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Queer in the museum
Methodological reflections on doing queer in
museum collections

IN THE SUMMER of 2008, when Stockholm hosted Euro Pride, the term “queer” and the acronym “HBT” (Swedish for LGBT) appeared all over the Stockholm museum world. Several museums such as the Dance Museum, Hallwyl Museum, Museum of National Antiquities, Museum of Modern Art and the National Museum of Fine Arts gave “queer tours” of their permanent collections, some museums such as the Army Museum presented a queer reading of their general exhibitions using impermanent information panels, and a few institutions, such as the National Museum of Fine Arts, Police Museum and the Nordic Museum, organized temporary exhibitions on queer themes. An independent exhibition initiative called § 1, referring to the first paragraph in the Declaration of Human Rights, consisted of a gallery space that was shared by the Nobel Prize Museum, National Museum of Science and Technology, National Maritime Museum, and Army Museum. Each participating institution had their individual display and there was an accompanying pamphlet, to which the Museum of Ethnography also contributed. Nation-wide media reported on these initiatives, the audience came in large

numbers, media reported on the success and it seemed like queer perspectives made a successful entrance into the Stockholm museum world.¹

Gender studies scholar Vanja Hermele has recently pointed out that through temporary exhibitions and collaborations with feminist and queer artists and curators Swedish art institutions tend to profile themselves as much more radical than they actually are.² Directing a critical eye to the museum queer venture in Stockholm 2008 my impression is that the exhibitions, tours and display interventions did not achieve a necessary critical analysis of norms and tended to engage with queer perspectives only on a surface level. The museum's own role in producing and upholding normative readings has still not been dealt with in the institutions mentioned above, nor have these museums' collection policies been evaluated with respect to sexualities.

As an Art Historian I myself was involved in giving queer tours at the National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm, in 2006 and 2007. These guided tours offered queer interpretations of museum objects and pointed to queer presences in a high-brow and otherwise normative institution; they proved to be an efficient way of communicating a queer perspective on art to a wide audience.³ However, more profound efforts are needed. The above mentioned tours and exhibitions can only be regarded as the first step for museums to involve queer perspectives.

This paper is a critical discussion on methodological aspects of how to perform queer as a cultural interpretive practice in museum collections. The term queer as employed in this article, refers to a perspective that problematises the display and narrative on how non-heteronormative sexual and erotic desire has influenced the creation, interpretation, collection and exhibition

of artworks and other artefacts, as well as the production of art history and research on museums. The activities at the National Museum of Fine Arts and those at the Nordic Museum during the summer of 2008 will be discussed in order to address two methodological issues: How to perform a search for objects that might reveal queer presences in museum collections and how to address the museum as a producer of normative categorisations is the first issue at stake. The second issue will address how to include alternative interpretations in a museum or archive and elaborate the productive role of non-normative desire and affective attachment in the practice of queer interpretation. The National Museum of Fine Arts is devoted to western art and design dating from c. 1500 until the turn of the twentieth century, the Nordic Museum is a cultural history museum that collects, preserves and exhibits historic and contemporary everyday life in Sweden. During Euro Pride 2008 both museums produced exhibitions from a queer perspective based on their respective permanent collections.

At the National Museum of Fine Arts I co-curated the exhibition “Queer. Desire, Power and Identity” together with Veronica Hejdelind, curator at the museum. This exhibition discussed queer in relation to the representation of gender, same-sex desire and sexual identity in the permanent collections of the museum.⁴ (Image 1) At Nordic Museum, a small photo exhibition called “*Visa dig!*” (“*Show yourself!*”), showed images with hetero-normative and non-normative couples from the museum’s vast collection.⁵ (Image 2) As part of a recent project at the Nordic Museum to establish LGBT as a field of collection and documentation, the exhibition invited LGBT visitors to submit their own images to the collection in order to expand its scope.

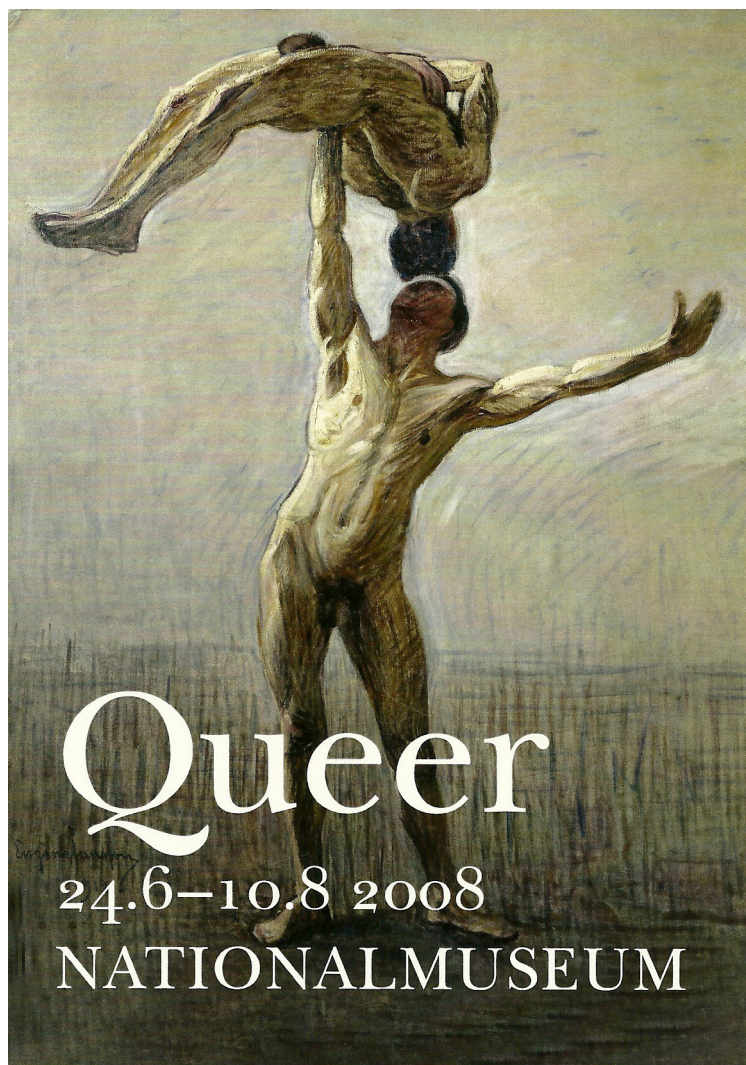


Image 1



Image 2

Searching for queer presences in museum collections

Brian Wallis, chief curator at International Centre of Photography in New York writes: "Museums are central to the ways our culture is constructed...principally concerned with sorting and classifying knowledge." He continues: "Museums serve as disciplinary structures, socially constructed means of defining and regulating difference."⁶ Wallis is one among a number of scholars that have critically studied the role of museums in Western culture the last decades, often bearing on Michel Foucault's theories on the productive power of naming and classification and the institutions and uses of knowledge.⁷ How museums produce

meaning, subject positions and valuations of knowledge, historic and aesthetic worth are questions that have been important in establishing the academic field of Museum Studies. In studies by Carol Duncan, Tony Bennett, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill and Douglas Crimp, for example, the museum is considered as an instrument of social and cultural reproduction and an important site for the production and display of discourse.⁸ However, while the most brilliant of these studies have laid bare the implicit nationalist, evolutionist and patriarchal narratives of the traditional museum, so far there are only a few who have discussed or analysed the museum's role in supporting heteronormative narratives.

Art Historian James H Sanders III analyses the silence of museums when it comes to the sexuality of artists and their subjects, and points to the inability of many art museums to integrate aesthetic representation with social and political discussions.⁹ Sanders' observation matches my own experience searching for queer presences in the historical collections of the National Museum of Fine Arts. Art history is full of images and motifs that have become loved by groups of women who love women, men who love men and people who have not felt at home in their own bodies. Saint Sebastian is one example of a motif that originally was aimed at an audience of religious worshippers but already in the eighteenth century started to circulate among groups of men who loved men, and in the twentieth century became a gay icon through the work of artists such as Derek Jarman and Pierre & Gilles.¹⁰ The meaning of this painting has changed from its original context as gay men have appropriated it for their own particular visual pleasure, and used aesthetic taste as a means to build alternative community.¹¹ Asking the curators of the Na-

tional Museum for imagery that might be considered lesbian and gay, or included icons, such as Jeanne d'Arc, the answer was that "this is a museum that collects on grounds of artistic quality". The answer suggested that what I was asking for was imagery of social or cultural interest, images that were not likely to meet the aesthetic standards of the museum. To collect artworks of aesthetic quality is undeniably the explicit mission from the government to the museum, but it is also a tool that separates Fine Arts from popular imagery. This separation bears consequences for the possibilities of integrating aesthetic representation and social context in productive discussion within the museum.

Social categories are implicitly present in setting standards of aesthetic quality and establishing a canon based on connoisseurship. Already during the 1970s feminist art historians exposed how the term "quality" was used to exclude certain artworks from the art historical canon. Linda Nochlin, Norma Broude and Griselda Pollock were among the scholars who most powerfully showed that implicit assumptions about masculine norms are imbedded in terms such as "masterpiece" and "master artist."¹² The insistence on aesthetic quality often excludes the representation of the underprivileged. Therefore, I argue, we need to reconsider what assumptions about heterosexual norms are embedded in a term like "aesthetic quality". In an earlier study, I researched the art historical reception of the work of Swedish artist Eugène Jansson, who painted naked men in outdoor bath-houses and indoor gymnasiums in the early 1900s. The reception was compared to that of his contemporary Anders Zorn who painted naked women bathing in the archipelago. Both artists treated their subjects with an erotic eye but their work has been judged differently in art history. While Jansson's male nudes systematically were consid-

ered as curiosities in the Swedish canon, Zorn's female nudes were considered masterpieces of Swedish turn-of-the-twentieth-century art.¹³ This comparison illustrates how a heterosexual privilege might bias aesthetic judgments and, as in this case-study, lead to the exclusion of homoerotic motifs from Swedish art history.

If implicit ideas on heterosexuality have influenced the writing of Swedish art history, this will in turn have affected the acquisition of artworks for the National Museum's collection and their display in permanent and temporary exhibitions. To elaborate a queer perspective in a museum collection or archive whose compilation has been governed by implicit and sometimes explicit heteronormative standards, presents methodological challenges to the individual researcher. Hidden in the collections of any museum there might be hundreds of objects that have immense queer potentials or may be strongly associated with LGBT community.

Before we go further into the discussion of this methodological issue I would like to further discuss the exhibition *Visa dig!* (*Show yourself!*) at the Nordic Museum. The museum's photography collection holds about five million photographic images, and they are all registered in a local data-base. According to the museum curators, entering the word 'homosexual' in the search field of the search engine gave zero results. Nor did the words 'bisexual', 'transvestite' or 'transsexual' return any matches. According to the press release it seems like they never even tried searching for 'queer'. The word 'heterosexual' did not result in any matches either, which is actually somewhat less surprising since the dominant norm often is taken as a given in this type of classification system. However, the word 'couple' returned several matching images, all representing a man and a woman, which

suggests the heteronormative workings of the data-base. It was not until the curators looked for images of spaces where same-sex activities between men are known to have taken place, such as prisons and military camps, that they found pictures of men in intimate situations. The exhibition included several other images that the curator found of cross-dressers and intimate same-sex relations, which can be seen in the exhibition poster. (Image 2) Even though images of explicit queer performances are present in the Nordic Museum's photography collection it is not through systematic data-base search that they were found, but rather through contextual research and manually flicking through the image archive.

The inclusion of queer interpretations and LGBT histories within traditional museum classification systems raises some problems of methodology. First of all, it is important to keep in mind that the terminology of homo-hetero-bi- and trans has its own history. Considering that it was not until the early decades of the twentieth century that homosexuality as a word gained currency for describing same-sex sexual acts in Sweden, it would be anachronistic to label an 1850's image of two men engaged in erotic activities as homosexual. In addition to the problem of neologism, there is a problem that the act of labelling is also a form of exercising power. Michel Foucault showed that the introduction of the term homosexuality at the end of the nineteenth century concurs with the criminalisation and medicalisation of homosexual acts in several European countries.¹⁴ It is important to keep in mind that reclassifying objects not only makes them available for database search, it also adds new historical layers and confines objects to fit the established categories. So, the insertion of the neat categories of homo, bi or hetero-sexual would probably

limit the individual researcher's work and restrict queer possibilities. Sanders also points to the problematic of oversimplification of the binary opposition between homosexual/heterosexual and would prefer an emphasis on fluid identities in museum narratives.¹⁵ Androgynous portraits from the eighteenth century and photographs of cross-dressing men and women are objects that represent queer presences in both the Nordic Museum and the National Art Museum collections, but if they were tagged as such in a database their identity would become fixed. Inserting queer as a static label in a museum database would surely be the end of the term itself.

Queering museums questions how museums collect. Which narratives are included, and which are excluded? Narratives that have already been articulated in research and represented in previous exhibitions are the ones most likely to be referred to in future studies and repeated in coming exhibitions. This repetition of primary research creates norms, and is probably the reason why queer presences are absent in most exhibitions. These epistemological repetitions are also probably the reason why male perspectives dominate many queer/LGBT-themed exhibitions. Comprehensive research on the history and representation of transgender persons and lesbians in collections would arguably be more important to queering museums than an all-embracing search engine.

Establishing alternative archives

Display and exhibition is an area of activity where museums can, and indeed do, produce and uphold social norms through the organisation of objects and knowledge. By the same token however,

these types of activities can become arenas to expose, challenge, discuss and alter those norms from a queer perspective. Collections and acquisitions are two other areas where a queer perspective can expose the normative structures of museum practices and rethink the role of sexual and erotic desire within this field. Art historian Michael Camille describes how collecting as a practice can challenge gender and sexuality norms: “The collector’s desire has often seemed to strain the limits of the heterosexual matrix and to problematise the logic of oppositions structuring it.”¹⁶ Camille points out the performative aspect of collecting: “The history of collecting is not the account of how groups of already-finished, inert things are organized by individuals and institutions, so much as a process by which these objects are being constantly produced, reconfigured and redefined.”¹⁷ Following this performative perspective, art historian Robert Mills points out that the act of collecting itself can be considered as a site of queer affect and desire. Mills suggests that display of, and discussion about queer collecting might be one way of making the audience of a museum aware of that collecting is an activity based not only economic and rational decisions, but also involves desires and affects that objects can generate in an individual.¹⁸

In a discussion of the relations between archives and contemporary artistic practice Judith Halberstam rethinks the concept of archive in ways that are also relevant to museums: “The archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory and complex record of queer activity”¹⁹ Halberstam elaborates on the performative function of the archive/museum for a queer community, discussing both the importance of ephemeral objects like flyers and music, and the even more ephemeral affects, memories and cultural

values generated by other types of objects than the documents and objects that can be found in a conventional archive or museum. The cultural role of affects – positive and negative – is an important field of inquiry within Queer studies ever since Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal work on the culturally productive role of the affect of shame, conceptualised through the symbolic structure of the closet.²⁰ The work of Ann Cvetkovich and José Esteban Muñoz, among others, continues to theorise the productive role of affect in queer readings and outline the importance of rethinking the concept of archive when writing queer histories.²¹ I imagine an "alternative archive" that consists of interpretations of artworks or other objects that have been queered and appropriated by a LGBT audience, and which holds narratives about affective knowledge and queer desires.

"Image Culture and Desire" was one of the themes of the 2008 exhibition "Queer: Desire, Power and Identity" at National Museum of Fine Arts, where the queer appropriation of images and the potential to change the social meanings of artwork depending on the cultural context was discussed in short texts. In a pioneering text within the field of sexuality research, Magnus Hirschfeld introduced the idea that one way to determine a person's sexual orientation was to study the objects that decorates her or his home. Hirschfeld then lists quite a few artworks that he had seen in the homes of homosexual men, for example the statuettes of half-dressed working-class men by Belgian sculptor Constantin Meunier.²² Through this catalogue Hirschfeld, even though he was a medical doctor, established a sort of alternative art historical canon, based mainly on homoerotic and aesthetic appreciation. Several of the listed artists are not included in mainstream art history today but a number of them are, such as Michelan-

gelo, Thomas Gainsborough and Auguste Rodin. The alternative archive is not necessarily about completely different objects, but about different emotional and political attachments to objects.

Selecting the artworks for the National Art Museum exhibition I curated, showed me to what extent emotional attachments can affect personal knowledge. I know quite a few art historical icons within a male homosexual culture but my knowledge of lesbian art historical icons was clearly insufficient. For example, I included the museum's painting of Saint Sebastian by Italian painter Perugino very much thanks to my own memories of enjoying the eroticised imagery of saints by Pierre & Gilles in the early 1990s. When it came to lesbian visual culture however, my insights were limited. Turning to friends and asking around, I was learnt about the pleasures of viewing images of Venus bathing with her nymphs, and was told stories of images of Diana, goddess of the hunt and her all-female and allegedly chaste hunting company, having been pinned to young girls' bedroom walls.²³

The practice of appropriation through interpretation and collection has a long tradition, which Whitney Davis outlines in his article on male homoerotic art collections 1750–1920.²⁴ The juxtaposition of modern art with classical and renaissance art is, according to Davis, characteristic of the collecting and display practices within circles of men with homoerotic interests. Davis argues that the shared aesthetic judgement that formed these collections produced semi-clandestine museums. This tradition of performing and sharing an aesthetic judgement based on personally experienced illicit homoerotic desires can be understood as a prototype of the pertaining tradition of camp in the twentieth century. Theatrical self-presentation and the establishing of subcultural taste are central factors in the manifold concept of

camp.²⁵ The collecting of objects, artworks, interiors, clothes, and memorabilia, and the ways that they are displayed, can be considered as two practices that allow for camping both as the objects are collected and as they are appreciated.

Another example is Rolf de Maré, Swedish art collector and dance patron, most famous for directing and funding *Les Ballets Suédois* in Paris in the 1920s and for his private collection of dance objects from around the world. He mainly collected modern art by Pablo Picasso, Marie Laurencin, Fernand Léger and Swedish artist Nils Dardel.²⁶ Only a few older paintings were included in his private gallery, but no less than four of them were at the time of acquisition attributed to the Spanish/Greek painter El Greco. Interestingly, in 1920 *Les Ballets Suédois* performed a ballet called “El Greco”, inspired by the painting “Entombment of Count Orgaz” (1586–1588).²⁷ Intrigued by this I soon found that Jean Cocteau had written a book on the painter and in his journals the homoerotic appreciation of the motifs is very explicit.²⁸ In his often cited text on camp, Christopher Isherwood also mentioned El Greco together with Mozart and Baroque art as camp phenomena.²⁹ These examples show that the taste for El Greco was something that de Maré shared with other famous homosexual men in Europe in the early 1900s.³⁰ This cult is more or less forgotten today, even among male homosexual art historians such as myself, and I have initiated a research project on how El Greco images were appropriated by a subculture and used as coded objects that could communicate unmentionable desires among these men. Considering the act of collecting as a performative identity-forming act, my theory is that the individual produces and reproduces her or himself by appropriating objects through the practice of collecting.

The act of queer interpretive appropriation produces not just additional knowledge about artworks (or other objects), but rather it registers another type of knowledge. An important question to consider is, to what extent any ‘alternative archive’ of this kind of knowledge should be incorporated by a museum? My concern is that some archivist somewhere might want to “straighten up” the alternative archive. Camp and queer sensibilities have historically been produced in order to shape alternative communities in times and places where homosexuality was legally forbidden or a social taboo. Therefore it could be argued that the alternative archive should resist public space, and rather stay a semi-secluded archive that we could share among ourselves and that we share with a larger audience only on our own terms.

Collecting Pride

The first Pride celebration in Sweden was in 1998 when Stockholm hosted Euro Pride. The main venue was a separated area in the public park Tantolunden – temporarily re-named Pride Park – that hosted bars, shops and large scale stages; the Pride Parade was the main event of the Pride week. Pride replaced the annual Gay Liberation events that had been arranged by The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL) since 1977. The Pride organisation was criticised for their focus on consumerism and partying – where did the politics go? And why would white, gay male, party culture be something that the diverse LGBT-community should be proud of? As a reaction against Stockholm Pride, in 2001 members of the LGBT community organized Stockholm Shame, an alternative festival with events such as film screenings, workshops on

sex work, which pronounced itself as “worse than queer.” Even though Stockholm Pride ever since the start in 1998 had been accompanied by seminars and discussions, the concept of “Pride House,” that was launched in 2003 created a venue for political debates and social activism that vitalised the political agenda of Stockholm Pride. In 2005, the “Pride and the City” programme expanded Pride activities further by encouraging various cultural institutions in Stockholm to arrange Pride-related events. The Pride organisation worked strategically to involve and activate mainstream institutions by prompting them to explore queer and LGBT-related issues. When Stockholm hosted Euro Pride for the second time in 2008, the Pride week had become an event whose party, politics and cultural events in Pride Park, Pride House and all over the city included not only a large part of the LGBT community and their friends, but also attracted attentions from the majority audience, the national media and public institutions.

This chain of events has made the LGBT community more and more visible in the Swedish public sphere. The annual presence of the extremely diverse LGBT community in national, regional and private cultural institutions is very important for the long-term museum representation and historiography of non-normative individuals, experiences and perspectives. At the same time however, the heterogeneous community also became identified as a discreet, demographic group of consumers.³¹ For museums, whose success is often measured by visitor numbers, the term “pink money” – used to reference the supposed heightened purchasing power of the gay community – became of interest, and was related to a concept I would like to call “pink audience”, meaning the idea of a very culturally active gay community. It could be suggested that Stockholm museums were drawn to the

LGBT community for two reasons: On the one hand, Pride was an opportunity for museums to revise their collections, exhibition programmes and policies from a socially progressive, non-normative perspective. On the other hand, it was an opportunity to ride on the popular success the Pride festival had come to achieve after ten years of long and conflicted work within a heterogeneous community, and take a cut of an imagined “pink audience” through small-scale activities.

During Euro Pride 2008 the Nordic Museum initiated a project to document the LGBT community.³² Objects from the parade, such as flags, information sheets and home-made rainbow coloured hats, were acquired for their collections. At the store in Pride House, a museum curator interviewed people who purchased items, documenting why they bought it and also purchasing identical items for the museum, to be stored with the story in the collection. These are the first items in this museum’s collection to be labelled LGBT. Is this really how we would imagine an alternative archive? Stories of Pride shopping? The museum space is very effective as a producer of social norms. Objects that enter the museum change their meaning with their change of context. It’s possible that through context and display originally queer objects may produce normative meanings; the object’s affective attachments and traces of queer desire may be lost. An object that is collected in order to represent LGBT community might end up affirming and reproducing normative attitudes and social categories.

Conclusion

Methodologically it is important to remember that queerified objects and queer stories can still be straightened up in a museum

collection. And even though museums might aim at integrating a queer perspective in their collections, the queer eye will always see its presences elsewhere and collect the neglected. We cannot, I argue, rely on the museums to establish our own alternative archives, filled with desired and affected objects and their stories. Museums with ambitions to be queer need to look on their role as institutions and as producers of power and of normative meaning. They should allow for queer presences to occur on their own terms rather than co-opt LGBT culture as a way to seem more radical than they really are. Museums should instead facilitate the production of queer meaning in their collections by innovative display, ground-breaking research and encouraging subversive social events on their grounds. New ways of involving the LGBT community on queer matters might actually prove to be the path that leads to new directions for the social role of the museum.

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Notes

- 1 Norling 2007-07-26, "Queertema på museet under Pride" *Svenska Dagbladet* 2007-07-31.
- 2 Hermele, Vanja: *Konsten – så funkar det (inte)*, KRO/KIF Stockholm, 2009:31f.
- 3 Kommittén för mångfaldsåret 2006: *Mångfald är framtiden. Slutbetänkande* (SOU 2007:50), 2007:305ff.
- 4 The exhibition was on show 24 June–10 August 2008. Further information: <http://www.nationalmuseum.se/sv/English-startpage/Visit-the-museum/Exhibitions1/Past-exhibitions-/Exhibition-Queer--Desire-Power-and-Identity-/2010-01-26>
- 5 <http://www.nordiskamuseet.se/Publication.asp?publicationid=10769&cat=148&catName=utställningar&topmenu=0> 2010-01-26
- 6 Cited in Sanders 2008:17.
- 7 Foucault 2004.
- 8 Bennett 1995, Crimp 1993, Duncan 1995, Hooper-Greenhill 1994.
- 9 Sanders 2008:18–22.
- 10 Kaye 1996:86–108.
- 11 Cf the concept of interpretative community, as developed by Hooper-Greenhill 1994:50. The role of aesthetics in the development of queer communities is also discussed by Rosenberg 2009:50–53.
- 12 Broude & Garrard 1982, Nochlin 1971, Parker & Pollock 1981.
- 13 Steorn 2007:61–71.
- 14 Foucault 1976:70.
- 15 Sanders 2008:21.
- 16 Camille 2001:164.
- 17 Camille 2001:163
- 18 Mills 2008:48.
- 19 Halberstam 2003:326.

- 20 Sedgwick 1991:2003.
- 21 Cvetkovich 2003, 2007 and Muñoz 1996. See also Steorn 2009 for a discussion on the possible use of wardrobe as alternative archive.
- 22 Hirschfeld 2000. Statuettes by Meunier were included in the exhibition “Queer” at the National Museum of Fine Arts 2008.
- 23 Lesbian visual cultures on these themes have been discussed by Rand 1994 and Simon 1994.
- 24 Davis 2001:247–277. Female homoeroticism in art collecting during the same period has been studied by i.e. Bonnevier 2007, Casselaer 1986, Chadwick 2000 and Souhami 2004.
- 25 For historicised and queer perspectives on the diverse meanings of camp, see Cleto 1999. See also Richard Dyers text “It’s being so camp as keep us going” in Cleto 1999.
- 26 Asplund 1923, Näslund 2009:162.
- 27 Maurer 2001:69–81.
- 28 Cocteau 1943, Cocteau 1989:29of.
- 29 Isherwood 1954:125f.
- 30 Näslund 2009:238.
- 31 Nielsen, Mika: ”Ett kapitalt misstag, behovet av en queer antikapitalism” *Trikster: Nordic Queer Journal* # 4 <http://trikster.net/4/nielsen/1.html> 2010-03-09
- 32 Museum scholar Wera Grahn showed in her critical work on the collections of Nordic Museum that sexuality hardly is represented at all in the Nordic Museum as it has been considered “a sensitive topic”. Grahn 2006:112ff.

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Images

1. Exhibition poster: *Queer. Desire, Power and Identity*. National Museum of Fine Arts, 2008.

2. Exhibition poster: *Show Yourself!* Nordic Museum, 2008.

ABSTRACT

Under sommaren 2008 var Stockholm värd för Euro Pride och på flera ställen i Stockholms museivärld mötte besökare förkortningen HBT och ordet queer. Flera museer såsom Dansmuseet, Hallwylska museet, Historiska Museet, Moderna Museet och Nationalmuseum erbjöd queervisningar av sina permanenta samlingar medan exempelvis Armémuseum presenterade en tolkning av deras permanenta utställningar från HBT-perspektiv med hjälp av tillfälligt utplacerade texter och ytterligare andra institutioner, såsom Nationalmuseum, Polismuseet och Nordiska museet anordnade tillfälliga utställningar med HBT eller queer i de egna samlingarna som tema. Utställningen § 1, vars namn hänvisar till det första stycket i förklaringen om de mänskliga rättigheterna, var ett oberoende initiativ som förenade Nobelmuseet, Tekniska museet, Sjöhistoriska museet och Armémuseum på en utställningsyta där varje institution gjort var sin egen utställning som på olika sätt anknöt till HBT-historia eller allmänna reflektioner kring konstruktion av normer.

Artikelförfattarens samlade intryck är dock att museernas aktiviteter inte uppnådde en normkritisk analys utan tenderade att befatta sig med perspektivet på ett relativt ytligt plan. Respektive museums egen roll i att producera och upprätthålla normer har fortfarande inte behandlats seriöst av dessa institutioner och riktlinjer som gäller museernas verksamheter har heller inte utvärderats i relation till normer när det gäller sexualiteter.

Artikeln är en kritisk diskussion om olika metodologiska aspekter av att använda sig av queer som ett perspektiv för att tolka och ställa ut museisamlingar. Två utställningar med HBT/queer perspektiv som visades i Stockholm under Euro Pride 2008 är fokus för artikelns analys. Nordiska museets fotoutställning *Visa dig!* visade bilder med heteronormativa och icke-normativa par ur museets stora samling av fotografier. *Queer. Begär, makt och identitet* var en utställning på Nationalmuseum som visade ett urval verk ur de permanenta samlingarna och diskuterade representationer av kön, samkönad lust och sexu-

ell identitet. Artikelförfattaren var själv curator för denna utställning och bidrar därmed med personliga reflektioner kring de metodologiska utmaningar det innebär att omsätta ett abstrakt queerperspektiv i museal praktik.

Exempelvis kan det finnas hundratals föremål med stor potential för queer tolkning eller med stark koppling till HBT-samhället gömda i ett enskilt museums samlingar utan att de går att hitta på grund av att kunskapsinsamlingen kring de samlade föremålen varit inriktad på till exempel kategorier som material, upphovsperson, proveniens. Samtidigt skulle införandet av queer tolkningar och HBT berättelser i museernas klassificeringssystem inte var en tillfredsställande lösning eftersom det väcker frågor om hur och i vilka syften den insamlade kunskapen skulle kunna användas. Att införa queer som en kategori i en databas skulle dessutom gå emot hela begreppets innebörd. Att söka efter queer närvaro i en museisamling är alltså en metodologisk utmaning och artikeln diskuterar behovet av närmare undersökningar av hur museer samlar in föremål.

Betydelsen av att tänka om själva idén om vad ett arkiv kan vara blir särskilt viktig när queer historia skrivs, vilket flera forskare inom queer studies diskuterar sedan några år. För att kunna berätta nya typer av historier behöver forskare och museer vända sig till andra typer av källor till information. Judith Halberstam pekar bland annat ut material som kan tyckas trivialt eller efemärt. Artikeln för fram att behovet av att upprätta alternativa arkiv inte kan överlåtas till offentliga institutioner, utan här behöver olika typer av HBT-grupper och queeraktivister också vara aktiva.

Museer med ambitioner att vara queer måste titta på sin roll som institutioner, som producenter av makt och normativ mening. Museerna skulle kunna underlätta produktionen av queer tolkningar av deras samlingar genom innovativa utställningsidéer, nyskapande forskning och genom att uppmuntra oväntade och subversiva evenemang att ta plats i de egna lokalerna.