



MEP MAISON
EUROPÉENNE
DE LA
PHOTOGRAPHIE

Press release



Thomas Mailaender

Les Belles Images

12.06–29.09.2024

Studio

Anne-Lise Seusse

Les enfants du palais
sous la mer

12.06–14.07.2024

Tatjana Danneberg

Something Happened

19.07–29.09.2024

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EXTREME TOURISM!!!

Summer 2024 will be unforgettable, and great fun, in Paris, as we host the Olympic and Paralympic games in the city. To celebrate this unique and historic event the MEP has invited the Marseille-based French artist Thomas Mailaender to take over the whole museum for a playful and subversive "Carte Blanche" that he has entitled *Les Belles Images*.

For many years Mailaender has been at the forefront of an important tendency within the contemporary art world that focusses on pre-existing photographic images, whether found physically, in flea-markets and boot-sales, or digitally, through internet searches. But for artists like Mailaender, finding this 'raw' visual material is only the first stage of a creative process that can lead towards a whole range of different destinations. Initially often presented in artists' books, the archives and groupings of images that Mailaender assembles for his work then undergo spectacular processes of presentation and circulation. And because the artist is interested not only in finding but reworking images through photoshop and retouching, visitors will be able to take part in Mailaender's 'extreme tourism' having themselves photographed at the edge of an erupting volcano!

From the giant printed sail of a yacht in the garden of the museum, through multiple cabinets, video installations, giant cyanotype panels, ceramics and lava fragments, a full-size metal shack, and even an entire gallery transformed into a darkroom with the walls as its support, and even a Silver Woman on planet Earth, Mailaender brings us face to face with images and materials that are usually overlooked, underappreciated or simply ignored, as stunning works of art on their own right. Like a medieval alchemist, working away in his laboratory, Mailaender transforms 'base' imagery into creative gold, while always remaining faithful to his process and practice. There are moments in his work where we may laugh at the idiocies of others, and equally, moments where we are confronted with the pathos involved in salvaging stories from the dustbin of history by regarding *Les Belles Images*.

To accompany this immersive and interactive take-over of the MEP, we have invited two of the best of the next generation's photographic artists to show for the first time institutionally in Paris in the STUDIO, from Paris; Anne-Lise Seusse and from Vienna, Tatjana Danneberg.

And because this is, above all, an Olympic summer, there will be winners at the MEP: Thomas Mailaender has arranged for every 1000th visitor to receive a surprise "golden ticket"!

Simon Baker,
Director, MEP

Cover image

From the series "Les Belles Images",
2010-2024

© Thomas Mailaender

Galleries +2 +3

Curators

Simon Baker, director, MEP
Aden Vincendeau, assistant curator,
MEP

Production manager

Elisa Monteillet, MEP

Some of the installations in the
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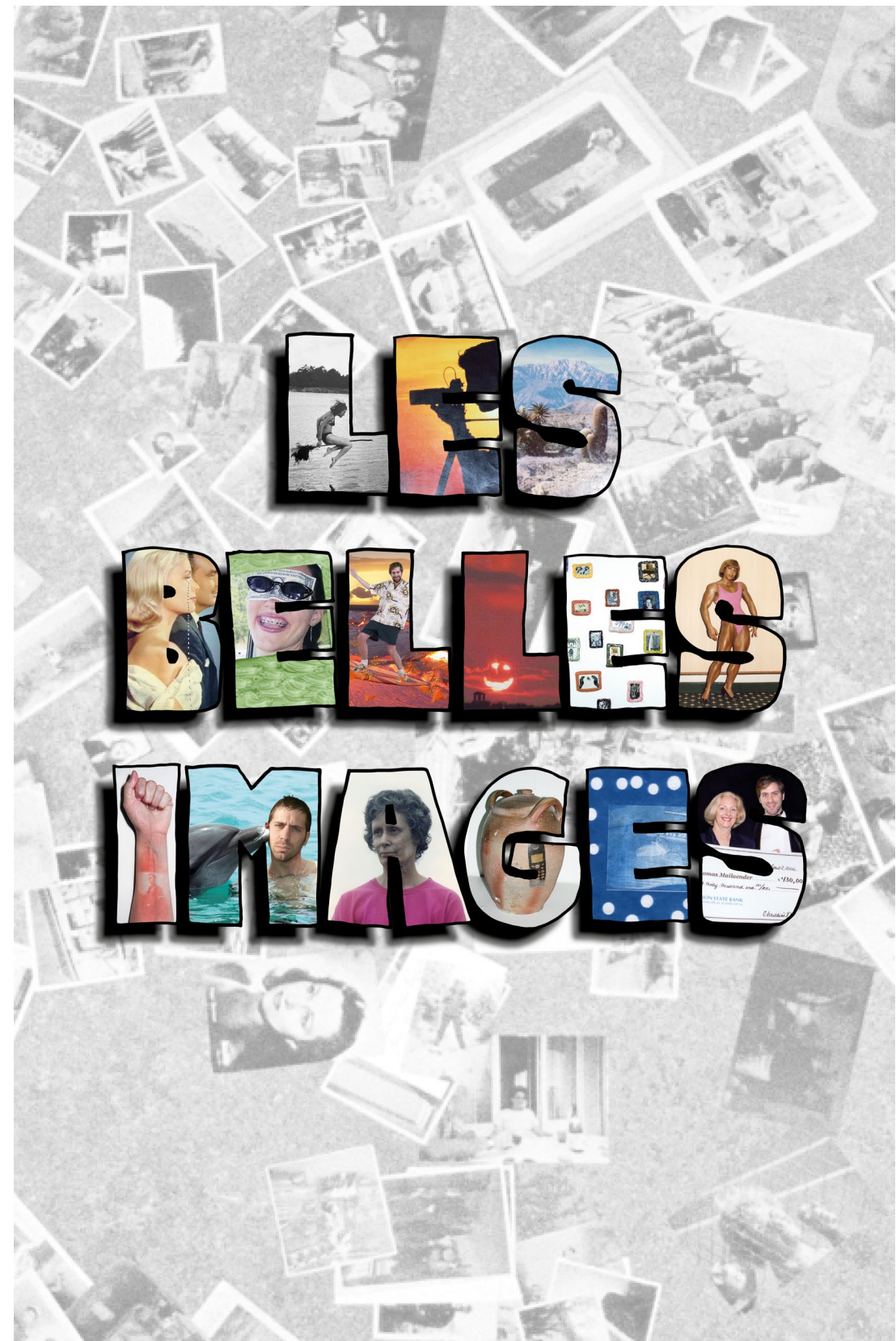
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Thomas Mailaender
Les Belles Images
12.06–29.09.2024

The exhibition

The MEP gives a Carte Blanche to Thomas Mailaender, with his first major retrospective in Paris. The multimedia artist, who pushes the boundaries of photographic experimentation by exploring a wide variety of images and a range of innovative and original processes, will take over both floors of the MEP.

Based in Marseille, Mailaender undertakes a wide range of obsessive and passionate visual research through the use of different photographic source material and techniques, deploying highly unusual materials and installations in an institutional context. Situated at the intersection of several disciplines, Mailaender's artistic practice questions the role and primary function of the image through a diverse multidisciplinary approach to photography, and its associated archival tendencies.

His installations, which are often monumental in scale, question the place of the image in our society, and its materiality, by incorporating not only photographs found online, but also those found in flea markets and garage sales. An avid collector of anonymous images, Thomas Mailaender has assembled an archive of over 11,000 documents in a major collection entitled "The Fun Archaeology", a substantial part of which will be on show. Exploring digital archives, the artist draws attention to unusual vernacular images that highlight the absurdity of human behavior and the impact of online sharing platforms. Symptomatic of our ultra-connected societies, the subjects studied by Mailaender explore the role and primary function of the image as a cultural object, and its reappropriation for artistic purposes.

This Carte Blanche will feel a little like an experimental photographic laboratory, the diversity of the visual proposals questioning our relationships with images and the daily consequences of their circulation and consumption. Led by the artist's interventions, the exhibition will put the legitimacy of creative processes at the centre of its concerns and by moving away from the traditional frameworks of visual display, *Les Belles Images* represents a major innovative approach for the MEP as a photography museum.

The exhibition will bring together a vast array of pieces with work specially designed for the show, such as "Fail Anthology", "Extreme Retouch" and the "Chemical Room", for example, which will be covered with photographs exposed directly onto the walls. Spread over the two floors of the MEP, the exhibition will include "Les Belles Images", the eponymous series in which the artist redeploys press agency photographs with ceramic frames, as well as his major series "Extreme Tourism", "Gone Fishing", and "Illustrated People". Finally, the "Life and Adventures of a Silver Woman on Planet earth" revisits the life and commitment of Rosemary Jacobs, an American activist who was a victim of the ravages of silver nitrate, using photography to document her story and denounce the use of this compound for medical purposes.

Super lottery - Golden ticket!

Based on an original idea by Thomas Mailaender, a super lottery will be held throughout the Season! Thanks to a "Golden ticket", every thousandth visitor will receive a surprise: an excerpt from a film from the Fail Anthology series, stamped by the artist.

Will you be taking a surprise home with you?

Exhibition overview



From the series "Extreme Tourism", 2011

© Thomas Mailaender

Taking over the two floors of the MEP as well as spaces that are being used for the first time, this Carte Blanche brings together emblematic series by Thomas Mailaender, such as "Extreme Tourism" and "Sponsoring", alongside works conceived specially for the exhibition. Beginning outside the building, the show opens with a stranded boat, whose cyanotype sail, created for the exhibition, gives a first glimpse into the artist's world. On the first floor, visitors can discover "Extreme Retouch" for the first time, as well as "Les Belles Images", with its hundred or so ceramic frames.

Thomas Mailaender's exploration of the photographic medium continues with the series "Handicraft", "Lava", "Gone Fishing", and "Chemical Room", an immersive installation designed as a darkroom inside the MEP.

The second floor focuses on the theme of the archive, which is central to Thomas Mailaender's work. The series "Illustrated People", "Fail Anthology", which brings together 150 prints excavated from the Internet, "The Fun Archaeology", a cabinet of curiosities containing hundreds of documents, photographs, and other unusual objects collected by the artist, and "Crash Archive", a collection of photographs of car accidents from the archives of an insurance adjuster, are all presented here. The project "Life and Adventures of a Silver Woman on Planet Earth" is also presented in the form of a projection in a 1970s-style American living room. Thomas Mailaender's work in the field of publishing is also showcased in the "Bookworm" series, presented in the form of an installation in which woodworms devour one of the thirteen copies of the eponymous book, and of "Sunset Books", a series made up of large sheets of cyanotype plasterboard to which are attached books featuring sunsets on the cover, taken from the artist's collection.

Exterior

Set up in front of the facade of the MEP, an old boat stranded on a synthetic lawn appears to the public as soon as they enter the building. Topped with a digitally printed sail, this installation immerses visitors in the world of Thomas Mailaender as they enter the grounds of the Maison Européenne de la Photographie.



"Boat", 3d modelling, 2024

© Thomas Mailaender

Floor +2

Extreme Tourism

In 2011, Thomas Mailaender discovered Steve Young, a photographer specialising in volcanic eruptions, who creates photomontages for his clients based on his shots of the most dangerous volcanoes. Amused by the possibility of collecting trivial stagings of extreme situations, Thomas Mailaender called on Steve Young to produce this series in which he stages himself. These works plunge the viewer into a contradictory feeling: by freeing himself from convention through the use of photomontage and retouching software, Thomas Mailaender questions the role of photography in the dissemination and legitimisation of these visual representations.

Sponsoring

Following extensive research on the Internet, Thomas Mailaender identified a number of visual recurrences in ceremonies in which cheques are presented as part of a lottery or charitable event. This provided the premise for the Sponsoring series. As part of the genre of group portraits, this series presents images that systematically feature the same visual codes and technical errors: forced smiles, formal attire, aggressive flash, red-eye, or underexposure. To transform these photographs, in the manner of a forger, Mailaender carries out a long process of retouching, creating an imaginary scenario in which the outcome is always the same: the artist as eternal winner.

"I don't think my work is not intellectual, but I do try to make it as free from discourse as possible."

Interview with Thomas Mailaender by Scott Indrisek for ARTINFO.COM, Dec. 2010 - Jan. 2011.

From the series "Sponsoring", 2011

© Thomas Mailaender





From the series "Gone Fishing", 2016

© Thomas Mailaender

Gone Fishing

Produced in 2016, "Gone Fishing" is a fictional series inspired by the artist's experience of fatherhood. Presented in the form of an installation, it comprises nineteen photographs and as many fictitious typed letters addressed to his partner, Marion Mailaender, who was pregnant with their first child at the time. In this way, Thomas Mailaender draws up a portrait of an awkward man running away from his commitments as a young father, somewhere between implausible fiction and plausible reality. Fascinated by the visual imperfection of photomontages, Thomas Mailaender deliberately uses a cheap snapshot aesthetic produced from images found on the Internet, exploiting the narrative potential of a complex emotional relationship.

Gamby

In March 2020, Thomas Mailaender spent the first lockdown at Pierre Grosse, in the French Alps, with his family and his friend Gamby, a man who lives alone in a remote area. Gamby has built up a photographic archive since his childhood centring on nature, mountains, cars, drinks, and friends. Against a backdrop of closures imposed on public venues by the global pandemic, many cultural institutions sought to maintain a virtual connection with their audiences. In collaboration with the NRW Forum in Düsseldorf, Mailaender embarked Gamby on a new kind of collaborative digital project: photographic dance. In a deliberately disorganised environment, accompanied by inaudible music and lighting effects, Gamby's personal archives appear before the camera. This video goes against the the imagery that emerged on the web during the period, revealing an unusual moment that promotes the dissemination of strangely disconcerting vernacular content.



Extreme Retouch

At a time when the emergence of digital software has encouraged the development of new possibilities for photographic retouching that allow us to correct our mistakes, Thomas Mailaender's "Extreme Retouch" project focuses on the imperfections that mark the life of a photograph. Manipulated, transformed, and modified to the extreme, the images in the series are the result of virtual exchanges between the artist and studios based in India. By voluntarily sending out botched images, the artist ironically attempts to correct these errors by giving often absurd instructions. The result is uneven images, marked by camouflage with dubious effects, but also by the artist's own hand in modifying these documents before they are sent.

"I like the fact that it's an entirely internet-based process, that you send a photograph to someone on another continent who then paints you. And in this case, it feels strangely personal."

Interview with Thomas Mailaender by Michael Grieve for the British Journal of Photography, 2017.

From the series "Extreme Retouch", 2024

© Thomas Mailaender

Pricasso

In 2011, Thomas Mailaender discovered the work of Tim Patch, an Australian artist better known as "Pricasso" who films himself reproducing portraits using his penis as a paintbrush. Through the use of video, Pricasso plays on the codes of performativity associated with the artist, but also questions the "virile" vision of the act of painting. Following in the footsteps of Marcel Duchamp, who used his own sperm in "Paysage Fautif" (1946), and Paul McCarthy in his performance "Painter" (1995), Thomas Mailaender questions the staging of the artist at work through a visual satire of artistic productivity. In this video, Mailaender plays with the boundaries between art and entertainment (which he considers an artistic category in its own right) and rethinks the different practices and how they are received by the public.



"Totem 3", 2017

© Thomas Mailaender

Handicraft / Lava

One of Thomas Mailaender's favourite materials is clay, whose stability fascinates him. At the centre of his research into the permanence of the medium, the "Handicraft" series experiments with the relationship between ceramics and photography through several unique pieces with deliberately visible imperfections on which photographs taken from the Internet are printed. This "eternal" fixation of images destined to be lost in the visual and immaterial digital web, is also a way for Mailaender to reflect on their circulation and ownership.

The enamel-covered lava stone slabs in the "Tiles of Lava" series come from a volcanic stone production site in Volvic. All illustrated with photographs found on the Internet, the works are characteristic of the disordering of materials and artistic sources that is central to the artist's approach.



From the series "Les Belles Images",
2010-2024

© Thomas Mailaender

Les Belles Images

Partly produced for this exhibition, the series brings together photographs from the stocks of press agencies, which used to receive prints from amateur photographers on a daily basis for their "news" columns. Used as masters for the press stories, the images had a small note on the back written by the photographer, giving a brief account of the event photographed. These "semi-precious" images are set in unique handmade frames enamelled by Thomas Mailaender and his assistants.

What Thomas Mailaender calls "minor major moments in our history" allow the artist to reconfigure these images visually, giving them a new narrative. Taken from traditional media distribution networks, these images acquire a particular resonance and take on a new meaning in the form of a visual archaeology of photography. Their museum setting celebrates the plurality of the press image in the second half of the twentieth century.

Chemical Room

"Chemical Room" is an immersive installation conceived by Thomas Mailaender as an exploration of the photographic medium. By applying a gelatin-silver solution directly to the walls of the room, and using tracing paper as large-format negatives, the artist opens up visual possibilities and questions the place of images in a museum context. Taken from photographs found in various magazines, this work takes the visitor into the artist's archives and, through the creation of a darkroom, removes the boundaries between working studio and institutional space.



Fail Anthology

Drawn from a series of ten books originally published by Thomas Mailaender with RVB Books, the prints presented in the "Fail Anthology" series reflect amateur practices made possible by the growing popularity of the Internet. The images from these books take the form of a visual anthology of modern times, with similar technical characteristics.

Presented in coloured frames in reference to each book, the photographs are retouched by hand. In this way, Thomas Mailaender breaks away from traditional photographic conventions by promoting these images that are doomed to disappear into the depths of the Internet.

Crash Archive

Comprising hundreds of images of car accidents taken between the 1960s and 1990s, the "Crash Archive" is a collection from the professional archives of an insurance adjuster who travelled the roads of France to record the most serious accidents.

Like the "Car Crash" series begun by Andy Warhol in 1962, Thomas Mailaender questions the visual impact of these images, which, through their serial nature and media coverage, tend to lose their emotional charge. Stripped of their legal function, these photographs paradoxically become a striking testimony to the complex relationship of fascination/repulsion that we have with these violent images that have become commonplace. Thomas Mailaender takes the opposite view of the event and reminds us of the ambivalent tension at play: should we look away or face the horror of the scene? The artist leaves us no choice here by confronting the visitor with the brutality of the collision, generating different scenarios for each accident.

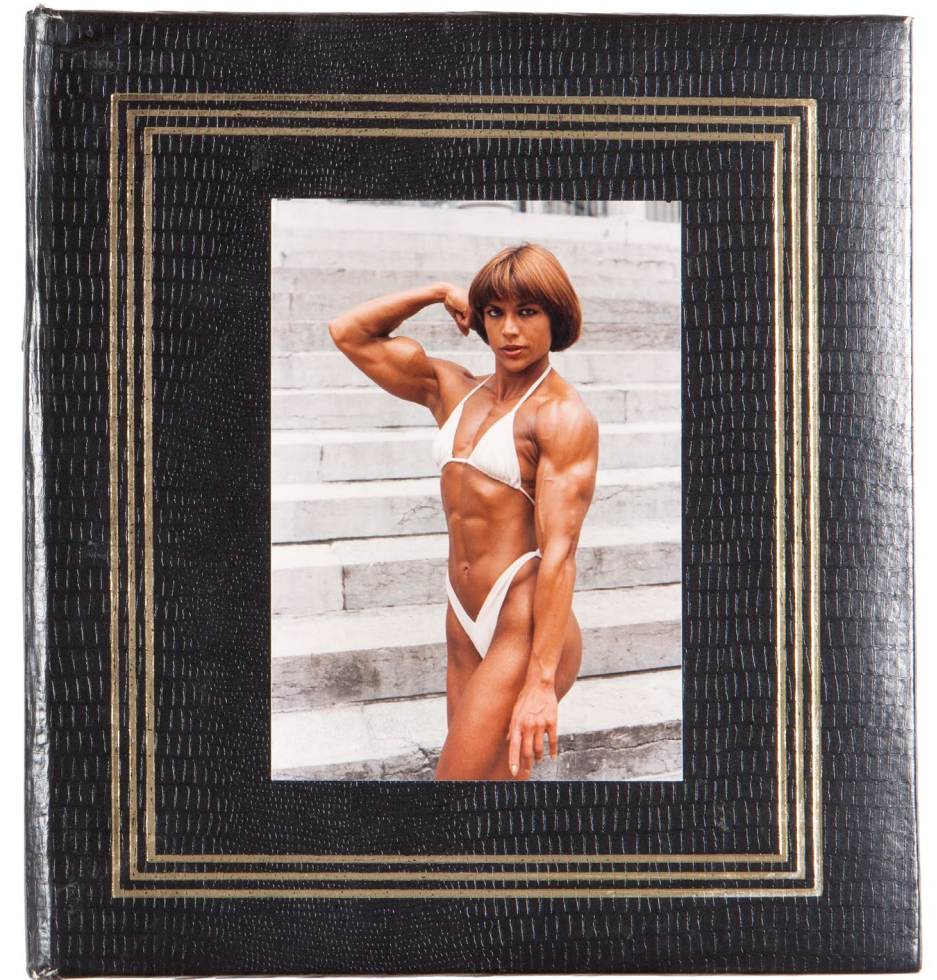
"I've always liked specialists. I spend a lot of time looking for people who have singular practices and who don't have any particular expertise.

I like to get to know them so that I can fully interpret their methods and approaches.'

Interview by Caroline Niémant with Thomas Mailaender for Foam Magazine, April 2011.

From the series "Fail Anthology", 2024

© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "The Fun Archaeology", 2018

© Thomas Mailaender

The Fun Archaeology

"The Fun Archaeology" is a vast collection of documents assembled over more than a decade by Thomas Mailaender. Evolving with each discovery, the collection is made up of vernacular images, unusual objects, and albums found at flea markets, second-hand shops, and private resale sites. Made up of extremely diverse objects, "The Fun Archaeology" is a singular visual archaeology of the twentieth century. Containing strange, astonishing, sometimes embarrassing, but often funny images, this archive of several hundred documents bears witness to the artist's frenetic collecting habit.

Blue Corridor

Initially created in 2017 for the artist's solo exhibition at the NRW Forum in Düsseldorf, "Blue Corridor" is an installation originally made up of around sixty sheets of plasterboard, a material used primarily in the construction industry. Coated with a photosensitive solution and exposed to UV rays, reproductions of digital images found online are integrated into the sheets. Produced using the cyanotype process, which is characterised by its bluish colour, this dual use of an old technique and photographs from web culture is highly representative of Thomas Mailaender's work. The installation confronts visitors with the evolution of the visual iconography of images, poking fun at the strategies for legitimising his work.

Sunset Books

A collective and intimate experience, sunsets are one of the most common visual typologies in our collective imagination. Using his own collection of books with sunset covers and shimmering colours, Thomas Mailaender plays with the visual conventions associated with this category of images. The installation makes these books available to visitors, whose value lies in the iconography chosen to illustrate the subject of a romance or thriller. Arranged on a resin table created especially for the exhibition, these covers are a cynical reminder that nothing beats the real experience of a sunset.

Life and Adventures of a Silver Woman on Planet Earth

"Life and Adventures of a Silver Women on Planet Earth" considers the phenomenon of argyria, a photosensitisation of the epidermal layers caused by the use of silver nitrate for medical purposes. In 2020, Thomas Mailaender, who was researching silver and photosensitivity, stumbled across an online publication about the story of Rosemary Jacobs, an American woman who was contaminated by silver nitrate at the age of 15 following the use of a nasal spray sold in the United States.

In March 2020, Thomas Mailaender went to the United States to meet Rosemary Jacobs. The artist then began work on her personal archives, as well as a photographic series focusing on the current consequences of this poisoning. In his work, Thomas Mailaender is keen to explore the materiality of the medium, and reflects on the limits of the photographically visible through the use of the body as a photosensitive medium. Composed of archive images and snapshots taken by the artist during the trip, the series plays with the traditional conventions of vernacular photography on the one hand, and formal photography on the other.



From the series "Life and Adventures of a Silver Woman on Planet Earth", 2020-2024

© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Illustrated People", 2013

© Thomas Mailaender

Illustrated People

In 2013, Thomas Mailaender carried out research at the Archive of Modern Conflict (AMC), a private photographic archive founded in 1991 and based in London. Made up of millions of documents and photographs, the archive initially specialised in images from the First and Second World Wars before opening up to other forms of vernacular photography.

To produce this series, Thomas Mailaender selected original negatives from the archives and exposed them on the skin of volunteers for several minutes using an ultraviolet lamp. Through the use of light, the negatives appear directly as positives on the bodies of his models, who undergo superficial burns. By exploring the question of the primacy of the subject over the photographic object itself, through superimposing one image over another, this series transforms the body into a significantly political object.

Résine

The plates in the exhibition are part of a new series of works produced using resin, a technique invented by the French biologist Pierre Giraudon (1923–2012) in the late 1940s, which involves incorporating elements from the plant, mineral, and animal worlds into a synthetic medium.

In large, thick, custom-built structures, Thomas Mailaender fixes different elements—photographs, archival items, but also cigarette butts and empty packets of crisps found by his friends.

His work is based on a collection of objects found on the ground during his wanderings around the flea markets of Saint-Ouen and Marseille.

Like an archaeologist attentive to the complexity of his environment, Thomas Mailaender creates contemporary fossils by adding various "documents", thus preserving 'decisive moments' that were destined to disappear.

Papier Mâché

Designed in collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gouy, a craftsman who continues to make paper by hand in the Limousin region, the "Papier Mâché" series features sheets of handmade paper into which the artist inserts compressed objects and printed photographic elements. Augmented with images, packaging, and various artefacts found by Thomas Mailaender at flea markets or on the ground during his wanderings, the "Papier Mâché" series is made up of multi-faceted works in which the desacralisation of photography is visible, reduced to the same level as historically lesser objects which Mailaender has revalued for artistic purposes.

Bookworm

Created in collaboration with the Dutch artist Erik Kessels, "Bookworm" is an installation that destabilises the viewer's relationship with the persistence and disappearance of objects.

Comprising a Plexiglas box containing one of the thirteen original copies of the eponymous book, the installation reveals the gradual degradation of the work, devoured by thousands of wood-eating worms, leading to the inevitable erasure of the printed photographs.

Bringing together images collected by the two artists from their respective collections, "Bookworm" is a kind of *memento mori* that invites us to question the durability of photography and to desacralise the museum object as such.



From the series "Bookworm", 2021

© Thomas Mailaender

Biography

Thomas Mailaender was born in Marseille in 1979. He studied at the Arts Décoratifs in Paris and then at the Villa Arson in Nice. He lives and works between Marseille and Paris and is represented by Michael Hoppen Gallery in London. Known for using a broad range of different techniques and a variety of materials, he reappropriates images from the Internet or from his own archives. An obsessive collector with a passion for immersive installations, Thomas Mailaender uses his ingenuity to design creative exhibitions that always combine humour and originality.

His work has been shown in numerous French and international institutions and presented in group exhibitions including *Do Disturb* (Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2017), *Iconoclasts: Art Out of the Mainstream* (Saatchi Gallery, London, 2017–18), *Performing for the Camera* (Tate Modern, London, 2016), *From Here On* (Rencontres d'Arles, 2011), *Back to the Future* (FOAM, Amsterdam, 2018), *Don't! Photography and the Art of Mistakes* (SFMOMA, 2019) and a walk-through installation of *The Fun Archaeology* (MUCEM, Marseille, 2021). His first European retrospective, *The Fun Archive*, was organised at the NRW Forum in Düsseldorf in 2017, followed by two other solo exhibitions, *Ultraviolets* at La Chambre, Strasbourg in 2022 and *Lumière Passion* at the Centre Photographique Marseille in 2022.

Thomas Mailaender's works are held in institutions around the world, including the Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration and the Fonds national d'art contemporain in Paris, the Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée in Sérignan, and MONA in Tasmania.

He has also published numerous artists' books and has undertaken several residencies, notably at the Société Française de Photographie (2013), the Archive of Modern Conflict (2014), and LVMH Métiers d'Art (2018). He also curated the exhibitions *Hara Kiri* (Rencontres d'Arles, 2016) and *Photo Pleasure Palace* with Erik Kessels (Unseen, Amsterdam, 2017). In 2015, he received the PhotoBook of the Year award at the 2015 Paris Photo–Aperture Foundation PhotoBook Awards.

Press images

The press photos are copyright free for the promotion of the *Thomas Mailaender — Les Belles Images* exhibition at the MEP and for its duration only. They cannot be cropped or modified, or have any text added onto them.



From the series "Extreme Tourism", 2011
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Extreme Tourism", 2011
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Extreme Tourism", 2011
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Les Belles Images", 2010-2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Les Belles Images", 2010-2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Les Belles Images", 2010-2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Gone Fishing", 2016
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Gone Fishing", 2016
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Gone Fishing", 2016
© Thomas Mailaender



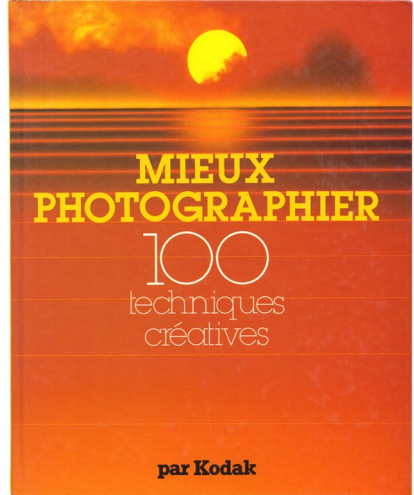
From the series "Les Belles Images", 2010-2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Bookworm", 2021
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Bookworm", 2021
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Sunset Books"
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Résine", 2023-2024
© Thomas Mailaender



"Totem 3", 2017
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Illustrated People", 2013
© Thomas Mailaender



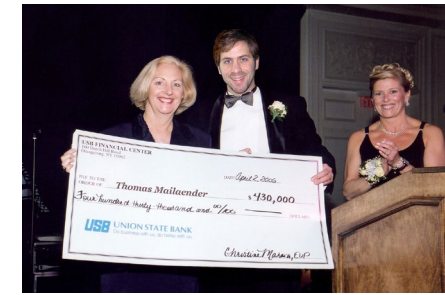
From the series "Illustrated People", 2013
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Illustrated People", 2013
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Sponsoring", 2011
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Sponsoring", 2011
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Sponsoring", 2011
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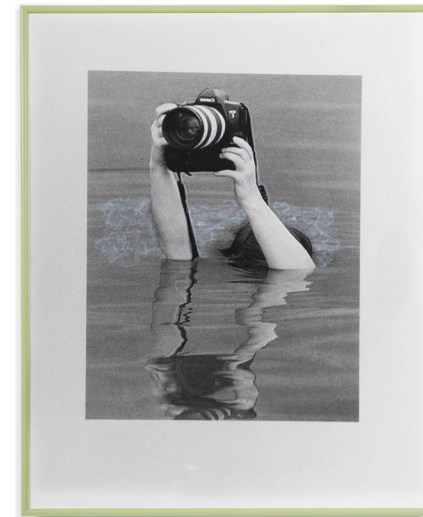
From the series "Papier Mâché", 2021
© Thomas Mailaender



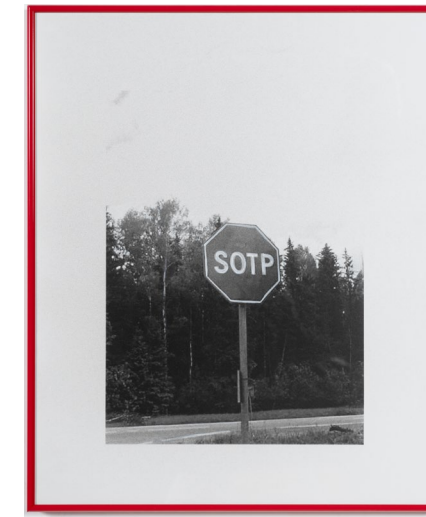
From the series "Papier Mâché", 2021
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "The Fun Archaeology", 2018
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Fail Anthology", 2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Fail Anthology", 2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Fail Anthology", 2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Lava", 2015-2022
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Lava", 2015-2022
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Crash Archive", 2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Life and Adventures of a Silver Woman on Planet Earth", 2020-2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Life and Adventures of a Silver Woman on Planet Earth", 2020-2024
© Thomas Mailaender



From the series "Life and Adventures of a Silver Woman on Planet Earth", 2020-2024
© Thomas Mailaender

The MEP supports young artists

In parallel with the four-month-long programme in the Galleries (on floors +2 and +3) presenting major exhibitions and work by established artists, the Studio (on level +1) is organized according to a shorter timetable, offering emerging artists the opportunity to exhibit their work as a solo show for the first time in an institutional setting in France.

Curator

Clothilde Morette, artistic director, MEP

Production manager

Elisa Monteillet, MEP

The exhibition is organised in collaboration with Christian Dior Parfums.

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Les enfants du palais sous la mer, le gant, 2024

© Anne-Lise Seusse

#AnneLiseSeusse

#StudioMEP



Anne-Lise Seusse

Les enfants du palais de la mer

12.06–14.07.2024

The exhibition

From 12 June to 14 July, the MEP Studio, a space dedicated to emerging creative work, is hosting the project "Les enfants du palais sous la mer" (*Children of the Palace Under the Sea*), by photographer and video artist Anne-Lise Seusse. From a series conceived based on an invitation by the sociologist and lecturer-researcher Amélie Nicoles, this exhibition focuses on two issues linked to the Vendée region: the fate of former holiday camps along the coast and the threat posed by global warming and rising sea levels.

Until the 1970s, the commune of Saint-Hilaire-de-Riez in the Vendée had more than a dozen holiday centres which were the result of a political desire to take in children from the "red suburbs"—communist towns in the periphery of Paris—after the Second World War. Focusing on one of these centres, the Houilles holiday camp which was abandoned in 2018, Anne-Lise Seusse found this research site to be a fertile ground for connecting multiple narratives, from the memory of the buildings to the past cult of outdoor leisure activities and the wild reappropriation of the site by illicit night-time activities.

The two-stage project led the artist to carry out in-depth research combining urban sociology, history, and territorial policy with personal accounts through the collection of postcards, photographs, and letters. Anne-Lise Seusse then took over the uninhabited colony at night and turned it into her studio. Illuminating the space with coloured gels, Anne-Lise Seusse delivers images that are situated somewhere between documentary and forensic photography, with elements of installation and sculpture. "Les enfants du palais sous la mer" shows a maze of objects of all kinds—furniture, toys, etc.—which seem to have taken over the space. We are left guessing at an apocalyptic landscape, not knowing whether the catastrophe is imminent or has already taken place. Amidst these objects, traces of life can be seen in the presence of recent graffiti that tell another story, that of these depreciated places that are once again becoming desirable. "Les enfants du palais sous la mer" thus evokes a dystopian world in which human civilisation ends up irretrievably submerged underwater.

Anne-Lise Seusse was born in Lyon in 1980 and lives and works in Paris. She studied philosophy before going on to study at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Lyon and is interested in territories as fictional spaces and their sociology. Her work has been exhibited in museums and art centres including the Creux de l'enfer in Thiers (2008), the Institut d'Art Contemporain in Villeurbanne (2011), the National Gallery in Cape Town (2012), the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2012), the Centre International d'Art et du Paysage de Vassivière (2013), the École spéciale d'architecture in Paris (2014), MuMa in Le Havre (2017), and Frac Limousin (2018). Anne-Lise Seusse has worked in South Africa with the support of the FNAGP (now Fondation des Artistes). Several of her photographs and videos have been acquired by the FRAC Limousin. The project "Les enfants du palais sous la mer" was supported by the CNAP.

Press images

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Les enfants du palais sous la mer, 2024
© Anne-Lise Seusse



Les enfants du palais sous la mer, le gant, 2024
© Anne-Lise Seusse



Les enfants du palais sous la mer, salle des jeux, 2024
© Anne-Lise Seusse



Les enfants du palais sous la mer, le dé, 2024
© Anne-Lise Seusse



Les enfants du palais sous la mer, 2024
© Anne-Lise Seusse

Studio +1

The MEP supports young artists

In parallel with the four-month-long programme in the Galleries (on floors +2 and +3) presenting major exhibitions and work by established artists, the Studio (on level +1) is organized according to a shorter timetable, offering emerging artists the opportunity to exhibit their work as a solo show for the first time in an institutional setting in France.

Curator

Victoria Aresehva, curator, MEP

Production manager

Elisa Monteillet, MEP

The exhibition is organised with the support of Christian Dior Parfums and the Austrian Cultural Forum Paris.

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Fiebertraum, 2024

Gesso, pigments, gouache, inkjet-print on Canvas
100x150 cm

© Tatjana Danneberg

#TatjanaDanneberg

#StudioMEP



Tatjana Danneberg
Something Happened
19.07-29.09.2024

The exhibition

In the second half of the Season, the MEP Studio presents the first solo exhibition in France of Austrian artist Tatjana Danneberg, whose work combines photography and painting.

By experimenting with materials and processes for transferring images to canvas, Tatjana Danneberg transforms her candid analogue photographs into expressive paintings. Using point-and-shoot cameras, the artist seeks to prolong occasional memories by depicting relatives, acquaintances, and everyday objects in familiar and often intimate shots. Her technique for making the transition from photography to painting is fairly complex.

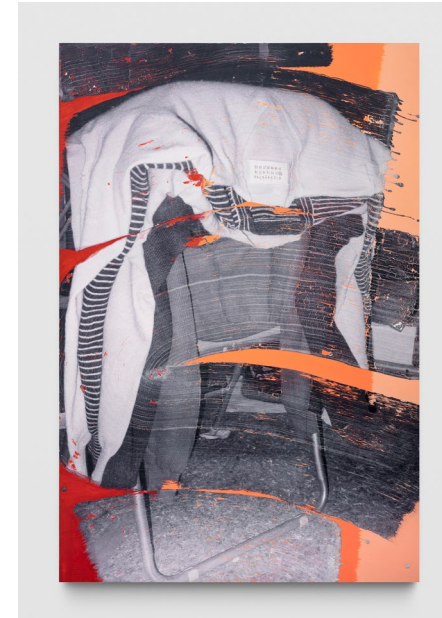
The images are first enlarged and printed by inkjet onto sheets of plastic foil. They are then painted with gesso, left to dry and wetted again, before finally being separated from the foil and transferred to canvas. The final result is only known once the sheet is removed from the canvas. Revealing fragments of objects, everyday actions, or even a total absence of action, these images akin to amateur snapshots are transformed into a powerful pictorial gesture. The brushstrokes applied by the artist intuitively follow the composition of the photograph, adding movement while obscuring part of the image.

Tatjana Danneberg's floor-to-ceiling works in the Studio are reminiscent of the torn posters found in urban space. Enlarged and superimposed on solid blocks of colour, the artist achieves a distancing effect from these intimate images. They become autonomous, creating a kind of paradox between two modes of vision—the meticulous and prolonged observation of the things that surround us and the passing curiosity provoked by advertising images that impose themselves on our gaze despite ourselves. By manipulating and deconstructing images, the artist questions the nature and status of photography, the way it is distributed and the value we attribute to it.

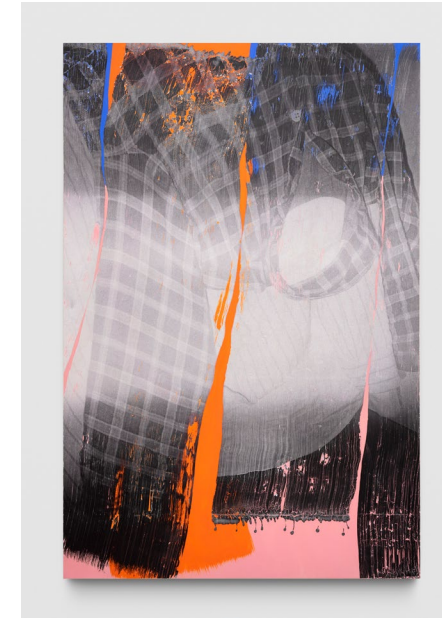
Tatjana Danneberg was born in 1991 and lives and works in Vienna. She is a graduate of the Technical University in Vienna, the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Frankfurt. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Salzburger Kunstverein (2021) and La Maison de Rendez-Vous, Brussels (2020), as well as the galleries LambdaLambdaLambda, Prishtina and Galeria Dawid Radziszewski, Warsaw.

Press images

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Fiebertraum, 2024
Pigment print, gesso, acrylics, pigments,
glue on canvas
100x150 cm
© Tatjana Danneberg



*As The Mind Shrinks It Tends Towards
Disappearing, 2024*
Pigment print, gesso, acrylics, pigments,
glue on canvas
100x150 cm
© Tatjana Danneberg



Be Original, 2023,
Pigment print, gesso, acrylics, pigments,
glue on canvas
60 x 90 cm
© Tatjana Danneberg

Useful information

MEP – Maison Européenne de la Photographie

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or Pont Marie (line 7)

Opening hours

Wednesday and Friday from 11 am to 8 pm
Thursday from 11 am to 10 pm
Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 8 pm
Ticket office open till 7:30 pm
Closed on Monday and Tuesday

Admission fee

Full price: €13
Over 65 years : €10
Reduced price: €8
MEP Pass*: €40
MEP Pass 18-30*: €25
MEP Pass Donor*: €120
*Pass for two people for an entire year.

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