"HORN OF PLENTY"

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Queer culture has historically embraced movies, art, and people with subversive qualities (i.e. the style of camp, the celebration of all that is artificial, excessive, and performative) to provide an alternative authority for taste other than what the cisgender and heteronormative mainstream dictates or in order to communicate to other members in a discrete and coded manner. In order for queer culture to continue to grow and to evolve over time (and therefore to become more inclusive and hopefully more likely to be accepted by society at large), there has to be room for queer individuals to create new “subspecies” of culture. Through a transformation of dated, kitschy or campy materials into biomorphic forms which suited my personal taste, I created a collection of artifacts imagined for a queer utopian future.

Biomorphism and camp subvert the binaries of alive/inanimate and good/bad taste, respectively. This subversion gives them an authority supplementary to normative sets of standards. A superficial, as opposed to a cultural, read of camp biased my prior appreciation for the genre and limited my feelings of inclusion within the queer community. During a time of personal development, identity formation and physical transformation as a young queer person, I challenged and expanded
my standards of taste. Exploration and dialogues surrounding inclusion and diversity within the LGBTQ+ community is crucial now more than ever to ensure a safe and prosperous future for its members.
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A horn of plenty is a mythical source of sustenance, providing an abundance of fruits and vegetables to its owner. The largest object that came out of this project is a suspended carcass-like, larger-than-life soft sculpture that resembles a horn of plenty yet it is made up of fake plants, gold lamé, and sprays a cloud of LED-lit mist. The story of the horn of plenty is that it provides food for the owner but not to excess. This body of sculptures unintentionally plays with the concept of excess in relation to camp (the celebration of all that is artificial, excessive, and performative), queerness, and identity formation.

My previous work focuses on the boundaries of attraction and repulsion, gender and the changing human body, and the biomorphic aesthetic potentials of synthetic materials. I have a BS in behavioral neuroscience and an extensive background in medicine. Various visuals from labs and from clinical experiences over the years have manifested into a fascination with organic forms, colors and an experimental method of working with materials to explore their physical potential. The forms and color choices that I have gradually refined have given way to research surrounding the politics of gender and sexuality, abjection and the
human body, the relationship of contemporary art and technology, and the importance of human-centered product design.

The soft sculptures evolved alongside my understanding of my own sexuality and gender identity. They became a way for me to find my way into and through queer aesthetics/community, with which I had an ambivalent relationship. As someone with a visual interest in oddities, the natural world, and the grotesque and changing human body, I resisted joining a community of people who appeared to celebrate artifice, superficiality, performativity, through the style of camp. My perceptions of this community were limited and dated. Seeking a way in for myself, my exploration of materials through familiar forms is both autobiographical and critical. Over the past year I have challenged my internal biases to make room for a shifting identity and to accept presentations and aesthetics that I previously judged. This body of work is the manifestation of my research and acceptance.

In 2018 it is still illegal to be gay in over 50 countries\(^1\). There isn’t guaranteed protection for all members of the LGBTQ+ community. The history of deviations from mainstream behavioral and aesthetic norms--especially with regards to sexuality, gender, race, and physical or mental ability--have traditionally been labeled as “other”\(^\). This “other-ing” can be alienating, traumatic,
life-threatening, and fatal. Manifestations of such distinctions can take the form of the exoticization of the different, in persecution due to fear and lack of understanding, or in innovative cultural content stemming from such minority groups. Identifying these subgenres of culture created for communication, entertainment, or critical purposes can light a path for future cultural production and analysis.

With regards to the queer community, an appreciation for the subversive has made way for an evolution and expansion of queer media and culture. As with any early phase of a community’s culture, it has not been without criticisms and problematic representation, but it has allowed for a critical dialogue about what a queer future, one where all identities and expressions are safe and even celebrated, might look like. I have decided to self-identify as “queer” because I see gender and sexuality as fluid and ever-changing so it is easier to use an all-encompassing term for both and to not put myself and my experiences in a box. While it used to be a derogatory term, it has recently been reclaimed as a proud and versatile label.

By mining my interest in natural history and scientific display methods, I identified a latent queerness of that which was presented. This grey, and at times problematic, area between self
and other connects to biomorphism and camp, which both possess subversive qualities. Biomorphism confuses the binaries of living/inanimate and camp collapses good and bad taste. Through processing my feelings about the taste level and historical aesthetic choices of my (now) community, I identify that ambiguity and rejection of norms can connect even the most seemingly contrasting aesthetics. This disrupts a predominantly cis-heteronormative patriarchal culture.

In this paper I discuss the innate queerness of cultural and organic artifacts displayed in Wunderkammers, the precursor to art galleries and to museums. I discuss the reclamation of the term “queer”, the evolution of queer aesthetics, and a brief history of camp. I connect my work to contemporary (mostly feminist) artists who have created alternative narratives and aesthetics to suit the way they view the world, and to artists who have used display methods to explore the potential of manipulating displays to critique a set of standards or traditional practices. I connect my work formally to other artists who have combined camp and biomorphism in ways I hoped to. I then describe the work I made, how it fits into the dialogues I have explored, and discuss the autobiographical nature of the project. Finally, I discuss the
takeaways I got from this research, the unanswered questions I have, and my future research.

**STATE OF THE FIELD**

From the 60s to present-day, director/writer/actor/producer John Waters has been a large contributor to the camp movie genre. In the 80s and 90s, the work of gay male artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe and David Wojnarowicz was both celebrated and controversial for portrayals of BDSM and gay culture as well as for visual critiques of religion. Writer, sex-positive feminist, and former porn star and stripper, Annie Sprinkle has worked on many projects with her wife Beth Stephens about ecosexuality, an overlap between art and environmental activism. Along with other techniques, they have used absurdist humor to create inclusivity and a level of criticality to their work, just like camp has done to critique standards of taste. These artists are relevant to the history of the concepts I am interested in, but I see my contributions as aligning more with the work of contemporary artists who make similar formal decisions. The conceptual labor of the work holds more of an autobiographical purpose and is not as obvious.
The precursor to the art gallery and to the museum was the Wunderkammer, or “cabinet of curiosities”. Originating in sixteenth-century Europe, these collections were owned and curated primarily by wealthy white men who would keep artifacts, treasures, and oddities from other countries and cultures to show off to their visitors. This practice was one of the first which highlighted the differences between cultures as distinguishing the people from other cultures as the “other.” This was still a time where “queer” meant strange and was something (or someone) to be feared.
Still before the term “queer” was reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community, it was not safe to be openly gay in most places. In the nineteenth century, even, that meant that queer media (popular culture that was both iconic for queer populations and accepted by the mainstream culture) did not yet exist. What can be considered as a precursor to queer media (including iconic films, artists, books, etc. but which also includes contributions and narratives that came from queer folks themselves), however, was work created with a camp sensibility. It was this style of work that appealed to homosexual men, specifically, and acted as a type of coded visual language. Camp acted as a code because if a gay man appreciated something created in the style of camp ironically just as another man appreciated it ironically then it would be a nod to their more intimate preferences. One had to be part of the group “in the know” to be able to fully understand the meaning of such things\(^2\).

Camp can be described as a subversion of high and low standards of taste to provide an alternative to heteronormative, mainstream culture. “It is the good taste of bad taste\(^3\)”\footnote{In the first critical analysis of camp, Susan Sontag asserts that bad art and kitsch can be camp, but that not all of it is camp by default. She also states that camp can take the form of just about anything from...}. In the first critical analysis of camp, Susan Sontag asserts that bad art and kitsch can be camp, but that not all of it is camp by default\(^4\). She
people or objects to art, but that oddities and anything from nature are definitely not camp. Its best forms are naive, meaning that the camp items were not conceived intending to be camp, but rather were recognized after the fact to be highly artificial and over-the-top. While Sontag asserts that the population which is the most well-versed in camp are homosexuals, in a later analysis of camp, Andrew Ross makes the more confident claim that camp cannot be separated from queerness at all.

In many contexts, homosexuality was not decriminalized until the late 20th century, yet during this time gay lifestyles and characters were present in the media. It is also important to keep in mind that an increase in media presence does not correlate to improved social justice for the LGBTQ+ community or even for guaranteed physical safety. Life is still very difficult and often dangerous for queer folk, especially for queer people of color.

An antidote to the closeted past and the shadowy current struggles for queer folk is the glimmer of hope for a safer future. Queer futurism is a type of speculative fiction which imagines a future where queer people live safely, at the very least. It provides questions and proposes answers about the immediate and distant future, culture, and political relationships and rights. Artists such as Kristen Liu Wong, Polly Nor, Lucy McRae, and Victoria Sin
explore various methods of imagining fictional worlds where queer and/or feminine desires and lifestyles are normalized, if not celebrated.

Kristen Liu Wong paints depictions of strong, futuristic women who are clearly in control of their lives and of their environments. The women are aggressive, sometimes to the point of violence, and seem to know what they want: often times involving junk food, art, drugs, and promiscuity. Similar to feminist artists of the 60s and 70s, Wong’s women of all races are fearless and unapologetic about their nude bodies, menstruation, vices, relationships to technology, and range of sexualities. Their bodies are often tattooed, vein-covered, curvy, or bruised. Along with these typical human imperfections, they also often contain flawlessly integrated elements of technology such as weaponized guns-for-hands or vaguely technological cuffs on their arms. Her women explore their sexuality with people of other or of the same gender in a free and open way. Their powerful sharp features typically appear deep in critical thought or mischievously enjoying their activities, yet they rarely smile—a departure from contemporary societal expectations of women which include softness, effortless positivity, and docility.
Polly Nor digitally illustrates demons who wear women’s skins like clothing and she explores the balance between self-love and the process of understanding multiple facets of one’s personality. Sometimes the cheeky demon-beings and their more traditional human counterparts appear to maintain a balanced and healthy relationship where the devil unzips their human skin at the end of the day to relax, but sometimes the woman physically battles with her inner demon. In the calm and understanding relationships when the two are separate, the demon helps the woman learn to love her body in either an aesthetic or sometimes sexual way. In the more complicated relationships they sometimes rip each other to shreds. A common motif in her illustrations is the presence of plants and the relationship of the figures to nature. The devils appear to come from a wild, forest-like place while the humans live in controlled, man-made and decorated bedrooms. The women often have potted plants in their rooms which tie into the sometimes stifled and controlled power that the women attempt to have over their internal desires, the untamed yet authentic parts of themselves.

More related to feminist and queer futurism specifically, Lucy McRae directs and designs films which imagine beautiful and graceful solutions for futuristic problems like giving birth in
space, for example what medical care, supplies, and social supports will be needed. Likewise, Victoria Sin explores the intersectional queer future through the long-term project ‘Dream Babes’ where artmaking sessions, readings, dance parties, and performances provide a platform to discuss, critique, and imagine a more inclusive and wondrous future. A majority of the workshops or events are specifically tailored to queer, trans, intersex, and people of color. In the mainstream media, Janelle Monae’s movie-length series of music videos for her 2018 album “Dirty Computer”. In this “emotion picture” as she calls it, the main characters often wear shiny, vaguely futuristic costumes in the queer afro-futuristic setting where her “impure” thoughts and experiences with her girlfriend, played by Tessa Thompson (her real-life girlfriend) are deleted by cisgendered heterosexual white men behind a control station.

These artists provide a contemporary (mostly feminist) spin on the morality of desire, something which has historically been a critique of queer lifestyles including homosexuality, transgender identities, and non-monogamous relationships. The playfulness and elegance with which Nor’s and Wong’s subjects are depicted makes them less about making the viewer understand the actual experiences, but rather creating a fictional world where
queer or extreme (sometimes surreal) actions are not other. Sin and McRae use desire to look to the future and anticipate problems that female and queer populations will likely be forced to address. They are about the desire to be better and to imagine/create the future we wish to inhabit. Conceptually, I wanted my work to be a playful way of exploring personal issues and a critique of the specific culture I see most strongly associated with such a diverse group. My goal was to contribute to the dialogues surrounding what the steps might be to make an inclusive and healthy environment for queer minorities. Again, there is a significant difference in the intentions of the work and the actual effects of the work.

While camp subverts the binary of good and bad taste by proposing an alternate set of standards, biomorphism subverts the binary of living and inanimate. They are opposite aesthetics with an overlapping conceptual effect. One place where camp and biomorphism overlap is in the fake representation of nature. One of the main characteristics of camp is its love for the artificial. This can mean sugary sweet colors or excessive gemstones on a costumes, and in combination with biomorphism, work looks like the product of an LSD-induced trip or a cartoon come to life. The work of Dan Lam and Eda Yorulmazoğlu evoke a sense of tension between organic and artificial in a campy sort of way while scenes
in a natural history museum such as the Museum of Jurassic Technology evoke a more believable imaginary.

Plastic representations of real plants, biomorphic art, or dioramas can mimic elements of nature. Fake plants, when potted and intended to mimic living plants can be considered kitsch because they are attempting to be something else, and fall short. Such displays of fake-plants-as-kitsch exist in hotel lobbies, cheap office foyers, or other liminal places with low budgets. According to Sontag’s argument, things that are kitsch have the possibility to be camp. For example, when a fake plant is on its own in a waterless vase, it is kitsch. It is plastic that is trying very hard to be “real”, but it is lifeless and collecting dust. It is a sad attempt at a plant. However, a wall or any large surface area made entirely of fake plants could be camp. It is made from a material that was once kitsch (fake plants), but in its excess it transforms into a celebration which is not asking the viewer to believe that it is real, but rather it wants you to notice that it is fake.

Dan Lam makes polyurethane, acrylic, and resin sculptures which appear to be dripping. They look like they might be alive or in motion, when in reality they are inanimate, static, and firm. They are often airbrushed a couple different neon colors and have spikes made out of paint in contrasting hues. It appears that the
“blobs”, “squishes”, and “drips” that she makes are from another world. Their forms are soft enough to evoke a living feeling yet their coloring evokes a plastic and manufactured quality. Her sculptures possess an organic form but they also fall under the category of camp because of their Lisa Frank-like color palettes. Their obvious artificial coloring gives them away as inorganic.

DIY aesthetics and handmade, crafty qualities can be a part of both kitsch and camp. The costumes of Eda Yorulmazoğlu are a combination of soft sculpture, monstrous animal-like forms, and children’s drawings. They resemble cartoon intestines, polka dot frogs, and lumpy fictional bodies. The costumes are often documented as worn by drag queens and are styled in a feminine yet monstrous way with accompanying lumpy headpieces, bright wigs, and avant-garde heels. Makeup accentuates more feminine features like eyes and lips, and the fact that the models are clearly performing in these costume is a focus. She documents these pieces as their wearers frolic in fields, walk down runways, or relax in frozen tundras. They are lumpy, imperfect, and the DIY nature of them shines through despite their display context. Often her pieces resemble organs, but in a very cartoony, approachable way.
Scientific dioramas and natural history museums are another, albeit more realistic, approach to the aesthetics of faking nature. Whether natural specimens are presented on a pedestal, behind plexiglass, or are reproduced in the form of a plaster cast or a painted backdrop, they are noticeably separated from their original context. In these contexts, they are definitely not camp, nor are they necessarily kitsch. With a somewhat more authoritative and believable context, the fakery is accepted as part of the experience and the imagination can take over. The context is critical for a viewer’s inner dialogue to determine the areas of truth versus fiction. If the set is intentionally serious and self-aware in an academic sense then its information presented is more likely trustworthy and accurate. This is not always the case, however. The Museum of Jurassic Technology (MJT) in Los Angeles exhibits both authentic and questionable artifacts and oddities. All objects and exhibitions are presented seriously, but there has been speculation over the authenticity of some of what’s presented. In Lawrence Weschler’s book, “Mr. Wilson’s Cabinet of Wonder,” he describes his ongoing relationship with David Wilson, the owner and operator of the museum. Weschler’s skepticism drove him to seek professional corroborations for some of the more surprising items and tales in the museum, but he is ultimately
unable to prove the authenticity of some of them. If there are indeed fictitious objects in the museum, they are believably disguised as being real. Even a critical viewer or scientist might be fooled.

Formally, “Horn of Plenty” can be situated with artists whose work blends camp with biomorphism. These two seemingly unrelated styles can often blend to form otherworldly and confusing pieces. They can be appreciated at either a formal or conceptual level and their purpose is less critical than works which focus more on display methods or narratives. Like the brightly hand-drawn and hand-painted works of Nor and Wong, the hand-sewn sculptural costumes of Eda Yorulmazoğlu are campy extensions of the body. They are queer objects, especially because they are displayed on queer, non gender-conforming bodies. My work resembles the work of Lam Yorulmazoğlu, and like the exhibitions in the MJT it also plays with the lines between authenticity, fiction, and display.
The body of sculptures in “Horn of Plenty” consist of a three-foot by six-foot soft sculpture suspended from the ceiling, a small cluster of one-inch-cubed sculptures attached to the floor, and four wall-mounted sculptures of varying dimensions. The top of the suspended sculpture is 1-2 feet from the ceiling and the bottom of the sculpture ends around the average viewer’s hips. It is approximately as tall as a person’s body, yet much wider at the top and narrower (to a curved point) at the bottom. The wall-mounted ones are each roughly the size of a human head and are arranged in an irregular cluster. Finally, the floor-mounted installation is located roughly halfway between the large sculpture and the smaller ones and they are spread out in a random pattern taking up no more than a square foot. While the spatial arrangement of the sculptures differs significantly, they all exhibit biomorphic forms made out of campy or kitschy materials. Painted, organic-appearing forms made out of spray foam, a holographic silver or oily black fabric, and a rhinestone-studded texture are used throughout the body of work to create formal cohesion among all pieces.
The largest sculpture has two main sides, one of which is convex and outward-facing to viewers located in the hallway. Facing a wall of glass, this side is made of gold lamé, other metallic fabrics, and black bubble-like protrusions. Between some of the sections of bubbles—which vary in texture, color, and size—there are fake fern leaves, ivy tendrils, and patches of fake grass. More artificial plant matter is also visible sticking out the top of the sculpture and can be seen when the sculpture is viewed from the sides. The concave, gallery-facing side of this sculpture is covered in mostly fake plant matter, including moss, rocks, ferns, tall grasses, and ivy. Scattered among the fake plants are a real
piece of pyrite, a piece of a deer antler, two living air plants, and 20-25 organic-looking objects made out of foam, paint, googly eyes, fake rhinestones, hot glue, fabric, and spray paint. A water diffuser sprays a continuous cloud of mist from a concealed location within the sculpture, and there is an internal set of LED lights, some of which highlight this mist. In some places, the gold bubbles from the outer side of the sculpture fold over onto the inner plane, just like parts of the green side fill the cracks and bleed over onto the gold side.

Detail photograph of a location where the biomorphic/campy areas overlap with the fake plants

The wall-mounted sculptures mirror the large sculpture compositionally and conceptually. They are hung roughly at the same height as the large sculpture and all four sculptures contain a
shiny, opalescent fabric: either a material used in the large sculpture or something similar. Some of them also contain fake plant matter, and all of them have a biomorphic softness to them. The pink piece’s color palette differs the most out of all the sculptures because of its rhinestones and boa material, yet it has the same bubbling texture that the large sculpture possesses.

The floor-mounted installation links all of the sculptures together spatially, conceptually, and formally. They were installed in between the suspended sculpture and the wall-mounted ones. One of the blobs on the floor has a rhinestone-covered texture, just like some of the small pieces inside the concave side of the large sculpture, and mirroring the sculptures that appear to be dripping from the bright pink wall piece. Initially these pieces of painted foam were mounted to the tile floor in a seemingly random pattern resembling a cluster of islands, yet over the course of the show, they were stepped on, kicked, damaged, and gradually migrated across the gallery. The colors and materials of these smaller sculptures are present in the other pieces, yet they were an unexpected source of movement and change over the duration of the show.
View of the installation from behind the glass

Detail photograph of a wall-mounted sculpture
To begin this work, I collected materials that I was both attracted to and offended by, similar to how Susan Sontag describes one of the characteristics of camp. I loved to hate these materials as they both comforted me and reminded me of a time in my life where I was not comfortable in my body or confident in my identity. I chose materials that made me think of the ambiguity and safety of my childhood identity, for example the fake plants from my grandmother’s home, a place I felt safe and loved unconditionally. I also chose materials that I associated with my gradual introduction into queer culture writ large, including materials from drag costumes, costume jewelry, and DIY costumes from the cult classic movie Rocky Horror Picture Show (RHPS).

I bought plant replicas similar to those my grandmother owned, rhinestones that resemble those on the bodice of RHPS’s Dr. Frank-n-furter’s corset (a staple costume from a character whose self-confidence I admired), and gold lamé fabric that looks like his bisexual-Frankenstein-monster’s golden booty shorts (a character who struggled with his sexuality and who portrayed an object of desire, wrapped in gold). In the combination of these materials I see an innocent and naive version on my past self mingling with both the struggling young person and the
comfortable adult I am now. One of the next associations I have with some of the materials is a nod to queer futurism. I see the use of holographic materials in the documentation of Victoria Sin’s *Dream Babes* and in multiple music videos from Janelle Monae’s “emotion picture” *Dirty Computer*. I see these choices to use fluid, rainbow fabrics for costumes as a low-budget, self-aware and playful vision of a future with queer people in it. The fluid and subtle color changes in these types of fabrics are a less showy and perhaps more inclusive version of the rainbow gay pride flag.

My feelings about the materials were initially conflicted but the associations with camp and with queerness drove me to use them instead of following my usual preferences for dark and mysterious, flesh-like colors. Instead of starting with materials I already liked, I explored how I could physically alter the materials I didn’t like to make myself appreciate them when I was done with the project. The main method I used was to mimic scenes and artifacts from nature. I specifically replicated biomorphic textures that I obsessively draw on a regular basis and I inserted obviously fictional plants and organisms into a rainforest-like backdrop. My previous work has dealt with visual and conceptual representations of tension, but not yet in this way.
Artist intentions often differ from the read of the viewer, and I acknowledge that my inspirations may be far off from audience interpretations. For example, the fabrics I associate with queer characters and plots in my favorite examples of queer media, the viewer may associate with lavish interiors of Donald Trump’s hotel empire and with his presence in the White House. The fake plants might stir up visions of low-budget hotel lobbies or hospital
waiting rooms, and the hot pink boa materials might be associated
with craft or with tacky wannabe-glamour.

Just as I have different associations with the materials used
than the average viewer might, my relationships to the forms used
are also perhaps difficult to read at surface-level. I challenged
myself to take the materials I did not consider to be my usual taste
and transformed them into a form that I did appreciate. I have
always been interested in the natural sciences and in the ways that
organic specimens and animals are displayed. I applied visuals
such as the cracking of dried earth, the multiplication of cells, and
the splaying of taxidermied bird wings to the chosen materials. I
see the smallest floor pieces as a basic building block for some of
the larger pieces. It is the origins of the “life” of the displayed
world and its movement over the course of the exhibition reflects
the vulnerability of budding identities. The wall mounted pieces
have varying levels of surface texture in comparison to the gold
side of the suspended “horn”. These pieces represent an advanced
stage of life and identity which plays with contrasting aesthetics a
bit more, yet there is still a rather smooth and undifferentiated
quality to some of them. For example, the dark lumpy sculpture
has forms growing under the surface of the fabric, but they still
look relatively unformed and soft. The largest piece, by contrast,
has such a large textured and varied surface area and a rich, albeit fake, interior. It is so complex that it has sprung a new world within its original shell.

The largest sculpture was not intended to look like a horn, but it comes across as one anyway. The presence of the glass wall in the gallery accentuates the distance between the viewer and the objects. With all the white wall space, the pieces look like they might be specimens, cleanly collected from another world and mounted. The backside of the large piece is diorama-like. The seams show in places, for example in the bunching of the fabric around some of the wall-mounted pieces or in the visibility of the LED lights installed within the large sculpture. There is a continuity of materials which connects all the pieces, and the few real plants and bits of organic material (like the deer antler fragment and the chunk of pyrite) are disguised among the fake plants. This is the opposite effect from the MJT.

The display methods of Wunderkammers problematically other-ed people and cultures from non-eurocentric locales, yet they also celebrate queerness, if latent. They highlight oddities, atypical artifacts, and sometimes fictional (or seemingly fictional) objects. The separation and distinction of objects makes them special and give the objects a certain power and value. If exaggerated, the
relationship of organic to cultural materials can critique the latent practices of othering via display by highlighting artifice within the materials.

There is a pervasive self-talk narrative in the LGBTQ+ community about not acting, looking, or being “queer enough” to belong in queer spaces and to participate in queer dialogues. Assumptions made about people based on their appearances can lead to various types of queer invisibility and erasure. For example, if a cisgendered woman is dating a cisgendered man, it is assumed that she is straight, when she might be bisexual or pansexual. The truth is that she is who she says she is, and she belongs in the queer community despite a seemingly heterosexual relationship. No matter what, queer-identifying people are queer enough, whatever that even means. They are “enough” and there ideally should not be a need to prove otherwise. Unlike the beautiful yet shocking exposure of underground gay sex scenes in the 80s and 90s, a relatively tame yet inclusive range of queer media is necessary to diversify contemporary queer culture. The metaphor “horn of plenty” reflects this concept and ideal.

One can interpret camp and biomorphism to be formally in opposition to one another, yet they possess conceptual similarities. Camp rejects the binary of good or bad taste to provide an
alternative standard. Biomorphism rejects a binary of living and inanimate with forms that evoke life but are not alive. In this way, I see both styles as possessing the potential to critique that which is considered high art or that which is considered to be living. Another similarity that I found by challenging my internal biases against the artificial and excessive style of camp was that I carved out a niche combining biomorphic art and camp. By doing so, I learned more about the struggles, triumphs, and contributions to culture of my new community.

Before I came out a few years ago as queer I had very little exposure to queer culture (either art/media made by queer folks, or made for them). In my childhood and adolescence I was drawn to musical and theatrical performances such as the Lawrence Welk Show (which I watched with my grandmother as a child), live concerts, musicals, and any sort of choreographed group dance routine. This draw to performance and theatricality led me to join a shadowcast of Rocky Horror Picture Show in college, something which opened my eyes to the more specific category of queer culture and media and which gave me the space to explore my sexuality.
Materially, the use of plastic representations of organic matter has sparked an interest in the impact of plastic on the (actual) earth. I am drawn to the fleshiness of plastic and its versatility, but I would like to explore the potential for responsible and conscientious use of recycled materials or of creating bioplastics, which are made of organic materials and are biodegradable.

The models for what it looks like to be queer are limited and in order to expand them, the community and its culture need to remain fluid. By allowing room to grow and change, an ever-changing set of aesthetic standards and norms can create a safe future full of potential. To diversify the models of what it means and what it looks like to be queer will ultimately increase mainstream visibility, the education of the public, and therefore safety of queer people.

It would be ideal if members of the LGBTQ+ community were not othered from the heteronormative society, or especially if society were not heteronormative. This would mean that we need to stop being considered outliers from the main population, and there needs to be a celebration of diverse identities, especially intersectionally (regardless of race, class, or physical/mental
ability). This is a utopian ideal and may never become realized, but in a few hundred years the human race has come a long way so time and the evolution of culture will tell our actual future.

Conceptually, I am interested in ways that queer creatives can make space, both physically and culturally, for its group’s expanding demographics. Consequences of under-representation in mainstream culture and of lacking a sense of belonging within a community are alienation, higher rates of suicide, depression, other mental health issues, and substance abuse in young, queer populations. In addition to typical struggles of navigating family relationships, “coming out”, and self-discovery are feelings of not belonging in one’s own (queer) community. How can queer folk help build each other up and create models for communication tools, safe spaces, and entertainment to ensure a sustainable future for decades to come? The methods used in the creation of “Horn of Plenty”, specifically researching the origins and uses of queer media and proposing imaginary literal landscapes push back against the notion that art must reflect realities.
NOTES

1. Reality Check team, “Commonwealth summit: The countries where it is illegal to be gay,” BBC News.
4. Ibid., p. 108.
5. Ibid., p. 113.


Weschler, Lawrence. *Mr. Wilson’s Cabinet of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, and other Marvels of Jurassic Technology.*