

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

## GUILLAUME LEBLON

### *The Traveler Walking On Tiptoes*

Thursday 19 May - Saturday 9 July 2022



Exhibition view *The Traveler Walking On Tiptoes*, Guillaume Leblon  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris / Brussels

Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present *The Traveler Walking On Tiptoes*, the first exhibition of the artist Guillaume Leblon in her Brussels gallery. The sculptor, who presented the solo exhibition *THERE IS A MAN and more* at the S. M. A. K. (Ghent) in 2018, will have a solo exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris) in the autumn of 2022. An artist with a rich and intuitive visual vocabulary, Guillaume Leblon presents sculptures that alter our perception of time and space. The artist brings to the fore the physical potential of the forms and materials he uses, which seem to be imbued with the passage of time and memory. His sculptures dialogue with the space, and engage in an active, mobile and open relationship with the world.

Guillaume Leblon's work combines familiar and abstract elements, implying a number of meanings and references: an interplay that is also reflected in the sculptures in this exhibition, which are arranged so that they respond to the architecture in which they are displayed. The steel ramp of *The Corporeal and the Mechanical*, steers our circulation through the space, causing confusion about its very nature: is it an element of urban architecture or a design construction with a mysterious function? Placed on a leather cushion, a scorpion becomes symbolic of the outside world and recalls the influence of the environment in which the work was created, Mexico, which is where Guillaume Leblon lives part of the year. The artist's sculptures are composed of industrial materials and criticize our contemporary fetishization of 'things' and our need to consume objects of all kinds. These questions are brought to the fore through the motif of the electronic cigarette: the latter is aesthetically implied not for what it is, but rather for its representation of our collective addiction to having close to us – even in our mouths and in the utmost direct contact – ever more elaborate versions of the most basic of accessories. It implies a breath, a breath of energy passing from our body to an inanimate and manufactured object, resulting in a high-tech tension of the everyday that Guillaume Leblon is fascinated with. This tension is illustrated by works such as *The Hunter, the smoker and the critic* or *Perfect Love*, a sculpture whose extremities simultaneously light up and switch off, as if activated by one and the same breath. The relationship to the body, a central notion in the artist's work, sometimes becomes a pretext for a sense of humour: the work *Cul* for example oscillates between being an intriguing seat and a sculpture of obvious sensuality.

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In his plaster works, Guillaume Leblon seeks to capture the impermanence of things, to grasp that which existed and then disappeared. The artist's plaster casts mark an absence, the imprint making it possible to retain the memory of a contact with something that is no longer there. The works *The Dreamer* and *The Botanist*, for example, preserve a trace of an activity, a trace of clothes and consequently of a human body, if only to reinforce the absence of the latter.

In his recent works on paper *BILL#1* and *BILL#2*, Guillaume Leblon has chosen to extract a colour from US dollar bills of various denominations and reproduce them in dry pastel. In this way, a monetary value is translated into a chromatic value: the sculptor transforms concrete amounts anchored in reality into an abstract colour, erasing all possible recognition by the viewer and suggesting multiple narratives.

The work of Guillaume Leblon presents us with familiar forms that suddenly take on a certain degree of strangeness, in an *'intertwining of the customary and the ambiguous'*<sup>1</sup>, as the art historian H  l  ne Meisel puts it. Combining manufactured elements and sculptural techniques rooted in art history (plaster, blown glass), his works play on the spectator's expectations, opening a dialogue with the space in which they are viewed and the person looking at them. They evoke unstable and fluctuating narratives, questioning our relationship to the world.

<sup>1</sup> Meisel, H  l  ne. « Guillaume Leblon, une ironie », 20/27 (Paris), n  4, 2010

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## Born in 1971 in Lille (France), Guillaume Leblon lives and works between New York (USA) and Guadalajara (Mexico).

Guillaume Leblon studied at the Ecole Nationale Sup  rieure des Beaux-Arts in Lyon from which he graduated in 1997. He subsequently completed a residency at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam.

In 2022, the artist will be given a solo exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France). He has recently had important solo exhibitions in prestigious institutions, including *Guillaume Leblon | There is a man, and more* at S.M.A.K. (Ghent, Belgium) in 2018; *Le poids que la main supporte, Panorama au Friche Belle de Mai* (Marseille, France) in 2015; *A dos de cheval avec le peintre* at IAC Villeurbanne (Villeurbanne, France) in 2014; *Under my shoe* at Mass Moca (North Adams, USA) in 2013; *Une appropriation de la nature* at the Mus  e de S  rignan (S  rignan, France) in 2012; *Black Apple falls* at the Fondation Paul Ricard (Paris, France) in 2011; *Site of confluence* at MUDAM (Luxembourg) in 2009; *Augmentation and dispersion* at the Culturgest Contemporary Art Centre in Porto (Portugal) in 2008; *National Monument* at the Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry-sur-Seine (France) in 2006, and *AZIMUT* at the FRAC Bourgogne (Dijon, France) in 2004.

Guillaume Leblon is represented by the Nathalie Obadia Gallery, Paris/Brussels, since 2021.

Guillaume Leblon's work has been shown in numerous group exhibitions such as *Des Mondes Construits, MNAM* at Centre Pompidou-Metz, (Metz, France) in 2020 ; *The House Where You Live Forever* at Garage Rotterdam (Rotterdam, The Netherlands) in 2019; *Or : Un voyage dans l'histoire de l'art au fil d'or* at the MUCEM (Marseille, France) and at the Front International Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art (Cleveland, USA) in 2018; *Singing Stones* at the Palais de Tokyo and extra-muros at the Dusable Museum of African American History (Chicago, USA) in 2017; *Accrochage, a selection of the Pinault Collection* at the Punta della Dogana (Venice, Italy), *Collections :   l  mentaires* at Les Abattoirs (Toulouse, France) and *Une Histoire (art archi design/ des ann  es 80    nos jours)* at the Centre Pompidou (Paris, France) in 2016; *Tout le monde* at the Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - le Cr  dac (Ivry-sur-Seine, France) and *L'usage des formes, artisans d'art et artistes* at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France) in 2015 ; *De leur temps (4), 2010/2013, Regards crois  s de 100 collectionneurs sur la jeune cr  ation* at the Centre d'art Le Hangar in Bananes (Nantes, France) in 2014; *Une pr  face* at Plateau, FRAC   le-de-France and *Collection Amplifi  e, une proposition d'Arnaud Maguet* at the Mus  e de Rochechouart in 2013; *Pour un art pauvre* at the Carr   d'art de Nimes as well as during the Rennes Biennale in 2012.

Guillaume Leblon's works have been included in prestigious collections around the world: Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (Paris, France), Centre Pompidou (Paris, France), Carr   d'Art (Nimes, France), Mus  e d'Art Contemporain de S  rignan (France), IAC Villeurbanne (France), Mus  e d'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart (France), Nouveau Mus  e National de Monaco (Monaco), S.M.A. K (Ghent, Belgium), MUDAM (Luxembourg), MAK Museum (Vienna, Austria), MCA (Chicago, USA), CGAC (Santiago de Compostela, Spain), Kadist (France, USA), as well as the Fonds R  gionaux d'Art Contemporain in France: Les Abattoirs de Toulouse, FRAC   le-de-France, FRAC Bourgogne, FRAC Bretagne, and private collections: the Fran  ois Pinault Collection (Italy), the Laurent Dumas Collection (France), the Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette (Paris, France).

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