Crafting queer spaces: privacy and posturing

Professor Peter McNeil
Professor of Design History, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, University of Technology, Sydney

ABSTRACT
This paper examines several extraordinary spaces crafted by eccentric and famous men. It will be argued that they created novel and innovative 'queer space' for the projection of fluid male identities and fantasies employing intimate private spaces, furnishings, dress and diversions. In most cases the spaces developed in an organic way over time; even the planning process was odd. The cases will be the English patron-designers Horace Walpole (Strawberry Hill), William Beckford (Fonthill), the Swedish King Gustav III (Haga), and the 20th-century collector and connoisseur Henry Francis du Pont (Winterthur, Delaware). The notion of 'queer' that will be deployed is derived from David Halperin's Foucauldian reading of sexuality: where queer 'describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be limited in advance'. In reading the meanings of the neo-gothic, neo-classical and historicising spaces created by these men, aspects of the relationships between the crafting of interior decoration, sensibility and sociability will be foregrounded.

INTRODUCTION
Enlightenment Europe witnessed a significant shift in the relationship of men to the crafting of interior spaces and decoration. In courtly societies the spectacular appearance of architecture, furnishings and male dress embodied decorum, dynastic rivalry, familial networks, the stability of the orders and patriarchal power. The Greco-Roman rhetoric of extremes of male luxury and its supposedly enervating effects, however, could also be deployed by detractors in order to render hated counts immoral.1 Those courts in which men gained special privilege, were frequently presented as the most debased examples, even sodo-mitical. Fashions, whether in dress or furnishings, also functioned as a potent symbol for the types of social and economic change which modern capitalism enabled, standing in for the values ranging from transformation to deception which were explored within Enlightenment philosophical tracts and popularizing accounts. Protestant values and Rousseauan arguments criticized vain and undeserving gesture, whether on the body or in the boudoir.2 Extreme fashionability and artifice were transferred in the social arena and cultural imagination to the realm of femininity.

Historians and theorists of sexuality have published numerous studies of male same sex companionship in Enlightenment Europe, of the development within cities of proto-queer subcultures, even of male dress codes and gestures. Very little attention has been paid to relationships between interior design, spatial planning, privacy, fantasy and same-sex desire. Changing notions of gender and sexuality influenced and regulated men's relationship to spaces of the home and those myriad crafts and objects which created its effects, comforts and novelties. If, as Charles Rice's recent monograph The Emergence of the Inte-

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counterpoint with the introduction of an unlikely example, the 20th-century collector and connoisseur Henry Francis du Pont (Winterthur mansion and collection). And du Pont’s Winterthur will be privileged as the space in which my argument became apparent and possible for me as an historian. A visit to Winterthur reminded me how the spaces I once studied developed in a markedly queer manner over very long periods of time; even their planning process was odd. Within these spaces a disparate set of men created novel and innovative ‘queer space’ employing intimate private spaces, furnishings, dress and diversions.

SINFUL CRAVINGS

David Halperin’s much cited notion of “queer”, where queer describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogenous scope cannot in principle be limited in advance provides us with ways of avoiding the impasse of needing to ascribe or match acts to individuals.

Aaron Betsky notes that:

the emergence of homosexual networks was coincident with the emergence of icons about personal freedom and mobile social relations in which each person could make a space for himself.

What were these “networks” Betsky described and how do they relate to design? Can interior space be seen as an extension of other forms, such as gothic literature or masquerade dressing? My paper, relying as it does on subjects, will have to address the challenge of writing backwards from a post-Freudian position. If, then, we accept that at least some of these figures are a part of both queer and architectural history then did they make queer space?

HORACE WALPOLE: ‘A STRANGE BUT SIGNIFICANT SPORT’

The notable scholar of eighteenth-century interior decoration Charles Sauvarez Smith calls the taste for Gothic “that strange but significant sport in the development of eighteenth-century taste”. Of Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill, he notes,

it was a prefiguration of the way interiors would be used in the future, as a conscious instrument of personal expression: the house was to become a private castle. An escape from time, a place of retreat.

Sauvarez Smith, like most writers on this topic with the exception of Timothy Mowl, does not attempt to assess exactly what Walpole’s retreat or withdrawal might have involved. Horace (Horatio) William Walpole, 4th Earl of Orford (1717-1797) was a British writer and antiquarian. The third son of Robert Walpole, Prime Minister, Walpole was a Member of Parliament (1741-1768) but his main interest was letter-writing and design. A voluminous and bichy correspondent, he wrote with an eye to posterity, cataloguing the motives, appearances, and manners of the personalities of his day in 4,000 surviving letters. He also published The Castle of Otranto (1764), the first Gothic novel, and Essays on Modern Gardening (1785). Walpole’s most significant contribution to visual heritage was his development and promotion of ‘Strawberry Hill Gothic’, a style which led to a new strand of English architecture and internal planning. From 1748 to 1776 Walpole had his residence, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, repeatedly rebuilt in an asymmetrical pseudo-Gothic mode, which contradicted the Palladian pomposity of the architectural establishment of his youth and the Adamesque fantasies popular in the 1770s.

It is a little plaything house... the prettiest bable yox ever saw. It is set in enameled meadows, with fittree hedges... Dowagers as plenty as foundlies inhabit all around, and Pope’s ghost is just now skimming under my window by a most poetical moonlight. [11]

Rather like du Pont’s lifetime venture at Winterthur, Walpole spent forty-four years rebuilding. These additions included a gallery, cloister, Oratory, and the Beaucerc Tower, which contained drawings by Lady Diana Beaucerc for Walpole’s play The Mysterious Mother. Like du Pont’s later exercise, Walpole pursued what Sauvarez Smith calls an “exclusionary mythology, recreating different periods of architecture from room to room”. The building was, he writes, “a monument to the complexity of Walpole’s own imagination”, and the collections assembled at Strawberry Hill took twenty-four days to auction upon Walpole’s death. In old age Walpole described his “small capricious house” as “a sketch by a beginner”. Walpoleian scholar W.S. Lewis described Strawberry Hill in 1934 as “assembled rather than built”; J. Mordaunt Crook felt that it was “design by transcription”. The almost crude appearance of Strawberry Hill from the exterior, which in its rambling connections reminds me of the equally lumpen exterior of that of du Pont’s Winterthur, makes this architecture which complicates the logic of inside and outside, of public and private, or visible and invisible. Timothy Mowl has interpreted the choice of gothic forms and detailing as a war of style, in which the homosexual outsider Walpole attacked the values and norms of his father’s generation, creating an introspective and fantastical retreat. Sauvarez Smith interprets this as Walpole’s reaction to Robert Adam’s “uniformity” and popularity and in a very useful construction, he suggests that Strawberry Hill “allowed visitors to interpret the furnishings of a room as a form of masquerade.” As a space of the night, a liminal entertainment, and one of the most popular cultural forms of the period, ideas of the bounded masque ball must have appealed to Walpole, whose letters are viewed as one of the main sources for analysis of this event. It is possible that the taste for masquerade, which manifested itself in forms ranging from portrait painting to nightly diversions, also drove a new conception of interior design. How fitting that one of my subjects, Gustav III of Sweden, an obsessively vain masquer who even developed a national costume for his courtiers based on Van Dyck dress, met his untimely end assassinated by a masked enemy whilst he attended his own Opera.

Despite plenty of evidence to the contrary, Walpole’s man-loving man status was ignored and even rebuffed until the 1960s. His chief biographer of the inter-war years, W. S. Lewis, the famous Walpole collector and editor of the 48-volume Yale edition of the Letters, interpreted Walpole’s relationships as gentlemanly and platonic. Mowl’s recent biography has rejected this position, calling Walpole “one of the most successful deviant infiltrators that the English establishment has ever produced”. Mowl indicates that Walpole had a loving teenage relationship with Henry Fiennes-Clinton, 9th Earl of Lincoln and later 2nd Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyme, who subse-
quently married; a group of personal letters survives. The pair were painted in Venice, a notable queer space, in companion portraits, by Rosalba Carriera (1741), the significant woman painter in pastels. Walpole was part of a network of bachelors with same sex inclinations, including the poet Thomas Gray, with whom Walpole took the Grand Tour between 1739 and 1741, and whose work Walpole published on his private press, and the architect John Chute, who designed a part of Walpole’s house.

Timothy Mowl argues that Walpole’s legacy, in permitting thousands of middle-class tourists to see his villa, was to make the picturesque as building the world around it, available to Victorian taste. In terms of the history of furnishings, the collections at Strawberry Hill also fuelled an interest in fantastical and incongruous juxtaposition. Betsky notes that in the early nineteenth century, queers “turned palaces into quasmuseums”, with designs by Hope, and Percier and Fontaine, looking

as if you had peeked behind the heavy curtains of daily life to find a space of fantasy... the inhabitant could mirror himself or herself in idealized human forms and luxurious stage sets of a royal life.19

This is a useful corrective to the idea that the Gothic was a stylistic impasse, a quandary, or simply folly.

WILLIAM BECKFORD: ‘LOST IN VAPOUR... ALL WAS ESSENCE’

Betsky’s monograph Queer Space foregrounds William Beckford as the greatest “builder of queer spaces in nineteenth-century England”.20 Like Walpole, the son of a powerful and wealthy grandee, Beckford published an eccentric novel, Vathek, an Orientalist tale of incest and murder. In 1796 Beckford commenced building the grandest home in England, Fonthill Abbey. Like Walpole’s Strawberry Hill, Gustav III’s Haga and du Pont’s Winterthur, it was outside urban space and scrutiny, Fonthill being on the edge of a wild landscape. Designed by architect James Wyatt, Fonthill included an enormous entrance hall with a correspondence 276 foot tower that collapsed repeatedly during building. As Beckford ecstatically wrote in a letter, to look up in to the tower,

was lost in vapour... all was essence – the slightest approach to summation was here un tolerated – monotonity of every kind was banished.21

Beckford, who was the subject of a public and scandalous love affair with a man, created, Betsky writes,

an enclosed world that defined him in opposition and in serious relation to the world around him.22

Of his building at Fonthill, Beckford wrote in a letter of the line of apartments and apparently endless passages extending from it on either side that were all vaulted.23

To Betsky, Beckford is a bridge between old and new world cultures, Betsky jumping fairly hastily in his analysis on to Ludwig II of Bavaria; the symbolists and decadents Huysmans. Jean des Essenies, Oscar Wilde; ending up somewhere in the 20th century with the architecture of Bruce Goff. This is an interesting lineage which suggests that the middle class home had a queer side to it.24 In this sense Betsky reveals that his work owes more to twentieth-century studies of popular culture than a focus on historical research. But in making his risky argument he opened up an important discursive space within the study of interior design.

GUSTAV III: ‘HE LOVES ALL KINDS OF ORNAMENTS’

An interest in reflection, introspection and play also characterised the reign of Gustav III (1746-92), modernising enlightenment King of Sweden (1771-92). Gustav III’s life combined a rather naive sense of statecraft and attempts to link his reign to the earlier Vasa dynasty, with grandiose projects of architecture and design, his interests ranging from his own amateur architectural sketches to developing distinctive national court and even children’s dress.25 Gustav III’s vanity and liking for courtier males has been presented by some historians as evidence of sexual transgression. Contemporaries noted his indifference to women and preference for men, including an entourage of male favourites, notably Gustav Mauritius Armfelt. His own sister-in-law claimed that “through his own exulted example” he helped spread in Sweden “this vice of sleeping with men, which hitherto had been almost unknown here”.26 Other letters exist in which Gustav is described having alternative tastes, not unusual for a period which believed all men were capable of a sin to which they would hopefully not fall prone.27 His place in queer history is contentious and would be widely disputed by many scholars in Sweden. Various terms are used to describe him, from bisexual to homosexual. The idea presented in a surviving caricature by a detractor, suggesting that he did not father the heir to the throne, is not an uncommon idea in early modern society. Perhaps the emphatic virulence of the presentation is unusually emphatic. Leaving the official record of portraiture aside, there also exists several intriguing character sketches, notably a fine rendering in which Gustav transforms from man to woman and back again. This idea of a floating or third gender is similar to the one which was attached to Walpole and which has been pursued in the important text by Gilbert Herdt, Third Gender.28

Approximately 300 drawings of architectural schemes survive by Gustav III, highly unusual for a monarch of that time.29 Gustav III paid attention to public buildings and churches, gardens and palaces, but his particular legacy is a tiny villa at Haga outside Stockholm. Haga was acquired in 1771 as a garden estate and the King’s pavilion designed in an unusual collaboration between the King, artist-designer Louis Masreliez and architect Olof Tempelman. The unusual nature of Haga, which appears temporary, has led some historians to argue that it was indeed that, intended as accommodation while a much grander palace was built nearby. The most recent historiography argues that Haga was never intended as a temporary structure, but as “clearly exclusive dwelling for the King”.30 Much of the decoration was painted on thin paper; an imitation spruce plinth in one room suggested the Roussean joy of the origins of architecture. It was in Gustav’s reign that pictorial art was transformed

from something attached to the walls as a separate entity to an integral part of the interior architecture.31

This blurring of wall and decoration, which has been part of

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both the Baroque and Rococo traditions in French culture, also
characterised the schemes of Walpole and Beckford, but
through the use of sculptural elements, gothic fluting and dam-
ask wallpapers rather than neo-classical painted grotesques.
The issue of decoration is always vitally by the separation of archi-
tecture and interior decoration; Walpole, Beckford and Gustav
III, in drawing it together, in diminishing the architectural pres-
ence of their private homes, emphasised this charge.

this queer space of tents containing a feminized classi-
cism that acted as the setting for an archaeological
display quickly became subsumed in mainstream mid-
dle-class culture. Queers... began to collect so vor-
ciously that the collections took over the architecture.
They created stage versions of their lives that repli-
cated their heritage and social station.30

Decoration was not a problematic category in the eighteenth
century; it was requisite for polite urban society. Nineteenth-
century bourgeois men still bought furniture, paintings, wall-
hangings, but they were to do it through a principle of investiga-
tion rather than pleasure. 33 As the enlightenment man was
asked to think about the architecture of nature (Linnæus) and
systems, so he was still in charge of the parts and structures, but
not of the way in which elements looked.

At Haga the dining hall and study seem almost modest com-
pared to contemporary palace design, but the principle space at
Haga is the Mirror-Room. Described as “one of the most re-
markable Swedish room creations of the 18th [sic] Century
[sic],”, architectural historians seem to struggle to account for
its impact.

We have already mentioned how these environments
followed the prevailing fashion of the times but it is
worth noting their extra-ordinary quality, both in

terms of the individual items and the overall compo-
sition of the rooms.34

With windows diving down to floor level and a view across the
lake, the space takes some of the chaste experiments conducted at
the Petit Trianon or by Camon in Russia much further. Like
Strawberry Hill, the neo-classical exterior of Haga is fairly un-
remarkable, and is not concerned with a classical notion of de-
corum. Despite some interior paintings allegorical of the King
as a triumphant hero, it contains no portrait of the King; “his
personal presence was needed to complete the allegory”.35 The
interior, with exquisite wall painting by Maresiel, has the ef-
fact of a set or a jewel box and it should be noted here Gustav
III’s love of diamonds – “he loves all kinds of ornaments, espe-
cially jewels” wrote his sister-in-law. One of the sober histori-
ans of Gustav III notes that this comment “has certainly contri-
buted to our picture of the King as a somewhat effeminate
man”.36 Within one of his dwellings was placed a piece of fur-
niture by Georg Haupt which is quite famous within Swedish
decorative arts studies. Known as the ‘page bed’, the initial G in
the centre of the marquetry indicates that this item belonged to
Gustav either as King or Crown prince, and “the bed can there-
fore be assumed to be the sleeping place for a page”.37 It is
known that when the Queen did not sleep with him, the page
slept at the foot of his bed, and not on the floor like the pages of
Louis XVI. The bed, which has a counterpart in Castle Howard,
requires more analysis but I’m going to present it here as a
queer space in itself, one which seems to defy analysis in the
historical record. Introspection and play, in the case of Gustav
III, proved fatal. The final queer space of Gustav III’s life was
his death. Gustav III delighted in acting, the opera, masquing
and the theatre. He met his end conducting this activity, assassini-
nated by an enemy whilst he watched his own Opera. The
leather chair in which he bled to death and the assassin’s mask
are grimly retained in the royal collection, a material-culture
shrine to decadence. The funeral matched that of Nelson in its
theatrical majesty.

WINTERTHUR: MY QUEER SPACE
Winterthur is a famous estate created near Wilmington, Dela-
ware, by Henry Francis du Pont (1880-1969) and his father
Henry Algernon du Pont (1838-1926). Renowned for its ency-
clopedic collection of North American and English seventeenth
and eighteenth century decorative arts, I knew something of
what to expect upon visiting. Winterthur includes 175 period
rooms and more than 85,000 objects, spanning 1640 to 1860.
Henry Francis du Pont combined the turn of the century colonial
revival with what were then new museological impulses, as a precocious and
innovative collector, or as a founder and funder of American
material culture studies. Du Pont’s rooms were dressed with
extraordinary detail to the textiles and trimmings appropriate to
what was then understood of their respective date and style,
with museum quality flat textiles cut up to re-upholster chairs
and lambrequins. Winterthur was not built as a museum, as
Calloway suggests, but as a museum within a home.39 Du Pont
and his guests lived, ate and moved around the rooms, his ob-
sessional attention to detail extending to the curtains and bed-
hangings which were changed every season, some chosen to
echo the flowers and plantings in the landscaped grounds be-
yond. Hothouse flowers, hundreds of sets of dishes, and dozens
of matching sets of napery marked his every meal and entertain-
ment. I knew that such behaviour in the interwar years did not
mark out a man as gay or queer; that to suggest that fastidious
behaviour should be conflated with any notion of a gay or queer
temperament was in effect a form of homophobia.

After the 1930s the ‘period room’ movement went into abey-
ance, until it was revived in the 1980s.40 Winterthur is now the
favourite destination of scholars of furniture forms and dowa-
gers seeking decorating ideas. Textile and home-furnishing
companies pay licence fees to reproduce parts of the collection
to satisfy the demand for conservative decorating styles based
on tradition, historicism, regionalism and nationalism. But as I
stood that winter day in du Pont’s principle dining room, one of
dozens strewed throughout a two hundred room house, I realized
that I was not standing in a private museum but rather a queer
space. The room, although furnished with ‘correct’ furniture and
objects, was emphatically theatrical and hyperbolic. More Cecil
Beaton than Mayflower, I realized that its spatial characteristics,
its chinoiserie textile treatments, its apertures, strange scale and
lack of relationship to other connecting rooms, corridors and
suites, created queer space.41 Mr du Pont almost seemed to
scopt with his furniture.42 It was more movie lot than resi-
dence. As I toured the house with the Curator of Textiles,
moved from one set-like space to another, I enquired about an
article in American House and Garden which had seemed to
'out' Mr du Pont in its discussion of his dinner parties. Mr du Pont, I learned, frequently entertained privately in this set-like vista of rooms. The curators also knew that much archival material concerning this American baron of industry, whose fortune derived from the Du Pont cellulose – gunpowder and later synthesites from nylon to corian – industries, had been burned upon his death. There was enough in the archive, it was hinted, for someone to write some alternative narratives, which the curators, constrained by a genuine respect and courtesy for du Pont's legacy, were not in a position to consider.

As I considered this house, which is not presented to audiences as an idyll, but rather as an example of extreme wealth and period choices, it began to connect in my mind with the earlier exercises of Walpole and Beckford. Their schemes had connected collecting with eccentric planning and a complete focus on interiority. Vast sums of money were spent on the interior of Wintertthur, Mr du Pont becoming famous in the 1920s for the proceeds of his art objects for sale for well provenanced pieces. (Walpole, too, had been obsessed with provenance). The exterior of his house, which is generally not foregrounded in the picture books of Wintertthur, resembles a not very well detailed and rambling upmark: holiday Inn. Up to nine stories high in parts, its wings, projections and dormers were designed to hold the growing collection of period-room paneling, hallways and foyers within, and unlike other North American mansions of that period, it lacks a focus on external presentation. I would suggest here that an avid passion for the interior can lead to the disfiguring of the exterior, that the relationship between the transient and the permanent seems to be inverted. Du Pont, it seemed, had preferred an internal life. As I considered this approach to planning, which is generally not remarked upon in the Winterthur literature, I was reminded of other eccentric but influential episodes in the history of architecture and design which I have described in my paper today. Winterthur, despite its size, is less a mansion than a villa. Du Pont's tendency towards exclusiveness amongst his extraordinary set pieces, his obsessive rearranging of the mise en scene, and his ultimate success in appealing to establishment taste, indicates a link from Enlightenment to modern cultures of interior design. As Halperin argues, queer gives us a horizon to think through the past and the present. To Halperin queer is a positionality, at odds with the normal, the legitimate dominant. There is nothing particular to which it necessarily refers. To practice a stylitics of the self ultimately means to cultivate that part of oneself. 43

I'm going to refuse to show you an image of Winterthurs's interior. It brightly lit official photograph conceals. Winterthur was queer space for me, my space of arguing. I was seeing queer.


2 Historian David Kuchta has argued that post-1688 English aristocrats pre-empted the middle-class and puritanical challenge that their rule was tainted by luxury by promoting a more moderate appearance than their continental and Catholic counterparts. David Kuchta, The three-piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550-1850. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002, pp. 54-78.


6 Betsky, Queer Space, p. 62.


10 The Gothic was long held to be the antithesis of Classical ideals and harmony.


13 Saumarez Smith, Eighteenth-century decoration: design and the domestic interior in England, p. 237. Walpole's own collecting was mirrored in the early-twentieth century by William Sheldon Lewis and his wife Annie Burr Auchincloss, who created at Farmington, Connecticut, a type of research shrine to Walpole and the 18th century.


16 Of the family estate Houghton, Walpole wrote to Chute: "I literally seem to have murdered a man whose name was ennui for his ghost is ever before me". Lewis 1973 cited in Gervase Jackson-Stops (ed), The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 414. Strawberry Hill was purchased in 1747, a house dating from 1698.

17 Saumarez Smith, Eighteenth-century decoration: design and
the domestic interior in England, p. 240.


31 Betsky, *Queer Space*, p. 66.

32 Betsky, *Queer Space*, p. 67. Betsky is correct to note that the crimson and gold interiors were based on both orientalist and gothic sources, but he is incorrect to claim that Beckford was the first great English collector and antiquary. This was undoubtedly Walpole.

33 Letter by Beckford, Betsky, *Queer Space*, p. 70.

34 Betsky, *Queer Space*, p. 70.

35 Betsky, *Queer Space*, p. 70.

36 Betsky, *Queer Space*, p. 92.

37 Encouraged by the Empress of Russia, Gustav III formulated and actively encouraged the adoption of a national dress for his couriers from 1778. For men this suit of black trimmed with red or blue with white combined French knee breeches with a Spanish cloak and archaic doublet with shoulder slashing, the features indicating Gustav III’s personal interest in masquerade and fancy dress, attempts to link his reign to an earlier tradition, and perhaps a personal vanity, in that the tight fitting sleeves of French coats did not suit his shoulder deformity.


32 Betsky, *Queer Space*, p. 66.

33 This idea was formed in discussion with Dr Giorgio Riello, University of Warwick.


38 The American wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art was opened in 1924-5 and all major United States’ museums began to collect American-colonial decorative arts in this period.


40 Philippe de Montebello, ‘Introduction’, in *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996, p. 10. American preservationist activity has been described as ‘almost exclusively concerned in the late twenties and the thirties with the colonial image’. In 1923 Henry Ford purchased and restored the Wayside Inn, Concord; in 1925 J. Pierpoint Morgan purchased the Wallace Nutting collection of pilgrim century furniture for the Wadsworth Atheneum (Nutting’s *Furniture of the Pilgrim Century, 1620-1720* was published in Boston, 1921); in 1926 John D. Rockefeller Jr. began the purchase and restoration of buildings in Williamsburg. This yearning for a pre-industrial past bears a close relation to the aims and ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement, the circles of which included the first earnest collectors of antiques.

41 I do not wish to suggest that Winterthur embodies any sense of camp, although much of the scheme is hyperbolic despite its attempts at historical accuracy. It is inadequate as a concept to describe what I sensed and felt at Winterthur. ‘Camp’ is well understood as a style of politics for dress, posing, navigating the city, decorating in 1930s Hollywood (See Moe Meyer (ed), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994). But it is less well understood or analysed as a strategy for creating interiors, which also has a base in regional practices – what may be ‘normal’ in Manhattan is not ‘normal’ in Paris or Sydney. Mowl’s anachronistic use of the term ‘camp’ to describe the strategies of Horace Walpole has been very thoroughly condemned in Haggerty’s subtle reading of male-male relationships, in which he argues that Enlightenment ‘men of feeling’ from the upper classes were capable of a ‘sensibility … so utterly eroticised as to make distinctions between
what is and what is not sexual almost beside the point'. (George
E. Haggerty, Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the
Eighteenth Century, Columbia University Press, p. 154). Hagg-
erty argues that men of class and privilege such as Walpole
and Beckford were able to “articulate his desire in terms that
reconfigured male-male affection as romantic love”. Haggerty
focuses on a textual and literary reading of the traces of these
lives, to which I would add the aspect of their built environment

Photography tends to flatten out the contents of a room and
contradict du Pont’s lighting intentions, which included the use
of special electrified candles. Some of the rooms now appear
rather gemütlich, but others are stupendous exercises in the
painterly juxtaposition of Chinese screens and wallpapers, huge
scale matching floral arrangements and symmetrical volumes
filled with sculptural groupings of furniture.

Halperin’s far-reaching argument in which he argues that
oppositional practice extends beyond any simplistic notion of
political action occurs in his Saint Foucault: “it is from the ec-
centric positionality occupied by the queer subject that it may be
possible to envision a variety of possibilities of reordering the
relations among sexual behaviours, erotic identities, construc-
tions of gender, forms of knowledge, regimes of enunciation,
logics of representation modes of construction, and practices of
community, for restructuring, that is, the relations among
power, truth and desire.” Halperin, Saint Foucault, p. 67.

Halperin, Saint Foucault, p. 76