

## *Queering Homonormativity: Transmasculinities and the Erotics of Representation*

The aim of this project is to examine critically the potential pedagogical work done by the embodied erotics (and labor) of trans men in commercial gay pornography, their navigation of sexual economies, and the politics of desirability in homonormative spaces — decoupling sexual orientation and identity schema from genitocentric and (particularly in the case of commercial gay pornography) phallogocentric normative notions of attraction. Acknowledging the role of queer porn in expanding opportunities for the erotic representation of transmasculinity and trans bodies — and the body of academic writing that has been devoted to the “queerness” of queer porn — with this project I also recognize the inequity of audience size and distribution (and, therefore, affect) between independent (read: “queer porn,” “feminist porn,” and niche “FTM porn”) and commercial pornographers and studios. So, I instead examine the roles of transmasculine performers within the “mainstream” industry — from Buck Angel, the “Man with a Pussy,” in TitanMen’s *Cirque Noir* to Gunzblazing’s new gay porn website Jock Pussy, centered on FTM porn star Luke Hudson and reported on by industry-specific media as “gay porn” on equal footing with Gunzblazing’s other recently released sites like RawFuckBoys and DaddysBondageBoys. This project attempts to marry, through the hybridity of experimental, multimedia visual ethnography, the sexological literatures of the twentieth century and twenty-first century media representations of the erotic and pornographic — and, of course, the scholarly bodies of work arising around pornography in anthropology, sociology, and media and cultural studies — while critically analyzing modern and historic notions of homonormativity and transmasculinities.

Close readings of the semiotics of the pornographic performances of Buck Angel and Luke Hudson — as well as amateur and DIY pornographic content uploaded by and/or featuring transmasculine individuals onto “tube sites” like XTube, Pornhub, XHamster, etc. and erotic and sexualized depictions of trans men in mainstream gay publications, like Gay Star News, Out, The Advocate, etc. — will provide the other half of the research project, providing exemplifications of the dominant cultural matrix’s range of transmasculine erotics within commercial gay pornography and its consumers and fan communities. Visual and auditory artifacts drawn from these performances will inform the construction of the final product of research: a digital, multimedia ethnographic “zine”. Combining the representational methodologies of visual anthropology with traditional written ethnographic thick description, I will construct a digital art object at the intersection of modern pornographic aesthetic and historic modes of intracommunity trans (and, more specifically, transmasculine) representation, drawn from visual record of past Fantasia Fairs as well as zines and newsletters like Boys Will Be Boys, Renaissance News, and Vanguard Magazine. An amalgam of text, video, .gif, images, and hypertext, the aim of this ethnographic “zine” is to reconstruct the aesthetic and experiential gestalt of the online pornographic viewing experience, to capture the “affective loops and fleshy motion” theorized by Susanna Paasonen in her *Carnal Resonance: Affect and Online Pornography* as central to the contemporary affective experience of online pornography. Recognizing the centrality of the visual and auditory (and, as some argue, the hypervisual and hyperauditory) in pornographic imaginaries to their bodily affect has been fundamental to porn studies, and is correspondingly fundamental to the aesthetic of this project.

The primary holdings of the Schlesinger Library to be consulted for this project are the “Papers of J. Ari Kane-DeMaios, 1970-2005” and “Videotape collection of J. Ari Kane-DeMaios

1976-2000". More specifically, the following materials will be utilized in the course of my research:

— *Papers*, Series I, Subseries A, 3.24 – 4.14, 5.2 – 8.15. “Fantasia Fair” materials are of interest primarily from 1990-2005, as during this fifteen year period and into the present the demographics of conference attendees is known within the community to have shifted significantly from primarily heterosexual crossdressers and trans women to include greater proportions of trans men, transmasculine, and genderqueer individuals. Fitting with the interests of the project, special attention is to be paid to materials addressing conference programs related to trans men, specifically those addressing (homo)sexuality, relationships, and embodiment of masculinity. Similar themes will be identified in “Programs and conferences”, “Publication services”, and “Publicity and general information.”

— *Papers*, Series II, 19.7-19.11 (particular interest in item 19.11 – “Boston FTM (Female To Male): Hero's Journey Conference”), 20.1-22.2 (particular interest in items relating to “sexual attitude reassessment”) — and *Papers*, Series III; this series is of lesser interest and is included to allow for providential discovery of materials relevant to the project.

— *Papers*, Series IV, Subseries A, PD.37-PD.91 and Subseries B, PD.92, PD.114-PD.135.

“Photographs” will provide primary source visuals of Fantasia Fairs. As noted above, materials from 1990 and on are of particular interest. Numerous photos will be reproduced, in accordance to Schlesinger Library policy, with much discretion taken regarding the privacy of individuals

depicted therein — all efforts will be made to avoid reproduction of identifying images and information.

— *Videotape collection*, Series I, 1-8, 12-15 Series II 18-25, 28-44 — as with the “Fantasia Fair” materials of *Papers*, particular interest will be shown to post-1990 Fantasia Fairs. Audio, video clips, and video stills may be reproduced, in accordance to Schlesinger Library policy — as with above, all efforts will be made to avoid reproduction of identifying information, audio or visuals.

Another significant holding of Schlesinger to be utilized is “Records of Outrageous Women, Inc.”, Series II. Of particular interest are the letters described in Series II SUBMISSIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS, in which “many writers include personal information about themselves and their relationship to S/M” and “some express relief at finding a like-minded community.” Reproductions of excerpts of these personal correspondence — and, potentially, responses by Outrageous Women staff — will be used in construction of the multimedia “zine,” contributing to the hand-lettered, cut-and-stick DIY aesthetic, wherein the textual and visual debris of collage invoking visual experience of online pornography, with its confusion of animated banner ads, pop-ups, thumbnails, video content, hyperbolic language, and innumerable links to additional pornographic media. Additionally, “Advertisements” (Series I, 1.1-1.43) will be consulted for (potential) primary source visuals for the “zine.”

The Digital Transgender Archives are yet another vital source of this project, allowing for access to digitized primary source materials on topics relating to transmasculine homosexuality, including all manners of historical sexological literature, newsletters, and zines — and

discovering vital archival materials outside of Schlesinger Library, including the papers of Louis Graydon Sullivan, Beau Lee James, Loren Cameron, and East Coast Female To Male Group.

While those holdings and resources listed above are a product of extensive research, they are by no means exhaustive or complete, and it is wholly expected that specific holdings will fade in overall importance to the project while others will become more vital, and others more may be discovered and become integral to my “zine” during the course of research.

The importance of the above holdings of the Schlesinger Library in contextualizing the modern semiotics of transmasculine pornographics within the medical and historico-cultural understanding of gender, sex, and sexuality and the embodied experiences of trans men cannot be understated, as the primary intent of the research project and “zine” are to contribute to the discipline of porn studies vital scholarship on the history of the erotics of gay transmasculine representation, from sexological literature of the 1970s and 80s to present commercial gay pornography, a markedly underrepresented area of study in the field.