

Transformation

Why might someone in drag not want their photo taken?

As much as members of the drag scene wanted to confront homophobia it wasn't a wise idea. You could lose your job, or your family would find out. It was a dangerous thing to be photographed.

However, many of Linda's subjects felt comfortable both because she didn't intend to out people in her photographs and because they were transformed, unrecognizable. They reinvented themselves with make up, wigs, and clothing.

We could ask why is drag an attractive option when you are a gay person?

QR code

audio tour

view the QR code through your smartphone camera to access the exhibition audio tour.



Flee to NYC

What is the relevance of the New York City drag scene in the '80s and '90s to present-day Saskatchewan?

Simpson's intimate photos of friends, queens, celebutantes and club kids are remarkable for their power to arouse empathy and create understanding. Many members of this scene would have fled small towns and cities, like Regina with it's heterosexual family pride day, to find a supportive community a be who they knew themselves to be in New York.

The Drag Explosion contains images of adults enacting gender and sexual identities in nightclubs, peep shows and domestic settings. These photographs may capture sexuality, nudity and alcohol consumption.

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Self-guided Tour



photo: Kayle Neis, Regina Leader-Post

The Drag Explosion by Linda Simpson

August 11 -
September 28, 2022
guest curator: Gary Varro

AGR

Engaging.
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What's in a Name?

What is the explosion in the exhibition title, *The Drag Explosion*?

You are probably familiar with term "drag," which describes the performance of masculinity, femininity or other forms of gender expression. A drag queen is someone, usually male, who performs femininity and a drag king is someone, usually female, who performs masculinity.

The Drag Explosion refers to two periods of drag culture exploding into public consciousness both as political activism and mainstream entertainment.

In the 1980s experimental drag performers, who discarded old-fashioned impersonations of famous actresses. Suddenly, people has frequent access to drag performers in large clubs.

Drag has exploded in mainstream popularity in recent years thanks largely to the reality TV program *RuPaul's Drag Race*.

Political Performance

What is significant about Taboo!'s clothing choice?



In the 1980s and 1990s, in Canada and the USA, gay marriage was a mainstream political issue. Candidates for major political parties often campaigned on fervent and hateful anti-gay platforms.

At the time that Linda took this image of Taboo! in a wedding dress and veil, the notion of same-sex marriage was pure fantasy. Taboo! wasn't expressing the desire to be a bride so much as confronting society with a provocative persona.

Same sex marriage became legal in Canada in 2005 and the USA in 2015.

Mise-en-scène

What can we learn from the photo's setting?

Look at the photograph of *Zandra* or *Christopher, Formika*. Instead of looking at the people, look at where they are and what is around them.

In *Christopher, Formika* we can see the couple immersed in a tiny bathtub against a backdrop of a stained and peeling wall, giving us a glimpse into their low-cost living situations.

We see *Zandra* reclining in a tiny hospital bed, a tray laden with pills and medicine bottles behind her. Dressed in full drag, she also wears her glasses. Did she have an accident or is she hospitalized to treat a long-term illness?

photos permitted. Tag us:



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