



The Spiv and the Architect: Unruly Life in Postwar London

Richard Hornsey

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As London emerged from the devastation of the Second World War, planners and policymakers sought to rebuild the city in ways that would reshape the behavior of its citizens as much as it would its buildings and infrastructure—a program defined by a strong emphasis on civic order and conservative values of national community. One of the groups most significantly affected by this new, moralistic climate of reformation and renewal was queer men, whom the police, the media, and lawmakers targeted as an urgent urban problem by marking their lives and desires as criminal and deviant.

In The Spiv and the Architect, Richard Hornsey examines how queer men legitimized, resisted, and reinvented this ambitious reconstruction program, which extended from the design of basic public spaces and municipal libraries to private living rooms and home decor. From their association with the urban stereotype of the spiv (slang for a young petty criminal who lived by his wits and shirked legitimate work) and vilification in the tabloids as perverts to the assimilated homosexuals within reformist psychology, Hornsey details how these efforts to transform London fundamentally restructured the experiences and identities of gay men in the city and throughout the country.

Providing the first critical history of this cultural moment, *In The Spiv and the Architect* weaves together a vast archive of sources—canvases and photobooth self-portraits by the painter Francis Bacon, urban planning documents and drawings, popular fiction and films, autobiographical and psychological accounts of homosexuality, design exhibitions about the modern British home, and the library books defaced by the playwright Joe Orton—to present both a radically revised account of homosexuality in postwar London and an important new narrative about mid-twentieth-century British modernity.



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