Lucas Castel

Lucas Castel (Be)

Lucas Castel is a Belgian artist based in Brussels. He use photography, video, and installation to question, through a documentary approach, the society and world in which he lives. Lucas's work explores the connection we have with other living beings through stories rooted in reality, highlighting our ability to take over natural spaces and those who inhabit them.

Recently, with Pigeon Paradise, Lucas Castel has been developing a reflection on a popular practice that brings into play the relationship between animals and humans. He questions the contemporary obsession with control over living beings, at the heart of the Anthropocene era, and the evolution of a local and amateur sport into an international business.

Lucas Castel (BE)

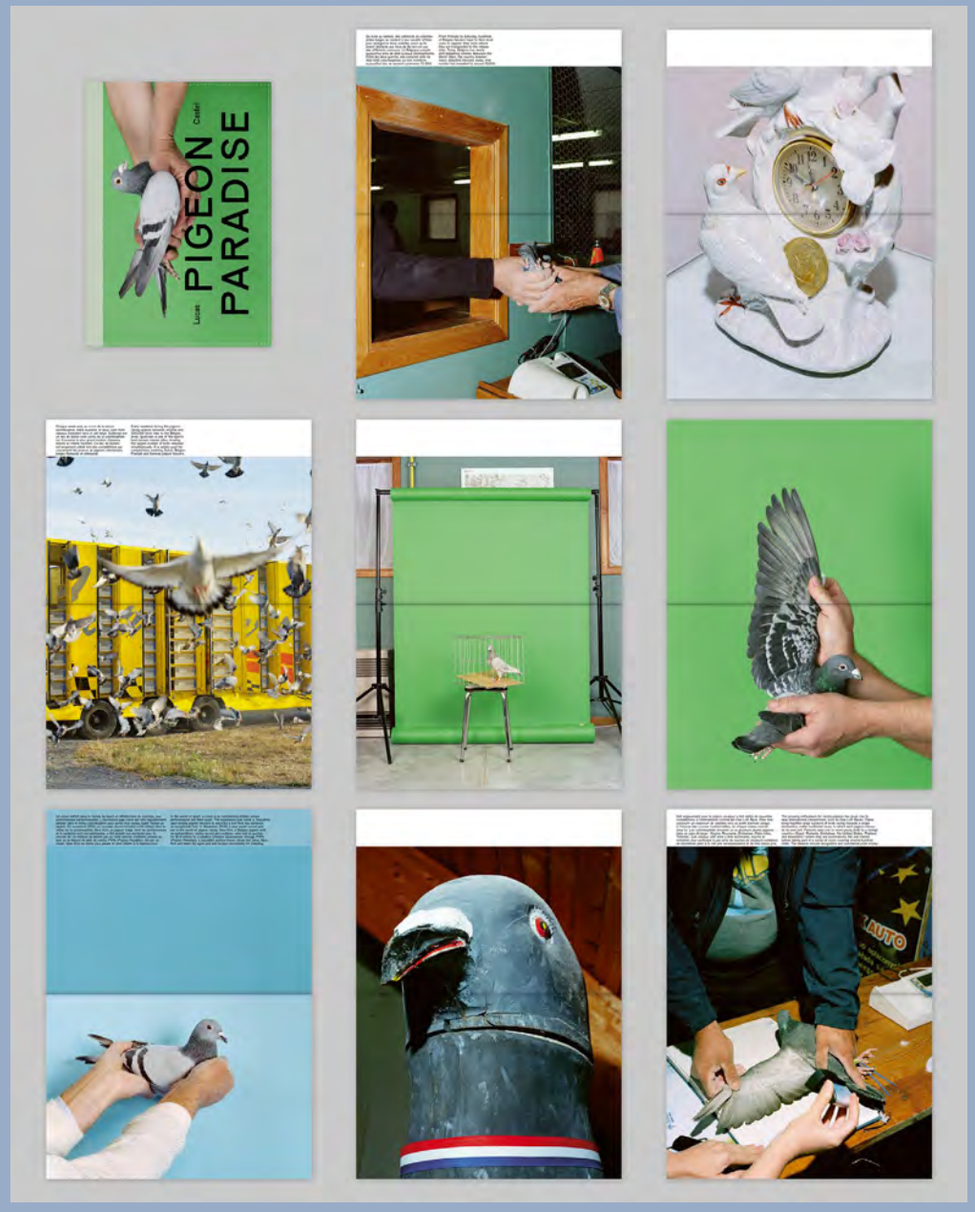
Lucas Castel est un artiste belge basé à Bruxelles. À travers la photographie, la vidéo et l'installation, il interroge, dans une approche documentaire, la société et le monde dans lesquels il évolue. Son travail explore les liens que nous entretenons avec les autres êtres vivants à travers des récits ancrés dans le réel, mettant en lumière notre capacité à nous approprier les espaces naturels et à exercer notre emprise sur ceux qui les habitent.

Récemment, avec *Pigeon Paradise*, Lucas Castel développe une réflexion autour d'une pratique populaire qui met en jeu les relations entre les animaux et les humains. Il questionne l'obsession contemporaine du contrôle du vivant, au cœur de l'ère de l'Anthropocène, ainsi que la transformation d'un sport local et amateur en une activité commerciale à l'échelle internationale.

www.castellucas.com
castel.lucas@hotmail.com
+32 479 634 694

PIGEON PARADISE PHOTOBOOK - PUBLISHED BY ERISKAY CONNECTION, NOV. 2026





Pigeon Paradise



In November 2020, a new world record was set in the world of pigeon racing. New Kim, a Belgian pigeon, was bought at auction for $1.9 million by a wealthy Chinese man.

Pigeon Paradise

LUCAS CASTEL

Avec *Pigeon Paradise*, Lucas Castel (BE) plonge dans l'univers des courses de pigeons, un sport dont les origines remontent aux régions minières de Belgique et de France au début du XXe siècle. Le projet a vu le jour en novembre 2020, lorsque New Kim, un pigeon de course belge, a été vendu aux enchères pour 1,9 million de dollars à un riche collectionneur chinois, établissant ainsi un nouveau record mondial. Le pigeon réside toujours dans un pigeonnier de luxe en Belgique, où il restera très probablement indéfiniment. Il est peu probable qu'il fasse un jour le voyage vers la Chine, qu'il vole à nouveau, ou même qu'il serve à autre chose qu'à la reproduction.

Cet événement a conduit Castel à s'intéresser à l'évolution du monde des courses de pigeons. Il observe la relation étroite qui unit les humains à leurs oiseaux : les mains qui en prennent soin, les rituels liés à l'entraînement et à la compétition, ainsi que le dévouement nécessaire pour préserver leur santé et leur bien-être. Plutôt que de se concentrer sur l'aspect spectaculaire de ce sport, Castel s'intéresse aux moments tranquilles d'interaction entre l'éleveur et son pigeon.

Pigeon Paradise explore le lien complexe qui unit les humains et les animaux, où l'affection, la bienveillance, la compétition et la valeur s'entremêlent. L'ouvrage se concentre sur le pigeon lui-même : sa présence, sa physicalité et les différentes façons dont il est admiré et mis en valeur. Les humains n'apparaissent qu'à travers leurs mains, qui tiennent, soignent et réconfortent les pigeons. L'ouvrage comprend une série de poses soigneusement composées qui révèlent comment les pigeons sont présentés lors des ventes aux enchères et des concours, transformant ainsi l'oiseau à la fois en créature vivante et en objet de fascination. À travers ces images, Castel met en lumière les significations et les valeurs extraordinaires que les humains attribuent aux animaux dont ils s'occupent.

With *Pigeon Paradise*, Lucas Castel (BE) enters the world of competitive pigeon racing, a sport rooted in the mining regions of Belgium and France in the early twentieth century. The project began in November 2020, when New Kim, a Belgian racing pigeon, was sold at auction for $1.9 million to a wealthy Chinese collector, setting a new world record. The pigeon remains in a luxury loft in Belgium, where it will most likely stay indefinitely. It is unlikely ever to make the journey to China, to fly again, or even serve any purpose beyond breeding.

This event led Castel to look into the changing world of pigeon racing. He observes the close relationship between humans and their birds: the hands that care for them, the rituals surrounding training and competition, and the dedication involved in maintaining their health and well-being. Rather than focusing on the spectacle of the sport, Castel turns his attention to the quiet moments of interaction between breeder and pigeon.

Pigeon Paradise reflects on the complex bond between humans and animals, where affection, care, competition and value become intertwined. The book focuses on the pigeon itself: its presence, its physicality and the ways in which it is admired and presented. Humans appear only through their hands, holding, caring for, and comforting the pigeons. It includes a sequence of carefully composed poses that reveals how pigeons are displayed for auctions and competitions, transforming the bird into both a living creature and an object of fascination. Through these images, Castel reveals the extraordinary meanings and values humans attach to the animals they care for.



In November 2020, a new world record was set in the world of pigeon racing. New Kim, a Belgian pigeon with an extraordinary racing record and pedigree, was sold at auction for $1.9 million to a wealthy Chinese businessman through PIPA (Pigeon Paradise), a specialist auction house. Given her value, New Kim will never fly again and will be kept exclusively for breeding.



Columba-philos: The Pigeon Fancier

Columbophile: from the Latin columba,
«dove, pigeon», and the Greek philos,
«friend, one who loves».

Weather permitting, the pigeon racing season spans from April to September. These six active months see a variety of races organised by homing pigeon federations worldwide.











From Monday to Saturday, hundreds of Belgian fanciers head to their local clubs to register their birds before they are transported to the release sites. Today, Belgium has nearly 200 basketing centres. Between the World Wars, the country boasted nearly 300,000 fanciers; today, that number has dwindled to around 13,000.





Every weekend during the pigeon-racing season, between 40,000 and 200,000 birds take to the Belgian skies. Quiévrain is one of the sport's best-known release sites, drawing the largest number of birds released simultaneously. It is widely used for competitions involving Dutch, Belgian Flemish and German pigeon fanciers.




M
Cl














TIME
JUNIOR





Marc De Cock’s pigeon loft, Temse, Belgium

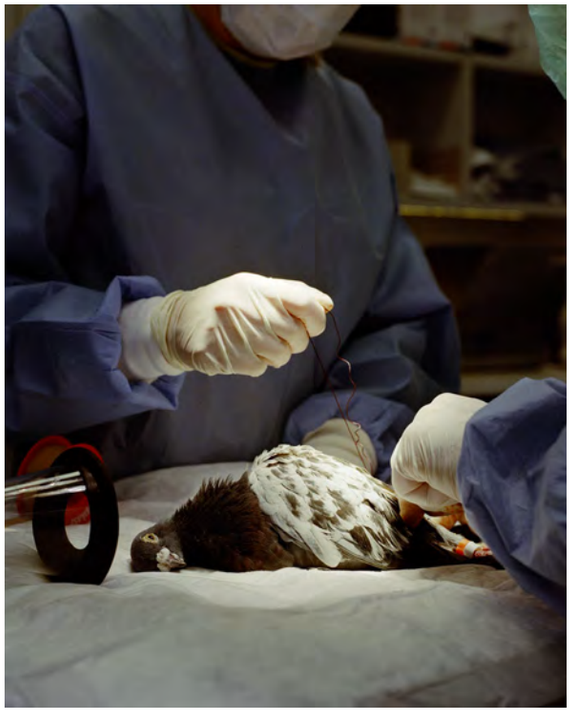
Marc is one of Belgium’s leading pigeon fanciers. He made his fortune in prepared meats and now devotes his spare time to caring for his horses and pigeons. His two passions have led to some inventive ideas, including the use of horse solariums to dry his pigeons. Once washed, the birds are taken to another room, where they can warm up in optimal conditions.
Marc now has around 500 birds and a team of employees, including handlers and trainers, dedicated to maintaining their health and maximising their performance.



The killing of Pastis

Pigeon breeders are regularly forced to kill birds, driven both by limited space and the fact that simply releasing them would be difficult, as they would likely return. For some, it is an incidental, sometimes daily occurrence; for others, it remains a painful ordeal. Selection is the darker side of the practice.


COMED
Trouble-free breeding
21
Comed
SCIENCE
4 ANIMALS
COMED



Belgica de Weerd Veterinary Clinic, Breda, Netherlands

A renowned veterinary centre specialising in the treatment and surgery of pigeons. Following the clinic’s success among professional pigeon fanciers, Henk de Weerd established a second veterinary centre in Beijing, China.


MARTENS
DAF



Strengths, attributes and the breakdown of a pigeon's presentation movements.
An anthropomorphism akin to bodybuilding, questioning our ability to assess the physical attributes of another living being.

PIGEON PARADISE

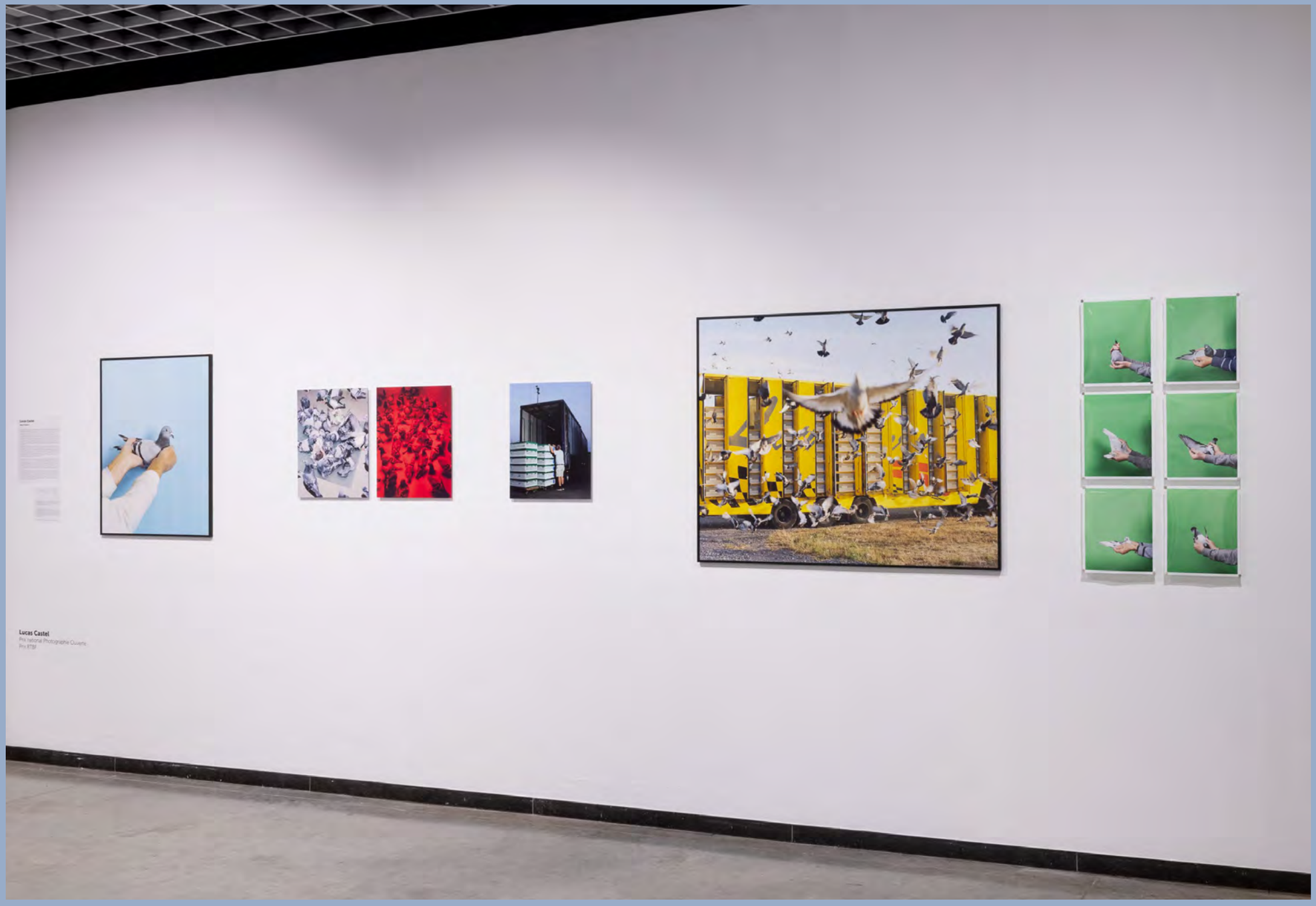
ART AU CENTRE - LIÈGE, FÉVRIER 2026





MUSÉE DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE - CHARLEROI, JUIN 2024

PRIX NATIONAL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE OUVERTE



PIGEON PARADISE

LUCAS CASTEL