

Cvetnić, Sanja.

Text for *Thingworld* exhibition catalogue, International Triennial of New Media Art, Beijing, China, 2014

The complex installation of Silvio Vujičić (b. 1978 in Zagreb, Croatia) consists of several objects and devices in which the artist explores the white crystalline xanthine alkaloid, or caffeine, as a medium, and its chemical transformations as techniques. In his *Vessels in Which Bodies Are Dissolved* (2012), an oversaturated solution of caffeine has crystallized around dead skin cells, accidentally dropped by the artist on glass surfaces while dripping the liquid. His *Death Drive* (2012) repeats the technique, but this time the crystallization has taken place on a different substrate, namely textile, using its structure to attract the crystals. When exhibited, both *Vessels* and *Death Drive* mesmerize with their poisonous laces of filigree delicacy. *Furnace for the Sublimation of Spirits* is a device constructed as a hybrid between a medieval alchemical apparatus and elements used in present-day laboratories. An electrical heater warms up the psychoactive drug caffeine – of course under a vacuum-protected glass bell – which slowly sublimates, changing shape so as to create a fine sculpture of archetypal form (that of a phallus), which undergoes further transformations as long as the device is active. Vujičić's *Bodies* (2012) are caffeine crystals, objects that evoke sculptures in manually blown borosilicate glass vessels, while his *Saturations* (2012) are hand-developed black and white photographs on cardboard paper: shots from above of various Petri dishes (plates), containing caffeine crystals – completely unexpectedly – as a microcosmic response to Galileo's sketches of the lunar surface as published in his *Siderius Nuncius* (1610). Vujičić appears here both as an author of the *text* of the installation and as the director organizing the creative process, allowing the medium and the technique to manifest themselves, to surprise him and the spectator.