

# **Lu Yang**

## **Digital Descending**

04.12.2021 – 24.04.2022

(EN)

*Digital Descending* is a solo show featuring Chinese artist Lu Yang. The artist is interested in subjects such as gaming culture, biotechnology, neuroscience, and religious studies, mixing all these disparate elements in art.

The exhibition *Digital Descending* comprises video installations, sculptures, a computer game and the brand-new major work *DOKU – 6 Realms of Reincarnation*. The exhibition takes the form of a vast, flashing, hyper-stimulating techno-world in which a twentyfive-metre alien – an inflatable head with Lu Yang's face and hair like tentacles – spreads out as if in a huge gaming mothership to lead us into the world created by the artist. A fictional, virtual parallel realm populated by monsters, gods, demons, superheroes, manga characters and not least Lu Yang's own genderless avatar that zaps across times and places within a teeming videogame-like universe.

Like a digital shaman, Lu Yang can transfer the spirit or consciousness into whichever digital shells the artist wishes to inhabit. Lu Yang has created the artist's own avatar, giving it Lu Yang's own facial features and an asexual body. The artist regards this as a digital reincarnation, using the character to cathartically explore different virtual worlds. Lu Yang can explore suffering, can enjoy, be entertained, or ponder philosophical questions. The artist can pursue anything that happens to fascinate or entice, and as in a computer game, Lu Yang has unlimited access to zapping in and out of space and time, moving between different levels and characters. Through the artist's avatar Lu Yang can acquire human or superhuman strengths and powers; Lu Yang can have any gender or be genderless; Lu Yang can be exactly the being the artist prefers to be.

“My own flesh is no longer bound by so many constraints. I can project all possibilities into my digital shells. In the digital world, the limits of the physical flesh can find release to the heart's content.”

Lu Yang

In the eyes of Lu Yang, technological development is a positive thing – it frees the individual human being from society's restrictive boxes, categories and expectations. Technology offers liberating opportunities for building individual worlds where you can establish your own world order and ask probing questions about all the ‘truths’ you think are wrong or in need of updating.

Lu Yang inspects philosophical, spiritual and cultural roots with great respect. With Lu Yang's art, the artist seeks to update the past, creating a Mark 2.0 that facilitates new inquiries into established categories, thinking and philosophy, thereby paving the way for the future.

Welcome to the world of Lu Yang!



### ***Material World Knight, 2018***

3-kanals videoinstallation (22:25 min.) / 3-channel video installation (22:25 min.)

Courtesy kunstneren / Courtesy the artist

Tre typer af figurer optræder i videoinstallationen: et klonet menneske, der udfylder rollen som 'Material World Knight', et par robotter med kunstig intelligens samt en 'cyborg' i form af et menneske iført et exo-skelet. Figurerne indtager scenen på skift og fremsætter tanker, om såvel det menneskelige mikrokosmos som universets makrokosmos. Installationen er en svimlende cocktail af japansk 'manga'-æstetik og futuristisk filosofi om menneskets og universets eksistens.

Værket tematiserer menneskets søgen efter at forlænge livet, forstærke kroppen og øge sin intelligens. Lu Yang viser, hvordan vores evige begær efter at udfordre menneskets begrænsninger kan finde frisættelse gennem teknologi.

Three types of characters appear in this video installation: a cloned human being who is the titular *Material World Knight*, a pair of robots with artificial intelligence and a 'cyborg' in the form of a human being wearing an exoskeleton. The figures take centre stage in turns, presenting thoughts and ideas about the human microcosm as well as the macrocosm of the universe. The installation is a visually dizzying cocktail of Japanese 'manga', and futuristic philosophy about the human condition and the universe.

The work addresses humanity's quest to prolong life, strengthen the body and expand human intelligence. Lu Yang presents how our eternal desire to challenge the limitations of mankind can be liberated through technology.



### ***The Great Adventure of Material World – Game film, 2020***

Video installation (26:22 min.) / Video installation (26:22 min.)

Courtesy kunstneren / Courtesy the artist

I *The Great Adventure of Material World – Game film* har Lu Yang opbygget en serie forskelligartede verdener, der er sat sammen efter hinanden og bygget op som 'levels' i et computerspil. I filmen vandrer hovedfiguren 'Material World Knight' igennem illusioner af verdener eller riger – såsom himlen, helvede og den materielle verden – for at udforske nye territorier og for at prøve at begribe hensigten med universet. I løbet af sin opdagelsesrejse på jagt efter nye erkendelser finder 'Material World Knight' ny energi, bliver ødelagt og genfødt og kæmper en indre kamp med sine egne følelser, ønsker og sig selv.

*The Great Adventure of Material World – Game film* er bygget op over et computerspilsverk, som kan afprøves i rummet ved siden af.

In *The Great Adventure of Material World – Game film*, Lu Yang has built a series of highly different worlds joined up one after the other like 'levels' in a computer game. In the film, the main character – known as the 'Material World Knight' – travels through illusions of worlds and realms such as heaven, hell and the material world, the purpose being to explore new territories and to gradually approach an understanding of the true meaning of the universe. During this voyage of discovery in search of new insight, the Material World Knight collects new energy, is destroyed and reborn, and fights an inner battle with his own feelings, his desires – and his own self.

*The Great Adventure of Material World – Game film* is based on a video game you can try for yourself in the next room.



### ***The Great Adventure of Material World – Game***

Computerspilsinstallation / Video game installation

Courtesy kunstneren / Courtesy the artist

Værsgo at træde ind i Lu Yangs verden gennem computerspilskunstværket *The Great Adventure of Material World*. Tag plads i stolen og lad spillet begynde!

Computerspillet tager dig med på en eventyrlig rejse, hvor du kan overføre din ånd til den digitale figur 'Material World Knight' og gå på opdagelse i de forskellige 'levels', eller virtuelle verdener, som Lu Yang har bygget op. I værket samles en række hovedfigurer fra Lu Yangs tidlige værker i en slags liga af legender. Som spiller vil man på sin færd kunne udforske forskellige riger, såsom himmel og helvede. Man vil også møde dæmoner og guder, superhelte og -heltinder, og ikke mindst Lu Yangs ansigt, der dukker op i forskellige monstrøse udgaver.

Go ahead – step right into Lu Yang's world in the art video game *The Great Adventure of Material World*. Take a seat and let the game begin!

The video game installation takes you on a fantastical journey where you can transcend your spirit into the digital character known as the 'Material World Knight' and explore the various 'levels' – virtual worlds created by Lu Yang. The game brings together a range of main characters from Lu Yang's earlier works, forming a kind of league of legends. As a player, you will venture into various realms, such as heaven and hell. You will also meet demons and gods, superheroes and heroines, and not least Lu Yang's face appearing in various monstrous versions.



***LuYang Delusional Crime and Punishment, 2016.***

Videoinstallation (12:37 min.) / Video installation (12:37 min.)

Courtesy kunstneren / Courtesy the artist

Værket er en blanding af musikvideo, science fiction, undervisningsfilm, technomusik, TikTok-dans og middelalderlig tortur. I filmen bevæger Lu Yang sin avatar igennem en række helvedesscenarier. Her undersøger kunstneren gennem sin figur forskellige ideer om menneskelig skabelse og lidelse og om synd og straf på baggrund af beskrivelser i videnskabens og religionens verden. I løbet af denne helvedesrejse synes Lu Yang at fremsætte filosofiske spørgsmål, der rokker ved disse begreber og fremhæver eksistentielle og religiøse dilemmaer, såsom:

Hvem eller hvad skabte livet? Hvorfor findes der religioner? Hvis en gud har skabt mennesket i sit eget billede, er synd da ikke indbygget i menneskets design? Og er mennesket således ikke forudbestemt til at ende i helvede?

The work mixes elements of music video, science fiction, educational film, techno music, TikTok dance routines and medieval torture. In the film, Lu Yang's avatar, is taken through a series of fictive simulated scenarios of hell. Here, the artist utilises this virtual character to explore a range of ideas about human creation and suffering, and about sin and punishment as described in science and religion. During the journey through hell Lu Yang seems to pose philosophical questions that prod and poke at these concepts, highlighting existential and religious dilemmas such as:

Who or what created life? Why does religion exist? If some god has created man in their own image, is sin not an inherent aspect of our design? And if so, is man not destined to end up in hell?



### ***Delusional Mandala, 2015.***

Videoinstallation (16:27 min.) / Video installation (16:27 min.)

Courtesy kunstneren / Courtesy the artist

I værket *Delusional Mandala* blandes Lu Yangs interesse for moderne hjernevidenskab og for religiøse traditioner. I filmen har Lu Yang indsat sin egen kønsløse avatar, der dels er fri og bekymringsløs, men også bliver utsat for foruroligende hjerneeksperimenter, slået ihjel og genoplivet.

I Lu Yangs værker er der to elementer, der ofte går igen og som sammenkobler fortid og nutid, tradition og fornyelse. Det ene er en halvcirkelformet gylden hovedudsmykning, der på én og samme tid refererer til et hjernekirurgisk redskab og til en guddommelig aura kendt fra buddhismen. En anden genganger i Lu Yangs værker er en traditionel kinesisk ligvogn gentænkt i en opdateret, tidsvarende version, hvor afdøde kan opleves som et levende billede ved hjælp af moderne digital teknologi.

The work *Delusional Mandala* mixes Lu Yang's interest in modern brain science and religious traditions. In the film, Lu Yang has inserted a genderless avatar based on the artist's own appearance, a figure that is free and carefree, yet also subjected to disruptive brain experiments, killed, and revived.

In Lu Yang's works, there are two elements that often recur and that connect past and present, tradition and renewal. One is a semi-circular golden headdress, that refers partly to a brain surgical instrument, partly to a divine aura familiar from Buddhism. Another recurrence in Lu Yang's works is a traditional Chinese hearse, reinvented to create an updated contemporary version where the deceased can, thanks to modern digital technology, appear before onlookers as moving images.

**(Skulpturerne)**

*Hearse Delusional Mandala No4, 2015*

Kunstig krystal / artificial crystal. Edition: 1/3

*Hearse Delusional Mandala No.6, 2015*

Kunstig krystal / artificial crystal. Edition: 1/3



### ***Electromagnetic Brainology, 2017***

5-kanals videoinstallation (13:34 min.) / *Five-channel video installation* (13:34 min.)

Courtesy kunstneren / Courtesy the artist

*Electromagnetic Brainology* er en videoinstallation, der leder tanken hen på et futuristisk religiøst alter. Her ses levende billeder af fire guder, der optræder som var de et *boy-band* i et underholdende popdanseunivers fra cyberspace. I værket har Lu Yang animeret fire opdigte superhelteguder, en for hver af buddhismens fire store elementer: ild, jord, vand og luft. Som i mange andre af Lu Yangs værker optræder en gylden halvcirkel som en form for guddommelig hovedudsmykning eller glorie. Uformningen er baseret på et såkaldt 'stereotaktisk apparat', der bruges i hjernekirurgi til at udføre dyb hjernestimulering til behandling af både fysiske og psykiatriske lidelser.

Lu Yang præsenterer her en futuristisk fantasireligion, hvori mennesket ved hjælp af teknologi er blevet guder.

*Electromagnetic Brainology* is a video installation reminiscent of a futuristic religious altar with vivid images of four gods performing as if they were a boy band inhabiting an entertaining cyberspace pop dance universe. In the work, Lu Yang has animated four fictional superhero gods, one for each of Buddhism's four great elements: fire, earth, water, and air. As in many other of Lu Yang's works, a golden semi-circular headpiece appears as a form of divine headdress or halo. The design is based on a so-called 'stereotactic device', an advanced brain surgery device used to perform deep brain stimulation to treat both physical and psychiatric disorders.

With this work Lu Yang proposes a futuristic imaginary religion, in which man, with the help of technology, has become gods.



### **DOKU – 6 Realms of Reincarnation, 2020-2021**

6-kanals videoinstallation, 6 lysbokse / 6-channel video installation, 6 light boxes

Courtesy kunstneren / Courtesy the artist

'DOKU' er navnet på Lu Yangs allerseneste kønsløse avatar, der er skabt på baggrund af en højteknologisk ansigtsscanning af kunstnerens eget ansigt, der gengiver udtryk næsten 100 %. Lu Yang optræder gennem sin digitale reincarnation, DOKU, i seks virtuelle verdener, der mimer buddhismens seks re-inkarnationsriger: gudernes, menneskets, asuraernes, dyrenes, helvede, og de sultne spøgelsers rige. I modsætning til Lu Yangs fysiske 'jeg' besidder DOKU evnen til at zappe på tværs af tid og rum, skifte roller, og til lynhurtigt at tilegne sig komplekse data, hvilket gør den i stand til, som i dette tilfælde, at udføre traditionelle balinesiske danser – uden nogen form for forudgående øvelse.

På væggen ved siden af den store videoinstallation kan man følge tre dokumentarfilm om tilblivelsen af *DOKU*, 2020-2021

'DOKU' is the name of Lu Yang's most recent genderless avatar, modelled entirely on a scan of the artist's own face, capturing all the textures of facial expressions with almost 100% accuracy. Lu Yang appears through this digital reincarnation, the DOKU, in six virtual worlds that mimic the six realms of reincarnation from Buddhism: Heaven, Human, Asuras, Animal, Hell, Hungry Ghost. As opposed to Lu Yang's physical 'I', DOKU has the superpower of zapping across time and space, of adopting different roles, and of rapidly acquiring complex data, enabling the avatar to, as in this case, perform Balinese traditional dances – without any previous training.

On the wall next to the large video installation, you can watch three documentary films on the making of *DOKU*, 2020-2021.



### ***Power of Will – Final Shooting, 2016***

Oppustelig skulptur, 4-farvet LED strobelys / Inflatable sculpture, strobe LED 4-colors lighting.

Courtesy kunstneren og Société / Courtesy the artist and Société

Den store oppustelige skulptur har Lu Yangs ansigt, men med lysende, gale øjne og hår som tentakler, der breder sig i rummet. Skulpturen varsler en indtræden i et fiktivt univers med Lu Yang i centrum. Som et monster eller en 'alien' i en science-fiction-fantasi har den indtaget udstillingsrummet og markerer, at dette er Lu Yangs territorium.

Skulpturen er et eksempel på, hvordan Lu Yang eksperimenterer med at lave flere versioner af sig selv ved at transcendere sin egen fysiske krop og lade sit 'selv' tage bolig i en lang række forskellige ydre skaller, såvel fysiske som digitale. Med disse kloner kan kunstneren lege frit i de parallelle verdener, som kunstneren har bygget op for sig selv.

The large inflatable sculpture has Lu Yang's face coupled with glowing, mad eyes and hair like tentacles spreading out into the room. The sculpture heralds our entry into a fictional universe with Lu Yang at the centre. Reminiscent of a monster or alien from a science fiction fantasy, this entity has taken over the exhibition space, marking it as Lu Yang's territory.

The sculpture is an example of how Lu Yang experiments with multiplying the artist's own persona by transcending the physical body and letting Lu Yang's 'self' take up residence in a variety of different shells, whether physical or digital. Through such avatars, simulacra and clones, the artist can play freely in parallel worlds of Yang's own devising.