

PRESS RELEASE

Espacio Fundación Telefónica presents the exhibition 'Joanie Lemerrier. Lightscares', open to the public until 25 July 2021 and located on the fourth floor of our galleries

THE EXHIBITION 'JOANIE LEMERCIER. LIGHTSCAPES' IS A REFLECTION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY THROUGH SEVEN AUDIOVISUAL INSTALLATIONS

- **'Joanie Lemerrier. Lightscares'** is the first major solo exhibition dedicated to the French artist. A pioneer of video mapping and creative technology, he proposes an immersion through landscapes that invite us to contemplate and safeguard nature.
- **Among the seven installations on show, three have been specifically designed for Espacio Fundación Telefónica: *Edges, The Hambach Forest and the Technological Sublime, and Desirable Futures.***

Madrid, 10 February 2021.- Espacio Fundación Telefónica presents 'Joanie Lemerrier. Lightscares', the first major show of the artist's work where visitors are taken on a journey through a series of landscapes that transport them from the contemplation of refined abstract lines and the fascination for majestic computer-generated mountains to the disturbing reality of an overexploited environment. The exhibition is located on the fourth floor of our galleries and admission is free of charge with prior online reservation from 11 February to 25 July 2021.

A pioneer in the artistic use of video mapping and co-founder of the AntiVJ collective in 2008, Lemerrier (Rennes, 1982) set up his own studio in 2009, first in New York and since 2015 based in Brussels, to focus on creating pieces that use projected light to generate experiences that alter visual perception. Through computer programming and the manipulation of devices, he has been able to turn projectors into a source of light capable of transforming the appearance of things and leading us to question our conception of reality. "Light as a medium, space as a canvas" is the underlying premise on which he has based a large part of his work over this period. The exhibition, curated by Juliette Bibasse, director of Studio Joanie

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Lemercier in Brussels, highlights the importance of nature in Lemercier's practice and life, and reflects on the representation of the natural world through technology.

The use of technology in Lemercier's creative process

The first part of the exhibition brings together various types of landscapes that reveal a particular paradox: the attempt to grasp the spectacular beauty of nature, which has not been captured by humans, through the use of digital tools. These are principally geometric views that reveal a bewildering interplay of spaces, volumes, and shadows. Such is the case of *Edges*, which introduces Lemercier's key elements of expression at the core of his early years of practice – grids, geometries and lines through which the artist explores his technological landscapes. In this first part of the exhibition, Lemercier also shows us landscapes inspired by natural sites, ancestral legends and personal experience, as well as imaginary geographies that stem from the collaboration between man and machine.

In *Montagne, cent quatorze mille polygones* (Mountain, one hundred and fourteen thousand polygons), we see a large valley surrounded by mountain peaks created with an algorithm-distorted grid that highlights the blurred line between what we consider to be real and what is a mathematically-generated simulation. In his volcano series, his installations *Eyjafjallajökull* and *Fuji* reveal the immeasurable grandeur of nature compared to humans. The first of these pieces was inspired by the famous Icelandic volcano that wreaked havoc to air traffic in northern and western Europe in spring 2010, an experience that had a great impact on Joanie Lemercier. By that time, he was due to take up an artist residency in New York, but on the day that he was supposed to travel, the volcano erupted. During the next two weeks that his flight was delayed, Lemercier closely followed all news concerning the volcano, spending hours drawing its silhouette and studying the eruption. When he finally made it to New York, this obsession turned into inspiration, with the volcano as the central element of the installation planned for the residency. *Eyjafjallajökull* became thus the first piece in Lemercier's series on volcanoes. The installation, a distorted topography drawn directly onto two perpendicular walls, transports the viewer to the site of the explosion which saw one of Iceland's biggest volcanoes produce an enormous ash plume.

The second installation in this series comprises another hand-drawn large-scale landscape representing Mount Fuji augmented by a layer of projected light. The interplay of various projections animate the drawings, recreating an abstract light-based version of *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, a Japanese legend from the 10th century.

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From his desire to depict the close relationship between man and machine in the creative process, emerges *Paysages Possibles* (Possible Landscapes). Initially, Lemercier only used pen and paper for his drawings, but further on and inspired by the pioneering digital artist Vera Molnar, he began to employ a plotter which allowed him to produce larger images with continuous lines. With *Paysages Possibles* (Possible Landscapes), the plotter becomes an extension of the artist's hand using a computer software to sketch out Lemercier's personal mountain universe. As the hours go by, the finished drawings are hung on the surrounding walls along with the tests and errors resulting from mistakes in the software, all of them part of the creative process.

A reflection upon human impact on nature

In contrast to the fascination created by digitally "manufactured" environments, the second part of the exhibition shows us the reality of a nature full of scars caused by human overexploitation. Through a series of colossal images captured by drone, Lemercier leaves fiction behind to highlight the staggering and urgent need to safeguard our environment. An excellent example of this is *The Hambach Forest and the Technological Sublime*, an installation in which the artist depicts the destruction of one of Europe's oldest forests, just 200 kilometres from Brussels, which has been largely replaced by the continent's biggest coal mine. The Hambach Forest has become a central focus in the fight against climate change and for the preservation of biodiversity. With this piece, Lemercier embarked on a new creative stage in which his artistic output sought to reflect on matters such as sustainability and how to foster positive action to combat global warming.

The exhibition concludes with *Desirable Futures*, a space dedicated to ponderation and contemplation in which Lemercier invites visitors to reflect on the present, to rediscover our ability to see the world and to renew our commitment to it, imagining and constructing new realities.

Joanie Lemercier's works have been exhibited at the China Museum of Digital Art in Beijing (China), Art Basel Miami (United States), Tokyo City View (Japan), The Roundhouse London (United Kingdom), Barneys New York (United States), Sonar Festival (Spain), and the Sundance Film Festival (United States) among other venues.

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The Parallel Activities Programme and Digital Content

The exhibition is accompanied by a programme of free, parallel cultural activities aimed at people of all ages. Within the framework of the Madrid Design Festival on 23 February, there will be a round-table discussion on art and digital design in relation to this show. Throughout the period of the exhibition there will be a wide range of digital content available online which will help to better understand and expand on its content: audio guides, audiovisual material, infographics, photo galleries of Lemercier's work and complementary educational content. There will also be a family workshop 'Ilusiones Lumínicas' (Light Illusions) on 27 February, 6 & 27 March, 3 & 24 April and 8, 22 & 29 May 2021 to introduce children aged 6 to 12 to the technique of video mapping, as well as a school programme based on the exhibition. From 18 February 2021 there will also be guided tours for private groups (maximum 9 people) which can be booked online: Tuesday to Friday at 12 midday, Wednesdays and Fridays at 5pm and Sundays at 10:30 am.

For further information and registration, please contact **espacio.fundaciontelefonica.com**