

RIK VERSTEEG

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A SERENADE TO HALLUCINATION

SNAP COLLECTIVE
PARIS

*Pictures develop in our minds,
they color our eyes and fill our hearts with negatives,
which in time,
develop again.*

**RIK
VERSTEEG**

MIND MIRAGE

**A
SERENADE
TO
HALLUCINATION**

FOREWORD

by Joana Cavaco

INTRO

Versteeg, queer visual artist, fearlessly explores the realm of self-expression, using his artistic prowess to celebrate and shed light on queer identity. Through a diverse range of mediums and an unapologetic approach, Versteeg weaves together thought-provoking narratives that challenge societal norms and creates space for dialogue and understanding.

Born and raised in Drunen, Versteeg discovered his passion for art at a young age. Versteeg always liked dressing up, playing imaginative games, and making up stories in his mind. Being brought up in safe surroundings and with a family who've always accepted him for who he is, Versteeg had the space to develop his creativity further. After graduating from art school Versteeg started his own studio in 2013 in Rotterdam.

Growing up as a queer individual, Versteeg often found solace and empowerment in artistic expression. Versteeg began to view their artistic journey as a platform for personal and collective transformation. Embracing a multitude of mediums, from make-up, film, photography, and costume design, Versteeg pushes the boundaries of conventional artistic forms, transforming his work into an all-around practice. With each creation, Versteeg skillfully conveys the nuances of queer experiences, addressing themes of self-acceptance, identity, love, and the struggle for equality.

At the core of Versteeg's artistic vision is the celebration of queer identity. His works often feature diverse representations of queer individuals, breaking stereotypes and challenging societal constructs. By portraying a spectrum of genders, sexualities, and expressions, Versteeg aims to amplify the voices of marginalised communities and spark conversations surrounding the complexities of queerness. Versteeg uses his platform to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights, foster inclusivity and empower others to embrace their true selves.

One of Versteeg's notable contributions to the artistic landscape is their ability to blend vivid colours, intricate concepts, and symbolic imagery to create evocative compositions. Their use of symbolism and metaphor not only adds depth to his works but also invites viewers to delve into their own emotions and experiences.

The book *Mind Mirage* is a serenade to Versteeg's hallucinations, it illuminates and sheds light on a lingering darkness. A love letter to the beautiful and wicked thoughts passing his mind.



Me in my favorite dress, a picture made by my mom, 1995

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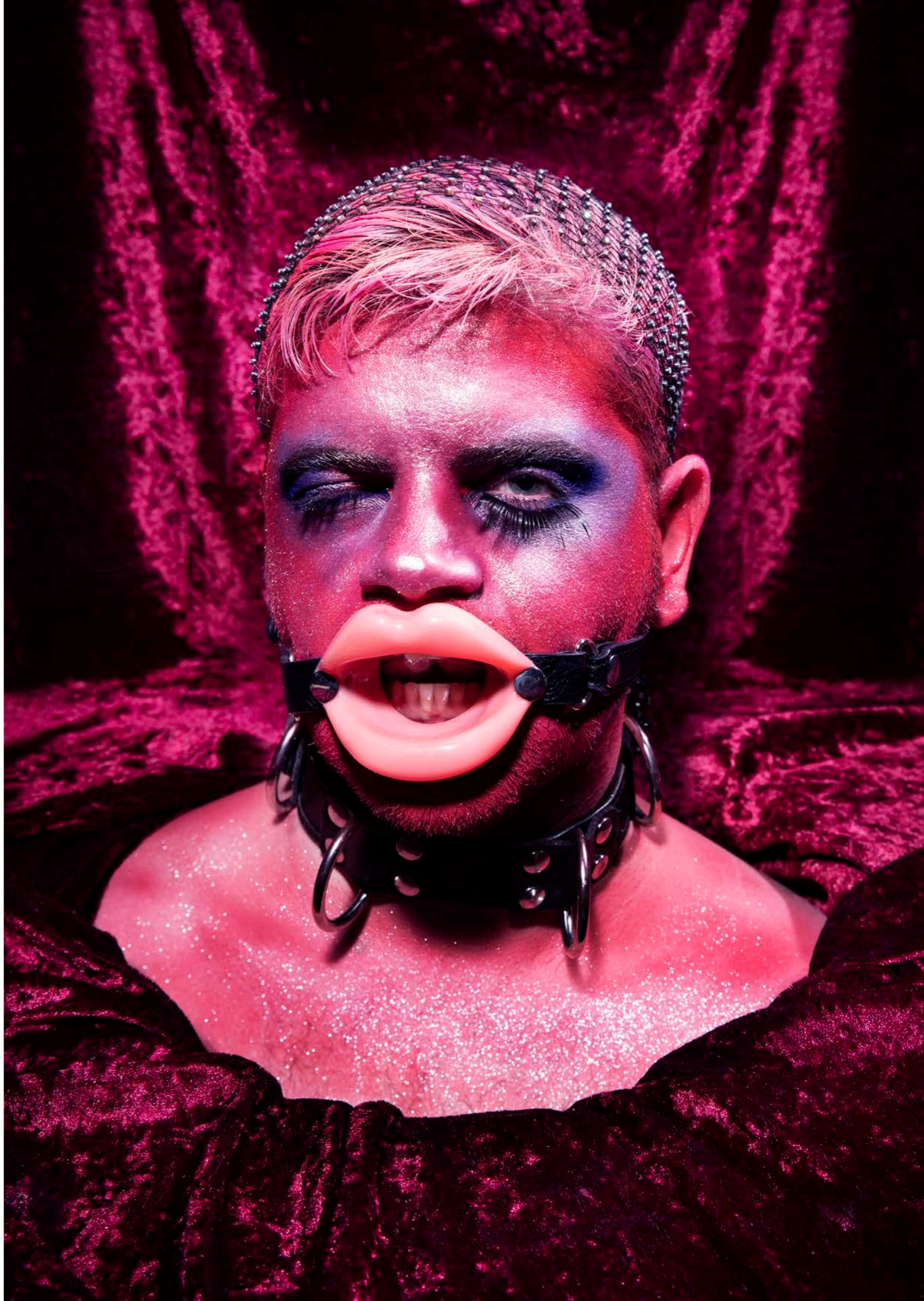
**THE
MIND**

SNAP DYSMORPHIA

Most social apps allow the user to alter their appearance in an instant and conform to an unrealistic and often unattainable standard of beauty. When you alter a photo and the result is a you-but-better-version staring back, you may start to get in your head that that's what you should look like. Cosmetic doctors are noticing an uptick in people who are bringing face-tuned, filtered, and, otherwise altered photos into their offices, calling it Snapchat Dysmorphia.

For this series, I wanted to highlight the disconnect between reality, mirror images, and selfies by using the filters offline; printing them, painting them on my face, or replacing them with a similar-looking object.











THIS IS A MEMORY OF A DREAM I ONCE HAD

When I was younger I suffered from night terrors and had a recurring nightmare for about a year. Today, I still cannot explain this dream or harmonize it with meaning.

Early civilizations thought dreams had prophetic power as if they were messages between the gods and life on earth. Mid-twentieth century Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung had formulated some of the most well-known theories about dreams and dreaming in Western society. Freud's theory of dreams centered around the notion of repressed longing. However, Jung argued that dreams are our conscious and subconscious minds accommodating each other.

Within the Western scientific research that has been done, we neither grasp the reason why we dream nor do we comprehend the meaning of dreams. This leaves room for interpretation. One might say that we are all fragmented and divided, and knowingly or not, we're all searching for our souls. The conventional, outer world has structure and order. But within us is an entirely different world, the unconscious.

By visualizing the memory of a dream I am transforming night terrors into aesthetic images and I am redesigning hypothetical hidden messages of my subconscious. This allows me to reflect on coincidence, spirituality, and visions you have of who and what you are to become.

*In the beginning,
we are mostly asleep.
Society conditions our consciousness.
And so we remain unconscious of our true self,
for at least the first half of life.*



















JUST STOP OIL

Tomato soup, mashed potatoes. Glue and red glop.

In 2022 activist protests have been focused on widely admired art, carried out by protestors demanding action on climate change. While wearing t-shirts with anti-oil slogans, the activists target masterpieces that are so valuable and one-of-a-kind, to get one message across. Unless industrialized nations act quickly and radically to cut carbon emissions and stop all new oil and gas projects, the world will fall to pieces.

None of the works targeted have had lasting damage as many are covered by glass. The climate activists are seemingly targeting the most famous works not to damage them, but to draw media attention to the lasting damage of the climate crisis. Directors of musea and galleries around the world are "deeply shaken" by the attacks. The activists throw mashed potatoes, tomato soup, and other substances on the artworks and glue themselves on the walls or the frames of the artworks. Most galleries and musea are being tight-lipped about the attacks, to avoid more attention to the protests.

Do I not condone the attacks on the artworks, it surely raises the question of what is valuable, and how this relates to general social issues. For this series, we choose to replicate some famous artworks and photograph them in an all-black on-black, oil-covered setting.

*We are living on this planet,
as if we have another one to go to.*











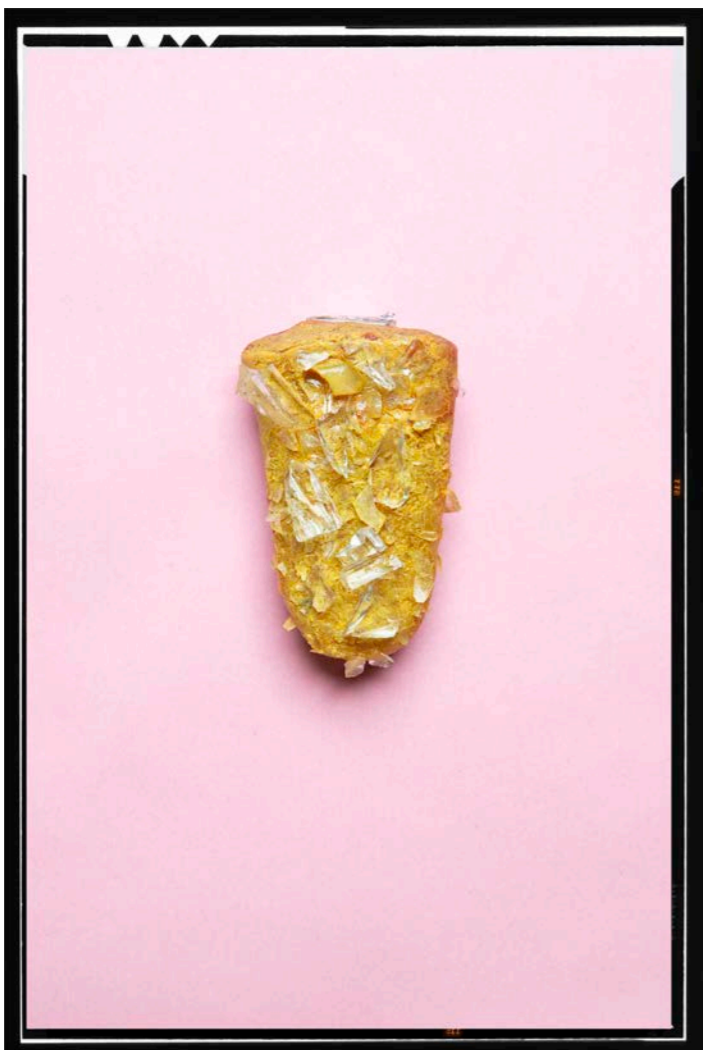
FELT CUTE, MIGHT DELETE LATER

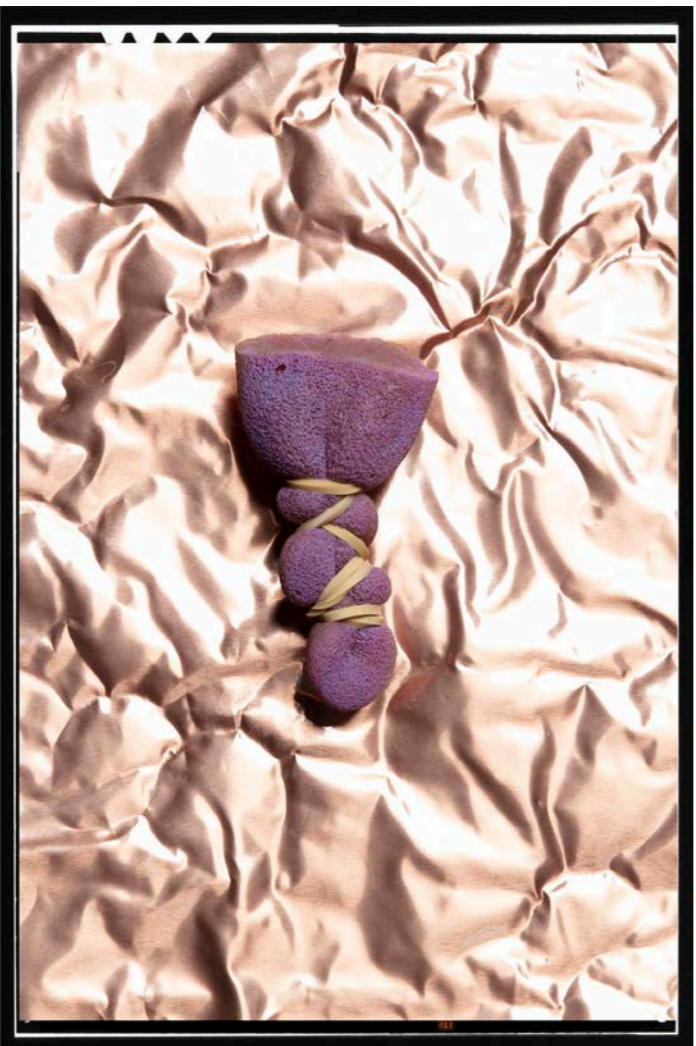
The series "Felt Cute Might Delete Later", draws inspiration from the modern phenomenon of self-expression and ephemeral digital content. In this project, the aim is to explore the transient nature of self-representation and the evolving identity in the age of social media. By combining the artistic medium of self-portraiture with the ubiquitous online trend, this series delves into the complexities of self-perception, and authenticity.

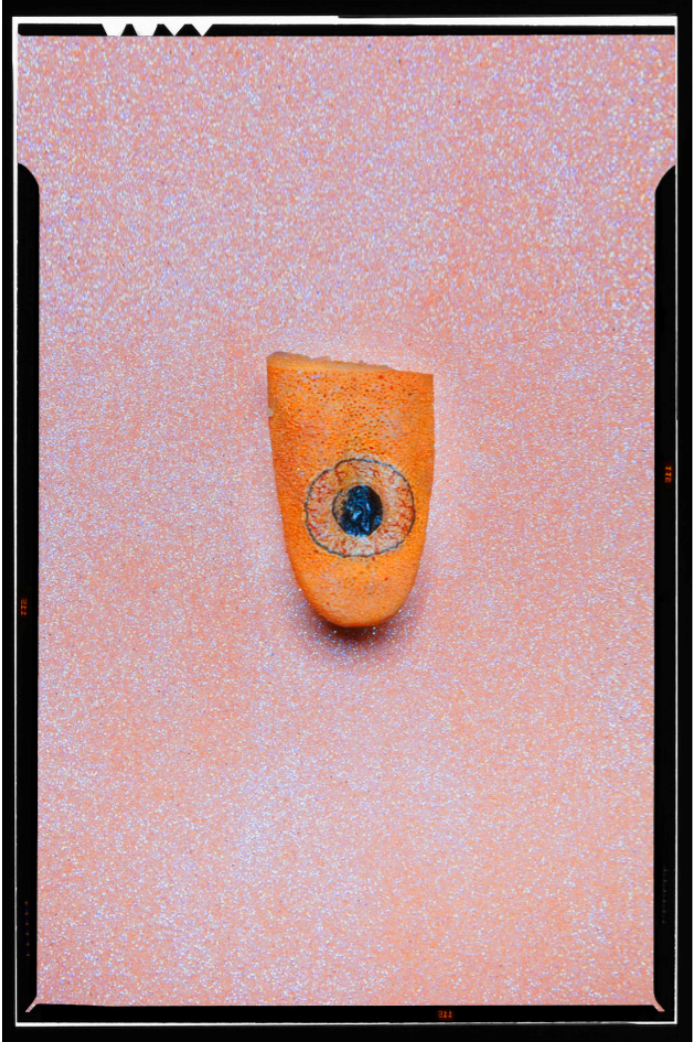
The self-portraits in this series serve as a means for self-exploration, enabling the artist to reflect upon his own vulnerability, self-image, and the quest for external validation. The series delves into the underlying societal pressures and expectations that influence self-portrayal on social media. It critically examines the tension between authenticity and performance.

By embracing the "Felt Cute, Might Delete Later" ethos, the series captures the nuanced emotions and multi-faceted nature of self-perception. The series seeks to provoke thought, spark conversation, and encourage viewers to reflect upon their own experiences within the digital landscape.











SUSPENSION

Practices of BDSM survive from some of the oldest textual records in the world, associated with rituals to the goddess Inanna. Inanna describes cross-dressing transformations and rituals “imbued with pain and ecstasy, bringing about initiation and journeys of altered states of consciousness.

This series was inspired by the Fetish and BDSM culture of the Queer and LGBTQIA+ community. This culture is often viewed as a subculture mainly because BDSM is often still regarded as “unusual” by some of the public. A scene that is rarely accepted by the heteronormative society or the lgbtqia+ scene itself. Many people hide their learning from society since they are afraid of incomprehension and of social exclusion.

I see these practices as an example of “aesthetic sexuality”, in which a founding physiological or psychological impulse is irrelevant. Rather, sadism and masochism may be practiced through choice and deliberation, driven by certain aesthetic goal tied to style, pleasure, and identity. These practices, in certain circumstances and contexts, can be compared with the creation of art.

So you'll get your kicks by exerting your will over me.







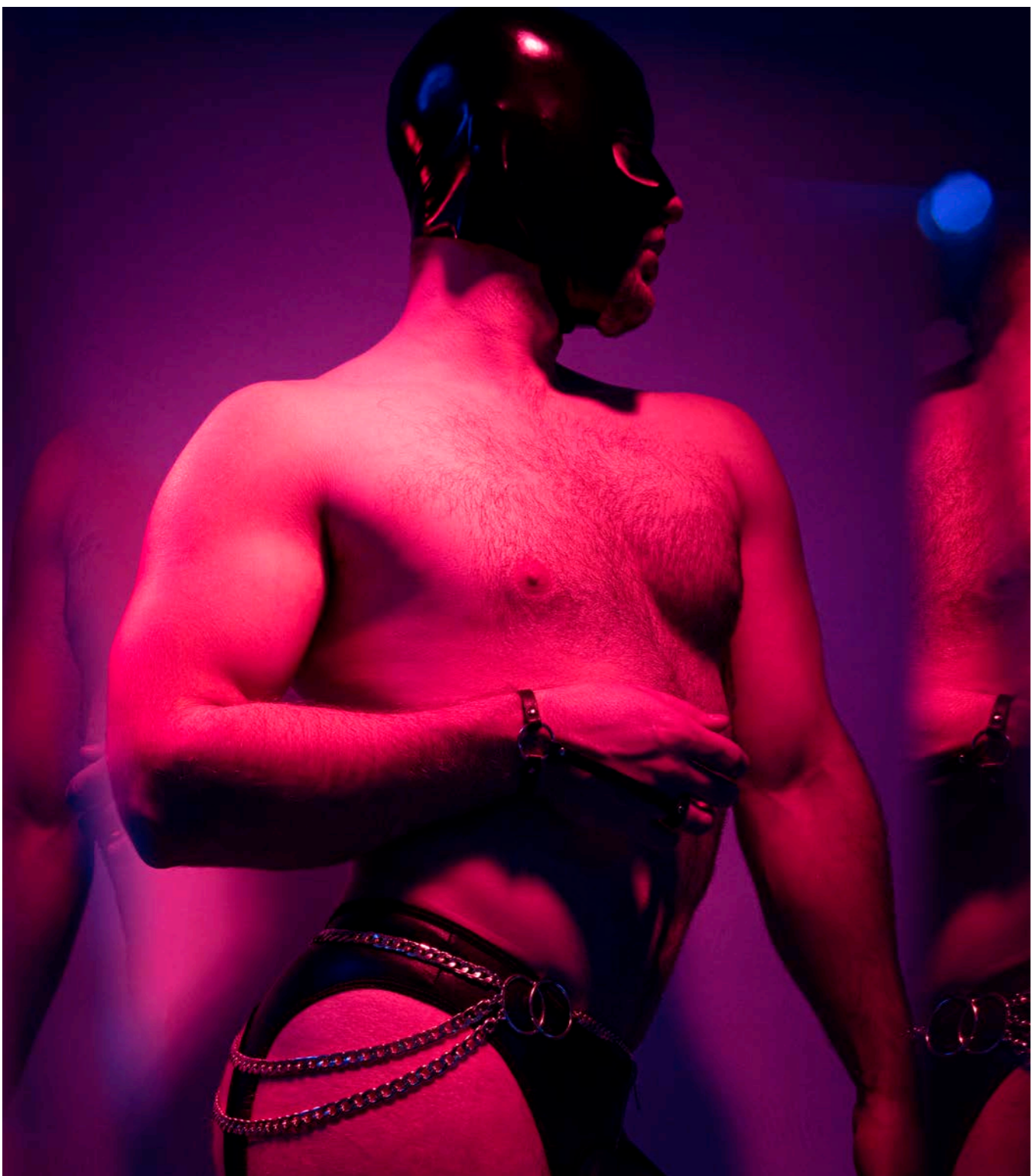


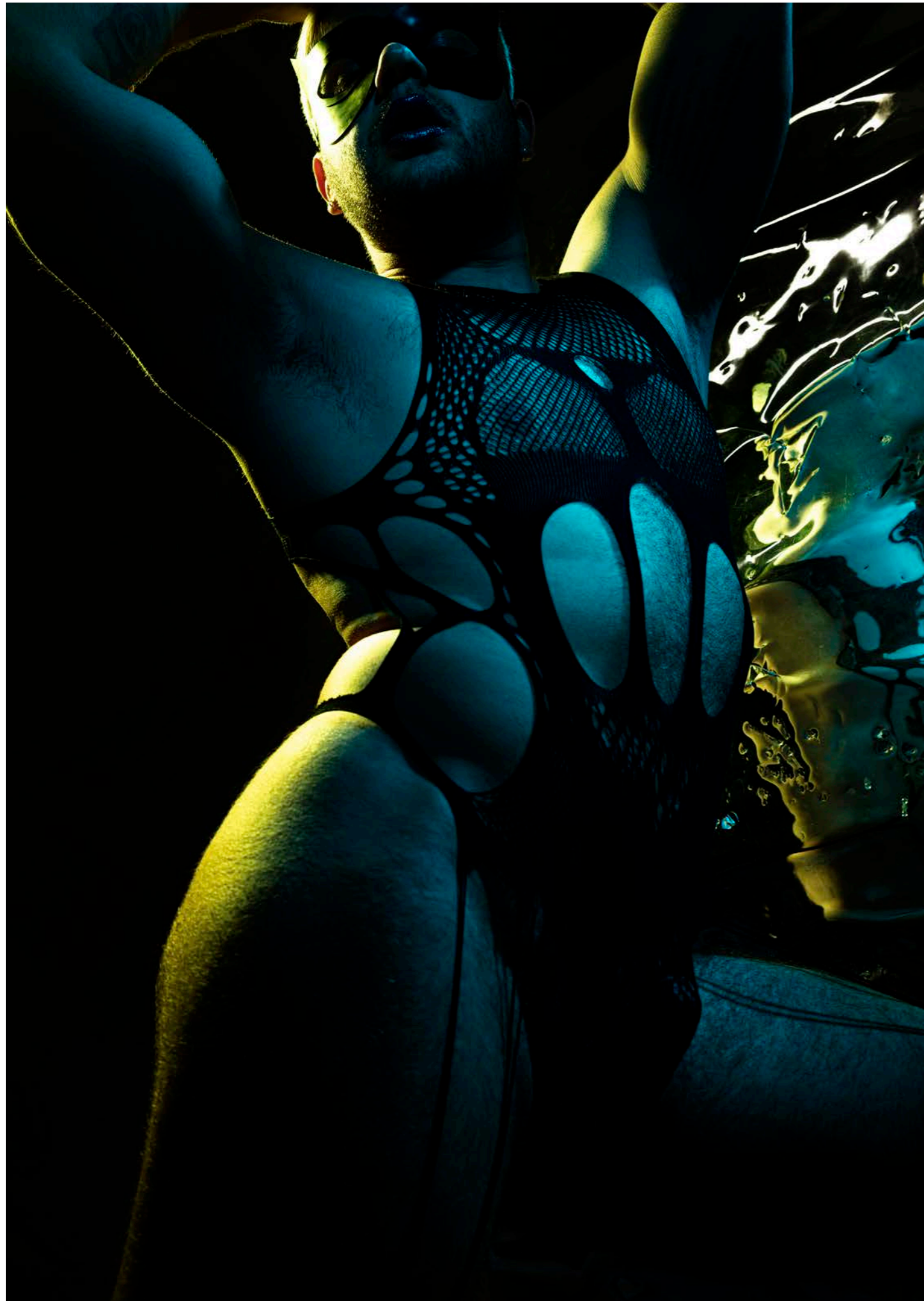


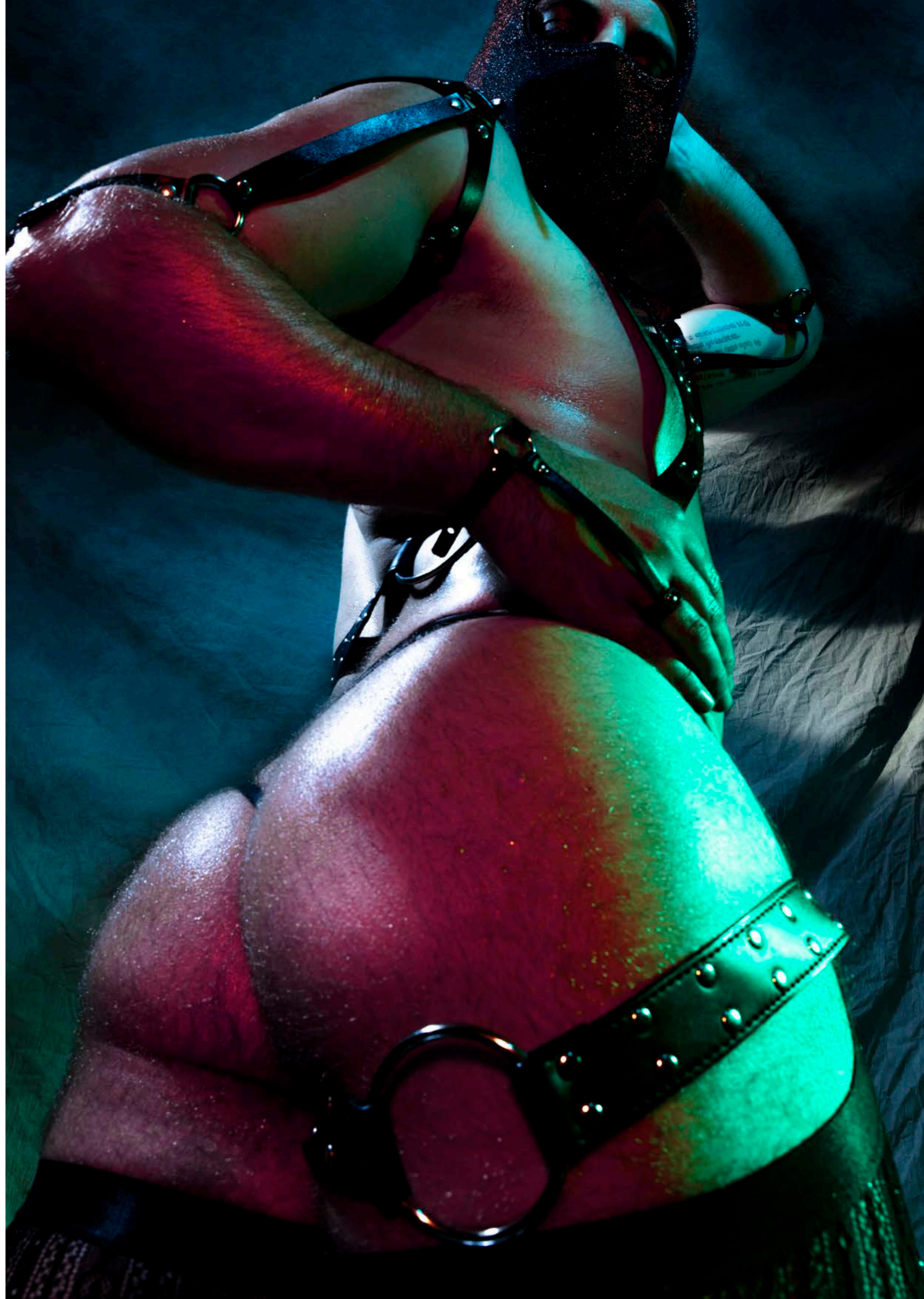












SENSITIVE OBSCURITIES

The project "Sensitive obscurities: exploring the queer (sub)conscious" comes from a deep desire to connect with the inner struggles, and then ultimately joys, of the queer body. By exploring the inner works of the experiences of five members of the large spectrum, that is the queer community in Rotterdam, the work connects with feelings of anger, loneliness, and abandonment. The reality of living within a queer body that is Othered, and often either put on a holy pedestal or seen as a devilish mistake. By not running away from the underlying abjection of these feelings, we embarked on a journey to create a storytelling exhibition, consensually exploring these very human journeys through a queer and post-feminist lens. By using a multidisciplinary approach that combines photography, fashion, film, and sound, we attempt a journey through honesty into the deep resonances of the vulnerable, by harnessing and reclaiming the forbidden.

ROBERTO ANGELS

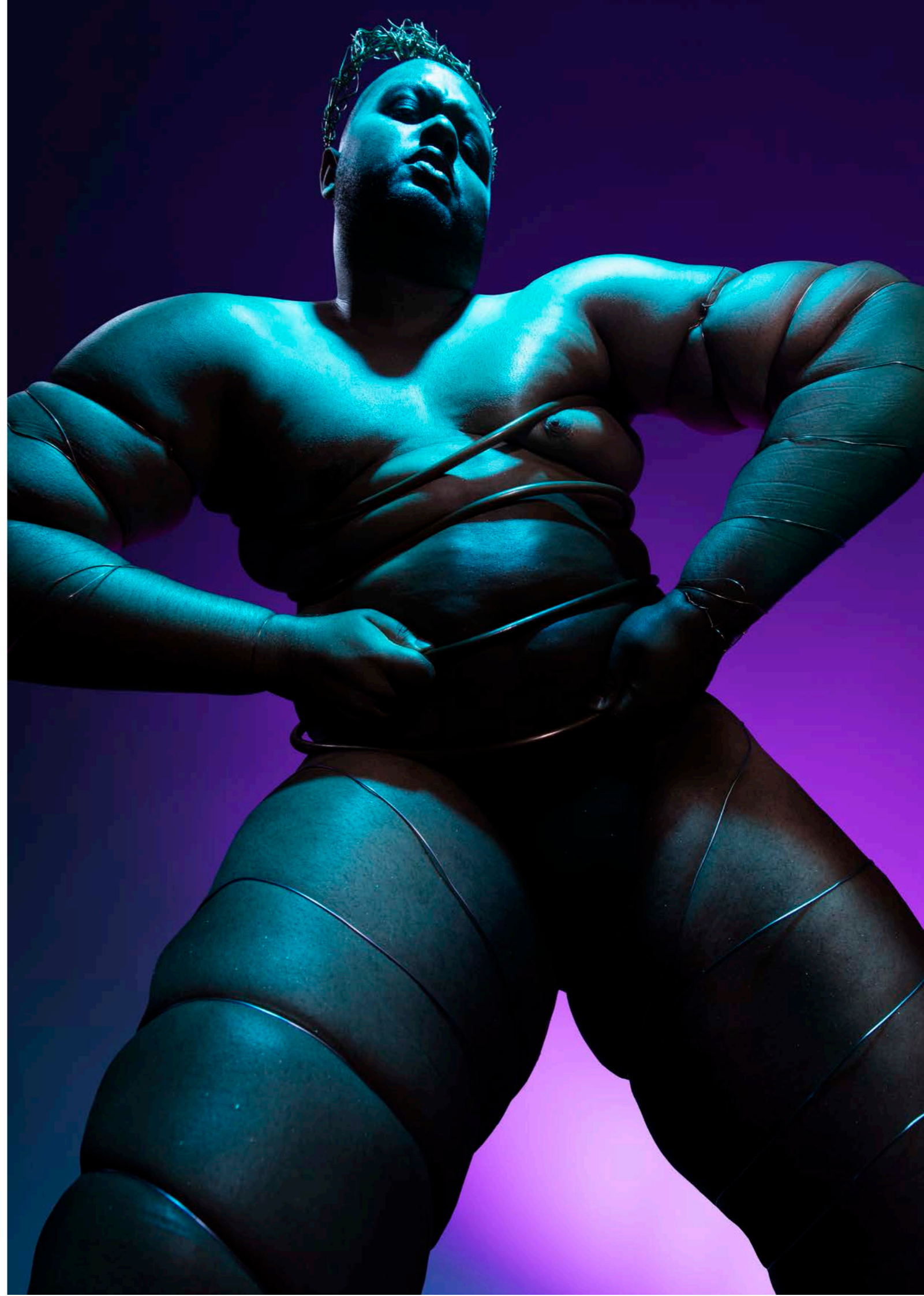
*To nurture,
To make space for Others.
While making space for yourself.*

Transcending beauty. Magical fatness. Enrobed by a shimmer that emanates from the pores of your skin.

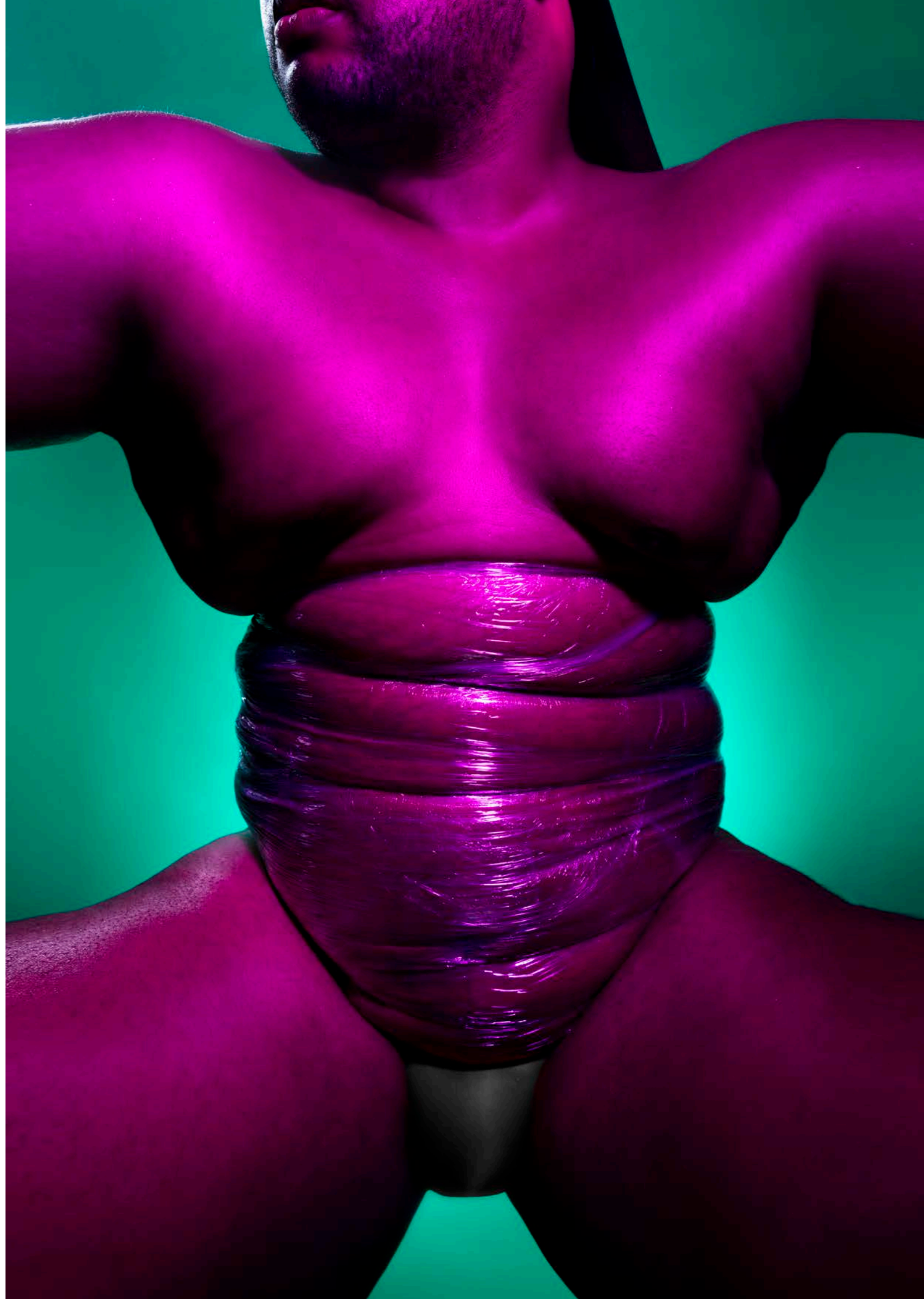
*To make space for myself,
To love myself.
While loving Others.*

*Roberto, a King of his right.
Glistening community Angel.*

*Adored.
Revered.
The Future is Fat,
Embrace it.*









Video stills of Roberto Angels, 2022

XIANG YU YEUNG

Short lived. Temporary. Yet overwhelmingly powerful and changing.

Fire underneath your skin.

My skin.

The traumas.

The pains.

Hurdles and roads less traveled.

The body has experienced it all.

And the body remembers.

A Dragon Lady re-born.

Reclaimed.

Rejoicing in her own temporary devourment.

Embracing it. Accepting it. Letting it pass through her.

A Lady who is Devoured. Yet, never consumed.

Always righteous in her journey.

And lucidly conscious of its unfolding.







*Sticky and tired.
Sticky.
Tired.
Who I am is my calling.
My queerness.
Sticky.
Tired.
At the end of the day,
even when all the layers are out,
I am.
Sticky and tired.*









LILITH DE VILLE

*The one and only.
Alpha and Omega.
The beginning and the end.*

*All at once, this is Lilith de Ville's sweet farewell.
Running towards a glorious afterlife. Secure,*

*And Righteous.
Adieu! Adieu!
Madame Supreme.
Irreplaceable.
Irreplicable.*

*An ascension. Oh Mother of Mothers!
Adieu, sweet Lilith.*

May your memory always be a blessing upon our queer heads.



*A prayer,
for myself.*

*For my inner child who deserves love.
Immense, unconditional, unapologetic.
Queer liberation towards my own body.*

*Unspoken and holy.
I am a deity.*

*To myself. To others.
I am my inner altar.
The finery of healing, like gold, draped around my body.*

*Spoken and holy.
My journey, my calling.
I am the queer liberation I have been longing for.*









**QUEER
JOY!**

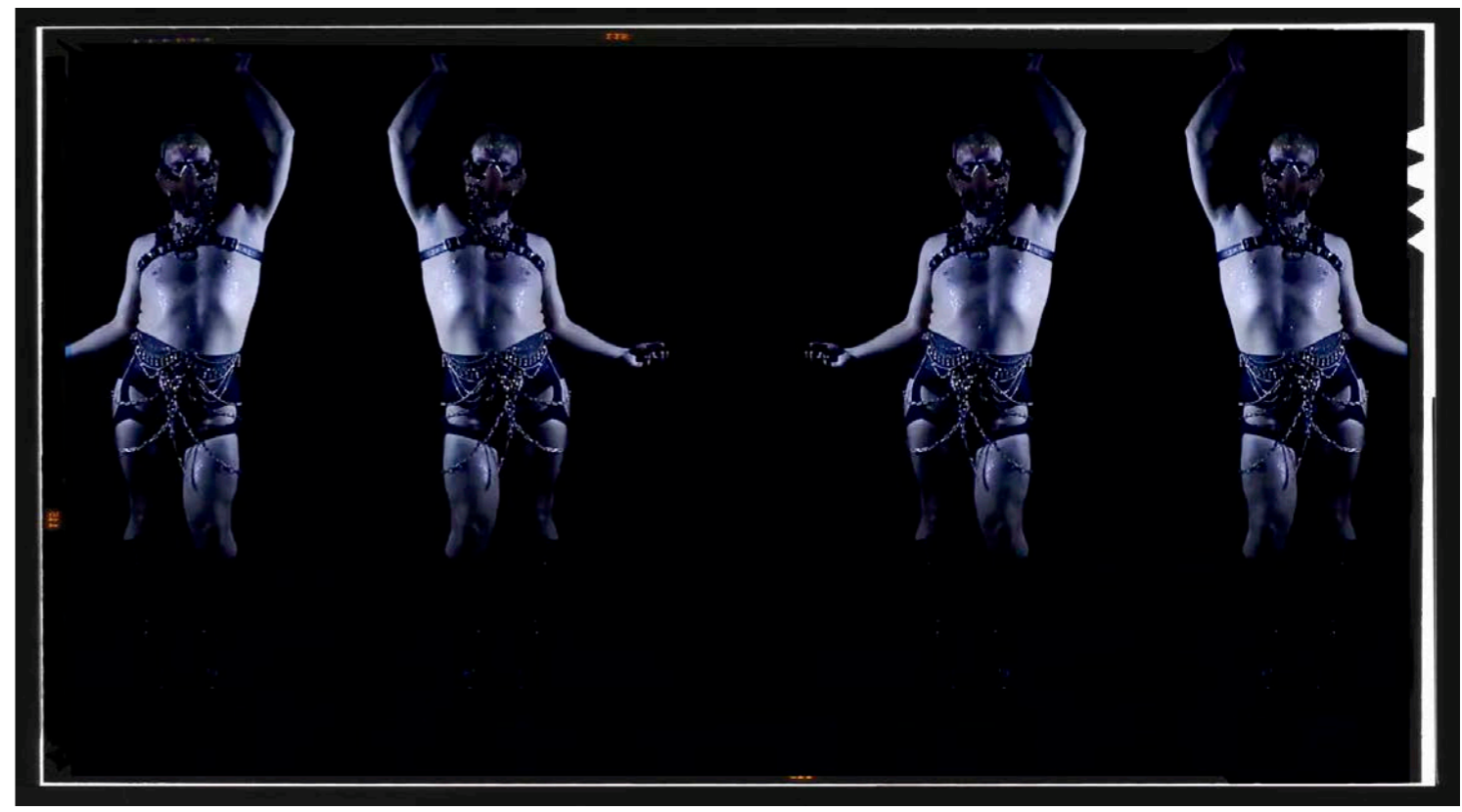
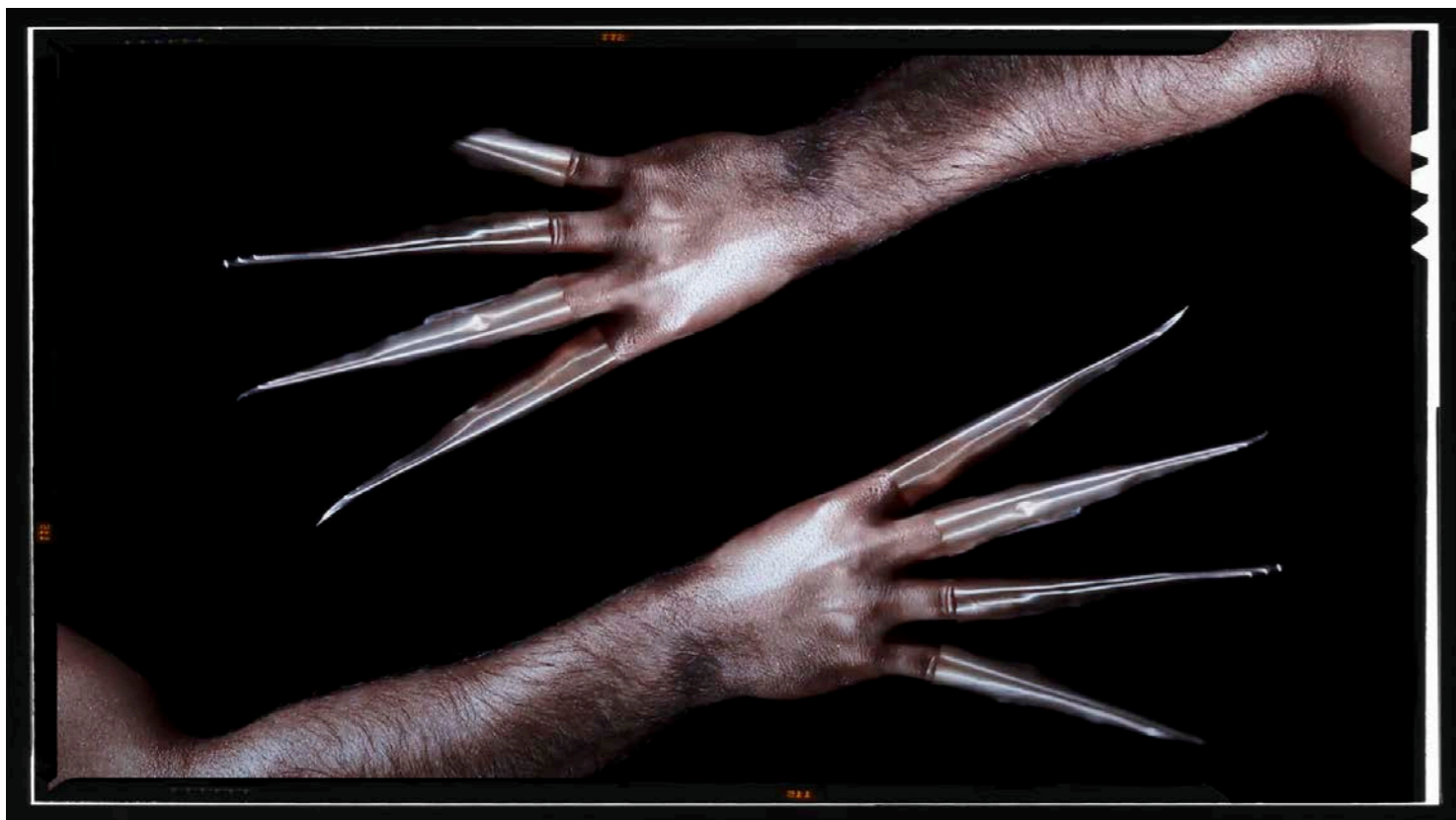
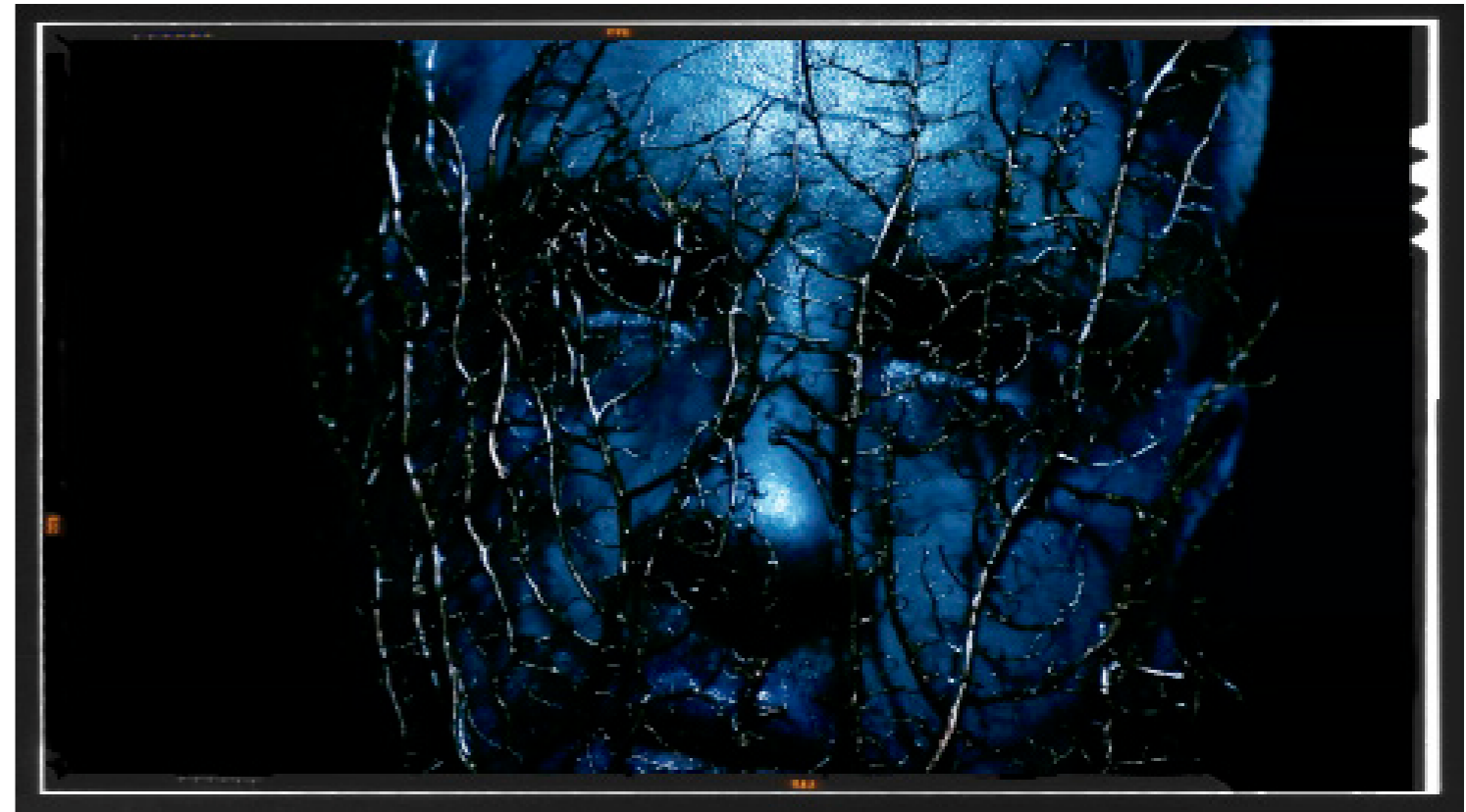












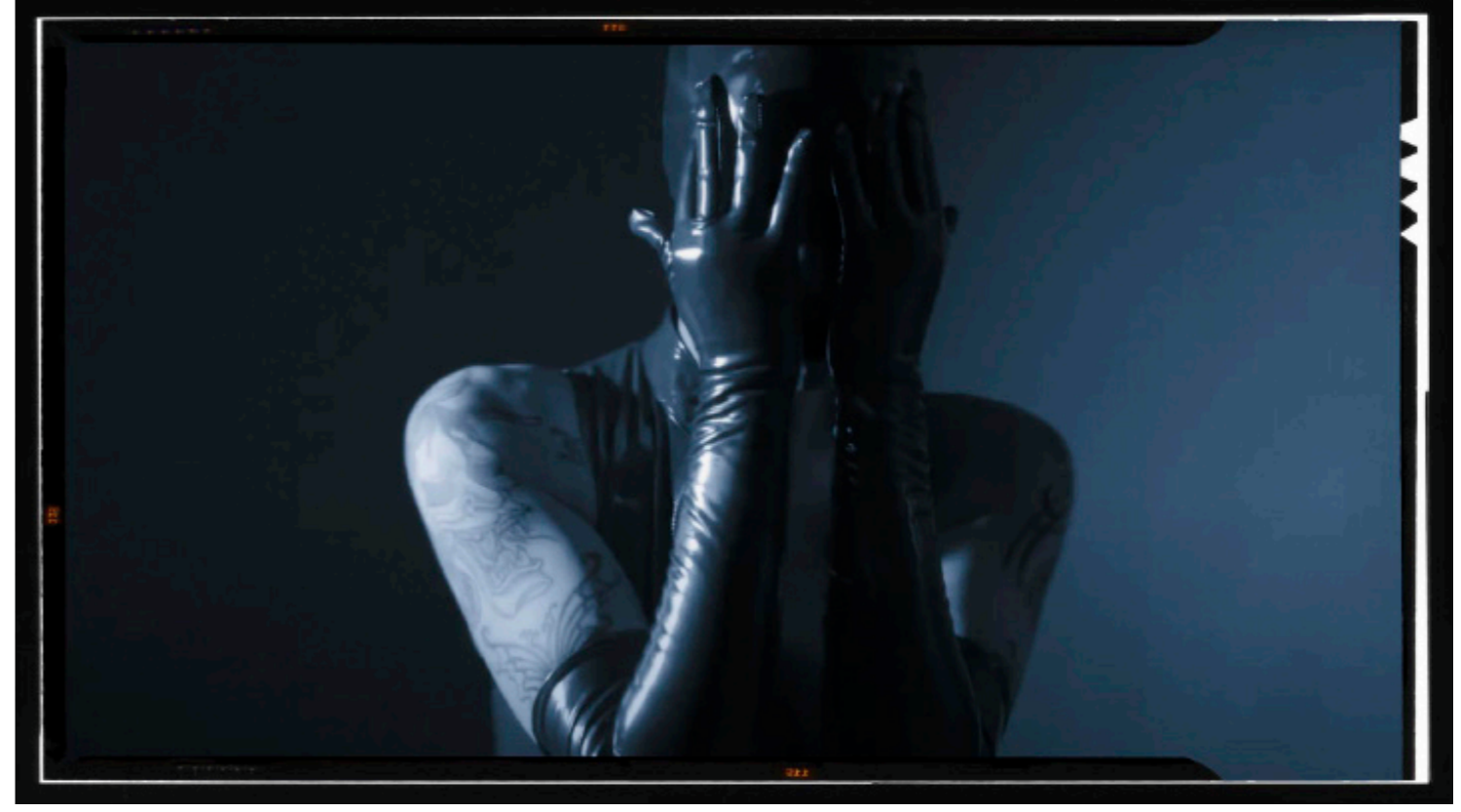
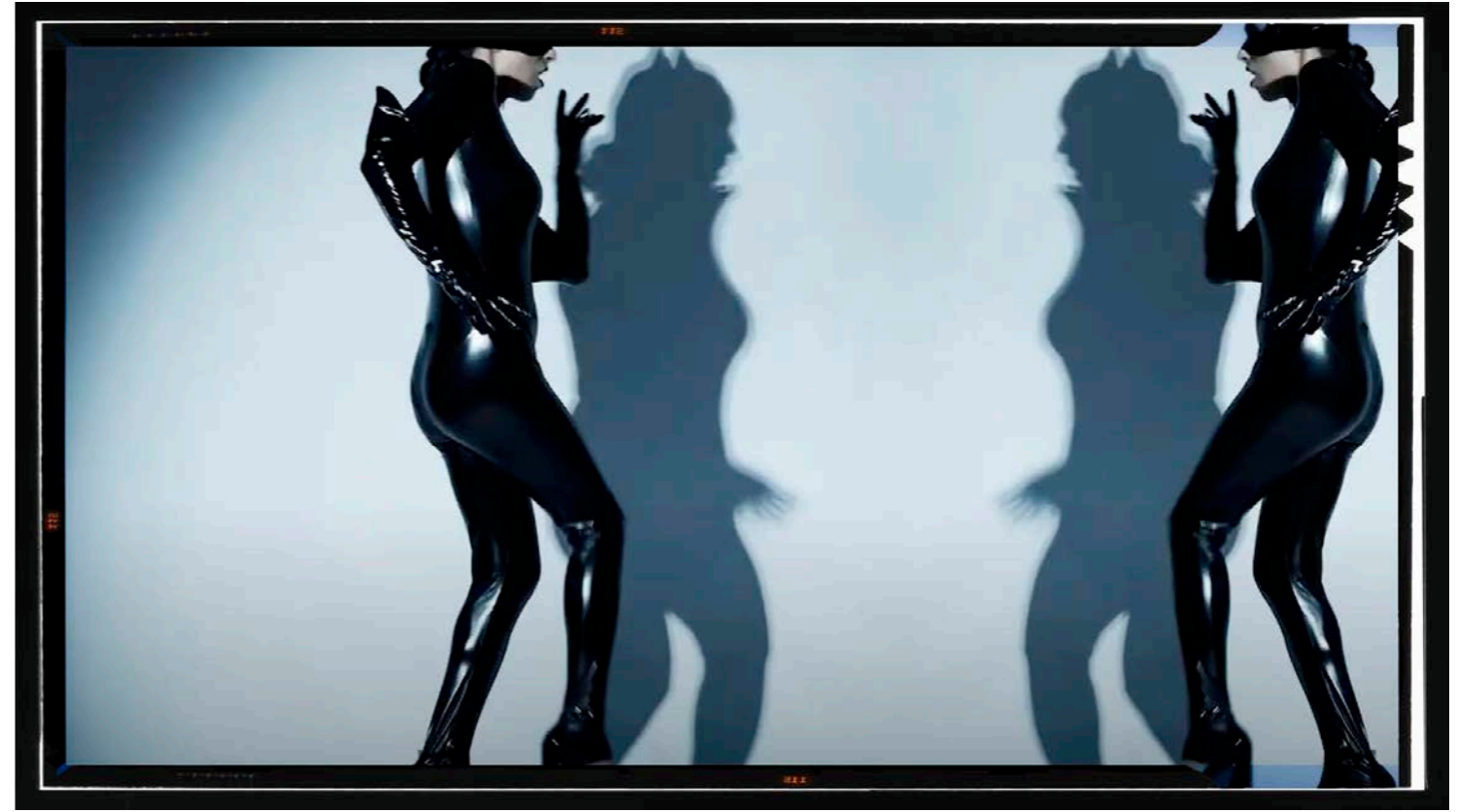




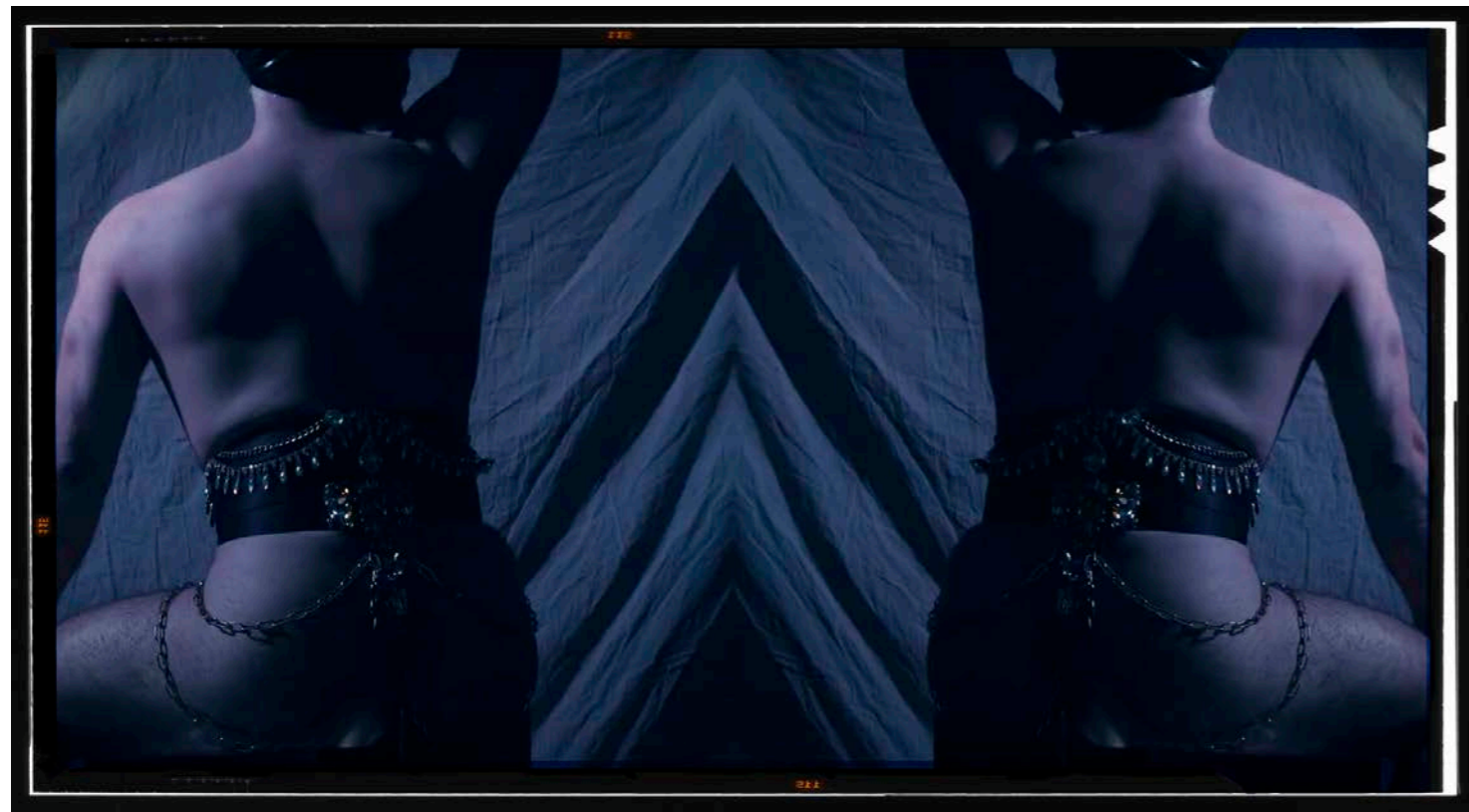
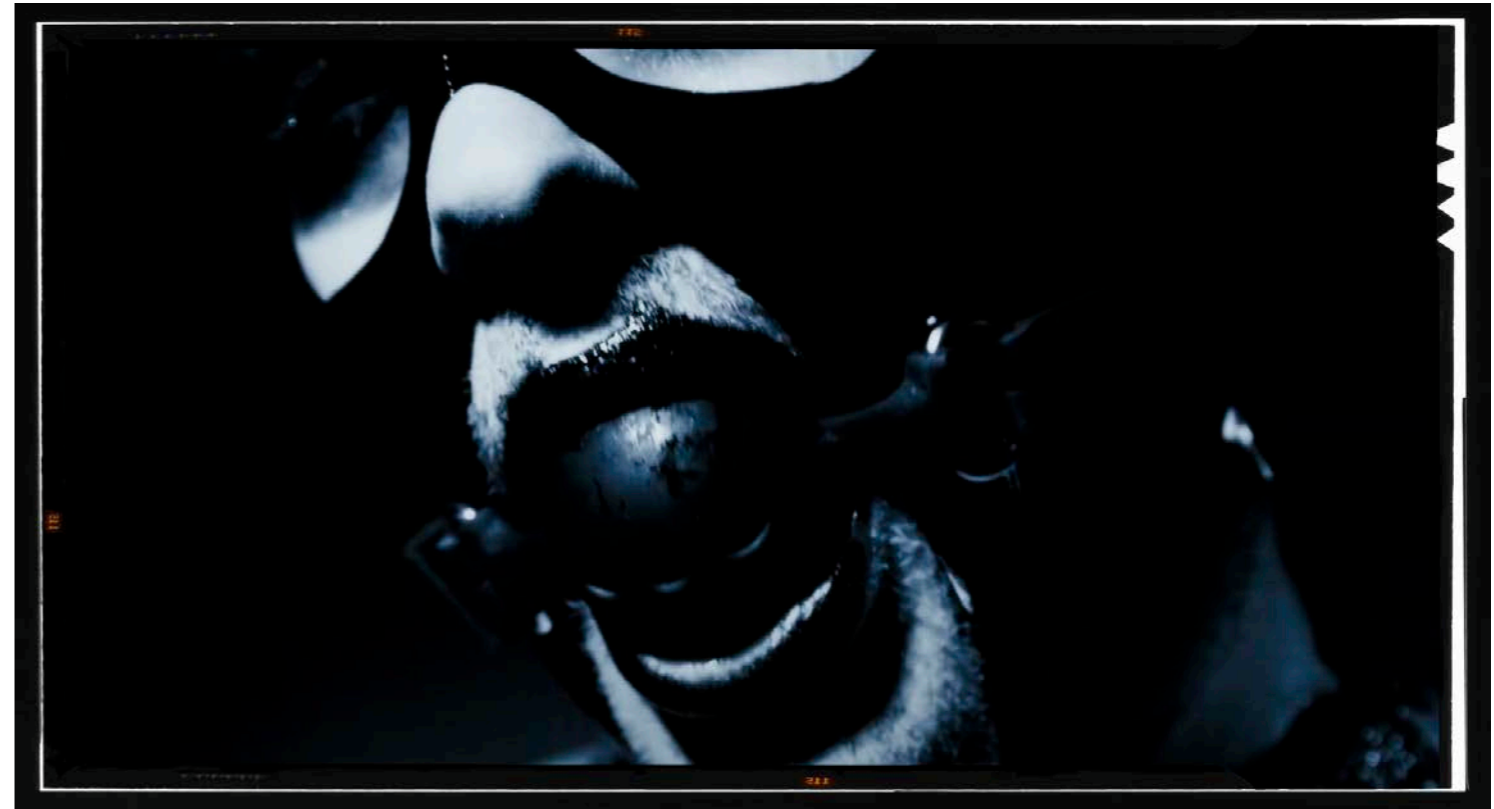












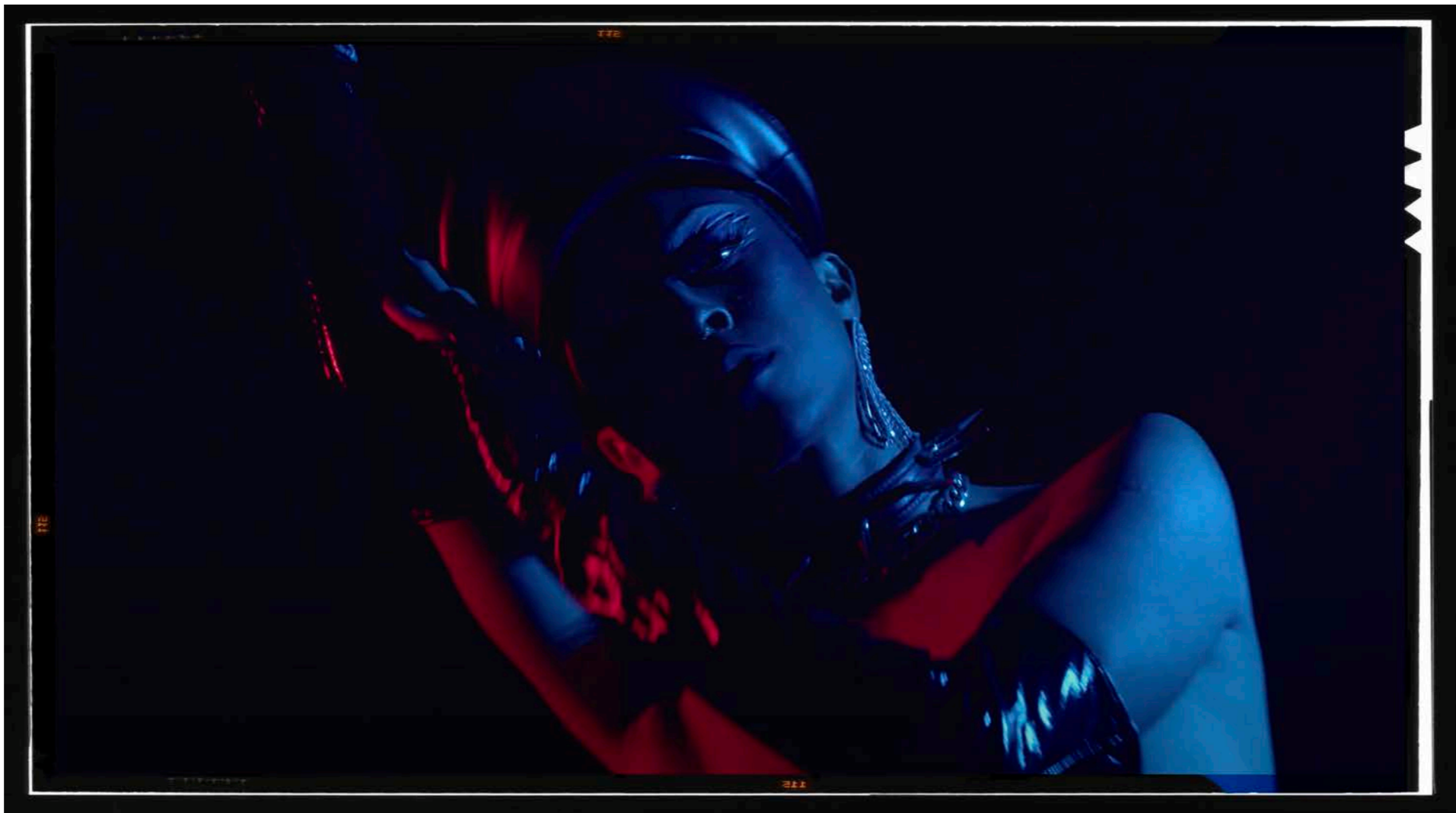
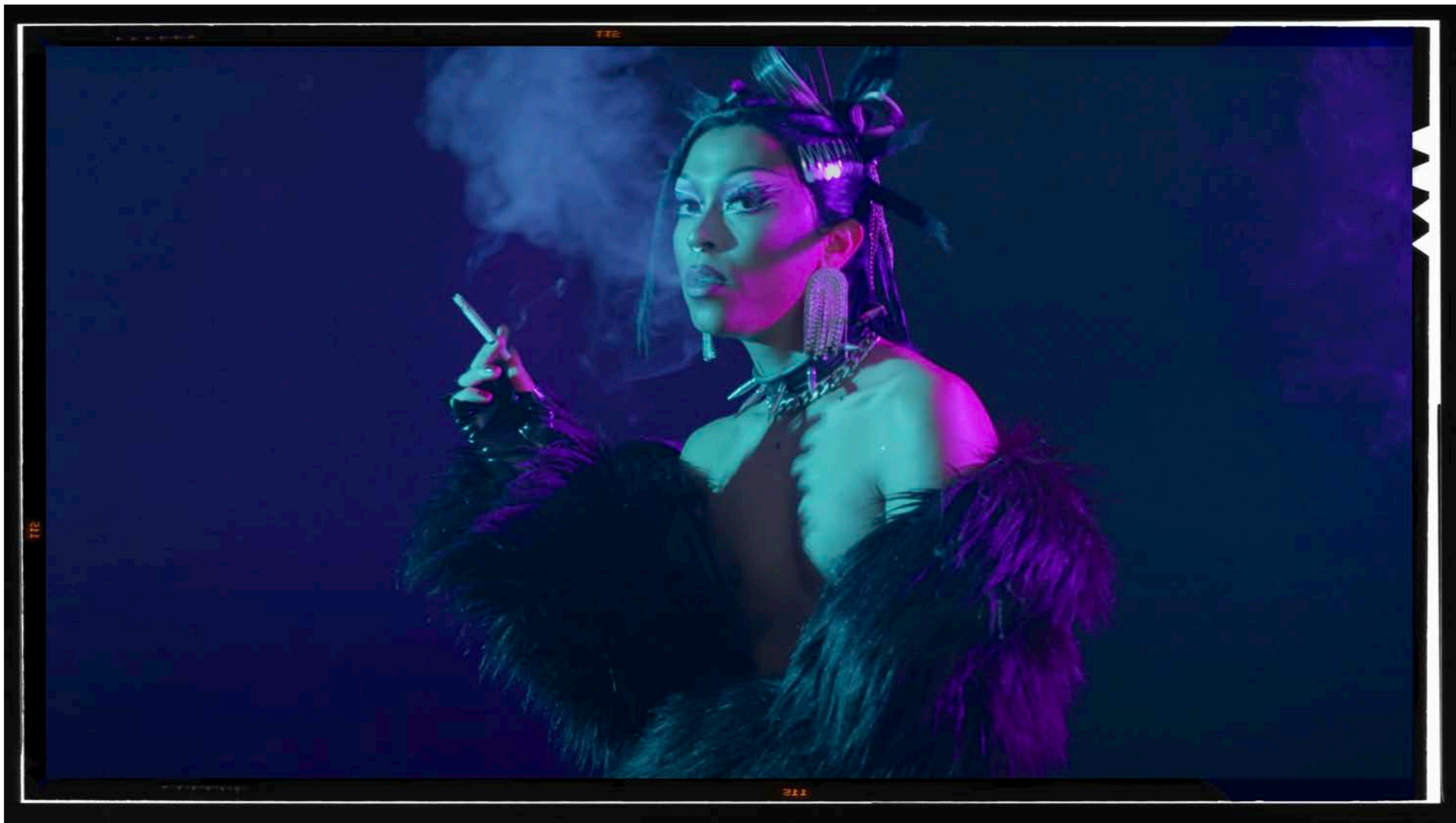
















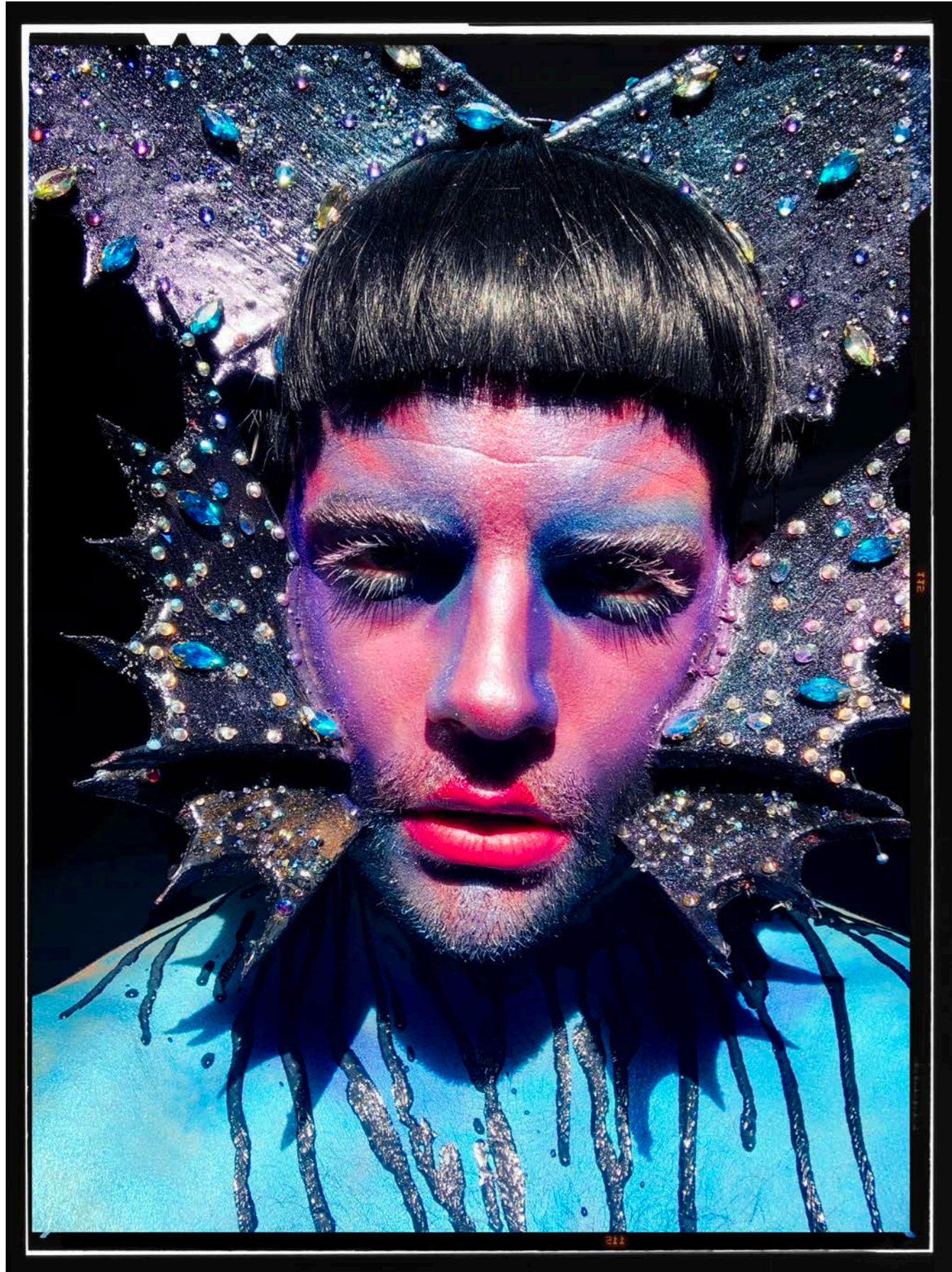
BTS!



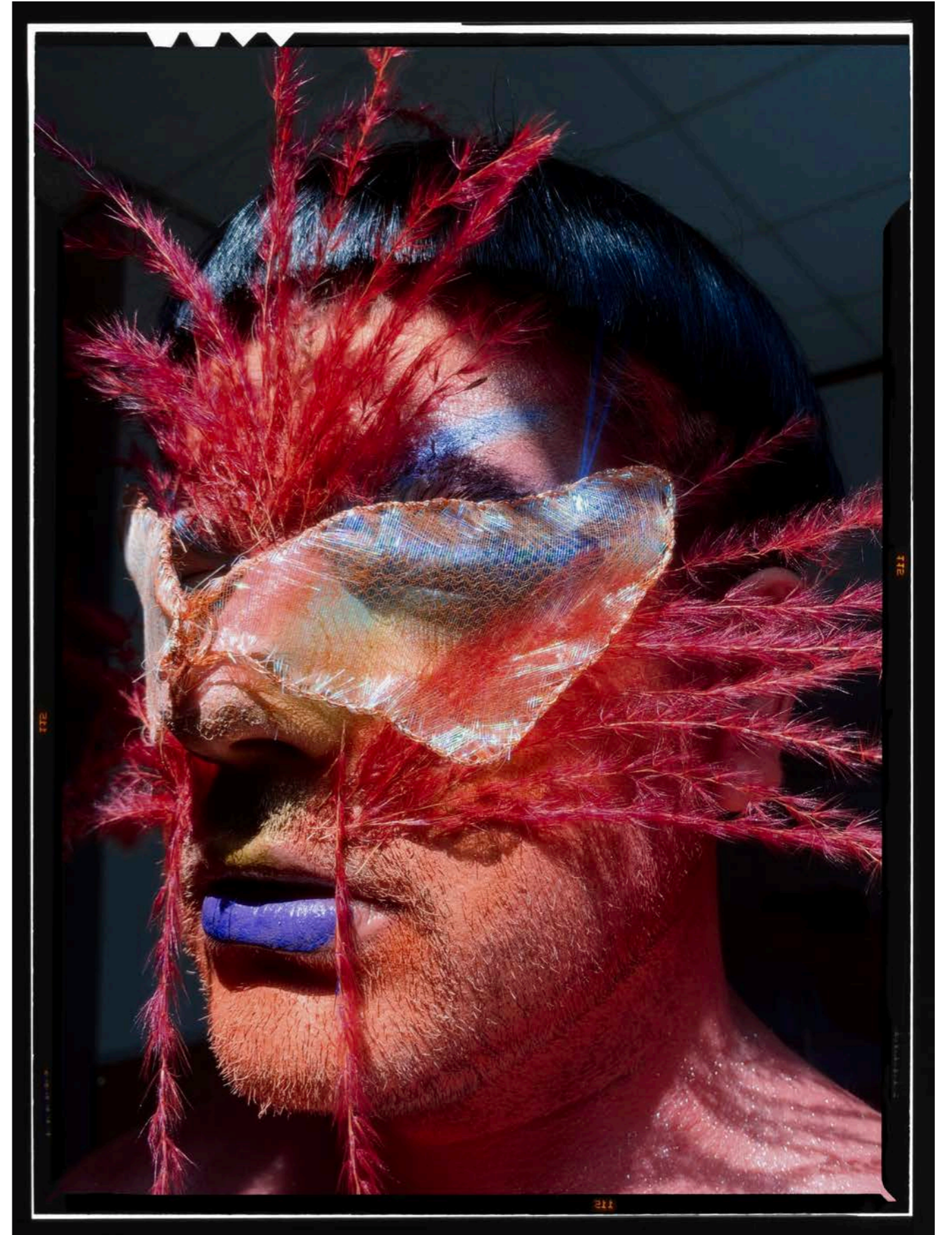
Roberto Angels, posing in my studio, 2022



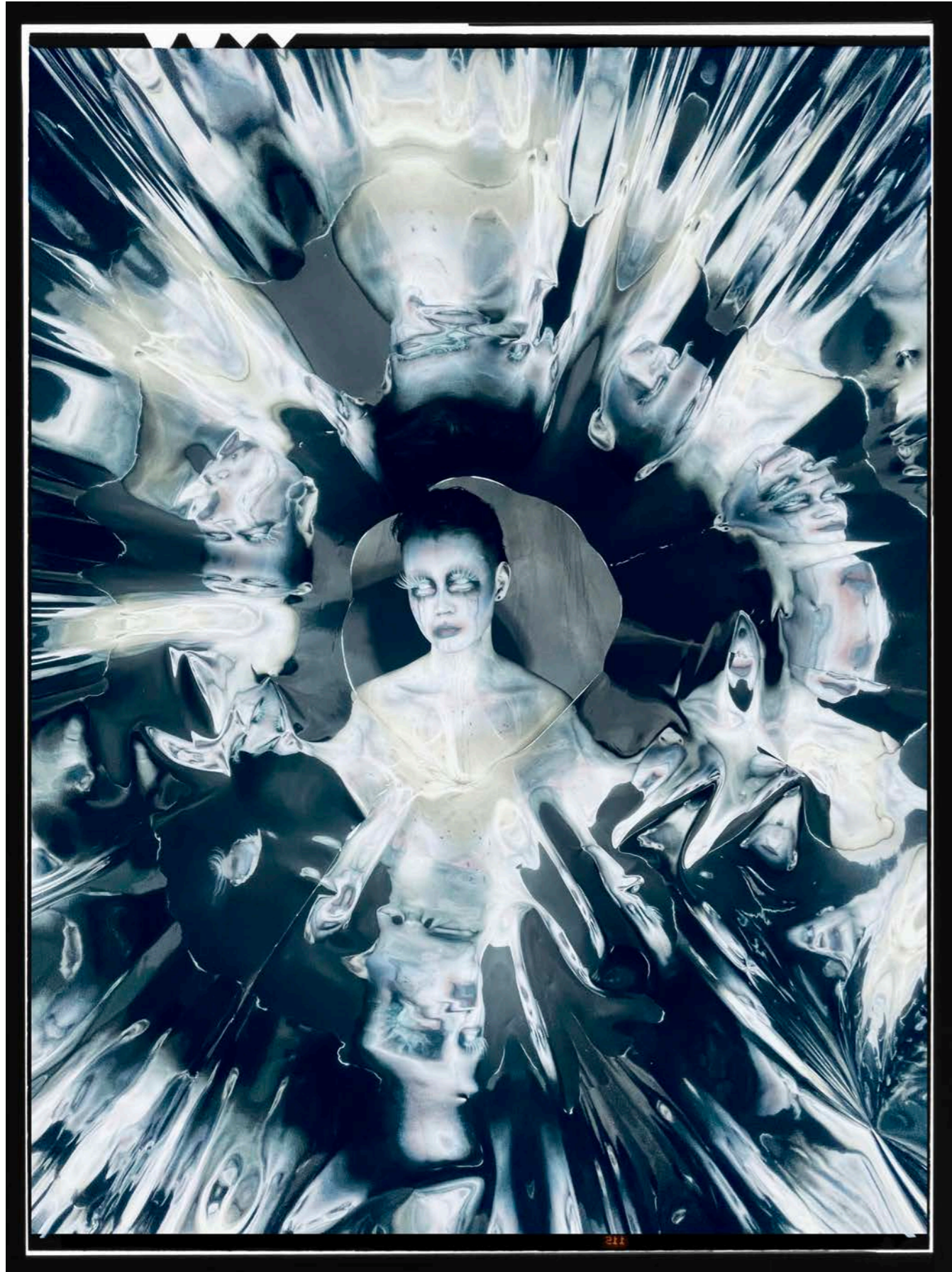
David covered in glitter, in my studio, 2019



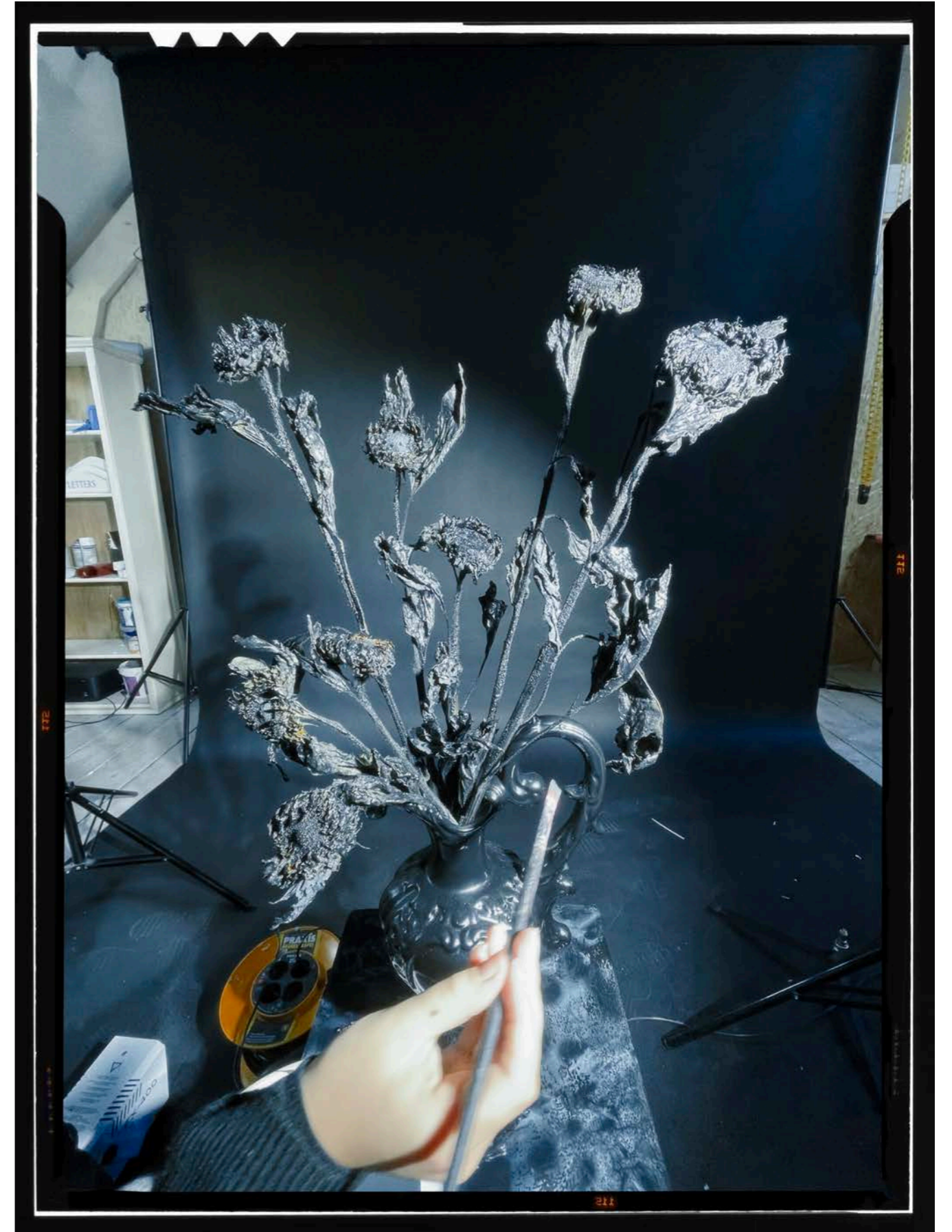
Me wearing a handmade headpiece, in my studio, 2021



Me wearing a handmade mask, in my studio, 2019



Film still of Fae, posing in our kaleidoscope, 2022



Painting dried sunflowers with latex paint, in my studio, 2022



Xiang decorated in a balloon outfit by TIMNOTSIMON, 2022



Me wearing a killer outfit with my designs, in my studio, 2021



Thailand, 2020



Fuerteventura, 2020

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As the pages of "Mind Mirage" come to a close, the journey of exploration and self-discovery reaches a poignant culmination. This book, this compilation of my artworks, has been more than just a collection of my work over the past years. It has been a journey of self-discovery, self-acceptance, and embracing the kaleidoscope of queerness that resides within me.

But this book is not just a personal exploration; it is also an invitation—a call to embrace the beauty of queerness in all its forms. Through my art, and collaborations with other queer artists, I sought to challenge societal norms, question preconceived notions, and shatter the constraints that society often imposes upon us. I wanted to create a safe space, a haven where queerness could be celebrated, cherished, and understood without judgment or fear.

Through its pages, readers have glimpsed into my world that embraces all shades of the queer spectrum, nurturing creativity and offering solace in a society that is still learning to understand and appreciate the richness of diversity.

