

Symposium

Drag!

Queer Crossings in Global Contexts

Recent years have marked what scholars call the drag boom: the exponential growth of drag's mainstream popularity following the widespread visibility of drag performers on social media and the commercial success of the United States reality TV competition RuPaul's Drag Race. As the show expands to countries including the Netherlands, Thailand, Brazil, Germany, Spain, France, and more, the dominating role of RuPaul's Drag Race has created the impression that drag has a universal standard. Post-RuPaul, mainstream audiences have come to expect normative feminine glamour; polished lip-syncing routines; and an ultimate, perhaps reassuring, 'reveal'.

Yet such an impression fails to reflect drag's historic and present diversity, beyond the reality TV cameras and, often, beyond the stage. From leading protests, to renouncing stigma associated with non-normative performances of gender and sexuality, to cultivating joy and defiance in the cultural spaces of 'everynight life', drag performers have long played vital roles in queer and trans communities. Across the globe, these cultural workers continue to navigate the persecution and praise attendant on queer aesthetics' simultaneous criminalization and consumption. Moreover, in their full contextual complexity, practices of drag within queer and trans spaces often suggest that drag's subversive politics may lie less in its function of troubling gender's rigidity and more in its capacity to challenge the oppressive systems of power and attendant social inequalities that intersect with the gender binary.

In the wake of the drag boom, questions of what drag performance is and does are increasingly relevant. Such questions might lead to diverse understandings of drag, including as a queer and/or trans way of doing things, a method of critique, a form of activism, and an art form with a rich legacy of deconstructing and challenging dominant norms and systems of oppression. Focusing on multi-layered contexts of queer crossings, this symposium aims to develop critical approaches to drag that incorporate its range of uses by various marginalized groups in diverse contexts globally.

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BERLIN INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL INQUIRY

ICI Berlin | Christinenstraße 18-19, Haus 8 | D - 10119 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 473 72 91 - 10 | www.ici-berlin.org

Symposium 13 May 2024
10:30–21:00,
ICI Berlin
In English

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Organized by
B Camminga, Tunay Altay,
Özgün Eylül İşcen,
Ruth Ramsden-Kareise



Programme

10:30 Introduction by Tunay Altay, B Camminga, Eylül Özgün İşcen, and R. Ramsden-Karelse

11:00 – 12:40 PANEL I – BEYOND GENDER

Old Drag: or, on The Mrs Merton Show
Sam Dolbear

„Andihambi ndedwa“:
A Queer-autoethnographic Account on the Tokenisation of
Black Drag (Re)presentation in Cape Town, South Africa
Belinda Qaqamba [ONLINE]

Building Queer Mountains: Drag, Migration,
and Sexual Citizenship in Germany
Tunay Altay

12:40 – 13:40 Lunch Break

13:40 – 15:20 PANEL II – ACROSS BORDERS

All You Need is „Love“?
Drag Performance, Race, and the Affective Politics of
Canadian Multiculturalism
Kevin Nixon [ONLINE]

„Eine Reise um die Welt“: Performances of Gender and Nationality in the
Artistic Trajectory of Ivaná/Yvana in Brazil and Germany
Ruby Mascarenhas

Drag Performances Without Clubs? Cross Dressing House Parties in
Communist Poland: The Case of Lulla la Polaca and Ryszard Kisiel
Izabella Tyborowicz

The Three Capucines: Minoritised Histories of Gender and Performance
from Cape Town to Paris via Hollywood
Ruth Ramsden-Karelse

15:20 – 15:50 Coffee Break

15:50 – 17:10 PANEL III – HALLOWED & REPARATIVE DRAG

Hadassah’s Pentecostal Drag:
Sacred Reparative Queer Performance and Solidão
Joe Coyle [ONLINE]

Trespass as Deliverance:
How Drag Challenges Colonial Legal Regimes in the Philippines
Ruby Rosselle L. Tugade and Athena Charanne R. Presto

Catharsis of Drag Through the Lens of Tal-Nori
Isu Mignon Mignonne (異水)

17:10 – 17:40 Coffee Break

17:40 – 19:00 PANEL IV – DRAG THINGING AND THINGING DRAG

Dancing in Kathakali at Kitty Su:
Evolving Practices of D/drag Cultures in
Indian Queer Performance Spaces
Gaw Warriar [ONLINE]

Send in the Dragclowns: Clown & Drag
Rémi Baert

Drag Things: Crossing into Non-Human/Non-Organic Drag Performance
Joe Parslow + Stephen Farrier

19:30 Keynote
Divas, Drag Queens, Aunties,
and Other Academic Personas
Kareem Khubchandani

Tracing his trajectory across three intellectual projects — one on queer Indian nightlife, the second on drag performance, and the most recent on the figure of the aunty in South Asian public culture — Kareem Khubchandani explores co-constitutive relationships between research, teaching, and artistry. He maps out his academic personas, the various roles he has been cast into by his research subjects, audiences, and students in order to center and interrogate the academic’s body. Where the scholar’s body is often obscured in preference for their mind, evacuating the body from academic labor is a luxury rarely available to queer people of color. This talk serves as an opportunity to collectively think through the pitfalls and possibilities of self-fashioning in the academy for minoritarian subjects.