



**External
Space**

2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M6K 2W5
416 849 2864
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xpace.info

HOLY TRANNITY

J'vlyn

April 3- May 15, 2014

“...But who cares? No big deal. I want mooooooore!”

-Ariel, Disney's *Little Mermaid*

HOLY TRANNITY is a three part autobiographical coming of age story. It is also a critique on the narcissism and superficial vanity perpetuated within queer culture, lacking in trans* representation. In the guise of a pop star hero, J'VLYN offers the viewer their journey of self discovery in three parts: *THE GRINDR*, *LAUGHING LADIES* and *CELEBRATION*. This journey examines desire and sexual pleasure, while challenging the misogyny of fetishized masculine idealism and the objectification of feminine and trans* bodies. Using sassy word play and psychedelic video and sound editing, *HOLY TRANNITY* merges reality tv, music videos and Disney to form a self-portrait, a mirror revealing an appearance that is familiar, but not quite.

J'VLYN's identity is performed by a vampy diva: a psychedelic idol who is part drag queen, part cartoon villain. Their role is presented as a goddess, an exotically feminine creature, who sneers at simple minded misogynists who are dismissive of anything feminine or remotely human. But J'VLYN is not an all knowing oracle, they are human. And like most humans, they are just looking for a potential sex partner, for shared pleasure and for self-acceptance. But where does a trans* body exist within a queer culture that is openly intolerant of any feminine traits?

Part 1: THE GRINDR introduces a desire for sexual companionship and pleasure for J'VLYN, in spite of hostility and intolerance. Grindr is a smartphone application, used by people identifying as gay or bisexual men, to chat with, make friends, and potentially meet other men to engage in consensual sex. This utopian ideal of shared pleasure is also an openly misogynistic, trans*phobic arena within queer culture, evidenced for example, in a Grindr profile that reads “No femmes”. In Grindrland, the ideal sex partner is masculine, a “real” man. Within Grindr, men displaying any feminine traits are undesirable, implicating those who declare their distaste for sissy gay men or trans* people, as being hateful toward femininity. The practice of equating femininity with weakness and general inferiority of women in relationship to men is a form of misogyny. J'VLYN recites lines appropriated from Grindr users' profile descriptions, selecting those that are shrewdly misogynistic and trans*phobic. J'VLYN's performance of these profiles is both satirical and confessional. J'VLYN mocks the absurdity of users who incite misogyny, exemplified best in a repeating edit of them slurring “Uuuuuh”.

Their art blurs distinctions that separate a private life of sexual desire and a public role and performance as a trans* person and artist. J'VLYN recounts their personal experiences as a trans*gendered through layers of public performance. The roles that social platforms, like Grindr for example, limit to an idealized hierarchy of physical and personal traits: masculinity, and discretion of sexual desires and encounters. This exclusive adherence to a strict gender binary, where “real” men are masculine and “real” women are feminine, is stretched by J'VLYN's trans* identity. “Real” or cisgender translates to “born with genitalia that matches an anatomical binary: men having penises and women having vaginas”. This system continues into the performance of

gender: men are masculine and women are feminine. According to this system, sexuality limits gender to include only cisgendered people who perform their masculine or feminine gender roles. J'VLYN challenges these binaries by presenting their self within Grindr and then their video work. J'VLYN gives visibility to those who exist outside of a system of sexual and gender exclusivity.

Part 2: LAUGHING LADIES is an exploration of physical pleasure and desire. It is an abstract music video, with various rainbow shapes, floating and merging, stacking and engulfing each other. This sequence is a visualization of pleasurable and conflicted feelings during various sex acts. An amorphous, scallop-edged shape hovers, centered by a geometric hole. A pink triangle appears, then multiplies, stacking into a phallic tower. Vocals reciting prose related to sex acts and emotional reactions to them, fisting for example, are concluded by a repeating line "I'm dead! I'm dead!". This could be read in terms of the French euphemism for orgasm "Le petit mort" or "little death". It could also, as the pink triangle would suggest, stand for public acknowledgement of sexual identity in the face of hostility and shame. The pink triangle is synonymous with the expression "Silence=Death", referring to gay-bashing, the AIDS crisis, gay rights and gay pride, and so on. In this part, J'VLYN is both calling to the misogynists of *THE GRINDR* to remember the past struggles of homosexuals in private and public realms, and allying the current struggles of trans*gendered people to be acknowledged, as they fight to gain rights, and have visibility, privately and publicly.

Part 3: CELEBRATION presents a false idol, an empowered trans* figure, J'VLYN, now wearing a deep purple wig, blows air kisses to their worshipping admirers. Those fans are feminine cis-gay men, united in their mutual place outside of the masculine ideal of "real" gay men. J'VLYN is happy to receive praise and worship from these "sissies", but rejects their fetishizing objectification, which is a hidden form of misogyny, confusingly buried in seemingly affirming adoration. This celebration is troubled by an anxious undertone, the novelty of trans* bodies standing in for "sissies" as a saviour figure of feminine empowerment, or an objectified body to become an accessory for social authenticity for cis-queer men. J'VLYN presents their personal journey for self awareness and acceptance of their own body and their own desires as a trans* individual. J'VLYN dismisses these cultural vampires instead asserting that this celebration is their own.

HOLY TRANNITY tangles identity and social critique through language appropriated from pop cultural reference. Quoting lines from the song *Part of your world* from Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, "I want to be the girl, the girl who has everything", delivered with an emphatic pause and a knowing wink to the camera. Using language, J'VLYN's performance of *Part of your world* replaces the pronoun "she", as quoted from the original song lyrics to "they". *The Little Mermaid* is a cultural reference, a personal childhood favourite for the artist, which they have now queered to include a trans* subtext. This mix of pop-cultural and personal-political through video, music, and performance is akin to transdisciplinarity, a scientific research process, focusing on the problems limiting specific disciplines for further research potential. By crossing boundaries and examining the limits within conventional systems, in this case, the insertion of a trans* body and language into a hetero-normative pop cultural reference, *HOLY TRANNITY* challenges those perspectives.

By conflating the disciplinary roles of performance, video and sound art with their sex life and gender, *HOLY TRANNITY* serves as a challenge to disciplinary restrictions and divisions within queer sexuality and identity. Misogyny toward feminine behaviour and appearance by masculine gay men on Grindr, narcissistic displays of personal experience made public by social media, and the fetishized objectification of femme pop divas and trans* gendered femmes by gay men are all fodder within *HOLY TRANNITY*. J'VLYN's journey offers no simple answers or resolutions beyond their own self-discovery and presence as a trans* artist who likes to fuck. No big deal.

-Cameron Lee