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Jonathan D. Katz

Art, Eros and the Sixties

At the height of the Cold War's blinkered border consciousness, a theory of Eros was made universal as potential solvent to a range of repressive social strictures, not least global capitalism. Just before second wave feminism and gay and lesbian liberation linked political resistance with an ever increasing specification of difference, it was Eros' evocation of a universal capacity to experience somatic pleasure that made the body available as a site of active political resistance and dissent in the first place. But our still nationalist art history has lost sight of the profound links among US and non-US artists at this time, obscuring the emergence of an art of Eros as perhaps the first genuinely global art movement.

Jonathan D. Katz, a scholar of post war art and culture from the vantage point of sexual difference, was the 2007-08 Clark-Oakley Fellow at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, and is currently Research Faculty at the University of Manchester, UK. Katz was the founding director of the Larry Kramer Initiative for Lesbian and Gay Studies at Yale University, and served as the first tenured faculty in gay and lesbian studies in the US, at City College of San Francisco. He co-founded the activist group Queer Nation, San Francisco, and founded the Queer Caucus of the College Art Association, and the Harvey Milk Institute in San Francisco. It was at City College in 1989, that Katz founded and chaired the very first Department of Lesbian and Gay Studies in the United States. Katz is currently researching the book from which this talk is drawn, as well as curating two groundbreaking exhibitions: the first, entitled *Hide/Seek: Desire, Difference and the Invention of Modern American Portraiture*, will open at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in October 2010 as the first queer exhibition at any major American museum. The second exhibition, entitled *Art/AIDS/America* will open at the Corcoran and Tacoma museums a year later. Katz is writing full-scale books to accompany both exhibitions.