

*'Luxury is personal'*  
*Arlette & Martine Syms*  
*11 Apr – 16 May 2024*

*anonymous gallery with*  
*Relaciones Públicas hosting*  
*Rose Easton, London*  
*for Condo CDMX 2024*

Inherent in the idea of luxury is the notion of something being rarefied, or quite literally rare. Many of the things that we define as “luxurious” are, therefore, at best exclusive, and at worst exclusionary. Characterised by a heat-forged alembic of painstaking craft, subtle wit, and geographical and historical specificity, the work of the multidisciplinary Mexican artist Arlette is certainly luxurious, but it is also deeply personal – its baroque intricacy and its frequent use of heavy-grade materials, including metal and volcanic rock, are offset by its ongoing exploration of deeply human themes and feelings. Amusement and arousal, in particular, emanate from surprising places in her sculptures, just as they sometimes take us by surprise in real life. With this in mind, it makes perfect sense that for *Luxury is personal* – a collaborative show for Condo CDMX – a new piece by Arlette appears in concert with three works by Martine Syms, another multidisciplinary figure whose practice combines theory, memoir, popular culture, gender politics, sex, and a wicked sense of humour. Like Arlette, Syms may show within the art world, but her practice is routinely energised by the desire to poke fun at its absurdity and self-seriousness; she is political *and* playful. In general, her output has the cool, scrappy, half-genius-and-half-bonkers vibe of an online fanpage for a pop star that is maintained by an academic.

Here, that elevation of fandom and femininity takes literal form: the three collages in this exhibition, one of which is the titular *Luxury is personal*, first appeared in

a 2021 Syms show called *Loot Sweets*, which itself originated with the artist's visit to an auction of the singer Janet Jackson's costumes. Syms, attending as a fan, won an Alexander McQueen jacket that once belonged to the singer, and the sense of psychic communion that she felt with Jackson as a result inspired a series of works that explored the relationship between objects – merchandise, ephemera and designer clothes, yes, but also art objects, and objects of cultural significance – and the self. Arlette's complimentary piece, *Couch*, is one whose magnitude and heft are unprecedented in her previous practice: a couch, made of bronze, weighing 350 kg and reproduced at full, authentic scale. It is another exercise in canonising an item of personal, or domestic, significance. A couch, after all, is usually confined to the home, and designed to be utilised without drawing much attention to itself. Here, it becomes a monument: a thing legitimised by graft, craft, weight, and cost. (On its reverse is the impression of a man's muscular back, meaning that it's also something of a monumental paean to sensuality, and more specifically to the desirability of hot men). In acknowledging the degree to which our own individual histories are assembled from a collage of experiences and acquisitions, Syms produces her own monuments, too: to Black excellence, to the appreciation of gorgeous things, and to the dizzying power of nostalgia. In *Luxury is personal* and beyond, both artists' works successfully transmogrify the singular and personal into something bigger, sexier, and grander – if not always literally in scale, then certainly in significance.

Arlette (b. 1998, Mexico City, Mexico), lives and works in Guadalajara. She received her BA from Central Saint Martins, London in 2022. Her debut solo exhibition *José* opened at Rose Easton, London in 2023. Selected group exhibitions include: *SL x RE*, Silke Lindner, New York (forthcoming); *On the edge of fashion*, Rose Easton, London (2023); *WORLD FAMOUS BABYLON*, Barbican Arts Group Trust, London (2022); *Auftrebende Kunstler*, Proyecto Paralelo – Recorrido Zona Maco, Mexico City (2022); *Talabarteria Malcriada 2021*, Espacio Union, Mexico City (2021); *Sonic Event*, Lethaby Gallery, London (2019); *Metaphonica IV*, Central Saint Martins, London (2018) and *Art Park*, LUX, London (2018).

Martine Syms (b. 1988, Los Angeles, US), lives and works in Los Angeles. Syms obtained an MFA from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson (NY) (2017) and a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (IL) (2007). Syms has exhibited internationally with recent solo exhibitions including: *Present Goo*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2023); *Loser Back Home*, Sprüth Magers, Los Angeles (2023); *Ugly Plymouths*, Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes, France (2023); *SHE MAD S1:E4*, MCA Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2022); *Grio College*, Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson (2022); *Neural Swamp*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2021, touring to Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia in 2022); *Loot Sweets*, Bridget Donahue, New York (2021); *Aphrodite's Beasts*, Fridericianum, Kassel (2021); *SOFT*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2021); *SHE MAD: S1:E4*, part of Glasgow International, Tramway, Glasgow (2021); *Ugly Plymouths*, at Sadie Coles HQ (offsite), London, and at 5239 Melrose Avenue, presented by Bridget Donahue and Sadie Coles HQ, Los Angeles (2020); *Boon*, Secession, Vienna (2019); *Shame Space*, Institute of Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond (2019); *Incense Sweaters & Ice*, Graham Foundation, Chicago (2018); *SHE MAD: Laughing Gas*, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago (2018); *Grand Calme*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2018); *Projects 106: Martine Syms*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2017); *VNXXCAS: Martine Syms*, Camden Arts Centre, London (2017); and *Fact & Trouble*, Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2016). In 2022, Syms released her widely acclaimed feature-film *The African Desperate*. Syms has been recognised with numerous awards, including the Guggenheim Fellowship (2023); United States Artists Fellowship (2020); Future Fields Commission in Time-Based Media (2020); and Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago (2018).

Text by Philippa Snow

Preview days, Thursday 11 and Friday 12 April, 12 – 6pm  
Open Wednesday – Friday, 12 – 6pm,  
Saturday 12 – 4pm

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Hosting Rose Easton, London  
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