

Lounis Baouche - Open Studio

When we browse publications, whether physical or digital, our minds inevitably behold, process, or form certain correspondences. Some might pursue the rhythm of the words, tracing the proportions of the page, while others, depending on the visual arrangement, will lay their gazes on the images that, almost declaratively, yield a silent command. This was the case for Baouche: it was images that spoke to him, unmediated by the need for a prerequisite knowledge or language. “All images are polysemous”¹—an idea that can frame our reading of his work. This interplay of meaning is achieved in his work by employing a set of techniques destined to prevent the ultimate meaning from solidifying. The artist privileges instead a generalized relativity of viewpoints, narrating an absolute doubt that withholds a conclusion.

Lounis Baouche’s work evenly rests on two pillars: irony and topicality. He plays with derision, drawing from the collective, personal, imaginary, and mythical. During his six-weeks residency, he decompresses—while tacitly pathologizing—both local and universal news, tales, and disturbances. Attracted by the aesthetics of sarcasm that are ever-present in cartoons, he considers each piece to be the equivalent of a multi-page comic strip. Baouche is attuned to the narrative contexts of territories; current events hold a particular interest in his headspace, which he then transposes by establishing a dialogue between form, object, and history. This cartoonesque approach has forged his visual identity and repertoire, allowing him to examine how heavy networks—such as violence, politics, dysfunction, and more—usually trivialized on screens, can be creatively defused or combated. This aesthetic choice becomes instinctive for the artist; rather than assimilating to an obsolete praxis, he develops a counter-style.

While each piece represents a certain history and epoch, the archetypes are nonetheless inherently anachronistic, stemming from his belief that events repeat themselves in a contemporary sense. An unconscious continuity—not necessarily chronological—ties all ends. A similar continuity recurs in Baouche’s subjects and symbols, which resurface from years past and find new form in his current iconography. The foliage of palm twigs shrouds an absent, dissimulated silhouette, absorbed by the silence of a root system—fragile, yet crowning. An architecture that shelters it even as it disappears, wrapping it in its enveloping film. This work, like much of Baouche’s practice, is suspended between dual truths, dual borders. A simple gesture of folding, where hiding is neither erasure nor escape, but survival itself. A bending of signs, a masking of tension, a dwelling within the invisible, where the body develops its own immunity to that which wounds it. This vegetal refuge is a defence system.

Metaphors, however, are a recurrent intervention in Lounis’s work—never gratuitous, only summoned in a moment of extreme urgency. Here, the present situation is itself an urgency. His entire oeuvre aims to deconstruct this contextual chaos, without bluntly conquering it. Similarly, in the pieces *USA or USA* and *Life after Death*, the celestial and terrestrial crisscross. The former confronts the entanglement of technology and biology, embedding notions of digital domination and surveillance, all while satirically addressing a global hegemon. In *Life After Death*, by contrast, the focus shifts to the metaphysical and the biblical: a near-spectral figure steps over a pair of birds that echo the iconography of angels, traditionally rendered human in form. Rather than depicting

¹ Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath, Fontana Press, 1977, p. 38.

mere religious confrontation, he instils an allegory of the human struggle. The primitive and the futuristic, the forceful and the fragile, the geometric and the organic are all in bloom in his compositions, leaving us peering through a patchwork stitched from both the real and the imagined, at the interstice of revelation and burial.

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Tunis. May 2025.