

I am that I am - a deconstruction

Prue Hazelgrove

I am that I am is a series of collages and tintypes attempting to transform harm into healing through representation and reclamation.

This work physically and philosophically deconstructs evangelical messaging around sexuality, gender and purity by recontextualising Christian self-help book clippings in collage form. The act of cutting up these texts disarms their sense of authority and mirrors the selective use of scripture as an instrument of control.

The accompanying portraits use the tintype's unique ability to reveal something more in an individual than what can be seen by our eyes; something physical, raw and honest. The longstanding use of the collodion process as a medium of documentation and representation forms resistance to a history of erasure and censorship of queer individuals.

I am that I am embodies a process of deconstruction, reclamation and healing, enabling me to claim the right to exist as I am. I hope with this work to promote discussion, acceptance and mutual care, and to create a space where people can feel seen and validated.

- Prue Hazelgrove

Ultra Visible by Emma Batchelor

I am that I am.

A person.

I have a body, beliefs.

Beliefs about that body. How it can be and what it can do.

I also have beliefs that are inherited.

They have been passed on over time, mutating and updating, until they have reached me.

Seeped into me.

Refreshingly biblical.¹

¹ Excerpt from 'Boy meets girl' by Joshua Harris

I am that I am.

Aren't I?

I want to be like everyone else, and be into what everyone else is into.²

So I am waiting.

Tender, pure, untouched.

Waiting for the right feeling. A correct feeling.

'Til death do us part

I'll mean it with all of my heart

Now and always, faithful to you.³

I will be what I am supposed to.

I am that I am.

Ashamed.

I am pure but also impure.

My inner world is vibrant, abundant.

It betrays me.

When someone says they are gay, or for that matter, lesbian or bisexual, they normally mean, as well as being attracted to someone of the same gender, their sexual preference is one of the fundamental ways they see themselves.⁴

How do I see myself? What is visible, what is hidden.

I am questioning.

I might not be a girl. I might not be a boy.

I am other.

Sex and gender aren't the same thing.

² Excerpt from 'Is god anti-gay?' by Sam Albury

³ Excerpt from the lyrics of 'Waiting for you' by Rebecca St James

⁴ Excerpt from 'Is god anti-gay?' by Sam Albury

I am that I am.

I am nothing.

I have no intrinsic worth.

Repentance means turning around, to change course.⁵

I have been trying to steer this body, my vessel.

But it always comes back to this.

A difference. A wrongness.

The quickening of my heart, the rock in my stomach.

An inevitability.

I know how I must go on.

I am that I am.

Deconstructed.

Unfurling, reforming, I am rendered in light.

You are a whole person as an individual.⁶

I am whole. Wholly correct.

I have unearthed what once was inside.

I will take up space.

I exist.

I am that I am.

Ultra visible.

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Emma Batchelor is a queer writer and author from Canberra. From 2016-2019 she edited and wrote for online publication Leiden, and in 2017 published 'Building a Conscious Wardrobe (and other fun things)' a book championing conscious consumerism. In May, 2021 her first novel 'Now that I see you' won the Australian/Vogel Literary Award. As a dancer, Emma has performed for QL2 in both regional and international tours as well as for brother, choreographer James Batchelor. Emma is currently the Chair of ACT Writers and an ambassador for the ACT Chief Minister's Reading Challenge.

⁵ Excerpt from 'Is god anti-gay?' by Sam Albury

⁶ Excerpt from 'Sex and the Single Soul' by Jack Hayford

1	Prue Hazelgrove, Self Portrait- She, They – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800
2	Prue Hazelgrove, Too much Skin- I am that I am, 2022, paper, photo and text collage, oak frame, 500 x 415mm, .	\$1200
3	Prue Hazelgrove, God’s plan for the complete training of young women- I am that I am, 2022, paper, photo and text collage, oak frame, 500 x 415mm.	\$1200
4	Prue Hazelgrove, It is right for such sins to weigh heavily on our hearts, 2022, paper, photo and text collage, oak frame, 500 x 415mm.	\$1200
5	Prue Hazelgrove, Dani- She, They – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800
6	Prue Hazelgrove, Cayla- She, Her – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800
7	Prue Hazelgrove, Everything they can dream of- except feminine or womanly, 2022, paper, photo and text collage, oak frame, 500 x 415mm.	\$1200
8	Prue Hazelgrove, Grace- She, Her – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800
9	Prue Hazelgrove, Florence- She, Her – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800
10	Prue Hazelgrove, Ella- She, Her – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800
11	Prue Hazelgrove, According to God’s design - I am that I am,, 2022, paper, photo and text collage, oak frame, 500 x 415mm.	\$1200
12	Prue Hazelgrove, Is God anti-gay? - I am that I am, 2022, paper, photo and text collage, oak frame, 500 x 415mm.	\$1200
13	Prue Hazelgrove, Kate- She, They – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800
14	Prue Hazelgrove, Just a couple of good buds – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800
15	Prue Hazelgrove, Beth - They, Them – I am that I am, 2022, Tintype, 202 x 254mm.	\$800

About | Prue Hazelgrove

Prue Hazelgrove is a Canberra region artist and musician. Hazelgrove specialises in the 19th century ‘wet plate’ photographic process: Collodion. The Collodion process, one of the first photographic processes, fixes images to glass and metal.

The collodion process is sensitive to UV and Blue light, parts of the spectrum that can be out of reach to the human eye. Hazelgrove values this medium for its unique ability transform an individual’s appearance and reveal an unseen side of their character.

As a person that identifies with LGBTQI+ community, who grew up within the evangelical church and purity culture, Hazelgrove seeks to use their artistic platform to encourage the audience to practice vulnerability and question our inherited beliefs and bias.