

1. Introduction

The LGBT+ landscape within Glasgow has always existed and has been crafted by individuals, their activism, and stories (Women's Library, 2019). The narratives within this landscape of LGBT+ people within Glasgow have not been recorded in traditional ways and have been overlooked through time. This is especially true at moments of tension for the community such as healthcare inequalities regarding HIV and AIDS, illegality of homosexuality discourse through Section 28, and activism for transgender rights (Women's Library, 2019). Therefore, it is important to reclaim LGBT+ history through exploring these stories in times of turbulence and their relevance to the lived experience and built environment in the city today. Landscapes and their construction are ultimately crucial for queer people. Community safety and solidarity is made physical in these 'queer spaces' within Glasgow (McCartan, 2022).

This inquiry seeks to explore the creation of the LGBT+ landscape in urban Glasgow. Reminiscent of cultural geography, what is physically present underpins the categories of these socially constructed spaces (Duncan, 1993). Equally, what is not present is also a contributing factor. This sentiment is echoed when reflecting on both positive and negative experiences in the landscape— LGBT+ joys contribute to the forming of place in the same way as identity based discrimination. Figure 1 shows two photos demonstrating positive and negative contributions to the landscape.

Figure 1: Photographs of George Square, Glasgow

1a. People attending the 25th June, 2022 Pride March in George Square



Source: PA Media

The photograph depicts people of all ages in the foreground with one young person centrally holding a progressive pride flag for the Pride march and another to the left of the image wearing a transgender pride flag as a cape. Commemorating the Stonewall riots of 1969, pride events in Scotland have a history dating back to 1994 (McCartan, 2022). In the background, the branding of visit Glasgow ‘People Make Glasgow’ can be seen.

1b. Anti-Gender Recognition Reform Bill Protestors assemble at George Square



Source: PA Media

Protestors assembled in George Square on the 5th of February 2023. The Gender Recognition Reform Bill passed in December of 2022 with the aim of streamlining the process in which transgender people apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) (Scottish Government, 2022). In the foreground, people can be seen holding flags of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). In the background, the branding of visit Glasgow 'People Make Glasgow' can be seen.

Within figure 1a and 1b, who is welcome within the landscape are being contested. Those in 1b who do not support Transgender people in the LGBT+ community contrast the visible joy of those at the Pride march in 1a. This landscape is a process that changes over the course of the year between the events. The space is hence defined by these power relations and the individuals that contribute to it (Massey, 2004, in McCartan, 2022). Above both events, the advertising of 'people make Glasgow' is present. The power

dynamics in 1b supersede this message of solidarity amongst Glaswegians whereas the positive contributions in 1a conform to the message. There is therefore a difference between individuals' lived experience and 'the tourist gaze' of outsiders. The use of flags by individuals is important– transgender flags show solidarity and support whereas the changed meanings of the WSPU flag seek to divide.

From Pride to political protest, this landscape is therefore contested. From an event in the same space that seeks to include and support to another that seeks to exclude, the Glasgow LGBT+ landscape is contested. This inquiry therefore seeks to explore the extent as to which the surrounding built environment influences the LGBT+ experience and evaluate its role in place-building.

2. Reading the Landscape

The inquiry is framed by the 'Stride with Pride' walking tour published by the Women's Library in 2019 that consolidates the LGBT+ experience within the built environment in Glasgow. Using this source as a 'frame' provides both a descriptive and analytical element in light of other sources– Benford refers to frames as 'cultural components' that challenge other 'frames' for collective social experiences (Benford, 2000). The Women's Library 'acts as a nucleus' for discussing marginalised communities and provides a critical viewpoint to explore the categories of gender, sexuality, and identity (Marshall, 2017). The inquiry will examine physical art and modern art spaces, Glasgow's history with LGBT+ wellbeing services and contemporary history projects. Figure 2 documents the location and names of these places within the broader landscape.

Figure 2: Map of Glasgow



Key

1-16, Women's Library annotation of locations.

- A. George Square (Figure 1a, 1b).
- B. Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum
- C. Gallery of Modern Art
- D. Glasgow LGBT+ Centres
- E. The Mitchell Library

The author has adapted the figure to include locations A-E.

Figure 3: Photograph of exhibition: ‘Memorial to a Marriage’



Transcription: “Memorial to a Marriage is a double portrait of my partner - artist Deborah Kass - and me. A double life-size marble version of the work was installed on our burial plot in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York. The statue addresses issues of lesbian invisibility, gay marriage, love and loss, power and status. In death I make official my “marriage”, which was not legal for most of our relationship. I wanted something that celebrated our life together, if all I would be officially allowed is death, I decided to make the most elegant and dignified statement I could about the end of our life together. In summer 2011, the New York State Senate passed a bill allowing gay people to “marry”. After 18 years together, we went to City Hall on the morning of 24 July for this service which was a step in the right direction. However, it still does not give us full equal rights with heterosexual marriage which is recognised in all states under federal law” - Patricia Cronin.

Source: Photography by Professor Nina Laurie

This statue is located within the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

“Memorial to a Marriage” provides an emotionally evocative example of LGBT+ contestation. The statue provides an exogenous link to the couple themselves living in the US but an echoed sentiment of celebrating their relationship in a system that does not facilitate marriage equality as is the similar in Glasgow. The artist therefore seeks to memorialise this narrative with joy where otherwise through societal institutions it is ignored (Watson, 2010). The statue in the context of Glasgow’s LGBT+ landscape acts in what Watson describes as a ‘discursive parody’ of other celebratory statues in George Square (2010, p.82). Where the infamously cone-wearing Duke of Wellington statue commemorates military battles, the failure of Cronin’s marriage to be given legitimacy in society crafts this statue as a reminder within the landscape of a voice that was unheard. The caption is poignant in its use of

parentheses for ‘marry’ and description of only achieving unity in death– this adds to the intensity of the voice and creates a strong message within the landscape.

The statue was later referenced within an exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) as depicted in figure 3b.

Figure 3b: ‘Memorial to a Marriage’ within the GoMA.



Source: Women’s Library, 2019.

The GoMA building was historically owned by a profiteer of the slave trade but since 1996 has hosted a variety of queer art exhibitions including the feature of ‘Memorial to a Marriage’ (Women’s Library, 2019). The impact of this statue is therefore not atemporal in the landscape or in isolation– in 2018 the GoMA held an interactive exhibition engaging with LGBT+ audiences regarding the themes of ‘fights against exclusion’, ‘rights and equality’, and ‘alternative families’ (GoMA, 2019). Where the statue alludes to a different American based space, this exhibition interrogates heteronormative categories and

contextualises them within local experiences (Duncan, 1993). Therefore, it further highlights political contestation within the landscape.

Contrasting the community engagement of 'Memorial of a Marriage' is the absence of a dedicated Glasgow LGBT+ centre. In 2011, Glasgow council surveyed 130 LGBT+ people with 92% of respondents stating the need for a dedicated LGBT+ space (Marshall, 2017). In exploring changing sources for created spaces, Lorimer argues that landscapes take three frames through informal creation, physical places and then gestures and movement (2002). In Glasgow, the first 'Gay Centre' was informally created in 1977 until relocation to Dixon street in 1995 (Women's Library, 2019). The physical space was then closed as funding was withdrawn in 2009 (Women's Library, 2019). Applying Lorimer's three frames, the (albeit limited by respondent count) survey by the council demonstrates actions and movement towards the need for something in the landscape that has been removed. Lorimer argues that this is the 'missing book' in a library and for LGBT+ people in Glasgow this is a missing provision (2002). The removal of the service in 2009 was as a result of a withdrawal of funding that lends itself to contest in this landscape (Marshall, 2017). In 2013, a feasibility study was conducted for creation of a centre that has yet to be actioned— LGBT+ individuals seeking in person support travel to Edinburgh for their equivalent provisions (Marshall, 2017). Ultimately, the wellbeing of LGBT+ people is not present, yet the institution of the city council remains constant representing a power dynamic of difference. The voices of those who are underrepresented further within this community such as those of transgender, BAME, asylum seekers and refugee identities are likely to be further marginalised in different ways due to power dynamics (Massaro, 2013).

The Mitchell Library is a part of the built environment that has been characterised by LGBT+ experiences. In 1995, the Glasgow Lesbian Avengers campaigned against the library's decision to not stock The Pink Paper as a result of section 28 enforcement and campaigned against this until it was overturned (Women's Library, 2019). Today, the library hosts the OurStory archives that documents

LGBT+ experiences and began at the Dixon street site (Women's Library, 2019). As analysed by Crang, considerations of emotion and sentiment in the production of this heritage is 'crucial in excluding and including different people' (2010, p.2315). The documentation of the oral LGBT+ tradition is therefore an act of contestation in combating heteronormativity. There is further support to this in that the project is described as 'our story, our words' – a reclamation of this tradition especially in light of Section 28 where agency was otherwise removed (Women's Library, 2019). The project housed in the Mitchell library today demonstrates this contestation becoming normative within the built environment.

3. Conclusion

The experiences of art, experience and how this is normalised through the environment for LGBT+ people therefore demonstrate different levels of contestation. Where the Mitchell library was historically a place of contestation that is now honoured, this is untrue for the recognition of the relationship depicted within 'Memorial of a Marriage'. The voices and narratives that are heard across these spaces are reminiscent of Massey's writing – the experience is 'real, grounded, everyday, and lived' (2004, p.7). The narrative of this community is real yet it is not necessarily 'everyday' and 'lived' – the denial of LGBT+ wellbeing provisions and marginalisation does not affect all. This enquiry therefore has scope in exploring the struggles of the LGBT+ community through categories of art and experience (Duncan, 1993). There is further discussion in the reasoning for actors socially constructing these dynamics – what shapes institutions like the Mitchell library to respond positively to the LGBT+ community and the council negatively is important for further discourse (Duncan, 1993).

The landscape within Glasgow needs to therefore continue to honour the narratives of individuals that otherwise would be unheard. Where community engagement and interaction is seen in the Mitchell library, OurStory project, and in the GoMA, this does not translate to the 'everyday' experience (Massey, 2004). Visibility as in the Memorial to a Marriage is incredibly important and akin to the experience of museums, support and solidarity needs to be represented in the built environment in an almost shocking

sense (Crang, 2010). As seen in figure 1b and the stall in services, LGBT+ identities are under threat despite the documented progress through time in Glasgow. By working with community groups, although already stressed, engaging LGBT+ people in commemorative projects on a more popular stage than hidden away within buildings and exhibitions is important in creating a normative LGBT+ experience (Marshall, 2017).

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