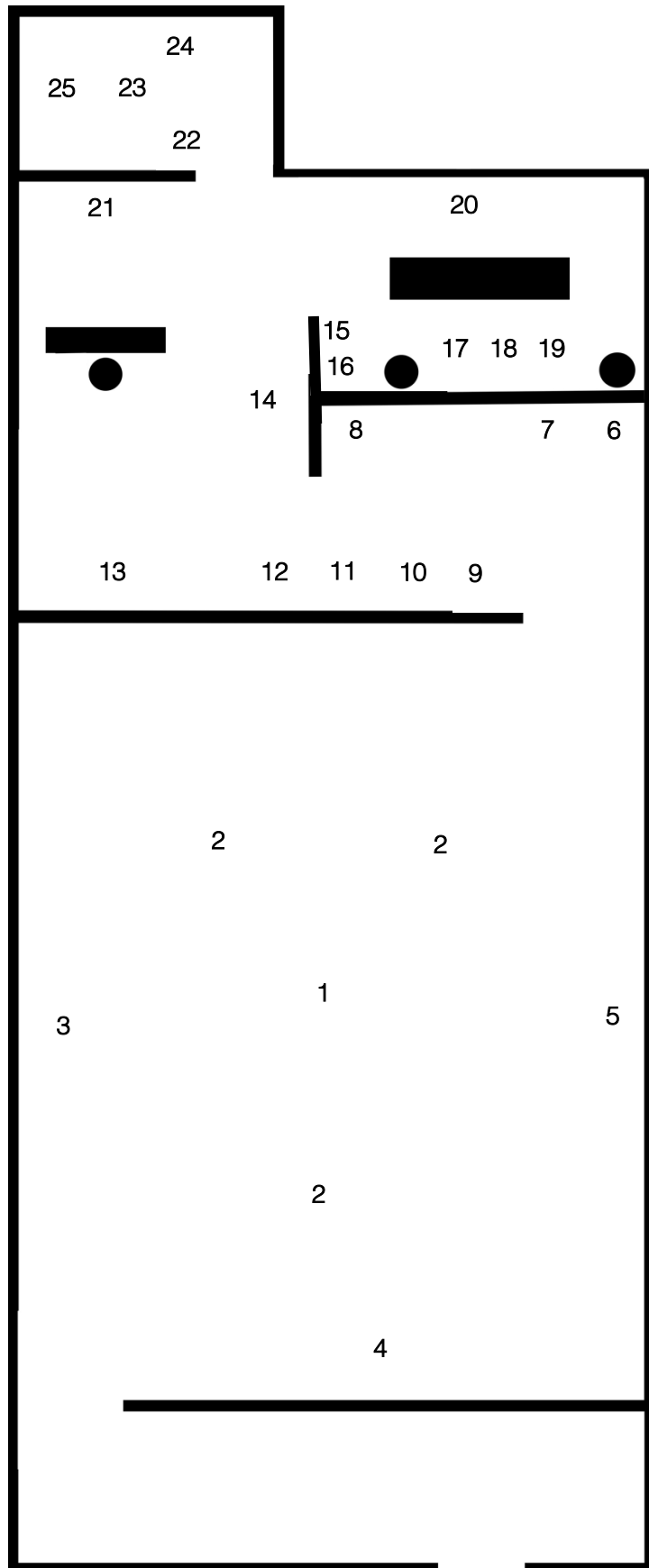


Mary-Audrey Ramirez. Forced Amnesia Descriptions of Works



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

KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN



- 1 Somebody's Basilisk, 2023,
vinyl, PVC, fiber fill, metal, wood
- 2 Weapons/ Derbis, 2023,
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- 3 Owly peaking through, 2023,
2 min loop digital video
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2 min loop digital video
- 5 Melting peaking through, 2023,
2 min loop digital video
- 7 Die Nervensäge/ pls shut up!, 2022,
satin print on crushed velvet, 61 x 48 cm
- 8 Trapped in PVC...so much PVC, 2022,
satin print on crushed velvet, 120 x 93 cm
- 9 Strong Baby Jesus Vibes, 2022,
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- 10 PVC Birth: Seymour, 2022,
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- 25 Happy Face (Parasites), 2023,
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- 26 Forced Amnesia Loading Screen (WIP),
2023,
2 min loop digital video

Soundscape by Simon Goff, 2023

All artworks:

Courtesy of the Artist + Martinetz, Cologne

For her solo exhibition *Forced Amnesia*, the artist Mary-Audrey Ramirez (*1990 in Luxembourg) creates an environment that evokes the impression of being inside a computer game. Ramirez reproduces the classic staggered structure of computer game storytelling with a labyrinth-like presentation in the Kunsthalle. Inspired by the aesthetics of games, she allows glimpses into other fantastic worlds that are inhabited by insect and reptile-like creatures, whose bodies are enveloped in shiny materials. She developed these creatures in collaboration with an artificial intelligence (AI), a *text-to-image* generator. A desire for a direct connection between the digital and physical worlds is integral to her practice.

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. Furthermore, the term can refer to the collective

eradication of cultures and religions. The focus here lies with influencing the writing of history. A third meaning can be the manipulation of memory by outsiders. The intensive examination of modes of thought outside of the mainstream are part of Ramirez's artistic practice. She deliberately uses and integrates exhibition titles into her work, whereby the title *Forced Amnesia* can also be understood as a way to read 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 so that it can be slowly forgotten. Ramirez developed the presented body of work for this exhibition.

**1: Somebody's Basilisk, 2023,
vinyl, PVC, fiber fill, metal, wood**

Ramirez's creatures consciously evoke connotations of mythical, legendary beings that have both frightened and fascinated people since ancient times. For instance, the enormous, dismembered reptile-like creature is

reminiscent of a *basilisk* (the king of snakes), but also resembles a dragon-like lindworm or a hydra (a multi-headed water snake). In the setting that Ramirez has created, the reptile is analogous to a powerful *(end) boss*, the most important opponent in a game. The set-up is so inviting that visitors want to observe the basilisk from all angles and enter the white area on which it lies. Ramirez has intentionally staged a *boss pit*, a battle arena that attracts the *player*. Just as the *player* is supposed to resist this desire, so too are visitors of the Kunsthalle **not permitted to step onto the white floor**. During the fight in the *fight pit*, the boss challenges all of the played *character's* powers, determining the further course of the game (e.g. advancement to a new level). The *(end) boss* also has a weakness that must be identified. According to mythology, an almost invulnerable basilisk can, for example, be killed by the smell of a certain kind of weasel. Perhaps one of the *Critters* on show in the exhibition has been its undoing. Ramirez is particularly fascinated by how killing and dying are visualised and aesthetically

realised in games. A white viscous mass flows slowly from the reptile's wounds. It remains unclear whether this is blood or some toxic excretion from the snake itself. Dismembered and defeated, the mighty basilisk lies in the arena. In the digital realm of a computer game, however, death is not final. After all, it is possible with just one click to return to an earlier memory state and bring various creatures and characters back to life.

**2: Weapons/ Derbis, 2023,
Vinyl, PVC, fiber fill, metal**

The weapons that Ramirez has placed around the snake are made of the same shiny white material as the reptile itself and have been abstracted and stylised almost beyond recognition. The chosen material softens what is presented, it unites beauty and brutality at the same time and lends the scene a curious tranquillity. The weapons are rendered useless. The way the exhibition space is staged corresponds on the one hand to a violent *post-battle* depiction in a computer game, but at the

same time adopts the reduced and meditative desert world of the Zen game *Journey*, which radically subverts the typical *lose/kill/win mentality* of most video games.

The brilliant white amplifies the impression of a hyper-clean science fiction world populated by alien creatures. The use of monochrome also refers to the creation process of games: the setting is in development, the 3D framework is built, the colouration is still missing. The constructed space thus creates a game scenario that does not yet exist.

3: Owly peaking through | 4: Rotting peaking through | 5: Melting peaking through, 2023, 2 min loop digital video

Rifts between the physical and digital worlds are revealed by the animated versions of the *Critters*, which can already hazily be made out in the Kunsthalle's display window. Brought to life, as it were, they now find themselves in their own digitally generated environments that resemble a snowy landscape, an underwater world or the vastness of space. Through the

rift, the creatures curiously peer into our world, approaching and trying to make contact. Through her works, Ramirez creates portals, transitions and transit zones between the physical and the digital worlds. As a result, they no longer appear as separate spheres, but as closely interwoven ones.

**6 – 21: Various titles, 2022,
satin print (in some cases on crushed velvet)**

In another incarnation of the *Critter*, Ramirez presents a series of portraits printed on satin, some of which are framed by shimmering panne velvet. They adorn the walls of the Kunsthalle as though they were part of an ancestral portrait gallery or as devotional images with an air of the sacred. 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 *text-to-image* generator 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 generator as a collaboration. She employs it to create the first versions of her *Critters*, which she then develops further or transfers into different forms and media. In this way, she emphasises the fluid transition between nature and technology and between digital, artificially produced creations and physical, naturally occurring ones.

22: Rotting Head | 23: Peaking | 24: Happy Face (Parasites), 2023,
3D printed sand

25: Forced Amnesia Loading Screen (WIP), 2023,
2 min loop digital video

While the *Critters* on the screens are yet to slither into the physical living realm, the three-dimensional sculptures in the video cabinet have already made the transition into physical being and now find themselves beyond the digital landscape. Ramirez presents her creatures as if they had been petrified. Are they fossilised relics of primordial extraterrestrial *Critters*?

Simon Goff: Soundscape, 2023

The exhibition space is enveloped by spherical sound composed especially for the exhibition by the classically trained violinist and Grammy award-winning sound engineer, composer and producer Simon Goff (*1988 Abergavenny, Wales). The British artist's music sounds akin to planetary tones, whose frequencies are

calculated based on the rotation and orbital cycles of planets in the solar system. It transports visitors to other fantastical worlds and, like the soundtrack of a game, intensifies the mysterious, sometimes eerie and supernatural atmosphere that Ramirez takes us to.

Credits Videos

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

Music

Simon Goff

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Diverse Stadt
Gießener Graduiertenzentrum
Kulturwissenschaften (GGK) | International
Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture
(GCSC)

Accompanying Programme

Alien – Adventure tour

Interactive activity for all over 6 years

Sun. 07.05. from 2 pm

Generative AI

Talk on Artificial intelligence with 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.

Free entry

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Opening hours

Tue–Sun: 10 am –6 pm
Closed: Thu., 18.05. + Sun., 28.05.



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

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