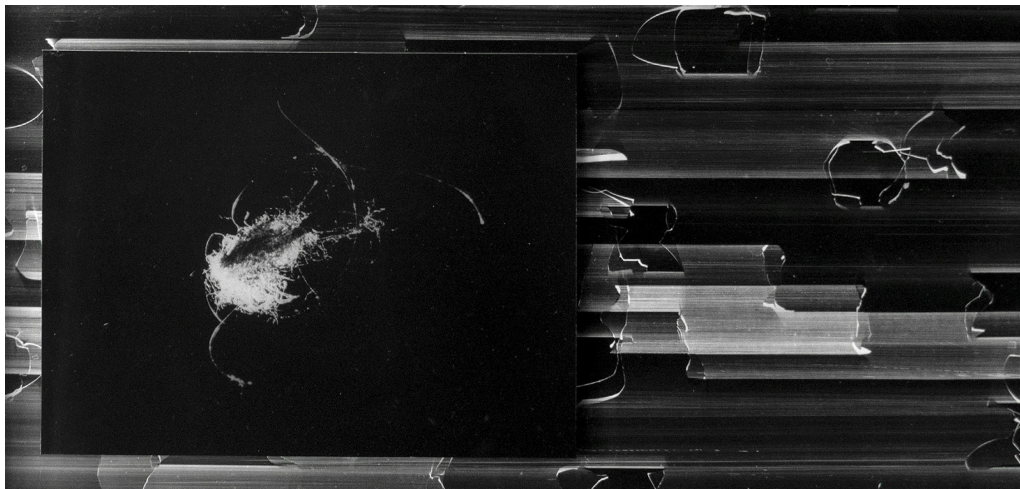


# Vincent Lemaire

## WHAT LIGHT STOPS ILLUMINATING

05.09 – 19.09.2026



*Spatialisation Egocentrique B (detail), 12,022*  
photograph et photogram, black & white silver prints on Ilford glossy baryta paper.

To mark the publication of Léo Marin's\* essay *What Light Stops Illuminating, Inevitably Emerges from the Shadows*, which focuses on the work of Vincent Lemaire, Galerie Dix9 presents a selection of works mentioned and contextualized in the essay to illustrate its themes.

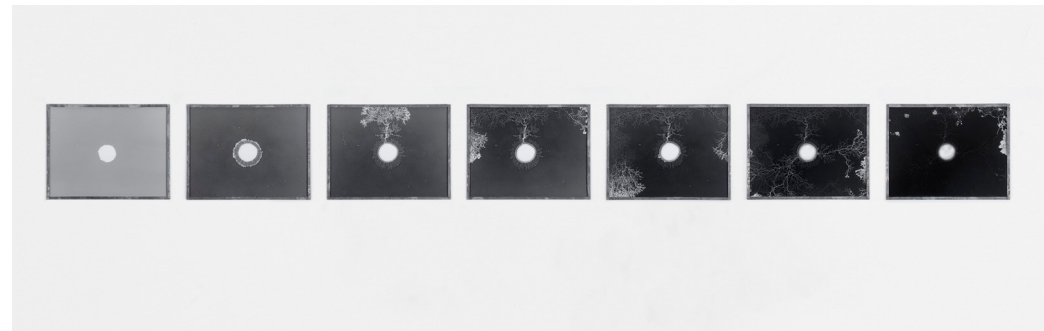
The essay was produced as part of the ADAGP's Ekphrasis grant, which Vincent Lemaire won in 2025. It will be published in September in the magazine *Le Quotidien de l'Art*.

One year after *Entropy*, the artist's second solo exhibition presented at the gallery, this text offers a fresh perspective on these works, which explore the origins of life and attempt to situate us within the vast scales of time and nothingness.

\* Léo Marin is the director of URDLA and vice president of AICA France.

### What Light Stops Illuminating, Inevitably Emerges from the Shadows

Vincent Lemaire's work involves an array of protocols, such as cultivating organisms, producing photograms from glass plates, compiling form inventories, maintaining daily records, and engaging in analog rephotography. However, this rigorous organization is not that of a laboratory. Instead, it is an examination of systems of knowledge, particularly the ways in which images enable us to create a collective memory of the living world. Lemaire interprets science rather than documenting it. He appropriates its methods to expose the ideological tensions and archaic impulses they conceal.



*Emergence B7, 12,022*  
photograms, black & white silver prints on Ilford glossy baryta paper.  
23,5 x 237,5 cm

The *Emergence series* (12,022-12,023), developed from cultures of slime mold, commonly known as "blobs," is a compelling example. Audrey Dussutour, a research director at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), studies these single-celled organisms. The golden networks spreading across the plates are neither maps nor automated drawings. They are manifestations of foundational life processes: expansion and the search for resources. Lemaire transforms this process into a model of human impulses toward exploration and conquest. The Petri dish becomes a miniature globe, and the blob's behavior mirrors our desire for territorial and technological expansion. By bringing biology and geopolitics together, Lemaire shifts the focus from the origin of life to the narratives through which that origin is constructed. How is the history of the living world continually reenacted through our fantasies of expansion, colonization, and control over resource flows?

<sup>1</sup>The dates follow the Holocene calendar, also known as the Human Era calendar. This calendar adds 10,000 years to the current calendar, placing the beginning of human history at the start of the Holocene era around 10,000 BCE. According to this system, the year 2025 becomes 12,025, combining prehistoric and recorded human history into one timeline.



*Lithopanspermie E*, 12,022-12,026  
photograms, pulleys, ropes, asphalt.  
92 x 64 cm

This conceptual dislocation becomes more pronounced in the materials used in other bodies of work. The broken neon tubes in *Rayonnement fossile* (12,016–12,021) and the asphalt fragments in *Lithopanspermie* (12,022–12,025) represent more than mere structural elements for his installations. They evoke contemporary life infrastructures, such as lighting, roads, and traffic, while also extending our fantasies of interstellar grandiosity through references to meteorites, cosmic microwave background radiation, and panspermia. By replacing a stone fallen from space with asphalt, Lemaire performs a material inversion: the material basis of terrestrial movement becomes a vehicle for the idea that life originated from outer space. In doing so, he disrupts the linear chronology of progress—from primitive to civilized—by folding it back upon itself. The energy confined within the neon tube recalls stellar energy, while the tube's helical fracture evokes DNA. The asphalt road turns into a meteorite. The ordinary becomes charged with the primordial and cosmic.

The same logic runs through Lemaire's image inventories. The prehistoric Venuses that he collects and rephotographs were created long before today's geopolitical borders divided the territories in which they were later discovered. In his studio, he catalogs them according to two temporal systems: one based on the dates of their discovery and the other arranged from oldest to newest. In the works titled *Matriarches* (12,022–12,023), the figurines are ordered vertically, from oldest at the top to most recent at the bottom. This reconstructed family tree reveals the paradox of prehistory as a discipline claiming universality while continuously reenacting contemporary rivalries over territorial ownership. These figurines are seen less as objects of study than as “symptoms.” As some of the earliest three-dimensional sculpted representations of the human body, they also become surfaces onto which our contemporary fantasies of gender, maternity, and identity are projected. Lemaire reveals the inherently speculative dimension of science, with its material “readings” and unverifiable hypotheses.

Another protocol yields another set of forms. In a series at once trivial and vertiginous, the artist reconnects with his origins by collecting his own navel lint daily. For seven years, he archived every fiber, methodically placing each accumulation in a dated and numbered box. He describes this intimate ritual as “a gesture of care and observation of the body” that gradually evolved into an experiment in time and matter. These fibers emerge from the umbilical cavity—the scar of birth and the remnant of the cord that once connected us to the maternal body and, through it, to the world beyond. They become the first natural sculptures produced by our bodies. When Lemaire began photographing them in works such as *Rayonnement Egocentrique* (12,017) and *Cosmagonie TMC* (12,015–12,019), he instinctively drew parallels between them and images of comets, meteorites, and nebulae. These are two forms of dust—one organic, the other stellar—animated by the same processes of accumulation and descent. This correlation establishes the themes that define his subsequent work: the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm; the intimate specimen and universal archaeology; and the bodily trace and celestial fragment.

These miniature sculptures encapsulate Lemaire's preoccupations: the sedimentary accumulation of living matter, the memory of origins, and the transformation of residue into a generative matrix.



*Matriarches*, 12,022-12,026  
installation of 6 photographs, black & white  
silver prints on Ilford matte baryta paper.  
96 x 75 cm



*(4,54 x 10<sup>9</sup>) + 1*, 12,014  
112 wood boxes, 12 mini fluo tubes, 12 engrave lead slabs, 365 plastic boxes, 302 navel lint.  
27 x 383 x 30 cm



*Spatialisation Egocentrique B*, 12,022  
photographs and photograms, black & white silver prints on Ilford glossy baryta paper.  
92 x 125 cm

From one series to the next, the artist accumulates, classifies, arranges, and explores. His systems generate inventories while leaving room for accidents, residues, and the unforeseen. At a decisive threshold, this accumulation begins to resemble an inherited memory. One that becomes so saturated that it turns sterile and must be erased before a new hypothesis, another vision, or a revised understanding can take shape.

In Lemaire's work, an inventory is never merely a repository. It is a site of transformation in which the protocol turns against itself and exposes the gaps in its own premises. Each image, reproduction, classified element, or rephotographed object gradually erodes the veneer of an established hypothesis, allowing a residual theory to emerge—one based on the protocol's recurring anomalies.

Lemaire's material archaeology has led to digital and political excavations. In his recent series, *Alan Turing (1954–1998) (12,025)*, Lemaire entrusts an AI tool with generating posthumous portraits of the mathematician widely regarded as a founding figure of modern computing and artificial intelligence. The choice is far from incidental. Turing embodies both the emergence of computer science and the violence of a system that benefited from his genius before condemning him for homosexuality.

By asking an algorithm to produce images of Turing at ages he never reached, Lemaire once again distorts the presumed linearity of history. He records in digital memory the erasure to which Turing was subjected, transforming an algorithmic tool descended from the condemned man's own work into an instrument of restoration and reparation.

Across Lemaire's practice, an alternative reading of narratives of progress begins to take shape. There is no hierarchy between microbes and meteorites, navel lint and comets, or Venuses and algorithms. They all belong to the same inquiry: What do we make of the traces we leave behind, the images we collect, and the worlds we project? Lemaire's work does more than document the forces moving through living matter. It also examines the systems that shape its memory and the impulses that animate it. This elevates his work beyond scientific anecdote. Lemaire performs a cultural analysis of a world inundated with data and narratives, in which latent forms of life—biological, material, and digital—persist in seeking expression despite the constraints imposed on them. Every fragment of light, flesh, or code appears to search for the form through which it might reappear.

Léo Marin

English translation and adaptation by N. M. Taylor



*Alan 54-87-98*, 12,025  
photographs et photograms, black & white silver prints on Ilford glossy baryta paper.  
30 x 63 cm