

HAYWARD GALLERY

Press Release

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DRAG: Self-portraits and Body Politics

22 August – 14 October 2018

HENI Project Space, Southbank Centre's Hayward Gallery

"There is no original or primary gender a drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original."

Judith Butler, 1990 in *Gender Trouble*



(L-R: Hunter Reynolds, *Shhh* (from *Patina du Prey Drag Pose Series*), 1990/2012. Victoria Sin, *Cthulhu Through the Looking Glass*, 2017, film still. Luciano Castelli, *His Majesty the Queen*, 1973. Copyright the artists)

DRAG: Self-portraits and Body Politics is the first institutional exhibition to expand on the traditional representations of drag, involving drag queens, drag kings and bio drags from different generations and backgrounds. The exhibition focuses on self-portraiture from the 1960s to the present day including work by artists who have used drag as an artistic tool to explore or challenge preconceptions of identity, gender, class, politics and race. Featuring the work of key established figures such as **Pierre Molinier** (b.1900-d. 1976), **VALIE EXPORT** (b.1940), **Robert Mapplethorpe** (b. 1946–d. 1989), **Ulay** (b. 1943) and **Cindy Sherman** (b. 1954), as well as self-portraits by a younger generation of contemporary artists who have recently embraced drag as an art form like **Adam Christensen** (b. 1979), **Oreet Ashery** (b. 1966) and **Victoria Sin** (b. 1991).

The exhibition explores drag from a contemporary perspective in light of current debates on gender identity and selfie culture. **Paul Kindersley** (b.1985), whose work touches on class and consumerism, has been commissioned to create a new site-specific wall painting and **Adam Christensen** will present a new performance for the opening night. **David Hoyle's** (b. 1962) paintings are displayed for the first time in an institutional setting.

DRAG: Self-portraits and Body Politics is presented through a multitude of distinct voices rather than offering a linear or chronological narrative. The artists included explore key cultural shifts from the past 50 years, and through drag, they address a diverse range of topics from feminism to the AIDS crisis and post-colonial theory. Most of the works in this HENI Project Space show are photographs, but the exhibition also includes works in other media, including performance. Throughout the run of the exhibition there will be three exhibition tours led by key figures from London's drag scene.

The artists in the exhibition demonstrate that drag is rarely a simple act of emulation but sets out to draw attention to the way that gender is constructed, choreographed or performed in our everyday lives. A number of artists in the exhibition explore the idea of being neither one gender or the other, but rather something more ambiguous, something in-between. In her *Identity Transfer* images **VALIE EXPORT**'s gender is deliberately androgynous; neither straightforwardly male or female. **Luciano Castelli**'s (b.1951) self-portraits, are another example and were motivated by the idea that 'we are all made up of male and female aspects'. In his photographs, Castelli criticises what he saw as a conservative, puritanical society, and celebrated the sexual freedom of the pre-AIDS generation. **Eleanor Antin**'s (b.1935) work emerged from a belief that 'the usual aids to self-definition – sex, age, talent, time, and space' were 'tyrannical limitations' on her 'freedom of choice'.

Dubbed 'the magician of erotic art' by Surrealism's founder André Breton, **Pierre Molinier** produced photographic self-portraits in which he appeared wearing masks, corsets, stockings and high heels using drag as a tool to create ambiguous photo-montages exploring eroticism, fetishism and androgyny. **Ulay** used Polaroid film to create a series of self-portraits or, as he termed them, 'auto-portraits'. In the diptych *S'he*, 1973, Ulay is both a man and a woman, while in *Renaissance (White Mask)*, 1974, Ulay shows the process of transformation from one identity to another.

As well as parodying and unsettling the very idea of gender, drag is also able to reveal and undermine other systems of oppression. In this exhibition, **Samuel Fosso** (b.1962) and **Ming Wong** (b.1971) use drag to critique the depiction of cultural and racial stereotypes, while **Jo Spence** (b.1934-d.1992) uses it as a tool to make a comment on class systems. Artists included in the exhibition use drag in a humorous way to make poignant and often political comments, Brooklyn-based artist and feminist activist **Martha Wilson** (b.1947) for example has been experimenting with both male and female identities: borrowing from stand-up comedy, she performs as political personalities including Barbara Bush and Bill Clinton. In his work, **Francesco Copello** (b.1938-d.2006) often explored sexual identity and nationality. In his 1975 series of photographs *El Mimo y La Bandera (The Mime and the Flag)*, we see the artist in drag dancing with the Chilean flag. The series alludes to the absence of individual freedom after Pinochet's military coup of 1973, and references the artist's own exile from his homeland.

DRAG: Self-portraits and Body Politics is curated by Hayward Gallery Senior Curator Vincent Honoré, supported by Assistant Curator Katie Guggenheim.

Full list of artists in the exhibition:

Eleanor Antin, Oreet Ashery, Renate Bertlmann, Leigh Bowery, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Luciano Castelli, Adam Christensen, Francesco Copello, Jimmy DeSana, Rose English, VALIE EXPORT, Samuel Fosso, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Ann Hirsch, David Hoyle, Michel Journiac, Birgit Jürgenssen, Paul Kindersley, Suzy Lake, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ana Mendieta, Pierre Molinier, Tony Morgan, Hunter Reynolds, Cindy Sherman, Victoria Sin, Jo Spence, Sturtevant, Ulay, Martha Wilson, David Wojnarowicz & Jesse Hultberg, Ming Wong, Cerith Wyn Evans.

For further press information and images please contact:

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Listings information:

DRAG: Self-portraits and Body Politics

22 August – 14 October 2018

HENI Project Space, Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX, Free

Hayward Gallery Normal opening times:

11am–7pm every day except Tuesdays when the gallery is closed.

Late night opening on Thursdays until 9pm

Further information:

www.southbankcentre.co.uk / 020 3879 9555

Twitter: [@haywardgallery](https://twitter.com/haywardgallery)

Instagram: [@Hayward.Gallery](https://www.instagram.com/Hayward.Gallery)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/haywardgallery/

NOTES TO EDITORS

HENI Project Space

Originally opened in July 2007, the Hayward Project Space has been home to a regularly changing programme of exhibitions featuring both emerging and newly established artists as well as significant expressions of broader visual culture. Focusing on innovative forms of art making, the Project Space has also been a platform for presenting the latest developments in contemporary art from across the globe: in addition to the UK, exhibiting artists have come from Latin America, Africa, Europe, North America, Russia, China, Korea, India, and Japan. Presenting 6-8 exhibitions each year, the Hayward Project Space's programme moves at a faster tempo than the Gallery's main exhibitions. Free to the public, it enables the Hayward to provide a continuous visual arts offering even at those moments when the main galleries are closed for installation. It also crucially enables the Hayward to regularly feature the work of emerging artists from diverse backgrounds: over the past 8 years, the Project Space has featured artists from 20 different countries and 5 continents. The Hayward Project Space reopened in January 2018 in a larger space on the ground floor of the building and as the HENI Project Space. The rebuild and renovations were kindly sponsored by HENI publishing. While adjacent to the Hayward's principal galleries, it offers an enclosed environment that ensures that its exhibitions maintain a distinct identity within the larger Hayward programme.

Hayward Gallery

Hayward Gallery is a part of Southbank Centre and has a long history of presenting work by the world's most adventurous and innovative artists including major solo shows by both emerging and established artists and dynamic group exhibitions. They include those by Bridget Riley, Martin Creed, Antony Gormley, Tracey Emin, Andy Warhol, Ed Ruscha, Jeremy Deller, Anish Kapoor, René Magritte, Francis Bacon and David Shrigley, as well as influential group exhibitions such as *Africa Remix*, *Light Show*, *The Human Factor*, *Psycho Buildings* and most recently *The Infinite Mix*. Opened by Her Majesty, The Queen in July 1968, the gallery is one of the few remaining buildings of its style. The Brutalist building was designed by a group of young architects, including Dennis Crompton, Warren Chalk and Ron Herron and is named after Sir Isaac Hayward, a former leader of the London County Council.

HENI Publishing

Established in 2009, HENI Publishing is a small, independent art publishers based in Soho, London, working with artists on projects ranging from major trade publications to artist books and limited editions. HENI have published six Gerhard Richter publications to date along with titles, both upcoming and previously published, on the work of Sabine Moritz, Brian Clarke and the late Albert Irvin, working closely at all times with the artists to create personal, bespoke publications with impeccable production values. Whilst specialising in contemporary art monographs, both HENI Publishing and its sister imprint SALMA Editions have published a diverse range of publishing projects, including books on the work of the Dulwich Outdoor Gallery (street art), the drawings of Tommy Kane (illustration) and the life and work of Stephen Webster (jewellery design).

Southbank Centre

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 17 acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as The National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. For further information please visit www.southbankcentre.co.uk.

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