

FEMME FAMILY ZINE #1: COMING OUT

The NYC Femme Family is a self-selected community group for femmes of all genders, makes and models. In this, our first zine, we're really excited to present work by femmes from all over the US and Canada.

As organizers in the Femme community, we were called upon to define Femme. Rather than offer a generic «all-encompassing» definition, we thought it best to put out the call to our extended femme family in hopes of developing an «anti-definition,» focusing as much on our very personal identifications as the common threads that run through them. It is our hope that this zine helps to show the breadth of Femme experience and that there is no one right way to be Femme.

The theme of Coming Out is both a commonly-used trope and a site of deep reflection and resistance. How do we come to the moments that compel us to locate our identity somewhere new? What is it about identity that prompts us to source ourselves in it?

Given the amazing response we got for this «Coming Out» issue, the first in our series of zines, we are putting out the call for our next issue now! Calling all femme-identified artists or femme-identified folks who love and appreciate art! We want you to wax poetic on what you as a femme make or what feeds your femme in others' work. Submission deadline March 1, 2010- e-mail submissions and/or inquiries to info@femmefamily.com

Femme Family NYC came out of the spirit of the 2008 Femme Conference in Chicago, IL for which this zine is a fundraiser. Happening bi-annually, the conference seeks to explore, discuss, dissect, and support Queer Femme as a transgressive, gender-queer, stand-alone, and empowered identity, and provide a space for organizing and activism within Queer communities. (From www.femmecollective.com) See you in Atlanta in 2010!

love, The Femme Family NYC

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I THINK I CAME OUT THE FIRST TIME I DIDN'T FUCK SOMEONE *BACK*.

By Hana Malia

I.

*If I were loose mountain mud I might love you,
Because I've loved like that before,
Weak in the knees for the constancy of bruises,
Always the size of a boy's middle and index knuckles,
Always brief and torrential.
Blue yellows that will fall off, and rain
That will drip down to an unseen molten core.*

I am seventeen and haven't been touched sober in three years. That last time was in the dark between the strain of my own resisting arms and the harsh cold of tiled bathroom walls.

By the grace of what must be magic, I am living without a body— just a mouth for pills, hands for scrawling or rhythmic manic fucking myself insomnia, and eyes that keep shiny things/fathers/scaffolding tunnels/kitchen knives/books and corners in sharp focus.

I am my work— reading it is as close as I come to living it for now. At best reading finds a memory:

Girl with box-braided head, lips desperately stuck to my hips in the bathroom at gay kid choir practice.

Pour parent's leftover Jameson over eleven year old skin, set it aflame— excuse to kiss her burn, no excuse needed not to stop there.

Lay side by side hands inward never out toward, coming, coming to the black box cable playboy channel saved or ruined what we thought sex could/should be.

II.

*You should know- there is a formula
To falling apart unnoticed.
Small girls study it
Eat themselves— pieces of bread,
Or find the food they need on inside bones
That they'll lick clean
After she leaves in the morning.*

I am at college and only doing work for one class— Feminists Spit Fire: studies in revolution, shake the world poetry. Failing school is on its way to getting me somewhere alive.

I am at college and the beds I find myself in tie me up and tell me I'm femme— point out where it lives— the soft places, the ones easiest to bruise. I think the femme is closer to my jaw, but I don't tell them.

Gloria Anzaldua, Daphne Gottlieb, Suheir Hammad, Beth Ditto, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Anna Camilleri, Rebecca Brown, Jewelle Gomez, Cherrie Moraga, Amber Hollibaugh, Meliza Bañales, Ami Mattison, Audre...



III.

I will be your night's high femme sex cat,

The girl who wants too much

Crystal quality reflection

The girl who is too much.

But I will fuck you as hard as

I don't love you,

A brick dropped from a window

Without checking that the street below

Is clear of passers by.

I'm back home in my abusive relationship with the city, (can't live with it, don't know how to live without it) and no one I grew up with can afford to live in their hoods and Bushwick is home for queer slow jams and PBR(!??)

I have a toothache— they're reaching out from the roots.

Curly mess of my hair lies in tendrils between floorboards. I pick up handfuls and try to rip it like that perfect snap of silly putty if you pull right. I cry and cry at the weightlessness of it.

I have short-hair-too-easy-signifier and girls want to call me daddy. This is not what I meant. These words and lengths are tearing me down to nothing.

IV.

My hair is getting longer again— the transparency is fleeting and I need a place in this new sceney city of queers from 49 other places that are not here. A word buys you a right to get down, so why not Femme?

I'm ambivalent about this lexicon as advertisement for how we're gonna fuck and who we're gonna be and what we're gonna need. And in my world femme was pier queens and middle age lipstick lesbians at the Center butch/femme social.

I read Brazen Femme again— tie one arm to my own bed and scream out the word, femme, taste it at the back of my throat, roll it around. It doesn't taste like diva draped in diamonds, but remnants of carbon. Rips up my mouth with rocks from deep-origin volcanic eruptions.

V.

I'm examining my resistance to see femme as more power than pretense.

I'm digging these notions— Femme as femininity gone wrong, Femme as the knife buried in a pile of glitter...

But then so many of the Femmes I meet seem to be very much about femininity. They tell me their Femme is radical and transgressive because they prescribe to the model of girl they were told to, except for the big catch— they fuck other girls, trans men, and queers. They talk about the power in being just what the world thinks it wants, only to follow up with the haha— tricked you! You can't have it!

If the dagger under the glitter, the femme, is about performance or trickery— the big reveal— then I am daggerless and definitely not femme. Because that leaves femme dependant on the pretense of femininity that preempts the upset, and in my life the message has been sent loud and clear that fat and ugly is not feminine, mixed up jew gypsy nomad is not feminine, bottle of whiskey a night is not feminine, sex that bares teeth and doesn't know how to stop is not...



I have felt like a leftover— a survived burden looking always for the pockets of flawless in my bones. So it is too familiar when femme is seen only as the absence of masculinities— a default identity. Negative space rather than something of its own substance.

I am screaming and yelling and needing to reach in deep enough to feel with my own hands that on my very inside there is matter, not just the absence of something better. And after all that reaching I can't get down with "my communities," turning Femme into something that looks more like what's not there than what is.

This is what it is. This is where I found it. This is what lives. And for all that I can't explain yet, I know Femme translates to revival.

Hana Malia is a born and bred mutli-borough New Yorker with roots in commercial fishing boats, East Flatbush hat factories, and a long line of women with salty salty skin. She's a writer, student, on the fly visual artist, activist, teacher, and fighting hard to be fly fat dancer always seeking collaboration.



FF ZINE EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE:

Damien - Wrote and scored her first musical at 11, started performing poetry at 15, lost a Sudden Death Haiku slam at 19, and went on to tour North America with words and femmes. more info: axondluxe.com

Bevin - Wants to make the world safe for people to love themselves, regardless of their differences. Passionate about bacon, cupcakes, dancing, performing & community. The relentless pursuit of her joy is chronicled at queerfatfemme.com

Amanda - queer-southern-feminist-femme living in brooklyn but always longing for her southern soil. her lifelong dream is to bring radical queer organizing and visibility to rural southern communities.

Gaby - A NYC mermaid by birth Gaby just spent two years in Montreal outside of her natural habitat. A performer, puppeteer, and costumer Gaby works with companies who strive to bring theatre to the heart of social life. At 26 she still plans on running away with the circus.

Sophie - High femme grown organically in the new age mecca of Eugene, Oregon, with a stint in the Siberian town of Irkusk. A recent escapee from an international think tank, she is now focusing her freedom on photography, poetry, and performance, and studying conflict resolution & negotiation.

Bridget - is ever so mysterious and copyedits like a tiger!

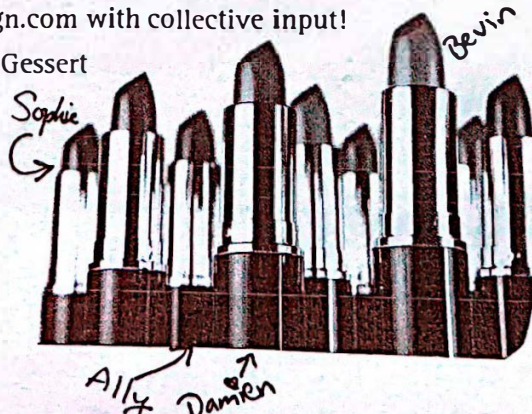
Hana - Was crushed after spending years assuming her Jem doll was a drag queen Barbie. She has survived this and a few other heartbreaks and as a result believes fiercely in the love and the fight. If you're ever up for a Coney Island ocean swim mid-January, give her a holler.

Taueret - Is like a hippo in a banana skirt en pointe. She likes the divine, sriracha, pitbulls, friction, hibiscus juice, sexual currency, poetry, and rioting. She dislikes White Santa/ White Jesus/White Male God, hate crimes legislation, and the NYPD.

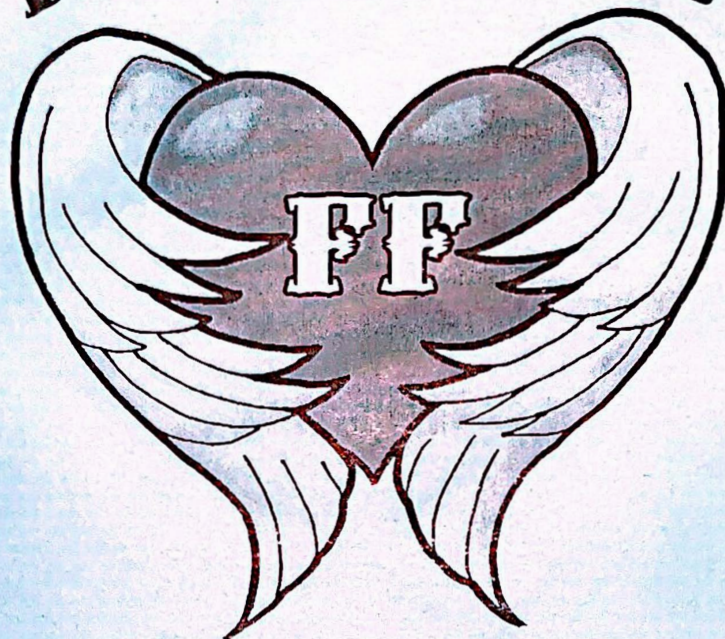
ALLY: Photographer, veteran zinester + queer femme party creator. Bloodhand Photography.com

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Femme Family Logo by Sophie Rogers-Gessert



FEMME FAMILY NYC



MISSION STATEMENT:

The Femme Family is an open community of self-identified queer Femmes of all genders that seeks to explore, subvert and celebrate notions of femininity.

We work to strengthen and empower Femme communities in New York City, organize social activities and events, and create safe spaces for dialogue, liberation, and fun.

We recognize and celebrate our intersectionality of identities, so if you're reading this and you think you might be Femme, you are welcomed.

WEB:

site: femmefamily.com // facebook: [femmefamilynyc](https://www.facebook.com/femmefamilynyc) // email: info@femmefamily.com

MORE FEMME COMMUNITIES:

Femme Mafia (ATL, ATX, Berlin, Minneapolis, Stockholm)

Femme Guild (Sydney)

Femme Sharks (Oakland and all over)

Fat Femme Front (Sydney)

SUPPORT!

Proceeds from the sale of this zine go to The Femme Collective, organizers of The Femme Conference. For more info go to: femmecollective.com

To buy this zine, use paypal@femmefamily.com on PayPal, \$5 - \$10

