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Introduction: Placing Visual Cultures in a Queer Context

SUBASHISH BHATTACHARJEE

Art is not linked to some intrinsic relation to one's own body but exactly the opposite: it is linked to those processes of distancing and the production of a plane of composition that abstracts sensation from the body.

Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*

The visual arts genres have been under critical and theoretical scrutiny for a substantial length of time, although not quite as long as the literary arts have been on the receiving end of scholarly attention. The wide spectrum of the visual arts genres – painting, theatre, dance, and cinema among others – has encouraged the possibility of a similarly wide range of critical measures to anticipate the direction of social 'performance'. LGBTQA theories too have had increasingly significant bearings (or even the other way round) on visual culture artifacts over the decades since the mid-twentieth century. The present state of 'crisis' that necessitates an excursion into reading visual culture in the backdrop of 'queer theorizations' can be summed up in the words of David V. Ruffalo from 2009 in the context of the recent developments in terms of cultural assimilation of tropes that were previously denied polity and parity and may still be viewed as abject:

Queer has reached a political peak. Its theoretical movements have become limited by its incessant investment in identity politics and its political outlook has in many ways attained dormant status due to its narrowed interest in heteronormativity. . . . Over the past two decades, a significant body of work has contributed to what is referred to as queer studies. Queer theorizations are at the heart of this anti-canonical genre where the intersection of bodies, identities, and cultures continue to be a central focus. (1)

The visual arts possess a unique possibility of transgressing heteronormative boundaries by pushing the liminal spaces between

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