

Drag can be a means of touching queer and other publics, or of mediating one's economic precarity. It can function as art by other means, or by any means necessary. And like politics, drag can be a duty, a contentious pleasure, or something to dread.

The talk presents drag aesthetics as an ethics, focusing specifically on the ways artists and activists use drag to respond to, or reframe, some of the pressing political crises of our times, including racism, austerity, and police and military violence, among others. It is constructed as a series of interlocking ethnographic portraits of contemporary drag across three sites, New York City, Berlin, and Israel/Palestine. These stories foreground some of the interlocutors' competing desires for doing drag—for some it provides a stage from which they can articulate a radical politics, while for others it is a sensual refuge away from politics as they are ordinarily understood. Indeed, in keeping with the lecture series' theme "Desire's Multiplicity and Serendipity," McGlotten shows how the desires that animate the drag personas and performances of his informants reflect a diverse array of lived conditions and political aesthetic orientations.

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Desire, wandering about and forming assemblages, might be accompanied by serendipity or mate with jouissance or the power of the erotic, even as it fails to reach its presumed aim. Instead of running on a single track, we take desire to be functioning in a multiple manner. We call on desire's serendipity to grasp its illogical, contingent modes as a figure of fortunate errands. The lecture series **Desire's Multiplicity and Serendipity** looks for queer reconceptualizations of desire, its cultural articulations and lived realities. The key question is how to get from the critique of desire as a hierarchizing and normalizing force to the heterotopias of desire. What would it mean to understand or experience desire as opening up to alterity, undermining its own involvement in structural inequalities and normative violence?

The Lecture Series **Desire's Multiplicity and Serendipity** is a cooperation between the **Institute for Queer Theory** and the **ICI Berlin**.

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POLITICAL AESTHETICS  
OF DRAG

