Body Acts Queer

Body Acts Queer is an exploration of the performative and ideological functions of clothes with regard to gender, feminism and queer. It is an artistic, practice-based thesis in the field of fashion and design. The thesis includes three projects: On & Off, If you were a girl I would love you even more and The Club Scene. In these projects I, using text and bodies, work with acts in which clothes have a fundamental role. By exploring bodily experiences of clothes, I investigate the clothes’ performative and ideological functions, with a focus on cultural, social and heteronormative structures.

Working with clothing and fashion design from a queer feminist perspective, I transform queer and feminist theory into a creative process. The projects presented in this thesis, together with the discussion, suggest a change in the ways in which bodies act, are perceived and are produced within the fashion field, giving examples of how a queer design practice can be performed. In this thesis, queer design is explored as an inclusive term, containing ideas about clothes and language, the meeting point between fiction and reality and the ability to interpretation and bodily transformations – where desire, bodily experiences and interaction create a change.
Body Acts Queer

Body Acts Queer is an exploration of the performative and ideological functions of clothes with regard to gender, feminism and queer. It is an artistic, practice-based thesis in the field of fashion and design. The thesis includes three projects: On & Off, If you were a girl I would love you even more and The Club Scene. In these projects I, using text and bodies, work with acts in which clothes have a fundamental role. By exploring bodily experiences of clothes, I investigate the clothes’ performative and ideological functions, with a focus on cultural, social and heteronormative structures.

Working with clothing and fashion design from a queer feminist perspective, I transform queer and feminist theory into a creative process. The projects presented in this thesis, together with the discussion, suggest a change in the ways in which bodies act, are perceived and are produced within the fashion field, giving examples of how a queer design practice can be performed. In this thesis, queer design is explored as an inclusive term, containing ideas about clothes and language, the meeting point between fiction and reality and the ability to interpretation and bodily transformations – where desire, bodily experiences and interaction create a change.

Keywords: Body, Clothes, Design, Desire, Direction, Fashion, Feminism, Gaze, Gender, Ideology, Other, Perception, Performance, Performative, Performativity, Power, Research, Sexuality, Text, Queer, Writing.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed to this work. Firstly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of the participants in my projects. Thank you for participating and sharing your experiences! I could not have completed this work without you!

I would like to thank my main advisor, Hanna Landin, for your encouragement, enthusiasm and sharp eyes. I am so happy that you have been by my side throughout this journey! The support from my co-advisor Emma Göransson has been of great importance for this work. I am truly grateful for all of your feedback! Thank you Tiina Rosenberg for your kind words and important support in the most critical of moments. Thanks also to my examiner, Lars Hallnäs, for believing in my work and giving me positive feedback when I needed it the most.

I am truly grateful for the fruitful cooperation with the art and architecture group MYCKET: Mariana Alves, Katarina Bonnevier and Thérèse Kristiansson, who I worked with in the project The Club Scene. Thank you for your great generosity and for sharing your thoughts and ideas! Thanks also to Annika Enqvist of the New Beauty Council and Lina Zavalia and Rebecca Vinthagen at Settings.

Thanks to graphic designers Elin Nilsson and Josefin Carlén for your work with the publication If you were a girl I would love you even more. Thanks to Jonas Esteban Isfält and Elin Nordlinder for photographing Culture Club, and to Santiago Mostyn for filming. Thank you Moa Sjöstedt and Minna Magnusson for assistance. Thanks also to David Boothroyd and Magnus Persson.

My warmest thanks also go to the institutions and galleries that have shown the works in this thesis. In particular, I would like to thanks Glenn Adamson, who curated Tendenser/Tenderness – the exhibition where I first showed If you were a girl I would love you even more. Thank you Louise Wallenberg for being the moderator at my artist talk and presentation at Bonniers Konsthall, and thank you Yuvinka Medina for inviting me.

I would like to thank all of the institutions and people that have invited me to present my research in various lectures, presentations and workshops; especially Jenny Edlund, Fredric Gunve, Sofia Hedman Martynova, Helena Hertov, Emma Lindblad, Roland Ljungberg, Daniel Koch, Jennifer Mack, Ingela Nilsson, Jane Philbrick, Bella
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rune, Helen Runting, Sofie Rykowski, Uta Brandes and Hanna Wirman.

Thank you to my students and colleagues at the School of Textiles. Thank you The National Artistic Research School, and especially Emma Kihl and Ylva Gisién for your inspiration and support.

Thanks to Richard Langlais for your feedback and Elin Hallberg for your costume skills at Culture Club. Thank you Marika Lagercrantz for nice discussions about performance, Helena Eriksson for discussions about writing and thank you Kajsa G Eriksson and Lena Berglin for the nice words.

Thanks to international Gender Design Network (iGDN) for great teamwork in supporting, discussing and highlighting gender and feminist perspectives in the design field.

A tremendous thank you goes to my family and friends for all of your support. Especially I thank Dwayne Edmondson, Olle Gunn, Elin Israelsson, Christer Gunn, Sara Gunn, Anna Gorbow, Ann Damoison Larsson, Martin Falck, Nicholas John Stevens, Jenny Mörtsell, Iki Gonzalez Magnusson, Lydia Kellam, Katarina Matsson, Oscar Guermouche, Jacob Huurinainen, Jenny Olsson, Stefan Dufran, Martin Benninge, Kira Carpelan, Patrick Kretschek, Rita Maria De Castro, Theresa Traore Dahlberg, Anna Lo Westlin, Maria Winterstrid, Daniela Bueno, Angelica Piñeros Virgüez, Kerstin Lagnefeldt and David Andersson. Thank you for the inspiration, for help with the logistics and for believing in me. My warmest thanks go to my child Otto who traveled with me to conferences all over the world and who, during my most intense periods, made me lift my eyes from my books and practice and take the oh-so-important breaks. The presence of your amazing energy has made me remember what this is or should be all about: Love.

This work is dedicated to my mother, Christina Garbergs Gunn, who passed away during the writing of this thesis. Thank you for giving me the language, and for always being my biggest fan. I know you would have loved to read this.

♥
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................. 2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................. 4
CONTENTS ............................................................... 8
INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 10
ON & OFF ............................................................... 14
IF YOU WERE A GIRL I WOULD LOVE YOU EVEN MORE ............ 38
THE CLUB SCENE ..................................................... 50
PHOTOGRAPHS ....................................................... 69
AIM ........................................................................ 96
ABOUT ................................................................. 98
QUEER ................................................................. 114
DESIGN ............................................................... 118
PERFORMATIVE DESIGN RESEARCH ................................ 130
DISCUSSION .......................................................... 140
NOTES ................................................................. 186
REFERENCES ......................................................... 188
In this thesis in performative design research, I, using text and bodies, work with acts in which clothes have a fundamental role. By exploring bodily experiences of clothes, I investigate the clothes’ performative and ideological functions, with a focus on cultural, social and heteronormative structures.

Whilst this thesis focuses on the field of design and the performative acts of dressed bodies, it is also partly an exploration of performative words, texts and speech acts. The bodily experiences of clothes are described through dialogue, monologue and participants’ voices. The texts embody the clothes, and so become a part of the design practice.

The exploration of text and dressed bodies is conducted in three projects: On & Off, If you were a girl I would love you even more and The Club Scene. In On & Off, I perform a monologue about a separation and describe re-dressing in the other’s clothes. The bodily experience of clothes becomes a notion of the past and a passage through memories, fears and the future. It is performed as a speech act – no photographs or films show the garments – and instead the clothes become visible through words and the imagination. The text embodies the clothes and the clothes embody the other.

The bodily experiences of clothes in If you were a girl I would love you even more relate to a man’s fear of being feminized, and the homophobia related to this. I dressed the participant in clothes he considered to be feminine, and the project followed his reactions over time. If you were a girl I would love you even more challenges ideas regarding the appearance-based norm of heterosexuality, and highlights values and biases related to clothes, gender and sexuality.

The Club Scene was a series of queer nightclubs which restaged important historical queer feminist rooms. For this project, I worked with the art and architecture group MYCKET. When the participants entered the nightclubs, they were encouraged to re-dress. The clothes became a transformative act, and were part of the restaging of the queer history. The participants’ bodily experiences of the clothes that were handed out to them or made in the room are presented in this thesis as a selection of shorter texts based on interviews, and are discussed alongside the other projects.

Using these projects, I exemplify ways of working with design from a queer feminist perspective, especially regarding clothing and fashion design. Working from such a
perspective, I transform queer and feminist theory into a creative process. Through its implementation, I explore the performative and ideology related functions of clothes. Both the performative (performativity) and ideology notions are in my thesis primarily related to queer, gender and feminist politics and performances. In my research, I show examples of how clothes relate to feminist notions, how they relate to how we value ourselves and others, how we perform in them and what such performance create for our selves and others, how clothes create community and how we can play with the clichés related to such a community.

The main contribution of this thesis relates to implementing queer theory and practices to a creative process, and so exploring clothes’ ideology and performative functions – although each project also has its own, individual, contribution. In On & Off, I explore the functions of text, and write the clothes instead of showing them using visual materials. In If you were a girl I would love you even more, my contribution involves a dialogue and the aim of creating a change through clothes, with the goal being for the participant to challenge his ideas of norms related to clothes and sexuality. In On & Off, the contribution is made using critical fiction in which fiction and reality is fused. It was created as an exploration of queer history, while simultaneously staging a queer act of the present. In all three projects, the exploration and contribution is made through the participants’ bodies. The bodily experiences of clothes are at the core of my research result, and it is from this foundation that the ideology and performative functions are explored and discussed. The result contributes to a shift in how bodies are produced and perceived, and suggests how the designer’s role, methods and processes can evolve.
Jeans day

I wear your jeans. They’re stonewashed. I gave them to you as a gift.
Then they lay at the back of your closet.

Unwashed. I like that.
I like that your body has touched the fabric and that it touches me now.
It’s almost as if our bodies are meeting again. This is as intimate as we get now.

There are two receipts in your pocket. You bought a sandwich from a café.
You bought halloumi at the grocery store. The receipts are dated December.
In December, everything was different.

The jeans are soft. I can feel that you had them for a long time.
I can feel that you didn’t wash them.
The waist is too big. I need a belt for them to stay up.
I find one of yours in the closet. I tighten it hard.

I don’t do anything in particular while wearing your clothes.
I act no different, but there is a satisfaction in it;
not the kind one gets from touching someone or falling in love, but a satisfying calm.
In your clothes, I am in balance.
It is as if being reminded of how things were then makes it easier now.

Basketball day

When we started seeing each other you always wore basketball shorts at home.
You owned several pairs.
I think they reminded you of how fit you were during high school.
I always thought you looked so young in them. Too young, but cute.

You wore them when you cleaned my apartment.
Or maybe it had become our apartment by then.
You cleaned it all the time, and my family was very impressed by that.
They thought you were the best. I was inclined to agree with them.

You slept in your shorts, or put them on first thing in the morning. I do that too now.
They are soft, but far too big. It’s too cold to wear them during the winter.
Sometimes I wear a second pair on top of the first, to stay warm.
One pair is not washed. There are some unidentifiable stains on them.
I sometimes fantasize about what caused them.
I wear the unwashed shorts closest to my body. I sleep in them.
They have gone from being yours to being mine.
Navy blue shirt day

When you got the navy blue shirt, I said right away that I wanted it. You objected, said that it was yours. Now, it’s thrown among all of the other clothes you no longer wear.

I wear it with my black zipped leggings. I feel elegant in it. It is crispy, sleek and stiff. I wear it as a short dress.

I remember it being tight on you, especially on the chest. I remember my hands under the shirt when you wore it. I remember tickling you with cold hands. I remember you laughing then.

Now is less fun.

The super-small turquoise shorts’ day

Once, I gave you a pair of super-small turquoise shorts. I told you to wear them when running. I told you you would look sexy in them. It was with reluctance that you put them on. You said they were cool and that you would wear them. I could tell that you were lying. I could see in your posture that you felt uncomfortable wearing them. You took them off and put them in a drawer. I never saw you wearing them again.

I’ve considered taking up running. I think it would do me good. I would like to learn to run fast and swift in the forest. I would like to run with tanned legs and the wind in my hair.

I try on the super-small turquoise shorts. They fit okay, but my legs are winter dry and pale. Something about the feeling is missing. It’s not as I expected it to be.
Big coat day

I had searched for an ankle-length coat for quite some time.
I wanted it to be black or navy blue.
But none of the coats I tried were good enough.
Not one of them fitted me.
There was always something I disliked about them.
Or perhaps I never found the right ones.
I never found one that was even close to what I was looking for.

Your coat was in a plastic bag in the closet.
I had promised you that I would sew buttons on it, but never did.
I had never tried it on before, assuming that it would be too big.

I try it on and it's big. It's ankle-length just like I want.
I feel comfortable, warm, and enveloped in it.
I think it fits me perfectly. Perfect.

Dancing white tank top day

It's warmer outside; perhaps it's spring. I wear your white tank top.
It feels soft against my skin. It sags over my stomach.
It keeps the cold from sneaking in and makes me warm.

I have danced in the night, and you're waiting for me when I come home.
And I ask you. And you lie. And you play. And I laugh.
And you sleep at my place, although you shouldn't.
Low-cut day

It’s pretty soiled, the t-shirt you left behind. Washed-out turquoise.
Probably bought at one of the low-price chain stores.
I think that it was I who bought it.
I bought all of your clothes in the beginning.

It’s low-cut. It used to follow the contours of your chest.
I remember you commenting on the way your breasts looked in it. The shape and size.
The way they stood out under the thin fabric.
It was as if the t-shirt revealed the body.

The neckline has lost some of its elasticity. It’s no longer as smooth against the skin.
I feel naked wearing it; the neckline is too low and too loose to be comfortable.
Patches of deodorant or bodily fluids are visible at the armpit,
as a reminder of your sweating skin.

I smell those parts of the t-shirt when I wear it, believing I will detect your scent.
The one I loved; a flash of recognition.
That your scent will still be there somewhere in the circle of sweat and deodorant.
Like a scented sticker.

But all I smell is me.

Striped sweater day

I take your striped cashmere sweater out of the freezer.
I put your sweaters there when I suspect that they have attracted pests.
I often suspect things.
Suspicions may arrive suddenly, and there is no logic to them.
You should have gotten used to that.
Still, you forgot to check the freezer before you left;
perhaps because you were always so annoyed with me for being suspicious.
You said you didn’t like frozen sweaters.

The cashmere sweater has a V-neck and broad stripes.
You were always a little smug about it – that it was cashmere,
that it was not from a cheap chain store.
I don’t feel smug when I wear it. It’s comfortable, but boring.

I sleep in it and throw it on the floor, just the way you hate it.
Denim jacket day

Your denim jacket hangs in the hall. Fairly similar to mine, yet I choose yours. It is a bit big on me. I turn up the collar. It covers my neck. I feel like a secret agent, a denim detective. It fits me.

It has a brown stain by the bottom button. I remember telling you to wash it. You answered that the stain was cool. In my eyes it was disgusting. Perhaps that made it even more cool to you.

Bad-day day

I don’t think your clothes suit me. I don’t feel stylish in them. There is no attraction. I try on your denim shirt. It feels stiff and the pockets chafe against my chest. I put on the striped knitted sweater that you wore when we celebrated your grandmother. It feels as if I am going to choke when I wear it. Everything goes black before my eyes. Your woolen socks feel prickly against my feet. I cannot walk in your shoes.

There are piles of clothes everywhere, everything is yours or mine; I try on piece after piece, but nothing fits. I put things on and take them off, but you are all wrong for my body. I don’t know how to stop.
Underwear day

I find a pair of dirty underwear in a drawer. Maybe you left them there on purpose. Maybe you thought that it would make me happy.

They are navy blue and covered in lint. The fabric is so worn that it is near-transparent. One seam has begun to unravel.

I search the internet to find out if one can get venereal diseases by wearing someone else’s underwear. I read about the chances of getting pregnant; old sperm that survives for months.

I think to myself that it’s not true, that there is nothing to worry about. I can probably wear your old underwear without risking illness. But I don’t do it. I don’t.

Short sleeve narrow-striped shirt day

That shirt is actually quite ugly. Narrow stripes and short sleeves. Nothing special, just quite ugly.

I wear it when I clean the house. Before, you were the one who cleaned. You were good at cleaning. I am quite bad at it, but I do it often to make the house okay at least.

When I clean I think of the secrets of yours that I know; the weaknesses, the things you don’t want anyone to know.

I feel unattractive in your ugly short sleeve narrow-striped shirt. I’m glad you cannot see me now. I think that I never want you to see me again. Maybe I don’t want you near me. I think that it might do me good. To be rid of your insecurities and your bad sides. Then I realize that you will probably find someone new soon enough because you’re so charming at first. When I think of who you were when we first met, I want you back.

When I look at myself in the mirror, in your ugly short sleeve narrow-striped shirt, I change my mind again, thinking it’s good that you are gone. I’m going to throw this shirt away, I think. I have no reason to keep it, I think. It reminds me of the bad parts, the sides of you that I don’t want. I’m not even jealous when I wear this shirt. I think that the other would be a relief. That is how I think and, later on, that becomes my reason for keeping the shirt; despite it being a short sleeve narrow-striped, nothing special, just quite ugly.
Vest day

You got the vest from work. I remember the spring when you got it.
I think the sun was shining. I think we still liked each other.

I remember trying it on. It fit as if it was mine.
It was double-breasted, made of wool.
Maybe you thought it looked better on me; you never wore it after that.
It just hung there entirely forgotten.

Before you moved out, I hid it in my closet.
Maybe we both felt that it looked better on me.
I thought that maybe I should not ask, as you might say no,
just because you felt that you had to.
Argue that what was yours would stay yours, and what was mine would stay mine.
That we should not share, and think, and like the same things any more.

I go to a dyke club and feel hot wearing it. I wear tight black pants and heavy boots.
I wear a black cap. I don’t look attractive the way you used to want me to,
and then I think that it doesn’t matter.
I get compliments and make new acquaintances, and the vest is with me the whole time,
and soon it will be spring again, and a year will have passed without you missing it.

Gray t-shirt day

I wear your gray t-shirt. All day, underneath my other clothes.

I bike home fast, and when I rush up the stairs you’re there.
You’re here to collect something, or leave something that you took by mistake.
You’re inside my apartment, which was once ours.
I begin to sweat, post-bike ride.
I wear a knitted sweater, pants, and a jacket.
I don’t want to take anything off.
I don’t want you to know that I’m wearing something of yours underneath.

The gray t-shirt is from a Japanese brand; it was so close-fitting when you wore it.
A little too small for you. Now, it’s under my warm clothes.

You take what you came for, or return what you have taken.
I don’t know if I want you to stay or leave, but I know I’m sweating.
My cheeks become rosy when I’m warm, I feel them burning.

When you’re gone I take off my clothes.
I stand naked, except for the gray t-shirt, by the open window,
and watch you walk along the street below me,
and I don’t know whether it’s a good thing
that you have left or if I wish that you had stayed,
but I think that the breeze is nice, that it’s calmer now.
Alike day

I used to think that we were alike.
I have a series of photographs on my computer,
of us wearing near-identical clothes.
I used to think that we were such a good match.
That you were like me, only different.

You bought a jacket just like mine. You imitated me.
A bomber jacket; black, with an orange lining.
I wear yours now, instead of mine.

We're not so alike anymore. It makes no sense.

Sometimes, when I'm wearing your clothes,
I think that I would understand you better if I became more like you.
Maybe if I become like you, I will understand.

You cannot change others, only yourself, the shrink says.
I always wear your clothes when I see her.
Anything else would be senseless.

Hair and blue shirt day

I empty all of my closets. Wash and fold the clothes nicely.
It's almost like meditation.
I take things out, think about them, see new things.
I find a blue knitted sweater that I didn't know you had.
It's a finely knitted, fluffy turtleneck, with a small collar.
I picture the way it looked on you, when you wore it.
The way it sat on your shoulders. The way it hung over your chest.
The way your hands would poke out of the cuffs, the way they would gesticulate.

It's loose on me, and it reaches down to my thighs.
Some strands of your hair cling to the fabric.
It feels as if they have burrowed between the threads.

It has been quite a while now, but I still find strands of your hair in the apartment.
Not just on blue knitted sweaters, but everywhere.
It doesn't matter how much I clean. They are still there.
One clings to a tile in the bathroom. I find several of them in the bed.
Behind the couch, a whole clump.

I clean and clean and clean, but it's never clean.
It comes back. You never leave.
Why will you never leave?
Tight jacket day

I meet your friends. They say I have to stop talking about you.
They say they know everything. They say that you told them.
That the things I say aren’t true. You have to stop saying those things, they say.

Then they change their tones. They ask if I’ve been afraid of you.
Someone laughs, and says that I cannot be surprised by the way you act, that I know
where you come from and that, knowing what I do, I should have understood...
Ideas of prejudice occur to me, and perhaps I say something to that effect,
and maybe I am met with laughter then.

The day after, I’m sitting on the balcony with your jacket over my shoulders.
The smallest one you have. Canvas-like, gray fabric.
The one you bought with me in a second-hand store during our first summer.
The beginning of your new style.
You were smaller then; it’s probably too small for you now,
but big enough to drape across my shoulders.

I think that I’m not as afraid anymore.
I think of what someone said, that it’s not the terrible things which happen
in our lives that shape us, but the way in which we handle those terrible things.
I think that perhaps I don’t know how I’m handling this, if I should handle it in this way.
And I have no idea how this will shape me. Later on.

But, it’s the day after, and the jacket is warm, and I think that I’m handling it now.
Right now I am handling it. I am handling it now.
I am. At least now.

Designer shirt day

When I met you, you had never been to an exhibition.
You only read books about diets, exercise and business management.
I used to take you to movies shown in old, run-down theaters.
You always complained about the popcorn.

I made you become a vegetarian.
I taught you the names of film directors and new words.
On your to do list, you wrote ‘watch Bergman movies’.
I taught you the names of designers and when you moved to my town you sent
an application to the brand that I said was the best.
On the phone, you told them that you liked their clothes,
because you thought it would be good to say.
In reality, you were completely clueless.

I bought a black shirt in their flagship store,
and met you at the platform when your train arrived.
You were sweating and I wiped you.
I dressed you, and then you took a cab to the interview.

You’ve been working there for quite a while now, and when I’m wearing this shirt
I always think about you on that platform, changing into it.
How I went all the way across town so you could wear the right shirt to the interview.

Now, long after, I put the shirt in a transparent plastic bag and tie a knot.
I don’t want it, that reminder of ‘then’, any longer.
I throw it out, and what arrives afterwards is relief.
Red sweatpants day

You used to wear them at home. Soft and red, with an elasticated waist. 
I wear them when I go shopping on Sunday mornings. No-one gives me odd looks then.

I buy almond milk and bread and bananas. The money, carelessly crumpled in my pockets, forms what looks like lumps on my thighs.

They are so innocent and harmless, those pants, as if the wearer is incapable of harm. 
There is no room for threats, in those pants. They will never hurt me.
That's what I thought then. Perhaps unconsciously, but still.
Now I think that it was naive of me to think that way.
Of course a pair of soft red pants can lie.

Around the neck day

You've been at my place while I was out.
You've left unwashed dishes in the kitchen, taken off your necklaces, and forgotten them there.
A kind of declaration of your constant presence.

Couscous in a pot. Soup plates in a pile.

I never asked for you. You were the one who wanted me.
I wished for warmth and loyalty.
It has been a long time since you stopped with that.

I swore that if it happened again, I would leave. When I left you cried. 
I cannot remember if I did. I remember thinking I had to.

Once, you were angry because I didn't agree with you about something.
You ripped the necklace from your neck, scattering the pearls.
A bracelet was torn to pieces. A phone was broken.
You ran away only to come back. You made threats to get what you wanted.

I go to therapy to deal with you. It's your suggestion.
You say that I probably need it.
I need it.

When I wear your necklaces, I do so reluctantly. 
They feel like nooses around my neck. They feel deceitful. 
My neck hurts.
Sports socks day

I try to avoid being too close to you. I limit your presence. Today, only sports socks. You often wore white ones. They were brown underneath, dirty from the insoles of your shoes. A little worn at the heel, and with a seam over the toe. The ones I wear are thick and black. You only have a few of those. The cuffs of the socks are slightly ribbed, and would reach to above the calf if I pulled them up; but I don't. They sag by my ankles.

Before, I used to think that they were comfortable. Now, it feels as if they don't fit me any more. They're invisible. I cannot see you. You don't exist. I don't want you.

I'm starting to feel sick of you. Your attitude towards me. It makes me wonder about your ability. The way you treat other people. The way you lie about who you are. It makes me wish so many things undone.

I've stopped believing in you. That is what I tell myself. I will not protect you any more.

Long johns day

I clean out our old apartment and find the pair of long johns that I gave you. Garishly patterned in bright colors. Made by an expensive brand. I remember that I bought them before meeting you, and your predecessor used to borrow them. Then I gave them to you.

I never told you that someone else had worn them. I think you would not have liked that, but now you don't want them anyway. I take them. For myself, in the hope of new lovers.
IF YOU
A GIRL
LOVE
EVEN
WERE
I WOULD
YOU
MORE
I have bought him a wig and a bra. The wig is a black bob. The bra is light pink. He tries them both on. I help him, dress him and direct him. He is not taking any initiative. I fill the bra with some textile material. The bra gets a bit of a bulky look, and the textile material filling is partly visible. It does not look anything near “natural”. We are in my apartment. It is just he and I. The whole setting is an experiment, I explain. It does not matter if your breasts look fake, I continue. I am not sure why I tell him this, but maybe it is a way for me to try to make him relax. The fact that he is wearing these feminized clothes or attributes, as he describes them, seems in itself to be such a big source of anxiety for him that I do not want the technical aspects to be noticeable. Simultaneously, however, I am not sure if a look that would pass as “natural” would make him more comfortable. He is constantly distancing himself from the clothes I give him. Even though he is voluntarily participating in the project, I get the feeling that he does not want to fully explore the potential of the clothes. Instead, we play with his resistance. He does not put anything on until I have asked him at least twice. He makes it clear that the clothes are not his choice, but entirely mine.

At the outset of the project, it seems that the wig and the padded bra are so alienating for him that they tend to become theatrical costumes rather than wearable clothes or accessories. He is only wearing the bra and the wig at this point. It is a private try-out experiment, and yet he expresses the fear that the neighbors across the street will see him through the windows. While putting on the clothes, he verbally degrades his look, saying that it is so silly and strange that it is impossible to be taken seriously. He laughs and complains at the same time. He is obviously disturbed by his new look. He wants to take the things off as soon as possible.

I get the impression that his resistance is a way to distance himself from his look and his actions. He can blame his appearance on me, since I am the one who has control of the situation. This somehow protects him from being exposed. Simultaneously, I get the impression that he hopes that his repeated resistance will change me and my taste, and maybe stop my actions. That his opinion about the clothes I make and give to him seems so ingrained that he cannot verbalize it. His body, however, reacts strongly. He curves his back when putting dresses on. Like the fabric makes his skin itch. He shakes when he looks at himself in the mirror. Every fitting is a struggle, for both of us. For him the struggle stems from the appearance of his dressed body. For me, it is about getting him dressed and creating the desired aesthetic appearance. Sometimes it seems like he wants to wear the clothes, but he does not dare, and at other times he dares to but constantly voices his disagreement, or refuses to make any comments at all. The body then seems to react similarly. Either his hand goes over the garment as part of a nervous, uncomfortable reaction, or he freezes in positions of fear. This happens even when not in public. Me as the public, or himself as a spectator in the mirror, seem to be enough to trigger these reactions.

I confront him with his actions and ask why he is reacting so strongly. I question his tolerance and acceptance. He does not really respond to that. His resistance to the clothes I make and give to him seems so ingrained that he cannot verbalize it. His body, however, reacts strongly. He curves his back when putting dresses on. Like the fabric makes his skin itch. He shakes when he looks at himself in the mirror. Every fitting is a struggle, for both of us. For him the struggle stems from the appearance of his dressed body. For me, it is about getting him dressed and creating the desired aesthetic appearance. Sometimes it seems like he wants to wear the clothes, but he does not dare, and at other times he dares to but constantly voices his disagreement, or refuses to make any comments at all. The body then seems to react similarly. Either his hand goes over the garment as part of a nervous, uncomfortable reaction, or he freezes in positions of fear. This happens even when not in public. Me as the public, or himself as a spectator in the mirror, seem to be enough to trigger these reactions.

Since we do not expose this new look to his family and friends, I instead verbally try to figure out how other people in his surroundings would react to his appearance. When
I ask him about that, the answer is continuously negative. It seems, according to him, that no one around him would accept or respect him due to the way he now looks.

–Maybe you should wear this at work tomorrow?

–No! They would beat me up!

–Really?

–Yeah!

–What would people in your church say if they saw you?

–They would tell me to go home and change.

–How would people you grew up with react?

–They would stop talking to me. I would no longer exist for them.

–What would your DJ friends say if they saw you like this?

–They would laugh. They would never stop laughing.

–What would your mom say?

–She would cry.

The uncomfortable feeling is not only verbally expressed, but also becomes visible when photographing him. He repeatedly freezes into fixed bodily positions, and does not move. At one point I have him sitting on a chair with a silky bow blouse and a black velvet hat. I ask him for different expressions, but his pose continues to be static. His body expresses the feeling of being odd, and that feeling seems to dominate all other attempts at varying expressions.

At one of the first photo sessions, I ask him to stand in other postures than he usually does.

–Pout with your lips, I say. Move your hips.

I encourage him to pose in ways that potentially mimic the bodily expressions of female models, or could be considered to be stereotypical notions of how women act. I try to achieve a play with the assumed expressions of a girl's reflections in the mirror, but I do not tell him that. I just tell him to pout with his lips, walk in certain ways and stand in feminine postures. It becomes clear to me when watching him that his body is not accustomed to these expressions. Presumably the way he acts in front of mirrors is usually totally different. The fact that I encourage him to perform acts he relates to the opposite sex is met with resistance.

He is not cooperating much at this point. He seems uncomfortable with the whole situation, like he does not really know how to act, if he should try to do what I tell him or just stand still. He does something in between but does not really go fully into it. There is a resistance from him, but he never says clearly that he will not do it.

–I didn’t come with those skills, he says. These are not the skills I came with!

–You didn’t come with any skills, I argue. You learned your skills. Now you can learn this.

I make him practice his walk in long corridors inside an apartment building. I tell him to walk back and forth, move his hips more and more for each step. He is wearing a little black dress at this time. It is tight and it catches the form of his body in a nice way, I tell him. He says that he is afraid that someone will see him. He does not want the neighbors to know. However, he does continue his practice in the public corridor. He stands on the tips of his toes, pretending he is wearing high heels. When I photograph him, he likes to see the photographs. His comments are not positive, but it is obvious that he is now curious about how he looks and his bodily progress.

In the later part of the project, after looking at the photographs taken, he suddenly comes up with suggestions.

–Maybe I should have some pictures to look at, he suggests. Can you google Grace Jones?
–She is Jamaican.

–I know. Can you google her and we can look at her poses, and maybe I can try to do something similar.

–Okay.

–Right now I just pout with my mouth, and that’s a problem. That doesn’t do much good. I don’t know how to put my hands or move my hips. If I can look at something to imitate that would be easier.

I search for images, and he picks one in which she is holding a headscarf.

–Something like that. I can do that! he says.

Grace Jones has the same citizenship as him, a powerful androgynous look and makes music he likes, aspects that probably make it easier for him to identify with her. By imitating Grace Jones, he feels that it becomes easier to, as he says, adopt a more feminine look. When he imitates a behavior or look he can also go into a role, become a character. In that sense it’s easier to go away from the expression of the, as he feels, expected performance of the male gender.

After the project has proceeded for a couple of months, I give him a pair of pink, frilly underwear. At first, he refuses to put them on. His reaction is stronger than when wearing dresses or make-up.

–I am not wearing that! he says.


–That is for women, he argues. I am not doing it!

–But everything you have been wearing lately is originally made for women, no?

–I am not doing it!

–Come on! It is just clothes! We are alone in here. What are you afraid of?

–I am not afraid! I just don’t like it.

–But you can just try them, I argue. You can take them off whenever you want. I just want you to try. I think it would be good.

–No!

–No?

–No!!!

After a while he changes his mind and tries the underwear on. He is lying on the bed when I photograph him. I tell him it looks great. He is mainly silent during the shoot. I get the feeling that he looks at me with a sense of being abused. He wears the underwear without complaining, but I cannot touch him or be near him when he has it on. He wants me distanced as much as possible. When we are done he takes them off immediately.

–If I were dressed like this in Jamaica I would get shot.

We are renting an apartment in Berlin, and I find a leopard-print jacket hanging in the hallway. He tries it on. It is waist–length and a bit too small for him to close it. The fake fur seems to attract him, and I make him wear it even outside the house.

When inside, I make him wear a black knitted dress. At one point, he also puts a long lace dress on. It is see-through, with a vintage feel, black with a white collar and a flower decoration on the front. He mainly wears it with a hat, to cover his short hair. The lace dress and hat suggest another decade. His reactions at this point are a mixture of rejection and what could be read as comfort. He seems more and more used to my suggestions.

A few days later he sees a poster of a naked woman topping up a bath and wearing only a towel turban. She is squatting on her haunches, with her back to the camera. He then comes up with the idea that he will try to imitate the poster.
–I can sit like that at the bathtub, he says. I will have my hands just like hers.

His suggestion attests to the idea that it is only his front that reveals his sex. The rest of his body could pass as a woman’s. From the back, his nude body is androgynous or sex-neutral.

When photographing in Berlin, he wears nail polish for the first time. When I tell him that I think he is hot with red nails, he expresses his disagreement:

–No, it’s not hot! As soon as you are done taking pictures the nail polish is coming off!

I then tell him that I probably need to make some supplementary photograph more later. He then agrees to keep the nail polish on. Towards the end of the day, he says that he does not think of the nail polish that much anymore. He forgets, gets used to his red nails.

He is reminded of his red nails when meeting new people or receiving compliments. The compliments are many and often, from people he does not know. At Berlin airport, a man in the security staff notices the red nails when checking boarding passes. “Nice nails”, he says, and his serious face turns into a friendly smile. A woman with red nails has probably just passed by unnoticed. After boarding, I ask him if he thought the security guy was hitting on him, but he says no.

–I don’t think he was gay. He just thought I had nice nails.

In the next sentence he informs me that Seal wore nail polish on the TV show Oprah. He admits that it looked cool.

–But it was black, he says.

–I think dark purple would be nice on you, I say. Next time.

When we do purple nails a few days later, he wants to paint them himself. He is getting fully into it. He seems to be intensely concentrated. After he is done, I inspect the nails and tell him that he has a great talent when it comes to painting nails. No one can tell it is your first time doing this, I say. He does not respond to that, but he looks pleased with the result and me giving him compliments for it.

A week after the purple nails, we talk on Skype. He explains that he has been wearing purple nails all week. At work, with old friends, out at clubs and bars… He says that some of his old friends reacted strongly.

–They kept asking why I was wearing it. They asked if I was gay.


–I said I was wearing it because I thought it was cool. But they kept on asking why I was wearing it. Then a friend from Jamaica came, I said the same thing to him, and he seemed cool with it. It kind of surprised me that he would be the one who was cool with it, ‘cause he is from Jamaica and I thought that… …I don’t know.

He says that he feels that some of his old friends are so limited in the ways they think.

–They say that they could never live anywhere else. They do not want to see things. And they found it super hard to accept that I was wearing nail polish. That was such a big thing for them.

At this point, the fact that he might have reacted in a similar manner to his friends does not really hit him, although at several times during the project he admits that he has changed, in many ways.

The man did at one point say that the project created him and changed him. It had a fundamental role in creating what he has become or is. I influenced him, he says. I made him see or wear things he would never see or wear otherwise. I was part of creating and forming his look, style and values.

In Stockholm, when If you were a girl I would love you even more has been going on for a few months, the participant tries on women’s blouses and says he could wear them, not at work but at nightclubs. We pick a light blue one with bust seams and a draped collar. He seems pleased to have the blouse’s silk material against his skin. He has no problem with either wearing the blouse in public or looking at himself in the mirror.
Instead, he says that he likes the blouse, and uses superlative words like “cool” and “nice” to describe it. After we are done with one of the last photo sessions I show him a pair of high-heeled boots from the Rick Owens men’s collection. He says that he could easily wear them. For him, at this point, they are not extreme.
THE

CLUB

SCENE
The Club Scene

Sam, 40

I was there as a participant in all three clubs – the first one at Årsta Castle, the second at Gallery Index and the third at Unga Klara.

For the first one, I got an envelope in my mailbox with an invitation inside. I was instructed to come to Mosebacke Square. When I arrived, there were a lot of people who I knew waiting at the same spot. We boarded a bus, which stopped at Årsta Castle. There, we got off. I mingled, drank absinthe and tea. A person came out in character on the stairs and gave a speech, and after that we entered the castle. Inside there were clothes that I re-dressed in; robes, slippers and turbans. We walked up the stairs and entered the different rooms – allowed to act freely in them and participate in different acts. Everyone wore slippers, so all movements were a bit slow. Then the time came when we were told to leave, take the robes off, and go back with the bus. I didn't talk with so many people that night. I was busy just watching.

The first act gave me expectations of playfulness. I tried to stay open to what fictional context I would be included in. It was also a conscious choice. I like being surprised. I like being moved around. There is something in being forced to relinquish control.

I had expectations that it would be a very special room, and although I couldn't guess how that room would be, I was aware of the concept behind it all; to investigate feminist organization in different ways. I know some of the people who arranged it, so I knew what they were interested in.

For the second act I received a text message, instructing me to call an answering machine. First it was a general summons in the form of an empowering pep talk, encouraging me to go to a certain place to buy the ticket. The ticket was this tape roll and posters with different messages on. On my way to the club I put some posters up. On the inside of the tape roll there was an address for Gallery Index.

I went to the gallery with some friends – this time I knew more people who were going. When we arrived we got a plastic bag to put our own clothes in, and there were piles of clothes to re-dress in. I familiarized myself with the space and found a pair of shorts and an asymmetric T-shirt that I pimped with the tape. I put my hair up in a ponytail on the side, because that felt 80’s. It was very nice.

The first act referred to a time that I haven’t experienced other than through films and images, but this was the 1980’s, which I have a very strong bodily experience of. It was a fantastic and liberating feeling to be able to dress in those clothes with the body I have now, as a forty-year-old in this safe room. The 80’s was for me a problematic decade in many ways.

I have never been good at being feminine. I couldn't fully realize the femininity, so it was very fun to play with that; the ponytail and the sloppy makeup, to show my belly in a too short t-shirt… It is a much bigger belly that I have now as a forty-year-old than I had as a sixteen-year-old, but in contrast I had a great disdain for my own body back then that I don't have now. I am very grateful for the fact that I have a healthy body that can feel pleasure. It was a very liberating feeling to be in that setting. Experiencing then, but now.

Then there also was an overlapping of time periods; the 1970’s and 1990’s, the ACT UP Movement and Queer Nation. The various political speeches of the night. All of those references, I have bodily experiences of. I wasn’t in New York in the 90’s, but that movement has been very important for me.

The third act was Sappho Island. The invitation was a Facebook event as well as a film. By this act, I had realized that the aesthetic changed each time, and so I quite easily figured out the theme – aha, now it is this paradise island, and at the same time it references Uganda and the death threats made against LGBTQ activists there.

There were two sessions that night, and I went to the last one. When we got there we had to take our shoes off, and were then moved into this wardrobe and transformed into clothes which represented ideas of paradise, pleasure and heat. Different performances took place, but my experience was that it was like a pre-party – that the purpose of the event was to get fixed and have a glass of wine. You could fix your nails, and there was makeup there. I went with people who I also hung out with during the night; some friends, my partner, her other partner. We were there together. At the other events, it was more that I wanted to be there alone. I wanted to be in my experience. Not so much connect with others.
When I was choosing clothes, there was not so much to choose from. I hadn’t washed my hair. Maybe it was extra cold outside that day. The body was not in phase. When I look back, I wish that I had been in a better mood that day – that I could have thrown my clothes away and just felt pleasure. That had more to do with how my body was there and then. When you don't have the energy to enjoy yourself I think it is wonderful to watch other people play. And all those people from all over the world who were there from the ILGA conference, it was a pleasure to see them being a part of this. Re-dressing was a different experience during each act, and I think that was connected to how I felt in my body on the different nights. However, the re-dressing in all three acts gave me the opportunity to be in the rooms in a different way than if I had worn my own clothes.

I wish all parties were like that. That when entering a club you needed to hang up your own clothes in the wardrobe and get re-dressed. I felt safe, and the clothes helped me to feel that. I think that femininity, or masculinity, or just being an adult and possessing expressions of identity, demands a lot of effort.

I felt a sense of community. At the first two, I felt that I didn't need to hang out with anyone. I wanted to move around alone. But that was connected to a feeling that I felt like I was part of a community. I didn't want to connect with just a few, I wanted to float around in this world.

In the play there is a community. If you have accepted the participatory contract, then everyone is a part of this – and the community is fragmented when someone breaks the contract. I experienced that the contract was so elastic that you could act freely in it. I felt that everyone at the club had accepted the contract “now we play that if…” Then the community happens.

The premise for the clubs was to explore the queer feminist rooms and community. To restage utopias. I wish the world was always like that. That it were built on play, and that those accepting rooms existed. I would say that the themes for the clubs were queer, desire, community, political activism and feminist organizations. Those themes and issues are things that I spend most of my life dealing with. For me, this is the ultimate. As I said, I wish that all parties were like this. Playing makes me feel safe.

Ann, 37

I was at Sappho Island. I had heard some nice words about the earlier parties, that there was a nice atmosphere. The people I know who went were so happy afterwards. They talked about it warmly. So I had some positive excitement, but I had no idea what would happen. I was just curious.

When I entered the party, there was a very nice, chaotic atmosphere. There was a warm and lovely feeling in the room. People were happy. That is also the main feeling I have from it. No one in the room seemed to know what was going to happen, and that can, of course, create a collective stress – but there was no stress. Rather, it was the opposite. It was the flow of chaos in the nicest way.

People were relaxed and easily started to talk to each other, because it was a playful situation. The transformation thing with the clothes was disarming. When you put those nice costumes on, you also take off your own costume; the person you usually display. It was special that night because there were a lot of people who I knew, together with a lot of people that I didn't know. You heard English everywhere. It was a very international feeling. The whole world was there.

I have one really strong memory. Something that changed me. I came in quite late, when there was a dance performance. I sat and watched the dance, and I also watched the audience. And everyone was dressed up. It was so nice! That was such a strong feeling. It was a real kick! I really felt that time stood still. It was a wow feeling. I was so happy! It was like being euphoric!

It was a mix of feelings, that this is too good to be true. Everyone was dressed up and it was this nice feeling and these crazy clothes. I became very happy. I felt something tender for this setting. It was like the world's nicest picture. I work with images – so maybe I am a bit affected by that – but it was so nice to see. I felt such a strong, liberated feeling. I thought that a lot of this was the people from all over the world. That there were a lot of activists who fight for LGBTQ rights or gender issues, and there was such a strong power in that room. Here everyone could act, it was a utopian feeling, even though it was now and here. It was the present. I got a real kick. It felt like everyone enjoyed being there and being dressed up. It was a feeling of anarchy.
The clothes prevented people from settling into different groups, as usually happens in a crowd. It was more that everyone was there under the same pretences. You don’t usually think of those things, but when you are at a party like this it becomes clear. It also differed from a masquerade, for example because in a masquerade you can get really anxious since you have to choose and decide much more. In contrast, the change of clothes at the party created something new, without becoming a uniform. Here, it was just fun. You got dressed. People dressed each other.

I just dressed in whatever they gave me. I remember that I was trying something on and looked down and there were some giant feet… And the person wearing those funny feet gave me something to wear and I did. I felt that I was taken care of. It was fun.

I think there was a political dimension to the party, it was political and playful at the same time. That, I really liked.

I rarely use makeup, but I felt a temptation to use it there, because it was not only a party – it was more like a party as a forum in which to do something. Political in a different way than if you discuss something. I, for example, felt that I got closer to my own norms, I challenged them.

If you as a girl never use makeup, it may also be that you have some complex reason for that. Maybe you never started to use makeup for different reasons. You maybe took another path, went another way. You maybe have different physical desires then. You can probably feel that with clothes as well. Or guys that use makeup, or girls that… or no matter what it is… Just the feeling that Yes! I wanna try this! Then you cross a physical border when you are doing things that you usually would not dare to do. That, I think in general, can occur when you are with people who you do not know, and are getting dressed together. Some people think that it is really fun, while others think it is really tough. But it was that kind of feeling, that this process just felt playful and fun. It was challenging in a good way.

I think it is connected to the whole thing that you feel ridiculous, and then reflect on that. Like you feel ridiculous looking a certain way, and why is that? Those kind of reflections are a totally different experience when felt in a positive context than if it is forced. It never felt forced. At the party, there were no clothes that people usually have in their closets, all people together without those codes that you subconsciously try to read when you meet new people.

People might have read me differently than how I usually communicate myself. There is something liberating in the fact that others cannot position me. There was something humble about the whole thing, while simultaneously being challenging. And the transformation aspect was something that I felt was a big takeaway for me. That it was fun. I thought a lot about it afterwards. That you just had to let everything go. How much you actually scan of an environment that you are usually in, and how you wear different glasses in different settings. That, I thought of afterwards – what the difference was, and what it was that made this event such a nice experience for me.

I think that the fundamental ground was the serious consciousness behind the club. It felt really thought through. It was not only a party. You were able to point at issues. I think that in itself is really interesting.
I was in all three acts. Before the first, I didn’t have any expectations in the sense that I expected it to be a certain way, but I was filled with anticipation. It was more like; oh this will be exciting! The first time was so fantastic – a real knockout experience! I didn’t know that the things I got to experience at that party existed. What happened – and to experience that – was first to enter a nostalgic atmosphere or history that appealed to something that we can never reach or feel. Nostalgia or memory work in such a way that the value increases afterwards, it becomes bigger after than it was when it happened. Or it is the idea of something that becomes present. But to actually be at the party was to experience the idea of something in reality. This is how it must have felt back then, and it was possible to create that here and now. This feeling is not only connected to history, it is not unreachable. It was a totally fantastic experience!

It also changed power structures, since I got to experience a non-normative setting. There are a lot of layers within that, but it was a dislocation of history. When people for example make nice television programs about the renaissance, no one will get the experience of being there, but the image of something nice is communicated through the visualization. But here, at the event, it was like we actually got to experience it. Even if it probably was not that nice during the renaissance after all, this party was as nice as the idea of something. It became real, it was 100 percent real.

It started with getting a moustache if you wanted, and then you got dressed and all those things went from a bit like “now I accept this situation and it feels great to be part of this reenactment” to actually undergoing a transformation, to making it become real. It was totally real. Time stood still. I don’t think we were even there for a long time, but it was like a vacuum. It was totally magical! Therefore, for the second event my expectations were super high. I had realized that it was possible to feel like that. It was possible to create safe rooms, or rooms where you can feel in a certain way and are able to act without being part of hierarchical structures. So I got to understand how certain people probably have it – the ones that are at the top of our power structures. Or how certain guys use this machismo body language, and how nice it is for them to be able to do those things. Those are feelings I don’t feel, because I’m not in that position. But it was like that at the event. The feeling that bodies are okay. If they sweat and hug me, it is just a wonderful feeling. At the first party the sexuality started from zero. There was nothing that was wrong, it was an environment where everyone could do as they liked. It was an accepting environment. Also, gender; there was no sense of men and women, you were just a person.

It started with the clothes. It was what you would think of as manly aesthetics. But they are not, they are just a moustache, a kimono, a castle… No one owns that. But they, the men, have been able to act within that context. And I got the opportunity to act within that. And that is super nice, you know.

All of the things that you relate to in your everyday life changed during these hours or minutes when we were there. Because it is possible, and we decide what is possible, we create those rooms or settings. But the main and the strongest thing for me was that I never thought it was possible to experience something that you think should exist – like the idea of the historical, sentimental thoughts when you think that it was so fantastic in the past and it was always better then – those kinds of ideas. And then I realized that you can create that now, and we can have it like that for real when we create those kinds of rooms.

For the second party, I already knew that this was possible to create, so then I expected it to be recreated; and it was. I think it was created in all three parties, but they became very different from each other. I also thought that it was fantastic that there were three different parties. That you can create different types of rooms in different environments. It shows that it is possible to create different variations of these kind of rooms. All three parties or sets of rooms are needed.

After the second act some friends and I went to a kebab place to eat, and we continued to act the way we had done at the party. We were a bit loud and gabby, and three super big dudes wanted to beat us up. That never happens to me when I eat a kebab at 2am. In those situations, I usually never provoke anyone. But in this situation we took up space, and then I actually realized how free I had been during the evening. I had not perceived that, I realized it only after. It took a few hours at the party, and then we let everything go. So that freedom actually later put us in a dangerous situation, in real life. That was also an ‘aha!’ experience for me, because the way we were at the party is actually the way I wish we could be – but it is impossible. Because we have hierarchies and power structures, and I will laugh and smile if someone is drunk and aggressive because otherwise I will maybe be beaten up … So it was a mix of feelings, how I felt during the party and how I felt after. At the first party it was more, even. I think both parties were good, they were just different in their nature.

The third party was more open. It was easier to attend. That, I think, affected the party. At the previous parties, the crowd was somehow connected to each other,
while at the third there was a greater mix. At that party it felt like I was more of an observer than a participant. I was able to encourage myself to become a greater participant; for example, you could get photographed with objects, or be photographed in a group, or do your nails. I did my nails and that was one of the strongest things that happened for me during that night. To sit down and take your time, and that they took their time was fantastic. I could have sat there for the whole party. It was amazing. I woke up the next day and was going to scratch my ear, and it was impossible because I had so many pearls on my nails.

I wanted to get as much out of the events as possible, so I re-dressed during all of them. I understood that this experience might never happen again in my life. I hope it will happen again, but it needs so much for that to happen and to create such opportunities. So, being aware of that, I really wanted to explore as much as possible. At the first party I didn’t understand what it was. There it happened more automatically, I felt more guided in my actions. At the other two I knew more, and wanted to try more.

At the second party I felt that I was so transformed when getting there. I looked one way when I arrived, and then I changed into a look that I would never have chosen myself, or I would not have been able to come up with such a creative idea. It felt great that another person dressed me. I was wearing a pair of jeans that were cut into shorts. I could not close them because I was too fat, so they were open at the front. Instead, the person who dressed me taped me together. It was like a cross over my torso. It looked really good! I was taped together with clothes I was unable to wear. They were all too small. I felt that I had the coolest outfit ever, which made me relax and let things go more and integrate a lot with others. I borrowed a monkey mask. The whole change of clothes felt like a transformation. It felt like I entered the space by re-dressing. If I had not changed clothes, I would not have been part of the environment.

For me, the body was central. I found that that bodies were magnificent, no matter how they were. The bodies were equal at the parties. I was too fat for those shorts, so then the shorts were remade to fit me. I did not have to lose weight to fit into them. It was more like okay, we create a setting so you can function here. Instead of the opposite; that this is how it is going to be, and you have to change. That was great. At the second party it was maybe even stronger when it came to the clothes. At that event I became tailor-made. This is how you are gonna look. I was created, sort of. At this party, everyone was individually customized. It became clear that this (the clothes) had to adapt to me and my body, not vice versa.

At the third party I started to ask people around me for feedback. The choices depended on me, which made it harder for me to integrate with the environment, and it made me feel more distanced. I think it is a very strong action; to be dressed by someone. For me, the dressing up is connected to dress codes. Dress codes can of course be connected to hierarchical structures and power, but also to the feeling of accepting and respecting the context you are in. That is also why I got re-dressed. To respect the context I was in, and to be able to experience things in a different way.

The clothes created equality because everyone had the same basis. What happened to me was that I became very relaxed. I felt calm. I became curious, instead of watching my own position as you usually do in social contexts. I let my self-consciousness go. I trusted the situation. I was as relaxed as I am when alone, but here I was surrounded by others. That is not common, and I felt that the clothes and the environment created that. I have been thinking about that a lot after – what the re-dressing act created.

I think the political context was fundamental for my strong experience of the party. It was definitely not just a party. I think it constituted a political act just to join the party.

I took away with me the fact that it is possible to create what we think belongs to the past, or the idea of the past. That it is possible to create now. We just have to do it, because no one will do it for us. I also took away with me a generosity, which I also try to take from other contexts. That, I take with me; to look at things that work, that can change things. If I change how I relate, then it is changed. I mean if more people do that…

I want it to happen again. I want to actively work to make it happen again. I want this kind of thing to exist. I do not want to passively wait for it to happen. I want to live like this; things like this should happen in my life. Maybe not every day, but what if normal parties are those parties how would everyday life be then? That is how I have started to think. How would everyday life be related to if you have these kinds of parties, and if you live in this way? Yes, when I sit in the subway I would… I mean, how would a complete society look if it were that non-hierarchical? And that, I think, is related to power, sexuality and gender. If everything was different then we should have… I realize that some people have it that way, but then they profit from others, and I think that this event was without any profit.

I didn’t know that it was possible to feel like this. I didn’t know that it existed. So that was a really ‘aha!’ feeling. We can do it, we just have to collect many people together.
These parties were generous in a way we usually aren’t in our everyday lives. We do not take care of each other so much.

Something happened with me that I bring with me. Maybe I do not think of it every day, but it is with me. So that has been very important for me.

Kim, 53

I went to all three acts. I went because I was invited, and it is of interest to me how people relate to identity within those clubs – in a contemporary and historical context. You turn and twist the identity, you peel it off and look at it at those clubs. And I think that is interesting. Identity issues interest me. That’s why I went to those events.

The first event was special. I was invited by a letter. There was not much information. You only knew that you were to go to Årsta Castle. So that became more of a surprising evening, and it was a very good one, there at the castle. Because you were transferred in there through this bodily transformation, in which you changed clothes and identity, and everyone did it. It became an interesting meeting when you walked around in the castle, with the architecture and your costume. I thought it was a really good evening.

The second act was at Gallery Index. It was interesting in another way. Because it was about the 1970’s and 1980’s, and it reflected on things in a different way than the first act at Årsta Castle. At Culture Club, I arrived and put my clothes in a plastic bag, and transformed myself with these clothes that were made available. The clothes were arranged in piles on the floor in one of the rooms, and everyone was transforming themselves with them in different ways. It felt like participating in a happening or performance or something like that. I was more active in this act than the first one. That is probably because it is closer to me. I have experienced that era. I have been to that type of club.

It felt, in Culture Club, like you entered it in a different way. It was raw, and identity was highlighted in a different way than in the first one. The first act at the castle was more classical. It was very beautiful and nice, and ended with a dance under the crystal chandelier. At Culture Club, however, it was a more raw club night. Because of that, it created for me a more transparent incorporation into the project, which allowed me to easily enter different situations and identifications. That became clearer at the Culture Club than at any of the other parties, probably because it began in a different way. The clothes and the makeup and the mask created for me another relation, so to speak, to myself and to the event. The Culture Club created an intimacy. It was small and it was packed. You got involved in the situation and with others. I can identify myself a lot with this club. I have experienced the time period it referred to. I went to a lot of clubs during that time period. It is therefore close to who I was, and maybe still am.
The third act was harder for me, not least because I work at the theater. It became too familiar. It became an identification that is more similar to theater; you change clothes, you dress up, you add something, you have a plume. If you want of course, but it was there, all those theatrical attributes were accessible. And because of that, the third act became more problematic.

For me, re-dressing is a play, a game. I have no problems playing since that is what I do every day in my job. For me, changing clothes is just fun. It is a fun thing to do. But there was also a difference between the acts. In the second it was more interesting, because I had to pack my things into a plastic bag. I had to transform myself in a bigger way. I got into those clothes, and it lasted a longer time. All of those things together created another feeling, actually. I could get into it in another way. It was not just a play any more. I was not distanced, as can happen in plays. I mean that I think playing is something positive, but that it can create a role, and I did not feel that at the second event. I did not enter a role there. At Culture Club I was there, I was in it in a totally different way. I do not know if that is related to the clothes or not, it could be. There were more simple clothes, it could be connected to that. At Unga Klara there was more of the world of theater in a way, or the parts of the theater that I dislike, crinoline and things like that. When I am in the theatrical world it is not those things that I accentuate, for me it is more about the text; the historical costumes are not important for me. They can be nice and beautiful, of course, but I think I felt with Culture Club that there was a totally different excitement and energy with this regular, simple clothing. It was more basic. That created a different energy. Those clothes are closer to me, it is much more me.

The clothes created a meeting. At the first event the costumes created a meeting with the location. The era, the rooms, the settings... All of this together, it was a play, you know. It was very elegant with the turbans, and it worked really well together with the architecture, but it never became reality. But at the second event the clothes created an intimacy and identity, because it was easier to relate to them. It also felt like that event was in more of a context because it was in a gallery, so I could identify with the room as well. I mean, Årsta Castle is a castle, it is harder for me to relate to it. The clothes at Årsta Castle became a costume or theater component, while the clothes were not costumes or theatrical props at the Culture Club. There, I was closer to the clothes, and they fused the past and the present in a way that the other events never achieved. I think that happened because it was in a gallery, it was made as a nightclub, and when I entered I could paint and do other things. It was more of a performance situation, and then the clothes created an intimacy that made it easier for me to be in the room. While in the last one, it became more like a theater. That happened because of the roles that I entered through the costumes, and because it was at a theater. If it had been at another venue then maybe I could have identified myself more. The theater had its own concept already, so it was hard for me to disregard that. I wish I could, but unfortunately that is impossible for me.

I think I was most attracted to the second event because I felt that I got or achieved something, and exactly what that was is hard to describe. But it was through the clothes, of course; because they were more simplistic, basic. It felt freer. And that has everything to do with the room, the place and the costumes.

I went with different people for each occasion, and that probably affected how I felt both during the event and after. At the first one I was there with a director, and we had a very lively discussion about the event. When we left on the bus that took us back to Stockholm City, we talked about what the action of putting on those clothes really meant. What is it? What is it intended to imply? What did they want to create? It was a very rancorous discussion. It was interesting, because even though we disagreed on several things, we could also agree that it was interesting, and that there were several things that we both liked at the event. For me, the most interesting thing at that event was the meeting between the costumes and the architecture; the place, the castle. That meeting was fun, I thought. But we discussed the event quite widely, and that was good. It was fruitful to discuss it.

At the second act I was so happy to navigate through all of those knots of clothes placed on the floor, and put those simple clothes on. And it was a strong feeling that what I had carried with me was stored away in a cheap plastic bag. I liked that.

I have in general discussed those club events quite a lot, because I think they are interesting. What I found interesting is that, in those events, you put on, as I call it, another shell. You change your outer identity through the costumes, since everything you wear means something. It gets very glorious when you play with that, and try out those different identities together in different constellations. It adds meaning in different ways. I think these things are very interesting. Also how the rooms affect these try-out experiments, because for such experiments it is very important where I am and how I relate to the architecture and the setting. The contrasts are enormous between being at Årsta Castle, Gallery Index or being at the Unga Klara theater. Those
rooms have different identities in themselves. They are different contexts. Therefore I think the second act had a greater transparency, in the sense that it combined the room and the costumes together in the best way.

At the second act I had one sleeve that was a bit plasticy and a regular shirt under that, and some fabric that was taped around my body. I used the tape a lot to add different pieces together, and I loved that. I liked that they were not ready-made clothes. I liked that there was the opportunity for me to make and remake, nothing was finished or complete. Maybe that is what I reacted to at the third act; things seemed so finished. That created more of a resistance for me. I like when it is a process, and I can get involved in the actions. At Culture Club I was very active, while at Sappho Island I was more passive. I find it much easier to go fully into things if I feel that I am active in the process. At Culture Club I changed identity. That was fun. I could try that identity change completely, in a way that I could not at the other two events.

From a gender perspective, I think that Culture Club was interesting because everyone became equal in their costumes. Genders fused there. The first one was a play with clichés, like the turban and the moustache, but it never became as interesting as the second act. The first act did not have the same investigation of gender as the second act. In the third act the costumes were more of a power game, since there was a costume that was already made and included plumes and crinolines that have an added value already. These garments have a time relation, and are usually used to display power relations on stage. In the first act, the power was present in the building. The castle is for me automatically connected to the upper class and the power related to that. I did not feel that sexuality was present at any of the acts. Since I was playing, and was part of a commitment within this play, sexuality was no longer important. The clothes desexualized the events. If I go out in a regular bar I am Kim, and then my sexuality is more visible. As a woman; as I am. But when I entered the club and changed my clothes with tape and cloth, sexuality was no longer important. I think it was liberating that sexuality became less important.

In these three acts the body is affected, you actually change the pattern in each and every person. Which is interesting. When theater and art is at its best it does that as well; it breaks the pattern you are squeezed into. The pattern that everyone is more or less stuck in. So yes, it was interesting. But I want more, and I want it longer. You have to let the time pass. The time is super important. You cannot always just go straight into it, you also need time for the transformation of yourself.
this is for you
I will talk about you

and I will give some structure to try to explain
explain what and how and why
explain what design and queer and performative means to me
I mean they can have different meanings but to me here
now in this it means this
at least now
Aim

In my research I aim to investigate the performative and ideology potential of clothing and fashion design. This aim is elaborated through a series of acts in which clothes have a fundamental role. Bodily experiences of clothes are explored from perspectives of queer, gender and feminism. While such perspectives include or relate to multiple analytical categories – e.g. ethnicity, education and class, which are also discussed in this thesis – sexuality and gender have been the focus of this research, and the work has been defined from this perspective.

I depart from a theoretical position at the intersection of feminism and queer, in which performative aspects of identity, together with attitudes to bodies and sexual practices, have a central role (i.e. performativity in Judith Butler, 1990; intersectionality in Lykke, 2005; Chavez and Griffin, 2012; sexual heritage and space in Ahmed, 2006; Probyn, 1996; queer and feminist performances in Rosenberg, 2000, 2012; clothes as queer identity markers in Geczy and Karaminas, 2013). I elaborate with performative acts which explore a deconstruction of hierarchical and heteronormative structures. Fashion and dress as connected to politics and societal structures (see e.g. Hoskins, 2014; González and Bovone, 2012; Marzel and Stiebel, 2014; Paulicelli, 2004; Tarlo, 2010) is a core concept throughout my work. By including social behavior or contexts in my design research, I aim to highlight some of the complexities connected to clothing, and simultaneously visualize the interaction between clothes, body and gender identity.
About

This thesis includes discussion of three different projects; On & Off, If you were a girl I would love you even more and The Club Scene. The projects are presented through the artwork and the created settings, but also through the texts. The texts contain a written literary structure (including interviews, monologues and dialogue materials), and a discursive text including references to performance, gender and queer studies.

The different characters of the three projects have enabled the exploration of bodily experiences of clothes from different angles, created in the context of performative design research from the perspectives of queer and feminism. The bodily experience of clothes becomes in this thesis a source of enactments, perceptions and interactions, both within and among bodies. When working with queer and gender elaboration, the body's reactions, acts and experiences become active contributors to the settings created.
About On & Off

In On & Off, the bodily experience of clothes is explored in relation to their function when understanding a scenario, a farewell, a sorrow. On & Off was a very lonely project. I present it as a monologue. I am performing a reading. It is my words, directed to the other. The stage is a small wooden box I have made. It makes me just slightly higher than the audience. The stage is so small I cannot move. The clothes described in On & Off are found leftovers, readymades that become an important part of the project.

The performative acts were almost entirely hidden, and included only one body and the absence of another. Before On & Off was performed, it was a private thing, but it became a performance when it was shown to the public. For me as the designer it was a new arena to enter, in which expression came no longer from clothes but from a performance, enacted using my words and body. The design then became much more related to me. I was no longer just the creator or sender; I embodied the work, and the work embodied me.

When presenting On & Off, I introduce it with Cause and effect – Thoughts on a scenario, which is built on assumptions and maybes. This introduction has similarities to the other text (the diary), and is presented as a performance as well. In my article On & Off – The Designer as a Writer (2015) I present a draft from Cause and Effect – Thoughts on a scenario:

Maybe. Maybe none of this is true. Maybe it doesn’t matter why, maybe all that matters is that. That I try to understand but try not to feel too much. That there is still something here that is you. That I try to handle it, and this situation. That I do this through the things that are left. One day for each thing. To put on and shrug off.

Grab, take and talk.

About If you were a girl I would love you even more

I started the project if you were a girl I would love you even more in 2010, after spending some time in the United States, where I reacted to more distinct gender roles than I was accustomed to or felt comfortable with. The project took its present form after meeting the man upon whom the work is based. He grew up in Kingston, Jamaica and New York's suburbs, a background which in many ways is the opposite of mine. He describes his neighborhoods as poor, working class and strongly religious. He has a university degree and works in both a female-dominated retail business and a homogenous, physical male environment. Having moved away, he still considers the areas in which he grew up to be his home, and some of the people there as his closest friends.

After getting to know him, I met some of his old friends and heard one of them using the word fag in a negative context. They were also explicit in their ideas about dress, and the values and norms connected to that. Even though the participant never acted in a discriminatory manner around me, he did not voice his disagreement to his friends’ voices.

In New York I met Genesis P-Orridge. Gen talked about hen’s relationship with Lady Jaye née Jacqueline Breyer, and their transformation into homogenous bodies. Their transformation of body was an ongoing project which involved, for example, Genesis P-Orridge getting breast implants for the purpose of creating a pandrogynous being named Genesis Breyer P-Orridge. The “cutting up” techniques were used on their own bodies to merge the two identities. The process was a way, as hen describes, to limit the distance between them and as a means of creating an expression of true love. Lady Jaye passed away in 2007 but, when I met Genesis in 2010, hen still talked about hen as we. The shared identity was still very present. I was very touched by the love story. I became inspired by their bodily modification and transformation. I was curious to further investigate the role of garments in such transformations, and explore whether clothes could act not only as a gender marker but also as a tool with which to deconstruct, fuse or eliminate gender and gender-oriented expressions.

At approximately the same time as I met Genesis P-Orridge, I began experimenting with clothes and makeup for the man in my project. How would he act when wearing dresses, blouses and skirts from my wardrobe? Could he adopt some of these
attributes? Could he agree to wear them and, if so, how would he feel about it? For the participant, the exploration with the clothes became not only an elaboration with styles and forms, but also an experiment with social positions and bodily acts.

At the start of the project, the participant had distinct ideas regarding what men and women should wear, particularly when it came to himself and what was proper for him, as a heterosexual man. He seemed to care highly about what others thought of him and his look. He expressed a desire to be fashionable, look good and be accepted. Simultaneously, though, he also seemed curious. He was presumably impressed by the artistic context which I represented to him. I got the impression that he wanted to try new things and be considered to be liberal. However, this aim seemed for him hard to achieve in practice. The reminders of social structure and the imagined reactions from relatives and friends easily took over his thoughts regarding his appearance.

Gender identity is understood from an intersectional perspective which states that power structures are not separated from each other – instead, they intersect (Crenshaw, 1995; Lykke, 2005). Social structures related to power – for example through gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity and age – affect one another. With the notion of intersectionality and post-colonialism in mind, the fact that I am white and the participant is Afro–American meant that the project could be interpreted not as a dislocation of power structures, but rather as a confirmation and establishment of such power. For me, this intersectional awareness involved critical ramifications, not only with regard to social structures but also for myself and the assumed power structures that I am part of or that I may inadvertently have established or confirmed. By highlighting such structures, I can potentially at least discourage a reproduction or misuse of them. My role of power can be located through the act of initiating the project, being the photographer (subject versus object) and owning the outcome. Furthermore I had a power position related to experience, education, class, age and race. However, the selection of the man was independent of race or skin color, and was much more personally founded, based on actions, attractions and reactions.

This project may be said to follow a wide range of parameters and discussions. The focus in this thesis is on queer and gender issues. With an application of feminist ideas to intersectionality and postcolonial theory, this thesis still has its limitations. Therefore, I would like to clarify that I am aware of the potential issues of inequality that could be read between me and the man, even if the discussion focuses on gender and sexuality, and the power that is embodied within these concepts.

If you were a girl I would love you even more was an experiment that lasted around a year and which, as it continued, was performed as a collaboration. In the later part of the project his suggestions were as frequent as mine. During the whole project, and in particular when his strong resistance was present, I worked with him within a loving and caring atmosphere. It was a play. There were no forces. In the early stages, everything was staged as a non-public event. It was a try-out experience in which both of us could elaborate, investigate and explore the potential of clothes as a marker and re-maker of gender identity.

In *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, the participant is anonymous in the sense that his name is not explicit, nor are the details as to how we relate to each other. However, he is exposed in the photographs (which he has consented to), and as a result also visible for the people who know or may recognize him. With respect to our agreement, I keep him anonymous in the text. However, as the title indicates, the project used love or desire as a force. Confirmation and compliments were used as a means of creating change and potentially increasing attraction.

Furthermore, it is important to make clear that this project does not aim to suggest that, by wearing certain clothing, you, per se, change sexuality or gender. Nor do I claim that this is how men, or men from certain cultures, generally react. There are no generalizations. The project started as a research phase for a more unisex collection, and does investigate reaction and identification aspects with regard to clothes. I do not believe that being transsexual or transvestite is something you choose or will automatically become by wearing clothes which were originally made for the opposite sex. Nor do I believe that a heterosexual man will become gay just by wearing a skirt or makeup. However, I do claim that performativity, as discussed by Judith Butler (1990), displays a produced idea of gender roles. How clear those roles are might vary based on context. The design research in this case is not limited to the artifact, but includes the context in which the artifact is being used.

The man’s appearance was created through my design work. I designed his look. I used him as a tool and inspiration for my work. In a fashion context, he could be compared to a muse. Even though this was a muse full of resistance. I was inspired by him and, simultaneously, dressed him in a way that would please me more. In the project, the dialogue was crucial. The man’s reactions and, later on, suggestions, had a great influence on the clothes I made for him.
I entered a role similar to that of a director. If he was the actor, we improvised the story. The design method was here based on a cooperative exploration. Even though I was the leader, the director, the designer, the project would not have existed in its present form without his contributions. We did fittings and styling tests together, and even if he was, for the most part, negative and skeptical, he also changed over time. In the end his creative suggestions were as frequent as mine.

About The Club Scene

The Club Scene was a series of clubs or events that were created to explore important historical, queer feminist rooms. The clubs were presented as three acts in Stockholm in the fall of 2012: LaLaSalon, Culture Club and Sappho Island, with me making costumes for the last two. For The Club Scene I cooperated with the Swedish design-artist-architecture group MYCKET (Mariana Alves, Katarina Bonnevier and Thérèse Kristiansson), who initiated the project together with Norm-Creative Settings (later Settings; Rebecca Vinthagen, Lina Zavalia).

When entering the clubs, the participants were encouraged to re-dress. I had prepared clothes, which were arranged in piles or hung on racks. The participants could localize the garments, try them on and re-dress and transform themselves as they liked. I and several others were helping out – dressing the ones who requested that, offering costumes to everyone. The re-dressing act was intended to be a performative one in which the guests were encouraged to participate, form and interact.

Upon beginning to write about the project, I encountered the complexity inherent in describing it. This was about bodily experiences, and these can be hard to document and/or visualize through a text. As the text can easily tend to just describe the event – and I would like to go beyond this general description to focus on the enactments, the feelings, the transformations – I used interviews as a method of reaching beyond my own description of the acts and so as to understand the bodily experiences of the participants. These were performed as individual talks. I used nine informants, each with a different background, age and role during the events. The paragraph with the participants’ voices – The Club Scene – is based on four interviews. The interview materials, featuring questions such as “what happened?”, “what did you wear?” and “how did it feel?” were later edited, translated and anonymized using pseudonyms², and further altered by the removal of my questions. Their voices instead speak for themselves. This method of using their words in a more literary way than through a simple transcript relates to my idea of the performative as a method, and the inclusion of literary texts in this methodology.

Complementing the interviews, we (myself, MYCKET, Settings) hosted an evaluation party about a month after the third act at Iaspis in Stockholm. Those invited had worked during the clubs or had participated in all three acts. The space at Iaspis was decorated with costumes and props from all three acts. A projector showed photographs from the different nights.
As an aperitif, the roughly twenty-five guests were served the same absinth as was offered during the first act. They were then put into groups and tasked with making pizzas which were supposed to be interpretations of how they explored the different clubs. Words that came up were “maximized”, “a lot of good things” and “really tasty”. During the dinner, which consisted of the pizzas, the guests received an envelope with three tasks. There was a sheet with questions about how they had perceived the clubs, another encouraging them to write an anecdote from one of the acts and a third on which they were to make a map of their experiences of the act. The tasks in the envelopes were an individual activity, performed at the dinner tables. At the end of the night we received twenty-five envelopes with answers, anecdotes and maps.

In The Club Scene I tried to imbue the costumes with a hint of the potential they contained, without giving them too much of a fixed appearance. The participants were free to put the clothes together in different ways. We were there to help, but they were encouraged to engage in this free play with those bodily attributes. Instead of seams, we taped. The clothes were shaped to fit the bodies; the tape thus had a central role in the creation and transformation of dressed bodies. It became both a decorative element and a forming tool. The outfits were very much created in the moment, even though I had prepared them with some colors and cuttings. The aesthetic platform was created through the selection of garments that the participants were able to play with. The clothes were donated by Emmaus, a Swedish welfare organization with several second-hand shops. The clothes were picked for the aesthetic ideas that were connected to the activist movement concept of the party. All garments were laundered and partly dyed. Some of the garments were also cut and formed. To make the garments connect with the gallery room that was now covered in paint, I had pre-stained them with the same paint.

We Sappho Island described as “a tribute to the legendary Kuchu/Queer club Sappho Island in Kampala, Uganda, and the island heaven of Lesbos and the heart of our poet of all time”. The aesthetic theme was connected to a Greek island. Lamé fabrics were made into togas. All participants wore slippers. I had sewn seashells of gold and silver velvet, which were used as hair or body decorations. Newly-made garments were mixed with a selection from the theater wardrobe. The clothes were hanging on racks, and accessories like hats and seashells were attached with clippers on cords, enabling the guests to localize and play with them. We were around five people who helped to dress and suggest garments and outfits, but the guests could freely choose whatever they wanted. The design intention from my end was to create an aesthetic platform which connected with the theme for the night, but was still open for the participants to engage and transform within.

The idea behind the transformative re-dressing acts – present in all acts of The Club Scene – was to create rooms in which fusion occurred between fiction and reality, body and space, past and present. The rooms all had historical references, and the act attempted through its reenactments to create rooms in which bodies achieved a safe platform, where queer and gender elaborations could freely act. The design work in that sense embodied both a creation, and the potential for re-creation. It worked as a transformative tool. It became a way to embody the enactments of the queer feminist rooms – the queer spaces – and the self-consciousness and identity connected to it.

The Club Scene involved hundreds of people. The central idea was the interaction with others and the setting that was collectively created. The clothes were handed by me to the participants. I served them the material with which to experiment, or I dressed their bodies as part of a performative act.
LESBIKT KRAFTFÄLT

Bemöta hur en medveten människa är klubbarna...

Bara att det var underbart att få prata om
jag har numera barn med en kvinna, att
något jag inte förväntade att jag aldrig
måste svara för den frågan: Om ett
människa och det numera barnet
jag (jag har numera barn med en man).

Med vilken känsla tämligen fel att dessa
och vilken känsla har du nu, när du tänker tillbaka på klubbarna?

(GLÖDJE), känsla av att ni slappat ner.

Finns det något från de tre klubbarna som du nu prövats emot (en metod, känslos, lid, redor...) i det
vardag eller arbetslivet efteråt?
HUR UPPFÖRDE DU TILLATTET I INBJUDNINGARNAS TILL KLUBBARNAS?

VAR GICK DU UPPTÅG PÅ, VAD FANTAD?

JAG VAR EXTREM NTYSK. OCH DET BLEV SÅ.
FÖRST觸 ENVELOPE VAR HÖG ISTÅRS EXCELLENCE OCH DET
VAR TYSKLT ATT HÅLLA EPISKT SMÅLIG HÅND.

INGULTING, FATTADES !!!!

VAR UPPFÖRER DU ATT KLUBBARNAS GÖR DIG TYSK? ATT AGERA SÅ SOM DU ÖNSKADE, VÅT VAR DET SOM BÖJDE OCH VAD VAR DET SOM BÖJDE?

CLUB 1 TÄV TRÄDE. 2 VAR FRÖNLIKT PÅ
SANG. 1 VAR LITE LAGOM, JAVA JÖRRADE MIN NER
MISTRIKTISET. CLUB 3 VAR INTE SÅ SOM 1 TÄV. 

SÅPAT ATT KOMA I STÄMNING. MAN ATT KOMA JÄTTE EPISKT
OCH SPEL.

UPPFÖRDE DU PLATZERNA, KLUBBARNAS SOM TRYGGA MILJÖER PÅ VILKEN SÄT?

OCH OM INTET, KAN DU BESKREVA FÄRGER.

TOTALT TRYGGHET!!

VAR ONS DET FÅNDE? FÅNDE PÅ, ALLE MÅN OCH FÖRKLÄNNINGAR FÖR DIG UNDER KLUBBARNAS?

JAG KÄNDE POLITISKAN ÖVERALLT HÄLTA TIDER PÅ ALL.

MEN MÅN PÅ CLUB 1 TÄV 2. 2 VAR ALLMÄNT
POLITISKT, OCH JAG KÄNDE ATT JAG KÄNTE FÖR MÅNO
HÅLDA LITE MÅNika UPPVÅLT IGNA MED ATT ANNORLÄTAN.

MÅN KÄNDA HAR DU NU, NÅR DU TRÄKER TILLBAKA PÅ KLUBBARNAS?

JAG KÄNDE MIG SOM DET VAR LÅTANDE LÄNLIG O
KLÄS, OCH STORGALL MED TACK!

FINTS DET NÅGOT FRÅN DE TRE KLUBBARNAS SOM DU HÄR PÄRITISERAT (EN RX, KÄNSLA, IDÉ, NÄTVERK) I DET
vardag eller arbetssituation efter?

JAG HAR BYXORNA
PÅN CL 2 KVÄR...

OCH JÄT TÅG HÄR ÄT HÄR ALLT I
MÅL SYSTEM OCH TÄT MED (...)

FINNS DET NÅGOT I FÖR UPPORN
NÄR DET STORA - LIGGLIGA - SOM ÄLTE RUN

MÅN PÅ, MÅN ÄR ÄN SÅ LÅNGE VÄGT,
PÅ KÄNSTLADAET.

DET FINNS HOPP
Queer is a wide term which refers to what is at odds with the normal, normative and dominant (Halperin, 1995:62), and so a challenge to heteronormativity. Within queer theory, analyses of sexuality with regard to identity, norms and social structures have been performed. These notions relate to a feminist perspective in which sexuality, gender, class, culture and social structures interact and affect each other to a great degree.

As a starting point, queer history (Aldrich, 2006; Lord and Meyer, 2013; Dyer, 2002; Halperin, 1990), historical and contemporary notions of queer styles (Geczy and Karaminas, 2013; Suthrell, 2004; Steele, 2013; Warkander, 2013) and the performative acts of queer (Judith Butler, 1990; Carlson, [1996] 2004; Rosenberg, 2000, 2012) have been a basis for inspiration, reflections and ideas for the works in this thesis.

In my work, I relate to queer in terms of both theory and through practical work, for example through the application of the writings of Sara Ahmed (2000, 2006, 2010), Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (2010), Judith Butler (1988, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2004, 2005) and Elspeth Probyn (1995, 1996). Such theories are used as a platform for the artistic practice, related to the other, performativity, cross-dressing and queer spaces. Queer can also include things which are open to interpretation, undefined and full of nuances with regard to bodies, acts and artistic expressions.

‘Queer’ came about as an embodiment in practice of transgression and subversion. Queer is attractive in its inclusiveness – it can go beyond gender and sex – and in its simple statement of being against the norm in whatever way the performer proposes. In a way, ‘queer’ does not pretend to be anything more than a one-off performance, a pop-up shop of identity. It is ironic and playful.

(Wilson, 2013:188)

The practical and performative has a fundamental role in my research, and is the core from which the writing and analyses begin, as related to Geczy and Karaminas’s statement that “queer is something far more lived, experienced, enjoyed and suffered than it is theoretical” (2013:3). In my work, I want the design to be felt and explored. I not only create for bodies, but let the bodies be part of the creation. The queer and the design are in my work explored among bodies, and also created through them. The practical work
relates to queer scholarship which highlights queer experiences, embodiment and sexuality in varied ways (Halberstam, 1998, 2005; Probyn, 1996; Dahl and Volcano, 2009).

In the publication Malin Hellkvist Sellén: verk 2003 – 2010 / texter av Hanna Wilde, which is about the Swedish choreographer Malin Hellkvist Sellén, queer is explained as follows:

The queer strength lays in the notion that it cannot be beset, it goes beyond static definitions. In the case that queer in any sense is something, it claims to be the floating and undefined, that which opposes all attempts to define what that something is.

(transl. from Wilde 2012:46)

In the definition of queer in a fashion context, it, at least potentially, relates to cross-dressing and the reshaping of looks expected based on gender. However, even if queer is considered to be a definition of something outside the box, apart from the norm, it might indicate a notion of subcultures and, as such, the stereotypes within such subcultures, for example gay men wearing leather or the styles of lesbian femme and butch.

My interest in queer topics and the connection between clothes and identity is present in my works prior to this thesis. I worked with queer in the project Collection L (Gunn, 2009), which was influenced by a group of bi- and homosexual women. Starting from a series of interviews about clothes, sexuality and gender, I made clothes which were an interpretation of each woman. The women were then photographed wearing the clothes I made, thus wearing an outfit which embodied themselves. For the film A Little Tiger by Annacarin Andersson (2006), which is about a boy who grows up with two lesbian mothers, I was the costume designer. As part of the work for this movie, I discussed how lesbians are presented in popular culture and on the screen with the director, Annacarin Andersson. It was important for us when working on the movie to relate to lesbianism as something other than a visual stereotype in which the women are expected to look a certain way because of their sexual orientation. In the workshop Make & Remake: Fashion & Gender that I held in Cairo, Egypt in November 2012, I applied a theme based on androgyny, feminism and queer to a design practice related to recycling. The notion of the Arab Spring and the current situation for women in Egypt became a platform for the discussions, and with the application of their own experiences they incorporated ideas of feminism and gender into their design practices. The participants all created small collections with recycled materials as part of their interpretation of the theme. The workshop became an opportunity for me to work with a gender and queer perspective in what was for me a new context. The result was shown as an exhibition at Darb 1718 in Cairo in April 2013.

Present in my work is the play with clichés and stereotypes, with reference to the notion of camp as a queer expression. This includes the stereotypes and clichés of gender roles, as well as the clichés of the appearance of LGBTQ persons. Camp, is defined by Susan Sontag in Notes On “Camp” (1964) as an aesthetic phenomenon – a creation no near the natural – involving elements of kitsch and proposing a “comic vision of the world”. My practice applies the queer notion of camp as found in Fabio Cleto’s Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Reader (1999) and Moe Meyer’s The Politics and Poetics of Camp ([1994] 2005). Meyer goes as far as to claim that queer identity is inseparable from camp (Meyer, [1994] 2005:4). In my work, it is through highlighting stereotypes, and exploring and remaking them, that the potential of the clothes as clichés and embodiments of stereotypes becomes visible. As a political term, camp has been used since the 1980’s by, for example, ACT UP and Queer Nation; here, queer parody is implemented as a critical function of heteronormative structures (Meyer, [1994] 2005:6), and such notions are applicable to my practice.

In this thesis the queer theme and settings are used as a platform for the creation of ideas, bodies, clothes and performative acts. This includes, for example, the format of the text, cross-dressing acts and the restaging acts of important queer feminist rooms. The broader definition of queer, which goes beyond normative pressure, makes it potentially political, not only in contexts of bodily and sexual practices but in all contexts in which it might occur (i.e. design and other popular culture practices).

To queer is both to do differently and to make a particular set of relations that are different from the binary oppositions defined by the norm.

(Janet R. Jakobsen 1998:528)
Design

Design entails not only the creation of artifacts (i.e. clothes), but also the creation of ideas (Adamson, 2007; Barthes [2004] 2006; Ericson, Frostner, Kyes, Teleman and Williamsonson, 2009; Jones, 1970; McKim, 1973). Design thus becomes a notion related to ideology and social change (Attfield, 1989; Attfield and Kirkham, 1989; Buckley, 1986; Ehrnberger, Broms, Katzeff, 2013; Ehrnberger, Räsänen and Istedt, 2012; Ericson and Mazé, 2011; Jahnke, 2006; Kirkham, 1996; Margolin, 2002; Papanek, 1971, 1983, 1995; Papanek and Hennessey, 1973; Wosk, 2001). It connects with the values, emotions and sense of identity that people apply to their clothes. We let the clothes embody us, confirm us and, simultaneously, we allow them to produce us, our body and our self (Entwisle, 2000; Entwistle and Wilson, 2001; Flugel, [1930] 1951; Holland, 2004; Tseelon, González and Kaiser, 2012). The design- making, the transformations, the performative acts (highly present in my settings) are all part of an act of creation which forms and establishes society, its structures and the norms connected to it. In my work I have collaborated with the art and architecture group MYCKET, the architecture group New Beauty Council (NBC), the art collective FUL, the fashion organization FashionPlay, and the graphic designers Martin Falck (Studio MS) and Josefin Carlén and Elin Nilsson (Joel-works). As a result, I consider all work from perspectives in which design constitutes not only artifacts, but objects which have an effect on ideological and societal norms. Furthermore, I work with the international Gender Design Network (iGDN), which connects and discusses gender design with designers and researchers. In my work, the aim of achieving change is present in the relations to the self and the other in the performative acts, as well as in the writing structure.

When working on If you were a girl I would love you even more, I noticed that several bloggers highlighted Steven Meisel’s photographic story A Sexual Revolution, created for W Magazine from October 2004. Around the same time, Acne released a mini collection in cooperation with the transversal style publication Candy Magazine. The Creative Director at Acne, Jonny Johansson, said that his dream is to design women’s clothes for men – “All I wanna do is to create women clothes for men” (Braunerhielm, 2010). For their fall 2010 campaign, Givenchy used the transsexual model Lea T. Hen had earlier worked as a fitting model for the brand and, by using her as a campaign model, Creative Director Riccardo Tisci strengthened the sense of androgyny in his collections. In Louis Vuitton’s spring 2011 collection, the models were styled like Candy Darling, Andy Warhol’s muse. Later in the Fall of 2010, Marc Jacobs, dressed as a woman and accompanied by the text “Mrs. Jacobs”, was on the
cover of the November issue of Industri #2. The following Spring, Iggy Pop was photographed wearing a dress by Mikael Jansson in the New York Times style supplement T-magazine. In December 2010, a portrait photo series by Jon Uriarte with his male friends dressed in their girlfriends’ clothes – produced with one photo session per person – was shown in a gallery in Bilbao (Uriarte, 2014). In July 2012 – when the exhibition in which If you were a girl I would love you even more was shown for the first time was still running – Rad Hourani had his first show, which came to be seen as the first unisex haute couture show in history. My application of fashion design research as it relates to performance and art contexts has similarities to Kajsa G Eriksson’s Concrete Fashion: Dress, Art, and Engagement in Public Space (2009). The allowing of participants to interact with and be part of the artistic outcome has similarities to the design research of Ulrik Martin Larsen (2014) and Ricarda Bigolin (2012). The gender elaborations in my work have similarities to Kirsí Nevantti’s ongoing dissertation In Real Life (Or Elsewhere), which deals with creative processes and parallel realities, and for which she initiated two workshops led by Diane Torr: A man for a day (two days in spring 2013) and A woman for a day (three days in spring 2014). Here, women and men could change gender identity for a few days at the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts (Nevantti, 2015). I find the application of text – queer and performative notions of writing, text as movement and resistance and the application of knowledge through bodily experiences – interesting in the research of Mara Lee (2014). The application of queer and gender theory (i.e. Judith Butler, 1990) to artistic practice relates to Cecilia Björcks research in music pedagogy, Claiming Space – Discourses on Gender, Popular Music and Social Change (2011), and I find the relation between gender and design interesting in the research of Karin Ehrnberger (2012, 2013). Marcus Jahnke’s Meaning in the Making – Introducing a hermeneutic perspective on the contribution of design practice to innovation (2013) relates to my work through the involvement of non-designers in a design practice, and through the discussion in which design does not necessarily primarily involve problem-solving, but instead takes into account experiences of design and notions of practice reflection. My exploration of ideology and the performative functions of clothes partly relates to fashion label Hood By Air’s queer performances (boychild), or fashion designers like Lucia Cuba, Ida Klamborn, Minna Palmqvist and This is Sweden, are other examples of ideology being applied to a clothing practice. Notions of the relationships between gender and design (Attfield, 1989; Attfield and Kirkham, 1989; Buckley, 1986; Ehrnberger, Broms and Katzeff, 2013; Ehrnberger, Räsänen and Istedt, 2012; Jahkke, 2006; Kirkham, 1996; Wosk, 2001) highlight the patriarchal context’s effect on design and artifacts. Design has been formed in a male-dominated society, and has confirmed patriarchal structures in both historical and contemporary settings. Applying perspectives on gender to design opens up for new methods of analysis and the historical reading of design and material culture, with the aim of overcoming conventions and stereotypes (Ferrara, 2012), something that my work is also very much about. With the notion of gender as central, I, in my design practice, relate to our ideas about the assumed appearances of (and categorization into) men and women. Even though clothing has its variations, this relates to contemporary stereotypes – things which have been established culturally and historically. Therefore, the notion of the history of dress is present in my practice. As fashion design is influenced by multiple sources and gender is only one of them, the application of intersectionality when discussing design broadens the notion of design changes, and gives a more full picture of the effects on consumption, styles and appearances. In terms of the history of western dress, France in the eighteenth century held a position in which they exported not only styles of fashion, but also modes of living, related to how one should live and act in their clothes (Ribeiro, 2002). France thus exported cultural appearances and contexts. The appearance of a dressed body includes notions of masks and masquerades, decoration and silhouettes and the idea of the aristocracy. In the late eighteenth century there was a shift in which male clothing changed from being decorative and ostentatious while female dress continued to be extravagant, outrageous and playful, and this shift was mirrored by political changes and so came to signify social change (Haulman, 2011; Tseëlon, 1995:36). The relationship between dress and social power – appearance and hierarchy – signifies a social structure that we enact within. Historically, female dress has been an expression of men’s wealth. The clothes of the women of the upper class or bourgeoisie were not made for work or physical activity. Women did not have power over money, politics or themselves. It was when women entered occupations which were previously male-dominated that they also adopted stylistic elements from the wardrobes of men. Playing with gender power can take the form of drag. Drag kings can be a deconstruction of masculinity and dominant paradigms, as well as an expression of identity (Karaminas, 2013). The designed performative bodies become the tool for such deconstruction, and the platform for identity expression.
Over the centuries, fashion has tried to form and shape the female body. In Abba Goold Woolson’s *Dress Reform* (1874), the health issues related to women’s clothing (i.e., the corset) are discussed. In Sweden, the book was distributed by Doctor Curt Wallis, who also introduced the reform dress and simultaneously claimed that women should use clothes that enabled them to be more actively involved in society (Bergman, 1986). This notion of design’s relation to political positions appears distinctly in history, but is still present in more contemporary contexts. French historian Christine Bard (2011) writes about the differentiation between male and female dress, and how men’s fashion embodies a tradition of greater functionality, while women’s bodies have been directed into clothing concerned with beauty and limitations – sometimes at the risk of their health. Clothes have had a political function in their central role when discussing and campaigning for women’s rights (Bard, 2011). As recently as the 1980’s, it was forbidden for female lawyers in Great Britain to appear in court wearing trousers (Wilson, 2013:185). This tradition, political notion or provocation still has a presence today, for example in countries where it is forbidden by law for women to wear pants (Ahmad al-Hussein, 2010).

In relation to the dressed female body and its relation to the traditional male wardrobe, my design interest in *If you were a girl I would love you even more* is highly related to the male adoption of what could be considered to be feminine. The design practice therefore involves studies of the historical men’s wardrobe and its queer references (Bolton, 2003; Ribeiro, 2002; Steele, 2013; Steorn, 2012). This includes the macaronsi who, through their fashionable dressing, challenged ideas of masculinity in eighteenth-century England (Ribeiro, 2002; Steele, 2013), or the depictions of men wearing a variety of skirts - shendyt (sometimes combined with aprons) in Ancient Egypt (Roehrig, Dreyfus and Keller, 2005). Tunics and skirts were frequently worn by men in Ancient Greece, and togas had significance for Roman men, and also appeared in the form of loose mantles and tunics, belted with a sash, during the French Revolution (Bolton, 2003). The 1930’s Men’s Dress Reform (MDRP) in Britain encouraged men from a health perspective not to wear aprons in Ancient Egypt (Roehrig, Dreyfus and Keller, 2005). Tunics and skirts were frequently worn by men in Ancient Greece, and togas had significance for Roman men, and also appeared in the form of loose mantles and tunics, belted with a sash, during the French Revolution (Bolton, 2003). The 1930’s Men’s Dress Reform Party (MDRP) in Britain encouraged men from a health perspective not to wear pants (Bolton, 2003). Furthermore, the Arabic bisht (cloak) and thawb, African kanzu (ankle- or floor-length tunic) and boubou (loose-fit wide-sleeved robe) and Indian shervani (long coat/jacket), kurta (long shirt) and cultural and geographical variations on the sarong (e.g., izaar, lungi, dhoti, mundu, macawis, kikoy, lamba, kitenge, capulana, lava-lava) are other examples of men’s clothes that are similar to women’s dresses and skirts.

In the 1960’s fashion scene, androgyny was an important influence. The style appeared around the same time as the increase in the number of feminist movements and growing awareness of gender politics. However, the deconstruction of gender appearances in fashion – which unisex clothes can be interpreted as constituting – does not automatically create a breakdown of gender roles, but rather constructs new gender categories in which the deconstruction of the appearance of heteronormative masculinity can increase the role of heterosexual masculinity (Steorn, 2012). The deconstruction of norms potentially creates new norms. In Sweden, the unisex fashion was established by designers like Rohdi Heintz, Sighsten Herrgård (Herrgård and Werkelid, 1988) and Mah-Jong (Hallström Bornold, 2003). Mah-Jong was political in the sense of being not only critical of gender roles, but also of several societal issues, e.g., labor and textile production, as well as the anti-war movement which supported the FNL during the Vietnam War (Hallström Bornold, 2003). Internationally, the unisex designs of e.g., Ted Lapidus and Rudi Gernreich were significant, while Yves Saint Laurent made it fashionable for women to wear pants. As stated by art historian and fashion theorist Patrik Steorn (2012), unisex clothes opened up for a potential performative play with gender, in which the wearer could disguise and explore sexual heritage – accentuating desire towards both sexes (see comparison with Steorn, 2012 about S. Herrgård) and strengthening the idea of the outrageous sexual identity of the 1960’s.

As the politics of the 1970’s became more hippie-oriented, the adaption of robes or caftans influenced by Moroccan, Indian or Middle Eastern cultures occurred. The 1970’s also involved the punk movement, with kilts and skirts as part of the male wardrobe. Long shirts for men were present in the 1990’s (e.g., Armani S/S 1994, Vivienne Westwood, A/W 1998/99, Moschino S/S 2002) and today (Walter Beirendonck S/S 2015, Ann Demeulemeester S/S 2015, Balenciaga S/S 2015). In contemporary fashion, skirts for men have at times been present in the design of, for example, Jean Paul Gaultier, Vivienne Westwood and Commes des Garçons, and have frequently been worn by Marc Jacobs. The lines are somewhat blurry between transvestism, gender-marked clothing and what simply could be categorized as fashion (Sutrell, 2004).

The notion of gender appearances and the bodily experience of design is at the core of my research. The application of user experiences – focusing on pleasure rather than usability – has previously been developed in design research (Koskinen, 2011:26-27). However, such studies have frequently been used in the context of...
of constructive research (Koskinen, 2011), in which the design practice is more technically-oriented than in my work. When presenting my research in the context of art and design – in museums, galleries, and art magazines – I relate to the notion that artistic research should not be separated from design or art practices, but should instead be part of them: “Artistic research takes place at the same stake where art also takes place; otherwise the topic has been changed and meaning of research has been betrayed.” (Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén 2005:61).

However, the term ‘design’ in a research context may not only evoke research through or about art and design, but also the design of research proposals. I define my design research as performative – as I further explain in the Performative Design Research section – but there are also other definitions that I relate to in my design practice. With regard to the involvement of others as a performative act, my method also relates to an action research line (Lewin, 1946; Reason and Bradbury, [2001] 2006).

In my research, this is applied as a participatory act with reference to participatory art where the wearer and audience become active participants in the work and where the notions of space, context and change can be achieved through and within bodies – participatory actions which affect audiences on both individual and collective levels (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998).

Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

(Reason and Bradbury, [2001] 2006:1)

The action research line also relates to an advocacy/participatory approach – also applicable to my work. Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart (2012:273) define ‘participatory research’ as “shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation toward community action”.

Participatory action research is social; participatory action research is directed toward studying, reframing, and reconstructing social practices. […] Participatory action research offers an opportunity to create forums in which people can join one another as coparticipants in the struggle to remake the practices in which they interact—forums in which rationality and democracy can be pursued together without an artificial separation ultimately hostile to both.

(Kemmis and McTaggart, 2012: 277)

John W Creswell (2003) states that the participatory application opens up for research in which marginalized people’s or communities’ voices are heard and explored. Creswell’s explorations with feminist perspectives (Olesen, 2000, 2005), racialized discourses (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1983), queer (Gamson, 2000; Yep, Lovaas and Elia, [2003] 2014) and critical theory (Fay, 1987) relate to my practice and research approach. Feminist critique commonly departs from a conviction that research should represent women’s experiences and the lives of ordinary women, highlighting those who have been excluded or presented in one-dimensional terms (Smart, 2009). The participatory, queer and intersectional feminist approaches implemented, along with the artistic practice, become performative design research, as I will return to later.

Involved in the design practice are also ethical issues, which are related to the participatory actions. The notion of “do no harm” (Sandretto, 2007) is an important reflection throughout my work. This includes the idea that my design practice involves the participants in ethical discussions about the issues that affect them, as with the outcome of If you were a girl I would love you even more described above or the usage of pseudonyms for my informants in The Club Scene, which took into account aspects of confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, this also includes aspects of power – how I relate to power, my role with regard to the participants and the people I work with. The reflection on power – to remain critical of my own privileges and power positions – is thus from a feminist perspective a part of the design practice. Hence, the challenging of power structures is related to the questioning of norms created in a male hierarchical structure, where it is of great importance to recognize not only the male epistemological stance, but also your own subjectivity (MacKinnon, 1982). I can be subject and object, sender and receiver, depending on the context and my position within it.
Design is multiple things. It is how I present my work, which voice I use. The project texts are design. They do not describe what I am doing, but actually are the doing. They, through description and the reader’s imagination, create clothes, appearances and outfits. The texts become design through the embodiment of the other, the embodiment of an act and the formation of time. The texts form, and are being formed. The design choices here lie in the selection of words, the rhythm and the meanings. What is said in the text is made out of choices. The design choices relate to what should be told, should be hidden or exposed. The design choices are made out of notions of protection, caring, understanding, communication and actions. Working from a queer and feminist perspective, such attitudes are implemented in the design choices of the performed text through the application of a personal perspective, the expression of narratives which include a conscious decision relating to whose history and story is being told. The queer could also meet with non-linear narration, as I try to conduct my exploration at the intersection between literary and academic writing, but also through the text, as in On & Off, where ambiguity and contradictions are used.

With the application of the text as design in a clothing and fashion design context, I partly go beyond the object. Dressed bodies become created through words. Simultaneously, photographs and performances are also included in this thesis, as I consider them to be part of my design practice.

Design or fashion studies can have multiple methodological approaches, such as semiotics, ethnography, sociology or artistic-based research (Kawamura, 2011). Fashion studies, as well as artistic research itself, is a relatively new academic field. New research fields tend to experience a need for distinction – and, simultaneously, a need to create a terminology for the new, distinct field (Lönndqvist, 2009). New approaches to studies and new experiences and explorations create change and processes including an intellectual relation to the objects (Lönndqvists, 2009:299), the design and fashion field.

In my artistic practice and research I integrate theory as part of an exchange between the two, in which theory and practice are intertwined and developed in parallel. This method is present in contemporary artistic research, and develops a variety of knowledge and skills, both artistic and theoretical (Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén 2005:19-22). The artistic research presented is connected to both the creation of the garments and their setting, as regards the descriptions and stories linked to each act. I create the performative settings in which clothes have a fundamental role. To create such settings and contexts, as the garments become part of them, is from my perspective an action related to ideology. It not only highlights issues from the queer feminist historical perspective, but also creates a context and sense of community in its present form. I make the clothes or let the participants be involved in the making and re-dressing, I document the events through text and photographs. The images become in some cases not only documentation, but also the artwork itself.

Working with settings in which clothes have a fundamental role, the definition of ‘clothes’ and their function has been discussed and reflected upon. The bodily experiences of clothes might relate to how we define clothes or fashion, our expectations and previous experiences. In the field of fashion studies, there is commonly a distinction between fashion and clothing. ‘Clothing’ has a more everyday, functional meaning, while ‘fashion’ represents a system connected to communication, status and significant cultural forces (Barnard, 1996; Barthes 1983; Bordieu 1986, 1993a; Brewster, 2003; Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2005; Loschek, 2009; Luhmann, 1984) in relation to imagination, dreams and desire (Steele, 1985, 1996; Wilson, 1985; Vinken, 2005). The signifying values relate to cultural expressions, subcultures and the ambition of distinctions (Muggleton [2000] 2006; Keenan, 2001; Lynch, 1999), as well as the function of a distinctive marker of class and economic structures – historical (Veblen, 1899; Simmel, 1957) and contemporary (Klein, 2000). In my work, the perception of the garments varies, and the lines between clothes, fashion and even costumes are blurred. I handed the ability to make distinctions over to the participants, but describe the garments and outfits in this thesis as clothes, and the work in this thesis has been positioned in various contexts within the art, craft and design fields.

In the publication Svensk Smak (2002), Zandra Ahl and Emma Olsson write about Swedish ‘taste’. They claim that the evaluation of design objects is rarely concerned with whether the object is well or badly designed, but instead with who sets such rules and guidelines. It is about power, and the knowledge of power structures. Good taste belongs to those who follow the rules, while bad taste is of those who do not know about the rules or follow them. Good taste is thus limited to a select few. Taste becomes related to class, cultural capital (see Bourdieu, 1986) and gender. Traditionally, male taste is represented by sleek lines and grand objects, while so-called female taste is concerned with decoration and ornamentation (Ahl and Olsson, 2002). The male taste is the one which has a high status. This is not unique to design, but visible throughout our society. As discussed by Michel Foucault (1976–1978), these norms work as a form of social regulation through which gender
structure is instituted (Judith Butler, 2004). Zandra Ahl and Emma Olsson aim with their publication to show another taste – another Sweden – than what is usually represented, as the norm and what we communicate.

As design or craft thus not only constitutes an object or artifact, but also values and norms, and this thesis focuses on performative acts in which clothes have a fundamental role, my focus with these acts has not been the creation of details and form, but the creation of ideas and settings, and the discussion of what the clothes create, how they are used and perceived. The design choices for the garments in this context were made based on aspects that would fit the situation, or even quite suddenly, in the moment. The design choices did not follow any process found in retail or in the work used for fashion collections. Commercial values were also entirely absent. Instead, the design choices were focused on creating a setting in which bodies could explore the performative and queer potential of the clothes. For me, the clothes were not interesting without the bodies that were connected to them and the context they were in.
Performative Design Research

The term ‘performative design’ can have varied meanings and connotations, depending on the context (Oxman, 2008). Performance and performativity have entered research fields outside of the theater and the stage (Lamontagne, 2007). Instead, the social drama has come to importance in performative design, and the performative perspective can be used in various research fields to understand the meaning of an event by taking into account deeply intertwined relations between one’s self and the surroundings (Lamontagne, 2007).

The application of this performative design research definition to my projects has allowed for an understanding of bodily actions and experiences through clothes – and the performance and creation of such actions and experiences. This understanding is based on the monologue, interview materials and dialogues in which participants verbalized their experiences, as well as my studies of the bodies involved in the performative acts. The experiences are related to the settings in which the participants were encouraged to interact, transform and explore themselves and others through clothes. Briefly, I claim that performative acts (and the study of such acts) offer the potential to understand bodily experiences, as they include different parameters, such as context, movement, interaction, gaze, perception, play and communication with others. The multiple functionalities of performative acts opens up for a more complex understanding of bodily experiences than if the research were to only focus on one or a few parameters, since I consider design as well as fashion studies to be a multidisciplinary subject. With such a notion, I claim that the effect on bodies in social, political, sexual, contextual, physical and psychological terms should also be considered when exploring the bodily experiences, since the body acts in multidisciplinary contexts.

Performativity also enabled the evocation of a theme or issue, which the participants could explore through both visual effects and their own bodies. Even when primarily relegating performativity to an off-stage situation, I relate the encouragement of action, included in my work, to the engaging aesthetics of the Swedish director Suzanne Osten and her work with queer and feminist themes. Osten was the creative director for Unga Klara, where we staged The Club Scene’s third act, Sappho Island. Through her work, Osten has connected the ideological theater with the individual actor’s opportunities to develop in their professions and through their roles in the group (Svens, 2002:89), something which also relates to my work when considering the participants as actors. Reperformances where both the designer (artist)
and the audience are encouraged to cooperate in actions both on and off the stage, relate to my work, regardless of whether that stage is placed inside or outside of theaters. In the use of a modernistic form and aesthetic, Osten distanced herself from theater traditions and instead entered a dialogue which disturbed both contemporary and traditional norms (Svens 2002:120). It is this function of dialogue, and the relation to norm criticism or norm creativity, that I found interesting in her work.

Elin Diamond (1996, 1997) applies a feminist perspective to theater and performances. Her work includes both gender and performance studies – the main theoretical foundations that I base my work upon. Diamond suggests that Butler’s performativity needs the performance, the embodiment (Diamond, 2000), and as such implements an inclusive term for performance that is not limited to the theater and the stage (for such a definition of performance see also Schechner, [1988] 2003; Carlson [1996] 2004; Sauter, 2000; Gindt; 2008). Furthermore, when applying performative design research, I also relate to sociology (Goffman, [1959] 2009) and anthropology (Turner, 1974, 1987) in combination with feminist and queer theory (Judith Butler, 1990; Phelan, 1993, [2001] 2012; Rosenberg, 2012), queer performance (Rosenberg, 2000, 2012) and performative speech acts (Austin, [1955] 2009), as I work with the performative as a method which includes acts of art, gender and everyday life.

Richard Schechner’s performance theory positions performance as an inclusive term “that reaches from the rituals of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life – greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on – through to play, sports, theater, ceremonies, rites and performances of great magnitude” (Schechner, [1988] 2003:xvii). Schechner’s ideas of performance open up for the definition of performative acts in everyday life. Schechner’s work partly relates to Victor Turner’s (1957) concept of the social drama as a tool for social anthropology. Here, performative acts are placed outside of the theater and into a much wider cultural context. Schechner later explored the interactions between the social drama and the aesthetic drama to highlight the flow between social and political actions and theatrical events (Schechner, 1976). Wilmar Sauter (2000) defines a theatrical event as any type of performance that may occur on a stage or on the street and which is watched by an audience. This makes the performative act an inclusive, ongoing event. Interpreted in a fashion design context, the fashion show is then an everyday occurrence which takes place everywhere where there are clothed bodies performing. I display my work with clothes at various places and events, positioning it away from the setting of a traditional catwalk. Social constructionism considers the social performance not as fixed, but instead as constantly constructed and reformed – a pragmatic elaboration with pre-existing materials referring to processes of bricolage (Carlson: [1996] 2004:44). Marvin Carlson ([1996] 2004) discusses performance not only from an everyday perspective, but also from that of scholars within art, queer and feminism. Carlson states: “Most modern politically oriented performance is flexible, […] slipping back and forth between claiming an identity position and ironically questioning the cultural assumptions that legitimate it” (Carlson, [1996] 2004:194). In my work with queer performative settings, the identity aspects of both the self and the context in which the bodies are placed have been crucial when exploring the bodily experience of clothes. I have worked with the creation of body and space and its interaction, where bodies become part of the architectural space and where the rooms in which bodies are placed become part of the bodily act and the transformation that is being performed and explored. The rooms created relate to cultural assumptions and contexts, and the bodily acts become both an identity elaboration and, simultaneously, a potential criticism of norms and assumptions.

The application of social masks (Goffman, 1959) and how we integrate and act in relation to others is another perspective of performativity that is applicable to my work. We present ourselves through a certain type of acting, through masks, which relates to how we interpret and understand others (Goffman, 1959). Considering the performative acts as an act of human play, notions of the cultural functions of play include acts and language (Huizinga, 1945). As such, play has a fundamental role in social interactions, simultaneously involving excitement, lust and joy (Huizinga, 1945). Play is defined through agreements or rules where the possibility of an alternate reality may occur, and where play enters a political and social function (Caillois, [1958] 2001). Play becomes part of rituals, sexuality and culture (Turner, 1974), and in my work is expressed through nightclubs, re-dressing acts and explorations of sexual and cultural identity. While Huizinga and Caillois describe play as a distinct act, Jacques Ehrmann (1968), in contrast to Huizinga and Caillois, suggests that reality (as in work and everyday life) and play are fused. Turner (1987:94) states that “the major genres of cultural performances (from ritual to theater and film) and narration (from myth to the novel) not only originate in the social drama but also continue to draw meaning and force from the social drama”. Applying the notion of play to a queer context, Benjamin Shepard (2010) argues that Huizinga and Caillois’s definition of play is applicable to queer activist performances, as it occurs in the form of direct actions to make visible and extend queer politics in the form of non-sanctioned marches or norm-creative
Butler, intersects with the designer's role and affects how learning and making take place. The notion of gender into what are already socially established. “Doing gender”, as discussed by Adrienne Rich (1980), later developed by Judith Butler (1990). The heterosexual matrix framework – the heterosexual matrix – as first established by poet and gender scholar is connected with gender and how gender is produced. The definitions of a performance – is defined by the term performativity, as discussed by Judith Butler (1997), and is connected with gender and how gender is produced. The definitions of the performative and performativity are a platform which I relate to design in my work, which for example includes gender elaborations, restaging and performative acts in public spaces and everyday life. As Butler (1990) states, is through repetition that bodies are produced and gender is established. The gender role is related to a heteronormative framework – the heterosexual matrix – as first established by poet and gender scholar Adrienne Rich (1980), later developed by Judith Butler (1990). The heterosexual matrix is a queer theoretical framework which defines the structure of the heterosexual norm, its dominance and supremacy. Everyone and everything is read as heterosexual until proved otherwise, and such normative interpretation creates structures in which the body is assumed to act and appear in a certain way. The heterosexual matrix thus limits the acts of gender into what are already socially established. “Doing gender”, as discussed by Butler, intersects with the designer’s role and affects how learning and making take place.

Street theater. The idea of the play as a performative act is in my work inseparable from and synonymous with reality, and culture becomes an important standpoint when perceiving, interpreting or analyzing my work, as I present a fusion of fiction and reality and consider the performativity – play – as a method with which to explore the bodily experience of clothes in the context of cultural and sexual heritages. Hence, with the application of feminist theory to the social drama, ritual and play, public performance has to be combined with an analysis of the political context – including sanctions and taboos – that it is placed within (Judith Butler, 1988:526). In the social drama there are performative bodies – a repetition – that reenact and re-experience the socially established act – and gender becomes a part of such a social performance (ibid). The drama or play becomes part of my work in relation to both playing and performing within the acts, and through such acts’ relation to the more general social drama and the norms and structures that the acts relate to and comment on. The social drama and the notion of play are therefore not only present when acting and performing, but also in analyzing and discussing the acts.

The creating of performative settings in which play has an important function does not only relate to cultural agreements, but to the exploration of bodies and settings that I try to achieve. In my work the performative acts relate to acts of ideology, which are linked to Dirk Gindt’s (2008) research into performativity of masculinity at demonstrations and within political organizations. How gender is performed – and the appearance of such a performance – is defined by the term performativity, as discussed by Judith Butler (1990), and is connected with gender and how gender is produced. The definitions of the performative and performativity are a platform which I relate to design in my work, which for example includes gender elaborations, restaging and performative acts in public spaces and everyday life. As Butler (1990) states, is through repetition that bodies are produced and gender is established. The gender role is related to a heteronormative framework – the heterosexual matrix – as first established by poet and gender scholar Adrienne Rich (1980), later developed by Judith Butler (1990). The heterosexual matrix is a queer theoretical framework which defines the structure of the heterosexual norm, its dominance and supremacy. Everyone and everything is read as heterosexual until proved otherwise, and such normative interpretation creates structures in which the body is assumed to act and appear in a certain way. The heterosexual matrix thus limits the acts of gender into what are already socially established. “Doing gender”, as discussed by Butler, intersects with the designer’s role and affects how learning and making take place.

Cecilia Björck makes this comparison in her thesis on gender, popular music and social change (Björck, 2011:24). Björck relates her work to Elizabeth Gold’s theory that Butler’s “doing gender” is implemented in how “doing musician-ness” occurs (Gold, 2007). Since we consume, create and feel music through our bodies, it becomes part of social relations, and the embodiment of music is constituted in terms of e.g. sexuality and gender (Gold, 2007; Bowman, 2002). I agree with such analyses, and furthermore suggest that “doing gender” can intersect with wearing, learning and the creative processes related to clothes, since it also involves an embodiment and performative act.

Katarina Bonnevier’s (2007) ideas about the connection between architecture and performativity relate to my work not only from a queer feminist perspective on artistic practice (in Bonnevier’s case architecture), but also as a result of the fact that I consider context and space to highly affect and interact with dressed bodies. This also relates to how architectural theorist Elizabeth Grosz discusses the relationship between architecture, bodies and cities, as I discuss in the article Exclude Me In (Gunn and Enqvist, 2014). Grosz argues that the body is shaped by its surroundings – by family, society and built spaces such as the city (Grosz, 1992). Rooms create frames for how we move our bodies; our muscles are built up in certain ways depending on how we use them. The city and its spaces are a complicated network, which is linked together by different social activities and relationships – both real and imagined. As regards the application of ideas of architecture and the interaction between body and space, I claim that the dressed body is produced, and performativity can be embodied in all clothes. Such embodiment becomes created in relation to context and space and cannot be separated from it, no matter if it is an individual or a collective bodily experience.

Hence, the embodiment and appearance of dressed bodies becomes a common way to read gender, status and social behavior (Breward, 1995; Breward and Evans, 2005; Guy, Green and Banim, 2001; Hurd, Olsson and Öberg, 2005). Throughout history, performative repetition has created stereotypes and cultural customs related to space, gender and bodily acts. We have been born into these acts and, because of this, commonly assume that they are part of the natural order of things.

Furthermore, Judith Butler (1997) argues that performativity is not only performed as part of theatrical bodily acts, but is also connected to language and linguistic communication. From this perspective I apply the idea of the performative speech act, where the word content primarily does something instead of simply asserting something (Austin, [1955], 2009). This includes the notion of the self (as, for
example, using the I in my writing), both when it comes to my words and the words of others. I do – I make – I speak.

In theatrical contexts, the words are embodied by scripts. The script works as the platform from which expression can develop, a raw material that can be interpreted and transformed. Such transformation and interpretation, as developed through words and performative acts, is present throughout my work. Using dialogue, interactions between others or a performed monologue for an audience to recite, something relates to doing something – the talking becomes the doing – and the making is ingrained within the words performed. I even go so far as to claim that the words are the design. The words makes the garments, embody them, even if they are just imaginary. This function, sign or symbol of the words relates to Roland Barthes’s *The Fashion System* (2005) and *The Language of Fashion* (2004) (2006), in which he discusses fashion from a semiotic perspective, claiming that clothes are a form of linguistic expression. In my work I apply the idea that fashion can be a text as well as clothing – text can be clothes and vice versa. Additionally, I also include photography (Joblings, 1999) and performance (Evans 2007, 2013) as important expressions in the fashion and clothing design context. Those varied expressions can all express desire, sexuality, power and gender.

I believe that this performative design research method opens up for the ability to work in an extended way with fashion and clothing design, which not only includes the objects but the settings and contexts in which bodies integrate, sexuality is explored and history reshaped. The force of the performative act even transforms reality (Bonnevier, 2007: 374). The reason for me working in such a way is therefore connected to both the working method and the theme from which my exploration departed. I consider the theme/the thinking (what) and the making (how) to be highly connected.

Brad Haseman’s (2006) application of the term performative research as a new research paradigm (instead of the quantitative or qualitative research framework) to the working methods and practices of artists and designers defines my work not only as performative, through the references to performance studies and performativity, but also through its artistic content. The performativity paradigm opens up for new perspectives and the ability to distinguish between artistic research and the traditionally dominant models of knowledge (Haseman; 2006; Bolt, 2008).

Using Tiina Rosenberg’s statement that “in contemporary art performativity and performance refer to a type of invention, one in which the art does not passively reflect the world but actively contributes to create it” (Rosenberg, 2012: 189) ‘performative’ as I use the term and ‘performativity’ as a method are a part of a political act. Queer theory and practice, including an awareness of sexuality and gender roles, involve the notion of queer from a wider societal perspective, carried out as part of people’s lives. This to a high extent allows participation and interpretation. Therefore, the method as well as the process might not be easy to identify or categorize. Even when using performativity as the main method throughout the thesis, a variety of others were used in the different projects.

In *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, the performative text is explicit through a dialogue between myself and the participant. The dialogue expresses the assumption of critique from others, together with the self’s ideas about gender identity and bodily appearance. The text – the words expressed during the act – here becomes a performance concerned with the fear of being queerrified or feminized and, through that, the assumption of being excluded, degraded or sexually alienated.

In *On & Off*, the text stages a scenario in which clothes are embodied. The text is written in a diary format, a description of an act developed over time. The story is not necessarily narratologically logical or linear. The text was performed as a monologue, with me as the performer, meaning that my role as designer became similar to that of the performance artist. Within performance art there is a tradition of the artist performing their own texts (Rosenberg, 2012). In fashion it is very rare that the designer displays their work with their own body, and instead models perform the work. When enacting such a shift, with me as both the designer and the performer, I not only extend the designer’s role but embody the work. In this sense it can also potentially create an awareness and acceptance among bodies, where the performer of the design does not belong to the criteria of size but to other criteria – in this case that of being the sender, the maker, and the performer of a speech act.

Applying queer and gender to design practice as performative design research, I relate gender studies’ contribution to the academic writing format (Alvesson and Sköldberg 1994:288; Brännström Öhman and Livholts, 2007; Livholts, 2013; Lykke, 2014), reinventions of language (Stein, 1975, 1998), and narrative queer and gender writings within design and artistic research (Bonnevier, 2007), which I also experiment with in the performance and text of *Writing Queer Gender and Design* (Gunn, 2014). Such notions of different perspectives on texts were the basis from which the writing format for *On & Off* was inspired. Even if the use of narrative has long held an
important role in social research, and has more recently been developed to include the presence of the researcher’s voice (Leavy, 2009:259), I still found it challenging to develop and expand the format further.

For The Club Scene the participants’ voices, based on interviews, are the introduction to the project. Their words create an image of what happened and how it was. The text becomes a series of performative stories in which ideas of the bodily transformations and the contexts in which they were performed are expressed.

When using bodily experiences and including the experiences of others, the reflection processes are not only mine but collective. Using material such as the bodily experiences of others, the reflection might be made present in the mind of the participants, but is explicit in the post-setting stage (i.e. through interviews). During the settings, I documented the acts and scenarios through photographs and text. Dialogues are presented in this thesis, along with images of the dressed bodies. In practice, I use the method of performative design research as a starting point for the creation of design and ideas. Crucial for the bodily experience in the projects in this thesis were the clothes and the roles that they played.

I connect with the idea that the way we understand things is highly connected to language (Gergen and Gergen, 1991), which is why I consider linguistics and verbalization to be fundamental. Through the communicative acts of language I try to visualize different perspectives and experiences of the event. However, I do not limit my information sources to only language, but am highly aware of real thoughts, settings and actions (Alvesson and Sköldberg 1994:320-321). The ways I interpret and discuss my work depart from a hermeneutical perspective in which interpretation is not regarded as “facts” or “data”, but as text, as in spoken and written language, as well as images and performative acts (Alvesson and Sköldberg 1994:171). The text is expressed as stories implied through dialogues or, in On & Off, presented as a monologue through the description of a scenario which unfolds over time. This is made as an elaboration with the perceptions of text and the designer’s role. Through the monologue, I narrate a performative act in which I embody the text and elaborate with language and power through the entering of new spaces.
when I talk about you I will
maybe say something about myself
and us
I will tell you about desire
about gaze and power
I will talk about directions
how I direct away and towards you
directions related to people and objects
I will talk about my acts in relation to popular culture
I will talk to you about languages
how clothes are linguistic appearances
and how I believe that language is also design
things are verse
and the same
sometimes simultaneously
everything I tell you I do
to make you understand
it is a dissection of my work, perhaps it clashes with my integrity but
I do it anyway
For you

Maybe you will understand and, if so, maybe you can
apply it to yourself
the personal is political, the individual is collective
but maybe there is no clarity, maybe I don’t have an answer and maybe
that is just fine
Discussion

As a starting point, I see desire as a fundamental part of my work, being simultaneously a central idea in fashion in general and a force for me throughout my practice – as well as in the writing of this text. To desire the text, the knowledge, evaluation or different perspectives – potentially with the desire to increase, get further or see something new. Desire also includes what we desire to wear, who we desire to be, who we desire and what context or situation that desire puts us in. Desire is then not only something connected to our selves and our minds, but potentially also something collective. Norms, gender and social structures are related to the desire of our individual and social bodies.

In *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, the desire of the participant was related to gender, both with regard to how he desired to be and what he assumed others desire. Desire here connects with ideas which are quite probably socially constructed. For the participant, the experience of the clothes acted as a gender marker. The clothes helped to construct and perform sex and gender. Certain clothes positioned him, as he expressed, in a feminized context - something which he wished not to be seen in. He expressed a sense of alienation in being included in such a context as he claimed to identify as a man and not a woman. This identification seemed to be so strong and fundamental that he expressed a fear that his sex and sexuality could be misinterpreted as a result of the explorations he was part of. Through the clothes, he potentially expressed his self towards others. When a dissonance occurred between the self that he wanted to display and what he actually expressed, the bodily experience of the situation created discomfort, alienation and at some points even fear. This became visible when trying on different clothes, and also in the dialogue with him. However, in the end, when his values were partly changed and experiences increased, the clothes began to work as a tool with which to reconstruct or even deconstruct sex and gender.

I remember I desired to be different
I desired to be like you

In fashion and design, staging is generally connected with something positive and desirable. Models are often seen as stars, and their performing acts as attractive. For the participant in *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, staging and confrontation with an audience was problematic and an undesirable action. I follow Verhaeghe’s (2001) Lacanian analyses, in which “My body is the body of another”, pointing out the “gap between what the subject is and what it is forced to be by another”. Furthermore, this is related to desire and the urge to become what we believe the other desires us to be.

Fashion is connected with desire, and what we consider as fashionable is culturally constructed. The fashion objects, in this project exemplified as feminine clothes, and the relations we have to them can, as sociologist Yuniya Kawamura claims, be analyzed to understand domination and subordination (2005:95). At the beginning of the project, the man felt not only uncomfortable in changing his look, but in fact subordinated. The clothes became a tool to create a more feminine self, and through this also degraded him, from a culturally constructed dominant position as a man into a more gender-elaborative character or self. The uncomfortable feeling that he expressed was culturally constructed and based on existing norms. Gender as a regulatory norm is produced by a system of regulations (Judith Butler, 2004:53). As stated by Catharine MacKinnon (1987:6-7), the production of gender is constructed through the hierarchical structure of heterosexuality, and the inequality in the sexualization between men and women is what produces gender. In *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, the participant was partly and potentially sexualized and objectified. It became for the participant a challenge to his heterosexual identity and, as a result, if we are to use MacKinnon's theory, also a challenge to a hierarchical structure and the gender roles that are produced within it.

And you looked at me

Since I created a type of character in *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, and used a camera to document and produce this staging, feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey’s (1975) statement about male gaze becomes relevant. Briefly, her theory concludes that the spectator is in a masculine, subject position, while the woman on the screen becomes the object of desire. The woman is coded with a to-be-looked-at-ness (Mulvey, 1975). Ann Kaplan (1983:26) builds on Mulvey’s analyses when she states that the pleasure inherent in watching film occurs for women through an identification with the male subject. Translating the aspects of gaze to the field of fashion, the voyeuristic gaze is present in advertisements for clothes, for example (Young 1994:201). Joanne Entwistle (2000:38) states that “the feminine body is always, potentially at least, a sexual body and women have not been able to escape this association entirely, despite their challenge to tradition and the acquisition, in part, of sexual equality”. In this project I wanted to take control of the gaze.
Even though *If you were a girl I would love you even more* is about garments and the experiences of a dressed body, it was the man who provided the suggestion to imitate a poster depicting female nudity. At this point, it seemed irrelevant to him that the body was undressed. For him, the enactment was present, regardless of the lack of clothes. I see the feminization or gender fusion that he tried to improve upon by sitting in a certain pose next to the bathtub as a testament to how body-oriented this project became for him. The clothes became so tightly connected to the body that the body achieved equality with the clothes. As discussed by Anne Hollander (1994), nudity—the undressed or not yet dressed body—is also an apparel—for example displayed through fashion photography—in which the dressed body can express sexuality as much as the nude one. It seemed to me that, for this man, body and clothes were united as a gender-performati ve tool.

In the performative act that *If you were a girl I would love you even more* departs from, not only clothes and appearance but also social relations and bodily acts were created. The play, performative act or social structure that was defined between myself and the man in this project created through its form (potentially at least) a female-dominant position (me) and a subordinated male position (him). However, what happened in those acts and how that changed the evaluation of clothes, norms and social structures was and is complicated to quantify. The project and the performative acts were based on bodily experiences, and the explicit transformation became visible through the garments, verbally through the dialogue and imagined or abstracted through the mind. Intersectionality draws attention to invisibilities that exist in feminism, in anti-racism, in class politics, so obviously it takes a lot of work to consistently challenge ourselves to be attentive to aspects of power that we don’t ourselves experience.

(Crenshaw, 2014)

Even though the participant in *If you were a girl I would love you even more* expressed a resistance to the challenges and changes I introduce him to, there was still something that made him want to continue with the project. When I asked him what that was, he refused to answer, and ‘blamed’ his actions on me, the designer, as I was an active part of his enactment. However, I get the feeling that he was flattered by the fact that he was being constantly photographed and received compliments on his appearance. My approval of his bodily acts was present, while the assumed comments from friends and family were absent and therefore easier to ignore. Through the elaboration with the clothes, the bodily experiences (of clothes) changed, and through that power was potentially dislocated and gender deconstructed.

With regard to power, it could be claimed that I possessed the power. Even though *If you were a girl I would love you even more* explores a gender elaboration through clothes, and the man was not picked based on ethnicity, class or religious background, but rather as a result of more personal preferences, I am aware that I, in my position both in the project and through my cultural background, could be seen to have been in a position of power. When I explored his gender identity, which this project was all about, I potentially also deconstructed the power he possessed. The cross-dressing act, the transformation of his dressed body becomes—as I earlier discussed—a degredation (Phelan, 1993). The male to female act, the feminization performed, did empower him (at least in an initial phase) in the patriarchal context he was (we were) in. Taking his cultural background into consideration, his being a heterosexual man might be the most clear position of power that he possessed, at least in the context in which this project took place. The clothes were not only garments for him, but became a combination of sexuality and gender identity elaboration, power deconstruction and social degradation. With that said, I want to state that I am aware of the aspects of the project which go beyond the gender perspective, and that the project conveys a further complexity. An intersectional gender perspective cannot be independent of race and class, for example, as these highly reinforce each other (Crenshaw, 1995; Lykke, 2005). Even if the project’s focus was to explore a gender elaboration, it might also have involved other aspects, such as ethnicity, class and cultural capital.
In On & Off, the powerful self was partially absent. The text indicates that the other has a fundamental role in the acts related and performed by the self. In this dependent situation, the other achieved their power through the absence of his or her body. The use of words, the text, became a means of making explicit the absent and highlighting the power relation between the self and the other. At the moment in which the text was being performed, the self took command of the story and the situation. The design – the text and the performative act – thus created a shift of power. In this shift, aspects of desire were embodied; the ambivalence of desire and the power of who desires who, in what context and under which conditions.

It is because of you

In On & Off, the powerful self was partially absent. The text indicates that the other has a fundamental role in the acts related and performed by the self. In this dependent situation, the other achieved their power through the absence of his or her body. The use of words, the text, became a means of making explicit the absent and highlighting the power relation between the self and the other. At the moment in which the text was being performed, the self took command of the story and the situation. The design – the text and the performative act – thus created a shift of power. In this shift, aspects of desire were embodied; the ambivalence of desire and the power of who desires who, in what context and under which conditions.

It is because of you

In On & Off, the powerful self was partially absent. The text indicates that the other has a fundamental role in the acts related and performed by the self. In this dependent situation, the other achieved their power through the absence of his or her body. The use of words, the text, became a means of making explicit the absent and highlighting the power relation between the self and the other. At the moment in which the text was being performed, the self took command of the story and the situation. The design – the text and the performative act – thus created a shift of power. In this shift, aspects of desire were embodied; the ambivalence of desire and the power of who desires who, in what context and under which conditions.

It is because of you

In On & Off, the powerful self was partially absent. The text indicates that the other has a fundamental role in the acts related and performed by the self. In this dependent situation, the other achieved their power through the absence of his or her body. The use of words, the text, became a means of making explicit the absent and highlighting the power relation between the self and the other. At the moment in which the text was being performed, the self took command of the story and the situation. The design – the text and the performative act – thus created a shift of power. In this shift, aspects of desire were embodied; the ambivalence of desire and the power of who desires who, in what context and under which conditions.

It is because of you

In On & Off, the powerful self was partially absent. The text indicates that the other has a fundamental role in the acts related and performed by the self. In this dependent situation, the other achieved their power through the absence of his or her body. The use of words, the text, became a means of making explicit the absent and highlighting the power relation between the self and the other. At the moment in which the text was being performed, the self took command of the story and the situation. The design – the text and the performative act – thus created a shift of power. In this shift, aspects of desire were embodied; the ambivalence of desire and the power of who desires who, in what context and under which conditions.

It is because of you

In On & Off, the powerful self was partially absent. The text indicates that the other has a fundamental role in the acts related and performed by the self. In this dependent situation, the other achieved their power through the absence of his or her body. The use of words, the text, became a means of making explicit the absent and highlighting the power relation between the self and the other. At the moment in which the text was being performed, the self took command of the story and the situation. The design – the text and the performative act – thus created a shift of power. In this shift, aspects of desire were embodied; the ambivalence of desire and the power of who desires who, in what context and under which conditions.
DISCUSSION

representation, and I consider such representation to include artifacts as well as bodies and bodily acts. As they claim, “[a] feminist re-examination of the notions of art, politics, and the relations between them, an evaluation which must take into account how ‘femininity’ is itself a social construction with a particular form of representation under patriarchy” (Barry and Flitterman-Lewis 1980: 35–48). I do not claim that there was a feminization of the man, but that the participant perceived such a change. His bodily experience of the clothes relates to the structure of genders that I try to explore through my practice and create a change within.

The definition of the body and the self can be seen as an important act in strengthening the queer community (Judith Butler, 1990). Defining and expressing oneself as drag, queer, gay or lesbian can simultaneously work as an establishment and acceptance of such bodies. The identity of queer and queer style is a “sociosexual force pushing the limits of cultural acceptability and knowledge” (Geczy and Karaminas, 2013:8). This is why subcultures when they first appear are commonly seen to be part of a disorder, a threat to morality and societal norms and structures (ibid). The resistance of the participant in If you were a girl I would love you even more related to the societal norms he was accustomed to, and he based his appearance on styles and gender roles he had previous experience of. To go beyond boundaries and to explore new things, or invent them, is part or at least could be part of a fashion design practice. In my work, it in this case included the invention of the self, gender elaboration and a performative play with the male appearance.

In performance as in film and theater, cross-dressing acts have been present throughout history. This ranges from the Renaissance – when women were not accepted as actors and all roles, including those of women, were played by men – to more contemporary drag and transgender characters. The film and fashion industries were developed at around the same time and, through studies of film costumes, gender and identity – issues related to both film and fashion – can be discussed (Wallenberg, 2009). Queer film studies contribute by both offering queer readings of ‘straight’ texts and highlighting the representation of same-sex desires (Hart, 2013:vii). My standpoint when studying gender identity and queer expressions in film (see Aaron, 2004; Benshoff and Griffin, 2005; Griffiths, 2008; Davis, 2013; Hart, 2013) is expressed by the artistic projects in this thesis and how the films relate to my practice.

The design choices in this thesis have related to queer in the play with clichés and the creation of cross-dressing and performative acts, in which different bodies could be explored and where the fusion between reality and fiction, the notion of who is who and what is what, became blurred. Utilizing queer theory in a creative process relates not only to the body that performs it, but also to the structure and content. In On & Off, the design process involved entering into another person’s look. Furthermore, I tried to use the text as a design piece, where the story became the clothes. It did not appear as a commonly imagined fashion show, even though there was a line-up with clothing-related stories. The structure of the text – how it sounds and how it relates to time and reality – might be a possible adaption of queer. In If you were a girl I would love you even more, the queer instead mainly appears through the appearance of the participant. Here, the gender-related elaboration, which had similarities to a drag appearance, became the core for the project. The participant’s reactions seemed to be strongly connected to his ideas of drag and sexual heritage. In The Club Scene, the cross-dressing acts became a way to strengthen the community and, by extension, also created a platform for queer bodies to act more freely.

Common to all of the acts in The Club Scene was the repetition of bodily experiences. The repetition of fiction is used to create a reality. The line between fiction and reality fades. Some of the participants claim that it was not a masquerade, while others feel that the event was both a masquerade and reality. Some claim that it simultaneously staged and re-staged, that they became both part of an audience and an active participant. The clothes became for them, as they expressed, a tool with which to explore not only the potential of costumes, but also identity issues and how they performed and integrated with others.

‘Masquerade’ is here used by the participants as a term for a party at which the guests dress up as characters. In gender studies, the term is also used to refer to gender performances (Judith Butler, 1990). It implies that gender is not connected to a fixed reality, but rather performed, and can potentially be transformed and parodied – for example through the practice of drag (ibid). The post–feminist masquerade as discussed by Angela McRobbie (2009) involves how feminists acts and appearances are never completely independent from premises based on a heterosexual norm that secures masculine hegemony, even when perform such acts as a statement of personal choice. Regarding the fact that gender equality at least on the surface seems to be common
sense, feminism has also been contributed to and utilized by popular culture (Jess Butler, 2013). In such an act, the line between feminism and the female body has been blurred, as the exposing of female body has been argued to constitute a feminist act. McRobbie’s (2009) ideas about the post-feminist masquerade can be read critically as the encouraging of some feminists to adopt what could be considered as a girly, sexy or feminine approach, and the enjoyment of products as they please, including make-up, thongs, and high heels (see Baumgardner and Richards, 2004). Fashion theorist Elizabeth Wilson (1985) claims that fashion in its varied forms can provide women with elaborations and pleasure. From this perspective fashion, does not have a disempowering function, but instead (potentially at least) embodies feminist ideas and desires (Steele, 1995). In The Club Scene, the exploration of feminine attributes (with the absence of thongs and high heels but the presence of makeup) was for some participants fundamental for their experience. They stated that it was the prior absence of such experiences that made the access to makeup exciting. Exploring these attributes in a queer context allows for a potential play with the normative female appearance, a norm that several of the participants felt alienated by.

In the queer community, clothes have acted, and still act, as identity markers for the roles of butch and femme, the drag kings and drag queens and the groups of bike dykes or leather-wearing gay men – to name just a few. Clothes as identity markers are seen throughout society, but are perhaps more evident in subcultural contexts. These manners of dress become a combination of postmodern hyperindividualism and the modernist prominence given to authenticity (Muggleton, 2000). Dress is in other words a way to both blend in and stand out, an expression connected to both the notion of being inside a community (in this project the queer) and distinct from another (the heteronormative).

The queerness of queer style has multiple functions: it retains the remnants of its suppression, it announces itself as form of resistance and, finally and most importantly, it maintains queerness as a reluctance, mild to militant, to be at one with normalcy. Even if being gay is ‘normal’, it can never be since normalcy always conspires with codes that imply hostility to difference.

(Geczy and Karaminas, 2013:18)

In The Club Scene the feeling of being excluded, different or not accepted was made explicit by the participants as a notion of identification. Even when considered to be ‘normal’ in a certain setting, the awareness of norms and structures outside of that setting were still present in the minds of the present bodies. Their bodily acts became a notion of queer appearance as the creators of a utopia.

The ideological references that the clothes were part of added another value to the garments. Even though the cut and form in this setting were seen as tools for gender fusions, or as aesthetically connected to the queer feminist movement, the garments might have felt less political in another context. The deconstruction of norms and hierarchical structures was seen as a possibility through The Club Scene’s setting. Queer could be defined as norm-creating and in those clubs the queer was fully explored, highlighted, paid tribute to and allowed to free rein. The historical references, in contrast to the contemporary nightclub, became a way to connect the past and the present. Queer and feminism has throughout history been ignored and degraded. By highlighting the queer feminist movement in the past, an awareness was created of its history, potentially strengthening the movement of today. The power deconstruction was achieved through that which was present within the clubs, both in the bodily transformation achieved through the act of re-dressing and in the theme of the settings and the atmosphere and community created within it.

Judith Butler suggests in Gender Trouble (1990) that gender parodies (such as drag) could establish a better world for queer people.

If identities were no longer fixed as the premises of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old.

(Judith Butler 1990:189-190)

The act of re-dressing outside of a masquerade (party) has references to drag, pointed to by several of the participants, which are more commonly associated with the world of gay and transsexual people. Some of the participants claimed that The Club Scene was an act of equality in which lesbians were able to explore expressions
of cross-dressing, but was the whole act. The Club Scene played with gender roles as well as with fiction and reality. It was a play with clothes and attributes, as well as settings, time and scenarios. When the participants entered these restaging acts, they did so as part of an action of curiosity, political persuasion or social interaction. The bodily acts that occurred in The Club Scene setting created bodily experiences, felt by the participants to be the creation of change and overwhelming feelings. The restaging acts not only created self-expression and changed bodily awareness, but also created a community. Through bodily transformation, the individual acts became part of the whole setting. The transformed bodies, which the garments helped to create, became a setting and a platform where power and gender could be displayed and played with. In that way, the design did not only create dressed bodies, but also the setting and context in which those bodies could act. The Club Scene was designed to be a a series of safe rooms in which bodily expression was allowed in a more free way than the participants expressed they were accustomed to. The Club Scene created a fiction that became a new reality – what was happening was for several participants completely real. The making and remaking of the clothes and the dressed bodies was in the end not only a remaking of garments and bodies, but a remaking of bodily acts, scenarios and settings. It became a making and a remaking of reality. It became the reality, even if just for a moment. That creation meant that the clothes were not limited to being a decorative tool, but instead highlighted, I claim, the clothes' role as part of a restaging act, and the fundamental connection they have to bodily experiences. As the participants expressed, they, through the restaging acts of The Club Scene, achieved a dislocation of power and gender and, through this, they achieved bodily acceptance, identity awareness and community strength.

The body’s understanding of its surroundings and the experiences it has perceived are the basis for memories and knowledge. On & Off is an attempt to try to verbalize the bodily experience. The use of self-reflection and the private has a tradition within feminist art (see Lindberg, 1995; Nyström, Andersson, Jensner, Livion Ingvason, Werkmäster and Östlind, 2005; Phelan and Reckitt, [2001] 2012; Rosenberg, 2012). The personal is political – a commonly used concept. It departs from an aim to highlight women’s experiences (Rosenberg, 2012) as these are not only individual, but collective. It also relates to the idea that you have to understand in what way
you are alienated – and to understand this, you first have to understand yourself.
Simultaneously, the ability to take space, position yourself and make yourself heard is a privilege (Ahmed, Kilby, Lury, McNeil and Skeggs 2000:17). I had the opportunity to take such space in On & Off.

Women’s performance art has particular disruptive potential because it poses an actual woman as a speaking subject, throwing that position into process, into doubt, opposing the traditional conception of the single, unified (male) subject. The female body as subject clashes in dissonance with its patriarchal text, challenging the very fabric of representation by refusing that text and posing new, multiple texts grounded in real women’s experience and sexuality.

(Forde, 1988)

The subject’s role and the exploration of the relation between the female body and subjectivity are visible in feminist art through the use of language, both linguistic and visual (Phelan, [2001] 2012:36). In On & Off, I entered the role of the subject, as I directed and staged the room and the text. I took space. I was visible. I embodied the text through the reading. As a designer it is common to not be seen, with the object or artifact occupying the space.

In The Club Scene, the bodily transformations that were achieved through re-dressing were acts that were open to interpretation. The design in that sense was a material connected to the body, which could be transformed and recreated. The design developed from consisting of artifacts or objects, to their actually becoming tools for the creation of scenarios and settings.

A theoretical foundation for The Club Scene project was the following statement by Elspeth Probyn (1995:81) “[S]pace is a pressing matter and it matters which bodies, where and how, press up against it. Most important of all are who these bodies are with: in what historical and actual spatial configuration they find and define themselves’. The queer spaces created in this project were embodied and implemented in the archive of the participants’ bodies. The design aspect in this project was therefore not limited to the clothing objects, but included enactment and performative actions.

The collecting and evaluation of such embodied experiences was integrated into the project at the post-event stage, which are presented in this text through the participants’ voices and the evaluation party materials.

In all of the projects in this thesis, the clothes relate to space and the body, and are part of a performative act in which the familiar or unfamiliar contexts vary. All of the actions in the projects depart from the bodies and their experiences. The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty states in Phenomenology of Perception [1945] (2014), that our body is crucial in the understanding of spatial forms and distances. We relate to objects not primarily in their relation to each other, but in how we perceive the relation between objects and our selves. In relation to the roles of the body with regard to understanding spaces, Sara Ahmed writes:

The body provides us with a perspective: the body is ‘here’ as a point from which we begin, and from which the world unfolds, as being both more and less over there. The ‘here’ of the body does not simply refer to the body, but to ‘where’ the body dwells. The ‘here’ of bodily dwelling is thus what takes the body outside of itself, as it is affected and shaped by its surroundings

(Ahmed, 2006:8–9).

In the discussion of bodies and space, and how bodies perceive or familiarize spaces, there are spaces which exclude certain bodies. It is in the spaces in which certain bodies are extended and developed while others are excluded and limited that norms and alienation are formed. Such structures are established, created and developed throughout our social bodies and the structural spaces that we act within. When I relate body and space to a queer context, I connect with the ideas of queer architecture studies (Bonnevier, 2007), of the radical possibilities of friendship in queer contexts’ (Roach, 2012) as well as queer activism, expressed through outspoken bodies in public spaces (i.e. Queer Nation Manifesto, 1990).

Let’s make every space a Lesbian and Gay space. Every street a part of our sexual geography. A city of yearning and then total satisfaction. A city and a country where we can be safe and free and more.

(Queer Nation Manifesto, 1990)
Outspoken gay and lesbian bodies can reshape spaces and embody them with other meanings than those proclaimed by the heterosexual matrix. They can create a redirection of both body and space. Sexuality is a political notion, and the sexual act creates a social, political or spatial change. The following quote describes a kiss shared between two women, and how it challenges spatial heteronormativity.

While their kiss cannot undo the historicity of the ways in which men produce their space as the site of the production of a gender (Woman) for another (men), the fact that a woman materializes another woman as her object of desire does go some way in rearticulating that space. The enactment of desire here can begin to skewer the lines of force that seek to constitute women as Woman, as object of the masculine gaze. […]

While this scenario remains hypothetical, at a theoretical level it encourages us to do justice to the singular ways in which space is gendered or sexed. As a point of departure, we need to recognize that the conditions of the production of space as gendered or as sexed are historically, materially and strategically different.

(Probyn 1995:81)

The outrages lesbian or queer bodies might not only express desire through sexuality, but also through other performative acts, with queer bodies creating a redirection of space through their bodily appearance – which includes both style and acts. When challenging the spaces and the norms within these spaces, queer bodies expose themselves to risk – an action which is often without an alternative choice. This fear and discomfort can also be applicable to the participant in If you were a girl I would love you even more. The clothes he wore directed him into spaces that were for him spaces of fear or phobia.

The creation of safe rooms was an important consideration in The Club Scene. In other rooms than the ones we created, the bodily experience of the clothes might have had an entirely different significance. In addition, in On & Off, the body is affected by its surroundings, and space – the absent of the other.

The bodily experiences of clothes are affected by the assumed reactions of others, or the absence of the other, and the empty space and effects this may bring with it. The effects of the surroundings were related in all three projects to a norm or social construction. For The Club Scene, my role involved creating a foundation for the bodily interactions and restaging acts that were to occur. It was therefore not concerned solely with the clothes, which are relevant to a discussion about bodily experiences, but with the whole setting in which the bodies were placed and acted. In the acts, the clothes and spaces worked together as tools or starting points in which the bodily experiences and explorations could occur. The created settings allowed for transformation and interpretation. The participants’ experiences of the restaging acts and settings became the result. This is why I offered a selection of the participants’ descriptions of their experiences.

Normative is a repetition, a habit, a look-alike game. It forces non-conforming bodies to feel uncomfortable, hypervisible, and in danger when they enter Its space

(Wilde, 2012:43).

The bodies and their enactments were crucial for all of the projects discussed in this thesis. The rooms of The Club Scene could not have existed, neither in the present nor the past, without the bodily acts. For some participants, the bodily enactments were seen as the comprehensive theme and positive result. The clothes were tightly connected to the bodily enactments, and were said by the participants to be crucial to the experience of the event, their identity and self-conception. The party created a change in that the dressed bodies entered new spaces, activities and appearances (i.e. Ann, Billie). Ann – one of the participants – said that one scenario during the third act was so strong that she felt that it changed her. The experience of a communicative act, in which everyone is dressed up under the same circumstances and in a club which is a tribute to queer activism all over the world and with those activists present, became an overwhelming experience. For Ann, the image of the dressed up audience was a utopia that suddenly became reality.

Even though the The Club Scene’s political strategy might not have been completely understood by all participants, it may still have created a politically-connected change and community. Another participant pointed out that the ambitious invitations created a curiosity and respect for the event. Even though she did not remember the theme of the acts she participated in, she still talked about them as strong experiences. Billie, on the other hand, displayed an awareness of the themes, and stated that her going to such events as The Club Scene is a political act in itself. At the clubs, the participants were
able to experience the political, rather than simply talking about it (Ann). The body and its transformation became a way to explore political issues both present and past.

As already mentioned, The Club Scene was a utopian creation. It was a restaging act, a fiction with the potential to become reality. Several participants also claimed that, in the moment, it became reality. The bodily acts within The Club Scene and the transformations that occurred also led to bodily changes outside of the club space.

Central to my work are ideas of bodies and directions, which I found to be fundamental concepts in the works of Sara Ahmed. Bodies are formed through acts of directing themselves towards or away from objects and others (Ahmed, 2006). This is connected to gaze, perception, desire, performativity and enactments of gender. The creation of norms is established through repetition. Bodily acts work against, as well as confirm, norms. Directions regarding how to act and what to be are performed based on explicit or unspoken guidelines. These lines of how to act relate to social and contextual norms.

Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition.

(Ahmed, 2006:16)

In my work the lines, in the form of history and queer spaces (The Club Scene), cultural heritage and gender norms (If you were a girl I would love you even more) and the imitation of the appearance lines of the other (On & Off) became relevant. Everything, since it is more or less part of a societal structure, involves lines of norms and conventions. In The Club Scene, the change relates to queer history and the restaging of this history to highlight it and make the power of the past not forgotten, but instead part of a present community and political force. The Club Scene relates to what has been excluded in heterosexual structures and norms. Through the restaging acts, which the clothes are fundamentally part of, the queer bodies received a change through perception, interaction and communicative acts. The change thus included both self-understanding and the relation to the other, and simultaneously created a potential change regarding the queer as a community strength, and this community's awareness of its history and presence.

The whole setting in If you were a girl I would love you even more was based on the ambition to create a change. That change was to be made on an individual level, but with the potential to go beyond this. The effects were to extend from the appearance and judgment of the self to also include the relation to others. The dressed body, here with the potential to be interpreted as drag, was perceived by the participant with resistance. In the project this was expressed as resistance – against the self and other drag or queer bodies - which then changed over time. The drag appearance captured an acceptance of the self that automatically also included the other. In that sense, the intimate setting of If you were a girl I would love you even more created a wider change.

When in the writing and showing the project the potential for change increases even more since it may no longer just affect the participant, but also the reader and viewer. When starting If you were a girl I would love you even more, I did not know what changes I would experience or if I would experience any at all. If there had not been a safe environment for the participant to experiment within, the result might have been entirely different. If the setting was not filled with care and joy, his reactions might have been much more aggressive. All of these assumptions regarding the result and how it could have developed differently in a different context, or with a different relation, are simply speculations that I cannot further consider or evaluate. However, there were also changes that the project did not perceive. Changes might not happen rapidly.. The change in the participant was not fixed, or does not necessarily include all aspects of gender identity. As aspects of identity are complex and the clothes in this project created a great change, it is likely that the project was lacking in terms of its potential to effect change. As Donald E. Hall states in Reading Sexualities (2009:13), “you cannot simply shatter your past sexuality and build a new one on the ruins of the old”, while Judith Butler (1990) states, that since gender is a performative act, it is also possible to transform it. As discussed above, the processes of gender and sexual identities, and how they are perceived, develop over time, and so the changes effected by such a work might be hard to measure. The participant did not vocalize a change in his sexuality, but rather a change in what he considered to
be proper for a heterosexual man to wear. At the post-project stage he was no longer afraid to wear something that could be considered as feminine, drag or gay. The project in that sense reevaluated his narrow-mindedness and ideas about a heterosexual man, both when it came to his self and his view of others. The performative act of drag, which the project could be seen to include, thus created a deconstruction of narrow-mindedness into acceptance which, by extension, could help to establish a change in the perception of queer.

The bodily reaction, the verbal disagreement, the constant resistance transformed into acceptance and at some points even comfort. The bodily experience in If you were a girl I would love you even more also included a normative change. The way he perceived the garments, and through them his body and sex, transformed over time.

When asking the man about his experiences of the project after its conclusion, he seemed to be very positive to the whole act. He claimed that it opened his eyes and changed the ways in which he dresses and thinks. Before, he was dressed “more stiffly” he said, but is now more liberated When discussing the bodily experience of the garments, he reminisced regarding the exclusive feeling afforded by wearing a lace dress. It was the exclusive and expensive feeling that he primarily talked about, and he did not mention that he earlier complained or even refused to wear it. The frilly pink underwear, he explained, was the garment that he felt most uncomfortable wearing. He felt exposed, he later said. However, he claimed that the exposed feeling was irrespective of gender. Being photographed on a bed wearing only underwear is in itself an exposed situation, regardless of sex. Even though he at that moment felt exposed, he later stated that he was glad that he did it. The effort he made led to results that he was not aware he had perceived. It was only after the conclusion of the project that he could see the results that the project had brought about. When the project was still running, he was generally negative to all of the changes, but later considered them to have been great experience.

When putting this project in a design or fashion context, the confirmation of others, the collective opinion, becomes a force with which to potentially create trends. Even though this project did not aim to point out trends or even create a trend, the fact that the public comments were consistently positive became for the participant a change mainly through the perception of queer.

In fashion, group behavior is crucial – you either want to distinguish yourself or blend in. Dress codes or aspects of taste become a way to communicate who we are, what we think and where we belong. We can lie with regard to our clothes, we can pretend and imagine, we can be and become. When the participant at the end of the project was confronted with clothes from established designers, he was so accustomed to the assumed feminizing effect of the garments that he had been wearing that they no longer seemed extreme to him. The fact that these garments were the work of well-known high fashion designers might also have been an important reason for him describing the clothes as “cool” or “nice”, instead of just “okay”.

The social construct in constant change – ingrained by repetition – which Judith Butler (1990) discusses as the basis for how we interpret bodies, is a characteristic of the fashion system, and can of course occur in different shapes. In my work, the change is discussed through the perception of bodily experiences connected to clothes. Those experiences – as the example of the man in If you were a girl I would love you even more shows – attest that clothes not only project and communicate and establish them and the experiences connected to them. Through the repetition of acts, the man’s bodily experiences increased, and the evaluation of the accustomed bodily act was transformed. The repetition also created recognition, wherein he became aware of others that he had earlier not seen. In aspects of bodily experiences and self-perception, the perceived degradation becomes a developmental platform for change. The subordination of gender, no matter what that gender might be, creates an allowance that, post-project, was seen by the man as a remarkable resource.

For me, If you were a girl I would love you even more became a change mainly through my re-positioning, and the way I used my work as a way to describe and change the participant man. Simultaneously, the project was also a way to get to know him. That in itself affected me, both work-wise and personally. As the title of the project indicates, his feminization created affection and increased desires. We elaborated, cooperated and acted both as a unit and as individuals with separate roles. The work with the participant was in that sense intimate.

I encouraged his feminized actions by giving him compliments, confirming him in his new look. I considered his feminine acting as attractive. I told him that. He also knew that I would not proceed with the project without him. Through that, I created an exclusivity with regard to his self. I gave him the option to leave the project if he...
wanted to. The situations were always created as a balance between play and reality. There was no forcing, and I felt that I cared for him during the whole process.

Parallel to that, I in a way used him and involved him in an act that could potentially be a dissection of the hierarchical structures and norms he was accustomed to. I entered a role in which I had control over the situation. The bra and the wig – the first things I gave him – became quite strong attributes. I probably shocked him. I picked those attributes to expose him to what, in his eyes, was extreme. By doing that, I hoped to create an acceptance, so that other clothes and attributes that I was to later gave to him would in time appear as not extreme or even normal. I somehow aimed to change the values or fears he had expressed in the initial phase. The fact that he was a man, and therefore his gender in my eyes was connected to hierarchy and power, made it easier to create legitimized scenarios in which he was exposed.

In The Club Scene, the great experience for me as a designer was found mainly in the socializing and interaction with others. It created a change as a collective act – and an interpretation of bodies – while simultaneously also creating a change in the role of the designer. I was part of a bigger constellation which for me meant less pressure, more discussions and great fun. Together, we created a setting that included performative speeches, costumes and rooms. The participants, in total several hundred people, were the great challenge in the acts, but also what for me was the greatest aspect of the project. The interactions and participatory acts of the guests, and their ways of using the clothes and transforming themselves, was as a designer an interesting setting to be part of. The design thus became a visible, active tool of integration, and allowed me to observe the guests’ reactions, something that is usually not possible for a designer.

In On & Off, the change lay in the performative act. The experience of letting your voice be heard – telling your story or relating the political to the personal – creates a change within the body, something which I experienced even after the performative act. As a designer, the choices as to how I present the body – what I say and perform – become my design choices. The design is thus, as discussed above, not only about the object, but concerns the creation of acts and ideas.

The design choices related to creating acts in which feminist explorations or queer bodies are present or given opportunities to act freely are in themselves political acts. In the creation of ideas, which I see design as being highly engaged in, the choices I make in my practice become not only aesthetic but also political. In The Club Scene, the whole theme, with the restaging of queer feminist rooms, was political. In If you were a girl I would love you even more, the change of norms and values related to politics. As a designer, I use my practice to investigate the potential to achieve change, to be achieved in myself as well as others.

In the creation of change there are also aspects of time in relation to the establishment of that change. As in all projects, the bodily experiences, and the changes that occur through them, are related to certain settings, acts and time frames. However, with that notion I have still aimed to create a change that goes beyond the setting itself. Therefore, the evaluations of The Club Scene are of great importance in terms of how I consider the outcomes of the work. With regard to creating a political act, as I claim the projects have done, these aspects of time and change, both during and after the projects, are important. For The Club Scene, the interviewees stated that they had strong experiences from the events, and that those experiences affected them and to some extent changed them. The idea of creating a utopia connects with the aim of strengthening the queer community. If the bodies are safe or confident in their queer acts, those emotions and actions can work as a strengthening force, even outside of the created setting. However, these changes might not occur clearly or happen rapidly, and the informants expressed a sense of a dissonance between the created setting and the outside reality. In If you were a girl I would love you even more, the man felt that the project changed him, and that the effects of that change continued even after the project had ended. How he affects others, and how that could create political change, I can only speculate.

In Culture Club, the clothes of some participant’s were customized directly on the body. The clothes were formed and shaped to fit the bodies, instead of vice versa. The events were pervaded by a sense of acceptance, in which all bodies were seen as great and important parts of the enactment. When Billie, one of the participants, describes the experience of the outfit she wore at Culture Club, it becomes clear that the transformative power of the garments she wore also transformed her perception of her body, and her words narrate the excitement of transforming the body so as to display something new and unexpected:

I was wearing a pair of jeans that were cut into shorts. I could not close them because I was too fat, so they were open at the front. Instead, the person who dressed me taped me together. It was like...
a cross over my torso. It looked really good! I was taped together with clothes I was unable to wear. They were all too small. I felt that I had the coolest outfit ever, which made me relax and let things go more and integrate a lot with others. [...] (The re-dressing) created equality because everyone had the same basis. What happened to me was that I became very relaxed. I felt calm. I became curious instead, of watching my position as you usually do in social contexts. I let my self-consciousness go. I trusted the situation. I was as relaxed as I am when I am alone, but here I was surrounded by others. That is not common, and I felt that the clothes and the environment created that.

I would never have done this if it wasn’t for you

As discussed above, the participants’ role in The Club Scene was crucial for the whole setting. The acts that the participants created established the project as a source of bodily expressions and elaborations. The collective act, which The Club Scene involved, is potentially easier to adapt. The comfort of being part of a unit, a movement or a crowd is a strengthening aspect. For example, at Culture Club several participants mentioned a man and a woman who watched them from an apartment building. That couple, described as white, presumably heterosexual and wealthy (living in the city center), could be seen as part of the norm or an embodiment of a power position. However, the participants stated that they, as a community, were the group which held power, at least in that setting and for that night. They were included, and the couple in the apartment building became the outsiders. This deconstruction of roles and power, which connects with community, self-awareness and confidence, is easier to achieve when among others. Therefore, the bodily transformation might have been harder to adopt in If you were a girl I would love you even more as the participant was alone in his actions. He could not compare his appearance to others who were the same. His confrontations with himself in the mirror or with a potential or real public were an act in which he appeared to be alone. There was no group activity, there were no chances to compare the appearance to others who were similar. I was there with him, I was part of the creation, but my appearance was not the same as his, and in a sense I was not completely included in the act as I was not acting but rather directing, being the mentor or creator, and in that sense not equal to him. His actions were confirmed by me (and to some extent by strangers), which meant that our relationship became even more important to the project. It was the confirmation from others that affected him and, as earlier discussed, slightly changed him, but these others were never completely equal to him as they were not transforming themselves the same way as he. The fears that he had were mastered through the trust that was created between us.

Moreover, it is in relation to myself as the other that the changes of the man’s actions and fears began to be achieved. In The Club Scene, the others were the world outside of the club, ‘reality’, as some participants felt. The others might also be the other participants, the guests who they interacted with. In On & Off, the other is highly present through the text and the clothes. The absence of the other becomes the story’s core. The relation to the other becomes part of the setting and is highly connected to how we relate to our selves, each other and our surroundings. The other becomes part of the establishing of norms, no matter how we relate to those norms. It is, as Judith Butler (2005:35) states, not a fixed scenario, but rather “norms emerge, transform, and persist according to a temporality. [...] The norms by which I seek to make myself recognizable are not fully mine. They are not born with me; the temporality of their emergence does not coincide with the temporality of my own life”. Through this relation to the self, the other and the norms and structures, narratives are created. In the act of narration by which the self tries to give its own account, it is exposed to the other, with the potential consequence of breaking apart and becoming undermined (Judith Butler 2005:38).

The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1960) uses the term intercorporeality to define reflective bodily understanding. Our bodies’ acts are so highly related to experience as to create intercorporeal memory (Fuchs 2012:14). It is in relation to others that the body becomes defined and understood (Fuchs 2012:15). In On & Off, not only the self but also the other is defined through bodily experience. Merleau-Ponty states that “I do not need to look for the others elsewhere, I find them within my experience, they dwell in the niches which contain what is hidden from me but visible to them” (as cited in Fuchs 2012:15, from Merleau-Ponty 1974:166).

Merleau-Ponty claims that the object’s role has meaning if it is near enough: “I see it only if it is within the radius of my action” (Merleau-Ponty 1968:7). Sara Ahmed takes Merleau-Pontys’ statements further when she claims that “the orientation of objects is shaped by what objects allow me to do”, and continues “while objects have to be near enough to complete specific actions, such actions are what bring objects near to me” (Ahmed 2006:52).

In feminist theory, the other has been used as a patriarchal positioning of the female sex, referring to Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1949), in which she states
that the socially constructed woman is defined as the other. Beauvoir claims that by turning women into the other and making them mythical, men avoid understanding women and so simultaneously authorize the exclusion of women (Beauvoir, 1949). The identification of the female sex as the other might be a part of the experiences in On & Off, the refusals of the man in If you were a girl I would love you even more (earlier discussed in relation to degradation), and the identification of a collective outside of the hetero-normative structure, in which queer people as well as (hetero-)sexual women are excluded, in The Club Scene. The other is thus not only the other in the sense of being another person, but can be related to the definition of the self as alienated or excluded, defined through a societal structure.

The relationship between appearance and identity (Kaiser, 1990; Davis, 1992; Craik, 1994; Holland 2004; Arvanitidou and Gasouka, 2011) makes clothes an important external appearance tool in the confrontation with others. Through clothes, we try to understand the other’s internal self. Hence, if we feel insecure in ourselves, it is possible that this will affect our relationship with our dressed body. The appearance of dress – how we communicate through our dressed bodies – is not static, therefore not easy to read. As I am applying the idea of ‘written clothes’ – text as clothes and clothes as text – the vocabulary of dressed bodies is of importance. However, such a vocabulary is interpretable, and affected by mood and emotions (Dodd, Clarke, Baron and Houston, 2000). As is discussed by Arvanitidou and Gasouka (2011), if dress is considered to be a material culture with a visual communication element (Crane and Bovone, 2006) – in my case as a text and a performative act – it also needs to be understood carefully, as it can be interpreted in multiple ways and so easily be misread. What we do with words (Austin, [1955] (2009); Fellman ([1980] 2003) relates in my work to what we do through clothes. I join Shoshana Fellman ([1980] 2003) and Judith Butler (2004) in following Lacan’s idea that body and language are intertwined. The body – the text – involves both an individual and social body, where my experiences – archived in my body – when written and spoken become part of a collective history (Stoltzfus 1996).

We say something, and mean something with what we say, but we also do something with our speech, and what we do, how we act upon another with our language, is not the same as the meaning we consciously convey. It is in this sense that the significations of the body exceed the intentions of the subject.

(Butler, 2004:199)

I’ve always wondered if you could read me

In On & Off the design choices – with regard to the text and the narrative functions of the design – were related to an elaboration with words (the content) to present the scenarios in an uncomplicated way. In addition, there were choices made with regard to telling a story as it felt in the moment, with all of its doubts and (maybe) illogical thoughts. The text also aimed to embody the clothes and make present the feeling of the garments. In If you were a girl I would love you even more, the body of the participant became ingrained with the dialogue – the text – as well as with the body of the other (me).

The dressed body, for the participant in If you were a girl I would love you even more, could possible create an ambiguous self. However, the performing act and the bodily experiences connected to this is not limited to a dressed body, but bodily acts in general. Gender and performativity as expressed through bodies not only include clothes but also body structures, postures and countenances. The participant imitated postures and countenances, and tried through that to attain a bodily-oriented transformation. Through the acting in front of mirrors or the postures that were caught by the camera, the man feminized himself. He adopted an expression that could be considered to be a caricature of a woman. His countenances in front of the mirror reminded me of schoolgirls trying out bodily expressions and looks – a naïve and elaborative activity, affected by identity transgression and self-perception.

When working with performativity with regard to If you were a girl I would love you even more, the acts of the signifying systems (i.e. language and dialogue) are the point of departure for interpretive analyses (Phelan, 1993:15). Performance and lesbian scholar Peggy Phelan claims that “bodies inhabit signifying systems and […] signifying systems are always organized as bodies”(Phelan, 1993:15-16). In her texts, this is used as a notion when studying performances; “how women are read as bodies and how most performing bodies are read as feminine” (Phelan, 1993:16). In
If you were a girl I would love you even more, the significations of the feminine body are present. The participant in If you were a girl I would love you even more perceived feminization as something frightening or not desirable. Performing bodies read as feminine are, as Phelan also states, usually degraded (ibid).

The feminist and queer are in the design made through the choice of topics and acts. They are made in the choice of what is explored and who is present. The queer feminist design choices in my work include the notion of what voice is heard, how it is written, what is said and in what way it is performed.

In literature, the descriptions of clothes work to turn characters into images. The description of styles gives clothes materiality. At the same time, however, we read and perceive differently, depending on textual materiality and context (Allen, Griffin and O’Connell, 2011).


In the Swedish novel Reflexer (Kerfstedt, [1901] 2010), which came out over one hundred years ago, a cross-dressing man is the main character. At the time of its publication, the very concept of transvestitism had not yet been defined – rather, the gender-bending acts are described as expressions of homosexuality, bad genes or a traumatic childhood (Andersson, 2010). The acts of the participant in a my project were in a way similar; it was as if the transvestite acts were not implanted into his body or mind but, when they began to take hold, his reactions changed.

The trope of queer in literature has its variations; for example, in Radclyffe Hall’s The Well of Loneliness (1928), shirts, suits and cufflinks become markers for a lesbian identity, and the description of text as clothes (as I implement in my own design practice) relates to the lesbian body, where it appears with specific style elements. The female to male character is usually more sophisticated, as that cross-dressing act occurs in everyday life, for example when women wear pants. However, there is a distinction there too – where there are norms for how women should act and appear.

This does not only include the clothed body but the body as a whole – bodily hair, breasts, flesh, etc. It is the signification of the cross-dressing act that becomes interesting, as wearing pants is not especially unusual per se. As a biography of a writer, Virginia Woolf’s Orlando (1928) not only transforms through gender and time, but also through the writing style and processes – a metaphor where writing is a dress of thought (Koppen, 2009:59). Thus, androgyny, as in Woolf’s Orlando and A Room of One’s Own [1929] (2012), is related to aesthetic theory (Koppen 2009:61).

Applying linguistic ideas of clothes (Barthes, [2004] 2006) while simultaneously discussing language in relation to queer, I suggest that the fashion narrative – written and performed – can take varied shapes, go beyond our fixed ideas of identity and storytelling and so challenge ourselves and our languages. If design is all this – if fashion can embody such a variety – it should also have the potential to be the most unexpected.

When creating the acts and writing this thesis, there has been a balance between literary and critical interpretation – the in-between spaces and the words that make us understand. It might be that when you ask me a question, you do not get a clear answer. This balance between communication and integrity means that I will not give you everything but I will give you something, and that something might be a lot and can perhaps grow even further into something new. Because design and language and identity are not static. Nothing is fixed.

Clarity is of no importance because nobody listens and nobody knows what you mean no matter what you mean, nor how clearly you mean what you mean. But if you have vitality enough of knowing enough of what you mean, somebody and sometime and sometimes a great many will have to realize that you know what you mean and so they will agree that you mean what you know, what you know you mean, which is as near as anybody can come to understanding anyone.

(Stein, 1947:127)

Memories are related to experiences. Maybe to be attired and to remember the other is also a way to understand and to learn? The knowledge of how to handle a situation or to handle new situations; “maybe we learned something we must have learned something”, I say. Knowledge and understanding and perceiving new things
is the research platform. The definition of knowledge and learning varies and, in my projects, it is placed in the context of artistic research, where I use the term ‘knowledge’ as a definition of experience – but where the result is still interpretable. In my projects, the learning is not there as something pedagogical, but the understanding of the clothes’ meanings and the bodily experiences related to them create an understanding of a scenario. The understanding for the clothes’ meaning is created in parallel. As is the text, and the body it embodies. Text, narrative and the storytelling format cannot be separated from the research process and its result. Through aspects like body, clothes and text, gender, sexuality and power are visualized and performed. How that is made – what can be embodied in the clothes, body and text – is interpretable.

My research thus does not give any distinct answers, but instead investigates a theme which includes; performative design research in relation to power, sexuality and gender (all included as ideology and performative), visualized through the bodily experience of clothes. This is partly visible in the text, but the ideology (the feminist approach) and performativity also become visible through the performative acts – in On & Off through my performance of the text. I take command and embody the text and the self. It is a performative act.

Do you understand?

To summarize, this thesis has explored bodily experiences of clothes in the settings of individual and collective manifestations and performative acts. Such manifestations, in this thesis exemplified through the notions of queer and feminism, are created through a design work, and simultaneously become an act related to ideology. The performative design research here becomes a way to understand the world and simultaneously create the ability to change it. The experiences that the body perceives work as a platform to explore and create a change. It is through the design practice – the performative design research – that such change is perceived. With such a notion, design, at least in its extended form, becomes political, and a potential actor for the creation of a re-evaluation, great change and, lastly, a utopia.

Finally, I let the quotes of the participants take their place as the last words of this thesis.
I got a real kick

It was a feeling of anarchy
It felt important

It felt present
I think it is a political act

I experienced that bodies were magnificent, no matter how they were
I let my self-consciousness let go

I trusted the situation
I felt that the clothes and the environment created that I was as relaxed as I am when I am alone.
You created me

You made me become the person I now am
Maybe nothing of this is true
NOTES

1 Hen is a gender-neutral pronoun from Swedish hon (she) and han (he).

2 Participants were kept anonymous through the use of pseudonyms, but the ages stated are real.

3 Original: “Det queeras styrka ligger i att det inte kan ringas in, att det skyr statiska definitioner. I den mån queer alls är något, är det något som gör anspråk på det flytande och det ickebestämda, som gör motstånd mot alla försök att definiera vad något är.”

4 Original: “Allt jag vill göra är kvinnokläder för män”

5 Original: “I fråga om samtidskonstens performativa karaktär och begreppet performance avses någon form av intervention, en tanke om att konsten inte passivt återspeglar världen utan aktivt bidrar till att skapa den.”


7 I relate to Tom Roach’s (2012) analyses of Michel Focaults’ writings about friendship as a radical force. Roach claims that “Especially for, although not exclusive to, queer resistance movements, friendship plays a crucial role in subjectivating practices and politics. Focault’s model of friendship – involving critical distance, a deflection of commonality, and a refusal of transcendence – becomes a micro-model for alternative communal and political forms.” (Roach, 2012:95). Though sexuality and desire is a fundamental presence in nightclub contexts, The Club Scene was created so as to have a high impact on the friendships within the queer community. Through the friendship and collective act, the clubs were made possible. Focault writes about bio-power and the state’s regulatory mechanisms for controlling bodies and populations (Foucault, 1976). The organized structure of friendship - organized networks with decentralized leaderships - is a structure that relates to feminist ideas and queer community, and can work as a grass-roots political force. The movement of political queer and feminist grass-roots worked as an inspiration and was implemented in The Club Scene.
REFERENCES


Adamson, Glenn, (2007), Thinking through Craft, Oxford: Berg

Ahl, Zandra och Olsson, Emma, (2002), Svensk Smak, Stockholm: Ordfront Förlag


Andersson, Maria, [1901] 2010, afterword in Reflexer, by Amanda Kerfstedt, Stockholm: Rosenlarv Förlag

References


Austin, J.L, [1955] (2009), How to do things with words, Oxford: Oxford University Press,


Bergholz, Frédérique and Pérez, Iberia (eds), (2010), (Mis)reading masquerades, Berlin: Revolver Publishing

Bergman, Ingrid, (1986), Kvinnokläder – kvinnokamp: Dräktreformföreningen 100 år, Stockholm: Nordiska Museet

Bigolin, Ricarda, (2012), Undo Fashion: Loose Garment Practice, School of Architecture + Design


Bonnevier, Katarina, (2012), The Club Scene (paper and research description), Stockholm: ArcDes


Braunerhjelm, Agnes Greberg, (2010), blog post for Agnes B at rodeo.net September 1st


Breward, Christopher, Evans, Caroline (eds), (2005), Fashion and Modernity, Oxford: Berg

Browne, Kath and Nash, Catherine J, (eds) (2010), Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research, London: Ashgate


Butler, Judith, (2004), Undoing Gender, New York: Routledge


Church Gibson, Pamela, [2000] (2005), No-One expects Me Anywhere – Invisible women, ageing and the fashion industry, in Fashion Cultures – Theories, Exploration and Analysis, eds Bruzzi, Stella and Church Gibson, Pamela, New York: Routledge,


Crane, Diane, and Bovone, Laura, (2006), Approaches to Material Culture: The Sociology of Fashion and Clothing, in Poetics, 34, 319-333


Crenshaw, Kimberlé, (2014), interviewed by Bim Adewunmi, in New Statesman, April 2nd


de Lauretis, Teresa, (1990), *Eccentric subjects: Feminist theory and historical consciousness*. Feminist Studies, 16(1), 115-150


Diamond, Elin, (1997), *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater*


Dragstedt, Kajsa, (2013), *Lajvkulturen har vuxit upp*, article in Fria Tidningen, October 24th


Ehrnberger, Karin; Broms, Loove; Katzef, Cecilia, (2013), *Becoming the Energy Aware Clock – Revisiting the Design Process Through a Feminist Gaze*, Nordes


Entwistle, Joanne and Wilson, Elizabeth (eds), (2001), *Body Dressing*, Oxford: Berg


Ferrara, Marinella, (2012), *Design and Gender Studies*, in *Pad Journal*, Issue 08
REFERENCES

Fitzpatrick, Corinne; Sandström, Imri; Wilde, Hanna (eds), (2012), In The Act, Stockholm: Högkvarteret


Fuchs, Thomas, (2012), The phenomenology of body memory in Body Memory, Metaphor and Movement, eds Sabine C. Koch, Thomas Fuchs, Michaela Summa and Cornelia Müller, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company


Geczy, Adam and Karaminas, Vicki, (2013), Queer Style, Sydney: Bloomsbury


Gunn, Maja and Enqvist, Annika, (2014), Exclude Me In, paper, Stockholm: International Bakhtin Conference

Gunn, Maja, (2014), Writing Queer Gender and Design presentation at Linköping: Linköping University

REFERENCES

Hurd, Madeleine; Olsson, Tom; Öberg, Lisa, (2005), *Iklädd identitet – Historiska studier av kropp och kläder*, Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag


Kaplan, Ann, (1983), *Women & Film – Both sides of the camera*, Methuen Inc

Karaminas, Vicki, (2013), *Born This Way: Lesbian Style Since The Eighties, in A queer history of fashion: From the closet to the catwalk*, ed. Valerie Steele, New York: Yale


Koskinen, Ilpo Kalevi (ed.) (2011), *Design research through practice from the lab, field, and showwroom*, Waltham, MA: Morgan Kaufmann


REFERENCES


Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, (1960), *Signs (Signes)*, Paris: Gallimard


REFERENCES


Munoz, José Esteban, (1999), Disidentifications – Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Nevanti, Kirsi, (2015) Master Class with Kirsi Nevanti - In Real Life (Or Elsewhere), Presentation at Tempo Film Festival, Stockholm: Tempo Film Festival

Nyström, Anna and Andersson, Louise, Jensner, Magnus, Livion Ingvarsson, Anna, Werkmäster, Barbro and Ostlund, Niclas, (2005) Konstfeminism, Dunkers/Riksutställningar/Liljevalchs


Papanek, Victor and Hennessey, Jim, (1973), Nomadic furniture: how to build and where to buy lightweight furniture that folds, collapses, stacks, knocks-down, inflates or can be thrown away and re-cycled, New York, Pantheon Books


Phelan, Peggy, (1993), Reciting the Citation of Others, in Acting Out: Feminist Performances, eds Lynda Hart & Peggy Phelan, University of Michigan


Roehrig, Catharine H, Dreyfus, Renée and Keller, Cathleen A, (eds), (2005), Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art

Rosenberg, Tiina, (2000), Byxbegär, Stockholm: Alfabeta
REFERENCES


Simmel, Georg, (1957), Fashion, in The American Journal of Sociology, Number 6


Smart, Carol, (2009), Shifting horizons: Reflections on qualitative methods, in Feminist Theory, 10; 295-307

Smith, Darron T., (2013), Images of Black Males in Popular Media, article in Huffingtonpost, March 14th

Sontag, Susan, (1964), Notes On “Camp”, digital source

Steele, Valerie, (1985), Fashion and Eroticism: Ideas of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Age to the Jazz Age, Oxford: Oxford University Press


Steele, Valerie (ed.), (2013), A queer history of fashion: From the closet to the catwalk, New York: Yale,

Stein, Gertrud, (1998), Gertrud Stein: Writings, 1903 to 1932 Vol.1, Library of America


Stein, Gertrud, (1975), How to Write, Mineola N.Y.: Dover Publications

Stein, Gertrud, (1947), Four in America, New Haven: Yale University Press


Svens, Christina, (2002), Regi med feministiska förtecken: Suzanne Osten på teatern, Stockholm: Gidlunds Förlag

Takako, Danna, (2013), boychild’s new beauty, in Dazeddigital, September

REFERENCES


Uriarte, Jon, (2014), e-mail correspondent with the author


Warkander, Philip, (2013), "This is all fake, this is all plastic, this is me": An ethno-graphic study of the interrelations between style, sexuality and gender in contemporary Stockholm, Stockholm: Stockholm University


Young, Iris Marion, (2005), *A room of one’s own: Old age, extended care, and privacy. In On female body experience: “Throwing like a girl” and other essays* (pp. 155–170), New York: Oxford University Press

Queer Nation Manifesto, (1990), *Queer Nation*, [digital version]