

## **Lovis Wind**

***Lovis Wind is an emerging designer who lives in Sweden. They have an MFA in Child Culture Design (HDK - Valand, University of Gothenburg) and a bachelor in audiovisual arts (Ionian University). In their work, story telling, illustrations and textile design come together to document everyday life or to revisit adolescence.***

# **Hreyfing**

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## ***Abstract***

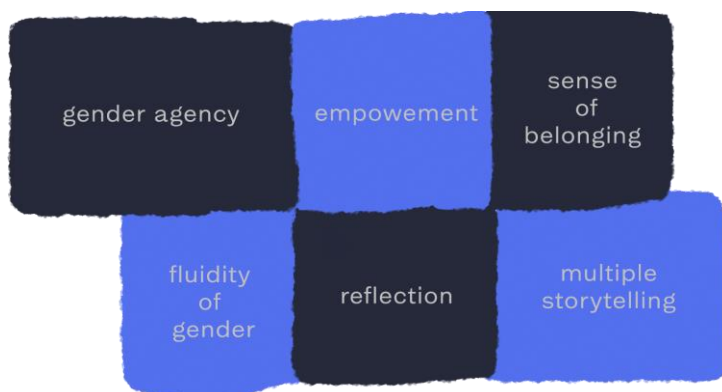
**The project, Hreyfing, is a temporary reflection space, which invites youngsters to reflect on and project their own musings on gender identity. This article outlines the project's development and reflections. The project uses spatial and illustration design to create the affordances and possibilities for youngsters to share and collect stories and disrupt the status quo. Multiple storytelling and spatial design created a space for stories to be gathered and read. The idea of collective reflection was developed through the designer's reading practice and the designer's continued reflection on how they relate to the world as a queer person. Hreyfing is an exploration into opportunities to disrupt how gender identity is communicated to children and to extend its definition in directions that can introduce other possibilities, but also to celebrate individualities.**

## ***Keywords***

**Gender identity, spatial design, exhibition design, illustration, textile, safe space**

## ***Introduction***

**This project has been an exploration of gender identity's formation, opening up space for youngsters to question society's gender norms, to explore and play with their identity. The western binary system is a social and cultural construction assuming identity develops, thus there is an end goal to the already limited options it communicates to children. This past decade, more and more children and adolescents have a voice and a choice to fabricate their own narratives. In this project, inviting for reflection was used as a method to think about "other ways of being" (Nelson, 2021) beyond the gender binary. A main part of the process has been mapping and interpreting conversations and spaces. Through these mappings on how queer children and youth would describe gender identity and their view on safe spaces, stories have been collected. By sharing and reading experiences of others, otherness could be better understood, or explored. Children and adults have participated at the interviews for this project, opening up space to a broad audience to reflect collectively on gender identities narratives. A few of the topics which were communicated through their invite were: fluidity, transgression and safe spaces.**



***Fig. 1: overview of the topics in the project***

### ***Topics within the Project***

The exploration and realisation of this project was connected to my own journey of figuring out who am I, what can I be for the world and what does it mean to have a chosen family (sense of belonging, see *Paris is Burning* (Livingstone, 1990))? Since this project started, I have been questioning gender norms; the linear narrative, the western gender binary understanding. Society has expectations from adolescents to develop their identity. I have been trying to figure out how reflection can be a shared journey and involve youngsters who are either already exploring or not, in order to empower the first, take away the pressure and to provide options to the latter. My topics (Fig. 1) intersect. The gender binary is a project of control and experiencing gender in a different way than how we were instructed upon, unlocks another possibility of being and of having agency over our bodies. The choices we are making, or will be making, do not need to be permanent, because our identities evolve and are in constant conversation with the world around us.

### ***Fluidity***

Legacy Russell shares the view that "gender is a scaled economy: it is a mode of regulation, management, and control" (Russell, 2020). Getting away from the position of identity that people put on us is a form of refusal. This is what Russell names "glitch" and questions identity's fixedness. By creating new frameworks within the gender pole, constant play and experimentation will activate the component of "becoming". Becoming as a means of making room for fluid



***Pic. 1: interpretation of fluid identity narratives***

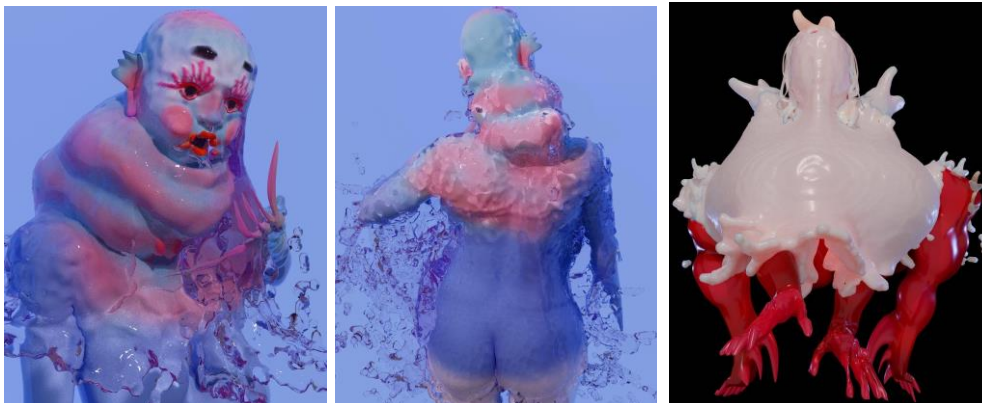
**gender narratives and their broad range, where forming oneself's identity is an ongoing constant process. Torrey Peters, the author of "Detransition, Baby", in an interview mentioned how "It's not about having a target (gender expectations) and hit it perfectly, but rather about going back and forth" (Pic. 1).**

### ***Imagination, Body, Performativity***

**To make room for other narratives, we can start from questioning gender and prioritising other qualities that could define our identity. Activist and writer adrienne maree brown, who believes in transformative justice, writes: "Our radical imagination is a tool for decolonisation, for reclaiming our right to shape our lived reality" (brown, 2019). What would it mean for us to be creators and define our identities? The body is an entity which performs gender with its materiality. According to Woodyer Tara (2008), a lecturer in Human Geography, we ought to "appreciate the role of embodiment in the processes through which children participate in social life", because what shapes our embodiment is the social relations and interactions. Body as play can be looked upon as a way of "exploring the breadth of cosmic corporeality" (Russell, 2020). "If we truly wish to understand and extend the agency of**

children we need to appreciate the myriad ways in which agency may be, and is exercised” (Woodyer, 2008).

Bora is a multidisciplinary artist who works with the body and intimacy, collecting, and transmitting stories within a digital realm. In an interview at Swarm Mag, on the question "What role does physicality play in your work? How is it related to your signature figuration motive of bodies blending into each other?", they replied, "I believe digital reality has the power to build new narratives about physicality and its representations" (Kosinová, 2021) (Pic. 2, 3, 4). Imagination can pave the way to a queer utopia, which according to Muñoz (2019) is not yet here.



*Pic. 2, 3, 4 (BORA, 2021)*

## ***Gender Non-Conformity and Femininity***

**Gender non-conforming identities are non-normative, in politics and everyday life, intersectional and transgressive, fluid, fabricated by radical imagination. Gender non-conformity disrupts the expectation to engage in the fulfilment of the gender we were assigned at birth (Alabanza, 2022).**

**Yet, in our society, the visibly gender non-conforming non-binary folks regularly dismissed are the ones who appear to be feminine. Julia Serano (2016) argues that only when femininity is empowered we will achieve gender equity. Or how Édouard Louis touches upon an interview for his book "Who Killed My Father" when asked about masculinity for young boys: "Masculinity is an option among other options.." and suggests that "the ideal would be to build identity as a system of choices" (Hudson, 2019). With my illustrations, I am trying to represent and depict queerness either with clothing, or other visual cues (Pic. 5). One of the interviews I have had was focused on fashion and wearables and their role to expressing queerness and transform.**



***Pic. 5: interpretation of queer visual cues (Wind, 2022)***

## ***Safe Space and Collectiveness***

To describe a safe place open to otherness was one of the questions in the conversations / interviews for this project. The most common answer of what it takes for the creation of a safe place was the folks being there, or not being there, the DIY aspect, the space being a meeting point allowing for conversations and conflict to happen. Travis Alabanza (2022) writes: "The kind of joy I recognise now as that which comes from the perfect symphony of being yourself, of others celebrating that, and of being in a place of safety."

Another influence has been Maggie Nelson (2021), where her latest book "On Freedom: Four Songs of Care and Constraint" questions "What might an aesthetics of care look like, today, as a deep structure that might drive artistic practice, formally and materially? How do ideas of care -as a form, too, of love- transform the aesthetics of protest?" and Billy-Ray Belcourt (2022) argues that "To care in a more feminist sense is to think outside of a singular life, and to do this is to participate in a process of self-making that exceeds the individual. With care, one grows a collective skin (Pic. 6): the fact of being touched by what we touch".



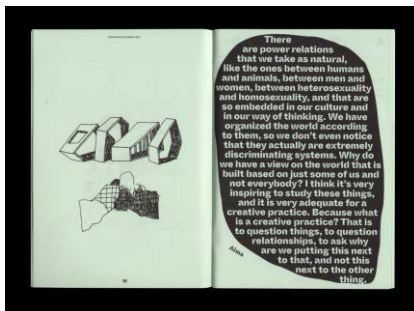
***Pic. 6: visualisation of togetherness***



I hope that the design of this space can be interpreted as a design that someone has cared for, with elements to relate to, to feel that there is something there for queer youth, that this space was designed for queer youngsters.

### ***Queer Spaces***

Olivier Vallerand (2013) is an architect, historian and assistant professor who focuses on gender, sexuality, and the built environment. From the very beginning of the article "Home is a place we all share, Building queer collective utopias" he creates a link to the queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz's queer futurity ideas, where they do not talk about the 'here and now', but the 'then and there'. One more of the distinctions that he touches upon is the binary 'public/private' occupational realms.



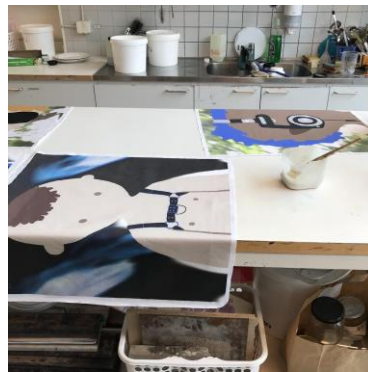
***Pic. 7: Safe Space Collective, Zine 6***

Included in the article is a group exhibition, which suggests that "queer utopia is understood and used as a collective sphere where they (public/private) interact in full relationality." On his conclusion, Vallerand refers to Jose Esteban Muñoz to suggest the renewal of our understanding of architecture's queer potentiality, in order to "allow everyone regardless of their self-identifications, to experience fully, and safely, spaces, both collectively and individually" (Vallerand, 2013).

**Safe Space Collective is a critical dialogue which takes the form of an exhibition / residency, an 8-episode podcast series, and a 6-issue series of zines. Safe Space poses a question that is “Why do we have a view on the world which is build on just some of us and not everyone is included?”. They interpret ‘queer’ as a way of deconstructing, proposing different standards, reinterpreting norms, and developing new subjectivities (Pic. 7).**

### ***Illustrations, Textile Tactility, Spatial Design***

**The style of my illustrations can be characterised as cute and dark while youthful characters are navigating adolescence and/or early adulthood. The locations are abstract and invite the viewer to place them in their own space and time. A comic layout was used to share two of the stories exactly as they were told. I wish for the characters to be seen as queer, non-binary or trans. When portrayed naked, one can not tell about their gender, which aims to challenge how identity is defined by our birth genitals (Pic. 8). Through the different phases of this project, different textile methods were explored to engage with the tactile experience. Textile design evolves slowly and allows for pauses, reflection and testing, which can relate with the process of gender formation. Being familiar with textiles it was another reason to work with them to translate stories/illustrations to spatial objects. Moreover the textile tactility adds to the warmth of the space, making it more cozy for someone to pause, spend more time there and think.**



**Pic. 8: naked figure, Pic. 9, 10: illustration of Andrea, work in progress  
Pic. 11, 12, 13, 14: tufting, Pic. 15: gluing the edges of the digital textile prints**

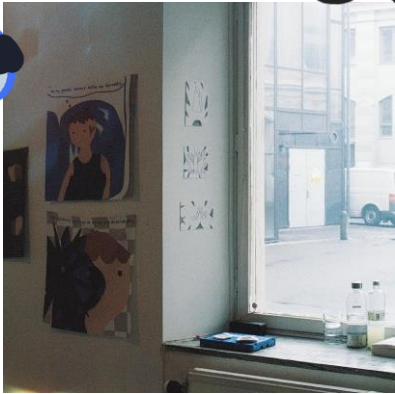
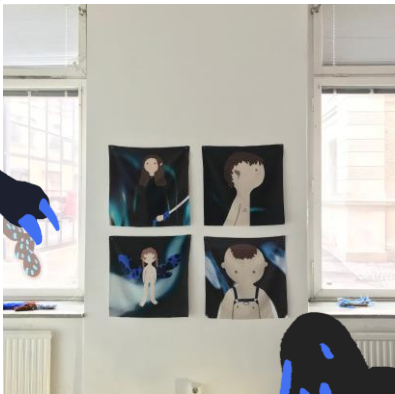
## ***Outcome***

**The outcome can be presented as space for collective reflection. "A queer gathering" was meant to be an exhibition that is different to everyone, an enabler for sharing queer experiences or being introduced to them. What the different elements aimed to communicate was collectiveness and trans liberation.**

## ***Conclusion***

**This project has been an investigation of what is a queer safe space for youngsters, what are the different components that make this space safe, welcome and inclusive. I consider collecting and sharing stories of others my main contribution and the bridge between private and public. To provide questions and references that enable collective reflection for youngsters to have gender agency and explore new ways to look at themselves. This project was a personal exploration too, where moving to a new country meant figuring out how much space I can take, where do I feel safe to be queerer, and how do I connect with others. All of the above were the starting points for designing for a queer safe space.**





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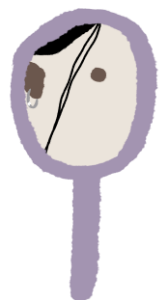
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**Architecture.**

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