

# An Artist Statement

Joseph Faura

Issues of gender, and particularly gender identity, are the focus of my work. I am partly interested in spiritually transcending gender, but understand that we are physically embodied male or female, and socially conditioned to be men or women. To be more specific, I believe there is a struggle between male and female forces for supremacy over the individual.

In my video installation series, *The Embodied Self*, completed in 2006, I became interested in the idea that gender is innately embodied after reading an article of the same name, written by Michael Novak. A theologian, Novak explains human sexuality by arguing that transcendence—or in his case “the image of God”—is attained through the sexual union between a man and a woman. It is because we are embodied male or female, he concludes, that we alone can never achieve the true image of God.

Unlike Novak, however, I am interested in the possibility of an internal union between the male and the female within each person. The videos in *The Embodied Self* present the limitations of an external union of the two figures, a man and a woman, who inhabit an empty white space, continually moving, merging together, only to move apart again. Their futile attempts at coming together are met with physical resistance. It is this corporeality, which governs them and prevents them from transcending.

Various artists who function in the field of video installation have also informed my work. One example is Mathew Barney’s *Cremaster Cycle*, which allegorically depicts a

stage in a fetus's development where gender is consequently differentiated.

In addition to my video work, I oftentimes combine photographic images and my own drawings to create collages. In these works, gender conflict is depicted through the juxtaposition of imagery that questions a societal understanding of gender roles.

Appeasing The Feminine consists of cutouts of people and animals combined to create fictitious archetypes for our adoration. In each collage, a figure is seen inhabiting an abstract landscape. For instance, a young man, with a fur headdress looks at three eyeballs suspended from cloud-like formations that are made of pink flowered wallpaper. In another, a woman with a sheep's head in an intricate golden evening gown is supported by a similar cloud-like structure.