

The Honorary Graduand: Del LaGrace Volcano

Honorary Doctor of Arts

Del LaGrace Volcano (b. 1957, California, USA) is an internationally renowned genderqueer photographer, cultural producer, and activist whose practice has played a pivotal role in shaping queer visual culture from the mid 1970s to the present. Trained at the San Francisco Art Institute and holding an MA in Photographic Studies from the University of Derby (UK), Volcano employs photography as a critical and aesthetic tool to interrogate normative understandings of gender, sexuality, and the body.

Volcano's early work includes the exploration of investigated lesbian desire and the performance of masculinity, contributing decisively to the emergence of drag king culture in the 1990s. Their collaboration with Judith "Jack" Halberstam, *The Drag King Book* (Serpent's Tail, 1999), remains a foundational text in both queer studies and visual art. Combining theoretical insight with portraiture, the project documented drag kings across multiple cultural contexts, demonstrating the political and performative potential of gender parody. Earlier works such as *Love Bites* (1991) explored queer eroticism and sexual agency, while *Femmes of Power: Exploding Queer Femininities* (2008, with Prof Ulrika Dahl) expanded representations of queer femininity, emphasising its creativity, multiplicity, and resistance to normative constraint.

As an intersex person, Volcano's lived experience informs the conceptual and political dimensions of their later practice. Projects such as *INTERme** (2011–ongoing)* and *VISIBLY INTERSEX* (2018–ongoing) centre intersex embodiment, aging, and self-representation, combining personal narrative with collective activism. These works challenge the medicalisation and erasure of intersex lives, offering instead a visual archive of resilience, dignity, and visibility. Through portraiture and performance, Volcano constructs a powerful counter-narrative that situates intersex experience within broader discourses of queer temporality, corporeality, and human rights.

Volcano's work has been exhibited extensively in major institutions including Tate Britain and the Victoria and Albert Museum (London), Schwules Museum, Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), The Leslie Lohman Lesbian & Gay Museum (USA) and the Tampere Art Museum (Finland). Their photographs and writings circulate widely across academic, activist, and community contexts, contributing to feminist, queer, and trans scholarship while influencing successive generations of artists and thinkers.

Now based in Sweden, Volcano continues to write, lecture, and produce new work. Their ongoing research and practice address the intersections of queer embodiment, intersex identity, temporality, and kinship. As a co-parent, known as "MaPa," Volcano extends their political and artistic commitments into the domain of radical parenting, exploring alternative forms of care and kinship beyond heteronormative and binary frameworks.

Across five decades of sustained creative and intellectual production, Del LaGrace Volcano has profoundly expanded the visual, theoretical, and cultural horizons of gender and sexuality. Their body of work exemplifies the power of art as critical inquiry and as social intervention, transforming photography into a site of knowledge, activism, and aesthetic pleasure. Volcano's enduring

contribution lies in making visible the multiplicity of human embodiment and in reimagining the possibilities of living beyond the binary.