

# **MASQUE-ULINITIES**

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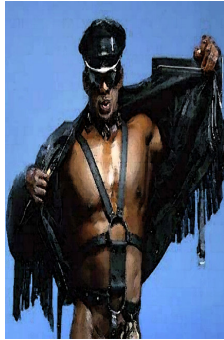
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**Attestation of Authorship**

*“I hereby declare that the submission is my work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.”*



# Masqueulinities

*abstract*

The research is specifically concerned with the notion of the military masque as a projected extension of the history of masquerading behaviour evident in gay men's attire.

The creative outcome of the project is a collection of five interchangeable masques, an animated poetic work and a series of photographic images.

This exegesis therefore, seeks to contextualise the created artifacts. In doing this it posits a historical and critical framework that considers the hyper-masculine<sup>1</sup> and its relationship to gay men's masquerading.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this exegesis hyper masculinity is taken to mean an exaggeration of stereotypical male beliefs and behaviors through an emphasis on virility, strength and aggression and dress codification.

<sup>2</sup> Frye (1957), in his *Anatomy of criticism* offers a useful definition of masque as I frame it in this thesis. The term may be understood as “a species of drama in which spectacle plays an important role and in which the characters tend to be, or become aspects of human personality, rather than independent characters” (pp. 365-7). In this respect the masque is something donned that presents a decodable identity extra to, or other than the actual personality of the wearer.

## **structure**

The exegesis is divided into three chapters.

- The first chapter describes the research design employed in the project. It considers a heuristic framework supported by a dialogic journal [as lived space]. It then discusses Human Design Object-orientated Product Testing employed in the design of the garments.
- The second chapter offers a historical/critical framework for the created artifacts. It examines the notion of the masque as a form of encoding that has undergone significant transitions in gay men's society. Issues arising from this overview are used to contextualise and activate the design of the masques that form the creative outcome of this thesis.
- The final chapter concludes with a consideration of the military and its relationship to gay men in contemporary society. It also offers a brief commentary on the created works.
- The exegesis concludes with two appendices. The first lists the meanings attributed to handkerchiefs and artifacts worn in the gay clone culture of the late 1970s and early to mid 1980s. The second contains the words of the animated poetic work composed to accompany the masques.

## concept

### *the mystery of the visible*

*"It is only the shallow people who do not judge by appearance.  
The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible"*  
OSCAR WILDE.

This quote from Oscar Wilde I found a useful starting point for clarifying key theoretical ideas around which my project is positioned.

I would suggest that we interpret and make judgments of people based on appearance and within this we frame identity. Gay men practice the adopting of certain forms of dress as a method of encoding and decoding specific meaning. In this research I frame some of these encodements as masques and from this consideration I undertake the design of a projected set of hyper-masculinesed masques that draw on signifiers of the military.

The encoding of meaning in these masques I see as Wilde's '*mystery of the visible*'. This is because the reading of garments is subjective, yet within certain sub-cultural groups [including gay men] signifiers may have shared meanings. This allows a masque to replace [temporarily] individual identity and engage in the communication of generic ideas like masculinity and homoeroticism.

# **chapter one**

*r e s e a r c h   d e s i g n*

## research design

### position

This research project has developed as a consequence of my cultural identification as a gay man who has across thirty years, observed and engaged in an ongoing way with the nature of hyper-masculinity inside gay men's culture.

Because of this, as an inside researcher I am able to consider and verify significant bodies of data from a culturally informed standpoint. In so doing, I have sought to synthesise collected data into a unique body of work that creatively reflects, with a degree of integrity, on core issues of the hyper masculine/homo-erotic.

The first chapter of the exegesis outlines the key methodological frameworks through which the research was developed.

### approach

This project sought to consider elements of the homoerotic and hyper-masculine by creatively reflecting on historical profiles and projecting elements of these forward into a new collection of military inspired masques for gay men.

The research was concerned with the generation of a unique body of work and in this regard it required both synthesis and systematic testing so the designer was able to establish the feasibility of emerging design ideas.

The research design for this project used two specific approaches, which in relation to each other, allowed for both creative synthesis and careful analysis of wearability issues.

The first method employed was heuristics. A form of designer's journal I will discuss as 'lived space' activated the process. This methodology was employed in the creative processing of ideas underpinning the masques. It was employed because of its propensity for enhancing chances of discovery.

The second method employed was *Human Design Object-orientated Product Testing*. This type of methodology, concerned with measurement and adjustment, enabled the



researcher to bring into concord, designed forms with movement and shape issues affecting the body.

## heuristics

The data collection and synthesis in this project employed a qualitative methodology called heuristics. Heuristics may be understood as a method of problem solving where no existing formula for a solution exists. It employs informal methods or experience, and uses forms of trial and error as a method of evaluating ideas and testing hypotheses.

Thus, heuristics relates to the ability to find knowledge, patterns or a desired result by intelligent questioning and guess work.

In this research project a heuristic methodology involved using knowledge gained by experience. I was able to do this because of my background in fashion design and also because of my position as a culturally positioned researcher. Both of these contexts allowed me to make relatively informed decisions about the potential of emerging designs.

Heuristics as a framework that is activated by the *lived space*<sup>3</sup> was useful because it embraced the intuitive and drew significantly on tacit knowledge.<sup>4</sup> While tacit knowledge applied in decision-making is useful, it operates in an environment of instability. This instability I find stimulating.

Heuristics accepts as one of its given tenets that, “The researcher should be:

*“open to new concepts and change his or hers preconceptions if the data is not in agreement with them”* (Kleining and Witt, 2000, p11).

Initially, I came to this project with preconceived ideas of how these accessorised masques might look (and be constructed). This was influenced by years of producing

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<sup>3</sup> By this I mean a studio environment where inspirations and emerging outcomes co-exist with the researcher. It is not a visited space but a space where the researcher dwells.

<sup>4</sup> By tacit knowledge I refer to a reliable understanding of the machinations of ones given task so an environment of intuitive discovery can exist. In other words, tacit knowledge may be seen as built experience and knowledge that may only be realized once it is called upon in critical decision-making.

designs in a professional environment where deadlines and costing projections could be realised in a reliable, calculatable way. However, by using heuristics in the project this attitude was sacrificed in exchange for a broader level of consideration. Kleining and Witt (2000) note that when using a heuristic methodology,

*“The topic of research is preliminary and may change through the research process; it can only be fully known after being successfully explored”* (p. 12).

Thus the research problem may produce new, unanticipated questions. It may shift and need redefining as new data or connections between data surface. This often means that one needs to redefine one’s project to accommodate a change in direction and be open to chance discoveries.

However, one of the most significant advantages of heuristics was in its propensity to accumulate very rich bodies of data. The skilful use of this methodology however, lies less in the accumulation of this data and more in the ability of the researcher to make effective, creative connections between data, and to synthesise this into working designs that can remain open to change throughout their refinement. Kleining and Witt suggest that this form of analysis *“directs itself towards discoveries of similarities”* (ibid.)

In my research I found that patterns tended to show themselves and what was dissimilar failed to weave themselves into possible connections. However, what was connected was not what I had originally anticipated.

### **Activating heuristics through the lived space**

Wood (2004) suggests that because heuristics is more *“concerned with discovery, rather than with proof”* it is a more appropriate method for many designers because it does not involve *“a series of linear, finite questions.”* (p. 9)

Thus while chronological in development, this research can not be framed as linear. It has moved forward, looped back on itself, been influenced by illness and wellness, by discovery and frustration, and by the surfacing of potentials that came not from prediction, but from the serendipitous and the disrupted.

To enable the maximising of discovery in the research I employed (as an activating agent within the heuristic framework), a dialogic journal<sup>5</sup>. However this journal was not a bound document, but existed as a *lived space*.

This space was my studio. I used the floor area, walls and windows to display emerging material. In this environment I was able to constantly reflect upon both tangential ideas and emerging cohesions between them. Unlike a bound document, this form of dialogic journal enabled me to consider bolts of fabric, light, furniture, photographs, potential embellishments, and relationships between design hypotheses and emerging theoretical frameworks. As such I lived in this journal. I ate inside it, slept inside it, made work inside it and sought critique inside it. The journal may therefore be understood as a living transactional space.

This space was constantly changing because as a designer I was constantly reflecting upon and finding relationships between new and disparate data.

As my illustration skills are limited I surrounded myself with images and artifacts that provoked my imagination. This approach was achieved by attaching pictures to the walls, displaying fabrication that I might use, using mannequins as easels, and importing elements into the environment that might sit in discord with emerging themes.

Thus, this constructed environment captured elements that suggested voices in the visual dialogue underpinning this project

In this *lived space* the finding of patterns and potential connections between data was essentially an intuitive, non-linear process. That is why conventional designer's journals have never worked well for me. I need to physically live in the world of voices. I need to be able to move things around so they physically sit in relation to each other. The conversations between bodies of data and between me are not fixed. They remain discursive, and as a result any physical method of enabling dialogue has to remain flexible.

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<sup>5</sup> A dialogic journal may be understood in terms of this project as a space in which dialogue occurs between the designer and artifacts, images within a *lived environment*. This space was **media discursive**. This meant it integrated more than one method of recording and processing ideas. Images, fabrics and mocks operated as processes of thinking rather than as fixed data. Newbury (2001) notes that in this form of designer's journal, "*for some projects the visual or artefactual is not simply of contextual significance, but is itself the focus of the research.*" (p. 7) Thus it may be understood that the dwelt space was the activating agent for the processing of ideas in this project. Within this objects and images wove into the fabric of design development and concurrently into the fabric of the life of the researcher.

Marshall & Rossman (1995, p. 15) suggest that certain forms of research journal are significant because they integrate elements of *“the real inner drama’ of research, with its intuitive base, its halting time line, and its extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives.”*

For me this ‘inner drama’ is the tension and excitement<sup>6</sup> that emerges out of the unexpected patterns and relationships that emerge when data is in dialogue.

The following two photographs are indicative of changes in this environment over the seventeen months of the project.

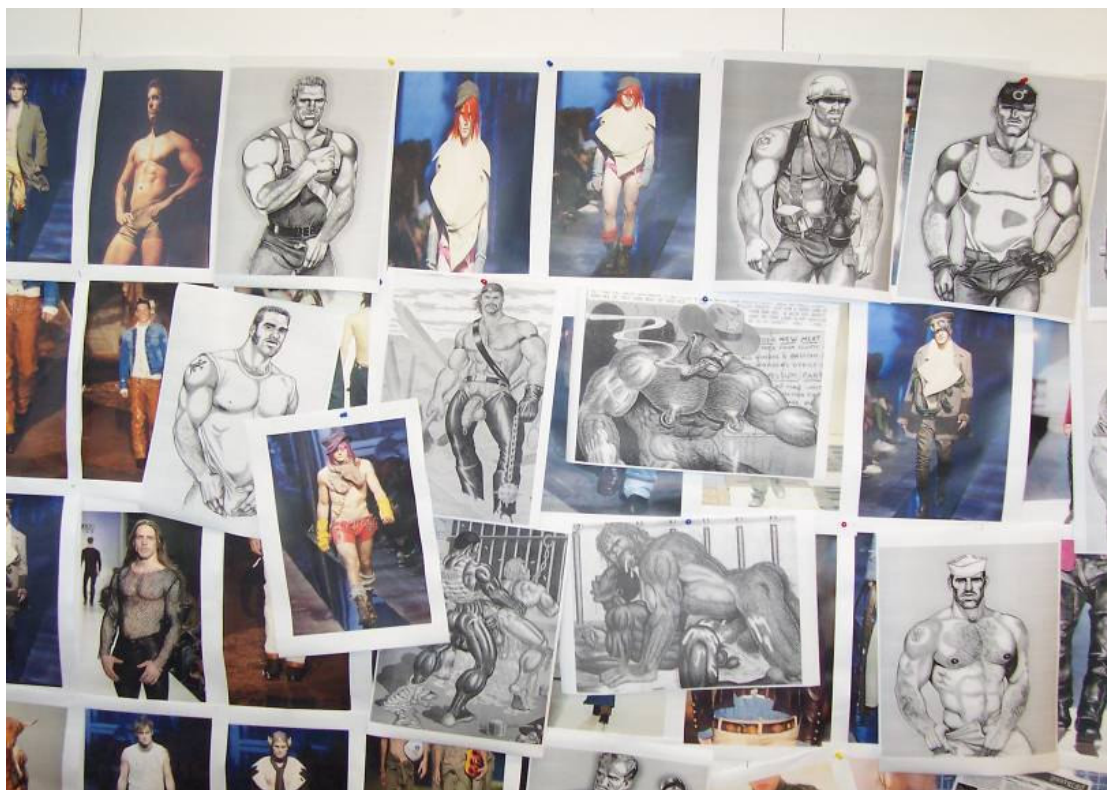


Fig 1:1 The studio space midway through the project. This image shows concerns with disproportion as it appeared in homoerotic drawings by a range of gay artists I was examining at the time. At this point I was surrounding myself with drawings and photographs sourced from publications and sites on the net [both fashion and erotic]. These profiled aggressive notions of hypermasculinity and its relationship to homoeroticism.

Considering design hypotheses in an environment surrounded by artists’ depictions of the hypermasculine helped me to remain in contact with the ethos and strength of what I was attempting to embed in the designs.

<sup>6</sup> Sometimes others saw the walls in my studio as relatively confrontational, but they were that way because the conversations between the data were confrontational. I was not dealing with euphemism in the research but with cultural voices that occurred in the realm of the other. For useful dialogue to occur, it was necessary for the data to genuinely depict the world I was considering.



Fig 1:2 The studio space some weeks later showing a design in the 'mock' process. This process contains the elements of fit, handle, proportion and adjustment that led to the distinctive cut and silhouette of the final masques. There were many of these trials developed that [like the one depicted here] did not become part of the final collection of masques. The designs were methods of trialing ideas in the context of the lived environment, rather than prototypes that would be refined through *human design object orientated product testing*.

### Human design object orientated product testing

The second research method used in this project was employed as a methodology to ensure usability and effectiveness in terms of the fit and function of the masques.<sup>7</sup>

Booch suggests,

*“an object has state, exhibits some well-defined behaviour, and has a unique right (1992, p 77).*

<sup>7</sup> There are of course many methods of framing *function*. Traditionally one would consider issues like demographic, size, price structure, fabrications, prêt à porter or haute couture positioning, and the garment's intended cultural habitat. However, with this project I was more concerned with conceptual *fit* and wearability.

It is this '*well defined behaviour*' that was of importance to this project. The masques had to move effectively. This is because they were conceptually part of the body.

Booch adds,

'The state of an object encompasses all of the [usually static] properties of the object plus the current [usually dynamic] values of each of these properties.' (ibid.).

It is my belief that a garment simply remains 'a garment until the design enables dynamism. A masque is a persona, not a garment. It nominates one characteristic of the personality and expands upon it. Because it expands on the body, it must move as an expansion of the body. In moving as a projection, [expansion or detraction] the masque frees itself from its traditional role of cladding.

### **pattern development**

Methods of human design, object-orientated, product testing employed in this project were important in achieving a satisfactory outcome, and these necessitated a systematic approach that still allowed for discovery.

Pattern developments that were processed as discourses with emerging ideas, [rather than made as instant, end-products], were used in this project as a method of importing conventional processes of cutting for effective form and movement.

Primarily I drew on two distinct systems of structuring; draping,<sup>8</sup> and flat-pattern drafting<sup>9</sup>,

Initially I began by draping. As a designer I tend to work with the discourse between fabric and form (rather than by framing concepts through adjustments made to existing patterns. ...or by sketching ideas and translating them into two-dimensional patterns).

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<sup>8</sup> Draping is a technique used in pattern development. In this method, fabric is moved around the body, cuts, darts and pleating are then used to achieve the desired shape and fall of the finished garment.

<sup>9</sup> Flat pattern drafting is the manipulation of pattern paper through the use of darts, pleats and other manipulation formats to achieve a three-dimensional shape that fits and falls on the body in the desired manner.

Draping as a design method may be likened to the approach taken by Alberta Ferretti who says, “*my clothes are not born on paper, they are born on the mannequin*” (Sartorio, 2007, p. 143).

In this approach the *fall* of the fabric is intrinsic to the way a concept develops. The cut of the fabric of choice becomes a response to its handle.

Thus design requires the trialing of proportion against body shape, fabric movement and fall.

After a concept had been developed and trialed the design moved to a second stage from the three dimensional to two-dimensional space (pattern making).

Koh, Lee and, Lee say,

*apparel pattern making is a form of transforming three-dimensional fashion designs into two dimensional pattern pieces, these pieces are flat irregular in shape and correspond to a piece of the three dimensional design. They contain information needed for the cutting and manufacture of the garment, this information contains, seam allowance, hem allowance, dart width, depth and placement, grain lines, size balance marks and placement of buttons and button hole. (1997, p.1)*

### **the mock and designing for movement**

In my research method, this process of three-dimensional concept, converted into two-dimensional patterns, had another stage added. This stage involved a constantly revisited journey from pattern to mock.<sup>10</sup> This stage allowed me to test for fit and dynamics. When fit or dynamics didn't work, adjustments were made to the mock and moved to the pattern. If after this process the fit and dynamics were still not in coherence with the visual concept, the concept had to be reevaluated. It was during this process that the basic blocks<sup>11</sup> and secondary manipulations<sup>12</sup> took place.

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<sup>10</sup> Generally calico is used in the development of a mock [for the purpose of this project a mock is taken to mean the finished fitting garment, where the fit and the fall of the garment is evaluated]. A personal preference is to make the mock out of the intended fabrication as different fabrications have their particular variations on fall and handle.

<sup>11</sup> Basic blocks are defined as *fitting blocks* without any secondary manipulation.

<sup>12</sup> Secondary manipulations are those that give the finished garment its character; these can be placement of pleats, the width of belt loops, anything that is individual to a garment.

Without these being mathematically correct the finished artifacts could not ‘project’ the movement and body form intended.

However, because the masques were made for a specific model, they were not developed entirely by hanging them on a static mannequin. This was because this conventional approach could only provide feedback on static structure. To allow for useful feedback on dynamics, the model also donned the garments at mock stage. Wearing the masque, he was asked to move in specific ways. This allowed me to consider the more subtle interplay of the fabric with structure and body form. It also allowed me to consider the emerging design in terms of choreographed movement, as the intention of these masques was that they might operate as nightclub/dance floor wear. In this process I asked the model to move to a vigorous piece of music. By doing this I was endeavoring to simulate, as closely as possible, the environment [night club/dance floor] in which the masques might perform. By employing this process I was able to ensure that the masques operated effectively as an extension of the body.

## conclusion

In summary, the research design for the realisation of the masques employed two distinct methodologies.

Heuristics was used to optimise the chances of discovery in the project.

This was necessary because I was concerned with the generation of ‘new knowledge’. The employment of heuristics was evidenced in both the approach to data gathering and the synthesis of findings.

As an activating agent for heuristics the research was conducted in a ‘lived’ environment where my life was in constant discourse with emerging designs. This created an intimacy between the researcher and emerging research questions, and resulted in a highly transactional relationship with the project.<sup>13</sup>

As the designs began to move beyond initial concepts, a process of *human design, object-orientated product testing* was employed. This enabled me to refine and test emerging designs on a re-visitable continuum of practice that involved draping, flat-pattern drafting, cutting, assembling on mannequins, testing for structure and

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<sup>13</sup> Heuristics permeated the whole process of the design of the masques. Thus, it may be seen as an undercurrent, even during the garment testing.



dynamics, and trailing the masques on the model in a simulation of the environment in which he was to perform.

While the research design for this project enabled me to creatively synthesise ideas and address certain technical issues related to the masques, the project was also shaped by a historical/critical framework. In the following chapter I will offer an illustrated outline of this as it relates to the concept of the gay masque.

# **chapter two**

*historical & critical framework*

# historical & critical framework

## introduction

The wearing of masques as a tool to both hide and reveal identity has been the subject of enquiry in diverse cultures.

This chapter reflects upon the culture of the urbanised, gay, western male and the notion of the masque as a form of encoding that has undergone significant transitions in the last hundred years.

Initially analysing transitions from the theatricised encodements of Wilde and his contemporaries, the chapter examines the transgressive dress of Quentin Crisp, the masques of rough trade in the 1940s and 50s, and finally considers the anti-hegemonic yet brand-influenced encoding of the clone in the 1970s and 80s (with particular attention given to hypermasculine encodements).

Issues arising from this overview were used to contextualise the design of the masques that form the creative outcome of this thesis.

## Manipulating and transgressing masculine encodements

We may consider the concept of the masque in two ways.

First as a physical component, an item of clothing and accessory.

Second, it may be seen as a device used to expose (albeit sometimes covertly) the wearer's position, and/or desires in relation to a sub-cultural grouping.

Homo-erotic and hyper- masculine signifiers are influential in the production of gay men's masques, however, these may be understood as sometimes integrations and at other times transgressions against dominant (heterosexual) codes of masculinity.

This is why I would suggest that gay masques are complex ensembles, not easily analysed outside of knowledge of queer culture.

In considering the impact of heterosexist shaping of masculinity (dominant systems of encodement) I would suggest that gay men's masques are often used to represent gay men at variance with values of masculinity in the heterosexual society.

Rubinstein (2001) suggests,

*'clothing speech can be defined as an individual's manipulation of language to produce specific utterances characterized by personal intonation and style'* (p. 13).

The notion of clothing '*speech*' I would argue however, is deeper than simply intonation and style. The need for gay men to become expert at manipulating the language of dress comes as a result of heterosexuality's need to maintain control of signifiers of masculinity. Through their ability to identify and shape the signifiers of 'manhood', a dominant culture may relegate men who break these codes to the arena of the '*other*'. Most common remarks used to describe men whose dress behaviour breaks dominant codes of masculinity are associated with derogatory framings of effeminate homosexuality.<sup>14</sup> if gay men are identifiable as effeminate, cloned, exotic or hyper-groomed, they are locatable in a heterosexually defined culture as homosexual.

Gay men, as the '*other*' either sit outside of heterosexist systems of masculine encodement [the fem, or hyper-sexualised leather man], or conform to it [the straight dresser].<sup>15</sup>

However, what this research project is concerned with is a third demarcation of men. These are gay men who manipulate or contest elements of heterosexuality's encodements of masculinity for their own ends. Often this is done as a method of communicating to their subculture while remaining unnoticed by the dominant culture.

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<sup>14</sup> Examples of phrases in current vernacular use include '*You look like a pouf*', '*That's so Gay*'; '*Those are faggot's pants*' and '*You look as camp as a row of tents*'.

<sup>15</sup> The straight dresser is a gay term used to describe a heteronormative gay man who dresses in such a way that his system of encodement is inseparable from the heterosexual construct of masculinity. The term can be contrasted to contemporary the phenomena of the fauxmosexual, homodynamite, and metro-sexual, all of whom are heterosexual men who may dress and groom in a manner associated with heterosexuality's construct of the gay man. (See <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=straight+dressing>).

## Historical precedents

Gay men's clothing as communication manipulates established codes of masculinity in complex ways and in creating the ensembles for this thesis I have considered examples of transgressive<sup>16</sup> dressing from both a historical and contemporary perspective.

In tracing changes in gay men's masques over the last hundred years one can see the nature of this transgression clearly illustrated. I will now briefly discuss this phenomenon with reference to six examples that have been influential in the production of the ensembles developed for this project.

### Oscar Wilde

At the turn of the century the notion of the effete, sophisticated male was evident in certain literary and artistic circles of Victorian England. These men were often associated with the artistic movements of Art Nouveau, the symbolists and literary aestheticism. Often these men profiled as highly theatricised and transgressive distortions of heterosexual constructions of masculine identity. In understanding systems of encodement and transgression at this time it is useful to close read an image taken of Oscar Wilde.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The term transgressive is often applied to behaviour exhibited by those who feel confined by the norms and expectations of society, who use unusual and/or illicit ways to break free of those confines. I use the word to mean behaviour that disrupts certain codes of masculinity through its disproportionate emphasising of certain clothing features.

<sup>17</sup> Wilde was an Irish author, poet and playwright. A paedophile who had numerous relationships with working class and rent boys, he is perhaps best remembered for his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. As a result of this relationship in 1895, Wilde was found guilty of gross indecency and sentenced to two years hard labour in Reading gaol. His sense of ostentatious luxury in clothing and living environments was much discussed at the time Wilde was often photographed holding flowers [lilies, sunflowers and orchids]. While studying at Magdalen College, he decorated his rooms with flowers, feathers, blue china, exotic fabrics and object d'art.



Figure 2:1 Oscar Wilde, photograph circa 1890.

*Well known for his role in the aesthetic movement and his belief of the importance of 'art in life' Wilde adopted certain principles of aestheticism in his attire.*

In the photograph above, Wilde is posed not as an austere, stoic Victorian male, but as defiantly laissez-faire and theatrical. Significantly his suit is distinctively embellished. In this regard the attention to cut, fabric and detailing seen here, go beyond that of the accepted masculine aesthetic of the time. The fabrics used are luxurious and voluminous. The emphasis is on dramatic draping over a casual but carefully tailored look. Wilde had a penchant for lush fabrics (velvet, silk, fur and fine wools) and made spectacular use of large, flowing capes.

His jacket in this photograph is tighter fitting than the norm, the cuffs are wide (a feature of feminine attire of the time) and a heavy emphasis is placed on linings and trims.

While dominant encodements of masculinity as attire were associated with top hats<sup>18</sup> and later, bowlers, Wilde preferred wide brim hats. Similarly, while the hat was

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<sup>18</sup> The top hat gained popularity as a signifier of masculinity at this time because a development from Hetherington's silk-covered variation of the contemporary riding hat was worn by Prince Albert in 1850. This form of top hat was made of "hatter's plush" (a fine silk shag). Middle and upper class Victorian men wore top hats for business, pleasure and on formal occasions. Convention of the time held that pearl grey was worn in the daytime, black for day or night.

normally *worn* by Victorian men in photographs, Wilde's postured informality in this image displays his flowing hair, which is worn longer than generally acceptable at the time.

Another significant break with convention of the period is Wilde's theatrical and flamboyant use of the silk scarf. Wilde often wore his scarves tied in a bow, rather than as the neatly pinned cravat recommended at the time.

Although these transgressions against acceptable encodements of Victorian masculinity are evident, Breward (1999) points out that late Victorian men's fashion was also marked by fraught relationships between ideal models of manly behavior and attitudes towards the expression of sexual and class identities through dress. Breward identifies the late Victorian period as a crucial moment in the development of a commodity culture that was profiled by a 'feminisation' of practices linked with shopping and fashionable display.

However, within this feminisation of men's fashion at the end of the 19th century, there are distinctive signifiers of what was called at the time *Uranism* or *sodomist* culture. These were signifiers that moved beyond fashionable display and presented fixed meanings to (homosexual) sub cultural readers.

The most famous of these was the wearing of a green carnation inserted in the buttonhole above the left chest pocket of jackets worn by Wilde and his contemporaries. The symbol was drawn to public attention through the novel *The Green Carnation* by Robert Hichen (1894).<sup>19</sup>

The use of an exotic, unusually coloured flower was a disruption to the dominant male convention of wearing a small white carnation buttonhole. The green carnation's size and unusual colour were typical of the transgressive nature of some gay men's treatment of the masque in this period.

The signifier of the green carnation alluded to the dominant heterosexual code but also disrupted it. The green carnation indicated the 'other' through distortion, just as Wilde's clothing indicated the 'other' by its disproportionate attention to theatrical cut, quality materials and additional embellishments.

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<sup>19</sup> The hysteria surrounding the green carnation and its signification was highlighted when this book was published just before Wilde's trials. The novel spends some time probing the meanings latent in Wilde's 'surface of symbols'.



Figure 2:2 Portrait of Quentin Crisp  
circa 1989. New York.

## Quentin Crisp 1940s-60s

Cole (2000) in his seminal work on gay men's clothing *Don We Now our Gay Apparel*, argues that,

*'The counterculture movement of the 1960's and the beginnings of sexual liberation prompted men to question their roles' (p. 93).*

Even though masculinised formatting in gay men's clothes was the norm in this period, effeminate queens had cemented themselves in the gay and mainstream visual vernacular.

The effeminate queen was not a simple phenomenon. Within this definition one may see a variety of transgressive behaviors ranging from Wilde's theatricality to an assortment of forms of drag.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Drag is an acronym for Dressed as A Girl. Drag is often mistakenly read simply as a form of gender play in which a man dresses and applies makeup to exaggerate certain features. His transgressive appearance is often displayed through "shows" (*show queen*). However, the phenomenon is more broadly used in gay men's culture. Rogers (1972, pp.67-68) in *The Queen's Vernacular*, defines drag as '*clothing in general*' worn by gay men. In this context drag may mean simply wearing clothes in such a way that they might be *read* by other gay men, but not decoded in the same way by heterosexual society.



However, of use to this thesis is a manifestation of transgression that profiled between the late 1940s and early 1960s, epitomised by men like Quentin Crisp (1908 –1999). In the language of the time, men like Crisp were commonly known *as Nellies, Pansies, Swishes, Fairies or Camp Queens*.

In contrast to the dominant conservatism of narrow trousers, white shirts and single-breasted coats worn by most British businessmen in the 1940s, 50s and early 1960s, characters like Crisp, who wore male clothing embellished with colour and accessories, appeared as highly confrontational.<sup>21</sup>

Crisp dressed in men's clothing. Inside this construct however, he wore in public, bright make-up, long crimson hair, and painted fingernails. Unlike Wilde, Crisp was of working class origin and his theatrical masque was one constructed from clothes bought from opportunity shops and cheap department stores.

Crisp experimented with a distinctive look that disrupted signifiers of masculinity. He wore men's hats, and jackets and pants, but ostentatiously disrupted their masculine constructs with embellishments. This embellishment took four distinct forms.

The first was colour. Crisp wore long dyed hair. In a time when dyed hair was a signifier of femininity, his was blatantly crimson. He also painted his face (lipstick, eyeliner and face powder) and coloured his fingernails and toenails.

Second, he wore highly patterned fabrics. Although the white shirt had been challenged in the 1950s by the coloured shirt (as casual attire among fashionable European men), Crisp went well beyond this development. His shirts were often brightly coloured and generally worn with their collar turned up. This was partly a

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<sup>21</sup> Crisp who changed his name from Denis Prat associated with young gay men and rent boys in the cafes of Soho in the 1930s. For forty years he lived in a bed-sit in Denbeigh Street until he immigrated to the United States in 1981. Crisp became famous after the publication of his memoir *The Naked Civil Servant* (1968) brought to the attention of the general public his defiant exhibitionism and longstanding refusal to conceal his homosexuality. Crisp's transgressive approach to masculinity generally attracted hostility and violence from British society of the time.

convention borrowed from women's fashion to accommodate the scarf as something worn as an accessory to the blouse.<sup>22</sup>

Third, unlike Wilde (who wore his clothes closely tailored) Crisp dressed in loosely fitting, flowing garments. The fabrication was lush either in handle, pattern or quality. This was significant if one considers that at the time, the fashionable challenge to the business suit was Italian modernism that emphasised tighter fits and defined silhouettes<sup>23</sup>.

Finally, Crisp made significant use of jewellery and embellishment poached from the prerogative of the feminine. His scarves were held in place with brooches (not tiepins), his jackets were often decorated with small ornaments or badges. These were not the lapel badges of the masculine (like discrete membership badges or service medals) but ornaments solely serving the purpose of decoration.

Crisp's treatment of the masque was highly striking and personal. It was in its defiance, highly individualistic and in terms of the spirit that has underpinned my own design work for the masques in this thesis, highly influential. What became obvious to me was the strength Crisp had to masque himself aggressively as the 'other'. The fortitude it took to carry this off and more importantly the power of an individual to challenge both fashionable and conservative paradigms of the time, as a designer, I find inspirational.

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<sup>22</sup> Like Wilde, Crisp made much use of the scarf and at the end of his life had hundreds of these framed, photographed and put on public display.

<sup>23</sup> As men's fashion in the early 1960s became heavily influenced by this form of modernism Hoeymakers (2003) notes that,

*Men's suits became tighter fitting. Formal leisure suits and single-breasted suits with short tailored jackets and narrow lapels worn with narrow collared shirts and thin ties became popular (p.1).*

## Rough trade

Cole (2000) suggests that up until the 1970's gay men's dress style was dominated by two choices, overtly feminine styles or conformity.

However, by the middle of the twentieth century there were men who began to question the hegemonic, feminised or theatricised construct of homosexuality proffered by the dominant culture. Therefore during this period some gay men began to find other ways to express their sexuality through dress.

Significantly, the gay liberation<sup>24</sup> movement that ran parallel to other sub-cultural liberation movements established in America had a significant effect on the way gay men began to conceptualise themselves. However, although many commentators make this link between gay liberation and the demise of the feminised gay paradigm (Baker 2002, Cole 2000, David 1997), I would suggest that earlier manifestations of homo-eroticised hyper-masculinity had already begun to influence this questioning of identity.

Significant among these precedents were the Wandervogel,<sup>25</sup> and the rough-trade<sup>26</sup> construction of the preceding decades.

While the influence of Wandervogel permeated gay men's society through physical culture magazines,<sup>27</sup> images of rough trade were already established as a clothing

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<sup>24</sup> Gay Liberation (or Gay Lib) was a term used to describe a radical lesbian and gay movement of the late 1960s and early-to-mid 1970s in New Zealand, Australia, North America, the UK and Western Europe. Gay Lib was known for its intent to transform institutions of society such as gender, youthism and the family. In order to achieve such liberation, it employed devices like consciousness raising and direct action.

<sup>25</sup> Wandervogel is the name adopted by a popular movement of German youth groups dating back to 1896. The movement was concerned with shaking off of societal restrictions and returning to notions of nature and freedom. Wandervogel profiled ideals of masculine virility, health, male beauty and physical culture.

<sup>26</sup> Rough trade was a slang term for a masculine working class man who had sex with other men. The term is still in use, but was more widely known between 1900 and the late 1980s. Often the term referred to a male prostitute who did not perceive himself as gay.

<sup>27</sup> At the turn of the 20th century Bernarr Macfadden's *Physical Culture* magazine was in wide circulation. By the 1940s the *Athletic Model Guild* and the photographic publications of Bruce of Los Angeles were targeted specifically at gay men and led what became known in gay culture as the physique movement. In 1951 Bob Mizer began publishing one of the most widely distributed of these texts.

construct that can be evidenced in underground publications going as far back in gay culture as the 1940s.

Images like figure 2:3, appearing in 1953 in *Physique Pictorial* depict a world populated by violent working-class men.

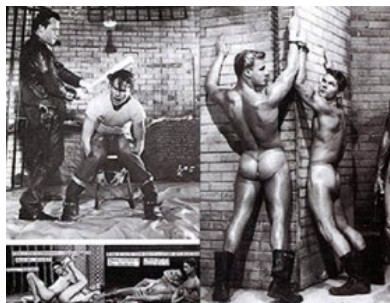


Figure 2:3 Double page spread from 1953, *Physique Pictorial*, USA.

Preceding these even images, rough trade could be evidenced in Tom of Finland illustrations completed in the mid 1940s.



Figure 2:4 Consecutive pages from a homoerotic comic *Trade. Tom of Finland* (1946)

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Bianco (2005) argues that a number of early American physique magazines, with names like *Grecian Guild Pictorial*, *Adonis*, and *American Apollo*, purported to foster the "Grecian" ideals of morality, honesty, and physical beauty. 'Photos of men in G-strings or with carefully placed fig leaves ran next to articles on the development of the mind and spirit, often written by clergy members. "I seek a sound mind in a sound body," was the Grecian Guild Pictorial's credo. "I am a Grecian." The word "Grecian," however, could easily be read as underground code for "gay"' (p.1).

These images from what Ramakers (2004) describes as the artist's 'trade' series depict two distinct types of gay men. The younger conform to the hegemonic construction of the youthful, passive, feminised man. They have slender builds, long eyelashes and submissive poses. However, what is evidenced along side them, *thirty years before gay liberation*, is another type of gay masque. This one is aggressive, with clothing that accentuates the maleness of the body. These men wear working-class attire (or derivations of it). There is a strong emphasis on fabrics like leather and clothing is cut to accentuate the genitals, chest and buttocks.

## the Clone

The clone may be defined in gay vernacular as a 'butch',<sup>28</sup> gay man. The term is mostly associated with the 1970s and 80s and was typified by a masque that often profiled a moustache, jeans, sunglasses, short haircut, and white t-shirt. However, the term grew over time to include references to leather culture, cowboy, construction-worker and fetish aesthetics.

By the 1970s writers like Damien (1970) were suggesting that many gay men were ready to change society's view of them as effeminate. He stated that,

*'the straight world has told us that if we are not masculine we are homosexual, that to be homosexual means not to be masculine'* (pp.22-3).

At this time, some gay men began to adopt a new, more masculine persona, not as part of a binary notion of *butch* and *bitch* but as a masque unrelated to preferences in sexual activity.

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<sup>28</sup> *Butch* and *bitch* were opposite positions in a heterosexist construction of gay identity that was relatively unquestioned by gay men up until the closing decades of the twentieth century. This construct was a direct transfer from heterosexual constructions of sexual relationships. The terms *Butch* and *bitch* were American but moved into common use in the UK and New Zealand in the late 1940s. *Butch* referred to a masculinised masque associated with sexual dominance and *bitch* was associated with the masque and performance of the passive homosexual feminine.

By adopting the clone masque as a basis for presentation, one did not signify a particular preference for a passive or active sexual ‘position’. What one embellished the basic masque with became a signifier of preference, (see appendix 1).

The clone had a forerunner in the *trade* masque but it was also highly influenced by the work of the photographer, performance artist and model Peter Berlin<sup>29</sup>.

In the early 1970s Berlin created a series of what were to become seminal gay photographs depicting him in hyper-masculinised poses that emphasised both his youth and physique. Unlike Physical Culture photography that had preceded these images, these works were overtly sexual. An interesting aspect of Berlin’s work was the narcissism involved; he rarely sat for other artists (Tom of Finland and Andy Warhol being the exception). He preferred to be his own designer, model and photographer.



Figure 2:5 Three photographs of, and by Peter Berlin, circa 1978.

*Berlin’s photographs often made reference to illustration in their treatment of colour and environment, but essentially they were performative. Berlin is generally conscious of, or performing to the camera. His treatment of dress is in direct discourse with his body; the two in unison being used to emphasise the overt sexuality of the images.*

Looking at Berlin’s costumes we see signifiers of the time, although, I would suggest that even for the gay environment in the 1970s, his outfits were transgressive.

<sup>29</sup> Berlin made and starred in two films, *Nights in Black Leather* (1972) and *That Boy* (1974) and along with Wakefield Poole and Jack Deveau helped to bring artistic legitimacy to gay male erotic films. Berlin’s photographs gained considerable popularity in the mid 1970s and 80s. They appeared in the Mapplethorpe curated show *Slip/Vision* [New York, 1986] most recently at the *Berlin on Berlin* show at the Leslie/Lohman Gallery [New York, 2006].

An analysis of his masques reveals how the use of heterosexual signifiers of masculinity (jackets, boots, jeans) were adopted and adapted to contribute to an encoding that is essentially gay. Thus, the chain around his upper thigh, the studded belt strapped between his legs and the ties around the boots are all clearly non-heterosexual constructions. The chain and the belt are used to emphasise the model's genitals.

The second image depicts Berlin masqued in a combination of signifiers taken from western, military and biker aesthetics. These in combination with pose are used to imply a level of narcissistic sadomasochism in the image.

The last photograph demonstrates the artist's use of pattern in design. In this image we see the use of contrasting lines on his pants being employed in much the same way accessories (belts and chains) were used in the first image.

Gay men adopting the clone paradigm posited a form of hyper masculinity that denied demarcations between the passive and the active, social class, and ethnicity. The clone became a masque that used spectacle in such a way that the wearer was presented, not as an independent personality, but as a construction of signifiers of masculinity.

Thus the appearance of the clone in the 1970s and 80s may be seen, not simply as an extension of the 'rough trade' masque of the preceding decades, but as a deliberate effort to forge an identity that broke with the heterosexist paradigm of the passive/receptive feminine and the active dominant [masculine] penetrator.

While the clone masque drew on certain working-class notions of maleness, the construction of ensembles and the distinctive way clothes were worn, set the nature of these masques apart from heterosexual encodements of masculinity.

Essentially, what the clone did was posit a distinct form of gay hyper masculinity.





Figure 2:6 Details of the clone masque (Distressed Levis 501s, wide belts, reflective sunglasses, and boots,) *circa 1985*.

This look was achieved by the integration of specific features.

Among them was the wearing of Levis 501, straight leg jeans. When wearing these jeans, the top button on the fly was left unbuttoned. This device changed the way the crotch region sat. The crotch and legs of these jeans were often deliberately *aged*, normally by wearing the jeans into a hot bath to allow the denim to shrink-fit tightly. While wet, the fabric was distressed by rubbing surface areas with pumice or sandpaper.

The clone torso was generally clad in a checked shirt, worn over a white t-shirt, singlet, or the bare chest. This exposure of the bare chest became popular on the dance floors as disco, and later club music coincided with drug influenced party culture of the period.

Other features of the clone masque, including the short haircut, the wide belt and the workers' boots, Fischer (1977) argues were adapted items of heterosexuality's codes of masculinity. He argues they were,



*‘Essentially neutral in the culture at large, but form[ed] a style within the gay culture’ (p.15).*

Another significant feature of the clone masque was the importance of the brand. In a highly consumer conscious period where marketers were already identifying the phenomenon of the gay or pink dollar<sup>30</sup> certain branded items became an integrated part of the masque. In addition to Levis 501s, significant brands included Aviator (Ray-Ban sunglasses), Doc Martin boots, Converse All-stars (sand-shoe boots), Fred Perry and Lacoste T-shirts, and Adidas gym wear (significantly, shorts). Brands of underwear also began to profile in importance at this time, (although these were to gather more significance in the mid-to-late 1990s). Significant brands of the time were Calvin Klein, Joe Banana (Australia), and in the US, Castro Street.



Figure 2:7 Salesman on Castro Street.

*Underwear outside one of six retail outlets in the city. (San Francisco, circa 1985)*

Bomber and denim or leather jackets, often with studs as decoration, became *de rigueur*. Generally, the older these garments looked the more authority and authenticity they generated. Studded belts or wide leather belts with cowboy buckles,

<sup>30</sup> The Pink Dollar (or *Dorothy Dollar*) was a term emerging at this time that described the purchasing power gay men. In the United Kingdom, this spending was known as the Pink Pound. Income of gay and lesbian households was identified [and remains] higher than average. Many pink dollar households are also categorized by demographers as DINK, double income, no kids. By the 1980s, gay men had become clearly identified as having on average high levels of disposable income and were easy targets for luxury brand marketing. Specific businesses that have tried to tap into these markets with specific advertising campaigns include American Airlines, Diesel jeans, Abercrombie & Finch, Levis, Ray-Ban sunglasses, and Calvin Klein.

key chains, and vests (either in leather or denim) worn with, or with out a garment under it contributed to the hyper masculinised nature of these ensembles.<sup>31</sup>

Elements of the clone masque, unlike the same garments worn by straight men of the time, were highly integrated and in general worn in a self-consciously tighter manner.

Levine (1995) states that in heterosexual society, many of these clothes,

*were used to camouflage the imperfect body, but on the whole men that adopted the clone look, adopted a whole life style that involved using the gym and eating the right foods. Having a good body was, at lest initially, as important as having the right clothes (p. 107).*

However, specific elements inside the broader encodement of the clone contributed specific meaning to the masque. These included certain specific signifiers such as the handkerchief, the earring and keys worn on a metal chain on belt loop of jeans.

### **the handkerchief**

The handkerchief worn in the pockets of the gay clone took on specific meanings at this time. Fischer (1977) says,

*The gay semiotic, specifically the handkerchief signifier, was created in the leather community for practicality. Patrons of leather bars wanted to know who to cruise- they needed an identification system which would label men as passive or aggressive and also signify the type of sex act in which they wished to engage (p. 20).*



<sup>31</sup> When we parody the clone masque today we often reference *the Village People*. However, I would suggest that this look is a pastiche of the original with elements still evident e.g. the Levis 501's, but others decidedly absent. What are generally missing are the clear encodements of sexual meaning like handkerchiefs in back pockets and crotch-less leather pants. What was manufactured for popular consumption of the gay men's disco ethos was a sanitised reconstruction of the gay masque.



Figure 2:8 The semiotics of the handkerchief. USA 1980

A navy blue handkerchief placed in the right hip pocket indicated the wearer's desire to take the passive role during anal sex. Conversely, a navy blue handkerchief placed in the left hip pocket indicated that the wearer would assume an active role.<sup>32</sup>

Fischer notes that,

*In San Francisco, the signs began appearing around 1971. The Trading Post, a department store specializing in erotic merchandising, began promoting handkerchiefs in the store and printing cards with their meanings. The Red and Blue handkerchiefs and their significance were already in existence, and meanings were assigned to other colors as well (ibid.).*

Traditionally, in the heterosexual world, referencing ownership and non-accessibility was indicated by the use of engagement and wedding rings. In America this non-accessibility was also indicated by the wearing of a lavalier or pledge pin.

However, Fischer, (1977) suggests that in the clone culture, the reverse was evident.

<sup>32</sup> A fuller profile of readings associated with the wearing of handkerchiefs during this period is provided in appendix 1.

*Obviously one reason behind this was that gays were less constrained by a type of code which defined people as the property of others or felt the need to promote monogamy. The gay semiotic is far more sophisticated than straight sign language because in gay culture roles are not as clearly defined (p. 21).*

When entering a gay bar or nightclub at the time it was impossible to read a person's preferred role in sex because of the homogenised dress code. A room full of men wearing Levis, checked shirts, leather vests and T. shirts, did not give indications as to individual preference. Therefore, by attaching signifiers such as keys rings, teddy bears, zip lock bags, and handkerchiefs worn in specific ways, one was able to understand through dress what people were communicating.

### **the hypersexualised leather influence**

With the rise in the overtly hyper-masculine gay male, leather became a specific system of encodement that was adopted for purposes of identification and disclosure inside the gay club and bar scene.

Fischer suggests that the leather masque was influenced by the idealisation of the rebel/outsider in 1950's films like *The Wild One* [1953] and *Rebel without a Cause* [1955]. Brando and Dean became archetypes of sexualised anti-heroes whose youth, freedom and defiance of convention, fitted easily with aspirations of some gay men at the time. The leather costumes they wore also drew on certain aspects of the rough trade masque that was already an aspect of gay men's culture.

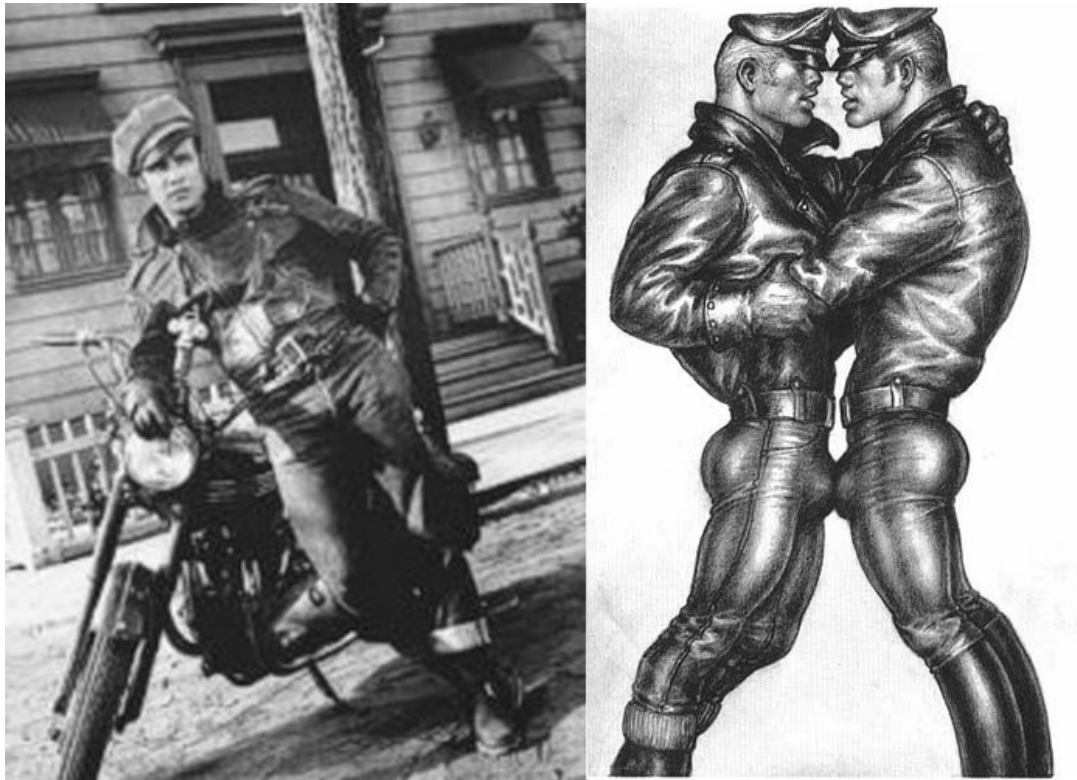


Figure 2:9 Comparative encodements of *The Wild One* and Tom of Finland's *Leather men* 1953 and 1983 respectively.

*Note in the gay masque, an increased emphasis on the crutch, the use of wide belts and the streamlined aesthetic of the jacket/pants combination. These design approaches all serve to emphasise the triangular (hyper-masculine) body form. Small details like dual fabric caps and the upturned leg of the jeans are replaced in the gay leather look so a singularity of fabric type is emphasised. As a feature of this, boots like Brando's have been superseded either by leather horse riding, construction worker or military boots.*

Fischer argues that '*Leather was adopted and adapted as a proclamation of non-acceptance or separation*' (p.20).

However, the leather cult was considered different to other gay sub-cultural groups at the time as it dealt in very overt ways with signifiers of transgressive sexual behaviour. While in most gay groupings the semiotic mode was publicised, it was not always practiced. However, in the leather scene there was a strong level of adherence to its semiotic code; leather was considered more than attire. It was associated with codes of practice and certain commonly understood values and rituals. This may be because the forms of sexual gratification sought by leather men were often very defined.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> However, even though the leather scene may be understood as having hereditary ties to bondage and discipline, one cannot automatically assume that all leather men are bondage and discipline advocates.

Cole (2000) suggests that the leather man often strove for a hyper-masculine lifestyle where he might display many of the outer appearances of an idealised masculine type.

*He might take an active interest, sometimes to the point of obsession, in things that were traditionally associated with virility. He might develop a muscular frame to actuate a stage of visual gratification and to felicitate a platform to show off his masque [as a relationship between body and clothing]. He might wear tattoos. He might take on masculine jobs to maintain the aura of the heterosexual male, or he might shape an appearance of a rough hewn, anti-intellectual member of the gang (pp.108-109).*

Thus, 'leather' was not just about clothing as this fabric it was saturated with sexual connotations. The wearing of leather connotes an aura of strength and power and with a well-honed body; the fabric acts like a primordial second skin that shows the physique in ways that draw specific attention to individual features. The nature of leather allowed garments to be constructed closely around the body creating an enclosure that accentuated the contours of the physique. This was often further emphasised by topstitching, using the weight and thickness of the fabric to introduce ridges that were visual representations of different muscle groupings.

The masquing of gay men in leather carried suggestions of the rebel, the hunter, of aggression, prowess and virility. Weltzien (2005) states,

*The historical examples of changing dress as a presentation of masculinity come into view, in most cases, in the context of a fight, and confirmed by violence. Putting on a mask or a costume resembles the armoring of knights of war, painting and tattooing of face and body by warriors of different cultures (p. 243).*

Within the gay community at this time, black leather became a symbol of something unknown or untried. It represented to a certain extent 'the other' inside a culture of 'others'. As such, in gay magazines of the period, its codes were often alluded to but rarely portrayed in full. The gay press was unlikely to run a fashion spread devoted to black leather but showed a propensity for depicting 'suggestions' of the leather scene.

It is of interest to note that in the formative years of the leather masque, most signifiers of sexuality beyond those provided by over-ground garments were either made by the wearers (or their friends) or bought and recontextualised from other 'over-ground' sources.

Cole (2000) notes,

*There were no shops dealing with ready made leather sex clothes in the 1950's; instead a harness was created by visiting the local saddle shop and improvising' and leather pants and jackets came from Harley Davidson. Chaps came from western shops, as did boots and vests. (p. 108).*

Although many theorists (Cole 2000; Fischer 1977; Weltzein 2005) recognise the influence of 1950s American cinema on the leather masque, little attention has been paid to the influence of British punk on the phenomenon.

By 1973 Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's designs from 430 Kings Road had moved out into the British youth culture and the aesthetic of torn fabrics, chains and references to bondage and rebellion were quickly taken up and integrated into the underground gay leather aesthetic. Like the early leather scene, punk ensembles borrowed from eclectic sources and recontextualised seemingly antithetical signifiers into cohesive meaning. Often this meaning related to notions of anarchy or rebellion.

In the early years of the leather scene, there were essentially three groups of gay men who might don a leather masque.

**Leather queens-** gay men that enjoyed the look of leather and would dress in leather for a night but the scene was not a lifestyle.

**Motor bikers-** these men were motorbike enthusiast and rode bikes often belonging to bike clubs. You often saw these men in full leather costume.

**The S/M culture-** this culture was organised around dominance, control and endurance and symbols such as whips, chains and leather. These men wore leather most of the time and considered it a life style.

## the Cowboy



Figure 2:10 Comparison between Cowboy: Tom of Finland 1988 and a Marlborough Man press ad of the same year.

*Note again the tighter fit of the gay cowboy masque with its greater emphasis on the body form; its sharp toed black boots, and tightly fitting shirts and pants. These are not clothes designed for labour on the ranch, they imply association but their function is the pose.*

The cowboy and biker/leather archetype were both instrumental in the broader hyper-masculinsing of gay men's dress in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Both represented aspects of maleness associated with individuality and male dominated environments. Of the two, the cowboy arguably had more widespread exposure through prominent advertising campaigns like 'the Marlborough Man' and in certain clothing campaigns like the Levi anti-hero television and print commercials of the time. These played up the hyper-masculine loner image in a way that was understood and easily transferred into the commodity self<sup>34</sup> of gay men seeking alternative identities at the time.

Fischer (1977) argues more superficially. He suggests that,

*...the western image was popular for three reasons. First, the movies and television made it familiar. Second, the cowboy lived a man's life in a man's world. Third, western attire was easily translated into contemporary dress* (p. 19).

<sup>34</sup> The term 'commodity self' as used by Ewen (2001), suggests that consumers can become the sum of the products they employ. This means that the individual begins to lose his 'self' to the seduction of product-identities targeted at him. Thus a gay man might say I am a FORD or a HOLDEN or a SPEIGHTS man.

Thus as brands present associations between themselves and certain values associated with masculinity or romanticised 'outsider' status, the consumer [gay man] identifies with these values with the 'look' he might adopt off the back of them. Advertisers targeting gay men at this time often alluded to "freedom and masculinity" through the consumption of their commodities. These campaigns preyed on fears of being read as feminine and of hyper-self-consciousness. Gay men were therefore offered "solutions" through commodity consumption.

A fuller explanation of this idea, in a non-gay context is provided in Ewen, S. (2001). *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture and Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness*. New York: Basic Books.



Unlike the biker/leather archetype the cowboy was a rural construct, remodeled for what was essentially an urban gay look. The masque of the cowboy did not require a horse as an accompaniment, nor did it require guns, lassos or the ability to ride. What it adopted into its ensemble were signifiers of an essentially manufactured myth. Men wore the flannel shirts, vests, jeans and in some cases hats they saw in advertisements like the Marlborough Man. Occasionally in this masque a handkerchief was also worn, but in the encoding of the cowboy, this was not worn in a pocket but around the neck.

The cowboy may be understood therefore as representing the frontier and male dominated society, the bunkhouse, (featured heavily in Tom of Finland's drawings of cowboys), wide, open spaces and male camaraderie. It was a form of masque that presented not a man's personality, but an alluring front.

Weltzein (2005) in discussing the western masque in popular culture says that it strikes,

*...that special kind of macho masculinity. [The cowboy masque] makes use of the mask as a form of butch embellishment. As a very special kind of dress the mask always provokes the wish to see behind it, to take it off and to discover something hidden. In this, the mask represents the general possibility or recreating a person by a change of dress (p. 230).*

## **conclusion**

Gay masques historically present a narrative of transgression and manipulation, and at times this manipulation runs in two directions. Sometimes gay men have manipulated certain heterosexual codes of dress as a method of disclosing themselves to others in their subculture. At other times gay men's masques have been shaped by their vulnerability to consumer culture, the power of the brand and the phenomenon of the commodity self.

These influences have enabled gay masques to be read as signifiers of their time. Gay men have communicated using dress in different ways at different times in history. Wilde donned the theatrical masque of the transgressive aesthete, Crisp dressed in men's clothing but used accessories to create a highly provocative masque, comparable in its time to those adopted by the street queens and Nancyboys of London's Soho district.

Rough trade was an early manifestation of the heterosexist idea of all relationships having a dominant and passive party. It profiled a hypermasculineising of the dominant homosexual male. Rough Trade's masque emphasised the shape of the body and the role of undress in presenting masculinity. Trade may be understood therefore as a perceptible forerunner of the Clone, but growing out of an essentially heterosexist paradigm.

Clones may be seen as having political relevance the masque dissolved the line between 'butch' and 'bitch'. Clones presented themselves as men to each other and to the over-ground. However, within the culturally understood encodements of the time these men were able to communicate certain sexual preferences through the use of 'meaning specific' signifiers.

Although the profile of the gay masque went through many metamorphoses between the late 1890s and the late 1980s, it has not stopped changing.<sup>35</sup> What is significant is that the desire to present profiles of gay masculinity still exists and is evident in bath houses, bear clubs, private cruise clubs, gay book stores, some night clubs and in the wording of on-line gay dating and cruising sites.

Being cognisant of this, the next chapter of this exegesis will look at an arena not discussed in this overview. It is the hypermasculinisation of the military. In discussing this I will posit the design of the ensembles that constitute the practical component of this thesis.

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<sup>35</sup> Today I see the gay masque undergoing a form of homogenisation that to a significant extent is commodity driven. Perhaps the homogenised phenomena of the youth culture in the first part of the twenty-first century can be looked on as the truly hegemonic, making it almost what Maynard (2004) calls, "*an overarching uniformity of clothing*" (p.32), where it has become almost impossible to distinguish straight from gay youth purely by their use of clothing as a signifier of identity.

# chapter **three**

*project commentary*

## introduction

Wilde's assertion that '*the true mystery of the world is the visible*' underpins the thinking behind the collection of masques that form the practical outcome of this thesis. These masques are an interchangeable network of garments that interplay *visible* notions of dress and undress to suggest a claimed 'gay' space in the *militarisation of masculinity*.

The way these masques are designed and presented disrupt certain conventions of the heterosexual militaristic. This is because as a designer I have drawn on signifiers and values drawn from gay men's treatment of the masque. However, the works are not simply historical applications of past convention in gay men's masque wearing. They go beyond application and artistically engage with issues of structure, fabric surface, body form, ornamentation, eroticisation and transgression.

I ask:

*In a contemporary, media-saturated environment where the military as a signifier of masculinity infiltrates contemporary society's construction of manhood (from television news and propaganda to children's toys), what might the homosexualisation of military encodements of masculinity look like if it was actualised as form for use in gay men's culture?*

In considering this question one must understand systems of encodement already identified in the construction of the gay masque. However, one must also be able to project outwards from this, considering both the position of gay men in the heterosexualised world of the military and signifiers of the military hyper-masculine.

## the gay man & the military



Figures 3:1 and 3:2 *The first photograph is a contemporary gay comment on the US military and their policies around gay men's sexuality. [Anon. 10 July 2005 ]*  
*The second image was also taken anonymously in New York's Times Square during the WWII victory celebrations in 1945 and appeared on the cover of Life Magazine.*

Perhaps it is odd that gay men might consider the military masque as holding the power of sexual and physical allure, considering that most armies in the world still consider being gay an objectionable phenomenon.<sup>36</sup>

Attitudes to enforced 'invisibility' of gay men may be exemplified by the 1993 US legislation colloquialised as "*Don't ask, Don't tell*". This policy implements Pub.L. 103-160 (10 U.S.C. § 654) and prohibits anyone who has sexual or romantic contact with a person of the same sex from serving in the armed forces of the United States. It also prohibits any homosexual or bisexual while serving in the United States armed forces, from disclosing his sexual orientation.

The threat posed to the military by '*out*' homosexual men may be understood in terms of the historical association of gayness with immorality. The phenomenon was exemplified in 2007 when Marine Gen. Peter Pace, (chairman of the US Joint Chiefs

<sup>36</sup> An example of this is evidenced in current processes for seeking exemption military service in Turkey on the grounds of homosexuality. This is an extremely difficult and humiliating process: one is required to submit photographs or videos graphically displaying sexual intercourse with another man and/or submit to an anal examination that supposedly yields proof of passive anal sex. These are not guaranteed ways of being exempt from service; they are practiced arbitrarily at the whim of whatever military authority and are used more as a degrading strategy of systematic humiliation than anything else. (Kaos GL Files 2007)

of Staff), stated that homosexual acts were "*immoral*" and he emphasised that the military "*should not condone immoral acts*".<sup>37</sup>

In the US, more than 10,870 military personnel believed to be gay have been discharged since 1993.<sup>38</sup>

In New Zealand the situation is a little more liberal, although homophobia is still rife in all three of the armed services.<sup>39</sup> Although recently the UK was forced to drop its ban on gay personnel due to the Human Rights ruling in Belgium, in most military forces internationally homosexuality remains a criterion either for disqualification or expulsion.

In considering encodements of the military masque specifically for gay men, artists such as Tom of Finland and Kobi Israel have emphasised notions of power and exposure of the body as core signifiers of homoeroticised hyper masculinity.

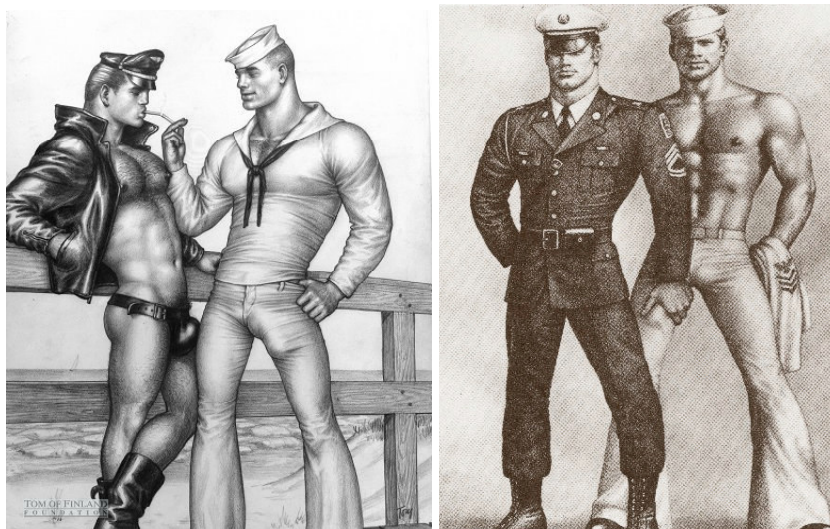


Figure 3:3 Tom of Finland's treatment of the military 1967 and 1977 [pencil on paper].

Although the military uniform as a fetish masque was not a dominant feature in the artist's work, sailors did appear significantly in barroom drawings completed in the late 1950s and then spasmodically through the next two decades. Tom of Finland's treatments of the military often referenced generic US designs and his silhouettes were either highly tapered to emphasise the torso, or made of fabric that clung to body contours. The cut of his trousers was such that it normally emphasised the genitals and buttocks. Significantly, although often decorated with medals and insignia, his soldiers never carried weapons.

<sup>37</sup> [Ann Scott Tyson](#). (Wednesday, March 14, 2007). Don't ask, don't tell. Washington Post, p. A0

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> In 2001 the Royal New Zealand Navy won a *Manaaki Tangata Work-Life Balance* Award from the EEO Trust for work on creating a gay-friendly environment. Initiatives used to address homophobia in the navy have provided major anti-homophobia learning tools for the Royal Australian Navy, and are currently being considered by the UK Navy.



Figure 3:4 Kobi Israel. (Circa 2001). *Photographic print.*

In his work Israel considers the fine line between the homo-social and the homo-erotic in army life. He discusses this tension as “*confusing and torturous for a gay soldier*”. He says, “*Soldiers hug and kiss each other, say "I love you brother" to each other, sleep together - sometimes lean on each others' chests, sometimes share a tiny mattress, have communal showers where they play "boy games" like throwing water and soap on each other, sometimes share a hot shower, sometimes masturbate together*”.<sup>40</sup>

Although their treatments of the military’s encodements of hyper masculinity may be seen as *challenging*, both draw on signifiers of garment structure and un-dress to emphasise camaraderie and assertiveness.

The relationship between the body and *undress* is a significant difference evident in the framing of masculinity between gay men and their heterosexual counterparts. Often gay men’s hypermasculine masques are unabashed in emphasising the buttocks torso and genitals. They engage with revelation as well as covering. In this regard, the gay masque often displays and presents the naked body as something enhanced by covering. Thus the cut of a garment may promote a theatricised masculine body shape, the tailoring of lines may draw attention to gender specificity and the erotic, and transgressive are made part of the *visible mystery* of dress.

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<sup>40</sup> See <http://www.kobi-israel.com/gay.php?gspot=2>



Understanding these features of the gay man's masque, it is useful at this point to discuss how they influence and profile in the designs of the presented work. In doing this I will discuss features of certain garments in the collection: *the Scotsman*, *the Gladiator*, *the Paratrooper* and *Storm Trooper*. These masques creatively engage with notions of the homoeroticised hypermasculine by drawing upon both historical and fictional constructs. They are discussed below as discrete ideas, but must be understood as concepts that can disintegrate and re-gather in interchangeable forms. Thus the boundaries of demarcation are permeable. An element of one masque may be worn with that of another. This is a form of transgression. It accepts that gay men transgress boundaries between heterosexual notions of the 'complete' and re-order and arrange to create masques to suit their own purposes.

### **Camouflage**



Figure 3:5

However, before doing this, it is useful to discuss a concept that permeates all of these masques. It is the notion of camouflage. Camouflage creates an association with the military, even when the rest of the design may not appear to be specifically martial.

The surface patterns of fabric developed by the military for survival in hostile environments mean that troops can operate effectively, but in a manner where they are undetected.



This has direct parallels in the need historically for gay men to operate as undetected in certain environments. The most obvious of these environments are those associated with cruising<sup>41</sup> where gay men are subject to the hostile attention of queer bashers and the police. However, camouflage is also associated with notions of '*passing*'. Passing (or *straight acting*) is a term used to describe behaviour and attire that enable a gay man to present himself and be perceived as heterosexual in a work or social environment, where his identification as homosexual might be detrimental.

The concept of camouflage is therefore a ubiquitous phenomenon in gay men's society as both overt and covert discrimination (despite the provisions of the Human Rights amendment)<sup>42</sup> are still frequent experiences.

The use of camouflage in the gay world has a duality. It enables one to hide from hostile attention while simultaneously seeking out other men who might want sexual and emotional connection.

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<sup>41</sup> Cruising is the act of looking for sexual gratification with anonymous partners. In New Zealand this activity often takes place in and around public spaces like toilets, parks and specific beaches.

<sup>42</sup> Protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation became part of New Zealand law on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1993, when the Human Rights Bill s.21 (1)(m), was passed into legislation.

## the Scotsman



Front Figure 3:6



Side Figure 3:7



Back Figure 3:8

This first masque demonstrates the creation of the homoerotic, hyper masculine through a strategic use of cut and silhouette.

It uses both fabric print and cut to re-orchestrate notions of the military hypermasculine.

Craik (2005) has suggested, that authority, status and power can be referenced by the cut and silhouette of a masque. In Tom of Finland's work we encounter men connected by a cleanliness and simplicity of line that emphasises the torso, buttocks and genitals. The body is covered and revealed in such a way that we have made *visible* its homoerotic nature.

In my work this attention to proportion is activated through a series of specific techniques. Clothing (as in this masque) is often fitted tightly across specific contours of the body. This emphasises the shape of defining features of the masculine form. This is achieved by revealing the body as partially undressed, or by creating emphasis through the use of stretch fabrics, or by using lines established through the cut or embellishment of the fabric.

In the Scotsman, the militaristic is also referenced by the use of a belt that contains a pocket for holding essential items for survival. In gay men's culture this has historical references to the *zhoosh* or *trade bag* of the 1960s. This was a small bag carried by

men cruising that contained lubricants, ‘trade towels’ and small weapons necessary for defense. In the 1990s this concept was revived by the BEATS project of the New Zealand AIDS foundation, where safe sex packs containing condoms, lubricant and pamphlets were given out to men encountered in cruising environments.

The cut of the jacket in this masque makes distinctive use of webbing, moving from the wide point on the shoulders to a narrow point on the hips. This is designed to create an illusion of a V shape that is an established ideal in the presentation of the male torso. The slight curvature of the belt from side hip to the centre front of the ensemble gives the illusion of elongation to both the torso and the leg. The length of the shorts is important as it draws attention to the upper thigh and emphasises this muscle structure of the calf.

The inclusion of a half kilt in this masque gives a transgressive edge that adds to the masque’s homoerotic nature. It does this because it plays with the tension between notions of feminine, and conversely with the ‘skirt’ as an encodement of militaristic masculinity in Scottish and Roman warriors uniforms. The kilt/skirt half wraps the hips so it emphasises active movements of the body. It does this partly through its emphasis on un-dress and partly through the way it flares out when the body is in motion.



Figure 3:9 Cut of underpants for the Scotsman [detail]

The design of the shorts in this masque is significant as they emphasise the *phallic masculine*. This is because they are deliberately cut in such a way as draw attention to the space filled by the genitals.<sup>43</sup> This design is therefore a transgression of established approaches to men’s trouser design where traditionally most clothes (including underpants) are designed either hide or only subtly suggest the genitals.

<sup>43</sup> The term for this in gay men’s language in the middle of last century was the *basket* or *lunchbox*. The suggestion of the genital contents of trousers was a significant feature of much camp discussion relating to attractiveness of other men at that time.

## the Gladiator



Front  
Figure 3:10



side  
Figure 3:11



back  
Figure 3:12

The Gladiator continues the use of camouflage print, but combines it with Lycra netting (as a fatigue scarf) and stretch fabric (as underwear). Both fabrics cling to body contours and texture them in a manner closer to a second skin than a donned cover.

This ensemble is perhaps the most overtly gay and as a masque it was designed to reflect upon the amyl-scented world of the gay dance floor. In this environment of energy and posturing, a strong emphasis is given to the interplay between dress and undress. Because of the influence of drugs and music, men often dance for long periods of time on the floor and the sweat-saturated torso becomes part of the presentation of sexualised identity.

The rhythm of the dance as an expression of sexuality draws attention to the pelvis. Here we see the use of strapping and cut in the design of the pants emphasises movement of the buttocks and crotch.

The use of belting and buckles suggests a level of aggression and masculine posturing alongside references to freedom and restraint.

The vest in this masque is detachable. It can be worn onto the dance floor but it can also be taken off so more of the body is revealed. This is not a version of the waistcoat, but a design that plays creatively with concepts of fatigue vests as reconstituted signifiers of undress.

## the Paratrouper



Front  
Figure 3:13



side  
Figure 3:14



back  
Figure 3:15

This masque again places heavy emphasis on the developed torso as a signifier of hypermasculinity.<sup>44</sup> In this respect the front detail of the top is designed to draw attention to the pectoral and chest muscles. Similarly, the left of centre back places emphasis on the V shape of the torso.

<sup>44</sup> Gay men often wear their outfits tighter to reveal the work put into the manipulation of the body in the gymnasium. In the 1970's and 1980's gay society witnessed gravitation towards this institution, to the extent that gymnasiums were set up specifically for gay men. Attention to the upper torso, buttocks, abs [abdominal muscles] and legs became profiles of men's engagement with body enhancement actualised through the use of weights and 'work out' regimes.

The garment plays subtle homage to a mixed signifier of the handkerchief. On a surface level this is the *sweat rag* used by soldiers fighting in adverse conditions. However, the fabric also references the gay semiotics of the trouser handkerchief worn as an indicator of sexual proclivity. In formal decoding of gay semiotics, the *olive drab* handkerchief indicates a preference for sex with military men (see appendix 1).

This masque also reconstitutes signifiers of industry. Plumbing washers are decontextualised and worn as adornments. These now function as devices hung at the side of the pants that enable the wearer to reshape the silhouette of the garment.

The masque may be worn with military boots and leggings but across the interchangeable nature of the masques, I suggest that footwear may be treated transgressively. Thus Swiss army leggings (traditionally used to hold the trouser into the boot) can be employed as black leather arm straps (see portfolio). These are buckled into place and serve to heighten attention to muscle structure.

## Storm trooper



Detail  
Figure 3:16



Front  
Figure 3:17



Back  
Figure 3:18

This masque has its point of differentiation in that its use of camouflage is associated with the night. Here a heavy, black, acrylic-lycra mix is used for a garment with references coats designed for the German navy during the Second World War. The T-shirt worn as a form of '*tank top*' is knitted from heavily textured black wool. The undergarment's texture sits in contrast to the matt smoothness of the masque's outer layer.

Ideas of transgression permeate Storm Trooper. From the front of the jacket, where medals might once have hung there is now a chrome fob chain (a signifier of the British Dandy). The use of other details like buckles, D rings, and small, plastic aeroplanes are used as detachable brooches. These have no remaining function other than a droll parody, where an emblem of destruction is reduced to ornamental decoration.<sup>45</sup>

Webbing (normally used for strengthening military body-bags and parachutes) is sewn on to the masque as a way of emphasising its structure. This material is also

<sup>45</sup> This treatment may be linked to Quentin Crisp's use of brooches, decontextualised from their cultural function and worn transgressively as embellishments signifying the *other*.



used transgressively to suggest an inverted peace sign on the back of the jacket (figure 3:6).

Storm Trooper also draws inspiration from Tom of Finland's illustrations of tightly jacketed guards from the 1960s and his heavy interplay between the vest, the torso and the open coat. The jacket of this masque is designed to hang open in such a way as to actively emphasise the structure and contours of the torso.

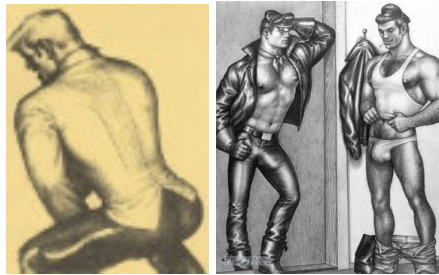


Figure 3:19 Tom of Finland drawings from 1965 showing tight, highly structured, stretch coats and the singlet/vest worn as a second skin under a black jacket.

In fashion, reflections on Tom of Finland's hypermasculinised constructs of gay men have been evidenced in the May 2000 catwalk show at the University of Philadelphia<sup>46</sup> and more significantly in the (2005) *Absolute Vodka* show that commissioned from Gary Robinson and David Johnson, a collection translated from the artist's drawings.<sup>47</sup>

However, unlike the work of Robinson and Johnson, Storm Trooper is not a translation. Rather it is a masque that pays homage to an aesthetic, and in so doing, transports it beyond application of drawings into fashion.

The masque is the most forward projecting of the designs in this thesis. In it we still note attention to the 'center' evidenced in the wide belt strapped around the waist to draw attention to the lower torso.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://citypaper.net/articales/042700/cs.catwalk.shtml>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.findarticales.com/p/articales/mi>



## conclusion

This collection of masques is a response to Wilde's contention that,

*... 'the true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.'*

The visible may be understood as a series of signs that may be creatively manipulated to design masques that allow gay men to hide and reveal.

In an introduction to Warwick and Cavallaro's book, *Fashioning the Frame* (1998) the authors suggest that identity relies on boundaries to individuate the self. Dress, they argue, challenges boundaries, it frames the body and serves both to distinguish and connect the self and the 'other'. The authors argue that clothing is ambiguous and produces a complex relation between self and not self.

Thus the gay masque is not the self, but a presentation made for others by the self.

It is what Frye (1957) suggests is,

*"a species of drama... in which the characters tend to be, or become aspects of human personality, rather than independent characters"* (pp. 365-7).

The masques designed for this thesis project address the question:

*What would the gay masque's annexation of the military look like if it engaged with notions of hyper masculinity and homoeroticism?'*

They are a collection of interchangeable, transgressive ensembles that may be worn by gay men as a system of identification. They draw on a history of gay men's masquing as cultural practice and in synthesizing and applying this history, they eroticise and hypermasculinise the body.

They are a manifestation of

*Wilde's mystery of the visible.*

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# **appendix   one**

*handkerchief codes in gay men's bar culture of the 1980s*

The handkerchief code was a traditional form of signaling to others of sexual preferences and interests. Gay men used this code to communicate with each other in the noisy and distracting environment of gay bars. The code also embraced some objects like keys, zip lock bags and small teddy bears. Although not widely used today, this form of encodement by gay men in the 1980s profiled a highly complex and system of meaning.

The following diagram (using gay men's terms of the period) provides a breakdown of the colour, artifact and positioning system. It is available on line at

<http://www.gaycityusa.com/hankycodes.htm>

COLOR	WORN ON LEFT	WORN ON RIGHT
BLACK	heavy SM top	heavy SM bottom
GREY	bondage top	fit to be tied!
BLUE, Light	wants head	cocksucker
BLUE, Robin's Egg	69er	anything but 69ing
BLUE, Medium	cop	copsucker
BLUE, Navy	fucker (top)	fuckee (bottom)
BLUE, Airforce	pilot/flight attendant	likes flyboys
BLUE, Light w/WHITE Stripe	sailor	lookin' for salty seamen
BLUE, Teal	cock & ball torturer	cock & ball torturee
RED	fist fucker	fist fuckee
MAROON	cuts	bleeds
RED, Dark	2-handed fister	2-handed fistee
PINK, Light	dildo fucker	dildo fuckee
PINK, Dark	tit torturer	tit torturee
MAUVE	into navel worshippers	has a navel fetish
MAGENTA	suck my pits	armpit freak
PURPLE	piercer	piercee
LAVENDER	likes drag queens	drag queen
YELLOW	pisser/WS	piss freak
YELLOW, Pale	spits	drool crazy
MUSTARD	hung 8"+	wants 8"+
GOLD	two looking for one	one looking for two
ORANGE	anything anytime	nothing now (just cruising)
APRICOT	two tons o' fun	chubby chaser
CORAL	suck my toes	shrimper (sucks toes)

COLOR	WORN ON LEFT	WORN ON RIGHT
RUST	a cowboy	a cowboy's horse
FUSCHIA	spanker	spankee
GREEN, Kelly	hustler (for rent)	john (looking to buy)
GREEN, Hunter	daddy	orphan boy looking for daddy
OLIVE DRAB	military top	military bottom
GREEN, Lime	dines off tricks (food)	dinner plate (will buy dinner)
BEIGE	rimmer	rimmee
BROWN	scat top	scat bottom
BROWN LACE	uncut	likes uncut
BROWN SATIN	cut	likes cut
CHARCOAL	latex fetish top	latex fetish bottom
GREY FLANNEL	owns a suit	likes men in suits
WHITE	beat my meat (J/O)	I'll do us both (J/O)
HOLSTEIN	milker	milkee
CREAM	cums in condoms	sucks cum out of condoms
BLACK w/WHITE Check	safe sex top	safe sex bottom
RED w/WHITE Stripe	shaver	shavee
RED w/BLACK Stripe	furry bear	likes bears
WHITE LACE	likes white bottoms	likes white tops
BLACK w/WHITE Stripe	likes black bottoms	likes black tops
BROWN w/WHITE Stripe	likes latino bottoms	likes latino tops
YELLOW w/WHITE Stripe	likes asian bottoms	likes asian tops
BLUE, Light w/WHITE Dots	likes white suckers	likes to suck whites
BLUE, Light w/BLACK Dots	likes black suckers	likes to suck blacks
BLUE, Light w/BROWN Dots	likes latino suckers	likes to suck latinos
BLUE, Light w/YELLOW Dots	likes asian suckers	likes to suck asians
RED/WHITE GINGHAM	park sex top	park sex bottom
BROWN CORDUROY	headmaster	student
PAISLEY	wears boxer shorts	likes boxer shorts
FUR	bestialist top	bestialist bottom
GOLD LAME	likes muscleboy bottoms	likes muscleboy tops
SILVER LAME	starfucker	celebrity
BLACK VELVET	has/takes videos	will perform for the camera
WHITE VELVET	voyeur (likes to watch)	will put on a show

COLOR	WORN ON LEFT	WORN ON RIGHT
LEOPARD	has tattoos	likes tattoos
TAN	smokes cigars	likes cigars
TEDDY BEAR	cuddler	cuddle
KEWPIE DOLL	chicken (under-aged)	chicken hawk (likes young adolescents)
DIRTY JOCKSTRAP	wears a dirty jock	sucks dirty jocks clean
DOILY	tearoom top (pours)	tearoom bottom (drinks)
MOSQUITO NETTING	outdoor sex top	outdoor sex bottom
ZIPLOC BAG	has drugs	looking for drugs
COCKTAIL NAPKIN	bartender	bar groupie
KLEENEX	stinks	sniffs
KEYS IN FRONT	has a car	looking for a ride
KEYS IN BACK	has a home	needs a place to stay
HOUNDSTOOTH	likes to nibble	willing to be bitten
UNION JACK	skinhead top	skinhead bottom
CALICO	new in town	tourists welcome
TERRY CLOTH	bathhouse top	bathhouse bottom
WHITE w/MULTICOLOR Dots	hosting an orgy	looking for an orgy

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# **appendix two**

*poetic work created as a contextualising document for the masques.*



The poetic work below draws on a lexicon of underground speech used by gay men as a form of communication. It includes words taken from gay men's slang, polari<sup>48</sup>, and cant<sup>49</sup>. The poem was written so when animated it would speak of the masculinised assertiveness of gay men's language. In doing this it supports the ethos of encodement manifested in the masques in the exhibition. Words like BARRACK, BASEMENT, and THE BEAT carry references to the physical environment, words like BUTCH, BITCH, BUCK, BASKET, and RAG all refer to signifiers of gay men's identity. Therefore the animated poem may be seen as a series of words that define the conceptual space that these masques inhabit.

The design of the poem is an animation of type that extends or replaces letterforms as a form of interchangeability (in the same way that the masques operate as extensions and interchanges of each other). The poem is set in a masculine, Helvetica Bold typeface and is animated to the rhythm of generic 1980s gay club music.

*A translation of the terms is provided in italics.*

BUTCH *masculine*  
 BITCH *passive or effeminate*  
 SKIN *flesh*  
 SWEAT *perspiration*  
 POPPERS *amyl nitrate*  
 RAG *a small towel used for cleaning up after sex*  
 AMYL *see poppers*  
 SPUNK *semen*  
 JIZZ *semen*  
 SPOOF *semen*  
 MILK *semen*  
 JUICE *semen*  
 CREAM *semen*  
 CUM *semen*  
 LOAD *semen*  
 BASHER *anti gay assailant*  
 BASHED *assaulted gay man*  
 ARREST *apprehension*  
 BADLANDS *famous hyper-masculine gay cruise bar*  
 BASEMENT *famous hyper-masculine gay cruise bar*  
 BARRACKS *famous hyper-masculine gay cruise bar*  
 COP *policeman*  
 PIG *policeman*  
 TRADE *sexually available men*  
 BUCK *assertive [often dominant] gay man*  
 BASKET *genitals as contained in trousers or undergarments*  
 POKE *insertive sex*  
 HARD ON *erection*  
 HARD *erection*  
 JACK OFF *masturbate*  
 JACK *masturbate*  
 BAREBACK *to have sex without a condom*  
 S AND M *sado-masochism*  
 B AND D *bondage and discipline*  
 THE BEAT *an environment used for cruising for sex*

<sup>48</sup> Thieves' cant may be traced back to the eleventh century in Britain (Wilde 1889, p. 306), and was a secret language used by criminals in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cant or peltling speech contained words for criminal strategies, tools, spoils and legal consequences of being apprehended. It was an early influence on gay men's slang, before the arrival of Polari in the late 1950s. For a fuller description on the language see: Ings, W. (2007). *Lost in Space*. Queer Space: centers and peripheries. Sydney: University of Technology Sydney. [http://www.dab.uts.edu.au/conferences/queer\\_space/proceedings/index.html](http://www.dab.uts.edu.au/conferences/queer_space/proceedings/index.html)

<sup>49</sup> Polari is a term used by writers like Cage and Baker to describe a secret language, mainly used by gay men. It came into New Zealand gay speech through the merchant Navy and the Julian and Sandy sketches broadcast on the NZBC in 1968. For a fuller discussion of the language form see Baker, P. (2002) *Polari- The Lost Language of Gay Men*. London: Routledge, and Cage, K. (2003) *Gayle: The Language of Kinks and Queens. A History and Dictionary of Gay Language in South Africa*. Cape Town: Jacana.