Rendering the Cyberfag: An Examination on the Spatial Sociology of Grindr

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Rendering the Cyberfag: 
An Examination on the Spatial Sociology of Grindr

Senior Project Submitted to 
The Division of the Arts 
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by
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To Mama, Papa, Lina, and Mia, thank you for teaching me what I care most for in life. Your endless love kept me going.

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Finally, to my cat Masha, thank you for keeping me tethered to reality, love you more than you can possibly comprehend.

“the road is long, we carry on, try to have fun in the meantime”- LDR

For my fellow homosexuals, I hope this isn't forever
Queerness in itself, is a societally paradoxical existence. The inception of homosexuality and queerness as a concept, and an identity is a societally induced fissure of human form and sensation, from biological function. This inherent “queerness”, in the word’s verbal form, to ruin, and its adjectival form, something odd, goes beyond the homosexual as an individual, but rather “queer” existence as an citive “queering” of environment, space, and architecture. Homosexual spatial navigations, in response to societal disdain for homosexuals, were and still are to a degree, subversive, unseen egressions of spaces. A web of spaces built by spoken word, innuendo, and hints: homosexual navigation through a heterosexual reality, a built environment of obscurity. This existence within obscurity, splits a queer existence between real life and homosexual acts, that creates a desire to reframe and orient homosexuals within the seen world. Queer spaces have thus evolved to be part of the urban canon, and now, exponentially, canonized within media and especially the digital. Grindr has ushered in an unprecedented era within gay culture, entirely altering the cultural, political, and spacial trajectory of gayness as an identity. The app claims to be an innovative tool to positively connect the queer community to a global scale, a “safe-space”, “trailblazing the queer community towards a true, foundational community. The evolution of queer spaces from the physical to the digital, from cruising to Grindr, seems to have ushered in true queer liberation. This essay begs to ask how a digital space such as Grindr reconstructions the architectural/urban context in how queer people exist/interact? What are the consequences of these shifting interactions? How has commodification, consumerism, and neoliberalism altered the reality of progress as well as the values of queer culture? How has the transition from a physical queer culture to a digital one created a new level of spacelessness? This essay argues that the functions of these spaces, the progression from the physical to the digital, has shifted queer culture towards a synthetic reality; the creation of Grindr, and the cultural focus towards the digital space is derived from trauma, attempts to “fill the void” of spacelessness, and actively facilitates the experiencing of trauma and current “disorientation” of gay people.

Developing a Lexicon for Investigation

“There is no heterosexual orientation, the term ‘orientation’ in itself has implications of the “orient”, the east, or the foreign, and “orient” as a state of being in a deviant direction, needing to be ‘oriented’” (Ahmed, 12). In this quote, Ahmed implies that through this inherent deviancy of the very term “orientation”, it invokes a need to be oriented through this societal “disorientation”. Having “orientation”, or being “oriented” relies on established, foundational societal and spatial relations/navigation. Heterosexuals are seldomly labeled as being of heterosexual orientation because they have foundational orientation. Their spatial existence and community is the entire world. Homosexuals must carve and fabricate their spaces and architecture in an attempt to gain “orientation”, but this is fruitless, as homosexuals can not be “oriented” within established heterosexual space. Although queer spaces are made, they are inherently ephemeral and societally unprotected. Thus a void based on the lack of foundational physical spaces of existence for gay people is created. This void of spacelessness, spatial/societal “disorientation” and subsequent spatial fabrication creates a reaction within homosexuals attempting to find purpose. Gay people then attempt to need the physical space, and rather create space through sensation. Queer spaces are immaterial facilitators utilized to “fill the void” (“voidal” being an absence of physical reality, lacking orientation implies a lack of physicality. Gaining physicality by any means, is in a way, gaining orientation) and orient the self through physical, carnal desire creating a momentary, replicable architecture. These spaces are based on exalting the body as an object or tool to achieve pleasure. The gay club, cruising grounds, bathrooms, or glory holes are not the architectures that are spatially focusing queer people, but rather, the humans themselves; sectioning the built environment into a maze of bodies aching, yearning, begging, filling their voids. This “orients” gay people towards constant momentary pleasures that ephemerally fills the void of spacelessness.
“THERE IS NO HETEROSEXUAL ORIENTATION, THE TERM ‘ORIENTATION’ IN ITSELF HAS IMPLICATIONS OF THE “ORIENT”, THE EAST, OR THE FOREIGN, AND “ORIENT” AS A STATE OF BEING IN A DEVIANT DIRECTION, NEEDING TO BE ‘ORIENTED’” (AHMED)

“THIS VOID OF SPACELESSNESS, SPATIAL/SOCIETAL “DISORIENTATION” AND SUBSEQUENT SPATIAL FABRICATION CREATES A REACTION WITHIN HOMOSEXUALS ATTEMPTING TO FIND PURPOSE. QUEER PEOPLE THEN ATTEMPT TO SHED THE NEED FOR ESTABLISHED PHYSICAL SPACE AND RATHER CREATE SPACE THROUGH SENSATION. QUEER SPACES BECOMES IMMATERIAL FACILITATORS UTILIZED TO ‘FILL THE VOID’”
Crafting a Praxis of Current Tensions and Failures through a Mapping of Gay Chronology

Queer spaces of the recent past were remappings of the built architectural environment rooted in achieving orgasm. These spaces, mainly the men’s bathroom or locker room, centered in masculinity and voyeurism obviously would fascilitate gay experiences, and often are the birthplaces of homosexual fantasy. The very architecture of these spaces have non-heterosexual implications. The complete lack of privacy, culturally accepted same-sex nudity, the very color of tiles all emphasize the human form. The urinal, a nonchalant display of male genitalia, the stark nude against white tile begs for focus, same-sex focus⁸. Although homosexuality is implied it still requires discreet, subversive homosexuals acts. The gay bar/club attempts to create concrete queer establishments, spaces for congregation, potential for orgasm, and “safety” in knowing everyone in this space is queer. These spaces are all very sexual in nature and either “queer” or “queered” is homosexuality confined to the actions within, it does not solve the problem that gay people do not have any societal foundation to exist within. Gay existence in established space was even further uprooted after the HIV/AIDS epidemic, gay clubs, bars, bath houses, and known cruising spots were shut down and deserted out of fear and government sanctions. In Queer Space by Aaron Betsky, he explains how HIV/AIDS created a “chasm” or “void” within gay life, fracturing any semblance of community and space, leaving gay men without any space to exist.

The digital age brought in a new way of attempting to “orient” the self in the wake of HIV/AIDS wreckage of queer spaces. Beginning with the chat rooms of the late 90’s. AOL created an entirely new mode of connection specifically rooted in anonymity. Users were able to join and create chat rooms with users of similar interests, this helped create an internet specific coded language for gay men to find each other. The discretion, and lack of ability to send or receive images provided these users looking for sexual exploration with a sense of inhabitation, the “cyberfantasy” a novel concept that is attributed to this digital anonymity was born. Gay men not only explored the surface of their sexuality, but also were able to push their limits of sexual morality and fantasy with virtually no consequences.⁹ In Dennis Cooper’s 2004 novel The Sluts, he writes a fictional narrative in the format of a gay internet chat room. The story explores the concept of the “cyberfantasy” and obsession, mainly focused on a Portland based sex worker named Brad. The men would describe their supposed soliscitations and encounters with Brad. Unknown whether or not these encounters were real they all described Brad as naive, worthless and entirely complicit with anything done to him. Cooper based the novel on his ownresearch, searching through the extensive chat logs of gay men in this chat room devoted to a gay porn star by the name Peter Azur. According to Cooper, the chat room had an extensive collection of the often dark, obsessive, and violent fantasies of these men about this porn star. He described that their fantasies spiraled into cruelty. These chat rooms furthered a subconscious concept within gay men as their sexuality being a hiding place. Chat Rooms were tied to a specific space and time, reliant on being at a home desktop, dial up speeds, and the ability to even afford a home computer. Chat Rooms did not remedy the issues of gay clubs or bars, but merely mimicked the sensation of community with the added complexities of digital anonymity.

Responding to the popularity of gay chat rooms, and the decentralization of gay life post HIV/AIDS, Joel Simkhai founded Grindr in 2009. The app redefines and centralizes queer reality, it allows users to exist within a digital grid of sexual tension at all times. The app is a 24/7 (when allowed by the user) geolocator, allowing other users to see, down to feet, other users locations at any time. This creates a pervasive, ever-present undercurrent of sexual tension. The app constantly focuses the user towards sexual encounters without it even being on the mind of the user. Thus, queering every space, the workplace, the school, apartment complex, etc... becoming a space of “pre-organism”. While redefining reality, Grindr also solidifies the same ontological function of past queer spaces, this foundational network is a tool for momentary pleasure and gaining purpose through sensation not only active sensation but the inactive sensation of sexual tension. If sexual tension, and the possibility for sex is present in the subconscious mind, technically that should dismantle the ephemeral nature of gaining “orientation” through momentary sensation. If the sensation (tension) is ever-present, subconscious, and “foundational” then queer existential “orientation” is accomplished? Unfortunately, this does not take into account the “voidal” nature of the digital, and how existence is based on pleasure.¹¹

Grindr quite literally is a digital way of orienting the physical body, but also (dis)orientations reality from the physical to the synthetic and digital, shifting queer culture towards the “void” “The texture of a smartphone’s alkali-aluminosilicate glass screen is similar to smooth skin, so you rub your thumb down the display of Grindr users, it is touching the young, hairless skin of a naked body” (Jacque pp.76). Jacque then goes on to explain how Grindr provides a “new mode of romantic experience” that does not require physical touch or pursuits of love, but rather a synthesis of non-physical sensation altering queer reality

¹¹The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a form, a morphology, with an and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a form, a morphology, with an and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a form, a morphology, with an

"THE GAY CLUB, CRUISING GROUNDS, BATHROOMS, OR GLORY HOLES ARE NOT THE ARCHITECTURES THAT ARE SPATIALLY FOCUSING QUEER PEOPLE, BUT RATHER, THE HUMANS THEMSELVES; SECTIONING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT INTO A MAZE OF BODIES ACHING, YEARNING, BEGGING, FILLING THEIR VOIDS. THIS ‘ORIENTS’ GAY PEOPLE TOWARDS CONSTANT MOMENTARY PLEASURES THAT EPHEMERALLY FILLS THE VOID OF SPACELESSNESS."
from sexual sensation to synthetic digital sensation; which "requires and triggers important architectural and urban transformations. Alkalai-alumino silicate is human skin, networked" (Jacque pp. 77). Queerness is now truly shedding most aspects of physical, non-synthetic reality. When the main way for queer people to find community is based on sex, sensation, and pleasure, and now there is a digital foundation to further position homosexuals towards this pursuit one must question the possibilities for new and unprecedented vulnerabilities for the users. Queer space before Grindr’s inception, naturally facilitated the experiencing of trauma. When most queer spaces were and still are focused on pleasure, hedonism and anonymity, trauma would closely follow as these experiences often involve immense amounts of vulnerability. There is vulnerability in discretion, sexual encounters, drug and alcohol usage as well as the often illegality of these spaces being used. The abandoned warehouse, public pier or park is not sanctioned sexual space. As stated previously, these spaces were still rooted in “orienting” the “disoriented” homosexual existence through acts of superficial, momentary pleasure. Which creates an architecture that is queered by these acts, rather than being foundationally queer. The trauma experienced, usually sexual violence, was largely due to this sex focused spatial arrangement, but access to these built spaces were only available to those involved within adult queer communities, usually located in major cities. Grindr, as the new normal foundation for queer spatial orientation and navigation, brings unprecedented access to a global network of queer people eagerly seeking both physical and mental sexual sensation. This almost societal acceptance of the app, and its prolific global use is largely due to modern queer liberation, sex positivity, and politically liberal movements. Modern queer liberation is mainly focused on explicit displays of sexuality, heteronormative displays of homosexuality, or homonationalism. Thus, Claiming prolific queer sex and assimilation into heteronormativity is true queer liberation, sensibilities of the body and assimilated homosexuals. These values that are back to sexual sensation to synthetic digital sensation. The commodification of queerness seems to turn the values of the past on its head. Grindr seems to turn the values of the past on its head. When spatial foundation is finally created specifically for queer purposes, no matter the mode in which the foundation orients the inhabitant towards, human nature is to find comfort in a larger system that “supports” their identity. The modern queer person now exists in a heterosexual perception of gayness in response to a heterosexual experiences romantically far outweighs the risks in the mind of a minor. In another study it was found that in 2015 alone there 25 documented criminally charged cases of statutory rape, sexual assault and molestation. Which obviously does not account for undocumented cases, as well as possession of child pornography when nudes are solicited from a minor. Grindr user. Grindr is pushing queer youth towards a “voidal” reality. Love and achieving “homonormativity” is all rooted within an unregulated digital realm that puts desirability and orgasm at the top of the modern gay person’s hierarchy of needs. The commodification of queerness seems to be the antithesis of queer liberation movements of the past. Grindr seems to turn the values of the past on its head. Modern queer liberation is mainly focused on explicit displays of sexuality, heteronormative displays of homosexuality, or homonationalism. Thus, Claiming prolific queer sex and assimilation into heteronormativity is true queer liberation, sensibilities of the body and assimilated homosexuals. 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"IF SEXUAL TENSION, AND THE POSSIBILITY FOR SEX IS EVER-PRESENT IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND, TECHNICALLY THAT SHOULD DISMANTLE THE EPHEMERALITY OF GAINING "ORIENTATION" THROUGH MOMENTARY SENSATION. IF THE SENSATION (TENSION) IS EVER-PRESENT, SUBCONSCIOUS, AND "FOUNDATIONAL" THEN IS QUEER EXISTENTIAL "ORIENTATION" ACCOMPLISHED?"

"A SYNTHESIS OF NON-PHYSICAL SENSATION, ALTERING QUEER REALITY FROM SEXUAL SENSATION TO SYNTHETIC DIGITAL SENSATION; WHICH "REQUIRES AND TRIGGERS IMPORTANT ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS. ALKALI-ALUMINOSILICATE IS HUMAN SKIN, NETWORKED" (JAQUE, PP.76)."
As the only way truly available to “heal” this voidal trauma is momentary pleasure.

Assimilation into the “seen” world has pushed queerness as a concept for capitalist consumption. Damning queer people to find their existential “orientation” within being consumed.

**Design Path I: Examining Current Spatial Tensions**

The spatial examinations presented above frames architecture as spatial navigation, architecture as a construct of societal use and value. Architecture as something not entirely rooted in the physical, but a metaphysical excavation of established space using the digital. **Grindr** unearths, or reveals what is already there in physical reality, but organizes it for the user to navigate through the digital. **Grindr** is carving digital pathways and reframing the architecture in physical reality through a queer, sexual digital lens. The modern “orientation” of gay people completely alters the pre-conceived realities of architectural and spatial function. Currently, the function of an architectural or urban setting, in a gay context, is ruled by a digital grid of desire, trauma, and consumption. Queer spaces of the past were the mens bathroom seen through a lens of voyeurism and anonymity. The abandoned building as a place for sex or congregation, “gayborhoods” in NYC and San Francisco, gay bars and clubs. Queerness hides in plain sight, an intersection between the public and private, a sense of domesticity within the urban grid. Although still in existence, and often rooted in desire and sex there was a sense of community due to the physicality of the repurposed architectural and urban spaces. **Grindr** is actively dissolving these coopted environments in exchange for a digital architectural foundation that is a layering of transparency, secrecy, and voyeurism. Some argue that the app has allowed for gay people to “ascend” into the seen world, escape the “victimhood” of living within the urban underbelly; the once gritty “gayborhoods” of the past through a lens of queerness has moved away from such locations and it is now sited in everyday existence17, commodifying the body, isolating and reorienting queer peoples relationship to sex and desire, relegating it to the digital realm; all in the name of achieving normalcy.

**Grindr** is a city itself, networked. A city as an endless network of human existences arranged for navigation and consumption. When this digital networked “city” is virtually boundless, unixed, and untraceable in physical reality can community even be formed? The gay urban sprawl of the past navigated through word and nuance based in reality is now replaced by a digital map and compass. If the “gay” city was navigated, erected, and fabricated through these architectural “queered” repurposements that fragmented the experiencing of pleasure to “orient” the self, then the app is the queer city digitized and streamlined with a foundation for queer existence. Each profile, essentially creates an ever-present space of possible sexual encounter. If architecture is a container for existence, then a **Grindr** profile could be thought of as individualized containers for existences. **Grindr** coined their app as a “Globally Distributed Mobile Cloud Architecture”, a built environment that provides space for existence, a “city”. A city is technically entirely determined by population density, as well as distinctions of culture and social hierarchies. **Grindr**, with approximately 11 million users qualifies as a digital city with similar functionality. The lived digital existence of **Grindr** contains social hierarchies based on class, race, religion, age, body type and a specific **Grindr**-based dialect. **Grindr** is a complete digital reflection of a city, there are places within the grid with users that share similarities either physically, politically, linguistically etc… When physically moving throughout physical reality, or changing your location on the app the users on the grid change to reflect the inhabitants of the area. The user can virtually navigate through digital neighborhoods to look for users with their preferred traits; mainly wealth, race, or social clout. **Grindr** can be seen as a digital filter or mirror of the physical reality to be viewed through to see or move through physical reality. Physical reality becomes secondary to the user’s existence on **Grindr**.

“...DISPLAYING, ADVERTISING, AND IDOLIZING THE CONSUMABLE HUMAN FORM. SENSATIONS OF THE BODY AND ASSIMILATED HOMOSEXUALS PARTICIPATING IN HETEROSEXUAL CONSUMERIST CULTURE BECOME EPITOMIZED WITHIN THE CANON OF QUEER IDEALITY.”

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11. “...resorting to this back-and-forth discussion of a contemporary app’s digital space alongside a novelized version of physical space, the paper explores how Grindr reimagines and highlights long-standing problems such as machismo and invisibility within Puerto Rican queer culture, while acknowledging the politics of space at an urban level,” “Back and Forth: Between KidSt Kibi and Grindr”(2020), Regner Ramos. Ramos documents the closure of physical gay space in Puerto Rico in response to Grindr’s emergence in a digital/spatial theoretical context.

12. “What I didn’t see was that almost of that dissolution would come about because of how pervasive technology would become. My sense is a lot of these other spaces, the spaces of others, the physical places where queer men and women had to go to define themselves aren’t necessary anymore” [after Klibb interviewing Aaron Betsky, “The End of Queer Space?”, Log 41 p 68 (2017)].

13. “...assisting in this back-and-forth discussion of a contemporary app’s digital space alongside a novelized version of physical space, the paper explores how Grindr reimagines and highlights long-standing problems such as machismo and invisibility within Puerto Rican queer culture, while acknowledging the politics of space at an urban level,” “Back and Forth: Between KidSt Kibi and Grindr”(2020), Regner Ramos. Ramos documents the closure of physical gay space in Puerto Rico in response to Grindr’s emergence in a digital/spatial theoretical context.

15. “...queerness has moved away from such locations and it is now sited in everyday spaces; it has become more normal. We’re really looking at the assimilation of whatever consumer culture and capitalism sees as innovative and avant-garde.” Ibid 86.
“THE MODERN QUEER PERSON NOW EXISTS LOCKED WITHIN A DIGITAL GRID OF SENSUAL, SEXUAL SENSATION.”

“THE INHERENT NEED TO LOVE AND BE LOVED IS CLOUDED AND CONFLATED TO NEEDING TO BE AN OBJECT OF DESIRE, A NEED TO BE ABLE TO BE CONSUMED CONSTANTLY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY BY MANY. TO BE CONSUMED AND WANTED BECOMES A WAY OF EXISTENCE.”
In this seemingly constant and desperate attempt for queer people to find direction through a foundationally heterosexual reality, Grindr creates this foundation for homosexuals. Instead of a physical foundational reality rooted in all aspects of human existence, the queer foundation for “existential orientation” is not within the physical realm but the digital, and fundamentally skews the inhabitant towards gaining their existential “orientation” or purpose through sexual sensation. This derailing of queerness towards the digital is actively stripping “queerness” from physical reality. Homosexuality/desire is being conflated with queerness, queer existence is not sexual, queerness is opposition, a way of being, existing, and contemplating. A queer space can not exist in a positive, futurist manner in the current cultural definition it resides under. Queerness is novel futurism, and queer space is abstraction. In José Esteban Muñoz’s book Cruising Utopias he claims “Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness’s domain”. In this claim, and the rest of the book, he argues that “queerness” in this ideological sense, is forever a conceptual enigma of possible future existences. Gay people must strip their identities that surround hedonism, consumerism and sexuality as all of these conceptions are often entirely heterosexual. Foundational physical reality may not be the answer for true queer liberation to occur, perhaps it is fantasy, or perhaps it requires radical erasure. All that is known is that the queer space, as it is known now is a voidal artifice. The digitization and commodification of gay sex is lacking of any queerness. In the wake of this now foundational voidal digital architecture in which queers now exist within, can queer people shift from an artificial, superficial, sexually centered existence? Is the debasing of queer existence an inevitable consequence of capitalist commodification? Is it even possible for queer people to exist beyond the “voidal” within a heterosexual physical reality?

Examining “queer architecture” there seems to be attempts at architecturally attempting to create or repurpose spaces to craft a type of micro-utopia. Architecture designed for exclusive queer existence often focused on domesticity, luxury, voyeurism, and largely, exclusivity. The Rudolph Apartment at 23 Beekman’s Place by Paul Rudolph (1997), the Weston Havens House by Harwell Hamilton Harris (1940), and the BOOM Community by Mayer H e Diller and Renfro (2011), all are supposed “queer” spaces, redesigning the domestic for queer use. Yet, all of these proposals are deeply flawed, and only provides relief for the privileged contained within the walls of the space. Muñoz claims that queerness is a future-oriented, utopian way of existing. He states that queer people must collectively dream for new worlds, new ways of navigation, and more fulfilling pleasures. He actively defies the nihilism of modern queer theory that states that queer people should abandon looking towards the future, revel in the sensations of the present. So how can one even begin to imagine a future queer space? Rendering such projections seems entirely futile given the state of queerness now, versus the true nature of queerness. It first requires true community and collectivity, unlearning decades of established value systems and behaviors, collective healing, the eradication of Grindr, and then removing the damaging realities of the past and present from the universal temporal consciousness. Perhaps then can “queerness” be idealized and pondered through a collective existential orientation towards futurity. Now, in this apparent fictitious nature of change, disruptions must be made, the present spatial and superficial nature of queerness must be dissected for any semblance of collectivity to occur. Sex is not queerness, it is biological. Space can not be based on biology, but rather on future possibilities.

Exposing “queer architecture” there seems to be attempts at architecturally attempting to create or repurpose spaces to craft a type of micro-utopia. Architecture designed for exclusive queer existence often focused on domesticity, luxury, voyeurism, and largely, exclusivity. The Rudolph Apartment at 23 Beekman’s Place by Paul Rudolph (1997), the Weston Havens House by Harwell Hamilton Harris (1940), and the BOOM Community by Mayer H e Diller and Renfro (2011), all are supposed “queer” spaces, redesigning the domestic for queer use. Yet, all of these proposals are deeply flawed, and only provides relief for the privileged contained within the walls of the space. Muñoz claims that queerness is a future-oriented, utopian way of existing. He states that queer people must collectively dream for new worlds, new ways of navigation, and more fulfilling pleasures. He actively defies the nihilism of modern queer theory that states that queer people should abandon looking towards the future, revel in the sensations of the present. So how can one even begin to imagine a future queer space? Rendering such projections seems entirely futile given the state of queerness now, versus the true nature of queerness. It first requires true community and collectivity, unlearning decades of established value systems and behaviors, collective healing, the eradication of Grindr, and then removing the damaging realities of the past and present from the universal temporal consciousness. Perhaps then can “queerness” be idealized and pondered through a collective existential orientation towards futurity. Now, in this apparent fictitious nature of change, disruptions must be made, the present spatial and superficial nature of queerness must be dissected for any semblance of collectivity to occur. Sex is not queerness, it is biological. Space can not be based on biology, but rather on future possibilities.
Design Path II: The Hotel as a Point of Reflection and Emulation

To further attempt to comprehend this chronology of gay spatial sociology, and my crafting of a possible “disruption”; I began to search for existing architectural disruptions/investigations that similarly attempt to dissect this reflection of sex, consumerism, capitalism, and modern urban sociology with architecture/space. Thaddeus P. Juscyzk’s 2009 Massachusetts Institute of Technology M. Arch thesis titled Hotel Archiphilia, weaves a both written and visual narrative based on Jean-François de Bastide 1879 novel The Little House: An Architectural Seduction. Which describes a story where a man romantically pursues a woman within an estate that actively shifts and distorts to aid the man in his romantic pursuit. Juscyzk’s thesis questions the applicability of such a narrative within a modern context. He recontextualizes this tale within a fictional Boston “love hotel”, marketed as an escape, a total, encapsulating environment free from the plights of modern urban life. Accompanied by collaged images and renderings of this hotel, through fiction and visuals he begins to analyze and render out how architectural design, specifically, how the hotel, can act as an active participant in the narrative of a story within the framework of modern urban sociology. He describes how the hotel, architecturally, is designed in such a way that is both intensely separatist, but also voyeuristic. Juscyzk explains “…the love hotel room capitalizes on the alienation inherent in the space, and applies it towards fantasy and sexual abandon. By further focusing the attention to the interior through texture, framing, imagery, and limited exterior openings, the love hotel facilitates a removal of inhibition through enclosure, and the submission to fantasy through its isolation.”

With this reference that introduces the concept of how architecture (the hotel) could be charged through design and subsequently disrupt spatial use, and sociological conception I began to further contextualize these concepts through a homosexual lens. In my research, I found Gaedicker’s 1949 guide Sodom-on-Hudson, the first published guide to gay life, which outlined almost every known bar, club, cruising spot and hotel that served as hubs for gay existence. One of the only hotels at the time that tolerated gay tenants was the Hotel St.George in Brooklyn; over time it became a gay institution, housing Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, and Hart Crane. In 1995 the majority of the hotel burnt down, and then lost most of its popularity due to its diminished size, the fear of the AIDS crisis, and the lack of need of gay safe-havens within New York City as gay people became widely accepted within the city. After synthesizing these references, and based on my theoretical explorations on the spatial consequences of Grindr, Hotel St.George became the case study for my “disruption”. When thinking about the structure of the hotel, it seemed to obviously reflect the nature of Grindr itself. Both the hotel and Grindr actively challenges conceptions of reality, thresholds, sex, and privacy. Each room acts as a profile of existence, sectioned, divided, yet connected. A conglomeration of simultaneous existences, a piling of bodies within a realm of specificity. Both being containers for an entropic reality running parallel to “real” life.

“EACH PROFILE ESSENTIALLY CREATES AN EVER-PRESENT SPACE OF POSSIBLE SEXUAL ENCOUNTER. IF ARCHITECTURE IS A CONTAINER FOR EXISTENCE, THEN A GRINDR PROFILE COULD BE THOUGHT OF AS INDIVIDUAIZED CONTAINERS FOR EXISTENCES.”
"...THEN REMOVING THE DAMAGING REALITIES OF THE PAST AND PRESENT FROM THE UNIVERSAL TEMPORAL CONSCIOUSNESS. PERHAPS THEN CAN “QUEERNESS” BE IDEALIZED AND PONDERED THROUGH A COLLECTIVE EXISTENTIAL ORIENTATION TOWARDS FUTURITY. NOW, IN THIS APPARENT FICTITIOUS NATURE OF CHANGE, DISRUPTIONS MUST BE MADE, THE PRESENT SPATIAL AND SUPERFICIAL NATURE OF QUEERNESS MUST BE DISECTED FOR ANY SEMBLANCE OF COLLECTIVITY TO OCCUR."

"...A REMOVAL OF INHIBITION THROUGH ENCLOSURE, AND THE SUBMISSION TO FANTASY THROUGH ITS ISOLATION." (Juscyzk, pp.109)
“A CONGLOMERATION OF SIMULTANEOUS EXISTENCES, A PILING OF BODIES WITHIN A REALM OF SPECIFICITY. BOTH BEING CONTAINERS FOR AN ENTROPIC REALITY RUNNING PARALLEL TO ‘REAL’ LIFE.”

Design Path III: Rendering the Digital-Socio-Spatial Critique, Digitally

I began creating this visual representation of said likeness by digitally rendering and extruding the floor plans of Hotel St. George, and then viewing these hotel rooms, bathrooms, and hallways as opportunities to emulate the deconstruction of both physical and metaphysical thresholds of sex, privacy, existence, and identity as a result of the proliferation of Grindr, and the relegation of gay people to the digital realm. I viewed the architecture of the hotel as active facilitators for both wanted and unwanted connection; playing with the materiality of the wall, the use of mirrors, light, reflection, and opacity, as layers of access. In articulating these alterations, I was able to render an environment that set a scene reflective of Grindr’s architecture. I placed figures, ambiguous of age or identity throughout the scene, each contained in their own rooms that provides or forces moments of exhibition, voyeurism, invitation, connection, denial, rejection, secrecy, vulnerability, and isolation. The rooms are seemingly endlessly monotonous, decorated and adorned with modernist furniture to combat conceptions of futurity, and fracture the viewers preconceived temporal perceptions of the fabricated environment. Using V-Ray\textsuperscript{20}, charges the film within an architectural context; Often, the software is utilized within architectural marketing. Its ability to render realistic materials, lights, and objects allows the designer to provide their potential client with nearly tangible imagery. Within Rendering the Cyberfag, the architectural implications in using this software targets the rendering of spatial marketing as a practice. In the film’s disorienting qualities, it aims to challenge the consumability of the scene, and question the use of the software as a tool for streamlined architectural consumption. Within this thesis’s theoretical praxis, the weaponizing of V-Ray emulates the concepts and critiques of Grindr being a tool for the exploitation and objectification of its users, and being a central cause of the modern socio-spatial frictions present in gay culture. The space is subsequently captured in a purposefully antiquated and distorted way, the visual noise and suffering pixels aims to further illustrate the sentiment that we do not exist within any semblance of queer ideality. The conjuction of these seemingly polar aesthetics and concepts aims to disorient the viewer, and further orient the setting of this fictional disruption within “the void”.

\textsuperscript{20} V-Ray, developed by Chaos in 1997, is a computer-generated rendering software, often used by architects to design, model and market architectural projects.

\textsuperscript{21} Relating to the sociological aspects of spaces

Conclusion

The digitization of our current reality and the following consequences is not something novel to the modern gay experience, but through this chronological mapping of gay experience, theory and failures, it is glaringly apparent that there are temporal continuities relating to the political, spatial, interpersonal, and self-induced adulteration of gayness that lead to the targeted subjection of gay existence into the digital realm. Grindr, created by gay people, allowed for the containment of homosexuality. The centralization of an identity in a fabricated-digital reality actively creates unprecedented socio-spatial tensions, while it does harbor “orienting” qualities to aid in the creation of a foundation for community, the exploitative qualities of the digital realm are emboldened within Grindr’s inherently sexual contexts. This emboldening of vulnerabilities and normalization of Grindr as the standard for gay interpersonal navigation has altered concepts of love, eroticism, tension, spatial occupation, sex, and connection within physical reality. Thus, arguably, cementing queerness and queer spaces as sensation-based ephemera.

This investigation is an active acknowledgment of the futility in the pursuit of such a dramatic cultural shift, as even the eradication of Grindr could not solve the issues presented in this thesis. This coffin has been carefully crafted over decades of shifting suppression, there are fingers to be pointed at in all directions, including the victims of this supression. The existence of this thesis and film stands as dissent against the synthetic hedonism central within twenty-first century homosexuality, perhaps acting as some kind of foundational reference for internal frustration and dissent.

Rendering the Cyberfag in its praxis, references, and its visuals asks nothing of the consumer, but rather it provides a critical lexicon of theory and precedent of visualizations for the emergence of this synthetic and paradoxical gay existence.
"...FIGURES, AMBIGUOUS OF AGE OR IDENTITY THROUGHOUT THE SCENE, EACH CONTAINED IN THEIR OWN ROOMS THAT PROVIDES OR FORCES MOMENTS OF EXHIBITION, VOYEURISM, INVITATION, CONNECTION, DENIAL, REJECTION, SECRECY, VULNERABILITY, AND ISOLATION."

"THUS, ARGUABLY, CEMENTING QUEERNESS AND QUEER SPACES AS SENSATION-BASED EPHEMERA."
"The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away." (Foucault, pp.43)
"...PENETRATING THE ENCLOSURE OF SPACE, LEAVING A MARK OF HIS OR HER PRESENCE IS THE INTUITIVE GOAL. EACH PENETRATION INTO A ROOM IS AN ACT OF LEAVING A TRACE, OF ENTERING A SPACE, AND THEREBY ALTERING IT. BY HIS OR HER PRESENCE, THE ARCHIPHILIAC FOREVER VIOLATES THE MEMORY OF THE SPACE." (JUSCYZK)

"THIS EXISTENCE WITHIN OBSCURITY, SPLITS A QUEER EXISTENCE BETWEEN REAL LIFE AND HOMOSEXUAL ACTS, THAT CREATES A DESIRE TO REFRAME AND ORIENT HOMOSEXUALS WITHIN THE SEEN WORLD."
"YOU WOULDN’T EVEN LOOK AT A CLOCK UNLESS HOURS WERE LINES OF COKE, DIALS LOOKED LIKE THE SIGNS OF GAY BARS, OR TIME ITSELF WAS A FAIR HUSTLER IN BLACK LEATHER." (My Own Private Idaho, 00:29:53)

"IN A FEW WEEKS, ALL THE PROSTITUTES I’VE HIRED WILL BE THE LAST BOYS ON EARTH WHOM ANYONE WOULD PAY. NOT LONG AFTER I’M DEAD, THEY’LL BE DEAD. SOME NIGHTS I FANTASIZE ABOUT TELLING THEM WHAT SAINTS THEY ARE, BUT I DON’T. STILL, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I ALMOST GET THE FEELING THEY KNOW." (Cooper)
"...ORIENT THE SELF THROUGH PHYSICAL, CARNAL DESIRE CREATING A MOMENTARY, REPLICABLE ARCHITECTURE."
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