



**Press visit | Opening Day:**

Tuesday, 2 March 2021  
11 am-8 pm

**Press material:**

[tinguely.ch/en/presse-download](http://tinguely.ch/en/presse-download)

**Leu Art Family. Caresser la peau du ciel**  
**3 March – 31 October 2021**

**The Leu family is famous in the tattooing world. Felix, the son of Eva Aepli, who was Jean Tinguely's first wife, and Loretta Leu, made their living off their art traveling around the world with their children, Ama, Aia, Filip, and Ajja during the end of the 1960s and 70s. These years of traveling were fed by an artistic curiosity and, above all, gave shape to a familial cosmos. This exhibition, which will be open to the public from 3 March to 31 October 2021 at Museum Tinguely in Basel, was born out of the desire to present this cosmos through the artistic creations of all the members of this tribe.**

Homebodies today, vagabonds yesterday, but always inhabitants of their own universe, weaving together thousands of artistic explorations. Loretta and Felix met in New York in 1965, at the opening of a Tinguely exhibition. They collaborated with Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle on the realisation of their monumental sculpture for the 1967 International and Universal Exposition in Montréal. And then they got on the road... Three generations speak to each other at Museum Tinguely's exhibition: Felix and Loretta Leu; Filip and Titine Leu; Ama, Doug, Summer and Poppy Leu-Wilson; Aia, Steve, Fay and Indica Leu-Allin; Ajja and Tanya Leu; Jane Leu Rekas; Miriam Tinguely; Rolf Kesselring; Cajun Leu and Chloé Liberge; and Cressa McLaren.

**The exhibition**

The first room is black as night where the second is sensuous, surging, and luminous. Two galleries like the yin and yang, lunar and solar...The darkness reveals the first moves. Phantasm of the first trace, in prehistoric caves. The first dances, the first trances, by torchlight, in these stone bellies, belly of the earth. The first artistic traces of humanity are drawings. Drawing is also the first thing a child does, before it starts to speak. In this first part, carried by the darkness, an ocean of sketches echoes an electronic pulsar. We can think of Malcolm Lowry, who, legend has it, wrote his book *Under the Volcano* three times... Drifting pages.

Whenever people asked Felix, the patriarch, if his children should not go to school instead of running around the world, the latter would reply that human experience was learned on the road. That geography and languages were covered by the trips themselves, and everything else could be accomplished with paper and a drawing implement... This first room is an opening onto freedom, the freedom to create, and to live.

The second space is celestial, like the sky that holds all the stars. This cosmos is presented as a total work of art. It is the sky of the *Leu Art Family*: attempting to reveal a universe, a philosophy, and a conception of the world, a 'Weltanschauung', using exclusively the numerous pictorial presences of each and every one. The walls disappear, invaded by the works of twenty members of the tribe. The desire for intoxication, of an overflow, desire to construct a mirror image of the generosity of being part of this great family. Here, everyone will find their star...

**Leu family tree:**



The exhibition represents the cosmos at once intimate and explosive, of a family of artists. It is to enter a womb vast as a sky, in a unique universe in which everyone draws their own stars and traces their own lines into infinity. This family reconstructs the first envelope in which the entire universe is created, life. That of the human being. That of the child you would like to be when you enter.

'Childhood is constructed thus: first and foremost, in the mother's womb, its first envelope. And then the child, having 'entered' the world, constructs a sort of bubble around itself that I imagine as the limits of its perception, but above all as the construction of ITS own world. I believe this is how the child grows up, with its own universe, up until the age of eight or nine when the bubble bursts in the name of socialisation and schooling, in the name of a norm, of a codification, of a standard practice.

And so, adults pass their whole lives lost in a world not of their own making, attempting to shroud themselves in masks or armour. It is not childhood we lose, but rather the capacity to build a world to our own specifications, a world in which we can create, mature, relax, accommodate...

When I encountered the Leu family and entered their artistic universe, I recovered just those qualities I had lost. This family understands the importance of building one's own universe. It is not a closed universe, but rather a skin: the place of all one's exchanges, but also the space that contains the bodies, that defines the contours of one's identity. This body-world, this Leu-body, allows everyone to unfold their creation.

And it is this polymorphous body, generous as hell, strong like an aura that colours and neutralises the sinister nature of everyday life on our planet, which is offered up to the gaze like an amniotic envelope.

Welcome to the world of the Leu Art Family!'

Christian Jelk, exhibition curator

### Publication

The show is accompanied by a book authored by the exhibition curator. It's a voyage, an interstellar road movie, in a sky in which every star is a member of the *Leu Art Family*. They offered the author their artistic universe and their friendship; a womb and a cosmos at one and the same time. This book and the captain's log of these encounters, and the turmoil they have caused in the author's own universe. (320pp, French, German, English, ISBN 978-2-9701291-10, edition Ogive, available at the museum shop: 56 CHF)

### Film

*The Artist Family - The art of the Leu Family at the Lieu Unique in Nantes*

by Valerio Bariletti and Morgan Bertacca, produced by Mooz Film and The Leu Family (Original Music and Sound Design by Ajja S.F. Leu)

### General Information:

**Title:** Leu Art Family. Caresser la peau du ciel

**Address:** Museum Tinguely | Paul Sacher-Anlage 1 | 4002 Basel, Switzerland

**Opening:** Tuesday, 2 March 2021, 11 am–8 pm

**Duration:** 3 March – 31 October 2021

**Opening hours:** Tuesday–Sunday, daily from 11 am–6 pm

**Websites:** [www.tinguely.ch](http://www.tinguely.ch)

**Social media:** @museumtinguely | #museumtinguely | #tinguely | #leufamily | #tattoo@leufamily

**Press contact:** Isabelle Beilfuss | T.: +41 61 68 74 608 | Email: [isabelle.beilfuss@roche.com](mailto:isabelle.beilfuss@roche.com)

Copyrights of image of the first page: Titine Leu, *The Boxer*, 1998

Copyrights of image of the second page: Aia Leu, *Family Tree*, 2012