

HISTORICALS

Historituals
Exhibition with Lucas Leffler
from March 14 to April 25, 2021 at Plagiarama

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Exposition avec Lucas Leffler
du 14 mars au 25 avril 2021 à Plagiarama

Edited by **PLAGI ▶ R ◀ M ◀**

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ENG/

At the crossroads of genres, Lucas Leffler's work summons the documentary, the experimental and flirts with fiction. The artist readily takes the position of investigator, both to conduct research on photography's technical aspects, showing an inextinguishable taste for experimentation, going back in history, unearthing astonishing forgotten mythologies. The history of the places he investigates takes part in the work as well as the experiments with the medium, pushing the limits beyond its two dimensions.

The artist directs his explorations towards the mineral and chemical qualities of silver. For the Zilverbeek project he walks in the footsteps of the precious metal rejected by a photographic products company. His recent re-enactments include the celestographies by August Strindberg or the experiments with silver nitrate by Lilly Kolisko. He examines the issues of alchemy and anthroposophy, questions the processes and materials long inherited, and with them the place of humans and their rituals within their own history, discovering the quality of the so created links.

Lucas Leffler's performative practice of re-enactment questions history and its writing. It is not the issue of remaking history or of repeating it, but rather of replaying for the present events or experiments that have been understated, sometimes ignored by history. Therefore he participates in the contemporary principle of historical reassessment in questioning the values that underlie it.

Curator Yuna Mathieu-Chovet

FR/

À la croisée des genres, le travail de Lucas Leffler convoque le documentaire, l'expérimental et flirte avec la fiction. L'artiste prend volontiers la position de l'enquêteur, tant pour mener des recherches sur les aspects techniques de la photographie, témoignant d'un goût inextinguible pour l'expérimentation, que pour remonter le fil de l'histoire, détarrant d'étonnantes mythologies oubliées. L'histoire des lieux qu'il investit prend part à l'oeuvre au même titre que les expérimentations du médium, dont il repousse les limites au-delà de ses deux dimensions.

L'artiste oriente ses explorations vers les qualités minérales et chimiques de l'argent, à travers son projet Zilverbeek, où il part sur les traces du précieux métal rejeté par une entreprise de produits photographiques, mais aussi lors de ses récents re-enactments des célestographies d'August Strindberg ou des expérimentations au nitrate d'argent de Lilly Kolisko. Il examine les problématiques de l'alchimie et de l'anthroposophie, questionne les processus et matériaux hérités de longue date, et avec eux la place de l'humain et de ses rituels au sein de sa propre histoire, découvrant la qualité des liens ainsi créés.

Lucas Leffler développe une pratique performative du re-enactment qui interroge l'histoire et son écriture. Il ne s'agit ni de refaire l'histoire ni de la répéter, mais plutôt de rejouer pour le présent des événements ou des expérimentations qui ont été minorées, parfois ignorées par l'histoire. Il participe ainsi du principe contemporain de réévaluation historique, dans le sens d'un questionnement des valeurs qui la sous-tendent.

Commissariat Yuna Mathieu-Chovet

Lucas Leffler



ZB #05, 2021

Lucas Leffler

photo print on paper, mud, silver gelatine, handcrafted steel-frame
70x100 cm

Tree of Diana, 2019

Lucas Leffler

plexiglass, steel, cooper, silver nitrate, demineralized water
250x80x80 cm

Zilverstrijk, 2021

Lucas Leffler

mud, silver nitrate, binder
280x360 cm

Table of research, 2021

Lucas Leffler

documents, publications and elements included in the research
100x120 cm

Kolisko experiments, 2019

Lucas Leffler

28 filter papers, 1 ml of silver nitrate and 1 ml of iron solutions (each)
140x110 cm

Gevabox, 2021

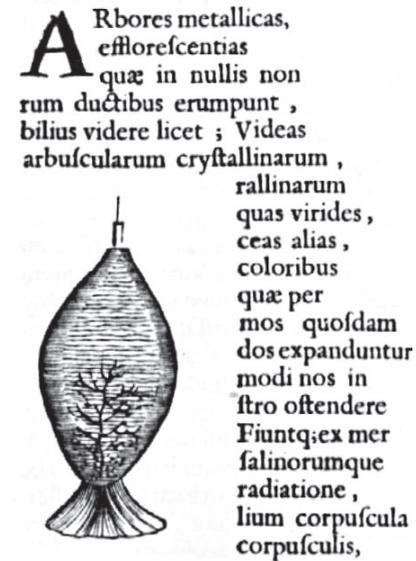
Lucas Leffler

welded steel box (oxidized and varnished), 10 solarized b&w prints made on gelatine photo paper (Ilford Warmtone)
26x32x2 cm

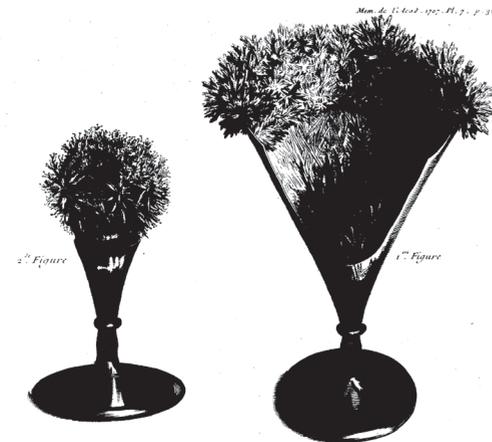


Extracts from the work **Table of research**, composed of documents, publications and elements included in the research

Lucas Leffler (°1993, Virton) lives and works in Brussels. He studied photography in professional high-school *HELB* in Brussels and he completed the master programme at the *Royal Academy of Fine Arts* in Ghent (BE). His work has been exhibited at *Art Paris 2020*, *Manifesto Festival* (Toulouse, FR) and *Musée de l'Elysée* (Lausanne, CH). His works will be shown in 2021 in *Hangar Photo Art Center* (Brussels, BE), *salon Approche* (Paris, FR), *Biennial of the Tangible Image* (Paris, FR), and *FOMU* (Antwerp, BE) for 'tiff #08'. His first book 'Zilverbeek' was released in autumn 2019 with Dutch publisher *The Eriskay Connection*.



One of the first publications of chemical vegetation by Athanase Kircher, German Jesuit scholar in *Mundus subterraneus*, 1664–1678 (University and State Library Düsseldorf).



Trees of March, obtained by Louis Lémery, French chemist, published in *Les Mémoires de l'Académie royale des Sciences*, on July 20, 1707, p. 328.

«... for nothing is created, neither in the operations of art, nor in those of nature, and it may be posited in principle that in every operation there is an equal quantity of matter before and after the operation; that the quality and quantity of the principles is the same, and that there are only changes, modifications.»¹

The law of the equivalence of the mass was enunciated in 1777 at the *Academy of Sciences* in Paris by Antoine Lavoisier, considered since then as the father of modern chemistry.

One well known manifestation of this law is the reduction-oxidation reaction. The presence of a 'reducing' element, such as a copper rod, inside an oxidizing solution, such as a silver solution in a plexiglass tube, leads electrons (negatively charged) to be released on both sides of the chemical elements. These 'ions' are exchanged by associating with the opposite element.

On the first hand, the silver-ions come to condense around the copper rod, and thus generates metallic silver. On the other hand, the copper-ions spread inside the liquid solution and turn its color into a subtle light blue. The name of this reaction, *Tree of Diana*, originates from an old alchemical experiment dating back to the Middle Ages, which permit to generate silver in their holy quest for metal transmutation and where Diana stands for the goddess of the hunt and the moon.

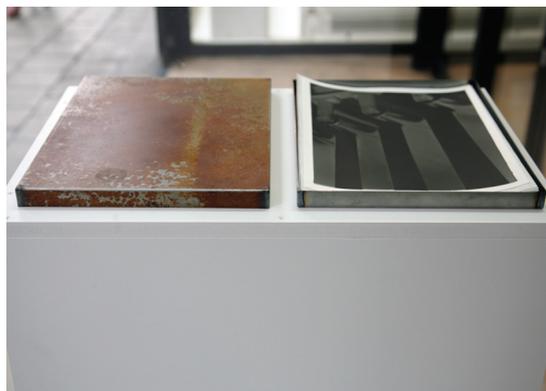
If the metallic silver generated by this reaction is then immersed in a solution of nitric acid, it will be dissolved and will return to the state of salts. If these salts, the silver nitrate, is diluted in a liquid solution we can remake the whole reaction again. The *Tree of Diana* experiment can be performed again to transform the salts into metal, and the metal into salts endlessly without any other items being added.

This well known chemical phenomenon of *redox*, already learned at college, has many manifestations. A plate of metal rusts with the effect of oxygen, a plant is fed by the process of photosynthesis, an analog image appears on a print in a developer chemical bath. An infinite cycle of coming and going which brings to light Lavoisier's law. The changes with the state of matter exchange ions between elements but do not cause any quantitative or qualitative loss with these elements. You have the same things at the start than at the end. The elements combine, associate, attract and reject each other, but at the end nothing appears or disappears from nowhere, like a rabbit coming out of a magician's hat. Everything is only reconfigurations of preexisting things.

From a scientific point of view, it is therefore not valid to define an artist as a creator, the artist would be assimilated to the Big Bang. It is more correct to define the artistic act as an act of transformation. An act that transforms a state into another, which gives substance to an idea by re-configuring different raw materials and giving them a new form.

The transformation of the world of ideas into the world of matter, transformation of the world of the real into the world of images. The beauty which is sought is therefore not in the result of transformation but on the process of it, by its own phenomenology in a way. What «appears in the experience», both in the physical world and in our minds.

Lucas Leffler, March 9, 2021.



¹Lavoisier, *Traité élémentaire de chimie* (1789), p. 140/141

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