

What were people so sceptical about?

G.B.: I'm convinced that there were a lot of unconscious fears involved. I have learned that this subject matter represents a great taboo for many people. Many reacted with the suggestion that I stick to what is familiar. They recommended that I film a single biography, from A to B, from woman to man. And that was exactly what I did NOT want to do with VENUS BOYZ. Others made it clear that I should in no case film Drag King performers or performances because they would be only attractive, but not profound enough. But it was exactly the attractiveness of the performances that appealed to me, because they contradict our prejudices and expectations, they challenge the associations we have about masculine women: that they are ugly, Amazon-like, have hair on their chests...

Isn't this because it arouses a lot of insecurity and fear?

G.B.: Of course – but where do these fears come from, fears that lead to the situation that little children are forced into specific roles? And what happens when the roles are not fulfilled? Let's talk about Storme Webber: Many people perceive her as a man. She, however, lives her life as a woman – and is happy about being a woman.

Which leads to the question of why society forces its members into such rigid roles?

G.B.: Let's ask the question differently: If we did not have any gender, would there still be sexual desire? Sexual desire establishes itself in the traditional understanding about the distinction between man and woman. The problems homosexuals have result from this socially constructed gender binarity. It denies them the "ability" to experience "natural" desire. Today we all know that sexual desire is possible in every direction: man-man, woman-woman, man-woman... The less sexuality has to do with reproduction, the freer it becomes and the more society changes. Instead of blood relatives, a freely-chosen "family of friends" forms. The importance of the classical family as such diminishes. The protagonists in my film live in very different "family forms". Diane Torr lives alone with her daughter, the New Men in London share a very close relationship...

VENUS BOYZ is a documentary, but contains experimental elements. What is the reason for this?

G.B.: Documentary film always involves staging. To make a documentary you construct your portrayal of reality. In VENUS BOYZ the moment of staging is strengthened. The Performances, that is, the interpretations of the protagonists on the stage, are interwoven with their conscious as well as their unconscious performances in every day life. Their permanent staging of themselves helps us perceive that there are only very gradual differences between gender performances in every day life and those on stage. These performances (diese Inszenierung) concern all of us. The dichotomy of the sexes is so obvious to us that we seldom think twice about it. We grow into these roles and unconsciously "perform" our gender every day. In its form, VENUS BOYZ attempts to be consistent with this constant staging of gender. I filmed the whole time with two cameras: the main camera was accompanied by a small camera which filmed the same scene from a different perspective. We also experimented with film speed and lighting. By doing so I wanted to achieve a release from "reality", I wanted an undefined visual zone. Both levels were mixed as we edited the film. For me, the blue images represent a third level. They indicate short moments extracted from a world of dreams, of imagination. They achieve a certain distance and refer to the act of constructing film reality. Film is, after all, "reality in drag".

Do you have the feeling that VENUS BOYZ will have some kind of cultural and/or socio-political effect?

G.B.: VENUS BOYZ is a film about Drag Kings and transgendered personalities, but above all, it is a film about people who take risks and refuse to succumb to their problems. Instead, they become creative, seek a new identity beyond the field of tension between man and woman. That affects all of us and, along these lines, I hope that my film will open doors and provide a glance into a world that was thus far relatively unknown. My wish would be that it makes a small contribution towards more tolerance in our encounter with other human beings. I would be happy if those who see the film begin to perceive ideals of beauty in a new way, and think more consciously about where the freedom of individuals begins and where it ends...

