

MAR GARCÍA ALBERT

PLASTIK

From May 16, to July 19, 2025

CACN – Centre d'Art Contemporain de Nîmes

4 Place Roger Bastide, 30900 Nîmes

Curated by : Guilhem Monceaux

Texts : Camille Richert and Guilhem Monceaux

Documentation: Margot Montigny and Thelma García.

Plastik – Camille Richert

On April 25, 2025, painter Nicolas Chardon posted a text on social media calling on art critics to awaken from their intellectual slumber regarding painting, which is often fetishized and treated as an untouchable, immanent technique¹. He also urged painters to stop complaining about their so-called invisibility.

This debate echoes those raised in 2023 by art historian Larne Abse Gogarty, the year before by critic Barry Schwabsky, and earlier by journalist Alex Greenberger - all skeptical about the intense popularity of figuration among young artists, and puzzled by their lack of awareness of the complex debates surrounding post-abstraction figurative painting².

Chardon's diatribe may ring familiar to critics and curators: when speaking with painters, both established and emerging, one often encounters silence - or outrage - when asking, "Why painting? And how?"

Some painting studios in art schools are entirely cut off, their doors shut, the smell of turpentine wafting through. When diploma time comes, these students are often stunned by critical questions. No other medium seems to benefit from such tolerance.

It would be a healthy thing - for painters, for art lovers (who are right to love painting), even for the market - to reflect seriously on the conditions in which art is made.

Looking for hope in Chardon's harsh observation, I think of artists like Rosalind Nashashibi and Lucy Skaer, who collaborated on eight 16mm films over ten years. Their piece *Why Are You Angry?* (2017) deconstructs Paul Gauguin's exoticizing gaze on Polynesian women, using painting to critique colonial and gender domination.

Or French artist Laura Lamiel, who moved from large canvases to drawings and finally to monumental installations - not out of aesthetic whim, but because her home and family responsibilities only allowed for work at the kitchen table³.

The idea that an artist "chooses" a medium freely is a myth. The truth comes out in the studio - when the artist explains how their work evolves over time, how practical realities shape their decisions.

¹ Nicolas Chardon, « Peinture, par ici la sortie », *Instagram*, 25 avril 2025, en ligne [https://www.instagram.com/p/DJBUNgMiKtd/?img_index=1].

² Larne Abse Gogarty, « *Figuring Figuration* », *Art Monthly*, no 465, April 2023, pp. 6–10; Barry Schwabsky, « *Beyond Zombie Figuration* », *The Nation*, December 19, 2022; Alex Greenberger, « *First There Was Zombie Formalism—Now There's Zombie Figuration* », *ARTNews*, July 9, 2020.

³ Camille Richert, *Laura Lamiel. Entretien avec Camille Richert*, Paris, Manuella Éditions, 2024.

This reminds me of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, dubbed the matriarch of the *Garbage Girls* by Lucy Lippard⁴. Unlike male artists like Serra or Judd⁵, Ukeles didn't have full control over her time - her life as a married, white, heterosexual, cisgender woman with children demanded care work. She made her daily life her art - not Fluxus-style, but by reflecting on the conditions under which women artists in the 1970s could claim professional recognition.

Many women artists have done the same - carving space where competition was less fierce, adapting their medium to limited time, and revitalizing art history. Hartigan, Krasner, and others were writing new meanings with their work, even briefly⁶.

Thinking with feminist and materialist art histories helps dispel the grand illusions that surround art discourse. We make what we can, when we can, with what we have. And women artists know this all too well⁷.

This is where Mar García Albert fits in. Trained first in economics, Mar is aware of what made Matisse possible: gender, social standing, elite patrons. She loves painting - even that kind of painting - but she knows she doesn't work in those conditions. Her dialogue with Matisse is neither cynical nor bitter. She paints within the social expectations still pressing on her.

She works - echoing Lucy Lippard - on "the illusion of freedom in neutral aesthetics." She lays her paint directly on plastic-wrapped canvases⁸.

She doesn't make things easy: she could use acrylic, but she chooses oil - despite its slow drying time and her limited windows of availability as a mother, partner, teacher, and, when she can be, artist. She's even invented transport boxes to move wet, wrapped canvases.

Mar is not just a painter or sculptor: she's an artist whose work addresses the sexist conditions of artistic production.

After reading Chardon's text in April 2025, I return from Lausanne's MCBA, remembering a painting by Aimée Moreau: *Still Life (before 1976)*, depicting a dustpan and brush—facing Dieter Roth's artfully strewn trash. The installation provocatively contrasts gendered experiences of care.

Artists make work according to the material and lived realities available to them. And the indecision around painting today? It's a stalling tactic. Deep down, those who dismiss critique know they'll be out of the game once feminist and decolonial tools are applied to them. So they scramble, while they still can.

Biography of Mar García Albert

Mar García Albert (Valencia, 1980) is a visual artist based in Paris since 2013. With a background in economics, she is interested in painting as a way to disrupt the mechanisms of value assignment in a

⁴ Bénédicte Ramade, « Après la révolution, qui ramassera les poubelles ? », *Vacarme*, vol. 4, no 57, 2011, p. 82.

⁵ « [...] artists were "lifting industrial processes and forgetting about the whole culture that they come out of. So Serra was this steel worker without the work, without the workers. And Judd was this carpenter without workers." », Bartholomew Ryan, « *Manifesto for Maintenance Art: A Conversation With Mierle Laderman Ukeles* », *Art in America*, March 20, 2009, online [<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/conversations/2009-03-20/draftmierle-interview/>].

⁶ Ramade, citée n. 4; Caroline Ibos, « Mierle Laderman Ukeles et l'art comme laboratoire du care. "Lundi matin, après la révolution qui s'occupera des poubelles ?" », *Cahiers du genre*, vol. 1, no 66, 2019; Jérôme Denis et David Pontille, *Le soin des choses. Politiques de la maintenance*, Paris, La Découverte, 2022.

⁷ Rozsika Parker, Griselda Pollock, *Maîtresses d'autrefois. Femmes, art et idéologie*, Zurich, JRP Éditions, 2024, pp. 265–266.

⁸ Lucy Lippard, « *Sujet tabou* », in Fabienne Dumont (ed.), *La rébellion du Deuxième Sexe*, Dijon, Les Presses du réel, p. 49.

free-market context. This often leads her to focus on creative processes in the studio—a rarely visible workspace for audiences—or on minor, banal (almost illegitimate) subjects drawn from daily life.