

Gender F Extravaganza challenges stale gender roles



SARA MINSKY/GUILFORDIAN

BY ALEXANDRA HARIDOPOLOS
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Swaying with hands on hips, about 30 students danced behind rainbow-colored disco balls as performer Jessie O'Brian mouthed Cher's latest hit, "I Hope You Find It." On Saturday, April 19, students filled the Community Center for Pride's Gender F Extravaganza, one of the club's two annual dance parties.

Formerly known as the Drag Ball, Pride felt a change of name

was in order this year.

"The idea is to get people to start talking about gender as ideas rather than these set in stone roles we're meant to play," said first-year Pride member Colin Nollet. "It's a lot more than guys putting on dresses."

In an email interview, sophomore Pride member Cara Messina said, "We wanted people to understand that the history of drag is about playing with gender and making it clear that gender is simply performance."



The evening of performances by professional drag queens started and ended with jokes. O'Brian, the queen who opened the show, joked about performing for a majority gender-conforming audience.

"It's weird getting tips from heterosexuals," O'Brian exclaimed.

The first musical performance was from Devonte Jackson, dressed as Alvin from Alvin and the Chipmunks. Jackson lip-synced a rendition of "Troublemaker," which, unfortunately, included a few piercing amp drones.

The third act, Ava Park Devine, stripped off her shimmering black dress halfway through the performance, revealing a bright green gown. She dipped into the crowd to embrace event goers. The crowd went wild.

For many first-years, it was their first time seeing a drag performance. Others were familiar with the event.

First-year Molly Marcotte said her mother takes her family to see drag annually. This time, Marcotte said she "came to support every kind of human being."

Some students dressed androgynously, while others opted for more costume-like outfits.

Sporting a clip-on white collar with golden spikes, Nollet took a more gender-fluid route.

Sophomore Eleanor McTigue was called up to the stage by one of the performers. Dressed in a gender ambiguous outfit, a baseball hat and an oversized denim shirt, the queen joked that she couldn't tell if McTigue was a boy or a girl.

The evening ended with a sweet melody akin to a high school farewell song. Students swayed their arms in the air to "We are Young" by Fun, acutely summing up the night.

Greensboro drag queens gave a dynamic performance at the Gender F Extravaganza, the Drag Ball reincarnated, held on April 19 in the Community Center.

Tats and their tales: students share stories of getting ink

BY ALLIE BADDLEY
STAFF WRITER

Imagine walking into a tattoo parlor for the first time: smelling cleaning agents, seeing artwork covering the walls and hearing tattoo guns drilling in the background.

You know you want a tattoo, but are flooded with mixed emotions.

Relax, take a deep breath and get tatted. Having trouble deciding what to get?

Take some advice from students who chose tattoos with personal meaning.

"I think it's really important to pick something that has significance to you," said first-year Hollis Haid. "I don't think tattoos should be taken lightly. If you're going to put something permanent on your body, it needs to be something that you really have thought about."

Haid ensures that each of her six tattoos have personal importance. The pink lotus flower on her left thigh symbolizes rebirth and compassion in honor of her sister.

"Even if 10 years from now I hate my lotus flower for whatever reason, the meaning is still there," said Haid.

The pyramid on her left arm reminds her that she is grounded.

"My pyramid is for recovering from an eating disorder and reminding myself that my body is a temple and to respect it," said Haid. "Pyramids have a very solid foundation, which is where I feel like I am and what I am building up to. I hope to have a smooth and solid foundation moving forward in life."

Junior Joey Able's first of four tattoos is a family memorandum.

On his back, tribal artwork borders his last name. Below sits a large red V to honor five generations of his last name.

It is clear that there is no right way to pick the best tattoo.

Sophomore Ollie Aberle-Grasse wears an outline of Malawi on his right shoulder to represent where he lived for five years. Junior Satiir Stevenson has his parents' and sister's names on his arms to represent his family.

Others, such as Assistant Professor of English Cynthia Nearman, have more of an appreciation for the artfulness of their tattoos.

Nearman got her first tattoo when she was 19 years old while studying abroad in London. The forsythia branches on her left shoulder reminds her of her childhood as her father used to pick them for her. She grew up thinking they were called "For Cynthias."

In 2005, Nearman got the map of the world tattooed on her right forearm, representing her love for travel.

In reminiscing on her thoughts after leaving the parlor, Nearman wondered, "How are you just going to let me walk away with your art? It's beautiful."

Junior Molly Schneider is another example of someone who picks her ink based on aesthetic appeal.

"I wanted something that was beautiful in an artful way," said Schneider. "I think you can get a tattoo that doesn't even mean anything to you. If it is beautiful and done really well, I think that is valid enough."

Schneider loves her cherry blossom branch with orange flowers on her left hip for its beauty.

The same is true for sophomore Alexandra Marlowe, who sketched her own cat tattoo before getting it inked on her chest.

After choosing what to get, the next step is deciding where to go and who your artist should be.

When looking for the right tattoo parlor, some feel cleanliness is the most important factor to consider.

"If you walk in and things don't look clean and comforting, don't get your tattoos there," said Marlowe.

Others find the prices to be the biggest deciding factor. When it comes to tattoos, "Cheap tattoos aren't good, and good tattoos aren't cheap," said tattoo artist Russell Lucas of Carolina Tattoo.

Others choose where to go based on their interest in an artist's style.

"Look through portfolios and find someone whose style fits what you want," said tattoo artist Zach Crisp of Golden Spiral Studios.

It can also be helpful to establish a relationship with your artist and thoroughly explain what you're looking for.

"You have to be really stern about what you want," said Schneider.

Remember that tattoos are permanent, so make sure you speak up.

"If there is something you don't like, say it," Haid said. "You really have to keep your personal belief of what you want, and stick to it."

Once you get your new ink, it is crucial to follow the healing instructions given by the tattoo artist. Failing to do so can result in infection or fading.

So, do your research to find the perfect tattoo, artist and parlor for you.

As Able put it, "My body is like a temple, and I am going to decorate the walls."



ADAM P. FAIRER/GUILFORDIAN

First-year Hollis Haid has six tattoos. Her lotus flower symbolizes rebirth and compassion.

According to a recent survey by The Guilfordian, Golden Spiral Studios on Elm St. is the preferred tattoo parlor.

Other local parlors include:

Little John's Tattoo
Jolly Rogers Tattoo
Sacred Art

Darkside Studios
Tattoo Phoenix
Carolina Tattoo Company

Kingpin
Seven Sagas Tattoo
Legacy Iron