

LILIBETH CUENCA RASMUSSEN's performative works likewise challenge cultural norms to draw attention to the politics determining her subjects' identity, often with regard to gender. For *Afghan Hound* (2011-present), Cuenca Rasmussen wears a costume made of hair modeled after an Afghan hound's appearance. She covers herself in the hair each time she assumes the role of four diverse Afghan characters. Each character conveys a narrative of exploited women and children in Afghanistan; all four stories are connected by two common themes: masculinity defining gender roles and new constructions of gender arising in a culture of sexual repression. The first character quotes Malalai Joya, an Afghan activist, writer and politician in exile. She shows her resolve when declaring that "One flower doesn't bring spring/ I will fight until I hear my people sing." For the second, Cuenca Rasmussen dons a beard to play an archetype of the patriarchal misogyny, power and authority that so often riles Westerners, but who ends up challenging the hypocrisy of the West's demonization of Afghanistan: "Your Western eyes...you choose which conflicts you want to see." The third is Bacha Bazi, a young boy trained to act as a girl who is kept as a sex slave. The fourth recounts the experience of Bacha Posh, a girl raised as a boy in families without a son. This performance, like much of Rasmussen's other work, references music video tropes through contemporary music, singing, and dance.

Similarly spanning cultures to explore ways in which identity is formed, *I Want You Under My Skin*, 2010, comprises before-and-after photo portraits that use makeup and costume to transform models into the ethnicity of their choice. Inspired by Cuenca Rasmussen's memories from the 1970s of children playing dress-up, such appropriation is viewed as stereotypical and demeaning today. Cuenca Rasmussen's project thereby questions the absurdity of assuming another person's ethnic identity as an observer, if not a colonist.

*Shown, left and next page: Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen, I Want You Under My Skin, 2010, series of colour photographs, 16 x 12 inches framed; p. 27: Afghan Hound, 2011-present, performance, 15 minutes, composite photo by Anders Sune Berg*

