

queering the body of architectural education

Gem Barton / Reader in Design Pedagogy / gemma.barton@rca.ac.uk / Royal College of Art, QuEAN

introduction to the cultural/architectural context of the paper's topic (100 words);

Architecture, one of the oldest and most conservative of disciplinary traditions, is frequently resistant to creative critique, activism, and subversion of its hegemonies – the very opposite of queer theory, thinking and action. From the outside, Architecture and Queerness are very unlikely bedfellows, binary opposites even. If architecture is to be just, if architecture is to be for humanity, then architecture needs Queer-ing. To dismantle the systemic binaries inherent within the architecture discipline and profession, we must begin with education, and we must look to the *future(s)*. QuEAN^[2] was founded to catalyse change within universities and schools, leveraging queerness as a lens to scrutinise and dismantle entrenched and uneven hierarchies within the education of the built environment.

main content of the paper and key examples and/or reference used in the paper (100 words);

Despite undeniable trends towards a more queer society (regardless of acceptance) and ongoing developments in queer studies, relatively little attention has been paid to queerness within spatial design practices since the 1990s. Recent publications (Jobst & Stead 2023, Furman & Mardell 2022), indicate a revived interest in queer spaces. This trajectory alongside growing percentages of LGBTQ+ youth (Stonewall rainbow Report, 2022^[1]) unequivocally tells us that the education of our spatial design students (future practitioners) must sharpen critically, rigorously, and quickly to become more inclusive. Pedagogy within architecture and interior design is well established and often developing, however as yet comparatively underexplored through a queer lens.

key argument of the paper and its response to the conference theme (100 words).

Queer-ing is a questioning of categorisation, of normativity, of standardisation. *This goes far beyond queer as identity, and leaps into queer as action; into unlearning, disruption, challenge and change - how does one que(e)ry not just the institution, and the curriculum, but the processes and regulations of prescription which are stitched together with red tape?* This paper is a provocation, asking how might the body of architectural education be queer-ed and to what end? Where might the responsibility, labour of change, and opportunity lie? What might be the **role** of the university, the governing bodies (ARB, RIBA), of the School of Architecture, of the educator, of the student(?) in its development and implementation.

Gem Barton (she/her) is an author and senior academic specialising in the interrelations between human behaviour, speculation, and spatial design. Currently teaching at the Royal College of Art, she was awarded a coveted National Teaching Fellowship in 2019, is Senior Fellow of AdvanceHE, Lead UK academic advisor for ArchitectureLGBT+ and chair of the Academic Champions Network, and founding chair of QuEAN - the Queer Educators in Architecture Network.

^[1] "among Gen Z (16-26-year-olds), 71 per cent of people surveyed identified as straight – compared to 91% of Baby Boomers (56-75). The study, of 2,000 people across the UK, also found that 40% of Gen Z showed a "pattern of attraction" that can be described as queer."

^[2] QuEAN is an emerging network of queer spatial design educators – with a focus on queer theory, pedagogies, identities and its intersections with spatial design; inclusive of architecture, interior design, planning and beyond. The network is founded and chaired by Gem Barton (she/her) a senior academic currently at the Royal College of Art.