



Images by Rachel Britton Photography





# Art Is A Drag Illuminates Exhibition Space

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Vibrant, large-scale photographs exploring gender identity and expression were on display in the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons throughout November 2017. The exhibit, *Art is a Drag*, is a body of work created by Grand Valley State University students and twin siblings Kaylee Britton and Rachel Britton.

The exhibit is meant “to educate audiences and to get more people to see drag in a new way,” Kaylee explained.

*Art is a Drag* is a convergence of the artists’ personal, social, and academic interests. Rachel studies photography and Kaylee studies illustration. Kaylee and Rachel are both drag performers themselves. Kaylee performs as a drag queen under the name of

Salem Massacre and Rachel performs as a drag king, Jack Dup. The exhibit features both Kaylee and Rachel.

The exhibit has been shown at many venues throughout Michigan. Each time, a range of events are planned to provide additional learning opportunities. “If you are someone who doesn’t regularly interact with drag performers, it can be intimidating,” Kaylee said. Film screenings, lectures, workshops, live demonstrations, and drag shows provide people with various ways to engage with drag culture.

More than 700 people engaged with the exhibit and attended related events. “I like knowing that people are impacted by our work,” Rachel said. A reception, workshop,

storytime event, and drag show were all held in the Mary Idema Pew Library in tandem with the exhibit.

Some people visited more than once. “I’ve been in here twice to look at your pieces, and I love them so much. I’m glad this got to be displayed,” commented one visitor. Many others shared sentiments of awe and appreciation.

Rachel and Kaylee continue to perform and make new work. They were recently awarded a gold student American advertising award by the American Advertising Federation of West Michigan for *Art is a Drag*.