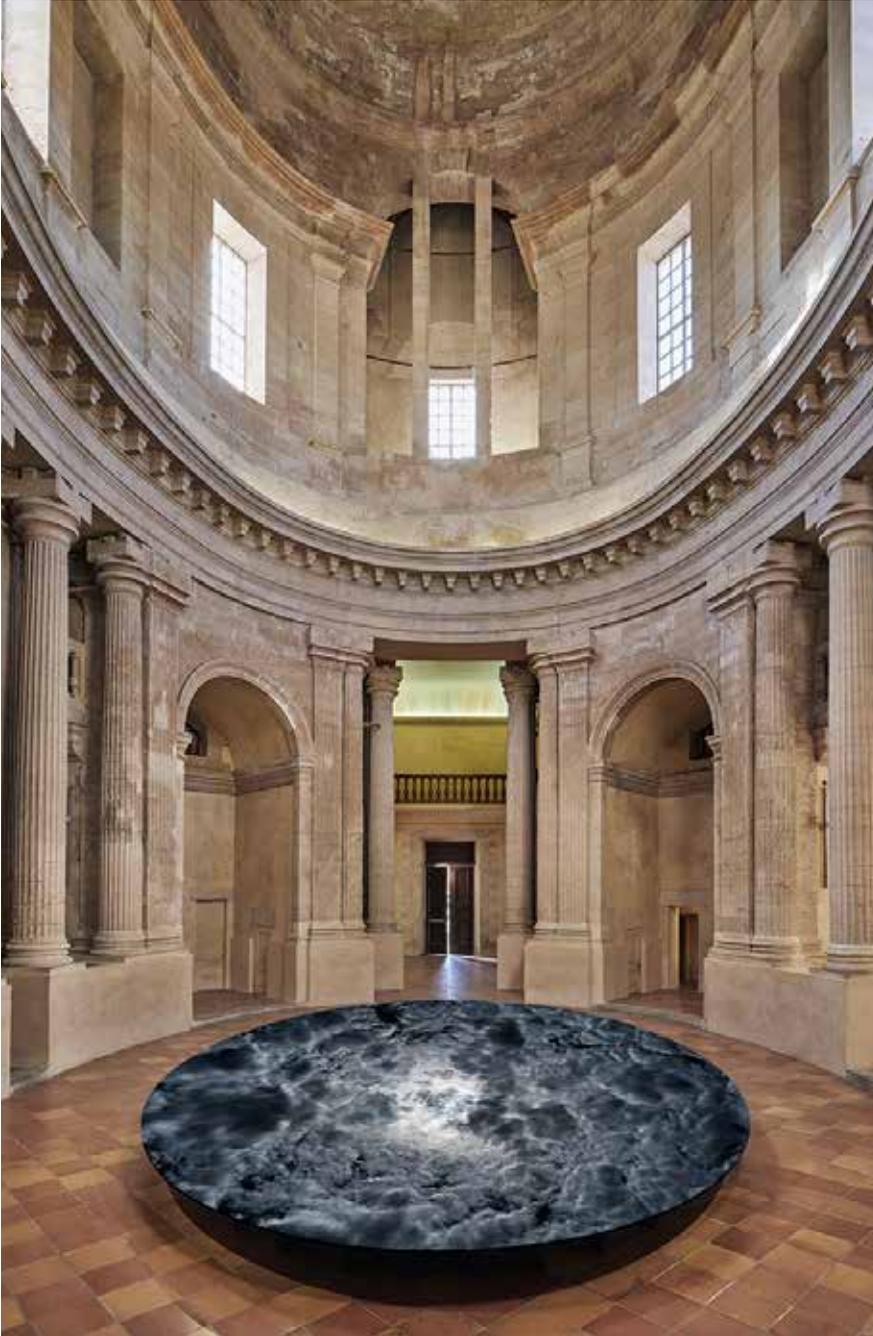


FLUX

ÉRIC BOURRET

Exhibition leaflet



© Éric Bourret - Installation - Chapelle de la Vieille Charité, Marseille 2021

ÉRIC BOURRET **FLUX**

Installation, 2021

A unique, ephemeral installation, imagined specifically for the Centre de la Vieille Charité Chapel, Flux mirrors the dome designed by Marseilles-born architect, painter and sculptor Pierre Puget in the 17th century with a photograph of the sky evoking the celestial vault that Eric Bourret created on the summits of the Himalayas in 2010. A surprising dialogue between two images of the cosmos, the installation imperceptibly modifies our perception of the architectural space. Placed on the ground in the chapel, the photograph seems at first to multiply the dimensions of the space in an unexpected subterranean direction, which provokes a feeling of dizziness in the viewer, when admiring in turn the elevation of the dome and the new perspectives below it. Contrasting the timeless permanence of the architecture with the photographic oscillation of a sky that appears to be both day and night, the artist suggests a muted, almost imperceptible movement, an oscillation that draws the chapel towards another reality, one that is moving and sensitive.

Alluding to the incessant moving energy that is at the heart of nature, this choice evokes the abstract and sonorous chaos characteristic of the primary energy that animates our environment. It seems to make the Centre de la Vieille Charité Chapel a distilled image of the universe in movement. Under the dome, resonances of the work 'Fifty-Eight', a musical work for 58 wind instruments composed by John Cage in 1992, add to the intensity of the installation to the point of creating tension. This underlines the importance of music to Eric Bourret, from Cage to Indian ragas and the iconoclast Frank Zappa.

A unique experience, the installation presented in the Centre de la Vieille Charité Chapel is the first stage of a retrospective exhibition dedicated to the last ten years of Éric Bourret's work, shown in the temporary exhibition galleries at the Centre de la Vieille Charité during the Photo Marseille Festival 2021.

Éric Bourret

A unique figure on the contemporary art scene, Éric Bourret splits his time between the South of France and some of the most remote regions of the globe, from the Himalayan peaks to the Icelandic fjords to the old-growth forests of China and Macaronesia. This solitary life spent surveying landscapes is at the heart of the artist's photographic expression. Six months a year, he walks. After several days of trekking along a meticulously prepared route to fully experience the terrain, he begins the patient work of shooting, gradually increasing the frequency of images as he moves. Éric Bourret discards all documentary intentions and rejects the notion of distance that photography implies; instead, he fully immerses himself in his preferred spaces in search of the chaotic and ever-changing flux of nature that he aspires to capture with his images. This quest for an original big bang culminates in vibrant photographs that feature a convergence of the time spent walking, the incessant micro-fluctuations of the environment, and the intimate experience of enduring cold, fatigue, and isolation.

The quasi-meditative poetry of Éric Bourret's photography has its roots in the work that has been done in land art, minimalism, and performance art since the 1960s. By celebrating curious arrangements of natural elements that he has captured in the heart of the Alps or on the mineral horizons of the Montagne Sainte-Victoire, the artist evokes a kinship between the creative power of nature and the creative power of art, between microcosm and macrocosm. The predominantly kinetic renderings that make his photographs so distinctive testify to an appreciation for randomness, impermanence, and the stretching of time in the tradition of the musician John Cage. Their almost exclusively organic quality recalls some of the most important painters of our time, such as Simon Hantāi or Gerhard Richter. Despite the photographs being cultivated in this way, Éric Bourret's work nonetheless embraces a commitment to the challenges of our time. It can be a matter of conjuring up the stakes of the climatic crisis or, when he immerses his body in the waters of the Mediterranean every winter to photograph the sea's changing surface, alluding to the destiny of those who are today called "migrants".

Photographic series

The work of Éric Bourret is organised in series. Thus, the exhibition invites the viewer not only to admire the unique images, but to immerse themselves in the photos as a set. This installation has evolved from working methods that the artist has used for almost 25 years, and reflects the importance he gives to the link between the photographic image and the experience of walking. Thus, some series trace a specific expedition, even going so far as to link shots taken during the same day as the artist wandered along. Others bring together photographs produced during different trips that share similar subject matter. For example, photographs taken all over the world are brought together to demonstrate their common exploration of primeval forests on earth. This principle gives a unique tone to the exhibition at the Centre de la Vieille Charité. By inviting the public to follow Éric Bourret's footsteps through his chosen geographical horizons and themes, the journey through the exhibition could be likened to a slow expedition, like a gradual ascent.

With this slow unfolding of time, this experience has a strong meditative dimension. It echoes the artistic creation process that is particular to photography, in slow and continuous flux, to the rhythm of our natural environment's constant pulsations. The vibrant character of Éric Bourret's photographs illustrate this. Overlapping several different shots in a single photographic frame - at the moment of shooting - the artist offers an insecure vision, which destabilises the viewer seeking reassuring visual clues. This representation of movement goes as far as to suggest a form of disintegration in the real world, favouring a vision that conveys hallucination, a sensual and spiritual experience, where the energy of nature becomes the real subject. By removing any topographical or geographical dimension from his work, to the point of seeming to put the photographic medium itself in tension, Éric Bourret places it irremediably in the realm of poetry, even metaphysics.

[Chapel: free access]

[temporary exhibition galleries: 6€ (full fare) 3€ (reduced fee)]

The world's pulse

[Defferre 1 Room]

DANS LA GUEULE DE L'ESPACE (2014-2010) [IN THE JAWS OF SPACE]

The title of this series refers to the work of the writer, poet and painter Henri Michaux (1899-1984) and more particularly to 'Dépouillement par l'espace', a text written in 1964 in which Michaux evokes "the surrounding powers of a hostile world", his fear of being invaded by them but also the fascination they inspired in him. This formula could be used to describe the inhospitable expanse of the territories where Éric Bourret created these images: the icy peaks of Etna, the snowy plateaus of the Alps, the isolated ranges of the Himalayas. It traces the extreme experience of crossing them on foot, while highlighting their inspirational character. Like Michaux, Bourret evokes spaces that are potentially dangerous but whose immensity stimulates his imagination. The artist frequently evokes this ambiguity, which he describes in terms of the 'receptivity of the landscape'; it makes him a go-between, crossing the landscape but at the same time revealing the pulsation of the world that runs through him as he walks.

SAINTE-VICTOIRE (2013-2014)

Montagne Sainte-Victoire in Provence has fascinated artists since the late 19th century. Through his colour and light studies of the mountain relief in more than 80 paintings, Paul Cézanne laid the foundations for what was to become Cubism. Drawing on the history of painting, Éric Bourret has also addressed this territory. But in contrast to Cézanne's approach, who observed it from afar to better synthesise its forms, the photographer has chosen to focus on its teeming organic dimension. This approach is a response to his desire to give an account of the telluric forces that enabled the creation of Sainte-Victoire 65 million years ago, as well as to show its secret manifestations up to the present day, in the fossil chaos of mineral matter.

ECHOES (2017)

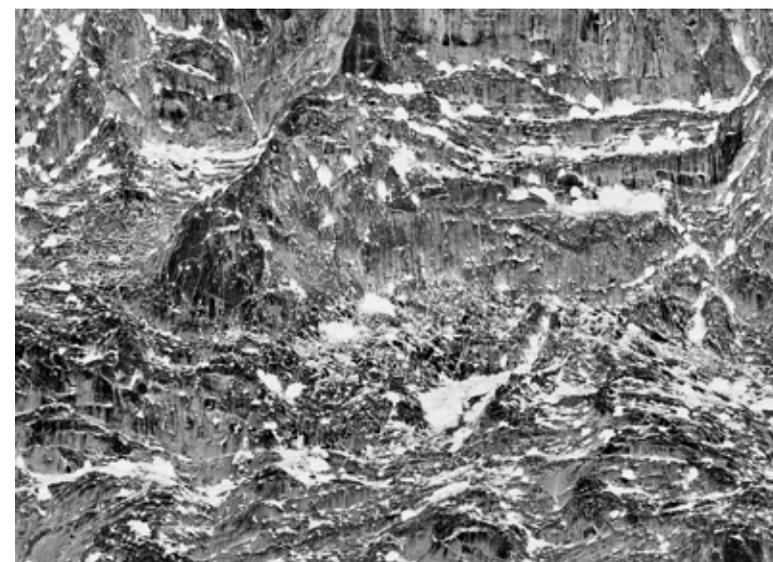
This series has resulted from the same fascination for the incessant moving energy in the heart of nature. Made using photographs of the changing surface of the sea, which the artist painstakingly superimposes over each other, the images that make up **Echoes** show magnetic grey, black and white surfaces whose volume and depth the eye can no longer grasp. All that remains is an abstract and sonorous 'tohu va-bohu' that seems to repeat itself endlessly - like an echo - and in which our eye detects potential forms here and there, like a child observing the clouds. Abandoning the representation of natural elements to focus on its primary energy, **Echoes** translates perpetual movement as well as the creative and intangible force that stirs the world. The series presents photography as a container for this universal energy. **First** (1979), the very first photograph that the artist took, while as a teenager in Aveyron he observed the celestial vault, shows the extent to which he locates this primary power in the wider scale of the universe and cosmic movements since the Big Bang.



© Éric Bourret - Landscape 3 - Dans la gueule de l'espace - 134 x 110 cm
Alpes/Himalaya - 2010-2014



© Éric Bourret Landscape 18 - Echoes 195 x 140 cm - Malte 2017



© Éric Bourret - Landscape 8 Sainte-Victoire - 140 x 195 cm - France - 2013-2014



© Éric Bourret - Landscape 16 - Pangaea - 140 x 195 cm - Alpes 2018-2020

Photography as vortex

[Defferre 2 Room]

PANGAEA (2018-2020)

Although he works almost exclusively in photographs, Éric Bourret also has connections with other artistic media. His references are in fact surprisingly pictorial: they bring together some of the most important painters of the 20th century, including Gerhard Richter, Simon Hantai, Joan Mitchell and Philip Guston. The images that comprise the **Pangaea** series reflect this very open approach to artistic creation, perhaps to the point of destabilising the photographic medium. The viewer is confused as to the exact nature of the works: are they photographs or paintings? Are their hypnotic material effects, their nebulous rendering of light and their almost organic density of the surface the work of a brush or the camera?

Music also enriches Éric Bourret's research, with his interest in Indian ragas, the atonal work of John Cage and Jimi Hendrix riffs. Far from being anecdotal, this cultural background sheds light on certain aspects of his photographic research, in particular his work on the superimposition of several photographic shots within the same image. Like a compilation of different snapshots, this process suggests the idea of a temporal unfolding and compression of several successive instances in the still field of the photograph. This phenomenon leads to the creation of time-images. It echoes the principle of rhythmic sequencing and the use of repetitive loops in music to suggest perpetual back and forth, the acceleration and deceleration of time. It could also be likened to the repetitive inflection of a single note played by a musical instrument in a potentially infinite number of ways.

An image of time expanding, where beginning and end merge, this series retraces both the territories crossed by Éric Bourret and Pangaea, the original continent that its title evokes. Rather than simple still images, the series Pangaea seems to propel the viewer into strange temporal vortices. A video work, a unique experimentation created especially for this exhibition, may well mark the culmination of this research with a strong hypnotic tone.

Crossings

[Puget Room]

NO LIMIT (2017-2020)

Created in the Mediterranean, in contact with the sea, the highly mineral character of the series **No limit** series is surprising. Evoking the surface of ice or glass in fusion, these images echo the mountainous landscapes that Éric Bourret more frequently photographs. The liquid element appears in all its paradox: rather than connecting one bank to the other, the Mediterranean is presented as an impassable, harsh barrier, resisting any prospect of crossing. Without a shoreline, the sky becomes the only means of escape. **No limit** inevitably evokes the history of ancient navigators, risking storms. It also suggests the terrible destiny of those who, in today's world, attempt this perilous and often fatal crossing. The perspective adopted by the artist intensifies this disturbing impression. To produce his images, he in fact dove into the sea, to be as close as possible to the crest of the waves, his body and face often submerged. The result is a feeling of anxiety, an anguish, as if at risk of drowning.

ZÉRO L'INFINI (2014-2015) *[ZERO INFINITY]*

A calmer vision, with a wide open frame, **Zéro l'infini** reflects perhaps a more reconciled approach to the sea, with coloured areas that echo the expanse of the sky. Coming back to the universal, Éric Bourret also seems to be returning here to the early days of photography and in particular to the seascapes of Gustave Le Gray. Inviting a spiritual and almost meditative contemplation, this series offers a poetic vision of the infinity of the world, a source of eternal wonder.



© Éric Bourret - Landscape 15 - No Limit - 80 x 60 cm - Méditerranée 2017-2020



© Éric Bourret - Landscape 5 - Zéro l'infini - 140 x 195 cm - Ocean 2014-2015



© Éric Bourret
Landscape 11 - Primary Forest
195 x 140 cm
Îles de la Macaronésie
2016-2019

Closer to the world

[Allende Room]

PRIMARY FOREST (2016-2019)

ZHANGJIAJIE (2018)

Seeking the primary energy that animates the world, Éric Bourret dedicated some of his walks to the last primaeval forests in the world, as well as going to certain regions that are the most isolated on the Asian continent. Plunged into this infinity, without any trace of past or present human activity being visible, here the photographer perhaps comes closest to the magical dimension of natural forces. While he presents highly kinetic works, Éric Bourret seems to also want to translate - or, more accurately, concretise - the rustle of a groaning forest as the wind blows through it or the dry collision between two mineral elements at the top of a mountain.



© Éric Bourret
Landscape 14 - Zhangjiajie
140 x 195 cm - Chine 2018

HOT SPOT (2020)

This same impression of power emerges from this series, made in Ireland in the 'hot spots' where seismic activity in the subsoil escapes to the surface of the planet in volcanic eruptions. "How do you account for all these ethereal and telluric events that occur at the same time and of which you are a part, disappearing and reinventing themselves in a continuous flow"? How do you crystallise this organic and sonic experience and project it onto an artistic medium? By superimposing several moments in the same image and by accepting the randomness and magic that comes from that process, I feel closer to reality.' Images of a world perpetually in movement, the works of Eric Bourret raise the issue of the fragility of our environment in the face of ever-increasing human interventions in nature. They are, in this sense, a call to preserve a world threatened with extinction.



© Éric Bourret
Landscape 21 - Hot Spot
60 x 80 cm - Islande 2020

Éric Bourret

Born in Paris in 1964

Lives and works in the south of France and the Himalayas

Éric Bourret identifies as an artist-walker. His work is influenced by English land art and wandering landscape photographers. Since the early 1990s, he has been travelling the world on foot, crossing all horizons at all altitudes, taking photographs that he describes as experiments in walking and in the visible. During his walks, over several days or several months depending on a precise protocol that determines the number and spacing of his shots, the artist overlaps different images from the same area on a single negative. These sequences intensify and accelerate the imperceptible movement of geological strata and fix the ephemeral temporality of human beings at the heart of the natural feature. Disintegrating the structure of the visible, they create another sensitive reality in movement. The image coming from this temporal layering is vibrant, oscillating, almost animated. Accident and chance are used, as a testimony to the subjective experience.

Éric Bourret's work has been shown in exhibitions in Xie Zilong Photography Museum in Changsha and in the Shenzhen Art Museum in China, during the Venice Biennale, at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Tamulipas in Mexico and in the Espace de l'Art Concret in Mouans-Sartoux, France, among others. His work can be found in various public collections, in particular: the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Maison Européenne de la Photographie (MEP), Musée d'Art Contemporain et d'Art Moderne in Nice, Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne, Switzerland, Musée Ziem in Martigues, among others.

The Photo Marseille Festival

Each year from October to December, since 2011, the Photo Marseille Festival has offered a programme of contemporary photography (exhibitions, screenings, talks, workshops, etc.), creating a real journey through the city to encounter contemporary photographers.

In 2021, the festival will be held in 21 venues and will present the work of more than a hundred photographers in over forty events. Since its creation in 2011, the festival has focused on discovering young talent, notably with the Prix Maison Blanche, and highlighting internationally renowned photographers (Martin Parr, Bernd & Hilla Becher, Robert Frank, Stephen Shore, Man Ray) as well as local ones (Franck Pourcel, André Mérian, Geoffroy Mathieu, Monique Derégibus, Yohanne Lamoulère). The event also connects the history of photography and its current practice via exhibitions, screenings and educational activities for the public (mediated tours, workshops, lectures, master classes).

The festival takes place in venues belonging to organisations, private individuals, institutions, as well as cultural spaces. From 2021 onwards, the festival aims to take over the urban space on a large scale by drawing on the richness of Marseille's heritage to contribute to the diversification of its audiences. The festival's programme is largely created with the event's many partners. It is a collective adventure that builds and enhances a network of cultural players around a unifying event.

Musées de Marseille

Marseille, France's second city, the nerve centre of one of the largest metropolitan areas in Europe and major Mediterranean capital, has a wealth of exceptional heritage, the fruit of its twenty-six centuries of history and of the cosmopolitan paths followed by the people who have kept the city alive to this day.

Marseille's museums - les Musées de Marseille - are all examples of this shared heritage. Boasting a collection of almost 120,000 pieces from all historical periods and geographical areas, they bring together 19 heritage sites, 7 major historical monuments, 12 museums that are listed 'Musée de France' by the French government, 2 memorial sites, 3 conservation centres and 7 documentation centres, archives and specialised libraries. This ecosystem is animated with a programme that is constantly renewed, combining excellency and experimentation, and open to all sectors of society. It is testimony to the investment made in a cultural access policy as well as the strategic contribution to the local, metropolitan and regional territory's influence on the international scene.

Le Centre de la Vieille Charité

The Centre de la Vieille Charité is a symbol of the Marseilles region and its rich heritage. It is the head office of the Musées de Marseille and also houses the MAM (Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne, Museum of Mediterranean Archaeology), the MAAOA (Musée d'Arts Africains, Océaniens et Amérindiens, Museum of African, Oceanic and Native American Art), the cipM (Centre International de Poésie de Marseille, International Poetry Centre Marseille), several world-renowned universities and research centres (EHESS, Centre Norbert Elias, CNRS) and a cinema.

Built in several phases, from 1670 to 1750, the Centre de la Vieille Charité is a particularly prestigious example of 17th century French Classical architecture, designed for a hospital and prison project. The site is the work of sculptor, painter and architect Pierre Puget (1620-1694), and is a symbol of Michel Foucault's 'Great Confinement'. Puget, one of the most noteworthy artists working during the reign of Louis XIV, for whom he sculpted a number of portraits, received a number of royal orders, including the famous Milo of Croton, and Perseus and Andromeda, which were placed in the Gardens of Versailles in 1683. They are now flagship works in the sculpture department of the Louvre. Several of his pieces are also displayed in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Marseilles. They retrace Puget's long stays in Italy and offer an understanding of the importance of Marseilles for the spread of some of the most important artistic and cultural movements throughout France and Northern Europe, starting from the early modern era.

ALONGSIDE THE EXHIBITION



Conferences, Programs, Events

During the exhibition, the Musées de Marseille and the Photo Marseille Festival are offering activities for all ages: tours, meet the artist sessions, film screenings, talks, image education workshops, writing workshops.

Practical photography workshops for adults and young people are also planned throughout the exhibition. Open to experienced photographers as well as the curious and beginners, they offer the opportunity to experience one's own artistic creativity.

Catalogue

The exhibition catalogue brings together contributions from several specialists in contemporary photography who examine Eric Bourret's place in French and European photographic practices in the landscape since the 1990s, examine his links with the research of land artists and the field of performance art since the 1970s, and note the kinship of his work with that of painters since the nineteenth century, from Cézanne to Gerhard Richter, Judit Reigl and Simon Hantaï.

Éric Bourret - Flux

192 pages, 123 photographs - In French and English - Published by Arnaud Bizalion

Published: 4 November 2021 - Retail price: 40 euros

Paris Photo 2021

A book signing event for the exhibition is planned on 11 November at 4 p.m. for Paris Photo 2021, at the Grand Palais Éphémère (Paris).

Find detailed information at musees.marseille.fr

FLUX ÉRIC BOURRET

29 OCTOBER 2021 - 27 FEBRUARY 2022

Exhibition organised jointly by Musées de Marseille and the Photo Marseille Festival


Musées de Marseille

**PHOTO
MARSEILLE**
FESTIVAL

Useful information

Centre de la Vieille Charité

2, rue de la Charité - 13002 Marseille

Information : 04 91 14 58 23 - musees@marseille.fr

Bookings

School groups, social groups, leisure centres: +33 (0) 4 91 14 58 23 - musees-education@marseille.fr

Other groups: Tourist Office and Marseille Convention Bureau groups: +33 (0) 4 91 13 89 03
groupe@marseille-tourisme.com

Opening times

Tuesday to Sunday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Mondays, closed on 1st and 11 November, 25 December and 1st January.

Prices

Ground floor rooms: €6 full price/€3 reduced price - Chapel: free

Access to the permanent collections in the Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne and the Musée d'Arts Africains, Océaniens, Amérindiens, is free of charge.

Sanitary measures

- Masks are compulsory from age 11
- Hand sanitiser is available
- Currently we are not lending pushchairs or wheelchairs

Covid pass needed from age 12

- PCR test carried out within 72 hours with negative result
- Certificate of full vaccination issued within the last 7 days
- Certificate of immunity issued more than 11 days and less than 6 months.

musees.marseille.fr

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