

Towards a Queer Urban Design Methodology

“In the city, different people with different projects must necessarily struggle with one another over the shape of the city, the terms of access to the public realm.”

—Don Mitchell

“How can you be rigidly orientated toward something that is amorphous shifting, fluid, tricky, elusive?”

—D. Travers Scott

B.D. WORTHAM-GALVIN

Portland State University

INTRODUCTION

Who and what is being left out and left behind of design and development decisions of the twenty-first century city? How can architects, landscape architects, planners and preservationists change how they know—and therefore make—the city so that they might promote a city of difference rather than continue to propagate a nostalgic (and outdated) notion of the city as community? This paper proposes that the idea of the city—and how we adapt its existing resources—could benefit from a rethinking of both what we reuse and how we alter those things. In order to change the what and the how of the city made (and, therefore, extend narratives of power and control), this paper focuses on by whom and for whom is the city as a means toward pursuing urban transformation. Specifically, this paper will assert the queer in a methodology of an urban adaptation in order to destabilize the norms of urban design practice. To facilitate this discussion, this paper will describe the pedagogy and design methods used a framework for the investigations of an architecture thesis by Dustin Buzzard entitled “Painting the Town Pink (2013).” In this case, the queer will be asserted as a method for destabilizing naturalized norms of urban design knowledge and practice.

ADAPTING THE CITY

Traditionally, the management of change in the city falls under the rubric of preservation development and planning activities—most commonly known as adaptive reuse. Adaptive reuse activities in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been dominated by capitalist systems of production. This means those who have controlled late twentieth and early twenty-first century adaptive reuse activities laud the conversion of sites or buildings for their potential consumption by tourists and upper middle class consumers. Historic, cultural, and public values of reuse are defined by consumerist logics of a very specific taste group with development strategies that are often with limited or no public processes or partnerships. In addition, the projects are sold as sustainable; but the application of this discourse is driven via the reuse of the physical fabrics, not configured as a cultural resilience.

The resulting adapted city, thus, is often driven by big projects (in financing, scope, scale) in socio-economically decimated neighborhoods in order to attract a new urban audience. In the current schema, the city is understood by a consumerist logic that privileges (and/or delimits) who has the right to the city. The adaptation of the city thus is about the politics of who makes place and who gets to occupy it as today's city is most often stewarded by a select group of (often socio-economically and/or culturally homogenous) people who assess the values of the traditions that the city should represent.

While decline in the twentieth century North American city often happened in small, almost unnoticeable increments, the rebirth has involved more large scaled approaches with their hastening consequences of the socio-economic and cultural homogenization of the "reborn" city. Until the economic recession of 2008 this bigness of approach to design and development often left behind certain people and places not outsized enough to control large scaled processes. A small approach to urbanism has been gaining adherents in the past decade in part due to the increased popularity of tactical urbanism projects that emphasize the temporary, the local, the low cost, and the pervasive use of digital tactics and social media; (one metric of tactical urbanisms' success might be how the unsanctioned actions have been incorporated into municipal regulation in the case of parklets). The implications of small thinking (and the knowledge generated therein) are that different peoples, places, and things are able to wrest control of how, where, and by whom changes is stewarded in the built environment. The way we have understood the city for the past century is through big money, big visions, and—more recently—big data. Can the wicked problem of knowing and designing a complex city be better served by rethinking the bigness of urban knowledge with a reconsideration of what resources we are (re)using, and which voices inform the process of their adaptation?

QUEERING ADAPTATION

In order to remain relevant custodians of place and change in how one knows the city, designers, planners and preservationists should seek out the subsidiary as sites of opportunity. But in taking on an expanded notion of how one knows the city, a broadening of physical adaptation activities needs to also promote a culturally protean urbanism that recognizes LGBTQ contributions to the North American city. This paper suggests a methodology of knowing and intervening that represents a queering of the city in order to give relevance to urban activities and sustain a twenty-first city of difference rather than an outmoded utopian notion twentieth century notion of the city as community.

Queering the city, here, means constructing a place "where people witness and appreciate diverse cultural expressions that they do not share and do not fully understand." In constructing a queer methodology that promotes a city of difference, queer is used to refer to a destabilization of the norm. Queer is also used as a signifier of the making of identity, gender, sexuality, family, and "community," as moving targets. This design method, thus, uses the term queer (as other authors do) not as a way of stipulating specific people's identities or sexualities, but in the questioning of norms and orthodoxies so that we might achieve an urban realm of "difference without exclusion". City life and urban knowing, in this schema, does not aspire to community (which oft excludes not a part of the predominating homogenous group) but to the construction of city life wherein the tensions between different groups and their varied understandings of sites make the complex politics of place visible. As Kath Browne notes, queer "seeks to reconsider how we think [of] our modes of being and our conceptualizations of politics." In this way a queer design methodology is a means by which culture is seen as a process, not product, that derives from the enaction of space, not a priori to it.

Figure 1: Graphic by Dustin Buzzard,
Painting the Town Pink map



ENDNOTES

1. Mitchell, D. (2014). To Go Again to Hyde Park: Public Space, Rights, and Social Justice. In J. J. Giesking & W. Mangold (Eds.), *The People, Place, and Space Reader*. New York: Routledge. (Originally published 2000), 193.
2. Scott, D. T. (1997). Le freak, c'est chic! Le fag, quelle drag! In C. Queen & L. Schimel, *Pomosexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality*. San Francisco, Cleis Press, 65-66.
3. Iris Marion Young explicates the concept of urban difference. Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
4. Key adaptive reuse discussions include: Fitch, J. M. (2005). *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World*. Clarion Associates; and, Murtagh, W. J. (1990). *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*. New York: Sterling Publishing; and, English Heritage. (2005). *Regeneration and the Historic Environment: Heritage as a Catalyst for Better Social and Economic Regeneration*. London: English Heritage. Catacuzino, S. (1989). *Re-Architecture: Old Buildings/ New Uses*. New York: Abbeville Press; and, Landecker, H. (1991); and, Powell, K. (1999). *Architecture Reborn: Converting Old Buildings for New Uses*. New York: Rizzoli.
5. Further reading on adaptive reuse and economics: Mason, R. (2005). *Economics and Historic Preservation: A Guide and Review of the Literature*. Washington: The Brookings Institution; and, Schilling, M. J. (2002). Rypkema, D.D. (2003). *The Economics of Rehabilitation*. Washington: National Trust for Historic Preservation.
6. The term and meaning of the term "taste culture" is taken from Herbert Gans, in Gans, H. (1968) *Urban Vitality and the Fallacy of Physical Determinism*. In: *People and Plans: Essays on Urban Problems and Solutions*. New York: Penguin Books. I discuss traditional modes of preservation development and the discourses of sustainability in Wortham-Galvin, B.D. *The Woof and Warp of Sustainability: Dialogues on the Resilient Reuse of the Blue Heron Paper Mill*. Powerlines, Summer 2015, online journal, <http://amst.umd.edu/powerlines/the-woof-warp-of-sustainability-dialogues-on-the-resilient-reuse-of-the-blue-heron-paper-mill/>

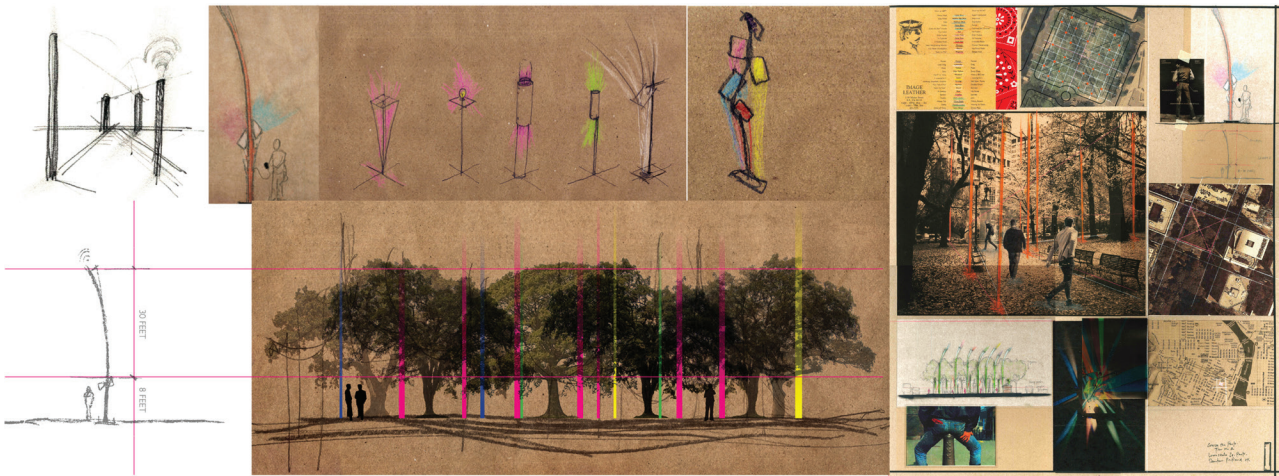
"PAINTING THE TOWN PINK"

In applying queer design methodologies as a means to: (1) reconnect underutilized resources of the city Portland to a vital urbanism, and (2) use specific moments and productions in the cultural history of Portland's LGBTQ residents to achieve a plural contemporary publicness, graduate architecture student Dustin Buzzard's thesis provides a model for a capacious notion of adaptive urbanism that permits a variety of peoples to engage in social, economic, and cultural productions. Buzzard's investigation began with the observation that there was no "gayborhood" in Portland—a city with a reputation as liberal as San Francisco, but no equivalent to the Castro neighborhood. Through historical research he found a wealth of queer activities and sites in the downtown and even the development of the "gay triangle" area during the 1960s and 70s, but by the twenty-first century the triangle had dissolved, rendering queer space and its interconnected networks indiscernible. Methodologically, Buzzard was prompted to question predictable notions of the intersection between urban design and reuse in favor of: challenging conventions of public and private; promoting discursive communication over assumed understanding; valuing the plural over the singular; and, converging temporal histories and contemporary conditions. The result of his queering of urban design is a series of four interventions—entitled "Cruise the Park," "Frozen Kisses," "Lock Your Junk," and "Paint Your Face"—that represent his attempt to queer the city both in terms of the physical infrastructures used and their socio-cultural occupations.

"CRUISE THE PARK"

Lownsdale Square, a picturesque park-like courthouse square near Portland's City Hall was established in 1869. A site of oratory during the early settlement, Lownsdale Square was originally a gathering place for gentlemen only (with its partnering urban park, Chapman Square, being reserved for women and children). In October 2011, the protest and demonstration known as Occupy Portland set up an encampment in Lownsdale and Chapman Squares. During its occupation of Lownsdale Square, Occupy Portland's tent city established an alternative urbanism grounded in civil disobedience and socio-economic justice. After Occupy was forcibly removed from the squares, the city restored the squares to their prior park-like state wherein they once again function primarily for visual consumption as they are underused in a plural, socio-cultural, and performative sense.

In "Cruise the Park," Buzzard reaches back to Lownsdale's historical use in order to stimulate renewed and variable activity within the park today. As a historically men's only domain Lownsdale Square was known as a casual place of cruising and meeting others for same-sex



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encounters. In the merging of private desires met through public encounters, gay men developed patterns of subcultural codes in order to safely communicate in the city. Whether engaging in subtle body language signals or code-words and language or clothing and bandana choices, “like other marginalized groups seeking a public presence, gay men had to hone their sense of the social dynamics governing various neighborhoods and the possibilities each presented.” Those historical codes gay men used for meeting have lost their public performance in real physical spaces as they now predominate on the internet and social media applications. “Cruise the Park” is an attempt to layer physical and virtual spatial action, by providing a space wherein (LGBTQ and straight) social meeting can happen; and, simultaneously queer the urban room of the park through unexpected action.

The proposal seeks to redeploy historical gay subcultural codes—and broaden a user audience—through what is often thought of as a mundane park infrastructure: lighting. Inserting a series of playful light poles within Lowndale Square is meant not merely as a safety measure, but as an interface with social media applications. Digital applications would communicate directly with light posts which would change color according to the desires programmed on an individual’s mobile device. The series of light poles illuminate the wishes of those who pass by and choose to wait and find another who is like-minded in their wants—from platonic activities to sexual assignations. The poles reach above the canopy of the park trees gaining power from small solar panel “leaves”. The added public component, beside the color display of ever change lights, is a wi-fi hot spot zone within the park area and charging stations to power up mobile devices. People and their desires, thus, enact the visual aesthetics of the space and move it from one of static consumption of a “natural” landscape to an interactive installation that highlights the ambiguity between private and public action, between visibility and invisibility, and between disclosures and enclosure. The adaptation of the urban park is one that contests the inert visual consumption of nature into a human cultural performance. This intervention is meant to demonstrate “the degree to which the boundaries between spaces defined as ‘public’ and ‘private’ are socially constructed, contingent, and contested.”

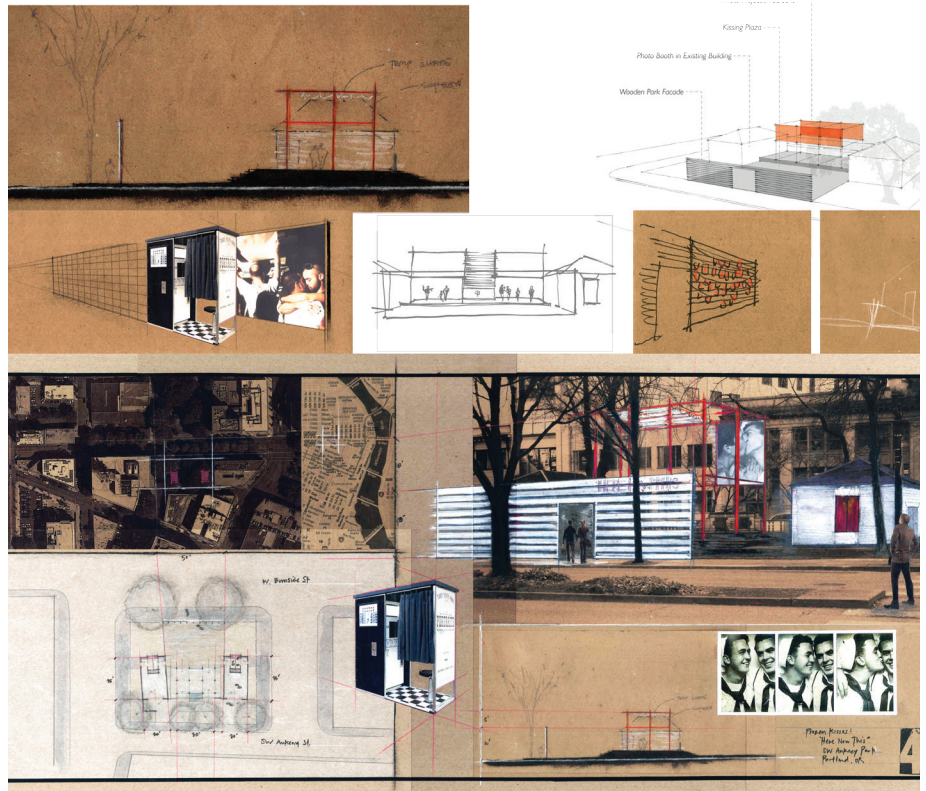
“FROZEN KISSES”

Buzzard’s design proposition “Frozen Kisses” offers another alternative rethinking of the park as an activating urban room and the reuse of its infrastructure. The intervention is located at the southern end of Portland’s North Park Blocks, an area physically and perceptually cut off from the main Park Blocks by the predominating automobile traffic of Burnside Avenue. Like Lowndale Square, North Park Blocks was deeded early in the city’s formation in 1865 when Portland as a city barely existed as such. With an initial nineteenth century residential focus, and areas set aside for children, North Park Blocks declined in the 1920s when the

Figure 2: Graphic by Dustin Buzzard., *Cruise the Park collage.*

7. Further reading on adaptive reuse and sustainability: McDonough W. & Braungart M. (2002). *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. North Point Press; and, Elefante, C. (2008). Renewing modernism. *Places* 20 (1), 44-51; and, Brand, S. (1994). *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They’re Built*. New York: Penguin Books; and, Diamonstein, B. (1978). *Buildings Reborn: New Uses, Old Places*. New York: Harper & Row; and, Bullen, P. A. (2005).
8. Lefebvre, H. (1996). The Right to the City. In E. Kofman & E. Lebas (Eds.), *Writing on Cities*, Oxford: Blackwell. (Original Work published 1968)
9. This is a reformulation of the question asked by Henri Lefebvre “If space embodies social relationships, how and why does it do so? And what relationships are they?” Lefebvre, H. (2014). The Production of Space. In J.J. Giesking & W. Mangold (Eds.), *The People, Place, and Space Reader*. New York: Routledge. (Originally published 1990), 289.
10. Roberta Brandes Gratz discusses this bigness of revitalization, it’s consequences and the counter argument for the small in: Brandes Gratz, R. (1999). *Cities Rebuilt, Cities Reborn*. The Journal of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Vol. 13, Number 2. Washington: National Trust for Historic Preservation.
11. Wortham-Galvin, B.D. (2013). *An Anthropology of Urbanism: how people make places (and what designers and planners might learn from it)*. Footprint Delft School of Design Journal, No. 13, 21-40.

12. By small thinking I refer not only to the design movement of tactical urbanism, but also to leaders in a variety of fields of inquiry to include: urbanist Jane Jacobs, economist E.F. Schumacher, architect Christopher Alexander, architect John Kaliski, planner James Rojas, urbanist William Whyte, and economist Muhammad Yunus among others.
13. The term wicked problem refers to the work of Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber wherein they assert, "Policy problems cannot be definitively described. Moreover, in a pluralistic society there is nothing like the undisputable public good; there is no objective definition of equity; policies that respond to social problems cannot be meaningfully correct or false; and it makes no sense to talk about 'optimal solutions' to social problems unless severe qualifications are imposed first. Even worse, there are no 'solutions' in the sense of definitive and objective answers. (p. 155)" from Rittel, H. and Webber, M. (1973). Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning. *Policy Sciences* 4, 155-169.
14. As of 2014 only three properties of the 80,000 listings on the National Register of Historic Places marked Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) as the cultural heritage of significance (not unsurprising considering that it is only since the turn of the twenty-first century that the National Park Service has begun to consider sites of importance attributed to the events and peoples of this constituency). While the recognition is long overdue, it still situates preservation in its past paradigm of investing the physical artifact in a cultural stasis, removed and abstracted from contemporary relevance. Paula Martinac is a champion of LGBT issues in preservation practice with her blog, <http://queerestplaces.wordpress.com>, and her article publications for the National Trust: "11 Significant LGBT Sites You May Have Never Heard Of" <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/diversity/lgbt-heritage-in-preservation/sites/> and "Recognizing LGBT Historic Sites in Our Cultural Heritage," June 21, 2011, <http://www.preservationnation.org/forum/library/public-articles/recognizing-lgbt-sites.html>. Aust, C. (2014). *Be Proud: The Recognition and Preservation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Cultural Heritage in the United States*. (Master of Arts Thesis) Graduate Program in Art History, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Lee, A. J. (2003).

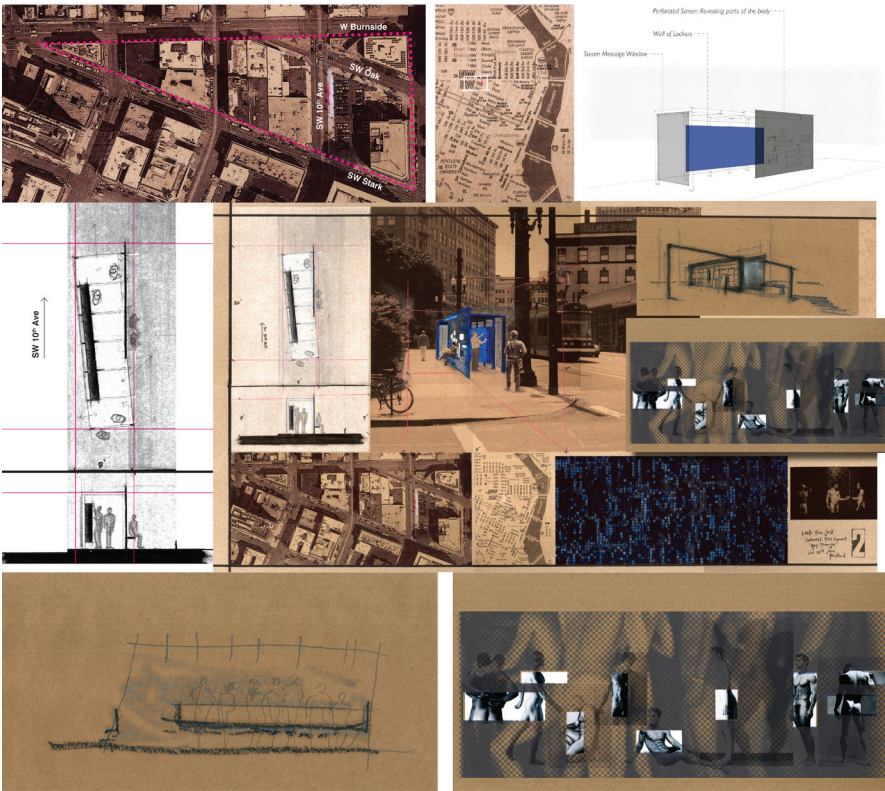


1924 zoning code changed the surrounding area to industrial, commercial, and residential hotels; and, was in full neglect by the 1940s up through the turn of the twenty-first century, with homelessness, panhandling, and drug use dominating the area. While the use of the northern part of North Park Blocks increased with the redevelopment and establishment of the neighboring Pearl District at the turn of the twenty-first century, the small piece of park south of Burnside (with two historic but abandoned public restrooms) remains overlooked and blighted within the Park Blocks as a whole.

Buzzard's choice to activate this urban room was based not only on its discarded condition, but also on the historical role of the "tearoom" as a site of sexual encounters supported by the infrastructures of public restrooms in parks and transit centers. Situated in a prominent location along the path of Portland's annual Gay Pride Parade, "Frozen Kisses" adapts this derelict park piece and its neglected bathrooms into a photo booth, gallery, and interactive arts plaza. The two public teahouse galleries frame a center urban outdoor room—a meeting place composed of a light frame structure that supports a billboard sized screen where projected images from the photo booths can be seen (if the photos so desire) from one of Portland's busiest thoroughfares. It becomes a place to celebrate public displays of affection—both episodic and continual. It also becomes a way of marking land with fragments of the past—related to the queer presence in the gay triangle—and the present in terms of the periodic pride parade route and the incessant urban activities (both planned and unplanned). The bathrooms-cum-photo booths and galleries become a place where photos from the past and the present can be displayed. If the tearoom represented a public place where private acts took place and a place where the invisibility of gay life was made visible to other men, then "Frozen Kisses" seeks to amplify gestures of intimacy by all peoples rather than marginalize them.

"Frozen Kisses" reclaims a space of police oppression and sexual suppression by transforming a space that has been culturally engrained as a site of disgust (through associations with

Figure 3: Graphic by Dustin Buzzard., *Frozen Kisses collage*.



gay action, drugs, and prostitution) into a celebratory people spot, “Frozen Kisses” alters a forsaken infrastructure into a welcomed one.

“LOCK YOUR JUNK”

Portland’s historic gay triangle is undetectable to most contemporary urban dwellers today. The triangle came to a point at the intersections of Stark and Burnside Streets and extended several blocks east. During the 1960s and 1970s, this concentrated area housed bars, sex shops, bathhouses, and teahouses that were frequented mostly by men in an era of newfound sexual freedom layered onto the tumult of the civil rights and women’s rights movements.

The “Lock Your Junk” intercession is located within the historic gay triangle at the former site of The Riptide. The Riptide opened in June 1965 as one of the first gay bars on Stark Street and was closed just four years later after the city refused to issue food permits and the Oregon Liquor Control Commission would not let the bar serve liquor without also serving food. This discrimination through regulatory bureaucracy was not uncommon in delimited the queering of downtown Portland. Today, this spot is a parking lot. Buzzard decided to queer a bus stop on this block into an enhanced infrastructure in which the sidewalk becomes a community room. Since the area, at one time, housed the city’s premier men’s bathhouses, his concept was to bring the baths to the street. In acknowledging that “the bathhouse and other realms of sensuality offered respite from the world, and thus became escape values for society as a whole,” Buzzard’s intervention takes an inward fantastical realm and makes it public and on display as an urban phantasmagoria.

The infrastructure as community room is extended in two layers. While one layer is a solid wall of day-use lockers, the other layer consists of a perforated metal screen with framed cut-outs that highlight the oft sexualized areas of the human body. The space between the screen and the lockers provides seating and shelter from the elements. The screen acts as

15. Young, I. M. (2014). City Life and Difference. In J.J. Giesking & W. Mangold (Eds.), *The People, Place, and Space Reader*. New York: Routledge. (Originally published 1990).
16. Young (1990/2014), 251.
17. Gore, A. (2009). Introduction. In A. Gore (Ed.), *Portland Queer: Tales of the Rose City*, Portland: Lit Star Press, 9.
18. Important discussions of queer include: Browne, K. (2006). Challenging Queer Geographies. *Antipode* xx, 885-893; and, Davis, H. (2005). The difference of queer. *Canadian Women’s Studies*, 24(2-3), 23-37; and, Giffney, N. (2004), Denormalizing queer theory: More than (simply) lesbian and gay studies. *Feminist Theory* 5(1), 73-78; and, Halberstam, J. (2005). *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.
19. The phrase “difference without exclusion” is from Young, (1990/2014), 247.
20. Browne (2006), 889. Brown references Halberstam (2005) at the end of this sentence.
21. Iveson, K. (2014). Putting the Public Back into Public Space. In J.J. Giesking & W. Mangold (Eds.), *The People, Place, and Space Reader*. New York: Routledge. (Originally published 1998), 189.
22. Buzzard, D. (2013). *Painting the Town Pink: Queer Interventions in Portland’s Public Realm*. (M.Arch thesis) Portland State University.
23. Adorned with elms and ginkgo trees, restrooms, paths, and statuary, Lownsdale Square has Historic Landmark designation within the city.
24. Occupy Portland was inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement that began in New York City the month before. The encampment lasted about a month before a violent removal and dismantling by the Portland Police on November 13, 2011. Oregon Public Broadcast covered the political use of the square in a broadcast on November 25, 2011 subsequently uploaded to the internet: Oregon Public Broadcast. (2011). Chapman And Lownsdale Square Have A History Of Political Movements. Retrieved from <http://www.opb.org/news/article/chapman-and-lownsdale-square-have-history-political-movements/>.

Figure 4: Graphic by Dustin Buzzard., *Lock Your Junk collage*.

25. The restroom in Lowndale Square was the site of numerous entrapments by the vice squad all though the 1940s-1960s. In 1961, a man being arrested by a police officer in the restroom resisted so violently that the officer had to be hospitalized. Research by the Gay & Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN) has documented many of those arrested by combing thru the Oregonian and Oregon Journal and looking for the clue words "arrested at Fourth and Salmon," and arrested for "disorderly conduct involving morals." Lowndale Square is mentioned as a cruising location in the court transcripts of the State of Oregon v. McAllister (1913). Lowndale Square was a cruising location at least as early as 1901, as noted in a memoir by Portland chronicler Lawrence Pratt. Retrieved from <http://www.glapn.org/6045walkingtour.html>. An ordinance repealing the then unenforced gender divisions was not passed until 1990. Lowndale is not unique as American city parks were popular meeting places for gay men early in the twentieth century. In his discussion of New York City, historian George Chauncey notes, "The parks endured as a locus of sexual and social activity for homosexual and heterosexual couples alike, despite police harassment, in part because the police found them challenging to regulate. Chauncey, G. (1996). Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public: Gay Uses of Streets. In J. Sanders (Ed.), *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 231.
26. Chauncey (1996), 240; and, Duncan, J. (1978). *Men Without Property: The Tramp's Classification and Uses of Public Space*. *Antipode* 10, 24-34.
27. Chauncey (1996), 225.
28. Pickett, N. (1992). North Park Blocks improvements under way. *The Oregonian*, E02; Nicholas, J. (1991). Setting straight the crooked record. *The Oregonian*, D01; Lane, D. (1990). Running out of patience. *The Oregonian*, B01; and, Mackenzie, H. (1988). *The Portland Park Blocks: their origin and development* (Thesis), University of Washington, Seattle, WA.
29. There is no documentation specifically dating the emergence of the bathrooms, but Portland's Parks and Recreations department notes that were constructed sometime during the decade of the 1920s. Retrieved from <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/finder/index.cfm?&propertyid=447&action=ViewPark>.
30. The then single sex bathrooms were constructed in 1922 right before the parks decline. They became unisex bathrooms in the 1980s. Even the term "tearoom" allowed for the elision between public and private as, on its face, it appeared to refer to cafes where "respectable" women socialized, but was a transliteration from toilet room to t-room to tearoom. Humphreys, L. (1970). *Tearoom Trade. Impersonal Sex in Public Places*. Duckworth; and, Delph, E.W. (1978). *The Silent Community: Public Homosexual Encounters*. Beverly Hills, Sage Publications; and, Chauncey (1996), 250-251.



a communication devise with people seeing and being seen, framed, and watched on either side. The backside of the lockers is a glittering sequin facade made of the same metal key tags one would find in a bathhouse that reflects through kinetic fragments the passerby's own gaze onto his or herself.

In bringing a conventionally private room outside, Buzzard's design acknowledges that the queers historically rewrote the city and its urbanism by refusing to accept restrictions about boundaries such as publicness and privacy. This project adapts the street as not just a site of passing through, but as a place of occupation and communication that can enliven, while offering infrastructures that enhance unmet needs like safe storage, a place to rest, refuge from the weather, and a place to watch.

"PAINT YOUR FACE"

Portland's most famous queer face, Darcelle XV came out in 1969 when Walter Cole transitioned to a drag queen after a two-year experimentation with wearing women's clothes. Cole opened a dyke bar in 1967 called Demas that would become Darcelle XV Showplace in the early 1970s. Both then and now, Darcelle XV is a popular drag revue. A fixture at many of Portland's socio-cultural events, she has become Portland's "unofficial welcome wagon" for forty years, to include serving as grand marshal of the Portland Rose Festival and receiving the city's Spirit of Portland Award both in 2011.

Figure 5: Graphic by Dustin Buzzard.,
Paint Your Face collage.

For this intervention, Buzzard was encouraged to rethink the increasing popular notion of the parklet—the adaption of the right of way of a parking space into a people spot. This intervention engages in Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical analysis of daily life as Buzzard seeks to bring the “back-of-house” transformation of female impersonation into the “front-of-house,” by designing a public vanity where one can stop and primp or vamp. Utilizing Portland’s Street Seats initiative, the parking spot directly in front of Darcelle’s performance venue would be transformed into a spectacle of mirrors of every size. The red carpet would be rolled out indefinitely, opening from the front doorway through the vanity parklet to a full length dichromatic mirror, which has shifting and alternating fragments of colored reflective glass transforming the on-lookers perception of what a reflected image is. Once again notions of publicness and privacy are conflated as the act of transformation into drag is moved from an invisible and unknowable realm to a publically shared one. In other words, the relationships between performance, social masks, and being oneself are merged and intensified. Ultimately the intent is that anyone would engage in play at the public vanity parklet in what is usually a private moment of self and identity.

CONCLUSION

In queering a methodology for an adaptive urbanism, the goal is to stimulate a plural means by which we perceive, process, and synthesize how we know and live in the city. In some ways Jane Jacobs started this urban project fifty years, as I have written previously:

In making visible the ‘street ballet’ of Greenwich Village, by recording the mundane and highly specific actions of daily life she made the familiar strange. She made visible and significant ‘where the what’ happens and, most noteworthy, by whom.

The queering of urban design is meant to update her anthropologically based ideas about how to make cities within the urban realities of the twenty-first century. Today’s city is consumer driven and the power of the purse—in terms of corporations, municipal institutions, and the upper class—controls much of how city’s make place today. In seeking to queer the city, Buzzard notes, “Queer space is [...a ...] place free from the pressures of conforming to an idealized urban fabric.”

The queer is critical in establishing a methodology for a process oriented city because: it challenges assumptions about what is public and what is private; it makes elisions between interiority and exteriority of social and physical fabrics; it not only permits but encourages play; it promotes the mutable and variable over the static and singular; it promotes modifications and adjustments by users; it encourages difference and struggle over the shared and complacent; it promotes discursive communication over assumed understanding; it highlights people as a critical component in constructing the city (not just the physical and material fabrics). It allows for oft ignored and marginalized physical infrastructures to be rethought and reincorporated instead of demolished and decimated; it allows for urban rooms to happen at multiple scales; it allows for design to focus on continual process rather than a fixed product as its purpose; and, it allows for the democratization of design as more people have direct contact with the design and social production of space.

Writer D. Travers Scott comments on the fluidity of gender and sexual orientation by asking: “How can a rigid Gay Male identity cope with that really cute guy, who used to be a butch baby dyke, and is still involved in a primary relationship with a woman but considers herself basically a gay man?” Most urban physical fabrics could benefit from Scott’s observations about being rigid in the face of the protean and mutable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My thinking on this topic began with a research collaboration between two architecture students—Dustin Buzzard and Klara Jolesz—and myself in the Summer of 2011, that resulted in a walking tour to queer Portland. After researching historic places of significance to the queer community, Dustin remained inspired by the topic and pursued it as his thesis. While the theorizing, conceptualization, and methodological explorations were proffered by the author, turning it into a specific design investigation was the work of Dustin’s.

31. At the point of the triangle today stands The Crystal Hotel—part of the McMenamins chain of adaptive reuse projects in Oregon that transforms historic structures into a variety of hybrids that include some combination of bars, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment venues via conventional economic-driven preservation models. Formerly known as The Club Baths in 1971, The Crystal Hotel was the heart of the city’s queer scene including its ground floor gay-owned night club that transitioned through a number of owners until closing in 2007. While most of the original spots were driven out or demolished by urban revitalization efforts during the 1980s, 90s, and 00s, a few queer establishments remain. This de-queering of the downtown began as the area thrived when in 1964 the Portland City Council asked the Oregon Liquor Control Commission to revoke the liquor licenses of all of Portland’s Gay and Lesbian bars. The OLC refused, noting that the bars were operating within the law. Cook, T. (1999). Portland Gay History Walking Tour. Retrieved from <http://www.glapn.org/6045walkingtour.html>. The walking tour was supported by GLAPN. The GLAPN’s guide to historic gay, lesbian, and transfer buildings and locations in downtown Portland uses the following primary sources: minutes from the Portland City Council, Oregon Liquor Control Commission Records, Portland City Directories, the U.S. Federal Census, Sanborn fire insurance maps, and several gay newspapers published between 1970 and 1980—*The Fountain, The NW Fountain, The Northwest Gay Review, and The Cascade Voice*.
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34. Darcelle XV homepage: <http://www.darcellexv.com/index.php>; and, Cole, W. & Knorr, S. (2010). Just Call Me Darcelle. Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.
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