

Crèveœur

Louise Sartor *“Rive gauche/Rive droite”* at Crèveœur, Paris
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Louise Sartor *“Rive gauche/Rive droite”* at Crèveœur, Paris. Courtesy: the artist and Crèveœur, Paris. Photo: Martin Argyroglo

Through the window of Louise Sartor’s studio can be seen the crooked spire of Notre Dame de la Paix. At the foot of this chapel, now an annexe of city hall, she picks up the confetti from a wedding celebration, or the broken egg of a couple of clumsy doves that unerringly come back daily over the spire’s weathervane, looking for their lost offspring. Below, the view dips down along Rue Eugène Daubech, a narrow slope that presents the possibility of a tight, vertical composition. Louise Sartor paints using lengthened, squared, holed formats which, restricted in this way, impose strict conditions on her compositions. Since her first paintings on torn paper, she has made this attraction to damaged material into a strength, or compositional procedure. The exercise is thus complexified and restricted differently than by the traditional laws of the genre.

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She likes to paint her views under different skies, at different times, while obstinately reproducing the same motifs. The total absence of characters accentuates the timeless character and infuses her landscapes with a strange presence, like fleeting silhouettes that linger on in certain old photographs, the ghostly residues of long exposure times. From her observatory, where she scrutinises motion and inaction with the patience of an ornithologist, she manages to transmit an atmosphere, a meditative effect comparable to the actual contemplation of a landscape. The only individuals that are allowed to emerge are birds or the moon, floating above a canopy of sequoias in the Aveyron. On louisartor.cool/read.html she agrees with Ingres, who stated on a little piece of tattered paper that “you should not look too hard for subjects: a painter can make gold from a pile of junk”.

Her paintings with their classic techniques used on the versos, backs or interiors of mass-market packaging, accentuates our physical relation with the work. At a time when the Instagrammable has overtaken the reproducible, she thus brings to mind the reduced, standardised format of images on smartphones and tablets. These tools, regularly used to draw from life, have allowed her to improve her grasp of composition. In her paintings, they have also influenced the treatment of colours, which she now saturates with neither artifice nor any tenderness towards nature. Such pictorial mutations can also be found in some of her portraits. In the painting titled *Apple Green*, the young woman's face, absorbed by her work on her computer, is lit up, almost backlit, by the screen of an apple green Mac. In this seemingly austere portrait, she has captured the chiaroscuro of the 21st century. As in her landscapes, she likes to paint the same person several times. Yet we discover quite a different face, examining the spectator with a direct, detached stare. In front of the diversity of her portraits, we think of Neel, Modersohn-Becker, Morisot – for the intimate and instant – and more strangely Bellini or Renoir, suggested by their fine, meringue colours.

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In her paintings, bouquets of daisies – the flower whose leaves we pull off out of love – are composed in triplets, or even quintets and, like immortals posed on a drawing pad, are varied using a mottled motif. Like one of her favourite authors, Colette, she likes the theatrical expressivity of wilting flowers. Day by day, they twist about, adopting dramatic poses as they fade. In a pure compositional exercise, she has painted them laid out, like effigies. In this same posture of abandon, villages lie on the ground, like towns, or surgical masks. Their bright colours and folds ironically bring to mind the drapery and silks so dear to historical paintings.

As a virtuoso draughtswoman, Sartor likes to explore new techniques. After the tablet, she has taken an interest in other ways to diffuse light from a picture. Like Gainsborough who, at the end of the 18th century, painted small landscapes on glass, to be seen in a magic lantern, she paints on glass globes mounted on electric lamps. Rounded in this way, the format of her images has once again been mistreated. A shapeless brown mass spreads out across the sphere and ends up revealing the face of an imposing Limousine cow. The artists of *Der Blaue Reiter* made their paintings on glass in a form of homage to the primitive anti-naturalism of Bavarian folklore. As for Sartor, she is celebrating a symbol of naturalist painting and its indescribable charms.

These past few months provided the artist with the opportunity to develop an original correspondence with her father, the writer Claude Eveno. To his letters about his *Voyage à Treignac*, she has replied with silverpoint drawings. Using a single drawing-pad format, isolated trees, thickets, byways and pine forests have been drawn with a strict economy of means. The use of silverpoint has led to a meticulous compositional grasp. At a time when the generalised formatting of digital images seems patiently to be orchestrating the world's vacuity, through the sharpness of her stare and the diversity of her artifices, Louise Sartor attests to the enduring power of images.

— Louise Sartor & Claude Eveno, *Le Voyage à Treignac*,
Édition Sens & Tonka, Paris, 2022

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