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Identity and gender politics.

According to Dictionary.com, identity politics can be explained as 'political activity or movements based on or catering to the cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, religious, or social interests that characterize a group identity.' The reality of why identity (gender specific) politics are important to discuss can be boiled down to how the media has decided to target individuals that identify with genders outside of the norm, outside of the comfort zone of many.

The Guardian has covered one of many stories regarding transgender discrimination, 'Texas to pass bill banning transgender students from choosing bathrooms.' Among other news outlets, BBC also wrote the headline: 'Why toilets are a battleground for transgender rights,' which is only a year older than The Guardian's article. One year difference, same issue. 'she "more regularly than not" experiences abuse when she tries to use public toilets.' If individuals can't use public restrooms without fear of facing hatred, and even sometimes physical violence then something needs to be fixed. This is why I've decided to discuss the topic, and it'll be relevant until others can live without fear simply for having a gender identity that doesn't align with another's worldview.



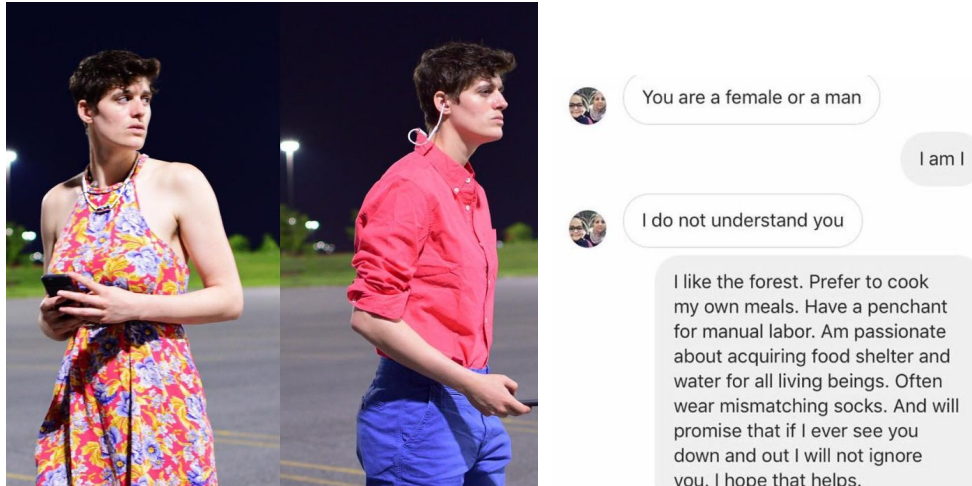
Trixie Mattel, promo look for All Stars 3.

RuPaul who is considered to be the most commercially successful drag queen in the United States has created an Emmy-winning series, one that has held its own for ten seasons spanning over a decade. Along with the success came a spin-off series which sees past contestants return to compete, and one queen who returned for the third installment was Trixie Mattel. Trixie Mattel is the drag person of Brian Michael Firkus, an American singer-songwriter, and comedian from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Trixie stands to highlight the accepted identity, although Brian showcases the two most accepted genders (cisgender male and cisgender female) in an unconventional manner, there seems to be less public uproar and political commentary surrounding his visual exploration of gender-fluidity. I believe Drag Queens are becoming increasingly more accepted in mainstream Media due to their entertainment value, although in their essence they showcase gender-fluid identities within basic and understandable visual prompts many still see these individuals (some of which identify as gender-fluid within themselves,) as men in dresses. It's easy to ignore the politics of Drag as the art is still considered comedy-centric entertainment.



David by Michelangelo.

The renaissance sculpture stands at a demanding height of 17ft, (5.17 meters.) With a centralized placement in the exhibition space, David could easily be read as overpowering, and demanding. His height makes his counterpart (aphrodite) insignificant in comparison, an easily ignored piece when featured in the same room as Michelangelo's overwhelming carving. This is a direct reference to cisgender males who comment, belittle and argue against the very concept of a gender spectrum despite never once having their identity challenged.

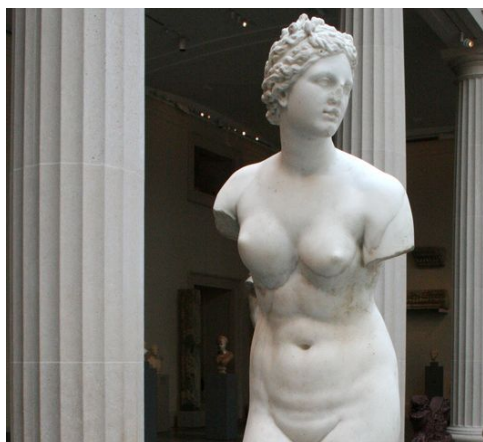


Dove Rain, photographed by @thejoecardamone. (instagram.)

Dove Rain is a firefighter turned model who is using their androgynous features to challenge gender stereotypes.

Although Rain is now an advocate and activist for gender-fluid identities, they haven't always seen themselves as androgynous. Rain has stated that she once saw herself as an 'ugly woman.' Individuals such as Rain are important to feature not only as a activist but to highlight how the struggle of gender identities may affect an individual's self confidence and how they may view their own self-worth. Having a tight and strict view on beauty is and has been a struggle for women since beauty has been a concept, and the struggle only gets harder as ignorant groups fight with ferocity against those who threaten to change their world views.

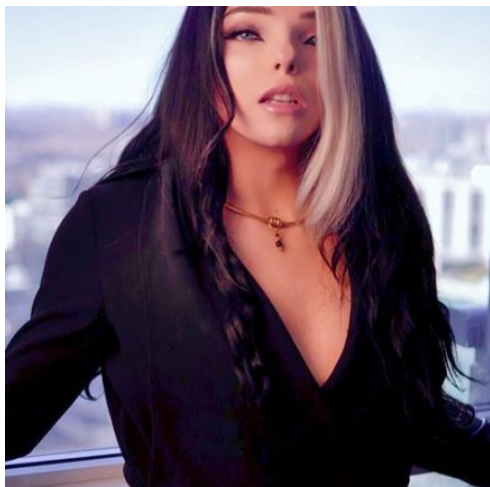
Dove Rain represents the easily denied, despite showing a raw reality of gender-fluidity unlike Trixie Mattel who has been accepted since featuring on RuPaul's Drag Race. Rain threatens to cause change, a concept so many have become afraid of. Dove Rain, model and activist, is the symbol of gender without comedy.



marble statue of Aphrodite.

Aphrodite stands at roughly 5'2 feet, (1.9 meters.) Isolated the carving could be viewed as a symbol of empowerment, despite the imperfections the statue is still very much so seen as beautiful and has been a centerpiece in art since its creation. Standing in the shadow of Michelangelo's David has Aphrodite shrinking in comparison, next to such an overpowering male figure changes the room's mood. A once strong and beautiful woman now becomes a metaphor for real to life cases where women are underpaid in favor of their male counterparts. Men have dominated both history and the contemporary space since the written word was created.

Beyond the feminist concepts is a deeper comment on society, David and Aphrodite occupy their own space, the largest space on the building plan. While only two out of five exhibition pieces are placed in one room, three more are forced into an excluded area. The two statues represent cisgenders, the only genders by the standards of many thus the sculptures are set-up in an area which greets the audience.



Stef Sanjati, photographed by @mollie.pie.photography. (instagram.)

Stephanie Luciana Pelozo is a Canadian transgender-female YouTube personality, better known by her stage name Stef Sanjati. Sanjati has documented the ups and downs of life as a transgender woman, her videos gauged international interest when Stef Sanjati archived her experiences such as Facial feminization surgery (FFS.)

Her documented experiences and the raw footage of surgeries would be played without audio, leaving the audience to place their manipulated concept of what the life of a transgender woman may be, whether it is

glamorized or otherwise. Living as part of the generation that was both raised by parental figures, and the rise of the internet, I know that I would've believed a transgender individual's surgeries to be purely aesthetic if not for the accessibility of information. Accompanying the silent visuals would be a pamphlet featuring a transcript, the truth would be readily available for those who were ready to step outside their comfort zones and learn. This silent video installation is a direct comment on individuals who refuse to learn, those few who despite outwardly denying the chance to discover new information continue to argue their ignorant views.

Bibliography.

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