



Beasts of
Raagnora



Foreword

This Bestiary was written following the parameters of the Fashion Fictions investigation and development project, which aims to create critical discussions around the current state of the fashion world through speculative exploration of alternate situations, as it inquires on the influence it has on culture, economics and the planet we live in. Being aware of the damaging impact that our current relationship with garments and their production has on Earth, Fashion Fictions brings forward parallel lifestyles that show us possibilities to change our reality, questioning the status quo and inspiring people to transform it (Twigger Holroyd, 2022).

Our research is based on two of Fashion Fictions' concepts: Fashion itself which shows us topics related to trends, clothing culture and value around the physical appearance of clothes we as a community create and, on the other hand, Embodiment which refers to the connection between the human body and the outfits it wears, touching on subjects like inclusivity, our sensory experiences and wellness. Some worlds created from these topics include cultures where people inject their skin with natural pigments that replace clothes, humans with sensory restrictions like a monochromatic eyesight, laws that prohibit chemical dyes on fabrics or even the creation of public garment libraries, which all show the different possibilities both concepts are able to investigate upon.

Many bestiaries from the Middle Ages (XV century) came from stories told by explorers of the New World to those willing to write down their tales. These books slowly became cultural mosaics of the interpretations of animals and beasts that, despite how common they were for some, appeared as wonderful creatures to others.

In the same way, the narrative style created to explain our concepts seeks to understand their connection from various perspectives, giving them a visual appearance so they are able to interact and surprise us by forming narratives around how the knowledge system we created works. In the stories told on this book, concepts turned into creatures themselves act as muses: entities that inspire and influence performance acts and expressions through outfits that performers use. Transformed into myths, these stories tell the origin and existence of customs that change the bodies of many communities as a way of expressing themselves while they summon the actions of the beasts on their identities.

Introduction

Beasts and legends have always existed throughout history. They are imaginary beings that represent distortions of truth, tales that mold our minds and realities. They influence people into adapting their movement and behavior as they provide inspiration for material expressions. The following mosaic of characters presents itself as an interpretation of personified ideas that continuously determine and build identities and bodies even in current times.

These beasts are fragments of our reality and they allow us to see codes and norms that classify us in society either out of tradition, fear, need for expression or acting. They take us to windows to other parallel worlds as we human beings share our space with them, thus why we should seek to comprehend their nature and learn to live with them no matter how problematic they seem (Haraway, 2016).

To understand relationships amongst the beasts we decided to associate them with one of our three main concepts: 'Corporeidad' (embodiment), 'Moda' (fashion) and 'Performance' in an attempt to recognize their connections and interactions with our own myths.

Our decision to use 'Corporeidad' as the translation of Embodiment comes from the word's philosophical definition created by Xavier Zubiri (1986), which not only includes the fact humans own a physical body but also have experiences through it where thoughts, actions and feelings intervene.

World R

In this world humans have formed a belief system that recognizes the effect that various artifacts which work as clothing have on its believers. These garments increase the connection people have with beasts that endow their bodies with certain attributes related to their movement, perception and performances by modifying their shape. The morphological transformations can be seen through a ceremony where they are directly manifested onto the believers.

Three great beast families shape the existence of this world: Corpusia, Modeias and Perfos, each one with its own characteristics. All beasts are led by Inoxiva who created every being.

Every new year the Great Ceremony of Inoxiva takes place. People receive guidance of a beast through an assigned card which guides their future. They then perform a ritual where they wear a special artifact through which the bodily effects of the beast are felt. Under the influence of the creature, they must complete a certain set of movements while reflecting on the change the garment generates in their body and how it creates a new performance that slowly bonds with their identity.



Inoxiva

Beast of Expressive Construction

Inoxiva is the creator who formed every being, containing within itself all of their strengths and weaknesses. It does not belong to any family as it is part of all of them, being present in the physical realm and the action realm while also acting as a means of communication of inspirations, connecting our dimension with the plane of beasts.

Depictions of Inoxiva tend to be compositions that combine symbols and shapes of every beast, showing its nature as the mix of the abstract and physical matter. It only exists in the continuous present and the constantly developing world.



Corpusia Family

Beasts of the Corpusia family are born from embodiment: the tangible condition of bodies that anchors us to the physical world and allows us to experience individuality and culture through our senses.

They are the incarnation of individual perceptions of our own bodies built from the subjective experience we have with them.

Every idea the Corpusia family represents comes from the body, appearing as a soul or spirit. Their name originates from the latin word 'corpus', referring to the human form as a set of independent systems that together create a compound body.

These beasts symbolize many ways of understanding the physical realm, acting as catalysts of our being and tools to move and act. The Corpusia creatures can turn into a canvas for art forms, memories and public or private statements.



Sen

Beast of Sensoriality

Sen represents all that we are capable of capturing through our senses. It is the incarnation of cold, warmth, sadness, happiness and all external things, both real and abstract, that have an effect on our body and change its state and perception of reality.

Morfus

Beast of Shape

Morfus represents forms and silhouettes of both bodies and other physical objects. It appears as the material conditions that are molded by the environment and changed through movement. Morfus creates the bonds between beings, objects and the tangible world.





Cordis

Beast of Remembrance

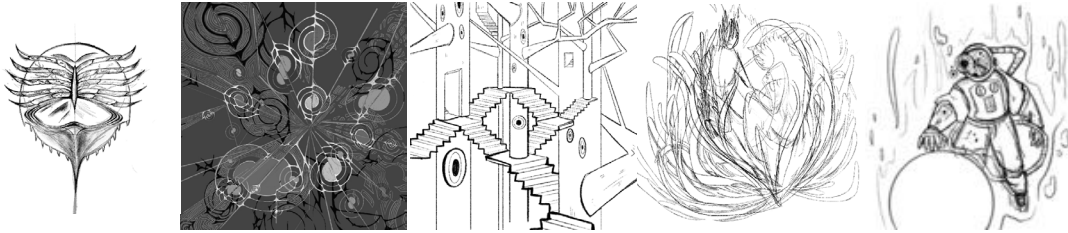
Cordis embodies the marks left behind by all experiences, keeping memories on the body and mind and manifesting them physically as scars, tattoos, birthmarks, muscle memories and common movements. Cordis may or may not be visible in all bodies but it is always present in them.



Caliuz

Beast of Physicality

Caliuz evokes all that is tangible around us but resides outside our body as well as the ways it affects us. Not to be confused with Sen, Caliuz is instead the manifestation of the external inputs Sen perceives. Materials that compose the body are also an existence of Caliuz.



Modeias

Family

Modeias is the family of beasts that represent the existence of trends created amongst societies. They are a result of collaborative creations that change through time.

This family refers to all material and visual aspects of expressing one's identity built from the relationships created between the humankind and otherkin (clothes).

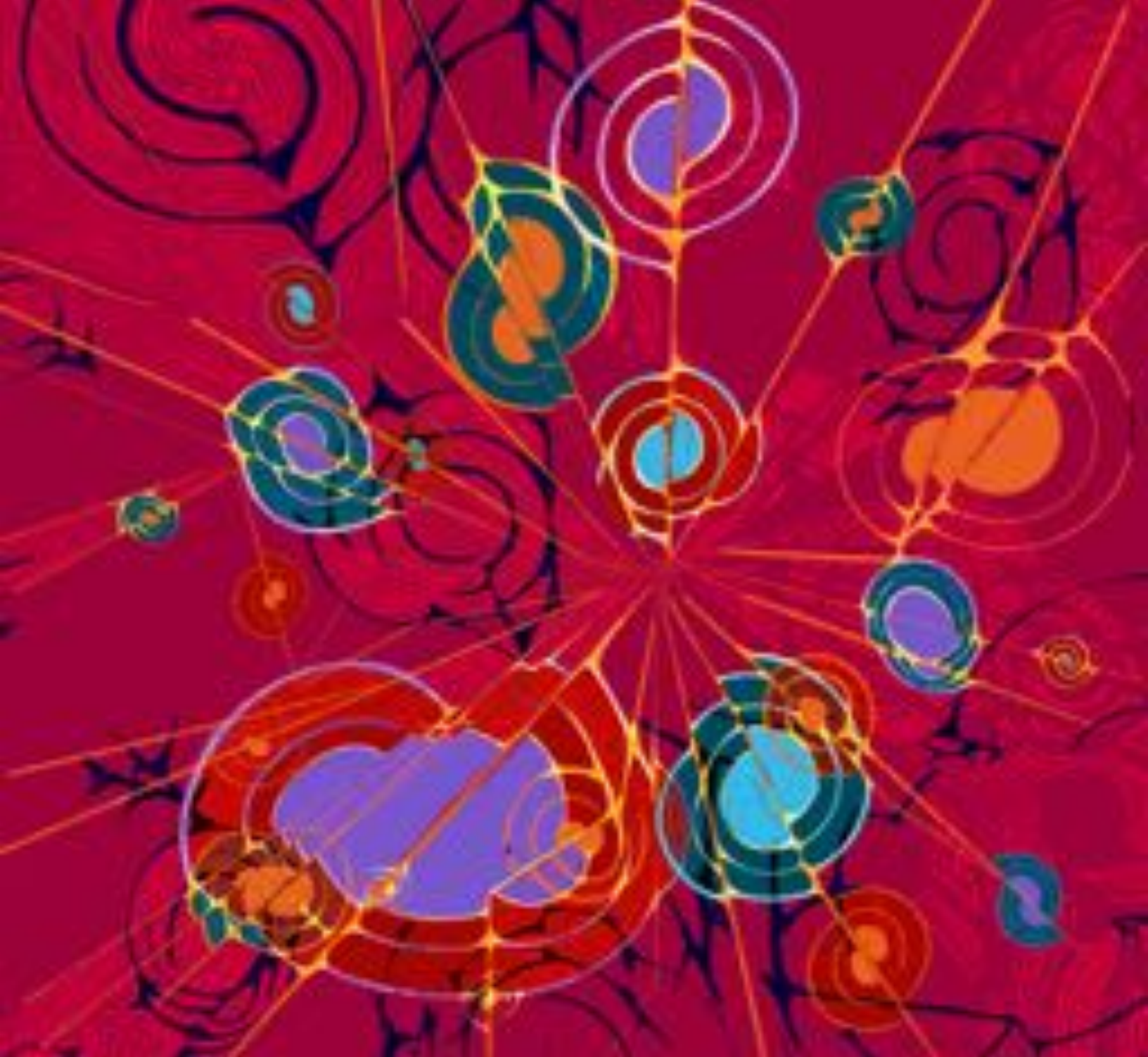
Modeias beasts are the personification of clothing culture and refer to styles associated to different criteria such as a time period or trend. Its name comes from the latin word 'modus' which means manners, so all Modeias creatures are related with the manners and customs of every moment in time. The word mold also shares the same latin root, which allows us to also interpret the Modeias family as beasts capable of molding bodies



Histemo

Beast of History

This beast is the guardian of all moments, foregoings and events in history that together build the global context we live in. This supreme being holds the biggest amount of details related to collective memory, allowing it to inspire the creation of clothing when summoned.



Truale

Beast of Social Constructs

This beast observes and projects the multitude of social constructs that have been developed in different human civilizations onto the clothing that they make. Truale watches over them and regulates what they enforce, but it also generates new ones when it considers such action necessary. It has the power to define entire communities and form strong collectives that give order to society in specific ways.

Teria

Beast of Materialization

Teria holds in its power the inspiration for expressions of beauty while also having the ability to guide humans on acquiring talents for creation of different garment styles, bringing ideas to life and helping them adapt to the resources the believers that summon it have in their habitat.





Genis

Beast of Gender Expression (m-f)

This creature is actually composed of two beasts with individual characteristics that manifest differently on clothes, making them appear either masculine, feminine or neutral. When combined they generate all possible expressions of identity that a person can choose from. Genis gives meaning to each person's gender and determines how they are perceived through the otherkin they wear.



Atractea

Beast of Attraction

Atractea possesses the ability of persuasion and conviction. It acts as a magnet that creates bridges and connections between humans and the way they are perceived by others. It is capable of determining how approachable a physical being is based on how they look and express themselves visually.



Perfos Family

Beasts of this family are born from performance: the actions bodies perform with an intention and objective.

Performance comes from the french word 'Parfourmer' which in turn comes from old french 'parfournir' which means giving through.

They are not only the means through which we act, but are also the act of functionality. They are not restricted by any rule to generate acts of creation in humans. Carlos Armando Cruz Velazquez (2004) states that:

"Performance arises from manifestations against culture which means they are a form of resistance towards actions stated and enforced by a determined group. It is an alternate action to what is being created at the moment, a rebellion against what should be (...). I consider performance to be an experience with a creative initiative and a rejection of what the outside wants to impose on individuals."

Thus, every beast of Perfos acts onto actions themselves as a means to channel and oppose social constructs that affect forms of identity directly and do not allow them to exist. This is supported by what Judith Butler explains about performance. "It is not simply an expression of a preexisting identity, but a process through which identity itself is created (...). Performance is not a singular act but is instead a ritual and a repetition that happens inside culturally established contexts ruled by norms and laws." (Cruz Velásquez, 2004).



Mottio

Beast of Movement

Mottio embodies the way a body changes its position across a specific location in time and space. It is the beast that forms expressions of bodies, determining those position modifications and offering all possible variations they can generate, all with the goal of creating a performance.

Iiere

Beast of Resilience

Iiere is the beast that provides the capabilities of adaptation and permanence. It acts through different expressions of each being's own habits, helping them last and create no matter the circumstances of oppression they find themselves in. It resists against harmful social constructs, paradigms and restrictions towards self expression.



Phantasia

Beast of Fantasy

Phantasia is the beast that represents the fantasies every body is able to reflect through the act of performance. It is the beast that brings out the true internal gender of every person as a means of expressing that which comes from inside the self as opposed to the norms others put on them, allowing the birth of new identities restricted by no boundary.

Judith Butler mentions in Gender trouble: "Gender is not a natural or biological property of individuals, instead appearing as a fantasy that presents itself onto all bodies as a result of the repetition of constant performance acts" (1990)"





Embracia

Beast of Embracing

Embracia's purpose is to reconstruct. It takes the enactment of various customs so they can be given and embraced by others and reflect the essence of those performances, creating a bond between the giving being and the embracing people who not only take a sample of how they act but also how they are deep inside, pushing traditions beyond the communities they belong to.



Transfus

Beast of Transformation

Transfus is always seeking for change and never stays still. It is able to transmute bodies through the creation of performances with the otherkin. It unites the powers of other Perfos beasts to allow physical bodies to be modified as a result of self expression.

Exiliants

Our physical world is currently dominated by certain centralized ideas that cause society to perceive the West as a superior society with richer culture than others while it exoticizes and excludes them, oppressing different forms of identity. These beliefs exist because of the presence of four entities described as the contemporary restraints of expression: Colonialism, Patriarchy, Quantitative science and Capitalism, ideas that Kate Fletcher and Mathilda Tham (2019) describe as concepts that have hindered substantial changes in society through the segregation of certain communities. These are embodied in the Exilient beasts, beings of chaos that intend to keep the damaged reality we live in.

Colonus

Beast of Colonialism

Colonus is believed to have been born during various historical periods of colonization, summoned by powerful nations to establish their own cultural, social, religious and political beliefs upon others. With the strength of Colonus, these societies were able to dominate and acquire both territories in the physical realm as well as power over ideas and constructs. Colonus contains the power of european relational logic which negates the existence of other beliefs. Its dominance also remains through various practices that perpetuate inequality and keep the hegemonic oppression system of the global north over the global south in place.

Pater

Beast of Patriarchy

Pater contains its power on patriarchy and the strict unchanging beliefs about gender, which contradict Genis. Pater builds another oppression system based on apparent differences in gender, through which hierarchies ruled by men (mostly cis het and white from western cultures) are created and kept thanks to the system's ability to silence and subordinate anyone who is different from them. They create a mistaken view of Phantasia where it's believed it only manifests according to the person's genetic body parts and negates any other variation of its presence.

Centiva

Beast of quantitative science

Centiva, tough and inexpressive, carries forward the power that information created through numbers and scientific research hold over human knowledge. It has the power to quantify and dehumanize all that conforms humankind and otherkin, and rejects anything outside the parameters the other exiliants have set. Centiva considers arts and humanities useless and inferior so it leaves those practices behind as it leads people towards an insatiable search for data and how it should be constantly increasing. trying to prove the intellectual superiority of the West.

Econis

Beast of Money and Economy

Econis expands its power over the world through a system of income injustice and exploitation of minorities as a means for hierarchies to remain favoring certain groups over others. Additionally, it is even ready to spark wars as long as the social pyramid stays the same and specific sectors of society are left vulnerable. Econis generates discord amongst the ambition of those with more acquisitive power through the seduction of having more in the physical realm, distorting the relationship they have with otherkin and reality.

Myths

Through various stories we can observe how the three families relate to one another, being able to discover the way Modeias has direct effects over the transformation of Corpusia, affecting in turn the actions of Perfos, constructing and shaping bodies as a result of self expression through clothes.



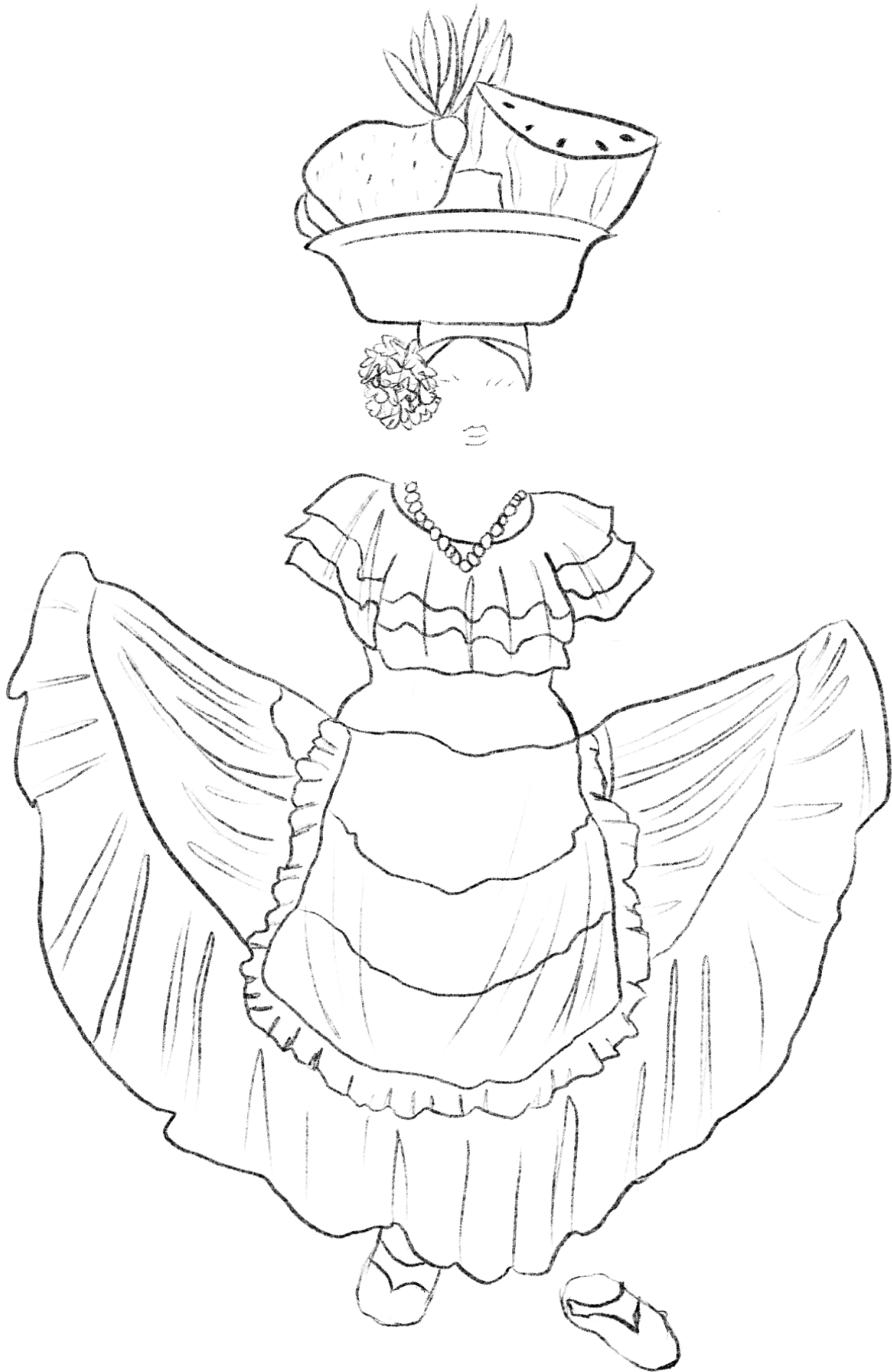
Palenqueras

Palenqueras in Cartagena, Colombia modify their bodies for a simultaneous use of service and performance as manifestation of Ilere's power. Observe their attire made up of a dress, an apron, a turban and a basin which channels Morfus to change their posture and Mottio to adjust their way of walking, showing off the products to citizens and tourists of the Walled City. They become an iconic figure of the Cartagena landscape as Beltrán Paredes (2012) mentions about them: "The palenquera woman creates an act around her own image, adapting her garments to present them as striking and utilizing the basin on top of their head that produces transformation in their way of walking to appear as attractive and gather enough resources to maintain their family".

Their acting is born from the need to sustain themselves in a place dominated by Econis and Colonus which discriminate them because of their skin color and gender and makes the process of acquiring enough money more difficult. They are forced to work selling fruit through manipulating their ancestral customs and roots, using the help of Histemo, who allows them to reconnect with the traditions of their ancestors and specifically with their own expression of Genis' femininity. They channel these attributes in a material form through Teria and create a folkloric and exotic form of attractive image of them and their work as a result of Atractea's effect on those who see them act.

Transfus acts out when turning these women from simple fruit vendors to exhibitions of a cultural image that Cartagena wants to give tourists: a city where african roots are conserved. The performance they make around the vision others have of the palenques is sold as a product along with the fruit they carry, turning into an accessory of the city's landscape (Beltrán Paredes, 2012).

Throughout the XX and XXI century, a traditional way of the Palenquera has been created through these women who, challenging their position in society established by Pater, become those in charge of providing their families as they gain admiration and respect from the city. Arturo Escobar (2014) describes this phenomenon in various societies in Latin America, noticing how it creates new customs and modifications around bodily perception to become more 'pintoresque' and help their communities thrive.



Drag Queens

Four friends, Andrés, Martín, Daniel and Juan David become Drag Queens through a ritual that summons Transfusus to manifest through their clothing and create an expression of new identities they call Mariadna, Martinique, Juana and Suamiga.

'Mis Amigas Drag' perform femininity where Genis manifests it through their makeup and exaggerated outfits as a parody towards the existing beliefs around traditional gender norms with the goal of entertaining others and summoning Iliere, looking for its resilience. During this ritual they use thigh clothes, high heels and see-through thigh highs that mold their body through Morfus and Mottio's power. The high heels mold their posture and causes a specific walking pattern with a different way of balancing and stability. Makeup generates form changes as it transforms their facial expressions and shapes, adding to their cheeks, their thin noses, the colorful lashes and the expressive eyebrows. Despite evoking the feminine side of Genis, many of their masculine traits are also kept, such as body hair and their prominent beards. This style of Drag is called 'Genderfuck' because for their performance the expression of an accurate gender binary is unnecessary.

Judith Butler had proposed the idea of gender as performance: "Gender identity is performative, which means it is created through the repetition of acts and gestures that transmit and solidify one's own identity." It is also through language, clothing, movement and bodily shapes that this performance is formed. Drag is a personification of what can be created when intervening on these aspects. Butler remarks that "clothing, makeup and other cultural practices around gender are performative and contribute to consolidating one's self." It is relevant to note that these objects do not determine gender on their own but are instead a way of expressing it through creating a personal character adapted by us actors through their bodily modifications. "The performance of gender implies that it is not an essence of the self but is instead a practice that can always change and subvert itself". This has the goal of destabilizing and questioning gender norms as well as resisting against constructs and creating new identities.

In this specific myth, the clothes that take effect on embodiment and performance create a particular way of questioning gender and deconstructing it. Donna Haraway mentions in her article Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far that to be able to live in harmony with the rest of the world, humans must become gumans, which means getting rid of the idea of gender binary to become part of the other organisms that make up our world, which is what 'Mis Amigas Drag' is able to achieve.



Closing Statement

We are now aware of how the performance of Palenqueras and Drag Queens is a reflection of body shaping through fashion. During the formation of these new cultures new changes related to aesthetic appearances and manifestation has lead to new visual trends as consequence of how fashion ends up modifying matter and social images. We can conclude that clothing is capable of completely changing the way we move and conceive our bodies not just in extravagant acts of performance but also on a day to day basis, defining the human lifestyle and how it interacts with others and the images they create of themselves. It is also important to highlight the way that performances also modify themselves according to the social and cultural environments they develop in, appearing as an alternative to specific situations restricted by society. The relationship between fashion, embodiment and performance unites the effects created by the elements that participate in the summoning of each value and give us the possibility of creating new meanings that question established standards around clothes and which beasts we want to summon with them.

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