

Flip Flapp ers



Queer
Gesture





A

moment,
please

FLIP-FLAPPERS is a 2017 anime about two girls entering fantastical worlds, falling into them, and in love.



This is a zine for them, and about how they reach for each other, and touch.



Show Summary:

Flip Flappers is a 2017 television anime produced by Studio 3hz under the direction of Kiyotaka Oshiyama. Cocona and Papika are its duo of main characters, who traverse ethereal worlds of fantasy and longing that emerge from their own minds. Their goal: to retrieve powerful stones that grant wishes. The show winds from one surreal space to another, whirling through genre, tone, and style with assurance and grace. All the while, the love between the two leads comes more and more to the forefront, offering a twistier, stranger take on the yuri “girl-love” genre that brings delight to my gay little heart.

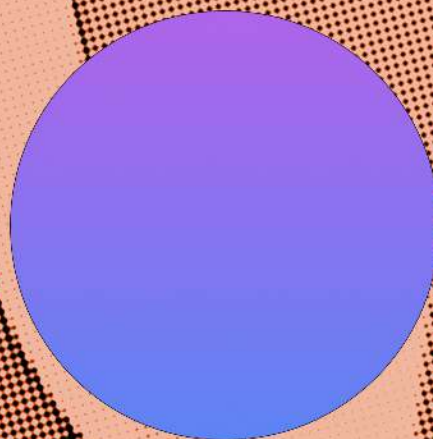
Cocona is reserved and shy, her blue hair being an obvious giveaway. Papika is pure fire, and enters into Cocona’s life in a flash, disrupting all of her new friend’s comfortable routines. Even as conspiracies snake around them, our gaze is arrested by their budding love for each other, expressed as often in the language of gesture as in words. This is why *Flip Flappers* is hard to write about, and much easier to show, to break down and re-present.



Cocona



Papika



Theory Note:

Forgive me for being pedantic, but I wanted to just smuggle in a little micro-essay on gesture. Maybe it's because it makes me feel better about fellow academics finding this and expecting me to be tough and specific with my material.

Someone once asked me whether *Flip Flappers* was about “real lesbians” or just “bait.” While I don't think my conversation partner was entirely wrong to ask this question, answering them would require impoverishing my own experience of the show. Keen queer eyes can find value for *queer selves* in any kind of entertainment that brings pleasure, and in *Flip Flappers* the gestures and positions of the characters are more than open to queer interpretation—to me, they quietly demand such interpretation. I like what Vilém Flusser has to say about gesture:

“I know I made a free decision to lift my arm, and for this reason, it is not the motives for this decision that are determining but rather the fact that I would not have lifted it if I had not wanted to. This negative side of my knowledge renders all objective explanations of the arm movement, even the dialectical ones, unsatisfying. To this extent, the concept of “gesture” may be defined as a movement that expresses a freedom.” (1)

Gestures between Papika and Cocona, however “ambiguous” in the sense that they do not indicate whether their identities are lesbian or not, clearly point to a mutual affection and closeness that I, as a lesbian, can identify with my own feelings. They elicit gay feelings without saying “I'm a lesbian,” or, “I'm bisexual.” If it did, it would be exonerated from being “bait,” but, I would argue, also lose a great deal of its value as *yuri* and as nourishment for all kinds of queer people who join with the show's characters in feeling. We gesture alongside each other. There is no such thing as “bait” if those who are “caught” derive beauty and pleasure from it. Bait is an analysis of marketing, not of content first and foremost. Gesture and feeling are what brings beauty into my life. *Flip Flappers* creates the exhilaration of queer freedom to love and to hold and to stand in stillness, impossible to directly explain but lovely to see.

1. Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, trans. Nancy Ann Roth (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 163.



Cocona



Papika





Stillness





MOMENT



bite



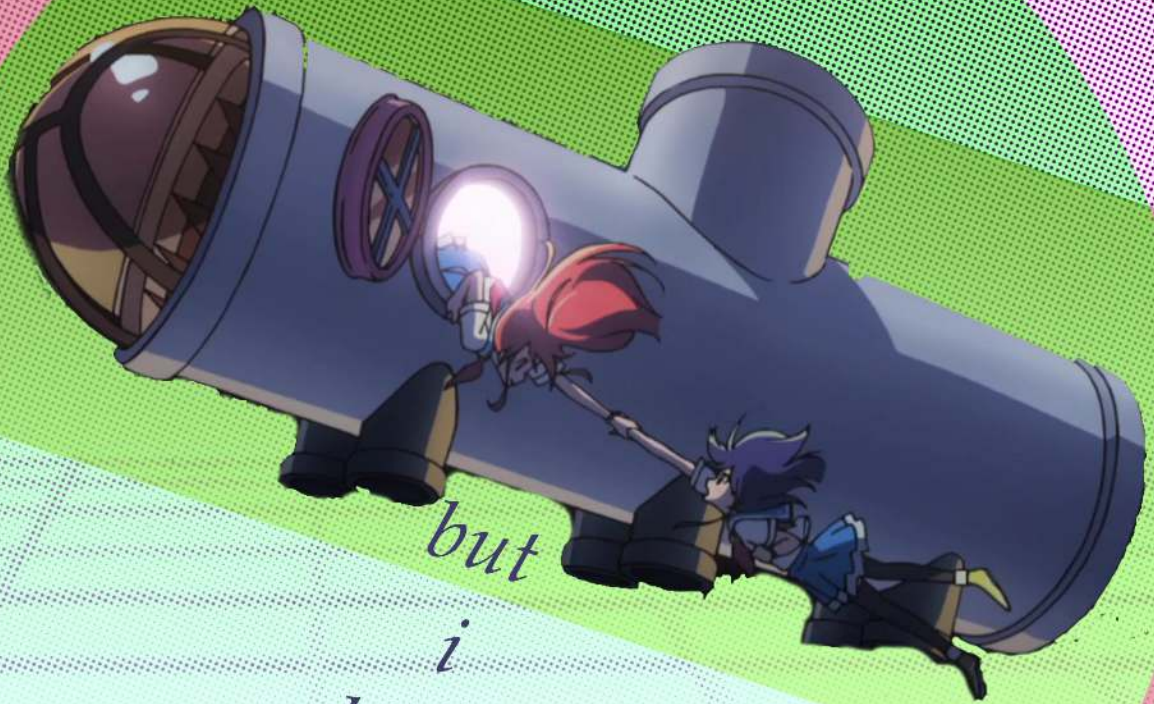
Love!
Now!





sleepless

*i'm
unsure*



*but
i
know
you*



"come on sis"



who
loves
me
?



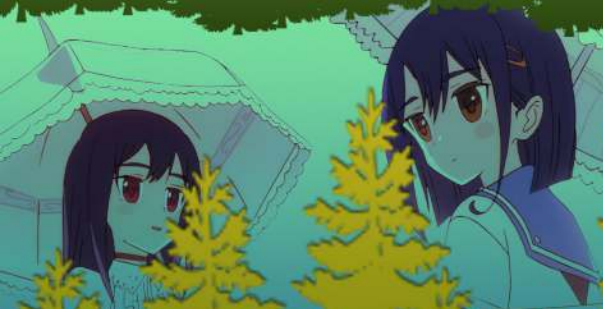
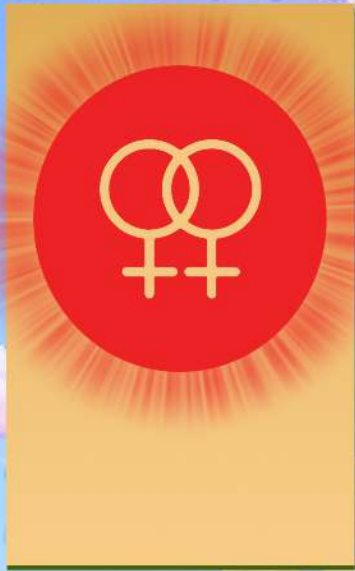
"could you stop
calling me sis?"

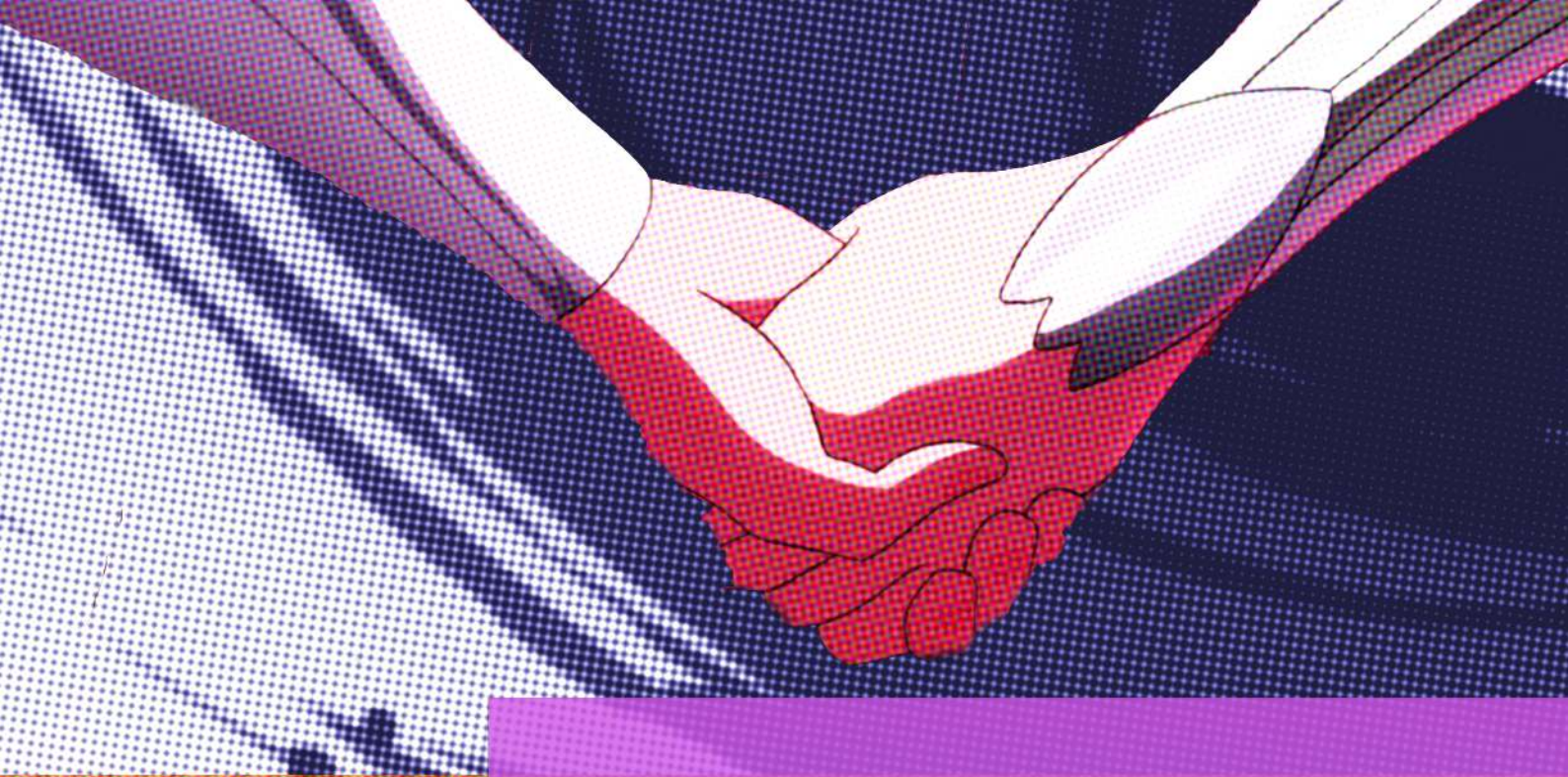


butterfly



rabbit





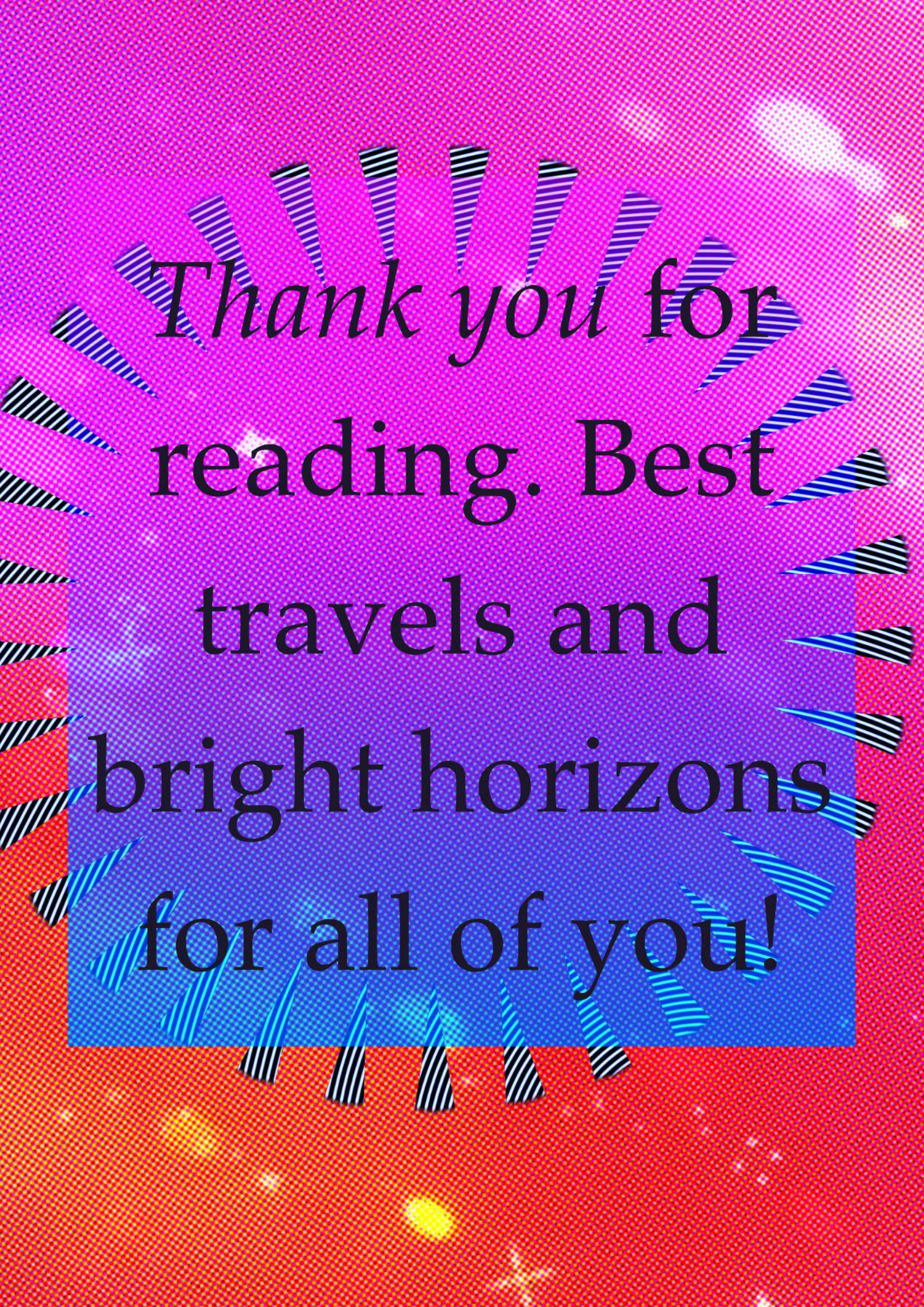
Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the inspiration of a lot of artists and writers. The most important are the crew of Flip Flappers, of course. Please look them up by name and find their other work, maybe even before closing the zine.

Also, thanks to my partners Jacqueline Ristola and Zoë Barylko...look them up!

Outside of *Flip Flappers* as a project, I have taken brazenly from Tatsuya Oishi, who taught me to never draw something when collage and fine layering effect will do the job better. My love of beautiful girls I learned from the lesbians of the world, from Chiho Aoshima, Naoko Yamada, and Akiko Morishima, among others. My love of collage (or femmage, perhaps?) is inflamed by the work of Miriam Schapiro, who taught me there is no shame in the collection and open adoration of beautiful patterns

Thank you all



Thank you for
reading. Best
travels and
bright horizons
for all of you!



RAMIEL 2020