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Post-Gender Pandrogyny

By: Andrew C. Robinson

Womanizer

Deitch Projects

76 Grand St. at W. Broadway

Through Jan. 27

Tue.-Sat. 12-6 p.m.

212-343-7300

The outsider, the queer, the goth rock priestess, the pandrogyne, the side show freak, the trannie, and the power of pussy are on parade in the current exhibition "Womanizer" curated by Julie Atlas Muz and Kembra Pfahler at Deitch Projects.

This exhibition takes an up close and personal look at the work of seven wild, irreverent, and audacious performers and artists who manage to confront shock and transgress the ultra-commoditized, faux-culture within which we are usually immersed.

Visitors to the main gallery are greeted with a "welcome" spoken in multiple languages by the ever so talented Mr. Pussy aka Julie Atlas Muz's costumed and animated genitalia. The image of Muz's Mr. Pussy is featured in a looping welcome video as well as multiple color photographs of Mr. Pussy in various poses with props from pipes to a well groomed and waxed mustache and plastic googly eyes.

At the far end of the gallery is an installation by Kembra Pfahler of the band "The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black." Pfahler has created a bed set tucked into a corner and surrounded by walls plastered and colored with a thick red paste. The bed contains a skeleton and several plush dolls in multiple colors. Off to the side a video plays showing Pfahler ripping the dolls out of a birthing canal, with blood spurting and an unnerving audio track akin to the tinkle of a small girl's musical jewelry box.

On the opposite wall are a variety of surgical and anatomical photography and a horrific gumball machine filled with dried, blood-stained tampons, and various examples of spinning taxidermy. This wonder cabinet of pandrogyne creations is brought to us by Breyer P-Orridge, the artistic entity and brainchild of Lady Jaye Breyer P-Orridge and Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, the latter of "Throbbing Gristle" fame. These two gender variant activists / performance artists explore and deconstruct the culturally imposed narrative that resides in the environment of the body.

According to P-Orridge, "It's not about gender... some feel like a man trapped in a woman's body, others like a woman trapped in a man's body. The pandrogyne says, 'I just feel trapped in a body.' The body is simply the suitcase that carries us around. Pandrogyny is all about the mind, consciousness." P-Orridge goes on to say that, "Pandrogyny is not about defining differences, but about creating similarities. Not about separation but about unification and resolution."

On the flip side of ambiguity and away from the tumult of the main gallery is a queer confessional created by Vaginal Crème Davis. The small pinkish room is plastered with memorabilia, photographs, pornography, and shelves filled with correspondence and personal artifacts, which visitors were invited to peruse. It looks like a dressing room behind the scenes of a Nan Goldin photograph. In the background is an audio of Davis elaborating of a variety of topics, including sucking on big cock, and the ecstatic exclamation, "Tom Cruise has the cleanest asshole I've ever seen!" This verbal barrage goes on and on, and I found myself laughing guffaws as I rifled through her drawers.

Outside the confessional is a series of sideshow pin up photographs created by Bambi the Mermaid of Coney Island. She elicits a comic sensibility through her saccharine portrayals of characters such as "Bambi as the Dog Faced Girl" and other hypnotic grotesqueries.

This exhibition illustrates the unique vocabulary of these funny, transgressive, and powerful heroines who celebrate and ritualize themselves through their theatrical use of the body and its visceral qualities.