eyesore
Fleshy little strips, I switch them out from the lip store
So my lips are juicy now, you see how my lips are moving
But they are in a face that could do with some improving
So I rip my face off, go to the face shop
Buy myself a new face, now I like my face lots

And I say hey
I got a brand new face (I got a brand new face!)
Okay (Okay!)
I got a brand new face (I got a brand new face!)

[...]



Figure 22. Drawing of *PLAY*.

INVENT

INVENT is an ode to bodily autonomy and self-determination. It does not preoccupy itself with any social apparatuses of control. It exists beyond their reach. Left to its own devices, *INVENT* represents freedom in its truest form. The body is free to adorn itself however it desires. What this outfit may look like will be markedly different from individual to individual. With no external factors to inform one's decisions, *the possibilities are endless*. It's a BYOB (Build Your Own Body) party!

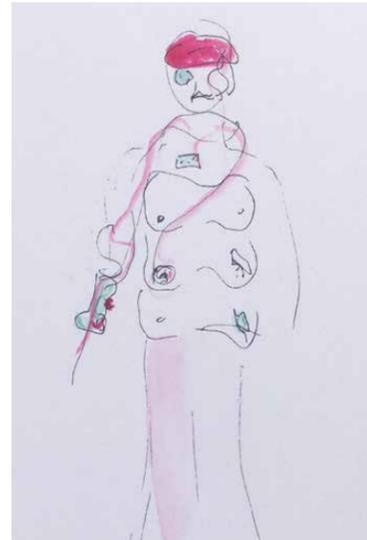


Figure 23. Concept drawing of *INVENT*.

Lyrics:

Faceshopping by SOPHIE

My face is the front of shop
My face is the real shop front
My shop is the face I front
I'm real when I shop my face

Artificial bloom
Hydroponic skin
Chemical release
Synthesise the real
Plastic surgery
Social dialect
Positive results
Documents of life

[...]



Figure 24. *You cannot touch me I am in another universe*. Photo by Connie McDonald.



Figure 25. Video of *INVENT*.



Figure 26. Photo of *INVENT*.



Figure 27. Photo of *INVENT*.



Figure 28. Photo of *INVENT*.

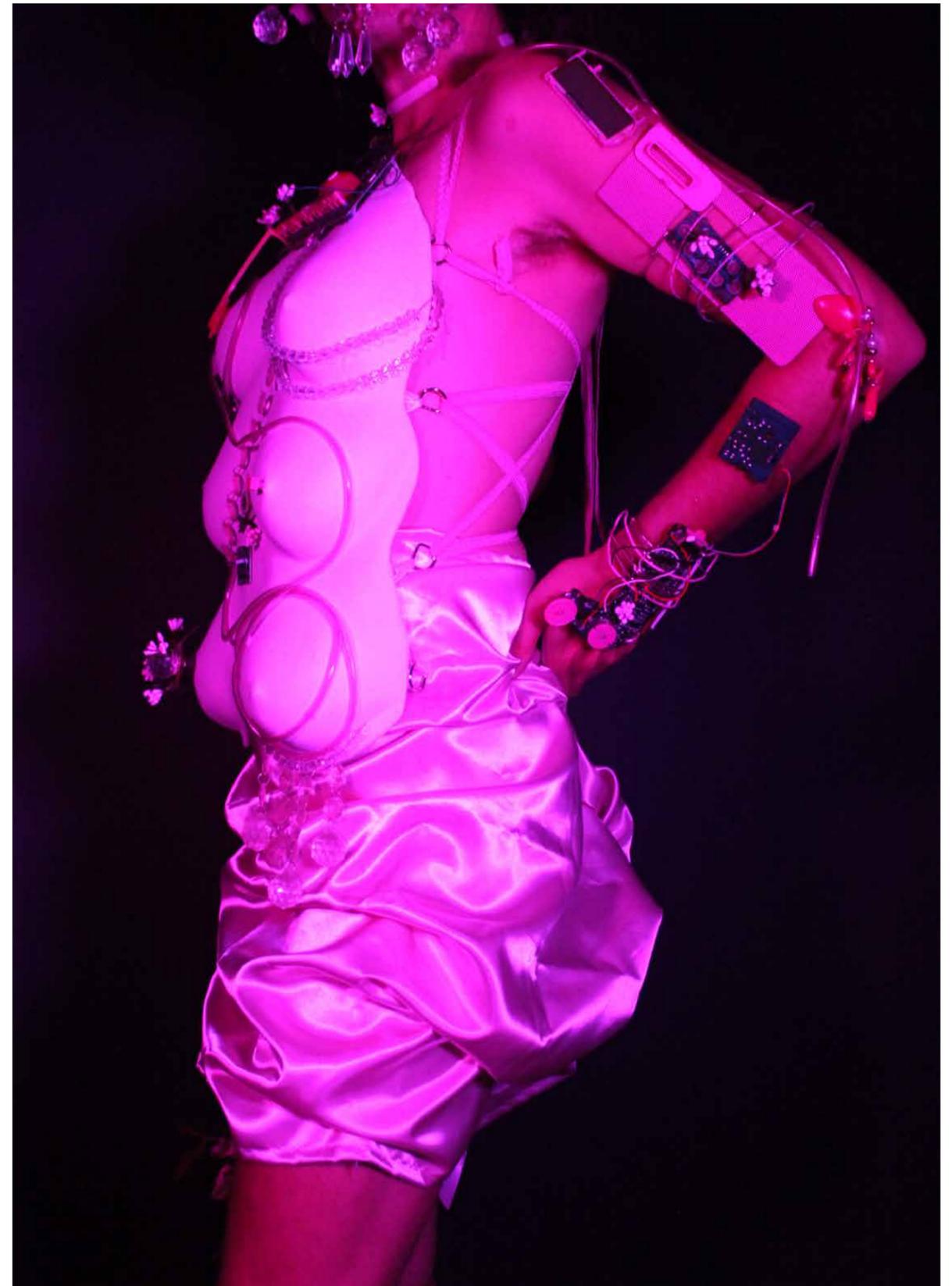
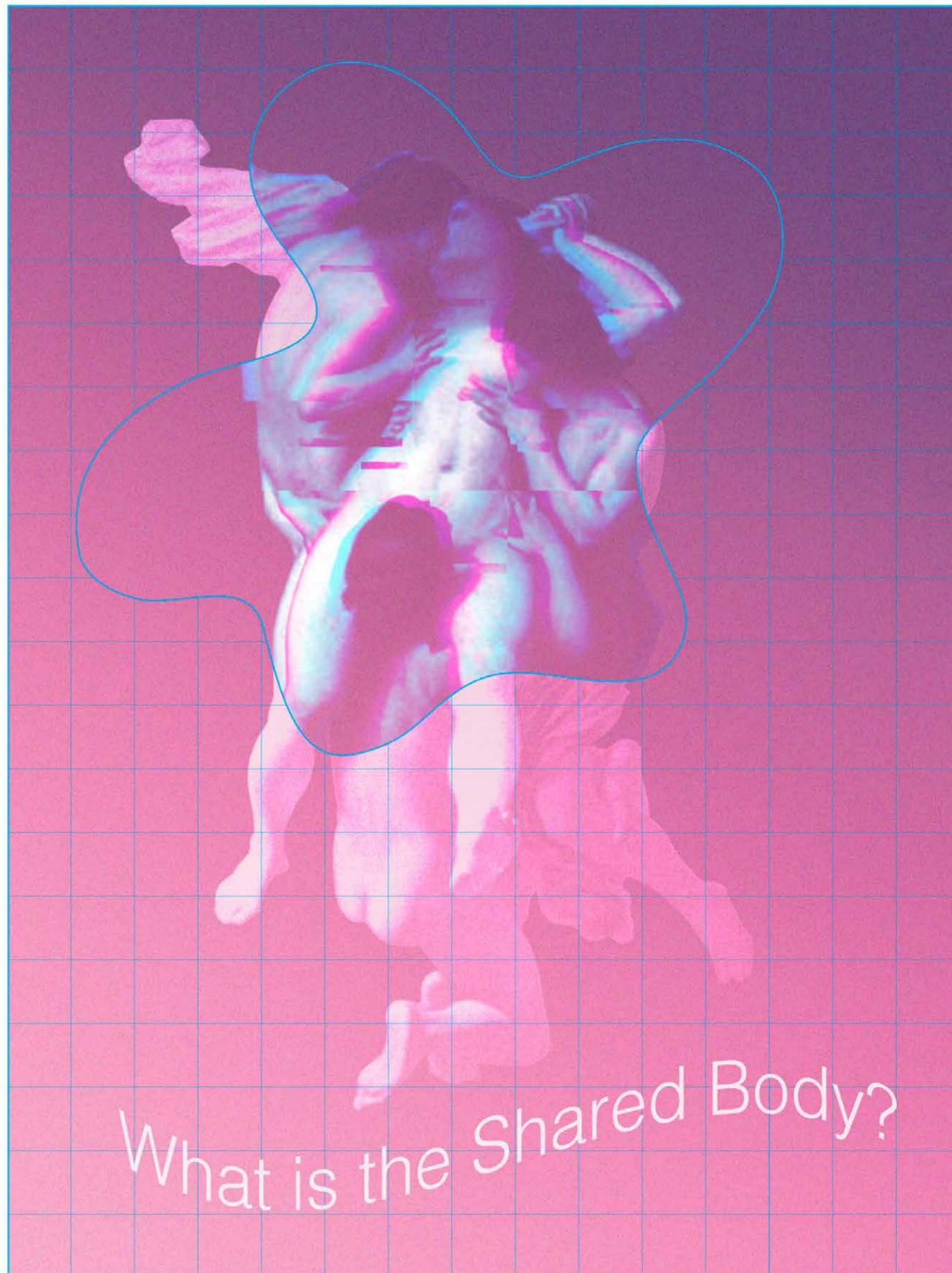


Figure 29. Photo of *INVENT*.



Figure 30. Photo of *INVENT*.



2.3 What is the Shared Body?

To 'share' is to "have in common." As many scholars have underscored, communal space is on the decline. In the West, there has been a marked reduction in spaces considered 'public,' with commercialized ventures filling this void. Areas that governments "have neglected or have left underfunded" are particularly susceptible to takeover by corporate entities. Inevitably guided by market forces, privately owned 'public' spaces dictate a certain *social order*. While geographer of modern living Ash Amin states that 'public' spaces are "marked by the unfettered circulation of bodies," which produce "new rhythms from the many relational possibilities," this ownership model precludes such a vision. As explained by social and cultural geographer Bradley L. Garrett, these 'public' spaces become "too monitored, too controlled, to allow this communal activity to simply unfold." In this paradigm, corporate entities have the power to not only *impede* certain activities, *but to bar 'public' access to 'public' space entirely*. Given the unclear boundary of what is considered socially acceptable activity, and the legal implications of this demarcation, Garrett explains that "we tend to police ourselves, to monitor our behaviour, and to limit our interactions." Far from a place of 'relational possibilities,' this spatiality becomes characterized by *the performance of a narrow range of 'public' expression dictated by imposed social norms*. This is particularly troubling, given that, as explained by geographer Don Mitchell, it is by "*claiming space in public*," that "social groups themselves become public." Consequently, by reducing 'public' recognition, normative orders deny *legibility* to other ways of being. In turn, access to 'public' space, and by extension, *the ability to participate in society at large*, is limited to those who are rendered *legible*. Alas, as stated by economic geographer David Harvey, "the freedom to make and remake our cities *and ourselves* is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights."

While I have presented a brief overview of the discourse surrounding the privatization of 'public' space, this section is concerned with the most privatized space of all; that of *the private home*. This architectural typology does not usually feature in discussions about the public sphere of the city. Indeed, if to 'share' is to 'have in common,' the private home presents itself as a stark contrast to the spatiality in question. Its operative term, 'private,' is defined as "for the use of or belonging to one particular person or group *only*." Moreover, further highlighting its incongruity, it encompasses what is "not *shared* or available to other people." If, by any stretch of the imagination, the private home could be considered 'shared,' it would be in a limited sense of the word. Illustrating the extent of this form of commonality, urban theorist Lewis Mumford once described suburbia as "a *collective* effort to live a *private* life." Effectively, the suburban "vision of *community*" was built on "*the primacy of private property*." The private home, and the *ownership* model it proliferates, may be the ultimate 'private' space. Emblematic of as it is, this architectural typology is typically not regarded as having an intelligible relationship to those considered 'public,' which are definitionally "accessible to or *shared* by all members of the community." However, it is arguably the most significant spatiality to consider in the pursuit of one that is *shared* by all.

Forming a binary, 'private' and 'public' spatialities are generally understood as separate realms. Moreover, as with all binaries, they are conceived as opposing entities. Constructed as "two halves of a whole," the definition of one becomes integral to the other. In this form of constitution, a hierarchical arrangement is implied. Consequently, the dichotomous terms are on unequal footing. In the scenario discussed, the 'private' acts as the center, and the 'public' as the contested *other* in need of defending. As a result, when protesting the encroachment of the 'private' onto the 'public,' the inclination is often to define the latter. Alas, leaving the former unquestioned, despite the evidence of a shifting boundary, *reifies this invasive spatiality*. Consequently, these elaborations

prove counterproductive to the task at hand. In order to address the loss of 'public' space, **the imperative to privatize space must be critically examined.** As outlined above, the privatization of 'public' spaces incentivizes conforming to *imposed social norms*. However, it is not only privately owned 'public' spaces that dictate a certain *social order*, but 'private' spaces in general. Just as bodies deprived of 'publicness' are rendered *illegible*, failing to question this realm contributes to the *illegibility* of those who are not served by this spatiality. The 'freedom to make and remake' the built environment must go beyond 'public' spaces, as it is 'private' spaces that present *the most significant impediment to making and remaking ourselves* in all spatialities. In order to proliferate 'relational possibilities,' the most prohibitive spaces must be the first to be *dismantled*. This task necessarily entails *the deconstruction of binary conceptualizations of space*. Any treatise that does not address this division of space in a meaningful way *will inevitably perpetuate the mechanisms that produce the contested outcome*. The boundary between 'public' and 'private' must be *dissolved* to enable creation of a 'shared' architecture.



Figure 1. *Inversion* by Dan Havel and Dean Ruck (2005).

The 'public' / 'private' binary and structural exclusion

The private home, although often characterized as a space of belonging, is actually a space of *exclusion*. As architectural historian Robert Fishman explains in the book *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, the suburbs not only promoted the “primacy of private property,” but also that of “*the individual family*.”¹⁶ This ‘family’ is, of course, the heteronormatively defined ‘family’ which is characterized by “an *absence* of other kinds of bodies.”¹⁷ As outlined in the case study on ‘the private home,’ its supporting architecture *assumes* heteronormativity in its users. While it presents itself as though it lacks nothing, this typology *renounces* nonnormative bodies, while *producing* normative ones. Indeed, as stated by design educator Colin Ripley, the suburb presents itself as “an extermination camp” for queer people.¹⁸ Far from ‘neutral,’ “the single-family house and by extension apartments, condominiums and the like,” Ripley asserts, is “*the primary architectural expression of hetero-normativity*.”¹⁹ Accordingly, working within the parameters of privatized space, such as that of the emblematic private home, is a futile effort. The ‘inclusion’ of nonnormative bodies cannot be accomplished through these means. By definition, **‘private’ spaces dictate a certain level of exclusion.** Correspondingly, **this spatiality is irremediable.**

Critically, **beyond excluding nonnormative bodies from ‘private’ space, the private home informs their exclusion from ‘public’ space as well.** Given that these spatialities constitute a binary, the formulation of one necessarily infers the other. Positioned as the center, the elaboration of what constitutes as ‘private’ has structural implications for those considered ‘public.’ **Along with privileging heteronormative occupants, the private home dictates what activities may take place and where they may be conducted. The spatial specificity of these activities informs their relegation to the ‘private’ realm, which, in turn, renders them as impermissible in the ‘public’ realm.** Given that ‘private’ spaces are, by definition, not accessible

to all, granting this spatiality the exclusive rights to certain activities *significantly impedes excluded populations from partaking in them.* Seeing as ‘public’ access to ‘public’ space can be revoked, those who are shut out from ‘private’ space are unable to participate in ‘private’ activities without serious repercussions. Prohibiting the performance of certain activities in ‘public’ is particularly egregious when they are fundamental to the human experience. While this injustice is particularly evidenced by the treatment of the homeless population, which includes a disproportional number of queer individuals, it must be emphasized that *property ownership is far from a reality for all.* For those who do not hold this privileged position, which constitutes the majority of humanity, ‘private’ spaces do not guarantee the freedom to conduct ‘private’ activities. Faced with this conundrum, it becomes evident that, in this paradigm, *all spatialities impose limitations on nonnormative ways of being.* Indeed, **people that do not conform to the norm are not given room to exist in ‘public’ or ‘private.’** Alas, the implications of the private home, characterized by the presence of some bodies and the absence of *others*, goes well beyond ‘private’ space. This architectural typology is mobilized to reproduce the heteronormative order *in society at large.* The *exclusionary* model it promotes is integrated into ‘public’ space through the mechanism of privatization, to the detriment of those already *excluded* in its initial elaboration. As a result, **the built environment dictates social norms no matter its designation.**

Historical analysis demonstrates how designating activities as ‘private’ effectively disallows their performance in ‘public.’ **Notably, due to the ongoing privatization of bodily functions, the boundary of what is considered socially acceptable in ‘public’ spaces has been shifting in an increasingly prohibitive direction.** Over the course of the last several centuries, activities that were commonly performed in ‘public’ were assigned to specified spatialities in order to render them as ‘private’. For instance, the development of *shame* surrounding *eliminatory functions*, as chronicled in the case study on ‘the public toilet,’ can equally be observed in the evolution of the private home. A

veritable fixture of the built environment, the toilet established itself as “a technology Westerners not only rely on but *always* expect in daily life.”²⁰ Once the provision of toileting facilities became convention, usage was not only strongly recommended, but legally mandated. Constituting public excretion as a criminal offense is especially problematic when access to a toilet, whether it be located in ‘private’ or ‘public,’ is not guaranteed for all.

To offer another pertinent example, **the development of *privacy* also resulted in the relegation of *sexual functions* to the bedroom.** As outlined in the case study on ‘the private home,’ this space only emerged in the 17th century. Correspondingly, confining sexual activity to this location *was not possible prior to its invention*. For most of human history, the bed did not have a dedicated room. Moreover, it was typically shared among many. The earliest known “mattress,” dating back 77,000 years, lodged an entire kin group within its 22 square feet expanse.²¹ Sharing this piece of furniture remained common until the 20th century when health officials made a “concerted effort” to deter the people from communal sleeping on moral grounds.²² Promoting the “fine principle of a separate bed for everyone,” they even enticed married couples to procure twin mattresses for a time.²³ Alas, **once the interior of the private home was parcelled up to include a bedroom devoted to “isolating and stabilising sexual functions,” then displaying one’s sexuality outside of these four walls became increasingly abject.**²⁴ Beyond losing its social acceptability, performing sexual activities in ‘public’ became punishable by law. It goes without saying that reserving intimacy for the private home, which, as previously stated, is “the primary architectural expression of hetero-normativity,” did not fare well for queer people.²⁵ Ejected from ‘private’ space as a result of their affinities and punished for displaying them, even covertly, in ‘public’ space, this population continues to bear the brunt of this imperative. However, it must be noted that privatization of intimacy is not optimal for humanity as a whole. **The social order imposed by the built environment *limits the agency of all, even if it is felt most strongly by those who, by design, cannot conform to its dictates.***



Figure 2. Medieval art depicting the three wise men in the same bed.



Figure 3. Medieval art depicting courtiers and servants observing a couple lying in bed.

Further investigating this matter, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, core theorists in the development of queer theory, explain in their essay “Sex in Public” that **the privatization of intimacy not only criminalizes public sexual cultures, but also grants property and ownership “far too great a role in our concept of what constitutes a sexual citizen.”**²⁶

Observing that heterosexual culture secures itself through “*banalizing* intimacy,” they submit that “if we allow our sexual cultures to be similarly *banalized*,” then “almost all *out* gay culture will wither on the vine.”²⁷ Indeed, the “hyper-domestication” of sexuality inevitably “works *against* queers.”²⁸ The privatization of intimacy was not conceived with their interests in mind. Far from it. Rather, it was instigated to promulgate the heteronormative order. As historian Allan Bérubé points out, when laws prohibited ‘homosexual’ acts (which is still a reality in many parts of the world), *the location of its occurrence was of little import*. With “no legal right to *privacy*,” these barred activities were considered a ‘*public*’ concern.²⁹ This effectively cast the population that engaged in them as “sexual outlaws” *regardless of the spatial circumstance*. While homosexuality has ostensibly been decriminalized in the West, it remains hyper-visible. This is because the constructed morality of a ‘private’ sexual citizenship not only neutralized the *banal* displays of heterosexuality in ‘public’ space, but it also made those that do not conform to this paradigm all the more apparent. Engaging in nonnormative activities, even analogous demonstrations of affection, marks people for differential treatment. As such, they are targeted with violent acts. **Policing practices, even those that do not carry the weight of law, dissuade people from conducting nonconforming acts, including the ones that may be deemed insignificant if they were carried out by people read as ‘heterosexual.’** Given that it is by ‘*claiming space*’ in ‘public’ that social groups become *legible*, and that access to ‘public’ space, and by extension, *the ability to participate in society at large*, is limited to those who are rendered *legible*, this enforced exclusion has serious implications. As follows, **assimilationist tendencies do a disservice to queerness by contributing to its erasure.** Effectively, **queer people who advocate that sexuality should be reserved for ‘private’ spaces in an effort to secure ‘rights’ jeopardize queer futurity.**



Figure 4. A crowded 20th century bedroom.



Figures 5-6. The bed in the film Holy Mountain by Alejandro Jodorowsky (1973).

Halberstam concurs that contemporary queer and trans politics should steer clear from “notions of respectability and inclusion,” and rather work towards “the anti-political project of *unmaking* a world that casts queers and trans people [...] as problems for the neoliberal state.”³⁰ Discussing the formulation of a “queer counterpublic,” Berlant and Warner suggest that this endeavor has already begun.³¹ Indeed, despite the imperative to privatize intimacy, **the “pleasures of queer public sex” persist.**³² Moreover, queer people have consistently developed relations “that are only recognized as intimate in queer culture.”³³ Offering “a context for witnessing intense and personal affect,” they contribute to “a public world of belonging and transformation.”³⁴ Witnessing this phenomenon, Berlant and Warner emphasize that **“making a queer world has required the development of kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or the nation.”**³⁵ With the imposition of the heteronormative order on all forms of spatiality, it is imperative that queer intimacy continue to be *fostered*. It must be *defended* against the privatization imperative. Moreover, *its validity must be asserted overtly*. This cannot be accomplished in the framework of a ‘public’/‘private’ binary, as these spatialities mutually reinforce each other in the suppression of queer existence. As Halberstam suggests, **the world as we know it must be “unmade.”**³⁶ It is only by *dismantling* the spatial understanding that enable *exclusion* that it can be overcome.

Dismantling the ‘public’ / ‘private’ binary

As previously declared, the private home is an *irremediable* architectural typology. It cannot be ‘repaired.’ In the article “Unbuilding Gender: Trans* Anarchitectures In and Beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark,” Halberstam asserts that **“change will only come through demolition.”**³⁷ Indeed, this action is “the precondition for *newness*.”³⁸ In his elaboration of a queer concept of “anarchitecture,” which deals

in “creative destruction,” Halberstam draws on the “anarchitectural practices of *unmaking*” promulgated by artist Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978).³⁹ As part of his art practice, Matta-Clark performed inventive site-specific cuts into abandoned New York City buildings throughout the 1970s. He developed the concept of “anarchitecture” in collaboration with his artist collective of the same name, defining it as “a counter-proposal to mainstream architecture.”⁴⁰ Expanding on this term, Halberstam explains that **“if architecture is a structural grammar for organizing space and situating the bodies it in, then anarchitecture is premised on the *exposure* of those logics, and their *destruction*.”**⁴¹ Having been presented images of Matta-Clark’s interventions during my undergraduate degree, I too felt that they were “full of queer promise.”⁴² Accordingly, I was ecstatic to find this queer reading of his practice. Halberstam’s analysis uncovers how it may contribute to “an *undoing* of architectural theory and a *refusal* of certain political paradigms for the urban environment,” adding that Matta-Clark’s cuts “also, perhaps unwittingly, posit the *unmaking* of certain binary logics of the body.”⁴³

While Le Corbusier insisted that “everything must hold together, *or it will collapse*,” Matta-Clark invited this fate.⁴⁴ In defiance of the modernist architects who believed that “form followed function” and that “rational order” should be imposed on “irrational existence,” Matta-Clark sought to deconstruct the vision that they were trying to construct.⁴⁵ Understanding it as part of a flawed pursuit, Matta-Clark suggested that **“perhaps the faith we place in our past needs re-examination.”**⁴⁶ His counterproposal “almost by definition [...] cannot be embodied by an architect.”⁴⁷ As Halberstam explains, **anarchitecture “resists mastery, refuses to build, and finds other ways to alter the environments we move through.”**⁴⁸ Opposing the spatial violence perpetuated by the practice of architecture, it requires “the death of the author, the death of the building, and the end of gendered vocabularies.”⁴⁹ Unlike how the field of architecture tends to present itself, **anarchitecture openly declares that it “attempts**



Figure 7. Exterior view of *Splitting* (1974).

to solve no problem.”⁵⁰ Refusing this trajectory, **it nonetheless remains committed to “an ethos of change.”**⁵¹ While anarchitecture does not offer a ‘solution,’ it does, however, offer *guidance*. Providing a methodology for *dismantling* normative orders, it is conceptually fruitful for the task outlined throughout this thesis. Indeed, **in order to create a queer world, the current one needs to be *unbuilt***. Doing what needs to be done, anarchitecture’s only task is *destruction*. As Matta-Clark states, each cut constitutes a form of “*completion through removal*.”⁵² **By demolishing oppressive structures, anarchitecture clears the way for new ways of being.** It does not prescribe what the future holds. In the ruins of a regime built on hierarchy, a top-down approach would constitute a missed opportunity. What arises from the rubble must be a collaborative effort.



Figure 8. Interior view of *Splitting* (1974).

In the context of this exploration, Halberstam’s analysis of Matta-Clark’s piece *Splitting*, which documents his process of bisecting a house, is particularly pertinent. This endeavor consisted of excising a slice through its center, rocking the structure back on its foundation and removing the four corners of the eaves. In this “feat of engineering,” the house had to be “cut, supported, and tilted so that the forces holding it upright [...] could also be deployed to allow the building to fall open.”⁵³ Reflecting on this piece, Halberstam states:

Matta-Clark makes clear his understanding of the house as belonging to a *seemingly unshakeable environmental grammar*. But, he suggests, **where a grammar becomes fixed, stuck, committed only a few hegemonic signifying chains, it must be cut up, destroyed, deconstructed.**⁵⁴

The house in question had been empty, like many in the area, due to eviction. It represented “the failure of a postwar economic dream,” while registering “the decline of the suburbs from utopian enclaves to domestic prisons.”⁵⁵ Pamela M. Lee, author of a book on Matta-Clark that offered the first critical account of his work, explains that **anarchitecture deals in the “object to be destroyed.”**⁵⁶ In the task of dismantling the heteronormative order, the private home may be the ultimate target. **Often emphasizing “the absence of some bodies,” Matta-Clark’s projects constitute an archive of “what has been omitted [or] what was never there to begin with.”**⁵⁷ As discussed previously, the ‘family’ represents ‘an *absence* of other kinds of bodies,’ given that it *excludes* those that fail to contribute to the heteronormative regime. Its supporting architecture, the private home, *is premised on this same principle*. In *Splitting*, Matta-Clark invokes *disorder* in relation to “heterosexual norms of embodied power and desire.”⁵⁸ By opening up a house, and thereby rendering what was *uninhabitable for some* as *uninhabitable for all*, he excavates a path of *possibility*. **Unbuilding is a powerful act that allows new realities to take place.**

In discussing the potentiality of *destruction*, the aftermath remains a question. The fear of the unknown may encourage complacency. This inclination cannot be abated with a ‘master plan,’ as this remains in the logic of the current paradigm. However, observing what can flourish in decay may prove encouraging. Halberstam discusses another artist, photographer Alvin Baltrop (1948-2004), who documented life in the interzones of New York City, again in the 1970s. Baltrop crossed paths with Matta-Clark, as his work featured in his photographs, but was ultimately concerned with *what might be generated by destruction*, rather than *destruction* itself. The landscape he photographed was of the piers along the Hudson River, which featured abandoned and collapsing warehouses,



Figure 9. *The Piers (man looking in window)* by Alvin Baltrop.



Figure 10. *The Piers* by Alvin Baltrop.

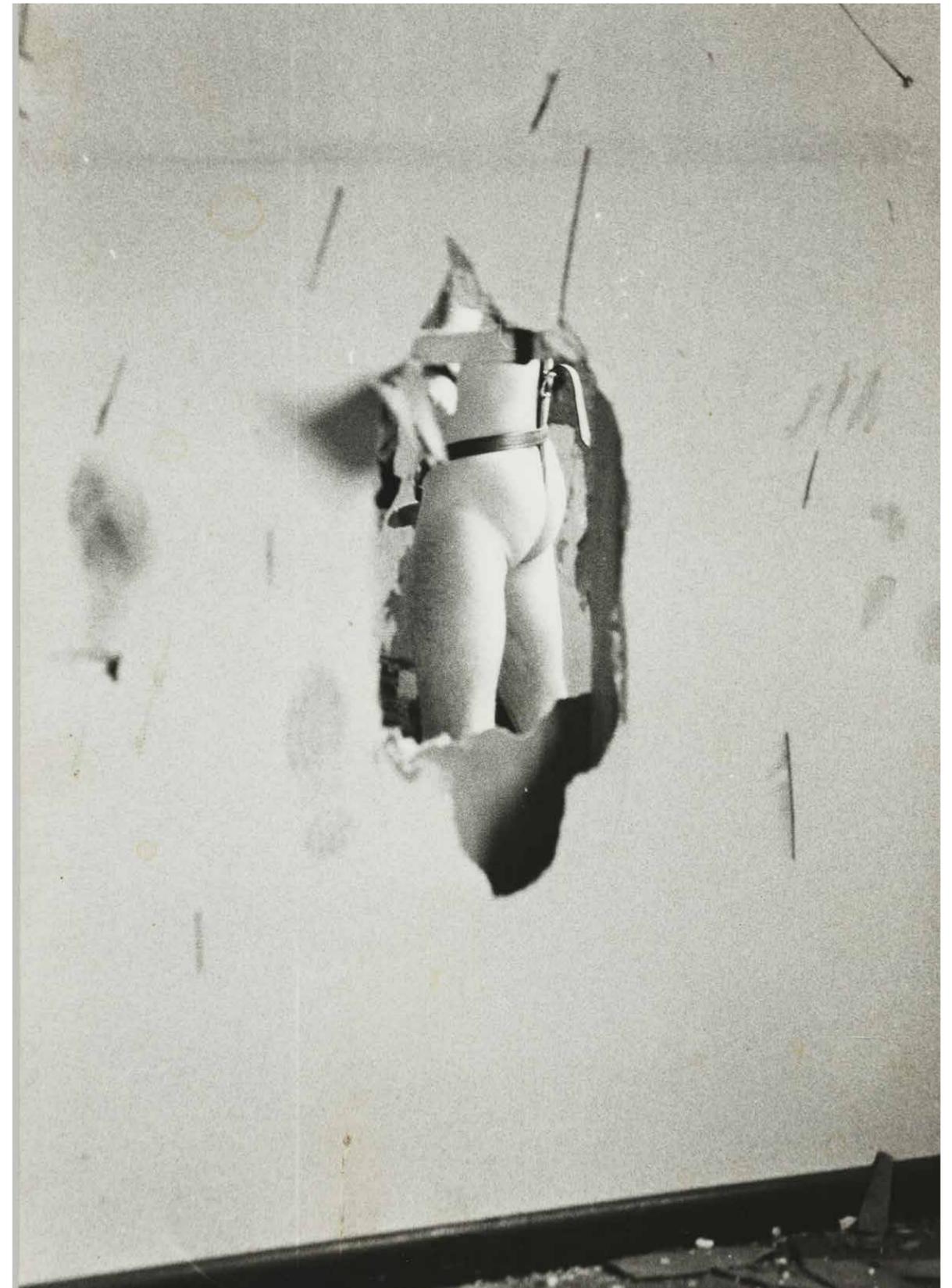


Figure 11. *The Piers (hole in the wall)* by Alvin Baltrop.

along with other industrial structures. While this zone exemplified the city's failings, Halberstam explains that **it offered “opportunities for new mappings of desire, relationality, contact, and collapse.”**⁵⁹ In their state of decay, these spaces were *opened up* to people who had been *shut out* by society. Not only did it serve as refuge for homeless people, but it also offered a place for gay men to cruise for sex in a homophobic society. By the 1970s, **the Hudson River piers became a thriving gay subculture, “connected to endless cruising, subterranean sex worlds, and noncommercialized queer activity.”**⁶⁰ Baltrop, a “voyeur into the sexual underworlds” of this area, recognized the “‘joyous’ and utopian project of cruising the piers in ways that Matta-Clark could not.”⁶¹ He often suspended himself with a harness from the rafters of the decaying structures to get a better view of their interior and their inhabitants. Moreover, as a black gay man, he “attends carefully” to the bodies cruising these spaces.⁶² Rather than focus on the hardship of vulnerable populations as an outsider might be inclined to do, Baltrop *emphasized the agency asserted in placemaking*. While, as stated by Halberstam, “nothing much remains of a counter-capitalist gay urban interzone,” the memories live on.⁶³ He maintains that **“utopian space [...] can be glimpsed only when an extreme act temporarily clears the landscape of impediments.”**⁶⁴ As such, ruins are not spaces of “vacancy and failed promise,” but rather the “necessary punctuation” between the “‘wasteland’ of the here-and-now” and the “then and there of queer futurity;” they become sites for “dynamic change.”⁶⁵

Alas, **the imperative must be to *destroy*, and not *repair*, the heteronormative regime and its associated built environment.** This includes the private home, and privatization in general. Through no fault of trying, ***exclusionary architecture will never be inclusive.*** By definition, someone will be left out.



Figure 12. *Pier 52 (four people sunbathing near Gordon Matta-Clark's Days End)* by Alvin Baltrop.

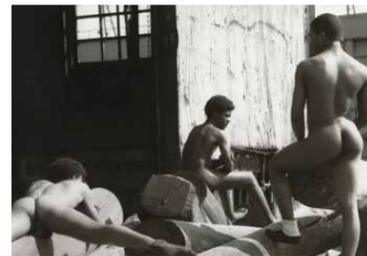


Figure 13. *The Piers (three men on dock)* by Alvin Baltrop.



Figure 14. *A young couple on the piers* by Alvin Baltrop.

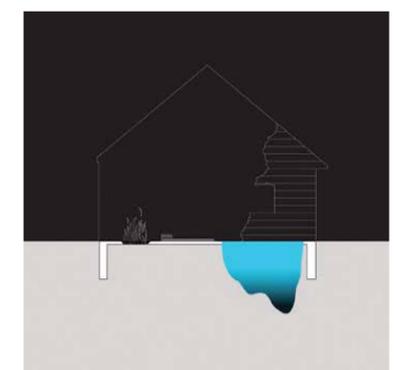
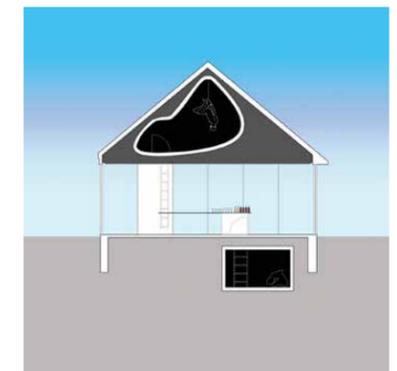
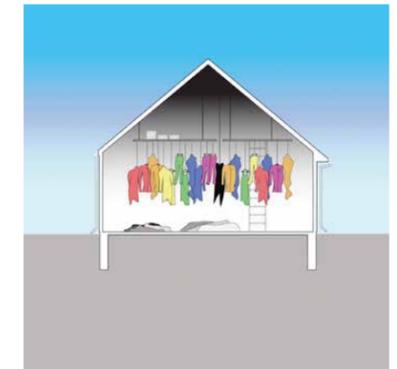


Figure 15. *Pier 48* by Paul Hosefros.



Figure 16. *Chelsea piers* by Leonard Fink.

Our paradigm does not serve the collective. For a ‘shared’ architecture, other ways of doing and being must be explored. Impossible to elaborate within the parameters of an imposed hierarchy, this vision requires the *leveling* of this oppressive structure. As stated by Halberstam, **“new social affects are possible only if we *dismantle* — rather than simply *renovate* — the roles and regimes that currently imprison us.”**⁶⁶ Anarchitecture offers potential, as a tool that clears the way for newness. It exposes the logic of ‘public’ and ‘private’ space, locates an inherent instability in this binary composition, and dissolves the false boundary that has been erected between them. Through this act of *destruction*, it opens up a world of *possibility*. In the book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Esteban Muñoz asserts that ***queer futurity can only be accessed through “crazy, risky, wild leaps into the void.”***⁶⁷ **It is through the process of ‘queering’ that we are offered glimpses into what this queer future might hold. By *dismantling* heteronormative structures, and making space for queer existence, this methodology effectively enacts a “*pre-appearance in the world of another mode of being that is not yet here.*”**⁶⁸ In our elaborations of such a world, **we must remain committed to unmaking the world as we know it.**



Figures 17-20. *Strategies for Living in Houses* by Colin Ripley.

THE SHARED BODY

The Shared Body

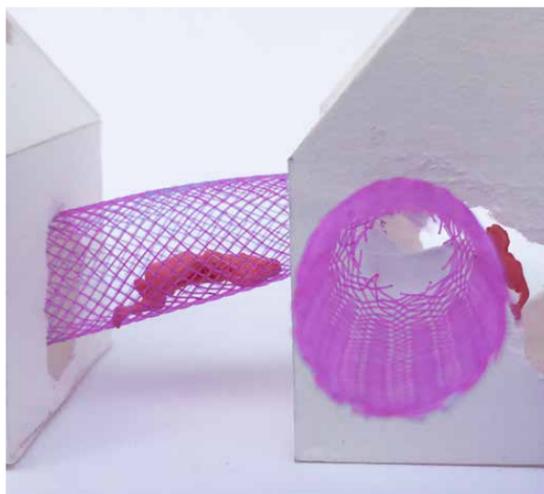
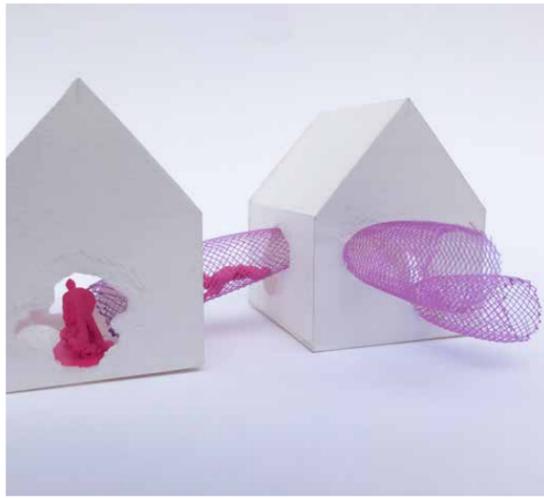
“Can we go further? Can we find a way to trans-form, to trans the form of houses, *to make our houses like our bodies sites for resistance?*”⁶⁹

- Colin Ripley

As discussed, the private home is an architecture based on principles of *exclusion*. Moreover, all ‘private’ spaces, by definition, are not accessible to all. Given that one informs the other, the elaboration of this spatiality has direct consequences for ‘public’ spaces. Significant activities, *many of which are integral to the human experience*, have been designated as ‘private.’ In turn, they can no longer be conducted in ‘public.’ This outcome has significant repercussions for those *excluded* from ‘private’ spaces, given that performing these activities may lead to their *exclusion* from ‘public’ spaces as well. Through the mechanism of the binary, all spatialities become *uninhabitable* for people that do not contribute to the dictates of the heteronormative regime. The affected population is composed of a wide range of marginalized identities that are not considered ‘productive’ to this order. Alas, the private home, as the ultimate “hetero-sexualized” space, delimits the social relationships of its inhabitants by assuming “a certain lifestyle,” *which it then imposes on society as a whole*.⁷⁰ Far from benign, it is a mechanism of *social engineering* with devastating effects. As such, **this design exercise does not propose a mere ‘renovation,’ as it recognizes that trying to ‘accommodate’ queerness in a space that was designed to suppress it constitutes a futile effort. Rather, it explores the *unbuilding* of this *irremediable* spatiality.**

Informed by anarchitecture, the private home undergoes a form of *deconstruction*. In the performance of his “surgical interventions,” Gordan Matta-Clark did not seek to “cure nor mend,” but rather to “explore damage.”⁷¹ By rejecting “state-sanctioned practices of entrapment and containment,” he investigated what building could do “beyond ‘holding’ bodies.”⁷² In all his work, he *refused* the temptation of *maintaining order*, and instead *embraced* the *chaos* that ensued when this imperative was disregarded. Similarly, **in this exploration, I present the private home, the architectural typology the most responsible for propagating the heteronormative order, as the ‘object to be destroyed.’** This practice is not meant to ‘solve’ the issue at hand. Rather, it is concerned with uncovering *potential*. However, like Alvin Baltrop, my interest goes beyond the ruins themselves. **While I engage in a methodology of *deconstruction*, I also suggest *what might be generated by this act*.** Cutting into this structure, the boundary between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ is dissolved and the binary formulation of ‘private’ and ‘public’ spatiality is abandoned. **By breaking down the private home, and its derivatives, I reconfigure spatial arrangements in ways that *allow new modes of inhabitation*.** Foregrounding the relationship between people and their built environment, I highlight spatial conditions through evocative scenarios. **Given that ‘private’ spaces hide sexuality, and thereby render all the many ways that people can be sexual as *illegible*, I place an emphasis on how reversing the course of privatization may allow this diversity to *thrive*.**

This exploration consists of four iterative exercises. In the first, physical models, reminiscent of gabled houses, are punctured. As a result of this action, what is inward is projected outward. By creating visual porosity, the relationship between the two entities is altered. In the second, a series of analog collages perform a similar action. Various magazine covers on the topic of housing are torn apart to reveal intimacy that has been privatized. Or, as a result of social norms, has been discouraged from occurring altogether. In the third, digital collages populate a variety of residential buildings that are in the process of being demolished. They depict interactions transpiring both inside and outside these structures, and, more critically, those that disregard this boundary entirely. In the final, this relationality is reiterated through digital modeling. A standard house is replicated, creating the semblance of a suburban condition. With the aim of disrupting this typical scene, key walls are removed, connecting elements are added, and pieces of furniture are dispersed throughout. Various interactions that defy the division of ‘public’ and ‘private’ are depicted in the renderings. **Each iteration maintains that we must go beyond the current paradigm to discover the *relational possibilities* that might arise from its *dismantling*.** They serve as a reminder that *unbuilding* architecture is done in service of a new spatial reality. By *unmaking* hierarchy, the future becomes ‘shared.’



Figures 1-5. Photos of concept model.



Figure 2. Collage.

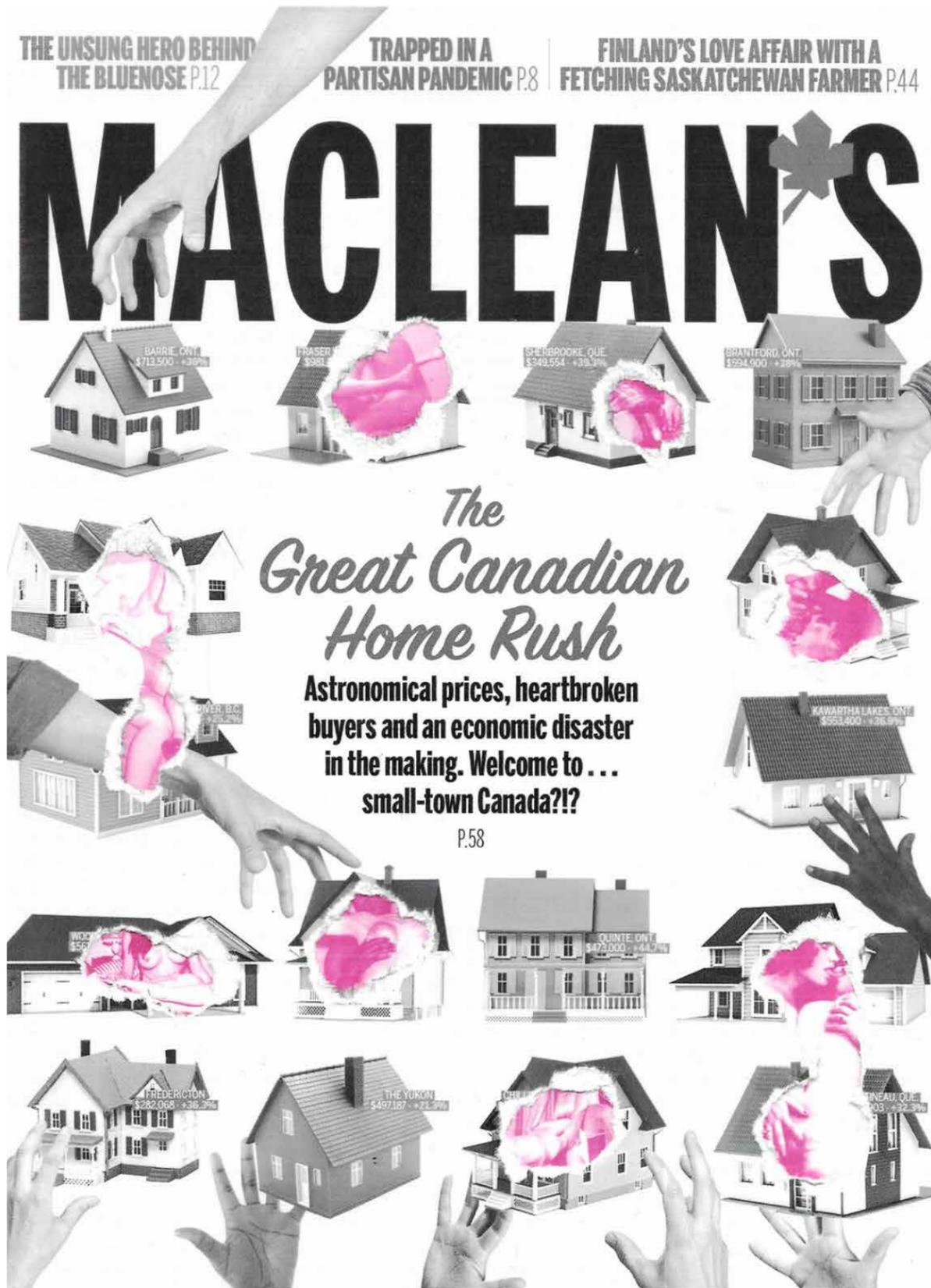


Figure 3. Collage.



Figure 4. Collage.

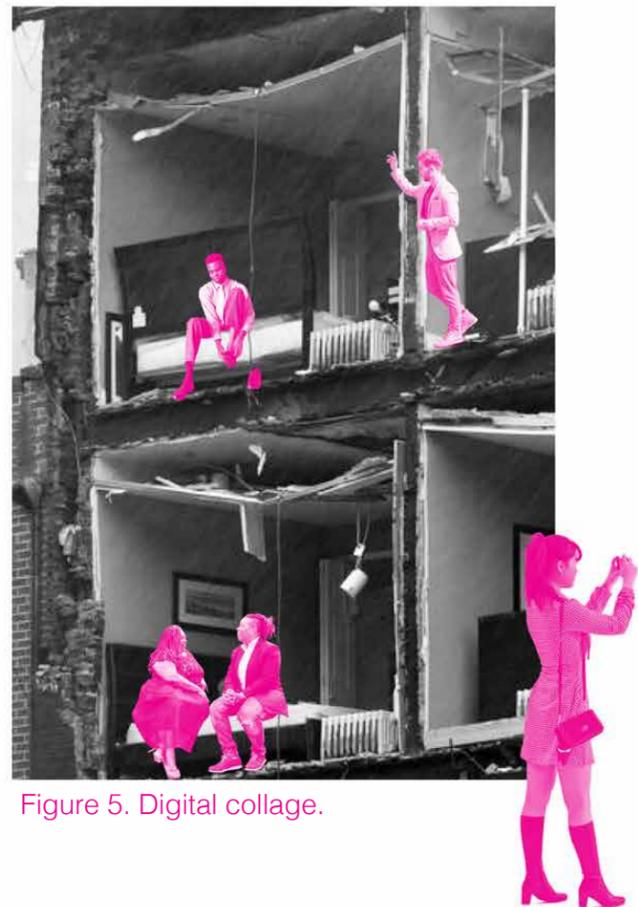


Figure 5. Digital collage.

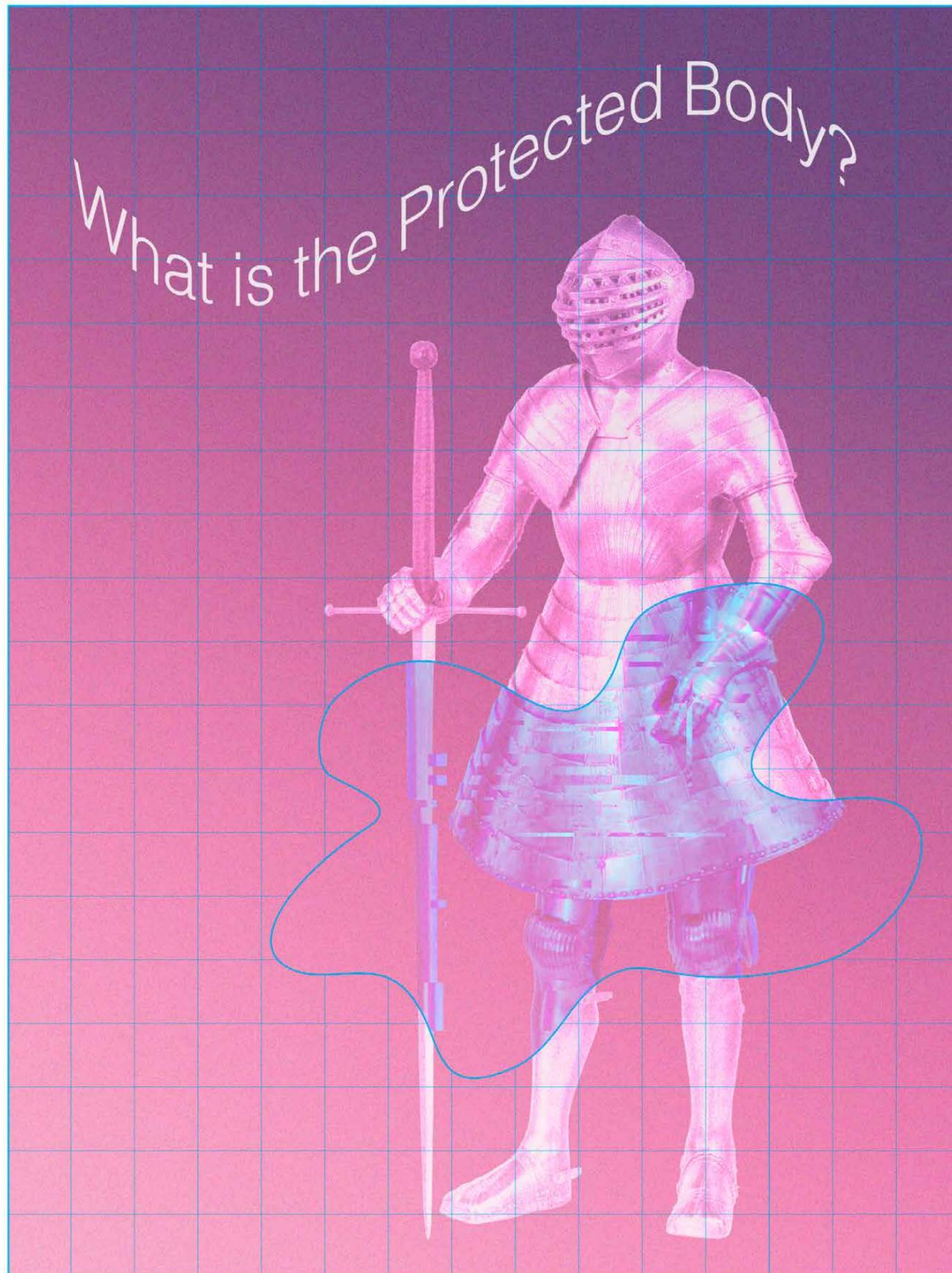


Figures 6-7. Renderings.



Figures 8-9. Renderings.

Figures 10-11. Renderings.



2.4 What is the Protected Body?

“For the gender variant, **the tyranny of gender intrudes on every aspect of the spaces in which we live and constrains the behaviours we display.**”¹

-Petra Doan

Queer bodies are literally and figuratively under *constant attack* in our heteronormative society. While the scope of this thesis is limited to the West, this is unfortunately a global phenomenon. Amidst growing polarization, gender and sexual minorities have become the target of yet another *moral panic* incited through the joint efforts of conservative thinkers, religious leaders, and certain ‘feminist’ groups.² As part of a wider political strategy, the transgender and gender nonconforming community is being used as a ‘wedge issue,’ with governing bodies attempting to legislate away their existence. For instance, a record number of anti-LGBTQ bills have been proposed in the United States.³ Last year, with a tally of 191 bills, had been labelled the “worst year in recent history for LGBTQ state legislative attacks.”⁴ According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), there have already been *over 300* bills put forward less than three months into 2022, the majority of which specifically target trans people (update: at the time of revising this section at 6 months into 2022 the HRC is now tracking *nearly 600*).⁵ Legislative trackers on sites such as Freedom for All Americans show an increasing number of these bills are being signed into law.⁶

In addition to the *formal* efforts to eliminate bodily autonomy, members of the public have enlisted themselves to enforce conformity. Public opinion has a direct impact on the rates of violence directed towards these groups. The dehumanization of queer people



Names of transgender people whose lives were lost to anti-transgender violence in the United States of America between 2016 and 2021:

2021

Marquiisha Lawrence,

Jo Acker,

Jessi Hart,

Mel Groves,

Royal Poetical Starz,

Kiër Solomon,

Brianna Ulmer,

Disaya Monae,

Pooh Johnson,

Miss CoCo,

Shai Vanderpump,

Taya Ashton,

EJ Boykin (also known as Novaa Watson),

has led to an *onslaught of hate crimes*. While so-called Canada (where the elaboration of this thesis takes place) may believe itself to be a ‘tolerant’ nation, the numbers say otherwise. Statistics Canada’s 2022 data on police-reported hate crimes indicates that attacks targeting people of marginalized sexual orientations have *over doubled* since 2017.⁷ Demonstrating a critical oversight, it does not provide data for transgender or gender nonconforming individuals. A national survey conducted in 2011 by EGALE on Canadian high schools reported that 74% of the trans participants had faced *verbal harassment*, and 37% had faced *physical harassment*.⁸ Another report conducted in 2013 by the Trans PULSE Project found that “*experiences of transphobia were nearly universal among trans Ontarians*,” with *98% reporting at least one instance*.⁹ A 2019 national survey by Trans PULSE Project found that 16% of trans and nonbinary people had been *physically assaulted*, and 26% *sexually assaulted*, with *64% reporting that they avoided three or more types of public spaces for fear of harassment*.¹⁰ In their article “A Climate for Hate? An Exploration of the Right-Wing Extremist Landscape in Canada” published in the journal *Critical Criminology*, researchers Barbara Perry and Ryan Scrivens have found that hate crimes grow substantially in “enabling environments” where people are given a tacit “permission to hate.”¹¹ This phenomenon is also observed in the United Kingdom, as the BBC reported an *81% increase* in crimes against transgender and nonbinary people *in just one year* (2018 to 2019).¹² The article explains that this group has “their existence *debated* on a near daily basis across U.K. media, and several activists believe this negative attention reinforces the poor treatment they receive on our streets.”¹³

In addition to this mistreatment, the transgender and gender non-conforming community is repeatedly stricken with *record-breaking murder rates*. The numbers reported by the Human Rights Campaign for the United States in 2021 “shattered the record” set by the previous year.¹⁴ The most recent “Trans Murder Monitoring” report indicates this past year was the

Zoella Martinez,
 Tierramarie Lewis,
 Oliver “Ollie” Taylor,
 Poe Delwyn Black,
 Serenity Hollis,
 Danny Henson (also known as Pryynce Daniel),
 Sophie Vásquez,
 Whispering Wind Bear Spirit,
 Thomas Hardin,
 Keri Washington,
 Tiffany Thomas,
 Iris Santos,
 Natalia Smüt Lopez,
 Jahaira DeAlto Balenciaga,
 Tiara Banks,
 Remy Fennell,
 Dominique Lucious,
 Jaida Peterson,
 Rayanna Pardo,
 Diamond Kyree Sanders,
 Aidelen Evans,
 Jenna Franks,
 Jasmine Canady,
 Jeffery “JJ” Bright,
 Chyna Carrillo,

deadliest on record *globally* since the organisation Transrespect Versus Transphobia (TVT) began tracking this information thirteen years ago.¹⁵ The disturbing numbers are *unlikely to accurately reflect reality* as the victims are often misidentified by police and media - they are believed to be far higher. As noted by TVT, these numbers “are just a small glimpse of the reality on the ground. [...] The majority of the data was collected from countries with an established network of trans and LGBTIQ organisations that conduct the monitoring. In most countries, data is not systematically collected. Most cases continue to go unreported and, when reported, receive very little attention.”¹⁶

As another consequence, the suicide rate of queer people is significantly higher than the general population and is on an upward trend. According to the annual Trevor Project survey, 94% of American LGBTQ+ youth reported that recent politics negatively impacted their mental health, and that *nearly half of their respondents seriously considered suicide this year*.¹⁷ In 2015, the National Center for Transgender Equality conducted the largest survey of American transgender people ever undertaken. Of the nearly 28,000 respondents, it found that *81.7% had seriously considered suicide in their lifetime, and 48.3% considered it in that past year*.¹⁸ Even more alarmingly, *40.4% had attempted suicide at some point in their lifetime, and 7.3% attempted to do so in the past year*.¹⁹ In 2020, the Trans PULSE Project’s national report found that *30% of Canadian trans, nonbinary, and two-spirit people had considered suicide in the past year, and 5% had attempted to do so*.²⁰

All of the above affects queer spatial experience. Existing, in public or private, is disproportionately dangerous for gender and sexual minorities, especially those with intersecting marginalized identities. Receiving little to no protection, the queer body is made to be a target.

Alexus “Kimmy Icon” Braxton,
 Fifty Bandz,
 Dominique Jackson,
 Bianca “Muffin” Bankz,
 Samuel Edmund Damián Valentín,
 Tyianna “Davarea” Alexander,
 2020
 Alexandria Winchester,
 Courtney Eshay Key,
 Jaheim Pugh (who also went by “Barbie” and “Bella”),
 Kimberly Susan Fial,
 Skylar Heath,
 Chae’Meshia Simms,
 Asia Jynae Foster,
 Yunieski Carey Herrera,
 Angel Unique,
 Sara Blackwood,
 Brooklyn Deshuna,
 Felycya Harris,
 Michelle Michellyn Ramos Vargas,
 Mia Green,
 Aerrion Burnett,
 Kee Sam,

Spatial Analysis of the (Un)protected Body

To begin contemplating this difficult subject, I made a series of models exploring spatial power dynamics. Drawing on written accounts detailing queer experiences of space, I visualized the described interactions while emphasizing the conditions that enabled them. For this exercise, I principally relied on the autoethnography of Petra Doan, who has written extensively on queer planning issues including most notably the book *Queering Planning: Challenging Heteronormative Assumptions and Reframing Planning Practice*.²¹ Using her lens as a professor of urban and regional planning, Doan reflects on spatial encounters from her vantage point as a transgender woman. In doing so, she highlights how what she refers to as the ‘tyranny of gender’ has shaped her life. Tyranny is defined as “the exercise of power which is cruelly or harshly administered,” and usually involves “some form of oppression by those wielding power over the less powerful.”²² In her article, she argues that transgender and gender variant people experience “a special kind of tyranny – the tyranny of gender” which arises when people “dare to challenge the hegemonic expectations for appropriately gendered behavior in western society.”²³ I also referred to interviews conducted by author Sheila Cavanagh in her book *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination*.²⁴ As the title suggests, the insights provided by the book specifically relate to experiences of the public toilet. It does, however, include the voices of a wide range of participants. Looking into the lived experiences of queer people offers critical insight regarding spatial violence.

In ‘Public’

Doan explains that **the “tyranny of gender” operates when individuals “feel empowered to act as heteronormatively constructed gender enforcers in public spaces.”**²⁵ Bolstered by current events, this ‘enforcement’ has become more frequent. These “policing behaviours” often escalate with minimal encouragement, granted approval by the mere presence of indifferent others.²⁶ Nonreactive bystanders act in collusion during these instances.

Lea Rayshon Daye,

Aja Raquell Rhone-Spears,

Queasha D Hardy,

Dior H Ova / Tiffany Harris,

Marilyn Cazares,

Summer Taylor,



Bree Black,

Shaki Peters,

Merci Mack,

Brayla Stone,

Brian “Egypt’ Powers,

Selena Reyes-Hernandez,

With no dissent, particularly from peers, this conduct continues unfettered. In fact, these individuals draw strength from this form of complicity to “sharpen their verbal and physical assaults.” Active endorsement further encourages ‘gender enforcers’ to go to extreme lengths with their efforts. Queer people experience various forms of ‘enforcement’ in their everyday lives. *It is rampant.* Increased visibility often translates to increased victimization. By contrast, as observed by Doan, wider community support of “gender variant performance” in public spaces can offer “a powerful statement against the dichotomy.”²⁷

Public spaces often contain structural elements that enable “gender tyranny.”²⁸ It is well established that secluded areas heighten vulnerability, for instance, literature on transport safety has long maintained that isolated zones are the most dangerous in terms of gendered violence.²⁹ This research notes that this is particularly true of spaces that reduce the *physical proximity* between bodies, *increasing the possibility of unwanted contact*, such as *elevators*.³⁰ As there is a high prevalence of incidents in these enclosed areas, women are often warned not to ride with unknown men.³¹ Doan recounts a physical assault she was subjected to in an *elevator*. In her case, *the presence of other individuals*, and by no means exclusively men, offered no solace, as they ignored the occurrence. Even in diametric conditions, safety for transgender people is not guaranteed. Doan describes an incident of verbal harassment that occurred on the crowded sidewalk of an airport arrival area. Reflecting on the perpetrator’s episode, Doan writes “my gender expression in that public space offended his sense of appropriate behavior and he acted to sanction that violation *in as public a fashion as possible*.”³² The implicit encouragement offered by the “silent but supportive watchers” was thankfully countered by her driver stepping in.³³ His protective presence was all that prevented the altercation from becoming physical; as stated by Doan “I would have been assaulted on the spot.”³⁴ **In the middle of the day, in front of countless people. In the most public of public spaces!** For the ‘gender variant,’ *it is not as simple as avoiding dark ‘off the beaten track’ places.* As Doan’s experiences suggests: **“those who are gender variant are at risk wherever they travel.”**³⁵

Jayne Thompson,

Riah Milton,

Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells,

Tony McDade,

Helle Jae O’Regan,

Nina Pop,



Penélope Díaz Ramírez,

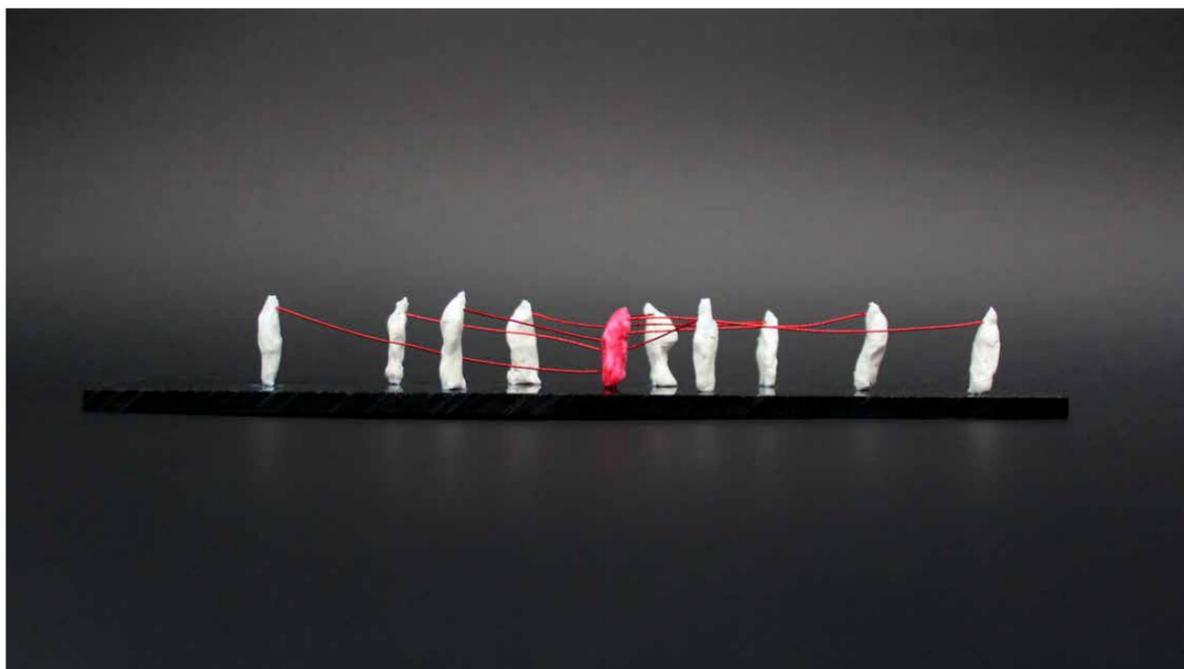
Layla Pelaez Sánchez,

Serena Angelique Velázquez Ramos,

Johanna Metzger,

Lexi,

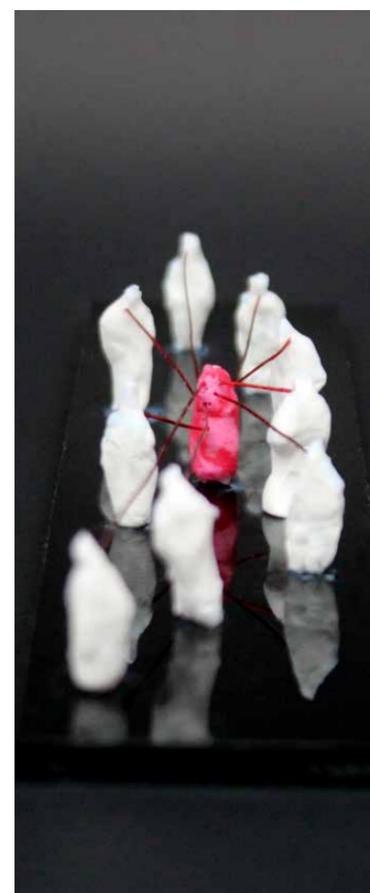
Monika Diamond,



Targeted for simply existing, Doan reflects on how she is perceived. Understanding gender as “mutually constituted by the performer and by the viewer in a particular space,” Doan describes how the gaze of each person who looks upon her comprises a “policing practice,” questioning her gender and undermining the “tenuousness” of the category.³⁶ She describes the sensation:

I experienced my gender as a kind of moving target, like one of those opposing moving sidewalks in modern airports. I was moving in one direction and the spectators were moving in the other, and somewhere in between **my gender was constructed and reconstructed with each fleeting moment.**³⁷

In this heteronormative society, her safety *depends* on being successfully read as a normatively gendered individual. *It requires the erasure of her transness.* There is only so much one can control in terms of how others perceive oneself. On this note, Doan writes: “The lesson for me on this day was that I only control a portion of my gender presentation, namely the clothes that I wear and the spaces I choose to occupy. **The rest is in the eye of the beholders.**”³⁸



The gender enforcer’s gaze leaves queer individuals at an impasse. Forced to make impossible choices, every option has dire consequences. One could comply by suppressing one’s queerness. This erasure of self only gives a false sense of security. It is conditional, based on one’s willingness to self-abandon. The trade-off comes at a high cost. Not living authentically can have devastating mental health effects, with many succumbing to their suicidal thoughts. Additionally, it can be physically dangerous if one is outed. As undesirable as it is, the option of remaining closeted is also not available to all. Many queer people can simply not hide their queerness, no matter how hard they try. Those bullied from a young age, for things they could not help, can attest to this. Historian, activist and author Leslie Feinberg, a self-described “gender outlaw,” wrote about the difficulties of growing up as a “masculine girl” in the 1950s and thinking that ze would be killed before reaching adulthood as a result of zir gender presentation.³⁹ For people like Feinberg, *conforming was impossible.* Regarding clothing, ze wrote:

My choice of clothing was not the only alarm bell that rang my difference. If my more feminine younger sister had worn ‘boy’s’ clothes, she might have seemed stylish and cute. Dressing all little girls and all little boys in ‘sex-appropriate’ clothing *actually called attention to our gender differences. Those of us who didn’t fit stuck out like sore thumbs.*⁴⁰

In a society that forces one to comply with the heteronormative order, this conundrum is unresolvable. Being the target of the ‘tyranny of gender,’ as a person irremediably marked as queer from day one, can also be mentally and physically precarious situation. While there are many people that cannot hide queerness, there are also many that do not *want* to hide this part of themselves. *It is only oppressive social conditions that create the incentive.*

- Scott/Scottlynn Devore,
- Yampi Méndez Arocho,
- Neulisa Luciano Ruiz,
- Dustin Parker,
- 2019**
- Nikki Kuhnhausen,
- Mia Perry,
- Yahira Nesby,
- Brianna “BB” Hill,
- Itali Marlowe,
- Ja’Leyah-Jamar,
- Bee Love Slater,
- Bailey Reeves,
- Tracy Single,
- Bubba Walker,
- Pebbles La Dime Doe,
- Kiki Fantroy,
- Denali Berries Stuckey,
- Brooklyn Lindsey,
- Zoe Spears,
- Chanel Scurlock,
- Chynal Lindsey,
- Paris Cameron,
- Michelle “Tamika” Washington,
- Muhlaysia Booker,

As much as many people would like to live unapologetically queer, this hostile environment often requires a mediated approach. ‘Code-switching’ can offer this middle ground, albeit still treacherous. In order to blend in “across various social settings,” queer people employ this technique by adjusting their “voices, speech patterns, mannerisms, and behaviour.”⁴¹ For instance, one may present themselves differently in a ‘straight’ workplace than if one were knowingly among other queers. That being said, queer people suffer from mass unemployment due to discriminatory hiring/firing practices.⁴² Or as another example, one may limit displaying forms of affection, such as only sparingly holding hands with a partner while in public areas. As explained by comedian Karis Anderson:

Something you might not if you’re straight is that, **as a gay couple, you’re never casually holding hands, there’s always a part of you that is on red alert for potential dangers** – you know like Sunday school teachers, or guys wearing John Deere hats, or Ann Coulter.⁴³

They joke that even seemingly ‘nice’ comments, in this case a man approaching from behind late at night yelling “hey!” only to say “all love is equal,” can set one’s heart racing.⁴⁴ Anderson quips: “In this moment I know with complete certainty that I’m going to die – I’m like, okay, it’s my time.”⁴⁵ Having been accused of being “heterophobic,” they reflect: **“Taken more literally [...], am I tits to the wind terrified of straight people? Yes. I am not a fucking idiot y’all!”**⁴⁶

Joking aside, compiling a repertoire of what can and cannot be done in certain spaces is a skill gained over time through trial and error. **It demands a heightened sense of awareness, not required of the normative population. It is exhausting. Safety often depends on successfully gauging the levels of tolerance in any given space.** One misstep can have deadly consequences, especially for transgender women at the hands of cisgender men.⁴⁷ However, as noted previously, there is only so much one can do about the perception of others, and the onus should never be on the victim.

Claire Legato,
Ashanti Carmon,
Jazzaline Ware,
Dana Martin,
Layleen Polanco,
Johana “Joa” Medina Leon,



2018

Regina Denise Brown,
Keanna Mattel,
Tydi Dansbury,
Ciara Minaj Carter,
Nikki Janelle Enriquez,

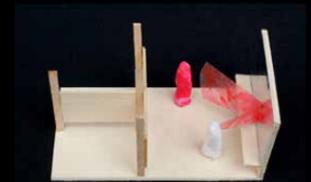
In the Public Toilet

“What makes a public bathroom safe or unsafe? I think how the user of the bathroom is perceived.”⁴⁸

Turning now to a specific spatial configuration, public toilets are a key location for the operation of ‘gender tyranny.’ While the media often focuses on fabricated dangers that would arise from transgender usage, the fact is that this typology causes issues for many of its queer users. Anyone that appears to defy gender norms, including ‘masculine’ ‘women,’ ‘feminine’ ‘men,’ and ‘genderqueer’ individuals, are at risk.⁴⁹ As demonstrated by the accounts in Cavanagh’s book *Queering Bathrooms*, **typical design elements allow for visual and acoustic apprehension of any person deemed out of place.**

In public toilets, mirrors create a panoptic environment where ‘gender enforcers’ can indirectly assess users. While some queer people use the mirror as a “personal safety device,” one interviewee says it provides them with an element of security, stating “I don’t have eyes in the back of my head,”⁵⁰ others believe that **“mirrors are the site where the panopticon is actually operating.”**⁵¹ As explained by another participant: “Mirrors ... allow ... people to sort of watch you from different angles without actually turning around and looking at you. So ... if you are already in a space that you know you’re otherized in, then ... the existence of a mirror becomes even more of a way to police and make sure your body looks just the way it’s supposed to look.”⁵² Another describes being observed in this way: “People feel like they can look in the mirror at me. Because they’re not looking directly at me, like, they have access to staring that’s not actually looking at me. They’re looking through the mirror which somehow... makes it okay.”⁵³ An interviewee, who was physically assaulted upon exiting a public restroom, offers a similar account: “People use mirrors to watch me. So they won’t actually turn and look at me; some people will. They won’t actually ... spin around and stare at me and go ‘Oh my god, what are you doing in

Londonn Moore,
Shantee Tucker,
Dejanay Stanton,
Vontashia Bell,
Sasha Garden,
Keisha Wells,



Cathalina Christina James,
Diamond Stephens,
Antash’a Devine Sherrington English,
Gigi Pierce,
Nino Fortson,

here?’ But they will covertly watch me out of the corner of their eye, and I can feel it ... I will turn and look in the mirror and catch them doing it, and they ... jump and ... [act] like ‘Oh you caught me watching you.’”⁵⁴

Surveillance in public toilets also has an auditory component. As stated by Cavanagh, **“we learn to ‘see’ gender with our ears.”**⁵⁵ Disjunction between the visible and the audible can cause serious issues for queer people in public toilets. One participant describes his strategy for using the restroom: “I put my voice ... up like this [his pitch rises] and talk to her [his girlfriend] like this [voice getting higher in pitch], and stick my, stick my boobs out, and I’ll talk to her the whole time.”⁵⁶ Cavanagh explains “trans folks sometimes parody normative gender scripts to gain access to gender exclusionary space.”⁵⁷ In doing so, these individuals attempt to perform the “synchronization” between ‘gender identity’ and ‘sex’ that the “normative cissexual audience *wants* to see.”⁵⁸ While gender parody is a necessary strategy from some, for others it is ineffectual. Abstaining from speaking, or painstakingly avoiding the production of any other noise such as coughing, is not always enough to escape acoustic apprehension.

Standard public toilet design ensures that posture can be apprehended by sound vibration. Positioning, and its acoustic properties, is intertwined with stereotypical notions of gender. As described by an interviewee, “If the person is standing up to pee ... it’s a different sound. And you know [people decide] if it’s a guy or a girl in there [on the basis of noise] ... the girl next door [may] think you are a guy because it [urine] makes a different sound. It’s got longer to travel and it sounds different.”⁵⁹ **Aural “dis/symmetries” compel people to assume “dimorphic ‘urinary positions.’”**⁶⁰ The urinary position one assumes in the lavatory is not a natural given. Entirely contingent, it is “historically and culturally variable.”⁶¹ One participant ponders: “But when men are growing up they pee sitting down at home, right? Because it’s usually mom who is doing the toilet training ... right? ... it’s easier. So I think that boys do learn to pee sitting down, but they pee standing up [as adults], I think, it’s more of a social thing.”⁶² Another interviewee similarly reflects:

Karla Patricia Flores-Pavón,

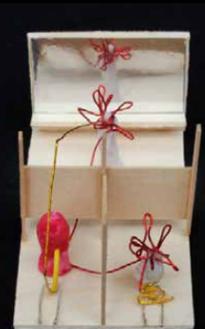
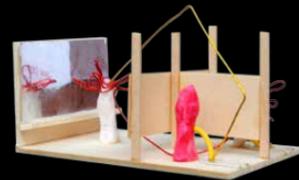
Sasha Wall,

Amia Tyrae,

Phylcia Mitchell,

Zakaria Fry

Celine Walker,



Tonya Harvey,

Christa Leigh Steele-Knudsen

Vicky Gutierrez,

Roxana Hernández,

2017

“Women and men can both pee in different ways ... Like, women can certainly stand up, and men can certainly sit down. So it’s interesting that there’s these two [positions], and of course it’s enforced by public spaces, like the way that women’s rooms are laid out and the way that men’s rooms are laid out ... they encourage ... [dimorphic] ways of urinating ... people are capable of both but encouraged to do one thing or the other ... I think it’s just kind of reinforcing different [gender] practices ... [to] ... keep ... a rigid binary.”⁶³ Indeed, as explained by Cavanagh, **“gender is disciplined by architectural designs that mandate gender-specific postures and positions.”**⁶⁴ The public toilet’s panopticism allows for easy detection of positions that deviate from the norm. Bending the body to its will, this model ensures specific positionality. Consequently, “urination is ritualized to the point where some people cannot do it in another position.”⁶⁵ ***By design, this ritual is imposed upon us all.***

To reiterate from the case study, public toilet design unnecessarily amplifies socially constructed difference. Architects that support the heteronormative regime by delineating spaces divided by binary sex/gender categories, such as the public toilet, enable the targeting of queer individuals. **It cannot be overstated enough that this is a design choice.** As noted previously, many groups are re-imagining what public toilets can look like. Gender-neutral designs have been put forward and are easy to implement. While providing inclusive facilities can be instrumental in eliminating discrimination against those perceived to be in the ‘wrong’ space, this binary model stubbornly remains the norm. Data has demonstrated that transgender and gender non-conforming people are at a higher risk of violence when using the public toilet, and that inclusive policies, while drastically improving the spatial experience of queer people, have not been found to diminish that of the rest of the population.⁶⁶ Alas, this remains a contentious issue. Consequently, public toilet usage continues to subject this group to embarrassment, harassment, assault, arrest, and possibly even death. Facing this ongoing reality, it becomes all too evident that ignoring the impact that public toilets have on the lives of queer people is an intentional political project.

Brandi Seals,

Brooklyn BreYanna Stevenson,

Candace Towns,

Stephanie Montez,

Ally Lee Steinfeld,

Derricka Banner,

Kashmire Redd,

Kiwi Herring,

Gwynevere River Song,

Jaylow McGlory,

TeeTee Dangerfield,

Ebony Morgan,

Ava Le’Ray Barrin,

Josie Berrios (also known as Kendra Adams and Kimbella Rosé),

Kenne McFadden,

Sherrell Faulkner,

Brenda Bostick,

Chay Reed,

Alphonza Watson,

Jaquarrius Holland,

Ciara McElveen,

Chyna Gibson,

Keke Collier,

JoJo Striker,

Mesha Caldwell,

In 'Private'

Discussions around safety (or lack thereof) generally revolve around spaces considered 'public.' Conversely, those considered 'private' often hold positive connotations.⁶⁷ For instance, the home is frequently presented as a safe haven, "in which individuals escape *the constant surveillance of identity*."⁷¹ However, as stated by Doan, "**the home does not always deter heteronormativity.**"⁶⁸ For many queer people, 'home' does not offer this reprieve. In fact, the spatial conditions related to domesticity may exacerbate the harm one experiences.⁶⁹ Analyses that conflate unsafe/safe with public/private rely on simplistic binaries, obscuring the various ways these categories interact. The 'tyranny of gender' knows no bounds. Reflecting on this pervasiveness, Doan writes: "For me **these spaces were not examples of dichotomous divisions of public and private space, but were part of a much richer continuum.**"⁷⁰

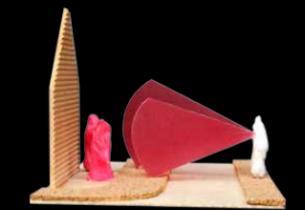
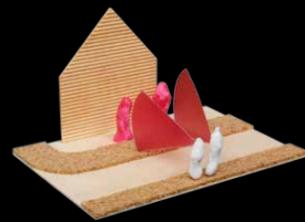
Encouraging designers to consider the different ways in which people experience, or are made to experience, "privacy, publicness, and the interrelation between the two," Olivier Vallerand, who conducted his doctoral thesis on the home in relation to queerness and continues to publish prolifically on the topic, explains that domestic spaces are, in actuality, "shared with one's community."⁷¹ While notions of public and private still exist, he emphasizes that they must be understood as *overlapping*. As a result, Vallerand maintains: "**The assumed safety of the domestic realm [...] has to be rethought.**"⁷²

In their book *Space, Place and Sex: Geographies of Sexualities*, Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst also elaborate on the instability of the public/private binary. Blurring this division, they call attention to the fact that most spaces, no matter the designation, involve some level of interaction with others. As such, most spaces can be subjected to *surveillance*. Even within the home, considered the ultimate private space, "**behaviors may be subjected to exterior monitoring and controls.**"⁷³ Neighbours, or any other interested party, can observe one's comings

Jamie Lee Wounded
Arrow,

2016

Monica Loera of Austin,
Jasmine Sierra,
Kayden Clarke,



Veronica Banks Cano,

Maya Young,

Demarkis Stansberry,

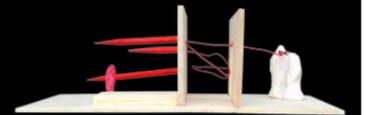
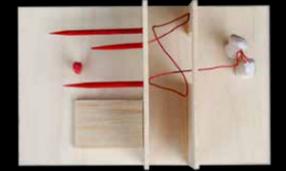
Kedarie/Kandicee
Johnson,

Quartney Davia Dawson-
Yochum,

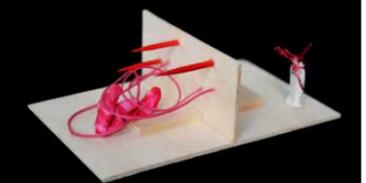
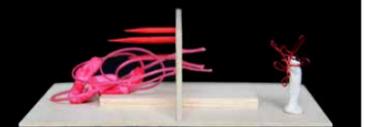
and goings. They may take note of the company one keeps. From time to time, they may glance in through the windows, attempting to discern activity based on shadow movement if the shades are drawn. Increasingly invasive supervision can be undertaken inside the home by family, roommates, or visitors. Beyond the visual, acoustic properties often contribute to aural intrusion. Poor sound insulation, a frequent occurrence in a range of domestic spaces, enables various undesirable communication. Hearing, or being heard, is always in the realm of possibility. Spaces considered private can feel very public indeed.

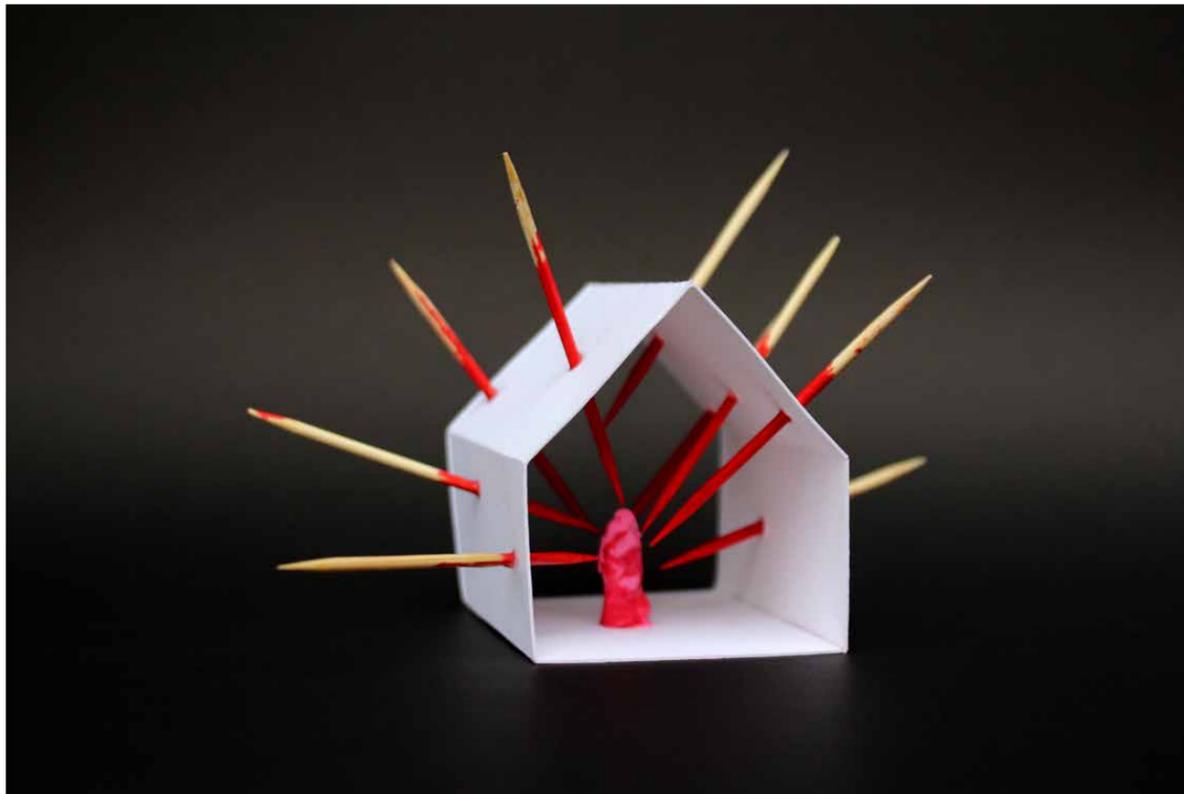
Of course, all of this does not eliminate the possibility of the home as a place of refuge for queer people. However, **this condition is reliant on the safety of other occupants and/or adjacent residents. There is always the possibility of interacting with others, who may or may not make their intolerance known.** Given the continuing negative social perception of queer people, it can be hard to gauge if one is safe or not around these people. Unless someone is outwardly accepting, not knowing this information can leave one on edge. As a result, the heteronormative gaze may dictate one's behaviour even in what should be considered one's own personal space. Contingent on many factors, the home's status as a safe space erodes. Moreover, it must be noted that the queer community disproportionately faces homelessness, a condition which brings about an entirely different set of relations to space.⁷⁴

Beyond the usual suspects, the 'tyranny of gender' may also infiltrate "via modern communication systems."⁷⁵ As explained by Doan, "electronic media of various kinds allow **the intrusion of distant events** into the space of domesticity."⁷⁶ Indeed, the horrors of the outside world often follow queer people home. With the current climate, many do a fair share of 'doomscrolling.' Even in isolation, not having any *physical* interactions with another person, queer people are attacked.⁷⁷ For Doan, the telephone, as a telecommunication device, "constitutes the most significant invasion" of her private space.⁷⁸ She explains:



Shante Isaac,
Keyonna Blakeney,
Tyreece Walker,
Mercedes Successful,
Amos Beede,
Goddess Diamond,





I generally answer the phone when it rings. Callers who do not know me invariably hear my voice and assume that I am male. Part of my witness related to integrity involves telling them patiently that they are speaking to a woman. However, many callers refuse to disbelieve their ears and continue this pronoun abuse by calling me Mister and Sir. After a few attempts to persuade them otherwise I often simply hang up in frustration at this intrusion of the tyranny of gendered pronouns into my own space. **Many people do not understand the power of these little words and how painful the persistent use of inappropriate pronouns can be.** After a long day of being out in heteronormatively defined spaces (and getting my share of confused looks and the occasional, yes sir), it feels like a violation to be subjected to such indignity at home.⁷⁹



As a typical millennial, I usually let my calls go to voicemail (and then 'forget' to check them). However, the experience described by Doan resonates, as it would with countless queer people. **Perhaps contrasted with other events in our lives, particularly the horrific ones, 'little words' may seem insignificant. However, they generally entail a denial of personhood.** Through repetition, they can have a large impact. As many studies have shown, the power of microaggressions should never be underestimated.⁸⁰

Whether struck with numerous small punches, or one big one, the queer body receives little protection in this heteronormative society.

Deeniquia Dodds,
Dee Whigam,
Skye Mockabee,
Erykah Tijerina,
Rae'Lynn Thomas,
Lexxi Sironen,
T.T. Saffore,
Crystal Edmonds,
Jazz Alford,
Brandi Bledsoe,
Simon (Sierra) Bush,
Noony Norwood,
India Monroe,
And far too many more.⁸¹

Figures 1 - 21. Series of models exploring spatial power dynamics.

THE PROTECTED BODY

The Protected Body

How does one propose a spatial intervention for such a wicked problem? I often come across well-intentioned architects advocating for design-oriented solutions. Granted, some of these proposals do indeed drastically improve people's spatial experiences. However, others fall short of achieving real change, highlighting how vast the issue of safety really is. For instance, the addition of lighting is often brought forward to rectify the dangers of the public realm. But what if, as with Doan and countless others, one is targeted in broad daylight? *What does one do when the problem is other people?* There is no easy remedy, certainly not an architectural one. **Social perceptions need to change.**

Beyond band-aid architecture proposals, **the onus is often on the victim to better prepare themselves for unpredictable attacks.** This includes being conscious of their appearance, deferring to what is deemed acceptance public attire in an act of self-denial. Conformity is not always possible as some traits are not easily concealed. It certainly is not desirable either. Targets of violence are expected to enrol in self-defence courses. To ride in taxis instead of public transportation (even though this expense *does not guarantee* that the drivers will not harass them all the same). To avoid putting themselves in any sort of compromising position. Etcetera. In the aftermath of an act of violence, victims are made to answer for it. "Why didn't you x?" "Couldn't you have x?" "If you hadn't x..." "Next time you should x!" Rather than address the perpetrator, it becomes a learning moment. If it wasn't that person's last.

At the end of the day, queer people are tired of going to the hospital to see friends that have been 'queer-bashed' or who are having mental health issues brought on by an increasingly queer-phobic society. They are also tired of ending up there themselves for the same reasons. The only reason queer people should be visiting friends in the hospital, or having their own extended stay, is because gender-affirming care

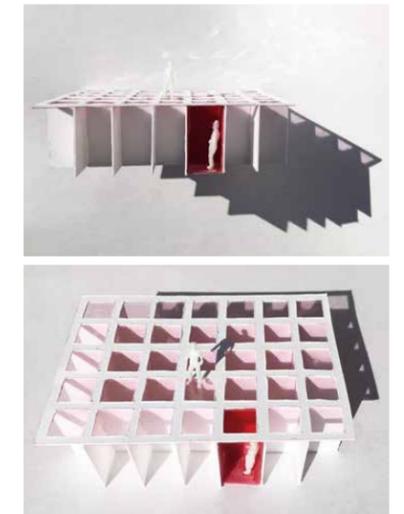
is *finally* accessible. Queer people are also tired of attending the funerals of lives cut too short. They want to celebrate life *while people are alive*. **Queer people want to live freely, with no fear.** Lighting alleyways is not going to cut it.

The resulting design exercise is based on the premise that violence should not be the problem of those that experience it, but rather that of those that administer it. It acknowledges that architecture simply cannot provide the solution to all societal problems, as it would be naive to think otherwise. As such, this project necessarily engages with the realm of speculative fiction. It suggests the possibility of a better system than *texting someone that you got home safe*.

Taking on a satirical dimension, the tools of the heteronormative regime are turned against itself. Historically speaking, the systematic imposition of grids, the widespread installation of surveillance systems, and the development of mass incarceration complexes, have not been beneficial to queer life. In fact, these are among the mechanisms that have been used to control, and eradicate, queerness. Long used to oppress the queer population, *they are now redeployed in service of their protection*. **Rather than require victims to better prepare themselves for navigating their environment, this proposal alleviates this burden by creating an infrastructure that ensures peace of mind by detaining potential aggressors.**

Conceived as a digital interface overlaid onto built reality, it operates through *containment* (think electric dog fence). Performing certain actions will trigger the system, *resulting in their neutralization*. **The culprit then undergoes educational rehabilitation before re-entry into society, as these problematic behaviours are learned, rather than inherent to anyone's character.** Meanwhile, the intended target gets to go along their merry way. They are protected, without having to do anything, *much like how different privileges in society reduce the potential of certain bodies being put in harm's way*.

The irony of resorting to these tools is not lost, *this design exercise arrived at these drastic measures out of exasperation*. **The primary purpose is not to advocate for the imposition of this model, but rather to point out the situation at hand while shifting the emphasis onto the guilty party.** Queer people are tired of being on edge all the time. It should not be up to them to create the conditions of their safety. Moreover, this is not a reasonable request to make of this population. Those who have long benefitted from the heteronormativity *need to educate their counterparts as this is the only method that will ensure that queer bodies are protected*.



Figures 1-2. Photos of concept model.

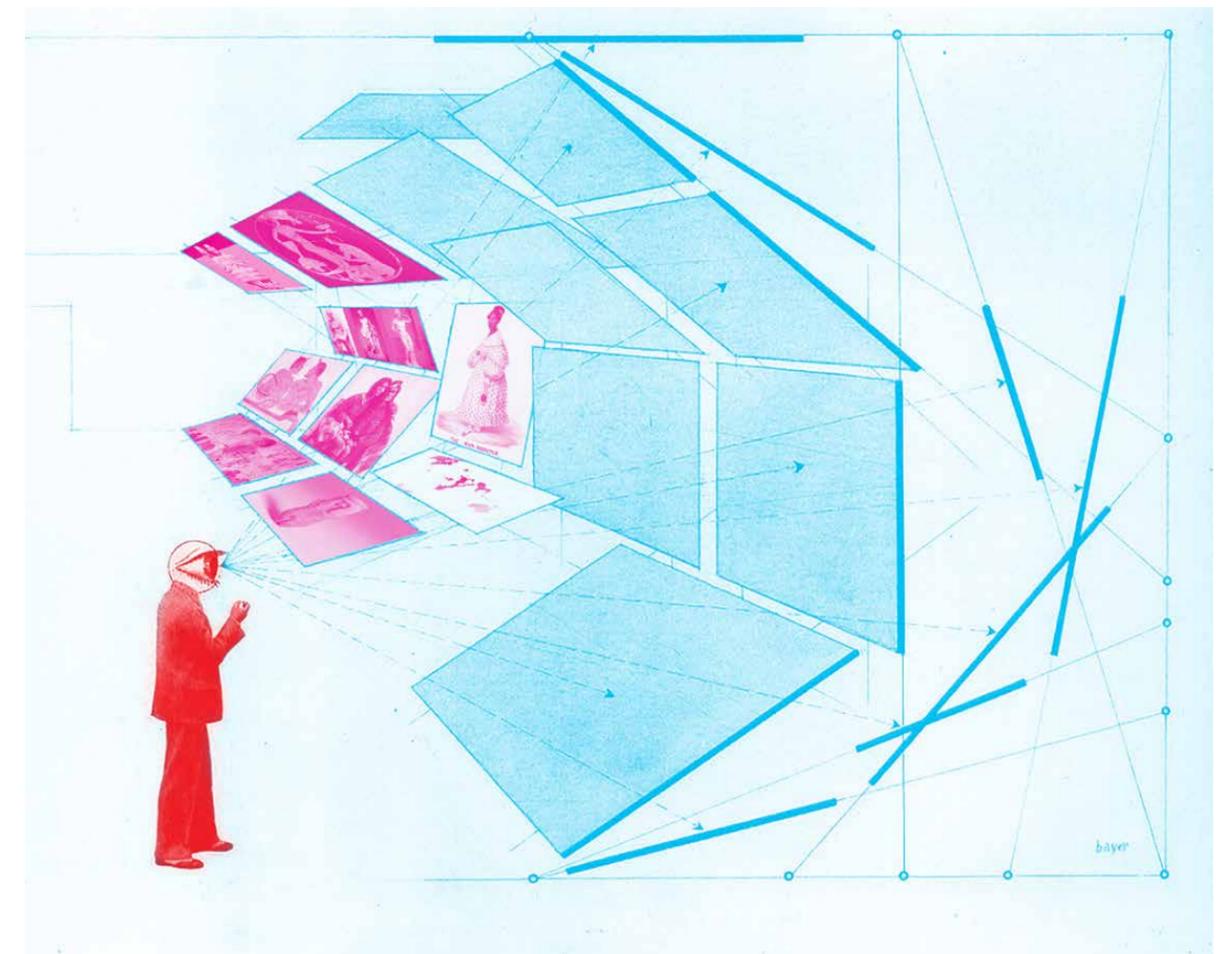


Figure 3. Collage over *Diagram of the Field of Vision* by Herbert Bayer (1930).

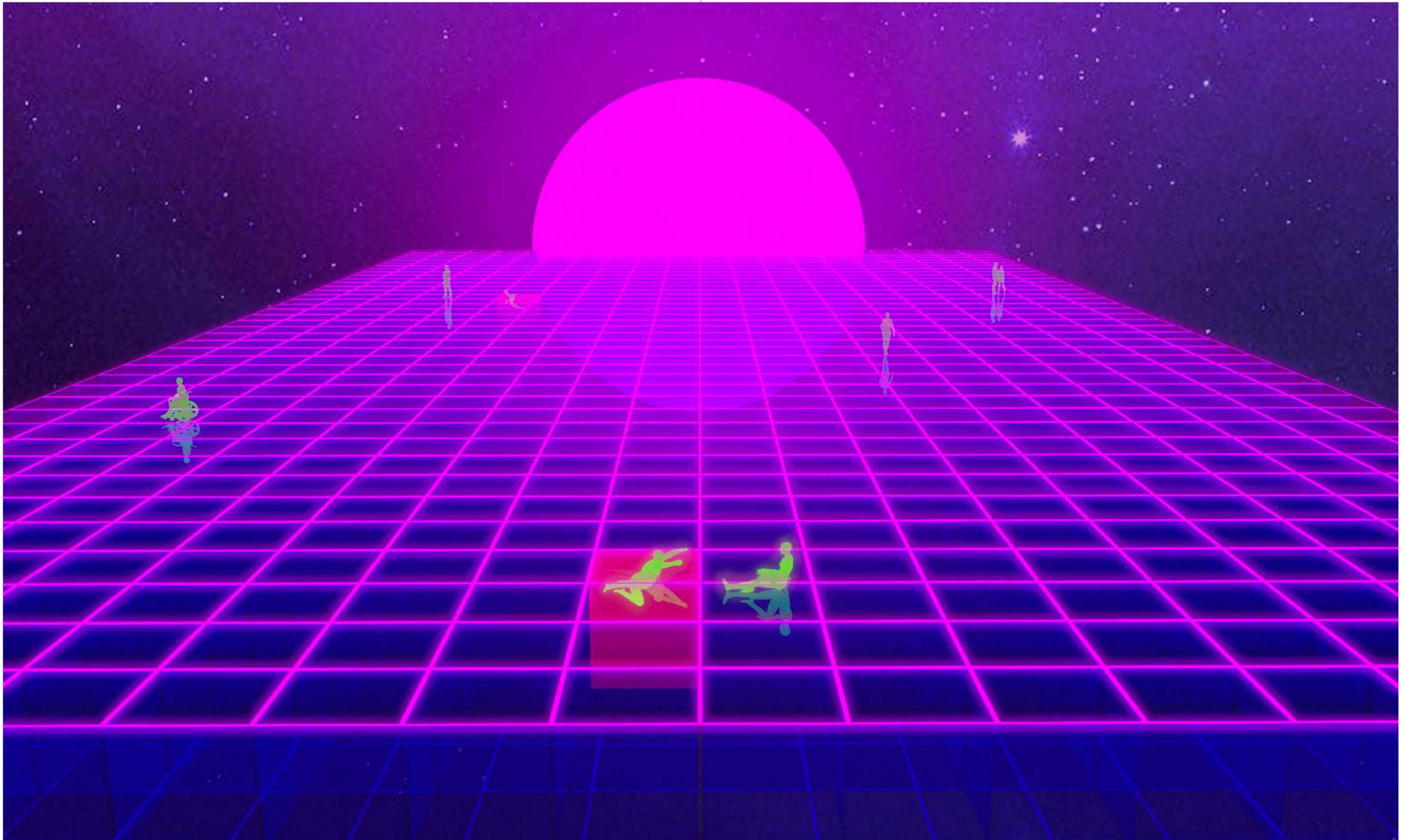


Figure 4. Perspective of digital infrastructure.

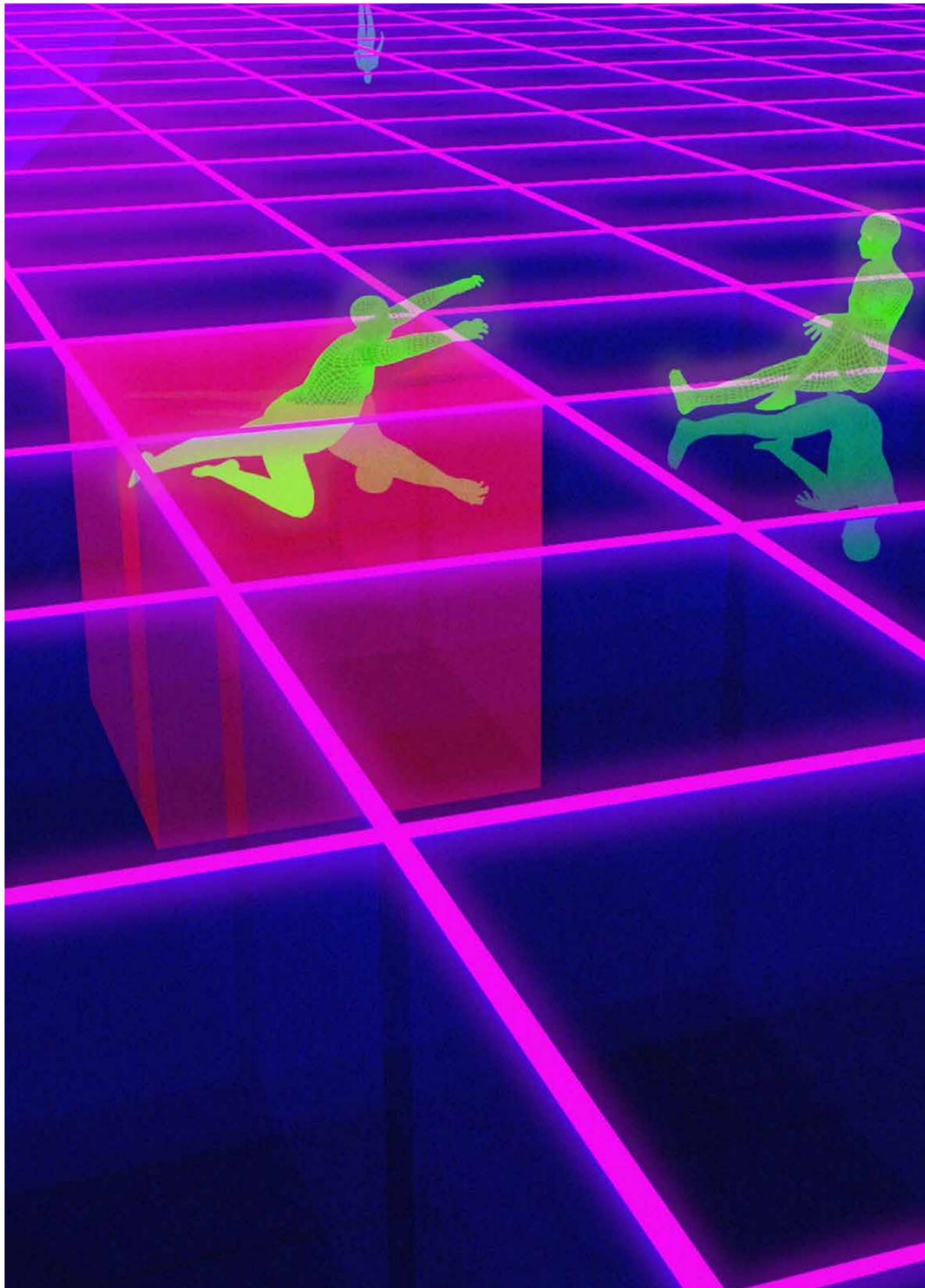


Figure 5. Perspective of digital infrastructure.

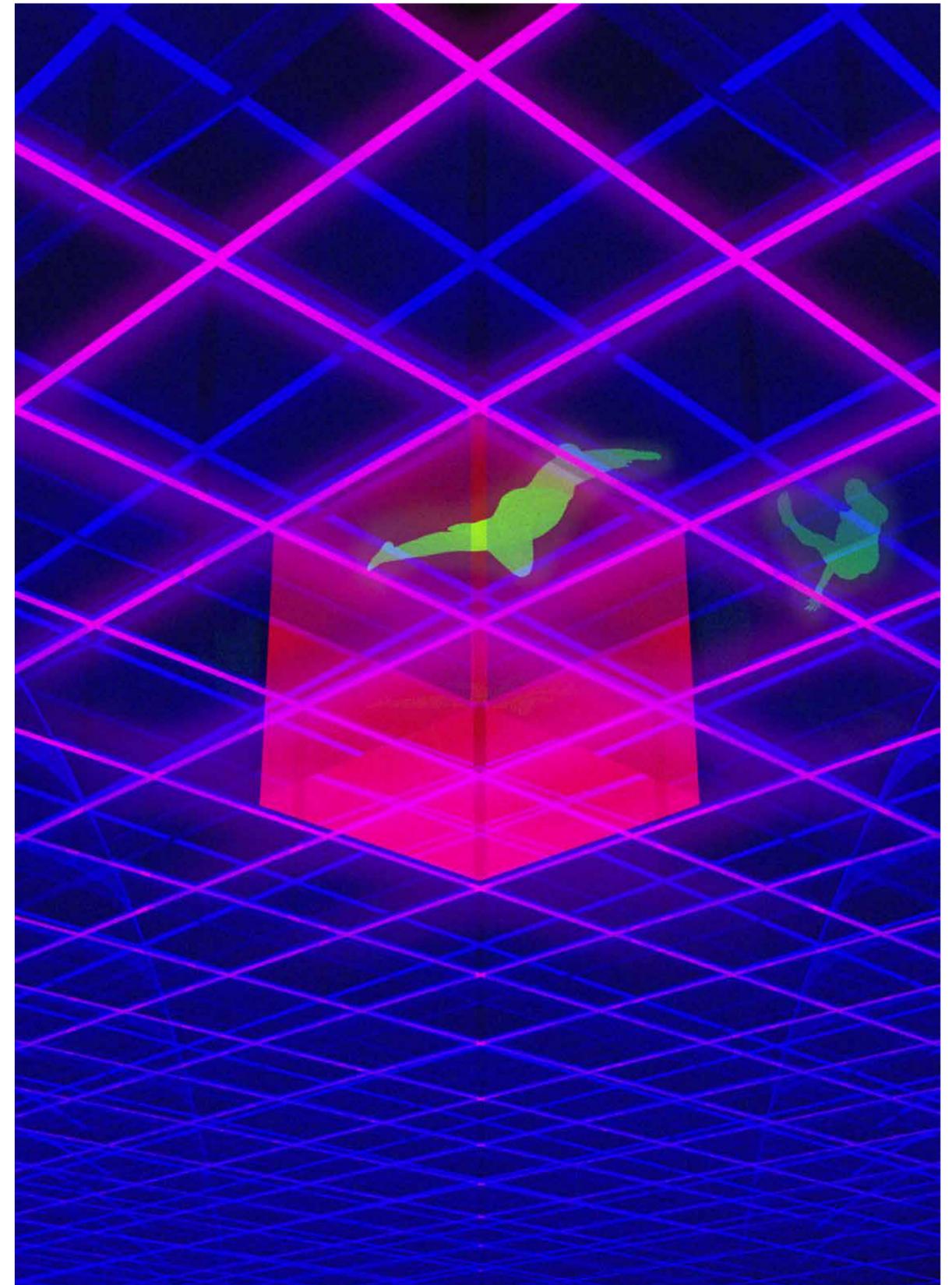


Figure 6. Perspective of digital infrastructure.

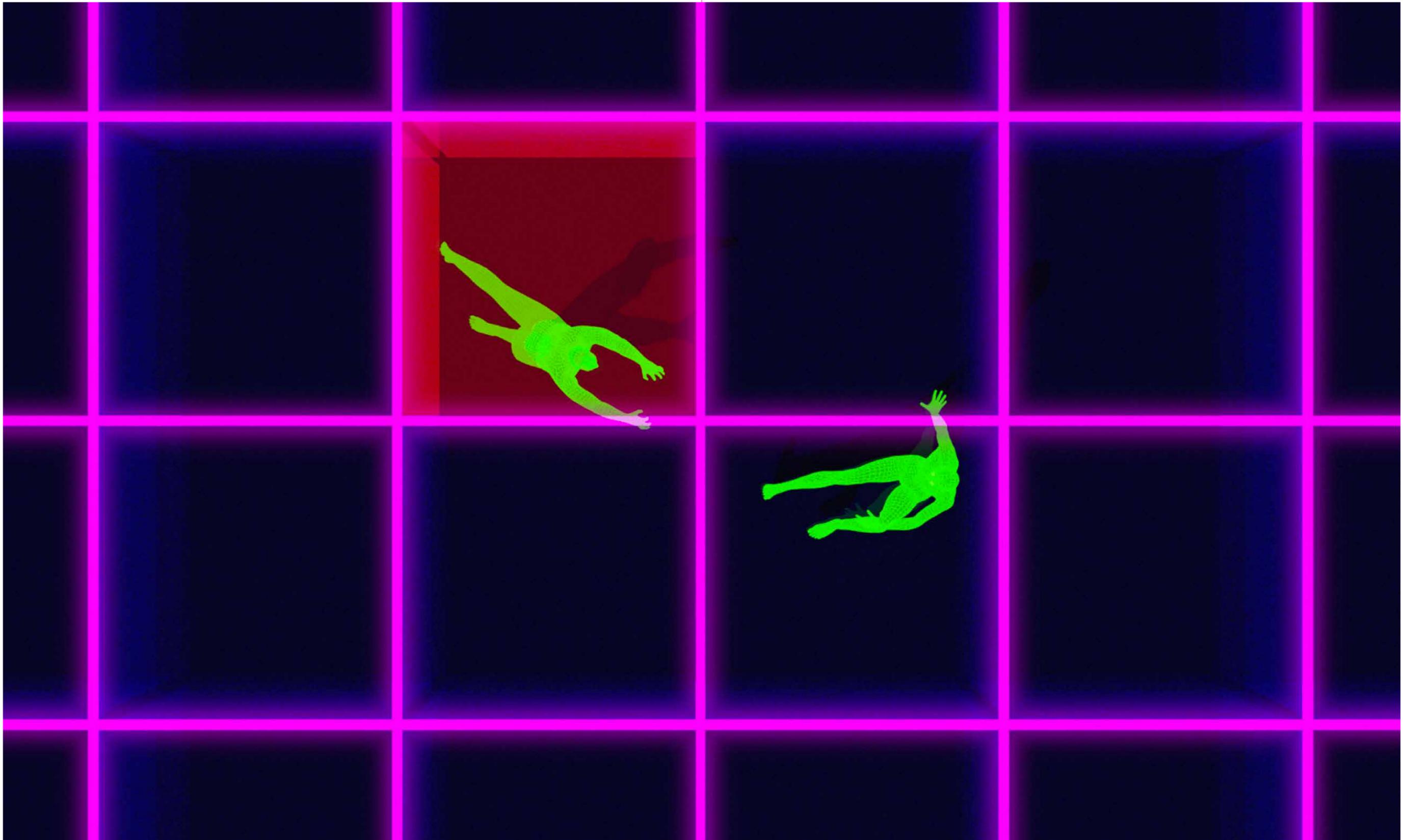


Figure 7. Perspective of digital infrastructure.



Figure 8. Perspective of digital infrastructure overlaid on the built environment.



2.5 What is the Worshipped Body?

To worship is to “treat (someone or something) with the reverence and adoration appropriate to a deity.”¹ This term is typically associated with religion, which is the institution primarily responsible for the denigrated status of queer people. As seen in the section ‘what is the layered body?,’ this was not always a strenuous relationship. In ancient societies, queer practices were considered *sacred*. Notably, Two-Spirit people still hold an important spiritual role in many Indigenous groups to this day. Alas, in order to institute the heteronormative regime, Western religions took a definitive stance on queerness. **By characterizing queer people as abject, religious leaders sought to problematize their access to the spiritual realm.**

Philosopher Michael Foucault has documented this process in great depth.² Notably, he expounds that **the Catholic Church successfully established sex as the central issue of morality when it made ‘confession’ mandatory.** Preaching that ‘sinful’ acts and ‘sinful’ desires would result in eternal damnation, the institution maintained that personal salvation *depended on adherence to strict sexual propriety.* With the implementation of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in 1215, the Catholic Church succeeded in producing a population that willingly managed and maintained their own behaviour. **This internalized gaze was integral in producing conformity.** Critically, it was instrumental in producing *shame*.



Figure 1. Confession.

1. Have I denied my spouse his or her marriage rights?
2. Have I practiced birth control (by pills, condoms, devices, withdrawal)?
3. Have I abused my marriage rights in any other way?
4. Have I committed adultery or fornication (including oral sex, intercourse, impure touching)?
5. Have I committed any unnatural sin against purity (homosexuality or lesbianism, etc.)?
6. Have I ever solicited a prostitute?
7. Have I sinned impurely by myself (masturbation)?
8. Have I entertained or taken pleasure in impure thoughts?
9. Have I indulged in lustful desires for anyone, or willfully desired to see or do anything impure?
10. Have I willfully indulged in any sexual pleasure whether complete or incomplete?
11. Have I done anything to provoke or occasion impure thoughts or desires in others deliberately or through carelessness?
12. Have I read indecent literature or looked at bad pictures?
13. Have I watched suggestive movies, TV programs, or Internet pornography or permitted my children to do so?
14. Have I used indecent language or told indecent stories?
15. Have I willingly listened to such stories?
16. Have I boasted of my sins or taken delight in past sins?
17. Have I been in lewd company?
18. Have I consented to impure glances, lusting over women?
19. Have I prayed at once to banish such bad thoughts and temptations?
20. Have I avoided laziness, gluttony, idleness, and the occasions of impurity?
21. Have you committed bestiality... sexual contact with animals?

Note Well: Do not be afraid to tell the priest any impure sin you may have committed. Do not hide or try to disguise any such sin. The priest is there to help you and forgive you. Nothing you say will shock him, so do not be afraid, no matter how ashamed you might be.

As evidenced by proclamations made by the current Pope, **religion continues to justify harm against queer people on a massive scale.** For instance, he has repeatedly attacked the transgender population, likening them to nuclear weapons, as the unlikely pair “both destroy and desecrate God’s holy and ordained order of creation”³ He has also declared teaching about bodily autonomy as “ideological colonization.”⁴ He is perhaps right in saying that “there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual union to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family,” given that both are tools of the heteronormative regime.⁵ Nonetheless, in characterizing the contemporary moment as “the epoch of sin against God the Creator,” the Pope has incited a religious fervor intent on eradicating queerness.⁶

In this section, I have compiled a visual catalogue of queer reactions to the church, including protest, fetishization, subversion, and appropriation. These queer ‘rituals’ defy the regulations of sexuality imposed by religious institutions, demonstrating that it is possible to “disassociate spirituality from normative tradition in a conscious rejection of heterosexual societal norms.”⁷ Moreover, as stated by artists AA Bronson and Carlos Motta, **queer ‘rituals’ “offer affirmative spaces of deviance, subversion and indecency that continuously propose alternative relationships as the basis of queer sociability.”**⁸ Queering this domain goes beyond challenging repressive notions of morality. This process opens up space for celebration. Indeed, **it is in queer space that the body is worshipped.**



Figure 2. ACT UP New York’s “Stop the Church” protest announcement (1989).



Figure 3. ACT UP protestors inside St. Patrick’s Cathedral during the “Stop the Church” direct action.
Figure 4. A ziptied ACT UP protestor being removed from St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

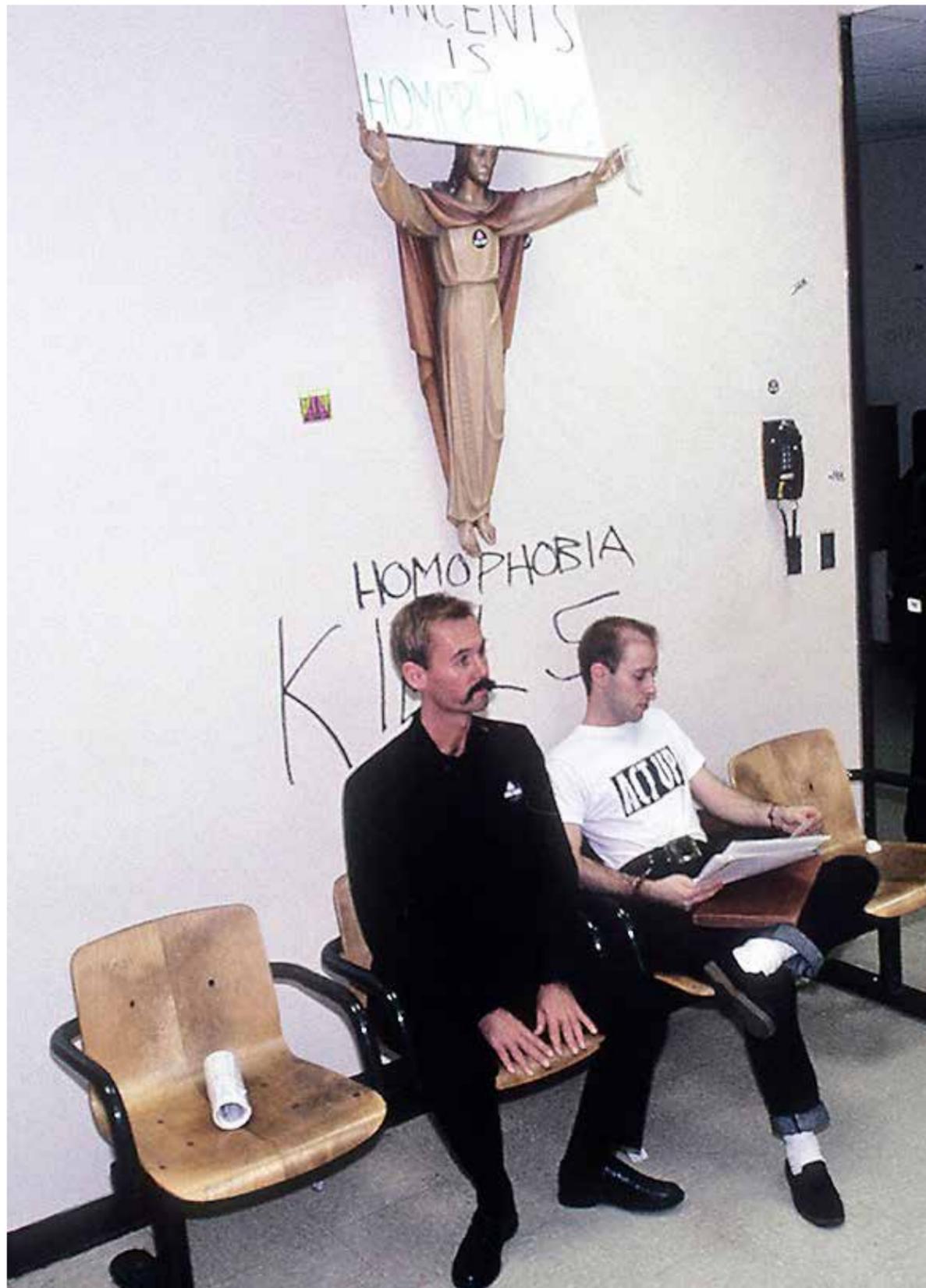


Figure 5. ACT UP New York performing civil disobedience at St. Vincent's Hospital (1989).



Figure 6. Queer Nation demonstration against homophobia in Manhattan (1992).

Figure 7. Couple kissing in front of a homophobic group at the Toronto pride parade (2022).

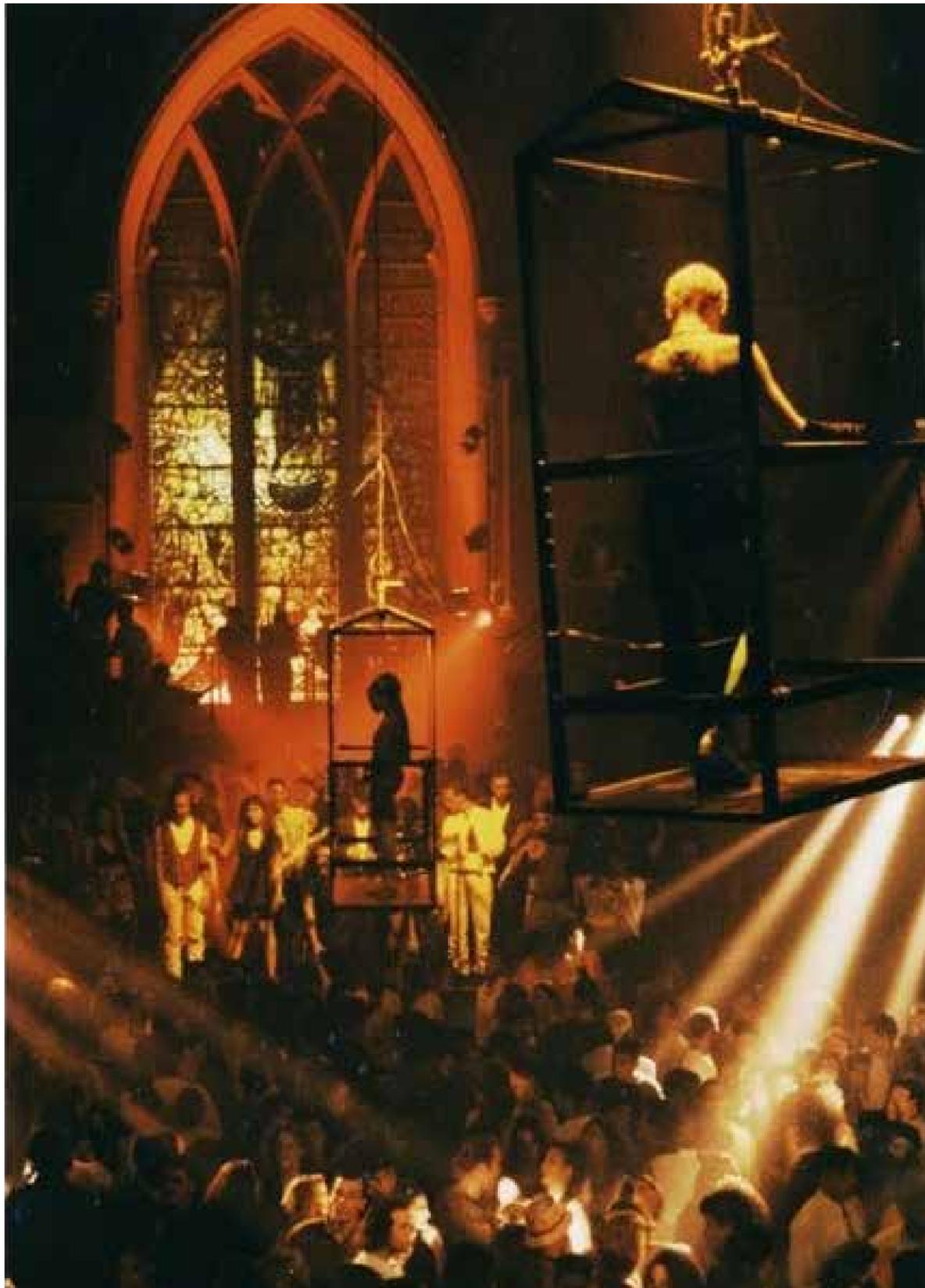


Figure 8. Limelight, a church-turned-megaclub in New York (opened in 1983, closed in 2007).



Figures 9-11. Photos from *In the Limelight* by Steve Eichner (1990s).

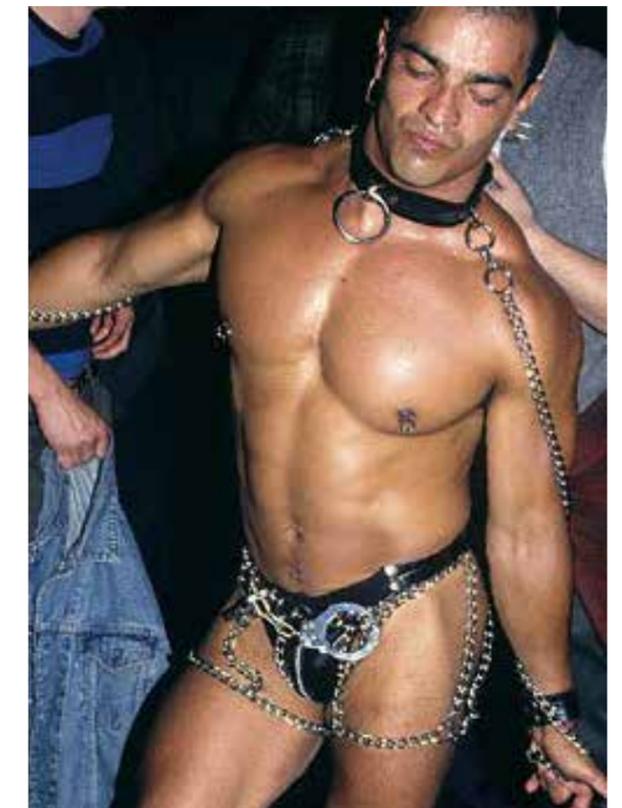
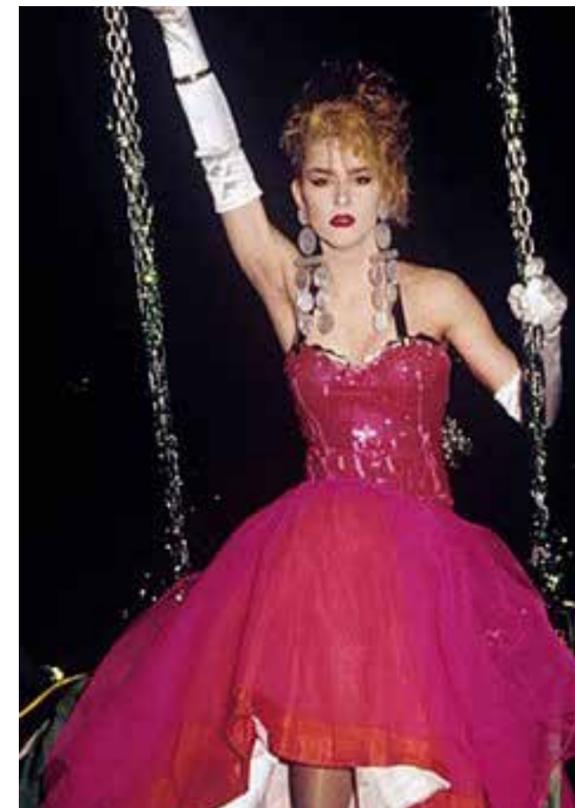




Figure 12. Still from a film by Claire Hunter (2018).



Figure 13. Crucifixion scene in a gay porn video.
Figure 14. Crucifix thong.





Figure 15. Self-portrait (2015).



Figure 16-17. Self-portrait (2011).
Figure 18. Self-portrait (2016).



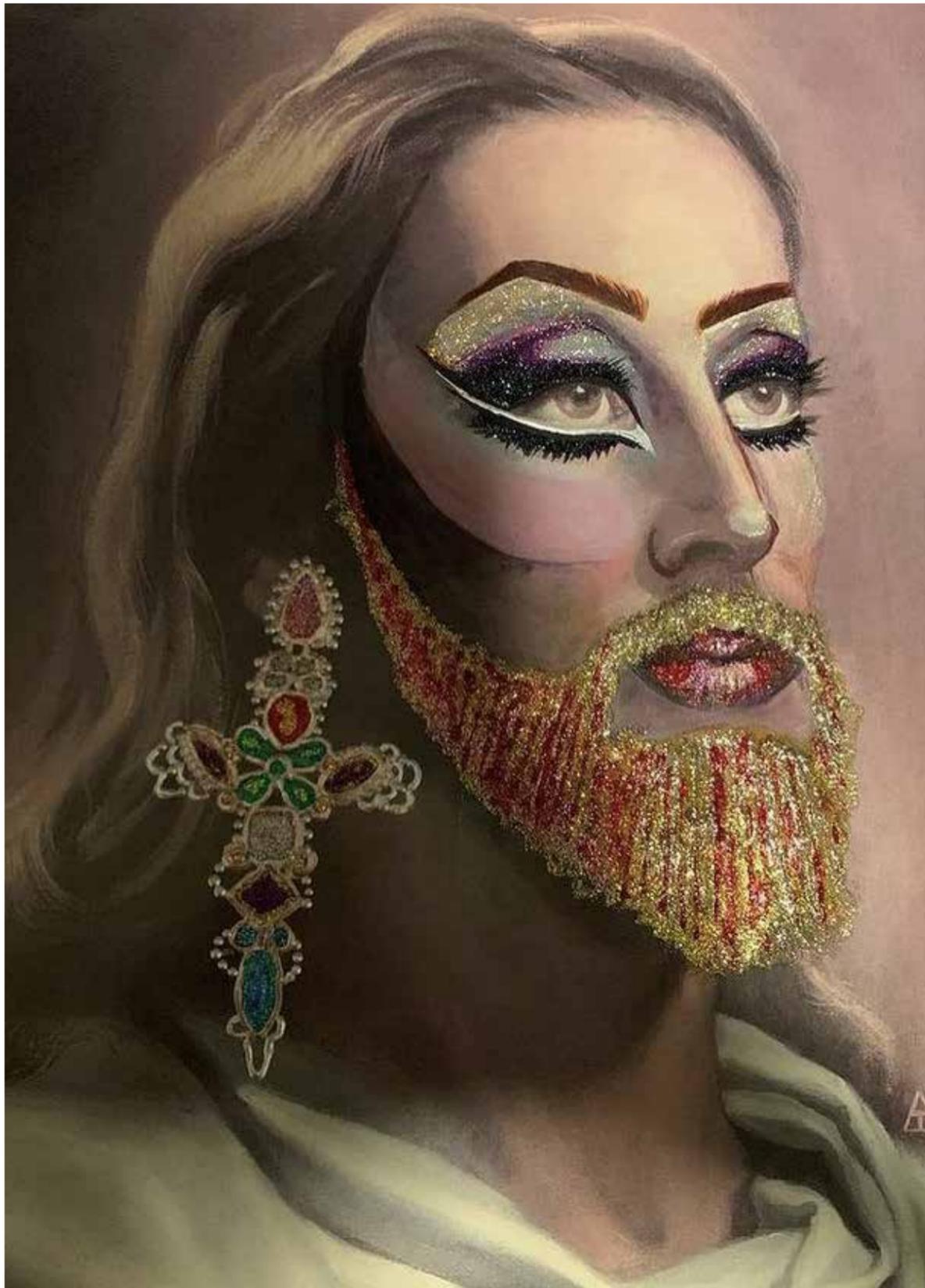


Figure 19. *I Did Not Die On The Cross For Your Eyebrows To Look Like That* by Glitter Jesus.



Figures 20-21. The award-winning performance by Spanish drag queen Sethlas (2017). She entered the stage dressed as the Virgin Mary singing Madonna's Like a Prayer and she ended crucified like Jesus Christ. Sethlas was subsequently sued by the Association of Christian Lawyers.



Figure 22. Album artwork for King Princess single *Pussy Is God* (2018).

Figure 23. Lil Nas X descending into hell on a poll, in his music video *MONTERO* (2021).



Figure 24. Lil Nas X giving Satan a lap dance, in his music video *MONTERO* (2021).



Figures 25-26. Transgender women depicted as saints. From the series *Virgenes de la Puerta (Virgins of the Door)* by Juan Jose Barboza-Gubo and Andrew Mroczek.

Trans gods are everywhere.

They are out on the shore with bulges out in satin and healed scars glistening.

They are building temples out of the night with the hymn of synth and gospel of bass.

They are on a chariot cascading through sunrise, to make it home safely since gods can't always walk where the light touches them because gods hold powers that others want or cannot comprehend.

They are in the bookstore finding any last scriptures that reminds them of themselves, and when they can't find it they pen a new chapter to fit themselves in.

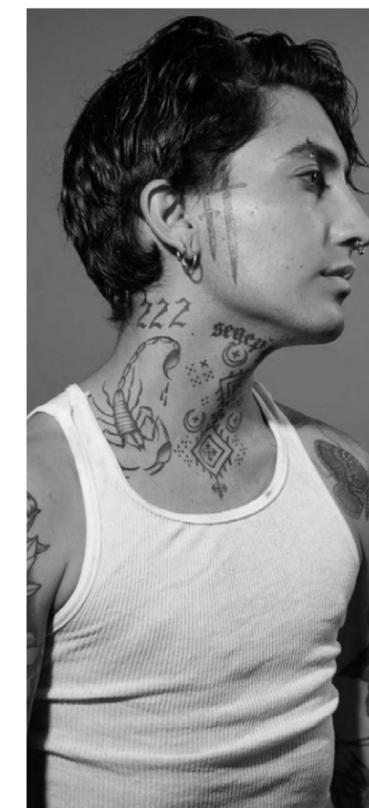
They are kissing one another on pastures, confiding to one another in sanctuary, and scheming of new worlds.

They are transforming and returning to themselves for centuries.

We are lucky we still have gods like us in this lifetime, existing in our fullness and our greatness.

- Coyote Park

Figures 27-28. Photos of Two-Spirit artist Coyote Park.



THE WORSHIPPED BODY

The Worshipped Body

“The true space of pleasure, which would be an appropriated space par excellence, does not yet exist.”⁹

- Henri Lefebvre

According to philosopher Henri Lefebvre, “resistance to ‘dominated space’ can only be affected by *appropriation*, by the assertion of the freedom of use, through the user’s realization of the space’s flexibility and multifunctionality.”¹⁰ He maintains that “existing space” is “susceptible of being diverted, reappropriated, and put to a use *quite different from its initial one*,” particularly when it outlives its “original purpose and the *raison d’être* which determines its forms, functions, and structures.”¹¹ He gives the example of Christianity co-opting the Roman basilica for worship, then using this form for all subsequent Christian churches.¹² Originally intended for secular purposes, it was ascribed an enduring religious role.

For this exploration, I propose a similar takeover.

Using an abandoned church in Montreal as a site, I investigate how it might be appropriated to worship the queer body. While I initially designed a queer club, **this formal elaboration was not needed.** As I ran into two other queer people while breaking into the structure, I realized that **the process of queering was already well underway.** In the following iteration, I imagined how this space might be transformed into a cult of bodily autonomy through more informal means. How one might choose to worship one’s body will inevitably differ from person to person. While the term ritual contains an element of prescription, this act of appropriation frees it from this constraint. **By inserting queer rituals, whatever they may be, oppressive spaces can be reclaimed for queer joy.**



Figures 1-6. Photos of the Montreal event "Grind'her" by Aunerade Bagueaece (January 25, 2020), arranged in the form of a cross.

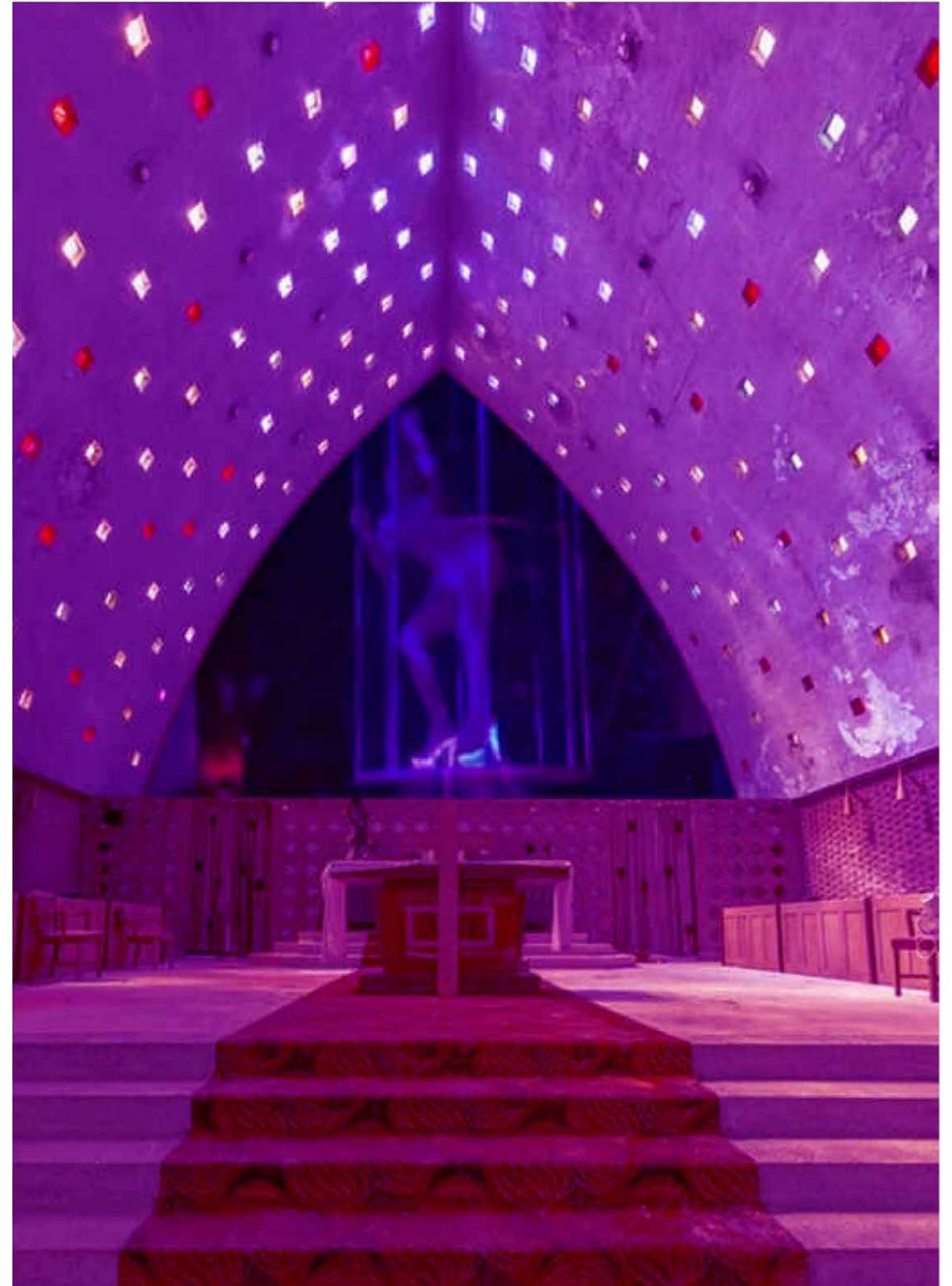


Figure 7. Concept video featuring performance by Gabriella Alexis.

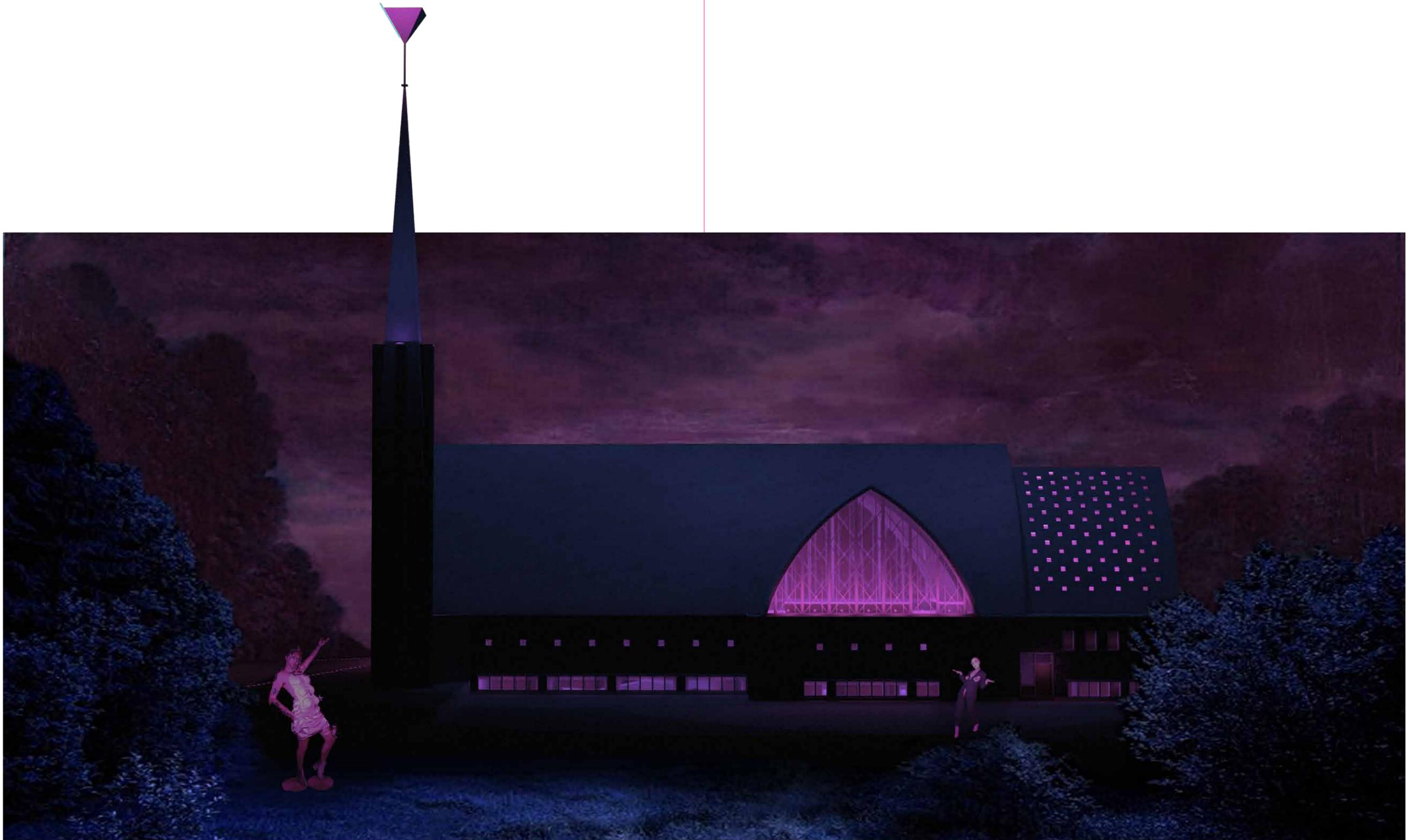


Figure 8. Side elevation.

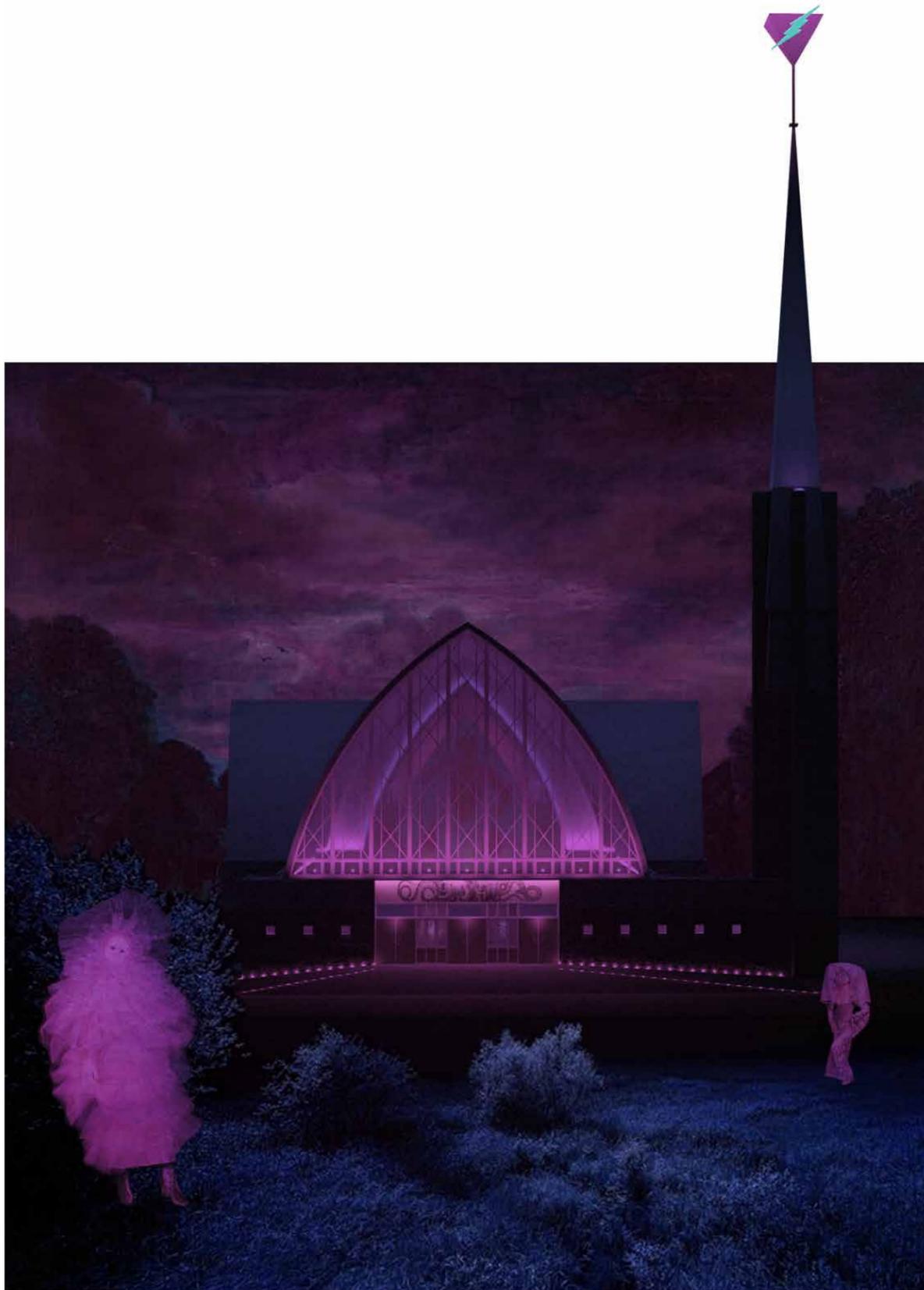


Figure 9. Front elevation.



Figure 10. Transverse section.

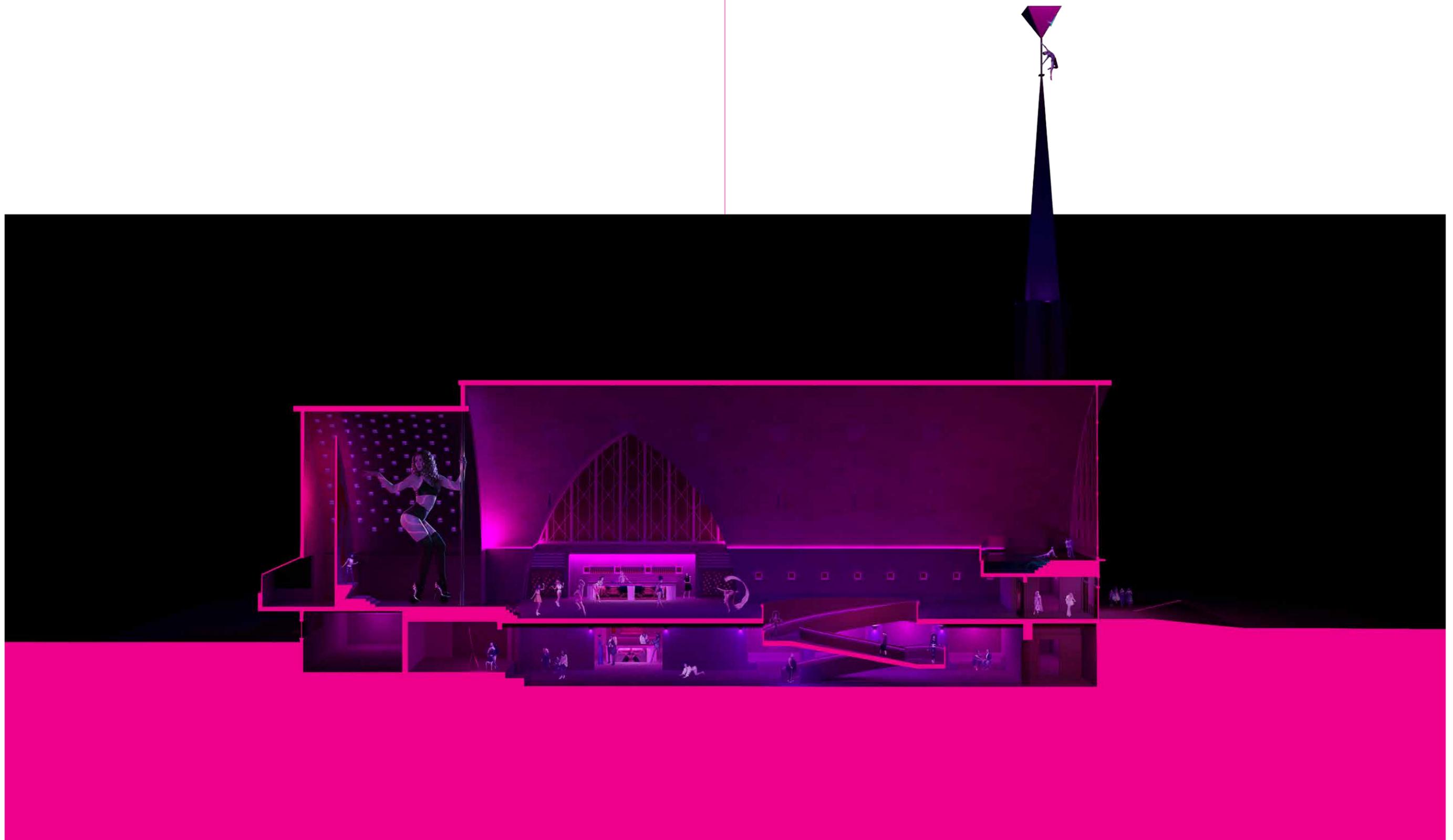


Figure 11. Longitudinal section.

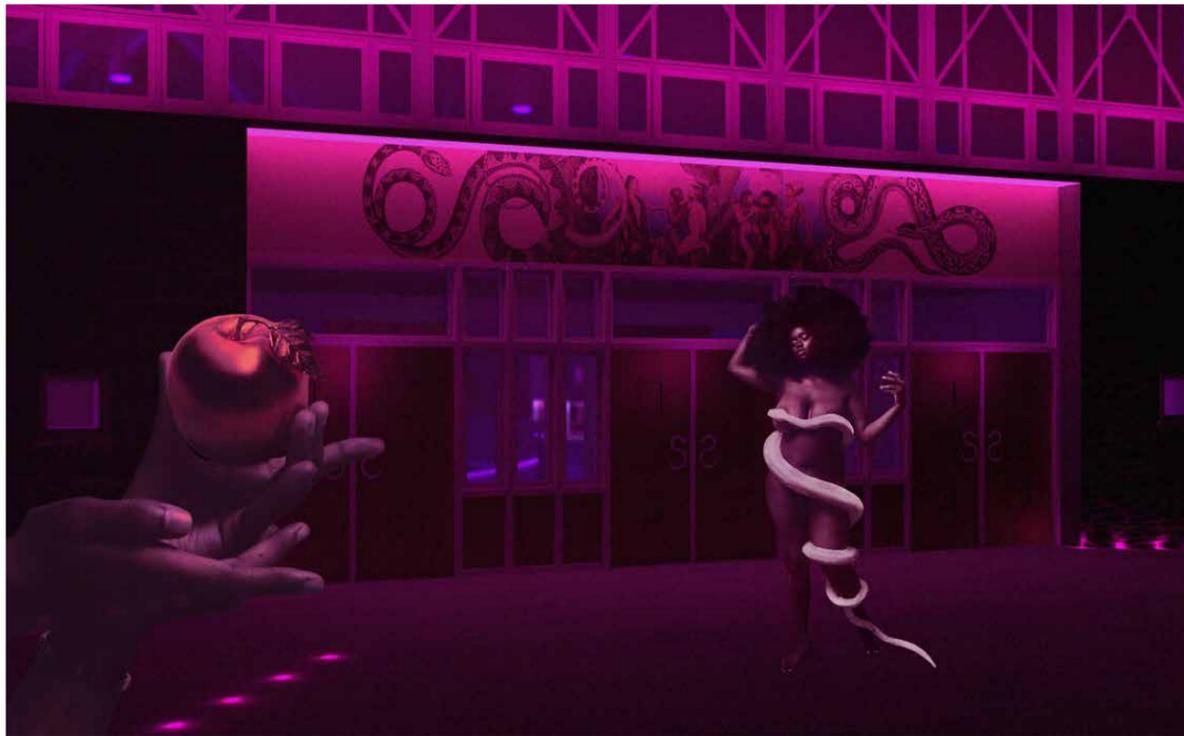


Figure 12. Perspective of the front entry.



Figure 14. Perspective of the bar.



Figure 13. Perspective of the central ramp.



Figure 15. Perspective of the decor.



Figure 16. Perspective of the cozy booths.

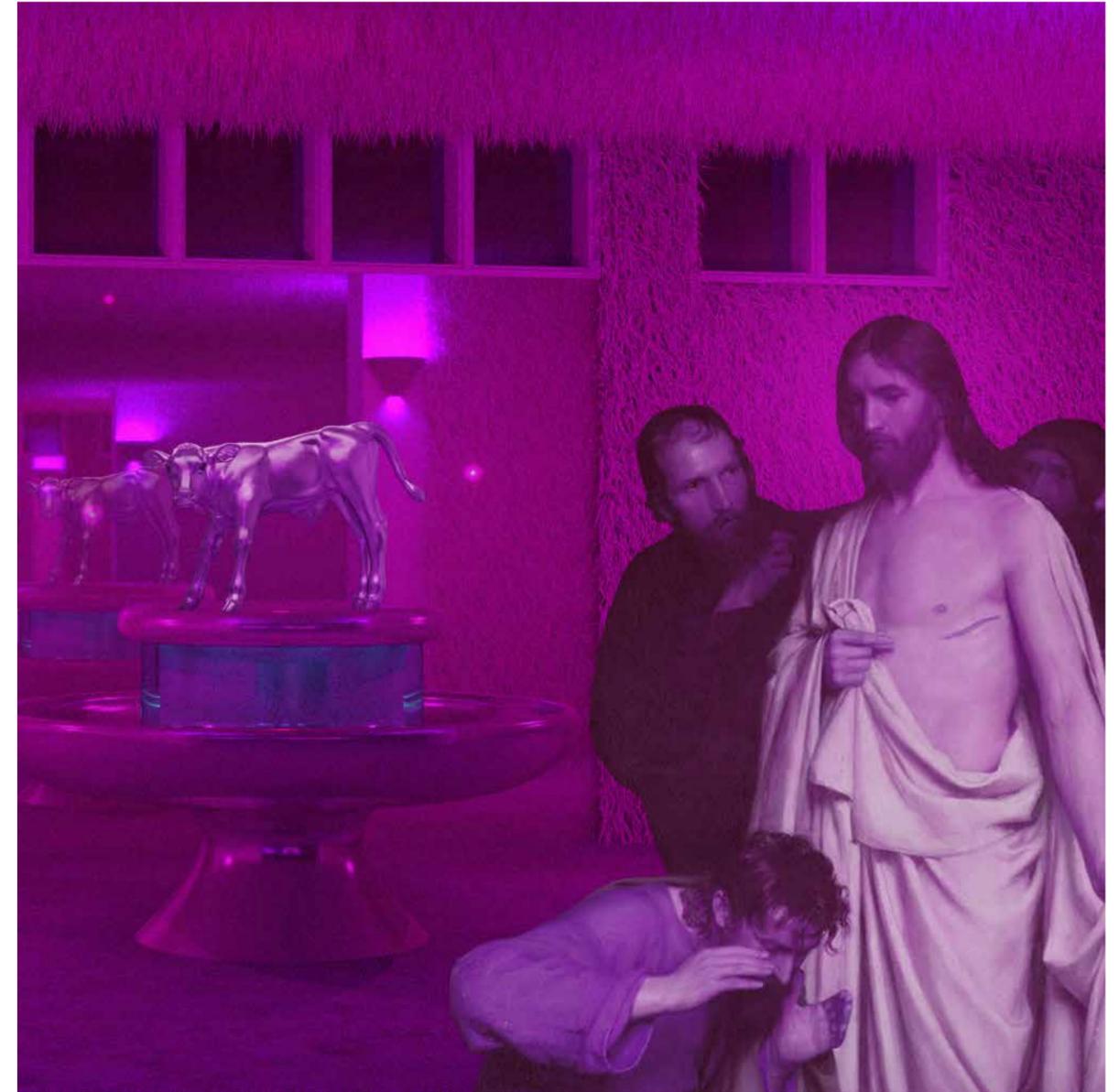


Figure 17. Perspective of the cozy bathroom.



Figure 18. Perspective of the hot tub.

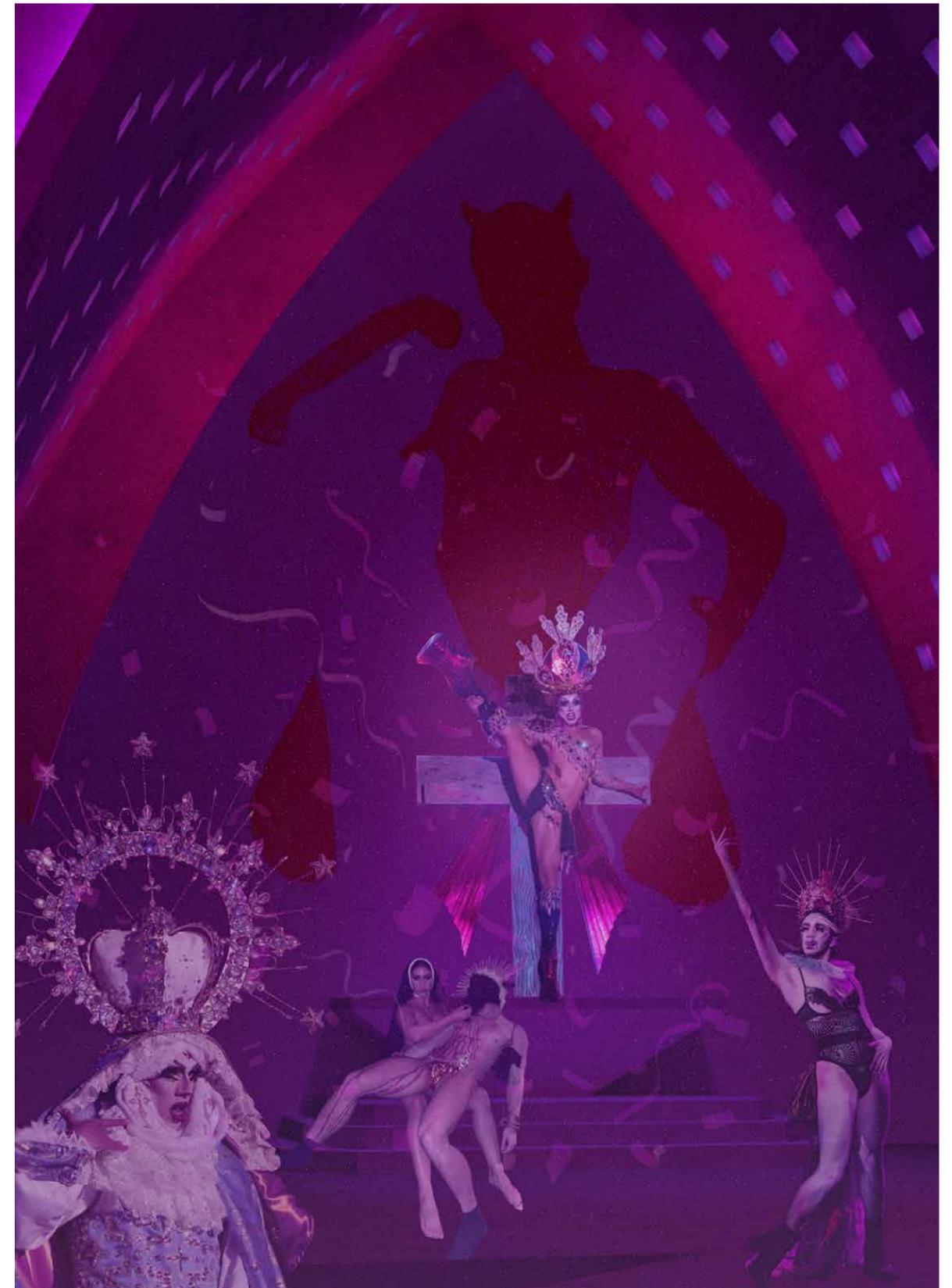


Figure 19. Perspective of the central stage.

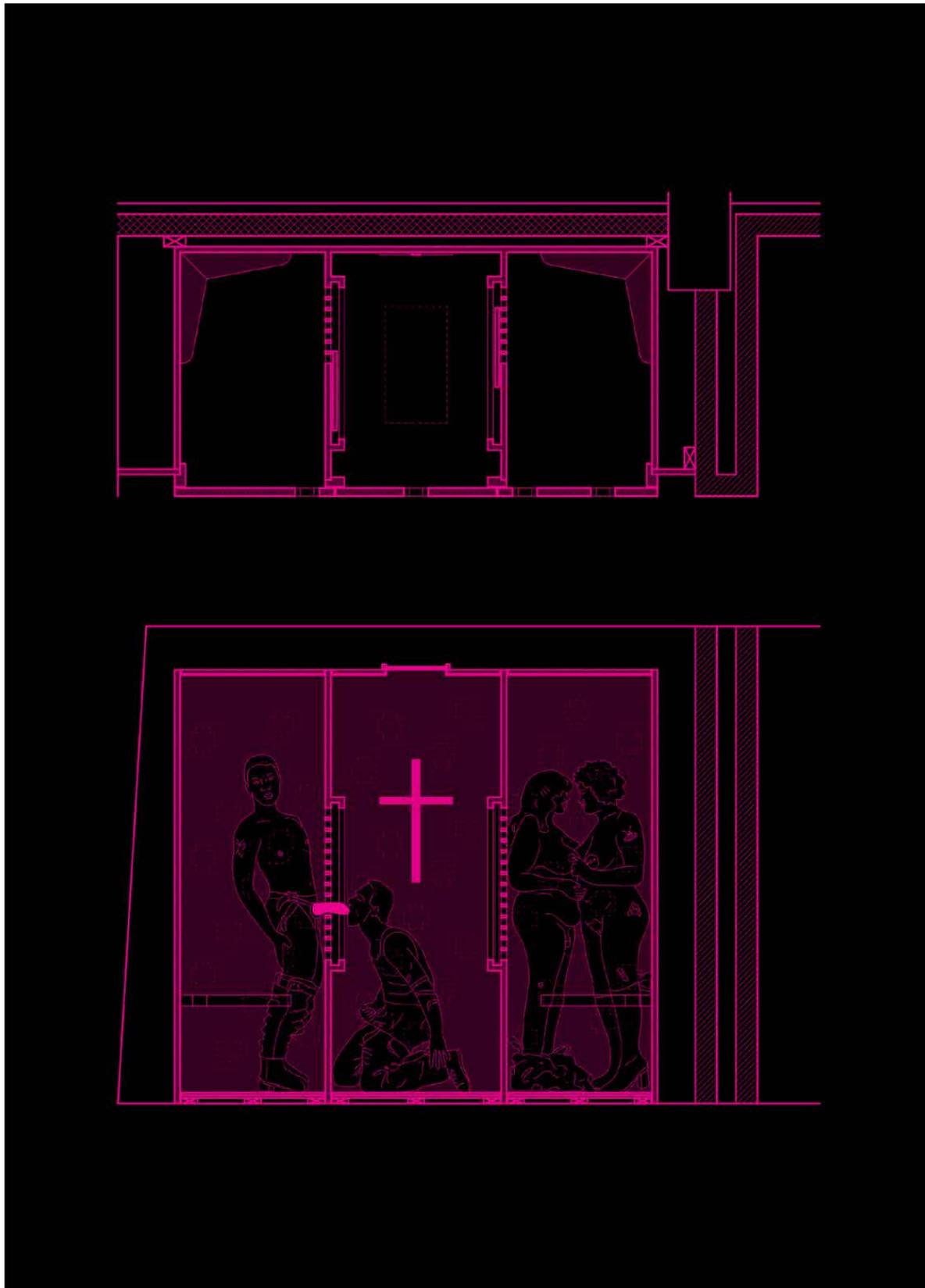


Figure 21. Queering the confessionals.

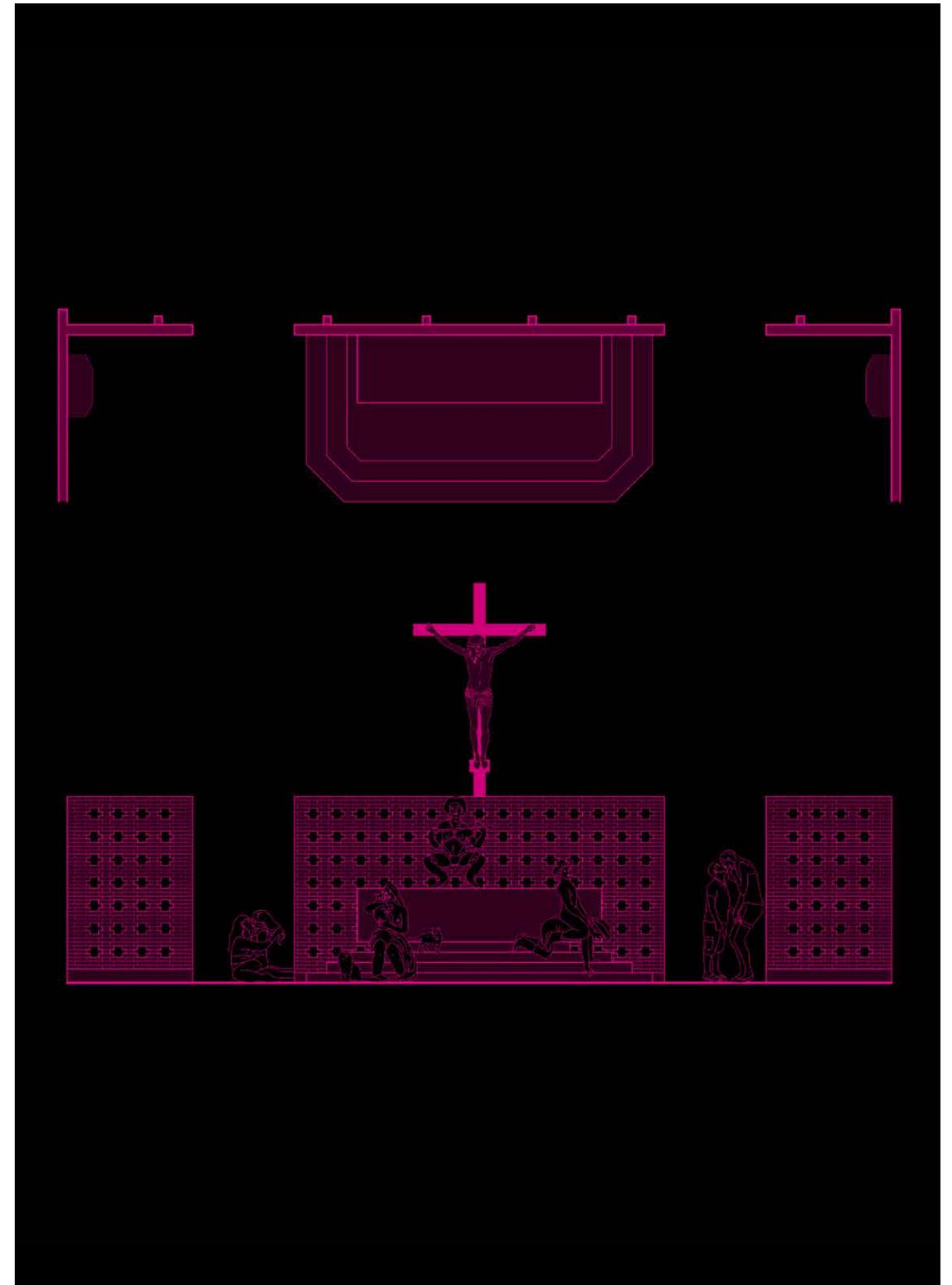
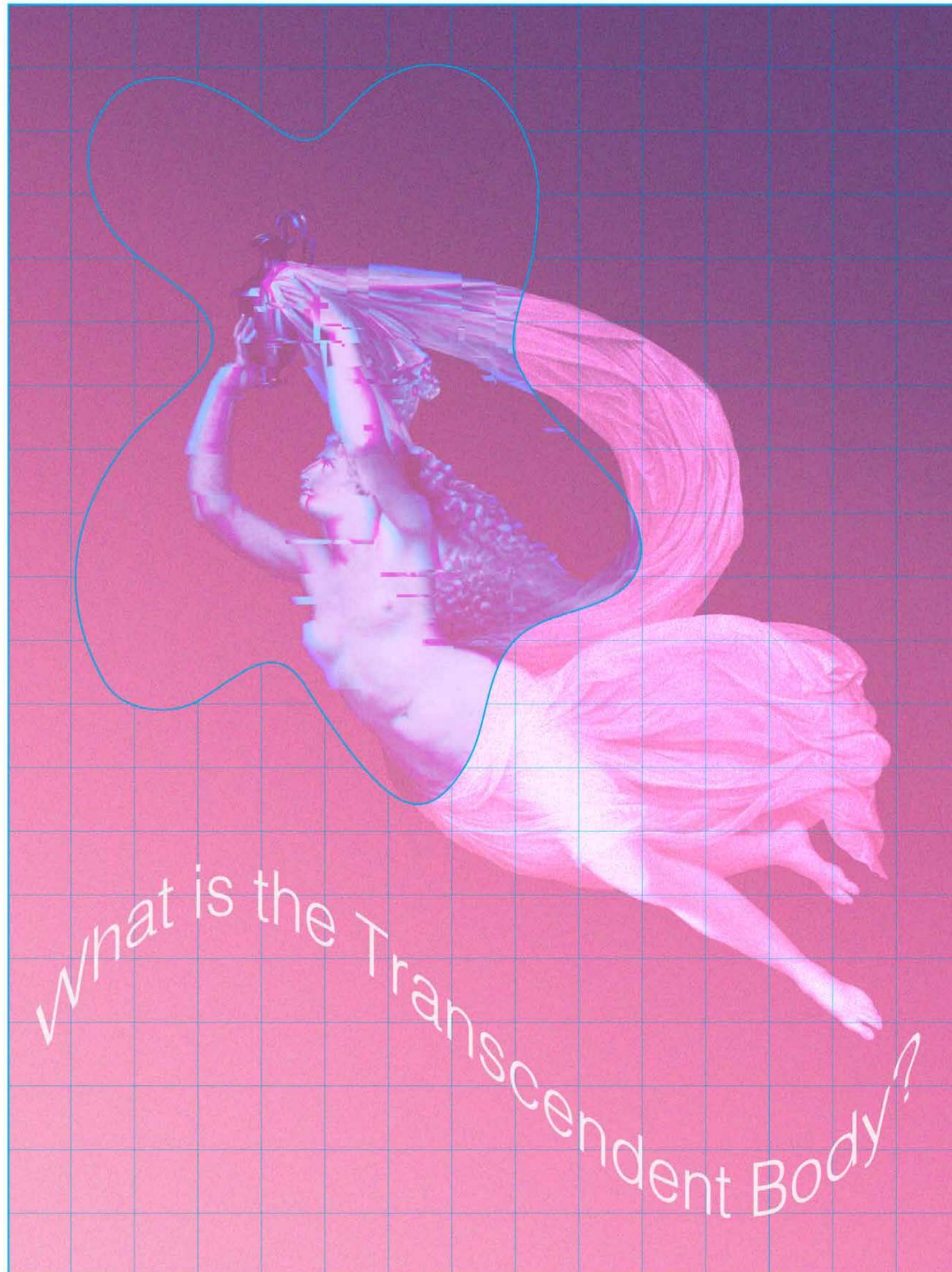


Figure 22. Queering the altar.



2.6 What is the Transcendent Body?

“Queerness is essentially about the *rejection of a here and now* and an *insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.*”¹

- José Esteban Muñoz

To *transcend* means to “rise above” by extending “notably beyond ordinary limits.”² Connoting a sense of “overcoming,” it also signifies to “triumph over negative or restrictive aspects.”³ Time and time again, queer people have demonstrated their resilience in the face of adversity. Asserting their agency, they have worked tirelessly to dismantle the oppressive circumstances they have found themselves in. **As a testament to this active resistance, they have created spaces where queerness not only continues to exist, but where it thrives.** Queer people refuse heteronormativity, *because they know a better reality is out there.* As stated by José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* “queerness is the thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing.”⁴ Queer people reject this normative order and deny the limitations it places upon them. In doing so, they elaborate other ways of being. Through an act of innovation, they create *queer space*. Rather than restrict themselves to current paradigm, queer people contribute to a better present and a better future to come. For the final chapter of this thesis, I consider more broadly the topic of world-building. Highlighting moments of queer transcendence, I present three case studies that exemplify this practice.

On world-building

To begin exploring this subject, I return to architectural critic Aaron Betsky's book *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*. As previously stated, Betsky's concept of queer space is very limited. By his own admission, and criticized by many for doing so, he almost exclusively focuses on the spatial practices of a *specific* demographic. Notably, Betsky proclaims that "modern queer space" is "the domain of *middle-class white men*," given that, in his assessment, this spatiality "made by *man*, and in which *man* makes himself" requires a certain level of wealth to produce.⁵ Drawing on individuals who created "whole fantasy interior landscapes from which they rarely emerged," Betsky extrapolates that "collecting becomes *the* hallmark of modern queer space."⁶ Moreover, he ties queer space to *the private home*. In Betsky's view, it is not a space of "denial," rather, as "a collection of artifacts," it is one of "affirmation."⁷ Paradoxically, he states that "modern queer space is open *only to one segment of the population*."⁸

On first assessment, Betsky's proposition could not be further from the process of queering that I have outlined. Indeed, his belief that "money [is required] to create such a space" rids the concept of its liberatory potential.⁹ As explained by Lucas Crawford, author of *Transgender Architectonics: The Shape of Change in Modernist Space*, it is "problematic" to define queer space as one of "interiority, ownership and material accumulation."¹⁰ He outlines that it is more conducive to conceive of this spatiality as an "outward-looking and collaborative venture" that challenges the social divisions of self/other, interior/exterior, and public/private "on which Betsky's definition depends."¹¹ Resisting the urge to dismiss his work for its "obvious" exclusions, Crawford notes more approvingly Betsky's attempt to redefine queer space as an act, quoting the following from his book: "queer space is not a place: it is *an act of appropriating the modern world for the continual act of self-construction*."¹² In the section on 'the process of queering,' this is one of the few statements that made the cut. That being said, Crawford believes Betsky's "willingness to imagine new queer relations to space" is countered by his framing of 'queering' as a "mystical and indeterminate

act."¹³ Stating that "the queerest space of all is the void," Betsky leaves his reader "with questions of how precisely one ought to 'queer' space and how spatial design might participate in this queering."¹⁴

While all criticisms levied against Betsky are unquestionably valid, his notion of creating a space for 'self-construction' is worth reconsidering under the lens of *world-building*. He may not articulate queer space in a fruitful way, however some of his ruminations are worthy of *appropriating*. Betsky explains that, since the "modern queer [...] finds few role models in the straight world, and certainly no spaces that affirm [their] identity or place in the world, [they create] fantastic places of [their] imagination."¹⁵ Subsequently, "this artifice becomes so delightful that the outside world can dissolve behind layers of sensuality."¹⁶ Constructing "*other worlds than the one in which [they are] imprisoned*" may seem like an escapist venture, however, in doing so, queer people bring new realities into existence.¹⁷ Betsky suggests that these "experiments" of "playing with the norms of interior space" reveal "*an architecture that can free us all*."¹⁸ Despite his limited lens, *as this queer experimentation has long been occurring beyond the confines of the private home*, it is true that **the creation of environments where queer people can "define themselves without fear" is integral for queer futurity**.¹⁹ World-building, which involves creating spaces in which queerness can thrive in the present, allows "a glimpse at the potential of queer futures."²⁰ As stated by Muñoz, rejecting the "here and now" presents the "concrete possibility for *another world*."²¹ By insisting that there are better ways of "thinking, living, loving, meeting, and belonging," queer people transcend the current paradigm.²²

Again, I recognize that Betsky's conception of queer space is insufficient to encompass all the variance that exists within the practice of world-building. I merely present elements of his seminal book as a starting point to this discussion. Expanding from the limited spatiality that he presents, I demonstrate how world-building, which involves the creation of a wide range of affirming spaces, *occurs on so many levels*. The first case study recalls conditions similar to those Betsky describes, as it showcases one

individual creating worlds from a place of interiority. The second differs on many accounts. Occupying a liminal space, the group in question is not given the option to hide. While interfacing with the 'straight world,' community building efforts empower its members to go beyond imposed limitations. Finally, the third involves a medium that knows no bounds. Free from any particular spatiality, music demonstrates a potential to change our landscape. Granted through the invisible, mainstream visibility provides an avenue for shaping the future. **Drawing a parallel between all three case studies through the common thread of world-building, I demonstrate that this practice transcends the spatial conditions in which they occur. Infinitely expansive, they all contribute to the 'outward-looking and collaborative venture' of transcending our current reality.**

James Bidgood: a big world in a small space

First to be presented are the sensual worlds created by artist James Bidgood, who generally fits within Aaron Betsky's limited demographic, although without the associated level of wealth. After experiencing homelessness, Bidgood moved on to create entire worlds from inside his apartment, which were disseminated to the world via photography and film. Working as a freelance photographer for physique magazines, he created homoerotic imagery when anti-obscenity laws prevented materials of which the primary purpose was sexual arousal. Requiring some sort of alibi, suggestive photographs were published under the guise of art, which allowed Bidgood to realize his creative potential. His images "undoubtedly led to more complicated fantasies," as "the viewer entered an enchanting world in which sex was no more important an element than romance and persona and adventure."²³ Bidgood's captivating scenes were not shot in a professional studio, but rather in his own living quarters. Devising ways of simulating distance, size, and panorama within the confines of the small space, he was known to say "you can block out the entire Empire State Building by holding up a finger."²⁴ His ambitious projects often required him to sleep and live for weeks at a time in the sets he had constructed.



Figures 1-2. *Water Color* polaroids.



Figures 3-4. *Sandcastle* polaroids.

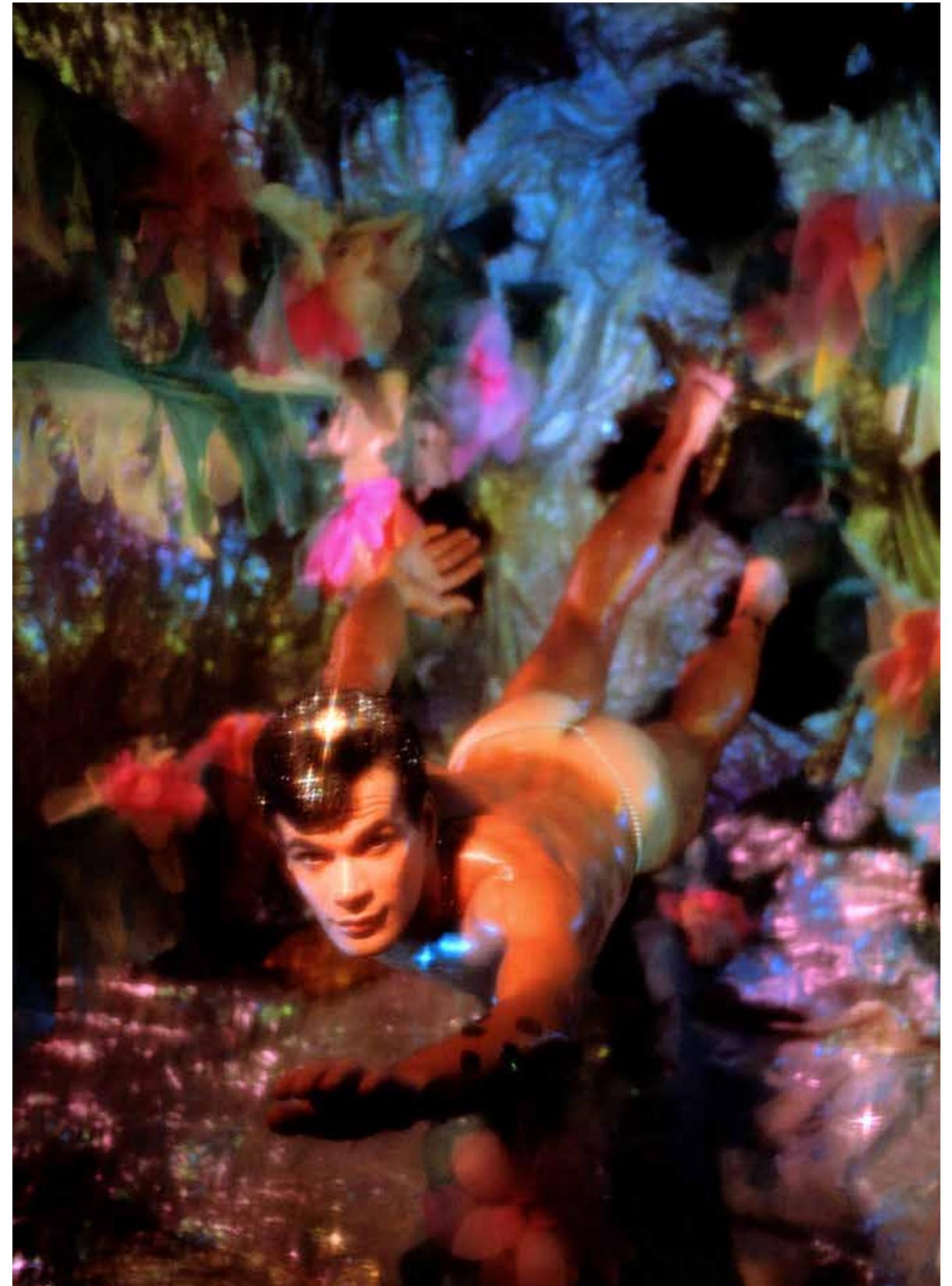
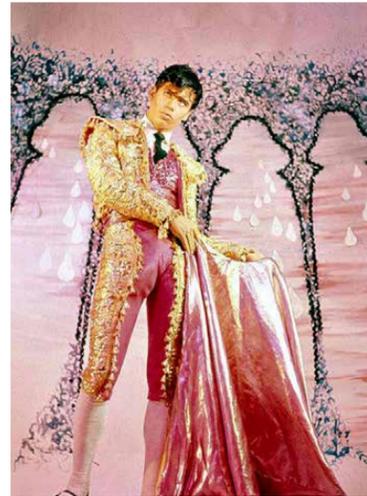


Figure 5. "Pink Flowers" from the *Water Color* series (circa 1960-64).

In one series, an underwater fantasy world titled *Water Colors*, the model's body is coated with mineral oil and glitter to suggest the prismatic reflections of the sea. Simulating weightlessness through visual trickery, the model appears to be floating in space as if he were actually swimming underwater. The stunning scenes were composed of common materials such as fabric and wax paper. In another series called *Sandcastle*, Bidgood built a cave using aluminum foil over chicken wire. The sparkling ocean floor is a tarpaulin coated with sequins, and the moonlit sky is a painted backdrop. The campfire, composed of shreds of yellow silk lit from below, is animated with a blowing fan. People bought into the fantasy, as shown by a reader who wrote to the magazine: "Where did the photographer run across that eerily-beautiful cave with the jewel-like sand floor? Certainly it must be a wonderful place to come into from the rain!"²⁵

What is considered Bidgood's ultimate masterpiece is an erotic art film called *Pink Narcissus*, which he dedicated seven years of his life to its production. The dialogue-free cinematographic experience builds a loose narrative around the fantasies of a gay sex worker. To create the film's stunning visuals, Bidgood lived in sets for years, "shooting bits of the film with an 8mm Bolex when money allowed."²⁶ Painstakingly hand created, Bidgood used "small motors, strings, and long hours" in the place of a crew.²⁷ Fans, turntables, and other mechanical tools were used to animate objects such as the fluttering butterfly and expressive clouds. Of his makeshift production techniques, Bidgood was especially proud of those he employed for the long track shot of the meadow in the opening scene. Rather than go outside to find a vast expanse of verdant field, he shot the same eight-foot expanse of an artificial greenery over and over, "changing his branches and leaves or logs after each shot to make it seem like new territory was being covered."²⁸ This panoramic journey also included a backdrop on a dolly, employed to fake the appearance of the moon traveling along with the viewer. Bidgood went through various other measures to keep the production of this world inside his own. As another example, instead of finding an abandoned public restroom to film in, he built urinals out of foam. Coated with enamel paint, liquids could run down them without disrupting the illusion.



Figures 6-8. Stills from *Pink Narcissus* (1971).



Figure 9. *Setting Down White Boot* from the *Valentine's Day* series featuring model Bobby Kendall for *The Young Physique* magazine (1964), including costume and decor later used in *Pink Narcissus*.

Fueled by passion, Bidgood believed that all the time and effort he put into this project would one day offer him fulfillment. Unfortunately, he considered his masterpiece “ruined,” as few scenes of the released material aligned with his original vision.²⁹ Benefactors had stepped in several years into the project, investing in the film’s production in an apparent effort to help him bring it to fruition. When it stretched beyond their imposed schedule, the film was taken away from Bidgood before he could finish it. One day, he had come back to the editing room to find that all his material had been removed to a secret location where the film was to be finished quickly without his participation. Released in 1971, with Bidgood refusing to allow the company to put his name on the film. Credited to ‘Anonymous,’ Bidgood did not reap the benefits when *Pink Narcissus* won lasting attention as a cult film. Among those speculated to be the creator was Andy Warhol, until an investigative journalist traced the film back to its true originator an entire three decades after its release. Recovering from a depressive episode brought about by the ordeal, Bidgood thankfully received the attention he deserved before he ultimately passed away in 2022.

From a place of interiority, in the domestic setting of his apartment, Bidgood created entire worlds beyond the one he found himself. By doing so, he transcended the dictates of this spatiality. The impact of Bidgood’s fantasy lands also exceeded the spatial conditions in which they were created, inspiring future artists to push boundaries more openly. Described as “Camp before Camp was stylish,”³⁰ Bidgood was the stylistic precursor of photographers such as Dave LaChapelle and Pierre et Gilles, “who enjoyed the fame and economic security that eluded him.”³¹ While Bidgood never reaped the same financial benefits from his own work, the pioneer of Camp aesthetics also lacked the profit motive. Showing “little interest in the twin dilemmas of the market place and the art world,”³² Bidgood lived to realize these fantasy worlds, once stating in an interview “I’m addicted to dreaming.”³³ As expounded by curator Lissa Rivera, “He wasn’t being ironic. He was interested in the fantasies he had since he was a boy. *He was elevating men who don’t get elevated*: queer men, hustlers, people from the drag world. He loved them in this emotional visual sense. He still loves that way.”³⁴ Bidgood’s world-building expanded the worlds of so many others.



Figure 10. Ball culture, photo by Chantal Regnault (circa 1989-92).



Figure 11. Ball culture, photo by Chantal Regnault (circa 1989-92).



Ball culture: building a world of their own

Definitively moving on from places of domesticity, the second case study in world-building involves the ‘ballroom scene,’ which is an African-American and Latinx underground subculture that originated in New York City. Balls of this nature have their origins in the late 19th century, with Harlem’s Hamilton Lodge no.710 staging the first in 1869.³⁵ Prizes were given out for the most beautiful gown and “most perfect feminine body displayed by an impersonator.”³⁶ In his autobiography, poet Langston Hughes described the “queerly assorted throng” composed of “males in flowing gowns and feathered headdresses and females in tuxedos and box-back suits” as the “strangest and gaudiest of Harlem spectacles.”³⁷ Gaining popularity in the 20th century, these pageants were attended in the thousands.³⁸ While “notably integrated,” black contestants were expected to “whiten up” their faces to win.³⁹ Due to increasing racial tensions in the scene, the black community established their own balls in the 1960s.⁴⁰ Led by ‘butch queens’ (‘gay men’) and ‘femme queens’ (‘transgender women’), the ballroom scene became a safe space where queer people of

Figure 12. Ball culture, photo by Chantal Regnault (circa 1989-92).



Figure 13. Ball culture, photo by Chantal Regnault (circa 1989-92).

colour could express themselves freely. Participation expanded in the following decade with the addition of more inclusive categories that enabled the involvement of everyone.

The 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*, which “remains the encyclopedia for modern ball culture,” offers a glimpse into this world in which participants ‘walk’ the runway to win prizes for their personas.⁴¹ Asking “Looking head to toe, would you know?,” one of the categories measures ‘realness,’ which refers to one’s ability to blend into the outside world.⁴² Dorian Corey, a star of *Paris is Burning*, explains, “If you can pass the untrained eye, or even the trained eye, and not give away the fact that you’re gay – that’s when its realness.”⁴³ Careful to qualify that the act does not constitute “satire,” she clarifies that it is the closest approximations that are rewarded.⁴⁴ Often it is binary gender that is emulated: “The realer you look, it means you look like a ‘real woman,’ or you look like a ‘real man.’ A ‘straight man.’”⁴⁵ Variations on the category include participants donning attire associated with roles that they have been barred from attaining. To illustrate with one example, Corey explains the category of ‘executive realness:’

In real life, you can’t get a job as an executive unless you have the educational background and the opportunity. Now, the fact that you are not an executive is merely because of the social standing of life. Black people have a hard time getting anywhere. And those that do are usually straight. In a ballroom, *you can be anything you want*. You’re not really an executive, but you’re looking like an executive. And therefore you’re showing the straight world that ‘I can be an executive. If I had the opportunity, I could be one because I can look like one.’⁴⁶

‘Realness’ has implications that go beyond the ballroom, revolving around questions of safety. Corey elaborates, “When they’re undetectable, when they can walk out of that ballroom, into the sunlight, and onto the subway, and get home, and still have all their clothes, and no blood running off their bodies – those are the femme realness queens.”⁴⁷ Another participant comments on the incentive, “They give the society what they want to see, so they won’t be questioned.

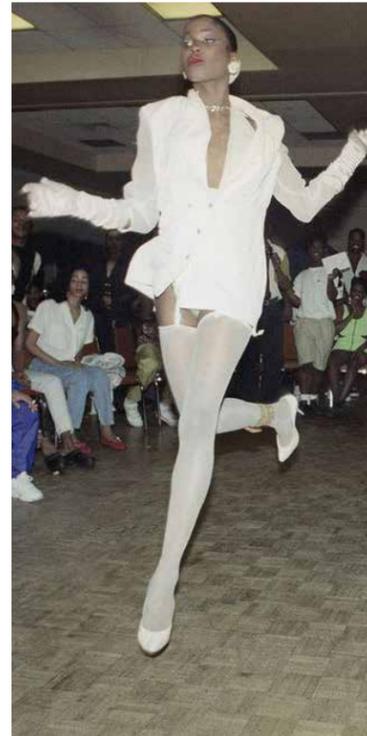


Figure 14. Ballroom scene (circa 1980s-90s).

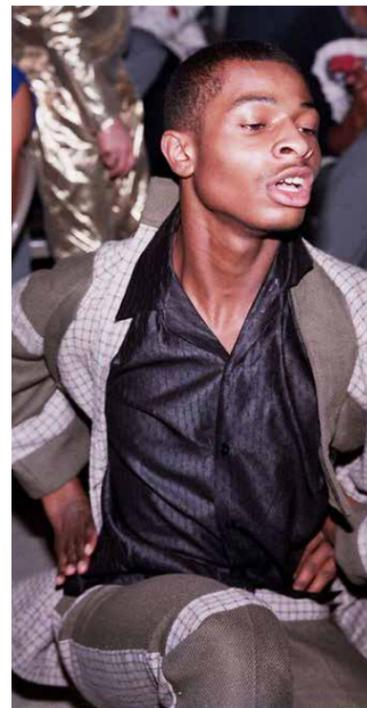


Figure 15. Voguer at a Brooklyn ball, photo by Jennie Livingston (1986).



Figure 16. Ballroom scene (circa 1980s-90s).

Rather than have to go through the prejudices about your life and lifestyle, you can walk around confidently, blending in with everybody else. You’ve erased all the mistakes, all the flaws, all the giveaways, to make your illusion perfect.”⁴⁸

Although this may seem like “a case of going back into the closet,” the balls were not about conforming to normativity.⁴⁹ In fact, they were overwhelmingly about resisting these norms. While the ‘realness’ categories offered a safe space for queer individuals to practice strategies for surviving the outside world, providing joy alongside the necessity, other categories, as well as the scene in general, equally provided a safe space for a variety of expressions that deviated from those outlined by the heteronormative regime. Describing the atmosphere of ballroom, one *Paris is Burning* participant relays, “You go in there and you feel, you feel 100% right as of being gay.”⁵⁰ When the interviewer asks, “And that’s not what it’s like in the world?,” the interviewee responds, “That’s not what it’s like in the world. That’s not what it’s like in the world. You know... it should be like that in the world.”⁵¹ As explained by another contributor, “When you’re gay, you monitor

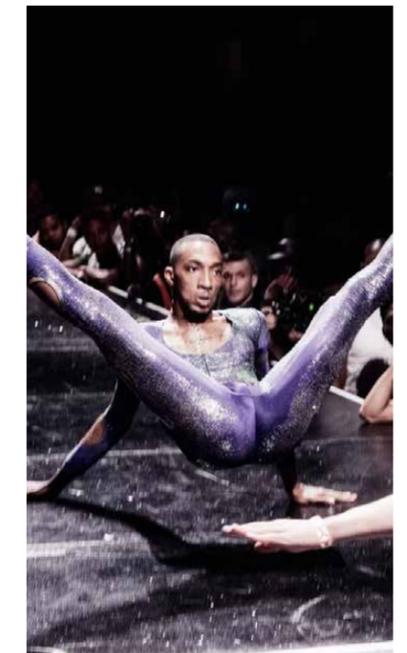


Figure 17. Zay Lanvin performing in the Vogue Femme category at *Latex Ball: Year of the Legends*, photo by Anja Matthes (2015).

everything you do. You monitor how you look, how you dress, how you talk, how you act.”⁵² Ballroom offered queer people respite from the surveillance of identity, while allowing them to construct their own senses of self apart from oppressive paradigms. In these spaces, it was understood that “whatever you want to be, you be.”⁵³ As stated by ball contestant, “you can become and do anything, right here, right now, and it won’t be questioned.”⁵⁴ Celebrating all forms of queer expression, ballroom created a world where queer people could be ‘real’ among their peers and gain the confidence to do so outside of it.

The ballroom scene created networks of support. Starting with the House of LaBeija after the initial split from the mainstream, members of this community created alternative families for people who were ostracized from their biological ones.⁵⁵ Typically lead by a ‘mother’ or a ‘father,’ terms which could be applied to persons of any gender, these experienced members of the ballroom scene offered mentorship to their queer ‘children.’ These groups compete together a ‘house,’ and strive for ‘legendary’ status. Far more than an imitation of the heteronormative concept, these ball houses complicate ideas of family by reframing the composition as a choice. Giving new meaning and depth, the chosen family is one of agency and pride.

Paris is Burning ends with a sad undertone, with the devastating revelation that one of its leading stars, Venus Xtravaganza, was found murdered. Reflecting on this directorial choice, voguer Jamel Prodigy states “I think our message is much more powerful than the impression that [Jennie Livingstone] left. *We are an inspirational, creative and resilient community.*”⁵⁶ He continues: “It’s time to show that we have prevailed. It’s time to show that it’s *not* a sad story.”⁵⁷ Indeed, the ballroom scene created a space in which queer people of colour could rise above the conditions that had been outlined for them. Through ball, they resisted a society that continually devalued their lives and attempted to erase their presence, all while building one that celebrated their community. The world they created was not one of imitation, but one that fostered new realities. Far from escapism, it empowered people to see their potential and work towards achieving their wildest dreams. The effects of this can be seen with ‘vogue,’

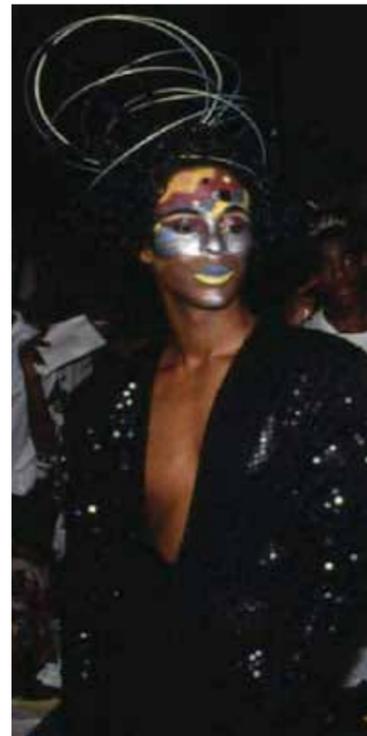


Figure 18. Ball culture, photo by Chantal Regnault (circa 1989-92).

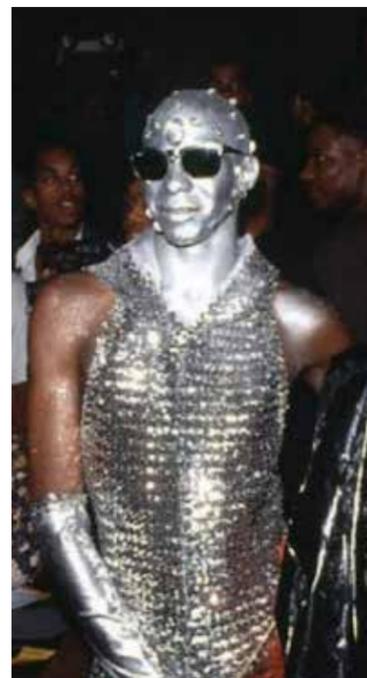


Figure 19. Ball culture, photo by Chantal Regnault (circa 1989-92).

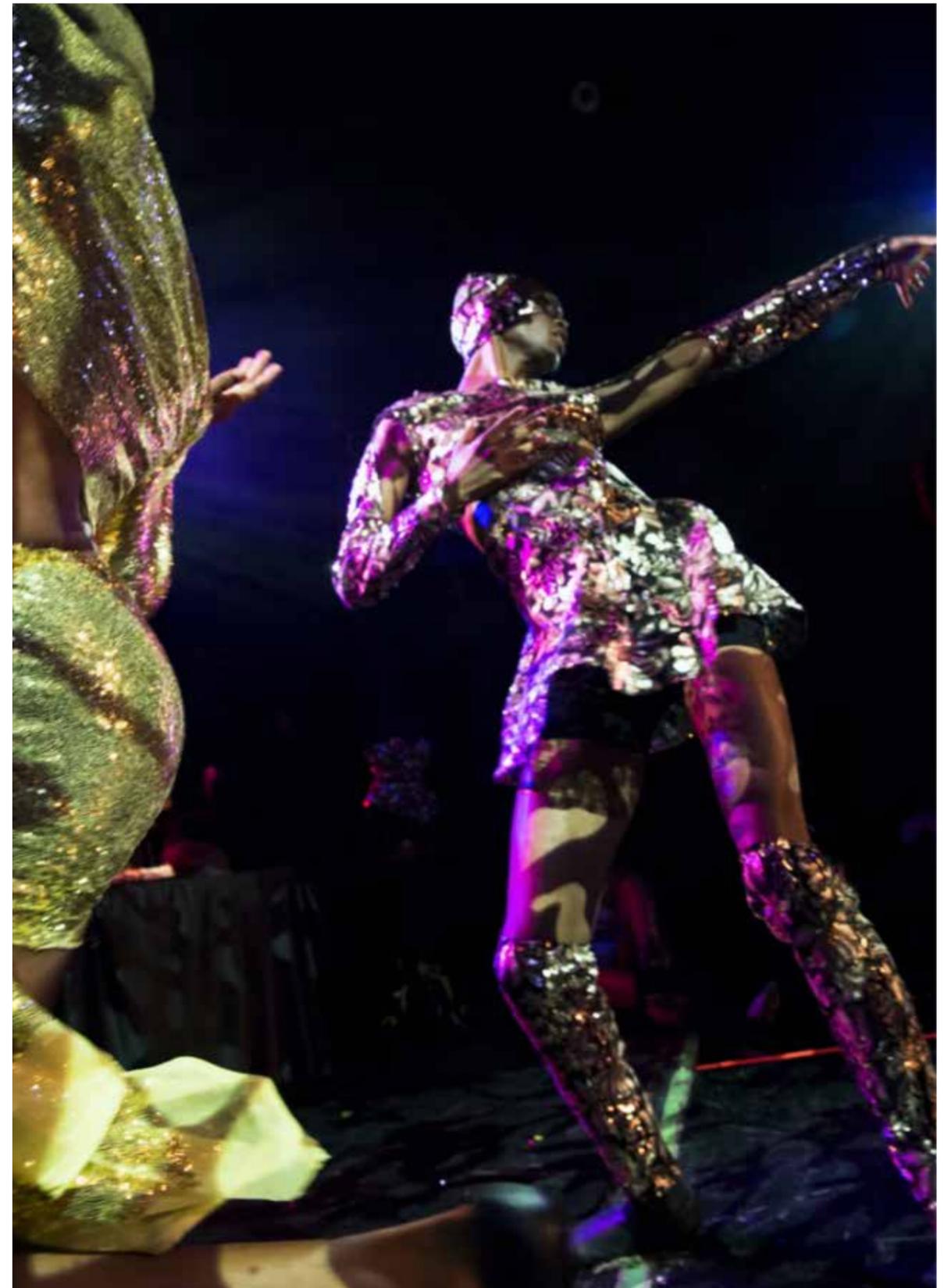


Figure 20. A performer at *Live a Metallic Life, METALIKA Ball*, Photo by Anja Matthes (2017).

the dance pioneered by this movement, becoming a cultural phenomenon.⁵⁸ The ballroom scene has equally garnished more mainstream attention with hit series such as *Pose*.⁵⁹ This visibility granted opportunities to those whom they are infrequently granted, with the show featuring the largest cast of trans people to date.⁶⁰ With mainstream media's long history of disseminating damaging and inaccurate depictions of transness, the positive portrayals in *Pose*, as well as those in a growing number of other shows, are turning the tide.⁶¹ For a group that is told over and over that it should not exist, the impact of these empowering depictions cannot be understated. In many ways, as a thriving scene or as an emblem of queer excellence, ballroom's legacy continues to this day. By transcending the limitations of the current paradigm, ball culture builds new worlds in favour of an infinitely better queer future.

Electronica music: making the future visible

The final case study explores a medium that has multiple spatialities, one that can be enjoyed anywhere while also having dedicated space to do so. Music has long been a site of affirmation and ideation for queer people. Electronica in particular has emerged as an avenue for trans artists, and by extension their fans, to explore questions of futurity. Musicality can be tied to endless spatial conditions, including those that are yet to be created, and those beyond the reach of our world.

When musician SOPHIE tragically passed away in 2021 while attempting to see the full moon, grieving fans launched a petition to NASA requesting that a recently discovered planet, TOI 1338 b, be renamed in her honour.⁶² The circulated imagery of the pastel orb had many noting its similarities with the aesthetics of SOPHIE's visual work, particularly the dreamscape featured on her album *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides*. With the news of SOPHIE's passing, there was a strong push to link this otherworldly artist to the cosmos, securing her legacy beyond the confines of this earth. The petition garnered over 95,000 signatures.⁶³ While it may not be TOI 1338 b, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) permanently renamed the asteroid 1980 RE1 in her honor.⁶⁴ Officially announcing the name



Figure 21. *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* album cover (2018).

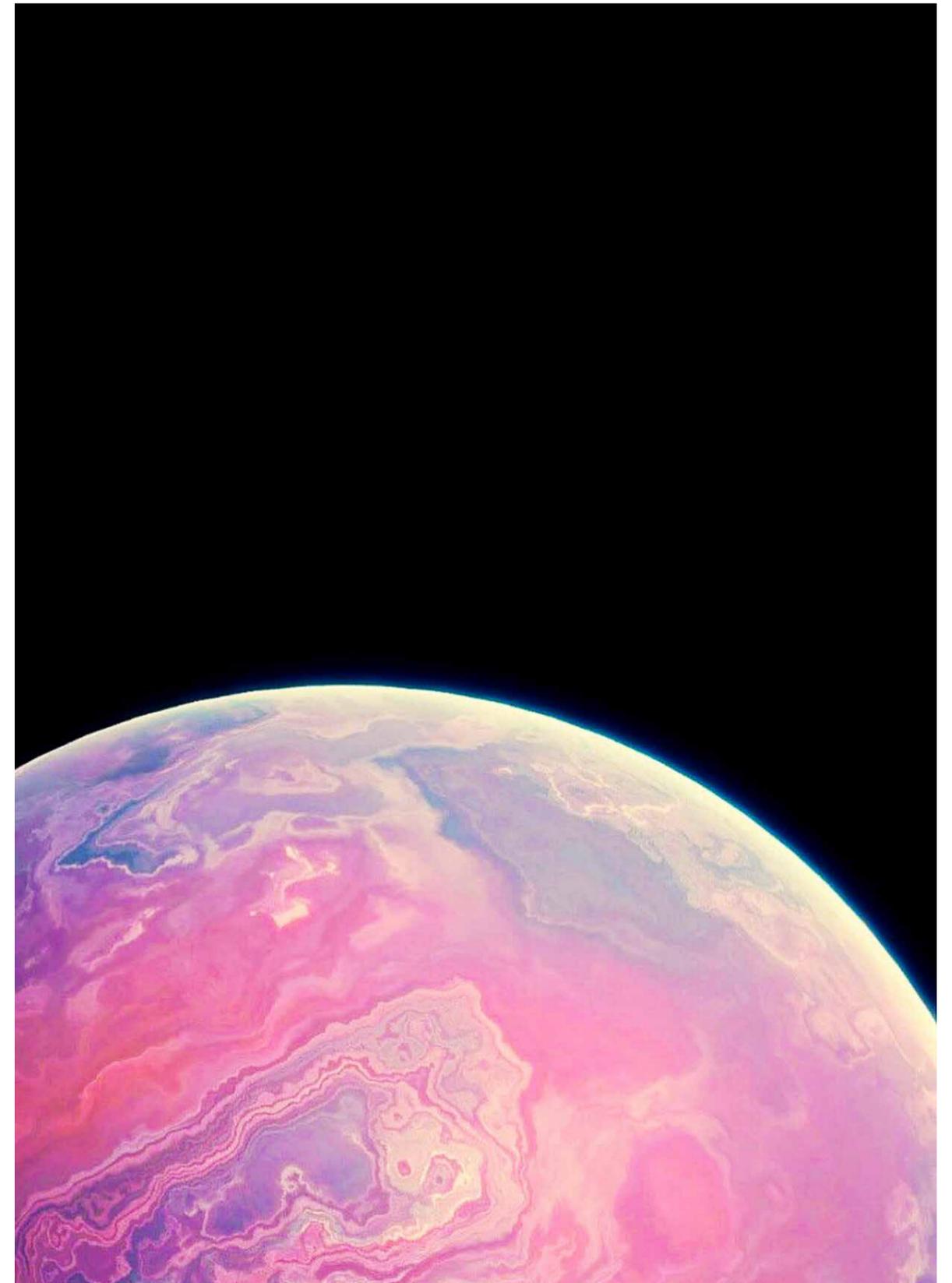


Figure 22. Artist rendering of TOI 1338 b.

'Sophiexeon,' the IAU noted SOPHIE's influence as an electronic music pioneer "whose futuristic style changed the landscape of pop music in the early 21st century."⁶⁵ Once singing "I could be anything I want / Anyhow, any place, anywhere, anyone / Any form, any shape, anyway, anything, anything I want" in her song "Immaterial," she is now part of the solar system, living on as a celestial body.⁶⁶

SOPHIE was an innovative musician, pioneering the 'hyperpop' genre. As stated in an early review by music publication *PitchFork*, "It's not every day that you hear music that sounds totally and wholly *new*—that is, music that you've never heard anyone make *quite like this* before. And in the oftentimes retro-fixated arena of modern dance music, true uniqueness can be an even rarer find."⁶⁷ Indeed, SOPHIE once stated: "I'd like my music to be the antithesis of nostalgia—sensual, *an assault on the senses*. Nothing that reminds you of the past, just what you're feeling right now."⁶⁸ While some sounds may be reminiscent of childhood, this is done "not for nostalgia's sake, not to replay the past as it was, but *to restore the openness and flexibility of the mind before it petrifies within a social role*."⁶⁹ Sonically, SOPHIE's music is composed of "unexpected textures colliding in startling ways," including "gasping, gleeful voices," "rubbery, lubricated tones," and "looming aerated bass," that come together in tightly produced "glossy dance tracks."⁷⁰ Undeterred by those that characterized her music as 'artificial,' she embraced the portrayal, singing "I'm real when I shop my face" on her track "Faceshopping."⁷¹ Along with garnering attention with her breakthrough single "BIPP" in 2013, and then with her debut album *PRODUCT* released in 2015, many began to note that her name was tied to the production of major-label acts such as Madonna, Lady Gaga, Nicki Minaj, Vince Staples, and Charli XCX, among others.⁷²

For years, SOPHIE was shrouded in mystery, with "no age, no gender, no face, no origin – only associations."⁷³ The few interviews SOPHIE gave were conducted over the phone with masked voice.⁷⁴ While some appreciated the identity obscuring moves for the "post-human genderfuck[ery]" they provided, others lambasted SOPHIE's long held anonymity in pieces such as the (since retracted) *Fader* article "Feminine



Figures 23-25. Scenes from *It's Okay to Cry* music video, projected at a Louis Vuitton runway show (2020).

Appropriation Was 2014's Biggest Electronic Music Trend."⁷⁵ Dispelling all assumptions made by her detractors, SOPHIE came out as transgender in 2017 with her song "It's Okay to Cry," which was the first production to include her voice and image.⁷⁶ Singing "I hope you don't take this the wrong way / But I think your inside is your best side," she made a profound statement by allowing herself to be vulnerable.⁷⁷ Reintroduced to the world, SOPHIE became one of the world's first trans pop stars.⁷⁸

Explaining transness as "taking control to bring your body more in line with your soul and spirit so the two aren't fighting against each other and struggling to survive," SOPHIE became a strong advocate for expressing one's true self.⁷⁹ Previously, SOPHIE had remained anonymous, as she believed that one's music should not be judged on one's appearance, stating: "You should try to use every opportunity available to say what you're trying to say, instead of saying, 'Here's my music and this is what I look like.' Nobody cares."⁸⁰ Embracing her transness publicly, while attaching an image to her sound, allowed her to transcend what others had imposed upon her without even knowing what she looked like. In SOPHIE's words, to be trans means there's "*no longer an expectation based on the body you were born into, or how your life should play out and how it should end*."⁸¹ She continues: "On this earth, it's that you can get closer to how you feel your true essence is without the societal pressures of having to fulfill certain traditional roles based on gender."⁸² As reflected by Sasha Geffen, author of *Glitter in the Dark: How Pop Music Broke the Binary*,

It's not only trans people who quit their preprogrammed sequence and start over, but it's through [SOPHIE's] music that I began to understand transness as *an incomparable gift, a vantage from which prohibitive assumptions about human relationality begin to curl away*.⁸³

Coming out allowed SOPHIE to reclaim her identity, while empowering her to say what she had to say even louder. This had a huge impact, inspiring trans music makers and fans alike. SOPHIE understood the importance of visibility, as a mechanism of generating future queer possibilities. In the domain of music, she predicted that more trans artists would gain success,



Figure 26. Live performance at nightclub Heaven (2018).



Figure 27. Live performance at music festival Coachella (2019).

thanks to the gender-bending work of those who came before them, stating: “If you think about any of the people who have been really influential like Madonna, Bowie, Prince — people like that have shifted culture in this way that gets us as far down that path as possible.”⁸⁴ As one article writes: “it took artists like SOPHIE to take the established norms of music and turn them upside down, changing the landscape forever.”⁸⁵ Rejecting the idea of a singular auteur, SOPHIE believed that new realities were the result of co-creation. As described by Geffen: “It’s not only in the self but in the other that reality opens and allows formerly ambiguous desires to crystallize. I see you and you see me and we see each other seeing each other, and in this way we view the real in parallax. We draw it into three dimensions, our passions mingling, feeding each other and growing stronger.”⁸⁶

In a retrospective on her life, Geffen states “SOPHIE belonged to the future.” Describing a concert t-shirt with the words “LIVE IN PERSON! SOPHIE LA000010302017,” they write: “Four zeroes ahead of the date, four powers of ten for us to expand into, millennia upon millennia still unwritten. That was the music’s promise—that we would all make it out, that we would spill not just past this present moment, but into the untold expanses of time yet to come.”⁸⁷ Through her music, which she described as her “chosen method of communication,” SOPHIE, she demonstrated that it was possible to reconstruction oneself, abandon any predetermined life path, and pursue freer ways of being.⁸⁸ For this reason, SOPHIE saw digital technology as “*indispensable to the creation of new, livable selves and new, livable worlds.*”⁸⁹ While SOPHIE may have transcended earthly bounds, she leaves a behind this world-building legacy.

Arca has equally been integral to the formulation of queer futurity through music. Gaining prominence as an experimental electronic producer for the likes of Björk, Kanye West, and FKA twigs, she went on to release her own work to great acclaim.⁹⁰ In the wake of her self-titled album *Arca* in 2017, she described feeling “stagnant, even bitter” due to experiencing gender dysphoria.⁹¹ After coming out as a non-binary trans woman, she wanted to reclaim these emotions through her music. Explaining that “rather than



Figure 28. *KiCk i* album cover (2020).

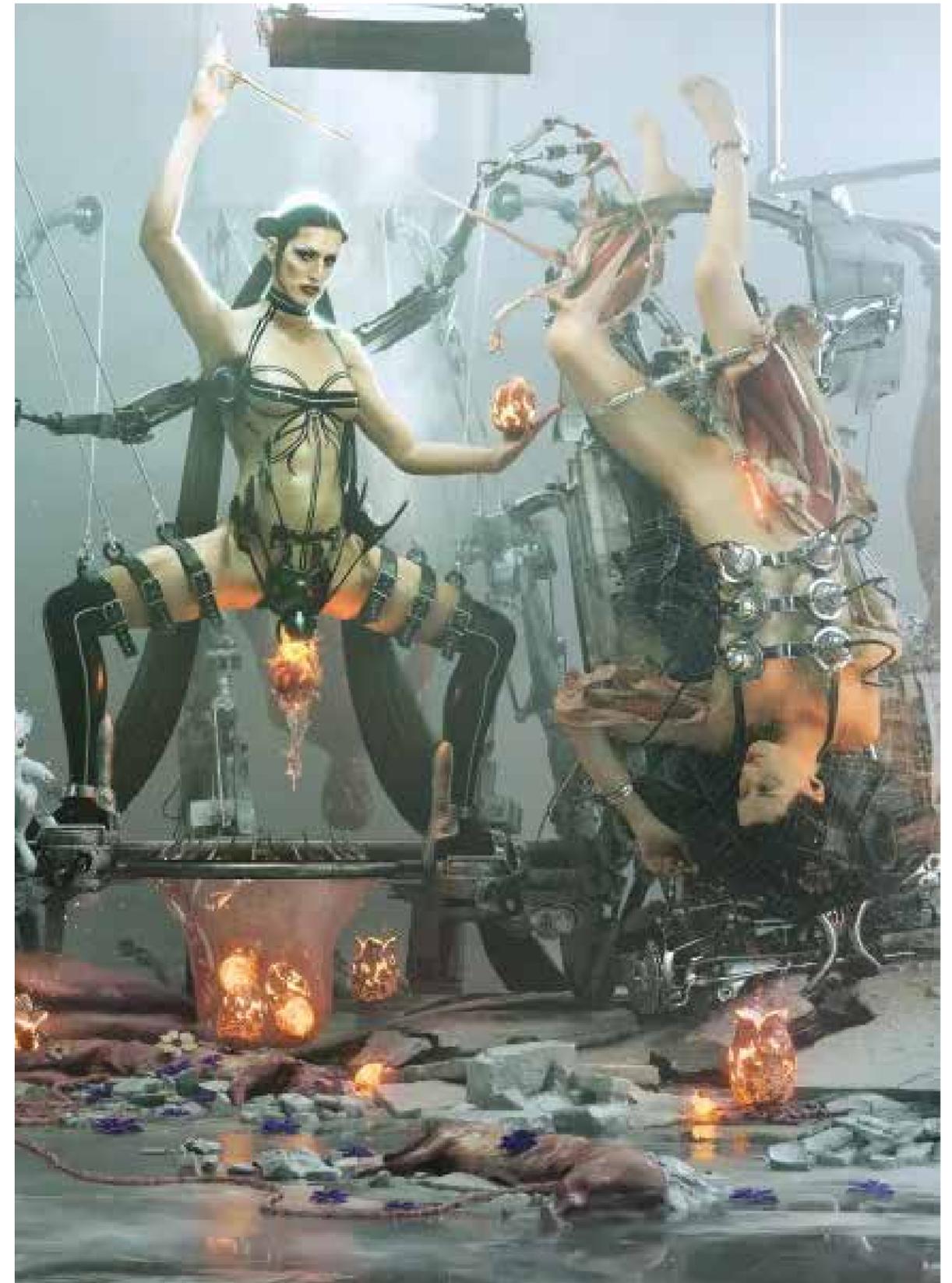


Figure 29. *KiCk ii* album cover (2021).



Figure 30. Still from *Nonbinary* music video (2020).

depicting *gender dysphoria*,” she “wanted to explore *gender euphoria*,” Arca began this musical celebration by releasing the first installment of her *KiCk* series in 2020.⁹² In *KiCk I*, Arca collaborated with SOPHIE on the song ‘La Chiqui.’ One article, titled “Arca & Sophie’s ‘La Chiqui’ Pushes Pop Music Further into the Future,” describes the end sequence of the long anticipated first collaboration between the two artists: “Eventually, it sounds like they’ve broken the music itself, as the song short-circuits and fades out.”⁹³ It continues, stating that “‘La Chiqui’ is really about the possibility of creation: *what can be made when boundaries get pushed to a breaking point.*”⁹⁴

The next *KiCk* albums picked up where this one left off, with greater force. Unleashing the rest of the series into the world like rapid fire, she released an album each day for four consecutive days in 2021 (*KiCk ii* was released on November 30th, *KiCk iii* on December 1st, *KiCk iiiii* on the 2nd, and *KiCk iiiiii* on the 3rd). Arca describes the *KiCk* series as “self-contained, mythical, *almost world-building exercises* that interrelate to one another.”⁹⁵ The masterwork is accompanied by an elaborate 3D world, co-created with multimedia artist Frederik Heyman. The visual and sonic production showcases Arca’s desire to “denaturalize and interrogate all kinds of boundaries: of the physical body, of immigrant identity, of biological conceptions of gender, rendered in part by blurring the line between flesh and technology.”⁹⁶ Explaining that working with “themes of body and technology” is something that she’s been drawn to aesthetically for as long as she can remember, her world, as depicted in each installment’s album artwork and associated music videos, show similar motifs of “body modification via mechanical aberration.”⁹⁷

The figure of the cyborg and its capacity to free the body from gendered entrapment, invoked by scholars such as Donna Haraway, has been dismissed by a number of interlocutors as a potentially dangerous trope. Frequently, in the case of feminist scholarship, this alleged “celebration of the transsexual” is accompanied by “a disturbing elision of the experiences of transsexual subjects.”⁹⁸ As explained by Crawford, “In such a reading, transgender is *reduced* to not only

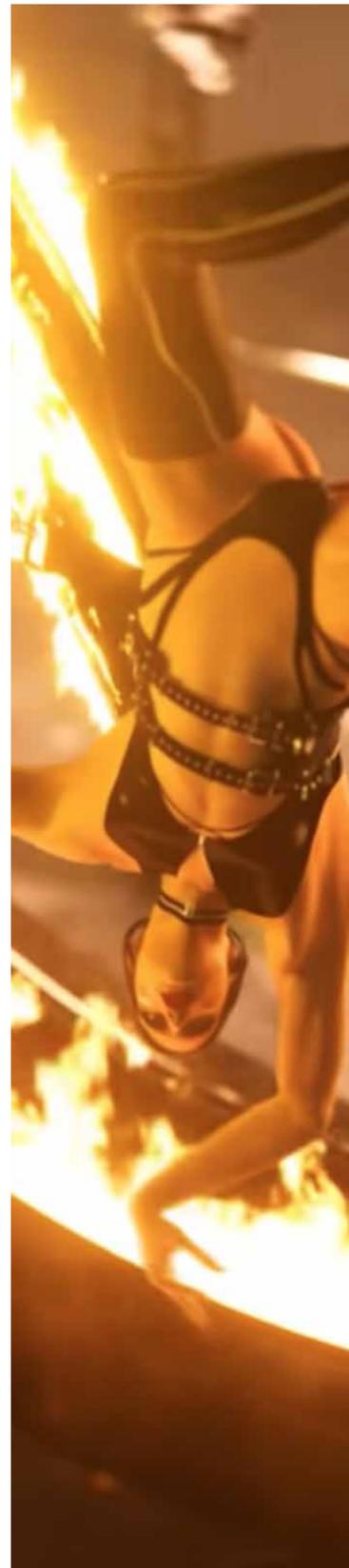


Figure 31. Still from *Prada/Rakata* music video (2021).

a symbol of the mixture of two apparently heretofore-discrete genders but also *the evacuation of meaning rather than a proliferation.*”⁹⁹ As a welcome change, Arca’s creations are a celebration of the trans body, rather than a symbol of its erasure. Explaining that “there is a particular kind of skepticism or cynicism in the face of the modified body, *as if there was a shame to the transformation of the body,*” Arca uses her platform to elevate the figure of the “mutant.”¹⁰⁰

Understanding her transness as a form of spirituality, the term ‘mutant faith’ reoccurs often in Arca’s work. As expressed in the song “Riquiquí,” it is “Love in the face of fear / Fear in the face of God.”¹⁰¹ Defining the expression as “a belief in the promise of the othered,” she explains that it is a faith for “mutants, freaks, weirdos, migrants,” that it is an “intersectional rallying cry for the spirit.”¹⁰² Weaving in “reggaeton textures” and “Venezuelan folklore,” Arca conjures “her own kind of trans immigrant futurism.”¹⁰³ Embracing change within herself, and her worlds, she states: “I do see a lot of possibility for the creation of a self that isn’t a photograph, that can change over time. I think the Latinx community is that. It’s going to be shape-shifting ever after and forever, hopefully in the same way that queerness is.”¹⁰⁴ To transcend the ‘here and now,’ one must be open to the possibility.

On transcendence

To be *transcendent* is to exist “apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe.”¹⁰⁵ Queer people, through their imaginative capacities, are truly so. While I have presented a limited number of examples, **there are countless ways that queer people build themselves new realities in the present and project themselves into the future, and they are all important.** Cumulatively, these actions contribute to the elaboration of a better world. Through the process of queering, the possibilities are infinite.



Figures 32-34. Stills from *Prada/Rakata* music video (2021).

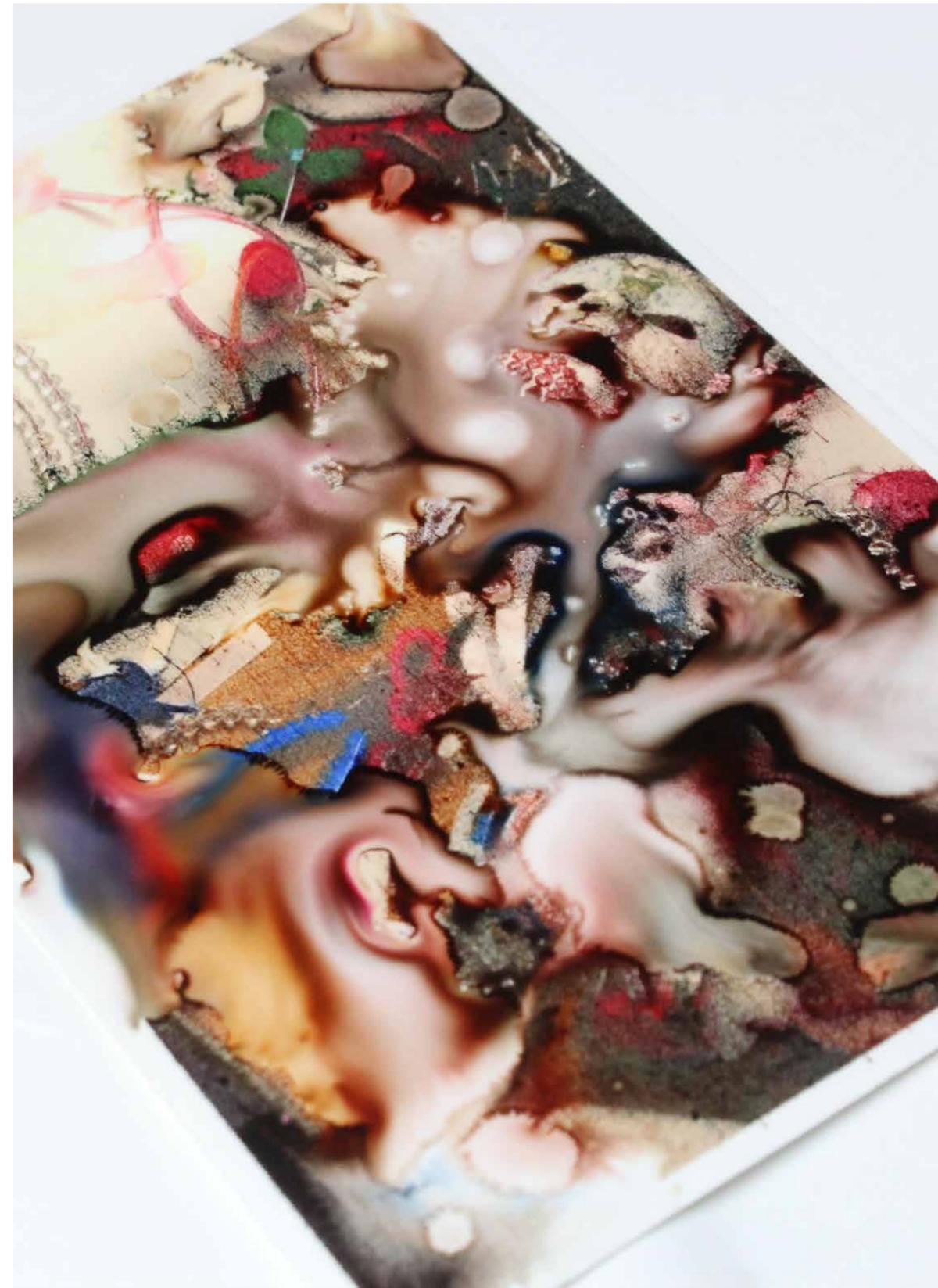
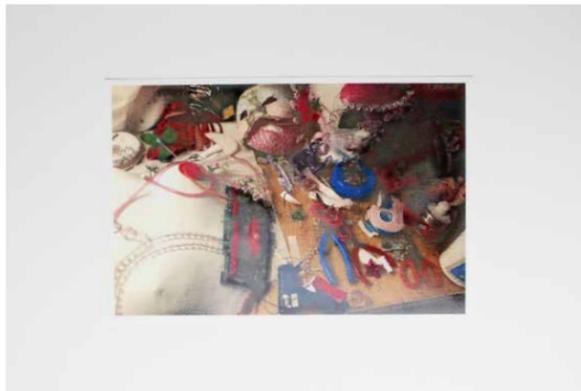
THE TRANSCENDENT BODY

The Transcendent Body

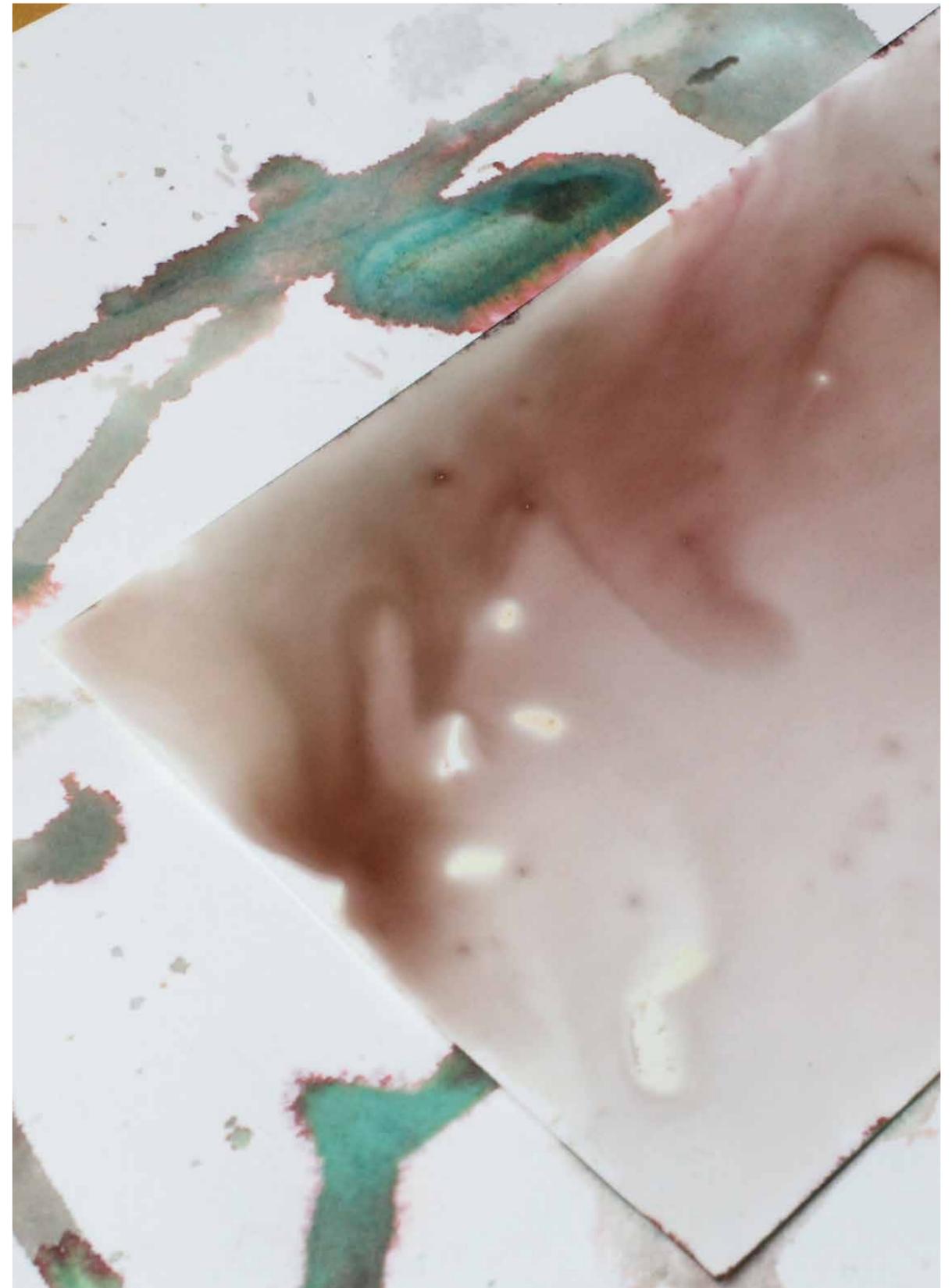
When presented with outstanding examples of queer world-building, it may be difficult to comprehend how one might contribute to queer futurity. **As my final design exploration, I wanted to demonstrate that no act of queering is too small.** It is the accumulation of individual actions that make up our reality. Through collaboration, change is made. **Additionally, I wanted to emphasize *process over outcome*.** Queering is a strategy with no fixed end result. Its power lies in its lack of fixity. Throughout this thesis, *it has been this methodology that I have been trying to impart.* To summarize, this simple exercise consisted of taking a photo of my messy desk while I was making the Invent / Build Your Own Body outfit, printing it off, and dripping water on it. **Undergoing a *transformation*, the visuals *transcended* what the medium had destined to be a mere depiction of reality.**



Figure 1. The original photograph.







Figures 2-31. Documentation of the photograph's transformation process.



Conclusion

“Pessimism of the intellect,
optimism of the will.”¹

-Antonio Gramsci

Throughout this document, I have applied a norm-critical perspective to spatial phenomena, which, in this respect, is all I endeavored to do. While an architecture thesis typically proposes a design solution for its outlined problem, my aim was never to ‘solve’ anything. The fact is that the many pressing issues that architects are facing today are not easily resolved, as they are *systemic* in nature. Heteronormativity, the normative structure that has been the primary concern of this thesis, is a ‘*wicked problem*.’ Overcoming this regime would require a complete overhaul of societal values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and practices. The sheer complexity of this undertaking rules out any simple solution, especially at the hand of one individual over the course of one academic year. As such, this thesis did not provide an ‘answer’ to the phenomenon of spatial *othering*. That being said, it did not limit itself to only providing a reading of this issue. Certainly, an architectural education offers a lens that is conducive to discussing the matter at hand. Moreover, critical analysis is integral for any challenging normative order. Questioning systematized understandings that are taken for granted in design draws attention their contingency, which ultimately contributes to their destabilization. However, this thesis recognized the necessity of going beyond revealing the operation of the heteronormative regime, *as there is no point in contesting it if one cannot imagine better ways of living, or a better future.*

The field of architecture, while it has been contested for its role in perpetuating spatial violence, is also conducive for considering new realities. It offers tools to 'make' space, *which may be appropriated in service of world building practices*. To avoid prescribing any form of design, this thesis necessarily took on an exploratory framework. It proposed 'queering,' not only as a methodology of resisting normative spatiality, but as a mechanism that creates new sets of relations that exist outside of spaces dictated by the norm. This expansive approach goes beyond queerness and being queer; it is a practice of *dismantling* that offers guidance in the wake of crumbling normativity. Queering enables an expansion of perspective, allowing one to exist beyond the dire circumstances of the present and foreground the possibility of a desirable future. *It is by asserting one's agency in altering one's own reality that it becomes possible to envision different worlds*. Harnessing the liberatory potential of spatial production could be transformative to the field of architecture. Rather than impede on the development of alternative ways of being, architects should work in service of this venture.

While this thesis considered the process of 'queering' through a finite number of topics, its potential is infinite. There will always be other areas to consider, this thesis only represents the beginning of my own personal journey to locate heteronormative implications in design. Moreover, there is an abundance of ways to 'queer,' the compilation of explorations in the document are merely my take. *If this thesis was to impart one thing, it would be that everyone should not only work towards unmasking and unlearning normativity, but, more importantly, that they should explore ways of being that exist with no consideration to this paradigm*. It is by engaging in this process, and adopting a generative mode of thinking, feeling, and acting, that we can *expand the horizon of hope and make it a reality*.

As a final word, I would like to reiterate that normative orders have real impacts on real bodies. Consequently, it is imperative to counter normativity on all levels, *especially in the realm of architecture*. The built environment is far from neutral; embedded with ideologies, such as those of the heteronormative regime, it enacts spatial violence on non-normative people. As design professionals, architects play a critical role in constructing and maintaining this paradigm. *This complicity must be made apparent in order to effectuate change*. Alas, spatial production does not have to be in service of normativity, *it can offer so much more*. While the topics I have dealt with in this thesis have often been very serious, I hope that I have also demonstrated that it is also possible to have fun when considering them. In the face of adversity, *joyful resistance must be fostered*. Even though heteronormativity is embedded in our material reality, there are so many ways to 'queer' it. The possibilities are endless. 'Queering' as a methodology, albeit one that eludes formal elaboration, offers the potential to reclaim space. *I encourage everyone to reject the casual implementation of norms, remaining critical of the ease of this imperative, and instead pursue the elaboration of a better future for all. It is by working together that it becomes more than a possibility*.



Epilogue

Reflecting upon the unfolding of this thesis, I acknowledge that I tried to take on too much. At times, I felt engulfed in the vastness of the topic I had undertaken. I wanted to offer a comprehensive overview of heteronormativity, a system so complex that its inner workings are beyond human comprehension, to an audience that had potentially never considered any, or all, of its elements as anything but 'natural.' Subsequently, I wanted to demonstrate its spatial implications, which I thankfully limited to two exemplary, albeit long-winded, case studies, in order to clarify the complicity of design professionals in producing and maintaining this order. Having identified key themes, I then sought to further illustrate this phenomenon with six questions that would highlight the process of 'queering' through six responses. The range of design outcomes I envisioned were extensive, often requiring skills that were not possible to acquire in the time that I had allotted myself. As I developed this work, it became clear to me that each and every section could have been a thesis. Nonetheless, once I devised this framework, I felt as though each part was integral to the whole. Particularly because I wanted to do each facet justice, I kept going when maybe I should have stopped.

Initially, I was not particularly concerned about the length of this thesis because I was treating it as a personal archive, compiling everything that I had uncovered in one place for future reference. However, over time, I came to the realization that this ???-page document may be unapproachable to other people. When I conceived of the topics I wanted to cover, writing about them was a daunting task. It seemed like an insurmountable obstacle, of my own making to be sure, that I had to overcome. I am apprehensive that,

when presented with something of this length, people may experience a similar feeling, which may lead them to not read it at all. While I do want to build upon my research after graduating, I do not want it to exist in a vacuum. I will undoubtedly continue pursuing this vast topic, but I want others to do so as well. It is important to me that this work be accessible to everyone that wants to 'queer' architecture. Moreover, I want people that have no interest in this topic whatsoever to engage with it as well. To instigate change, one cannot simply keep preaching to the choir. They are not the ones who need swaying. As such, the compilation of esoteric material may be futile in this effort.

I do hope that people engage with this incredibly long document, but in the event that they do not, I want the content found within to exist in other forms. After submitting this thesis, one of my goals is to disseminate it online via multiple platforms. Having learned about the hidden labour of website maintenance through this process, I am assessing options that have longevity. I have set up accounts on a few sites with free hosting and plan to move forward with the one that offers the most interactive options for the user. Along with a website, I will further distill this information on social media. I have procured the Instagram handle @queering_architecture, which I will eventually populate with shareable posts, such as infographics. While I do have my qualms about this app, it has provided a lot of networking opportunities for people interested in queer spatial production. Moreover, this route tends to have a further reach than a stand-alone website. Additionally, I plan to submit variations of my work to a variety of publications. This form of communication may be less public facing, but it is certainly important in the realm of building discourse. In the afterlife of this thesis, I will continue investigate other options to share my findings. Ultimately, in doing so, I hope to advocate for non-normative perspectives in design.

Beyond sharing the resources I have compiled, I hope to bring the ideas explored in this thesis into the real world. They need to go beyond these pages to have a chance at altering any aspect of our material existence. I want to continue engaging with the process of 'queering' spatial production, in a way that brings it into contact with others. While there are many ways that this might be accomplished, public installations could be an initial avenue. Kosmic, an annual party hosted by architecture students at Carleton University, presented itself as a perfect opportunity to experiment with creating some form of exhibition during my thesis. As all spatial production is a collaborative venture, this exercise was enriched by working together with my classmate, and dear friend, Thompson Nguyen. We created an interactive piece on the dance floor titled "Queerly Beloved: An Homage to Disappearing Queer Life." Commemorating aspects of queer life that had been put on hold for the duration of the pandemic, each portal offered a glimpse into different spatial passages. Silhouetted memories of various venues were illuminated, drawing attention from the crowd. Over the course of the night, the intervention invited people closer, to observe and to dance with the altar. This humble beginning, assembled by two sleep-deprived thesis students, was a successful case study in introducing people to the concept of queer space. Plus, we got to bring out two of the 'layered body' outfits (SHROUD and PARODY) out for a test drive. All in all, it was a fun couple of nights, and I look forward to more collective 'queering' in the future. Ultimately, queering requires us to *engage* and to *take action*. It thrives in *collaboration and community*. As such, to strive for a queer future, experimentation needs to be a bigger part of everyday life.



Figure 1. Kosmic attendees photographing installation. Photo by Christopher Rohde.



Figure 2. Close up of a scene featured on one of the installation's four cubes.



Figure 3. Kosmic attendees reading artist statement. Photo by Christopher Rohde.

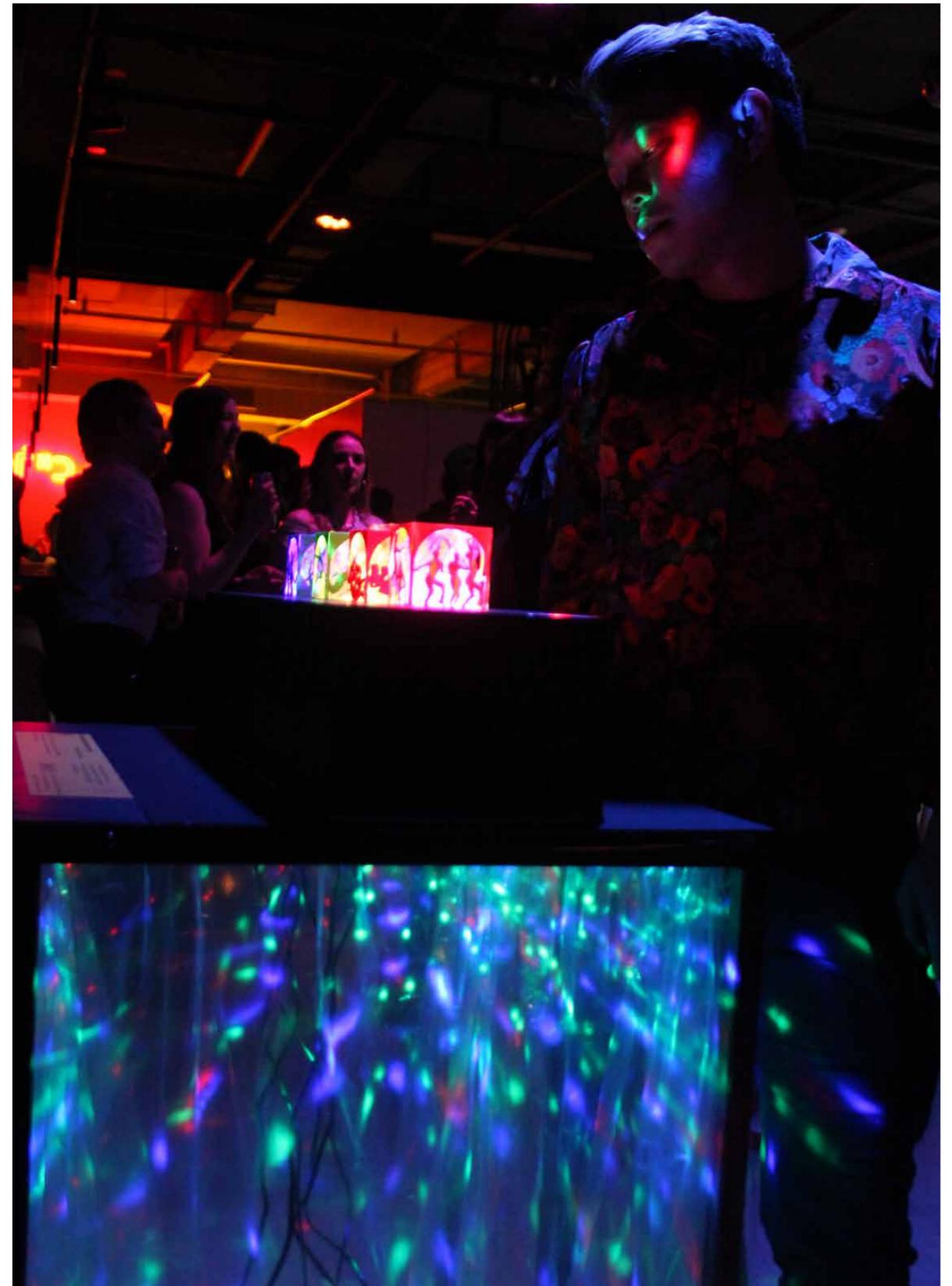


Figure 4. Video of "Queerly Beloved: An Homage to Disappearing Queer Life" installation, accompanied by the song *Marea (We've Lost Dancing)* by Fred Again.. & The Blessed Madonna.



Figure 5. Dancing on stage in 'layered body' outfits PARODY and SHROUD. Video by Aram Payroveolia.



Figures 6-7. Backstage in 'layered body' outfits PARODY and SHROUD. Photos by Riya Kuruvilla.

Endnotes

RE: Book Design

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Part One // Understanding Heteronormative Space

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As the easily accessible online information about this event (e.g. Wikipedia) misconstrues this event, alleging that the arrestee had perhaps committed sexual assault, it is important to comment on the sources used for the reconstruction of the historical narrative. In an account from 1874, the author explains that the event was caused by "the imprisonment of an actor [or] clown of the circus, who was a great favorite with the people, *but who nevertheless was guilty of unnatural crimes.*" 'Unnatural' can be understood in many ways, leaving room for misinterpretation, as evidenced by the online encyclopedia. Feinberg cites *Romanarum et Mosaicarum Legum Collatio* from the end of 4th century, which contains rare systematic comparison of Jewish and Roman legislation. It includes the 390 CE edict, which is the same year as the event in question, that proclaimed: "We cannot tolerate the city of Rome, mother of all virtues, being stained by the contamination of male effeminacy." It continued: "Your laudable experience will therefore punish among revenging flames, in the presence of the people, as required by the grossness of the crime, all those who have given themselves up to the infamy of

condemning the manly body, transformed into a feminine one, to bear the practices reserves for the other sex, which have nothing different from women [...].” It keeps going. Based on the evidence collected from the period in question, it is evident that the arrest was on account of the performance of ‘femininity.’ People with heteronormative biases tend to erase, intentionally or not, the lives of queer people. Always be aware of this in the case of conflicting accounts.

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Conclusion

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Epilogue

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APPENDIX 1

Supplementary information for:

1.1 - The Construction of Heteronormativity

The following essay, titled *Denaturalizing Biological Sex in Queer Migration Studies* was completed for the course SOCI 5805X: Selected Topics in Sociology – Queer Migrations (Winter 2022).

In this essay, I bring the question of sex to the forefront. Locating the concept in a long lineage of Western thought, I demonstrate its constructed nature. Despite its contingency, sex has cemented itself as the organizing principle of society, denying legibility to multitudes of experiences. Failing to refute the biological ‘truth’ of sex reifies the concept as ‘natural.’ This, in turn, counteracts efforts to denaturalize sexuality. I argue that sex *must* be addressed by queer migration scholars, as it is the basis of the heteronormative regime they seek to dismantle.

Note: only sections pertinent to this thesis have been reproduced.

On the distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’

“But what if Sex is already a gendered way of looking at bodies? What if Sex is already gender, so that the distinction between the two is no distinction at all? What if Sex – the original Given, transcendent and universal – could be deconstructed?”¹

- Riki Wilchins

The term ‘gender identity’ was formerly introduced in an article by psychoanalyst Robert Stoller in 1964.² In the preface of his subsequent book *Sex and Gender*, he announced “we have split off ‘gender’ as a distinguishable part of ‘sexuality.’”³ In an effort to explain the apparent misalignment between maleness and masculinity or femaleness and femininity observed in people ‘afflicted’ with homosexuality, which of course was considered a mental illness at the time, the split was deemed necessary. This differentiation was well received by various feminist groups, as it allowed them to counter biological determinism with the notion of socially constructed gender.⁴ Under this view, gender relations are understood as “a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention.”⁵ While biological differences are considered fixed, gender roles are merely social

interpretations capable of alteration through “social reform.”⁶ Despite distinguishing between object and idea, the belief that psychological differences between men and women have biological roots remains alive and well. To this day, there are countless scientific studies expounding this view.⁷ As stated by activist Riki Wilchins, “no matter what we say about gender,” sex is brought up to “remind us that [...] there is still a fixed, biological basis for all of this in the flesh.”⁸ Essentially, sex acts as a stand in for gender to the extent that differentiation is unintelligible. Observing how man and male or woman and female are so casually interchanged in everyday speech (and even in academic discourse) underscores this point. Reflecting on the complexity of bodies, sexologist Anne Fausto-Sterling states: “The more we look for a simple physical basis for ‘sex,’ the more it becomes clear that ‘sex’ is not a pure physical category. What bodily signals and functions we define as male or female *come already entangled in our ideas about gender.*”⁹ Given that the “immutable character of sex is contested” queer theorist Judith Butler proposes that “this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender.”¹⁰ They maintain that “the distinction between sex and gender *turns out to be no distinction at all.*”¹¹

A limited and limiting pursuit

When it comes to exposing social construction, queer migration scholarship has primarily focused on sexuality.¹² “Refusing a homo-hetero binary logic,” its proponents critically address sexuality’s intersecting relations of power including those of “race, ethnicity, gender, class, citizenship status, and geopolitical location.”¹³ In doing so, their analyses demonstrate how a plethora of marginalized positionalities are created in relation to “a valorized standard of reproductive sexuality between *biologically born male-female couples.*”¹⁴ Luibhéid has described heterosexuality as “an unstable norm [...] which requires anxious labor to sustain.”¹⁵ Similarly, as will be alluded by the journey it has undergone, sex has never been a stable concept. Given that these scholars are acutely aware of that “sexual identities and categories are never transhistorical, essential, fixed and self-evident but rather are constructed within social relations that change over time and by location,” they certainly have the capacity to extend this understanding to other areas.¹⁶ Arguably, sex ‘identities and categories’ are equally as constructed. Perhaps there is a reluctance to venture into this realm because their arguments are reliant on sexual difference, taking a male-female dichotomy as their very founding (or structuring) principle. How can we coherently speak of ‘same-sex’ relationships without sex as a given? In prioritizing coherence, there is potential to reify oppressive structures. Discourse that uncritically assumes sex enshrines essentialism on an ontological level. It is worth noting, as explained by philosopher Timothy Morton, that ontological boundaries are human-made, and are sustained through “everyday practices that perpetuate mechanism of separation.”¹⁷ Consequently, “knowledge is [...] critical in questioning them.”¹⁸ Re-examining the root of the binary sex system reveals a value system that does not align with queer migration scholarship ethos.

Unveiling contingency through discursive strategies

The work of Michel Foucault, particularly his assertion that sexualities “can only be understood through discursive strategies,” is often invoked in queer migration scholarship.¹⁹ Indeed, examining how normalization occurs “through discourse and knowledge production” unveils how identities are not as fixed as they might seem.²⁰ It is at the margins, as elaborated by Wilchins, that “discourse begins to fray, where whatever paradigm we’re in starts to lose its explanatory power and all those inconvenient exceptions begin to cause problems.”²¹ Luibhéid affirms that the work of Foucault “offers particularly useful tools for examining these relations of power.”²² Congruently, tracing the concept of sex discursively proves fruitful. Historical genealogy reveals its root in Western ideology, and its subsequent permutations leading to the variation that reigns today. Its inconstancy reveals its constructed nature, allowing for an informed contestation.

Returning to the root of Western civilization

“‘Everyday language’ is not innocent or neutral. It is the language of Western metaphysics, and it carries within it [...] presuppositions of all types.”²³

- Jacques Derrida

“Philosophy plays out only part of what [language] makes possible.”²⁴

- John McGowan

“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”²⁵

- Audre Lorde

This narrative begins with ancient Greece, not to romanticize pederasty as Foucault once did, but rather because it is considered the foundation of Western civilization. Building upon ideas that originate from this base, without questioning them, reaffirms the supremacy of Western thought rather than contest it. Before discussing the concept of ‘sex,’ it is imperative to understand the Western conceptualization of ‘truth’ and its contribution to a form of knowledge centered around ‘sameness.’ As stated by historian Marcel Detienne, “in our scientific civilization, the idea of “truth” immediately summons up notions of objectivity, communicability, and unity.”²⁶ Indeed, it is defined as “the property of being in accord with fact or reality.”²⁷ Prior to its ‘rationalization,’ the Western concept of truth had mythoreligious origins. Truth could only be summoned by three key figures: the diviner, the poet, and the king. This ‘prerational’ truth “served to construct reputations,

support political claims and thus to create the social order.”²⁸ Truth remained in the realm of the powerful in its next iteration. Explaining how “mythical concepts, religious practice, and societal forms [...] were involved in philosophy’s beginnings,” Detienne writes that “philosophers wasted no time in attempting to monopolize this desire for truth.”²⁹ He explains further:

When philosophical thought discovered its own particular subject of inquiry, disentangled itself from the bases of mythological thought [...], and deliberately set out to address the problems that would thereafter retain its attention, it became organized around a central concept that from then on would define a particular aspect of first philosophy (or metaphysics) [...]: that concept was Aletheia, or ‘truth’.³⁰

This transition coincided with the birth of ‘democracy.’ This institution, which continues to be held in high regard in Western society, was in fact “a form of state based on the authoritarian rule of the slave-owning patricians over the enslaved majority.”³¹ Similarly, truth was based on a model where consensus was reached among a powerful elite. Majority rule is often unfavorable for minoritarian causes. This is especially true if they are not even part of the discussion to begin with. Given that “truth remained the prerogative of particular types of men,” certain forms of knowledge were privileged over others.³²

The Western predilection for ‘sameness’

“The philosophical tradition, at least from Plato on, has always favored the concept of the same; i.e., the aim of philosophical thought has been to reveal the essential characteristics that two things hold in common.”³³

- John McGowan

Similar to how ‘truth’ was determined through majority rule, Western thought tended to name whatever was “common and shared among [its] members.”³⁴ By favoring sameness, it left what was out-numbered unnamed. At the same time, Western thought developed a predilection for overvaluing language, mistaking what was named for what was “Real.”³⁵ Unfamiliar occurrences were described in relation to existing terminology rather than described in their own right; assumed to be derivatives of what was already established, lesser-known experiences were subsumed in what constituted “an act of replacement and erasure.”³⁶ As theorized by philosopher Jacques Derrida, these tactics resulted in a “tendency to see the world’s complexity in terms of simplistic binaries.”³⁷ Cast in opposition, dichotomous terms were made to appear as though they were “two halves of a whole.”³⁸ On unequal footing, one term is positioned as the ‘center,’ thereby setting the terms of discussion determining the composition of other. As a result, “we endlessly debate the meaning of Woman but not Man, homosexuality but not heterosexuality, blackness but never whiteness, transgender but never *normal*

genders.”³⁹ In its “compulsion to create totalitarian forms of knowledge,” Western thought has been charting “an essentially dishonest quest for what is universal and certain.”⁴⁰ Presenting a procession of “transcendent truths,” it declares concepts true “for all people, in all societies, and at all times.”⁴¹ This declaration remains consistent, even when concepts go through a variety of permutations. All-encompassing in its imposition, Western thought has serious structural implications on other ways of life. As stated by Wilchins: “In the end, binaries are not just a curious way we have of understanding the world. They are political. They are about power. They create hierarchies [...] that produce winners and losers.”⁴²

Tracing the Western concept of binary sex

“The word ‘sex’ [refers] not to a fixed ‘biological’ category that remains coherent throughout history but to a historically contingent category that is rooted in a specific discourse about nature, a discourse that was produced and dominated by particular groups whose claimed expertise was the human body.”⁴³

- Ahmed Ragab

“The notion of sex made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, pleasures...a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified.”⁴⁴

- Michel Foucault

Historian Leah DeVun, in her book *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance*, conducts an impressive tracing of the many forms that sex has taken throughout history. With its propensity for binary logic and declaring universal truths, it’s perhaps unsurprising that the history of today’s sex categories begins in Greece. In his quest for naturalist explanations of existence, Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC) developed the initial Western concept of sex. Explaining that “mortal organisms” strive for “continued existence,” *sex was teleologically tied to reproduction*.⁴⁵ Aristotle believed that ‘males’ were “spiritually elevated,” and ‘females’ were “mere matter.”⁴⁶ Accordingly, he argued that nature always strove to produce a superior ‘male’ offspring. He considered ‘female’ offspring as “the result of a less successful generative process – a mistake – and a departure from nature’s intended course.”⁴⁷ In this conception, ‘females’ were “deformed” ‘males’; an “inferior version,” rather than an “opposite.”⁴⁸ Despite the apparent widespread occurrence of ‘deformity’ among the population, the firm boundary between ‘males’ and ‘females’ was put forward as evidence in his theory of human superiority. Establishing sexual differentiation was crucial to Aristotle’s broader goal of categorizing creatures on a graduated scale of

high to low. In his tiered system, humans were placed at the apex as “perfect” animals because their binary sex distinguished them from all other creatures.⁴⁹ Lower organisms, meanwhile, displayed a variety of “differentiated and undifferentiated sexes,” as well as reproductive processes.⁵⁰ It was their lack of dichotomous sex, seen nonetheless as a “natural feature,” that accounted for their position in this hierarchical ordering.⁵¹ Perhaps counterintuitively, Aristotle willingly acknowledged ambiguous sex in humans. However, in order to rectify this flaw in his grand scheme, he argued that many of these occurrences constituted cosmetic defects obscuring “an underlying sex that was ‘really’ male or female.”⁵² Consistent with the Western tendency towards sameness, these individuals were assimilated into the broader categories of ‘male’ and ‘female.’ However, not all contingencies could be salvaged. If they differed too far from the norm, Aristotle framed them as “monstrosities.”⁵³

Long period of spectrum theories

Aristotle’s theory survived via the ‘Abbāsid caliphate.’⁵⁴ The multicultural and multilingual region promoted the exchange of ideas, producing a wealth of scholarship. Drawing on a variety of sources, including those of Greek origin, Muslim scholars synthesized and innovated in a variety of fields. Islamic anatomical treatises tended to accept a diverse range of human sexes, “none of which were assimilable to binary categories.”⁵⁵ Sex categories beyond those described as ‘male’ and ‘female’ were not denigrated as deformities or monstrosities, but rather were described in “consistently pragmatic and neutral” terms.⁵⁶ Allowing for multiplicity of understanding, Muslim scholarship did not insist on a universal truth. As these theorists drew from diverse textual disciplines, which often offered contradictory accounts, “experts never settled on a single authoritative view of sex and sexuality.”⁵⁷

Islamic knowledge, including its intellectual and multivalent naturalist commentary, was conveyed to Western Europe via the Crusades.⁵⁸ Until this point, Greek texts had largely bypassed Western Europe. In the interim, scholars developed theories based on the few core treatises that had been translated into Latin. These texts also tended to theorize sex as a spectrum. While the concept was anchored by “masculine men” and “feminine women” at the poles, several categories populated the in-between.⁵⁹ Texts commonly emphasized the continuity of the sexes, rather than vast difference. This diversity was attributed to “natural variables at the time of conception;” it was believed that the sex of a fetus was determined by its location in the uterus.⁶⁰ Composed of various chambers, the right produced ‘males,’ the left produced ‘females,’ and the center “balanced male and female sexual traits in equilibrium.”⁶¹ Other factors in this stage dictated whether the sex would be “feminine male” or “masculine female.”⁶² While these theories may be dismissed as rudimentary, especially in comparison to the Islamic understandings of anatomy that was developing in parallel, this period of Western thought acknowledged a broader range of experience than it had in the past or would in the future.

When Aristotle's texts re-entered Western thought, it incited a profound change in sex scholarship. Bolstered by newly founded universities in the 13th century, rediscovered naturalist texts contributed to a "discourse of opposites."⁶³ A growing group of scholars began advocating for a binary model of sex, claiming that "all humans were one of two sexes – male or female — with nothing in between," chiefly relying on "authoritative traditions drawn from the distant past."⁶⁴ While prior models identified several variations of sex that, despite being less common, were deemed "no less natural," the replacement theory now questioned the ontological status of "hermaphroditism."⁶⁵ The truth of dichotomous sex became the dominant discourse for centuries to come, effectively erasing "nonbinary sex from the human species."⁶⁶ With the parallel rediscovery of Roman law, there had been further incentive to articulate binary categories, given that "vastly different legal privileges" were assigned to 'males' and 'females.'⁶⁷ During the period where the reality of ambiguity was still acknowledged, jurisprudence dictated that nonconforming persons were to live as a "man only, or as a woman only."⁶⁸ As stated by deVun, when "authorities spoke of 'discerning' a sex that already existed in the body, they were not describing any corporeal reality *but rather the effects of their own ideology.*"⁶⁹

The birth of surgery and 'correcting nature'

*"Knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting."*⁷⁰

- Michel Foucault

*"There is nothing abstract about the power that sciences and theories have to act materially and actually upon our bodies and our minds, even if the discourse it produces is abstract. It is one of the forms of domination, its very expression."*⁷¹

- Monique Wittig

Simultaneous to the theoretical and legal articulations of binary sex, the field of surgery was striving for legitimacy. Lacking the "prestige of internal 'medicine,'" surgeons called for "greater respect for their vocation."⁷² In an unfortunate turn of events, they "came to view themselves as arbiters of sex."⁷³ Arguing, along with other fields, that humans could only be 'male' or 'female,' they offered their services for the "correction of nature."⁷⁴ In excruciating detail, deVun recounts the methodologies surgeons developed to determine what "men and women should look like" and the operations they performed to achieve these constructed standards.⁷⁵ While this reshaping of bodies may seem fitting for the period (medieval), deVun asserts that this articulated "science of sex resembles our own modern one in some startling ways."⁷⁶ Intersex genital mutilation (IGM) is a common pediatric practice, as has in fact accelerated in recent history, despite

advocacy efforts.⁷⁷ As described by Cheryl Chase, founder of the Intersex Society of North America, when a case arises, a medical team will analyze the infant, 'assign' it male or female, inform the parents of their child's 'true' sex and then "proceed to enforce this sex with surgical and hormonal intervention."⁷⁸ One arbitrary procedure involves measuring the newborn's exterior genital organs: if it is less than three eighths of an inch it is deemed a clitoris, if it is more than an inch it is a penis, if it is somewhere in between... "it gets cut off."⁷⁹ Leaving the child "genitally and emotionally mutilated, isolated, and without access to information about what has happened to them," Chase explains that "the burden of the pain and shame is so great that virtually all intersexuals stay deep in the closet throughout their adult lives."⁸⁰ As stated by psychologist Suzanne Kessler, intersex genitals are deemed unacceptable "not because [they are] threatening to the infant's life but because [they are] threatening to the infant's culture."⁸¹ The concept of binary sex has real consequences for real people.

Non-binary sex and racial othering

Returning to the Middle Ages, in a move that may seem familiar to queer migration scholars dealing with post-colonial sexuality, concepts of sex were mobilized to fabricate borders. At a time where "Christian kingdoms were under great pressure," categories of sex that did not conform to the binary of 'male' and 'female' were projected onto various populations it wished to control.⁸² The largest surviving "world map" (depicting Europe, Asia, and Africa), created in the 1300s, is populated by depictions of what has been dubbed the "monstrous races."⁸³ These illustrations "performed the serious work of defining what Europeans viewed as civilized cultural practices," while "establishing antipathy towards bodies and desires at odds with a European Christian ideal."⁸⁴ Portrayals included, for instance, "a turbaned figure with a full breast on one side, a flat chest on the other, and both a penis and a vulva below" with the inscription "a race of both sexes."⁸⁵ Perhaps ironically, as Christians had been granted access to Greek texts that delineated binary sex via their Muslim neighbors, these geographical 'others' were depicted with ambiguous sex in order to purport their inferiority. By "'hermaphroditizing' them," the authors sought to present these groups as "dubiously human" and "racially distinct."⁸⁶ Within their own territory, these methods were used to expulse groups deemed undesirable. Other historical documents identified Jews with the "alleged impurity" of ambiguous sex, casting them as "agents of contamination."⁸⁷ A prominent myth that began during this period was that Jewish 'males' menstruated. The trope became conventional wisdom, as it was generally accepted that "Jews, men, as well as females, are punished *cursu menstruo sanguinis*, with a very frequent blood-fluxe," until the 18th century when some authors began denouncing the belief.⁸⁸ While it has been hypothesized that these myths served to denigrate the 'male' to the status of the 'female,' this portrayal ties in with other efforts to assign ambiguous sex to Jewish people in order to justify their forced removal. As shown by these examples, the concept of binary sex was both produced by and contributed to forms of border control, policing bodies from within and without.

Colonial expansion predicated on binary logic

*“Colonialism could only exist at all by postulating that there existed a binary opposition into which the world was divided.”*⁸⁹

- From *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*

In queer migration studies, much important work has been done to investigate the colonial roots of heteronormativity. These scholars have demonstrated how “colonial rule comes into being by mobilizing gendered and sexual power.”⁹⁰ However, as noted by Scott Lauria Morgensen, “this observation in itself does not denaturalise gender or sexuality, as is apparent when even major texts in these fields *leave the impression that a natural gendered or sexual order underlies what colonial violence produced.*”⁹¹ Feminist and queer accounts, particularly those brought forward by people of color, are critical as they show that “colonisation’s sexual and gendered methods are inventive, not foreordained; and that liberation will follow disturbing all that colonisation taught, so that distinctive ways of life might be recalled or imagined.”⁹² A “hallmark” of this scholarship is the “denaturalising [of] gender, sexuality, race, and nation.”⁹³ Noting the absence of sex as a vector, texts that engage with a ‘common sense’ usage of sex leave the impression there is an underlying natural sexed order. As demonstrated by its long lineage, it is a concept that has been continually under construction. Further evidence demonstrates that it has equally been a part of the colonial project which these scholars put under investigation. Accordingly, sex should explicitly be featured in the denaturalization of the colonial process.

Binary logic was integral to colonialism. Gradual establishment of empire “depended upon a stable hierarchical relationship in which the colonized existed as the *other* of the colonizing culture.”⁹⁴ During this process, cultural forms were “reconstructed and transformed by and through colonial interventions, creating new categories of oppositions” used to ‘justify’ the unjustifiable.⁹⁵ As stated previously, heteronormativity requires the alignment of *all three binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality*. Queer migration scholarship has largely concerned itself with the latter two. Indeed, the “simultaneous efforts to shore up and bifurcate categories of race and sexuality” were “deeply intertwined.”⁹⁶ As stated by David Eng and Alice Hom “sexual and racial difference come into existence only in relation to one another.”⁹⁷ Similarly, scholars have noted significant colonial efforts to contain “gender trouble” in the “body of a racialized other.”⁹⁸ However, it was not only deviant sexualities and genders that were projected onto colonized populations to establish colonial rule.

While the constructed differences between ‘men’ and ‘women’ were claimed to be achievements by the white race, this was not simply a question of gender roles. Sex was a crucial element to the perceived superiority of the white race. Reminiscent of Aristotle’s theory of higher and lower animals, Western ‘scientists’ sought to demonstrate that racialized people were less evolved *on account of their sex*. Patrick Geddes and Arthur Thomson, in their 1889 book *The Evolution of Sex*, wrote that “hermaphroditism is primitive.”⁹⁹ Similarly, after explaining that “the secondary sexual characteristics differentiate the two sexes; they present the specific male and female types,” Richard von Krafft-Ebing claimed that “the higher the anthropological development of the race, the stronger these contrasts between man and woman.”¹⁰⁰ William Thomas also held this belief, stating that “morphological differences are less in low than in high races, and the less civilized the race the less is the physical difference of the sexes.”¹⁰¹ The Western concept of what constitutes a ‘man’ and a ‘woman’ is inseparable from what constitutes a ‘male’ and a ‘female,’ to the extent that using the latter terminology only serves to invoke the former. It is therefore crucial to not only denounce colonial gender, but also its associated sex categorizations.

To expound this further, by only explaining the colonial process as gendered and sexualized, without explicitly detailing how it is also sexed, scholars contribute to the colonial act of erasure. Andrea Smith, in her book *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, refers to Indigenous people strictly in binary terms, ignoring and contributing to the violence perpetrated against those who are two-spirit.¹⁰² Other texts that do acknowledge two-spirit people often write of ‘males’ wearing ‘female’ clothes or taking on ‘female’ roles in ways similar to original quotes from colonizers, albeit without the outward disgust. Alluding to binary sex not only silences the intricacies of two-spirit identities, but those of all Indigenous people. While many Indigenous nations seem to use terms that translate to ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ it is problematic to assume that they are analogous to the Western terminology, which has traditionally bound these identities with ‘male’ and ‘female’ sex designation. To illustrate this point, Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes:

“I understand the word *kwe* to mean woman within the spectrum of genders in Nishnaabemowin, or the Nishnaabe language. *Kwe* is not a commodity. *Kwe* is not capital. It is different than the word *woman* because it recognizes a spectrum of gender expressions and it exists embedded in grounded normativity. *Kwe* cannot be exploited. There is a fluidity to my use of the term *kwe* that gestures to the gender variance within Nishnaabewin. *Kwe* does not conform to the rigidity of the colonial gender binary, nor is *kwe* essentialized. In my mind, *kwe* has the capacity to be inclusive of both cis and trans experiences.”¹⁰³

As demonstrated by a compiled list initiated by the organization Gay American Indians (GAI), there is a wide spectrum of categorization among Indigenous nations.¹⁰⁴ While some do not appear to have two-spirit terminology, others have many. The living list contains hundreds upon hundreds of terms.¹⁰⁵ The reclamation effort is ongoing, as there have been significant colonial efforts to undermine Indigenous knowledge. While the term two-spirit may appear unitary, it was put forward as an umbrella term to encompass multiplicity and reclaim what had been suppressed for so long.¹⁰⁶ Given the sheer abundance of Indigenous interpretations of the human experience, it becomes evident that scholars cannot simply acknowledge these other 'gender identities' while attributing to them an underlying biological sex without participating in the colonial legacy they claim to challenge. A more nuanced approach would be more conducive to the sustained resistance.

The only 'truth' of sex is that it can change

"Language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it."¹⁰⁷

- Monique Wittig

In contemporary times, the 'male' and 'female' binary is an inescapable organizing principle. 'Sex' is noted on birth certificates. It is projected onto the built environment. It is everywhere. Given its entrenchment in our society, this division is made to feel very real. As demonstrated above, sex is not composed of oppositional categories, it is a false dichotomy. However, using binary terminology reinforces this misconception, continuing a long legacy of denying legibility to other experiences of life. Forcing people to conform to one or the other, this conceptualization effectively limits the range of human expression. Beyond that, it enacts violence on bodies with an intensity proportional to their corporeal difference from the norm.

By not directly addressing sex and continuing to use the categories of 'male' and 'female' as a given, queer migration scholars risk perpetuating the heteronormative order they are combatting. Sex is used to justify gender and sexuality. It has been constructed as the biological explanation underpinning for both constructs. Refuting biological claims about gender and sexuality serves no purpose if the foundation is not excavated. In the heteronormative system, binary sex will always mobilize its explanatory power to justify reproduction. 'Male' and 'female,' and their analogous 'man' and 'woman,' were conceived

as perfect opposites to explain exactly this process. When countering heteronormativity, queer migration scholars must go further than denaturalizing heterosexuality. It must deal with sex, because sex is at the root of it all. In the end, binary categories, such as 'male' and 'female,' do a disservice to us all. Consequently, the field must contend with all binary logics, including that of sex, in order to enable bodily autonomy.

Sex, while it presents itself as an eternal truth, has revealed itself to be fluid. In spite of the harm this concept has imposed, knowledge of its many permutations offers a sign of hope. It is up to us to recognize this opportunity and engage with its malleability in order to move beyond the current organizing paradigm.

APPENDIX 2

Supplementary information for:

1.2 - Case Study: The Private Home

The following essay, titled *Bourgeois Values and the Birth of Suburbia*, was completed for the course ARCH 5201: Passages Through Modernity (Fall 2021).

In his book *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, Robert Fishman defines the “true suburb” as the outcome of two opposing forces, “an attraction towards the opportunities of the great city, and a simultaneous repulsion against urban life.”¹ He credits the London bourgeoisie of the late-18th century with the “collective creation” of the suburban typology.² Recounting the history of the suburbs as “a history of a vision,”³ Fishman describes the bourgeois as “pioneers” with the “resources and self-confidence” required to “reorder the material world to suit its needs.”⁴ Prior to this collective assertion of class wealth, the advent of suburbia required a shift in bourgeois ideals. In the mid-18th century, a new system of values hinging on class distinctions established the social conditions that prompted the creation of the first modern suburbs.

Members of the London bourgeoisie were typically engaged in “overseas trade” and “the financial operations that accompanied it.”⁵ This relatively small merchant elite controlled vast revenues derived from British imperialism.⁶ Although their income levels were equivalent to those of the landed gentry, their work tied them to the city.⁷ London was the political capital of the British Empire, and the centre of the bourgeoisie’s business endeavors. The wealthiest occupied the heart of the city, benefitting from the district’s favorable economics.⁸ Income level and social status “declined markedly” as one moved out towards its periphery.⁹ Nonetheless, the wealthy core areas were not “upper-class neighborhoods in the modern sense,” but rather “mixed” in population and in use.¹⁰ The upper-classes would occupy “townhouses that fronted on principle streets,” while the lower-classes would crowd into the “narrow alleyways and courtyards that literally existed in the backyards of the rich.”¹¹ The presence of the lower-classes “was accepted without question.”¹² The combination of “physical proximity and vast social distance” was not a cause for concern, as it did not diminish the status of the rich.¹³ In fact, it could be said to “remind them of their privileges.”¹⁴

In the thriving center of trade, work and home were “inseparable.”¹⁵ The bourgeois townhouse was open to the city; “commercial life flowed in freely.”¹⁶ Every room in the house had overlapping business and family functions, with little discernment between the two; as described by Fishman, “virtually every aspect of family life was permeated

by the requirements of the business.”¹⁷ The family itself was not an “emotional unit,” but rather an “economic unit.”¹⁸ The family had yet to acquire the modern definition of “a small group confined to immediate blood relations,”¹⁹ and included other members such as apprentices who lived in the house and “were treated like children.”²⁰ All members of this expanded family were considered “workforce” for the merchant.²¹ For instance, prior to her relegation to the domestic sphere, the wife’s participation in the business was vital, particularly in the event of the passing of the husband.²² Her knowledge of the inner workings of the trade insured that business could carry on as usual, and that capital would be passed down to the next generation.²³ In Daniel Defoe’s 1726 book the *English Tradesman*, he recommends the “closest cooperation” between husband and wife as a favorable business practice.²⁴

By the mid-18th century, newly formed bourgeois values created the necessary conditions for the “radical decentralization of bourgeois residence.”²⁵ Decisively separating work and home, the “earliest of modern suburbs” on the outskirts of London defined the “essential suburban image for all subsequent development.”²⁶ The inclination to create single-function, and single-class, districts was not an “inexorable result of any drastic social change in the city.”²⁷ When the city grew, the wealthy were largely unaffected; “crowding was the problem of the poor alone.”²⁸ Notably, the associated ills of the industrial revolution had yet to affect London; beginning in the north of England, it bypassed the city until the mid-19th century.²⁹ Rather, these bourgeois values materialized as mechanisms for class differentiation, and, in due course, were used as justifications for physical separation.

The bourgeoisie’s desire to distance itself from the lower classes became markedly apparent by the mid-18th century.³⁰ Prior to this period, social life had involved much “mingling” between the classes.³¹ In public spaces, such as the gardens, “density and communication” were “aestheticized.”³² Here, “the city was revealed to itself as a scene to be enjoyed.”³³ Nonetheless, as Fishman explains, social distinctions increasingly “required” physical segregation due to “differing personal habits [...], especially over personal cleanliness.”³⁴ Arguably, this “great divide of disgust”³⁵ goes much deeper than hygiene. Mary Douglas contends that “nothing is in itself dirty; rather, dirt is that which is not in its proper place and upsets order.”³⁶ She explains further: “Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity.”³⁷ Following this line of thought, the metaphorically “dirty” body is seen as “out of place,” as it “transgresses the orders of respectability and respectable places.”³⁸ Adding on to this understanding, Julia Kristeva posits that the abject provokes disgust “because it exposes the border between self and other.”³⁹ This was a border the bourgeoisie showed increasing interest in defending.

The emphasis on hygiene is an outgrowth of the concept of “civility” defined as “a set of external behaviour traits which distinguished the civilized from the uncivilized.”⁴⁰ Increasingly, “civility” required the “physical withdrawal of the individual body and its waste products from contact with others.”⁴¹ The advent of “new bodily habits, attitudes, and practices” developed with the arrival of “new instruction manuals, schoolbooks, and court regulations” centuries prior.⁴² It became “increasingly inappropriate” to speak directly about bodily functions, which are distanced through the “employment of euphemism.”⁴³ For instance, in *Galateo: or, A Treatise on Politeness and Delicacy of Manners*, the author states “[it] does not befit a modest, honourable man to prepare to *relieve nature* in the presence of other people, nor do up his clothes afterward in their presence (emphasis added).”⁴⁴ Stone contends that the development of these new behaviours “clearly have nothing to do with problems of hygiene and bacterial infection,” given that these terms are “never even mentioned in the conduct books.”⁴⁵ In *Galateo*, advising the “modest, honourable man” to “not wash his hands on returning to decent society from private places, as the reason for his washing will arouse disagreeable thoughts in people,” substantiates this claim.⁴⁶ Stone continues: “it has exclusively to do with conforming to increasingly artificial standards of gentlemanly behaviour, which were internalized in the young at an early age.”⁴⁷

Indeed, these new standards required individuals to consciously learn “a new way of being embodied” and to be “cognisant of their actions.”⁴⁸ As evidenced by the reduction in text in subsequent editions of etiquette literature (for example, the same passage in *Les règles de la bienséance et de la civilité Chrétienne* is reduced from 208 words in the 1729 edition, to 74 words in the 1774 edition), “much that could be and *had to be* expressed earlier is no longer spoken of” due to successful social conditioning.⁴⁹ The arrival of the adage “the lower classes smell”⁵⁰ did not signal changed physical conditions (“the odour of stale sweat [...] had been taken for granted for millennia”⁵¹), but rather new social perceptions that had firmly taken hold. Ultimately, the goal of this movement was “to create a culture in which the elite, the gentleman and the lady, were clearly distinguished by a whole set of immediately recognizable external behaviour traits.”⁵² Thus, social stratification was heightened by the concept of civility, and provided the repugnance integral to the bourgeoisie’s exodus from London.

The bourgeoisie’s desire to distance itself from the lower classes also played out within the home, as demonstrated by the augmenting privacy within the structure. As previously mentioned, work had been intimately intertwined with the home; business and family matters were conducted in the same spaces. In “the great household,” there was no privacy; “everyone, all the time, was on public display.”⁵³ During the 15th and 16th centuries, “interlocking suites of rooms” required passage through one room to enter into another.⁵⁴ By the late 17th century, plans increasingly allocated space for corridors.⁵⁵ This circulation strategy delineated more privacy for activities occurring within individual rooms.⁵⁶ Notably, the bedroom emerged as a dedicated space during this period.⁵⁷

Over the course of the 18th century, bedrooms came to occupy the upstairs, leaving the ground floor for business.⁵⁸ In parallel with the vertical separation between home and work, business employees gradually started living elsewhere.⁵⁹ No longer under the same roof, previously familial relations between the two groups eroded.⁶⁰ Increasingly isolated, a new form of ‘family’ was developing. It would come to be known as “the closed domesticated nuclear family.”⁶¹ In the early 19th century, James Mills wrote: “the group consisting of a Father, Mother and Children is called a Family.”⁶² The fact that this “conscious definition” needed to be articulated “is in itself significant.”⁶³

The evolving bourgeois family continued to seek more privacy from the lower-classes by further subdividing the house. Commonly, bourgeois homes would include servant quarters with separate staircases.⁶⁴ This spatial segregation provided “some escape from the prying eyes and ears of the ubiquitous domestic servants, who were a necessary evil in every middle- and upper-class household.”⁶⁵ Protests against invasions of privacy were numerous among the “middle-class,” as they were “the worst sufferers since their houses had less space for escape and who were the first to become sensitive to the problem.”⁶⁶ For the lower-classes, with even less space still, privacy remained largely unknown. As the bourgeoisie increasingly sought out privacy, it was common for the poor to crowd their entire household into a single room.⁶⁷ While the former had individual bedrooms, the latter crammed as many as possible in the same bed.⁶⁸ This setup was believed to be a main cause of the “loose morality” of the lower-classes.⁶⁹ However, in these living conditions, privacy was “neither a practical possibility nor, one imagines, even a theoretical aspiration.”⁷⁰

In 1890, journalist E.L. Godkin reminded his readers, who were no doubt by that time accustomed to higher levels of sequestration within the house, that “Privacy is a distinctly modern product, one of the luxuries of civilization [...]”⁷¹ He recounts, “The earliest houses of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors in England, even among the Thanes, consisted of only one large room [...]”⁷² He posits, “The first sign of material progress was the addition of sleeping rooms, and afterward of ‘withdrawing-rooms’ [...]”⁷³ Godkin concludes, “One of the greatest attractions of the dwellings of the rich is the provision they make for the segregation of the occupants. All of the improvements, too, of recent years to the dwellings of the poor, have been in the direction, not simply of more space, but of separate rooms.”⁷⁴ At its onset, the bourgeois value of privacy provided further class distinction prior to these customs developing among the lower-classes.

With their new living arrangements, bourgeois families became increasingly sentimental; “these trends deeply intensified the emotional bonds that united family members.”⁷⁵ Previously, members “were not closely bonded to each other by warm affective ties,” and the entity itself was often short-lived, “frequently dissolved” by the death of a parent, or the departure of the children.⁷⁶ In this period, familial relations emerged as “the primary and overwhelming emotional focus of its members’ lives.”⁷⁷

United by “strong and exclusive personal ties,” the bourgeois family was characterized by “an emphasis on the boundary surrounding the nuclear unit.”⁷⁸ This “closed sphere of emotional intimacy” required, yet again, more privacy.⁷⁹ The ideal living situation was deemed unobtainable in the city, where business matters continued to infiltrate the home.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the constant presence of “urban amusements” in the city threatened the burgeoning formation, by drawing members away from their “domesticated attachments.”⁸¹ With a growing distinction between “a man’s work and his family,”⁸² this period was marked by the divorce of work and home. As a result of this split, bourgeois women were extricated from the working world and placed firmly in the domestic realm.

The 18th century saw a “dramatic change” in the “image of woman.”⁸³ The misogyny of the previous century was replaced by the “Cult of True Womanhood,” in which the “praise of woman and her role” proliferated.⁸⁴ Some critics attribute these “positive judgments of woman” on the “humanitarianism” of the century,⁸⁵ however this view ignores her removal from public life and diminished agency. As explained by Marlene Legates, this phenomenon did not evolve from new ideas, but rather was a new response to an “old problem” – that of controlling women.⁸⁶ “Virtue” was so valued, because it was so “difficult” to maintain; Hume’s remark that “a female has so many opportunities of secretly indulging [her] appetites that nothing can give us security but her absolute modesty and reserve” underscores this belief.⁸⁷ In order to gain control over women, a narrative shift was required; condemnations of their “sexuality and insubordination” were replaced by praises of their “chastity and obedience.”⁸⁸ Rousseau voiced his approval of this form of engineering: “if the timidity, chasteness and modesty which are proper to [women] are social inventions, it is in society’s interest that women acquire these qualities; they must be cultivated in women.”⁸⁹ Legates notes that the development of these traits had class implications, and were meant to distinguish between the “virtuous woman of the upper classes (whether by merit or birth)” and the “loose woman of the lower orders (whether by choice or circumstance).”⁹⁰ This distinction was an “attempt” by the bourgeoisie to “consolidate their precariously won prosperity and security against the ‘outs’ of society.”⁹¹ The class differentiated virtuous woman, given “semidivine status as the angel in the house,” was integral to the formation of the class differentiated virtuous family.⁹² The “fallen woman” played a key part in the bourgeois dramas of the period, warning the bourgeois woman of the fate that awaited her should she not conform to this new standard.⁹³

The new image of woman was largely conjured up by the Evangelical movement which “took hold with special strength” among London’s bourgeoisie in the early-18th century.⁹⁴ Fishman describes this group as the “ideologists of the closed, domesticated nuclear family.”⁹⁵ The Evangelicals launched a renewed emphasis on personal salvation, which became increasingly dependent on women.⁹⁶ A leading Evangelical author wrote: “make them as it were the medium of our intercourse with the heavenly world.”⁹⁷ Claiming that women were “naturally more disposed to Religion than men,” they were

to be the “principal guardian of the Christian home.”⁹⁸ Meanwhile, the most “secure” path to salvation was the “beneficent influence of a truly Christian family;”⁹⁹ Thus, by devoting themselves to their “God-given functions,” which included providing “religious support” to their family, women were granted the “highest possible role.”¹⁰⁰ However, this role required strictly remaining within the home. The only “valid education” women could now receive was in “home enjoyment.”¹⁰¹ Contrary to prior times, contact with “either the business or the social world” was now deemed “degrading” for women.¹⁰² Living in the city, with close contact between work and home, became increasingly at odds with the Evangelical ideal. Incapable of providing for the “closed” family and the “sheltered” woman, the Evangelicals launched an attack on the city and its urban pleasures; anything that weakened family ties was “anathema.”¹⁰³ The bourgeoisie came to believe that “the city was not just crowded, dirty, and unhealthy; it was immoral.”¹⁰⁴ Their “salvation itself” depended on separating “the woman’s sacred world of family and children from the profane metropolis.”¹⁰⁵ Men were of course required to continue working in the city, as “hard work and success” were also Evangelical virtues.¹⁰⁶ To remedy the contradiction between the ideal and the reality, the bourgeois required an office in the city, and a home an appropriate distance away. This division would incite the creation of separate spheres; the “masculine/rational/urban” world of work and the “feminine/natural/emotional” world of the family.¹⁰⁷ The attitudes around the latter made the home “more sacred to the bourgeoisie than any place of worship.”¹⁰⁸

According to Marxist thought, the family is an indispensable “apparatus” to the bourgeois order, as it functions as an “anchorage point” for private property while reproducing the “ruling ideology.”¹⁰⁹ In *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Frederick Engels links the “monogamous family” to the “bequeathal” of private property.¹¹⁰ Amongst the “possessing classes,” the husband earns a wage to support his family, which puts him in a “position of supremacy,” while the wife carries out “her duties in the private service of her family,” which excludes her from “public production.”¹¹¹ Engels asserts, “the modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife.”¹¹² Indeed, the separate spheres created by the new bourgeois family model led to an increasingly hierarchical relationship, elevating the role of the husband, and subjugating that of the wife. This self-perpetuating system ensured, to the greatest extent possible, the transfer of inheritance.

Legal provisions regarding the family also ensured the accumulation of wealth. Lord Hardwicke’s Marriage Act, introduced in 1753, “aimed at keeping the family unit a publicly witnessed and controlled entity.”¹¹³ It enabled secular courts to deny the validity of religious ceremonies unless they conformed to certain conditions; provisions included, among others, parental consent for those under the age of 21.¹¹⁴ The “propertied class” was chiefly responsible for the enactment of the Marriage Act.¹¹⁵ It was argued by “persons of ‘fortune and rank’” that “both men and women of the most infamous character had opportunities of ruining the sons and daughters of the greatest families

in England [...].”¹¹⁶ Indeed, “clandestine marriages” were causing a “public scandal.”¹¹⁷ Upper-class parents were “disturbed” by the ease in which “penniless” individuals could “entice or seduce” their children into marry them without their knowledge and demanded more control.¹¹⁸ For the lower-classes, the suggestion of marriage within ranks was met with protest, opponents arguing that “riches is the blood of the body politic; it must be made to circulate.”¹¹⁹ The Bill was passed, assisting the development of a “closed, and increasingly wealthy, caste.”¹²⁰

The wealth of the bourgeoisie and their propensity for multi-property ownership aided the transition to the early rendition of suburbia. Not yet abandoning their townhouses, it had become common practice for the bourgeoisie to acquire a “weekend villa.”¹²¹ Leaping “over the belt of poverty,” villas were located on relatively inexpensive land a short commute from the city.¹²² This intermediate structure provided the “crucial bridge” between living in the city and establishing permanent residency in the countryside.¹²³ The weekend villa had a 16th century origin, gaining currency in the 17th century following the disturbances of “the Civil War, the Plague, and the Fire.”¹²⁴ It offered the bourgeois the opportunity to feel like “an aristocrat on weekends,” albeit without income producing acreage.¹²⁵ By the mid-18th century, owning a “substantial” weekend villa had become a “defining characteristic” among London’s merchant elite.¹²⁶ When the aforementioned bourgeois values emerged, causing tension with city life, the “innovation” of their exodus was limited to “adapting already existing structures to new functions.”¹²⁷ Definitively converting the townhouse into an office, the merchant elite were the first to take up residence within commuting distance of the city, outlining a new pattern of living.¹²⁸ By the late-18th century, the earliest modern suburbs had developed on the outskirts of London, defining the “essential suburban image for all subsequent development.”¹²⁹

To summarize, the basic principles of the modern suburb were not present in the pre-modern city. The wealthy were in its center, the poorer along its periphery, however neither could be classified as single-class neighborhoods. For the bourgeoisie, work and home were intimately intertwined in this milieu. The advent of the first suburban developments required the total transformation of bourgeois values. Informing class differentiation, these newly formed values were used to justify the extraction of the nuclear family from the city. Based on principles of exclusion, the suburb enabled the division of both function and class. Personal resources (derived from colonial exploitation) enabled multi-property ownership, forging the path for this new pattern of living. The first modern suburbs, developed in the late-18th century, offered a blueprint for future suburbanization. Once reserved for the elite, the typology of the suburban home, and the nuclear family, would be taken up forcefully in post-war America, and come to dominate the middle-class ideal.

APPENDIX 3

Supplementary information for:

2.1 - What is the Body?

APPENDIX 3

By asking ‘what is the body’ rather than ‘what is a body,’ I seek to illuminate how the specific has reigned over the non-particular. Disguised as universal, the body has been in construction for hundreds of years. Throughout this trajectory, this ‘unmarked’ figure has become normalized and, consequently, largely insulated from being questioned. Embraced by the architectural project, the body forms the basis from which all our standards are derived. Catered to by the built environment, it is privileged with access, which reinforces its sense of belonging. The choice of this figure is thus deeply embedded in notions of power. By tracing the body back to its origin, it becomes evident that forms derived from the past, and systems that uphold them, need urgent re-examination. Any attempt to deconstruct current architectural practices will necessarily require a deconstruction of the body. In a constant state of unbuilding and rebuilding, bodies constructed as ‘other’ now offer potent conceptual frameworks. Through a process of queering, the body will undergo transfiguration.

Vitruvius; the founding father of the body

My architectural education, and I imagine that of many others, began with reading the ‘foundational’ text *De architectura* (translated as *On Architecture*, it is widely known as *Ten Books on Architecture*) by the Roman military architect and engineer Vitruvius.² Written in 1st century BCE, it was presented as ‘the first book on architectural theory,’ and thus was deemed an essential part of the canon by the institution that I attended. This treatise is also the first to promote an architecture for the body. Vitruvius believed that nature’s designs were based on “universal laws of proportion,” and that the body demonstrated “natural proportional perfection.”³ As such, he saw the body as “a living rulebook, containing the fixed and faultless laws set down by nature” that could be used as a template for its own built environment.⁴ Declaring that architecture “must have an exact proportion worked out after the fashion of the members of a finely-shaped man,” Vitruvius sought to mandate a reciprocal relationship between these entities, enabling his vision of what constituted ‘harmony.’⁵

The rationale behind Vitruvius’s statement that the body constituted ‘natural proportional perfection’ is dubious at best. In order to demonstrate that “Nature has planned” the body “so that the members correspond to its complete configuration,” Vitruvius went through great lengths to enumerate the many ways in which ‘man’ embodies various ratios.⁶ He then attributed importance to certain numbers, largely because of their apparent relation to this figure. For instance, he considered the number six to be “perfect” for ‘mathematical’ reasons (“a sixth is one; a third is two; a half is three; two-thirds [...] four; five-sixths [...] five,” etc.), but most importantly “because the foot has the sixth part of a man’s height.”⁷ Even seemingly random numbers were brought into concordance with this system in order to bolster its explanatory power. To illustrate, since “the foot has sixteen fingers,” he characterized this count as the doubling of five-

sixths which is then added to “the perfect number.”⁸ It is only through these mental gymnastics that Vitruvius ultimately concluded that “it is agreed that the number is found from the articulation of the body.”⁹ Alas, based on these ‘findings,’ he advocated that the “fixed module” of the body should inform not only the “parts of the building,” but that of “the whole.”¹⁰

Following the Greek philosopher Protagoras’s principle “man is the measure of all things,” Vitruvius linked units of measurements derived from the proportions of ‘man’ to the creation of ‘harmonious’ architecture.¹¹ While some modern translations opt to insert the “human body” in the place of “man” in Vitruvius’s seminal text, this attempt at inclusivity is futile.¹² The numbers he presented were not reflective of humanity, and it is irresponsible to suggest that they were conceived as such. Given the tremendous variety found among human bodies, it can be decisively stated that these ratios were developed through the study of a specific subject. Vitruvius’s ideal body was, of course, based on those most likely to occupy the buildings he devised; Rome’s relatively small ruling class. Deriving from the Latin “patres,” meaning “fathers,” patricians formed the empire’s political, religious, and military leadership.¹³ Vitruvius’s stated goal of ‘harmony’ was then to create an architecture that mirrored a narrowly defined body, thereby legitimizing its dominance over all others, which included the plebians, who were ‘free’ but nonetheless held no power, and the enslaved population. Erecting buildings based on the proportions of the body privileged its presence in spaces of authority, effectively reinforcing the hierarchical paradigm the people it resembled headed. Embedding the proportions of the body into the built environment would only become increasingly formalized over time, to the extent that exclusively catering its needs would become the unquestioned norm.

Re-introduction of the body via the Renaissance

Deriving from the French word meaning “rebirth,” the Renaissance refers to a period in European history that was marked by the rediscovery of Classical “learning and wisdom.”¹⁴ Among the many Greco-Roman concepts that were revived during this period of ‘cultural exchange’ was that of the body, as elaborated by Vitruvius. This notion was taken up by Leon Battista Alberti in his 1452 treatise *De re aedificatoria* (translated as *On the Art of Building*, it also came to be known as *Ten Books on Architecture* since it closely followed the format of his predecessor), which became the “bible of Renaissance architecture.”¹⁵ Regarded as “the foremost theorist of Renaissance architecture,” as well as “one of its great practitioners,” Alberti believed that architecture should be governed by “mathematical laws and proportions.”¹⁶ While he agreed that the built environment should reflect the ratios of the body, he “demur[ed] with respect to the proper module.”¹⁷ As such, this figure received a very slight numerical update in Alberti’s rendition.

Another ‘Renaissance man’ would ultimately produce the iconography that promoted Vitruvius’s ideal body. In 1490, Leonardo da Vinci drew a figure based on the description from *De architectura*. “Repurposed time and again,” da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man is now so recognizable that it is widely regarded as “an iconic image in Western culture.”¹⁸

The drawing features a naked 'man' with outstretched arms and legs placed inside both a circle and a square and is accompanied by notes describing Vitruvius's elaborations on symmetry and proportion. Vitruvian Man is described as an example of da Vinci's efforts to fuse "artistic and scientific objectives."¹⁹ As he believed the body to be "a mirror of the order of the universe," da Vinci attempted to "satisfy visually the symmetric [and proportional] requirements for harmony laid out by Vitruvius."²⁰ Even though it disseminated "antiquated truth claims about bodily proportions," which was increasingly recognized over time, the body depicted in this drawing became a reference for both medicine and architecture.²¹

Making the body 'scientific'

While the Vitruvian Man was criticized on account of mathematical proportionality, the "birth of modern science" brought on representations of very similar bodies which "became new epistemic objects" by the early 19th century.²² In their book *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability*, critical disability studies scholar Aimi Hamraie explains that new positivist standards of knowledge, "premised upon the validity of statistical data," reproduced essentially the same figure.²³ Anthropometry, while claiming to be a new venture, promoted an 'average' body that "shared many of the aesthetic and epistemological conventions of the classic, universal body."²⁴ Various practitioners, which included statisticians, criminologists, anthropologists, eugenicists, and the like, engaged in this practice of measuring the human population "with calipers and rulers," with the goal of transforming the canon of 'perfect proportions' into a normative prescription.²⁵

The 'scientific' endeavors of those engaged in anthropometry established standards of practice which, in turn, informed perception. Through the analysis of "raw materials of physical variation," 'statistical data' was mobilized to construct a binary between "Sameness and Otherness" which was, of course, hierarchical.²⁶ 'Statistically probable' bodies were not only rendered 'normal,' but also 'natural.' The rate of occurrence allegedly confirmed the "moral and aesthetic truths" of these bodies, effectively 'justifying' their elevated status.²⁷ Meanwhile, this 'statistical data' was also manipulated to provide "conclusive and comparative evidence" of the "supposed degeneracy" of bodies deemed 'abnormal.'²⁸ This information was used to cast them as 'unnatural,' a designation which not only 'justified' the debased social position that was reserved for them, but also 'authorized' subhuman treatment.²⁹ As Hamraie points out, 'norms' did not "simply reflect probabilities within populations," rather, they were produced to force the 'real' population to align with 'normalcy.'³⁰ In other words, instead of 'accurately' describing the populace, 'norms' coerced bodies to conform to what was deemed 'normal,' which was not always possible, by design. The efforts to cement the body as the ideal through 'empirical' research ultimately created a system in which bodies that did not, or could not, resemble this specific body were marked for marginalization. Effectively, these pseudoscientific movements sanctioned the enactment of violence

towards these bodies, "with an intensity proportional to [their] corporal difference from the norm."³¹

While purporting to reference actual 'statistical data,' it must be emphasized that the "mythic average norm" remained only an ideal.³² For instance, the Gaussian curve (also known as a 'bell curve'), which was devised to demarcate averages and deviations, placed Adolphe Quetelet's 'average man' at its centre. Quetelet's figure, similarly to its predecessors, was "white, youthful, masculine, and able-bodied."³³ Unlike what its name suggests, this 'man' was not actually 'average.' Its placement in the centre was aspirational. For Quetelet, and those before him, the body was "an ideal type to be desired."³⁴ Believing that the body was "perfection itself," and that which "Nature aspired to, free from error," Quetelet's choice of standard was undoubtedly informed by his biases.³⁵ Notably, the "initial, direct application" of anthropometry was to inform new racial sciences, which sought to provide 'proof' of the 'inferiority' of "nonwhite, disabled, poor, and 'feeble-minded' people."³⁶ This query would only confirm what was already 'known' to those who undertook this kind of research; that the body was 'superior' in every way. As such, this updated iteration was not obtained through 'objective' scientific inquiry; its elaboration was a choice entirely contingent on the social attitudes at the time. Even if another figure had been found to be 'statistically probable,' for instance, operating within the binary system would in theory suggest an equal number of 'men' and 'women,' none other than the body would have been chosen. These efforts never intended to represent 'reality,' which is not even possible to accomplish with an 'average' figure, rather, they were developed to normalize power relations. In its many (slight) variations, the body was always meant to impose a hierarchy; even under the guise of being the result of 'incontrovertible' statistical data, this newest rendition was no exception. Along with continuing the tradition of elevating the body while debasing all others, its originator sought to render this operation invisible. By placing the 'ideal' as the centre, the goal was to insulate the body, and only the body, from being questioned. Successfully legitimized as the standard through this positioning, it was then able to function as the norm against which all other bodies were to be compared. As such, the practice of designating bodies as 'normal,' or conversely as 'abnormal,' through a comparative study with the body, was granted an enduring authority.

As any normative ideology dictates, what is 'normal' is 'good' and what is 'abnormal' is 'bad.' This, however, was not always the case. As noted by curator, writer, and researcher Sofia Lemos, the early 19th century saw a "symbolic shift" where the word 'normal' went "from the language of geometry to that of biological matter."³⁷ The previous iteration referred to "'right angle' surfaces," while the new derivation, which first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1828, signified "constituting, conforming to, not deviating or differing from, the common type or standard."³⁸ This departure, of course, coincides with the efforts to codify the body as such. Also notable is the first appearance of its etymological counterpart 'abnormal,' meaning "deviating from the rule," in 1835.³⁹ By the end of the 19th century, as stated by Lemos, "the antonyms placidly transitioned from its disciplinary abstract definitions rooted in science and statistics to public consciousness."⁴⁰ Significantly, as demonstrated by scholars in comparative

literature, this “morphological trajectory from medical jargon to the public forum” resulted in ‘normality’ gaining an “inherent morality.”⁴¹ As such, ‘normal’ was desirable, and anything other was decidedly not. This attitude would subsequently inform the early 20th century “biological and social movement” that strove for the “‘improvement’ of the human race,” also known as eugenics.

The modernist movement; taking up the body with force

Architecture became enthralled with the movement to ‘improve’ the ‘human race,’ which was ultimately a social project “determined to cull supposedly defective bodies from the population.”⁴² Up for elimination were those that did not resemble the body. While it remains exalted in architectural education, the modernist movement is increasingly understood as a eugenic enterprise.⁴³ Its key architects espoused the view that design could ‘shape’ and ‘correct’ the body, under the guise of “human betterment.”⁴⁴ Using the world as a laboratory, they began to test the evolutionary hypothesis that changing the built environment could change the body. In other words, rather than build for people, they wanted people to adapt to their buildings. Ultimately, their goal was to transform all bodies into the body. As explained by Leopold Lambert, editor-in-chief of *The Funambulist*, this elaboration of spatial production was not only discriminatory, but forced bodies “to physically tend towards the normative body” since “the body always attempts to adapt to its direct environment.”⁴⁵ Architecture transformed into “a machine engaging processes of normatization,” akin to “a garden stake for a plant.”⁴⁶ Of course, as stated previously, not all bodies were able to conform to this ideal, by design. The movement was all too happy to exclude them, as demonstrated by early 20th century ‘ugly laws’ that “prohibited people with atypical bodies from entering public space.”⁴⁷ As expounded by Hamraie, denying their access to public space “created the illusion of their nonexistence,” which resulted in their needs being further ignored.⁴⁸ This mechanism, in turn, sanctioned the modernist “dream” to create an “optimized” built environment for the body, and the body alone.⁴⁹

In order to promote this ideology to the profession at large, many of the modernist movement’s key architects developed iterations of the body and advocated for an architecture that was “perfectly adapted to this same body.”⁵⁰ As a result, this period saw the proliferation of professional handbooks which presented the body, with its “unmarked race, gender, and disability status,” in a manner that “communicated their intended use as universal figures.”⁵¹ By providing corresponding spatial designs, they encouraged others to follow suite in adjusting the built environment to the needs of the body. Allegedly, the body that figured in these prominent guidebooks was “based on an average or normal adult.”⁵² By claiming to cite anthropometric data, those developing this material attempted to tether the body to ‘reality.’ However, as one may have noted, the body’s appearance remained largely unchanged since its inception. According to architectural historian Hyungmin Pai, who conducted a study on one of these figures, the numerical values presented “did not match any anthropometric data available at the time.”⁵³ As with all its past iterations, including those derived from ‘scientific’ inquiry, the choice of the body remained deeply embedded in notions of power. It had more to do

with schemes of domination than with a question of majority.

Even so, the belief that an ‘average’ figure could represent humanity is fundamentally misguided. The danger of pointing out that the body only has the illusion of referencing statistical data is that, as stated by Hamraie, it will encourage the belief that “there is a real, objective truth about bodily size and proportion awaiting discovery by superior methods and proper notations.”⁵⁴ However, averages are merely “mathematical calculations;” they are not, and never will be, “representations of existing, living bodies.”⁵⁵ As explained by Lambert, any such figure would not “represent anybody’s body,” but would rather constitute “an unreachable state of normality.”⁵⁶ He continues to elucidate that the built environment is “not only calibrated to non-existent normative bodies, but also requires the conformity and compliance of the real bodies which interact with it.”⁵⁷ In this paradigm, embodying the body will never cease to be ‘ideal.’ While a figure that was veritably based on the amalgamation of statistical data may not be an ‘ideal’ in the classical sense, it remains an ‘ideal’ nonetheless. Proposing an architecture based on the body, even if it were truly the average, which it is not, would be to conflate what is ‘ideal’ as ‘universally applicable.’ Reality is far more complex; such an oversimplification only benefits those who approximate the norm, to the detriment of all others. As queer theorist Jack Halberstam wrote in his article “Unbuilding Gender” which considers how the built environment informs the heteronormative regime, “Modernist architecture believed that form followed function, and sought to impose a rational order upon an irrational existence.”⁵⁸

The modernist movement’s venture of ‘human betterment’ only solidified the supremacy of the body. It indoctrinated the field of architecture into believing that the built environment should cater to an alleged ‘average,’ while shielding it from the violence that this pursuit produced. Neutralized through repeated implementation, the spatial arrangements promoted in reference manuals became common sense. Progressively expanding its reach in subsequent editions, the guidebooks left nothing untouched; all space was to be in service of the body and only its needs were to be met. As Hamraie explains, disseminating this information rendered the body “legible,” and, as part of this same process, all others were rendered “illegible.”⁵⁹ Trained to only anticipate the bodies they recognized, architects “came to create buildings and public spaces with particular inhabitants in mind.”⁶⁰ Moreover, because of the way normative systems operate, it became increasingly difficult for them to “imagine a space that was neither calibrated to nor productive of dominant bodily norms.”⁶¹ These professional handbooks impoverished architectural creativity to such an extent that, over time, most architects could only fathom creating normative environments for normative bodies. Alas, as stated by Lambert, “the precision and illusory exhaustiveness of dimensional combination of the body and architecture, however useful, elaborates an imaginary limited field of possibilities.”⁶² As a result of the widespread acceptance of these reference manuals, the standards of which came to be implemented without a second thought, the architectural profession transposed the ideology of the body onto the built environment at an unprecedented scale. Enacting violence on othered bodies through neglect became the norm.

The guidance provided by the exalted leaders of the modernist movement resulted in an architecture for the body, by design. While the intentions behind the standardization of spatial production may not be widely known, or mischaracterized as a noble venture, they are nefarious. The proponents of this venture held problematic views, which go unacknowledged in architectural practice, as what they offered is deemed 'convenient' to implement. Moreover, even if the unsavoury sentiments held by these architects are admitted, they are generally divorced from the spatial requirements they produced. Attributed 'neutrality,' these industry standards are not understood as having an intelligible relationship to the genocidal regimes promoted by their creators. By and large, the violence embedded within them is hidden in plain view. Likely, many architects fail to see it in operation. Or, given that they have plausible deniability, some might even choose to ignore their complicity. Either way, normative configurations that cater to the body, at the expense of all others, are implemented with ease. As with any normative construct, it is meant to feel 'natural.' Reviewing key elaborations of the body that continue to dominate contemporary practice, it is clear that it was contrived to advance programs that one would hope most individuals would not actually want to be involved with if they were made aware. The two most well-known sets of bodily standards in the profession, "which influenced an entire generation of post-war architects," and have an enduring presence in the field today, are those of Ernst Neufert and Le Corbusier.⁶³ The body these architects promoted, and the ideologies they embedded within it, will be examined.

Ernst Neufert: mobilizing the body for the Nazi Party

Ernst Neufert, an architect who studied under Walter Gropius at the Bauhaus, was an early proponent in the standardization of architectural dimensions. In 1936, he published the book *Bauentwurfslehre*, also known as *Architects' Data*.⁶⁴ Containing a plethora of diagrams, this reference manual established the spatial conditions required for an optimized relationship between the body and its built environment. Internationally disseminated, it is described by its publisher as "an indispensable tool for the beginning stages of designing."⁶⁵ Considered "a source of fundamental information," the book is often referred to as the "Architect's Bible."⁶⁶ As one of the most popular professional handbooks, it is constantly recommended by professors to their students. The content is rarely questioned by either party, given that the outlined requirements are simply understood as 'best practice.' In consequence, architecture that exclusively caters to the body proliferates in society at large. Indeed, as stated by architectural researcher Sarah Gunawan, reference manuals such as *Architects' Data* "pervade architectural education and practice and necessitate critical examination of the spatial discriminations they perpetuate."⁶⁷

Neufert's *Architects' Data* is likely the most comprehensive manifesto of the body to date. Despite going through 39 German editions, and translations in 17 other languages, this seminal reference manual has changed very little since its inception.⁶⁸

According to Gunawan, the only notable modification was the introduction of 5 pages of accessible design considerations in 2012 (over two decades after the establishment of the Americans with Disabilities Act).⁶⁹ The figure that *Architects' Data* promotes is, of course, the same one as its predecessors. Tellingly, the first chapter, titled "human scale in architecture," begins with the familiar image of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man.⁷⁰ Explaining how past dimensions were "based on the human body, and on man's daily activities," Neufert goes on to enumerate a variety of units of measurement that have their basis in the body, just as Vitruvius did.⁷¹ While he bemoans the metric system for being "divorced from human dimensions," he maintains that "architectural design remains largely about man and his spatial needs." Stating that the aim of *Architects' Data* is "to bring together in convenient form dimensional and spatial planning information," Neufert presents the figure that will inform his diagrams, captioned "man: the universal standard."⁷² Despite being visually similar to past iterations, Neufert claims that the body is based on data from an "anthropometrical survey."⁷³ As the previously mentioned study suggests, this is unlikely. The body remained an ideal, as evidenced by Neufert retroactively changing measurements of the body whenever he felt like it. For instance, he raised its shoulder height an entire 7 cm solely because the number better suited his newly developed system of proportions.⁷⁴ Like with the antecedents, presenting this specific body was a choice. Hinting at this decision, Neufert states that it "should be borne in mind that only half or less of the population under consideration may be fully satisfied."⁷⁵ Further offering clues that the body holds a specific identity, he goes on to differentiate some figures with the addition of a dress and high heels in scenes that involve cooking and cleaning. These deviations from the norm reinforce that it is the body, and only the body, that is considered in all other spatial circumstances. As such, the body is far from 'neutral.' It embodies power dynamics, which are now enshrined as industry standards as a result of Neufert's efforts.

Neufert not only perpetuated the ideology of the body, but he did so with an antisemitic flair. Often overlooked, or overexplained in an attempt to neutralize, is Neufert's involvement in the construction of Adolf Hitler's empire. *Architects' Data* was published in the midst of the Third Reich and was very much a product of its time. The information presented within this reference manual led to a close collaboration between Neufert and various high-profile members of the Nazi Party. Among those who shared his passion for orderliness and efficiency was Albert Speer, a Nazi architect who had recently been appointed as Hitler's General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital. Starting in 1938, Speer hired Neufert to oversee the standardization of Germany's building industry.⁷⁶ Neufert's contributions were critical for the expansion of the regime. Heading an entire team at the Neufert Department, he developed rapid construction systems that were deployed in German and in occupied states to aid the settlement of the 'Aryan' population.⁷⁷ He streamlined the building process to the extent that "unskilled laborers" (i.e. concentration camp prisoners) could no longer resort to "sabotage" as the modular nature of the systems he pioneered were so "simple and transparent" that they were "difficult to undermine."⁷⁸ By 1943, he published *Bauordnungslehre* (Building Over Treatise) on behalf of the Nazi Party.⁷⁹ Conceived as the sequel to *Architects' Data*, this manual included a foreword by Speer, who had by then risen to the position of Hitler's

Reich Minister of Armaments and War Production. Along with repeatedly quoting Hitler, Speer's introduction clearly articulated the importance of standardizing the building industry for "Total War." Moreover, he commended Neufert for dedicating himself to establishing this "new order."⁸⁰ As another testament to his critical role in the regime, Neufert was included on the Gottbegnadeten-Liste ("God-gifted list") by Hitler himself.⁸¹ This 1944 document compiled the names of people that were considered essential to Nazi culture, and thus exempted from military action in the final stages of war. Listed in the first section among less than 400 individuals, Neufert was highly regarded for his efforts in the Nazi party.

After the Second World War, Neufert's career was unaffected by denazification proceedings.⁸² This program was notoriously inconsistent. Some Nazis, such as Speer, were successfully convicted at the Nuremberg trials. Several others, however, were protected from prosecution. Many remained in positions of power. According to architectural historian Nader Vossoughian, who has written extensively the architect and his work, Neufert was not "technically" an employee of the state as he had only been Speer's "beauftragter ('consultant')."⁸³ While this position unquestionably had "considerable access to the corridors of power," this disqualifying specificity likely materialized when the systems Neufert developed for the Nazis were deemed crucial for the post-war reconstruction of Germany's bombed cities.⁸⁴ After dodging formal indemnification due to a technicality, Neufert subsequently leveraged his connections to the Bauhaus and Gropius to secure himself a "prestigious professorship."⁸⁵ These associations allowed Neufert to have plausible deniability, given that the Bauhaus had closed under pressure from the Nazi Party, and that the rise of Hitler drove Gropius out of Germany.⁸⁶ Successfully disentangling himself from his past associations, Neufert continued his efforts to standardize architecture in service of the body.

While the evidence of Neufert's involvement with the Nazism is abundant, it is often redacted from the historical record in order to disassociate the implications of this regime from the standards that dominate architectural practice. Until I personally rectified the situation, the English version of Wikipedia omitted nearly two decades of Neufert's life (interestingly the German version was not as sparse). Removing undeniable facts, which are far from benign, is ideologically driven. The only reason I found out about Neufert's past is because I happened upon an article that mentioned his involvement with the Nazi regime, in order to explain it away. The article, titled "Neufert: The Exceptional Pursuit of the Norm," positioned Neufert's efforts as "apolitical and, to some extent, amoral."⁸⁷ The author claimed that Neufert worked towards standardization "regardless of circumstances or regimes," and that the work he produced was "tied to no political ideology, save for its absolute devotion to the efficiency of industry."⁸⁸ Allegedly, his standards "did not impose stylistic or ideological paradigms on those who followed them."⁸⁹ In order to demonstrate these claims, the author explained that "this was a man who, over the course of his life, associated with the likes of [Walter] Gropius, Antoni Gaudí, and Frank Lloyd Wright, as well as Albert Speer."⁹⁰ Because of his 'diverse' associations, "it would seem, for the rational-above-all Ernst Neufert, that the end really did justify the means."⁹¹ The article ends rather ominously by stating that "Neufert is

everywhere."⁹²

The reality is that the origins of Architects' Data are tied to deeply problematic beliefs. It is not unfortunate timing that it was published in Nazi Germany. The contents of this book were well in line with this regime. Moreover, its author dedicated a significant portion of his life to ensure its successful expansion. Even after the demise of the Nazi Party, Neufert continued to advocate for the implementation of his implicitly eugenic standards by disguising them as universal. At its core, Architects' Data promotes an architecture for the body, at the expense of all others. While the book "contains data to simplify design," it only streamlines spatial production for a specific body.⁹³

The Modulor: Le Corbusier's version of the body

Another notable effort to develop a system of measurements for the body was conducted by Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, also known as Le Corbusier. Regarded as a pioneer of modernist architecture, a leader of the international style, and one of the most influential architects of the 20th century, Le Corbusier promoted a figure called "The Modulor."⁹⁵ He first published this version of the body in a 1948 book titled *The Modulor: A Harmonious Measure to the Human Scale Universally Applicable to Architecture and Mechanics*. The sequel, released in 1955, was titled *Modulor 2 (Let the User Speak Next)*. While Le Corbusier had been elaborating the Modulor since 1943, he had expressed an interest in the standardization of the built environment for decades. For instance, in 1923 he declared:

A standard is necessary for order in human effort. A standard is established on sure bases, not capriciously but with the surety of something intentional and of a logic controlled by analysis and experiment. All men have the same organism, the same functions. All men have the same needs.⁹⁶

On the surface, this statement may suggest that Le Corbusier believed in the unity of humanity (if one was to ignore the repeated use of 'man'). However, the figure he ultimately produced was not "a humanist expression that helped form the basis of human-scale architecture."⁹⁷ Despite repeated attempts to portray the Modulor in a positive light, the fact is that it reflected a specific body. Consequently, Le Corbusier's system only reflected the needs of this specific body. Despite his assertion, all bodies do not have the same needs. Framing the Modulor as 'universal' had the effect of privileging the needs of the body over all others. Due to the lack of transparency around these circumstances, Le Corbusier's efforts even granted him praise.

Far from being established on 'sure bases,' the Modulor did not even try to defend itself as an 'average' like its contemporaries. Rather, believing that "mathematics is the majestic structure conceived by man to grant him comprehension of the universe," Le Corbusier reached further back in the history of the body for his vision of 'harmony.'⁹⁸ Following the path of Vitruvius and Alberti, Le Corbusier sought "to find the mathematical

relationship between human dimensions and nature.”⁹⁹ While this endeavor had been pursued intermittently over the centuries, architectural historian Michael J. Oswald, who has written extensively on the relationship between architecture and geometry, notes that this era displayed a renewed “fascination” with “mathematics as a potential source of universal truths.”¹⁰⁰ That being said, Le Corbusier’s elaboration of the Modulor was “a turning point in architectural history;” according to Oswald, it was “a final brave attempt to provide a unifying rule for all architecture.”¹⁰¹ Notably, the proportions devised by Le Corbusier provided “a visual bridge between two incompatible scales, the imperial and the metric system.”¹⁰² For all its ‘innovation,’ as stated by Hamraie, the Modulor “complied with a long tradition of conflating real and ideal bodies to realize universal geometric harmonies in material form.”¹⁰³

Like his predecessors, Le Corbusier’s proportional rationalization is dubious. As stated by curator and writer Federica Buzzi in her article “‘Human, All Too Human’: A Critique on the Modulor,” this figure is “a healthy white male enhanced by mathematical proportional gimmicks ‘of nature,’ such as the golden ratio and Fibonacci series.”¹⁰⁴ Despite its mathematical facade, the Modulor was comically contingent. Initially, its height was set at 1.75m (5’-8”) based on what Le Corbusier perceived to be a typical “French height.” Then, he changed it to 1.83m (6’-0”) because, as he wrote in his book, “have you never noticed that in English detective novels, the good-looking men, such as the policemen, are always six feet tall?”¹⁰⁵ Most people assume that this number was chosen for less absurd reasons, but alas. Le Corbusier shrouded the specificity of the Modular by representing it as a “stylized drawing” of a “non-existing body.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, the architectural forms he proposed appeared to be calibrated to an ‘unmarked’ figure. In another deceitful move, he attempted to legitimize his standards by appealing to the authority of the past. As noted by Oswald, his publications not only included “many dozens of pages [...] filled with self-congratulatory notes,” it also included lengthy sections which used “inaccurate measurements [...] to trace the presence of the Modulor in several famous ruins and buildings!”¹⁰⁷ As Buzzi came to realize after an incident where her grandmother got stuck in a Le Corbusier’s LC2 armchair, which was of course designed to suit his system of proportions, the Modulor irrevocably represents a “masculinist and ableist universalism.”¹⁰⁸

Ultimately, the Modulor was not widely adopted in comparison to Neufert’s figure. This may have been because Le Corbusier sought to patent the system in order to earn royalties from buildings that use it.¹⁰⁹ Or, perhaps it was deemed inferior to the ‘universal’ figure that allegedly referenced anthropometric data in other guidebooks. Conceivably, systems of proportion rooted in ancient civilizations were not as popular after the discovery of the ‘average,’ even if the form it presented was no less of an ‘ideal.’ By his own admission, Le Corbusier notes that the Modulor had the capacity to produce designs that were “displeasing, badly put together,” and even “horrors.”¹¹⁰ However, he maintained that this was not on his account, as the Modulor “does not confer talent, still less genius.”¹¹¹ Functional or not, for whatever reason the Modulor remains iconic. After being confronted with its image week after week in my “Advanced Building Systems” course, as my professor chose to use it at the end of each slide

set, it is evident that most people either do not know or do not accept that the Modulor reflects deeply problematic ideologies. I was taught at the beginning of my architectural studies that Le Corbusier was important and admirable, in a large part because of his elaborations of an architecture that considered the ‘human scale’ as part of the modernist movement. However, to even suggest that he was referring to all of humanity is not only a stretch, but also unimaginable considering his preoccupation with white supremacist ideology.

There is a debate in the architecture world between those who believe that Le Corbusier was “a fascist-leaning ideologue whose plans for garden cities were inspired by totalitarian ideals,” and those who continue to view him as “humanist who wanted to improve people’s living conditions.”¹¹² The evidence for the former is abundant, well documented, and easily accessible. Given that Le Corbusier’s problematic views are undeniable, there have been efforts emphasize seemingly contradictory beliefs in order to characterize him as “a political naïf who, like many architects, was eager to work with almost any regime that would let him build.”¹¹³ This position is increasingly contested. For instance, when the Centre Pompidou held an exhibition titled *Le Corbusier - Mesures de l’homme* in 2015, the major retrospective on the architect was criticized for failing to mention his politics.¹¹⁴ Notably, three books detailing Le Corbusier’s fascist tendencies had been published earlier that year, including *Un Corbusier* by François Chaslin, *Le Corbusier: Un fascisme français* by Xavier de Jarcy, and *Le Corbusier: Une froide vision du monde* by Marc Perelman.¹¹⁵ A “scandal” erupted in France around the books, despite the fact that the topic had been considered in multiple other publications since 1970.¹¹⁶ In an open letter published in *Le Monde* following the exhibition, Perelman asserted that “Le Corbusier was a fascist and that the French academy had whitewashed this from architectural history.”¹¹⁷ Further controversy ensued, which Chaslin describes in psychoanalytical terms as “‘le retour du refoulé’ (the resurfacing of suppressed memories,” stating that “when you hide something too much, one day it explodes.”¹¹⁸ While a growing number of scholars argue that Le Corbusier’s beliefs are inseparable from his work, the field of architecture remains largely in denial. Based on my architectural education, which has spanned from 2016 to the current moment, I would contend that he remains as exalted of a figure as ever. Similarly to my experience with Neufert, I came across all this information through personal research. As stated by de Jarcy, “there’s still a myth surrounding Le Corbusier, that he’s the greatest architect of the 20th century, a generous man, a poet,” however, he maintains that this vision is “a great collective lie.”¹¹⁹

The abundance of incriminating information on Le Corbusier calls for a summary, rather than an entire exposition which can be found elsewhere. Similarly to Neufert, he was tied to various antisemitic movements. Despite not being directly involved with the Nazi Party, he was far more outspoken about his beliefs than his contemporary. Le Corbusier’s many letters disparaging the “Jewish race” can be traced all the way back to the early 1910s.¹²⁰ Continuing his remarks well into the Second World War, he stated in a 1940 letter that “it does seem as if their blind thirst for money had corrupted the country.”¹²¹ Beyond denigrating the Jewish population while it was experiencing

genocide, he wrote admiringly that “Hitler can crown his life with a great work: the planned layout of Europe.”¹²² In addition to these private remarks, he penned “hateful editorials” in fascist publications.¹²³ Indeed, Le Corbusier was active for over two decades in “groups with a very clear ideology,” a fact which “has been kept hidden” by those in charge of his estate.¹²⁴ Le Corbusier also sought to lend his services as an architect beyond the theoretical domain. For instance, he collaborated with the regime in Vichy, which was then the seat of the Nazi puppet government in France, after its Jewish population had been expelled.¹²⁵ Believing in the “power of governments to realize architectural visions,” he also attempted to work for other totalitarian dictators, such as Benito Mussolini.¹²⁶ While he was not always successful in obtaining these commissions, the record is clear that he actively pursued these ‘opportunities.’

Some scholars attempt to counter Le Corbusier’s antisemitism by insisting on the fact that he had some Jewish friends, and even designed buildings with the Jewish population in mind.¹²⁷ For instance, Chaslin, despite the fact that his book contained “the most substantial evidence” of Le Corbusier’s deep-seated antisemitism at an “unprecedented level of detail and vigour,” asserts that “it’s an error in my view to insist on his anti-Semitism.”¹²⁸ He denounces efforts to label Le Corbusier as a ‘Nazi,’ believing these campaigns to be “laughable.”¹²⁹ While it is true that Le Corbusier “didn’t deliver Jews to the Gestapo” himself, the housing he envisioned for the Jewish population was extremely problematic.¹³⁰ Given his fear that “the trouble,” meaning mass Jewish emigration, “would spread to all Europe,” he wrote unfavourably in a 1938 article about “keeping the Jews in large numbers in European cities.”¹³¹ Advocating for a “‘good’ exodus,” he devised plans to resettle this population in “nature” which overlapped with Zionist ideology.¹³² While this convergence has led to the mischaracterization that he acted in the interest of the Jewish population, Zionism only interested him “as an opportunity to implement his ideas on an essentially captive population.”¹³³ As Le Corbusier wrote, “anything is better for them than what is now happening,” therefore “one can imagine how it is possible to exploit these spontaneous circumstances to take the first steps to organize a mechanical society on a natural basis.”¹³⁴ Prior to the advent of Israel, he proposed giving the Jewish population an area of French Guiana “because they are accustomed to the ghetto.”¹³⁵ He added that they “should consult me about urban planning of their new settlement.”¹³⁶ His vision included overcrowding them in housing units of 2,000-3,000 people each and transferring the remainder to rural areas.¹³⁷ It must be noted that the accusations of antisemitism levied against Le Corbusier are not new. He had been publicly accused as such as far back as his first urban planning projects in La Chaux de Fonds in Switzerland, “in which he placed the Jews in a separate zone.”¹³⁸ That was over a hundred years ago. Any suggestion that this was considered ‘acceptable’ behaviour at the time is simply not true. Moreover, as stated by architectural theorist Simone Brott, who has written extensively on Le Corbusier’s fascist tendencies, “just because antisemitism and murdering Jews was ‘normal’ under the Third Reich does not legitimate it, a point so obvious that it scarcely needs to be mentioned.”¹³⁹

Le Corbusier’s eugenic tendencies went beyond the racial ideology of Nazism. As

architectural historian Fabiola López-Durán has outlined in her book *Eugenics in the Garden: Transatlantic Architecture and the Crafting of Modernity*, Le Corbusier was a major actor in the global effort to achieve white supremacy through urban planning and architecture.¹⁴⁰ The utopian project of modernization was premised on the belief that improving the built environment would lead to “improvements in the human race.”¹⁴¹ This concept of humanity, of course, was not a unitarian view. The fear of social degeneration in Europe sparked the “‘science’ of race improvement,” in which racism was “an ideology of progress.”¹⁴² As a result, modernization campaigns spread across the colonies. In these efforts to craft modernity, “race, gender, class, and the built environment” were “critical instruments.”¹⁴³ Le Corbusier, operating on an international level, deployed various techniques to achieve “the perfecting and whitening of man.”¹⁴⁴ Notably, when he was developing the Modulor, he sketched the human body he wanted to transform; “a black man.”¹⁴⁵ Next to this figure he wrote himself a reminder to procure Alexis Carrel’s newest book, and the names of other modernist architects who were involved in eugenic masterplans abroad. Carrel, a Nobel Prize-winning surgeon who, among other high-profile positions, worked for the Vichy government on ‘national renewal’ and founded the Foundation for the Study of Human Problems, was the most prominent eugenicist in France at the time.¹⁴⁶ Le Corbusier “read and enthusiastically underlined” Carrel’s 1935 best seller *Man, the Unknown*.¹⁴⁷ This “manifesto of white superiority” outlined methods to propagate the “superior man,” which included gassing part of the French population in order to “preserve the most ‘virile’ elements.”¹⁴⁸ Le Corbusier developed a professional relationship and a friendship with Carrel, who ultimately died before his arrest at the end of the war. Given the ties of the modernist movement, and its leaders, to explicitly racist ideologies, López-Durán addresses the “elephant in the room;” this “social and biological movement was not just pretending to seek a perfect human body,” but rather “a white body.”¹⁴⁹ The ploy to medically correct the ‘human body’ was embedded with issues of race, sex, gender, sexuality, ability, class, etc. As a result, the accompanying architectural movement was empowered to enact violence on all bodies other than the body through the built environment. Le Corbusier, one of its most celebrated architects, and the Modulor, his own version of the body, are inseparable from this venture. They are particularly influential proponents of the body’s long ideological trajectory and, as such, must be denounced in the field of architecture. Continued exaltation only serves to legitimize widespread spatial violence as an accomplishment.

Progress? ‘His’ and ‘Her’ versions of the body

[This section is too incomplete to place]

More progress? The oxymoron of a disabled version of the body

When architectural historian Peg Rawes asked the question, “what subjects are considered to be too complex for architectural design, and are therefore rejected as excessive or unnecessary to its aims?,” she was specifically commenting on the needs of “the sexed subject.”¹⁵⁰ While it holds true for all bodies that are not the body, when it comes to the built environment, this rejection is especially apparent in the case of those

designated as 'disabled.' Because they are considered to be deviations from the norm, their embodiments all too often go unconsidered. I will never forget the time when a former boss repeatedly reprimanded a co-worker for not producing renderings at 'eye-level' until she realized that, as a wheelchair user, he was outputting the 'eye-level' he knew. She then proceeded to make him redo them all at a 'normal' height. While it could have been an asset to have his perspective at the firm, he was ultimately let go for dubious reasons. Ableist attitudes in the field of architecture transpose onto reality and dictate how 'disabled' bodies are made to experience space. As lesbian feminist writer Christina Crosby draws attention to in her memoir *A Body, Undone*, which recounts her experience of becoming quadriplegic, the built environment, once a backdrop to her life, became a barrier. After a biking accident, she discovered a world "created by building codes and education policy, subway elevators that don't work and school buses that don't arrive, and all the marginalization, exploitation, demeaning acts, and active exclusions that deny full access and equality to 'the disabled.'"151 Again, given that the built environment caters to the body, the further one is from this norm, the more one is made to experience the effects of this violent normative order.

In recent years, "disability" has been reformulated to mean "the social disadvantages and exclusions that people with impairment face in all areas of life: employment, housing, education, civil rights, transportation, negotiation of the built environment, and so forth," thereby shifting the emphasis from bodies onto the social constructs that restrict them.152 As stated by Carol Thomas, a sociologist of health and illness, "being disabled was an entirely socially caused phenomenon."153 The elaboration of this position was the result of "a society where the concept of the norm is operative."154 Correspondingly, 'disablism' refers to "the social imposition of avoidable restrictions on the life activities, aspirations and psycho-emotional well-being of people categorized as 'impaired' by those deemed 'normal.'"155 This form of oppression exists on many levels, however, according to sociologist Anastasia Liasidou, who specializes in inclusive policy, disability is "primarily caused by environmental barriers."156 As such, those who play a role in creating the built environment, such as architects, are deeply implicated in the production of disabling circumstances. While awareness of this fact has grown, the field of architecture has largely responded with the same tactics it used to produce the body. Claiming inclusivity by appealing to new set of non-existent bodies, it continues to produce spaces that limit the access of non-normative bodies.

While Neufert's *Architects' Data* was slow to the call, other handbooks started to include accessibility as a design consideration. In 1981, *Architectural Graphic Standards* by the American Institute of Architects, released its 7th edition which replaced the body with Joe and Josephine, a person in a wheelchair, a person using crutches, and a child, "all depicted as white, featureless figures."157 While these figures "appeared to represent social progress toward a greater diversification of architectural inhabitants," Hamraie states that they were not "an indication that well-intentioned architects had simply sought out better information about users."158 Indeed, they only materialized as a result of the legal impetus for disability access, with code-based requirements highlighting "the urgency of a more inclusive knowledge base for architects."159 As Hamraie notes,

this led to a "wholesale diversification" of guidebook figures because "the legibility of disability [...] was fundamentally entangled with the structures of knowledge governing legible human variation."160 In other words, the advocacy efforts that demanded the social inclusion of people with disabilities were the catalyst for all representation beyond that of the body. However, these new 'bodies' did not "unseat the normate template."161 Alas, "'configuring' prototypical users" remained a process of collecting 'statistical data' in service of producing "objects" or "tools for designers to use."162 Merely representing 'averages,' these figures once again failed to represent 'real' bodies. As such, while their integration in manuals "seemed to suggest that architects could finally design with a range of users in mind, not as an afterthought but throughout the entire design process," they were still emblematic of a normative order.163 In fact, this semblance of inclusivity had the effect of solidifying norms, albeit beyond that of the body. As Lambert explains, "the very idea of including wheelchair users, handicapped or elderly within this mean of rationalization, however thoughtful and progressive, is problematic as it attempts to normalize what is, by definition, failing to respect the norm - that is the very idea of categorizing somebody as 'handicapped.'"164 That being said, these figures did disrupt the supremacy of the body. As Lambert concedes, "it nevertheless helps us to question further a potential transgression to the universality of the norm."

The end of the body, the end of a normative regime

TO BE CONTINUED (/wrapped up!)