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Historically, "queer" was the slur used against those who were perceived to be or made to feel abnormal. Beginning in the 1980s, "queer" was reappropriated and embraced as a badge of honor. While queer draws its politics and affective force from the history of non-normative, gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities, it is not equivalent to these categories, nor is it an identity. Rather, it offers a strategic undercutting of the stability of identity and of the dispensation of power that shadows the assignment of categories and taxonomies. Artists who identify their practices as queer today call forth utopian and dystopian alternatives to the ordinary, adopt outlaw stances, embrace criminality and opacity, and forge unprecedented kinships, relationships, loves, and communities.

Rather than a book of queer theory for artists, this is a book of artists' queer tactics and infectious concepts. By definition, there can be no singular "queer art." Here, in the first Documents of Contemporary Art anthology to be centered on artists' writings, numerous conversations about queer practice are brought together from diverse individual, social and cultural contexts. Together these texts describe and examine the ways in which artists have used the concept of queer as a site of political and institutional critique, as a framework to develop new families and histories, as a spur to action, and as a basis from which to declare inassimilable difference