

My Favorite Things
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Introduction

In this piece, Mangold applied the Humument technique pioneered by Thomas Phillips to a single unassuming page of the Maria de Bruyn collection held in the Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library. Maidman describes the Humument technique as “a naked concept to which the virtues of the visual arts have been applied. In the application, these virtues transform and enrich the concept until a unique entity has been created, which does indeed transcend the word.” Mangold originally selected this document from the Maria de Bruyn collection as he intended to explore the often overlooked issue of LGBT rights and discrimination in Latin America, as it relates to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. His art reframes traditional concepts of masculinity and seeks to affirm the place of LGBT youth among men.

Machismo

Little discussion occurs to address the unique issues that LGBT youth face in Latin American cultural contexts, such as the implications of the concept of *machismo*. Machismo essentially is the manifestation of hyper-masculine values and behaviors that define strict expectations for gender roles and pervade family and community dynamics in Latin America. The paragon of *machismo* is a cisgender heterosexual man who acts as the sole breadwinner for his family such that his wife and children want for nothing. He will uphold his sexual dominance over his wife through extramarital affairs as he frequents bars and women in the streets during nights out drinking. Deviation from this modeled behavior by men is seen as disgraceful. Young boys are expected to conform to precursors of these behaviors such, thus LGBT youth begin to internalize shame of their identity and experience discrimination at an all too early age and into adulthood.

“Niño en traje de bailerina”

Niño en traje de bailerina (The boy in the blue tutu) is an article originally authored by Lisen Stromberg for the March-April 1999 issue of the magazine *Mothering*. Mangold was surprised to find that the first publication of the article was in English and has found no rationale connecting why it was then subsequently translated into Spanish and collected in the de Bruyn archive. However, Mangold notes that the first reading of the article in Spanish strongly affected his subsequent artistic interpretation and influenced him to incorporate notions of *machismo* into his creative energy.

“My Favorite Things”

At the focal point of “My Favorite Things” is a self-portrait of the subject of the article, the 3-year old son of author Lisen Stromberg. Her central thesis revolved around the question, “Porqué no podemos amar los ‘mozos traviesos’ también? (“Why can’t we love ‘janegirls,’ too?”), and tackles the ubiquitous expectations for men that too often squash self-expression for young boys and begin the narrative of exclusion in early childhood. Her child loves to sing from “The Sound of Music” and this nuance inspired Mangold to title his work, “My Favorite Things” after the iconic song by Julie Andres

featured in the film. Mangold collaged colorful images of the young boys 'favorite things' referenced throughout the article in an approximation of the Mars symbol, a universal symbol for male identity. The 'favorite things' highlighted in the article range from Batgirl and Barbie to soccer and Superman. Mangold composes these conflicting 'favorite things' in this particular structure to challenge traditional ideas of masculinity and assert space for self-expression.

However, the repurposed Mars symbol conglomerate is juxtaposed with the black and white boundary of traditional masculine iconography: muscles, beards, cars, cigars, gambling, guns, boxing, basketball, football, etc. Mangold builds tension and visual metaphor by restricting the colorful self-expression of the young boy on all fronts with darker and airtight expectations for men. Moreover, encroaching and limiting gender roles will impact the young boy when he begins to realize his identity conflicts with representations of men in the media and he experiences cognitive dissonance. From a young age, he will recognize feeling different, perhaps less than others, leading to censorship of self and near inevitable discrimination and isolation into adulthood. Stromberg argued, "Nuestros estereotipos de roles para los sexos se ha extendido para niñas pero se han restringidos para niños" ("I am coming to realize that while our sex-role stereotypes have expanded for girls, they have contracted for boys").

Conclusion

In "My Favorite Things," Mangold represented affirmation of identity for youth who challenge traditional notions of gender roles, specifically for men. Moreover, the narrative of exclusion and isolation for LGBT youth can become exacerbated since this population experiences an elevated risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. Thus, it is important to recognize the struggles and reaffirm the validity of self-expression for LGBT youth worldwide.

Bibliography

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