

# ARTour

Art works & artists

## **Marc Lee - Sheep 1.5**

A virtual flock of sheep populates the Münsterplatz in Basel. If you move towards them, the sheep begin to bleat. After a short time they jump into the air in unison and face the onlookers, who are suddenly in the center of the scene and are being stared at. All the sheep are based on the same animated 3D model and their bleating also comes from just one sheep, but they sound different in each case due to various digital filters. The seemingly individual traits of the sheep in this flock are easy to see through and the abrupt change from “natural” and orchestrated movements creates an eerie setting that questions the ability of nature to be generated.

With Sheep 1.5, Marc Lee makes several references to scientific and technological developments: sheep are among the first domesticated creatures, and in 1996 “Dolly” the sheep was the first cloned mammal. Furthermore, Lee takes a look at the increasing homogenization of our globalized world, which includes the extinction of species as well as the ever-increasing optimization of farmed animals for human needs. Lee is one of the pioneers of media art in Switzerland, and became famous for his immersive installations. In net-based installations, he uses live feeds to take a look at globalized communication on social media and renders our connection in these streams of information poetically vivid. His current works revolve around our relationship with nature, our responsibility to the environment, and the question of whether new technologies such as genetic engineering and synthetic biology can contribute to solving ecological problems.

Marc Lee (Switzerland) is a Swiss artist. He uses contemporary art as a vehicle to continuously redefine how we see ourselves and the world around us. To this end, he experiments with information and communication technologies, the creative, cultural, social, ecological, and political aspects of which he traces. He creates network-based, interactive art projects using a wide variety of media and formats: the internet, performances, videos, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and mobile apps. His work has been shown in major museums and exhibitions, including the Zentrum für Kunst und Medien (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, the New Museum in New York, the Transmediale in Berlin, the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz, the HEK (House of Electronic Arts) in Basel, the Fotomuseum Winterthur, the MoMA in Shanghai, the ICC in Tokyo, the Nam June Paik Art Center, the Media Art Biennale, and the MMCA in Seoul.

## **MengXuan Sun - Irrigation 2.0**

In MengXuan Sun’s work Irrigation 2.0, we encounter the artist as an oversized avatar, a powerful figure whose falling heads water the soil with her inexhaustible energy as nutrients or offerings. The work is the continued development of an existing project. The entire scene is framed by huge syringes within which

the avatar floats above the landscape. Her body is transparent and the spinal cord is exposed. Only the face is realistically depicted as an image of the artist. This also appears inside a flower she carries with her. On her back are two wings or flower stalks, which identify her as a cosmic godlike “flower,” and raised syringes protrude from her back.

Sun’s work is a very personal response to the pandemic that trapped the world in standby mode. She creates immersive digital imagery in her work inspired by global gaming culture. At a time when life seemed confined to the digital sphere, she creates an avatar whose pent-up energy is discharged in the irrigation of the world around it. The digital arena fertilizes the real world. She seems to draw her energy from the syringes that supply fluid to her body and surround her like a sanctuary. The medical infrastructure and associated progress protect us and provides the power we need to be human.

MengXuan Sun (China) is a Berlin-based artist who graduated from the University of the Arts in Berlin as a master’s student in art and media. She develops her experimental works using game engines to describe the creation of her own spiritual world through 3D imagery. She is a member of the Society For Nontrivial Pursuits (S4NTP). She has done live audiovisual performances in Europe and Asia. For her performances, she constructs her own control systems that regulate the relationship between sound, electricity, and light. Her art resembles a journey of exploration and adventure through the virtual world - with a strong sense of the unknown and a longing for a digital romantic future. MengXuan Sun’s works have been exhibited in Berlin, Essen, Bonn, Shanghai, and New York, among other places.

### **Erika Marthins - Omnipulse**

Omnipulse by Erika Marthins is located at the Basler Totentanz at the Predigerkirche, a memento mori that reminds us that death comes for everyone at some point. Marthins deliberately chose this location for her virtual intervention to reflect on our lifetime and the representation of life in digital space. The viewers stand in front of a cluster of objects. Five universal bodies symbolize the five basic elements Marthins refers to: earth, air, fire, water, and the universe. In collaboration with the musician Florin Büchel, a sound structure was created that is inspired by the human heartbeat as a symbol of life and the rhythm of the earth. The earth as an organism also has an electrical heartbeat known as the Schumann resonance. It is around 8 Hertz and, according to researchers, has a calming and relaxing influence on people. The sounds of Omnipulse were developed using an analogue modular synthesizer. A specific sound was developed for each of the five objects, consisting of three separate parts: a rhythmic pulse resembling a heartbeat, a high-frequency drone, and a low-frequency sound. The constant heartbeat of the earth interacts with these layers of sound as the viewers move around the physical space to investigate the different sounds. In Omnipulse, Marthins invites us on a meditative journey through space and time.

Erika Marthins (Sweden) lives and works in Zurich. She studied Media & Interaction Design at the École Cantonale d’Art de Lausanne (ECAL) and Architecture and Digital Fabrication at the ETH in Zurich. As a designer, she seeks to reflect on our relationship with new technologies and speculate on the future by exploring new solutions to future problems. She is particularly interested in making connections between different subject areas, such as food and cutting-edge technology, memory and social networks.

Marthins has already exhibited at museums, festivals and institutions such as Google, the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, and Milan Design Week in Milan.

### **Andy Picci - The Cycle of Life**

Andy Picci created a surrealist work with *The Cycle of Life*. A three-dimensional object floats in a prominent position above the Rhine. It continuously changes its shape - from a sphere to a square and back. Some bodies are more or less clearly recognizable, others appear only hinted at, for a cloth hangs over this object, concealing its shape and only now and then revealing what may lie underneath. The cloth itself seems to reflect the sky, like a mirror of the real firmament above.

Picci looks at the effects of digitization on society and our identity in his art. This search for “who we are” in the age of social media, in which interpersonal interaction increasingly takes place via clicks and likes, he translates into subtle as well as playful works. *The Cycle of Life* does not simply focus on the individual. The sculpture discusses the change in life itself, reflecting on the various phases of life from birth to death as an incessant, repeating cycle of shapes and bodies that merge into one another. The sculpture reflects the fluidity and vicissitudes of our digital world. It arouses curiosity about deciphering the changing form, but like our own future it remains hidden from our gaze.

Andy Picci (Switzerland) grew up in Lausanne, Switzerland. He studied photography at the École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL), visual communication at the École Supérieure des Arts Modernes (ESAM) in Paris, and received his master's degree in Fine Arts from Central Saint Martins in London. His work explores issues related to celebrity culture, our relationship with social media and the profound search for identity in the age of hyper-digitization. Since 2010, Picci's work has been shown at numerous exhibitions around the world, including at the NRW Forum in Düsseldorf, König Galerie in Berlin, Mana Contemporary in Miami, the Museum der bildenden Künste in Leipzig, and Magasins Généraux in Paris. Picci's work encompasses music, video, painting, sculpture, and audiovisual installations in equal measure. He lives and works in Lausanne.

«Virtuality should be a reality-enhancer! Today it is clear that some things are made to be experienced IRL and some others are better URL.»

### **Studer/van den Berg - be one of us**

*In be one of us* by the Basel artist duo Monica Studer and Christoph van den Berg, six giant mushrooms float above the street and dance to a weird polka. Their synthetic singing invites you to join in and celebrate. Mushrooms are a constant feature in the work of Studer/van den Berg, appearing in ever new variations. Mushrooms are fascinating. In purely biological terms, they are a hybrid, more closely related to animals than to plants. They are able to form parasitic or symbiotic associations with other living things and they can produce substances - from remedies and poisons to mind-expanding drugs - that affect their environment. For the artist duo, this makes them almost prototypical of a new world in which humans exchange more with other life forms and no longer stand alone at the center of the universe. With a twinkle in the eye, *be one of us* invites us to “become a little more mushroom” ourselves, as the two artists write.

At the same time, the mushrooms' virtuality is clearly visible, with the basic polygonal structure deliberately retained. The playing with realities, the permanent shifting of boundaries between physical reality and an illusionistic world generated by computers in real time is a core aspect in the work by the artist duo. They are two of the pioneers of digital art and have been exploring the aesthetics of virtual spaces as well as the representation of nature through digital means for years.

New mushroom configurations emerge every time the piece is opened. This creates a unique work of art for each viewer.

In addition to the AR experience, the artist duo created a separate website where interested visitors can find out more. You can also download a free "fungible giveaway," a personal 3D mushroom from the "Republic of Mushrooms" from the website.

Monica Studer (Switzerland) and Christoph van den Berg (born in 1962 in Basel, Switzerland) have been working together as the "Studer/van den Berg" duo in the field of new media since 1991. They are among the pioneers of computer-based art in Switzerland. Their collaborative work, which they present in the international art context and on the net, is characterized by a unique combination of analog and digital spaces. With game engines, computer renderings, real-time animations, internet-based projects, interactive livecam installations, AR/VR applications, and artificial intelligence, they construct subtle fictional narratives in their hybrid settings that constantly question current developments in digital media.

Their works have been exhibited in many national and international museums, including the Zentrum für Kunst und Medien (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, the Fondation Beyeler in Riehen, the Kunsthalle Mainz, the Kunstmuseum Thun, the HEK (House of Electronic Arts) in Basel, the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, and the Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva. The pair live and work in Basel.

### **Tabita Rezaire - Matrixx II**

Tabita Rezaire makes a huge womb float above the maternity ward of the Basel University Women's Clinic in the middle of an imaginary solar system - it is a new planetary power. Matrixx II celebrates the wisdom of the womb as a healing and transformative force. In her videos, her virtual reality and augmented reality installations, as well as with her knowledge of love and healing, Rezaire traces the racist and sexist practices that have made the womb a contested place - for example, through the exploitation of women of color and surrogacy.

Matrixx II acts as a virtual blessing over the maternity ward to radiate love and powerful energy to support all expectant mothers on their journey to motherhood. Matrixx II is not only an ode to all mothers, but also a metaphysical reflection of birth as a universal beginning. This golden womb gives birth to our solar system as a cosmic origin, so to speak.

The uterus as a symbol of wisdom and power is a recurring theme in Rezaire's work. Matrixx II is the second augmented reality installation in this ongoing series. Rezaire describes the uterus as a "portal to receive information, to download from our hard drives all the knowledge and wisdom that is stored on them." As an artist, she creates fascinating works that combine spiritual well-being with technology. In

doing so, she develops her very own aesthetic, which is inspired as much by traditions of her ancestors as by a globalized digital net culture.

Tabita Rezaire (France) lives in Cayenne, French Guiana, where she is currently setting up AMAKABA, a spiritual center for collective healing. She studied at Central Saint Martin in London, and is a yoga teacher and digital healing activist. Her work has been presented internationally in solo and group exhibitions at venues including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, MASP in São Paulo, Serpentine Galleries in London, MoMA and the New Museum in New York, Gropius Bau in Berlin, MMOMA in Moscow, Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, ICA in London, V&A in London, the National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen, the Tate Modern in London, the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, and the biennials in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Kochi, Athens, and Berlin.

«When I started making work, I was addressing all the things that enraged me, namely historical-political injustices and the mechanics of oppression especially in relation to race, gender and sexuality, online and offline.»

«My work was basically an outlet for my anger and the pain underneath. I was digging into the wounds, trying to find out where my pain and our collective suffering came from.»

### **Manuel Rossner - Spatial Painting**

Manuel Rossner's Spatial Painting connects two central Basel locations: the market square and the trade fair. An enormous sculptural form consisting of three-dimensional lines and bubble-like formations occupies the space and snakes up into the sky to find its continuation and connection at the other location. Rossner's digital sculpture is in the tradition of abstract painting. It is colorful and rich in contrast, and refers to the fluid aesthetics of the digital age. It invites us to experience color, form, and matter in space in a sensory manner. The sculpture is not static and instead changes rhythmically. It expands and shrinks again - a breathing entity that appears to react to the surrounding space.

A small, artificial white figure that Rossner often uses as a digital alter ego in his works moves on the digital sculpture. The figure explores the lines and uses them as a starting point for its own explorations in space. The spherical shapes represent obstacles and digital representation errors, known as glitches, occur when the figure is hit by them. This playful component is part of the artist's aesthetic practice and refers to the increasing gamification of our world and to strolling in digital game worlds. These immaterial experiences meet with the experience of physical environments here.

In addition to the AR experience via smartphone, Rossner presents further images in the app in which the work of art becomes vivid in its entire dimension across Basel in photomontages.

Berlin-based artist Manuel Rossner (Germany) studied at the Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) in Offenbach, Germany, as well as at the École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and at Tongji University in Shanghai. In 2012, he launched the virtual gallery "Float," which presents exhibitions in the digital arena. Rossner uses virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to design digital spaces and virtual worlds in which he explores the impact of technological developments on society and art. His works have been exhibited at the König Galerie in Berlin, the Museum der bildenden Künste in Leipzig, the

NRW Forum in Düsseldorf, the Frankfurter Kunstverein, the Grand Palais Éphémère in Paris, the Galerie Roehrs & Boetsch in Zurich, the Biennale Art Safiental, and the Hamburger Kunsthalle, among others.

### **Studio Above & Below - Digital Exchange**

Digital Exchange by the artist duo Studio Above & Below simulates a virtual round of leaves from local trees found on Petersplatz. The shape and structure of the digital leaves correspond to their real-life counterparts, with leaves from beech, chestnut, ash, and walnut trees, for example, but in the virtual sculpture they have been given additional digital “chloroplasts,” which are usually responsible for photosynthesis in the plant cell. The work is connected to the Internet, allowing real-time data to be collected to map the intensity of solar radiation and UV light onto the surface structure of the dancing leaves. The local environmental data stimulates the digital “plant pigments” and changes the appearance of the leaves depending on the weather. Real phenomena are brought into dialogue with digital structures.

In Digital Exchange, Studio Above & Below transfers natural phenomena and processes into the digital arena. Digital life does not need oxygen, which plants produce through their photosynthesis, but the artist duo makes it clear that digital “ecosystems” also require energy and resources for their digital life. In their work, they question who and what nourishes this life. The interaction of humans with their environment is the focus of their works. In their augmented reality works, they make invisible ecological effects and structures visible, giving the environment a voice in order to encourage us to strive for a better coexistence with our ecosystem.

Studio Above & Below is a London-based artist duo and design practice founded by Daria Jelonek (Germany) and Perry-James Sugden (UK). Their work combines computer design, speculative storytelling, and digital art to address the invisible connections between people, machines, and the environment. In recent years, they have developed immersive and interactive works based on real-time data for this purpose. The duo’s works have been exhibited internationally at institutions such as the Royal Academy, the Tate Modern, the V&A Museum in London, the Today Art Museum in Beijing, at the WRO Biennale in Wroclaw in Poland, SONAR, WIRED Japan, Hyundai Motorstudio, and at the International Short Film Festival in Oberhausen. They have already received numerous prizes.

## **Mélodie Mousset & Eduardo Fouilloux - The Jellyfish**

The virtual glowing jellyfish created by Mélodie Mousset and her Patch XR studio splash around in several fountains in Basel. The ghostly sea creatures float above the water basins and encourage app users to interact with them. The jellyfish can be controlled by singing or humming. The pitch, vibration, and intensity of your own voice animates the virtual creatures. This new work builds on a previous virtual reality work that immersed visitors in a dreamlike, interactive underwater landscape in which they could also enter into dialogue with the virtual sea creatures by singing. The artists created a sense of connection with another species in a poetic and playful way through the harmonious interaction and synesthetic exchange between visitors and virtual creatures.

Mousset's works challenge our senses and invite us to participate. This is precisely what makes VR and AR technology so exciting for her: you are no longer just a spectator, you become part of the work and find yourself in the middle of it. Her works often oscillate between their own physicality and the virtual extensions that these technologies make possible for us. In her early works, Mousset used her own body in her works, through medical imaging technologies such as MRI or 3D printing. Her current works immerse us in her wondrous and idiosyncratic virtual worlds where we are able to interact thanks to our bodies.

Mélodie Mousset (United Arab Emirates) is a French artist living in Zurich. She studied art in Rennes, Lausanne, London, and Valencia in California. Her works oscillate at the intersection of the virtual and physical worlds and unfold in a wide variety of media, including performance, video, installation, photography, sculpture, and interactive media. Her work has been exhibited in institutions, galleries and festivals worldwide, including the Centre Culturel Suisse in Paris, MOCA in Los Angeles, Bund Museum in Shanghai, The Metropolitan Art Society in Beirut, SALTS in Basel, Helmhaus in Zurich or the Beijing VR Festival, VR Arles Festival, and the Zabłudowicz Collection in London. In 2020, she co-founded Patch XR, a studio specializing in the development of musical tools and playful experiences for Extended Realities (XR).

Eduardo Fouilloux (Mexico) lives and works in Copenhagen. He works on creating new ways of playing with interactive audiovisual media in real time. Fouilloux is the director and co-founder of Patch XR.

## **Tamiko Thiel - ARpothecary's Garden**

In her intervention in Solitude Park, Tamiko Thiel addresses the production of plant-based medicines. The artist selected several plants that are known for their healing power and have long been used in medicines, including the opium poppy, the red foxglove, the Adonis rose, and the castor or miracle tree. It thus makes a reference both to Roche's field of activity and to the 1936 mural "Medicinal Plants" by Niklaus Stoecklin, which is located in Roche Building 21. If you click on the pharmacy vials in the app, animated plants are released. The type of animation refers directly to the specific potency of the plants. Thus, a field of flowers slowly emerges, singing in cheerful, upbeat chorus with human voices, celebrating healing power.

Thiel is one of the important pioneers of art with VR and AR, having realized interactive 3D virtual worlds as early as the 1990s. On several occasions, she has generated virtual flora based on real plants. With her works, she refers in a playful way to ecological issues and the changes in our ecosystem due to global warming. Using AR to do so, she creates alternate realities that are rendered in real time in space, letting us "look into another dimension," as she says, while also making us think about our real world.

Tamiko Thiel (USA) lives and works in Munich. As an artist, she explores the interplay of place, space, body, and cultural identity. She works in a variety of media ranging from digital prints and videos to interactive 3D environments and VR and AR installations. She began her career as a product designer and has worked for many high-tech companies. She is one of the founding members of Manifest.AR, a group of artists working on augmented reality, with whom she has staged spontaneous interventions since 2010, including guerrilla actions at the Tate Modern in London and the Venice Biennale. Thiel's works have been presented in numerous exhibitions worldwide and are in many important collections, such as MoMA in New York, the SAN JOSE MUSEUM of ART, and the Whitney Museum in New York. She has received numerous awards for her pioneering work in the field of new media.

«Art-making is often if not always a conjuring practice, bringing that which is there but unseen – thoughts, ideas, memories, wishes, fantasies – into the visible realm.» Tamiko Thiel

«Three dimensional AR artworks engage viewers not just as images, but as objects with an extended presence in space, especially when the artwork extends beyond the display.»

«You are not looking at an 'image' on your phone – you are looking through your screen into a speculative vision of the future.»

«People tend to absorb information better when it is presented in an enjoyable medium, and AR allows people to interact with the world but also feel as if they are a part of the exhibit.»