

Sandra Lahire, Serpent River, 1989, 16mm, digitized, 32', Courtesy of Sandra Lahire and LUX, London.

OVEREXPOSED, LIKE
AN X-RAY

SANDRA LAHIRE

Exhibition

from 15 May to 1 August 2026

Opening: Wednesday 13 May, from 6 pm to 9 pm

Temporary closure

from 8 to 11 of July

Curators: Maud Jacquin and Émilie Renard

Exhibition display: Jagna Ciuchta

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday to Friday, from 11am to 7pm

Saturday, from 2pm to 7pm · Free entrance

9 esplanade Pierre Vidal-Naquet 75013 Paris

M14 & RER C: Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand

www.betonsalon.net

+33.(0)1.45.84.17.56 · info@betonsalon.net

BÉTONSALON
CENTRE FOR ART
& RESEARCH

Sandra Lahire (United Kingdom, 1950–2001) was a feminist experimental filmmaker whose work has had a lasting influence on numerous artists and filmmakers, yet remains insufficiently recognized to this day, particularly in France¹. Like many of her contemporaries in London, she was affiliated with the London Film-Makers' Co-operative (LFMC), a self-organized structure dedicated to the production, exhibition, and distribution of experimental film². Active from the late 1960s onward, the LFMC constituted a key center for a dynamic cinematic movement united by a shared commitment to exploring the materiality of film, notably through direct interventions on the film reel.

From the mid-1980s, while continuing her formal investigations into the material properties of the film medium, Lahire incorporated autobiographical and documentary dimensions into her practice. She situated film in constant relation to other forms of matter: human and non-human bodies, landscapes, and the flows that traverse them. Through a wide range of experimental techniques generating stratified, textured surfaces, she gave form to the co-implication of bodies and the physical continuity connecting herself to other living beings—human, animal, and vegetal—conceived as organic and perishable matter. Drawing on her own bodily vulnerability—Lahire suffered from anorexia—her work gives form to what feminist theorist Stacy Alaimo has termed a “transcorporeal space”³, in which human corporeality is inextricably bound to the environment through a shared condition of permeability and contamination.

1 Maud Jacquin devoted her doctoral research to feminist theories and practices in experimental film, with particular attention to the London Film-makers' Co-operative (LFMC). In 2016, on the occasion of the LFMC's 50th anniversary, she curated a programme of screenings and performances at Tate Modern and Tate Britain, "From Reel to Real: Women, Feminism and the London Film-makers' Co-operative", in which Sandra Lahire was among the most prominently represented filmmakers, enabling many to (re)discover her work. To date, no exhibition has been dedicated to her work in France. This exhibition is intended as the first in a series of group exhibitions that positions Lahire as a source of inspiration and a key point of reference for artists across different generations.

2 Founded in 1966, the London Film-Makers' Co-op merged in 1999 with London Video Arts to form LUX. It is a fortunate coincidence that this exhibition dedicated to Sandra Lahire at Bétonsalon coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the LFMC.

3 See in particular Stacy Alaimo, Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

The exhibition title, “*Overexposed, like an X-rays*”⁴, borrows from the work of American poet Sylvia Plath (1932–1963), whose voice resonates throughout Lahire’s films. While not directly drawn from a specific film by Lahire, the phrase frames the exhibition through an overlapping of entities—Lahire herself, women workers and residents living near nuclear facilities, the film strip, and the earth—subjected to processes that penetrate and erode its material integrity. Under exposure to X-rays, flesh, emulsion, and mineral matter are attacked, hollowed out to their fragile supporting structures. X-rays operates on multiple levels: literally, as a reference to clinical imaging and nuclear radiation; and metaphorically, as an index of the invasive power of medical authority, the military-industrial complex, and, more broadly, the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist system. In Lahire’s films⁵, “exposure” speaks to the material vulnerability of both human and non-human entities, not only as a means of critiquing relations of domination and exploitation, but also as a way of affirming a contingent, porous corporeality inseparable from the material world that constitutes it. This perspective aligns with what Stacy Alaimo, in *Exposed*, describes as an “ethics of exposure”⁶, grounded in the recognition of our material continuity with our environments. “Dwelling in the dissolve”, as Alaimo suggests, is to acknowledge permeability as the basis for an ethical relationship to the living.

The exhibition brings together four key films from the early phase of Lahire’s practice in the 1980s—she would go on to produce ten films between 1984 and 1999. These works trace a progressive expansion of corporeal concerns: from an exploration of her own bodily vulnerability, shaped by anorexia and fostering an empathetic relationship to other living beings, to an engagement with environments affected by the invisible toxicity of nuclear radiation, power plants, and uranium mining.

4 The exhibition title is a citation of Sylvia Plath’s poem *Medusa*, from *Ariel* (1965). Maud Jacquin adopted this expression as the title of her essay on Lahire’s cinema, written in 2016 and published in 2019 in *Women, Feminism and the Moving Image*, ed. Lucy Reynolds; and subsequently in 2022 in *Living on Air: The Films and Words of Sandra Lahire*, ed. María Palacios Cruz and Charlotte Procter. This text already outlines the argument underpinning the present exhibition—hence the decision to republish it in the exhibition booklet, in its original English version and in a new French translation produced for the occasion.

5 Sylvia Plath occupied a central place in Lahire’s thinking, to whom she devoted an unfinished doctoral thesis. Plath’s poems, often read by the poet herself, appear in a large number of Lahire’s films; Lahire also dedicated a trilogy to her: *Lady Lazarus* (1991), *Night Dances* (1995), and *Johnny Panic* (1999).

6 Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

The first two films, *Arrows* (1984) and *Edge* (1986), approach film as a body—as a “skin” (Laura Marks⁷)—establishing parallels between cinematic editing and surgical procedures through a deliberately discontinuous montage. They also introduce the figure of the animal, tracing a shift from metaphor — the animal as image of freedom — toward an acknowledgment of shared suffering. Lahire draws connections between the objectified female body within dominant representational regimes—extended through invasive medical practices—and the animal subjected to human domination, both fragmented into slices, evoking Sylvia Plath’s expression of “pathological salamis⁸”, cited in *Edge*.

Terminals (1986) and *Serpent River* (1989) respectively open and conclude a series of four anti-nuclear films. *Terminals* examines the working conditions of women in a nuclear power plant and their exposure to radiation. Its title refers both to monitoring interfaces—pervasive instruments of control—and to the terminal stages of illness. The image is held at the threshold of disappearance, as though the film itself were subjected to the same radiative forces as the bodies it depicts. *Serpent River*, the final work in a trilogy shot in *Serpent River*, Ontario (Canada), addresses the ecological and human consequences of uranium mining by the multinational Rio Tinto Zinc. Lahire renders perceptible the otherwise invisible toxicity of radiation as it circulates—fluid, diffuse, and chromatic—across mined landscapes, through living streams, into human bodies, and onto the filmic surface itself, whose textures and colors evoke the entanglement of bodies and the substances that permeate them.

Across these works, bodily fluids, blood circulation, underground waters, and tidal movements converge into a shared substrate of contaminated matter. The materiality of film mirrors the entanglements it articulates: the filmmaker’s body, those of local inhabitants, the depths of the earth, the filmic medium, and the spectators are bound together in a shared vulnerability. Lahire thereby suggests that an awareness of the mutual porosity of bodies and environments—and of their interdependent fragility—may constitute the foundation for an ecofeminist ethics grounded in embodiment, challenging Western conceptions of the subject as fixed, bounded, and autonomous.

The exhibition design is conceived by artist Jagna Ciuchta, whose practice—characterized by processes of permeability, contamination, and the incorporation of other artists’ works—extends and reactivates key gestures and motifs present in Lahire’s cinema.

↘ The exhibition is developed with the support of LUX, London.

⁷ Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

⁸ Line taken from Sylvia Plath’s poem *The Surgeon at 2 am* (1962)..

Agenda

Full Programme on
www.betonsalon.net

Thursday 11, Friday 12 and Saturday 13 June
« The Blood is a Sunset »

“The Blood is a Sunset 9” brings Sandra Lahire’s work into dialogue with that of artists and researchers engaged in making perceptible our entanglements in material forces, flows, and processes linking human and non-human bodies, ecosystems, and technologies. Lahire’s work acts as a catalyst for exploring the relationships between bodily vulnerability and responsibility toward other living beings (Part 1 – “Not Alone in This Big Empty Skin”), intersectional inequalities in exposure to toxicity and access to care (Part 2 – “The Proletarian Lung”), and practices of material continuity as a foundation for an ethical relationship to living beings (Part 3 – “Sponges Kiss My Lichens Away”).

The programme brings together a range of discursive and experiential formats, including lectures, presentations of ongoing research, screenings, collective practices, readings, and discussions.

Friday, June 5, from 2:30 to 6pm
Béton Book Club: Collective reading session of *Exposed, Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* by Stacy Alaimo (ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), in English

Monday, June 15, at 7:30 pm
Screening of films by Sandra Lahire
At MK2 Bibliothèque x Centre Pompidou

Friday, June 19, from 3 to 6 pm
Stakeholders #10: revisiting the archives of the exhibition "A Hard White Body" by Candice Lin (2017) at Bétonsalon, in the presence of Lotte Arndt

Saturday, June 20, 3:30 to 4:30 pm
Exhibition tour as part of TaxiTram

Friday, July 3, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm
Writing with Mittens: Writing workshop, run by Manon Barbe

9 The titles of the different sections of the programme refer to Sandra Lahire’s work and evoke images of a transcorporeal experience. The title of the programme is drawn from *The Surgeon at 2AM* (1961), a poem by Sylvia Plath, cited in Lahire’s film *Edge*.

Biographies

Sandra Lahire (1950-2001)

A lesbian, Jewish, feminist filmmaker, Sandra Lahire was a central member of the feminist and experimental filmmaking community in London in the 1980s and 1990s. Having produced around ten films in 16mm, she developed a significant body of work that deserves greater recognition. Her environmental concerns, its intersectional feminism, its honest discussion of mental health feel poignantly modern and relevant today. Marked by corporeal vulnerability – her own, that of the female body, the body of the earth, the body of film – Lahire’s work proposes a comparison between the violence committed by patriarchal society against women and that committed by humans against the non-human world. Her four anti-nuclear films echo the feminist anti-nuclear, anti-war movement at the time. Formally, they merge documentary, performance, animation and experimentation (superimposition – both in camera and on the optical printer – re-filming, colourisation, changes of speed, layering of sounds).

From her first film to her last, Lahire was in sustained dialogue with the poetry and archive of Sylvia Plath. And like Sylvia Plath’s, hers is a body of work that is retrospectively overshadowed by her premature death aged 50. Lahire’s films were ground-breaking in the frank way that they addressed the unspoken cultural causes of diseases such as anorexia, with which she struggled throughout her life and which led to her untimely passing in 2001.

Lahire studied philosophy at Newcastle upon Tyne, film at Saint Martins School of Art, and film and environmental media at the Royal College of Art. Her films have been screened at numerous national and international festivals, including Créteil, Locarno, Berlin, Montreal, São Paulo, Turin, Jerusalem, Australia, and the Philippines. She notably published Lesbians in Media Education in Visibly Female (ed. Hilary Robinson, Camden Press, 1987), as well as articles in *Undercut*. She also composed the music for Just About Now by Lis Rhodes.

The Courtisane Festival dedicated its 2021 “artist in focus” section to her under the title “Arrows, Edge, Terminals, Eerie, Night Dances.”

Source: Courtisane Festival 2021.

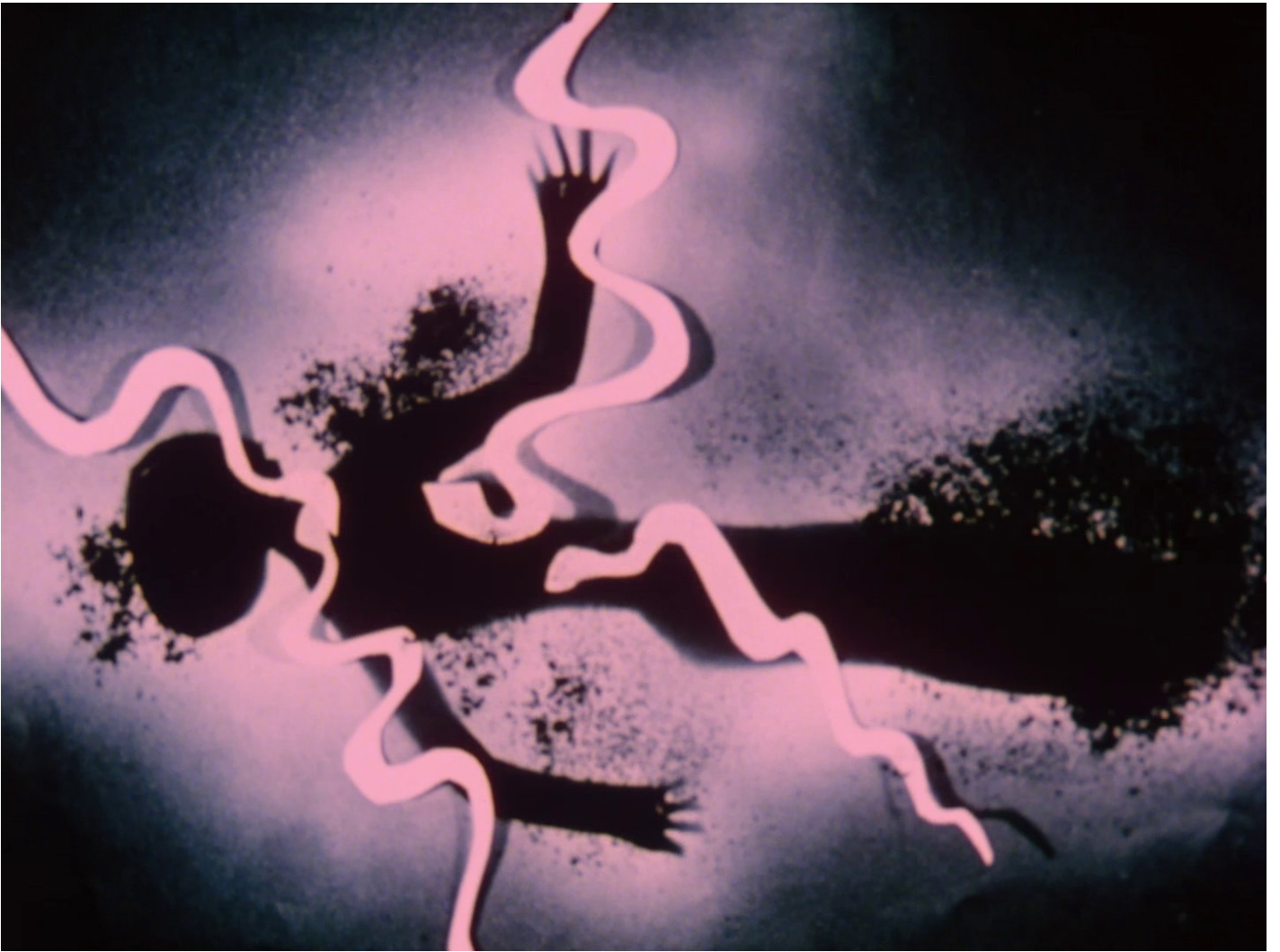
Maud Jacquin

Maud Jacquin is an art historian, curator, and research associate at Bétonsalon since 2022. Her PhD, completed in 2013 at University College London, examined the politics of narrative in feminist artists’ films, with a particular focus on the British scene of the 1970s and 1980s. From 2014 to 2022, together with Sébastien Pluot, she co-founded and co-directed Art by Translation, an international programme of research and exhibitions involving partner institutions in four countries— including CalArts in Los Angeles, James Gallery in New York, and Fonderie Darling in Montreal—and artists engaged in a post-master’s

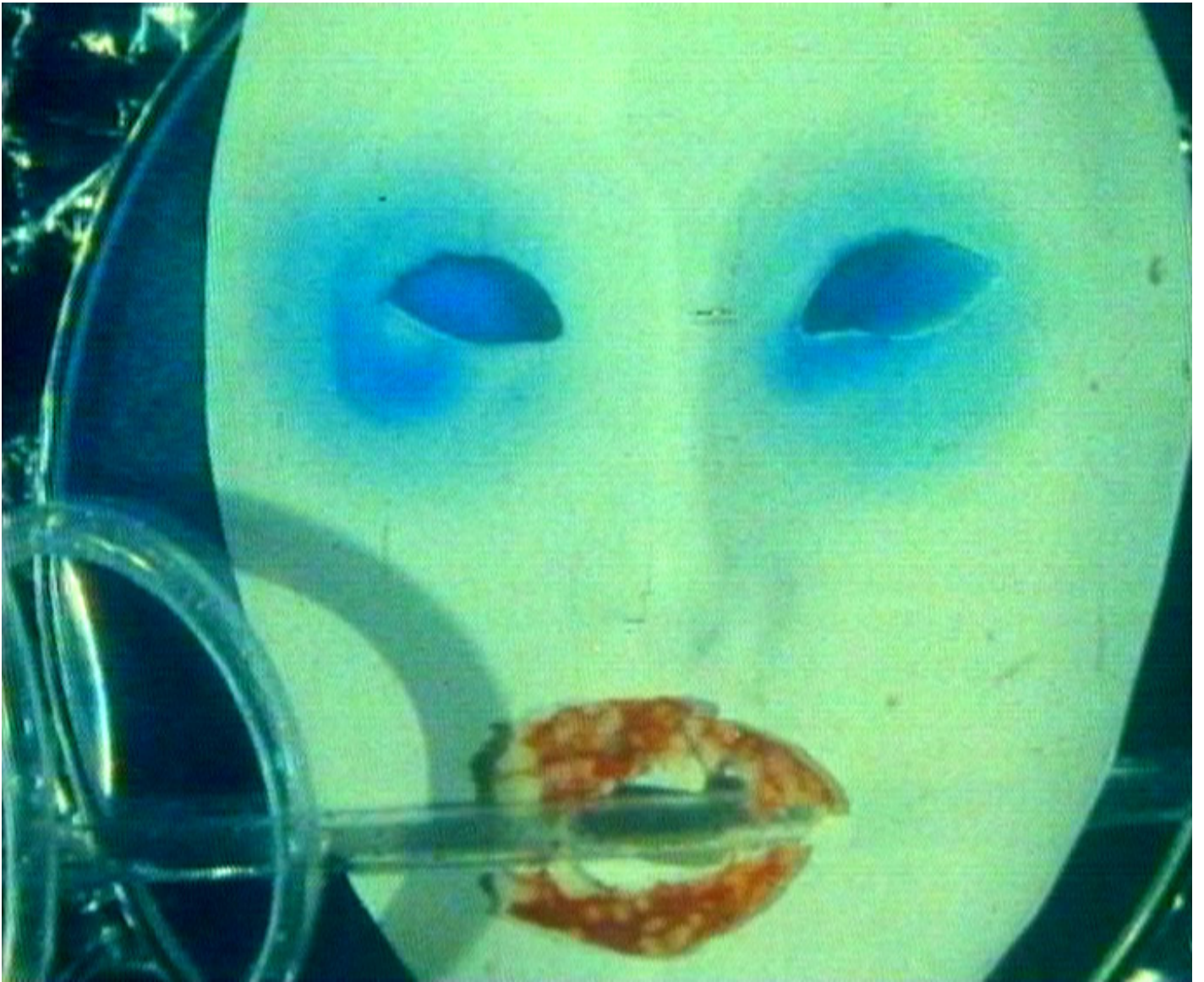
programme run by the art schools of Cergy and Angers. She also served as co-artistic director of Cneai= during its relocation to the Magasins Généraux in Pantin (2016–2017), and previously as associate curator at Residency Unlimited in New York. Taking seriously the idea that an artwork constitutes a materially embodied aesthetic, theoretical, and political proposition capable of affecting viewers, her curatorial projects often take as their point of departure the practice of a given artist (Klonaris/Thomadaki, Pauline Oliveros, Alison Knowles, among others), in order to collectively explore—together with artists and researchers from various disciplines—questions concerning the relationship between sensibility and politics.

Jagna Ciuchta

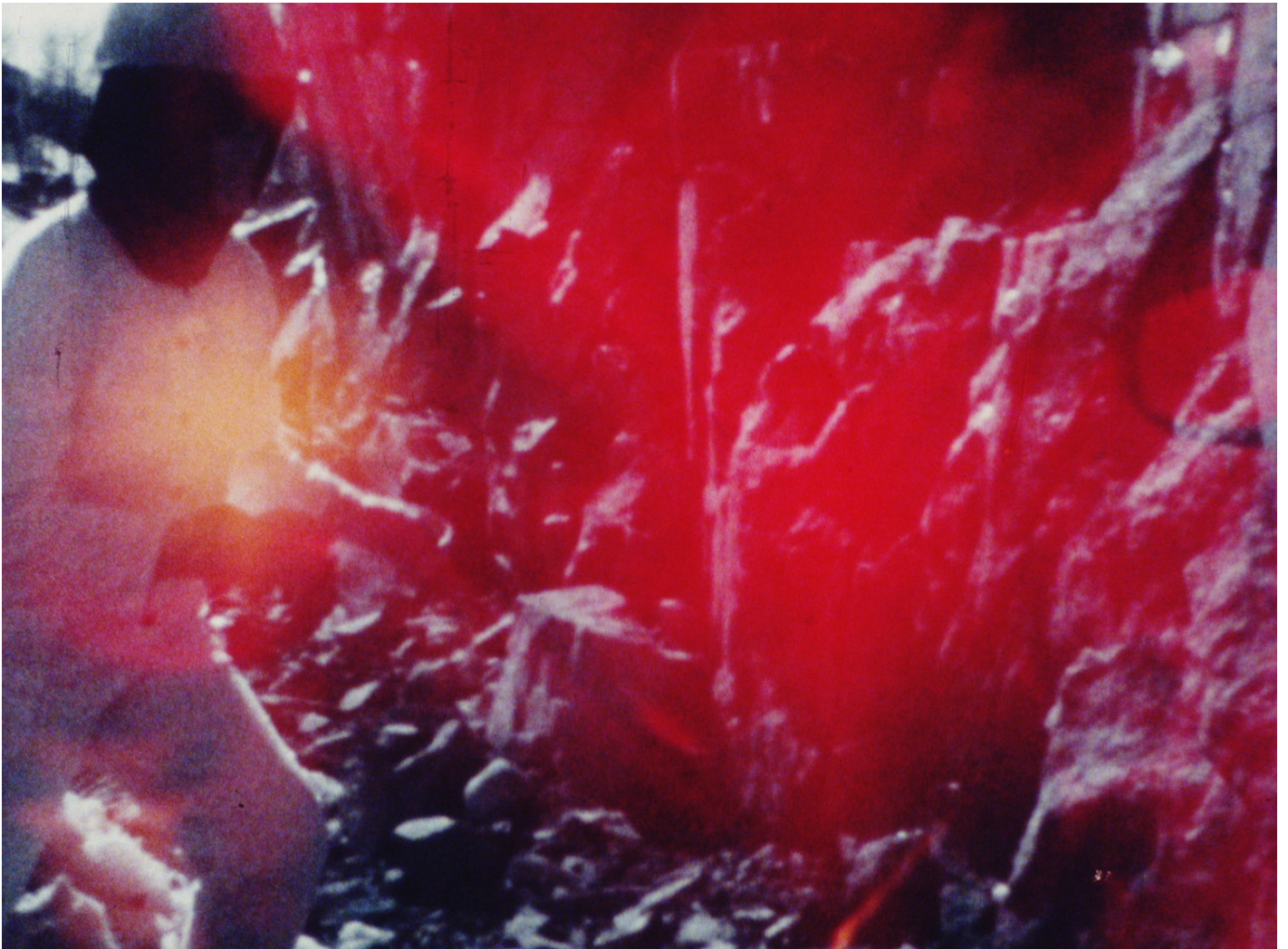
Born in Poland in 1977, Jagna Ciuchta lives and works in Paris and teaches at ENSAPC Paris-Cergy. A graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań, she completed a practice-based PhD within the SACRe/ENS/PSL doctoral programme at the Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2019, entitled *Exhibitions: Dilated Self, Liquid Images and Carnivorous Plants*. In 2024, she published *Je dilaté, images liquides et plantes carnivores*, the first monograph dedicated to her work (Mousse Publishing & Bétonsalon). She has recently exhibited at FRAC Île-de-France, Paris & Bagnolet (2026), at Galerie Rayond Heins, Saint-Brieuc (2025), at La Chaufferie, Strasbourg (2023), at Capucins, Embrun, the Artothèque de Caen (2022), Bétonsalon (2021), Lafayette Anticipations (2020), Friche la Belle de Mai (Marseille), Galerie Edouard-Manet (Gennevilliers), Moly Sabata (Sablons), Centre d'art Le Micro-Onde (Vélizy, 2019), Cneai (2017), FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, James Gallery (CUNY, New York), Villa du Parc (Annemasse), Occidental Temporary (Villejuif, 2016), and in the Krtsky forest near Prague (2017). She has undertaken residencies at Fondazione Antonio Ratti (Como, Italy, 2011), Residency Unlimited (New York, 2013), La Galerie, Centre d'art contemporain de Noisy-le-Sec (2015–2016), and Futura (Prague, 2017). Her work is held in both private and public collections, including FRAC Île-de-France, FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, and FNAC.



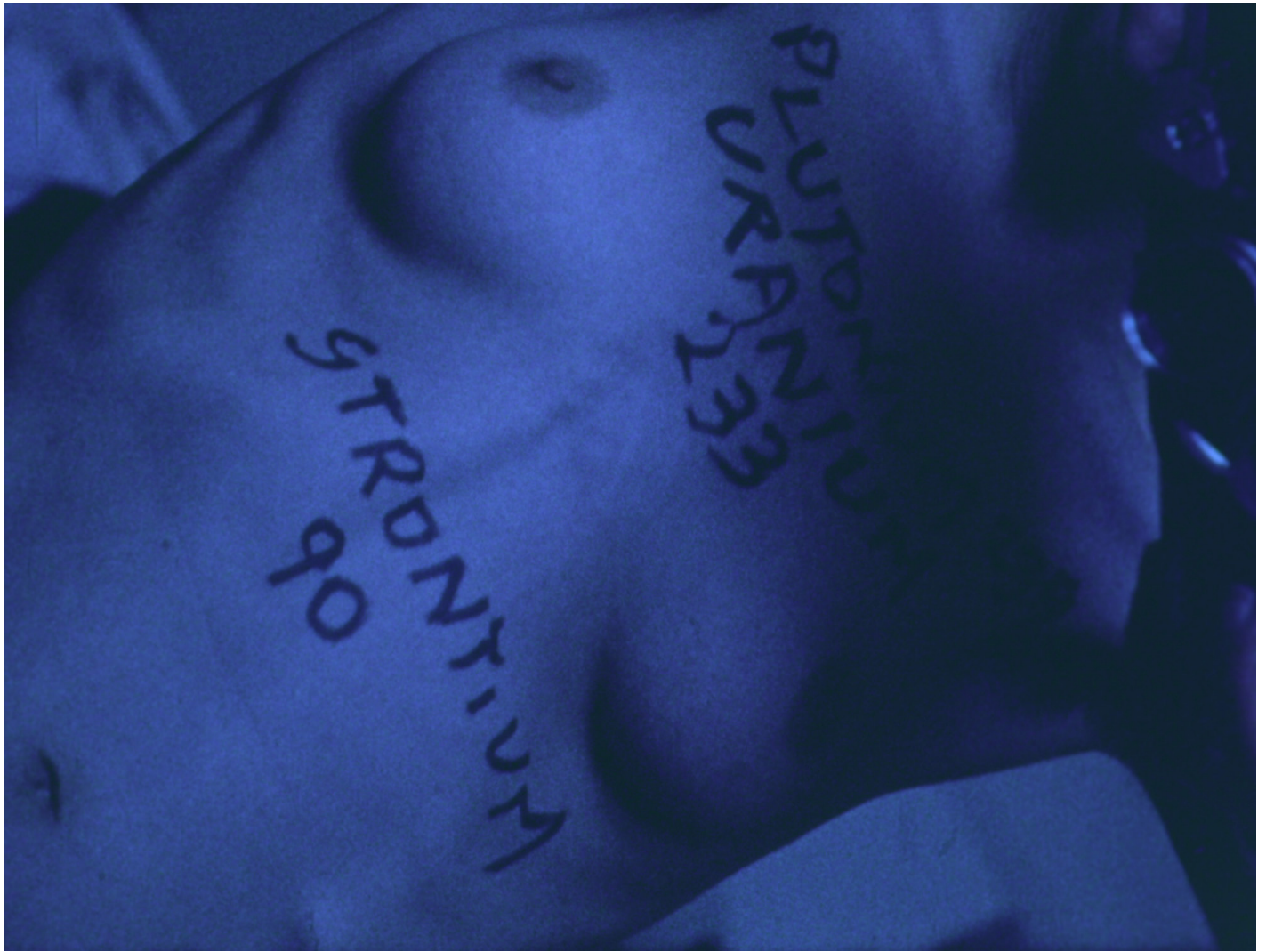














Upcoming

"Magnanrama: Portraits, Networks,
and News of Nathalie Magnan"
From September 25 to December 12
A group exhibition centered on
Nathalie Magnan
Curator: Mathilde Belouali

Practical
information

Bétonsalon
centre for art and research
9 esplanade Pierre Vidal-Naquet
75013 Paris
+33 (0)1 45 84 17 56
info@betonsalon.net
www.betonsalon.net

Access:
M 14 & RER C
Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand

Free entrance
from Wednesday to Friday,
from 11 am to 7 pm
Saturday from 2 pm to 7 pm

All events are free of charge.
The entire space is wheelchair-
accessible. Group visits are free
of charge with advanced booking.

Please check our programme
on social media. Instagram · LinkedIn:
@betonsalon

Contact presse

Sarah Bidet
presse@betonsalon.net
+33 (0) 1 45 84 17 56

With the support
of

Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research is supported by the City of Paris,
the Île-de-France Regional Board of Cultural Affairs – Ministry of Culture,
and the Île-de-France Region, with the collaboration of Université Paris Cité.

Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research is a cultural institution of the City
of Paris, certified institution of national interest by the Ministry of Culture.

Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research is member of DCA / association for
the development of art centers in France, Tram, réseau art contemporain Paris/
Île-de-France, and Arts en résidence - Réseau national and BLA! - national
association of mediation professionals in contemporary art, as well as a
partner of the Souffleurs d'Images service for access to culture for blind and
visually impaired people.

Graphic design : Catalogue Général

Images courtesy : Sandra Lahire and LUX, London