



SO FAR SO GOOD

SYLVIE FANCHON

At Bétonsalon:

Exhibition from Saturday, 4 May to Saturday, 13 July 2024

Curator: Émilie Renard

At Pauline Perplexe:

Exhibition from Saturday, 4 May to Sunday, 26 May 2024

Visit by appointment on Thursdays and Fridays:

paulineperplexe@gmail.com

Open without appointments on Saturdays 11, 18, 25 May, and

Sunday 26 May, from 2 pm to 6 pm

Curators: Romain Grateau, Fiona Vilmer and Sarah Holveck

PRESS MATERIALS

From Wednesday to Friday, from 11 am to 7 pm
Saturday from 2 pm to 7 pm. Free Entrance
9 esplanade Pierre Vidal-Naquet 75013 Paris
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BÉTONSALON
CENTRE FOR ART
& RESEARCH



QUEPUISJEFAIREPOURVOUS is a protocol-based artwork by Sylvie Fanchon installed on the windows of Bétonsalon since 2021 and that is regularly updated, derived episodically and indiscriminately from among the ten phrases that compose it¹. The words are those of Cortana, a “virtual assistant for personal productivity²” equipped with a reflex-function that interrupts any unhelpful tangents undertaken by users, in a typically feminine voice. The artwork replicates this direct and unequivocal address, inscribing it on the glass facade of the art centre, transforming it in turn into a sounding board for services expressed in the first person in an easy-read style³ with suspect motives. Located at the extremity of the building, the phrase is visible from the outside, but visible does not mean legible. Because each phrase, drawn in capital letters with no spaces or breathing room from one end to the other of the glass surface, traced in the margins on an invisible line, clearly stands out from the background wash of Meudon white, which has kept the imprint of the circular and regular gesture of its creation. In this way, the message has lost all its limpidity along the way: the meaning has difficulty resisting this collusion between the rectilinear line of the lettering and the agitated surface on which it is inscribed. This invitation to dialogue thus spins in an empty loop, which the gaze is invited not too linger for too long on, especially since all of this hides the disorder of the organisation (thus providing a real service).

These subtle discrepancies are prevalent in Sylvie Fanchon’s work, playing out through the inscription of a very clear symbol on a very simple surface. Extracting well-known and easily identifiable motifs, “common things” as she called them – everyday language, animal figures, decorative forms, or strips of tape – paring them down to retain only the contours and laying them in a strategic place (at the centre or the extremities) of a flat surface (a canvas or wall), using techniques with no particular knowledge required (collage, stripping, raking, whitewashing, etc.) and finally, revealing the strange character of this superposition, through the contrast of two colours that are often dissonant (red and green, pink and brown) attributed either to the form or the background... These are the well-known *Fanchonian* special effects that always manage rather mysteriously to thwart our immediate reflexes of recognition, to set our cursory associations into a tailspin, to create disjunctions, and elicit doubts, smiles, or laughs.

1 Sylvie Fanchon has entrusted to Romain Grateau, artist, member of Pauline Perplexe and floor manager at Bétonsalon, the instructions for the fabrication of this work: to apply the Meudon white with a regular gesture, refreshing it roughly every two months, depending on the wear and tear of the work on its interior face. Composed of ten phrases, its completion is indexed on the exhaustion of this series of phrases. But the rhythm of renewal is deliberately unclear, since it depends on the state of wear of the artwork, sensitive to the slightest contact on its interior face, and for the artist, the artwork is tolerant of becoming worn.

2 <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/topic/what-is-cortana-953e648d-5668-e017-1341-7f26f7d0f825> “What is Cortana?”: “Cortana (...) helps you save time and focus attention on what matters most.”page consulted on 03.04.2024.

3 “Easy read” is a simplified language, designed to be understandable to all. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easy_read

Although Sylvie Fanchon knew she had cancer, we actively prepared this exhibition together in Bétonsalon down to the finest detail. And on the occasion of a scenographic trial run, she latched onto a proposition for a rebound to Pauline Perplexe⁴ that, this time, was intended to be improvised.

The exhibition at Bétonsalon brings together seven recent paintings, created between 2021 and 2023. On the five big canvases (130 x 200 cm) hanging in the exhibition space, we can read from left to right: *Enter Password*, *Error Data Deletion*, *Clean Your Android*, *Do Not Turn Off The Computer*, *Wait*. All of them confront alert messages – errors, loss of data, eternal waiting periods – addressed by computers to humans. The typical and mocking silhouettes of comic characters – like *Toons*⁵ with an exalted Daffy Duck, Bugs Bunny kicking back with legs crossed, and also Snoopy asleep or inanimate – lying down or buttressing these messages in capital letters, floating in vast spaces that could be called voids (deep-space voids, windy voids, fiery voids) depending on the bichromatic interplays between backgrounds and figures: black on red or black on yellow or red on green... Sylvie Fanchon refused the illusionist space in painting – she has been known to say that a painting is a surface without depth, period – she nevertheless accorded the possibility that something like a sense of loss emerge from the dark depths of her recent paintings, a flip with a touch of humour or hope. Today, knowing the fatal result of her illness, we can rapidly assimilate these alert messages of the loss of computer data with loss of life.

The exhibition at Pauline Perplexe presents about twenty drawings. Some of the older ones compose festive games using linguistic signs, for instance when two empty bubbles come into contact in an attempt at amorous communication, and bear a strange resemblance to clouds or excrement, depending on the projective abilities of the viewers. Other more recent drawings react to a new kind of abuse of language, this time stemming from the medical register that Sylvie Fanchon must now face; that which, for a lack of better options, appeals to maintaining morale and staying active: “Keep Making Plans”, “Keep Your Spirit Up”, “The Show Must Go On”! The orders to stay positive from medical discourse, the dubious helpfulness of Cortana, and the anxiety-inducing urgency of computer messages all had the power to make Sylvie Fanchon angry. “Une ignoble inspiration me poussant⁶” (Motivated by this ignoble inspiration), which she liked to quote from Marcel Broodthaers, this muted rage would set her to work.

4 Based on a proposition by Romain Grateau. For more details on this episode, see the introduction to our interview published on the Bétonsalon website. Pauline Perplexe (<http://www.paulineperplexe.com>) is an artists' collective based in Arcueil.

5 Toons made their appearance in Sylvie Fanchon's work in 2009, in the series *Les caractères*.

6 Marcel Broodthaers, “To be a straight thinker or not to be. To be blind”, text published in English in the catalogue of the exhibition *Le Privilège de l'Art*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 26 April - 1 June 1975. Our translation from the French.

The title of the exhibition at Bétonsalon, *SOFARSOGOOD*, follows an identical procedure in Cortana's phrases: the text is applied in the margins in Meudon white, in a gesture that this time she intends to be chaotic, irregular, angry. The message is brief and its surface of application so broad that the letters are very big. That's because this time the idea is to provoke a desire to stick one's nose to the glass to discover the exhibition (rather than hide the disorderliness). In the face of cancer, *SOFARSOGOOD* resonated for us like a wager or at least a powerful wish, "so far so good" or "up until now, everything's been fine", which Sylvie Fanchon translated by "so far, so good". This message already contains a hiatus, it is in fact an affirmation that is unsure of itself, an apt reflection of her work. Since Sylvie Fanchon is now dead, this double exhibition is a window that she has left open behind her.

Émilie Renard

Biography

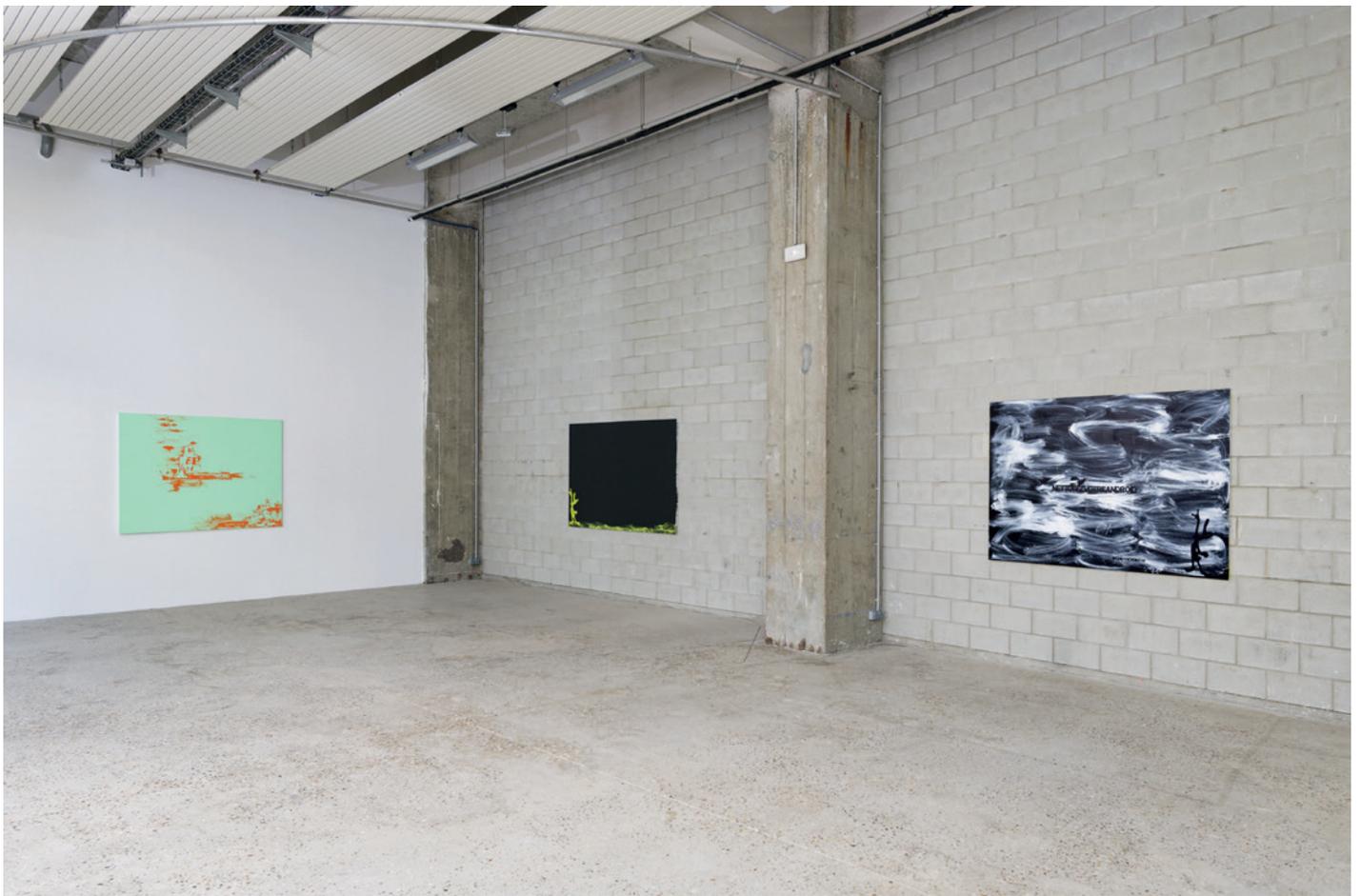
Born in 1953 in Nairobi, a graduate of the Beaux-Arts de Paris in 1980, and deceased in Paris in 2023, Sylvie Fanchon is a French artist whose practice has been characterised since her earliest productions in the late 1980s by an experimentation with multiple pictorial techniques, in service to an aesthetic research articulating around three parameters – surface, colour, and form – whose association, although marked by the legacy of the avant-gardes was constantly questioned and replayed as her career progressed. Deliberately oscillating between abstraction and figuration, her artworks perturb as much the rules of pictorial composition (perspective, shadows, volume) as the prowess of the artistic gesture, which finds itself reduced to a series of simple repeated actions that are codified or even delegated, such as her torn strips of cellotape that define a regular but random shape on the canvas (*Tableaux scotch* [Tape Paintings]). Characterised by their flatness and an apparent structural and emotional neutrality, they thus fall within a system of variations of recurrent motifs not devoid of humour: silhouettes of figures, comic-strip and animated bubbles and symbols (Snoopy, Looney Tunes), advertising logos, stereotypical phrases, etc. While the surface of her artworks becomes the site where various reminiscences, signs, and citations are stratified, it paradoxically reveals what surpasses their physical limits: an out-of-frame that is expressed as much within the frame and the architecture of the space that conditions their visual perception (as with the series of *Monochromes décoratifs*) as in the highlighting of mechanisms of value production, through the deconsecration of the figure of the artist and her signature (sometimes ironically reduced to the domain name SylvieFanchon.com or her initials, SF). More recently, Sylvie Fanchon developed a series of works that appropriate and subvert generic phrases formulated by Cortana, Microsoft's vocal assistant, thus revealing the ambiguity of the message and the artificiality of the relationship established with viewers. Through these games of displacement and intermingling, Sylvie Fanchon offers a form of deconstruction of images, as well as of the symbols and languages associated with them, in order to question the frameworks that govern our perceptions, and, by extension, skew our gaze in the light of these fragments or mirages of the real.

Alongside her career as a painter, from 2001 to 2019, she occupied a teaching position at the Beaux-Arts de Paris, which afforded her the opportunity to initiate fruitful conversations with the students in her workshop, giving rise to collaborations, such as the *Simple et facile* [Simple and Easy] exhibition presented in 2015 at Palette Terre (Paris). Her work has been the subject of several solo and collective exhibitions, notably at the Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain (CRAC) de Sète in 2012 and 2015, the musée d'Art contemporain du Val-de-Marne (MAC VAL) in Vitry-sur-Seine in 2014, the musée d'Art moderne Grand-Duc-Jean (MUDAM) in Luxembourg in 2017–2018, as well as at the Espace de l'art concret in Mouans-Sartoux in 2018 and FRAC Franche-Comté in Besançon in 2018. Her works are conserved by several French collections, notably at the MAC VAL, the Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP), the Musée national d'Art moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, as well as in nine FRACs (Alsace, Auvergne, Brittany, Corse, Franche-Comté, Île-de-France, Normandy, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Sud). She is represented by Galerie Maubert, Paris.

Vincent Enjalbert



Sylvie Fanchon, Untitled (Do not Turn off the Computer), 2022
Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 200 cm
© ADAGP, Paris, 2024 / Sylvie Fanchon. Photo: Aurélien Mole.



View from Sylvie Fanchon's exhibition "SOFARSOGOOD", Bétonsalon -
centre for art and research, Paris, 2024

© ADAGP, Paris, 2024 / Sylvie Fanchon. Photo: Aurélien Mole.



View from Sylvie Fanchon's exhibition "SOFARSOGOOD", Bétonsalon -
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© ADAGP, Paris, 2024 / Sylvie Fanchon. Photo: Aurélien Mole.



Sylvie Fanchon, SOFARSOGOOD, 2024

Blanc de Meudon on glass, in situ

Variable dimensions

Production Bétonsalon

© ADAGP, Paris, 2024 / Sylvie Fanchon. Photo: Aurélien Mole.



View from Sylvie Fanchon's exhibition "SOFARSOGOOD", Bétonsalon -
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© ADAGP, Paris, 2024 / Sylvie Fanchon. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

Full programme on www.betonsalon.net

Events

Friday, 3 May, from 4 pm to 9 pm
Opening of the exhibition at Bétonsalon

Saturday, 4 May, from 6 pm to 10 pm
Opening of the exhibition at Pauline Perplexe

Thursday, 23 May, from 12 pm to 2 pm
Midi-deux: flash tours of the exhibition and pay-what-you-can lunch with Résoquartier's solidarity foodtruck

Friday, 24 May, from 7 pm to 8 pm
Launch of the book *The Surplus of the Non-producer* (Rotolux Press) and conversation between Ève Gabriel Chabanon and Mathilde Belouali in the presence of the contributors

Saturday, 25 May, from 3 pm to 5 pm
Launch of the book *La Part affective* (Paraguay Press) by Sophie Orlando and conversation with Émilie Renard and Elena Lespes Muñoz
And for parents coming with their children, in parallel, *Beep beep!*: flipbook workshop, for children aged 5 and over

Saturday, 15 June — as part of Treize'Estival
from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm: *Tape a Nap*: scotch painting workshop, for adults
from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm: tour of the exhibition by Bétonsalon's team, as part of a 'RandoTram' with Tram – réseau art contemporain Paris / Île-de-France
from 5 pm to 7 pm: Launch of the book *Mémoire de l'oublieur* (Les commissaires anonymes) by Charlie Boisson, cooking and oblea tasting

Parallel Programme

Thursday, 16 May, from 6 pm to 8 pm
Nyumbani Book Club: reading club around African and diasporic feminist writing proposed by Ramata N'Diaye

Friday, 17 May, from 3 pm to 6 pm
Béton Book Club: collective reading of *The Promise of Happiness*, by Sara Ahmed (2010), in English

Fridays, 31 May and 28 June, from 6 pm to 8:30 pm
Written with mittens: writing workshop on and around, for, with, under and along-side art

Tuesday, 4 June, from 4 pm to 6 pm
Matrimones: towards an ecologisation of practices, with Nathalie Blanc, Cécile Roudeau, Renata Freitas Machado, Violaine Lochu, Johana Blanc, Clara-Louise Mourier, a programme of the Centre des Politiques de la Terre and the Cité du Genre, Université Paris Cité

Workshops

Saturday, 25 May, from 3 pm to 5 pm
Beep beep!
Flipbook workshop, for children aged 5 and over

Saturday, 15 June, from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm — as part of Treize'Estival
Tape a Nap
Scotch painting workshop, for adults

Wednesday, 19 June, from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm — as part of Treize'Estival
Insert your text here
Family stencil poster workshop, aged 6 and over

All our activities are free, upon registration:
publics@betonsalon.net
For more information, visit
www.betonsalon.net

Tours

Tours are led by a mediator and adapted to all audiences. Tours in a foreign language or in LSF on request, within 4 days.

About Bétonsalon

Bétonsalon develops activities in collaborative ways, with local, national and international organisations. Our program includes solo or collective exhibitions, with emerging, reemerging, confirmed or forgotten artists, multidisciplinary events with the best exchange quality, actions and research focused on mediation and experimental pedagogy, research and creation residencies, outdoor projects engaged with local visitors and structures, and other actions which are yet to be defined.

Bétonsalon is a nonprofit organisation established in 2003. Inserted within the campus of Université Paris Cité in the 13th arrondissement since 2007, Bétonsalon is the only certified art centre to be located inside a French University.

Practical information

Bétonsalon
centre for art and research
9 esplanade Pierre Vidal-Naquet
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info@betonsalon.net
www.betonsalon.net

Access:
M14 & RER C
Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand

Free entrance
from Wednesday to Friday, from 11 am to 7 pm
Saturday from 2 pm to 7 pm

All events are free of charge.
The entire space is wheelchair-accessible. Group visits are free of charge with advanced booking.

Please check our programme on social media: X · Facebook · Instagram: [@betonsalon](https://www.instagram.com/betonsalon)

Press contact

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With the support of

Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research is supported by the City of Paris, the Île-de-France Regional Board of Cultural Affairs – Ministry of Culture, and the Île-de-France Region, with the collaboration of Université Paris Cité.

Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research is a cultural institution of the City of Paris, certified institution of national interest by the Ministry of Culture.

Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research is member of DCA / association for the development of art centers in France, Tram, réseau art contemporain Paris/Île-de-France, and Arts en résidence - Réseau national and BLA! - national association of mediation professionals in contemporary art, as well as a partner of the Souffleurs d'Images service for access to culture for blind and visually impaired people.

