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## Laughing (until/because) it Hurts: Finding Time for ‘Queer Belonging’ and ‘Queer Joy’ through Art and Aesthetics

Amy Keating

Western University, akeatin@uwo.ca

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Amy Keating  
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In addition to existing in a world devised to punish deviance from systemic norms, marginalized groups are also expected to be the leaders of systemic deconstruction and destruction. These burdens are heavy. How, then, do queers find time for the inane and frivolous, for laughter, or for the opportunity to connect and relate without the immediate pressure of socio-political reformation? When reformation is critical for survival, how do queer folks make time for joy?

My dissertation considers contemporary art works made for and/or by queers within the reality of systemic heteronormativity, capitalism, racism, colonialism, and ableism pervasive in our North American context. By critically reflecting upon four artistic objects/moments/performances and their relationships to queer history and community, my research illuminates the creativity and wisdom of queer artists as they create their own spaces of belonging. In a world "unhappy" with queerness, art and aesthetics make room for queer joy.