

## The Exhibitionist: 'Visibly Invisible'

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By Maureen Davidson Wed, Oct 06, 2010

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Maxx Sizeler's 'Red Shoes (size 9.5 men)'

Difficult as it may be to "find oneself" during the course of that journey we all share, Cabrillo Gallery's exhibition, "Visibly Invisible," shows how, for some, that search became a hero's quest. Curator Tobin Keller brought together five artists working in still photography, drawing and painting, film, video and multimedia to present perspectives, each very personal, on the issue of gender transformation. Subtitled "Artists Working with Transgendered Themes," the exhibition voices truths relevant to the entire race, whatever gender, through its empathic focus on one group of people struggling with how to be who they are.

A quiet series of drawings by Moules traces her/his transition from female to male in small, faint, self-deprecating imaginings of a future "self" with

testosterone-produced facial hair: self with stubble, self with moustache, as if mugging in a bathroom mirror. Not timid or self-deprecating at all, Shani Heckman's film *Wrong Bathroom* greets visitors at the entrance of the exhibition. In a series of interviews Heckman makes it clear that, when the choice is Men's or Women's, only the first decision is one's own.

Other artists range from quiet to confrontational to subversive. Maxx Sizeler looks at shoes: sensible or self-defeating. His colorful men's saddle shoes are perched on tall, thick, rounded, rocking, neck-breaking heels as if to ask what would change if men's shoes became as debilitating as women's.

Jana Marcus' "Transfigurations" is revelatory: A series of larger-than-life-size black and white portraits that—perhaps as a function of a wide-open camera lens or the fine quality of printing, but more likely because the eye of the photographer has called forth a deep veracity from the subject—make available the human essence of Aiden, born female, from age 16, as she begins the transition into a boy first, and then to a man. In a fascinating time-lapse through a life, Aiden is revealed at the point of decision to make a gender change, after the surgery to remove breasts, at the onset of hormonal treatment, and at stages of reconfiguration to complete identity as adult male. Excerpts from interviews with Aiden accompany each image. At 27, Aiden is quoted: "I have noticed an overall cultural disrespect for women—that their physical space isn't their own, that for some reason they don't need it. Sitting next to a stranger somewhere I would have usually been shy about the space I took up, aware of people's reactions. As a man I'm free to take up space and I am aware that more is given to me in our culture. I speak louder now and people listen."

Humans of all labels can find insight in this impactful show that continues through Oct. 29, Monday–Friday, 9am–4pm, and Monday and Tuesday, 7–9pm, at Cabrillo Gallery, Cabrillo College, 6500 Soquel Dr., Library Rm. 1002, Aptos.

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