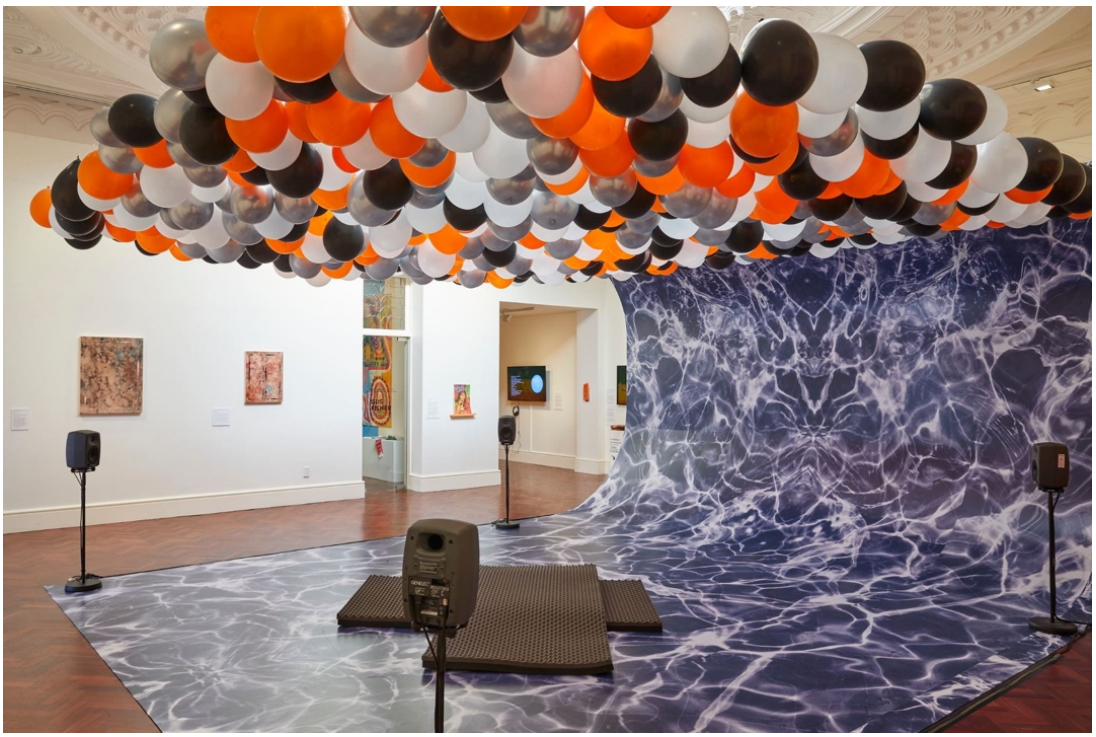
The Subversive Potential:

A Reading of Queer Algorithms (2020) at Gus Fisher Gallery



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Abstract

This research essay examines how queer curatorial practice can subvert the inherent perpetuation of normative thinking within the art institution. This is analysed through a comprehensive investigation of Gus Fisher Gallery's *Queer Algorithms* 2020 exhibition, curated by Lisa Beauchamp. I have identified key elements of the curatorial practice embedded throughout the show, evident in the dialogic framework used to challenge representations of HIV/AIDS through the practice of John Walter and the New Zealand AIDS Memorial Quilts, the treatment of language used to heighten awareness of trans issues through art by Shu Lea Cheang and Aliyah Winter, and the abstract strategies drawing on spatial concerns in works by Shannon Novak and Martine Gutierrez. These productive frameworks possess the potential to diversify Auckland's art world by renegotiating understandings of queer identities and experiences.

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Introduction

> Queering the museum… requires us to question every aspect of the institution. That this entails critically interrogating not only the museological practices that are the museum's lifeblood, but also our own professional identities and dispositions, is at once obvious and, for many, troubling.[1]

Queer curatorial practice and contemporary art act ultimately, as a subversive and reflexive mechanism according to this statement by Amy Levin. Patrik Steorn argues that the museum is understood as "an instrument of social and cultural reproduction and an important site for the production and display of discourse," an entity with the power to shift the meaning of whatever enters its framework.[2] The notion of cultural institutions being enforcers of normativity has become increasingly relevant as dialogues revolve around the pertinence of intersectionality, calling for museums to investigate their internal structures and the external manifestations of power hierarchies. This discourse reinforces that museums are at the centre of a symbiotic cycle where they are both influencers of and by the social contexts they exist within, endowing them with the agency to either perpetuate or upend social norms. Nikki Sullivan and Craig Middleton claim that "the museum is not just an institution, a place, but also a set of practices that cannot be separated out from the contexts in which they operate," arguing that the museum is as much a verb as it is a noun.[3] For art institutions to deconstruct these entrenched practices, they must reveal and challenge how normativity is relayed, a feat that can be achieved through queer curatorial practice.

This dissertation will examine how queer curatorial practice has the potential to subvert normative power structures inherent within art institutions. In examining this, I will deduce the significance of this for queer communities and the local art world within Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. I will confront these research concerns through the analysis of three curatorial frameworks present in Gus Fisher Gallery's (GFG) 2020 exhibition, *Queer Algorithms,* curated by Lisa Beauchamp. Chapter one of this research will explore the dialogic framing of HIV/AIDS, analysing the artworks featured by John Walter in conjunction with panels from the New Zealand AIDS Memorial Quilts. I will uncover the disparity between historical and contemporary approaches to the subject,

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[1] Nikki Sullivan and Craig Middleton, "Queer/ing Museological Technologies of Display," *Queer Studies in Media & Popular Culture* 4, no. 1 (2019): 62.
[2] Patrik Steorn, "Curating Queer Heritage: Queer Knowledge and Museum Practice," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 55, no. 3 (2012): 355.
[3] Nikki Sullivan and Craig Middleton, "Introduction," In *Queering the Museum* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 5.

the implications of these representations and how they are subverted by the queer curation. Chapter two will focus on how the exhibition articulates the relationship between transgender issues and the centrality of language, emphasised primarily through the contributing artworks by Shu Lea Cheang and Aliyah Winter. This section will examine the facets of queer vernacular and the ways it can empower the voices of trans communities, while also explaining how the curatorial practice was enhanced through public programming. Lastly, chapter three contemplates the use of abstraction in facilitating a safe space within the institution through the works of Shannon Novak and Martine Gutierrez. Within this chapter, I will elucidate how abstraction can act as a vehicle to navigate spatial concerns within institutional settings, leading into discussions of the cultural significance of this for Auckland's art scene.

My methodology in undertaking this research was characterised by a heightened sensitivity to the emotional and at times contentious, subject matter that permeates queer contemporary art. This informed the lenses through which I examined specific themes, namely HIV/AIDS and violence against transgender communities, as well as the language used to articulate my argument thoughtfully. To ascertain an accurate understanding of the exhibition's specific curatorial practice, I interviewed Beauchamp and Julia Craig, the Public Programmes and Engagement Officer for *Queer Algorithms*, held upon the exhibition's completion on 4 September 2020.

A Queer Emergence

The etymology of queer posits the term around the early sixteenth century, referring to something different from what is usual, connoted with the strange or off-kilter. The language of queerness is historically rooted in being antithetical to normativity. Meanings eventually evolved, situating the word as a slur that was subsequently appropriated as an activist stance. David Getsy describes this reclamation as "a mode of resistance to the oppression and erasure of sexual minorities," emblematic of rejecting normative assimilation.[4] Arguing that the power of queerness relies "not on the covertness of difference but, more politically and polemically, to call out and to target the camouflage workings of power and normativity," Getsy's definition remains evident throughout the varied discussions of queerness that will be examined in this research. Notably, it shapes my definition of queer curatorial practice. In this context, queer curatorial practice does not exclusively refer to curators who identify as queer, which Beauchamp does not, nor solely in cases where exhibitions address LGBTQ+ ideas and

[4] David J. Getsy, ed., *Queer: Documents of Contemporary Art,* (Cambridge: MIT Press and Whitechapel Gallery, 2016), 12.

themes. Rather, queer curatorial practice embodies the sentiments outlined by Getsy, to defiantly topple hegemonic power structures of normative meaning, of which the art institution traditionally upholds. Therefore regardless of Beauchamp's identity, she demonstrates queer curatorial practice through utilising her curator privilege as a form of allyship to platform queer voices.

The framework of queerness in New Zealand's art exhibitions has been tenuous, often fraught with exclusion and limited perspectives. In his thesis, Peter Derkson performs an exhibition-based analysis of local LGBTQ+ representation through examinations of the 1992 and 2015 iterations of *Implicated and Immune: Artist's Response to AIDS,* first staged at the then-Fisher Gallery, with the latter reimagination exhibited at the Michael Lett Dealer Gallery. Derkson also analysed the display on Homosexual Law Reform in Te Papa Tongarewa's *Us & Them* installation, part of their *Slice of Heaven: 20th Century Aotearoa* exhibition which ran from 2010-2017, making it arguably one of the most visited queer displays in a New Zealand museum. Derkson deduced that the different curatorial strategies employed reflected the complex procedures the institute must navigate in constructing a queer exhibition, citing the consultation of community organisations, varied public programming, creative freedom of queer expression and the use of narrative and voice as storytelling devices.[5] Within recent years, Aotearoa's local art scene has witnessed a resurgence of queer themes in exhibitions, notably the Dowse Art Museum's *Sleeping Arrangements* (2018), a group show exploring intimacy, tactility, memory and desire within considerations of AIDS since the 1990s. Earlier in 2020, the queer artist Becki Moss exhibited her photographic project *Queer Portraits of Auckland,* documenting raw vignettes of Auckland's LGBTQ+ nightlife. Exhibited at the Ellen Melville Centre in the CBD, the images depicted moments captured from Queer AF events held in Basement Theatre, each displayed with the muse's name and pronouns, demonstrating the artist's emphasis on the accessibility of queer perspectives. Ultimately, this points to an unrelenting interest in queer culture within contemporary exhibition-making that has flourished over the last decade.

A Contemporary Gallery's Social Responsibility

GFG's identity is rooted in pushing the boundaries of Aotearoa's art world through ambitious, socially relevant exhibitions that actively engage with local communities. Since reopening in April 2019 and Beauchamp assuming the curator position in July of that year, their exhibitions have covered issues of sustainability (*The Slipping Away*),

[5] Peter Derkson, "Where is the Queer? A Case Study of LGBTQ Representation in Aotearoa New Zealand Exhibitions," Master's thesis, (Victoria University of Wellington, 2018), 62.

immigration (*The Shouting Valley: Interrogating the Borders Between Us*), and consumerism (*We're Not Too Big To Care*). The sustained passion for uniting contemporary art with community interests in boundary-pushing visual mediums recalls how both museums and communities serve as sites of social action.[6] For GFG, owned by the University of Auckland, this structural affiliation carries underlying regulations that accompany the stature of being an institution, despite their attitude being more reminiscent of independent organisations. In *Queering the Museum,* Sullivan and Middleton explain the parameters entrenched within public institutions that inform not only their funding but the artistic content of exhibitions. As opposed to independent galleries, publicly funded institutions have more regulations, and thus more inhibitions on creative expression, resulting in more risk-averse subjects.[7] However, GFG fervently asserts their identity in actively engaging with contemporary social issues through their exhibitions and public programming despite their status as an institution. As a public gallery, people can explore their exhibitions and participate in their programming without cost, enabling individuals to engage with these issues within a safe, accessible environment. Nonetheless, it is critical not to dismiss the resonance of their institutional position; however, we can interpret the nuances of their identity as indicative of their ability to occupy a grey area between the unmediated public and the higher institutions of New Zealand's art world.

In *Queer Algorithms,* GFG attempted to explore the broad range of queer experiences. The exhibition featured twelve artists: Aliyah Winter, Bronte Perry, essa may ranapiri, Evan Ifekoya, John Walter, Martine Gutierrez, micha cárdenas, Shannon Novak, Shu Lea Cheang, Ursula Mayer, Yuki Kihara, as well as AIDS Memorial Quilts from the New Zealand AIDS Foundation. The array united local and international practices, exhibiting both pre-existing and commissioned works. Beauchamp was inspired to conceptualise a queer exhibition based on her overseas encounters, notably her work curating the *Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender and Identity* (2017) at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, part the travelling show from Liverpool.[8] Similarly influential was the *Kiss My Genders* (2018) exhibition at the Hayward Gallery. Through these interactions, Beauchamp noticed how intentions of intersectionality were problematised by reductive frameworks.[9] Upon moving to New Zealand, Beauchamp observed the prosperity of local queer spaces in Pride Festival and Karangahape Road. Interested in communicating

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[6] Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst, *Space, Place and Sex: Geographies of Sexualities,* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2009).
[7] Nikki Sullivan and Craig Middleton, "Introduction," in *Queering the Museum* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 2.
[8] Lisa Beauchamp and Julia Craig, interview with author, Auckland, 4 September 2020.
[9] Beauchamp and Craig, interview.

these ideas in a more effective and empowering fashion, the team at GFG endeavoured into curating *Queer Algorithms*, drawing on the timeliness of contemporary queer issues by bringing together varied strands.[10] As the exhibition concept developed, it went through several iterations before settling on its permanent title, emblematic of the intention to present an algorithm for change in reorienting understandings of queerness to become more nuanced.[11] Not only did the exhibition bring artworks to the community that had not been seen before, but it also worked to connect with Auckland's queer communities, demonstrative of how institutions can portray these subjects without having to exist within heteronormative limits.

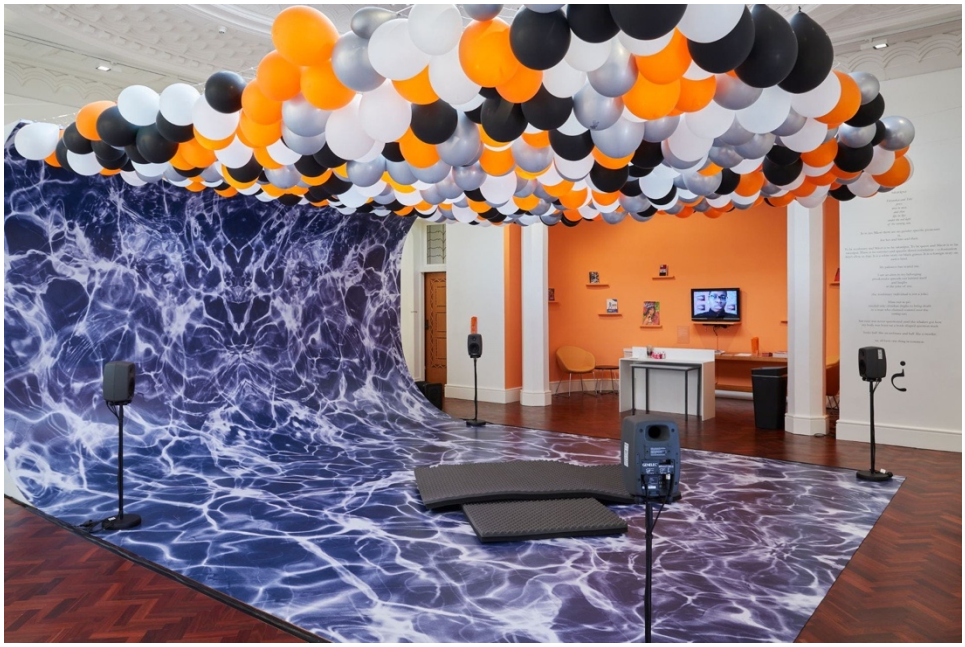
A Transcendent Starting Point

Upon stepping into the gallery space, the viewer is greeted by Evan Ifekoya's *Ritual ~~Without~~ Belief* (2018), an open vinyl floor evocative of staring into water while sunlight creates a dappled texture on the surface. The floor swims upwards towards a ceiling of suspended balloons, anticipating a midnight climax to drop, a playful nod to David Mancuso's 1970's New York City club nights at The Loft and the binary symbol of gender reveal parties. Beneath the installation's roof lie acoustic foam mats, encouraging the viewer to break from the periphery and immerse. Four surrounding speakers sitting at the corners expedite this activation, enveloping the sitter in a musical cacophony. The sound work comprises six hours of multi-layered vocals compiling techno music, underwater samples, and streams of consciousness. Ifekoya toys with polyvocality, a term like queer, without a concrete definition. The soundtrack enhances the sensory experience of the work, like its ocean setting, providing a site of transformation for visitors.

Ifekoya describes this work as a 'black queer algorithm,' a phrase which inspired the exhibition's title.[12] One can determine the resonance of this work as an introduction characterising the exhibition as a whole through Ifekoya's remark of the installation as "a repeating and responsive code that starts from a place of abundance rather than scarcity," serving as the impetus of *Queer Algorithms.*[13] Working within a context of dichotomies, both the exhibition and this work seek to emulate queer ways of perceiving our surroundings. Aiming to portray the sensation of viewing our environment as in flux through a queer lens, *Ritual ~~Without~~ Belief* and *Queer Algorithms* encapsulate the

[10] Beauchamp and Craig, interview.
[11] Beauchamp and Craig, interview.
[12] Gasworks, "Interview with Evan Ifekoya: Ritual Without Belief exhibition at Gasworks," 13 December 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LndgttxFhPs&feature=emb_logo.
[13] Gasworks.

intoxicating euphoria of celebrating community without forgoing the sobering hangover of occupying a world that structurally alienates queerness. These stark juxtapositions feel evident throughout, with constant reminders of simultaneity that pervade queer existence. Intentionally striking through the titular 'without,' Ifekoya asserts there is no ritual without belief, the double negative imploring us to consider the inherited rituals of daily life, subverting what non-queer audiences take for granted by submerging them in a queer world that is at times uncomfortable, but ultimately transcendent.[14] *Queer Algorithms* proposes the challenge of upsetting our understandings of normativity, exemplified in Ifekoya's introductory living work, with the once plump balloons deflated and collapsing by the exhibition's end after a four-month period. Holistically, the exhibition invites its visitors to return to this space and endure, offering a meditative opportunity for unity through art that reveals and subsequently unravels normative traditions.



Ifekoya, Evan. *Ritual ~~Without~~ Belief,* 2018. Installation view. Audio, vinyl, balloons, acoustic foam. Gasworks, London. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

[14] Gasworks.

Chapter I: Reshaping Perspectives on HIV/AIDS Through a Dialogic Framework

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) attacks the body's immune system. In its weakened state, the compromised cells are unable to fight off infections, leaving the body susceptible to illnesses that would have otherwise been preventable. If left untreated, this can develop into acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). AIDS is diagnosed when the number of CD4 cells falls below 200 cells per cubic millilitre of blood, or when the individual develops one or more 'opportunistic infections.'[15] First identified in 1981 in the United States, HIV quickly became affiliated with gay men as the majority demographic affected. Speculative names such as the 'gay cancer' and Gay Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) were attributed to the emerging epidemic prior to conclusive medical research.[16] HIV is transmitted through specific contact of bodily fluids with an infected individual, namely unprotected sex, shared injection needles, breastfeeding, pregnancy or childbirth; however, it cannot be transmitted through casual contact.[17] While medication through the late twentieth century was largely ineffective, modern treatments include antiretroviral therapy (ART), where HIV positive patients can slow the development of the virus. Through ART, one can avoid transmission by developing an 'undetectable viral load,' meaning that the traces of HIV are so minimal that they cannot be detected in a blood test.[18] Preventative measures also include pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) which can significantly reduce the risk of contracting the virus even with exposure to an active case. These modern remedies, while not complete cures, significantly contribute to the reality that HIV/AIDS is no longer a death sentence.

Public perceptions of HIV in the heteronormative mainstream quickly and passionately villainised queer communities for their perceived transgressions, using that as ammunition in justifying the onslaught of HIV cases. With the known channels of transmission linked to homosexual intercourse and drug use, circulating images and stories of HIV/AIDS patients reinforced the narrative that the disease was moral retribution for their deviant lifestyles, the milieu characterised by permeating attitudes of disgust. Disseminated images deriving from medical journals saw people suffering from

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[15] CD4 cells are a type of white blood cell important in the immune system. A healthy CD4 count ranges between 500 and 1,600 cells per cubic millilitre of blood.
[16] Julia Craig, "Fluid Practice: Queer Duration in Art about HIV/AIDS," Master's thesis, (University of Auckland, 2018), 17.
[17] Craig, 17.
[18] HIV.gov, "What Are HIV and AIDS?" Accessed October-November 2020, https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/about-hiv-and-aids/what-are-hiv-and-aids.

HIV/AIDS as faceless beings abstracted from their humanity, identified by Kaposi sarcoma lesions and their emaciated physicality.[19] Categorised into 'risk groups,' LGBTQ+ HIV victims were pariahs, carriers of a foreboding affliction. As Susan Sontag explains, the ingrained association between a plague and the 'other' further stigmatised the already reinforced discrimination targeting queer minorities. Considering the ubiquity of shame engulfing perceptions of HIV/AIDS, Sontag notes that "getting the disease through a sexual practice is thought to be more wilful, therefore deserves blame."[20] The correlation between queerness and HIV/AIDS stunted medical research, which exacerbated the perpetuation of prejudicial misinformation in media. The cultural treatment of HIV asserted that queer people belonged in the margins of society, deeming them the greatest threat to the sanctity of American normality.

HIV/AIDS has been a popular subject of queer art since the height of the epidemic, both globally and locally. Several of Aotearoa's most well-known queer exhibitions have focused on responding to AIDS, including both iterations of *Implicated and Immune, Sleeping Arrangements* and *"Thirty,"* an exhibition presented by the Nga Taonga Sound & Vision Auckland, each seeking to raise awareness and redefine how HIV/AIDS is construed publicly. In 1988, Nicholas Nixon's *Pictures of People* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) generated an impassioned disavowing from the activist collective AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP New York) for sensationalising images of AIDS patients, relegating them to awaiting their inevitable deaths.[21] The legacies of early depictions of HIV/AIDS have been exposed in contemporary settings. Tara Burk examines the exhibitions *ACT UP New York: Activism, Art and the AIDS Crisis, 1987-1993* (2009 and 2010) and *Gran Fury: Read My Lips* (2012), focusing on the protest graphics used to voice dissent towards the socio-political contexts that subjugated queer casualties. Burk cites the use of cultural ephemera as an exemplary medium of queer activism throughout the crisis, remarking how the curatorial practice of the respective exhibitions mediated the visual objects under their frameworks.[22] A prolific cohort of artists in the 1980s and 1990s explored HIV/AIDS in their practices while being HIV-positive themselves, including Felix Gonzalez-Torres, David Wojnarowicz, Robert Mapplethorpe, Keith Haring, Leigh Bowery, and Ron Athey, navigating both institutional frameworks and grassroots activism. With Athey being the only exception, all other artists eventually died due to complications from the virus. Stating, "when I was told I'd contracted this virus it didn't take me long to realise I'd contracted a diseased society as well,"

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[19] Craig, 22.
[20] Susan Sontag, *Aids and Its Metaphors,* (New York Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989), 153.
[21] Craig, 27-28.
[22] Tara Burk, "From the Streets to the Gallery: Exhibiting the Visual Ephemera of AIDS Cultural Activism," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 51.

Wojnarowicz's vocal criticism of the cultural vitriol towards HIV/AIDS victims captures the growing tensions in the art world that challenged harmful representations through a queer point of view. [23]

In *Queer Algorithms,* the gallery featuring interdisciplinary artist John Walter's contributions is a maximalist wonderland, where the exuberant aesthetics initially appear to conflict with the traditionally sombre subject matter. Anchoring the peripheral walls, two large-scale murals are featured, *Co-Factor (Big Breakfast)* and *Co-Factor (Owl Vase and Les)* (2018). Selected from a series of ten paintings, these reflect Walter's collaboration with molecular virologist Professor Greg Towers of University College London.[24] In them, Walter interprets co-factors, particles aiding the navigation of a capsid as it traverses the cellular structure to the nucleus.[25] Personifying the capsid through an energetic use of colour and pattern, these motifs are consistent throughout each of Walter's works depicted in this exhibition, including *The RNA Book* (2018) and short films *The Zany Capsid* (2017) and *A Virus Walks Into A Bar* (2018). Taking objective scientific knowledge and translating it into a visual lexicon, Walter expresses the traits of virology in a tactile way, doing so to expand public awareness of HIV representations. Throughout the works, Walter fuses confounding imagery in a fashion that, for the uninitiated viewer, mimics the puzzling science behind HIV. Walter has opined that "[HIV] doesn't have agency, it's not alive like we are, it's just a piece of programming, but in empathising with it, I have gained a greater respect for it," reflecting the intent to depict HIV by conveying its algorithmic tendencies through sensory excess, coinciding with the exhibition's theme of abundance.[26] Maximalism dominates the atmosphere, saturated in the painting's obscured iconography of 1980's BBC Breakfast Time logos and 1600s Staffordshire pottery amongst phallic patterns and writhing corporeal silhouettes. *A Virus Walks Into A Bar* serves as an analogy drawing on the idiosyncratic styles of television staples Coronation Street, Twin Peaks and the Teletubbies to imitate the life cycle of an HIV. Walter's art tethers the viewer between the uncanny and reality, evoking the perplexing feeling one is arrested with when confronted with such topics that seem impossible to process.

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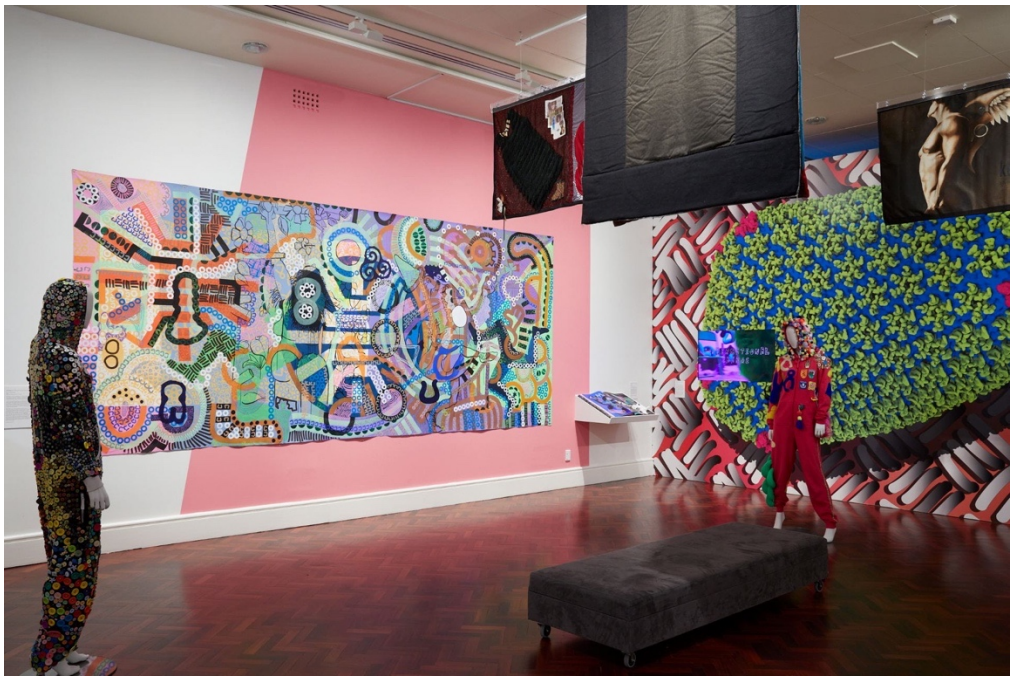
[23] Quoted in Amelia Jones, ed., *Sexuality: Documents of Contemporary Art,* (MIT Press and Whitechapel Gallery, 2014), 111.
[24] John Walter, "Alien sex club: educating audiences about continuing rates of hiv transmission using art and design." PhD thesis, (University of Westminster, 2016), 276.
[25] A capsid is the protein shell of a virus.
[26] Circuit Cast, "Episode 83: An Interview With John Walter," Accessed March 2020, https://soundcloud.com/circuit-2/circuit-cast-83-an-interview-with-john-walters.



Queer Algorithms, 2020, installation view. Pictured: John Walter, *Co-Factor (Big Breakfast), The Zany Capsid, The RNA Book,* costumes from *A Virus Walks Into A Bar.* Panels from the New Zealand AIDS Memorial Quilts. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

Starkly juxtaposed against Walter's concoctions hang individual panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilts, courtesy of the New Zealand AIDS Foundation. Five quilts embody the lives and spirits of Alexis, John Chorlton, Peter Alexander Cockburn, Kevin Todd and Warren Wah, commemorated here through the practice of quilt-making performed by their loved ones depicting their hobbies and talents to immortalise their existence beyond their AIDS-related deaths. An additional sixth panel, a solitary red ribbon set within a black-on-black frame, memorialises the unnamed individuals who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS, reminding visitors of the magnitude of these consequences. Suspended above, it is impossible not to imagine the quilts symbolising angels watching overhead, as the poignancy of their presence drips down onto audiences craning their necks to read the detail embroidered onto the quilts. Two stations posited at both entrances provide more context to foster education, with pamphlets on the origins of the quilt project, free health services, the goal to end AIDS, alongside bowls of red ribbons and pins, reflecting the sacredness of the tapu space. A selection of stories from the quilts were also provided, where viewers could take home the words from those confiding in their grief. The significance of the quilts and their stories echoes another of Wojnarowicz's declarations:

> Each public disclosure of a private reality becomes something of a magnet that can attract others with a similar frame of reference… to turn our private grief for

> the loss of friends, family, lovers and strangers into something public would serve as a powerful dismantling tool.[27]

The layers of meaning embedded into the quilts and their presentation exude the sensitivity of these representations that inform both the curation and the visitor experience of this exhibition.

Beyond the thematic compatibility between Walter's works and the quilts, their tonal contrast incites questions of what the dialogue between these convey. This display reflects the simultaneity that commonly characterises the contemporary queer experience, one where vitality exists alongside suffering. The dynamic between the artworks connotes unique narratives distinct from earlier representations of HIV/AIDS, strongly influenced by the respective periods. The AIDS quilts, traditionally displayed on the floor following the ritualistic unfolding practices performed since its inception, are instead displayed here as art.[28] In this form, they provide an emotional depth that enhances Walter's pedagogical approach. Walter embraces humorous elements in his works, evident particularly within his films, to emphasise the abject bizarreness of virology, taking something intimidating to comprehend and making it more approachable through the lens of tragicomedy. This recalls Amelia Jones' notion of queer feminist durationality explored in her book *Seeing Differently* that encourages a stalled process of classification.[29] These unspoken, visual interactions appreciate the duality in the impact of HIV and the surrounding cultural phenomenon. The quilts ensure that humanity reverberates throughout the space. Just as visitors may begin to feel emotionally distant from the subject matter through the playful tone of Walter's creations, the panels ground them once more.

Many of the subversive qualities apparent in the curatorial practice of this theme are ones inherent in the artworks themselves that were amplified through the dialogic framework. The works, specifically Walter's *A Virus Walks Into A Bar,* with a runtime of approximately 20 minutes, encourages duration with the viewer prompted to stay with the artwork for an extended time. Amidst the hyper-stimulating atmosphere, onlookers are compelled to take a moment of pause to absorb the meanings before them gradually. With the pamphlet containing stories from the quilts that audiences could take home with them, this quality is emphasised furthermore. The curation intended to expand the

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[27] Quoted in Getsy, *Queer,* 78.
[28] Steven James Gambardella, "Absent Bodies: The AIDS Memorial Quilt as Social Melancholia," *Journal of American Studies* 45, no. 2 (2011): 214-215.
[29] Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 109.

impact of the works to last beyond one's time spent physically in the gallery so that visitors contemplate the art long after exiting the space. Even the framework that characterises the space can be traced back to the works themselves. Walter's art is in conversation with the evolution of HIV/AIDS through the history of scientific misconceptions and representation. Similarly, the quilts are made in reaction to the media portrayal of those with HIV/AIDS that defines them by their condition, overlooking their identity beyond that. Collectively, what this illustrates about the queer curatorial practice is the significance of employing a fluid approach. Allowing the artworks to shape the overarching ideas of a significant theme enables multifaceted perspectives to become autonomous, defying normative meanings previously upheld within institutions. Therefore, the queer community is served through access to authentic representations that reflect the experiences of their contemporary reality.

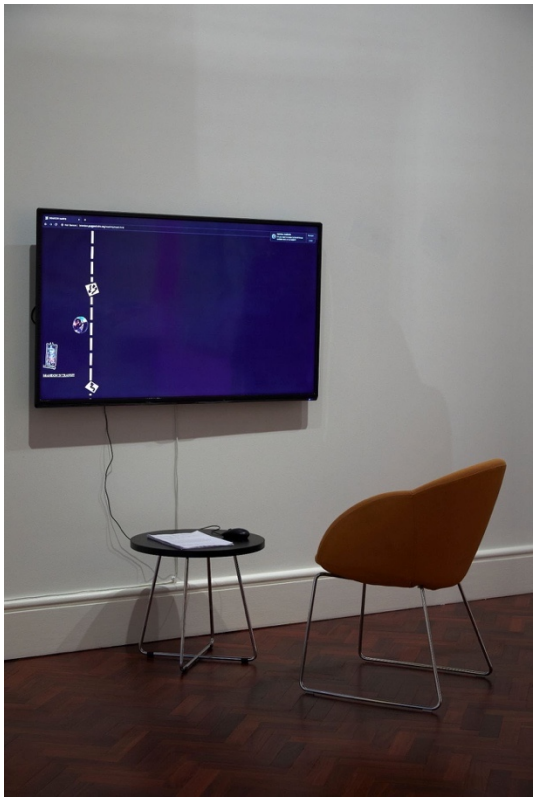
Chapter II: Articulating Transgender Issues Through the Centrality of Language

Transgender activist Stephen Whittle has remarked that "the epistemology of gender is contained within language and we have no language to go beyond the binary."[30] The relationship trans identity has with the language widely used to communicate it is often tenuous. Sara Ahmed describes this as "an affinity of hammers," where trans individuals are given a tool through which they can chip away at their transness.[31] With both the self and society disintegrating trans beings, Ahmed explains this phenomenon of reciprocity, speaking to the internalised transphobia that begins externally and grows inwards. Language is an instrumental tool through which trans people are alienated both outside and within queerness, with Ahmed stating that "violent misgendering enables trans women to be positioned as imposters within a feminist march, as perpetrators rather than victims of male violence."[32] The centrality of language in the queer community is immense; it is the foundational apparatus of communication, yet terminology is subject to change regularly. Through the telling of trans stories and issues, language is the primary vehicle to promote understanding; however, due to common misuse, language can easily become a way in which transphobic bigotry is propagated.

On New Year's Eve 1993 in Humboldt, Nebraska, a twenty-one-year-old transgender man named Brandon Teena was callously sexually assaulted and murdered alongside his friend Lisa Lambert and her boyfriend Phillip Devine. While the brutal nature of the crimes incited a wave of shock, it was Brandon's transmasculine gender identity that garnered intense public scrutiny. Mainstream media outlets regularly deadnamed Brandon and denigrated him through language invalidating his transness.[33] An example of this was the 1994 *Village Voice* article by Donna Minkowitz entitled *Love Hurts: Brandon Teena Was a Woman Who Lived and Loved as a Man,* which painted Brandon as a self-loathing lesbian.[34] Upon reading this, Taiwanese-American artist Shu Lea Cheang conceived of a cyberspace project in response to the discourse surrounding Brandon's death. Also influential was Julian Dibell's article chronicling a reported 'cyber-rape' enacted by user 'Mr Bungle' in the online community LambdaMOO, a 'multi-user

[30] Quoted in Jones, *Sexuality*, 200.
[31] Sara Ahmed, "An Affinity of Hammers," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 1-2 (2016): 22.
[32] Ahmed, 25.
[33] Deadnaming is when a transgender individual is referred to by the name they used to prior to their transition (sometimes referred to as their birth or given name).
[34] Trish Bendix, "'Boys Don't Cry' 20 Years Later: For Trans Men, a Divisive Legacy," *The New York Times,* 9 October 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/09/movies/boys-dont-cry-anniversary.html.

dungeon' (MUD). Cheang's resulting work, commissioned by the Guggenheim Museum, comprised a non-linear, collaborative net-based experience entitled *Brandon* (1998-99). The release of *Brandon* coincided with popular depictions of Brandon's life and the ensuing hate crime, the documentary *The Brandon Teena Story* (1998) directed by Susan Muska and Greta Olafsdottir, and the film *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) directed by Kimberly Peirce. Considered one of the earliest internet artworks, *Brandon* has been a seminal commentary on the role of the internet in relation to the exploration of queer gender identity, albeit a discussion rooted firmly in the climate of the 1990s. Entering into the twenty-first century, the pioneering software used to construct the work quickly became outdated, leaving much of the site unusable, so following multiple requests the Guggenheim eventually enlisted a conservation team to undergo a year-long process of restoration.[35] In 2017 it relaunched to new audiences, which would eventually lead to its inclusion in *Queer Algorithms*.



Cheang, Shu Lea. *Brandon*, 1998-1999. Installation view. Interactive networked code (html, Java, Javascript and server database). Guggenheim, New York. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

[35] Deena Engel, Lauren Hinkson, Joanna Phillips and Marion Thain, "Reconstructing Brandon (1998-1999): A Cross-disciplinary Digital Humanities Study of Shu Lea Cheang's Early Web Artwork," Digital Humanities Quarterly 12, no. 2 (2018).

Brandon is composed of five multi-layered interfaces: bigdoll, roadtrip, mooplay, panopticon and theatrum anatomicum. The bigdoll interface, produced through collaborations with Cherise Fong and Jordy Jones, comprises a collection of randomly shuffling images and text that disappear when clicked, eventually exposing a mechanically reconstructed knee. Roadtrip serves as the backbone of the website, with Susan Stryker, Kimberly Saree Tomes, Linda Tauscher as well as Jones and Fong once again contributing to its production. The motif of the highway enables the viewer to travel alongside Brandon, uncovering how his story fits into the broader historical narratives of trans identity, achieved through clicking on photographs or pills taking the user to contextual pages on figures from Herculine Barbin to Venus Xtravaganza. Cheang described the nature of the interface:

> The roadtrip interface is conceived to upload Nebraska's Brandon onto the cyberzone where he would surf across Nebraska's route 75, the national border patrol, the linear timezone and the gender markings to encounter fictional persona play along the ever-extended, ever-expandable yellow dividers.[36]

The third interface, mooplay, was co-created by Pat Cadigan, Lawrence Chua and Francesca da Rimini, drew on early 1990s text-based systems to produce a server where various fictional characters communicate in a group chat. The panopticon interface involved collaborations with Beth Stryker and Auriea Harvey, reimagining the eighteenth-century prison design conceived by Jeremy Bentham and popularised by Michel Foucault. Here, Cheang utilises the panopticon's connotations with surveillance to examine the treatment of trans beings in medical institutions with areas leading to images of the invasive treatments while cells contain prisoners awaiting procedures. The theatrum anatomicum interface features collaborations with Mieke Gerritzen, Janine Huizenga, Yariv Alterfin, Roos Eisma, Bram Boskamp, Joep Van Lieshout, Atelier van Lieshout and Derek Jan Wooldrik, displaying a seventeenth-century dissection table. Redolent of the melodrama of early surgeries conducted before audiences, clicking areas of the interface bring viewers to the documentation of the live events accompanying *Brandon's* exhibition This included a Guggenheim co-produced forum *Digi Gender Social Body: Under the Knife, Under the Spell of Anaesthesia* and the event *Would the Jurors Please Stand Up? Crime and Punishment as Net Spectacle* with Harvard University exploring virtual criminality. The unique nature of *Brandon* has lent itself a historic reputation, often in discussion with Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* due to the relational elucidation between digital media, bodies, sex, violence and language.

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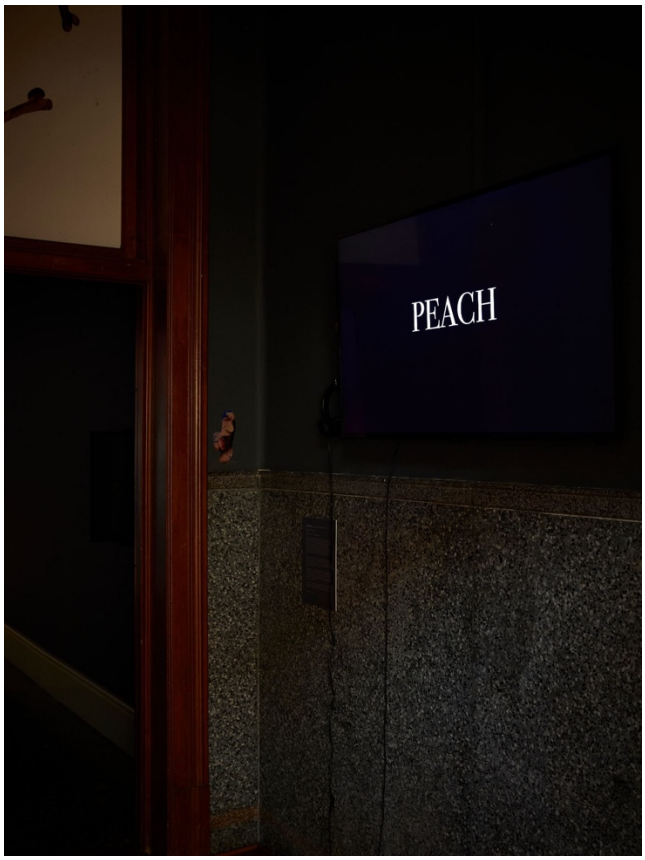
[36] Quoted in Gina Marchetti, "Cinema Frames, Videoscapes, and Cyberspace: Exploring Shu Lea Cheang's *Fresh Kill*," *positions: asia critique* 9, no. 2 (2001): 416.

New Zealand-based trans artist Aliyah Winter's spoken word artwork *Speaking Without Words* (2019) encapsulates the tentative relationship between transgender issues and language. Inspired by Jos Charles' poetry collection *feeld,* Winter plays with phonetics and structures of the English language, spoken by a computerised voice against a black, void-like backdrop. Conceived as a response to trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs), Winter amalgamates phrases from both pro and anti-trans activist groups to redefine damaging language through linguistic experimentation. As words appear on the screen, they are not spelt 'correctly.' This non-conformist style harmonises internet slang with Old English, evoking a timeless style as the language transcends the contemporary, suggesting these debates are not isolated to our localised politics, instead existing on a continuum. Winter destabilises the confinement of trans identity within this vernacular, proclaiming "TRANZ WOMXN R WOMYN" to convey the fluidity of the subject through opening up the potential of language. This strategy is amplified within the work where phrases are audibly spoken, but the text does not appear: "if you have to shout to be heard you are heard as shouting. If you have to shout to be heard you are not heard" and "without the space we are defined into something else entirely." Winter illuminates how language can either empower or subjugate people by encouraging viewers to ponder the inadequacies of language. Prefacing her thesis, Winter discloses how the terms we use within trans dialogues often lack in completely encompassing the meanings they inhabit when lived. Writing "sometimes they are they, because: we are not able to fully know the ways that people do, have, and will identify, to acknowledge the ways that we can/not be visible to each other, or to ourselves; to open up a space of not knowing," Winter articulates the impossibilities of language while inciting us to reconsider how we use it.[37] *Speaking Without Words* interrogates this boundary between language's power as a mechanism for advocacy and its detriments as a facilitator of hate speech.

Throughout *Queer Algorithms,* trans narratives recur. In addition to Winter, artists Martine Gutierrez and micha cárdenas identify as transgender, while Yuki Kihara's fa'afafine identity and essa may ranapiri's non-binary identity exemplify a further delineation from the gender binary, and this fluidity explicitly influences the art visually and thematically. The intricacies of trans issues, which are innately expansive, highlight the vital role of curatorial framing in this context. *Brandon* is perhaps the best example of the many challenges that queer curatorial practice must navigate to meet the needs of trans communities effectively. Cheang deliberately drew on channelling the user's

[37] Aliyah Winter, "to represent the sex of angels: trans/poetics," Master's thesis, (Massey University, 2017), 1.

frustration and impatience when constructing the site, apparent in the non-linear format coupled with pop-ups and windows without one distinct path of navigation. This means that every individual visitor gets a unique view of the site with every visit, as *Brandon* totals approximately 65,000 lines of code and over 4,500 files.[38] The enormity of *Brandon*'s hidden archive means that no person, including Cheang herself, has ever witnessed the work in its entirety. While this challenges the viewer to persevere with the difficult subject matter, thus providing the opportunity for complete engrossment where one could find themselves lost on the site for long periods at a time, some issues had to be circumvented in the curatorial framing of the work. In being based on 1990s understandings of transness, the primarily tragic view of the trans experience can be traumatic for modern trans audiences, which is further complicated by Cheang being the predominant artist credited in the largely collaborative project. Where Cheang



Winter, Aliyah. *Speaking Without Words*, 2019. Installation view. Video, duration: 1 minute, 22 seconds. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

[38] Jeppe Ugelvig, "The Digiarchitextual Body or: Brandon's Corporeal Virtualities," *Parallax* 25, no. 2 (2019): 161.

does not identify as a trans artist, Winter's work comes directly from her firsthand experiences as a transfeminine woman, contrasting with the approach employed in *Brandon* that communicates trans issues in a manner that at times verges on sensationalising the death of Brandon Teena to enable an artistic encounter. To account for this, a guide accompanied the physical work in GFG to provide more context within the specific framing of *Queer Algorithms*, ensuring viewers were conscious of the codesigned nature of the work as well as the history of its creation.[39]

Curatorial practice was instrumental in safeguarding trans communities by offering a safe space for discussion, while providing a platform for contemporary issues affecting the community to be seen by the general public. The public programming event, *Remembering Brandon: a kōrero on trans visibility,* worked to address the innate issues in Cheang's work, led by and codesigned with the trans community health worker Max Whitehurst, and was attended primarily by trans youth. Providing contemporary trans audiences with a safe forum for deliberating this work, such as their problems with the presentation of traumatic content, as well as broader portrayals of trans subjects, this signifies the prioritisation of trans needs above those of the institution. GFG can then use this knowledge to improve the vernacular that institutions use to articulate issues affecting the trans community, as well as the queer community wholly. While foundational works such as *Brandon* are divisive, they have enabled subsequent art seen in *Queer Algorithms,* including *Speaking Without Words* and micha cárdenas' *Pregnancy* (2017), a painstakingly vulnerable look into the artist's experience with dysphoria while undergoing sperm banking as a trans woman, calling attention to trans issues that are scarcely brought into public spheres. Through the curatorial frameworks of trans narratives in this exhibition, normative understandings of trans experiences are deconstructed, encouraging viewers to trace the trajectory from *Brandon* to *Speaking Without Words* to recontextualise the centrality of language in expressing these issues.

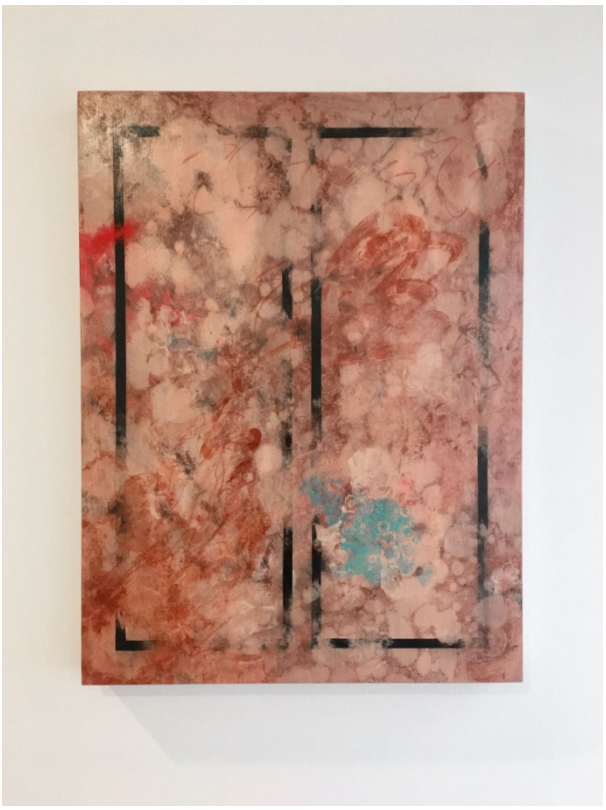
[39] The contextual guide was also accessible online for visitors who wanted to navigate the work separately from the gallery.

Chapter III: Constructing Safe Spaces Through The Fluidity of Abstraction

The presence of abstraction in *Queer Algorithms* has a palpable influence on how the gallery fosters a safe queer space within the institution. Abstraction in this context serves to translate what cannot be put into words or figurative visuals, and no works encompass this more than New Zealand artist Shannon Novak's 2019 abstract portraits. Exhibited in pairs, Novak commemorates key LGBTQI+ figures that have monumentally impacted Aotearoa's queer history: Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Louisa Wall and Jack Goodwin. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku was famously refused entry into the US for her lesbianism in 1972, which served as the catalyst to her establishing gay liberation groups throughout Aotearoa. Louisa Wall is a Labour Party Member of Parliament representing Manurewa, who brought the same-sex marriage bill to parliament in 2012, which came into effect in August a year later. Jack Goodwin founded the Dorian Society in 1972, New Zealand's first formally organised gay group. Celebrating the actions of these individuals, Novak immortalises them through the canvas, which is symbolic of the human body, decorated by flesh-toned paint emblematic of skin. With colours occluding rectangular geometrics, Novak considers this as symbolic of the "failure of heteronormative mechanisms/pressures to silence the individual."[40] This approach employed by Novak's abstraction recalls Getsy's musings that "in its forgoing of representation and its embrace of afiguration, abstraction makes room for a different kind of sedition against the imposition of normativity."[41]

Below the main gallery, GFG's third floor is utilised for its first exhibition, displaying artworks that marry the attitudes of Novak's abstraction with the desire to secure the institution as a safe queer space. This is particularly evident in Novak's site-specific work, *Untitled (Stray)* (2020) an architectural intervention into the gallery. GFG is housed within a 1934 Grade I listed building, meaning Novak's work here encapsulates a monumental act disguised as an understated, abstract artwork. Observing a deviation in the downstairs stained glass window, Novak transforms the menial error, replacing the obstructing window pane with a coloured transparent vinyl. This creates an even bolder disruption to the otherwise symmetrical fixture, which Novak explains as reflecting being "part of the LGBTQI+ community [which] often feels like you are deviating from the norm in almost everything you do."[42] Complementing this sentiment of alienation, his *Bathroom Liberation Study II* (2020) furthermore works to upend the contentious space

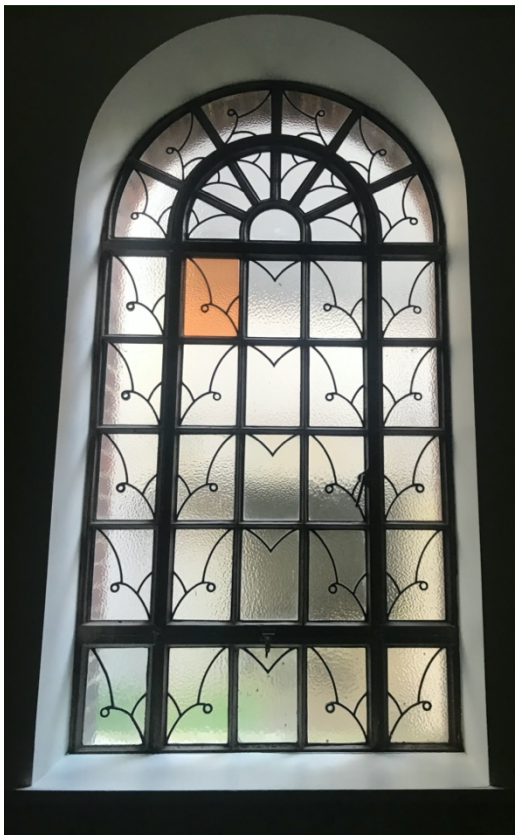
[40] Gus Fisher Gallery, "Artist Spotlight: Shannon Novak," 31 March 2020, https://gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz/2020/03/31/artist-spotlight-shannon-novak/.
[41] David J. Getsy, "Ten Queer Theses on Abstraction," in *Queer Abstraction,* edited by Jared Ledesma, (Des Moines Art Center, 2019), 66.
[42] Quoted from wall text.



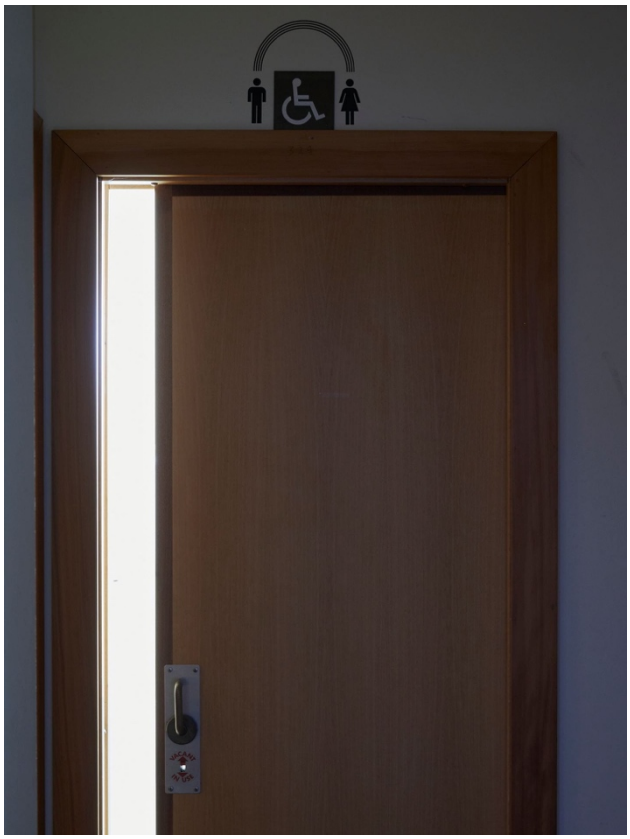
Novak, Shannon. *Louisa Wall*, 2019. Acrylic ink on board. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

into one welcoming the breadth of gender identities. Revivifying the signage of the gallery's bathroom, Novak installed a 'Toilets' sign above the entryway as opposed to the conventional 'male' and 'female' instructions. Between the binary stick figures, a rainbow arches between them, unifying the icons and exemplifying more of the fluidity within the gender spectrum. Bathroom signage is a complex issue contemporary queer communities are confronting, and Novak does not perceive this work as an ideal solution for the conflict, but indicative of a stepping stone towards progress. The abstract forms in Novak's contributions to the exhibition suggest an attempt to deconstruct power hegemonies built into institutional spaces through subtle shifts, once more reinforcing Getsy's argument that "queer existence is always wrapped up in an attention to form… in the survival tactic of shaping oneself to the camouflage of the normal."[43] Entering into the exhibition area displaying these artworks, it is through the presence of the wall texts and the curated atmosphere that the status of the works as anti-normative statements is patiently revealed.

[43] David J. Getsy "Queer Relations," *ASAP/Journal* 2, no. 2 (2017): 256.



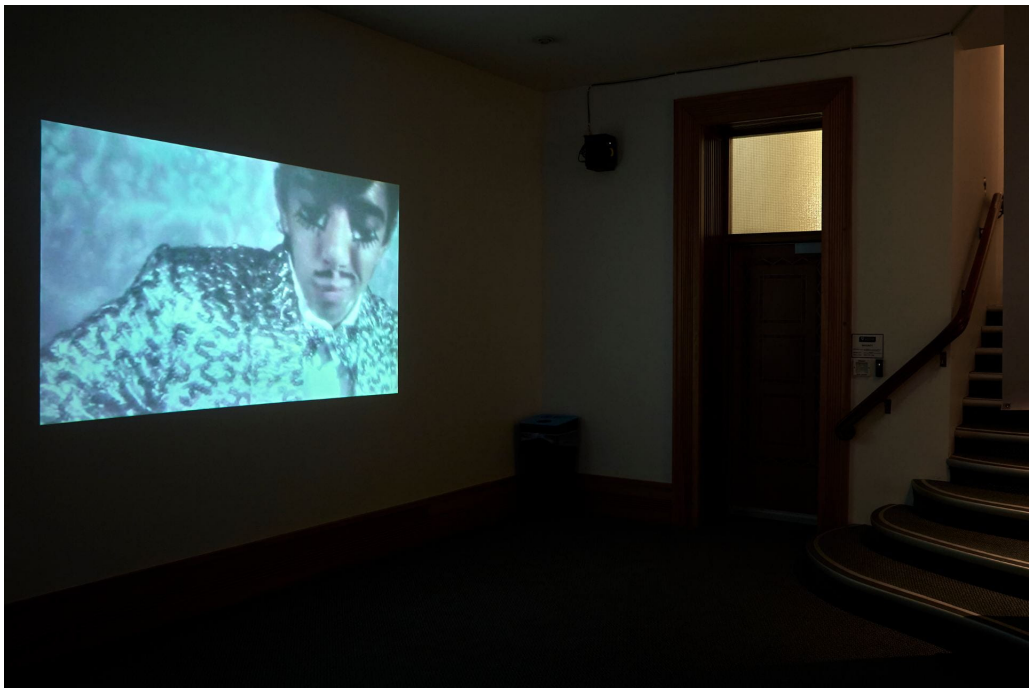
Novak, Shannon. *Untitled (Stray)*, 2020.
Transparent vinyl. Gus Fisher Gallery, Auckland.



Novak, Shannon. *Bathroom Liberation Study II*, 2020.
Acrylic and ink. Gus Fisher Gallery, Auckland.

Described as *Queer Algorithms'* thunderous finale, Martine Gutierrez's video artwork *Clubbing* (2012) accompanies Novak's architectural interventions in the gallery's lower level, establishing a safe queer space through the hypnotic ebullience captured in the 3-minute duration. Set within a low-fi glittery realm, the performance commences with a pulsating rhythm. The ambiguity of the silver setting partnered with retro dance movements creates a timeless atmosphere, reflected in the vogue-like motions reminiscent of 1980's ballroom culture merging with a futuristic tone. As the first couple dances, they multiply, building to a crescendo with three couples populating the dancefloor, the figures watching alternate versions of themselves in synchronicity, as awareness of their presence gradually swells. Projected onto the wall of the gallery's basement-like floor, the physical setting connotes proximity to a nightclub. The silky muted greys and silvers that filter the camera lens provide an atmospheric quality to the performance, while the androgynous physicality of the subjects relishes in non-conforming gender attributes. Gutierrez, through her embellished aesthetics of costume and cosmetics, associates the joy that occurs through assuming this performance of authenticity. In a similar vein to Ifekoya's allusions to queer nightlife spaces in *Ritual*

~~*Without*~~ *Belief,* this work offers a site of transformation and community for the viewer. The unapologetic sensuality invites viewers to explore their gender expression playfully, while the cathartic dance exercises convey the relational capabilities of experimenting with gendered forms in safe public settings. Gutierrez replicates the liberating possibilities of queer communal dance culture, which is described by Fiona Buckland as "packed with stories all pulsating with their own experiences and needs. Any queer dance floor is a mode in which many weaving, layered maps meet."[44] It is a work that suggests rather than duplicates the tendencies of abstraction; it carries the tenet of resisting normativity through empowered dancing as a "multivocal and flexible sphere of social activity."[45]



Gutierrez, Martine. *Clubbing*, 2012. Installation view. Video (still), duration: 3 minutes, 8 seconds. Photograph by Sam Hartnett.

Gutierrez's interpretation of gender performativity strongly reflects the seminal theory of Judith Butler. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler argued that gender is, to an extent, a performance where one repeats gendered actions following a culturally sanctioned code to acclimate to binary standards of gender. This incited a considerable amount of debate within queer theory, mainly targeting Butler's assertation that gender is 'mere' performance, with commentary arguing this insinuated that gender is manufactured.

[44] Fiona Buckland, *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*, (Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 3.
[45] Buckland, 7.

Undoubtedly, Butler's argument remains highly influential, but in relation to Gutierrez's facilitation of safe spaces through her portrayal of performativity, it holds immense value in unfolding the layers of meaning within *Clubbing*. In her book *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler writes:

> Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a 'pure' opposition, a 'transcendence' of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure.[46]

This argument mirrors Gutierrez's approach in challenging gender normativity through the empowerment of queer cultural practices. The resonance of Butler's performativity claims in *Clubbing* become multifaceted when considered in addition to Getsy's argument on the power of queer abstraction. As stated, the abstraction within this work is not explicit, Gutierrez utilises the bodily forms of the dancing subjects, which strengthens links with Butler's gender performativity that focuses heavily on the centrality of the body. However, as a video artwork devoid of narrative, an identifiable environment or other signifiers that enable viewers to extract an exact, logical meaning, the work remains abstract. Getsy's theories on queer abstraction highlight the significance of resisting the cultural markings of the body, whereby the taxonomical classification of the body through gender stereotypes is subverted, which Getsy frames as a "position from which to prompt new visualisations and to propose new relations."[47] Through the ways that *Clubbing* draws on Butler's theory and queer abstraction, intentionally or subconsciously, the work reinforces the uplifting potential of safe spaces with abstract performance as the instrument to enact this power.

The curatorial framing of the abstract works in *Queer Algorithms* conveys a desire to subvert the institution's elitist propensities to construct an accessible, safe space. In working with Novak, the founder of the Safe Space Alliance, an organisation working to increase the number of safe spaces available to the LGBTQ+ community in New Zealand, GFG represents a diversion from institutional practices that have privileged the needs of society members already equipped with power. The Safe Space Alliance defines a safe space as somewhere either physical or digital where the queer community can

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[46] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 184.
[47] Quoted in Christiane Erhater, Dietmar Schwärzler, Ruby Sircar, and Hans Scheirl, eds., *Pink Labor on Golden Streets: Queer Art Practices*, (Sternberg Press, 2015), 51.

freely express themselves without fear, where discrimination in any form is not tolerated.[48] This exhibition employed various framing devices in the form of signage throughout the gallery to help communicate with queer individuals that the gallery was a welcoming place, which is intrinsically complicated by their status as an institution. There are entrenched layers of inaccessibility that needed to be acknowledged in order to reconcile the gallery as a safe space, from the building itself still requiring improvements to be more accessible for those with disabilities, to its location in the CBD as a region isolating to those unfamiliar with it. By framing Novak and Gutierrez's works through contextual associations of queer club culture, the curation strives to situate the visitor experience as if it was outside of the institution to enhance their ability to consider the works through queer perspectives.

The queer curatorial practice in the treatment of abstraction instigates curiosities of the efficiency of the safe space tactic in dismantling institutional normativity. It poses the question, is it even possible for institutions to become a safe space? Novak's work in *Queer Algorithms* builds on his practice of abstract portraiture and bathroom signage exhibited in *Sub Rosa,* held in New Plymouth's Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in 2019. Francis McWhannell's analysis of the queer politics in this exhibition prompt similarly philosophical ruminations on what determines a safe space for contemporary queer communities. The 2019 attack on queer journalist Aziz Al-Sa'afin took place not only on Karangahape Road but during Pride Festival celebrations, challenging the feelings of safety many harboured towards the street reputed for its queer nightclubs.[49] *Queer Algorithms* represents the lengths Auckland and its art centre has to go to deconstruct the preservation of normativity, while remaining cognitive of the ongoing efforts required to implement small changes that can accumulate to a consolidation of safety. The queer curatorial practice at work is not ground-breaking, but realistically ambitious. *Queer Algorithms* does not depart from what we understand an exhibition to be, nor does it attempt to sever itself from its setting in an institution entirely. Instead, it takes inspiration from the subversive power in the queer artworks to acknowledge the progress the sector still needs to work towards.

[48] Safe Space Alliance, "Vision, Mission and Values," Accessed November 2020, https://safespacealliance.com/.
[49] Francis McWhannell, "Sex in the Gallery: Shannon Novak's Sub Rosa," 11 April 2019, https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/shannon-novaks-sub-rosa.

Conclusion

Returning to Patrik Steorn, he argues that despite the potential for further segmenting queer narratives as incompatible with museum displays, by resisting representation in a public space queer artists could exhibit in independent community archives. Thus, he suggests that sharing queer knowledge bases with larger audiences should only be done in the terms established by the individual or community.[50] *Queer Algorithms* signals not only the significance of artists displaying their work on their own terms within the institution, but the possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship between the two parties. Despite the oppressive powers built into institutional structures, queer exhibitions can thrive within them without compromising activist intentions and fluidity. This showcases the responsibility of curatorial practice in facilitating a sustainable, safe public space for queer communities and artists.

Throughout this dissertation, I have examined the primary curatorial frameworks typifying *Queer Algorithms*. Exploring the responses to HIV/AIDS, this exhibition has distinguished itself from preceding depictions of the virus with its juxtaposition of emotions evident with its use of John Walter's work and the New Zealand AIDS Memorial Quilts. Here, they draw on the variants of representation to incite a durational process of introspection for the viewer. The treatment of trans subjects in the exhibition strongly correlated with the importance of language, focused on the works of Shu Lea Cheang and Aliyah Winter. This chapter considered queer communication and how the trappings of language within these artworks are used to subvert the marginalisation and depiction of trans individuals and communities. Finally, the analysis of the exhibition's use of abstraction in forming a safe queer space with longevity was examined through the contributions of artists Shannon Novak and Martine Gutierrez. Drawing on the pivotal queer theory of Judith Butler and David Getsy, this revealed the layered mechanics enabling visitors to feel welcome within the institution.

Queer Algorithms was, from its infancy, irrevocably self-conscious of its timeliness in Aotearoa's queer contemporary culture. Having opened amid Auckland Pride Festival, the exhibition sought to redefine the boundaries previously assumed to have constrained the possibilities of queer exhibitions for major local galleries. With intersectionality embedded into the curatorial framework, collaborations were central from the conceptual origin of the exhibition, with artists and the queer community.[51] Not only were collaborations with the New Zealand AIDS Foundation and the Safe Space

[50] Steorn, 363.
[51] Beauchamp and Craig, interview.

Alliance prioritised, but the staff underwent preliminary training with Rainbow Youth on gender and sexuality. At the same time, the University of Auckland's Rainbow and Trans Groups, as well as the Queer Student Rights Officer were involved in ensuring accessibility across the range of queerness was considered. As a group show, the exhibition welcomes breadth in every instance in the audience it embraces, in the subjects approached, in the public programming presented. Abundance and fluidity were fundamentally entwined with the ethos of the exhibition to convey that queerness is not fixed, nor a eccentricity that needs to be solved, but a way of viewing the world openly.

If we consider the long-term impact of *Queer Algorithms* on our contemporary milieu, we may question how this model poses strategies for Aotearoa's institutions to subvert the normativity they risk purporting. Determining the central tenets of queer curatorial practice as an espousal of fluidity, the relinquishing of power (at least partially) and an openness to challenging viewers, this highlights how the subversion of normativity hinges upon queer sentiments. These strategies are empowered in *Queer Algorithms,* evident in the developed curatorial frameworks that are dialogic, concerned with communication and navigating spatial concerns. This exhibition implores Auckland, and New Zealand's art institutions to actively step outside of normative viewpoints and re-evaluate their role in taking a stance on social issues for the betterment of the communities they claim to serve.

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Appendix Interview Schedule

What were your key inspirations and motivations for making a queer exhibition?

What was the planning process of the exhibition like?
(How did the concept develop?)

What went into the process of involving the artists and selecting the works?

What were the central aims you wanted to achieve?

Did you have a target audience or demographic that informed the exhibition?

Were any collaborations with queer organisations/communities involved?
(If so, why did you feel consultation was important?)

What challenges were most difficult to navigate when curating this exhibition?
(Were there any limitations, obstacles, or areas where you felt you had to exercise caution?)

Did you feel that the queer perspectives in the art and overarching themes had an impact on the curatorial process and exhibition design?

The exhibition encourages revisitation, aside from being interrupted by Covid-19, was there a noticeable rise in visitors returning to the gallery?

What were the goals of your public programming?

Was there any kind of long-term change you hoped to incite throughout the wider Auckland/New Zealand art world with this exhibition?