



Deconstructing Current Representations of Queer Masculinity in Media

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Introduction

As a queer man myself, I was noticing a derth of representations of people like me in media, and even negative representations of men who love men (MLM) in queer circles. Because of these events, I decided to conduct a multifaceted study both to help create representations of queer men through my own art, and to discover more about where representations of queer men are happening in media and how the men who sat for my portraits felt about those representations.

Research Questions

- How do the representations of queer people in popular media impact the outlooks of queer men around their gender, sexuality, and comfortability in regards to their gender presentation?
- How are queer men shown and represented in popular media, if they are represented at all? How can creating my own representations of queer men impact that canon?
- How does queer men seeing themselves represented impact their outlooks on themselves and on queer men in general?

Literature and Prior Knowledge

In order to inform this study, I had to research some of the history around queer representation in media, and how masculinity in general is thought of and represented in media. This also requires some prior knowledge about queer theory and current issues facing queer people, which is an exhaustive field and so I chose to only mention what is relevant to this study, and also to rely on some of my own lived experience and expertise as a queer individual.

Methodology and Data Collection

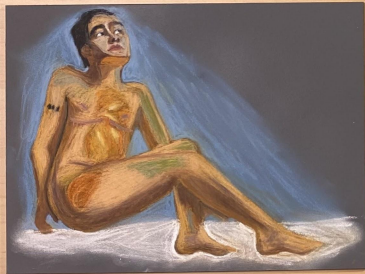
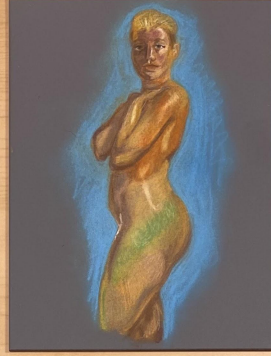
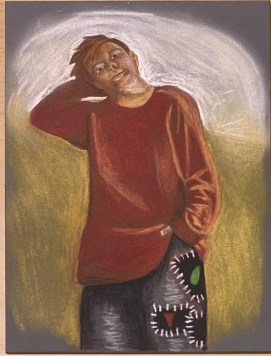
Art and Self Study

- I used chalk pastel pencils and 6x8 in. gray Ampersand Pastelbord for each portrait
- I allowed participants to select a photo of themselves that they wanted me to use as reference so that they were in complete control of their own representation
- I did some self reflective writing during the process of making these portraits, especially toward the end of the process
- I took many process photos along the way

Participant Interviews

- 4 participants within my social circles, including myself.
- I allowed participants to be interviewed either over a video call or via Text in order to make them feel most comfortable and accommodate their situations during the pandemic
- In both instances, I was present and responsive to their answers instead of conducting interviews through a form or email

Portraits



Interview Questions

- In this study I'm using the words "queer" and "man." Are there other relevant words you use to describe your identity?
- For more obscure terms, I followed up with asking participants to define those terms in their own words.
- Where do you find the most representations of your identity in popular media?
- This was often followed by discussion of appropriate and inappropriate representation of queer men and queer people in media.
- How do representations of your identity, and queer men who look like you, impact you or make you feel?
- How does the drawing I made make you feel about yourself?

Interviews

Terms that participants used to describe their identities:

- Queer
- Man
- Non binary
- Gay
- Genderpunk
- Gendervoid
- Man-adjacent
- Genderfluid

Areas in media that were discussed in this study:

- Television (Elliot Page (Actor), Chaz Bono (Actor), Voltron: Legendary Defender (2016), Yuri on Ice (2016), The L Word (2004))
- Movies (Marvel Cinematic Universe)
- Youtube (Miles McKenna)
- Books (Fun Home, Prose Edda, Rick Riordan Novels (Percy Jackson & the Olympians, Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard, The Heroes of Olympus))
- Comics (Loki: Agents of Asgard, Dykes to Watch Out For)
- Video games (Pokemon)
- Musicals (Fun Home)
- Instagram
- Fanfiction

Data Analysis

Building Community and Relational Knowledge

Othered and Othering

The Room Where it Happened (on “Shitty Representation”)

When Specificity Hurts

Non Standard Modes of Representation

Transforming Media

Seeing Yourself

Findings and Recommendations

- This is a small case study involving a more insular community, so the findings are specific to this group. These findings may not be representative of all queer people or all men, and should be taken with a grain of salt. However, the ideas behind these findings can be more widely applicable
- More queer people should be consulted when representing queer characters in media
- More explicitly queer characters should exist in media
- It does not matter which type of media these characters are in, there are a wide range of interests among queer people
- Identities of queer characters, while involving character development and backstory, should be less specific in order to apply to more people
- Being purposefully gender neutral or gender inclusive in media can also create spaces for queer people to identify with characters

Questions?

Thank you!