

Title: Transgender and art in the school curriculum.

Authors: Rebecca Dittman, Chair of the Gender Trust

Pam Meecham, Senior Lecturer in Art, Design & Museology

Address: Art, Design & Museology

School of Arts & Humanities

Institute of Education, University of London

20 Bedford Way

London WC1H 0AL

Email: [p.meecham@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:p.meecham@ioe.ac.uk)

Short Title: Transgender and school art

Word Count: 6,274

## **Title: Transgender and art in the school curriculum**

### **Abstract:**

*The intention of this paper is two fold. First, it makes explicit a little known and poorly understood area of human experience: transgender. Second, it explores curriculum possibilities opened up by recent legitimating of transgender people through the Gender Recognition Act (2004). The Act foregrounds the necessity for a forum in schools to debate, reflect and understand the full implications of changes to legislation. This paper proposes that, rather than approaching transgender issues through biological science or through the levelling gaze of citizenship, issues of gender identity can be understood without censure through the visual arts. Moreover, the visual arts offer a 'safe place' to discuss issues around the body because they allow distance and, in offering visual representations rather than text based work, make visually concrete what science ethically cannot.*

### **Sweeping Changes**

\* denotes glossary entry

The passing into law of the Gender Recognition Act in July 2004 has largely gone unnoticed, but the possible effect that this legislation may have on contemporary society is wide ranging and complex. Because *trans people*\* have now gained a mechanism to receive full legal rights in their *acquired gender*\* it is important that this fact is recognised and understood by all. The part that education plays in this is significant and there is an urgent need for a space to be found within the curriculum in schools that not only allows for the absorption of the dry knowledge of the Act but also enables discussion to take place around the complexities of gender expression that the trans community represents. The authors propose in this paper that the art and design curriculum offers students the

opportunity to explore and learn about identity without fear of judgement and without personalising debate.

### **The Gender Recognition Act 2004**

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA) is the culmination of 34 years of quiet lobbying and the use of the courts by UK trans citizens determined to obtain the legal rights and responsibilities appropriate to their acquired gender.

Trans history during those years was marked by a number of challenges in the UK courts, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and latterly the European Commission of Human Rights (ECHR). There have been notable court cases and legislation since the 1960s most significant of which were *Corbett v Corbett* dealt with below, the 1999 Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations and the more recent Gender Recognition Act which received its Royal Assent in 2004.

The case of *Corbett v Corbett*, a divorce case that was eventually heard in the High Court, set in place restrictions on the lives of trans people as in his judgement, Judge Ormerod concluded that sex/gender identities were fixed by our chromosomal compliment: in most circumstances XX for women and XY for men. As such April Ashley, the respondent in the case, was deemed to have been a biological male since birth and hence her marriage to Arthur Corbett was void, although he was fully cognisant of her trans status when they married.

From 1969 to 2002 a significant number of cases were brought each of which sought to challenge and overturn the consequences of *Corbett v Corbett* using UK and incorporated European Community (EC) legislation. These were largely unsuccessful until 1996 when in *C v S and Cornwall County Council*, the appellant won an Employment Tribunal case

based on discrimination in the workplace that was referred to the ECJ. Having acceded to the EC Equal Treatment Directive 1976, this judgement caused the UK government to amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to include the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999. These regulations give protection against discrimination to trans people in the areas of employment and vocational training.

Not until 2002, and the two successful cases *Goodwin v United Kingdom* and *T v United Kingdom*, was the British government required to give trans people protection under the Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights incorporated into UK law through the Human Rights Act 1998. The Gender Recognition Bill was introduced to the House of Lords in November 2003, was enacted on 1 July 2004 and came into force on 4 April 2005.

The purpose of the Act is to provide trans people with legal recognition in their acquired gender and to grant full legal recognition following the issuing of a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) by the *Gender Recognition Panel (GRP)\**. To grant a 'full GRC' the GRP needs to satisfy themselves that the applicant: is at least 18 years of age; has, or has had, a diagnosis of '*gender dysphoria*'\*; has lived in the acquired gender for the preceding 2 years and intends to continue to live in the acquired gender until death.

It is interesting to note that unlike similar legislation enacted or proposed in some other countries, the GRA does not require an applicant for a GRC to have had any sort of *gender reassignment surgery\**. Even though this was seen by some opponents of the Bill as being far too transgressive and undermining of the natural order, the government maintained their position by accepting that not to do so would deny some trans people their rights because they could not or chose not to undergo surgery; ultimately, this

legislation had been designed to address the issue of gender recognition, i.e. the gender performance a person makes in society, not their sex or sexuality.

Applications for GRCs started to be taken from early 2005. The application process has been made as simple as possible within the rigorous rules laid down in the Act. Certain evidence must be provided upon application e.g. medical reports, documentary evidence of a legal change of name as well as a graduated fee based on income. Two application routes have been created, 'Fast Track' and 'Standard Track'. Due to the significant number of trans people who had transitioned into their preferred gender identity some years ago, the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) devised an administrative procedure to allow this group to obtain their rights ahead of others, the so called 'Fast Track' process.

The 'Fast Track' process is only available for those who have lived in their acquired gender for more than 6 years before making an application. This track will only be available until April 2007 when it is believed that this 'backlog' will have been dealt with. The GRP started to adjudicate on applications from 4 April 2005. The second or 'Standard Track' application process will use the two-year rule and packs for this process will not be available until July 2005 with the first adjudications taking place in August. Foreign nationals may make an application for a GRC ('Fast' or 'Standard' track) if they have been recognised as having changed gender under the law of a country or territory outside the U.K.

The most important benefit gained by the issuing of a GRC, apart from the legal rights it confers, is that after issuing the certificate the GRP also informs the Registrar General who is then in a position to issue a new birth certificate in the acquired gender '*as if it had always been*'. In the UK the birth certificate plays a key role in many social transactions

such as marriage, employment, legal and financial matters etc and it is in this area that the trans community's battle for recognition has been fought. With a birth certificate in their acquired gender trans people can at last engage in society with equality.

The issuing of a new birth certificate will be recorded by the Registrar in the Gender Recognition Register. This record has caused anxiety amongst some trans people because of the potential damage to an individual through disclosure of information. However, the Act contains prohibitions (see below) which should prevent such circumstances.

The exception to applications for and issuing of GRCs, is for any trans person who is married at the time of their application. The process of transitioning to a preferred gender identity can be very traumatic not only for the individual but also for those around them and some marriages do not survive the stress of transition. In drafting the Bill the government listened to those who argued that currently married trans people should have equal access to this law. However, in the light of their (then) declared policy on same sex marriages for gay and lesbian couples, the government could not be seen to be introducing such marriages by another route.

A married applicant will initially be issued with an 'interim GRC', valid for 6 months, which when presented in the divorce courts will act as an additional ground for dissolution or annulment of the marriage in England, Wales and Northern Ireland or a decree of divorce in Scotland. The government offers the future Civil Partnership Act 2004 as a way for these couples to re-cement their legal relationship. Although many pleas were made to allow this small number of couples to be given a one-off dispensation, the government remained resolute, presumably fearing a backlash from elsewhere in society. The personal consequences for such married people are great. Couples may be tied to each other because of their religious beliefs and it is difficult to imagine how trans people in this

position will be able to resolve the dilemma between loyalty to their spouse and their personal need for legal and social recognition.

The Act brings into effect amendments to other existing legislation. Significantly, not only for trans people but for many others in society, the 'Prohibition on disclosure of information' is laid down in Section 22 of the Act, Section 22(1) of which states:

It is an offence for a person who has acquired **protected information** in an **official capacity** to disclose the information to any other person.

'*Protected information*' is defined as information about a person's application for a GRC; a GRC a person has been granted or anything concerning a person's gender before it became their acquired gender.

An '*official capacity*' includes a civil servant, constable, holder of public office, be it in a local, public or voluntary organisation, an employer or prospective employer or anyone employed by them, or by anyone in the conduct of business or supply of professional services.

These wide ranging definitions are aimed at protecting trans people and ensuring that their right, under Article 8 of the ECHR, to a private and personal life, is not violated. In short this sanction applies in all professional settings including that of education and it is important that the Personnel/HR Departments of local authorities, universities and private educational establishments ensure that they and their staff are fully cognisant of this new law. Although a small community in themselves, trans people are widely spread throughout society both as employees at all levels and as customers of service industries.

## **Transgender and Art Education**

Given official sanction with its own designated month, transgender has gained a public profile. February 2005 was the first 'LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) History Month' complete with its own ministerial launch at the Palace of Westminster on 7 February. This was followed on 14 February by a northern equivalent courtesy of Manchester City Council. LGBT History Month (like Black History month) is one initiative with aspirations to uncover previously repressed histories in an attempt to offer alternative ways of looking at issues of sexuality and identity. The rhetoric from central government, via the then Schools Minister Stephen Twigg and Jacqui Smith, centred on 'social inclusion'. However, transgender fits uneasily at the end of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual in part because it is a gender issue rather than a question of sexuality. The grouping is indicative of the difficulties of both transgender classification and taxonomies and its identification with particular subject areas in secondary and higher education. Most typically in higher education, transgender issues are subsumed into studies of deviancy in criminology, or are the subject of medical discourse; although in the US transgender often forms part of the literature syllabus. In secondary schools it is taught largely as part of sex education in relation to bullying and HIV/AIDS and now, guided by a notion of difference and tolerance, may well be included in citizenship. While explorations of identity issues around personal, cultural and racial difference are a strong theme within the National Curriculum for Citizenship the wholesale dismantling of constructed notions of gender which the Gender Recognition Act implies may well sit uncomfortably with the liberal humanist tone of DfES rhetoric.

The recent changes to legislation outlined above gives an imperative to the need to open up debate in this neglected area of human experience. The Gender Recognition Act and the possibility of gaining a Gender Recognition Certificate will change the status and our understanding of those people who have embraced a gender not officially designated their

own (that is as defined on a birth certificate, once the first and final arbiter of the male or female taxonomy). 'Acquired gender recognition' has far reaching implications in terms of diversity, equal opportunities and, crucially for this paper, notions of fixed or unitary gender identity. Moreover the Act will call into question passionately held beliefs about what it is to be male or female and challenge many liberal humanist notions of what it is to be human. So official recognition of LGBT peoples and a place in academic and schools' curricula is not a transparent or simple inclusion issue. Working with young people on aspects of LGBT will prove problematic as little has been done to prepare schools beyond acceptance of difference. However, transgenderism, transsexuality and transvestism are familiar and largely accepted practices in modern and contemporary art. So rather than take a familiar route through sex education, for instance, LGBT issues could find a very different way of being explored via the National Curriculum for Art and design which includes the instruction at Key Stage three, under Knowledge and Understanding, that pupils should be taught about, 'b: *codes and conventions and how these are used to represent ideas, beliefs, and values in works of art, craft and design*' (p.168). Pupils should also be taught about, 'c: *continuity and change in the purpose and audiences of artists, craftspeople and designers from Western Europe and the wider world*' (p.168). It is doubtful that such an inclusive agenda was intended to incorporate issues of transgender however issues of sexuality and the covert or overt visualisation of such identities have a long history within art practices.

### **Clause 28 and the suppression of interpretation**

When in the late 1980s the imperative to work with contemporary and modern art entered the classroom as legislation it was eagerly embraced by many and school exhibitions bore witness to the use of a relatively limited number of *living* artists who moved the curriculum beyond the staple diet of dead Frenchmen which had haunted the orthodox curriculum in the years leading up to the introduction of the National Curriculum.

However, at about the same time the full implications of artists' work on repressed or covert identities and the realisation of those identities in often coded form (in for instance paintings such as David Hockney's *Third Love Painting* from 1960 which was painted when homosexuality was still illegal) took a problematic turn. It was during the late 1980s that the ramifications of legislation in relation to sexualities impacted on the art and design curriculum. In British law, section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, prohibited local authorities from promoting homosexuality by publishing material, or by promoting the teaching, in state schools, of the acceptability of homosexuality as a 'pretended family relationship'. Following widespread opposition to the introduction of the Act there were a number of conferences that debated the extent to which one was liable to be prosecuted for working in schools, for instance with David Hockney's paintings and drawings. In a show of solidarity teachers and galleries marshalled their forces to open up the debate around representations of difference. At the height of anxiety about the now notorious clause, David Hockney's exhibition illustrating the Greek/Alexandrian C.P. Cavafy's explicitly homosexual poems, opened at Tate Liverpool. Hockney's work is widely celebrated in schools due to his technical competence rather than the covert and overt images of homosexuality although these aspects of his iconography are frequently discussed. The contentious legislation was repealed in Scotland in 2000 and only as recently as 2003 in England. Although no prosecution was ever brought it is noteworthy for the discussion here that the effect of the Act was to stifle debate and therefore weaken the knowledge and understanding imperative of the curriculum. The school art and design curriculum had not needed much of an excuse to resort to formalism (that is a reading conditioned through exclusive attention to line, tone, colour and texture). The Roger Fry, Bloomsbury effect could and was used to reinforce formalist agendas and bypass the necessity for discussion of content.

While supporting the notion of a curriculum in school that may have pleasure at its core

and that is not entirely instrumental, the art and design curriculum can serve a useful function in an increasingly accountable climate. Staying aloof from the political and social dimensions of contemporary cultures would be to renege on the possibilities of learning from visual arts. As well as *making art*, looking at and understanding the complexity of visual images develops much needed visual literacy skills in young people precisely because the broader secondary school curriculum excludes much visual culture in favour of diagrams and illustrative photographs. Motored by a rational, scientific, managerialism contemporary educational culture finds the apparently ineffable in art difficult to mark and quantify. However, the art and design curriculum can be a place to regard the often overlooked in our culture. It is a site for discussing and imaging the body and, in the case that occupies us here, gender and acquired gender identity. Within the rhetoric of ‘social inclusion’ and the radical climate the Gender Recognition Act heralds, much that has occupied modern and contemporary artists acquires a new resonance.

What is argued here is that the art and design curriculum provides a site to discuss and debate issues of sexuality, gender and transgender identities with the caveat outlined above that transgender does not fit comfortably in any easily defined space and is too often subsumed in overarching definitions. Through an 18<sup>th</sup> century Romantic prism it would be easy to make a case for the arts being the place to situate debates around transgender as there is a long history of gender transformation across the arts from Candy Darling, part of Andy Warhol’s entourage during the 1960s, to the high profile accorded 2003 Tate Turner Prize winner, ceramicist and transvestite Grayson Perry. Moreover, in an often hostile Western culture many sexually excluded groups have found refuge in modernist artistic culture’s anti-bourgeois position where social deviancy or counter culture status was a marker of intellectual and creative radicalism. The arts therefore become an important site for celebrating the achievements of so-called marginal people, an important aspect of the LGBT History Month. In constructing a place to discuss difference, the positive

achievements and creative cultural contributions of trans people is a crucial aspect of the new climate of inclusion. Important though that is, the thrust of this paper is concerned with the way in which the body as the vehicle of artistic agency has gained primacy during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present as identity politics impacts on most areas of cultural practice.

The art world offers such a space not merely because it has numerous examples of cross-dressing artists and a blurring of gender boundaries but because the *body* has become a primary vehicle with which artists engage; crucially, the *actual* body, rather than a representation of the body, has been used by many artists to question notions of fixed gender identities and sexualities. During the 1960s women pioneered new art forms, particularly performance art, for two distinct reasons. The first, to avoid working in paint and canvas, perceived as a patriarchal practice and dominated by a machismo culture and second, because understanding of the human body, in brief a shift from *having* a body to *being* a body, was beginning to dominate critical thinking from a range of cultural perspectives as the *biological* body became the *body politic*. It is unsurprising given the dominance of the female nude in modernist male art practices that women artists should turn to their own bodies and attempt to disrupt the staple diet of masculine artistic production: the passive, faceless nude which became a marker of modernity (Perry, 1999). This process is seen graphically in art installations such as the Cuban born exile Ana Mendieta's 1973-7 *Siluetas Works in Mexico* that critiques both race and gender using the actual body to shape the landscape.

There is a further aspect to opening up debate that needs exploration. Many women are resistant to aspects of their identity being the subject of research particularly within medical and scientific discourses that are often forensic in methodology with little room for individual agency or lived experience. However, allowing a space for debate around

minority issues needs to be recognised as a pyrrhic victory. The veil of *non-recognition* protects against curiosity, idle intrusion and the spectre of spectacle. Subjecting minority or less powerful groups to scrutiny, traditionally the preserve of social anthropology, often sees the subject analysed through specific forms that may be antithetical to the subject. Early Freudian psychoanalytic discourses around women and the irrational might be one such example. Perhaps, heretically some subject areas are also limited by their commitment to ethics and rationalism. Without wishing to perpetrate C.P. Snow's two cultures argument, art and design offers a place for visualisation in concrete form through the imagination that is not as ethically bound as other disciplines. Through the imagination, other possibilities can receive concrete visual form that are not available to more traditional research methodologies and subject disciplines. It is this ability to make concrete through performance, film and sculpture that allows a different set of ideas to circulate in an interpretative community of creative practices.

The National Curriculum for Art and design written in a benign tone in a language bedevilled by liberalism has allowed the unfettered enthusiasm for formalism and notions of 'self-expression' to continue unchecked. Art and design may be expressive but that it is expressive of the unmediated self, as modernist theory purports, is certainly not the case. Essays such as Hal Foster's (1985) *The Expressive Fallacy* have done much to undermine confidence in an essential self that can be expressed (see also Sheldon, 1996). However, contemporary theory has found its way piecemeal into school art. The lack of a coherent theoretical practice, usually celebrated as providing the teacher with a degree of autonomy in the application of the curriculum if not in the letter of the curriculum itself, is critiqued in Addison and Burgess (2000). Contemporary theory is, however, evident in the identity projects that dominate art and design departments under the banner of cultural diversity with a small number of departments creating works specifically around gender and race.

A more radical perspective would be enabled if the theoretical parameters of performativity were explored. In accepting notions of performativity it is possible to question notions of fixed identities and the unitary self: a legacy of an Enlightenment past. For the ways in which human nature was historically reconfigured during the 18<sup>th</sup> century see in particular Roy Porter (2000) 'Anatomizing human nature'. Although the decentering of the unitary self is problematic in many cultures and faiths and indeed in some areas of transgender practice, the approach advocated here is to open up issues of gender identity understood as a lack of gender fixity. A search for a particular self-defining point rather than switching between genders can also be explored. So rather than seeing some artists as merely playing with gender's more overt dressing codes, by looking seriously at art and design practices, we can also see the complexity that ambiguous gender definitions and visualisations arouse. An example can be found for instance in Rose Selavy, the feminine alter ego famously created by Marcel Duchamp. Rose first emerged in portraits made by the photographer Man Ray in New York in the early 1920s but *she* continued as the maker to whom Duchamp attributed specific writing, artworks, and ready-mades. The creation of Rose threw into question any simple understanding of identity and undermined notions of authenticity and the unique signature style that were the foundations of modernist theory and our understanding of the unitary self. An exploration of other works by Duchamp, perhaps his mannequin dressed for the 1938 Paris Surrealist exhibition (see Lewis Kachur, 2001 *Displaying the Marvelous, Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations*) would help open debate further. Knowingly informed by Freudian theories around repressed desires and fetishes letting the Surrealists into the classroom, beyond Dali's floppy watches and other clichés, allows discussion in an interdisciplinary context to be removed to a sphere of visual culture that is free from the constraints of traditional discourses. Psychoanalysis, at least in its Freudian construction, did much to underpin the binary male and female however it also has value in offering ways to discuss the process of looking at the culturally polarized

masculine and feminine images that dominate our culture. As a tool for interpreting art works in relation to this paper its presence as an academic device offers a great deal in problematising the unitary subject and in helping subjects make meaning from art works, forgoing formalism or canonical significance, to allow a range of pluralistic/polysemic readings. Importantly the distancing afforded by debates around the visualization of gender and transgender allows young people to discuss issues of self-hood and gender in a relatively detached way.

Through theories of performativity, that is the performance of gender identities, it is possible to consider (and accept or reject) the notion of fixed identity. Our sense of what constitutes a gendered body can then be seen as historically conditioned and therefore unstable and, crucially, subject to revision. Performativity theories suggest that it is the social fields through which we operate or enact that gives form to our ideas of masculinity or femininity. This understanding of gender formation allows us to re-consider the essentialism that has dominated gender and identity formation leading Judith Butler, the American feminist philosopher, to uncompromisingly state, ‘there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender...identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be the results’ (Butler, 1990, p. 113). This is complex terrain for so short a paper and while Butler’s work has important implications the matter of longing for authenticity and what constitutes an authentic self in a postmodern world needs further exploration. A recently conducted research project with a contemporary photographer, Bettina von Zwehl and sixth formers following the art and design curriculum at Dartford Grammar School (Meecham, 2005), revealed young people’s expressed longing for a personal authenticity and a search for a real self in a cultural climate that is impatient with notions of essentialism or universals (see Charles Taylor, 1991 *The Ethics of Authenticity*). The most salient point for the art and design curriculum of aspects of performativity is not just the ways in which gender construction can be

debated and a wholesale revision of the ways that performance of the self is boundaried by the ways that we perceive and experience our own bodies, but the ways that identity is acted out in art works and through artists' bodies, covertly or overtly.

The emergence in the second half of the century of the notion of the body politic testifies to a changing set of ideas about the way the body may signify. Our way of thinking about the body changed post-war largely as a result of two types of discourse-social anthropology and French philosophy. The first argued that 'the human body is always treated as an image of society' (Polhemus, 1978, p. 21) and that the physiological properties of the body are subordinated to the ideological position within any given society. The latter, under Maurice Merleau-Ponty, made the body the centrepiece of his philosophical inquiry. He posited his theory of 'the primacy of perception' in his 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception*. In brief he maintains that all our higher intellectual functions are contingent upon our pre-reflexive bodily existence; that is, perception. His writings emphasised the bodily nature of the human subject and what he termed 'the philosophy of the lived body'. Merleau-Ponty maintained that the lived body is not an 'object' in the world, separate and distinct from the subject, but the subject's own 'point of view on the world' that is the knowing subject. This privileging of the lived body is understood not just as a physiological entity but also as a 'phenomenal' body, the body as individuals experience it. However, an individual's experience is not a purely cognitive process as Enlightenment thought once maintained; the distinction is an important one.

Representing one's specific experience of being a body or of lived bodily experiences of class, race, gender, transgender, sexual orientation or health is a pre-occupation, as indicated above, of much contemporary art. This preoccupation stands in marked contrast to the universalising preoccupations of modernism. Modernism's artist as genius accessed universal truths through the subjectivity of the artist, however, the postmodernist artist is

less willing to declare the universality of his/her experience and more likely to acknowledge the specificity of lived experience.

As we have shown, some artists seek to undo the social construction of male and female in order to expose the power relations that have shaped it. The process of revealing, however, may never be finally resolved with lived experience since this is always a constant process of reworking. This too is a strength in looking at artists' work as they may not be searching for final truths, evidence or presenting a universal condition but may be seeking to visualize a moment of subjective lived experience. The notion of self-hood in the West continues to possess a powerful currency. Counter to orthodoxies in terms of the phenomenal body, nothing is meaningful until it is experienced by the body in and through the mind. Social anthropology and the systematic investigation of non-Western cultures have demonstrated that a sense of self is by no means universal and is always contained within language. In a multicultural/multi-faith society a place to debate these issues is crucial particularly as postmodern writers tend towards the view that rather than a search for a unitary, stable self, the search for self is a shifting enterprise.

The quest for an authentic unitary self can be illustrated by reference to the work of the Japanese artist Yasumasa Morimura, who through a process of reconfiguring the self into a kind of techno transvestite uses digital technology to produce multiple selves. In reworking Edward Burne-Jones's *Golden Staircase*, for instance, Morimura superimposes his androgynous face and body, clothed in a timeless shift in serial replication. This act calls into question the West's received wisdom on the existence of the unitary self by confronting the viewer with sexually and racially ambiguous 'otherness'. Morimura suggests 'if it were possible to liberate ourselves from the bodies and characters we were given and to choose a favourite combination ourselves, expressions like "true face" would eventually become superfluous. And of course we would have no need for words like

“self” (in Weiermair, 1996, p. 236). For Morimura, currently interested in growth hormones and cosmetic surgery, the reconfiguring of the unitary self is not a negative act but opens up the possibility of freedom. In a 1991 work Morimura’s naked body is superimposed into the place formerly occupied by the French modernist painter Edouard Manet’s barmaid. However, Morimura changes the pose of the original and substitutes his own arms. This change in posture leaves behind the severed arms of the first barmaid still fixed to the edges of the bar at the Folies-Bergeres. In Manet’s celebrated 1882 original, hanging in London’s Courtauld Institute, the body of the barmaid can be seen as another commodity amid the novel Bass bottled beer. But Morimura superimposes his androgynous face and body on to the barmaid overturning orthodox interpretations of the painting. In other works Morimura continues his project of undermining Western universals by playing on stereotypes that are dependent upon the notion of unitary selfhood.

Other ways of thinking about selfhood have been suggested by the science of biotechnology. The discovery of DNA, the engineering of animal cells and the advent of the Human Genome Project to find the blueprint for life have contributed to the notion of a post-human society. The artists who comprise Gene Genies Worldwide have begun a long-term project, the *Creative Gene Harvest Archive*, which they say on their web-site aims ‘to harvest, store, and utilize the genetic codes for creativity from some of society’s most exemplary and creative individuals in order to design and imbue personalities with these same traits’ (<http://www.genegenies.com>). The *Creative Gene Harvest Archive* displays the genetic samples donated by individuals who lead in their respective fields. These samples include hair from geneticists James Watson and Marie-Claire King that are displayed in glass vials alongside the hair of authors and artists. If we turn finally to the work of Patricia Piccinini (2002) who represented Australia at the 2003 Venice Biennale we can see further visual evidence of an artist’s preoccupation with the decentring of the

self which has led to questioning about notions of free agency and the idea that 'we', a set of unitary selves, exercise determination if not outright control over our desires and destinies and that we create our own meanings. These are important issues to young people exploring notions of self-expression, sexuality and gender. Although it would be premature to announce the death of the Enlightenment artist as genius and the wholly subjective experience of creativity, the process of representing the self in and through the body has been made sociologically, politically and philosophically accountable. It is this accountability which chimes with the need to question received wisdom about gender and its representations. The interdisciplinary nature of much current art practice and its realisation in diverse visual forms makes it one more vehicle for the exploration of self-identity and difference in a less hostile legal climate than the 1980s. The lived experience may be a long way from the belated idealism of the legislation but without the punitive language of Clause 28 it is to be hoped that art and design departments will be encouraged to work with contemporary art to try to understand the complexity of gender and transgender identities at the same time as learning to be visually literate and engage with current artistic and philosophical debates around what it is to be human.

## Bibliography

- Addison, N. (2000) *Towards a Plural Curriculum*, in: N. Addison, & L. Burgess, (Eds) *Learning to Teach Art and Design in the Secondary School* (London, Routledge).
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York, Routledge).
- DfEE (1999) *National Curriculum Order for Art and design* (London, HMSO).
- Foster, H. (1985) *The Expressive Fallacy*, in: *Recodings: art, spectacle, cultural politics* (Seattle, Washington, MIT Press).
- Gene Genies Worldwide, *Creative Gene Harvest Archive* <http://www.genegenies.com>.
- Perry, G. (Ed.) (1999) *Gender and Art* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press).
- Kachur, L. (2001) *Displaying the Marvelous, Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press).
- Meecham, P. (2005) *A Photographer in residence at Dartford Grammar School*. Unpublished research report, Institute of Education, University of London.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945) *Phenomenology of Perception* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul).
- Polhemus, T. (1978) *The Social Aspects of the Human Body* (Harmondsworth, Penguin).
- Porter, R. (2000) *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, Penguin).
- Sheldon, J. (1996) *Matisse and the Problem of Expression in Early Twentieth-Century Art*, in: L. Dawtre, T. Jackson, M. Masterton, P. Meecham & P. Wood (1996) *Investigating Modern Art* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press in association with the Open University).
- Snow, C. P. (1959) *Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

Taylor, C. (1991) *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).

Weiermair, P. (1996) *Prospect Photography and Contemporary Art* (Frankfurt, Kilchberg and Zurich, Edition Stemmler).

## **Glossary**

*Acquired Gender* – The gender in which the applicant for a GRC is living. It is usually different to the gender they were ascribed at birth.

*Trans people* – Includes transsexual and transgender people or those who live in an acquired gender but use other terms to self-define.

*Gender Recognition Panel* – A part of the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) based in Leicester. Their website, [www.grp.gov.uk](http://www.grp.gov.uk), is a useful source of information for applicants.

*Gender Dysphoria* – Gender dysphoria, gender identity disorder or transsexualism is a drive to live in the opposite gender to that in which a person has been registered at birth. It is a widely recognised medical condition.

*Gender Reassignment Surgery* – Commonly known as ‘Sex Change’ surgery, it is a range of surgical procedures aiming to assist the individual in gaining a body that more closely represents one appropriate to the acquired gender in which they are living. It can vary from simple cosmetic operations to full genital reconstructive surgery.