

# IVETTE

29•Mexican and Cuban•She/Her/They/Them•Brooklyn

**Femme means highlighting the feminine aspects of myself**, of the way I want to perform, and celebrating those aspects that empower me and make me feel good about my gender, about my performance. **When I say performance, I mean** the way that I present myself when I step out the door. It could be my clothing, the way I style my hair, the way I walk, the way I talk, the way I take up space, the way I interact with other people, all of those things are the way I perform in the world.

When I moved to Brooklyn five years ago, I was sitting outside a radical feminist bookstore after a performance and someone asked me if I was Femme identified. It took me a second because I hadn't ever heard the term really and I said "Yes, yes I am." Immediately hearing that word resonated with me, and that's when I started learning more about Femme identity and my own performance, that I had a space within the queer community that aligned with my gender performance and presentation and was still seen as radical. Prior to that, I thought that not performing in a genderqueer way or in a non-heteronormative way wasn't as radical or that I wasn't pushing myself to challenge my own performance. But **finding Femme community** that identified across bodies and gender and that were also People of Color really taught me a lot about how radical being Femme is regardless of your body.

**There's so much I enjoy about being Femme.** I enjoy the shoes. I'm five feet tall and I really am incredibly grateful that heels are in my life. I enjoy playing with color, whether it's in my makeup or my nails or my clothing. I love being able to play with color in fun ways and I think Femme lends itself to that very well. I enjoy the community... I don't know another word that encompasses sisterhood? Not gendered in that way but kind of like **familial unity that comes with building Femme community**, whether it's in sharing our knowledge around Femme performance or our lipstick or our clothes. Performing Femme, but this time being in a space where I feel I have agency over that.

**Feeling like I have agency over my Femme identity means** that I acknowledge the ways that femininity has been imposed on me, but being able to acknowledge that despite that, I still really enjoy femininity as something apart from the expectations, which has really **liberated the way I perform Femme**. Where before I wouldn't have pushed myself to perform in the ways I do now, because I wanted to take up more space, because as a petite brown woman, I was expected to not take up a lot of space, so I felt like I had to perform in a more masculine way in order to do that or be taken seriously. Having agency means that I don't feel like I need to compromise that. I can push my gender in a way that makes me feel really powerful.

I struggle to be taken seriously as a businesswoman and as an artist, and I think it's **directly related to my Femme identity**. When I travel and I'm DJing, sometimes I'll go to new venues and they expect me not to know how to set up equipment. To what extent those interactions are because I'm a woman or because I'm Femme I don't know, but definitely femininity positions me in such a way that I'm not taken as seriously in certain environments.

**I would love to have more Femme-centered space** to meet more Femmes. I want friendship and camaraderie, and sleepovers. And to not be critical of each other's performance as Femmes, but to be more open to what that can mean for different people so we can better support each other. Also, white Femmes should center Trans\* Femmes and Femmes of Color when they do create Femme specific space, and think about who's at the organizing table. I think generally the Femmes that I've organized with do a great job of doing that, and I want us to continue doing that.