

LÉA BELOUSSOVITCH

EIDÔLON

«Before my gaze thy soul's eidolon stands»

04.05.19 — 29.06.19

Opening on Saturday, Mai 4th 2019 from 6pm to 9pm

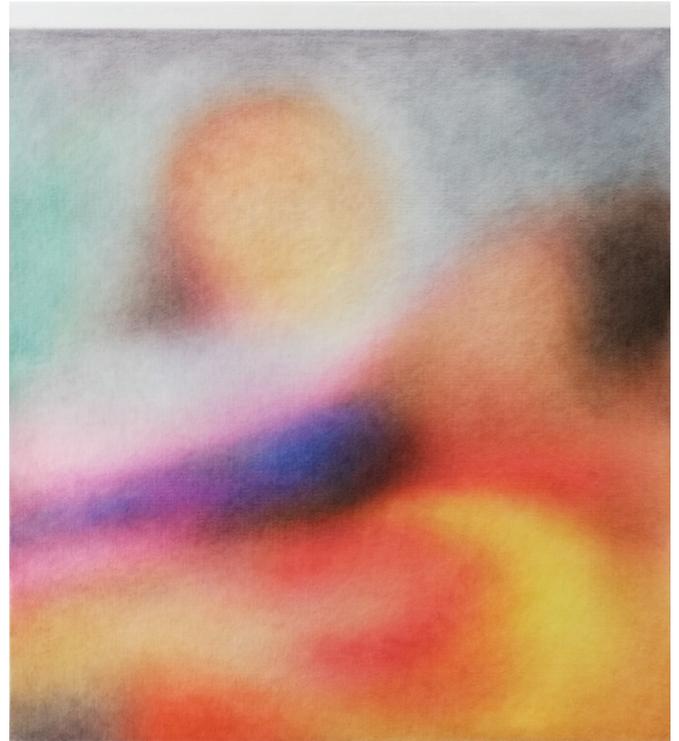
Two years after her first exhibition «Remanences» in PBProject space, Galerie Paris-Beijing is pleased to announce the new solo show of Léa Belousovitch.

Léa Belousovitch, Le carême des images - by Gaël Charbau

During a recent conversation, Léa Belousovitch confessed to me that people often ask to see the original photographs upon which her drawings on felt are based. It is a request that she has always refused, since the very point of this series is to present an image through the intermediary of an artistic process conceived as the inverse of the aesthetic of the many images that inundate us on a daily basis.

Let us recall the principle: starting with a particularly violent image – or, perhaps we should say *an image corresponding to the everyday violence to which we have become accustomed* – found in the media and derived from current events, Belousovitch makes a copy, a double, an alternative. She subjects this image to a series of transformations that deconstruct it definitively. First, she reframes it, concentrating only on a detail, the scale of which will inevitably be modified in the final format. Next, rather than falling into the sort of hyperrealism that has come back into fashion, she produces this new image on an unexpected surface: felt. Far from the glossy appearance of magazines or the slick effect of our screens, this fibrous material used since antiquity immediately summons a sensuality – or, we might say, a “default corporality” – since it serves primarily to protect us from the cold. Finally, this material naturally degrades as the artist’s pencil strokes cover its surface.

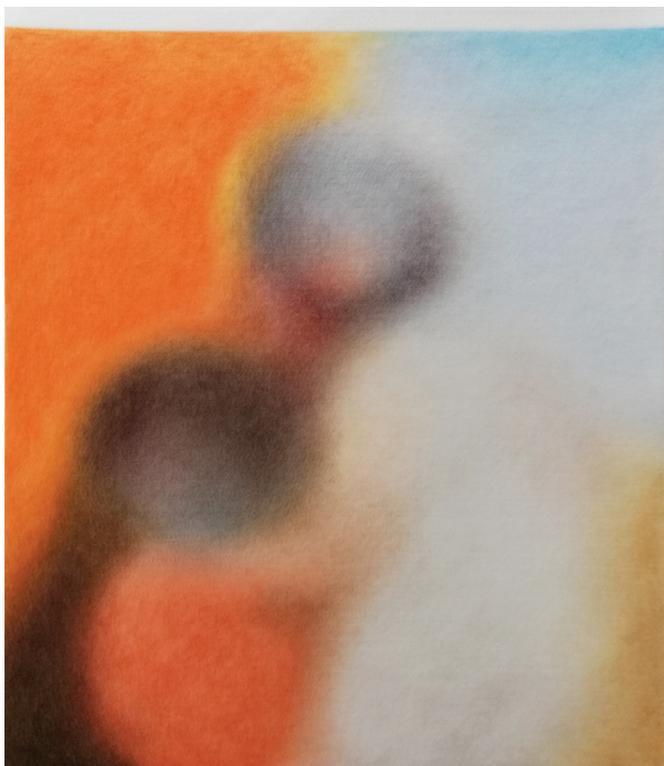
From the clear and speckled original image, the resulting work becomes downy, velvety, almost powdery, forming clouds of color that melt into one another, to such a point that without knowing the origin, we would think that we are looking at a purely abstract image. These three operations – reframing, changing the surface and “re-materialization”, not only strip the images from their media context but also from their intended use. It is almost as if Belousovitch had transformed into a sort of captor: she *captures*, but she also *captivates*.



© Léa Belousovitch, 'Relatives' « Dhaka, Bangladesh, 21 février 2019 », 2019
Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing

These raw snapshots of current events, thrust into our gaze, include war scenes, images of refugees and attacks; most of the time, the artist selects them because they capture the victims candidly and unposed. What creates the mechanical or digital eye in the hands of the photographer is a theater, a stage that incorporates our emotional reaction at the forefront, in the fixed moment of an instant. Conversely, the long period of time that the artist dedicates to her activities, which entails first scouring the media to find these images and then transforming them into drawn works, could correspond to a sort of repair job.

As if the time in the studio became a time to heal, a step back from the overly-visible, a form of economy – and maybe even *ecology* – of seeing.



© Léa Belousovitch, *Mexico City, Mexique, 3 mars 2019* », 2019
Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing

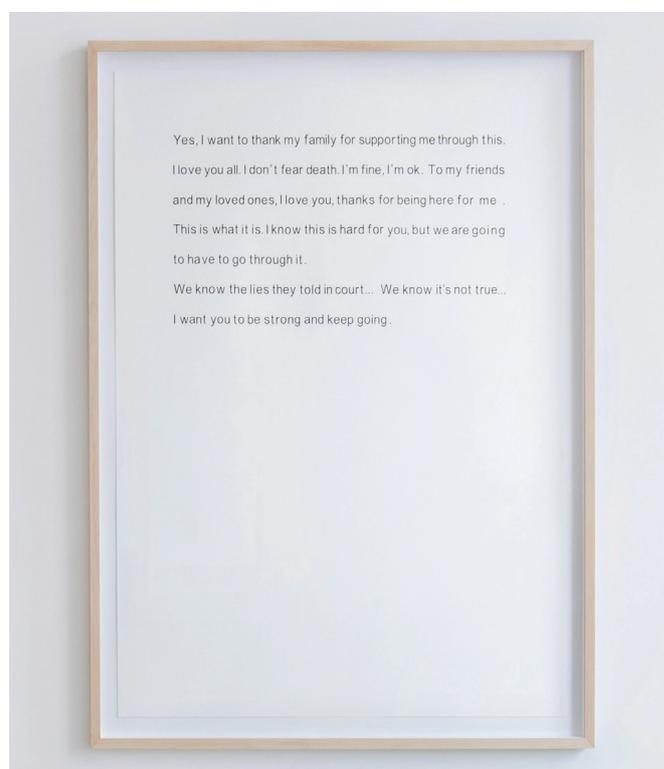
The new series, *Executed Offenders* (2019), proceeds from a similar gestural logic, in which the relocation of the point of view, and indeed the time that the artist devotes to the realization of the work, seem to offer a sort of re-orientation of our judgement. In this series, Léa Belousovitch reproduces the last words of prisoners on “Death Row” in the state of Texas, recorded just before the start of the procedure. These final words have been inventoried, in a sober and administrative way, for several years on the website of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. As the darkness approaches their voices, the inmates cry out about their innocence, ask for forgiveness or address their parting words to their families.

With the help of a stencil, the artist carefully copies those last few utterances, letter by letter, with a ballpoint pen on large pieces of paper. This fastidious manual technique creates slight differences in the letter spacing and subtle misalignments appear in the characters. The typography selected by the artist is linear, similar in character to Helvetica, while the texts are presented on large white sheets of paper, without any particular consideration to the page layout. No effects are visible, apart from the small accidents of approach that betray the works’ artisanal execution.

Yet it is in the extreme reduction of the proposition that the artist manages to concentrate the emotion – which no image could possibly render – within these sometimes naïve or barely comprehensible words,

thanks to which we imagine by default the face of these criminals, condemned for the atrocities they have committed, generating an empathy beyond good and evil.

Without establishing any sort of moral, the works of Léa Belousovitch thus assume a sort of aesthetic of redemption, as if her work consisted of delivering the photographs and documents she collects from the impulse towards voyeurism that has shaped our relationship with images. Rather than shouting ever louder, rather than overplaying the codes of visual communication, she almost makes the image regress; she refolds it within a mental approach, holding the demons of immediacy and sensationalism at bay in order to situate us within a longer, more responsible timeframe for contemplation, yet without sacrificing the mystery of showing and seeing, which is part of our humanity.



© Léa Belousovitch, *'Executed Offenders' « Ross »*, 2019
Courtesy Galerie Paris Beijing / photo © Jasmine Van Hevel

1 - In art, we of course think of its recurrent use in the work of Joseph Beuys, who employed the protective and insulating qualities of this natural material, or of the sculptures of Robert Morris that play on its weight and suppleness.

Gaël Charbau - April 2019

Born in Paris in 1989, she currently lives and works in Brussels. After receiving a master's degree in drawing from the ENSAV La Cambre in 2014, she is nominated for the 2016 edition of the Prix Révélations Emerige and she is the winner 2018 of the Young Talents prize of Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.