



| women | femme | girl-identified | their | womyn | nonbinary | femme-identified | womanist | lesbian | trans | queer |

Introduction

More and more, in public, social, and interpersonal life, people in our North American culture find it necessary to “Identify As...”

With that, two things are most apparent day to day.

One, outside of the matters of race, the notion of “gender” dominates the discourse on *which identities* our present-day culture promotes, or suppresses; includes, or excludes. Meanwhile, more and more distinctions between identities get coined.

And two, thanks to ubiquitous and cheap social media, the language used to express these identifications goes *everywhere*, with the energy of popularity, regardless of where or why it started.

Collectively, that has created a gigantic thought cloud, in which the specificity that makes these individual identities meaningful is overwhelmed by using them almost gesturally, like signals or interchangeable tokens instead of discrete ideas.



What is it that allows the general population to still take a meaning from the increasing cloudiness of uninformed, careless, or cynical usage reducing all these variations to a single epic synonym?

And what is it synonymous of?

In the environment of a given *culture*, some types of people, and some types of experiences, are tolerated more than others. In the range of tolerances, one pole is aggressive suppression, and the other pole is routine advocacy. Our present-day culture features intensive resistance to its legacy of what we call *gender-based suppression*. But is “gender” even the right word?

“*Identity*” and “*Identify As*” are two separate but core thoughts carried in this cloud. After all, we know that an identity may be defined whether it is adopted by any given person or not. What we also want to know, then, is what defines an identity, *and* why someone would adopt it.

Historically, persons who have had and exercised most of the power in society and culture have most often been born as biological males, and that is most notably true regardless of sexuality or personality. **The cultural and social “norm” has been that *the male sex supersedes both the female sex and all gender identities.***

The effect is that the same imbalance of privilege and rights now exists between male power-holders on the one hand – and on the other hand women, homosexual men, bi-sexual persons, or non-binary persons, and more, without power. It turns out that “Gender” is *not* an adequate cover term for the experiences, nor for the motivations, of all particular persons in this identity cloud, *not identifying as Male*.

Meanwhile, why “identify as”?

“*Identifying As*” confirms and advocates the presence of a distinctive experience of life in the culture, wherever it falls on the culture’s spectrum of tolerance.

For most people, most of the time, culture is an environment that allows or predisposes *experiences*. In this show, the background context is that historically, male-dominated designs of actions, events and environments are the most prevalent elements characterizing the cultural environment.

THE NOT MALE SHOW

This show starts with the premise that the unifying theme “represented” by this cloud of identities is that they are culturally **Not Male**.

It argues that “Male” *as regards our present-day culture* refers to a set of experiences and conditions that most often correspond to how persons who are biologically male have preferred to design and support the environment and each other.

And as context for the show, we stop there.

Not Male is a concept that argues there are distinctive identifiable sets of characteristic experience that are different from the conventional set already defining Male. The show can both demonstrate that idea *and, in the process, also test the provisional definition of “Male” that was offered.*

The hypothesis of this art show is that works of art will *generate experiences directly demonstrating or representing* important experiences of being Not Male; without restricting mediums or genres, we look for clarity and impact that is better than the increasing ambiguity of language usage.

The purpose of the show is to survey and compare how those works do what they do.

About this Show

Instead of trying to solve the unintended but increasing vagueness of language usage in representing identity, our premise is that it makes art more important than ever in the discourse because of how art works:

The essential function of art is to discover and convey how *meaning* is generated by the arrangement of materials and their sensory impact.

Meaning is the *understanding* of an acknowledged distinct impact.

Experience is the most concrete form of understanding.

In essence, art intentionally creates or recreates experiences that are meaningful.

The individual *experiences* that *typify* any distinctive identity are the subject of this art show.

We will find, in the scope of its presented experiences:

direct sensory stimuli;

the grasping of ideas in formation or communication;

and in our case, art made with language as well.

[END]