

queer time

the one about drag

Volume 2

with
Peachez, Hibiscus,
Shim Shim She,
Jenny Sayquan,
+ MS Paint





that one time MS Paint put me in drag :)

a note from the editor

first and foremost, i would like to infinitely thank the drag artists who so generously gifted me with their time and shared their thoughts with me for this volume of queer time. thank you for your willingness to share, thank you for your art, and thank you for your light.

after thinking much about what to say about drag i find myself wordless. there is something about drag that feels so earnest it hurts to watch- maybe it's the love, maybe it's the willfulness, or maybe it's just magic.

every time i watch a drag show i feel the world around me fade- it's joy, its beauty, it's revolution.

this issue, 'the one about drag', started out first as prologue to 'the one about gender'. it didn't feel right to talk about gender without drag, and then there was too much to say about drag, so it grew to become its own volume.

as for thoughts on gender and drag, i think judi(th butler) said it best: "there is no original or primary gender a drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original."

following the first volume of queer time, this second volume follows on the intervention to the archive, hoping to document in print the voices of the amazing drag artists interviewed for this project. there is power in allowing drag artists to define themselves for themselves, and have their voices be the center of the conversation of their art form.

thank you again to all involved, this is, "the one about drag"...

What

is

“Drag”?

Drag

/drag/ noun.

MS Paint: It's dressing up as a character of a person for the sake of expression.

Shim Shim She: I would just find drag as a form of entertainment and expression that defies gender norms. And yeah, I think that's like a good generic definition for me.

Jenny Sayquah: I would define drag as, in the most simplest terms, I think it's just a form of queer dress up. I think it's kind of like us as adults now kind of going into like that childlike wonder of like, putting on a character, like playing fantasy, and kind of just sharing that with the world. Honestly, I think that the wonderful thing about it is that it has so many forms, you can try to define it in one way or the other, but the great thing about it is that it's so all encompassing that it almost doesn't need a very clear definition. So... I think, in the broadest terms, that I would define drag as dress up.

Peachez: I think that drag is left to the interpretation of those that are doing it, and participating in it. I think that is a key factor though- drag is defined by the artist, and not by the audience that is receiving it. I think a lot of times now, especially with drag race, there's a huge audience that wants to decide what is and is not drag, what is and is not good drag. I think drag is what you want it to be, I do firmly believe in the saying that all drag is valid- I do not believe all drag is good, I'll make it very clear: I do not think that all drag is good, but just like I think all art is valid, not all art is good.

Hibiscus: To me, drag is an art form first and foremost. It is not in the binary. When you go back, it's in theater men dressed as women. So I hate to put a gender in drag, but you can choose your gender in drag. Like people ask me- do you have a problem with AFAB queens or drag kings? And I'm like- never. It's an art form so everyone should be able to do it. It's also political statement, like it takes a lot of someone to put on a face, put on a look, and hit the public scene. That is a big one because I never know how to define it. For so long, I used to say drag is the art of female impersonation. Like if you had asked me this question five years ago, I would have said drag is female impersonation. But doing drag, being presented with so many amazing queer artists, I'm like- drag is not female impersonation- it is an art form that allows you to express who you are as a queer person.

Peachez



Drag as

Peachez: I think there's always a danger to self expression when you are a person of color stepping outside of the norms that have been set for us, so I think it's so important for us to continue to do this because- one; there's a history. It's interesting for me because the histories run in this kind of parallel line, in that we have our cultural norms and all this rebellion against what all of our parents and our ancestors have said is normal, and then there's this other line that is drag was created by us as kind of a rebellion against all of the systems and the systemic norms, and our cultural norms. So, I think it's pushing back against what we were taught, but it's also this remembrance of the thing that we created and trying to hold on to that portion of this culture. And I think it's so important that we continue to celebrate and, and uplift BIPOC performers and especially the BIPOC drag performers because this is our thing. We made this. Every single white girl that has done this after us is literally imitating what we created- they literally. I mean, they called it a death drop and everybody that actually matters knows that it's a dip- like it's it's kind of mind boggling. But also, I mean, it's not mind boggling- that's America as a whole. White people love to colonize, and gentrify and take things from us because they want so badly to be us, but never want to actually walk on our skin. But I think that's the importance of doing it as we have these two traditions that we're kind of trying to pull in opposite directions.

a POC

Hibiscus: I feel like as POC we always have to work harder. I was one of the last ones in the group of people that I started with, to really start getting the bookings as a drag queen in New York City. I can think of six, seven off the top of my head, and yes, the white queens always got the opportunities first. So for me, it was always a question of what do they have that I don't have? Is it that they have more connections? Or is it that they're scared to put a person of color in the poster? Because that's another issue I had with a bar that I used to work with, where they used to put two white gogo boys on the poster over my face and I was the one performer and like- Why could they not put even a Latin or a black gogo boy instead? Why did they both have to be white? Is it because to you that sells to people? Are they looking at this like that's the standard of beauty? And I see that with bars a lot, that they don't put a black or Latin gogo boy in the poster because they're afraid that that's not going to draw attention. And that's a reason why I've parted with bars before, because they've done that. Like, really, my face was never on a poster until it was with other white people. So yeah, I feel like you have to work much harder just to prove yourself. Like, I feel like I took way more no-pay gigs at the beginning just to prove myself than my white counterparts. And I feel like 2020 helped a little bit with that, in people realizing that AAPI, and Black, and Latinx people are here doing the same services that white people are doing and doing them well. But like, I joke about this in a show with a white queen that I do a show with about this all the time- and I tell her "you can show up here with no pads, and don't shave your legs, and it would be completely fine. But if I were to do that I would be judged so much harder." And she knows I'm right, and she's like: "You're right. I don't have to work as hard because I have my privilege."





Shim Shim Ska

Shim

HOW DOES IT FEEL

LIKE TO BE IN

DRAW?

Shim Shim She: Getting in drag does give you kind of the feeling that you are another person. It kind of allows you to put on, not only like a costume, but like a mask in a way, even though it is still your face. There is a sort of an anonymity when you're in drag because you aren't like recognizable necessarily as your true self. So, if it kind of gives you this alter ego to step into and portray. I think it gives you a huge confidence boost, because, like, if you were to fail if you were to mess up, it isn't really you, it's your persona that you're creating. So It's kind of like, I wouldn't say it's entirely like doing like improv or something like that, but It is almost like acting- you are kind of portraying something else which kinda frees of you of your own body, and your own mind. It is really really freeing. So by being able to like, kind of, step out of your real self you kind of get this new level of confidence, especially being on stage too. Not only being in drag, but just existing in the world of being on stage specifically gives you another level of freedom, and confidence, because, like, when you're on stage the not only are the eyes on you, but like you're allowed to kind of do whatever you please you're not specifically put in to do one specific thing... So, you can kind of portray whatever you would want to portray in your most imaginative way, and get to put on character and a show for an audience without having to be your real self. And in that sense when you get into drag, you kind of are able to take some things from your drag persona and bring them back into your real life, so you're able to have the concept of like 'not giving a shit'-especially in drag, and can kind of bring that back to your real self. And then the other thing is like, not only are you like molding your face into something else, but you're also like molding your body- you're wearing heels, you're putting on pads, you're drawing on this that don't exist. So, you're able to like not only change your like emotional state, and your confidence- you're able to change your like physical state, and you're able to cinch your body, you're able to add things where they aren't necessarily, so you're able to change your physician appearance. That all helps create another barrier between your real self, and your drag self, making it really feel like you are kind of a different person. When I'm in drag, especially in full drag, like I don't necessarily feel like I'm walking around as myself, I do feel like I'm walk around as a different person. Especially in heels! Something about wearing heels really does change the aura of like yourself- it does give some level of confidence, like the height is involved in that, especially because I am a little bit shorter, so like It brings my posture up, It changes the way you walk. Just really subtle changes in yourself- like the way you walk, the way you carry yourself, the wig, the way that you're hair is flowing down, does really change how you exist on a small detail level.



Hibiscus

FAVORITE THING ABOUT DRAG

Hibiscus: My favorite thing is definitely, and it's hard to believe because I don't show it, but I still get nervous before every single time I perform- and some of the closest queens that I work with know this, and they'll be like: "it'll be fine". But, my favorite thing is that first moment you hit the stage and you see someone smiling, or really appreciating who you are for that moment, because it's a genuine reaction. Like the first time they see you like, I remember seeing you and you were just like- ✨, like you know? That moment when we turn around, I always try to find someone. And I just love watching that reaction and being like, "I did that. I brought them that joy, even for one moment". Like, that's my favorite thing about drag. Like, I always like to start backstage or like turn around and being like, "here we go!", and making that connection, making that first eye contact, and seeing that first genuine reaction. It's never negative I feel, and it's like- I feel it for the first time, I feel the love, I feel the joy, I feel you. So, like, yeah, like I remember like where you were sitting we were directly in front of each other- and and it was like, "Okay, here we go!" And it's really people in the audience that make me feel good, and make me feel like I'm doing the right thing, and that really create the vibe for the night.



Jenny Savannah

loving femininity:

Jenny Sayquah: You know what? I realize that, like a lot of fashion designers say it best, because, you know, we're so like, gendered in our clothing, that like, it really is just like, the most performative thing that like is so widely accessible because you know, everyone puts on clothes- unless you're like a nudist, then more power to you. And so, I kind of take inspiration from people like Thierry Mugler, who has this just like powerful woman, just almost like the like "you are gorgeous, no matter how you look, and the clothes don't wear you you wear the clothes", because he would make all of the models put on a character. And like, they would have fun on the runway. And it wasn't just like how stoic you can be, but like how much fun you're sharing with, you know, with the audience. And I think that that kind of is where I get mine from. Because I just want you know, power, and you know, I think that kind of claiming feminine aesthetics is such a powerful thing that you can do. You know, I like honestly the most times I feel masculine is when I'm in drag, because it's just like, you command a room, and you command attention, and you get all of the people to get their eyes on you. And it's such like, it's a very, you know, reading as masculine in this context sort of thing, but you're also bringing forth feminine aesthetics. I mean, it's like especially whenever I want something to like, be very like sensual or very sexual. You know, I love just like the act of just even just like stripping because you know, allowance of what you can let the audience see is just so powerful and just reclaiming that is, like the best part of it, and it's all within the aesthetics of like, being feminine.

MS Paint



On drag and self-indulgence:

MS Paint: I mean, where else do we get to self indulge? Like, if not this than what? Like, there's really no other aspect I can think of, not even just for queer people, but really anybody's life where like, you are 100% in charge and everyone else is 100% there to indulge you, and your own shit. Like, there's really nothing else where you can be like the most self centered person in the world that everyone is choose you on for it. It's kind of fun. And I think that's kind of special for like queer people to have, especially since like, we don't even get close to that and a lot of other things. Like I don't think anyone really gets that exact level of self indulgence in anything except for drag. Just because, I mean it is kind of funny. It's like this, this little person is like doing whatever the fuck they want, and they can literally say anything in the world to anybody. And people would just be like, "yass! you work! You go girl!" It's kind of fun. It's fun to mess with that too. Like since you know that that's like the reaction, and people are going to indulge you in whatever you want to, you can just kind of go crazy.



Peachez

drag origin story

Peachez: It was very happenstance. There was an accident, I moved to New York in 2013 to pursue theater- that's what I went to school for. I started doing musical theater when I was like eight. And in 2018, I was coming up on the end of the year and I was just like- "I'm not finding the joy of this anymore. I'm not looking the way that I want to. I'm not progressing in my career the way that I want to", and I was working at Trader Joe's for my survival job, and I was just like "This is a nightmare. I can't do this anymore." So, I quit my job at Trader Joe's, went back into the corporate world, and right around when I started a new job my roommate at the time, Taylor Iman Jones, like put me into drag one day; she was like "I think you would enjoy this, let's try, I wanna put makeup on you., and I was like, "okay, whatever.", and she put me in drag and I was like "eh, I'm not mad at this". Then one of her best friends, who became one of my really good friends, we had all planned trip to San Diego, and he at the time, had just started dabbling and drag too, and was like:"when we all come together, we should have a little drag retreats. We can get dolled up and go out in San Diego, like, whatever just be baby drag queens together". And I was like, okay, and he started sending pictures and I was like, "Oh, you look really good. I have to start practicing." So I just started like, buying extra makeup, and then I was like "well if we're going to do this fantasy, let me go buy some pads." And then it was a very slippery slope that led to us getting to San Diego, we never even went out, but I was very much bit by the bug. So we came back, and I was like "okay, let's do this". And then like, two or three months later, I was in a club. I had taken some pictures with one of my friends, and I was in a club, and Marti Gould Cummings was there, and saw I changed my background on my phone, and she was like: "do you do drag?", and I was "I guess", and I ended up doing the competition that they were hosting at the time. And the rest is history. That was the long of how I got into drag.

inspir

What inspired me initially was like, my passion for becoming a performer. I had always grown up watching Paula Abdul, Janet Jackson, Britney Spears, on the TV and Madonna and like I was like "I want to do what they do". I owned their posters growing up, and put them in my room, and my mom thought I wasn't gay because I had women on my wall, but it was because I wanted to be them. It's really performers like them that really inspired to perform the way I do today. I love performance, I love going outside of the boundaries, and like making a fashion statement. Like, you know, women were looked down on for showing their midriff, but Britney, Selena, and J Lo did it and felt confident, and made it look sexy, and made it look like a powerful statement. That's what I love.



Blackness, always, as much as I can. The music that I listen to, I think you'd be hard pressed to find another drag queen performing SZA or giving you a midtempo mix. I love music, and music is so inspiring to me, and so a lot of times there are a few numbers that, literally, the song came up on my random mix on Spotify, and I'm like "I'm performing that tonight" and like, literally, learned the song that day. And then I think the women that I see either around on the streets of New York and inside fashion and pop culture, I think I just love when I see a black woman that just is really giving fashion down, and loving all the curves. I love that, and I try to embrace that inside of my performances. I will never hide my body when I'm performing, because I want people to be comfortable saying "Look at this big thick, black woman." That you started off and said I was hot at the beginning of the night, and now you're saying I'm hot, now that I'm not wearing any clothes. So, next time you're looking at a thick, black, dark skinned woman, I hope you're carrying that with you. I may not check all those boxes, but I do hope that you can carry some of what I'm doing with you. So I do try to take inspiration from the powerful, beautiful, black women that I see out on the streets.



ation:

MS Paint



A lot of music inspires it, like I will try to match an outfit to a song. But other than that, I don't know. I mean, like, I kind of just see things and I'm like, "Oh, that's cool. I want to do that" and then I do it. But yeah, there's really a lot of just like trying to figure out what I can make with what I already have. And just going from there, or even like sometimes I'll be thrifting I'll see a dress and I'll be like, "ooh, this would be good for this song." And like that's how things come together.

A lot of my ideas can come from things I see online, from memes, other things inspire me from media, TV, and movies. Sometimes people inspire me on the street, and just seeing what people wear and fashion inspires me. Other drag queens inspire me a lot too. There's kind of endless inspiration depending on where you live but I'm inspired by the biggest queen the smallest different things. Some times my ideas come from super super crazy, grand ideas and concepts, and other times they come from a smallest little Tiktok I saw one time.

Shim Shim She



I think, mainly, what inspires me right now is getting a good story across. You know, I kind of started just only doing like, one song and just kind of like having whatever was in my closet to perform it and, and it just didn't like make sense to me. It's like, well, you're kind of doing this but what do you want to say? And so you know, even if it's like some silly goofy thing that I just like thought of like the top of my head and is like so dumb, at least it like has some merit to it. So I think for me, it just is like- Alright, how do you get yourself in this performance? Like what kind of mix are you going to want to do? How do you want to look and what do you want like people to like, get from it? So I think just like what inspires me most about, is you know, thinking about all that stuff is just how like outsiders view you and what you let in with that information.

Jenny Sayquah



[illegible]

CURVY
SENSUAL
WACKY
and
and





CRAZY creative MESS

MS Pant



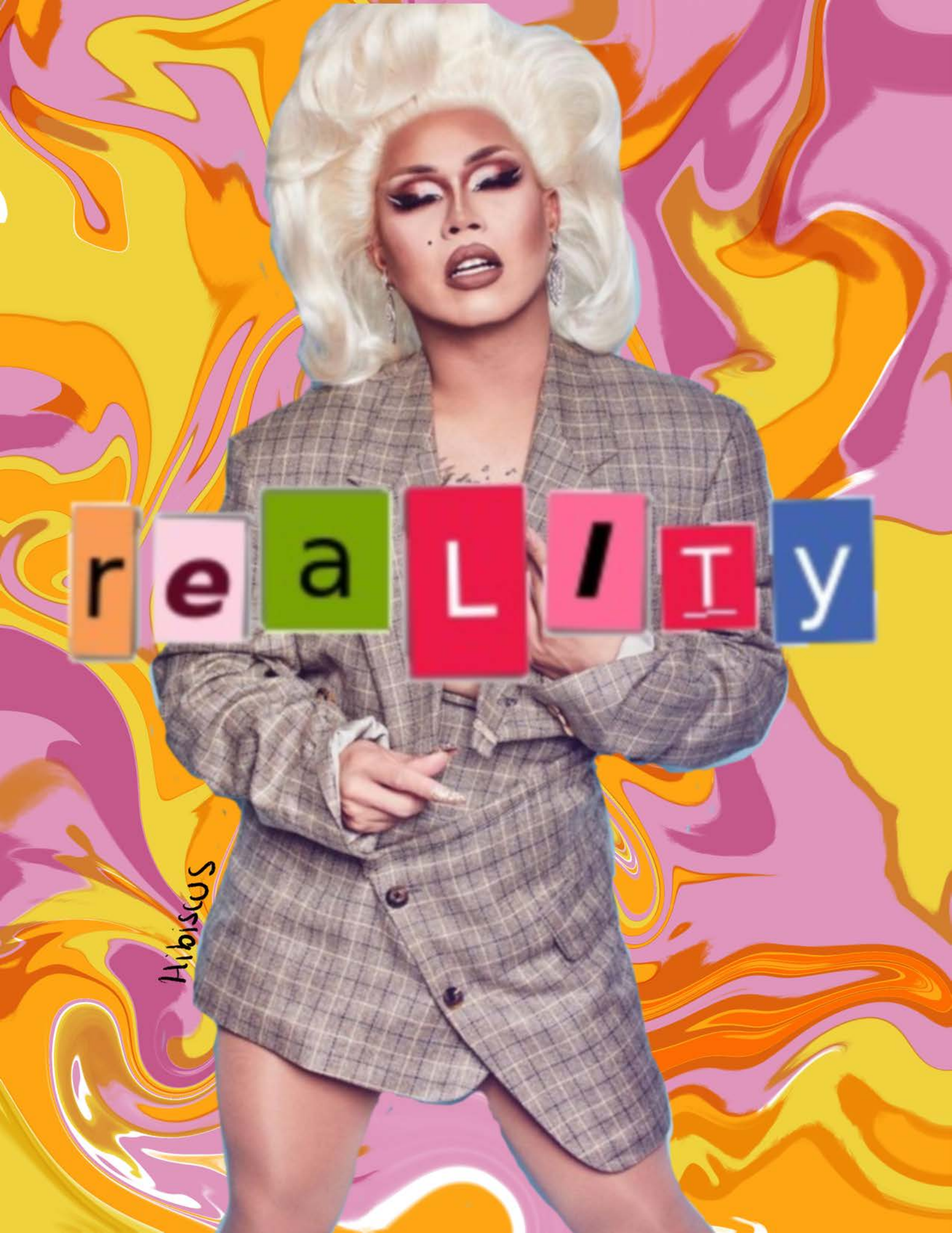
HER FEMININE

MISS QUEEN

Jenny Saygıoğlu



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@itshibiscus

@peachez.nyc

@shimshimshe

@jennysayquah

@mspaint_nyc

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