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PRESS RELEASE



FLUIDITÉS



05.02 –
24.04.22



ME - DI 11H - 17H
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MBALONE.CH
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Il s'agit d'une œuvre de l'artiste
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BEAUX-ARTS
LE LOCLE



LUTHER écal ouverture Jean-Louis GALLIÉRIE

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05.02.2022 - 24.04.2022

THE NEW BLACK VANGUARD
ERWAN FROTIN
NAMSA LEUBA
ECAL

Fluidity

In response to contemporary social debates, the artists create and invite us to reflect on new ideas. Through their eyes, new perspectives on the world are opening up to us.

The history of modern and contemporary art, long focused on the West and the work of white artists, has been plagued for some years by an identity crisis. In the 21st century, several major challenges affect museums. One of these is the need to decentralise the narrative and offer a more inclusive exhibition programme. This is what we are trying to do at the MBAL. After having offered an all-female programme, we are continuing our artistic exploration of the gender issue by exhibiting contemporary works that challenge Western ethnocentrism.

Through four exhibitions, the MBAL examines the themes of the fluidity of bodies, identities and nature by offering its spaces to **ECAL** students, to photographers **Erwan Frotin** and **Namsa Leuba** as well as to the artists of the exhibition *The New Black Vanguard*. The programme brings together a range of outstanding artists from Switzerland, the United States, South Africa, Nigeria and Ethiopia. Conceived by the curator Antwaun Sargent and implemented by the Aperture Foundation in New York, *The New Black Vanguard* is an extraordinary project. This exhibition shows that it is essential to report on the emancipation of black artists. With *The New Black Vanguard*, we are bringing together works by black artists working in very different contexts, from Johannesburg to New York, Lagos to London, and sometimes as activists. The exhibition places the human being at the centre of its subject matter and thwarts the stereotypes that black people have long been subjected to. Beauty does not come down to a single universal standard, as the artist Nadine Ijewere reminds us. Like those of Erwan Frotin or Namsa Leuba, most of the images in *The New Black Vanguard* were published in fashion magazines or trend-setting magazines, which were the first to show other types of representations. Some of the artists released their images on social networks only without waiting for professional validation. While the photographs produced for the fashion world are often alienating in the way they represent bodies, these creators show us that it is possible to go further, to go beyond Eurocentrism by showing more diversity and redefining the canons of beauty.

The generation of artists exhibited at the MBAL is the sounding board for these agents of change who are shaking up contemporary codes. Beyond their skin colors, we have to remember their belonging to a same era and their will to defend a common cause : to apprehend the world in its multiplicity and to enrich the imaginary, despite the crises that our societies are going through. Artists have always played a key role in creating a desirable future. Art is a vehicle for social and political change. By addressing issues of identity, gender and race head-on, the works presented at the MBAL are a plea for openness to the other and an invitation to transcend stereotypes.

Nathalie Herschdorfer

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THE NEW BLACK VANGUARD

PHOTOGRAPHY BETWEEN ART AND FASHION



© Arielle Bobb-Willis, *New Orleans, 2017 (The New Black Vanguard)*

The New Black Vanguard presents artists whose vivid portraits and conceptual images merge art and fashion photography, and break down long-established boundaries. Their work has been featured widely in fashion and society magazines, advertising campaigns and museums, as well as on their own social networks, re-instilling the contemporary visual vocabulary around beauty and the body with new vitality and substance. These images open up the conversation around the representation of the black body and black lives as subjects. Collectively, they celebrate black creativity and the hybridization of art, fashion and culture in the construction of an image. Seeking to challenge the idea that the black world is homogenous, the works serve as a form of visual activism. This is a perspective often found in this loose movement of emerging talents, who create photographs in very different contexts -- New York and Johannesburg, Lagos and London. The results -- often made in collaboration with black stylists and fashion designers -- present new perspectives on the medium of photography and notions of race and beauty, gender, and power.

This exhibition includes a selection of works by these groundbreaking contemporary photographers, as well as a wall of images created by other young black photographers who are contributing to the movement. Showcases of publications, past and present, contextualise these images and trace the history of inclusion and exclusion, in the creation of the black commercial image, while proposing a brilliantly rethought future.

An exhibition conducted in collaboration with Aperture, New York. Curated by Antwaun Sargent.

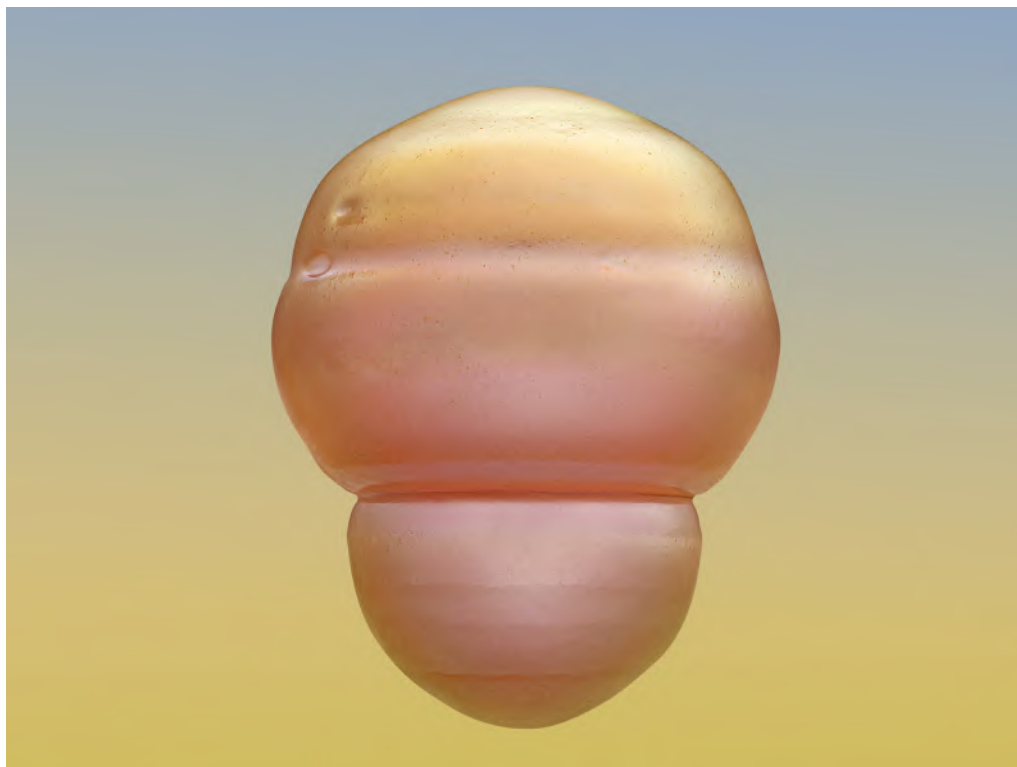
Among the artists:

Campbell Addy · Arielle Bobb-Willis · Micaiah Carter ·
Awol Erizku · Nadine Ijewere · Liz Johnson Artur · Quil Lemons · Namsa
Leuba · Renell Medrano · Tyler Mitchell · Jamal Nxedlana Daniel Obasi ·
Ruth Ossai · Adrienne Raquel · Dana Scruggs · Stephen Tayo

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aperture

ERWAN FROTIN
RÉTROVISION

© Erwan Frotin, *Perle 8*, 2014

For nearly twenty years, Erwan Frotin has been engaged in photographic research on plant, mineral and animal forms, while successfully completing advertising and editorial commissions. After graduating from the ECAL in 2002, a school where he influenced several batches of students through his teaching, Frotin has made a name for himself on the international scene, particularly through his still lifes. The wild flowers he immortalizes in a palette of shimmering colours are reminiscent of the herbariums made a century earlier by the German photographer Karl Blossfeldt. With his photographs of plants on a neutral background, Frotin is indeed part of the legacy of the famous New Objectivity photographer made famous by the book *The Magic Garden of Nature* (1932). Developing a work that navigates between the real and the surreal, Frotin photographs a repertoire of strikingly beautiful plant, animal and mineral forms in the camera. In addition to his meticulously composed studio still lifes, the photographer continues to explore the natural world by travelling around the world to Japan, Hawaii, Chile, Costa Rica, and India. As an artist who has developed a singular photographic style, Frotin creates images in wild places, paradisiacal locations that seem timeless and without human presence. Over the years, the artist has built up a cabinet of curiosities with an almost encyclopaedic ambition. This interest in nature links him to the early 19th century American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, who saw it as a divine entity, and to the American Eliot Porter, a pioneer of colour photography, who fought to protect the environment by immortalising the beauty and diversity of the natural world. Frotin invites us to reconnect with the cosmos by allowing ourselves to be carried and transformed by these fragments from unknown territories. The universe poetically depicted by the artist offers an unconventional vision of nature and the beings that inhabit it. Because even when it comes to depicting humans, they are hybrids like plants. Through his work, the artist wishes to show the omnipresent fluidity of living beings.

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Invited by the MBAL, Frotin brings his catalogue of forms into dialogue on the walls of the museum. Under his gaze, plants, animals, minerals, landscapes and humans are interconnected. Fascinated by the beauty of nature, Frotin creates photographs of a strange and supernatural world in constant metamorphosis. *Rétrovision* refers to the ability to look back to the past and the origins of Earth. Here the images, anchored in a protean reality, paradoxically evoke a sci-fi setting. The notion of place and time escapes us completely, inciting our imagination to let us embark on unexplored territories similar to those that inhabit the unconscious. There is an idea of the sacred in Frotin's work. This flow of hypnotic images is a real invitation to meditation.

A book entitled *FLUX 1*, published by Note Note Editions, is released on the occasion of the exhibition.

Born in Toulon, Erwan Frotin (Switzerland/France, 1978) graduated as a photographer from the ECAL/École cantonale d'art de Lausanne in 2002, as well as studying biology and art history. That same year, he won the Grand Prix for photography at the Hyères Festival, which was quickly followed by his first commission for Vogue Paris. From then on, Frotin received commissions for Vogue Hommes International, Wallpaper, The New York Times Magazine, Another Magazine, Interview, System, and Dazed and Confused. He has also created campaigns for Asprey, Dior, Bergdorf Goodman, Louis Vuitton, Tsumori Chisato, Loewe and Apple. His work has won numerous awards and has been exhibited in Switzerland, France, Italy and the United States.

NAMSA LEUBA
CROSSED LOOKS

© Namsa Leuba, *Sarah, Lagos, Nigeria*, 2015, (The New Black Vanguard)

Namsa Leuba develops a powerful photographic work with her strange characters photographed in natural landscapes during her travels far from Europe. The African continent in particular exerts an almost magical fascination on the artist. The work eludes definition : is it documentary fiction, fashion images, performances or a vast investigation into non-Western identities?

For the past 10 years, the artist, born of a Guinean mother and a Swiss father, has used the photographic medium to question exoticism. Paying particular attention to postures, costumes, props and sets, she creates strong settings around her characters. For several years, Leuba has explored the Western imagination in relation to African cultures. The series *Weke*, produced in the Republic of Benin, the cradle of Vodou, features stories inspired by local animist traditions. In *Tonkōma*, a series produced for a fashion brand founded by Ali Hewson and Bono (US), she has her models pose on a Johannesburg rooftop and plays on the contrast between the urban environment and her creatures on stilts. Inspired by the figure of the *Nyamou* from Guinean tradition and often described as «the devil in the sacred forest», the artist, who grew up between two cultures, plays here with the juxtaposition of identities that come into tension. In the *Illusions* series, made in Tahiti where the artist lived for two years, it is the myth of the vahine that is explored. In response to Paul Gauguin's paintings, which contributed to the dissemination of the myth of exoticism in modern art, Leuba once again challenges us by focusing on the hybridization of genres in Polynesian culture. Her images are addressed to us – Westerners – and return us to the stereotypes of female beauty as they have been conveyed by the so-called tropical images. In Tahiti, the artist places her models, who belong to the «LGTBQ+» community, in the midst of a lush nature and associates the idea of beauty with the strangeness of bodies.

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In her photographic work, Leuba creatively recreates scenes that evoke "otherness". Posing in costumes and settings imagined by the artist, her models embody characters who seem to come out of fantastic tales. Combining the Western imagination with representations of the "other", the artist has created a powerful work that questions our Western gaze.

A numbered edition signed by the artist, produced for the MBAL, is being released for the exhibition. The artist's first monograph, *Crossed Looks*, published in 2021 by Damiani, is available at the museum shop. Namsa Leuba's work is also featured in the exhibition *The New Black Vanguard*.

Namsa Leuba (Switzerland/Guinea, 1982), who holds a master's degree in art direction from the ECAL/École cantonale d'art de Lausanne and a postgraduate degree in photography from the School of Visual Arts in New York, works between France, Switzerland and the African continent. The award-winning artist from Neuchâtel broke through on the international scene in 2011 with *Ya Kala Ben*, a series of photographs taken in his mother's native Guinea. Her work is regularly exhibited in Switzerland and abroad, including South Africa, Nigeria, Canada, South Korea and Spain.

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ECAL SMELLS LIKE QUEER SPIRIT



© ECAL / Lisa Mazenauer et Dominique Bartels

It is in the 1980s that Jean Paul Gaultier overturns dress codes and reveals the porous boundary between masculine and feminine. With playfulness, the fashion designer reverses roles, confounds gender and designs silhouettes that unite masculine sensitivity and feminine power. When they were launched, the brand's perfume bottles also broke with the androgynous fashion of the 1990s. They have become iconic and are the starting point for the photographic explorations carried out here by the ECAL students.

For this research project directed by Florence Tétier and Nicolas Coulomb, the 3rd year Bachelor of Photography class is questioning the human body and its representations. The images created in 2021 by the 11 students of the ECAL are thought under the sign of pride and tolerance. Starting with the perfume bottle and the designer's statements in favour of the degendered status of fashion, the photographers create different universes around the famous fragrance where nudes and still lifes rub shoulders. Playing with the fluidity of gender, the artists stage beings that blur the boundaries of male/female bipolarization. For these young artists, who are following the path opened thirty years ago by Jean Paul Gaultier, fluidity is not perceived as a negation of the sexes but as a true richness. When gender becomes more flexible, new potentialities are opened up. This works show that the commitment to a more inclusive society also passes through images.

An exhibition produced by the ECAL/Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne as part of the Bachelor of Photography programme, under the direction of Milo Keller. The images were created on the occasion of Pride Month, with the collaboration of Claude-Emmanuelle Gajan-Maull, consultant at the ECAL on queer issues.

A publication, co-edited by ECAL x JPG x Novembre, is published on the occasion of the exhibition. *Graphic design by Baptiste Gerbelot Barillon et Jean Marques.*

The project is realized with the assistance of **Matthieu Croizier, Antoine Martin and Yul Tomatala.**

Students:

Dominique Bartels, Julie Corday, Diego Fellmann, Florian Hilt Samara Krähenbühl, Angèle Marignac-Serra, Lisa Mazenauer Marvin Merkel, Inès Mermoud, Basil Pérot, Yolane Rais, Camille Spiller

www.ecal.ch · [@ecal_ch](https://twitter.com/ecal_ch) · [@ecal_photography](https://twitter.com/ecal_photography)

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Jean Paul
GAULTIER

EVENTS

GUIDED TOURS

Sundays 13 February, 6 and 20 March*, and 10 and 24 April at 2.30 pm
Included in the entrance ticket

**The guided tour on the 20th March has been organized in collaboration with
«la Semaine d'action contre le racisme»*

WORKSHOP

Saturday 12 February from 2 pm to 5 pm

Jewelry upcycling

In company of Atelier 11, come give a new life to your old jewelry. In this workshop, bring jewelry you don't wear, and by combining with others, create a brand new one. Primary material (clips, buckles, rings) and pieces of necklaces will be provided.

Initiation course for adults. Registration required. 45.-
(includes equipment and gourmet coffee)

BRUNCH

Sunday 20 March from 11 am to 2 pm

Between bites, the adults freely visit the exhibitions and the little ones do crafts with our mediator.

For children of all ages

Limited space, registration recommended.

Adult : 18.- / Children : 12.-

LA GRANDE TABLE

Sunday 10 April at 11 am

Digital art, artists, galleries, institutions, art collectors, art historians, what are we talking about?

The MBAL invites several specialists for a discussion.

Free entry, followed by a brunch.

This event is in collaboration with la Galerie C.

MEETING WITH THE ARTISTS

Sunday 10 April at 1pm

Tour of the exhibitions with the artists and signing of the book by Namsa Leuba.

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© Campbell Addy, *Adut Akech*, 2019, from
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© Arielle Bobb-Willis, *New Orleans*, 2018, from
The New Black Vanguard (Aperture, 2019).



© Daniel Obasi, *Moments of Youth*, Lagos,
Nigeria, 2019, from *The New Black Vanguard*
(Aperture, 2019)

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© Dana Scruggs, *Adonis #1*, 2014, from *The New Black Vanguard* (Aperture, 2019)



© Awol Erizku, *Asiatic Lilies*, 2017, from *The New Black Vanguard* (Aperture, 2019)

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© Jamal Nxedlana, *Johannesburg*, 2019, from *The New Black Vanguard* (Aperture, 2019)



© Micaiah Carter, *Adeline in Barrettes*, 2018, from *The New Black Vanguard* (Aperture, 2019)

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© Tyler Mitchell, *Untitled (Hijab Couture)*, New York, 2019, from The New Black Vanguard (Aperture, 2019)



© Stephen Tayo, *Pedro Street, Lagos, Nigeria*, 2019, from The New Black Vanguard (Aperture, 2019)



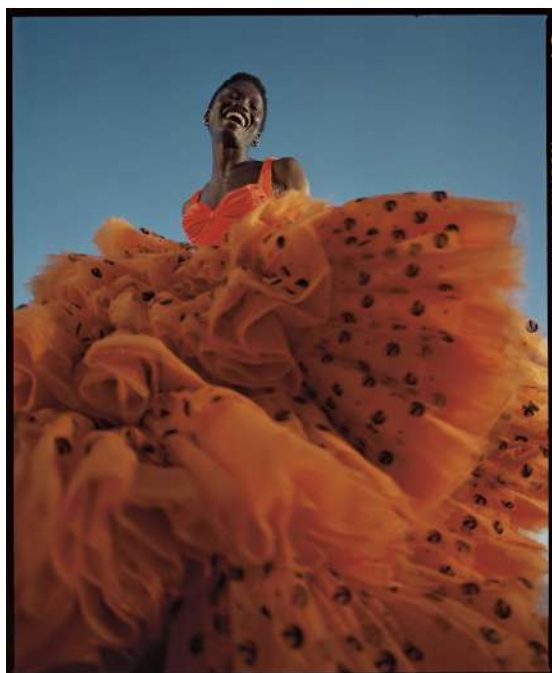
© Micaiah Carter, *Three Men*, 2018, from The New Black Vanguard (Aperture, 2019)

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© Nadine Ijewere, *Joy as an Act of Resistance*, 2018,
from *The New Black Vanguard* (Aperture, 2019)



© Nadine Ijewere, *Untitled*, 2018,
from *The New Black Vanguard* (Aperture, 2019)



© Namsa Leuba, *Sarah, Lagos, Nigeria*, 2015,
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© Quil Lemons, *New York*, 2017, from *The New Black Vanguard* (Aperture, 2019)



© Renell Medrano, from *1984, Harlem, New York*, 2018, *The New Black Vanguard* (Aperture, 2019)



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© Erwan Frotin, *Rocher*, 2011



© Erwan Frotin, *Composition verte*
The New York Times, 2004



© Erwan Frotin, *The Monkey*, Numéro China, 2021

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© Erwan Frotin, *Nuage 4*, 2012



© Erwan Frotin, *Lave en fusion 12*, 2016



© Erwan Frotin, *Perle 8*, 2014

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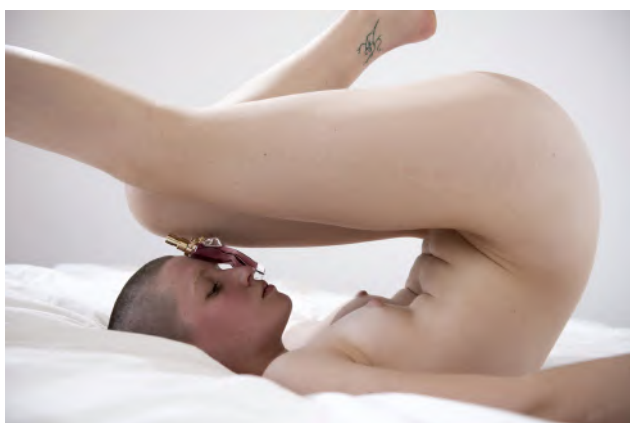
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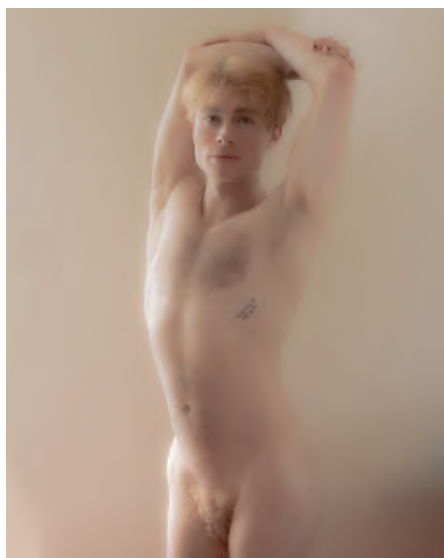
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SPECIAL EDITION FOR THE MBAL



JUCY PARROT, IT WILL NEVER AGAIN REPEAT !

Namsa Leuba
Limited edition for sale created for MBAL
20 inkjet prints numbered and signed

2022

Price: 500 .-

PUBLICATIONS



FLUX I

Erwan Frodin
Pages : 92, 62 photographs in color
Edition of 300 copies FR, 500 copies EN
Special edition of 10, with a unique print
Publication date: 2022
ISBN : 978-2-493467-01-0



Crossed Looks

Namsa Leuba
Published by Damiani Editore
Pages: 180
Language : English
Publication date : 2021
ISBN: 978-8-862087-52-0



The New Black Vanguard
Photography Between Art and Fashion

Published by Aperture Publishers USA
Pages : 256
Language : English
Publication date : 2019
ISBN : 1597114685

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PUBLICATIONS



ECAL x JPG x Novembre

4 different covers

Graphic design by Baptiste Gerbelot Barillon
et Jean Marques

Pages: 116

Date of publication: 2022

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PARTNERS

The Museum of Fine Arts relies on public funding from the city of Le Locle and the Société des Beaux-Arts et du Musée, Le Locle.

The MBAL's exhibitions receive support from the Loterie Romande.

The programme intended to the young audience is supported by the Foundation Pierre Mercier.

Nivarox-FAR S.A is also one of the sponsor of MBAL.



ADMISSIONS

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HOURS

Wed – Sun, 11.00 AM – 5.00 PM

PRICES

Adults: CHF. 8.-
Senior citizens, students, apprentices, unemployed: CHF. 5.-
Children, young people under 16 and art students: free
First Sunday of the month: free

OPENING

Thursday, February 4th at 6 pm

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