

# A QUEER NOISE MANIFESTO

"SILENCE = DEATH" - ACT UP (1987)

# 1. QUEER

Unwanted desire

## 2. NOISE

Unwanted sound

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These microdefinitions of the terms "queer" and "noise" sure have their limits but might temporarily serve their purpose in our attempt to reflect upon what personal and political implications the genre "queer noise" could have as a form of (re)generative symbiosis. The common denominator, the ontological similarity, between the two terms is "that which is unwanted" and "that which is unwanted" is being perpetually repudiated, or, in psychoanalytical terms, disavowed *by* or foreclosed *from* a hegemonic symbolic order. Neither as subject nor object, that which is unwanted turns abject and therefore causes affects of horror and disgust on both discursive as well as subjective levels (Kristeva 1982:1ff.). This manifesto is an attempt to explore different ways in which the abject (queer) can be politicized sonically (noise). Or, to speak with philosopher Judith Butler, assist in "...a radical resignification of the symbolic domain, deviating the citational chain toward a more possible future to expand the very meaning of what counts as a valued and valuable body in the world." (Butler 1993:21f.)

### 3. QUEER BODIES AS QUEER NOISES

The symbiosis of “queer” and “noise” into the genre “queer noise” turns our attention to the expressions “take space” as well as “make noise”. As the queer activist group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) tried to mediate through their activism during the HIV/AIDS-crisis of the 80's and early 90's silence on these issues literally meant death for us queers. The emerging queer politics of life, manifested in ACT UP's activism, was a response to a deadly silence (the absence of sound) making us aware of what the phrase "make noise" could mean in a wider queer political context:

*to make noise is to take space sonically*

Queer bodies can be interpreted as a form of noise that disturbs and distorts heteronormativity in radical ways and therefore opens up new ways for us all to live our lives, perceive our bodies and express ourselves. To speak with Butler again, it is through their perpetual presence, their persistent existence, that queer bodies challenge heterosexual hegemony by exposing heterosexuality as both a norm and fiction (Butler 1990:136) whose purpose is to naturalize and sustain a binary gender system with its categories "Man" and "Woman". From this vantage point,

*all queers are noisicians in a straight society*

and queer bodies, with their embodied experiences, can be used as sound sources in the making of noise. This is where unwanted desire (queer) and unwanted sound (noise) can meet and turn into a politically (re)generative symbiosis. As queer noisicians we are promising monsters screaming, hissing and stuttering a paraphrase on ACT UP's message:

"NOISE = LIFE!"

## REFERENCES:

Butler, Judith (1990): "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity", Routledge

Butler, Judith (1993): "Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'", Routledge

Kristeva, Julia (1982): "Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection", Columbia University Press

"Seroconversion" is a queer noise project based in Stockholm (Sweden) created in 2013 by Birt Berglund and Johan Sundell. They make pink noise out of found objects relating to gay male subculture.

"Seroconversion" is also the medical term in immunology for when the body's autoimmune system starts producing antibodies in response to an HIV-infection. It is often characterized by flu-like symptoms (swollen lymph nodes, headache, rashes and fever).