

Edith-Russ-Haus für Medienkunst
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SILVIA
MARTES
MECHANICAL
MANIFESTATIONS

2 February to 26 March 2023

EXHIBITION

Project coordination: Ulrich Kreienbrink

Technical realisation: Carlo Bas Sancho, Mathis Oesterlen

Educational programme: Sandrine Teuber, Jan Blum

Graphic design: Katarina Šević, Anna Mándoki

EVENTS

EXHIBITION WALK

Wednesday, 15 March, 5 p.m.

with Edit Molnár, director Edith-Russ-Haus (in English language)

Wednesday, 22 March, 5 p.m.

with Marcel Schwierin, director Edith-Russ-Haus (in German language)

GUIDED TOURS

Every Sunday during the exhibition at 3 p.m.

(Attendance free, regular entrance).

Group tours on request.



www.facebook.com/edithrusshaus



www.instagram.com/edith_russ_haus



www.twitter.com/edithrusshaus

Mechanical Manifestations is the first solo show in Germany of the Dutch artist Silvia Martes, who primarily works with film. She plays with her medium on multiple levels: experiments in nonlinear storytelling span genres, from thriller and sci-fi to documentary, melodrama, and comedy. She often investigates the shifts in power relations within filmic representations, comments on autobiographical storytelling, and explores the blurring of boundaries through pseudo-fiction.

Martes's wide-ranging interest in the sciences, encompassing fields such as neurology, psychology, and physics, feeds into her adventurous, playful, and often humorous—yet not entirely prescribed—film scripts. Her narratives gradually develop through research and committed conversations with both her actors and the filming locations. This deliberately capricious way of working remains visible in the completed films. Since the stories intertwine with autobiographical details, Martes keeps control over as many aspects of production as possible, undertaking nearly every step of the filmmaking process herself: she builds the sets, runs the camera, acts, directs, and edits. Conflicting and deeply troubling ideological and political dilemmas are portrayed through the staging of conflicts and in her association-heavy, dreamlike storytelling style.

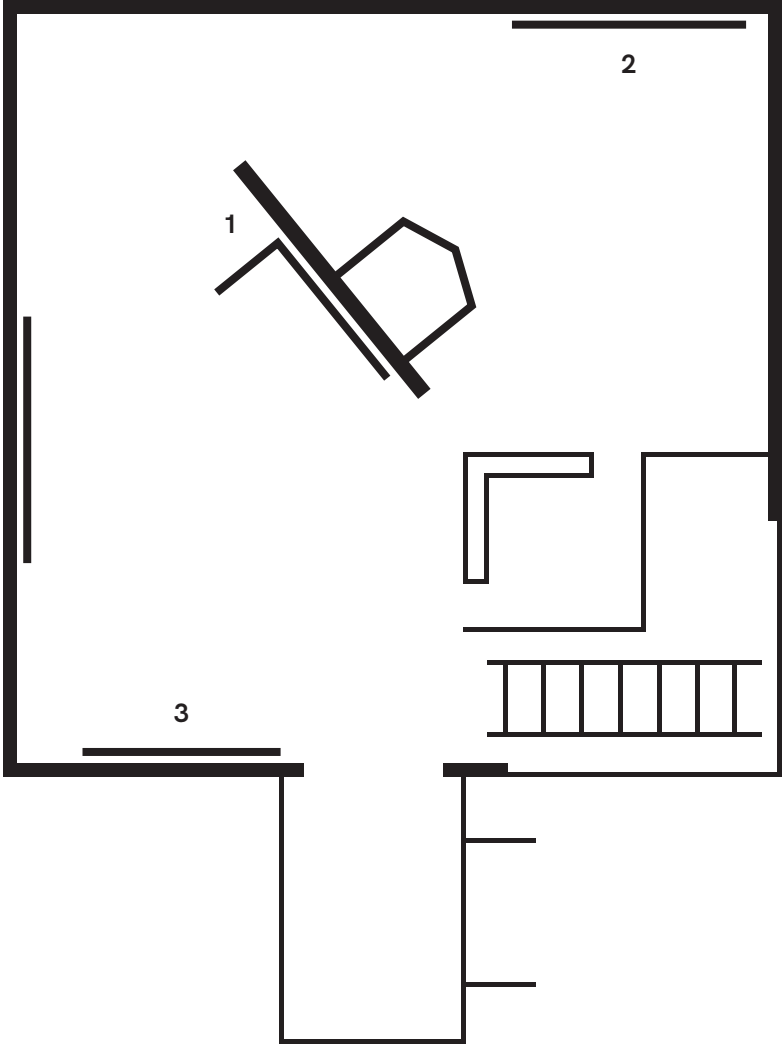
The insertion of photographs, voice-overs, and rapid cuts into the filmed footage acknowledges the fact that any given story always contains references to other stories—most of which remain unarticulated and untold. One such untold story prompted Martes's newly commissioned multimedia installation, *Heru Ku Heru pt. 1 (Iron With Iron pt. 1)* (2023), which was inspired by travel routes taken by the artist's family. The work revolves around the complex history of descendants of émigrés from the Caribbean island of Curaçao to the Netherlands and takes a twofold format: it comprises both a fictional story, which follows characters visiting a Curaçao diner, and nonfictional interviews with Dutch residents with Caribbean roots. *Heru Ku Heru pt. 1* dives into their mythical memories and investigates

the sensitive and complex legacy of colonialism from a contemporary perspective.

This solo presentation of Martes's work at the Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art revolves around a fascinating feature of her oeuvre: her elaborate yet homemade film sets and spatial designs, which weave a captivating atmosphere. This exhibition sets out to send these sceneographic installations on a renewed journey, giving them scope to take over the gallery space and break through filmic boundaries.

Silvia Martes's exhibition, presented as part of her 2022 Grant for Media Art from the Foundation of Lower Saxony, offers generous insight into the artist's exciting practice, which maintains a tone of hope, and sometimes humor, even as it deals with complex and heavy topics.

EXHIBITION GROUND FLOOR



1

HERU KU HERU PT. 1

2023

1 channel 4K video installation, spatial installation, mixed media
24 min

Heru Ku Heru pt. 1 (Iron With Iron pt.1) was inspired by travel routes taken by the artist's family. The work revolves around the complex history of descendants of émigrés from the Caribbean island of Curaçao to the Netherlands and takes a twofold format: it comprises both a fictional story, which follows characters visiting a Curaçao diner, and nonfictional interviews with Dutch residents with Caribbean roots. *Heru Ku Heru pt. 1* dives into their mythical memories and investigates the sensitive and complex legacy of colonialism from a contemporary perspective.

The newly produced work, like many of Martes's previous videos, is a synergy between fiction and non-fiction on several levels: the main set was built in the artists own house. As a rather experimental gesture, Martes's own house was transformed into a diner, whose design is based on a real site in Curaçao. The original diner is located in Willemstad, and plays a central role in the neighborhood as a gathering place which is central for the local inhabitants' daily routine.

The participants in the project are amateurs', playing mainly them-

selves in the film and the portrayal of their daily mundane activity (in Eindhoven) is weaved together with their confessional monologues. Hence the diner becomes a crucial location on the crossing of several lives on the border of fiction and reality.

The actors are selected as they all have special relations to Curaçao, their memories, biographies were fertile sources for the script and most of them are the members of the family of the artist. In this particular project Martes enlarges the circle of people from her intimate surroundings to narrate the lives of a wider community: she worked together with people who are all—in some extent—are from the Antilles.

2

ENCLOSE. DEPRIVE OF LIGHT. HIDE.

2022

1 channel HD video installation, spatial installation, mixed media
20:38 min

Silvia Martes shot this film in "The Eye", one of the freely accessible exhibition spaces of the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven. *Enclose. Deprive of Light. Hide* is based on her performance *To Enclose*, a project which reflected the first wave of the Corona pandemic, when social distancing and self-isolation in favor of the common good was still a

new concept for many. The film tells of rituals of loneliness, distanced communication and death in highly formalized images.

A central element of the film is a glass house set up in the glass-clad museum architecture. Silvia Martes conducted performances in it, which became part of the film along with the spectators. A replica of this glass house is part of the installation in the Edith Russ Haus.

3 **SHE THAT COMES FROM THE GREEN FOREST, ON A TUESDAY**

2013

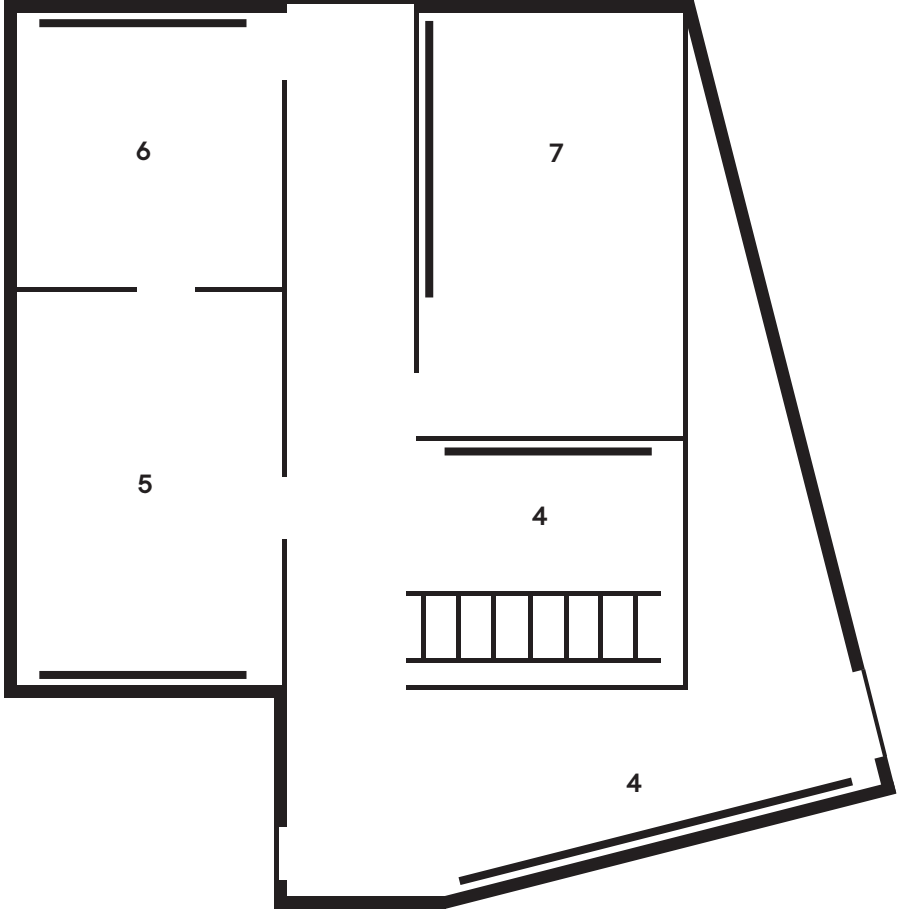
1 channel HD video

4:44 min

'She that comes from the green forest on a Tuesday' is the literal translation of the name Silvia Martes and is a semi-autobiographical film. We hear a male voice over tell the story about the house of 'she'. The interior and her content is being described in a distant objective manner while at certain moments a very subjective personal layer is brought in. There is no direct identification with the protagonist, there is no emphasis on a specific visual embodiment of 'she'. Deliberately, distance is being created between the viewer and the character while at certain moments, highly intimate facts are revealed, which keeps the viewer engaged in the story. The image in relation to

what is being spoken of is a constant swift of power positions. Text and image can be situated on a clear line, to be broken off the next moment in visual segments that refer more to each other than to what is being said. The dramatic tension is being increased because of the contradiction between the visual and sound.

EXHIBITION BASEMENT



4

AS THINGS GO

2016

1 channel HD video installation,
wall objects, mixed media
19 min

As Things Go tells the story of Ava who keeps on losing objects, persons, memories. Whenever such a displacement occurs, her time travel quest to retrieve what has been lost begins. She enters a white corridor, opens the large white doors and finds herself reuniting with what has been lost and yet the context of it all seem to have undergone several transformations. The video work shines a metaphysical light on our attachment and obsession to the material world while we as human beings are unable to leave this realm with a single thing, only with what once was called a body.

5

THE REVOLUTIONS THAT DID (NOT) HAPPEN

2019

1 channel HD video installation,
objects, mixed media
29 min

"The Revolutions That Did (Not) Happen is set in the year 2085, hundred years after I was born. It suggests a time when political and social structures have collapsed as a result of wars, pandemics and

natural disasters. Once turquoise oceans have turned into mudslides devoid of life, erupting volcanoes while shopping for a new outfit doesn't faze us. The society to be rebuilt is one of equality, one in which women of color—attuned to my own skin color—work at all levels of the hierarchy. But it is also one that has an awful lot of traits of a totalitarian state in which the currency has taken form in extracted human teeth, where everyone sells their identity for a gray suit and people and robots are indistinguishable from one another. Inspired by the way in which, under the influence of the internet and social media, we all start to look alike while at the same time being rewarded for individuality. The film is full of ambiguities about the necessity and meaning of change, mass behavior, individuality and the costs of work ethic. By fantasizing about the future, the shortcomings of the present are mainly exposed."

Silvia Martes

6

TO CONFIRM YOU ARE NOT A ROBOT, PLACE A CHECK IN THE BOX NEXT TO "I'M NOT A ROBOT"

2021

1 channel HD video installation,
objects, mixed media
22 min

To Confirm You Are Not a Robot, Place a Check in the Box Next to

"*I'm Not a Robot*" tells the story of three protagonists in 2121 and paints a picture of a possible future resulting from our behavior in the realms of technology and climate. The narrative follows the three characters as they move through the remains of what was once Mother Earth; they are "the last standing." One is a human being with an external resemblance to the artist herself, the second an audible yet invisible being, the third a non-binary robot suffering enormous guilt about its partaking in the destructive role of technology. The three characters consult an oracle to gain some idea of what awaits humanity—rather than being a crystal ball that predicts the future, however, this oracle functions as a history book.

7 THE RESTLESS DREAD OF SOME(THING) EVIL

2019

1 channel HD video installation,
objects, mixed media

18 min

In the film *The Restless Dread Of Some (thing) Evil*, we enter a dystopian world in which all human beings have a body part removed based on a conviction that such amputations will enable them to extend their lifespan. Most undergo removal of the tongue, so that they no longer waste energy by speaking. At a facility that specializes in these

operations appears for the first time a woman who wants to get rid of her heart. Holding the time-honored view of the heart as the seat of emotions she hopes to achieve a state of rational imperturbability. The philosophical mind-body problem is hereby exposed through a discussion of monism and Cartesian dualism. The lack of expression of the other actors in combinations with clinical pastel decor forms a pointed contrast with the largely unspoken restlessness of the protagonist.

Silvia Martes (b. Eindhoven, 1985), completed her BA in Fine Arts at the Audiovisual Department (VAV) at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam in 2013. She finished her studies with a nomination for the Fine Arts graduation prize with her autobiographical videowork 'She That Comes From The Green Forest, On A Tuesday'. Shortly after her studies she won a pitch prize from ShortsTV at the Dutch national Filmfestival (NFF) to produce and execute the short film 'As Things Go'. With subsidies from the Netherlands Film Fonds she completed the work 'As Things Go' in 2016. With the Young Talent Fund from the Mondriaanfonds she has produced & directed several short films in the Netherlands, New York and Senegal. In 2017 she was selected for a Mondriaanfonds artist residency in Ukiha, Japan where she made the short film 'Where The Pink Roses Bloom Even In November', and

finished her residency with two solo exhibitions. In 2019 she started the postdoctoral art residency at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. In the same year she completed the film 'The Restless Dread Of Some(thing) Evil', which was selected by the Eye Filmmuseum as part of the 'Selected Dutch Short Editions'. In 2020 she was selected as one of the NRC's 101 most promising artists of the future of the Benelux'. On International Womens Day 2021, she was announced as one of three female artists selected for the 'Theodora Niemeijer Prize' from the Van Abbe Museum. In April 2021 she was shortlisted for the Prix de Rome for which she produced a new videowork to be exhibited in November at Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In September 2021 her videowork 'The Revolutions That Did (Not) Happen' premiered in project-space Wool at museum De Pont in Tilburg.

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday till Friday

2 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday

11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Monday closed

ADMISSION

2,50 Euro / 1,50 Euro

Free admission on 25 February
and 25 March.

Free admission for students of
the Oldenburg universities.

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H A U S
for Media Art