

Jochen Lempert
Phenotype
17.07–30.08.2020
Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius

Curator: Asta Vaičiulytė
Exhibition architecture: Linas Lapinskas

'Phenotype', an exhibition of analogue photography by Jochen Lempert at the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, presents works by the artist that have largely been created over the past five years. A biologist by training, Jochen Lempert (b. 1958 Moers, Germany) worked during the 1980s at Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Bonn while at the same time collaborating with the film group Schmelzdahin. Together they produced experimental films and carried out research in the fields of shooting, montage and material processing along with studying at length the effects of bacteriological and chemical alterations of film. Since then, by joining up the worlds of scientific and artistic thinking, Lempert has continued his exploration into the properties and materiality of the photographic image as well as research into various life forms and their ways of coexistence.

Lempert's photographs are always black and white, captured on 35 mm film, developed, and hand printed by the artist in his studio. He photographs diverse environments – nature, natural history museums, zoos and cities – places where nature and culture intertwine, thus reminding us of the continuous and inevitable affect we have on each other and our milieus. This non-finite variety of interplay is also present in his photography books and exhibitions – each time new arrangements, meanings and contexts are created.

The attentiveness of the process and the imagery captured in the artist's photographs remind us also of slower times, when we have long enough to look closely and linger within our own lives. In his work, Lempert explores the interrelations of the human and natural world as well as themes of looking, being seen and the human gaze (phenotype is the term used in genetics for the composite observable characteristics or traits of an organism). At the same time, the artist's works seem to challenge our anthropocentric gaze of the world: his photographs are characteristic of a non-hierarchical approach, here everything is equally important – plants, animals, things and people. Lempert's oeuvre is also pertinent in the context of the challenges we face today, i.e. an inevitable necessity to find a new equilibrium within ecological, social and interpersonal relations. And although his photographs do not aim to perform this task directly, they carry an ability to awaken a different kind of seeing and connection, one that is more delicate and open.

All photographs in the exhibition are silver gelatin prints. The artist is represented by ProjecteSD, Barcelona and BQ, Berlin.

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Images courtesy of CAC, Vilnius and Andrej Vasilenko