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Queer Zagreb

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QUEER ZAGREB

Z V O N I M I R D O B R O V I C

Queer Zagreb is an international festival that took place for the first time in Croatia from April 25-30, 2003. It presented an extensive program which included theater, dance, film and visual art, as well as a symposium of papers from around the globe focused on queer sexuality, art and activism. It was a pioneer event of its kind in post-communist Europe, and was presented throughout the city in some of Zagreb's most established venues. The festival's main goal was to use art, activism and theory as a catalyst to raise awareness about and visibility for queer people, all the while questioning heteronormativity. These goals were achieved with more than 150 articles in Croatian newspapers and over five hours of TV and radio coverage dedicated to the festival. Queer people in the region now have a public voice and identity and are developing mechanisms and programs to further a regional queer rights movement. Since the end of Queer Zagreb, portions of the original festival program have toured to other towns around Croatia including Rijeka, Opatija, Osijek, Pula, Tabor and Vis.

Queer Zagreb 2004 will take place April 23-30, 2004 and will focus on music and film. It will present such artists as The London Gay Symphony Orchestra (UK), John Kelly (USA), Tribe 8 (USA), London, Paris and Berlin club scenes, as well as numerous other artists and activists from China, Spain, Czech Republic, Serbia, Slovenia, Moldova, Bosnia and Macedonia. We are also putting together an extensive program dedicated to gay skinheads with over ten films on the subject, and will have visiting filmmakers and skinheads from around Europe to participate in the post-screening discussions. In its regular film program, the festival will screen over twenty of the most recent feature films as well as approximately fifty shorts and documentaries from around the world. We are also producing and commissioning local artists and their work and presenting it in the festival program. Additional events, which will show parts of the original Zagreb program, are Queer Rijeka (April 28-May 1, 2004) and Queer Osijek (May 7-9, 2004).

In 2005, Queer Zagreb will be dedicated to examining heteronormativity among youth and children since they are the last line of defence of heterosexual society. This means they usually cannot hear or see anything positive about queers in the environment in which they spend most time (schools or kindergartens). Therefore, the festival will try to look into different ways that children are "protected" from queer "influence." Queer Zagreb 2005 will put together a program of interest to youth and children which focuses on questioning heteronormality. Again, we are doing this in cooperation with responsible government institutions in order to reach a wider population as well as education and youth programs decision makers.

One of the bigger projects we are developing at the moment is the establishment of queer studies as an additional field of research for university students in Zagreb, as well as for civil society activists. The focus of the studies will be construction and deconstruction of norms (hetero and homo alike). The pilot project should begin in 2005, with a few prior visiting lectures.

Queer Zagreb is a project very much dedicated to strengthen local and regional initiatives and is collaborating with almost all organizations in the area on achieving this goal. Further information on our program and plans can be found at www.queerzagreb.org and we can be contacted at queerzagreb@email.hinet.hr ♦

Zvonimir Dobrovic is Program Director of Queer Zagreb.

Queering the Crip/Crippling the Queer

B E T H K L I N G

What does it mean to reclaim the terms "queer," "crip," or "freak" as signifiers of personal identity? How have sexuality and disability changed meaning over time? How do images of queer and disabled sexuality differ? These were some of the questions explored in CLAGS's Fall 2003 Seminars in the City series, *Queering the Crip/Crippling the Queer: Introduction to Queer and Disability Studies*.

In monthly meetings at the LGBT Community Center, participants explored the similarities, differences, intersections, and conflicts between Queer Studies and Disability Studies. The series began with a presentation by Simi Linton of Hunter College, whose book, *Claiming Disability*, was the first assigned text. Other reading assignments included Eli Clare's *Exile and Pride* and Fleischer and Zames' *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation*, in addition to shorter readings by queer and disabled scholars and activists.

Led by Sarah Chinn of Hunter College, and CLAGS Board members Kim Christensen of Purchase College, and Peter Penrose of the Graduate Center, the semester-long seminar was open to academics, activists, and interested community members free of charge. Contact the CLAGS office for information on future offerings in its Seminars in the City series. ♦

Beth Kling is a freelance writer who lives in Brooklyn.