

BODY OF WORK



: Representations
of gender in
Rebecca Swan's
'Assume Nothing'

ARTH 489

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Representations of gender in Rebecca Swan's *Assume Nothing*

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Introduction

On the following pages gender is embodied, expressed, transgressed, transformed and performed in many different ways. Each person reveals their own gender nuance and this is but the tip of an emerging iceberg.¹

Rebecca Swan, *Assume Nothing*

This essay discusses *Assume Nothing*, a book published in 2004 to accompany an exhibition of the same name.² The book and exhibition comprised of a series of photographs of transgender individuals, clothed and unclothed, alongside biographical statements addressing their experience of being transgender. These photographs arrested people worldwide with their openness and vulnerability. In this essay I will focus on the book *Assume Nothing* to allow a broader discussion of Swan's practice, to focus on the development of her practice over the course of the series, and the meaning produced by the interrelations of images in the book.³ Not only did this series situate the naked body as subject matter, but it forthrightly showcased the bodies of transgender people and people with alternative gender identities as never before. Here exist bodies outside of conventional expectations of binary gender, some a composite of gendered anatomy, hormones, birth features, and surgical advances in technology. This stark subject matter could easily have invited a tone of anthropological curiosity, exploring the classification of 'other' bodies outside of normative expectations. Instead, the viewer is privileged with seeing the evident vulnerability, as the individuals are captured with exceptional tenderness. These images are presented to us with a high level of intimacy; bodies appear simply as they are, and interrupt viewers' preconceptions about what constitutes gender, and what defines an individual. Throughout the series, Swan's works capture the tension between personality, gender identity and the physical limitations of bodily corporeality. This is a direct result of Swan's concern with the ethics of representation, and

¹ Rebecca Swan, artist's statement in *Assume Nothing* (Auckland: Boy Tiger Press, 2004), 7.

² 'Assume Nothing' was first exhibited in February 1999 at the George Fraser Gallery in Auckland. In 2008, the solo exhibition 'Assume Nothing: Celebrating Gender Diversity,' was commissioned by The Dowse Art Museum, Wellington, in partnership with the Human Rights Commission of New Zealand, and toured New Zealand.

³ There is also a documentary film entitled *Assume Nothing*, released in 2008 and directed by Kirsty MacDonald, who interviews several of the individuals featured in Swan's series *Assume Nothing*. However, this is outside of the limitation of this essay.

how to practically respect the models' wishes, needs, and consent.

Queer rights, and transgender rights have assumed centre stage this decade, leading Joe Biden to call the issue 'the civil rights of our time'.⁴ During the 1990s, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity emerged, setting the stage for later discussions specifically around trans experience and the disjunction between body and self. Where then, can we situate *Assume Nothing*? Produced between 1995 and 2003, Swan's works reflect the changing ideologies surrounding gender, and indicate a growing acceptance of transgender issues. Through this thesis I will discuss Swan's two primary photographic approaches in *Assume Nothing*. Firstly, reflecting Pictorialist photography aesthetics and incorporating a variety of photographic techniques, Swan's pre-1998 works emerge through an atmospheric haze as her own vision of gender diversity clarifies. Secondly, in her post-1998 works, Swan's photographic methods become defined by a sharp focus, and a rigid interrogation of visual representation itself. The earlier works feature ambiguous bodies and reflect the state of queer theory during the 1990s, where gender was analytically disconnected from birth sex, exemplified in the writings of Judith Butler; Swan's later works respond to a more recent emphasis on the individualistic, singular experience each person has of gender and their body, as well as the greater visibility of transgender issues and the increasing diversity of transgender voices.

Swan's post-1998 works exemplify an awareness about the limitations of the visual image, resulting in her recognition of the need to introduce the voice of the subject, to showcase a diversity of opinions. These works appear as carefully lit, clean studio portrait photography of different individuals, a style exemplified in *Rusty #1* (1999), where the gender of the figure's naked body remains ambiguous [Fig. 1]. It is only after reading the text on the facing page that an answer is found. Here, Rusty supplements the image by sharing her own experience as a transgender woman. These post-1998 works show Swan accommodating her subjects' views on gender within the publication itself. When exhibited, these same biographical statements appear as wall texts to complement the images. The result: *Assume Nothing* includes a range of opinions, and in doing so, contemplates both the mental and conceptual understanding of gender, and the physical gendered body, together with the limitations it poses.

⁴ 'Biden suggests GOP and other presidential candidates are "homophobes"', *FoxNews.com*, Last modified 4 October 2015, accessed 20 September 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/10/04/biden-suggests-gop-and-other-presidential-candidates-are-homophobes.html>

A Note on Terminology

As it is discussed constantly through the internet, LGBT+ community terminology changes, and as terminology assists in the construction of identity as much as it defines it, this leads to difficulties writing about it. Furthermore, several terms utilised in *Assume Nothing* have developed different meanings over time.⁵ Through this essay I will endeavour to discuss Swan's subjects with each individual's appropriate pronoun. This process has been supplemented by Swan's own knowledge of the individuals, in order to accurately respect their respective gender identities. In instances where the individual's pronoun is not indicated, I will utilise the singular, gender-neutral pronoun 'they', which does not negate the existence of any individual's specific gender.⁶ Many words are difficult to separate from their initial etymological usage – for example the term homosexual began as a medical diagnosis.⁷ Here then, I will discuss and define colloquial terminology around sex and gender diversity, the definitions of which can be found in the glossary.

Although the words are often used interchangeably, *sex* and *gender* are different concepts. *Sex* constitutes one's body, determined by physical markers such as anatomy, and/or hormones, and classified upon birth as male, female or intersex. Therefore, someone can be assigned female at birth (AFAB), or male, or intersex. On the other hand, *gender* is built upon social and cultural constructions of what constitutes a man or woman. *Gender identity* is the psychological experience a person has of themselves, as a man, woman, or a combination, or rejection of these binary genders. *Gender expression* is outwardly expressing masculinity or femininity. *Cisgender* is considered the most common, normative gender, and simply means to identify with the sex one is assigned at birth (for example a male identifying as a man). However, gender identity may not necessarily align with assigned at birth sex. *Sexual orientation* relates to whom someone is attracted (heterosexual, same-sex, bisexual, etc.), and

⁵ For example, gender fluidity is no longer understood as general flexibility around gender identity and expression; but gender fluidity is now defined as a specific gender identity which allows for this very flexibility.

⁶ For further reading, I direct you to the Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'they' as a singular, gender non-definite pronoun. 'they, pron., adj., adv., and n.,' *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, last modified September 2016, accessed 20 September 2016. <http://www.oed.com/helicon.vuw.ac.nz/view/Entry/200700>

⁷ Zadjermann, Paule, 'Judith Butler: Philosophical Encounters of the Third,' filmed 2007, YouTube video, 09.50, last modified October 2008, accessed 31 June 2016. <https://youtu.be/DLnv322X4tY>

is separate from their gender or sex.⁸⁹

Transgender broadly includes a variety of alternative gender identities, and defines ‘a person whose gender identity is different from their physical sex at birth’.¹⁰ Often this is someone whose gender identity is within the binary realm of man or woman, but whose birth sex is incongruent with their psychological experience. While transgender encompasses transwomen and transmen, it also encompasses other identities such as, genderqueer, non-binary, gender neutral, androgynous, takatāpui (a te reo term for non-heterosexual or non-cisgender Māori), and fa’afafine (a Sāmoan third gender recognised as an individual born male but who is imbued with the spirit of a woman).

Trans is a flexible umbrella term encompassing many identities, including transgender. In its sheer broadness resists a singular definition, aside from being non-cisgender. *Queer* encompasses gender diversity as well as sexual orientations. As medical technology becomes more accessible, more transgender people are shaping their body to be congruent with their gender. A *transsexual* individual is one who has, or is in the process of medical transitioning from one sex, to one aligned with their gender identity, choosing to undergo hormone therapy and/or gender-affirming surgery. Transgender encompasses transsexual; however, transsexual is less commonly used and is considered a slur by some. *Gender diversity* then, describes the inclusion of not just men and women, but and anyone who identifies within alternative gender identities under the broad term transgender. The ‘+’ symbol in the LGBT+ community recognises that there are many other identities excluded from this small acronym, and so stands not just for other identities and sexualities, but as a counter to cis-normative and heteronormative restrictions and limitations.

⁸ National Center for Transgender Equality [America], ‘Transgender Terminology,’ last modified 15 January 2014, accessed 25 September 2016.

<http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/transgender-terminology>

⁹ Human Rights Commission New Zealand, ‘Trans Terminology,’ accessed 30 September 2016.

https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/9914/2378/4830/HRC_H_Trans_Terminology.pdf

¹⁰ Ibid.

Defining and deconstructing gender

Jack Halberstam, a queer theorist, wrote the essay 'Gender Flex' included within *Assume Nothing*.¹¹ This essay creates an analytical entry-point to the framework of gender. Here, he notes, 'the body does not always do what we want it to do' and transgender experience is 'as much about the constraints of identification as it is about the possibility of release from those constraints'.¹² Although gender is experienced, constructed, formulated or rejected psychologically, it is difficult to sustain if not grounded in the physical. As Halberstam notes, one is not necessarily guaranteed freedom from the distress of bodily limitations or gender norms 'by understanding how they work'.¹³ *Passing* is convincingly being recognised by others as cisgender in the gender one identifies as, and is an ideal for many transgender people; but for many passing is unattainable, causing a distressing discrepancy between someone's identity and their physical body.¹⁴ This experience is recognised as a medical diagnosis, *gender dysphoria*, commonly referred to as feeling like one is 'in the wrong body'.

Furthermore, presenting in a gender-affirming way can cause the possibility of prejudice or danger in many cis-normative cultures.¹⁵ This specifically transgender experience of bodily disconnect, and the possibility of medical interventions for the alteration of individuals' bodies, is a frequent topic throughout Halberstam's 1998 book *Female Masculinity*, and his 2005 *In a Queer Time and Place*. This more recent strain of transgender theory is reflected in Swan's post-1998 works, which I will discuss in section III.

Transsexuality has been made medically and technologically possible through a combination of hormone treatments and surgeries. However, as there is no singular narrative of transgender

¹¹ Halberstam himself has undergone a transition between the period of *Assume Nothing's* publication and the present. In *Assume Nothing* Halberstam used the pronouns 'she/her' and published as 'Judith "Jack" Halberstam', and now uses 'he/him' pronouns, publishing as 'Jack Halberstam'. Through this essay, I will refer to him as the latter.

¹² Jack Halberstam, 'Gender Flex,' in *Assume Nothing*, 24.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Human Rights Commission New Zealand, 'To Be Who I Am/ Kia noho au ki toku ano ao Report: The Inquiry into Discrimination Experienced by Transgender People,' last modified January 2008, accessed 1 July 2016. https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/8214/2378/7655/24-Nov-2008_11-36-56_To_Be_Who_I_Am_HTML_Aug_08.html Section 3.48 - 3.51c

¹⁵ Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 78.

experience, there is also no singular path that transgender individuals may or may not take in altering their bodies.¹⁶ Medical assistance to pass is considered contentious by some, as it enables third or alternative genders to disappear, while upholding the status quo by reasserting binary genders.¹⁷ Gender theorist Bernice Hausman has argued that transsexual people seeking to alter their bodies 'demonstrate that their relationship to technology is a dependent one'.¹⁸ However, Halberstam notes that although affirming gender is linked to bodily alteration, that nevertheless identity is as much determined and affirmed by queer communities as by the medical profession.¹⁹

Through Swan's work we see the ongoing, continual process of trans bodies caught in being and becoming, as the photographs capture the salutary effects of hormone therapy and gender-affirmation surgeries. Jay Prosser wrote that transgender theories place fundamental emphasis on the body, where the 'prioritization of surface is emphatically occularcentric'.²⁰ However, as stated, through emphasis on idealized and undetectable transitioning, the visual body of a transgender individual can be seen to reproduce binary ideals. Prosser states this relies upon 'a notion of the body as that which can be seen, the body as visual surface' and excludes someone's non-bodily experience of their own gendered self.²¹ *Assume Nothing*, a primarily visual work, resists visual territories of masculine and feminine, and through its portrayal of the visual surface of the body, presents us with people not only transitioning from one sex to another, but those who resist or reverse the order of gendered boundaries.

Butler's queer theory articulates gender performativity, and was first established in her essay of 1988, 'Performative acts and gender constitution,' and expanded in 1990 with *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.²² Through *Gender Trouble* Butler states that

¹⁶ Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 164.

¹⁷ 'Transgender Oppression Definitions,' *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (second edition), ed. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin (New York: Routledge, 2007), PDF, accessed 20 September 2016.
<http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415892940/data/3%20Transgender%20Oppression%20Definitions.pdf>

¹⁸ Bernice Hausman, in Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 160.

¹⁹ Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 161.

²⁰ Jay Prosser, 'Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and The Transubstantiation of Sex,' in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, ed. Donald E. Hall (New York: Routledge, 2013), 46.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 33.

the birth assignment of sex, and the continued structuring of a child's life is based upon the body as a site of external and internal gendering. Butler deconstructs gender as a social and cultural framework, which begins at birth when a child is stated to be: 'it's a boy/girl!' A person is not 'one' at birth: rather, Butler argues a person must be assigned a gender through this formative declaration to become a 'one', that is, a valid subject.²³ Following this gender designation, specific traits, thought processes and mannerisms congruent with that declaration are assimilated by the individual, through an elaborate process of cultural repetition and expectations. Butler, rather than considering gender as inherently who someone *is*, considers that 'gender is always a doing,' a social construct which someone actively takes part in.²⁴ Butler contends that this continuous ingrained, gendered narrative results in subliminal gender performativity; 'compulsory performances, ones which none of us choose, but which each of us is forced to negotiate'.²⁵

Butler has considered Simone de Beauvoir's statement 'one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one'; but Butler posits the question – *does one ever* reach this point, or is it a continuous process of becoming, an ongoing performativity?²⁶ Furthermore, Butler argues that despite the 'cultural compulsion' of females to become women, any individual becoming a woman does not necessarily begin female; thus regardless of birth sex, any individual can 'become' any gender.²⁷ This disputed essentialist theories of gender as an inherent essence dictated by birth sex, and instead separated gender identity from its contingency on biological factors. In arguing that gender is an artificial construction, Butler argues that drag culture reveals gender as mere artifice and separate from sex, and thus revealing the artificiality of cisgender culture.²⁸ And as drag performs the 'sign of gender' separately from the normative 'body it figures', drag is often met with a negative response, and in doing so reveals a deep social anxiety pertaining to the rejection or artifice of cis-normative gender norms.²⁹ Butler's 1990s queer theory precedes Halberstam's writings, and focuses on gender performativity and

Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal* 40 no. 4 (1988): 519 - 531.

²³ Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer,' in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, ed. Donald E. Hall (New York: Routledge, 2013) 26.

²⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 33.

²⁵ Butler, 'Critically Queer,' 26.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 12.

²⁸ Butler, 'Critically Queer,' 26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

the extrication of sex from the construct of gender. However unlike Halberstam's writings, which were a refinement of these concepts around gender, Butler did not fully articulate the implications of isolating gender from sex for transgender individuals, who often need their body to align with their gender identity (regardless of their initial sex). It is this theory which seems to be reflected in the way Swan approaches her pre-1998 images, and, as I will discuss further in section II of this essay, in these works Swan untangles expectations of binary gender from the sex of the individual depicted, instead creating ambiguity and alternative gender possibilities to be read onto each figure.

In his essay 'Gender Flex', Halberstam discusses a shift in thinking toward transgender people, noting recent wider medical and social acceptance, especially the wider options for employment, where previously it was largely limited to the sex industry.³⁰ This acceptance is part of an overall shift in the deconstruction of prescriptive gender roles as the matrix for society, and as Halberstam notes, now for many individuals there is 'potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing'.³¹ As the hegemony of binary genders are increasingly obsolete, gender roles less dichotomous, and gender performativity structurally weaker, there is a widespread rejection of what has been a culture of compulsory heterosexuality and cis-normativity. This allows greater freedoms in gender identity and expression, both of which are expressed openly throughout *Assume Nothing*.

However, as Halberstam points out in 'Gender Flex', although there is a progressive perceptibility of gender diversity, these instances of visibility do not signify an absence of discrimination:

Certainly, as many of Swan's subject's show us, gender norms have changed radically in the last ten years; transsexual women have many more options now than sex work and isolation and transsexual men are finally being recognised by medical practitioners but also other queers. But again, the rosy optimism of a simple narrative of progression and liberation does not do justice to the extraordinarily resilient power of binary gendering and stable sex roles in a male-dominated world.³²

³⁰ Halberstam, 'Gender Flex', in *Assume Nothing*, 27.

³¹ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 2.

³² Halberstam, 'Gender Flex,' in *Assume Nothing*, 24.

The New Zealand Human Rights Commission 'Inquiry into Discrimination Experienced by Transgender People' delineates many transgender people's experiences. Despite the increasing visibility of non-binary genders, transgender individuals still face many obstacles: at best, they face prejudice, and lack of access to medical treatment; at worst, high rates of suicide, ostracism and abuse.³³ We see these concerns in the biographical statements from Swan's models, which raise awareness of the tension between the desire to live a life congruent with one's identity, to alter one's body, and the social difficulties that these decisions may bring. Rather than gender performativity, it is this gender theory, focused on the individual, distinct experience of (trans)gender that Swan refines through her works post-1998.

The increasing visibility of transgender concerns is partially attributed to transgender celebrities such as Balian Buschbaum, Andreja Pejić, Laverne Cox and Caitlyn Jenner, who bring awareness of issues such as the emotional and physical labour involved in living as a transgender person, including the obstacles many face to assume their gender identity. In reality, this is rarely socially or financially accessible to many transgender individuals, with the cost and access to healthcare largely prohibitive. This also brings about a visibility of transgender bodies; however, unlike Swan's work, this visibility is often of homogenised, seamless surgical transitions.³⁴ Indeed, although Swan's work inherently focuses on the physical bodies of transgender individuals and their experiences of their bodies, there is limited focus on individuals' genitals through these photographs. The only two images in which the individuals reveal their lower halves to the viewer are those of the individuals who appear in *Norrie* (1999) and *Ema* (2001). *Ema*'s lower half is supplemented by the inclusion of an artificial, silicone penis. As I will later discuss, Norrie has had lower gender-affirming surgery, but is the only individual Swan has captured who has been able to access this surgery; surgery which is of paramount importance to the mental well-being of many transgender people. This limited view of transgender individuals' genitals through Swan's *Assume Nothing* partially reflects the very limited access to gender-affirming surgeries; but it also further cements Swan's contention that genitals do not determine someone's identity.

Within the publication, Swan wrote that her interest in gender drew her to creating this series,

³³ HRC New Zealand, 'To Be Who I Am'.

³⁴ Not every transgender person desires hormones or surgery.

and that it 'resonates with something very deep inside' her.³⁵ She wrote that her twin brother, whose 'energy merged' with hers in utero created this: 'When I see people who embody both masculine and feminine energy, it awakens that primal state within me'.³⁶ Joanna Drayton termed this as Swan's 'almost genetically imprinted attraction' to gender diversity.³⁷ Interviewing her this year, Swan's opinion has shifted. She revealed that her practice has always been intuitive, and through her practice she continuously extricates the underlying purpose of her work over time, as with this project.³⁸ Looking back at *Assume Nothing* after 13 years, Swan now believes that her interest in gender is less about her time in utero, and more transcendent instead – her belief is that people's non-physical beings or souls are essentially gender non-binary or androgynous. However, she continues, since we have solid bodies, we have a vast space for gender expression as an integral part of our identities.³⁹

Swan has a longstanding involvement with the LGBT+ community, participating in queer art exhibitions, as well as appearing on the panel for 'Asia Pacific Out Games' HRC Conference where she spoke about the power of images. Regularly when *Assume Nothing* is exhibited, Swan hosts panel discussions alongside the exhibition, on the intersectionality between art, images, and gender identities.⁴⁰ Swan has extended her artistic practice to curate exhibitions showcasing queer artists, such as 'Faerie Tales' which was exhibited at the Snakepit Gallery, Auckland in 2012, as well as supporting her partner Jack who is an activist for transgender rights. Swan was also tasked with being the photographer for the NZ HRC 'Inquiry into Discrimination Experienced by Transgender People'. For Swan, *Assume Nothing* initiated an ongoing conversation in support of others, and is continuously linked back to her practical role of being an ally for transgender issues.

³⁵ Swan, introduction to *Assume Nothing*, 6.

³⁶ Swan, introduction to *Assume Nothing*, 7.

³⁷ Joanne Drayton, 'Rebecca Swan: Twins, Trans-cendence & Art that Assumes Nothing,' *Art New Zealand* 140, Summer 2012-13, accessed 12 June 2016. <http://blog.rebeccaswan.com/2011/12/twins-trans-cendence-and-art-that.html>

³⁸ Rebecca Swan, interview with the writer, Auckland, 16 September 2016.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Rebecca Swan, *News blog*, last modified 28 May 2012, accessed 3 May 2016. <http://blog.rebeccaswan.com/>

II

Ambiguous bodies, shifting identities

Pre-1998 works

Assume Nothing opens with a group of soft-focus or blurred photographs of nude and semi-nude figures. These images are some of the first works from this series, dated from 1996-1999. These plates begin a narrative sequence, where each image blurs and blends traditional binary gender boundaries through photographic effects. This sequence leads up to the essay 'Gender Flex' by Halberstam, and then continues up until the collage work *Collision* (1997) and the double-exposure work *Merge* (1997), which appears alongside the first extended biographical statement from one of the models. Following this, the plates are sharp-focused portraits with accompanying quotes from the models, which I will discuss in section III. Although the majority of the portraiture works post-1998 are not ordered chronologically, these instances pre-1998 appear at the very front of *Assume Nothing*. These initial works fuse, heighten or alter traditionally feminine and masculine features to create visual surfaces of ambiguous bodies, and in this conflation seek undo to the relationship between bodies and normative gender categories.

Although the models shown are real people with individual views on, and experiences of gender and sexuality, the photographs which open *Assume Nothing* reflect Swan's own artistic decisions, over the more collaborative approach we see in later works. These works question what constitutes identity, and explores how images can be used in the social construction of identities. As the nature of photography is a singular, optical representation and reductive abstraction, Swan faces the difficulty of capturing the individuality and complexity of the models. In section III, I will discuss how Swan minimises more obvious photographic effects and instead integrates biographical statements from the models to convey their experiences of gender. While the pre-1998 photographic effects are evident to the viewer, the constructed nature of the latter works appears subtler, as the nature of photography effaces and naturalises the

constructed, artificial character of representation; although all these photographs are still the result of a constructed representation and Swan's artistic decisions. All the works in *Assume Nothing* use black and white photography which creates a somber tone with the additional appearance of authenticity. The series was predominantly shot on a Mamiya RZ67 film camera, which Swan used to generate a Pictorialist aesthetic.

Swan uses several photographic strategies within her pre-1998 work. In the first, Swan captures diffused light from various source points, without the clear delineations and definition provided by accurate lens focusing. In these works, details of facial and bodily features are enveloped in a misty haze against an indistinct background. The first plates in the publication, *Layne #1-3* (1997) feature Layne from the torso up in three different poses, as the figure raises his hands above his head, bring them to his chest, and finally draw them upward to his chin in a self-embracing posture [Fig. 2]. The figure's hair is gently waved and dark, around his neck is a thin choker which cuts lightly into their neck under an Adam's apple. But his lips are full and his hand gestures immeasurably gentle, almost balletic and tipped with long nails.

Layne #1-3 are composed to emphasise conventionally 'feminine' postures and gestures, and the soft focus over the figure's body render it flatter, drawing attention to surface details. Scanning these superficial details, it is tempting to establish the figure's body as assigned male at birth (AMAB), due to their wider neck, developed Adam's apple, and square hairline. Although these features could be result from hormone therapy, there is no visible evidence of chest scarring or breast tissue – yet these attempts to discern the sex of Swan's subject are resisted by the haziness of conclusive details.⁴¹ Concurrently, the exclusion of props, background, or other points of interest, allows, even invites this scrutiny of the body's exterior surface. Although the series title reiterates the necessity of assuming nothing, these first works fluctuate

⁴¹ Although the two methods of FTM top surgery Peri-areolar and Keyhole leave little visible scarring, the most widely utilised method remains double incision and inverted-T, both of which leave visible torso scars under the nipples.

between evidence and assumption, existing within the space between socially codified symbols of what is agreed to be *male* and what is agreed to be *female*. Here, masculine and feminine signifiers exist simultaneously. This tension continuously prevents and frustrates the viewer's ingrained desire to assign a normative gender to each model's body and person.

Directly over the page from the *Layne* works in the publication, this atmospheric haziness is used in *Sydney Light #1-2* (1997), this time combined with the model Megan's own rapid movement shaking their head, rendering their face a blur. Here, the gendered surface plays between Megan's narrow forehead and face, and Swan's emphasis on their strong jawline and muscular shoulders, heightened with strategically placed shadows, creating an ambiguously gendered representation. Here, as through the other photos, the predicament transgender people face is reiterated – that their body is scrutinized without invitation by viewers seeking conclusive signs of maleness or femaleness. This reveals the resiliency of prevalent cis-normativity which (subtle or not) undermines and sabotages a transgender individual's sense of identity, while reinforcing the rigid order of binary gendering. Following *Sydney Light #1-2*, still in the beginning of the book, are three spreads which show tentative glimpses of bodies either in movement or shadow, and isolate certain limbs such as arms and hands, while resisting deciphering of the whole bodies.

This physical blurring of features combined with a slow shutter speed is the second technique used in Swan's pre-1998 photographs. This technique, used in *Sydney Light #2*, is more notably utilised in *James #1-2* (1999). These are the last works placed in the book after Swan's own preface, but prior to Halberstam's essay 'Gender Flex'. Halberstam's essay explores non-binary genders, and delineates the necessity of suspending preconceptions prior to approaching *Assume Nothing*. In the first image, James' facial features are blurred; in the second, the whole body is rendered a blur through movement. Here, the model James also appears mid- or just post-bodily transition, presenting the viewer with narrow muscular shoulders, and taped scars from double-incision top surgery – the body of someone assigned female at birth

(AFAB) whose body is in the flux of recovery. This image is accompanied with the first quotation featured from an individual within *Assume Nothing*, and expresses, like the previous atmospheric works, the unrestricted ambiguity or fluidity of gender that some people experience. Here James reflects on this self-in-transition: 'When I'm feeling good, I think it's a lucky thing to have a gender that is so fluid and in perpetual motion'.⁴²

The atmospheric softness or blur, created through an unfocused camera lens or through the models in motion, produces a similar result: that these pre-1998 photographs resist a clear reading of gender. Familiar clear indications such as hair lines, facial hair, make-up, and jawlines and vocal chords have been largely eliminated as cues or clues which indicate either assigned sex or current gender, generating overall facial and bodily ambiguity. The motions captured in the images by slow shutter speed indicate movement – not only the movement from one physical space to another, but also changes in gender expression, and the flux of bodies themselves when altered by hormones or surgeries. Or perhaps, the misty haze has rendered them ethereal, even celestial and transcending the corporeal necessity of defining gender.

Although the photographic language depicts the visible surfaces of the body, it is inadequate to define or represent the complexity of (trans)gender experience. The blurring of bodily indicators frustrates superficial identification of the individuals' genders – but here photography reaches a limit, as it cannot convey the individual sitter's experience in all its depth. For while focusing on the visible body, it is unable to convey the personal experience of gender identity. The inconclusive details acknowledge the vast, undefined expanse between individual experiences of gender, and hint at the limited capacity of labels or definitions. The only certainty that we can infer from these photographs is that the subjects are people. This blurring of visible boundaries marks the beginning of Swan's practice in identifying the blurring of invisible boundaries, and altering viewers' perceptions.

⁴² James, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 23.

Formally, these entry works are reminiscent of Pictorialism – the late-19C photographic movement characterized by atmospheric haziness and use of soft focus – particularly the works of Henry Peach Robinson and Frederick Holland Day, two practitioners and advocates for the movement during the second half of the nineteenth century. Although Swan was not consciously referring to Pictorialist photography, iconographically the images hold semblance.⁴³ The Pictorialist photographers sought to validate photography as an art form, capturing subjective or emotive experiences rather than limiting it to scientific usage.⁴⁴ By rejecting a sharp scientific focus in favour of emphasizing tonality, experimenting with different printing techniques on special papers to emphasize the individuality of their prints, and lifting compositional techniques associated with fine art painting, Pictorialism can be considered as ‘an aesthetic strategy that explores the limits of photographic representation’.⁴⁵ Likewise, Swan’s works delineate the limitations of photography to encompass the complexities of gender and bodily experiences. The placement of these works at the beginning introduces viewers into a realm of representations marked by uncertainty, questioning representations and bodies themselves – and following this, allow the viewer to move into the greater visual clarity of the images following Halberstam’s essay.

Day’s Pictorialist work sought to detach the ‘photographic signifier from signified, altering and expanding the indexicality’ of photographic reproduction.⁴⁶ In an unpublished manuscript, ‘Is Photography Art?’, Day argued for the lifting of the individual to reveal the subjective, writing that Pictorialist photographers ‘have found that the indefinite is the road to the infinite’.⁴⁷ His images sought to transcend the

⁴³ Swan, interview with the writer.

⁴⁴ Hope Kingsley and Dennis Reed, ‘Pictorialism,’ *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online*, Oxford University Press, last modified 11 February 2013, accessed 29 July 2016.
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T067402>

⁴⁵ Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 45.

⁴⁶ Smith, *At the Edge of Sight*, 41.

⁴⁷ Day, F. Holland, quoted in Smith. *At the Edge of Sight*, 41.

particular for the spiritual or universal, and his images of semi-nude men, validated by Pictorialist aesthetic strategies and religious or classical titles, stand in as representations of subjects separate from their real models.

Layne #1-3 bring to mind Day's works, not just for their aesthetic qualities, but also the content in Day's *Saint Sebastian* of 1906. More specifically, *Layne #2* is reminiscent of traditional pose used to depict Saint Sebastian, with head fallen back, expression seeming in transcendent ecstasy rather than agony, and his hands holding his chest. Smith calls Day's *Saint Sebastian* a 'swoon ... of abandon'.⁴⁸ The figure's head in *Layne #2*, stretched back, and the delicate fingers resting on his chest mimic these poses in Day's works, and even their expressions are similar, each seeming languid and spiritual, or possibly caught in an erotically charged moment.

Fiona Pardington's photograph *Sebastian* (1987) features a nude male bottom speckled with cupid stickers and treated in a similar Pictorialist style to Day's works and the *Layne* series. As another New Zealand artist, and as this work is dated ten years earlier than Swan's *Layne* works, it is plausible that Swan saw this work, and was influenced by it. In the publication on Pardington's work, *Rising to the Blow*, Stuart A. McKenzie argues Saint Sebastian 'seems to have encouraged so many homosexuals to devote themselves' to him.⁴⁹ Again, Smith argues that during the time that Day was working, 'Saint Sebastian had become a kind of covert homosexual icon ... increasingly understood to represent not only an object of homoerotic desire, but also a homosexual subject'.⁵⁰ Swan's *Layne #2* iconographically recalls Day and Pardington's works, and to the wider tradition of Pictorialist depictions of Saint Sebastian. *Layne #1-3* could also be compared to the poses and expressions assumed in Michelangelo's unfinished marble sculpture *Rebellious Slave*, (1513-15). All instances depict the male figure as erotic subject, and in the case of Saint Sebastian, an elected image of penetrated male homo-eroticism. *Layne #2* then, iconographically recalls

⁴⁸ Smith, *At the Edge of Sight*, 50.

⁴⁹ Stuart A. McKenzie, *Rising to the Blow* (Wellington: Eyework Design, 1992), 6.

⁵⁰ Smith, *At the Edge of Sight*, 50.

representations of the male body as both desirable and desired, in a conflation of traditional male and female positions. The suffused iconography of *Layne #2* then links to this tradition of homoeroticism, where Saint Sebastian transcends bodily corporeality, and suffused with spirituality, becomes a symbol and icon of alternative gender roles and non-heteronormative desire.

Like Pardington, Rebecca Swan's photographs exist between assumed truth, reality, and fabrication. McKenzie has noted of Pardington's practice that:

photography is expected to record the world "truthfully". But, exploiting its reputation for truthfulness, photography actually fabricates certain images of women and men, enforcing these while discrediting others.⁵¹

Here, Swan's *Assume Nothing* counters these 'images of women and men' in favour of intermingling conventionally 'male' or 'female' features, poses, and representational tropes, in order to redistribute between individuals some of these gendered photographic conventions.

Halberstam's essay within the book divides Swan's use of Pictorialism from her other works. Directly following Halberstam's essay appear three images, which show individuals partially or fully clothed: *Androgynous* (1995), *Bound* (1996), and *(Mildréd Gerestant aka) Dréd in NYC* (2001). *Bound* shows an individual from the waist up, wearing a waist cincher and necklace with exposed breasts and shaved head. The image has been mirrored vertically, and the divide between the midsection has been physically bound with ribbon and eyelets through the middle. *Androgynous* and *(Mildréd Gerestant aka) Dréd in NYC* each show an AFAB individual, each donning traditionally masculine formal attire and photographed outside, fully within the real world rather than confined to the studio. *Dréd in NYC* shows a suited person, with false stubble applied, who easily passes as a man against the backdrop of New York City. This image contrasts with the following two full nude images which combine or blur gender categories: *Collision* (1997) and *Merge* (1997) which I will discuss below. In

⁵¹ Stuart A. McKenzie, *Rising to the Blow*, 4.

these works, post-production photomontage and multiple-exposure are used, constituting the last of the pre-1998 techniques Swan uses to more blatantly intermingle 'male' and 'female' attributes and further convey the limitations of gender as distinctions enforced on individuals. These techniques are created after an initial photo has been taken, unlike the two other aesthetic methods I discussed so far, Pictorialism and physical blurring.

In *Collision* Swan uses physical collage of two photographs, of two separate individuals. Here, Swan has staged the initial photographs so that both models assume the same pose, within a similarly lit studio. They stand facing us, with their feet together and facing forward, and palms and fingers touching together in a prayer-like gesture, which are then pointed downwards to hide each model's genitals. Both photographs were then printed at a similar size, and carefully ripped apart, then the fragments were methodically rearranged, glued, and rephotographed so that the finished collage is a single composite figure. Swan evenly disperses the anatomy from both the assigned male and assigned female bodies to create a fragmentary yet hybridized, androgynous figure. On one side we are presented with breast tissue, on the other, a flat chest – yet the 'assigned-female' parts of the figure have enlarged, 'masculine' body-building muscles, while the 'assigned-male' parts are more smooth and supple. In many areas of the final image, the gender identity of the body is unclear.

This transfused form in *Collision* is unapologetically artificial, rejecting naturalism or a smooth finish, to highlight the raw edges of physically ripped paper. This image intends to emphasize the shared human nature of individuals, and placed after the essay 'Gender Flex' but prior to the majority of Swan's portrait works in *Assume Nothing*, this prepares the viewer prior to continuing through the publication. The two real individuals are displaced from the subject of specific and particular signified individuals to universal, non-specific figures, representative of the universality of people rather than gender. The image's ripped edges advertise Swan's artistic intervention in the physical method of creating this hybrid image, and therefore, its artificiality as a constructed photograph.

Merge is a double-exposure photograph featuring the same two models as *Collision*. In this instance the subjects' bodies are turned, and crouching, as one merges into the other. The physical action of Swan's to engineer this image is less obvious, as it is accomplished by two exposures on a single print, and the subjects fade into one another, though both still remain translucent. Each individual was photographed in separate exposures, and then both negatives were sandwiched together to create the final print. Again, like *Collision*, it is less a portrait of two individuals with distinct gender, and more a photograph on shared human experience.

Through the beginning of the book *Assume Nothing*, Swan uses different photographic techniques which act as an extended metaphor to induct viewers into the language of gender identity and expression. Using Pictorialism and blurring, as well as photomontage and layering of images, Swan draws our attention to the very tactile fabrication of image representation. By extension the viewer is drawn to flexible modes of thinking, wherein the fabrication of not only of images, but of bodies and gender itself, appears constructed, and can just as easily be deconstructed, or torn apart and reconstructed to meet individuals' own needs. Through extended metaphors, viewers engage in the creation of meaning from the visual photographs. Here, the variety of effects used is indicative of individuals' experiences of gender, which range from a blurring and blending of different identities, to movement and occupying a different gendered sphere. Like the photographs, the metaphor expands to describe combinations of both genders into one complex and unified identity; either as a double-exposure, where a new gender identity is superimposed onto a former, with areas of overlap and gaps; or as a sort of gender-collage where gender presentation is altered but reveals evidence of the process, like the visibly rough edges of the collage. Swan's use of these techniques prior to 1998 continues to enable a flexible but critical engagement with the concept of gender, loosening viewers' strict definitions. Following this, the works within the publication no longer utilise obvious techniques to blur gender boundaries – instead, they are portraits which show individuals successfully realising their transgender identities.

These pre-1998 works reflect a shift in attitude toward queer theory, even if they are not directly influenced by it. Begun in 1993, three years after Judith Butler's formative *Gender Trouble*, these early works delineate the disconnect between gender and sex, intentionally creating a field of ambiguity where individuals cannot be recognised as one sex or another; rather each body is treated as a surface upon which a mosaic of gendered attributes and features are depicted, separate from the assigned sex of each individual. Unlike the later works, the emphasis is not rigidly on the individuality of each person with their own specific views on gender – rather each is figured as an example of the viewer's inability to easily decipher either sex or gender based on the visual alone, prompting the realisation of the necessity of the individual's own experience to provide clarity and understanding.

III

Developing methods of representation and inclusion

Post-1998 works

As I have discussed in her pre-1998 works, Swan experimented with a variety of photographic effects in order to both construct, and signal to the wider gender diversity addressed through *Assume Nothing*. In the post-1998 works, which I will discuss in this section, Swan abandons overt photographic manipulations in order to create more visually straightforward depictions of individuals. In the earlier works Swan as an artist explores the limits of the visual body, but these later works are more of a collaborative effort. These post-1998 works integrate models' choices of poses, and also include their opinions as biographical statements alongside the images. Swan fosters an open communicative platform for the photographed individuals, enabling a space for them to share their own opinions on gender and sexuality within the publication. Within the overarching narrative of acceptance of diversity, Swan meets the individuals' wishes, granting them agency and autonomy in how they are represented. Here, the photographed individuals shed their stance as mere models upon which ambiguity is inscribed – instead, each image is a multi-medial portrait of the individual sitter, through both the visual image and text quotations.

Swan's desire to respect the individuality of the people featured in *Assume Nothing* subverts more conventional practices of photographers acting as individual artists. Instead, Swan relinquishes the photographer's position of author and authority, in favour of a dialogue with the models. Swan intentionally takes advice from her subjects in terms of pose and how they would like to be portrayed.⁵² More specifically, Swan follows an informed consent model when showing these works, to ensure that the subjects' agree to their images being shown at each new exhibition or event.⁵³ As Joanna Drayton has noted, this mode of practice has occasionally 'necessitated a

⁵² Swan, interview with the writer.

⁵³ Drayton, 'Rebecca Swan'.

frantic call to a printer to make a last minute format change'.⁵⁴ This constitutes a radically counter-cultural move from a legislative model. Common practice is a model signs a release form, and thereafter the photographer owns the intellectual property, and are at their own disposal to use the resulting images. Swan's strategy differs from conventional photographic practice, as Swan follows an empathetic model, utilising feminist methodologies where consent is never assumed. Here, Swan is more concerned with the ethics of representation itself – who chooses to be represented, when, and how. In recognising the vulnerable subject matter, Swan is acutely aware that the resulting images are tied to the lives of specific individuals. Over time, this results in a continuous process of consent, and a degree of collaboration between the artist and model continues each time *Assume Nothing* is exhibited.

Perhaps it is useful here to compare Swan's approach, to Fiona Pardington's decision in photographing her series *One Night of Love* (2001). Pardington received vintage negatives from porn shoots (or, as she termed it, from 'wank mags'), which a friend discovered in an abandoned warehouse.⁵⁵ Yet, only after months of deliberation on re-photographing these works, without the models' consent, or the ability to obtain the original release agreements, did she decide to use them.⁵⁶ Here, both Swan and Pardington show intense concern for the implications of obtaining permission, (or the inability to) – and each results in the photographer making considered discussions as to the depiction and display of others' nude bodies.

Swan and Pardington both address the ethics of representation as a whole, particularly since their works depict intimate, private, personal moments and rely upon a high degree of trust between the photographer and model. Pardington's works were motivated by a political intent, as she stated that she selectively re-photographed: 'the images that I felt addressed power issues and exposed the enormous problems within

⁵⁴ Drayton, 'Rebecca Swan'.

⁵⁵ Kate Brett Kelly-Chalmers, 'A conversation with Fiona Pardington,' last modified 2 September 2015, accessed 2 May 2016. <http://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/fiona-pardington/>

⁵⁶ Fiona Pardington, 'Meet the Artist: Fiona Pardington,' artist talk, City Gallery Wellington, Wellington, 22 November 2015.

that industry and within the dominant “entertainment” paradigm’.⁵⁷ Likewise, Swan’s photographs address issues of entrenched binary gender limitations, assumptions, and prejudices. Each used photography for decidedly political purposes; unlike Pardington, however, it was within Swan’s power to gain individual consent from the models. Here, both artists display a similar concern for the models’ consent and autonomy, prizing it above or equal to their own artistic endeavours or gains. However, for Swan the concern for consent goes beyond physical nudity; it is also a question as to whether the sitter still identifies with the image. In particular, Swan’s works are concerned with how a visual image itself can delineate someone’s identity, especially where a transgender individual’s identification with their own body is concerned. Here, Swan exemplifies empathy for the needs of transgender individuals to determine their identity, and how they are represented – particularly where bodily modification is concerned. This additional element brings into question the sitter’s determining of whether an image remains congruent as an authentic representation of the person.

Meyer has argued that both documentary photography and photojournalism intend to concisely portray a narrative through the gathering of visual information.⁵⁸ Although Swan’s work closely adheres to the wishes of individuals, and is more akin to art and portrait photography, *Assume Nothing* creates a singular and informative narrative of transgender experiences through the interweaving of images of individuals, as well as the textual elements of their stories and opinions on gender. Wells notes that documentary photography is determined by ‘seriousness of purpose, detail and depth of research, and to integrity of story-telling’.⁵⁹ However, documentary photography has previously been subject to criticism, particularly regarding relationships between photographer and subject, which have ‘forced [the other] show but not to speak’.⁶⁰ Instead, in her mode of operating, Swan conscientiously endeavours to bring a balance to any discrepancy in power dynamics, while still creating a narrative throughout

⁵⁷ Brett Kelly-Chalmers, ‘A conversation with Fiona Pardington’.

⁵⁸ Liz Wells, ‘Introduction to Documentary and Photojournalism’ in *The photography reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge Publishing, 2003), 252.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ John Tagg, quoted in Wells, ‘Introduction to Documentary and Photojournalism,’ 252.

Assume Nothing. This is achieved through her incorporation of word as well as image, including others' opinions in the publication, and by continuously regaining consent from her models. As Swan's process never assumes consent, Swan ceases to use particular works in the instances where communication with a model is lost.⁶¹

Lisa Henderson contends that within public photography is an 'essentially exploitative relationship that prevails between photographers and subjects' as emphasis is placed on obtaining permission for taking the photograph, rather than for its later use or publishing.⁶² This distinction between consent for taking a photograph, and for usage afterwards, was one Henderson explored through interviewing various photographers. Here she discovered the majority of interviewed photographers considered gaining consent less important than taking the right shot.⁶³ Although they are predominantly studio shots, several of Swan's photographs feature subjects within public places. The individuals who are shot outside are James, Heather, Dréd, and Rosa Pacifica. Dréd has several studio shots included; the other three are exclusively photographed in public. The works featuring Heather have a somewhat self-studied air, arranged poses, and are dressed in men's vintage formal wear suggesting a pre-arranged photoshoot. James has quotations included alongside their photographs, and makes eye-contact with the camera. James is also photographed nude, suggesting that the photoshoot was pre-arranged. On the other hand, *Rosa Pacifica* (1999) appears fleetingly in only two shots, leaning against a wall and seemingly unprepared for the photograph. This is the only image without a quotation that is dated post-1998 – and the sense of ephemerality is confirmed as a spontaneity of model choice, as Swan approached them at a public performance.⁶⁴ Given Swan's emphasis on informed consent, we can assume that although this is the only photograph in *Assume Nothing* that wasn't arranged prior to the shoot, and given Rosa Pacifica's eye-contact, that this image nevertheless valued the individual's autonomy and permission.

⁶¹ Swan, interview with the writer.

⁶² Lisa Henderson, 'Access and Consent in Public Photography,' in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 285.

⁶³ Henderson, 'Access and Consent in Public Photography,' 276, 284.

⁶⁴ Swan, interview with the writer.

As noted, each photo in *Assume Nothing* is rendered in monochromatic black and white which recalls the history of art photography. Edmundo Desnoes has said 'art frequently creates a comfortable world that detaches itself and becomes independent from action'.⁶⁵ The black and white images distance the viewers from the corporeal fleshiness of the photographed bodies, and demarcates them outside of the realm of fleshly coloured reality, perhaps resisting the viewers' own impositions onto the works. The nature of photography selects and isolates one specific moment – the individuals in *Assume Nothing* appear untouchable and suspended from the corporeal necessities of time. Here, the physicality of individuals' bodies are frozen, not just from age, but also from physical transition. Some individuals have since furthered their process of medical transition, yet the images do not reflect their continued physical transitions.

From 1998 onwards, Swan sought to include a quotation from every individual she photographed, which were published alongside the plates in *Assume Nothing*. Each individual has a segment of writing published alongside their photograph, outlining their perspective on the subject of gender, or their own experience of it. In the preface, Swan expresses her gratitude to this open vulnerability, wherein subjects were willing to 'share their passions, struggles, triumphs and visions' and her admiration that they 'live with courage, often in the face of prejudice and ignorance'.⁶⁶

In this preface, Swan also indicates that this project drove her to travel worldwide, 'to explore communities where alternative gender is more openly expressed'.⁶⁷ In most instances, Swan arranged to photograph people prior to arriving at her destination, while some she met on her travels.⁶⁸ Swan's consciously included a diverse range of individuals, not just in terms of gender, but culture and race – *Assume Nothing* encompasses not only transmen and transwomen, cross-dressers, genderfluid

⁶⁵ Edmundo Desnoes, 'Cuba made me so,' in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 315.

⁶⁶ Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 7.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Swan, interview with the writer.

individuals, intersex, fa'afafine, takatāpui, but also a variety of ethnicities such as Māori, Pākeha, Sāmoan, Haitian-American, and indigenous Australian.⁶⁹ In *Assume Nothing*, we see emerge a global model of diversity which resists cultural, ethnic, and gender boundaries.⁷⁰ The intermingled placement with no specific order of plates and people, reinforces shared humanity.

The post-1998 works resemble studio portraiture photography, utilising sharp focus, grayscale and balanced studio lighting. The emphasis here is on the rich array of individuals' bodies and their quotations, which assist the reading of the works by outlining the individuals' own experiences of gender. For example, *Karl #1* (1999) shows Karl clothed in a Sāmoan traditional necklace and shirt, smiling into the camera lens, while the opposite page includes Karl's biographical statement. Here Karl outlines their identity as 'Sāmoan first, fa'afafine second and then fabulous', and discusses the Sāmoan-specific gender fa'afafine as a physical man imbued with the spirit of a woman.⁷¹ Here, Karl also outlines their childhood indicators of being fa'afafine, as well as others' reactions. Karl was lucky to have a supportive aiga (family) but at school was 'strapped for giggling and playing with the girls'.⁷² Over the page, *Karl #2* (1999) is shown shirtless and dancing a *siva Sāmoa*, a Sāmoan dance, with flourishes of delicate hand gestures [Fig. 3]. Karl's biographical statement continues, and discusses the historical reception in Sāmoan culture surrounding fa'afafine and the complications arising from colonisation, where, as non-cisgender, 'fa'afafine was deemed to be "normalised" to being males'.⁷³ Karl Pulotu-Endemann is a health professional and fa'afafine rights activist, and has been awarded both the New Zealand Order of Merit

⁶⁹ Swan, interview with the writer.

⁷⁰ Simon Morley pinpoints a power exchange, wherein the 'Western, white middle- or upper-class heterosexual male who had largely determined what was to be regarded as legitimate cultural currency' and whose words have dominated mainstream culture; are becoming 'increasingly challenged not only by the voices of women, the urban or suburban masses, gays and lesbians, but also by peoples from around the world'. We see this alternate prizing of others opinions as possible throughout Swan's inclusion of quotations.

Simon Morley, *Writing on the Wall: Word and Image in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2003), 190.

⁷¹ Karl, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 97.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Karl, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 98

and the title Fuimaono, which is given to an ali'i or Western Sāmoan high chief.⁷⁴ In these photographs of Karl, as in other post-1998 works, the quotations are printed opposing the photographs and support a reading of the individual's own experiences and ideologies around gender diversity.

Victor Burgin has noted 'we rarely see a photograph *in use* which does not have a caption or title,' and we most commonly encounter photographs in conjunction with text.⁷⁵ Furthermore we encounter a photograph without text, we approach it with a linguistic overlaying of meaning, as 'it is "read" by a viewer'.⁷⁶ As defined by Karin E. Becker, Swan's post-1998 works use a *multi-medial* relationship to convey information, a curated sifting of individuals' words and images in combination to convey one cohesive narrative.⁷⁷ This multi-media relationship, further expanded upon by Morley, means that although the reading of Swan's works is supplemented by the text, predominantly 'word and image [remain] spatially and cognitively segregated'.⁷⁸

Karl's biographical statement follows a structural formula repeated through other individuals' statements, possibly posed by Swan as interview questions. Each individual describes their childhood experiences of gender; their physical or social transition; and their present experience of gender. Often individuals begin by outlining their experience of gender from a young age, and while Karl's family was positive, there is a repetitive thread for many that childhood was a problematic time within their wider social spheres: 'I went to town with my Grandmother's witch's britches on and tennis balls stuck down her bra. I vaguely remember my poor old Nan screaming "Get back here with my bloomers on."'";⁷⁹ '[My mother] said "You were always wacking [sic]

⁷⁴ Johanna Schmidt, 'Gender diversity – Fa'afaine,' Te Ara: the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, Te Ara Government encyclopedia on gender diversity, last modified 20 July 2015, accessed 25 September 2016. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/28880/fuimaono-karl-pulotu-endemann>

⁷⁵ Victor Burgin, 'Looking at Photographs,' in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 131.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Karin E. Becker, 'Photojournalism and the Tabloid Press,' in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 302.

⁷⁸ Morley, *Writing on the Wall*, 11.

⁷⁹ Rusty, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing* 92.

something out of your pants, if it wasn't the hose full blast wetting the girls, it was something else coming out of your pants'".⁸⁰ The overall tone remains resolute, although many of these childhood stories articulate a sense of disjointedness with the body, a desire for bodily artificial addition, and a resistance by social spheres to these behaviours.

Some subjects define their non-binary gender, or encompass and include both feminine and masculine; 'I identify as Takatāpui ... I express both male and female aspects of myself and ... they are an integrated expression of who I am'.⁸¹ Some individuals refuse others' binary definitions: 'I don't feel like a man but I don't feel like a woman either';⁸² 'I don't do labels ... I just dip in and take what I need when I need it'.⁸³ Many of the quotations refuse clear definitions imposed by other people, and remind the viewer that scanning the visual surface of another's body discloses little about an individual's experience of their body or their gender.

Many individuals discuss negative experiences interacting with cis-normative people. Melisa states: 'They don't want to see me for who I am ... even tell me that I'm not the gender that I am'.⁸⁴ Celebrity self-described transsexual, drag queen, and performer Carmen describes the harmful experiences she faced earlier in her career, as well as the abuse she received: 'there were thirteen or fourteen drag queen prostitutes and I'm the only one still alive'.⁸⁵ Mani also outlines her own experience as a child subject to 'gender corrective' surgery against her will and without her knowledge.⁸⁶ While each model is singular, the tone of *Assume Nothing* flickers between resolution and defiance. The overall narrative emphasizes unity and strength, yet the darker undercurrent is the lengths that others will go to negate individuals' genders.

⁸⁰ Sean, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 85.

⁸¹ Ema, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 42.

⁸² Frankie, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 44.

⁸³ Shane, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 80.

⁸⁴ Melisa, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 39.

⁸⁵ Carmen, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 75.

⁸⁶ Mani's pronoun is 'herm', which recognises Mani's identity as an intersex individual (formerly termed hermaphrodite).

Many individuals outline their psychological experience of gender, and while Swan outlines the limitations of assuming identity based on body, Swan also includes the visceral, physical struggle many of the individuals face in transitioning. In 'Gender Flex' Halberstam writes, 'the body does not always do what we want it to do'.⁸⁷ Here, Halberstam recognises the divide many transgender people experience between the physical map of the body, and the imagined or mental map of the body, when the topography of each, distressingly, does not align.

Although photographers such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Christine Webster, and Yuki Kihara, have explored concepts around gender and physical bodies, there is a lack of images in visual culture and art exploring transgender specific experiences of bodily disjunction. Zackary Drucker and Rhys Ernst's publication *Relationship* (2016), from a series of personal photographs of each transgender artist transitioning became an overnight success, and attests to the strong demand for new methods of transgender inclusive images and image making. The proliferation of Hollywood films and advertising images regularly construe the female as hyper-feminine, and the male hyper-masculine, with very little room for exploring gender diversity. In *Assume Nothing*, Norrie states:

It's been hard as a trannie for me to feel my body is attractive because it doesn't fit into any of the stereotypes. I won't see it in a picture, I won't see an actor with the same body. It doesn't have a fixed gender.⁸⁸

This text appeared alongside the image of Norrie, photographed naked upon a plinth, like a sculpture – however their self-conscious and challenging gaze at the camera creates an awareness and a disjuncture between any plinthed conventional classical beauty, and Norrie's elegant yet awkwardly stanced body, graceful and bearing the scars from a vaginoplasty.

⁸⁷ Halberstam, *Gender Flex*, in *Assume Nothing*, 24.

⁸⁸ Norrie, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*.

We could consider these personal statements as a sampling representative of opinions of some people within the wider gender-diverse community. Most reveal a sense of discomfort from a younger age, tentative excursions into presenting in clothing congruent with their own gender, positive or negative reactions from family or friends, the ongoing physiological process of transition, and their philosophical engagement with the concept of gender. By including these texts, Swan isn't limiting the capacity of *Assume Nothing* to the visual. Where the subject matter could allow an engagement with gender diversity exclusively to a select few who 'read' the images in the way Swan intends, the text allows for no possibility of mistaking her intentions, or misgendering the individuals, while creating room for empathy and heightened political engagement.

While most of the post-1998 images supplement the portraits with quotations, the images of Mani adopt a different strategy, showing an inter-medial relationship between image and text rather than a multi-medial one. Here, the words directly overlay the image surface, scratched over Mani's body rather than printed alongside it. This emphasises the physical creator-mark aspect of the writing, rather than the appearance of the digital font as other quotations appear. In one the text over Mani's nude torso reads 'Who's [sic] body is this?' and the other reads 'I am not a monster' [Fig. 4]. Created by Mani scratching the words directly onto the photographic negative itself, this work is a collaboration between Swan and Mani's own choice of herm representation.⁸⁹ This also relates to Mani's own experience as a child, and the subsequent process of identity reconstruction that Mani underwent.

This violent, textual and scrawled physicality indicates the presence of another person acting upon Mani's gender identity and body.⁹⁰ The biographical statement outlines Mani's personal history, subject to genital 'correction' surgery at a young age, and unable to give consent or even aware of what was happening. 'Who's body is this', scratched over the image becomes a statement about the politics of power, and an act of reclamation for Mani, who assisted in creating this image. The infliction of linguistic

⁸⁹ Swan, interview with the writer.

⁹⁰ Morley, *Writing on the Wall*, 17.

violence onto the image emphasizes the traumatic treatment Mani received, while signaling to wider prejudice against intersex people and the necessity of further education about intersex people. So, while the text reinforces the trauma and silencing Mani experienced, concerning her gender identity and body, the choice of this scrawling, and the typed biographical statement indicates inclusivity and Mani exercising her own autonomy. The scrawled text then also compels us to be aware at our own complicity in our response to 'not just gender differences ... all differences' as Mani reminds us.⁹¹ But by inhabiting a symbolic space, the words avoid literal injury.

Simon Morley states combinations of word and image have historically been used as visual and verbal tools loaded with political or radical intentions. He outlines 'the fundamental connection that exists between language and power,' noting that by holding the power of naming and defining 'language is also always about control'.⁹² Morley considers 'linguistic colonisation' inscribes language onto another subject, rendering them '*intelligible* and therefore an object of control'.⁹³ Resisting this, Swan's works enable space for individuals to share and include their opinions within the publication, and instead of limiting the texts to Swan's own experience, Swan grants a domain for the opinions of a widely and historically marginalised section of society. Mani argues language itself is non-neutral, as words like homosexual and transgender were initially utilised as diagnoses and possess a history of marginalising individuals.⁹⁴ With terms around gender diversity, the linguistics are already entrenched in specific cultural, gendered, and sexuality based hierarchies. Conversely, Swan enables each individual to utilise their choice of terminology, an act which resists exterior labels or definitions. This constitutes an opposition to 'linguistic colonisation' and in including the language of her photographic subjects, Swan enables the individuals to reclaim their autonomy and authority.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Mani, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 103.

⁹² Morley, *Writing on the Wall*, 93

⁹³ Morley, *Writing on the Wall*, 188.

⁹⁴ Mani, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 58.

⁹⁵ Morley, *Writing on the Wall*, 188.

New Zealand photographer Fiona Clarke also explored the subject of gender diversity with her series *Go Girl* of transgender, drag queen, and cross-dressing individuals during the mid-1970s. Unlike Swan's sensitively staged photographs, these were taken in the subjects' own familiar environments, at home, at clubs, and cabarets. These photographs were also accompanied with text excerpts, but unlike Swan's subjects' careful deciphering of their own experiences, these captions appear as passing comments; impulsive, personal, and highly informal. Some are openly self-deprecating or insult others. Clarke's *Tina* (1974) is a close-up of Tina's made-up face with a doll-like expression. Scribbled on the photo in biro are the words 'Very vogue? I'm sorry for the boring sequin between her eyes (aren't the eyes beautiful). The scaly lips! Tròp tragique!'. This addition highlights the effort of beautification undergone, and the areas the writer sees as failures. Adam Geczy, looking back at Clarke's works notes:

The jibing from caption to caption shows a certain self-mastery, but also betrays the opposite, and it is like the bitter exchanges that occur between groups who are robbed of self-esteem; distress about their lot is vented amongst themselves, exacted on one another.⁹⁶

The formal qualities of the texts in Swan and Clarke's works further emphasize this difference; Swan's captions are included in digital type, the same font as the introduction and essay, granting them an official level of inclusion within the publication. Alternatively, Clarke's quotations are scrawled in blue biro ink, adding to the sense of impulse and ephemerality.

Many of Clarke's models have since passed away from AIDS, leading Geczy to note the heavy sense of reticence in Clarke's photographs, as well as the awareness that within society the visibility of third genders remains constricted; therefore that 'the transvestite is also subject to satire and victimisation'.⁹⁷ *Go Girl* was included in the 1975 exhibition *The Active Eye: Contemporary New Zealand Photography*, alongside works by Laurence Aberhart and Peter Peryer; however the frank photographs of

⁹⁶ Adam Geczy 'Who's that Girl? The Work of Fiona Clark,' *EYELINE Contemporary Visual Arts*, 54: Winter, 2004, accessed 2 July 2016. <http://www.fionaclark.com/about/home.html>

⁹⁷ Ibid.

transwomen and cross-dressers caused a public outcry, resulting in their removal and effective censorship from the public eye – marking the beginning of the contentious reception of these works.⁹⁸ As Butler has argued, any discomfort viewers sense at cross-dressers can be considered discomfort at the explicit underpinning of perceived social ‘norms’ of gender as mere acts, learned, and rehearsed.⁹⁹ Furthermore, unlike the transgender or transsexual who often has the intention of passing, often a crossdresser is less concerned with appearing cisgender and more concerned with *wearing* the act of subversion for other’s viewing. The crossdressers appearing in Clarke’s works have been termed by Geczy as , ‘a singular phenomenon after all, because she is not like a transsexual who sloughs on skin to become a different breed, rather the transvestite wears two skins at once, parading the signs of each unequally but with exaggerated relish’.¹⁰⁰ Where Clarke’s works are actively concerned with the performance of gender exaggeration, and the combination of male and female signs, Swan’s works are more concerned with gender as a first and foremost a social construct, and the navigation of this by individuals.

The images of two individuals, Mark and Dréd, punctuate the more naturalistic works post-1998 with their explicit artificiality. In each we are presented with three images of each individual, one titled *Boy* where the individual presents in traditionally male clothes, one titled *Girl* where each presents in traditionally feminine clothes and cosmetics, and the middle image *Mark (Boy/Girl)* (1998) and *Dréd (Boy/Girl)* (2001) [Fig. 5]. This middle image of each occupies an intermediary zone where the transition is made evident to the viewers and the individual appears as physically split into seemingly antagonistic gendered zones. This *Boy/Girl* work shows Dréd and Mark divided, each with their right half in male clothing and in Dréd’s case, with applied stubble and a drawn on eyebrow. Their left halves appear in dresses, with feminine make-up applied, and in Mark’s case, wearing a wig. The resulting image is a single photograph with an arranged composite of clothing and incomplete make-up. These

⁹⁸ Peter Wells, ‘Incandescent Moment: Fiona Clarke’s Go Girl,’ *Art New Zealand* 106, Autumn 2003, accessed 31 August 2016. <http://www.art-newzealand.com/Issue106/Clark.htm>

⁹⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 174.

¹⁰⁰ Geczy, ‘Who’s that Girl?’

images follow the same composition as transgender artist Del LaGrace Volcano's photograph *Mo B Dick, Half & Half*, (1998), which features drag king Mo B Dick on the left assuming heavy, show-girl make-up and sequined outfit, and on the right wearing a masculine suit with a drawn outline of a moustache. This convention has also been used more recently in the American photographer Leland Bobbe's series 'Half-Drag ... A different kind of beauty' which again, follows the same conventions. In each of Bobbe's photographs, one side of an individual presents as overtly feminine, and heavily made-up, the right left with masculine features from the male models. In the images of Dréd and Mark, as in these other photographers works, the display of signifiers for man and woman are conflated and revealed as artifice, as easily applied as make-up.

Mark identifies as a man and a drag queen, and Dréd identifies as a variety of things, including 'multi-spirited [and] gender illusioning,' seeing drag as a way to freely 'play with gender roles and social/racial stereotypes'.¹⁰¹ Butler has argued that drag reveals sex as the artifice of gender all along, and in doing so, undermines the structural basis of societal cis-normativity as artifice.¹⁰² Rather than many of Swan's images of individuals who prize passing, these images of both Mark and Dréd of are reliant on gender as performance, in which as performers, they express the polar extreme of each gender stereotype. The emphasis on the constructed nature of the *Boy/Girl* images is brought to a surface level in the same way as Swan's earlier artificial collage works, and reject the 'normalised' and cohesive nature of frameworks of the cisgender gaze. The constructs of gender appear for these individuals as selective and as protean as a different outfit, a gender that is as flexible – and as artificial – as a wardrobe change.

If we are to view poses taken up in *Assume Nothing*, how then can we approach the *body* of work produced by Rebecca Swan? The representations of the body, as she clarifies in the preface, are finely and selectively attuned to each individual's own

¹⁰¹ Dréd, quoted in Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 66.

¹⁰² Butler, 'Critically Queer,' 26.

desires of self-presentation, and in this way, reveals the way representation constructs identity. The poses captured are the individuals' own conscious decisions; mirroring, rejecting, or conforming to stereotypical gendered depictions of the body. Gendered reading of the body flickers between each model's assigned at birth sex, their identified gender, and their physical body. The resulting portrayals of bodies is central to Swan's photographs, and through the works each body conforms or challenges our expectations of what a gendered body looks like. For, as much as the viewer is constantly reminded by the title *Assume Nothing*, we still do assume, at first. We catch ourselves eyeing faces, hair, musculature, chests/breasts and genitals, scanning for clues to categorize, often before addressing the accompanying text of the person's own story.

While Butler's theory of gender performativity disentangled gender from sex, Halberstam's queer theory focused on the specificity of the singular and personal experience of gender. Here, a range of individual transgender experiences are delineated and defined. Gender expression and bodily representation is considered, and different modes of bodily alteration are explored, as individuals seek not what a singular mode of transsexual identity looks like, but what it may look like for *them* as an individual. This allows for an array of bodily narratives, and hybridized bodily possibilities as the dictates of medicine are now being selectively chosen by individuals to counter their specific dysphoria or to meet their specific needs. This shift in medical practice for transgender people in Aotearoa reflects an informed consent model for the use and dosage of hormone therapy, and different options of surgeries. Here then, through Swan's work, recent transgender theory is navigated, prizing the individual over a singular prescriptive and collective narrative. The focus on the models' voices over only Swan's, replicates the focus on not just transgender visibility, but transgender vocalisation. The representations in *Assume Nothing* are created through collaboration. Each person displays and discusses their particular gender, regardless of whether it aligns with cisnormative expectations. These texts then, are vital to our reading of the images and pull the viewer away from ingrained and automatic standards of measuring binary gender. The texts and images together collate in a

collaborative effort in the shaping not just of bodies, and gender, but of representation itself.

Conclusion

Through Swan's works in *Assume Nothing*, then, we see a rich array of what constitutes gender and how gender is experienced by a variety of people. Furthermore, Swan's works exist as examples of how gender can be constructed and manipulated by means of visual media. Swan has pioneered a sensitive approach to depicting gender diversity and transgender experience, allowing for an intellectual engagement with gender theory while never severing it from individuals' own experiences. The intimacy with which the works reveal themselves to us attests to the feminist methodology Swan approached each of her models with. Here, the finely honed continuous consent model utilised did not justify the intimate resulting shots; instead the consent framework allowed for and invited the level of vulnerability that the models were willing to share concerning themselves. Through the quotes and the images, Swan's intention is clearly to provide a platform and opportunity for multiple individuals to share their experiences and opinions.

Swan's photographic practice raises questions of gender identity through the manipulation of image representation. The image representation in the final photographs collected in the publication, *Assume Nothing*, intersects between the Swan's constructed photographic representations of the body, the individuals' bodies themselves, and assumptions of gender that viewers bring when analysing these photographs. The image representations are knowingly constructed and manipulate our interaction with the bodies depicted; confounding normative conventions of male/female gender which are generally assumed to be natural. These assumptions confront the viewer, even as the works repeatedly remind us to 'assume nothing'. While reminding us of this mandate, these works serve as a basis for viewers to analyse the assumptions which they, nevertheless, inherently have. We become aware of our scrutiny of bodies according to normative binary genders. Even as non-normative non-cisgender representations, these alternative genders are still formed in response to what is the prevalent normal: normative signifiers of feminine and

masculine, for female and male. In many of the represented subjects, these placements within society of occupying a 'male' or 'female' space are exchanged or swapped, rather than rejected, as many transgender individuals still work within this framework, even while constructing gender alternatives for themselves.

However, the issues of transgender individuals are still emerging within mainstream consciousness, as are images of transgender bodies. As Swan states, the individuals photographed here 'reveal their own gender nuance and this is but the tip of an emerging iceberg'.¹⁰³ Through the series, we see not just how photographs represent gender and perspectives, but also how they actively construct them. Swan's series *Assume Nothing* has been praised by the Rosslyn Noonan of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission for this role, and her ability to 'build understanding and respect, and celebrate diversity by making us see in ways we haven't ever seen before'.¹⁰⁴ Politically motivated, these works never appear obtrusive or officious in their tone – a fine balance created by Swan. So rather than maintaining a solely theoretical or distanced approach, these works also engage with the lived experience of individuals, each with specific viewpoints. In their visual detail, the photographs capture both the physical struggle against corporeality, and the sense of disjuncture with between body and being – but also the hope of transcendence and redemption above these physical concerns. This transcendence takes the form of release from the biological constraints of sex as the camera captures the visual surface of bodies in flux, as well as the promise of a mental and spiritual elevation above these restrictions. While delineating corporeal reality, Swan's emphasis on the individual's decisions to how they are represented hints to further, non-ocularcentric facets of gender identity. As much as these photos show us how far we've come, change is still necessary before this journey toward acceptance reaches its end.

¹⁰³ Swan, *Assume Nothing*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Rosslyn Noonan, quoted in Rebecca Swan, *Assume Nothing* website, last modified 2010, accessed 20 September 2016. <http://www.rebeccaswan.com/assumenothing.htm>

Glossary of key terms

Taken from the National Centre for Transgender Equality [America]

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. 'Trans' is shorthand for 'transgender.' (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun, thus "transgender people" is appropriate but 'transgenders' is often viewed as disrespectful.)

Transgender Man: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a man.

Transgender Woman: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman.

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Expression: How a person represents or expresses one's gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

Transsexual: An older term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth who seeks to transition from male to female or female to male. Many do not prefer this term because it is thought to sound overly clinical.

Cross-dresser: A term for people who dress in clothing traditionally or stereotypically worn by the other sex, but who generally have no intent to live full-time as the other gender. The older term "transvestite" is considered derogatory by many in the United States.

Sex Reassignment Surgery: Surgical procedures that change one's body to better reflect a person's gender identity. This may include different procedures, including those sometimes also referred to as 'top surgery' (breast augmentation or removal) or 'bottom surgery' (altering genitals). Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact there are many different surgeries. These surgeries are medically necessary for some people, however not all people want, need, or can have surgery as part of their transition. 'Sex change surgery' is considered a derogatory term by many.

Sexual Orientation: A term describing a person's attraction to members of the same sex and/or a different sex, usually defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, or asexual.

Transition: The time when a person begins to living as the gender with which they identify rather than the gender they were assigned at birth, which often includes changing one's first name and dressing and grooming differently. Transitioning may or may not also include medical and legal aspects, including taking

hormones, having surgery, or changing identity documents (e.g. driver's license, Social Security record) to reflect one's gender identity. Medical and legal steps are often difficult for people to afford.

Intersex: A term used for people who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosome pattern that does not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female. Intersex conditions are also known as differences of sex development (DSD).

Drag Queen: Used to refer to male performers who dress as women for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events. It is also sometimes used in a derogatory manner to refer to transgender women.

Drag King: Used to refer to female performers who dress as men for the purposes of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events.

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- Rebecca Swan, *Sydney Light #1-2*, photographic print, 1997
- Rebecca Swan, *Mani (Who's body is this?)*, photographic print, 1998
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- Rebecca Swan, *(Mildred Gerestant aka) Dréd in NYC*, photographic print, 2001
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- Del LaGrace Volcano, *Mo B Dick, Half n Half*, photographic print, 1998

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Figure 1.

Rebecca Swan, *Rusty*, 1999, photographic print.

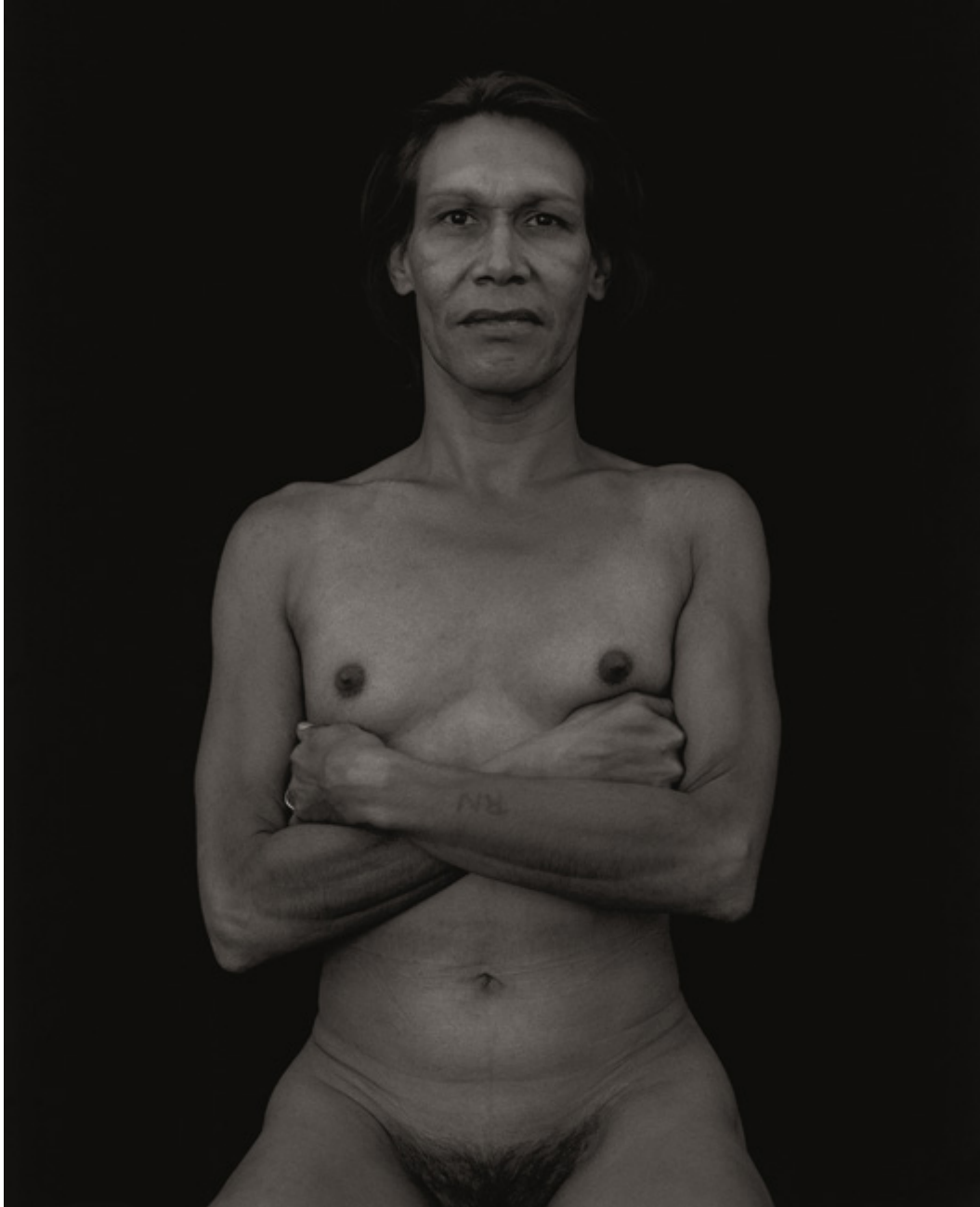


Figure 2.

Rebecca Swan, *Layne #2*, 1997, photographic print.



Figure 3

Rebecca Swan, *Karl #2*, 1999, photographic print.



Figure 4

Rebecca Swan, *Mani (I am not a monster)*, 1999, photographic print.

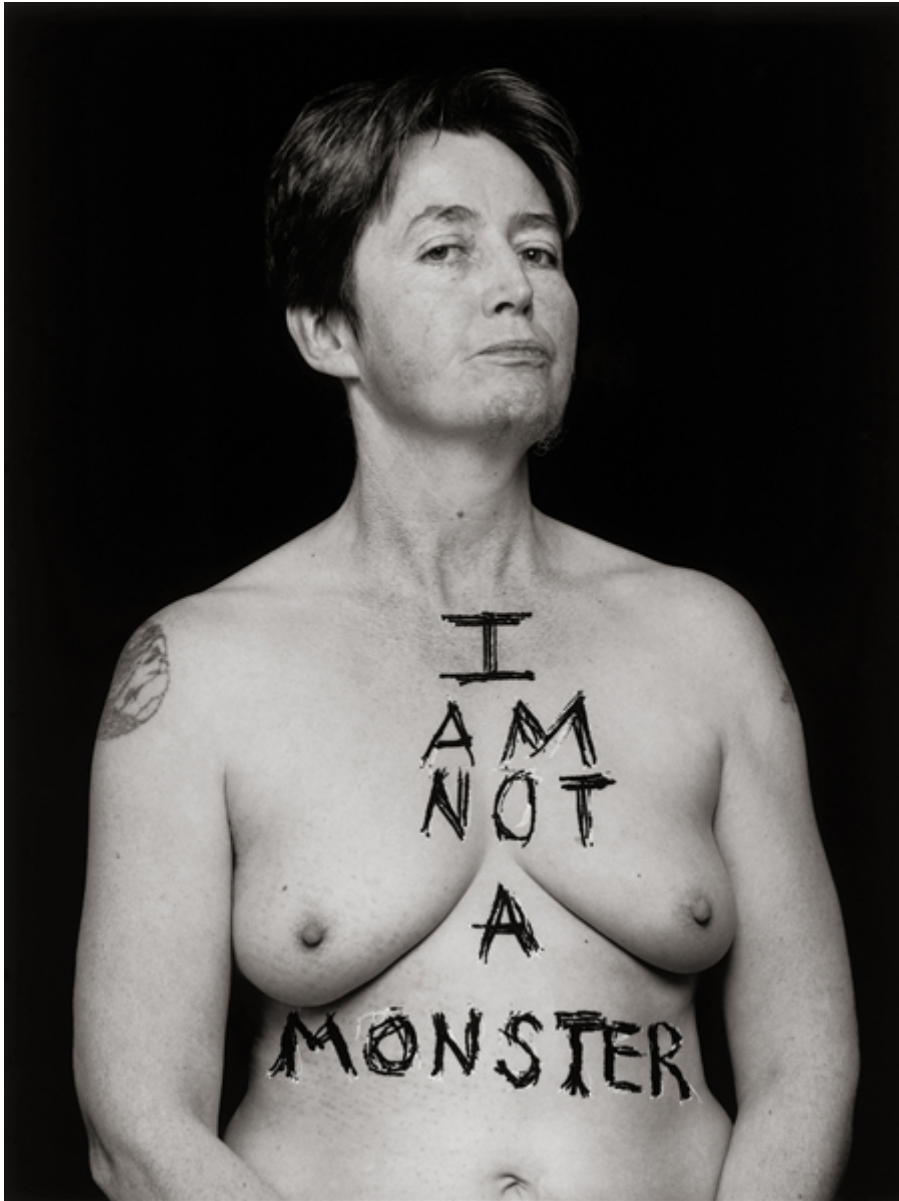


Figure 5.

Rebecca Swan, *Mark (Boy/Girl)*, 1998, photographic print.

