

**The Danish Pavilion announces details of Maja Malou Lyse's *Things To Come* at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia**



Chus Martínez (left) and Maja Malou Lyse (right). Photography: Zoe Chait, July 2025.

**Commissioner:** Danish Arts Foundation

**Curator:** Chus Martínez

**Exhibitor:** Maja Malou Lyse

**Venue:** Giardini, Biennale di Venezia

**Dates:** 9 May – 22 November 2026

The Danish Arts Foundation unveils details of *Things To Come*, the exhibition by Danish artist Maja Malou Lyse, presented at the Danish Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. Curated by Chus Martínez, the project explores how science, fiction, and pornography converge in a historical moment in which images and humans become inseparable.

*Things To Come* takes its title from the 1936 science-fiction film of the same name, based on H. G. Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come*, a visionary work speculating on future technologies, social structures, and the fate of humanity. Drawing this speculative impulse into the present, Lyse's exhibition engages with recent scientific research suggesting that exposure to virtual sexual stimuli can measurably increase sperm motility. The finding offers a striking perspective on how image consumption does not merely influence imagination or ideology, but enters the biological realm.

Set against a widely documented global decline in male fertility, *Things To Come* considers the paradoxical role of contemporary media technologies as both toxin and antidote. Science, fiction, and pornography intersect as entangled image systems shaping how futures are imagined, governed, and lived.

In *Things To Come*, the collapse of sperm counts is not treated solely as a biological crisis, but as a metaphor for a broader civilizational breakdown. Environmental toxicity, screen addiction, cognitive exhaustion, and the erosion of intimacy mirror a society in which reproduction, relationships, and labour are rapidly changing.

Developed in collaboration with the architects Common Accounts and the artist collective DIS, the pavilion presents a large-scale video installation that stages a sensorial and conceptual environment in which erotic imagery, scientific rationality, and speculative narrative collapse into one another. The film operates as a manifesto for a contemporary naturalism: one that understands mind, visual order, language, and social and political culture as emergent from material processes. Sperm is matter and so is the hyper-feminine visual register of the film.

Echoing Picasso's late harlequins, this conceptual pornographic fairytale appears belated - melancholic and already marked by disappearance. In an era of infinite AI-generated imagery and endlessly reproducible pornography, where reproductive science and genetic engineering increasingly detach sex from reproduction, pornography and sperm begin to register less as contemporary phenomena than as archaeological residues. The film therefore does not speculate on the future of sex so much as linger at its threshold: a final dance - an ode to porn stars and to a fragile idea of humanity quietly slipping from view.

The project reflects Lyse's media-conscious practice examining sexuality, power, and the body in the digital age, alongside Martínez's curatorial ethos rooted in care, criticality, and dialogue. Together, artist and curator have established a dedicated research and working group to develop a project that expands Lyse's ongoing inquiry into how the life of images affects the body and the world, with consequences for humanity's future.

This commitment to engaging complex and uncomfortable questions resonates with the vision articulated in the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia by Koyo Kouoh whose philosophical framing *In Minor Keys* calls for art to move beyond moralizing debates and to cultivate forms of attuned listening - particularly to voices and forms of knowledge systematically excluded from mainstream cultural legitimacy.

**Chus Martínez, Curator, said:** *"AI-generated images no longer serve as evidence of anything, having been detached from their material origin. Imagine, then, the surprise of Maja Malou Lyse upon learning that the viewing of pornography through VR technology enhances male fertility by as much as 50%, as recent studies suggest. Fertility, futurity, and pornography thus become deeply entangled."*

*Maja Malou Lyse has conceived a paradoxical environment that suggests we are not simply at the end of the image, but at the beginning of a new world in which images persist, yet their meaning, function, and credibility are fundamentally altered. In her work, images no longer describe reality; they operate within it. Images function as an affective technology: they produce sensations, they produce time, they produce the species. They are rehearsals for possible futures rather than records of the present. "*

Born in 1993, Maja Malou Lyse is the youngest artist to represent Denmark at the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. She graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2022 and has exhibited internationally at institutions including ARoS, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Index Stockholm, and O – Overgaden, and performed at the National Museum of Denmark, Tate Modern, and Moderna Museet. She currently lives and works in New York.

Chus Martínez is a curator, writer, and academic whose practice centers on care, generosity, and active listening. She is currently Head of the Institute Art Gender Nature at the Basel Academy of Art and Design FHNW and serves as Associate Curator at TBA21 (Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary) in Madrid and Venice, as well as Artistic Director of the 36th Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts. Martínez positions artworks as spaces for learning and dialogue, proposing art as a form of epistemology capable of enabling alternative futures and ways of knowing.

## ENDS

To access the press kit, click [here](#).

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## Notes to Editors

### About Maja Malou Lyse

Maja Malou Lyse (b. 1993, Denmark) is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice interrogates the entanglements of desire, power, and mass media. At the core of her work lies a sustained inquiry into the body's relationship to the image — a dynamic intensified by the visual demands of the digital age. Lyse examines how images shape sexuality, self-perception, and cultural memory, tracing how the pornographic imaginary and media history construct, transmit, and preserve desire over time.

Her work embeds itself within the platforms that dominate contemporary visual culture — television, tabloids, advertising, and social media — appropriating these spaces to expose the mechanics of spectacle. By reconfiguring familiar formats, she reveals how art and media co-produce one another, staging a reality that seduces, governs, and occupies the collective imagination.

Employing humor, ambiguity, and the vernacular of pop culture, Lyse confronts the visual saturation of modern life and its effects on identity and desire. She is recognized for her incisive engagement with the erotic image and the politics of representation, approaching complex social questions with both critical acuity and disarming wit.

Lyse holds a Master of Fine Arts from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2022). She has had solo exhibitions at Overgaden (Copenhagen) and Brandts Kunstmuseum (Odense), and has participated in group exhibitions at the National Gallery of Denmark (Copenhagen), the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), Copenhagen Contemporary (Copenhagen), Blueproject Foundation (Barcelona), Moderna Museet (Stockholm), ARoS (Aarhus), Kunsthall Charlottenborg (Copenhagen), and INDEX (Stockholm), among others.

In 2018–2019, she created and hosted *Sex med Maja* (“Sex with Maja”) for the National Danish Broadcasting Corporation — a TV programme combining performance, education, and social critique to explore the politics of sexuality in a digitally mediated era.

### **About Chus Martínez**

Born in Spain, Chus Martínez is a curator, writer, and academic with a background in philosophy and art history. She is currently Head of the Institute Art Gender Nature at the Basel Academy of Art and Design FHNW in Switzerland and serves as Associate Curator at TBA21 (Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary) in Madrid and Venice. She also served as Artistic Director of the 36th Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts in 2025.

Martínez is a board member of CIMAM (International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art) and sits on advisory boards of several international institutions, including Castello di Rivoli in Turin and the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. Her previous roles include Chief Curator at El Museo del Barrio, New York; Head of Department at dOCUMENTA (13); Chief Curator at MACBA, Barcelona; and Director of the Frankfurter Kunstverein.

Known for her critical and experimental curatorial practice, Martínez has developed numerous exhibitions and projects in collaboration with contemporary artists worldwide. She writes regularly for international journals and contributes essays and texts to exhibition catalogues and books.

Recent exhibitions include *The Oracle*. Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (2025); *Search for Life* by Stephanie Comilang (TBA21 at the Thyssen Museum, Madrid, 2024); *Doblad mis Amores* (Collegium, February 2023); *Living in Joy* (Art Sonje, March 2023); *Clear, Lucid and Awake* (Art Sonje, 2024); and *Mathilde Rosier* (Fondation Pernod Ricard, May 2023).

Recent books include *The Complex Answer: On Art as a Non-Binary Intelligence* (Sternberg Press, 2023); *Like This: Natural Intelligence as Seen by Art* (Hatje Cantz, 2022); *Coding Care* (co-edited with Sabine Himmelsbach, Hatje Cantz, 2022); *Corona Tales: Let Life Happen to You* (Lenz, 2021); and *The Wild Book of Inventions* (Sternberg Press, 2020).

### **About Danish Arts Foundation**

Danish Arts Foundation promotes and supports Denmark’s contemporary art internationally through grants, collaborations and projects. [www.kunst.dk](http://www.kunst.dk)

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