MASKs and identities

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Y
Dear journey fellow,
Queridx companheirx de viagem,

Obrigadx por dedicar o seu tempo e energia para entrar nessa /
Thank you for taking time and energy to get into this jornada incerta. /
uncertain journey.

In which we are going to wonder about on my written thoughts inspired by
vamos passear envolvendo nos meu pensamentos escritos, inspirados por
research, interviews, experiments and experiences dealing with masks and identity.

I believe this discussion
Eu acredito que esse assunto
is endless não tem começo e não tem fim
broad is endless
far-reaching

deep
profundo
fundo
and e,

on this entangled of letters
words
sentimentos
pensamentos

FIQUE ATENTO
BE more AWARE
of your thoughts mais nos seus pensamentos
than mine do que nos meus
I am not here to boss you não estou aqui para te chefiar
Neither to convince you muito menos para te convencer
I am here to share
Estou aqui para compartilhar

paola de ramos
pipoca
The starting point

I am the starting point, all the views shown in my artwork and on this paper is a product of my limited self. The limited self that is encapsulated in a body which carries the mechanisms to experience and read the self and the environment. This tool, the body, is programmed biologically and conditioned throughout life by outside triggers. This body has all “software” programs as culture, language, sensibility, knowledge, family background, experience and by these “software” I read and experience the environment, the other, and myself. These software are kind of filters that determine which information my body and mind can process. The fascinating element of this filter is its flexibility, it is a component that it can be bent, reshaped, updated by will and experiences.

The body is in a constant movement of internal and external awareness. It reads itself and is read by others. It exists as an interdependent communication between the inside and outside. At the same time, the body reads the outside with its “software” which can be changed by external forces and transform its surroundings too. The body is the protagonist of this endless dance of relative interactions.

I believe my body is this flexible tool that experiences the outside and inside and by changing its characteristics, I can experience the world in a different way. I realized by wearing props, costumes and masks I can understand and process the perceptions that I have of my self as well as how others understand their selves and how flexible this can also be.

The body can be changed in several ways, by surgeries, wearing makeup, tattoos, clothes, objects, costumes, masks, wigs so on. This change can be just practical (wearing a coat because it is cold), social (wearing makeup as it is more acceptable socially) or conscious (creating a transformation or character that can represent beliefs and ideas). Those changes can reflect the way we perceive others and interact with our selves. This shift of appearance, which triggers different possibilities in the synergy between self and outside, provoke changes into internal and the external states. This transformation is one of the reasons I am interested in masks.

The history of masks is an extensive subject, masks exist since Prehistoric times, still in use in several places, cultures and utilized for different purposes. Because of that, it is hard to choose the materials without feeling that I am living out an important part about masks. Masks are this sea of possibilities that connects our instinctive embodiment with our quest to our real self; travel through time as masks from Prehistoric, Classic, Middle Age motives and festivals are still existing in the present; connect different artistic and cultural forms as theatre, performance, sculpture, dance, festivals, religion, visual arts; link the classical and the popular; bring together several cultures since most of them have masks.

¹ The oldest masks found so far are 9,000 years old, at the location of the modern city of Jerusalem, and in the fringes of the nearby Judean Desert. https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140610-oldest-masks-israel-museum-exhibit-archaeology-science/
² 28/12/2016 Notas pessoais
Como escrever sem produzir “verdades”, como deixar a escrita aberta suficiente para que as pessoas as
Masks are mystical objects.

Masks trigger numerous feelings at the same time as joy, freedom, fear, power, and agony.

Masks can give a voice for an ignored body.

Masks can go beyond our body.

Masks can hide.

Masks can be a materialization of an idea, a philosophy, an ideology, a power, a force or a belief.

Masks can give another experience, a chance to be somebody or something else.

Masks can offer the chance to be the real self.

Masks can transform.

Masks can provide another identity.

Masks are vast and paradoxical subjects. They play in an uncomfortable field in which everything is questionable and doesn’t have one truth.

Masks challenge my out-dated “software” and core beliefs by not limiting myself in polarities as right and wrong, real and fake, trustworthy and ambiguous, woman and man, love and hate. For me, masks open up an abundance of possibilities, I had to learn how to lose myself and enjoy the uncertainty.

You will see that this project has an organic flow, the same time that I was looking for masks around the world, the usage of masks in different contexts and cultures and a more inclusive reference. I was also interviewing artists, putting myself in experiments and creating masks and characters.

As a consequence, I tried to weave information, experiences, and mediums into this project to provide the same sensation of possibilities and plurality that masks can provide.
Como escrever sem criar verdades?

How to write without creating truths?

How to think without creating truths?

Como pensar sem criar verdades?

Apenas uma única verdade

Apenas uma única pessoa

Apenas uma única identidade

Apenas uma única cara

2 28/12/2016 Notas pessoais
Como escrever sem produzir “verdades”, como deixar a escrita aberta suficiente para que as pessoas as sintam (ideias)* e não somente pensem.
Fazer séries de exercícios no texto.

28/12/2016 Personal notes
How to write without producing “truths”, how to leave the writing open enough for people to feel (ideas)* and not just think.
Create series of exercises for the text.

*Adicionado posteriormente por mim para mais claro entendimento.
*Added later on by me for cleared understanding.
Apenas uma única verdade

Nesse mundo de possibilidades

para eu estar certa,
você precisa esta errado(a)?

Only one truth
Only one person
Only one identity
Only one face
Only one truth

On this world of possibilities
for me to be right,
do you need to be wrong ?
I find myself in an out-of-body experience. I feel that I don’t have a defined shape and have a sensation that my consciousness is not located only in my mind but in all of my “cells”. They are aware and sensitive. This being who is not me but at the same time, it is. Without shape, identity or references. I am this thing, without a description, without words, without feelings, without attachment, without a name. Going back to this vessel, the body. I can feel that I am accommodating myself to it. This being distributes itself in the legs, thorax, and arms. I feel the heaviness of the body and how the body is like a glass, and this deformed consciousness as water, filling the body and taking its shape. The last part to be filled is the head. I feel getting inside of my own face. I have the sensation that my face is a mask. I realize the materiality of my body and face and their disconnection from what I really am.
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos/ Photography Ricardo Coimbra
Voltando a mim

Coming back to myself

Sinto o peso da máscara

I feel the heaviness of the mask

Me moldando

Shaping me

Respiro

I breathe

A pele que antes era macia e flexível

The skin that before was soft and flexible

Reprime o meu ser

Constrict my inner self

Respiro novamente,

I breathe again,

Tentando me acostumar com o seu material

Trying to get used to its material

A estranheza dessa embalagem,

The unfamiliarity of this capsule,

O seu peso e restrições

Its heaviness and restrictions

Ainda me incomodam

Still bothers me

A carrego sem saber o que é ao certo

I carry it without knowing exactly what it is

Sem saber se realmente me pertence

Without knowing if it really belongs to me

Isso é o que sou?

Is this what I am?

O que sou eu?

What am I?

Quem sou eu?

Who am I?
I believe because of this teenage out-of-body experience I started to question who I really was and to have this feeling of disconnection between body and self. I began to realise how materiality, time, space, gender, ethnicity, culture and economics were shaping the self and body. Then, I felt a need to use my body to experience these enquiries, hoping that I could understand them or let them go.

Recently, I could remember this out-of-body sensation by making and living with the replica cast of my bust. The cast triggered several insights about my body and self. In the beginning, the cast of my bust was made for practical means. It was created to have a model of my head, face and shoulders to be able to build the masks onto it.

The process of making the cast recalled my out-of-body experience. The sensation of the hard structure moulding my body, the plaster, resembled when I was getting inside of my body in the out-of-body experience. The process of making the cast made me accept the materiality of my body. Also, when I finished the cast, I lived with my bust every day; it was like living with my corpse, a “dead” material which looks like me.

3 Nowadays, it is called projection of consciousness or out-of-body experience (OBE) by scientists and researchers, the phenomenon has been studied in a scientific way, allowing the self-perception that it is natural and physiological and that happens to all people regardless of their set of values, creed, race, sex, age, social class and cultural level, classifying itself as a universal phenomenon. Projections of consciousness or out-of-body experience, ie the actions of consciousness (ego, self or human personality) in non-physical dimensions, free from the constraint of the biological body. http://www.iipc.org/as-ciencias/projeciologia/
23/10/2016 17:17

The cast of my face made me realize how we are a living sculpture.
That there is no difference between my body and any other material.
Having the mask (casting) in my daily life, in a way was morbid because its presence made me realise my own ephemeral materiality.
I could be aware that my body is this structure that is constituted by several animate beings and inanimate materials. It is not better than any other, what I have inside also exists outside; mineral, water, bone, blood, energy, complexity. I do believe that materials have their own “soul”, intrinsic characteristics that make them unique like us. Because of this, I decided to make costumes and masks with different materials, as clay, fabric, and wood. Before I used to make masks mostly out of recycled materials and Papier-mâché. This technique and material quality have taught me a lot, but I wanted to learn with the “soul” of other materials.
The clay mask was the most challenging one. The clay didn’t do what I wanted but instead did what it wanted to do. Dealing with my ignorance and arrogance I got lost in the nature and possibilities of clay. During the process, the initial idea disappeared. It was frustrating. I couldn’t connect anymore with the mask that took me three months of challenges and failures.

What was this mask about?

If I made it then why can’t I connect with it?

What did this mask want to say to me?

The clay mask was the last one that I wore and experienced. I cannot say that I made a character. I believe I created a moment between the mask and myself. After having several ideas, I decided to do a video performance, a safe platform that I could stop or change my mind about it without compromising the performance with an audience. I wanted to hide my body to give more attention to the mask. Intuitively I created a white abstract dress and a structure with wire to resemble the clay mask’s aesthetic. Because I didn’t intend to overload it with different materials I chose to also use clay to cover the rest of my body.
By experiencing the heaviness, limitation, and fragility of the mask, the entangled wire structure and the clay on my skin, I had the opportunity to understand the heaviness, limitation, and fragility of my body, my entangled movements and the peculiarity of my skin. In the beginning, the clay moisture felt soft like a baby skin and through time started to get dry and wrinkly. During the performance, the clay was dropping on to the floor and the costume was decaying.

Clay is a wet element, but if it is applied to heat or dryness, it can change its malleable structure into a strong one. Even though it is a steady structure, it is still fragile and cannot be dropped and must be handled with care. It is like my body that is sensitive to environmental changes and it also needs to be handled with care, otherwise, it brakes. I believe because of the clays inherit properties, I had the chance to experience the materiality of my body as part of who I am.

Face it

Encare

Since masks are objects that are mostly made for the face, I created ways to experiment with my face in order to understand the materiality of the face, why faces are so connected with identity and why hiding our faces have such a strong impact in our society and sometimes on our selves.
One of the experiments was to touch my face and head to be more conscious of its materiality and function. I did this with my eyes closed to bring awareness to my tactile senses and subjective experiences.

My own head feels like an alien object.
My hands get lost in the diversity of materials, textures, and compartments.

The ones that I could reach,
With my bare hands, I felt their richness.
The skin has a complexity of colours and surfaces.
The quality of the skin of the mouth, eyelid, nose, ears is unique.
The soft, well designed and delicate eyelashes.
The drawing of the eyebrows.
The differences between the texture of my facial hair, inside of my nose, eyelashes, eyebrow and the hair.
The wetness of my mouth, the rigidity and glossy teeth and chicken skin-like texture of the tongue.
The solid bone structures.
The elastic skin.
The several openings as mouth, nose, ears, and eyes.
And each opening has its unique and complex design for different functions.
Nose and mouth give entrance for oxygen and exit for carbon dioxide.
The mouth is a machine of taste and chewing.
Also, the mouth is a megaphone to project and articulate our voice to speak and express ourselves.
Or the mouth can draw a silent smile.
Nose smells any odour that comes in.
Eyes that see everything and can communicate emotions.
By the ears, we can hear and interact with the outside world.
The head is a complete body in itself.

The head is this multifaceted structure that keeps us alive. It is the main entrance and exit of air. It is where we feed ourselves. It is the member, which we understand the external world. Most of our sensorial faculties are placed in the head: vision, hearing, palate, smell, and tactility. It is where the mysterious and irreplaceable organ, the brain, is located. By experiencing my head and face, I gave time to myself to be more aware of how sensitive and essential it is for my biological survival and for social interaction. We take our bodies for granted not realizing its importance as a tool of expression of our consciousness and who we are.
Head and face have this important role in our body, they are our sensorial and communication centre. The artist, performer, and actor Linda Laiva\(^4\) explores the head and face as a sensorial object in connection to her identity in her performance called Goodbye Muhammad. Laiva doesn’t create characters, she playfully applies things on her head and face to investigate and experience the sensation and what it can be triggered by her intuitive actions. The artist is from Latvia, but her father is Tartar and her Latvian mom has German roots, and Laiva lives in the UK. By embodying the elements on her face she activates her senses, intuitively she creates a mask, every element of this spontaneous and ephemeral mask has a meaning. For her, “the face is like a canvas for painters”.

\(^4\) Linda Laiva was born in Latvia, in 1986. She received her (First Hons) BFA from Westminster University (Mixed Media- Fine art) in 2011. Laiva has exhibited (mainly performance) in the UK including shows at Albert Studios, Ambika 6, FIVE YEARS and USURP galleries in London; Round Building, Laines Organic Farm in Lewes and Hodginson Loom gallery in the Isle of Man. Her work has been reviewed in Guardian Art. Linda lives and works in the Isle of Man, UK.
Through the performance, she talks about makeup, plastic surgery, aging, textures, memories, family, food, and identities.

Laiva applying the cake icing and commenting on it.

The finished “mask” is not important as the process. In her performance, she tells stories and comments about the things she is using, her personal relationship with them and how they feel on her face.

Linda Laiva at the end of the performance and with all the materials.
“For thirty years I have been looking in the mirror and I see the same image. Actually, it is constantly changing, but it is the same face. So, it is interesting to apply these things on and see what happens. And see the transformation. Relooking at the face, again and again, just frequently discovering new ways to find some new things to look at. For me, this just related to the idea that we are constantly changing as humans.”

Linda Laiva
My experiment with my face and the performance of “Goodbye Muhammad”, by Linda Laiva, can show how faces have an important sensorial function in our lives, they are a significant part of communication and they are closely linked to our identity.

Despite the fact that the face belongs to us, our faces are the gaze of others, the image that we have of our own face is provided by external objects. We still cannot see our own faces without a help of mirrors and images. A face is a complex three-dimensional element in which has lots of textures, materials, and colours, but when is represented by pictures, videos and mirrors the three-dimensional face is distorted for a two-dimension format. As owners of our faces we cannot really see it the same way we can see and experience most of our bodies; as our hands, arms, chest, legs, and feet. We will always just visually experience the replica of our own faces.

What do you see when you look at yourself in the mirror? Is this image a reflection of who you are?

O que você vê quando se olha no espelho? Essa imagem refletida no espelho é o quem você é?
Because I wanted to understand this relation between face, mirror and identity, I was inspired by a mirror exercise. For me, this exercise creates awareness of the face and identity in relation to face reflection by drawing the lines of the reflected face in a mirror and recreating the face in the mirror in a playful way.

If you have time you can do it, here are the mirror exercise guidelines:

First, it is good to have a fixed mirror that you don’t need to hold while you are drawing on your face. Then, you can get any cheap paint; water-based paint is easier to clean off from the mirror after the exercise.

You begin by looking at your face in the mirror and paying attention to its shapes, different textures and colours. Find or mix colours that you would like to use, it doesn’t need to be realistic colours that you find on your face if you don’t want to. Then choose the face lines that you would like to start to draw and with a brush or your fingertips paint over in the mirror the lines of your face that you are seeing in the mirror. Always when you do a line, stop and contemplate the lines in relation to your reflection in the mirror. While you are drawing your face try to pay attention to your feelings, emotions and thoughts brought up during the process. Repeat the action until you feel that you’ve finished the painting of your reflection in the mirror. Take notes of the experience.

By going through your sensations and notes, rethink about how do you relate to your reflection in the mirror compared to your real face and in connection with your identity.

Can you see by changing your perception of your face in the reflection can transform the way that you perceive yourself?

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5 Inspired by the Masks and Special Techniques workshop and text of Maria João Brito and Fernando Rato (“Máscaras e Técnicas Especiais” https://axiodrama.wordpress.com/tecnicas-de-intervencao/aplicacoes-do-sociodrama/tecnicas-especiais-em-sociodrama/mascaras-e-tecnicas-especiais/)
Doing the mirror exercise.

In this mirror face exercise, by changing the reflection instead of modifying the face, I could experience and question my self-image in the mirror and its connection to my reflection towards myself.

First I drew the whole face, starting from the head shape, neck, eyes, nose and mouth. Then I finished by painting the hair and reinforcing some face lines. After facing the painting of the reflection, I decided to create a painting mask on top of the existing drawing of the face. Next, I wanted to document this new painting mask not just by taking a picture of it so I imprinted the painting of this mask on a paper. The last part was cleaning the mirror. I believe this step can also be added to the experience of the face, representation and identity.

Personal notes:

13/10/2016  17:57
Técnicas do espelho
Na hora que estava colocando as primeiras pinceladas no espelho, foi difícil de se concentrar nas linhas. As linhas do rosto no espelho e das pinceladas se confundiram.

Mirror Technique
When I was doing the first lines on the mirror it was hard to concentrate on the lines. The lines of my face and the painted ones in the mirror mixed up which confused me.
First photo-documentation of mirror face exercise experience
O processo demorou quase uma hora.

The whole process took an hour.
Second photo-documentation of mirror face exercise experience
The visual confusion made me think about my identity and how the face is the first contact with the majority of people, and how they recognise me through my face.
Third photo-documentation of mirror face exercise experience
The face that is marked in people’s memories and in all ID photos.
Fourth photo-documentation of mirror face exercise experience
On the left, documentation of Mirror Technique experience after imprinting the painting on a paper. On the right, the printing of Mirror Technique experience on a paper.
The face and identity overlap.
Será que se nos desligarmos das linhas e forma do rosto, o que resta?

If we get detached from our face lines and format, what would be left?
Last photo-documentation of mirror face exercise experience, cleaning the mirror.
When we think of mirrors we usually imagine this stagnated item, which just reflects everything and is immutable. What changes is the object that in the front of the mirror, but not the mirror. In this experience, by changing the mirror I could engage more in the visual impact of the face rather my subjective sensation of it. Because of this detachment of my own face, I could experience my face as being seen by an outsider; throughout the experience most of my insights were related to my face in relation to others recognition and photo IDs. I believe the part of cleaning was the most disturbing, because I was left with just a blur with no defined colour or shape. And it came to my mind that if we had just a shapeless blur on our face, how could we relate to that? Which body part or movement that would represent our identity? How would we recognise other people and how would other people recognise us?

It is disturbing how faces have an important role in our social and subjective identity. It is even more disturbing between the paradox of faces importance and how we as owners cannot have the full visual experience of it and how the mirror works as a visual facilitator to see our own faces.

On the other hand, we are the sensorial objects changing in front of the mirror, all our senses are triggered by the changes that we apply or are applied to us. I believe the mirror works as an external feedback to visually reassure the sensations. In most of my performances, I use the mirror as a tool to concentrate and get into the character. The mirror enhances the sensation of the mask on my face and the costume on my body by visually activating the weight, texture, colour and shape of them. The sensorial experience triggers the body memory activating gestures and movements. The mirror provokes all the visual memories and concepts that I have in relation to the reflected image and adds to the experience of the self. It is a combination of introspective embodiment and reflected visual experience and memories that feed each other in order to give a sense of the self.

Also, in the Japanese Noh Theatre the performers gaze at their reflection when they are wearing the mask to get into the character as Diana Devlin explains:

> The putting on of the mask is an important ritual in preparation for the performance. It is as containing within it the power in which the actor will acquire in wearing it. The actor contemplates himself in the mirror, wearing the mask, and draws power from that contemplation. When the mask represents a god, the effect is even more powerful.⁶

After doing this mirror exercise and thought about mirror in relation to face and identity, I wanted to experience how would be to create a new face, on my face without a mirror. It was again inspired by an exercise called creating another face⁷.

How far can we go and create a totally different face?

First attempted. Shots of the video of the experience process “Creating another face”. Camera and assistance Jakub Bobrowski. Video available on the media attached.

It is blank and flat
It is not my face anymore
I can still see and choose pencils, brushes, paints
Even though, I have the freedom to draw anything I want
I still draw my nose, my eyebrows, eyes, cheeks, lips, and hair
The image of my face and the idea of a face is still very strong in my mind
I cannot liberate myself from the traditional face drawing
It becomes a portrait on top of a real face

Finishing the first attempt

Red lipstick
The action of putting makeup on came very easily

I had to be aware of those automatic movements and memories
That the experience was provoking

I had to decide

To embrace the transformation I had to deliberately choose colours and different ways of painting
to explore new ways

I had to give it another try
Second attempt

The new is not so new
It is drawing of an old face and memories
Third attempt

Focusing more on the sensation

Third attempt

The freedom of playing with my own face
Face liberation
Personal notes:

14/11/2016 18:31
Máscara cega: colocar papel no rosto e fazer outra face.
No primeira tentativa foi difícil sair da ação e pensamento em estar fazendo maquiagem sem espelho.
O desenho mostra isso através do batom vermelho, pintar a bochecha rosada, brincos, lapis nos olhos.
Mas gostei do resultado final, interessante esteticamente por ser usado em máscara.
Mulher não é só consciente do seu corpo visualmente, mas também através de ações automáticas condicionadas pela sociedade.
O exercício deveria ser uma oportunidade de transformação, porém acabou por trazer ações já automáticas como colocar maquiagem sem o espelho.
Fazer mais.

11/14/2016 18:31
Blinded mask: put a paper on the face and create another.
On the first attempt, it was difficult to get out of the action and thought of putting makeup on without a mirror.
The drawing showed that through the red lipstick, rosy cheek, earrings, pencils in the eyes my social conditioning.
But I liked the final result, as it was an interesting aesthetics for a mask object.
Women are not only aware of their bodies visually, but also through automatic actions conditioned by society.
The exercise should be an opportunity for transformation, but it ended up bringing more automatic actions, like putting makeup on without the mirror.
I need to make more of them.
14/11/2016  19:08

Foram feitos dois exercícios com o papel nos rosto, mais um com os buracos para os olhos, nesse eu ainda podia escolher as cores e melhor o material, colaborando assim para a estética e resultado final.

Na segunda tentativa foi mais fácil de entrar em espaço mais introspective e realmente trabalhar com a transformação e não pensar sobre maquiagem.

O terceiro experimento, não fiz buraco. Então, não conseguia ver nada, a estética ficou totalmente confusa.

11/14/2016  19:08

I made two more exercises with the paper on the face, the one with the holes for the eyes, I could still choose the colours and the materials, thus collaborating for the aesthetics and the final result. Also, it was easier to get into more introspective space and get the opportunity to work with the process of transformation.

The last experiment, I did not make holes, then I could not see anything, the aesthetic was quite confusing.
The result of the first attempt

The result of the second attempt
Depois de ver as várias caras, me pergunto quem sou eu?
O quanto realmente posso decidir quem eu sou?
Ou o quanto de mim é somente uma construção já definida?

After seeing the various faces, I wonder who am I?
How much can I really decide?
Or how much of me is just an already defined construction?
Throughout the experience of creating a new face, after getting out of my visual conditioning what a face is and what is supposed to do on a face, like makeup, I could sense the part of my head, that we call face, in a liberating way. I felt that my face was a part of who I am, it can represent the person that I am and influence the perception of who I am, but it is not the whole of who I am. So, who am I? How much can I know about myself? How different is my “real” self to who I am now? Clarice Lispector in the text “If I were me”, Lispector wonders about who she would be if she was really her. She started with an ordinary question, when she was trying to find an important paper, “if I were me and I had an important paper to keep, which place would I choose to keep it?”, but then she begins to consider deeply the statement “If I were me” and to think and analyse the meaning and consequences of this thought. Lispector perceives if she was herself, how she would be such a different person; her appearance would look so different that even her friends recognise her and she would do things so unusually that probably she would end up in a jail. She continues, “If we were ourselves, we would experience finally and fully the pain of the world and our own pain - that one we learned to do not feel”. And then she acknowledges how greater and unreachable her true self is.
Se eu fosse eu

Clarice Lispector

Quando eu não sei onde guardei um papel importante e a procura revela-se inútil, pergunto-me: se eu fosse eu e tivesse um papel importante para guardar, que lugar escolheria? Às vezes dá certo. Mas muitas vezes fico tão pressionada pela frase "se eu fosse eu", que a procura do papel se torna secundária, e começo a pensar, diria melhor, sentir.

E não me sinto bem. Experimente: se você fosse você, como seria e o que faria? Logo de início se sente um constrangimento: a mentira em que nos acomodamos acabou de ser locomovida do lugar onde se acomodara. No entanto já li biografias de pessoas que de repente passavam a ser elas mesmas e mudavam inteiramente de vida.

Acho que se eu fosse realmente eu, os amigos não me cumprimentariam na rua, porque até minha fisionomia teria mudado. Como? Não sei.

Metade das coisas que eu faria se eu fosse eu, não posso contar. Acho por exemplo, que por um certo motivo eu terminaria presa na cadeia. E se eu fosse eu daria tudo que é meu e confiaria o futuro ao futuro.

"Se eu fosse eu" parece representar o nosso maior perigo de viver, parece a entrada nova no desconhecido.

No entanto tenho a intuição de que, passadas as primeiras chamadas loucuras da festa que seria, teríamos enfim a experiência do mundo. Bem sei, experimentaríamos enfim em pleno a dor do mundo. E a nossa dor aquela que aprendemos a não sentir. Mas também seríamos por vezes tomados de um êxtase de alegria pura e legítima que mal posso adivinhar. Não, acho que já estou de algum modo adivinhando, porque me senti sorrindo e também senti uma espécie de pudor que se tem diante do que é grande demais.9

9 Considered one of the greatest names in Brazilian literature, Clarice Lispector debuted with the award-winning novel Near the Wild Heart (1943), not without some discomfort in part of the critics of the day, given its peculiar and innovative writing. In addition to novelist, author of the acclaimed The Passion According to G.H. (1964) and The Hour of the Star (1977), was established like great storyteller thanks to titles like Family Ties (1960) and The Foreign Legion (1964). Her production also includes works for the infant-juvenile public and a vast number of chronicles. Her books are now widely translated and published, which makes Clarice Lispector compare to Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Katherine Mansfield.


“Se eu fosse eu - Clarice Lispector por Aracy Balabanian”, http://leituraafins.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/se-eu-fosse-eu-clarice-lispector-por.html
If I Were Me

Clarice Lispector

When I don't know where I kept an important paper and the search becomes useless, I wonder: if I were me and I had an important paper to keep, which place would I choose to keep? Sometimes it works. But sometimes I get so pressured by the phrase "if I were me," that the search for the paper becomes secondary, and I start to think, I mean I start to FEEL.

And I don't feel well. Try it: if you were you, how would you be and what would you do? From the beginning, we feel an embarrassment: the lie in which we were accommodated was just been moved from where it had been settled. However, I've read biographies of people who suddenly started to be themselves and their lives changed completely. I think that if I were really me, my friends would not greet me on the street, because even my appearance would have had changed. How? I don't know.

I can't tell half of the things I would do if I were me. I think, for example, that for some reason I would end up going to jail. And, if I were me, I would give everything I have and I would trust my future to the future.

"If I were me" seems to represent our greatest danger of living, it seems to be a new entrance into the unknowingness.

However, I have a hunch that, after the first called craziness of the party that it would be, finally we would have the experience of the world. I know, we would experience finally and fully the pain of the world and our own pain - that one we learned to do not feel. But sometimes we would be taken by pure joy and ecstasy, the legitimate ones, that I can hardly imagine. No, I think I'm somehow already imagining, because I was smiling and I also felt a kind of a shame, as that one we feel when we are facing something that is too great.
Experimente:
se você fosse você, como seria e o que faria?¹⁰

Try it:
If you were you, how would you be and what would you do?¹¹

¹⁰ Clarice Lispector, Se eu fosse eu
¹¹ Clarice Lispector, If I were me
Also, the understanding of the self is present in the artist Mahnaz Kh. Motazedi’s mask works. She explores the possibilities of who she is, through the process of creating wearable masks to give birth to her personalities. For her, it is a way to be aware of them and to seek her real self. Mahnaz Kh. Motazedi is from Iran, but when she was in Italy the cultural displacement made Motazedi rethink her own personalities and beliefs. Then the artist started to research her own culture, women from regions of South Iran who wear masks and she also investigated Italian masks. It was a way to connect herself, her concerns and her culture to the country she was living in, Italy.

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12 Mahnaz Kh. Motazedi (b.1986) is an Iranian artist based in Helsinki, Finland. In her mind, there is no limitation to acting as an artist and trying to create a new language of expression. Her creation derives from her philosophical ideology and her contribution is to analyze the hidden fact behind the ideas through self-observation and inner feelings. She is always inspired by traditions and cultures and her sociable personality leads her to improve her anthropological research based on her essays.
Because of the artist is interested in the Sufi philosophy and in the Jungian concept of persona, she began to question the action of disguise and the different personalities that we use every day, which we are not aware of and use them to hide our real souls. She wanted to go deeper into her idea about masks and personalities by creating her own masks with Papier-mâché, tights and cotton. She uses tights because it relates to her identity as woman and cotton material for its malleability. The mask base is Papier-mâché and the main structure is made of tights filled with cotton. She chose those materials because of their lightness since her masks are very big and they need to be light enough to be wearable.

Most of the time, friends give her materials. Motazedi likes used materials, as she said “I think when you touch the material you can feel the stories behind it. So, I prefer to use them as part of women's lives”. She doesn’t plan beforehand the masks, she lets the material and the interesting things that happen during the making process to lead her to the final result. The sewing technique comes from her background in Iran and she really enjoys sewing; for her, it is a symbolic action of putting her personal pieces together.
All her masks are a mixture of her emotions, feelings as a woman, feelings of migration, of the intercultural and international world. Motazed masks are made to show people how heavy and uncomfortable it is to wear social masks. She believes that by wearing them people can feel their heaviness and be conscious of their own personalities. She hopes that through experiencing her masks, people can be aware of who they really are.

**Hiding the face**

One of the qualities of masks is to hide our faces. So, I decided to disguise faces on pictures to understand this visual relationship between mask, face, identification and identity. I created some collages, I cut white circles, colourful ones and drew masks placed them on personal pictures, photo IDs, newspapers and magazines to “erase” peoples faces.

Primary Paola Collage, 2018.
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos/ Photography Ricardo Coimbra
With this action, I would like to perceive how I feel about those faceless images.

It seems that when the head member, especially the face, is hidden I cannot read properly the images. I can see people interacting with each other, but I cannot tell what their personal emotions are in those pictures. Perhaps, I could have a guess considering the whole picture, however, I feel that the face is an important tool of communication.
Faceless Baby Collage, 2018
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos/ Photography Ricardo Coimbra
The pictures that have white circles, I just see emptiness. Where in the colourful ones, the colours can give a different meaning depending on how I perceive the colour.

I can link the colourful circles with person’s clothing, to the other colourful circles or to the whole image. But this interpretation depends on the viewers’ cultural background, for example, if the orange in my cultural background is related to happiness, when I see the colour orange I will see a happy image. This is the same for the colour blue, for some cultures blue is considered a calming colour for others it is related to sadness. Same as I feel about the white circles, I can just relate to emptiness, maybe another person can interpret in a different way. At the pictures that I draw masks, the masks gave additional and more complex information, because of their colours and suggestive formats. I could see that masks are not just to hide people’s face but also to give another meaning.
All these pictures are with people who are familiar to me, because of that in my point of view the facial expressions were more important than their identity. It is understandable that mask can hide our facial expressions. Consequently, it can hide our emotions.

In addition, most research proves that we can distinguish some basic emotions through facial expression independent on our cultural background. So, masks can interrupt this basic human communication through facial expression, maybe because that for most of the people can be uncomfortable with a masquerade person.

Faceless newspaper Collage, 2018.
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos/ Photography Ricardo Coimbra
I still continue my collage experiment but with newspaper and magazine images. I was amazed how we are overloaded with printed faces. The idols are everywhere selling products, ideas and their lifestyles.

Faces everywhere I see and go
Faces that look at me and I look at
  Photoshopped faces
  Made up faces
  Makeup faces
  Faces that I like
  Faces that I dislike
  Faces that I see in myself
  Faces that I need to have
  Faces that I need to be

Faces

Why do I care about those faces?
Do they care about my face?

Everything is resumed in images

Faceless newspaper Collage, 2018.
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos
Photography Ricardo Coimbra
We sell our emotions and times on other faces
We think we know them just because we can identify with them
We admire them
We follow them
Is there any difference between knowing and recognising someone?
Because we are usually recognized by our faces, I believe that the recognition and the understanding of who we are in relation to the face get muddled. We are overloaded by external images emphasising the face of others and also of us. Since we were born we have images and a collection of photo IDs to constantly reaffirm our identity by our faces.

This emphasis on face recognition may be because most of us live in crowded societies, in which we don’t know or create strong bonds with each other and in our fast relationships the face is the
first one to be presented and judged. In addition, the authorities usually make a constant reaffirmation of our identities by the face in the official documents, verifying who we are throughout printed photos and nowadays, the modern CCTVs registering and confirming people’s faces all the time.
Suspicious Faces

Brazilian Passport Collage, 2018
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos/ Photography Ricardo Coimbra
We are identified by our faces printed on our ID documents.

What is our identity?
What is our essence?

Qual é a nossa identidade?
Qual é a nossa essência?

We usually present ourselves to the world with our faces, we are convinced that our faces are the representation of who we are.
On the land of fear and suspects, you need to prove that you are you.

Documento com foto, por favor.
Photo ID, please.

I chose some photo IDs to repeat the same process of “erasing” my face that I did my personal and newspaper photos. I wanted to understand my uncomfortable feeling of the connection with my identification on the photo ID of my face and self-image and identity.

In the process, I was first surprised by the amount of photo ID that in those 32 years of life I managed to collect. I didn’t select even half of them for the collage. In this playful deconstruction of my face in the official documents, I began to analyse their usefulness and uselessness. I realised that these documents label a complex human identity on a mere piece of paper. Unfortunately, these ordinary papers are, usually, more important than the human being who is represented on them and they have the power to inform, close and open doors of places and countries. Therefore, they have a constant presence in our relationships with other people and our identity.

Sou brasileira? Sou polonesa? Sou estudante? Sou estrangeira?

Am I Brazilian? Am I Polish? Am I a student? Am I foreign?
In this practice, I could realise how faces have a significant role in representing the person in relation to the society and the perception of the self. They are unique as each person has a distinctive face. Also, faces have an important identification purpose in photo IDs. Although, people’s fingerprints and more recently eye irises are unique body parts which authorities use to identify people. So, the next experiment was to see if another part of the body would have the same strong relation to identity as faces.
Considering this fact, I thought of wearing finger masks. Then I wore four fingers’ masks, three copper finger masks made by myself and one of ceramics made by the artist Laura Leif.
Copper finger mask
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos/ Photography Ricardo Coimbra
Copper finger mask
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos/ Photography Ricardo Coimbra
Ceramic finger mask made by Laura Leif
Idea and concept Paola de Ramos/ Photography Ricardo Coimbra
Fingerprints are unique and they can represent our official identity for the authorities, but my experience of wearing finger masks wasn’t as powerful as wearing a head mask. Of course, when I put on the finger masks I felt the weight, the temperature and shape of the copper or clay on my finger, but, for me, it was not a sensorial experience that could cause a psychologically strong sensation. Personally, when I am wearing a head mask, the body experience is much stronger since the head is a centre of all senses and the mask can affect all of them. In addition, the performance by wearing a mask is a more intense experience in the social space in relation to finger masks.

**Hiding my fingers is not socially fascinating and threatening as hiding my face.**
This discussion of hiding body parts and their effect on social relationships made me aware that nowadays we are overloaded with photo IDs and surveillance. The face is this important body part, which we are identified by and the authorities have a full control of it. Then, the balaclava masks made by Lari Rantalainen inspired and made me question our right to be anonymous. Since I have lived in London, the city is overloaded with security cameras on the streets and underground in name of safety, I feel that I don’t have the right to my own image. I am recorded and observed several hours by someone who I don’t know. In the name of security, we are living in constant fear of each other and an antagonistic dilemma that, in a big city we don’t know most people we interact with, but we still want to recognize everyone’s faces in the assumption that everyone is a potential criminal and terrorist.

According to the artist Lari Rantalainen the colourful crocheted balaclava masks was originally a spontaneous handicraft project born out of boredom. He continued: “I started making the first one
while watching TV on a cold December evening in 2013, if I remember correctly. I found the crochet technique to be quite a meditative process and in a weird way addicting. I realized it was something quite odd for a young man to be spending time on.”

Rantalainen said that the concept was inspired by the masquerade characters of Pussy Riot and Finnish rap artist Eevil Stöö, as well as the demonstrators of the Occupy movement. In addition, the masks can talk about different forms of violence, warming one up in the freezing cold or seeking the wisdom of one's own body and senses. The investigation of personal identity interested him, as he learned that the word Persona from Greek translates roughly as a mask. Additionally, his masks address questions “Who are we in relation to this chaotic world and what are we doing here? What kind of sounds can resonate through the mask?”. The artist concluded that it is about a critical mind-set towards ideologies and social games and examining one’s intentions when ones public identity is undetectable.

I believe that the non-threatening look, handmade, knitted with colourful and soft wool like a grandmother’s heat, Rantalainen’s balaclava contrasts to this social fear of encounter someone hiding ones face related to a criminal’s balaclava. So, I am planning to do an experiment by wearing the balaclava at London transport locations and on the street to see how far I can go, without being stopped by authorities or people and to show my dissatisfaction of my face being recorded.

By hiding the face, we can impersonate our ideologies and be anonymous to the authorities, like Pussy Riots. Pussy Riot is a feminist punk band from Russia, all the members wear colourful ski masks to be unidentified. It was created in August 2011. It had a flexible membership of approximately eleven women.  

15 http://mentalfloss.com/article/52633/why-these-11-bands-wear-masks
Their protest songs are feminism, about LGBT rights, and are in opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom the group considered to be a dictator. Pussy Riot uniforms are usually brightly coloured clothes with faces masked by balaclavas. They usually use nicknames such as "Balaclava", "Cat", "Seraph", "Terminator", and "Blondie".16

16 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pussy_Riot
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/29/pussy-riot-protest-vladimir-putin-russia
Also by wearing a mask that it is easy to reproduce, the movement has an inclusive characteristic. Anyone can be a Pussy Riot as Nadezhda Tolokonnikova stated in at an Amnesty International Concert presented by the CBGB Festival at Barclays Center, in 2013:

Anybody can be Pussy Riot, you just need to put on a mask and stage an active protest of something in your particular country, wherever that may be, that you consider unjust. And we’re not here as the leaders of Pussy Riot or determining what Pussy Riot is and what it does or what it says. We are just two individuals that spent two years in jail for taking part in a Pussy Riot protest action.18

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17 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/29/pussy-riot-protest-vladimir-putin-russia
18 Nadezhda Tolokonnikova Statement onstage at an Amnesty International Concert presented by the CBGB Festival at Barclays Center. (6 February 2013)
Masks have been used for political acts and celebration of freedom for a long time. One of the examples is the Carnival\(^{19}\), Entrudo or Caretos of Lazarim, in Portugal, which has pagan Celtic and Roman roots.

Lazarim\(^{21}\) is a Village, North of Portugal that found in the Carnival a space to affirm its cultural identity by reinventing a tradition. In the process of institutionalization of those Carnival practices restoring the rites, the symbols and texts related to winter parties, it gives a sense and meaning to the communities’ lives.\(^{22}\)

\(^{19}\) Carnival is a symbolic system associated with the transition from winter to spring, from old to new, from death to life, from cold to heat, from the masculine part to the feminine part of the universe, bringing together different meanings that mark this cycle in the life of rural communities. Furthermore, when people were participating more in the Catholic Church, Carnival was a way to free themselves and get out of their routine. Carnival was liberation and preparation for Lent. Also, the Carnival is can be seen as reminiscent of Roman Saturn’s festivals, which were characterized as a period of complete licentious liberty. "Carnaval em Lazarim: Máscaras, Testamentos e Práticas Carnavalescas por Dulce Simões", Mural Sonoro, http://www.muralsonoro.com/mural-sonoro-blog/2014/10/20/ka8f0sz8b7z7hlqat1n3zz1xxewyy1


\(^{21}\) Lazarim is a Portuguese parish of the municipality of Lamego, Viseu district, Beira Alta, with 15.71 km\(^2\) of area, and a resident population of 686 people, with a total of 236 families (Census 2001). Historically it is identified through pre-Celtic, Roman and Visigoth archaeological vestiges, attributing the inhabitants its origin to the village of Antas, currently uninhabited. ("Carnaval em Lazarim: Máscaras, Testamentos e Práticas Carnavalescas por Dulce Simões", Mural Sonoro, http://www.muralsonoro.com/mural-sonoro-blog/2014/10/20/ka8f0sz8b7z7hlqat1n3zz1xxewyy1)

\(^{22}\) “Carnaval em Lazarim: Máscaras, Testamentos e Práticas Carnavalescas por Dulce Simões”, Mural Sonoro, http://www.muralsonoro.com/mural-sonoro-blog/2014/10/20/ka8f0sz8b7z7hlqat1n3zz1xxewyy1
In Lazarim, the Carnival was a period to solve problems among women and men and neighbours, furthermore to confront the instituted powers. In early times, it was a way to continue with the pagan culture in opposition to the Catholic power. During the Estado Novo the carnival practices in Portugal were subject to the approval of local authorities, often dominated by the Church. In Lazarim, the masquerades (Caretos) and the reading of the testamentos (protest texts read by the masquerade during the festival) were prohibited by a direct intervention of the local priest next to the Bishop of Viseu. In that time for the Church, the Carnival with the testamentos was something harmful to the morality of society. The act of reading testamentos is still contemporary, the masquerade read the testamentos to protest about their social and political dissatisfaction.
Masks and costumes at Carnival in Lazarim.\textsuperscript{25}

The Caretos of Lazarim exhibit, through their masks, representations of historical figures such as bishops, kings and Romans, mystical figures such as witches and devils, grotesque figures, and animal figures such as the donkey, the Corsican, the owl and the pig. The Caretos (masquerades) complete the mask with other elements of clothing, like facts made of straw, or of beards of braided corn, red or black covers. In the hand, they usually carry an object of agricultural use, such as a hoe or a fork, some of which use a walnut staff, which refer us to the symbolic system of the rural world.

For the people of Lazarim, masks are a source of pride and are a symbolic cultural reference, which it is taught in local schools.\textsuperscript{26}

Carnival is a festivity that was brought by Portuguese to Brazil and enriched by African culture, nowadays it is one of the biggest event of the year in the country. The internationally most famous Carnival is in Rio de Janeiro with the Samba Schools performing at the Sambodromo. In Brazil, the Rio Carnival hardly would have political and contradictory themes, but this year of 2018 the Samba School Paraíso do Tuiuti with the samba music Meu Deus, Meu Deus, Está Extinta a Escravidão? (Oh God, oh God, is the slavery extinct?) in an act of protest performed against the coup that “impeached” President Dilma Rousseff , the illegally elected the corrupt President Michel Temer

\textsuperscript{26} “Carnaval em Lazarim: Máscaras, Testamentos e Práticas Carnavalescas por Dulce Simões”, Mural Sonoro, http://www.muralsonoro.com/mural-sonoro-blog/2014/10/20/ka8f0sz8b77hlqat1n3zz1xxewyy1
and showed the corrupted and discriminatory Brazilian society. The President Michel Temer was portrait as a vampire. The repercussion was so strong that Temer had to demand the performer not to wear the presidential sash for next appearances. In my opinion, it is a contemporary appropriation of mimesis, masks, costumes and carnival as a tool to express the dissatisfaction in relation to the current government.

Samba School Paraiso do Tuiuti, 2018 - The Vampire a representation of Michel Temer

The privileged population that was manipulated by television and own greediness went to protest on the streets to facilitate the coup.\textsuperscript{28}

The history of the slavery, its violence, repression and discrimination that still reflects on the contemporary Brazilian society.\textsuperscript{29}

Even without the performers and rituals, masks are just an object that can be provocative and an instrument of contestation. The mask *Namanari* Cameron created by the artist and performer Miyuki Kasahara was a commission for “Beyond Words” exhibition (2016) at Milton’s Cottage (John Milton’s Museum) in response to Milton’s play “A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634”, also known as “Comus”, and in reaction to the corrupt administration of David Cameron.

Cosmus was commissioned by the Ludlow Castle’s owner, John Egerton in order to perform a masquerade play at the Castle. In the play-mask Comus, the author uses the piece to criticise the monarchy in a plot that acclaims the virtues in contradiction of life’s pleasures. There is an evil spirit called Comus who wants to seduce a young lady lost in the woods. In this forest there are monsters, those monsters were also humans that got lost in the forest and Comus transformed them into beasts. The artist was inspired by the transformation and the beasts’ characters to create a beast pig mask of Cameron, UK Prime Minister of the time. Also, Kasahara was influenced by Noh Japanese theatre masks from the 14th century, she explained that *Namanari* is a type of Noh mask that represents the first stage of becoming a monster, the next stage is *Hannya* (a monster) and the final stage is *Ja* (a completed monster). The artists translated the unsatisfying by showing Cameron inhumane side through the mask *Namanari Cameron*.

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Namanari Cameron “Beyond Words” exhibition at John Milton’s Museum, 2016
Picture courtesy of Miyuki Kasahara.
“Noh mask of the Namanari type,” 31

31 Artist Unknown, Japanese, 18th Century, Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts Boston. From Miyuki Kasahara image archive.
Masks

dance of contradictions.

Mask persecutions were and are recurrent, it can be found in different times and places because masks can be seeing as deceptive or freeing, they challenge values of the established power. In addition, mimicking for some cultures can be very problematic, especially if it is impersonating spiritual, sacred and natural forces. Many religions as Judaism, Christianity and Muslim for centuries prohibited masks and especially theatre, because it was related to paganism, devils and untruth. For all monotheists, the attempting to understand the supernatural or sacred by mimesis is a serious violation. It is different if polytheistic in which forces can be approached, understood and controlled by personification.

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32 Diana Devlin, Mask and Scene: An Introduction to a World View of Theatre, 114.
33 A. David Napier, Masks, Transformation, and Paradox, 13.
34 A. David Napier, Masks, Transformation, and Paradox, 13.
I interviewed Iris Lima\textsuperscript{35}, Progestur\textsuperscript{36} collaborator, in Lisbon, Portugal. She said that Christianity, especially during the Inquisition period, forbidden or converted in Christian motives masks, rituals and festivals in Portugal and Spain. Nearly all of them were pagan dated from Prehistory time as Winter Solstice and Saturnalia from Roman and Celtic times, just few of them survived. Even though, masks and theatre were rejected by Christianity. Iris Lima told me that Christianity had a big influence in the festivals and masks in Portugal and Spain, because the ones that they didn’t forbid were appropriated and shaped into Christian motives as Entrudo, São João Festival and Carnival.

In Portugal, the Carnival Bugiada and Mouriscada is a cyclic festivity, in honour of Saint John of Baptist. It happens every year on the 24\textsuperscript{th} of June, in the Village of Sobrado, the council of Valongo. It is the festivities of Moors and Christians that still take place in the present days all over the world, in particular in the Iberian Peninsula, assume, at the first sight, an opposition between two people of different religions, leading very often to a conversion of the Moors to Christianity.\textsuperscript{37}

The most part of this festive tradition is created based on a representation of a tale that is inspiration for this whole celebration and the object of many interpretations and readings common traces tell the story about a dispute between two leaders for the miraculous Saint John. Legend says that the king of the Moorish people, who occupied the lands of Macuca (Mountain of Santa Justa in Valongo), realizing the fragile and sick state of his daughter, borrows the image of Saint John from Christian king, since the saint was known his miracles, having already healed the daughter of the Christian king when she was badly. Happy with miracle saint, the Moors are slow to return the image to the Christian generating a conflict between the two parts of that leads to the capture of the Christian's by the Moors' army. The conflict only ends when the Christian people confront the Moors with a Wyvern, frightening them. The Christian king is finally free and the image of the saint is recovered.\textsuperscript{38}


\textsuperscript{35} Iris Teresa Pires Lima, graduated in Sociology, Masters in Social Policy, Postgraduate Degree in Criminology and Social Reinsertion and technical course in Tourism and Sociocultural Animation. Since 2015, she has collaborated with Progestur - an association that acts in the area of Culture and Tourism, developing projects - events (among which the International Mask Festival of Iberia), edition of books, exhibitions and other activities that highlight the importance of traditions as a mark of an identity.

\textsuperscript{36} PROGESTUR is a cultural non-profit organization aims to with “affirmation of Portuguese cultural identity”. Funded in 2003, since then dedicates to work with what is the most genuine and authentic that exist in Portuguese culture.


\textsuperscript{37} Maria João Nunes, Coordination Hélder Ferreira, Rituais com Máscaras / Rituals with Masks (Lisbon: Progestur), 8.

\textsuperscript{38} Maria João Nunes, Coordination Hélder Ferreira, Rituais com Máscaras / Rituals with Masks (Lisbon: Progestur), 10.

\textsuperscript{39} Maria João Nunes, Coordination Hélder Ferreira, Rituais com Máscaras / Rituals with Masks (Lisbon: Progestur), 12.
The Bugios are masked figures, nice and playful (despite of some very frightening “faces”), while the Mourisqueiros are men with no masks and a rigid posture.  

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40 Image by Elisa Alves, Hélder Ferreira and Nuno Feliz from the book *Rituais com Máscaras / Rituals with Masks* (Lisbon: Progestur), 53.

41 Maria João Nunes, Coordination Hélder Ferreira, *Rituais com Máscaras / Rituals with Masks* (Lisbon: Progestur), 12.
Therefore, if Bugiada symbolizes joy, subversion and disorder, the Mouriscada symbolizes order, discipline and severity.43

Masks can be controversial subject for Christians and Muslims as they perceive masks and theatre as deceptive. However, Muslims in Indonesia have appropriated the Indonesian traditional mask to spread Muslim values. In a conversation with mask dancer Hasna F. Afiff44 from Indonesia, she performs the traditional mask dance called Klana Dance or Topeng Rahwana, in Selangit style45.

The artist started dancing when she was seven years old, but she quitted because she was just a little child and lost interest. Afiff began again when she was fourteen years old, but had to stop again because her grandmother, from father side, didn't like it, since in Islamic beliefs women have to cover their bodies. When she was eighteen she started to dance and hasn’t stopped since. In 2013, in her early twenties, Afiff got interested in dance mask. The dancer went to Cirebon city to learn the Selangit style, it is a Islamic mask dance performed on the streets and festivities and aims to teach Islamic values.

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42 Image by Elisa Alves, Hélder Ferreira and Nuno Feliz from the book Rituais com Máscaras / Rituals with Masks (Lisbon: Progestur), 58.
43 Maria João Nunes, Coordination Hélder Ferreira, Rituais com Máscaras / Rituals with Masks (Lisbon: Progestur), 12.
44 Hasna F. Afiff was born in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia in 1993. Afiff has Sociology Major at Open University. At the moment, she is working at an art space in Bandung, called NuArt Sculpture Park. Afiff has been focusing on Balinese dance for almost 8 years and mask dance for 5 years. The dancer is specializing on the traditional mask dance from Cirebon, Selangit style. In 2015, she started to concentrate into her contemporary dance abilities, and so far Afiff created her own contemporary mask dance.
45 Selangit is one of five region that have a traditional mask dance at Cirebon city.
Around 9th Century, Arabian merchants went to Indonesia and brought Islam religion and culture to Indonesia. In that time Hinduism and Buddhism were dominant religions. Wali Songo⁴⁶ era is the end of Hinduism and Buddhism period. One of Wali Songo created Mask Traditional Dance from Cirebon City, West Java. His name is Sunan Gunung Jati and with his friend Sunan Kalijaga, they spread Islam in Cirebon City, transforming the city into a centre of Islamic religion and culture in West Java.⁴⁷ Although the mask traditional dance is from East Java, street artists brought to Cirebon and because of the acculturation and Sunan Gunung Jati and Sunan Kalijaga Islam values, Cirebon masks traditional dance is unique.⁴⁸

There are five kind of dance masks from Klana Dance or Topeng Rahwana, in Selangit style, Cirebon:

Five kinds of masks Klana Dance or Topeng⁴⁹ Rahwana, in Selangit style.⁵⁰

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⁴⁶ There are nine iconic people who spread Islam in Java Island, they are called Wali Songo, Songo means nine.
⁴⁷ Hasna F. Afiff
⁴⁸ Hasna F. Afiff
⁴⁹ Topeng means mask.
Panji Mask\textsuperscript{51}: Panji derived from the word Siji (one or the first), well-established sing Siji (believing in the One). Islam believes that there is only one God. You can believe and be sure of one God, Allah. Dance motion always small and soft, minimalist and more silent. Said Mutinah (mastermind mask Gegesik origin, Cirebon), Panji mask dance is rich, but with no much movement, like the dead but alive, alive but dead.\textsuperscript{52} Also, it is representing the infant.

Samba Mask\textsuperscript{53}: It comes from sambaing, the word samba meaning every. The philosophy says that every time we have to do what God tells us.\textsuperscript{54} It can symbolize the child.

Rumyang Mask\textsuperscript{55}: It is from harum it means smell good and yang or hyang it means God or Allah. Harum. In a phrase, it means God’s name. So, the philosophy is that we have to always call God with always pray and dzikir. Dzikir is like subhanallah, it means God it’s perfect or Allahu Akbar means God is the greatest. It can represent the youth.

\textsuperscript{54} Hasna F. Afiff.
\textsuperscript{55} http://kerajinankotacirebon.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/gambar-seputar-panca-wanda-topeng.html
**Tumenggung Mask**[^56]: It is a picture of the soldier's life attitude and valiant heroism, full dedication, loyalty and high responsibility.[^57] It is to remind us to always be kind to everyone.[^58] Also, it can represent an adult.

**Klana Mask**[^59]: It means finding; the philosophy is we always have to find the philosophy of life.[^60] It represents anger, human nature is greedy and justifies any means to achieve his personal ambitions.[^61] Also, it symbolizes an old person.

In this mask dance style shows the human values and transformation, but the five masks don’t perform together, each masquerade dance is an independent performance with a group of musicians. Each mask has a dance with a specific choreography in which every movement has a meaning.[^62]

Even thought, Muslim and Christian religions are not in favour of impersonation and masks, both of them sometimes appropriate the local mask and ritual culture to disseminate their beliefs. It seems that masks and theatre are a strong artistic human expression that monotheist religions cannot or have a hard time to remove from our human culture. It is easier to aggregate them to the religion than to completely forbid them.

[^57]: http://host-culture.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/cirebon-mask-dance-history.html
[^58]: Hasna F. Afiff.
[^60]: http://host-culture.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/cirebon-mask-dance-history.html
[^61]: Hasna F. Afiff
[^62]: Hasna F. Afiff
Madonna Vagina

Nasci na falta de amor
Me alimentei do sangue violento
Bebi lagrimas salgadas
Cresci no estupro das almas

Madonna Vagina

Vim dar vida
Transformar
Dor em amor
Cinza em colorido
Triteza em alegria

Liberdade
Liberdade para todos os seres

Madonna Vagina
Madonna Vagina
Madonna Vagina

I was born in the lack of love
I was fed on violent blood
I drank salty tears
I grew up in the rape of souls

Madonna Vagina

I came to give life
Transform
Pain in love
Grey in colour
Sadness in joy

Freedom
Freedom for all beings

Madonna Vagina
Madonna Vagina
Madonna Vagina
Shot of the video “Madonna Vagina”, cameras artists Julia Madison\(^{63}\) and Maria Teresa Gavazzi\(^{64}\). Video in the media attached.

\(^{63}\) Julia Maddison was born in London in 1969. She was awarded a BA Combined Honours degree in English Literature & Fine Art by Exeter University in 1990 and an MA in Fine Art by Middlesex University in 2011. Largely an installation artist, her work deals with lies, longing, memory, sickness and sex. She is slowly piecing together a museum of domestic misery, collecting and reworking the flotsam of forgotten lives. She has exhibited widely, including a solo show based on Maeve Brennan’s Novella ‘The Visitor’, at 35 Blumen in Germany in 2016, and ‘Most Loved Most Far’, an installation about the death of her mother, at the Herrick Gallery in Mayfair, London in 2017. She curated ‘I am ready for you, darling’, a show about history, secrets and sex in an abandoned shop in Kings Cross in 2015 and was Artist-in-Residence at Stephens House in London in 2017.

\(^{64}\) Maria Teresa Gavazzi was awarded a Master in Fine Arts at the Accademia di Brera, Milan. She then went on studying Portrait in Photoreportage at the London College of Communication. Currently, she is studying for a Master in Migration and Diaspora Studies at Soas University of London. Her practice embraces painting, drawing, collage, photography, installation, video, performance and participatory projects. Gavazzi’s work has been exhibited widely across Europe, the UK and Japan, including shows at Palazzo Reale and Il Milione in Milan; Herrick Gallery, Red Gallery, and Viktor Wynd Fine Art in London; Biennale Internazionale di Fotografia in Torino; Nederland Fotomuseum in Rotterdam; Galeria Jorge Albero in Madrid; Monica De Cardenas Gallery in Zuoz (CH); Osaka Triennale in Japan; Magazzini del Sale in Venice. Recent shows include ArtVerona, Fotografia Europea in Reggio Emilia, Athens Photo Festival. Maria Teresa Gavazzi is an Italian artist who lives and works in London.
The character Madonna Vagina was born from my personal research into masks, power, women and spirituality. She was inspired by the Virgin Mary figure; it was a tribute and critic to my Catholic background. Virgin Mary is a very important figure in my Catholic father family side, for them, she is the representation of unconditional love, redemption and eternal forgiveness. But, because it is a patriarchal religion, Mary is still a fragile figure and negates her sexuality, as she was virgin when conceived Jesus. Due to this chaste female image, I wanted to create a strong feminine entity, which represents liberty, transformation, hyper-sexuality, strength, colourful and love.

For this character, first I had the idea and concept of Madonna Vagina, then I thought about fabric material because it is light and it can represent Virgin Mary’s mantle. The Madonna Vagina mantle\textsuperscript{65} is made with colourful fabric attached representing a vulva, this mantle was designed to be able to dance with it and move mimicking vulva and vagina movement of closing and opening. The mask was the last part of the costume. It was hard to create a mask that it would be suitable for such a visually strong costume. I made a mask from a fabric mask that I already had, I added some painting and an abstract aura, made with wire and fabric.

Afterward, I started to create her dance; the dance is inspired by drumbeats rhythm because drumbeat sounds resemble heartbeats. On Madonna Vagina mantle has bells, representing church bells. After creating her dance, I had to think about her appearance. Her appearance is never on a stage, she must be always dancing in the middle or around of people making a circular shape dance. In a way, this movement is to go against the Catholic Church arrangement, in which people are passively sitting in a mass, looking up to a higher altar and waiting to be guided by a priest.

Madonna Vagina is an entity that at the same time is powerful and approachable by people. Her first appearance was at Organic Farm festival\textsuperscript{66}, Madonna Vagina didn’t have a musical background, I interacted with people, I walked and danced playing the drumbeats in my mind. I passed by the fields, apple trees and finished at a round house. But in her second presentation at Iklectic, in the event Beyond the Mask\textsuperscript{67}, since it was an indoor space and people would be sitting, I thought to create a background sound to give more presence to Madonna Vagina. I already had the poem and my musician friend Tuca Milan\textsuperscript{68} composed the music for Madonna Vagina.

\textsuperscript{65} Madonna Vagina costume technically advised by the Fashion Designer Saša Nemec. Saša Nemec was born in Nova Gorica, Slovenia in 1986. She received her MSc in Fashion and Textile Design from the University of Ljubljana in 2015. Nemec has exhibited and performed in Slovenia and abroad, especially in Finland where she has been residing for the past three years. Her expertise in clothes design led her to develop a community building practice build around sustainability and the right to repair. Her practice spans between exploration of new technologies and use of age old techniques. From mending a loose button to creating garments with 3D scanning technology. Her work Repair-a-thon has been presented at the Pixelache Helsinki Festival 2017, and at the Dimora OZ Gallery in Palermo, as part of the Collective Intelligence residency which she will continue in 2018 at the Orestiadi Foundation, Palermo. Nemec works and lives between Helsinki, Finland and her home town in Slovenia.

\textsuperscript{66} Lost Artists Art Festival, Laines Organic Farm, UK, 2017 - Organized and curated by Rosa Farber

\textsuperscript{67} Beyond the Mask, Iklectic, London, UK, 2017 – Organized and curated by Calum F. Kerr

\textsuperscript{68} Tuca Milan is drummer, percussionist, composer, founder and member of the band Let Drum Beat.
Madonna Vagina background music:  
[link](https://soundcloud.com/paola-de-ramos/madonna-vagina-by-tuca-milan)

I believe that making the mask and the costume was a starting point to materialize, to bring to life the concepts of power, women and spirituality. But for the full understanding, I believe the embodied experience of wearing the mask and costume can channel non-intellectualized thoughts and insights, a raw understanding of body, materiality and forces. I feel that masks can give a great body and mind empowerment.

Masks and costumes can give this empowerment and help the performer to understand or channel other personas or enhance characteristics of their personalities, as the SuperHero SH created by the artist and performer Vishnu Vardhani[69]. The SuperHero mask and performance is an exploration of Vardhani experiences in relation to her identity as a human, woman, foreigner, lover, daughter, artist and performer. Also, it is a way to understand which things that are inherent in her and imposed by the society.

The SuperHero SH character wears a combination of mask and makeup on her face. The mask is a handmade leather chose and bough in Venice by the artist. Through the makeup, the performer tries to bring back the same traditional makeup products that she grow up with in India, and combining with her favourite piece of makeup a red lipstick, which represents her rebellion since in India red lipstick doesn’t have a good reputation. Through the performance Vardhani questioned how hypocrite is, that some makeup is acceptable and others not. The SuperHero SH helps the artist explore and face her own history of prejudice because of her gender and body features. Also, SH investigates and shows different kinds of hypocrisy and helps to open new possibilities for girls and women.

[69] [http://www.vishnuvardhani.com](http://www.vishnuvardhani.com)
“Every single time I put on a mask, I felt I was exploring a different aspect of me.”
Vishnu Vardhani

“I was putting on the SuperHero SH mask and it was like opening the door into another space.” Vishnu Vardhani
Because of mask qualities of facilitating people to open the door into a new space, explore different aspects of them, discover and know the personas and find their inner truth masks are also used for therapeutic propose. Masks can help people free themselves from traumas, self-image and crystalized social masks that don’t let them be a creative being and find their own truth.

The dramatherapists Sue Jennings and Åse Minde, in their book Art Therapy and Dramatherapy, Masks of the Soul, wrote that masks and their use in therapeutic and religious worlds can be hesitant, since masks are often seen as ‘the false self’, ‘wicked self’, ‘the self that it cannot be controlled’, that masks can evoke demons and generally stir up and bring unhelpful imaginaries. But, in their view, in dramatherapy, they perceive masks as a safe medium to encapsulate and bring up people’s uncertain and uncontrolled aspects and solve them in a balanced way. They clarify:

> Just as through art people have the possibility to see things in different perspectives, through the use of masks we have the chance to see ourselves in different perspectives.

> The mask is especially a safe container of the 'self that is dangerous', or the 'self that feels dangerous'.

The dramatherapist Sue Jennings sees mask making as a therapeutic process and transformational when slowly the person experience development of the mask taking form and shape. And the dramatherapist Åse Minde complements that masks can be used to express aspects of the self that usually cannot be expressed.

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70 Sue Jennings and Åse Minde, *Art Therapy and Dramatherapy, Masks of the Soul*, 188
71 Sue Jennings and Åse Minde, *Art Therapy and Dramatherapy, Masks of the Soul*, 189
Also the psychologist Melissa Marques Torres Oliveira, in her article *O Poder da máscara no Psicodrama: a sombra e a luz - The power of masks in psychodrama: shadow and light*, she uses masks to treat psychotic patients and they demonstrated an improvement of the expansion of their self-knowledge and their perception of social roles in relation to their lives, they could creatively see new possibilities to reconstruct social relationships and personal histories.

Torres Oliveira understands masks as a possibility for the person to break through her/his social crystalized identity that is automatic and suffocates her/him and free the creative being that gives the chance to the one to express spontaneously her/himself. The psychologist explained:

The psychodramatic process with masks permits the person to recognize objective and subjective contents of her/his personality, leading her/him to enter deeply into her/his world. The mask has the power to allow this connection with the "sacred" of the patient.  

72 Picture from Sue Jennings and Åse Minde, *Art Therapy and Dramatherapy, Masks of the Soul*, 190  
73 Melissa Marques Torres Oliveira, *O Poder da máscara no Psicodrama: a sombra e a luz*  
She wrote that the “sacred” or “divine” self is the inner world of the person and each person has a different inner world. And it is this “divine” that governs and administers ones own world to create, construct, multiply, or sicken and paralyze. So masks help the person to reach this “sacred” space and free themselves of their crystallised identity by emerging her/his creativity and spontaneity, the person places herself/himself in an active way to the world. Torres Oliveira added that identity is a dynamic and not static concept, it is always varying according to social situations and changes.

Complete the sentence using as many descriptors you can think of in sixty seconds:

“I am ____________,”

In the article The Complexity of Identity: “Who Am I?”, Beverly Daniel Tatum said that she used to apply this same exercise to her students. Tatum realised that over the years students of colour usually mention their racial or ethnic group and this same pattern repeated in terms of gender, religion and sexuality. Women would usually mention being a female, Jewish students would say they are Jews, some students refer themselves as being gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In conclusion, she

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75 Exercise taken from The Complexity of Identity: “Who Am I?”, Beverly Daniel Tatum, 2
realised among her students the ones who their identities were part of the dominant social group weren’t aware of some their social identities. Tatum pointed out:

Common across these examples is that in the areas where a person is a member of the dominant or advantage social group, the category is usually not mentioned. That element of their identity is so taken for granted by them that it goes without comment. It is taken for granted by them because it is taken for granted by the dominant culture.76

Since we present ourselves in the society with our bodies, and socially they have a meaning, Tatum wrote that the concept of “who I am” a large part is constructed in relation to “on who the world around me says I am”. What the parents, peers, teachers, neighbours, media and the cultural images say what I am reflects into my self-image of who I am.77

Because our identity is in constant communication and changing in relation to the environment, sometimes we see ourselves belonging to the dominant group and other times not. The author concluded that it is essential to everyone to acknowledge when we are part of the oppressor or the repressed group to have a more fair society. She finishes: “Our ongoing examination of who we are in our full humanity, embracing all of our identities, creates the possibility of building alliances that may ultimately free us all.”78

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76 Beverly Daniel Tatum, *The Complexity of Identity: “Who Am I?*, 1
“I think they (Camila and Wendell) are together in this search, Wendell is a person, he is a human person, he is an energy that it is inside of me, he inhabits the same body with other different personalities. I personally believe that we have this possibility of these transitions of personalities and identities.”

Camila Carrello

The artist and performer Camila Carrello⁷⁹ is the drag king Wendell Cândido, the artist told that Wendell was born from her questioning about gender that started since she was a small child. In her young age, Carrello realised that people would censure her because she liked to be naked most of the times, play football and have friendship with boys. After some time, she understood that those repressions would happen because under people’s view she was a girl and for them, she should be treated and behave like one.

Shot of video of Camila Carello transforming into Wendell.

⁷⁹ Camila Carrello was born in Rio de Janeiro and at the moment lives in Lisbon, Portugal. Since 2014, the artist works as Drag King to open up and intensify the representativeness of Drag King in the Drag world. Carello had presented in several places as Turma Ok, in Rio de Janeiro, Amstel 54 in Amsterdam, The George in Dublin, Vauxhall Tavern and Boi Box, in London. Instagram: candidowendell
The artist said that she has a fluid gender identity since she was a kid. For Carrello, the creation of Wendell was the materialization of those gender questions and the body investigation about why her body is different than other bodies, as from men and other women. She sees the drag world quite sexist and this gave her even more strength to challenge herself to give birth to Wendell. Wendell was born inspired by the Drag Collective and because she realised that there were very few drag kings. In her experience, she felt that most of people don’t know about drag kings and because of that she had to fight to get space, respect and educate people about drag kings. Carrello developed Wendell’s personality, makeup, beard and colourful clothes with the help of other drag friends. She created Wendell as a sensitive guy to show that men can also be sensitive and cry in opposition of the incentive and strong masculine stereotypes. Wendell is inspired by “cheesy” Brazilian singers such as Reginaldo Rossi, Sidney Magal, Cauby Peixoto and music style Tecnobrega, pagode and samba. Wendell lip syncs music sung by men talking about their feelings and love. Wendell uses his body to challenge people’s way of seeing gender and also the drag world. The performer uses the presentation spaces to talk to people and to educate them about gender. Camilla said that Wendell is a constant construction and the makeup has an important role to impersonate the character Wendell because of changes to her body and her skin.

Shot of video of Wendell interview. https://paoladeramos.wixsite.com/masksidentities
“Who do you think you are?
Who do you think you are?
I’m telling the truth now
We’re all born naked
And the rest is drag”

RuPaul

Gustavo Bitencourt performs drag queen Dalvinha Brandão, the artist has background on theatre, but he got interested in the drag world because of its possibilities of the art getting into people’s daily life, which it is different from the traditional space of theatre. Bitencourt is interested in work with humour, since he believes humour can be used to discuss difficult themes. Dalvinha Brandão is a character that was created eight years ago. Dalvinha gives to Gustavo possibilities to challenge conventional concepts of the aesthetics, gender and social hierarchy.

For the artist, makeup is very important. He said the act of applying makeup makes him feel that something starts to happen and begins to get into Dalvinha’s story and character. However, Bitencourt added that this transformation into Dalvinha doesn’t depend just on his transformation, but also the relationship with other people. One example that he gave: “Once I went as Dalvinha to a bar that I usually go, the waiters didn’t recognise me and started to talk with me in the feminine. I realized that every time that people treat on feminine form, I would act differently and get more into the Dalvinha character.”

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81 Dalvinha Brandão is Drag Queen, activist, researcher and supporter of the Drag Queen, Drag King and transformist culture in Brazil. She works as Drag Queen for ten years, she is one of the responsible for reviving the Drag scene in Curitiba, where she promoted events as OVER:, a Crossdresserdiscodiva, o Natal Infernal. Also, Brandão was one of the first to offer a workshop “Entravecando com Dalvinha Brandão”, which it is a combination of Drag techniques and elements of transformism in Brazil, it has been organized in several cities in Brazil, since 2012. In addition, Brandão usually participates in public debates related to LGBTTI rights, the history of the transformist culture, humor and art. She lives travelling between Paraná, Santa Catarina and São Paulo. http://queerbrasil.com/gustavo-bitencourt/
The performer confirmed that Dalvinha is the result of the transformation of Gustavo and she is part of him, they grow and add to each other as well as two different personas. He likes to play around with Gustavo and Dalvinha dislikes for each other and this also works as an excuse for Gustavo and Dalvinha to not been seen at the same time and place.

Claude Cahun\textsuperscript{82} important surrealist artist who was forgotten by art historians, her art and history came to the public around 1980’s. The artist was one the first 20\textsuperscript{th} – 21\textsuperscript{st} century female who dressed up and photographed herself/himself \textsuperscript{83} exploring her/his identity through art. In the 1920s and ‘30s, the artist created a series of theatrical self-portraits to challenge the rigid sexuality and gender social norms of the time. Cahun was homosexual and declared her/his gender as neutral. In her/his autobiography, Disavowals, she/he wrote: “Shuffle the cards. Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation. Neutral is the only gender that always suits me.”\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{82} Claude Cahun, original name in full Lucy Renée Mathilde Schwob, (born October 25, 1894, Nantes, France—died December 8, 1954, St. Helier, Jersey), French writer, photographer, Surrealist, and performance artist who was largely written out of art history until the late 1980s, when her photographs were included in an exhibition of Surrealist photography in 1986. She is known for her self-portraits that portray her as ambiguously gendered. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Claude-Cahun

\textsuperscript{83} The Guerrilla Girls, The Guerrilla Girls’ Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art, 63

\textsuperscript{84} http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160629-claude-cahun-the-trans-artist-years-ahead-of-her-time
By dressing our bodies, we can face, shift and walk through traditional social stigmas. I believe by changing our external appearances, we can change the crystalized and pre-conceptions of who we are according to others and also to challenge others belief systems around what is gender, ridiculous, right, wrong, sane, insane, appropriate, etc.

Likewise Camila Carrello, Gustavo Bitencourt and Claude Cahun I have been using my body to research and explore the body, gender, sexuality and humour for about five years now, but I haven’t created a character or another persona like them. Most of my explorations would be through performances, props, projects and installations.

I have a mask that I made a while ago that doesn’t have a defined gender that inspired me to create a character who could explore those aspects all together. In combination with my props “I have balls”; a pair of fabric balls on male underwear and a bright pink bra with green nipples painted on and a jacket suit, which I costumed, and so the Madamesir was born.

The Madamesir is this being who doesn’t have a stated gender, Madamesir is orange and bold with a big red lipstick that sometimes looks like a moustache, big pink boobs and balls and a dick and wearing a grey jacket suit with red painted lapel and fluffy red sleeve ends. The character is a mixture of drag, masquerade and clown. Madamesir doesn’t have a story. It is this being who simply exists by its presence. When Madamesir was born, I wasn’t sure what it would the movements be, then by exploring the sensation of the props and idea of what is to be on a body of a woman or a man, I started to play around the movements exaggerating what are socially considerate “feminine” and “masculine” actions. Sometimes, I would walk spreading my legs, other times walking as I was wearing high heels, I would scratch the balls or hide the boobs.

With the embodying of Madamesir I could research and explore the bodies and gender as the artist Camila Carretto commented and also to investigate those themes in relation other people and the environment. So, I decided to have a walk around Helsinki city as Madamesir, because the character has a strong presence I didn’t want to interact directly with people and invade their spaces, I choose to interact just with monuments, posters, advertisements and shop windows which in my view were reproducing the stereotypes of women and men gender image and roles.
I walked around playing with the props, I passed by the phallic monument called Memorial to Women in Times of War (Sodanajan naisen muistomerkki) that ironically is to honour for the work of Finnish women in the Second World War.
Madamesir interacted with posters and shop windows exaggerating their gender messages.

Why are women usually portrait naked or wearing few clothes since their sexuality is so repressed?
My presence was the performance and indirectly interacted with people and their sense of gender. Even though this theme is quite delicate, because of the humoristic and the ridiculous quality of the costume and performance I could enter into this space and express my views. The displacement and ridiculous advantages of my character let me be in places that I wouldn’t be comfortable as Paola.

Humour is a way to explore and challenge the social rules. The clown is a very well known humoristic figure. Bruno Lops\textsuperscript{86} confirmed in interview that clowns don’t obey any rules. Lops is the Lourdes Shirles clown, he was never imagined to be a clown, but in 2012 when he was looking for an acting job, by chance he applied for a clown workshop and at the end of the workshop some people would be selected to work as a clown in hospitals in Curitiba called “Trupe da Saúde”. He got the clown job, since then Lops and Lourdes work in “Trupe da Saúde” and theatre. The artist said the clownery style that influences him, it doesn’t consider the clown as character but an exaggerated version of himself, “Lourdes is not a character, Lourdes is an inflated version of Bruno, it is a playful state”. The nose and makeup are not a requirement to be a clown, but Lops said that the nose helps him to get into Lourdes and in this playful state. He also thinks the nose, makeup and costume are important elements for people to recognise the clown. The makeup is

\textsuperscript{86} Bruno Lops (antisocial name). He was born in 1986. He is graduated with Graphic Design / UFPR, Administration / FAE (do not tell anyone please) and Postgraduate in Cultural Anthropology / PUCPR. Rumors that now he studies Psychology. He is a clown since 2012 in the Trupe da Saúde and since 2015 at Palhaçx Gourmet. He started several projects currently and they all shipwrecked. He passed in a few open calls, Wannabe of Drag Queen. He thinks he is funny. He has several performances shows but he rarely presents them. He worked as an actor in plays, was nominated for a Gralha Azul award. He still lives until the date of sending this email.
made in a way to emphasise the expressive parts of the face as eyes, eyebrows and mouth and also to accentuate a physical characteristic that is comic on the person.

The artist believes that the clown, through the ridiculous, shows a fragile state and exposes the human vulnerabilities. The clown is this being who goes against the social ideal and does what she/he wants, she/he is like a child or crazy and drunk person as Lops explained.
He said that because the clown is guided by her/his personal agenda automatically she/he goes against the social expectations, there are the funny and ridiculous aspects of it, but it is also easy to relate to a clown as a human, since all of us are or have aspects that are not fitting in the social expectations or we just want to go opposite to them to be able to express who we are. In addition, Lops shared that Lourdes and clownery thought him to be sincere with himself and not be suffocated by social systems.

“If a clown is frying an egg and a butterfly land on the window, she/he gets interested on the butterfly and forgets the egg, her/his attention shifts because she/he is very interested. The clown is interesting because she/he is an interested being.”

Bruno Lops
Ridiculous can be a powerful tool of expression and protest, Mariana Barros\(^7\) is an artist and performer and she uses masks as a bizarre element to show, shock and cross social boundaries. Barros doesn’t create characters, she believes in the visual impact of her body transformation through masks and props in relation to the viewers. The artist has a collection of masks, she has cartoon characters helmet masks, furry masks, Venetian’s style masks, neutral masks, masks and costumes that she got from friends and others that she made specifically for performances. In the performance “Manifesto Digital”(Digital Manifest), several masks were used in this political performance with a kitsch element focusing on the Brazilian crisis and manifested the repudiation in a ridiculous way.

Her work aims to disrupt the traditional social norms like going out on the streets with a furry scary wolf mask when she was pregnant, for her it was a way to express “mundo-cão” (dog-eat-dog world) of being a mother, the harshness to have a child in this crazy world.

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\(^7\) Mariana Barros, 28 years old, mother, Brazilian multi-artist and currently living in Curitiba/PR. She was awarded BA Theatre at Faculdade de Artes do Paraná, in Curitiba. The artist works in performance, visual arts, music, theatre, dance, expressive consultant and art education. Barros put herself in flux for the dialogue physical/intellectual for the body liberation from local traditions, to substitute the patterns and conventions that tie any artistic language. The artist is open for experiences, a combination of subjectivities of ridiculous, the relationship of interpersonal encounter and the inter-arts transit. Barros has a strong presence in the performance scene in Curitiba, since 2009, she has done more than 20 performances solo and in collaboration with other artists, she performed in several festivals, galleries in South America and in Europe. Barros founded Fluxo de Performance in 2015, it is a laboratory for practices and reflections into performance. Facebook: mariana barros / instagram: marianabarrosbr
“Mundo-cão” (Dog-eat-dog world), 2011 / Photography Simony Sotelo

“Mundo-cão” (Dog-eat-dog world), 2011 / Photography Simony Sotelo

Image: https://www.flickr.com/photos/simonysotelo/6549717951/in/photostream/
Image: https://www.flickr.com/photos/simonysotelo/6578548151/in/photostream/
Impersonation of animals and magical animals are very common in mask world in different times and cultures. The artist and performer Miyuki Kasahara, the same one who created Namanari Cameron mask, she has a character called Fox Witch.

“Wearing a mask, I do feel changing my character, you cannot see anything you just feel it.” Miyuki Kasahara

Kasahara enjoys the transformational quality of masks, in the interview she talked that historically, people started to transform themselves by wearing masks during ceremonies, to get into a different character or impersonate a god or devil. Therefore the mask proportionated a sacred area for those activities to happen. One of Miyuki characters is Fox Witch (Kitsune Tsukai), the Fox Witch was born for Camberwell Arts Fair 2010 relating to the theme witch and witchcraft.

The artist decided to go back to her Japanese cultural background for inspiration and she found the Fox Witch that it is very traditional in Japan. In addition, her Fox Witch uses the power of another magical fox called a Kudakitsune (Tube Fox). A Kudakitsune is small and long, lives in a bamboo tube and is usually invisible; it has the power to predict people’s future but also can curse them.
To be able to use Tube Fox mythical powers Fox-Witch has a deal with the Tube Fox promising its favourite food and daily care. For this performance, the Fox-Witch talks with the Tube-Fox, Tube-Fox answers visitor’s questions by vomiting coloured stones.

The artist said that in Japanese folklore Kitsune Tsukai (Fox-Witch) is a relative of legendary figure Tamamo-no Mae who was the most beautiful courtesan under the Japanese Emperor Konoe (1142 -1155), but when Konoe became mysteriously ill, an astrologer revealed Tamamo-no Mae's true-form, she was a nine-tailed fox-witch plotting to kill him and take his throne.

After fighting against 80,000 warriors sent by the Emperor, she was hunted and killed in Nasu (Tochigi prefecture), then her corpse transformed into a killing stone (Sessho-seki). Miyuki explained that in 1385, the priest Genno performed certain spiritual rituals and the haunted stone was destroyed but the spirit of Tamamo-no Mae spread all over the island with the broken pieces of stone, Kitsune Tsukai and the next generation of Fox-Witches were born from these pieces of stone.

For Miyuki to impersonate Fox Witch and work with Fox Tube is a way to bring back the ancient Japanese mythical creatures into the present. Also, to deconstruct the image of bad women witch that in both cultures Japanese and European is recurrent.

As Kasahara the artist, performer and musician Calum F. Kerr\(^\text{89}\) gives life for animals such as Maurice, the Dodo and the Ghostly White Whale. Kerr does not describe himself as an actor, but he is very interested in creating characters or impersonating beings or things, even a corner of St John’s Church in Bethnal Green, London. The artist has several characters, most of them wear physical masks, others he can impersonate by just wearing different clothes, props and objects. For him, Maurice, the Dodo and Ghostly White Whale are the representation of his worries of animal’s extinction and our imbalanced relationship with them, as well as the denial we have between human and nature.

“I was always very interested in ideas around nature and our relations to nature. Also, when I was a child I was very fascinated in evolution”. Calum F. Kerr

\(^{89}\) Calum F. Kerr (born London 1975) is an artist whose work is expressed through performance, sculpture and sound. His projects are often in relation to specific locations and inhabiting of characters such as J. D. Swann (ornithological investigator), Brian Guest (S.P.A.R: Society for the Preservation of Admirable Rubble), a Ghostly White Whale and Maurice the Dodo. He has performed recently in Liminality (The Unknown), Gallery 46 with Flange Zoo and at numerous exhibitions in the UK including at the ICA and Tate Britain, and internationally in Bulgaria, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the USA. In 2016/17 he received an Arts Council England International Development award for research and travel to Japan for the project 'Calum’s Road to Aonodomon'. Musical projects include 'Flange Zoo’, ‘Lonesome Cowboys from Hell’, ‘Gran-paw Frankee & the Son-of-a-Gun’ and ‘I Am Dragonfly’. www.vimeo.com/calumfkerr
Maurice was created in 2012 for an event to celebrate the independence of Mauritius Island from the United Kingdom (12 March 1968), the Dodo as written in Alice Wonderland inspired the artist to create a contemporary Dodo. The Dodo is an extinct species because the colonizers hunted it and also brought other animals to the Island that ate Dodo eggs. In addition, Dodo couldn’t be domesticated.

So, first Maurice, the Dodo, couldn’t talk, then Kerr, through time, developed the character Maurice as this old Dodo who tells the history of his kind’s disappearance and gives voice to other animals which are in risk of extinction. Maurice, the Dodo, has been making appearances in several events to warn humans of their bad behaviour and human-made disasters.
Like the Dodo, the Ghostly White Whale is a creature that is between life and death, Dodo cannot be seen alive anymore and the White Whale is a myth. The Ghostly White Whale was created for an event in Greenwich that related to the area.

The creature was inspired by Moby-Dick literature, written by Herman Melville, the book is sailor Ishmael's narrative of the neurotic hunt by Ahab, captain of the whaling ship Pequod, in retaliation for Moby-Dick, the white whale biting off Ahab’s leg. Because this specific place Enderby Wharf, in Greenwich, is named after a man called Samuel Enderby who had a whaling company that explored the South Seas. The company went to the Pacific, travelled far and opened up new whale-hunting areas. Specifically, Herman Melville mentioned and wrote a passage of meeting a boat called Samuel Enderby and he historically cited the company in London. The artist confirmed, “by bringing to life the Ghostly White Whale and walking around Greenwich, I wanted to have the story of Samuel Enderby as a whale hunter exposed.” The artist impersonates these animals to bring messages and awareness to humans about their misbehaviour towards other beings.
“I think that sisterhood or animalhood are more important than nationalism. I believe that nationality and nationalism should be in the past.”
Daria Apakhonchich

The performer, artist and activist Daria Apakhonchich believes that Russians are still related to the idea of animism, she mentioned that this animism is revealed in the Russian usage of animals

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Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKrKKts5f8U
91 Daria Apakhonchich artist, performer, curator, born in 1985 in Kamchatka, now lives and works in Saint Petersburg. One of the founding members of {rodina} ([motherland]) group engaged in experimental political art dealing mainly with the patriotic myth and languages of power. From its origin in 2013 {rodina} has made dozens of performances, actions and street interventions in Russia and abroad in various different spaces (streets, bars, galleries, libraries, factories etc). From the very beginning {rodina} was also interested in collective actions, ran and still runs curatorial projects focusing on anti-militarism, censorship,
image, like the double-headed eagle that is a symbol of power, the white bear the symbol of a political party of Russia and other national symbols picturing animals. But for Apakhonchich these animal symbols are fake masks, she added that they are a misappropriation of animals voice to fake that they are the image of “real” Russians, they are folk, they are nature, they are the Estate or that they are even "natural". The artist tries by making her animals masks to emancipate them and help her to be genuine her country, to be her folk and to be a citizen of this world, for her “we still have a Shamanic mind-set”.

One of her masks is a crocodile inspired by the goddess Ammut, the Egyptian Demon who eats the heart of sinners, and the Russian image of a woman, representing the mother of the Russian nation, calling for war. In the beginning, the crocodile mask was made for her daughter to go to a New Years party of the archaeology extracurricular course in her school. Then she realised that word Ammut is a similar word for mother in Russian. Apakhonchich explained, “we decided to play with these combinations and create a big crocodile as our motherland because it sounds almost the same. We have very strong images and popular images of the World War II, it is a tall woman who calls people to the war, the name of this picture is Motherland is Calling, then we decided to give the name for this piece as Ammut is Calling.” So, Ammut is the representation of this motherland eating their own sons and daughters heart by calling them for war, death. The first idea was just walking and taking some photos of this "Crocodile calling", but at that time, a dancer friend Alina Abilkalamova, from Kazakhstan, was in Russia and wanted to be Ammut. So, she coloured her hands, legs, feet in red and she was wearing a beautiful black dress. She performed at Palace Square, in Saint Petersburg, a special dance that each movement and gesture represented a word. It was like a narrative about the motherland and describing what she will do with her children, she will eat and hurt them.
Furthermore, Apakhonchich impersonates The Mother Bear. The Mother Bear was born in a performance about speciesism. The performance was called “Take a picture with a Human” ("Фото с человеком" - "Photo with a human"). They were a group of masquerades of different animals walking on the streets pulling a white male human with a rope on the neck, asking people: "Do you want to take a photo with a human?". In her view, the performance was funny but the same time creepy, because there were several animals, Mother Bear, a Cat, a Crocodile and a Cow and the unusual action of animals impersonating the usual human abuse perpetrated in animals. Also, Mother Bear is a character by herself; she is a political being who advocates for nature and to aware humans of its unbalance.

The impersonation of elements of nature and animals can have different meanings. In Brazil, the tribe Kura^Bakairi after three hundred years of contact with non-indigenous, they are regaining and reappropriating their traditional knowledge about aquatic spirits represented by the masks Yakuigady. In Vitor Aurape Peruare masters thesis Yakuigady: cultura e sustentabilidade nas

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92 Os Kurâ-Bakairi são tradicionalmente originários do vale do rio Paranatinga (também chamado Teles Pires ou Pakuera para o Kurâ-Bakairi), na região central do estado do Mato Grosso. The Kurâ-Bakairi are traditionally from the valley of Paranatinga river (also called Teles Pires or Pakuera for Kurâ-Bakairi), in the centre region of the state of Mato Grosso.

máscaras rituais do povo Kurâ-Bakairi (Yakuigady: culture and sustainability of ritual masks of Kurâ-Bakairi people) he explained the importance of the spirits for the Kurâ-Bakairi people:

These spirits are responsible for the environmental, organizational and feed the Kurâ-Bakairi people. The Yakuigady bring peace and joy to the people Kurâ-Bakairi, providing them spiritual services to face a wide range of situations.\(^9\)

Peruare wrote how Yakuigady reviewed themselves to the tribe for the first time. He described that from Tha’u Sawa’pa beaches, the sacred waterfall of Kurâ-Bakairi, the masquerade spirits representing the most important fishes of Paranatinga appeared for the first time for a Shaman who was fishing. They showed in group of five per day, in five days all twenty-five reviewed themselves: Matola, after Iakua, Menxu, Papa, Pa’re’n, Kuynahu, Toinlein, Maykory, Ma’ty-Iery, Natuninha, Nawi’ri, Kakaia, Pili and Senwe of rectangle masks and the after the Kwamby, with Nuianani, Numitao, Mapabalo, Kwalowe, Palapybe, Ta’nupedy, Nueriku, Wyly-wyly, Makwala and the last one, Palapaia – the only one who presents late and on bad mood.\(^9\)

The Yakuigady are seen as aquatics spirits who influence the fishing and hunting, giving food and spiritual sustainability to Kurâ-Bakairi. He added that in the tradition the mask is hereditary and untransferable, always belong to the same family.\(^9\)

The mask Numitao represents a feminine-spirit of the fish. She is a Shaman and the partner of Nuianani, leader of Kwamby, also masculine-Shaman. Numitao represent the Agulha fish, takes care of all Yakuigady and give balance to all nature cycles. The spirit organises the community and your social function is to help. Numitao is very playful and gives happiness to the owner of the mask and community.\(^9\)

Numitao Spirit

http://mogoxebakairi.blogspot.co.uk/2013/05/kuamby.html
Masks can be a channel to embodied and materialize abstract ideas and concepts, I believe that the mask and creature that I call Between Worlds was a way to express the need of understanding the cycles, cycles of nature, seasons, daylight, night, sunrise, sunset, birth, life and death.

In the beginning, the Between Worlds mask was made in an attempt just to understand the properties of materials and how they can influence mask aesthetics and meaning. So, I had the idea to work with wood, because it was a new material for me and the novelty would help me to understand the material influences.

The found woods, were cut or dropped from trees, were on this underdetermined space, they were still alive because plants were living on them and they could be a supply of vital energy for other beings and the same time were dead since they weren’t connected to their source of life, tree, and they were putrefying.
The wood as a material reconnected me with nature, its cycles and time, and gave the chance to the Between Worlds to be born. The hardness of working with the wood provided me the patience and brought me to the materiality of our reality, also the rigidity of the wood and the costume put me on another time, a time that it was much slower than mine. The found wood recalled for me the between a state of life and death as symbolic elements for transition and to be in peace with the uncertain. I could embody the transition. I could be this being with no name and no human structure. I was just a thing and a concept. The words are not enough to describe the experience that my body went through walking in this creature’s skin within the night and sunrise in a forest in Espoo. The wood in its existence and language taught me and the knowledge still resonates in my body.
After going through those masks experiences, listening to other artists mask experiences and reading about masks, I feel that I can perceive mask like a refractory material. A refractory material has the property to reveal all the other colours that light is constituted. I can see that personalities and identities as the light, we know that they exist, we can presence their existence and their existence are proved scientifically, but we cannot materialise the personalities and identities in a concrete way that we can hold them in our hands, likewise spectrum of light. The refractor as masks can be made of different materials and shapes. The refractor can be humid air, raindrops, a glass or a crystal, its shape results in different light refractions, they could be presented as one or more rainbows, a semi-circle or full circle rainbow, a straight lines of coloured lights or different colourful light shapes. In addition, the white light is not opposite of its coloured refracted lights, the colourful refracted lights do not deny the existence of the white colour and vice-versa, the white light is not better than the refracted colourful lights, the colourful refracted lights are the white light but channelled by a material. In conclusion, I believe that we have our everyday personality/identity that we don’t question too much and don’t try to reach them, we don’t let ourselves to realise that the white light, this daily set personality and identity, is constituted of several colours. I believe that masks can help show these other colours that we have, all other personalities and identities. Sometimes we need to manipulate our bodies and hide our social faces to be a clay mask, Goodbye Muhammad, Becoming, anonymous balaclava, caretos of Lazarim, Bugios, Mourisqueiros, animal, Pussy Riots, Samba, Klana, Madonna Vagina, ridiculous, SuperHero SH, Wendell, Dalvinha, outsider, Lourdes, Fox Witch, Maurice (The Dodo), Between Worlds, Mother Bear, Numitao, Ghostly White Whale, Ammut and more. This can be a healthy way for us to realise our true colours and to also disrupt the crystallized social norms and show others that exist different colours and shapes to be explored.

We are in an ongoing transformation and exploration of who we are.
In this thesis, I had the chance to revaluate my references’ backgrounds since I have started this research. I realised the names that were mentioned were most of the times the same, also the gender, skin colour and continent of the most of the references were repeating. So, I tried to look for other references that it would genuinely express the interested and knowledge of masks from different perspectives and background. The search wasn’t successful; most of the references were still male, white, straight, European and North American. Even the researches that weren’t made by this dominant group, the researchers would drink from the same references background: male, white, straight, European and North American. I felt a lack plurality and representativeness from other groups in this theme of masks and identities. It looks like the academy and the system perpetuates the same narrative and names. This is worrying because masks have a long history, there are several places with history of masks and consequently should have more plurality in the references. I feel that we are stuck in the same narratives, even though, we have the Internet, the information is quite repetitive and I believe it is because it is lacking of voices from other backgrounds. A way that I found to get out of this constancy was to find people who worked with masks to interview them and to try to give new perspectives to the research. Despite the new doors that the interviews open up for me, in the research process, I realised several barriers such as language barriers, lack of written materials, hard to access people who had the knowledge and even information that disappeared because the people who had the knowledge were gone. I hope that in the future the Internet can help to open up new opportunities and to give space for other voices to challenge our domesticated minds, which are accustomed to the lack of diversity and to use the same references. In addition, I hope that by diversifying the references background, giving more representativeness, we can be more open and understanding to differences.

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Ann Williams

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98 This happened a lot in oral cultures, as indigenous tribes in Brazil that the colonizers exterminated or acculturation that happened because of unhealthy contact with non-indigenous through slavery, alienation and poverty. Nowadays, several tribes are working to recover and preserve their ancestors culture.
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