ANOMALIES

INTERVENTIONS
INTO THE DIGITIZED
FEMININE SPACE

CO-CURATED BY :
JULEANA ENRIGHT

By Juleana Enright

In 1991 the self-declared "mercenaries of slime" VNS Matrix ushered in their rallying cry, a quippy cyber feminist manifesto in which they unabashedly proclaimed the title of the "saboteurs of big daddy mainstream," the symbolic viruses or glitches of the overwhelmingly cis-male tech world / cyber space. Hot on the heels of the likes of Valerie Solana's' "cutting up men" manifesto – a counterculture text male irrelevance – they strove to disrupt the inherent marker of technology as assigned to the male default and reclaim it as a feminine digital landscape.

And while their anarchic poetry provided a cybercultural freedom for some, its archaic language isolated others.

Enter spin-offs; enter sub-genres; enter critique; enter cyborg.

As if the 90s didn't already feel disjointed and contradictory, in the same decade, Donna Haraway released her own manifesto daring to challenge the hierarchical bodily-based binaries and biology-based exclusionary vernacular VNS failed to recognize, i.e. trans and non-binary experiences, BIPOC voices; the basic concepts of intersectionality. Can we fear the machine if we are the machine?

Enter more flaws; enter oppressive legacies of the cyberfeminist genesis.

Haraway's metaphor "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism—in short, cyborgs," — aka the cyborgian dream of dissolution of body and gender dualisms — was closer to this intersectional digital utopian landscape but still had its flaws. For her very own cyborg dream had militaristic origins thus placing them in direct contact with patriarchal lineage, humanist stories, linear progress, dichotomies. How do we live in a post-gender social realm while being a man-made machine? In the words of Legacy Russel in Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto, "We fail to function in a machine that was not built for us."

And yet, while we become essentially digitized, increasingly mediated by technology, are we not cyborgian? Plot twist.

When the Post-Cyber Feminist International met in 2017, their conference set out to "examine what new technologies can still offer, how to use them positively, and how online spaces might be queered and hacked," Hettie Judah, *Ungender, deprogram, urinate: improve your life with post-cyber international feminism!*, in *The Guardian*.

> *Cyberfeminism circa 1991 had glaring insufficiencies. The first ramraid on technology's sanctified halls was a gender war, paying little heed to the political economy of technological production and consumption... But that first action, with all its insufficiencies, smashed the field wide open and these gaps provided pivot points towards a more intersectional cyberfeminism.*
> — Virginia Barratt, "From C to X: Networked Feminisms," in *Ars Electronica*

Where cyberfeminism followed in the footsteps of a wave of feminism that left a lot of voices out of the conversation, glitch feminism, coined by Russell, sought to invite different voices beyond the binary, and use the online space as a way of world building that counters patriarchy. Cyber activism, an agency where cyberspace, digital art and new media can be used as a template for world building, disrupting the male-dominated fields where only certain people's work can be taken as canonical.

Exploring the world of post-cyberfeminism and glitch feminism, Ladylike's experimental art exhibition, "**Anomalies: Interventions into the Digitized Feminine Space**" sets out to examine the feminine as a continuum. And while it's easy to look at this word and equate it with "female," easy to shove this word into a binary box, there's errors and fractures when we get too rigid.

> *The body is a text: every time we define ourselves, we choose definitions — names — that reduce the ways our bodies can read. Decolonizing the binary body requires us to remain in perpetual motion; accidental bodies that, in their error, refuse definition and, as such, defy language. Forcing the failure of words, we become impossible. Impossible, we cannot be named. What is a body without a name? An error. - Legacy Russel*

How do we occupy a space — technology — that is in itself infinite? In a digitized era where there is calculated curiosity, limitless curation and intentional mendacity, how do we define what's not supposed to exist?

Which brings us to the paradox of hyper visible and rendered invisible, another theme **Anomalies** seeks to tackle. When the divide between the digital and the real world no longer exists – enter the digital dualism of AFK and IRL – how do we find out who we are in this digital era? Where do we create the space to explore our identity? How can we come together in solidarity?

I think of the work of Juliana Huxtable, Sondra Perry, boychild, Victoria Sin, and Kia LaBeija — those who have traveled through the glitch in their work and fused fluidity in virtual space — and the words of writer, professor, curator and artist Katie Peyton Hofstadter, "Glitch forces failures and triggers disorder but can also create space in which reclamation and liberation can be practiced."

If we set out under the informed guise that technology is not neutral, it is not innocent in the divide and isolation it created while operating as male-distinguished, we can use these digital texts and bodies of work found in **Anomalies** to reflect and crystallize the biases already present in society. These systems/cyber-induced spaces at their origin worked best for the identities that designed them: mostly cisgender, white, fit, straight men. When others attempt to participate, they often encounter errors, failures, and glitch.

Enter participation; enter glitch.

As a curator for **Anomalies** (and a contradictory cyborg who contains multiples*), I probe you to enter this space with the following themes, questions, concepts in mind:

The constant flux of visibility and concealment

Unveiled nuances and hidden layers of a data-driven world

Cultural apprehensions concerning privacy, transparency, and the fear of being exposed

Duality of the observer and the world's gaze

And most importantly, what role you play in the glitch of it all.

*See Walt Whitman "Song of Myself"

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BIO

My work explores queer narratives while integrating utopic theory influenced by digital platforms and historical imagery. Combining digital media work, such as moving-image, with flamboyant materials my work recontextualizes perceptions of narcissism and queer identity through iconography.

STATEMENT

My multimedia installations integrate digital practices and queer narratives influenced by utopic theory with historical queer imagery. Firmly established in image-making, my work takes form through sculptural objects and installations assisted by digital editing software. Moving images convey my conceptual interests, while technology fulfills my spatial objectives. Whether using grand-scale projections, reflective films as refractive lenses, or video monitors placed directly on the ground, my work is site responsive subtly shifting between venues.

Currently, I work with a projection mapping software inverting moving images into specific forms of fig leaves, narcissus, and hyacinth flowers engaging conversations of beauty and salvation. Digitally mapped figures of the body are further altered through video monitors and controlled light environments attaining an artificial persona heightened by the complete absence of sound. I am interested in our relationship with technology, how one perceives identity through a filtered world, and questioning how moving images as installations envision alternative queer futures.

La.dy.Like Duo

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BIO

Hailing from the creative heart of St. Paul, interdisciplinary artists and educators Andrea Bagdon and Spencer Legendre-Gillespie founded the Ladylike Experimental art project in July of 2022 as a means to interrogate their relationship to femininity and to be an inclusive discovery for all femme-identifying persons.

Their collaborative projects, characterized by their nuanced insights and unapologetic stance, offer a fresh perspective, providing a broader understanding of the varied experiences of femme-identity. As educators, they extend this vision to their students, nurturing a space for dialogue, growth, and a deeper connection to the self and the world.

Embodying the spirit of feminist aesthetics, the Ladylike Experimental Art Project is a testament to the power of collaborative exploration and the ever-evolving narrative of femme identity in today's world.

Andrea Bagdon

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BIO

Andrea Bagdon is an artist and educator based in the Twin Cities. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Some of her most notable exhibitions include the College of Art Association Conference in Chicago, Fringe Bath Arts Festival in London, and Project Gallery V in New York. Her paintings were selected to appear in the New American Paintings West Issue, No. 156.

Andrea holds a BFA from Northern Arizona University and an MFA from Colorado State University. She has taught at Colorado State University and now serves as a College Board-certified advanced placement art instructor at a college preparatory high school in the Twin Cities. She was an artist resident at the Signal Culture Experimental Media Residency in July of 2023 and is currently a MFA candidate Mentor at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

STATEMENT

Andrea's hybridized practice examines the symbolic order of femininity through experimental video, painting, and mixed media. Through her research, Andrea questions aesthetic theory and its attitude toward gender while engaging in an interdisciplinary artistic dialog.

Janet Regina

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BIO

Janet Regina is a queer filmmaker from Minneapolis. After graduating from the screenwriting program at MCTC in 2017, she began writing for multiple local short film programs, as well as delving into cinematography to aid in her storytelling.

STATEMENT

I prefer to lean into works that feel dreamy and nostalgic. Filmmaking has always been a form of escapism to me, and I think combining that feeling of, "what if?" with common experiences, I can try to create something that feels new and different, yet familiar and relatable.

DESCRIPTION

"CRUSH" was originally made for FEELSWORLDWIDE, a queer dance and performance event. When hearing the theme (crush), I was tasked with creating a visual representation of the feeling of new infatuation. It's blissful, it's confusing, it's dizzying, and it can be, well, crushing. I was able to make this piece with the help of Nyala Sarita, Madison Lutz, Tala Sabri, and with the encouragement of Juleana Enright and Dom Laba.
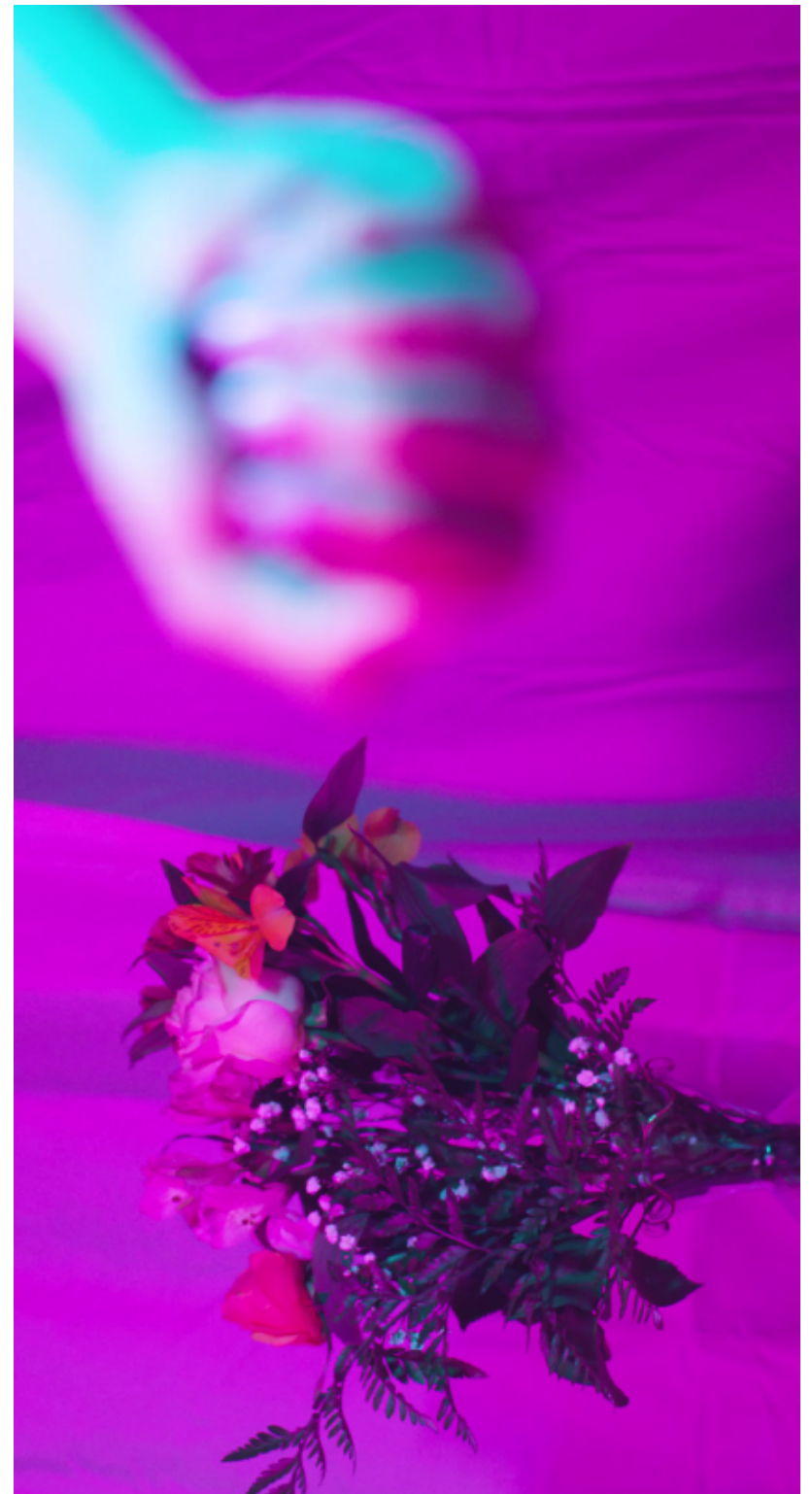
Sarah Maricha White

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BIO

Sarah's visual and sonic work has been featured at the International Center of Photography and the Museum of Contemporary African Diaspora Arts in New York, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Masden Gustafson Gallery at Film North, SooVAC, Public Functionary, and the Walker Art Center. Sarah is currently expanding and exploring new mediums as she studies deeper and deeper into unlearning and deconditioning old "programming."

STATEMENT

Sarah Maricha White (Minneapolis, MN) is a Mama, multimedia artist, trauma informed body practitioner, lyricist and abolitionist based in Minneapolis. Sarah's work aims to chip away at the systemic chains that seep into our nervous systems & push us out of our bodies.

To find home everywhere within, during times of upheaval and resistance.

Her almost decade-long studies in trauma and healing through pleasure, sensuality, neuroplasticity, ritual, ceremony, presence and soil - inspire her art.

Black, Defiant, Queer, Here!
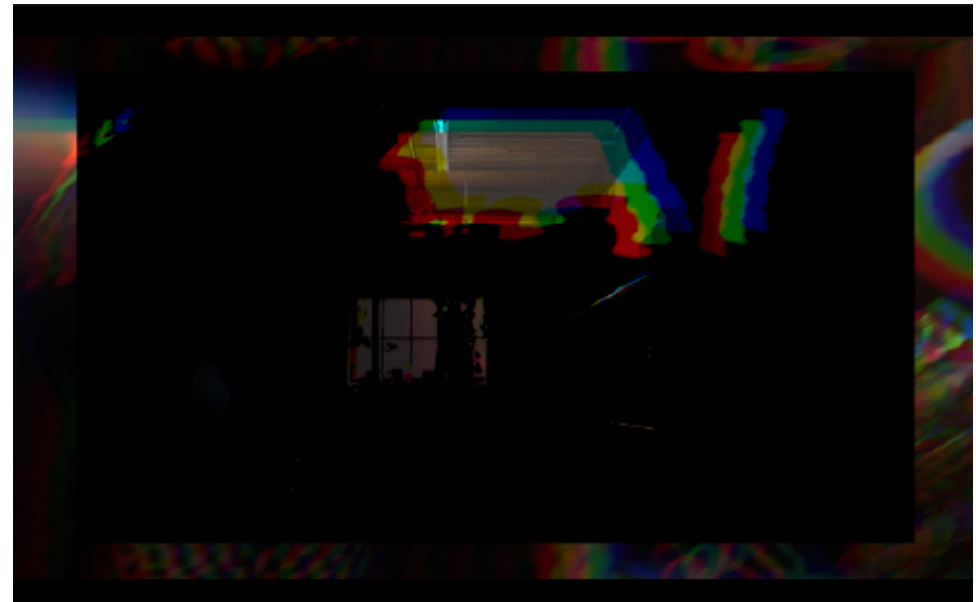
Ellen Mueller

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BIO

Ellen Mueller has exhibited nationally and internationally as an interdisciplinary artist exploring issues related to the environment and capitalism as it affects daily life. She lives and works in Minneapolis, MN, received her MFA from University of South Florida, and has authored multiple zines, artist books, and textbooks. More at EllenMueller.com and @EllenMMueller on Instagram.

STATEMENT

This work was developed in the months directly before and after the 2016 American presidential election. I use the cheerleader as a compelling allegorical archetype when considering the paradoxical requirements of being a presidential candidate who identifies as a woman. I am interested in what it takes to maintain the duality of being both a leader and a conformist; to be simultaneously an individual and a team member; being cheerful, on-point, ready, and prepared. What it takes to be a follower, a supporter, a woman, a patriot, a hero, a human; being trustworthy, loyal, fearless, bold, loud, synchronized, and well-practiced. I am asking questions about how this cliché of coexisting opposites is constructed and what are we left with after deconstruction.
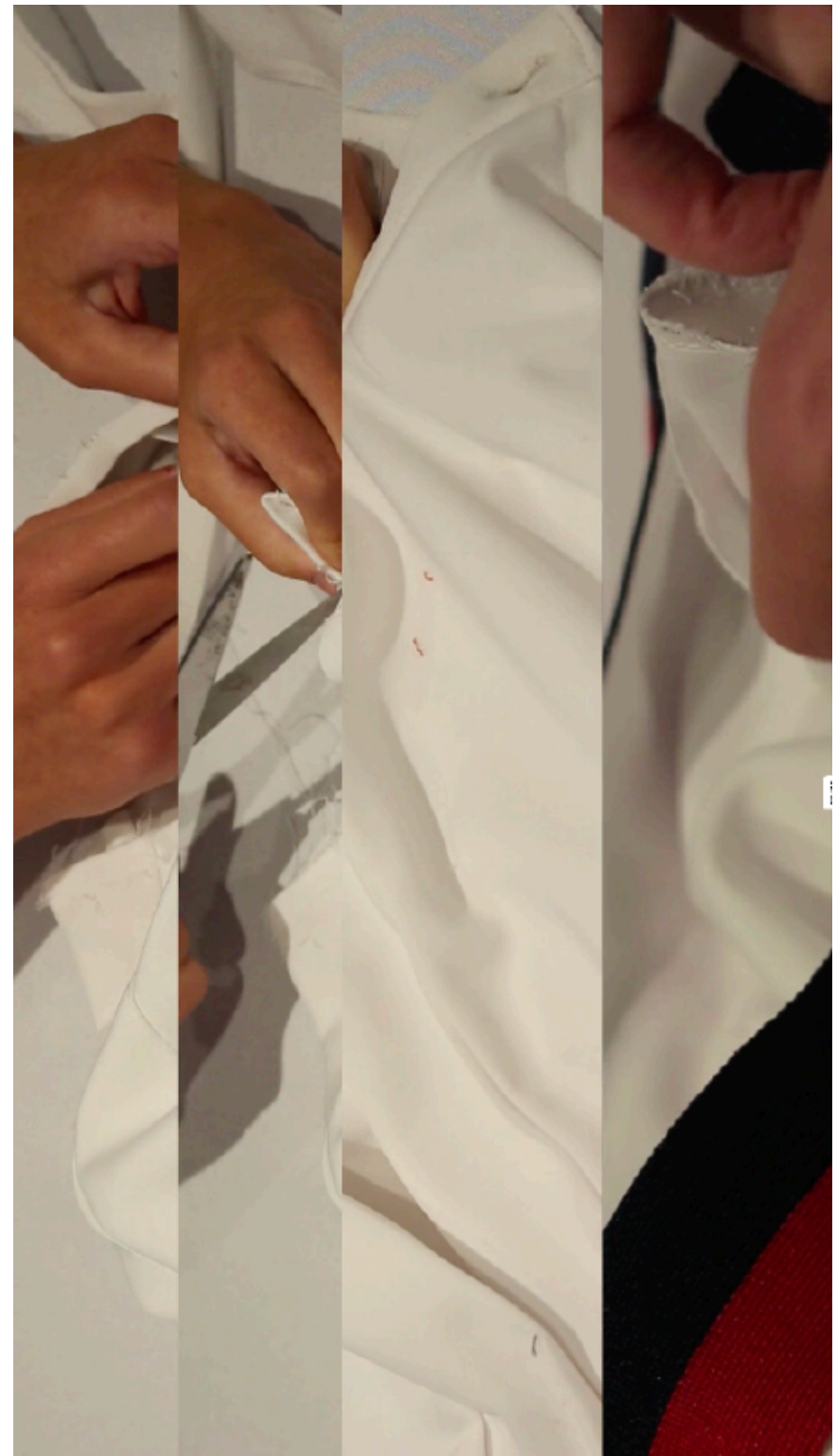
Ivonne Yañez

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BIO

Ivonne Yáñez is an interdisciplinary artist and fashion designer from México City. In 2023 she graduated with a Master of Fine Arts Program from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. She holds bachelor degree in fashion design from both the Universidad del Valle de México, México City, and from the Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, in Milan. While presently, she is focusing on creating immersive installations, her background is in fashion media and retail design in México City. Her work has been exhibited at Rochester Art Center, Soovac, Gallery 148, and Gamut Gallery and Random Access Gallery in Syracuse, NY.

She works with Minneapolis Textile Center as the Program Coordinator of the Mining Mending Exhibition and at Interact Center for the Visual Arts as a Fiber Specialist.

STATEMENT

I´m an interdisciplinary artist originally from Mexico City working between soft sculpture, installation, video-projection, and painting who utilizes dreams as the medium to represent an ephemeral view of reality. I explore the subjects of dreams and surrealism via different mediums, ranging from watercolor painting to installation art and soft sculpture. Over the past 18 months of my MFA journey at Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) I´ve found it interesting how my initial watercolor paintings inform my sculptures and vice versa; recently I have been interested in producing pieces that create a common thread between the content of my paintings and the texture of the material in my sculptures. I combine my past training as a fashion designer with sculpture due to the three-dimensionality of the human shape and the fine art process.

In my practice, I amplify the disproportions that can be experienced while dreaming, blending memories and traditional objects that belong to the traditional Mexican culture such as the Milagros and Floreros de Tlaquepaque. I take references from dreams and superstitions I have heard since I was a kid. Moreover, my work has taken an introspective and emotional charge. It engages themes like memory and archival imagery in atemporal moments when the present meets the past to be situated in the same story. This exhibition explores the theme of magic, blending traditional objects from my country like the vases and other places of Latin America that believe in ritual objects.
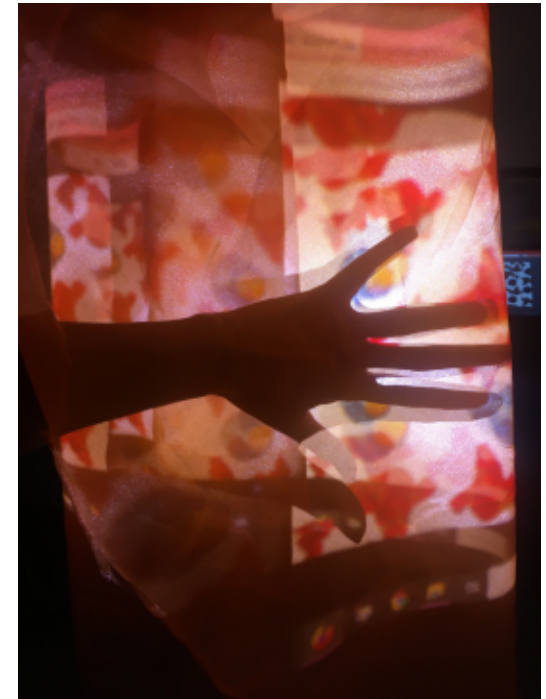
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BIO

Shawna Lee is a Chinese-Hawaiian Minneapolis video artist who creates live visuals and videos with modular video synthesizers. Over the last 7 years she has participated in gallery shows, collaborated on audio/visual projects, co-led video art workshops, created and collaborated on several music videos, had an installation at the Walker Art Center's 2019 Avant Garden, and assisted with setting up and participated in the first U.S. experimental video art convention, Vidicon.

STATEMENT

I make video art using rack mounted modular video synthesizers, modified electronic video equipment, and devices intended to create effects and distort images. I have used a combination of new and old hardware to make the synthesized images, making it a fun and unique challenge when creating visuals for a live show.

My initial interest in video has been based on play and familiarity. Using technology that's tactile and nostalgic from my youth, I can rely upon my ears, sensitivity, and intuition when I make visuals in response to music and sound. The connection I have to video has been based on community and collaboration, mainly how I've absorbed knowledge but learning through playing with others.

There's something that was incredibly freeing and limitless to video synthesizers. It can take work and patience to find the nuances of shape, color, movement and rhythm. The boundless space I found felt neverending. The freedom of expression was closest in this practice and I found myself being able to be more in touch with my confidence as a person and who I am as an artist.

ABOUT LADYLIKE EXPERIMENTAL ART PROJECT

La.dy.like Experimental Art Project is a platform dedicated to showcasing the diverse talents of local Twin Cities-based female, femme, and queer-identifying artists. It aims to provoke a deeper exploration and appreciation of the complexities of femininity.

Founded in July 2022 by St. Paul interdisciplinary artists and educators Andrea Bagdon and Spencer Legendre-Gillespie, La.dy.like is an experimental art project dedicated to examining and questioning aesthetic theory and its attitude toward gender. With the support of sponsors Metropolitan Regional Arts Council and Springboard for the Arts, the Ladylike Exhibits 2023 program will continue to present exhibitions, panel discussions, and curatorial opportunities featuring local artists exploring the complexities of femininity and gender identity. For more information about La.dy.like and the "Anomalies" exhibition, please visit ladylikeart.com.

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