

'The Picture in my Head is my Reward'*

The Mental Mapping of a Queer Urban Perspective

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Urban space is a productive force reflecting and affecting human interaction both with other humans and with their environment (Lefebvre). Traditionally the urban scheme is envisioned to control and order 'nature' and social interaction, and to sustain the power of a dominant group (Foucault). Yet due to the complexity of the post-capitalist city, this urban realm is not a smooth surface. Sometimes temporary cracks form, where space is opened up for creating alternative orderings (Hetherington 40). Because of their ambivalence, these spaces do not clearly belong to anyone, and can easily be claimed. It is this type of place that queers and other minority groups have often repurposed and appropriated to their needs. With our photographs we hope to visualize these fragments in the urban environment, where the imposed order suddenly stops, and where organic (over-) growth takes over. Here nature reclaims temporarily unused urban space and thus disrupts the idea of a human-constructed and human-controlled landscape and the idea of 'city' in a dualistic relation with 'nature.' In this sense, our photographs represent a queer version of urban typologies like 'park' or 'garden'.

The process of discovering these places through chance encounters and capturing them on film has an important queer dimension. Queering space, in this context, means looking differently at the urban realm—with a queer eye, so to speak. Instead of focusing on queers in space, the aim of this project is to investigate in what way our environment reflects (hetero-) normative assumptions and directs behaviours. The places in our project disrupt the seemingly homogeneous city with its smooth con-

struct of order that establishes a false notion of naturalness, and hides (hetero-) normative biases.

These intentions are repeated in our decision to work only with analogue material. All of the queer urban phenomena discovered are temporary spaces. Either human agency or natural growth itself will change these spaces constantly and we feel that the click of a finger on the release button of an analogue camera, capturing the very moment on a film roll—unalterably and

definitely—corresponds accordingly. The mechanical clicking of an analogue shutter mirrors the wink of an eye more accurately than a digital medium. On top of that, the slow process of finishing a film roll, developing it, and only then rediscovering what one has actually caught on film, freezes these spatial moments in time. The defectiveness of the analogue media is preserved as such to reflect—in a similar way—the beauty of failure, of cracks, overlaps and scratches.

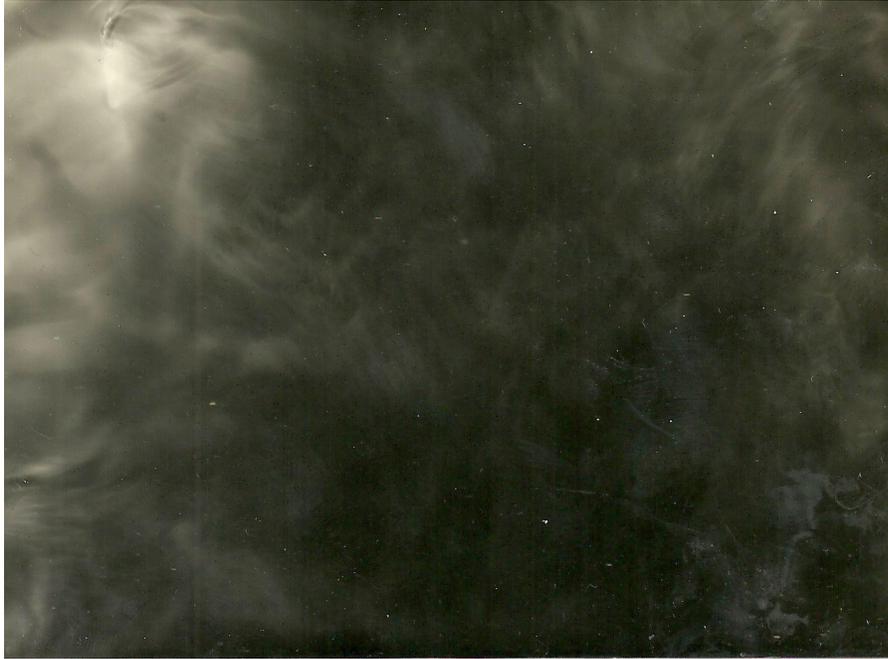
Evidently, a lot of work is still to be done in the analysis of space—both urban and architectural—as reflective of power structures, in order to expose both their positive and negative effects. With a queer eye, we try to defy the heteronormative power structures that traditionally shape urban space. Queer ecologies have the capacity to offer a less evident, but all the more interesting perspective on these matters. We hope this project can contribute to ongoing research in queer geographies and urban studies, by exploring different modes of representation, outside of our own academic comfort zone.

* Stern, Marnie. "Patterns of a Diamond Ceiling."













Works Cited

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