EPFL CDH ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM LAUSANNE

ENTER THE HYPER-SCIENTIFIC

GARY ZHEXI ZHANG

23.2.—17.3. 2024

METAMERS

Are the stars out tonight?
I don't know if it's cloudy or bright
I only have eyes for you (dear)

How real is a hallucination? Metamers are different states of physical reality which produce the same phenomenal experience. It is generally believed that what appears as mental representation corresponds, via the sensory apparatus of the body, to the reality of an external world. Upon waking from a dream, the ancient philosopher Zhuangzi wondered: had he been Zhuangzi dreaming he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming it was Zhuangzi?

The founder of psychophysics, Gustav Fechner, theorized mind and body—which he extended to the inanimate world—as a curve which is convex from one view and concave from another; he sought to scientifically measure their duality. Contemporary neurological evidence demonstrates that far more of our reality is made in the mind than we may like to believe: we live in a world that dreams of us, far more than we can dream of it.
Unfolding as a psychological and acoustic descent inside anonymous subterranean architectures, *METAMERS* is an extended hallucination, invoking exchanges between the history of perceptual knowledge and the development of industry, war, and primordial biological memory. Time flows, but without spatial constancy; like a dream, ambiences breathe through one another across icons, portals, and rhymes. A frog watches, but we do not know what its eyes are telling its brain.

Gary Zhexi Zhang is interested in unstable knowledge. Operating individually, in collaboration and within organizational frameworks, his work explores systemic connections between cosmology, technology, and economy. He recently edited *Catastrophe Time!* (Strange Attractor Press, 2023), a book about time which brings together finance, science fictions, and interviews with leading climate modelers. The opera he cowrote with *Waste Paper Opera*, *Dead Cat Bounce*, premiered at Somerset House in 2022 and tours in 2024. In September 2023 he presented *The Tourist*, a documentary essay exploring an uneasy exchange between Afrofuturism and Sinofuturism via the life of Zanzibari revolutionary Ali Sultan Issa.
He has held teaching positions as lecturer in critical studies at Goldsmiths MFA, adjunct lecturer at Parsons School of Design, and PhD external examiner at the Royal College of Art. He cofounded design studio Foreign Objects, which received the Mozilla Creative Media Award in 2019. He has undertaken fellowships at Berggruen Institute in Los Angeles, Sakiya in Ramallah, and Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai, where he leads on strategic initiatives. With the Serpentine R&D Platform, he cowrites the *Future Art Ecosystems* series on advanced technologies and the cultural sector. His writings on art, technology, and economy have appeared in *Frieze*, *ArtReview*, *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, *Journal of Cultural Economy*, the MIT *Journal of Design and Science*, *e-flux Architecture*, among others.

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Initiated by the EPFL College of Humanities (CDH), amplified by EPFL Pavilions, and in partnership with the City of Lausanne, the EPFL – CDH Artist-in-Residence (AiR) Program Enter the Hyper-Scientific reflects the CDH mission of fostering transdisciplinary encounters and collaborations between artists and EPFL's scientific community. The program invites professional Swiss and international artists for three-month residencies to realize innovative and visionary projects at the intersection of art, science, and advanced technologies.
Curator & Head of Program: Giulia Bini
Program Administrative Assistant: Christine Farget
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