



Gender Issues and Beyond: intersectionality in Drag Art

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ABSTRACT – Gender Issues and Beyond: intersectionality in Drag Art – This article weaves together the analysis of contemporary studies and a brief repertoire of *queer* artists with identity issues and their intersectional relations. Through the notion of the body as a territory of political action, we examine how they have addressed, in creation, issues concerning identity, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class, which we consider to be urgent in terms of raising awareness and inciting political transformations inherent in anti-hegemonic artistic and pedagogical processes. Since one of the authors is a practitioner of drag queen, the body's role in research matters. Nowadays, the recent category of drag queer and their associated subgenres enables us to engage in a dialogue with the concept of post-drag, as proposed by Luc Schicharin.

Keywords: **Drag Art. Queer Performance. Intersectionality. Body Identity. Gender and Sexuality.**

RÉSUMÉ – Les Questions de Genre et Au-delà: l'intersectionnalité dans l'Art du Drag – Cet article entremêle l'analyse d'études contemporaines et un bref répertoire d'artistes *queer* confrontés à des questions d'identité et de leurs relations intersectionnelles. Basé sur la notion de corps, comme territoire d'action politique, on analyse comment leurs créations abordent les questions d'identité, de genre et de sexualité, de race, d'ethnicité et de classe, considérées comme urgentes pour donner de la visibilité et provoquer les transformations politiques impliquées dans processus artistiques et pédagogiques contre-hégémoniques. L'un des auteurs étant un artiste drag queen pratiquant, l'expérience du corps est intéressante en tant que recherche. De nos jours, la catégorie récente de drag queer et les sous-genres qui en dérivent, permettent de dialoguer avec le concept de post-drag, évoqué par Luc Schichicharin.

Mots-clés: **Art du Drag. Performance Queer. Intersectionnalité. Identité du Corp. Genre et Sexualité.**

RESUMO – Questões de Gênero e Mais Além: a interseccionalidade na Arte Drag – Este artigo entrelaça a análise de estudos contemporâneos e um breve repertório de artistas *queer* com as questões identitárias e suas relações de interseccionalidade. A partir da noção de corpo como território de ação política, analisa-se como abordam em suas criações as questões de identidade, gênero e sexualidade, raça, etnia e classe, que se consideram urgentes para dar visibilidade e provocar as transformações políticas implicadas nos processos artísticos e pedagógicos contra-hegemônicos. Sendo um dos autores um artista praticante de *drag queen*, interessa a experiência do corpo como pesquisa. Atualmente, a categoria recente da *drag queer* e os subgêneros dela derivados possibilitam dialogar com o conceito de pós-*drag*, levantado por Luc Schicharin.

Palavras-chave: **Arte Drag. Performance Queer. Interseccionalidade. Identidade Corporal. Gênero e Sexualidade.**

[...] actually, I'm neither a boy nor a girl, and I'm not gender neutral. The only reference I have is myself. It's me, actually! (Soa de Muse as cited in Drag Race France, 2022).

This article needs to be thought of as the result of a study-in-movement, considering that it arises from the living experience of one of the authors in the practice of *drag* art montage¹ and is incorporated into research in the field of Performing Arts, suffering interferences and contaminations that make it always fluent².

Bringing together different research approaches, however, the sources have in common the notion of the body as identity, an issue that is at the center of academic debates on artistic practices. These approaches stand in opposition to identity understood as something fixed and immutable, which does not consider the developments and achievements of decolonial historical processes. A person's identity should not be grounds for discrimination or violation of their human rights. Thus, in the flow offered by scientific methods that treat the body as knowledge, we will combine practical scenic research with the methods of cartography, documentary and historical research, as well as bibliography.

The contribution of this study-in-movement should also serve to give visibility to a historical and aesthetic debate that we are interested in reflecting on: how drag art is crossed by identity politics and used as a sensitive materiality by contemporary artists who, in addition to issues of gender and sexuality (which often seem coincidental and in others intrinsic to drag practice), have also been crossing reflections on inequality, difference, dignity and freedom, resisting the violence that racial, homophobic, transphobic and even religious discrimination brings back to colonial processes.

The repertoire of artists brought here as references present transgressive artistic productions that raise issues that have long been separated from queer studies, but which have been updated through intersectional thought. With this conceptual perspective, we are looking at the possibility of an analysis that reflects on social, political and cultural relations, in which human rights claims intersect, whose themes are different, although they are combinable and/or inseparable.

From observing contemporary artists such as *Themônias* (Belém/PA), Lolita Banana (France/Mexico), Soa de Muse (France/Martinica), 2Fik

(Canada/France) and Uýra Sodoma (Manaus/AM), we reflect on how there is a greater problematization and concern in thinking and creating critically, and the necessary care not to erroneously reproduce stereotypes, which end up going against the counter-hegemonic discourse that the art of montage essentially evokes.

In this sense, we focus on the drag performance, its technique, montage, make-up, artifacts, costumes, hair design, dance, acting, singing and, above all, an attitude and body composition that match the grandeur of the image created. A body that is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, which often, when reflecting on a particular social and cultural context, makes visible the reasons for oppression, discrimination and inequality.

Drag art, transformative art, montage art or transformism are art forms in which the artist is characterized by a character that alludes to performativity/theatricality with the construction of another physical appearance, another behavior, another personality and, therefore, another body, which is assembled with extravagant, but always very beautiful, visual and scenic artefacts. These eccentric figures are literal, in the sense that they take the *ex* out of the center, which presupposes, visibly, outside of oneself, as they say, *out of the tree*. Performance of gender is, above all, an art to entertain, to make people laugh and, at other times, it does not hide the poignancy of the forms and visualities, a more serious backdrop in the form of resistance and activism.

Drag art, it can be said, has been gaining other functions in contemporary times, such as Rita Von Hunty, a character created by actor and teacher Guilherme Terreri, who, among the possibilities offered by the montage composition, uses performance as a pedagogical and political practice.

Transformism and drag art have been changing with the creation of new possibilities beyond drag queen and king, such as drag queer, and relevant discussions have accompanied this movement in all manifestations of drag art. An art form that has always been linked to issues of gender and sexuality is gaining multidimensionality, from which other aspects emerge that make up the identity of the artists that might not have been so evident in the past.

With their origins linked to theatrical traditions and cultures, the artists of drag montage have always challenged gender norms and social taboos. The different forms of drag art currently take place in concerts, where they are mainly hired as performers and DJs for events in LGBTQIAPN+ nightclubs and at particular and cultural events. The shows are similar to what we know in the field of Performing Arts as clowning numbers or gags, in which, in a short space of time, the artists put on a performance with the aim of entertaining and cheering up the audience, combining elements that are characteristic of this art, such as dance³, comic dubbing and lip sync. The surprise elements during the act are very important, such as a sudden change of costume or wig (known as a reveal) and virtuous dance steps or acrobatics, such as openings and splits, which, performed on very high heels, cause frisson in the audience.

Drag art, both Brazilian and international, is also gaining ground in the cultural industry, with a strong reach on television and the internet, especially on reality TV shows, WhatsApp and Telegram groups and forums, and on social networks, with a legion of fans who follow their favorite artists.

Keeping the necessary proportions in mind, the number of academic narrative productions that have dealt with the subject is remarkable, especially given its direct relationship with issues of gender, sexuality and identity. There are scientific articles, dissertations and theses that discuss the historical, aesthetic, cultural, social, economic and political aspects that drag art moves, drawing up dialogues with other disciplines such as the Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology.



Image 1 – Pride flag and its intersectionalities. Source: Reproduction/Internet.

In Latin America and Brazil, drag art is also called transformism. According to researcher Bentes (2020, p. 54),

Transformism is the Latin phenomenon of montage within LGBTI+ communities in the suburbs. While in the beginning, it was very similar to the foreign *Female Impersonator*, seeking to reincarnate the great divas, not only international and Broadway divas, but also soap opera divas and great radio singers. Transformism is the search for transformation into the so-called opposite gender in a natural way. With the hyper-mediatization of *Drag Queen* in the 1970s and its eventual influence from the Club Kid communities in the 1980s, the concept of *Drag* arrived in Brazil slowly, causing strangeness in the Transformist community of the time.

This nomenclature has been reclaimed by artists and researchers with the aim of valuing our history, as drag queen, pedagogue, activist and politician Ruth Venceremos points out in a column for *Dragazine*: “[...] nowadays, using and reclaiming the term transformist art is a reunion with the history not only of an artistic endeavor, but of the LGBTQIA+ community itself” (Gagliardo, 2023, p. 22).

Gal Maria, who today identifies herself as a trans woman and was one of the forerunners of transformism in Distrito Federal, performing cover of singer Gal Costa, says: “[...] I don’t remember drag artists before I expressed myself in transformist art, because it was a novelty in Brazil that was still little explored in the early 90s” (Gagliardo, 2023, p. 25).

Unlike the transformists, who had a so-called *natural* visual construction, like the divas, the drags emerged with a more exaggerated aesthetic, with wigs and huge heels, “the feminine raised to the cube”, as Nany People described in an interview. In their performances, while the former were more subtle, doing voice-overs, the latter also performed more exaggerated actions, as transformist artist Sarah de Montserrat, from Belém, points out:

The transformist only had the audience, the light and the music. When this segment of Drag Queens emerged, for me, because I didn’t have these devices, these things, this support, they were crazy, they threw blood, they hit each other, they broke each other, they threw each other from above, it was all very strange (Bentes, 2020, p. 55).

The first transformist artists in Brazil, most of them trans women and transvestites, built a real legacy in Brazilian culture from the 1960s onwards, leaving their mark and becoming icons, such as Rogéria, Jane di Cas-

tro, Divina Valéria, Eloína dos Leopardos, Brigitte de Búzios, Camille K., Fujica de Holiday, Marquesa, Vera Verão, Elke Maravilha, Nany People, Kaká di Polly, Miss Biá, Silvetty Montilla, Isabelita dos Patins, Marcinha do Corinthians, Marcia Pantera, Salete Campari, among many others.

The story of this pioneering spirit is portrayed in the documentary film *Divinas Divas* (Divine Divas) (2017), which features the first eight artists mentioned above. The film takes a historical look at a time of great cultural effervescence and resistance in the city of Rio de Janeiro, even in the face of the military dictatorship. It is important to note that, although the Rio-São Paulo axis often gets more visibility than other regions of the country, the LGBTQIAPN+ scene and culture is intense from the north to the south of Brazil.

In the current history of transformism and drag art, there are also drag kings, who, roughly speaking, would be a personification of the so-called masculine. According to Viviane de Paoli, who researches Latin American transformism and performs Lord Lazzarus (king) and Lady Lazzarus (queen), she was the creator of the first (official) drag kings contest in Brazil, the *King of Kings*,

The art of *drag kings*, whose history officially dates back about 250-300 years, is an art that came from AFAB (assigned female at birth) people, cis-gender women and trans men, essentially. A lot was said and is said that 'women could not be drag', when not only could they, but they had also been for a long time. Studies conducted by drag king Mo B. Dick, from *Drag King History*, claims to have found records of male impersonation artists from the 1660s. Since we are not sure exactly how the art of drag queens came about, we can say that kings have been around as long as they have. Therefore, AFAB people have long been paving the way for the art of montage, and should be as respected as AMAB (*assigned male at birth*) people (Lady Lazzarus, 2023, n. p.).

Beyond queens and kings, other mounted figures have emerged in contemporary times, such as drag queers. These creations seek precisely to break with very essentialist representations of masculinity and femininity, taking drag art to places of expression that shake up tradition. According to Bentes (2020, p. 57),

[...] Drag Queer is an artistic phenomenon that was built on changes in gender concepts. Since it is performative, the question raised is: why con-

tinue to reproduce the gender archetypes that socially bind us even within art? Thus, a drag who does not reproduce specific genders and seeks to play with them or their absence is born, using both social representations and even none (objects, animals, etc.).

Within this category of drag queers, whose aesthetic in the montage will seek to escape conventional standards, we can include drag monsters, whose characterization will refer to all kinds of monstrosity, as well as the subgenres of *ecodrags* and *tranimals*:

[...] the EcoDrag – the drag that seeks to use recyclable or organic materials, usually represented in political activist performances of public appeal to social and environmental causes – and the Tranimal – the drag that seeks to dehumanize its artistic construction as much as possible, resembling the appearance of animals rather than humans (Bentes, 2020, p. 57).

In Belém do Pará, there is yet another subgenre of drag queers, the so-called *drag themônias*. The *Themônias* artistic movement or cultural group, which began with the production company *NoiteSuja* and completed ten years of activity in 2023, is not just about following a queer or underground aesthetic line. It is a work that, based on collectivity, affection and mutual care, has discussed the issue of culture and territoriality in a unique way, through a montage that exalts its identities, the diversity of the Northern region and the Amazon rainforest, while criticizing the import and influence of foreign models.

According to the author⁴, there is a large segment of drag performers in the city who work according to more traditional standards, such as a shapely body and makeup with a defined finish, but who, despite their aesthetic differences, are part of the *Themônias* cultural group and are an important and primordial part of its maintenance. It is worth pointing out that the dissemination of a montage aesthetic based on a stereotype of femininity is largely due to the massive influence of the show *RuPaul's Drag Race*, in which most of the contestants take this approach.

In any case, the *Themônias* hack and re-signify what the word *demon* carries as marginal and negative, affirming it as a positive place of power, like the processes of inversion present in the aesthetics of the grotesque (Bakhtin, 2010), which is also a source of inspiration and reference for them. Over the years, the movement has been consolidating a practice that

is decolonizer since its inception, in the marginal parties focused on montage, where we can already see the crossings of intersectionality. According to the *themônia* Sarita (2020, p. 9),

Themônias, written with a 'th', is a strangeness to the word *demônio* (demon), which tries to sum up everything that is bad and should be forbidden by Judeo-Christian morality, and with it, the sense of *themonization*, which for us is synonymous with quality, as a response to the demonization of our existence, culture and ancestrally. We make it a point to exist, to disturb more and more, and since our existence is a threat, our actions become an attack in the name of love and freedom of expression. We are *Themônias*, a movement of differences that reinvents behaviors and relationships, for everything and for everyone, from work relationships and cultural support to the autonomy and democratization of art and culture as essential knowledge inherent to social expression and organization, in dispute of the dominant imaginary and materialities in empowerment.

In view of the above, we do not want to restrict what drag art can be, but rather highlight its presence in the context of contemporary art, whose language and creation do not place borders. Furthermore, in the era of the postmodern subject and fragmented identities (Hall, 2019), we are also seeing the emergence of post-drag epistemology. Extrapolating gender issues, post-drag, like drag queers, would be another aesthetic strategy that no longer acts through parodic imitation, but invents new critical possibilities of representation (Schicharin, 2017).

Drag: repertoires and questions of identity

As we saw earlier, drag art was also initially built on the binarisms of feminine and masculine, in the figures of the drag queen and the drag king, respectively. However, drag art plays with this binarism, as it destabilizes gender roles that are still quite fixed and normatively present in our society.

New assembled figures are emerging, such as drag queers (monsters, *ecodrags*, *tranimals* and *themônias*) and other figures and performances whose images will refer to the drag body, but may not necessarily call themselves drags *per se*. These artists seek to blend, hybridize, blur the codes that are supposed to be feminine and masculine, bringing gender issues into their work, but also other important aspects of what constitutes their fluid

identities, which are not fixed and are constantly changing, seeking to answer, paradoxically, what makes a person unique.

To give a sample of artists who articulate the intersectional issue, we mention drag queen Lolita Banana, one of the contestants on the reality show *RuPaul's Drag Race*⁵. In its French edition, *Drag Race France* (2022), hosted by Nicky Doll (Karl Sanchez), Lolita, performed by Esteban Inzúa, a cisgender gay man, was the first Mexican-born to compete in one of RuPaul's franchises, and became one of the presenters of the show's recent Mexican franchise, alongside Valentina. In the aesthetic conception of the artist, who is also a professional dancer, the cultural references that give recognition to the Latin American artist are present, whether in the dance, the costumes, the make-up or her own drag name.

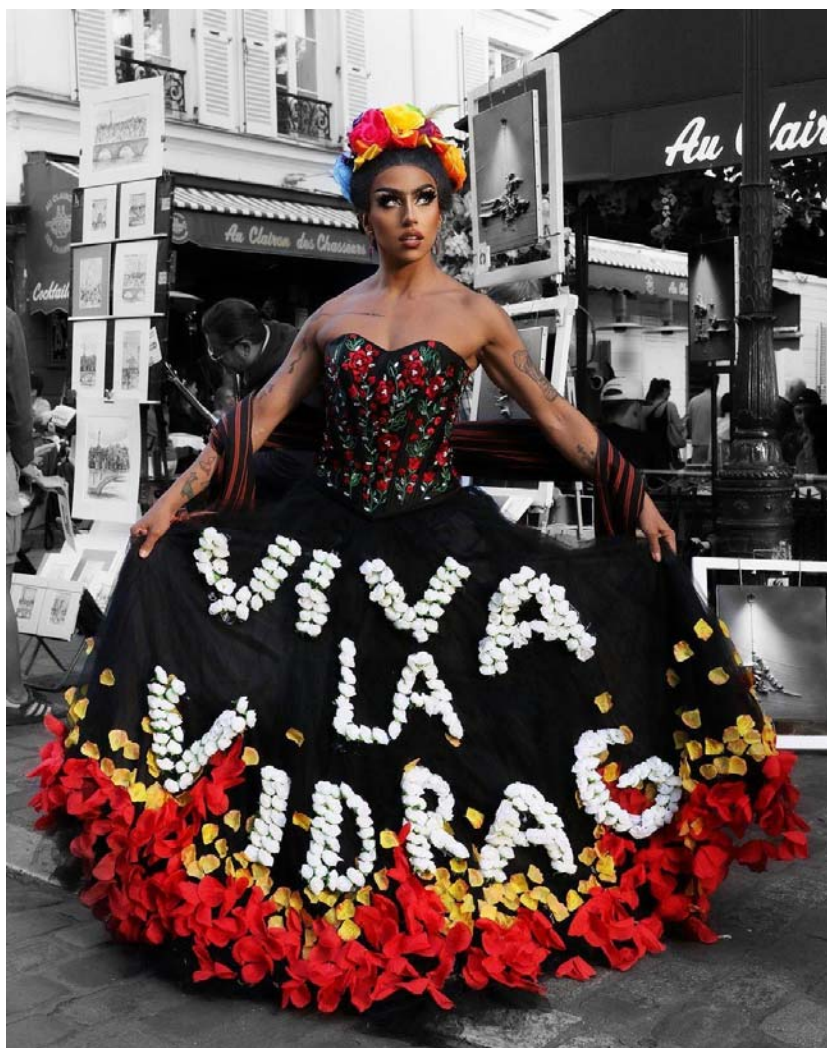


Image 2 – Lolita Banana with a look inspired by the painter Frida Kahlo and elements of Mexican culture.
Source: Lahoucine (Paris, 2022).

As well as being Mexican, the performer is an immigrant to France and a person living with HIV, and it is this intersection of identity issues that is of interest. These agencies and intersectionalities were brought out in his shows and performances during the program, through visual compositions and artistic interventions that refer to his culture (Image 2).

Incorporating their cultural heritage into the scene is commendable, especially in a context where most of the contestants were French natives and did not bring that kind of reference to the competition. However, these choices have a distinct perspective when they are made by racialized people:

[...] Amid gender play on RPDG there is an adherence to racial ‘authenticity’ where for the Black and Brown characters on the show, racial realness means staying ‘true’ to one’s off-stage ethnic/racial identity, a requirement not enforced for the white and Asian [...] This leaves these performances caught in a state of unresolvable tension or in fatally un-subversive appropriations, preserving the *status quo* (Ward, 2022, p. 142).

This may have been the case with Lolita, who at times, contradictorily to her intention, may have entered a place of exoticization of culture. The artist was criticized by the jury panel and often mocked by her colleagues for her excessive use of *Mexicanisms*. One of the jury members commented that Lolita needed to go deeper into her proposal and reflect, for example, on what it means to have been an immigrant in France for over ten years, how Mexico and France intersect in their cultures and how this could be translated into performance.

That is why, from this point of view, it is important for artists to reflect on their identity issues and the intersectionalities that run through them. In Lolita’s case, she is placed in a stereotypical and even cruel position, that of the *Latin performer*, the *Mexican* and the drag queen who reproduces a colonial logic. This received feedback can be problematic because, in other words, it sounds like: “That’s great! We love that you bring your culture, but we want you to show us [in this case, the colonizing country] how you dialogue with *our* culture, what your experience is like as an immigrant”.

For the judges, Lolita needed to show more in the competition. Broadening the debate, let’s imagine, for example, that the jury, faced with the persistence of a drag tradition in performance, judged her creations to

be commonplace, considering them mere illustrations whose outer layer, adorned with so much visual richness inspired by their own culture, becomes insufficient as an example of a territory of diversity and otherness in the context of subjectivity.

We can also assume that the jury might have wanted the performer to reflect critically on what that body gains and loses from the intermingling of cultures, and also what it brings and leaves from the original culture and what has been enculturated. In this way, we could perceive other layers that the materiality of Lolita's body could have evoked and subverted, inserted in a more critical historical context from the perspective of queer performance.

Latin queer/*cuir* performance has gained more visibility in the last decade, so much so that some scholars from different disciplines have pointed out the inherent disruptive (revolutionary, interventional) quality, which does not apply to just one particular project, but to a myriad of socio-political issues (Walters, 2022). Thus,

Beyond issues of gender and sexuality, Latin American queer arts and activism seek to extend a series of agendas for social change; this occurs in countries or regions with transitions and political contexts of structural and exceptional violence; regional, international and cyclical migrations; democratic debates; economic destabilization; and thoughts and spaces that have been critical of coloniality since colonization⁶ (Vidal-Ortiz; Viteri; Serrano Amaya, 2014, p. 187).

In this sense, Lolita could have incorporated this “colonized, mestizo and agent body- territory” (Walters, 2022, p. 41) into their performances. So, from this perspective, how could we think from the place of a colonized body? It is important to understand that, in its historical trajectory, drag is an image and a body that occupies social spaces of entertainment in art. It is the subversion and extravagance of the image that makes it who it is.

In the same edition of *Drag Race France*, another contestant, drag queen Soa de Muse, also put together their foreign ancestry around the traces of their ancestry. Born in Martinique, an island colonized by France, the artist, who is non-binary, also incorporated elements of their culture into their creations. They said that “[...] actually, I'm neither a boy nor a girl, and I'm not gender neutral. The only reference I have is myself. It's me, actually!⁷”.

Perhaps because they already transgresses the norms of male-female binarism, inhabiting this *in-between place*, the artist builds an aesthetic that is also transgressive, bringing a mixture of identity elements to their *drag* performance and identity. It is important to emphasize that we do not want to compare Lolita Banana to Soa de Muse, just to point out that the *way* each tells their story is different, and in the competition, *how* the drag performer tells the story(s) through montage and performance is something that the jury will take into consideration: how thought-provoking, *avant-garde*, how much they manage to entertain, arouse curiosity, interest, among other subjective criteria.



Image 3 – Soa de Muse poses for *Drag Race France*.
Source: Nathalie Guyon (Paris, 2022).

In the first episode, Soa de Muse already showed their *genderfuck* profile, with its androgynous and multicultural aesthetic, which will appear throughout the program. In their entrance look, they wore an extra-large striped men's suit, with a bare torso underneath, already bringing tension to binarisms. In another task, the contestants had to create a catwalk look, that is, fashion and editorial, inspired by French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier, creator of the famous conical bra worn by Madonna in the 1990s. In this challenge, they wore a dress made entirely of hair and fur (Image 3), recreating the conical bra with braided hair.

Braids are a symbolic identity element of African and Afro-diasporic cultures, and when Soa puts them in dialogue with a very Western symbol (French fashion and Madonna's bra), we observe an interesting intersectional crossing, in this case of their Black race and ethnicity, with creations from another culture.

The post-drag

Drag montage, in any case, is a creative process that builds another body on top of itself, providing fluidity to the subject's identity by constructing a liminal space between reality and representation. The inversions of roles, both gender and class, subvert social rules since the grotesque celebrations of the liturgical festivals of the Middle Ages.

The attitude of dressing as another gender, or as an animal, or as a madman, seen through playful practices, parody and laughter, makes them appear to be profanations of Christian consecrations. Such farcical attitudes and rituals show that subverting order implies proposing disorders in social norms and behaviors, in order to provoke the perception of other modes of existence. Rituals that expose the contradictions of social rules even before they are illuminated by *Teoria Queer*.

And, as Baker (2014, p. 40) points out,

Although her energies seem today to be channeled into the theater, the film and the nightclub, the drag queen's unruly spirit still hovers unexpectedly over the popular festivities, the fairs and celebration days held in villages and small towns all over the country when men dress themselves as grotesque women with overstuffed bras and suspended belts to play charity football matches or compete in High Street races. These are the remnants of an an-

cient communal transvestism, primitive and pagan, which the church could not eradicate and so, as with many pre-Christian observances, incorporated them into its own functions with the last day of Christmas (Twelfth Night) becoming associated with misrule and reversal of order.

*Travestiment*⁸ is a performative act that is constituted in the friction between opposing genders. Its relationship with gender identity and sexuality, that is, whether the performer is cisgender, transgender, transvestite, gay, straight or bisexual, among others, necessarily brings up issues that materialize the individual's desire for freedom of expression. This obviously includes the debate on sexuality and sensuality, gender violence and the discussion of compulsory heterosexuality, as reflected by philosopher Judith Butler, since it elides the concept of biological sex and binary gender.

However,

[...] The 'playfulness' of drag, while often perceived to challenge hegemonic notions of gender, thus also has the potential to reify hegemonic notions of race and culture [...] As artist Nine Yamamoto-Masson reminds us: Black, Indigenous and People of Colour often face ridicule, discrimination, social back-lash, violence for features that are celebrated when worn by [non-Black, non-Indigenous, and/or white] people (Ward, 2022, p. 142).

This problem is pointed out by researcher Luc Schicharin, who articulates the concept of post-drag, presenting and analyzing artists who bring aspects to their productions that he considers relevant to this epistemology, which concerns the extrapolation of gender imitation or parody, as is often described in the work of drag queens and kings.

One of them is 2Fik, a cisgender, gay man of Arab-Muslim origin (French, born into a Muslim family), currently based in Quebec City, Canada. With his creations in photography and performance, the artist questions the stereotypes associated with the male figure – composing different characters with beards, moustaches, gestures, clothes – through figures or avatars that cause a shift in perception and, therefore, strangeness, as they are in a liminal place, intersecting gender codes, thus coming closer to queer, which involves non-binarism in a deeper position (Image 4).



Image 4 – 2Fik in a photo shoot. Source: Jeremy Patlen (Nova York, 2013).

As part of the complex journey of the subject in search of affirmation of identity positions, which are in eternal construction, and consequently of their ethical and aesthetic place as an artist, we believe that reflection on this post-drag creation, which in addition to gender issues brings identity issues to the performance and dialogues directly with the notions present in performance art, is something important to be considered by artists from the drag scene (and from other artistic languages), in view of the paradigm shifts we are experiencing in contemporary times.

This is what 2Fik does by questioning his place as a man, with codes of masculinity very present in his body, such as a full, long beard, but who wears high heels without necessarily calling himself a drag:

[...] 2Fik's work proposes a reflection on gender and ethnicity as a complex identity, because, according to the artist, the habit does not make the gender, or rather, the habit does not belong to a gender. Dresses, heels and the *hijab* do not necessarily feminize a man who wears them. This category of clothing, attributed to the female sex, allows the artist to redefine the concept of masculinity (Schicharin, 2017, p. 240).

To understand what 2Fik does, and what the author considers post-drag, let's look at what came before, starting with post-structuralist theories.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (2003) – whose work is the basis for many discussions on gender and sexuality – considers gender from the premise that it is a discursive construct, something that is produced, and not a natural fact, thus functioning as a structure in which (or by which) the subject is shaped (Salih, 2015).

Now, when the artist 2Fik states that “habit does not make gender”, he is in a way problematizing Butler’s (2003) statements, which are based on the nature/culture opposition, exploding not only the question of nature, but also this predetermined cultural script that shapes the person. He plays on the proverb *habit does not make the monk*: it is not the clothes that determine whether a monk or nun lives their life according to Buddhist precepts, but all their actions as a monk/nun.

Similarly, it is not the clothes that determine what it means to be a man or a woman. Both in his life and in his work, 2Fik seeks to shake up the conceptions pre-determined by society, by the economy, by the context in which he is situated, in other words, all the issues that *make up* gender: a *masculine* man or a *feminine* woman.

When considering drag, Butler (2003) draws on the line of thought that associates it with the imitation or parody of a gender, saying that by imitating the gender, *drag* implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself. Considering the year that *Gender Trouble* was written (originally published in 1990), we can think that Butler used more traditional *drags* as a scope and reference, considering the important historicity present in the LGBTQIAPN+ movement, but leaving out some points that would even be mitigated by the author years later, as Schicharin (2017) points out.

The researcher problematizes this fundamental principle of Butler, according to which “[...] the parodic repetition of homophobic, sexist and racist representations, carried out by the travestied⁹ performance, implies a theatrical distancing and, consequently, the expression and reception of a critical discourse” (Schicharin, 2017, p. 227), showing us, based on examples of American drag kings from the 1990s, how the effect is often the opposite: there is no critical discourse based on parody, but rather the reinforcement or reaffirmation of stereotypes and prejudices.

Ward also discusses this issue through an analysis of some Indigenous representations made by drag queens on the reality show *RuPaul’s Drag*

Race, questioning when a performance is subversive and educational and when it is ignorant and provokes havoc. She points out two problematic attitudes when performing indigeneity, both inside and outside the drag context: that drag culture and drag performers are often considered exempt from *politically correct* modes of public discourse and can therefore engage in any kind of performance or representation; and that performances of cultural or racial stereotypes are acceptable when performed by members of the group being acted out.

Today, the contemporary *drag* scene has expanded to include a much greater diversity of work, which goes beyond the imitation/accentuation/copy/parody of a gender, although there is still and always will be room for all segments of drag, as is the case with so many whose presence and legacy contribute to combating prejudice, binarisms and raising discussions of gender (and class, race and ethnicity... intersectionalities that were not even included in Butler's first analyses). However, unfortunately, representations that reinforce gender, class and ethnic stereotypes are also frequent, which justifies the importance of research in this area.

It is worth to remember that we are here in an academic context, discussing post-drag, but that in society (think of Brazil, country towns, conservative, religious places), the mere presence of a drag figure, whatever their style, in itself causes an impact or revolt, because it presents something totally outside heterocisnormativity, because of this characteristic of "amusing anarchy" (Baker, 1995).

Contrary to categorizations that often end up framing art too much, we finally present the work of visual artist and art educator Uýra Sodoma, a trans and Indigenous woman in a context of diaspora, from the state of Pará, living in Manaus, Amazonas. Recently, Uýra took part in the *Rock in Rio 2022* event, with the performance *Natureza sampleada*, alongside dozens of artists from the Amazon.

We could approximate some aspects of Uýra's work, which, according to the artist's description, is *a tree that walks*, to that of a drag montage with a queerer aesthetic, and, both in her aesthetic composition and in her performances, we see the presence of identity issues that go beyond the discussion of gender, without reinforcing stereotypes.

Uýra, who works as a human rights activist, is like a messenger who would speak for the river if it could tell its memories and violences. In her body and performance, she agencies urgent issues related to gender patterns and violence, LGBTphobia, machismo, sexism and environmental issues, such as the lack of public policies, river pollution and deforestation (Correa, 2022). Questioning what is *natural* and what has been *naturalized* to kill us, the artist says that her fight is for something obvious and blatant in reality: it is for our life, for a place for all of us, a fight that the original peoples have been waging for over 500 years in defense of the Earth.

As in performance art, which as we know began to take shape in the 1960s, and in Latin American queer performances, we see the artist conducting disruptive and transgressive actions, placing her own body-agent in high-risk situations to alert, denounce and draw attention to social, political, economic and environmental causes. In the photographic essay *Mil Quase Mortos* (A Thousand Almost Dead), in which she lies down and performs amidst the garbage of an extremely polluted stream, the performer shocks those watching live by the combination of her visually striking construction, entering this risky space and the very discourse that the performance itself evokes.

Its relationship with montage, in a broader sense, has a profound identity and spiritual characteristic. It is a practice of self-knowledge, affirmation, resistance, self-care and transformation. Each time the performer assembles and personalizes their figure in and for the world, they not only perfect their artistic techniques, but also open themselves to a subjective, unrepeatable and mysterious becoming. The drag body is constructed by agglutination, as in the aesthetics of the grotesque, bringing together references, memories and discourses to the materials such as paints, wigs, fabrics, natural elements (leaves, seeds, shells), staples, shoes, glue, headdresses and whatever else creativity and inventiveness give rise to.

The montage is similar to identities: it is not fixed, it is constituted through constructions and deconstructions, through processes of identification, counter-identification or disidentification (Muñoz, 1999). Like a grotesque image, it can simultaneously enchant and disturb, provoke fascination and horror. In the following excerpt, we can see Uýra's relationship with this process:

[...] in a *Bicha's* flesh and Plant. Assembling myself is a constant journey of recognizing the body I live in. I think we're wrong when we say we already know everything about our bodies. It is a world of fantastic and authentic places, but many of them remain unexplored because they are places that have been forbidden to us. I'm not just talking about artistic or sexual experimentation, but all the sensory possibilities such as self-touching or simply stopping in front of a mirror to look at and love our naked bodies. Beauty standards and social taboos have taught us to hate the real body, our body. They have trained us and developed products to tighten it, hide it and mistreat it, creating, in our intimacy, a discomfort that hurts. We get sick when we can't feel our bodies. Assembling myself as *Uýra* has been a constant and necessary cure. I modify my body to experience new things, to learn more about myself and to feel more alive. I assemble at home, in public squares, at friends' houses. It's an act alone or in front of people, as I propose in my performance *Criação Assistida* (Assisted Creation). I usually start with the eye, the area of greatest impact in contact with the other; then I move on to the contours and mouth, giving them proportions and non-human elements, the result of which makes an impact, either annoying or enchanting (*Uýra Sodoma*, 2018).

Final bindings

Regardless of the aesthetics of performance, we analyze how contemporary artists have intersectionally brought up issues that really need to be considered together. In his, her or their body, the performer carries a complex history, whose subjectivities do not fit into just one category. By considering these multiple crossings, their productions gain discursive and political potential.

As we have seen in a brief presentation, transformism and drag art are maintained over time and the inherited tradition is important in maintaining and preserving them, as a living memory that this path was opened by many before us, and continues to be built. Tradition does not allow this artistic expression to die and the teachings continue to be passed down from drag mothers and fathers to their drag sons and daughters, in the family that each one chooses for themselves. Even if the people who make up the families change, the culture of the *Haus* remains firm, a space of mutual care, exchange and concern for the well-being of others (Bentes, 2020).

However, we need to look at the art of montage as a living organism that is constantly changing. Without updating tradition, without thinking

about art in dialogue with our present time-space, looking towards a queer future, a there-then (Muñoz, 2020), it can sometimes end up stigmatizing or reinforcing stereotypes, reproducing colonial attitudes and the white hegemonic vision, making bodies of drag scene invisible, such as cis and transgender women (AMAB) and transgender men (AFAB), or disregarding what has been produced in regions outside those axes that seem to be the center, such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, New York and Paris.

We looked at Mexican drag queen Lolita Banana's participation in the reality show *Drag Race France*, and how she composes her assembled figure with elements from her culture. We discussed hypotheses as to why, in front of the jury and her colleagues, the aesthetic elements of Latinity that the artist brought ended up not being enough to convince the panel, as opposed to the aesthetics and performance of Soa de Muse, which seem to have pleased the jury more.

With the work of the artist 2Fik, we discuss the aesthetics of post-drag, observing how he plays with his own identity in performances and photographs in which he explores the creation of avatars, overcoming “[...] the racist representations of the macho and homophobic virility of the Arab-Muslim man through a multiculturalist performativity, in which records that mix male/female, Western/Eastern, homosexual/heterosexual costumes are side by side” (Schicharin, 2017, p. 242). Finally, with the work of Uýra Sodoma, we saw how the artist puts her body at risk, dealing with intersectional environmental and human rights issues through a queer performance that escapes pre-established standards, a characteristic also present in the work of the drags *Themônias*, from Belém do Pará, with Uýra also being part of this collective.

Notes

- ¹ *Drag*: Although there are no sources that precisely guarantee the etymology of the English word *drag*, it is sometimes attributed to the abbreviation of the initials of *dressed as a girl*, in reference to the tradition of actors dressing up as women. It is also attributed to verb *to drag*, in reference to the movement that the long dresses of the costumes made on the floor. This last meaning is claimed by Willian Dorsey Swann *the Queen*, “[...] a black *bicha* (queer) who was en-

slaved, as a reference to the first *Drag Queen* in the world, bringing beyond the term the *modus operandi* of this performance such as the notion of *Haus*, ball, family and mobilization for struggles and rights” (Sarita; Astrais, 2020, p. 11).

- ² This article is part and unfolding of the research for the doctoral thesis of Francisco Carlos Costa Filho, a researcher and drag artist in the city of Brasília/DF. The methodologies used are bibliographical research; fieldwork – producing and analyzing data based on interviews and observational participation with collectives and artists from the drag scene in Brazil; and research into the work itself. To this end, dialogues are established with performance studies, gender studies and Practice-Based Research (Nelson, 2013). It was written in co- authorship with researcher Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Silva Lopes, who guides the research involved in performance studies.
- ³ In dance, many drags use elements of Vogue and *Bate-Cabelo* (hair-banging). Vogue or Voguing is a dance genre that is part of the so-called ballroom culture, linked to the LGBTQIAPN+ community. It was created by Black, Latino and trans people in the USA between the 1960s and 1980s. Brazilian Marcia Pantera is credited with creating the *Bate-Cabelo*, a dance movement in which the performer throws the wig in various directions and combinations, like a whip.
- ⁴ For more, see *Ekoaverá – Um estudo sobre a territorialidade nos processos identitários das Drags Demônias* (A study of territoriality in the identity processes of the Demon Drags), by Juliano Bentes (2020).
- ⁵ The first season of the American drag competition TV show was in 2009, followed by several other seasons in the USA, produced and presented by drag queen RuPaul (RuPaul Andre Charles). It currently has franchises in Spain, France, Canada, Sweden, the UK, Australia, Holland, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Philippines, Thailand, Mexico and Brazil.
- ⁶ Originally, in Spanish: “Más allá de los temas de género y sexualidad, las artes y el activismo queer latinoamericanos buscan extender una serie de agendas de cambio social; esto ocurre en países o regiones con transiciones y contextos políticos de violencia estructural y excepcional; migraciones regionales, internacionales y cíclicas; debates democráticos; desestabilidad económica; y pensamientos y espacios que desde la colonización ejercen una crítica a la colonialidad”.
- ⁷ Originally, in French: En fait, je ne suis ni garçon ni fille, et je ne suis pas non généré. Le seul repère que j’ai, it’s myself. C’est moi, en fait! (free translation of a line taken from the program).

- ⁸ The use of the terms *travestir-se*, *travestimento*, *travestido*, as a translation for the act of dressing up as another gender (which would be *drag* or even *cross-dress*), is quite problematic in our view, due to its proximity to the word *travesti*, in Portuguese and Spanish, which in this case is used to refer to a mode of existence, a gender identity (and not just the act of dressing up in other clothes).
- ⁹ The Portuguese translation of Schicharin's article opts for the expression *travestied* (*travestido*) as a translation for *drag* (e.g., drag performance = travestied performance).

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