

# SOYA



THE  
COW

PRESS  
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# ART MEETS ACTIVISM: THIS COW HAS A MISSION

# SOYA THE COW



## WHAT THE PRESS SAYS

*"She wants to change the world with veganism: drag cow Soya the Cow.ow."*  
[nau.ch, November 2020]

*"The Zurich singer, performer, dancer and theatre maker armed with philosophical questions, is to the arts what veganism is to gastronomy: the answer to one and more crises of meaning."*  
[NZZ, November 2020]

*"The visual part consists of a whole range of spectacular outfits: horned cow masks, latex bodysuits with spot prints, rubber udders. On sky-high heels, Soya plays theatre stages, festivals or rallies."*  
[Deutschlandfunk Kultur, Oktober 2020]

Featured in BBC's  
*"The World in Pictures"*  
[October, 2020]

Climate activism, music, feminism and animal rights, spiced up with a good dose of drag – that's **Soya the Cow**. The alter-ego of Zurich-born artist Daniel Hellmann manages the balancing act between a crisis of meaning and pop culture, offering answers to the ethical and philosophical questions of our time, presented in a refreshingly honest, yet polarising character.

## PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS IN DRAG DRESS

Daniel Hellmann is **Soya the Cow**, the world's first feminist, sex-positive, vegan drag cow. **Soya** is multi-talented: she raps, sings and dances. **Soya** is a pop star and an activist who inspires reflection in her audience. Sometimes in an elegant evening gown, provocatively wearing suspenders – or cuddling pigs – **Soya** is a character who challenges the current status quo of sexuality, gender norms and feminism, not only visually but on multiple levels. **Soya** deliberately uses her songs and performances to provoke critical questions about climate change, animal rights and consumption. The balancing act between human and animal, man and cow, almost automatically confronts the audience with some of the most pivotal questions of the 21st century: is it justifiable to exploit and kill so-called farm animals? And are humans and other animals not so different after all?

## CULTURAL-ETHICAL QUESTIONS OF THE CENTURY

Inspired by San Francisco's drag culture, which is also strongly influenced by politics, Hellmann brought the idea of the drag activist to the German-speaking world and has been thrilling audiences with the glamorous cow ever since. As **Soya**, Hellmann gives animals a new kind of voice, which is particularly effective in her musical works. Here, the thematic focus is not only upon the meat industry and its surrounding issues; **Soya** shows us how loving and compassionate animals can be towards each other – just as humans can form intimate relationships with selected animal species.

As **Soya the Cow**, Hellmann creates his performances from the animals' point of view, painting a picture of what the world could look like without animal suffering, and showing which social hurdles still need to be overcome in order to reach such a future. In doing so, **Soya** appeals above all to our compassion, and reminds every single person of the responsibility they bear with their behaviour in general and in particular through their purchasing decisions.

Despite all the activism and political commitment – one thing is never missing from **Soya's** performance: the desire to entertain the audience – and now and then to involve them directly and interactively in the colourful stage show.



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## WHO IS SOYA THE COW?

- ↪ Soya the Cow is a quirky mixture of human and cow, and is very fond of leopard print. The character was created by Zurich artist Daniel Hellmann.
- ↪ Soya first appeared in 2018 at the Animal Rights March in front of the Volksbühne Berlin.
- ↪ Simultaneously, she is a cow and a stage hog: her one-cow show "Dear Human Animals" celebrated its premiere at the Gessnerallee Zurich in November 2020.
- ↪ Soya's mission is to promote a world based on compassion, joy and freedom – for all human and non-human beings.
- ↪ Soya blurs the boundaries between species and gender, polarises with her performance, and provocatively challenges common norms.
- ↪ Soya's debut album 'Purple Grass' will be released in spring 2021 and combines powerful electropop beats with emotional ballads from the perspective of a dairy cow.



BIOGRAPHY



## WHO IS DANIEL HELLMANN?

- ↪ Daniel Hellmann is a singer, performer, dancer and theatre maker from Zurich.
- ↪ He studied philosophy, classical singing and theatre/performance and has been developing his own artistic and award-winning works since 2012.
- ↪ Hellmann sees his artistic practice as a form of intersectional activism, addressing norms and areas of tension – questioning sexism, speciesism and prevailing role models.
- ↪ He was awarded the June Johnson Dance Prize for his music-theatre performance Requiem For a Piece of Meat (2017).
- ↪ Since 2018, Hellmann has curated the performing arts for the interdisciplinary festival of gender & sexualities LA FÊTE DU SLIP in Lausanne.

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## REBEL, ART FIGURE, ACTIVIST: SOYA THE COW POLARISES – AND CONFRONTS CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Swiss singer / drag artist and cow activist, Daniel Hellmann, wraps up philosophical questions of our time in a flashy and glittery dress. With his character **Soya** and his debut album, which will be released in April, the artist gives animals a new kind of voice: he provokes and at the same time elicits compassion, questions social norms, and plays with the fantasies of his audience. After an encounter with **Soya the Cow**, it is virtually impossible to stick with culturally accepted habits.

Pink lips, bright eye shadow, a curly blond mane and pointy horns – sometimes dressed in a tight latex suit, other times in flowing evening couture: **Soya** is colourful and eye-catching. The unique drag cow was created by Daniel Hellmann, who describes her as a “fantastic cow creature” that playfully bends gender and species. **Soya** raps, sings and dances – for animal rights, feminism and against gender norms. She stands for love, joie de vivre and compassion – and confronts society with critical questions that are otherwise all too readily suppressed.



Daniel Hellmann was born in Switzerland and lives in Zurich and Berlin. His favourite animals? Cows, obviously. With his alter ego **Soya**, he has found a way to combine performance, music and his love for animals. Hellmann was inspired by his time in San Francisco. The city's drag scene along with the animal rights group Direct Action Everywhere influenced and inspired him to break new ground. “Drag has always played with imitation and appropriation while being serious and ridiculously exaggerated at the same time,” Hellmann explains. “It’s exactly this balancing act that fascinates me – and that allows me to put across really uncomfortable subjects in an artistic way.”

Hellmann explains why the choice of alter ego fell on a cow and not a pig, for instance, with an aha moment he experienced while researching the dairy industry. “Like many people, I thought that cows simply gave milk and that it did them no harm to be milked. But I later realised that cows have to give birth to a calf every year, from which they are separated shortly after birth. In the end, it is a mother who is torn away from her child,” Hellmann describes. He supports the critics and animal rights advocates who refer to these practices as anti-feminist. “Cows are such gentle giants – even though they are completely superior to humans in terms of body mass and strength, we have systematically exploited them for many thousands of years. This attitude of being superior to non-human animals is symptomatic of man’s treatment of animals.”

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THE COW



Prior to **Soya the Cow**, Hellmann studied philosophy, classical singing, theatre and performance. He created multiple award-winning theatre projects and campaigned for minorities and refugees. He discovered his love for music in childhood, when he experienced his first performances in a Swiss boys' choir.

"Through my studies, the path to classical singing was virtually open to me. But I knew that I didn't just want to sing, I wanted to make art: Art that moves something in people's hearts and in our society."

Hellmann recently seized Zurich's stages with **Soya the Cow** and his play *Dear Human Animals*. Praised by the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* as tip of the week, the theatre maker created a solo performance reminiscent of reality TV – as an appeal or rather a reminder of one's own humanity and the questioning of the thoughtless exploitation and killing of animals, which we humans pay for every day in a way that is completely socially acceptable and without batting an eyelid with almost every purchase.

According to Hellmann, the deliberate provocation, the breaking with prevailing gender norms and the tension between feminism and animal rights are not met with only positive reactions. "Of course, **Soya** is also a rebel and troublemaker – disruption is sometimes inevitable. But I'll put up with that if it means I can make people contemplate."

The debut album "Purple Grass", which Hellmann is releasing in collaboration with composer, pianist and producer Phil Constantin in April, does justice to precisely these aims. With romantic love ballads accompanied by piano, powerful electropop sounds and provocative rap, Hellmann as **Soya the Cow** conveys a forceful message, a call to every listener to question their own consumer behaviour and view of so-called farm animals. **Soya the Cow** literally gives animals a voice, tells from the perspective of a dairy cow about grief and being hurt, but also the passionate desire for freedom and justice. **Soya's** powerful, classically trained voice not only serves the role she embodies, but inspires with a character of its own – sometimes gentle and quiet in the lower registers, sometimes raspy, cheeky and challenging – topped off with an impressively powerful vibrato in the high registers.

**Soya the Cow's** new album is underground, poetic, artistic and political at the same time. But above all, there is humour and a delight in artful production that entertains the audience and thus enables an unprecedented change of perspective.

"Purple Grass" will be released in April 2021 and can be found on all major music streaming services.

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CONTACT



## DANIEL AND SOYA ONLINE

 Web [www.soyathecow.com](http://www.soyathecow.com)

 YOUTUBE <https://bit.ly/2ZgYU8j>

 FACEBOOK [www.facebook.com/soyathecow](http://www.facebook.com/soyathecow)

 TWITTER [www.twitter.com/soyathecow](http://www.twitter.com/soyathecow)

 INSTAGRAM [www.instagram.com/soyathecow](http://www.instagram.com/soyathecow)

**Stream the Debut Single "Soy Much" now**

 SPOTIFY <https://spoti.fi/37iDlMj>

SOY MUCH / MUSIKVIDEO [youtu.be/DVi8JZgmoiA](https://youtu.be/DVi8JZgmoiA)

**Stream Debut Album "Purple Grass" April 2021**

 Soundcloud <https://bit.ly/2ZkBPBm>

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