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PRESS RELEASE

**ANIMAL INSTINCT /
INSTINCT ANIMAL**

13.10.2023 – 25.02.2024



John Drysdale, *Boxing Kangaroo Hitting a Paparazzi for Trying to Photograph Him*, 1967.
© John Drysdale Voller Ernst-our-planet, Berlin.

M 7 MUSÉE DES
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L A LE LOCLE

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AN UNUSUAL JOURNEY INTO THE ANIMAL CONDITION

The Museum of Fine Arts Le Locle (MBAL) is pleased to present *animal instinct / instinct animal*, a group exhibition conceived as an invitation to reflect upon our relation to the animal world, both from the standpoint of our own identity and that of the biodiversity challenges currently at stake. The project is part of MBAL's museal commitment to question societal issues by creating a dialogue between the masterpieces of its permanent collection - as well as those of MUZOO's collection in La Chaux-de-Fonds for this occasion - and the artworks of invited contemporary artists. Why do turtles rush to the sea as soon as they leave their nests, and spiders spontaneously weave webs? Mysterious, imperceptible and fascinating, the animal instinct has always stirred the curiosity of artists, both in its aspects of representation and in the relationship between the human being and the animal.

What does a dog running through an abandoned factory perceive? How do bees react to pesticides? What kind of stress do animals exploited by the army feel? Animal artists, philosophers, victims and rebels, the projects presented question the blurred boundaries between the innate and the acquired, wilderness and domesticity, nature and culture, submission and freedom, science and fiction.



Francisco de Goya, *La Tauromachie* [Bullfighting], 1815, etching, aquatint and drypoint. © Le Locle, Musée des Beaux-Arts

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The journey begins close to the sky, on the top floor, with a few bees fluttering about, not knowing where to go. Inspired by the book *Les merveilles de l'instinct chez les insectes* by naturalist Jean-Henri Casimir Fabre (1914), the MBAL invited the Swiss collective APIAN to present an original installation combining videos, documents and artifacts related to the behaviour of bees disturbed by pesticides. Created by artist Aladin Borioli, the collective defines itself as a "Ministry of Bees, in charge of the relationship between humans and all species of bees". Revealed to the public by the book *Ruches* (2020), now an international bestseller, the collective combines methods issued from anthropology and philosophy, the practice of art and beekeeping with the ambition of promoting more egalitarian encounters with bees.



Apian (Aladin Borioli and Ellen Lapper), *Bee with a transponder*. DR.

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On the second floor, influenced by Jorge Luis Borges' imaginary beings (1957), the intriguing blue bird in wood, plaster and wax by artist Irène Grundel (1991) dominates and extends into a structure adorned with the blue of its wings that hosts a cabinet of curiosities with objects and sculptures from MBAL and MUZOO's collections. Visitors will find terracotta plates and vases, carved ivory rabbits, decorative boxes adorned with owls, soapstone sculptures of birds and marine animals. Among these treasures, the mermaid created by Willy Vuilleumier (1898-1983) converses in an astonishing way with the half-human half-snail playing the accordion, designed by Robert Rudolf (1884-1932).



Robert Hainard, *Sans titre* [Untitled] 1948, xylogravure. © Le Locle, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Real and dreamlike creatures from the museum collections, including works by Marc Chagall and Robert Hainard, a Swiss naturalist painter, confront the technological unconscious of Emilio Vavarella's animal filmmakers presented in the same room. In his short film, *Animal Cinema* (2017), Vavarella collected excerpts of found footages created by animals that stole and activated camera devices. The hypnotic sequence takes us on an underwater journey with a crab, an aerobatic figure captured by a vulture, or an introspective moment by a monkey. Classic paintings of cows and oxen interact with Dutch artist Erik Kessels' surreal video documenting a cow's photo shooting.

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Erik Kessels, *Useful photography #005_008*. © Eric Kessels

Le Corbusier's unstructured and colourful bull as well as wonders of modern Inuit art confront Pamela Rosenkranz's symbolism of the serpent.



(Left) Le Corbusier, *Taureau* [Bull], 1963, Lithogravure. © Le Locle, Musée des Beaux-Arts

(Right) Pamela Rozenkranz, *Healer Scrolls (Eastside)*, 2023. © Courtesy Pamela Rozenkranz, Karma International. Photo Sebastian Lendenmann

The journey continues with Patrick Goddard who shares a conversation with his philosophical dog endowed with more reason than instinct. In his film, *Animal Antics* (2021), two characters chat during a visit to the zoo: Sarah, a woman in her mid-twenties, and a talking dog, Whoopsie, a very pedigree-proud Bichon Frisé. The dystopian and hilarious dialogue reveals that Whoopsie sees the animals as distinct beings, different from

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herself. In the same way as humans, Whoopsie refuses to allow her immediate environment to be contaminated by other species. And like privileged humans, she has papers that support and legitimize her position in the social order. A crowd of helium-inflated balloons representing dogs' heads hanging at human eyesight will fill the room with their sweet and abnormal presence.



Patrick Goddard, *Animal Antics* (2021), screenshot of Whoopsie. © Patrick Goddard

Taxidermy in Gaza's bombed-out zoos, which could be the story of all zoos in a war zone, as a desperate solution of resistance is at the heart of Roman Selim Khereddine's video piece, *Behind a thousand bars no world* (2023).



Marta Bogdańska © Australian War Memorial

On the first floor, the visual installation specially crafted for the exhibition by Polish artist Marta Bogdańska around her project *Shifters* (since 2018), unveils a video wall mixing her photographic research on animals used by the army as spies,

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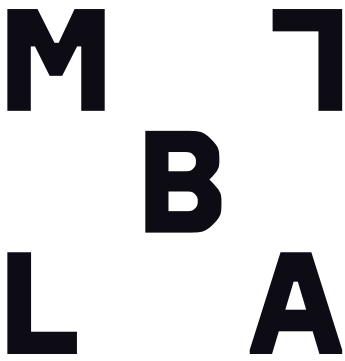
soldiers, policemen or suicide bombers with works from MBAL's animal collection. This forcefully points to the relationship of domination of humans over animals but also to the acts of revolt of the latter, explored in her new project, *Vive la Résistance !*

On the ground floor, science, experimentation, and fiction invite themselves through two fascinating projects. In their video piece, the collective BE-AR(T) presents a repellent against humans intended for bears in order to improve inter-species relations! In a room still empty, the animals of MUZOO, La Chaux-de-Fonds's zoo, will unveil the result of their artistic workshop carried out with their caregivers.



© Sergey Uryadnikov

In the Marie-Anne Calame room, children can express themselves and reflect on three top predators: the lynx, the wolf, and the bear, in collaboration with the Swiss magazine *La Salamandre*.



INVITED ARTISTS

MBAL COLLECTION
MUZOO COLLECTION
APIAN
BE-AR(T)
MARTA BOGDAŃSKA
PATRICK GODDARD
ERIK KESSELS
ROMAN SELIM KHEREDDINE
KEIKO MACHIDA
PAMELA ROSENKRANZ
LA SALAMANDRE
EMILIO VAVARELLA

OPENING 13.10.2023

From 11 am to 6 pm, press preview with MBAL director Federica Chiocchetti, adjunct curator Séverine Cattin, and a number of exhibiting artists.

From 6:30 pm, opening to the public followed by a cocktail-dinner and animalistic DJ set with La Collective.

CONTACTS

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Wednesday-Sunday: 11 am–5 pm
Free access on the first Sunday of the month

