

Beside* Glitter

Spaces of Queer Solidarity and Love

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QUESTIONS

Reflecting on the state of architecture, Paul Preciado writes that architects have been ignoring the epistemological transformations and the critical turn taking place in queer and transgender movements. And then, Preciado asks; What is the relationship between gender and sexual politics and architectural practices and discourses today? Can we think of our discipline as a practice of gender and sexual resistance within contemporary global capitalism? The indexical *our* and *we* connote both our positionality as makers/architects and the contingent and fragile alliances we form to help us endure the grinding down of life's possible genres and imagine a forward-dawning future.

PROMPT

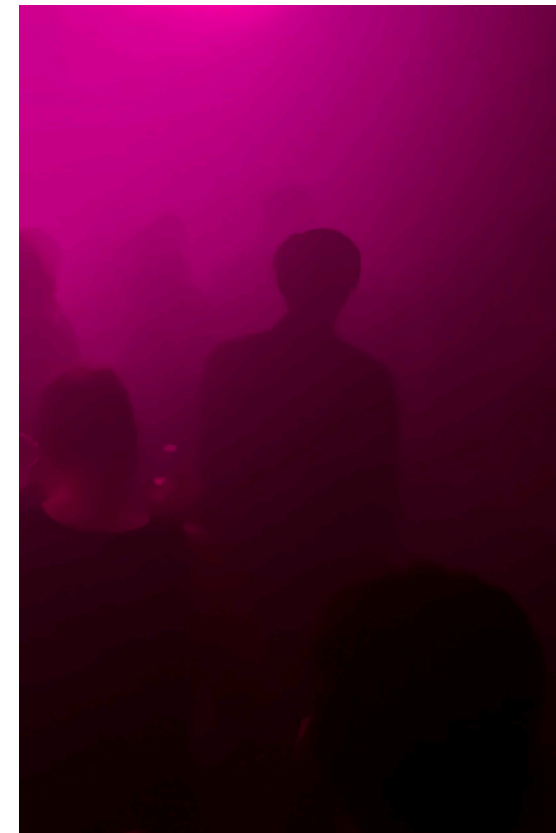
Space is a formation that is co-constituted through sexualities and genders. While the discipline of architecture has disregarded this very fact, queer communities have been creating spaces to enact desire, to find joy and pleasure, to protect, support and uplift one another, and ultimately, to live life in its fullness. For this studio, we will turn to these queer practices that have carved possibility not where repression has inscribed it. We will explore stories, archives, and everyday rituals, that challenge the normative and normalizing habits of architecture. From the bedroom to the darkroom, from the bathhouse to the cruising spot, from the dance floor to the floor of the health clinic, we will revisit practices, locate spaces of solidarity, and reflect on the inner workings and contradictions of our queer coalitions.

CONTEXT

The physical context of the studio will be the city of Pittsburgh and its contemporary politics –our here and now. However, we take heed of what José Esteban Muñoz writes: “Queerness is that thing that let us feel that this world is not enough, something is missing.” To escape “the negative and toiling in the present,” Muñoz proposes to look at the realm queer aesthetics of the past because they contain blueprints and schemata of a possible future. Thus, queer aesthetics, from the quotidian to the spectacular, are also our context.



somewhere, sometime #1, photo by Theodossis Issaias



somewhere, sometime #2, photo by Theodossis Issaias

*“Beside is an interesting preposition because there’s nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another [...] Beside permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce a dualistic thinking. [...] The irreducibly spatial positionality of beside also seems to offer some useful resistance to ease with which beneath and beyond turn from spatial descriptions into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos.”

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 8.



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PROGRAM

Throughout the semester we will collaborate with and learn from friends, colleagues, and mentors. Joseph Hall (Executive Director of Kelly Strayhorn Theater) will introduce us to the theater as a space for Queer & Trans Artists of Color; Harrison Apple (Associate Director of the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry) to their work on the Pittsburgh Queer History Project; Dana Bishop-Root and Ginger Brooks-Takahashi (General Sisters) to their collaborative artistic practice; Jacob Gordon (School of Social Work at UPitt) to his research on dating apps among LGBT+ populations; Stephanie Tsong to their work as founder of the DJ queer collective Jellyfish. Sharing in this knowledge, the studio will develop a typological method of recording and understanding these spaces including the theater, the -room (bedroom, restroom, darkroom), the dance floor, and the grid and the territory of dating platforms.

We will put additional pressure to established expectations of programmatic and typological inquiry by rethinking spaces through affect, relations, and tactility. To do so we will focus on texture, borrowing from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Even more immediately than other perceptual systems, Sedgwick argues, the sense of touch makes nonsense out of dualistic understanding of agency and passivity; “to touch is always already to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold, and always also to understand other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before oneself, if only in the making of the textured object.”

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In the lineage of queer agit-prop, the outcome will be a fanzine and an installation of individual or paired up students, presenting, pursuing, and capturing the research and design process. On successful completion of this studio you should be able:

to articulate spatial propositions based on a critical understanding of the relationship between the politics of genders, sexualities, and forms of representation

to work collaboratively with members of grassroots and non-profit organizations and groups

to navigate the complex field of queer and gender studies, including scholars such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Lee Edelman, Lucas Crawford, Jack Judith Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, Susan Sontag, among others.

to appreciate the wealth of architectural queer speculation and activism by familiarizing ourselves with the work of Joel Sanders and Susan Stryker, Adam Nathaniel Furman, Pol Esteve, Leah Wulfman Andrés Jaque, Hal Hayes, Paul Preciado, A.L.Hu, among others.