

Towards a performance history of (neo-)burlesque corporality

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Miss Indigo Blue, Dita Von Teese, Tamara the Trapeze Lady, Miss Dirty Martini, Miss Glitter Painkiller, Lady Flo – these are just a few haphazardly selected names of the female artists currently populating the increasingly popular and rapidly growing neo-burlesque scene. The performance genre of neo-burlesque has gained increasing interest over the last two decades, gradually mutating from a joyful but subversive underground culture in which the possibilities of the female (and sometimes male) body as a tool both for radical critique and bawdy humour are investigated, to plain mainstream culture, the movie *Burlesque* (2010) featuring Cher and Christina Aguilera being the most recent celebration of neo-burlesque culture.

The genre of neo-burlesque, a hybrid performance genre encompassing a wide range of acts from comic scenes over modern dance to full-blast striptease acts, stems from burlesque performance, a practice with a long history. Burlesque ridiculized stage conventions, turning social conventions upside down and mimicking and mocking the social attitudes and cultural practices of the upper classes (opera, ballet, serious drama). Through its pronounced taste for surprise, *double entendre*, wonder and extravaganza, burlesque performance entailed both social and interpersonal critique, exposing the bodily fantasies lingering behind late 19th and 20th century Western culture.

This PhD-project aims at analysing the different representational and performative strategies at work in contemporary neo-burlesque performance practices, while, at the same time, comparing these practices to their historical antecedents and re-investigating Judith Butler's conceptual apparatus on the performativity of gender representations. The project might focus on one or more of the following questions (the list is all but exhaustive):

- the history of burlesque corporality
- burlesque and 19th century visual culture
- performative strategies in burlesque and/or neoburlesque performance practice
- neoburlesque as a subcultural 'style'
- burlesque and striptease as cultural phenomena
- a cultural analysis of the mainstreaming of neoburlesque performance
- burlesque as an artistic strategy in contemporary performance art (e.g. the work of Steven Cohen)
- (mass)media representations of (neo-)burlesque corporality

Candidates should have an MA in performance studies, cultural studies, media studies, cultural history or gender studies.