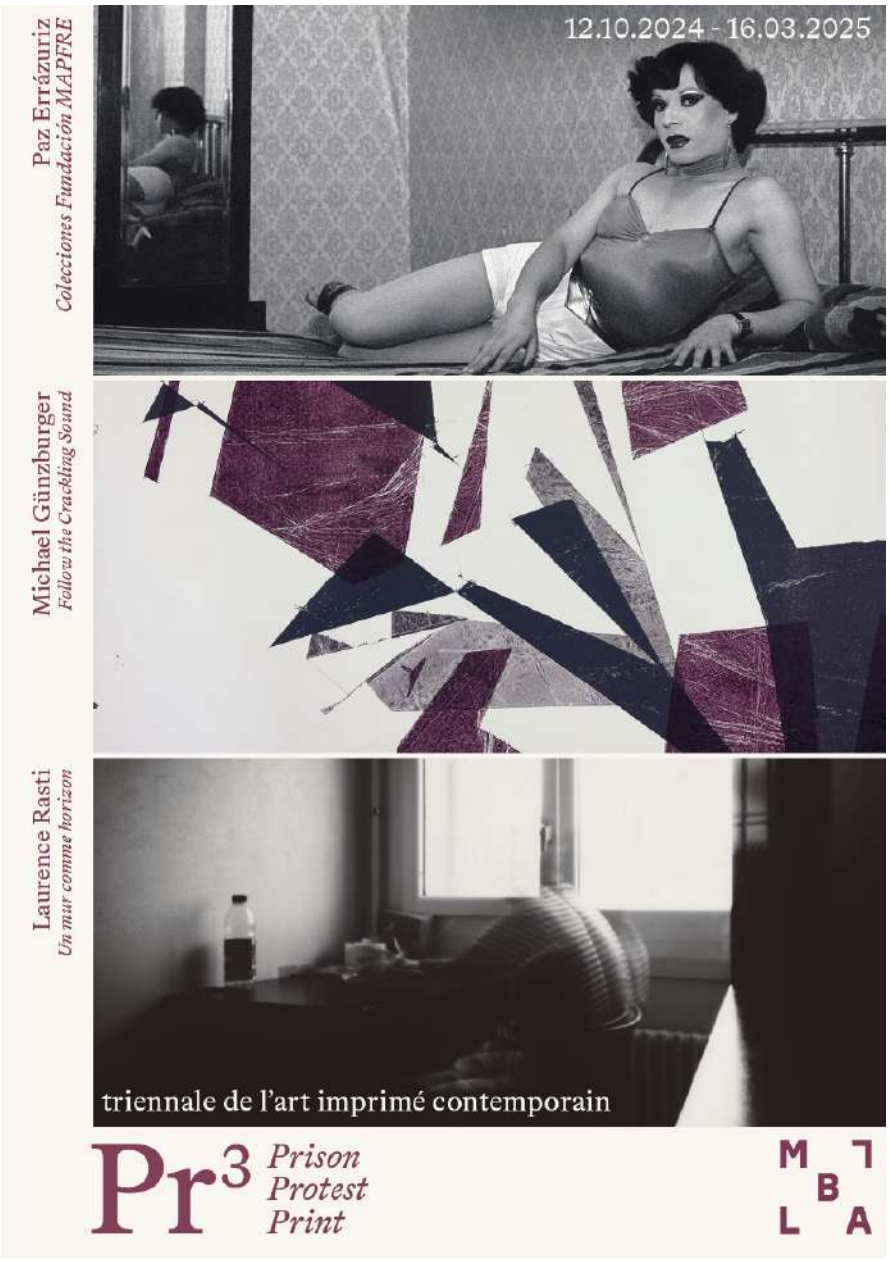
PRESS KIT

11TH TRIENNIAL OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRINTMAKING

PR³ : PRISON, PROTEST, PRINT

PAZ ERRĀZURIZ
LAURENCE RASTI
MICHAEL GÜNZBURGER

12.10.2024 – 16.03.2025



MBLA MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS LE LOCLE

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PR³ : PRISON, PROTEST, PRINT

The Triennial of Contemporary Art Printmaking continues its ambition to explore diverse themes. For its 11th edition, the MBAL presents three monographic exhibitions, each exploring printmaking in a unique way. From printing to photography to installation, the three artists featured reflect on the medium of print in a unique way. For Chilean documentary photographer Paz Errázuriz, photography becomes a tool of resistance, while Swiss artist Laurence Rasti's photographic installation delves into the prison experience. Michael Günzburger's abstract works embrace printmaking as an act of creation.

Federica Chiocchetti, Director MBAL and Anna Bleurer, Associate curator

PAZ ERRĀZURIZ
COLECCIONES FUNDACIÕN MAPFRE

LAURENCE RASTI
WITH A., D., G., L., M., N., T., Z.
A WALL AS HORIZON

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FOLLOW THE CRACKLING SOUND

PAZ ERRĀZURIZ

COLECCIONES FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE



Paz Errázuriz, Evelyn, La Palmera, Santiago, de la serie *La Manzana de Adán*, 1983.
© Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

The exhibition is the first retrospective in Switzerland of renowned photographer Paz Errázuriz, showcasing 50 years of her documentary work that focuses on the marginalised communities of Chile. A self-taught photographer, Errázuriz began her career during the violent repression of the Pinochet regime in the 1970s. A feminist and activist, she only received recognition for her significant contribution to contemporary photography later in life. Over the years, she has documented people ignored by the regime, developing a long-term approach by forging close relationships with her subjects. The 175 photographs on show bring together her most famous works, such as La Manzana de Adán, which presents a group of transvestite prostitutes, and El infarto del alma, featuring psychiatric patients. The exhibition also includes lesser-known works, all of which highlight those who are often rendered invisible by society, such as the elderly, the mentally ill, indigenous people and the LGBTQ+ community, delivering a universal message of resistance and visibility.

INTERVIEW WITH PAZ ERRĀZURIZ ON HER CAREER AND ICONIC WORKS.

Paz Errázuriz, what have you been photographing for the past 45 years?

The same thing: the world around me. I've always been interested in people, women in particular, and I've done a lot of series on women. And I've stayed in Chile, except for one time. I've travelled all over the country, which is so big, from north to south, all the way to the southern tip of the continent. I think I know my fellow human beings quite well. But there's always one feeling that stays with me: that I've never really finished a project. I'm still

engaged with the subjects I've worked on over the years. My projects, as you would say in French, are unfinished or in progress.

Do you think there's something universal about the subjects you've photographed?

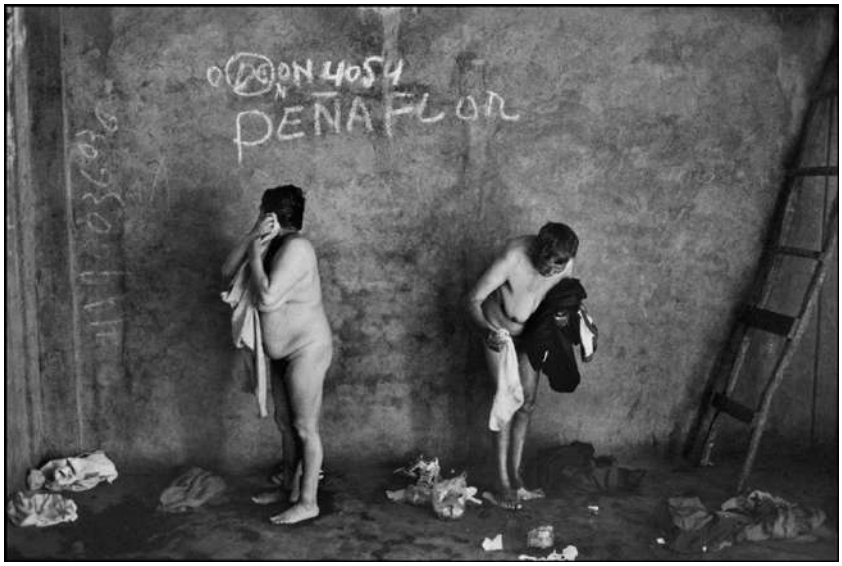
Yes, of course, many other photographers have explored the same themes. For example, that fantastic Argentinian photographer, Adriana Lestido, who did a wonderful job on women in prison. I'm not the only one who has worked with psychiatric patients in Chile (*El infarto del alma / Heart attack of the soul*, 1992-94) – many people have dealt with this topic. Yes, some subjects are universal, like *La manzana de Adán* (*Adam's Apple*, 1982-88, about transsexuals), but others, such as my work with the Kawéskar ethnic group (*Los nómades del mar / Nomads of the sea*, 1994-96) who live south of Chile on Wellington Island, Puerto Edén, are specifically Chilean. I'm very proud of this project, which was very difficult. Now, the next generation is asking me to return and tell their story again. I feel very honoured, and I plan to go back in December. As I said, my projects never really end.



Paz Errázuriz, Compadres, Santiago, de la serie *Personas*, 1987. © Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE.

What is the aim of your photography, particularly your work with people?

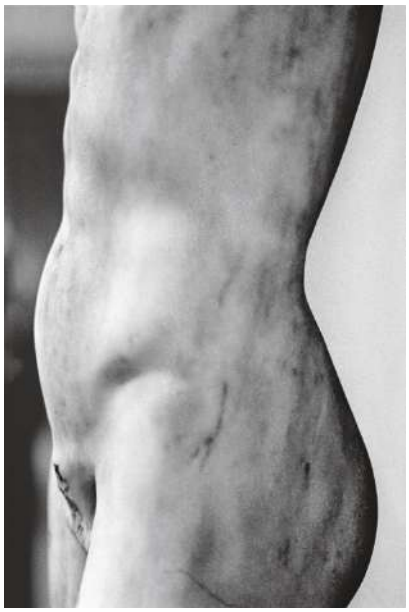
Ultimately, I'm an investigator. I investigate the people around me. It's my way of understanding them and getting close and a way to understand myself. I do my research before meeting them, and I have a fairly good knowledge of history in general. Then I introduce myself and explain what I'd like to do – to take photographs and record a few conversations, which is what I did for *La manzana de Adán*. I spent over a year recording them before inviting a journalist I knew to help write about them. I have a sort of anthropological approach. And I really need my subjects to know what I'm up to, without any promise of an exhibition or publication. In any case, during the dictatorship, no one wanted to exhibit my photographs. And I wasn't even sure at the start of my career whether I wanted to show them. I'm an independent, self-taught photographer. I didn't follow any particular path.



Paz Errázuriz, Baño X, de la serie *Antesala de un desnudo*, 1999. © Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

How and why did you take up photography at almost 30 years old?

I was a schoolteacher and after Pinochet's coup d'état in 1973 I had to leave my job. That's when I finally decided to pick up a camera. I wanted to so badly. I had always felt like a photographer. I took a few pictures of children at school, which was very formative for me. But at the time, I couldn't become a photographer – it was tricky. I didn't have a camera, I didn't know how, training was nonexistent. I learned with the help of friends. Yes, it's true that I started at an age when I was already quite mature and no longer so enthralled by beautiful images. The dictatorship pushed me to identify as a photographer, even though I didn't really know anything. I joined other photographers who I didn't know very well but who shared my political views, and together we created the Association of Independent Photographers (AIP). We were militant and committed, and I learned a lot from them. We were photojournalists, and we wanted to bear witness to the violence and protests that were taking place at the start of the dictatorship.

(left) Paz Errázuriz, Boxeador VI, Santiago, de la serie *Boxeadores. El combate contra el ángel*, 1987.
(right) Paz Errázuriz, Exéresis III, de la serie *Exéresis*, 2004. © Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

You were a photojournalist, which isn't widely known……

Yes, that's true. It wasn't until last year that the first exhibition dedicated to that period of my work took place. After four or five years, I decided I didn't want to be on the frontline anymore. Others were doing it much better than I was. I started to focus on other, equally difficult, subjects. I only returned to cover major events, the big demonstrations, which appear in different series (*Protestas* / *Protests*, 1985/88/89).

You have stated: "I have always thought that photography reflects the photographer. In my case, all my series inevitably reflect my desires, interests and obsessions". What are your desires, interests and obsessions?

These obsessions are linked to a feeling I had and still have: the lack of knowledge or not being educated enough to sufficiently understand certain subjects, like women for example. I knew so little about what it meant to be a woman, we weren't taught anything in school or at home. I had to discover that for myself. And then, one subject led to another and another.

Why did you become interested in subjects that revolve around precariousness, poverty and people on the margins of society?

Ever since I was a child, I've been aware of these realities, but I didn't understand them. How could I approach them, how could I address them? I photographed these subjects to answer my own questions. The camera was my ally in this quest. Recently, I've been wondering why people accept me so easily? I think it's because these subjects Recently, I've wondered why people accepted me so kindly. Because these subjects all had valid reasons to exist—they were necessary at a given time.

Do you have a favourite series?

I become so close to people, it's hard and sad to finish a subject, to leave them, it's almost impossible. Sometimes it's just the circumstances that force me to stop. *La manzana de Adán* had a tragic ending, as all but one of its protagonists died of AIDS. The disease was taking its toll when the book was published in 1990. It was poorly understood and highly stigmatized.

Are you still in contact with the last survivor of the *La manzana de Adán* series?

Yes, and I'm currently working on another project related to this story. I'm preparing a book with a friend who is a poet and a biologist about the AIDS-related photographs I took just after *La manzana de Adán*. I wasn't sure I wanted to show these images, but now I feel ready. Two years ago, I also collaborated with my friend, trans activist and historian Niki Raveau, on a book on trans people today, *Señales* (2019), which includes a section on children who identify as trans and whose friends and family support their identity. None of them have received treatment yet because there's still this debate about younger people taking hormones. It was fascinating. Many of my stories continue over time.



Paz Errázuriz, Macarena, de la serie *La Manzana de Adán*, 1987. © Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

How was *La manzana de Adán* received in the late 80s, and how did you distribute it?

It was very badly received! Nobody wanted to talk about the subject. We didn't do an exhibition, and while we managed to produce a book, it was a struggle. It came out in 1990, right at the end of the dictatorship. The launch was organised by a bookseller friend in Santiago, and we sold only one copy. The book wasn't distributed anywhere. It felt like censorship. It wasn't until years later that the series was recognised. In 1994, Tate Gallery in London bought it. What's extraordinary is that it's very well known among younger generations, and I'm constantly receiving testimonials. It was through this project that they got to know me. Today, the subject of trans people is more open, dialogue is more liberated and free, and not as violent as it was back then.

In the 1990s, you produced a series on Chilean women (*Mujeres de Chile / Women of Chile*). How did that project come about?

I've photographed many women, but I haven't shown everything. I started during the dictatorship, protesting with them and photographing them. I discovered feminism, realising how little I knew about the subject. I educated myself further and then created this series on the women of Chile, travelling the country from north to south to show the diversity of their experiences, from fisherwomen to intellectuals, entrepreneurs, politicians, writers, painters, peasants and the vulnerable. We can be so different from one another. I love all these women, and it's wonderful to see the infinite possibilities that exist for survival.



(left) Paz Errázuriz, Mujer buzo, Matanzas, Chile, de la serie *Mujeres de Chile*, 1992.
(right) Paz Errázuriz, Mujer chinchorrera-recolectora de carbón, Lota, Chile, de la serie *Mujeres de Chile*, 1992. © Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

You beautifully photographed elderly nude bodies in your *Cuerpos* series (2002). Why did you choose that subject?

This project began in a strange way. A very wealthy man was organising an exhibition of “body painting”, and he wanted me to do the photographs. I hated the exhibition beyond belief. I politely declined; and instead suggested photographs of elderly people in the nude. It was like rediscovering my own body. I'd never seen my mother, or any elderly person, naked. It wasn't easy to get him to accept the idea, but he said yes. It was a fascinating project for me because I had these long, wonderful conversations with the models, models who were being paid for the first time. I showed this work once in Chile and wrote a lot about it, especially the women. The widows all shared the same confession: “oh, if my husband could see me like this”. They were ashamed to pose naked, to show their bodies. That generation of women is very different from today... It's beautiful to see these nude bodies. A very, very beautiful experience, particularly with women.

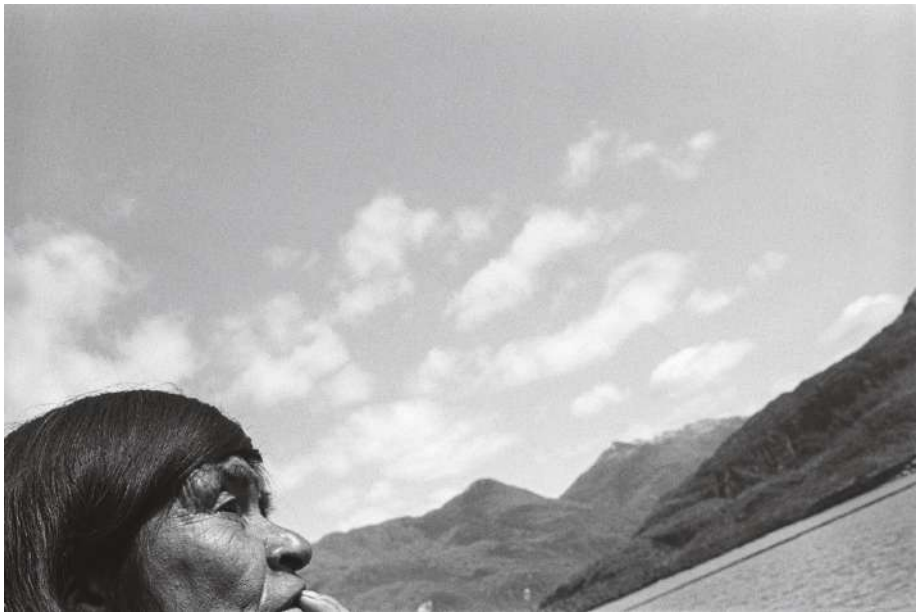
Which photographersdo you feel close to, past or present?

I discovered other photographers late, long after the dictatorship. We were living in isolation with no information about the outside world. I really like Nan Goldin, Susan Meiselas, whom I met when she was covering the events in Chile and taught us how to make books. Diane Arbus, too. André Kertész, I love him. So many classics...

Do you follow the work of younger photographers?

Yes, in Chile of course. I often meet them when I speak at conferences or universities. Their work and their way of doing things are different from mine. They know so much about new technologies, and that's so important to them. They often help me! What I notice is that they have no patience, they want to succeed the next day, not the year after, but literally the following

day. Maybe they're lacking that engagement or deep thought that takes time to make a project a success. Aesthetically, I find some of their work very interesting. They make beautiful images. My question concerns the depth of feeling or thought in their work.



Paz Errázuriz, Atáp, Ester Edén, Puerto Edén, Wellington, de la serie *Los nómadas del mar*, 1995.
© Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

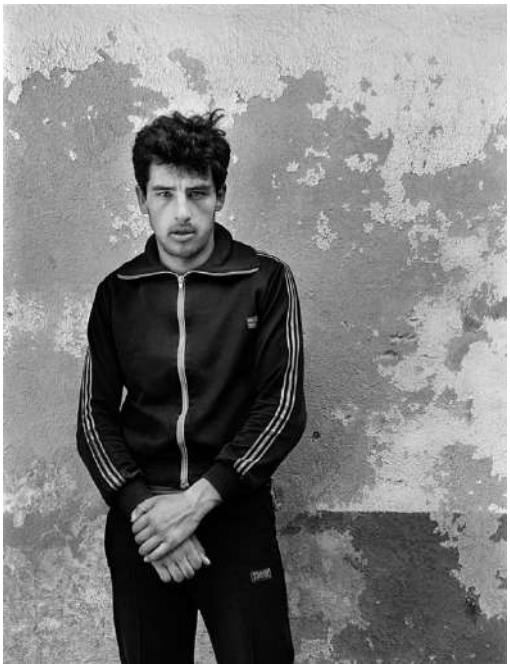
Are you still photographing?

Slowly, yes! I work more slowly. I spend a lot of time on exhibitions and books. After the pandemic, I started photographing using a mobile phone. I never thought I'd be able to do it, or that I'd ever do it. I'm quite fascinated with it. I'm seriously experimenting with this new medium, especially thinking about what it might look like in print. It was one of the outcomes of the pandemic that influenced us in so many ways. The atmosphere in Chile was very violent, and I couldn't go out with my cameras. The phone offered discretion and made it possible [to take pictures]. For the first time in my life, I'm working on a project without people, using the iPhone. I don't want to say any more for the moment...

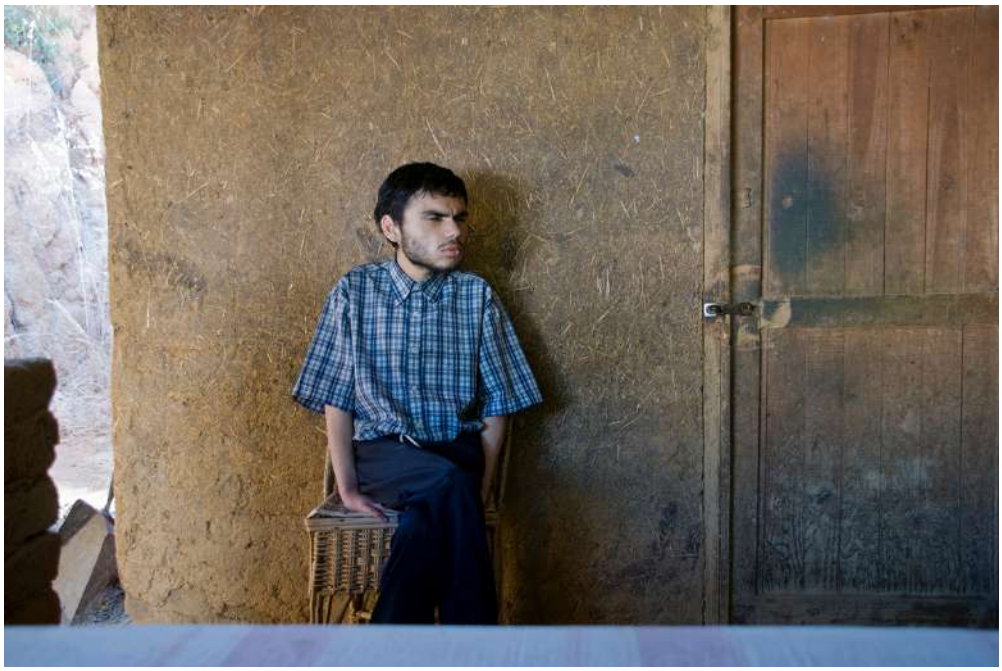
What legacy would you like to leave for the younger generation?

I'd like to leave the memory of my career. How long does it take for a woman to be recognised for her work? In 2017 I received the National Plastic Arts Award, a great distinction in Chile. For the first time, a woman photographer was honoured; before that, it was painters, writers and sculptors. A tiny minority of women are recognised for their art. It can be done, that's the message I'd like to leave. Even late in life, recognition is possible.





(left) Paz Errázuriz, Cuerpo II, Santiago, de la serie *Cuerpos, Santiago,* 2002.
(right) Paz Errázuriz, Boxeador V, de la serie *Boxeadores. El combate contra el ángel*, 1987.
© Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE



Paz Errázuriz, La luz que me ciega, de la serie *La luz que me ciega*, 2008-2010. © Paz Errázuriz. Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

LAURENCE RASTI
WITH A., D., G., L., M., N., T., Z.
A WALL AS HORIZON



Laurence Rasti avec A., D., G., L., M., N., T., Z., *Sténopé réalisé par N., Un mur comme horizon,* 2023. Originale papier photosensible, 10 x 15 cm, reproduction en impression pigmentaire.
© Laurence Rasti / Enquête photographique neuchâteloise 2024

Winner of the 2024 l'Enquête photographique neuchâteloise (litt. Neuchâtel Photographic Survey), organised annually by the Association pour la promotion de la photographie dans le canton de Neuchâtel (APPCN, litt. Association for the Promotion of Photography in the Canton of Neuchâtel,), Swiss-Iranian photographer Laurence Rasti is author of the acclaimed *There Are No Homosexuals in Iran* (2017). In her lastest project, she collaborated with inmates from Établissement de détention *La Promenade* à La Chaux-de-Fonds (EDPR, litt. *La Promenade* Detention Facility in La Chaux-de-Fonds) in the Neuchâtel region. An engaged photographer focused on human rights, migration and precariousness issues, Rasti explores the overrepresentation of vulnerable individuals incarcerated for short sentences. She critically examines the connection between criminal and social justice, questioning a system of imprisonment that seems to disproportionately target the most marginalised. After several months of research into the Swiss prison system, Rasti invited eight prisoners to co-author the project, notably using pinhole photography to represent their experiences. The resulting immersive installation presented at MBAL is accompanied by a book of the same name, published by Scheidegger & Spiess.

Alongside Laurence Rasti's installation, The MBAL is presenting a masterpiece from its collection, taken from the famous series of engravings *The Imaginary Prisons* by the Italian artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778). In her essay *Le cerveau noir de Piranèse* (litt. *The Black Brain of Piranesi*, 1962), the writer Marguerite Yourcenar described it as "an artificial world, and is nevertheless eerily real, claustrophobic, and yet

megalomaniacal (which) is reminiscent of the world in which modern humanity is shutting itself in more and more...".



The project can also be discovered in an eponymous book published by Scheidegger & Spiess.

Laurence Rasti, *Un mur comme horizon*
Scheidegger & Spiess
Publication date : October 2024 - CHF 42.-
Hardback, 152 pages, 23,5 x 32 cm, 100 colors illustrations. ISBN 978-3-85881-894-2

INTERVIEW WITH LAURENCE RASTI ON HER PROJECT AND THE INSTALLATION AT MBAL.

Why did you choose to work on short sentences?

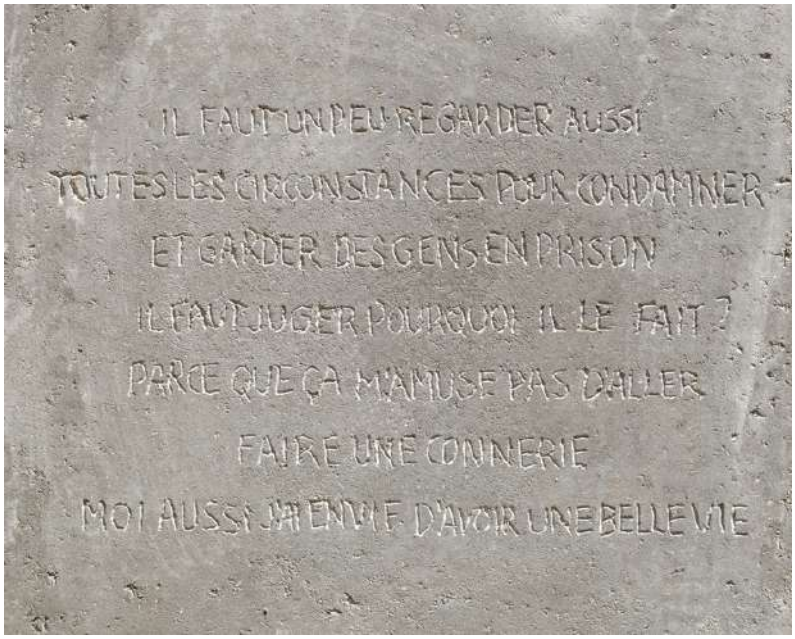
Long sentences often involve other forms of violence than short ones. Victims are frequently involved, whose voices become important and require different treatment. Given the project's timeline, I couldn't address these larger issues, such as gender-based violence in the judicial treatment. Working on short sentences made it possible to explore whether shorter sentences facilitate reintegration into society, as outlined in Article 75 of the Swiss Penal Code. Do these short imprisonments positively impact society. My focus was to work and collaborate with individuals serving short sentences or in the early execution of sentences particularly related to offences against property, the execution of fines, the breaking of bans, violations of the laws on foreigners and integration, and drug-related crimes. The conclusion is clear: these sentences predominantly affect people in precarious financial and/or residency situations. About half of these individuals cannot afford fines, leading to imprisonment instead. We must question whether such punishment is justified and beneficial to the greater good.



Laurence Rasti avec A., D., G., L., M., N., T., Z., *Cour de la Promenade, Un mur comme horizon*, 2023. Photographie numérique moyen format. © Laurence Rasti / Enquête photographique neuchâteloise 2024.

How did you prepare before meeting the prisoners?

I had some knowledge of the subject, but deepened my understanding through works by Angela Davis, Didier Fassin, Michel Foucault, Loïc Wacquant and Daniel Fink, and by attending conferences like the "Rencontres critiques des enfermements" (Critical Encounters on Incarceration). I also met with experts and researchers, such as Julie de Dardel and Luca Gnaedinger, who specifically work on the criminalization of so-called "undesirable" migration in Switzerland. My research at La Chaux-de-Fonds prison included meeting with administrators, who were very welcoming. These investigations revealed that most inmates serving short sentences face significant financial and administrative challenges, with very few wealthy individuals in these facilities.



Laurence Rasti avec A., D., G., L., M., N., T., Z., *Extrait de conversation avec L., Un mur comme horizon*, 2024. Gravure sur béton, 50 x 50 cm. © Laurence Rasti / Enquête photographique neuchâteloise 2024.
Literal translation of the quote: “You have to look at all the circumstances to condemn. And keeping people in prison, you have to judge why he's doing it? Because it doesn't amuse me to go and do something stupid - I want a good life too.”

The project consists of both a book and an exhibition. In the book, you detail your critical approach, illustrated by your photos and those taken by the prisoners. Could you explain the installation presented at MBAL?

The exhibition revolves around two key elements: the prisoners’ pinhole and cyanotype photographs and my own images and the documentary materials. At the centre of the room is a 10-square-meter enclosed space, the average size of a prison cell. On the exterior walls, visitors can read quotes from interviews engraved on concrete. The public is invited to enter the space, where an analog installation intermittently projects portraits of the people I met in prison, accompanied by sounds of the city and a nearby elementary school—sounds that can be heard from the prison yard. The fleeting nature of the projected prevents extended engagement, a deliberate choice made to avoid voyeurism and instead reflect the realities of incarceration. I didn’t want these portraits to be aesthetically pleasing, printed and framed. The audio can be disturbing, reminding individuals of life beyond prison walls. Visitors are confronted with confinement for a moment, experiencing the suspended, empty time through the anticipation of the images.

Administrative documents highlighting issues of precarity, and items from the prison canteen further enrich the experience.

The theme of collaboration is highly relevant today. How did you approach co-creation with the prisoners?

In my previous project *Venuses*, which explored questions of femininity and identity, I recognised the two participants as co-authors of the project. Without them, it wouldn't exist. They also hold the rights. In other projects, I remunerate participants for their time. In a prison setting, this was more complicated because, anonymity had to be maintained, meaning the prisoners couldn't be identified. On the other hand, paying them raised issues of equality in the prisoner community. So, I donated an equivalent sum for their contributions to associations that support inmates during their incarceration, particularly those lacking recourses.



Laurence Rasti avec A., D., G., L., M., N., T., Z., *Sténopé réalisé par Z., Un mur comme horizon,* 2023. Originale papier photosensible, 10 x 15 cm, reproduction en impression pigmentaire. © Laurence Rasti / Enquête photographique neuchâteloise 2024.

The engraved quotes on the concrete are powerful, reflecting the reasons for imprisonment and the usefulness of sentences. How did you select them?

Choosing the quotes was challenging because there were many interesting ones. The EDPR facility has better living conditions compared to prisons in larger urban centres, where there are issues like overcrowding and diminished living standards. Here, relationship between inmates and staff, and the administration, was generally positive. This environment allowed for discussions on the deeper impact of confinement, the limitations of prison life, its contributions, the discrimination it creates, and life post-release, revealing profound insights.

What do you hope the public understands or experiences through this exhibition and the book?

Before starting this project, I didn't necessarily hold an abolitionist stance. I was interested in prisons, but I didn't know much. After reading literature on the subject, reviewing the prisoners' files, understanding their personal situations, and talking with them, I uncovered so much inequality and discrimination within the system. It was violent and depressing realisation because I don't see any hope—unless we completely rethink the penal system. Someone who stole food because they were hungry will do it again upon release if they do not have more resources available to them; and paradoxically, they'll face even more hardship upon release. A person with a immigration status will experience even more stigmatisation with a criminal record, facing deportation or only CHF 250 per month to survive. Like them, I don't see the use of these sentences, and I've become increasingly abolitionist.





Laurence Rasti avec A., D., G., L., M., N., T., Z., *Un mur comme horizon*, 2023, Film diapositive. © Laurence Rasti / Enquête photographique neuchâteloise 2024.

Abolitionist for short sentences?

Yes, and in general. If we want transformative justice, we must look at the causes of the behaviours and analyse systemic violence, like rape culture or other power dynamics. I don't want to absolve people who have committed crimes—that's the critique I'll receive—but research shows there are alternatives to address these social problems without resorting to imprisonment. It's a question worth asking. Regarding the exhibition's theme, my aim is to provoke public reflection on the disproportionate effects of these sentences on vulnerable populations.

MICHAEL GÜNZBURGER
FOLLOW THE CRACKLING SOUND



Michael Günzburger, *Dann falte die Transparenz wieder auf*, 2024. Papier d'emballage et encre lithographique sur papier, 150 x 250 cm. © Photo : Michael Günzburger. Courtesy : Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle

Renowned Swiss visual artist Michael Günzburger explores the performative dimensions of printing challenging the notion of multiple reproduction. He has exhibited internationally and is the author of a thesis entitled "Printing with Chimeras - on Releasing Expectations" (Zurich/Linz, 2023), which documents and analyses this unique process. As a scientist and driven by insatiable curiosity, he experiments with various printing techniques, running diverse volumes through the press to seek unexpected compositions of lines, traces and uncontrolled colours. Through trial and error, he searches for the greatest alignment between content and form, expanding the boundaries of representation. Each work is unique – the result of a process conceived as a tool for painting and drawing. The exhibition features over 70 works, primarily focusing on monotypes and other experiments from the past decade, following his acclaimed series on animal reproductions (2010-2017). Alongside entire series of large-format prints that have never been exhibited, more recent pieces showcase printed representations of dinners and cocktails, as well as extensive experiments with a semi-automatic lithographic press.

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL GÜNZBURGER ON HIS CREATIVE PROCESS AND THE MBAL EXHIBITION.

What will be presented at MBAL?

In collaboration with curator Anna Bleuler, this exhibition offers a retrospective of my work over the past 11 years, focusing on experimental printing, which is part of my artistic practice. The traditional function of printing is reproduction, to publish content. For over 500 years, the technique hasn't evolved much, and its scope has diminished with the development of digital media. I found it interesting to approach this medium

from an artist's perspective. My goal is to produce something unique using a technique designed for replication. It's similar to painting or drawing but done with distinct tools. Printing requires a lot of control and precision to achieve the desired outcome. I let go during parts of the printing process, particularly the transfer of colours from the plate to the paper. I experiment without knowing what will emerge from the printing press.



Michael Günzburger, *Ein Zweiter Teller mit Tagliolini* (détail), 2023. Pâtes, crevettes, safran et encre lithographique sur papier, 80 x 40 cm. © Photo : Michael Günzburger. Courtesy : Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle

What does the exhibition title *Follow the Crackling Sound* refer to?

I print all kinds of things—fruits, small trees, objects. These are volumes that, when pressed, produce a sound. During the process, I listen. The materials change shape, mix with the oily texture of the colours, and all of this creates noise. When I hear that specific "crackling" sound, I think, "Yes, we're there."

Can you describe the works presented in these four rooms?

The exhibition begins with a series of large-format monotypes created in 2011, measuring up to three metres. This size can't be achieved with a standard press, which is limited to about 1.40 metres in length. I wanted to print something much larger for another project. My collaborator, printmaker Thomi Wolfensberger, and I built a custom, large-scale press. I couldn't do what I wanted at the time, but these are the first experiments using this unique machine.

You also collaborated with two other artists?

Yes, in two other rooms, I present works created with artists Arden Surdam and Ravi Agarwal. I collaborate with many people; it's an important part of my practice. When I tackle a subject, I want to know everything, so I work with experts from various fields. These were true artistic collaborations—we genuinely created works together. With Arden, an American photographer I met in Los Angeles, we explored still life. She photographs them, and I print them. We experimented with our respectives mediums for a month in 2021. I printed her images, and she photographed what was left in the press. We worked in an iterative process of gestures, transformation and capture.

And with Ravi Agarwal?

In 2024, I joined Ravi Agarwal in Rajasthan. He's an Indian photographer and activist. We were both interested in the impact of heatwaves in India and wanted to work on this contemporary issue. Conceptually, we decided to work *with* the heat, rather than *on* the heat, in an extreme environment to observe the consequences of this experience. The subject was a house located in the middle of the Rajasthan desert that belonged to Ravi's ancestors. We worked under temperatures of 48/49°C; I printed, and he captured. With the heat, the colours dried very quickly, and our working time was short—we were almost delirious. There are 15 pieces from this intense experience, and the rest will be exhibited in India simultaneously with the MBAL exhibition.

You dedicate one room to a series around a champagne bottle, with two works titled *First Sip of Champagne* and *Second Sip of Champagne*. Are these the two steps of the printing process or a metaphor for the increasing euphoria one feels when drinking champagne?

No! But I like the idea. I love when works allow for imagination. When we photographed the prints from this series for the catalogue, we discovered faces hidden in the images, similar to facial recognition software. We didn't notice them before. The photography made this extraordinary discovery possible – an unexpected coincidence that reflects my creative process. I perform the act that creates the image, but I can't control the outcome.



Michael Günzburger, *First Sip of Champagne* et *Second Sip of Champagne*, 2022. Champagne, encre lithographique et tessons sur papier, 280 x 204 cm. © Photo : Michael Günzburger. Courtesy : Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle

You talk about losing control in your approach, yet you decide on many parametrs before printing. What are they?

The performative aspect lies in the production process itself —where every gesture counts. For example, when printing the champagne bottle, there was a lot of preparation with Thomi Wolfensberger and a champagne expert who

taught me everything about bottle-making. Surprisingly, it's two pieces of glass assembled, leaving a fine line on the bottle. Should the line be positioned horizontally or vertically? How would the bottle break under the press's weight? Many other parameters were also studied: the weight required for the paper, the color arrangement, the choice of colours, etc. Everything is important.



Michael Günzburger, *Schlafe mit drei Brombeeren*, 2020. Mûres, duvet de plumes et encre lithographique sur papier, 152 x 204 cm. © Photo : Michael Günzburger. Courtesy : Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle

Could you explain in more detail the printing process for this champagne bottle?

It's fairly simple. I placed a smooth plate on the floor, applied a layer of green and a layer of black to create a mixture in the press, then placed the champagne bottle—a very good one, straight from the fridge—on top and covered it with paper. A 2-3-ton plate was then lifted by a crane to about 50 cm above the setup and dropped onto the bottle, which exploded. We had various effects with the mixing colours and the champagne, almost like a salad dressing with elements pushing against each other. The broken glass created drawings, as did the paper, which bent slightly under the weight. So yes, I control many parameters; I have an idea of what it will produce, but I don't know in which direction it will explode. There's a technical moment in printing where the pressure is at its highest—you can't see what's happening. Even with a micro-camera, it's impossible to know. At that moment, everything is destroyed and changed. How the material will emerge, I don't know. I let go—that's the chimera moment.

How do you select works after the performative act, such as with the champagne bottle?

Editing has become increasingly important but requires reflection after the production. I have to distance myself. I don't trust my feelings during the process. For the champagne bottle, we made three prints: *First Sip*, *Second Sip*

and a third. I only show two to avoid being too didactic. I also kept the plate with its traces of ink, broken glass and all the materials. It seemed even better than the prints—it has a quality unto itself. It will also be exhibited. Generally, during production, the idea of the artwork is absent. It's actually a decision when there's an exhibition. Otherwise, it remains material that I don't necessarily consider artwork. I store it and can revisit it two years later or even longer.

There's a great deal of poetry in your works, with a harmonious mix of colours and shapes. How do you make these aesthetic choices?

It's very difficult to describe my artistic choices. There are certain constants in my work, certain interests. I'm very drawn to colour gradients. What lies between one colour and another? How can I explore that space? Reproducing gradients with printing techniques is very simple. For a painter, however, it's very difficult. I try to show tension in my work—balance, but at the same time, a kind of dynamic. I look closely at other artists and classic printmakers, and I try to push beyond what's possible. Curiosity drives me as an artist. Also, when I look at the prints, I see a collaborative act. That's very important. During production, I discuss with Thomi Wolfensberger, an expert printmaker, about colours, papers and effects. These are simple conversations. That's what art-making is about—nothing genius, just a conversation between two people trying to achieve something.

What's your opinion on digital technologies compared to the type of printing you practice?

I'm not at all against digital—I use it a lot. I make digital drawings and print with digital printers. It's not one technique against another; they're just tools that allow me to realise a concept or idea. I don't understand why anyone would be dogmatic about it. It's the expression that matters, not the process. However, I don't want to be controlled by the tool. Software is very powerful, offering infinite possibilities, but it also directs your hand. When I look at some works, I recognise effects created by software—a Photoshop filter, for example—and that's not interesting. Ideas and artistic processes are at the centre of my work. Even if technique is important, sometimes very important because it shapes the subject, the concept must remain central. When we built the large press with Thomi Wolfensberger, it was because I wanted to print a polar bear. It was an idea, and we worked on the technique to achieve it. It didn't work, but we used the tool for another idea and shared it with other artists. In today's context, many printing skills are at risk of disappearing. That doesn't mean the tool has no further potential. The same phenomenon happened with other mediums. Painted portraits gradually disappeared, replaced by photography, and painters explored other territories, moving to abstraction. The same story happened with vinyl in music.

Why did you choose to work with food and beverages?

As I mentioned, I love collaborations, and I enjoy eating and cooking. It was a subject that interested me and offered engaging collective experience. Working with a mixologist, we created a great cocktail, tasted it, and then printed it, reflecting on its composition, the impacts of mixing ingredients,

and the colours. For the meal, I worked with two chefs, questioning all the parameters of gastronomy—from the state of raw or cooked ingredients to the visual aspect of the dishes, which stems from a long tradition of haute cuisine. We cooked, tasted and printed. It's also a way to understand what we eat, and it creates an image. All these connections and steps are in the prints. The ephemeral nature of food that we consume,which then disappears appeals to me—it connects to the ephemeral nature of my practice. The idea of creating for eternity doesn't interest me; I make art for the living and with a certain idea of the collective.



Michael Günzburger, *Moment du processus lors de l'impression du champagne*, Arni (Bern), 2022. © Photo : Michael Günzburger. Courtesy : Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle

OPENING 11 OCTOBER

11.00 pm – Press Opening with artists present
3.00 pm – Guided tour with the artists present
5.00 pm – Launch of the book *Un mur comme horizon* by Laurence Rasti
6.00 pm – Public opening, followed by a festive aperitif and a three-part DJ set by La Collective and Kaori Yanagita

OFF-SITE EXHIBITION OPENING, 30 OCTOBER

6.00 pm – Opening of the off-site exhibition MBAL x RHNe *Le souffle d'Amida* (*The Breath of Amida*) at the Réseau hospitalier neuchâtelois de La Chaux-de-Fonds (Neuchâtel Hospital Network in La Chaux-de-Fonds), showcasing the work of photographer Virginie Rebetez

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Wednesday - Sunday: 11.00 am - 5.00 pm
First Sunday of the month: free admission

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