

## **On the Edge**

**Michael von Graffenried**

ESPACE MVG

36 Rue Falguière, 75015 Paris

April 3 – July 4 2025

Thursday, Friday, Saturday 2 – 6 pm



*"On the Edge" presents impressions of the Indian city of Varanasi as seen by photographer Michael von Graffenried, which he took during a six-month stay in 2012. The photographs were exhibited that same year in the form of a large-format installation in the city center, though they were taken down again after just a few days.*

Twenty panoramic photographs by Michael von Graffenried were mounted over a length of 125 meters on billboards along the busy Rathyatra Crossing in the city center of Varanasi. The exhibition was organized in collaboration with the local Kriti Gallery for Contemporary Art and its director Navneet Raman. With their large format of three by six meters, the images were highly visible and attracted a lot of attention. Perhaps too much - the exhibition was taken down again after just eleven days, after one photograph was vandalized on the very first night. It is understandable that the photographs caused offense among the residents: an outsider is documenting their city with a radical view - a city that is known as the spiritual capital of India, which attracts countless Hindu pilgrims who bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges, and which is called "City of Light". The images show the reality of the photographer and not that of the residents. With his panoramic camera, Graffenried was able to take pictures quickly and from waist height, resulting in a variety of photographs of everyday life. The issues surrounding the exhibition in Varanasi were brought to a head by the provocative title "On the Edge", which accompanied each of the large-format photographs. Graffenried used this to reflect his personal stay in the city, during which he would always have found himself "On the Edge".

The exhibition presented at ESPACE MVG in Paris aims to examine the installation presented in Varanasi and the reaction it provoked. It is important to note that "On the Edge" is the work of a photographer who spent only a few months in Varanasi. It is a view from the outside that captures subjective impressions and is not representative of the place Varanasi. For this reason, one wall of the ESPACE MVG has been dedicated to the Indian photographer and reporter ANIRUDHA PANDEY, who was not only an important contact person for Michael von Graffenried during his stay, but also photographed his home town Varanasi from a different perspective.

### **About ESPACE MVG**

ESPACE MVG was created on the initiative of Swiss photographer Michael von Graffenried (\*1957) in order to review his photographic work of the last 50 years. Graffenried is using his long-term studio at Rue Falguière in Paris to present and restructure the series, publications and exhibition projects of his photographic oeuvre step by step. The exhibitions are accompanied by photographic prints from his private collection, which he received in exchange with other photographers. While the studio in Paris is the main location, pop-up exhibitions will also be held at other locations (including Geneva, Bern and Marseille). In a later stage, ESPACE MVG, founded in 2021, will open up for collaborations and establish itself as a platform for photography.

## Biografie

Born in 1957, photographer Michael von Graffenried has a background in photojournalism and now devotes his time to long-term projects using a variety of media. In 2002, the documentary film *Guerre sans images – Algérie, je sais que tu sais*, co-directed with Mohammed Soudani, was shown at the Locarno Film Festival. His images have been exhibited in galleries and museums in France and Switzerland, as well as in New York, Algiers, Hong Kong and Beirut, and are in the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, the Swiss Foundation for Photography in Winterthur and the Photo Élysée in Lausanne. He has published several books, including *Nus au Paradis* (Dewi Lewis 1997), *Algérie, Photographies d'une guerre sans images* (Hazan 1998), *Cocaine-love* (Benteli 2005), *Bierfest* (Steidl 2014) and *Our Town* (Steidl 2021). In 2006, Michael von Graffenried was awarded the Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres français and the 2010 Erich Salomon Prize. After René Burri and Robert Frank, he is the third Swiss artist to receive an award from the German Photographic Society.

## Press photos

Picture credit must read : Michael von Graffenried, Courtesy ESPACE MVG



Michael von Graffenried, from the series *On the Edge*, 2012



Michael von Graffenried, from the series *On the Edge*, 2012



Installation view from the series *On the Edge* in Varanasi, 2012



Installation view from the series *On the Edge* in Varanasi, 2012