QUEERING THE MUSEUM


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**QUEERING U.S. HISTORY MUSEUMS: HETERONORMATIVE HISTORIES, DIGITAL DISRUPTIONS**

This dissertation responds to the problem of disproportionate representations in U.S. history museums, which currently struggle to collect and narrate histories that accurately reflect the diverse identities of our nation. Exclusions based on race, gender and sexuality have misrepresented U.S. history as predominantly white, male and heteronormative. Drawing from queer theory, intersectional feminist theory and museum theories, I create a conversation that engages both theoretical and practical interventions into the important work of museum representation. I call this framework critical feminist museology. Two main points of praxis arise from my analysis of intersectional feminist and queer theories: 1) reflect critically on the institutions, systems and procedures that structure our pathways and our choices and 2) draw from this conscious perspective to identify pathways in-between the simplistic, binary trajectories of normalcy. With this guide, the principles of collaboration, reflection and relational responsibility were put into practice through a multi-year community-museum collaboration in Seattle. Exploring digital interventions, this research re-designs the process of narrative production in digital storytelling workshops. The result is a series of evocative, affective stories which fill an essential gap in historical archives while addressing issues of agency in representation. These digital stories function as a new kind of artifact, one which I call the evocative object, capable of addressing the competing needs to tell broad stories while attending to the diversity of authentic experiences within those broad categories. This project is a unique collaboration between theory and praxis, applying long-standing feminist and queer theories, and re-theorizing from the results of these collaborations. The tensions between institutional and community practices, evident in this collaboration, provide a rich framework for highlighting the social change work that occurs even when we do not meet all of our goals. The challenge to queer what are inherently static, codified histories is met when we utilize third-space feminist framings and queer disruptions of temporality and linearity.