

research questions:

When creating intimate portraiture, how does interpersonal connection between artist & subject impact the experience of artmaking, the experience of posing, and the aesthetic of the imagery being created?

How do gender & sex influence methods of intimate portraiture creation?

methodology:

I. Preliminary secondary research

- Transgender Archives

Before fully crafting research questions, I conducted secondary research through the University of Victoria's Transgender Archives, exploring the collection's works from artists & theorists such as Del LaGrace Volcano, Jenny Saville, Dean Kotula, Jack Halberstam, Lou Sullivan & others. I was interested in visual representations of bodies that were usually underrepresented in art, eventually narrowing in on the topic of intimate portraiture, specifically intimate portraiture of queer, transsexual, transgender, & otherwise gender non-conforming people. Through writings on these works, I was drawn towards wanting to further my understanding of the interpersonal experiences of intimate portraiture creation.

2. Project creation

After building a strong foundation of secondary research on the topic, I created my research questions & began crafting a research proposal.

3. Ethics board approval

4. Primary research: survey & interviews

After receiving ethics board approval, I interviewed seven artists who create intimate portraiture & have created portraiture of transsexual, transgender, & otherwise gender non-conforming subjects. Interviews were conducted in person, & online or via telephone where necessary, over the course of an hour. Artists were given interview questions ahead of time, & signed consent forms for their participation. I surveyed 15 transsexual, transgender, & otherwise gender non-conforming subjects who have posed for intimate portraiture about their experiences. All participants received honorariums for their participation (paid for using the awarded JCURA funds).

5. Data analysis, coding & synthesis

I transcribed interviews (using audio recordings) & used notes taken during interviews, as well breaking down transcribed interviews into key-words & themes to bring together my ideas into something I could present, focusing on those key-words, themes & concepts as found in primary research.



"Matrix" (1999), Jenny Saville

It was inspirational to see what an artist so devoted to her work and meticulous in her research can accomplish. Her preparation was flawless and her bedside manner effective enough to make me feel at home. She had photographed herself in the positions she wanted me to attempt, before I arrived. The fact that she exposed her own crevice, impressed me and produced in me a desire to do whatever was required no matter how undignified or painful.

On Being a
Jenny Saville Painting

Del LaGrace Volcano

key concepts & themes:

Artist: Facilitator of art creation

Subject: What is being visually represented through art

Portraiture: Art where the main subject is a human person

Aesthetic: Visual appearance

Transsexual, transgender & otherwise gender non-conforming: An all-inclusive way to refer to "all kinds of people who challenge...gender normativity." (Halberstam, 2005, page 55), as well as people who have an "awareness of dissonance between mind and body and between self and society" (Brody, 2002, page 239).

Bedside manner: Usually refers to the interpersonal and communication skills of a doctor providing medical care to a patient, but in this context refers to the interpersonal and communication skills of an artist creating intimate portraiture of a subject.

**- Collaboration - Communication -
Vulnerability - Sense of Safety -**

aesthetic(s) of intimacy

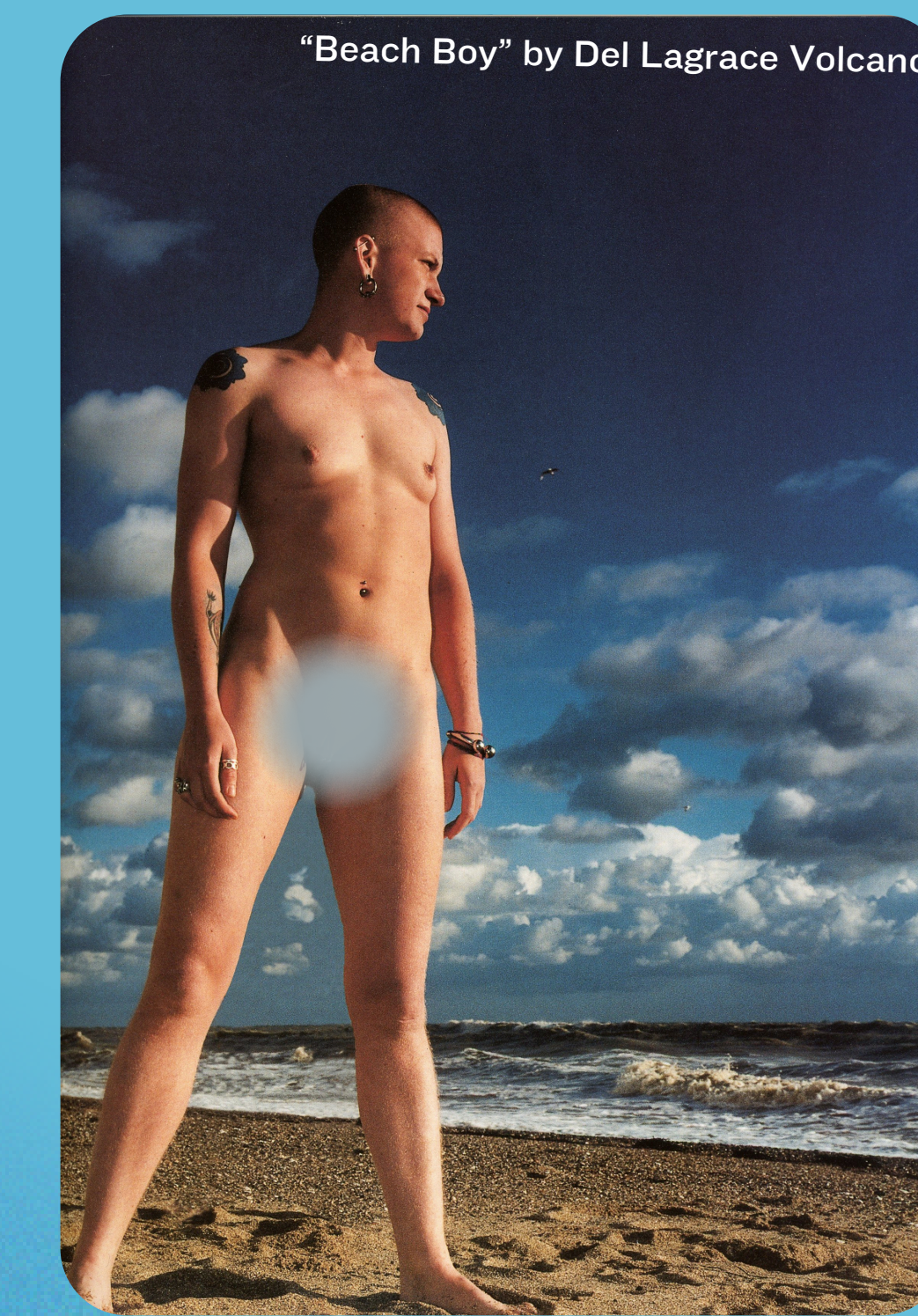
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Gieve Kuzak (2024)

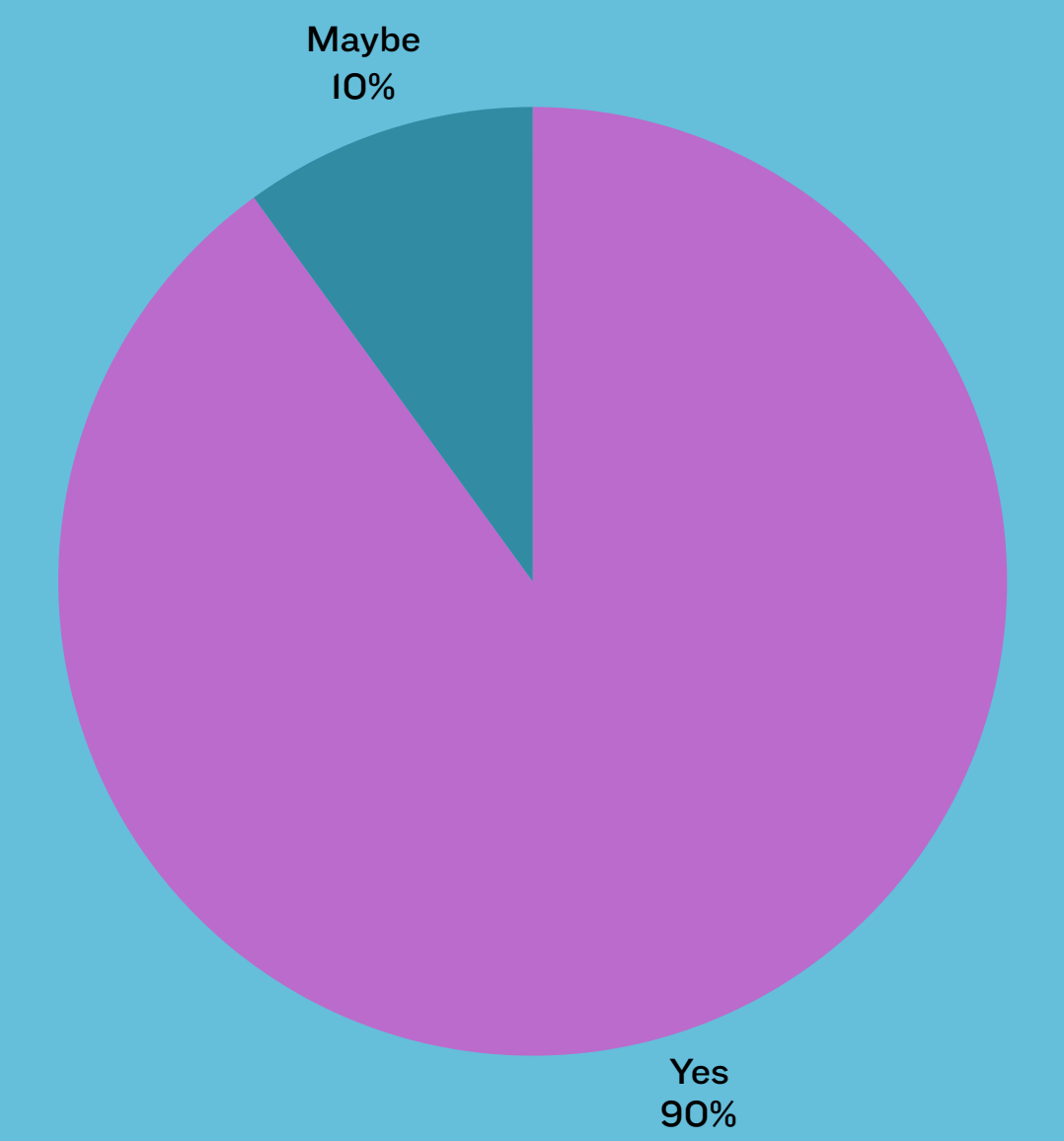


Halle Jean March (2024)



"Beach Boy" by Del LaGrace Volcano

Does your gender non-conformity influence your experience posing for art?



Primary Research conducted for this project:
Survey of 15 transsexual, transgender & otherwise gender non-conforming subjects who have posed for intimate portraiture (2025)

quotes from interviews/survey:

“ All portraiture is intimate... I become friends with a lot of the people I've photographed... because the dialogue we have during a shoot creates that environment. ”

- Halle Jean March (Artist)

“ Posing for art makes me feel present & real, like I am existing in physical space. It makes me feel seen. ”

- Anonymous (Subject)

“ It's emotional & so beautiful seeing people expressing themselves & being so vulnerable to the camera & to the public. ”

- Julianna Sech (Artist)



Songhees



WSÁNEĆ

The University of Victoria is located on unceded (stolen) land: **lək̓ʷəŋən Traditional Territory**, home to the Songhees, Esquimalt and **WSÁNEĆ** peoples

songheesnation.ca/community/l-k-ng-n-traditional-territory

wsanec.com/

supportlandback.com



Made possible using materials from UVic's Special Collections & Archives' Transgender Archives

uvic.ca/transgenderarchives/index.php

Approved by University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board
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ART HISTORY & VISUAL STUDIES

