

Moving Towards the Unknown With Genesis P-Orridge

Genesis P-Orridge is co-founder of Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV, a pioneer of acid house and industrial music, and a spectacular, often incendiary, artist, performer and self-described “cultural engineer.” Having been vastly productive since the late '60s, this year alone, Genesis will play Coachella with the original members of Throbbing Gristle; tour with Psychic TV in support of their release, “Mr. Alien Brain vs. The Skinwalkers”; perform a reinterpretation of the creation myth at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, with Adam, Eve and God recast as hermaphrodites; reissue an expanded edition of *Thee Psychick Bible* (the primary text of the Temple Ov Psychick Youth cult) and *Painful But Fabulous*, a book about Genesis' life; and put on a host of multi-media gallery exhibitions.

In 2003, Genesis began a project called “Breaking Sex” with his partner Lady Jaye Breyer P-Orridge, in which they underwent a series of dramatic cosmetic surgeries with the mission to undermine gender and ultimately look like and become one another. Genesis includes Jaye, who died in 2007, when referring to himself, using we and s/he. After walking Big Boy, a Jack Russell Terrier, around the block deep in Brooklyn, Genesis—with a freshly tattooed portrait of Lady Jaye on her forearm, and in a shirt that reads, “Nothing short ov a total gender”—prepared tea at her home and discussed life so far. “We have no control over anything that happens at all. We're just little bobbing corks on a sea of champagne,” s/he began in the soft, hyper-articulate style that characterizes her conversation. “It's weird isn't it?”

What is pandrogyny?

It developed as a theory from a sentimental expression of deep love. You know when people say, 'Oh god, I wish I could just eat you up, I love you so much'? When you want to be absorbed completely in that sensation of pure, thrilling adoration and connection? That's how it began for us. We just wanted that. And we thought mirroring each other, looking like each other, would just enhance that and keep reminding us even more that that's what we were feeling, and it would all just keep amplifying in this sort of positive loop of feedback.

It has been evolving for some time.

One day Lady Jaye, myself and our friend Timothy White—who used to work with John Lilly on dolphin intelligence and before that was in a cult called The Process—were sitting around and, let's be frank, we had had ketamine earlier that evening but were all straight again and just chatting. All of the sudden, Jaye and myself both looked at each other and she goes, 'Can you see it?' And we go, 'I think I can see what I think you see. But don't tell me.' So we get paper and pencils and each draw what was basically our bodies as one blob with these two heads at the top looking at each other. That's the pandrogyné, the vision that started us talking about it as pandrogyny.

Is it about partnering?

It's about finding that sense of completion that can be represented in our primitive state of consciousness as another person. There have been times when Jaye and myself—our consciousnesses—have blended so deeply that we didn't exist separately anymore. We just became this blissful cloud of being.

otherness. Which sounds almost contradictory to a lot of the work that we did when we were younger, but it's a place that you come to. It's almost as if you work really, really hard to wipe the slate clean to become an individual that's self-designed, to write your own narrative. And then comes this point where if you feel confident enough you've got some degree of autonomy, what happens next? You have to look around at your community and decide whether or not you want them to experience whatever positive things you've experienced.

What comes after identity?

The hermaphroditic.

So universality follows individuality.

Yes. And it's something that we didn't expect to happen. Lots of the writing in the '80s was all about *the individual, the individual*.

Identity politics were the story of the 20th century.

As it turns out.

And pandrogyny is what happens on the other side of the identity formation process laid out by the counterculture movements...

Or with regards to sexual preference or whatever makes you feel isolated enough to go through that evolutionary step.

From the outside, it might seem like an exercise in differentiation when in fact it's the opposite, it's about...

Inclusiveness. Exactly. Humanity has to completely re-envision itself as one single large organism, the human species, not various factions of human beings.

Establishment co-opting counterculture...

Which it has done very, very skillfully.

It might not be as detrimental as people think. It could mean the masses are moving along, discovering identity, taking that step, even if the tip of the pyramid is onto something new. They're dealing with a passé piece of evolution. They're dealing with leftovers.

The hope is that after their mass adolescence, they discover what comes next.

Which might be that our consciousnesses all become integrated, just like the internet. It might be that we all become non-physical beings. Or it *could* be that we actually just see ourselves, as Jaye would say, that the human body is a cheap suitcase. Which is what Timothy Leary would say, that the human body is just there to move the brain around, and the brain is there just to have the consciousness in it. This body is just the *container* of you. And that's one of our big errors—that the human body is sacred. It's not. The human *mind* is sacred. *That's* the big difference that we've all got to start remembering. This isn't the final version of us. This is just a stage along the way of evolution.

So what do you think of the universe?

It's a lot of fun. [*laughs*] It's so tenuous and vague, so ethereal and dreamlike. Especially the way we're experiencing it. It's like an ongoing hallucination, and just ridiculously perfect at times. It's also incredibly painful. We would rather that Jaye was still physically here. And yet so many things have occurred that really feel as if she's manipulating stuff from somewhere else.

And then there is the mundane.

That's fun too when it's illuminated by all of these options and possibilities and potentials. It's important just for people to understand they *are* all of these miraculous options and potentials.

How do you access that?

Well, you have to work at it don't you?

What kind of work is it?

Everyone has a genius factor so it's different for everybody, but you have to seriously want, truly desire change. At any cost. At *any* cost.

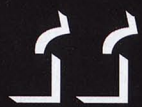
Which could involve great risk.

It does. Almost inevitably. Because you are almost inevitably going to go up against the status quo no matter where you are. As we all know, culture is arbitrary. The rules for sex, belief systems, what you do and don't eat, are different in every place you go to on the planet.

Those are all just invented. But wherever you are, if you truly desire to try and liberate your mind so that you can maximize your potential for expansion outwards into the world, into the universe, into possibility, then you're going to have friction with those who feel threatened by that. And that's when others see it as otherness. They don't see it as being this inclusive wave of love and compassion. They also see it as threatening because it tells them they are not doing it. And if you look as if you're having a good time searching, there can be resentment.

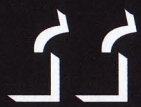
Is notoriety important to you?

No. Anybody who hangs out with me will tell you that we get uncomfortable if anyone notices who we are. It's counterproductive. Especially if its negative notoriety, because it gives a lot of people the excuse to not listen and be lazy. If they've not been predisposed to dismiss you, then there's more chance that they'll listen. We're still sick to death of being the tampon man from 1976. [*laughs*] Although last year, the tampon sculptures were exhibited in two museum retrospectives. Finally justified after all this time. Isn't that typical, though? How it takes about 25 years and then they like it.

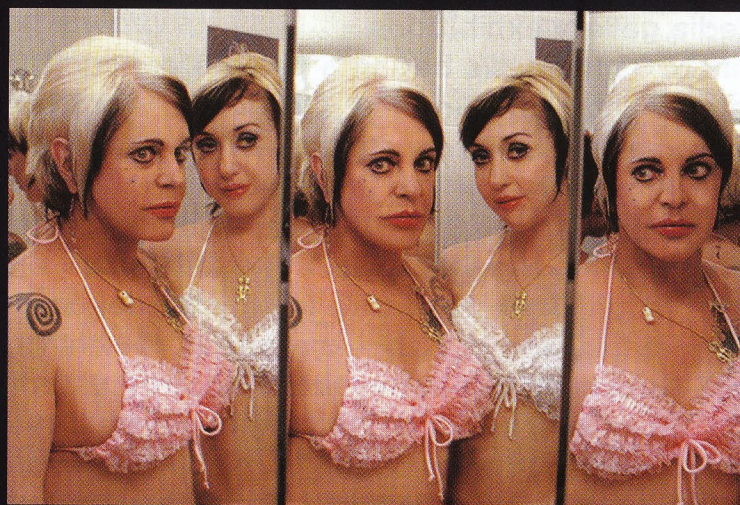


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What is that feeling about? Some describe it as love.

We've gradually come to believe that it is actually the divine natural state, to be hermaphroditic, a return to the original state of being. Whether it's symbolic or literal, it's the state of divine perfection, of balance.

Is the gradual acceptance of marginalized sexualities part of this evolution?

Absolutely. It's a huge indicator that a shift is happening on a very deep level in the group psyche, the species psyche. Cosmetic surgery was a terrible guilty secret not that long ago and now it's something people boast about. There's no reason to believe that the human body as it is now is the finished thing. If we have discovered genetic engineering and cloning and growing skin and growing organs, then we should embrace that just as we embrace other technologies. In Phoenix, we were banned from playing in two venues because they said Gen was transsexual. We were on the news program for ABC, and we knew we had to come up with a "bumper sticker"—Timothy Leary taught me that a long time ago. So when they asked me about it we just blurted out, "Transsexuals are the stormtroopers of evolution."

What does *otherness* mean to you?

I don't know that we would ever use that word. The only time we tend to use *otherness* is in a description of prehistoric behavior. [laughs]

Explain.

After one war, human beings would *surely* never have another. Why would anybody knowingly mutilate somebody twice? Something is severely wrong with that. But where does that behavior begin? It begins in prehistoric times as semi-thinking beings with a genetic program to protect the clan, that little group trying to scratch a living and stay alive. Part of this survival streak, of course, is that when you run into another clan you attack it. And that would be the *otherness*—those that you would attack and suppress to maintain your social supremacy.

How does that affect us today?

Over thousands and thousands of years, we've applied ourselves brilliantly, miraculously to building this almost post-technological environment, but we didn't develop our behavioral patterns at the same pace. So we have a pre-historic behavior system being applied to a futuristic environment. We have to take the species and bring it up to the level of its technology. One thing that would change the picture would be for us to start thinking like a species instead of defining ourselves by our difference, by our

