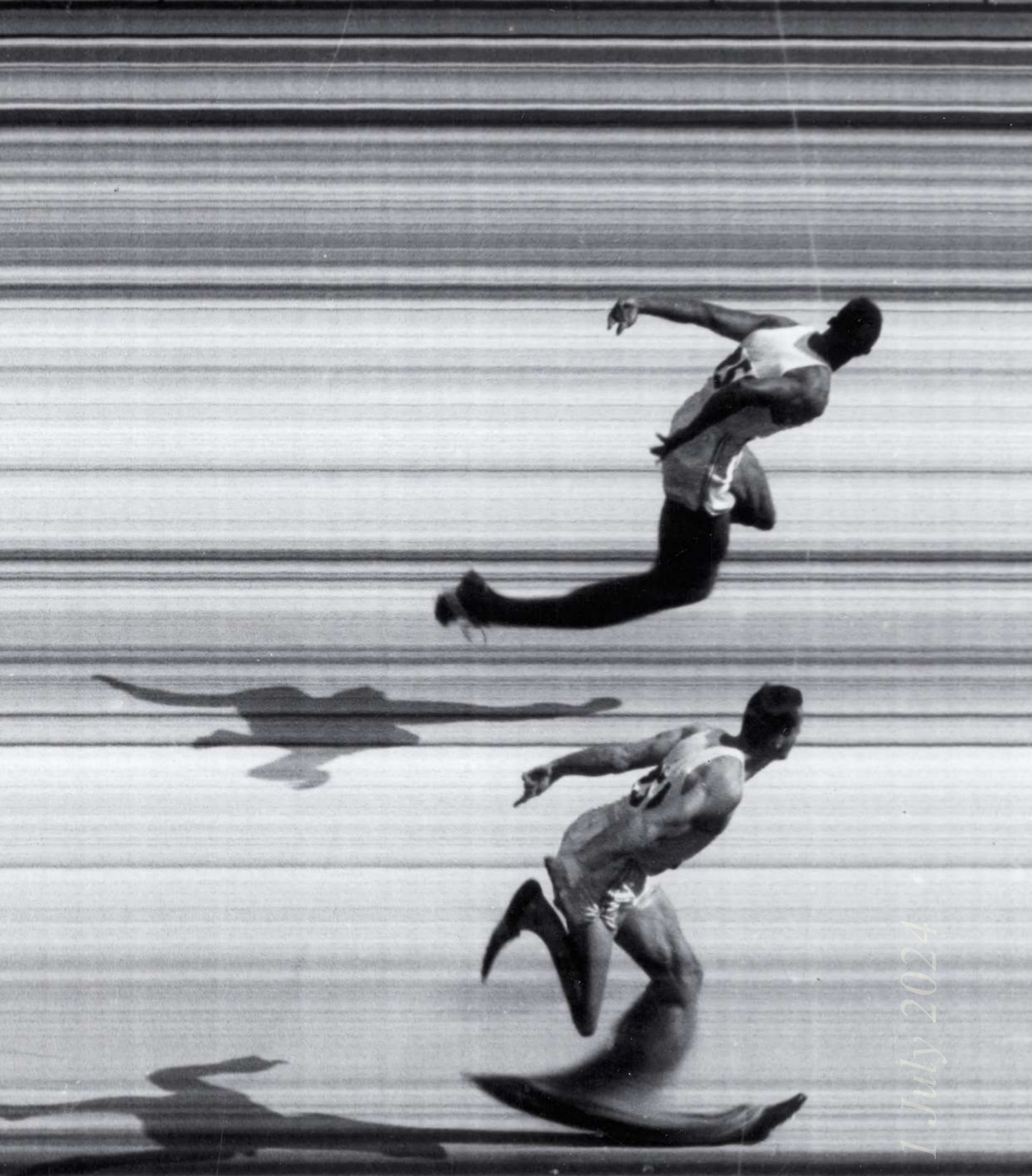


EVENT 8	NOV 28 1956	EVENT 8	NOV 28 1956	EVENT 8	NOV 28 1956
HEAT 1		HEAT 1		HEAT 1	
OMEGA TIMER	RACEND	OMEGA TIMER	RACEND	OMEGA TIMER	RACEND

**AMA** *art media agency*



*1 July 2024*

#363

**AMA** *art  
media  
agency*

*SEEK  
VISIBILITY?*

*CONTACT AMA*

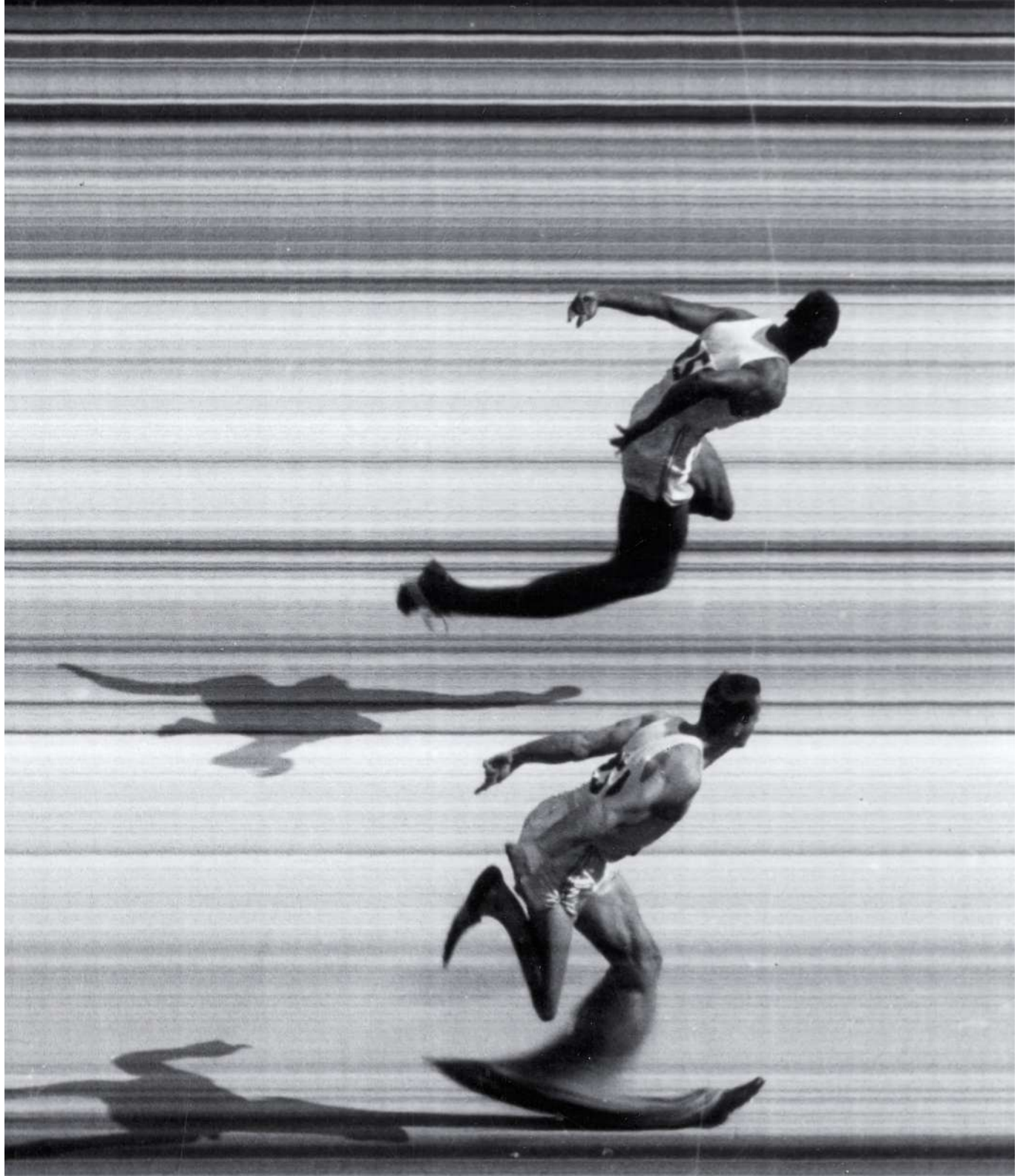
30 YEARS OF  
**NEW  
YORK'S  
ART  
FAIR**



**THE  
ARMORY  
SHOW**

**SEPTEMBER 6–8  
JAVITS CENTER**

XVI OLYMPIAD		XVI OLYMPIAD		XVI OLYMPIAD		XVI OLYMPIAD	
EVENT 8	NOV 28 1956	EVENT 8	NOV 28 1956	EVENT 8	NOV 28 1956	EVENT 8	NOV 28 1956
HEAT 1		HEAT 1		HEAT 1		HEAT 1	
OMEGA TIMER	RACEND-OMEGA TIMER	RACEND-OMEGA TIMER	RACEND-OMEGA TIMER	RACEND-OMEGA TIMER	RACEND-OMEGA TIMER	RACEND-OMEGA TIMER	RACEND-OMEGA TIMER



Melbourne Olympic Games, Athletics, 110 m hurdles — Joel Shankle (USA) 3<sup>rd</sup>, Jack Davis (USA) 2<sup>nd</sup>, Lee Calhoun (USA) 1<sup>st</sup>

Courtesy IOC. Rencontres d'Arles

# AMA

<b>Direction of publication:</b>	<b>Pierre Naquin</b>
<b>Editor-in-Chief:</b>	<b>Carine Claude Stéphanie Perris Gilles Picard Clément Thibault</b>
<b>Editorial office:</b>	<b>Stéphanie Perris Carine Claude</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	<b>Carine Claude Lucie Colleu Margaux Hannart Pierre Naquin</b>
<b>Translation:</b>	<b>Fui Lee Maisha Schimpelsberger</b>
<b>Graphic design:</b>	<b>Pierre Naquin</b>
<b>Layout:</b>	<b>Pierre Naquin</b>
<b>Proofreading:</b>	<b>Stéphanie Perris Laura Archer</b>
<b>Image editing:</b>	<b>Olivier Guitton</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	<a href="mailto:news@artmediaagency.com">news@artmediaagency.com</a>
<b>Distribution:</b>	275,000+ digital subscribers 30,000 printed copies

# COGNITIVE

Untitled (Time frames, 2020-2022),  
Vasantha Yoganathan  
© Vasantha Yoganathan.  
Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles



## EVENT

Rencontres d'Arles 2024 \_\_\_\_\_ **8**

## INTERVIEW

Christoph Wiesner \_\_\_\_\_ **20**

## NOTEBOOK

Exhibitions overview \_\_\_\_\_ **28**

## ZOOM

Japanese photography \_\_\_\_\_ **36**

## EXHIBITION

Olympics \_\_\_\_\_ **44**

## DISCUSSION

Matthieu Nicol \_\_\_\_\_ **52**

## AWARD

Discovery award \_\_\_\_\_ **60**

## PROFESSION

Condition reporter \_\_\_\_\_ **66**

## DATA

Sophie Calle \_\_\_\_\_ **72**

## ECOLOGY

Letizia Verdolotti \_\_\_\_\_ **82**



# FERNELL

*Prostitutas* (1970-1972), Fernell Franco

Courtesy Fernell Franco Foundation. Rencontres d'Arles



## BENEATH THE SURFACE

For its 55<sup>th</sup> edition, the artistic dynamism of the Rencontres d'Arles focuses on a meticulously curated programme that balances experimentation with historical reinterpretation, inviting exploration “beneath the surface” of diverse photographic narratives.

Themes such as perspectives on others, questioning the Anthropocene, the grip of power, identity, feminism, the representation of diversity, migrations, and the ecological emergency have underpinned recent editions of the Rencontres. These resonant themes reflect contemporary concerns, drawing a record 145,000 visitors last year despite the sweltering heat. This year, the festival invites us to observe “Beneath the surface” the slow and rapid changes in the world, to look beyond appearances, and to question the philosophy of the photographic medium, its relationship with time, ephemerality, and memory.

### The Wiesner touch

Explorations of new forms or narratives, reinterpretation of photographic heritage, testimonies of a changing world... The “Wiesner touch” is undeniably felt since Christoph Wiesner’s appointment as festival director during the pandemic, blending art and photography and paying special attention to archives and collections [see p.20].

With retrospectives, collective exhibitions, and monographs, the carefully curated programme is organised into five thematic sections — “Tremors and tremor”; “Spirits (Yōkai)”; “Traces”; “In parallel” and “Rereadings”. It interweaves formats, themes, and red threads across thirty exhibitions echoed by the proposals of Arles Associé and the Grand Arles Express in the region [see box p.64]. The “Emergence” section alone, mainly dedicated to the nominees for the Louis Roederer Foundation Discovery award, is a festival in itself. This year, it moves from the Église des Frères Prêcheurs to the raw

spaces of Monoprix [see p.66]. Art critic and curator Audrey Illouz oversees the exhibition of contenders titled “On the look-out” a reference to the “diffuse sense of unease” that permeates the work of the seven selected artists and their environmental awareness.

The festival’s pioneering spirit is also felt when the boundaries of the medium and other arts blur. Christoph Wiesner champions the quest for new forms: “For example, with ‘Heaven and Hell’, Vimala Pons and Nhu Xuan Hua lead us to the intersection of performing arts, performance, and photography, between current events, its actors, and fiction. At the heart of a hybrid exhibition, the two artists bear witness to a perpetual movement in a fragile balance.” At the Église Sainte-Anne, “In the name of the name” addresses another aspect of contemporary creation through graffiti in an exhibition curated by Hugo Vitrani [see box p.33]. “The exhibition highlights another scene: that of the street, of the margins, encountering the sensitive surfaces of graffiti where photography,



*A river that flows only in one direction (2013-2018), Lahem*

Courtesy Lahem. Rencontres d'Arles



sometimes the last witness of the oldest human creative manifestation, weaves a story between appearance and disappearance of the ephemeral," explains Christoph Wiesner. This openness of the Rencontres to other art forms leads to unprecedented collaborations, like the one initiated this year by Sophie Calle at the Cryptoportiques with "Never give nor throw away" [see p.72].

### Rising sun

With five exhibitions dedicated to Japan, the 2024 edition of the Rencontres d'Arles celebrates the archipelago's creativity, giving a prominent place to Japanese female photographers, often overlooked outside their country [see p.36]. The flagship programme honours these female talents with "I'm so happy

you are here: Japanese women photographers from the 1950s to now" at the Palais de l'Archevêché. This choral event brings together several generations of photographers, accompanied by the publication of the book *Japanese women photographers from the 1950s to today*. "This is the first exhibition in France on this subject, although there have been a few in Japan and the United States since the 1970s," says Pauline Vermare, co-curator of the exhibition. "More recently, in 2022, the Kyotographie festival presented an exhibition on contemporary Japanese female photographers — which I co-curated with Lucille Reyboz and Nakanishi Yusuke — to be presented in a different form at Arles this year in the contemporary space — La Vague." The ultimate accolade goes to Ishiuchi

Miyako, a photographer born in 1947 who has critiqued the "objectification" of women throughout her life by making the female body the subject of her art, receiving the Women in Motion Award, given annually by Kering to an exceptional photographer [see box p.38].

### Retrospectives

A classic of the Rencontres is delving into a photographer's complete works with a major retrospective. This year, the festival focuses on American humanist photographer Mary Ellen Mark, a portraitist of the marginalised. "The first global retrospective of the American documentary and portrait photographer Mary Ellen Mark, the Rencontres — co-produced by the C/O Berlin Foundation and the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation — kicks off by occupying the entire ground floor of the Espace Van Gogh, where celebrities and society's outcasts coexist, followed by the photographer for years," says Christoph Wiesner. Deceased in 2015, this American photographer specialised in intimate portraits of marginalised people or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. While she also immortalised many celebrities for major magazines like *Life*, *Vogue*, and *Vanity Fair*, it was among the outcasts that this exceptional documentarian excelled. Showing great empathy, she formed close ties with her subjects, sometimes following them for years, counter to the clichés of the time while casting a respectful and warm gaze on lives far removed from her own. Another retrospective features Chinese photographer Mo Yi, unclassifiable, who reinvents documentary practice and personal testimony by exploiting all the possibilities of his camera [see box].

### Recomposed past

These reinterpretations also delve into archives, dear to Christoph Wiesner. "Photographic archives

## "Me in my landscape"

First major retrospective for Chinese photographer Mo Yi at the Rencontres d'Arles. The exhibition "Me in my landscape" reveals the pioneering explorations of this self-taught artist, little known in the West. Working on the fringes in 1980s-1990s China, Mo Yi captured emblematic street scenes, seizing the energy of a country in transition. However, it is his technical experiments that set him apart. "These urban experiments challenge documentary tradition, thwart technical rigidity, and the dual notions of authorship and composition, in favour of new possibilities for the photographer and, by extension, his medium," writes curator Holly Rousset.

Defying conventions, he repurposed the viewfinder, sometimes mounting the camera behind his back or on a pole, close to the ground. "Everyone can become a subject in their own way. In late 20<sup>th</sup>-century China, Mo Yi embodies the very object of his images, at the heart of a vast observatory of everyday life, disrupting past representations through experimentation, subjectivity, and humour," analyses Christoph Wiesner.

The retrospective gathers his key black-and-white and colour series like *Tossing bus* or *I am a street dog*. Pioneering urban visions, both formally and conceptually, for Chinese and international experimental photography. Unpublished archival documents — contact sheets, collages, self-published works — also trace Mo Yi's rich creative process. An event rehabilitating an unjustly overlooked visionary photographer.

### "Mo Yi: Me in my landscape"

Until 29 September  
Mécanique générale  
33 avenue Victor Hugo. Arles  
www.rencontres-arles.com





*Feminist demonstration (1970), Mary Ellen Mark*

Courtesy Mary Ellen Mark Foundation. Howard Greenberg Gallery. Rencontres d'Arles





*Self-portrait as walking woman with bag*  
(*Contact Negatives*, 1979-2019), Tarrah Krajnak

© Tarrah Krajnak. Courtesy Thomas Zanger Gallery. Rencontres d'Arles



“There are numerous forms that photographic writing can take. The relationship to time and narration has become particularly perceptible in the serial and conceptual approach of a generation of photographers and artists such as Zoe Leonard, Judith Joy Ross, Hans-Peter Feldmann, or Nicholas Nixon. — *Christoph Wiesner*

are inherent to the medium,” says the festival director. “Year after year, the Rencontres propose incursions into the visual memory of photographers, artists, but also industrial, historiographical, or vernacular archives. This 55<sup>th</sup> edition offers many discoveries, both in form and content.” From Japanese *ama* divers through the archives of Uraguchi Kusakazu [see p.36], to the mysterious and whimsical world of Michel Medinger, via the history of the dining car [see p.28] or the juxtaposition of the collections of the Olympic Museum and Photo Elysée with “Sport on focus” [see p.44], archives take centre stage. Under the curatorship of art historian Nathalie Herschdorfer, the latter exhibition at the Musée Départemental Arles Antique develops a narrative on Olympism in photography from largely unpublished collections. To provide their academic insight, two sports social science specialists were invited to the project: Olivier Le Noé and Julien Sorez, scientific advisors to the exhibition, sought to demonstrate that disqualification is an integral part of the Olympic narrative.

The invitation to reinterpret an era is also made through the exploration of private collections. This year, the Rencontres invite us to discover at La Mécanique Générale the collection formed by Astrid Ullens de Schooten, preserved by her Brussels foundation, the Fondation A, created in 2012 on the site of the former Bata factories [see box p.25]. Around 5,500 photographs by a hundred photographers have been gathered over the last thirty years,

around conceptual documentary. This collector, initially interested in contemporary art, turned away from it when she “realised that contemporary art was becoming a business, that is, when money took precedence over the artists’ work,” she explains. She continues: “That is not my view of things. I have never bought for speculation. I felt the need to document myself, to meet the artists, to exchange with them. Some were expensive, but the prices were not exorbitant as they are today. Overnight, I stopped everything. About thirty years ago, I went to Paris Photo, then held at the Carrousel du Louvre, and I discovered Lewis Baltz’s *Prototypes*. That’s how I caught the virus.”

#### Celebration time!

In Arles, exhibitions take their time. They are visited and revisited leisurely throughout the summer. But the heart of the Rencontres beats during its opening week. From projections to performances, concerts to book signings, the programme sets the pace, while the city transforms and buzzes with a multitude of satellite proposals. It all begins at the Théâtre Antique on Tuesday 2 July, with a night of accolades: the Book Prize winners, which rewards the best photographic books published during the year, and the proclamation of the Women in Motion award for photography, given to Japanese photographer Ishiuchi Miyako [see box p.36].

Projections take centre stage on Wednesday 3 July, at Croisière with *I’m not everything I want to be*, a documentary by filmmaker Klara Tasovska exploring the life of Czech

photographer Libuše Jarcovjáčová, to be broadcast on Arte, the partner channel, in 2025. Using only photographs and journal notes read by herself, the artist intimately recounts her search for identity, daily struggles, physicality, relationships, and emotions.

Returning to the Théâtre Antique on 4 July, the *Madame Figaro* Arles 2024 Photo Prize dedicated to female photographers rewards the work of an artist from the Rencontres d’Arles programme. This is followed by the awarding of the Prix Pictet to Indian photographer Gauri Gill, who will speak on stage about her series *Notes from the desert*. The Théâtre Antique once again hosts a slew of prizes on Friday 5 July, with the Dummy Book Award Luma — Rencontres for the best book mock-up and the eagerly anticipated Louis Roederer Foundation Discovery award [see p.60]. The evening continues with the Live Magazine of the Rencontres, a patchwork of live on-stage improvisations of ideas and images by photographers, artists, filmmakers, and journalists. Jubilant. Notably, throughout the opening week, Tënk, an online documentary platform, and the Rencontres d’Arles transform the Fanton courtyard into an open-air cinema from 10 p.m. to midnight, featuring exclusive documentaries and rare gems.

But the highlight of the week is undoubtedly the Nuit de l’année on Saturday 6 July, taking festival-goers along the banks of the Rhône into the night with favourites, *carte blanches*, performances, and DJ sets. In Arles, photography is above all a celebration.





*Ocean Mud Pickle* (still, 2023), Paribartana Mohanty

© Paribartana Mohanty. Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles

The black door (Journey to the  
centre, 2021), Cristina de Middel

WWW.  
CENTER  
OF  
THE WORLD.US

INTERVIEW

# “PHOTOGRAPHY IS INTIMATELY LINKED TO REALITY”

Through its 2024 program, Christoph Wiesner, director of the Rencontres d’Arles, unveils a pluralistic vision of an uncertain and changing world.

Photography historian Françoise Denoyelle describes the Rencontres d’Arles as “the seismograph of photography”. Once again this year, Christoph Wiesner scrutinises strong and weak signals through a rich programme evocative of a changing world. Whirlwinds, spirits, traces, parallel readings, reinterpretations... The chapters of this 55<sup>th</sup> edition of the Rencontres d’Arles explore the porousness of narratives, the limits of the medium, and the multiple voices of photography past and present. Underpinning this, Christoph Wiesner seeks to question “our relationship with the sublime, both terrifying and wonderful.” This edition promises to delve into the philosophy of photography and its relationship with reality.

## **Your edition proposes a photographic exploration around the theme “Beneath the surface”.**

### **What did you aim to convey?**

The primary reference is related to the Japanese photographer Ishiuchi Miyako, who uses this expression to describe her relationship with her mother and the photos she took of her [see p.36]. The surface is what we see intuitively, immediately. With this expression, Ishiuchi Miyako illustrates that the act of photography is a way to become aware of the distance that separates us from things and that it allows us to enter another dimension. This reflection deeply moved me because, ultimately, when constructing a festival, we try to create an underlying reading, to hear echoes, to build connections. To make the invisible visible, in a way.

## **The theme of exploration also appears in this year’s exhibitions...**

Indeed, there is a more “literal” and almost amusing reading of this expression, which I had not initially considered, that can be found in many exhibitions of this edition. This exploration of the depths is seen with the *ama*, those Japanese women divers who free dive [see p.42], or with Nicolas Floc’h in “Rivers ocean”, who photographs the waters beneath the surface to reveal the infinite palettes of colours of rivers, varying according to human activities or the geography of the territories. “Beneath the surface” is therefore a title that opens up a multitude of interpretations.

## **You mentioned the question of the right distance, which is a fundamental principle of the photographic act. Is this a research axis for the Rencontres?**

Absolutely. Beyond photography, in a broader sense within art, this research, this situating, this *mise en abyme* of our existence confronts us with death, with love, with the construction of our lives.

### 3 questions to... Astrid Ullens

Astrid Ullens de Schooten Whettnall is a collector of photography.

#### What was the first photograph you bought?

It was at the Basel Fair. Long before I started collecting photography, I stumbled upon a print of Brancusi portraying himself in his studio. Unable to purchase a sculpture, I bought this photo instead. Three more self-portraits of the artist followed. These became the foundation of my collection, which quickly expanded to include contemporary currents.

#### How has your collection — and taste — evolved over the years?

The collection has been built through the acquisition of series, meaning I don't just choose a few prints from a body of work; I feel more legitimate with complete series. I have followed the work of all these artists. Fifteen years ago, I developed a passion for Latin America; some photos still give me goosebumps. I also notice that for a long time, many subjects have been linked to the environment, dehumanisation, deindustrialisation, and humanity — themes that are at the core of the evolution of my collection. In photography (as in contemporary art), my guiding thread is intellectual inquiry, what allows us to understand the world, what forces us to see. The documentary aspect takes precedence. The more engaged it is, the more I like it.

#### If you had to define your collection in three words, what would they be?

Engagement, small format (as it invites a deeper look into the image), black and white.

want to highlight underrepresented female artists, but it's a reality. I was recently discussing with a photography historian who told me that our field is significantly lagging. Women and minorities have been obscured, and it's not by doing an exhibition that we solve the problem. The subject needs to be refined over the long term to hope, eventually, to achieve a normal situation and relationships. This is what we are doing at the Rencontres. For example, the exhibition we organised on feminist *avant-gardes* in 2022 was crucial because it brought together major figures who used photography not just as a medium but also as a testimony of women's place in society. This is something we will continue.

#### In your opening statement, you mention that we are living in “exciting times”. How so for you?

The photographic field is intimately linked to reality. Through their questioning, all photographers leave traces on society, on what happens, on how we react. I find there is a lot of rethinking going on currently. The younger generation of photographers is concerned with questions of gender, lifestyles, production, societal life, movement, and, of course, the environment. For example, several exhibitions are related to the awareness of ecological urgency. The exhibition “Répliques – 11/03/11” reflects on trauma but, more importantly, what we do with it. Japan is quite an incredible example, as the entire country is on a seismic fault. Its reconstruction history is ongoing.

#### Have recent geopolitical upheavals been particularly present in the proposals you received?

I consider that the Rencontres are not a festival dedicated to photojournalism, meaning we don't

It's a philosophical reflection that can be explored from numerous angles. When Ishiuchi Miyako explains that she was never very close to her mother, but through her photos, there is this kind of awareness where her absence ultimately reveals her past presence, it's something quite incredible. Often, something or someone has to disappear for us to realise it was there. All of this also speaks to memory, another intrinsic question to the photographic image, which freezes something in time. At the moment you take a photo, the image already belongs to the past.

#### What did you want to show in this panorama of Japanese photography?

Projects always emerge gradually, over time. Two curators had been working for a long time on a project

about Japanese women photographers. This subject interested me, and I wanted to give it perspectives through various exhibitions that would show images never seen or known before. It's important to note that since the creation of the Rencontres, only one Japanese photographer has been exhibited, Rinko Kawauchi in 2004.

#### How do you explain this “invisibility” of Japanese women photographers?

Japanese society certainly played a role by favouring male photographers. With few exceptions, it was rare for women to exhibit their work in Japan, except for Ishiuchi Miyako, who was known by her contemporaries — Araki even found her work very interesting. For a long time, they couldn't get past the exhibition filter. I don't want to fall into stereotypes by saying we

# Photomaton®

ICI PHOTOS COMPATIBLES  
NOUVELLE CARTE NATIONALE D'IDENTITE  
Photomaton

## Photo d'identité officielle.

La cabine accessible à tous !

Pour tous vos documents d'identité



etc.



8€

Retrouvez également des portraits, des planches 16 mini photos & toute une collection de produits photo à petits prix !

TU VEUX MA PHOTO?

TU VEUX VOIR LE FILM ?



Photomaton  
Photomaton.fr



Attention vous voyagez à l'étranger  
Le ministre des Affaires étrangères recommande avant de privilégier un passeport valide à une carte de voyage d'une durée de validité dépassant.



Christoph Wiesner

“Rencontres d’Arles is not a festival dedicated to photojournalism, meaning we don’t have this immediate rendering of the world’s tragedies. The Rencontres reflect the state of the planet but not its immediate news. — *Christoph Wiesner*”

have this immediate rendering of the world’s tragedies. The Rencontres d’Arles reflect the state of the planet but not its immediate news. Our first chapter is titled “Tremors and tremor” because it refers to different types of realities. The retrospective we are dedicating to Mary Ellen Mark is a historical monograph that shows her incredible way of documenting her time and showing all the outcasts of American society. Cristina de Middel in “Voyage to the centre” and Rajesh Vora in “Baroque of the everyday” address migration and exile issues in very different ways. Cristina de Middel, a photographer linked to documentary, tells the story of the migratory journey through Mexico as a heroic and courageous expedition rather than a flight. She rehumanises the image of the migrating person through testimonies. Rajesh Vora travelled across the Indian subcontinent following the diaspora’s traces through incredible vernacular objects and architectures. In “Beirutopia”, Randa Mirza creates a visual essay evoking war and successive crises in her country. The Rencontres do not directly address the war in Ukraine or current events in the Middle East but speak of life trajectories that, indirectly, tell a global story.

**Each year, you like to focus on a collection. For this edition, you chose to present Astrid Ullens’ collection. Why this choice?**

I have always been fascinated and passionate about collections because a collection represents

a person’s history, their portrait. We discover the different facets of their interest, what they love, their passions, etc. Regardless of the person’s means, private collectors are all driven by a commitment, sometimes by a form of devotion. For them, it’s a necessity, whether we talk about photos, paintings, or objects. I admired Astrid Ullens’ way of writing a certain definition of our worldview through her photography collection [see box p.22]. Her choices have been rigorous and consistent. Out of her collection of 5,500 works, she focused on only a hundred photographers, demonstrating how deeply she worked on the idea of the series. History is not written with a single image but through a multitude of images.

**In a completely different vein, Sophie Calle [see p.72] created a project specifically for the Rencontres this year?**

That’s the magic of Arles. Last year, Sophie visited Juliette Agnel’s exhibition in the underground cryptoporticus. Unfortunately, microfungi had attacked the exhibited photographs, even though they were well protected, as the place is very humid. At the end of the visit, Sophie came to me and said: “I have something for you, I had an idea, I need to talk to you.” We met again in the autumn, and she told me another story, that of her series *The blind*. This series was supposed to be exhibited at the Picasso Museum, but Sophie had suffered water damage at home, in her storage, and mould had infiltrated. The restorers advised destroying the affected works due to the risk they might contaminate other images, even if treated. She made the connection between the two stories and said: “Listen, instead of destroying them, I could give them a beautiful end, letting them finish beautifully in the cryptoporticus, since it’s a place with 99% humidity.” That’s how the project was born, and she kept the expression for her exhibition title, “Ending beautifully”.

**And how will this beautiful end materialise?**

Until the end of September, these works will progressively be inhabited by mould and fungi and eventually disappear. Beyond this, it’s a reflection on the finitude of photography in a place that, however, proposes itself as a space for display and preservation. Once again, this gesture questions memory, in a *mise en abyme* of the medium.





*Lagune* (still, 2023), Susanna de Vido  
© Susanna de Vido. Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles





*Untitled #4 (Parallel Universes, 2006), Randa Mirza*

© Randa Mirza. Courtesy Tanit Gallery. Rencontres d'Arles

# NO. 1 FEBRUARY

*Capture (Echoes, 2011-2023), Stephen Dock*

© Stephen Dock. Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles

## ANOTHER NARRATIVE OF THE TERRITORY

Whether capturing intimate moments in daily life, graffiti in urban settings, underwater and terrestrial landscapes, or the socio-political impact on our environment, contemporary photography adds a new dimension to our understanding of territories.

### “Hannibal’s garden”, Marine Lanier. **Botanical poetry**

“There are always heroes in epics, and here they are the gardeners.” The Lautaret Alpine Botanical Garden, located in the Hautes-Alpes, is a place filled with legends, such as Hannibal’s journey to Rome. The story goes that this ancient warrior and Carthaginian general was driven from childhood by a desire to conquer Rome. The exhibition “Hannibal’s Garden” by photographer Marine Lanier is a metaphor for resistance, showcasing this small botanical garden’s struggle against the powerful modern lobbies, an anachronistic intersection of our current climate upheaval and a warrior’s fight against dominant Rome. Marine Lanier grew up in a family of horticulturists, florists, and nurserymen, which initially led her to study landscapes before turning to photographic art. Through her exhibition, the artist speaks of the near and the far: alpine gardens gather seeds, plants, and species from around the world, creating a global map of leaves, flowers, and rock formations that tells the current story of the entire plant ecosystem. Through portraits of gardeners filled with melancholy and tenderness, a form of resignation to uncontrollable forces, the photographer poetically invites us to ponder our actions. She presents a possible path against climate collapse, one followed by gardeners, the heroes of the plant world.

#### “Hannibal’s garden”

Until 29 September  
Summer garden. Boulevard des Lices  
Arles. [www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

### “The green ray”, Mustapha Azeroual et Marjolaine Lévy. **Colourful range**

The new duo of the BMW Art Makers programme, Mustapha Azeroual and Marjolaine Lévy, share a common love for abstraction. Mustapha Azeroual is a photographer, though he defies the typical attributes: “I claim to be a photographer even as I mistreat photography.” To create his images, he explores uncharted territories from his studio in Tours, using mostly phone pictures taken by sailors from around the world, which Marjolaine Lévy translates into words. Radiance results in the abstraction of a colour range, leaving only the “ghost image of the initial photograph.” Through his project, the artist seeks to present the hues of the sky, multicoloured traces of landscapes that conceal a less joyful reality, that of pollution and human activity. This pictorial reinterpretation of the image using lenticular technology evokes childhood memories. The perception is destabilised, making it difficult for the eye to focus... The duo presents an

immersive installation with multiple viewpoints, featuring works over 4 metres wide, inviting visitors to the Cloître Saint-Trophime to experience a social exploration of colour.

**“The green ray”**

Until 29 September  
Cloître Saint-Trophime  
20 rue du Cloître. Arles  
[www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

**“Wagon-bar, a short history of railway dining”, Arthur**

**Mettetal. *Holiday train***

Holland salmon, Pauillac lamb saddle, Nice green beans, parsleyed new potatoes, Argenteuil asparagus sweetbreads, Brussels pullet, cheese platter, Melba strawberries, coffee... This was the menu offered aboard the trains of the renowned Compagnie des Wagons-Lits, a stark contrast to today's wagon-bar menu of ham club sandwiches and vanilla yogurt. These trains, which crossed Europe, were ambassadors of French culture, gastronomy, and craftsmanship in marquetry and cabinetmaking. A model of railway luxury serving its passengers, made possible by the talents of famous chefs and artisans like René Lalique and René Prou, pioneers of the Art Deco movement in the 1920s. Arthur Mettetal, curator of the “Wagon-bar” exhibition, humorously and subtly presents the history of railway dining through the archives of the former Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits and the SNCF, also narrating a story of innovation and design. The exhibition evokes the pleasure of train picnics, holiday journeys, and joyful nostalgia.

**“Wagon-bar, a short history of railway dining”**

Until 29 September  
Croisière. 3 rue Claude Férigoule  
Arles. [www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

**“Rivers ocean, the landscape of the Mississippi's colours”, Nicolas Floc'h. *A river runs through it...***

Nicolas Floc'h engages in true geographic and scientific work by exploring the interactions between river, marine, and terrestrial environments. The photographer reveals an intensely coloured panorama of underwater landscapes and habitats — green, blue, white, yellow, orange, or red — showcasing the presence of an entire ecosystem. For the artist, it is “this colour that allows us to read the interaction between land and ocean.” “Rivers ocean. The landscape of the Mississippi's colours” explores, in 224 different locations across 31 US states, from Northern Minnesota to the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, one of the world's largest deltas. By showing this constant interconnection between ocean and land, Nicolas Floc'h also highlights human impacts on environments: the river nourishes the land while invisible pollutants starve the oceans. The exhibition is the first chapter of a vast research project, extending to the Rhône, the Loire, and Cotentin, an ongoing work.

**“Rivers ocean, the landscape of the Mississippi's colours”**

Until 29 September  
Chapelle Saint-Martin du Méjan  
Place Nina Berberova. Arles  
[www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

**“Model citizens”, Debi Cornwall. *Model fictions***

Since 2014, after a career as a civil rights lawyer, Debi Cornwall has dedicated herself to photography. The American artist is interested in the concept of citizenship, analysing its portrayal in this “militarised country where citizens can't agree on what is true.” On the eve of the

upcoming November presidential elections, these questions are particularly relevant, highlighting the need for vigilance against reality manipulation. The photographer uses her lens to expose the contradictions and pretences of contemporary American society. The series *Necessary fictions* explores military simulation exercises where actors play the roles of civilians in fictional countries to train American soldiers. The photographer captures the meticulous details of these scenes, revealing the authenticity of the artifice in the recreated environments. The second series, *Model citizens*, focuses on the representation of American citizenship through historical reenactments and patriotic ceremonies. By photographing these scenes, Debi Cornwall exposes how citizenship ideals are performed and celebrated.

**“Model citizens”**

Until 29 September  
Monoprix  
Place Lamartine. Arles  
[www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

**“Echoes”, Stephen Dock.**

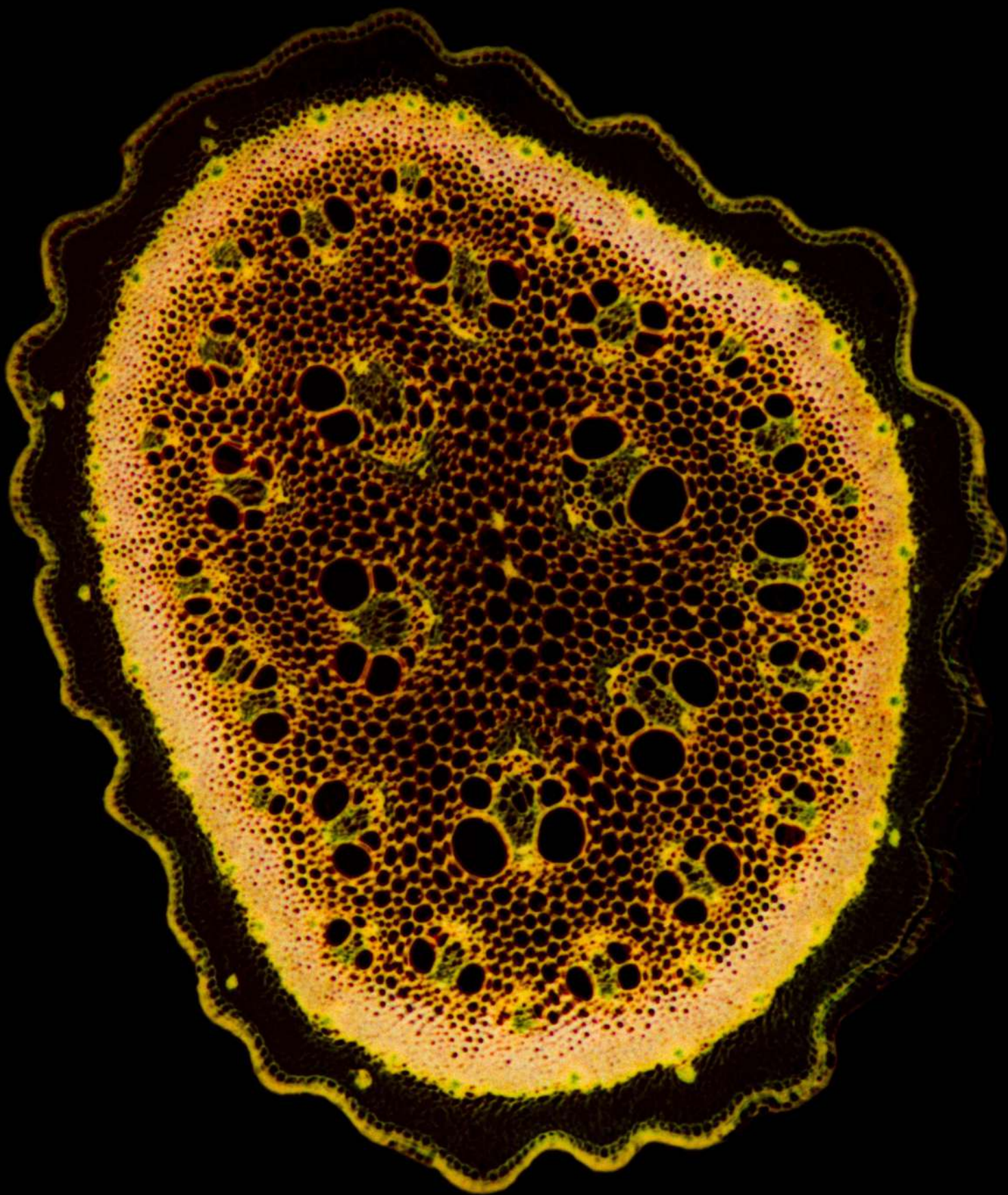
***Breaking stereotypes***

Photographer Stephen Dock is known for his documentary work on conflict zones: Syria, Lebanon, Mali, Israel, and Palestine. Accompanied by exhibition curator Audrey Hoareau, the artist presents “Echoes”, a reinterpretation of his work. The project questions how to produce images to narrate crises, wars, and the world, and the reasons and objectives behind such images. “War is not a minor news item. We are not here to consume it,” the photographer reminds us. Since the Spanish Civil War photos by Robert Capa or Larry Burrows' images of the Vietnam War,



*Smoke Bomb, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Centre, Twentynine Palms, California, U.S. (Necessary Fictions, 2018), Debi Cornwall*

© Debi Cornwall. Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles



*Cells #1 (Hannibal's garden, 2023), Marine Lanier*

Courtesy Marine Lanier. Espace Jörg. Rencontres d'Arles



photojournalism has drastically changed, especially with digital evolution and new dissemination channels. Access to extremely violent images has become commonplace. War photographs are no longer as disturbing and have become “consumable”. It is therefore necessary to move away from stereotypical war imagery. “Distance is the key word”, says Audrey Hoareau. By revisiting his personal archives, Stephen Dock provides a new interpretation of his images, engaging the viewer in a deep reflection on the lasting impacts of violence and conflicts.

#### “Echoes”

Until 29 September  
Croisière  
3 rue Claude Férigoule. Arles  
[www.stephendock.com](http://www.stephendock.com)  
[www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

#### “Beirutopia”, Randa Mirza.

##### Twenty years of Lebanon

“I remember a day during the war when my mother screamed at me to run under the bombs and not to look back. I grew up believing that the catastrophe had already happened until the day, thirty years later, I found myself propelled by a terrible explosion into the streets of my destroyed city.” The monographic exhibition “Beirutopia” by Randa Mirza brings together a body of work from seven series created between 2002 and 2022, spanning from the end of the Lebanese civil war to the Beirut explosion. Through a biographical approach, the photographer explores the empty streets of the city during the COVID-19 pandemic or analyses views from her home during the same period (*We promise, we deliver*, 2021 and *View from home*, 2020). In another

series (*Beirutopia*, 2010-2019), she studies the urban transformations and socio-political impacts in the Lebanese capital, highlighting the contrasts between the city’s past and present, notably the challenges

of modernisation and unfulfilled development promises. Her photographs also address the political responsibility for the country’s current collapse (*#crisisbillboard*, 2022),

### 3 questions to... Hugo Vitrani

Hugo Vitrani is the curator of “In the name of the name, the sensitive surfaces of graffiti”.

#### What was your goal with this exhibition?

First, I wanted to deepen the reading of graffiti. Today, when we think of graffiti, we envision certain aesthetic forms, and the idea is to escape these forms and delve back into the underground energy of this mode of expression. When we talk about graffiti, we often think of it as a practice in public spaces, but it also connects us to the origins of art, even to prehistoric caves. I also wanted to combine perspectives, through about fifty photographers of varied generations, backgrounds, and horizons, to illustrate the evolutions and connections among these scenes and practices. Finally, since we are at the Rencontres, I wanted to juxtapose different photographic practices (photojournalists, amateurs, police, or artistic) with graffiti to show how they have interpenetrated.

#### What does the exhibition title “All in the name of the name” references?

In the early 1970s, writer Norman Mailer published a text in *Esquire* magazine titled “The faith of graffiti”, describing graffiti as a belief, a growth stemming from the traumas of the Vietnam War, wild advertising, and everything that assaults the mind. He portrayed this new language as an evangeliser of public space. This explains the exhibition title “All in the name of the name,” a quote from Phase2, an iconic but forgotten artist of the 1980s in New York. He explained that it is “in the name of the name” that the graffiti movement exists, in the necessity to inscribe one’s name and identity in public space, directly or indirectly. I particularly nod to this vision by presenting this topic in a church.

#### The exhibition is held at the historic and emblematic Sainte-Anne Church. Why this choice. How will you use the space?

The choice was Christoph Wiesner’s, who wanted to highlight this project. He aimed to give prominence to what is a marginal journey in the history of photography, knowing that these perspectives have been ghettoised and sidelined. The church is built with eight alcoves, and the idea is to disrupt the space to avoid fixing what we show, finding treatments that allow for crossing perspectives and practices. The exhibition will take the form of a labyrinthine and chaotic journey, highlighting links, complementarities, or confrontations between artists, scenes, and practices. The challenge was to fragment the axes, much like what happens in the street, and diffuse them throughout the space. Among the major themes of the exhibition, we will find the question of vandalism as “care”: let’s stop seeing vandalism as destructive but rather as a new light. Also, the question of attitudes becoming forms: why certain attitudes in certain contexts have created forms, both corporeal and sartorial; and finally, issues related to toxic masculinity, as we know some graffiti scenes can be very macho.

# NOTEBOOK

emphasising the political, financial, and social crisis in Lebanon.

## “Beirutopia”

Until 29 September

Maison des peintres. 43 boulevard Emile Combes  
Arles. [www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

## “Time frames”, Vasantha Yoganathan. **Time flies**

One day in February, in a village in Provence, a wandering photographer passed an old lady on a bench with a bouquet of mimosas in one hand and a baguette in the other. This is the starting point of the encounter between Françoise and Vasantha and the story of “Time frames”. The exhibition speaks of the passage of time and the sentimental accumulation around the objects that surround us: the paintings on the walls, the photographs on the sideboards, the wallpaper colour, the book collection on the shelves... It is not a documentary about the old lady on the bench, but a work of memory with a universal dimension that the photographer offers us. Vasantha Yoganathan highlights habits that tend towards the extraordinary: he pays particular attention to gestures, our occupations, and the magical realism of everyday life. In *Past perfect*, the photographer’s presence fades to the point of questioning the very author of these images. Exhibited at the Cloître Saint-Trophime, the images blend perfectly with this historically rich place imbued with memory. This is the first part of the *Imaginary images* project (2020-), bringing together series with the common theme of a narrative of territory.

## “Time frames”

Until 29 September

Cloître Saint-Trophime  
20 rue du Cloître. Arles  
[rencontres-arles.com](http://rencontres-arles.com)





Service on board a Capitale train dining car (1966)

Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles

# ROOM 22

Fukushima Daiichi nuclear  
power plant, Fukushima (2011)

© Kazuma Obara. Courtesy Kazuma Obara. Rencontres d'Arles



## BENEATH APPEARANCES

With five exhibitions dedicated to Japan, the 2024 edition of the Rencontres d'Arles highlights the creativity of the archipelago and restores balance by giving a prominent place to Japanese women photographers. It also honours Ishiuchi Miyako, laureate of the Women in Motion award.

When we think of Japanese photography in Europe, we inevitably think of the works of Nobuyoshi Araki, Daido Moriyama, or Shomei Tomatsu. However, naming a female Japanese photographer is much more challenging. Unlike their male counterparts, Japanese women photographers have long remained under the radar of institutional recognition outside the archipelago. Few museums have dedicated retrospective or even collective exhibitions to them. Without claiming to restore balance with just a few events, the Rencontres d'Arles aims to address this asymmetry by dedicating a significant portion of its 2024 programme to the (re-)discovery of the works of Japanese women photographers. "In the field of photography, women and minorities have been overlooked, and just having an exhibition doesn't solve the problem," explains Christoph Wiesner, the director of the Rencontres [see p.20]. "We need to address this issue in the long term to hopefully reach a situation of normalcy. That's what we are working on at the Rencontres."

Highlights of the festival include the choral exhibition "What a joy to see you: Japanese women photographers from the 1950s to present time" at the Palais de l'Archevêché and the recognition of Ishiuchi Miyako, laureate of the Women in Motion award, at the Ancient Theatre on 2 July. "I am very happy that many Japanese women photographers are being showcased in Arles this year," says Ishiuchi Miyako. "Their works are of very high quality, demonstrating their versatility and diversity. I hope Europeans will look closely at their works and that these photographers will have more opportunities to exhibit in Europe." The photographer, born

in 1947, who comes to Arles to receive her award following Susan Meiselas, Sabine Weiss, Liz Johnson Artur, Babette Mangolte, and Rosângela Rennó, also presents a monographic exhibition at the Henri-Comte Hall. Simply titled "Belongings", it features moving photographs from her *Mother's* and *Hiroshima* series, reviving memories through the modesty of everyday objects. "Taking a photograph is about measuring the distance from the subject and making visible the invisible things beneath the surface," she says. "Ishiuchi Miyako is a major photographer. It's wonderful that she is being celebrated in France in this way for the first time," rejoices Pauline Vermare, co-curator of "I'm so happy you are here". She continues, "she has had a considerable impact in Japan, paving the way for other women of her generation and subsequent ones by showing that a woman could also be a photographer. Her work, particularly her colour photographs of personal effects belonging to her mother (her *Mother's* series) or the objects and clothing of Hiroshima victims, has had a profound impact on many photographers, both in

Japan and abroad. This recognition is significant both artistically and humanly: it broadens the collective imagination in France, offering a wider audience another face of Japanese photography.”

### Lifting the veil

The works of this pioneer are also shown at the Palais de l’Archevêché in the context of “I’m so happy you are here”, an unprecedented exhibition in France curated by Lesley Martin, Takeuchi Mariko and Pauline Vermare, which brings together, for the first time, works exclusively created by Japanese women photographers. “This exhibition produced by Aperture bypasses established narratives and reveals the importance of Japanese women photographers since the 1950s,” explains Christoph Wiesner. “The exhibition unveils new historiographic perspectives and allows for an inclusive understanding of the history of photography, which has been predominantly male.”

Covering more than 70 years of creation through the eyes of 25 Japanese women photographers, this exhibition offers a different perspective on Japanese society, often contrary to the images conveyed by male photographers. “We wanted to represent this wide range of styles and subjects at work since the 1950s,” explains art historian Pauline Vermare, co-curator. “The exhibition is structured around three themes: perspectives on society, daily life and experimentation. This structure allows us to appreciate the tremendous diversity of works over all these years, but also to observe certain intergenerational connections. Formally, one of the most striking elements of this collection is the remarkable use of colour from Yamazawa Eiko in the 1950s to Hiromix, Kawauchi Rinko, Hara Mikiko, Noguchi Rika, Ninagawa Mika, Shiga Lieko, Okabe Momo, and many others.”

This independent curator, former cultural director of Magnum Photos in New York and curator at the International Center of Photography and MoMA, adds: “Having grown up in Japan, it seemed important to me to show this other Japanese photography, these other representations of Japan: images that allow us to move away from the black-and-white, predominantly male Japan that is often presented to us, where Japanese women are frequently the subject. I wanted this project to open another window — or several — onto this country.” Favouring a close relationship with the photographers’ work, the scenography of the Palais de l’Archevêché offers a “both intimate and dynamic” display, creating connections between themes and generations. Each artist is given a space to present their work individually through prints, books, magazines, projections, installations, and texts.

Associated with a long-term editorial project, the idea for this exhibition has been developing in the minds of its curators for several years. “In 2019, Luce Lebart and Marie Robert invited me to contribute to their book *World history of women photographers*,” recounts Pauline Vermare. “On that occasion, I proposed writing about some Japanese women photographers [see box p.41]. When the book was published by Textuel Editions in 2020 during the Covid pandemic, Manon Demurger from the Maison européenne de la photographie asked me to present an online masterclass on Japanese women photographers. As I continued my research, I realised how little we knew about Japanese women photographers in France and the United States (where I have been working for 15 years), and thought it would be important to present their work in a collective volume. The Textuel team and Lesley Martin at Aperture

### 3 questions to... Ishiuchi Miyako

Ishiuchi Miyako is the recipient of the 2024 Women in Motion Award.

**You work on themes of distance, memory, and disappearance; three central elements to the photographic process itself.**

**How do you translate these into your images?**

I believe photography only captures the surface of objects, but by projecting my consciousness behind the surface or towards the unseen aspects beyond, it evokes time and memories.

**You have often focused on the body, particularly the female body. Isn't the body ultimately the main subject of photography?**

I think the body is a vessel of time. Time resides only within our bodies in daily life, but we cannot liberate it from our bodies. I am always intrigued by the fragility of flesh, which will one day vanish. It's a very important theme because it reflects the essence of life.

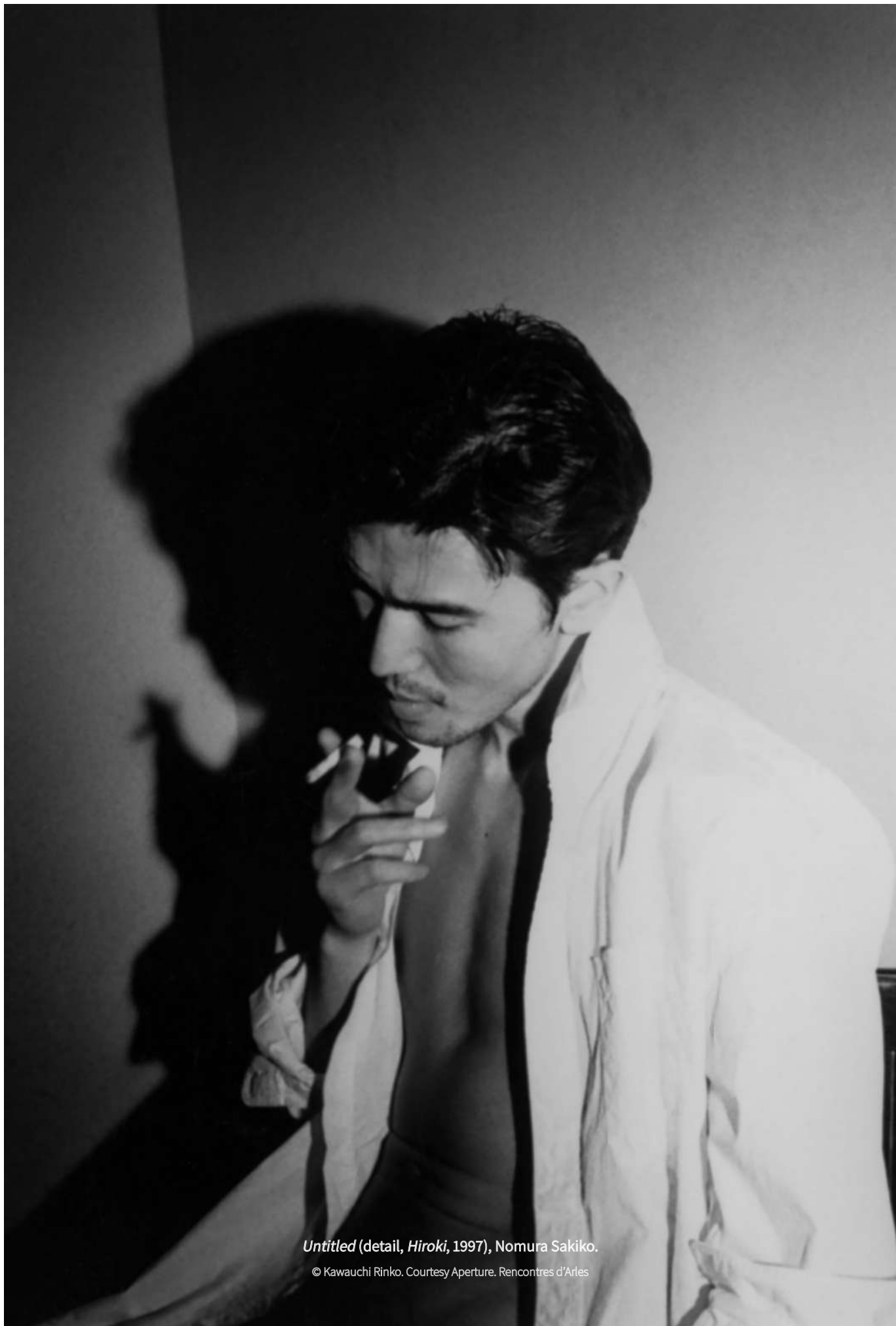
**What was your reaction when you learned you were the recipient of the Women in Motion Award?**

I was surprised to be honoured. I may not always be conscious of the feminine aspects myself, but gender discrimination still exists. I see this award as a step towards eliminating the need to use the word “woman”.



*Untitled (The eyes, the ears, 2002-2004), Kawauchi Rinko*

© Kawauchi Rinko. Courtesy Aperture. Rencontres d'Arles



*Untitled (detail, Hiroki, 1997), Nomura Sakiko.*

© Kawauchi Rinko. Courtesy Aperture. Rencontres d'Arles



immediately supported this project, and I am delighted that these two books are being published around this exhibition, which we organised together with Takeuchi Mariko and Lesley Martin.”

### Contemporary visions

Another collective exhibition, other narratives: “Transcendence” brings together the works of six contemporary Japanese women photographers, ranging from intimate portraits and evocative landscapes to poetic experiments. They also share a common generational background: Hosokura Mayumi (1979), Iwane Ai (1975), Okabe Momo (1981), Suzuki Mayumi (1977), Tonomura Hideka (1979), and Yoshida Tamaki (1975). Proposed

as part of *Kyotographie*, the international photo festival in Kyoto, this “choir of contemporary women photographers” settles for the duration of the *Rencontres at Vague*, a creative studio created by interior designer Teruhiro Yanagihara in a small Arlesian mansion. “Inspired by ‘10/10 Celebrating Contemporary Japanese Women Photographers’, an exhibition presented in 2022 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of *Kyotographie*, ‘Transcendence’ continues the narrative of the experiences of several of these photographers, paying homage to the power of vulnerability, the beauty of diversity, and the unwavering spirit of women who dare to rewrite their stories and history through the power

of photography,” summarise curators Lucille Reyboz and Nakanishi Yusuke.

### Collective memory

At the Espace Van Gogh, the collective exhibition “Reflection – 11/03/11: Japanese Photographers Facing the Cataclysm” moves away from strictly feminine photography to show how photographers from the archipelago not only documented but also transcended the Fukushima disaster with creative and resilient energy. “Many photographers quickly went there, returned repeatedly over the years to continue documenting the effects of the devastation and contamination, the efforts of reconstruction or rehabilitation, but also the

I was given darkroom equipment and a camera, and I tried to use them. Since darkroom work is similar to the fabric dyeing process I used to do during my studies, I thought photography would be comparable to dyeing, so I started photography.

— *Ishiuchi Miyako*

### *Japanese women photographers*

The exhibition presented at the *Rencontres d’Arles* is the counterpart to a collective book led by two of its co-curators, Lesley Martin and Pauline Vermare. This volume highlights the works created by Japanese women photographers from the 1950s to the present. Starting from the observation that recognition of the Japanese scene has primarily benefited male photographers since the 1970s, the authors emphasise the crucial role of women artists in the development of the medium and their “undeniable virtuosity”. Through more than 500 images — photographs and book facsimiles — and an anthology of texts, this book reveals the vastness of what has been obscured and constitutes a critical and joyful enrichment of the history of Japanese photography. “In the book, between portfolios, illustrated bibliography, and texts, we present about 80 photographers whose styles are extremely varied, from studio photography to street photography, documentary, political, social photography, portraits and self-portraits, intimate, fantastical, experimental photography...” enumerates Pauline Vermare. The book’s release, scheduled for 26 June 2024, coincides with the opening of the *Rencontres*. It will be presented during the festival.

#### *Japanese women photographers: From the 1950s to present times*

Lesley Martin and Pauline Vermare. Textuel Editions  
2024. French. 440 pages. €69. [www.editionstextuel.com](http://www.editionstextuel.com)

discrimination due to migration,” explain curators Philippe Séclier and Marina Amada. The aftershocks of this shockwave, a groundswell of resistance and anger, are still felt in Japanese society today, “a tragedy whose societal and environmental repercussions continue to haunt the Japanese people.” “The exhibition reminds us that the archipelago also carries the memory of a cataclysm that occurred on 11 March 2011, with origins rooted in the geological history of a territory continually battered, under the consequent threat of nuclear danger,” says Christoph Wiesner. “With resilience, resistance, and creativity, the photographers reveal the incredible diversity and vitality of the Japanese scene.”

# ZOOM

## Femininity in apnoea

Curator Sonia Voss has immersed herself in the archives of Uruguchi Kusakazu, a Japanese photographer who dedicated more than thirty years to documenting the lives of *ama*, the traditional female divers of the archipelago's coasts who dive in apnoea searching for seaweed and abalone. Mostly unpublished, these images of daily life and ephemeral underwater shots illustrate the lifestyle of these "extraordinary" women at the Abbaye de Montmajour. "This rediscovery also allows us to approach Japanese photography through one of its essential aspects, that of amateur practice, of which Uruguchi, through his involvement in various photo clubs, was an extraordinary representative," says Sonia Voss. Born in 1922 in Shima on the Pacific coast, Uruguchi Kusakazu managed a family business specialising in pearl trading before devoting himself to photography, which he practised avidly as an amateur for more than three decades. Hence his passion for the sea. Over his life, the photographer took tens of thousands of photos that had not been explored since his death in 1988. "His photographs highlight the secular practices of the *ama* while capturing their every moment's energy," continues Sonia Voss. "Nourished by their vitality and the trust they placed in him, he developed a visual language marked by intensity and expressiveness: contrasting blacks and whites, decentring, spontaneous gestures anchor the *ama* in their time — mainly the 1970s and 1980s — while paying tribute to their powerful and assertive femininity." Another shifted perspective that contrasts with clichés about women's conditions in Japan.

---

"ama"

"Reflection - 11/03/11"

"I'm so happy you are here"

"Belongings"

Until 29 September  
Abbaye de Montmajour  
Espace Van Gogh  
Palais de l'Archevêché  
Henri Comte room. Arles  
[rencontres-arles.com](http://rencontres-arles.com)

**AMA**





*Hiroshima #37F, Ishiuchi Miyako*

© Ishiuchi Miyako. Courtesy The Third Gallery Aya. Rencontres d'Arles

# RENÉ BURRI



Tokyo Olympic Games, Japan (1964), René Burri  
© René Burri. Courtesy Photo Elysée. Magnum Photos.  
René Burri Foundation. Rencontres d'Arles

## IMAGE REFEREES

The relevant partnership between two museums in Lausanne — Photo Élysée and the Olympic Museum — gives rise to the exhibition “The challenge of sport”. This exhibition develops a narrative on Olympism in photography from a largely unpublished corpus. A discovery.

Olivier Le Noé holds a PhD in political science and is an *agrégé* in economics and social sciences. He is a professor at the University of Paris Nanterre and heads the Institute of Political Social Sciences (ISP), a CNRS research laboratory. Julien Sorez is an *agrégé* in history and a lecturer at the University of Paris Nanterre. He is also part of the Institute of Political Social Sciences.

Missing out on this golden opportunity would have been a shame... In this Olympic year, sports photography steps out of its reserve to find its way to the Musée Départemental Arles Antique. In an archaeological nod, the exhibition “The challenge of sport” takes place on the site of the ancient Roman Circus, where chariot racers once sped in epic competitions.

In 1896, the first modern Olympic Games were inaugurated in Athens. Coinciding with the invention of photography, this new technology raises questions: how does a still image capture movement? Initially a tool for breaking down gestures to better understand anatomy, sports photography gradually became a powerful instrument of influence. The preserved images provide a valuable history of representations.

It all began with the clever collaboration between two museums in Lausanne: Photo Élysée and the Olympic Museum. Under the curatorship of art historian Nathalie Herschdorfer, the exhibition narrates the story of Olympism through largely unseen photographic collections. To bring their academic perspective, two specialists in the social sciences of sport were invited to participate in the project: Olivier Le Noé and Julien Sorez,

scientific advisers of the exhibition, aimed to demonstrate that disqualification is an integral part of the Olympic narrative.

### A story of representations

As academics, Julien and Olivier first took a fresh look at the photographic collections of the two museums. Interested in the conditions of production and circulation of images, they sought to illuminate the iconographic and aesthetic reading through the context of the shots. Julien admits to being wary of images: “Historians often overlook image analysis, using them more to illustrate their narratives than to treat them as documents in their own right, which can reveal new insights about the past.”

With two enormous databases (over 900,000 images at the Olympic Museum alone), choosing a relevant angle of attack was necessary. What alternative narratives do these images produce? The two historians raised the issue of visibility and its counterpart: *invisibilisation*. At the forefront of sports competition, which always involves a symbolic

battle of images, they sought to offer a more singular perspective that complements — or revisits — the historical narrative based on more traditional archives. According to Olivier, “photography captures aspects of reality that archives do not.”

### Images on the sidelines

From these initial questions, part of the exhibition naturally turned towards the off-field aspects of sports competition. Julien and Olivier’s role included ensuring the fair representation of often overlooked sensitive subjects and making recommendations on necessary themes to address: political protests, propaganda, colonialism, doping, women’s integration, etc. “We felt it was important for the Rencontres to have this collaboration between museum professionals on one side and academics on the other, so these crucial aspects weren’t overlooked.”

During the iconographic research, it was necessary to rectify certain representational injustices. “Can photography make visible the figures in sport who suffer from invisibility?” Olivier wonders. He reminds us that if images are instrumentalised by organisers, the same goes for so-called “weak” sporting nations: “Some micro-states, which only appear during the opening ceremony, use this sole moment of visibility to counteract certain stigmas.” To a lesser extent, one can also mention the case of female athletes. During their research, they were struck by a photograph of an Olympic tennis tournament, showing a woman playing while spectators turn their backs to watch the other court.

### Ethical challenges

As historians, showing images must adhere to a rigorous protocol. Taken out of context, photographs are manipulable and can sometimes become ambiguous. The exhibition includes historical reminders that punctuate the photo-narrative of the Olympics. Some of the major events of the last century are featured, each having generated significant commentary. Rather than a media perspective, Julien and Olivier sought to provide a critical, sometimes transgressive, but always objective view.

Julien cites the example of the 1936 Berlin Games. “Saying that Jesse Owens’ victory, an African American athlete, contradicted the ideological aims of Nazi Germany is misleading. In 1936, Hitler did not try to impose the superiority of the Aryan race in certain Olympic disciplines. For him, it was obvious that African American athletes would be better than Germans

in sprinting events.” In *Olympia*, Leni Riefenstahl’s propaganda documentary, one ambition was to give the impression that Germany was a welcoming, international state. There are many shots of the stands, showing a wide variety of nationalities and flags. Thus, one must read the image against the grain to avoid associating with these mechanisms of “sportswashing”.

Another event the historians wanted to reframe was the raised fist of Black Power. On 16 October 1968, the image of the Mexico podium went around the world. African American athletes who won the 200 meters raised their fists to protest racial segregation in the United States. Again, the scientific advisers favoured the off-field perspective and proposed, with the curator, an unexpected image: a photo of Lee Evans questioning the conditions of the protest. Julien explains the context: “We know that Tommy Smith and John Carlos were

## Coups de cœur

### Julien Sorez and Olympics postcards

“There is an example I love. The International Olympic Committee has a collection of postcards from the Olympics. Some are written and sent. This document, from the perspective of image circulation and appropriation, is a goldmine for social history. One can confront official images with vernacular writing. This dual narrative of image and personal correspondence shows the impact of these events within a friendly or familial circle. It moves away from the media and official image to enter the realm of personal experience.”

### Olivier Le Noé and photographers’ guidelines

“These are the guidelines for the Tokyo 2021 Games. They are memos distributed by the International Olympic Committee to photographers, explaining what to do and what not to do, for example, in how to capture athletes: avoiding reinforcing female stereotypes, avoiding passive and sexy images, not focusing unnecessarily on appearance... It’s very explicit.”



Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, Men's Hockey – China 11<sup>th</sup>  
South Africa 12<sup>th</sup>, detail of a player, H  l  ne Tobler  
   H  l  ne Tobler. Courtesy IOC. Rencontres d'Arles



Athens Olympic Games, Men's Marathon  
General view of the Panathenaic Stadium (1896)

Courtesy IOC. United Archives. Rencontres d'Arles





# EXHIBITION

very political, they premeditated their gesture, anticipating that it would occur during the national anthems on the podium. The podium is what enshrines the protest.” A less-exposed photograph taken by Raymond Depardon captures Lee Evans raising his fist off the podium. For Julien, this is particularly interesting: “Evans was considered a traitor to the cause because he did not protest in the ‘right’ way. This disqualification from his own struggle was precisely due to this deviation.” However, he was not expelled from the Olympic village, unlike Smith and Carlos.

## Requalifications

The exhibition presented this summer aims to reconcile social history and the history of photography. The proposed stills emphasise the socio-political and cultural anchoring of sports photography. The photo finish, the ultimate still image, illustrates much more than mere performance. The exhibition reveals the photo finish of the 100 meters at the Seoul Olympics, where Ben Johnson was disqualified for doping. For Olivier and Julien, it’s a brilliant photo: “He is erased, but his shadow remains.” Proof that images are read in the light of events.

To delve deeper into this study, the two specialists wished to question the circulation and appropriation of images. They recall an entire section of the International Olympic Committee’s collections depicting the ecosystem of the Games, not just the athletes. There are images of nurses, law enforcement, etc. These previously unseen collections still hold many secrets for historians to uncover, allowing for a different telling of the collective history of the Olympic Games and sport.





High jump (1936), Lothar Jeck  
© Lothar Jeck. Courtesy Photo Elysée.  
Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt. Rencontres d'Arles

# DISCUSSION



Boot (1989)

Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles

# THE (ARMY) COMMISSIONER OF VERNACULAR PHOTOGRAPHY

Embracing the little-known world of vernacular photography, Matthieu Nicol's exhibition at Ground Control blends contemporary aesthetics with military alternate history, offering a unique perspective on a segment of visual and documentary history. Discussion.

Seated behind his computer, Matthieu Nicol one day stumbles upon photos from the Natick Soldier Systems Center, the research and development centre of the US Army. This is a previously unreleased archive, recently entered into the public domain, which he meticulously examines for months. Within this collection, he discovers thousands of images of men and women posing with prototypes of clothing, technical accessories, and various equipment. In short, everything related to the "non-lethal". The commissioner reveals to Ground Control a set of 150 photographs, selected for their striking aesthetic qualities and enigmatic documentary value. A catalogue of resolutely contemporary forms, clashing couture look-book with military alternate history.

**Your project on the US Army archives begins with the publication project, *Better food for our fighting men*, published by RVB in 2022. Could you explain how you discovered these images?**

I have a passion for food photography, and own a collection of culinary photos from the Trente Glorieuses, covering the period from the invention of refrigerators to that of the microwave. I seek out low-quality media, even buying books by weight for years. Two years ago, I changed my approach and started browsing the internet. I came across survivalist forums sharing photos of combat food rations. Eventually, I found the source: these were declassified archives recently made public. I was completely astonished; I had just discovered 14,200 high-definition negative scans, available for download. I then spent three months exploring this collection, retrieving each image one by one. It was a very long, meticulous process.

**Your hypothesis is that these US Army archives were intended for internal use, as they were never distributed. Consequently, they lack context. How did you go about your investigation?**

After six months of messaging and countless questions, the army finally responded...saying that they couldn't answer me! Therefore, I can only make assumptions, supported by professional opinions. Lucie Moriceau-Chastagner, the head of photographic collections at the Army Museum, Invalides, explained that at that time, during the Cold War, the US Army was a military-industrial complex involving several thousand people. Internal use actually concerned a lot of people.

**When did you become aware of the artistic aspect of the "textile" corpus from which you extracted 150 images for the "Fashion army" exhibition?**

Having worked in the Newspapers, I'm used to looking at an enormous number of photos. But here, I had an intimate conviction that this was an exceptional find. I could see that historians were astonished when I showed them the images. They



Microclimate liquid conditioning demonstration unit (1980)

Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles





Layout (1980)

Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles



were disappointed not to have discovered them first! Thanks to them, I learned a lot, as I didn't know the technical details of the evolution of military clothing.

### What were the criteria for your selection?

In addition to product packshots, I only selected photos representing real people, to capture the anonymous gazes of those who were likely employees. What interests me is giving these utilitarian images — which have no proper authors — a new value and recontextualising them within the history of visual culture. This corpus notably helps to explore many societal topics. For instance, one notices a large number of female models. In the book, it's surprising to discover models of maternity combat uniforms. I was told that in 1984, when the photo was taken, active duty didn't yet

exist for women; that would happen only 20 years later. So, it's pure prototype: preparation for the arrival of female soldiers in the trenches... potentially pregnant. But be careful, this is just a hypothesis.

### Do you know if these prototypes led to developments in civilian fashion?

I would be very happy if researchers took up this topic. My approach is artistic; I acknowledge that it may raise many unanswered questions, as I primarily see myself as a conveyor. There has always been a significant overlap between military research and the civilian industry. The camouflage pattern is a perfect example. In the exhibition, one can see everyday uniforms (for the rear base) and tests of Kevlar suits, as well as anti-nuclear capes for contaminated environments, or bulletproof fabric. I've been told that some photos look very Balenciaga. Of course, I want to address fashion

enthusiasts, but personally, I'm more interested in visual history. I see striking echoes of Western popular culture production, particularly with cinema. All these images were produced between 2001: *A space Odyssey* (1968), whose futuristic aesthetic is reflected in the images, and *Top Gun* (1986). I feel that if the fighter pilot removes his technological mask, Tom Cruise will appear.

### With this cinematic universe of quasi-science fiction, surreal poses and captions, did you deliberately steer your approach towards a form of absurdity or irony?

No, I am aware that the US Army is a war machine, so I treat these images without irony. This laughter is a nervous laughter. At that time, the United States was achieving unparalleled technological supremacy, illustrated by the renewed conflict with the Eastern bloc. We all remember the photos from war reports, the horror of Vietnam, for example. Other dramatic events, like the Gulf War, were less documented and appear sanitised. What these archives show, these studio photos, are the silent behind-the-scenes, the methodical preparation for war, the thousands of people working on this destructive enterprise.

### Is it to avoid betraying this heavy historical context that you kept the images as they were?

There was no cropping or colour correction. These acidulated tones, which seem very "advertising and marketing", are entirely of the time. These are very desirable images, yet one must not fall into the trap of calling them propaganda images, as they were not distributed to a mass audience.

### Can we perhaps speak of body propaganda, in the sense of state bodies?

Yes, that's about right. It's one of the sub-categories of institutional vernacular photography.

## Planting trouble

Mutant carrots, giant watermelon, slick-haired experts leaning over different varieties of potatoes... On the upper floor of Croisière, "Farmer of the future" offers a surprising resonance to the vernacular photographs of "Fashion army". Visual artist Bruce Eesly delved into the Green Revolution, whose political goal was to intensify agricultural yields. His work reveals a fabricated reality, showing exaggeratedly large, deformed vegetables as the panacea to feed the planet. By producing these ideal, seductive, and smooth images of abundance, he raises suspicions: what historicity, what reliability? Combining fantasy and seriousness, he thus plays with the codes of photojournalism, industrial disinformation and archival documents. This post-photographic experience, according to the author's wish, challenges the definitive loss of biodiversity contributed by the productive turn of the 1960s. The conclusion is unequivocal; we have lost 75% of genetic varieties in a century. Image and gardening are thus the two pillars of Bruce Eesly's political engagement. Designed to feature on the "gardening" shelves of bookstores, his *New farmer* book was self-published in 2024. Upon release, he sold colour risographs in a special edition, donating half of the profits to VERN e.V., a German association that preserves nearly 2,000 ancient varieties, aiming to make them accessible to all.

### "Farmer of the future"

Until 29 September. Croisière  
65 boulevard Émile Combes. Arles  
[www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

## DISCUSSION

### *Tech care*

“Is a seashell made? If you knew nothing — if you had nothing to go on, no resemblance to evoke, and you were confronted with a seashell and a ceramic ashtray — could you say which was ‘made?’” Through these questions, Ursula Le Guin poses in *The wind’s twelve quarters* a dizzying problem that Marilou Poncin’s work seems to question. The real and its technological double are invited to the upper floor of Monoprix for the Discovery award [see p.60], which this year encourages us to “On the look-out”. Under the curation of Audrey Illouz, the artist proposes a reflection on the fantasies of augmented humans, where desire and skin play the main role in her technological fiction. In this fiction, set in the near future, the protagonists use transitory and palliative objects. Speculative design inspired Marilou Poncin to create these prototypes, questioning our relationship with connected objects. The video installation *Liquid love is full of ghosts* is presented by Laurent Godin Gallery, Paris, as part of the Louis Roederer Discovery award.

### **Your project around archives is also an editorial adventure. What’s next?**

Exactly. It was actually while working on a book project that I imagined the sequencing of the exhibition for the Rencontres. I am fortunate to work with Self Publish, Be Happy (SPBH), who are publishing the book this summer, where one can discover 350 photos of the textile corpus. It’s the second part of the project, after *Better food for our fighting men*. In July, “Test Subjects” will also open in Cortona, Italy, for which I gathered images of experiments on human guinea pigs. After this third instalment, I think I’ll withdraw and leave these military archives to others. I don’t intend to go mad either.





Clothing, camouflage, desert (3 styles) in the field (1972)

Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles

# AWARD

Site de Nartau (*Soulever la poussière*, 2020), Coline Jourdan

© Coline Jourdan. Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles



## THE DISCOVERY AWARD RELOCATES TO MONOPRIX!

Among the highlights of Rencontres d'Arles, the Discovery award by the Louis Roederer Foundation holds a special place, showcasing emerging new talents from the international photography scene.

2024 marks the dawn of a new era for the festival: the Discovery award exhibition is moving to the first floor of Monoprix, an immense raw space (and refreshingly cool!), promising endless possibilities for this award, which has seen generations of great artists, including Peter Hugo, Stephen Dock, Tarrah Krajnak, and Rahim Fortune.

To recap, the Discovery award by the Louis Roederer Foundation, established in 2015, every year honours two emerging photographers with substantial prizes: €15,000 for the jury prize and €5,000 for the public prize. This recognition provides winners with increased visibility and a springboard for their careers. The award also serves as a platform to highlight various exhibition venues: galleries, art centres, associative spaces, independent venues and institutions. The selection often favours bold works that question, unsettle, and offer new perspectives on the current world. The selected projects are conceived as a single, cohesive exhibition.

### **A selection between reality and disruption**

For the 2024 edition, curator Audrey Illouz takes the helm. An esteemed art critic and curator, she brings a sharp vision and a keen sensitivity to this exhibition titled “On the look-out”. The title refers to the “diffuse sense of restlessness” reflected in the works of the seven selected artists, all particularly attentive to our environment and ready to act.

Visitors will encounter projects that convey complex narratives, challenging our perception of reality and reflecting the upheavals of our

time: natural disasters, pollution, the omnipresence of technology, artificial intelligence, societal fractures, general anxiety, and the creation of images.

Photographer Cemil Batur Gökçeer, in his project *Thin air*, captures images of natural disasters (floods, wildfires, earthquakes), attempting to archive these moments of catastrophe. By subjecting his films to triple exposure to create complex, difficult-to-decipher images, he introduces chance into his artistic process, leaving room for doubt.

Coline Jourdan documents an imminent and invisible catastrophe, that of pollution. In *Soulever la poussière*, she reveals the toxic waste left after the closure of a gold and arsenic mine in Salsigne, in the Aude region. She employs various photographic approaches to expose the toxicity present in the water, air, and soil, including images developed in nearby river water, portraits, still lifes, landscapes, capturing the stories of local residents in this threatened area.





*Liquid love is full of ghosts* (still, 2024), Marilou Poncin

© Marilou Poncin. Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles

On another front, François Bellabas, with his project *An electronic legacy*, examines the evolution of artificial intelligence as the “keystone of a system where humans evolve indistinctly between real and virtual spaces.” In 2016, while in California during severe wildfires, he captured images of a burning America. In 2018, he fed these images into a first-generation AI, altering the perception of the fiery landscapes. In 2023, he merged this database with modern technologies (ChatGPT, Dall-E, and Mid-Journey), creating an immersive installation that reflects a dystopian world.

Continuing on the technological theme, Marilou Poncin explores the evolution of fantasies in the digital age with *Liquid love is full of ghosts*. She imagines technological objects with which humans can maintain emotional and sensory relationships. Her installation features three portraits where solitary individuals interact sensually with high-tech objects (a sedan, a sensory suit, or a touch screen).

Born in the Thokoza township near Johannesburg, Tshepiso Mazibuko documents in her series *Ho tshepa ntshepedi ya bontshepe* (*To believe in something that will never happen*) the daily lives of the “born free” generation, black youth born after the end of Apartheid. These introspective portraits highlight the tensions and resistances of her community in a still unequal society where the past’s scars are ever-present.

Continuing this engagement with the world, Nanténé Traoré’s series *L’inquiétude* captures moments of suspense and latency amidst ongoing crises. Her images, imbued with unease, depict scenes of tension where everything is on the brink of collapse.

Finally, Matan Mittwoch’s installation *The sun is broken* questions the representation and tools of image creation. In *Cracks*, he captures the palm of his hand obstructing a smartphone camera, creating abstract images. In *And the stars look very different today*, he overlays photographs of sandpaper to mimic stellar landscapes, questioning the fabrication of scientific imagery and its propagandist use.

### *Express and Associated*

The festival’s ever-expanding programme includes this year new venues and partners, bridging Grand Arles Express and Associated Arles.

Within the framework of Grand Arles Express and the first contemporary art triennial of Nîmes, La Contemporaine (in collaboration with Carré d’Art), the exhibition titled “Sedimentary partitions” features two photographers: young artist Alassan Diawara, who portrays different generations and communities in the Gard, and photographer Zineb Sedira, who explores familial and cultural transmission.

Visit 14 rue de Grille, at the Vague space, with curators Lucille Reyboz and Nakanishi Yusuke as part of Associated Arles. The two artists present an exhibition in collaboration with Kyotographie. “Transcendence” brings together the work of six Japanese photographers, ranging from portraits and landscapes to experimental photography.

#### “Sedimentary partitions”

Until 22 September. Carré d’art  
Place de la Maison Carrée. Nîmes  
[www.carreartmusee.com](http://www.carreartmusee.com)

#### “Transcendence”

Until 29 September. Vague  
14 rue de Grille. Arles  
[www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)





*Music for babies* (2023), Nanténé Traoré

© Nanténé Traoré. Courtesy Rencontres d'Arles

# STUDIO PROF





## PROFESSION CONDITION REPORTER

They are the first to discover the artworks. The condition report team is a discreet but essential part of the assembly line, crucial to the smooth operation of the exhibitions. They ensure tailored monitoring of each photograph presented at the Rencontres.

A truck filled with artworks arrives. It's a group transport, organised by the artwork registrar, soon to hand over to the assessors. Once unloading is complete, the "white-gloved team", consisting of seven members, checks the "packing list" and begins unpacking each item for an initial examination. Pierre-Emmanuel Nyeberg, the team leader, arrived at the Rencontres d'Arles 12 years ago. Specialising in preventive conservation, he is a pioneer in this field. Each year, in June, he enthusiastically renews his mission: to lose no artwork. A true feat considering the Rencontres teams handle between 3,000 and 4,000 distinct items annually.

"The condition report is a contractual document that transfers responsibility to the borrower." This document resembles the Arlesian passport for the artwork, allowing for quick identification. It includes a visual and a host of codifications that detail its current physical state: dust, scratches, discolouration, warping, oxidation, etc.

Standing by their high table, armed with a lamp, the assessors conduct a rapid and methodical scan of the artwork. The examination includes the type of packaging, the condition of the frames, the state of the glass, the photographic surface, and any potential vulnerabilities to monitor. They carefully turn the artwork over, add its increment number, associate this with its packaging, and finally sign the form that will be referenced during the dismantling in September. This routine, orchestrated by Pierre-Emmanuel, serves to know exactly what each exhibition contains, but also to anticipate the often rapid takedown.

"It resembles administrative management. We're seen filling out forms in all directions, and I think, for other teams, it's sometimes a mystery."

### **A tailor-made methodology**

Behind the paperwork lies the best way to trace the material life of artworks over years of collection movement. Although the condition report forms are scanned and sent to lenders, the paper archive is also kept by the Rencontres.

A method sometimes deemed archaic... For Pierre-Emmanuel, "we haven't found anything better yet." Indeed, software, though efficient, suffers from terrifying obsolescence, never precisely meets needs, and requires significant maintenance. The massive flow of photographs during a festival requires a different methodology from a museum exhibition. The multisite nature is also a confusing factor. "With 35 exhibitions, the team needs an overview of each file, each artwork, in short, a panoptic view. I'm not saying we'll never go fully digital, but for now, there are

still too many pitfalls, and our method has proven itself.”

The profession is evolving as demands change. The photography sector, compared to other visual arts, is still young. Pierre-Emmanuel’s arrival at the Rencontres 12 years ago coincides with an increased focus on heritage in exhibitions. That year, he recalls the exhibition of the Société française de Photographie collections at the Musée départemental Arles Antique. True national treasures were welcomed at the festival, requiring them to be at their best.

#### **Better safe than sorry**

While studying archaeology, he realised the importance of photography and radiography in conservation-restoration research: the only way to study a mummy was to X-ray it! In Canada and the United States, a second revelation: preventive measures were much more developed than in France, leading him to specialise. The discipline was emerging, and Pierre-Emmanuel was committed to the preservation of photographic collections. Today, he advises museums on best practices in preventive conservation. The Rencontres remain a unique project and a stimulating challenge. To continue offering exhibitions in original heritage sites while maintaining the identity of the Rencontres, one must balance technical constraints with adaptability.

In recent years, the team leader has observed a rise in climate demands, leading to stricter lending conditions. He emphasises the importance of proactive work to avoid ineffective actions. “Today, major museums, especially the Bizot group (International Group

of Organisers of Large Exhibitions), agree that we need a summer protocol, a winter protocol, and that the 18°C thermometer reading isn’t essential.” Indeed, it’s the significant variations in temperature and humidity that matter most. He adds, “With climate change and the energy crisis, we must adapt intelligently. Gradually, we manage to reassure and convince, but entire paradigms need reconsideration.”

The team also welcomes couriers sent by museums. This is an opportunity to exchange views on artworks and ensure a smooth handover while sharing some of the “Rencontres experience”. “During the setups, I always observe a collaborative spirit, a lot of mutual assistance. Here, everything is so interactive between different trades that once you’ve been through the Rencontres, you’re a bit all-terrain. That’s the interest and magic of the festival.”

### *3 questions to... Cécile Peillon*

Cécile Peillon — like her colleague Françoise Perronno — is one of the voices of L’Œuvrière, an engaged collective of art handlers/installers.

#### **What is the origin of your collective?**

The visual arts sector has always suffered from a lack of organisation, as unlike the performing arts or audiovisual sectors, there is no collective agreement dedicated to exhibition professionals. In 2017, becoming aware of the significant disparity in employment statuses and lack of transparency led us to gather. To enter negotiations, seek recognition of the profession, and demand a salary scale, we formed an association affiliated with the CGT entertainment federation (one of the french unions), which strongly supports the system of ‘intermittent’ employment. This was the starting point for reflecting on the evolution of our ways of working.

#### **What is the profile of exhibition installers?**

There is no specific training to become a hanger, although this is currently evolving. Establishing official training would help legally recognise the profession, as it’s one of the discriminating criteria. Currently, most installers come from art schools, often due to circumstances, a legal void we are fighting against. Our goal is to legitimise the expertise of those who handle multiple setups, who are itinerant based on cultural programming. It’s not a side job; it’s a real profession.

#### **What status are you requesting? How to speed things up?**

The normalisation of invoicing, akin to the uberisation of workers, further contributes to our precariousness. We ask institutions to protect and support us, as a social, legal, and economic recognition is needed at the state level. For this profession, we should all benefit from the ‘intermittent’ status, like our counterparts in events or cinema. Some institutions have understood and support us; things are evolving but slowly.

In this often dispersed profession, organising as a collective has already made us feel less isolated. By sharing our experiences, we create a more transparent environment where we can collectively strive for better working conditions. We estimate around 500 people in France are affected by this issue. By standing together, we hope to improve the situation in the visual arts and continue practising this passion.









# ARTA

Sophie Calle



## SOPHIE CALLE

Sophie Calle, a unique figure in conceptual art, is undoubtedly one of the most acclaimed French visual artists in the global art market and by international institutions.

With humour and insight, Sophie Calle cultivates the art of autofiction like no one else, blurring the conventional boundaries between public and private life, biography and fiction, reality and imagination. “Her works form a vast system of echoes and internal references, connected like the chapters of a global *œuvre* [...]. Her work meticulously orchestrates an underlying reality — her own or that of others — while leaving room for chance,” highlight the *Rencontres d’Arles*, with whom she created an astonishing exhibition at the *Cryptoportiques* this year [see box p.78]. The character herself defies definition: visual artist, photographer, video artist, author... Yet her distinctive touch, combining text and image, is immediately recognisable. In short, Sophie Calle is a comprehensive artist whose life itself is a total work of art.

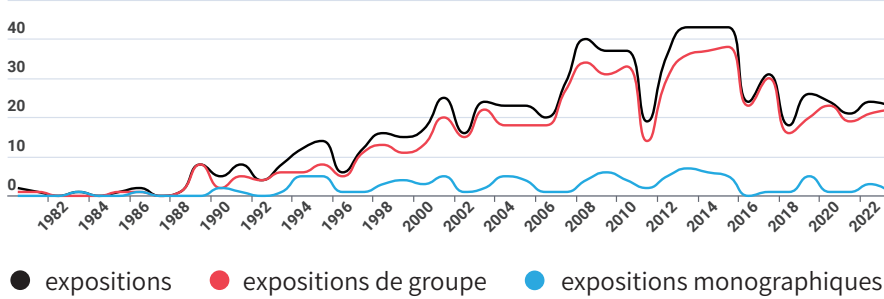
Since the 1970s, her work, sometimes described as “anthropological excavation”, has been featured in numerous exhibitions — 788 in total — favoured by both the market and institutions. Her projects, which dissect human relationships in their most intimate aspects, blend photography, texts, videos, and installations. Beyond the admitted voyeurism, Sophie Calle explores themes of absence, mourning, and reunions with acute sensitivity. Winner of the prestigious *Hasselblad* award for photography in 2010, she is now considered a major figure who has profoundly renewed contemporary art’s codes. The market confirms this, with a total turnover of €1.7 million in public sales from 255 lots auctioned, averaging €9,300 per lot with a 29% unsold rate. This result is predominantly achieved through photography, her primary medium, representing almost all her auctions (97.2%).

### Artistic origins

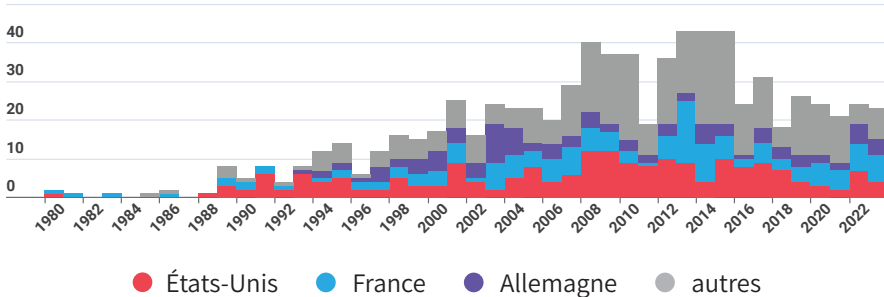
Born in Paris in 1953 to a family from Aigues-Vives, Sophie Calle grew up in an environment conducive to the arts. Daughter of Monique Szyndler and oncologist Robert Calle, former director of the *Institut Curie* and founder of the *Carré d’Art*, the contemporary art museum in Nîmes, she was immersed in an intellectual and artistic milieu from childhood. Surrounded by her father’s close friends, artists Martial Raysse, Arman and Christian Boltanski, Sophie Calle discovered her true vocation for artistic creation in the 1970s. Strongly inspired by this avant-garde circle, she embarked on an experimental approach, merging conceptual art and intimate exploration of daily life, which would make her internationally renowned.

Sophie Calle often starts from personal experiences that later become artistic endeavours, turning documents into artworks. This is exemplified by her first artistic performance, which became one of her emblematic series: *The sleepers* (1979). This work

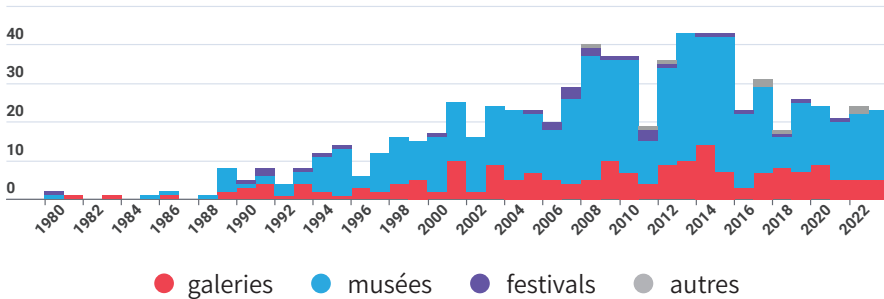
Evolution of the number of exhibitions by type



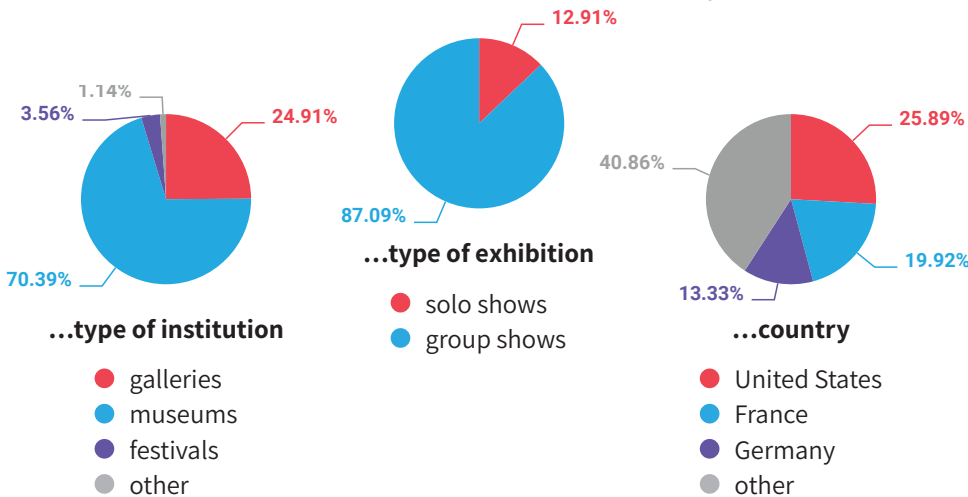
Evolution of the number of exhibitions per country



Evolution of the number of exhibitions by institution type



Distribution of the number of exhibitions by...



later set her auction record with a sale at \$180,000 (€130,790, or \$218,500, €158,750 including fees) at Christie’s New York on 8 November 2011. The story of *The sleepers* marks the true beginning of her career. A political activist at the time, she travelled the world for seven years in her youth before returning to Paris. Lost, without professional desire or specific skills, and without friends, she decided to follow people in the street as a way to rediscover Paris through others’ journeys. Soon, she immersed herself in the game, photographing and noting her movements, choosing a man at random to follow to Paris and then Venice — in 1981, she organised her own *Shadowing*, another significant early performance, which ranks among her best auction results (6<sup>th</sup> place) with a sale at \$42,000 (€38,370 or \$53,340, €48,730 including fees) at Phillips New York on 4 April 2023.

Through continuous shadowing, she then decided to invite random people to sleep in her bed for a few hours. “I wanted my bed to be occupied twenty-four hours a day, like those factories that never close,” she explained during a conference in Tokyo. “So, I asked people to take turns every eight hours for eight days. I took a photo every hour. I watched my guests sleep. [...] One of the people I invited to sleep in my bed, whom I met in the street, was the wife of an art critic. When she went home, she told her husband that she had come to sleep in my bed for eight hours, and he wanted to see what it was about. And that’s how I became an artist.” This work caught the attention of art critic Bernard Lamarche-Vadel, the husband of the sleeping woman. He invited the young artist to exhibit at the prestigious Paris Biennale in 1980, a decisive turning point according to Sophie Calle: “He decided I was an artist.”



Le ciel, c'est bien. Parce que chaque fois que j'ai vu quelque chose, ce  
n'est pas tout. Le ciel est noir, les fleurs, les jardins, la nature...  
L'air est toujours en vent.

*Finir en Beauté* (2024), Sophie Calle

© Sophie Calle. Courtesy Anne Fourès. Rencontres d'Arles

### Early works and auction successes

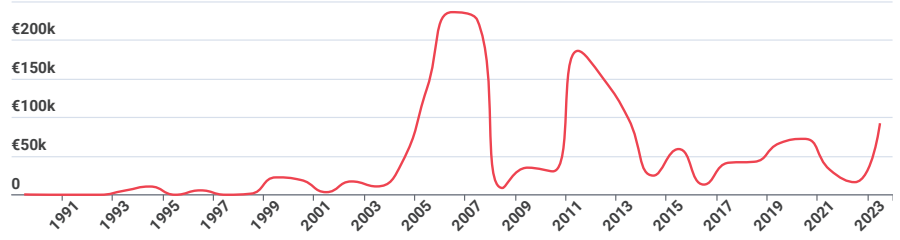
In 1981, she moved to Malakoff, into an abandoned factory shared with artists Christian Boltanski and Annette Messager. This period of artistic effervescence is particularly sought after by collectors, specifically works created in that same year 1981, which reach an average price of €38,370, more than four times the general average price.

In the early 1980s, she continued with performances and series like *Anatoli* (1984), recounting a meeting with a Russian on the Trans-Siberian Railway; *Les anges* (1984) in Los Angeles — “Where are the angels?” she asked the locals — a series earning her 5<sup>th</sup> best auction result with a sale at \$55,000 (€41,760 or \$68,500, €52,010 including fees) at Christie’s New York on 7 March 2012. Later, with *The blind* (1986), she reported discourses and representations of beauty ideas held by eighteen blind-from-birth individuals. Next to the text of each response, a colour illustration and their black-and-white portrait, placed on a ledge, similar to *ex-votos* on a commemorative altar.

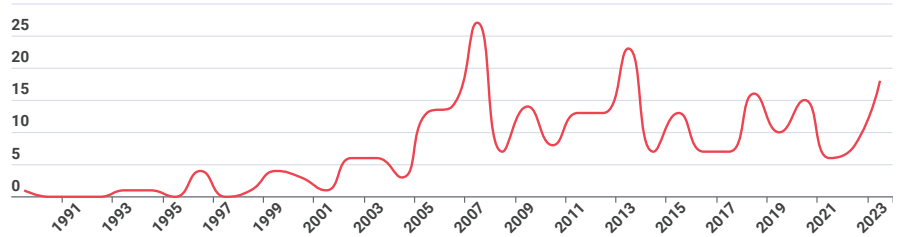
Absences, appearances, and disappearances are recurring themes in her work. In June 1989, taking advantage of the temporary loan of Pierre Bonnard’s *Nu dans le bain* by the Musée d’Art Moderne de Paris, the conceptual artist asked employees and visitors to describe this absent painting from memory. This became the project *Fantômes*. Works from 1989 stand out particularly at auctions, with an average price of €53,000, nearly six times the general average price. Two years later, in October 1991, she renewed the experience at MoMA New York, this time gathering testimonies about five missing paintings by Magritte, Modigliani, De Chirico, Hopper, and Seurat.

Pushing her exploration of art perceptions further, Sophie Calle

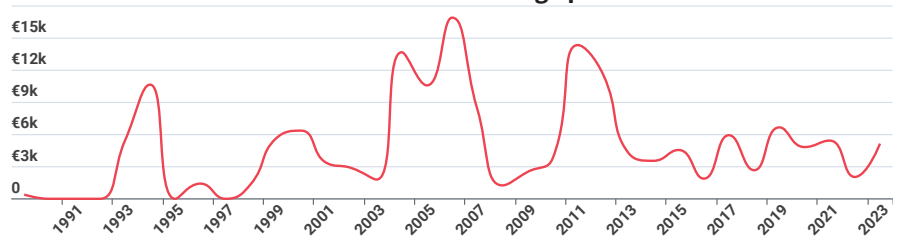
Evolution of the annual turnover



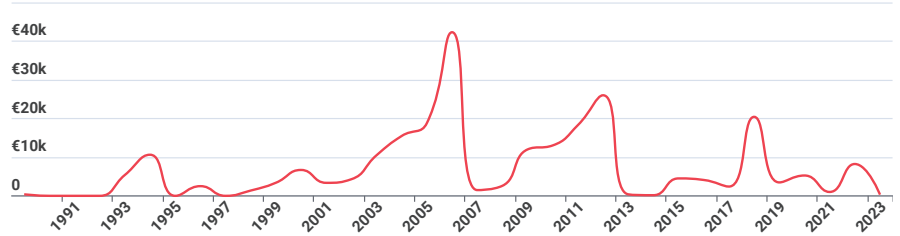
Evolution of the number of lots offered for sale



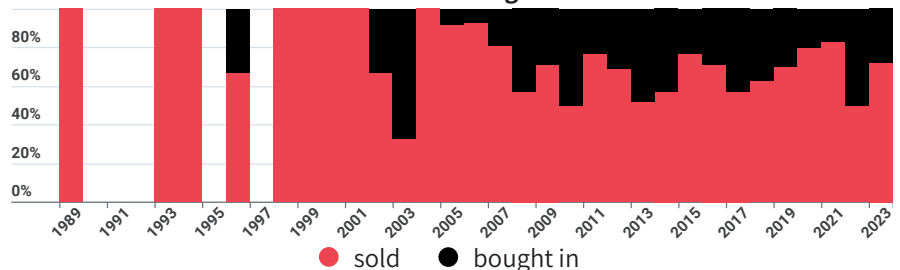
Evolution of the average price



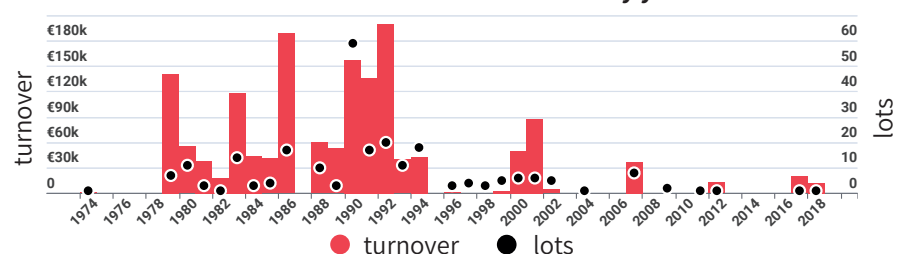
Evolution of the median price



Evolution of the bought-in ratio



Evolution of the number of lots and turnover by year of creation



conceived *La couleur aveugle* in 1991. She juxtaposed descriptions of monochromes by blind individuals with aesthetic theories of Yves Klein, Gerhard Richter, and Piero Manzoni on these abstract works, blending sensitive and conceptual approaches. In the same year, in one of her most famous series, *La disparition* (1991), she photographed the absence of stolen works, immortalising the voids left in museums by these thefts. “Make a portrait of the missing painting,” she asked curators, guards, and other museum staff to describe the stolen works. An unintended staging of absence photographed by the artist: “There were still the nails, the small texts, the torn fabric, but the painting was no longer there.” From this series, *Last seen... (Rembrandt, The storm in the sea of Galilee, 1991)*, her 4<sup>th</sup> best sale, sold for €42,000 (€51,150 including fees) at Sotheby’s Paris on 5 December 2012.

She embarked on fruitful artistic collaborations, always based on reciprocity, with Damien Hirst, whom she met in Glasgow in 1989, and especially American author Paul Auster. In his novel *Leviathan*, Auster was inspired by Sophie Calle to portray Maria, one of his protagonists, thus blending reality and fiction. In *Gotham handbook* (1994), Sophie Calle reversed the process by attempting to identify with a character created by Auster through a series of artistic gestures, following the novelist’s instructions “to beautify life in New York.”

In 2002, during her performance *Chambre avec vue* at the Nuit Blanche in Paris, Sophie Calle settled in a room at the top of the Eiffel Tower and invited strangers to come and lie down to tell her stories and keep her awake. “There were hundreds,” she said.

### Strong institutional presence

With a total of 788 exhibitions (12.6% solo shows and 84.8% group

exhibitions), Sophie Calle is an artist particularly shown and appreciated by institutions (museums and foundations account for 75.1% of her exhibitions, compared to just 24.9% in galleries). The pattern remains similar — though slightly less pronounced — when considering solo exhibitions alone: 59.8% in institutions versus 40.2% in galleries. As often, the duration of institutional exhibitions is longer: 86.9 days (almost three months) versus 46.3 days (a little over a month and a half) in galleries.

The evolution of Sophie Calle’s exhibitions shows a notable increase since the mid-1990s, reaching a first peak in 2001 with 25 exhibitions, including 5 solo shows. The upward trend continued, reaching another peak in 2013 with 43 exhibitions, including 7 solo shows. There is also a particularly active period in the early 2010s. Since then, despite a slight decline, exhibitions have remained frequent with relative stability. In 2015, there was another significant peak for group shows with 43 exhibitions.

Sophie Calle’s first appearance was in 1980 at MoMA PS1 in New York during the group exhibition “Une idée en l’air”. From the beginning, the United States has favoured her: with 205 exhibitions, they account for just over a quarter (25.9%) of events dedicated to Sophie Calle. Unsurprisingly, they are followed by France with 157 exhibitions (20% of the total, 18 solo shows). Germany, with 105 exhibitions, represents 13.3% of the total, having dedicated 12 solo shows (12.1%). The UK has held 32 exhibitions (4.1%) for Sophie Calle, including 6 solo shows (6.1%). Italy follows with 29 exhibitions (3.7%), but only one solo show. Spain has organised almost as many exhibitions (28, 3.6%). In total, 46 countries have held Sophie Calle exhibitions, 25 of which presented solo shows.

### Loyal collaborations with galleries

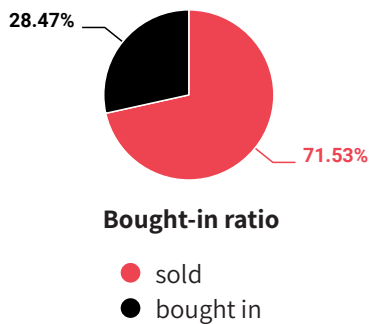
In 1981, she was first presented at Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris for a group exhibition. In 1983, she held her first solo exhibition at the same gallery with “L’Hôtel C.” In 1986, she held her first solo exhibition (“Les aveugles. Les moutons, c’est beau”) at the Appel Arts Centre in Amsterdam. The same year, she returned to Galerie Chantal Crousel for a duo show “Calle/Holzer”.

In 2001, Sophie Calle began her collaboration with Galerie Perrotin in Paris, where she presented her first exhibition with “Editions”. With 24 exhibitions dedicated to Sophie Calle, Perrotin is the gallery that has represented the artist the most, followed by ARNDT (15 exhibitions), Paula Cooper Gallery (14 exhibitions), which organised her first solo exhibition in New York also in 2001 with “Double game”, Galerie Chantal Crousel (11 exhibitions) and Krakow Witkin Gallery (9 exhibitions).

### Time for retrospectives

In 2004, the exhibition “M’as-tu vue” at the Centre Pompidou was her first major retrospective. It offered an opportunity to discover her latest productions, notably the series *Douleur exquise* (1984-2003), based on the experience of a romantic breakup, the most painful moment of her life. The Centre Pompidou is by far the institution that has shown the artist the most with 12 exhibitions (including 2 solo shows), followed by the Abbaye S<sup>t</sup> André (Centre d’art contemporain Meymac) with 6 group exhibitions, the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAM/PFA), the Hamburger Bahnhof and the Louisiana Museum.

Institutional recognition came in 2007 when she represented France at the Venice Biennale with two works: *Prenez soin de vous*, a breakup letter received by Sophie Calle and read by 107 women and *Pas pu saisir la mort*, a video made



at the time of her mother's death, coinciding with her invitation to represent France at the Biennale.

Events followed. In 2012, she held a solo exhibition at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme in Paris. The same year, she participated in a group exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, "Divine Comedy". In 2013, she travelled to Asia, to the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, which dedicated a solo exhibition to her. In 2014, she was present at the Musée Picasso Paris with another solo presentation. The same year, she was also present at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York. In 2018, she was included in a group exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

In 2022, the Centre Pompidou Málaga offered an unprecedented monograph of Sophie Calle's work, highlighting nearly forty years of creation through some of her emblematic works from the Centre Pompidou collection. The exhibition featured *L'Hôtel* (1981), a photographic series where the artist assumed the role of a chambermaid in a Venetian hotel to detail the traces of sleep and intimacy of strangers over three weeks, in a secret act of transgression, as well as later works like *Souris Calle* (2018).

Most recently, in 2023, she was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York with

"Don't forget to call your mother". The same year, to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pablo Picasso's death, Sophie Calle took over the four floors of the Hôtel Salé in Paris until January 2024. With the exhibition "À toi de faire, ma mignonne", the artist paid a unique tribute to the Spanish master, creating a scenographic journey in four stages, structured around Picasso's works while exploring her favourite themes such as the deprivation of sight, disappearance, and absence, heavily using personal archives and writing as raw material.

#### Photo only

On the art market side, Sophie Calle's first photographs to go under the hammer were recorded on 7 October 1989, at Poulain-Le Fur

and Cornette de Saint-Cyr in Paris. During this sale, *The sleepers* were auctioned for the equivalent of €400. They would later become the artist's auction record a few years later. The first significant sale of a Sophie Calle work took place on 9 November 1993, at Christie's New York, with the photograph *Patrick X, Sixteenth sleeper* selling for €5,400. A few months later, on 4 May 1994, *The Bronx* exceeded €10,000 (€10,625) at Sotheby's New York. On 18 May 2000, Phillips New York sold *The Tombs (Father, Mother)* for €6,700. In December 2006, Sotheby's Paris recorded a major sale with *Autobiographical Stories (El Rehen)* sold for €53,000, thus crossing the €50,000 mark. On 7 November 2011, Christie's New York sold *The sleepers* for the

### "Neither give nor throw away"

As often with Sophie Calle, exhibition proposals are not linear. They emerge from the collision of her experiences through which she weaves links and creates resonances. This is the case with "Neither give nor throw away". The idea came to her during a visit to an exhibition at the Cryptoportiques during the Rencontres, which echoed an incident that occurred some time earlier. Shortly before the inauguration of her exhibition "À toi de faire, ma mignonne" in 2023 at the Picasso Museum in Paris, a storm caused damage to her storage, and mould spores infiltrated her series *The blind*. The restorers' verdict was unequivocal: to avoid any risk of contamination, it was better to destroy the works. In urgency, she decided to stage their absence. However, these blind people had counted too much in her life to end theirs in the dump. She then recalled artist Roland Topor, who preferred to bury an old sweater he could neither give nor throw away. The Cryptoportiques in Arles then appeared as the ideal setting for these majestic funerals, as the previous year, during the Rencontres, the prevailing humidity had insidiously attacked the exhibited photographs. A paradox for this place supposed to protect and preserve works. She imagined she could bury her *The blind* here, to let them decompose and their words, which spoke only of beauty, sink into the city's foundations. A symbolic and poetic death of the work, playing on interwoven narrative registers dear to Sophie Calle. The exhibition is accompanied by a publication, Sophie Calle, *Finir en beauté*, published by Actes Sud for the occasion.

#### "Neither give nor throw away"

Until 29 September  
Cryptoportiques. City Hall  
Place de la République. Arles  
[www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)

equivalent of €130,788, exceeding €100,000 for the first time. Incidentally, the only lot sold above €100,000 alone accounts for 7.6% of the artist's total turnover (€130.8k). However, the majority of her result is achieved through works sold between €10,000 and €50,000 (56%).

Since their appearance in public sales in 1989, Sophie Calle's works' turnover has experienced several periods of more or less marked variations. After a peak in 2006 with €236,050, her turnover fluctuated in subsequent years, as did the number of lots offered at auction, which reached its maximum in 2007 with 27 lots. The average price reached its highest level in 2011 with €18,600, while the median price peaked in 2004 with €13,935. Since the early 2000s, there has been an upward trend in the number of lots, from 3 lots in 2004 to 27 lots in 2007. However, this increase in the number of lots has not resulted in a linear increase in turnover, which has fluctuated with notable peaks in 2006 and 2011. The average price and median price follow different trajectories. The average price increased significantly in 2011, while the median price reached its maximum in 2004, followed by significant fluctuations. In 2023, turnover amounts to €92,460, with 18 lots presented. The average price for this year is €7,110, while the median price is €2,200.

**Predominance of the American market**

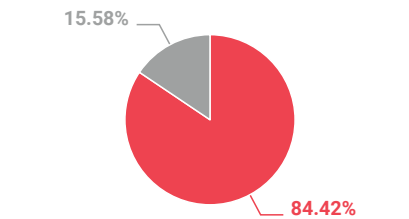
As with her exhibitions, Sophie Calle's market is concentrated in the United States. The country accounts for more than half of the lots (84, or 58.2%) and the exact same proportion of turnover (58.2%, or €909k). The average price is relatively high: €10,825. France represents 30% of the lots and turnover (30.1%, or 56 lots; €470,475, 30.1%) with an average price of €8,400. The UK generates a turnover of €110,425 (7.1%) with only 15 lots. Italy achieves

a turnover of €36,500 (2.3%) with 5 lots. In total, eight countries have offered Sophie Calle pieces for sale.

Sophie Calle's market is dominated by the three main Western auction houses: Christie's, Sotheby's and Phillips. Together, these three houses account for 57.3% of the lots (about a hundred lots) and 79.1% of total turnover (€1,234,530). Among them, Christie's achieves the best turnover: €431,750 (27.7%) with 37 lots (27.7%) and an average price of €11,675. Phillips follows closely with the same number of lots, 38 (22.2%), for €430,350 (27.6%), and an almost identical average price of €11,325. Sotheby's, with 23 lots (17.2%), achieves a turnover of €372,450

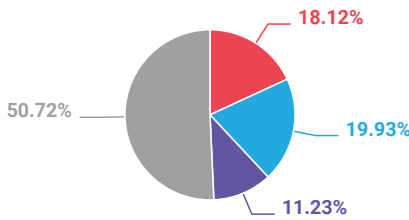
(24.2%), with a higher average price than the other two, at €16,200. In total, nearly fifty operators have offered Sophie Calle's works for sale.

A reliable value in the art market, a demanding artist whose talent is recognised by her peers and the general public, Sophie Calle's sales have remained stable and steadily progressing over the past twenty years, a sign of the lasting recognition she enjoys from collectors. Her market value is expected to rise further in the coming years, given her now-established historical importance.



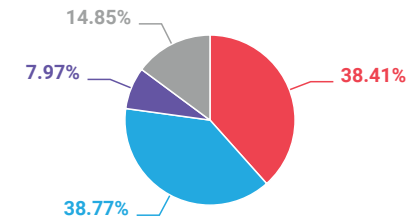
**Number of lots by medium**

● photography ● other



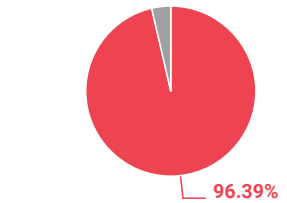
**Number of lots by auction house**

● Christie's ● Phillips  
● Sotheby's ● other



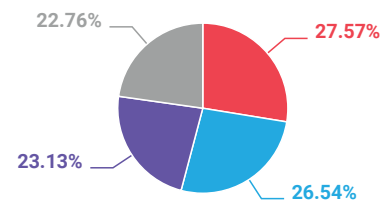
**Number of lots by country**

● United States ● United Kingdom  
● France ● other



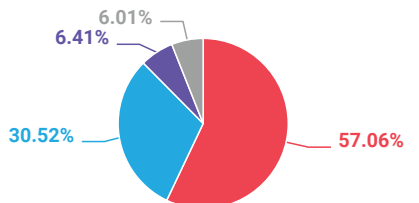
**Turnover by medium**

● photography ● other



**Turnover by auction house**

● Christie's ● Phillips  
● Sotheby's ● other



**Turnover by country**

● United States ● United Kingdom  
● France ● other





The Docteur's daughter (Talon Aiguille, 1985), Sophie Calle  
Sold for €21,600 by Sotheby's Paris on 21 May 2007  
© Sophie Calle. Courtesy Sotheby's Art Digital Studio



# ECOLOGICAL





Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



## “EUROPE’S CULTURAL HERITAGE DESERVES METICULOUS PRESERVATION”

Italian chemist Letizia Verdolotti is developing sustainable foams for the cultural heritage sector at the Italian National Research Council, a partner of the European GREENART project.

Her journey as a chemist began with a PhD thesis centred on sustainable polyurethane cement foams, conducted under the expert guidance of Marino Lavorgna. This endeavour culminated in the formulation of a groundbreaking material, subsequently licensed to Hycem, a CNR spinoff that has since blossomed into an independent entity.

Recently, Marino Lavorgna presented her with an intriguing opportunity to delve into the realm of sustainable foams for the Cultural Heritage sector. “This venture resonated deeply with me as it seamlessly integrates my passion for designing environmentally conscious materials with the nuanced demands of preserving and transporting precious artworks,” she says. “I eagerly anticipate the challenges and discoveries that lie ahead in this captivating field.” Today, she participates to GREENART, a project launched by the European Union in October 2022, bringing scientists, conservators, and cultural institutions involved in the conservation and restoration of artworks. Together, they collaborate to develop new restoration products that are green and sustainable, such as cleaners, protective varnishes, consolidants, and monitoring technologies.

### **What is your actual role at Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR)?**

Since 2009, I’ve been engaged in groundbreaking research at the Institute of Polymers, Composites, and Biomaterials within the National Research Council of Italy. This esteemed institution is renowned for its pioneering work in the development of sustainable, multifunctional

polymer-based materials. My focus lies in the creation of innovative foams tailored for diverse applications, particularly within the realms of building construction, thermal insulation and automotive industries.

### **What is IPCB-CNR and your actual role in the GREENART project?**

The IPCB-CNR is actively engaged in the GREENART project, contributing to three distinct research activities. First, the development of novel active and passive coatings aimed to protect the artworks. This involves the exploitation of potential of nanostructures and nanoparticles to serve as effective fillers for the controlled release of active compounds as well as to avoid the pollutants can get to the surface. Secondly, the development of sustainable packaging materials tailored for the storage and transportation of artworks. And then, undertaking the production of sustainable substrates to facilitate the production of graphene-based sensors. Under the coordination of Marino Lavorgna, who has been cooperating with CSGI project coordinator team across numerous European projects, the IPCB team,

comprising researchers from two operational sites in Pozzuoli and Napoli/Portici, is diligently working on these initiatives. In my capacity as the lead researcher, I am primarily responsible for developing sustainable packaging solutions based on polyurethane foams. Our aim is to engineer innovative foams capable of not only providing structural protection for artworks by acting as energy absorbers but also possessing the ability to absorb volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and regulate humidity levels within the storage containers. This multifaceted approach underscores our commitment to advancing the preservation and transportation of cultural treasures.

**Can you tell us more about the packaging materials and foams for the preventive conservation of cultural properties?**

Europe’s cultural heritage is a priceless treasure, deserving of meticulous preservation and safe transportation to mitigate potential degradation risks. Traditionally, packaging materials such as petroleum-based polymeric foams (mainly polystyrene and polyurethane), paper tissue, and nylon fabric have been the go-to choices, albeit at environmental costs. However, CNR-IPCB has pioneered a groundbreaking solution: an environmentally friendly packaging material specifically engineered for the secure storage and transportation of cultural artefacts. This innovative material is a sustainable polyurethane foam crafted from monomers derived from biomass biorefinery, strategically infused with a natural powder, Zeolite 4A, along with additional fillers to adsorb volatile organic compounds (VOCs). In comparison to conventional options, this composite polyurethane foam offers an array of unparalleled benefits. It boasts enhanced compressive strength, exceptional energy absorption capabilities, and superior barrier properties against aggressive

agents such as VOCs and acetic acid. Additionally, its adsorptive characteristics effectively regulate humidity levels, ensuring artefact preservation even in high-humidity or aggressive environments. The conceptual basis of this endeavour was to develop a customised green packaging solution in compliance with current Europe’s cultural legacy. This involved creating a multifunctional, bio-based packaging foam tailored to the specific requirements of the artwork using additive manufacturing techniques. This tailored approach ensures optimal protection while adhering to legal standards, marking a significant advancement in artefact packaging and preservation practices.

**Which other GREENART research institutes are working with you?**

We collaborate with Specific Polymers, one of GREENART partner because they provide us with bio-based precursor used for the polyurethane production, and CSGI because they provide us some functional fillers as VOCs adsorbers.

**What is the origin of those materials?**

Polyurethane foams are commonly manufactured through a polyaddition reaction involving a polyol and a diisocyanate, accompanied by an exothermic foaming reaction that releases expanding gases. The emergence of sustainable polyurethane foams for packaging stems from a heightened awareness of environmental concerns and the imperative for eco-conscious alternatives to traditional packaging materials. Various strategies have been explored to render polyurethane foams more sustainable: utilising polymeric precursors sourced from biomass; Eliminating isocyanates and substituting them with eco-friendlier molecules like cyclocarbonates and biobased amines; Developing materials that can be thermoplasticised for easy recycling, a particularly challenging endeavour.

Furthermore, the incorporation of micro- or nanofillers derived from natural sources, biomass, or waste materials into polyurethane foams not only improves their environmental credentials but also enhances their functional properties. These enhancements encompass increased compressive and impact strength, enhanced thermal or acoustic insulation, improved thermal stability, enhanced flame retardancy, and heightened pollutant adsorption capabilities. Such modifications allow for tailoring polyurethane foams to meet diverse packaging requirements while aligning with sustainability objectives.

**Are they already used in other fields?**

Polyurethane foams are renowned for their versatility, with exceptional mechanical, chemical and physical properties that make them indispensable in a wide range of industries. Their applications span a wide spectrum, encompassing sectors such as building and construction, thermal insulation, textiles, furniture, automotive, refrigeration, wood substitutes, and, notably, packaging — a realm we’ve explored through several projects, involving also several companies. Across these diverse applications, there’s a palpable surge in interest surrounding sustainable polyurethane foams. This burgeoning enthusiasm reflects a collective commitment to environmental stewardship and the pursuit of eco-friendly solutions across industries. As we navigate toward a more sustainable future, the utilisation of sustainable polyurethane foams stands as a key pillar to our dedication to innovation and responsible resource management.

**Are those materials suitable for all sort of cultural property material?**

Our expertise extends to finely tuning the mechanical properties of polyurethane foam, allowing for precise adjustments in terms of softness or stiffness/hardness. This flexibility enables us to tailor



Letizia Verdolotti  
Courtesy Letizia Verdolotti



Rigid Polyurethane foam

Courtesy Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche

the foam to suit the specific requirements of the object being transported, ensuring optimal protection. Simultaneously, through the incorporation of specialised functional fillers, independent of the mechanical characteristics, we can functionalise the foam with targeted properties. This multifaceted approach underscores our commitment to delivering tailored solutions that not only protect the transported artworks but also address broader environmental and functional considerations such as reduction of petroleum-based resources, improvement of carbon footprint of the materials, improve the recyclability.

**How is innovative compared with existing materials?**

A conventional packaging system for artefacts typically includes three layers: a direct wrapping layer — this initial layer directly envelops and protects the object, prioritising the avoidance of harm to any delicate or protruding parts; an intermediate cushioning layer — following the direct wrapping, an intermediate cushioning layer is employed to provide further protection; an outer protective box — finally, the artwork is encased in an outer hard box, often made of materials such as cardboard, plastics, or wood. This approach aims to control the microclimate conditions and ensure thermal comfort to preserve the artefacts’ integrity. Unfortunately, this results in significant energy consumption during both production and transportation phases. Most of these materials, integral to the preservation process, are predominantly derived from petroleum-based sources. This reliance on non-renewable resources underscores the need for innovation and sustainable alternatives in the packaging and conservation practices of cultural heritage. Conversely, we have conveniently designed and developed a sustainable composite

multifunctional foam in which all of the required functions are adequately integrated, and which can also be customised (by using 3D printing technique) for specific artefact.

**It’s a temporary or long-term protection and against which deterioration agents?**

Foam is designed for the storage or transport of objects and, provided that the packaging can be adapted to the object in terms of properties and shape, it can be used for a long time and, when customised on the artwork, it can be used many times with the same object. However, it should be noted that we are currently investigating the reversibility of foam, making it easily recyclable through thermal processes, as is currently the case with plastics such as PET.

**What about the sustainability, how can you say that the novel materials are greener?**

As previously mentioned, our composite polyurethane foam derives its eco-friendly credentials from green precursors and sustainable fillers. Moreover, our customisation approach enables us to minimise the amount of packaging required for each artefact, further reducing environmental impact. In our ongoing pursuit of sustainability, we’re also exploring the feasibility of rendering the foam reversible. This entails investigating methods to reprocess the foam at the end of its lifecycle, thereby facilitating its reuse. By embracing this circular approach to materials management, we not only enhance the eco-friendliness of our packaging solutions but also contribute to the broader goal of achieving a more sustainable and resource-efficient future.

**Are you working with cultural heritage institution to assess and validate the novel materials?**

Currently, our research efforts are primarily concentrated on the meticulous development of the foams, with a keen emphasis on

crafting chemical structures that align with sustainability principles while meeting the requisite functionalities. Once we finalise the formulations, our aim is to transition from the laboratory to real-world applications. In this regard, I’m pleased to highlight the recent agreement forged between CNR-IPCB and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice. This collaboration marks an exciting opportunity to put our innovative materials to the test in safeguarding and conserving authentic works of art. A notable case study within this partnership involves the iconic *Box in a valise* (1941) by Marcel Duchamp. By subjecting our materials to real-world scenarios and challenges, we aim to validate their efficacy and suitability for protecting invaluable cultural artefacts. This partnership underscores our commitment to bridging the gap between cutting-edge research and practical applications, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the preservation and longevity of our cultural heritage.

**Do you think the innovative foams will be ready for production and sale at the end of the project?**

As the project nears completion, the optimised formulation will be thoroughly validated and ready for deployment. It’s noteworthy that our polyurethane foams offer versatile commercialisation opportunities. They can be marketed as laminates with fixed thicknesses or as raw materials, allowing for on-demand mixing prior to utilisation, whether for filling empty volumes or replicating specific forms. At our institute, we have the capability to prepare laminates in-house, ensuring quality control and precise customisation. This means we can readily provide slabs of polyurethane to fill empty volumes as needed. While feasible, the preparation of bottles containing raw materials capable of reacting upon utilisation requires meticulous planning and execution. Nevertheless, we remain committed to exploring all avenues to make our innovative polyurethane foams accessible and available.

**AMA** *art  
media  
agency*

*NEWS OF THE  
ART WORLD*

*THERE'S AN APP. FOR THAT!*

*AMA News on the App Store.*






Organisez vos événements privés ou professionnels dans le cadre unique d'un des plus beaux Châteaux de Provence...



Château de Valmousse

  
04 42 57 20 08

  
Château de Valmousse  
13410 Lambesc

  
info@valmousse.com

[www.valmousse.com](http://www.valmousse.com)

# Oser l'imperfection



Photo : Gabrielle Riouah

mymosa

PARIS



