

“Revisiting AIDS and its Metaphors”

Ryan Conrad
Academic and queer activist

Respondent: Dr Dion Kagan, School of Culture and Communication

Conrad will analyze cultural production by queer North American artists in the 1980s and 90s that frames the AIDS epidemic as a form of genocide, using James Wentzly's 1994 experimental film *By Any Means Necessary* as its indexical anchor. Reviving these neglected works will demonstrate how common the analogies between warfare, genocide, the Holocaust, and the AIDS epidemic were amongst queer cultural producers at the time. Through (re)readings of Susan Sontag, Paula Treichlar, Judith Butler, and Deborah Gould, this talk exams how these meaning making metaphors came to be accepted within the shifting emotional habitus of queer people at the height of the crisis.

This talk continues by briefly examining how the AIDS epidemic is being historicized at the present moment, in terms of both its political and affective legacy, through recent film and visual culture. How have these metaphors of mass death and total destruction of queer lives been rearticulated or forgotten and to what ends? Lastly, this talk will offer provisional reflections as to how the historical framing of the AIDS epidemic as genocide does or does not serve the current LGBT political turn to the politics of inclusion and respectability. Or more specifically, what are the consequences of not remembering the AIDS crisis on the terms by which it was described by those queer artists and activists who experienced the carnage and unimaginable loss of life first hand, but are no longer here to remind us?

Ryan Conrad is a PhD candidate in the Interdisciplinary Humanities PhD offered through the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Society and Culture as well as a faculty member in the Interdisciplinary Sexuality Studies program at Concordia University in Montréal. Conrad is also the co-founder of Against Equality, a radical queer digital archive and publishing collective based in the United States and Canada. He is the editor of the collective's anthology series that are compiled together in *Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion* (2014). He has also contributed chapters to several anthologies including: *The Gay Agenda* (2014), *Queering Anarchism* (2013), and *After Homosexual* (co-authored with Yasmin Nair & Karma Chávez, 2013). His written work has appeared in scholarly and activist publications including: *American Quarterly*, *e-flux*, *Aparté: Arts Vivants*, *QED: A Journal of LGBTQ Worldmaking, Socialism & Democracy*, *We Who Feel Differently*, *UltraViolet*, *In These Times*, and *Fifth Estate*. His work as a visual and performing artist has exhibited internationally in Europe, Asia, and North America.

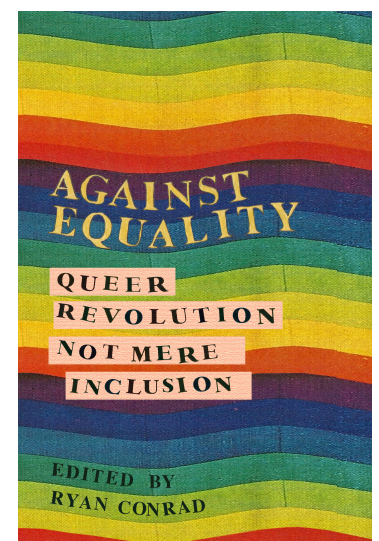
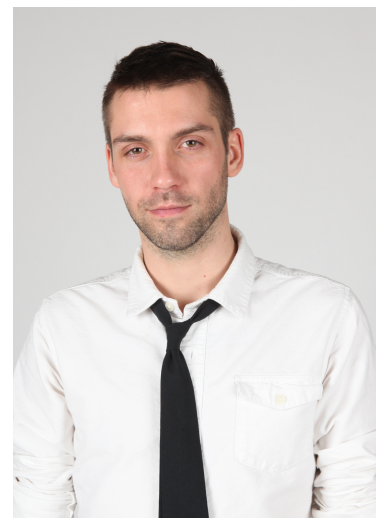
Presented by the Screen & Cultural Studies Program, School of Culture & Communication, with the support of the Research Unit in Public Cultures.

Thursday, 19 March 2015
5 - 6.30pm

Fredric Wood Jones Theatre
Medical Building
Grattan St entrance
The University of Melbourne
PARKVILLE VIC 3010

Admission is free, bookings not required

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