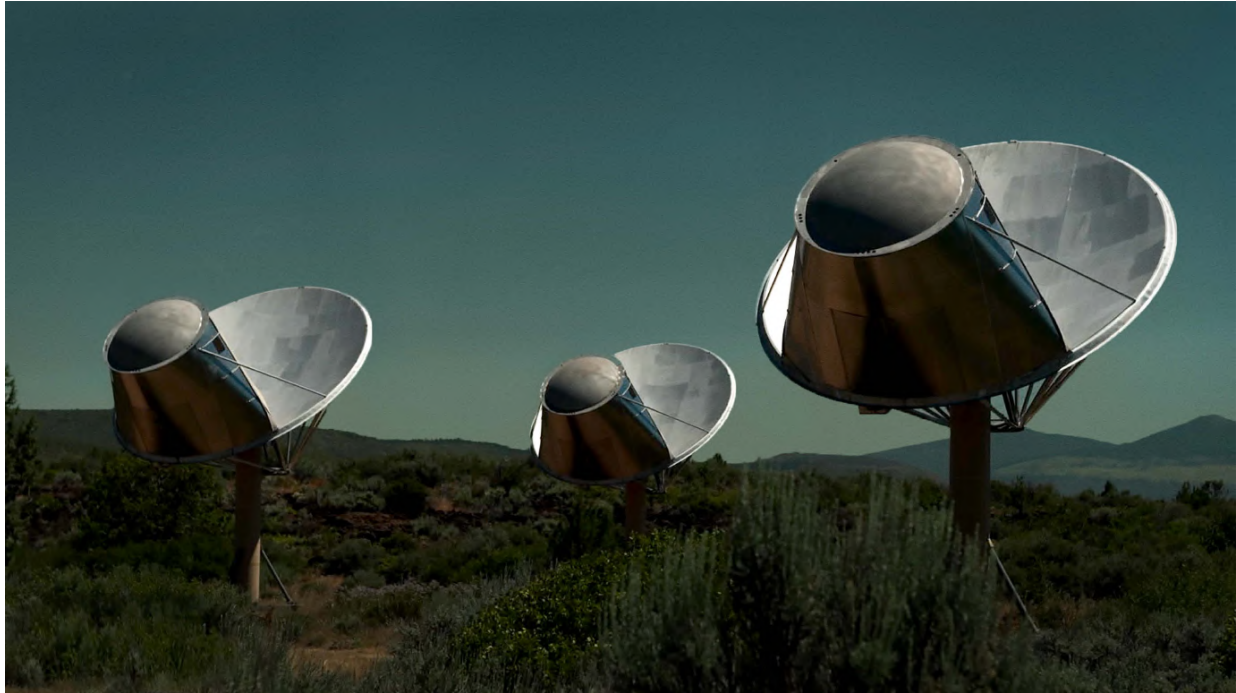


MASS MoCA

Laurent Grasso: *Metaphysical Maze*

The largest US exhibition to date devoted to French conceptual artist including the premiere of the new film *Cosmic Drive*



Laurent Grasso, *Cosmic Drive*, Film HR, 2026 (in progress). Courtesy of the artist, Sean Kelly, Perrotin and Pedro Cera © Laurent Grasso / ADAGP, Paris, 2026 © Laurent Grasso Studio

On view November 7, 2026 – January 16, 2028
Building 5

In Conversation: Laurent Grasso and curator Denise Markonish, November 7, 4pm
Opening Celebration: November 7, 5:30pm

Press Images

September 23, 2026, North Adams, MA –
MASS MoCA will present *Metaphysical Maze*, the largest exhibition to date in the United States devoted to French conceptual artist Laurent Grasso.

Installed in the museum's iconic Building 5, *Metaphysical Maze* takes the form of an immersive installation bringing together, for the first time, the artist's most emblematic films, along with *Cosmic Drive*, produced during his two-year research residency at the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California.

Laurent Grasso's work seeks to decipher structures of power and to make perceptible the often invisible forces that shape our relationship to the world. Initially focused on systems of surveillance and control, his research has continuously expanded to encompass relations between humans and non-humans, to explore realms beyond the terrestrial. At the intersection of the most advanced scientific theories and ancient or lesser-known systems of belief, his work is less concerned with providing answers than with shifting our perspective and opening up new possibilities of representation. In doing so, he gives visual form—often hypnotic, yet tinged with unease—to questions that are already shaping our future. In a context where the sky has long been a contested realm of knowledge, power and strategic tension, *Metaphysical Maze* extends this inquiry into the cosmos, approaching it as a space of metaphysical projection.

Conceived as a journey, the exhibition immerses visitors in a contemplative state that expands their perception of time. Paintings, sculptures, neons and architectural interventions will be presented alongside the films, forming an environment in which the different elements function as a whole. In Grasso's universe, lines are blurred and time appears suspended within a carefully orchestrated installation. *"Entering my exhibition,"* says the artist, *"is like walking into a forest — an imaginary landscape where you wander without trying to identify every species of tree."*

"Grasso's exhibition is the culmination of ten years of conversation," notes curator Denise Markonish. *"Grasso's work was first presented at MASS MoCA in Explode Every Day: An Inquiry into the Phenomena of Wonder (2016–2017), and since then we've been in dialogue about how to bring his expansive vision to Building 5. The merging of his films and related artworks will deeply immerse visitors in a new world, which will also extend to satellite projects throughout the region."*



Using three X-shaped structures specially designed to span the length of the former industrial space, Grasso turns the gallery into an immersive machine of vision. Each section holds videos and artworks, all of which upend traditional depictions of time. These structures also draw inspiration from Sol LeWitt's geometric works which are currently on view in *A Wall Drawing Retrospective*, installed in MASS MoCA's adjacent gallery and establish a dialogue between the two exhibitions. Each architectural element is positioned at a 45-degree angle to the next, creating shifting sightlines that encourage visitors to move around and between the structures. As visitors navigate the space, their changing perspectives create a sense of continuous movement, reinforcing the impression of being inside a living mechanism, evoking time travel, a theme Grasso has explored throughout his career.

The focal point of Grasso's practice is his films. *Metaphysical Maze* unites five works which look at shifting perceptions, invisible forces, and the resonance of landscape: *OttO* (2018), *Anima* (2022), *Orchid Island* (2023), *Geophonia* (2024), and *Cosmic Drive* (2026). The most recent of these, *Cosmic Drive*, was shot on location at and around the SETI Institute, a non-profit research organization that studies the emergence of life in extreme environments and beyond Earth.



Laurent Grasso, *Orchid Island*, 2023, Film HR, 20'. Courtesy of the artist, Sean Kelly and Perrotin © Laurent Grasso / ADAGP, Paris, 2026

It grew out of Grasso's residency at this Institute and his conversations with astrobiologist Nathalie Cabrol, Director of the Carl Sagan Center for Research, whose work explores the origins and conditions of life in the universe. The film follows a character, played by the French actor Megan Northam, as she drives across an immense desert in a vintage car that transforms into an experimental receiver. As the journey unfolds, the car's bodywork, windows, and dashboard begin to shimmer with light waves, pulsating tones, and electromagnetic patterns evoking fleeting traces of possible extraterrestrial emissions.

Cosmic Drive brings together mythologies and projections of life beyond Earth with contemporary research, from technosignatures that could indicate other forms of intelligence to the possibility that neutrinos could carry information across the universe. The film probes the limits of our instruments and perceptions, as well as the possibility that certain forms of life or communication may elude the categories and means of observation available to us. Space is therefore not conceived as a territory to be conquered, but rather as a field for metaphysical inquiry.



Laurent Grasso, *Studies into the Past*, oil on wood, 140 x 200 x 6.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin © Laurent Grasso / ADAGP, Paris, 2026. Photo Claire Dorn

Grasso punctuates the exhibition with works across various media that evoke strange phenomena, many of which appear in his films. These include his ongoing series *Studies into the Past*, a deliberately undated series that references historical painting, while introducing singularities that immediately unsettle their interpretation. This merger of past, present, and future is intended to produce a sense of confusion in the viewer when it comes to time, as well as a false historical memory.

New works related to *Cosmic Drive* include *Cosmic Mirrors* (2026), a series of hammered stainless-steel panels installed in the gallery windows with subtle painted interventions that evoke the optical phenomenon produced by gravitational lenses.

Other works include *Future Herbarium* (2026), a large white-bronze sculpture related to the film *Orchid Island*, which imagines the possible mutations of a post-disaster herbarium and *Solar Wind* (2026), an LED screen version of Grasso's 2016 permanent light installation in Paris. Throughout MASS MoCA, Grasso has placed a series of neon signs (2024–6) which reference flame and cloud motifs seen in the film *Anima*. The neons move from the exterior facade of the museum through the galleries leading the way to *Metaphysical Maze*.



Laurent Grasso, *Cosmic Mirror*, oil on hammered stainless steel, 150 x 80 x 5 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Sean Kelly, Perrotin and Pedro Cera © Laurent Grasso / ADAGP, Paris, 2026. Photo Rebecca Fanuele



Laurent Grasso, *Geophonia*, 2024, HR Film, 18'00" © Laurent Grasso / ADAGP, Paris 2026. Courtesy of the artist and The Black Gold Museum, Collection of the Museums

As these objects and films merge, viewers are drawn into a hypnotic environment, further intensified by layers of sound that blend into a continuous presence. The films' soundtracks include contributions from Grasso's collaboration with Warren Ellis (Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds) and Nicolas Godin (Air).

"Beyond Grasso's technically rich and structural forms lies his interest in how life intersects with science, the natural world, poetics, and time," adds Kristy Edmunds, Director of MASS MoCA.

"Metaphysical Maze provokes in us a multitude of invisible forces that are at continuous play around us, both real and imagined. Grasso's exhibition is like a call and response between forms and symbols, which are seamlessly threaded together, drawing visitors into an exploration of metaphysical time from prehistory to imagined futures."

"We are exposed to invisible forces that are often difficult to grasp," says Laurent Grasso. *"Through my installations, I try to bring viewers into contact with these forces and to create the conditions in which they can be sensed."*

Additional Satellite Experiences of *Metaphysical Maze*

From the conception of *Metaphysical Maze*, the project has formed part of a broader constellation of presentations across the region. Three satellite exhibitions will also be presented to the public at **Olana State Historic Site (Hudson, NY)**, the **Thomas Cole National Historic Site (Catskill, NY)**, and **Burlington City Arts (Burlington, VT)**.

Metaphysical Maze: Laurent Grasso at Frederic Church's Olana State Historic Site and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site will be on view from November 22, 2026 through March 28, 2027. Across these two historic sites, Grasso brings his work into dialogue with the legacy of American landscape painting, particularly through his engagement with the Hudson River School.

At Olana, Frederic Edwin Church's historic home, the exhibition presents an immersive installation of the artist's film *Orchid Island* (2023) in the Picture Gallery and Dining Room. Grasso has often intervened within existing historical displays, subtly inserting his own works into established contexts to challenge conventional museography and blur the boundaries between past and present. Elsewhere in the house, new paintings from Grasso's series *Studies into the Past* will be hung alongside Church's original paintings. These recent works draw directly on Frederic Church's paintings. His fascination with Prussian explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt — whose seminal work *Cosmos*, published 1845–1862, articulated the interconnectedness of science, the natural world, and spiritual concerns — is echoed in Grasso's conceptual works, traversing links between the sciences and artistic representation.



Laurent Grasso, *Studies into the Past*, oil on wood, 112 x 160 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Sean Kelly, Perrotin and Pedro Cera © Laurent Grasso / ADAGP, Paris, 2026. Photo Rebecca Fanuele

At the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Grasso's exhibition is centered in the New Studio Gallery and develops a direct dialogue with Cole's work, particularly, *Landscape with Clouds* (1846–47). The presentation includes a new *Studies into the Past* oil painting inspired by Thomas Cole and the film *Anima* (2022), as well as a sculpture and neon installation.

At Burlington City Arts, Grasso's film *ARTIFICIALIS* (2020) will be on view at the BCA Center from February 5 through May 8, 2027. The film extends his reflection on the representation of nature by bringing nineteenth-century conceptions of exploration into dialogue with landscapes profoundly transformed by contemporary human activity. Using LIDAR scanners, hyperspectral cameras, and special effects, Grasso creates unstable, ambiguous images that blur the distinction between natural and artificial to create a new field of exploration.



Portrait of Laurent Grasso, Courtesy of the artist and CNCITY Foundation.

About the Artist

Born in France in 1972, Laurent Grasso's projects attempt to capture and restore phenomena invisible to the human eye and mind. Combining the most prospective theories and scientific tools with the oldest beliefs, his work invites us to travel through time and into a collision of worlds.

Grasso is the recipient of the Meru Art*Science Award in Bergamo, Italy, the Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres and the Marcel Duchamp Prize. He is the subject of a major monograph, *Time Travel*, published by Rizzoli in 2024.

Grasso's work has been shown in solo exhibitions at international institutions including the 798CUBE in Beijing, China, Heredium in Daejeon, South Korea, the Abbaye of Jumièges, in France, Tao Art in Taiwan, the Collège des Bernardins and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Centre Pompidou x West Bund Museum in Shanghai, the Jeonnam Museum of Art in Gwangyang, South Korea, the Palais Fesch, Musée des Beaux-Arts in Ajaccio, France, the Hermès Foundation in Tokyo, the Kunsthhaus Baselland in Switzerland, the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Montréal, the Jeu de Paume and Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Bass Museum of Art in Miami, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. amongst others.

Grasso has participated in numerous international biennials, including Ennova in Langfang, China (2025), the Mardin Biennial in Turkey (2024), Chengdu in China (2022), Toronto in Canada (2019), the 21st Biennale of Sydney in Australia (2018), EVA International in Limerick, Ireland (2018), Kochi in India (2014), Gwangju in South Korea (2012), and, forthcoming, the Helsinki Biennial in Finland (2027).

Laurent Grasso has recently created several permanent installations in public spaces including *Solar Wind* on the Paris ring road, and a group of sculptures entitled *Roots of the Future*, which was installed for the 2024 Paris Olympic Village. Grasso was also commissioned to create a permanent site-specific installation for the ceiling of the new train station in Châtillon-Montrouge, as part of the Grand Paris project.

He is represented by Perrotin, Sean Kelly and Pedro Cera.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is a contemporary art museum that emphasizes bold creative exploration and fosters surprising connections between people every single day. It upholds artistic freedom and is an indispensable home for artists who stretch toward what has yet to be created. From its beginnings as the major textile mill Arnold Print Works in the mid-19th century, to its days as the Sprague Electric Company in the mid-20th century, to its current existence as a globally renowned, contemporary art museum and fabrication center, the MASS MoCA campus has a rich history of serving as an economic engine of the City of North Adams and the surrounding region. With vast galleries, artist studios and a variety of indoor and outdoor stages, MASS MoCA is able to embrace art in all forms.

For more information visit massmoca.org or follow on Instagram at [@massmoca](https://www.instagram.com/massmoca).

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> PRESS IMAGES

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