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B4BEL4B Gallery, 184 10th St., Oakland, CA, 94607
Opening reception: Saturday, October 14, 2017

Liss LaFleur: *New Frontiers*
October 14 - November 10, 2017

In 1960, presidential nominee John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) said, “We are not here to curse the darkness, but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future. I am asking each of you to be pioneers on that New Frontier.” This provocation is amongst the influences that artist Liss LaFleur uses to frame “New Frontiers,” her first solo exhibition in the Bay Area and at B4BEL4B Gallery.

Virtuality and queerness share common conceptual ground. They each destabilize what is natural and taken for granted by emphasizing the performed and experienced rather than what is “objectively real.” LaFleur explores this conceptual congruence throughout “New Frontiers” by acknowledging the female body in virtual space as a new form of pioneering - or the search for a female body without boundaries.

Included in this exhibition is the first in a series of operettas written for virtual performance, created in collaboration with composer [Samuel Beebe](#) and flutist [Brittney Balkcom](#). This series is based on a collection of reel-to-reel radio interviews produced by LaFleur’s grandfather between 1960-1970 on KTRH Houston, and left to her upon his death in 1998. For this exhibition, three interviews are combined with flute, voice, and harp. Interviewees include: LSD advocate Timothy Leary, anti-LSD activist Dr. John Schooler, and a 1950’s housewife who tries LSD for the first time. Presented as three channels of video, each recording is represented as a virtual gelatin dessert, recorded from the perspective of the artist in her studio, conflating her body with the camera.

Dainty desserts and technicolor delicacies, the antique gelatin molds — relics from our past and windows into cultural ideas of female objectification — are reworked in “New Frontiers” using 3D scanning technologies in virtual space. A material that the artist uses frequently, gelatin references the body and frames a narrative that is both culturally historical and deeply personal. A powder derived from the bone, ligament, and intestines of horses, cows, and pigs, gelatin is tied to the space race, the construct of the homemaker, and references specific moments in American history.

Through a series of accompanying grid-like images, LaFleur replaces the technology used in to produce this series with her own body to create a lexicon in the form of a choreographed score. This imagery produces a parallel between the virtual and the real that demonstrates a shared frustration with both the digital and the domestic. Referencing the traditional frame rate of film, each grid includes 24 images of the artist's body swaying, squatting, and gazing through repeated gestures.

In her video, "The Day I found Out They Wore Trousers" the artist recreates an image of her great grandmother sitting on a porch surrounded by a group of women. A recent immigrant to the United States from Czechoslovakia, she is pictured leisurely smoking a cigarette gazing directly into the camera. Unlike the artist's virtual performances, in this work LaFleur physically recreates this act as a durational performance, gazing directly at viewers.

The works in "New Frontiers" are situated entirely within a reflective two-tone dichroic surface, an incandescent composite of metals, oxides and glass developed by NASA, that acts like a selective prism, transmitting one color and reflecting another. The immersive qualities of this surface reflect LaFleur's relentless questioning of the role of technology when compared to the perceptible and invisible qualities of constructing identity.

LaFleur's work focuses on the question of what queer deconstruction and demystification can do, and how to use it responsibly. In this collection of video, photography, and writing, she proposes that queerness, like dye, runs through the family line and is sometimes undeniable. Her provocative and complex work offers a timely response to our current political climate, and through her work, she creates a platform to reframe matrilineality and a powerful repositioning of the female body.

About the Artist:

Liss LaFleur (born 1987) is a contemporary artist who works with video, performance, glass, Jell-O, and digital fabrication. LaFleur's work draws upon the histories of cyberformance, unconventional opera, lesbian feminism, and queer aesthetics. Her works are often durational, lyrical, and experimental, reflecting on consumerism, matrilineality, memory, sex, surrealism, and h(er)story. She has exhibited both nationally and internationally, at venues including: the TATE Modern, Cannes Court M trage, the Reykjavik Art Museum, and CICA Gallery in South Korea. She is currently an Assistant Professor of New Media Art at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX. www.LissLaFleur.com

About the Gallery:

B4BEL4B is an artist-run gallery for visual and new media art with an emphasis on diversity, community and network culture. Our arts program prioritizes women, queer, and critically underrepresented groups in technology and media art spaces. We strive to support radically-inclusive ideologies, critical dialogue, and seek to engage divergent communities in order to encourage new conversations and ideas through a rotating calendar of exhibitions, events, and workshops. B4BEL4B is a member of the Intersection Incubator, a program of Intersection for the Arts. www.b4bel4b.com

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