

### **Don't Worry Baby**

Liss LaFleur

April 10 - May 15, 2021

Public Open House coinciding with Dallas Gallery Day April 17, 2021.

Galleri Urbane is honored to present *Don't Worry Baby* by Liss LaFleur, the Denton-based artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. The show features the third and latest installment of LaFleur's *Sapphic Serenade* body of work, an ongoing series of biennially produced site-specific installations that combines video, performance and synthetic fringe. Together with the first work in a new photographic series, the installation explores queer subjectivity, histories and visibility.

Anchoring the exhibition is the *Sapphic Serenade's* latest work *Don't Worry Baby* (2020), first exhibited in the exhibition *Slowed and Thrown* at the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston. Preceded by *You Belong to Me* (2016) and *Bang Bang* (2018), *Don't Worry Baby* and each video installation in the series features the artist embodying a fictional queer persona lip-synching to an extremely slowed, remixed version of a popular love song from 1950-1970. In *Don't Worry Baby*, a projection through five layers of suspended purple fringe displays LaFleur personifying a drag king role to perform the 1964 Beach Boy's song of the same name. The purple fringe is echoed by the performer's monochromatic background, imbuing the space with a purple glow. In assuming this role, LaFleur questions what happens when queer women embody harmonies originally written and performed by white cis men who were singing about their heterosexual love. The absurdly slow audio encourages viewers to spend time with the installation and allows LaFleur's performed queer identity to take up greater space.

Accompanying the installation and exhibited for the first time is the inaugural work of LaFleur's *Burning Butch* series. In this newly developed body of work, LaFleur draws from her long-standing interest in utilizing archives to contemporize their objects and images. Combing through images in the expansive Lesbian Herstory Archives, LaFleur searches for photographic and ephemeral documentation of queer ancestry between the years of 1950-1970. Using a flatbed scanner she aggressively crops and disassembles the sourced images, layering atop with colored neon glass that playfully references the phrases, symbols, and designs pulled from the archive's extensive handmade protest button collection. In the source material for *Jill Johnston sitting on a Roof, Cape Cod, MA* (2021), the author and critic known for her separatist views is pictured with a relaxed self-assuredness, reclining with opened legs. LaFleur enlarges and crops the image to highlight her soft butch features, utilizing purple neon to focus on her popped denim collar and the lock of hair resting on it. In this work and the series as a whole, LaFleur provides context for the faux personas developed in the *Sapphic Serenades*: the drag king, the baby butch, the femme. It also allows LaFleur to talk back and even be critical of an archive and figures like Jill Johnston, whose non-intersectional views clash with contemporary feminism.

Utilizing technology, LaFleur creates a space where the lived experiences of queer predecessors and the fabricated stories of imagined folk exist in tandem. Through a tender, nostalgic approach she offers viewers the opportunity to renegotiate the past. This radical re-envisioning aims attention to the overlooked perspectives of these figures, ensuring their love, endurance and survival.

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**Liss LaFleur** is an interdisciplinary artist based out of Texas. Her projects address issues of sexism, queer culture, protest, and telepresence. She is the recipient of a John F. Kennedy Citizen Artist Fellowship (2020-21), and an Immersive Scholar grant awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (2018). Notable representations of her work include the TATE (London); the Reykjavik Art Museum (Iceland); Contemporary Art Museum (Houston); and the Czong Institute for Contemporary Art (South Korea). Liss is currently a Professor of New Media Art at the University of North Texas.