

Zach Blas

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Zach Blas Facial Weaponization Suite: Fag Face Mask from 2014 Future Greats

Want to evade face recognition by looking great? Try [Zach Blas](#)’s tools of ‘queer opacity’. *Fag Face Mask* (2012), from his ongoing [Facial Weaponization Suite](#) (2011–), creates facial anonymity by confusing visual recognition patterns. A pink sparkling plastic phenomenon, it is concocted (or so we are told) by the biometrical measurements of a multitude of gay men.

The superimposed result doesn’t resemble any contemporary human or other known organic figure. But it makes a wonderful in-your-face statement about elegance, defiance and sex – as in innovative procreation. What act of creation spawned these faces? Might our species look like this if all Palaeolithic human genres and genders had cross-mated even more vigorously and, nonchalantly, also included alien purveyors, occasional fern scrubs and sea cucumbers? But wait: we may still get there in the future! Mate with sparkling plastic now and here’s looking at you in a million years! The masks most charmingly make the point that the way to defy standard macho techno-surveillance and infomilitarism is not via an equally macho tech-obsessive countermovement rife with male authoritarianism, but miraculous, multifaceted sex.

Blas is not alone in such contemporary inquiry. Artists like Laura Poitras, Metahaven, Jesse Darling, Sang Mun, Tyler Coburn, Dmytri Kleiner, Andrew Norman Wilson and James Bridle, and organisations such as Auto Italia South East deal, in one way or another, with the affective, political, material, social aspects of a radically fucked up, unevenly developed, both exhilarating and disturbing networked space. (Poitras most obviously with mindboggling and game-changing consequences. She is the most successful, smart and competent political artist of the early-twenty-first century. She, Glenn Greenwald – who is the only person besides Poitras who has a full archive of the global surveillance disclosure initiated by Edward Snowden – and Chelsea Manning completely overthrew the traditionally dead white-male relationship between cutting-edge technology and gender.)

Works by RabiH Mroué and Lina Saneh, Trevor Paglen, Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin, Harun Farocki and Raqs Media Collective have set important precedents for this. On the other hand, most recent digitally inflected art seems to effortlessly wipe away queer, feminist, political or actually any position whatsoever. All-male shows and accelerationist monogender discussions return as the new/old norm. In this context Blas’s approach brings a dash of glamour and mischief to a postdigital aesthetics partly driven by testosterone-heavy technocults and partly by glib brand looks.

While a lot of contemporary technologically oriented art tries to resuscitate the wreckage of Futurism, or overidentifies with strategies of surgical marketing and apple polishing, Blas’s work insists that one doesn’t need to brand oneself into voluntary servitude or to eagerly identify with the aggressor. It may well suffice to fuck him. Or her. Or it. It’s such a reasonable idea and possibly much more fun too! Fuck military technology. Fuck infrastructure. Fuck drones. Fuck protocol ‘til it hums with pleasure. Throw in glitter and some shiny sensors. And after a few million years, there might be a smashing progeny!

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