

Sophie
Thun

Wet Rooms

14.3.2025 –
10.8.2025

Exhibition
leaflet

MUSÉE CANTONAL
DES BEAUX-ARTS
LAUSANNE
Espace Projet

Playing with the concepts of scale and trompe-l'œil, the vast photo installations that Sophie Thun creates take the exhibition space as their starting point. The artist renders modes of production and the manipulation of images visible through a complex process of layering that questions any fixed notion of time and space.

Wet Rooms refers to the darkroom where Thun develops her photographs. The artist works exclusively with analog photography, pushing back the boundaries of its technical possibilities by creating 1:1 scale prints. An intimate space marked by the presence of chemical baths essential to revealing the image, it is also a space of solitude and silence in which the artist reconstructs her vision of the world, notably through the motif of the window, which recurs constantly in her work. The bay windows of Espace Projet are here added to other elements drawn from her repertoire. In an elaborate use of collage mixing photograms and large-format prints, she overlays her own image onto the places where she has lived, worked, and exhibited, creating an archive that is continuously evolving.

When working on her large-format photos, she uses magnets to hold the paper against the metal wall in the darkroom. This surface frequently appears in her images, but for the first time, it is physically displayed in the exhibition, where Thun has relocated the metal panels that once served as the projection wall in the Berlin lab where she created her large-format color prints. Now dismantled due to a lack of economic opportunities, the wall exists solely as a relic. It symbolizes the interdependent relationships that marked the end of a technique.

The negative's exposure time can run as long as twenty minutes during which any movement that occurs in the space between the enlarger and the wall on which the image is projected is also recorded. Thun takes advantage of this by attaching to the photosensitive paper personal objects like the keys to her flat, her glasses or her scissors. At times, she even presses her body against the paper, whose sensitive surface reacts to the contact as well. This is how negative silhouettes appear in the final image.

Thun began cutting up, dividing, and repeating her own image in 2019 for the series *After Hours*. At the time, she could only make her own art in the evening in the rooms of hotels where she was staying, following her workday as a technical assistant producing the pictures of well-known (male) photographers. Back in the darkroom, she would cut up the negatives and combine active and passive poses. By exploring the question of self-representation, Thun becomes both the creator of the image and the subject on display, the author and the object. In doing so, she disrupts the power dynamics inherent in the strategies of representation that have long shaped the history of the female nude and the codes of pornography. However, this assertion is also paired with a form of vanishing. Her body, fragmented, multiplied, and rearranged, exists everywhere and nowhere simultaneously.

The artist also engages her own image in dialogue with the more or less explicit presence of figures who have shaped her aesthetic thinking. These include the archives of Latvian photographer Zenta Dzividzinska, a portrait of performance artist Ulay, and the apartment of Daniel Spoerri, with whom Thun developed a close friendship in his final years in Vienna. From these encounters, she creates images rich with ambivalence, lying somewhere between documentation and homage, such as her reproduction of Louise Breslau's *La Vie Pensive* (1908). In this painting, part of the MCBA collection, the German-born Swiss artist depicts herself in an interior scene with her partner. Appropriated by Thun, the image incorporates the genealogy of her own emancipation. Thus, the exhibition becomes a space where fragments of a multifaceted and elusive identity coexist, providing the foundation for an autofictional narrative.

Biography:

Sophie Thun (*1985) lives and works in Vienna and Berlin. She grew up in Warsaw and studied graphic arts in Cracow and later painting and finally photography at the Academy of the Fine Arts in Vienna.

In 2024, Thun was awarded the Otto Breicha Prize for photography. She is currently the visiting professor for the photography course at the Academy of the Fine Arts in Düsseldorf.

In June 2025, a solo show featuring Thun will open at the Muzeum Sztuki of Łódź, Poland. Recent solo shows include *Zwischen Licht und Wand*, Museum der Moderne Salzburg (2024); *Leaking Times*, Cukrarna, Ljubljana (2023); *Trails and Tributes*, Kunstverein Hildesheim (2022); *I don't Remember a Thing. Entering the Elusive Estate of ZDZ* Sophie Thun and the archive of Zenta Dzividzinka*, at the Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga (2021); and *Stolberggasse*, Secession, Vienna; *Extension*, C/O Berlin (2020).

Events:

Guided tours for the Ami-e-s du Musée (in French)
Tuesday, 25 March at 12:30pm
Thursday, 22 May at 6pm
With Pierre-Henri Foulon

Guided tours (in French)
Tuesday, 27 May at 12:30pm
With Pierre-Henri Foulon
Thursday, 26 June at 6:30pm
With Eleonora Del Duca,
assistant curator

Conversation with Sophie Thun
(in English)
Thursday, 1st May at 6:30pm
Conversation between the
artist and Héléne Giannecchini,
writer and photography
historian

Reservations required
for all events
→ mcba.ch/agenda

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→ mcba.ch
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