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****Oral**

From Fury to Erasure: Shifting Representations of HIV/AIDS in Queer Art and Politics

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This paper traces the shifting representations of HIV/AIDS in queer art and politics from the late 1980s until the present. We identify a nonlinear trajectory with three major characteristics: 1) militant and explicit representations of HIV/AIDS and their relation to queer sexuality, 2) memorials that publicize the artists' personal mourning of their HIV/AIDS-related losses, and 3) HIV/AIDS' near disappearance from queer art and politics. This transition throughout the AIDS crisis to contemporary times relates to an ongoing cultural understanding of sex as private issue, a notion that the works of David Wojnarowicz, the Gran Fury Artist Collective, and Robert Blanchon seek to disrupt. In contrast to these sexually explicit works that destabilize the public/private binary, this paper then examines the work of Felix González-Torres and the AIDS Memorial Quilt where memorialization is central and sexuality is all but erased. Furthermore, this paper notes the trend in contemporary times in which dominant queer culture has come to view HIV/AIDS as a personal, manageable medical condition, or a private issue, as witnessed in its erasure from queer art and politics. Responding to this privatization and erasure, the works of Sean Welker attempt to make public what this erasure seeks to privatize. Finally, this paper discusses the deleterious effects of this cultural erasure identified here in queer art but symptomatic of a larger trend in queer politics.

Information about the Authors:

Wendy Mallette and Nick Derda are aspiring radical queers whose interests lie in studying intersectional politics, with a particular emphasis on gender and sexuality. Their current research has most influenced by the works of Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Judith Halberstam, and Michael Warner. Wendy is an international service major and Nick is a Spanish and psychology major.

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