

# JULIAN

29 • Chicana • They/Them • Brooklyn

I never feel like I'm able to define Femme. It's a loose set of references. I often think about people who I have met that identify as Femme and little bits that I have read here and there. At the same time I feel like I do have some idea of what it is. Whenever I try to describe that I feel like it is not accurate. One of the things I think about is presentation - the way that Femme looks. I think about things like adornment and ornamentation and also hyper femininity, a conscious femininity. A femininity that requires work, but at the same time I want to move away from Femme as another way of saying femininity, and certainly another way to say female. When people look back in history and decide that people are Femmes I totally understand why people would make that move, but I feel like Femme is an identity that you have to claim. I don't think it's fair to just put Femme on someone that we would identify as a woman. Though I do see the impulse.

I first learned about Femme in high school. I read *Stone Butch Blues* and Leslie Feinberg describes Femmes and I was like oh-it **hadn't occurred to me that someone could identify that way**. The more that I saw it the more that I was like I could fit into that, but I didn't identify as Femme until just a few years ago. There were many years that **I knew it was an identity, but didn't know that I could claim it**. Once I did feel comfortable claiming it, it was because people around me allowed me to and respected that and saw it as a real thing, then I feel like it explained so much.

It's hard for me to parse out my Femme identity. I never call myself just Trans, I would call myself Trans-Femme, and **those things are so connected for me that I don't know any other Femme**. So often times it's the moments like when I wear skirts and pull them up to stand while peeing. Or when someone tells me something on the street and I don't feel in danger for my physical safety. I get told things that are negative, I get told things that are positive, I get told things that are meant to be positive but are totally negative or things that are negative that I totally take positively. But **there's something about other people not knowing what to make of me**. As long as I'm not in fear for my safety **I like those moments because it feels I'm being true to myself**. I like the moments of getting ready, putting on layers of clothing and shoes. Because for the very first time in my life I have enough clothes to do that with. For a very long, long time I had little bits of clothing marketed to "women" in my closet, but last year because I was getting so much support and had a job I was like this is what for me my transition is. **I'm not particularly interested in hormones or surgeries but to be in my gender I need clothes**. And I had not bought clothes in a really long time, so by giving myself permission to do that I bought a whole 'nother wardrobe. At the same time I don't think being Femme is just about women's clothes. I've had to unpack a lot of that, and in doing so I've needed a lot of people to unpack it for me. But **feeling fine calling myself Femme when I'm naked**, feeling fine calling myself Femme when I am in clothes marketed to men. Or when I'm in clothes marketed to women but you wouldn't know that I got them in the women's section.

I have challenged to push myself, but I'm really attracted to masculinity and I absolutely do not want any kind of butch/femme dynamic. That turns me off so much. My being Femme has absolutely nothing to do with a romantic partner. **I don't become Femme in relation to other people romantically**. So sex and like hooking up even seeking out people to hook up is one of the few places where I feel happily masculine and authentically masculine. And I enjoy those parts of myself too, and so I struggle with that, and to fuck masculine men you have to present masculinity. **There's a lot of guilt behind selling out to get laid**.