**Interview with Amie Vanité**

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Interviewer: Oh, eh, there isn't a lot of research on drag and drag artists and drag culture. Um, and if there is, it's more, there's more of an overarching question of like, what more can we learn about it? And so that's what my class and my instructor was wanting to do. And so, this is basically going to be about um your personal story, um, ideas that you have about drag, Um like how you define it. Um, what's the purpose of it, if there's any misconceptions, just like that. Um, but before we start, um, that picture that I sent you of your rights, um, for this interview, did you read that?

Amie Vanité: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any questions for me before we start?

Amie Vanité: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Awesome. Um, I guess my first question for you would be, um, when did you first hear about drag or, um, what was your initial reaction to it?

Amie Vanité: Um, my first encounter with it. I mean, I don't know, uh, when I realized what it was like for real. Um, I was, I guess, I don't know, maybe like 15, 16 what I, when I understood like that it was actually a thing. Um, as I had been dressing up in anybody's clothes that I could get my hands on.

Interviewer: Right

Amie Vanité: from what I was, you know, the age of three, maybe even younger, I don't know, my grandmother and introduced me to The Wizard of Oz and uh, that was kind of the end of it.

Interviewer: Oh Wow. Okay.

Amie Vanité: And my, and her cousin, her, uh, her, my grandmother's cousin introduced me to The Nutcracker. So, uh, yeah, I was bouncing back and forth playing either Dorothy or Clara, um, all the time growing up until my you know dad nixed that.

Interviewer: Wow. Okay.

Amie Vanité: Uh, but, um, I don't, like I got in, I got involved in it, um, through being involved in, um, theater. Like all my, my life I came from very artistic families.

Interviewer: Sure.

Amie Vanité: Uh, not so much like my mom and dad, but like my mom's side of the family is very artsy and there are members of my dad's side of the family. You are also very artsy. And artsy as in like all forms of art, whether it's visual or musical or the theatrical what have you.

Interviewer: Oh Wow. That's awesome.

Amie Vanité: So yeah, I've had very, you know, creative background,

Interviewer: You have had a lot of influences in your life.

Amie Vanité: influencing that. Yes. My grandmother and grandfather, my mom's parents, um, both were avid singers. Um, my grandfather was in a band, uh, my grandmother, Oh, they love to dance. They were very great, wonderful, fantastic dancers.

Interviewer: Wow. That's awesome. Well that's great to hear. But would that be-

Amie Vanité: Oh yeah, no.

Interviewer: continue. You can continue

Amie Vanité: So, I was trying to get back to initial question of, uh, yeah, I don't know. Um, I, I don't, I guess learned about it from, I don't remember if it was, I guess it had to have been The Birdcage. Okay. I would've seen The Birdcage before I saw anything else.

Interviewer: And that was a, that was a movie, right, or?

Amie Vanité: I mean, aside from Mrs. Doubtfire.

Interviewer: Right. Okay.

Amie Vanité: Well, yeah, I definitely saw Mrs. Doubtfire before I saw The Birdcage.

Interviewer: That was a great movie.

Amie Vanité: Um, either way, you know, like I, I didn't think anything of it really. I don't know. But then I, you know, uh, friends who could do makeup zen it, I was like, well, I look pretty good and then I learned that people do this and perform and make money and I was like, get the fuck out of here. So.

Interviewer: So, you just went off the wind and did it

Amie Vanité: as, yeah, as soon as I was like, you know, 18 I, you know, figured out how to get into places to start performing and it just kind of took off from there.

Interviewer: Sure. Okay. Uh, when did you start performing? Like 18, like

Amie Vanité: I was, I was 18.

Interviewer: Okay.

Amie Vanité: I was 18 um.

Interviewer: Um, could you tell me a little bit about it, your first experience? Like what was it like? Did you have any expectations of it take?

Amie Vanité: It was, it was kind of a last-minute thing. Uh, friends of mine were getting dressed up to go to uh a birthday party and there were a whole bunch of drag queens performing.

Interviewer: Sure.

Amie Vanité: And I got there, and they were like, hey room. Some of our people didn't show up. You want to be in the show? And I was like, uh, sure. I guess. Um, so that's, it's just kind of happened. Um, but I performed a song called Bring on the Men from Jekyll and Hyde.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. That's a great play.

Amie Vanité: I was at some bar like way up, in the Poconos somewhere. Not that you're from around here. I don't know if you know where the Poconos is.

Interviewer: Uh, not, not quite sure,

Amie Vanité: but it's mountainous region in northern eastern uh PA.

Interviewer: Okay.

Amie Vanité: Like New York border

Interviewer: New York. Okay. Yeah, no, that gives me a better idea up.

Amie Vanité: Yeah, way up there. It was like a three-hour drive.

Interviewer: Did your, um, did like any family or friends or other loved ones come with you to that first performance or?

Amie Vanité: no, it was just, it was just the friends I was with that we were going up there. Um, my one friend was DJing this show itself and then, uh, there was a friend of mine was in the show and then other people didn't show up and they were like, oh, this person, is here and all ready to go. Let's just throw them in the show. So, I was in the show and then the friend that I was with that was performing got very upset because I was better than they were and made more tips. Drama ensued.

Interviewer: Well, you got to do what you gotta do

Amie Vanité: As it always does but uh

Interviewer: So you would say that you would say that like your family and friends and other loved ones, they like received you as uh becoming a drag artists and they were like accepting of that, or did you have a little bit of trouble at first?

Amie Vanité: Um, my dad was not the most, uh, thrilled person in any circum.. Like it was just a rough childhood,

Interviewer: right.

Amie Vanité: Um, with the way he thought and felt and everything else. So, um, he since my, his parents passed away… years apart from each other. Um, my mom's parents, uh, my grandmother is my mom's mom who just passed away.

Interviewer: Right.

Amie Vanité: And my grandfather, my dad, my mom's dad, uh, passed away in July. So, it hasn't even been a year yet. Like we're, I'm still grieving about that.

Interviewer: Oh that is a lot of.

Amie Vanité: Then one of my grandmothers, my grandmother's brother died heart and my heart, you know, my mom and uh, aunts and uncles, their, their uncle. So, my great uncle, um,

Interviewer: Wow

Amie Vanité: it's been, it's just been like Bam, Bam, Bam.

Interviewer: Yeah

Amie Vanité: And my dad recently had like, since, since my grandfather died and now that that Baba just passed… he's been different like for a while, and I don't know what's going on. Like it's, I don't know, he's, he sent me a text message, which I had to show a couple of weeks ago and he sent me a text message that said, break a leg with like lipstick. Never before. So, I don't know, like

Interviewer: it's all touch and go you would say,

Amie Vanité: yeah, it's touch and go. Yeah. But my, but he seems to be really coming around now,

Interviewer: That’s good.

Amie Vanité: Like other people, family members and stuff, there wasn't really any, any pushback or anything now. Like they kind of all had it figured out before I had it figured out. So, it was all cool.

Interviewer: Okay. Well I'm glad.

Amie Vanité: they, you know, constantly come and support. They're there, you know, my grandmother she got to see me perform, uh, the last time I performed because,

Interviewer: that was wonderful.

Amie Vanité: The last show I've had. And so, the last time I performed on a stage she was there.

Interviewer: Looking back at it, how like precious, precious of a moment that was like, that. That's something that you can always look back on and you're seeing her smile at you and you know, supporting you. So that's good. Um, yeah, I am curious. Your name is Amie Vanité or?

Amie Vanité: Vanité yes, Amie Vanité.

Interviewer: How did you come up with that name?

Amie Vanité: Um, well the old, uh, urban legend. What have you, of how you get your drag name? Um, is you take the first female pet and uh, the street that you lived on.

Interviewer: Oh okay

Amie Vanité: first street you lived on, uh, growing up. So,

Interviewer: oh wow,

Amie Vanité: I had a pet frog. Her name was Amy.

Interviewer: Okay.

Amie Vanité: I stuck with that and I didn't really have a last name because the street I lived on was Chestnut and that it's just the it sounded weird

Interviewer: Amie Chestnut

Amie Vanité: I mean, funny, but not like I'm much more of a class act that I am,

Interviewer: it didn't fit your personality.

Amie Vanité: even though I know I can be rough, you know, so, um,

Interviewer: yeah.

Amie Vanité: it just depends on my audience, you know, what am I doing today?

Interviewer: Yeah, exactly. Okay.

Amie Vanité: Um, I stuck with Amie and then a Vanité got added on from a like drag sister I'll say, cause it wasn't really like motherly and I had already been involved in drag like before we met. Um, I never really had a drag mother I’m kind of a self-made queen.

Interviewer: Oh, okay that's the best.

Amie Vanité: But uh, we, you know, like so the, the doing all sorts of thing, you know, shows and whatever together. Um, and then I got involved in an awful, awful abusive relationship. Then turned marriage, which good heavens, I don't even.

Interviewer: What made you want to do that

Amie Vanité: I was like going saying, oh, you know, when you, you don't know you're being abused until you’re too far in it and then you’re stuck and then you can't do anything about it.

Interviewer: Because you feel like you've put too much time into it. You don't want to waste it.

Amie Vanité: And maybe they'll change.

Interviewer: Yeah

Amie Vanité: It'd be maybe, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. I definitely understand.

Amie Vanité: Long story short, the, best friend you well, he you know, I dunno, he's a jerk. I tried to reach out to him after the fact that he said that I basically deserved to everything I got. So yeah, he can go to hell. but uhm You know, the reason we had the like whatever is because he was upset that I was in this relationship with somebody else and we were in a relationship together and it didn’t mean we had to stop being friends, but I guess he and a whole bunch of other people knew how shitty this person was and were trying to tell me and I like I was not hearing it until it was too late. So anyway, um,

Interviewer: Hey, lessons learned.

Amie Vanité: I then I used to have another. Yes, exactly. I used to have another last name. Um, so Vanité was my middle name for quite some time. Um, because the person I was, uh, with was involved in the drag scene didn't really… well started dabbling in drag. Later on, after he realized that he could upstage me

Interviewer: Right

Amie Vanité: Um by being incredibly obnoxious and then like, uh, which I don't know why people thought it was funny. Um, well, and it wasn't even like his own thing. He would just, he would imitate, uh, what's your face? I can't remember her name uh the actress who played uh, Fran Drescher’s, mother on The Nanny, if you're familiar with that show.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah, that's a little bit of…

Amie Vanité: it was,

Interviewer: I dunno.

Amie Vanité: That…Obnoxious nasal Jew, right. Not that I have anything, you know, to try it, but just like come up with your own character, like.

Interviewer: Yeah, some people can't do that, but

Amie Vanité: You're not smart enough to, so people thought it was hysterical, obviously.

Interviewer: Yeah. So how would you

Amie Vanité: Enough about that moron.

Interviewer: How would you characterize your drag then? You know, you were saying that he kind of took his show and um basically mimicked off to somebody else. What is, how would you characterize your drag, your drag style?

Amie Vanité: Um, I mean, not that I don't. I do impersonation very, very well.

Interviewer: would you say?

Amie Vanité: but it's, it's more of a, it's, it's a little bit more, classy than it is anything else. I mean, I'm a chameleon. I can adapt to whatever situation. Excuse me, situation. I, you know, um, need to be in for whatever audience I'm going to, I'm going to be performing for. Um, but I've always remained like, I don't know. Um,

Interviewer: like would you say like,

Amie Vanité: oh, I'm like old school, like I'm very old school. Uh, when it comes to like the art form, because I think

Interviewer: Somewhat of a glamour, vogue type of. Okay.

Amie Vanité: The theater, I mean, yeah, I guess so. I'm very, yeah, I'm, I'm, I'm very, I'm pretty. Fishy, hey call it today cause

Interviewer: okay. Yeah.

Amie Vanité: Um, I. but I like I do Judy Garland. I do a lot as Liza Manila, Céline Dion, um, Carol Burnett, Bette Midler like people who are mostly dead.

Interviewer: Sure.

Amie Vanité: They're not all dead,

Interviewer: but legends

Amie Vanité: has then, you know, I have friends. Yes, yes, exactly. Be the legends, the gay, a female without that they're gay. But like female gay icons, you know,

Interviewer: Yeah, I get what you mean

Amie Vanité: the people. Yeah.

Interviewer: So uhm how often do you perform or like where do you perform in Pennsylvania?

Amie Vanité: I have performed all over. Um, I am, I live in West Reading, um, which is a separate entity from the city of Reading. Uhm…and from this epicenter I have moved, I shouldn't say moved. I've performed, um, all up and down like the eastern part of PA and some like central Pa and I performed in Harrisburg. Uh, Lancaster.

Interviewer: Oh Wow.

Amie Vanité: um oh, all the way up to the Poconos, Allentown. Uh, like, so the, I've been, I've been all over. I'm working on Philly. I don't know, I don't know why I haven't performed in Philly yet. Like it's not that far away. And I know plenty of people who perform in Philly, so I don't know if people are just hesitant to bring me and do their shows because I'll steal their spotlight or, whatever, I don’t know what it is.

Interviewer: Well, I guess you'll have to see for yourself and just go to Philly and you know, strut your stuff.

Amie Vanité: I guess so. So, I mean they know who I am.

Interviewer: Yeah. Right.

Amie Vanité: I've got, and I understand because I also have a lot of things in the works and I'm sure there's a lot more like in the works going on for them down there in an area where there's just a lot more going on in general. So, I know what it's like to, uh, you know, be a performer and uh, have, you know, have, we do have stuff that doesn't link up me, and you’ve got to figure it out for another time, or you know, whatever so.

Interviewer: Yeah, I understand. But you know, you know, if it's your time, it's your time. If not, there are multiple other places that you can and I'm sure, right. You know, I'm sure somebody would be willing to have you, you know, like you

Amie Vanité: And considering all of the things that are going on in my life right now, like,

Interviewer: Yeah

Amie Vanité: My family. Like, I, I kind of need to stay home for the most part now because a lot changing,

Interviewer: Yeah, it’s definitely understandable

Amie Vanité: But it doesn't mean I can't travel for a night or a weekend.

Interviewer: Yeah definitely and you know performing and just take it because you need a breather sometimes. You know what I mean? And I guess possibly like, you know, getting ready for a performance that could be kind of therapeutic.

Amie Vanité: Oh yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: What, um, what actually goes into, um, your, I guess routine of getting ready for performing? Like, do you do any particular thing before performance or.

Amie Vanité: um, you know, uh, I at least like to start rehearsing whenever I'm going to be performing like two weeks before, you know, depending, I mean, if, I don't, if it's, if I'm learning completely new music that obviously I'm going to listen to it on repeat for like three months. Right. Um, oh, for crying out loud. Oh, one moment. I’m Sorry.

Amie Vanité: Talking to person on telephone\* Hello. Hello.

Amie Vanité: resuming interview\* Nobody was there. Ha. so Um, I'll pick my music. Um, you know, you got to figure out what's going on. That's typically about like two weeks to like a month.

Interviewer: Sure.

Amie Vanité: Uh, before a performance I figured out what I'm doing. Um, and then I typically start getting ready the night before a performance. I will, um, if I've grown any, you know, facial hair back or anything or arm hair, chest, hair or whatever, I'll get my clippers. And, you know, trim all that off. And, uh, sometimes I will, if I have to get up super early to start getting ready, um, cause it all, it typically all depends on what time my performance is, you know, during the day. If it's like a later, like show, like at nine o'clock, I typically won't start getting ready, um, until like three in the afternoon.

Interviewer: Yeah. that makes sense

Amie Vanité: Um, but if I need to be somewhere at like noon, then, you know, I don't want to have to wake up at six o'clock in the morning to shave and shower and do all of that stuff. So, I will, you know prep my shower and shave and whatever the night before, so all I have to do is just wake up and start putting myself together. Um,

Interviewer: yeah

Amie Vanité: But the make-up process, um, oh, and I do, and I, and I'll, I'll paint my nails the night before as well. Right. It's anything, if you, you know, if, if that is the least amount of things I prepped for that I, you know, this paint, I always paint my nails the night before. So then when the, uh, this is where there's a baby's butt. Uhm. The makeup process typically takes anywhere from like two to three hours depending on what I'm doing.

Interviewer: Oh wow

Amie Vanité: and then,

Interviewer: oh wow

Amie Vanité: yeah. Uh Huh.

Interviewer: that...

Amie Vanité: I, uh, I'll usually have a bite to eat after most of my face is on, before I put my lips, I always do my lips last.

Interviewer: See I never, I'm always wanting to put my lips first. I don't know why I do, and then I go out and I'm like, where'd the lipstick go? But I guess you could say that I am not very good with, putting makeup on. So maybe that's why my makeup is like six months old and still like half full, with, like, foundation. So, that's just, I guess, I guess that's my biggest challenge. But, uh, what would be your biggest challenge? Um, in doing drag or being a drag artist? Um, is it in your performing, is it an, um, you know, other people's views of you? Like what would it be?

Amie Vanité: uhm think the most difficult thing I have encountered is dealing with people and their drama.

Interviewer: Okay.

Amie Vanité: Like I come from, you know, I, you see, I come from a theatrical background.

Interviewer: right

Amie Vanité: Like I said, I, I get the theater, I've been doing theater and then I got involved in drag, which is also very theatrical, but drag, you know, is completely different for everyone, but what drag is for me isn't what it sir it is. It really doesn't come close to, uh, when I, you know what I perceive as, um, other people's primary interest in, you know, doing drag or uh, watching it or being involved. Like it's the, you know, the super cattiness, the over the top, just dramatic whatever and that I can't, I can't, I just can't with it. I can't, I'm here to do a job that I enjoy and if you are going to rain on my parade while I'm doing it and it sucks all the fun right out. Like I am not here. I don't care how big the crown is. I don't care how big mine is like that. It's not why I'm here. Like I'm here because I'm talented and I enjoy performing and people enjoy watching me perform.

Interviewer: So, like is this coming from other artists or is this coming from people like in general?

Amie Vanité: Um, it's a combination of, you know, what I've seen on TV and um, people I've met in person and, or worked with closely in my area. I used to have a monthly show, um, that some people thought they could help with, but really their whole agenda was to bring my show into their venue, learn everything about it, and then get rid of me and steal all of my performers and bad mouth, like nonstop. It was, I've been

Interviewer: That is really unfortunate

Amie Vanité: and you know, uh, a lot of it had to do with the person that I was married to. Um, because nobody liked him and you know, then vicariously I must be an awful, horrible human being as well. So, I just got thrown under the bus and um, and these people like then, then, you know, they find that we break up, “Oh, we're so happy for you. He was some horrible, let's work together again.” And I'm like, "I don't trust you people as far as I can throw you,” you know?

Interviewer: Yeah

Amie Vanité: but I'll give it a go. You're reaching out a hand or whatever and then I, you know, start working with them again and it's the same shit. And I'm like, get, no, I'm done.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Amie Vanité: You know, you don't have the right to,

Interviewer: What do you think causes that?

Amie Vanité: What do I think?

Interviewer: What do you think causes people to, um, basically treat you like that? Like what are the

Amie Vanité: I, you know, I don't know. I look back on things and it seems like the majority of my problem is people want what I have, and know that I am such a kind-hearted person that I, I trust what not that I. Yes. That is what it was. I trust people too easily. Well, at least I used to. I don't so much anymore. Um

Interviewer: well at least you know you have really great stuff,

Amie Vanité: they put on this. Yeah. Um, you know, they put on this, let's be friends and let's work together and lets you do all this and it's just a ploy to get what I have and leave me with nothing.

Interviewer: yeah.

Amie Vanité: Like they just, I don't know. I'm easy prey for narcissistic abusers.

Interviewer: Well don't say that because then you're, you know, opening up into the universe for that to come back into your life.

Amie Vanité: Yeah. I know. So, it's not going to, I won’t let it. I know all the signs now.

Interviewer: Well, um, if that's the case, you know, taking the good and the bad, um, in drag and like in your experiences, how has it like impacted, how has it impacted you or your confidence as a person? Um, or when you're out of drag?

Amie Vanité: Um. I don't know. Like, I don't really put on like, my, Amie isn't really any different from Christopher.

Interviewer: Right.

Amie Vanité: Like what. It's just makeup and costume. Like I, I generally tend to, you know, it's the same personality that I always have.

Interviewer: Right.

Amie Vanité: Um, I mean, I can definitely turn it on if I need to or uhm if you're fine if I want to. But

Interviewer: is it basically just like, because you guys, because Amie and Christopher are the same person, um, it's, it's kind of like second nature for you or is it more of like a big, like light switch that you turn on and boom, like you can totally see a difference?

Amie Vanité: No, no, no, there's, it's not like a light switch or anything. uh It's, I don't know, like I, I've seen, I've seen a lot of people, um, you know, completely change persona at once. The drag goes on.

Interviewer: Right.

Amie Vanité: And then I've seen other people that I've worked closely with who put it all on and they're just like, Me, is still the same personality is still the same person.

Interviewer: Right

Amie Vanité: No, maybe, maybe, maybe a little, a little extra over the top for magic effect since we're onstage but, or on a microphone or what have you. But yeah. Um, so I don't, my confidence is, but I'm, I'm, I'm like the epitome of, Oh, how do I, how do I put it? Um, I'm like, I'm like, I'm an introverted extrovert.

Interviewer: okay Yeah. I'm the same way I know what you mean.

Amie Vanité: Like, I, you know, I, I would entertain what they want, you know, but at the same time I have, I'm definitely that person who was sitting like in a corner and just people watching, minding their own business.

Interviewer: yep

Amie Vanité: And I think a lot of that has to do with how exhausted being on is when I have to be on like, so what? I'm not off, I don't need to be. So, I'm not like, I can just sit back and relax and not have to worry about being on.

Interviewer: So, with you saying, um, so obviously it's the same personality, but you have Christopher and you have Amie. So, um, in terms of like identity, um, or like sexuality, what do you identify with?

Amie Vanité: Oh, I'm uh,

Interviewer: like pronouns.

Amie Vanité: I definitely prefer preferred. Christopher, he him his pronouns. Um, cisgender. Okay. Definitely. Um, but uh, yeah, I, you know, and that, and that's another thing that like a lot of people don't get. Like because, and when drag queens were making their own pages for, uh, um, the other drag character,

Interviewer: Right.

Amie Vanité: Is to promote what they were doing. Now a lot of drag queens these days don't do that.

Interviewer: Right

Amie Vanité: uhm They just have one page and you know, they use their, their real name and what flux of people coming after me trying to get with Amie. And it's like, hm, oh that is a lot of makeup and a lot of, uh, shaping garments that are not natural for my body.

Interviewer: Right. ok

Amie Vanité: And it just, you know, people, it's annoying that I have to yell const-like, not that I have to, but you know, I just, I let me to let people like you, no, no, no, leave me alone. Like, I'm not a rude person. I'm not going to like block you or something, you know, if you're not giving me a reason, like it's, you know, I don't, but I do get it. I get an influx of people who don't understand that I'm not a transgendered individual. Um, not that I'm affected by that, but, um,

Interviewer: but do you want people to identify you with who you identify with or what you identify with?

Amie Vanité: Exactly. Like I'm in drag all… often enough that if I am in some sort of romantic situation, which isn't a thing anymore with the amount of stuff I'm going through in my brain, um, you know, I, if, if that were to happen, I would prefer to feel and look like a boy. Cause that's what I, I'm not, uh,

Interviewer: you're not what, I'm sorry.

Amie Vanité: Nothing. I was going on another tangent. You were saying.

Interviewer: It's okay. Um, so would that being said, like do you think drag is, um, somewhat sexual in a way? Like do people like sexualize you or?

Amie Vanité: Oh, I think people absolutely do, which is why there is this influx of craziness with the drag queen story hour stuff. Cause I just started like that up in my area here. That's the picture of me and the big pink hat and my grandmother and the other pictures of pineapple and stuff. Um, I started doing the story hour things and initially it was all fine and then some crazy uh, fundamentalist Christian. I don't know. They show up with bagpipes and like crusade flags. Um, and she's screaming at these parents and children about how horrible they are for going. And you know, it's all the peop-, all sorts of nonsense. I don't know where they come up with this stuff. Hashtag fake news. I'm like, it's ridiculous. The amount. Like, I don't, that they think, I don't even, I don't even understand how they could possibly think the things that they think are going on in there. I'm in a, I'm in a library with children and their parents and other members of law enforcement because your dumb ass just had to show up and started screaming at children like, Oh, is your, you know, it's, it's sexualizing them and it's, it's teaching them that abhorrent behavior is acceptable and

Interviewer: yeah. But all you're doing is like reading a book.

Amie Vanité: Yeah, exactly. I, uh, I sing a couple songs and read a couple stories about, you know, the general principle in, in, in all of the stories that I read are, um, is like, is to be nice to each other, treat others how you want to be treated. Uh, it's okay to feel different because no one is the same. Even though we're, um, made up of the same stuff. Like we, while we are all the same, we are all unique individuals and we should respect and treat each other as such because somebody else is doing their life. As long as it's not hurting themselves or anybody else shouldn't concern you, it doesn't affect you at all. So live and let live.

Interviewer: I definitely agree with that. And so, you mentioned like religion with that aspect. So I'm kinda curious as to how, um, like social identities have like impacted your experience of drag or like vice versa, so like, um, social identities such, um, I guess gender, race, age, class, um, sexuality, disability, geography, like, um, or the interaction of, um, some of these social identities, um, how they impacted like your experience of drag or, and, or, um, your experience of your social identity that you associate with?

Amie Vanité: Um, well, I grew up in you know, both sides of my family is very Catholic. I went to Catholic school, I went to a Catholic high school. Uh, they eventually kicked me out and then I went to public school, uh, where I had no problems at all. Um, because people accepted me for who I was. I didn't tolerate bullshit. They know. They literally, they did. They, uh, the principal nun at the Catholic high school, uh, she figured out, you know, ways to get rid because that's, they can do that. They’re a private institution, you pay to go there and if they don't want you there, they don't need your money. They can get rid of you. Yeah. So that's what they did. Um, but I would say like an eve, but even so like there are, or a Catholic people who absolutely suck and there are Catholic people in my time, you know, on this earth being a Catholic because you like you really can’t get rid of it once they have you unless you convert to another religion which I am not planning on doing

Interviewer: So, you would associate with Catholicism as well?

Amie Vanité: Not so much. I mean there, there have been certain people, you know, that have definitely sucked, but you know, most of, most of the Catholics that I know don't treat me any different, um, at all. Uh, and I really haven't met any people who, uh, have given me a hard time with anything. Like I've had, you know, like snickers and stuff from kids in high school or whatever. Um, but I don't know. I don't know. There's just, I don't know. I don't know what it is. I don't know if I had just hang around with the right kind of people or if I just look like I'm not somebody people should fuck around with. I dunno. Like I don't get a lot of flak from anyone really, uh, minus crazy, uh, crazy religious fanatics who are not, not so much Catholics, but like all the other crazy bumps. I don't know. I like, there's just, there's just crazy people out there who read all sorts of wrong info, I had some protestor come up to me and one of my story hours to use, you know, had to let me know that there were people there who didn't support what I was doing and needed to be there to pray over everyone, uh, to shield them, uh, lies in the evil and that they're very sorry for whatever happened to me in my life to cause me to be this way. And they hope one day I'll find my true calling. I'm like, are you for real? Like, where, where? Who beamed you down?

Interviewer: What do you, what do you think the purpose of drag is then, like for you or for anybody out there doing drag? Well,

Amie Vanité: it's, it's completely changed. Um, I come from the, the theatrical background of drag where, you know, um, its origins where, you know, back before the time of Shakespeare and through the time of Shakespeare when women weren't allowed to be on stage, so men had to play those characters, you know, on stage. Um, so drag for me comes, uh, it's just that it's, it's, you know, impersonating female, um, you know, musically or, uh, the, you know, whatever I'm doing, I'm in. It's some form of feeder, whether it's, you know, straight play or musical or regular drag show, you know, what have you, or the story hour than, you know, yada yada.

Interviewer: But that's how you would define it, right?

Amie Vanité: but, that’s how I define it for me, it's something, it's a very theatrical art form for me. Um, which is, you know, its original intent, I guess. Uh, but when the civil rights stuff started happening in the 60s and the Stonewall riots and everything and all that. Um, that's when that's when drag queens like kind of branched off and became activists for change, uh, drag artists have become, forerunners for fundraisers and benefits, the causes and what not. Um, uh, so why all I, which I gave that I identify with you with all that stuff as well. I have performed and organized many benefits and fundraisers. Um, so that's, you know, that's where I come from with it. It's, it's definitely something theatrical that I love to do as a performer. Um, but I'm also really grateful that while I do this stuff, it's also a way for me to sometimes give back to the community or, um, you know, with the story hour, like there was somebody there, I ran into uh, them after like the fact with all of these crazy protestors at my last one. And they were like, so one of I ran into somebody that was like, um, he was like, I don't understand. I don't understand what people have with this. Like what's wrong and this person, and that I was talking to was telling me that the, you know, the person they ran into separate undercover guy that was there is like, you know, totally a part of that crowd, this narrow minded one track. This is, you know, from the devil, why would you do what you know? And he, this, this guy is totally changed his mind. He was there, he saw what I did, and he was, he thought it was the greatest thing ever. Like, so that's, you know, it's, it's about, it's about changing minds. It's about opening eyes. It's about spreading awareness and you know, giving back. And having a good time and entertaining people all under, you know, it's, that's kind of where I'm at with,

Interviewer: Okay, that's awesome.

Amie Vanité: You know, I'm in it because I love performing, which is why I got a new one. But there's so much more to it, you know, that I've learned over the years. Um, so much good. You know, like you, because you don't get to see a lot of the good or hear about a lot of the good because it's muffled by drama or scandal or god knows what else, so.

Interviewer: Would you say that, um, like RuPaul's drag race, is that a good depiction of what drag artist is or do you disagree with? Um,

Amie Vanité: No, not at all. I've, I've met RuPaul.

Interviewer: Oh, you have?

Amie Vanité: Uh, not that she would ever remember who I, she didn’t stay around long enough to… [recording briefly cuts out] when I just started out, uh, you know, discovering what drag was, and I just seen, uh, you know, I just, I realized who she was cause I was, was in To Wong Foo and uh, uh, uh, I, I don't know, I don't think YouTube was a thing yet, but I saw, I dunno. I, yeah, I figured out who she was and um, or who he was I should say. And uh, well he, I don't know, Ru was all done up. Um, it was at, um, uh, Pride in New York, um, she was all done up. And I like there she was, and I was, you know, star struck as a budding aspiring drag queen, fresh out of high school. And um, I was like, uh, I said, you know, I was like, oh my goodness, it's so nice to meet you. Um, I'm just starting out. Do you have any advice for, you know, there's something, you know, like that, like, you know, I'm just starting out, have any tips, so I don't know what I said. And she gave me that like once over look up and down, like I wasn't even in drag, so I don't understand, like gave me the up and down, look, rolled their eyes, turned around and just walked away.

Interviewer: Oh No.

Amie Vanité: Like how can you like, how can you even do that to somebody? Like I don't care who you think you are. Yeah, that's rude. Especially do which like still technically kid, like and now you're all like, now, now you have a TV show and you're all about, oh, drag con and Love, all this stuff for kids and blah blah blah. And it's like you're a total fake. You are such a fake. I can't deal with it. Like it's ridiculous. It really, it does, it, it, it irks me that there are people who I, and it's not just me. I have many friends who have actually worked with Ru and same thing, same thing, you know, just if that camera isn’t rolling, nothing that comes out of your mouth matters. Domo, it's my time.

Interviewer: Well, I'm sorry that you had like a bad experience with, um, RuPaul um, if, if there, if there was like that, like you could change about like the drag scene or like the drag community or drag like in general, um, what would it be and why? Like taking, taking that experience and you know, what, what would you change?

Amie Vanité: I would, I would change this, this attitude of, you know, it's, it's just ego. I don't know what it is. It's this, I'm the end all be all like we are all different and we all bring our own unique things to this because that's what drag is, drag is different for everyone,

Interviewer: Right.

Amie Vanité: I, the reason I do drag is certainly not the reason that you do drag or the reason that you over there, do drag, like we're all in this for something different or are drawn to it for different reasons and we should like, it's, it's, it all goes back to my story hour stuff. Treat people nicely. Like we're all here working together in the same show. It'd be why, why are we at each other at each other's throats? Like, not that I'm ever at someone's throat, but I've definitely had people at mine and I'm always the last to figure out why. It's usually because somebody over here said something about this, said something about that because you said, and it's like, oh my god, how old are we and no that is not what I said.

Interviewer: Yeah,

Amie Vanité: Cause you got whisper down the alley.

Interviewer: It's like playing telephone. So, if you, if you could

Amie Vanité: yup.

Interviewer: You know, if somebody were to come up to you and ask you, um, if you had any tips on being a drag, being a drag artist or learning about drag or the culture, what would you tell them?

Amie Vanité: Oh boy. I would say honey, don’t get involved with me. No, no. I have, I have many little people under my, you know, that call me mother, which is adorable and gross at the same time, but I do not feel or look old enough to be anyone's mother. Um, but uh, so I used to do, um, I used to, I would love to get it back up and running. I used to do a benefit show every year for, um, an LGBT youth group here in Reading. And because, you know, people suck and of ruined it for everybody. So, I, we, um, I would go in there and, uh, like paint my face while they watched and talk about, you know, the history of drag and they answered their questions whenever they had. It's, you know, be you, find, you know, your talent or whatever it is that inspires you to want to do this and, and hone in on it, you know?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Amie Vanité: Um, nobody don't, you know, listen to people take advice, but don't let anybody tell you what to do. You know, you have to make it your own.

Interviewer: I definitely agree with you there. Yeah. Well, I, that was my last question for you. Um, I hope this hour was as entertaining for you as it was for me and even more than entertaining educational, and I'm just kind of inspiring and you know, with your interview, I'm hoping that it can educate others and, um, get a little like peek on your life and your perspective on drag. And you know, some of the experiences that you've had and, uh, with family, other outsiders, um, with your experiences and performing. And with those last questions that I asked you, just get a little idea about what drag is about and you know, the purpose of it. And obviously there are a lot of purposes and perspectives that people take on drag. Um, but I definitely enjoyed yours. Thanks.

Amie Vanité: Yeah, no problem.