

# Jochen Lempert

## Jardin d'hiver

From 24 January to  
29 March 2020

### Natural History

Jochen Lempert's solo show is another example of Le Crédac's long-standing desire to maintain, even deepen, its commitment to artists. In 2014 Lempert was part of *The Registry of Promise*,<sup>1</sup> the project that Le Crédac had mounted with the curator Chris Sharp in four different art centers around Europe. The artist showed his work in the first installment called *The Promise of Melancholy and Ecology*, which questioned the trauma that is bound up with the traditional understanding of the idea of nature.

Both minimalist in their black-and-white analog photography and conceptual in their forms and frameless display, the images created by Jochen Lempert (born in 1958, lives and works in Hamburg) focus on the animal and vegetal world and the fleeting traces of natural phenomena. He attempts to make the visible invisible. Birds, humans, tree leaves, turtles, rainy landscapes, dragonflies, little clouds of midges, grains of sand, wind-worn stones, and mounted specimens deposit abstract lines and furtive signs on the photographic surface.

Lempert isn't looking to lend his photography an historical tonality, even if it does bring to mind Modernists like Karl Blossfeldt (1865–1932), August Sander (1876–1964), and the botanist Anna Atkins (1799–1871), whom he admires and who first began publishing, before William Henry Fox Talbot and his *Pencil of Nature*, her *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* in 1843.

Printing his images – the artist does this himself in his studio-lab – forms an important part of his work. He also prepares his developers and fixers himself according to his own formulas. Moreover, his way of using light-sensitive papers gives his images their singularity. Some are blurred, granular, and can look defective or oddly contrasted. They are even produced without film at times by leaving, for example, tree leaves floating over the photographic paper in the developer fluid. He has also slipped them whole into the developer; the plants are thus enlarged, as if viewed under a microscope.

The sobriety and restraint of Lempert's work associated with a documentary approach may be an outgrowth of his studies in biology. That particular vocation was born when he was fulfilling his nonmilitary service in the 1980s on Mellum, an uninhabited island in the North Sea and a sort of centuries-old bird sanctuary. He subsequently worked as an ornithologist on research vessels in the North Sea.

Upfront about the discretion, even occasionally the self-effacement of his images, Lempert offers us photographs that do not look to rival those of professional photographers and shutterbugs. For his work, he uses a 50mm lens almost exclusively, a piece of equipment that reproduces a natural view, although his images are allusive at times, almost pure mind.

Lempert's photography stands in stark contrast to the ambitions of a certain kind of German photography done in color and large formats, and practiced by the mainstays of the Düsseldorf school like Thomas Struth, Thomas Ruff, Andreas Gursky, and Bernd and Hilla Becher. Yet there is something of the punk

saboteur in him that came to the fore when he was a member of the experimental group Schmelzdahin (roughly “melting away”), which was active from 1979 to 1989. Lempert, Jochen Müller, and Jürgen Reble “subjected Super 8 film to the worst possible treatment, baths in bacterial solutions, fire, and plunging it in ice.”<sup>2</sup>

The show running at Le Crédac titled Jardin d'hiver carries on the series begun with *Sudden Spring* and *Predicted Autumn*,<sup>3</sup> a program Jochen Lempert recently produced that was designed to change with the seasons. Precise and sensitive, his eye takes in the connections between things. Lempert doesn't limit his art to producing images; he also forges analogies and correspondences in the pages of the books he publishes and the space of the exhibitions he mounts. It is an approach that recalls the work of his compatriot the art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929), who laid the foundations of iconology and began his famous *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1926) in Hamburg.

Be it through an installation of vitrines that both enclose and reveal his photographic compositions, or a wall display, Lempert creates forms of visual narratives thanks to a play of conceptual or formal free associations, correspondences that are renewed with every new exhibition.

After an initial tour of a show punctuated by fixed black-and-white images, visitors can experience color and the moving image in two (digitized) Schmelzdahin Super 8

<sup>2</sup> Frédéric Paul, « Ce qui est arrivé au tangara fastueux Ou The Problem of Life (5 jours à Hambourg) » in *Jochen Lempert, Phenotype*, König Verlag, Cologne, 2013.

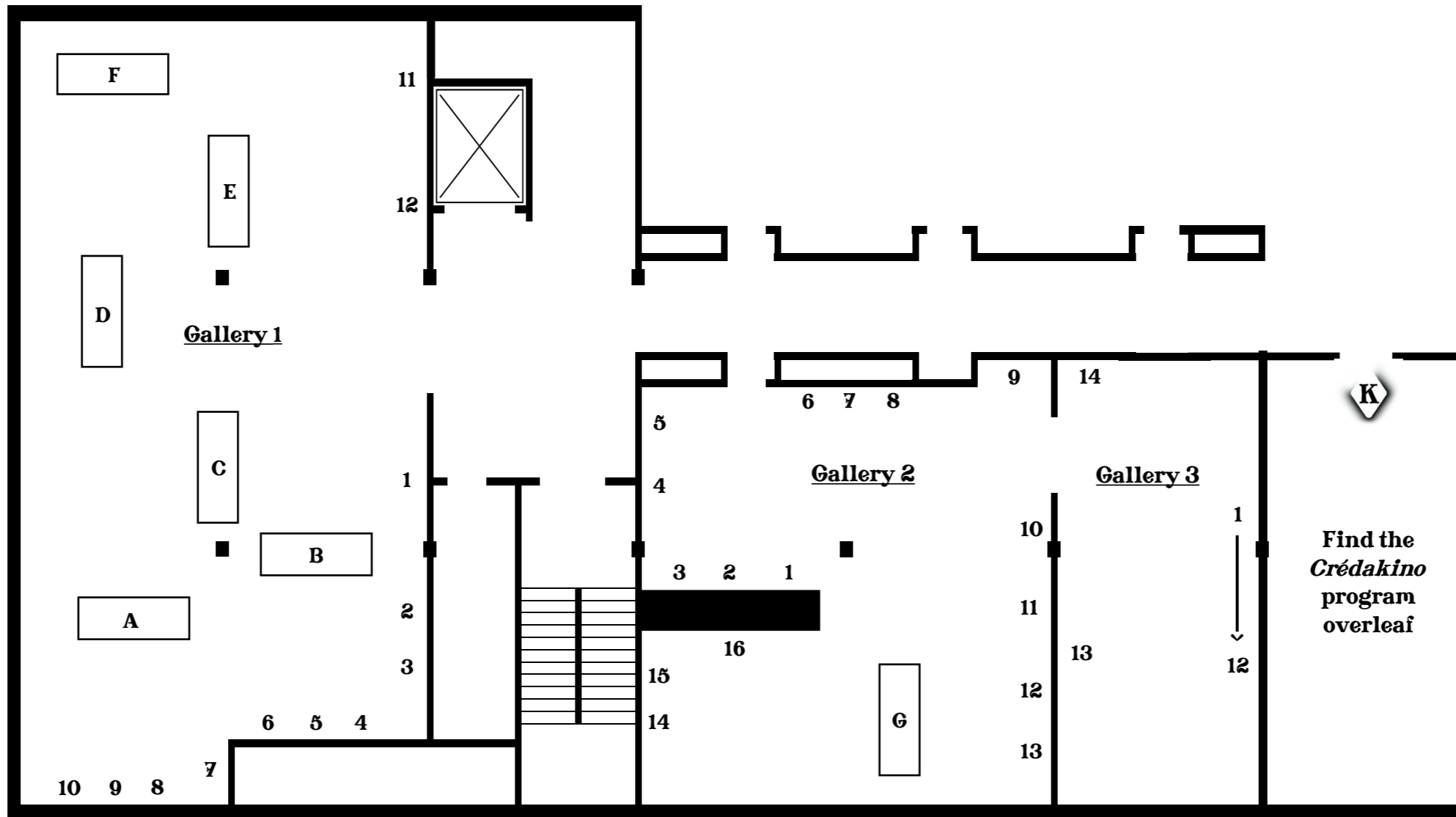
<sup>3</sup> At the Bildmuseet, University of Umeå, Sweden (2018), and the Musée d'art contemporain of Haute-Vienne, Château de Rochechouart (2018).

<sup>1</sup> *The Registry of Promise*, texts by Chris Sharp, Roma Publications, 2015

films showcasing the emergence of color. Selected by the artist, the films will be screened in *Crédakino*.

What attracts us to Jochen Lempert's work is that rare combination of constant observation, the recording of the invisible, and the distance – which he respects – between himself and what piques his curiosity. In his work there is no relationship of subordination subjecting nature to his own output. Lempert creates a different alliance between nature and the human. His view of the subjects he photographs is tinged with humor and melancholy, though always devoid of any moral. While quite topical in its subjects, his photography adopts an alternative attitude, i.e., it is worried without being dramatic, striking without being spectacular, and scientific while remaining artistic.

Claire Le Restif



→ Gallery 3

1 -> 12 (left to right):

- 1 *Sunset*, 2013
- 2 *Rain*, 2007
- 3 *Colibri*, 2017
- 4 *Bees (Rome)*, 2012
- 5 *Untitled (Phrasikleia Kore)*, 2020
- 6 *Sleeping Monkey*, 2013
- 7 *Rock*, 2013  
Volcanic rock at the base of Stromboli
- 8 *Flame*, 2018
- 9 *Kirschen III*, 2019
- 10 *Shadow on Stairs*, 2014
- 11 *Cat*, 2017
- 12 *Seefeder*, 2018
- 13 *Lyren I*, 2013 (ten parts)
- 14 *Untitled (Cicindela)*, 2017

## The works

→ Gallery 1

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <i>Wind II</i> , 2015                    | 11 <i>Untitled (Pigeons in Tree)</i> , 2008 |
| 2 <i>Untitled (Sleeping Flower)</i> , 2018 | 12 <i>Kirschen</i> , 2019                   |
| 3 <i>Untitled (Impatiens)</i> , 2014       |   |
| 4 <i>Untitled (Gingko, Japan)</i> , 2017   | <b>VITRINES</b>                             |
| 5 <i>Untitled (Liriodendron)</i> , 2019    | A <i>Plant Volatiles</i>                    |
| 6 <i>Untitled (Nepenthes)</i> , 2016       | B <i>Botanical Box</i>                      |
| 7 <i>Untitled (Morning Glory)</i> , 2019   | C <i>Phasmes</i>                            |
| 8 <i>Untitled (Botticelli II)</i> , 2017   | D <i>Love II</i>                            |
| 9 <i>Theretra / Ficus</i> , 2019           | E <i>Helle Kammer</i>                       |
| 10 <i>Untitled (Ivy &amp; Bee)</i> , 2019  | F <i>On Trees</i>                           |

→ Gallery 2

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <i>Untitled (Fishes and the Human Body)</i> , 2017     | 10 <i>Oligolectic</i> , 2016   |
| 2 <i>Untitled (Botany Bay)</i> , 2019                    | 11 <i>Spiderweb</i> , 2015   |
| 3 <i>Untitled (David)</i> , 2019                         | 12 <i>Untitled (Maria Sibylle Merian)</i> , 2015. From the book <i>Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium</i> , 1705 |
| 4 <i>Etruscan Sand V</i> , 2016                          | 13 <i>Caterpillar</i> , 2013   |
| 5 <i>Swans (Stockholm)</i> , 2018                        | 14 <i>Etruscan Sand VI</i> , 2019  |
| 6 <i>Untitled (Plastic Bag)</i> , 2017                   | 15 <i>Untitled (Automimikry)</i> , 2018  |
| 7 <i>Noctiluca</i> , 2017<br>Seawater poured on negative | 16 <i>Bills</i> , 2020   |
| 8 <i>Noctiluca (after Hercule Florence)</i> , 2016       | <b>VITRINE</b>   |
| 9 <i>Untitled (Polygonia c-album)</i> , 2019             | G <i>Lyren II</i> , 2017 ( five parts)   |

All the photographs presented are gelatin silver prints on matt baryta paper.

Courtesy of the artist and galleries ProjecteSD (Barcelona) and BQ (Berlin).

## Markers (selection)



### Biography

- 1958 born in Moers, lives and works in Hamburg (Germany)
- 1980–88 Studies of Biology, Friedrich-Wilhelm University, Bonn (Germany)
- 1978–89 Experimental film and film-performances within the group Schmelzdahin

### Solo shows since 2015 (Selection)

- 2018 *Predicted Autumn*, Musée départemental d'art contemporain de Rochechouart (France)  
*Sudden Spring*, Bildmuseet, Umeå (Sweden)  
*Jochen Lempert*, Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid (Spain)  
*Plant Volatiles*, Kunst Haus Wien, Vienna (Austria)  
*Phasmes*, A.VE.NU.DE.JET.TE, Brussels (Belgium)
- 2017 *Honeyguides*, Sprengel Museum, Hannover (Germany)  
*Zostera & Posidonia*, ProjecteSD, Barcelona (Spain)  
*Jochen Lempert*, Front Desk Apparatus, New York (USA)
- 2016 *Fieldwork*, Izu Photomuseum, Shizuoka (Japan)  
*Plant Volatiles*, BQ Galerie, Berlin (Germany)
- 2015 *Jochen Lempert*, Between Bridges, Berlin (Germany)  
*Field Guide*, Cincinatti Art Museum, Cincinatti (USA)

### Group shows since 2015 (Selection)

- 2018 *Unthought Environments*, The Renaissance Society, Chicago (USA)
- 2017 *The Photographic*, SMAK, Ghent (Belgium)  
*Hercule Florence*, Nouveau Musée National de Monaco
- 2016 *Animality*, Marian Goodman, London (UK)  
*Sublime. Les tremblements du monde*, Centre Pompidou Metz
- 2015 *Close-Cropped Tales*, ProjecteSD, Barcelona  
*Beastly/Tierisch*, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Winterthur (Switzerland)  
*Bare Wunder*, Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf (Germany)

## Schmelzdahin (Jochen Lempert, Jochen Müller, Jürgen Reble)

Schmelzdahin is an experimental film collective made up of Jochen Lempert, Jochen Müller and Jürgen Reble that was active between 1979 and 1989. Together they explored the possibilities that processes using chemical treatments and the celluloid film as an art material in itself offered artists. Working with sequences they found or shot themselves, they created films that are highly plastic in the sense of the plastic arts, thanks to chromatic changes, exposure and erasure, corrosion, and bacterial cultures.

Featured in the exhibition context, these two films emphasize an explosion of color verging on psychedelia.

— From 23 January to 23 February —

### *Weltenempfänger*, 1984

(World Receiver)

digitized Super 8 film; color, sound;  
5 minutes 08 seconds ; in loop.

— From 26 February to 28 March —

### *15 Tage Fieber*, 1989

(15-Day Fever)

digitized Super 8 film; color, sound;  
14 minutes 15 seconds ; in loop.

## Performance

### *Wir lagerten uns ums Feuer* Schmelzdahin (Jochen Lempert, Jochen Müller)

With *Wir lagerten uns ums Feuer* (“we gathered around the fire”), two former members of Schmelzdahin, Jochen Lempert and Jochen Müller, will redo in public their experiments with Super 8 filmstock. During the screening, the film negative, made up of sequences shot by the collective, will be chemically altered, scratched, and heated. Like alchemists of the moving image, they will show the transformation of the film from one loop to the next.

— Sunday 29 March —  
at 3pm and 5pm



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2pm to 6pm,  
on weekends from 2pm to 7pm

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