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Gender identity explored in Cabrillo Gallery's 'Visibly Invisible'

By Alia Wilson
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With fingers pushed against his face feeling the rough stubble of his first beard, artist Cobi Moules depicts the hormonal changes of his body as he transitions from female to male in a series of sketches titled "The Beard."

The drawings of the Boston-based artist's personal transition are in Cabrillo College Gallery's latest exhibit "Visibly Invisible," which explores gender identity and sexual politics.

The exhibit, opening Friday, will feature local and national artists who explore themes of transgenderism.

Moules brings two series of his work that relate to different experiences as he is taking hormones.

"Hair can be a marker for identification and how one presents themselves through hair can completely change the way in which one is seen," said Moules of his drawings. "By trying on different hair grooming I am also trying on different identities and acknowledging the complexities that come about with the slightest physical alteration and the ability to transform one's self."

The black-and-white stills from the award-winning photo documentary "Transfigurations" by Jana Marcus that follow such transformations step by step will also be on display. After touring nationally over the last four years, Marcus said the five-year project has served as an important learning tool.

"I'm trying to show a larger audience that they are just people too," Marcus said. "It's not so much about the surgeries, it's about what it means to be a man,

what it means to be a woman."

Through video, sound bites and still photography, Sheila Malone, adjunct faculty at Cabrillo College in the Art Photography Department, follows the impact of testosterone on the biological "sex" and the "cultural gender" of her subject, Renate. An installation by New Orleans-based artist Maxx Sizer and the film "Wrong Bathroom" by San Francisco filmmaker and former Cabrillo student Shani Heckman will also be on display.

The exhibit serves as an opportunity to get discussion going in Santa Cruz about transgender subjectivity, Cabrillo Gallery's Tobin Keller said.

"We don't have a lot of public platforms in order to have good open discourse about transgender subjectivity," Keller said. "It means a lot to have really challenging exhibitions in general, but to have an exhibit that's challenging nature as its subject matter is really important, especially for the student body learning about social issues. Social issues affect the artists and vice versa."

Exhibit-goers may attend a public reception today from 5-7 p.m. and a discussion with the artists from 6-7:30 p.m. Oct. 6 in the gallery at the Cabrillo Gallery in Aptos.

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IF YOU GO

'Visibly Invisible'
What: Art exhibit, transgender subjectivity, featuring the art of Cobi Moules, Jana Marcus, Shani Heckman, Sheila Malone, Max Sizer
When: Through Oct. 29, with a public reception today from 5 to 7 p.m.