

Alice Pauli. Gallerist,  
Collector,  
and Art  
Patron

14.2.2025 –  
4.5.2025

Exhibition  
Guide

ENNASUAL  
SIRA-XNAEBS  
LANONTANV EÉSUS

In the late 1940s, Alice Pauli (Moutier, 1922–Lausanne, 2022) was active in the business world representing a watchmaking company when she developed an interest in art and art exhibitions. She made her first forays in the art market in 1954 and began dealing in the tapestry art of Jean Lurçat. With her husband Pierre, she then helped launch the Biennale internationale de la tapisserie of Lausanne (the International Tapestry Biennial of Lausanne).

In 1961, Alice Pauli opened an art gallery at 7 Avenue de Rumine in Lausanne. From the outset she wanted the gallery to reflect the international scope of contemporary art and dedicated one of her first shows to the lithographs of Sam Francis. Thanks in particular to the Salon international de galeries-pilotes, an international art fair for experimental galleries mounted by the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne, she made a number of contacts that would bear fruit and allow her to show in her gallery work by foreign contemporary artists like Alicia Penalba, Mark Tobey, and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva.

Although she was to favour over the years an openness to the world, the gallery owner did not neglect the local art scene in Lausanne and the Canton of Vaud, making a point to exhibit artists like Jean Lecoultre and Juan Martínez. The projects she did with them gave artistic life in French-speaking Switzerland an exhilarating boost and contributed to the prominence of her gallery. Alice Pauli also took part in the major international art fairs, building her network and developing her gallery's business. When her son, Olivier, joined the gallery in 1989, she decided to move and reopened at a new address in the Flon neighbourhood of Lausanne, taking over a space that was better suited to showing large-format works of art.

Alice Pauli conserved in her personal collection of works by artists whose careers she had passionately followed, in some cases developing friendships that lasted years. Their works, hanging on the walls of her home and installed in her garden, were a reassuring presence throughout her day and helped her surmount life's painful trials. In the early 1990s, Alice Pauli was among the very first and the most active supporters of the project to construct a new fine arts museum in Lausanne. She followed up that enthusiastic commitment by contributing funding to the new building, which was inaugurated in 2019 on the Plateforme 10 site. She went further and donated a monumental sculpture by Giuseppe Penone to grace the new venue's spacious atrium. And she regularly added to the museum's collection of international contemporary art by donating major works by well-known artists like Pierre Soulages, Anselm Kiefer, Louise Nevelson, and Rebecca Horn.

In her will, Alice Pauli made the State of Vaud her sole beneficiary with the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts as her ultimate legatee. This show is our way of paying tribute to her by recalling the life and work of an exceptional gallerist, collector, and patron of the arts.

Born on 13 January 1922, the second of four children, Alice Bucher grew up in Moutier in the Swiss Jura region. She began her professional career in April 1937 as a trainee and then office worker at the Louis Schwab watchmaking company. She was put in charge of the Lausanne sales office when it opened in 1943. Alice Bucher often had to travel abroad to meet with the firm's international clients.

Alice Bucher later recalled that it was such visits to the United States, London, and Paris that led this young woman from a family milieu that was fairly indifferent to art to discover the pleasure of wandering through museums. As for the moment that triggered her love of tapestry and textile art specifically, it is clouded by the mists of time; it may have occurred when taking in a London exhibition in 1947. It was above all emotionally and artistically the coup de foudre she felt when she first met Pierre Pauli (whom she would marry in 1954) that convinced her to quit her job in February 1953 and join him in a cultural and commercial undertaking. After a time working to promote the French artist Jean Lurçat, Alice Pauli opened her own gallery in May 1961. The venue would only close years later, after her death on 15 July 2022.



Podcast: *Alice Pauli en voix directe* (FR)  
Alice Pauli on the profession of gallery owner  
Audio: 7 min. Sources: Association Films  
Plans-Fixes, 2000/RTS Radio Télévision Suisse,  
"Comme il vous plaira", 2015

# Julius Bissier

The art historian and museum director Werner Schmalenbach, whom Alice Pauli met as part of a campaign promoting the work of Jean Lurçat, acquainted the gallerist with the German art scene of the 1950s and 1960s. It was thanks to him that Alice Pauli discovered the work of the German painter Julius Bissier (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1893–Ascona, 1965), one of the artists whose work Schmalenbach had studied and knew well.

On 8 June 1965 Alice Pauli decided to write to Bissier to propose putting together a show featuring his work at her gallery, but by a tragic twist of fate her letter was to arrive just a few days before the painter passed away on 18 June. The artist's widow, Lisbeth Bissier, responded several weeks later that any collaboration was impossible because the Beyeler Gallery in Basel was the painter's exclusive representative in Switzerland. She suggested, however, that Alice Pauli come and meet her in Ascona, where the artist had settled in 1961. Thanks to her skill as a negotiator, the gallery owner managed to convince the widow to authorise the gallery to show Bissier's tapestries.

Alice Pauli's powers of persuasion eventually won the artist's widow over and in 1970 the Alice Pauli Gallery was also authorised to represent Bissier in Switzerland. The painter quickly became one of the principal names in the gallery's roster of artists.

So successful was the gallery's representation that Lisbeth Bissier turned to Alice Pauli without hesitation and entrusted her with the sale of numerous works from her husband's estate. Until 2015, the gallerist would exhibit the painter many times (over 60 shows!), featuring his paintings and Indian ink drawings.

# Jean Lurçat

Over the winter of 1953–54, Alice and Pierre Pauli decided they would devote themselves to defending and promoting modern tapestry. At the time, no one in Switzerland specifically followed the medium's development or dealt in art tapestry. In April 1954, Alice Pauli was in Paris and met the French artist Jean Lurçat (Bruyères, 1892–Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 1966), who was the main force behind the revival of contemporary tapestry in France and the world over. She offered to sell his work in Switzerland and mount a major show in Lausanne. Her proposal became a reality in the autumn of 1954 in the galleries of Lausanne's decorative arts museum, the Musée d'art décoratif, which was then located in the Palais de Rumine.

In the first half of the 1960s, sales of Lurçat's work were strong. Alice Pauli regularly requested new pieces from the Aubusson tapestry workshop to make a broad range of subjects available to her clientele. Besides the small- and medium-sized pieces, which she sold by the dozens, special wall hangings in very large formats were commissioned by major businesses in Switzerland and Germany like Bayer, Union de banques suisses, Nestlé, and Deutsche Bank. Thanks to the gallerist, Lurçat's tapestries can be seen on the walls of the National Theatre of Mannheim, the Philharmonia of Cologne, and the Cultural Ministry of Stuttgart.

Pursuing one initiative after another, Alice Pauli mounted a series of shows featuring Lurçat's tapestries in museums in Germany and Switzerland, notably at Zurich's Kunsthaus in 1962. She was also very active in promoting and selling the artist's work other than his textile art, including lithographs, ceramics, drawings, gouaches, and even jewellery in collaboration with Patek Philippe.

# Poland · Yugoslavia

In March of 1963, Pierre Pauli and the Lausanne art critic André Kuenzi travelled around Poland to meet artists who worked in tapestry. At the time, many artists were exploring new ways forward despite the censorship imposed by the Communist regime. The power of their compositions and the material quality of some of their weavings differed from the classic approach to tapestry. These pieces were, moreover, produced by the artists themselves and not entrusted to a specialised workshop. Unable to obtain enough wool, some artists would make use of hemp threads, cotton string or sisal fibres to create their pieces. They reimagined the very definition of weaving, introducing materials like wood, metal, and fur. This decisive trip was followed by others, in those cases with his wife, Alice. Their objective was to mount a major travelling show that would make stops in a number of European museums.

Pierre Pauli also passed on to Alice Pauli his interest in contemporary Polish painting and graphic arts. Polish artists' contributions in the realm of theatre, literature, and poetry, as well as tapestry were such in those years that widespread recognition followed in Switzerland and internationally. Into the early 1980s the Alice Pauli Gallery contributed in its way to this growing fame by regularly mounting shows featuring innovative Polish artists.

In the 1960s, Alice Pauli, often accompanied by her husband, travelled extensively in other Eastern European countries, such as the former Yugoslavia, in search of artist who were little known, if at all, in Western Europe, including the sculptor Dušan Džamonja and the textile artist Jagoda Buić.

# Italy

For Alice Pauli, the three iterations of the Salon international de galleries-pilotes, which were held at the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts of Lausanne in 1963, 1966, and 1970, were an opportunity to discover the world of the international art market. That discovery also offered her the chance to create ties with the major gallery owners of the day and many artists. During the 1963 show, she met the Milanese Arturo Schwarz. Thanks to the works he placed in her care, Alice Pauli was able to put together exhibitions highlighting the Italian artists Roberto Crippa (Monza, 1921–Bresso, 1972) and Enrico Baj (Milan, 1924–Vergiate, 2003).

In August of 1964, Alice and Pierre Pauli and their son, Olivier, were staying for a few days on the Italian Riviera, not far from Genoa. This seaside holiday was above all the occasion for her to visit artists in Albisola who were doing experimental work in ceramics. There she met with Crippa and Baj again, but the major encounter that year was with Lucio Fontana (Rosario, 1899–Comabbio, 1968). She left with two pieces by the artist, which she marked out for one of her closest collectors. She later mentioned having been once again in touch with Fontana in 1968, who offered to exhibit works from his *Venezie* series. These large-format canvases are covered with a thick layer of oil paint in which he often embedded shards of Murano glass.

Unsure of the success of such an exhibition with her clientele, Alice Pauli decided to talk it over first with her husband before definitively committing to Fontana. Her hesitation was to cost her. The artist passed away before getting her answer and the project never came to fruition.



# Alicia Penalba

It was most likely in 1966, at the 2nd Salon international de galeries-pilotes in Lausanne, that Alice Pauli first encountered the sculpture of Alicia Penalba (San Pedro, Argentina, 1913–Dax, France, 1982) at the stand hosted by Claude Bernard's Parisian gallery. She would later offer the artist two solo exhibitions (1967 and 1971) and would include her work in some 30 group shows. Although the limits of her gallery in Lausanne forced her to select only small and medium-sized sculptures, Alice Pauli did display the monumental pieces outdoors in Vernier and St Gallen in 1980.

Penalba's art is known especially for its simplicity and power. She created her first abstract sculptures in 1951. She began producing in 1953 a series of vertical bronze pieces that look like solemn tree trunks. The sculptor subsequently developed several series in which the forms withdraw into themselves or conversely burst outward, their angles and undulations establishing rhythms and generating plays of light. Her works of the 1960s express the liveliness of an ascending movement, poised in an unstable balance and formed from horizontal and oblique volumes.

Along with her output of both monumental and small-scale sculptures, Penalba also pushed her artistic experimentation into a range of other mediums, i.e., prints, textile art, ceramics, and jewellery.

# Maria Helena Vieira da Silva · Mark Tobey

In 1963 at the 1st Salon international de galeries-pilotes in Lausanne, Alice Pauli discovered the work of both the Portuguese-born French artist Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (Lisbon, 1908–Paris, 1992) and the American Mark Tobey (Centerville, Wisconsin, 1890–Basel, 1976). The two artists were being shown by the Paris-based Jeanne Bucher Gallery.

Alice Pauli offered Vieira da Silva a solo show in 1964 and would include her work in over 40 group exhibitions. After the artist's death in 1992, Olivier Pauli, who had been close to her, wanted very much to put together an exhibition in her memory. That show highlighted a career stamped by her endless questioning of urban transformations, perspective, and the musicality of brushwork.

Alice Pauli exhibited works by Tobey for the first time in 1965. This began a friendship and professional relationship that would last until the artist's death in 1976. The gallery owner featured the American artist's work in four solo exhibitions and would include it over the years in more than 60 group shows. Alice Pauli delighted in his art, which reveals a range of influences, from Chinese painting to Arabic script to Persian calligraphy. She also saw herself in a person always eager to travel as well as a keen lover of music – for Tobey, to the point of studying piano and musical theory.

The Alice Pauli Gallery was one of the first to champion the singular art of Magdalena Abakanowicz (Falenty, 1930–Warsaw, 2017) beyond Poland's borders. Starting in 1964, Pierre and Alice Pauli, and later Alice alone, launched a major campaign, aimed at museums and private collections, to promote the Polish artist's textiles. Alice Pauli had no qualms about showing very large formats in her gallery. Because of these pieces' dimensions, she would photograph them outdoors in order to illustrate the catalogues she published. She was also a constant presence for the artist in the actual making of specially commissioned works for a Swiss and foreign clientele. In 1968, Abakanowicz produced her first three-dimensional woven forms, her *Abakans*. These soft individual sculptures, freely hanging in space, were made using sisal fibre.

Starting in 1965, the Croatian artist Jagoda Buić (Split, 1930–Venice, 2022) saw her monumental textile works generating enormous interest on the art scene internationally thanks to the International Lausanne Tapestry Biennial, the brain child of several art world figures, amongst them Pierre Pauli. When Pierre died in December of 1970, the artist gave a new title to her project for the 5th Biennial, *Hommage à Pierre Pauli* [Tribute to Pierre Pauli]. The installation's arrangement of soft strips in a semi-circle and alternating empty and full spaces reveal a strong structural and theatrical character in the piece.

# Great trees and young shoots

Freed from the wall, the composition drops to the floor like a theatre curtain whose volumes have been designed with care. The piece amply displays its grounding in popular tradition. The materials she employs — wool, sisal, goat-hair rope, gold wire, gilded paper — are borrowed from the crafts of Slavic artisanal folklore, a heritage that Buić sought to cultivate in her work.

What Alice Pauli chose to exhibit over the years proved varied and cosmopolitan. She regularly brought together in her gallery paintings and sculptures, as well as graphic and textile art, done by artists whose aesthetic sensibilities and interests ran the gamut. Her aim was to generate a dialogue between the artworks and see them interacting in the same space. The following sections of the show, whilst grouping the featured artists according to a thematic approach, reflect the plurality the gallerist enjoyed and encouraged.

Through a smart balancing of personal tastes, clients' expectations, and financial resources, Alice Pauli managed to bring in and bond with well-known artists and take risks with young talents. The gallerist was indeed focused on the international scene first and foremost, and over time would stress openness to the greater world, but for all that she did not overlook the local scene in Lausanne and the Vaud region. Olivier Pauli readily spoke of “great trees” and “young shoots”, comparing the Alice Pauli Gallery to “a forest”. When mother and son ran the business together from April 1989 to late 1993, Alice took care of the “great trees” that included Pierre Soulages, Louise Nevelson, Jim Dine, and Frank Stella, whereas Olivier set off across the landscape in search of young artists like Jean-Pierre Pincemin, Philippe Cognée, and Émilienne Farny.

# Pierre Soulages

In 1970, Alice Pauli exhibited for the first time a painting by the French artist Pierre Soulages (Rodez, 1919–Nîmes, 2022). It would only be in 1987, however, that the gallerist, encouraged by her son, Olivier, would decide to contact Soulages with the idea of putting together a show. Although they were eventually meeting regularly, the painter was reluctant to exhibit at the gallery's initial address on Avenue de Rumine in an upper-middle-class flat. When Alice Pauli was forced to move in 1989, Soulages, together with Olivier, worked to convince her to take over a more contemporary space in Le Flon, a different neighbourhood in Lausanne. On 4 May 1990, the new gallery was inaugurated with the display of works selected for Soulages's first solo show in Switzerland, a major event. The exhibition was a success both critically and commercially. The 20 works on view quickly found buyers. Alice Pauli was to mount three more solo shows featuring Soulages in 2000, 2012, and 2019–20.

Like his mother, Olivier Pauli was fascinated by Soulages's painting, once writing to the painter that "...your work awakens the eye as much as it questions it. There is that black, a life-giving black, which wouldn't be if it weren't full of all the colours that have gone before it and haunted it. They continue to slip and slide beneath its gaps, like the grid of past time and a sign of a memory lurking there, still to be invented and constructed.

Then I think, the close connection maintained with Soulages the painter must always be begun anew, like your canvases, where light and shadows, the opposite and its double, create a dialogue in their metamorphosis, synergy, and duality." (Olivier Pauli in a letter to Pierre Soulages, 19 December 1989)

# Giuseppe Penone

Alice Pauli discovered the work of Giuseppe Penone (\*Garessio, Italy, 1952) in 1982 at “documenta 7”, the contemporary and modern art show that takes place in Kassel, Germany. It was only in 1997, however, that she sought to get in touch with the artist to invite him to show in her gallery. Reluctant to begin collaborating with a gallery owner whose work in the arts was unknown to him, he never replied.

A seasoned negotiator, Alice Pauli came up with a clever plan to approach the Italian artist. She offered to make a deal with the French filmmaker and collector Claude Berri, a friend of Penone’s who visited the gallery in May 1999. She would agree to sell Berri a drawing by the Swiss artist Louis Soutter that she absolutely did not want to part with and, in return, Berri would get Penone to agree to contact the gallerist and at least entertain the idea of working with her. To show her determination and ability to defend the artist’s work, she obtained a commission for the lobby of the UBS building on Place Saint-François in Lausanne.

Alice Pauli and Penone’s professional and personal connection was to last for over 20 years, during which the gallery owner exhibited his work in 30 group shows and featured him in five solo exhibitions.

Reflecting the strong ties that bound her to both the artist and the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts of Lausanne, for the opening of the museum’s new building, she donated to the institution the crowning glory of her sculpture garden, *Luce e ombra* [Light and Shade] (2011), that has graced the museum’s atrium ever since. She commissioned for its inaugural exhibition a special work of art, *A occhi chiusi* [With Eyes Closed] (2018), currently on view on the second floor of the collection’s presentation.

# Organisation and Publication

Curator of the exhibition:  
Camille Lévêque-Claudet,  
curator of ancient and modern  
art, MCBA

Collaboration in scenography:  
Carole Guignard

Publication:  
Camille Lévêque-Claudet  
with texts by Magali Junet,  
*Alice Pauli. Galeriste,  
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Lausanne, Musée cantonal  
des Beaux-Arts,  
Lyon, Fage éditions, 2025,  
200 p, fr., CHF 32.–  
Available at the MCBA Book  
and Gift Shop  
→ [shop.mcba@plateforme10.ch](mailto:shop.mcba@plateforme10.ch)

Works that Alice Pauli donated  
to MCBA are on view:

## In the Museum Hall

Giuseppe Penone,  
*Luce e ombra*, 2011  
Bronze, gold and granite  
Gift of Alice Pauli, in memory  
of her son, Olivier, 2016

## On the second floor in the permanent collection display

Giuseppe Penone  
*A occhi chiusi*, 2018  
Acrylic, glass microspheres,  
acacia thorns on canvas, white  
Carrara marble  
Gift of Alice Pauli, 2018

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva  
*Les Contours de l'orage*, 1956  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of Alice Pauli, 2016

Pierre Soulages  
*Peinture*, 1956  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of Alice Pauli, 2019

# Events

Reservations required  
for all events  
→ [mcba.ch/agenda](http://mcba.ch/agenda)

Please note: all tours and  
events are in French unless  
otherwise specified.

## Guided tours

Sunday, 16 and 23 February;  
2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 March;  
6, 13, 20 and 27 April at 11am  
Thursday, 27 February  
and 10 April at 6:30pm

## Guided tours with the show's curator

Thursday, 20 March and  
3 April at 6:30pm  
Sunday, 4 May at 3pm  
with Camille Lévêque-Claudet

## Guided tours for Les Ami·e·s du MCBA

Thursday, 6 and 13 March  
at 6pm  
with Camille Lévêque-Claudet

## Guided tour (in English)

Sunday, 16 March at 2pm

## Guided tours for teachers

Wednesday, 26 February  
at 12:30pm  
Thursday, 27 February  
at 5:30pm

## Guided tours for social workers

Friday, 28 February,  
10–11:30am

## Regards feminists

Saturday, 8 March at 4:30pm  
Tour of the show as part of Inter-  
national Women's Day.

## Discussion and workshop with Philippe Cognée

Saturday, 29 March, 10am–1pm  
The internationally renowned  
French artist Philippe Cognée  
gets his inspiration from photos  
and videos of landscapes

and architecture for his wax-  
based (encaustic) paintings.  
For a morning at MCBA, he will  
present his work to participants  
and introduce them to the  
wax-painting techniques he  
practices. CHF 50.–

## Conversation with Giuseppe Penone

Wednesday, 30 April at 6:30pm  
An evening conversation  
in memory of Alice Pauli  
is a chance to talk about the  
relationship between artists  
and gallery owners, as well  
as retrace the unique journey  
of an exceptional woman.

## Workshops for kids

### *Escape Game*

Tuesday 22, Wednesday 23,  
Thursday 24, Friday 25,  
Saturday 26, and Sunday 27  
April (PâKOMUZé), 1:30–3pm  
and 3:30–5pm

Teams try to figure out the clues in  
front of the artworks in the show.  
10–12 years old, CHF 15.–

## Workshop 0–100 years old

*Les coups de cœur d'Alice Pauli*  
Saturday, 5 April, 2–6pm,  
no set time.

Whether it is collage, imprint or  
an assemblage of materials, you  
are invited to stop by to experi-  
ence and experiment with  
techniques used by some of the  
artists presented. Come with  
your family, friends, or alone,  
and spend 15 minutes or 3 hours.  
Free admission/no reservation  
required

## An activity open to all in the museum's main hall

Kids' *Escape Game* activities  
booklet

Free at the museum front desk

Programme for schools and  
private tours → [mcba.ch](http://mcba.ch)

# Information

Hours:  
Tuesday–Sunday 10am–6pm  
Thursday 10am–8pm  
Monday closed

MCBA is open:  
Easter Monday (21.4.25)

Admission and Online Tickets:  
→ [mcba.ch/billetterie](http://mcba.ch/billetterie)  
First Saturday of the month:  
free



Access:  
SBB Lausanne train station,  
3 minutes on foot  
Bus: 1, 3, 20, 21, 60,  
Gare stop  
Bus: 6, Cecil stop  
Metro: m2, Gare stop  
Car: Montbenon parking,  
Reduced fee

Staying connected:  
Behind the scenes, a look  
at the collection, etc.  
[@mcbalausanne](https://www.instagram.com/mcbalausanne)  
[@mcba.lausanne](https://www.facebook.com/mcba.lausanne)

Newsletter:  
Events, Museum life,  
editorial, etc.  
→ [mcba.ch/newsletter](http://mcba.ch/newsletter)

Association des Amis·e·s  
du MCBA:  
Special tours and visiting  
hours, classes and trips, etc.  
→ [mcba.ch/amis-du-musee](http://mcba.ch/amis-du-musee)

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Other shows on view this  
spring at MCBA:

Espace Focus  
Alice Pauli and Prints  
14.2–31.8.2025  
Free entrance

Espace Projet  
Sophie Thun. Wet Rooms  
14.3–10.8.2025  
Free entrance

The Collection  
Free entrance

Your opinion is important to us



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Plateforme 10

**AUDEMARS PIGUET**  
*Le Brassus*

Main partners  
MCBA construction



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