

Body Acts Queer

Clothing as a performative challenge to heteronormativity

This artistic, practice-based thesis has been developed based on the idea that design creates social and ideological change. From this perspective, *Body Acts Queer — Clothing as a performative challenge to heteronormativity* introduces an artistic way of working with and exploring the performative and ideological functions of clothing with regard to gender, feminism, and queer. The thesis presents this program for experimental fashion design—exemplified through a series of artistic projects—while also discussing the foundations of such an approach and the different perspectives that have affected the program and its artistic examples. Working with clothing and fashion design through artistic projects using text and bodies, this thesis transforms queer and feminist theory into a creative process and, by looking into bodily experiences of clothing, *Body Acts Queer* investigates its performative and ideological functions, with a focus on cultural, social, and heteronormative structures. *Body Acts Queer* suggests a change in the ways in which bodies act, are perceived, and are produced within the fashion field, giving examples of—and alternatives to—how queer design practice can be performed. In this thesis, queer design is explored as an inclusive term, containing ideas about clothing and language, the meeting point between fiction and reality, and the ability to perform interpretation and bodily transformations—where pleasure, bodily experiences, and interaction create a change.



THE SWEDISH SCHOOL
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UNIVERSITY OF BORÅS

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CHALLENGE TO HETERONORMATIVITY

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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.



ABSTRACT

Body Acts Queer

This artistic, practice-based thesis has been developed based on the idea that design creates social and ideological change. From this perspective, *Body Acts Queer — Clothing as a performative challenge to heteronormativity* introduces an artistic way of working with and exploring the performative and ideological functions of clothing with regard to gender, feminism, and queer. The thesis presents this program for experimental fashion design—exemplified through a series of artistic projects—while also discussing the foundations of such an approach and the different perspectives that have affected the program and its artistic examples. Working with clothing and fashion design through artistic projects using text and bodies, this thesis transforms queer and feminist theory into a creative process and, by looking into bodily experiences of clothing, *Body Acts Queer* investigates its performative and ideological functions, with a focus on cultural, social, and heteronormative structures. *Body Acts Queer* suggests a change in the ways in which bodies act, are perceived, and are produced within the fashion field, giving examples of—and alternatives to—how queer design practice can be performed. In this thesis, queer design is explored as an inclusive term, containing ideas about clothing and language, the meeting point between fiction and reality, and the ability to perform interpretation and bodily transformations—where pleasure, bodily experiences, and interaction create a change.

Keywords: Artistic research, design, fashion, ideology, performativity, pleasure, power, queer.



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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to introduce a program for experimental fashion design with a focus on power, sexuality, and gender. *Body Acts Queer — Clothing as a performative challenge to heteronormativity* is presented as an artistic, practice-based thesis in the field of fashion and design. As performative design research, this thesis incorporates both texts and bodies, and performance and gender are related to acts in which clothing has a fundamental role. By working with bodily experiences of clothing, *Body Acts Queer* opens up for an investigation of the performative and ideological functions of clothing with particular regard to cultural, social, and heteronormative structures. While there is a focus on the field of design and the performative acts of dressed bodies, the artistic examples in the program also consist of an exploration of performative words, texts, and speech acts. The bodily experiences of clothing are described through dialogue, monologue, and participants' voices. The texts embody the clothing, and so become a part of the design practice. In this thesis, *Body Acts Queer* is presented and artistic examples are given, together with a discussion of the general foundations of the program with respect to the perspectives of queer, body, language, and design.

'Program' is here defined as a foundation and framework for working with experimental fashion design (see e.g. Redström, 2011). This program does not aim to answer a specific question; rather, it presents the process of working with a theme, and applies a norm-critical perspective in which design objects work as discussion materials, instead of being fixed objects or statements, and where a process is developed as a series of exchanges and interactions between the program and the experimental fashion projects, fusing what are commonly separated into the categories of 'questions' and 'answers' (ibid.). As a discourse and an artistic framework, the program is not static; through the artistic experiments, as well as the influence of other discourses, the content and meaning of the program can be further developed.

Body Acts Queer aims to implement queer theory and practices in a creative process by integrating the performative and ideological potential of clothing. This aim is elaborated through a series of artistic examples in which clothing has a fundamental role and the bodily experience of it is explored, with a focus on queer, gender, and feminist perspectives. While such perspectives include or relate to multiple factors—for example ethnicity, education, and class—sexuality and gender are the focus of the program, and the work has been defined with this in mind.

This thesis departs 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 (see e.g. performativity in Butler, 1990; intersectionality in Lykke, 2005; Chavez & Griffin, 2012; sexual heritage and space in Ahmed, 2006; Probyn, 1996; queer and feminist performances in Rosenberg, 2000, 2012; clothing as a queer identity marker in Geczy & Karaminas, 2013). *Body Acts Queer* considers the idea that fashion design can be created through performative acts which explore and elaborate on the deconstruction of hierarchical and heteronormative structures. The connection between fashion and dress on the one hand and politics and societal structures on the other (see e.g. Hoskins, 2014; González & Bovone, 2012; Marzel & Stiebel, 2014) is a core concept for this approach. By including social behavior or contexts, this thesis opens up for an improved ability to highlight some of the complexities connected to clothing, and to simultaneously visualize interactions between clothing, body, and gender identity. With regard to the understanding of fashion as an interdisciplinary subject, the applications of *Body Acts Queer* are many and varied; the program can work as a discourse platform for designers, artists, and researchers, and be used both professionally and in a pedagogical context.

The combination of text and dressed bodies is present in all of the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer*—*On and Off*, *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, *Utopian Bodies*, *The Safety Top*, *The Club Scene*, *Exclude Me In* and *The Lesbian Shirt*—and these projects exemplify the experimental fashion design approach of the thesis as a whole. By incorporating texts, bodies, and performative acts, this thesis facilitates the transformation of queer and feminist theory into a creative process and practice and, as such, opens up for discussion regarding and awareness of the performative and ideological functions of clothing. Both performative and ideological notions are related primarily to queer, gender, and feminism. The artistic projects show examples of how clothing relates to feminist notions, how we value ourselves and others, how we perform in clothes and what such performances create for ourselves and for others, how clothing creates community, and how we can play with norms and clichés related to such a community. A main aim of *Body Acts Queer* is to contribute to the field by demonstrating ways of working experimentally with fashion and relating it to the implementation of queer theory and practices in a creative process, while simultaneously applying the practice to theory and contributing to theoretical discussions by investigating the ideological and performative functions of clothing. The various projects, which represent examples of how this program of fashion can be expressed, vary in terms of form as regards both visual expressions and usage of texts.

On and Off is a text that has been performed as a monologue, and focuses on a separation and the re-dressing of the self in another's clothing.¹ The bodily

experience of clothing becomes a notion of the past and a passage through memories, fears, and the future. It has been performed as a speech act—no photographs or films show the garments—and so the clothes become visible through words and imagination. The text embodies the clothes and the clothes embody the other. The bodily experiences of clothing in *If you were a girl I would love you even more* relate to a man's fear of being feminized and his ideas about how a heterosexual man should appear.² I dressed the participant in clothing 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 clothing, gender, and sexuality. *The Club Scene* was a series of queer nightclubs that recreated important historical queer feminist settings. For this project I worked with Mariana Alves, Katarina Bonnevier, and Thérèse Kristiansson of the art and architecture group MYCKET, which initiated the project. When the participants entered the nightclubs they were encouraged to re-dress, and the clothing became a transformative act and part of the restaging of queer history. The participants' bodily experiences of the clothes that were handed out to them or made during the events are represented in this thesis as a selection of shorter texts based on interviews, and are discussed alongside the other projects. *Exclude Me In* was a queer carnival performance held in the centre of Gothenburg, and later became an installation at Göteborgs Konsthall as part of the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art (GIBCA), 2013. For *Exclude Me In* I again worked with MYCKET, this time in collaboration with Annika Enqvist (New Beauty Council). Annika has also been actively involved in the writing aspect of the project, as we together have discussed, written, and presented it in various ways. 'About Exclude Me In' and the sections of 'Notes' that relate to it, and where I write about carnival, are based on our paper *Exclude Me In* (Gunn & Enqvist, 2015). For the exhibition *Utopian Bodies — Fashion Looks Forward*, held at Liljevalchs konsthall between September 2015 and February 2016, I created an installation consisting of a series of male silicon breasts hanging from the ceiling, together with breasts that the audience could wear. They were made to fit all sizes and body types. Also shown were parts of a collection consisting of a series of tops decorated with printed male breasts, hairy breasts and arms, together with bra details. In this thesis, that project is referred to as *Utopian Bodies*. As part of the same exhibition but in another room one upper-body garment was shown, inspired by the idea of there being a 'lesbian shirt'. *The Lesbian Shirt* departs from the idea of the checked (originally male) flannel shirt as a queer style—a marker for lesbian identity. I made an ensemble consisting of tops. For *The Lesbian Shirt* I interviewed members of the queer community, who described their relation to

the lesbian shirt. These voices framed the project, placing the shirt in a lesbian context. I worked with the model Adina Fohlin and the actress Nanna Blondell, letting Adina take portraits of them both wearing the shirts I made. *The Safety Top* was a project which used norm-critical design to highlight, challenge, and provide new perspectives on gender and norms within the Södertörn Fire Department in Stockholm. The project involved Anna Isaksson, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Halmstad University; Emma Börjesson, Project Coordinator at the Center for Health Technology Halland at Halmstad University; Karin Ehrnberger, Industrial Designer and PhD Candidate at KTH, Stockholm; and Camilla Andersson, Architecture Researcher. The project aimed to highlight how norm-critical design can create new solutions and perspectives as regards gender within a fire department. We worked with three stations, which functioned as our reference groups, and my focus was on developing the fire department's uniform. I made a safety top, a garment that looks and functions as a sports bra and which is designed for use by all sexes, and added technical functions to make it useful when responding to alarms and during physical activities and tests. Instead of following the bodily needs of normative men, the uniform was developed to suit the expressed needs of female firefighters, and so *The Safety Top* deals with the contexts of uniforms and workwear, and is a tool with which to understand, highlight, and discuss issues related to gender disparity in such contexts. The projects' voices—presented in the texts, which are based on interviews—give an understanding of the bodily experiences of the current fire department uniform, and highlight the gender disparity issues that the organization ignores or struggles with. In *On and Off* I explore the functions of text, and write the clothing, rather than depicting it visually. *If you were a girl I would love you even more* involves a dialogue and had the aim of creating a change through clothing; for the participant to challenge his ideas of norms related to clothing and sexuality. In *The Club Scene* and *Exclude Me In* the contribution is made using critical fiction, in which fiction and reality is fused.³ They were created as an exploration of queer history, while simultaneously staging a queer act of the present. With the breasts and garments of *Utopian Bodies* I continued to play with gender appearances, allowing the audience to participate through the act of trying the attributes on their own bodies and so offering an exploratory environment that everyone visiting the exhibition could be a part of. *The Lesbian Shirt* used a queer item for design inspiration. As I placed the project in rather more traditional fashion contexts than the others, it constitutes an exploration of what could be seen as the normative, but retains an awareness of performative, feminist, and norm-critical practice.

In all of the projects that constitute in this thesis, the ways in which *Body Acts Queer*, the exploration and contribution are conducted (partially or entirely) by the

participants' bodies. The extensive usage of participants in a research context that the title 'Body Acts Queer' suggests raises the question of ethics, which is dealt with in the 'Ethics' section within 'Notes'. The examples in this thesis are shown as artistic examples—works of design—that usually have other ethical criteria than those commonly applied in the context of scientific research. However, even if I claim that the main contribution of this research is a new approach to fashion, and that the projects are free and experimental in their forms, it is nevertheless important to make clear that all participants interviewed and quoted have been informed that their contributions have become part of a research project; everyone photographed has as far as possible been asked if they were happy to be documented, and I have had contact with the Swedish LGBTQ organization RFSL to make clear that I have not 'outed' someone who is not outspokenly queer in public. Several of the projects have also been reviewed by the participants at the post-project stage to further ensure that they have not and will not have any detrimental effects.

This thesis describes the various projects that were conducted, and offers an idea of the possible applications of the approach to fashion presented that they embodied. However, performances cannot be documented without becoming something else. The participants' testimonies that describe bodily experiences are simply descriptions, as we cannot access the experiences of others as we can our own. As a result, I have tried to work with your experience as a reader. Words and images give you an idea of how the acts unfolded, and what effect they had on the participants. The bodily experiences of clothing are the basis of *Body Acts Queer*, and it is from this foundation that ideological and performative functions are explored and discussed. This thesis contributes to a shift in how (dressed) bodies are produced and perceived, and suggests how the designer's role, methods, and processes can evolve.

The thesis, after this introduction, moves onto the different projects—their images, texts, testimonies and feelings—to get as close as possible to the experiences of the different acts. First is the diary of *On and Off*, followed by the story of *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, then the text of *Utopian Bodies* that is partly borrowed from the exhibition. *The Safety Top* consists of quotes from interviewed female firefighters, *The Club Scene* presents the participants' experiences of the clubs and *Exclude Me In* describes the situation at Espererantoplatsen, where the carnival started, and presents the speech we gave. The last artistic project—*The Lesbian Shirt*—consists of texts written as scripts, including both dialogue and monologues. All of the scripts are based on documentary materials, aside from the fictional script that I wrote: A dialogue between Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore. The following chapter, 'About', describes the different projects, their content and contexts. Following this are

‘Queer’, ‘Body’, ‘Language’, ‘Design’, and ‘Performative Design’—chapters in which these terms are defined and their importance for and applicability to *Body Acts Queer* are discussed. In the ‘Notes’ chapter the artistic examples and their importance and social impact are discussed, along with ethical aspects. This section reflects on the artistic examples as relating to the themes of ‘Ethics’, ‘Pleasure and Desire’, ‘Gaze and Look’, ‘Redirecting Power’, ‘Dismantling Sexual Differences’, and ‘Materials as Materiality’. Finally, a short summary is offered, along with quotes from the projects.

ON

AND

OFF



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 crisp, 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.

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 those 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.
Suspensions 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 they 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.
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 shirt, 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 shouldn't 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, I think,
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 any more. 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 any more.
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.
Big black pearls. White pearls. Round pearls. Angular.

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 are covered by my pants and heavy boots.
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

WERE

A GIRL

I WOULD

LOVE

YOU

EVEN

MORE



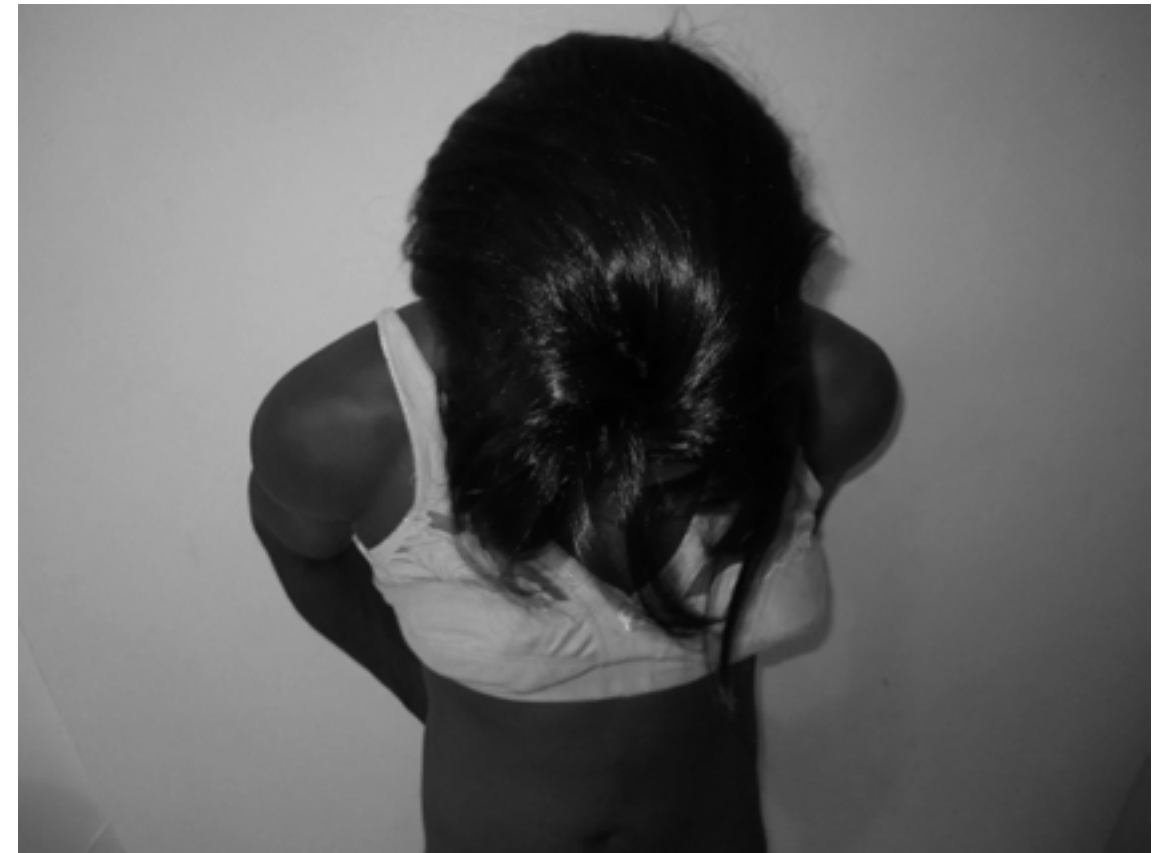
I have bought him a wig and a bra. The wig is a black bob. The bra is light pink. He tries them both on. I help him, dress and direct him. He is not taking any initiative. I fill the bra with some textile material. The bra gets a bit of a bulky look, and the textile material filling is partly visible. 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 that 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 appearance, saying that it is so silly and strange that it would be impossible for him 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 appearance and 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 will affect the way I look at him and the way I want him to dress. When he realizes that I will not change my mind, he puts the garments on.

I continue the project by giving him clothes that were originally made for me or could be made for any woman, as categorized in stores, and that I think would suit him. I introduce him to a mix of dresses, blouses, cardigans, coats and accessories.

At some point during the initial phase I ask the question, what would he wear if he were a girl? As with every other moment in this project, he is not very cooperative at first. "I don't know", he says. After a while he admits that he would prefer a dress.



–What kind of dress? I ask.

–A summer dress, he says. I would like to wear a summer dress.
Not too tight, kind of loose.

–Okay, I say, and make him a dress.

The project proceeds with a series of objections from him. He wears the dress, but constantly complains. It is a loose silk dress in white, gray and black. I continue by introducing him to a mix of ready-mades and garments created by me. I make the decisions for outfits based on what is categorized in stores as women's clothing, or what he has said he considers to be women's clothing. When I ask for his opinion about the garments, at first he refuses to look at himself in the mirror. He wants me to decide. He thinks everything looks terrible. When he sees the photos of himself he can barely look at them. He has nothing positive to say.

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 the 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. His 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 this, 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?

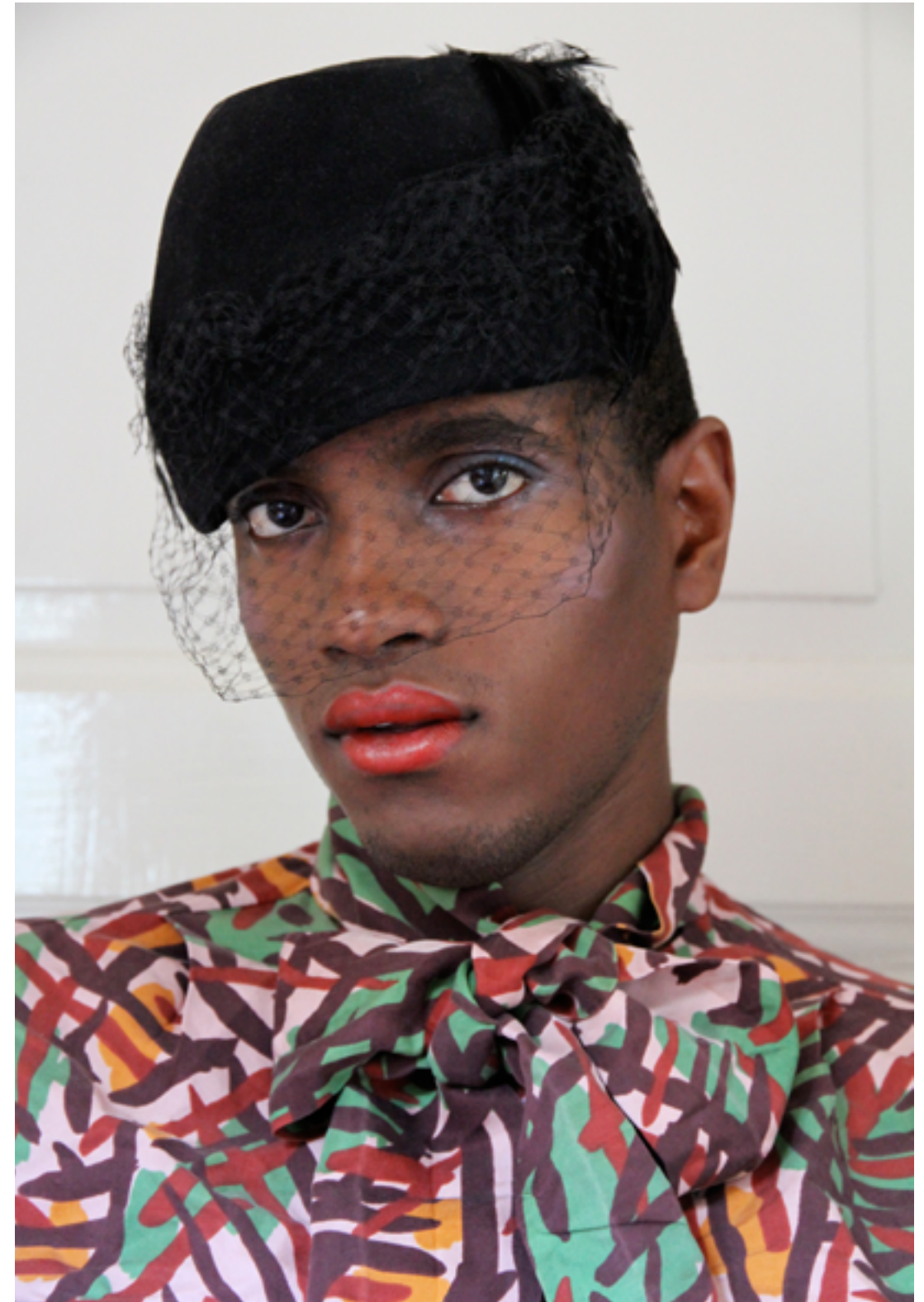
–She would cry.

The uncomfortable feeling is not only verbally expressed, but also becomes visible when I photograph him. He repeatedly freezes in 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.

During 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's 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 genderqueer 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 get into a role, become a character. In that sense it's easier to move away from what he feels to be an expected performance of the male gender.

After the project has been underway 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 to wearing dresses or make-up.

–I am not wearing that! he says.

–Why not? I ask.

–That's for women, he argues. I'm not doing it!

–But everything you have been wearing recently was originally made for women, no?

–I'm *not* doing it!

–Come on! They're just clothes! We're alone in here. What are you afraid of?

–I'm 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 having been abused. He wears the underwear without complaining, but I cannot touch him or be near him when he has it on. He wants me as distanced 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 I photograph him 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're done taking pictures, the nail polish is coming off!

I then tell him that I will probably need to take some supplementary photographs later, and he 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.





ELLEN AUERBACH IM ARCHIV

SCHWABELAND, 1949

AKADEMIE DER KUNSTE

Barbara H. 1910-2010, Berlin, 1910-2010, 1910-2010



He is reminded of his red nails when meeting new people or receiving compliments. The compliments are many and often come 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 my compliment.

A week after the purple nails, we talk using 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.

–What did you answer? I ask curiously.

–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 occur to him, although at several occasions 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 and wear things he would never have seen or worn 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.





UTOPIAN

BODIES

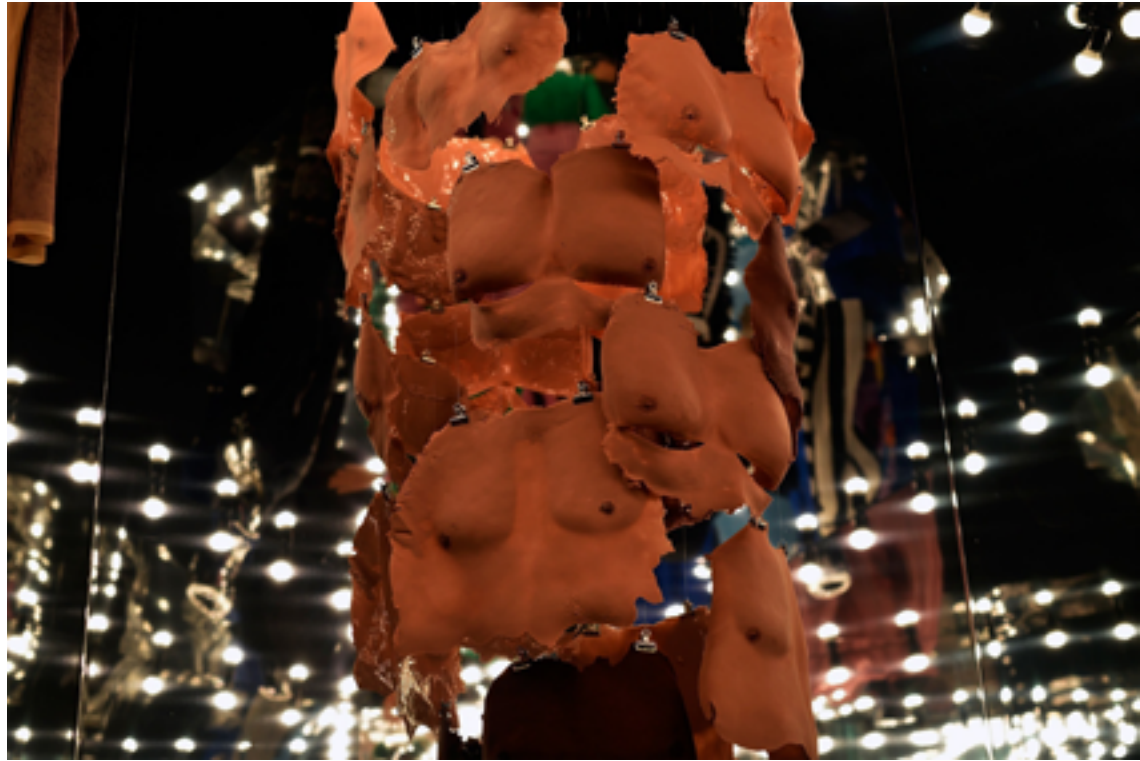
The room you are in is entirely covered by mirrors. Walls and floors project you, multiply you. There are light bulbs attached to the mirrors, reminiscent of the backstage area of a theater. Because this room is about theater, but not the kind where you are the audience and the actors stand on a stage. This theater is about you.

Gender is a construction. We play gender. On one of the mirrors that cover the room is written: "Fashion both indicates and produces gender. However, it also possesses the ability to redefine gender." In this room I show objects with bodily fragments; nipples and hairiness as decorative details. I show clothes and attributes that relate to the performance of sex, and the roles that we are expected to take. Our roles, the ones that we are expected to occupy and which are supposed to constitute who we are, are not necessarily static, but instead changeable. In my work I use clichés. Stereotypes. Symbols. That which we find easy to relate to and associate with. I play with this. By dressing in and playing with clichés and stereotypes we can challenge our prejudices.

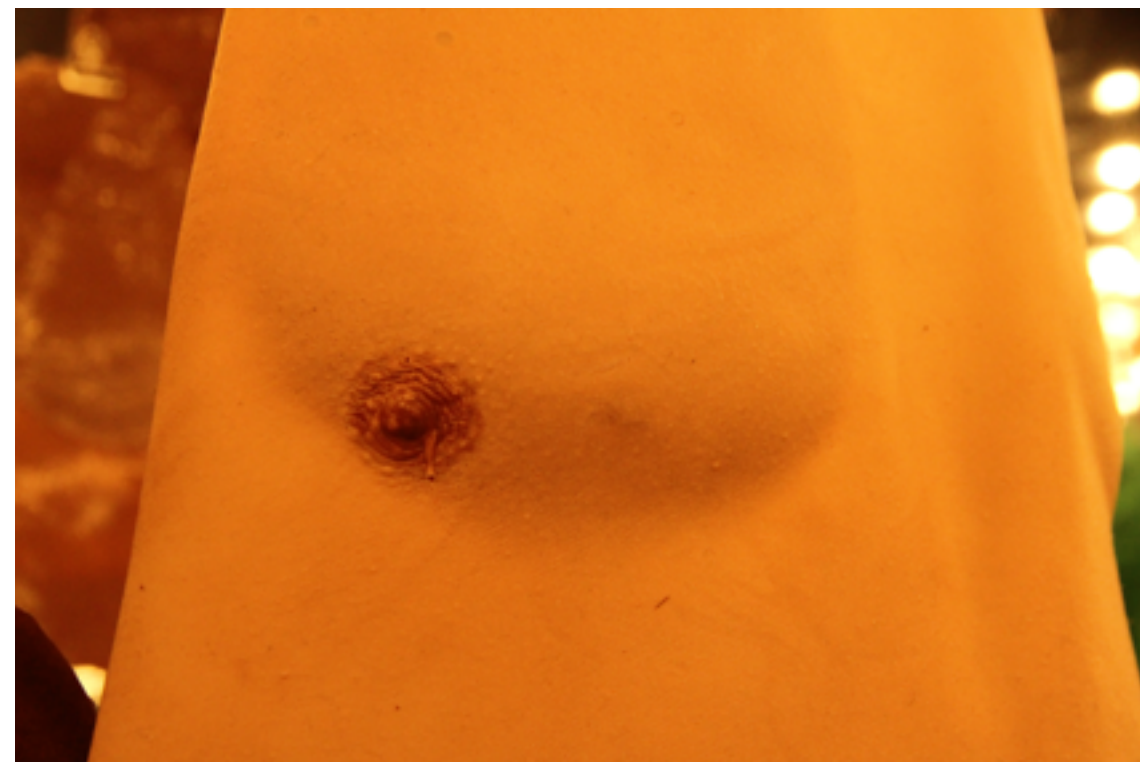
I have made some breasts for you. Large breasts. Small breasts. Brown breasts. Pink breasts. I have made some breasts that you say are women's breasts. And I have made some that you believe belong to a man. Girls' breasts, boys' breasts, my breasts, your breasts. I have made them so that you can put them on. If we allow ourselves to try things out, dress up, transform and experiment, we create possibilities for change. Perhaps there is no change the first time, or the second time; but through repetition, we can feel, experience and see things differently.

Enjoy! Give it a go! Try it out!









THE

SAFETY

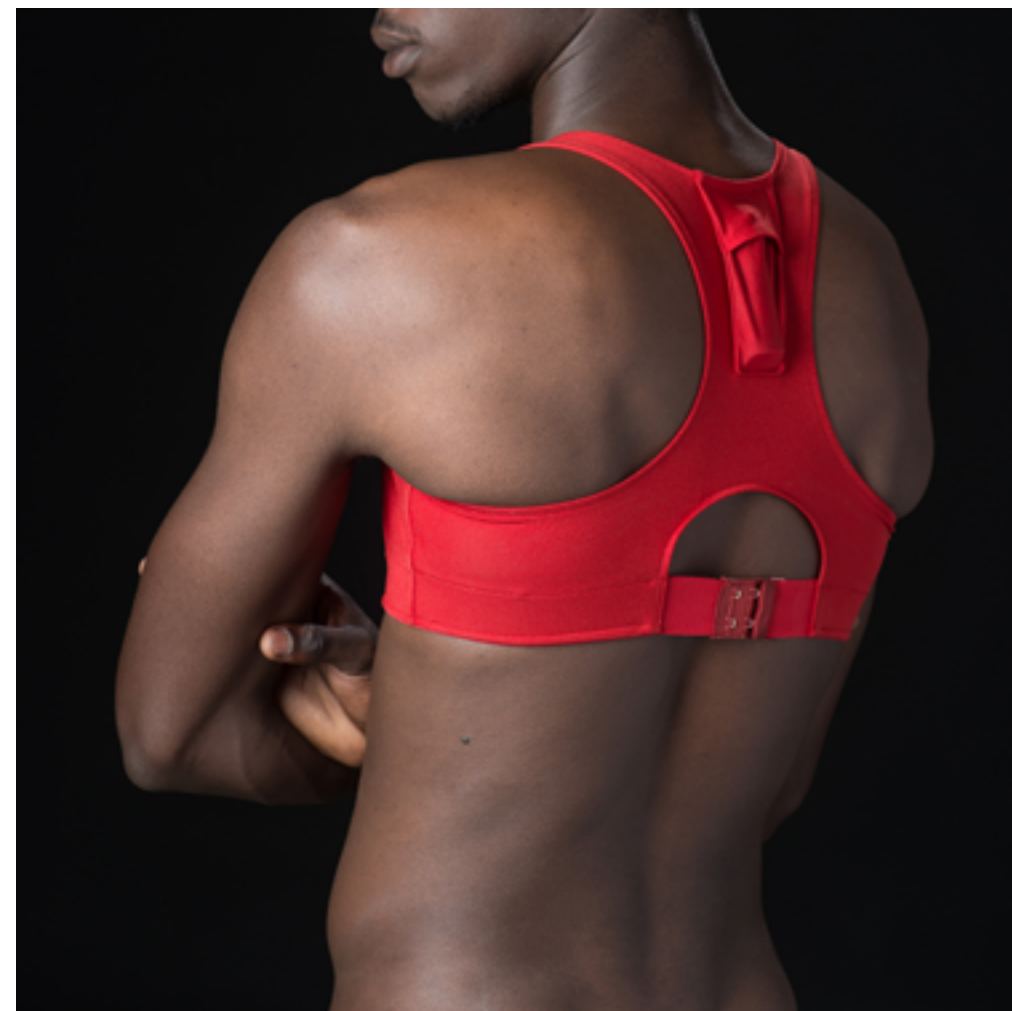
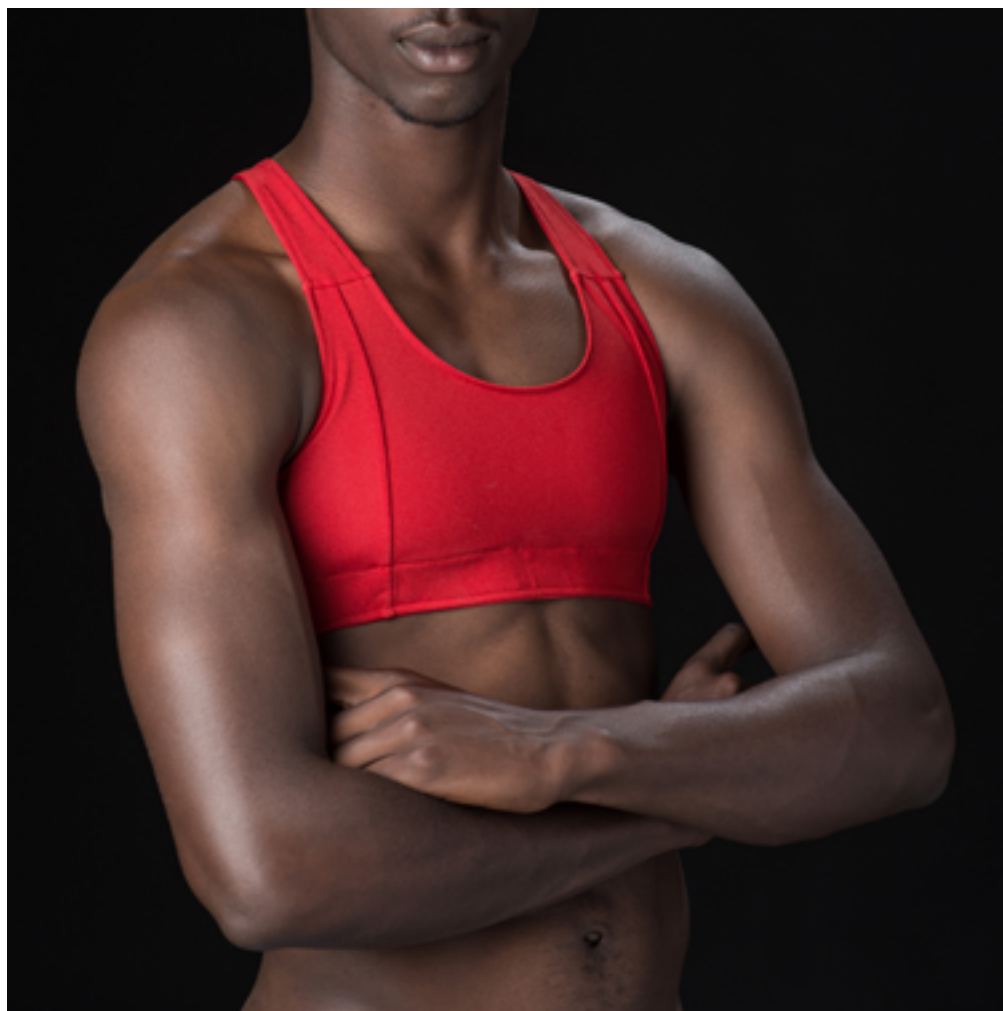
TOP

*There are clear hierarchies. Racialized women are on the bottom,
then white women, followed by racialized men. White men are at the top.*

I had to fight a lot to be able to get a sports bra, say that it should be classified as protective gear—and when I finally got it, a lot of the guys muttered, said it wasn't fair. They thought they should get extra socks then. To make it equal.

I am tall, with short hair—so when I'm wearing the emergency uniform I am commonly seen as a man. I'm equal to all of my colleagues then. When the alarm is over and I take my clothes off at the car, when I stand there in my sports bra, then I am exposed.

The toughest part is how everyone looks at me in public. When we are responding to an alarm, sometimes dudes come up to help me, simply because I'm a woman. They help me to carry things, hold open a door, and so on. It's like they think I can't do my job. My male colleagues never have to experience that.











THE

CLUB
SCENE

Sam, 40

I was a participant in all three clubs—the first 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, a lot of people that I knew were 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, and were 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 a conscious choice. I like being surprised. I like being moved around. There is something in being forced to relinquish control. I expected that it would be a very special room, and although I couldn't guess what that room would be like, I was aware of the concept behind it all; to investigate feminist organization in different ways. I knew some of the people who arranged it, and so was aware of 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 very eighties. 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 1980s, 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. In many ways, the eighties was a problematic decade for me.

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 1970s and 1990s, 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 nineties, 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 a 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 dressed in clothes that 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 do 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 wasn't a huge amount 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 dealing with 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 the feeling that 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 with *this* idea...” 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 was 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 good things about the earlier parties, that there was a nice atmosphere. The people I spoke to who went were so happy afterwards. They talked about it warmly. So I was excited, but 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 was the dominant feeling, looking back. 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 none. Rather, it was the opposite. It was a flow of chaos in the nicest way.

People were relaxed and comfortable talking 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 that 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, as if it was too good to be true. Everyone was dressed up and it was this nice feeling and these crazy clothes. It all made me 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 due to the presence of people from all over the world. That there were a lot of activists who have fought and continue to fight for LGBTQ rights or gender issues, and there was such a lot of 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 pretenses. 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 decide on more things by yourself. 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 woman 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. Maybe you took another path, went another way. Maybe you had 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 of “*Yes! I wanna try this!*” You cross a physical border when you do things that you usually wouldn’t 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 find it 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 fact that you feel ridiculous, and then reflect on that. Like you feel ridiculous for looking a certain way, and why is that? That kind of reflection is a totally different experience when felt in a positive context than if it is forced. It never felt forced. At the party, there were none of the clothes that people usually have in their closets, there were just people, together, without all of those codes that you subconsciously try to read when you meet someone for the first time.

People might have read me in a way that differs from how I usually present myself. There was something liberating in the fact that others couldn’t pin me down, and the whole thing felt oddly humble, although it was simultaneously quite challenging. The transformation aspect was something that was a big takeaway for me, it was fun. I thought a lot about it afterwards. That you just had to let everything go. How much you actually examine 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 common ground was the serious intent behind the club. It felt really well thought out. It was not just a party. You were able to point to issues. It was really strongly felt that we got to experience it, instead of talking about it. I think that that in itself is really interesting.

Billie, 36

I attended all three acts. Before the first, I didn’t have any expectations in the sense that I thought that it would 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 believe we can never reach or feel. Nostalgia or memory work in such a way that the value increases afterwards, the event becomes bigger in hindsight 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 is possible to recreate it here and now. This feeling is not just 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 representation. 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 one hundred 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, my expectations were super high for the second event. I had realized that it was possible to feel like that. That it was possible to create safe rooms, or rooms where you can feel a certain way and 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 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, thinking 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 that it was present at all three parties, but they were 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 kinds 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 afterwards. All it took was a few hours at the party, and then we let everything go. So later, that freedom actually 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 get beaten up... So it was a mix of feelings, how I felt during the party and how I felt afterwards. 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 one another, 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 more active participant; for example, you could get photographed with objects, or be photographed in a group, or get your nails done. I had my nails done and that was one of the strongest things that

happened for me during that night. To sit down and relax, with them taking 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 that 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 rather, 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 that 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 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 re-made to fit me. I did not have to lose weight to fit into them. It was more like 'okay, we'll create a setting so you can function here'. Instead of the opposite; '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 these (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, 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's another reason 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 since—what the re-dressing act created.

I think that the political context was fundamental for my strong experience of the party. It was definitely not just a party. I think simply joining the party constituted a political act. 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 were to 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 were those ones; what would everyday life be like 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 real 'aha!' feeling. We can do it, we just have to gather many people together. These parties were generous in a way that 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 don't think about it every day, but I carry it 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 twist and turn 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 1970s and 1980s, 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 the clothes that were made available. They 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 in 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.

At *Culture Club*, it felt like you entered it in a different way. It was raw, and identity was highlighted in a different way than in the first act, which 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 a lot with this club. I have experienced the time period it referred to, I went to a lot of clubs then. 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. Only if you wanted to, of

course, but it was there, all those theatrical attributes were accessible. And because of that, the third act was 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 more pronounced, meaningful 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 don't know if that was 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 were closer to me, they were 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 was 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 set up 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. But 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 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 was it? What was 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 thoroughly, and that was good. It was fruitful to discuss it. During 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 these club events quite a lot, because I think that 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 were enormous between being at Årsta Castle, Gallery Index and 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 plastic-y 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 action. At *Culture Club* I was very active, while at *Sappho Island* I

was more passive. I find it much easier to get 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 was unable to 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 did not have the same investigation of gender as the second. In the third, the costumes were more of a power game, since there was a costume that was already made and included plumes and crinolines, which have an added value already. These garments are related to a certain time period, and are usually used to display power relations on stage. In the first act, the power was present in the building. For me, castles are very much 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 was affected; you actually changed 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 time pass, it's super important. You cannot always just go straight into it, you also need time for the transformation of yourself.

















EXCLUDE

ME IN

People crowded into Esperantoplatzen, central Gothenburg. Clothes on racks. On the benches are homemade maracas, jewellery and masks you can wear. Next to the square are banners, laying in the grass. One banner for each queer club that has existed in the city's history. In our history.

Drums are playing, and a samba orchestra makes us start dancing. We dance and dress ourselves in the clothes that are there, made for us. We are the queer community in contemporary Gothenburg, and we are artists, visitors or just curious people who happened to be passing by. Five of us wear near-identical clothes with prints like "I can see queerly now", "bash back", "dyke" or "every time we fuck we win". We stand on one of the benches and we read a speech together; everyone has a copy handed to them, and we read together:

Do you remember the time when the air was clean
and sex was something dirty?
Touch me, touch me now.
I want to work and love,
make love to each and every one of you.
Every street is our sexual geography.
A city of longing and total satisfaction.

We are the rediscovered carnival parade,
left to ferment in the cotton warehouse.
We are a bacterial culture, stumbled across by chance.
We are the missing piece of the puzzle.
We are the queer bateria of Göteborgskarnevalen.
We are reinstating the archaeology,
We are the riff-raff, the cake mob,
but we won't stay confined the box.
Inside the pink room.
We are contagious,
our culture is at the center of the public body,
it can't be medicated against,
you can't send 'gay' straight to hell.
We make up the motive, the home, the heart.
Without us, no metabolism,
no motion, no transformation.
We are the dawning thought,
the living body.
Our tale doesn't write his/tory,
or her/story.
We write hir/story.
At the very least.

Chorus:

Do you remember the time when the air was clean
and sex was something dirty?
Touch me, touch me now.
I want to work and love,
make love to each and every one of you.
Every street is our sexual geography.
A city of longing and total satisfaction.

We took our places in the cotton warehouse without a roof of its own.
 We dream about being saved
 by saving the past.
 We have all been forced to bear the shame,
 the shame of being different.
 But we, and our co-creatures,
 have the right to be together
 in ways of our own choosing,
 without intrusion, control or imposed definitions.
 We are free and of age in a country in which we have the right of assembly.
 Simple as that.
 We know that there is no strength in solitude.
 We do not search for our other half.
 We know that we don't have to learn the rules
 in order to be able to break them.
 We know that each thing in its 'right' place is a lie.
 Together, we move above and beyond rules,
 instated by self-righteous white men.
 We demand more.
 We bash back. Hit & Miss.
 An Army of Lovers Cannot Lose.

Chorus:
 Do you remember the time when the air was clean
 and sex was something dirty?
 Touch me, touch me now.
 I want to work and love,
 make love to each and every one of you.
 Every street is our sexual geography.
 A city of longing and total satisfaction.

We exist yesterday, we exist before, we exist here,
 we exist all days,
 then as well as now,
 we exist beyond linear time.
 Our time is eternal.
 More sweat, milk and music, more dance.
 Now.
 We take responsibility for our company and pleasure.
 We consider the normative, official,

and legal writing of history to be inadequate.
 Therefore we actively favor the construction
 of dreams and thought experiments,
 of make-believe and building castles in the air.

Chorus:
 Do you remember the time when the air was clean
 and sex was something dirty?
 Touch me, touch me now.
 I want to work and love,
 make love to each and every one of you.
 Every street is our sexual geography.
 A city of longing and total satisfaction.

It's about being on the margins, defining ourselves;
 it's about gender-fuck and secrets,
 what's beneath the belt and deep inside the heart;
 it's about the night.
 Being queer is "grass roots"
 because we know that every one of us,
 every body, every cunt, every heart and ass and dick,
 is a world of pleasure waiting to be explored.
 Every one of us is a world of infinite possibility.
 And we are an army of lovers
 because it is we who know what love is.
 Desire and lust, too.
 We invented them.
 We come out of the closet,
 face the rejection of society,
 face firing squads,
 just to love each other!
 Every time we fuck, we win.

Chorus:
 Do you remember the time when the air was clean
 and sex was something dirty?
 Touch me, touch me now.
 I want to work and love,
 make love to each and every one of you.
 Every street is our sexual geography.
 A city of longing and total satisfaction.

QUEERS READ THIS

Exclude Me In – Talet från glömmorna

Minns du tiden när luften var ren
och sex var nåt smukt?
Rör mig, rör mig nu
Jag vill arbeta och älska,
älska med var och en av er.
Alla gator är vår sexuella geograph.
En stad av längtan och total tillfredsställelse.

Vi är det återfunna karnevalståget
som har legat och jäst i bomullsmagasinet
Vi är en bakteriekultur som återlämnas av en händelse
Vi är den saknade pusselbiten.
Vi är Göteborgskarnevalens queers batterier.
Vi återupprättar arkæologin.
Vi är Packiet, the Cake Mob,
men vi slussas inte i boxen.
I det rosa rummet.
Vi smittar,
vår kultur är mitt i samhällskroppen,
går inte att medicinerar,
eller skicka gay straight to hell.
Utan oss ingen matchollism,
ingen rörelse, ingen transformation.
Vi är den klarnande tanken,
den levande kroppen.
Vår berättelse skivens inte his/toria,
inte heller heterotopia,
vi skriver hen/toria.
Minst.

Minns du tiden när luften var ren
och sex var nåt smukt?
Rör mig, rör mig nu
Jag vill arbeta och älska,
älska med var och en av er.
Alla gator är vår sexuella geograph.
En stad av längtan och total tillfredsställelse.

Vi tog plats här i bomullsmagasinet utan eget tak,
vi drömmer om att räddas
genom att rädda det förfutna.
Vi har alla tvingats bära skammen,
skammen över att vara annorlunda.
Men vi och våra medvarelser
har rätt att vara tillsammans
på de sätt vi själva väljer
utan intryck, kontroll eller pålagda definitioner.
Vi är fria och myndiga i ett land med mötestridet.
Helt enkelt.
Vi vet att ensam är svag.
Vi letar inte efter vår andra hälft.
Vi vet att vi inte behöver läsa oss reglerna
för att kunna bryta mot dem.
Vi vet att var sak på sin plats är en läge.
Tillsammans går vi över och bortom regler
satta av självpeda vita män.
Vi begär mer.
Vi säger tillbaka. Mr & Mrs.
An Army of Lovers Cannot Loose.

Minns du tiden när luften var ren
och sex var nåt smukt?
Rör mig, rör mig nu
Jag vill arbeta och älska,
älska med var och en av er.
Alla gator är vår sexuella geograph.
En stad av längtan och total tillfredsställelse.

Vi finns igår, vi finns idag, vi finns här,
vi finns i alla dagar,
då som nu,
vi äger rum bortom den linjära tideräkningen.
Vår tid är ständig.
Mer Svett, mjölk och musli, mer dans.
Nu.
Vi tar ansvar för vårt umgänge och nöje.
Vi anser att den normativa, offentliga
och legala historien skrivningen är otillräcklig.
Därför gynnar vi aktivt konstruktioner
av drömmar och tankeexperiment.
Hälsopå och byggandet av lustriott.

Minns du tiden när luften var ren
och sex var nåt smukt?
Rör mig, rör mig nu
Jag vill arbeta och älska,
älska med var och en av er.
Alla gator är vår sexuella geograph.
En stad av längtan och total tillfredsställelse.

It's about being on the margins, defining ourselves;
it's about gender-fuck and secrets,
what's beneath the belt and deep inside the heart;
it's about the night.
Being queer is "grass roots"
because we know that everyone of us,
every body, every cunt,
every heart and ass and dick
is a world of pleasure waiting to be explored.
Everyone of us is a world of infinite possibility.
And we are an army of lovers
because it is we who know what love is.
Desire and lust, too.
We invented them.
We come out of the closet,
face the rejection of society,
face being regarded,
just to love each other!
Every time we fuck, we win.

Minns du tiden när luften var ren
och sex var nåt smukt?
Rör mig, rör mig nu
Jag vill arbeta och älska,
älska med var och en av er.
Alla gator är vår sexuella geograph.
En stad av längtan och total tillfredsställelse.

Vi snyter oss i bomullen från magasinets lager,
vi dansar över havet, mäter hästarna,
gillar att stå och skiter i svältekonomi.
Kärlsk föder kärlek.
Det finns mer.
Vi hyllar alla lesbiska,
queers, fläts, symder, dykes, vibes,
transkroppar, has-beens, ladyboys,
kings and queens, homos, bacchanten,
kryptriska, rathens alla vindsdrivna avvikare,
amörs och skabblar.
Vi är ett queer hotell där alla gäster är skandisa,
receptionisten tvåbövad och Fête for Fight.
Skuggor från gatorna som söker sig in
i det ständiga skymningslandet.
Vår dräkt projiceras oss,
och vår kropp dans, rörelse,
blir ett då, ett nu,
blir ett med det som kommer.
Vi är haket, de skyddande väggarna,
de utsträckta armarna, slumtryttat.
Vi slutar inte.
Genom vår dans växer vi dansgolv och tak.
Vår kropp är en kropp.
är där för din kropp.
vill känna din kropp.

Minns du tiden när luften var ren
och sex var nåt smukt?
Rör mig, rör mig nu
Jag vill arbeta och älska,
älska med var och en av er.
Alla gator är vår sexuella geograph.
En stad av längtan och total tillfredsställelse.
Närsta år, gör vi det här nakna.

Talet från glömmorna är skrivet av MYCKET
(Mariana Alves, Katarina Bonneriet &
Therese Eriksson) & The New Beauty Council
(Annick Engvin) i samarbete med Maja Gunn
och ingår i Exclude Me In, ett verk för Göteborgs
Internationella Konstbiennal 2013. Delar av talet
är hämtat ur Queen Nation manifest.
Läs mer på: www.mycket.org

We blow our noses in the cotton from the warehouse stock,
we dance across the ocean, feed the horses,
we like cleaning and we don't care for a starvation economy.
Love begets love.

There is more.

We celebrate all the lesbians,
queers, dykes, nymphs, vibes,
transbodies, has-beens, ladyboys,
kings and queens, homos, bacchanten,
cryptics, all the castaway deviants of the night,
amorous and scabrous.

We are a queer hotel in which all of the guests are shameless,
the concierge is bicephalous and Fête for Fight.
Phantoms from the streets find their way inside,
into the constant shadowland.

Our costume projects us,
and our dance, movement,
becomes a then, a now,
becomes one with what's coming.

We are the dive bar, the sheltering walls,
the outstretched arms, sisters of the slum.

We won't stop.

Through our dancing we weave the dance floor and the ceiling.
Our body is one body,
is there for your body,
wants to feel your body.

Chorus:

Do you remember the time when the air was clean
and sex was something dirty?

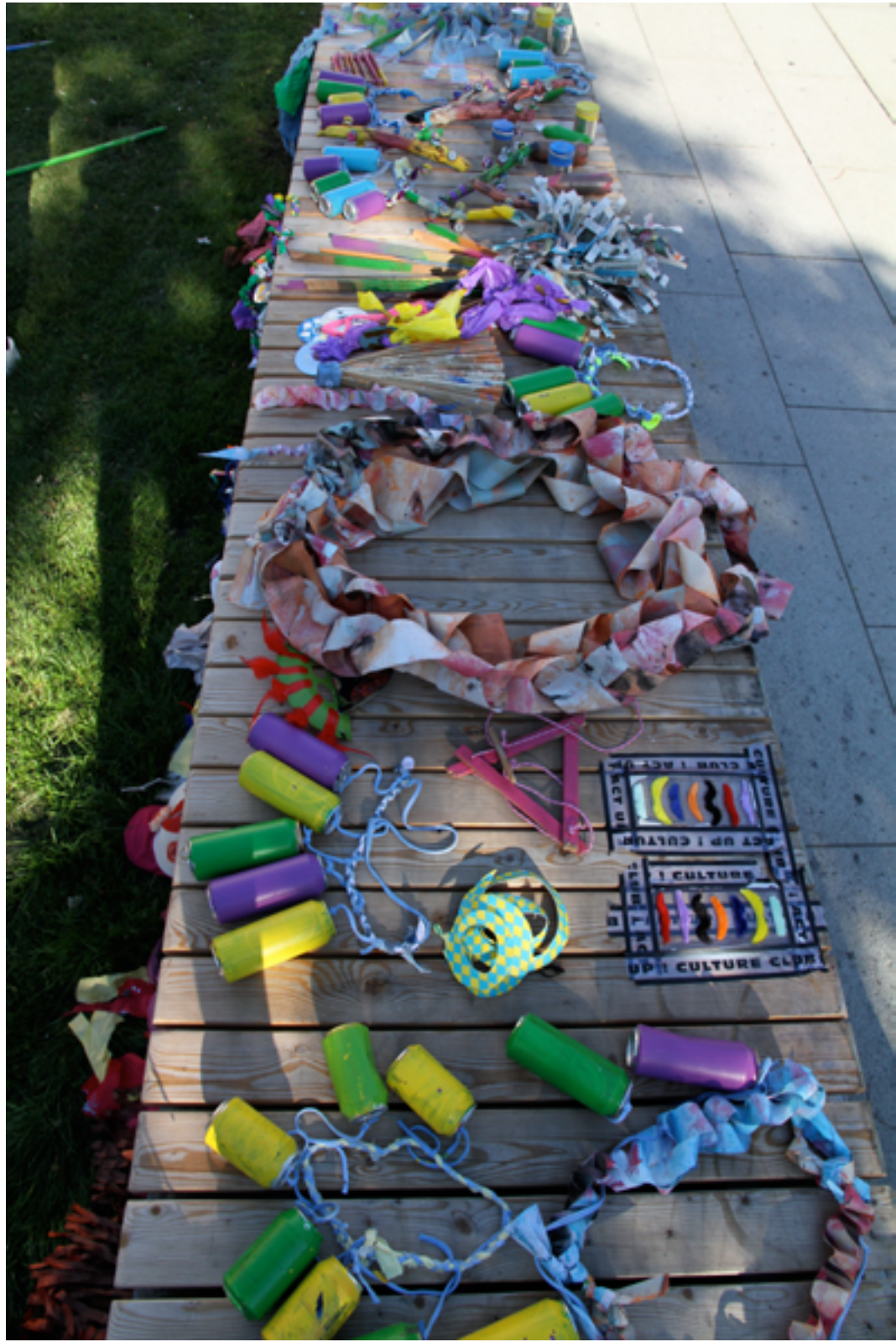
Touch me, touch me now.

I want to work and love,
make love to each and every one of you.

Every street is our sexual geography.

A city of longing and total satisfaction.

Next year, we do this naked.⁴













THE

LESBIAN

SHIRT

ESTER MARTIN

Wait, I need to put a shirt on 'cause I'm getting cold. A lesbian shirt! Haha.

MALIN

What does a lesbian shirt look like? [Laughs] Is it a lumberjack shirt?

ESTER MARTIN

It's kind of checked. Sometimes I can get a sort of lesbian aura, a feminine-masculine appearance. It's rare, but this shirt is a bit like that. In some way it feels more 'lesbian' than 'hetero man'. But that is perhaps also because I live in a community that... Or if I lived in a more heterosexual context, no one would think about it. But some things become lesbian.

MALIN

But is it a flannel shirt?

ESTER MARTIN

Yes sort of. Or, I don't know!



MAJA

What is the lesbian shirt?

ROBIN

It's checked. I mean, traditionally speaking I would say that it's a checked flannel shirt. I mean, there are different types of check, but I think of it as check in two colors.

MAJA

Is there anything else that characterizes the lesbian shirt, except pattern and materials?

ROBIN

It's sorta big. It's not tightly fitted. It has a collar...

MAJA

What's your relation to the lesbian shirt?

ROBIN

It was more like an idea. I mean, I was never thinking 'now I'm gonna buy a lesbian shirt'. I don't know where the idea came from. Or maybe Malin Holgersson had some sort of sound performance at a club in 2012.

MAJA

Yes, I worked with that club. *Culture Club*. At Index.

ROBIN

Aha. Yes, okay. It was around that time that I was at a art residence in Linköping, and I had googled lesbians and read about American lesbian feminism, and I thought of this shirt as a symbol of being lesbian. And then I made some sort of presentation of my time at the residence, and it was a performance where everyone had to wear a lesbian shirt. But I said that you could wear a lesbian shirt or a lesbian t-shirt. I had been in the US the year before, I think, and met a lot of lesbian people. I'm thinking that the idea sorta came from what they were wearing.

MAJA

So, what did they wear?

ROBIN

Well, they had shirts and random t-shirts and jeans. They weren't so stylish. More like an old t-shirt with a print, something you just wear.

MAJA

When you created these events, 'the lesbian breakfast' and so on, did the shirt become a kind of uniform?

ROBIN

Yes exactly. But it should also make everyone look the same, as a uniform does. Or make sure that no one feels more 'lesbian' than anyone else.

MAJA

How was it perceived?

ROBIN

Someone said "oh shit, everyone here has checked shirts, that's weird!" This was when they had seen it from the outside, before they'd entered. When they were outside they thought it was strange that everyone wore the same thing. So then it had something of an opposite effect, in that they didn't have one and so felt that they were different from the people inside.

MAJA

So if you're outside the group and still haven't got in, you become even more outside?

ROBIN

Yes, exactly. Then there was another criticism; that all lesbians don't have checked shirts. There are other things that are common to many lesbians.

MAJA

What other things are you thinking of?

ROBIN

I'm thinking that if you're going to work in a room in which everyone is dressed identically, it could be that today everyone wears dresses and then we are lesbians in this context. Another day we wear a feather boa. I mean, if you want to extend the lesbian space.



MAJA

But still, though, at least back then, the shirt was the garment that you thought was the strongest symbol for lesbianism, since you chose it?

ROBIN

Yes, it absolutely was. Because that whole project departed from the fact that I don't have a lesbian history. I don't know a bunch of lesbians that I can ask about lesbianism. So it became important to have a strong symbol, a stereotypical item. So then it was 'now I'll test this, now I can be this *real* lesbian'.

MAJA

How did it feel?

ROBIN

It felt... It was... It felt good. With the lesbian breakfasts I felt that there were many who had a similar need. So that was fun, and then it felt like the breakfast became a space to assemble around lesbianism.

MAJA

Why do you think people have such a need?

ROBIN

What do you mean?

MAJA

You said that dressing in a garment like this fills a need, what kind of need is that?

ROBIN

A kind of community belonging. When I came out I bought baggy jeans, sneakers and a basketball tank top, things I had never worn before. It was very clear, 'now I'm gonna be lesbian, or bisexual, or queer, or whatever', and that I wanted everyone to know.

MAJA

Does the shirt have the same symbolic power?

ROBIN

Yes, I think so. I can still, when I'm wearing a checked shirt, feel that I'm more lesbian.

MAJA

But do you think that others think that way, those who are not lesbians?

ROBIN

Hmm... No. But the shirt was very much part of this breakfast, and it's hard to think how it could be separated from that context.

MAJA

Yes, I understand, but you said before that if you were to see someone on the street wearing a checked shirt, you might think that the person is a lesbian?

ROBIN

Yes.

MAJA

So that association is taken outside of the lesbian room?

ROBIN

Yes, that's how it is. The lesbian shirt can be everywhere.



TILDA

The lesbian look, a certain look that is sometimes exchanged by lesbians. It is a look that says that you can tell what the other is, and it's often quiet, fast and loaded. An encouraging look of desire when you don't know each other. A gaze that maybe wants, and encourages one another in that. It can perhaps be perceived as insecure, but I still find it thrilling when it happens. Like a flirtation, but less connected to personality, as you don't really have time to notice more than the simple fact that you are 'of the same sort'.





1. INTERIOR. LIVING ROOM

Two women in an apartment. One of them (Claude) is wearing a checked shirt. She is standing next to a mirror, in front of a camera. The other (Marcel) wears a sailor jacket. She sits on a chair, reading. She is close to the camera. Marcel closes her book and looks at Claude.

MARCEL

I like the shirt, the way it looks on you. Because you don't look like a man, you look like you.

CLAUDE

[Smiling] Isn't that what lesbians do?
We don't look like men, we look like us.

MARCEL

Yes, that's right. Girls like us.

CLAUDE

Girls *like* us.

MARCEL

Yeah, that too...
How we are. What we made. Our pleasures. Our love. What we created.
Will that be visible?

CLAUDE

I don't know. I just want to do this.

MARCEL

For whom?

CLAUDE

I don't know. I don't care.
I'll just do this for us.
It's our thing. I don't need to show the world.

MARCEL

Yes, I know. But if the world doesn't want to see, perhaps there is a purpose to making them see, to opening their eyes, you know?

CLAUDE

I know. But I'm not doing this for them.
I'll never do this for them.
Will you help me with the camera?

[Marcel stands behind the camera. Claude moves herself closer to the mirror.]

MARCEL

[Smiling] Give me the lesbian look.

[Claude looks at her. A gaze full of desire.]

[Click]

MARCEL

That checked shirt that you're wearing. It's a lesbian shirt now.

CLAUDE

From now on, all shirts I'm wearing are lesbian shirts.

MARCEL

I like that. I like that everything we'll do will be lesbian. This sailor outfit I'm wearing, it's lesbian. The book I was reading, I was doing a lesbian reading of it. And soon, we will have a lesbian dinner.

CLAUDE

But first I want to take a photo of you.

MARCEL

Only if it's a lesbian photo.

CLAUDE

[Smiling] Of course.

[Marcel and Claude change places. Marcel looks at herself in the mirror and sees Claude behind her.]

CLAUDE

Look relaxed. Like you do when you look at yourself in the mirror.

MARCEL

I never really look at myself in the mirror.

CLAUDE

Okay, think of something nice then. Or look at me in the mirror. Or just tell me what you're thinking. I want this to be spontaneous. Just say what you're thinking right now.

MARCEL

[Smiling] Okay, right now I'm thinking that this hot lesbian should take her photo, 'cause the other lesbian, me, is starving and wants a lesbian dinner soon—then I'm thinking that after lesbian dinner I want to have lesbian sex with this lesbian photographer and hopefully this lesbian photographer wants to have lesbian sex with me. Does she?

[Click]

2. INTERIOR. BEDROOM

MARCEL

The world is a dangerous place for people like us.

CLAUDE

I know.

MARCEL

After we die, will they remember us?

CLAUDE

Will they be sorry for not accepting us while we were alive?

MARCEL

Aren't all artists more famous after their death?

CLAUDE

Yes, but maybe they will remember us to rid themselves of guilt.

MARCEL

They will remember us because of what we created. Because we do what they cannot.

CLAUDE

Because we say something about our time? Or because we are timeless?

MARCEL

Both.



3. INTERIOR. BEDROOM

CLAUDE

Sometimes I wonder what I would do if I didn't have you.

MARCEL

You always had me.

CLAUDE

I know.

MARCEL

You will always have me.

[Marcel goes into the kitchen. Claude changes clothes. Marcel comes back.]

MARCEL

You've changed again.

CLAUDE

Perhaps by changing I become myself.

MARCEL

I am the other. We are always the other.

CLAUDE

I am the other, but I'm always diverse.





NANNA

I was born brown but, through my upbringing, I've been taught that I'm black. My parents, my school and the media have all made it very clear to me that I am black. Others have learned to look at me as black. When I stand on stage or am acting in a role, I become a political body. I cannot escape it. It's unfair, but people often assume a lot based solely on the color of my skin. I know some people will give me roles because of it, and I know for sure that I won't get the chance to do many roles because of it.

I see myself as a black woman, and don't ask anyone to ignore the color of my skin—but it should not define who I am. We live in a world where white people are generally the most privileged; they are at the top of hierarchies around the world, and the opportunities available to them are significantly greater than those of non-whites. Choosing to ignore this is to maintain racist structures. To not talk about inequality in the acting profession for racialized actors makes the problem greater, because then no effort is made to improve it. We should be aware of both our conscious choices and the choices we refrain from making, and how they affect our society.

When I was younger I did some modeling and was asked to pose, so I tried to pose as I assumed all models do. The photographer told me that I posed just like a man; my facial expressions were more like a man's than a woman's. I became aware of the fact that facial expressions differ between the sexes. I wasn't acting as I was supposed to; I didn't have the facial expression that is commonly associated with the female sex. Again, this is about norms. Just as there are restrictions for non-white people, there are restrictions for women. The spheres within which we can move are limited. We are expected to look and act in a certain way, and are repeatedly told not to go outside of these norms.





ADINA

I was so young when I started modeling, only thirteen, and it has shaped me greatly. I grew up with it. I have imitated other models, how they pose. When I began to study Gender Studies I became more aware. It gave me a distance from modeling; being a model has been such a great part of who I am as a person, but when I started to study gender I thought much more while being photographed, about how I posed and things like that. Simultaneously, though, it's so easy for me to fall back into rehearsed mannerisms. Sometimes, when I look at old images of myself, I think 'oops... I was involved in creating this'.

Now, I feel that I can take charge of a situation in a way that I didn't understand was possible before. Now I understand the power that I have, and the responsibility that comes with it. Because I'm the person standing in front of the camera, I'm an active part of the image. Of course, it's not just me but also the photographer, the stylist, the magazine... There are so many forces that affect how the image will look. So I guess there are two sides to it. But when I'm more aware I'm able to better control the situation. Of course. But I can't fully decide.

I grew up being a model, I don't know anything else. It's hard for me to imagine how things would have been if I hadn't become a model. It was a very special situation to be in. It's a very hierarchical environment. It's important what gigs you do, who photographs you, and so on, and you can be hot stuff one season but that can rapidly change. It's a lot like that. It's a very special situation to be in, and to grow up in. I must have been affected by it, but I'm not sure in what way.

When I was at my peak I never thought of the male gaze—I never thought of any gaze, because I was so used to being looked at. When I worked as a model I wasn't a lesbian. I had a lesbian shirt, but I wasn't a lesbian. I had a checked flannel shirt that I wore a lot. Around the same time, when I wore this flannel shirt a lot, I became a lesbian. I say that I *became* a lesbian, because if I say that I *came out* it would indicate that I was already aware that I was a lesbian, and I wasn't. When I met my ex-girlfriend for the first time—we exchanged looks at a party—I just thought that I wanted to become friends with her. In the look I felt an attraction, but I wasn't able to connect it to my sexuality, and so I automatically defined it as friendship. If I had gotten that same look from a man I would most likely have immediately defined it as sexual attraction. Because that is the norm, and how I've learned things should be.





ABOUT

About On and Off

In *On and Off* the bodily experience of clothing is related to the clothes themselves, and functions as a means of understanding a scenario; a farewell, a sorrow. *On and Off* was a very lonely project. I presented it as a monologue by performing a reading, and so it is my words, directed to the other. The stage consisted of a small wooden box I had made, elevating me only slightly above the audience, and was so small that I could not move. The clothes described in *On and Off* are leftovers that I found, readymades that became an important part of the project.

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

When presenting *On and Off*, I introduced it with *Cause and effect — Thoughts on a scenario* (Gunn, 2013a), a text that is built on assumptions and maybes—how things could have been different. In my article ‘On and Off — The Designer as a Writer’ (Gunn, 2015), I present a section of the diary and my thoughts on the project and the role of the designer as a writer, together with a passage 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 began the project *If you were a girl I would love you even more* in 2010, having spent some time in the United States, where I found that gender roles were more rigid 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 these neighborhoods as poor, working class, and strongly religious. He has a university degree and works in both a female-dominated retail business and a homogeneous environment dominated by traditional male norms. 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 use the word 'fag' as an insult. 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 any disagreement with his friends' opinions.

In New York I met Genesis Breyer P-Orridge. Gen talked about his⁵ relationship with Lady Jaye née Jacqueline Breyer, and their transformation into homogeneous bodies. Their transformation of body was an ongoing project that 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 Genesis describes, of limiting the distance between them and creating an expression of true love. Lady Jaye passed away in 2007 but, when I met Genesis in 2010, zie⁶ still talked about himself as 'we'—the shared identity was still very present. I was very touched by the love story, and inspired by their bodily modification and transformation. I was curious to further investigate the role of garments in such transformations, and explore whether clothing could act not only as a gender marker, but 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 clothing and makeup for the man involved in my project. How would he act when wearing dresses, blouses, and skirts from my wardrobe? Could he adopt some of these attributes? Would he agree to wear them and, if so, how would he feel about it? For the participant, the exploration with clothing became not only an elaboration with styles and forms, but 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 a great deal about what others thought of him and his look. He expressed a desire to be fashionable, look good, and be accepted. Simultaneously, though, he seemed curious. He was presumably impressed by the artistic context that I represented to him, and I had the impression that he wanted to try new things and be considered to be liberal. However, this aim seemed for him difficult to achieve in practice. The reminders of social structure and imagined reactions of relatives and friends easily took over his thoughts regarding his appearance.

Gender identity is understood from an intersectional perspective that 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 facts that I am white and the participant is African-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, at least potentially, discourage a reproduction or misuse of them. My role of power can be located in the act of initiating the project, being the photographer (subject versus object) and owning and benefiting from the outcome. Furthermore, I held a position of power as a result of my experience, education, class, age, and race. However, the selection of the participant was independent of skin color and preconceptions, 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 but, with an application of feminist ideas to intersectionality and postcolonial theory, it still has its limitations. Therefore, I would like to make clear that I am aware of the potential issues of inequality (as in me initiating, leading, owning and benefiting from the project, together with those related to experience, age, education, class, and race) that could be read between myself and the participant, even if the discussion focuses on gender and sexuality and the power that is embodied by 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, the participant's suggestions were as frequent as mine. Throughout the project, and in particular when his resistance was particularly strong, I worked with him within a loving and caring atmosphere. It was a play. There was no coercion. During 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 clothing as a marker and re-maker of gender identity.

The participant is anonymous in the sense that his name is not given, nor are the details of how we know each other. However, he is exposed in the photographs (which he has consented to), and so is visible to those 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 worked with love and desire as a theme; confirmation and compliments were used as a means of creating change and potentially increasing attraction.

The man's appearance was created through my design work. I designed his look, used him as a tool and inspiration for my work. In a fashion context he could be compared to a muse, although 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 clothing I made for him.

I entered a role similar to that of a director. If he was the actor, we improvised the story, and so the design method was here based on a cooperative exploration. Even though I was the leader, the director, and the designer, the project would not have existed in its present form without his contributions. We conducted fittings and styling tests together, and even if he was, for the most part, negative and skeptical, he also changed over time. By the end, his creative suggestions were as frequent as mine.

The project has been exhibited as part of the 'Tenderness' part of the 'Tendenser' exhibition series at Gallery F15 Moss, Norway, and 'Kropp & Språk' at ID:I Gallery in Stockholm. It was also covered by the Swedish media (Braunerhielm, 2013a, 2013b; SVT, 2013).

About Utopian Bodies

The fashion exhibition *Utopian Bodies — Fashion Looks Forward* was held at Liljevalchs, Stockholm, between September 23, 2015 and February 7, 2016. The show, which was curated by Sofia Hedman and Serge Martynov, consisted of eleven rooms, each of which visualized a theme. The exhibition showed works by designers such as Hussein Chalayan, Walter van Beirendonck, Prada, Rick Owens, Viktor & Rolf, Acne, H&M, and many upcoming Swedish designers. I was selected to make special items for the exhibition. My work was shown in the 'Resistance & Society' and 'Gender' rooms. In this thesis, '*Utopian Bodies*' refers to the portion of my work that was shown in the 'Gender' room.

The room consisted of mirrors and light bulbs, evoking the backstage area of a theater and the idea that gender is performative (Butler, 1990). Fashion can work both as a gender marker and a tool to play with and deconstruct gender. As written by the curators on the exhibition's wall: "Fashion is becoming increasingly aware that gender is not simply twofold, or indeed, innately linked to a particular gender, sexuality or type of dress". My installation was an ensemble of male breasts made of silicon and female breasts made as prosthetics, which the audience was encouraged to try on. Shirts with printed male breasts and nipples, hairy arms and bra patterns were hung on the wall, alongside the following:

These designers play with gender by working with silhouettes, colours, materials and styles that are coded as male, female or neutral. By mixing signifiers, such as Walter van Beirendonck's corset look, or making it easy for wearers to assume the bodily attributes of a specific gender, such as Maja Gunn's prosthetic breasts and hairy arms, fashion can cause confusion and ultimately challenge strict gender boundaries. (Hedman & Martynov, 2015)

About The Safety Top

The Safety Top was conducted within a project called ‘Origo’, funded by the Swedish innovation agency and research foundation Vinnova, which has the aim of working toward sustainable growth. As part of the project I worked with Anna Isaksson, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Halmstad University; Emma Börjesson, Project Coordinator at the Center for Health Technology Halland at Halmstad University; Karin Ehrnberger, Industrial Designer and PhD Candidate at KTH, Stockholm; and Camilla Andersson, Architecture Researcher. The Origo project aimed to highlight how norm-critical design can create new solutions and perspectives with regard to gender in a fire department organization. We worked with the Södertörn Fire Department and had three stations as our reference groups.

Through twelve formal interviews, at three different stations as well as with former firefighters, and several informal conversations and visits, we perceived that the changes made by Swedish fire departments in beginning to hire female firefighters in 1971 (although many stations are still wholly male) resulted in women becoming segregated and relegated to the status of ‘the other’, instead of being integrated. This involved, for example, the creation of changing rooms for women, which removed the female firefighters (commonly only one per shift) from the informal and therapeutic atmosphere of the post-alarm changing room.

Rooms, tools, and uniforms were all made following the male norm, and so in this project we examined the possibility of working in a norm-critical way, with designs specifically made for the fire department. We came up with architectural solutions for a shared changing room and discussed the differences in terms of physical power between men and women, which resulted in the construction of a code lock that eliminates the need to force a door using brute strength in the case of fire. I worked primarily with the uniform and its effect.

The uniform has social and homogeneous functions. It unifies the group, creating a sense of solidarity between colleagues, while simultaneously distinguishing firefighters from their surroundings. The uniforms have a primarily protective function, having been designed to make it possible to put out fires and save lives.

Several of the firefighters discussed the uniform in a positive manner, noting advantages such as the fact that the wearer does not have to think about what to wear, their own clothing is protected from damage, and the uniform strengthens the sense of professional identity, suggesting that the wearer takes their work and objectives seriously. Several firefighters also described the uniform as an identity tool that strengthens the group, creates homogeneity and blurs sexual identity. However, several firefighters

stated that they do not feel that the current uniform was created with their bodies in mind, and that their needs are not being met. The uniform, they claim, is built to suit the male norm, and the way it is shaped relates to structures and norms in the fire department’s organization. Based on such testimonies it is arguable that the uniform can, in contrast to its purpose, create feelings of alienation.

As the uniform is created to fit as many people as possible, it is standardized and follows a ready-made scheme to suit the bodies that will presumably wear it. The making of assumptions regarding body types makes those that are not included in the standard scheme exceptions, or an additional cost; in other words, a problem. Many female firefighters described their frustration and feeling of marginalization, but similar sentiments were expressed by some male firefighters, who felt that the organization had much further to go to achieve equality. A female firefighter said:

The fact that there are no maternity uniforms is an illustration of the fact that our employer does not have a plan for when their employees get pregnant. A firefighter is not supposed to give birth or be on parental leave.

The possibility of changing the uniform had its starting point in the idea of catering for a greater number of body types. As a result of the interviews and visits, we perceived that there were deficiencies in the current uniform, as several firefighters felt that they were excluded—that the uniform was not made to fit their bodies. Several claimed that the uniform reinforces the idea of the tall white man as the norm, and that the uniform design reflects the attitudes, structures and norms of the organization (see also Ericson, 2009; 2011, for discussion of firefighters and masculinity and gender equality in this context).

The aim that we settled on was that the uniform should suit the needs of different body types; varying lengths and widths, bodies with breasts, growing bodies, and bodies whose owners do not want to expose areas of their skin or hair. The uniform should then—to be complete—allow the combination of different components to form one workable unit. These components should not be considered as exceptions, but be part of the basic supply, as firefighters should not need to make a special order and it should not be up to local managers as to whether or not these uniform components are available. Having these garments visible on the order lists could also demonstrate an improved approach to diversity.

When sketching the new uniforms I decided to go further, by producing safety top samples. Instead of using the male norm to create a uniform, a traditionally female-

coded garment is here used for both sexes. Inspiration for *The Safety Top* came from interviews with female firefighters, who expressed frustration with the fact that sports bras were not classified as protection equipment; instead, it was up to local managers as to whether this garment—for many women a necessary one—should be considered to be part of the uniform. Furthermore, the idea behind *The Safety Top* was partly developed from an aim to make the procedure following an alarm more gender-neutral; reinforcing the uniform's function of homogeneity while simultaneously working towards a feeling of being less naked and exposed, since the wearer is still uniformed. Norms and ideas about how firefighters should look and act are not unique to the organization, but rather to an extent reflect the opinions and prejudices of many members of the public. As an employer, the fire department should be able to clearly demonstrate that all of its employees are important and fulfill a function, and so this subject is of importance not only internally, but also in relation to the public.

During the development of the uniform I studied functional materials and sportswear, as firefighters have duties that are physically challenging and they exercise frequently. Through the interviews and studies conducted I received the impression that sports, particularly soccer, were of interest to many, leading me to consider gender in the context of sports and an image of the soccer player Zlatan Ibrahimovic. During the summer of 2013, Zlatan made headlines when he wore something that looked like a sports bra: “The explanation behind Zlatan’s sports bra” (Sjögren, 2013); “Zlatan Ibrahimovic Wore a Fetching Sports Bra And Bikini Ensemble” (Duffy, 2013); “What The Hell Is Zlatan Ibrahimovic Wearing?” (Samer, 2013); “It’s not a sports bra: there’s a good reason behind Zlatan Ibrahimovic’s new look” (Yahoo Sports, 2013). It later became apparent that the ‘bra’ was a high-tech GPS vest, used in soccer to measure, for example, the player’s acceleration.

The technical aspects of the garment—that, through measurements, it can improve the results of players—seemed to create an acceptance. To be able to dress in a female-coded garment, as the sports bra is commonly categorized, one needed an excuse—another reason—for this to be acceptable. Focusing on the top’s technological aspects and terming it a ‘vest’, rather than a ‘bra’, compensated for the female-coded function: to support the breasts. This application of words—the reformulation—avoids associations with transsexuals, transvestites, and women; in other words, it avoids degradation.

The Safety Top includes GPS functionality and the ability to measure pulse and body temperature during an alarm, and all of this information can be transmitted to the emergency leader, placed outside of the fire area. *The Safety Top* is also a tool for use during physical training, primarily to encourage increased health awareness. Studies

show that firefighters are a high-risk group for diseases such as cancer, heart problems, stress, and injuries caused by both physical and mental stress (c.f. Pukkala et al., 2014; Bergman, 2013; Örneborg, 2012; Beaton & Murphy, 1993). In our interviews (twelve formal, and several informal) at three fire stations, we sensed an attitude of ‘duty comes first’—working even if one has a flu or fever. This attitude, however, can mean that some female firefighters (and most likely many males too) feel that they have to perform even better, and so being at home to take care of a sick child, for example, may be considered to be a failing.

As I cooperated with sociology and healthcare researchers, those aspects were very present when developing *The Safety Top*. Firefighters’ health risks at work are amplified through the lack of monitoring of health and regular check-ups. Additionally, this can be connected to the traditional roles and values of men and women, where women are traditionally seen as those who stand back, reflect, are emotional, and have an internally-directed focus, while men and the broad idea of ‘manhood’ have traditionally been synonymous with being impulsive, never hesitating, acting externally, etc. Firefighters’ health risks could be countered by better monitoring of health and, in Sweden, employers are obligated by law to ensure this. Here, *The Safety Top* could have an important function in questioning the normative culture that is prevalent in the fire department. The integration of health monitoring technology in the top would improve the experiences of both firefighters and employers, and could also contribute to improved performance, grounded in a respect for the capacities of unique and widely variable body types.

The Safety Top has multiple functions, and relates to gender through several parameters. The performative—the act of dressing in what is often considered to be exclusively for the opposite sex—can allow for an increased understanding of different bodies’ needs and appearances. Through this transformation, *The Safety Top* constitutes both an emblematic milestone in the development of gender equality in the context of firefighting and a practical piece of life-saving equipment for the firefighter of the present.

About The Club Scene

The Club Scene was a series of clubs or events that were created to explore important historical, queer feminist settings. 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 latter two. For *The Club Scene*, I cooperated with the Swedish design-artist-architecture group MYCKET (Mariana Alves, Katarina Bonnevier, and Thérèse Kristiansson), who began 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 clothing, which was arranged in piles or hung on racks. The participants could make changes to the garments, try them on, and re-dress and transform themselves as they liked. Myself and several others assisted by dressing those who requested our help, 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 difficult to describe and visualize through verbal description. As the text can easily tend to describe only 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 participants, each with a different background, age, and role during the events. The section featuring the participants’ voices—*The Club Scene*—is based on four interviews. The interview materials, which included questions such as “what happened?”, “what did you wear?”, and “how did it feel?” were later edited, translated and anonymized using pseudonyms, and further altered by the removal of my questions.⁷ This method of using their words in a more literary way than through a simple transcript relates to the 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 at Iaspis in Stockholm, roughly a month after the third act. Those invited had worked during the clubs or participated in all three acts. The space at Iaspis was decorated with costumes and props from all three acts, and a projector showed photographs.

As an aperitif, the roughly 25 guests were served the same absinth as was offered during the first act. They were then divided into groups and tasked with making

pizzas, which were supposed to be interpretations of how they explored the different clubs. Words and phrases that were used included “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 25 envelopes with answers, anecdotes, and maps.

I tried to imbue the costumes of *The Club Scene* with a hint of the potential they contained, without giving them too much of a fixed appearance. The participants were free to put the clothing together in different ways. We were there to help, but they were encouraged to engage in this free play with those bodily attributes. In *The Club Scene* I worked with clichés and so, at the *Culture Club*, the aesthetics of the garments were inspired by the clichés of queer from the 1970s up to the present. Defining such clichés was done using the clothing I selected, made, or remade. For example, there were a selection of white jeans, sleeveless t-shirts, motorcycle jackets, and garments dyed in a pastel color palette. For me they represented, in a varied way, the idea of the queer of that time, seen from a general and clichéd perspective. The clothing and attributes played with the aesthetics of the queer community, and simultaneously aimed to strengthen or even create such a community.

I chose which clothing to include. I spray-painted and dyed cloth and garments to go with the themes of the night, and sewed a series of burglar masks as a reference to Pussy Riot. There were no fixed ideas with regard to how the final outfits should look. The guests were encouraged to transform and mix the clothing as they liked. They were free to keep the same clothing throughout the evening or change at any time. Six of us assisted them, applying tape and suggesting different forms and combinations. The tape was used both as decoration and as a way of attaching different pieces together—instead of seams, we taped. The clothing was shaped to fit the bodies; the tape became the tool to make all clothing accessible to everyone. No garment was too small, no body too big. 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 clothing was donated by Emmaus, a Swedish welfare organization which runs several second-hand shops. The clothing was 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 covered in paint, I had pre-stained them with the same paint.

Sappho Island was 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 clothing was hanging on racks, and accessories including hats and seashells were attached with clippers on cords, enabling the guests to customize and play with them. Around five of us helped to dress and suggest garments and outfits, but the guests were free to choose whatever they wanted. The design intention from my perspective was to create an aesthetic platform that connected with the theme for the night, but was still open for the participants to engage and transform within.

For *Sappho Island* we made a tableau vivant; this effort was led by Emma Lundqvist, trainer in creative methods and manager at Amphi Production. The image created was made by the costumed participants. Seeing the clubs as a form of performance, the tableau vivant—considered to be the historical predecessor of the costume drama—was placed in the club as an opportunity to act together on a stage, with an audience that was also in costumes and able to join if they wished. The tableau vivant also has a role in the history of fashion as, when fashion shows and modeling were developed in the early couture houses, audiences became familiar with modeling acts through the culture of staging tableaux vivants (Evans, 2013:13). Similarly, the aesthetic of the tableau vivant was present in many of the early fashion shows (ibid.).

Using inspiration from history, dreams, and illusions, the idea behind the transformative re-dressing acts—present in all acts of *The Club Scene*—was to create settings in which fusion occurred between fiction and reality, body and space, past and present. The rooms all had historical references, and the acts attempted through their reenactments to create settings in which bodies achieved a safe platform, where queer and gender elaborations could freely act. In that sense the design work embodied both a creation and the potential for re-creation, and worked as a transformative tool. It became a way to embody the enactments of the queer feminist settings—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 clothing was handed out by myself to the participants; I gave them the material with which to experiment, or I dressed their bodies as part of a performative act.

MYCKET has continued to work with *The Club Scene* as a research project, funded by the Research Council at the Architecture and Design Center in Stockholm. The ongoing project started in January 2014 and is planned to continue for three years. By both creating new queer spaces and working with existing ones, MYCKET works with the concept of “Architecture in Practice”: “[We try] futures, utopias and/or other ways to organize, meet, create, interpret and reuse the built environment, social rooms and society” (Alves, Bonnevier, & Kristiansson, a). In practice, the research examines how aesthetic expressions affect and change behavior from different intersectional perspectives, such as anti-racism and queer feminism, and applies themes and methods of theatricality, carnival, and activism (Alves, Bonnevier, & Kristiansson, b).

Rita här en korta över någon av klubbarna - så som du minns det!



Berätta här en anekdot från någon av klubbarna...

Bara att det var underbart att få frågan om jag har mina barn med en kvinna, att någon tog det för givet. Att jag aldrig aldrig annars får den frågan irriterar mig (jag har mina barn med en man) men varför skulle det vara så självklart



Hur upplevde du tilltalet i inbjudningarna till klubbarna?
Vad gick du igång på, vad fattades?

Jag kände mig utvald, kallad, äntligen specifikt tilltalad. Men hur kan man följa upp ett vitt brev med handskrivet

Hur upplevde du att klubbarna gav dig utrymme att agera så som du önskade, vad var det som bejakade och vad var det som begränsade?

Underbart att bli omhändertagen - adress? klädd, sminkad osv.

Jobbigt att bli bortrörd med välseshet om hur länge, ~~och~~ med varande bröst

Upplevde du platserna, klubbarna som trygga miljöer, på vilket sätt? Och om inte, kan du beskriva varför.

Trygga temporära miljöer när jag val utom
vars stabilitet ligger i min bebis för första gången.

Överenskommet mellan oss som bjöd in Var (om det fanns) fanns politiken, allvaret och förskjutningarna för dig under klubbarna?

Under Joanna Zaveligas tal + LARON och Metodi oss som val

→ på Galleri Index + Hon val inbjudna och kom.

Med vilken känsla lämnade du de olika klubbarna?

Och vilken känsla har du nu, när du tänker tillbaka på klubbarna?

(Invitation över att jag missade den sista.)

GLADJE, känsla av att ni ^(vi) skapar nu.

Finns det något från de tre klubbarna som du har praktiserat (en metod, känsla, idé, nätverk) i ditt vardag eller arbetssituation efteråt?

Funderar ständigt på om jag en "TAR SKIT".... (erfaren att inte göra det kommer från Index kullen.

Hur upplevde du tilltalet i inbjudningarna till klubbarna?

Vad gick du igång på, vad fattades?

JAG VAR EXTREMT NYFIKEN. OCH DET BLEV SÅ.
FÖRSTA ENVELOPPET VAR HÖG STATUS EXCELLENCE OCH DET
VAR TYDLIGT ATT NÅTT EPISKT SKULLE HÄNDA.
INGENTING FATTADES !!!!!!

Hur upplevde du att klubbarna gav dig utrymme att agera så som du önskade,
vad var det som bejakade och vad var det som begränsade?

CLUB 1+2 VAR ULTIEMT. 2 VAR FRIHET PÅ
SÅG. 1 VAR LITE MIGNARE OCH JAG KÄNDE MIG MER
MYSTERIÖST. CLUB 3 VAR INTE SÅ SOM 1+2. LITE
SVÄRT ATT KOMMA I STÄMMING. MEN ALLTILLSAMMAN VAR
DET EPISKT
BR
OCH
SPECIELL.

Upplevde du platserna, klubbarna som trygga miljöer, på vilket sätt?
Och om inte, kan du beskriva varför.

TOTALT TRYGGHET!!

Var (om det fanns) fanns politiken, allvaret och förskjutningarna för dig under klubbarna?

JAG KÄNDE POLITIKEN ÖVERALLT HELA TIDEN PÅ ALLA.
MEN MEST PÅ CLUB 1+(2). 2 VAR MEST
POLITISKT OCH JAG KÄNDE ATT JAG KUNDE GÖR MITT
HELA LESBISKA UPPVÄLKST IGEN MEN MED EN ANNORLUNDE

Med vilken känsla lämnade du de olika klubbarna?

Och vilken känsla har du nu, när du tänker tillbaka på klubbarna?

JAG KÄNDE MIG SOM DET VAR LÄSKANDE
FÖR MIN SJÄL. JAG KÄNDE MIG STARKT
OCH STOR OCH TOTALT ÄLSKAD OCH
ACCEPTERAD. DENNA KÄNSLA FINS DÄN
FORTFÄRENDE. HELT UNDERBART! JAG BEHÖVEN BARR
KÄNSLA OCH
MEDVETENHET.
TACK!

Finns det något från de tre klubbarna som du har praktiserat (en metod, känsla, idé, nätverk) i din
vardag eller arbetssituation efteråt?

JAG HAR BYXORNA
PÅ CLUB 2 KVÄR...

OCH JA JAG HAR DET HÄR ALLT I
MITT SYSTEM OCH TA DET MED MIG I

→ tänke på fester
och jag känner
mig GLAD.
Att ni har fixat det
här är helt fantastiskt

Hur upplevde du tilltalet i inbjudningarna till klubbarna?

Vad gick du igång på, vad fattades?

BREVET SOM SÄNDES HEM VAR SPECIELLT. EN FÄRSÄLLAN POST MED
ROLIGT INNEHÅLL

FEST 2 → ROLIGT MED TELEFONUMRET & ÄLSKARBILJETTEN

INBJUDAN TILL ISLAND... VIDEO. SÅ FET. SAKNAR INGET

Hur upplevde du att klubbarna gav dig utrymme att agera så som du önskade,
vad var det som bejakade och vad var det som begränsade?

CLUB 1. VAR AVSÄRSKILDA SKÅL EN MILJÖ ALLA SVÄVADE RUNT I.
BEGRÄNSNINGEN LAG BARA I DEN MUSEALA MILJÖN

CLUB 2. SÅ SKÖNT ATT ALLA VAR DÄR PÅ SAMMA VILLKOR. STHLAS-
HIERARKI UPPLÖST. FÖRLÖSAND, SVIKT FÖRLÖSAND FEST.

CLUB 3. HÄR VAR DET LITE MER SKILT - DET VAR SÅ PUBLIKT ATT
INTIMITETEN FÖRSVANN MER SOM EN FÖRESTÄLLNING. LITE

Upplevde du platserna, klubbarna som trygga miljöer, på vilket sätt?

Och om inte, kan du beskriva varför.

JA. TRYGGA.

SE CLUB 3 OVAN ÄR SOM EV. KNYTER AN TILL
NÅGOT SOM NÄRMAR SIG OSÄKERHET

SVÄKARE SAMMANHANG
TROTS DET GRYMMA I
ALLA DELTAGARE

Var (om det fanns) fanns politiken, allvaret och förskjutningarna för dig under klubbarna?

I DET ATT ALLA VAR JÄMLIKA. DÄR PÅ LIKA VILLKOR.
VI KLÄDDE UT OSS OCH LÄMNADE VÅRA VARDAGLIGA
ROLLER - VI VAR TVUNGNA ATT BEKRÄFTA
VARANDRA

Med vilken känsla lämnade du de olika klubbarna?

Och vilken känsla har du nu, när du tänker tillbaka på klubbarna?

MED EN KÄNSLA AV FÖRUNDRA
INOM DET STORA - MAGISKA - SOM ÄGDE RUM

Finns det något från de tre klubbarna som du har praktiserat (en metod, känsla, idé, nätverk) i din
vardag eller arbetssituation efteråt?

JA. MEN DET ÄR ÄN SÅ LÄNGE VAGT,
PÅ KÄNSLOSTADIET.

DET FINNS HOPP

About Exclude Me In

Exclude Me In was an artwork in which we turned the streets of Gothenburg into a public queer club, through the collective act of a performance and carnival float on September 6, 2013. Critical fiction and projections of possible futures were used to make it, as well as conceptual and norm-challenging design. Here, history, our own time, and the future met in a re-enactment of real and imagined events, with bodies using the healing power of disguises to alter and repair history, saving the past by creating a new collective memory and adding our alternate history to the City Archives of Gothenburg.⁸ *Exclude Me In* was undertaken as a collaboration between myself, Annika Enqvist/The New Beauty Council, and the art and architecture group MYCKET. It was part of AnarKrew: An anti-archives exhibition, curated by Claire Tancons for the Gothenburg International Art Biennial (2013). *Exclude Me In*'s starting point was Göteborgskarnevalen, but we were surprised to find that there were no materials relating to the event in the city's archives, in spite of the fact that it was the biggest cultural event at the time it took place.⁹ The inner city carnival was able to connect people from the suburbs with the underground music scene.

Queer clubs are an important part of queer culture and history, functioning as meeting points in which queer bodies can act freely and explore and communicate with one another. Pride festival parades, which are also carnivalesque acts, have grown to become an important part of making queer bodies accepted and visible in the city. We discovered a pronounced desire for a mapping and writing of the queer history of the city when talking to the community, as it was felt that queer presence had been excluded from the city's official story in a manner similar to that of the absence of an archival memory of the carnival itself. Through interviews, testimonies, and articles we mapped the queer history of the city, and in the carnival re-enacted and staged it in a hybrid way.¹⁰

We used the power of fiction to let the relationship between activities and spaces span several time periods.¹¹ Working from a queer feminist perspective we created a lost queer float of the carnival, in which performative bodies, both historical and present, were central. Moving in public was important to us, as queer bodies have been excluded in public spaces and did not have an explicit presence in the carnival.

For *Exclude Me In* we framed an outdoor act, providing clothing and accessories that the participants could re-dress in. We assisted participants as necessary, but everyone was able to act freely and create an appearance on their own. Hence, the design and creation of dressed bodies became a collective act. The designs were based on clichés and stereotypes relating to how queer bodies dress, combined with

aesthetic elements from the 1980s and 1990s, when Göteborgskarnevalen took place. The costumes represented bike dykes, sport dykes, queer activists, the rave community, drag in varied expressions, the outrageous and sexual body, flesh, pussy art, and much more. There were references to queer-related fashion as, for example, a Jean Paul Gaultier-inspired corset. In addition, we used up-cycled materials and combined our craft knowledge with DIY aesthetics as a nod to the past and the mix of expertise and amateurs of that time. When creating the lost float of the carnival, we made banners to represent all of the queer clubs in Gothenburg since that time. By highlighting queer spaces and bodies, their stories became visible and included—instead of forgotten—in the history and collective memory.

We combined historical documents relating to Göteborgskarnevalen and fictional elements, such as a film from the archives to which we added (pasted in) new materials from our outdoor carnival—a film sequence in which contemporary and historical agents met. The film is named *History As We Know It*, and has also been added to the existing documents in the city archives.

Hence, *Exclude Me In* was an attempt to add a queer presence to the history of Göteborgskarnevalen. Our work was performed in order to fill this historical void, which we experience in the revealed history of the carnival through its archive, by creating a new story, and allowing this re-written fictional history to meet and affect the present.

About The Lesbian Shirt

The Lesbian Shirt is modified and inspired by a flannel shirt, a garment that is worn in varied contexts; (male) workers, musical circles, and various subcultures. I worked with the flannel shirt as a symbol of the lesbian dress code. My starting point was the idea that, in a lesbian context, the shirt is a significant identity marker and, as a result, distinguishes the wearer from their surroundings, strengthening queer identity while simultaneously challenging heteronormativity.

The Lesbian Shirt is inspired by this archetypal lesbian shirt, without necessarily having the same style. I knitted the fabric, sewed and formed it in several variations, in the manner of a try-out experiment. *The Lesbian Shirt* relates more clearly to a fashion context than much of my other research work, as I used a professional model and fashion references with regard to styles and appearances, and presented the garment in a fashion exhibition. *The Lesbian Shirt* has references to my earlier work, *Collection L*, which I made in 2007 and which was based on a group of lesbians. *Collection L* was presented in two different exhibitions by the fashion group Fashionplay (2007, 2009). At the first Fashionplay, (#3, 2007) I presented the project solely through text (connecting to my method with and presentation of *On and Off*), and at the second Fashionplay (#6, 2009) as a film with text and photographs. I then wrote about *Collection L* for my master's thesis in Fashion Studies at Stockholm University (2007) and presented a paper at the 'Fashion in Fiction Conference' in Sydney (2007), which was later published by Berg in *Fashion in Fiction* (McNeil, Karaminas & Cole, 2009) and continued with a published draft from the project in the Swedish art and culture magazine FUL (#2, 3, 4, 2009).

Collection L was photographed by Hans Gedda, and for inspiration we looked to the images of Claude Cahun. What I find interesting about Cahun is that she, in the early twentieth century, was an outspoken lesbian, worked with text, and made a series of self-portraits in which she played with performativity and dressed-up characters. The use of self-portraits in fashion in recent decades has been represented to a great extent in the use of 'selfies', relating to bloggers and Instagram users and so also to a deconstruction of the fashion system and the establishment of multiple voices, many of them belonging to young women. I wanted to add these perspectives to *The Lesbian Shirt*, together with the references to Claude Cahun, and so I showed Cahun's work to the (lesbian) model Adina Fohlin and asked her if she wanted to participate in the project as both a photographer and a model. Also invited was the actress Nanna Blondell, who I worked with on the film *Audition* (Sirén, 2015). I was present during the shoot of *The Lesbian Shirt*, but it was important for me to let the participants feel that they were a part of the creation of the images.

For *The Lesbian Shirt*, I used a draft of a text from a performance by Malin Holgersson, performed at *The Club Scene's* second act, *Culture Club*, followed by the transcript of a conversation between myself and Robin N Spegel (founder of *Lesbisk Makt*; 'Lesbian Power'), who introduced the idea of a 'lesbian breakfast', the first of which had a lesbian shirt theme. In addition, I used a draft from *Collection L* (2007) featuring a quote from Tilda, one of the participants, followed by an invented conversation (written by myself) between Claude Cahun and her partner, Marcel Moore. I end with quotes from Nanna Blondell and Adina Fohlin which describe their experiences of the white and male gazes. These texts are presented in the format of a script, referring to the writing of plays and performances.



QUEER

Queer

‘Queer’—in this thesis defined as a challenge to heteronormativity—refers to what is at odds with the normal, normative, and dominant (Halperin, 1995:62). Within queer theory, analyses of sexuality with regard to identity, norms, and social structures have been discussed, taking into account the interaction and effect that sexuality, gender, class, culture, and social structures have on each other. Queer history (see e.g. Aldrich, 2006; Lord & Meyer, 2013; Dyer, 2002; Halperin, 1990), historical and contemporary notions of queer styles (Geczy & Karaminas, 2013; Suthrell, 2004; Steele, 2013; Warkander, 2013), and the performative acts of queer (Butler, 1990; Carlson, [1996] 2004; Rosenberg, 2000, 2012) have been foundations for inspiration, reflections, and ideas, and the artistic projects of *Body Acts Queer* exemplify how these aspects can be used in a design practice.

Body Acts Queer — Clothing as a performative challenge to heteronormativity relates to queer in terms of both theory and practical work, for example through the application of the writings of Ahmed (2006, 2010), Browne and Nash (2010), Butler (1988, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2004, 2005, 2015b), and Probyn (1995, 1996). Such theories are used as suggestions for a platform for artistic practice, as in the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer*; these are related to the other, performativity, cross-dressing, and queer spaces. ‘Queer’ can also include ideas and concepts that are open to interpretation, undefined and full of nuances with regard to bodies, acts, and artistic expressions. Involving participants means that they are able, with their own bodies, to explore what queer is and could be.

‘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)

In this thesis ‘queer’ is used as an inclusive term, defined as something that we do, regardless of whether this action has a large scope or is an impulsive act carried out in the moment, and the content and meaning of which can change dependent on context. Through playing, making, and doing we can act, experiment, and transform who we are, and so also challenge norms. The practical and performative—the queer doing—has a fundamental role in *Body Acts Queer*, and is the core from which the

acts take shape, the bodily experiences are explored, and 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). The program encourages the idea that design can be felt and explored, and focuses not only on designing for bodies, but also on allowing bodies to be part of the process of creation. Queer and design are explored among bodies, and also created through them. The practical work relates to queer scholars who highlight queer experiences, embodiment, and sexuality in varied ways (see e.g. Halberstam, 1998, 2005; Probyn, 1996; Dahl & Volcano, 2009). The bodily experiences described in *Body Acts Queer* can be compared to and understood in relation to other queer experiences or theories; the bodily reactions when challenging heteronormativity in *If you were a girl I would love you even more* (cf. Butler, 1990, with regard to performativity), the identification of and playing with lesbian appearances in *The Club Scene* (cf. Halberstam, 1998, with regard to female masculinity and drag kings; Dahl & Volcano, 2009, with regard to femme and queer femininity) and the absence of racial identification in a fashion context as expressed in *The Lesbian Shirt* (cf. Hooks, 1990, with regard to race and representation). Applying a queer approach to both theory and practice, these texts can be used as voices or applied as the 'in-between spaces', the undefined.

In *Malin Hellkvist Sellén: verk 2003 – 2010 / texter av Hanna Wilde*, which focuses on 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. (Wilde 2012:46)¹²

The notion of undefined gender appearances—what fashion is and could be—with regard to the definition of queer in a fashion context relates to cross-dressing and the reshaping of looks and expectations based on gender. However, even if queer is considered to be a definition of something outside of the box, apart from the norm, it might indicate a notion of subcultures and, as such, the stereotypes within such subcultures—gay men wearing tight black leather or the styles of lesbian femme and butch, for example.

My interest in queer topics and the connection between clothing and identity is present in my works prior to this thesis. As already mentioned 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 on the topics of clothing,

sexuality, and gender, I made clothing which was an interpretation of each woman. The women were then photographed wearing the clothing that I had made, and so wore an outfit that 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. I discussed how lesbians are presented in popular culture and on-screen with the director, and we both felt that it was important for the movie to relate to lesbianism as something other than a visual stereotype in which women look a certain way because of their sexual orientation. For the workshop 'Make & Remake: Fashion & Gender' that I held in Cairo, Egypt, in November 2012, I applied a theme based on 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 addition of their own experiences, the participants incorporated ideas of feminism and gender into their design practices, creating 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 the works of this thesis is the play with clichés and stereotypes, with reference to the notion of 'camp' as a queer expression. This includes stereotypes and clichés relating to gender roles, as well as those of the appearance of LGBTQ people. 'Camp' is defined by Susan Sontag in 'Notes On "Camp"' (1964) as an aesthetic phenomenon—a creation that is not natural—involving elements of kitsch and proposing a "comic vision of the world". *Body Acts Queer* 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 so far as to claim that queer identity is inseparable from camp (Meyer, [1994] 2005:4). By highlighting, exploring, and remaking stereotypes, *Body Acts Queer* allows the potential function of clothing as cliché and embodiments of stereotypes to become visible. As a political term, 'camp' has been used since the 1980s 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 the form of design that *Body Acts Queer* suggests and creates a platform for, as for example in using re-dressing into drag or queer outfits in *The Club Scene* and *Exclude Me In*, together with ACT UP logotype fonts on tape rolls (*The Club Scene*) and clothing (*Exclude Me In*).

In this program of experimental fashion design, queer themes and settings are used as a platform for the creation of ideas, bodies, clothing, and performative acts.



QUEER

This includes the questions of both *what* (i.e. restaging, history, cross-dressing) and *how* (the creation of acts, the performative), as is discussed in the chapter 'Performative Design'. In *Body Acts Queer*, queer is visible in the format of the text, in cross-dressing acts, and in the restaging of important queer feminist settings. The broader definition of queer, which goes beyond normative pressures, makes it potentially political, not only in contexts of bodily and sexual practices but in all 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. (Jakobsen, 1998:528)



BODY

Body

As fashion scholar Wilson states: “To be clothed is to be human” (2015:14). The clothed body is a signifier for our society and the context we are in, an identity marker, a tool of communication that is open to interpretation and that positions us in varied contexts. Clothing is packaging that covers us, while at times simultaneously making us recognizable and contextualized. Our bodies are our selves, our identity; our size, skin, face, and clothing are the first things that others see when they meet us, which is why our bodies become significant to who we are. As the body is crucial for fashion, performance, sexuality, and gender—parameters that are fundamental to *Body Acts Queer*—the bodily experiences of clothing are the core from which the program departed as they are constantly related to fashion, even if this is not always made explicit. Fashion is commonly discussed in the contexts of desire, imagination, and vanity (all of which can affect bodily experiences) and, when describing bodies in fashion, a common focus has been on a certain type of body—which is to say that the idea of beauty and ideal bodies has been normative in the context of fashion. Throughout history, clothing has helped to form and restrict bodies, and this is commonly related to gender.

In the field of fashion, however, it is possible to find designers that actively work with the deconstruction of such norms, with the deformation of the body and the deconstruction of beauty. With designers such as Commes des Garçons and Margiela, this deconstruction has entered the commercial and established fashion context, and even becomes normative in terms of form. This perhaps relates to the fact that fashion, bodies, and norms are not fixed, and even the deconstruction of norms, as in the work of the designers noted, is undertaken in the context of fashion in a way that plays within the norms of the fashion system and its aesthetics. In the field of fine art there is a wider spectrum of bodily practices, performances, and feminist approaches, which often deals with problematizing the body, visualizing hierarchies, and presenting stories that are linked to personal experiences to a larger extent than fashion normally does.

Body Acts Queer is a contribution to revealing and making explicit the body's position in fashion, and simultaneously suggests a repositioning of bodies, outside of what is expected. It suggests that bodies are not only objects to be dressed but also ones which act, feel, experience, protest, and function as activists. The method, with the performative, ideological, and personal aspects that are incorporated into this thesis, can be placed in a feminist art and design context, which has varied expressions but has the aim, in summary, of challenging the male norm. Such challenges to patriarchal structures—where the artist's body becomes both the subject and object—are, in

the context of feminist art, frequently made using the artist's own body, and involve the exploration of linguistic and visual representations of sexuality, gender, and race (Warr, [2000] 2012:13-15). Within feminist art there is a long tradition of expressing oneself through one's own body, visualizing one's bodily experiences.¹³ There is also a tradition of theory, criticism, and analysis relating to artworks or performances by discussing their content, history, and cultural and social references. These discussions are also becoming increasingly present in the field of fashion, as fashion studies grows into an academic subject or a research topic, paralleling the publishing of texts in a popular-culture context that exists outside of academia and which utilizes a more comprehensive, socially-minded perspective on the body and clothing.

The placement of the dressed body in a social context, as part of the social body, can in a feminist art and design context become an aspect of activism and the activist body, and so how we act and in which contexts becomes a political act. Multiple examples of this exist in the field of performance art, for example in the early works of Yayoi Kusama, Yoko Ono, and Marina Abramovich; artists whose work I have referred to in my practice, and who were studied in various ways during the development of *Body Acts Queer*. The activist body in the work of Malin Arnell is placed in a contemporary context relating to both artistic research and queer (for more research examples see the 'Design' chapter). The work of activists such as Femen, Slutwalk, and Pussy Riot are other examples in which the body acts in a performative and political manner, where style and appearance become important signifiers, along with stylistic references to the feminist movement and art that was developed during the 1960s and 1970s. Additionally, Tynan refers to Foucault's idea that the body stages acts of resistance in a constant, ongoing, and everyday act:

For protesters this shape shifting is about disguise and transformation, offering them an arsenal of techniques to rebel against authority. These aesthetic body practices create new forms of thought and action. From the simple act of wearing a slogan t-shirt to the subtle insolence against class hierarchies expressed by subcultural styles, the design of our bodies and how we occupy social space become sites in the struggle for free expression. (Tynan, 2015:185-186)

Clothing can be used as an attribute with which to transform the body, and through that create political change in which it is not limited to a fashion context but instead is used to embody other purposes and contexts; thus, it has the potential to position the transformation of the body as a political act and, as a result, be an initial step towards the goal of changing the world. This act of change, this perception of fashion—where

bodily practices are seen as political acts and where the design and bodily experiences that the participants describe are linked to ideological functions—relates to how design can be developed, produced, and perceived in *Body Acts Queer*. The participants of the projects of this thesis stated that they were changed by them (e.g. *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, *The Club Scene*), that they shaped them into the people they now are. The bodily transformations, linked to ideologies, made the act of change go from being a personal and individual act of cross-dressing (*Utopian Bodies*, *The Safety Top*) to a much wider statement relating to sexual identity (*Exclude Me In*, *The Club Scene*, *The Lesbian Shirt*). The body in *Body Acts Queer* is thus an activist one, and appearances are an ideological statement.

In fashion there are, and have been, attempts to create works that can be perceived as constituting activist bodily practice: The Swedish brand Faggot Apparel, which was launched in 2013 following Russia's legislation against "homosexual propaganda", produces printed t-shirts with feminist, queer and equal right themes. A percentage of their profits are donated to the Civil Rights Defenders organization, which works to protect the civil rights of LGBTQ people in Russia. Many examples of the printed t-shirt as a political statement exist and, in a contemporary feminist context, there are, for example, the Etsy shop Feminitees, whose t-shirts are embroidered with statements such as "Pizza Over Patriarchy", and the art and design collective Otherwild, whose garments feature phrases such as "The Future Is Female" and "How dare you assume I'm straight".

Other examples of activism, activist bodies or activism aesthetics: Moschino's ball gown made of garbage bags, for example, embodying the idea that "fashion is trash", and other—often humorous—anti-fashion statements, such as Jean Paul Gaultier's usage of cross-dressing in his menswear collections in the 1980s and 1990s, and the use of models found randomly on the street, allowing tattoos and pierced bodies to enter the catwalk. One can observe attempted activism and bodily practice in Rick Owen's fashion show for the Spring/Summer 2014 collection, in which he employed groups of step dancers representing a broader spectrum of sizes, looks, and colors than that traditionally seen on catwalks, to perform in his clothing, radiating power through their alternative body language. Vetements' deconstruction of garments relates to the idea of 'anti-beauty', or another perception of what womenswear is (or should be). Alexander McQueen's 'Voss' collection (Spring/Summer 2001) featured Michelle Olley lying naked on a couch, in contrast to the many size zero models that commonly feature in fashion. In Hussein Chalayan's 'Afterwords' (Autumn/Winter 2000), the body takes on architectural functions due to the fact that fashion becomes furniture—and so the body not only acts in the clothing but *upon* it—so that the body acts in the

spaces created, constituting a form of living flexibility in which users can carry their furniture and home with them. Considering Chalayan's work in a social and political context brings up the notion of refugees and their "journey of alienation and loss" (Evans, 2005:12). Refugees, immigration, and identity are also themes of the Swedish brand This is Sweden who, for the exhibition *Utopian Bodies — Fashion Looks Forward*, made 'A ship comes loaded', a work that includes a blue shirt, inspired by the blue tarpaulin found on ships and which relates to protection (of private property as well as their usage as temporary shelters in refugee camps), covering a box (referring to how we categorize humans based on the color of their passports and so reduce them to the status of a package that can be easily rejected and sent away), along with a film featuring a voiceover, which together symbolized today's immigration politics. Through my engagement with the international Gender Design Network (iGDN) I have worked with Lucia Cuba, whose work involves a critical approach to fashion design and the exploration of garments as performative and political devices. 'Artículo 6: Narratives of gender, strength and politics' (2012-2015), for example, discusses the issue of forced sterilizations in Peru between 1996 and 2000, with Cuba using the testimonies of those affected by the policy to explore different narratives related to this case.

The attempts of fashion designers to utilize activist bodily practices have been both acclaimed and criticized, with those in the latter camp stating that fashion cannot work as a political force; that, even though a design's political statements can strengthen the role of the designer within the fashion industry, when such statements appear in a commercial context there is a risk of them being absorbed by commercial rather than ideological values. Such was the case for the Palestinian scarf that, when produced and sold for the mass market, went from being an ideological marker to primarily a matter of aesthetics and style. The fashion trend thus hollowed out the ideology that the garment initially represented.

Trend forecaster Li Edelkoort has written on the subject of feminism as a trend, claiming that it extends to the feminization of men—men looking after their own children, for example. In her trend report lectures referred to in *Fashion United*, Edelkoort claims that "[t]his shift has lead [sic] to men of today moving away from their fixed 'man' codes, no war and ready for the new world [...] I am very excited for the merging of gender" (Hendriksz, 2015). Edelkoort's claims were made just weeks after the Swedish music company Spotify declared its policy of paying six months' parental leave to all of its employees, regardless of gender and all over the world (Spotify, 2015). Spotify thus positioned themselves at the forefront of international companies that market themselves as working towards equality by stating that they

believe that a healthy work and family balance would benefit their employees and so also Spotify as a company (ibid.). Independent of this agenda, however, is the fact that the aim of achieving gender equality is potentially not simply an issue that relates to benefits to employees, but could also be used as a commercial marketing tool and means of covering up or deflecting criticism away from other inequality issues (for example that of payments to musicians, salary inequality, etc.).

As the example of Spotify—a company that works in the context of popular culture—shows, when discussing feminism in a fashion context it is important to not only raise issues about how bodies are exposed and perceived through images and fashion, but to also discuss conditions, parental leave, health benefits, and the right to functional daycare and schools. The fashion industry includes far more bodies than the ones we see, and feminism or equality can be applied in many and varied ways. Our bodies are never separate from the context in which we find ourselves, but what we say and how we act with our bodies could be interpreted differently, and so as a feminist there must always be an awareness of the variations within feminism. My activism might not be yours.

The use of transgender models does not need to be an act of activism or be part of a positioning of oneself in the context of queer and feminism—being picked from the same criteria as all other models are judged by—but they can be used as a statement to highlight transgender bodies, position the sender in such a context, express a sense of sexual or gender liberation, and, sometimes, obtain a great commercial value. For example, the H&M-owned & Other Stories brand used transgender models in its campaign in August 2015, which was accompanied by a behind-the-scenes video entitled *The Gaze & Other Stories*. This occurred just a month after the then 65-year-old Caitlyn Jenner, formerly Bruce Jenner, was shown on the cover of the July issue of *Vanity Fair*, having had a portrait taken by Annie Leibovitz, and so at a time when transgender models could be seen as being more established and well-known—several years after the Givenchy's Fall 2010 campaign, in which the label received attention for their use of the transsexual model Lea T. When & Other Stories created the campaign, which featured transsexuals, and a same-sex Valentine's Day campaign, they were open to criticism related to the commercializing and/or cultural appropriation of the queer community; simultaneously, however, they may also, through the placement of advertising material in public spaces, have created a greater identification and acceptance of transsexuals and lesbians.

As our experiences of fashion are commonly affected by commercialized bodies, combining fashion with a political aim can be problematic, as it risks exotifying rather than being activist. This relates to the issue of cultural appropriation and the

application of power by privileged groups. In relation to this—the activist body, the political body, and the exotification of bodies—is the question of representation, with regard to both queer bodies and racism. Therefore, discussions of bodies in this thesis are not limited to the issues of gender and sex, but involve other parameters.

As opposed to criticism of commercial interests, and contrary to academia as it is traditionally perceived, mainstream and popular culture can go further in its ability to reach a large number of people. Through the channels of mainstream performances, a greater change is potentially created. Beyoncé’s visual album *Lemonade* (2016) allows us to follow her journey – arguably constituting an awakening process – where her personal story becomes political. By quoting Malcolm X’s assertion that “[t]he most disrespected person in America is the black woman” (1962), centering ‘blackness’ through the words of the Somali-British author Warsan Shire, inviting black women into the work (e.g. the tennis player Serena Williams, the actress Quvenzhane Wallis, and the mothers of black men murdered by police brutality), making visual references to the work of black female directors such as Kasi Lemmons (*Eve’s Bayou*, 1997) and Julie Dash (*Daughters of the Dust*, 1991), and using black spiritualism and post-Katrina imagery, Beyoncé position herself as an artist of popular culture whose work is perceived as “a Revolutionary Work of Black Feminism” (Bale, 2016). Her work reaches the masses, and the emotions that music or other popular culture phenomena or artworks express can create strong bodily experiences and so greater change. Somewhere, in the effects that art and artistic expressions create, is the core of why I make, do, and perform; the belief that artistic expressions (in all their varied forms) can extend the potential of research, as well as of artistic practice itself, and its content and effect on both people and society as a whole.

Based on the assertion that artistic practice or design can create change and the experiences of Beyoncé and her ideas of feminism, black power, and anti-racism, the discussions and reactions that such a commercial (and strongly political to a great many) album elicits, together with the idea that the field of fashion is felt to be pioneering and forward-focused, one would perhaps expect a complete absence of discrimination and racist symbols in fashion. However, this is not the case, as can be seen with the fact that, even in a contemporary context, it is possible to find examples of models wearing blackface. Such instances exist together with arguments that they are ‘edgy’ shoots, that they stick out and therefore generate great publicity or, worst of all, that *actual* black models or performers are so hard to come by that brands, art directors or photographers do not have a choice (Rees, 2013).¹⁴ Such arguments say a great deal about which bodies we see, which count, and who we choose as representations of media and popular culture (for more on black representation in the media, see e.g.

Hooks, 1992; Collins, 2004). Perhaps fashion is just a reflection and representation of the (racist and patriarchal) society we live in. This representation—where white models are painted black—is happening in the present, and to a shockingly large extent.¹⁵ Other examples move past the body and what we wear and relate to ideas such as racism and colonialism, as when *Vogue Italia* featured “slave earrings” on their website (May 8, 2011) and Dolce & Gabbana used white models wearing black figurine earrings, referred to as “mammy earrings” or “blackface earrings”, for their Spring/Summer 2013 collection (see e.g. Sauers, 2012; Wilson, 2012), which the brand described as referencing “Sicily’s traditionally Moorish-inspired artefacts” (Alexander, 2012). Dolce & Gabbana also offered “slave sandals” on their website in the spring of 2016 (Stansfield, 2016), and removed “slave” from the product description following criticism. *Vogue Italia* replaced “slave” with “ethnic” and, in so doing, simply swapped one offensive term for another, indicating that they consider the two words to be equal in meaning; this reproduction of ethnic stereotypes can, as fashion studies scholar Lisa Ehlin (2012) suggests, be seen as a fashionable interpretation of ‘funny’ Halloween costumes which perpetuate stereotypes and racism. The representation of black people in the media (or in design) is often conducted by the white patriarchy and institutions and these, as bell hooks states, “maintain the oppression, exploitation, and overall domination of all black people” (1992:2). Thus, these expressions relate not only to style but to the perception of bodies and associated power structures, both historical and contemporary. With these examples in mind—how white bodies are changed into blackface ones and the absence of variation in fashion features—it is also interesting to study the variations that exist. In the documentary film *The Color of Beauty* (Philip, 2010), a modelling agent claims that successful African-American models look like white ones, just of a different skin tone. The variation in terms of bodies is thus a very limited type of variation.

The girls that are really just being featured in everything, they really have unique features for African-Americans. You know, the very skinny nose, the very elegant faces. They really look like white girls that were painted black. It, that’s beauty, you know, to the industry’s perspective, to agents’ perspective, when they see that, you know, when they see a girl that, that can look different, you know, by a skin pigment, and, and still have great features like that, it’s, it is sellable. You know, when you, when you come in with, you know, big eyes, big nose, big this, whatever, big lips, things that are common traits in African Americans, it doesn’t work. But for those lucky few girls that, like Renée, they have



BODY

white girl features, and it's kind of messed up, but that's just the way the, the industry is. (Philip, 2010)

The fashion industry is huge and, looking carefully, it is of course possible to find examples that do not confirm the statements made in *The Color of Beauty*. Alek Wek is commonly considered to be a model who is featured because she does not conform to a Caucasian aesthetic. However, her appearance has often been seen as new, different and exotic—descriptions that once again categorize her as *other*. There is a distinct lack of black models in the fashion industry (although they do, of course, exist, with successful examples including Naomi Campbell, Tyra Banks, Iman, Chanel Iman, Liya Kebede), and those that are to be found are set to a standard (Wissinger, 2011) in which racial and gender ideas highly affect the use of models (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2012), and where racialized bodies are portrayed as bestial, animalistic, or submissive (Plous & Neptune, 1997; Millard & Grant, 2006). The male gaze is here joined by the white one:

The white gaze, as a ritual performance [...] is inextricably bound up with objectifying, exoticizing, and sexualizing the Black body, inscribing it with myths and codes that function to ontologize it, thus returning it as that which it is not. (Yancy, 2008:204)

Categorizing bodies into fixed characters and embodying them with significant abilities creates norms, and so also limitations. Hence, as bodies constitute such a broad variety of discourses, these limitations in terms of categorization affect a great deal of people, on all levels. With the approach taken in this thesis, bodies are not fixed, static characters, and the program offers the ability to explore fashion design in relation to a variety of bodies, each of which can benefit the design process and context as well as the society that acts within such discourses. When working experimentally with fashion design there is the potential to change fashion discourse as a whole and, when working with the aim of change for *Body Acts Queer*, reflecting on the social body as well as on the bodies of the discourse had an effect on the outcome. This is also the reason why the artistic projects that constitute *Body Acts Queer* involved a variety of bodies in a variety of contexts—workwear, art installations, fashion exhibitions, carnivals, stages, nightclubs, and everyday life—and so the discourse can be extended in terms of scope, while also being constantly affected by other discourses. This also includes those relating to bodies, and bodies' racial experiences and identifications. As Yancy (2008) writes in *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race*:

[I]t is not only the Black body that defies the fixed fantasies and distorted images projected upon it through the white gaze, and, hence, through the episteme of whiteness, but the white body is also fundamentally symbolic, requiring demystification and exposure of its status as the norm, the paragon of beauty, order, innocence, purity, restraint and nobility. In other words, given the assumptions about the body stated above, both the Black body and the white body lend themselves to processes of interpretive fracture, moments of disarticulation. (Yancy, 2008:xxii)

Fashion photography commonly utilizes stereotyped gender roles and sexuality, for example in how female bodies are frequently presented with open mouths and sexually provocative postures, while male bodies more often shown in relation to strength and power. Subtle examples of this are to be found in almost every fashion magazine, along with more clear ones depicting male violence against women.¹⁶ These images are made to promote a brand, to attract attention and create desire, but they can also be read as signaling that these power relations, which include violence against women, are sexy. Simultaneously, the images confirm gender roles, with women as passive and sexualized objects and men as the active, dominant subjects. One might argue that these are just images, but the question is then; why do we use these images to communicate brands, clothing, and lifestyles? How do we perceive those images? How is the experience of perceiving such images and scenarios archived in our own bodies? How does it affect us? Does it have any effect on how we act and look upon each other? Can we even tell?¹⁷ As *Body Acts Queer* works with exploring the reflections and experiences of bodies and critical and feminist perspectives on fashion, it contributes to a change in what fashion is or can be. From such a perspective, *Body Acts Queer* suggests that, when the design relates to the wearer, perceptions and so on should relate to social and political change.

As the body is a space of projection in which dreams and pleasure are embodied, *Body Acts Queer* focuses primarily on queer pleasure (see e.g. Brown [2009], 2015, for queer readings of Baron Adolph de Meyer's photographs in *Vogue* 1913-1922; Geczy & Karaminas, 2013, for queer style and how brands such as Calvin Klein and Jean Paul Gaultier used queer appearances in their ads.). Just as desire and the sexual markers between bodies are present in both fashion and art, and the line between the two fields is not always distinct, so too is this dichotomy present in *Body Acts Queer*. The artistic body, the fashion body, the performative body, the sculptural body, the social body, and the private body are all applicable to a program like *Body Acts Queer*—to one

which works towards an extension of what fashion is and can be. This also has relevance to the idea of ‘too much’ in regard to a body; when beauty becomes grotesque and, conversely, who it is that decides this. The grotesque body is discussed by the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin ([1941,1965] 1993), who considers the carnivalesque to be a political action and the carnival itself to contain elements of the grotesque body, and this relates to my idea that it can challenge hierarchical power structures. In the carnival we see expressions of the vulgar, of dreams and fantasies. How a grotesque body is expressed—what leads to a body being categorized as ‘grotesque’ or ‘not attractive’—is defined through norms, which in turn vary depending on context. The definition of grotesque is also related to sex.

Ideas relating to how the body should appear are governed by our beliefs about how one should be. Hairy bodies, menstruating bodies, sweaty bodies, sexualized bodies, bulging bodies, restrained bodies, deconstructed bodies, edited bodies, idealized bodies, and so on: Art and design focus on the body—on bodies that are being projected, staged, and performed. In *Body Acts Queer* a large variety of bodies is shown, experiences told. The artistic examples involve shirts with bodily hair used as printed decorations (*Utopian Bodies*) and clothing made to fit the body regardless of size (*The Club Scene*), in contrast to the idea that bodies should look a certain way—something that fashion commonly communicates. When talking about bodies in a more general sense, in the context of fashion and art, *Body Acts Queer* asks more concrete, simple questions: Who are the people? Who are we in our bodies? How does it feel to be us?

Bodily experience is related to fashion’s effects on our bodies, body image, and identity. Fashion is a performative medium, a poetic expression in which the body becomes fictionalized (Hollander, 1994:32). Unlike other media, such as literature, film, and theater, the fiction created by fashion is much closer to our selves, and so the difference is usually much easier to accept in movies or at the theater than it is in relation to our own bodies (ibid). Fashion and the fiction we ourselves perform do not have the same distancing effects as those of film and theater: we, ourselves, are accountable for our bodies.

To avoid distancing oneself and instead experience with one’s own body creates a different understanding and experience. This bodily experience creates memories, archived in our bodies, and so we remember through experiences.

With bodily experience, individual and collective memories, there are also issues to deal with. Whose body do we see? Whose body is acting? Whose gaze is upon us? Who has the power? Why are some bodies always excluded?



LANGUAGE

Language

Working with words, text, performance, bodies, and appearances can be summarized, quite simply, as working with *language*; in *Body Acts Queer*, this is undertaken in an interdisciplinary fashion context. The design practice is not limited to the object but involves multiple expressions, as the appearances of dress—how we communicate through our dressed bodies—are not static. When the idea of ‘written clothing’ is used—text as clothing and clothing as text—the vocabulary of dressed bodies is of importance, although such a vocabulary is interpretable, and affected by mood and emotions (Dodd, Clarke, Baron, & Houston, 2000). As Arvanitidou and Gasouka (2011) assert; if dress is considered to be a material culture artefact with a visual and communicative element (cf. Crane & Bovone, 2006)—in this program as a text and a performative act—it also needs to be understood carefully, as it contains a complexity and so can be interpreted in multiple ways and possibly misread. I join Fellman ([1980] 2003) and Butler (2004) in following Lacan’s idea that body and language are intertwined; that the body—the text—involves both individual and social elements, where experiences—archived in the body—become part of a collective history when written about or spoken (see e.g. 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)

The idea of acting in relation to body and speeches is crucial to *Body Acts Queer*’s application of performative design, as the body is crucial for the experiences, speeches, and conversations described in the artistic examples. The meaning of the clothing is extended, or perhaps even invented through the body. However, the program also utilizes vague and abstract language, as bodies are interpretable, changeable, and contextualized.

Body Acts Queer involves linguistic variation, using vocabularies and text formats in varied ways; diary, poems, interviews, scripts, etc. The text functions as a collection of experiences, but can also be a platform from which expression can develop; it is a raw material that can be interpreted and transformed. As texts and communication were constantly present in the design work of this thesis, such transformation and interpretation can be continuously developed. Using dialogue, in the form of

interactions between others, or a monologue to be performed in front of an audience, language relates to doing something—the talking becomes the making—and the making is simultaneously ingrained within the words performed. Thus, in a program such as *Body Acts Queer* and some of its artistic examples, it can even be claimed that the words are the design itself. The words make the garments, embody them, even if the garments are imaginary. This function, sign, or symbol of the words relates to Barthes' *The Fashion System* (2005) and *The Language of Fashion* ([2004] 2006), in which he claims that fashion is a form of linguistic expression. *Body Acts Queer* suggests that fashion can be a text as well as clothing—that text can be clothing, and vice versa. Additionally, the artistic examples in this thesis also involve fashion in the form of photography (c.f. Joblings, 1999; Eriksson & Göthlund, [2004] 2012) and performance (c.f. Evans 2007, 2013).

The application of language—written, spoken, and performed—in *Body Acts Queer* is both related to semiotic ideas, where the text is the design object, and used as a social and political practice, where words act and create situations. This stems from the presence of the designer and the participants' vocabulary of perceptions; different testimonies describe acts and situations and, simultaneously, the words are used to create other situations. Using words as a performative act, the language is here partially explicit—what is spoken and written—and partially implicit—the notions of design and form as text; in other words, the design 'talks'.

This thesis opens up for elaborations with texts in varied forms. *On and Off* stages a scenario in which clothing is embodied. The story is not necessarily logical or linear. The text is of a private and emotional nature, and uses a diary format that somewhat evokes the form of poetry. The text also embodies the clothing and makes present the feeling of the garments. The embodiment of clothing through different voices discussing bodily experiences is also central to *The Safety Top* and *The Club Scene*; in both, the participants' voices, based on interviews, function as the introduction to the project. For *The Club Scene*, their words create an image of what happened and how it was. The text becomes a series of stories, in which the bodily transformations and the contexts in which they were performed are expressed. In *The Safety Top*, the interviews were an important resource for the design. The bodily experience was present before the design work began.

In *Exclude Me In*, the text was performed as a speech, and the participants were encouraged to join in. As the speech was inspired by the 'Queer Nation Manifesto' and the carnival, both historical and present, had a political agenda, the performative act became a queer and ideological statement. *The Lesbian Shirt* has the format of a script, with a mixture of fiction and reality (interview materials). The text of *If you were a girl*

I would love you even more is a combination of dialogue and descriptions, with the body of the participant ingrained in the dialogue—the text—as well as the body of the other (myself).

With regard to performativity in *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 Phelan claims that "bodies inhabit signifying systems and [...] signifying systems are always organized as bodies" (Phelan, 1993:15-16). In her texts, this notion is used to study 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 perceived feminization as something frightening or undesirable. Performing bodies read as feminine are, as Phelan also states, usually degraded (1993:16).

On and Off is an attempt to try to verbalize bodily experience. The use of self-reflection and private discourse has a tradition within feminist art (see e.g. Lindberg, 1995; Nyström et al, 2005; Phelan & Reckitt, [2001] 2012; Rosenberg, 2012). The personal is political—a commonly used motto. It departs from an aim to highlight women's experiences, for these are not only individual, but collective. It also relates to the idea that one must understand in what way one is alienated—and to understand this, one must first understand oneself. Simultaneously, the ability to take space, position oneself, and make oneself heard is a privilege (Ahmed, Kilby, Lury, McNeil, & Skeggs, 2000:17). I had the opportunity to take such space in *On and Off*, positioning myself as the speaking subject who performed a text grounded in non-fictional experiences.

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. (Forte, 1988: 220)

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 and Off*, the designer entered the role of the subject, as I directed and staged the room and the text. I took space, was visible, and

embodied the text through the reading. As a designer it is common to not be seen, with the object or artifact occupying the space.

The text of *On and Off* was performed as a monologue, with me as the performer, meaning that my role as a designer became similar to that of a performance artist. Within performance art there is a tradition of the artist performing their own texts (Rosenberg, 2012). In fashion, however, 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 extended the designer's role, but embodied the work. In this sense, I potentially created an awareness and acceptance among bodies, where the performer of the design no longer belonged to the criteria of size but to other criteria—in this case that of the sender, the maker, and the performer of a speech act.

Applying queer and gender to design practice as performative design, *Body Acts Queer* involves fashion in relation to gender studies' contribution to the academic writing format (see e.g. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994:288; Brännström Öhman & 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). I also experimented with this in the performance and text of 'Writing Queer Gender and Design' (Gunn, 2014b), which combines a feminist approach to writing with the artistic examples featured in *Body Acts Queer*; the paper was written while the ideas of *Body Acts Queer* were being developed. Believing that *Body Acts Queer* could contain a variety of writing styles—different perspectives on texts—was the basis when developing the artistic examples. 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 in some academic texts (Leavy, 2009:259), I nonetheless found the process challenging.

When developing a design in which text is used in place of images in order to describe a scenario or situation, as in *On and Off*, the designer works in the manner of a writer. This method of working with fashion expresses how *Body Acts Queer* opens up for how design practices can incorporate literary concepts, with, for example, the descriptions of clothing working to turn characters into images. The descriptions of styles, scenarios, and narrations turn clothing into materiality. At the same time, however, we read and perceive differently, depending on textual materiality and context (Allen, Griffin, & O'Connell, 2011).

Since the project texts in *On and Off* are also a part of the design, they do not describe what I did, but actually *were* the doing. They, through description and the reader's imagination, create clothing, appearances, and outfits. The texts become

design through the embodiment of the other, the embodiment of an act, and the passage of time. The texts form, and are being formed. The design choices here lie in the selection of words, the rhythm, and the meanings, relating to what should be told and what should be hidden or exposed. They are the result 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 that include a conscious decision relating to whose history and story is being told. The queer could also meet with non-linear narration or with the elaboration of design writing, as *Body Acts Queer* can involve a design practice that works at the intersection between literary and academic writing.

Combining the formation of theory with more literary writings, I find the works of Hélène Cixous ([1969] 2008, [1970] 2010) inspiring, as she has combined a career as a literary writer with a profession as a gender studies theorist. Her placing of herself as a writer in different contexts has similarities to the designer's role and its taking different forms. The Swedish author Hanna Hallgren (2008, 2009, 2012, 2014) has taken a similar approach, in that she also works in the two fields, and Mara Lee (2007, 2011, 2014) also combines literary writing with artistic research.

In the Swedish novel *Reflexer* (Kerfstedt, [1901] 2010), published 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 *If you were a girl I would love you even more* 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. I use the text, a combination of his and my words, to describe this change.

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 clothing relates to the lesbian body, where it appears with specific style elements. The self described by Virginia Woolf in her novel *Orlando* (1928) not only transforms through gender and time, but also through the writing style and processes—a metaphor in which writing is a dress of thought (Koppen, 2009:59). Thus, non-binary gender, queer or gender transformations, as in Woolf's *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*, is related to aesthetic theory (ibid.:61). In Alan Hollinghurst's *Swimming Pool Library* ([1988] 1989), a novel focusing on homoerotic fantasy, male nipples are sexualized and erotically described. In *Body Acts Queer* the appearances of queer—identity markers, stereotypes, and clichés—are played with,

and the artistic examples present shirts as markers for lesbianism and the exposing of male nipples. In applying linguistic ideas of clothing (Barthes, [2004] 2006), while simultaneously discussing language in relation to queer, this thesis explores how 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 language.

Body Acts Queer connects with the idea that the way we understand things is highly connected to language (c.f. Gergen & Gergen, 1991). Through the communicative acts of language, the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer* visualize different perspectives on and experiences of events. However, information sources are not limited to language, for it is also possible to access real thoughts, settings, and actions (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 1994:320-321). The ways in which works are interpreted and discussed depart from a hermeneutical perspective, in which interpretation is regarded not as consisting of ‘facts’ or ‘data’, but of ‘text’, as in spoken and written language, as well as images and performative acts (ibid.: 171).

When creating the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer*, there has been a balance between literary and critical interpretation—the in-between spaces and the words that make us understand. This relates to a queer application of language, knowledge, and research, in which it might be entirely clear to you what I mean but, when you ask a question, you do not receive a clear answer, and so meaning becomes vague and odd. Gertrude Stein acts as an inspiration for such an approach—one in which words are allowed to be unclear—which can be considered to be a queer standpoint for writings and knowledge. In relation to this, the text, narrative, and storytelling format of this thesis cannot be separated from the artistic process and its result. Through body, clothing, text, and other such aspects, gender, sexuality, and power are visualized and performed. How that is made—what can be embodied in the clothing, body, and text—is interpretable.

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)



DESIGN

Design

Since design entails the creation of not only artifacts (clothing) but also ideas, it is a notion that is related to ideology and social change; it is connected to the values, emotions, and sense of identity that people apply to their clothes. Clothing embodies us and confirms us, and at the same time we allow it to produce us, our body, and our self; this is why the artistic examples in *Body Acts Queer* also describe the participants' relations to clothing, and were affected by the participants themselves. The creation of designs, the transformations, the performative acts; all were part of an act of creation that forms and establishes society, its structures, and the norms connected to it. As discussed in the 'About' chapter, for the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer* I collaborated with Mariana Alves, Katarina Bonnevier, and Thérèse Kristiansson of the art and architecture group MYCKET, Annika Enqvist of the architecture group New Beauty Council, and Karin Ehrnberger, Emma Börjesson, Anna Isaksson, and Camilla Andersson of the research project Origo. Additionally, during the development of *Body Acts Queer* I have worked with the fashion organization Fashionplay, the graphic designers Martin Falck (Studio MS) and Josefin Carlén and Elin Nilsson (Joel-works), all of whom I consider to work from perspectives in which design has an effect on ideological and societal norms. In *Body Acts Queer*, 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 written structure.

In 2010, during the development of *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, I noticed that several bloggers had linked to Steven Meisel's photographic story 'A Sexual Revolution', created for *W Magazine* (October 2004), which featured young men in dresses, high heels, and make-up. Around the same time, Acne released a small collection in cooperation with the transversal style publication *Candy Magazine*, with Acne's creative director, Jonny Johansson, claiming that "[a]ll I wanna do is to create womens clothes for men" (Braunerhielm, 2010).¹⁸ For their Fall 2010 campaign, Givenchy used the transsexual model Lea T; zie had earlier worked as a fitting model for the brand and, by using hir as a campaign model, creative director Riccardo Tisci strengthened the sense of nonbinary in his collections. For Louis Vuitton's Spring 2011 collection, the models were styled in the manner of Candy Darling, Andy Warhol's muse, and in the fall of 2010 Marc Jacobs, dressed as a woman and accompanied by the text "Mrs. Jacobs", appeared 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*, and in December 2010 Jon Uriarte produced a portrait photo series featuring his male friends, who were dressed in their girlfriends'

clothes, which was shown at a gallery in Bilbao. 2013, the same year as ‘Tenderness’, part of the *Tendenser* exhibition series, in which *If you were a girl I would love you even more* was shown for the first time Rad Hourani had his first show, which came to be seen as the first unisex haute couture show in history. In 2015 the artist Lyndal Walker showed *The Artist’s Model* at the gallery hangmenProjects in Stockholm. As part of the exhibition she photographed young men in their underwear in what would appear to be their own homes, with herself visible in the mirror that featured in each shot. She claimed that the models “represent the aspirations of the target audience; the photographer’s sexual fantasies and the ethical dilemmas or the crisis of meaning that the artist wants to investigate” (Walker, 2015:7).

Body Acts Queer proposes a performative, queer feminist approach to activism that has similarities to the ongoing research work of MYCKET: Consider, for example, the parallels between *Exclude Me In* and *The Club Scene* and Malin Arnell’s forthcoming PhD thesis on performance art, *Avhandling / Av_handling (Dissertation / Through_action)*. In contrast to the work of Arnell, this thesis has a close relation to theory, considering it to be a visible and important resource in the process and presentation. At the same time as *Body Acts Queer* was being developed, the research project *Queer Moving Images*, conducted at Valand Academy by artist, curator, and producer Anna Linder and film scholar and filmmaker Ingrid Ryberg, investigated queer and feminist moving images and how they can avoid being excluded from archives and the historical record, and instead reach a new audience. The project has been influenced by queer and feminist film culture, focuses on temporality and trust in relation to audiences and participants, relating to how works such as *The Club Scene* and *Exclude Me In* were developed, where queer history and community are presented, exhibited, and explored in the contexts of both the queer community and art more broadly. Annica Karlsson Rixon’s forthcoming doctoral thesis, *Queer Community through Photographic Acts* (2016), which focuses on lesbians living in Russia, is an example of artistic research (photography) which works with a queer and feminist theme. There are several examples of feminist and activist approaches to art, as have been used in *Body Acts Queer*, including the research of Olivia Plender (artist and PhD Candidate, Royal Art Institute, Stockholm) and Petra Bauer (artist and PhD Candidate, Konstfack, Stockholm), both of whom use archive materials. Frans Jacobi’s PhD thesis *Aesthetic of Resistance* (2012) uses artistic research to examine the performative politics of contemporary activism and is presented through text, performance, and images, relating to *Body Acts Queer*’s approach of considering the performative to be a political act. Working with space and social and political issues related to cities and living environments, the research of Apolonija Sustersic also has similarities to the examples in *Body Acts Queer*, particularly with

regard to her approach of inviting the public to participate in her projects, creating platforms for change, activism, and engagement. The allowing of participants to interact with and become part of artistic outcomes constitutes a performance, and placing this in the context of fashion design research, as *Body Acts Queer* does, has similarities to the design research of Ulrik Martin Larsen (2014) and Ricarda Bigolin (2012), although these research efforts do not include queer and ideological perspectives.

Fashion design research in relation to performance and art contexts is present in Kajsa G Eriksson’s doctoral thesis *Concrete Fashion: Dress, Art, and Engagement in Public Space* (2009), although the participants’ voices and bodily experiences are not present, in the same way as they are in *Body Acts Queer*. The gender elaborations of this thesis have similarities to Kirsi Nevanti’s ongoing PhD project *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. As *Body Acts Queer* opens up for an application of text, the doctoral thesis of Mara Lee, entitled *När andra skriver — Skrivande som motstånd, ansvar och tid* (2014), is relevant in its use of feminist, queer, and performative notions of writing, text as movement, and resistance, along with its application of practice as theory and knowledge through bodily experiences. The application of queer and gender theory (e.g. Butler, 1990) to artistic practice relates to Cecilia Björck’s research in music pedagogy, *Claiming Space — Discourses on Gender, Popular Music and Social Change* (2011), and the relationship between gender and design is found in the forthcoming PhD project of Karin Ehrnberger, whom I worked with as part of the Origo project. Ehrnberger, who is an industrial designer and PhD candidate at KTH in Stockholm, made (in collaboration with Emma Börjesson, Anne-Christine Hertz, & Cristine Sundbom, of the project *Hälsoformer & tekniknormer* [2012], initiated by Center for Health Technology Halland, Halmstad University) *Androstolen*—a chair made for men, based on women’s experiences of the gynecological chair. Taking women’s experiences, transforming them into a design object, and presenting this to a male target group relates to the norm-critical perspective that was worked with within the Origo project, which led to *The Safety Top*. A norm-critical design approach works to highlight an issue, and so design objects become the starting point for a discussion: innovations can here be categorized as radical, and with a great potential for creating change. Frida Hållander’s forthcoming PhD thesis *Vems hand är det som gör? Orienteringar kring konsthantverk, klass och feminism (Whose Hand is Making? Orientations around Craft, Class and Feminism)* focuses on crafts and the politics of making, particularly in relation to feminism and class. I gave

a lecture and workshop together with Hållander—entitled ‘Body, Politics & Craft’—at Konstfack’s research week in 2016. Hållander uses autoethnography (see e.g. Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015; Khosravi, 2010) to apply a form of self-reflection regarding her thesis writing to craft practice. The autoethnographical approach can be considered in relation to the above-discussed idea that ‘the personal is political’, which is very much related to *On and Off*. Furthermore, Hållander considers feminist history and relates her work to political notions of historical writings, which are also important in *Body Acts Queer*, most particularly in *Exclude Me In* and *The Club Scene*.¹⁹ The exploration of ideology and the performative functions of clothing relate to Otto von Busch’s doctoral thesis *Fashion-able Hacktivism and Engaged Fashion Design* (2008), which argues that the designer’s role is a collective and participatory act, and so the production of a design can be considered to be an act of activism. Also notable are the fashion label Hood By Air’s queer performances, and the work of fashion designers such as Lucia Cuba, who works with a critical approach to fashion involving performative and political devices (highlighting forced sterilization, notions of health, etc.), Ida Klamborn, who has worked with feminism as a theme when presenting and marketing her collections, used feminists as models, and created publications that function as feminist statements in relation to the design work, and Minna Palmqvist, who has worked to reconstruct the norms relating to women’s bodies. Similarly, This is Sweden have worked with a critical perspective on Swedish identity and nationalism, and used their experiences as refugees and feelings of alienation as a theme in their design. *Body Acts Queer* involves methods and frameworks relating to applying ideology to a design practice, which designers interested in these issues can apply. Even though there are similarities between *Body Acts Queer* and other research projects, this thesis differs from the works discussed above in that it is a program, and combines performance and queer feminist theory to form a fashion design practice, involving participants and their experiences and stories.

Design can be used in a norm-creative work but can also, dependent on its appearance, work to confirm norms, and so Ida Måwe discusses how gender awareness can create demands for designs that are not related to stereotypes in her article ‘Genusmedveten design — en balansakt’ (2011), produced on behalf of the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Gothenburg. Examples of clothing developed with the aim of creating alternatives to existing gender stereotypes include Marcus Jahnke’s crafts kilt, which has men as its target group and is a research project that has become part of the company Blåkläder’s standard collection (2006). Jahnke has also created the children’s collection ‘Trots’ (2005), which he developed by working with preschool children. The production of functional garments that work, regardless

of gender identity, often requires a great deal of research work and knowledge among those working on the design. Måwe gives examples from the industry and the ‘Future Factory’ project at Luleå University of Technology, the aim of which is to more closely examine why young women in particular choose to work on the factory floor and other production environments in which industrial design is conducted (Måwe, 2011). The project was based among other things on an exploration of possible ways for the industry to become more attractive (ibid.). From a design and design education perspective, such an investigative report regarding needs, demand, and gender stereotypes may be useful in the design process. How things are produced is often closely linked to the design object, but there are also commonalities in terms of attractive features and requests that the designer often incorporates into their research and process. The challenges offered by the varied parameters that can be included in design projects, and which can affect the designer’s role, relate to the fact that design is an interdisciplinary subject. This also makes the designer’s role and their thoughts and ideas related to the design very complex due to the vast number of involved parameters. In *Body Acts Queer*, this complexity has been investigated as part of the design process.

Notions of the relationships between gender and design (see e.g. Attfield, 1989; Attfield & Kirkham, 1989; Buckley, 1986; Ehrnberger, Broms, & Katzeff, 2013; Ehrnberger, Räsänen, & Ilstedt, 2012; Jahnke, 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); this is a focus of *Body Acts Queer*, as exemplified in *The Safety Top* and *If you were a girl I would love you even more*.

With the notion of gender as central, *Body Acts Queer* relates 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 that have been established culturally and historically. Therefore, the notion of the history of dress is present in *Body Acts Queer*. 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 fuller picture of the effects on consumption and styles; as a result, it can go further in challenging gender stereotypes.

In terms of the history of western dress, France in the eighteenth century held a position in which it exported not only styles of fashion, but also modes of living, related to how one should live and act in their clothing (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 to more somber and formal, while female dress continued to be extravagant, outrageous, and playful, and this 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, and 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. Put simply, it was when women entered occupations that were previously male-dominated that they also adopted stylistic elements from the wardrobes of men.

Over the centuries, fashion has tried to form and shape the female body. Woolson's *Dress Reform* (1874) discusses the health issues related to women's clothing (i.e the corset); in Sweden, the book was distributed by Doctor Curt Wallis, who also introduced the reform dress and simultaneously claimed that women should use clothing 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. Clothing has had a political function in its central role in relation to women's rights (ibid.) for, as recently as the 1980s, it was forbidden for female lawyers in Great Britain to appear in court wearing pants (Wilson, 2013:185). This tradition or political notion is still present today, for example in countries where women are forbidden by law to wear pants (e.g. Ahmad al-Hussein, 2010).

With regard to the dressed female body and its relation to the traditional male wardrobe, the design interest in *Body Acts Queer*, as exemplified by *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, is highly related to the male adoption of what is commonly considered to be feminine. The design practice therefore involves studies of the historical male wardrobe and its queer references (see e.g. Bolton, 2003; Ribeiro, 2002; Steele, 2013; Steorn, 2012). This includes the macaronis who, through their fashionable dressing, challenged ideas of masculinity in eighteenth-century England (e.g. Ribeiro, 2002; Steele, 2013), or the depictions of men wearing a variety of skirts—*shendyt*—(sometimes combined with aprons) in Ancient Egypt (Roehrig, Dreyfus, &

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 Men's Dress Reform Party (MDRP), active in Britain in the 1930s, encouraged men not to wear pants from a health perspective (Burman, 1995). Furthermore, the Arabic *bisht* (cloak) and *thawb* (similar to a robe); African *kanzu* (ankle- or floor-length tunic) and *boubou* (loose-fitting wide-sleeved robe); Indian *sherwani* (long coat/jacket), *kurta* (long shirt), and cultural and geographical variations on the *sarong* (e.g. *izaar*, *lungi*, *dhoti*, *mundu*, *macawiis*, *kikoy*, *lamba*, *kitenge*, *capulana*, *lava-lava*) are other examples of men's clothing that are similar in form to women's dresses and skirts.

In the 1960s fashion scene, androgyny was an important influence. The style emerged around the same time as the increase in the number of feminist movements and growing awareness of gender politics occurred. However, the deconstruction of gender appearances in fashion—which unisex clothing 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 concept of unisex fashion was established by designers such as Rohdi Heintz, Sighsten Herrgård (Herrgård & 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, for example labor and textile production, as well as the anti-war movement that supported the FNL during the Vietnam War (ibid). Internationally, the unisex designs of Ted Lapidus and Rudi Gernreich, for example, were significant, while Yves Saint Laurent made it fashionable for women to wear pants. As stated by art historian and fashion scholar Steorn (2012), unisex clothing opened up for a potential performative play with gender, in which the wearer could disguise and explore sexual heritage—accentuating desire towards both sexes (c.f. Steorn, 2012, and his discussion of Herrgård) and strengthening the idea of the outrageous sexual identity of the 1960s.

As the politics of the 1970s became more hippie-oriented, the adaption of robes or caftans influenced by Moroccan, Indian, or Middle Eastern cultures occurred. The 1970s also saw the birth of the punk movement, with kilts and skirts as part of the male wardrobe. The 1990s grunge scene involved women adopting the aesthetics of men's wardrobes (e.g. checked shirts) and the reverse, as with Kurt Cobain wearing dresses, for example. Long shirts for men were present in the 1990s (e.g. Armani Spring/Summer Collection 1994, Vivienne Westwood Autumn/Winter Collection 1998/1999,

Moschino Spring/Summer Collection 2002), and can also be found today (Walter Beirendonck Spring/Summer Collection 2015, Ann Demeuleemester Spring/Summer Collection 2015, Balenciaga Spring/Summer Collection 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 could simply be categorized as fashion (Suthrell, 2004).

Even when placed in the context of art, drag and transvestism do not necessarily constitute a questioning of gender roles; rather, they relate to questions of identity. Andy Warhol in drag, Marcel Duchamp as Rose Sélavy, or in the works of artists such as Jürgen Klauke, Carlos Leppe, and Urs Lüthi; one frequently finds drag appearances in relation to the questioning of the self as a stable identity (Warr, [2000] 2012:13). It was the strong connection to identity, rather than a political statement, that led to the reactions related to fear and shame of the participant in *If you were a girl I would love you even more*.

As how we categorize appearances is highly related to perception and experiences, user experience—focusing on pleasure rather than usability—has previously been a focus of design research (Koskinen, 2011:26-27). However, such studies have frequently been used in the context of constructive research (ibid.), in which the design practice tends to be more technically oriented than that of *Body Acts Queer*, as the program has been developed to include emotional and bodily experiences as a fundamental and primary source for design practice—sometimes without the technical aspects of making or creating design, as these are only developed in the form of imaginations and fantasies. Presenting the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer* in the context of art and design—in museums, galleries, and art magazines—relates to the notion that artistic research should not be separated from design or art practices, but should instead be part of them (Hannula, Suoranta, & Vadén, 2005:61). In *Body Acts Queer*, art is used as an approach in which the artist, instead of creating an image of a phenomenon, participates and creates relationships and changes in immediate, actual situations (see e.g. Allerholm, 2010; Gunn & Enqvist, 2015); in many of the artistic examples this also involves participants and their pleasures and experiences, which help form and make the design.

However, the term ‘design’ in a research context evokes not only research performed using or focused on art and design, but also the design of research proposals. The design research of *Body Acts Queer* is defined as ‘performative’—as is discussed in more detail in the ‘Performative Design’ chapter—but other concepts also relate to the program and its design practice. With regard to the involvement of others as a

performative act, or working with an experimental practice and a transformation, the method of this thesis also relates to ‘action research’ (see e.g. Lewin, 1946; Reason & Bradbury, [2001] 2006). In *Body Acts Queer* this is utilized as a participatory act in an artistic context, with reference to participatory art, in which the performer 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 that affect audiences on both individual and collective levels (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998).

[A]ction 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 & Bradbury, [2001] 2006:1)

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

[P]articipatory 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 & McTaggart, 2012: 277)

Creswell (2003) states that the participatory application opens up for research in which the voices of marginalized people or communities can be heard and explored. Other explorations with e.g. feminist perspectives (Olesen, 2000, 2005), racialized discourses (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983), queer (Gamson, 2000; Yep, Lovaas & Elia, [2003] 2014), and critical theory (Fay, 1987) relate to *Body Acts Queer*’s practice and research approach, as the program encourages an

interdisciplinary perspective on the artistic acts involving participants, highlighting a critical perspective on fashion and society and allowing the queer community's and participants' voices to be heard as part of the design work, as in *The Club Scene*, *Exclude Me In*, and *The Lesbian Shirt*. 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 in this thesis, along with the artistic practice, become performative design research, as will be returned 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) was an important reflection throughout the artistic works of *Body Acts Queer*. This included the idea that the design practice involved the participants in ethical discussions regarding the issues that affected them, as with the anonymity of the participant of *If you were a girl I would love you even more* and the usage of pseudonyms for the interviewees of *The Club Scene*, which took into account aspects of confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, this also includes aspects of power—how the designer relates to power, the designer's role with regard to the participants and the people that work with the projects. The reflection on power and aim of remaining critical of privileges and power positions were thus, from a feminist perspective, parts 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 one's own subjectivity (MacKinnon, 1982). You can be both subject and object, sender and receiver, depending on the context and your position within it.

Working performatively with the body, using the artist's own body (in *Body Acts Queer* also involving the participants), can be categorized in relation to 'body arts'; in the context of feminist art, this involves using the body to perform (and thus enact) the shift away from heteronormativity and towards feminism (Jones, 1998:19). Through highlighting the activity of the body/self, this places focus on racial, sexual, gender, age, class, and other bodily-oriented identifications (Jones, 1998:13).

Body art proposes the art 'object' as a site where reception and production come together: a site of intersubjectivity. Body art confirms what phenomenology and psychoanalysis have taught us: that the subject 'means' always in relationship to others and the locus of identity is always elsewhere. (Jones, 1998:14)

When using the artist's body or the bodies of participants to create the design work and simultaneously perform a change from ideological perspectives, the process, body, and performance are in constant relation to their surroundings. In *Doing Research in Design* (2012), Crouch and Jane state that discussions regarding design research can create an awareness of the effects that design has on social and environmental contexts. Through design, research materials transform into objects that have an effect on their context, and at the same time the research can also affect how we think about objects; the design research includes materials, objects, and our ideas (ibid.). This stance on design research—one which considers its effect on society and ideas—connects with *Body Acts Queer* and its ideas of clothing as related to ideology and social change.

Body Acts Queer integrates theory and practice, intertwining and developing them in parallel. This method is present in contemporary artistic research, and develops a variety of knowledge and skills, both artistic and theoretical (Hannula, Suoranta, & 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. Since performative settings, in which clothing has a fundamental role, are described, the creation of such settings and contexts is related to ideology. It not only highlights issues from a queer feminist historical perspective, but also creates a context and sense of community in its present form. In *Body Acts Queer*, the designer makes the clothing or allows the participants to be involved in the making and re-dressing. The events are documented through text, film, and photographs. The images in some case become not only documentation, references, or theory, but also the artwork itself. In basing the artistic examples in *Body Acts Queer* on other research they also refer to other artists and designers, independent of whether this work is categorized as research or not, and through the references to theory, the line between practice and theory becomes blurred, and possibly even erased altogether.

Working with settings in which clothing has a fundamental role, the definition of 'clothing' and its function has been discussed and reflected upon. The bodily experiences of clothing might relate to how we define clothing 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 (see e.g. Barnard, 1996; Barthes, 1983; Bordieu, 1986, 1993a; Breward, 2003; Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2005; Loschek, 2009) or imagination, dreams, and desire (e.g. Steele, 1985, 1996; Wilson, [1985] 2005; Vinken, 2005). The signifying values relate to cultural expressions, subcultures, and the ambition of distinctions (e.g. Muggleton, [2000] 2006; Keenan, 2001; Lynch, 1999),



as well as the function of a distinctive marker of class and economic structures, both historical (e.g. Veblen, 1899; Simmel, 1957) and contemporary (e.g. Klein, 2000). In *Body Acts Queer*, the perception of the garments varies, and the lines between clothing, fashion, and even costumes are blurred. The artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer* have been positioned in various contexts within the art, craft, and design fields.

As the products of art, design, or craft constitute not only objects or artifacts, but also values and norms, and *Body Acts Queer* focuses on experimental forms of fashion design, involving performative acts in which clothes have a fundamental role, the focus with these acts has not been on the creation of details and form, but on ideas and settings and what clothing creates, how it is used and perceived. This has, as previously discussed, also involved the use of language and the relation between words and objects, and how word choice has been valued in terms of design choices. This, moreover, relates to the objects, and to the fact that the design choices with regard to the garments were made based on aspects that would fit the situation—or even quite suddenly, in the heat of the moment. The design choices did not follow any process found in retail or commonly used for fashion collections. Similarly, commercial considerations were entirely absent. Instead, the design choices, the methods of *Body Acts Queer*, were focused on creating a setting in which bodies could explore the performative and queer potential of clothing. As a designer working with a program such as *Body Acts Queer*, the clothing was not interesting without the bodies that were connected to them and the contexts that they were in.



PERFORMATIVE DESIGN

Performative Design

The term ‘performative design’ can have varied meanings and connotations, depending on the context (cf. Lamontagne, 2007; Oxman, 2008); in *Body Acts Queer*, however, it is defined as artistic design practice in relation to performance and performativity. The term has allowed for an understanding of bodily actions and experiences through clothing—and the performance and creation of such actions and experiences. In the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer*, 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 acts. The experiences are related to the settings in which the participants were encouraged to interact, transform, and explore themselves and others through clothing. The performances, creation of actions, and experiences were conducted in collaboration with the participants. As both design and fashion studies are to be considered multidisciplinary subjects in this thesis, a performative approach involves participants’ actions, choices, and experiences in relation to a notion of their effects on bodies in social, political, sexual, contextual, physical, and psychological terms.

Even when performativity is primarily relegated to an off-stage situation, *Body Acts Queer* relates the motivation to act, incorporated in parts of the various artistic examples and in the program as a whole, to the engaging aesthetics of the Swedish director Suzanne Osten and her work with queer and feminist themes. Between 1975 and 2014, Osten was the creative director for Unga Klara, where we staged *The Club Scene*’s third act, *Sappho Island* (2012). Through her work, Osten has connected the ideological theater with individual actors’ opportunities to develop within their professions and through their roles in the group (Svens, 2002:89), which relates to my work when one considers the participants as actors. Performances in which both the designer (artist) and audience are encouraged to cooperate in actions both on and off the stage relate to the methods of *Body Acts Queer*, regardless of whether that stage is placed inside or outside of theaters. In the use of a modernist form and aesthetic, Osten distanced herself from theatrical traditions, and instead entered a dialogue that 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.

Diamond (1996, 1997) applies a feminist perspective to theatre and performances. Her work includes both feminist and performance studies—the main theoretical foundations that *Body Acts Queer* is based upon. Diamond (2000) suggests that Butler’s performativity needs the performance, the embodiment 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, 2007).

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, and relates to Victor Turner's concept of the social drama as a tool for social anthropology (1957). Here, performative acts are placed outside of the theater and in a much wider cultural context. Schechner later explored interactions between the social drama and the aesthetic drama in order to highlight the flow between social and political actions and theatrical events (Schechner, 1976). 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 thus an everyday occurrence that takes place in any location in which clothed bodies are performing. In *Body Acts Queer*, clothing is displayed 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 as constantly constructed and reformed—a pragmatic elaboration with pre-existing materials that refers to processes of bricolage (Carlson, [1996] 2004:44). Carlson discusses performance not only from an everyday perspective, but also from that of scholars within art, queer, and feminism, stating that "[m]ost modern politically oriented performance is flexible, [...] slipping back and forth between claiming an identity position and ironically questioning the cultural assumptions that legitimate it" (ibid.:194). *Body Acts Queer* creates an ability to work with fashion in queer settings, where the identity aspects of both the self and the context in which the bodies are placed are crucial when exploring the bodily experience of clothing. The artistic examples, the acts and performances, involve the creation of body and space and their interaction, where bodies become part of the architectural space and 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, as the bodies can, through their performative acts and appearances, challenge ideas of stereotypical gender roles or explore queer history and presence. By exploring the situation with their own bodies,

several participants discovered that their experiences and impressions became much stronger than if they had been members of a passive audience.

Considering performance 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 that allow the possibility of an alternate reality, meaning that the concept moves towards 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, Ehrmann (1968), 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, 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 that make visible and extend queer politics in the form of non-sanctioned marches or norm-creative street theater. With regard to the artistic examples, the idea of play as a performative act is inseparable from and synonymous with reality. Culture becomes an important standpoint when perceiving, interpreting, or analyzing the artistic examples, as *Body Acts Queer* presents a fusion of fiction and reality and considers the performative—play—as a method with which to explore the bodily experience of clothing 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 (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.

As the creation of settings in which play has an important function relates not only to cultural agreements, but to the exploration of bodies and settings that *Body Acts Queer* tries to achieve, this thesis and the artistic examples presented relate the performativity of bodies to acts of ideology. Ideological performances, including

acts of gender, as in the research of Gindt (2007), show performative 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 Butler (1990), and is connected with gender and how gender is produced. The definitions of ‘the performative’ and ‘performativity’ are a platform which in *Body Acts Queer* relates to design, and includes, for example, gender elaborations, restaging, and performances in public spaces and everyday life. As Butler (1990) states, it is through repetition that bodies are produced and gender is established. Gender roles are related to a heteronormative framework; e.g. discussed by writers and feminists Monique Wittig ([1980] 1987, 1982) and Adrienne Rich (1980), and later developed by Butler (1990) in the definition of ‘the heterosexual matrix’. This is a queer theoretical framework that defines the structure of the heterosexual norm, its dominance and supremacy. Everyone and everything is read as heterosexual until proven 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 to those which are already socially established. “Doing gender”, in the words of Butler, intersects with the designer’s role and affects how learning and making take place. Björck makes this comparison in her thesis on gender, popular music, and social change (Björck, 2011:24), relating her work to Gould’s theory that Butler’s “doing gender” is implemented in how “doing musician-ness” occurs (Gould, 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, for example, sexuality and gender (Gould, 2007; Bowman, 2002). *Body Acts Queer* agrees with such analyses and, moreover, the program suggests that “doing gender” can intersect with wearing, exploring, and the creative processes related to clothing, since it also involves an embodiment and performative act. The gaze is also of relevance here, as it is performative and important with regard to the “doing” of both fashion and gender, as well as queer, and how these discourses are perceived (see also the ‘Notes: Gaze and Look’ chapter of this thesis).

Bonnevier’s (2007) ideas about the connection between architecture and performativity relate to *Body Acts Queer*, not only from a queer feminist perspective on artistic practice (in Bonnevier’s case, this is specifically architecture), but also as a result of the fact that this thesis argues that context and space strongly affect and interact with dressed bodies. This also relates to how the architectural theorist Grosz discusses the relationship between architecture, bodies, and cities, as discussed in the conference paper relating to *Exclude Me In* (Gunn & Enqvist, 2014, 2015). Here, we consider Grosz’s (1992) assertion that the body is shaped by its surroundings—

by people’s relations, society, and built environments, such as the city. Architecture creates frames for how we perform, and we act in relation to the surroundings we live in or identify with. This application of ideas relating to architecture and the interaction between body (including both individual and collective experiences) and space has relevance to the production of dressed bodies, in that performativity can be embodied in all clothing.

Hence, the embodiment and appearance of dressed bodies is a common way to read gender, status, and social behavior (see e.g. Breward, 1995; Breward & Evans, 2005; Guy, Green, & Banim, 2001; Hurd, Olsson, & 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 a part of the natural order of things. By playing with such assumptions—and learning beyond the practice of gender performance that we have repeated our whole lives—this act of play is allowed to create social change. As this thesis performs stereotypes and simultaneously tries to reconstruct them, it investigates and challenges ideas regarding what a stereotype is, as well as what fashion and design are.

Furthermore, in relation to gender performance, Butler (1997) argues that performativity is not only performed as part of theatrical bodily acts, but is connected to language and linguistic communication. In the acts of *Body Acts Queer*, communication is performed in varied ways, and the program, through the artistic works, gives examples of how linguistic communication can be performed in the context of experimental fashion design. This includes, for example, the notion of the self (such as my use of ‘I’ in my writing), both when it comes to my words and the words of others. I do—I make—I speak.

The performances in *Body Acts Queer* have taken different directions—some with historical references—but always with clothing or costumes as a central element. The many connections between fashion and other performances, and *Body Acts Queer*’s attempt to extend what fashion is and could be, mean that performative design is a method that can establish fashion and clothing design as something that not only includes the objects, but the settings and contexts in which bodies integrate, sexuality is explored, and history is reshaped. The force of the performative act even transforms reality (Bonnevier, 2007:374)—the design act creates a change. The reason for working in this performative way is therefore connected to both the working method and the theme from which the exploration departed. As already discussed in the ‘Body’ chapter, the theme/the thinking (what) and the making (how) are highly connected. This includes what we investigate and in what context, the theories, history, and context we refer to, highlight, and explore, how the program involves a feminist collective



PERFORMATIVE DESIGN

approach, the sharing of ideas and participatory actions in which the audience is not passive but actively involved in the outcome, and where the participants work with bodily transformations and bodily experiences to investigate the projects, theories, and themes.

Haseman's (2006) positing of performative research as a new research paradigm (instead of quantitative or qualitative research frameworks) in relation to the working methods and practices of artists and designers defines the works of *Body Acts Queer* as performative, through both their relations to performance studies and performativity and their artistic content. The performative paradigm opens up for new perspectives and the ability to distinguish between artistic research and the traditionally dominant models of knowledge (e.g. Haseman, 2006; Bolt, 2008). Using Rosenberg's statement—that, in contemporary art, performativity and performance refer to a type of intervention, and one in which art does not passively reflect the world but actively contributes to creating it (2012:189)—'performative' as a term used in *Body Acts Queer* and 'performativity' as a method are aspects of a political act.²⁰ 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. The use of the performative thus allows participation and interpretation, while simultaneously positioning and discussing the design work in relation to ideology and social change.



NOTES

Notes

In this chapter I clarify my ethical standpoint in *Body Acts Queer*, and discuss and reflect on the artistic examples in relation to several topics—gaze and look, pleasure and desire, power, sexuality, and material as materiality—in order to clarify the position of the work in terms of social and ideological contexts. These reflections on the relationship between design and other discourses have been present throughout the duration of the projects, and were the foundational ideas, the platform, that *Body Acts Queer* as a whole was developed from.

Ethics

Considering design to be an interdisciplinary subject, *Body Acts Queer* follows a wide range of parameters and discussions; its primary focus, however, is on queer and gender issues and, even with an application of feminist ideas to intersectionality and postcolonial theory, it still has its limitations. I wish to clarify the ethical circumstances surrounding this thesis, and point out that I am aware of the potential issues of inequality (as in me introducing, leading, and owning the project and its results, together with that related to experience, age, education, class, and racial issues) that could be read between myself and the participants, even if the discussion focuses on gender and sexuality, and the power that is embodied within these concepts.

All of the participants interviewed for this thesis were informed that their contributions would be used as part of a research project and that they could, at any time, choose to not participate. In the text I have changed names so as to keep the participants anonymous and, when possible, asked the participants for their approval with regard to printing the photographs. The photographers (including myself) at *The Club Scene* were made aware that it was not acceptable to photograph anyone that did not want to be documented.

Pleasure and Desire

When I began working on this research project, I saw 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. Desire towards the text, knowledge, evaluation, or different perspectives—potentially with the desire to increase, proceed further or see something new. It also relates to what we desire to wear, whom we desire to be, whom we desire, and what context or situation that desire puts us in. Desire is thus not connected solely to our selves and our minds, but is a collective concern. Norms, gender, and social structures are related to the desires of our individual and social bodies.

However, desire is also associated with the heterosexual norm, patriarchy, and power relations, all of which I strive to challenge. Through the various projects, I have worked to create another form of desire than the heteronormative one, by moving away from the heterosexual matrix of desire, as discussed by Foucault ([1984] 2002), and instead utilizing pleasure as a discourse that relates to queer sexuality. It is often easier to create something new than to change the old and established; thus, when the creation of a new pleasure is achieved, desire will, perhaps, follow (Halperin, 1995). Working with fashion and its communicative expressions, developed and discussed through the application of queer theory and practices, I relate to Vasvári's article 'Queer Theory and Discourses of Desire' (2006), which considers how language constructs desire and attempts to read between and outside of the lines of dominant heteronormative discourses. By encoding such desire and challenging how mainstream reproductive heterosexuality becomes (re)produced through cultural narratives, becoming obligatory and desirable as a result (ibid.), my work is a practical exploration of queer pleasures in the context of fashion. My contribution, through the projects and the participants' bodies, lies in giving examples of desires that, instead of confirming, challenge heteronormative desire and open up for desire, pleasure, and joy in more diverse ways.

I regularly complimented the participant of *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, indicating that his new look was embodied with pleasure, that I considered it to be desirable, defined as something attractive. When pleasure or my ideas of the desirable were opposed to the heterosexual norms of desire, the man became skeptical of the project, as he identified as a male subject in a heterosexual context. His reactions also related to assumptions regarding others' desire—what he believed regarding what others would think and how they would act towards him. I worked based on the idea that clothing helps to create desire and also functions as a tool to construct gender

and norms—but, simultaneously, that they can deconstruct these. The participant had clear ideas regarding what he thought was desirable for him and, by giving him clothing that was opposed to those ideas, I challenged his preconceptions relating to desire and changed his feelings of alienation and fear into pleasure.

We perform sex and gender. When the participant felt that he was being feminized, he feared that his sex and sexuality would be misinterpreted. This relates to the dissonance between the self that one wishes to display and what is actually expressed. When asking yourself what it is that you actually express, the answer to that question stands in relation to this—the gap between what you actually express and what you usually express. This can, as in the case of the man in *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, create discomfort, alienation, and even fear.

If you were a girl I would love you even more created changes for me through my re-positioning, and the ways in which I used my work to describe and influence the participant. Simultaneously, the project was a way of getting to know him, which in itself affected me in terms of both work and my personal life. 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.

Desire and the intimate were also crucial for *On and Off*, as its content relates to handling a situation that is very much focused on desire. When pleasure or desire relating to another is remembered through clothing, these clothes become markers for not only the other but for related emotions. Psychologically, and in this case through the use of the monologue format, desire relates to becoming a subject, but the subject is not formed at once and in definite terms; instead, the formation of the self occurs continuously, repeatedly, and in an ongoing manner (Butler, 2015b). In *On and Off* the reader traces changes in emotions over time, even though this is not necessarily linear. I found it interesting to work with desire and pleasure as performed solely by words, letting them be expressions of bodily experiences and embodying clothing—and so also the other. When writing and developing these works focusing on emotion, the aspects of desire and pleasure (including their lack or absence) became highly present. The creation of words and narratives led to a formation of emotions, and through that also created another expression of fashion.

Gaze and Look

The way I see things is crucial to how I work. Looking is part of the making, and aesthetics and appearances communicate, affecting the wearer and participants. Through seeing I have created the garments, but I have also affected the participants' gaze, as I believe our gaze is highly related to perception, gender, and norms. Through the projects in this thesis I saw how clothing and settings could create a change, and some of those changes were much more pronounced than I had imagined before I started the work. One of the participants of *The Club Scene* said that, when she saw the other participants in the room, with everyone dressed up, and that she was not alone, that the world we created—a form of utopia—existed, that that moment fundamentally changed her. When I saw the participant in *If you were a girl I would love you even more* dress in the clothing I gave him, I became aware of the strong feelings and physical reactions that my clothes can create. I also saw how he changed over time, and with that came changes in his own gaze, in how he looked at himself, and, in the end, how he looked at others. The gaze, the look, relates to a great extent to self-consciousness, to identity, gender, and sexuality, and even though I was already familiar with ideas of gaze in feminist theory, particularly in film, the ways in which we look at each other and ourselves became very clear to me over the course of the different projects of this thesis. The design-making caused a shift in terms of gaze, while simultaneously allowing and creating another type of seeing; the non-patriarchal. This is in contrast to the voyeuristic gaze and objectification of bodies, especially those of women, that fashion often tends to become a symbol of. From this background, and with my interest in fashion and gender, aspects of gaze have been of importance when planning, executing, and writing about my work.

Since I created a character in *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, in that the man adopted a more female appearance and I used a camera to document and produce this staging, feminist film theorist Mulvey's (1975) statement about the male gaze, which concludes that the spectator has a masculine, subject position, while the woman on the screen is the object of desire, is coded with a "to-be-looked-at-ness", has been present. Kaplan (1983:26) builds on Mulvey's analyses when she states that the pleasure inherent in watching film occurs for women through identification with the male subject. Williams also relates to Mulvey in her essays "When the Woman Looks" ([1984] 1996) and "When Women Look: A Sequel" (2001), in which she takes into account women's pleasure relating to looking at and identifying themselves with other women, independent of the male subject. This pleasure in looking at other women is, as argued by McMullan in *Notes on the Gaze* (2015), also present in the context of

fashion and everyday life: Consider Walker's *The Artist's Model* (2015), which features photographs of young men in their underwear, and the more radical film *Flasher Girl on Tour* (Rytel, 2010), in which male breasts are sexualized and the artist Joanna Rytel 'becomes' the flasher—both of these examples feature an unusual take on gaze, subject, and object. With the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer* I wanted to take control of gaze, or at least experiment with its functions, and use that as a method. Using theories relating to gaze as discussed in the context of film, the artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer* suggest a shift in how to look at others, how others can collectively look, and how 'the lesbian look' can be a starting point for a design practice.

Through the experiment of gaze, in which I played with the relations between, and definitions of, object and subject, woman and man, and actively integrated the gaze and look of the participants, I felt that the projects could change directions, that the outcome was not fixed, as there were no strict lines or aesthetics regarding how things needed to look. By making the gaze collective I also handed the responsibility, the perceptions, and the bodily experiences over to others, even though I continued to be an active part of the work. My own gaze, my look and seeing, was still important.

The changed position of gaze is crucial in the installation that featured male breasts at the fashion exhibition *Utopian Bodies*. This related to the idea that nudity—the undressed or not yet dressed body—is also a piece of apparel—displayed, for example, through fashion photography—and that the dressed body can express sexuality as much as the nude one (Hollander, 1994). Using silicon—a material commonly associated with women's breast implants—the installation was an attempt to refer to the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of the female body, here projected on male breasts, and so reflect on how we look differently at men and women while simultaneously taking into account the fact that fashion is so strongly related to the body that the two are commonly fused.

Even though *If you were a girl I would love you even more* focuses on garments and the experiences of a dressed body, it has similarities to *Utopian Bodies* through the positioning of gaze and play with objectification. At one point, the man in *If you were a girl I would love you even more* suggested that he 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 clothing. I see the feminization or gender fusion that he tried to improve upon by sitting in a certain pose next to a bathtub as a testament to how body-oriented this project became for him. The clothing became so tightly connected to the body that the two achieved equality. His imitating the poses of the nude female body signified him embracing his "to-be-looked-at-ness", the feminization or gender transformation being related to postures and gaze, rather than simply clothing.

For the *The Lesbian Shirt*, I worked with self-portraits as a method of documentation. The photography scholar Irène Berggren (2015) states in her lecture 'Hannah Höch, Grete Stern and Claude Cahun', at Marabouparken (December 9 2015) that female photographers in the early- and mid-twentieth century commonly made self-portraits with themselves looking in the mirror, while the self-portraits of male photographers of the time often showed them in action with their cameras. Claude Cahun's work moves away from the tradition of the woman looking in the mirror as she, even when standing next to a mirror, looks directly at the camera—and therefore the viewer. In *The Lesbian Shirt*, I wanted to relate to Cahun's work and the aspects of gaze, look, and self-portrait. Another inspiration was selfies, commonly used by bloggers and in social media, which are often criticized for being narcissistic in nature and having a negative impact on their creators (Winter, 2013; Chou & Edge, 2012); they can, however, also be seen as a democratizing force within fashion photography, and a way of taking control of the male gaze (Ehlin, 2015). I found it interesting to allow the participants' work with the self-portrait to relate to history and presence and to play with gaze and looks, and so deal with the issues of male and female, subject and object(ification), desire and pleasure, and, in relation to images, performance and design practice.

I consider my work and *Body Acts Queer* to be a contribution to another type of gaze than the male gaze, where the aspects of gaze and desire have a queer agenda. By inviting the participants to be part of the creation of images, the communication of the self became a dialogical seeing in which the roles of subject and object were not fixed. I believe that applying another form of seeing, as in challenging the male gaze and heteronormativity, opens up for other platforms where a greater variety of images, bodies, and narratives can be explored.

Redirecting Power

When working with gender as a theme I deal with the relation between subject and object, which leads into discussions of power and the ability to act freely. In the literature on the role of the subject as related to gender and sexuality, and how it has been perceived both historically and more recently, power relations are considered to be everywhere, and resistance can be used to highlight, locate, and understand them. Groups of people coming together can indicate “hope as well as fear” (Butler, 2015a:1), as with demonstrations, riots, carnivals, pride parades, and protests. During the writing of this thesis I ran workshops with participants who had been involved in demonstrations at Tahrir Square in Cairo and the student protests in Hong Kong, created a club to which queer activists from all over the world were invited, and arranged a queer carnival in a public space, highlighting queer history and its presence. In the end, these groups of people, their opposition, resistance, and struggles, can be summarized as constituting a will to enjoy freedom. The performance of gender—whether we feel it is a choice or not—and will to appear as we like also involves exercising a freedom, but is simultaneously part of a social category, and thus has the potential to change the related ontology (ibid.).

I believe that the freedom—as well as the consequent resistance and opposition—of people to experiment with whom they really are, or to claim their right to be whomever they want to be, is crucial for *Body Acts Queer*. Bodily experiences and their effects on individual bodies are a fundamental resource for my research. Through knowledge of the bodily experiences, the application of a wider knowledge, as in using references outside of the participants’ bodies by implementing theory, has enabled me to see the potential of the program in a more general context, taking into account the social body, the space in which bodies act. The artistic examples of *Body Acts Queer* have highlighted power and created other forms of power structure than the standard, patriarchal one. Through the making, I have elaborated with power to create a shift in power structures, leading to equality and a collective power.

In *Exclude Me In* we used the concept of the carnival to make power relationships obvious. We worked from the idea that the carnival allows the individual to try on another form of mental clothing—a ‘mental drag’—that goes beyond his or her normal identity. We consider the carnival to be a meeting place, a bodily act, an architectural structure, a public performance, a transformation. By letting the performance of *Exclude Me In* take place in the city centre, we had the opportunity to highlight queer history and presence in a public space.

In *The Club Scene*, as in *Exclude Me In*, power was discussed and (re)created as a collective act. It existed in the connection between the bodies of the participants, who created a community, and this community was achieved through the appearance of bodies and visualized and recognized through their acts and the setting that was created. The looks and the bodily acts created, in their manifestations of recognition, acceptance, and community, a design work related to community power. This community also functioned as a collective of pleasure.

What I found interesting with both of these projects was how the participants transformed them, that they so actively created them. In the interviews relating to *The Club Scene*, the participants expressed their awareness of the ideological statements that the club had had, and that the act of entering and participating in them was a political act. The participants’ engagement in the projects worked towards the creation of pluralistic, inclusive, and yet non-coherent and non-patriarchal situations (cf. Gunn & Enqvist, 2015). I found it interesting how they created a collective power, how we shared the situations, while simultaneously challenging the patriarchal and heteronormative through the theme and content of the performances.

While both *The Club Scene* and *Exclude Me In* were created in an artistic context, in which fiction and reality were fused, I wanted to take the work of *Body Acts Queer* into reality, to enter workplaces and everyday life. With *The Safety Top* I came into that context, and the research project was developed based on a discussion of women’s ability to be powerful, specifically within a fire department. Working with uniforms, power here became a feeling of identification. In the fire department, tools and uniforms are made based on the male norm, and the idea of a standard firefighter is a powerful, white, tall, heterosexual man. By developing items and uniforms that were not made to suit this male standard, the project challenged the idea and appearance of power.

This shift, with design becoming a tool to facilitate discussion, is also related to power. When a person tries to be someone else they play with power, which can be dislocated and deconstructed. Power is, as I posit in my projects, linked to shifts in terms of appearances, bodily experiences, and gaze. As power is fundamental to the patriarchal structure of gender roles, feminist art has a tradition of confronting it by highlighting, challenging, and deconstructing it (see e.g. Broude & Garrard, 1996; Guerilla Girls, 1998; Reckitt & Phelan, 2012). I believe that working with design as I have with *Body Acts Queer* relates to the context and tradition of feminist art.

In *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, the play, performative act, or social structure that was defined between myself and the man potentially created a female-dominant position (for myself) and a subordinated male position (for him). The male

to female transformation, the feminization performed, empowered him (at least in the initial phase) in the patriarchal context he was in. Taking his cultural background into consideration, his being a heterosexual man might have been the clearest source of the power that he possessed, at least in terms of 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.

As I contribute to theory with artistic material, and simultaneously present it in the context of research, I also transform practice into theory and so make a contribution to the theories of subject and power relations. The work thus relates not only to power, in terms of what happened within the project, but has a more extended platform as regards what it creates *with*—and, through the readers, to the context and placement of academic research and the power structures related to that. The use of another form of power than the patriarchal is applicable to the different projects, as well as to the texts and writings of this thesis.

Dismantling Sexual Differences

Clothing has a fundamental role in the categorization of sex and gender due to the fact that appearance is the first thing we pay attention to when we meet someone. Appearances take on perhaps an even greater significance in a queer context, as queer style can be “considered not only as a set of signifiers of dress and accoutrements, but it is also worn as part of the body. Whereas the straight construct sees a dichotomy between the naked body and the clothing that covers it, queer style considers a far more seamless relation between the two” (Geczy & Karaminas 2013:7). In *The Club Scene*, the re-dressing acts were so closely linked to the participants that they observed that the restaging acts became reality. The bodily act of re-dressing was perhaps even more of a personal change with regard to the notion of the connection between queer identification and clothing. With such a notion in mind, the design practice not only created clothing (objects), but worked towards an acceptance of sexual difference. *Body Acts Queer*’s dismantling of sexual difference through clothing allows ideas of sex and gender to be experimental in nature, where the self and the other are changeable—independently and in relation to each other—and sometimes become fused.

When I worked with cross-dressing as a theme, I did so based on the idea that gender is a drag expression—an act of performativity—and so we are all in drag (Butler, 1990). Starting from the parodying of gender as found in drag as a tool for deconstructing gender roles (ibid.), I allowed the participants of *The Club Scene* to use drag as a try-out experiment, in which the participants could choose between multiple garments and textile materials. I only partially implemented the notion of drag, since several participants actively chose what to pick and wear. When Billie, one of the participants, describes the experience of the outfit she wore at *Culture Club*, which was formed and shaped to fit her body, it becomes clear that the transformative power of the garments she wore also transformed her perception of her body, and her words relate the excitement of transforming the body into something new and unexpected.

Using tape as a material, as in Billie’s outfit, we moved away from how clothing is usually made and formed. This allowed the creation of garments in the moment, while simultaneously going beyond bodily norms. How the clothing was made helped to create gender elaborations, as the appearances were not fixed. Subtle details sometimes function as gender markers on clothing; on which side buttons are found on shirts and blouses, how pants are zipped, or the seams over the chest. That the participant in *If you were a girl I would love you even more* accepted a blouse with breast seams by the end of the project was an indication for me that a change had occurred in terms of his perspective on clothing, as I considered the clothing to constitute a set of gender markers and an expression of sexual difference.

For *Body Acts Queer* I worked with try-out experiments, where I allowed participants to explore and visualize in relation to the idea that sex and gender is not fixed, giving examples of how sexual difference can be promulgated through acts of redressing. In practice and through practice, I tried to change the binary separation between the sexes and give alternatives to the generally accepted understanding of sexual difference. In *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, the play with and application of sexual difference was initially met with resistance, but what I found interesting in this project, and what made me continue it, was that I saw a slow acceptance on the part of the participant, and that the drag, in his eyes initially extreme, was over time something that he became used to and could (more or less) relate to. The bodily reactions, the verbal disagreements, and the constant resistance eventually transformed into acceptance and even, at times, 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. However, I also felt there were changes that the project did not perceive—ones which might not happen rapidly. The change in the participant may not be fixed, or does not necessarily include all aspects of gender identity. As such issues are complex and the clothing in this project created a great change, it is likely that the project was lacking in terms of its potential to effect change. As 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”, although Butler (1990) argues 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 difficult 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 no longer expressed a fear of wearing something that could be considered as feminine, drag, or gay. In that sense, the project reevaluated his (arguably) conservative ideas about clothing and what it is to be a heterosexual man, both when it came to his own self and his view of others. The performative act of drag, which the project could be seen to include, thus deconstructed a conservative mindset and created acceptance that, by extension, could help to establish a change in the perception of queer.

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.
(Butler 1990:189-190)

Applying such theories to *Body Acts Queer* has the potential to re-shape societal perceptions, as the body is political and the act of drag is a political performance. The non-fixed identities that Butler refers to are also elements of the definition of queer.

However, it is important to make clear that with *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, I do not suggest that, by wearing certain clothing, anyone will change sexuality or gender per se. 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 investigated reactions and identification aspects with regard to clothing. I do not believe that being transsexual or transvestite is something one chooses or will automatically become by wearing clothing that was 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 try to explore how the role of performativity, as discussed by Butler (1990), displays a produced idea of gender roles. How clear these roles are might vary based on context, and the design research in this case is not limited to the artifact, but includes the context in which the artifact is being used.

As strong definitions of the body and the self can be seen as important ways of strengthening the queer community (Butler, 1990), and defining and expressing oneself as drag, queer, gay, or lesbian can simultaneously work to establish and promote acceptance of such bodies, my work with cross-dressing and elaborating sexual difference through clothing is conducted so as to highlight queer and queer identities, and so also our human rights. Queer and queer style are a “sociosexual force pushing the limits of cultural acceptability and knowledge” (Geczy & Karaminas, 2013:8), and this is why subcultures, when they first appear, are commonly seen to be indicative of disorder or a threat to morality and societal norms and structures (ibid.)—a perspective that is not wholly dissimilar to the reactions of the participant in *If you were a girl I would love you even more*.

The exploration of gender appearances and sexual difference using breasts in *Utopian Bodies* arguably constituted an appearance of drag, in that it offered men the opportunity to wear (prosthetic) breasts, although this appearance was entirely at the discretion of the participants and for me only visible when documented on social media. Leaving the project to develop on its own, where I had an idea of what occurred but could not fully take part in those experiences, as they were most likely far more significant internally than externally, became part of my method, as I consider bodily

experiences to be an important result of my design, and the clothing continues to be archived in the participants' bodies and so can have effect far beyond my control. How the method of involving bodily experiences was developed varied between the different projects, as did the perceptions and experiences of the participants..

Queer and drag are seen as positive in some projects, but references to drag and sexual difference might also create a distance between the clothing and the wearer, as when the participants felt that they 'appeared in drag' and simultaneously considered drag to be something that they were not, something undesirable. With *The Safety Top*, several male firefighters stated that they would not wear the top, as they did not consider it to be made for their bodies but instead designed specifically for women.²¹ Far from all male firefighters expressed this opinion, and many were very positive, but these perspectives existed and were vocalized. At the same time, several male firefighters reflected on why they had such clear thoughts about the top, why they automatically felt a resistance to wearing it; one, for example, told me that his nipples bled due to chafing while exercising hard, that he frequently taped them, but that they continued to be sore, and that he was aware that wearing the safety top would stop this from happening. Nevertheless, and in spite of these experiences of pain, he still felt that it would be awkward to wear the top, even though he knew that it might prevent the pain and soreness. Simultaneously, however, he expressed his support for making uniforms that challenge the male norm, which is perhaps why he did not express any resistance to the safety top, but rather reflected on the norms that govern his current appearance. His expressing these ideas relates back to the functions of clothing in terms of the creation of sexual identities, and how sensitive we are to what we wear.²² As a designer, and through the experiences achieved by conducting the projects of this thesis, I feel that, by challenging the normative, design has the potential to visualize the binary separation between the sexes—and, by designing alternatives and spaces where queer bodies can act, it can suggest alternatives to the generally accepted sexual difference.

Material as Materiality

When I work with clothing, I do so in relation to a context. This is why, when I write about and describe my work, as in this text, the focus is on the materiality, as in describing the object and material in relation to bodies and space, rather than detailed descriptions of materials, forms, and styles. My desire to contextualize my work has also been a reason why I have collaborated with MYCKET and the New Beauty Council, whose work is more architecturally oriented. Working with dressed bodies as a method to take over a city and create spaces for those commonly excluded also relates to my ideas of the performative: that bodies do. Related to this is how I work with archive materials, memories, and experiences archived in our bodies, and how we write and rewrite the histories of our bodies and the contexts and communities we are part of. This has primarily been about the queer community (as all projects relate to that in various ways), but I also specifically explored workplaces (*The Safety Top*), private spaces (*If you were a girl I would love you even more*, *On and Off*), public space on the streets (*Exclude Me In*), nightclubs (*The Club Scene*), theaters (*The Lesbian Shirt*, *The Club Scene*), and art galleries (*The Club Scene*, *Exclude Me In*, *Utopian Bodies*).

With regard to material and materiality, dress and context, fashion and space, and the ideas of bodies and directions, which I found to be fundamental concepts for *Body Acts Queer*, the works of Ahmed have been central. Bodies are formed through acts of directing themselves towards or away from objects and others (Ahmed, 2006), and 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. Applying Ahmed's ideas about directions, the design object—in my work clothing—becomes a way to relate to each other and movement, as in a definition of ideological or cultural movement. The formation of bodies, as discussed by Ahmed (2006), is in *Body Acts Queer* not only related to directions as an external act, where the object is the other, distanced from the body, but is so highly related to the body and its transformation that directions become internal. It becomes the directions of bodily experiences, memories, and emotions. The directions towards others are always in relation to the directions embodied in our selves.

In *On and Off*, everything is about the self in relation to the other. The effect is so ingrained in the self that nothing, no actions, are separated from the directions towards or away from the objects that embody the other. As a reader you only have the garments as described by words; you have to imagine them, how they look and

feel against the skin. I describe them, but you never see them. The look and feel of the garments are only described so as to give an idea of what the garments mean, what they embody, and what emotions such embodiment creates. When doing this—putting the garments, emotions, and bodily experiences into words—I took command of the situation, while simultaneously making myself vulnerable. I was exposed in a way that differs from the traditional role of the designer. I felt that I needed to undertake the project close to my own body, by writing it and performing it myself. Everything I do is close to where I am; my work is, in varied forms, a reflection on the life I live.

A few months before I started my PhD, in 2009, I saw Sophie Calle's 2007 Venice Biennale installation "Take Care of Yourself," at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York. Calle had invited 107 women to interpret a break-up letter from her ex-boyfriend, to dissect, understand, and answer it for her; in other words, to take the time and assistance of others so as to deal with the emotions of a break-up, transforming it into art in order to better handle it. At that time I had no idea that several years later I would create *On and Off*, and I do not see my project as being inspired by Calle, as I did not actively reflect on her work when I was creating mine, but I find it interesting how she works with intimacy, the private and, in this case, a separation. She also involved others in her art, which has been a central part of my other works, and through that she redefined the idea of the sender, the author.

Making the intimate public also became part of *If you were a girl I would love you even more*. Initially intended as a research phase for a collection of garments, it soon developed into a project of its own, and in this intimate setting—just the two of us—it grew based on the participant's reactions and my challenging of his ideas regarding the male appearance. Even when we were alone, he had strong reactions to the garments, and these intensified when we were in public, even if this was just internally. Public reactions I could easily understand, as he then put himself at risk in terms of not knowing what the reactions of others would be and whether his appearance would come across as some sort of statement, something he might need to defend. I asked myself, though, why did he react so strongly? The answer is perhaps related to his background and the surroundings in which he lives, and with this comes the fact that he was alone in his acts, that he did not have a community to support him. However, if there had not been a safe environment for the participant to experiment within, the result might have been entirely different. If the setting had not been 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 are impossible to further consider or evaluate.

When I asked the participant about his experience of the project after its conclusion, he seemed to be very positive. 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 and expensive feeling afforded by wearing a lace dress, and did not mention that he earlier complained, and 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 that he made led to results that he was not aware of at the time, and it was only after the conclusion of the project that these became evident. When the project was still running, he was generally negative to all of the changes, but later considered them to have been great experiences.

It can be argued that everything, since it is more or less part of a societal structure, involves aspects 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 community and political force. *The Club Scene* relates to what has been excluded in heterosexual structures and norms. Through the restaging acts, which clothing was fundamentally part of, queer bodies underwent 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 social construct in constant change—ingrained by repetition—which 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 clothing. Those experiences—as the example of the participant of *If you were a girl I would love you even more* shows—attest to the idea that clothing not only projects and communicates bodies, but creates and establishes them and the experiences connected to them. Through the repetition of acts, the participant'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 participant as a remarkable resource.

In *Exclude Me In* and *The Club Scene*, the bodily transformations that were achieved through re-dressing were acts that were open to interpretation. I worked with the design as a material connected to the body, which could be transformed and recreated. The design developed from artifacts or objects to tools for the creation of scenarios and settings.

A theoretical foundation for *The Club Scene* 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. By collecting and evaluating the embodied experiences of the project at the post-event stage, which are presented in this text through the participants’ voices and the evaluation party materials, both myself and the reader have a hint of what effect the different acts had on the participants.

As discussed above, *The Club Scene* was based on the idea of a utopia. It was a restaging act, a fiction with the potential to become reality. Several participants also claimed that, in the moment, it became reality. As the bodily acts within *The Club Scene* and the transformations that occurred also led to bodily changes outside of the club space, the design work and its effects became much wider than I could control. When I made the garments, what was important was not only how they felt on the body, but how that body felt and acted when wearing them.

When working with the performative in this way and attempting to create a utopia, there is the consideration of presence, as the bodies and spaces that currently exist are my working material, something to transform and redirect. Here, the application of the ideas of architecture scholar Grosz (1992, 1995) are of relevance, particularly with regard to *Exclude Me In*. As discussed in *Exclude Me In* (Gunn & Enqvist, 2014, 2015), following Grosz, (1992) the city can be considered to be a complex network, linked together by different social activities and relationships—just as the city and the body are involved in a complex interplay, producing and constructing each other in myriad ways. This also includes the in-between, ambiguous, vague, and indefinable, by many categorized as threatening, whether it be gender, bodies, places, or materials that are under discussion. However, these very qualities can also be seen to be what make them worth putting our trust in, and Grosz (2001:93) discusses this quality of the in-between in positive terms.

As we write in *Exclude Me In* “[a]esthetics has such an obvious presence during a carnival—no one questions the fact that the city is a stage that should be decorated, and that the costumes should go with it” (Gunn & Enqvist, 2015).. Traditionally, aesthetics has been associated with ideas of the beautiful and the idea of being consequent, connected to an entity, while the between ugliness and evil, physical deformity and moral decline, has, on the other hand, often been ill-defined (ibid.). In fashion, ideas about beauty have been and still are dominant, even though there are examples of ‘ugliness’ entering the halls of fashion, as inspiration or as a protest against existing norms. Miuccia Prada states that “[u]gly is attractive, ugly is exciting. Maybe because it is newer”, and continues; “ugly is human. It touches the bad and the dirty side of people” (O’Hagan, 2013). Aspects of ugliness (in relation to taste and high and low aesthetics) and ugliness as a human trait could also be interpreted in the works of the Swedish designer Ann-Sofie Back, who used lipstick stains and thongs as part of her design. The fashion curator Judith Clarke, in her article ‘Mark Cousins’ “The Ugly” – 20 Years On’ (2014), uses Cousins’s (1994) ideas about ugliness to describe contemporary fashion. Cousins (1994, 1995a, 1995b) argues that, instead of categorizing ugliness, as contrasting with beauty, the two are to be considered differently and be separated from each other, with the ugly being defined in relation to the temporary, as a contrast to the necessary and essential. Douglas (1993) states that dirt is related to space, and that objects, even when not substantially dirty in themselves, become perceived as dirty depending on where they are placed. Fashion has commonly been categorized as the unnecessary, but at the same time (or contrastingly) has been associated with aesthetics that could be categorized as opposite to, or distinct from, dirt and ugliness. Even in the contexts of fashion that are considered elaborative, avant-garde, or experimental, there are aesthetics that help to define a work as ‘fashion’; as Clarke (2014) argues, fashion has changed dramatically through its re-descriptions, but is still familiar in its designs and shapes.

Throughout history, re-descriptions of beauty or the quality of ugliness have attracted activists and alternative groups, embraced distortion and challenged norms, while simultaneously pushing back the norms of dominant aesthetics and the New Beauty Council has also in previous projects worked with this activism, ugliness, and re-description of beauty (Enqvist, 2009). For *Exclude Me In*, The New Beauty Council, MYCKET and myself worked from the perspective that, with an understanding of ideas of dirt and ugliness in a social and ideological context, we can perhaps understand the provocative and powerful imagery that is embodied in expressions of carnivals, graffiti, illegal nightclubs, and actions of activism. Rules of social engagement are being challenged and, in the carnival, the clothing and setting create a stage for different

social behaviors, although there exist, of course, many new social distinctions and hierarchies within the carnival setting (Da Matta, 1991).

At carnival time, the unique sense of time and space causes individuals to feel they are a part of the collective, at which point they cease to be themselves. It is at this point that, through costume and mask, an individual exchanges bodies and is renewed. At the same time there arises a heightened awareness of one's sensual, material, bodily unity and community. (Bakhtin, [1941, 1965] 1993:10).

In *Exclude Me In*, by including, challenging, actively negotiating, and deconstructing the past and present, we explored how diversity could be addressed in this carnival including the context of queer and the city landscape. As political theoretician Mouffe argues in *On the Political* (2005:9), this antagonism is an important part of the creation of society, and is constituted within the political space of power relations and conflicts. From such a perspective, democracy can be considered to be a platform for constant negotiation, rather than a consensus-based system. We worked on *Exclude Me In* from the perspective that the idea of constant negotiation is applicable to the relationships between art and architecture, public and common spaces, and the in-between spaces of the city itself.

We thus investigated dressed bodies as architecture, making, with our own bodies, the walls and floors, and thus a movable space. It was also an investigation of bodily transformations and the performative and ideological potential of dressed bodies. 'Materiality' here includes actors, attire, architecture, and performance—all of which, taken together, related to the project's theme. We worked from the perspective that clothing, make-up, and accessories, as well as façades, properties, rooms, and buildings, are read as different in scale, rather than belonging to different categories. Together, they interact, create, provide, and sustain the norms and normalcy of a particular situation; however, we also considered those parameters of varied scales to act as disguises and curtains, which are pulled back so as to set the play in motion.

With this application, and in the context of queer and fashion, materiality is not limited to the wearable, the objects we put on, or the spaces in which we act, but can include the materiality of sex, as discussed by Butler (1990), where sex is a product of regulation. Working from the perspective of intersectionality, regulative discourse and de-naturalized bodies—i.e. bodies that are formed through the repetition of performative acts, including the expectations projected on them—also relate to racialized bodies (see e.g. Fortier 1999:41-64, who uses Butler's theory to define the

production of cultural belonging, including the ethnicization of bodies and space). The extension of materiality, from the effect and context of objects to also include bodies and sex, indicates the multiple applications and interdisciplinary practices that *Body Acts Queer* contains or can be developed into.

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.

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)



SUMMARY

Summary

In this artistic, practice-based thesis, I have worked to create a new fashion program, *Body Acts Queer*, which enables an experimental, performative, and ideological perspective on fashion design practices. *Body Acts Queer* applies queer theory and practices to creative processes, and simultaneously investigates the performative and ideological potential of clothing and fashion design. The content of the program is exemplified through a series of artistic projects in which clothing has a fundamental role. In these projects, I have studied the bodily experiences of clothing, which are explored from queer, gender, and feminist perspectives. The thesis includes seven projects: *On and Off*, *If you were a girl I would love you even more*, *Utopian Bodies*, *The Safety Top*, *The Club Scene*, *Exclude Me In*, and *The Lesbian Shirt*.

As *Body Acts Queer* and its artistic examples have explored bodily experiences of clothing in the settings of individual and collective manifestations and performative acts, such manifestations, in this thesis exemplified through notions of queer and feminism, are created through design work, and simultaneously become an act related to ideology. Performative design research is here a way to understand the world, and simultaneously create the ability to change it. The program extends the designer's role so that it encompasses the formation of not only objects, but of change in a much wider societal context, on the basis that what we make and how it is perceived and produced has an impact on our world. The program enables the experiences that the body perceives to work as a platform to explore and create a change. It is through the design practice—the performative design research that *Body Acts Queer* contains and explores—that such change is perceived. With such a notion design becomes political, and a potential actor in the efforts to achieve a re-evaluation, great change, and, lastly, a utopia.

Finally, I let quotations from the participants of the projects take their place as the last words of this thesis.



SUMMARY

I got a real kick.



SUMMARY

It was a feeling of anarchy.



SUMMARY

It felt important.



SUMMARY

It felt present.



SUMMARY

I think that it is a political act.



SUMMARY

I experienced that bodies were magnificent, no matter how they were.



SUMMARY

I let my self-consciousness go.



SUMMARY

I trusted the situation.



SUMMARY

I was as relaxed as I am when alone.



SUMMARY

I felt that the clothes and the environment created that.



SUMMARY

You created me.



SUMMARY

You made me become the person I now am.



SUMMARY

Maybe.



SUMMARY

Maybe none of this is true.



ENDNOTES

¹ *On and Off* was presented as a performance at Konstfack (2013) and Södertälje Konsthall (2016), and as a paper at the IFFTI Conference in Florence (2015), where I also discussed the project in relation to the designer role's as a writer (Gunn, 2015) —a discussion that was partly inspired by the manuscript of this thesis.

² *If you were a girl I would love you even more* was presented at the Design Principle & Practices Conference in Tokyo (2013) and exhibited as part of Tendenser/ 'Tenderness' (2013) at Galleri F15, Moss, Norway and 'Kropp & Språk' at ID:I Galleri, Stockholm. The text of *If you were a girl I would love you even more* was previously published in *If you were a girl I would love you even more* (Gunn, 2013b).

³ Critical fiction is, in our practice, used as a term related to critical design (see i.e. Dunne, 1999), where the design offers critical perspectives on objects and acts, and simultaneously applies notions of ideology or social, cultural, or sexually-oriented behaviors. The creation of performances are a fusion of fiction and reality; the critical notions change how we perceive not only the imagined past (the re-enactment) but also the present.

⁴ "The tale from the hide-outs" (Talet från gömmorna), chorus, speech by MYCKET, Maja Gunn and Annika Enqvist (NBC), held at Esperantoplatsen, *Exclude Me In*, September 6, 2013. The speech is a combination of quotes from The Queer Nation Manifesto and texts written by the artists.

⁵ 'Hir' is a gender-neutral possessive pronoun (in place of 'his' or 'her').

⁶ 'Zie' is a gender-neutral pronoun (in place of 'he' or 'she').

⁷ Participants were kept anonymous through the use of pseudonyms, but the ages stated are real.

⁸ Regionarkivet is the caretaker of information from the Västra Götaland Region and the City of Gothenburg. Documents that have been filed with the City of Gothenburg and the nearby Bohus, Skaraborgs and Älvsborgs County Councils (now Västra Götaland) are archived and stored in Regionarkivet.

⁹ – Göteborgskarnevalen was a carnival in the 1980's and 1990's in the second largest city in Sweden, Göteborg/Gothenburg, located on the west coast.

¹⁰ We interviewed today's Gothenburg queer scene and mapped its history from the middle of the 1990s up to the present. Local organizations include Fjollfront, Transmilitanta brigaden, Queerinstitutet, Pantrarna, Ingen människa är illegal, Fittcrew, Kvinnofolkshögskolan, Queerhotellet, West pride (and its opponents), Lesbisk festival, RFSL Gbg, HBT-Seniorerna, Stolta föräldrar till hbtq, Regnbågen Transföreningen, FPES Vänner i väst – transpersoner RFSU Göteborg, Lucky Lips – kör, Hellmans Drengar – kör, Gays in Angered, GUTS Homan i Göteborg, Håbeteku – hbtq-studenterna Göteborg, Utopia EKHO Elektra Göteborg, Amnestys HBTQ-grupp Göteborg, Club wish LM (Scandinavian Leather Men), Göteborg Intersex Scandinavia, Café Vulgo and clubs such as Feed the Horse and Bonanza. Informative sources included the two reports of Bergsten (2006, 2007), and publication of Lindholm and Nilsson (2002)

¹¹ The term 'power of fiction' relates to our method of allowing the participants to be a part of a re-enactment. Through this restaging act –the performance of bodies – fiction created something real.

¹² 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 (Wilde 2012:46).

¹³ We see this in the works of e.g. Cindy Sherman, Martha Wilson, and Dynasty Handbag, where clothing is used as a tool to create characters which lead to discussions regarding gaze, power, and social structures.

¹⁴ A recent Swedish example of this is the Stockholm nightclub and restaurant Berns which, in August 2013, used a white person painted black, imitating Josephine Baker, as part of a performance. Berns claimed that they used a white person in blackface because there were no black actors or extras available, which was swiftly shown to be incorrect. The use of blackface was heavily criticized in the Swedish media and led to demonstrations outside Berns, resulting in a statement from the CEO to the effect that blackface would not be used by the company again.

¹⁵ See e.g. i-D, August 2007; *Vogue Paris*, October 2009; *V Magazine*, November 2009; *L'Officiel Hommes*, February 2010; *Stern Fotografie*, June 2010; *Numéro*, October 2010; *L'Officiel Paris*, February 2011; *Illamasqua Australia*, advertising campaign, November 2012; *Numéro*, February 2013; *Vogue Netherlands*, May 2013; Claudio Cutugno, Fashion Show in Milan, February 24, 2015; for more examples of uses of blackface in fashion, see e.g. Ehlin 2012; Rees, 2013; Nessif, 2015). Such shocking images are not confined to instances of blackface, however, and have included other non-white bodies as well, as when the eyes of American model Crystal Renn were taped and stretched to look 'more Asian' in a shoot for *Vogue Nippon* (October 2011).

¹⁶ cf. group rape in a Dolce & Gabbana advertisement, 2007; also Calvin Klein, advertisement, 2010; a Duncan Quinn advertisement showing a suited man smirking and standing by a car, holding a tie which is looped around the neck of a presumably dead woman, who is in her underwear, 2008; Tom Ford's men's fragrance campaign in which the bottle is placed on, or facing, the vagina of a naked woman, 2007; multiple examples in the adverts of Sisley and American Apparel.

¹⁷ Research has been conducted on the perception of sex and violence in advertisements (see e.g. Bushman [2007], Edell and Burke [1987]), some of which suggests that sex in advertisement does not, despite what many assume, improve viewers' memory of the products (see e.g. Parker & Furnham, 2007).

¹⁸ Original: *Allt jag vill göra är kvinnokläder för män*

¹⁹ In her research, Hållander highlights e.g. the first Swedish women's soccer team, Öxabäck IF. In her project 'Pottery as Politics' [2016], she focuses on pottery with political messages from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and remakes them into contemporary political commentaries.

²⁰ 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."



ENDNOTES

²¹ These reactions were expressed in an informal manner in groups during our presentations at the different fire stations, and we did not document each comment. Three presentations were given in total to roughly 30 firefighters, both male and female.

²² This idea of what we are expected to wear and how we react when someone goes outside such norms relates to the great deal of publicity that male Swedish train drivers received in Summer 2013 when they wore skirts as a protest against their uniform's lack of shorts (see e.g. Wallin, 2013; Bendz 2013).



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