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URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Design Community Celebrates Gay Rights

Questions of sexual identity, stereotypes, and prejudice dominated two design events held in New York City concurrent with the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion—the flashpoint of the modern gay-rights movement. The StoreFront for Art and Architecture opened “Queer Space” in its Acconci/Holl-designed gallery on June 18; and architects, interior designers, and graphic artists assembled June 24 at the Cooper Union for Design Pride ‘94, the first international conference of the New York-based Organization of Lesbian and Gay Architects and Designers (OLGAD).

OLGAD staged a day of slide presentations and panel discussions. Stanley Abercrombie, editor-in-chief, *Interior Design* magazine, tackled the question of whether the history of changing attitudes toward sexual diversity has affected the way designers design. His remarks set

the tone for a series of historical glimpses of homosexual designers, including Eileen Gray, Russell Wright, and Philip Johnson.

The conference delivered a mixed message. David McFadden, assistant director of the Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design, cautioned designers to be wary of the gay esthetic they wished to cultivate. A stereotype can be a positive form of identification, he noted, but warned it also encourages marginalization and offers an excuse for bigotry.

Ensuing panel discussions tackled the notion of a gay design esthetic and the legitimacy of “queer space.” Equating space with sexual preference proved an unconvincing exercise. More successful was the group’s handling of practice issues, such as discrimination and advocacy of housing, education, and civil rights for people afflicted with AIDS.

The elusive topic of “queer space” was addressed more successfully at StoreFront for Art and Architecture, where responses to the gallery’s call

for projects addressed stereotypes, icons, and discrimination.

The 14 selected projects, on view through July 30, ranged from videos and photographic essays to Brian McGrath’s *GayDar Maps*, architectural drawings identifying “erotically charged” urban spaces, and Michelle Fornabai’s interactive *Death Drive*, which re-created the site of actor James Dean’s fatal crash.

Projects lined the gallery’s movable panels and filled all available floor space, complemented by the work of Paul Lewis, Peter Pelsinski, and Marc Tsurumaki, exhibit designers from New York-based Operatives.

Individuals funded the StoreFront projects, since all requests for grants or sponsors were denied. John Buscarello, chair of Design Pride ‘94, indicated OLGAD also did not receive corporate sponsorship; Design Pride relied on private donations, ticket sales, and fund-raisers. In an industry that traditionally rewards diversity, this lack of participation is disheartening.—Ann C. Sullivan



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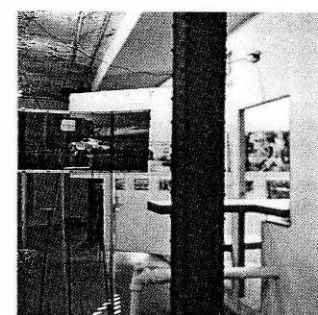
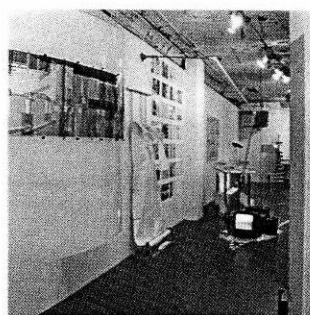
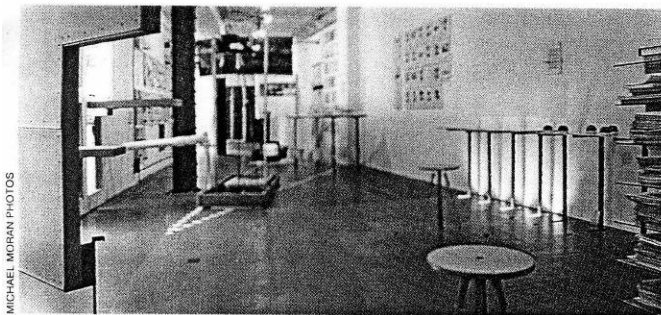
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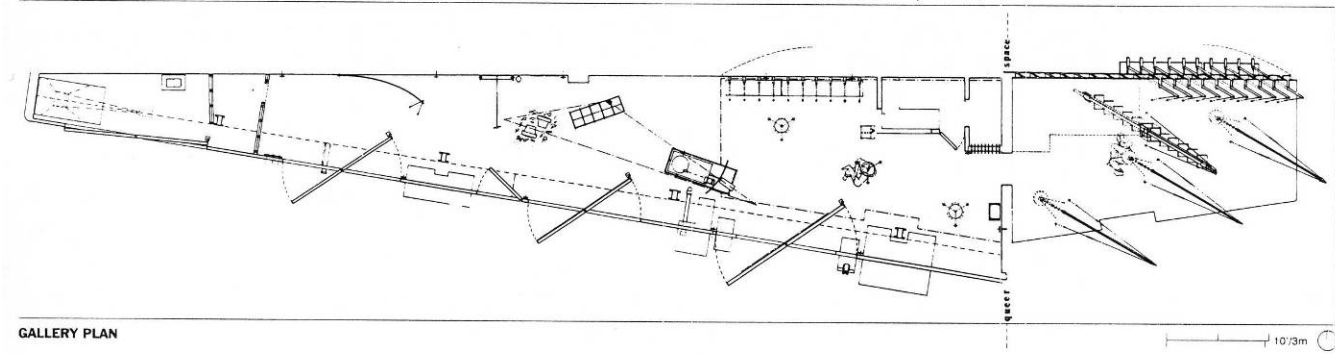
MICHAEL MORAN PHOTOS



STOREFRONT: Exhibit design by Lewis, Pelsinski, and Tsurumaki incorporates stools.

MAPS: McGrath's urban analysis (left).

VIDEO: Fornabai's ode to Dean.



GALLERY PLAN

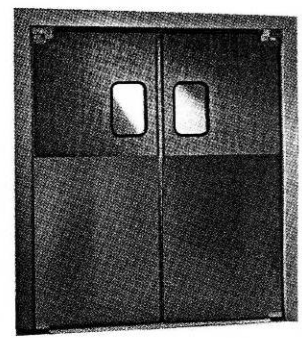
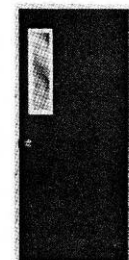
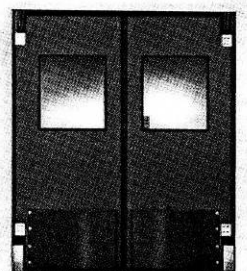
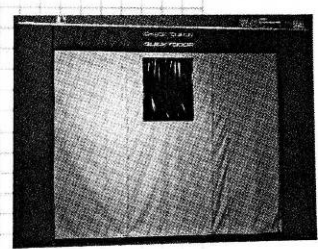
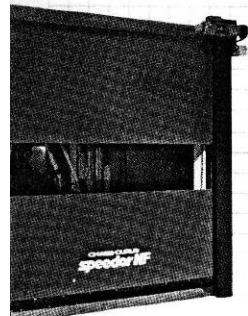
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