

When we are grossed out by the muck of shit and sex, the ejection of body fluids, and the penetration of holes, according to Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva, our gag reflex is a reaction to the disruption of the symbolic order. “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health,” she writes in her seminal feminist-psychoanalytic text *Powers of Horror*, “that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”<sup>1</sup>

FlucT, the performance collaboration between artists Sigrid Lauren and Monica Mirabile, embodies in their name a celebration of this ambiguity, one posed in opposition to stasis and order. In their choreographies, they pantomime sexy and gross tableaux. They simulate fucking—one woman bends the other in front of her, pulling her partner with mechanical disinterest up and down an invisible penis. They imitate nursing—the “mother” yanking the suckling “child” towards and away with the same impartial automation. These instances of role-play woven into their athletic mode of dance invoke an uncomfortable space where the boundaries between animal, human, and machine blur. Humping meets glitching.

FlucT’s work takes the shape of live performance and video art, as well as photography and performance artifacts. In Fall 2016, they premiered *SISSY JOKER LA PIETA* at New York’s Maccarone Gallery in conjunction with the show *COMING TO POWER: 25 Years of Sexually X-Plicit Art By Women*, which restaged a landmark group exhibition from 1993 with work by Hannah Wilke, Carolee Schneemann, Yoko Ono, Marilyn Minter, and Cindy Sherman. In early 2017, FlucT’s sculptural video installa-

tion *Alienated Labor* was included in the group show *Without a Body* at Andrea Rosen Gallery and later acquired by the Whitney Museum. While these two works, and the majority of what Lauren and Mirabile create as FlucT, feature the two women as both authors and principal performers, their practice is fluid and expands to include works with larger casts. In May 2017, they presented the 18-person *UpwardFacing-ControlTableTop* at the Lever House, translating their interrogations of intimacy and interdependence to a many-gendered multi-being organism.

Whatever the size of the cast, there’s always at least two bodies in a FlucT work. Performing coordination, collaboration, and contraposition, their choreographies explore how we define ourselves in relation to others. For Kristeva, abjection is a way to understand how imaginary borders separate the self from that which threatens the self. Similarly, with their focus on relationality, FlucT explores the shared territory of identity, the body, and semiotics. Together, Lauren and Mirabile climb on top of each other’s shoulders and wrap their legs around one another’s waists, their lifts and holds at once gesturing at codependence and building a figurative language. In *SISSY JOKER LA PIETA*, their limbs contort together to illustrate something vulva-like and then to reference an automatic firearm—one woman mimics the act of locking and loading the other’s leg. What their bodies signify is constantly shifting. “The place of the abject,” explains Kristeva, “is where meaning collapses, the place where I am not.”<sup>2</sup>

The frantic shifts in a FlucT performance are triggered and enhanced by the sample-heavy soundtracks they are performed to. The dancers’ bodies lurch to the looping fragments





from pop songs and reality TV show shouting matches, instructional video narrations and lifestyle talk show interviews. It's an assault of sonic information and interruption suggesting mainstream media's controlling forces. FlucT's reactive relationship to these splintered soundtracks suggests how culture choreographs our bodies into an obedient acceptance of the symbolic order. "CULTURE IS NOT YOUR FRIEND," a phrase featured as a distorted sample at the end of every duo FlucT performance and the title of their 2016 solo exhibition at Baltimore's Platform Gallery references a lecture by ethnobotanist Terence McKenna,<sup>3</sup> who argues that the brainwashing, disempowering, and dehumanizing effects of culture are in the interest of dominant institutions and not the interest of the people.

FlucT's work strives to represent from a psychoanalytic perspective how networked communications, institutionalized prejudices, and capitalist civilization reinforce one another. Embodying twerking androids and blinking dolls, their choreographed movements allude to sexism, automation, and bodies for sale. They thrash and crash around too, possessed by seemingly violent impulses. Over the six years they've been working together, Lauren and Mirabile have developed a movement vocabulary they call gaping, glitching, and gushing, based on how the body and mind process capitalism. Gaping, for instance, refers to feeling empty and the desire to buy things. Glitching points to a corporeal system failure when efforts to fill that void don't work. And gushing invokes oversaturation in the wake of compulsive consumption. FlucT's naming conventions suggest an abject-oriented understanding of living under capitalism (gaping, gushing), updated to our contemporary era of post-industrial electrostimulation (glitching), while their visceral demonstration of these concepts feels cathartic.

By entering their bodies into the contemporary art marketplace, FlucT negotiates the same relationships of sexism, culture, and capitalism that their work thematizes. They aim to infiltrate the system at once as psychoanalytic philosophers, queer clowns, and women shaking their

asses for money. When their flesh pulsates at near inhuman frequencies, it's confusing if the vibrations are working their way from the inside out or the outside in. "The abject is perverse," contends Kristeva, "because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them."<sup>4</sup> Sexy and gross, attractive and repulsive, perverse and powerful, FlucT uses contradiction and visceral contention to disturb and disrupt the viewer's psychology with the hope of hacking into the dehumanizing systems that order our contemporary experience of alienation.

1. J. KRISTEVA, *POWERS OF HORROR* (NEW YORK: COLUMBIA, 1982), P. 4.
2. *IBID.*, P. 2.
3. T. MCKENNA, "THE CULTURE IS NOT YOUR FRIEND," [HTTP://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM](http://www.youtube.com) (FEBRUARY 23, 2012).
4. J. KRISTEVA, *OP. CIT.*, P. 15.

All images: Sissy Joker La Pieta, 2016  
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