

THE ART OF DRAG



Adult

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ISBN: 978-1-910620-71-7



Book Summary:

The history and culture of dressing in drag is discussed.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains alternate gender ideologies; alternate sexualities; sexual nudity; profanity; deviant behavior; and inexplicit sexual activities.

3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

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8	<p>While cross-dressing has been around for hundreds of years, it wasn't 'drag' until an 1870 edition of the UK's Reynold's Newspaper printed a fabulous-sounding event invitation: "We shall come in drag, which means men dressed in women's costumes." It is now one of the world's most glamorous, hilarious and rebellious art forms.</p> <p>...Drag has come a long way over the centuries and undergone countless transformations. Every artist in this book has made key cultural contributions. Their pronouns have been carefully selected (some use different pronouns in and out of drag), and the word queer has been used not just as an umbrella term for different LGBTQ+ identities, but also as a synonym for 'radical' or 'disruptive.' Drag ticks both boxes. So, from pantomime dames and kabuki queens to avant-garde club kids, it's time to pay homage to drag legends and explore how drag became the glitzy, queer phenomenon we all know and love today.</p>
16	<p>Under Okuni, the troupe's popularity rose until 1629, when stigma, and the government's fear that performances were too erotic, led to women being banned from kabuki. It subsequently became a male-only art form, although some wakashu (young men, often sex workers) were also banned.</p>
25	<p>It may be that the laws were primarily passed to crack down on prostitution, as cross-dressing was seen by the law as overtly sexual. In the case of women dressing as men, the aim was to enforce an ideal femininity, resulting in butch women often being singled out. Anyone who might fit today's definition of transgender was persecuted by default and even sexually assaulted in some cases.</p> <p>Early drag balls were called 'fag balls,' a pointed insult, and queer people were punished for daring to step outside of society's idea of what a man or woman should be.</p>
34	<p>Bently, who had cross-dressed in her brother's clothes as a child (and been frequently punished for doing so), dragged up and managed to land the job. ...She reveled in toying with gender, famously performing at the Lafayette Theatre alongside a troupe of six effeminate men, who referred to her as a 'gorgeous man'.</p>
39	<p>Then there's Marilyn, who gives a masterclass in exaggerated femininity still mimicked by drag queens worldwide. She took the 'dumb blonde' archetype and crafted the kind of coy, playful femininity that does what drag does best: poke fun at gender. Perhaps more impressively, the film managed to slip through the net of the infamous Hays Code, introduced in 1930 to ban 'degrading content'- which often seemed synonymous with 'queer content'.</p>
41	<p>THE PANSY CRAZE</p> <p>Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, drag's popularity grew steadily through vaudeville, cabaret and the extravagant queer ball culture spreading throughout New York City. This fascination accelerated sharply around 1930, sparking a period known as "The Pansy Craze"- a few short years when gay clubs and performers experienced a surge in popularity before the repeal of prohibition laws in 1933.</p>

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43	The years following the Pansy Craze saw a strict crackdown on drag and queer communities in general, but there were a handful of success stories, including the Jewl Box Revue: an all-drag performance troupe founded in 1939 and the first of its kind.
46	For centuries, queer people around the world have been subject to violence and ridicule, for simply daring to exist.
48	Police raids on queer hangouts in the USA continued throughout the 1960s, but communities were increasingly resisting persecution. In 1966, a crackdown to Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco's Tenderloin District became a riot when a trans woman threw her coffee in a policeman's face. Her friends- also trans women- followed suit, beating officers with their bags and heels.
49	The illustration on this page depicts several people surrounding a police car. A woman with a baseball bat is swinging it toward the rear window of the car which has several cracks and holes in it. There is a woman walking toward the car with a large stick in the air. And a brick and a bottle on fire, are flying in the air.
50	<p>STONEWALL'S SHEROES</p> <p>It's likely we'll never know exactly what happened during the first raid of Stonewall, but all stories tell of three daring sheroes (l-r): Sylvia Rivera (a trans woman), Marsha P. Johnson (often referred to as both a drag queen and a trans woman) and Storme DeLarverie (a butch lesbian). All were gender non-conforming people of colour with histories of queer advocacy that continued long after the riots had died out.</p> <p>...As for Sylvia and Marsha, they co-founded the trans advocacy organization (sic) STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) and led with passion, conviction and the same radical protest methods that would lead the Gay Liberation Front to make real political change.</p>
51	Sadly, it didn't take long for raids on public and private queer spaces to increase in frequency. In 1967, the Immorality Act marked a fully-fledged crackdown on drag and same-sex relationships.
53	Between scenes of queens getting ready and strutting across the stage, the performers are also shown discussing sexual identity, the military's ban on gay soldiers and the perceived differences between trans women and drag queens.
58	While the aftermath of the Stonewall Riots saw something of a drag drought in the 1970s, a wave of renewed energy was about to burst forth in the 1980s, this time with an even more intense desire to disrupt. This new era of drag leaned into filth, sex and scandal to rebel against the establishment.
61	In 1970, he joined The Cockettes, an experimental theatre troupe filled with fabulous, politically-charged hippies. Their costumes were androgynous and their jokes were filthy and famously controversial. Their film Tricia's Wedding (1971) was a send-up of the marriage of president Richard Nixon's daughter, featuring LSD-spiked punch and a dazzling cast of drag queens.
62	The illustration on this page depicts a nude man with long pink hair standing on a shell mimicking Sandro Boticelli's painting "The Birth of Venus."
63	When The Cockettes travelled to San Francisco, she donned a red lobster costume and joined them for a cover of their song, 'A Crab On Your Anus Means You're

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	<p>Loved'. Divine was at her best when cracking dirty jokes and leaning into the freaky worlds of Water's creation. Their shared goal was to shock audiences, which meant that nothing was off limits: from vomit and incest to lobster fetishists and rosary-strewn sex toys.</p>
64	<p>Dressed in a sparkling gold blouse and dyed-yellow wig (roots exposed, of course), her character Babs struts down the street before stopping to scoop up, and subsequently eat, a handful of dog faeces (sic). It's the disgusting cherry on top of a plot that also involves bestiality, cannibalism and castration- and it turned bot Divine and Waters into stars. The film was the first in a so-called 'Trash Trilogy', continuing with Female Trouble (1974) and Desperate Living (1977), which introduced their work to a wider, more bewildered audience. The illustration on the top of this page depicts a woman with her tongue sticking out while she holds a pile of feces in her hand.</p>
66	<p>Her masculine energy led interviewers to ask intrusive questions about her gender and sexuality, but Jones always shrugged them off. "I think it's ridiculous trying to categorise (sic) people's feelings", she said in 1985. "Do what you feel, when you feel like it- if you feel like it!" A long list of musicians including Prince, Annie Lennox of The Eurhythmics, and Freddie Mercury kept this spirit alive, dragging up in their videos and playing with ideas of what a man or woman should look like. Fans reacted with glee and hysteria, and it seemed like the stigma around playing with gender was starting to disappear. Disruptions weren't just tolerated any more- gender-bending was becoming legitimately cool.</p>
70	<p>In 1968, a boat full of plainclothes policemen headed there in search or gay men having sex outdoors.</p>
73	<p>His glowing article- titled Is It a Male or Female?- praised the show, but also argued that drag has "no homosexual connotation".</p>
75	<p>Clothes are also a vital tool in any drag performer's arsenal, used to build charismatic characters and toy with the visual codes of gender. ...As RuPaul once said, "we're all born naked and the rest is drag".</p>
78	<p>The beginning of the AIDS crisis in 1981 sent shockwaves through the gay community, sparking a more radical, political era of drag. Although a handful of stars had succeeded in winning acceptance throughout the 1970s, media coverage of the crisis halted this progress. Headlines blamed the LGBTQ+ community for the virus, and fear-mongering in the press led to an increase in racism and homophobia. ...Activists reclaimed words like 'queer' for good, and drag was pushed beyond masculinity and femininity by Club Kids, whose 'genderfuck' aesthetics trickled into fashion and television.</p>
87	<p>Their annual pilgrimage is to attend Miss Tiffany's Universe, a beauty pageant dedicated to celebrating the beauty of trans women, promoting Thailand's culture of transgender acceptance and raising vital funds for humanitarian causes.</p>

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	<p>When the pageant first launched back in 1984, trans showgirls were commonly mistaken for sex workers and subsequently targeted by authorities. They had often been sidelined or fetishized (sic); Miss Tiffany's Universe sought to counter this, adopting the conventional pageant format to put these women front and centre (sic).</p>
90	<p>CLUB KIDS</p> <p>Throughout the 1980s and 1990s came 'genderfuck' drag. As the name suggests, this radical brand of drag throws out gender norms completely by deliberately clashing 'masculine' and 'feminine' looks, topping them off with elements of the monstrous or otherworldly, its popularity was driven in no small part by New York's club kids.</p> <p>...Stories of drug addiction and violence soon trickled out, yet the club kids' hedonistic embrace of excess still inspires designers and drag artists today.</p> <p>LEIGH BOWERY</p> <p>Legendary club kid Leigh Bowery (bottom right) is considered the most iconic and experimental of any club kid worldwide. His signature performance saw him stimulate giving birth to his 'wife' (their marriage was thought to be performance art), a scene decorated liberally with sausages- a makeshift umbilical cord- and fake blood.</p>
92	<p>Amanda Lepore was working as a dominatrix in a New York S&M club on the night that changed her life. Despite having already earned a name for herself as a glamorous club kid and, in her own words, "the world's most famous transsexual", it wasn't until she met legendary fashion photographer David LaChapelle that she was catapulted into the spotlight, birthing an influential creative partnership.</p> <p>...Together, Lepore and LaChapelle created art: in one image, Amanda became a hypersaturated, exaggerated replica of Warhol's Marilyn Monroe; in another, a naked blonde starlet hoovering up diamonds like cocaine from an upturned mirror.</p> <p>...Along the way, she has spoken candidly about undergoing gender affirmation surgery on prime-time television shows and raised awareness of what it meant to be a transgender woman in an era when transgender visibility was the exception, not the rule. Amanda readily acknowledges that trans women can do drag, but her appeal transcends labels. Her blend of hyper-femininity and infectious charisma, combined with maximalist glamour, make her a drag icon in her own right.</p>
93	<p>The illustration on this page depicts a woman standing up with an arm and a leg around the Empire State Building. She is wearing ornaments on her nipples and a bra without cups. She has a red line going around her hip to her groin. She is wearing stockings and high heels. There are planes flying near her with their headlights on her.</p> <p><i>See Figure 1.</i></p>
94	<p>At the helm was Mo B. Dick himself, whose distinctive aesthetic of sharp suits, a gold tooth and signature pompadour won over the likes of cult filmmaker John Waters, who cast Fischer in his 1998 film Pecker.</p>
95	<p>EXPERIMENTAL QUEER THEATRE</p> <p>In the more avant-garde nooks of 1990s queer culture, theatre performers were</p>

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	<p>making groundbreaking work on their own terms. Just as drag artists pushed beyond the gender binary with genderfuck, and activists reclaimed the word queer to mean 'radical and disruptive', the world of theatre saw a shift towards a more avant-garde approach to telling queer stories.</p>
97	<p>THE PINK MIRROR Despite attempts at censorship, Indian director Sridhar Rangayan released his award-winning film <i>The Pink Mirror</i>, acclaimed for its sensitive portrayals of queer and transgender characters.</p>
98	<p>The illustration on the middle of the page depicts a woman lying on her side wearing a transparent bra with her nipples exposed. <i>See Figure 2.</i></p>
102	<p>But like any reality show, <i>Drag Race</i> has drama and controversy aplenty. The show primarily favors more conventional feminine queens over their kookier counterparts, and isn't generally inclusive of trans or non-binary contestants, though it looks to be getting better. Overall, the show succeeds in striking a difficult balance, delighting mainstream newcomers and die-hard drag fans alike. Tricky on-screen discussions have also shed light on various issues within the queer community, including conversion therapy, racism in the drag scene, gender affirmation and familial acceptance.</p>
105	<p>But this isn't true, anyone can do drag! In the 21st century, drag simply means using aesthetic and artistic tricks to disrupt our idea of what it means to look like a man, a woman, or even just a person. It's the art of playing with gender.</p>
106	<p>A GLOBAL TAKEOVER Once upon a time, drag was seen as a niche practice. Now, drag artists aren't just part of the zeitgeist; they play a role in actively shaping it.</p>
107	<p>Former <i>Drag Race</i> contestant Courtney Act similarly won over the UK public in 20198 when she was crowned the winner of <i>Celebrity Big Brother</i>. By combining charisma and kindness with glimpses of her drag expertise, she charmed her housemates and became a TV personality in her own right, going on to present primetime bisexual dating show <i>The Bi Life</i>. More or these historic moments look set to happen in the near future, as drag superstars continue to spar cultural shifts worldwide.</p>
109	<p>DRAG DICTIONARY Like most cultures across the world, drag has cultivated its own language. With origins that trace back to Harlem's fabled ballrooms and AAVE (African-America Vernacular English) more generally, drag terminology has started to creep into mainstream consciousness. From 'throwing shade' to looking 'sickening', here's a primer on the lingo you need in order to fully immerse yourself in drag culture. Reading: To verbally destroy someone with minimal effort and maximum humour. When you hear the famous exclamation 'the library is open'...get ready to read. Throwing shade: A subtler take on reading, to 'throw shade' means to insult someone so slyly and intelligently that they barely realise (sic) you're doing it. Sickening: Surprisingly, a compliment. To look 'sickening' means to look fierce, fabulous and gag-worthy. ...Gagging: To react positively with shock and joy. "I was gagged by her look"- she</p>

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	<p>took my breath away!</p> <p>...Fishy: An adjective used to describe hyper-femininity. With derogatory origins, it's best to avoid use of this one.</p> <p>Beat: To 'beat your face' means to apply make-up; your 'beat' is your final make-up look.</p> <p>Werk!: 'You betta werk!' is a popular drag compliment- you'll only hear it when you've put in enough effort to leave your audience gagged.</p> <p>The illustration on this page depicts a stack of books. One of the books is titled, "READ for FILTH."</p>
110	<p>FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT</p> <p>A lot has changed since the Stonewall Riots, and drag has paved the way for more progressive attitudes toward homosexuality and cross-dressing, both of which have largely been decriminalised (sic) around the world. But there's still work to be done.</p> <p>Almost 70 countries still have laws that target people for being LGBTQ+, but within them, a series of underground drag circuits have started to emerge.</p> <p>...Conventions like DragCon attract thousands of young fans desperate to dress up and snap selfies with their idols, whereas the newfound fame of 'drag kids' and the rise of child-friendly drag events proves that attitudes are slowly changing.</p> <p>There's still progress to be made, but with drag stars using their profiles to effect international change and today's youth growing up with queens as their role models, drag continues to play an important role in pushing for LGBTQ+ rights.</p>
111	<p>The illustration on pages 110 and 111 depicts a parade. There is a woman with a child on her shoulders who is holding rainbow "pride" flags.</p>
116	<p>Each represents a new breed of drag: one that is unashamedly political. The rise of shows like RuPaul's Drag Race may have opened up a certain blueprint of drag to global audiences, but underground artists are constantly working to show that drag has no gender and fits into no norm. This ethos of inclusivity is what underpins the future of this trailblazing art form. Needless to say, that future is dazzling.</p>
117	<p>The illustrations on the bottom of the page depict a man wearing different dresses.</p>
119	<p>The illustration on the bottom of this page depicts a man with a beard wearing a white wig and dress. He has earring that read: "BAD" and "BITCH."</p>
121	<p>"...In the future, the ways in which we describe our 'performance art' will be able to exceed people's limited understanding and the inadequacy of language for describing our expressions of gender, sex and human form. The future will involve queering the lines of drag, where we no longer solely focus on breaking down gender roles, but where we can experiment with the possibility of new forms of expression. There will be a resistance, and afterwards what was deemed to be 'normative' won't exist, bringing a liberation of expression where the drag self can live freely outside the underground spaces it is often forced to occupy, and spread itself into the everyday spaces typically reserved for heterosexual bodies."</p>

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122	"When I look into my crystal ball, what I hope to see for the future of drag is more diversity. More inclusivity. More AFAB (assigned female at birth). More non-binary. More black and brown people. More trans. More genderqueer. And less cis white male domination. Drag provides a platform for all people regardless of race, gender and sexuality to present a side of themselves that they want to be celebrated. I hope the future of drag opens up more opportunities for performers to be whoever they are and whatever they want to be, with fewer boundaries."

Profanity /Derogatory Term	Count
Bitch	1
Fag	1
Fuck	3



Figure 1



Figure 2