

Reframing GENDER

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Land Acknowledgement

A land acknowledgement is an opening recognition about the land that we are gathered on. The land where *Re:Framing Gender* is taking place has an important history, present and future that we need to understand and acknowledge. This land is called Turtle Island, and it is the original home of many Indigenous peoples. It is the unceded traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat and the Mississaugas of the New Credit. We acknowledge and respect these nations as the past, present, and future tenets of this land.

How does this land acknowledgement translate in practice?

It means that as settlers and immigrants to this land, we work together as allies with Indigenous communities to center their voices, experiences, and histories. It means we work together to dismantle systemic structures of oppression and foster Reconciliation. *Re:Framing Gender* provides a platform for community voices to share experiences of marginalization.

Curator's Statement

Clothing has a powerful effect on our understanding of self, as well as how we interact with the wider world. It is a means of protection, identity formation, and social distinction. Our entire world, specifically within a fashion context, is ordered towards male/female binaries. But what of identities that sit beyond these constraints? What if you are also a person of colour? How does race factor into the equation? How is clothing used to reflect such intersectional identities? This exhibition explores such questions of sartorial self-framing. The participants featured in this exhibition share with you their own stories of navigating our binaried world. This dynamic is important as such voices have historically been edited or erased completely from many institutional narratives.

Archetypes of gender are represented in clothing loans from the York University Fashion Archive and the Fashion History Museum in Cambridge, Ontario. These displays refer to the ways in which fashion has framed our perception of gender. While the exhibition focus is primarily on Western fashion, the 'Wedding' section offers a global perspective on how different cultures have stereotypically perceived gender. A small survey of special occasion clothing from India, Sri-Lanka, and China reflects the ethnicities of some participants.

Re:Framing Gender privileges an ethic of collaboration, both between the participants and the exhibition team, and the wider institution. The show was devised in collaboration with multiple faculties across York University, uniting the departments of Theatre, Film, Women & Gender Studies, Art History Graduate Studies, and the Art Gallery of York University.

Video 1: York University Fashion Archive

Runtime: 3:40 mins

Femme

- 1a.** Green velvet gown, American, c.1940s, on loan from Jonathan Walford, c/o the Fashion History Museum
- 1b.** Purple velvet gown, Canadian, early 1940s, on loan from the Fashion History Museum
- 1c.** Gold devore velvet gown, Made in France, Canadian store label (Ira Berg), c 1985, on loan from Jonathan Walford, c/o the Fashion History Museum

Masc

- 2a.** Olive wool trench coat, c.1940s, on loan from the York University Fashion Archive
- 2b.** Olive wool trench coat, c.1940s, on loan from the York University Fashion Archive

Video 2: Being Authentic

Runtime: 12:57 mins

Female Archetypes

- 3a.** Coral chiffon cocktail dress, c.1950s, on loan from the York University Fashion Archive
- 3b.** Yellow chiffon afternoon dress, c.1960s, on loan from the York University Fashion Archive
- 3c.** Ivory column gown with white fox stole, French, Holt-Renfrew label, early 1960s, on loan from the Fashion History Museum
- 3d.** Pink brocade column gown, c.1960s, on loan from the York University Fashion Archive
- 3e.** Terracotta crepe dress, c.1930s, on loan from the York University Fashion Archive

Wedding Attire

- 4.** Ivory Wedding gown, 1955, Italian, Simonetta label, on loan from the Fashion History Museum

Video 3: Navigating Self

Runtime: 16:23 mins

Special Occasion Wear

- 5a.** Red lace cheongsam, Hong Kong, c.2010s, on loan from Janice Leung
- 5b.** Navy silk lehenga skirt and top, India, 2018, on loan from Fatimah Zaiter
- 5c.** Gold lace sherwani jacket, India, 2015, on loan from Jason Cyrus

Video 4: Facing the World

Runtime: 13:47 mins

Masculine Archetypes

- 6a.** Black leather jacket with t-shirt and neck scarf, 2018, on loan from Antonia Anagnostopoulos
- 6b.** Red wool & white leather varsity jacket, 1980s, on loan from the Fashion History Museum
- 6c.** Blue wool suit, cotton shirt, and silk tie, 2015, on loan from Kari Tolppanen
- 6d.** Multi-coloured blazer, 1990s, on loan from the Fashion History Museum
- 6e.** Silk blazer, cravat, and shirt, on loan from the Fashion History Museum

Video 4

Video 3

Video 1

Male Archetypes

6e.
6d.
6c.
6b.
6a.

3a.
3b.
3c.
3e.
3f.

Female Archetypes

Femme

1a.

1b.

1c.

Masc

2a.

2b.

Special Occassion Wear

5b.
5c.
5a.

Video 2

DEFINITIONS

AGENDER

Literally “without gender.” Used by people who understand themselves as genderless, gender neutral, unaligned with one specific gender, and/or as having a gender that defies definition or terminology.

BIPOC

An umbrella acronym meaning Black, Indigenous & People of Colour.

BISEXUAL

Someone who is attracted to more than one gender.

CIS-GAZE

The way trans people are seen as objects of titillation or fascination.

CISGENDER

Someone whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

GENDERFLUID

Used by some people whose gender presentation, behaviour, and/or identity moves among or across multiple genders.

GENDER BINARY

The classification of gender as two distinct, opposite, and rigid expressions of masculinity and femininity.

GENDER EXPRESSION

How an individual outwardly expresses their gender identity, often through clothing, mannerisms, chosen names, and appearance.

GENDER IDENTITY

The gender an individual feels most closely aligned with. This is personal, internal, and cultural, and not necessarily visible to others.

GENDERQUEER

To ‘queer’ gender, often by taking a visual and political stance against gender conformity.

HIJRA

A legally recognized third gender specific to the South Asian subcontinent.

INTERSEX

Someone born with sexual anatomy that does not fit typical medical definitions of male or female.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Commonly used to describe how different parts of a person’s identity (such as race, ability, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc.) intersect to create a unique experience

LGBTQ2IS+

An acronym used to represent a broad array of identities.

MISGENDERING

Referring to someone in ways that do not match their gender identity, whether intentionally or by mistake.

NON-BINARY

To be on the gender spectrum and not bound by the constructs of male or female.

QUEER

Now used as an umbrella term for all LGBTQ2IS+ individuals. ‘Queer’ has historically been used as a derogatory term and is not completely embraced by all.

QTIPOC

Queer, trans, and intersex person/people of colour.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Who someone is sexually and/or romantically attracted to.

SEX

The classification of a person as male, female, or intersex. Sex is assigned at birth based on external anatomy (genitalia).

THEY/THEM/THEIR

Pronoun used by people who identify with neither masculine or feminine pronouns.

TRANSGENDER (OR TRANS*)

An umbrella term used to indicate a wide variety of people whose gender identities are not aligned with their biological sex.

DID YOU KNOW?

Two Spirit is used to distinguish the variety of indigenous concepts of gender and sexual diversity as separate from the European gender binary, which was imposed on Indigenous nations as part of colonization.

There are other culture specific identities outside of the European gender binary. One example is Hijira, a legally-recognized third gender specific to the Indian subcontinent.

What does race have to do with LGBTQI2S Issues?

Someone's racial identity affects their experience of sexuality or gender and vice versa. Identities overlap and combine to create different experiences. For example, police violence, discrimination, and brutality disproportionately affect Black communities, so one of the Black Lives Matter (BLMTO) demands at Toronto Pride was to remove police floats from Pride marches and parades. BLMTO protests at Pride also put a spotlight on a longtime critique of the contemporary gay rights movement: that the movement has increasingly lost sight of its founding by Black trans women and prioritizes instead the experiences of white, cis gay men. This founding refers to the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City, widely considered to be the start of the LGBTQI2S liberation movement, which was led by Black trans women.

TRANSITION

The social and/or physical journey some take to enact a gender identity different from the one assigned at birth.

TWO SPIRIT

This term refers broadly to Indigenous people who were born with masculine and feminine spirits in one body, but means different things to different people and communities. Two Spirit can signify a gender identity, a sexual orientation, a spiritual identity, or a combination of these.

Participant Biographies

Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa

Jade is a PhD Sociology candidate at York University. Their dissertation focuses on the history of AIDS/HIV organizing in Toronto through a queer-postcolonial and Black feminist lens. Grounded in Jade's lived experiences as a second-generation, queer working-class gender non-conforming womxn of colour, their academic work is motivated by their desire to produce meaningful research that aims to mobilize agitational spaces on behalf of queer and trans Black, Indigenous and people of colour. Jade's reason for collaborating with *Re:Framing Gender* is similar to that which motivates their academic work: They want to help carve out spaces, whether literal or symbolic, that permit non-cisgender Black, Indigenous and people of colour the space we need to truly exist – beyond the violence of whiteness and the boundaries of gender.

Kusha Dadui

Kusha is a Trans Masculine person of color, social worker, and a Masters of Environmental Studies student at York University. He is very passionate about fashion and how it impacts his identity as a Trans person. Kusha thinks about fashion as a form of expression and is excited to participate in *Re:Framing Gender*.

“The reason I wanted to be a part of this project is because I rarely see conversations around being queer and Trans and the impact of style and fashion on our identity. I am very passionate about this topic. Furthermore, I felt this would have been a great opportunity to share these thoughts with other queer and trans folks”

Ami Leung

Ami is a fourth year Gender and Women's studies undergraduate at York University with a particular interest in analyzing the intersections of imperialism, race, gender and pop culture. She is a proud feminist and an outspoken advocate for queer rights with a background in queer activism, and has been interviewed in the Toronto Star. Outside of school, Ami does trans education workshops and runs a website which examines the way women are visually depicted in superhero comics and video games.

“As a trans woman and a feminist who is particularly interested in analyzing movies, comic books, and video games, I think there’s a lot of value in looking at aspects of our society that are often dismissed as being frivolous or superficial, and so Re:Framing Gender is something I wanted to contribute towards. I think Cyrus’ idea of looking at the meaning of fashion, a genre that is often seen as pointless consumerism, to trans people of colour is really refreshing and I especially like that it will be marginalized people speaking about a subject usually thought of as a vapid interest of the rich. I definitely have very complex feelings about my personal connection to fashion, how societally it is used to box in and define people, but at the same time how on an individual level it can be a place of self-expression, self-definition, and reclamation of one’s identity and body.”

Cynn Adereti

Cynn Adereti is a freelance model in Toronto. They are excited to be a part of *Re:Framing Gender*.

Participant Biographies

Thsolo Khalema

Tsholo is a South-African Canadian multidisciplinary artist and visionary based in Toronto, Canada. As an African transman, clothing has always been a struggle. How do I fit into this world? How do I express my authentic self? Clothing is a part of survival for me in every stage of my life, while also being my greatest method of self expression. I have found freedom of expression through the way I dress. For these reasons I thought it important to participate in Re:Framing Gender. Visibility is important, as visibility informs ignorance.

Geethanjali Lena

This project is what Geethanjali been waiting for! They are a 46 year old Sri Lankan genderqueer woman lawyer who has been a homo for 25 years – moving through many fashion phases from boy-femme to tropical-glam-fag. Geethanjali is often misgendered by gays and queers who assume they are femme because of having long hair. They have a very genderqueer personality and their look is heavily influenced by Tamil cultural styles and colours, as well as Sinhalese colours and silhouettes. Geethanjali also wears a lot of metal and leather. They graduated from York with a Masters of Laws in April 2019. When Geethanjali needs to look lawyerly, they cover their side shaves with their huge Tamil hair. Geethanjali is also a playwright and fashion plays a huge role in their play about Tamil queers called “Leopards & Peacocks.” It examines saris, gender, genocide, and caste.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Defining LGBTQ Words for Children, from *Welcoming Schools*, a project of the *Human Rights Campaign Foundation*: www.welcomingschools.org/resources/definitions/youth-definitions
This is a helpful list of terminology about gender and sexuality explained in a way that is simple and age-appropriate for children.

Gender Variance Around the World by Lucy Diavolo, from *Teen Vogue*: www.teenvogue.com/story/gender-variance-around-the-world.
An article exploring the long and varied past of gender expressions worldwide.

Intersex 101 from *The Intersex Roadshow*: intersexroadshow.blogspot.com/2009/04/intersex-101_28.html

This is an informative blog post by Dr. Cary Gabriel Costello, advocate for transgender and intersex rights. He offers in-depth answers to common questions about intersex people and describes how sex is a spectrum, not a binary.

LGBTQ History Timeline from *GLSEN*: www.glsen.org/article/lgbtq-history-1
This webpage contains a timeline of international LGBTQI2S history, as well as a variety of other learning resources.

LGBT Youthline: www.youthline.ca
1-800-268-9688 or text 647-694-4275
Confidential and non-judgmental peer support for LGBTQI2S youth.

The Trevor Project: Bisexual: www.thetrevorproject.org/trvr_support_center/bisexual/
A clear, helpful primer on bisexual identities.

The Trevor Project: Coming Out as You!: www.thetrevorproject.org/about/programs-services/coming-out-as-you/the-guide/
A pocket-sized resource to help navigate the experience of coming out.

The Trevor Project Lifeline: 1-866-488-7386
A 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention phone service for LGBTQI2S youth staffed by trained counsellors.

Trans 101: Gender Diversity Crash Course by *YGender and Minus18*: www.trans101.org.au
This is an educational series of videos and booklet by, for, and about transgender youth on a variety of trans-related topics.

Trans Student Educational Resources: Transforming Education: www.transstudent.org
This website, co-founded by two young transgender women, offers clear and useful definitions, resources, and links to events for trans students and their allies.

What Does “Two-Spirit” Mean? from the *InQueery* education video series by LGBTQI2S community platform them: www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4IBibGzUnE
This is a brief (6m 16s) video about the origins and meaning/s of Two-Spirit, hosted by Geo Soctomah Neptune (A Passamaquoddy Two-Spirit activist and educator).

The Youth Project Resource List: youthproject.ns.ca/resources/resources-and-information
A comprehensive list of resources about LGBTQI2S issues and identities for/about youth, health, parents and family, non-English speakers, schools, workplaces, and more.

Acknowledgments

Participants

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Cynn Adereti
Geethanjali Lena
Jade Da Costa
Kusha Dadui
Tsholo Khalema

Team

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This guide is based on one developed for the Art Gallery of Burlington by Hannah Barrie, Fiona Gordon, and Madison McDonald – three students in the Gender Studies and Feminist Research Masters students at McMaster University.
It has been used with their permission.

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performance & design**

YORK
UNIVERSITÉ
UNIVERSITY The York University logo is a red stylized letter 'U' with a vertical bar through its center.