Sophie Ristelhueber

Portfolio

Born in 1949 in Paris, where she lives and works.

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© Léa Crespi

For nearly thirty years, Sophie Ristelhueber has been reflecting on the territory and its history through a singular approach to the ruins and traces left by mankind in places devastated by war or natural and cultural upheavals. Far from the classic photo-reportage, her practice focuses on the exposure of facts and the imprint of history, in bodies and in landscapes, by making wounds and scars visible, real memories of the "facts" of history.

While she mainly uses photography in her work, Sophie Ristelhueber uses her photography to create plastic works in their own right, playing on the material and format of the image, its status, its frame and its installation in space.

Her work has been presented in many international institutions, among which :

- MoMA (New York, US)
- The Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, US)
- Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo, US)
- The Power Plant (Toronto, CA)
- Tate Modern (London, UK)
- Whitechapel Gallery (London, UK)
- the Imperial War Museum (London, UK)
- the biennials of Johannesburg and Sao Paulo
- the Triennial of Etchigo-Tsumari (Niigata, JPN)
- the Rencontres d'Arles (Arles, FR)
- the Centre Pompidou (Paris, FR)
- the National Gallery of the Jeu de Paume (Paris, FR)
- the Zadkine Museum (Paris, FR)
- the Rodin Museum (Paris, FR)
- the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris (Paris, FR)

Sophie Ristelhueber's work is held in many public collections, including :

- the Museum of Fine Art (Boston, US)
- the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (US),
- the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, CA)
- the MNAM - Centre Georges-Pompidou (Paris, FR)
- the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris, (Paris, FR)
- the Victoria & Albert Museum (London, GB)
- the Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris, FR)
- the National Library (Paris, FR)
- the National Fund of Contemporary Art (FR)
- Various Regional Funds of Contemporary Art (Brittany, Upper Normandy, Lower Normandy, Corsica, PACA).


“I HAVE OBSESSIONS I DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND, THE DEEP MARK, THE SCARRED SURFACE, THE SCARS, THE TRACES THAT HUMAN BEINGS LEAVE ON THE EARTH. BUT IT' S NOT A COMMENTARY ON THE ENVIRONMENT. IN A WAY, I AM AN ARTIST WHO WOULD WORK RATHER LIKE AN ARCHAEOLOGIST”
Sophie Ristelhueber

Exhibitions

Selection

1994 — 2024

Galerie Poggi, Paris (FR), 2024

Exhibition view *What the Fuck!* (solo show), © Photo .kit



"What the Fuck!" is a strong iconoclastic gesture that questions the relevance of art in our world ablaze and at war, literally undermining the very principle of exhibition.

It expresses the revolt of a "history painter", as described by art historian Thomas Schlesser, who has been reflecting for over forty years on territory and its history through the ruins and traces left by humanity in places devastated by wars or by natural and cultural upheavals. Half a century during which little has changed, as humanity's madness continues to inflict the same wounds on the centuries-old landscapes of the Middle East, as well as on those of Europe and Central Asia.

Sophie Ristelhueber emerges from her reserve, gathering her most emblematic works, abandoned on the gallery floor, as if defeated and on strike, in a stunning dialogue with previously-unseen photographs of animals that she is exhibiting for the first time.

“Strangely alone, they make the presence of life even more confusing and heighten the feeling of its precariousness. But they hold on”, as Vinciane Despret emphasises, “They hold the wall, alone, offering a striking contrast with the collapsed works that surround them.”

Sophie Ristelhueber
What the Fuck #5, What the Fuck #3, 2024
Black and white photography, expert pigment print piezography (charcoal ink) on Hahnemühle German Etching paper
100 x 150 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris © Photo .kit

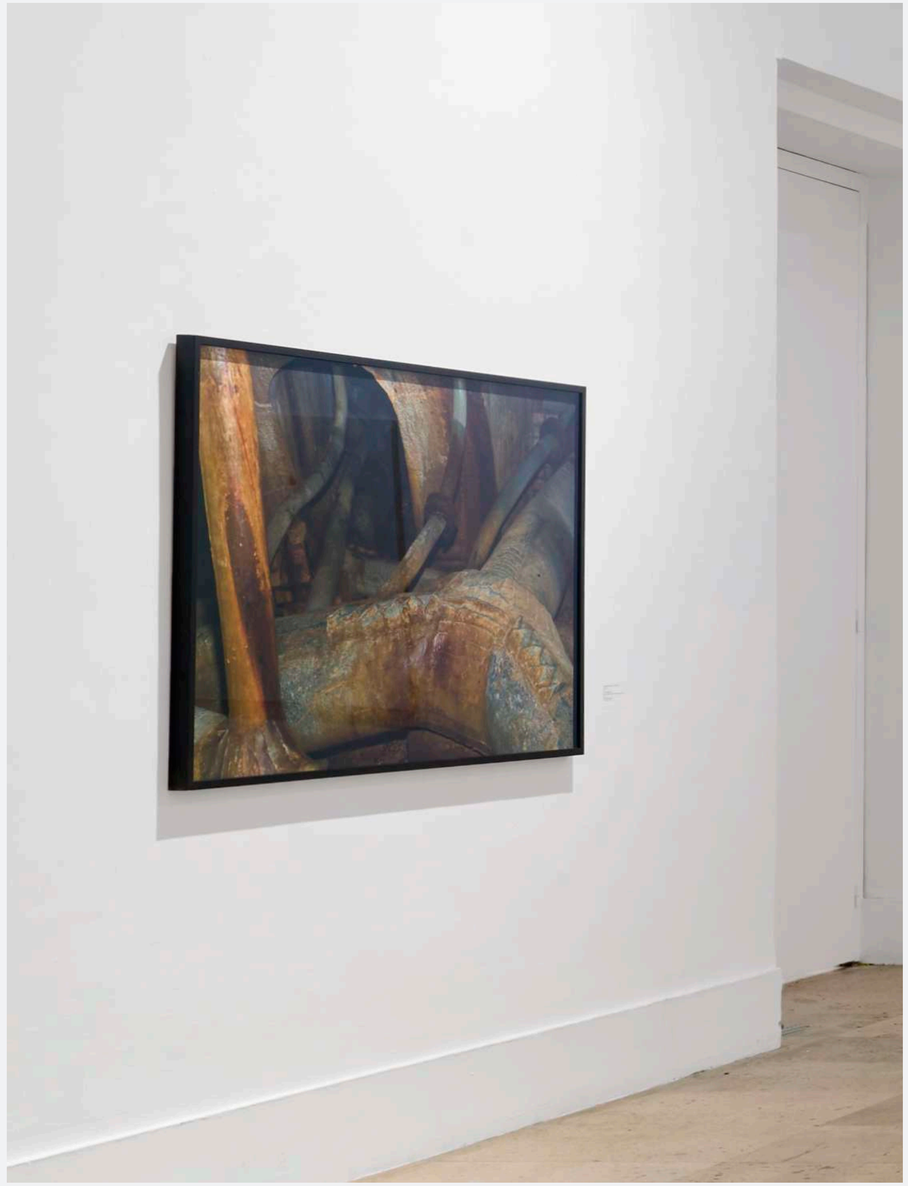
Galerie Poggi, Paris (FR), 2024

Vues de l'exposition *What the Fuck!* (solo show), © Photo .kit



Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (FR), 2023

Exhibition view of *Nouvelles acquisitions photographies* (group show)





Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon (FR), 2023

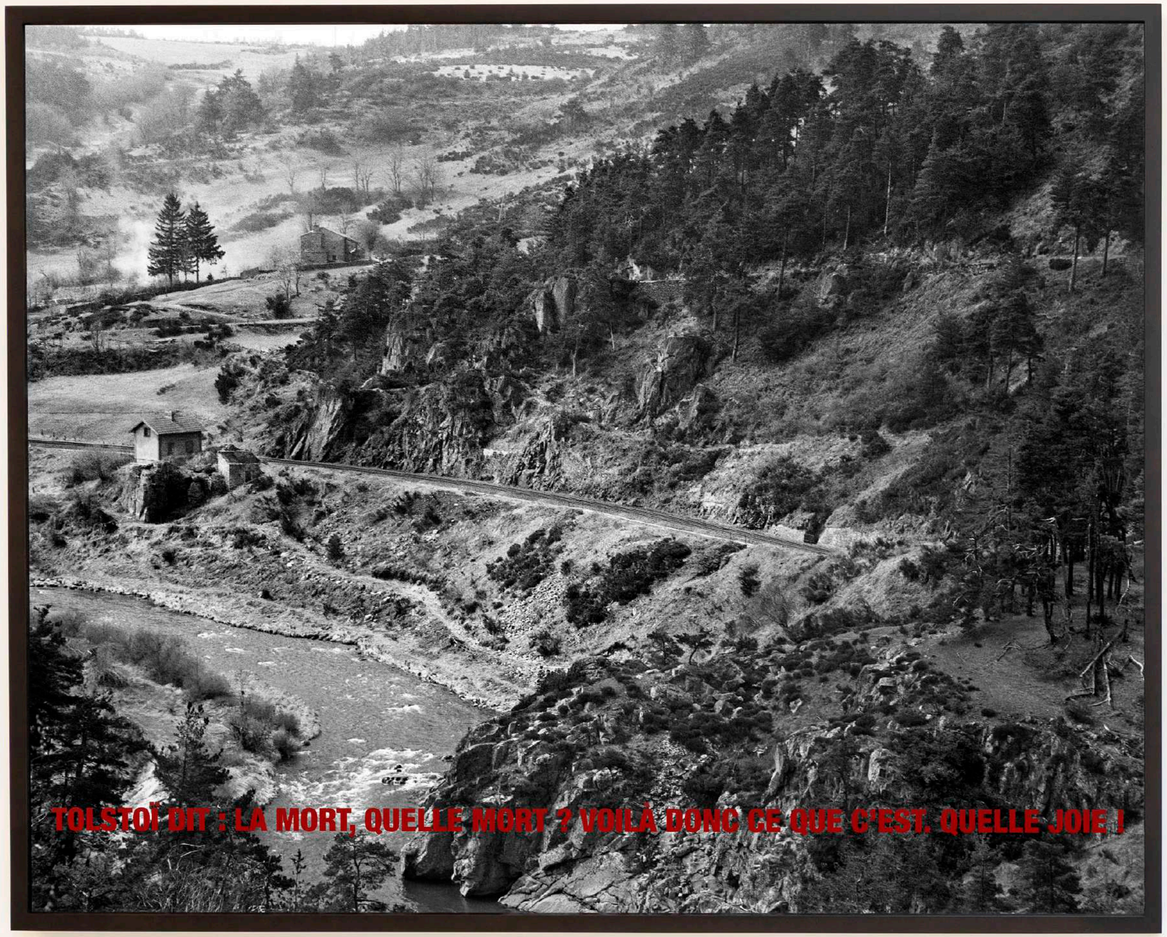
Exhibition view of *Les Formes de la Ruine* (group show) © Lyon MBA - Photo Martial Couderette

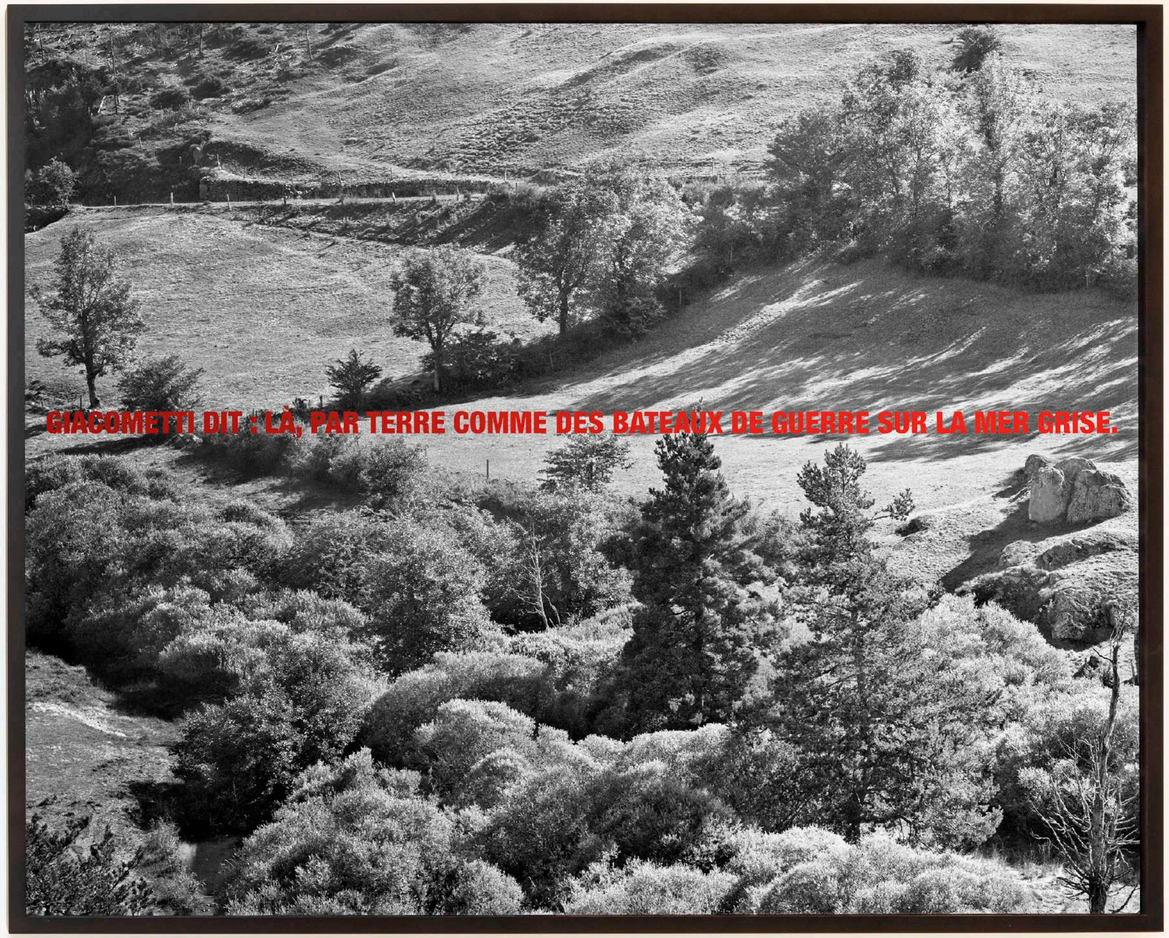




Institut Giacometti, Paris (FR), 2022

Exhibition view of *Legacy* (solo show)





Institut Giacometti, Paris (FR), 2022

Exhibition view of *Legacy* (solo show)





Musée d'art contemporain de Haute Vienne, Chateau Rochechouart (FR), 2022

Exhibition view of *Les Pensées Sauvages* (group show)

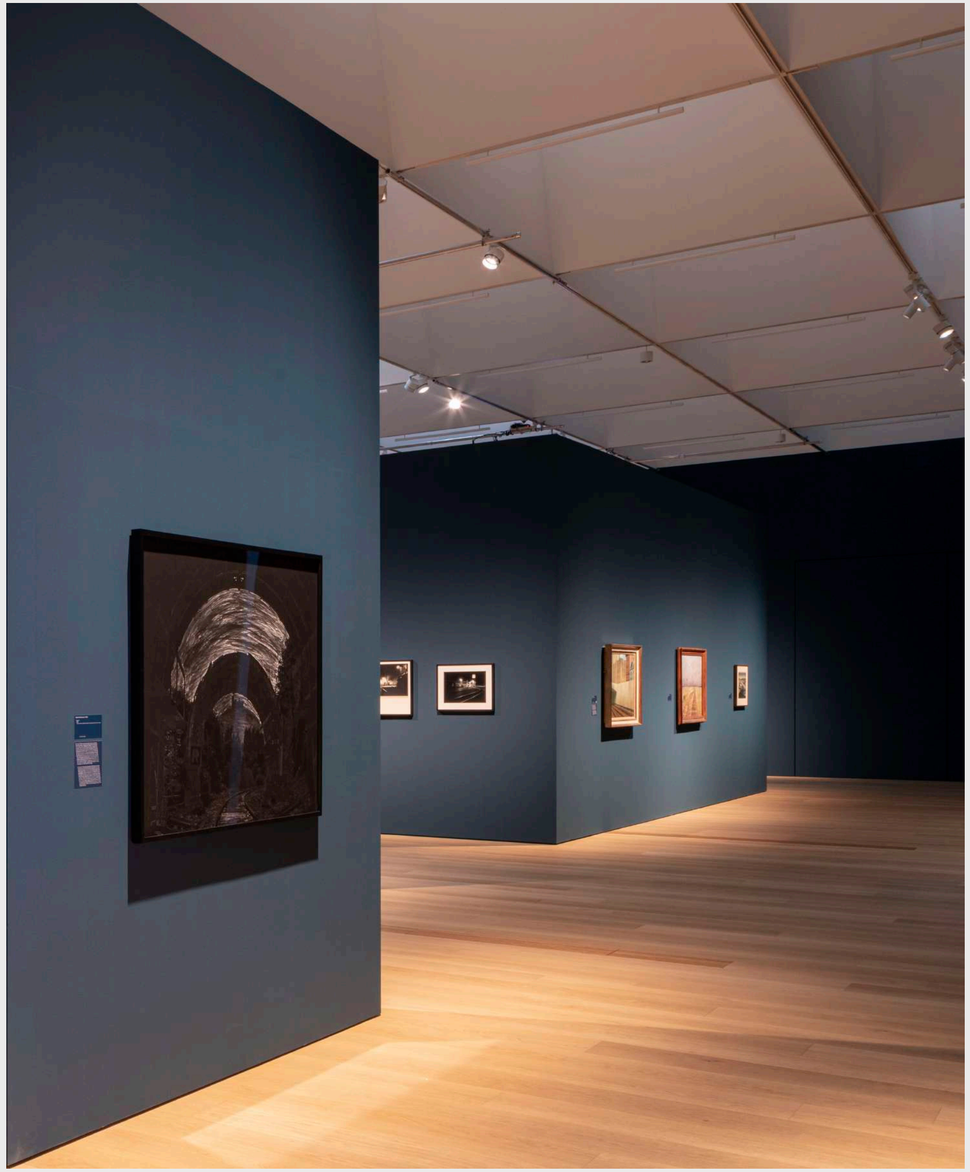


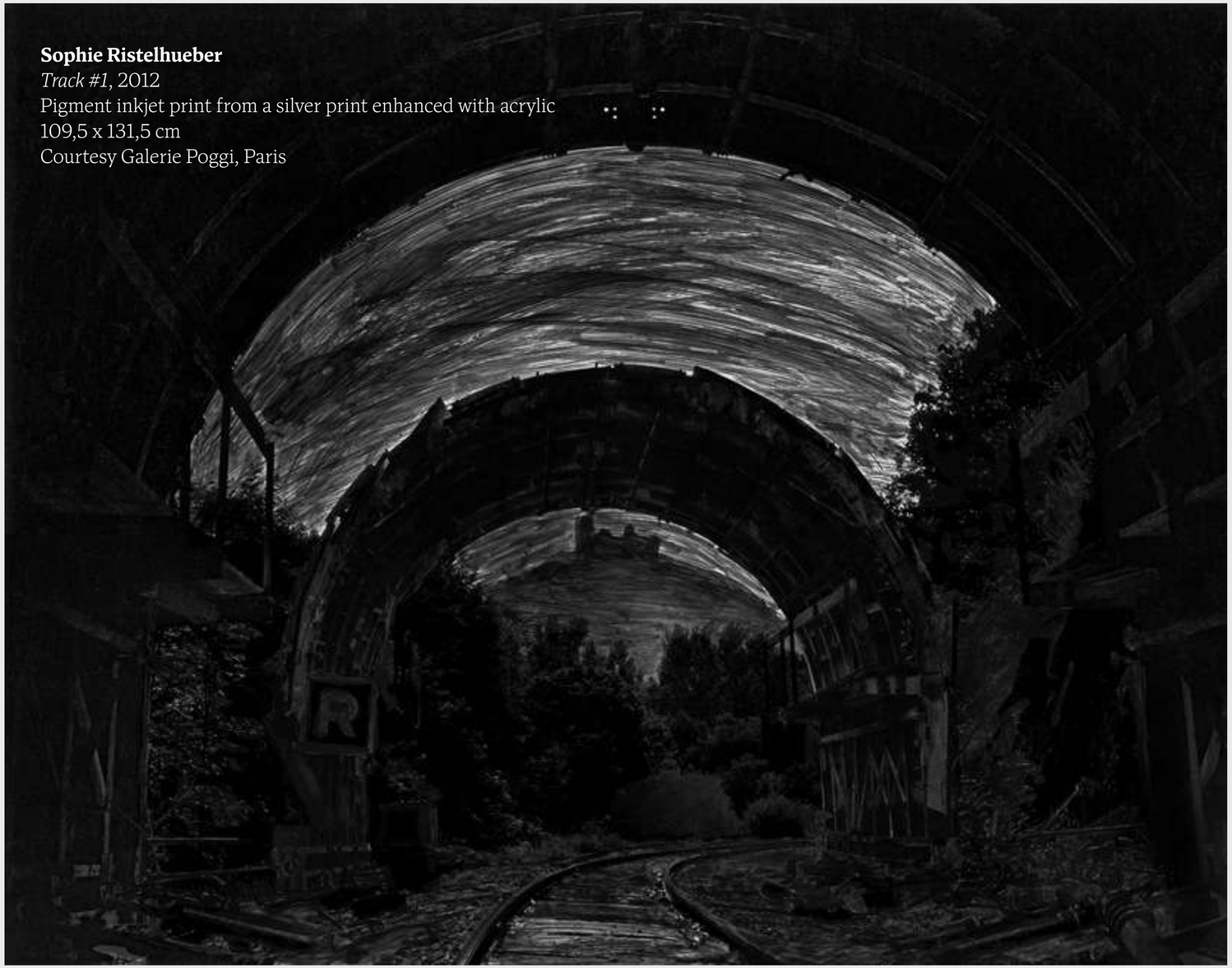




Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts de Lausanne (CH), 2022

Exhibition view of *Voyages Imaginaires* (group show)





Sophie Ristelhueber
Track #1, 2012
Pigment inkjet print from a silver print enhanced with acrylic
109,5 x 131,5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Musée Musée d'Art Naïf Anatole Jakovsky, Nice (FR), 2022

Exhibition view of *Les fleurs du Mâle* (group show) © Laurent Thareau

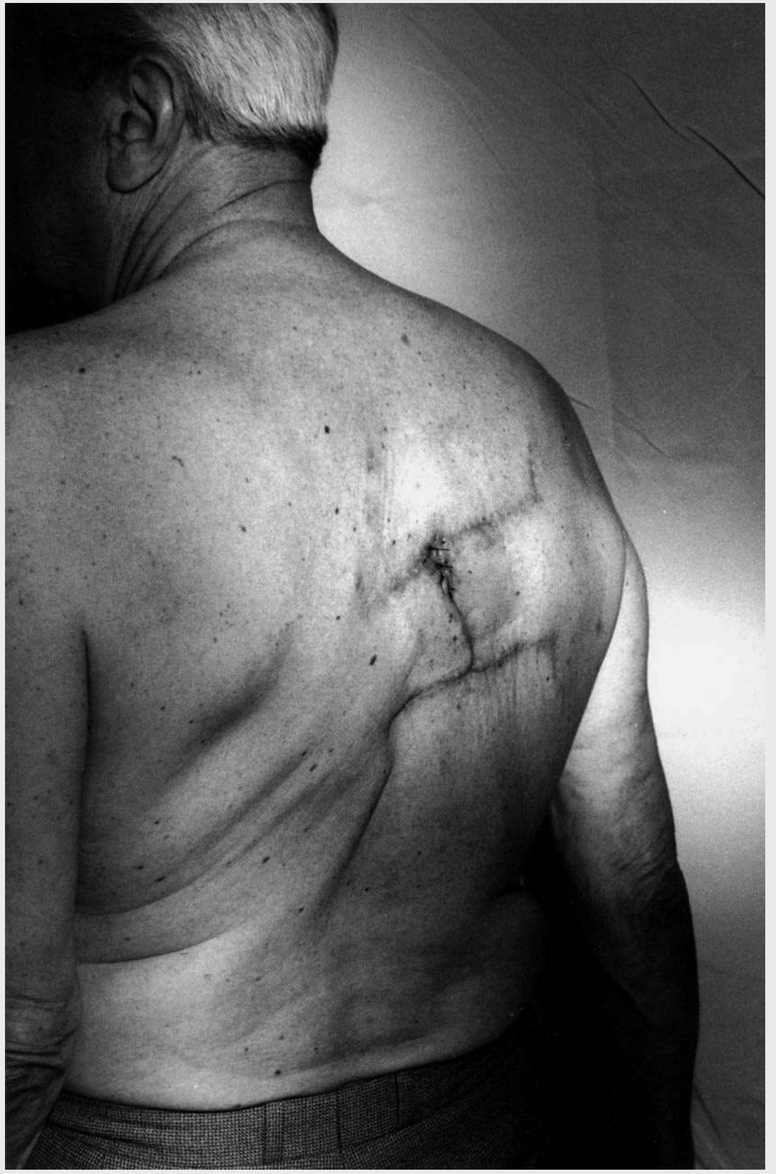


Jenisch Museum, Vevey (CH), 2022

Exhibition view of *Art Cruel* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
Every One #10, 1994
Black and white photograph, silver print mounted on wood fiber plate
270 x 180 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



National Center for Photography and Images, Taipei (TW), 2021

Exhibition view of *A Handful of Dust : from the Cosmic to the Domestic* (group show curated by David Campany)



ZKM - Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe (DE), 2020

Exhibition view of *Critical Zones* group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
Sunset Years series, 2019
Pigment print on Baryta Prestige 340gr Fine Art Paper
120 x 158 x 5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Topographie de l’art, Paris (FR), 2020

Exhibition view of *Epaisseur du temps* / *Photographique* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
Vulaines I, 1989
Two photographs
167,5 x 208 cm each
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



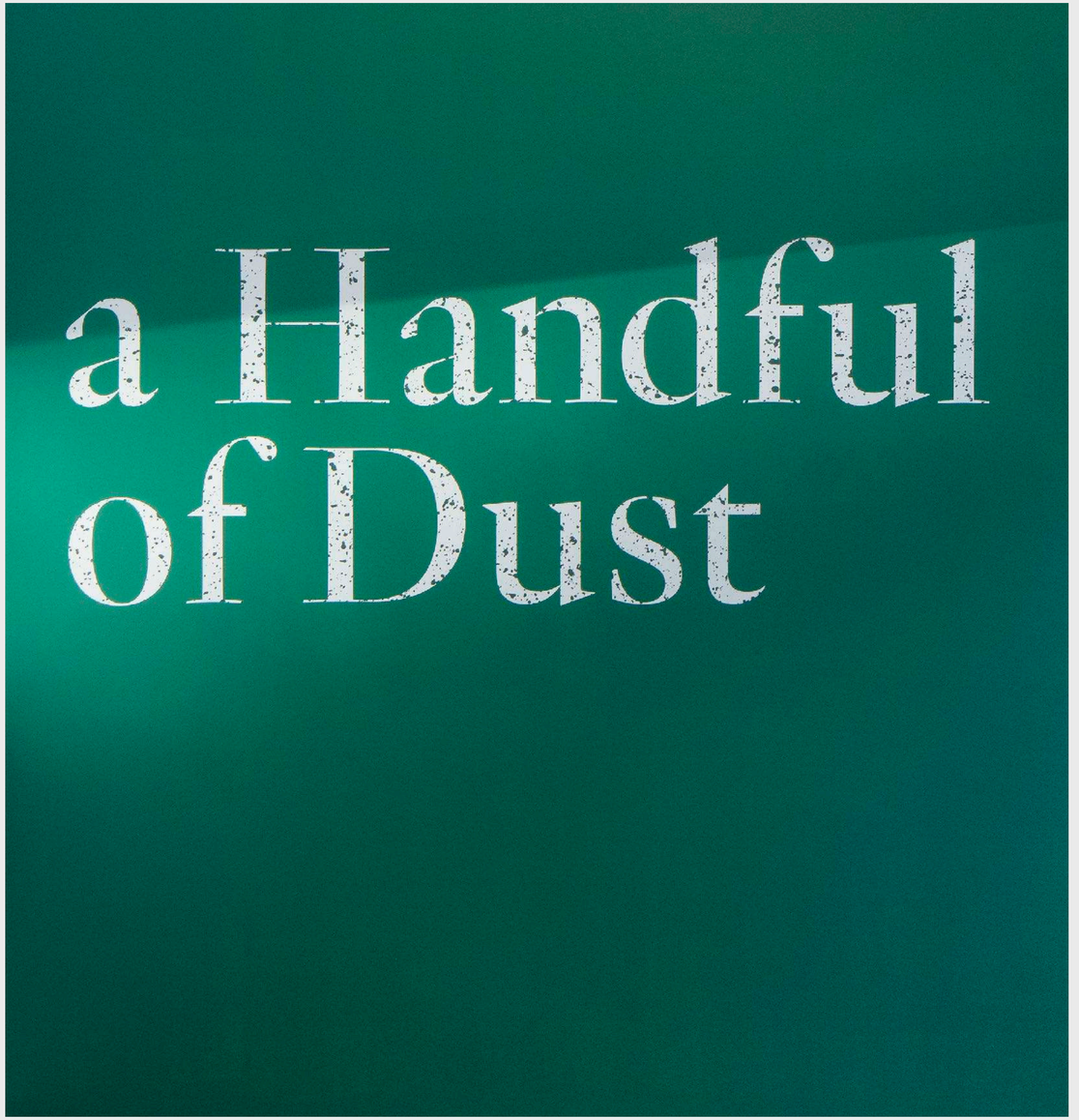


Ryerson Image Centre (CA), 2020

Exhibition view of *A Handful of Dust : From the Cosmic to the Domestic* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
A cause de l'élevage de poussière, 1991-2007
Black and white photograph, pigment print
framed under glass
155 x 190 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris (FR), 2019

Exhibition view of *Sunset Years* (solo show)



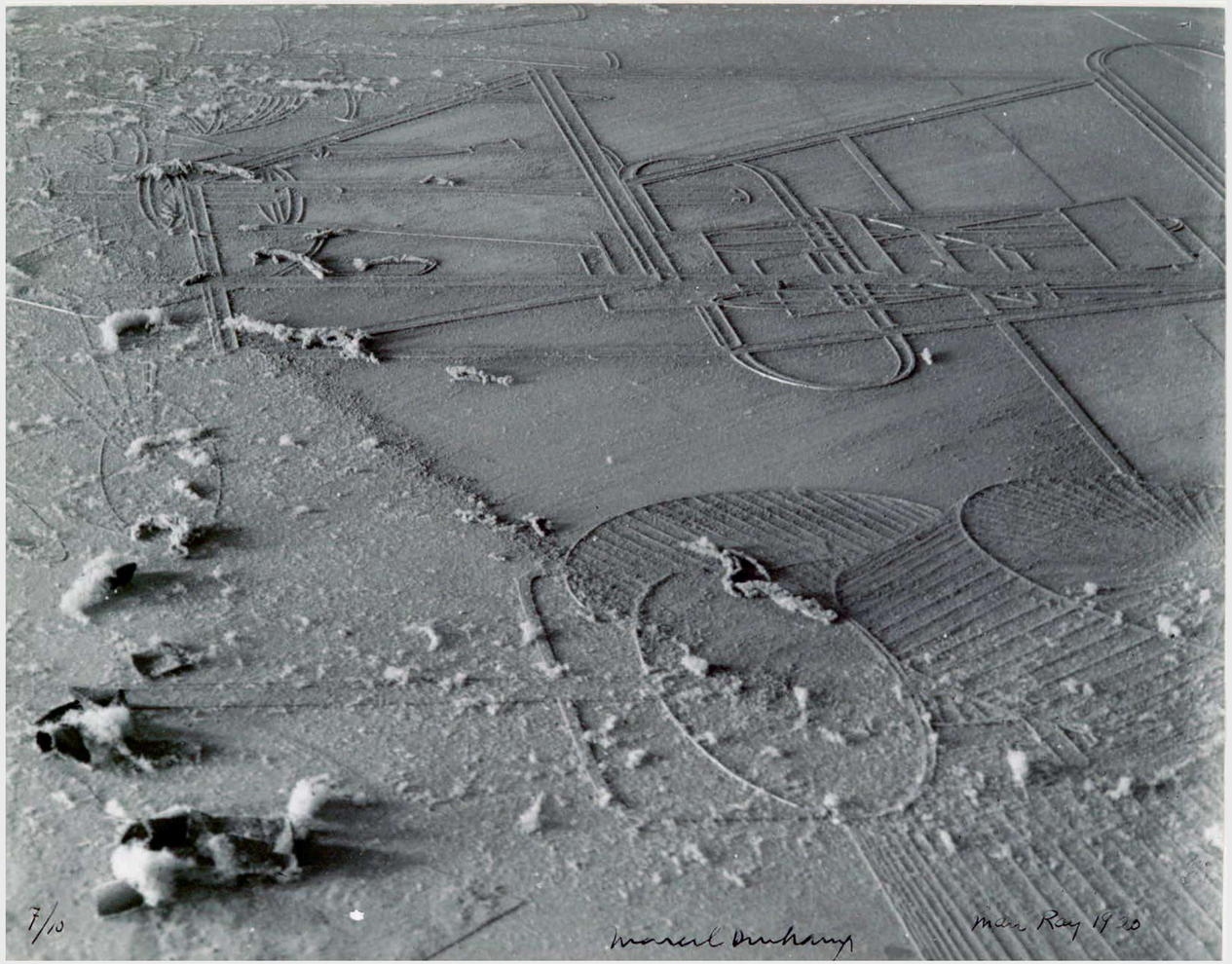
Obsessed by the hills that have been sifting through the dry coasts of the Dead Sea for several years, Sophie Ristelhueber flew over this mythical sea in 2017 to photograph its almost Martian craters, the result of real climate bombs that bear witness to the environmental upheavals and political conflicts caused by the over-exploitation of the Jordan River.

In the foreground, it is the Parisian asphalt whose deformations she scrutinized in close-up, resulting from the effects of thermal contractions of the bitumen or the underground roots deforming what man is trying to flatten and devitalize.

Sophie Ristelhueber
Série Sunset Years, 2019
Pigment print on Baryta Prestige 340gr Fine Art Paper
120 x 158 x 5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Whitechapel Gallery, London (GB), 2017

Exhibition view of *A Handful of Dust Photography after Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp* (group show)



Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp
Élevage de poussière, 1920
Silver negative on flexible film
9,20 x 12 cm

This exhibition focuses on a work that is particularly significant for the history of modern and contemporary art: *A Handful of Dust* by Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp (1920). An unidentified object, each of its dimension opening up to indeterminacy, confusion: the subject - battlefield or heap of dust? the scale - aerial view or close-up? -nature - landscape or still life? -, the author - Man Ray and/or Marcel Duchamp -, and the title - first *Vue prise en aéroplane (Literature, 1922)* then *Elevage de poussière (La Boîte verte, 1934)*. This open field of meanings and readings contributed to the decisive influence of this image in the history of creation.

In books and exhibitions devoted to Man Ray, this photograph, considered to be visionary, occupies an essential place. In books and exhibitions devoted to Marcel Duchamp, it is a simple document, a view taken during the elaboration of the artist's greatest work. Tossed between various categories and definitions, *A Handful of Dust* is a perfect illustration of what the uncertain status of photography can conceal in fascinating and ambiguous terms. In the 1960s and 1970s, conceptual artists saw it as a prefiguration of their reflections on questions of meaning, context, and process. Echoes of this can be found in the work of such diverse figures as Bruce Nauman, Edward Ruscha, John Divola, and Gerhard Richter. Through its use of poor materials, *A Handful of Dust* will be seen as heralding the work of artists associated with Art Brut, Fluxus and Arte povera. The image is claimed by all these movements but does not belong to any of them. It has also served as an improbable counterpoint to military imagery, police photography, documentary practices, and photojournalism.

Whitechapel Gallery, London (GB), 2017

Exhibition view of *A Handful of Dust* (group show)

Can this strange and unusual photograph, almost a hundred years old, be a key to understanding our century? The exhibition tells a speculative story. The story of one and the same photograph that confronts us with an exploration of time, a concentration of chance, spatial uncertainties, ambiguities about the origin of the image and its author, a feeling of instability, a blurring of the established boundaries between photography, sculpture and performance, a meditation on the notion of process, a dissociation of image and text, and a collapse of the classical distinctions between document and work, formalism and formless, cosmic and domestic. This image, almost trivial and anodyne, will prove to be surprisingly complex, persistent, influential and visionary.

The exhibition offers a thematic journey through 150 works and objects, including works by Man Ray, John Divola, Sophie Ristelhueber, Walker Evans, Mona Kuhn, Aaron Siskind, Gerhard Richter, Xavier Ribas, Nick Waplington, Eva Stenram, Georges Bataille, Jeff Wall, as well as aerial views, forensic images, postcards, and amateur photographs.

A proposition by David Campany



Sophie Ristelhueber
A cause de l'élevage de poussière, 1991-2007
Black and white photograph, pigment print framed under glass
155 x 190 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris (FR), 2016

Exhibition view of *Sophie Ristelhueber* (solo show)





MOCAK - Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow, Cracovie (PL), 2016

Exhibition view of *Medicine in art* (group show)



PRATT - Institute of Photography, New York (US) 2016

Vue de l'exposition *A Handful of Dust* (group show)



ZKM - Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe (DE), 2016

Exhibition view of *Reset Modernity* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
WB #6, 2005
color silver print, mounted on aluminum and framed
120 x 150 cm
Edition of 3 plus 1 AP
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

What do you do when you are disoriented, when the compass of your phone goes haywire ? You reset it. The procedure depends on the situation and device, but you always have to stay calm and carefully follow instructions if you want the compass to capture signals again.

In this exhibition, we offer you to do something similar : resetting a few of the instruments that allow you to register some of the confusing signals sent by the epoch. Except what we are trying to recalibrate is not as simple as a compass, but this most obscure principle of projection to map out the world, namely Modernity.

Modernity was a way to differentiate past and future, North and South, progress and regress, radical and conservative. However, at a time of deep ecological mutation, such a compass is running in wild circles without offering much bearing anymore. This is why it is time for a reset. Let's pause for a while, follow a procedure and search for different sensors that could allow us to recalibrate our detectors, our instruments, to feel anew where we are and where we might wish to go. The layout of the exhibition itself offers a set of disorienting/reorienting procedures. No guarantee, of course : this is an experiment, a thought experiment, a Gedankenausstellung.

TATE Modern, London (GB), 2015

Exhibition view of *Conflict, Time, Photography,* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
Fait series, 1992
Color photographs, silver prints mounted on aluminum, with gold waxed frame
100 x 127 x 5 cm

Le Bal, Paris (FR), 2015

Exhibition view of *Dust. Histoires de poussière d'après Man Ray et Marcel Duchamp* (group show)



MAMVP - Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (FR), 2015

Prix Pictet - *Disorder* (group show)



PICTET 1805 Asset Management

The Prix Pictet aims to harness the power of photography – all genres of photography – to draw global attention to issues of sustainability, especially those concerning the environment. Founded in 2008 by the Pictet Group, the Prix Pictet has become the world's leading award for photography and sustainability. To date, there have been eight cycles of the award each of which has highlighted a particular facet of sustainability. The eight themes are Water, Earth, Growth, Power, Consumption, Disorder, Space and Hope.

Sophie Ristelhueber
Eleven Blowups #1, 2006
Color silver print mounted on aluminium, framed
Edition of 3
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris (FR), 2014

Exhibition view of *Pères* (solo show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
Pères, 2014
Vidéo couleur HD, 13’
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



Sophie Ristelhueber
Dead Set, 2001
Pigment proof mounted on aluminium
90 x 135 cm
Edition of 3 plus 1 AP’
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Paris Photo, Paris (FR), 2013

View of the Galerie Poggi booth (solo show)



Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle (BE), 2010

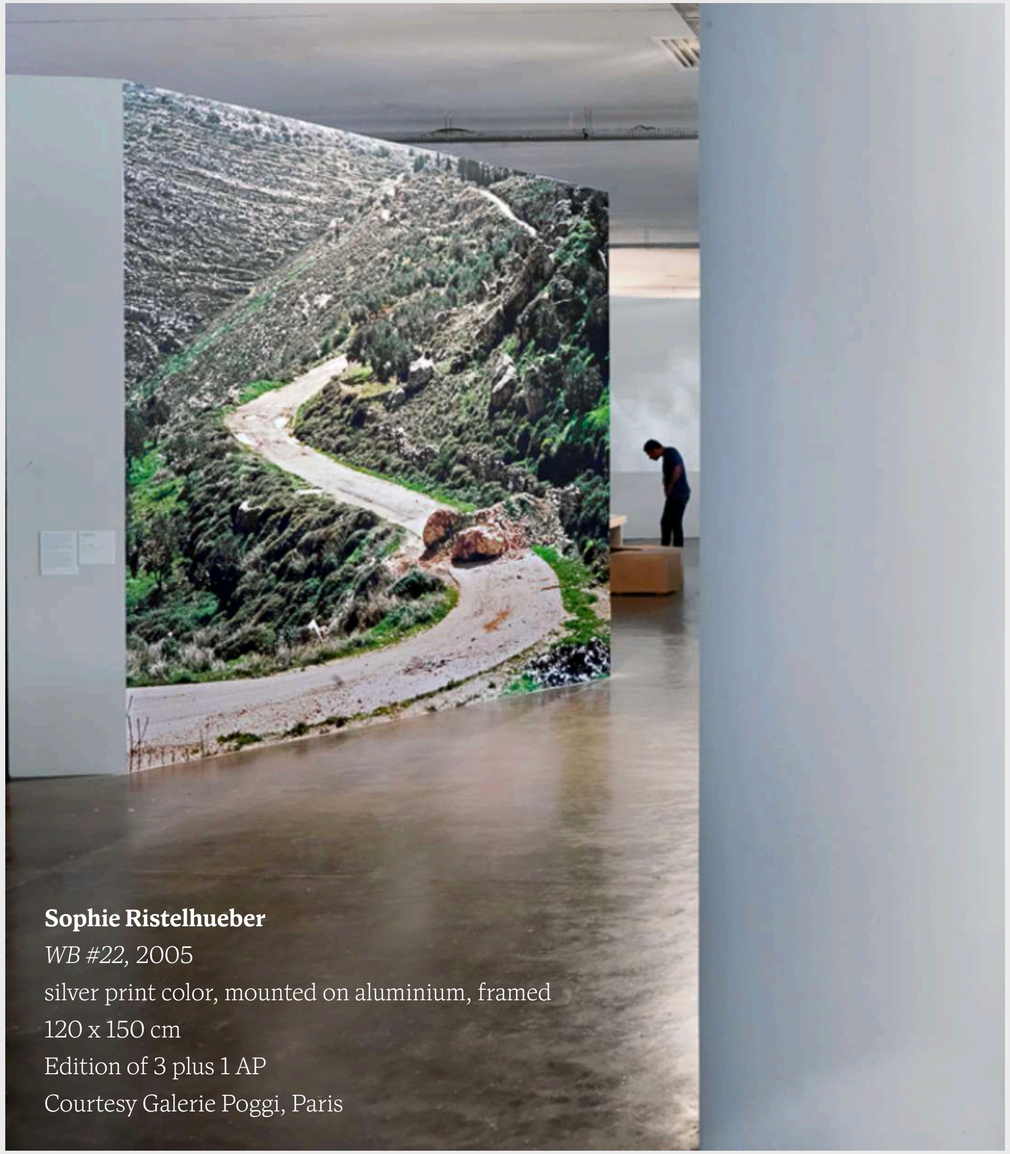
Exhibition view of *Every One* (solo show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
Every One *#3, #14 et #10*, 1994
Black and white photograph, silver print mounted on wood fiber plate
270 x 180 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Biennale de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo (BR) , 2010

Exhibition view of *There is always a cup of sea to sail in* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
WB #22, 2005
silver print color, mounted on aluminium, framed
120 x 150 cm
Edition of 3 plus 1 AP
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



Galerie Nationale Jeu de Paume, Paris (FR) 2009

Exhibition view of *Sophie Ristelhueber* (solo show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
Irak #1,#2 et #3, 2001
Silver print color mounted on aluminum
120 x 180 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain - MAMCO, Genève (CH) , 2005

Exhibition view of *West Bank* (solo show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
WB series, 2005
silver color print, mounted on aluminum and framed
120 x 150 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

In the remainder of the fifty-four photographs and in the small artist's book that reproduces them under the sober title of WB, from the English name in use there, West Bank, "we find in a very dense manner," the French artist continues, "all the obsessions of [his] previous works: traces, scars, destruction of the human presence or the construction of obstacles of all kinds to "separate" oneself from the "other.

The images that Sophie Ristelhueber brought back from the West Bank in November 2003 and again in February and March 2004 are also those of her inner landscape. She accompanied them with this single small text (printed on the back cover of her artist's book) which integrates, very freely translated, a quotation from "De rerum natura de Lucrèce": "What am I doing there, wiped out on the roof of this car? Do I tell myself that it is 'sweet to stand safe and sound on the shore watching others struggle amidst raging currents and furious winds. Not that there is any pleasure in the misfortune of others, but it is sweet to be spared from such despair'? No doubt, as an artist, I too am at war. "For 'the rest', these images show a land where the roads between towns and villages are blocked. Simply cut by small trenches dug in the simplest way in the world with an excavator, or sometimes obstructed by rocks and piled concrete blocks. The roads on either side of these 'cuts', as one would say in the language of universal communication, are empty and plainly obvious, ostensibly present, but petrified and without expectation. These paths are deprived of their finality, of their destinations; they no longer connect.

Centre Pompidou, Paris (FR) , 2005

Ewhibition view of *Big Bang, destruction et création dans l'art du 20e siècle* (group show)

Interrupting for a while the principle of presenting artistic movements or monographs, while tightening the hanging on a single floor of the Museum, Big Bang is an unprecedented experience. This redeployment is based on a theme that has been crucial to understanding art since the beginning of the 20th century: the modern "Big Bang".

Claiming radical freedom and pulverizing established values, the modern project has produced a creative destruction. It was first the site of a profound crisis of representation, based on a desire to constantly reinvent new forms: deconstruction of forms by Cubism, disfiguration by Expressionism, subversion of images by Dadaism, constructive autonomy with abstraction The art scene has been a field of experimentation where all research and all claims have been expressed. Freed from the weight of History and the straitjacket of academic culture, artists have brought about a fruitful renewal of perception that has irreversibly shaped our contemporary consciousness.

Conceived from the idea of a continuous expansion of forms and creative forces from a destroyed original center, this new course of the collection is articulated around eight sections, attitudes or fields of investigation that are at the heart of the artists' experimentations : Destruction, Construction / Deconstruction, Archaism, Sex, War, Subversion, Melancholy and Reenchantment. By revealing the close link between destruction and creation, the exhibition sheds new light on the cultural and artistic phenomena of the 20th century, as well as providing an understanding of the impulses and procedures at work that are proposed today.



FRAC Alsace, Sélestat (FR), 2003

Exhibition view of *Trace/Archive/Mémoire* (group show)

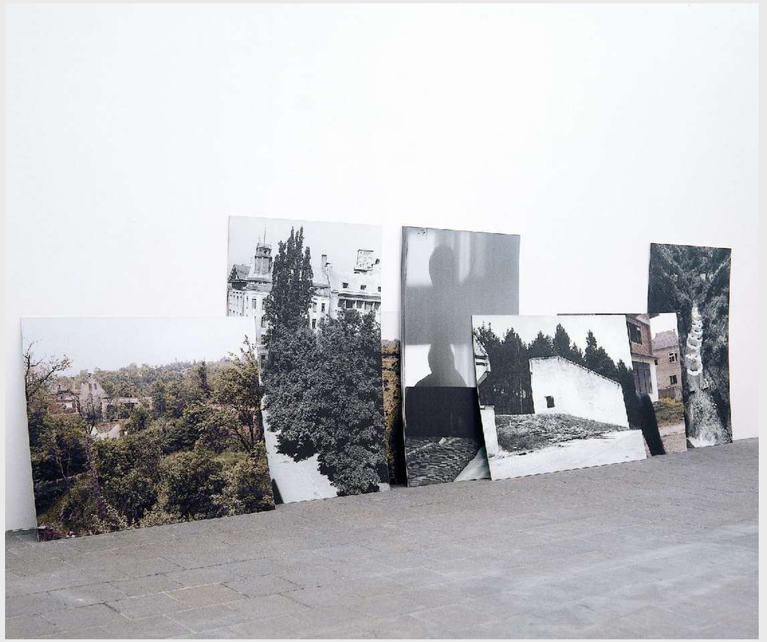


Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (US), 2001

Exhibition view of *Details of the World* (solo show)







Galerie Blancpain-Stepczynski, Genève (CH), 2001

Exhibition view of *Dead Set* (solo show)



Hotel des Arts, Toulon (FR), 2000

Exhibition view of *La Liste* (solo show)



In the spring of 2000, invited by the Hôtel des Arts, a contemporary art center in Toulon, to create a work on the Var department, Sophie Ristelhueber realized a project entitled La Liste. By sticking large digital prints directly onto the walls of the mansion, she gives the impression of appropriating the space by using certain architectural elements as frames for her images. By compiling a list of more than two thousand names of places, mountains, rivers, villages and ports in the department, Ristelhueber suggests "that one can never say what a place is but that one can always name it after the sea". She invites the actor Michel Piccoli to recite this list, whose recording is broadcast inside and outside the building, as if this litany could be enough to reaffirm the identity of the region. The catalog, in fact a stand-alone book, reproduces the same photographs on pages of different formats, which overlap each other, thus once again reminding the viewer of the mechanism of The Campaign.

The Power Plant, Toronto (CA) , 1999

Exhibition view of *Sophie Ristelhueber,* (solo show)





Galerie Blancpain-Stepczynski, Genève (CH), 1996

Exhibition view of *Vulaines 1989-1995* (solo show)





MoMa - Museum of Modern Art, New York (US), 1996

Exhibition view of *New Photography 12* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
Fait Series, 1992
Color photograph, silver print mounted on aluminum, with gold waxed frame
Edition of 3
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

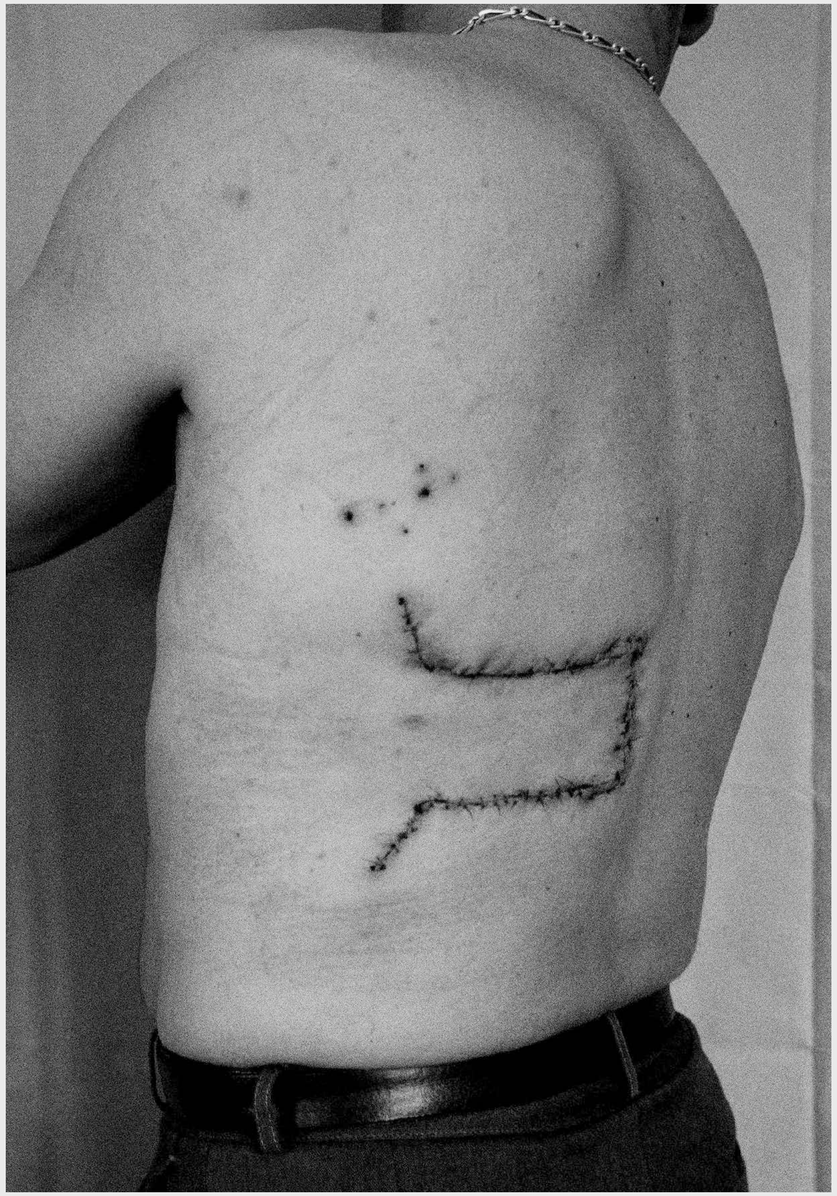
Centraal Museum, Utrecht (NL), 1994

Exhibition view of *Every One* (solo show)



Galerie Arlogos, Nantes (FR), 1994

Exhibition view of *Every One* (solo show)





Installations

Selection

1998 — 2007

Le Quartier - Centre d'Art Contemporain, Quimper (FR), 2007

Installation View, *Sophie Ristelhuber*, (solo show)



Sophie Ristelhueber

L'Air est à tout le monde III,2001, et *L'Air est à tout le monde II*, 2000
Color photographs, digital prints, with soundtrack
200 x 250cm
unique edition

Les rencontres de la photographie, Arles (FR), 2006

Installation view of *Eleven Blowups* in the disused apartment of Bank of France Governor (solo show)





Musée Zadkine, Paris (FR) 2002

Installation view of *Le Luxembourg*



Sophie Ristelhueber
Le Luxembourg IV, 2002
Color photography, digital print on tarpaulin
346 x 520 cm
unique edition



Sophie Ristelhueber
Le Luxembourg IV, 2002
Color photography, digital print on tarpaulin
280 x 420 cm
unique edition

Chapelle Méjean, Arles (FR), 2001

Exhibition view of *L'air est à tout le monde* (solo show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
L'Air est à tout le monde IV, 2002
Color photograph, digital print, with soundtrack,
200 x 300cm
Unique edition
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

WHO Headquarters, Genève (CH), 1998

Installation view of *The edge of awareness* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
The edge of awareness, 1996-2020
Silver print on RC paper
124.5 x 1545 framed
Edition of 3 plus 1 artist's proof
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

PS1 MoMa, New York (US), 1998

Installation view of *The edge of awareness* (group show)



Sophie Ristelhueber
The edge of awareness, 1996-2020
Silver print on RC paper
124.5 x 1545 framed
Edition of 3 plus 1 artist's proof
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Works

Selection

1989 — 2019

What the Fuck!, 2024

“(...) Animals still hold the road. There is an eaglet, whose concept of wings and feathers has not yet fully materialised. The eaglet itself seems slightly perplexed about this—there is an idea whose time has not yet granted the fullness of its form. As if, for the eaglet, this is about replaying the story of exaptation, that biological shift where one form acquires a new function. There is also a monkey meditating before a forest, a tiny baby held close, a boar that seems surprised, a rhinoceros. Some of them are “in a universe of stones and complete austerity”. But above all, these animals are strangely alone. Their presence makes life’s persistence even more disorienting and its fragility more striking. But they hold on. They seem abandoned to themselves, as if a contract binding them to humans had been severed. As if, in this chaotic landscape, they had chosen the only possible path: ferality.”

Vinciane Despret

Sophie Ristelhueber
What the Fuck! #1, 2024
Black and white photography, expert pigment print piezography (charcoal ink) on Hahnemühle German Etching paper
100 x 150 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



What the Fuck!, 2024



Sophie Ristelhueber
What the Fuck! #5, 2024
Black and white photography, expert pigment print piezography (charcoal ink) on Hahnemühle German Etching paper
100 x 150 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Palmæ, 2024







Sunset Years, 2019

In Paris, during a hot summer, Sophie Ristelhueber photographed sidewalks. One of those in asphalt, sometime blistering up due to the joined action of the heat and the surface they cover. To do this, to display these cambered shapes, similar to blisters, that she calls « bubons », the artist watered the asphalt. A useful action indeed, so that when they are seen closely each asperity, each grain, each relief of this world shines of a singular brightness. A symbolic action, especially when we think about the others images of this sea dying of thirst, that the artist shows at the same time. One could, in front of this suddenly aerial tar, dreaming of a black world – black and alive. But there is this word - « bubons » - which sounds like an alarm. Something works under the world, like a plague that drives the surface of the world to a final movement : diastole and systole, craters and buboes, both sides of the same wounded surface.

Sophie Ristelhueber told me that she thinks about calling this exhibition *Sunset Years*, expression used by one of her old Americans friends to refer to this period of his life : a bright twilight. It is true that at sunset the gazing light reveals each asperity of the earth and caresses it for a moment. The light is so much more beautiful and precious, so that by contemplating the world at sunset we are wondering if after this, something, despite it all, will still have the strength to rise.

Pierre Wat

Sophie Ristelhueber
Sunset Years #5 ,2019
Pigment print on Baryta Prestige 340gr Fine Art Paper
120 x 158 x 5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



Sunset Years, 2019



Sophie Ristelhueber
Sunset Years #5 ,2019
Pigment print on Baryta
Prestige 340gr Fine Art Paper
120 x 158 x 5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



Sophie Ristelhueber
Sunset Years #5 ,2019
Pigment print on Baryta
Prestige 340gr Fine Art Paper
120 x 158 x 5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris









Pont Allenby, 2016

Sophie Ristelhueber went back to the Dead sea. Time inexorably went on doing its work.

But it is no longer the Allenby bridge melancholic palm trees which are hunching down on themselves, abandoned by the vital flow which had kept them standing: it's the world.

Overflying ancient sites of this dried up sea, she saw crevices, round crevices, sometimes isolated, sometimes side by side, who seemed absorbing the shade like a black ink. No impact, yet, no body having fallen down from the sky, could justify that: here, it's the ground which is collapsing on itself. Too dry, too exhausted, too forsaken by the water which kept it alive. Soaring in the sky to overview this, Sophie Ristelhueber brought to light the underworld; the palm trees have disappeared, the ground is swallowing itself, what will remain when the underneath will have finished devouring the surface ?

Pierre Wat

Sophie Ristelhueber
Pont Allenby #2, 2016
Pigment print on matte Fine Art paper
90 x 130 cm
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



Pont Allenby, 2016



Sophie Ristelhueber
Pont Allenby #1 - 2004, 2016
Pigment print on matte Fine Art paper
90 x 130 cm
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Babylone, 2016

Sophie Ristelhueber borrows her tools (photography) and one of her major themes (war) from reportage, but bends them to the procedures of art. The political meaning of the images is thus constructed from and against the war report. It comes less from the contents and tools (photography) than from the forms, temporalities, speeds, trajectories of images, than from their temporal and spatial distances from things and facts.

Sophie Ristelhueber's manner is in fact completely opposed to that of war photographers. The excessively competitive information system forces reporters to act in a hurry (they are linked by satellite directly to their agency), to take part in the very course of events (otherwise their images would lose their market value), and to submit to a kind of aesthetic doxa: "Make images that give the world what the world wants to see," says Luc Delahaye of the Magnum agency. Sophie Ristelhueber, on the other hand, contrasts slowness and maturation with urgency, spatial distance with proximity, the afterthought to the present of the event, and the obviously obligatory allegorical deviation of the press clichés. His approach does not stem from testimony or commitment, but is closer to art than to the world. His images have galleries, museums and artists' books as their trajectories; their forms are those of art rather than those of the press.

Sophie Ristelhueber
Babylone, 2016
Pigment print on baryta paper Fine Art
53 x 73 cm
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Sans Titre (Beirut 1982), 2016

Neither an apology for war, nor a vision of the final catastrophe or suffering at its climax, Sophie Ristelhueber's work does not in fact offer any details of a specific reality. It does not imitate anything in particular, even if everything might lead one to believe it at first glance. Whether it is the impact of bullets on walls in Beirut, the remains of a conflict in the Kuwaiti desert, or the scarification of mutilated bodies, it is above all a question of speaking of ruins, of traces, as of a common, universal aesthetic. By taking an interest in ruins, Sophie Ristelhueber tries to bring back permanent images. Images that recur throughout the history of art, societies and current events, which are part of our mental structures. Ruin as so many archetypes. An aesthetics without date nor particular culture. An aesthetic of disintegration, of disappearance.

Ruin as a metaphor of the threats that weigh on the world. Ruins as an image of the beginning, of a possible point of departure. Here and there. The history of the world is this eternal passage from construction to ruin and vice versa. Quoting Malraux, "one day the work will speak a language that it will never speak again, that of its birth," 10 Maurice Blanchot develops with other words that the work is a beginning. The experience of a new beginning. Of an eternal beginning again. Again and again. Working on the ruins and the traces as Sophie Ristelhueber does refers to the approach of an archaeologist of the present whose methodology consists in bringing back to light what was left yesterday buried, without knowing in advance the result of his research.

Sophie Ristelhueber
Sans titre (Beirut 1982), 2016
Pigment print on matte Fine Art paper
130 x 90 cm
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



Sans Titre (Beirut 1982), 2016





Pères, 2014







Sophie Ristelhueber
Père, 2014
HD Color video
13’
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris

Eleven Blowups, 2006

"When I started to ask myself questions, to want to photograph men's current events in a different way, I found a friend who helped me to get out of my past. Together we made San Clemente, she did the sound, I did the frame, this film about a psychiatric hospital in Venice. I wrote Notes, my first book for her. The most important thing about her is her uncompromising journey. In her own way, with reflection, it is the opposite of the war reporter, her photographs also testify to the madness of men, probably even more forcefully than the reporter witness. Sensitive, discreet, committed, inhabited, she has a real talent as a photographic artist, hailed throughout the world, she is also a faithful friend. »

Raymond Depardon

In response to Raymond Depardon's invitation to take part in the 2006 edition of the Rencontres d'Arles, Sophie Ristelhueber presented a "census" of attack craters like so many tombs that are being dug every day in Iraqi soil. To carry out this new work, she viewed the video archives of a news agency in London, and rediscovered the reality of this country that she had traveled through in 2000 to work on "an astonishing shortcut of thousands of years: from the oldest civilization of Mesopotamia to that of the first Gulf War, when American F-16s were flying over our heads on a surveillance mission. Fossilized vision is a material that has haunted me since my work on Beirut, a cycle of more than twenty years that is perhaps about to come to an end".



Sophie Ristelhueber
Eleven Blowups #1, 2006
Colored silver print mounted on aluminum, framed
Edition of 3
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Eleven Blowups, 2006







WB, 2005

In the series of 54 photographs and in the little book that gathers it under the simple name «WB», from the usual shortname of West Bank, we can find «in a very dense way, all the obsessions of my earlier works; traces, scars, the destruction of human presence, or the obstacles of all kinds that are built in order to keep others out».

In November 2003, February and then March 2004, Sophie Ristelhueber has shot photographs in the West Bank. It shows a countryside, where all the roads are cut and strikethrough, some times simply by digging the ground with a shovel, or simply blocked by stones and rocs brought there. Therefore the roads has no more meaning or finality, the path purpose is canceled, it can not link anymore.

Sophie Ristelhueber
WB #10, 2005
Silver print color, mounted on aluminium, framed
120 x 150 cm
Edition of 3 +1 AP
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



WB, 2005







Every One, 1994

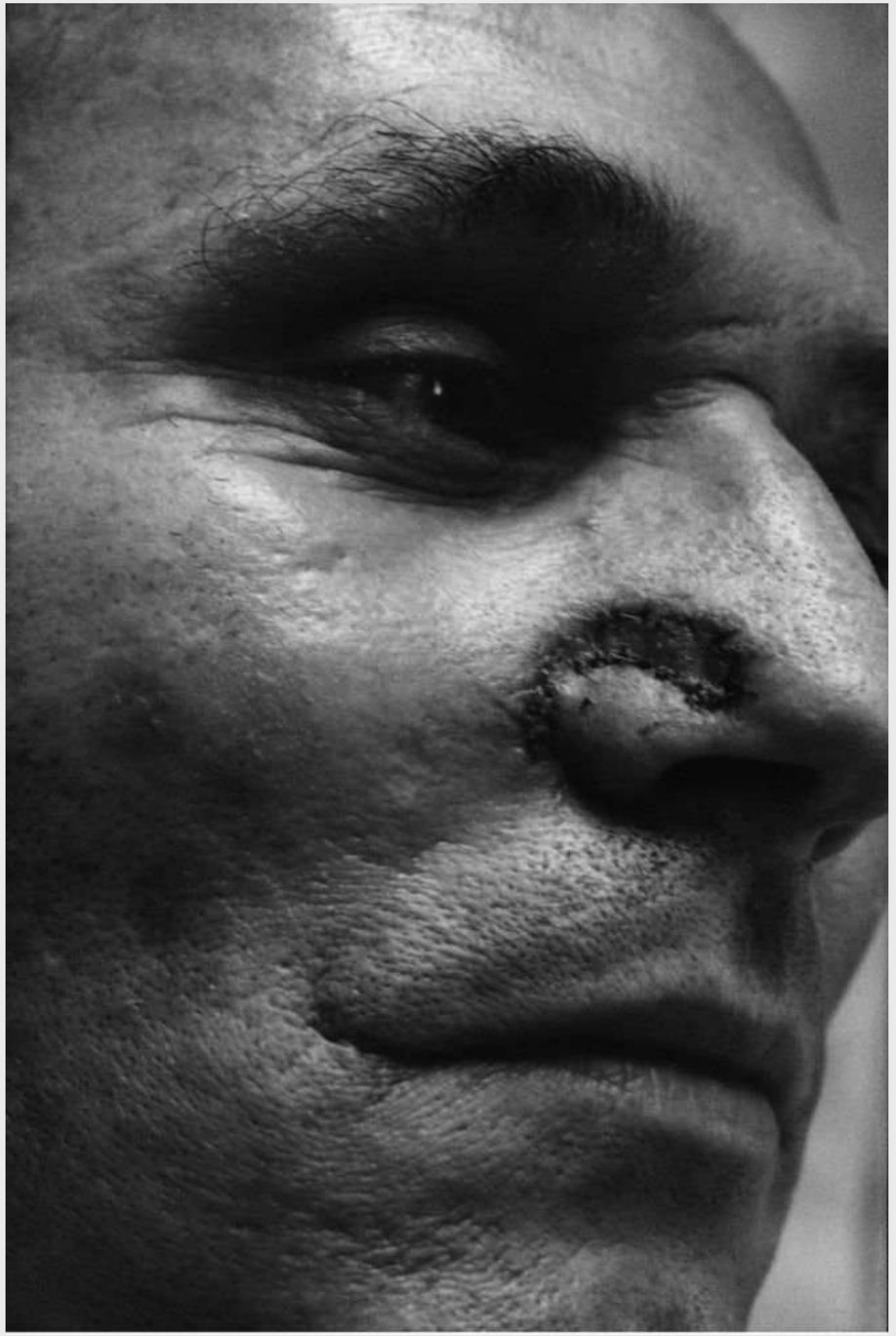
Excerpts of an interview by Laure Vermeersch in Vacarme magazine (Paris) n°37, fall 2006

“My work often stems from real events. In mid-February last year, the ex-prime minister of Lebanon, Rafiq Hariri, was killed by a bomb explosion. Everyone saw the televised image, a crater three times the size of my studio, it was unbelievable. It made me think that this was how to treat Iraq, where bombs go off all the time. I tried to dismiss the idea, but it only got stronger. However, there is a universality to the subject that goes beyond Iraq: after these car bomb explosions, it’s as if the earth was sucked out from its centre. I am inspired by the idea of earth, charged with history, swallowing itself up. I have to think up a form that lets me consider all these comparisons at the same time. This work has meant mixing up so many images and obsessions that I’ve held onto for the last 25 years, so that I can now say I have probably finished with these epics. Some commentators have referred to a work on ‘traces’. I would rather say a ‘baring’ of things, objects and lives that I shoot through buildings and architecture.

In these pictures, everything is true and false at the same time. The raw material was video rushes from Iraq, taken by local Reuters correspondents, which I viewed at their London office. I was looking for pictures of the craters – the “tombs”– that open up in the ground in Iraq several times a week, or even a day.

Working on stills taken from the rushes, I put together my own pictures, using computer techniques to reconstruct scenes that were both real and imaginary, and incorporating elements from my own earlier work. This mix of material comes from different territories –Turkmenistan in 1997, Syria in 1999, Iraq in 2000, the West Bank in 2003/20004 – and reflects the vision of history as chaos that has haunted me since I worked in Beirut in 1982.” - Sophie Ristelhueber

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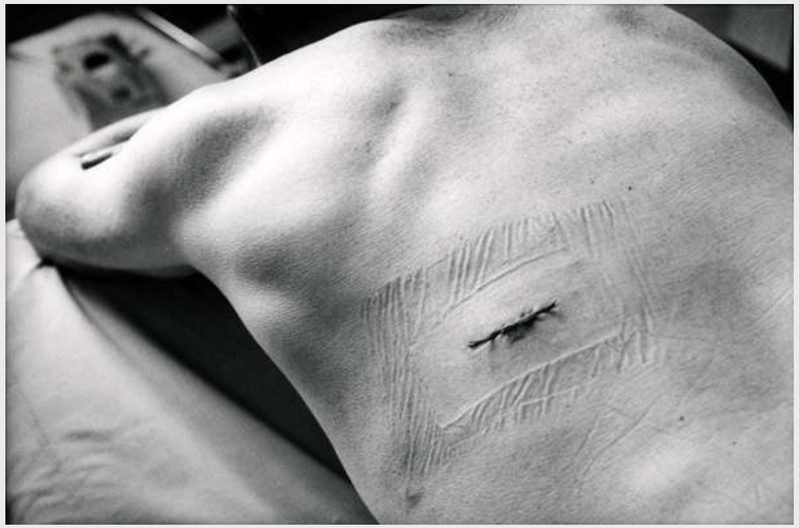


Sophie Ristelhueber
Every One #1, 1994
Black and white silver print mounted on wood fiber plate
270 x 180 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Every One, 1994







Sophie Ristelhueber
Every One #8, 1994
Black and white photograph, silver print mounted on wood fiber plate
270 x 180 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Sophie Ristelhueber
Every One #14, 1994
Black and white photograph, silver print mounted on wood fiber plate
270 x 180 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Sophie Ristelhueber
Every One #2, 1994
Black and white photograph, silver print mounted on wood fiber plate
180 x 270 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Beirut, 1984

The series of photographies made in Beyrouth in 1984-1985 is one of her most emblematic and important work which founded her whole career. In 31 photographies, Sophie Ristelhueber examined the war in Beiruth with a formalist eye for the interaction of inert matter and high explosives. Rather than focusing on human subjects of the seemingly interminable Lebanese tragedy, Sophie Ristelhueber went to the real estate. She avoided the temptation of war photographers to show dead human victims. Instead, she presented a chapter in the lexicon of ravaged building.

These works, which figure in few public collections such as the Bibliothèque nationale de France or the Cabinet des estampes de Genève rarely appeared on the art market.



Sophie Ristelhueber
Beyrouth, résidence des pins, 1984
Pigmentary print on baryta paper Fine Art
120 x 86 cm
Edition of 3
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Beirut, 1984

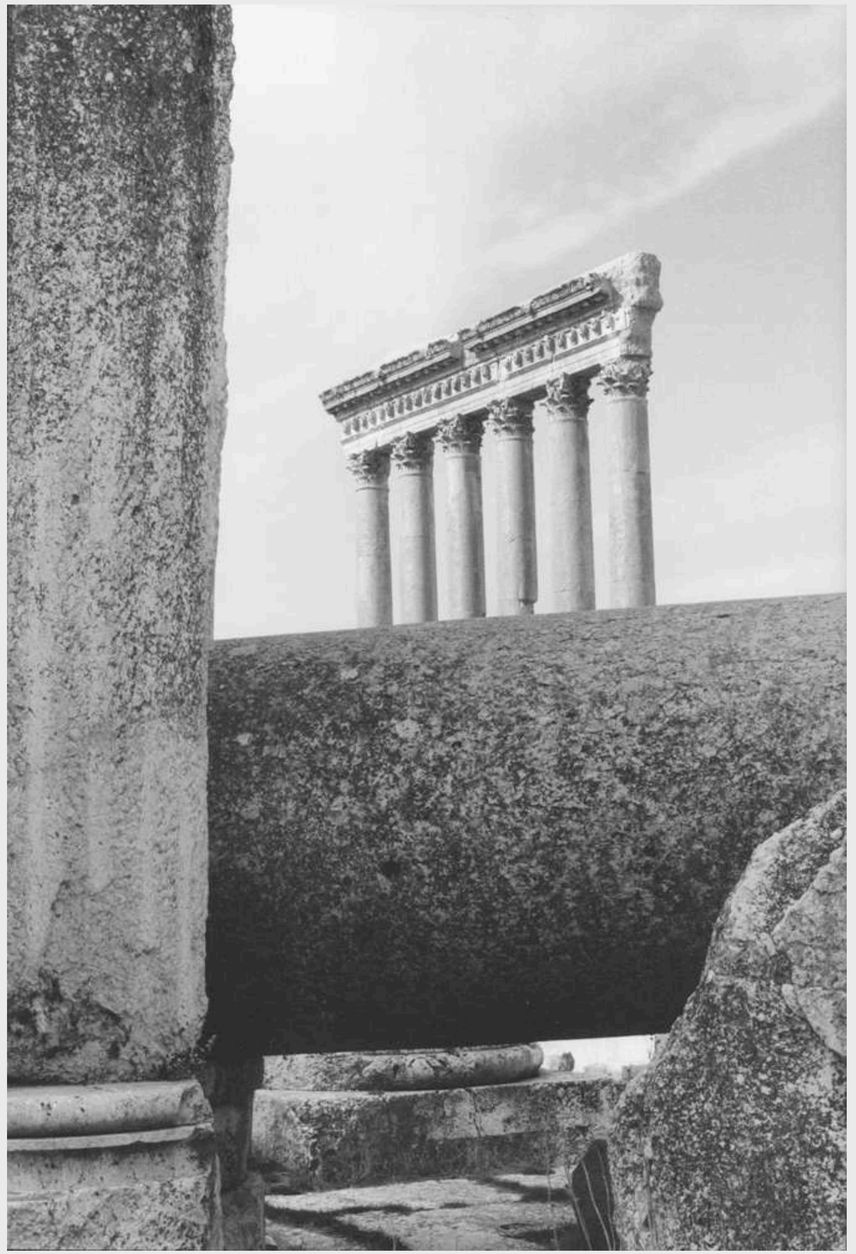






Beirut, 1984





Fait, 1992

In 1991, the French photographer Sophie Ristelhueber photographed the Kuwait desert in the aftermath of the Gulf war. Her pictures, published in a tiny book about the size of a paperback novel, have gigantic resonance. The aerial photographs, in colour and black and white, are combined with scaleless ground views of debris. Armies moving across that terrain leave wonderful patterns in the sand. Itis not that the lines, spirals and geometry of tanks and gun batteries divorce us from the horrors that their machinery inflicts, or that they simply satisfy abstract aesthetics, but that the view from the sky, gliding over the war zone, dropping a bomb down a chimney in Bagdhad, is the cumulative view of the war. Ever since Vietnam, control of the image has been the first requirement in a successful campaign strategy. Wars are won through international and domestic opinion as well as by armies on the field. Exclusion of the photographer on the ground is the logical conclusion. The photographer is left with the residual evidence: fragments, melted metal and blasted terrain.

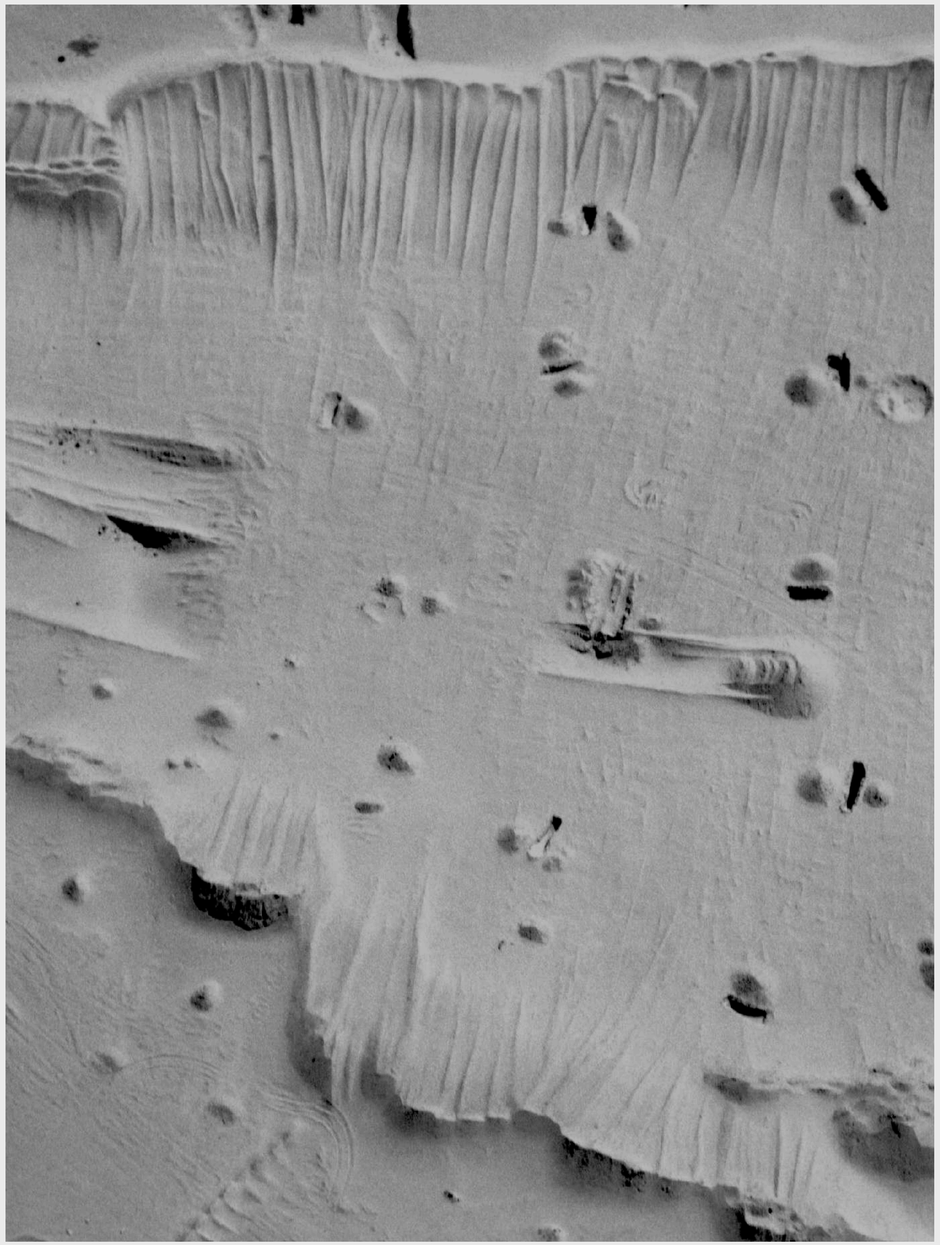


Sophie Ristelhueber
Fait #01, 1992
Color photograph, silver print mounted on aluminum, with gold waxed frame
Edition of 3
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

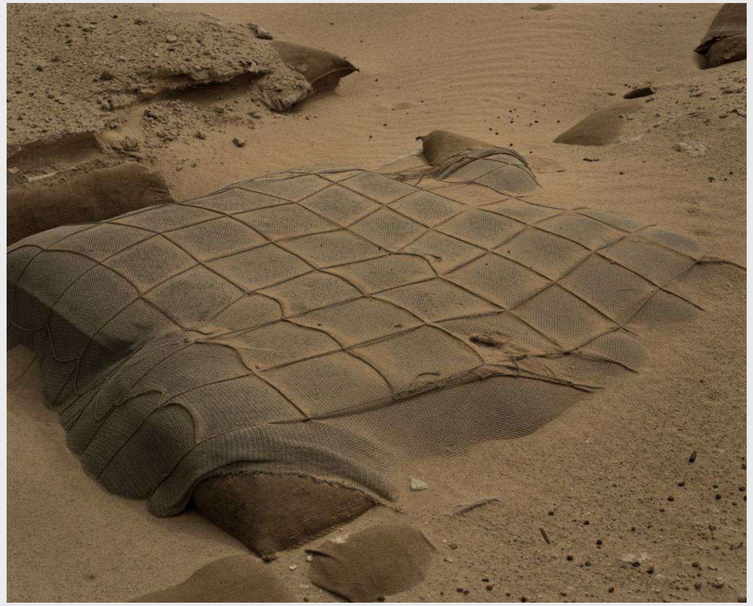
Fait, 1992











Vulaines, 1989 - 1995

In *Vulaines* of 1989, the fiction is rendered more complex by an obvious autobiographical ingredient. (It would doubtless be more apt to reverse the proposal and say that the autobiographical dimension called for fiction...). These are very large format diptychs for an intimate subject. On the left, there is a very narrow black and-white photo that depicts people, mainly children, in a blurred rendition like old family albums, and on the right we have the plan of an interior in colour and in very large format. The whole is akin to an installation, such is the importance that the artist attaches to the framing –frames that are at once exquisite and antiquated and "bourgeois", covered with Cordoba paper for the colour photographs and Chinese paper for the black-and-white photographs. Equally important is and the positioning of the works, at floor level, in such a way that they submerge the onlooker the way objects belonging to the grown-up world submerge children. This, incidentally, is the subject of the "interiors" part of the diptych: the ambivalence of given things. Here, the objects are photographed through the eye of a child, that is, both disproportioned and mysterious: a counterpane is just as much as a landscape, a strip of wallpaper turns into a map. The emotional factor of the "secret" (Vulaines is the name of the village where the family home stands) called for taking a long step back. This was achieved by the writing. The 1989 photographs, along with a dozen photographs This was achieved by the writing. The 1989 photographs, along with a dozen photographs taken in1995, were brought together in a book titled Les Barricades mystérieuses (The Mysterious Barricades), which the artist introduces with an excerpt from Lawrence Sterne's masterpiece novel, Tristram Shandy. This is a work that is little known in France, but it is one of the great classics of English literature, which even gave rise to a very fashionable-eighteen-century expression, "Shandyism", describing a distressed reflection about solitude, and the impossibility of speaking about oneself.

Ann Hindry, 1998

Sophie Ristelhueber
Vulaines V, 1989
Color and black and white photographs, silver prints laminated on aluminum, with wallpaper-covered frame
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris





Vulaines, 1989 - 1995





Sophie Ristelhueber
Vulaines II, 1989
Silver color prints, mounted on aluminum, with wallpaper-covered frame
Diptych 168 x 76 cm and 168 x 207 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

Vulaines, 1989 - 1995



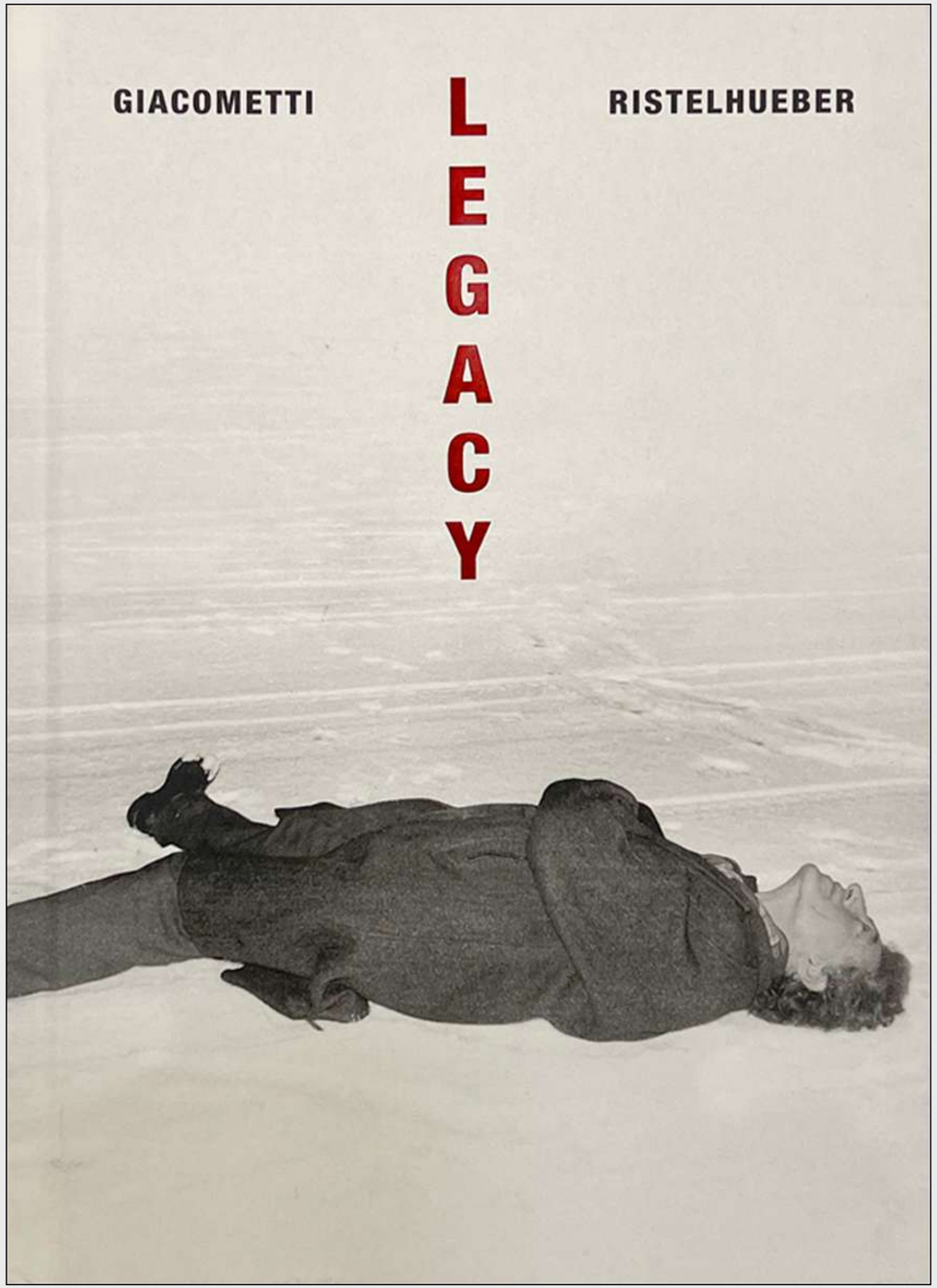
Sophie Ristelhueber
Vulaines VI, 1989
Silver color prints, mounted on aluminum, with wallpaper-covered frame
Diptych 168 x 76 cm and 168 x 207 cm
Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris



Publications

Selection

1996 — 2022



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI / SOPHIE RISTELHUEBER. LEGACY

Fage Editions, Lyon, Fondation Giacometti, Paris 2022
130 pages
French / English
23,6 x 17,1 x 1,8 cm
ISBN : 978 2 84975 724 6



Sunset Years #2, 2019. Pigment print, 120 × 158 cm.

CRITICAL ZONES

The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth

You want me to land on Earth? Why? — **Because you're hanging in midair, headed for a crash.** — How is it down there? — **Pretty tense.** — A war zone? — **Close: a Critical Zone, a few kilometers thick, where everything happens.** — Is it habitable? — **Depends on your chosen science.** — Will I survive down there? — **Depends on your politics.**

EDITED BY

Bruno Latour — Peter Weibel

Each of Sophie Ristelhueber's expeditions lead to a publication. Far from traditional exhibition catalogs, these publications function more as an artistic projects in themselves, stages that brings her expedition to a close. Neither notebooks nor books recounting the history of each expedition, they are publications in their own right. Paperback books whose paper quality and the model made by the artist herself, make them close to books for the bibliophile. Books where one enters on the same level in the image. A bit like in the dark room of a movie theater. Following the example of Godard's films, these books, with no other chronology than the randomness of the encounters, where the photographs are not categorized or hierarchized, can be approached from any side and be discovered in all the possible traveling, in all the back and forth, in all the freeze-frames. They are not picture books. But books as an exhibition and not just an extension of the exhibition. As an enigma always appear short texts (Lucrèce for Beirut, Clausewitz for Fait, Thucydide for Every One) that she found after having carried out an investigation here again. Texts that she uses as literary "ready made". Neither commentary nor description of the images, these texts by authors who are out of date, formulate a significant departure from a troubling modernity, whereas texts by contemporary authors would only be pure pleonasms. Pre-texts that do not lock the work into limited areas but openly declare that this combination is self-sufficient. Admittedly, this destabilization of the conventional reading of a work does not make it easy for exegetes. All the more so since Sophie Ristelhueber, who is not very prolific on the subject, only delivers these texts. Texts that do not give the work's instructions for use. On the contrary. They resist this attitude and seem to declaim that any attempt at deconstruction is always in vain. Any attempt at interpretation contains in itself a potential for regression. "Invoking the biographical, historical or cultural context to discover and stabilize possible meanings is a naive subterfuge. The context cannot determine the text.

Critical Zones, The Science and Politics of Landing Earth
By Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel
MIT Press, Cambridge, (Massachusetts)
2020

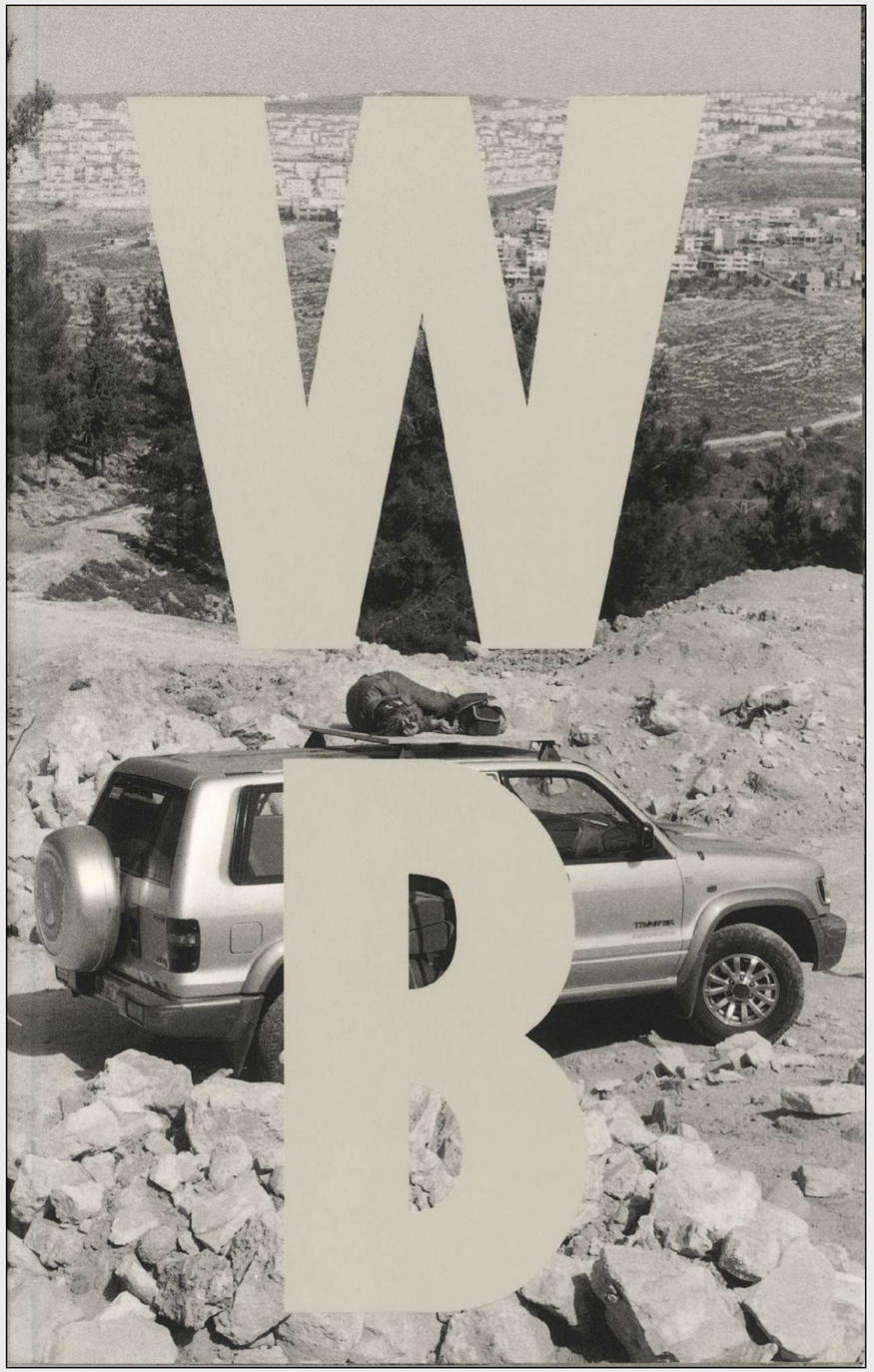
Catherine Grenier

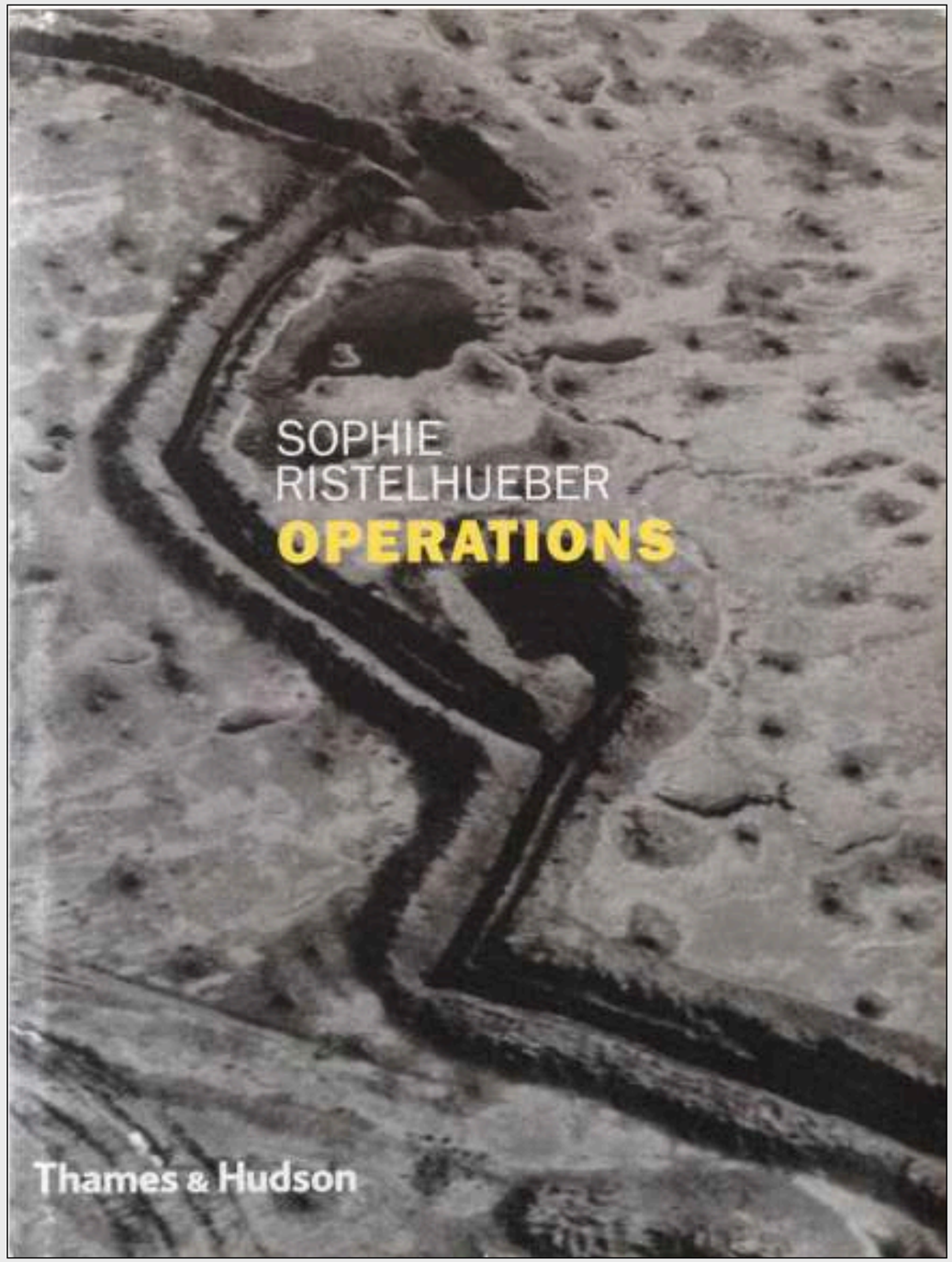
Sophie Ristelhueber

La guerre intérieure

Sophie Ristelhueber : La guerre intérieure
By Catherine Grenier
Les Presses du Réel Editions
(Dijon), 2019

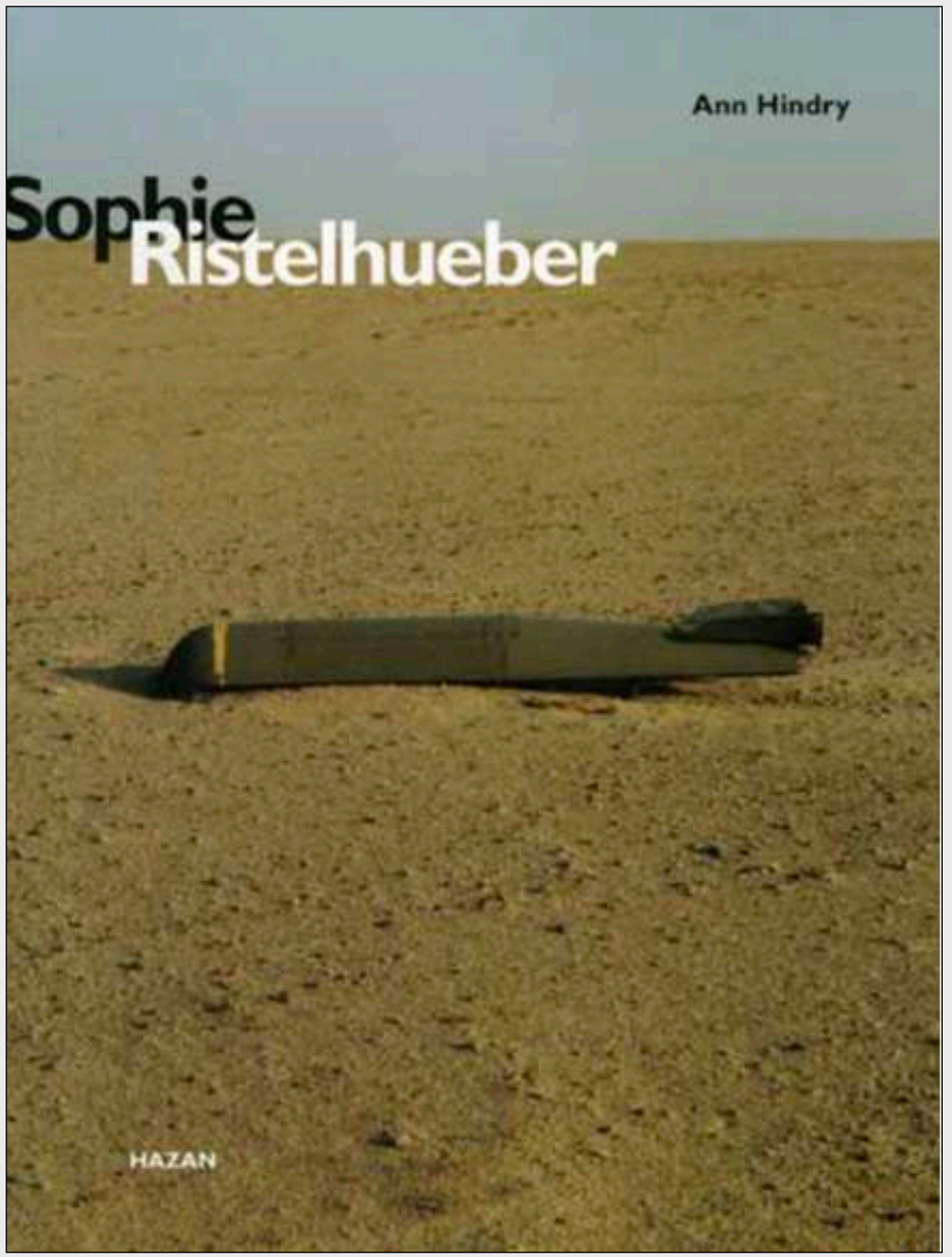
West Bank
By Sophie Ristelhueber
Thames & Hudson Editions
(Londres) 2005

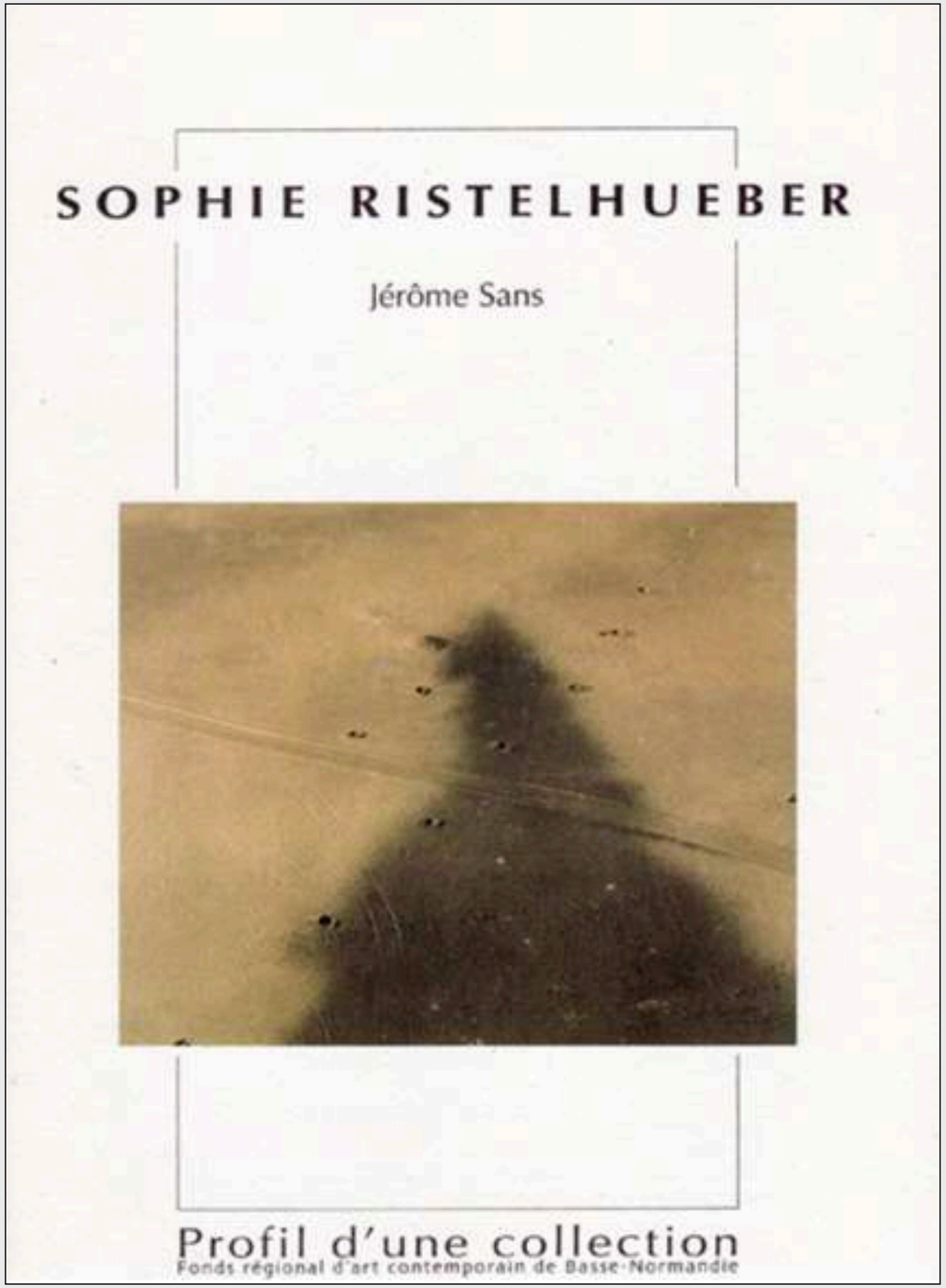




Operations
Texts by Bruno Latour, David Mellor, Thomas Schlesser
Thames & Hudson Editions (Londres), 2009

Sophie Ristelhueber
Text by Ann Hindry
Hazan Editions (Paris), 1998



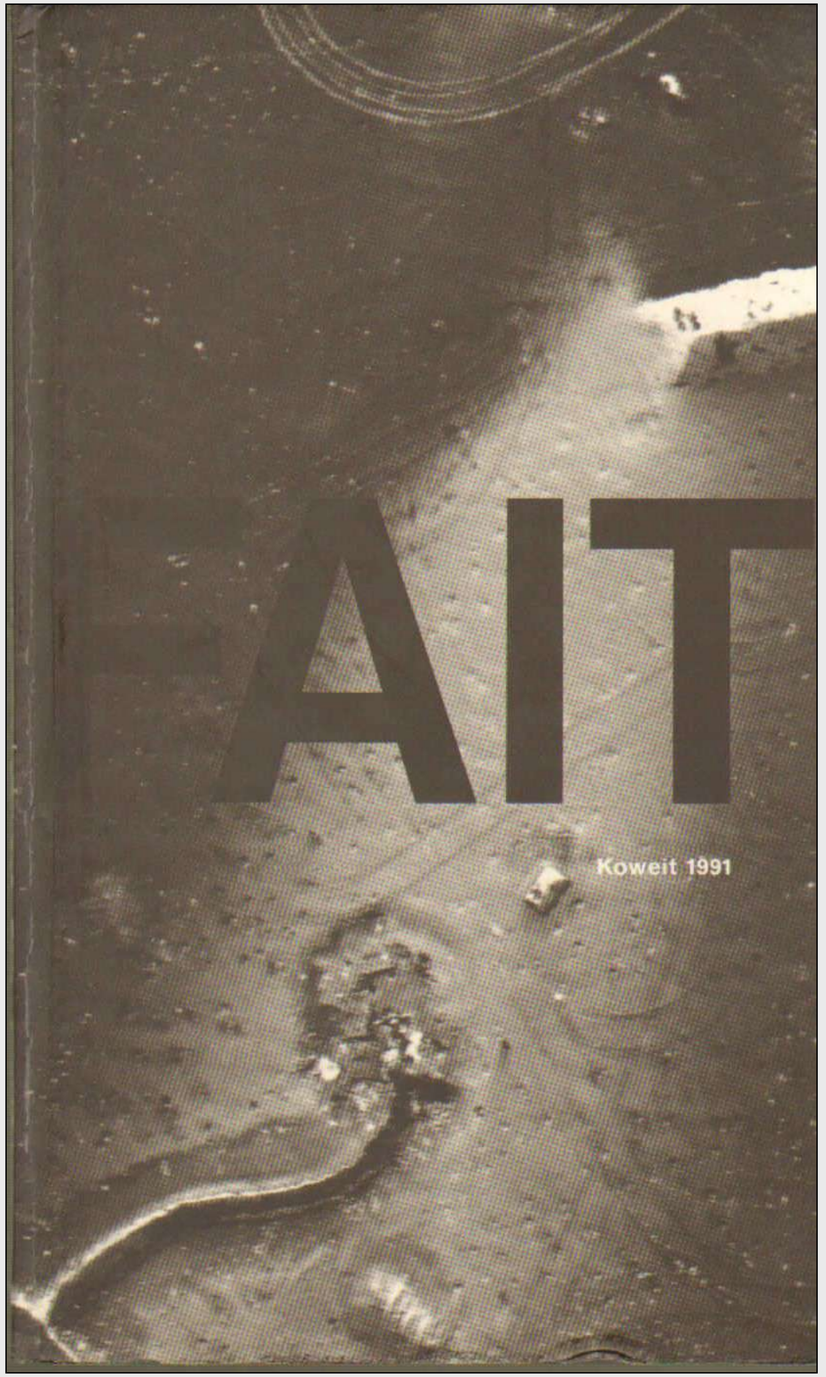


Sophie Ristelhueber, une oeuvre de terrain.
Text by Jérôme Sans
Frac Basse Normandie
(Caen), 1996

←

Fait ; Koweit 1991
By Sophie Ristelhueber
Hazan Editions
(Paris), 1992

→



CONTACT

Jérôme Poggi
j.poggi@galeriepogg.com

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