‘Drag’ refers to the performance of gender theatrically. There are many kinds of drag artists ranging from professionals who have starred in movies to people who just try it once. Drag artists also vary by class and culture and can vary within the same city.

Although many assume that all drag performers are gay or transgender, there are drag artists of all genders and all sexualities. Generally, drag queens perform femininity theatrically and drag kings perform masculinity theatrically. Being a drag queen or a drag king is not the same as being transgender, though people who are transgender may also perform drag sometimes. Being transgender or gender diverse is about identifying as a different gender to the one you were assigned at birth.

In a recent exhibition of drag culture, curator Ricky Beirao displayed the full history of drag in Melbourne from the underground movement in the 1960s, the sparkling disco era of the 1970s and today’s modern glitz and glamour.

The changing face and colourful history of Melbourne’s drag culture is on display at an exhibition, from the underground movement in the 1960s, the sparkling disco era of the 1970s and today’s modern glitz and glamour.

The curator of the What A Drag! exhibition, Ricky Beirao, is a performer who goes by the name of ‘Rhubarb Rouge’. He said there was little knowledge about the importance drag played in creating acceptance and awareness of the gay community by wider society.

“I saw so much history and passion about it, so I thought why not put this all together for people to learn about it, for the younger generation to really respect what people have done for them to be able to do what they do now,” he told the ABC.

“A lot of people take for granted... and they just think it’s old fashioned,” he said. “I didn’t see it as something they could do for free.”

He added that there was a growing push for more acceptance of gay people, but there were still people who were not ready to accept them.

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