Developing A Unique Voice

Presented by Jack WInbow

Self Identity

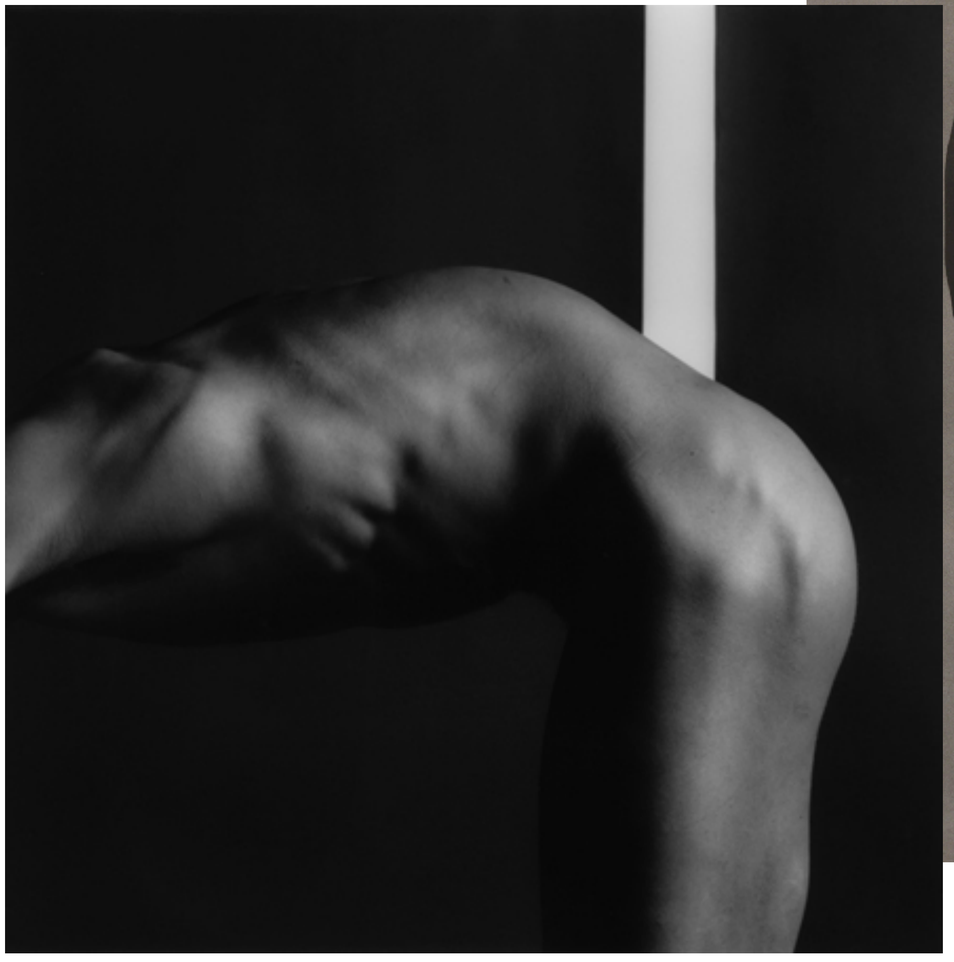




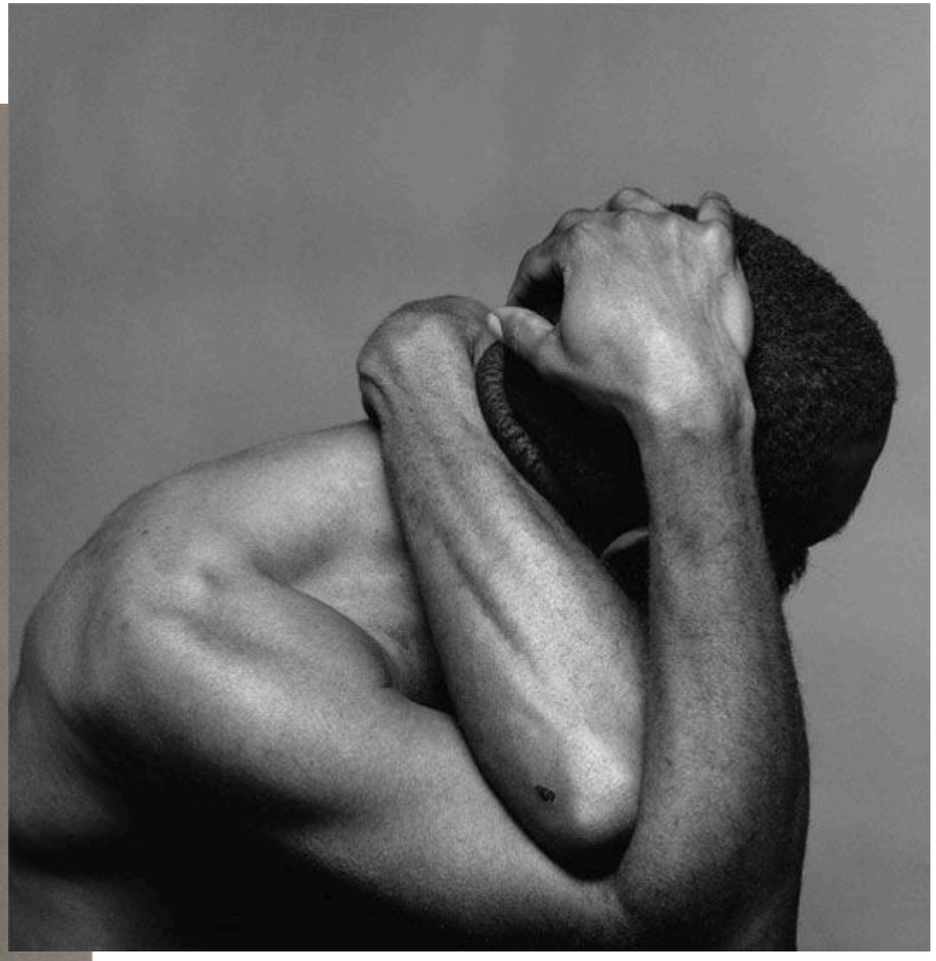
Robert Mapplethorpe

When beginning the project assignment ‘developing a unique voice’ my intuition told me to venture into the world of exploration in identity and self expression in particularly within sexuality. Being a gay male the world of sexuality and identity seems to be an inescapable one, always the first to call when a question of someones self arrises and the last to know about my own identity. As a proud member of the LGBTQIA+ community I have always been happy to explain and delve into the psyche of self expression and sexuality to those who ask. However, this has left me in the awkward position of being the coach in the game of life rather than a player on the team. In this project I wanted to explore the world of self expression starting with myself.

I wanted to begin the project with a series of self portraits that reflected my duality in presenting as feminine and masculine. As a cis man I am comfortable within my own gender but like to play with masculinity and femininity, blurring the line between these archaic forms of gender norms is where I feel most comfortable. I wanted to begin my research with one of the more famous queer photographers Robert Mapplethorpe. His androgynous depiction of self in his series of self-portraits helped me find artistic direction within my own portraits. His use of simplistic framing and strong focal points allowed for undivided attention to his main proposition… expression.









Cindy Sherman

Moving onto Cindy Sherman I wanted to challenge my own perception of femininity and how I may present that. As a man, my ideology of femininity has been shaped by patriarchal figures in my life such as my father, grandfather and uncle. These one sided perceptions of femininity stem from misogynistic and sexist stereotypes, while these men in my life are not overtly sexist to their female counterparts. Traditionalist sexism ideals of women have been socially conditioned into their ideology from a young age and passed onto myself. Cindy Sherman's use of sexually aggressive stereotypes and humorous depictions of the scrutiny women inspired me to present femininity in a similar way.

I wanted to use stereotypical depictions of femininity in my self portraits to not only highlight and make abundantly clear my blurring of lines between masculinity and femininity but to highlight my own internal misogyny and struggle to unlearn and re-educate myself on female-centric issues and stereotypes.





The Sleeping Hermaphroditus

After researching Cindy Sherman’s work and her depiction of women I wanted to research into art histories depiction of women, in-particularly the idea of the perfect woman. Here you see the recreation of the sleeping Hermaphroditus, one of art histories first idillic depictions of women however Hermaphroditus was gender assigned male at birth. Born from the God Hermes and Goddess Aphrodite, one of the first depictions of the perfect female body stems from a non-binary person. While the ideology of the perfect woman is a harmful one, it interests me that the idea of female beauty comes from someone who can present as both male and female.



Claude Cahun





For the final portion of my self-identity research, I wanted to delve into the work of Claude Cahun. Their blurring of lines between femininity and masculinity was something that I wanted to initially capture in my first set of images. Although their unique poses of the time period created an editorial aesthetic most commonly found in zines of this era. The poses created in the images transcend time, proven when Cahun's images were lost for decades and re-discovered in the nineties becoming a sensation within the art world. I wanted to recreate these editorial style poses as editorial aesthetics are something that I am deeply fascinated by. While these poses are not groundbreaking in the modern era their use in popular culture still seem to be relevant.







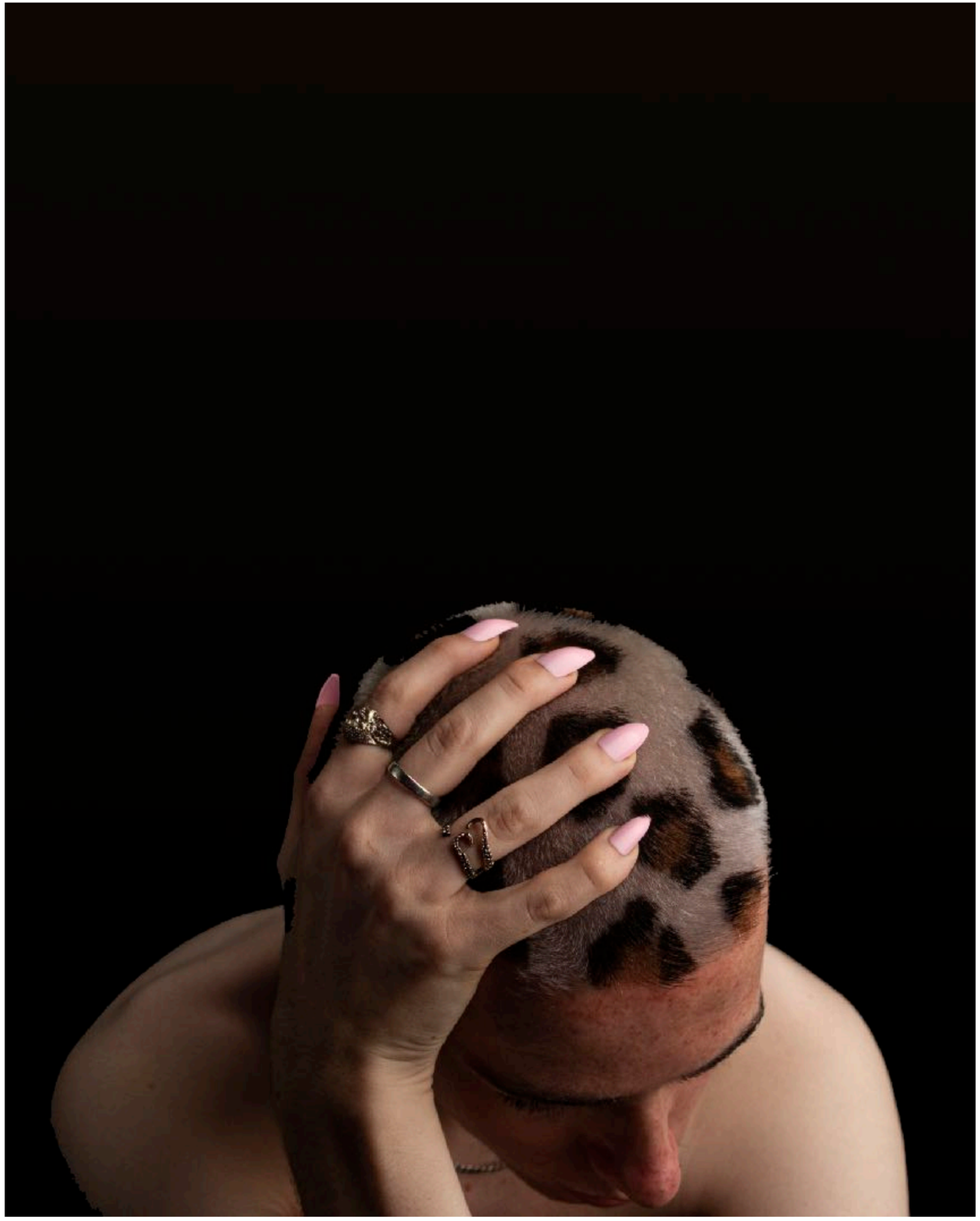


















Alternative Identity

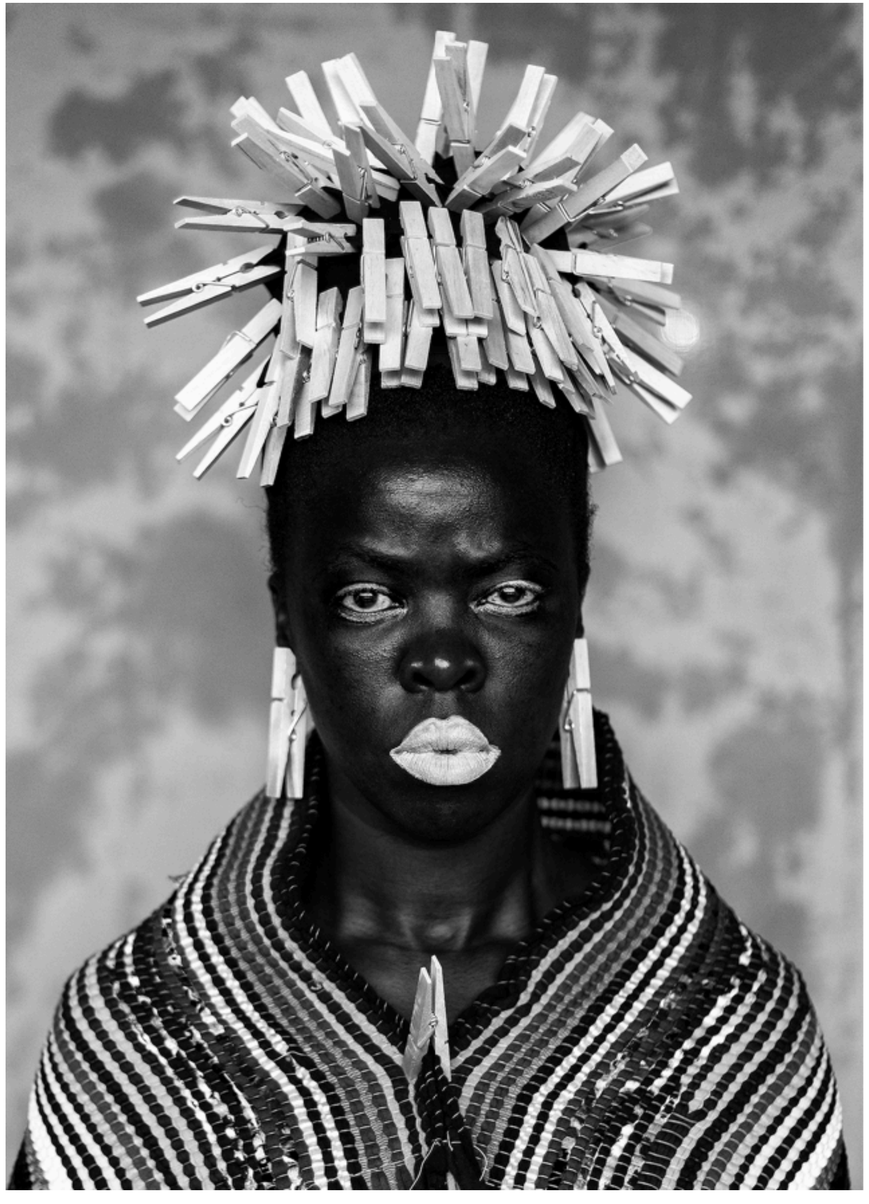


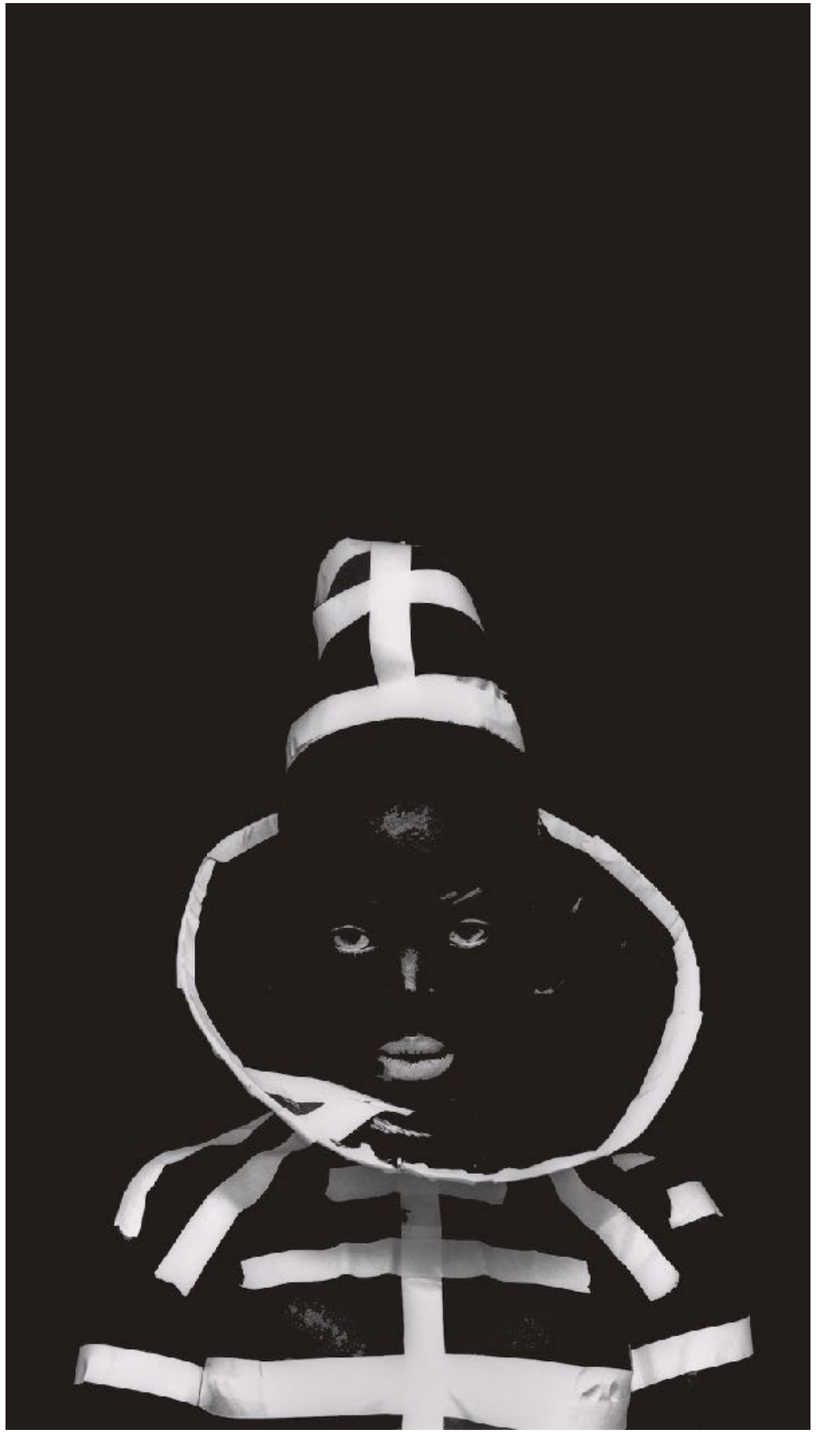
Zanele Muholi

After producing the self portrait images I wanted to continue my exploration into gender and photograph subjects who follow their own ideas of gender. Beginning the next section of my project I wanted to experiment more with my photography style and aesthetic within my images. Flash style photography has always interested me yet whenever I have tried to experiment within this photographic style I had never been confident enough to create. I wanted to combine my experimental aesthetic with the experimental nature of my subjects gender expression.

Beginning with Zanele Muholi, their harsh flash photography style was something that I had imagined when brainstorming my second shoot. Muholi is a gender non-binary photographer that explores their relation with gender as well as their relationship with their birth place South Africa and the apartheid that they had experienced in their childhood. Their powerful and strong images are further reinforced by the flash aesthetic which creates a sense of exposure that conveys an unmasking of truth. This exposing quality of flash photography is something that I aspired to create in my images.













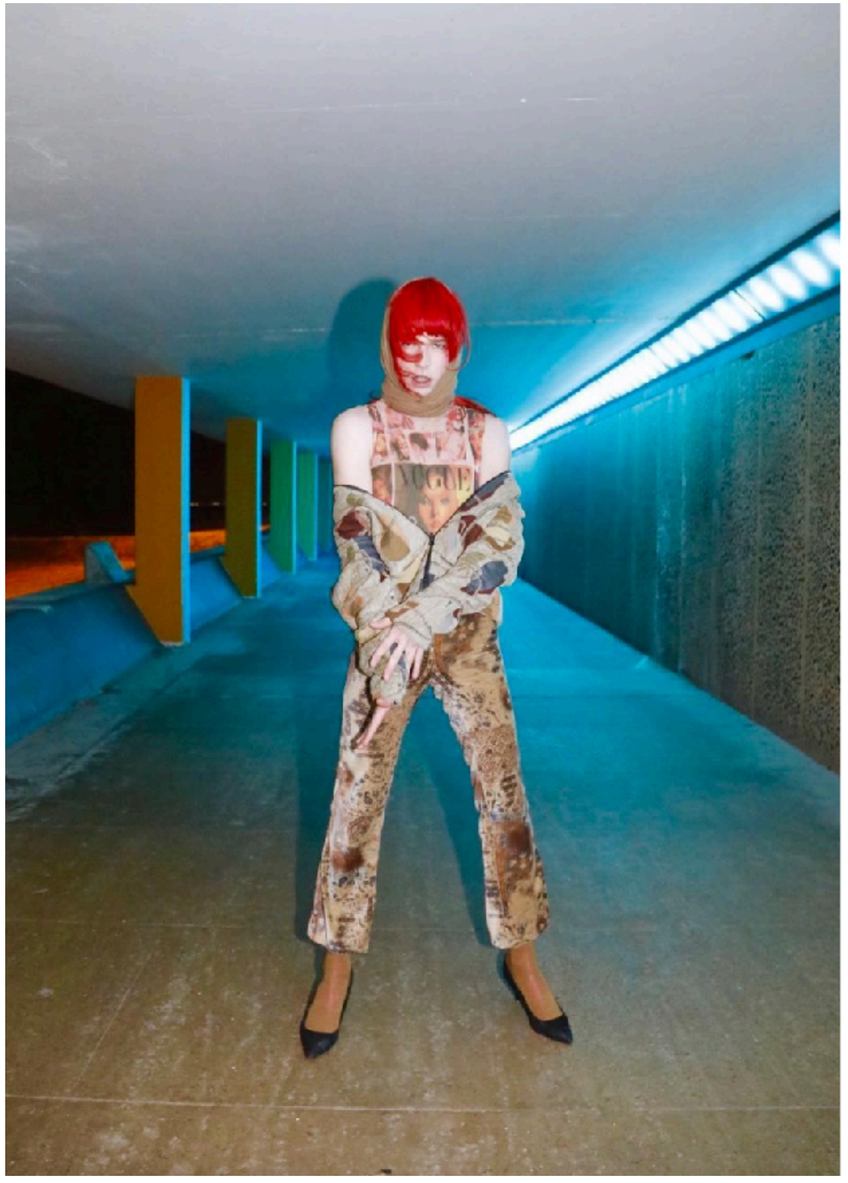
Lanee Bird & Cherry Auhoni

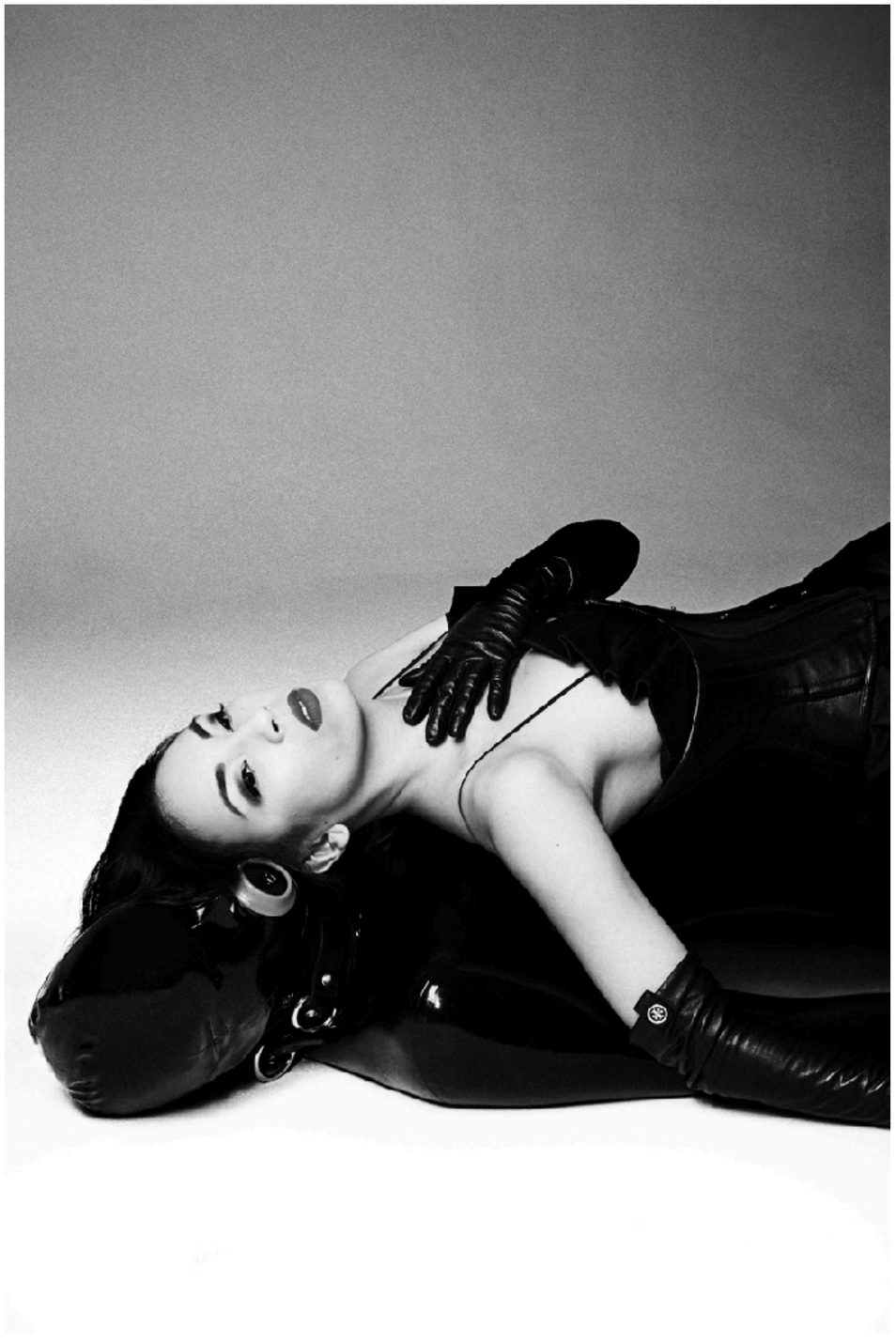
Moving onto my next two artists ,Lanee Bird and Cherry Auhoni. Their images also used the flash style of photography however I wanted to focus more on her use of editorial and fashion forward poses. I wanted to keep my images from these two shoots as well as my previous shoot consistent in part through the poses and shooting style I have captured my subjects in. Both of these photographers have combined the queerness of their subjects and the fashion forward poses found in pop culture to bring the queerness into the mainstream. This is something I aspire to do.

In my shoot I wanted to explore my subject's relation with femininity and masculinity much like my previous shoot. However I wanted to isolate my subjects feminine and masculine desires into two shoots that compliment each other rather than combine both gender norms into one shoot. I believe this helps create clear and defined images that allow the spectator to focus on one version of the subjects self. This duality in person and identical shoot aesthetic allows for a sense of separation as well as unification between the person and images. This confusing relationship between subject and artist, spectator and image, masculine and feminine is made to show the uneasy and confound ideology of the subjects relationship towards gender and identity.







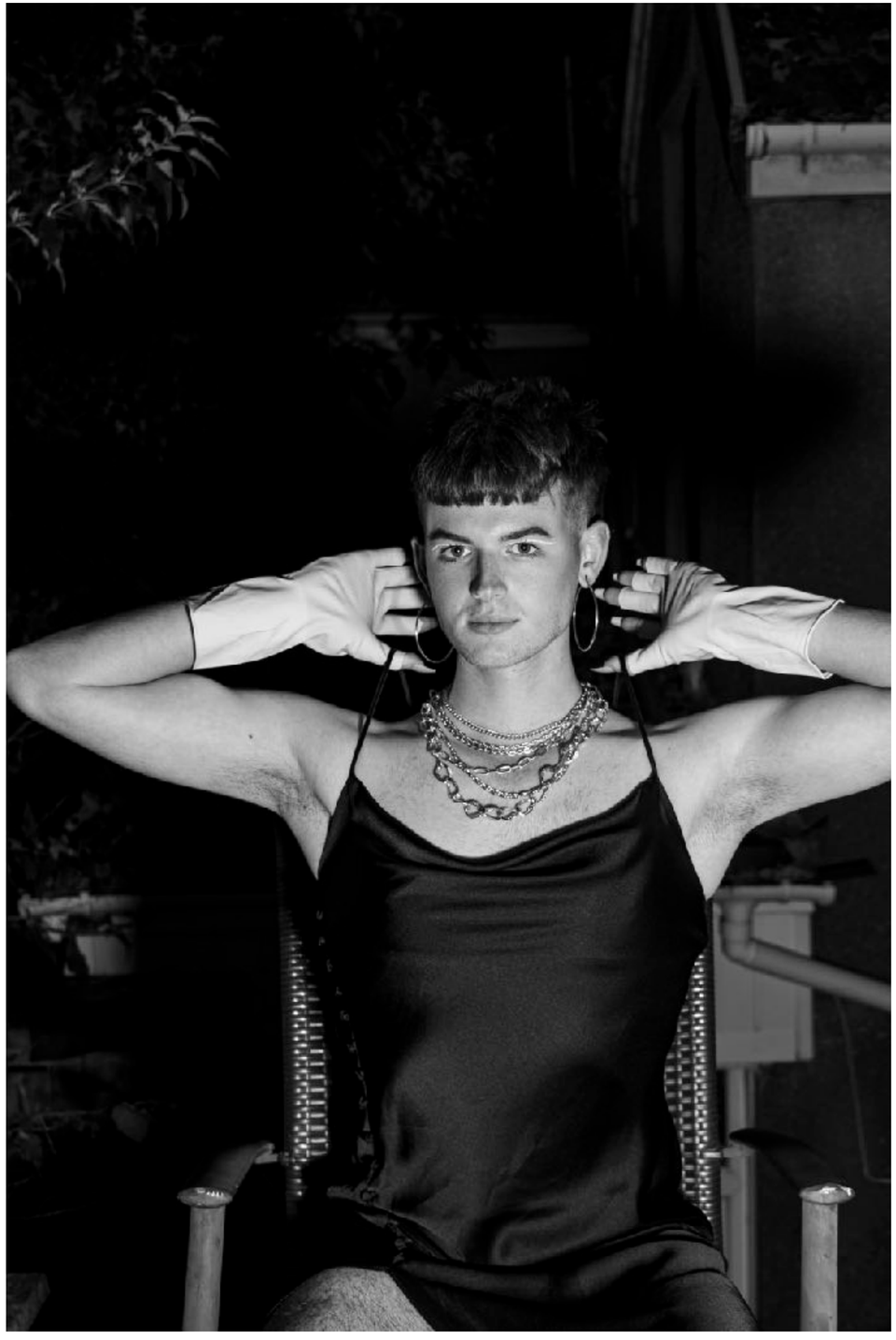




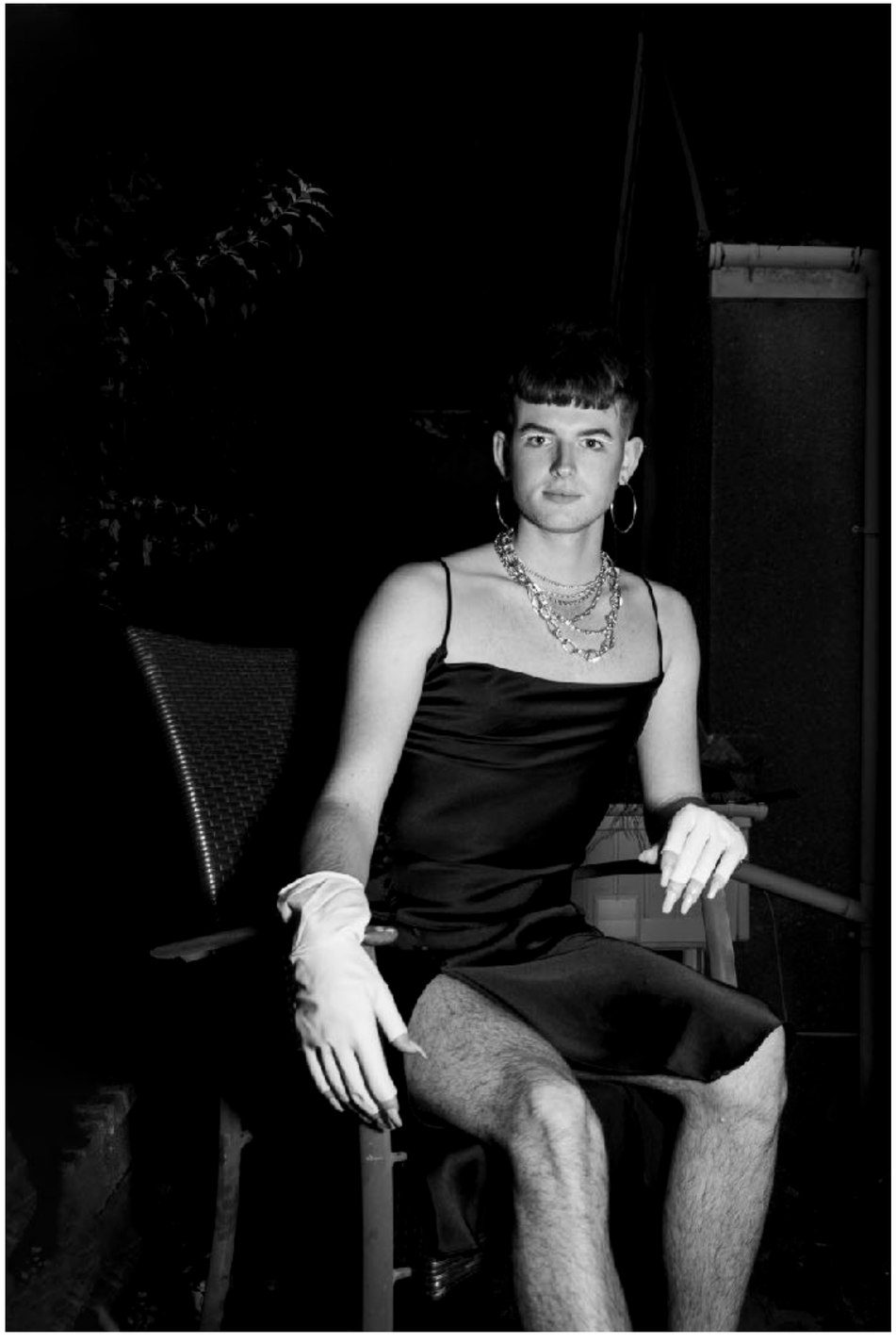


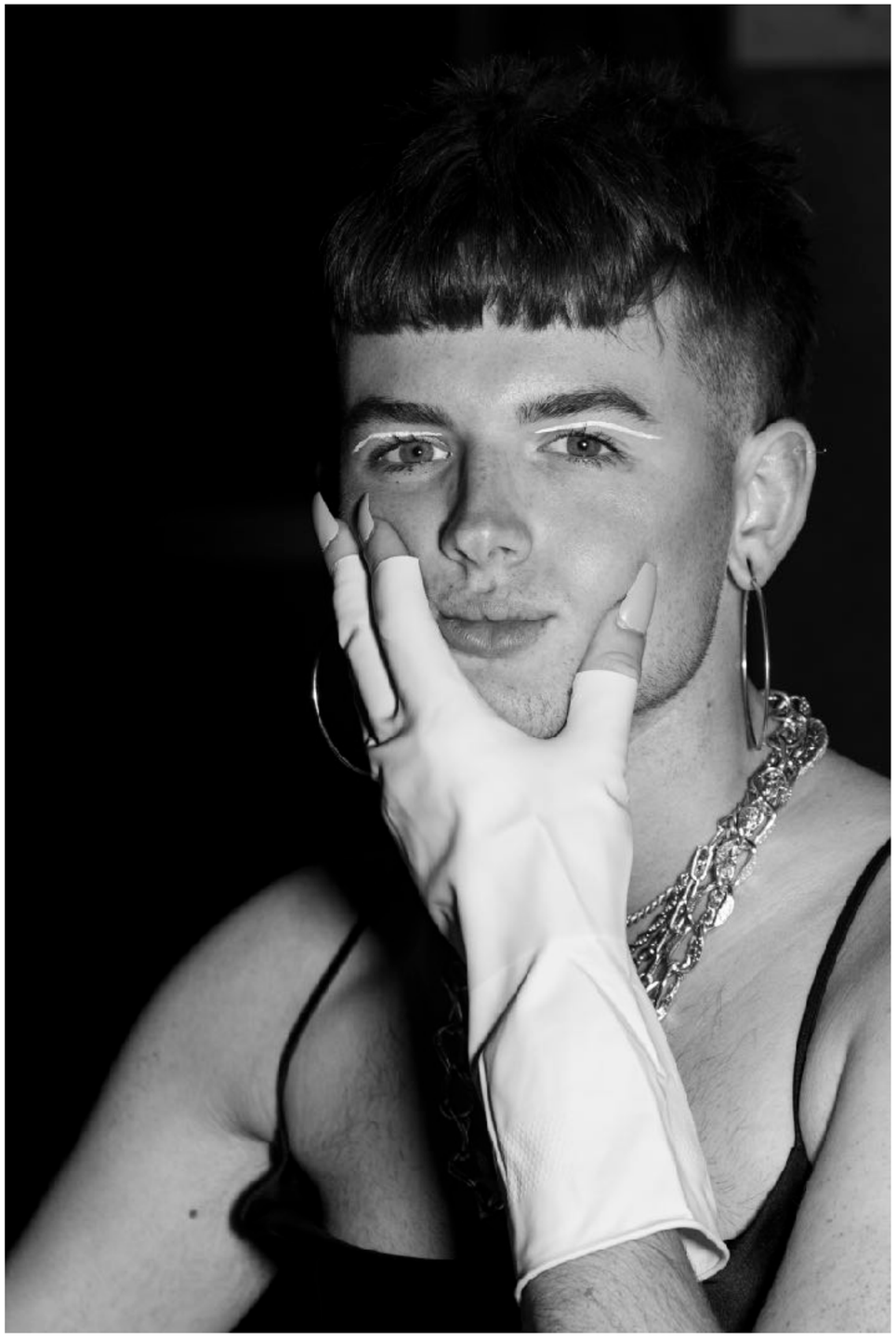

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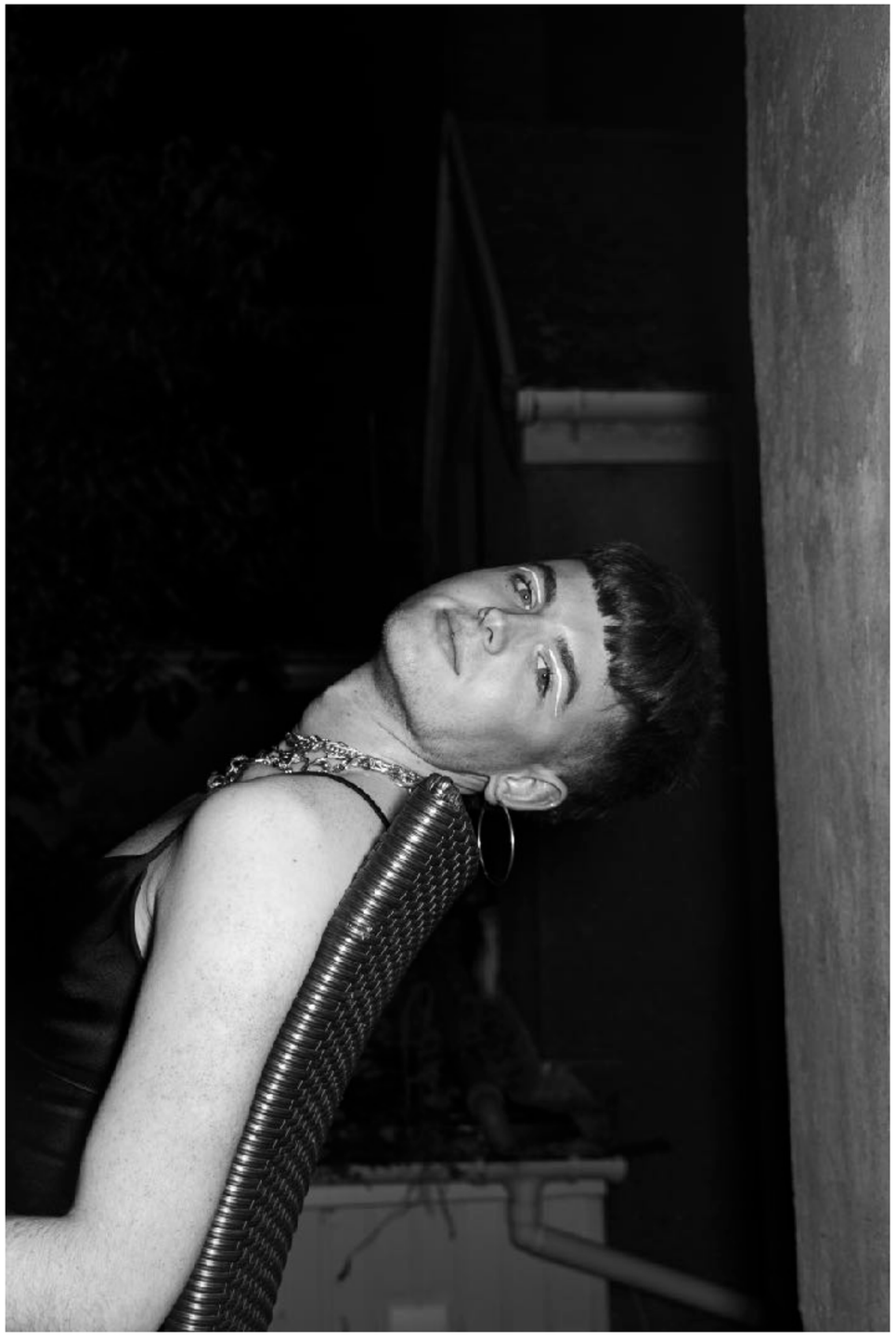


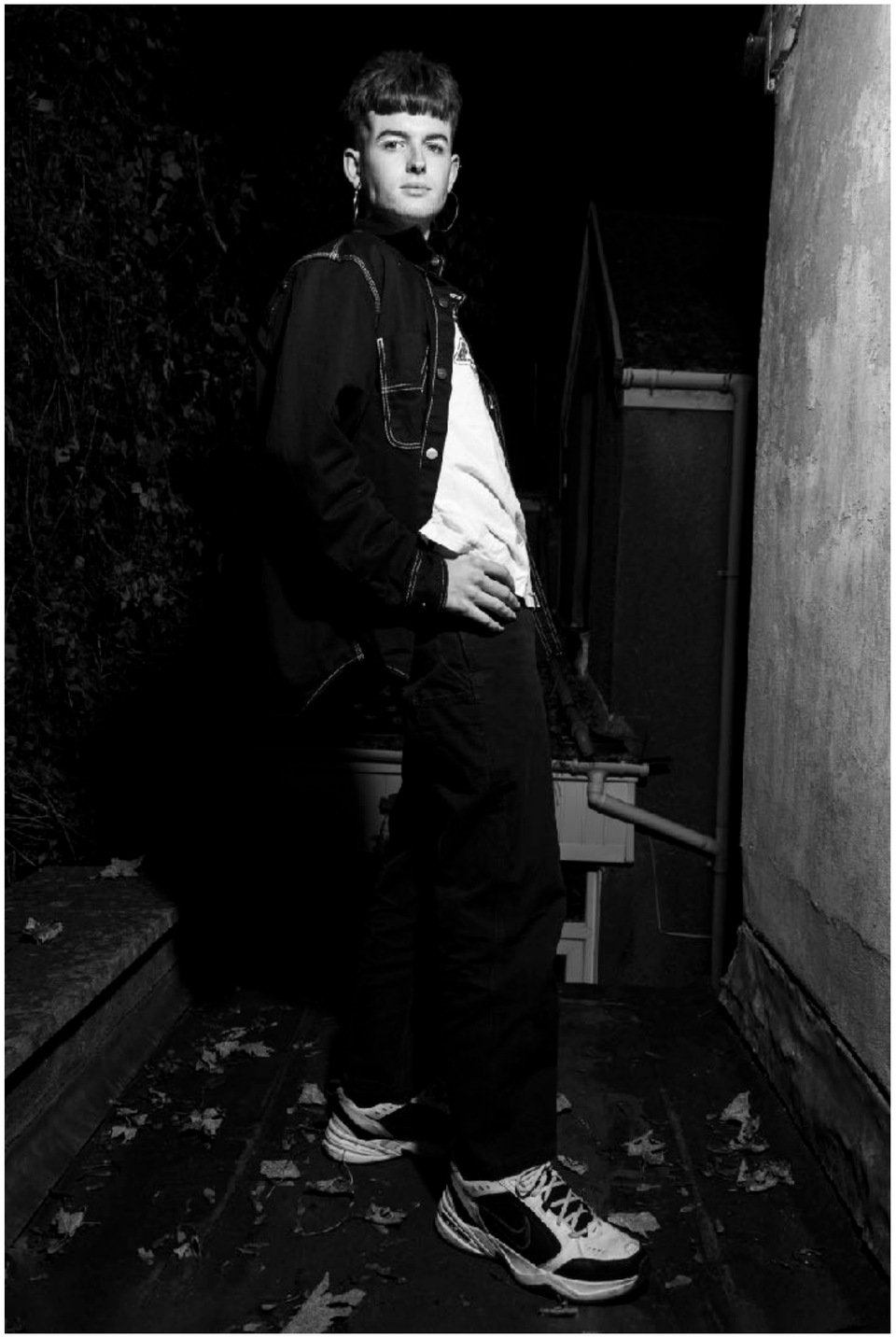


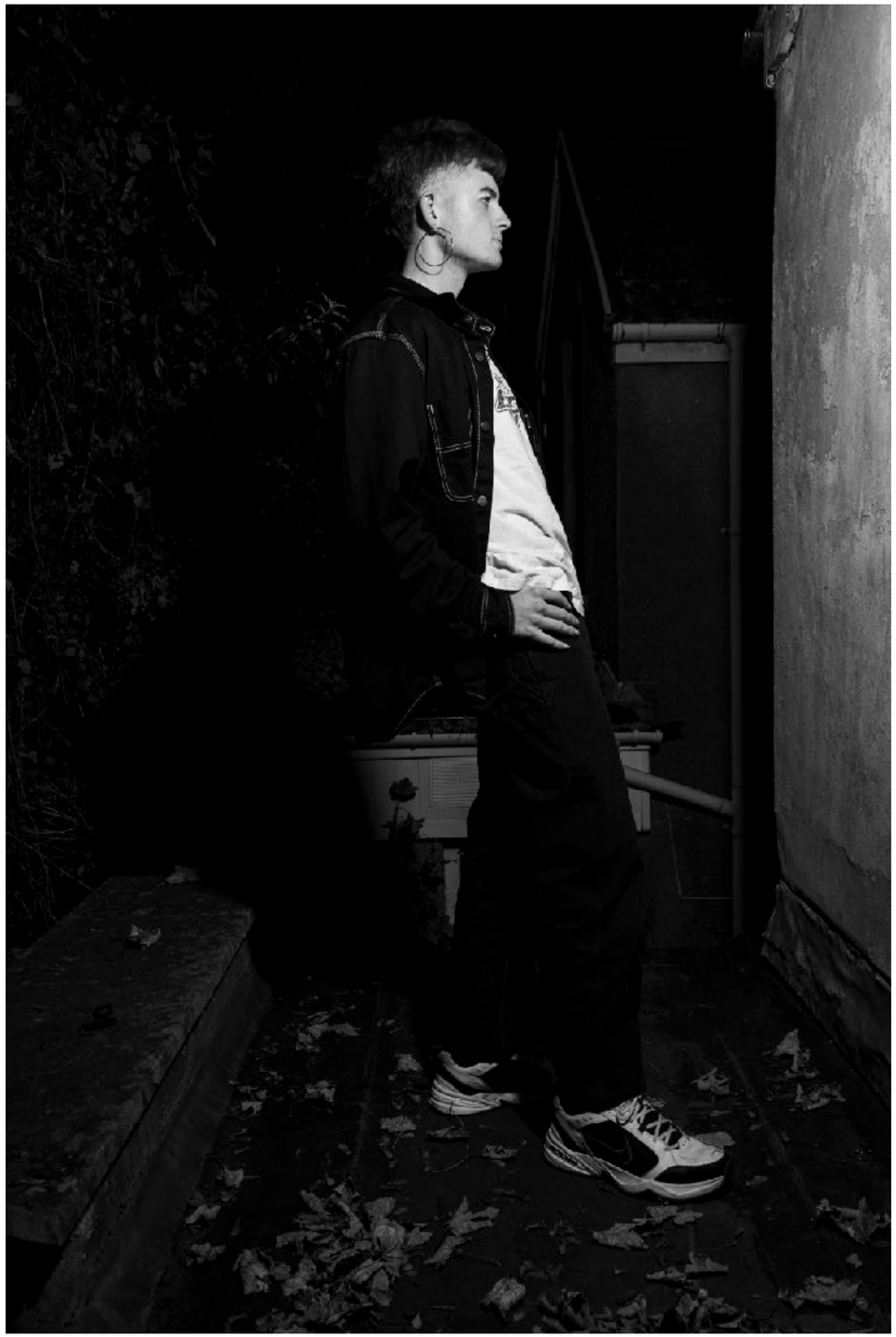




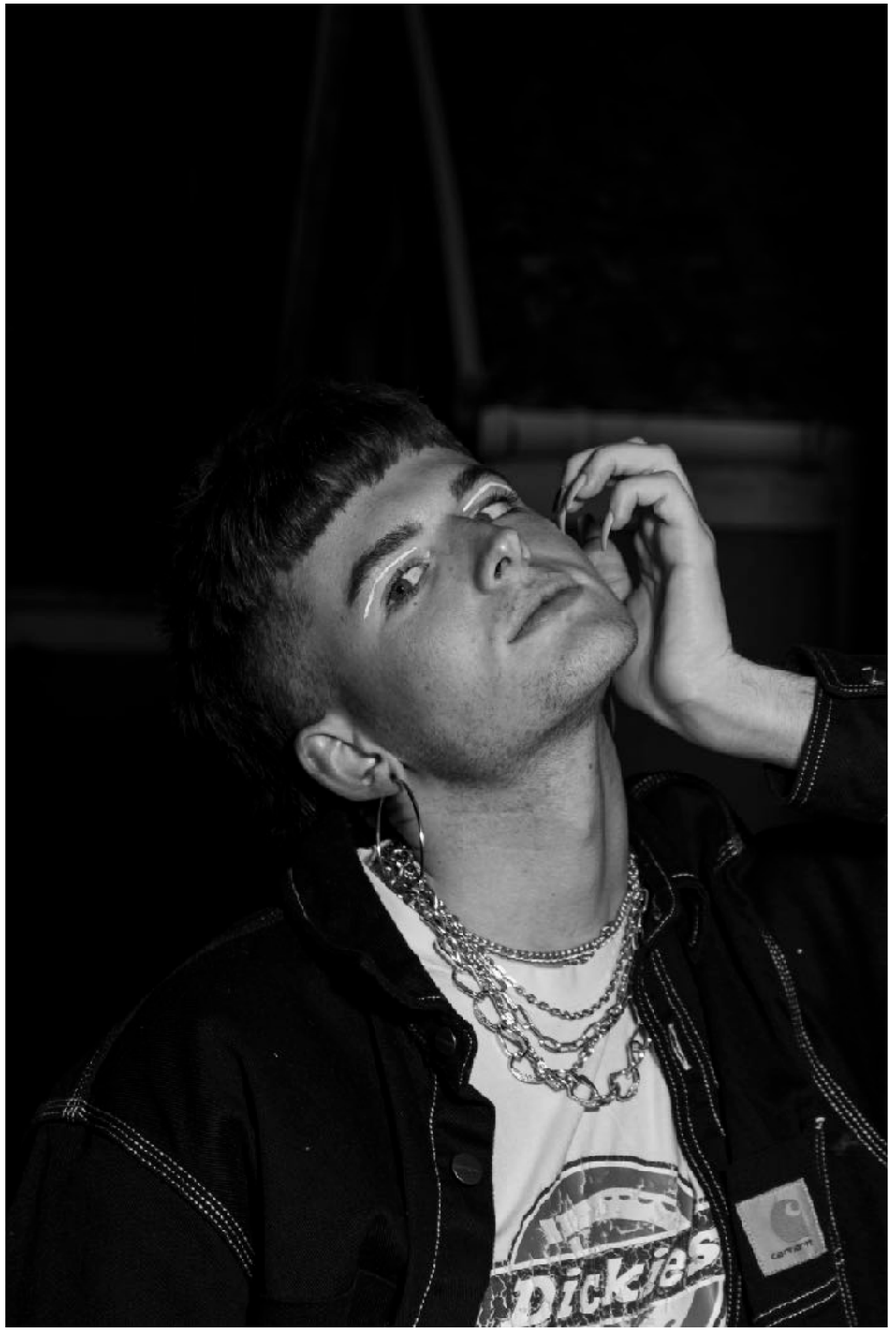











Dickies

Subversive Identity





Catherine Opie

In my final portion of my exploration into identity I wanted to traverse the realms of subversive identities in particularly subversality within gender norms and expectations of straight women. It seems to me that Cindy Sherman and her political rhetoric against gender expectations and the scrutiny of women was a subject that I was magnetised towards. After my first self-portrait shoot investigating the duality of two halves of myself involving masculinity and femininity, my second shoot in which I further explored this identity, instead encapsulating it into two separated shoots. I found that femininity and the idea of the female aspect of identity was still a little underrepresented. As a result I wanted to shoot a female subject who's identity defies that of expected normality.

Beginning with Cathreine Opie, I felt encouraged to start my last section of research in more extreme female and lesbian art. Something that may seem contradictory to my initial statement beginning this section of photographic practice but I feel is necessary considering the type of identity my subject presented. This being that of a more masculine identity. Oversized clothing, monochromatic colours and light cosmetic appearance may be stereotypical characteristics of masculinity or lesbian women. In Catherine Opie's 'cutting' she expresses her longing for a normal family, or rather fitting in. She carves in her back what she most desires, a house belonging to two women living happily. While this goal is not physically unattainable. The idea of normality and respect that the image would have if the characters were male and female is much different to that of two women. Not only do they face the everyday, ever growing lack of acceptance in sexuality from her peers but also the daily misogyny that holds so many women captive. Opie doesn't long for a house, she longs for the idea of acceptance, ease and happiness, all foreign concepts in a world that distastes your very being.









Corinne day

Moving onto the next artist, I again wanted to take inspiration from editorial aesthetic photographers in order to keep my shooting style and series of image consistent in both aesthetics and political narrative. Looking into Corrine Day I stumbled across an article in which she was named one of the first photographers that explored the idea of the female gaze. As many know the male gaze has and will always be a hot topic within the art world's discourse however the female gaze was something that I had wondered about but had never seen discussed so far in my early career as a photographer. This sparked my interest in Day and made me question my own sub-conscious biases that I may convey when working with my self partly thanks to the male gaze. It made me question whether my "version" or "definition" of the male gaze may differ from that of a straight man as sexual attraction in women is a foreign subject to myself or whether both my sub-conscience male gaze and my straight counterpart's would be the same. These were questions that I wanted to explore further in my shoot.









Heather Glazzard





For my final artist I wanted to research someone who embodied both of my previous artists, Heather Glazzard creates feminist and lesbian artwork while using the aesthetics and poses found in editorial magazines and campaign images. Her work reminded me of the general mise en scene that I:D magazine presents in a lot of their issues. This contemporary yet timeless style that captures emotion in a single moment was something that aspired to create in my own images. I wanted a sense of agelessness in my image to give the impression that the image was stuck in the moment as if you couldn't tell when it was taken. Almost the very embodiment of the still image. The clothing found in Glazzard's images is reminiscent of the 2nd wave skinhead fashion in the 80s and early 90s. This mix of political fashion that mirrored far right ideology and a much more liberal left wing subject creates a conflicting juxtaposition that I feel adds further to the timelessness of the images.

In my shoot I wanted to utilise my lighting in order to create the ageless and timeless images that I desired from my shoot. I also wanted to include the skinhead fashion that is found in Glazzards images as well as some of Opie's. When positioning my model I want to shoot in the aesthetic style of Day in order to re-capture the overall essence of my project.







