

Appearing Differently Abstraction's Transgender and Queer Capacities

David J. Getsy in Conversation
with William J. Simmons

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William J. Simmons: Queer art has often been predicated on the literal nature of LGBTQ themes and bodies, following the idea that representation is a form of liberation. How does the representation of politics differ from the politics of representation?

David Getsy: The history of queer practices in art has been wrapped up with a desire to testify to the existence of those who love and live differently. This means that both art and its histories have tended to be preoccupied with the production of evidence.

This compulsion to make evident has its roots in the late nineteenth-century construction of sexuality as a means to categorize people based on their erotic or romantic gravitations. In this history, regulations of sexual acts gave way to a wider monitoring of individuals' ways of living. The agents both of oppression and of resistance positioned what we have come to call "sexuality" as being more than carnal. Rather, it came to delimit an interrelated set of nonnormative attitudes toward desire, family, and one's relation to the social. One way this played out historically was in the emergence of medical and legal formulations of homosexual (and later LGB) identity that could be posited, defined, and identified—whether that be to attack or to defend them. No less than those who would be prejudiced against them, pro-LGB activists and cultural workers, that is, tended to pursue a model of identity that privileged shared experience, coherence, and visibility. It was this model that they came to argue was equivalent (but still different) to the norm to which they aspired. In this they demanded evidence of existence as a foundation for arguing for sympathy and compassion. This is the "equal" rights strategy in which restrictive identity categories are constructed and, consequently, defended in order to talk back to the unequal distribution of power. Ultimately, however, this strategy demands that difference be made visible, countable, and open to surveillance as a precondition for arguing that such identifiable divergence be treated like the norm. Not only does this strategy insidiously reinforce a hierarchical relationship between normalcy and difference, it also serves to engender attitudes of assimilationism and of subordination to normativity among those who are fighting prejudice. Difference (and oppression) is still experienced, but it is denied as a foundation for opposition. Michel Foucault was right to warn of all that was lost when sexuality became a taxonomic category of identity and, consequently, became an axis of regulation.¹

¹ Beyond the analysis in Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Volume 1, an Introduction*, trans. Robert J. Hurley (1976; New York: Vintage Books, 1990); see also

the 1978 interview published as "The Gay Science," *Critical Inquiry* 37 (Spring 2011): 385–403; the 1982 interview published as "Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity,"



Fig. 3
Gordon Hall,
SET (V), 2014

In the 1980s in the United States, a recognizably queer politics (and art) emerged publically out of the fight against the genocidal effects of governmental inaction to the AIDS crisis, and activists and cultural workers demanded visibility and accountability. (Foucault was a key source for many as they thought about the redistribution of cultural power).² Such political movements targeted assimilationist politics for their compulsory self-abnegation and argued that their self-erasure from discourse had facilitated the ability of the government to passively overlook the mounting deaths caused by AIDS.

Paradoxically, clear evidence of the existence of nonnormative desires was (again) demanded. Anti-assimilationism—the refusal to erase the difference of nonnormative sexual lives—became a cardinal principle, and it manifested itself as highly visible incursions of nonnormative sexualities into politics and culture. In activism and its attendant cultural manifestations like visual art and theater, evidence of existence was confrontationally produced. The United States is not the only place this happened during this era, of course, and we can see different kinds of AIDS-related artist activism in Europe and in Latin America (as with, for example, Roberto Jacoby in Argentina or *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* in Chile). I'm calling forth this history here because it's important to remember how queer practices were formulated boldly and bravely in public discourse for the first time on a large scale. Across this history, however, it has been evidence of visibility and the ability to identify that have been given the most currency. That is, from the invention of the modern category of sexuality to the eruption of antiassimilationist queer practices that departed from it, an organizing question has been how to bring into representation visible positions of difference.

WS: So, are there alternatives to the politics of representational visibility?

DG: Running within and against this history has been the ongoing desire to evade the protocols of identification and surveillance that come with the figuration of queer positions. This arises from a skepticism about the limitations of overarching taxonomies of identity and, more specifically, about the ways in which sexuality has been made available to representation—that is, about how visualizations of sexuality have tended to focus

in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–84, Vol. 1: Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1998), 163–73; and the 1983 interview published as “Sexual Choice, Sexual Act: Foucault and Homosexuality,” *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews*

and *Other Writings of Michel Foucault, 1977–1984*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 286–303.

² See David Halperin, *Saint Foucault* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).



Fig. 4
Jonah Groeneboer,
bent hip, 2014

almost exclusively on bodies and their couplings as recognizable signs of queer sensibilities. Such a privileging of images of erotic objects has the effect of caricaturing sexuality as sexual activity (even as something to be defended and celebrated) while replaying the regulatory compulsion to produce evidence of existence—to *appear* as lesbian, gay, bisexual, homosexual, or queer. That is, even though the history of modern sexuality has been caught up with arguing for a category of identity, the allowable and verifiable representations of nonheterosexual sexual identities have tended to privilege bodies and acts. In turn, this has prompted some artists to pursue ways to resist the reproduction of the regulatory power that makes the queer subject identifiable and distinguishable.

What I'm trying to say is that while the history of LGB activism and art have tended to focus on the politics of representation and visibility, there has also been, from the start, a recognition of how easy legibility comes with a cost. After all, how does one make sexuality visible to others? More to the point, how does one make it visible in a sophisticated way that speaks to the complexities of desire, of self-created familial bonds, and of the accumulated experience of living outside tacit norms? Queer experience can incorporate attitudes toward the world, family, sociality, and futurity—attitudes of resistance to compulsory heterosexuality that depart from its normative and procreative logics. How, today, do artists address this richer understanding of what sexual perspectives of difference can produce? Think about the problems faced, for example, by an artist who identifies as lesbian or gay or queer and asserts the centrality of that part of their existence to their work but who *refuses* to paint, sculpt, or write about erotic objects, same-sex couplings, or naked bodies—or, we shouldn't forget, who might be *barred* from doing so. How do they prove to skeptical viewers or readers that their sexual sensibility matters? Possibilities for speaking from experiences of difference are limited when one can only testify to existence through a recourse to the depiction of sexual acts, same-sex couplings, or erotically available bodies. This becomes a political as well as a formal question.

These concerns are not new, and they can be discerned throughout the history of art and, especially, twentieth-century art.³ But what I've been fascinated to see is that many twenty-first-century artists have been finding one answer to these questions—and by no means the only one—in abstraction. This is, for them, not a turning away from politics but rather a mode in which to enact politics. Abstraction has been embraced for its oppositional, utopian, and critical possibilities, for it is in abstraction that the dynamic potential of queer stances can be manifested without recourse to the representation of bodies. The human figure in representation is inescapably culturally marked. Abstraction is one tactic for

refusing the power of this marking and for resisting the visual taxonomies through which people are recognized and regulated.

WS: So, what is the relationship between this history of the representation of sexuality and renewed interest in the term “queer”?

DG: In my view, abstraction makes sense as a vehicle for queer stances and politics because it is unforecasted in its visualizations and open in the ways in which it posits relations. On a conceptual level, queer is an adjective and not a noun. The usage of the term always implies at least two other things—a noun to which it is applied (a queer *what?*) and a norm or convention against which the term queer is posed. So, the term is always historically and contextually contingent. It infects and overtakes the nouns and things to which it is attached. One way of saying this is to say that it is performative in the strict sense, and its effects are to highlight and bracket the operations of implicit normativity. The connotations of queer in English center on a suspicion about unnaturalness, and it is the assumptions about what is and is not “natural” that queer practices critique.

I’m setting all this up to remind us that queer is no one thing—nor is it easily recognized. It is an operation in which norms are called into question, “common” sense is challenged, unnaturalness is upheld, and castigation is rebuffed through its embrace. It is frustrating for some to deal with the fact that queer has no one simple definition nor a readily available iconography, but it’s important to keep it mobile, tactical, and immoderate. This is why it continues to be urgent today—and why its mobility cannot be limited to the politics of representation. For this reason, abstraction has proved to be a useful mode for many artists in thinking through queer perspectives and their tactical richness.

WS: I noticed that in all you just said, you didn’t include transgender. You even left the “T” of the acronym. But much of your recent work has foregrounded the perspective of transgender studies. How have the important challenges brought about by recent interventions from transgender theory complicated our understanding of the word queer?

DG: This is crucial for both historical and conceptual reasons. While they are interwoven, transgender and queer histories should not be simply equated. Historically, gay and lesbian politics (as well as its outgrowth in academia as queer theory and queer studies) have tended to subsume, ignore, or misrepresent the role of gender nonconforming people.⁴ More broadly, the distinctions between what we in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries define as gender and sexuality are historically contingent and not clear cut.⁵ Gender variance was often seen—by both medical

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Fig. 5
Prem Sahib, *You & Me Both II*, 2013

establishments and by otherwise well-meaning gay and lesbian activists—as merely a manifestation of nonnormative sexual desire and identity. Such appropriations effectively made the contributions of trans and gender-variant people invisible. Even more problematically, transfolk were also subject to prejudice not just from the general public but also from gay and lesbian politics and culture. They were seen to be distracting from the message and problematic to gay and lesbian assimilationism.

- 3 See also “Queer Formalisms: Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy in Conversation,” *Art Journal* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 58–71.
- 4 See, for instance, the critiques in Susan Stryker, “Transgender Studies: Queer Theory’s Evil Twin,” *GLQ* 10, no. 2 (2004): 212–15; *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2007); and see notes 6 and 7 below; Viviane K. Namaste, “Tragic Misreadings: Queer Theory’s Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity,” in *Queer Studies; A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Anthology*, ed. Brett Beemyn and Mickey Eliason (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 183–203; Viviane K.

- Namaste, “The Use and Abuse of Queer Tropes: Metaphor and Catachresis in Queer Theory and Politics,” *Social Semiotics* 9, no. 2 (1999): 213–34; and Viviane K. Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- 5 See the discussion in David Valentine, “The Categories Themselves,” *GLQ* 10, no. 2 (2003): 215–20; and David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

Susan Stryker has talked about how the uncontextualized addition of the T to LGBT in mainstream activism had the pernicious effect of *normalizing gender* for the L, the G, and the B in that acronym, thus desexualizing the T and keeping all visibly nonconforming genders into that last letter.⁶ This doesn't mean that there should not be coalitional politics among queer and transfolk, and Stryker has also argued how much queer politics and LGBT rights movements *have always been* tied up with gender non-conformity and the fight against gender oppression.⁷ The relation of queer to transgender should always be interrogated for the many ways in which they differ and interweave. I slipped the T out of the above because I was specifically talking about queer history. The politics of representation and the problems of visibility are different in trans history—as are the demands that one *appear* in order to be a political subject.

All in all, it's important to remember that there are allegiances and overlaps between queer and transgender priorities and experience, but they are not equivalent. Many individuals adopt both terms as ways in which they affiliate and understand themselves, but one needs to be careful not to equate gender nonconformity with sexual nonconformity. Further, one must understand how queer practices are always also fundamentally about gender. Because of this, the critique of gender regulation must be prioritized and the history of appropriation of trans experience by queer politics and theory must be attended to and revised.

WS: In another piece, you argued: “While transgender subjects and experience must remain central and defining, the lessons of transgender critique demand to be applied expansively.”⁸ How can transgender theory be best incorporated into art historical scholarship?

DG: Transgender studies, as an intellectual formation and as an academic manifestation of real world politics, demands a substantial reconfiguration of our conceptions of personhood, relationality, and the social. Quite simply, the world looks different once we attend to the historical reality that gender is multiple, bodies are mutable, personhood is successive, and variability rather than (binary or dimorphic) consistency is ubiquitous. Our accounts of the human, of sexuality, and of the interpersonal must all be rethought through a valuation of mutability and of particularity. For instance, recognition of gender's pluralities fundamentally undermines the ways in which mainstream definitions of sexuality are predicated on binaries, however aligned or shuffled. What is needed is a broad recasting of politics, biopolitics, and necropolitics to understand the ways in which persons have been taxonomically regulated through the assumption of dimorphism and through the repeated positing of gender as static and unworkable.

With regard to artistic practice and its histories, I think art history can offer a major resource in this endeavor in its long-standing critique of representational strategies and of the use of the human figure as privileged image and allegorical device. In other words, art history has been concerned, for a long time, with the adequate rendering of the human form and the debates that have surrounded it. These arbitrations are ethical and not just aesthetic.

To take on the indisputable reality of transgender history and its complexity demands that additional work be done. Beyond its foundational focus on trans subjects speaking to and from trans experience and history, transgender studies is also a position from which to launch expansive critiques of gender regulation, of binarisms and dimorphisms, and of the ways in which persons are recognized. For me, this meant that I had to look differently at the ways in which art's histories have tended to reinforce models of the human that disallowed particularity and transformation. So I track episodes in which gender mutability or plurality incited reactions of anxiety and repression, or I examine ways in which artistic practices formulated non-dimorphic or nonbinary accounts of genders and bodies. In my new book *Abstract Bodies*, it is sculpture's struggle with extreme abstraction or objecthood in the 1960s that proved to be a particularly rich site for asking questions demanded by transgender studies.⁹ It allowed me to see differently the work of non-trans artists such as David Smith or Dan Flavin. They are artists who would never themselves espouse a critical attitude toward a binary model of gender—let alone a more open understanding of gender's complexity. So, I use the questions from transgender studies to re-view their work itself, showing how the artists' desires to refuse the human figure inadvertently produced unforeclosed possibilities for thinking differently about how the human could be nominated. This is what I mean when I talk about “transgender capacity,” and I think it's essential for scholars and artists to take on board the wider critique of gender and biopolitics on which transgender studies insists. Such work supplements the important research being done by trans scholars on history, theory, and politics as well as contributes to a wider revision of the ways in which we analyze the “human” as a category of analysis and politics. My historical re-

6 Susan Stryker, “Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity,” *Radical History Review* 100 (Winter 2008): 145–57.

7 Susan Stryker, “Why the T in LGBT Is Here to Stay,” *Salon*, October 11, 2007. http://www.salon.com/2007/10/11/transgender_2/.

8 David Getsy, “Capacity,” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (2014): 48.

9 David Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

search on 1960s abstraction seeks to understand how nonrepresentational art objects problematized binary gender assignments, how accounts of gender were reformulated in this decade, and, more broadly, how this history can inform current engagements with abstraction by trans and queer artists.

WS: Following this line and thinking about this new book on nonrepresentational sculpture, how do these critiques relate to abstraction as a practice that gives voice to nonnormative sexualities or atypical or transformable genders?

DG: Abstraction has afforded many artists a way of thinking about the varieties of identification that operate for individuals. With regard to gender, abstraction's avoidance of the figure offers the possibility to at least partially circumvent the tendency to read bodies as if they signify simply the gender of the person with that body. In other words, one shouldn't assume that one can discern gender from a quick glance at a person or a body. Figural representation brings with it the cultural marking of bodies in relation to ideologies and power, so one means of resistance is to refuse to render the human form and to demand an open range of potential identifications.

Abstraction is not a panacea for the cultural oppression of otherwise genders and sexualities, but it is a generative and increasingly attractive mode in which to prompt new visualizations. Because it refuses representation and figuration, abstraction relies on relations, be they between internal forms or externally with the viewer or with the space. One can examine those relations for what they propose and how they foster variability and particularity.

WS: Can the lessons we derive from the queer and transgender advancements be applied to different veins of artistic practice beyond abstraction?

DG: There is no denying that abstraction is a rarefied mode, but it is nevertheless a capacious one that engenders openness and potential. It's not, however, the only way to think about temporalized personhoods and plural genders. Any rendering of the human form (and any evocation of it as a standard) necessarily engages with the arbitration of persons and bodies, and transgender studies argues that we misrecognize the world by assuming that bodies and genders are simply and easily divided into two static camps. Instead, it demands that we attend to the temporal nature of bodies and persons and that we not assume that gender is readable as an expression of bodily configurations. Similarly, queer studies problematizes how we think about how bodies relate to one another,

how desire operates, and how the social is formulated. These questions are both bracing and enabling for the study of image making, and they offer ways to show how artistic practice is an arena in which accounts of personhood have, for centuries, been at issue. Abstraction distills these concerns and provides an exemplary theoretical object for them, but the questions are mobile and infectious.

WS: Is there, then, a transgender iconography? A queer iconography? Surely this runs the risk of some kind of essentialism, though it sounds as promising as it does problematic. These issues have been on the mind of straight artists for some time as well. Lisa Phillips said of David Salle in 1986: "Salle has largely displaced the eroticism of his subject matter into the act of painting itself, demanding an erotics of art as a way of encountering the world."¹⁰

DG: Well, the big difference is that Salle's subject position is in line with compulsory heterosexuality and normative accounts of gender as binary, so there is not the same political weight given to (or expected of) his *appearing as* heterosexual or male. Displacement or eroticism can be apolitical for an artist like Salle in a way it isn't for an artist working from a trans or queer perspective. For trans and queer artists, to choose to be visible is a political act. But from those same positions, to argue that one's difference still matters while refusing to become an object of surveillance or voyeurism is no less political. This is the difficulty. How does one do justice to the complexity and daily political content of trans or queer existence without simply requiring self-disclosure and self-representation as avatar of an identity category?

Back to your first question. Yes, there are iconographic signs that have been used by queer and trans artists—everything from Oscar Wilde's green carnation to the omnipresent rainbow to the proud display of the chest scar. These are reductive and by no means universally accepted. But I think the bigger question is how to refuse the requirement of an iconography. That's where we started this conversation, after all. It is often assumed that in order to be recognized as such, queer work has to *figure* queerness in the form of the iconography of sex and desire and that trans work has to make *visible* a process of transition. Such iconographic presumptions fall prey to the same evidentiary protocols that characterize the politics of visibility. We have to leave room to be able to speak from experiences that deny being so figured, and we have to reject the presumption that one needs to self-disclose and make oneself *easily recognizable* in order to have one's differences matter.

¹⁰ Lisa Phillips, "His Equivocal Touch in the Vicinity of History," in *David Salle*,

J. Kardon, ed. (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1986), 31.



Fig. 6
Heather Cassils,
*The Resilience
of the 20%*, 2013

It's precisely because of its own refusals of representation that abstraction seems newly political to many artists. Abstraction has become a position from which to prompt new visualizations and to propose new relations. Again, it resists the cultural marking of the body by refusing the figure. Some might see this as utopian and apolitical, but there are many artists who put forth abstraction as a way to make space for a critique of relationality and for *worlding* differently. Again, it's not the only strategy, but it is one that has been increasingly important in recent years as a means to think beyond the limitations of an exclusive focus on the politics of representation.

WS: So, what about other practices? My own work has thus far focused on the Pictures Generation, especially the late Jimmy DeSana, whose lush, abstracted bodies of the early 1980s became complex photomontages after he was diagnosed with AIDS. How might photography factor into these discussions?

DG: Because photography often starts with image capture, it differs from the ways in which images in painting and sculpture are largely built up through their material mediums. It's a cliché—but not all that wrong—to say that photography has a more intimate relationship with the world. It captures it, receptively, and relies on it. Montage and digital tools, however, afford many possibilities for the captured image(s) to be manipulated, allowing for new combinatory forms and previously unvisualized potentials. Because of this, degrees of abstraction are surely possible in photography (in addition to DeSana, one obvious example is Wolfgang Tillmans), but it's still relatively rare. I guess my question for abstract photography would be medium specific: What were the events during which the form of the photograph occurred?

For DeSana, however, could you say a bit more? Are those works actually abstract? I think collage and montage have some specific meanings (and are related to a long history of visualizing hybridity and the ways in which the given or the found can be used as raw material for transformation and recombination).

WS: It is precisely this oscillation between raw material (or the body) and the capacity for its manipulation that allows DeSana to enter this discussion. Before being diagnosed with AIDS, DeSana used his camera to dissolve bodies, to create a world wherein corporeality is both present and diffused—a combination of queer politics and the medium—something that could equally be said of the work of Amy Sillman or Nicole Eisenman as well. His works of the early 1980s are indeed representational, but through complex staging, lighting, and precise darkroom production, they speak to the possibility of a photography that is able to approximate the abstract possibilities of raw canvas or sculptural material.

His collage work, done in the darkroom, often uses materials we can recognize, like mustard, ravioli, flour, and letters of the alphabet. In many cases, DeSana would layer these materials atop photographs using glass, a method also used by his friend Marilyn Minter. This distancing effect refuses easy assimilation or consumption, causing us to pause and consider the layers of representation inherent in the photograph—the essence, perhaps, of abstraction. In this way, DeSana peels back the “laminated” image, to use Barthes’s terminology, and the crevices in between these sediments take on their own life. This suggests possibilities for new forms of queer erotics.

Getting back to the present moment, what artists do you see as working within the queer and trans frameworks that we have been discussing?

DG: My historical work on the 1960s has really been developed in dialogue with current practices. This comes, in part, from the fact that I teach in an art school and am deeply engaged with thinking about how art’s histories inform contemporary art and its making. It was seeing more and more trans and queer artists working with abstraction in the studios and in the galleries that made me realize the need for a historical assessment of a moment when abstraction became a place from which new accounts of gender could be articulated. This is what drove the writing of *Abstract Bodies*. That said, I am beginning to write much more often about artists working today, since I think all of the questions we’ve been discussing about abstraction have become increasingly widespread.

I’ve been approaching this in some writings about artists like Heather Cassils, who works between performance, sculpture, installation, and sound. Cassils’s performances often have a sculptural element as well as being aimed at the political history of figuration in art, and I am interested in the ways in which they critique that history and deploy abstraction.

There are also a number of artists who have used more or less reductive and geometric abstraction to address trans experience and queer perspectives. I’m thinking here of artists like Gordon Hall, Jonah Groeneboer, and Math Bass. Hall, like Cassils, also activates abstract objects through performance, and they create site-responsive sculptures that speak to issues of transformation, remaking, care of the self, and the refusal of visual taxonomies of personhood. For instance, their *Set* sculptures appear simple at first. However, the sculptures reveal themselves slowly as intricately worked objects that repay attention to particularities. Only by committing to spend time with one of these objects will one begin to see the ways in which it occupies the space and the ways in which it is



Fig. 7
Jimmy DeSana, *Instant Camera*, 1980

unique. All of the *Set* sculptures also produce color effects (through reflection) on the wall that they are placed in intimate relation to. However striking this reflected color, the viewer sees only the effects of the vibrancy of the side that it refuses to show us directly—that is, visibly unavailable to us. The visual disclosures made by the sculptures in response to the viewer’s commitment to get to know them are, in this way, nevertheless restrained and intentionally partial. Not all is available to looking. Similarly, Groeneboer’s practice uses both sculpture and painting to create works that frustrate visual discernment. He makes art that is deliberately hard to see, singly. For instance, his sculptures made from barely visible strings in tension are visually inextricable from the space in which we encounter them. They activate an engaged process of looking in which viewers struggle to see the drawing made by the slight, taut strings in three dimensions. As they attempt to engage with these barely visible lines in space, they become just as much aware of what they have had to choose to not see in order to focus on one aspect of the complex polygons and quadrilateral outlines hovering in their proximity. I also think of Bass’s sculptures that appear, only from some angles, as if they are bodies underneath brightly striped tarps but from other angles appear illegible as such.

All three artists have explored the ways in which transformation can be visualized in works that evoke problems of figuration but that refuse to offer a representation of the body. Such work can be understood as standing in opposition to the long history of the voyeurism and exploitation to which trans and queer people have been subjected. At the same time, it's much more than that, and the work uses abstraction to address larger questions of the politics and poetics of how we view each other, what demands we make on recognition, and how transformation and particularity can be valued.

There are many more artists who similarly work from trans, queer, or both perspectives in making abstractions of varying degrees. One could look to Sadie Benning's paintings of video-editing transitions, Prem Sahib's abstract wall works, or Ulrike Müller's carefully composed and tightly cropped forms made from vitreous enamel on steel. For instance, Müller's coupled geometric forms have boundaries and interfaces that blur slightly due to the material. Visual differences of color and line are all made inextricable from (and intimately related to) each other once the powdered glass becomes fused through heat into one solid matrix. Divisions become continuities. Such work reminds us how materials and processes can also be used to evoke the complexities of personhood and its accruals, transformations, and exchanges.

Ultimately, there is no one way to recognize queer or trans content in abstraction. That's the point. Trans and queer stances appear differently each time. I think it's crucial to cultivate those acts of appearance and the openness they propose.

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