

Charan Singh

Questions the 'self' imposed exile we inhabit

Francisco Gomez de Villaboa

Individual expression as a political act and a call to protest

Gabriel Andreu

Thoroughly researches how Apps kill off the magic of the encounter

Geoff Titley

Developing an identity that fits the online image

James M Barrett

Revealing 'real' beauty in the processed image

Richard Ansett

Explores a physical representation of present and absent identity

Richard Sawdon Smith

A symbol of what ties us together?

Sara Moralo

Portrays gender identities as processes of construction

Sunil Gupta

Narrates a fictional drama of conflicting forces

UNCERTAIN STATES /14



(IMAGE ON COVER)
FRANCISCO GOMEZ DE VILLABOA

"Disappointed", this is the feeling that pushed me to create an exhibition in January 2013. Disappointed about the economy, the government, the police, companies, and, not surprisingly the media, I am also very disappointed with the superficial, hypocrite, and consumerist society that we are living in. The aim of "X-Press Yourself" is to encourage people to think deeply and enact what they really think about the world, society, justice, values and the things that we can do better instead of wasting time writing useless comments on social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Throughout history, people who fought against suppression, governments, and injustice had to spread their theories, ideologies, or revelations by publishing books and pamphlets abroad then smuggling them home in covert and clandestine ways. Today internet technology has improved to a point that allows a world wide majority instant access to global information and communication and. We have the freedom to express our political thoughts without risking our lives, but not many people seem interested in expressing disappointments and fighting for justice and human rights. We are stuck in a fake democracy lead by financiers, bankers and corrupt politicians, whilst people are too busy looking at themselves through a screen.

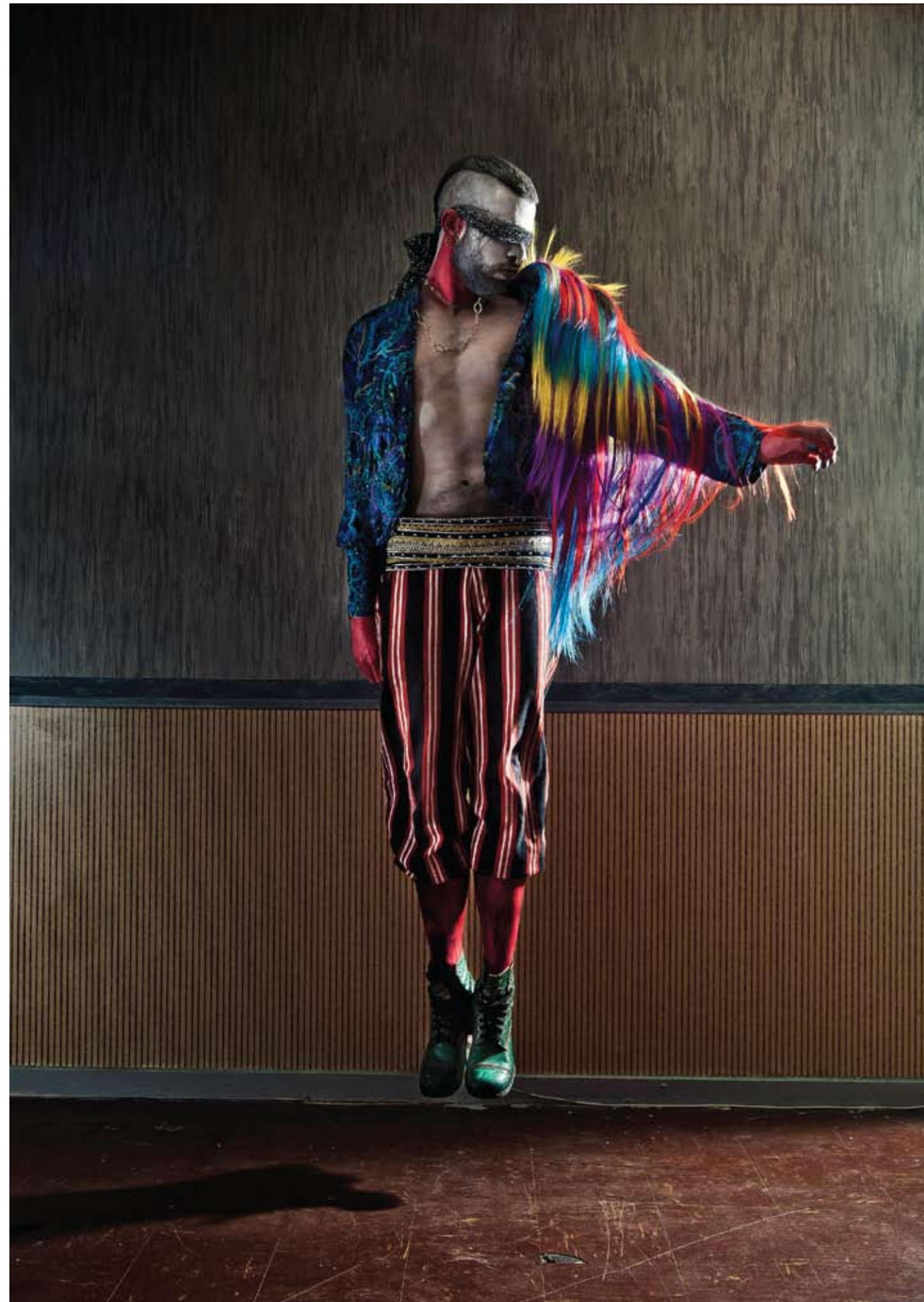
People's life is getting lost here and we find ourselves in a society designed to distract people in order to stop them from considering more meaningful and important values in life. All the superficial and skewed information published in the media is focused on distracting us, encouraging us to consume and think of yourself instead of think by yourself.

It is very contradictory that many people have a poor life in developing countries because they lack information, whilst there are lots of people in developed countries whose lifestyle is poor as a result of being oversaturated with poor information. When are we going to leave the hedonistic bubble where we sleep and jump into reality, to uncover truths and recover our ethics and values?

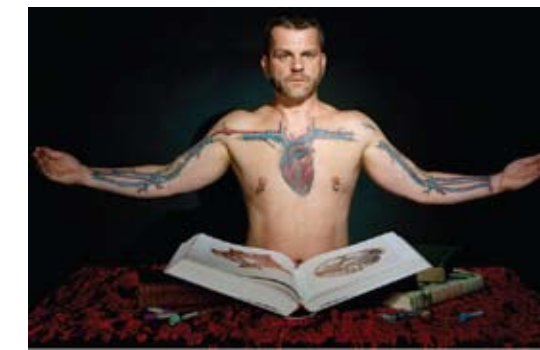
This exhibition was commissioned by Anton Johnson and sponsored by the LGBT, Unite the Union and the Sertuc Network. All the conceptual portraits are of emerging artists and figures in the LGBT community that come from countries in recession to pursue their career. Each portrait has a different symbol and touches different issues and political contexts. The cross exploding in the background of the Claudia Torres pictures, not only symbolises my disagreement with the Roman Catholic Church, in addition the cross is also part of Spain's largest fascist monument called the Valle de los Caídos ("The Valley of the Fallen") where the tomb of our most renown dictators lies. Who better than Claudia, a transsexual and a good friend, to represent "liberty leading the people" whilst holding the enigmatic flag representative of the republic governments of Spain before the dictators coup d'etat and civil wars.

My disappointment came from the big hope that I have in the humanity. Time does not stop, the world is always changing, we cannot commit the same errors, and this time the technology could be in our side. Just remember, X-Press yourself.

www.gomezdevillaboa.com



QUEERING THE NEW NORMAL
 RICHARD SAWDON SMITH



Just when I thought the academic study of queer theory and politics was somehow quaint and redundant, the term queer seems to be making a resurgence, never more so than in its relationship to photography. Although these debates seem as contested as ever they might still be a useful way to try and contextualise my own photographic practice and that of others in this issue.

Recently the concerns about using the term queer arose again when over the winter of 2011/12 my work The Anatomical Man series was exhibited at Fred International Ltd gallery as part of the very interesting show Queer Self Portraits Now. The exhibition had a strong mix of international artist old and new including amongst others, Ajamu (London), Jack Pierson, AA Bronson, Nayland Blake (USA) and Athi-Patra Ruga (South Africa). Fred Mann the owner of the gallery and I discussed at length the title of the exhibition, initially he wanted to call it The Contemporary Gay Self Portrait but then said "Its all men in the show, so should I say male? And I always get theoretically stuck with the gay/queer thing". This substitution seemed problematic to me as although there were twelve 'gay' photographers in the exhibition one, Del LaGrace Volcano, identifies as intersex. I must admit that I was also getting stuck with the 'gay/queer' thing as well and responded "that the word gay somehow sticks in my throat" when trying to describe my work, even though I identify myself as a gay man. In terms of my work though I told Fred if we need such labels I identify and feel more comfortable with using the word queer and hence Fred's new title for the exhibition. This however seemed to be contentious amongst some members of the public. Not outrage from the Daily Mail reader type of public, the show was largely ignored by the mainstream press, but by the self-identified queer community because of the lack of inclusion of a more diverse, primarily female selection of photographers. Although the lack of women represented in the exhibition doesn't stop the work that was shown from being considered as queer art. I also found it interesting that one of the other exhibitors, a young artist called Ryan Riddington questioned the title of the exhibition, as he had not been selected for a show before based on his sexuality and asked if this now made him queer? In response the gallery did hold a symposium about the work in the exhibition with a panel of some very prominent speakers. Discussion however appeared to return to the 80s politics of representation and visibility for minority groups. The use of gay and queer were interchangeable throughout the discussions in relation to both the artists and the work without defining or articulating the difference between them.

More recently I was asked if I would give a talk about my work, alongside other 'queer' photographers including Sunil Gupta and Grace Lau at the Photography and Queerness study day, part of the Moose on the Loose biennale of research organised by University of the Arts London's Photography and the Archive Research Centre. The event had obviously been created in conjunction with the Queering Photography special edition of The Journal of Photography and Culture. As an academic peer reviewed journal there was a call for papers for this special issue claiming that "It will analyse photographic work that engages with both hetero-normative and queer subjects, allowing a new evaluation of how the application of queer theory and queer positions allows a subversively fresh reading of photographic imagery." Possible themes they would like to explore in the volume include the following:

- photography and its relationship to queer cultures
- photography and LGBTQ+ lives
- photography and queer temporality
- queer/trans and photographic representation
- photography, queerness, and intersectional analyses (race, class, ability, etc)
- the limits of sight in relationship to photographic practices
- queerness as a methodology
- new (photographic) media and narratives of transition (queer and normative)
- queer aesthetics
- queering colonial visibility
- market logics and queer visibility
- photography and normativity (queer, trans, homo-)

- queer affects and photography
- photography and queer archival practices
- neoliberalism and the queer photographic subject
- queer utopias and the role of photography

So while I might get stuck with these terms this long list of possible approaches to queerness and photography suggests that there is still a lively debate out there in a community of lens based practitioners and theorists. I was intrigued then when Uncertain States approached me around the same time to ask if they could publish my work in the magazine, as they were planning for it to be a special queer issue. I mentioned that these gay/queer debates were becoming quite prominent so was interested in what this queer issue would look like – but in subsequent emails I was informed by the editors that it would be a showcase for gay lens-based artist although they didn't want to labour this point; the idea being that there is a range of very interesting work in this issue whatever the gender or sexuality of the artist might be. But that already raises the question of how gender and in particular sexuality may inform someone's practice and I simply raise this point again to question the interchange between the terms gay and queer.

I remember a few years back the Austrian photographer Matthias Herrmann called to say he was preparing a lecture about queer theory and photography and asked how it had impacted on my own work. At this point I realised that while I situated my work from what I thought was a queer position I hadn't actually read any queer theory to back this claim up. I also remember applying for a job in a University known for teaching queer theory, so naively assumed I would fit in because of my queer practice and being gay. At interview they asked what side of queer theory was I on – all I could think was 'do I have to take sides?' So my response to Matthias was 'Fuck queer theory!' and he subsequently quoted this in his talk. As you can tell by now I'm not a queer theorist, so I'm sure that some reading this will gasp in horror at my musings, but I'm not proclaiming any sort of agenda merely reflections on recent activities, I claim to represent no one here but myself.

Originally queer meant strange, out of alignment or perhaps not quite right and not necessarily about individuals or the sexual context. In academia while associated with gender studies, queering indicates a means of studying a subject from a different perspective, perhaps against the grain of perceived wisdom or thought, so its usage can vary quite significantly. More recently it has been reappropriated as an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities, although for some it simply seems to be used to mean gay, almost as if it is politer, less offensive or hip. But queer has always been a contentious term; while some embrace the definition of difference and diversity others feel that as a form of hate speech it is still offensive and self-deprecating.

It is perhaps this making strange and coming from a non-hetero-normative mainstream perspective that we engage with the work in this issue. But why should there be this sudden popularity and celebration of queerness? I would suggest that in part it could be viewed as a backlash to the homogeneity of gay culture. There is a continuing commodification not just of the gay body, some sort of ideal, the perfectly toned and shiny gay we are all supposed to aspire to that we see in most gay magazines or porn video, but also in the rebranding of subcultures, which are then sold back to us, such as bears and beards. I found a friend's succinct comment on Facebook quite illuminating when he wrote, "they are even using the 'Beard' to sell John Lewis homeware". This homogenisation of gay and mainstream culture can only generate a lack of diversity, a void that some of us now feel we inhabit outside of the new normal, outside of gay-normative culture. I of course use this term "the new normal" to make lite of the American sitcom of the same name that also plays on E4. In the finale to season one the two main characters, a gay couple that live together both witness the birth of their surrogate baby and get married. Who knew that Elton John and David Furnish would become our role models?

We have long been aware of the creeping objectification of the male body in gay culture similar to that of the male gaze defining the female

body for centuries and throughout art history. One difference is maybe the intensity of the fit, healthy gay body in light of AIDS, one that is 'clean' and free of contamination. It was Sander L. Gilman (1995) who wrote in Health and Illness: Images of Difference that the healthy body is seen as good and beautiful, and in turn the ill body seen as bad and ugly. By placing such emphasis on issues of health the person with HIV/AIDS or what I will call the AIDS body becomes less of a desirable commodity and is situated outside of the mainstream, immediately placing it in a queer context. It is from this perspective that I approach my practice as an artist.

The strategy I developed to explore the AIDS body has been to create various personas for myself. Like many other HIV-positive people I found that life could often be divided by pre- and post-diagnosis so fundamental is the shift in the perception of oneself. The first persona created was that of The Damaged Narcissist, a series of self-portraits that investigated these reforming and emerging new identities, ones that are strange, unusual or not quite right. The second persona, The Anatomical Man required the tattooing of my body and has resulted in me looking at my life now as pre- and post-tattoo, as it has created a fundamental shift not only in my perception of self, almost as much as the HIV diagnosis but how others perceive me as well. The consistent, regular and repetitive trips to the clinic, to have blood tests screening for the effects of the virus by the prick of a needle and the drawing of blood, led to another painful procedure – the tattooing (a process that also draws blood with the use of a needle) of medical illustrations depicting veins and arteries onto my body. Simultaneously collapsing the internal and external together onto the surface on my skin, working as a permanent marker of my condition and reminder of the consistent medical gaze one is submitted to.



Just before the tattooing I discussed The Damaged Narcissist work in an interview for issue 5 of the Australian magazine They Shoot Homos Don't They! with Jason Evans, a fellow academic, friend and photographer who happens to be gay. He mentioned that he didn't think my work, particular the series Man Contemplating his Own Body Image that we were discussing was typically gay, even though I'm openly showing my gay naked body. He didn't believe the photographs were designed for a particular sexual orientation. He continues saying that the images are "totally deadpan", even though I "have a nice cock" I "don't stand in that porn-starry 'I've-got-a-nice-cock' way", that I "don't even stand like a naked person should half the time, especially not in the way people do in an erotic context...I see you acting out a role as a kind of everyman, sometimes an HIV+ everyman". This was me acting out The Damaged Narcissist but this alone doesn't make the work queer. This response to my work did however lead me to think about my aversion to being identified as a gay photographer, yet more willing to accept the term queer. There used to be a joke amongst us academics at work that there was such a thing as bad café art. Wherever you are in the world having a coffee in a café the walls always seem to be populated with a particular kind of artwork, images that would rarely make it to a professional commercial gallery. Not that I wish to suggest gay art is the same but it conjures up in the mind a category all of its own. A lot of gay art seems to be part of a monoculture that is stuck in a fine art tradition based of aesthetics, appreciation and beauty. Queer art wants to tear up those traditions, not offer a different version of the same, not a new normal but offer diverse, alternative and political visions.

© Prof. Richard Sawdon Smith
 Head of Arts & Media, London South Bank University

CHARAN SINGH

What Would My Father Think?
"From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art." – Michel Foucault

After thousands of years of civilisation there are still many societies where self awareness is highly repressed. Individuals who do not have a self-identity have to create an identity for themselves, otherwise they are doomed to suffer throughout their lives. As Foucault says the only practical solution is for such individuals to create an identity for themselves using art. Photography has been central to the discourse around identity since its inception over 150 years ago, therefore it has become the site of identity politics throughout its history. Artists on the margins have deliberately used self-portraiture to explore their 'other' identities.

During my childhood I was very curious about a collection of old photographs in a family album. It was not a proper album, it was more like a box.

Whenever those pictures were taken out, I was the one who used to stare at them for hours. I would be thinking when was I going to have that many pictures of myself!

As an adult I became exposed to the larger world and found myself under lot of pressure to hide my feelings as they were not appropriate to the social climate. I took this up as a challenge and began working with HIV/AIDS and the sexual health of gay men in India, a subculture that had been hidden till AIDS activism got underway. As I am coming out of the development sector working with various non-profit organisations, where I have been observing many life and death stories. I soon learnt that "we" have been living with so many assumptions about social norms. "We" often spend our whole life in pretence and sometimes we have to pay a huge cost to maintain these norms.

Therefore, self portraiture has been a crucial part of my artistic practice so far. It has been a few years since what started as a hobby. It

has become a medium for expressing feelings, emotions, thoughts, identities, sexualities, political positions including many other things.

Coming from development work, sharing time with people who are experiencing some kind of loss; mostly their family, friend, lovers, relationships, identities, self-esteem etc., it was a real challenge for me to make them aware of the importance of their sense of "self" and to ensure that they were able to take control of their lives.

My work deals with the idea of self and this loss in a somewhat humorous way and questions these "self" imposed exiles people are living in. Through my work I would like to explore these myths, social norms, prevalent differences based on caste, class, race and sexual orientation and for lobbying collective issues on a broader social-political-geographical canvas.

charansingh@me.com



GEOFF TITLEY

I Share. I am
 Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, has famously been quoted by Kirkpatrick (2010) as saying that on the internet we should simply have a single identity. The days of having a different image for your work friends and other people are probably coming to an end he said. Accepting that Zuckerberg has a big influence on our digital connections, his comment aroused my interest to look at how we shape our identity(ies) online.

Far from having one single identity, Miller (2013) claims there is evidence to suggest that we hold a multiplicity of online and offline identities often without any clear break between them. Further to that, in the online space, many identity cues are able to be marked or shaped resulting in the internet enabling latent forms of identity to find expression, indeed fulfillment. He goes on to say that the lesson being learned from the study of online identity is that offline, our identities were more multiple, culturally contingent and contextual than perhaps we had expected.

As Ellison (2013) explains, online we are able to exercise selective self-presentation and choose the identity cues which we claim. The report by Ellison on social media offers insights into our self-presentation in the online environment including the way intimate connections are performed to create the illusion of friendship or closeness. The reduced cues available through digital communication, she says, mean that identity information cannot be inferred, it has to be explicitly communicated either accurately or sometimes not so accurately.

The impact of our digital connections, however, extends beyond our self-presentation online to just about all aspects of our daily lives. This explosion in technological tools and interconnectedness may someday lead to a form of super-intelligence as is often suggested by science-fiction writers, or perhaps, it may just simply continue to supplement our physical existence with sophisticated communication channels. In any case, the effect of using these tools in expressing our identity(ies) and shaping our behaviour continues apace. We can now connect to anyone from anywhere for any reason. We may indeed be forging new forms of community or perhaps, as Turkle (2011) proposes; this relentless communication may just lead to a new solitude.

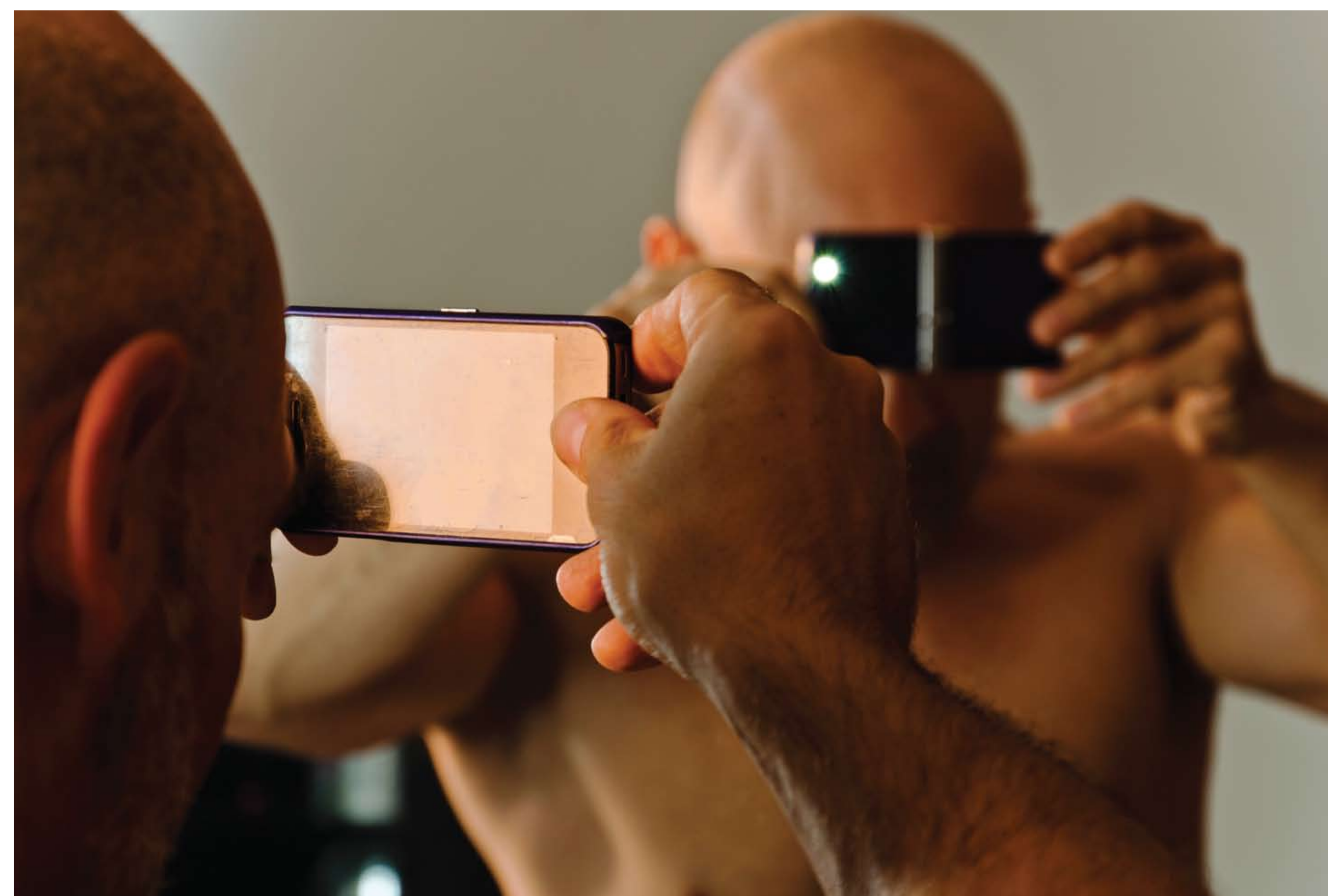
Ellison N, 2013 *Foresight Future Identities 2013: Changing Identities in the UK – The Next 10 Years DR3 Social Media and Identity*, London: The Government Office for Science

Kirkpatrick D, 2010 *The Facebook Effect*, New York: Simon and Schuster

Miller D, 2013 *Foresight Future Identities 2013: Changing Identities in the UK – The Next 10 Years DR2 What is the relationship between the identities people construct, express and consume online and those offline?* London: The Government Office for Science

Turkle S, 2011 *Alone Together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*, New York: Basic Books

www.titley.me



RICHARD ANSETT

Untitled, 2013
A Photograph uniquely records each layer of development as a definitive work but no single image represents an unequivocal end and this project is an extension of previous themes of emotional fracture and healing; it explores a physical representation of present and absent identity.

The trauma associated with loss can be a shock of awakening into a positive new reality, free of ingrained constructs that have defined, comforted but imprisoned us in our previous incarnations. The customary and historic framework that contextualizes events for us, subjugates our

responsibility for its content. I discuss that stepping outside of these boundaries, accepting a more complicated and less certain reality enables greater empathy and empowers us to cope with the emotional impact of inevitable change.

These images as metaphor represent our instinctive creature smothered by inveterate moral conventions but further they are manifestations of the form of emotions themselves, seemingly invisible until given shape through knowledge and experience.

"When we experience strong emotional arousal – it imprints itself upon our brain as a pattern. All

the sensory details of where we were, what we could hear, smell, taste at the time are captured in that pattern, like a fine mosaic. The reason our memories are always in reach – and often in glorious technicolour surround sound – is that the patterns embed themselves, constructing over time a tangible sense of the self and one's past. Like 3d photocopiers – our sense of self can be constructed from past patterns.

"The full self is not easily presented. Instead, we put on costumes to make certain aspects visible to others. Our daily outfits denote our functionality or our take on society. Accessories

frame certain parts of our bodies otherwise rarely noticed. But it's just as common to be rendered invisible by clothes that deflect attention rather than draw it – dull, shapeless, borrowed clothes. Ansett's photographs bring to mind the invisible, made visible only by the adoption of a cloak – like vulnerable people on the edge of society, given low paid jobs in a factory to stop them disappearing altogether." Indra Adnan.

www.richardansett.com



Image #1, from series 'Untitled', 2013



Image #2, from series 'Untitled', 2013

SUNIL GUPTA

Sun City
 This project is a fictional narrative loosely based on the 1952 film, "La Jetée" by Chris Marker. We can view it as some "stills" from a film that is "missing." The original elliptical form has been retained so the 'hero' sees his own death in the 'beginning' and we return to that scene as reality in the 'end.'

The nuclear apocalypse of the original has been replaced with the ongoing holocaust of HIV/AIDS. The heterosexual possibility of romantic love which drives the original character has been replaced with an immigrant, homosexual one.

Our 'hero' arrives in Paris, Orly (from India) to be greeted by his French lover, a scene witnessed by the only woman in the pictures. She has an approving smile. She could be simply passing by, or possibly standing in for his mother or a guardian angel.

In the remaining pictures he alternates between living out a romantic relationship above ground or in the open, and another life where he discovers the gay bath house and slowly progresses towards increasing degrees of intimacy with a series of anonymous partners. Whether his death is actually related to this experimentation, we cannot know for certain.

Our hero is always highlighted with a yellow light. He is both sacred and innocent.

The actors in the bath house scenes are arranged in postures borrowed from the history of photography - mainly Baron von Gloeden (Germany late 19th C), George Platt Lynes (New York 1930s-40s). The romantic scenes are a reference to the original movie - the park, the department store, the museum, and the apartment.

In his romantic world, he is reading Victor Hugo, trying to overcome his linguistic and cultural barriers. However, in the bath house he finds a kind of democracy as communication does not involve speech and everyone wears the same blue towel.

In both worlds he is new, and uncertain. In India, where he came from, neither situation is possible, so both are new to him - there are no safe spaces for casual sex and no possibility of an overground and 'out' romantic lifestyle with a same-sex partner.

However, underlying all this, both in France and in India (and elsewhere in the world) gay men are trying to come to terms with the opposite political choices of promiscuity and the institution of marriage.

Commissioned by the Centre Pompidou, Paris 2010

Financial assistance principally by the Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi; with further assistance by Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto; Sepia Eye, New York; Mr Rudolph Leuthold, London

Assistant Photographer Saadiya Kochar
 Paris Production: Eva Albarran & Co
 Production Manager and general coordination: Marguerite Vial
 Production assistant: Kasia Konieczna
 Lighting technician: Simon Roche, Baptiste Dhont-Farcy
 Actors: Kamal Kant, Claude Jan
 Ensemble: Mehboob Dada, Ghaly Bensouda, Ronny Pong, Emmanuel Potier, Christophe Leprêtre, Bruno Tacnet, Raycharles Samba, Cedric Gambon

Thanks to Centre Pompidou, Gym Sebastopol Sun City, Paris Aéroport de Paris-Orly, Senat-Jardin du Luxembourg, Printemps Haussman (Paris)

With additional thanks to Argos Films, Paris for the use of "La Jetée"

www.sunilgupta.net



GABRIEL ANDREU

For me Internet dating is nothing new. I met my current boyfriend on Internet and my previous one too. But before you only had the opportunity to get men online at the moment that you were in front of your computer at home. Now it is on your mobile, which means that it can be everywhere, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That is establishing a new way of communication, a new language that in my opinion is putting us in boxes - boxes which expose us to different aspects that before you didn't discover till the moment you were in bed with a person. In my opinion these apps are manipulating us in a similar way that Facebook can do with the control of the "Like" button. These tools are putting us in boxes and are cutting our imagination.

In which ways are they? Well, one way is the "body fascist". Is it necessary to be bare chested in the photo of your profile? No, it is not. But as the majority of the people do show it then you feel that you have to do it. The same happens with the photos of your private parts - people ask you for those photos and if you are not able to send them, they lose interest in you. But eventually this happens to you too because you get sucked into the "language" of these apps and you start to think in the same way. So soon you don't want to meet with someone if you've never seen his body before, or his dick, his arse. Here's when the problem starts and when I feel they are manipulating me in the same way that Facebook can do.

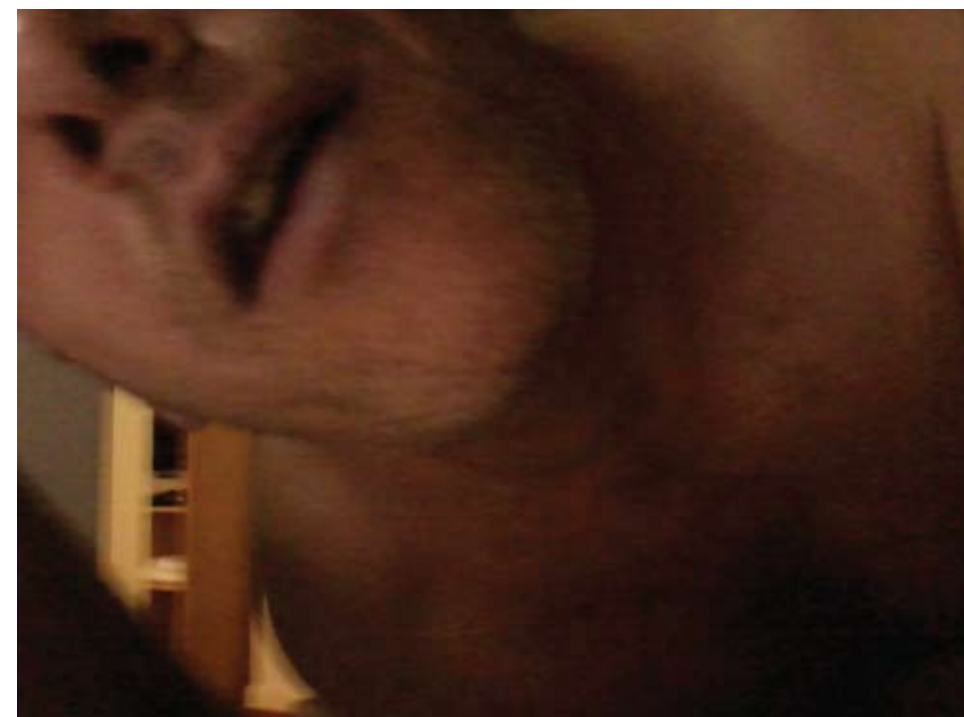
In my exploration I found myself answering questions to strangers which before I didn't have to answer. I lost my imagination in sex. I choose to have sex with different types of bodies but you can see in the project that at the end these apps make me choose one type of men more than another. So I forced myself not to always do the same things with my sexual experiences and not to get myself stuck in one kind of sex only. I open myself to new experiences, lying to people to get what I wanted. Sometimes they lied to me to get what they wanted too. Why is that? Are these apps removing the magic mystery of the first encounter?

For some people these apps are opening a door in their life to know more men. For other men these apps are an addiction. For others still they are tools to look for "the one".

Are we being honest with ourselves? Where is everything going? Instead of opening doors are we closing doors? Are we looking for relationships with meaning or just sex? Sex without imagination??

I used these apps to make the job that I was doing that summer more bearable and to move on from my last relationship. I am not here to answer your questions or my questions about it. I am here to make you think about the pros and cons of these new tools.

www.gabrielandreu.me



JAMES M BARRETT

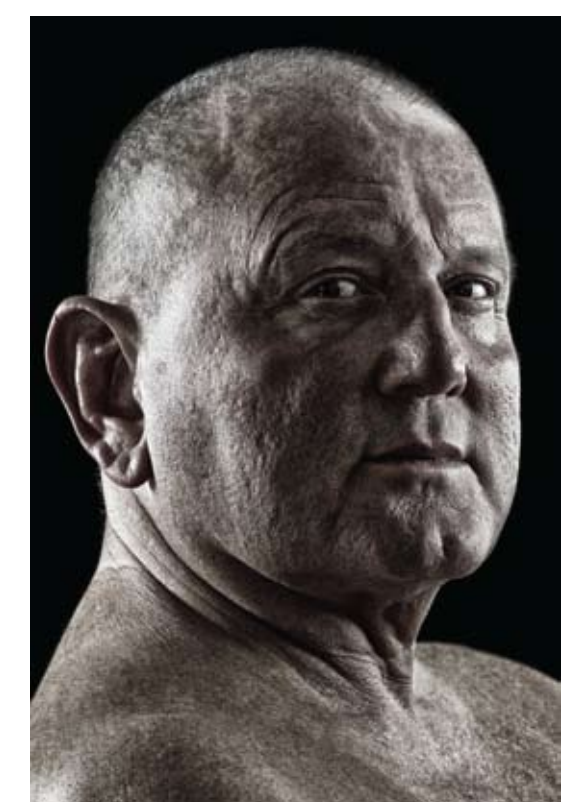
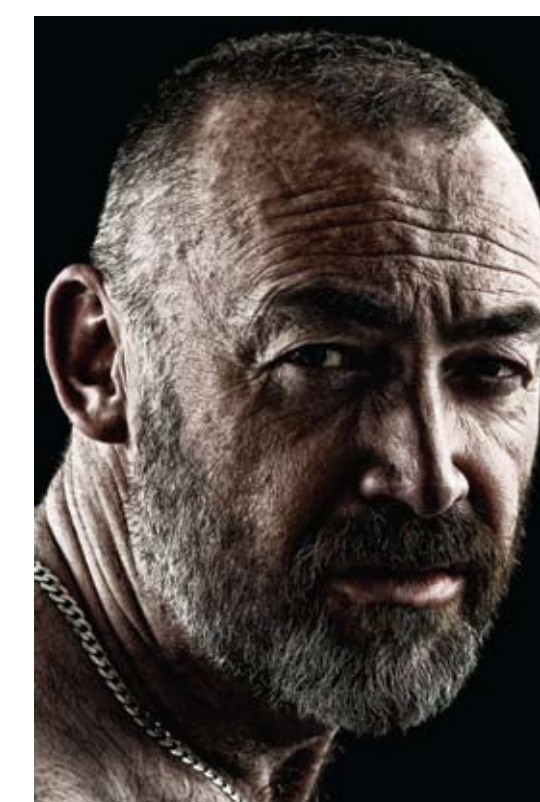
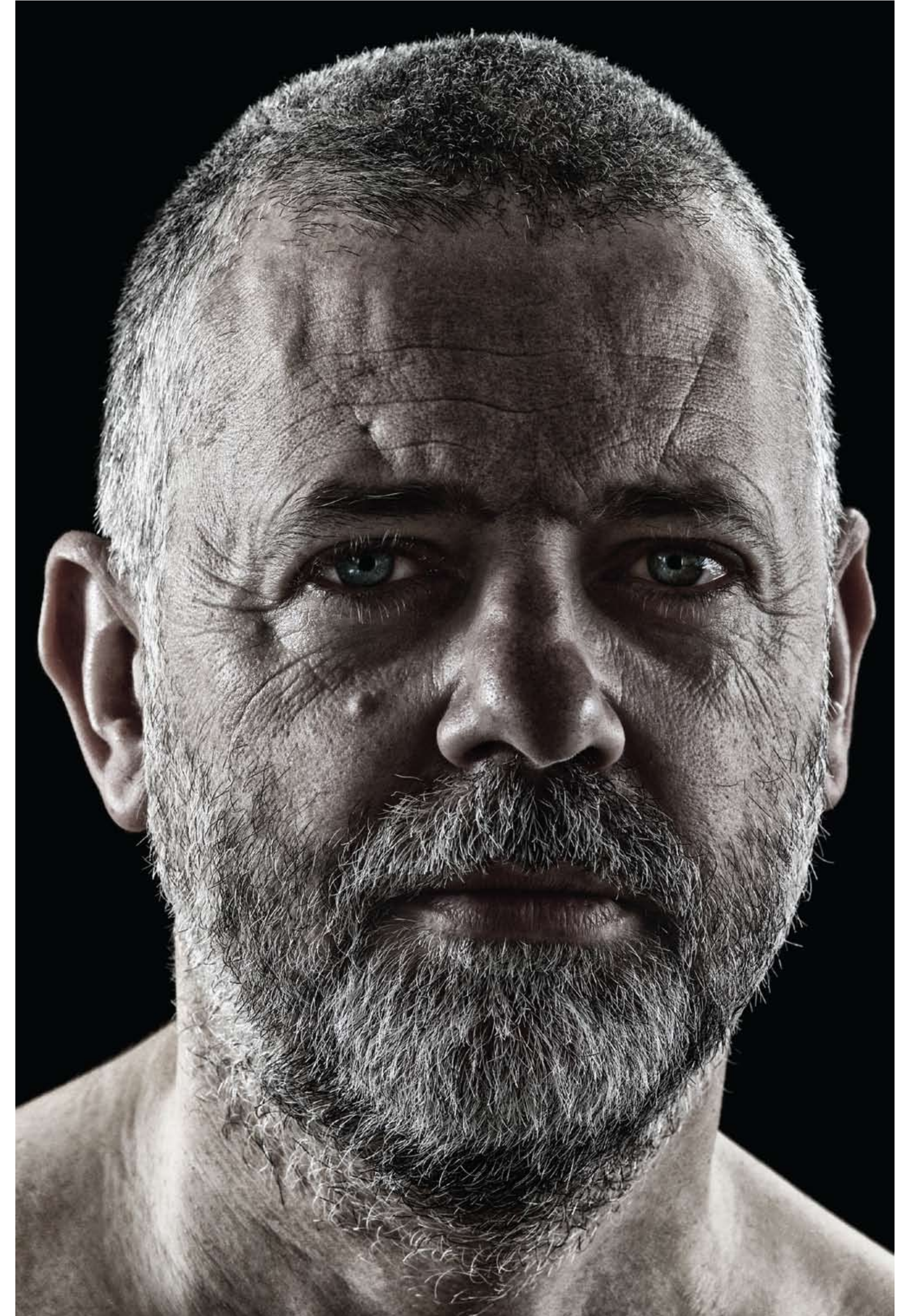
Harsh Beautiful Series

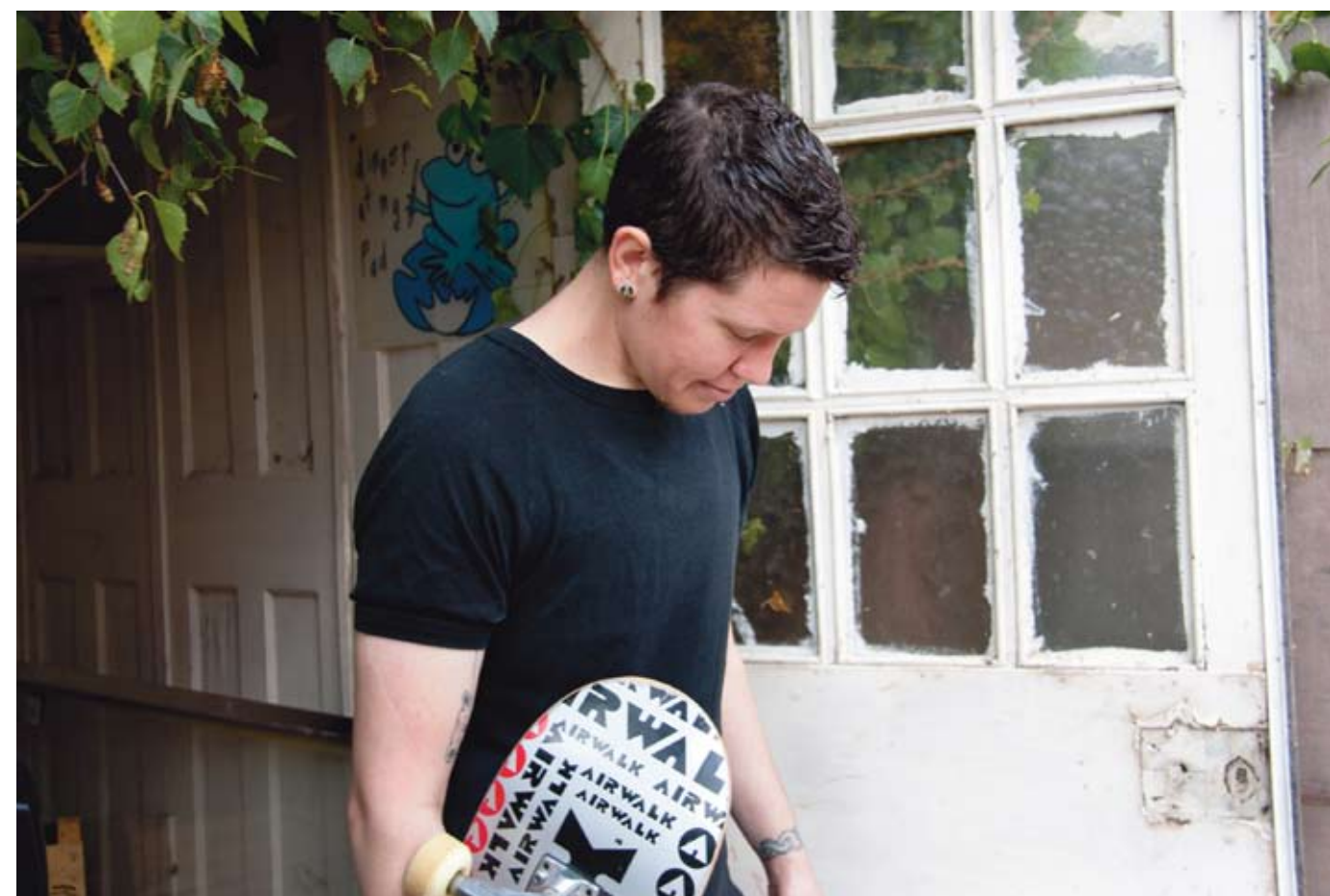
In popular culture there is an extraordinary urgency to take charge of our bodies and minds, and to "become the person that we were always meant to be"! It is as if we can rewrite our lives and give birth to new selves, simply through the power of positive self-belief, and some bloody good cosmetic work on our physical appearance!

It is not just a practical idea that looking more attractive might increase our pulling power or lift our spirits. It is the fantasy that if we could just become achingly beautiful, then we will also be unbearably desirable, and our whole lives will be transformed from ordinary to unique.

And of course digital photography plays right into this fantasy, allowing us to perform virtual nip-and-tuck manipulations, and to airbrush a veneer of youthfulness onto our imagined selves. The images in this portrait series have also been heavily worked in post-production (for up to 8 hours), but the effect is meant to suggest something very different: a harsh beauty that resonates with uncertainty, doubt, restlessness, world-weariness, perhaps mid-life crisis... but which also carries a tender intimacy, resilience, ruggedness, and a new-found robustness that comes from surviving a crisis.

www.jamesmbarrett.co.uk





Lysander

CN

Charlie

Charlie

SARA MORALO

At twelve s/he cut hir hair
When I embarked on this project, I thought I needed first of all to further understand the motivations and politics within the transgender community. However, soon after I met Charlie, CN and Lysander I realised that there was nothing concrete to decipher – they were creating their gender identities much in the same way as I was constructing mine.

At twelve s/he cut hir hair explores new possibilities of gender construction. Through the use of childhood images in parallel to current images of three female to male transgender subjects, the work aims to create a narrative that examines the concepts of masculinity and femininity, and the infinite liminal space between these notions.

Assigning a sex at birth entails the attribution of certain gender roles and characteristics which is derived from the need to subscribe to a dimorphic category of male and female. Children, still unshaped and in a process of assimilating the socially tolerable and lawful,

explore ways to create their identities; childhood can therefore be considered a queer time and space (Judith Halberstam, 1998)¹ as sometimes these explorations happen outside society's expectations, challenging and transgressing normative boundaries. For this reason, a selection of the subjects' childhood photographs was chosen to work as referents in the creation of the current work. Together, current and childhood images create a narrative that invites the viewer to travel with the subjects across genders, time and cultural backgrounds.

By exploring Charlie, CN and Lysander's gender identities as processes of construction, this project portrays the performativity and fluidity of gender – opening up wider possibilities for understanding gender beyond the binary concept of male and female.

www.cargocollective.com/saramoralo

¹ Halberstam, J. (1998) *Female masculinity*. Durham, N.C: London: Duke University Press.

RICHARD SAWDON SMITH

Eating the Ribbon

Eating the Ribbon is a collaborative work with the Los Angeles photographer Albert J Winn. Both of us had been working independently exploring issues about the experience of living with HIV. Brought together by the Visual AIDS organisation in New York because of our similar outlook we started working together on a number of projects in 2007.

In part we explore a cross-generational, cross-continent dialogue, the red ribbon becoming symbolic of what ties us together. The red ribbon was original created by the Visual AIDS Artists' Caucus, as a symbol of remembrance for those who had died of AIDS related illnesses, visualising that lost and also as a tool to highlight the need for further action. However we don't take the ribbon for granted but critically engage with its symbolism and use. The ribbon could be interpreted as a flow of blood, as life giver but also as carrier of disease and contamination.

The staging of digesting the ribbon leaves interpretation of the action open; it could represent a burden of the memory of so many loved ones lost; a personal memorial. Or the ribbon has become such a powerful symbol that the people it was intended to represent are not recognised. Have the figures in the photograph become defined solely by their illness? Has the ribbon become sign rather than substance? Does it highlight the fact that stigma around AIDS still exists or is it just another logo that drugs companies can stick on their advertising to suggest that they care? It could be all of these things.





Credit: Richard Sawdon Smith

**FIRST TUESDAY TALKS AT THE CAT AND MUTTON |
BROADWAY MARKET | EAST LONDON | 7.30-9PM**

**MAY 7TH
ANDY LAWSON**

SIMPLE RESOLUTIONS

**JUNE 4TH
SOPHIE GERRARD**

PEOPLE AND PLACES

**JULY 2ND
MIKE LERNER**

**PUSSY RIOT - THE ART OF
PROTEST IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA**

**AUGUST 6TH
GRACE LAU**

**"TYPES" - THE
CONSTRUCTED STUDIO
PORTRAIT**

Uncertain States is a lens-based artist collective who are passionate in creating, discussing and promoting photography. In this volatile global climate the work reflects some of our current concerns and challenges how perception is formed in our society on issues as diverse as politics, religion, and personal identity. For your on-line copy, visit www.uncertainstates.com or e-mail info@uncertainstates.com for a hard copy.

We welcome submissions from lens-based artists for further publication. For all enquiries please contact info@uncertainstates.com

Follow us on Twitter [@UncertainStates](https://twitter.com/UncertainStates)

Edited by Spencer Rowell, David George and Fiona Yaron-Field | Designed by James Young | Printed by Sharman & Co Ltd, Peterborough