

## Press release

Marc-Aurèle Debut, *What are u into ?*, 2025, installation, variable dimensions.



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« This particular work sheds light on the issue of bottom-shaming in the gay community and its detrimental effects on the mental and physical health of gay men. 'Butt-on' is a life-size representation of my own posterior. » Marc-Aurèle Debut

« I often use upholstery as a metaphor for skin and flesh. [...] By resembling a cushion, which is often associated with domestic life and comfort, this padded and buttoned piece emphasizes the anatomical structure and function of this specific body part. Marc-Aurèle Debut

For its first participation in Art Genève, CALM – Centre d'Art La Meute (founded in 2022) is delighted to present, for the first time in Switzerland, the work of Marc-Aurèle Debut (\*1990, lives and works in London). His playful yet subversive installation literally positions the audience at “buttock height“ challenging conventions of gender and power.

At the center of the installation, an upholstered canvas molded from the artist's own buttocks hangs at the same height. Its powdery pink—somewhere between piglet skin and cosmetic blush—oscillates between tenderness and provocation. A smooth Chesterfield-style button forms the orifice. Originally titled *Butt-on* (2022), the piece is reimagined for this exhibition under the title *What are u into?* (2025). This is one of the most commonly asked questions on gay dating apps, alongside “Looking?”, “Hnh? (High and Horny?)” and “Top or bttm?”. In this work, Marc-Aurèle Debut continues his exploration of discrimination and power dynamics in both physical and digital relationships. Humor, used as a Trojan horse, destabilizes stereotypes inherited from “classic” pornography, where “submission” is equated with femininity—or, in the gay sphere, with *bottom shaming*<sup>3</sup>.

Circulating within *What are u into?*, visitors are deliberately destabilized: they must crouch or bend down, uncovering the hidden biases within their own perceptions. Why is “submission” deemed inferior? Why is passivity equated with weakness? The installation reminds us how coercion often masquerades as “consent” in media (Ovidie, 2017; Valérie Rey-Robert, 2019). As Paul B. Preciado suggests, the so-called “submissive” posture historically assigned to women in heterosexual relationships is transposed—and similarly devalued—in the gay community, labeled under “bottom.” This reproduction of patriarchal schemas highlights the persistent grip of systemic misogyny, which stigmatizes passivity as synonymous with “weakness.” Similarly, unattainable ideals of virility, rooted in male domination, continue to exert their influence.

In the face of rising masculinist discourses and calls for a “return to virility” devoid of nuance, *What are u into?* interrogates the place of vulnerability and consent. Why does receptivity—physical or symbolic—remain conflated with inferiority? How does this norm-driven vulnerability shape our understanding of freedom, desire, and equality?

Balancing provocation with sharp critique, Debut envisions a space to rethink sexuality beyond binary schemas and misogynistic frameworks. His work emphasises the importance of consent, shared pleasure, and equality while encouraging us to confront our ingrained assumptions about power and submission.

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<sup>3</sup> Expression referring to the devaluation of a person who adopts the so-called “passive” (or receptive) role in a sexual relationship, particularly within gay communities. This phenomenon is based on patriarchal schemas that associate passivity with inferiority and perpetuate the idea that “being penetrated” or “being down there” is a sign of weakness.