

Why I Am Not a Fine Artist
By Princess Hans

I am a hundred and fifty years old this year.

I am not a male or a female, at the moment, but I have been both.
I have plans to be female again, but as yet have no definite date set for this.

I came to New Zealand to learn about Fine Art.

In my English dictionary it says this;

Fine art: Visual art as primarily subject to aesthetic criteria or judgements of beauty and meaningfulness, specifically, painting, sculpture, drawing, watercolour, graphics, and architecture.

I think my art is fine. There is nothing really wrong with it.

Last week I saw a human making art by kissing the wall.
She kissed the wall and wrote the sentence "Once is never enough" (in kisses).
Then she had a drink and hit herself in the head.

I told her that I did not understand the art, and that was the truth.

I always tell the truth. I only lie in bed.

Identity is a central concern of contemporary art. For citizens of post-capitalist society, one of the greatest points of conflict is the assertion of identity through individual choice. What do I choose to value? What kind of person do I want to be? Who am I? We look to the world around us to find where we might fit, who we contrast to, who we align with. Identity is inferred via a multitude of components, not least race, ethnicity, age, class and sexuality. Arguably the most crucial component of identity definition is our sex. My punctum into critiquing identity in and through art practice was gender theory. This, as I will show, opens into a rich post-modern understanding of identity, and provides a useful tool for dissecting identity in art practice.

This paper has been written in response to two questions raised during discussion of the nexus of my performance-based practice and queer theory. With regards to my performance persona the question was - "I'm sure it's fun for people to see you dressed up like this, and no doubt you enjoy the attention, but what does anybody really get from it?". With regards queer theory, "What does this have to do with art?"

I recently had the privilege of sharing correspondence with Amelia Jones, who co-convened a symposium at the University of Manchester in April of this year entitled "Theorising Queer Visualities". I asked her opinion of the question "What does queer theory have to do with art?", to which she replied;

That's an idiotic question, if you don't mind me saying so. All art is saturated in and by threads of our identifications – otherwise, what would it mean? What would be the point? We don't engage with art because it's an object; we engage with it because it promises to deliver a subject to us – and thus, all aspects of identity, including perhaps most pressingly, the sexual, are central to how it functions.

While answering these questions may, for some of us, be somewhat obsolete, the fact that they are being raised indicates an ongoing need to engage in these dialogues. It points further to a role of art to engage audiences in dialogue with definitions of identity.

By the time I was four years old I had become completely enamoured with Wonder Woman, and fully intended to grow up to be Wonder Woman as a day job. I went to kindergarten each day wearing blue stubbies and a red t-shirt, with a piece of yellow wool tucked at my hip for my lariat of truth. Every day fresh bullet-proof bracelets and boomerang tiara were constructed out of cardboard. At the age of four it had not yet occurred to me that the odds of me growing up to be Wonder Woman were limited given that a. she was fictional and b. I was a boy who would presumably grow up to be a Wonder Man, if a wonder anything at all.

Almost a decade later, Judith Butler's seminal work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* presented a new theoretical model for understanding and critiquing gendered identity. Extrapolating from Foucault, and building directly on the concerns of Nietzsche, she added weight to the argument that the subject is the effect of action, rather than the cause of it, the action in this case being the (hetero)normative installation of gendered identity.

Butler identified what she referred to as “gender performativity” – the suggestion that none of the signifiers by which we classically recognise gender are inherent in our bodily sex. Gender, she posited, is a fiction, a façade constructed via a process of recognising and participating in a complex series of repetitious social codes through which we learn, and then ‘perform’ our gender. Reflexively, our performance contributes to the ongoing process of coding what it means to be female and male, masculine and feminine. These codes are constantly evolving to reflect or, perhaps, suit various political, social and sexual developments. In Butler’s eyes, ‘how to be’ male or female is a rehearsed and then performed dialogue with our culture.

By the time I was six years old, I had come to understand something of these social codes. Until that point, as evidenced by my Wonder Woman blind-spot, I had had little conscious concern for my gender and the roles I was supposed to be performing.

With primary school came new social considerations as boys and girls began to divide more distinctly. A typical method of building a circle of playmates for Big Lunch was to link arms with someone with whom you wanted to play, decide on a game, and gather comrades by parading through the school calling, for example “Who wants to play Star Wars? No girls”. Such scenarios were linguistically challenging for the group of girls I played with – requiring constructions like “Who wants to play Lastics? No boys except Ryan”. At a certain point this became somewhat uncomfortable, and I clearly remember the day I informed my best friend Anne Blom “We can’t play together so much anymore, we have to start doing things we’re supposed to do. You have to go and play netball and I have to learn how to play four-square”.

Whether this was the main cause I’ll never know, but Anne Blom and I never did get married as our parents had hoped we might.

Butler’s theory constituted a breakthrough for many groups traditionally perceived, both from within and without, to be marginalised. Of most relevance to our young Wonder Woman were its implications for people who had been giving ‘bad performances’ of their gender roles. Finally a framework existed to understand the suffering caused to those who either refused to, or were unable to fit the norm. Once the system of control had been exposed, it could begin to be dismantled.

Almost a year after the publication of *Gender Trouble*, Teresa de Lauretis coined the term ‘queer theory’, and a radical shift in identity politics was thrust upon academia. Queer theory was a natural effect of the wave of postmodernism crashing over gay and lesbian studies, itself a relatively new branch of academia. Offering an alternative to firmly modernist definitions of gender and sexuality, queer theory rejected binary notions of male/female, masculine/ feminine, heterosexual/homosexual.

It raised, and continues to raise the hackles of some members of gay and lesbian, and women’s rights movements. Contrary to key political objectives of these groups, queer theory does not present an argument for tolerance, inclusiveness or even acceptance. In fact it has no interest in engaging in such dialogues - the stance it takes is far more radical.

A firmly post-structuralist theory, queer theory outright rejects the notion that gender and sexual normalcy exist. It follows then that it has no interest in locating itself 'on the margins of' or 'as an alternative to' a heteronormative model. Queer theory states that there are no categories of identity which could conceivably be considered real. Without categories, there can be no 'norm', and inclusiveness thus becomes a moot point.

In terms of aesthetics and visual culture, queer theory makes things as problematic for art theorists as it does for die-hard gay activists. The now common usage of 'queer' as a verb - 'to queer' or 'queering' work, implies methodological unpredictability. Indeterminacy is one of its constituent characteristics, part of its clout depends on its resistance to definition. Queer art (or queer anything for that matter) can take any form, appear in any media, for any number of audience members.

My interest in queer theory was piqued by years of people telling me how closely my working methods and themes reflected it. Unsurprisingly perhaps, initial readings did little but reassert, in different words, things which I for years had taken as given.

In whichever discipline I have created work, my art has always had social transformation at its core. It follows that of most interest to me was queer theory's championing of genderfuck performance (an area in which I was already working) in critiquing socialised gender codes. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler advocates the parody of drag performance as means of critiquing gender performativity. Mikhail Bakhtin would no doubt be in full agreement, suggesting in *The Dialogical Imagination* that parody arises in resistance to the tyranny of singular understandings of reality, and serves to point out the limitations of particular discourses.

In *Undoing Gender*, the 2004 follow-up to *Gender Trouble*, Butler revisits her earlier assertions. Drag, she argues, utilises parody to draw attention to the received norms of gender, and highlights the possibilities for shifts to alternative models. "The point to emphasise here..." she iterates,

...is not that drag is subversive of gender norms, but that we live, more or less implicitly, with received notions of reality, implicit accounts of ontology, which determine what kinds of bodies and sexualities will be considered real and true, and which kind will not. This differential effect of ontological presuppositions on the embodied life of individuals has consequential effects. And what drag can point out is that (1) this set of ontological presuppositions is at work, and (2) that it is open to rearticulation.

Thus the bridge from parody to politics is built, and for my concerns as an artist, the bridge from theory to practice.

Butler further asserts that while theory is transformative, it itself is not sufficient for social and political transformation. Theory must be presupposed, and then implemented via "...actions, sustained labour and *other forms of social intervention*". The role of art in relation to queer theory is thereby self-explanatory. The question answered here is "What has art got to do with queer theory?", if not the inverse.

In my first piece this semester, the audience was placed in a classroom situation. I read a dictionary definition of the word “binary”, in German. Naturally, for the people in the audience, I was speaking another language, talking in terms they could neither understand nor relate to. The audience was then made to answer what were for them equally meaningless questions with positive or negative answers, basing their answers on the information they had heard.

People complained.

They found it overly controlling, artificial, alienating, and slightly wanky.

This is, oddly enough, exactly the experience I have of heterocentric culture.

It had seemed to me for some time that with any artistic gender-bending, from Virginia Woolf’s transgendered Orlando, through the drag works of Paul McCarthy and Andy Warhol, to John Cameron Mitchell’s Hedwig of Hedwig and the Angry Inch – the question being raised was “what does it mean to be a man, what does it mean to be a woman?”.

Since my performance work is frequently based in gender and sexual transgression, an obvious initial question to expand of my artistic practice was “what other questions could be being raised by performed gender?” In the interests of being truly queer I soon after chose to go a step further, taking the issue away from gender, and posed the broader question “what issues are raised by performed identity?”.

We are speaking now of performance persona or, to use the theatre term, character.

Efrat Tseëlon, in introducing *Masquerade and Identities*, points out that drag serves to problematise more areas than just gender identity, it critique essential identity itself. Interestingly, the Latin word ‘persona’ means ‘mask’. The dialectic of the mask - concealing and revealing - calls into question our very presumptions of fixed identity. It highlights our imposition of a distinction between truth and non-truth. In much the same way as drag serves to highlight performativity of gender, mask highlights the performativity of identity itself.

To construct what we would classically recognise as a ‘mask’, one must make a number of aesthetic decisions. What do I want my mask to be made of - clay, fabric, card? Once these rudimentary decisions are made one turns to questions like “what *kind* of person do I want this to be?” Miserly people have hooked noses; jolly people have fat faces. Etc. What *kind* of person has bushy eyebrows? What *kind* of person has thin lips? Soon we have created a face that can be recognised as a ‘type’. We put on the mask and ‘become’ this person. In other words, creating a traditional mask is a process of attributing identity based on physical characteristics. It is the literal construction of an identity.

Taken further, we could argue that the use of makeup is a physical way in which many put on a mask each day. Concealer. Foundation. Suddenly my real face is no longer visible. I have affected a persona, even if the persona exists explicitly only as a

new skin tone. Now I am the kind of person who has beautiful skin. I have changed my identity by changing my appearance.

One artist who used constructed masks was obviously Leigh Bowery, who invaded London's club scene with his avant-garde, costumed characters. His carnivalesque, body-morphing costumes often hid his real body completely. Bowery's use of clothing to distort his true form created obvious personas, but again, reflexively, where should the line of differentiation between art and life fall? With every item of clothing we put on, something is hidden. Viewed as an aesthetic reflection of our personal sense of self, each item becomes a piece of costume.

To steal from Virginia Woolf, articulating Orlando's awareness of the potential plasticity of this two-fold process "...it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking."

Australian artist Suzanne Treister plays very consciously with the notion of identity in her construction of her persona Rosalind Brodsky. Much like my persona, the Princess Hans, time travelling Rosalind has her own website dedicated to archiving her stories. Online, one can read of her research she is conducting at the Institute of Militrionics and Advanced Time Interventionality, and see pictures of her time-travelling adventures to Bolshevik Russia, her attempts to rescue her grandparents from Nazi Germany. One can also read transcripts of her counselling sessions with Freud, Lacan and Kristeva, all of whom agree that she is delusional. There are photographs of the time-travelling outfits on display, and details of Rosalind's band's tour dates. Treister's work implores us to make decisions about what of identity is real and what is not. In the same way that a photo-shopped image can bring us to challenge the validity photograph as a purveyor of truth, a performance persona who insists they are a real person can bring us to question our own insistence on fixed identity.

Are these aesthetic decisions - makeup, clothing, behaviour - a conscious process of deception, are they deliberate refusals to reveal some monolithic internal 'truth'? Or is identity a massive, evolving, situationally sensitive process, of which we can only display a limited number of facets at a time?

If we have an 'I', if inherent identity exists, then it can only be reflected in our clothing, our language, our mannerisms. While these illustrate our perceived existence of an 'I', they do not demonstrate *the 'I' itself*.

In this sense, the masquerade characters we meet at the carnival or the dress-up party do not present a fictionalised alternative to our 'reality', they merely exaggerate what is going on every day. As RuPaul famously puts it, "We're born naked, and the rest is drag". Lacan agrees - we are born nothing, we construct the 'we' later.

We turn now, to my performance art. In defining performance art, it seems the fashion to begin by stating what it is not. It is not, most implicitly, theatre. It is often said that

one of the primary differences between performance art and theatre is the absence of a character – that the performer is presenting themselves as ‘themselves’. In terms of a queer understanding of identity, this is a somewhat simplistic distinction.

It is, we assume, not the usual pastime of Marina Abramovic to sit about her apartment on a big pile of beef bones. One hopes that Paul McCarthy does not spend most of his life covered in mustard and ketchup wearing a Mad mask. The likelihood of Carolee Schneeman regularly removing bodies of text from her vagina is fairly slim, and I have yet to see David Cross afford every passerby the opportunity to jump up and down on his face.

In order to stage these performance spectacles, a conscious degree of artifice must be adopted. That is to say one cannot perform, in context with an audience, *without adopting a persona*. We could flip this sentence back on itself and say “I do not exist without an audience”. *Without You I’m Nothing* indeed, Ms Bernhard.

As mentioned, there are multiple layers to binarise within identity construction than simply gender. Age, race and class are three more obvious areas which are perceived as quantitative indicators of identity. All four of notions: gender, class, race and age, are thrown into flux by my performance persona, the Princess Hans.

If pressed, the Princess will claim to be one hundred and fifty years old. She will claim to be the last surviving member of the Austro-Hungarian Royal family. She will admit to having been male and female, at different points in her life, and will imply that she is now female. She has a hairy chest, and a beard. She has no idea that she is fictional. Much like Anna Anderson, the woman who falsely claimed to her death to be the Russian Grand Duchess Anastasia and on whom the Princess is largely based, the Princess had been lying for so long she no longer knows what the truth might be.

The conundrum is explained by the credo on the Princess’ crest - In Fabulae Veritas, truth in stories.

In our daily life it is generally presumed that we are interacting with ‘real’ people, that the ‘I’ with which we speak when communicating with the Other is a non-fictional entity. These notions can then be queered by removing this ‘façade of truth’. What I present in my work as The Princess Hans is a façade of untruth. While it may or may not be the case that I am European, it is simply inconceivable that I might be female, let alone a princess. Let alone one hundred and fifty years old.

As a construct, the fact that the persona has a singular name, “The Princess Hans” does not presuppose a cohesive, singular identity. The persona becomes a vehicle for creating artworks – performance, film, photography, music, costuming – whatever is useful. It is in a permanent process of becoming, and can be expressed in multitudinous ways.

In a recent dialogical work, The Princess was presented to a tutor who, she had been informed, was a noted photographer. She began polite conversation “I am told you are a photographer?”. The person responded “*I do some photography, yes*”. Consciously or not, when presented with the Princess the participant rejected a simple definition of their identity, choosing instead to define themselves by action they undertake. The

same person later bemoaned having to construct an artifice to engage with the Princess. Another in the audience called back “Isn’t that what we all do anyway?”.

That The Princess herself is unaware that she presents any conflicting identity aspects to the outside world supports one of two conclusions. Either a. this person claiming to be a Princess is delusional, or b. I am being presented with a person who is playing a game of having an identity. In this regard the lie has revealed the truth – identity is a delusion, or at least an illusion. If one acknowledges such then any human interaction in which the participants purport to have a fixed identity is a game.

As queer theory helps us understand, there is not, cannot be a ‘true self’. Any expression of self must always be reduced to conferrable components, the state of being must be filtered through the physical realities of sound, space, matter etc. Identity does not exist in physical space, it thereby is unable to be related via physical means. What can be related is at best a reflection of how it seems to *perceive* an identity, but this is closer to watching the documentation of an event than it is to actually being at it.

Art is, thereby, incapable of presenting identity.

What does this mean for the division between real and unreal identity?
Between our fact and our fiction?

There is no identity.
Or to put it another way,
What space does identity exist in?
Theoretical space.
Nowhere else.

To return, one last time, to my tutor’s assertion and question: “I’m sure it’s fun for people to see you dressed up like this, and no doubt you enjoy the attention, but what does anybody really get from it?”

There is nothing that could be gotten from my work *other than* the fake, the lie, the con, the simulacrum of identity. An alternative literally does not exist.

So, I present the lie to reveal the truth – that there is none.

Annotated bibliography

(Please note: I have annotated only the principle works that informed my paper. Readings that were more tangentially related to the paper appear after these, and are not annotated)

Bakhtin, M.M. (1968). *Rabelais and his world*. Bloomington, Indiana, U.S.A.: Indiana University Press. Translated from (1965) *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura.

Bakhtin, M.M. (1981). *The dialogical imagination: Four essays*. Edited by M. Holquist, translated by C. Emerson & M. Holquist. Austin : University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin's analysis of the novels of Rabelais presented the first critical analyses of the components of the Carnival. One of the four key sections of the book deals with the use of mask in the Carnival and the social structures this mirrors and critiques. I had previously familiarised myself with this text for its arguments of the carnival body as reflection of the social body, and revisited the text to relate to my readings on masquerade as critique of identity. His further analyses of applications of parody in literature presented in *The Dialogical Imagination* are directly mentioned in my paper.

Bernhard, S. (writer) and Boskovich, J. (writer/director) (1990). Without you I'm nothing [motion picture]. United States : MGM

Sandra Bernhard's film of her 1988 stage show presents a plethora of performance personas, all of whom seem to be Bernhard trying on different masks and projections of herself to gain audience recognition. Performing stylised, 'drag' versions of Nina Simone, Donna Summers, Diana Ross and others, she places the notion of her own identity up for grabs, blurring her fantasy and reality lives. At the climax of piece she strips to an American flag g-string and pasties, and gogo dances to Prince's "Little Red Corvette" to an almost entirely empty club lounge. Her performance is rejected by the only remaining audience member, who walks out to leave Sandra alone on the stage.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.

The book that, Butler says, was intended predominantly for a circle of friends was pivotal in the development of queer theory. It is fiercely critical of heteronormative models of understanding gender and identity, and seems to be foremost an extension feminist discourse. Taking many of its cues from Foucault, the writing is very dense and initially difficult to access. As *Gender Trouble* is cited in numerous secondary texts, I focussed mainly on coming to grips with the sections pertaining to these.

In the follow-up to *Gender Trouble*, Butler revisits much of the territory she covered 1990, and includes her recent work on gender and sexuality. It is a comparatively easier read than *Gender Trouble*. The expansion in her explanation of the relevance of drag to politics is especially well explained. The section which appears in my paper is quoted from p. 214.

Cameron Mitchell, J. (director/writer) (2001). *Hedwig and the angry inch* [motion picture]. United States : Fine Line Cinema

Initial material. The story of this rock musical centres on the character of Hedwig Robinson, who began her life as Hansel Schmidt, a boy growing up in DDR East Berlin. In the hopes of finding a better life on the other side of the Berlin Wall, he undergoes a sex change operation that leaves him with an 'angry inch' – genitalia that is neither male nor female. The story follows Hedwig's attempts to reconcile the disparate threads of her identity through her relationships and her music, attempting to locate and then rejoin her 'other half'. Inspired directly by Aristophanes' contribution in Plato's *Symposium*, sections of the film on either side of, and including the song *The Origin Of Love* were presented at my initial seminar to provide an example of queer theory, and drag as critique of gender in artistic application.

Coates, J. (2003). *Men talk: Stories in the making of masculinities*. Malden : Blackwell Publishing.

Initial text. A linguistic analysis of a collection of conversations between men, displaying the dialogical construction of gendered identity. Although this not acknowledged in the text itself, the writing can be readily understood from a perspective of gender performativity. The section '*Queerie*': *Masculinity and Homophobia* provided a practical example of gender performativity in my initial seminar.

Elliott, A. (2001). *Concepts of the self*. Cambridge : Polity Press

Initial text. Elliot sets himself the task of analysing a wide array of cultural and historical viewpoints on the self and identity. The writing is rich and in-depth, while retaining conciseness and readability. He focuses mainly on social theory and cultural analysis, locating the work of such theorists as Kristeva, Baudrillard, Freud and Foucault in relation to contemporary identity politics. He also makes a valiant attempt to concisely describe the symbiotic relationship between the individual self and society. Large sections of the book deal with sexuality and gender, and Elliot's critique of the limitations of queer theory provided one of the three main initial readings for my symposium.

Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer theory*. Dunedin : The University of Otago Press

Initial text. Jagose provides a very readable overview of queer theory as it was five years after the publication of *Gender Trouble*, and begins to examine the contestations of queer theory at the time. The main issues were still the limitations of its applications (ie still an academic idea, rather than a movement), and the problems it raised for groups wishing to remain 'binarised'. I used this text as an overview of the earlier impacts of queer theory, and to lead me into further readings. A section of the chapter *Queer* was presented as one of my initial readings.

Jenks, C. (2003). *Transgression*. London : Routledge.

Transgression examines the evolution of theory on this topic. A piece that I used extensively in my first semester essay, I revisited *Transgression's* reflections on Bakhtin and the Situationists, viewing them as case studies of relational aesthetics. Jenks' work has been central to my building an understanding of the theoretical basis of transgressive/transformative art. He provides concise and useful insights into the work of Nietzsche and Foucault, both of whom I mention in relation to Butler's work.

Kester, G.H. (2004). *Conversation pieces: Community and communication in modern art*. Berkeley : University of California Press

Kester analyses a number of works that he sees as providing examples of dialogical aesthetics (his take on relational aesthetics) in play. WochenKlasur, Littoral, Suzanne Lacy and The Art of Change are some of the artists and groups he examines in terms of their collective aims to effect social change through relational work. His examination of the conflicts that naturally arise between dialogical or relational works and traditional models of art criticism were especially helpful for my understanding of the kinds of problems I might face in my work. The dialogical piece I mention in the text was directly informed by the content of this work.

Kirsch, M.H. (2000). *Queer theory and social change*. London: Routledge

Initial text. Kirsch sets up an argument to counter Butler's assertions of the usefulness of queer theory in social change. He calls for a revision of the validity of queer theory, arguing instead for a stronger focus on community and globalism. He brings a Marxist viewpoint to identity politics, and harshly critiques Butler's assertion of parody as an effective means of bringing attention to marginalised sexualities. He concludes by calling for theorists not to reject all aspects of previous identity theory, that there is a baby in the bathwater of modernist identity politics. The chapter *Meta-identity, performativity and homophobia* was presented as one of my core readings.

Plato (n.d.). *Symposium*. Translation by T. Griffith (1989). Berkeley: University of California Press

Initial text. Plato's transcription of a dinner party at which several key philosophers present their 'takes' on the subject of love provides great insight into the construction of gendered roles in ancient Greece, and also some ironic insight into the slow reversal of these roles in contemporary life. Griffith's translation captures the casual nature of the dialogue, finding nuances of speech that are more easily understandable as 'friendly banter' to a modern audience. Aristophanes' suggestion of the mythical divisions between men and women, heterosexuality and homosexuality provides one of the core themes of the film *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, and was one of the initial readings I provided in my seminar.

Thurer, S.L. (2005). *The end of gender: a psychological autopsy*. New York: Routledge

Thurer has 25 years experience as a psychologist, and in her call for a dissolving of gender categories she references linguistics, popular culture, psychology and cultural theory. *The End of Gender* is very accessible, creating multiple links between post-structuralist theory and contemporary life. Thurer points out the current trend in mainstream culture towards gender blurring, and examines the concerns of identity definition in contemporary culture. The often misquoted line of RuPaul's which appears in the paper was taken from the introduction.

Tseëlon, E. (Ed) (2001). *Masquerade and identities: essays on gender, sexuality and marginality*. London: Routledge

One of the key texts in informing my paper, this collection of essays from writers from varied backgrounds provides the basis for the central section of my piece. It discusses the use of mask in the expression of marginalised identities, drawing lines between such disparate themes as the Carnival fool, the use of voice and clothing as mask, Jewish folk theatre, and the

transgendered identities presented in the film 'The Crying Game'. The collection also provides a sample of interpretations of the use of mask from the traditional and the contemporary. The entire work helps to build a clearer picture of the relationship between masquerade and identity, problematising simple definitions between fact and fiction – pointing out the dialectic between the interior and exterior expression of identity.

Schacht, P.S. and Underwood, L. (Ed.s) (2004). *The drag queen anthology: the absolutely flawless but flawlessly customary world of female impersonators*. Binghamton : Harrington Press Park

Initial text. This collection of disparate essays overviews historical applications of drag, importantly looking at a number of other areas of identity construction, including race, religion, class and nationality. Drag is also put forward as an indicator of received concepts of femininity in the societies in which it appears. The use of drag as social critique recurs in several of the essays. The final chapter, written by one of the editors, Steven Schacht, describes his application of drag performance in academic discourse with his students. The closing paragraphs of this chapter, *Bringing Drag Into the Classroom* and *Learning How to Perform Equality* were provided as part of my initial readings.

Warr, T. (editor), Jones, A. (surveyor)(2000). *The artist's body: themes and motives*. London : Phaidon.

This extensive survey of twentieth century performance art contains both documentation of performances and body-based works, and reflections by the artists on their practice. The performance work of many artists presented highlights the use of performance in articulating socio-political agendas, and presents numerous examples of artists interpreting and critiquing identity through their work. Artists I particularly paid attention to were Marina Abramovic, Franko B., Leigh Bowery, Mariko Mori, and Carolee Schneeman.

Woolf, V. (1928). *Orlando: a biography*. London : The Hogart Press.

Virginia Woolf's love letter to Vita Sackville-West is arguably the most beautiful piece of literature on gender ever written. The plot follows the life of the English noble as he traverses time and gender, the gender flip in the middle of the book being one of the queerest moments in English literature. Orlando simply wakes up to find he has become a she, and continues on unperturbed. The character of Orlando, coupled with Anna Anderson, was one of the key inspirations for The Princess Hans. The section that appears in the paper can be found on p. 171 of the 1964 edition.

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