

František Fekete
Fluid Identity Club

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“Fluid identity is created when a particular milieu is excessively closed off and self-affirming. But then it opens itself up to the world, and we come to a realization. We are someone else. We are someone else *each and every time*. But who? We can be anyone, our identity is fluid...” Fluid Identity Club is an imaginary place visited by people yearning to change and share their character, gender, interests, and appearance. People who want to escape from the shackles of traditional social structures. People willing to give up their unambiguous identity in favor of choice.

František Fekete’s latest exhibition, *Fluid Identity Club*, expands on his earlier *Google Your Melancholy* (2017), which consisted of digital collages, animation, text-based video, and a musical soundtrack. To these, he has added the suggestive atmosphere (in particular in terms of light and space) of a music club, which, together with his original text, is designed to activate the viewer’s emotions. Like his art installations, František Fekete’s texts contain two important levels of meaning: firstly, they are an introspective exploration of his own mental processes; and secondly, they are a series of poetic and metaphysical pictures of man’s relationship to today’s technologically-based world. The objective of all his installations is to engage in communication on the conceptual as well as emotional level.

Fluid Identity Club presents fragments of objects, images, and ideas that emerge from virtual space and alternative worlds – worlds in which man is an absolute individual, an immediate content without any preconceived relations; where relationships are constantly changing in response to the current circumstances. *Fluid Identity Club* lets us look into these worlds and gives us a fleeting idea of their moods. Somewhat surprisingly, it does not make a particularly joyful impression, but evokes feelings of melancholy and anxiety and raises questions as to how, in a world of fluid identities, we can preserve a level integrity necessary for maintaining our spiritual balance. “Once we suffocated in the prison of conformity, then we drowned in the ocean of choice,” writes Michael Foley in “Is the Age of Individualism Coming to an End?” (2017). He recommends that in order to preserve our mental health we must maintain constant tension between the need for personal freedom and the demands of others. The demands made by traditional society are impossible to bear, but rejecting all limitations is not the answer, either. In his original text, which is an integral part of the exhibition, František Fekete confirms this proposition: “To understand oneself and human weakness, and to choose dependence.” But his vision is hardly pessimistic. Working within the intentions of contemporary post-humanism, he arrives at a positive (or rather, techno-optimistic) solution. Perhaps we are losing our “learned” identities within subjective, virtual, and manipulated realities, and perhaps it will be virtuality that helps us to break free from self-destructive societal prejudices and to find our true non-digitized self.

We are all constantly playing a game of “identity,” but it is amazingly attractive to try to find ourselves in the labyrinth of identities, because: “I am in actuality somewhere deep. I am not omnipresent. ... For man today to be whole, he must split himself. But the divided parts

cannot be kept inside; they must be hidden. One way of hiding things is to let them float freely.” (Fr. Fekete, www.fluididentity.club).

František Fekete has various different roles in the real world of art as well. He has spent the past several years working as a curator, primarily for Prague’s Galerie 35m2. Before that, he was a co-founder of and curator at Pilsen’s Vestřed contemporary art gallery (2013–2014), and he also curated the 2016 FAMUFEST exhibition (2016). The name František Fekete has appeared underneath articles written for the Artlist website, reviews on Artalk, and elsewhere, such as in Peter Fabo’s book *Nail Art* (2017) and on the website for *Fluid Identity Club* (2018).

Last year, Fekete organized a performative exhibition at the G99 Gallery (Brno House of Arts), in which he combined these two previously separate roles (artist and curator) in a remarkable manner. In *TBA* (2017), František Fekete physically realized six conceptual scripts sent to him by six invited artists: Michal Pěchouček, Pamela Kuřáková, Sam Sráč, Světlana Spirina, Dominik Gajarský, and Laura Trenčanská. In the gallery, where he personally and publicly prepared the entire project, he exhibited documentation of all these performative realizations, whose authorship of this Barthean experimentation with conceptual art could be described as fluidly collective. The only way the audience could understand the original concept was through its anonymous performance by a second person. *TBA* explicitly presented the work as “a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture” (Roland Barthes, *Death of the Author*, 1967), while the complicated structure and the fact that during process the various authors communicated only via email forms a direct bridge to the subject of virtual identity.

As a student of art, František Fekete has been making his own art for more than five years. One highly characteristic feature of his work is a fluidity between media: Fekete’s installations incorporate and combine moving images, original text, digital collages, and graphic design. And yet, their founding element is the constant tension between the physical object and the digital message – whether in the form of text or the moving image. With the passage of time, his work increasingly raises questions as to man’s relationship to both these dimensions. As the literary critic N. Katherine Hayles has written, there is a difference between man as self-regulating mechanism whose boundaries are clearly defined vis-à-vis his environment, and man woven into a cycle of information that transforms him completely.

Another work, realized last year in collaboration with Nina Grůňová, a student from FAMU’s Center of Audiovisual Studies, was called *Scan My Guilt* (Galerie Cyril, Prostějov, 2017, curator David Bartoš). This installation of photographic objects (cross-sections of the human body) was accompanied by a fictitious interview between a judge/digital being from the distant future and a real murderer sentenced to death in the 1990s. The murderer’s body was frozen for scientific purposes, cut up, scanned, and transformed into a digital object called Adam. The artists were here exploring the question of “what this process did to the murderer’s guilt”, which (whether individual or collective) is in this case a positive delineation of a human being. Adam is a metaphor for the virtual identity that this transcendental dimension in all likelihood is lacking.

The effort to combine the level of exact data with the humanistically inexact approach of the art world characterizes most of František Fekete’s art. He explicitly explored this subject in his graduation work entitled *Things That I Don’t Understand* (BA, studio of Milena Dopitová at the University of Western Bohemia’s Faculty of Art and Design, 2015) and which he

loosely expanded on in *Things That Fascinate Me* (2015). In so doing, he touched on Bruno Latour's theory of science, which sees scientific activity not as an exact procedure or set of principles, but as a system of idea, oral traditions, and specific cultural practices.

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