



MENTIRAS #15 - AB

J

I had the impression that your work was recently more recognized than it was when I first got to know it: you have been invited to a famous art center, and you had a couple of solo shows in Paris. How did it impact the way you work? Were you able to produce larger pieces? Were you at all interested in changing the scale of your work?

A

I had no solo show in Paris, ever. That being said, I will this year... But yes, I was invited to a famous art center last autumn, with you among others!

Last year I had the financial possibility to do bigger things, like the installation for *Futur, ancien, fugitif*. It depends on the situation I guess. At the moment I am still thinking about that room, a room for mattresses, « more or less » a dormitory.

Talking about scale, I often want to think I make « real » things, not sculptures in an exhibition but objects in a space, furniture, clothes, books, on a 1:1 scale... Almost objects and spaces that could, should, or must play in a movie, or the room in which a movie could take place – a fiction of objects. But then I let it go, loosely done and half finished, as I acknowledge a certain lack of desire for technical skills, and a kind of fear for anything too heavy or solid, for things that can't be taken apart and that are non negotiable in space. In the case of my mattresses for instance, if you remove the foam to move or to store them, which I do, there is only the fabric left and it is so easy – it has only 2 dimensions, like clothes without the body inside – you just have to fold and unfold it – same with most of the things I do and did in the last years.

J

Most of the pieces I have seen seem derived from a domestic space (clothing, fabric, books, etc.). Is it somehow related to necessity (having direct access to these items, not having to buy anything fancy)?

A

It is without a doubt linked to a desire for self-sufficiency, or a desire to hide. I can quickly get ambivalent when it comes to the question of being an « artist » and making art for a living.

Let's imagine that I'm hanging out with my mother. She meets an old friend of hers, by chance, and her friend asks me what I do in life at the

moment. I won't reply. I'll become stupidly shy, and so my mother will have to answer for me: « she is a visual artist » ; a teenager sulky mood will show on my face as I slowly start to grumble and get impatient if anything more is said on the topic. My mother and her friend are so ashamed by my lack of politeness that they feel it is best not to ask me anything again. In that same shameful way (I don't really know why), I often avoid specialist stores, where an expert salesman would try to talk to me using special words. I get stunned or frozen in place.

I am more at ease buying pens at the supermarket where it feels easier not to justify your purchases. I go there really often and I buy a lot of those « bic 4 couleurs » that I work with all the time, and a range of pastel markers that are very easy to find in any shop. In this scenario, I always let the cashier think that these pens are for my children, waiting at home like hungry ogres, craving to draw again with those wonderful pink, fuchsia, green, light turquoise and purple colors... So I am not embarrassed about the reason why I buy so many pens all the time.

Moreover, my relation to technique is a defective one. I mean, I am scared by anything that is bigger than what I can hold in my arms, make with my hands and carry by myself, because I would have to ask for assistance, which is not an easy thing to do when you have to organize and legitimize your request. Sometimes you only need spontaneity or funny secret methods to make things appear and happen... I have some tools at home, a few, mainly a sewing machine that I have not learned how to operate, so I use it roughly. I like it that way, wrong, and just like everything I do, it is badly done. I guess that comes from a childish fear of learning the « right way », and it is fun to do things you are not meant to do in the way you do.

J

What is your work schedule? Mood seems to be an important factor in what you do. How does that translate into your organization?

A

Yes there isn't much organization. Ideally, time would be a sort of lake in which everything can stand still. I would love to stay there focusing on small parts, or working as if I am driving a train, without any goal, no pragmatism, no plan d'ensemble at all, just driving with no brain! But it does not happen that way all the time alas, because of deadlines and

CHAT PERDU

Chat tigré à Aubervilliers

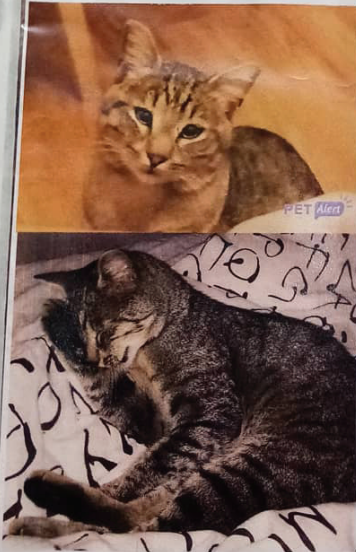
Prénom : Boubou

Caractéristiques : Tigré Marron / Gris, petite griffure à l'œil gauche

Silhouette normale – Taille grande – Poils Courts

Pucé – Non tatoué

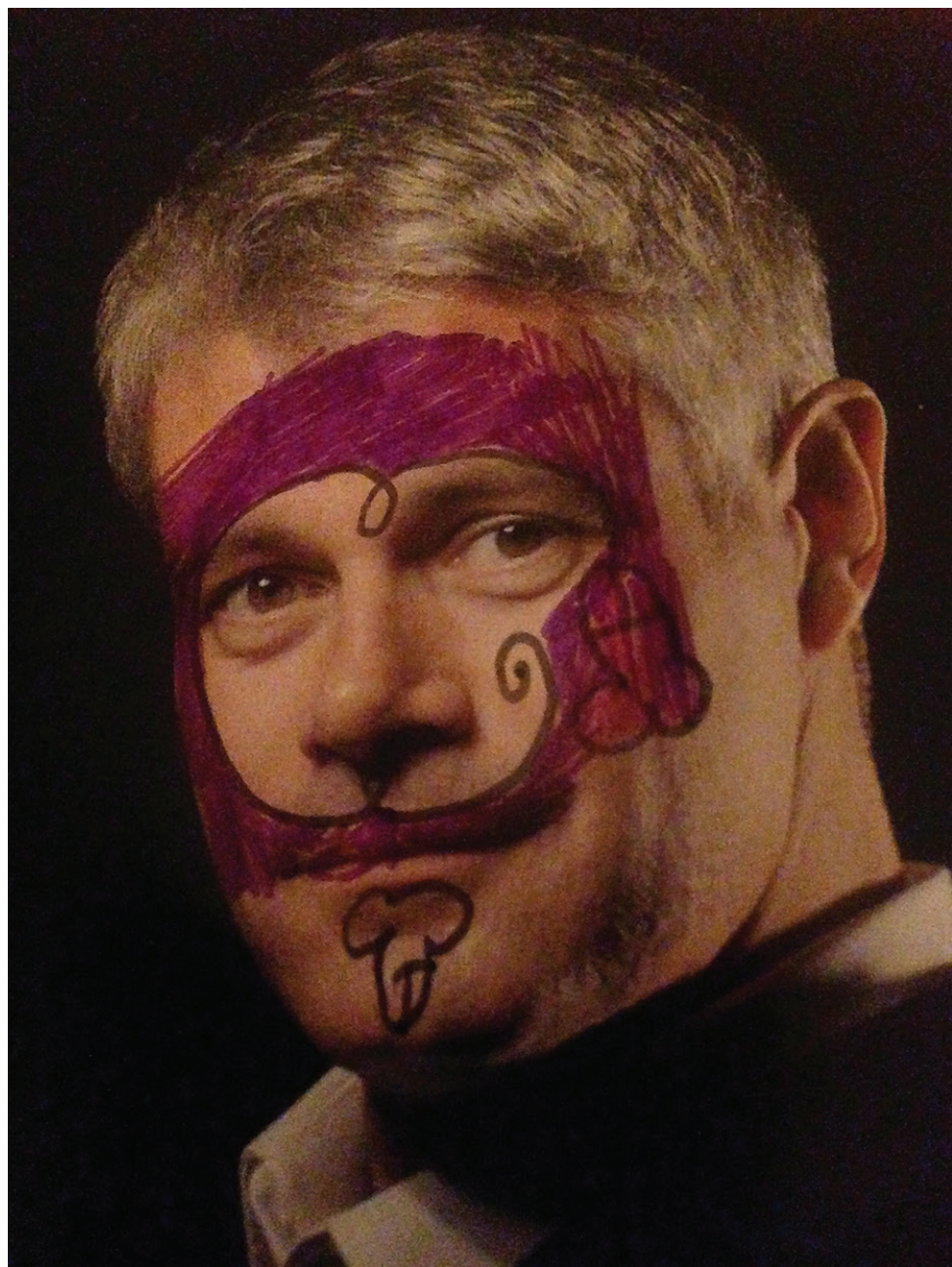
Disparu le 06/07/2020



**SI VOUS L'AVEZ VU
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This is Morgoth, aka "Little Dark Lord". She's a weird, needy little shit.





too many things that have to be accomplished at the same time, which results in a lot of tension.

What I have noticed is that some hours are more convenient for specific things than others. Instinctively, when I wake up, I want to draw. It is what I love the most, so if I have no other commitments, I draw before the day starts being too conscious. Back at night, once again, you can find that state of mind, a bit self-hypnotic, unconscious and friendly, a retreat from the boring and garish things of the afternoon.

And I love the fantasy of making things on my own, even if it sometimes takes such a long long time, colored silk surfaces, sewn, drawn all-over. I am pretty alienated by everything I do, by that desire to make these things a part of my daily life. I don't see how to say it otherwise – it is like I obey an order, but I am oblivious to the fact that I'm the one who gave it. I order, I execute, I moan, I play, I barely see the end, I hate it and I like it.

J

Your drawings and objects are highly connected to an imaginary monologue or an imaginary dialogue. How much of that comes from an initial idea, that you develop like a storyboard, and how much of it is improvised? Or is it a true channeling, you talk with spirits?

A

I don't talk to spirits but that must be fun. Sometimes, in my mind, I conceive ways of creating means potentially leading back to a conceptual pleasure... We could talk and maybe laugh about it, or have thoughts and feelings about it. This is not clear, what I mean to say is that I try to design a conversation, or imaginary books, or things, to have a conversation with or about. At the same time, it is both a pretext and a structure to release ideas and to just spend some time drawing or doing strange activities like coloring or writing words that you can't read. It is a space and a time to occupy, like writing a book could be a place, I guess, a place you return to whenever you get back to writing it, writing inside of it, like a sort of a house, with its own walls and inner stuff and memories and characters.

These monologues and dialogues are sometimes less imaginary than real, if we oppose the two words, which I should not. A simple transcription and translation of a dialogue I had with Greg, a friend of mine who lives in Bayonne, inhabits my « book » titled *Hidden thoughts*,

chatting with Greg, making a sashimi prospectus. These discussions are the main pattern of the book, with some extracts from our chats on *Messenger*, filtered both by the forms produced by rearranging words and drawings and by a really abrupt and simple transcription. In several other pieces too. Telling you about that makes me realize that it is the case in almost every drawing that I make: a friend talks to me while I draw and I just write down what he says on the paper. I spend a considerable time on the phone while drawing. A lot of words in my drawings come from these dialogues, or from things I heard on the radio, or in a movie, or a song that was playing while I was drawing.

J

With my previous questions, I guess I was going in circles around a more complex question, a difficult one to solve, which could be put as follows: how does one produce something which feels free form and sometimes dreamlike? Is it work, when your work is creating something which doesn't read like work? Does it require training? Do you reach a special mental place where you can jam? Is it all make believe – do you work hard to make it look light?

A

Yes I work hard! I am a real junkie, so maybe it should not be called work because it seems more of an addiction problem. This is probably related to a certain fear of going outside and having social interactions. Or perhaps my work is just an excuse for not being available, I can always answer: « Oh no sorry I can't, I've got too much work right now ».

No kidding, I have a deeply inefficient daily life, no profitability at all. That may be because what interests me is the time spent doing those things, not the time spent making them but the time spent *while* making them – the free space created around and inside where I can talk and fantasize about it and about other things too.

J

How important are the final pieces when you start to work? Do you work with them in mind from the start? Or are they more like traces, testimonies of an activity which is more important? Do they retain a talismanic quality, of magical objects charged by time and labor?

A

Both, clearly both. I make them to see them finished at the end, and I make them spontaneously as they should appear without external reason.

J

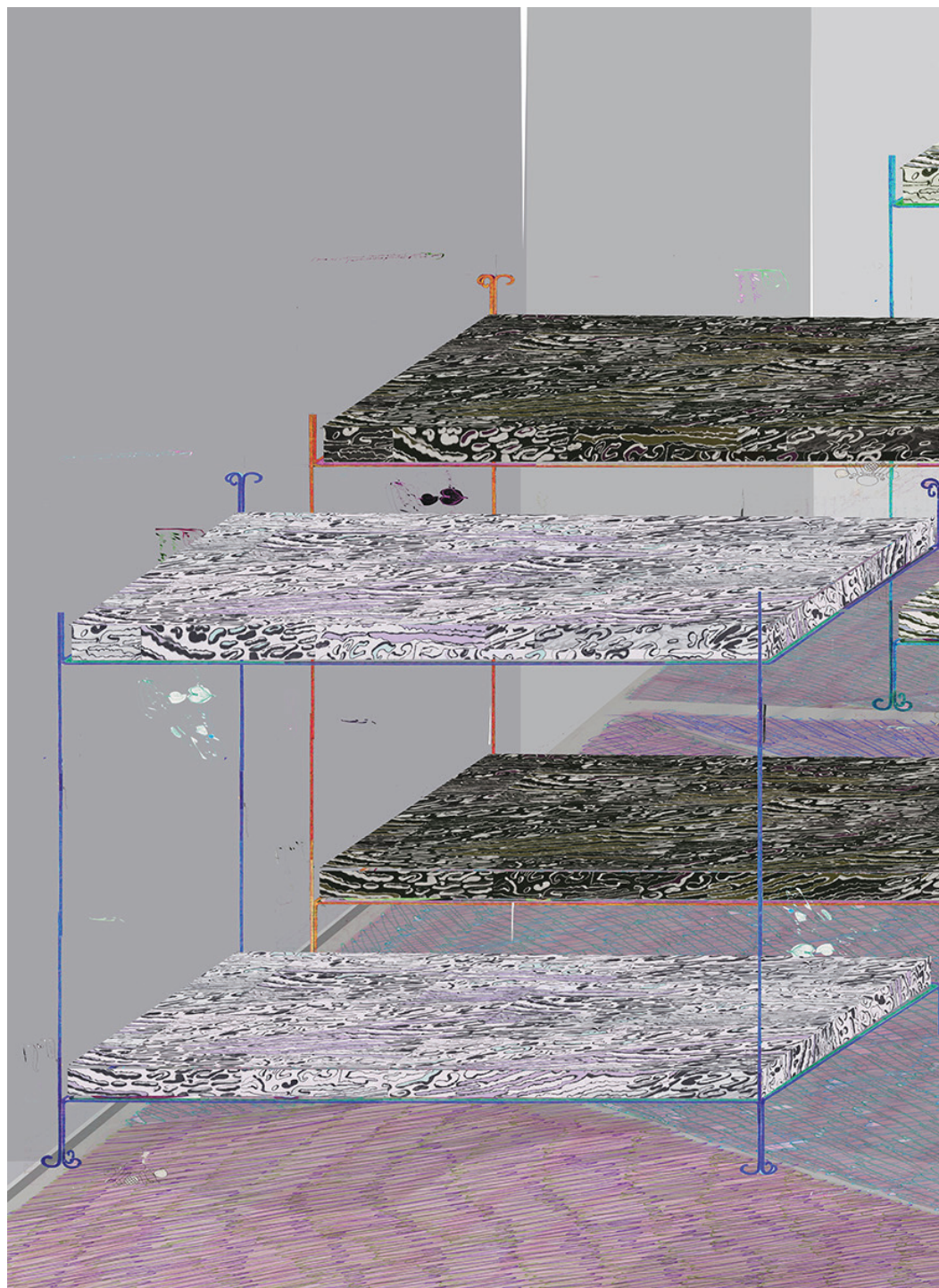
A book is a very specific item: on the one hand it is a finite object, with a beginning and an end, it can be closed and that indeed suggests that what you make are canonical pieces of art: finite objects loaded with meaning. But on the other hand, a book can be seen as a canvas (a bed sheet can be seen as one as well): you have a frame and you can doodle, improvise, adjust, until you reach the last page or the border of the fabric.

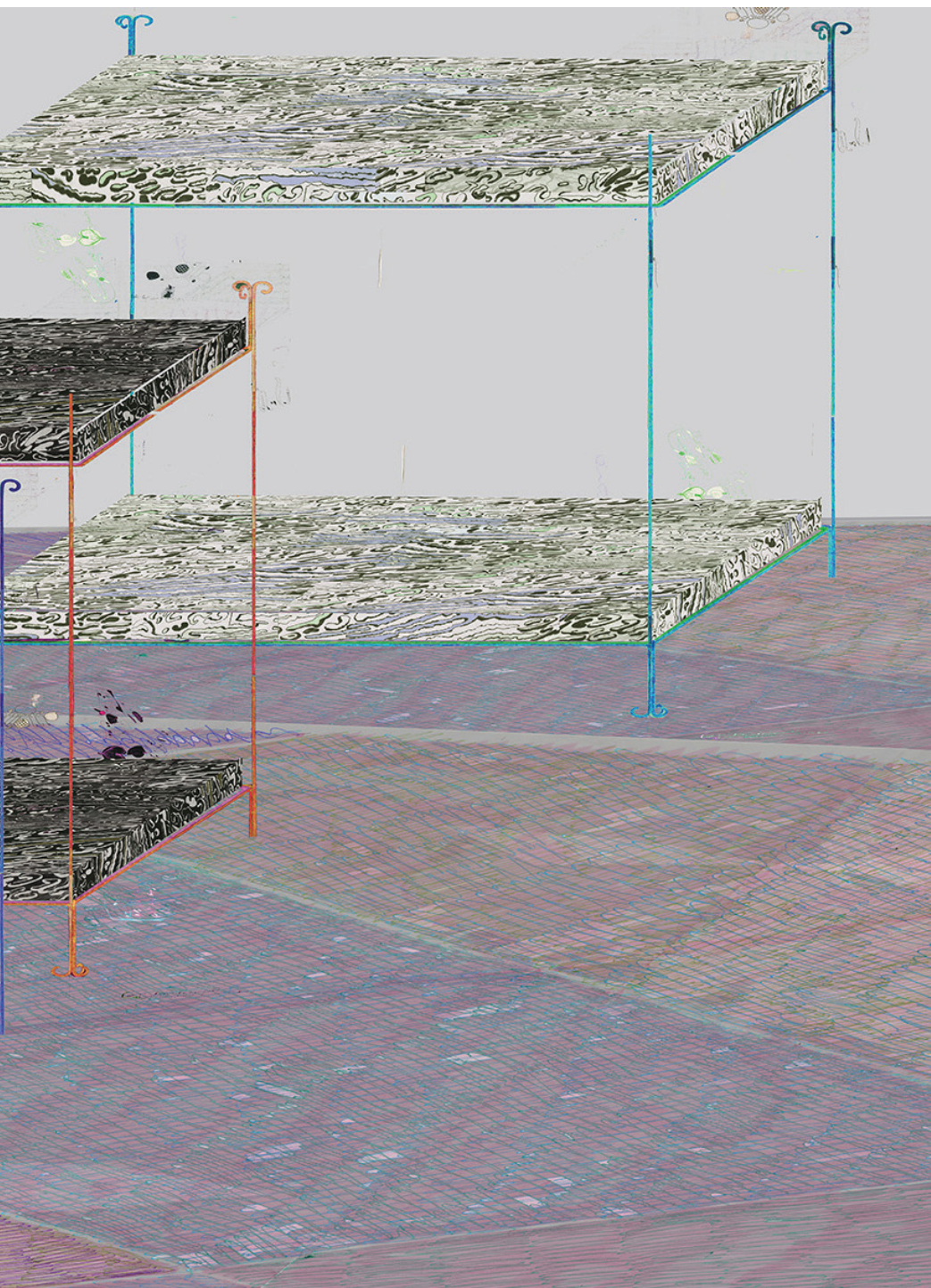
Do you plan much of what you do? Do you make sketches? When do you make choices? Are they all made before you start (and then you go with the flow) or are you more experimental in your approach: you try and depending on the result, you continue or you transform what you were doing?

A

There are no sketches nor sequencing but I can prepare systems to be filled with desires and accidental gestures.

I was fantasizing some sort of magazines I would make, images and texts in a designed book... And I was searching for ways to make my own ones, with images, drawings, texts, and a kind of serial thematic. All those would be loosely real, pretending to be writings but while being actually unreadable, with a thematic impossible to comprehend but also really, sincerely, looking for a path to existence. I try to assign the pieces to what seems to be their world, « things as they should be », if it is an advertising slogan. At the same time, these are errant manipulations and solitary thoughts. For instance, to make a pink version of *Adorable cochons d'Inde* (a children book about guinea pigs) is a system. So is this whole advertising book I made for the *H club* and for others clubs, a club that only once was real but became a myth since, mentioned in fake ads. Or my « re » publication of *Brain*, a journal of Neurology in which my real neurosurgeons published some researchs. I tried to make a different versions of it, with drawings – or the clothes and mattresses I did in the last years, participating as well in that remake process. A part of me resonates with « it is what it is » or with « what you see is what you get »,





but this side is always a bit troubled, perverted or pervertible to some degree. With regard to the original publications, I don't want to take their language for granted, or I pretend not to take it for granted but I do, and I do moreover to cheat them or cheat with them in ways I discover while working on them – operating at a slight shift from what they should have been is a pleasurable thing and an intellectual excitement, like filling gaps with other gaps. These are naughty activities.

J

Several of your books are unique pieces. That means they can only be read by one person at a time, but also that only the potential buyer can have access to the work (you sent me pdfs of some scans you did of them – so I guess that is not entirely true). Do you think of the viewer beforehand? Are they someone you're addressing at all?

A

There are always some traces and illegitimate addresses in the books and the drawings, private messages, someone's phone number, administrative numbers or other things like that, intimate materials – and some more mindful content as well, personal inscriptions, words intended for friends, for special people, or even for authors of the texts, the poems, the songs I rewrote in that book.

To make these look like « fan art » practices, I use specific ways to talk to or to be with idols. I'm moved by a really regressive feeling, going through the « imaginaire » of some idols or what I feel their « imaginaire » is moving in me... There are tributes to Roberto Bolaño, Jack Spicer, Peter Falk, my neurosurgeons, among others. Lyrics from Michael Jackson, George Michael, the *Pet Shop Boys*, and at the moment I plan to make a book dedicated to *Everything but the Girl*, collecting posters and images of this British duo from the 80s and 90s.

Some of these materials are memories, stories and fantasies. All of them shape some sort of universe, or some sort of play. So I mostly think of the books as already containing their own transmitters, players, their messages and their recipients, their viewers.

Then I simply hope it is read by the right person, whoever they are. I wish this person could be a fictional character. I recently made this wishlist:

babies, stoned teens, old people – someone in a waiting room,

several people in a waiting room – someone in a bed reading and sleeping – someone not reading but throwing it at the head of his/her lover during a fight they have... Maybe he or she has had a love affair with someone else and pretends it just didn't happen... One of them throwing my loose book at the head of the other, screaming « liar! ».

Sometimes I feel stuck, without any distance, like a « fan art » maker might feel if he had to show his art... When it becomes public it is a really peculiar and strong moment that I adore. This moment, setting up an exhibition, when these books, coming from intimacy, meet and reconnect with a show, with people in a space with other works of art.

J

Is there a difference between the books and the sculptures? And with the drawings? Do you fully make and design the sculptures, or are they like the books, altered pre existing items?

Where do these items come from? Are they personal belongings, with a backstory – or are they just shapes and materials and textures that you want to work with?

A

The books I made are not exactly all pre-existing items that I altered. In fact, some have a background and others don't. But yes they often have a « counter existence » in the real world – like *Brain*, like *Zoo*, a novel by Victor Chklovski, *Adorable cochon d'Inde*, *La longue marche de Filou*, etc. The mattresses, cushions, pillows, stuffed animals and clothes I make also pre-exist, at least conceptually, in the form of familiar manufactured objects. With the books, my versions are also a proposition of « counter-reality », so to say. That's why I won't use the word sculpture – to me they are more or less real objects, more or less at a 1:1 scale, except that I designed and manufactured them, their patterns, their material, and that I make them appear on a stage, not in an hotel room to sleep with, but in a place that can be visited, in the art world.

In a way, they are all personal belongings or fantasies of what could have been personal belongings. I mean, I make them to live with, even if it is in a fiction.

And they have their inner reasons, which are quite arbitrary and sometimes absurd. They are often built by accident or by chance.

J

You recently designed a very large poster, made for a billboard in a suburb of Paris. How did that go?

A

I feel it went pretty well, as the two people who invited me are friends and are very cool – the experience itself is not my favorite type of thing to do in the world, the process I mean, from drawing to printing in that huge format, it doesn't interest me so much. The fact that it is installed in the public space scared me a lot. I wished it to be a bit of a ghostly image that could disappear or get lost in the street.

J

How much do you use softwares and digital tools? Do you easily find a balance between the crafting nature of your work and computers? On a more global perspective, does it make sense for you to separate computers and smartphones from pencils and fabric or is it an outdated perspective, you see everything as a tool, something to work with, to play with?

A

To play with, yes, as I never learned to use it properly. At the moment I am trying to make a 2D animation movie, a sort of uchronic episode about the possible escape of Edna Krabappel from the Simpsons. Her American voice actress, Marcia Wallace, died in real life a few years ago and the writers decided to make Edna disappear in season 25. The results of my recent experimentations on the computer are full of errors, misconvenues and formal absurdities. If you consider the tool as a tool to serve you efficiently, it is a shame! The time it took from me is scandalous considering how it is supposedly designed for effective use.

J

We met only a couple of times and it seems to me that almost every time, we ended up talking about astrology – or to be more honest, I asked you about astrology and then I listened, because I know nothing about it. Can your interest in astrology translate into your way of being an artist?

What I understand from astrology is that some things are written before they even start – it is different from magic, which is more connected to

Yes [redacted]

Tomorrow I'm going on a class trip
Bus manager [redacted]
with the microphone [redacted]
standing on the bus next to the driver
rearward facing

We leave at 5:45
In the morning

I can read the horoscope
The horoscope without the vowels
[redacted]

they are funny

And they are young.
[redacted]

Every year they are younger
Smaller and smaller
It will not prevent us from dying
But we can stay slim
Stay slim.

Greg.



willpower than to destiny. So I was wondering if this is solely a thematic background or is there a magical or an astronomical aspect to your work?

A

Your question is a difficult one! I guess astrology is something I use as a system, to start a conversation, or a relationship with someone through that system. It is not something related to truth nor a desire for objectivation of the real. In other words, it just helps me to create fictions, like a trick that allows us not to talk too personally about ourselves, figuring out how to talk about oneself with distance and laughs.

So it is more of a psychological thing than a magical one. I see magic more as a matter of physical tricks, illusions and beliefs.

It reminds me of a party that happened not too long ago. It's embarrassing to tell this story, and it is not really interesting, so I shouldn't tell it, but here I go.

One evening I go to a bar, « Chez Nahfa », with Sarah, a friend of mine. It is a neighborhood bar, neither too fancy, nor too creepy, in the north of Paris.

The customers are mostly local middle-aged men, rough, working class... Some women too, but really only a few. It is a nice place to get drunk, loose and funny, a place to talk nonsense.

Nahfa is the boss, he is very quick-tempered, loud and often very drunk, but basically he's very nice, his trick is to be empathetic and smart.

I am at the bar counter with Sarah. He is behind it, filling our glasses with beer, and, of course, we ask him for his astrological sign. Giggling, playing at making light-hearted girl chitchat to make him talk, as he loves to feel seduced and seductive. As he is drunk very early every night, he probably does not remember that we have already had this discussion 50 times. He answers by yelling, bantering, that he does not believe in astrology, « that it is hogwash ! all this shit »... But that he knows real magic. With his index finger in the air like a teacher, « Listen to the man, girls! »

And the show starts. He takes out a deck of cards and starts showing it to us. He draws three cards and turns and turn them over, while he asks a question and if you answer « yes » and you pick the right card (the

one that we previously decided will mean « yes ») it just means his game works. That's how he starts messing with our minds a little bit, like that, screaming, playing, with comic gestures.

Then he takes me aside in front of everyone, still shouting like a clown: « Anne, do you believe in magic? »

I timidly answer « yes? » in order to play with him. I pick a card – and by chance it is the « yes » card. The ace of hearts or the ace of clubs, I can't remember. We start again. He shuffles the cards in front of us, and he shouts « do you believe in magic, Anne? »... Same question, same answer, but this time I am more affirmative, I shout « yes! » and I pick a card. Once again the ace of hearts, or clubs, the card that he defined earlier to be the « Yes, it is true » card.

It continues like that for a long time, we repeat the same game, amazed, same question, same answer and the same result with the card I pick each time. Nahfa makes everyone watch us in the middle of the bar, shouting, « So you see magic exists, you see! » – and indeed everyone in the bar, at first doubtful, begins to believe that the cards know how to answer, for real. Then we leave, and Sarah asks me laughing « but how crazy is it that you picked the card that says yes to magic twenty times? »... I tell her that it was just magic and that I have no clue about it... I did not tell her but, for « real », the first 3 or 4 times I was « innocent », trying to pretend, but very quickly I noticed that the card I picked each time was slightly bent from squeezing too tightly in my hand. Apart from Nahfa and myself no one else noticed the improvised trickery, this little game we set up between the two of us without even glancing at each other or talking about it.

That's pretty much my relation to magic, I don't believe in it at all, while I believe very strongly in it in terms of super fiction games that make some moments more alive and alert than the first degree world.

My relationship to astrology is similar, it is a role play. Asking for your astrological sign is a way to make us start to talk, while removing us a bit from our affects and our shyness. I like the way it plays with language, lightly, quickly bypassing the question of « believing » or « not believing », which is, when seriously asked, the most boring question on earth. And a really good reason to run away from a conversation! Honestly, maybe it's a way to control a situation without letting it show – I mean, it's a test – in the sense that it pretty much determines what funny exchange can happen with someone or not, depending on how the person answers to

the topic or prefers to think of themselves as too rational to reduce the meaning of things to this vulgar and naive system.

J

I already mentioned the solitary nature of what you do – from the scale of some of your works, to the domestic quality of them – but you have been involved in several collective projects, including a recurring invitation to contribute to the artist publication *Turpentine*. How do you fit into these more collective dynamics?

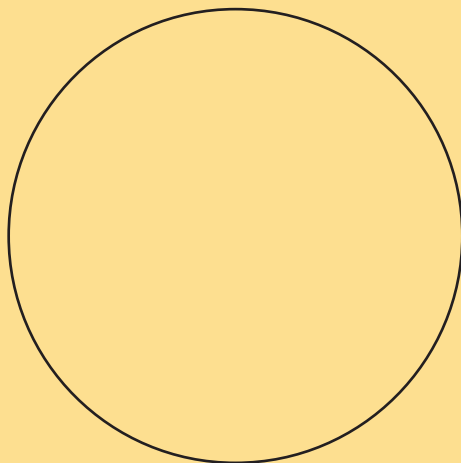
A

Unfortunately, I think I am not very good with collective labor. I am slow like a turtle, and a bit closed. But I often miss the fun of being more than one, I just find it difficult to reach a consensus sometimes – to understand and to make myself being understandable requires that I have an idea about what I'm doing, and I'm afraid that most of the time, I don't.

But recently, I started a collaboration with Mimosa Echard and Paul Desravines, two friends of mine. We made some clothes, the brand is called *Garçon Garçon*. It's more in touch with reality than anything I can do alone and it's a new thing I'm discovering.

MENTIRAS (2014-)

#1	HP	2014	#14	AM	2020
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#6	JW	2018			
#7	OV	2017			
#8	P*S	2017			
#9	AB	2017		cancelled	
#10	LS	2018	#4	IT	
#11	JH	2019	#?	JC	
#13	PB	2020	#12	CF	



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