TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S): AN INTERPLAY OF DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

• Paper / Proposal Title:

Expanding the limits of queer urban politics: the emergence of queer urbanism in the Bay Area’s response to HIV/AIDS

• Author(s) Name:

SG Yeros (Efstathios Gerostathopoulos)

• University or Company Affiliation:

University of California, Berkeley

• Presentation Method. I would like to:

  i. present in person (with/without a written paper)
  ii. present via skype (with/without a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):

This paper investigates the spatial legacy of queer organizing in the Bay Area before and after the HIV/AIDS epidemic, between 1981 and 2014. It argues that in response to that extraordinary medical emergency, the articulation of queer presence in Northern California centered around San Francisco – clinics, housing, cruising – introduced a new kind of “queer urbanism,” albeit based on the strong foundations of the gay liberation movement in the 1960s and 70s. Novel articulations of citizenship developed in tandem with it. The study, based on extensive review of existing literature on queer spaces and research at the GLBT Historical Society Archives in San Francisco, is organized in two sections. The first, is a historical account of the emergence of (i) HIV/AIDS clinics at the
onset of the epidemic, (ii) LGBTQ assisted housing programs during the 1990s, and (iii) the debate on the closure of gay bathhouses in San Francisco. The central case study, which combines much of the medical and housing concerns of the period, is the Ambassador Hotel, a single room occupancy building (SRO) in the Tenderloin neighborhood operated by Hank Wilson, that provided housing to the most vulnerable of the AIDS-affected populations at the height of the emergency. The second part considers the emergence of "queer urbanism," which is defined as the physical, social and administrative infrastructures that nurture and sustain open expressions of sexuality and limit the regulation of sexual activity. My study is focused specifically on the San Francisco Bay Area, which exemplifies similar urban-political processes in other U.S. cities since the 1970s. Correspondingly, "sexual citizenship" was expressed as demands, associated obligations, and allegiances to specific queer communities. The empirically based argument considers "queer urbanism" in conjunction with "sexual citizenship," in order to propose a view of queer spaces as non-homogeneous networks characterized by contingency and change.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

SG Yeros (Efstathios Gerostathopoulos) is a Ph.D Candidate in Architecture at UC Berkeley. He specializes in modern and contemporary architectural and urban history and theory. His work focuses on debates around ideas of difference within the built environment and his dissertation looks at queer place-making, its material manifestations, and how sexuality informs claims to citizenship and the right to the city. He has written on queer theory: "Notes on Queering the Military Apparatus," in Out/Look and the Birth of the Queer (San Francisco: GLBT Historical Society, 2017), as well as on public housing and grassroots organizing in Mexico City: “Making Home at Tlatelolco, Forging Livelihoods Amid Modernism’s Rubble,” co-authored with Eric Peterson, in Mexico City: Materiality, Performance, Power (provisional title - edited by C Greig Crysler and Maria Moreno-Carranco, forthcoming, 2018). SG is trained as an architect (M.Arch, UC Berkeley) with professional experience in California. His academic background is in Art History and Theater (University of Glasgow, UK) and he has directed and performed in experimental work that explores identity, space, and politics.