

# THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE

3 may – 8 july 2018



Tuesday – Sunday, 10 am – 6 pm  
Late closing: Friday, 9 pm

INFORMATION  
[www.petitpalais.paris.fr](http://www.petitpalais.paris.fr)

The Petit Palais presents its **first free exhibition dedicated to its own photographic collection.**

The exhibition shows the work of seven artists that have been attracted by the beauty of the museum : Vasco Ascolini, Jean-Christophe Ballot, Stéphane Couturier, Bruno Delamain, FLORE, Hélène Langlois, Julien Lescoeur.

**A hundred of contemporary photographs, purchased since the museum's reopening in 2005, show the artists' personal vision of the museum, as well as its history and character.**

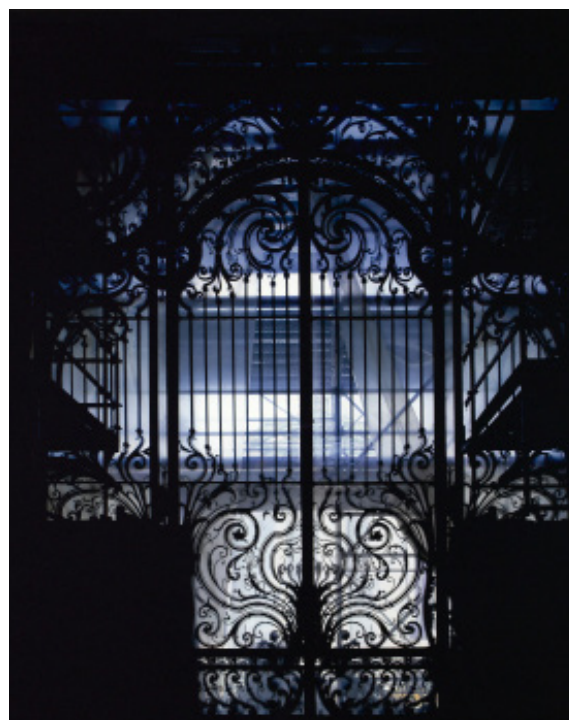
Photography first entered the Petit Palais as an archival document. At the beginning of the 1990s, it was raised to the rank of art object thanks to the rediscovery and restoration of a remarkable ensemble of daguerreotypes.

Since then, the museum has acquired numerous old photographs: ensembles of the Exposition Universelle of 1900, and portraits of figures connected to the collections, such as art dealer Ambroise Vollard, actress Sarah Bernhardt, and of course, the artists themselves. In 2016, the exhibition *In the studio. The artist photographed from Ingres to Jeff Koons* was the occasion to present a selection of these.

Contemporary photography has not been overlooked either: during the restoration campaign begun in 2000, the Petit Palais opened its doors, and its entrails, to a number of photographers.

Privileged witnesses, FLORE, Bruno Delamain, Hélène Langlois and Stéphane Couturier have observed and recorded from the inside the profound changes undergone by the Petit Palais. By the reopening of the museum in 2005, photographers had earned their place. Other artists have since followed suit: Julien Lescoeur, Jean-Christophe Ballot and Vasco Ascolini have all studied the Petit Palais in an effort to capture its spirit or essence.

Seven photographers, seven different perspectives, as well as countless individuals have all been seduced by the spirit of this place. We invite you now to follow them on a visual journey that will allow you to (re)discover the Petit Palais in a completely new fashion.



Stéphane Couturier, *Petit Palais n°1 - Paris 8, 2004.*  
photographic print on Ilfoflex paper, 1,60 x 1,24 m  
© Stéphane Couturier / Petit Palais / Roger-Viollet  
Courtesy of Nicolas Floquet

## CURATOR

Susana Gállego Cuesta, head curator, in charge of Petit Palais' exhibitions department

## PRESS OFFICER

**Mathilde Beaujard**

[mathilde.beaujard@paris.fr](mailto:mathilde.beaujard@paris.fr) / +33 1 53 43 40 14

**Vasco Ascolini (born in 1937, lives and works in Reggio Emilia)**

Particularly influenced by the world of theatre in which he worked for a long time, Vasco Ascolini pays close attention to the dramatic effects of light. Since the 1970s, museums have become one of his preferred themes. Attracted by the zones of shadow and declamatory gestures, Vasco Ascolini makes sculpture, or rather the secret life of sculpture, one of his main focuses. The photographer encountered the sculptures of the Petit Palais in the autumn of 2016. The exclusive use of black and white, and baryta paper, accentuates the intensity of the contrasts, and the game of reflections and trompe l'œil serve to confound the spectator. Vasco Ascolini provides an interpretation, at once melancholic and playful of the museum's ambience. The use of superposition, blurriness and the close framing of the objects give birth to some rather astonishing shadowy beings.

**Jean-Christophe Ballot (born in 1960, lives and works in Paris)**

An architect and film-maker by training, and intrepid traveller, Jean-Christophe Ballot focuses his photographic work around perception and the rendition of space. His approach is a highly classical one: he makes use of a photographic chamber and tripod, with an exposure time of several seconds, all of which allow the artist to be fully inhabited by his subject, where the emphasis is placed on duration rather than the immediate. His attention to natural light and its intrinsic qualities inside the building have guided Jean-Christophe Ballot in his exploration of the Petit Palais. Dwelling on a surprising angle or a precise light at a specific time of day, his shots seem to convey a fugitive or fleeting presence. His vision of the architecture is combined with his gaze on the artworks, henceforth revealed in a new and surprising light.

**Stéphane Couturier (born in 1957, lives and works in Paris)**

Since the late 1980s, Stéphane Couturier has documented urban transformations in France, Europe and throughout the world. He photographed the restoration campaign of the Grand Palais, shooting on several occasions between 1997 and 2004.

While Stéphane Couturier was photographing the Grand Palais, the Petit Palais was experiencing its own renovations campaign. The latter building especially intrigued the artist. However, he did not obtain permission to photograph the renovation work, and only visited the site a single time. Privileging a frontal view and emphasizing the planes of the scene, reflecting Couturier's penchant for spatial ambiguity, the photographs cause the spectator to hesitate: are we inside or outside? With his images, whose layers require deciphering, Stéphane Couturier offers the viewer portraits of invisible spaces.

**Bruno Delamain (born in 1955, lives and works in Paris)**

A photographer who trained at the École Louis-Lumière, Bruno Delamain made the acquaintance of architect Philippe Chaix in 1991. This was the beginning of a regular collaboration between the pair. When Philippe Chaix was selected, along with Jean-Paul Morel, to oversee the renovations of the Petit Palais, the photographer joined them for the project. Working from November 2005 to January 2006, Bruno Delamain focused on the behind-the-scenes details of a metamorphosis. From this period, we have twenty-three black and white photographs, three of which are today housed at the museum. With their intense blacks, they offer a highly abstract vision of the renovation site: with their unexpected perspectives and deserted spaces, the commotion of the work site fades, privileging a contemplative regard on the architectural transformation

**FLORE (born in 1963, lives and works in Paris)**

During the renovation work on the museum, the Mairie de Paris (Paris City Hall) gave Franco-Spanish artist FLORE free rein to photograph the work site. The renovation campaign, which lasted five years (2000-2005), gradually brought the artist to produce a large number of images, today included in the collection. These five years allowed her to create a strong connection with a space undergoing a major transformation: from the inside, she followed the transformation that culminated in the re-installation of the artworks in the newly restored spaces.

From the artist's early prints in black and white and faded colours, evoking the striking presence of the ruin amidst an intentional blur, via a series strangely evocative of an underground world, FLORE's work has culminated in a series of luminous shots that depict empty spaces, bathed in a golden light. .

**Hélène Langlois (born in 1975, lives and works in Paris)**

Following her studies in art history at the École du Louvre, Hélène Langlois entered the École supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Le Mans, graduating in 2001. She began working on this project at the Petit Palais in 2003. Equipped with her camera, she explored the space undergoing a major transformation over the course of three years, developing a personal regard and approach to the architecture, with a particular awareness of the fragments and precarious nature of certain structures. Her work evolved with the site and gradually turned its focus to colour and its subtle variations, which she observed in the waste materials, and unexpected spaces. These are the first works created by the artist: they dramatically reveal her emerging talent and explore the effects of the light and its capacity to reveal the private or personal.

**Julien Lescoeur (born in 1978, lives and works in Paris)**

Julien Lescoeur studied photography as part of his artistic training, where he focused particularly on painting and drawing. His experience in Germany proved essential to the development of his work: the Düsseldorf School of Photography and the New Topographics, as well as the city of Berlin, with its ghostly presences, were all an important source of inspiration.

Invited to discover a building far removed from his traditional subjects of predilection, the artist set himself the challenge of locating in the Belle époque architecture of the Petit Palais, elements evocative of a Cistercian Abbey. And the challenge was met: Julien Lescoeur succeeded in transforming the space, making it unrecognizable even to those who know it well, thanks to his singular and surprising vision.