

GRIMM

WELT

KASSEL

Press release | Kassel, 09.04.2019

A hero's journey »Into the Dark Woods« – an exhibition entices visitors into a fairy-tale forest filled with light and shade From 10.04.2019 in the GRIMM WORLD Kassel

18 powerful projectors, numerous loudspeakers and some 1.5 km of cable transform 330 square metres of exhibition area into a walk-in fairy-tale forest: Wednesday 10.04.2019 sees the opening of the new exhibition experience »Into the Dark Woods« in the GRIMM WORLD Kassel. The multi-media installation takes visitors on a fairy-tale hero's journey in which they play a part. A special highlight: the exhibition requires neither language nor real exhibits, and can be understood across all languages and cultures.

On Wednesday 10.04.2019, GRIMM WORLD Kassel opens its new exhibition experience »Into the Dark Woods – Find your way through the fairy-tale forest to the magic clearing«. 18 powerful projectors, the same number of media players, numerous loudspeakers and around 1.5 km of cable transform 330 square metres of exhibition area into a walk-in fairy-tale forest of generative design. It took 300 hours to render the sequences, and the resulting production restarts every 20 minutes. As the exhibition narration is non-linear, visitors can join at any time. If you want to see every individual sequence all the way through, you will need more than three hours. The highlight of the immersive production is that the exhibition is accessible without mediation or interpretation, regardless of linguistic or cultural background. »For the first time ever, GRIMM WORLD is staging a purely digital exhibition - »Into the Dark Woods«. This opens up various possibilities: as the exhibition does without speech as an information medium, the experience is intuitive – and accessible to visitors of all ages, regardless of linguistic or cultural background«, says Peter Stohler, Director and Programme Head of GRIMM WORLD.

A hero's journey Into the Dark Woods

Once you have crossed the threshold and ventured »Into the Dark Woods«, you will soon be lost in the fairy-tale maze of light and shade between the trees – just like Little Red Riding Hood was, once upon a time. This forest is a living thing which grows and meanders this way and that, drawing the visitor in deeper and deeper to fall under its enchantment. The path to the magic clearing is inhabited by mysterious figures that show us what is slumbering in the depths of our soul: the multi-media installation takes us, the visitors, on our very own fairy-tale hero's journey.

»The exhibition is all about transformation, because characters or objects in fairy tales are very rarely what they seem«, says Mirko Zapp, the exhibition curator. Appropriately enough, a will o' the wisp lights the way through the pitch blackness. Trees, bushes, caves, and even a waterfall feeding a stream line the path, but the exhibition changes constantly: creatures and objects loom up and disappear again, sometimes it is stormy or rainy, and then the moon shines down from a clear sky. In the centre, the visitor reaches the magic clearing: five huge standing stones form a kind of mythical ritual temple. »In fairy tales, transformations often represent the inner transformation undergone by their protagonists«, Mirko Zapp goes on. »The clearing turns visitors into fairy-tale heroes or heroines who experience how it feels to undergo such an adventure – alone in the dark woods, exposed to the elements, surrounded by

darkness and unearthly figures. Needless to say, everything ends well – just like a typical fairy tale.«

The production studio URBANSCREEN from Bremen has designed a video sequence that works in exactly the same associative manner as the surrounding forest – although these are real video images. Narration takes a back seat in favour of a more immersive experience in which the visitor is exposed to a whirlwind of images that surround him on a projection area of more than 40 square metres. The sequence contains many allusions – some direct, some hidden – to fairy tales, but the most intriguing thing, according to Mirko Zapp, is: »It is just as effective if you don't know or recognise any of the tales. The exhibition works without any previous knowledge, and actually works best if you do not try to rationalise everything«. In fact, »Into the Dark Woods« does not present individual fairy tales, instead providing associations and fragments of archetypal narratives which enable visitors to experience their own stories.

»Into the Dark Woods« was composed by URBANSCREEN, a production studio for interdisciplinary media art from Bremen. The studio is renowned for its immersive installations. »Creating a digital forest was a really exciting challenge for us, as designers and from a technical point of view«, says Majo Ussat, Managing Director at URBANSCREEN. »In order to make an aesthetically pleasing, living forest grow mainly from printed characters, we developed our own dynamic algorithm, consisting of design elements, typography and self-generating animations. «

URBANSCREEN has more than ten years of experience in the implementation of complex media productions, and has already illuminated a number of buildings, including the Sydney Opera House, the Rice University in Houston, Texas, or the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Hamburg.

VISION TOOLS from Hamburg is the exhibition's technical partner.

www.grimmwelt.de/finsterwald

www.urbanscreen.com

Press contact:

GRIMMWELT Kassel gGmbH | Contact person: Mirko Zapp, Press/Public Relations/Marketing
T +49.561.59861913 | mirko.zapp@grimmwelt.de | www.grimmwelt.de

Duration:

10.04.2019 – 06.10.2019

Opening times:

Tue – Sun from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fri 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., closed Mon.

Admission

Special exhibition »Into the Dark Woods«: 5 €, reduced rate 3 €

Combiticket for permanent and special exhibition: 10 €, reduced rate 7 €

www.grimmwelt.de

Background: Idea and concept

The exhibition complex GRIMM WORLD Kassel brings the Brothers Grimm and their works to life in the modern world. The exhibition »Into the Dark Woods« is another step along the path we have already begun, and the first time we have offered a purely digital presentation: it uses light and shade to bring the world of the Grimm's fairy tales to life, without the need for speech or solid objects. The tale is told spatially: 18 projectors create an architectural forest of steles; nine different sound loops conjure up the right acoustic environment. Visitors enter »Into the Dark Woods« through a sound- and lightproof curtain. What follows is an individual hero's journey, during which they discover the thoughts, feelings and emotions they have brought with them. There is no fixed path to follow, for the exhibition is non-linear and non-chronological.

The theme of transformation

To a certain extent, images of the hero's journeys of antiquity reappear in fairy tales, and the rites of passage of earlier civilisations or indigenous peoples also contain analogies: the tales and rites begin with a separation: deliberately or accidentally, the protagonist is torn from his familiar environment. He leaves his home to seek his fortune, or he is banished, abandoned or given away. The story of »Hänsel und Gretel« is a classic example. In the woods, the protagonist is in a state of transition or suspense; he undergoes profound disorientation and many tests or trials. Having passed the tests, he is reborn as a hero, fully aware of his new-found strength, and assumes a different role and position – even when he returns to his former life. This phase of »integration« concludes the transformation, and the environment has mostly changed, too. The reward for having had the courage to change can be an entire kingdom, the hand of a princess in marriage, a castle, or untold wealth. The fairy tale »Iron John« is a good example: the king's son frees the wild man of the woods, who carries him off and compels him to be his servant. He fails and is forced to leave the forest, but receives a »gift of gold« at the same time. Following a series of further trials, in which he demonstrates great courage, he wins the heart of the princess and breaks the curse that had been put on Iron John.

The installation is made up of letters – the lowest common denominator of all stories. However, the letters in »Into the Dark Woods« do not appear as a text, but as constantly changing pictures, thereby becoming protagonists of a transformation themselves – an allusion to the linguistic research of the Brothers Grimm, as language is also in a perpetual state of flux and change.

The woods – a place of longing and a den of thieves

Dark woods always were – and still are – the ideal setting for these tales of transformation. The forest stood for all that is sub-conscious, uncivilised, untamed, and was also a tangible threat, because it was where thieves and robbers lived, and the scene of their dark deeds. In the age of Romanticism and for the Brothers Grimm, the forest became a place of longing for the first time. Phrases such as »sylvan solitude« were coined, and endowed the forest with a multitude of romantic associations. To this day, the forest is an emotionally charged, strongly symbolic entity in Germany: the perfect setting for stories about growth, because the forest itself grows and proliferates. The edge of a wood is the threshold between cultivation and untamed nature, light and darkness, the known and the unknown. We all know the sense of change we feel when we enter a forest on a summer's day. Everything suddenly becomes cool, dark, and uncannily quiet.