

# BOUNDLESSNESS: AN ANALYSIS OF “HYPERHUMAN” MULTIMEDIA ARTIST AND PERFORMER, ARCA

by CÁMO Cemi’no (she/they)

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*“I do see a lot of possibility for the creation of a self that isn’t a photograph, that can change over time,’ she said. ‘I think the Latinx community is that. It’s going to be shape-shifting ever after and forever, hopefully in the same way that queerness is.” ~Arca*

The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is celebrating Pride Month this year by highlighting the contemporary heroes of both the LGBTQ+ movement and anti-sexual violence movement. NJCASA’s Community Engagement Specialist, CÁMO Cemi’no, shares an analysis of Trans-Venezuelan artist Arca. CÁMO grounds us in our understanding of what it means to celebrate pride month and how important it is to think critically about this to gain a deeper perspective on how folks in the movement are also changing the way we view the world around us. This blog is not only applicable to LGBTQ+ folx but to every individual involved in social justice.

Arca, labeled a “Hyperhuman” by electronic artist Björk, is a Trans-Venezuelan multimedia artist and performer who “desires to denaturalize and interrogate all kinds of boundaries: of the physical body, of immigrant identity, of biological conceptions of gender.” Rendered in part by blurring the line between flesh and technology, she is known for her collaborations with SOPHIE, Kanye West, Rosalia, Björk, and Fredrick Heyman.

Arca’s early life takes place in Venezuela. At three, her father got a job in New York City, and she had to move there until she was nine. Returning to Venezuela was difficult, as her childhood memories and references distanced her from her peers:

*“As a kid, I spent a lot of my mental energy hiding who I was and attempting to fit in,’ [s]he says of her childhood in Venezuela, a country where, as [s]he puts it ‘if I dressed the way I do here I’d be in physical danger..And as an adult, I spend a lot of energy in my work making sure that I celebrate the things I was once hiding.” ~Arca (The Guardian)*

The antiracist and anti-oppression lens that NJCASA holds as a value cannot come to fruition if we do not bring visibility and care to communities within the margins of the margins. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Arca touches upon the forms of violence, especially sexual violence, that black and brown trans women endure not only in the U.S. but globally. Arca frames her art in discovery, liberation, and healing. She is an inspiration to us to redirect our pain and suffering, create art, and share that art with the community to inspire more healing.

Feeling like an outcast, she turned to gaming and electronic music as a creative outlet. She got accepted to New York University (NYU) and moved back to New York City. However, she was still facing internal struggles regarding her gender and sexuality. As she explained it, "When I moved to New York at age 17, I was very repressed. There were a lot of colors that I was muting internally." Throughout her music career, and especially after publishing her self-titled album in 2017, she evolved into the multi-dimensional, transnational, luminary artist that she is today:

"For me, it's important not to be a snapshot of one of my backgrounds, but to be able to map all of those things," she said. "To let those differences be. And not feel ashamed of them." ~Arca (NYT)

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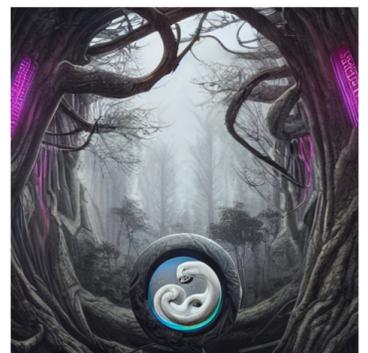
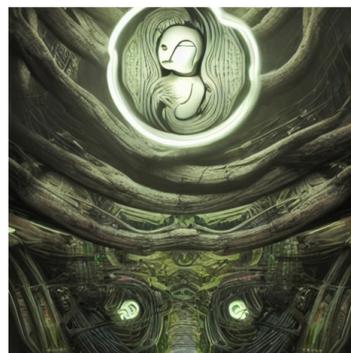
"Fictional worlds allow us to look the truth of our world in the eye more directly, because they carry the implication of being far from our world...Out of all the stories that we write and we choose to share as world builders, as storytellers, for me, the ones that are most exciting are the ones that point to a recognition of a boundary...rather than a video game being seen as an escape, it's actually a portal that allows for conversations that are too sensitive, tender and scary to have without the removal that technology allows." ~Arca (Glamcult)

Reflecting on Arca, her words, and her art, I wish to continue exploring my interpretation of posthumanism and its relation to transness, specifically my transness. My personal mission is to "re-imagine and challenge 'the self' via art." It is important to me that my art is constantly juxtaposed with philosophical thought and political theory, so that it may act as a catalyst for raising human social consciousness. Trans and nonbinary people question their existence as much if not more than the greatest philosophers known to mankind. These "hyperhumans" are the future that needs to be nourished, educated, loved, and protected. We bring a worldview that may very well be the solution to our society's hypercomplex, multi-dimensional, intersectional problems. As Arca notes,

“For me, it’s possible that a woman has a penis...in the same way that it’s possible that a man has a vagina. Separate the genitals. That’s my favourite part: thinking of identity as a place of philosophy rather than politics. I think sometimes conversations about gender are specifically complicated, because maybe they are, in a good way, a dead end.” ~Arca (*Glamcult*)

I ask myself the question: What would a post-human world look like where nature is of equal importance to technology, “accepting that we are part of nature” as posthumanism suggests? Inspired by Arca’s affinity for working in collaboration with Artificial Intelligence (AI), I collaborated with an AI photo generator to help me answer this question. Oftentimes when we contemplate a dystopian future, it almost always neglects imagery of nature. Why? Is that to say that humans have accepted the fate of the planet and given in to the toxic flow of capitalism? NO. I rebuke this imagery and welcome my interpretation of a dystopian fictional world. (Refer to the end of this blog post to see what CÁMO and AI re-imagined dystopia to be).

I highly encourage and recommend you all to read/watch at least ONE of the sources listed below. Celebrating Pride Month is about celebrating boundless liberation and joy in all its forms. Understanding Arca’s perspective on boundlessness reveals a deeper internal struggle that is necessary to challenge in order to reach the fulfillment you’ve been seeking your entire life. What I came to realize with Arca, and as an Afro-futurist World Builder, is that society places limitations on us, especially those living within the margins of the margins. These limitations brought onto us fear in the form of oppression and violence. However, we cannot keep our imagination, creativity, and curiosity from thriving. As Queer icon Lady Gaga always says, “We were born this way, baby!”



## Afterthought/Acknowledgement

I want to make it a point that Arca, as well as Tokischa and Lady Gaga are three queer women icons that have literally saved my life, my art, and my music. My art and music would not be what it is today (and what it will be tomorrow) were not for these three queer women. Happy Pride Month! #transisbeautiful #transjoy #transradicallove #bisexualpride #pansexualpride #transpride #lesbianpride #gaypride #intersexpride #asexualpride #nonbinarypride



***You may contact, NJCASA's Community Engagement Specialist, CÁMO Cemi'no, at [ccemino@njcasa.org](mailto:ccemino@njcasa.org).***

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## Resources

[Arca Interviewed by BBC 6 Music on Stuart Maconie's Freak Zone](#)

[Arca Once Made Electronic Music. Now She Builds Worlds.](#)

[Artist Spotlight: Arca is the underrated voice of electronic music](#)

[How Cruising, Graveyards, and Swans inspired Arca's new album](#)

[In conversation with Arca: Glamcult's URGENT cover girls talks videos games, glitches, and AI](#)

[Posthumanism: A Philosophy for the 21st Century?](#)

[The Story of Arca](#)

[Venezuelan Producer Arca on Gender, Hope, and \[Her\] Brave New Album](#)