

# DEEP TIME

## GABRIEL LEGER

### Gabriel Leger

born in 1978  
lives and works in Paris  
and Athènes

### exhibition

January 10th  
to March 6th 2021

### opening

Sunday, January 10th  
12pm-6pm

### galerie Sator Komunuma

43 rue de la Commune de Paris  
93230 Romainville

### opening hours

Wednesday - Saturday  
2pm-6pm

by appointment

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«One after another, the pieces of the game are taken off the board.  
They will be put back into play, other yet the same, identically but differently.»

Jean-Daniel Pollet, Méditerranée

DEEP TIME offers an encounter with the past: before our eyes, ancient objects, long unused, become animated once again, switch back on, come back to life as if welcoming hands were once more stretching out over the space of memory, to link the living of this century and those of distant ages. With this new exhibition around the Mediterranean in the age of antiquity, and in particular Egypt, Gabriel Leger continues his ongoing dialogue between different eras, presenting his archaeological fantasies and inviting us to step onto that greatest and most unfathomable of carousels, that of cyclical time, thanks to which nothing ever truly dies.

DEEP TIME proposes that we reconsider so-called 'antiquities' by transposing them into new contexts or returning them to their primary functions: oil lamps to be lit, moulds to be filled, wheat to be consumed. Far from the museum and its protective vitrines, these objects are to be viewed in a wholly different fashion thanks to an artistic gesture that adds a further temporal layer to their stories by bringing them into the present.

With the eponymous work Deep Time, , Leger uses authentic moulds from the Late Period of Ancient Egypt to relaunch a serial production of amulets, made with clay similar to the kind used by the original artisans. The two amulets – a scarab and a figure with a falcon's head, respective symbols of morning and noon – are combined in a large installation that invites a process of decoding, as if these objects were magical signals emitted from the past, between hieroglyphic texts and astrological charts.

In "Ev tò πᾶν, Leger meanwhile uses Egyptian wheat from the 3rd century B.C. to brew a truly ancient beer, the first of its kind. Collaborating with a ceramicist\* to create the bottles and a brewer\*\* to produce the beverage, Leger allows the grains to heed their "stubbornness to ripen"<sup>1</sup> and finally fulfil their destiny. Millennia after the fact, the fermentation process within the ceramic bottles allows Osiris to claim a victory of death. We might find ourselves imagining that this beer, if we dare to drink it, would quench our thirst for knowledge.

Lampes que le temps allume, sees an ancient oil lamp placed before a polished brass plaque. Lit just once, the only evidence of the lamp's



Deep Time - 2020  
 amulet mold (Egypt, VII<sup>e</sup>-IV<sup>e</sup> s. BC, terracotta), amulets (artist edition,  
 Egyptian self-enamelling pottery), magnets  
 2 x 1,5 cm et 3,7 x 2 cm, variable dimensions installation

reanimation is a black trail of soot on the metal's surface. If fire is a sign of the transcendental presence of the divine, then smoke is surely the vestige of prayer – a prayer that is all too human and leaves only traces.

This lamp, the “consciousness of the night”<sup>2</sup>, is juxtaposed with the solar burns of the Sunshine Recordings, indelible scars left by the movement of the sun over the course of a day that Leger captured in Egypt on photographs of remnants of ancient temples and statues.

The link with the past is perhaps here to be found in the imprint left by the sun, “forever continuously new”<sup>3</sup>, at once the same star that our ancestors saw and yet always another. Or is this link simply to be found in our own faces reflected in an ancient Greek cup filled with water (Quoi? L'éternité) as we lean over the liquid's surface as before the well of Pythus, curious as to what we might find there.

DEEP TIME is the vengeance of all those who have dreamt of touching statues and opening display cases. Here, what is proposed is nothing less than a total refusal of the immutability of the museum artefact, a kind of anti-vanity that defies the 'memento mori'. The crystals that transform these objects into fixed, untouchable points have been dissolved. And if they undeniably emerge as fetishes once again, these ones are at least living, actualized by the artist's gesture, uncovered and unearthed to bathe in sunlight once more.

Leger's amulets, libations, traces and mirrors allow us to recover our roots and recentre ourselves, so that we can face the passage of time with a certain serenity. Inversing the scenario of Chris Marker's film La Jetée, in which a future humanity dispatches to the past the energy that will enable its survival, here it is the past and not the future that gives us the power to confront the unknown: through touch, through poetry, and through the beating of wings



Sunshine Recordings # 16, Série Ra - 2018  
 solar burns, (Egypt) June 21st, 2018 on original print (circa 1880)  
 49 x 37 cm

\* Sylvain Berst

\*\* Arthur Farina, Brasserie BAPBAP (Paris)

<sup>1</sup> Aimé Césaire, Chemin

<sup>2</sup> Edmond Jabès, Deux poèmes de l'amitié en deuil

<sup>3</sup> Aristote, Météorologiques II, 2