

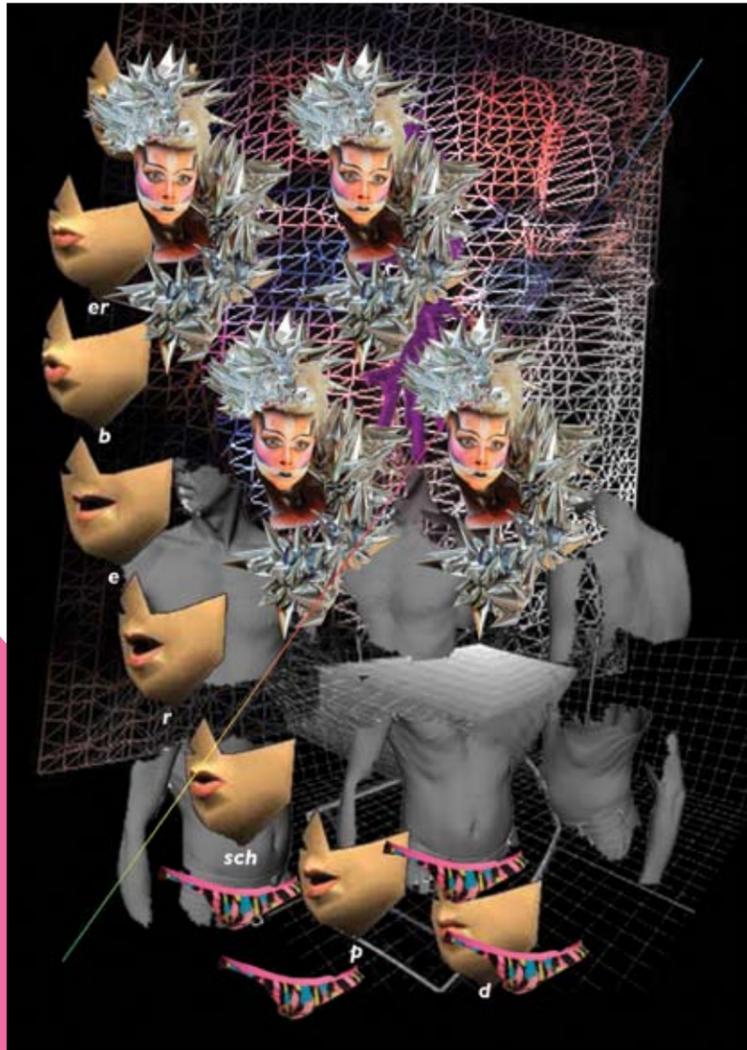
TWO IMMEDIATE QUESTIONS CAME UP WHEN SLIT WAS THINKING ABOUT ASKING REGRETTE ETCETERA TO BE PART OF THIS ISSUE OF SLIT: "IS 256 COLOURS ENOUGH?" AND "CAN WE AFFORD FLUORO?" SADLY, BUT PERHAPS UNSURPRISINGLY, THE ANSWER TO BOTH WAS NO. AS REGRETTE CANNOT BE CONTAINED WITHIN THE CONVENTIONAL

COLOUR SPECTRUM, LIKEWISE HER INCORRIGIBLE POLITICS REFUSE MAINSTREAM BOUNDARIES THAT DETERMINE PARTICULAR ISSUES AS 'QUEER' OR 'TRANS'. REGRETTE'S PERFORMANCE IS A TREAT, OFTEN PERFORMED JUST THE ONCE, AND ASSUMES THE AUDIENCE WANTS TO BE CHALLENGED RATHER THAN REASSURED. WITH THE SOUNDS OF THE MARDI GRAS FAIR DAY REVERBERATING AROUND CHIPPENDALE, DOMINO FROM SLIT MAGAZINE AND REGRETTE ETCETERA TALK.

D: When we first talked about doing an interview with *Slit* you mentioned you had some initial responses, specifically about what that means in terms of the politics of representation and the necessity to speak explicitly about being in *Slit*.

R: Yeah. What brought it to the fore for me is the fraught relationship between feminism at its most broad level, and the kinds of unwitting or deliberate erasure of transwomen, which can be violent. It made me think about *Slit* and what I'd seen of it and associated it with. When I think of trans and *Slit*, I think of trans boys. And that's the conundrum more broadly. Generally, 'Trans' is essentially trans guys, whether women's and queer spaces, activism, representation. It produces and hides huge effects.

D: So you were thinking about your responses and perception of participation being the token trans-femme in the *Slit* space, and how that frames your representation and voice in the



interview...

R: Of course. Sometimes you really can't win representationally. Whether it's queers or feminists or whatever you're up against a lotta ingrained stereotypes and shade. It's a schizoid awareness that can be pretty debilitating. It's always a micro-macro tension representationally. I'm always wary of

what I call 'diversity panic' too, where I get emails at the last minute; somebody is obviously having a freak-out la la la about ticking that box. So when invited to speak, it makes me question whether my presence will just dress up someone's agenda, they think "we have a tranny who'll represent and deliver critiques of X and Y so we don't even have to know about it". Then it makes you wanna put femme cock in the centrefold to push le envelope too, and make nasty jokes about being in the 'Simulacra' edition...

D: Issues of representation come up for *Slit* all the time, particularly that tension between representation and inclusion. Well, one of the reasons that we wanted to feature you in this issue is because of the theme of *Simulacra*, which immediately invites those motifs of the *Fauxist International* and your performance. In both these forums you engage a lot with the idea of simulation: whether it is simulated warfare; creating mock realities; or things that feel like mock realities but are reality- like the US bombing of the moon which felt so fictional, but was actual. Tell us about the *Fauxist International*.

R: The *Fauxist International* started here in Sydney in 2001 and is now a loose, cellular network stretching around the world. People working in it use its name to hide their identity, which is kind of an inheritance from the Neoists. In terms of the what, it spans everything: we've done conferences, workshops in different festivals, art exhibitions, residencies, nightclubs, international moon-bombing parties, lots of text based work and publications, films la la la. We had a big

retrospective in 2010 in Brisbane. It's a fun project. I'd say 'Meta' is the genre tag. [editors: In its contemporary meaning 'meta' means self-referential parody. The etymology of its use as a prefix refers to 'above, after, behind' or 'altered', and also 'in the midst of, by means of, in pursuit of'.] People do misapprehend many things about it, think it's all real, or just an art project or a political group because it's very deliberately elusive and non-definitional. It's definitely about genre-mashing and signal-noise mixing, and the conscious parody of authority, in terms of writing and knowledge, so lots of appropriation, plagiarism, and self-referential twists. It's nothing so la la 'postmodern' or 'death of the author', though we do have an essay called 'In Defense of Conspiracy Theory'...

D: But you also reference authors, so where is the plagiarism?

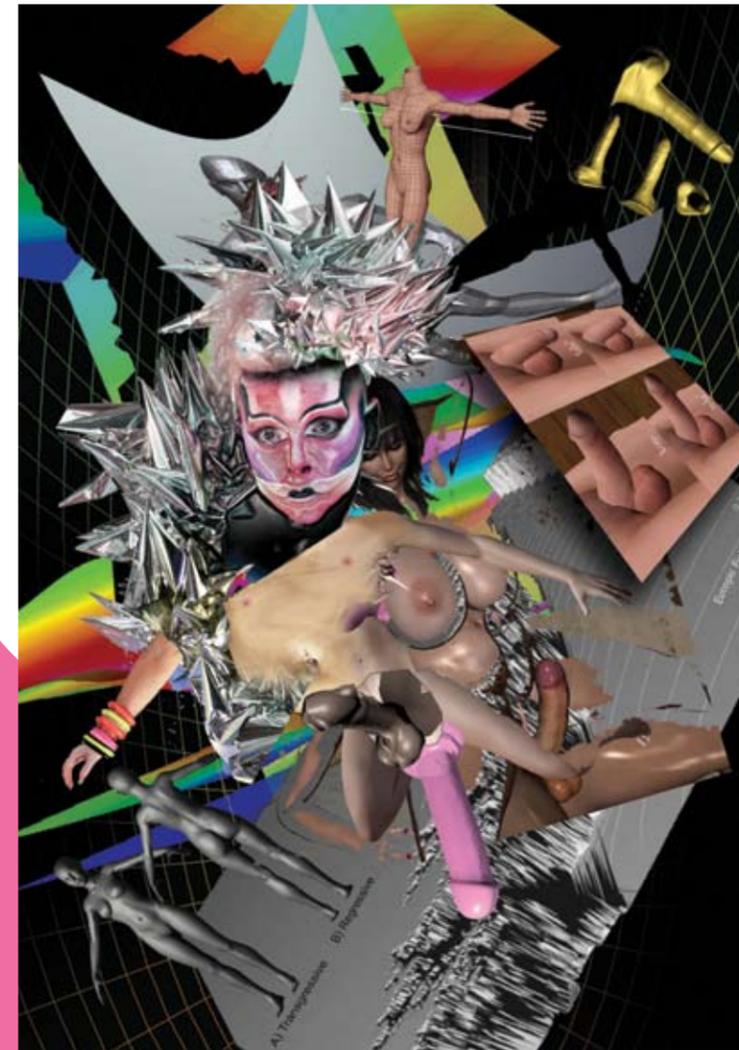
R: A lot of the theorists aren't real or they didn't write what we say they wrote- we often make them say stuff that incriminates or exposes them to a degree that they deserve- or we treat received or trendy ideas and politics in a decidedly sacrilegious way to expose their flaws.

D: Do you get much response to the *Fauxist International* site?

R: It's quite well trafficked, and has hovered around 500 views per week for a really long time. And we get a lotta weird fan mail. It's because of the breadth of the subject matter - from astrophysics to archaeology to fetish to tranny material - so it comes up in a lot of searches. Once one of our (fake) articles got picked up by a major science journal, they published a blurb on it, and as a result there was a massive spike in our visitation hits on the site.

D: What article was it?

R: One on Panspermia, the theory that life on earth started via material coming from other planets or space. It's written as a joke on secular humanism and religion at the same time,



via the idea that perhaps we are formed from the sewage that alien space craft are dumping and that is our evolutionary starting point. It went on to discuss the *Fauxists* as a group promoting that we should shoot our DNA into space to try and seed other planets and terraform them. There's an application form for a kit to sample your DNA to get

involved, and they thought we were writing about the *Fauxists* - aka a 'real organisation' practically offering that service that the theory underpinned.

D: I think you picked up on some of those ideas in your 'Mindless Fleshapoids are Easy: A trans-Viral Technophilic Oz' powerpoint presentation at the *Perv* queerotica film festival in 2010, which if I recall had elaborate diagrams of ladders of sperm shooting from earth into space.

R: That kind of out-there astrobiology and exopolitics is hilarious- the theological end of science, perhaps the occult. There is a collection of letters on the website which are our submissions to different astrobiology and archaeological journals, using some of these theories, and we publish all the rejection letters which say things like "we can't publish this, it's too political, partisan, you are not writing about the physics or the strict biology." It's very much about parodying this colonising mindset where 'we' are going to leave the Earth and transcend the body, transcend this, transcend that, become data beings. Though exopolitics are super interesting, it's about the UFO or alien 'Other' as a redux of the ethnographic or multicultural encounter.

D: We touched on this a little already: a strong theme in your work and performance is 'feminine artifactuality', and the *Fauxist International* website publishes some pieces on 'Femininisation Hypnosis'. Is this real?

R: It's a real field! And there has been an exponential increase in the amount of it - there are heaps of consumer-

a making-of-the-self, a liberation of the 'wrong body' inside the body, a project of inclusion in the liberal colonial nation and the colonised bodies and sexualities that have been done away with, abjected or hyper-sexualised to allow for the trans project. The hyper-sexualised trans body, particularly of colour, and the colonised body as well, each have this abject fetishistic desiring thing coming from a similar, overlapping centre. At one point I was singing "Click go the Shears" and piercing my junk with Australian flags on stage and that's always quite fun. Though the performance lectures are my favourite.

D: Well you give great powerpoint. What brought you to that format for performance?

R: Perfect geek pickup line!... One word: Content. People want a cutesy five minute track with a acontextual strip show. And I want... content. It's not that earnest, but there is an earnestness to it, holistically. So it's another genre play, which allows masses of content, and plays with the lecture format and the authority of knowledge. Surprisingly, we sometimes deliver false material as a vehicle for a political message. In the one you mentioned at *Perv* ('Mindless Fleshapoids Are Easy'), I introduced and discussed all these films that were a political take on 'trans as sci-fi', as a speculative medical body or social threat. But, the damn films just wouldn't play! There were pesky technical problems! And so people are still coming up to me years later, saying, "Oh my god, that was such a good presentation, I am so sorry that the films didn't play. I really want to get that film, it sounds amazing!" Of course there were no such films. It made them really desirous of a film and a politic they believed to be out there. So there is a utopian element in such a faking, a speculative questioning, and then it's just being lazy, and using the 'key Fauxist insight' of faking the truth claims of documentation to make a point. It's also a great way of getting into academic conferences and really fucking with them.



D: Following from what you said about drawing links and questions between colonial cutting of genitals and trans identity, I like the way you draw attention on the *Fauxist International* website to on the one hand to feminisation as an autonomous choice, and the on other, feminisation as a form of torture at Abu Ghraib. Often the importance of the context of these processes gets missed because people are so invested in identity politics, these things can be discussed in a very abstracted manner.

R: You can learn more about identity from these structural institutional currents than you can from any idea of the Self. Trans as a self-making project is one of the ultimate forms of neo-liberal subjectivity. That's why pop-culture is so obsessed with it now.

People are just so fascinated with people who have recreated themselves – it tells the North American success story of the individualised, entrepreneurial self-making project and it transgresses one of the most fundamental social categories, gender. A critical trans politics that engages with the prison-industrial complex, neo-liberalism, migration and bordering and so on isn't on the agenda here in Australia, it's very focused on identity, on the self. That's part of the colonial thing: whether it's the language, identity and writing being 90% north American, or the politic not troubling settler colonialism. The thinking around coalition-building and about how to do politics around trans is totally off here. Trans activism should start with sex workers, drug users, criminalised people, decolonising. Nearly everything that is held out as queer activism here is actually fundamentally erasing of a radical structural analysis.

D: That is certainly true for the marriage campaign, which is so offensive it's unbelievable. I thought that might be good to talk about your project *Club Meta Etcetera* because it connects with contemporary activist practices of memorialising such as the *Trans Day of Remembrance*. The first part of the narrative cycle in *Club Meta Etcetera* is themed 'Screaming Queens and Riot Monuments'. In the rave you give about that first cycle you talk about a 'mourning for militancy' and a nostalgia for a time of clear queer identities. What motivated your inquiry into the strategies and ethics of mourning?



PHOTOS BY HUCKLEBERRY SPIN

R: I have been interested in abject monumentality for ages, in monumentalising the sacrificial economies that hold up the normal world. And queerness and trans are sacrificial economies – the death, the oppression, the constant erasure, but are also beneficiaries of those economies. Monuments are pedagogical, they teach and transmit knowledge, and can be performative. The one regular trans event here each year is a mourning monument - the *Trans Day of Remembrance*. And it is particularly politically fraught. The vast majority of trans people around the world that are killed are trans people of colour and sex workers. But there is this archive building – websites and lists – done by north American and white trans people, which suggest that these deaths are attributable to trans-ness, and presume to speak for these people who have died. It's a very interesting white-washing of violence and death. It lacks an analysis of structural violence: the police-state, the daily minutia of grinding, eventless slow death- and centres an individualised, perpetrator perspective of violence. You have to be a certain kind of queer or trans person, and be killed in a certain way to become memorialised, and another to be the beneficiary of that same violence. It's fucked up. Hagiography is another thing I have worked on a lot – the making of saints, and trans saints - and this problematic white-washing of their lives whether they were drug users or sex workers or whatever, to make these normative monuments. All the names of dead trans people that we know – that get written about or have movies made about them – are constructed through very particular forms of death, violence and subjectivity.

I have done lots of exhibitions and performance around monumentality. For instance, considering genocide museums and their meteoric rise in the last ten years, I look at how they function- their aesthetics, their visitor experience- and at the politics of tourism around atrocities and genocide. In Argentina, some of those institutions of torture involved in 'the disappearances' have been reopened as museums. A museum has been built into Abu Ghraib, likewise in some of the places where people were held and tortured on islands in the Atlantic slave trade.



Adopting a critical approach to monumentality complicates identity and a lot of classic tenets of queer unity. The whitewashing of Stonewall is a classic example. Forty years on, how is Stonewall remembered today? It is definitely not represented as a bunch of queens and trans people and sex workers of colour having a riot against the police state. How do you memorialise a riot? You have another one - that is what we need. We don't need a fucking statue. And we don't need the gay-stream saying "Stonewall is our event, this is where we started".

Thinking about the work that groups like Gay Shame San Francisco do - they have a big poster saying "A new era of AIDS rage!" - that is what they want, a reinvigorated militancy that references the tactics and the choreography of ACT-UP's gay AIDS activism. ACT UP's activism was a choreographed performative movement often using quite scripted actions and props, very photogenic. But now with AIDS as a globalised disease which emerges from structural and developmental issues has become a poor, global south disease, it is not gay anymore. So at once there is a seeming mourning in queer and AIDS activism for this point of unity that used to generate and focus rage, and the mourning for rage as a tactic and as a unifier. This is where queerness as an identity doesn't hold, you can't do AIDS rage as 'queer' because it has proliferated beyond that boundary. It's really interesting quandary for rage as a tactic and mourning for an era of militant queerness.

D: These are issues I am thinking about as well because 2012 is the 150th anniversary of the NSW Police, and some of us want to work on some kind of memorialising of deaths in custody, as a contrast to the official memorialising of police deaths while on duty. Also one of the posters in the Sydney Cross Border Collective poster project focuses on a list of names of persons who have died at the border, but reveals that these deaths are not just those on boats in journeys to Australia but also in police and immigration chases and so on. At the same time, as we are doing multiple posters, it ameliorates some of the challenges that emerge from the way that a focus on death can invoke reliance on trauma and pain to authorise political claims, and at the same time, the fact that it is a poster series rather than a single poster, guards against how a focus on deaths that are essentially unknowable can invisibilise the agency and strength of those persons.

R: For the *Trans Day of Remembrance* this year, people wanted to read a list of Australian trans people who had been killed, and so the conversation became, "where do we get this list? why doesn't this list exist?". Minority politics is like "we need

some numbers, we need a list". Which necessarily, critically became: "Who can make that list? What does it mean to make that list?" For me, this is critical monumentality. Slow death or 'near life' and 'bare life' interests me as well. I don't need to be stabbed 16 times. It is the minutiae of consistent daily prejudice and shame or threat that is what the standard activist monumental analysis can't capture. Like the slow death that is Villawood Immigration Detention Centre, its interminable incarceration...

D: ...and the future mental incarceration, it's not just that time in detention...

R: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. "Post-Traumatic subjectivities" as central to contemporary identity politics...?

D: And now I have colonised your interview...

R: And that's good because talking about trans politics or monumentality should mean talking about immigration, gay marriage in terms of citizenship, police violence and colonialism.

D: Wanna say anything else about *Club Meta Etcetera*? It's such a massive ambitious exciting project...

R: It will start in 2013 in Sydney. The jokey by-line for it is "queer meta-clubbing for braniac and dissolute weirdos alike... and all you can get away with Sunday night series of interventions, installations and insurrections from the trough to the street." It is structured around a six-part narrative cycle bringing in the military industrial complex, homonormativity, the Child, critical science... all these different things, which are each grounded in a text-base. Part of it is also exploring how to perform some of these things: how do you perform about drone warfare?; how do you perform about securocratic warfare and the queer body?; what does re-performing ACT-UP mean? In these examples you already get this massive tension between invisibilised, extraterritorial, omniscient violence, and queerness in a settler colony. Basically I'm trying to ask for way more from queer performance and politics here.

So every week there will be different performers, decorators, writers. It's about having happenings in the toilets, out onto the street, a tour to the war memorial at 2am... making a club experience into this thing where there is this bit like you are simultaneously in a conference, a weird installation, a protest, a dance party. It is putting content, teaching and monumentality into a space that is generally meant to negate all that, and content that it doesn't usually reach for...

Generally, one of my big methodological focuses is about dovetailing-finding a form that can combine my club kid-freak-whore sides- sex, dancing, drugs, make up, weird performance and costumes- with textuality, theory, politics. The 3am scene is a challenge because it is automatically an uphill battle to get content into a club space, more so than even a queer performance space. You can't even guarantee people can hear you, see straight, or stand up. So it's a mashing together of forms of socialising and knowledge production I'm quipping as "sex and drugs and rigmarole".

We always want more Regrette
regretteetcetera.wordpress.com
thefauxistinternational.wordpress.com
clubmetaetcetera.wordpress.com

CENTREFOLD MODEL & CONCEPT, MAKE-UP, COSTUMES
 & TEXT: REGRETTE ETCETERA
 PHOTOGRAPHY: CHLOE HUGHES
 DESIGN & GRAPHICS: OLIVER VAN DER LUGT
 WITH THANKS TO HOLLY FLUXX

HOMAGE TO KEN DONE (OPPOSITE PAGE)
 MODEL AND CONCEPT: KELLI JEAN DRINKWATER.
 PHOTOGRAPHY: PENELOPE BENTON
 MAKE UP: ANTO CHRIST
 POST PRODUCTION: TRISTAN STILL