• Paper / Proposal Title:
Outsmarting the City – How Queer Subcultures in Queensborough Used Public Infrastructure for Community, Cruising, and Queering Car Culture, 1890-2000.

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• Abstract (300 words):
This paper, and photography presentation, examines LGBTQ subculture as an undercurrent of “smart city” networks from 1890-2000 in a working class section of New York City. If the appeal of smart cities is modernized/automated connection and improvement, this paper responds with a research-based visual analysis of how LGBTQ social intelligence and patterns of connectivity efficiently redesigned the use of urban planning. Central to this paper’s argument is the formation of coded networks in, and around, transportation norms: how certain zones sustained queer networks under the radar of heteronormativity and how these sites evolved as clusters of “deviant use” hiding in plain sight.

By comparing layers of architecture from multiple decades with emerging scholarship, this paper analyzes vestiges of queer space and use over time. Examples of primary research sites are: motorways, transport hubs, clusters of former bars/clubs, and public
parks in Queensborough, which remains an understudied borough for pre-2000s LGBTQ sites in New York City.

The presentation images are part of my on-going urban architecture photographic series of Queens, continuing a tradition of indexing urban streets through a non-masculine queer lens. As LGBTQ people, our histories often exist between what is marginalized and what is erased. As urban development enters new phases of gentrification, efficiency, and social control, conditions of marginality will become more invisible, as bodies and as data. The photographs and supporting research aim to contribute a deeper understanding of modes of connection and socialization that enabled subcultural continuity by outsmarting urban norms in the late 20th Century.

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

Patricia Silva works with available light, cameras, and research to examine visual culture, place, and queerness. Their photographs have been exhibited in group shows most notably at Berlin Biennale, Berlin, Germany; and The International Center of Photography, New York, USA. Photo books have been exhibited in group shows at Benaki Museum, Greece; Phoenix Museum of Art, USA; Ateliê da Imagem, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and in 2016, one of Silva’s self-published projects earned an invitation to the White House by the Obama Administration. Formally educated in photography at The School of Visual Arts (BFA); at Bard College (MFA); and recently awarded a 2019 Queens Council on the Arts New Works Grant. Patricia’s portraits of artists and friends have been published in Diva UK, The Times of Israel, Out Magazine, The Advocate, and several art books. Patricia has been a faculty member at The School at the International Center of Photography since 2014, and also makes short films that have screened internationally.