Queering Up for Battle

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Queering Up for Battle

by
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Introduction: A Movement for the 21st Century

As a Queer and Nonbinary artist living in Missouri during the 2020s, I witness an ongoing proliferation of anti-Queer legislation, violence, talks of culture war, and the threats and predictions of civil war. I can't stand by while my community becomes increasingly vulnerable. In response to this rise in anti-Queer bigotry, there is a need for an art that not only imitates Queer life but also one that fights for it. As an artist, I have come to admire the philosophies and works of the Russian Constructivists. The Constructivists were not limited to any media or art form, making everything from paintings, to plays, to furniture, all in the name of building a utopian socialist society. Russian Constructivism came to an end in 1932 when Stalin banned all independent artist groups, forcing most of the movement’s artists to flee or be purged.

Regardless of their untimely demise, I am inspired by the utopian potential the Constructivists pushed for, the ways they grappled with the inequity of the Tzarist regime, and their reconsidering of art to push for a more equitable world. In seeing their potential as a movement, I am striving to create an art movement for the twenty-first century, a new form of Constructivism: Queer Constructivism.
The Russian Constructivists were a group of artists who challenged the status quo and pushed for a better future through almost every media available. They did this between 1915 and 1934, a particularly turbulent time period in not only Russia, but Europe more broadly—a time of war, revolutions, shifting cultural norms, and the rise of totalitarianism. There are many parallels between interwar Europe and the United States today, namely an extreme conservative regime repeatedly attempting to strip the rights away from marginalized peoples and political opponents in a last-ditch effort to consolidate power. Looking for a way to address these attacks, I have found my answer in the Constructivists. On an artistic level, there are three things I admire most about the Constructivists: their use of materials, their dedication to geometry, and their focus on pragmatic and utilitarian objects to support their cause. Taking what I gained from their philosophy and collaging it together with elements of contemporary Queer culture and other revolutionary ideas, I drafted the *Queer Constructivist Manifesto* in December of 2021. My manifesto, which begins as a remixed version of the Declaration of Independence, lays down the groundwork for the kind of art needed to bring about a Queer utopia, which will begin in the creation of a world free of all forms of anti-Queer violence.
Figure 1. Alex Rosborough Davis, *Beat the Straights with the Pink Wedge (Queer Constructivist Battle Flag) [Queer Constructivist Manifesto Dispenser]*, 2022-2023, salvaged materials: fabric, wood, rubber, broken mirror, steel; inkjet prints, 92 x 26 x 77 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum.
The word *Queer* has many different meanings in today’s world. Etymologically, *Queer* is a word of unclear origins, though often having a negative connotation. Beginning in the early 1900s, *Queer* started being used as a slur for people who didn’t display normative cisgender heterosexuality.iii Today, *Queer* is used as both a neutral umbrella term for people who identify outside of cisgender heterosexuality and as a term for a genre of critical theory. In the *Queer Constructivist Manifesto*, I provide an additional definition of the word *Queer*. In the seventh point of my manifesto, I write, “We define a Queerness that extends past the realms of sexuality and gender identity. Queerness is a non-normativity. It is the abandoned, the broken, the hidden, and the discarded. Queerness is that which is or once was confined. Confined by society through threats of verbal, social, economic, and physical violence; confined by oneself through self-ignorance and fear.”iv My definition of Queer opens an understanding of Queerness based on experience. Am I Queer only because my sexual orientation and gender identity exceed what is labeled as normal? Or am I Queer because of the experiences and reality of being labeled as “the other”? Moreover, what are the implications of my definition of Queer? My definition is one that can more clearly be seen as a political unifier. In Lisa Duggan’s *Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism*, she addresses both the negative effects of contemporary identity politics and gay assimilationism.v The main point that Duggan makes is that with the focus that conservative and neoliberal homosexual men and women have on things like marriage equality and the inclusion of gays in the military, they are ignoring issues that affect Queer people without wealth or other elements of social power. Queer people can have their healthcare denied, not be considered for employment, and their murders willfully unsolved, all within the confines of the law.
I was contending with these ideas shortly before I found my way into *Queer Constructivism*. During this time, I was interested in creating visual replicas of Queer confinement. One work that I made during this time was *EggsHELL*, a sculpture that started as a steel lawn chair with a grid making up both the seat and backrest.

![Figure 2. Alex Rosborough Davis, *EggsHELL*, 2021, Steel Chair, Steel Fence, Dog Crate, Stuffed Fabric, Studs, Spray paint, latex paint, acrylic paint, 48 x 38 x 46 inches. Courtesy of the artist.](image-url)
In thinking about economics and class relationships between wealthy homosexuals and the Queer underclass, I welded pieces of fencing and a dog crate to make a cage underneath it. I covered the cage in layers and layers of off-white eggshell paint and crammed assorted pride-flag colored stuffed-fabric-lumps into it. I did this to show the economic disenfranchisement of the Queer underclass. After a while, I started seeing problems with visually replicating the systems of oppression I opposed. I vowed to create works for Queer liberation.

As my ideas for Queer Constructivism came together, I thought about the revolutionary history of the flag and the flag bearer. Thinking about all the histories I reference in the *Queer Constructivist Manifesto*, I designed my own flag remixing several sources into what would become *Beat the Straights with the Pink Wedge (Queer Constructivist Battle Flag)*. I designed my flag in homage to one of the Constructivist greats, El Lissitzky, by structuring my flag after his print *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, 1920.\(^{vi}\)
Figure 3. Alex Rosborough Davis, *Beat the Straights with the Pink Wedge (Queer Constructivist Battle Flag)*, 2022, Salvaged materials: fabric, jeans, wood, 110 x 75 x 1 ¼ inches, Performance Shot. Photo by Lynne Smith. Courtesy of the artist.
Figure 4. El Lissitzky, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, 1920, Poster, color lithograph, printed in red and black on wove paper, 20 1/16 x 24 7/16 inches. Courtesy of Museum of Fine Art Boston.

Not only does my flag reference the title of Lissitzky’s piece, replacing Whites with Straights and Red for Pink, but I also reference the visual forms from *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*. Where Lissitzky uses a sharp red isosceles triangle, I replace it with a pink one, my reference to a staple of queer symbology. Where Lissitzky uses a white circle, I replace it with a black and
white striped circle, a reference to a heterosexual pride flag invented by a far-right group in the early 2000s. Positioning the pink triangle to pierce the black and white striped circle in *Beat the Straights with the Pink Wedge (Queer Constructivist Battle Flag)*, I weaponize the pink triangle/wedge to stab a circularly-framed heterosexual pride flag. A further reference I make is to the Silence = Death poster from 1987.\textsuperscript{vii}

![Silence = Death poster](image)

*Figure 5* Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Oliver Johnston, Charles Krelöff, Chris Lione, and Jorge Socarrás, *Silence = Death*, 1987, Offset lithograph, 33 9/16 x 21 15/16 inches. Courtesy of the artists and Brooklyn Museum.
This poster was made at the height of the AIDS epidemic in New York City, when groups like ACT UP were drawing attention to the crisis and organizing the Queer community against political inaction. By pulling references from two works of print media in the design of my flag, I open a conversation on propaganda, public art, and symbolism.

Figure 6. Remy Jungerman, *GUARDIAN HAVANA*, 2009, cotton textile, coconut, shelves, photo prints, bottles, gin jars, wood, 197 x 138 x 12 inches. Photo by Aatjan Renders. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Ron Mandos.

The merging of Russian Constructivism with Queer culture in my practice is related to the work of Remy Jungerman, a Surinamese-Dutch artist who integrates the visual forms of De Stijl with those of Surinamese Maroon culture. In *Guardian Havana*, 2009, Jungerman superimposes textiles, jars, bottles, and a coconut, all elements of Maroon culture, onto a black,
yellow, and red grid-like structure evoking the visual elements of De Stijl. Through the act of visually remixing De Stijl and Surinamese Maroon, Jungerman is able to recontextualize the hundred-year-old art movement for use in contemporary conversations such as the history and aftermath of colonization.

Figure 7. Alex Rosborough Davis, *Make Love to Me, Tovarisch*, 2022, Salvaged materials: Steel pipe, window jamb, and pulley, angle steel, wooden 2x2, steel 2x2, wooden finial, colander, yarn; paracord, rope cleat, acrylic paint, 8.5’ x 8’ x 5’.

Courtesy of the artist.
I admire the Russian Constructivists for their use of materials. In pushing for an art that could be more relatable to industrial workers, the Constructivists started making heavy use of industrial materials and processes. As a Queer Constructivist, I use Queer materials to make art for Queer people. But what is a Queer material? The colander in my 2022 sculpture, *Make Love to Me, Tovarisch*, is a prime case study.

In *Make Love to Me, Tovarisch*, I joined together three linear elements—constructed from a variety of objects and materials—into a tripod. From the tripod, I hung a colander with an embroidered pink downward pointed equilateral triangle and yarn coming out of every hole in the colander, alternating lavender, white, and dark chartreuse. Before the colander was a colander, it started its life as a sheet of steel, a raw material, an industrial material perfect for a Russian Constructivist sculpture. By the time I found it, it was a piece of rusty metal hidden in the brush of my grandmother’s backyard. By the time I found it, it was an object hidden, abandoned, and confined. In that form, there are two potentials for the colander. On one hand, there is a semiotic potential that wouldn’t be out of place in an assemblage by Ed Kienholz or Betye Saar. On the other hand, there is the way of seeing it that stems from the writings of Alexie Gan. In *Constructivism*, Gan describes three key concepts at the heart of constructivist materiality: faktura, tektonika, and construction. When I first laid eyes on the colander, I witnessed it for its faktura, or its innate physical properties as an object/material. This allowed me to see it not as an object used to strain water from boiled foods, but instead as hole-covered, curvilinear, steel form with two D-shaped curves opposite each other with pitting from advanced rusting. The faktura of the yarn in *Make Love to Me, Tovarisch* is very different from that of the
colander. Yarn is soft, long, extremely pliable, made of fibers and is available in a multitude of colors.

Once the fakturas of materials have been identified, I employ the tektonika as I start assembling them. Tektonika can be described as the behavior of a material over time, possibly in conjunction with other materials. It can be seen in how that material is used and the purpose the material serves. In the case of *Make Love to Me, Tovarisch*, by using the colander as a substrate for yarn, I utilize the fakturas of both, thus moving into the realm of the tektonika. The tension I create by using the colander and yarn together creates a dominant focal point for the piece.

*Figure 8* Alex Rosborough Davis, *Make Love to Me, Tovarisch*, 2022, detail. Courtesy of the artist.
The third key aspect of Constructivist materiality that Gan writes about is construction. Gan addresses construction, not only as an additive process of art making in which the work is assembled or built but also as "the discipline of formation of conception through the worked material." For me, the act of construction is not merely the physical labor that goes into making an art piece—the welding, screwing, nailing, and sewing; the construction still takes place in the titling of the work. By hanging the yarn-covered colander at crotch height and titling the piece, Make Love to Me, Tovarisch, I was able to reframe that part of the sculpture as an abstract reference to genitalia. I used this reframing to transition Make Love to Me, Tovarisch into a monument to Queer sexuality.

I believe in the power of the triangle and all its related forms. I use them for their strength, balance, rigidity, and symbolism. In December of 2022, I wrote a manifesto about the history, uses, and Queerness of triangles titled Triads, Triples, and Tripods: A Queer Triangular Manifesto. Writing this text helped me navigate through the issue of the triangle and explain why it is the shape most useful to push for a Queer utopia. Building off the historical Queer symbolism behind the pink and black triangles, I push to utilize every aspect of the triangle in my work. I make work based around both the tripod and tetrahedron. I combined these two forms in my 2022 piece, P.A.F. Beacon (Assembly Required). This piece was constructed as an isosceles tetrahedron made of scrap plywood, its sharpest point as a leg, with two legs made of 2x4s and a steel bracket to turn it into a tripod.
In this work I used a triangular form as a structure for projection. I installed a multicolored disco ball in this sculpture and lined its inside walls with a mosaic of broken mirrors. This turned what would be easily dispersed light into a form of a projector, which, when dark enough, becomes a sort of reverse triangular kaleidoscope. I think of this projection as a *Beacon*, taking elements of the Queer club and making them visible to those on the outside to organize and inspire a Queer revolution. *P.A.F. Beacon (Assembly Required)* exists as a sculpture meant to inspire opposition to the anti-Queer politics of today. It exists as both an object and an objection.

By using faktura and tektonika, I recontextualize Queer objects into Queer materials. Using these Queer materials, I construct triangular forms to object to anti-Queer bigotry.
Through this process, I take abandoned, hidden, broke, and confined objects and organize them into objects of resistance. It is with these objections that I build a space for utopian potential.
Constructing the No-Place
Making a Map for Utopian Potential

As an artist, I’m interested in addressing the lack of access to Queer knowledge and erasure of Queerness from history. To address these issues, I constructed my work, *Magnus Hirschfeld Queer Revolutionary Library*, 2023, a collection of Queer literature, housed in an inverted triangular steel frame with shelves made of OSB, complete with triangular floor cushions for viewers to sit on while they read.

Figure 10. Alex Rosborough Davis, *Magnus Hirschfeld Queer Revolutionary Library*, 2023, Steel, OSB, Books, Cushion Foam, Fabric, Assorted Objects, Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum.
L.J. Roberts, a contemporary Queer artist, has responded to these historical exclusions and erasures in their own work. In Roberts’ collage-based work, Stormé at Stonewall, 2016-2019, they bring forward the almost forgotten history of Stormé DeLarverie, a mixed-race drag king, who had a pivotal yet underrecognized role in the Stonewall Riots. In this work, they present images and texts of DeLarverie’s life and her contributions during the Stonewall Riots. By providing this information, Roberts disrupts the notion that Stonewall was an uprising lead by anonymous gay white men. I find this form of presentation and the use of text to be valuable methods of providing access to Queer knowledge and attempting to include Queer people, as individuals, into history. In Magnus Hirschfeld Queer Revolutionary Library, I not only employ a similar strategy by providing access to Queer literature, but I am pushing to create a space of Queer utopic potential.

As I write this text, many local and state governments around the United States are banning Queer literature from schools and public libraries. On October 17th, 2022, Missouri Secretary of State, Jay Ashcroft, proposed stripping libraries from receiving state funds unless they adopt policies regarding age-appropriate material and banning state funds from being used to "purchase or acquire inappropriate materials in any form that appeal to the prurient interest of a minor." On February 7th, there was a hearing for a bill in the Missouri Senate, SB 134, that would ban ALL school employees from discussing gender identity and sexual orientation with students. Between these recent, local examples, and many others on a national scale, Queer people are being placed in increasing levels of danger. As the world is seemingly falling apart, I think of Oscar Wilde, who in his essay The Soul of Man Under Socialism, wrote, “A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at.” What I interpret Oscar
Wilde to mean here is that if there is no possibility for utopia, there stops being a point to keep going.

During my conception and construction of *Magnus Hirschfeld Queer Revolutionary Library*, I considered Joar Nango’s 2019 work, *Sámi Architectural Library*. Nango, a Sámi artist and architect, built his *Library* from repurposed construction materials, wood, books, video, and natural materials, addressing the lack of inclusion of indigenous perspectives in the field of architecture. On top of providing access to information on Sámi culture, indigenous architecture, and the colonization of the Nordic countries, Nango is building a space where people can gather, discuss, and learn together.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 12.** Joar Nango, *Sámi Architectural Library (detail)*, 2019, wood, repurposed construction materials, books, hide, bark, fish skin, stone, natural materials, and video. Installed at the National Gallery of Canada. Courtesy of the artist and National Gallery of Canada.
I align myself with Nango’s desire to build a social space around books. In *Magnus Hirschfeld Queer Revolutionary Library*, I not only collect Queer literature and information that is being targeted on a national level, house it, and attempt to make it physically accessible to the public, I create a space to come together. It is my intention that the triangular bookcase and cushions are Queer symbols of balance and strength, lead people to sit down, expand their minds, and make plans for building a better future. I relate this goal for my Library to the utopian ideas of Queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz, who in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* writes, "Utopia is not about the impossible, but rather about the potentiality inherent in the present. It is a methodology for charting futures that are both different from and better than what we have now." Muñoz recognizes here that utopia lies not in current perfection, but instead through acts and attempts to transcend the status quo. It is impossible for utopia to exist as a physical and permanent location, nevertheless, it exists and will continue to exist in the focusing of effort and energy toward ideal futures. As an individual, acts such as reversing these book bans and creating spaces truly void of anti-Queer prejudice might as well be impossible tasks. However, in *Magnus Hirschfeld Queer Revolutionary Library*, by providing a glimpse into what that might look like, I create a metaphorical roadmap of Queer potentiality.

When I think about modern and contemporary history, I see a society constantly questioning the social acceptance of Queer people. One example of this is the history of the namesake behind the *Magnus Hirschfeld Queer Revolutionary Library*. Magnus Hirschfeld, born in 1868, was a German physician, sexologist, and advocate for sexual and gender minorities. In 1919 he founded the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science). This institute not only housed a library with books, journals, and manuscripts on gender, same-sex love, and eroticism, the institute also provided medical services to the general public including STI
treatment, gynecological exams, and access to transgender endocrinological and surgical services, including the first recorded vaginoplasty in 1931. On May 6th, 1933, mere months after Hitler was elected, the Institute for Sexual Science, the brainchild of Magnus Hirschfeld, was ransacked; the contents of its vast library fueled the fire in the first large-scale book burning of the Nazi era.

By using Magnus Hirschfeld's name in the title of *Magnus Hirschfeld Queer Revolutionary Library*, I draw a connection between the book bans spreading across the United States and the book burnings of Nazi Germany. Much like with the Institute for Sexual Science, the moment a Queer utopia becomes visible on the map, it becomes not only a destination but also a target.
Defending Utopia  
Time to Build Some Barricades

Since the emergence of large Queer rights movements in the United States, Queer people have become increasingly visible in public. The visibility of Queer people is often described as an abject social good. Artist and Trans activist michá cardenas disagrees with this notion of visibility being completely positive. In her essay, “Dark Shimmers: The Rhythm of Necropolitical Affect in Digital Media,” she writes,

The increasing mainstream visibility of transgender people has been brought about by solidifying the line between who is an acceptable trans person and who is disposable. Now more than ever, it is evident that “visibility is a trap”, as Michel Foucault claimed, that the abolitionist, anticolonial, anti-normative tradition of transgender politics needs to be actively continued with actions that go beyond visibility.xxix

I agree with cardenas on the issue of visibility; visibility without any defensive measures is irresponsible. In this vein, I created my work Boogie Wonderland, 2023, a wooden baseball bat covered in a mosaic of mirror shards with a rubber-lined handle.

As an individual, I might not have the ability to stop the violence myself, but as a maker, I am capable of creating objects that can be used to defend ourselves. My drive to build a weapon as
an art object is informed by a project michá cardenas did in collaboration with Patrisse Cullors, Edxie Betts, and Chris Head in 2015. During UNSTOPPABLE, cardenas, Cullors, Betts, and Head designed bullet-proof clothing using found and accessible objects such as used car tires, and Kevlar from airbags. xxx The bulletproof clothing from UNSTOPPABLE and my own mirror-covered baseball bat, Boogie Wonderland, are both items to be used for the defense of Queer people as individuals. But what about the defense of Queer spaces? This is the impetus behind my sculpture Of Prurient Interest, 2023.
Figure 14. michá cardenas, Patrisse Cullors, Edxie Betts, Chris Head, *UNSTOPPABLE*, 2015. Courtesy of the artists.
Figure 15. Alex Rosborough Davis, *Of Prurient Interest*, 2023, Salvaged Materials: steel, brass, wood, fishnets, yarn; spray paint, 48 x 66 x 68 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum.
In the opening shot of *Saving Private Ryan*, one of Steven Spielberg’s most acclaimed films, we see Omaha Beach littered with steel tripodic structures. These tripods, known as Czech Hedgehogs, are effective defensive structures used in war to hinder vehicular movement. Czech Hedgehogs, which were originally invented to defend the Czech border in the 1930s from the Nazi advance, are still used to this very day. Currently, Czech Hedgehogs are a common sight in Ukraine, where shortly after the start of the Russian invasion, civilians gathered and organized workshops to build these and to slow the Russian advance.
After adopting the Czech Hedgehog for my use, I have also come to understand the form as an asterisk. Asterisks serve an important grammatical role and are often used in text to help clarify language that might be considered vague or imperfect, usually with a footnote. In the Queer community, asterisks are often used to signify imperfect language or at least language that some might use to be exclusionary. A common Queer use of the asterisk is with the term Trans.* In this instance, the asterisk is used to not simply clarify that the word Trans* as a word is being used to refer to people, but as a word that is not limited to just Transmen and Transwomen. xxxiv Despite this usage, Trans* with an asterisk has fallen out of common usage within the Queer community for being seen as unnecessary and promoting trans binarism. xxxv On top of the primary usage of the asterisk, and its history being used with the word Trans, * an asterisk can
also be used in expletives and other words that might be deemed too inappropriate for a certain context. Collectively these uses of the asterisk, alongside the defensive capabilities of the Czech Hedgehog, inspire me to investigate the form.

*Of Prurient Interest* is built from a salvaged I-beam, a found brass stanchion, a steel pipe, a scrap 4x4, and an abandoned piano leg. During its construction, I painted the I-beam fluorescent pink and covered it and the wood in fishnet stockings, fitting it all together. The phrase “of prurient interest” has become synonymous for me with the recent bans on Queer literature and performance art. I have seen those words appear in numerous bills and public orders, including Ashcroft's library ban and Tennessee Senate Bill 3, the infamous anti-drag bill. One reason I pair the form of the asterisk with the title *Of Prurient Interest* is for the asterisk to stand in for an expletive. It is me saying, "Oh, f***!" when I first looked up the definition of the word prurient. Despite the word prurient being legally defined as “marked by or arousing an unwholesome sexual interest or desire,” the current legal use of prurient is intended to be anti-Queer. This can be seen in the nicknames for bills that contain the phrase prurient interest such as Tennessee’s Anti-Drag Bill and Florida’s Don’t Say Gay Bill. By titling my own Czech Hedgehog *Of Prurient Interest*, I take the very phrase that American conservatives use to criminalize Queerness and turn it into a defensive structure to object to the attacks on Queer utopian potential.
Conclusion: A Quote from Silvia Rivera

Through my creation of *Queer Constructivism*, I merge the ethos and aesthetics of the Queer rights movements with those of the Russian Constructivists. To this end, I reconsider Constructivist ideas of material and form, refocusing them to make works to build and defend Queer utopian potentiality. In attempting to make revolutionary art and create an art movement for the twenty-first century, I ask myself the following questions. What effects does art have, if any, in the actualization of revolutionary goals? Can something exist simultaneously in the symbolic and literal? In an age of hyper-individualism and personal brands, is creating an art movement even possible? Regardless of the answers to these questions, the Religious Right is attempting to push Queer people back into the forgotten closets of history. How can Queer utopias be constructed, how can they be preserved, how can they be defended? To quote Sylvia Rivera, a veteran of Stonewall, “I’m not missing a moment of this — it’s the revolution!”
Figure 18. Alex Rosborough Davis, *Beat the Straights with the Pink Wedge (Queer Constructivist Battle Flag)*, 2022, Salvaged materials: fabric, jeans, wood, 110 x 75 x 1 ¼ inches, Performance Shot. Photo by Lynne Smith. Courtesy of the artist.
Appendix A: The Queer Constructivist Manifesto

THE QUEER CONSTRUCTIVIST MANIFESTO

When in the Course of a human's experiences, it becomes necessary for a person to dissolve the identities which have been forced onto them, and to assume among the powers of themself, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature entitle them, a decent outward respect of their true self requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to create their own separate forms of art and life.

1) We hold these truths to be self-evident, that Queerness is an act of self-creation, that Queer people claim certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life without harassment, Bodily Self-determination, and the pursuit of unadulterated Queer joy. --That to secure these rights, artists, writers, lovers, and fighters rise to the occasion, deriving their just powers from their personal and collective truths, --That whenever any society becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of Queer people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new society, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as they shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.

2) We push for an art and life that is one and the same. Function and lack thereof are of equal importance in our creation; from our furniture to our food, to our fashion all as valued as the anti-utilitarian objects and experiences we are driven to make.

3) We strive to reskill; learning crafts and trades so that we as a Queer society can possess the means of production necessary for our own liberation.

4) We engage the Faktura, Tektoniki, and Konstruktsiya, given to us by the Bolshevik Constructivists both within our handling of materials and the handling of our own bodies. Just as materials can be manipulated, used in conjunction with other materials, or placed in a new context in the process of art making as a means to re-configure, re-evaluate, and re-contextualize… the same can be done with our own bodies. Through the process of addition, we collect and add to ourselves from the rubble of society, assembling ourselves, constructing our identities, and collaging ourselves from the wreckage and refuse of a reprehensible society.

5) If our bodies are temples, may they be painted, drawn on, and adorned like the Sistine Chapel. If our bodies are sculptures may every chair, bed, couch, sofa, and chaise longue be a pedestal.

6) We honor the Queerness in ourselves and in the world around us; as in humans, as in animals, as in plants, as in inanimate objects.

7) We define a Queerness that extends past the realms of sexuality and gender identity. Queerness is a non-normativity. It is the abandoned, the broken, the hidden, and the discarded. Queerness is that which is or once was confined. Confined by society through threats of verbal, social, economic, and physical violence; confined by one's self through self-ignorance and fear.

8) We believe in additive art making processes, bringing together the abandoned, hidden, broken, and discarded, so that the Queer materials and objects of the world can unite and gain a collective strength that they would not obtain individually.

9) We aim to upend structures of confinements in our personal lives, the lives of others, and society as a whole. Whether peacefully or through usurpation, is only at the decision of the confiner.

ALEX ROSEBOROUGH DAVIS
(they/them/theirs & ever/ers)

1 Faktura, or texture: The inherent nature of a material, texture, chemical composition, weight, shape etc.
2 Tektoniki, or Tectonics: How a material behaves over time, possibly in conjunction with other materials; how that material is put to use or what purpose it serves.
3 Konstruktsiya, or Construction: An additive process of art making in which a work is assembled or built.
Appendix B: Triads, Triples, and Tripods: A Queer Triangular Manifesto

Triads, Triples, and Tripods: A Queer Triangular Manifesto

First there was a point, then a line, and finally the triangle. From the prehistoric engineering with simple machines to the mathematics of the Babylonians and Egyptians; triangles have been the backbone of human technological innovation. Triangles are the basis for wedges, levers, and inclined planes. They are used to determine heights of large objects, navigate by the stars, and can be used to break down every polygon.

Despite countless human innovations since the discovery of the triangle; between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis defiled triangles. In Nazi concentration camps, triangles were used as a means of codifying the people they saw as the lesser. Queer people were forced to wear pink and black triangles as badges of shame. The triangle took on a meaning of inferiority.

In reality:
Triangles are strong. Triangles are balanced. Triangles are withstanding.
Triangles are Queer

Triangles serve as a counterpoint to the binary. Every binary is a human invention (such as binary language) Most such as the gender binary or the sexual binary are a human fallacy as well. By adding a line between the two binary points, a spectrum or scale is created. Although more useful than a binary, spectrums and scales can only be used to help visualize specific things like the spectrum of light, the fuch scale, or the Kinsey scale. By simply adding a third connected point, the complexity of space unfolds into another dimension that can extend along three axes giving space for more nuanced understandings of gender and sexuality than a spectrum or scale can.

In comparison to quadrilaterals none are as easily labelled as a triangle. While different types of quadrilaterals are labeled with unique nouns, such as squares, trapezoids, and parallelograms, different types of triangles are labeled with their own adjectives like an equilateral triangle or an obtuse triangle. This difference between the usage of separate nouns vs adjectives means that triangles are recognized by their similarities rather than their differences. In a similar vein, by focusing on queerness as the center point for non-normative sexualities and genders rather than defining people as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Asexual, Transmasculine, Transfeminine, Nonbinary, etc. we focus on the things that bring us together rather than what separates us.

Building off the reclamation of the Pink Triangle by holocaust survivors and AIDS activists; if we as a Queer people value and utilize all triangles for their power, their opposition to binaries, and their collective inclusivity, we can construct a Queer utopia.

Alex Rosborough Davis
(They/Them/Their & E/Er/Ers)
Appendix C: Excerpt from Gan’s Constructivism Explaining Faktura, Tektonika, and Construction

[Tektonika] emerges and forms itself based on the one hand on the characteristic of Communism, and on the other on the expedient use of industrial materials. The word [tektonika] is taken from geology where it is used to define eruption from the earth’s [center].

[Tektonika] is a synonym for the organic, for the explosion from an inner being. The [tektonika] as a discipline should lead the Constructivist in practice to a synthesis of the new content and the new form. [They] must be a Marxist educated [person] who has once and for all outlived art and really advanced on industrial material. The tektonika is his guiding star, the brain of experimental and practical activity.

“[Faktura] is the whole process of the working of material. The working of material as a whole and not the working of one side.

Here the material is understood in its raw state. The expedient use of material means its selection and working over, but the character of this working over [of the material] in its integrity is [faktura]: the organic condition of the worked over material or the new condition of its organism.

The material is the body, the matter. The transformation of this raw material into one form or another continues to remind us of its primary form and conveys to us the next possibility in its transformation.

In so far as we transform and work over [materials], we are engaged in [faktura]. Proceeding from this, the second discipline one can formulate thus: [Faktura] is to consciously select material and use it expediently without halting the movement of the construction or limiting its [tektonika].”

Construction. Construction must be understood as the [coordinating] function of Constructivism.

If the tectonic unites the ideological and formal, and as a result gives a unity of conception, and the [faktura] is the condition of the material, then the construction discovers the actual process of putting together.

Thus we have the third discipline, the discipline of the formation of conception through the use of worked material.

All hail to the Communist expression of material building! […]

The end has come to pure and applied [art]. A time of social expediency has begun. An object of only utilitarian significance will be introduced in a form acceptable to all.

Nothing by chance, uncalculated, nothing from blind taste and aesthetic arbitrariness. Everything must be technically and functionally directed.

One and for all the idea of a final solution and eternal truths must be invalidated.

The roots of art were always in material-formal substances, in production…

From the speculative activity of art to socially directed artistic work…

The technical system of society, the ordering of its wealth, creates the ordering of human relationships. …

In the field of cultural organization, the only valid criterion is that which is indissolubly connected with the general tasks of the revolution … Art is dead! There is no room for it in the human work apparatus. Work, technique and organization!

Let us tear ourselves away from our speculative activity [art] and find the way to real work, applauding our knowledge and skills to real, live and expedient work. Intellectual-material production sets up working mutual relations and a production basis with science and technique, replacing art which
by its very nature cannot be disentangled from religion and philosophy and is not capable of pulling itself out of the closed circle of abstract, speculative activity…

*Tektonika*, *faktura*, *construction*. Retaining the lasting material and formal basis of art such as [color], line, surface, volume and movement, artistic work materialistically directed will become, in conditions of expedient activity and intellectual-material production, capable of opening new means of artistic *expressionism*.

Not to reflect, not to represent and not to interpret reality, but to really build and express the systematic tasks of the new class, the proletariat. The master of [color] and line, the builder of space-volume forms and the organizer of mass productions must all become constructors in the general work of the arming and moving of the many-millioned human masses. …

Our Constructivism has declared unconditional war on art, for the means and qualities of art are not able to systematize the feelings of a revolutionary environment.¹²
Notes:


ii I see a Queer utopia as something that will manifest itself organically through the collective actions of Queer peoples.


viii A Dutch art and design movement that was heavily influenced by Russian Constructivism. Notable members include Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, and Gerrit Rietveld.

ix Descendants of escaped African slaves in Suriname, a South American country that used to be a Dutch plantation colony.

x Remy Jungerman, GUARDIAN HAVANA, 2009, cotton textile, coconut, shelves, photo prints, bottles, gin jars, wood, 197 x 138 x 12 inches, Galerie Ron Mandos, Amsterdam.

xi The colors of the Genderqueer flag.

xii Two notable American assemblage artists.

xiii Author of the 1922 book, Constructivism. Executed in 1942 on the charge of “counter-revolutionary” activities.


xv Ibid.
xvi “Tovarisch” is the Russian word for comrade.

xvii Reclaimed symbols, originally used by the Nazis to identify and further persecute Queer people in concentration camps.

xviii Triangular pyramid.

xix Oriented Strand Board, an engineered wood product similar in function to plywood.

xx L.J. Roberts, Stormé at Stonewall, 2016-2019, collage and variable media, dimensions variable.


xxv An indigenous group from northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia’s Kola Peninsula.


xxxii Saving Private Ryan, directed by Steven Spielberg (1998; DreamWorks Distribution).


xxxiii Ibid.


xxxvi Missouri Secretary of State’s Office, “Ashcroft Submits Rule Protecting Minors from Inappropriate Materials at State Funded Libraries.”


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