

# RISD MUSEUM

## ***Bona Drag: An Incomplete History of Drag and Cross-Gender Performance in Film and Video Art (Part 2)***, March 5, 2019-July 7, 2019

These films and videos examine artists' engagement of drag performance and culture from the 1960s to today. Drag is the theatrical practice of exaggerating a physical presentation and affect culturally associated with another gender. Its long history extends back to ancient Greek and medieval and Shakespearean theater, when the roles of women were often played by young men. In the 20th and 21st centuries, drag has developed into a more formalized cultural practice and sensibility, with artists consistently turning to film and video. Drag's integration of elements of fashion and performances from stage, screen, and music and its defiance of conventional roles of gender and sexuality make it a compelling subject, strategy, and source of inspiration for contemporary art.

*Bona Drag* presents works that frame drag within the context of the art world and in more experimental examples by figures and collectives celebrated within drag culture. Drag's flamboyant defiance of convention has made it a powerful form of expression for LGBTQIA rights in recent history, most profoundly in the 1980s during the AIDS crisis (which took the lives of numerous artists in this exhibition) and in our current politically divisive climate.

Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art  
RISD Museum

For more information about the films visit [RISDMUSEUM.ORG/channel](https://RISDMUSEUM.ORG/channel)

### **CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION**

Chez Deep, *American*, 2013 - present  
*Four Walls (excerpt)*, 2015  
Video with color, sound  
Courtesy of Colin Self and Sam Banks TL23.2019

These excerpts from the longer work *Four Walls* present dance and lip-sync performances and ritualistic actions and movements. The compilation exemplifies how Chez Deep—a New York-based collective comprising Colin Self, Alexis Penney, Hari Nef, Bailey Stiles, and Sam Banks—uses drag to present unexpectedly intimate and intensely personal situations.



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Kent Monkman

*Mary*, 2011

Video with color, sound

Courtesy of Vtape TL104.2018

In *Mary*, Monkman's drag alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, reinterprets the Prince of Wales's 1860 visit to Montreal in the style and sensibility of a contemporary television commercial for perfume or shampoo. Indigenous Canadian peoples were engaged as an "exotic spectacle" for the royal visit, a historical situation and ongoing concern that the artist—a Canadian of Cree descent—sharply yet humorously criticizes.



Charles Atlas, American, b. 1949

*What I Did Last Summer*, 1999

Video with color, sound

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York TL27.2019

*What I Did Last Summer* compiles three short works celebrating downtown New York nightlife in the early 1990s. *Butchers' Vogue*, set in a Manhattan restaurant after hours, features waitstaff performing a dance style known as voguing. In *The Draglinquents*, two figures in drag perform while being superimposed over or intercut with clichéd images from 1950s muscle-boy movies. *Disco 2000* mixes footage of a crowded dance floor, homemade optical effects, and a dancing chicken.



Mark Morrisroe, American, 1959 - 1989

*Hello from Bertha*, 1983

Video with color, sound transferred from Super-8 film

Courtesy of the Estate of Mark Morrisroe, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland TL25.2019

This performance interprets the eponymous 1946 Tennessee Williams one-act play about a penniless prostitute dying in a bordello. Morrisroe plays the title role, with Stephen Tashjian (better known by his drag persona, Tabboo!) as Goldie and Jack Pierson as Lena. Despite the video's humor and its fictional basis, its earnest amateur performances and camerawork are marked by the raw emotional intimacy that characterizes Morrisroe's more celebrated photographs.



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Andy Warhol, American, 1928-1987

*Mario Banana #2*, 1964

16mm film transferred to digital file; black and white, silent; 4 minutes 12 seconds (at 16 frames per second)

Collection of The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts TL131.2018

In this film, Mario Montez suggestively eats a banana. Montez, the drag persona of René Rivera (1935–2013), was one of the “superstars” in Andy Warhol’s films of the 1960s and 1970s, who often performed simple gestures such as looking at the camera, sleeping, or kissing in ways that emphasized their extravagant personalities. Montez’s name is an homage to Dominican actress Maria Montez, whose dramatic presence was an inspiration for the more flamboyant tendencies in the artist's drag performance.

Kalup Linzy, American, b. 1977

*Conversations wit de Churen V: As da World Might Turn*, 2006

Video with color, sound

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York TL109.2018.1

This video is part of Linzy’s *Conversations wit de Churen* series, which portrays an art-school graduate’s career path as a televisual melodrama. The artist’s characteristic complication of gender roles allows him to interrogate and challenge long-standing biases and inequities within the hierarchy of the contemporary art world.



Martine Gutierrez, American, b. 1989, (RISD BFA 2012, Printmaking)

*Martine Part 3*, 2012

Video with color, sound

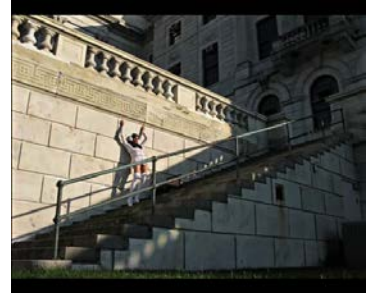
© Martine Gutierrez; Courtesy of the artist and Ryan Lee Gallery, New York. TL184.2018.3

Gutierrez shot this three-part video at the RISD Museum and other locations in Providence when she was a student at RISD and identifying as Martin Gutierrez. She appears here in public and private spaces, wearing various outfits and costumes and alternating between male and female roles. The videos’ protagonist, the sole figure in each setting, often wears headphones to suggest the isolation and otherness of an individual who is part of the world yet often kept deliberately at a distance.



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Martine Gutierrez, American, b. 1989, (RISD BFA 2012, Printmaking)  
*Martine Part 2*, 2012  
Video with color, sound  
© Martine Gutierrez; Courtesy of the artist and Ryan Lee Gallery,  
New York. TL184.2018.2



Martine Gutierrez, American, b. 1989, (RISD BFA 2012, Printmaking)  
*Martine Part 1*, 2012  
Video with color, sound  
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