

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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## TIIA KASURINEN:

### The friction between the internet and real life inspires me

The internet and social media have always fascinated **Tiia Kasurinen**. “Since I was 11 years old, I’ve been active on almost all social media channels.”

Kasurinen graduated from Stockholm University of the Arts with a degree in dance art in 2017.

When studying in Sweden, she discovered an interest in drag culture. “Being familiar with gender studies, I found it frustrating that, as a woman, I couldn’t be a drag queen,” she explains. “I started watching YouTube tutorials and practising, and ultimately made my drag debut in *Vulva T* (2016).”

She found the experience of performing in drag simultaneously unsettling and empowering. “It allowed me to examine identity-related transformations, something that nowadays is a pretty hot topic,” she smiles.

For her piece *I’m not entirely here (cybersad)* (2020), Tiia Kasurinen spends at least three hours getting ready. The make-up process entails around 50 different stages, including applying face lift tape. What’s more, the dance artist has also used foam to create exaggerated shapes to attach to her body – also using instructions found in YouTube tutorials.

At the beginning of the process for creating *I’m not entirely here (cybersad)*, Kasurinen collected a number of images from Instagram. “The almost cyborg-esque presence of performative, hyperfeminine people on social media, and the poses, body shapes and ways of moving and posing you see over and over again in photos fascinate me.”

Kasurinen explores the contradictory nature of how lonely these big social media stars often are. No one knows what is happening behind the scenes or how it feels for those in front of the camera. “Sometimes reality peaks out from behind the photos, allowing the viewer to sense the real feelings and sadness.”

When she brings the made-up, almost cyborg-like character to life in front of an audience in *I’m not entirely here (cybersad)*, the situation becomes more human and vulnerable. “My aim is not to criticise, but rather to present a kind of image of this particular period in society.”

In her short film *Live Stream* (2021), Kasurinen continues exploring loneliness and sinking her teeth into the culture of voyeurism, reality and YouTube.

