

Mary-Audrey Ramirez

EDWARD STEICHEN AWARD



LUXEMBOURG

2019

**A blank wall is an
appalling thing to look at.
The wall of a museum, a canvas,
a piece of film or a guy sitting in
front of a typewriter.**

**Then, you start out to do
something - that vague thing
called creation. The beginning
strikes awe within you.**

EDWARD STEICHEN

Mary-Audrey Ramirez

Born in Luxembourg in 1990, lives and works in Berlin (Germany)
www.maryaudreyramirez.com

Nominated by Kevin Muhlen, Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain and Fanny Weinquin, independant curator

Solo Exhibitions

- 2019** *KILL THEM ALL AND COME BACK ALONE*, Martinetz, Cologne (Germany)
xoxo winter is coming, Overbeck Gesellschaft, Lübeck (Germany)
Luke Glanton Gallery, New York (USA)
- 2017** *Scrolling and crying*, Martinez, Cologne (Germany)
- 2015** *Gekkering*, Martinez, Cologne (Germany)

Group Exhibitions

- 2019** *Sein & Desaster*, H3Ora, Berlin (Germany)
Störende Wahrheiten, curated by Rene Kockelkorn (Luxembourg)
cherry pickers, PODIUM (Luxembourg)
7, Vollreinigung, Berlin (Germany)
Antipasti curated by Veit Loers, Sauvage, Bonn (Germany)
- 2018** *Class Trip* curated by Casey Detrow for Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain (Luxembourg)
Anger is a solution, if anger means kittens, curated by Collective Çukurcuma/Eva Liedtjens/ Nada Schroer, D21, Leipzig (Germany)
Oh... fabelhaft, curated by Daniela del Fabbro and Sandra Schwender, Das weiße Haus, Vienna (Austria)
GIRLS 3000, curated by Nelly Gawellek, MARTINETZ, Cologne (Germany)
WET, Groupshow, Bar Babette, Berlin (Germany)
Black/Box(es), Künstlerhaus Saarbrücken (Germany), with Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain
Toy Bitches, Galerie Kai Erdmann, Hamburg (Germany), Robert-Schumann-Prize, Metz (France)
- 2017** *Jahresgabenausstellung*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (Germany)
Jahresgabenausstellung, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen (Germany)
Translokal, Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, AIR-Program KulturKontaktAustria, Wien (Austria)
Blinded by chances, k48 Projektraum, Wien (Austria), Fundacion Carlos de Amberes, Madrid (Spain)
POOL, curated by Nele Heinevetter & Leonie Pfennig, TROPEZ, Berlin (Germany)
RAMIREZ&BERMEITINGER, curated by Judith Hofer, Galerie Kai Erdmann, Hamburg (Germany)
Black/Box(es), Faux Mouvement, Metz (France), in cooperation with Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain
METAMORPHOSIS, Groupshow curated by Zdenek Felix, SVIT, Praha (Czech Republic)
Kai 10, Düsseldorf (Germany) and Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin (Germany)
Aftermieter, curated by Veit Loers, Haus Mödrath, Kerpen (Germany)

The jury

Suzanne Cotter, MUDAM (Luxembourg)
Drew Sawyer, Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (USA)
Thomas Seelig, Museum Folkwang, Essen (Germany)

BY KATE BROWN*

Player Two

A video game is not boundless. Despite the imaginative limitlessness of its fabricated worlds, even the most expansive landscape is bordered by raggedy pixels. In the end, it's all a flat earth, pseudo-badlands under which hides thinly veiled code.

Acts of cruelty cannot always be contained. When a backwater of gamers trolled Red Dead Redemption 2, and a player figured out to hogtie a Suffragette and feed her to alligators (admittedly, it took some skills of subversion), the video "Annoying Feminist Fed To Alligator" accumulated three million views before being removed from YouTube¹. Beyond the disturbing notions that someone thought to try this and that so many more watched, what was notable was that the game could even allow a player to engage in such twisted behaviour. After all, we've established that a game has boundaries. In its programmatic logic, there are rules.

In concise terms, artist Mary-Audrey Ramirez (who goes by m33hr13 when gaming) is a textile-based artist who investigates the social constructs of online worlds and the symbolic violence that is embedded in game-space.

She creates new interpretations of femininity at the intersection of craft theory and gamer ideology. When she is playing video games, m33hr13 embodies female leads (often not the default players, but among the cast of secondaries, though this is evolving) and tests the boundaries of the range of behaviours dictated by the developer (here to be understood as god or patriarchy) to learn (and then hopefully beat down) the limitations built into them.

Girls, they wanna have fun

Cyndi Lauper

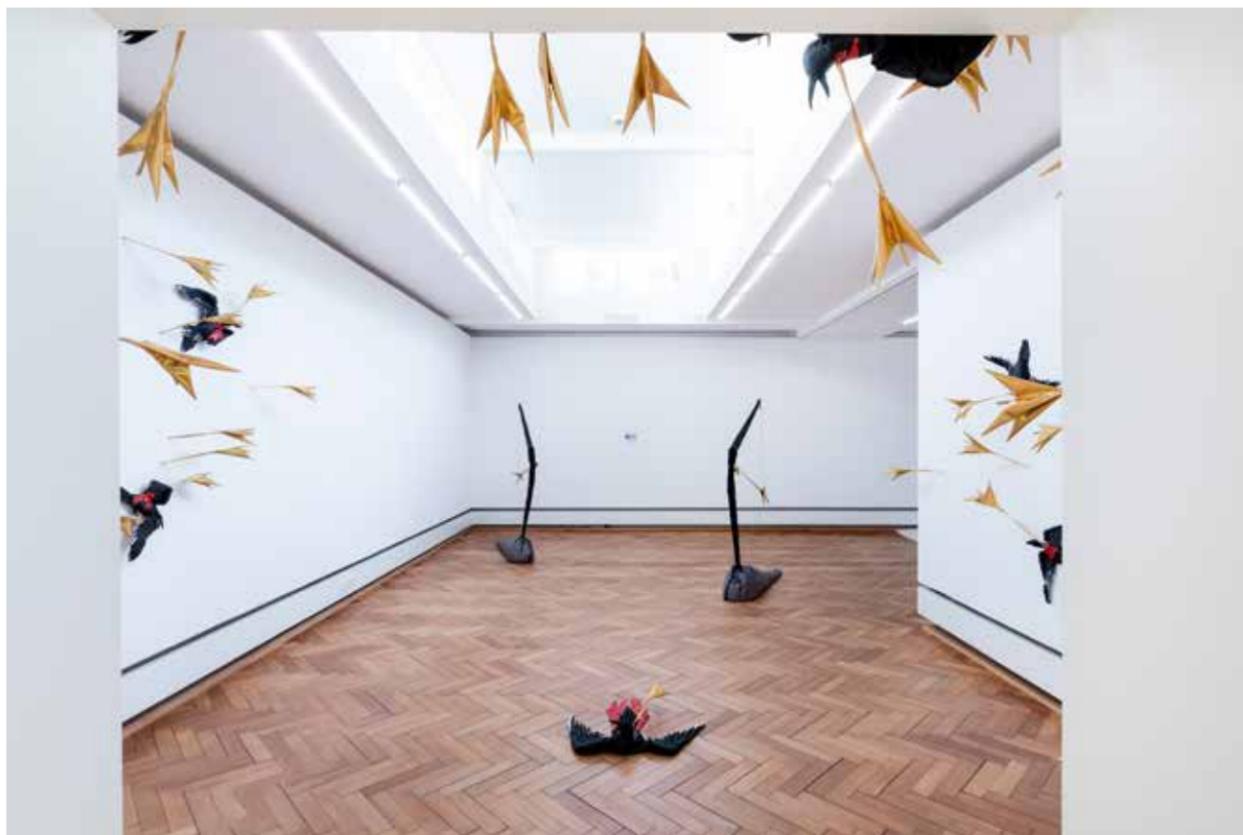
Though it could be cast-off as a hobby, the intention in m33hr13's gameplay parallels the material subversion in Ramirez's art-making. In the case of some of her art installations, she does not just build a bridge, but fuses the two practices together.

* Kate Brown is an art critic and curator. She co-directs the nonprofit gallery Ashley Berlin and is the European editor of Artnet News.

XOXO winter is coming

Solo exhibition | Overbeck Gesellschaft, Lübeck (Germany) | 2019

Visual material: Courtesy the artist and MARTINEZ Cologne



Pls don't die

2019, mixed media. Installation view 1. © photo Fred Dott



Pls don't die

2019, mixed media. Installation view.
© photo Fred Dott

In her material work, Ramirez plays on haptic surfaces. There's yarn on linen, embroidery paintings, and pillow-soft sculptures that frequently recur. Again, the presumption may be that these materials are a far cry from game worlds' digital matter. However, Ramirez helps us see the role-playing malleability of sewn material. Though her imagery hails from online theatres and often represents the brutal action that can take place there, she finds a cozy landing pad for these themes in plush synthetics.

**The body is not a thing,
it is a situation: it is our
grasp on the world and our
sketch of our project**

Simone de Beauvoir

Though the female gamer takes up nearly half of the entire gaming population², and, increasingly, females are being made into playable roles, a phenomenon that Ramirez explores in her installation, *pyjama party*. Her scenographic post-pillow fight is populated by a

gaggle of various heroines: there is Lara Croft from the *Tomb Raider* franchise, Seuna from *Hellblade*, Juliet Starling from *Lollipop Chainsaw*. There is Rook from *Far Cry 5* and Alice Liddell from *Alice: Madness Returns*, all attendant at the sleepover.

Like in game-space, "she" is still bound up in the constructs of a male projection in Ramirez's *pyjama party*, a work that intelligently encompasses masculine voyeurism. "The Young-Girl possesses her reality outside of herself in the Spectacle, in all of the doctored representations of the ideal that it traffics, in the fleeting conventions it decrees, in the more through which it commands mimesis," writes Tiquun. "She is simply the insubstantial concretion of all these abstractions, which precede and follow her. In other words, she is a purely ideological creature."³ The apparent girly and childlike setting recalls regressive ideas about women. Despite the presence of female leads, it is still true that, in the game-space, women are often depicted as passive figures or recipients of actions which can become violent. They are still second-class citizens, player two, or the second sex.

PART 2/3



Pls don't die

2019, mixed media. Installation view 2. © photo Fred Dott



Odin

2019, mixed media. © photo Fred Dott

Each of Mary-Audrey Ramirez's animal sculptures is an attempt to understand the nature of human beings and to comment on their behaviour.

When she invests animals with functions - the woodpecker, that can be strapped soothingly to the chest, the little lamb with its sewed-on gloves, screaming innocently for kindness and affection, or the ray embracing the torso like a protecting shield - much is revealed about deeply rooted human desires and needs.

LEONIE PFENNIG
Author and Art Critic

Kill them all and come back alone

Solo exhibition | Martinezz, Cologne (Germany) | 2019



What a kiss

2019 © photo Julie Wieland

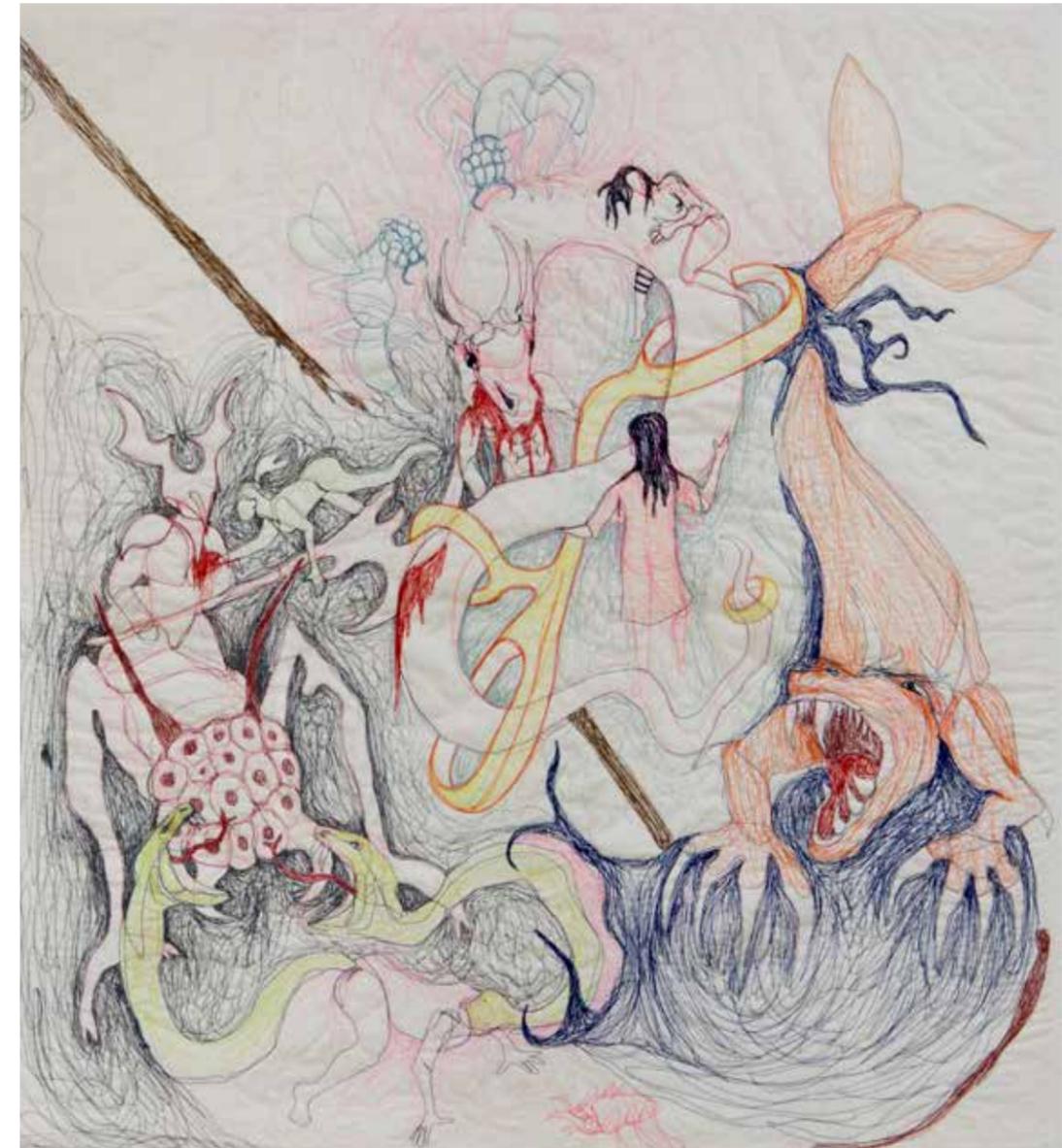


Crying ghost / evil birds (cummingbirds)

2019 © photo Tamara Lorenz



You know God has his ways
2019 © photo Tamara Lorenz



Ornery scandalous and evil most definitely

2019 © photo Tamara Lorenz



Ich will auch noch zermetzelt werden

2019 © photo Tamara Lorenz

But first, there is the process and there are the tools. Like in a game, where m33hr13's controller transmits a hand movement into coding that directs game play,⁴ so too does Ramirez's hand control the sewing machine as she leads its movement into a drawn path in fabric. Is there more freedom here to play? Her doodle embroideries, which feature fairytale animals or female figures embroiled in bloody violence, are informed by m33hr13's world; In turn, they inform Ramirez's larger sculptural works. She finds in the sewing machine not a domestic tool but a weapon of choice: a world-building machine.

There is an echo of Maggie Nelson's main question in *The Art of Cruelty*, her book that critically investigates representational violence in art: "what kind of reality-making [do] we, as a culture, and as a species, want to put our efforts and imagination into?"⁵ Ramirez seems similarly concerned with this query: Her 2019 floor-based sculpture, *Odin is trapped*, is an embodiment of it. Made with holographic fabric typically cast in cosplay costumes, a cages hugs Odin, a guardian force from gameplay but also a reference to the Norse war-god. Ramirez's hologra-

phic rib cage wraps around Odin in a maternal hug; Odin is safe here, but also under the control of the uterine sanctuary that surrounds him. What kind of reality, then, is this? Her sculptures are soft cells or safe spaces—and they're in control.

And, if Odin is a good lord, could the cage around him be a trap? Are our heroines in pyjama party just having fun, are they being surveilled, or are they creating a safe space still tied to long-held social constructs? What if, anyway, the woman is not a power for good but a negative force—what if she is an antagonist? Can the level boss allow this or does he even have a choice? Ramirez and m33hr13 are bending the rules we pictured to be concrete. She's trolling the meta-game and the long-held perceptions of craft work by making her own rules.

¹ Gareth Damian Martin. "The Cynical Politics of Red Dead Redemption 2's Symbolic Violence," *Frieze*, November 29, 2018.

² Sullivan, Gail. "Study: More women than teenage boys are gamers." *The Washington Post*, August 22, 2014.

³ Tiqqun. *Preliminary Materials For a Theory of the Young-Girl*. 2012.

⁴ Wark, McKenzie. *Gamer Theory*, Harvard University Press, 2007.

⁵ Nelson, Maggie. *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.

PART 3/3

Aftermieter

Group exhibition | curated by Veit Loers | Haus Mödrath, Kerpen (Germany) | 2017



Rose & Jack, kill me pls

2017 © photo Sven Vogel



Rose & Jack, kill me pls

2017 © photo Sven Vogel



Sad stingray and stingray so so sad

2016 © photo Julie Wieland



Flamingo fight

2016 © photo Julie Wieland





Consoling woodpecker

2016, Mixed media, 25x12x27 cm. © photo Julie Wieland

What does it do to us humans, when we look at animals, when we touch them, or, as with Mary-Audrey Ramirez's creatures begging for interaction, when we «climb into them»?

Man becomes aware of himself returning the look of animals, writes art critic John Berger.¹

Where could this be clearer than vis-à-vis an animal by Mary-Audrey Ramirez.

¹ John Berger (1980), "Why Look at Animals?" in *About Looking*. New York: Vintage International. P. 4.

LEONIE PFENNIG
Author and Art Critic

Edward Steichen Award Luxembourg

The Edward Steichen Award Luxembourg is a tribute to the life and work of Edward Steichen, born in Luxembourg in 1879. The prize honours Steichen's artistic achievements as a photographer and curator, as well as his tireless commitment to advocating for the arts and nurturing new talent.

The Edward Steichen Award Luxembourg is a biennial incentive in support of emerging European talents in the field of contemporary visual arts. It was initiated in 2004 to create an opportunity for young artists up to 35 years to expand their horizon and immerse themselves in the ebullient cultural context of New York City, that proved so fertile for Steichen himself.

There are two categories to the Award, the first with a resolutely European outlook, the second more specifically designed for artists from Luxembourg. Both prizes consist of a residency in New York City. The Edward Steichen Award laureate of the is hosted for a six months residency at the International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP), a renowned residency-based contem-

porary art centre in Brooklyn for artists and curators. The Edward Steichen Luxembourg Resident in New York, on the other hand, sponsored by fonds-stART up, Œuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte, is granted as a four-months stay at ISCP.

The Edward Steichen Award Luxembourg is conceived as a public-private partnership. Our most heartfelt thanks go to all our partners, sponsors and friends: Arendt, Centre national de l'audiovisuel (CNA), fonds-stART up de l'Œuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte, Luxembourg American Chamber of Commerce, Ministère de la Culture, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes, Mudam Luxembourg and Ville de Luxembourg.

We also would like to thank the family of Edward Steichen for their ongoing support and trust.

The Edward Steichen Award Luxembourg is placed under the high patronage of H.R.H. the Grand-Duchess of Luxembourg.

EDWARD
STEICHEN
A W A R D
LUXEMBOURG

www.edward-steichen-award.lu