

# Béatrice Balcou

## Poor Paintings

### 24.04–06.07.25

# EN

#### La Loge

Kluisstraat 86 – rue de l'Ermitage  
B-1050 Brussels

**Béatrice Balcou** continues her collaborative work with art restorers, a process she began several years ago, by repeating their gestures and engaging with artworks that have undergone damage and restoration. Through this practice, she explores their materiality, intimacy, and life beyond mere representation—both sensitively and with scientific attention. Her latest exhibition suggests that caring for artworks is an exploratory process. Acts of preservation and continuation, such as restoration, are deeply entangled with the material and conceptual challenges of reproduction and interpretation. Beyond the satisfaction of mastering a specific gesture, restoration—an act that can also involve destruction—requires an openness to trial and error, missteps, and the irreversibility of time. *Poor Paintings* functions as a fragile pact with the inevitable. Rather than presenting definitive answers, the exhibition offers a series of attempts—ways of working with what already exists—positioned as a political act. It reimagines our relationship to time, encouraging closer attention to transformation and decay.

A series titled *Containers*, developed during her 2019–20 residency at Cirva (International Centre for Glass and Visual Arts, Marseille), introduces the exhibition at the building entrance. These works consist of manufactured and cut glass forms encasing preserved insects—museum pests that had once gnawed on artworks—collected in collaboration with an entomologist. Each piece functions like a poetic magnifying lens, making visible the subterranean life and unpredictable nature of conservation, where what remains of an artwork may be nothing more than the trace left by an unwelcome intruder. By reversing the expected roles, Balcou shifts the hierarchy: the gaze is no longer directed at the artwork, but at the insect itself—now elevated to the status of subject.

For the new *Poor Paintings* series—presented in the temple and lending its name to the exhibition—Béatrice Balcou immersed herself in the techniques of Marcelle Cahn (1895–1981), Jef Verheyen (1932–1984), Felix De Boeck (1898–1995), and Barnett Newman (1905–1970). She reproduced specific segments of their paintings that had suffered damage and undergone restoration—areas marked by paint loss, lifted surfaces, cracking, oil or glue stains, and other forms of deterioration. These repair gestures are based on abstract works, which Balcou chooses precisely because they allow her to bypass figuration. In the absence of representational imagery, attention is drawn more sharply to content, form, and gesture. The canvas—sometimes rough, and selected with care according to the original artwork, such as the *Cotton Duck* typical of Newman—is removed from its stretcher or unrolled like material on a workbench. In this intermediate or resting state, it takes on a more sculptural quality. Minimal touches of colour and subtle variations of white across the surface invite reflection on the vulnerability of a nearly vanished painting.

The blunt title—*Poor Paintings*—carries an ironic or critical undertone, pointing to a deliberate rejection of monumentality and spectacle, echoed in the aesthetics of the works themselves. Rather than reproducing the whole of the original, the fragments Balcou focuses on suggest the passage of time. What emerges are discreet, almost landscape-like abstractions that differ from those of the source paintings. These *Poor Paintings* can be read as poetic documentaries of the restoration process. To learn the techniques of other artists and restorers, Balcou relied on technical and scientific reports, as well as the knowledge of the restoration specialists she collaborated with. Along the way, she encountered the uncertainties inherent in creative processes and the shifting criteria of conservation—neither of which can ever be fully fixed or finalised. Through persistence and careful iteration, Balcou developed her own methods, repeating gestures until they arrived at a form she could call her own. Caught between technical precision and illusion, the resulting works speak to a kind of resilience—precisely through their inability to faithfully replicate what once was. By sitting on the bench beside the piece laid out on the table, viewers are invited to experience what it might mean to be “alongside”—to offer support and companionship. It is, by necessity, a collective practice, as underscored by the series of names listed in the captions accompanying each work.

The *Recent Paintings* works on paper, displayed in the triangular space on the ground floor, echo the paintings exhibited in the temple. Created in 2023, they are made from pages of monographic art books that had been damaged by water and the passage of time. Restored by the artist in collaboration with students from the conservation department at Brussels' art school La Cambre, these works emerged as part of a broader investigation into the gestures of restoration. Though the original image is merely a printed reproduction of an artwork, Balcou transforms its status by emphasizing the active and creative dimensions of the restoration process. By making visible both the original material layers and the restorative interventions, she elevates these damaged pages to the status of original artworks. As with the *Poor Paintings*, the titles and subtitles of these works offer insight into their material histories and highlight the essential collective chain behind any act of creation: artists, publishers, photographers, printers, and more.

On the first floor, a glass staff composed of two segments—one fluted and kaleidoscopic, the other smoother with a magnifying-glass effect at its tip—contains residues from an artwork collected from another artist. The title of the piece identifies the origin of the materials. These *Porteurs* can be activated like relay batons, instruments of protest, or tools for speaking. Passed hand to hand, they function as witnesses and are used in spontaneous activations, each unique in form and context. During the exhibition's opening hours at La Loge, Balcou is occasionally present and invites visitors to participate in these activations. A simple example might be a brief walk—within the exhibition or just outside—a moment shared, with art as the pretext for presence and connection. As a counterpoint to the demand for constant availability, the work reveals itself in the immediacy of an unannounced encounter. It is offered in the form of shared responsibility: for its transport, its presence, and the attention it receives.

The exhibition continues more expansively on the second floor, where a filmed performance—69 hours, 51 minutes in duration—is projected. The video documents, over the course of three days, the creation of a small section (0.0365 sqm) of *Regendag* (Rainy Day) by Jef Verheyen, followed by its deterioration and restoration. The cycle foregrounds the time involved in both making and mending, including the silence necessitated by drying processes. Each phase is laid bare, with no editing. After applying several layers of alkyd paint over gesso, Balcou uses a scalpel to replicate the craquelure of Verheyen's original. A quiet sensuality emerges from the slow, delicate friction between brushes and canvas. On the third day, the painting is removed from the easel and laid flat for restoration. The act evokes a body on an operating table—accompanied by methodical gestures using tools like spatulas, a Leister heat gun, or Melinex sheets—eliciting a sense of empathy. The video, filmed in real time and without interruption, begins at the exhibition's opening and stops only when the art center closes, resuming the next day in a continuous loop until the show's end. Shifting light and sound intensities transform the video into a kind of living tableau. The work breathes within its broader environment, resonating with the rhythms of the surrounding neighborhood and the life of the art center, perceptible in the background. Gradually, the artist recedes, becoming one agent among many—just like the

materials, the sounds, or the passersby. As in Balcou's first filmed ceremony, *Tozai* (2018), this video urges us to slow down and give time its due.

The question, then, is not so much about mastering or controlling painterly techniques, but rather about exploring alternative forms of maintenance—sketching out a system of co-presence. To care for things is to get to know them by navigating a web of relationships. The attention given to artworks opens up new ways of thinking about their value and their connection to the broader environment, whether human or non-human. The exhibition offers a tactile, embodied experience of fragility—a kind of gentle resistance, almost passive, that distances itself from productivist logics and the constant demand for innovation. It invites a slowing down, a deep listening, and a different way of being in the world: attentive, patient, and relational.

This exhibition is part of the *Suite* programme, an initiative of the Centre National des Arts Plastiques (Cnap), with the support of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. With additional support from the French Embassy in Belgium and the Institut français, as part of EXTRA, a programme supporting contemporary French creation in Belgium.

**Béatrice Balcou** (1976, FR) lives and works in Brussels. In performances, sculptures and installations Béatrice Balcou creates secular rituals intended to care for the works of other artists and invitations to take time. By focusing on the different temporalities and materialities of the artwork and the behaviour of the viewer, she investigates the perceived value of art and the role assigned to it by our contemporary lifestyles.

From November 2024 to April 2025, Béatrice Balcou was in residence at La Loge preparing new works for the *Poor Paintings* exhibition.

Her work has been exhibited, among others at: Musée d'art de Joliette (Québec, CA), M Museum (Louvain, BE), BEIGE (Brussels, BE), La Ferme du Buisson contemporary art center (Noisiel, FR), Exile (Berlin, DE), Casino forum d'art contemporain (Luxembourg, LU), A tale of a tub (Rotterdam, NL), Rozentraat (Amsterdam, NL), Jeu de Paume (Paris, FR), CAB Foundation (Brussels, BE), Villa Kujoyama (Kyoto, JP), Salle Principale (Paris, FR), FRAC Ile-de-France (Paris, FR), FRAC Franche-Comté (Besançon, FR), FRAC Bretagne (Rennes, FR), FRAC Corse (Corte, FR), FRAC Champagne-Ardenne (Reims, FR), kunsthalle (Recklinghausen, DE), La Galerie (Noisy-le-Sec, FR), Société (Brussels, BE), Jacqueline Martins gallery (Brussels, BE), Été 78 (Brussels, BE), MAC VAL contemporary art museum of Val-de-Marne (Vitry-sur-Seine, FR), Kunstverein Langenhagen (DE), Palais de Tokyo (Paris, FR), WIELS (Brussels, BE) and Centre Pompidou (Paris, FR).

Béatrice Balcou's work has been collected by many including Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris, FR), Centre National des Arts Plastiques Cnap (Paris, FR), FRAC Île-de-France (Paris, FR), FRAC Franche-Comté (Besançon, FR), FRAC Corsica (Corte, FR), FRAC Normandie (Rouen, FR), FRAC Lorraine (Metz, FR), CIRVA (Marseille, FR), Cera-M Museum (Leuven, BE), Fondation CAB (Brussels, BE), MACS Musée des arts contemporains du Grand-Hornu (Mons, BE), Kunsthalle (Recklinghausen, DE) as well as various private collections in France, Belgium, Germany and United States.

A monograph *Ceremonies &* has been published by MER. Books (2021) in collaboration with Luc Derycke and Émilie Renard, with essays by authors such as Vanessa Desclaux, Christophe Gallois, Zoë Gray, Béatrice Gross, Julie Pellegrin, Émilie Renard, Septembre Tiberghien, Eva Wittcox and texts by the artist.

## WORKS

### Lobby

*Container #13 (Trogoderma Versicolour & Rogier Van der Weyden), 2020*

Glass, insect

ø 4,5 cm x 7,6 cm

Production: CIRVA, Marseille

Veys-Verhaevert Collection, Brussels

*Container #16 (Gibbium Psylloides & Georges Braque), 2020*

Glass, insect

ø 6 cm x 6,5 cm

Production: CIRVA, Marseille

Private collection, Paris

*Container #01 (Dermestes Peruvianus & Nasreen Mohamedi), 2020*

Glass, insect

ø 4,9 cm x 9,3 cm

Production: CIRVA, Marseille

Private collection, Paris

### Tempel

*Left: Poor Painting #5 (after the observations of Barbara Cardone, restoration student (2025) of the work Gelati (1969) by Jef Verheyen, Collection of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels), 2025*

Graphite pencil and alkyd paint on twilled linen canvas

150 x 150 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Right: Poor Painting #4 (after the observations of Barbara Cardone, restoration student (2025) of the work Variatie (1968) by Jef Verheyen, KMSKA Collection, Antwerp), 2025*

Graphite pencil and alkyd paint on twilled linen canvas

150 x 150 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Poor Painting #3 (after the restoration report by Véronique Sorano-Stedman, Richard Wolbers and Sophie Germond (1990–2014) of the work Shining Forth (To George) (1961) by Barnett Newman, Collection of the Centre Pompidou – Musée national d'art moderne, Paris), 2025*

Polyvinyl synthetic glue, pigments, motor oil, Sommières clay, xanthan gel, nanocellulose and oil paint on cotton canvas (duck canvas)

300 x 420 cm

Courtesy of the artist



*Poor Painting #7 (after the condition report by Chiara Bianchi (2025) of the work Paysage Abstrait (1963) by Felix De Boeck, Collection of the Felix Art & Eco Museum, Drogenbos), 2025*

Rabbit-skin glue, distilled water, calcium carbonate and watercolour on plywood panel

13,5 x 13,5 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Poor Painting #1 (after the restoration report by Chiara Bianchi and Pauline Hélou-de La Grandière (2022) of the work Tension verticale (1961) by Marcelle Cahn, Collection of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art – MAMCS, Strasbourg), 2025*

Rabbit-skin glue, distilled water, pigments and calcium carbonate, gouache and water-soluble wax crayons, Japanese paper, Plexigum PQ611® and White Spirit® on wood

100 x 73 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Poor Painting #2 (after the restoration reports by Maud Legall-Yver (2015) and Julie Barth (2021) of the work Relief (1961) by Marcelle Cahn, Collection of the Centre national des arts plastiques – Cnap, Paris), 2025*

Rabbit-skin glue, distilled water, pigments, calcium carbonate, gouache on wood

100 x 73 cm

Courtesy of the artist

## **Triangle RDC**

*Recent Painting #13 (Claude Rutault définitions / méthodes, edited by Intelligence Service Productions, Paris, 1981, p. 27), 2023*

Black ink, rainwater, tea, China ink, graphite pencil, methyl cellulose paste and 100% Kozo Japanese paper on coated paper

29,3 x 21 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Recent Painting #12 (Claude Rutault définitions / méthodes, edited by Intelligence Service Productions, Paris, 1981, p. 26), 2023*

Black ink, rainwater, tea, China ink, graphite pencil, methyl cellulose paste and 100% Kozo Japanese paper on coated paper

29,3 x 21 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Recent Painting #1 (Agnes Martin, dir. Lynne Cooke, edited by Yale University Press, 2012, p. 31), 2023*

Coloured inks, rainwater, vinegar, dust, watercolour, wheat starch paste and 100% Kozo Japanese paper on coated paper

25,3 x 18,9 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Recent Painting #3 (Agnes Martin, dir. Lynne Cooke, edited by Yale University Press, 2012, p. 35), 2023*

Coloured inks, rainwater, vinegar, dust, watercolour, wheat starch paste and 100% Kozo Japanese paper on coated paper

25,3 x 18,9 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Recent Painting #8 (Agnes Martin, dir. Lynne Cooke, edited by Yale University Press, 2012, p. 57), 2023*

Coloured inks, rainwater, vinegar, dust, watercolour, wheat starch paste and 100% Kozo Japanese paper on coated paper

25,3 x 18,9 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Recent Painting #6 (Agnes Martin, dir. Lynne Cooke, edited by Yale University Press, 2012, p. 38), 2023*

Coloured inks, rainwater, vinegar, dust, watercolour, wheat starch paste and 100% Kozo Japanese paper on coated paper

25,3 x 18,9 cm

Courtesy of the artist

## **First floor**

*Recent Painting #7 (Agnes Martin, dir. Lynne Cooke, edited by Yale University Press, 2012, p. 46), 2023*

Coloured inks, rainwater, dust, watercolour, wheat starch paste and 100% Kozo Japanese paper on coated wove paper

25,3 x 18,9 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Porteur #14 (Untitled, Laura Lamiel), 2020*

Glass, slate powder

ø 3,6 cm x 30 cm

Courtesy of the artist

## **Second floor**

*three days spent with 0,0365 sqm from regendag (1964) by Jef Verheyen, 2025*

HD video, 69h51m

Created with Jannes Calles, Tom Heene & Christophe Albertijn

Courtesy of the artist



## PUBLIC PROGRAMME

### Lecture by Julie Pellegrin

14.05.25, 18:30

Drawing on her interview with Béatrice Balcou, published in (*Non*) *Performance: A Daily Practice* (T&P Publishing, 2024), Julie Pellegrin will revisit artistic strategies of productive refusal. Presented in the context of *Poor Paintings*, her talk invites reflection on how gestures of maintenance and repair can disrupt dominant modes of perception, representation, and power.

### Biography

**Julie Pellegrin** is a curator, writer, and researcher whose work focuses broadly on performance and artistic practices that address social, political, and ethical issues—particularly through the lenses of relationship and attentiveness. For over twenty years, she has explored how the interplay between visual arts, choreography, and theatricality shapes the writing of exhibitions. From 2007 to 2020, she served as director of the Centre for Contemporary Art La Ferme du Buisson (Noisiel, France), and in 2013, she co-directed Nuit Blanche Paris. Between 2021 and 2022, she was a fellow at the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici. She is currently conducting research on the relationship between artistic practices and anarchist theories in the 20th and 21st centuries.

### Practical Information

14.05.25, 18:30

Doors open: 18:00

Language: English

Reservation recommended: [info@la-loge.be](mailto:info@la-loge.be)

### Through the eyes of Chiara Bianchi and Francisco Mederos-Henry

12.06.25, 18:30

A subjective guided tour

Chiara Bianchi and Francisco Mederos-Henry are art restorers. They will guide visitors through the exhibition *Poor Paintings* from their own professional and personal perspectives.

### Biographies

**Chiara Bianchi** is a painting conservator with a master's degree from ENSAV-La Cambre (École nationale supérieure des Arts Visuels de La Cambre). She is co-founder of the CARE studio, a restoration collective based in Ixelles, and has been an assistant professor in applied heritage sciences since 2022 within the Conservation-Restoration of Works of Art (CROA) department at ENSAV-La Cambre. She is currently a research associate at the FeliXart & Eco Museum in Drogenbos, as part of the project Belgian Abstract Modernism in the Spotlight, conducted in partnership with the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), Brussels. **Francisco Mederos-Henry** is a scientist-conservator specializing in cultural heritage. He holds a PhD in chemistry

from UCLouvain (Belgium) and a master's degree in conservation-restoration from the School of Conservation and Restoration of the West (ECRO, Mexico). Francisco currently serves as professor of applied conservation science in the Conservation-Restoration of Works of Art (CROA) department at ENSAV-La Cambre. He is also a senior researcher in the *Materials Science for Conservation-Restoration* (MatCoRe) unit at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) laboratories.

### **Practical Information**

12.06.25, 18:30

Doors open: 18:00

Language: Anglais

Free admission, reservation recommended: [info@la-loge.be](mailto:info@la-loge.be)

### **Closing Events: Book Launch**

05.07.25, 16:00

This new edition traces the actions carried out around the *Porteurs*—nomadic glass sculptures activated through handling and exchange. Conceived as a living archive, it interweaves haikus and photographs to reflect artistic experiences unfolding outside institutional frameworks. The *Porteurs* become talking sticks—tools for protest, transmission, and collective narration. They serve as vessels for stories, gestures, and encounters. The book reflects on our relationship to art, memory, and collective connection.

### **Practical Information**

Publisher: MER. Books, Ghent, BE, 2025

Graphic design: Studio Luc Derycke.

500 copies – Price: 39 euros

### **Guided tour in French Belgian Sign Language**

05.07.25, 15:00

To mark the final weekend of *Poor Paintings*, explore the exhibition with a guided tour in LSFB (French Belgian Sign Language).

### **Practical Information**

Free entry/ Advance registration recommended: [info@la-loge.be](mailto:info@la-loge.be)

### **Lab Loge – Children's Programme**

Visit La Loge with the kids! An activity kit is available at the front desk.

### **Practical Information**

Free kit available for children aged 6–12

Languages: English, French, Dutch

## Acknowledgements

*Poor Paintings* was made possible through close collaboration with artist Béatrice Balcou.

The exhibition is organised as part of the *Suite* programme, an initiative of the Centre national des arts plastiques (Cnap), with the support of the Académie des beaux-arts; with additional support from the French Embassy in Belgium and the Institut français; and as part of EXTRA, a programme supporting contemporary French creation in Belgium. La Loge and the artist extend their sincere thanks to the Cnap team (Béatrice Salmon, Marc Vaudey, Estelle Kesztenbaum, Anaïs Cazaben) and the team at the French Embassy (Violène Verduron, Inès Loge) for their support.

The exhibition owes its realisation to the dedicated work of Léonor Gomez and Arthur Jules, and the technical expertise of Ludo Engels.

La Loge and the artist warmly thank Christophe Veys, Tom Heene, Jannes Calles & Christophe Albertijn, Sibylle Hacquart, Barbara Cardone, Anaïs Chabeur, Chiara Bianchi (Felix Art & Eco Museum, Drogenbos), Aude Bodet and Coline Bidault (Cnap, Paris), Maud Legall-Yver, Julie Barth, Véronique Sorano-Stedman and Stéphanie Elarbi (Centre Pompidou – Musée national d’art moderne, Paris), Claudia Kramer (S.M.A.K., Ghent), Annelien De Troij (KMSKA, Antwerp), Francisca Vandepitte (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels), Barbara Forest (Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art – MAMCS, Strasbourg), Pauline Hérou-de La Grandière, Mathilde Bezon, Camille Jallu, as well as Cyrille Rocherieux, Fernando Torre and David Veis (CIRVA, Marseille).

We also express our heartfelt gratitude to Laura Lamiel, Agnes Martin, Claude Rutault, Nasreen Mohamedi, Jef Verheyen, Barnett Newman, Marcelle Cahn, Georges Braque, Rogier Van der Weyden and Felix De Boeck, whose works and trajectories continue to deeply inspire this project.

Our thanks also go also to all the participants in the public programme including Julie Pellegin, Chiara Bianchi, Francisco Mederos-Henry.

The opening and public events are supported by Vedett.

## **La Loge Team**

### **Front Desk**

Alice Beiglig, Inès Guffroy, Manon Laverdure, Martina Lattuca, Thibaud Leplat, Shankar Lestréhan, Marion Lissarague, Alice Nataf

### **Office**

Antoinette Jattiot (Curator and communication)  
Yasemin Köker (Intern)  
Wim Waelput (Director et curator)

### **External staff**

Antoine Begon & Boy Vereecken (Graphic design and visual identity)  
BLURBS, Martine Wezenbeeck (Translations and proofreading)  
Ludo Engels (Audiovisual support )  
Léonor Gomez & Art hur Jules (Production)  
Lisa Man (Lab Loge Coordinator)  
Armand Morin - Showing the Show (Video documentation)  
Lola Pertsowsky (Photography)

Visit our website for more details about our programme and events.  
[www.la-loge.be](http://www.la-loge.be)

### **Opening hours**

From Thursday to Sunday  
13:00 - 18:00

Free entrance.

La Loge is a non-profit association. La Loge is supported by the Flemish Government, the French Community (FWB), the Flemish Community Commission (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie - VGC) and First Sight, La Loge's community of engaged individuals and organizations. La Loge receives additional support from the Municipality of Ixelles, French Community Commission (COCOF), Brussels-Capital Region and National Lottery of Belgium. La Loge is a member of 50° NORD-3° EST and Brussels Museums.

