

MAKE ME FEEL MIGHTY REAL: DRAG/TECH AND THE QUEER AVATAR

Curators: Jamison Edgar, Scott Ewalt

March 03 – May 27, 2023

Opening Reception March 03, 6-8pm



Jacolby Satterwhite Avenue B, 2018-19, 2-channel HD color video and 3D animation with sound
© Jacolby Satterwhite. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

Honor Fraser Gallery is pleased to present *Make Me Feel Mighty Real: Drag/Tech and the Queer Avatar*, a group exhibition surveying the conceptual and aesthetic proliferation of avatars in queer creative practices and the pervasive technological fantasies they have engendered. The exhibition features over 40 artists and chronicles seven decades of experimentation in photography, painting, film, performance, and animation to champion the tools and techniques that queer artists have pioneered to build community, cruise utopia, and enact unruly hybridity online and IRL. The exhibition is on view from March 03 through May 27. An opening reception will be held on March 03 from 6pm to 8pm.

The exhibition's title borrows lyrics from Sylvester's infamous 1978 disco anthem, "You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)," a melodic monument to uninhibited queer desire, and its capacity to alter the mind, reconfigure the body, and spawn a new reality into existence. In turn, the exhibition at Honor Fraser serves as the song's most recent refrain, celebrating a lineage of artists who have forged their own mixed realities against the backdrop of a technological renaissance. The phrase "Drag/Tech" is offered as a curatorial key to underscore the significance and cultural influence of these entangled tech relationships while advocating for a recontextualization of Drag as a form of technology itself—applied queer knowledge accumulated, preserved, and reperformed across multiple generations and cultural terrains. Visitors to the gallery will be immersed in the rituals and traditions of Drag performance, but rather than restage a chronological history of the queer art form, the exhibition assembles a constellation of visual artists, avant-garde performers, nightlife celebrities, grassroots archivists, DIY publishers, and experimental technologists to illustrate the vital role technology has played in shaping the political power of Drag. Filtered through the lens of emerging digital technologies, "The Avatar" materializes throughout the exhibition in both its ancient and modern connotations – as both a divine, otherworldly teacher and as a physical/virtual surrogate. The breadth of artistic practices assembled highlights the range of creative play that has emerged in between the term's contrasting definitions. Each artwork is a fabulous invocation for all of us to dream beyond the boundaries of gender, sex, biology, and human subjectivity.

Merging the formal affordances of the white cube with the maximalist aesthetics of queer nightclubs, virtual chatrooms, and underground performance venues, *Make Me Feel Mighty Real* transforms Honor Fraser into a living archive of glamor, grit, glitch, and gore. Canonical queer artists, filmmakers, and performers including Josef Astor, Charles Atlas, The Cockettes, Mundo Meza, and Andy Warhol are woven into a constellation of emerging and established contemporaries such as Caitlin Cherry, Huntress Janos, Jacolby Satterwhite, Devan Shimoyama, Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, and Angela Washko. The careers of Leigh Bowery, Divine, RuPaul, Sylvester, Symone, and other legendary entertainers are contextualized through the illustrious resilience of transgender icons such as Potassa de la Fayette, Greer Lankton, Octavia St. Laurent, Amanda Lepore, and Marsha P. Johnson. The influence of queer collectives, like the Los Angeles-based House of Avalon, on mainstream fashion, entertainment, and social media are juxtaposed with the monstrous excess of "post-internet" identities seen in the work of Zach Blas, Dynasty Handbag, Big Art Group, Ryan Trecartin, and Theo Triantafyllidis.



Andy Warhol, Ladies and Gentlemen, 1975

To honor and underscore the models of solidarity and stewardship that arise within queer communities and the spaces they cultivate, *Make Me Feel Mighty Real* will be augmented with a slate of public programming. This multidimensional curation serves to amplify the charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent of all queer people at the very moment when politicians and vigilantes are determined to suppress their existence. To kick off the programming calendar, the gallery will host a mediated poetry reading by Huntrezz Janos. Please join us at 7pm for Janos's live performance. For more information on programming events, please visit our website.

Exhibited Artists: Enrique Agudo, Steven Arnold, Josef Astor, Charles Atlas, Zach Blas, Big Art Group (Caden Manson, Jemma Nelson,) Richard Bernstein, Leonard Burtman, Caitlin Cherry, Aaron Cobbett, The Cockettes, Max Colby, Caleb Craig, Ronnie Cutrone, Eleanor Davis, Tandi Iman Dupree, Jake Elwes, Scott Ewalt, Connie Fleming, Dynasty Handbag, Hilary Harp, Jef Huereque, Wesleigh Gates, Greg Gorman, Bob Gruen, House of Avalon (Symone, Gigi Goode, Hunter Crenshaw, Caleb Feeney, Grant Vanderbilt, Marko Monroe,) Huntrezz Janos, John Kelly, Eric Kroll, Greer Lankton, Marcus Leatherdale, Christopher Makos, Mundo Meza, Milton Miron, Perfidia, Tom Rubnitz, Jacolby Satterwhite, Devan Shimoyama, Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, Suzie Silver, TABBOO!, Ryan Trecartin, Theo Triantafyllidis, Antigoni Tsagkaropoulou, Jemima Wyman, Andy Warhol, Angela Washko, Astor Yang, Robert Yang.

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