

france rose hartline
Art[]Gender[]Art

Bærum Kunsthall Exhibition
6-23 April 2017

Conversations with Myselfs
projected video with audio
35:00, looped

So far *Conversations with Myselfs* is my most extensive and challenging project. It is a mixed media piece, involving simultaneous projections of a man and a woman. The individuals featured are engaged in a conversation with across a table. Both are played by me, employing stereotypical gender embodiments. They have a casual, friendly discussion about their experiences of gender/sex, sometimes breaking into debate. What inspired this piece is a theory by Hubert Hermans, called *Dialogical Self Theory* (DST), which applies a psychological concept that interlaces self (internal) and dialog (external). According to this, individuals have the capacity to imagine the positions of multiple participants within a dialog, and the positions are informed by the external (society) but are applied as they are interpreted within the individual. In other words, we can have debates in our minds because we do not have singular understandings. Within each person, there is the understanding of what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man, since gender is a learnt experience and not intrinsic to our being. We all embody varying degrees of gender, which fluctuate continuously throughout our lives.

The discussion between the presented man and woman in the piece reflects some of the typical elements of the debates held between men and women, but it is very personal as well (which is why I use myself as the models) because I find myself pondering the same issues. Having transitioned from female to male -- the physical aspects of which have primarily occurred in the time since this piece was first created to its current exhibition -- the work has particular meaning for me. The ways in which we are socially regarded according to our perceived gender has become acutely apparent for me, often in discomfoting or baffling ways. It does not, however, require a transition to become aware of these modes of social gendering, however. It only requires that we engage in earnest, open and meaningful discussions about how assumptions and experiences.