



Current dictionary definition - *'a lesbian whose appearance and behaviour are seen as traditionally feminine.'*

Origin - 1960's: French, *'woman'*

Originally a term adopted by the lesbian community to describe feminine lesbians, 'femme' traditionally represents the feminine-presenting woman and 'butch' the masculine-presenting woman in lesbian culture. This is reflected in gay male culture too; as a gay man you would traditionally either be considered 'masc' or 'fem' depending on whether you read/present in a more feminine or masculine way.

In recent years with a rise in the acceptance of transgender, non-binary, and gender fluid people, LGBTQIA+ people have started more widely to step outside of binary boxes and embrace the broader terminology of 'queer'. The terms 'femme', 'fem', 'masc', and 'butch' have blurred their lines; the term 'femme' especially has adopted a broader definition, to mean feminine queer person of any gender orientation.

There is dispute within the queer community as to how the term 'femme' should be used, with many still loyal to its lesbian origins. It is important to remember where we came from but also, we feel, to embrace where we are going.

As it is with feminism...

The motion passed in 1918 was a huge leap in the right direction for gender equality. However the definition of womxnhood\* back then was very limited, especially those who were deemed deserving of equality with men. The Representation of the People Act of 1918 granted the vote to women over the age of 30 who owned over £5 worth of land or were married into owning property. The same Act gave the vote to all men over the age of 21.

The suffrage movement in the UK helped pave the way for radicals and revolutionaries of today. Womxn led large scale public protests, disrupted public meetings, chained themselves to fences and even committed acts of arson, property damage and civil disobedience when peaceful methods proved ineffective. These womxn demanded equality and they wouldn't take no for an answer. Many were rumoured to have lesbian affairs and some would even be considered trans men today, wearing men's clothes, adopting male names, and living as men.

There are still those within the feminist community who reject the modern use of 'femme' to describe queer womxn, stating that 'feminism is for women'. Whilst it is important to acknowledge that the experience of womxnhood\* is different for cis womxn\*, trans womxn\*, non-binary, and gender-fluid people, we strongly feel that feminism is for all of us.

This open submission exhibition has allowed the term 'femme' to be interpreted freely within a queer feminist context. The work you see in this show both celebrates and analyses our femme identities and the intersectionality of modern womxnhood\*. 'Femme' is how we feel and how we choose to express ourselves.

Going forward we stand together against the patriarchy, continuing the fight for equality that was started so long ago. 'Femme' for us signifies the start of something progressive, inclusive, and revolutionary.

So here we find ourselves at another beginning, ready to march in the footsteps of rioters and revolutionaries who came before us and carry the path forwards to an equal future for all.

Welcome to Femme, welcome to Femmetopia.

\*womxn: a spelling of "women" that is a more inclusive, progressive term that not only sheds light on the prejudice, discrimination, and institutional barriers womxn have faced, but to also show that womxn are not the extension of men (as hinted by the classic Bible story of Adam and Eve) but their own free and separate entities. It is more intersectional than womyn because it includes trans-women.

References and further reading:

1918 Representation of the People Act - [parliament.uk](http://parliament.uk)

Anouk, Safira "Femme is Radical, and Femme-Shaming Isn't Feminist" - Harlot Media (2016)

"What We Mean When We Say 'Femme': A Roundtable" - Autostraddle (2016)

"11 Common Assumptions About Being a Queer Femme – Debunked - Everyday Feminism" - Everyday Feminism (2016)

"Bittersweet Like Me: Lemonade and Fat Black Femme Erasure" - [wearyourvoicemag.com](http://wearyourvoicemag.com)



An exhibition to accompany Femmetopia Festival, exploring the definition of 'femme' and the intersectionality of modern feminism, in celebration and critique of the centenary of women's suffrage.

- Curated by Kat Hudson

Split across VFD and Rio Cinema Dalston, London • 23 - 18th May 2018

#### LIST OF WORKS

**Angel Rose** • Assthetics • mynameisangelrose.com

**Ashton Attzs** • Nourish n' Flourish (2018) // Don't Stay In Ya Lane (2018) // Beyond the Binary (2018) // Untitled (2018) // Untitled (2018) • @attzs\_

**Atena Karimi** • Goddess of Fertility • @atena.karimi.showcase

**Ciara Movana** • Ciara Movana shot in Berlin by Callum Leo Hughes • @ciara.movana

**Eleni Tomadaki-Balomenou** • Onus • @eleni\_tomadaki / elenitomadaki.com

**Elouiza Mae France** • Necessity Part 2 • @elouizamae

**Eve Kennedy** • We. // A nod to female independence and diversity • eveyjoan.com / @eveyjoan

**Gillian O'Shea** • Portrait of Val

**Hannah Martin** • The Gaze On Your Skin

**Hannah Thomas** • I wish I looked like this // Portrait 4 // F • @yunikonart / yunikonart2.tumblr.com

**Hatty Carman** • Rot-ur-teeth nuclear queertopia series • @hatty.carman

**Hello The Mushroom** • Nirvana • @hellothemushroom

**Ina Gouveia** • Reaching • @inagouveia

**Karen Finley** • Impossible (Presence of Absence Series) // Jackie #5 (Leave Her Alone) • Coagula Curatorial Los Angeles • karenfinley.com

**Kat Hudson** • Babes on Rothkos • @kathudson\_ / @kathudson\_art / kathudson.co.uk

**Katy Jalili** • Dear Woody

**La JohnJoseph** • Hacked Knits Two (Is that a man?) • lajohnjoseph.com

**Linnéa Haviland** • A Different Category

**Mandy Gerrit Maria Niewöhner** • I'm a boy // HOLY TRINITY

**Marnie Scarlet** • Big Flying Vajeejee

**Maša Travljanin** • Light No.1 //Light No.2// Flow// Portrait

**MC Cartier** • Ubercock

**Michelle William Gamaker** • Katy Jalili, Portrait by Dan Fontanelli from Brown Queers

**Moa Johansson** • 19 Sisters // Fake Orgasm Because Control // We Cut Her Head Off // Floating // Dizzy

**Parthena Charistea** • Portraits as Frida Khalo

**Pedro Mainman** • 1934 // The Suspicious // The Bearded Woman • 12pm96.wixsite.com/mainman

**Ranafarba** • Thoughts III // Pyjama Party with my witches sisters // Boys Don't Cry // Freak's tears // Written on my Body • @ranafarba / ranafarba.bigcartel.com

**Sangeeta Bhagawati** • Inhabitant • @\_amoort\_ / amoort-7.tumblr.com

**Sara Kärpänen** • Series of poems

**Scarlett Shaney Langdon** • Femme Portraits - Elete // Lily // Frankie // Jender // Katy // Sarah // Travis // Umber • @scarlettshaney / scarlettshaney.com

**Suzie Pindar/The Naked Artist** • Naked • thenakedartist.co.uk

**Sweatmother (Sarah Jo Brown)** • Truss Me // Curves • @sweatmother / visualsweat.com

**Tiger Hutchence-Geldof** • The only good thing that happened that day