

Abbreviated Bio:

James H. Sanders III is an associate professor in the Arts Administration, Education and Policy Program at The Ohio State University, having entered the academy in 2003 after 26 years directing non-profit agencies in Arkansas and North Carolina. Author and founding principal of the Arts-Based Elementary (NC Charter) School, Sanders Ph.D. in Education was earned at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (1999), his MFA in Studio Art awarded by Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (1976), and his BFA from Arkansas State University (1974). The tangle of topics Sanders studies include educational policy, visual culture, artful inquiry in the visual and performing arts, community cultural practices, and theorizing sexualities. Sanders is a founding trustee of the International Curriculum and Pedagogy Group, a board member of Ohio Citizens for the Arts since 2005, and has served as Treasurer of the International Society for Education through Art since 2008.

Sanders (re)Examining Museum Queering

Thinking about queering the museum a decade after publishing in *CultureWork* (2007), I consider Jane Bennet's (2010) *Vibrant Matter*, Delanda's (2016) *Assemblage Theory*, and Karen Barad's (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* as I wrestle with how my prior queer concerns are entangled with intersectionality, speculative realities, and healing a fractured planet.

In the years since “[Queering the Museum](#)” was published in *CultureWork*, my thinking and perspective on the topic have shifted. While wanting LGBTQ identities to be recognized, artists’ intersecting identifications and points of view also warrant raising in museum contexts. I

am disinterested in reducing any artists to a fixed queer erotic performance, and instead argue that embodied erotic engagements be sustained without erasing the queer subject's diverse commitments and interests. The deeper challenge I contend our field must confront is unthinking heterosexual hostilities, including those maddening micro-aggressions that repeatedly take the form: "but how do you know they really were?" or, "that's just heresy," when arts educators could be asking themselves how one could prove an artist's heterosexuality? Or, more meaningfully, to what ends are either query entertained? Today, I suggest academics recognize all artist's capacity for innumerable subject positions and capacities to produce bodies of work that exude erotic expressions beyond naming and offering viewers alternate ways of seeing.

I've begun to challenge myself to embrace the notion that heterosexuals too could queerly create and read works in ways that are outside normative prescriptions. Queerness isn't a property, it's a practice embodied through innumerable forms of queerness that are open to all who would assume such subaltern standpoints. Beyond residual otherings, our allies must be welcomed to engage in the ongoing labor of working toward human rights so erotic expressions can be multiply conceived.

At this moment, the marriage equality mandate has rendered my outlaw sexuality a sordid subject. Today, I find myself lost without markers of deviance that once steadied my erotic pursuits. Jewelry has lost most meaning, beyond being markers of material of territory. I resist being so commodified, and similarly was never clear about handkerchief code either. I do remain deeply committed to camp matters and excess – valuing play and playing with values that matter. Recognizing codes and codification continue to unfold in queerly familiar patterns, I fear the challenges recognized in my earlier essay may persist given the recent U.S. Presidential election, and contradistinctly, contend exhibits like Katz & Ward (2010) *Hide/Seek: Difference and desire*

in American Portraiture at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC have risked fixing erotic ancestors to a queer positionality that posthumously none could protest (regardless of whether they engaged in same-sex carnality among other queer qualified acts). Today, I fear all excessively militant naming and claiming risks reducing complex queer lives to only the cipher of homo, when thoughtful audiences and artists exploring embodied erotic research deserve far more space to move around in and play.

References

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