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Manuel Rivera-Ortiz Foundation *Dress Code*

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***Dress Code* brings together around forty artists who offer a unique perspective on identity and clothing in the world.**

The *Dress Code* program brings together around forty artists who offer singular views on identity and clothing around the world.

Clothing is representative of an aspect of identity, it can arouse desire by sublimating the human body, notably through ornament, but it can also reveal codes and standards. Dress codes allow for integration into society or, to the contrary, rejection, emancipation and protest.

A symbol of globalization, fashion, a space of subjectivization and desubjectivization, of intervention and alienation, contributes to social and physical emancipation. This evolution leads us to ask ourselves why clothing is always at the heart of issue of identities. Clothing always takes on the role of being a marker of gender, age, social status, religion, sexual orientation, political opinions, wealth, and subculture. At times an ornament, a costume, a performance outfit, or a cult outfit, clothes represent singular as well as collective identities.

Dress Code explores this relationship between identity and clothing, notably through New York drag queens, Nigerian twins, Voodoo rituals in Benin and Togo, and Zapotec women in Mexico, but also through personal photographic investigations. Between rituals and gender indicators, the twenty or so exhibitions propose a discussion of singular and collective identities, as well as of dress as emancipation or revendication.

Fotohaus offers an enhanced version of the program with *Sein und Schein*, “being and appearing”, as does *Fragiles*, Tendance Floue’s group project, which is influenced by the upheavals of our time.

From the text *How We Dress* by Manuel Rivera-Ortiz:

When I was small, clothes, the lack of them, almost broke me. We were poor. Very, very poor. Until we left Puerto Rico for the “mainland” United States, Connecticut, at age eleven, I always had only one pair of good church shoes, one pair of good school shoes, one good set of church clothes, donated, and one school uniform comprised of one pair of khaki pants and two shirts.

So, what does all of this mean?

For me, uniforms were a blessing and a curse.

(...)

From European kings and queens to America’s own Fifth Avenue gilded bunch in the turn of the last century, to the commoner on the street, clothes can make us or break us. Clothes can keep us warm, but they can also intonate a frigid unapproachable distance.

Our clothes tell the world who we are out loud and unabashedly. Clothes decree to anyone watching that we believe in something and that something to us is essential. Our intentions, sentiments, passions, dispassion, disappointments—the horrors of challenges we’ve endured, like with the suffragists, or the colors of the cultural beauty on our side—all get reflected on our clothes.

Exhibition

Dress Code – Rencontres d’Arles 2022

MRO Fondation, Arles

04.07. – 25.09.2022

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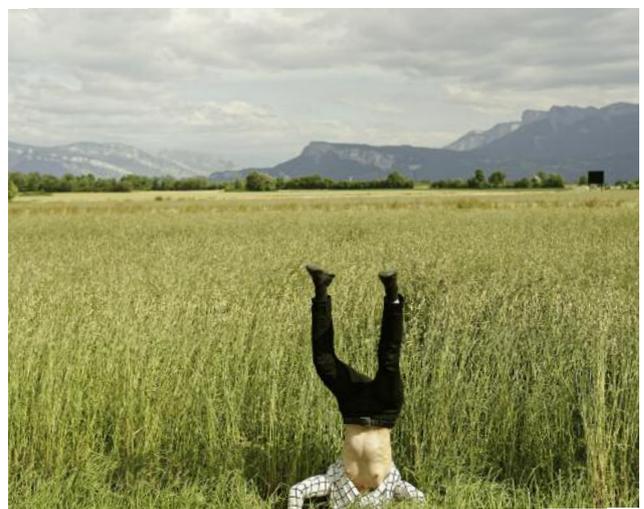
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