



# A received notion of masculinity/Ivory Tower

Julius Thissen



**ABOUT THE ARTIST:** Julius Thissen is a visual artist, curator and gender activist. Julius's main themes are the questioning of (gender)identity and diversity in Western society. By the use of masculine stereotypes he explores gender roles in modern day performance culture and the influence of social expectations on our behavior. With his work he aims to create narratives that investigate performing, representation and failure. His work has been nominated for the Hendrik Valk Price, Arnhemse Nieuwe and the Warsteiner Bloom Awards.



In 2016 I shot the first picture that is part of a bigger series called Ivory Tower. This is an ongoing documentation/photography project that is rooted in the speculations that my environment has about my transition. When I started identifying as a transgender man, some people I talked to had the tendency to fantasize about the changes that might occur and how my behavior/interests would (have to) change. While this “enthusiasm” was well-intended, it made me feel pressured and dysphoric, a feeling that remains difficult to describe. Two years later, I took a second picture, documenting the exterior changes. Now, I don’t know much about living up to the expectations of the other, but I do know I’ve lived up to my own and I’m not only talking about the bodily changes. These last few years I have had so many wonderful and touching conversations with people from the LGBTQIA+ community (and allies) that taught me important lessons on self-love and self-care. At the end of the day, our own standards are the only ones we should have to live up to.

