



Claude Como à côté de son œuvre *Bubble Tuft*
2020, laine touffetée sur toile, 300 x 200 cm.
© Claude Como.

Above:
Claude Como
Révolution.
Vue de l'exposition
« Supernature » à la Galerie
Le Cabinet d'Ulysse
Marseille 2021.
© Studio Tropicalist
Artist and Le Cabinet d'Ulysse
Courtesy

Claude Como

The living at heart

Since the 1980s, Claude Como (born in 1964, lives and works in Marseille) has used oil paint, ceramics, resin, charcoal and wool to fathom her own history. She also experiments with her complex relationship to the realities of the world, where the living finds a central place.

Abidjan

She began drawing at the age of five. Every Saturday, in front of a blackboard on an easel, she “does her job”. She would imagine a ballet: its staging, its characters, the details of the costumes. The following Saturday, she would erase the blackboard and recreate new situations according to very precise rules. In the end, this is what the artist has continued to do since the 1980s. She creates new worlds out of images gathered from her memories, her sensations, but also from the art history she continues to explore. The figuration of these worlds goes through the mastering of different techniques for the realization of long term series. She assumes that she knows nothing so that each work becomes an adventure in itself. This thinking by series allows her to investigate deeply into her subjects, dedicating to them all the time that is required : “My artistic approach is part →



Claude Como
Blood & Burning

2020, tufted wool on canvas,
360 x 240 cm.
© Claude Como.

Opposite :
Claude Como

Les Déracinés.

View of the exhibition
"Supernature" at Galerie Le
Cabinet d'Ulysse Marseille
2021.

© Studio Tropicalist
Artist and Le Cabinet d'Ulysse
Courtesy

of a permanent challenge, that is also a game. I go towards that which I do not know how to do. Nothing is ever taken for granted." Each series involves a technical reset, but also a visual one, as the artist immerses himself in a new area of the living. The result is a plural writing that adapts to the subjects to which she devotes herself fully.

She says that she has no style, that she is not programmed to write in a unique manner. "I don't have a single way of doing things. I follow my intuitions even if I am not recognized. It is in the long run that my work unfolds.



"I like the movements of the living: a volcanic eruption, a fire, a hurricane. It manifests itself violently as if it were breathing very hard, it overwhelms and impresses me."

CLAUDE COMO.

Exiting the Anthropocene

Since 2015, Claude Como is gradually moving away from an anthropocentric representation in favor of a physical and mental dive into the heart of the living. Human figures hybridize with vegetal elements or fade away into the abyss and cataclysms, and animal figures like the jellyfish – a majestic floating body. "I like the movements of the living: a volcanic eruption, a fire, a hurricane. It manifests itself violently as if it were breathing very hard, it overwhelms and impresses me." The Gaia series (2018) brings together terrestrials (animals, plants and other living organisms) to decenter the place of the human and think more deeply about the interdependencies that exist between beings and their environments. Another series is dedicated to animals. Since her childhood, the artist has had an intense relationship with them. "When I was little, my friend was an otter." She represents in particular the strangeness of their bodies. "They are clusters of feathers and hair, I want to treat the material, the sensuality of bodies." Like a scientific observer, Claude Como decomposes, radiographs, fragments, opens or hybridizes animal bodies to reach a dimension as mysterious as it is monstrous.

In 2019, we observe the emergence of an unusual technique: tufting. Armed with a tufting gun, traditionally used by craftsmen to make rugs, she projects wool threads to create works that are both supple and monumental. The result is two first works: J'aurais aimé t'envoler, a pair of white wings with a three-meter wingspan, and Tributes to Masters, an open and suspended animal carcass that reminds us of Rembrandt as well as Soutine or Bacon. These works open a new writing and a new relationship to space.

« Supernature »

Claude Como then begins a series of tufted tapestries that represent abundant vegetal elements, luxuriant micro-organisms. We can find there: seeds, stones, buds, roots, flowers, foliage or even mushrooms, endowed with bright and assertive colors. ➡



The motifs come from an image bank where microbial universes and botanical illustrations meet. The artist is an attentive observer of plant, mineral or cellular forms. “Matter influences the form, and vice versa”. The source images drift and transform through gestures, technical shifts and fictional necessity.

Claude Como expresses a physical and spatial imperative of proliferation. “It is an explosion. I need to experience intense feelings through my work.” To make works that reflect a more joyful and vibrant dimension of the living. The most recent works resonate with the ecological thoughts of Bruno Latour, Dénètem Touam Bona, Véronique Mure, Starhawk, Gilles Clément and many others. Since humans globally choose to turn away from the living, Claude Como endeavors to represent it in a disproportionate manner. We are physically taken by the presence of the tufted artworks. The images of the living impose themselves on us. They demand our attention.

Claude Como

Sun Seeds

2020, tufted wool on canvas
75 x 160 cm each.

© Claude Como.

The tufted tapestries emancipate themselves from the rigid and constraining formats. “I wanted to free myself from the canvas frame, to free the forms

About that technical choice, the artist prefers the word *touffeté*, it calls for a greater tactility of the woolly material and the colors. To a greater sensuality also. The tufted tapestries emancipate themselves from the rigid and constraining formats. “I wanted to free myself from the canvas frame, to free the forms.” By their flexibility, they extract themselves from the frame to literally colonize the walls and give an organic dimension to the architecture that hosts them. If Claude Como used to tie her forms to the limits of the painting, she now chooses to float, to multiply and to regenerate. Each element is autonomous and has its own title. If the works can be presented separately, it is collectively that they find their plastic power. On the walls, the artist (de)composes infinitely for an immersive and sensitive experience of an extraordinary biocenosis.

Getting rid of “natures mortes”

The choice of tufting places the artist in the history of tapestry. Indeed, since the Middle Ages, works representing the plant and floral world have been woven. From *Millefleurs* to *Verdures*, through trees of life and stylized motifs, the approaches evolve over time. The history of tapestry combines symbolic, religious, naturalistic, decorative, figurative or abstract approaches. If she confesses that she “feels very small in front of a world that she is learning to know”, Claude Como likes to explore the history of Western art in order to rework and (de)represent the great classifications or subjects considered traditional: vanity, animal figures, human anatomy, psyche, portrait, landscape, architecture, etc. Representations of the living (the word “nature” is voluntarily excluded, since it constitutes an argument to maintain a binary and mortifying thought between nature and culture) are here generous. Supernature thwarts the question of the “nature morte” – still life or, literally, “dead nature” –, which, if one thinks about it, is a nonsense since the living is an ecosystem in perpetual metamorphosis. ➔

Claude Como

Carmina Pod

2021, tufted wool on canvas, 340 x 230 cm.

© Claude Como.

Claude Como

Sunset Fungus

2021, tufted wool on canvas, 300 x 170 cm.

© Claude Como.



The tufted works contribute to a reactivation and an extension of the history of tapestry. Nothing is fixed, everything is redefinable. The cut-out forms are mutually articulated resulting in tentacular, moving and rhizomic installations – cut-out forms which inhabit, by the way, the whole of the artistic approach of Claude Como, constantly confronting volume and flatness.



© Oursou & Charlotte El Moussaed.

With a mixed feeling of wonder and gravity, she presents decontextualized bodies, scenes deprived of horizons, suspended ecosystems. The artist, who has long experienced herself as a marginal being, has built her work around notions such as uprootedness, movement, absence, impermanence, death and possible rebirths. Nourished by a strong autobiographical dimension, her protean work is built in the long run. She thus compares her approach to that of a spider weaving its web. The ramifications between the series generate the embodied narrative of a terrestrial and psychic cosmogony – as intimate as it is collective.

Julie Crenn

Doctor in art history, art critic (AICA) and exhibition independent curator, she is since 2018 associated curator with the programming of the Transpalette - Contemporary Art Center of Bourges - France. In 2005, she obtained a Master's degree in art history and criticism at the University of Rennes 2, whose thesis offers a political reading of the work of Frida Kahlo.

In the continuity of her research on feminist and decolonial practices, she received in 2012 the title of Doctor of Arts (history and theory) at the University Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux III. Her thesis is a reflection on contemporary textile practices (from 1970 to the present day). Since then, she has been conducting intersectional research focused on the living, bodies, memories and artistic militancy.