

ON AUTHORSHIP, QUEERNESS AND COMMUNITY

Zach Muir ID 3834211989 5,415 words

My practice has always been driven by a need to express or externalise myself. This has taken a variety of forms, however with my capstone project, my main interests have been in interrogating the idea and the role of the author/artist, how my work functions within and for a community, as well as a thematic interest in the erotic and the queer.

I looked at Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* as a theoretical basis for my approach to authorship and influence in terms of making meaning. Jenny Holzer's practice also provided me a lens through which these and other similar ideas of authorship could be practically implemented in terms of selection, editorship, and curation. I also looked at Richard Siken's poems both as a way of exploring how identity affects authorship, and his queer themes. Reading *Towards the Queerest Insurrection* by the Mary Nardini Gang gave me the language to express the politics of queerness that I was looking for. I read Audre Lorde's essay *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power* through that same queer lens, providing a comprehensive, thought out version of the ideas I was having on the topic. Similarly to my use of Barthes' essay in terms of authorship, I use Jonathan Lethem's article *The Ecstasy of Influence* to provide a theoretical framework for my appropriation of others' work to use for my own art. Lastly I looked at how zines can function as an archive and how important it is in queer circles to document our own history. These authors and artists overlap in theme, and have served a variety of functions in inspiring my collage, zine, and poster-making works so far this semester.

THE AUTHOR IN THEORY: Roland Barthes

Roland Barthes' seminal work *The Death of the Author* is integral to understanding the approach I have towards making art this semester, as well as being the base off which later readings build off in terms of authorship. I read Barthes' essay towards the end of semester

one this year, and recognised how it fit with my zine-making practice at the time (I had no art-making classes that semester and zinemaking fit into the little time I had outside of studying).

My interest in authorship came from a place of insecurity, given my heavy use of collage in my zinemaking practice; none of it was my own drawing, or writing or photography. Barthes gave me a well-known, respected theoretical basis through which I could justify the work as something my own, or 'original'.

Barthes describes the text an author creates as "a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture."¹ The author does not come up with anything 'original', but brings together different cultural elements and concepts to create something then perceived to be new. Barthes' concept of authorship, to my understanding, is that originality is required for one to be an author, and because texts are amalgamations, not originals, then it is impossible to be an author. In my collages there is a literal comparison between what Barthes talks about and what I do. I physically bring together different cultural elements, the words and images of others, and when combined to convey certain concepts or messages, they become 'new' works or texts.

Barthes wrote his essay to provoke his contemporaries in response to contemporary issues of people attributing too much of the meaning of a text to the author's biography. His arguments go against that grain: Barthes recognises that much of one's work is largely influenced by everything one ingests from the world, knowingly or not.

The second major part of his argument is that meaning comes not from the author, but the reader: "there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is ... the reader".² The idea that a lot of the work creating meaning is placed with the reader is something I think about when creating my work. I agree that the majority of meaning comes from the reader's knowledge and experience, however, the author does curate the set of

¹ Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (Aspen, 1967), 4.

² Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, 6.

images/words that the reader has to work with. This space of curation is where I feel I do most of my work in artmaking.

At the time of reading *The Death of the Author* I was also enrolled in Media Studies 101, where for a week we studied auteur theory, as well as dissenting voices. The 'Auteur' aligns with the conceptualization of the Author that Barthes was arguing against. The term was coined in the 1940s by Andrew Sarris, positing that the director is the sole creative genius behind a film.³ An Auteur director is supposedly characterized by having a distinct visual style and common themes throughout their filmography. The argument against is similar to Barthes'; the director is choosing relevant cultural elements to include or exclude in their work to create something 'new'. There is also the argument that the crew holds a great deal of creative power, from the costume and props department making things, to the technical skill of the camera crew influencing just how shots are taken. Much in the same way that nothing is original, there is no such thing as a sole creative genius when it comes to filmmaking, nor by extension artmaking.

In the context of my work, I am by no means an Author, nor an Auteur. In many circumstances I am influenced by what my friends send or suggest to me, for example links to magazines on The Internet Archive, pictures from which have ended up in my collage zines. Similarly, online posts which my friends share have pictures I use. Artist models have also been recommended to me by friends. I am by no means the sole creative genius and would not be able to do my work without the influence of others.

THE AUTHOR IN PRACTICE: Jenny Holzer

I first saw Jenny Holzer's work in person in 2019 at the Guggenheim Bilbao. It was an installation of floor to ceiling LED signboards with text scrolling up in multiple languages. I could not read it for how overwhelming the speed and lights were. However I later came across her other works, and my love for her art grew from there.

³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Auteur Theory," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Her Inflammatory Essays are some of my favourites, but until reading Britt Miazgowicz's 2010 Masters of the Arts dissertation I had not sat down and thought deeply about why I liked them and how they functioned. Miazgowicz investigates Jenny Holzer's relationship with authorship through examining a wide range of her works. It's Holzer's practical approach to interacting authorship, rather than the purely theoretical writing of Barthes that makes this text useful to me.

Despite offering a more practical approach, Barthes' spectre remains. Miazgowicz refers to Holzer's relationship with her work as being an editor or scriptor, rather than an author. "She sifts through information and retrieves that which she finds compelling. It is only after the material has been removed from its original context and placed into her unique medium of display, that these texts take on new meaning, are looked at differently, and establish new relationships with viewers."⁴ An editor chooses what is included or excluded, reworking a text for both accuracy, and ensuring the style is relevant to the text's intended viewers; one would employ different standards editing a children's book and a scientific article. Holzer selects from the plethora of texts that exist in the world, with her intended work and audience in mind, editing the style of her mediums to reframe the text.

In my own work I have taken to calling this editing process curation, a term more relevant to an art context. This is most relevant to my collaboration zine, where the texts I am working with are made to be their own fully-fledged works. I use 'curation' as it feels reductive to say I've 'edited' them into the overall work that is the zine. In terms of collages, where I have cut some things out and reframed others, I would feel more comfortable calling my work editing. Overall I am drawn to both these terms as they distance me from authorship, or artistship, something which seems too lofty and official for me and the DIY-inspired, politically motivated work I am creating this semester.

Apart from my emotional attachments to their definitions, there is a practical application to being an editor. When Holzer aesthetically manipulates her chosen texts to

⁴ Britt Miazgowicz, "'YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSTITUTING THE MEANING OF THINGS:'" Examining Jenny Holzer's Progressively Complex Textual Constructs" (M.A. diss. University of Miami, 2010), 10.

convey certain meanings she “becomes what Barthes terms a “scriptor,” existing not to explain the work, but to produce it.”⁵ In this sense she is explicitly not an author, but lets the audience come to their own conclusions without authorial guidance. This is exemplified in her works outside gallery spaces, where the viewer’s knowledge of Holzer’s previous work and approach, as well as gallery writing accompaniments (roomsheet, plaque) don’t come into play. For viewers who do not know Holzer’s motivations or do not recognise the work as hers, encountering the work in a public space allows them to come to their own meanings/conclusions, without the knowledge of an author/artist indicating how they should understand it. There is an openness that anonymity allows: viewers must become active in their own experience and interpretation of the work; moving from “a passive viewer to become an active questioner by inviting reflections on intentions, meaning, and authorship.”⁶

Your knowledge of who the artist of a work is always affects your reading of the work. This can deepen your understanding of, and emotional response to the work, or it could prejudice you against it. For example, knowing Felix Gonzalez-Torres is a gay man impacted by AIDS always deepens the experience of his works. His work *It’s Only a Matter of Time* means something different coming from a gay man than it does anyone else.

I have reflected on whether or not it is important to be recognised as the artist behind my own work. I want my work to function without the frame of reference that it’s made by a queer, trans guy - I feel like that’s obvious when it’s viewed. This was my approach at the start of the semester. Anonymity is a place of comfort; there’s no professional or personal stakes other than the time and effort expended. On the other hand I feel like there’s a responsibility queer artists have in being open about their identities, especially with how their identity impacts both their life and work. Being visible is and always has been important for all minorities, so I think it is important to keep the work associated with me and my identity.

There is one last aspect of Holzer’s work that resonates with me, and my artmaking approach this semester. Miazgowicz quotes Holzer; “I can do more art if I don’t try to write. I

⁵ Britt Miazgowicz, “YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE”, 45.

⁶ Britt Miazgowicz, “YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE”, 11.

can try what I am better at, to make things look right. And I can have more and better content if I'm choosing rather than generating it."⁷ She puts words to the exact feeling I've been having this semester: that my work is not on the same level as others'. In some ways this is true; I am a third year fine arts student, not Michelangelo of course, but it does make it harder to have confidence in my own work. It is reassuring that such a prolific artist believes that there is a place in the art world for the manipulation of others' works and texts to create something with a new meaning in a new context. It alleviates the worry that my collage works are not 'art', despite all the references and artist models I have to back up my claim that it *is*.

QUEER IDENTITY & AUTHORSHIP: Richard Siken

One of my plans for capstone is to do some prose writing, expanding on the kind of thing I did for FA245 last year. This has taken a backseat to my zine and poster-making because I had trouble getting past writers block for the majority of the semester. With my third zine I have begun to break through this block, hopefully allowing myself to begin working properly in this direction.

One of my favourite poets since I was a teenager has been Richard Siken. While I have not read every one of his poems, but poems like *A Primer for the Small Weird Loves*, and *Little Beast*, stick with me close in my heart the same way *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)* does. They are moving, saddening, and make you want for something you can't have. It's a cathartic experience, somewhere between hitting too close to home and being glad that someone else out there feels like that too.

Kasperi Elkki in their 2018 Bachelor's Thesis discusses the construction and context of Siken's work. One of the key themes within Siken's writing is 'queer death', a generational trauma passed down through the community because of general cultural understandings of what the gay experience entailed/entails (death from AIDS, death or harm at the hands of

⁷ Britt Miazgowicz, "YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE", 21.

homophobes, emotional suffering from homophobic prejudice, etc.).⁸ Siken's work acknowledges the realities of queer death that other media (TV, film) shy away from. As Elkki states, "it is safe to assume the queer community is working through the trauma caused by homophobia with self-expressive tools of art."⁹

There are two sides to queer art that I deal with: queer utopias and queer realities. The majority of my publication and poster-making work has tried to marry the two. I campaign for said utopias whilst acknowledging and standing in a place of reality. The little writing I have managed to do sits mostly in the reality camp, like Siken's. Thematically his poems are similar to things that are important to me and I want to address in my own, future prose work: living, loving, sex, pain (both emotional & physical) and agency, as well as the relationships between them. Each has their own utopia and reality, both of which I believe are important to acknowledge and share.

As I discussed in the Holzer Authorship section above, there is a logic to being known as a work's creator. Identity is a key motivator in all work I make, both for capstone and personally, and therefore is important to understanding my work. Elkki states in their thesis that "the universes of a fictive character and a real-life person are parallel as well as interactive with each other; the text gets its contents from the reality, and the product that is consumed by a reader shapes that reader's cognitive understanding of the world."¹⁰ While they describe how Siken's texts work with him as their author, this can also be applied more widely. One's experiences shape what one writes about; what they know and they think is worth writing about. There will always be an interplay between personal taste and life experience in the work one creates. Identity, queerness in this circumstance, is a continual experience, and so I feel like I will always be making art about it.

⁸ Kasper Elkki, "'You know that a boy who likes boys is a dead boy.'" *Traumatic Construction of Self in Crush (2005) by Richard Siken*, (Bachelor's thesis, University of Oulu, 2018), 2.

⁹ Kasper Elkki, "You know that a boy", 5.

¹⁰ Kasper Elkki, "You know that a boy", 8.

POLITICS OF QUEERNESS: Mary Nardini Gang

My work this semester is rooted in a political message that I have not put into words yet, but I do know that I want my work to function as a form of community-building for queer people, as well as protest against the growing conservatism around the world and Aotearoa. Because I knew my work was going to function in a political vein, one of the first things I did was to investigate manifesto-writing.

In my exploration of queer manifestos and adjacent writings, I came across the Mary Nardini Gang, who have written many queer anarchist texts, all of which can be found at theanarchistlibrary.org. *Towards the Queerest Insurrection* was the most personally interesting and agreeable of their texts. Through my reading of their texts I came firstly to the conclusion that I do not have the dedication to be an anarchist. Secondly, they put into words key ideological points that I had not until then put into sentences any longer than 'assimilation is stupid' or 'god, straight people are annoying sometimes'. In this way, they are key to understanding the politics behind my work, even if my work is not as anarchistic.

Queerness is incredibly important to both my work and *Towards the Queerest Insurrection*. There are many ways to define queer, but queer itself is against definition, it's amorphous in the way most labels or words aren't. When I think of 'queer', I think of queer culture (different from just being gay), I think of everything outside the norms of cisgender, heterosexual society, be that people who identify as queer, people who are queer but don't realise it, people doing queer things (this is where I feel kink comes in; that's outside of the norm too), then there's the action of queering things- that's a whole other subject.

The Mary Nardini Gang defines 'queer' as "a territory of tension, defined against the dominant narrative of white-hetero-monogamous patriarchy, but also by an affinity with all who are marginalized, otherized and oppressed."¹¹ Similar enough to my own vague definition. They continue on, this time in the direction of why they're writing about an 'Insurrection': "Queer is the abnormal, the strange, the dangerous. ... Queer is the cohesion

¹¹ Mary Nardini Gang, *Towards the Queerest Insurrection* (Mary Nardini Gang, 2014), 3.

of everything in conflict with the heterosexual capitalist world. Queer is a total rejection of the regime of the Normal.”¹²

Their positioning of queer as incompatible with ‘Normal’ ideologically combats the rising tide of gay assimilation into both heterosexual and capitalist society that has been increasing since gay marriage was legalised. This is not to say that gay marriage is bad; within the systems currently in place, everyone needs access to the rights and privileges marriage gives couples, but it has legitimised gay people as a group that can be advertised to: “The “LGBT” political establishment has become a force of assimilation, gentrification, capital and state-power. Gay identity has become both a marketable commodity and a device of withdrawal from struggle against domination.”¹³ By buying into the products, media, and advertising marketed to gay people we are letting ourselves be told what the gay experience is, rather than creating our own experiences, connections and relationships. It takes the culture out of queerness, subliminally assimilates anyone who doesn’t want to look deeper.

It’s from this stance of queerness standing against assimilation to the ‘normal’ that my work operates from. My work is about taking your experience with the world and society into your own hands; making your own media and your own community not founded on assimilation or heterosexuality or capitalism. My zines in their form are non-conformist, they do not take the traditional form of books. I don’t do the capitalist thing and sell them. I work in conversation and community with others and I spread my message with and through them.

Overall, *Towards the Queerest Insurrection* argues for an upturning of all societal structures, as anarchists tend to argue for. They do not want queer people to be able to join the military because the military’s job is to kill people, that’s not an institution anyone should join or support. It’s idealistic, but one has to have something to strive for in order to even make little changes. My work’s aim is to in some small way help someone break out of the

¹² Mary Nardini Gang, *Towards the Queerest Insurrection*, 3.

¹³ Mary Nardini Gang, *Towards the Queerest Insurrection*, 10.

pro-hetero, pro-capitalist assimilation mindset taught by society, or even get them just one step closer to being there.

THE EROTIC: Audrey Lorde

The erotic is a particularly important idea to me from a queer perspective. Historically, queer people have been punished for having romantic or sexual relationships with each other, or in the case of lesbians and bisexuals, had their identities erased. Even simple depictions of queer people holding hands has and still is seen as pornographic or obscene to some. While Audrey Lorde wrote her essay *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power* from a feminist woman's perspective, the themes can be applied to all marginalised groups. I read it with a queer lens.

Lorde describes the erotic as a source of power which comes from the expression “of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling”.¹⁴ Because oppression requires the suppression of all other forms of power other than that of its beneficiaries (cisgender white men) in order to perpetuate itself, the erotic has been suppressed for both women and queer people. Because the erotic is suppressed, both by patriarchal, heteronormative society and our individual selves that have internalised its beliefs, the erotic is often confused “with its opposite, the pornographic. But pornography is a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. Pornography emphasizes sensation without feeling.”¹⁵

Depicting queer sexuality and love as erotic and not pornographic is an important theme within my work. Most directly relevant being my *Positive Sexual Images are Important* poster series. Representation matters, and the way in which people are depicted has an impact on how those groups are treated in real life. I want my work to have a positive impact on my own queer community. I hope the depiction of the queer erotic in my work has the potential to give audiences the moment of acceptance of unrealised feelings Lorde

¹⁴ Audrey Lorde, *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, (Crossing Press, 1984).

¹⁵ Audrey Lorde, *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*.

described where one can gain erotic power for themselves - one of the aims of my work is to help others come to terms with or accept themselves as anything outside of the norm.

The other relevant aim of my work is to use the power of the erotic to reclaim from the oppression of the patriarchy, as Lorde states, “our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives.”¹⁶ The erotic is a core part of queer resistance against heteronormativity which is lived out in every aspect of queer lives where the cisgender and heterosexual is not centred. To free oneself from repression and bathe in the erotic is to affirm one's own queerness and in turn further destabilise the grip patriarchal power has over the world. Experiencing the erotic widens one's horizons; why should you settle for less (staying with a straight partner, not transitioning, etc.) when there is so much more in the world to feel? Being able to clearly see what you are fighting for is a motivating factor in fighting back against oppression.

APPROPRIATION: Jonathan Lethem

In a similar vein to authorship, as discussed at length above, “appropriation, mimicry, quotation, allusion, and sublimated collaboration”, however you want to label it, is an important aspect of my work.¹⁷ I started with collage, which requires using others' images in order to create your own. I used collage with words to create my own poems. With my posters both the images and text are others', being artfully lifted, cropped or edited and recontextualised into my own work.

Appropriation can be seen “across all forms and genres in the realm of cultural production”, from art (motifs, styles), to music (sampling), to literature (quotation, allusion, etc.), Jonathan Lethem states in his article *The Ecstasy of Influence*.¹⁸ He posits that “art is sourced”: “Finding one's voice isn't just an emptying and purifying oneself of the words of others but an adopting and embracing of filiations, communities, and discourses. Inspiration

¹⁶ Audre Lorde, *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*.

¹⁷ Jonathan Lethem, “The Ecstasy of Influence,” *Harper's Magazine*, 2007, <https://harpers.org/archive/2007/02/the-ecstasy-of-influence/>.

¹⁸ Jonathan Lethem, “The Ecstasy of Influence.”

could be called inhaling the memory of an act never experienced. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void but out of chaos.”¹⁹ In this way, his argument is consistent with Barthes’; the author is someone who pulls together a range of inspirations from a variety of sources and orders them in a new way in order to create a work. Only here, Lethem discusses this within a distinctly art-relevant context.

In his use of the word appropriation, Lethem does not mean it in the negative sense it has come to mean contemporarily (cultural appropriation), but in a much lighter tone. He argues that humans have always been building on the ideas of others; how else would progress be made? Either way, in the context of my work, to use an image without someone’s permission is hardly the greatest crime ever, especially in the sea of images that we live with on the internet today.

The other key point that Lethem makes in his article is how the ‘gift economy’ that art exists in functions within narratives of appropriation. The gift economy goes as such: “A gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people”, therefore when you encounter art “which moves the heart, or revives the soul, or delights the senses, or offers courage for living,” you establish a feeling-bond with the artist, as you experience something similar to what they did making it.²⁰ You receive the work “as a gift is received”.²¹ Being gifted something means that it is now yours to do with as you wish; the artist cannot deny that you have felt a connection, and they cannot take away your experience of it. From here you can switch from ‘consumer’ of art and culture to ‘producer’; making art inspired by this gift, in any number of ways both direct, appropriative, or allusionary. Art is founded on sharing (nevermind if you call it copying or appropriating); the sharing of techniques, ideas, motifs, etc.

Lethem’s gift economy argument is another soothing idea that provides me a justification for the work I’m doing. In this theoretical framework, I am ‘allowed’ to use others’ work within or to inspire my own. It’s also important to me to be placed in a visual community with other queer artists where viewers can recognise my references/inspirations.

¹⁹ Jonathan Lethem, “The Ecstasy of Influence.”

²⁰ Jonathan Lethem, “The Ecstasy of Influence.”

²¹ Jonathan Lethem, “The Ecstasy of Influence.”

The idea that my own work may establish a ‘feeling-bond’ with someone else is the prime motivator for making my work. My political motivation of community building comes into play with wanting people to resonate with my work, be moved by it, or simply love how it looks. The idea that I could be in a similar position to the artists I look up to, influencing someone else to go on to make their own work with or inspired by my own (or the artists’ work I’ve put into my own) is what I aim to do. It’s the greatest way to build a queer art community, continuing the chain of inspiration.

ZINES: A Community Archive

The last things important to my practice that I’ve researched are zines and the archive. The archive has always been a presence in my life; my family is into family history, and therefore we have accumulated a wealth of knowledge there, as well as an archiving practice for important things in my brother and I’s life- we have boxes of certificates, school photos, and years-old birthday cards chronicling our lives. I have personally continued this practice, and have previously made work with these family archives in FA242 last year. The archive has continued its presence in my life this year as I have worked on cataloguing Artspace Aotearoa’s archive as part of my volunteer role there.

According to Sarah Baker et al in their journal article, zines are “self-published, do-it-yourself booklets that have a long history as tools for activism in social movements.”²² They are low-cost, often personal or informational, and can cover any topic a creator wants, though they have a history rooted in punk music fandom and political activism. Today the majority I see in Auckland are offputtingly wholesome art zines, designed to be sold to a wide audience - gentrified, as I have heard some say. In my work I opt to make a political, aesthetic, and practical return to the roots of zinemaking.

Archives are traditionally made and held by institutions. Those in power here, or those with power over those institutions’ funding are in a unique position to decide what is

²² Sarah Baker, Zelmari Cantillon, and Chelsea Evans, “Zines as community archive,” *Archival Science* 22, (2022): 539, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-022-09388-1>.

worth keeping on historical record. Often these choices are made by cis, white men whose priority, consciously or unconsciously, has never been minorities. There is a way the traditional archive and its prejudices has and can be subverted; by the community archive.

Baker defines a community archive as “a non-traditional archival collection specifically tied to a particular group, often one that may be undocumented or under-documented by traditional archival institutions.”²³ They are often “political and subversive”, as they respond directly to archival institutions, interrogating them on what is ‘worth’ archiving and what narratives their archives perpetuate by demonstrating how an expanded, inclusive archive could be made for and by the community.²⁴ Zines share a similar political, subversive and community-based history. They are often about the personal lives, struggles and interests of a community. “Zines can, therefore, be of significant value as primary source material, documenting individual lives, community networks and societal changes.”²⁵ Therefore, zines are valuable inclusions in, and act themselves as an archive.

The idea of zines as a community archive is especially important to me from a queer perspective as the majority of information about queer people and culture is either not written by or for queer people. My own connection to the queer community both past and present has never been greater than when I’m with people, or reading something created both by and for queer people. This goes especially for things further back in history, when queer people had less of a voice, and the only way they could get it out was through self-publishing; making their own DIY magazines that only got a couple of issues before dying off and another cropping up. These *magazines* offered “marginalised communities a highly visual way ‘to record their stories, share information and organise’.”²⁶ These voices of history are incredibly important for queer people to keep alive, because institutions often do not see the importance of archiving these works. If they do archive them; the majority are

²³ Baker, “Zines as community archive,” 541.

²⁴ Baker, “Zines as community archive,” 541-542.

²⁵ Baker, “Zines as community archive,” 543.

²⁶ Baker, “Zines as community archive,” 542.

only accessible to those who have the time to visit the archives in person, effectively removing the work from the community it functions within.

In my collaborative zine I try to encapsulate and archive the current queer voice present within my direct community. It includes work about personal experiences, as well as more general responses to the current conservative political climate that's creeping its way from American politics to Aotearoa.

In my other zine and collage works, I work within others' archives, using what images I can find in queer or transgender archives online, and queer magazines that have been archived on The Internet Archive. By working within these archives I bring images back into the public eye, recontextualising them for a contemporary context, but they still bring with them the connotations and memories of their time. I think it is particularly important to always be using the resources available, like these archives; if they go unused they will eventually be defunded or shut down. When working with images from these archives you realise that not everyone is represented within them. Images of cis gay men are incredibly easy to come across, and though slightly less so trans women are quite visible (the reasons for this are oftentimes not so wholesome). There is a distinct lack of trans men, which says a lot about the priorities both when things were being made and of what later people thought were worth archiving. This imbalance of representation is also something that I had at the forefront of my mind, and tried to balance while making my works.

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