

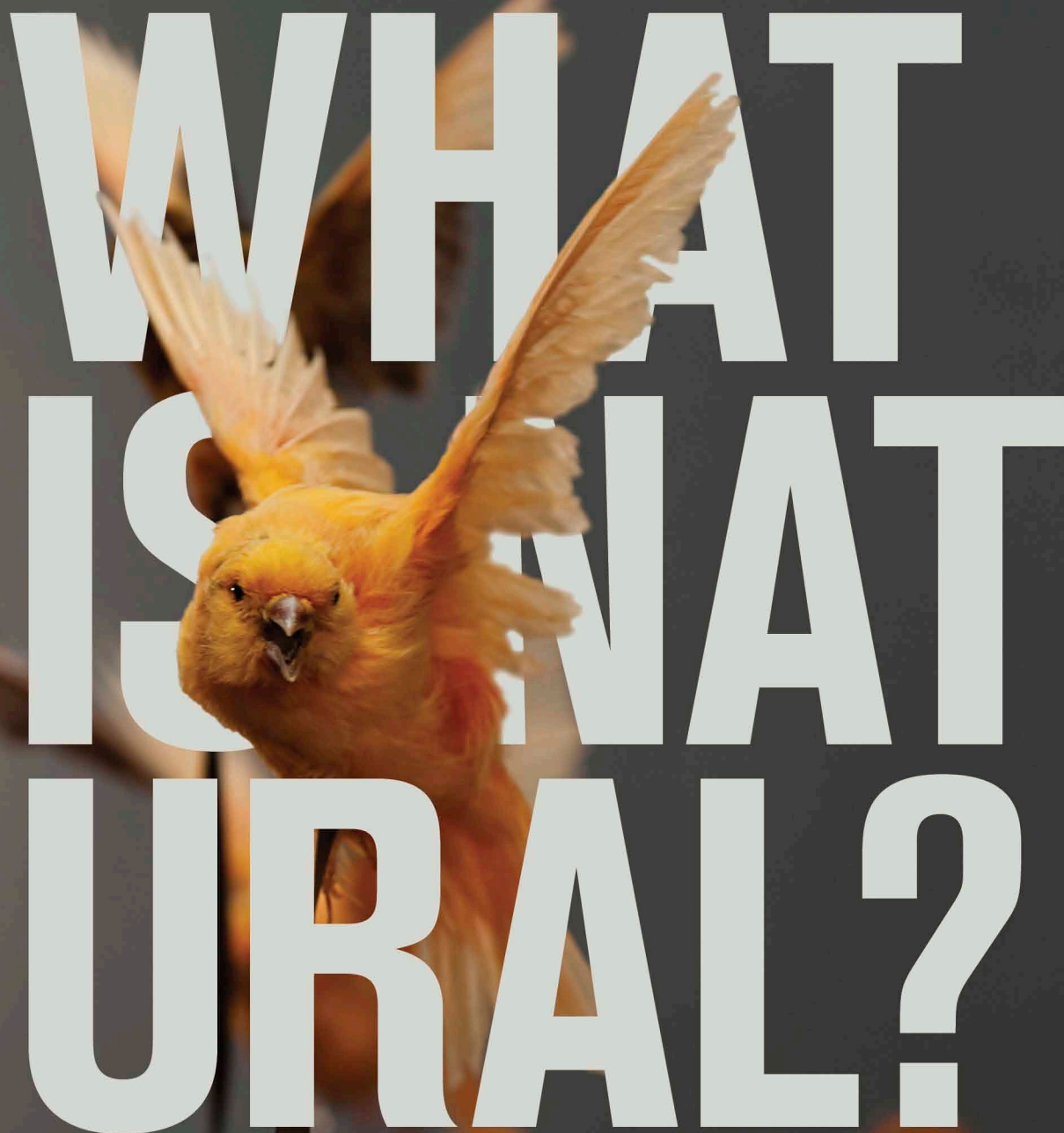
**Helwaser**Gallery

**Françoise Pétrovitch**

Press Archive (EN)

NATIONAL MUSEUM *of WOMEN in the ARTS*

# WHAT IS NAT URAL?



**FANCIFUL and FRIGHTFUL works by WOMEN you need to know.**

**ORGANIC MATTERS—WOMEN TO WATCH 2015**

**Artist Interviews**

# ORGANIC MATTERS—WOMEN TO WATCH 2015

## Artist Interviews

*Organic Matters—Women to Watch 2015* at the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) showcases innovative and adventurous women artists exploring the complex relationship between humans and nature. *Organic Matters* includes a range of artworks by emerging and underrepresented women artists from South America, Europe, and the United States. These artists engage with nature to expose its many meanings—from bizarre and beautiful to fragile and fearsome.

NMWA Associate Curator Virginia Treanor interviewed *Organic Matters* artists about their artistic processes, their works on view at NMWA, and how they are inspired by the theme of nature. The artists' responses collected here reveal their varied influences, techniques, and perspectives. Through these interviews, explore the artists' perspectives on the ambiguities and fascinations of the natural world.

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# Artist: Françoise Pétrovitch

Nominating committee: Les Amis du NMWA, France

Consulting curator: Julia Garimorth, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris



Françoise Pétrovitch, *Untitled*, 2014; Ink on paper, 63 x 94 1/2 in.; Courtesy of Semiose galerie, Paris; Photography by Hervé Plumet

# Artist: Françoise Pétrovitch

**Nominating committee:** Les Amis du NMWA, France

**Consulting curator:** Julia Garimorth, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

## **1. How does your work relate to the broad theme of nature?**

In my work, the animals are almost always associated with humans; sitting in the palm of their hands, leaning close to a face or floating over a body. They show the presence of nature, the animal aspect of humans and that nature is the reflection of an interior world. It is a mental landscape, a dream world.

## **2. How does this piece fit into your overall body of work? Is it representative of your oeuvre?**

Yes, it is representative of my work. This is a recent series (*Les allongés*, or "Lying down"), where the body is in the foreground and the bird is in an imagined space. They are big drawings where the space is undetermined.

## **3. What is your most essential artistic tool or process?**

Drawing is what drives my work. What I enjoy is its speed in execution, its direct relationship to my thoughts, and its freedom of expression. I enjoy the lightness of touch which it requires.

## **4. What are your sources of inspiration?**

I find my greatest inspiration in literature, as I feel it can be very intimate and often reveals that which we refuse to see. I am touched by the novels of Edna O'Brien, Joyce Carol Oates, Marguerite Duras, Anita Desai, Nathalie Sarraute . . . books written by women who tell, in their own way, of the intimate relationships between sisters, and between mothers and daughters; these stories resonate with my work as they describe a certain fragility and at the same time the violent relationships these women have with the world which surrounds them.

## **5. What's the last exhibition you saw that you had a strong reaction to?**

Recently, I went to the Bonnard show at the Musée d'Orsay. I was able to immediately "enter" into his work; one feels as though one is drowning in his ultra-sensitive, enveloping universe. It is amazing to see the same touch, the same light which emanates from the paintings from 1908 and others from 1938. It is a fabulous pictorial lesson of cohesiveness.







# Françoise Pétrovitch

FRANCE

Née en 1964 / Born in 1964

Diplômée de l'École Estienne, Françoise Petrovitch est peintre, dessinatrice, graveur et vidéaste et explore de nombreux supports. Son travail le plus identifié est celui de ses aquarelles grand format qui représentent enfants ou animaux, ainsi que figures hybrides. En fil conducteur, on retrouve souvent le thème du passage de l'enfance à l'adolescence. Elle crée souvent des paysages étranges, hantés par un incroyable bestiaire et traversés par des adolescents qui semblent flotter entre rêve et réalité.

A graduate of Estienne Art school, Françoise Pétrovitch is a painter, illustrator, engraver and video artist, an explorer of many media. Her best-known works are large format aquarelles representing children or animals, as well as hybrid figures. A recurrent theme in her work is the transition from childhood to adolescence. She often creates strange landscapes, haunted by an extraordinary bestiary and inhabited by teenagers who seem to float between dream and reality

## Rougir

2015  
70 x 50 cm  
sérigraphie 1 couleur sur  
papier Rivoli / xxxxxx

édition de 100 /  
edition of 100

numéroté et signé /  
numbered and signed

**100 €**

éditeur / publisher:  
Prints, Things and Books  
[printsthingsandbooks.com](http://printsthingsandbooks.com)

Cette sérigraphie fait partie du projet «Prints, Things and Books by artists» proposé par la galerie parisienne Sémiose. L'idée: proposer des tirages de cent exemplaires à 100 euros. Entre 1967 et 1972, les magasins Prisunic avaient initié un principe similaire d'édition, sous la houlette de Jacques et Catherine Putman.

This silkscreen belongs to the project "prints, things and books by the artist", presented by Parisian gallery Sémiose. The idea is to offer prints of 100 copies, for 100 euros. From 1967 to 1972, the chain of supermarkets "Prisunic" initiated a similar edition, lead by Jacques and Catherine Putman.





**Lorsque la forêt  
s'éclaircit et retient  
ses animaux en elle**

(détails)  
2014  
200 × 400 cm  
(en 4 panneaux / 4 panels)  
impression jet d'encre  
et sérigraphie sur papier  
Canson 310 gr. / inkjet  
print and screenprint  
on 310 gr. Canson paper

**édition de 12 /  
edition of 12**

**8 500 €**

éditeur / publisher:  
Bernard Chauveau  
[bernardchauveau.com](http://bernardchauveau.com)

En puisant dans la longue tradition du panorama, genre artistique très prisé vers le milieu du xix<sup>e</sup> siècle, Françoise Pérovitch permet à l'éditeur Bernard Chauveau de proposer un multiple exceptionnel par sa taille: quatre mètres sur deux. Autre prouesse, il est imprimé sur du papier Canson. En voici quelques détails.

/

Drawing on the long tradition of panoramas, an artistic genre that was very popular towards the middle of the 19th century, Françoise Pérovitch has authorized Bernard Chauveau Publishing to offer an artist multiple of exceptional size (400 × 200 cm) and technical quality (printed on Canson paper). Here are some details.







# FRANCOISE PETROVITCH



[www.francoisepetrovitch.com](http://www.francoisepetrovitch.com)

Since the early 1990's, Françoise Pétrovitch has been creating unique works of art that deeply penetrate our world, nourishing from it, and yet at the same time identified as disturbingly intimate.

Following the stories of others, in the glazed earth, in the ink of her drawings, of which she has been one of its reinventeurs, Françoise Pétrovitch lures us into a universe where words can create a world, and where silence reveals the intimate.

Françoise Pétrovitch makes art an everyday practice, very much like a hyphen between the world and oneself. She nourishes herself from this daily activity, from her ability to listen, and mixes stories told by others together, collecting, recording, writing down their memories, recollections of the old and of holidays gone by. With this, she paints a picture for everyone to see by letting their voices be heard in books that she enjoys so much making.



They are also, on the other hand, silent artworks that illustrate an interior world, nourished from a marvelous and terrible imagination, expressions of love and fear. Series after series, in the delicate dance of her ink and meeting together of colours, she unfolds unto us disturbing face to face encounters that combines charm and unsettling strangeness.

Like a typology of the ages of human life and a personal inventory, women come to life and figures who are often alone and truncated stand up while abstract forms flow out from these women's legs. There are also « Presentations » of animals, siamese children tenderly joined together, dolls both beautiful and monstrous, and children with waving arms. It is as if these figures must hold onto an object, a being, an animal or an ancestor to last, or else they fade away.

Ink joins shapes and subjects together on paper and reveals a glowing portrait of a strange and familiar people, dreaded and adored. A silent cry.

Alexia Favre

Directeur Musée Mac/Val , France







Painting 2012 oil on canvas 123x123 inches



Painting 2012 oil on canvas 156x112 inches





Twins 2011 Inks on paper 360x270 inches



Twins 2012 Inks on paper 360x270 inches



Féminin Masculin 2010 Inks on paper 270x180 inches





Museum of Modern Art St Etienne France



Museum of Modern Art St Etienne France



Dolls 2010 Inks on paper 180x134 inches



Vanités 2009 Inks on paper 360x270 inches



Vanités 2009 Inks on paper 360x270 inches





Vanités 2012 Inks on paper 360x270 inches





Le renard du Sheyshire 2008 Ceramic Manufacture de Sèvres



Hybrid 2008 Ceramic





Cages 2011 Blown glass Museum of Nature and Hunting



Tue lapin 2010 Blown glass



Ne bouge pas poupée 2008 Blown glass 201 inches

Françoise PÉTROVITCH  
[petrovitch.francoise@gmail.com](mailto:petrovitch.francoise@gmail.com)

Born in 1964, Chambéry.  
Lives and works in Cachan.  
Teaches at Ecole Supérieure Estienne, Paris.

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS (a selection)

- 2012 - Fiaf Gallery, French Institute New-York USA.
- 2011 - Musée de la Chasse, Paris, France.
  - Galerie RX, Paris, France.
- 2010 - Erröten, Galerie Jordan Seydoux Prints, Berlin, Germany.
- 2009 - Forget me not, Jardin de l'Hôtel Salomon de Rothschild, Paris. France
  - La vie en rose, Espace Art Contemporain, La Rochelle. France
- 2008 - Céline boutique, Omotesando, Tokyo. Japan.
  - Galerie Teo, Tokyo. Japan
  - Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint-Etienne. France
- 2007 - Françoise Pérovitch, Villa Tamaris, La Seyne-sur-Mer. France
  - Les photos de vacances des autres n'intéressent personne, Contemporary Art Center -
  - Parc Saint Léger, Pougues-les-Eaux. France
- 2006 - Françoise Pérovitch, Fondation Caisse d'Epargne, Toulouse. France
  - Se laisser pousser les animaux, tranquille, Maison des arts, Malakoff. France
- 2005 - Tenir debout, FRAC Alsace, Sélestat. France
- 2004 - Françoise Pérovitch, Galleria Sogospatty, Roma. Italy
- 2003 - Françoise Pérovitch, Present-Future, ARTissima, Torino. Italy.

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS (a selection)

- 2012 - Tefaf Gallery, Galerie Antoine Laurentin, Maastricht, The Netherlands ;
  - Vivement demain, permanent collection Mac/Val.
- 2011 - Un monde sans mesures, Palais Fesch Musée des Beaux Arts, Ajaccio. Curator : V. Marchi
  - Monuments & Animaux, Centre des monuments nationaux / Château de Rambouillet. Château de Talcy. Curator : Claude d'Anthénaise.
  - Femme objet / Femme sujet, Abbaye Saint André - CAC Meymac. Curator : C.Bissière
- 2010 - A la table de l'Art, Frac Haute Normandie, Hors les Murs, avec Fabien Verschaere, Château de Miromesnil, Curator : Marc Donnadiou, France.
  - Quand je serai petite... . Musée des Beaux-arts de Calais, Curator : Barbara Forest, France.
  - Drawing time, Musée des Beaux-arts de Nancy, Curator : Claire Stoulig et Christian Debize, Nancy, France.
  - Collection 3, Peinture et dessin dans la collection Claudine et Jean-Marc Salomon, Fondation d'art contemporain de Salomon, Alex, France.
  - je reviendrais, Musée MAC/VAL, Curator : Alexia Fabre, Vitry-sur-Seine, France.
- 2009 - Un monde sans mesure, MAC, Sao Paulo, Brazil. Curator: V. Marchi
  - Triennale de Poznan, Curator : Bozena Chodorowicz, Poland.
  - Ligne à Ligne, Centre Culturel français, Curator : Michel Nuridsany, Jakarta, Indonesia.
  - Ingres et les modernes, Musée Ingres, Curator : Dimitri Salmon, Florence Viguiet, Montauban,
  - Fragile, Musée d'art moderne de Saint Etienne, Saint Etienne, France.
  - Daejeon museum of art, Curator : Lorand Hegyi, Daejeon, South Korea.

- 2008 - MAM Gallery, Vienne, Austria.
- Galerie im traktlhaus, Curator : Dietmar Grimmer and Lorand Hegyi, Salzburg, Austria.
- Cris et chuchotements, Centre de la Gravure et de l'Image imprimée, Curator : Catherine de Braekeleer, La Louvière, Belgium.
- Racontez moi une histoire, Parcours Saint Germain, Zadig et Voltaire, Curator : Anne-Pierre d'Albis, Paris, France.
- Dessins Figuratifs, Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint-Etienne, France.
- 2007 - Place des Arts - Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres, Forum Grimaldi, Monaco ; Curator : David Cameo.
- Micro-narratives, 48th Salon Octobre, Belgrade ; Curator : Lorand Hegyi.
- Merveilleux ! D'après nature, Château de Malbrouck, Manderen, Luxembourg; Curator : Christian Debize.
- Etre présent au monde, Mac/Val, Vitry-sur-Seine ; Curator : Alexia Fabre.
- 2006 - Voiler/dévoiler, Villa du Parc, Annemasse; Curator : Karine Vonna.
- 2005 - Biennale de l'estampe, collection de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ljubljana ; Curator : Marie-Cécile Meisner.
- 2004 - Paperworks, Galerie Kramer, Köln. Germany
- Beyond Paradise, Galerie RX invited by Galerie Hengevoss Dürkop, Hamburg. Germany
- Parcours Saint-Germain, Vitrine Pierre Frey, Paris.
- Où sont les femmes ?, Printemps français en Ukraine; Curators : Léonor Nuridsany and Caroline Bourgeois ; Soros Center, Kiev.
- 2003 - trace, archive, mémoire, Selest'art 03, Selestat; Curator : Philippe Piguet.
- Palermo, Praha, Paris, Cantieri culturali alla Zisa, Palermo. Sicily
- Materia Difforme 2, Laforname, Asolo; Curator : Angelo Pauletti.
- 2002 - Ados, FRAC Basse Normandie; Curator : Sylvie Froux.
- Peinture[Figure]Peinture, Cattle Depot Artist Village, Hong Kong; Curator : Philippe Piguet.
- 2001** - Peinture[Figure]Peinture, Metropolitan Museum, Manila; Curator : Philippe Piguet.

## PERSONAL CATALOGUES

- 2012 - « l'art d'accommoder le gibier » Claude d'Anthenaise and Françoise Pétrovitch, Paris Gallimard-Le Promeneur.
- 2009 - « Radio-Pétrovitch », Sémiose Editions, Paris ; text by Leslie Compan.
- 2008 - « Françoise Pétrovitch » Exhibition catalogue at the Musée d'art moderne de Saint Etienne. Un, Deux... Quatre Editions, texts Lorand Hegyi and Philippe Piguet.
- 2007 - « Les photos de vacances des autres n'intéressent personne », Semaine, contemporary art center, Pougues-les-Eaux ; interview with Valérie Pugin.
- 2006 - « Sage comme une image », Editions Pérégrines / Le temps qu'il fait ; fiction by Eric Pessan.
- 2003 - « Françoise Pétrovitch », Sémiose Editions, Paris ; text by Michel Nuridsany.
- 2000 - « Avec mon meilleur souvenir », Friche Anis Gras, Arcueil ; texts by P. Piguet and P. Buttaud.
- 1995 - « Cahier d'entraînement à l'écriture », Galerie Polaris, Paris ; text by Michel Nuridsany.



## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature  
Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris  
MAC/VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine  
Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Etienne  
FRAC Haute Normandie  
FRAC Alsace, Sélestat  
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris  
Fonds municipal de la Ville de Paris, Paris  
Musée-Château, Annecy  
Musée, Sens  
Musée de la Poste, Paris  
Musée Fine Art, Chambéry  
La Collection Choisy, Choisy-le-Roi  
Artothèques : Annecy, Chambéry, Nantes,  
Angers, Caen, La roche sur Yon, Vitré,  
Auxerre, Grenoble, La Rochelle...  
Bibliothèque Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris  
Musée Georges de La Tour - Vic sur Seille,  
Conseil Général de la Moselle  
Musée Ingres, Montauban

## AWARDS

2010

- Award winner « Maif » price for a bronze sculpture « Presence in the corner »
- Assistance to research CNAP, the ministry of culture.

2006

- Price Bernier from the Academy of Fine Arts for the book « J'ai travaillé mon comptant »

2005

- Assistance to create Val de Marne , Museum of Contemporary Art in Vitry.

2000

- Aid for Project. City of Paris.



Forget me not 2010 Ceramics Manufacture de Sèvres



Wall drawing 2011 Museum of fine Art Calais





## THE ENCHANTMENT OF THE MOTIF

Anne Bonnin

The young inhabit Françoise Pérovitch's drawings and paintings like characters from film or theatre. They make up her universe. Without their presence, her art would be something other. They are young, very young, children, adolescents, and adults. Although the artist also paints flowers, landscapes and animals, it is nevertheless human faces and bodies that are predominant, alone or in pairs, rarely in larger groups. These are "morally similar" portraits, to quote Baudelaire from his *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*<sup>1</sup> (1863), in the sense that they portray the *manners* of an era and a certain age group—an age that is resolutely modern. Indeed, Pérovitch's girls and boys are certainly familiar to us in that we can immediately recognize contemporary gestures, attitudes and expressions. This is an experience similar to walking through the rooms of a museum and passing through several centuries of painting, observing within the portraits the "fashions, morality and passions" of an era that unite them in the same way as a family bond. The artist is committed to this kind of informal kinship even though the faces she paints are quite distinct. Indeed, Pérovitch is not a portraitist of individuality but of mood. Her figures are bathed in an almost amniotic environment that composes them as much as they compose it. Thus her characters form a family of brothers and sisters, both similar yet different, a homogeneous population that remains *Untitled*<sup>2</sup>. Although her figures emerge from the present, they are without context. Their homogeneity however denotes a certain point of view, that of someone observing a world to which she does not belong: that of a voyeur, who has built her own world from her observations.

For many years, the artist practiced mainly drawing, which in her own words remains her "base". Blood-red lines standing out against the white background of the wall or paper, underlining the incongruity of a representation that at the time the artist associated with childhood (equally with the infancy of art). In terms of context, in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in France, figurative painting was subject to the law of silence with a few notable exceptions such as Figuration Libre (Free Figuration) or the Transavantgarde that each in its own very different style was able to emphatically lay claim to the freedom to represent whatever they desired.

With the later introduction into her practice of painting and sculpture, the artist's universe was transformed and enlarged, investing spaces that had been hitherto kept in reserve. She savors the fluid or aqueous character of the oils and ink as well as the prehensile and resistant qualities of the clay she models to create her ceramics and bronzes. Drawing is nevertheless always present: hybridized, alternating between clear, tenuous and stringy strokes that free themselves from any outline, taking possession of the space, blurring bodies at the same moment as they emerge. Lines activate the medium, whether it is pictorial or earthen.

Françoise Pérovitch has not abandoned the red lines that often outline her figures, reveal details or create an allure. Lines beat out different rhythms: expressive, suggestive, delicate or flattened out by the thickness of a brushstroke, they sculpt concrete presences and bring forth gestures captured from life. Red, the color of vitality, irrigates her often-evanescent figures. It can be used to express or materialize violence among the muted tones of a light palette. A flat tint in red on a cheek or covering hands that hide the eyes captures a certain emotion. A bloody triangle on a black bird, in a strange way evokes an evisceration or a bloody pubis. In the *Nocturne* series, red contrasts with black to produce a sepulchral effect.

Succinct, nimble and sensitive, Pérovitch's drawing, like that of all great caricaturists, is capable of creating a being from a single line. In her work however, beings and emotions surpass their outlines. The characters transcend their figures and blend with their environment, undefined and ethereal. Her figurative art is based around the figure and plays on its opposition to the background that carries it.

Close-ups predominate. Bodies, faces and busts saturate the space and overflow from it. As in cinema, the frame determines the composition: the artist varies the focal length yet often opts for the use of the zoom and close-up views. The frames thus create clean cuts in the bodies and faces they truncate. Two adolescent girls, pictured from behind, molded into their cut-off jeans depict an ensemble of attitudes—elbows folded or arms crossed to carry a piece of clothing. These are syntactic bodies with their own grammar and vocabulary. The

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<sup>1</sup>Translator's note: *The Painter of Modern Life*.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the artist's works remain *Untitled*.

artist's work however is not simply a question of translating from one language into another but more of penetrating a universe and impregnating herself with it through the fluidity of her oils and ink.

In her series *Étendu*—very large ink drawings on paper—the artist has adopted a long shot vision: life-sized bodies in unexpected positions float in a watery space saturated with ink. Sleeping, languishing or dead, they appear as apparitions. The title <sup>3</sup> adopts a literality which allows us to project ourselves onto these screens / surfaces: the realistic bodies drawn from photographs taken by the artist, contrast with their monochrome backgrounds. They are *Ophelia*: but while Ophelia chooses the fatal and concrete eternity of the river, these figures abandon themselves to an interior eternity of dreams.

The positions of the *Étendu*, some of which are contorted and mannerist, evoke ecstasy, intoxication, pleasure, orgasm or death. They bring to the surface famous bodies of painting, notably the female nudes of the 19th century: Courbet's *La Femme au perroquet* (1866), Gauguin's melancholic and languorous nudes such as *La Perte de la virginité* (1891), Ingres' nudes or even Cabanel's *La Naissance de Vénus* (1863) come to mind.

Pétrovitch draws on the vast image bank of collective memory, where masterpieces co-exist in all simplicity.

These ambiguous postures suggest the support (sofa, ground) that might have produced them, yet it is never depicted—reality is what is missing in these *Étendu*, split between two worlds: reality and the dream. They are accompanied by a bird: this universal symbol covers so many meanings that it surpasses all of them. Yet this bird is a recurring motif in Pétrovitch's work; it appears in many paintings, out of proportion, sometimes huge or perhaps in the form of a discreet filigree superimposed on a body. The artist is displaying a feeling, perhaps even sentimentality, that of her protagonists, which she captures without ambiguity. Indeed why try to hide these fires that cannot be put out, that flow through us, as sweet emotions?

*Foule sentimentale*

*On a soif d'idéal*

*Attirée par les étoiles, les voiles*

*Que des choses pas commerciales*

*Foule sentimentale*

*Il faut voir comme on nous parle*

*Comme on nous parle*<sup>4</sup>

(Alain Souchon)

Paintings, drawings and sculptures, proffered as the tracing of juvenile emotions—of a youth full of heart and blood. Even if in contemporary art we readily adopt popular culture, it is most often used as an ironic or critical lever, suppressing the literal meaning of its sentimental nature, even if this is its predominant feature. Pétrovitch doesn't give a hoot about these conventions; she actively seeks out this side of our psychic and social mirror, the side where appearances are merely a smokescreen. In this way she explores the clichés of popular contemporary and ancient imagery, as do many of today's artists and painters, but without fear of entering an emotional core or getting under any social skins. The animal hide to her *Donkeyskin*<sup>5</sup>, moving yet in such a simple way, offers itself up as a silent lesson on the unfathomable depth of appearances.

The artist however delves deeper into these appearances in her sculptures, the surfaces of which she makes shine and resonate. There are no nudes in Pétrovitch's work. She paints her bodies clothed. Clothing has always been a wonderful subject for painting, whether classical, modern or contemporary. Pétrovitch, for her part, paints bodies of fabric that fill the canvas: the clothing dictates the atmosphere. It pours forth and blends into the environment.

A young girl is sat wearing a pink t-shirt; our eyes are drawn into the relief created by the fabric and the pleats of the jeans, hanging onto details, her nail varnish and the palm tree on the t-shirt. Our gaze penetrates the depths of a ready-to-wear presence that eludes us and comes apart. With their bulges and motifs, the

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<sup>3</sup> Translator's note: *Stretched Out*.

<sup>4</sup> Translator's note: *Oh sentimental masses / Thirsty for ideals / Drawn by stars and sails / Never by commercial matters / Oh sentimental masses / You should see how they speak to us / How they speak to us*

<sup>5</sup> Translator's note: *Peau d'âne*.

bodies transform into landscapes. These clothing landscapes absorb their wearers and lend relief to the fleeting, the transitory and fashion. In doing this, Pétrovitch gently makes appearances implode, becoming transparent and fluid like the water of the dreams and tales, from which these appearances are created: we bear fiction both on and within ourselves.

If the artist herself delves into appearances, she leaves us on the edge of her translucent visions: “There is no truth in perceptible appearances. There is only truth in the perceptible, where it shows nothing of itself.”<sup>6</sup> Pétrovitch reveals this discord of appearances by exploring it in depth and producing a vision of it that is both precise and evanescent: a vision that is above all *her own*. It is both diaphanous and tangible depending on the medium used, as it is also embodied in her telluric sculptures destined to inhabit woods and gardens.

All Pétrovitch’s paintings, the lighter canvases as well as the more somber *Nocturne*, create a particular atmosphere: in the former, it is crystalline, aqueous, as subjects and backgrounds intermingle, while in the latter, the dense atmosphere stems from the opposition of red and black. Figures emerge from a suffocating night, tarry like the blacks found in 19th century painting. The bone, glowing red on its dark background is a counterpart of Manet’s Asparagus depicted in daylight. There is nothing tragic about Pétrovitch’s *Nocturne*, they are more theatrical or grotesque in nature—in the same way as the expressionist tragedies—the fiery-red hair reminding us of Munch. We can also recognize Halloween costumes, an archaic Christian celebration that is very popular with young people.

Pétrovitch’s characters are not absorbed by an activity unlike those of Chardin or Greuze as described by Michael Fried, but rather by their dreams and thoughts. “I want to paint an inner conscience,” the artist explains. Their eyes are turned inwards: closed eyes (the title of an emblematic painting by Redon), vague, astonished or distraught. A boy is smoking; he has green hair and dark circles around his eyes, his hands are white, as white as the paper. A young, androgynous figure is also smoking; his hair is short against a red background, his eyes are circled with red and his knees are bent, forming an angular cocoon. Both of them are pulling on their cigarettes. This typical gesture of consuming disquiet is easily recognizable; its expression contaminates the entire surface, in the manner of the Symbolists, yet without the resonance, the reciprocal echo between the figure and the background, actually constituting any form of harmony or even the outpouring of a certain anguish, or of a scream.

Pétrovitch expresses a way, a manner of being: an oscillating presence / absence that she never attempts to elucidate; on the contrary she evokes it as a state to be lived or experienced. Her figures swing between two lives: “Since living another life implies first living in a different time. And boredom is the entry-point of this other time. It is the experience of unfilled time.”<sup>7</sup> A child clutching a ball of black hair is a clown, whose dazed eyes, circled in green, stare at the ground. The artist accentuates her characters’ melancholic expressions, their feelings of prostration, which in turn or at the same time, combine the sentimental with the comical. Is youth or childhood not a disguise? That adults invent and fantasize over and that young people actually take on?

Very few of the faces look at the spectator. If they do, they give the impression that they don’t want to see us. You can’t really see me they seem to say as they dissolve into the background. They bring us back to the reality of appearances. So what do you see? What is a face? A girl with dark skin stares at us. Her two white retinas punctured by black almonds are transparent. The duality of her stare invites us to lose ourselves. The artist leaves us on the edge, on the frontier of definitive meaning. “The face is meaning, but meaning without context: the face has a meaning alone.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Les Bords de la fiction*, 2017, Paris, éditions du Seuil, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 151

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



# FRANÇOISE PÉTROVITCH

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## TEXTS

À bruits secrets, Filipe Dos Santos, 2021

Françoise Pérovitch, dessiner pour voir, Camille Morineau, 2021

Dans les coulisses, Lucia Pesapane, 2021

Décoder la vie, Magali Arriola, 2021

La sculpture en céramique de Françoise Pérovitch, Luca Bochicchio, 2021

Biographie de Françoise Pérovitch, Laetitia Chauvin, 2021

Exactement pour Françoise Pérovitch, Marie Darrieussecq, 2021

Créer une zone de transformations possible, Petra Giloy Hirtz, 2021

Tout est fluctuant, Elsy Lahner, 2021

Le corps des vivants lavis, Nora Philippe, 2021

Des gravures en taille-douce de Françoise Pérovitch, Cécile Pocheau-Lesteven, 2021

Forget Me Not, Choghakate Kazarian, 2020 ([english version](#))

L'envoûtement du motif, Anne Bonnin, 2019 ([english version](#))

Tenir, une ekphrasis de l'exposition, Juliette Guépratte, 2018

Puissance de l'abandon, Julie Enckell Juliard, 2018

A vif, Catherine De Braekeleer, 2018

Ut pictura..., Ludovic Recchia, 2018

Sonatine en rouge et rose, Marc Donnadiou, 2017 ([english version](#))

Portrait d'artiste, Valerie Toubas et Daniel Guignent, Revue Point contemporain #8, 2018

Sans réserves, Parcours #8, Anne-Laure Falceliere, MACVAL, 2017

Françoise Pérovitch aux faits, Alain Bouaziz, 2017

Nocturnes, Véronique Baton, 2016

Françoise Pérovitch, une femme peintre, Christine Angot, in *Rendez-vous N°2*, 2015

Échos, Leslie Compan, 2014

Après, Nancy Huston

Premier sang, François Michaud ([english version](#))

Radio Pérovitch, Leslie Compan

La femme aux gants, Diane Watteau

Quand Bambi était petit, S'absenter et La vitesse invisible, M.C. Gayffier

Echos dans le lavoir et L'ouvert de la peinture, Michel Nuridsany

Une oeuvre sans réponse, Pascale Buttaud

Françoise Pérovitch, Alexia Fabre

Françoise Pérovitch croque les ondes, Philippe Dagen

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Quand je serai petite, Barbara Forest

La mémoire du côté du dessin, Annabela Tournon

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