



Putting on a Dress Means Nothing': Cross-Dressing Practice in Men's Fashion

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Abstract

Male cross-dressing as a form of aesthetic expression by something or someone has been practised in fashion globally. This article aims to investigate what role cross-dressing plays in contemporary men's fashion. Does it transform or confirm gender norms? In what ways can cross-dressing be used as a tool to produce visual politics? Cross-dressing or transvestism is a particular type of event affected by the multiple social, economic and cultural implications that continuously shift the meanings and objectives of the practice. I think of fashion in a broad sense,

i.e., similar to a verb in that it focuses on the action or process of negotiating, differentiating and self-presenting in everyday life. My scholarly inquiry is situated in the context of the social, the cultural and the historical. This epistemological study applies an interdisciplinary approach that employs visual interpretative analysis and queer reflexivity. Cross-dressing practices in men's fashion cannot be explained without an awareness of sociocultural context, narrative, gender performance and how clothing is selected and worn. I conclude by discussing the broader implications of understanding gender performance, sexuality and institutional power in men's fashion.

Keywords: transvestism drag gender politics sexuality queer theory androgyny