

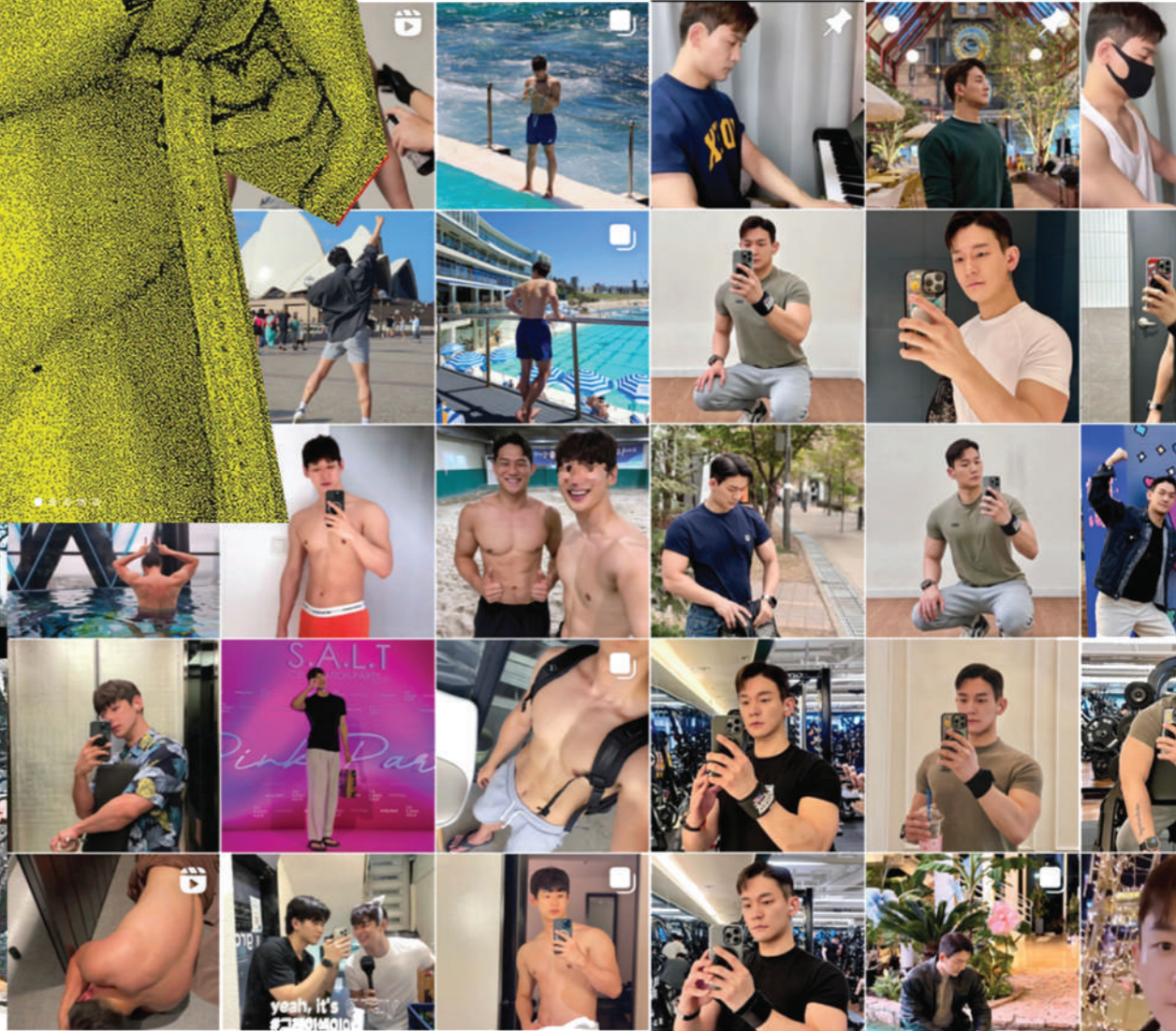
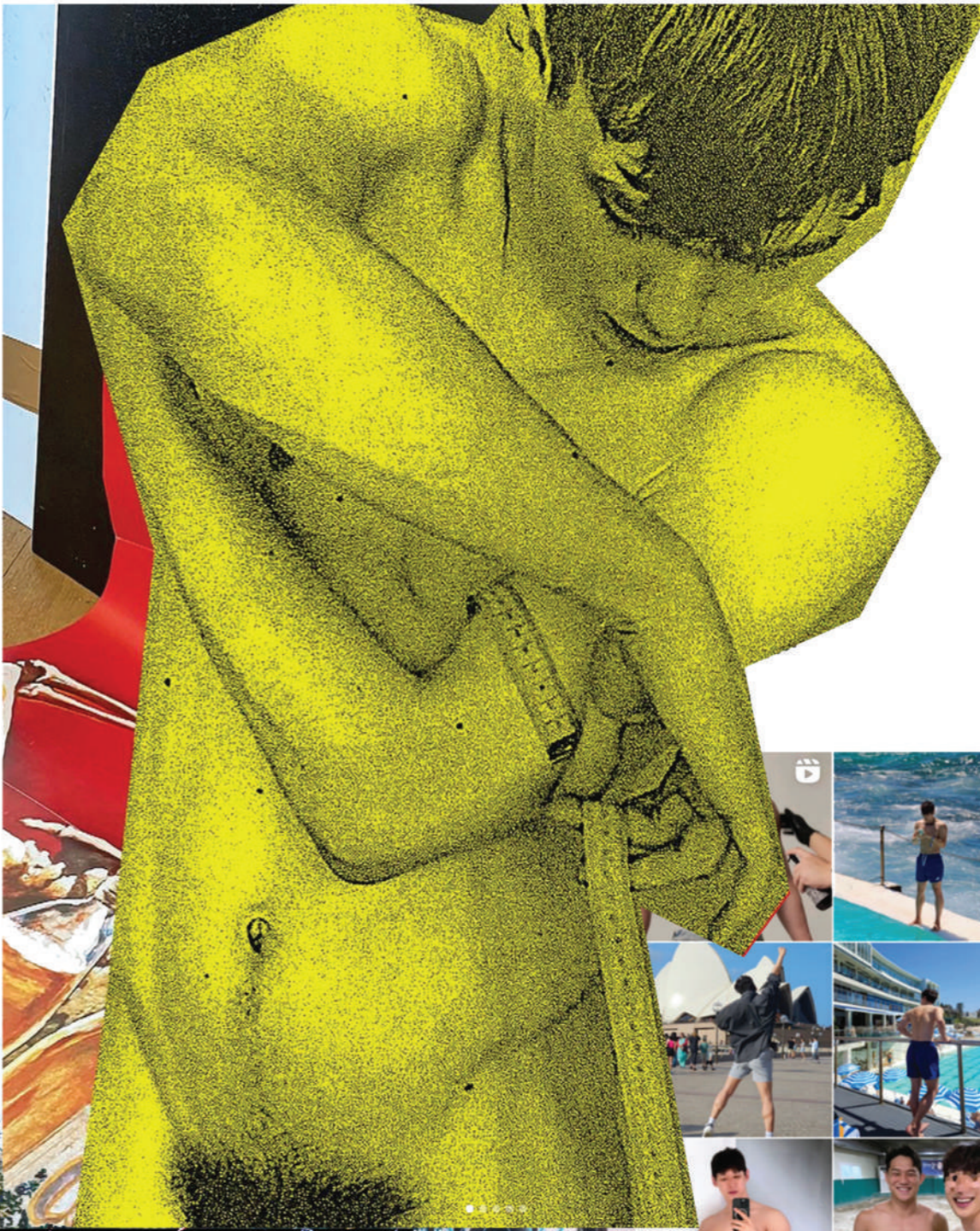


# DONGO

NOT THE FAVORITE CHILD



Gay Men\*



**Article 92-6 (Disgraceful Conduct)**  
A person who commits anal intercourse to any person prescribed in Article 1 (1) through (3) or other disgraceful conduct shall be punished by imprisonment with prison labor for not more than two years.





**What are we? Humans?  
Or animals? Or savages?  
What're grown-ups going to think?**

**William Golding,  
*Lord of the Flies*, 1954**





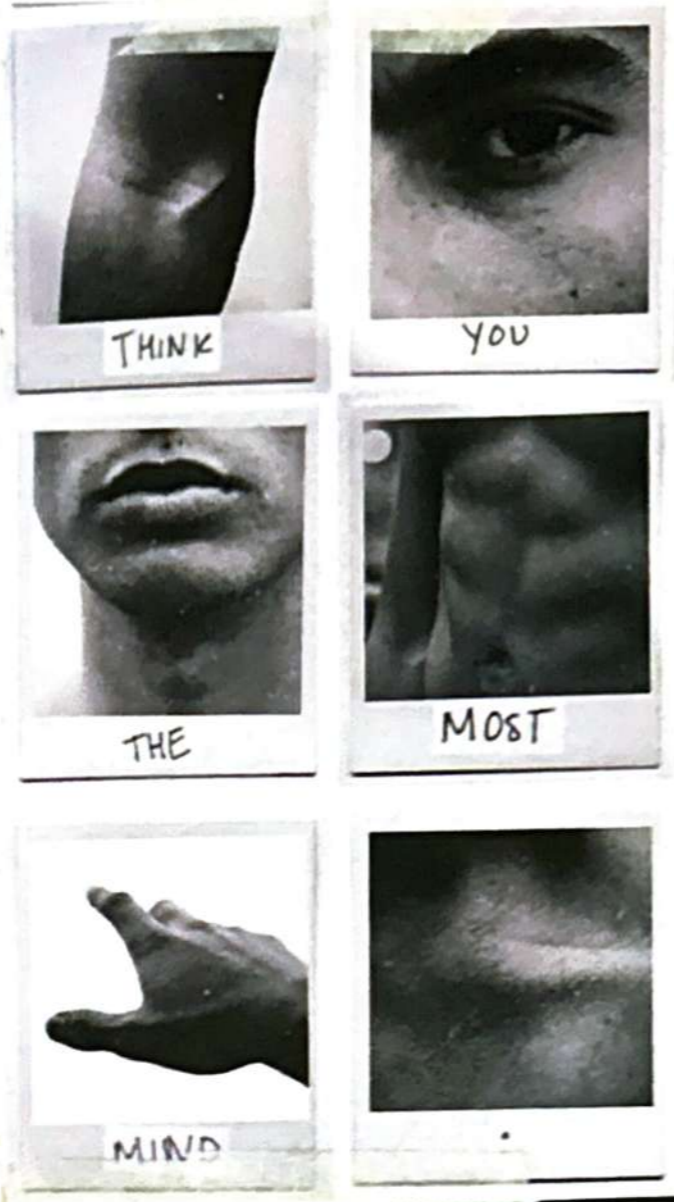
Lord of the Flies, 1963



I

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BEAUTIFUL



THINK

YOU

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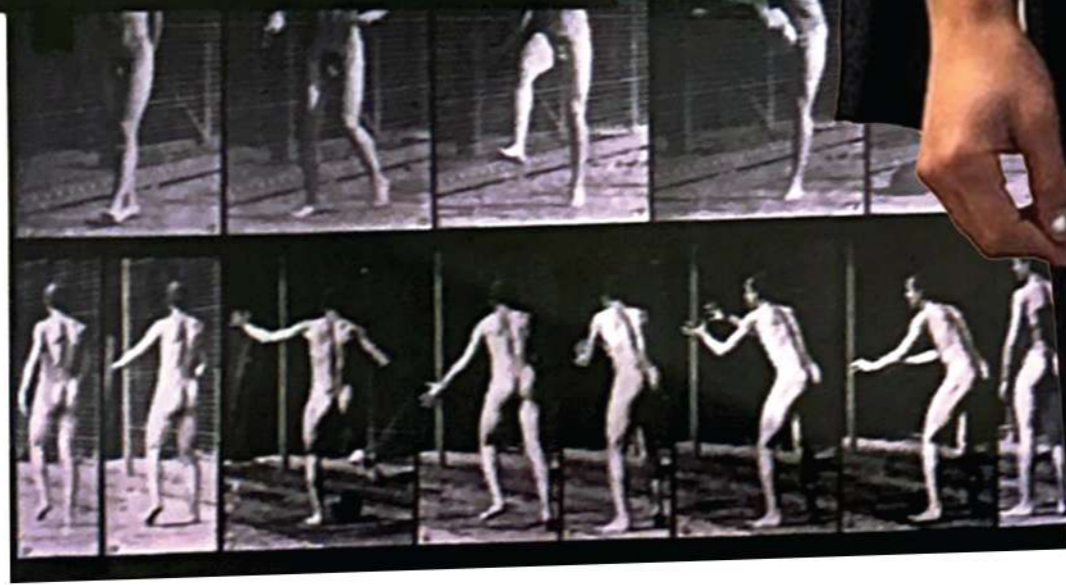
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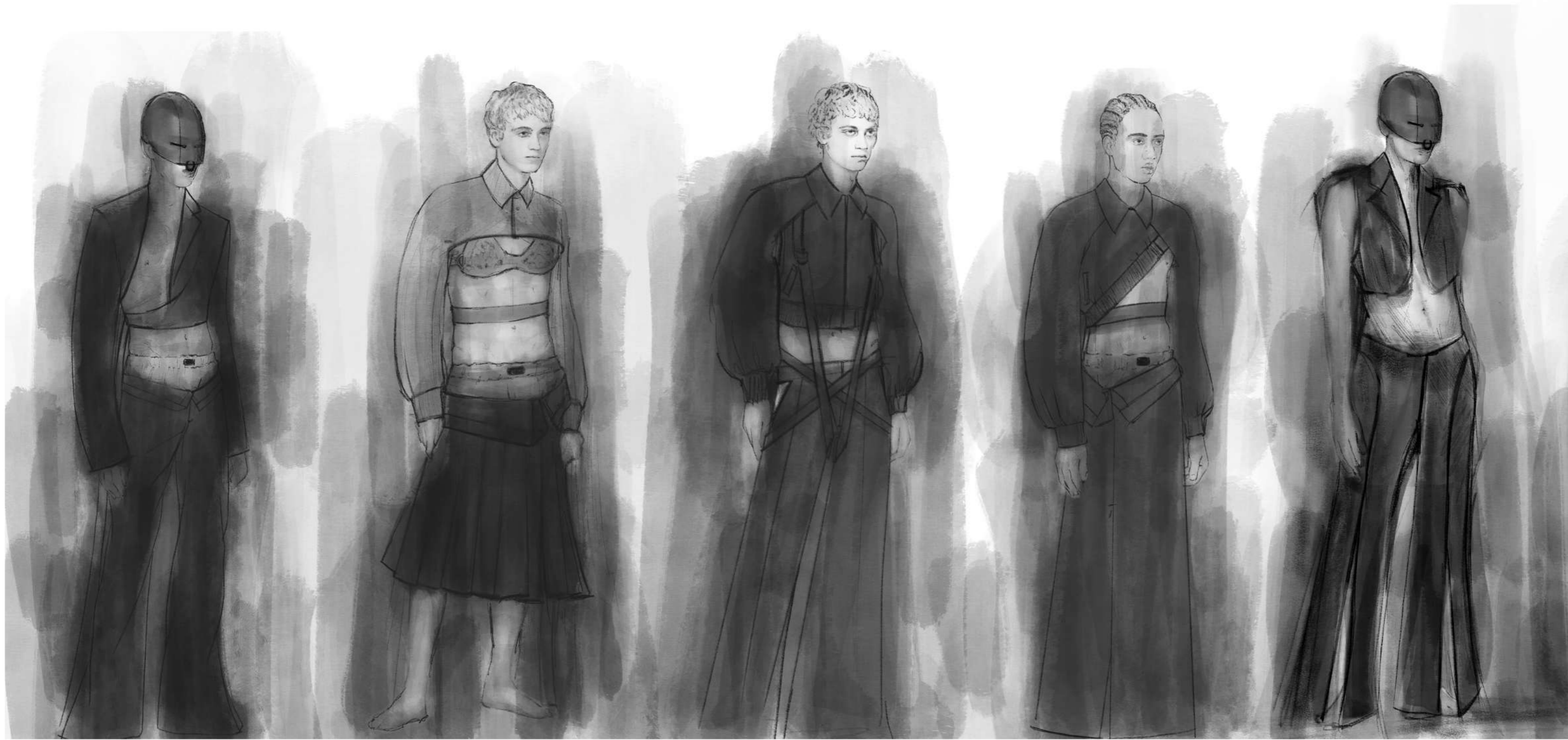
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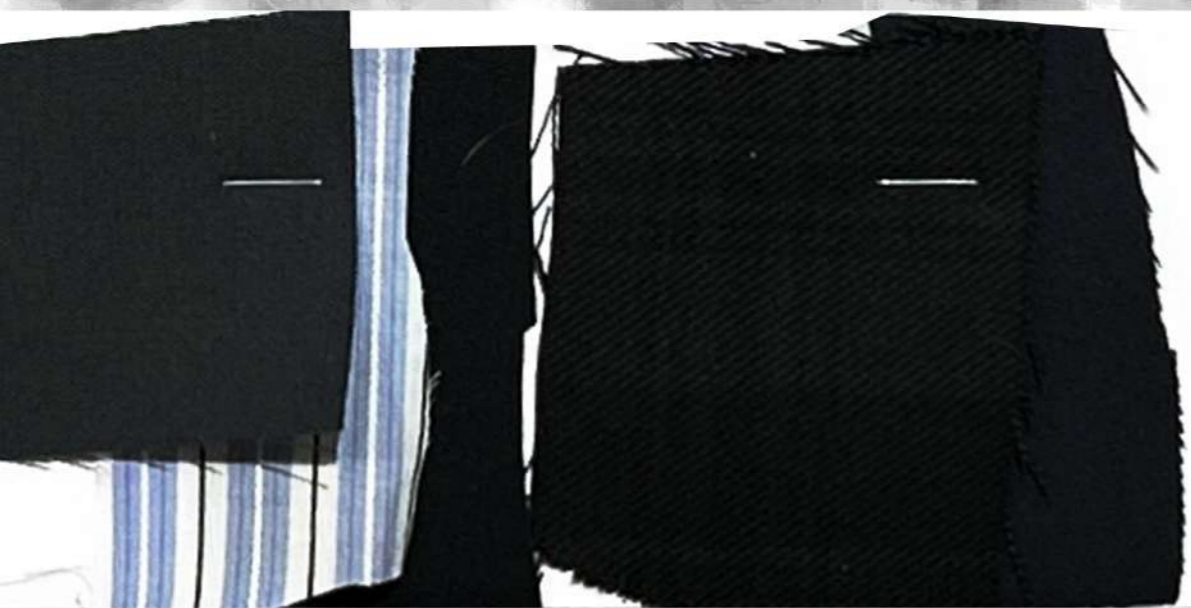


Hartz Magazine











(Sigi, 2024)

## Position Statement

The contextual review highlights a societal landscape in which Korean gay men endure systemic oppression and cultural stigmatization, entrenched in hypermasculinity and effeminophobia, instilling a profound apprehension of femininity or womanliness among gay men, thereby exacerbating their plight (Levine and Kimmel, 1998). This project is informed by the designer's personal experiences as a gay man navigating a society that dismisses homosexuality and enforces rigid heteronormative expectations. These lived realities have shaped the project's focus, emphasizing the need to address the discrimination, isolation, and internalized struggles faced by many within the LGBTQIA+ community in Korea.

Rather than presenting an idealized vision of queer liberation, the project confronts the realities of oppression, exploring how cultural, societal, and institutional pressures suppress individuality and self-expression. By engaging directly with themes of rejection, resilience, and identity, the designer seeks to challenge stereotypes and critique the norms that perpetuate these injustices.

Fashion serves as a medium to translate these complex narratives into a visually provocative and deeply personal collection. The work aims to dismantle stereotypes, inspire dialogue, and create a platform for inclusive representation. By addressing the lived experiences of those navigating these oppressive structures, the collection invites a more honest and nuanced understanding of queer existence in Korea, challenging the cultural dynamics that demand conformity and invisibility.

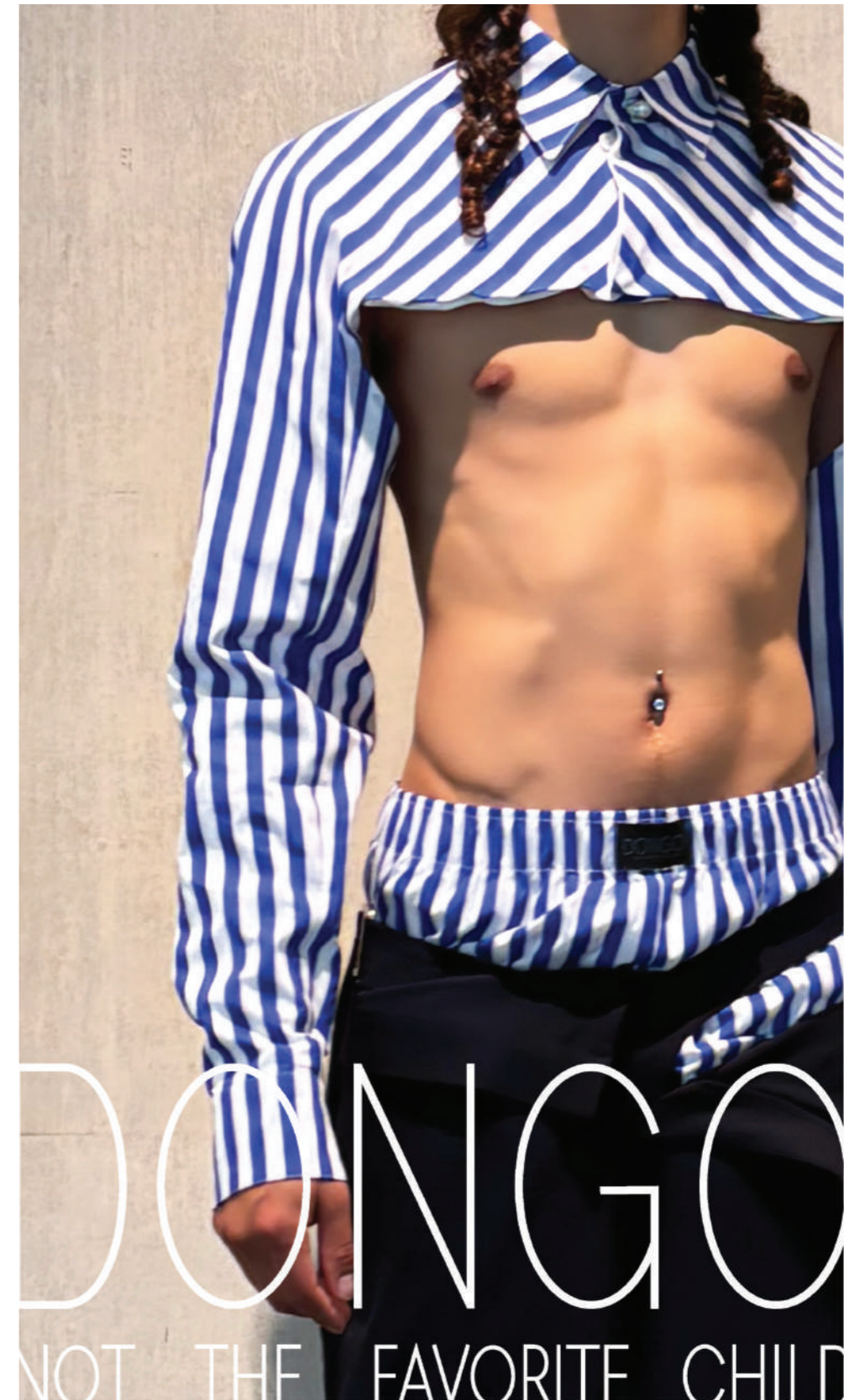




Figure. 7 & 8 - Transformation of the design on the fitting for the industrial review (2024)

This process was deeply informed by personal experiences. Wearing skirts in public, for instance, exposed me to both harassment and judgment but also became a profound act of defiance and self-assertion. On one occasion, in an ostensibly open city like London, I was insulted by a stranger who gave me the middle finger simply for wearing a skirt. This encounter underscored the persistent vulnerability faced by those who challenge gender norms, even in progressive spaces. It also made me acutely aware of the harsher realities in Korea, where societal conservatism and deep-seated prejudice make such self-expression unimaginable for many. The thought of attempting such an act in Korea fills me with apprehension, as the cultural and social consequences would be far more severe. This duality of empowerment and vulnerability became a central theme in my designs, pushing me to create garments that not only challenge societal norms but also provide wearers with the courage to assert their identities unapologetically.

By embedding transformation into the garments, I created pieces that resonated deeply with wearers' personal journeys. The designs were dynamic, reflecting the complexities of identity and offering the wearer agency in navigating societal expectations and personal truth. Through this collection, I sought to challenge the traditional constructs of masculinity and redefine what fashion could represent—both as a form of self-expression and as a catalyst for cultural critique.

The transformative elements emphasized the body as a site of self-expression, reflecting the tension between hypermasculinity and individuality in Korean gay culture. By allowing garments to shift between concealing and revealing, the collection addressed dual pressures: the societal demand for a "perfect" body as a marker of desirability and the personal desire for self-embrace (Levine and Kimmel, 1998). Revealing designs, such as the adjustable coat exposing the right torso, celebrated the body as a source of pride while critiquing the hypermasculine obsession with physical perfection. These features highlighted the harsh reality of body-centric ideals, offering both a critique of societal expectations and a space for empowerment, enabling wearers to navigate and reclaim their identities on their own terms.

The reinterpretation of school uniforms became another pivotal theme in the collection. In Korean culture, school uniforms symbolized discipline, conformity, and societal expectation. By incorporating skirts for men and trousers for women, I sought to reimagine these archetypes, blurring gender boundaries and subverting traditional roles. The use of traditionally feminine elements, such as soft textures and strap details, further disrupted hypermasculine narratives and opened up possibilities for fluid self-expression.

The design process itself bridged conceptual themes with tangible garments. Drawing, collage, and draping were central to my exploration, enabling me to abstract the male body and deconstruct rigid hypermasculine norms. These methods facilitated experimentation with form, texture, and proportion, pushing the boundaries of traditional design to create garments that embodied fluidity, rebellion, and individuality.



Figure. 11 - Fitting photos for the industrial review (2024)



Figure. 5 -Designer's inspiration map on his closet (2024)



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*(Tilman, 2002)*

## Acknowledgements

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Finally, I dedicate this work to the LGBTQIA+ community in Korea and beyond. Your resilience and courage have been a profound source of inspiration for this project and continue to drive my commitment to fostering inclusivity and representation through fashion.