

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
- 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
at 4:30 pm
Presentation of Gwendal Coulon's "#followmoistp" Art pour Grandir residency with students from Évariste Galois college
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
- 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
- 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 alongside art
- Tuesday, 4 June,
from 4 pm to 6 pm
Matrimonies: 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

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

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.

SO FAR SO GOOD, SALON OF PAINTINGS

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.

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 × 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 Toons⁵ 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 poussant ⁶” (Motivated by this ignoble inspiration), which she liked to quote from Marcel Broodthaers, this muted rage would set her to work.

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

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
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.

SO FAR SO GOOD, THE DRAWING CABINET

“But will this Pauline agree to it?” It was almost through a misunderstanding that the extension to Pauline Perplexe was decided, for the exhibition that Sylvie Fanchon was preparing with Émilie Renard at Bétonsalon, in December 2022.

Pauline Perplexe imposes its domestic format, with workshops and an exhibition space installed in a residential pavilion. A house made of millstone, amid an urbanism hesitating between a complete face-lift—towards a programmatic conception of the city—and what continues to be built *in the meantime*.

So it was almost by chance, then, that everything that “wouldn’t fit” at Bétonsalon would go to Pauline Perplexe. Including the pastel and pencil works on paper, Sylvie Fanchon’s last works. A series of drawings dedicated to the injunctions of the medical world, which the artist made seated at the table, when painting required too much energy. A dense, rough sketch where phrases of authoritarian optimism are agonizingly displayed. This series, endowed with drawings deriving from different periods, acts as a lining for the Parisian exhibition, transforming Pauline Perplexe into a pocket: the flipside, where previously unseen works are exhibited. The drawings represent all manner of proof of an unmitigated self, the implicit underside of a painting practice.

In her drawings, Sylvie Fanchon defines silhouettes of characters on the rebound, literally in different states. *Toons* with clipped or bleeding contours are slumbering, denouncing, or darting straight ahead without a backwards glance, emerging in various locations, in various versions of themselves. Mute characters with eloquent schnozes. Garish phrases in the margins, dictating a slick optimism. Hollow bubbles with variable moods, mossy, fulminating, taking the form of thoughts or characters to project oneself as. Continuous lines are traced to rest and lie flat, float or anchor oneself to the surface. Drawing a blank or possibly “blanks”, pictoriality that is not really designed for that. A casting that only exists as surfaces attached to reality: a *flattened* reality.

Sixth? Eighth? No elevator. Large-format canvases, standards that are barely met, to the centimetre, the interminable half-floors up to Sylvie Fanchon’s apartment-cum-studio. With windows on both sides of the building, a tiny television, the ghosts of former canvases on the wall opposite the windows. Because as sharp as a painter’s approach might be, it is still paint, it is still a white wall, circled with colours. A white kitchen, some tableware. A door, a bedroom? A rather old ink-jet printer. The remains of a former layout of apartments on the top floor, brought together. Multiplication of functions. One room: the bathroom, paintbrushes. A table, a folder, Canson, 50 × 65, grape format. The bathtub, view over the courtyard, scrambled with Meudon white. BONJOURQUEPUISJEFAIREPOURVOUS? Linear shelf, folders, A4, A3 folded, A5, drawings, printouts. A whole career in summary? Going as fast as possible, fossicking, selecting. Having Sylvie validate the selection, remotely, on photos. Orienting ourselves within a repertoire of forms. Neither too much nor too little. No double-ups, everything is more arid, nothing is obsessional but everything is there. There is no mystery because there is no riddle. Sylvie Fanchon works here, Sylvie Fanchon lives here. Nothing else to see than what you see. Drawings are drawings. Sylvie Fanchon tells us, young folks, to choose, to show them at our place. So far, so good.

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 cello tape 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.

To read

An interview with Sylvie Fanchon, conducted by Emilie Renard on 12 December 2022, entitled “*Si loin, si bon*” is available online at betonsalon.net (only in French).



To listen

“ERREUR 404” is a series of short sound episodes about Sylvie Fanchon’s exhibition at Bétonsalon, produced and recorded by 2nde9 students of the Lycée Adolphe Chérioux in Vitry-sur-Seine.

In this podcast, you can hear their mediation, based on several documentary sources and punctuated by short fictions written with the assistance of a generative AI.

The students worked with Hélène Carbonnel, author and producer of podcasts.

Editorial support and production: Lucia Zapparoli, head of Crédac’s Bureau des publics, with Pierre Dammame, literature teacher at Lycée Adolphe Chérioux. Mixing and music by Kyrian Nicolay-Kritter.

A project carried out as part of the “Tu vois je veux dire” artistic and cultural education project run by Crédac, Bétonsalon and la Briqueterie, with support from the Île-de-France region.





Above: Sans titre (Enter password), 2022. Acrylic on canvas, 130 × 197 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024
Below: Wait, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 130 × 197 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024



Above: Do not turn off the computer, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 130 × 197 cm

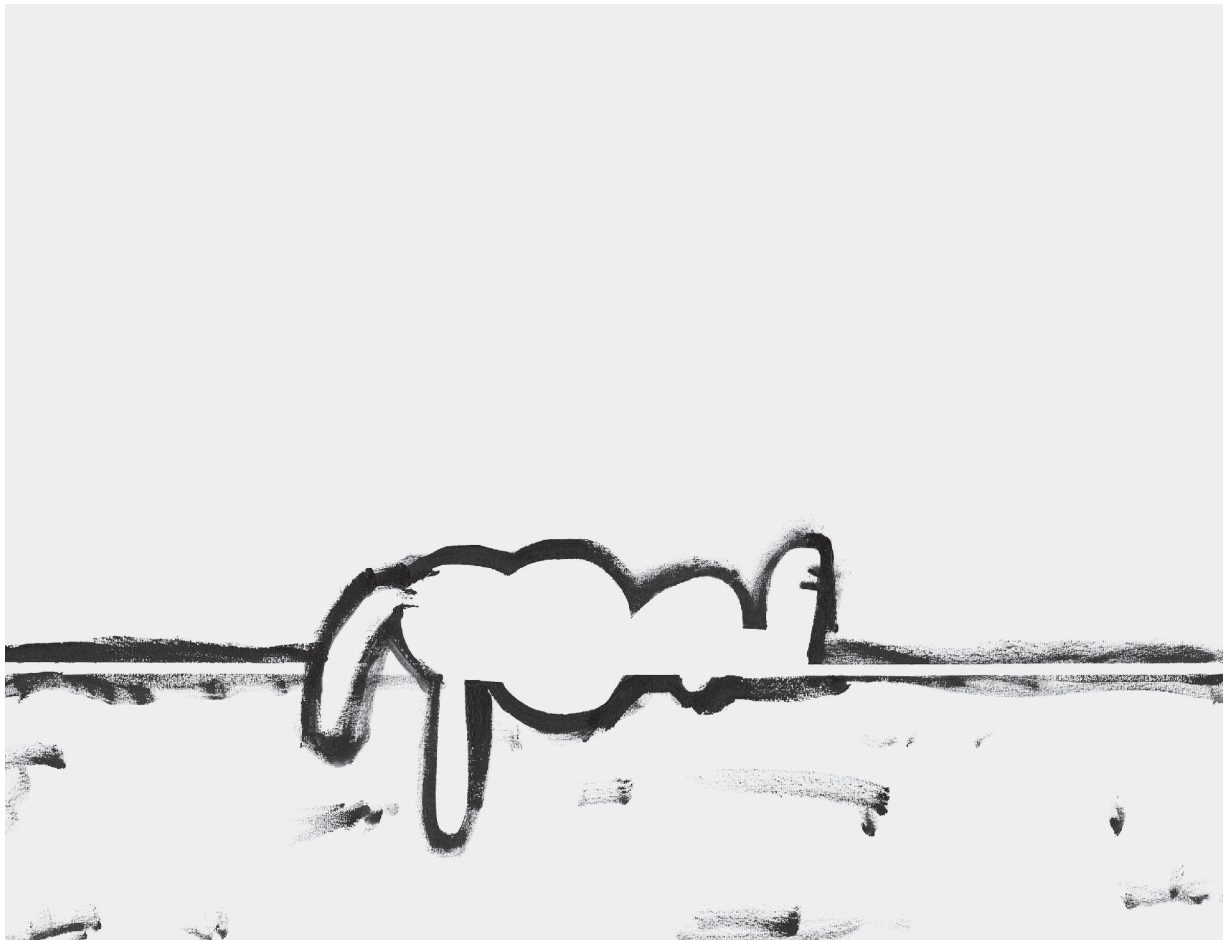
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024

Below: Sans titre (Nettoyez votre Android), 2022. Acrylic on canvas. 130 × 197 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024



Above: Sans titre (Data Deletion), 2022. Acrylic on canvas, 130 × 197 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024
Below: Snoopy Chéri, 2023. Acrylic on canvas, 40 × 50 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024

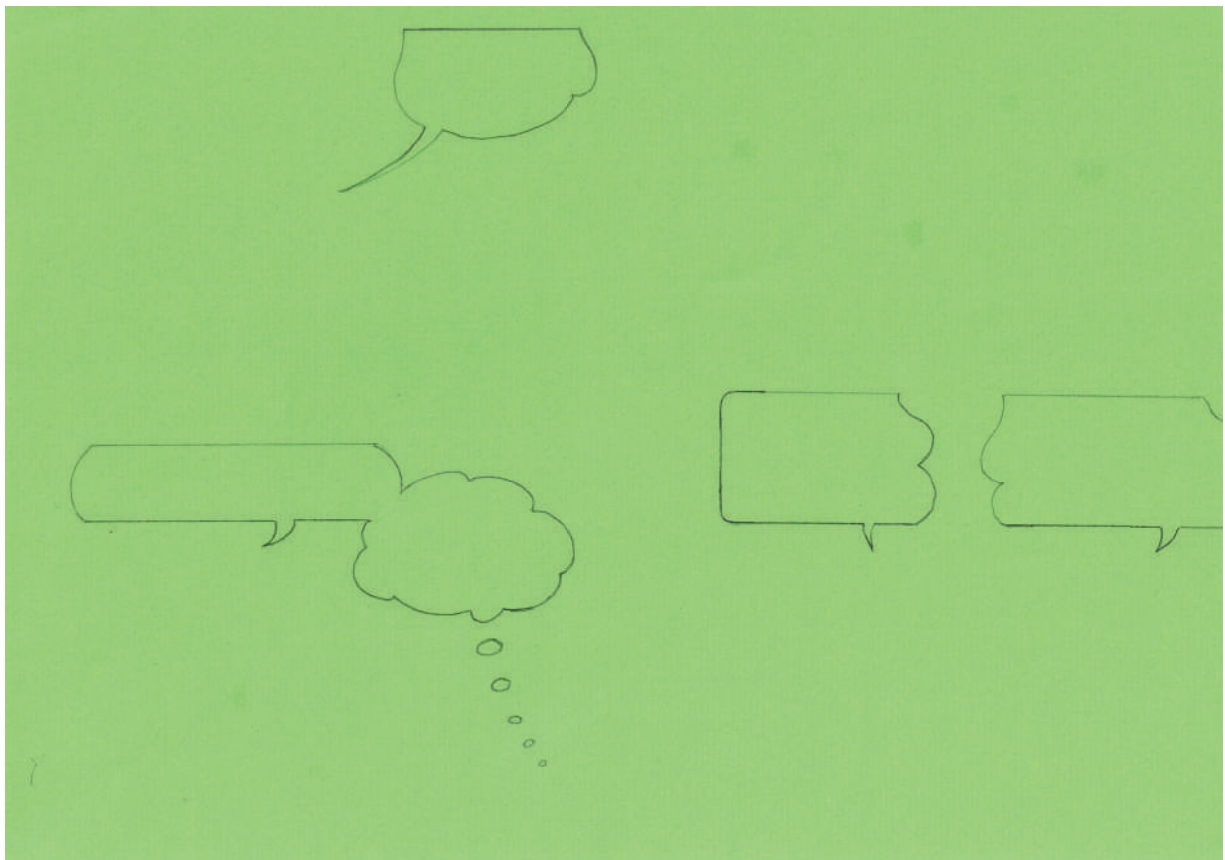
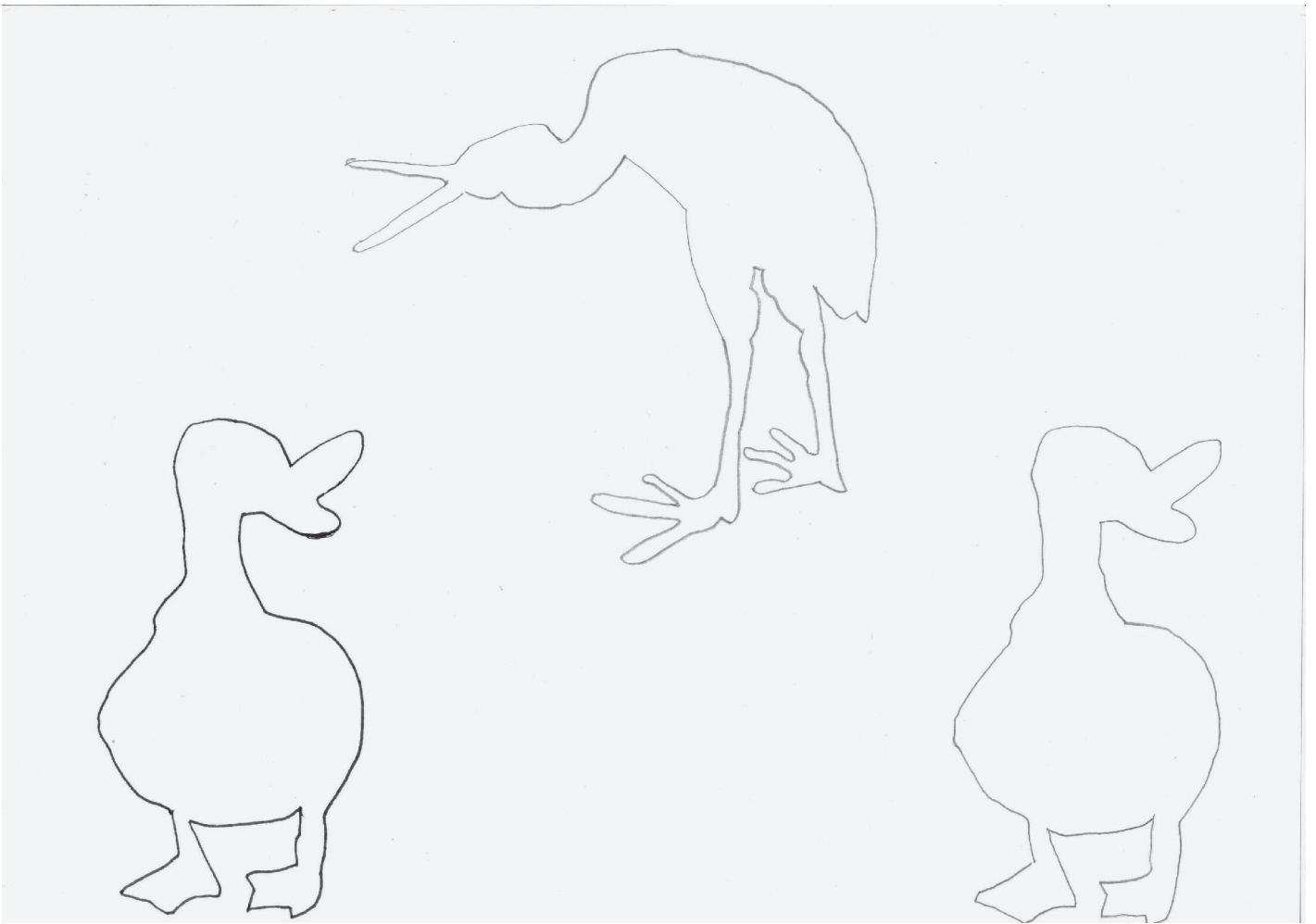


Above: So Far So Good, 2023. Acrylic on canvas, 40 × 50 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024

Below: Snoopy Chérie, 2023. 50 signed copies, print by Jérôme Arcay. Price: 300€.

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024



Above: Drawing [trois canards], undated. Pencil on paper, 21 cm x 29,7 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024

Below: Drawing [bulles sur papier vert], undated. Pencil on paper, 21 cm x 29,7 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Maubert © Adagp, Paris, 2024

|| SOFARSOGOOD ||

SYLVIE
FANCHON

Bétonsalon from 4 May to 13 July 2024
Curated by Émilie Renard
Pauline Perplexe from 4 May to 26 May 2024
Curated by Romain Grateau,
Fiona Vilmer and Sarah Holveck

Wednesday to Friday, from 11am to 7pm
Saturday, from 2pm to 7pm · Free entrance
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Visit by appointment on Thursdays and Fridays:
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Open without appointments on Saturdays 11, 18, 25 May,
and Sunday 26 May, from 2pm to 6pm

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