

9-10 June 2016
ICI Berlin

Symposium

Can one be queer and coupled? Or is the logic of complementarity that subtends the couple fundamentally at odds with queer existence?

In 1998 Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner wrote that 'making a queer world has required the development of kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property and to the nation'. Since then, however, we have witnessed the couple form move from the periphery to the center of queer politics, becoming the major vehicle through which gays and lesbians have achieved access to cultural and legal institutions as well as broader social acceptance. While before the late twentieth century same-sex relations circulated largely outside what Foucault called the 'monogamic and conjugal cell', today it seems even the most peripheral of sexualities have been absorbed under the couple's ever-expanding jurisdiction.

Does the present moment require a more honest reckoning with the central role of the couple in queer politics and everyday life? Or do we need, now more than ever, to revitalize our commitment to the production of a sexual politics that would resist the ideology of the couple?

This two-day symposium brings together some of the most significant voices in Anglo-American queer theory today to address the historical, cultural, and metaphysical force of the couple—and its often unquestioned status in queer life.

The Ontology of the Couple

Heather Love and Eng-Beng Lim on Commitment
Elizabeth Freeman and Bobby Benedicto on Reproduction
Aliyyah I. Abdur-Rahman and Peter Coviello on Devotion
Lee Edelman and Joseph Litvak on Estrangement
Michael Cobb and Petrus Liu on Openness
C. Riley Snorton and Rinaldo Walcott on Arrangement
Laura Kipnis and Annamarie Jagose on Asymmetry

Organized by
Pearl Brilmyer, Filippo Trentin, Zairong Xiang

Co-organized by
Hila Amit, and in cooperation with the Zentrum für Gender- und Diversitätsforschung of the University of Tübingen (ZGD Tübingen) and GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies