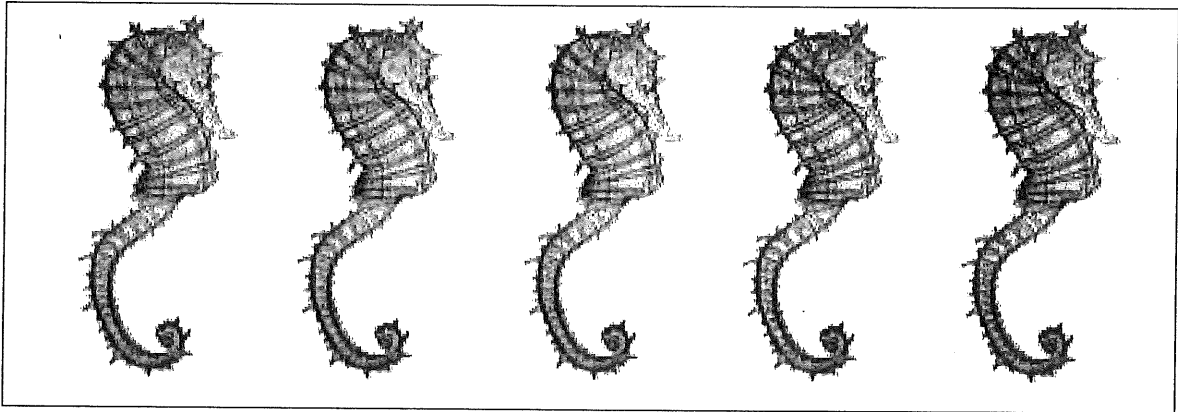


## Dirty Gender Secrets: A multi-media art event



@ Video In Studios / 1965 Main Street / Vancouver BC / V5T 3C1

Get Out! Grants to Youth

Office of Cultural Affairs / City of Vancouver

453 West 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue / Vancouver BC V5Y 1V4

## *The Organizers, Mentors and Organizations*

### **Dirty Gender Secrets Working Group**

We are an ad-hoc committee of artists, academics, curators and organizers. We are Samonte Lynton Cruz, Louis Esme Cruz, Cease Wyss and Aiyanna Maracle.

We came together because each of us has something to offer. Samonte and Louis are the primary organizers, responsible for curation, scheduling, outreach and technical requirements. Cease is responsible for mentorship, outreach, technical and structural support and has been in queer and trans video communities for over 15 years. Aiyanna is responsible for mentorship, direction, historical context and 20 years worth of research and art making, working with two-spirit themes and many others.

We have chosen to work together because we see the need for a trans-specific art event that bridges the gap between cultural theory, artistic practice and community. We feel aligned in our politics and artistic vision: that creation and sharing are healthy responses to the worlds we each live in. Art is about survival and healing - both profound acts of re-creation, as are our bodies.

There are eight artists we are working with: Bobbi Kozinuck, Thirza Jean Cuthand, Sven Black/Lucille Fur, Aiyanna Maracle, Colin Kennedy Donovan, Qwo-Li Driskill, Basil Shadid and William Maria Rain.

### **Non-Profit Partner: Video In Studios**

From their website ([www.videoinstudios.com](http://www.videoinstudios.com)): "*Video In is a not for profit video production, exhibition and distribution centre. We are an evolving*

*organization operated by and for artists and media/community activists."*

Video In is an excellent location for Dirty Gender Secrets. They have a reputation as an artist-run-centre that engages with uniquely disenfranchised communities, artists and projects. This is the first time in the history of Video In (and Vancouver for that matter) that trans/gender artists will be presenting our own art event.

We are excited to work with VI because of their outreach initiatives and tangible offers of support. VI approached us and offered us funding for a trans/gender program. We are honoured that we have been asked to curate this unique event.

### *Youth involved in the project*

Samonte Lynton Cruz (23 years)  
Louis Esme Cruz (26 years)  
Colin Kennedy Donovan (27 years)  
Qwo-Li Driskill (28 years)  
Thirza Jean Cuthand (26 years)

We will be doing extensive outreach to trans youth in the Vancouver and Lower Mainland area through schools, organizations, community centres, newspapers, Internet list-serves and fliers.

#### *\*\*A Note on Defining Youth*

This event is a youth-directed initiative. We realize that the guidelines for the grant use 24 as the age cap. We understand that there are good reasons for this. However, trans youth have a unique experience with age that complicates youthfulness and we believe that it is more appropriate to define trans youth using UN definitions. See addendum.

*Why do you want to do this project? Tell us why you think this project needs to happen and who will benefit from it.*

*Dirty Gender Secrets (DGS)* is a three-day, multi-media art event brought forth to unearth the gender dirt we're afraid to say, not allowed to mention - but are going to do it anyway. The first of its kind in Vancouver, *DGS* is a trans/gendering art event that will expose both dominant and alternate myths about gender.

Whilst digging the dirt, *Dirty Gender Secrets* celebrates those who got us here with generations of persistence and brilliant resiliency. As well, *DGS* will engage blossoming trans/genderers and allies who creatively de-construct and re-construct our histories, bodies, lives, relationships, oppressions/resistance - and dare to dream a future bigger than western-gender-medicine-machines, toxic modern freak shows and the absolutely unnecessary gender competition that permeates contemporary life. Understanding that gender doesn't exist in a vacuum, *Dirty Gender Secrets* will assist in re-contextualizing trans/gendering as a complex social non-phenomenon.

We would like to use art as a vehicle to create social circumstance where trans/gender youth, elders and our supportive community members can connect. There is only one trans-youth specific support group in the Vancouver area, at Three Bridges Community Centre. Because of the lack of social support, trans youth fall through the cracks in the system. (Please see addendum)

*Dirty Gender Secrets* will take place over three nights and two days over the weekend of October 20-22, 2005. This event will coincide with the *LIVE Biennale Performance Art Festival* ([www.livevancouver.bc.ca](http://www.livevancouver.bc.ca)). We feel that building relationships with other artist organizations is a fundamental part of this event and are honoured to be included in this festival.

There will be two evenings of live performance and video art by Sven Black/Lucille Fur, Thirza Cuthand, Bobbi Kozinuck and Aiyanna Maracle. The third evening will consist of an artist talk by Aiyanna Maracle, with a discussion and reception to follow. There will also be two days of Theatre of the Oppressed workshops for Trans folks of colour and allies facilitated by Qwo-Li Driskill and Colin Kennedy Donovan. Videographers, William Maria Rain and Basil Shadid, will provide interactive documentation of the events, artists and guests.

Trans/gender youth will be welcomed and included into all of the programmed events, however the artist talk will be a space for trans youth to connect with two-spirit elder, Aiyanna Maracle. The discussion period will be a time for questions and sharing. We desire profound relationships with our elders, honouring the extensive work they have done so that we can also live.

Samonte and Louis will be making videos to contribute to trans art discourse in general and *Dirty Gender Secrets*, in particular.

This event will lay down a foundation for future collaboration between trans youth, elders and community members.

Over the next year we will be developing plans to offer media intensive workshops for trans youth in video, sound, performance, etc.

### **(Dis)Ability and Access**

*DGS* also aims to be as accessible as possible. We hope to do this by offering bus ticket subsidies to youth and anyone else who needs them; offering child care subsidies; making the event scent and chemical-free; having healthy snacks be available by donation during events and for free at the reception; providing ASL accommodations; creating a "time out" room for folks who need it; providing comfortable seating for elders and people with chronic pain; providing alternate ways of communicating with guests about the event; being open to feedback about other needs we aren't able to predict.

### ***Project Outcomes***

1. Build upon pre-existing relationships and create new and stronger ones between trans/gender artists who are youth, elders and allied community members;
2. Positively engage trans/gender youth without tokenizing or condescending the amazing work that they are already doing;
3. Reduce the isolation, alienation, violence and self-hate that many trans people feel through positive, interactive artistic creation;
4. Offer examples of how trans youth are creating change in collaboration with others;
5. Offer positive role models of trans/gender adults and youth who are physically and mentally

& contact list of Trans Youth

more complex than simply being just "Transgender".

6. Build a foundation of trust between trans/gender youth and community members for another project that we are planning for next year.

### ***Evaluation***

An important aspect of this project is to self-create documents that map out our histories and present-day realities. For too long trans/gendered folks have been inadequately represented by various media, for example: talk/freak shows, and medical texts. We want to maintain control of our own representations using the following methods:

- Interactive Video Documentation (live interviews with Shadid and Rain);
- Participant feedback forms;
- Critical essay by *Dirty Gender Secret* curators, which we will self-publish and submit to various academic/scholarly journals;

## Addendum

The present day reality for trans/gender youth is that many of us did not have youthful experiences because of the daily threat of violence. Fear and loathing of trans people exists within the majority institutions that youth are often reliant on for support like schools, churches, and the medical system. More poignantly, this violence occurs within our fundamental support systems including families and friends. These relationships can be the most dangerous as we are reliant on them for basic survival needs. As a result, trans youth are forced into maturation more rapidly than their peers, developing various skills to survive including but not limited to: leaving home and school before maturity, entering into survival sex work, using substance to manage the pain of social and internalized violence and becoming super-trans-youth organizers, workers and students at the expense of our health.

Because of the oppression and discrimination inside the institutions trans youth are often reliant on for our survival, we are at-risk for much longer than average youths. For many of us it is not safe to "come out" as trans/gendered until we can support ourselves financially - which is often in our late teens or early 20's. At 19 we become legally able to access the medical system for transitioning without our parents' consent. On this fact alone we are at least six years behind non-trans youth who are able to access their preferred hormones at the onset of puberty. With that information in mind, we believe that it is more appropriate to apply the UN definition of youth as anyone under the age of 29. We also recognize that there are other factors (like class, race, ability, sexuality, etc.) that complicate the age in

which people "come out".

The statistics and issues become more complicated when we begin to acknowledge that there are large numbers of trans youth facing multiple barriers to community and systemic support. As we are both trans youth of colour who have worked hard to create stability within our own families and communities, we know the amount of work it takes to manage being young and living without well-informed advocates. As trans youth of colour, we must also deal with racism in addition to transphobia. All trans youth also are confronted with ageism for longer amounts of time than non-trans youth. Most adults don't believe us when we declare who we are and what our age is because many of us physically look younger when we begin transitioning or "cross-dressing". Ableism compounds transphobia where mentally, physically and developmentally (dis)abled trans youth are often deemed to be "medically unfit" for hormones, surgery and other tools for transitioning/survival - making it that much harder to live independently without familial violence. It is also a reality that a disproportionate number of trans youth live in poverty because most employers will not hire gender-ambiguous people to work in many service, office and front-line positions. So many of us don't actually get a chance to "be teenagers" until we are well into our twenties, thirties, forties and sometimes even later!

(note\*\* For more information, please read the essay "Medical Abuse of GLBT Youth" from the PFLAG website:

<<http://www.critpath.org/pflag-talk/gid.htm>>  
and check out the attached Gender Glossary)

## Gender Glossary

*Please note that this glossary is neither definitive nor complete. Language in Trans, Genderqueer, and "gender variant" communities is constantly being developed and changed, and the understanding of some of these terms may shift depending on the person or community one is interacting with. This, however, may give you a clearer understanding of some of the language and concepts in current Trans and Genderqueer movements.*

**\*Ambisexual:** Of all sexes or sexually attracted to persons of any sex. Defined this way, ambisexual can be applied to gender identity or sexuality.

**Bigendered:** Identifying and expressing one's gender as both "man" and "woman."

**Bio:** Biological. Refers to one's assigned gender at birth. Bio Woman, Bio Man, Bio Boy, Bio Girl.

**Butch:** Masculine qualities. Also, a person who displays masculine qualities/characteristics or inhabits a masculine gender identity.

**Compulsory Heterosexuality:** Originally coined by Adrienne Rich in her groundbreaking essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," compulsory heterosexuality can be briefly defined as the concept that a heterosexist power structure forces people to assume heterosexual identities, desires, and relationships through coercion, violence, and lack of options.

**Cross-Dresser:** Someone who dresses in the clothing opposite of the gender they were assigned at birth.

**Drag King:** A female embodied person who dresses in men's clothing, often exaggerating masculine characteristics and gender roles.

**Drag Queen:** A male embodied person who dresses in women's clothing, often exaggerating feminine characteristics and gender roles.

**Femme or Fem:** Feminine qualities. Also, a person who displays feminine qualities/characteristics or inhabits a feminine gender identity.

**FTM:** Female-to-male. Most often used for transsexual identities, but sometimes also used for gender expressions along a female-to-male gender spectrum.

**Gender:** Amy Sonnie defines gender as "Characteristics of masculinity and femininity learned or chosen. A person's assigned sex does not always match their gender...and most people display traits of more than one gender." In *My Gender Workbook*, Kate Bornstein defines gender as "Anything that categorizes people is gender, whether it's appearance or mannerisms, biology or psychology, hormones, roles, genitals, whatever: if we're trying to categorize or separate people out, it's gender" (Bornstein 26). Bornstein goes on to define "sex" only as related to sexual expression/activity.

**Genderfuck:** Intentional crossing of gender cues/signals in order to disrupt rigid gender constructions.

**Genderqueer:** Someone who "queers" gender. Someone who doesn't identify as either a man or a woman, but a different gender entirely. Someone who identifies as both a man and a woman. Someone who creates their own gender outside of binary concepts. Also, someone who identifies both their gender identity and sexuality as contrary to "acceptable" heterosexual, gender dichotomous constructions and uses this term as a way to show connections between their oppression as a Gay/Lesbian/Bi person with their oppression as a Trans or "gender variant" person.

**\*Gender regime:** A gender regime dictates that there are only two genders and regulates what it means to be a boy or a girl, a man or a woman. The idea that males should be masculine and females should be

feminine. A gender regime informs our understandings of our bodies, our “roles,” and the punishments that come with challenging these roles. A gender regime has built-in controls to keep us in our assigned roles, such as the threat of violence, ridicule, or rejection and the lack of models for anything different. A gender regime is policed and upheld by heterosexism and patriarchy.

**Heterosexism:** The belief, upheld by heteropatriarchy, that heterosexual desire is the only “natural” or “normal” sexuality and is superior to other sexual orientations, and therefore the perceived right to dominate Gay/Lesbian/Bi/Trans/Queer people. Also, the assumption that everyone is essentially heterosexual, and that other sexual orientations are simply a deviation from or replication of heterosexuality.

**Hir:** Pronounced “here.” An alternative possessive pronoun to “her” or “his.”

**Internalized Homophobia:** The fear and hatred of internal feelings of emotional/spiritual/sexual desires toward someone of the same gender. Also, homophobic feelings from one Gay/Lesbian/Bi/Trans/Queer person toward others in the GLBTQ community.

**\*Intersexed:** Describes people born multisexed (born with some combination of male and female sex organs.) According to the Intersex Society of North America, “Anatomic sex differentiation occurs on a male/female continuum, and there are several dimensions.” It is estimated that anywhere from 1 in 100 to 1 in 2000 infants is born intersexed, but the most common reaction by the medical establishment is to “fix” these babies immediately. Many consider “fixing” these babies mutilation.

**MTF:** Male-to-female. Most often used for transsexual identities, but sometimes also used for gender expressions along a male-to-female gender spectrum.

**Misogyny:** The hatred of women.

**Monosexism:** The belief that love and attraction to one gender is superior to all other sexualities.

**Monosexual:** A person who is attracted to only one gender.

**Omnisexual/Pansexual:** A person who is attracted to all genders. Many people are moving away from the term *Bisexual* to *Omnisexual* or *Pansexual* in order to disrupt the male/female gender binary.

**Oppression:** The domination of one group of people over another, enforced and maintained by institutional power.

**Patriarchy:** Literally, “rule of the father.” The system of male domination.

**Privilege:** Special rights and access granted only to those in a ruling class (white people, men, temporarily able-bodied people, etc), bestowed simply because one is part of that group.

**Relative Privilege:** Privilege that may occur in specific locations/contexts/experiences. (Example: a FTM perceived as a BioMan may experience relative privilege walking down the street but experiences oppression in contexts where his gender identity is disclosed or exposed.)

**Sexism:** Institutionalized fear, hatred, and marginalization of women. (Sexism=Prejudice + Power).

**S/he:** Pronounced “see.” An alternative pronoun to “she” or “he.” Also, see “ze” in this glossary.

**Tranny:** A Trans person. While embraced by many Trans people, some Trans communities and individuals may find the term offensive.

**Trans:** From transgender, transsexual and transvestite. An umbrella term often used in the transgender community to demedicalize the words used for our identities.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for people who's gender expression and gender identity fall outside constructed gender norms.

**Transman:** See FTM.

**\*Transphobia:** Hatred and/or discrimination against people who break or blur gender roles and sex characteristics. Transphobia is mandated by a gender regime that says we are either man or woman, masculine or feminine.

**\*Transsexual:** A person whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth, so they take hormones or get sex reassignment surgery (SRS). There is an incredible range of reasons for taking this step. In many states after a period of time SRS recipients can legally change their name and other legal documents. Sometimes called TS.

**Transwoman:** See MTF.

**Transvestite:** A person who dresses in clothing opposite of their assigned sex. Usually used in reference to heterosexual males, though sometimes used in reference to Gay/Bi men and Lesbian/Bi women. Usually distinct from Drag King and Drag Queen.

**Two-Spirit:** A contemporary term in First Nations/Native communities that refers to constructions of gender and sexuality within First Nations traditions. Created as an umbrella word in English by and for Native people and as an alternative to the offensive anthropological term "berdache," which has an original meaning of "boy kept for unnatural purposes." Please note that the use of the term Two-Spirit as an identity label for non-Native people is usually considered offensive.

**Ze:** Pronounced "zee." An alternative pronoun to "she" or "he."

\*Definition taken from the book *Revolutionary Voices: A Multicultural Queer Youth Anthology* edited by Amy Sonnie. Alyson: Los Angeles, 2000.

Qwo-Li Driskill, 2004.

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