Alok Vaid-Menon (they/them) is a gender non-conforming performance artist, writer, educator, and entertainer. Their eclectic sense of style, political comedy and poetic challenge to the gender binary have been internationally renowned. Alok was a guest at Kampnagel for the first time as part of the performance-duo DARKMATTER in May 2016 with the show ITGETSBITTER. In June 2017, Alok hosted the workshop THIS WORLD MIGHT BE ENDING, I AM SORRY, I LOVE YOU in the framework of Danny Banany’s School of Uncool – an intense exchange with the participants about hope, bonding and loneliness in an imaginary apocalypse.

The other day as I was walking into the restroom an older, white, cisgender woman accosted me and said, "Excuse me sir. What do you think you are doing?" I responded: "Going to the bathroom." She looked disgusted and pointed to the symbol on the door, "This is the women’s restroom, what do you think you're doing." I said, "Your point being?" and she said, "This restroom is for WOMEN!" and in this moment I was faced with a dilemma. I knew that if I responded, "Your idea of ‘woman’ just like your idea of ‘man’ is a colonial fiction that was assigned to my people to keep us down" she would have spit on me. I knew that the only way she would let me go is if I said, "I am a woman." So I did and she responded "Oh you must understand why I was concerned" and backed away apologetically.

And even though I got to pee I felt defeated because in so many levels trans femmes have to claim *womanhood* or else we are -- politically, physically, ontologically -- denied entry (to the bathroom, to the movement, to the narrative of violence). I wish that our gender justice movements would recognize that femininity does not have to be attached to womanhood to be legitimate. I wish that we would stop rehearsing a trope that womanhood is more sacred because it is *real* gender while other femininities are just artificial. I wish that we could understand how (trans)misogyny enacts violence on bodies that are not cis or trans women.

We should not have to claim the identity *woman* to be worthy subjects of feminism, (trans)misogyny, and let alone restrooms.