

Mary-Audrey Ramirez Forced Amnesia

Curated by Dr. Nadia Ismail + Kevin Muhlen
Duration: 15.04.2023 – 30.06.2023



Fig.: Mary-Audrey Ramirez, Herpes is annoying, 2022, digital
Image; Courtesy of the artist + Martinetz, Cologne

Press Event

Wednesday, 12.04.2023, 11 am

with Frank-Tilo Becher (The Mayor of Giessen), Mary-Audrey Ramirez (artist), Kevin Muhlen (Director of Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, curator) and Dr. Nadia Ismail (Director of Kunsthalle Giessen, curator)

Opening

Friday, 14.04.2023, 7 pm, Kunsthalle Giessen

For her solo exhibition *Forced Amnesia* at the Kunsthalle Giessen, the Luxembourg artist Mary-Audrey Ramirez has staged a clean, artificial world that addresses the increasingly fragile boundary between the physical and digital space as well as between natural and machine-generated elements.

She playfully circles around the increasing mental fears of our time, in which rapidly advancing technology threatens to replace humans in many areas. Unimagined possibilities of artificial intelligence (AI) that relativizes the limitations of the human mind meet the fear of creating an uncontrollable force, in which the abolition or subjugation of the human is implicit. Even if an uncanny moment resides in the strangeness of the created beings, Mary-Audrey Ramirez highlights the creative potential of AI, especially *text-to-image*-generators.

Ramirez has created a new body of work for the Kunsthalle Giessen. Digital techniques and creatures that seem to have emerged from a computer game stand at the centre of her work. Her installations give viewers the impression of being in the middle of a game. The contrast between fantasy and real life, and a desire for a direct connection between the digital and physical worlds are integral components of her practice. At the same time, her works are imbued with an apocalyptic beauty, through which a subtle humour sometimes shines. The exhibition at the Kunsthalle Giessen has been realised in cooperation with the Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, where it will be on show from 02.02. (opening) to 05.05.2024.

With the title *Forced Amnesia*, Ramirez refers to the theory of self-induced forgetting to banish traumatic experiences from one's own consciousness. Through an active compulsion to repress events, the hippocampus, which is functionally involved in memory, is disrupted and reversible amnesia can follow. *Forced Amnesia* can also refer to the collective eradication of cultures and religions. The focus here lies with influencing the writing of history. The intensive examination of modes of thought outside of the mainstream are part of Ramirez's artistic practice and reveal a multi-layered body of work. She deliberately uses and integrates exhibition titles into her work, whereby the title *Forced Amnesia* can suggest AI's blind spots. To the extent that AI is based on pre-existing data, it also adopts its *bias* (slant, prejudice) and dominant narratives, while taking other content less into consideration.

The multifaceted content of the title corresponds to the scenes designed by Ramirez. They evoke a range of emotions: fascination, incomprehension, awe and the impression that one is on the trail of a mystery – as if in a game, visitors to the Kunsthalle move between reptile-like fragments that have been severed in battle, self-sewn weapons and insect-like *critters* that look realistic. The composition is complemented by an electronic, ethereal sound composed specifically for the

exhibition by the classically trained violinist and Grammy award-winning recording engineer, composer, and producer Simon Goff (b. 1988 Abergavenny, Wales).

Ramirez's creatures consciously evoke connotations of mythical, legendary beings that have both frightened and fascinated people since ancient times. The reptile, reminiscent of a basilisk – the king of snakes – is analogous to the mighty '(end) boss' in a game. This boss challenges all the strength of the played *character* in battle, determining the further course of the game (e.g. advancement to a new level). The environment in the exhibition space is auratically charged and visually evokes a 'post battle' scenario with the victim's and the perpetrator's perspectives being tightly interwoven. How killing and dying are staged and aestheticized in games especially fascinates Ramirez.

In addition, the artist will show a series of insect-like *critter* portraits printed on satin. Ramirez plays with our perception here, too: are they photographs? Even though the creatures appear realistic and are reminiscent of macro photography of insects or micro-organisms, they do not correspond to the natural world. Ramirez generates them with *text-to-image* AI. Images are created with the help of machine learning processes by feeding it a multitude of terms. The AI is trained on the basis of already existing image material. Millions of images are stored in an artificial neural network – a computer system similar in structure to a human brain and equipped with features of artificial intelligence – including works of art that are tagged with keyword-like descriptions. The AI takes existing elements of the images from this pool and reassembles them according to the text command. This procedure is referred to as *synthography* (from the Greek: synthesis: composition; graphein: to draw, to write).

Ramirez sees her use of the *text-to-image*-generator as a collaboration. She uses it to create the first versions of her *critters*, which she then develops further or transforms into different forms and media. Using the generator, Ramirez creates artificial (living)beings and thus emphasises the fluid transition between nature and technology as well as between digital, artificially produced and the physical, naturally occurring worlds.

The artist integrates cultural references, including those of gaming, into her practice. She develops a game aesthetic in her exhibitions that oscillates between the physical and the digital world, where differentiation is nearly impossible. A desire to be part of the game takes over and the perception of a factual reality becomes clouded. In her work, Ramirez creates connections and portals between both worlds, which appear in her work not as separate spheres, but closely interwoven.

Mary-Audrey Ramirez (*1990 in Luxembourg) lives and works in Berlin. Her work has been shown in both solo and group exhibitions at institutions such as Esch2022 + ARS ELECTRONICA, Luxembourg/ Linz; Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund; Kai 10, Düsseldorf; Haus Mödrath, Kerpen; Margot Samel Gallery, New York City; Polansky Gallery, Prague and MARTINETZ, Cologne. She has received multiple awards and artist residencies including at ISCP New York City, USA in 2022.

Credits Videos

Texturing + Animation: Lukas/Hohloh
Unreal Engine: Max Kreis
Sculpting: Mary-Audrey Ramirez
Musik: Simon Goff

In cooperation with

Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain

With the support of

Kultur | IX – Arts Council Luxembourg
Edward Steichen Award

Many thanks to

Petra Martinetz, Köln
Büro für Frauen und Gleichberechtigungsfragen der Stadt Gießen // Diverse Stadt
Gießener Graduiertenzentrum Kulturwissenschaften (GGK) | International Graduate
Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC)



Fig.: Mary-Audrey Ramirez, Critter trapped inside a snowflake, 2022 digital image; Courtesy of the artist + Martinetz, Cologne

Visitor information

All the information relating to the opening, our accompanying programme of events and admission information can be found online at:

www.kunsthalle-giessen.de | www.giessen.de

Accompanying programme

Alien – Adventure tour

Interactive activity for everyone over 6 years old
Sun. 07.05. from 2 pm

Generative AI

A talk on artificial intelligence by Max Kreis
Fri. 12.05. 6 pm

10 Questions for... Mary-Audrey Ramirez

With Kevin Muhlen + Dr. Nadia Ismail
Tue. 20.06. 6 pm

Finissage

Guided tour by the curator + Drinks
Fri. 30.06. 6:30 pm

Art education in individual conversations

Every Sat. 2 – 4 pm

Guided tour of the exhibition

Sun. 3 pm: 16.04. + 30.04. + 14.05. + 21.05. + 11.06. + 25.06.