



Liliana Porter, Reality Play From the 1960s to the Present Day

From 7 April to 27 August 2023
at les Abattoirs, Musée - Frac Occitanie Toulouse

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Liliana Porter, *The Intruder*, 2010, digital photography, 104 x 72 cm © Liliana Porter © photo Studio Liliana Porter

Liliana Porter, Reality Play

From the 1960s to the Present Day

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les Abattoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie Toulouse

Les Abattoirs is proud to present the first retrospective in France of the artist Liliana Porter (born in Argentina in 1941, living in New York since 1964). With some one hundred works on display, the exhibition takes the viewer on a voyage through her art. Gathering together past and recent works, it brings to the fore a new generation of female artists who have redefined the boundaries of conceptual art and transformed the poetic form of the installation.

Porter explores the potential of various media including print-making, painting, sculpture, photography and video, in a long-term examination into our perception of reality and our notions of time and space.

Print-making is at the heart of her work, which she helped revive in the 1960s as part of the collective New York Graphic Workshop, co-founded with Luis Camnitzer and José Guillermo Castillo in 1964. This technique, which was rediscovered by Pop artists and championed in Central and South America for its political dimension, has allowed her to view the idea of authorship and collective work with a critical eye, as well as provide her with new narrative forms.

In the 1970s she became interested in photography and began including images of her own body into drawings, in particular wall art, echoing concerns held by female artists at the time.

The first half of the exhibition recounts this journey, while also offering a rereading of the historical, artistic and social context of the time, with regard to the commitment of Porter and the artistic community to which she belonged.

The second half presents her installations, including two that have been especially created for Les Abattoirs. These small scenes have been present in her work for around twenty years and are created with contemporary figurines and knickknacks that she has found in flea markets during her travels. They also feature in her paintings and videos.

By continuing her poetic exploration of reality, Liliana Porter upsets representational codes and challenges both the creative process and the surreal power of the image.

Curators

Annabelle Ténèze, Director of Les Abattoirs
Lauriane Gricourt, Curator at Les Abattoirs



Liliana Porter, *Red Sand*, 2018, installation (coloured sand, figurine on a white wooden base)
© Liliana Porter © photo courtesy Studio Liliana Porter and Galerie Mor Charpentier, Paris

Exhibition Visit

The exhibition *Liliana Porter, Reality Play. From the 1960s to the Present Day* occupies the entire ground floor of the Abattoirs.

Curators :

Annabelle Ténèze, Director of Les Abattoirs
Lauriane Gricourt, Curator at Les Abattoirs



Liliana Porter, *Tejedora*, 2017, fabric, figurine, string on white wooden base © Liliana Porter
© photo Studio Liliana Porter

ROOM 1

Reinventing Printmaking: The New York Graphic Workshop

In the early 1960s, Liliana Porter left Buenos Aires, where she was born, and studied in Mexico, before moving to New York in 1964. While attending the Pratt Institute, she co-founded the New York Graphic Workshop (active from 1964 to 1970) alongside artists Luis Camnitzer (1937, Uruguay) and José Guillermo Castillo (1936–1999, Venezuela). This collective printmaking workshop developed a more conceptual approach to the technique. In its manifesto written in 1964, the New York Graphic Workshop declared that it had gone beyond the traditional definition of printmaking as a craftsman's technique: "*The printing industry prints on bottles, boxes, electronic circuits, etc. Printmakers, however, continue to make prints with the same elements used by [Albrecht] Dürer [1471–1528]. The act of printing in editions, the act of publishing, is more important than the work carried out on a printing plate.*"

The ability to create works and to distribute them freely were emphasized, as these factors incorporate the usual industrial aspects of objects into art, bringing the artist and the public closer together and encouraging access to now-multiple originals. This approach echoed that of contemporary Pop Art and conceptual art movements, which also employed silk-screen printing and publishing, thus playing with the power of images and text.

But although the approach was collective, each member of the group developed his or her own aesthetic. Porter established various approaches (including the use of ordinary and replicable objects that she reproduced as a print) that the group then assembled together under the provocative name *arte boludo* [idiot art]. "*The idea is to lay reality onto the description of this same reality,*" wrote Porter in 1969. Her *Mail Exhibitions* series, which were exhibitions sent by post, as well as the installation *Shadows*, which combined painted and real shadows, offered immaterial alternatives to traditional artistic mediums in a critical appraisal of artistic institutions and the art market.

Exhibition Visit

ROOM 2

"Liliana the Wrinkle": Sculpting Paper

In the late 1960s, Liliana Porter continued to explore the possibilities of printmaking. She developed the medium by experimenting with different techniques, going beyond the usual limits of a piece of paper to create entire scenes, as in her work *Wrinkle Environment I* (1969). While still using ordinary materials and the concept of repetition, her research took the form of monumental installations that occupied the wall, floor, and furniture, in a trompe-l'oeil where paper printed with a wrinkle motif reproduced the image of actual wrinkled paper. The artist took the principles upheld by the New York Graphic Workshop even further, going so far as to transform the very exhibition space.

This was also when she first used photoengraving, which allowed her to accentuate the interplay between the image and its reproduction, and to break down the images in a virtually cinematic way. The artwork *Wrinkle* (1968) was described by the avant-garde Fluxus artist Emmett Williams (1925–2007) as "still-lives of action paintings." In this work, Porter used a flip-book effect to mimic the action of a piece of paper being scrunched up, making it look like a moving image. Williams also wrote that "*Yves Klein makes it blue, Tinguely electrifies it, Soto makes it vibrate, Mathieu wallows/revels/sprawls in it, Fontana cuts it, Christo envelops it, Arman collects it, Spoerri sticks it to the dining room table, Dieter Roth leaves it to rot, Liliana wrinkles it...*," thus placing her alongside other artists from the Nouveau Réalisme and Kinetic movements of the time, who were also pushing the boundaries of representation.



Liliana Porter in front of her installation "Wrinkle", Museum of Fine Arts, Caracas (Venezuela), 1969 © Liliana Porter ; photo Studio Liliana Porter Archives

Exhibition Visit

ROOM 3

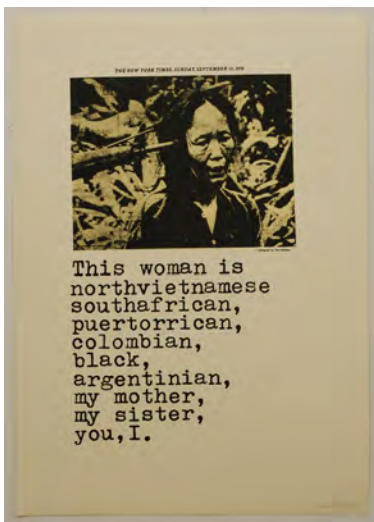
A Shared Creative Struggle from New York to São Paulo and Buenos Aires: An Art in Common

In the United States, the years 1960 to 1970 were a time of political and social protest, particularly by civil rights movements and with regard to the country's involvement in external armed conflicts, such as the Vietnam War. Across the South American continent, several countries were experiencing moments of political and democratic crisis, with coup d'états in 1974 leading to military dictatorships in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, followed by Argentina in 1976. These authoritarian regimes employed repressive measures to restrict personal freedom, causing many victims.

As a member of the Latin-American artistic community who had permanently emigrated to the United States (today known as Latinx), Liliana Porter developed several projects seeking to improve representation for these artists, especially women, and to criticize the stance of the United States towards authoritarian regimes in Latin America. Porter produced artworks such as *Untitled (nails)* (1963) and *Poster for the Peace Movement* (1971), and was also involved with the *Contrabienal*, a 1971 project in the form of a catalogue published in response to the 11th São Paulo Biennale, which took place in Brazil under a military dictatorship.

The New York Graphic Workshop also invented a fictional artist, Juan Trepadori, whose works were created by some of the artists in the group, thus subverting the clichés associated with Latinx artists. The aim was to produce commercial works under his name and thus help fund the community. Through this reappropriation, the group was able to hack, as it were, the art market and challenge the cultural hegemony that was developing in the United States.

For Porter, the collective and social aspects of art are fundamental. As an immigrant discovering the American art scene, she examined what was meant by "identity" for the Latinx artists who were then (and are still) underrepresented in major museums, while also questioning the status of the creator, which was reappraised for the overall benefit of the group.



Liliana Porter, *Afiche para el movimiento por la Paz*, 1971 (published in *The New York Times*, Sunday, September 13th 1970), Liliana Porter Collection. 70,49 x 50,8 cm © Liliana Porter; photo Studio Liliana Porter Archives

Exhibition Visit

ROOM 4

A Body in Space: A Female Conceptualization

Liliana Porter began using photography in her work in the 1970s. With this artistic practice she added a new dimension to her research on the temporality of the image and what brings materiality to a work. Mirroring the conceptual and minimalist movements that were then flourishing on the New York art scene, she put forward a version that she embodied personally, designed on the scale of the body. Appearing for the first time in the work *Shadows* (1969), the body is represented here through the privileged vehicle of the artist's hands, almost always combined with geometric shapes drawn onto the wall. The lines, wrapped around the photograph and the drawing, flow out of the frame and occupy the white space, making it part of the artwork. Porter uses a process of fragmentation, always against a white background to decontextualize the bodies as well as the objects, to reinvent herself, while continuing to search for the origin of the artwork and the image: the face, hands, geometric shapes, lines, the color white.

Through the use of the body, Porter's artworks provide an alternative to the most traditional forms of minimalism and conceptual art. As with other female artists, particularly Latinx such as Marta Minujin (1943, Argentina) and Ana Mendieta (194-81985, Cuba), she includes the body in her art, in an operation that is both aesthetic and part of the feminist struggle.



Liliana Porter, *Untitled (hands and triangle)*, 1973, Collection Les Abattoirs, Musée - Frac Occitanie Toulouse
© Liliana Porter

Exhibition Visit

ROOM 5

Social Games

In the years 1980 to 1990, Liliana Porter's artistic research focused on the relationship between reality and fiction, taking the form of scenes featuring tiny figurines and knick-knacks found in flea markets or while travelling. In photographs, on canvas or on paper, Porter collected and organized in a unique way objects and mini heroes in porcelain or plastic, from Mickey Mouse to Che Guevara or from John F. Kennedy to Elvis Presley, often accompanied by animals and anonymous stars.

Taking inspiration from surrealist experiments, these artworks reflect the influence of Belgian artist and master of the movement, René Magritte (1898–1967), to whom she paid tribute in a series of prints where she replaced the famous silhouette in a bowler hat with her own. Just like the artist behind "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*," she challenges our notion of reality, playing with the discrepancy between objects, their image, and the words used to describe them. The other figure who left a mark on her body of work is the Argentinian author José Luis Borges (1899–1986), whose work was also permeated by poetry and oddity, in search of a "whimsical truth." Despite their simple appearance, these characters so at odds with one another (penguin and soldier, plate and gardener, mechanical chicks and broken alarm clocks) interact in unforeseen ways to create incongruous situations. Through both laughter and nostalgia, these unexpected comparisons trigger our collective memory and put our relationship with reality at stake, as well as our instinct to project certain values onto certain characters. How will the story end?

ROOM 6

Animated Works

In the 2000s, in an almost natural progression, Liliana Porter began to create films and then theater productions in which her figurines became true actors: "*Just as photography took me to video, the rest of my work—in particular the installations—pushed me toward theater because I realized that there was already a lot of theatricality in the mechanism of my work, in the fact of staging situations.*"

In an extension of her paintings, photographs, and assemblages, Porter staged her figurine-characters in video works, bringing life to the interactions she creates. Whether filmed or performed in front of an audience, these choreographies combining tragedy and burlesque emphasize the theatrical and narrative character of her art. As collaborative works, the performances were jointly produced with artist Ana Tiscornia (1951, Uruguay) for the staging and with composer Sylvia Meyer (1951, United States), whose music brought an essential element to the stories. In these authentic short films, not only did Porter introduce movement into her staged situations, but she also played the role of puppeteer. Her hands, visible on-screen, remind us of her photography of the 1970s, illustrating the extent to which her creative process fits into her on-going research.

Exhibition Visit

Le Nef at Les Abattoirs *To Sweep*, 2023

Made especially for her exhibition at Les Abattoirs, the installation *To Sweep* has been designed by Liliana Porter to echo the building's monumental architecture. She continues the work of her previous installations by playing with scale, using tiny figurines staged in an imposing scene, like in *Man with the Axe* presented at the Venice Biennale in 2017. Within a landscape comprising old musical instruments, broken lightshades, and various damaged objects (clocks, crockery, etc.), the installation shows us a woman who is sweeping. With its two bases opposite one another, the scene almost has an air of fantasy, focusing as it does on people whose work is often invisible, symbolized by this tiny person sweeping. Faced with such a spectacular, indeed intimidating accumulation of objects, she seems engrossed by the impossible task in front of her. For Porter, it acts as a metaphor for time, which drags and which drowns us, ultimately carrying everything along with it in its path.

Artist Biography

Born in 1941 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Liliana Porter began by studying at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, where she soon gravitated towards printmaking.

In 1957, she moved to Mexico City with her family, where she continued her exploration of the medium at the Universidad Iberoamericana, getting to know many artists and writers such as Antonio Seguí, Juan-José Arreola, and José Emilio Pacheco. During this time in Mexico, she presented her first solo exhibition at the age of 17, at the Galería Proteo.

In 1964, while on her way to Paris, she decided to instead move permanently to New York. She furthered her study of printmaking at the Pratt Institute and cofounded the New York Graphic Workshop alongside Uruguayan artist Luis Camnitzer and Venezuelan artist José Guillermo Castillo. This collective printmaking workshop developed a more conceptual approach to the technique. With the creation of the FANDSO (Free, Assemblage, Nonfunctional, Disposable, Serial Object), their practice borrowed from industrial production processes and promoted the fact that the resulting artwork can be replicated and widely distributed. The group participated in many exhibitions in the United States and Latin and South America, including at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas in 1969, the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires with *Experiencias 69*, for which Porter created her iconic work *Shadows*, and also *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1970. Although the New York Graphic Workshop came to an end in 1970, the founding artists continued to work on collective projects, as part of a consciously political approach.

From 1968, photography became a recurring medium in Porter's artistic practice, enabling her to extend the range of her research on reality and the image. In 1973 she presented her first solo exhibition at the MoMA as part of the Project Room, which confirmed her place among the major proponents of conceptual art and in the Latin-American art scene.



Liliana Porter, *Forty Years (Self portrait with square, 1973)*, 2013, installation, chromogenic printing, 35,5 x 28,5 cm © Liliana Porter © courtesy Galeria Espacio Mínimo, Madrid (Espagne)

Artist Biography

From the mid-1980s, her works became peopled by tiny figurines and knickknacks, arranged in minimalist stagings and captured using various media, including photography, assemblages, video, or even theater. Containing both tragedy and sly humor, these artworks continue and extend Porter's research into the manipulation of reality and the creation of illusions.

From 1991 to 2007 she lectured at the Queens College of the City University of New York (CUNY). She has also received many awards, including the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1980 and three research grants from the PSC-CUNY from 1994 to 2004.

Her work has been the subject of several retrospectives, at the Centro Cultural Recoleta (*Liliana Porter : Fotografía y ficción*, Buenos Aires, 2003); Museo Tamayo de Arte Contemporáneo (Mexico, 2008); Artium Vitoria (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2017); Museo del Barrio (New York, 2018); and the SCAD Museum of Art (Savannah, 2018). She has also participated in group exhibitions such as *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985* presented in 2017 at the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), and in 2018 at the Brooklyn Museum (New York) and the Pinacoteca in São Paulo. In 2008 she also produced the internet project *Rehearsal* for the Dia Art Foundation in Beacon, New York. In 2017, she was part of the *Viva Arte Viva* exhibition at the 57th Venice Biennale.

Liliana Porter lives and works between New York and Uruguay.

She is represented by the Galerie Mor Charpentier in Paris, Espacio Minimo in Madrid, and Ruth Benzacar in Buenos Aires.

Press Images

<https://www.lesabattoirs.org/espace-presse/>



Liliana Porter, *Forty Years (Self portrait with square, 1973)*, 2013, installation, chromogenic printing, 35,5 x 28,5 cm © Liliana Porter © courtesy Galeria Espacio Mínimo, Madrid (Espagne)



Liliana Porter, *The Intruder*, 2010, digitale photography, 104 x 72 cm © Liliana Porter © photo Studio Liliana Porter



Liliana Porter, *Tejedora*, 2017, fabric, figurine, string on white wooden base © Liliana Porter © photo Studio Liliana Porter



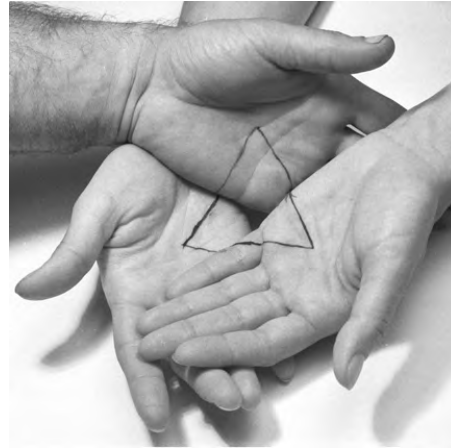
Liliana Porter, *Red Sand*, 2018, installation (coloured sand, figurine on a white wooden base) © Liliana Porter © photo courtesy Studio Liliana Porter and Galerie Mor Charpentier, Paris

Press Images

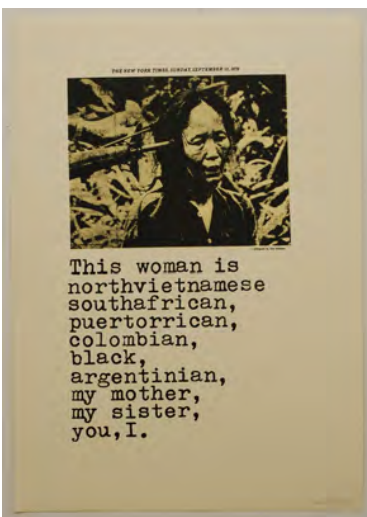
<https://www.lesabattoirs.org/espace-presse/>



Liliana Porter, *Untitled at Sea*, 2018, Acrylic and collaged objects on canvas, Collection Les Abattoirs, Musée - Frac Occitanie Toulouse © Liliana Porter © fotogr. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mor Charpentier, Paris



Liliana Porter, *Untitled (hands and triangle)*, 1973, Collection Les Abattoirs, Musée - Frac Occitanie Toulouse © Liliana Porter



Liliana Porter, *Afiche para el movimiento por la Paz*, 1971 (published in The New York Times, Sunday, September 13th 1970), Liliana Porter Collection.70,49 x 50,8 cm © Liliana Porter; photo Studio Liliana Porter Archives



Liliana Porter in front of her installation "Wrinkle", Museum of Fine Arts, Caracas (Venezuela), 1969 © Liliana Porter ; photo Studio Liliana Porter Archives

About Les Abattoirs

Les Abattoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie Toulouse opened in 2000 in a nineteenth-century heritage building. It holds modern art exhibitions and presents creations by contemporary artists.

Les Abattoirs is a unique institution created through the merger of the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de la Ville de Toulouse and the Fonds régional d'art contemporain (FRAC), which brings together permanent collections, a media library, a visitor's hall, workshops, an auditorium, a bookshop, and a restaurant in one location. Its collections, as well as works by various artists, are circulated within the Occitanie region, in direct association with the territory's stakeholders.

With an ambitious exhibition programme on its Toulouse site and out in the region, the presence of major and emerging artists in its programming, and the rich diversity of its activities that are aimed at a wide audience, Les Abattoirs remains more than ever a key player in the cultural, artistic, economic, and social life of the Ville de Toulouse and the Occitanie Region and continues to affirm its value on the national and international stage with strong partnerships.

Les Abattoirs is listed as a 'Musée de France'.

Some of the museum's recent major exhibitions

Picasso and the Exodus: A Spanish History of Art in Resistance 03.2019 > 08.2019

Peter Saul: Pop, Funk, Bad Painting, and More 09.2019 > 01.2020

Marion Baruch, Une rétrospective 12.2020 > 09.2021

Revue Noire Une histoire d'arts contemporains africains 06.2021 > 08.2021

La Dame à la licorne. Médiévale et si contemporaine 10.2021 > 01.2022

La Déconniatrie The Art, Exile and Psychiatry of François Tosquelles 10.2021 > 03.2022

Niki de Saint Phalle. The 1980s and 1990s: Art Running Free 10.2022 > 03 > 2023



© B. Conte



Institutional Support

Ville de Toulouse

The Ville de Toulouse has a cultural and historical heritage that bears witness to the extent of its political, economic, religious, cultural, and intellectual influence since ancient times. The city council wishes to bring additional value to this legacy for the benefit of its inhabitants and tourists, by making it more attractive, accessible, and in tune with today's world.

Toulouse is thus aiming to become a platform for modern and contemporary artistic creation, open to all forms of expression: painting, sculpture, photography, graphic arts, design, new media, music, theatre, etc.

The City fully supports modern and contemporary art and to do so, relies on organisations dedicated to creation, such as Les Abattoirs, which plays a prominent role in the circulation of modern and contemporary art forms at a regional, national, and international level, offering its public a vast space housing permanent and temporary exhibitions, artistic experiments, and possibilities for supporting creation.



The Occitanie / -Pyrénées - Méditerranée Region

The landscape of contemporary art in Occitanie / -Pyrénées - Méditerranée is extremely rich and dynamic. The Region supports its stakeholders and assists organisations that contribute to circulating works.

There are two Fonds régionaux d'art contemporain (FRAC) in the Region, which are its main regional policy tools for the development of contemporary art.

Over thirty years, the Frac Occitanie Toulouse, as part of the joint association Les Abattoirs, has acquired 1,200 works, while the Frac Occitanie Montpellier has built up a collection of 1,400 works. These collections were acquired by the Region through state funding.

These two FRACs undertake several essential missions: the creation of a collection representing "the art of today", the circulation of this collection throughout the whole regional area, direct support of artistic creation, the raising of awareness, and education for the widest possible audience.

Service presse Région Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée

- Montpellier: presse-region@laregion.fr

- Toulouse : service.presse@laregion.fr

www.laregion.fr



Ministry of Culture

The Directions régionales des affaires culturelles (DRAC or Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs) is a decentralised department of the Ministry of Culture that implements cultural policies established by the government under the authority of regional and departmental prefects. It supports, advises, supervises, and provides expertise to the cultural partners and territorial authorities in all the Ministry of Culture's sectors of activity: heritage, museums, archives, books and public readership, music, dance, theatre and performance, scientific and technical culture, visual arts, audiovisual and film.

In this capacity, the DRAC Occitanie provides financial support to the joint association that is Les Abattoirs, given its artistic and cultural project of general interest whose aim is the development, conservation, scientific study, and presentation of a collection of contemporary artworks, as well as its circulation and awareness-raising among the public, in accordance with the label Fonds régional d'art contemporain (FRAC or Regional Contemporary Art Fund. Organisations labelled "FRAC", as well as those labelled "art centres of national interest", comprise an outstanding national network contributing to the support and development of contemporary creation in the visual arts domain.

Furthermore, along with the Occitanie Region, the DRAC may contribute to the enhancement of its collections of modern and contemporary art via the intermediary of the Fonds régional d'acquisition pour les musées (FRAM or Regional Acquisitions Fund for Museums), as well as to restoration projects under the framework of the new FRAR measure (Fonds régional d'aide à la restauration - Regional Fund for Help in Restoration). This support is based on two legal texts: Book IV of the Code du Patrimoine (French Heritage Code) and the decree of 28 March 2017 relative to labels and conventions in the domains of live performance and visual arts.



Les Abattoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie Toulouse

Musée d'art moderne et contemporain Fonds régional d'art contemporain

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31300 Toulouse www.lesabattoirs.org
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or 33 (0) 5 34 51 10 60 (interactive voice response system)

Access

Metro: Line A, Saint-Cyprien République station
Bus: no. 14, 31 and 45, Les Abattoirs stop

Opening hours

Open from Wednesday to Sunday from 12pm to 6pm.
Late-night opening on Thursdays until 8pm (except during school holidays)

Prices

Full price: €9.00
Reduced price: €6.00

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