

## Checklist

**Venue:** Galerie Stadt Sindelfingen

**Exhibition Title:** Leon Simonis - Vessels of Unbecoming

**Dates:** 07.02.26-19.04.26

**Participating Artist:** Leon Simonis

**Curator and author of the text:** Marisa Zeising

**Photographer:** Kai Knoerzer

**Website:** <https://galerie-sindelfingen.de/leon-simonis-vessels-of-unbecoming/?lang=en>

**Instagram names:** Galerie Stadt Sindelfingen @galeriestadtsindelfingen (venue),

Leon Simonis @blitzbube (artist), Marisa Zeising @marisa\_zsng (curator), Kai

Knoerzer @kaiknoerzer (photographer)

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Courtesy: Leon Simonis

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# LEON SIMONIS

## *Vessels of Unbecoming*

07.02.26-19.04.26

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The exhibition *Vessels of Unbecoming* by Leon Simonis (\*2001, Sindelfingen) is conceived as an invitation to enter a space that oscillates between an experiential environment and spiritual landscape. Across places, cultures, and times, rituals structure human coexistence. They emerge where routines develop a meaning beyond themselves, where actions are repeated to provide orientation, support, or a sense of belonging. Symbols, colors, and forms function as visual anchors, as a universal language. The *Schaufenster junge Kunst* resemble sacred spaces in which mythical, religious, and contemporary narratives merge into a new, speculative mythology. The exhibition operates as an interface between tradition and reinvention, between collective memory and a speculative future.

The windows of the exhibition spaces are covered by the fragile latex work *Veil* (2024–ongoing), which covers the glass surfaces like organically grown intertwining strands. The work depicts the process of sclerotization, a biochemical process through which the chitinous exoskeleton of insects is formed. Initially soft and vulnerable, it becomes a hard protective shell that promises stability while still allowing movement. Like stained glass windows, they refract light, tell stories, and give the exhibition its outer form. Continued as a wall installation on elliptical museum glass, they function as veils through which we perceive the world.

At the center of the first room stands *A Manifesto of Unbecoming* (2026). The sculpture appears like an object of devotion, a relic from an imagined time, situated at the intersection of science, ritual, and speculative mythology. Three spinal columns orbit the spherical tip of a scepter. Instead of showing the body as a whole, like in a crucifix, a dissected, fragmented part of the body is revealed that usually remains hidden beneath the skin. The outward-facing vertebrae simultaneously evokes associations with fish bones and suggests an approach to the animalistic as well as the maritime origins of life. The classic Trinity composition of Christian iconography is expanded and disrupted by queer theory: the number three becomes a destabilizing factor here and opens up a space of possibility beyond binary orders. The sculpture does not assert a singular truth; instead, it holds contradictions and multiple readings at once. It understands the body as part of an affective network in which human and non-human elements mutually influence one another. *A Manifesto of Unbecoming* is not a monument, but a manifesto of non-becoming, of permanent shift.

In the second room, the epoxy resin mold of a leaf from a *Victoria amazonica*, the giant water lily from the Amazon, floats in a round stainless-steel basin. Monumental and powerful, *Victoria: The Becoming of a Beast* (2025) is not shown from its familiar top view, but from the perspective usually hidden beneath the surface of the water. The underside appears sinewy, fleshy, and almost animalistic. As an almost monstrous presence, the boundary between animal and plant becomes blurred. The sculpture is inspired by a folk tale in which a girl, in love with the moon, mistakes its reflection in the water for the celestial body itself and drowns while trying to touch it. Out of compassion, the moon transforms the girl into a plant. The upward gaze from below evokes the perspective of the drowning body, of a body in transition, where death and becoming intertwine. Loss becomes a prerequisite for transformation. Like a baptismal font, the water marks initiation and renewal. Baptism appears as the symbolic death of the old self and the entry into another state of being. *Victoria: The Becoming of a Beast* negotiates transformation not as a gentle process, but as a hybrid becoming in which death and metamorphosis are inseparably intertwined. Hanging on the walls are the works *Becoming of a Beast (triptych)* (2025), in which parts of the water lily have been molded in goatskin. The elliptical shape symbolizes infinity and cyclical renewal. The surface appears soft and yet resilient. It cannot be clearly assigned to humans, animals, or plants, thus reminding us of our kinship and the common structures of all living beings.

Behind a black chiffon curtain, a cabinet opens, in which the fabric panels envelop the body like a mourning veil, creating an intimate, almost sacred atmosphere. At its center hangs a *Nepenthes*, a pitcher plant whose gaping funnel generates a powerful pull. The interior of the plant is coated with a deep black, light-absorbing pigment that directs our gaze inward, silencing all distractions. The *Nepenthes* becomes a confessor, into whose throat we symbolically throw our sins. Seductive and threatening at the same time, it embodies an ambivalent figure: a deadly trap in which insects perish and simultaneously become part of a new body. *Nepenthes: Through Matter* (2025) refers to the perpetual transformation of matter and to the inseparable entanglement of death and growth.

The exhibition *Vessels of Unbecoming* itself becomes a container, gathering works that conceive materials and plants as fragile bodies, not as finished forms, but as snapshots of transition that always carry the possibility of another form within them. The exhibited works negotiate the body beyond binary logics and anthropocentric attributions. Human, animal, and plant forms merge into one another. Occultism and science intertwine to create a world in which multiple realities are allowed to coexist. Truth is not understood as singular or absolute, but as a fluid, composite structure that resists final codification. "Becoming" thus becomes a metaphor for letting go of inherited traditions and for the willingness to allow new perspectives on nature, belief, and interpretive authority.

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