

Trans(per)forming Nina Arsenault: An Unreasonable Body Of Work

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After sixty surgeries at a cost of almost \$200,000 to feminize and beautify her originally male body, transgendered Canadian artist Nina Arsenault has created a body of work emanating from her experiences that includes photographs, videos disseminated online, a website, a blog, several social networking presentation sites, stage plays, print media writing, and performance of the body in both celebrity appearances and daily public life. Arsenault was born in rural Ontario in 1974 and until the age of six lived as Rodney in a trailer park with her working-class family. Her father delivered bread for a large company, and her mother was a homemaker. In high school, Arsenault came out to close friends as a gay man, and then declared her sexual orientation publicly on the first day of university at a freshman event. All in all, she has a comfortable, reasonable beginning. But throughout her early years, Arsenault was also developing a need to externally manifest an internal yearning to express her feminine self and do so unreasonably by embodying extreme and even unreal representations of Western beauty. By rejecting the binary of real versus fake and dedicating herself to exploring authenticity and beauty, Arsenault today continues to evolve in a process that began in childhood with an awareness of her transsexuality, continued in adulthood with surgical steps towards Male-to-Female transition and beautification, and now anticipates new challenges in midlife and beyond that will include physical and psychological responses to biological aging as well as unknown effects from the un-encased silicone that has been directly injected into the muscle tissue of her body. Throughout her evolution, Arsenault has aspired to unreal, unnatural beauty, refusing to be reasonable in her choices. In conventional performance situations or on view buying a coffee at the local corner store, she represents the relationship between the female self and the constructed, personally designed feminine body she inhabits. In TRANS(per)FORMING Nina Arsenault, Judith Rudakoff brings together texts by artists, scholars, and Arsenault herself that vary widely in perspective, experience, and form, to offer a cross-disciplinary set of investigative and critical approaches to beauty, image, and the notion of queerness through the filter of Arsenault's performance art, and her commitment to embodying a

hyperfeminized Western ideal. Publisher: Intellect Illustration: N Language: ENG Title:
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