

marks left in her perverse adolescence—incorporating the adolescent’s never-full desire for freedom, for bad taste, for the paradoxical bittersweet—when the mortal frame of her sick time pressed hard upon her body. To nostalgically become a “perpetual subject-adolescent” in writing this way, I argue—drawing on the adolescent-attentive work of Julia Kristeva (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993, 1997), Joseph Litvak (1997), and Carol Mavor (1999)—is nourishing, intimate, and political. She remembers the queer adolescent energies, desires, and temporalities of her past and turns them into lifelines in her sick present, staking her claim that freedom for her, as a queer woman writer with AIDS, is also unfinished.

Galvanizing Aesthetics in The Trans Male Field:
Original Plumbing | Trans Male Quarterly and Tensions in the Contemporary Archive ACE LEHNER

After ten years of co-editing the premiere trans masculine magazine, Original Plumbing Trans Male Quarterly Amos Mac and Rocco Kayiatos wrapped production in 2019. The founders and editors celebrated the decade of trans visual culture production with the release of a ten-year anniversary book, Original Plumbing: The Best Ten Years of Trans Male Culture. Original Plumbing represents an exceptionally fascinating and charged critical moment in the growing proliferation of trans visual culture. Viewing Original Plumbing as a contemporary archive in the making highlights how exclusions are problematically integral to the constitution of an archive and reflect Jacques Derrida’s observation that:

The question of the archive is not [...] a question of the past. It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might already be at our disposal or not at our disposal, an achievable concept of the archive. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise, and of a responsibility for tomorrow.

At the crux of this paper is an interest in thinking through issues that arise when archives are produced. In this case, bringing trans masculinity in to view Original Plumbing as a cultural intervention may also be closing down possibilities and unintentionally setting parameters on what aesthetics of trans masculinity are desirable. This conundrum is not unique to trans masculine representation; however, in this specific example considering the galvanization of trans masculine representations, the case exemplifies issues at the crux of debates around the problematic nature of creating representations as a cultural intervention; an issue that continues to impact multiple constituencies.

Greer Lankton’s Medical Magic: An Alternative Archive of Transgender History CYLE METZGER

Artist Chris E. Vargas’s project the Museum of Transgender Hirstory and Art critiques the institutional logics that adhere to binary gender taxonomies and thereby make the nuances of transgender history, culture, and theory invisible within them. I open this paper by introducing how MOTH and the ongoing imaginatively archival project Transgender Hirstory in 99 Objects redefine what we consider transgender archives to be, what forms they take, and how they might destabilize more than they confirm what we think we know about transgender history, culture, and theory. From here, I present Greer Lankton’s 1981 artist’s book Medical Magic as alternative to the binary narratives held in archives at places like the gender identity clinics that Stanford University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University

of California, Los Angeles ran in the 1960s and 1970s. These clinics required patients to fully identify with the gender deemed opposite their sex rather than allowing them to live comfortably within both male and female identities if they wished. However, by collaging citations from the classical myth of Hermaphroditus together with Xeroxed illustrations of surgical procedures, prescription bottles, and candy-colored pills as well as self-portraits that chart the feminization of her own figure, Lankton’s Medical Magic brings techniques of medical transition that those clinics offered together with more expansive approaches to gender that include identifying as nonbinary. Nonbinary approaches to gender are rooted in the Butlerian notion that gender is produced outside of the morphology of the body. Thus, the emergence of nonbinary gender identity is, indeed, liberatory, yet it has also created some challenges within transgender discourse because moves surgery in particular to the periphery despite the need that many transgender people still have to access it. Thus, I argue that the archive that Lankton offers within the pages of Medical Magic fosters renewed conversations about the difficulty that the very idea of surgery presents within ever changing contemporary transgender cultures.

Barbara Hammer: Life After Death
some thoughts by CARMEL CURTIS

From May 15, 1939, through March 16, 2019, Barbara Hammer’s body lived. However, her body of work in photographs, drawings, paintings, collages, writings, sculptures, installations, and of course, media – spans intergenerational experiences that are unbound by conventional perceptions of a “lifetime.” Hammer’s body of work existed before May 15, 1939 and continues to exist today.

Known primarily as a pioneering and proud lesbian artist, Hammer’s filmography consists of over 100 films and videos made between 1968 and 2018. Hammer’s approach to art has been through a lens of curiosity, exploration, experimentation, advocacy, and urgency. Subject matters such as lesbian subjectivity and sexuality, politics and representation, and visceral manifestations of pleasure and discomfort, can be read throughout her oeuvre. Over her five decades of artistic practice, Hammer’s body inspiration from those who came before her, always willing to listen, learn, and contribute her own perspective. Recognizing her place within the ever growing and expanding landscape of queer art, Hammer has always been conscious of her potential power and influence.

Hammer’s afterlife is not an afterthought. It is not a footnote. Hammer was and still is control of her art and her narrative. Through thoughtful and intentional care and documentation, her art continues to be viewed, shared, interpreted, re-interpreted, and even uncovered. There are works of Hammer’s that no one has even seen.

In this presentation, I push back against the term “after-life” and instead suggest “after-death,” for the impact of Hammer life is far from after. Using personal recollections of my beautiful and everlasting relationship with Hammer as an archivist, curator, and friend, this paper will discuss the ways in which Barbara’s legacy is active, lively, and oh, so queer.

QUEER AFTERLIVES IN ARTIST ARCHIVES SYMPOSIUM



Organized by Sinéad Bligh
Mattress Factory Project Digitization
Archivist and Isaiah Bertagnolli,
PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh

Queer Afterlives in Artist Archives will re-examine and contextualize Greer Lankton's artwork and initiate discussion on her incredible collection with archivists, scholars and artists whose work engages with archives, the histories of Queer art and the identity it can reveal.

Schedule

12:00-12:10 Opening Remarks *Mattress Factory Executive Director, Hayley Haldeman, Senior Archivist Sarah Hallett and Project Digitization Archivist Sinéad Bligh*

Panel 1: Writing from Archives

12:10-12:30 **Alice Butler**, *Terra Foundation Centre for American Art Postdoctoral Fellow, Courtauld Institute of Art, London, UK*

12:30-12:45 **Ace Lehner**, *Visiting Artist, Department of Art and Art History, University of Vermont*

12:45-1:00 **Cyle Metzger**, *Assistant Professor of Art in Residence, Art History, Bradley University Design Department, Bradley University*

1:00-1:15 Questions/Discussion

1:15-1:25 Break

Panel 2: Body as Archive

1:25-2:00 **Liz Cohen**, *Photographer and performance artist and Eric Crosley Poet, artist and writer*

2:00-2:15 **Bekezela Mguni**, *Artist, Activist, Educator and Radical Librarian at Black Unicorn Library and Archives, Pittsburgh*

2:15-2:30 **Carmel Curtis**, *Moving Image Archivist, Researcher and Curator, Indiana University Bloomington*

2:30-2:50 Questions/Discussion

2:50-3:00 Closing remarks **Isaiah Bertagnolli**, *PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh's Department of History of Art and Architecture*

ACE LEHNER Visiting Artist, Department of Art and Art History, University of Vermont. Ace Lehner is an interdisciplinary scholar and artist specializing in critical engagement with identity and representation; history, theory, and criticism of contemporary art; photography history and theory; queer and trans visual culture and theory; and critical race studies.

Lehner recently edited the book *From Self-Portrait to Selfie: Contemporary Art and Self-Representation in the Social Media Age* published by MDPI Books (Switzerland) and put together the first-ever issue of *Art Journal* dedicated to trans visual culture.

CYLE METZGER is Assistant Professor of Art in Residence (Art History) at Bradley University. He received his PhD from Stanford University in Art History with a minor in Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with a focus on queer and transgender histories of art in 2021. His current book project, titled *Deep Cuts: Transgender History in US-American Art since WWII*, charts a history of gender variance, transsexuality, and transgender history in US-American art from the mid-twentieth century onward through distinct case studies of artists who have been part of some of the most recognized movements and moments in modern and contemporary art in the United States.

LIZ COHEN is a Photographer and performance artist (Colombian-American, b. 1973) whose work is currently on show in *Pop-Agenda* at the *Mattress Factory*. Cohen is best known for her project *BODYWORK*, in which she transformed an aging East German Trabant into an American El Camino lowrider, and herself into a car customizer and bikini model. Cohen's earlier work *CANAL*, a series of black and white photographs and performances, documents sex workers on the fringe of the Panama Canal Zone. In her more recent work, *HIM*, she depicts an ostracized poet through black and white photographs, weavings, and collaged textiles. Cohen's work has been characterized as examining immigration, nonconformity, and resistance. Cohen has received awards from the MacDowell Colony, Akademie Schloss Solitude, the Creative Capital Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation. She has exhibited work at Site Santa Fe, Ballroom Marfa, the Cranbrook Art Museum, Färgfabriken, and Museum Tinguely. Her projects have been written about in the *New York Times*, *Art in America* and *Lowrider Magazine*. Cohen received her MFA degree in Photography from the California College of the Arts. She holds a BFA in Studio Art from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and a BA in Philosophy from Tufts University. She is currently a professor at Arizona State University's School of Art.

ERIC CROSLEY, a Poet, Artist and Writer, will join Cohen for their lecture and deliver a special reading of his poetry. Cohen's work and Crosley's writing wrestle with the labor of everyday existence and defining "self" as a constantly shifting narrative.

BEKEZELA MGUNI is a queer Trinidadian artist, librarian, birth worker, and educator whose work is currently on show in *Pop-Agenda* at the *Mattress Factory*. She is a community organizer with over 15 years of experience in the Reproductive Justice movement and is a co-founder of *New Voices for Reproductive Justice*. Bekezela holds an MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh and participated in the first *Librarians and Archivists with Palestine* delegation in June of 2013. She completed her first micro-residency at the Pittsburgh creative hub *Boom Concepts*, a community space, and gallery dedicated to the development of artists and creative entrepreneurs, and was a featured artist in the 2015 *Open Engagement Conference*.

Bekezela was a 2015-2016 member of the *Penn Ave Creative Accelerator Program* with the *Kelly-Strayhorn Theater* and launched the *Black Unicorn Library and Archive Project*. Which works to cultivate libraries as sites of learning, possibility, and freedom. The *Black Unicorn* celebrates the literary and artistic contributions

of Black women, queer, Trans, and gender-expansive people. Bekezela also served as the 2016 *Sophia Smith Archive Activist-in-Residence* at *Smith College*. She was selected as an *Emerging Artist* in the 2016 *Three Rivers Arts Festival* and won the *Juror's Choice* award for her visual artwork. Bekezela was a featured artist of the 2017 *Activist Print Project*, a partnership between, *Artist Image Resource*, *BOOM concepts*, and the *Andy Warhol Museum*. She is also honored to serve as the *Education Program Director* at *Dreams of Hope* which affirms the voices and leadership of LGBTQ youth through the arts.

CARMEL CURTIS currently works as an archivist and curator in the *Moving Image Archive* of *Indiana University*, one of the world's largest educational film and video collections; is a board member of the non-profit *Screen Slate*, a daily resource for independent, repertory, and gallery screenings in *New York City* (and beyond); and is a proud member at large of *XFR Collective*, a volunteer run group that works to increase community access to at-risk audiovisual media. Carmel's previous projects include work with the *Brooklyn Academy of Music*, *Deluxe*, *Dirty Looks*, *New York University*, and the *United Nations*. In 2017, Carmel co-curated, *Barbara Hammer: Evidentiary Bodies*, a multi-faceted exhibition-project that delved into the life's work and resonating impact of lesbian feminist artist and filmmaker *Barbara Hammer*, held at the *Leslie Lohman-Museum of Art* in *New York City*.

The Pieces of Cookie Mueller's Adolescent Reverie

(pieces in loving reply) ALICE BUTLER

"This manuscript needs a lot of work," wrote Cookie Mueller, in a close-to-death cover letter she sent out to the small press publishers of the downtown scene at the end of the 1980s. In this cover letter—which accompanied the "compilation of autobiographical short stories" the contents of her book proposal comprised—she marked her manuscript by what she felt to be missing; by the 'work' that she planned to come; by the promise of connection and seamlessness, when her body was weakening under the weight of AIDS, the disease that had come to her. Traces of this manuscript would materialize soon after her death as *Walking through Clear Water in a Pool Painted Black* (1990), the first in *Chris Kraus's Native Agents Series for Semiotext(e)*; to then appear later as the posthumous "writings of Cookie Mueller" (1997). But before this, Mueller was attempting; she was drafting and re-drafting, making lists of stories written, and then re-written, along the way in real time, the real time of her sick time. Mueller's piecemeal archive—full of papers, photographs, letters, notes, and ephemera, unpublished and published scripts, the tidbit chapters of an autobiographical novel; all secretly shuffled amidst the officiated archives of others—holds the desire of the unfinished. It appears that she did not complete it, whatever 'it' might've been.

In this paper, I am poised to speculate and dream, to love her pieces in epistolary pieces. I inhabit the awkward (adolescent) middle. Like *Jack Halberstam's* celebration of the queerness of failure, I fixate anew (full of autoerotic, adolescent attention, which is also reparative love) on the ways Cookie did not, could not, chose not to (probably a mixture of all three) finish the novel, and how this returned adolescence back to her. In doing so, I argue that the scrappy, unfinished materialities of her archive offer their own queer possibilities, breathing new life into her entangled life and work. By encountering the scattered, speculative, genre-defying parts of what I term her novel-in-pieces, I touch upon the reparative, adolescent reveries and energies of her 'unfinished' writing. Here she restored the

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

ALICE BUTLER is an interdisciplinary writer and scholar working across feminist art history, feminist theory, and feminist art writing. Alice specializes in the intersections of queer feminist art and writing practices of the 1970s and 1980s, to explore questions of sickness, sexuality, and gender, via intersectional feminist and queer perspectives and experimental, embodied approaches to archive and autotheory.