Skinz: ‘Patience’

Personal Narratives of Identity within New Zealand’s Gay Leather Culture

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• ‘Patience’ is a Painting

• Mix of practice based research and theoretical research

• Background as an illustrator, graphic designer, sculptor and photographer

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Warning! - Some content may offend
Introduction:

Visual Culture Coding: often connected to visual consumption. Advertising, education, news, popular art, entertainment, etc..

I argue that culture coding within the majority of artworks about gay leather culture have focused solely on the “in scene/erotic” aspects of the culture, over the “out of scene” lives of the people participating. Creating a very narrow cultural code.
The SkiNZ project responds to this issue with a desire to expand knowledge and discourse of this minority sub culture.

**My questions -**

1. How can I create images that expand our knowledge in the area of gay leather culture and create new discourse?

2. How can I create meaningful artworks worthy of creating in the first place?

3. How can I provide a wider exposure of these images once made so that discourse will begin.
Visual Culture

Reflects and affects culture.

*Consumer* - (Berger 2000)

“Culture is seen not as something that is high and refined, but, rather, culture is ordinary. Culture is an everyday experience.”


The image needs to be grounded in sincerity

*Legitimacy* - (Gardiner 2003)
Leather Culture

The modern leather scene as we now know it first formalized itself out of the group of men who were soldiers returning home after World War II. (1939-1945).

*The Old Guard* - Baldwin

“Leather people,” a term for those who identify with a community generally centred on sexualization of leather and domination

*Leather Archive Museum* – *(Getsy 1998)*  *Founded in 1993*

Key Motto - **Safe, Sane, and Consensual**
Leather Culture in New Zealand

A mix of classical modern leather culture with personal lifestyles and environments found in New Zealand.

Note: Many participants also point out that they are also involved in the non-leather gay community.
**Some Key Artists of Leather Culture**

**Etienne**
One of the earliest leather artists. His early works (painted under the name ‘DOM’) show a strong relationship with classical paintings, exchanging Greek & Roman gods for tough leather clad men.

**Tom of Finland**
Most well known. Most published and longest career. Most influential providing gay men a model to follow. Tom of Finland Foundation - set up to - Protect, Preserve, & Promote the Erotic Arts.
Les Farnek

A local hero of the Chicago scene.
Fantasy views of S&M.

Nigel Kent

Works with rough heavy material to portray the rough heave nature of his work.
Pierre & Gilles
Photographer & Painter
Create highly attractive images where men are portrayed more god-like, than animal-like.

Joseph Bean
A paper cutter - Does not identify as an erotic artist, rather a folk artist with a penchant for gay male erotic subjects.
Domestic Portrayal

Some photographers have looked at the domestic portrayal

Robert Mapplethorpe  Tom Attwood  Mark Beehre
SkiNZ: ‘Patience’ is my latest response

It provides a visual fusion of the everyday lives of gay New Zealand leathermen, in and out of character. The resulting image portrays the duality of their lives, and in doing so creates a new visual coding that expands our understanding by painting visual traces of truth gathered from personal photoshoots and interviews.
Process:

• Ethics Approval
• 12 Participants
• Photo-shoots
  • Interviews
Sean and Woof
Drawing the new scene in perspective space
Building up layers in Photoshop
Tradition Airbrush techniques are used -

Masked Shapes, sprayed surfaces, and hand painted details
I use my photography as reference, not un-similar to life drawing
Conclusion:

Personal and ordinary portrayals of culture are valid, and highly important historical snapshots.

I believe that my sincere attempt to create a fusion of ‘in and out’ of the leather ‘scene’ is constructing a new way of painting a narrative, and in doing so expands the culture coding of leather culture, thus, providing new areas of discourse about this minority subculture and the traces of truth found within.