

Straight Queer Mainstream

(Another brick in the wall)

*Spicy*Tigers*on*Speed* are a mixed trans*genderqueer group of drag performers/activists based in Berlin. We tell short his/herstories on stage with lip-synching, dancing, and medleys of well-known songs; we use nasty old categorical and essentialist repressive cultural bullshit to question and criticise heteronormativity. We perform gender clichés and hetero/homo-normative assumptions to music - and smash them! We produce a space for other options/realities.

qft*-love, peace & happiness ... and money,money,money

Imagine a world where qft*artists/activists are part of mainstream entertainment and are paid for what they do (without selling their souls/politics as entertaining freaks).

We are so far away from this reality; people cannot make a living from performing/organising DIY events. They are happy to receive in other ways: yummy food; money for the trip; staying at private houses (much better than a sterile impersonal hotel room); wonderful people; being part of the festival; helping with cooking; building sleeping tents; performing; sharing hangovers; changing points of view; and giving something back.

So why is the mainstream lacking people interested in qft* politics to support these kinds of events/ people/ organizations/...? Should we fill up the mainstream with queer theory? Yes, because queer theory is a lovely thing, full of passion, options and personal needs, and even the mainstream should have a chance to get some of it. Don't be afraid, queer theory and action, as we understand it, will never be eaten up by

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mainstream. Money as a present would just make things a bit easier and absolutely fair to appreciate this fucking work. *Spicy*Tigers*on*Speed* feel at home in these non-commercial spaces. Money would make things a little bit easier but it is a privilege to experience. Damn it, DIY means DIY! We do what we do because passionate, glittering personal motivation kicks our bottomz.

Consuming Godz & Heartcore Zombiez

All this is sometimes forgotten by visitors who feel like consumers - in the "I have the right to be well entertained and served" way. The technical system breaks down; the toilets are dirty; the show starts late; you cannot buy cock-a-coola or star-fucks coffee; the organisers are acting very slowly (looking like zombies after two months without sleep); then something worse happens: bashing. This means criticising in a mean, disrespectful and destructive way. It can end up with people feeling frustrated and powerless.

That sucks! Utopic thought needs to feed non-mainstream projects to help make things happen, or happen differently, or to create more respectful /caring options for people. DIY events support these ideas and make dreams come true: slowly, sometimes just for a few seconds, and in ant-like steps. Respectful critics are fine and are needed for pushing things forward; but what the fuck, do ya think everything is perfect and quuuueeeeeer and wonderful? What is that stupid behaviour of accusing **SOMEBODIES** for not being top-of-the-pop-super-p.c.-conscious-aware- and-ultra-prepared godz/robotz responsible for having the solution for every single one of our_your personal and_or structural problem/struggles?

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So many things have been already reached by these events! Just think about the ongoing explosion of for example Lady Fests and Queer Festivals in some parts of the world and the growth of for example bands run by "women", even playing on platforms which we would regard as being mainstream and - SHOCK HORROR! - getting paid for it, while pushing their qft* politics forward in the big wide world. They often started performing at small feministic events. Or think of the abundance of spaces where awareness, discussion and fight against structurally based exclusions and privileges are possible! Isn't that fantastic? That's so important! That is fantastic!

Many performers would not have the chance to exist without people working hard (often without pay) to put on "queer/feminist/trans*gender" events. The fact that organisers remain invisible, or indeed forgotten, is sad and unfair; without them, performers have no platform and visitors have no event. Ladies and gentle ladiez, kingz and queenz, inbetweenz and criminal queerz, those who choose not to identify and the amazing rest we did not mention here, put your hands together! Scream loud "You are heroes! THANK YOUUUUU!" to all organisers, helping hands, and survival cooks.

Feedback really helps to keep the fire of interaction between entertainment and politics burning. Spend energy in the constructive support of politics and people who organise, perform, and fight for this; give critical feedback but do not bash back - otherwise, dear "monsieur je-sais-tout", as we are here as "Mesdames* we-know-it-all": If you are a bash-o-holic, we would kindly recommend you to just go straight back to heaven!

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Not every criticism is announced well, not every argument is fair; sometimes it is very relaxing to ask gods to just shut-the-fuck-up and go and do something else more useful, like cleaning the toilets! The reason why we have written this is to strengthen qft*-working people and give credits back where they belong. People must unite, support each other, and build up spaces - not barriers and frustration.

Identity (Trouble) Action

The spotlight gives you credits and visibility. After a drag show you sometimes find yourself reduced to the role you performed on stage by the audience - the show goes on. Sometimes you want it, and sometimes not. It can drive you crazy when you are identified with a role; you have to redefine yourself. It is like a (sub)cultural box. If the image taken of you HAS something to do with you, it feels amazing if heteronormativity and the two-sex-model falls apart with people's responses.

So let's make it short in one sentence and bring it down to the stage of everyday life as well: You can't assume anything, about the person standing next to you! Talking is nice and wild sugar! Why not go for it in a queering, supporting the deconstruction of stereotypes and acknowledging the right of people to define themselves? Maybe some day it will be totally normal just to ask: "Hey, who are you? How do ya feel? How should I identify you? Nice identity performance by the way! (Was that some kind of your coming out as "*insert what you like here *identified person"?). Put the repression-through-heteronormative-dominance somewhere else, by supporting the visibility and comfort of all these lovely (non)genderz!

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We are all stars of the (drag) show
Berlin's political qft*-party-scene is suffering from a flood of performances about gender-role-sucks-gender-bender-binary-shit, which show up time again. It is not bad to have personal coming-outs: once, twice, or three times on stage; it is definitely not stupid to perform gender clichés and then smash them; there is nothing wrong about deconstructing this crazy idea about a biological sex! Yet, the qft*-scene in Berlin is kind of over it. These performances are needed in other places - a Worldcup event at the Brandenburger Tor; the corner street; a university celebration party; a gay sex club; your neighbours' birthday barbecue party at the park; an antifa-event (where lots of male dominance is fucking normal); or in smaller villages (where people of our family are in a shitty lonely situation).

trans*gender dominance in queer politics

In our beloved bubble in Berlin we have the feeling that there is a trans*gender friendly atmosphere; genderz are seen as constructed by interaction/performance and not a naturally biology-based thing fixed to bodies. That was a hard and ongoing fight, so many different people are working with so many methods. In comparison to other places, the Berlin qft* bubble is much more open to these realities. It is important to celebrate and strengthen [this sentiment] again and again with parties which try to put the construction of trans*gender-spaces in the center, including the support of drag shows. Heteronormativity and trans*phobia is powerful and needs a lot of force and support to get to the point of emancipation; but there is more to think about.

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*Spicy*Tigers*on*Speed* perform less gender deconstructing performances in Berlin because of all these reasons. This does not mean the end of "drag" performances (hey, any gender is drag, so everything is a drag-performance by the way). It is a call of emergency for on-stage performances /discussions about the huge structural bullshit that is nearly everywhere, in our scene-bubble as well. Qft*-Bubble-trouble and bullshit-barriers show up through white privilege, nationalism, euro-centrism, gentrification, trans*phobia, sexual abuse, beauty-norms, class, queer theory against feminism (and vice versa), ability, ageism, conflicts in your hometown-scene, with your family...

Some people are more privileged - in the sense of having less problems in everyday life with regards to racism, ability, fascism, money, education, lookism, patriarchy, and so on. These people are in an advantaged position. They/we have more possibilities and power to fight for THEIR/OUR needs and be part of the discussion to define what they are all about. If people do not have the means to be part of this space - because of less time, force and capacity, or they do not feel respected, seen and /or safe in a discussion - there remains the serious danger of keeping up the power structures we want to get rid of. How can we break down hierarchies and privileges? Maybe - and that's nothing new - the awareness of power mechanisms and acknowledging the danger/fact of excluding people could be a good tool against our -ouch!:

straight queer mainstream. That's the reason why we think that we shouldn't resist, or wait to bring these kinds of problems on stage. Performances can't change the whole world, but point at unsolved discussions, conflicts and problems. So that's a really nice reason to just try to work it out!

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Besides this, "drag shows" mostly shouldn't be abandoned, or forbidden, if they might hurt people standing in the audience, because of being offensive. BUT: If they are, it should be clearly stated before the performance starts to give people easily the chance to choose whether they want to watch it or rather leave the room in a relaxed way.

On the other hand, provoking performances can be good, except when they are given just to provoke. So what the fuck! Dear performers, think about, WHY you want to provoke, or more: WHO you want to provoke and what for? And last but not least, WHO you could wrongly provoke like people who used to be your friends and qft*-family members!

Because the audience is part of the performance, while watching and interpreting what's going on on the stage, it would be so cool, if more people wouldn't hesitate to give their feedback to the people on stage, not only via booing, clapping, barking, throwing vegan chocolate eggs, bras, or tomatoes! Performers are for sure no superheroes and if they are and they're standing on a pedestal - don't mind for what reason - it's really lovely if somebody helps you out coming back down to earth to push politics forward!! So: talk to us idiots, as we are sometimes. Spend some minutes with us after the show, explain your frustration, passionately and honestly like you would do if you're going totally nuts and loving tha' shit! It's not the idea of performing / discussing qft* issues and giving you / others/ us bullshit! That's not what we want! You should have a good time! Or a pensive time! Or a fabulous time! Or a new exciting point of view! Or a new motivation for activism out on the streets!

qft*-bubbles and leftwing politics

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The her_history of Berlin's qft* underground is clearly and closely linked to leftwing politics. Spaces run by left-wing-groups were won and created (and people are still heartily and hardly fighting for them) and are often an open room for events of the qft*-community. qft*-politics are supported by and support left-wing-politics and the other way round -again: queer action, acknowledges this support and is working on the deconstruction of normative identity assumptions there as everywhere too. To make it more clear: Left-wing-politics, working for example against racism, fascism, nationalism, capitalism, ..., is part of queer action, because those structural and inhuman power-systems are clearly linked to normative identity-politics, through the construction of power, hierarchies and privileges and this is what queer action is working against!

queer normativity

The qft*-scene exists to create a space where you feel comfortable/safe (hard to find in mainstream society). It is some kind of holiday; some kind of discussion forum; some kind of subculture; some kind of home; some kind of space for celebrating "family"; some place where you can feel safe against trans*phobia and sexual attacks; some space to fight for! Queer is an explosive mixture of different politics and needs. Nowadays it is often taken as a label, simply meaning for example (to be) gay or/and lesbian. It has lost its pervert acting drive - in the sense of criticising and changing heteronormativity; this should be reclaimed. How can you do this, when the word has assumed a clear and fixed meaning? In our political sense "queer" never can be clear!

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Queer "is" never! If queer "is" (clear) then it is dead! Maybe we should find another word, or erase it - any ideas? Maybe we should stop being so hung up about this development of a word/5letters and go back to activism!

When identity becomes normative -for example, if queer becomes an identity label, calm and boring - it fixes new categories, causes new exclusions, reduces views, and maintains stereotypes and hierarchies. This has nothing to do with queer as a verb. Our friend Viola pointed out ironically before one of her performances: "Queer is fabulous! If you have problems with your tomato plant, your cooker does not work, or the Nazis are coming down the street, just queer it and the problem will be solved!" Yeah, she is so right! It is totally magic! If you put the label queer on something, or put your (queer) normative glasses on, structural problems disappear/become invisible! Now we're again - how wonderful! - close to god! Sadly this just works in queer heaven! Not in Berlin. If you're getting punched in the streets just because others decide that you're not normative enough, it doesn't help you out to know, or scream out that this is based on a structural power system / heteronormative assumptions!

Every member of the *Spicy *Tigers *on *Speed * (even s_herman* the depressed stage chicken_cock) is identified as "white"; misunderstood quite often as biological *argh! * "heterosexual" "man" because of cultural and hetero-normative suggestions; not too bad situated with regard to money; packed with cultural capital; close to body norms and ability; and so much more - which means getting some stereotypes and power others do not. Therefore we are in a fucking privileged hetero-normative position. If one of us, raised up with the idea

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of being and passing as "man" would have her_his coming out as a "lesbian" "tranny*" -somebody, that will be totally alright from a trans*perspective. And there you go with trans*gender politics versus (queer theory and) feminism: ...alright also from a feministic (and queer politics) point of view if it's NOT forgotten that this coming out never eva can be the same like the experiences somebody made with the coming out as a "lesbian", who is seen and probably sees herself as "women" in our society. They will never ever have the same coming out her_history, because this fucking gender hierarchy exists, and they will not share the same experiences of discrimination and problems or to say something more constructive: political victories in every day life you're making, if you break down borders of prejudice, phobia and judging. To know (more and more) about this differences and how to create tools out of them can just be a goal!

Straight queer mainstream: *arrrrrrgh*! NO!

When we perform at feminist, trans*gender, and/or queer events we occupy spaces on and off stage as privileged persons in regard to "white" and "male" dominance in the arts and music industry. *S *T *o *S * ARE exactly that straight queer mainstream we are shouting at!bang!bang!bang!bang!bang!bang! You can hear us fainting one after another right now.

Straight queer mainstream: YES!

We are responsible to be aware of power structures and essentialisms and how we use them, so we get through that in the position to support queer action and fight against oppression by using privileges as a queer tool.

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Berlin's qft*scene may be more safe than other places, but it is not a 100% safe bubble/space. People, whatever their gender and power position in regard to other identity norms, may wear dresses and make-up; perform "feminine" behaviour from a hetero-normative interpreted perspective; and are often positioned as sex objects. Who allows anybody to comment, to grab, or touch others - whatever their gender may be - without asking for permission? It happens quite often.

Added to that it's totally annoying but real, that cruelty and verbal and/or corporal attacks versus people who are identified as not clearly bio-"male/female", or/and not "white" by some non-acceptable godz do exist outside the bubble day and night too. When not interpreted as part of the unmarked "white" and/or "male" and/or "heterosexual" norm, you have to expect different dangers everywhere.

Straight queer mainstream: FUCK YOU!

Of those and the whole rest of essentialist point of views and abuses of (heteronormative) stupid and disrespectful power structures, we haven't mentioned in this mountain of experiences and thoughts, we have to put the spotlight on again and again, making them visible, positioning ourselves right in there at the same time acknowledging structural based real privileges, and finally changing them in our cultural system! And that's what we should be fighting for! That's how we think this queering option to change all that shit could work, already is working and where a queer emancipation lies. Energy should be right there in the building up of queering gangs, tools and support - nowhere else.

Straight queer mainstream, who we are, we gonna (have to) change ya!

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*S *T *o *S * special glittering thanks to
all you queer terroristz, theorystz, zombiez, our friends,
their friends. Last but not least: criticz!

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