

Elise Nguyen Quoc

*sous ultra-vide*

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My drawing practice takes place within an infra-linguistic dimension of the 'sign', that is to say, founded on the recognition of traces, movements and intensities. Through this reading of the world, it is a matter of considering 'signs' before they are transformed into constructed and ordered language or into clearly identifiable representation.

This question of representation is crucial in my work, in the literal sense of making present and beyond the opposition between abstraction and figuration to which painting and drawing are often reduced. I attempt to question the language of drawing itself, and the way we represent the world, by questioning this language. Drawing does not begin with the representation of an object, as in verbal language, where a word corresponds to a thing, but is already present in perceptible relations between interruptions, densities, repetitions, displacements, rhythm...

From gestures come traces, from traces come signs and eventually figures. *Ralentissement du chant des oiseaux* [*Slowing down of birdsong*] (2026) makes the simultaneous coexistence of these states perceptible, through and by means of lines that form figures without ever themselves becoming figures. The colours of the work are not arbitrary. When I stopped using only black ballpoint pens on my panel works and began introducing blue and red, one of my collectors told me that he did not like them, that he found them "kitsch". I think there is something in bright, primary colors, reproduced through mass industrial production, that conflicts with certain norms of "good taste": a kind of implicit hierarchy between colours and an assignment of roles to them (decorative or not, attractive or not). For me, beyond the fact that they create a certain discomfort, they belong to a collective memory of ordinary gestures: corrected schoolwork, notebooks, forms and annotations, for instance. In short, these are colours associated with standardised writing, without smudges or blots, without a beginning or an end to the stroke. Usually contained within the reduced scale of the page, the applied colours are displaced onto standard-sized panels (250 x 122 cm), and leave behind their function as a tool for producing information to become the marker of a lived duration.

My corpus of images comes from things that were never intended to be drawn. Remnants, accidents, peripheral or clandestine fragments of larger subjects that I photograph and then reproduce by hand in the posture of a copyist. This practice of reproduction in turn leaves traces around me, witnesses to the practice through which I work, which I incorporate on the same level as everything else.

*La transparence des langues* [*Language transparency*] (2026) emerges from the same origin. For several weeks, a wooden board bearing traces of white acrylic had been lying on the floor, left fallow: a failed and abandoned attempt. Then, while preparing the support for another work and after applying my paper to the surface, I cut away the edges that extended beyond the format. The thin strip of paper was sticky with glue, so I got rid of it by throwing it onto the wooden board to avoid dirtying the floor of my studio. It landed and adhered exactly as it appears in the work, physically taking up the suspended trajectory of one of the traces of acrylic previously inscribed there, a kind of bi-temporality, bi-dimensionality. The excess paper appeared to me both as the material representation of a vanished state of matter and as the vestigial sign of a gesture of production, further blurring the distinction between what produces the work and what constitutes the work.

*Absolument pas* [*Absolutely not*] (2026) belongs to a body of work that likewise developed from discarded materials that triggered a renewed process of inscription, without any recourse to an image. Positioned above the frames, I sketch a gesture in the air akin to writing. The traces of acrylic are deposited onto the surface, dry, and become markers: a type of Braille in which my hand retraces its path and literalizes these traces with small ballpoint bars, like Tom Thumb leaving markers to find his way back.

*Drawing 3, 4 and 5* (all 2026) are the palettes produced while I was seeking chromatic accuracy in reproducing the colours digitally extracted from the image that served as the iconographic source for *Fabrication fiction* (2026). I wanted to make it perceptible to the viewer that the integrity of my images is guaranteed by adherence to an operative procedure. The ethics of making, the ritual-protocol, creates a language in which each action is developed and regulated according to this single guiding principle. Each drawing carries within it sensory details as indices of its reality and, through its qualities, possesses an autonomy of its own.

The different visible techniques in the exhibition are not stylistic effects. They are tactical responses to the iconographic questions posed to me by the images. In order to reproduce what I photograph, I have to project myself into matter – to make use of a technical subconscious that cannot be formulated in clear terms, to identify my capacities for action and adapt them according to what I perceive in my image.

*Anyone wishing to further explore my relationship to copying and the image can read the text accompanying my most recent exhibition on the Contemporary Art Library website.*

– Text by Elise Nguyen Quoc