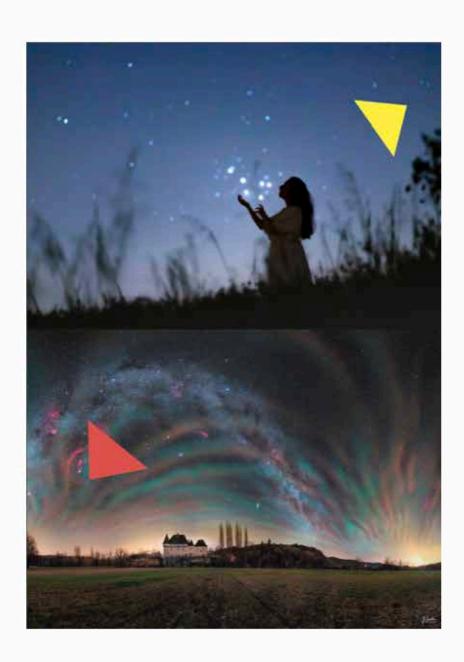


Galerie d'Art Photographique ■ Office de Tourisme ■ Café

# VISITOR'S COMPANION



EXPO

Un peu plus près des étoiles. A little closer to the stars, when the sky comes down to earth for an exhibition blending science and poetry...

### **EXHIBITION PRESENTATION**

In the past year, images of the Northern Lights have circulated widely in the media. Their stunning beauty has reached even our latitudes, revealing intense solar activity. Thanks to the powerful sensors of our smartphones, these celestial phenomena, once visible only to a handful of enthusiasts, can now be experienced by all in real time. Fascinating and intriguing!

However, observing the sky is far from a recent discovery. Ancient civilizations created solar calendars, aligned stones, and told stories to understand what unfolds above us. The sky has long been the anchor between knowledge and belief, science and storytelling. To assist your own stargazing, a map of the summer sky is provided at the end of this document.

As part of its annual program "Perspectives from Here and Elsewhere", this summer's exhibition continues along this same reflection. After a travel through time and one ocean with Joël Arpaillange's serie on Goree Island and its link with slavery's history, lets change subject and perspective. This summer, la Gare Robert Doisneau brings together two contemporary photographers from elsewhere and whose visions complement each other: Julien Looten, an astrophotographer from northern France, and Marion Kabac, based in the Southern Alps.

## Still .we tell tales...

All the photographs featured in the exhibition were printed by Saal Digital.

The annual program is supported by the Dordogne Department.

## THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Julien Looten explores the sky to reveal the luminous depths of our Milky Way, nebulas, galaxies, and other structures invisible to the naked eye. He often combines these celestial visions with foreground elements of cultural heritage: castles, churches, ruins... His photographs ground the infinity of the sky in earthly reality, blending technical rigor with historical context.

Marion Kabac, on the other hand, uses long exposures to place herself within nocturnal landscapes. Through delicate composition, she reinvents a relationship with the cosmos that is both intimate and committed, grounded in a poetic approach. She questions the norms of a traditionally masculine and scientific universe, offering a new way to inhabit the night.

An unpublished photograph by Robert Doisneau also makes an appearance along the way: a circumpolar shot above the Saint-Laurent Towers, near Saint-Céré. A nod to the photographer who, on this occasion, steps out of the permanent galleries to greet the younger generation.

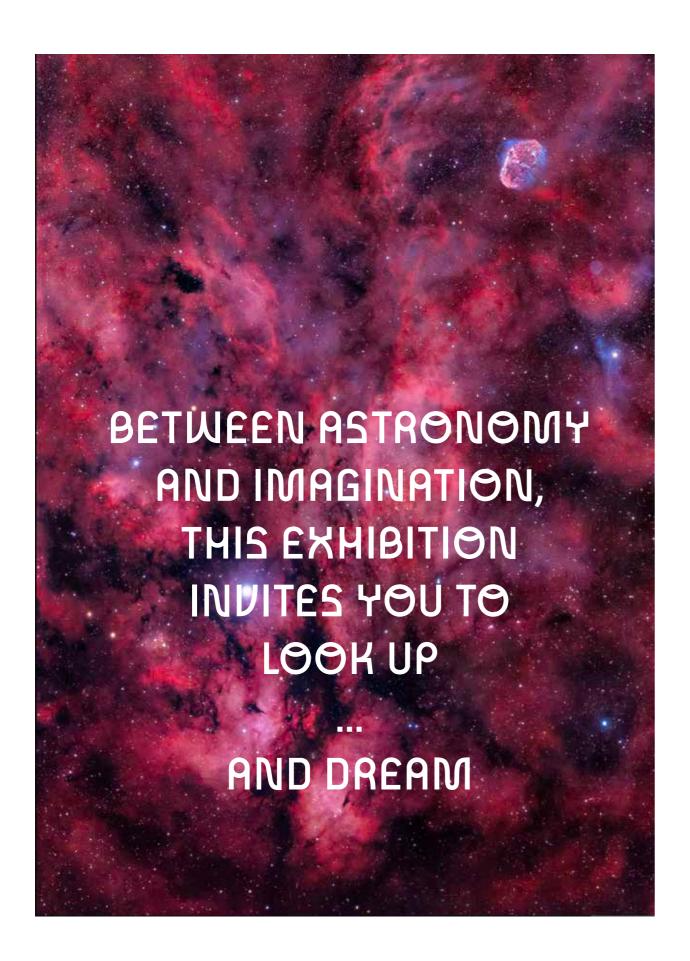
### HERE AND ELSEWHERE

Southwestern France offers ideal conditions for astrophotography, with dark skies recognized by various designations and labels: the Quercy Black Triangle, the International Dark Sky Reserve of the Landes de Gascogne, and the starry village of Borrèze, among others, make the region a paradise for astrophotographers.

While some images were taken here, most come from elsewhere—places steeped in memory or beyond our comprehension. In their own ways, the two photographers explore astronomy as a language made of pixels and photons, but also of real and imagined journeys.

### THE PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs in this exhibition are guaranteed Al-free. They were not processed or enhanced using artificial intelligence to reduce noise, boost resolution, or adjust color. In astrophotography, it's common to take multiple images of a single celestial object and combine (or "stack") them to improve the final quality. This includes techniques like image stacking to reduce noise and enhance signal-to-noise ratio.



# Once upon a time... a circumpolar.







Three photographers, one same gesture: framing the North Star at the center of the night sky, and letting time reveal the slow rotation of the stars around it.

A shared approach—with three completely different results—invites us into their respective worlds:

**Julien Looten** presents a circumpolar photograph taken in Pas-de-Calais, not far from where he lives. Of the Mont Saint-Éloi Abbey, founded in the 11th century, only the church façade remains. Julien stands in front of it, as if invoking the dance of the stars in the sky. Yet he gently reminds us that the sky and stars do not move—despite what we see. The Earth turns—and so do we.

**Robert Doisneau** captured a circumpolar shot above the Saint-Laurent Towers, near Saint-Céré, in April 1957. He took the photo from his room at the Casino run by the Delbos family. Doisneau knew Saint-Céré well and often visited friends there. Among them was another great artist: Jean Lurçat, who had purchased the ruined château of Saint-Laurent-les-Tours, where he set up his studio and created many tapestries.

**Marion Kabac** invites you—through poetry—to follow her into the rest of the exhibition. Unless the journey leads you into another world, guided by her words:

The alchemist with a noctilucent heart, you turned the black ink of my mouth into dewy laughter, the deep snows of my eyes into white, drifting nimbus clouds.

# Did you notice?

The circumpolar photographs by Julien Looten and Marion Kabac are self-portraits, chosen also as a nod to Doisneau's self-portrait\* you can see on the stairs.

# Stories of Stone,

# Between Sky and Earth







A **menhir** rises between sky and earth, emerging from the sun-bleached grass of the heathland at **Cham des Bondons**, located in the Cévennes. This archaeological site has the second largest concentration of standing stones in France after Carnac, with 154 upright stones. Likely dating from the late Neolithic or the early Bronze Age, these megaliths are among the oldest monuments in France.

**The 180° panorama of a typical Causse landscape** required around fifty photos. On the left, the Cassiopeia constellation can be seen. In the center, the arch of the Milky Way shelters the Cygnus constellation, surrounded by red nebulas. On the right, near the horizon, we see the galactic bulge and the Rho Ophiuchi nebula complex. Enthusiasts will recognize the "Summer Triangle": Deneb in Cygnus, Vega in the center, and Altair just below the Milky Way.

Some magenta glows appear beneath the Milky Way's left arm—perhaps Northern Lights?

In the foreground stands a "cazelle", a dry-stone structure typical of the Causses du Quercy. These small huts, built without mortar, were once used by shepherds and farmers as temporary shelters or tool sheds. In other regions, they are also known as gariottes, bories, or capitelles...

The sky seems to be cloaked in "multicolored clouds" in this magnetic scene of airglow, captured at the Château de Losse.

This rare natural phenomenon is caused by a chemical reaction in the upper atmosphere, where solar radiation excites molecules that emit a faint light. These atmospheric "clouds," found between 100 and 300 km altitude, sometimes take on wavy, colorful shapes, like luminous waves rising from the North and South Poles. While airglow can be seen with the naked eye under ideal conditions, a camera reveals its full range of colors in much greater intensity.

In this image, the arch of the Milky Way is clearly visible in its entirety, thanks to a 180° panorama. On the left, the Orion constellation shines, while in the center, Mars, the Pleiades, and the California Nebula add brilliance to the cosmic display. On the right, the Cassiopeia constellation and the Andromeda Galaxy complete this celestial tableau—even recognized by NASA.

The scene is particularly enchanting thanks to its composition: Julien follows the rule of thirds, creating a balanced image that highlights both the sky and the château at the center.





Under a starry sky, a massive stone sentinel proudly rises in the heart of the Périgord: the **Château de Commarque**. A witness to a history shared among six noble families, this castle has watched over these lands since the 12th century.

As night falls, far from any light pollution, the castle seems to merge into the darkness, its walls blending with the stars. A soft mist fills the valley, cloaking the landscape in a mysterious and enchanting aura. Above, the Milky Way stretches majestically across the sky, revealing thousands of stars and nebulas such as the Lagoon, Trifid, Eagle, Omega, and Rho Ophiuchi.

# Did you know?

The Château de Commarque faces the Château de Laussel, across the Beune Valley. During the Hundred Years' War, Commarque was held by the Beynac family, loyal to the French crown, while Laussel was controlled by the English.

Prehistory enthusiasts will recognize the name Laussel from the famous Gravettian Venus discovered nearby in 1911. As for Commarque, the rocky spur on which it stands conceals a decorated cave with over 150 Magdalenian engravings.

Seasonal change at **Château de Bannes**, still partially snow-covered in the photograph. Above the imposing Renaissance fortress, photographed from a slight low angle, the Milky Way unfolds in the air, as icy as it is mysterious. This Périgord castle, mentioned as early as the 14th century, was remodeled at the beginning of the 15th century by Brandelis de Gontaut-Biron to give it the form we know today. The fortress is thus equipped with many modern features visible in the openings and interior decorations.



The journey continues into other territories. We keep following in the footsteps of Julien Looten to the most remarkable places in France, which he elevates by capturing their full richness under the light of the stars.

In the Milky Way above **Mont Saint-Michel**, it is possible to identify Sirius and the constellation Orion, notable for its nebulae. Above the Mont, the Pleiades and the California Nebula can be seen. To the left of the Mont, almost attached to it, a very bright point stands out: that is Jupiter. To the right, the galaxies of the Triangle and Andromeda. Further north, the constellation Cassiopeia with the Heart and Soul Nebulae. On the horizon, multicolored clouds... This is the famous airglow, the same phenomenon present in the photograph of Château de Losse.

# Did you know?

The legend of Mont Saint-Michel, recounted as early as the 9th century in a Latin text, tells of the battle between the archangel Michael and Satan, who is transformed into a dragon. The fight begins on Mount Dol, continues in the sky, and ends on Mount Tombe, the future Mont Saint-Michel. The winged statue sits atop the towers, between sky and sea.

The legend has inspired many representations, one of which was created by Eugène Delacroix\*.

# The photo made galactic lavenders dance,





Gathered under the prism of color, the two photographs allow us to see two distinct aspects of astrophotography:

the revelation of the night sky with an infinity of details, but also the ability to transcend the human eye to see galaxies through a telescope.

Immediately, the eye is guided towards the architecture at the center of the image by the lines of the lavender rows and the diagonal of the Milky Way. **The Cistercian Abbey of Sénanque** has welcomed monks living under the Rule of Saint Benedict for 900 years. Here, as over there, the stone slab roofs and ancient stones watch over the landscape, topped by an infinity of stars belonging to our galaxy. But unlike here, observation is more difficult due to the light pollution from large southern cities like Aix-en-Provence and Marseille.

This time, the night was marked by numerous shooting stars, notably due to the Perseids and Aquarids. At the end of the session, Julien Looten was able to capture a large shooting star passing just below Altair, offering an impressive spectacle.

**The Moulinet Galaxy,** also known as M101, is located 22 million light-years away. It is about 70% larger than our galaxy, and even more imposing than our neighbor Andromeda (M31) with a diameter of 170,000 light-years from Earth. It is a spiral galaxy, like the Milky Way, viewed face-on and visible through a telescope pointed at one end of the constellation Ursa Major.

# CONSTELLATION OF REFERENCE IMAGES



**Self-portrait**, Villejuif, 1949 Robert Doisneau

Hàm Nghi Emperor, 1880,

unknown

Disgraced Vietnamese prince, painter, and owner of Château de Losse.





**Venus of Laussel,** 25,000 years before present.

Discovered in 1911 during excavations at the Laussel site.



Saint Michael defeating the demon, Ceiling of the Chapel of Saint Angel, Saint-Sulpice Church, Paris, created by Eugène Delacroix, 19th century.

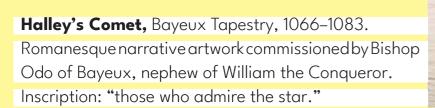


**Nebra Sky Disk,** 3,600 years before present. Germany, Bronze Age. Discovered in 1999 at Nebra-sur-Unstrut.



# Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin,

Born in 1900, she made numerous discoveries in astronomy and was the first woman to teach this discipline at Harvard University.





# to make the Pleiades twinkle,





The same star cluster appears in both photographs: **the Pleiades**. Easily recognizable in the night sky, it is possible to see here two versions — one close to our gaze and the other far beyond the capabilities of the human eye.

About five to twelve stars of the Pleiades are visible without any instrument, as in Marion Kabac's photograph. Sometimes called a stellar nursery, star clusters are places of star formation, housing more than 1,000 young stars. Over the next 250 million years, these stars will disperse throughout the Galaxy. The cluster contains different types of stars: the brightest are very hot blue giants, while others, smaller, are red or brown dwarfs, surrounded by gas and immersed in reflection nebulae. Their composition was discovered by Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin in 1925.

My sleep sometimes imagines songs, melodies, verses, but I never remember them upon waking. However, when my sleep dreams of photographs, I always remember them. These are rare dreams whose ink stains the heart, and I make sure to make them real... here is one.

I dreamed of this photo one winter night: a self-portrait with the Pleiades, wrapped in deep blue velvet. To achieve this, I waited for the spring horizon to gradually nibble away the winter constellations to reach out my hand toward the starry sisters.

"To fly away with the nebulae, return with the spring, grow together."
-Marion KABAC

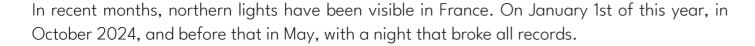
# Did you know?

On the oldest known star map to date, the Nebra disk\* dating back 3,600 years before present, are the Sun, the Moon, stars, and the Pleiades cluster.

# and ignite the auroras.







The night of May 10th to 11th was particularly intense, with the strongest geomagnetic storm since 2003. For a few hours, the sky took on a reddish hue visible to the naked eye. As for astrophotographers, they didn't close their eyes all night to immortalize this phenomenon, as rare as it was spectacular at our latitudes. In October, on the night of the 10th to 11th, a new magnetic storm hit the Earth head-on. This time, it was Marion Kabac who shared her vision tinted with the red of the aurora above her mountains.

# When I burn, it is my heart that is red; when I burn, it is my heart that radiates.

In the gratitude of witnessing the northern lights, I found the gratitude of being a woman. Red is the color of women, and that night, it was as if the sky invited us to marvel at our hearts, at the power of our emotions just as we marvel at the northern lights.

Under the crimson auroras, my wish was to create a series of photographs celebrating the female cycle, expressing a deep gratitude for my body as it is. I have never seen an artist illustrate this delicate theme with the northern lights, so I sincerely hope my approach is true and touches the right people. -Marion Kabac

Just above, **in shades of red, the constellation Cygnus partially** reveals itself. Located at the center of the image, the supergiant star Gamma Cygni (also called Sadr) lights up the nebula-rich area. It is a massive star, 150 times larger than our Sun. Throughout the image, complex clouds of gas and dust, as well as stars, unfold. To the left of Sadr is IC 1318, nicknamed the Butterfly Nebula due to its shape resembling two luminous wings separated by a long band of dark dust! At the bottom right, we notice the small and bright Crescent Nebula (NGC 6888). Located about 5,000 light-years from Earth, this emission nebula was created by the powerful stellar winds of the Wolf-Rayet star WR 136, visible at its center.







Immortalized at Étretat by Julien Looten, the northern lights of May unfold above the English Channel with a breathtaking view of the Aiguille and the Porte d'Aval, two of the rock formations that made the Alabaster Coast famous. Both the sea and the chalk cliffs take on a purplish hue under the light of the solar storm. Above, an aurora spreads out, slightly curved above the horizon. The solar wind, upon striking the upper atmosphere, causes the atoms there to react and generate colors: red for oxygen at high altitude, pink or dark red for nitrogen, green for oxygen at lower altitude. Auroras form at 100 to 300 km in the atmosphere.

Julien Looten had already captured an aurora in October 2023, in the North **near Saint-Omer, at the Norbécourt mill**. Despite challenging weather conditions—48 hours of relentless chasing, a freezing temperature of -4°C, and a light wind—it was worth it!

# Did you know?

Northern lights have been an integral part of the stories from northern lands for a very long time, from the Inuit to the Vikings and many other indigenous societies. For some, they represent the souls of the dead, the path to the afterlife; for others, celestial foxes or reflections on the armor of Valkyries. Often, they are associated with the world of the dead. In our latitudes, their reddish hues were seen as omens of war or disasters.

Despite their presence in stories, illustrations depicting auroras are rare.

# Magic of a suspended moment.

# With eyes wide open, the poets dream.







Guided by this glowing orb that seemed to have become a lantern in Marion's hands once it descended from the skies, we discover another celestial phenomenon.

"At the heart of October nights is hidden a silver-handed spider, a lace maker, a seamstress, a comet-weaving spider. Hidden in its constellation, it weaves for each comet the most beautiful fabrics and the most precious veils. It is said that when a comet is visible in the night, all the spiders in the forest turn towards the sky and, in turn, draw a comet in their webs."

That October night, **the Tsuchinshan-Atlas comet** appeared in the northern hemisphere for the first time, and its tail was so large it seemed woven from all the spider webs in the world.

In the hollow of a valley, we touch a moment suspended in eternity. In a mystical atmosphere, once again Marion confides in us:

In my secret garden, infinity is a feeling.

By the light of eternity, the embrace of words and that of the ivy covering the stone. In my diary, the night is an emotion. By the light of darkness, the color of the ink is that of petals covering the earth. Whatever story I share with the stars, I am certain they will always make something beautiful out of it.

Another bright point draws attention in Julien's **photograph of Mont Saint-Eloi**, a vestige of an 18th-century abbey still standing more than 44 meters tall today. Just to the left of the ruined towers, is it the rising sun or the Moon?

Above, debris from the Swift-Tuttle comet scatters meteors we call **the Perseids**. Within a quarter of an hour, two meteors followed the same trajectory, just above the towers — one for each! Their green color is due to the presence of nickel and other metals in the meteors, which burn as they pass through the atmosphere...

This meteor shower takes place every year between late July and mid-August. To observe them, rendez-vous at nightfall!

On the blocks at the center of the exhibition hall, we invite you to continue the journey toward mysterious elsewhere with the compositions of Marion Kabac.

On the slopes of the very airy Queyras, the nights are enchanted and poets love to dream when the Moon is absent. One September night, there I was, up there in my turn. After a seasonal shower, darkness fell and the clouds folded their opaque wings to rest lower down in the verdant valley. Very quickly, I found myself alone facing the infinite starry sky, the shifting sea of clouds beneath my feet, the eternal Milky Way, and some waves of airglow above my head.

"At the midnight light, I waited for the poets to reveal themselves."

Do the alchemists of words arise among these colors?

At the midnight light, I heard the poets, those who dream only when the moon is absent. They build clouds shaped like seashells, nebulous spirals to climb up to the stars, mother-of-pearl boats to sail between the snowy peaks.

Do the alchemists of words perish among these colors?"

"The earth wears a diadem of white roses, larger than every sunbeam. From one pole to the other, icy like diamonds, a ribbon embroiders all our wishes like we hold hands. This morning, the night is a fabric that only the warmth of dawn can pierce."

At nightfall, our earth wears a diadem. Who will touch the sky first—the highest mountains or the greatest dreamers?

Did you know?

Halley's Comet, which spectacularly visited us in 1910 and 1986, is one of the most famous and brightest. It has been observed many times since antiquity and is notably featured on the Bayeux Tapestry\*.

# The Moon, She Who Stands Guard.

If there is one celestial body we cannot ignore, it is the Moon. Our satellite, our closest neighbor. At once so near, and yet so distant. It only takes three days to reach her aboard a spacecraft. And yet, no human has traveled there since 1972...A journey whose traces might still be seen in Julien Looten's photograph The Moon in Her Simplest Form.

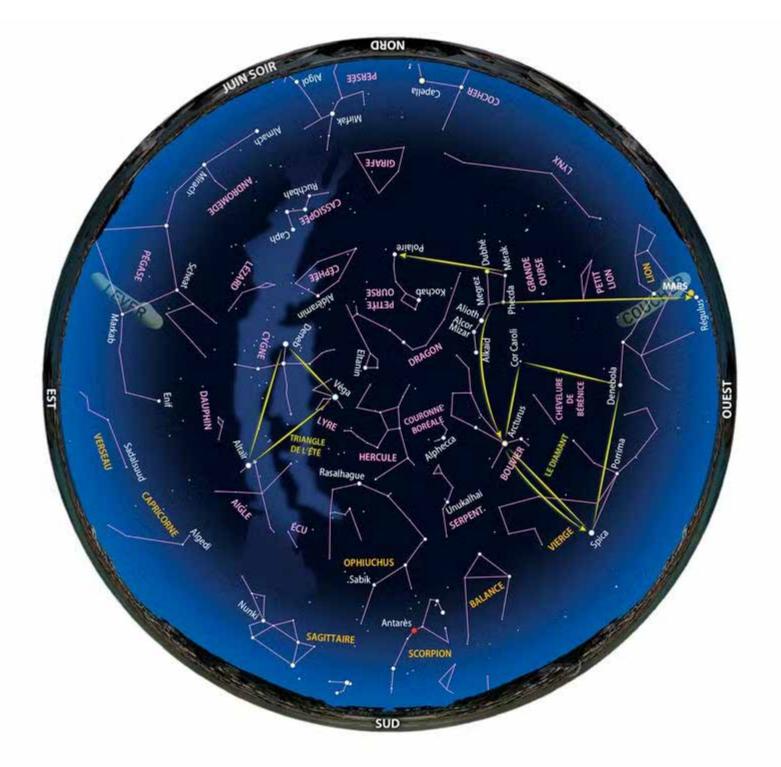
Just like the Sun, the Moon has always been there—unchanging. She has been the object of all kinds of beliefs, at times comforting, at times unsettling. Even more, she was among the first instruments humanity used to measure time. The civilizations before us worshipped her as much as they used her phasesto divide time, never ceasing to wonder about her true nature.

It was beneath the September sky, late at night, and somehow also early morning an hour not quite of this world, belonging only to the Moon now and then, a moment so still that even the frozen hearts of stars seem to slumber. In human terms, we would say: "3:30 a.m."

The great constellation of Taurus had already risen, its cluster of Pleiades shimmering above, while brilliant Jupiter gazed straight into Aldebaran's eyes. As mist rolled in like ocean foam crashing upon mountain ridges, my human point of view at times transformed— I became a fish peering up at the sky through gentle waves.

I climbed the coral wall of the Col Agnel to catch the moment a foggy wave swept in. To the left, Jupiter pierced the mist; to the right, the Pleiades lit up the clear darkness.

«The new moon will return, so that all the stars may, in turn, admire our dreams.»



Carte de Guillaume Canat, pour le Monde (c)

# Crédits:

Textes : Angeline Marcet à partir des éléments transmis par Marion Kabac et Julien looten.

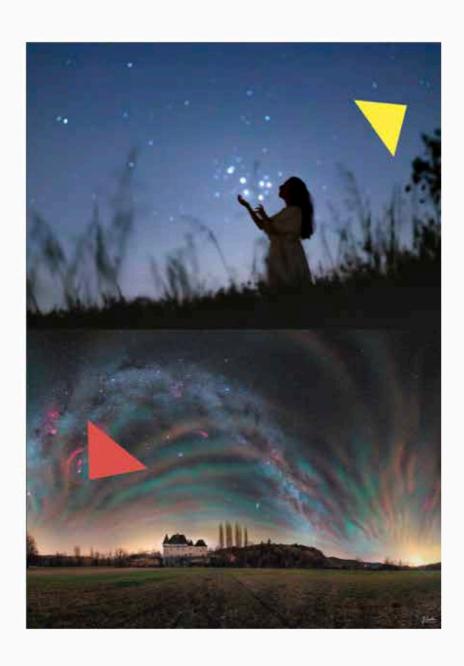
Textes poétiques en italique : Marion Kabac

Photographies en page de couv : Julien Looten ; Marion Kabac

- Juin 2025, La Gare Robert Doisneau.

Galerie d'Art Photographique ■ Office de Tourisme ■ Café

# COMPANION DE VISITE



E X P O

Un peu plus près des étoiles.