

SALON /H

LÍVIA MELZI

Laboratory for a Museum of the Future 2026

OFFSCREEN

October 20–25, 2026

VIP Preview October 19

Chapelle Saint-Louis de la Salpêtrière
Entrance via Square Marie Curie

47, Bd de l'Hôpital
75013 Paris



Le théâtre cannibale de Bry, VI, 2022, Aubusson tapestry, 180 x 216cm © Livia Melzi courtesy Salon /H, Paris

With the support of the  Centre national des arts plastiques



Boîte 30, 2024, Colour print on KODAK satin paper from a 4x5 negative, 40x50cm © Lívia Melzi courtesy Salon /H



Rescue objects I, 2024, Colour print on KODAK satin paper from a 4x5 negative, 70x90cm © Lívia Melzi - courtesy Salon /H, Paris

Laboratory for a Museum of the Future

Conceived for Offscreen Paris and presented in the Chapelle de la Salpêtrière, *Laboratory for a Museum of the Future* opens a new chapter in Livia Melzi's research into the relationships between images, memory and institutions. For the artist, photography is never an end in itself, but a research tool embedded in installations where images, objects, materials, documents and narratives enter into dialogue. Through its history, its architecture and its symbolic dimension, the Chapelle de la Salpêtrière extends this reflection on the metamorphoses of institutions and the forms of transmission.

For more than a decade, Livia Melzi has been conducting an investigation between Brazil and Europe into ethnographic collections, colonial archives and the conditions under which objects and images circulate. From the collections of the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro to the Tupinambá mantles now dispersed across European museums, her focus has gradually shifted: from objects to the images that make them visible, and then from images to the narratives that give them meaning. More than the collections themselves, it is now the systems of representation that produce, rank and interpret them that lie at the heart of her research.

The engravings of Theodor de Bry hold an essential place in this reflection. By shaping, from the late sixteenth century onward, a European imaginary of Brazil and its Indigenous peoples, they had a lasting influence on colonial narratives and museum representations. Far from

belonging to a bygone past, these images continue to act upon the way we look at collections, write history and define what deserves to be preserved. They are less historical documents than the visual matrices of an imaginary that is still at work.

The 2018 fire at the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro marked a decisive turning point in this research. The loss of nearly seventeen million items brutally exposed the fragility of heritage institutions and raised fundamental questions: what becomes of the museum when its collections disappear? What remains of objects when the institutional narrative that gave them meaning collapses? How can memory be passed on when the archives themselves are full of gaps? From then on, the challenge is no longer only to preserve collections, but to rethink the ways in which knowledge is produced and transmitted.

Where the modern museum sought to preserve objects, guarantee their authenticity and fix a narrative, artistic practice opens up another space of knowledge. It embraces uncertainty, the gaps in the archive, the circulation of images and the plurality of memories. The work does not set out to repair the loss; it makes it the starting point for new hypotheses and new narratives. It is within this space of displacement that the project presented at Offscreen takes shape.

Laboratory for a Museum of the Future is thus the first chapter of a broader body of research entitled *Museum of the Future*. The term designates neither an ideal institution nor a museum model to be invented, but a field of experimentation in which objects and images are no longer regarded as frozen witnesses of the past, and instead become vehicles for relationships, circulations and narratives in constant reconfiguration.

The installation is neither a documentary exhibition nor a historical reconstruction; it functions as a laboratory in which images, objects and narratives can be continually rearranged.

In the space of the chapel, four Aubusson tapestries inspired by Theodor de Bry's engravings hang side by side. Shown from the reverse, they reveal the image inverted, like a photographic negative. This reversal shifts the way we look at these representations and at the imaginary they helped to construct.

Facing the tapestries, a long table runs across the space. It brings together archival photographs and documents drawn from Livia Melzi's research, notably on the lost collections of the Museu Nacional. The table symbolically takes the place of the museum display case: rather than isolating and fixing objects, it brings images and traces into relation. The connections it proposes remain open, provisional and reversible; knowledge is built here less through accumulation than through montage and juxtaposition.

By bringing photography, tapestry and archive into dialogue, Livia Melzi sketches the first outlines of a museum that would no longer be defined by the accumulation of collections, but by the circulation of memories, the plurality of narratives and the capacity of images to produce new forms of knowledge. More than an exhibition, *Laboratory for a Museum of the Future* opens a space in which the museum ceases to be a place of conservation and becomes that of a history forever being rewritten.

Philippe Zagouri



Rescue Objects VI, 2024, Analogue print from a 4 x 5 negative,
40 x 50 cm © Livia Melzi courtesy Salon /H Paris



1888-2018, 2024, Colour print on KODAK satin paper from a 4x5 negative, 90x120cm © Livia Melzi / Courtesy Salon /H



SN1928*, 2024, Colour print on KODAK satin paper from a 4x5 negative, 40x50cm © Livia Melzi - courtesy Salon /H, Paris



Rescue Objects III, 2024, Analogue print from a 4 x 5 negative – 50 x 40 cm – © Lívia Melzi courtesy Salon /H Paris



Le théâtre cannibale de Bry, I, 2022, Aubusson tapestry, 180 x 216cm © Livia Melzi - courtesy Salon /H, Paris

The gallery

SALON /H



Galerie Salon /H, founded by Yaël Halberthal and Philippe Zagouri, sees itself as a twenty-first-century salon: an intimate and demanding space dedicated to all forms of visual expression. Committed to artists who are primarily Brazilian but also French, both emerging and established, it champions practices that explore ecology, memory, gender and the transmission of knowledge. Between Paris and Rio, with the creation of the Villa Ladeira residency in 2024, Salon /H acts as a true cultural bridge, affirming its role as an international platform for reflection and dissemination. Galerie Salon /H takes part in major events such as Paris Photo and Art Paris, while supporting its artists in the production, mediation and international development of their careers.

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