Task 2: Gender Performativity Theory

Read the theory drop article 'Gender Performativity' by Claire Pollard. Answer the following questions, drawing on the article for information and ideas.

1. **What does 'performative' mean in the context of this article? What different aspects of your identity do you perform on a regular basis?**
2. **Why does theorist Judith Butler argue that we have little or no control over how we perform 'gender'?**
3. **How does Claire Pollard draw a link between children's clothing and the future 'performance' of gender by men and women?**
4. **The article claims that the mainstream media still rely to a large extent on gender stereotypes. Do you agree with this? If so, what examples can you think of? What examples can you think of that challenge these stereotypes?**

Performing gender – your own identity

As well as reading Claire Pollard's article, you should also read the cartoon by Tom Zaino.

1. **Although the cartoon is making a humorous point, how far do you agree that girls and boys are conditioned to 'perform' gender roles from a very young age?**
2. **What do you think about stereotypical notions of gender?**

Conducting your own research: Social Media & Online Shopping Collage

1. **Social Media**
   Have a look at what people are posting on Instagram or Twitter under the hashtag #LetToysBeToys or #smashingstereotypes. Make a collection of images and posts that are either documenting the ways that gender stereotyping is pervasive in our culture or examples of people pushing back against binary gender stereotypes.



   You might find examples like this image from a magazine that the article's writer Claire Pollard's 3 year old daughter was given.
   Write a brief analysis/summary of what you find out – exploring differences between representations of male and female performativity.

2. **Online Shopping**
   - Go onto the website of any big clothing store or department store (e.g. John Lewis, Next). Children's' clothes are a great place to look for examples of gender conditioning so look at t-shirts or pyjamas for boys and girls and see how you feel about them. Consider how alienating this might be for children who don't 'feel' particularly like a girl or a boy. Think about how this might affect, encourage or permit certain behaviours.
   - Now think about how similar patterns apply to the adult world. Visit a gift shop website like Not on the High Street or Clintons and look for 'gifts for him/dads' and 'gifts for her/mums'. It would be a good idea to write a list of predictions of what you expect to find before you go online and see how accurate you are.
   - Gather images from both the activities above, and further research, that reinforce negative gender stereotypes and put them into a collage in Photoshop or PowerPoint.