LET THE WHOLE GODDAMN THING SHORT-CIRCUIT

Curated by **Quentin Emery**
With works of **Thalia Bassim, Cibelle Cavalli Bastos, Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, Corentin Darré, FAFSWAG, Su Yang, Lucas LaRochelle, 4FSB**

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Opening on **March 16th**
Toxi, **Zimmerlistr. 4, 8004 Zürich**

How does digitality affect queer art? Raising this question, the group show 'Let the Whole Goddamn Thing Short-Circuit' features works of queer artists who use digital tools and appropriate the aesthetics of the virtual world. Beyond highlighting the manifold forms of their plastic, digital, or hybrid pieces, this exhibition aims at finding possible thematic axes that lie at the heart of their creation. In fact, three distinct aspects that have shaped queer art history stand out as constitutive elements of the topics they reflect on; memory/ commemoration, stereotypes/clichés and the relationship to the body.

Initially, cyberspace was thought to offer a utopian field of endless possibilities, brandishing an emancipatory, liberal and horizontality-promising potential. These glorious perspectives now seem ridiculously far off from the reality we are experiencing. Not only are tech-giants gradually monopolising online-platforms, the World Wide Web also turned into a major stage for all kinds of violence that are boosted by the algorithmically generated echo chambers and filter bubbles. Cyber-bullying and hate speech have become a tragically common phenomenon, as they have systematically and efficiently benefitted from user-anonymity for years. Moreover, geolocating apps have made LGBTQIA+ easy targets for aggressors resulting in physical assault, as well as arrest in some states.

Lucas LaRochelle appropriates these very technological tools and functions, creating the interactive site called *queeringthemap*, through which queer experience of love, as well as traumas can be archived geographically. With an artificial intelligence that they endearingly call the QT.bot, working with Street View and text-data from the user's pins on that map, LaRochelle created a fun and touching video-piece: an algorithmically constructed tale of queer fiction. Archiving experience is what **Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley** bases their work on as well. Their video game centers Black Trans people's bodies and underlines the violence they endure, the battles they have fought and the resilience that they have proven to have. Players interact with Black Trans people who have been systematically marginalised and erased from documented history The artist **Su Yang** on the other hand chooses a geologically inspired approach to materialise the strata of his queer existence, the virtual part of which is especially doomed to stay hidden and invisible in his native China.

As the World Wide Web, through online forums, dating apps and video games has become a platform for LGBTQIA+-phobic stereotypes to flourish, transphobic and racist hate speech has also seen itself commonly spread inside some parts of the queer communities. Appropriating stereotypes to point at the problem they represent is a way for artist to fight against the global spread of violence and is part of many of the works presented here. In his work, **4FSB** crosses post-internet-era references with archetypical elements from queer

culture creating fascinating and ruthlessly grotesque photomontages highlighting the aesthetics of the deep meanders of the Web.

The era of digitality we are living in has resulted in users all over the world forming new relationships with their bodies, as the idea of a virtual self has emerged. Digital worlds like 'Second Life' made it possible for the generation of that time to shape their body as they wished, albeit a virtual one. Being able to create an avatar that is isolated from material reality is a form of agency that raises some questions. Does digitality generate increasing isolation of individuals or does it do the exact opposite and create new virtual community spaces? Does physicality even stand in opposition to virtuality or can they merge? Furthermore, would the fusion of both worlds - the material and the digital one - mean that we are imagining new forms of existing?

Thalia Bassim's illusion-infused video-work sketches their personal quest of defining their hybrid presence in a physically and virtually shaped existence. **Cibelle Cavalli Bastos'** approach on the other hand is very much questioning the medium itself and creating pieces that blur the lines between traditional art forms, blending virtual and physical components, thus inducing a reflection on gender and the broad spectrum of identities that should be explored. Breaking the seal separating the physical world from virtuality is what **Corentin Darré** does by making elements from his animations break into the exhibition space. His medieval-themed work addresses topics around queer love, sexuality and violence, with sculptural requisites of his virtual mythology at hand.

FAFSWAG offer an extensive confrontation with stereotypes and clichés, a spectacular mise-en-scène of bodies as well as a documentary collection of recorded queer experience. The art collective put forward an interactive video-installation, savvily demonstrating how the three thematic axes discussed in this exhibition are intertwined and form a common cause.

The artists honoured in this group show thus demonstrate how recurring topics of queer art history are being reflected on and reinterpreted in the age of digitality. Their works are the result of widely different led research, proposing ever so different kinds of reflexion and consequently contributing to contemporary queer history writing.

> **"It's time for new mechanics**
> **Let's mutate please**
> **Bye, binary! Buffer forever**
>
> **Usurp the body. Become your avatar. Be the glitch.**
> **Let the whole goddamn thing short-circuit."**

Legacy Russel, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*, 2020