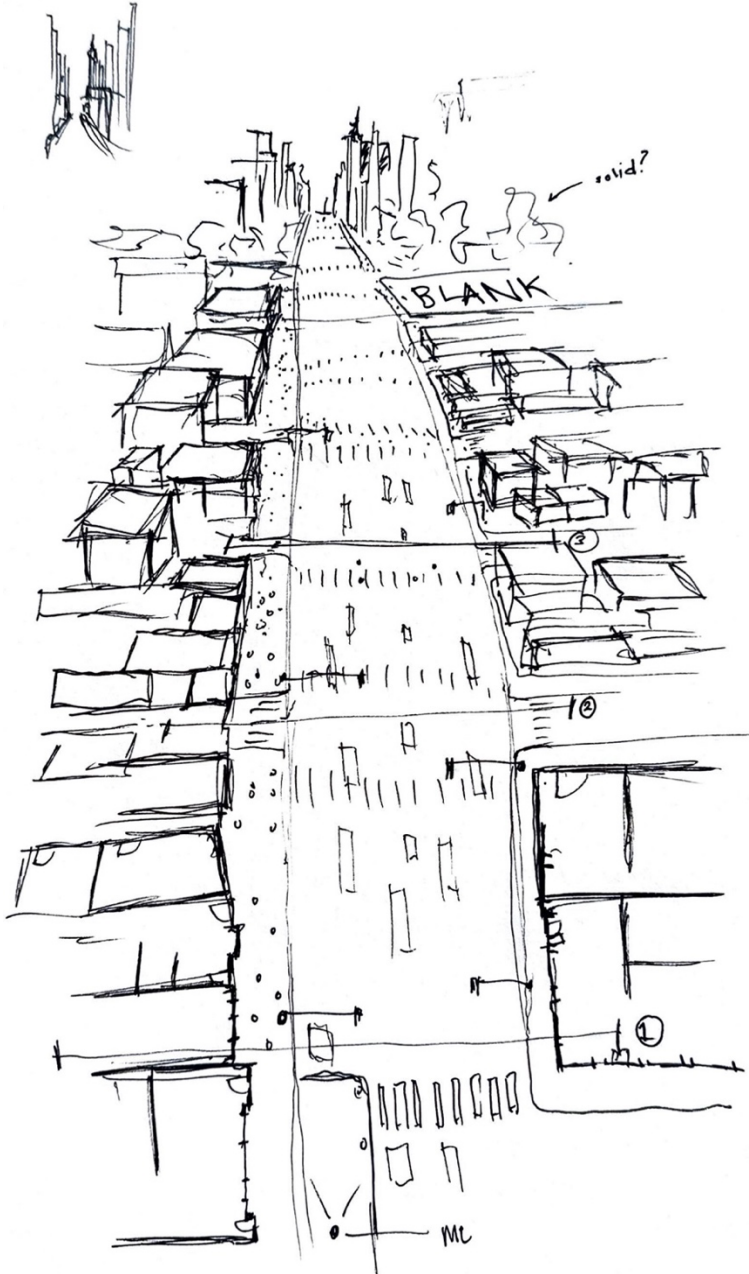


Draft: To be Finished.

“sanctuary”

*Queer Urban Phenomena:
Architectural and Urban Conditions responsible for
Sites of Queer Prosperity*



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00 Opening –

0.1-Abstract

Little scholarship exists speaking on the connection between urban architectural conditions and queerness. There is an assumption made that cities and urban landscapes are alienating and diminishing to human relationships, in this thesis I refute that assumption and develop characteristics of urban landscapes that provide a safe and powerful space in which ambiguity becomes a tool of power and growth. This ambiguity is accomplished through a myriad of architectural and spatial phenomena, and because of this ambiguity, people, queer people find power in privilege, kinship, performance, and autonomy. Through the unpacking of spatial pathology, the theory that humans are shaped by the built environments we walk around in, I will build a narrative for the landscapes of prosperity. The dimensions of the urban sidewalk in the *metropolis* have been redefined and recontextualized to house the narrative of the prosperous queer, who finds sanctuary in the chaos of the urban. The antagonist of this narrative is introduced through the idea of the *symbolic*. A timeless landscape, of institutional behavior and facility to limit groups of societies. A tool of repression and alienation through architectural form. Throughout the paper I will rely on the visual narratives of New York City and Memphis as case studies to unpack the typological differences found in these landscapes. What will be revealed is that one can determine whether or not they are in a metropolitan or symbolic landscape from a singular square of sidewalk pavement. The degrees of visibility and ambiguity present in these opposing places, will be identifiers of their nature and intentions. The urban metropolis holds the perfect balance between humanity's need for community and independence, something that queerness thrives on. Urban conditions, found in metropolitan landscapes, provide any person, a landscape to perform one's identity, with the protective cloak of a hyper-stimulated environment, one's appearance gets blurred out of view, as the density of stimuli in a city turn people into objects and passing moments. In defiance of that, the symbolic, an authoritarian logic of a hetero-patriarchal scheme exists throughout the built environment. The symbolic regulates, homogenizes, and displaces in the urban field. For queer people, untethered to the heteronormative expectations and boxes, the singular square of the sidewalk becomes a liberating space, ten feet away from the sanctuary of community and home. Thus, the urban metropolis is the perfect space for the queer body to flourish and thrive.

0.2-Opening Statements

In the bustling metropolises of the world, the components and conditions of the urban rhythm situate queerness to blossom and thrive. Cities stand as crucibles where diverse identities and expressions of love and self-discovery converge in a dynamic dance. From the neon-lit districts that embrace the night to the hidden corners where communities forge connections, the urban landscape becomes a site in which queerness finds sanctuary and prosperity. I began this project because I grew up in the suburbs of Manhattan. In the closet and confused, one thing felt right, and it was the feeling of emerging out of Penn Station. The grime of midtown was a rush, and I felt like I could breathe again. I'm thrown into the chaos of the street, the sounds, lights, colors bombarding my senses. My walk doesn't feel observed, I am someone and no one at the same time. I feel a weight lifted off my back and I feel so free. What I have come to establish is there is an architectural rhythm and logic related to these feelings and ideas, a harmony exists in this world. This is a study that looks at where I felt comfort, safety, and space for my vibrancy and where I didn't, a means to establish a pattern through the use of architecture and queer theory.

We understand cities to be places with high human density, an egalitarian market structure and governing body which attempts to hold the sprawl together. Because of this cities, emerge as sites of enormous cultural transmission, globalization, and economic prosperity. Now let me introduce the metropolis, beyond the definition of vast urban sprawl, the metropolis will become a landscape in which ambiguity is given and possibility is limitless. We have found that urban settings are safe spaces for progressive and futuristic mindsets and peoples. In an urban landscape, there is a necessity to investigate the physical conditions that provide a haven for outcast members of society. Those who appropriate the urban jungle to exercise visibility, truth, and authenticity, all to employ measures of unmasking one's identity beyond the subscribed nature of the symbolic. The **symbolic**, this timeless landscape, is an institutional behavior and facility made to limit groups of societies. Through alienating, excluding and marginalizing it dictates acceptability, based on behavior and identity that is viewed simply because it is visible outside the defined institutional thresholds. Beyond the landscapes where institutional expression is limited, I define the **Metropolis**, a singular square of sidewalk, a sanctuary. The sanctuary is a space that gives power to queer individuals who embrace the inertia of ambiguity, a political space of expression and visibility in the city, or the metropolis. In this intricate interplay between form and identity, cities not only witness, but actively participate in the ongoing narrative of queer existence.

Persecution → Sanctuary → Displacement

The diagram above is reflective of shared patterns of queer identity, from **my** perspective. Our emergence is often associated with an era of persecution and prejudice, my teenage years being an internal turmoil, the closet, negotiating terms, and derogatory language that I didn't know were my identifiers. This animosity led me to forge my own path to sanctuary, safety, vibrancy, and beauty in the metropolis, a willingness to engage with discomfort in the pursuit of truth and freedom. And then inevitably, that sanctuary, the avant-garde, new and fantastical becomes economically desirable, resulting in our displacement, exclusion, and removal. The intentions of this are to situate queer theory into a relationship with spatial pathology, and architectural theory. This will demonstrate an honest conceit of the built environment's effect on our lived realities, those part of the hegemonic institution of the heteropatriarchy and those excluded. Additionally, throughout this paper I will use the ambiguous language of "queer", to demonstrate that it is not who you share a bed with, but how your behaviors and identity can label you as elusive, transgressive, and powerful, in the context of the built environment. The nature of symbolic landscapes is applicable to many diverse identities, but in this context, I will use the character of the queer to build my argument, so that it is not that cities make queerness, but queerness congregates in spaces that allow them to define themselves and flourish.

01 Persecuting Worlds -

1.1-Defining Terms to Contextualize the Future

Let's begin with an unraveling of the history of modernization, and its relationship to the symbolic, our first era, persecution. Imagine modernization as a train. A train that moves at an exponential speed, crossing various landscapes, time periods, and technological revolutions. It's turbulent and tireless, withstanding the might and ever-lasting speed is a feat not for the weak in stamina. From exhaustion or indoctrinated ambitions, you leap off the train thinking that you will quickly be able to get back on, and you're mistaken. That train is culture, its ideas, its everything that yesterday thought was radical, but today and tomorrow engage with in open arms. The modern was the train emerging, the train moving through time is modernization, and modernity is the act of boarding the train, a willingness to engage, an identity of indeterministic ambitions, the queer. The act of leaping off the train is the symbolic. The symbolic is many things, dress, sex, work and even place. It is merely a representation of solidifying ideas in time, a purgatory of sorts. A dismissal of curiosity, and rationalization of today, an exclusive site of regulated theatricality. Queerness is just one example of modernity. It sits in the maelstrom of modernization in the metropolis and dares to be authentic and radical, an ever raging thriller.

To understand the relationship between the experiential and architectural qualities of the city one is required a re-introduction to the present, past, and future. Urban evolution and transformation must be recontextualized through the lens of the evolving nature of modernization, its desires, and effects on space through our history. Let's reconstitute these concepts with the identities of the built environment. Recontextualizing these ideas will help us further understand the architectural conditions of these places, to further recognize how specific individuals, queer people, experience and thrive in the metropolis. What places allow us to unshackle the bonds of the past, so that we may stay present in the current, and open-minded to the future.

The past, the forming of the symbolic, can be illustrated through the work of Frederic LePlay, an influential thinker of nineteenth century urban modernization. He constructed idealized worlds modeled around his studies of proletariat social structures. His studies would institute pillars/institutions to direct social change.¹ LePlay and other modern based thinkers believed they could create a utopian place that organized social being on this train of the future, and left behind the disease, poverty and baggage of the previous era. To escape the past, cities were fashioned with specific institutions and infrastructures to support this proletariat. For example, the market became the heart of the city, the seat of power the liver, the academies of art the lungs, the schools and worship spaces the brain, the roads as the veins, public transit as the arteries and the sidewalks as the eyes.² All these components working together symbiotically to uphold the institution of the symbolic of that era. This practice of design is the embodiment of the symbolic, through architectural methods, an intolerant and bounded utopia was established and consequently trapped in a purgatory of its own fruition. LePlay and other French urbanist's practices and theories become integral to this narrative as they represent the traditional, a solid, symbolic orthodox logic of prejudice and exclusion, being inscribed into the built environment. Symbolic landscapes will continue to emerge and become tools of repression and alienation to those who embody characteristics it deems deviant.

Before moving too far, three things need to be extrapolated on. The first is **metropolis**. The where, a hyper saturated, overstimulating, phantasmagoric production. Different from its generic

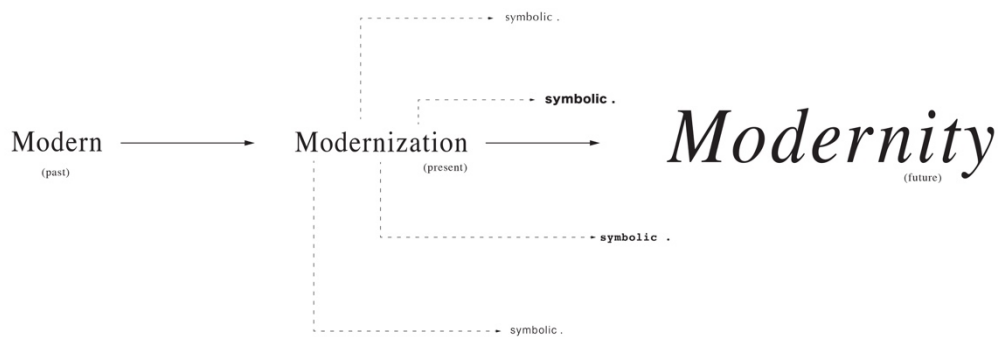
definition, here the metropolis is more than just urban density and sprawl, it is actually the space between the buildings in cities, a site of visibility and expression, a harmony of spatial conditions transpiring in collective symphony. Within the boundaries of sidewalk pavement, the metropolis is a sanctuary, a space that gives power to people who embrace the ambiguity it constructs. The “urban”, our downtowns, our cities, or our dense centers are actually just infrastructure for collective groups. They house capital, ideas, businesses, and entertainment and are often unable to push the boundaries like the metropolis, these are the symbolic. The **symbolic** is derived from queer scholarship of Lee Edelman, it is the antagonist and what, of our narrative. It is an alienating, disheartening congregation of elements that define a place. It’s a landscape unbound by time, an institutionalizing of behavior by facilities and conditions that limit groups in society. Through alienating, excluding or marginalizing, it dictates acceptability based on behavior and identity that is viewed, simply because it is visible outside the defined thresholds.⁵ The third definition is **Queer**. Queer holds many definitions and connotations. In the past it’s been a slur, today it’s an identity, and tomorrow it could be a place. In this project it is our who, this evolving nature of queer renders it ambiguous and independent from the hegemonic powers above. What can be said about queerness in this essay, is that queerness is the world of tomorrow. It’s the rejection of forced liberties, its sexual autonomy, its self-determination, its theatrical performance, it’s a refusal of heteropatriarchal control, and a rejection of bounded conservative identity. To put these terms into a familiar context together, I will introduce **heteropatriarchy**, a system of the symbolic. This is an intersection of the relationship between an oppressive agenda forced on by the social construct of masculinity and heterosexuality, it is a force that attempts to regulate and displace queerness in the built environment, a pressurized system of organization and essentialization that demands us to categorize our bodies and our practices into a fixed boundary of identity, one that can be used to sort and rank social factions.⁶ Queerness deteriorating in symbolic landscapes longs for space to reject the fixed boundary of sexual identity and conservatism. Thus, to escape the oppressive alienating character of the heteropatriarchal landscapes, queerness escapes to the metropolis, freed from its persecution, ambiguous.

To corroborate this figure who longs for a landscape of ambiguity, time and modernization in the metropolis is expressed by Marshall Berman, in his work *All That is Solid Melts to Air*, where he references **the modernist**. To me this is the human state of plasticity, one’s ability to repurpose themselves from the bond of yesterdays “traditions” and move forward, without fear or guilt to tomorrow’s reality.⁷ Queerness on the contemporary stage is this plasticity, an autonomy and self-determination, a grip on destiny in the face of the chaos in a constantly evolving world.⁸ Instead of running from this storm of modernity, we make home in it. Let’s take this metamorphosing quality and make it a social characteristic, as the world continues to modernize in the face of evolving technology there will be humans more comfortable sitting in that ever-evolving landscape, modernists, the flaneur, the queer. Our why becomes a question of site-specific qualities and conditions that generate ambiguity. Haussmannization, the demolition of venerable cholera ridden Paris, made room for the elements and objects of modernity, idyllic promenades of recreation and flirtation with the future. These landscapes to the abyss of tomorrow were transformational and would fashion an ambiguity, the how, on the sidewalk that gave space and power to the evolving character of the queer.

1.2-Modernization: Establishing the Symbolic and Metropolis

This new evolving world is set on the stage of the boulevard, the Champs-Elysees or the Rue de Rivoli were epic new architectural typologies to emerge out of French modernization. During the late nineteenth century these worlds were filled with places to feed the recreational desires of an elite class. Glittering fountains, and infinite arcades ornamented these streets and revolutionized the character of Paris.⁹ Broadway, Fifth Avenue and Flatbush Avenue help us situate ourselves in the context of the Metropolis of New York City, a global city with similar conditions. In the context of the nineteenth century, to walk was to promenade, to pronounce ownership of one's own destiny, these infinite worlds became dystopic privileged spaces of performance, an exclusive site of regulated theatricality, and a subscription of heteropatriarchal ideas onto the urban fabric. A display of fashions, families and dramas, the street was the stage, free from the grime of the lower classes. This brings us to the introduction of an elusive figure, one who finds their way into these privileged recreational spaces, **the flaneur**.

Walter Benjamin wrote the *Arcades Project* between 1927-1940, and in this chronicle of modernization he picks up on that elusive figure.¹⁰ By chance, absolved and ambiguous this anonymous person was the *flaneur*, unsubscribed to the heteronormative family structures that would have resulted in their deportation to the peripheries, they remained carefree and independent, to float through the boulevards with the bourgeoisie. They were unbound to the material rules of society that French urbanists meant to organize, thus the construct of their identity materialized through their alarming presence in the built environment. These figures were situated on the planes of modernity as they could not be categorized in the symbolic past, but what historical record tells us is that their disposal and removal from recreational spaces of the privileged will come with the development of sexual identity as a construct to control. This symbolic act would be a severing from the future to institute hierarchal segregation based on sex in the present, which would consequently leave them in the past.



The figure above illustrates the patterns of normative institutions establishing their own symbolics to project their futurity and imaginative providence. The criminalization of sodomy and the establishment of hierarchal sexual identities would establish a new symbolic. The old symbolic, disposed of the proletariat to be cogs in the machine, feeding the fires of the bourgeoisie fantasy, now in 1869, with the inscription of homosexuality as a defined state of being, beyond merely a practice or exercise, an era fixated on the future jumped off the train.¹¹ The establishment of “deviance” and “uncivilized” character

around sexual practices, was an abdication from the transformational nature of modernization on the boulevard, a birth to a new symbolic. The Symbolic here is a project of colonization of the body, to be placed into the system of the greater whole, a decree of respectable behaviors and expectations were thus materialized into the bones and organs of our urban spaces, the stage of the twentieth century would see the increase in heteropatriarchal institutions at work, to displace and destabilize the worlds of the queer.

Later in his novel, Berman articulates the departure of the upper class to a more regulated environment, somewhere they can truly organize their worlds, and exclude those unwelcome. He says, “the bourgeois embarrassment, they cannot afford to look down the roads they have opened up: the great wide vistas may turn into abysses.”¹² To escape the overwhelming newness of modernity, the exploding markets, new peoples, ways of life, diverse foods, and spices, the elite both removed themselves from the metropolis and established their own private worlds for self-determined recreation, leaving the metropolis to house the markets and cultures of the working class.¹³ Fantastical and thrilling, the byproducts of French Haussamization created architectural landscapes for the perplexity of modernity to run wild. In the periphery they classified and organized their world to best structure their lives, shallow as they might be, but they can see- even if what they are seeing is a mirage, fabricated and representative of yesterday. What we find in twentieth-century modernization is the subscription of the heterosexual family to a dystopic fantastical world where commodities and places reaffirm their destinies and desires. This will eventually become the middle class, gender and sex bound and regulated as means of ensuring future worlds of the symbolic, detached from the evolving nature of tomorrow and the character of the modernist.

If we stop being modern and become rigid, we leap off the train and sit in the past. The symbolic recurs persistently, throughout time it's an attempt to hold power and thought, regardless of if that thought is exclusive or alienating to a subset of people. These landscapes get filled with behaviors and facilities that fuel those fantasies of that past symbolic ideology. Consequently, the counterpart, the metropolis is an architectural landscape of possibility. This maelstrom changes people, to survive personalities must take on the fluid and open form of this society. This space of performance became an abyss filled with uncertain futures, ambiguous and dark. A place to nestle, house and breathe free of the realities, structures, and institutions of the past.



(Memphis Research Trip, Photography)

1.3-Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

I will return to the scholarship of Edelman to elaborate on the timeless qualities of the symbolic. In his literature, Edelman identifies “the child” as this tool of exclusion and alienation in mid-twentieth century.¹⁴ The lifestyles around procreation, the production of offspring, had not been a tool of division and exclusion until the implementation of sexual identity in society. Queerness, and its biological abstention became a rejection and dismissal to reproductive based futures in space, an agent of destruction. A statement of defiance to this fetishistic fixation on the heteronormative practice of family making.¹⁵ To counter this bounding of sexual recreation, the reality is queer people long for family, community and belonging in the same ways that heterosexual couples do. Through metropolitan landscapes they have found other ways to construct those immaterial bonds of humanity, where ambiguity allows them the shield from duties and expectations set by symbolic thresholds. The symbolic embodied and materialized in spaces around children, spaces that were unwelcoming and excluding to those who could not confine themselves to the parameters it set. Through suburban utopias, daycares, or playgrounds queerness became and was labeled a dangerous figure, whose lust for pleasurable sex, beyond procreative, was the epitome of deviance.¹⁶



(Memphis Research Trip, Photography)

The symbolic outlined above is the institution of behavior and identity that is permitted in visible space. This merging of surveillance, respectability, and guilt have become tools used to restrict the visibility and vibrancy of peoples, in order to protect and project the life force of a deemed privileged class. Flaneurs, who danced on the planes of the future were untethered and liberated. Their bodies unbounded were transgressive and alarmingly visible. As others were tethered to duties and realities of conservatism, the flaneur slips through the cracks, metaphorically becoming a leaf in the wind.¹⁷ The root of the symbolic is that it moves through time, as the flaneur is metamorphosing on the planes of the future, the symbolic will jump through time as well to keep up. It is the solidifying of ideas, and restriction to behaviors and institutions beyond those set. To counteract, was to justify crucifixion, the symbolic means to use infrastructure and architecture to regulate citizenship and recreation, through one’s visibility. Its conditions and practices will have lasting effects on the character of space, where we are visible, where we can unmask, where we have autonomy and where we have true power and prosperity.¹⁸

The symbolic can be identified by degrees of visibility one is able to access, ambiguity. In all forms of time the symbolic has emerged in landscapes with a *fragmenting of constructed space, a homogeneity of the built environment, a predictability of urban rhythm, spaces set for performance, intransigent institutions and a stale stimulation from the environment*. These qualities of space all render a hyper-visible expression of self, an absence of ambiguity that would provide security to the non-conformist, the flaneur, the queer, the modernist. We find that urban landscapes are recovered through symbolic characteristics listed above, as ways to dispose of the flaneur. Regulate and homogenize a once vibrant ambiguous landscape, into a fantasy like prison that is monitored, bound and devoid of personality.¹⁹ Edelman's suburban dystopias are just one example of symbolic landscapes, a development of the periphery, sprawled on spacious plots of land allocated to the recreation and performance of the middle class that emerged from the Second World War.²⁰ Tree-lined streets, paved roads, isolated commercial islands, parks and community institutions were used to feed a population of the consumerist culture of the post-war, today's symbolic will appear differently and claim space for the queer in new ways.

The Flaneur helps us situate identity in the landscape of the metropolis, to recognize where we can see the manifestation of immaterial beliefs structured into realities of submission or alienation. As the *Flaneur* moves freely through landscapes meant to regulate and organize we will begin to see the increase of resentment to their expression of liberty. Their autonomy of self becomes an obstacle and rejection of the past that they might find themselves situated in. Modernists, trying to live on that train that keeps moving and gives them space to be who they are. The symbolic, is built on pillars of heteropatriarchal control, these places were materializations of political economic and social ideas, with different tools to monitor, regulate and displace, all in order to sculpt the identities they chose to recognize. This is why the boulevard remains a powerful site, situated in the chaos of modernization, the boulevard gets reduced to the sidewalk, an infinite plane of possibility and direction. Dancing through past, present and future, queerness finally finds a space to breath and express its vibrancy.

Considering this reintroduction to past, present and future, let us consider again queerness and its relationship with our built landscapes. Where do we find to have autonomy and liberty, versus where have we found imprisonment and prejudice? What must be made clear here is that symbolic landscapes can exist in many places, even in urban dense landscapes. The title of this section is persecution, because our vitality and autonomy are held from us when we are trapped in the past. Growing up in the shadows of Manhattan, one wouldn't expect to feel the weight of the symbolic so heavily. It was the costume I felt I had to wear when I went to school, it was the stares I felt dressed for my first pride, it was the neighborhoods, people cookie cut and performing, the church I drove past on the way to soccer practice or the eerie silence of a parking lot. The symbolic will shift through time, as it claims more that was made by the modernists through its annulling of ambiguity and increasing of visibility, it will make room for those which has previously excluded. Nonetheless, queerness will thrive beyond these solids of the past, as it's a fractured identity situated in the character of the future. To be a Modernist is to be enmeshed and autonomous in the restless nature of modernization, to own one's own futurity, beyond the definition of what was earlier considered a future.²⁷ Our sex, and bodies are not to be machines of a reproductive heteronormative future, it is to challenge that conservative doctrine of the past. The phenomenological qualities of the metropolitan landscape will encapsulate this rejection of the rigid boundaries of hegemonic normalities. The Metropolis, a machine seeks that which is new and unhabitual, fresh and grotesque, the Avant-garde. It offers clouded, turbulent landscapes in which one can autonomously and

ambiguously control their future, regardless of their ability to conform to the box of the current, which just became the past.

02 Finding Sanctuary -

2.1- Chasing the Freedom of the Maelstrom

The metropolis is a unique place because, beyond the territories of domesticity and work, the world between these spaces is occupied by practices of recreation, expression, and visibility... in a dense, hyper-saturated, phantasmagoric production. The metropolitan landscape allows one to engage in the privilege of private autonomous life, and perform in the public sphere, all within a fractional and equitable dimension.²⁸ Queerness thus finds its home in the particularity of its practices and habits, in the voids and cracks of the hetero-patriarchal society, amongst the maelstrom of the metropolis. An overstimulating environment that is integral to the development and transformation of modernization. It is a site in which people have the power to change the world that is changing them. Berman uses this concept of the maelstrom to characterize the energy and power of the edge of modernity, and I will site this “maelstrom” in the metropolis.²⁹ It’s the antithesis to the symbolic, those solid worlds are devoid of inner freedoms, furnished and fed by a multitude of nullities subjects are bred to crave and need.³⁰ That rigid world beyond sits in the modernity of yesterday, whereas the metropolis, the evolving landscape, flexible and unregulated hovers, dances, glides across the cables of yesterday in the metropolis.

The metropolis is hard to grasp fully, we experience it as shapes, lights, colors, and objects, not as people, races, sexes, and cultures, bouncing off one another.³¹ Blurred are the boundaries and walls set by rationalist enlightenment-based thinkers. Queer people anxiously vibrate in the symbolic desperate for the liberation and vibrancy that is accessible on the infinite planes of the metropolis. These thrilling landscapes test the brain, and also free the brain from the preconceived worlds the past has constructed for us. On the streets is the site of change, liberation and equality, our feet, unbound to the engine, allow us to lead our own direction, free from cages of identity, we cruise through the agglomeration of material



(New York City Research Trip, Photography)

objects and spaces, transforming movement into beauty, truth and autonomy. To be specific I am referencing the landscape that encompasses the dimensions of the planes of the sidewalk and beyond.

Its recreational and flexible, these in-between spaces become liberating through the architectural character that Haussamen-esque design provided. It becomes a space that is exposing to the oblique and sharp boundaries that heteropatriarchal spaces create to situate humans in a given social reality, queerness alters those fantasies structurally and physically to sustain itself. Engagement with the alternative becomes resistant to the figural logics that shape the rest of the world. We cruise through the axial character that emerged out of the French rationalization of the urban street, it was influential in the development of place to practice one's "irregularities" and queerness that symbolic landscapes denied. Jack Halberstam asks us to reconsider the architectural logic of the metropolis, as for him bodily autonomy and trans-figuration of the body is a practice enmeshed in modernity and is undeniably related to architecture.³²

In *Unbuilding Gender*, Halberstam argues that transness is about expression and ownership of the body, a blueprint for the unbuilding of the binary systems of the world.³³ If we are to translate the sexualization and commodification of the binary of our bodies, why cannot we extend this expression or repression to the landscape of the physical world. In a way, architecture is the identity of an idea of a symbolic past. From this then we begin to contextualize that the metropolis has nothing to do with the buildings themselves as independent identities, but it is the space in-between the buildings. The maelstrom must be framed around the design of the abandoned un-marketable places that merely act as performance space. Trans bodies, the act of a "creative destruction" allow us to recontextualize bodily modification, around the foundational fictions of identity, and how solid rigid boundaries are representative of the symbolic. Architecture, the nature of something physical with permanence is the symbolic, and it is the street and sidewalk between this dense collection of symbolic objects that is the maelstrom. Queerness thus thrives in these in-between moments where they are unsubscribed to the narrative of that symbolic through architecture, free to unbuild the world around them through their ambiguity.

These revolutionary landscapes become erotic in their diversity and abundance of stimuli.³⁴ For most, the sidewalk has less meaning because it's simply a transitory site. It connects the domestic to the workplace, dressed in the drag of that symbolic institution, movement becomes representative of a performance of ideas instead of a choice.³⁵ People say, their apartment is where they eat and sleep, but they live in the city, on the streets, in the subway cars, in restaurants and clubs, at galleries and parties, constantly mingling and exchanging. But for queer people, the city character renders the sidewalk a space of independence, liberation, theatricality, and ambiguity. This visibility through pavement becomes powerful, as it is a disruption to the powers above, unshackled to the expectations of a forced symbolic reality, city sidewalks are both functional and recreational.³⁶ I will establish how an ambiguity can exist which allows for an unshackling of chains to the hetero-normative structures, to demonstrate how queerness as a practice of modernity is a central element of *metronormativity*. The ambiguous flaneur has found their Eden in which they are unbound to alienating futures, cultivate the theatrical performance that is identity, and find validation in community and collective citizenship.

2.2- Ambiguity: Cloaked in the Landscape

The axial character of our urban spaces that emerged during the French rationalization of the city street was incredibly influential in the development of places to practice one's irregularities and queerness that heteronormative enclaves denied, a haven where people were liberated from the roles society was forcing them to play. The previous typology of the street had been cluttered and disorganized, no balance between one's visibility and their covertness, the piece-meal medieval city organization was done away with under the clause of public health, and replaced by revolutionary vignettes that provided a glimpse into the future. Paris was not the only metropolitan space to incorporate these endless lines into the scape of the cities, it became a typology that popped up in many urban centers across the globe. This phenomenon changed the nature of humans and thus the spaces they would choose to inhabit. The metropolitan landscape situated at the edge of the maelstrom became an environment accepting and tolerable of performance, autonomy, kinship and visibility that queerness will thrive in.

"Giving off equivocal signs... class exists, but Haussmann's spaces allow it to be overlooked... History exists, but Haussmann's spaces have room for it to be hidden... their inattention is provided for by the empty spaces and streams of sights."³⁷ This quote, from TJ Clark, helps us contextualize the phenomenon of this radical new form of space, a reality indebted to the specific design and formal choices made in urban places. It is the characteristics of dense urban landscapes, the metropolis, that provides the balance between ambiguity and belonging, enriching the life of a displaced queer person. In the same structure as before with the symbolic, the metropolis too can be identified through the degrees of visibility one is able to access, as ambiguity is given as opposed to being withheld. Metropolitan landscapes emerge with a *questioning of infinity on the horizon, a heterogeneity to the character of the street, balance of space through asymmetry, the drama of light created by architectures providing a theatricality to the generic quality of the sidewalk, this space of both transport and visibility which is all compounded through a hyperstimulation of the senses*. One finds these qualities in symphony in the metropolis. It is through these characteristics that we can establish the spatial pathology of the city around the sensational effects it has on our bodies, and what type of landscape it provides to the mind and person. When I walk these streets I'm overwhelmed with the endless horizon line found on the grid, the shadows dynamic from towering skyscrapers acting as scenery for identity to be performed, the vast contrast of the streets and asymmetry of the skyline leaving my mind wandering, the smells of the world penetrating, and the speed of movement disconcerting. This truly is a site bursting with potential for revolution, liberation and visibility.

From this physical character, we can then pick apart the psychological impact of walking around in these specific types of cities. Urban theorists have been critiquing the experiment that is humanity amidst the maelstrom of the metropolis, and often their findings are conveyed in a demonized deplorable manner, as if the modernity of the maelstrom is a sickness on the development of people. Contrary to that, queer theory has begun to pick up on this phenomenon, which in there becomes a balance in the city, where one can find community and belonging in the voids we can carve out as homes, and then when met with the density of the sidewalk, slip into the ambiguity of the heterogenous landscape. This provides a sense of security, in the recreational zones of performance, one can unsubscribe to the material forces and orthodox ideas of the world as they are situated in the sensory overload of the metropolis.³⁸



(New York City Research Trip, Photography)

Spatial pathology is the theory that humans are shaped by the built environments we walk around in. Its relationship to queerness could be situated around how other spaces make us feel, let us consider the indoor mall, the outdoor mall, the suburb street, the isolated plot of land, the busy street, an alley or a park...each of these spaces have formal aspects that impact how we feel, think and move. Simmel, a German sociologist wrote the compelling urban piece *The Metropolis and Mental Life* in 1903, right at the beginning of the 20th century, a period marked by exponential and dramatic shifts in the global landscape.¹⁰ Simmel reflected on the metropolis that “forces” adaptations made to the personality in its adjustments to the forces that lie outside it.³⁹ He argues that the city became the site for ultimate freedom and individuality, a result of the overwhelming amount of stimuli engaged on the street, externally and internally.⁴⁰ He contrasts this phenomenon with that of the rural, or suburb, which he characterizes as predictable, habitual and homogenous.⁴¹ On metropolitan streets, every single one of our senses is occupied, and the mind becomes overstimulated, which he alludes to as the formation of a state of being called “the Blasé.”⁴² An intellectualistic character in which the body becomes so overstimulated it desensitizes those around it to protect the brain from overwhelming computation.⁴³ This product of stimuli become the perfect landscape for the queer body to take ownership of the street through the ambiguity that will protect their “irregularities” of presentation. Simmel doesn’t recognize that he is making the perfect argument for queer visibility, vibrancy and prosperity, but through the balance of the axial character of Haussmann’s boulevards of Paris and the diversity of experiential stimuli, the architectural form gave power and independence from the institution that would attempt to closet one’s vibrancy.

The sidewalk, a site of transport and movement, now becomes a site of conversation, discourse, and combat to the underpinnings of the hetero-patriarchal landscape. It retaliates against the authoritarianism that is structured in the urban. What if architecture is the symbolic, nature frozen in time, and the street is the maelstrom, between these historical solids of order and logic.⁴⁵ Amongst metropolitan landscapes, queerness is able to engage in the private autonomy of life and the performance of the public sphere, all within a fractional and equitable dimension. The sidewalk of the metropolis is the maelstrom,

and it is an architectural force that favors the drive of modernity. It was a rationalization of the medieval agglomeration marketplace, reordered to better serve the needs of a wealthier class of bureaucrats wanting to use the city as a playground, and this flamboyant body, the flaneur took advantage of this new stage to equally play, but unregulated by the oppressive expectations of heteronormative realities he/she/they blossomed and unmasked their potential in life. Unbound, ambiguous, floating down the grid of infinity, dancing between shadow and light, unlocking the limitlessness of their potential. Life is not set by a subscribed role with watching eyes, but a performance of authenticity, truthfulness, and freedom, independent and irreplaceable.

03 Implications of Ambiguity-

3.1- Privilege: Degrees of Visibility in Identity Politic

It's imperative to this narrative that I am transparent about where this argument started and where it is going. We live in a world stained by histories of genocide, human bondage, land theft, legislative marginalization, and the essentialization of peoples based on appearance. Essentialization, is the practice of the brain to attempt to piece together an object in space by its visual cues in which it might be related.⁴⁶ It is responsible for bias, prejudice, violence, and it is the structure that holds together fictional institutions of hierarchy that were established to cultivate imperial futures. Beyond this ambiguous jargon of identity politics, I mean to acknowledge the overwhelming intersectionality of identity in the urban places, to best articulate the experience in the metropolis. I am a white man, descendant of almost every western European nation, and identify as gay. My strawberry blonde hair, blue eyes and pale skin paint me and put me into a box that is surrounded by an enormous catalog of historical events meant to situate who I am in the world. I say this to acknowledge my privilege in a community that is marginalized, as to not equate my white queer-male experience with that of someone who is forced to engage with the intersectional relationship of a variety of identity politics (female/gnc/trans/black/brown/disabled/ etc). This is also not meant to establish a hierarchy of oppression, but to contextualize the variety of experiences found in the metropolis. All to situate that my formative experience through the metropolis might vary to someone else.

Place:

Starting with a theme of place and access I can acknowledge that there are certain spaces in the built environment that I have privilege to walk around in, versus ones where I am not meant to come close enough to breath the same air. As a white gay man in a heteropatriarchal world I still get access to certain patriarchal privileges, which I will later unpack the paradox of such realities. Nonetheless, one must recognize that the in-between spaces of the metropolis are going to be framed by institutions that might be safer for me than they would for a woman, or a trans-woman, or a brown/black man.⁴⁷ And occasionally the immediate queues of my identity will be used to assess my welcome or dismal from a place. This avenue of thought gets only more layered with the elements of race.

Race:

Race happens to also be an institution of the symbolic. During the enlightenment, scientific observation became a tool to discern hierarchal qualities into the world, thus, to justify the imperial

violence and rule white man had on the ever-expanding world. Certain racial qualities had been parts of society before this era, but what makes this era noteworthy, is it's the inscription of these ideas into institutions of thought and order, the symbolic. One's skin coloring became a tool to regulate and organize, and what we find continued today is this construct of race, has left devastating effects on the socialization and equitability of space amongst humans. An acknowledgement of race is not due diligence it's a requirement to situate truth in the claim of queerness. Race holds heavy burden on peoples of color as it is continually another element of their identity that one is forced to deal with. The experience of blackness, brownness and even whiteness will hold its own layer on top of someone's sexual identity.⁴⁸

Gender:

It is often that conflicts of gender expression get entangled with sexual practices. Under a heteropatriarchal institution, gender is a tool used to maintain strict boundaries of order in the world. It sets clear delineations for the moves and paths men and women are allowed to make, as it appropriates guilt to define specific qualities and traits appropriate for said sex. For example, myself as a gay man, I deal with the implications of masculinity. Masculinity being a system meant to form men into officers of the patriarchy. Masculinity is a tool of accountability, a set of expectations from heteronormative realities. It's related to themes of ownership, size, strength, aggression, and a demonization of effeminate qualities such as empathy, gentleness, sensitivity, kindness, and vulnerability. These characteristics of the sexes are then used to justify another hierarchy of space. A way to regulate power and access in the world.



(New York City Research Trip, Photography)

In Practice:

Compiling these notions together how can we understand ambiguity and its relationship with privilege. The experience for a gay-woman is thus going to be completely different for a gay-man. While she could deal with similar expectations from that institution above as a presenting woman, she does not

have to deal with the rejection of authority, and consequently the weight of its representation. The renaissance of one's masculinity, the deconstruction of the binary and oppressive logics of male character, is a process most gay men are forced to engage in. As it is an area of intersectionality that I have had to reflect on, it will lead the base context of this paper. It was/is for me the battle of code-switching. The act of turning myself on and off, deciding when and where I can be myself, versus where I am forced to play this other part. Recognizing what might be deemed as respectable to that institution versus what might come off as transgressive.⁴⁹ Queuing into my degree of visibility, and my state of ambiguity in space become factors to determine my expression and its level of authenticity. Above all, I am aware of the fear-based tactics of masculine strength and aggression as consequence to my refusal of submission to an ownership of identity, that I consider "symbolic". My visibility and authenticity are thus a product of spatial politics and should act as an example for the qualities of space that render specific places liberated.

Regardless of the specific identity we are placed into, we are all forced to recon with identity politics and the politics of space. Are we gaining power through ambiguity, or are we reduced to stereotypes and stripped of our humanity, it is a negotiation of ownership and citizenship in place. We are all forced to contend with the institutions of a symbolic which act to regulate our prosperity and place in life. They are a tool of control and order and are their own weight and trauma. To be naïve about one's identity and its relation to space is a privilege in itself. I am experiencing the metropolis in one way, and used this thesis to articulate that experience, and whether or not is it shared by everyone, I am fairly optimistic that certain themes of metro-normative conditions are representative of collective experiences where-in prosperity, vibrancy and authenticity can be accessed in the metropolis, amidst the maelstrom.

3.2- Kinship: Cultivating Community and Family

In the negotiations of visibility, kinship deals with where we want to be actively seen. It's sense of autonomy that doesn't always require an audience, as most often kinship and fraternity come from the private realms we cultivate.⁵⁰ In the context of urban environments one's autonomy of their form of kinship is implicated in how their citizenship is defined. Ambiguity accessed in the metropolis provides a landscape for "radical" forms of what one might consider family. Queer enclaves and domestic worlds emerged because their family structures were unaccepted in the symbolic landscapes that housed the heteronormative families.⁵¹ They found refuge in the dense urban worlds, cheap rent, and various business opportunities made life unrepressed and fruitful. Family structures beyond blood, for community, and collective interest were formed. A "House", a queer street gang, left the physical boundaries of a building and immaterialized into a manifesto of belonging.⁵² For outcasts, these houses were places that gave strength to the bonds of true family despite their untraditional logic. Disposed of, and alienated, heteronormative utopias found these family practices to be the work of deviance and defiance, and they were, as the boundaries of what the symbolic found acceptable at the time did not have room for them. The character of these enclaves was always defined by untraditional and transgressive forms of community and family.

Spatial ownership, has become a contentious element of this narrative. In the theme of kinship and family, visibility through the ownership of space was an important aspect of queer liberation in history and today. In a patriarchal landscape, to own space is to define and set terms for humanity and citizenship. When the first brick at stonewall was thrown in 1969, the boundaries of Christopher Street become a established landscape of queer visibility. It was and still is a practice to own one's citizenship. To best fight the oppression, one has to use the tools of the oppressor. Contradictorily, Jen Jack Giesecking

argues in his book, *A Queer New York: Geographies of Lesbians, Dykes and Queers*, that the ownership of anything is a colonial practice, and queerness must distance itself from such heinous acts. While the struggles and triumphs of the revolution in the West Village are cornerstones of the history, they can no longer apply to the visibility of today.⁵³ While I respect the morality and contextual thought of this belief, I lack optimism for its effectiveness. Queer people fail to hold their humanity and credibility because they don't have a seat at the table. That table requires of us to buy into the system that is capital ownership of land. Ignorance and naivete allow one to frolic and resist authority, but they don't protect and support the cultivation of vibrancy and longevity.

In the context of masculinity, we are confronted with this paradox. Queer relationships are so dangerous and transgressive to the heteropatriarchy, because specifically homosexuality amongst men can situate a person with the privileges of being a man, but excludes them from the spaces of heteropatriarchal masculinity, forcing them to exercise space-building institutions, such as enclaves for themselves.⁵⁴ The hypocrisy is the unchecked powers of men, who are not subscribed to the shackles of hetero-patriarchal society. Gay men, their domesticity and expression in urban places make them more powerful in our landscape because they sit in both the camps of the oppressed and the oppressor.⁵⁵ Cities become a landscape of contradictory comforts.¹¹ Spatial ownership, even under a patriarchal characteristic, must be respected as it is a constructed and contested medium of identity formation and establishment. Today queerness through spatial means doesn't rely on the institution of neighborhood, but what can be recognized as the phenomenon of visibility and community as something imperative to the well-being and vibrancy of queerness.

Belonging, and home is situated in the character of cities. As they don't often subscribe to heterosexual pressures of reproduction and monogamous lifestyles, the economies differ and are subject to different directions of life.⁵⁶ From this, we understand the nature of economic competition becomes dangerous in the terms of vitality and providence of the heteronormative agendas in the world. Creating an enclave, with privileged members of society is dangerous to the malevolent hands of the heteropatriarchy, who above all want to hold their power and keep the city "organized". We also recognize that there is an innate human quality of wanting to belong to something. When you are disposed of from the institution you used to consider home, your desires request of you the formation of some sort of collective in which you can infuse compassion and love, and also receive it.⁵⁷ These unorthodox family structures like "houses" emerged out of the ballroom scene in Harlem. They brought hope, and safety to displaced and discarded peoples, and in turn established their own definitions of humanity and citizenship.



(New York City Research Trip, Photography)

The metropolis and queerness ask us to consider the relationship between anonymity and citizenship, how is that defined and regulated in space? Architecture is a material register of social relations, and queerness highlights those underpinnings, through participatory actions.⁵⁸ Practices of queer belonging that exist both in the private worlds we cultivate and in the shared third places are also implicated on the ambiguity accessed in the metropolis. These uncomplicated connections with community, through bars, restaurants, or community centers extend the definitions and boundaries of home that the symbolic has set. It is through queer acts, dissentful or disruptive that the hegemonic practices, boundaries, and conditions that the city has subscribed onto us are revealed. Queerness on the street draws attention to the everyday and interstitial practices of citizen participation, those that are accepted and those that are labeled as rebellious, transgressive, or deviant, by the symbolic. Citizenship is very powerful term here, as we can understand that modernization is a practice of defining citizenship, and queerness is a dismissal of the authoritarian nature of that practice. Queerness will not allow the built environment to regulate its boundaries of citizenship, it will use and appropriate the built environment to construct its own definitions, and this is only possible because of the ambiguity of the metropolis. To be a citizen is to be protected and acknowledged by the institution, so current controversies around queerness: drag performance, the bathroom debate, marriage, adoption, and resistance of gender-affirming care, might be seen more clearly as examples of symbolic suppression of queer practice, facilities and behaviors.

Enclaves were/are collective ownership and sanctuary. Queer enclaves, places of belonging, gave the institutional right of citizenship to the hands of the people building that community.⁵⁹ The hegemonic enclaves of the hetero-normative family structure derive their definition of citizenship from an extension of orthodox views of life.⁶⁰ What is so powerful about queer enclaves is, they define their own citizenship, while also testing and presenting the boundaries of the box that excludes them and houses the rest of society. This is one of the reasons why we find the metropolis to be a central force in the phenomenon of queerness, it is a site that de-activates properties of kinship in the vernacular structures that we call homes. The city becomes a queer space, just by letting queer people be queer visibly, an exercise of expression and visibility, on its own terms.⁶¹ It is a balance of ambiguity and visibility. Invisible on the street but belonging in the home.

3.3- Performance: “We’re all Born Naked and the Rest is Drag.”

The quote referenced above comes from an icon of the queer community. RuPaul Charles is a drag queen, TV personality, queer pioneer, and compassionate leader into the future, famous for nine simple words. To break down this sentence, I will start by defining drag. **Drag** is a theatrical expression of gender, a performance of expectations, it can be political, comical, fantastical, and as imaginative as the brain permits. It’s one of the few cultural elements that is boundless, and in that I get to the base of this sentence. What if one were to consider that almost every part of our identity and expression is in our own hands, yet we are bound by certain symbolics and conditions which regulate our expression, thus making our movements through life a performance of ideas and practices. In this new hyper-saturated and thrilling environment, we are posed to proclaim our characters that we will use to walk through life, as we are all born naked, and the rest is drag.

Situating time is important in this next section as we discuss visibility and performance. Performance being the art of being, conditioned to a role subscribed or claimed. Drag and gender performance and expression are a contemporary phenomenon discovered and enriched by black and brown queer people in Harlem during the 1970’s in Ballroom. What *Paris is Burning*, an Avant-Garde documentary on queer culture during the late twentieth-century illustrates, is that our gender expression through clothes and movement is regulated and surveilled, as to dictate where and when we can be.⁶² Ballroom was situated in the void of the metropolis, a safe theatrical place for trans and gender-queer people to explore themselves. Tired of the shackles of symbolic landscapes that defined their expressions of self, delineated by their sexual organs, the ballroom scene gave community and visibility to the performance of life. Presentation is the second cornerstone of our society, if the built environment is responsible for organizing and regulating our movement, we are then sorted by what we wear and where we are safe to wear it.⁶³ It was an era of the symbolic in the city, streets surveilled, and presentation regulated strictly by ones “passability”. Ballroom brought those city streets into the sanctuary of the interior. That is the product of the symbolic, and as the maelstrom consumed that way of thought, the sidewalk emerged as a stage of the future, untethered to the traditions of yesterday.

Performance should be recontextualized under the boundaries of the autonomy or docility of the body. Something that can be endowed and inform the built landscape. It is through bodies and presentation that a recognition of space and one’s performance gets validated through cultures, economies, and societies.⁶⁴ Ambiguity and the metropolis situate one to own their body and its performance upon the sidewalk. The metropolis is erotic, it aids the performance of life, beyond the symbolic and its homogenous presentations.⁶⁵ Predictable and habitual, the counter worlds that are the symbolic, dystopias fixed with narrative for hetero-normative practices.

“here in buildings and in educational institutions, in wonders and comforts of space-conquering technique, in the formations of social life and in the concrete institutions of the state is to be found such a tremendous richness of crystalizing, depersonalized cultural accomplishments that the personality can, so to speak, scarcely maintain itself in the fact of it.”⁶⁶

Performance thus is a regulated practice by the landscapes one is situated in. Our worlds beyond the metropolis are situated in the symbolics, and thus expression and performance is regulated by space.

Suburban worlds created isolated playgrounds for the middle class to exercise economic “autonomy” as a performance of the middle-class values.⁶⁷ These worlds became exclusive zones that

restricted the habitation of only the homogenized structures of heteronormativity.⁶⁸ Divergent expressions had no space to perform in the regulated worlds beyond the maelstrom. In the symbolic recreational spaces, performance was regulated and curtailed to support the economic systems and commodities it supplied. The symbolic peripheries became the stages for the performance of global economy and culture, the status quo.⁶⁹ While, queerness embodies the city as a performance on the sidewalk, as the sidewalk becomes a domestic space, an appropriation of untamed wilderness. Performance is the theatricality of being a dismissal of a fixed boundary for one to exist in. The embodiment of the identity in any form, radical or null, becomes a subversive appropriation of space, where they are transgressive to the ulterior motivations of that environment.

Performance feels like a lot, but also only a little. Let's look at performance in three ways, presentation, walk and company. This is beyond the restrictive boundaries of sexuality and carnal relations, its about presentation and possibly its implications and rejections related to gender. Gender being an element of privilege has implications on same- sex relations in that our society is set up around the organization of rules for partnerships of contrasting sexes. Performance can be as little as holding hands, and It can be as radical as wearing nothing but a crop top, six-inch red bottom stilettos, and thong. Thinking broadly, how are our choices around presentation a performance of identity. They are a performance through what we wear, where we are, and who we are with. From my perspective as a man, there are only a select number of permissible forms of performance acceptable in visible spaces. In these spaces too, there is an expectation of act surrounding masculinity. How should my shoulders be? Can I look down? If I don't look down how will I make sure I am walking like a man and not a woman? Am I bouncy or rigid? Is what I am wearing me or what someone is telling me to be? How about when I speak? Is it okay that I said that word? Or how about had that opinion? To what lengths am I allowed to be, beyond what society tells me is permissible? Performance, and it being an authentic practice is ignited in ambiguity because it allows one to turn off that voice, the voice we've been indoctrinated to house internally. Dispose of the walls to make yourself in, and actually recognize that its all made up, and all you needed was a safe space to try something different out.



(New York City Research Trip, Photography)

Performance is a role we dress up as because we are informed by the institutions and space that surround us that that is what will be accepted. It is the character of these institutions, and also the space these institutions situate us in. How visible are we in that moment, how ambiguous and anonymous can we remain? Are we visible enough to need to be concerned with the uniform that is expected of us, an

expectation of how we are? Performance is a decree of acceptable dress in the office. It is the safety of showing affection to your partner. It is the gendering of clothing, a restriction and rule set made onto inanimate objects. It is the company you move down the street with. Performance extends far beyond sexuality, it's a response to the landscape one is in. The qualities of such worlds permit or deny a authenticity in performance. Symbolic landscapes regulate this authenticity of performance through hyper-visibility, creating spaces where those divergent stick out. Performance in the metropolis is not a regulated costume to display, but an authenticity of self, and selected visibility of self in space. It is theatrical, dramatic and vibrant, a character, an identity a person. Far beyond sexual acts and expectations, it is the roles inscribed to the sexual figures.

Sexuality, its look and actions, sexual or un-sexual should all be contextualized under the guise of performance. Not that we are making deliberate choices in our actions, but the state of being in a way becomes an action as it is a rejection of what has been turned solid by the symbolic. Sexuality in the metropolis is liberated and untethered to the cables of the symbolic network, dancing and performing on a boundless urban landscape, it sits at the edge of today, unrestricted by the prisons of the symbolic. The practice of queerness, the embodiment of the identity becomes subversive appropriations of space, where they become transgressive to the ulterior motivations of the built environment. Performance is many things, its dress, its walk, its who your in company with, its presence and it is vibrancy. The metropolis aids the queer, as their performance flexible and agile with the future, tends to stick out from symbolic landscapes.

3.4- Autonomy: Destiny, Guilt and Desire

To begin to close out this narrative of sexual liberation on the grids of the metropolis I will return to the work of Halberstam. The qualities of the metropolis that I have outlined above illustrate how this body, the queer, is able to float through the institutions that might attempt to control it, and that is a balance between one's ambiguity and their autonomy of self. Autonomy is a regulator of citizenship and authenticity. It's a performance and proclamation of one's visibility and desire. For Halberstam, he builds a claim through the revolution of the body by the trans community. A dramatic leap, but representative of the changing nature of one's bodily autonomy. The trans body eager to reach gender euphoria engages with various practices in gender reconstruction, hormone therapies, cross-dressing or even anatomical alterations.⁷² We have begun to think less about the end goal of a transition, but the continuous building and unbuilding of the body, flexible and self-determined.⁷³ This revolutionary reclaiming and redefining of the body is also reflected in the built landscape of the metropolis.

Queerness thrives in the metropolis because of its ambiguity and liberation from symbolic landscapes, but make no mistake the symbolic finds its way into the urban, and this is why queerness thus thrives on the sidewalk, among the metropolis. The sidewalk is a representative space of uncommodified landscape. Ethereal and liberating it allows one the autonomy of their body and presentation, free from the hyper visible, authoritarian symbolic. It's a radical space of endless possibility, gender roles, racial dividers and reproductive futures are inscribed into the institutions of the city, but the maelstrom of possibility sits on the sidewalk, a revolutionary landscape that allows access to community and independence. Queerness in the metropolis, can begin with the uncovering of trans-liberation and visibility, but from an architectural perspective should shift to the fundamental quality of the design of the abandoned negative space of symbolic realities.

Autonomy is a claim of ownership of self and one's practices. Let's illustrate this idea more clearly through historical narrative. Manhattan, was an industrial mercantile hub of the new world. Its geographic quality made perfect conditions for the Dutch and their East-India trading. What used to be a city lined with thriving ports, became a city desolate with relocated industry, lined with abandoned realities of yesterday. The late twentieth century made claim to these forgotten worlds, as queerness and the maelstrom embodied the reclaiming and redefining of space. Cruising, formerly recognized as the anonymous expedition of sex, will better be recognized as a practice of modernity, through the tools of ambiguity. These piers of old affluent mercantile era were appropriated to the practice of tomorrow. A paradox of the world of yesterday claimed by the present in order to engage with the future. Sex and the expressions and performance of queerness liberated in the untamed, ungentrified landscapes of the metropolis. Authenticity became a tool of power, the same way queerness thrived in the crevices of metropolitan environments through the piers, queerness thrives now in the voids of the institutions of today. Untapped and unregulated landscapes of performance and autonomy.

Cruising is a practice of modernity. It's autonomy and visibility, where and when one can be. Cruising is an ownership of self and desire. It's a quest for comrades and a social place making, a flirtation with the abyss, the establishment of the sanctuary, place to practice the tomorrows. To apply this concept more firmly, let us return to Edelman and his theory on reproductive futurism, let us situate this idea of autonomy around actions, roles and expectations. Through the lens of autonomy, reproductive futurism curtails and regulates social structure in space. Projecting heterosexual or procreative roles, and excluding pleasurable or transgressive actions, all through the vehicle and representation of the child.⁷⁵ Family, the act of having children, and living with children, and its parameters of acceptability and presentation are a set of expectations of regulated autonomy. Ambiguity protects and includes divergent identities into this reality, giving space to the production of different forms of family. Edelman's theory begins to unpack the recreational sites made for exclusive social classes and identities. To engage in such places and futures, spaces set for the development would be vital, where-in that class can "play" and "perform" the roles that are expected from them, unconcerned with their visibility and difference, because they are simply fitting a mold, they have been told to warp themselves to.



(New York City Research Trip, Photography)

Fantasy is bound in symbolic landscapes. In metropolitan worlds, life is beyond the phases and thresholds of procreative existence. Autonomy is agency and choice in one's own future, a dismissal of a forced dream. Until recently, symbolic landscapes were effective in restricting the visibility of different

family structures, the queer and their unorthodox approach to family making, whose sexual practices and lives could not biologically shackle them to reproductive futures were excluded and marginalized to phantasmagoric sites of the metropolis. Their character and actions were seen as subversive and transgressive to the future of the symbolic landscape at work. Children and their safety became a tool, a weapon of biological privilege, to warrant the discrimination and prejudice towards people, whose difference became visible, due to a lack of ambiguity and personal freedom. The child embodied the social order, a sticker of normalcy in space and time for people, a symbol of normalcy. The humanity of children, replaced with ignorant fears to construct a normative act of fitting into the mold. Queerness didn't emerge to disrupt; it just disrupts because it refuses to be bound to a pre-determined future. Our sexual liberation and boundaries don't limit the growth in which we can assume. The desire of family, through ambiguous or transgressive gender performances is a radical body politic and spatial politic. The sidewalk becomes a space to debate that symbolic institution, an endless void to live through, and its an extension of the domestic and retaliation of the symbolic. Queerness will thus thrive in the maelstrom because it actively participates in the modernization of tomorrow, appropriating the places of yesterday to charge the character of the present.

Autonomy is an exercise and control of one's visibility. What will later be made clear is that the qualities of the metropolis are special and a superficial symbolic institution has emerged attempting to represent the metropolis but reveals its failing in the degrees of visibility present. Autonomy is only powerful against repressive traditional institutions when we are able to claim its agency in protected or safe places.

3.5- Closing: Metronormativity

I have been throwing around another word, **metro-normativity**. It is the product of ambiguity; it is a normative set a themes that emerge in metropolitan landscapes. These compelling ideas, scratch the surface of how ambiguous landscapes shift human relationships and futures. Community, performance, privilege and autonomy have power in these spaces because of the qualities of the metropolis. The crushing weight of endless change, modernity as a practice always in metamorphosis. The radical-ness of metronormativity gets accessed and appropriated by the queer body through the marginal space between the balance of both community and autonomy. It's a phenomenon to be able to move between one space where you are enmeshed with community and agency of life. Surrounded by the things that make you whole, inanimate, and personable, reclaiming the definitions of family, and then to step outside and all of that melts away. As you are thrown into the mix of the chaos, every sense engaged, cloaked in a fog of overstimulation you can be exactly who you were in that enclosed space and in sanctuary of the street. Institutions of regulation have less control on you in the metropolis, of course they still engage throughout the landscape of the metropolis, but it is through the sidewalk that we are freed from the expectations and realities of symbolic landscapes. Autonomous beings, floating ambiguously with and without our communities, claiming citizenship and through spatial presence and visibility.

Metro-normativity has been expressed here through themes around queer existence, from my perspective. But they are also not restrictive to the queer body. The thrilling quality of the metropolis offers an untethering of social norms, that allow other identities a freedom they are unable to access in symbolic landscapes. I use the queer body and specifically male presenting queer body to develop the narrative through my lived experience as a gay man. I am experiencing the metropolis in one way, and used this thesis to articulate that phenomenon, and whether or not it is shared by everyone, I am fairly

optimistic that certain themes outlined above of metronormativity are representative of collective experiences where-in prosperity, vibrancy and authenticity can be accessed in metropolitan landscapes.



(New York City Research Trip, Photography)

The dimensions of the urban sidewalk have been recontextualized and redefined to the house the narrative of the prosperous queer who finds sanctuary in the chaos of the urban. Using the claim of this thesis, what places allow us to unshackle the bonds of the past, so that we may stay present in the current and open minded to the future. Dancing, through past, present and future, queerness accesses metronormative themes of power, finally finding a place to breathe free and express its vibrancy. Where do we have autonomy and liberty, versus where have we found imprisonment and prejudice? On the streets is the site of change, liberation, and equality. Our feet unbound to the engine allow us to lead our own direction, free from cages of identity, we dance through the material objects of the world, transforming movement into beauty, euphoria, and truth.

04 Towards Tomorrow, Measures of Displacement-

4.1- Boundaries and Visibility

The final section of this paper is wrapped around this idea of displacement. This will be a perception of what is to come. Brief, we will look at displacement through the way in which queerness in the metropolis gets attacked by symbolic forces, symbolic behaviors and symbolic facilities. The queer body has found sanctuary, but as we all know is forced to relocate constantly. In 1969 the West Village was the home to the misfit toys of the world. It held a special character, unlike any other neighborhoods in Manhattan, its quaint and detached from the grid. Christopher Street and The Stonewall are still symbols of pride and power for what happened, but the character of the street is not nearly like what it used to be. Those buildings and that neighborhood now house a much more homogenized class. It's through this distinction that I realize my argument of queer prosperity is not bound to a specific

neighborhood. Queer people aren't only powerful when they have institutional blocks of metropolitan landscapes, queer people cultivate the landscape of the sidewalk that exist throughout all neighborhoods in urban spaces. The reason for bringing this up, though deals with the fact that the symbolic continually moves throughout institutions and time, queerness constantly is forced to relocate due to a weaponization of visibility through gentrification and modification of that which it created.

As previously stated, the symbolic is organized through means of repression and alienation through securitization hyper-visibility, respectability and guilt. These forms of surveillance are a weaponized use of visibility, a declaration of who is allowed to be in space, through thresholds that determine ones belonging to the landscape. This weaponization is a product of the culture of fear, fear is a tool of ignorance, a hyperbolic rationalization of things unfamiliar. I could spend the next few paragraphs discussing the nature of homophobic based crime and queer targeted legislation, but to remain general, I will only state the fact, that the last sodomy laws in the US were taken down in 2003. With this context, we can rest assured that prejudice based on ignorance is not archaic and exists today in a shapeshifted form. What fear tactics and techniques will be used in future landscapes, and how will they too push the queer out of their sanctuary, a means to perpetuate the control and power of the built environment?

Today, and tomorrow we begin to see the institutionalizing of collective communities who value and are bought on themes of security.⁷⁶ Boundaries are put in place in metropolitan landscapes to exclude, but also to make others hyper visible. These non-visible thresholds, space making for a privileged class are all too familiar to marginalized peoples. These open spaces, are commodified, pretending to be equitable zones of community performance, but in reality, have a strict and set narrative of acceptability. The lengths the symbolic will go to capture space is ruthless, beyond merely legislation, symbolics will eliminate diversity from space through hypervisibility as to easily call out differences as a reason for fear-based discrimination. What we will begin to see is a transforming of the urban landscape, our metropolis through gentle architectural and typological forms that reduce ones ambiguity. While securing recreational space for that symbolic privileged class, disproportionately affect the mobility, habits and gestures of a larger public that to which queerness find itself in. The gentrification of ambiguous the Hudson river piers is the symbolic at work and in today's economy and political landscape is a tool that displaces and removes power from queer people.

04 Closing

4.1-Closing Statements

The phenomenon of queerness is a construct whose lifetime is far younger than we credit it for in a sense of its relevance in our culture. "Queer" came in a slurred context usually synonymous with odd, crazy or deranged when it found its way into mainstream European culture somewhere in the mid 16th century. If we look at queerness in the built environment, where does it situate itself? We know that queerness flourishes in progressive urban contexts- places that bring together a myriad of backgrounds, races, ethnicities and peoples. But, inside these sprawling metropoli, in the "voids of society", sanctuaries are formed for these bodies to endure. Cities are dense places and the exclusionary boundaries of the symbolic are more absent, making the landscape of the urban irregular in comparison. There is a freedom to evolve in any manner that is wished, organically and unrestricted. This density of form becomes the

perfect machine to assemble the queer body, and bring its vibrancy to life. The hyperesthesiatic anonymity of the urban environment gives a certain degree of agency to the regulation of that world. Queerness has flourished because it has been able to harness this structure of ambiguity. **The appropriation of urban environments to make “place” allows for transgression of the bounds of symbolic controls of society, creating a sanctuary to act without harm, safe to be, the ways in which we are.**

The Queer and the Urban are connected in more ways than ever imagined, but It's something we pick up on. It's why I come out of Penn Station in Midtown Manhattan and feel like I can breathe again. I'm rushed into the chaos of the street, the sounds, lights, colors, flashing and bombarding my senses. My walk doesn't feel observed, I am someone and no one at the same time. I look down the street and cannot see the end, I am just met with the flood of brake lights, perspective lines of the grid, asymmetrical contours of the beyond. My nose is dancing between the different vendors I pass. Words and places I have never heard of have a home, and my fears don't. I'm met engaging with an enormous diversity of faces, tall, short, hairy, dark, clean, dirty, and colorful, all dancing between the dramatic cast shadows from the various skyscrapers beyond. I feel incredibly free and excited. There is a harmony that exists in these worlds for us. Sure there is a historical logic for why queer people ended up in cities, but until now there was not a logic for why they stayed. Disposed off their vessels of war, and discharged with the shame of their deviant acts of love, they/we found community and comfort in these places. Our presence was both loud and quiet at the same time

Queerness again, is the act of boarding that train of the future. An open arms engagement, a willingness and identity of indeterministic ambitions. This research is about the relationship between where I felt comfort safety and space for my vibrancy and where I didn't, a means to establish a pattern through the use of architecture and queer theory. Queer people find prosperity in the sanctuary as they are unbound, ambiguous, floating down the grid of infinity, dancing between light and shadow unlocking the limitlessness of their potential. Life is not set by a subscribed role with watching eyes, but a performance of authenticity, truthfulness and freedom, independent and irreplaceable.

We return to the logic that is *Persecution* → *Sanctuary* → *Displacement*. Canon eras that make up the lifespan of queerness in a hetero-patriarchal society. Persecution began with the establishment of heterosexual reproductive futuristic dystopias that made no room, for alternative, ambiguous family structures. Our Sanctuary comes out of the urban conditions that make up the city, the metropolis. Formal architectural logic, ambiguity, performance, and zones of belonging bring us peace and prosperity. And then our prospective glimpse, a world beyond the scope of my lived experience to date. What is clear is that symbolic, wants to consume and stay relevant. Desperate for the avant-garde radical quality of the metropolis. The homogenized, predictable and stale landscapes constantly emerge to displace what it consumes. In the metropolis, amidst the towering skyscrapers and bustling streets, individuals find solace in themselves, their diverse expressions embraced and celebrated. A haven, a place where authenticity is not only accepted but embraced, where diversity is not merely tolerated but celebrated. Within these streets, alleys and hidden corners, queerness finds a home, enriching the city with its vibrancy and theatricality. In the metropolis, the boundaries blur and in their place emerges a beacon of inclusivity, acceptance and love. Overall, queerness owes its vitality to cities and their architectural landscapes, shaping an unintentional, but impactful narrative of diversity and liberty in stylistic choices which generate social and political spaces of ambiguity, where-in themes of power are situated in privilege, kinship, performance and autonomy.

Endnotes

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