










# STORY OF MY FIRST WIG

*By Rozzy*

STORY  
OF MY  
FIRST  
WIG





In the context of my previous studies<sup>1</sup>, I was walking in Chateau-Rouge<sup>2</sup>, a migrant neighborhood in the north of Paris, researching independent small businesses and shops. At that time I already had a fascination with hair and was cutting hair myself as well, shaping and colouring my own, too, every now and then. I remember entering a shop, Rue Myrha, full of hair products, curl care creams, weaves, beads, combs, hair dye, durags, wigs, and hair clip extensions.

At the time I had short, bleached, baby blue hair. I felt like a tomboy but wanted to channel a bit more of my feminine side. I saw this black, straight hair wig, with a layering, straight bangs, and length to the shoulder. I asked if I could try it on and they gave me a little head cover for hygiene. I put it on and looked in the mirror.



Wow.

The feeling is instant transformation. You see your own eyes sparkling with excitement. Your face is reshaped in another way. The hair falling on your forehead and on your ears draws new lines on your face. I bought it, and left the shop with the wig on my head.

There's something about the feeling of walking the streets with something new on you, with something changed. Somehow, no one really knows that you've got new hair but it feels like they do. You're glowing, you're smiling, waving at strangers like the world is yours!

After this instant sensation comes the moment when you face people who knew you before you changed, before this artificial piece of hair was set on your head.

I had class the next day, and fortunately I was already in an art school, a place where it is more or less acceptable to look different from one day to the next. But everyone's gaze at my new attire was something to handle. Some people would not realise that you've changed something about yourself, while others wouldn't dare to speak about it but you could see it in their eyes: they thought about it for sure. After those moments of showing off, shaming, and doubt, it becomes pure personal thriving and self-contemplation. This might be perceived as narcissistic, but mirror-gazing in those moments of transformation feels like a very healthy activity. It boosts your self-esteem and helps you feel like you're about to take over the world.

Love,  
Razzy

<sup>1</sup> Studied at the Duperré School of Art, Paris a weaving, tapestry 2 years diploma.

<sup>2</sup> Chateau-Rouge is a district well known for its specialist shops from Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and Caribbean origin?.







*Dressing  
Room:  
Personal  
Totem, A Map  
For Identity*



I realised after a while that it was not only the power of the wig itself, it was also the uniqueness of the place that got me excited. It was this small, crowded space full of accessories and possibilities for transformation. I have always felt so excited about going into someone's universe. Diving into someone's studio or working space can feel so good if the person has put their heart into creating it. But the one space in particular that always attracted my attention was hair salons, the self-made ones, the tacky, low-budget ones. Vivid colours on the walls or the toned-down atmosphere, hair extensions hanging from a hook, textured floors and illusional ceilings, religious icons next to the cash register. All those things are personal choices, arrangements made in order to make their space more personal, more welcoming, and familiar to the visitor.

Embodying the notion of transformation, hair salons have always been my favourite. Each tool is a medium working toward a mutation of the human hair. Roller, curler, combs, blades, vintage hairstyle lookbooks in the waiting room, scissors, blow dryers, brushes, hair dyes, pigments, bleach: the use of these objects and products can lead to a graceful choreography around the human head. You come inside the hair salon (the mutation space) and you come out transformed. Dressing rooms are a manifestation of a similar phenomenon. A range of choices to elaborate, decorate, and change yourself, with many opportunities for modifications, the reflection in the mirror is a

common feature. Both in the theatre and at home, the dressing room stages this transfiguration that would later be shared with the public, the outside world, or perhaps not at all; the transformation can also be a really private moment. They are interior, boudoir, small, private spaces that represent our subjectivity: a sign of how we feel and present to the world. They are tracks of memories, desires, and encounters.



*The Dentist's Wife Episode 12, Season 11 of American Dad TV show. Roger's Persona Creation Factory is where he created all of his personas.*







*Sketch of my actual dressing room.  
January 2021.*

My fascination with dressing rooms is already shown in my own bedroom. I see it as a ritual space of transformation, too.

When I enter my bedroom and take a look at my self-built, walk-in dressing room. I see: a collection of hats hanging on the wall; all types of accessories—extension clips, latex and silicone prosthetics, fake teeth and horns, necklaces, and brooches. Further, my clothes rack—it already broke three times but I keep on adding stuff. The collection is composed of second hand clothes bought around the world, some given by close friends, others found in the street. I have maybe two pieces bought in a fast fashion store, during a guilty shopping sesh.

Then, if you continue looking to the right, you enter my make-up station area, which is currently made from: a weird sculpture combining sex-toys and PU foam, on top of that a fake climbing plant, and a mirror framed with PU foam. See-through fabrics are also hung from the ceiling. I sew them with ruffles on the sides, to give a drape effect, as if they were some kind of theatre curtains. In front of the mirror: a plastic vanity table, made for kids. It's pink and white with baby blue coloured birds. I love it—my friend Valkan found it for me in a second hand store. Another important piece in my make-up and hairstyling zone: my green carpet. It is meant to represent grass, and is made from a soft, synthetic fabric that is furry and dark green. Its flip-side is crumbling, probably because it is a cheap quality, causing a sand-like substance to come off from it, and so every time I move it, it looks as if there's an actual earthy soil under my grass-simulating rug.

But the wonderful thing about this particular part of my room, the carpet I mean, is the fact that it is there that I sit whenever I start transforming my face. Somehow, I have to be on it to make magic happen. I also rounded the corners of the rug and made circular cuts on the edges, which makes it slightly more organic and creates a soft transition into my wooden floor. What I mean is that this area is the perfect setting to allow my brain to travel into another mindset, where I feel confident to change myself.





This indicates that there are special contexts, settings, in which one would feel more at ease to modify their appearance, a setting that would be designed with the purpose of establishing comfort and allowing intimacy. As you come as your 'naked' self into the transformation cabin, you are vulnerable. You need this safety to be reassured that the result will come out fine. What are those places where we feel comfortable, what are the criteria? And, once inside the space, what is happening, what are we doing to our bodies, and why?

If I leave the room, I like the idea that this setting keeps track of this transformation. It would be simultaneously empty but also filled with clues of previous dressing-up try-outs and other looks to come. Even without the human flesh in place, the insides of such a setting are a way to identify its owner, its inhabitant, because personal information and belongings are spread out around the room.

I would say the space you develop around yourself adds context to your identification and self-narration. You could be a character in a theatre play being activated on stage, or an ancient story-teller around a fireplace. It's all about creating the space where it's alright to believe.

*Photos by Zane Chausset, Mexico DF, December 2019. Series of pictures depicting different outfits and phases of the dressing*







The  
Transformation  
Box, Where it's  
Alright to Believe





There is something particular happening when you delimit a space in order to host a special moment, an activity. For me it is the green carpet and the PU foam mirror that allow me to enter this other world. The philosopher Johan Huizinga calls this type of space a "Magic Circle", introduced in his 1938 book *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. The Magic Circle is that boundary between what we know to be real and where we lose ourselves to another world rather than being chained to the one we live our daily lives in. It brings us to a place that severs the bonds of our world and allows us to cross over into that other world. Once surrounded by my sculptures and clothes rack, sitting on my grass rug, I feel ready to take off to another universe.

My dressing room with the make-up station and my vanity table are my doors to another world. This is the workshop that helps me build a character and a story around myself, the clothes and make up brushes are the tools; the fabric and make-up powders are the matter. It's all about building the right context. Kate Bornstein, author of *Gender Outlaw*, experimented with this from a young age:

*"When I was ten or eleven years old, I used to hang*

*in the basement, way back in the corner where no one would come along to disturb me. There was an old chair there to which I attached all manner of wires and boxes and dials: it was my gender-change machine. I would sit in that chair and twist the dials, and presto-I was off on an adventure in my mind as a little girl, usually some budding dykelet like Nancy Drew or Pippi Longstocking."*<sup>3</sup>

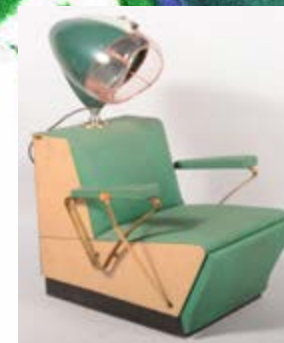
I'm intrigued by this extract from her book, because it portrays how Bornstein didn't need a fancy room to turn into her dream gender. On the contrary, she gathered a couple of materials she found in her surroundings and made it happen.

<sup>3</sup> Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* (Add Publishing Location: Vintage, 2016), 79.




*Art deco blow-up  
-chair  
Knut Andson*

The SMTV is a transformation device featured in most episodes of *Space Goofs*. It is a device that lets the aliens transform into almost any entity of their choosing.







The spaces we build in order to experiment with a similar situation to real life remind me of what French philosopher Michel Foucault called 'heterotopias'. The heterotopias are spaces that can be both physical and mental. They exist alongside our everyday environment as worlds-within-worlds, mirroring while also disturbing what's outside of them. Heterotopias can include brothels, prisons, cemeteries, public baths, and so on.

Building worlds-within-worlds is something we begin doing in childhood, playing restaurants or building tents. Something that starts as a game can become a huge part of our social and identity construction. The heterotopia can be the place where behaviour that is regularly seen as deviant is accepted within the built-up world, hence allowing you to be that perfect upgraded version of yourself that you always imagined.


*"Often, but not always, their main purpose was to exclude and make sure that society was safeguarded from symbolically threatening quantities like puberty, menstruation, or senility. But precisely from having different*

*investments in terms of identity and politics, these places also came to acquire an intensely subversive potential."*<sup>4</sup>

Building cabins is a way to imagine ways of living in a damaged world. Most of the time as a kid, but also now as an adult, I build those places and transform myself in situations of mental struggle. I would always find peace again in those tents, and have a moment of release. In the book *Nos cabanes* Marielle Macé explains how we build shelters and huts not to make other land ours, or to isolate ourselves from the world we disagree with, but to help ourselves to cope with it all, without ignoring the fact that it's in a situation of despair and rejection that shacks, shelters, and tents are built.<sup>5</sup>

Creating all types of worlds-within-worlds in order to occupy the 'real' world differently, I aim to propose transformative spaces, such as the dressing room, as heterotopias that allow us to be who we are and to express ourselves fully.

We must also point towards the importance of imagination and willpower when it comes to actually living out our beliefs in the transformational power of these spaces. In the case of the gen-



<sup>4</sup> Heterotopia - Art, pornography and cemeteries.

<sup>5</sup> Marielle Macé, *Nos cabanes*, (France: Verdier, 2019).





der-change machine, it's not only the power of the chair that allows Kate to become who she wants to be, it's also her will. She would allow herself, in that one space, to let go, with no censorship.

What I also find important about heterotopias is the fact they presuppose a system of opening and closing, which both isolates them while making them penetrable, too. The spaces wouldn't be accessible to everybody as public space, but rather pose certain criteria. They require certain things from you to be able to enter: tickets, access permits, or rituals. As such, these spaces can be zones of purification or intense feelings of ecstasy, joy, and fear, so they have to be handled with care.

I was recently reading words by Jesse Green, the co-chief theatre critic for the New York Times, who said the magic is not in the mascara<sup>6</sup>, but I disagree. In a similar vein, the dressing rooms of theatre are heterotopias, obeying rules and existing in a tangible space where time feels like it has stopped for a moment. To illustrate this situation I can only think about the dressing rooms in Le Théâtre du Soleil.<sup>7</sup> Here, it has been decided that the dressing room will be exposed to the public.



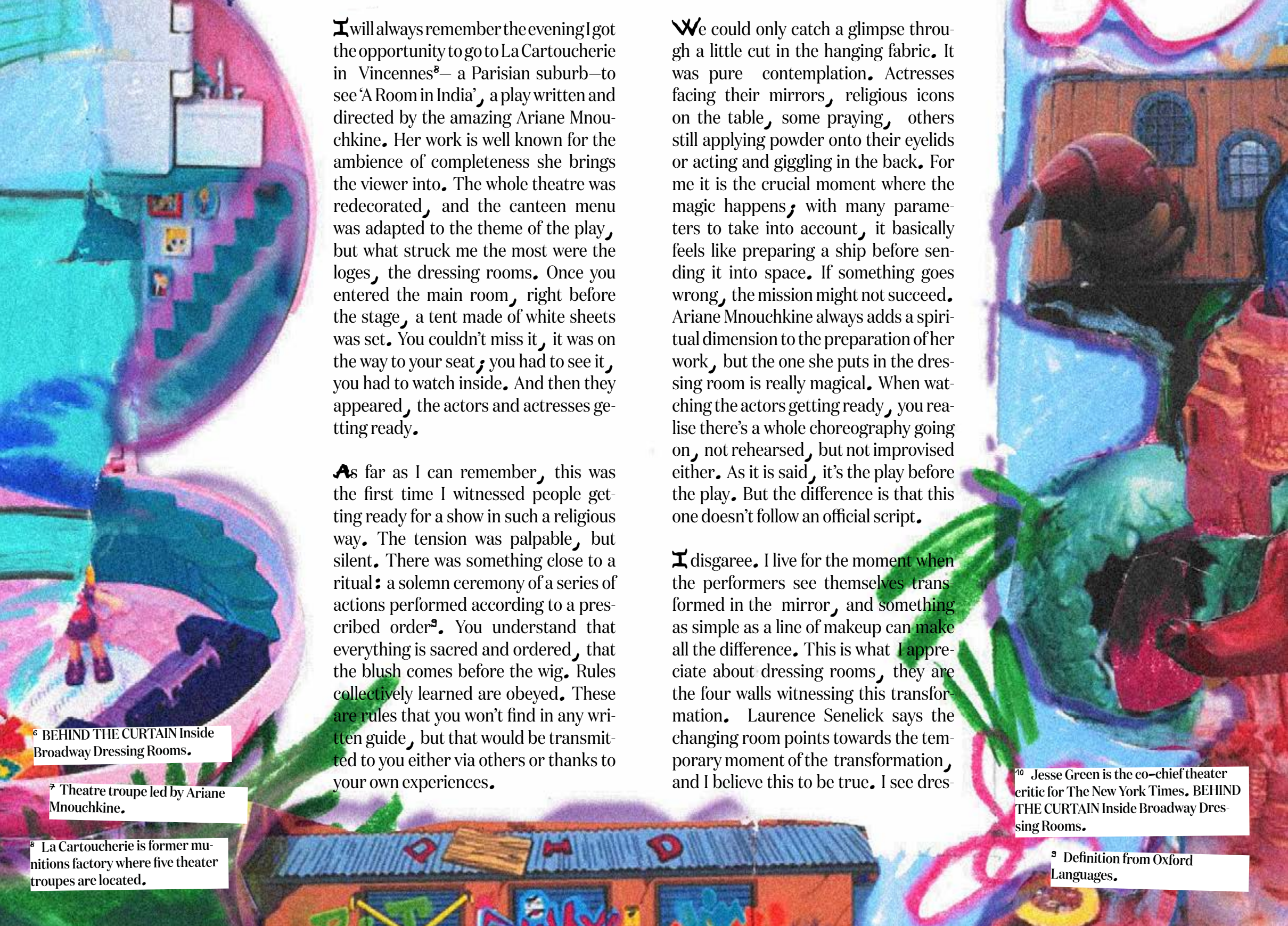
*Rozzy's world. Pencil colour drawing, May 2020. Rozzy trying to normalise her ideal world. The Rhythm of the Dressing Room.*





Corset wall dressing room. photo : Jehane Makmoud  
project: Sanctuaire for Draft Magazine with Pierre De-  
mones, Production: Reda Art.





I will always remember the evening I got the opportunity to go to La Cartoucherie in Vincennes<sup>8</sup>— a Parisian suburb—to see ‘A Room in India’, a play written and directed by the amazing Ariane Mnouchkine. Her work is well known for the ambience of completeness she brings the viewer into. The whole theatre was redecorated, and the canteen menu was adapted to the theme of the play, but what struck me the most were the loges, the dressing rooms. Once you entered the main room, right before the stage, a tent made of white sheets was set. You couldn’t miss it, it was on the way to your seat; you had to see it, you had to watch inside. And then they appeared, the actors and actresses getting ready.

As far as I can remember, this was the first time I witnessed people getting ready for a show in such a religious way. The tension was palpable, but silent. There was something close to a ritual: a solemn ceremony of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order<sup>9</sup>. You understand that everything is sacred and ordered, that the blush comes before the wig. Rules collectively learned are obeyed. These are rules that you won’t find in any written guide, but that would be transmitted to you either via others or thanks to your own experiences.

We could only catch a glimpse through a little cut in the hanging fabric. It was pure contemplation. Actresses facing their mirrors, religious icons on the table, some praying, others still applying powder onto their eyelids or acting and giggling in the back. For me it is the crucial moment where the magic happens; with many parameters to take into account, it basically feels like preparing a ship before sending it into space. If something goes wrong, the mission might not succeed. Ariane Mnouchkine always adds a spiritual dimension to the preparation of her work, but the one she puts in the dressing room is really magical. When watching the actors getting ready, you realise there’s a whole choreography going on, not rehearsed, but not improvised either. As it is said, it’s the play before the play. But the difference is that this one doesn’t follow an official script.

I disagree. I live for the moment when the performers see themselves transformed in the mirror, and something as simple as a line of makeup can make all the difference. This is what I appreciate about dressing rooms, they are the four walls witnessing this transformation. Laurence Senelick says the changing room points towards the temporary moment of the transformation, and I believe this to be true. I see dres-

<sup>6</sup> BEHIND THE CURTAIN Inside Broadway Dressing Rooms.


<sup>7</sup> Theatre troupe led by Ariane Mnouchkine.

<sup>8</sup> La Cartoucherie is former munitions factory where five theater troupes are located.

<sup>10</sup> Jesse Green is the co-chief theater critic for The New York Times. BEHIND THE CURTAIN Inside Broadway Dressing Rooms.

<sup>9</sup> Definition from Oxford Languages.





sing rooms as magic boxes triggering this particular moment. It can be anywhere: in the toilet of a club, a nursery, or the back of a shop. The most important is the energy that is within it.

On the few occasions I spent as a technician—make up artist—to experience those moments, I saw two periods of time. One of them was the solitary moment before the actors and actresses arrived. It is just a moment of silence with you and the space, as you are just laying down your brushes, preparing the hair extensions on the side, building your toolbox but also your altar. This is a solitary moment in the space before it becomes filled with other technicians and players. The second period begins in the moment when the first person to transform enters the space. It's not only yours anymore, and all of the sudden a whole new dynamic is beginning.

I also believe also the connection between a space and an individual is strong, especially in the context of character development. It gives space for psychological emancipation while pushing against social boundaries and separating reality from fiction. Somehow, certain unwritten magic rules exist in a changing room, written nowhere but the situation, allowing everyone to let go of any social orders. The cutest

being could become the most appalling person in the room. I think we can connect this to Huizinga's 'Magic Circle' theory. The magic circle is a place of dreams and fantasy. It's an escape from everyday problems and chores. And most importantly: everything inside the magic circle is, in some way, transformative. Each time a person leaves the magic circle, they bring more meaning and experience to the 'real world.'

In the end, dressing rooms have the natural rhythm of a play, but they are also instinctive and necessary: without this transition space, there isn't any room for this moment of transformation. It allows the performer to land into this special world and take off their everyday outfits. It's unwritten, unpredictable, but full of grace and climax while allowing us to understand debates about privacy, theatricality, aesthetics, and transformation.





*Alain Antoinne, hairstyling. Backstages for  
Soleil Rouge Magazine, July 2020.*



*Musa, getting ready. July 2020.*



*Hairdresser at market Lagunilla,  
Mexico DF, September 2019.*

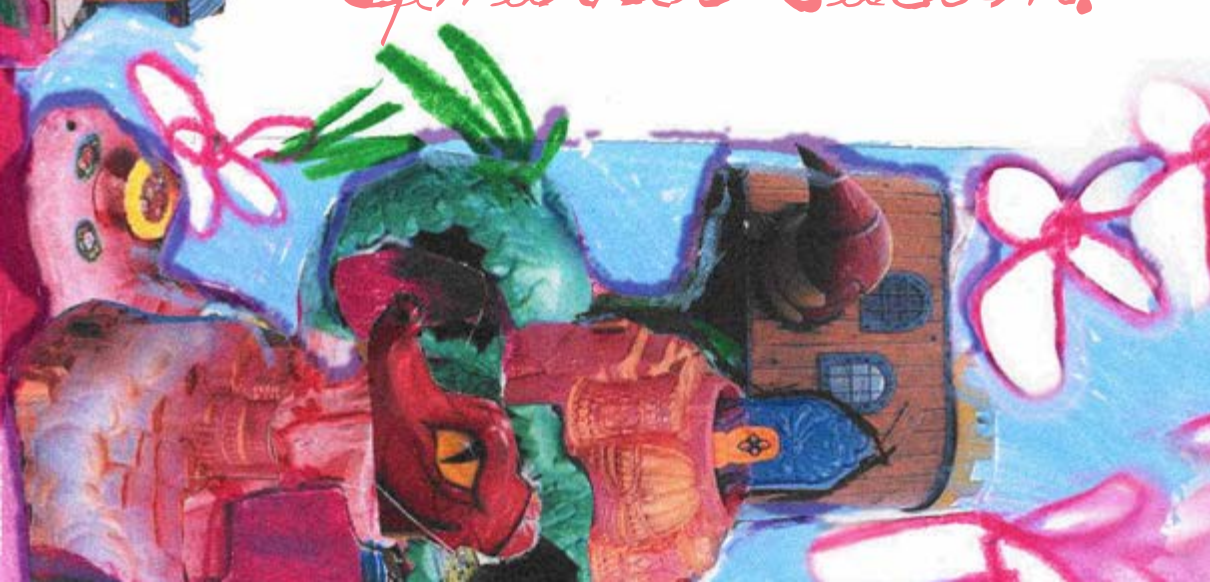
*Hairsalon in Senegal.*








*Why Do People Feel  
More at Ease and  
Comfortable in a  
Self-Built Space  
Rather than in an  
Upmarket Salon?*







From private to public, open to intimate, dressing rooms really play with the boundaries of comfort and social interactions.

In Simon Weller's book *South African Township Barbershops and Salons*, we can see a wide photo collection depicting the informal street salons that attract customers with vernacular signage and distinctive paintings. They are rent-free places, extremely popular with the community, not only because they offer cheap haircuts, but because they serve as social hubs.


The space would be composed of a high chair for the customer, a table or shelf attached to the wall to keep the tools on, and a mirror. A couple of chairs and a couch aligned to the wall would be used as a waiting room. This is how the social bond appears, firstly when you make spaces feel like home, with no pressure, no standards, and secondly when you provide a setting that allows people to feel welcome.

Then my question is: How do you bring the public into your world and make them appreciate it?

I recently discovered the work of Icelandic artist Shoplifter (Hrafnhildur

Arnardóttir), who builds site-specific installations with bright colours and hair to create artworks that enhance the positive feelings in people's experiences. Viewers have said that lying amidst her work for two hours was a life-changing experience for them. Arnardóttir explains that the shields we have, the armour we all carry, is finally left at the door; once we enter the work it's all about being. You experience your own awareness and forget about everything else. She also acknowledges the power of colour as it enters your retina and releases dopamine in your brain cells. It's a natural high and a certain feeling of ecstasy that helps the visitor enjoy the journey. Here she uses colour as a tool, but some other playgrounds would use funny shapes or textures to attract visitors and let the imagination run.

All that to say, it's not what is inside the space that really matters. You can choose to add stuffed toys or horror dolls—sure, the atmosphere would be different—but what really matters is the intention you put in and the feeling you want to create. It is nice to know you can have an impact on people's days in a positive, creative, imaginative way.





*Hairdresser in Thies, Senegal.*



*Chroma Sapiens, Shoplifter / Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir.  
Icelandic pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2019*







Digital collage, ideal shop.  
Cut outs from different shops,  
photographed in Amsterdam and Mawakesh.



# Home as Playground, Playground as Home

*Text by Valkam Dechov, May 2020.*



*Picture by Valkam Dechov, digital edit by me.*

## Play materials:

10 grams Atlantis magic mushrooms

7-8 large fabric sheets

15 pins

a friend's painting

music box & playlist (in our case, Kelsey Lu's CUM WITH ME playlist)

candles, plants, blankets, pillows

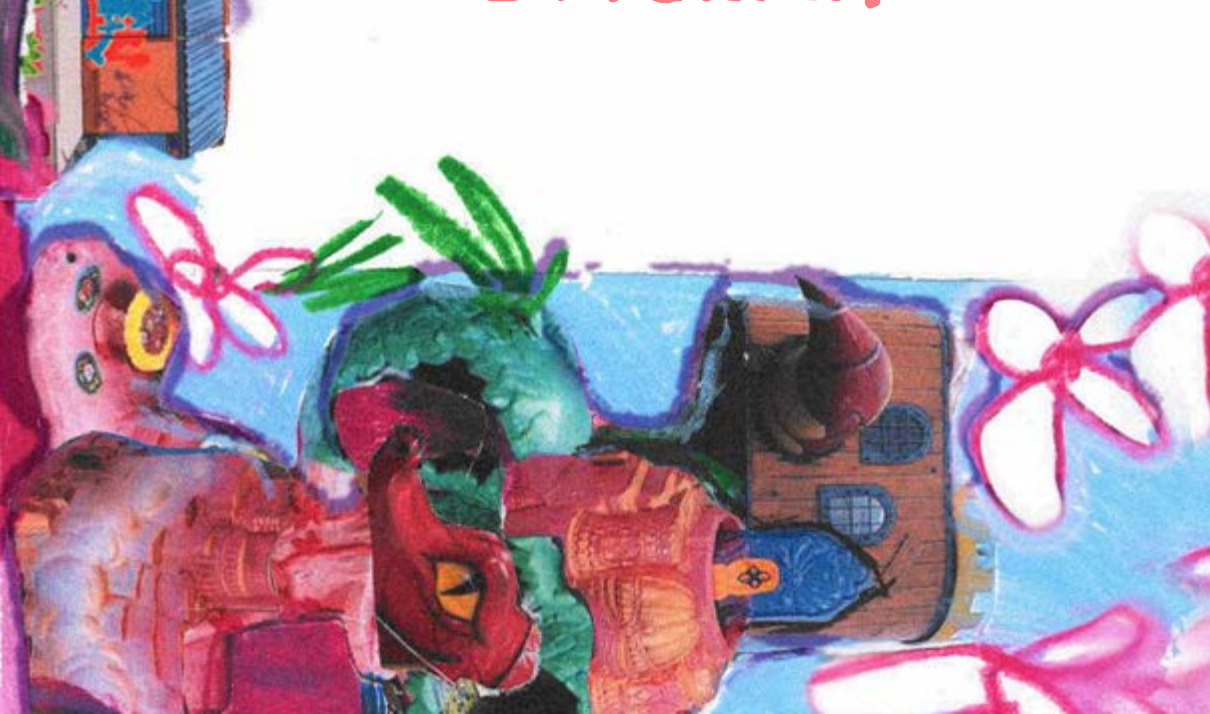
I'm aware that isolating yourself in a tent in an already isolated space does sound odd. To play, however, one must first establish at least a bit of distance from the context, rules, and systems of the quotidian. So, Chloé and I set out to build the tent in our own living room. We chose around 7 large fabric sheets from Chloé's textile archive, pinned those to the ceiling, laid blankets on the floor, layered them with pillows, and additionally decorated the space with whatever plants, paintings, and candles we had at hand. Easy and quick enough to do while anticipating the mushrooms to kick in within 45 minutes of ingesting. Once distanced from home's dailyness, we had a setting within which play's tools could be negotiated. Our tool of choice was psilocybin.








*Where are  
the Women  
Builders?*







After experiencing all types of hairshop settings, in different environments, I couldn't help but try to make and build my own. I personally always build ambient atmospheres, usually around a bed, so my guests can enjoy a moment of relaxation. I would hang pieces of fabrics as walls, add some pillows for comfort, and then music, talks, and general energy would build the rest of the space.

When it came to building my own hair salon, I swapped the soft materials for harder ones, such as upcycled wooden planks. I wonder why this change of materials conveys more the idea of a solid structure ready to host a dynamic activity—cutting hair for instance—while a lighter, more flowy fabric would be a call for a slow, lazy afternoon.

The choice of the colour pink in most of my installations comes from my desire to reappropriate this colour. For a long time I hated it, I thought it had too much of a connotation to a femininity that I did not relate to at the time. I was actually just neglecting it because of all the concepts western societies have associated it with, distorting the notion of femininity itself, belittling it to vulnerability and 'bubbly-ness', from which I was trying to stay as far away as pos-

sible. But growing up, I realised just how much I loved this colour, and that it can be considered feminine, erotic, kitsch, sophisticated, and transgressive. Its appropriation can even be a game, knowing how people can loathe the colour, I like to tease the audience using codes they would usually not feel comfortable with.


But coming back to my enthusiasm for building spaces, I recently dug out my family tree and found out that my paternal grandfather was a house engineer, my maternal great-granddad was a craftsman and a Kaz<sup>11</sup> maker, and my dad is basically an interior designer who likes to swap rooms in the house every two years. It is always super exciting to find out that your passion is in your DNA, but still it felt bitter. I did feel a bit upset that all the family members I was looking up to were cis-heterosexual males. And when I tried to look at the bigger picture, most of the main constructions, the city mapping, the homes we live in are also conceptualised and made by men.

In January 2019, I had the chance to assist the artist Olga Micinska, a Polish carpenter. During this month we talked about the difficulties of being women and entering male-dominated works-



<sup>11</sup> Traditional Creole houses.





hops, such as the wood one. For instance, as soon as you would start working on a construction project, men would question your abilities and make you doubtful of your own skills. They would ask if you can handle and use the tools by yourself, or question your construction plan in order to bend it to their vision of how it should look like, while you already did it a thousand times, and yes, it worked just fine, even without their help!

So, while browsing the internet using the keywords 'femalehood' and 'building trades', it came as no surprise to find associations and groups of women proposing apprenticeships together and showing the necessity of a female perspective on the field of construction.<sup>12</sup>

*"Housing, low-income housing, gardens, questions of public space, architectural criticism. You can change culture, knowledge and history by designing an app, engaging in social activism or mapping family-friendly spaces. The definition of success is up for grabs."*<sup>13</sup>

There is an article in the New York Times by Allison Arieff, titled Where

are the Female Architects? The author discusses the different aspects that limit women from pursuing a career as an architect, and why the presence of womxn would lead to a change in the profession. The general idea led to the fact that it's not about wanting only womxn architects or builders, but mainly about proposing a new perspective in the spaces they create. This new perspective would focus on the benefit that constructions can have on a community. We share deep connections within spaces; we experiment with social interactions, pleasure, solidarity, and many more nuanced feelings, so there is a huge game change possible if we change our attitude toward architecture.

This game change is something the architect Liz Ogbu<sup>14</sup> understood, and knew it from the very beginning. She has designed shelters for immigrant day-labourers and collaborated on a social enterprise that provides safe, hygienic, and convenient sanitation to the homes of low-income urban dwellers in Ghana. She describes herself as a Black female architect, being the complete opposite of what the building system usually is. She builds places that would be used for housing or sanitation rather than so-called landmarks that would be used as offices. It's crazy to see how

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.womenbuilding-futures.ca/>; <https://mironbuild-likeagirl.com/>.

<sup>13</sup> Amale Andraos, dean of architecture at Columbia.

<sup>14</sup> A designer, urbanist, and social innovator, Liz is an expert on sustainable design and spatial innovation in challenged urban environments globally. She is founder and principal of Studio O, a multidisciplinary innovation practice that works within communities in need globally to use the power design to catalyse sustained social impact.





*Tianguis de Bellea - Beauty Salon, installation built in Mexico. 2 x 2,5m. The salon was exhibited during a collective exhibition, Sin Isla? Dan Isla. December 2019. The audience was invited inside to get a make over.*

architecture is also—obviously—happening through the prism of patriarchy. And there is a difference in impact if we switch from phallic skyscrapers to caring community buildings.

Building accommodation while keeping in mind accessibility and playfulness can have a huge impact on people's lives and surroundings. The benefit of color around you has long been proven. Practicing another type of architecture provides space to play with textures and materials. I find it funny how we offer babies and toddlers play mats to develop their various senses and how as adults we take this continuous development for granted.

From my own experience I have felt strong feelings of ecstasy and completeness when I'm surrounded by colours. And, on the contrary, when I was painting the empty rooms of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, the art school in Amsterdam, accompanied by three pots of IOL Rietveld Grey, I felt nothing but sadness. Nothing, from the rectangular aspects of the building to the sad tones of its walls, no spark of joy. It was also interesting to see that the most recent associations of colours, and pink especially, with women started around the mid-nineteenth century when, according to Valerie Steele:<sup>15</sup>

*"men in the Western world increasingly wore dark, somber colors."<sup>16</sup>*

<sup>15</sup> Valerie Fahnestock Steele is an American fashion historian, curator, and director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

<sup>16</sup> Valerie Steele, *Pink: The History of a Punk, Pretty, Powerful Color* (Thames Hudson, 2018).



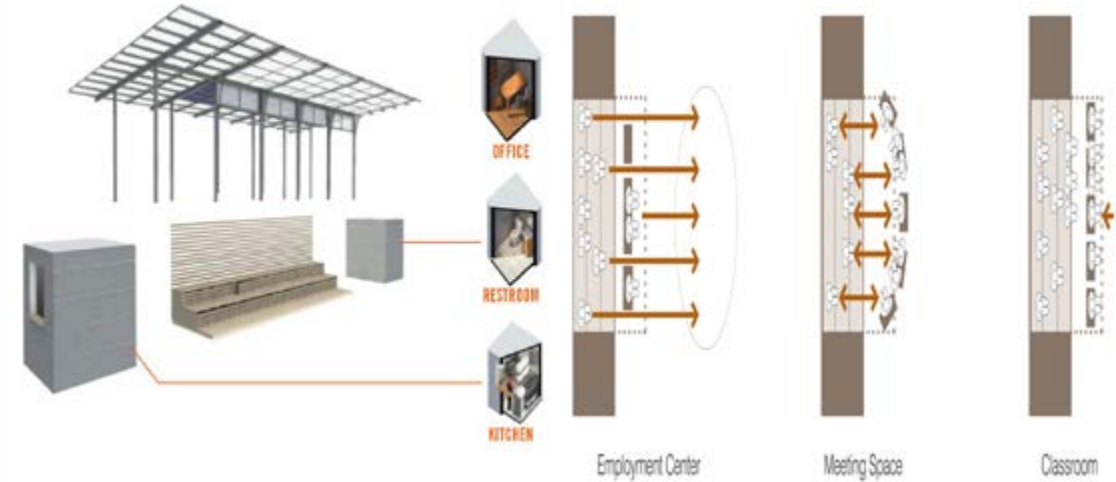
Thus, it comes as no surprise that those same men built grey towers matching their outfits! Wearing colours was seen as not serious and flaky, whereas buildings hosting 'important' activities had to be in grey tones, according to them.

As a future space-maker who's on her mission to offer unique experiences of escapism, I can't wait to paint the school in Rozy Pink,<sup>17</sup> I am just tired of the Rietveld Grey.<sup>18</sup> Rozy Pink is a call for fantasy and playfulness, while the grey is just this severe, boring, unappealing colour. I am rooting for Allison Arieff who says we have to redefine success, and I am thankful for those who already started building a different path. Can you imagine the differences that would occur in our daily lives, in our routines, if spaces were designed in a more social and playful way?

I personally don't have—yet—the capacity to propose social housing, but every time I get a tiny opportunity to offer something close to it, I try and do it. Social housing is not only about providing a bed and roof, that's the bare minimum. It is also about offering entertainment, space-sharing, relaxation, and possibility to relish the moment.

<sup>17</sup> Rozy is the alter ego I created and she loves pink.

<sup>18</sup> The Gerrit Rietveld Academie interior is mainly painted in three fixed shades of grey which are referred to as Rietveld dark, middle, and light grey.



*Dary Labor Station, Liz Zagbi, Various Location. The structure is adaptable, based on the realities of the warps in which the dary labor system operates. It provides a sheltered space for the dary laborers to wait for work as well as community resources such as a meeting space and classroom. <https://www.lizzagbi.com/portfolio-page/darylaborstation/>*







*The Importance  
of Caregiving  
Spaces*





Elke Krasny and Angelika Fitz are two cultural theorists and researchers in the field of architecture, who explain how urban planning can help heal, repair, and revive the planet. In their book *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet*,<sup>19</sup> it is said that caring is at the very core of architecture since it is about shelter, and hence about protecting humans.

Our institutions need to realise that a good way to change our sad lives is to change the built environment, because it can't be isolated from the political, social, and cultural fabric of society. Architecture is indeed a reflection of power. Obviously it is also an artistic expression, but it requires the deployment of vast material and human resources. Unfortunately, throughout history, architects have tended to care about the wrong things. They would care about the elegance of the material, about a sturdy structure, about the way the building would protect from elements such as wind or water, but would not care about providing care itself. The two theorists make clear that a caring architecture is an architecture that is sensitive to the values of repair, of preservation, of maintaining all forms of life and the planet itself.

But then the importance is also in the content of the building. This is the exact reason why I would build tents, shelters to take care of things that need to be taken care of and need to be safeguarded. Unfortunately, the politics of gender and of race have defined the history of care. Caring tasks have always been seen as a burden. From child caretakers to beauticians, these jobs would be looked down on by most people. I have this clear memory, in high school, of people—mainly females who were pushed to it—who would choose beauty as an education and a career as a beautician that would later on be judged or categorised as lower class studies or irrelevant jobs. It seems that people forget how much they like to be taken care of, or look pleasant, attractive, and confident.

To care for means that we must be attentive to the needs that have to be addressed. Before any caring process can begin, someone has to recognise the need for care. But also for someone to realise they need care, or to actually find the time to be taken care of, requires them to be in an already comfortable position. Our western society doesn't really allow people to perceive this; it might have to come from an external eye for people to realise they



<sup>19</sup> *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet* (The MIT Press) Paperback - Illustrated, April 30, 2019. By Angelika Fitz (Editor), Elke Krasny (Editor), Architekturzentrum Wien (Editor).





need care. With the pressure of being productive and not encouraging leisure, it can be hard to accept that sometimes you want to be cared for. Building caregiving spaces is a necessity to repair our world, from the love those spaces release to their comfort: everything is thought out throughout, and is necessary. I hope to tend to this need, to be able to offer people this one experience that could change their day and hopefully even more.

There is something magical happening in those tents, that will probably be appreciated by those who would also criticise it. Actually, they might be the person needing it the most!



*Beverly Nice Salon Set purple and green Asako seated and Larla styling02.png*







*Digital collage, futuristic hair care salon*









*How is your  
Hair Doing  
Today?*





For me, when it comes to taking care of myself, I would always start by doing my hair. It first started in a teenage crisis situation: my heart got broken and I impulsively cut it all shorter. The excitement, energy, and release I got from this change was such a thrill. I remember glowing the day after and not caring at all anymore about my heart pain. Since then, I started coping with any hard feelings by changing or cutting my hair; impulsive or thought through, this action would always bring me so much new energy afterward. Throughout the years my hair helped me find mental stability at certain times, while also reminding me of the fluidity of my persona.

Hair to me is like fibre to a weaver, it is a matter for creativity, for soft sculpture. It is the most malleable visible aspect of self-representation, part of who we are. Hair can be an indicator of someone's identity or can attract a lot of assumptions about someone's life, social status, faith, gender, and health. We are always trying to arrange our hair, to shape it and organise it for formal interviews or romantic dates. It's strongly connected to our self-esteem, as in the positive mindset about ourselves. A so-called bad hair day

can lead to self-doubt and personal criticism. Consequently, there is a big game change in the care and importance you give to this part of your body. Hair care can be a solitary activity or a service offered by a friend, a professional, an artist. Rather intimate, this moment is shared with people we give our trust to.

The act of people working on the hair of another was already depicted in ancient art. The first humans' bodies were fully covered with hair, and through evolution we see traces that they started grooming themselves. Cave people used sharp rocks and shells to cut off their long hair. Cave drawings found in modern-day Ukraine depict silhouettes with short stubble.<sup>20</sup> In Ancient China and Egypt, natural products such as beeswax, egg, and oils were used to soften the hair or skin. Humans were always keen to take care of themselves, whether it was to protect their body, scare the enemy, or look more pleasant.

Taking care of someone's hair is a long process and it requires commitment, patience, and focus. Hands will be in direct contact with another person's body. Hair carries strong energy and beliefs. It can be a vessel for our identity, therefore strong



<sup>20</sup> <https://us.braun.com/en-us/world-of-braun/brun-history/the-history-of-human-grooming>





connections and relationships can be built between hairdressers and their clients. Hours would be spent washing, combing, oiling, styling, and ornamenting.

What fascinates me is that this behaviour is also noticeable in animals. Primates, birds, and bats would use their hands, teeth, and tongues to stroke, scratch, and massage their offspring or mate. It is a real intuitive and intimate moment, which is called social grooming. I always somehow feel happy when I find out something I do is part of the animal world. I do believe that actions answering to some kind of universal intuition are true demonstrations of love and care.

Social grooming is, for social animals including humans, a way to clean or maintain one another's bodies or appearances, a pure form of altruism. This caregiving is also the root for relationship development, pair bonding, and conflict resolution. Receiving care is a moment of relaxation and release. As a make-up artist and hair stylist, I've seen and heard more than once the receiver expressing their content and happiness. Indeed, social grooming produces oxytocin which is a hormone released in response to love and labour. It is

known as the warm, fuzzy hormone that promotes feelings of love, social bonding, and well-being. It can be released in real moments of exchange between the hairdresser and the customer, such as discussion, confession, or asking for life advice. For the person being taken care of, social grooming can finally be a break from their busy schedule, a moment of silent relaxation, to respect.

Here we come back to the importance of building more caring spaces or the lack of respect given to such places. The power of a haircut—a hair salon—is strong. What happens in those moments is beyond a simple service transaction, it brings us back to the essential parts of our lives; care and social bonding.



*Hairdresser in Oaxaca, Mexico.*



<sup>17</sup> Rozy is the alter ego I created and she loves pink.

<sup>13</sup> The Gerrit Rietveld Academie interior is mainly painted in three fixed shades of grey which are referred to as Rietveld dark, middle, and light grey.







Getting my hair cut, September 2019.



Hair transformation from 2015 until 2018.





Power of  
Transformation,  
Necessity to  
Transform.





When I came across Dred—aka Mildred Gerestant—I got such an enlightening feeling, that it was natural for me to pick up their work as a reference. I found out about them in a book called *Artists, Performers, and Black Masculinity in the Haitian Diaspora*,<sup>21</sup> then I dug up an interview from the *Assume Nothing* exhibition.<sup>22</sup> When I saw them talking about how they started being a Drag King, from where it comes and simply their attitude toward their work, I felt like I could relate to them. There is a fluidity from one gender to another: they would start a performance as a man and finish it as a woman and so on, and I admire that. I prefer to mention that what will follow is only my own reflection on Mildred's thoughts and work, and in no case is it a generalised experience for non-binary people or drag performers.

First, when I see the way they talk about their transformation using words such as "I like to play [...] it's a beautiful thing", I completely see the playfulness of transformation. As Kate Bornstein says, when you let go of the gender barriers, you open yourself to a whole new world of possibilities.<sup>23</sup> I remember when I was 19 years old, the same day I got my Ardhhanarishvara tattoo,<sup>24</sup> a guy at the train station

asked me if I was a boy or a girl and I just proudly smiled and felt too happy with the idea of confusing someone about my identity. There is something fascinating about creating a state of disorder; people will feel disturbed, whether they want it or not, and they have to confront this feeling at that moment. I also feel like going out and scaring the "straight" people sometimes, because yes, there is something in the human brain that wishes for nothing to be left without answers, people need to know what you are, and tickling this part of the human mind is satisfying.

But before creating any disorder, you have to let go of that self-expression and all those barriers. This can begin with something as simple as clothes. Because they are gender markers, clothes can change the whole perception you have of someone, or even of yourself. There is so much to unlearn, especially when you see how rooted ideas are in us. This summer I worked in a textile shop, and a woman asked me which buttons she should put on the cardigan that she had knitted for her little son. When I pointed out flower buttons she was just shocked, and the same happened when I showed someone a cute car pattern for a girl's bedsheets. These



<sup>21</sup> Jana Evans Braziel, *Artists, Performers, and Black Masculinity in the Haitian Diaspora* (Location: Indiana University Press, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> *Assume Nothing: Celebrating Gender Diversity in Waikato Museum*, New Zealand (2009-2010).

<sup>23</sup> Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw*.

<sup>24</sup> The Ardhhanarishvara is a composite androgynous form of the Hindu deities Shiva and Parvati (the latter being known as Devi, Shakti, and Uma in this icon). Ardhhanarishvara is depicted as half-male and half-female, equally split down the middle.





are just tiny life situations that push us into performing our own gender. Transforming and playing with gender is liberating in many ways: how you perceive yourself, how you will react to situations, and even how you flirt with people. Dred says that being different is natural. I find it therapeutic to turn yourself into something different. Everytime my energy is low or I feel I am missing a part of myself, I dress up, I transform, I turn into the persona I see myself to be, the one I can relate to the most at that moment.

*"My name is Mildred and my name is Dred and we are multi-spirited. Haitian American, gender illu-sioning, black, shaved, different, goddess, anti-op-pression, open, non-tra-ditional, self expressed, blessed, gender bending, drag king, fluid, ances-tors supported and after all that, non labelling woman."*

Dred also mentioned how their practice stems from their ancestry, explaining how it is rooted in their blood to be woman-man, sometimes both, and that it actually empowers them. I always find it

*Short film "Blending the female and male through Mildred featuring artist Mildred Grestant from the "Assume Nothing" Exhibition. This exhibition exploring alternative gender identity toured New Zealand Art Galleries and Museums for 18 months and features the photographs of Rebecca Swan and the films of documentary director Kinstry Madanahy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WA3D5EnaA>*



Tiansois  
to  
Delleza



reassuring that certain practices or identities—in this case being fluid— have been present in society since forever. To not be the only one, and knowing that a path has already been drawn by predecessors, is comforting. In the same text about Black masculinity in the Haitian Diaspora, Dred mentions giving drag king workshops. One time they gave a workshop in a school, then they performed the same night in a cafe. When Dred saw the students, the same night, still dressed up in their drag outfit, they felt proud. I can understand Dred's feeling, since giving the occasion to others to feel the power and confidence in transformation is a magical feeling. The spark in the eyes of the freshly converted doesn't lie. And, just like Dred, I feel the same energy, and feel like a proud mommy. To give birth to a character, your own self or helping someone in this process, is such a sacred moment, a ritual not to be messed with. It is something that needs to happen in a proper setting and sometimes at the right moment. There is something spiritual in it. Something about the soul showing its true self.

**M**y great-grandmother was known to be a midwife for the soul. She would help people out of situations, and I firmly believe you can do the same through physical transformations in magical, intentional, and heterotopian spaces.





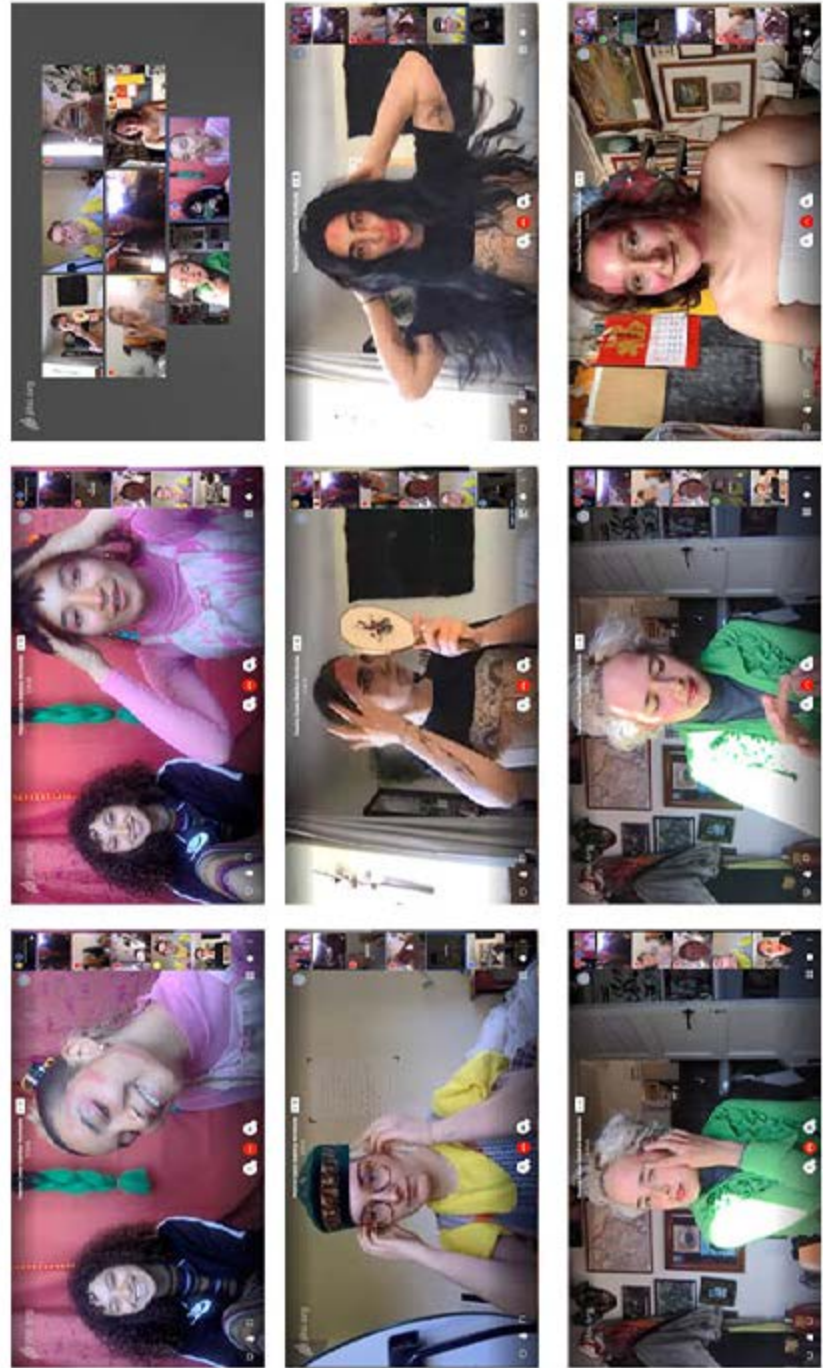
# Conclusion

The way you design your interior, the way you will place your objects on the walls and around your furniture, can tell a lot about your identity. It can also guide someone else through understanding your personality; the space will talk instead of you. A dressing room can tell more stories than you imagine, about how you dress up to go out for a coffee or how you dress up for celebrations. Dressing rooms are marks of our daily life and give rhythm to it. Everytime we enter a dressing room space or we sit in front of a makeup station, whether it is a tiny closet, a walk-in wardrobe, three hangers on a wall, or a wing mirror in a car, our brain enters a certain mindset. It will be a timeless moment, where our main focus is to style clothes together, or apply with precision our eyeshadow, this action re-centering the energy on yourself and somehow becoming a true form of meditation.

Sharing this moment of transformation with others can also be a social experience.

Sharing intimacy, vulnerability, but also joy and excitement, can be a real bonding instant.

Hence, dressing rooms are the closest to the hair salon that we can experiment within a domestic setting. They are this opportunity to make transformation happen without a professional context, this chance to become something else, to become someone else, as much or as often as you want.



Zoomin during lockdown, I proposed a short make-up session to my classmates.





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*Gerrit Rietveld Academie, 2021.*