

## Diane Torr

Diane Torr was born in Ontario, Canada. When she was four, she moved with her family to Aberdeen, Scotland, where she spent her childhood. After graduating from Dartington College of Arts, Devon, Diane returned to North America to develop her career as an interdisciplinary artist, working in the fields of dance, performance, installation, and film. She lived in New York from 1976–2002, and was an integral part of the downtown art scene, presenting at arts venues such as Franklin Furnace, and The Kitchen. She received her Master of Fine Arts degree from Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

Torr is best known for her performances as a male impersonator, and as an international pioneer of drag king culture. She has toured her performances and taught Man-for-a-Day workshops in North America, Europe and Asia, and has featured on US and BBC television and in the documentary *Venus Boyz*. In 2002 she returned to Glasgow, where she is a visiting lecturer at the Glasgow School of Art.

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'Over the past 27 years my main interrogation, as an artist and activist, has been the narratives of sex and gender. My work has investigated subjects as diverse as feminist go-go dancing and Robert Burns as an icon of Scottish masculinity. From 1996–99, I had a relationship with a woman in Leeds. I was living in New York and travelling to Leeds to visit her on my frequent working trips to Europe. I was astonished to discover homophobia. One day, when we walked down the street holding hands a man shouted "LEZZ-BEE-ANN!" I looked around to see the lesbian. I had no self-consciousness of being a "lesbian". I'm just me. Later, on discovering the high percentage of gay suicide among Yorkshire's teenagers, I was motivated to make an art work that could provoke a dialogue around homophobia, and stereotypes of sex and gender. *IDEAL HOMO* is an installation consisting of a series of photographs, a text and a soundscape that construct a day in the life of two Yorkshire men, Keith and Ricky, who met when working at the Leeds Central Post Office, fell in love and live together. They look like two ordinary blokes. They were, in fact, my lover and myself in drag, although viewers' awareness of that fact depended on how closely they read the catalogue. *IDEAL HOMO* was presented in galleries in Leeds, London, New York and Tokyo. My collaborator, Jane Czynszelska, is currently editor of the lesbian magazine, *DIVA*.'

### IDEAL HOMO

1999

Photographic print

61cm x 61cm

Photo: Gordon Rainsford

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