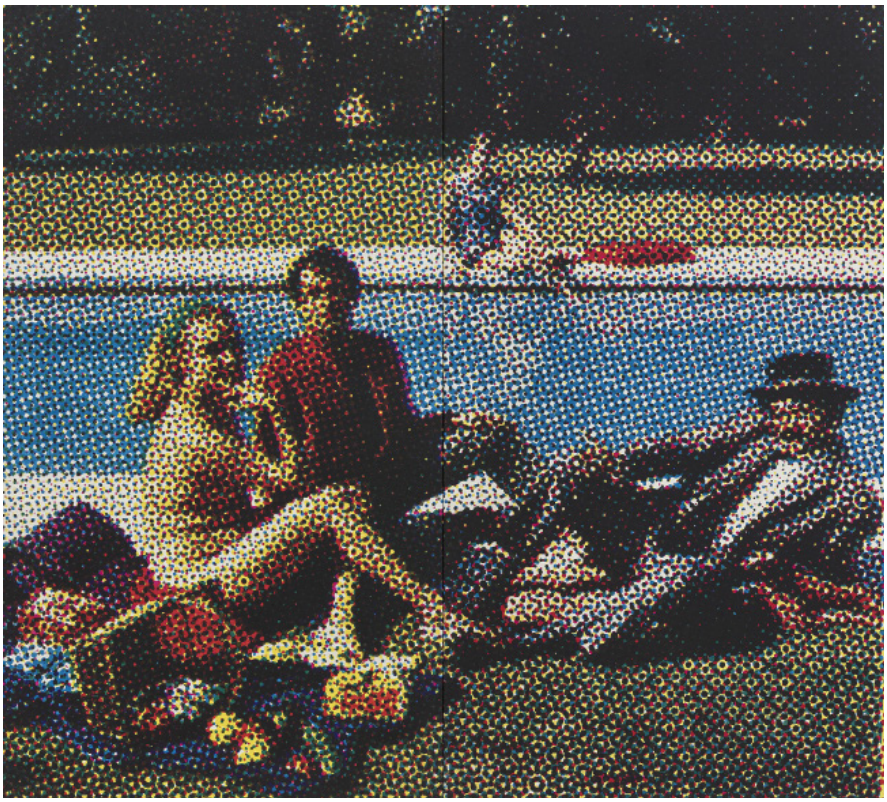
PRESS RELEASE

FOR ONE SOLID TIME, WET: THE SWIMMING POOL IN THE IMAGINATION

CO-CURATED BY FEDERICA CHIOCCHETTI AND LOU STOPPARD

3 OCTOBER 2026 - 21 FEBRUARY 2027
EXHIBITION OPENING ON OCTOBER 2ND 2026



Alain Jacquet, *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe,* 1964
Diptych, four-color cellulose screen print on paper mounted on canvas, 175 x 195 cm.
Collection MAMCO, don AMAM.
©Alain Jacquet / ADAGP, Paris, 2026. Courtesy of Alain Jacquet Estate and Perrotin.

This exhibition explores the swimming pool as a significant motif within the history of contemporary art. It unites artists who have explored the complexity of the pool, using it as a symbol of both prosperity and catastrophe, joy and solitude: a metaphor for our search for order and serenity in the face of an increasingly uncertain future. At once an architectural and sculptural object, a geometric space, and a stage for bodily experiences, the pool embodies the control of nature, and a form of collective dreaming tied to modernity, well-being and intimacy. It emerges as an ambivalent site, capable of evoking serenity as much as solitude, fulfilment as much as emptiness, luxury as much as ruin.

Within the exhibition, the swimming pool is considered as a political instrument or environment, bearing similarities to the museum or the art gallery: a space in which light, bodies and lines are controlled, where order prevails over disorder, and where certain boundaries govern behaviours, interactions and norms. Writing in *The White Album*, about California and water use, Joan Didion argues that " a pool is, for many of us in the West, a symbol not of affluence but of order, of control over the uncontrollable."

The exhibition engages with Didion's notion of a quest for order, offering a critical and poetic reading of the swimming pool as an icon of Western societies, while highlighting the alternative narratives it can carry—queer, political, or connected to memory and the passage of time. The artists featured in the exhibition present the pool as more than a simple leisure setting: instead, it is a space for aesthetic and social reflection, a mirror of contemporary longings and anxieties.

Caroline Walker, *Study for Fishing*, 2017
Oil on paper, 53.7 x 47.5 cm
© and Courtesy the Artist;
GRIMM, Amsterdam/New York/ London;
and Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh.
Photo: Peter Mallet.

Le Locle is a region shaped by water, or its disappearance. The name of the town comes from the Latin word for lake, and historically, there was a small lake near Le Locle: early maps and records from the 16th–17th centuries show a body of water or marshy area near the town, but urban expansion and drainage for watchmaking and housing eliminated it by the 18th–19th century. Today, Le Locle's large public outdoor pools try to compensate this loss. This context – and the wider issue of global water crisis - has been central to the development of the exhibition. So too has a playful yet troubling rumour in the recent history of the MBAL : a proposal, by some politicians, to close the museum and replace it with an indoor swimming pool. Luckily, for the artistic and cultural heritage of Le Locle, the Canton of Neuchâtel, and Switzerland more broadly, this project has not come to fruition, and, with this show, the threat – and the ideas connected to it, regarding power, aspiration and modernity - is transformed into an exhibition theme.

Andrew Cranston, *The Sadness of Being Scott*, 2016-17
Oil and varnish on hardback book cover, 23.5 x 31.5 cm. Private Collection.
© Andrew Cranston. Image courtesy of the Artist; Ingleby, Edinburgh;

Through a selection of paintings, films, photography, sculptures and more, by national and international artists, the exhibition immerses visitors in the visual, symbolic, and emotional universe of the swimming pool. Works on show will include *Restoration of an Empty Pool* (2007) by Rossella Biscotti, in collaboration with Kevin van Braak, a film that reveals the slow and laborious process of cleaning the swimming pool at the Foro Mussolini in Rome; a series of images from **Larry Sultan**'s *Swimmers*, taken in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a body of work that seems to directly evoke a sense of chaos and confusion beneath a surface of stillness; **Alain Jacquet**'s *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1970), which revisits Manet's famous modern and intimate painting by replacing the natural body of water with a man-made swimming pool; as well as *One Swimming Pool* by **Elisabeth Tonnard** (2013), a book that can be arranged to form a temporary pool.
A specially commissioned performance by the Swiss artist **Marie-Caroline Hominal** will unfold at the public swimming pool of Le Locle on 23 October, 2026, extending and activating her presence within the museum's exhibition. The participating artists include **Judith Albert, Nazgol Ansarinia, Rossella Biscotti in collaboration with Kevin van Braak, Andrew Cranston, Blaise Drummond, Elmgreen & Dragset, Ellie Epp, Kate Gottgens, Alexander Hahn, David Hockney, Marie-Caroline Hominal, Alain Jacquet, Hilary Lloyd, Jean-Luc Manz, Daina Mattis, Alexandra Maurer, Ian Mwesiga, Antonio Obá, Michael Raedecker, Pipilotti Rist, Anastasia Samoylova, Denis Savary, Leanne Shapton, Mary Stephenson, Larry Sultan, Elisabeth Tonnard, Levi van Veluw, Eva Vermandel, Bill Viola,** and **Caroline Walker.** A section of the exhibition is also dedicated to artists' books, featuring works by **Diego Abellán & Joaquín Lucas, Roni Horn, Tanja Lažetić** and **Ed Ruscha.**

A special waterproof artist's book that can be handled and read in water —similar to children's bath books — will be both an exhibited artwork and a keepsake of the exhibition. This unique take on an exhibition catalogue will showcase works by the London-based painter **Mary Stephenson**, whose subtly nuanced palette moves between intensity and pastel tones. The pool is a repeating motif in the work of Stephenson, and in various of her paintings hypnagogic environments and architectonic worlds intersect with abstract forms, evoking archetypes — physical spaces or objects — that summon the unconscious, emotions, and the elusive nature of memory. Her images will be accompanied by a new work of fiction written collaboratively by Candida Desideri and Lou Stoppard.

Mary Stephenson, *New House*, 2025 [detail]
Oil on linen, 160 x 200 cm. Steps, 300 x 30 x 200 cm.
Private Collection, Monaco. Image courtesy of the artist and Maureen Paley, London. Photo : Stephen James.

Notes to editors:

The title of this exhibition pays homage to *Wet*, a short story by Laurie Colwin, in which the swimming pool plays a central role in explorations of control, jealousy, intimacy and secrecy within a marriage.

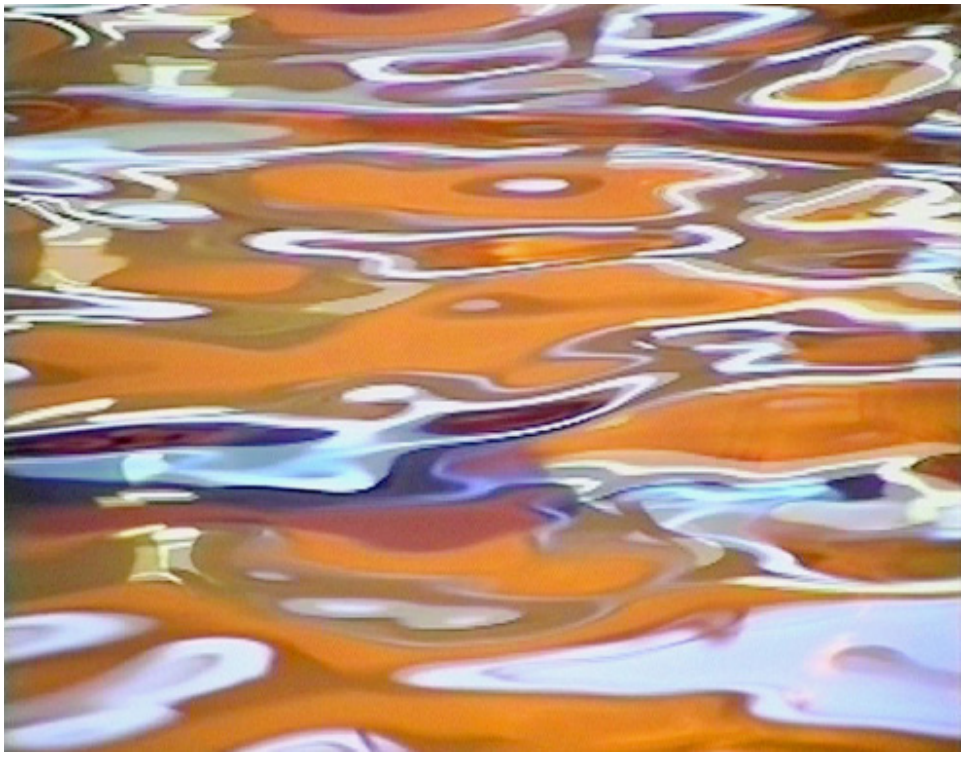
Federica Chiocchetti

Co-curator

Federica Chiocchetti has been Director of the Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle (MBAL), Switzerland, between 2022 and 2026. Through her transdisciplinary and transhistorical exhibitions — *Le plaisir du texte*, *animal instinct / instinct animal*, and *la scia del monte ou les utopistes magnétiques*, among others — she has developed a sustained dialogue between contemporary artists and historical collections, while initiating collaborations with Fondazione Monte Verità, Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, and Les Nouveaux Commanditaires. With her, the MBAL has become a laboratory for experimental, participatory, and inclusive projects, featuring non-human artists, publishing artist books conceived as anti-catalogues, commissioning digital art capsules, and hosting "general mental states" dedicated to art, shamanism, and meditation.

Previously, through her editorial and curatorial platform Photocaptionist, she collaborated with international institutions, festivals, fairs, magazines, and universities, including the V&A, Jeu de Paume, Aperture, L'Uomo Vogue, Paris Photo, Lucerne University, Kunsthalle Budapest, and the Tokyo Photo Festival, among others.
A nominator for the Prix Bob Calle pour le Livre d'Artiste, she also served on the jury for the Pro Helvetia Swiss Pavilion at the Venice Biennale Arte 2026. She holds a PhD in word and image intersections from the University of Westminster, an MA in Comparative Literature from University College London, and an MSc in Book-Making from the University of Milan and Fondazione Mondadori.

Under her alter ego Candida Desideri, she develops a more experimental literary practice — short stories and prose poems — published in *Nachbilder: Eine Foto Text Anthologie* (Spector Books, Zurich University of the Arts, and Fotomuseum Winterthur, 2020) and in *Der Greif* (2015). Since May 2026 she is in charge of the artistic and cultural programme at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris.



Hilary Lloyd, *One Minute of Water*, 1999 [Still]
Video, duration : 1 min, looped.
© Hilary Lloyd. Courtesy the Artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London.

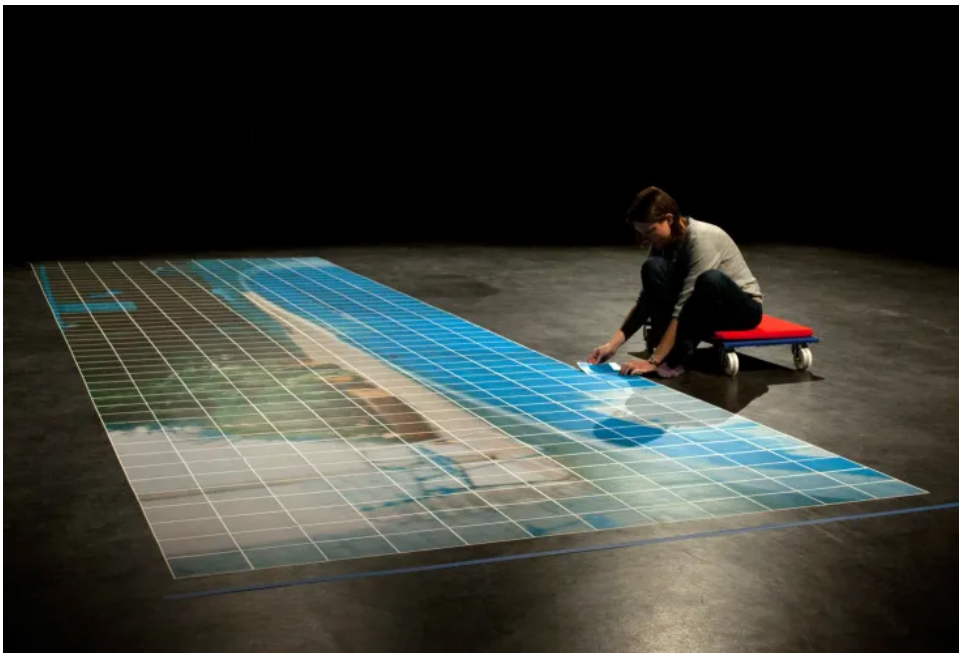
MBLA

Lou Stoppard

Co-curator

Lou Stoppard is a London-based writer and curator. Her books include a survey of the work of street photographer Shirley Baker, published by Mack in 2019; *Pools*, an exploration of swimming in photography, published by Rizzoli in 2020; and *Exteriors: Annie Ernaux and Photography*, published by Mack in 2024, to time with an exhibition of the same name which she curated at MEP, Paris. She has written for The Financial Times, Aperture, The New York Times and The New Yorker. Her fiction has appeared in publications including *Five Stories for Philip Guston*, published by Printed Matter in 2024.

Elisabeth Tonnard, *One Swimming Pool*, 2013
© Collection Serge Stommels.



Elisabeth Tonnard, *One Swimming Pool*, 2014
Full color digital print, 1575 pages,installation size ± 648 x 648 cm.
Installation view at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Courtesy of the artist.

We wish to extend our warmest thanks to our partners and sponsors who have helped make this exhibition possible :

VILLE DU LOCLE · LOTERIE ROMANDE · FONDATION COROMANDEL · Fondation Jan Michalski · DIXI · berndorf bäderbau · hsb recreating pools · BONHÔTE

Daina Mattis, *Lap Pool (Cobalt)*, 2018 [detail]
Fiberglass and steel. 41cm x 52cm x 63,5cm.

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL 2026 AND WINTER 2027 SEASON

- **October 2, 2026 :** Opening reception and DJ set with FlexFab, from 6 pm.
- **October 8, 2026 :** Book launch for *Wet Proof* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London, at 6.30 pm.
- **October 23, 2026 :** Discussion with Federica Chiocchetti and Lou Stoppard, plus *In Visible Form,* a performance by Marie-Caroline Hominal at the Le Locle swimming pool. Discussion at 3 pm in the museum, performance at 5.30 at the Piscine Communale in Le Locle.
- **21 November 2026 :** Co-creation workshop led by the artist duo Aalaii & de Perrot, starting at 2.00 pm.
- **December 6, 2026 :** The students from the Blaise Cendrars High School present their exhibiton in the Salle Marie-Anne Calame, in dialogue with the exhibition *For One Solid Time, Wet: The Swimming Pool in the Imagination.*
- **January 29, 2027 :** Book presentation *Wet Proof* at La Piscine - Musée d'art et d'industrie André Diligent de Roubaix (France).
- **February 21, 2027 :** Finissage reception with a conversation with Hélène Duret directrice La Piscine - Musée d'art et d'industrie André Diligent de Roubaix (France), followed by Marie-Caroline Hominal's performnace at the museum.

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS LE LOCLE - MBAL

The Museum of Fine Arts Le Locle – MBAL is a leading institution in Switzerland with an international reputation, thanks to its bold and accessible programme. The museum offers monographic and thematic exhibitions that broaden perspectives and bring together art from different epochs and places, creating a dialogue between works from its collection and contemporary Swiss and international artists.

Located in the city centre of Le Locle and established in 1862, the MBAL occupies a magnificent Art Nouveau building renovated in 2014. It features 800 m² of exhibition space as well as a virtual platform dedicated to digital art, ORBIT_E. The collection, comprising around 5,000 pieces — paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by Swiss and international artists from the 17th century o today — also includes prestigious permanent loans such as those from the Swiss Confederation and the Gottfried Keller Foundation.

During the direction of curator and writer Federica Chiocchetti (PhD) between 2022 and 2026, MBAL has pursued an inclusive programming and an acquisition policy committed to gender equality, with the goal of achieving parity.

© 2024, Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle. Photo : Lucas Olivet.

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Wednesday- Sunday: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
First Sunday of the month: Free admission