

BABI BADALOV

ZONA MACO 2018 - Booth ZMS5



Babi Badalov, *Legal illegal*, 2017, 90,5 x 116 cm. Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris

PRESS RELEASE

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Babi Badalov is a migrant, a nomad despite himself: from Azerbaijan where he was born to France where he found asylum, he has gone through a myriad of countries, cultures and languages. His migrations between the former Soviet Union, the United States, Europe, Asia Minor and the Middle East catalyzed his pictorial and graphic work: ornamental poetry in which one can read and look at the cultural, historical and ideological conflicts of our globalized world. For a virulent and sensitive artist such as Babi Badalov, art is a means of revolutionary struggle.

Badalov Badalov was born in 1959 in Azerbaijan (which was part of the Soviet Union), in a small village in the middle of the Talysh Mountains that spread along the Iranian border.

When he reached legal age, he was called up to join the Soviet army; for the first time in his life, he was confronted with discrimination, persecution, and local racism that was common against the Talysh people because of their language—different from that of other Azeri. This strong sense of otherness was reinforced during his stay in Leningrad (Russia) in 1980. Despite the difficult cultural, ethnic and linguistic cleavages that he suffered from in the Russian cultural capital, this first experience abroad enabled the artist to discover “high culture” and the most contemporary artistic creations. He quickly joined the famous underground scene, collaborating on several projects with Timur Nivokov and Vadim Ovchinnikov—central figures of the 1980’s art world in Russia, amid the Perestroika movement.

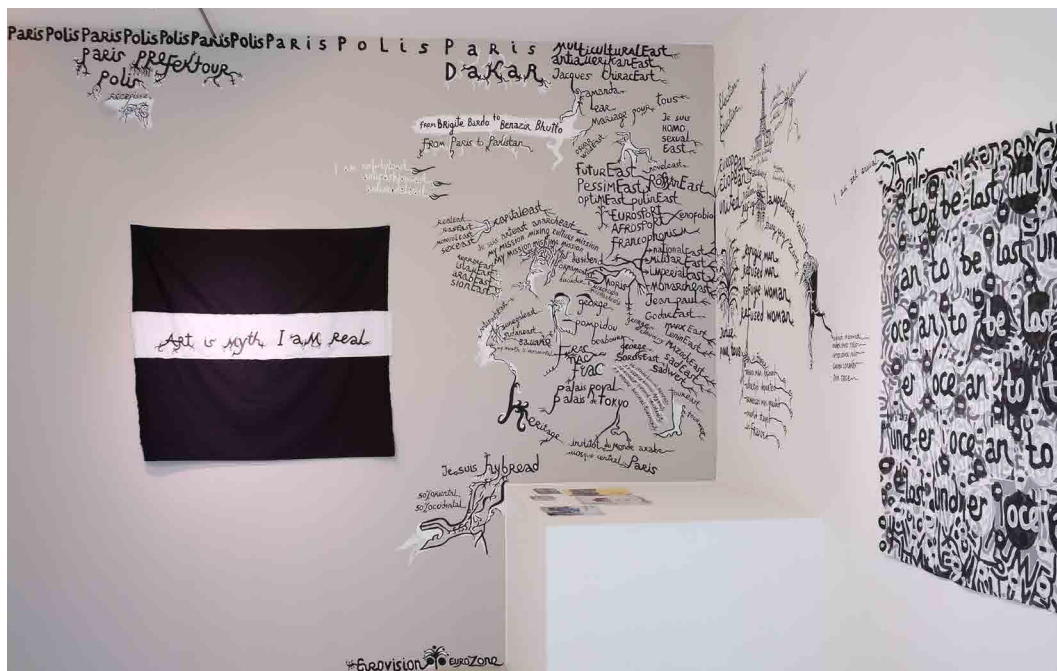
Yet it was in the United States that he experienced true freedom for the first time in his life. In 1991—after the fall of the Wall—, he was invited with 18 other artists from St. Petersburg to participate in a group show entitled “Non-official art. What is forbidden is allowed.”

There in California, far away from the West, Babi Badalov became fully aware of his profound otherness, and more precisely of his Orientalism. It was there that he devised his motto “I am Art-East” —title of his first solo show in the United States. With a very limited knowledge of the English language, of which he had only learned the phrase “I want to be ...” when arriving on American soil, Badalov spent two years roaming this vast territory without any legal identification, thus completely free but also completely clandestine.

A refugee with cultural roots

In 1993, he experienced his first deportation — the first of a long series. On returning to Russia, he found that the country had totally changed; there he faced famine, poverty, racism, jingoism, discrimination... because he was different, he was caucasian; he was “black”; he was a homosexual. He was an outsider. At the time he thought he could find asylum in Turkey, where the culture, the mindsets and the religion seemed much closer to his. He nevertheless failed to find safe haven there and was forced to return to Baku. Suffocating from the lack of freedom in his homeland, it was impossible for him to stay very long. His internal compass pointed towards Great Britain, where he went on to lead a clandestine life for two years; two years of failed expectations for a refugee status, two years of arrests, detention centers, rejection and deportation. He returned to Baku but for three nights only—the three longest nights of his life and his very last in his city.

He then returned to Saint Petersburg, his gateway to Europe, which he set about crossing through Finland, Germany, and Belgium in order to reach Paris. Once more, Badalov endured fear, misery, nights spent on the streets and in refugee hostels, before finally obtaining official recognition of his political refugee status in 2011—and with it the feeling of a real exile where he could begin to feel free, liberated from his past lives and



Exhibition view at Jerome Poggi gallery, Paris, 2015

without any kind of nostalgia. Yet in the cosmopolitan Paris of the 21st century, he is more than ever aware of being a migrant, an eternal fugitive, a stateless person belonging to a single nation: that of the art whose language he came to speak best.

An ornamental poetry

Language is Babi Badalov's primary work material. Considering himself as a "language victim," he is convinced that every person is a book from which it is possible to analyze human nature. As a nomad, Babi Badalov knows seven languages: Talysh, Farsi, Azeri, Russian, Turkish, English and French. He speaks these seven languages, but none of them at the same time. Not one more than the other but all of them at once, without any real hierarchy, without a main language, nor even a mother tongue. Babi Badalov does not want to speak English because he is not English. He is no longer Azeri but will never be European nor French. He has become a constant foreigner, one that will always have an accent. His oeuvre is his autobiographical diary: a testimony of his life as an emigrant recounted in an artistic language, the only language he can actually master.

Most of his works play on linguistic paradoxes. In his paintings and his drawings, he mixes different languages, alphabets, signifier and signified, etymologies that have been more or less invented, and puns where scholarly semantics are replaced by an art of visual and sound poetry.

The writing becomes ornamental, oscillating between Latin and Cyrillic characters and changing shape until becoming abstract—a distant evocation of a forgotten Ottoman writing. Babi Badalov, whose native language Azeri has changed alphabets four times in less than a century, composes languages and switches them around with the freedom of a nomad and of an artist. The outcome of his work is a synthesis, a paradoxical syncretism with deep mystical resonance. From these linguistic phenomena, that the artist calls "the paranoia of language," stems a universal oeuvre that echoes contemporary globalization, its conflicts and collisions, which could one day lead to the birth of a hybrid language common to all.

Leila Jafarova, 2015

BABI BADALOV

(AZ, born 1959 in Lerik. Lives and works in Paris)

Babi Badalov's practice is a constant exploration of the limits of the language. He is particularly interested in the way language is able to isolate individuals from the people who don't share the same language. Thereby, the artist covers current geopolitical topics that echo his own personal experiences.

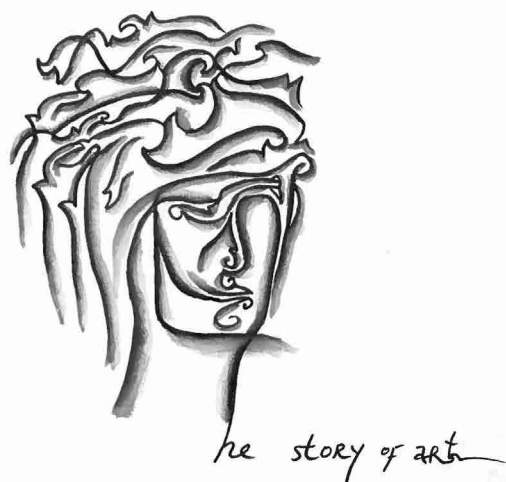
After having lived in Russian, he tried to settle in Cardiff (UK), but his asylum application was refused. Sent back in Azerbaijan, he finally got the right to stay and live in France in 2011 as political refugee. Great traveller and poet himself, Babi Badalov often introduces his own texts in his work: by combining them with manipulated political pictures, he creates installations, objects, paintings and happenings that he used to qualified as "visual poetry".

Babi Badalov has exhibited in various institutions and international events such as New Museum in New York, MUSAC in León, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Manifesta 8 in Murcia, Le Plateau in Paris, M HKA in Antwerp, Tranzit in Prague, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow, Moscow Biennial in 2015, Biennials of Gwangju and Rennes in 2016, etc.

Several of Babi Badalov's artworks are part of public collections such as Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (RU), Azerbaijan State Museum of Art in Baku (AZ), Kunsthalle of Emden (DE), Martigny Art Museum (Fondation Pierre Gianadda) (CH), Oetker Collection in Bielefeld (DE), rina Kowner Collection in Zurich (CH), Zimmerli Art Museum in New Jersey (US), etc.



View of the exhibition *To Make Art To Take Clothes Off*, curated by Manuel Oliveira, at MUSAC, León (ES)



Babi Badalov, *He story*, 2015, 21x29,7, courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi



Babi Badalov, *Whoman Right*, 2015, 21x29,7, courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi

NEWS

Automatic Electronic Algorithmic Predictive Poetry [solo show]
Uma Certa Falta de Coerencia, Porto (PT)

When I am um.ru, I will not have access
[group show]
Galerie Iragui, Moscow (RU)

Réfugiés politiques, réfugiés poétiques
Festival Vision d'Exil [solo show]
Palais de la Porte Dorée, Paris (FR)

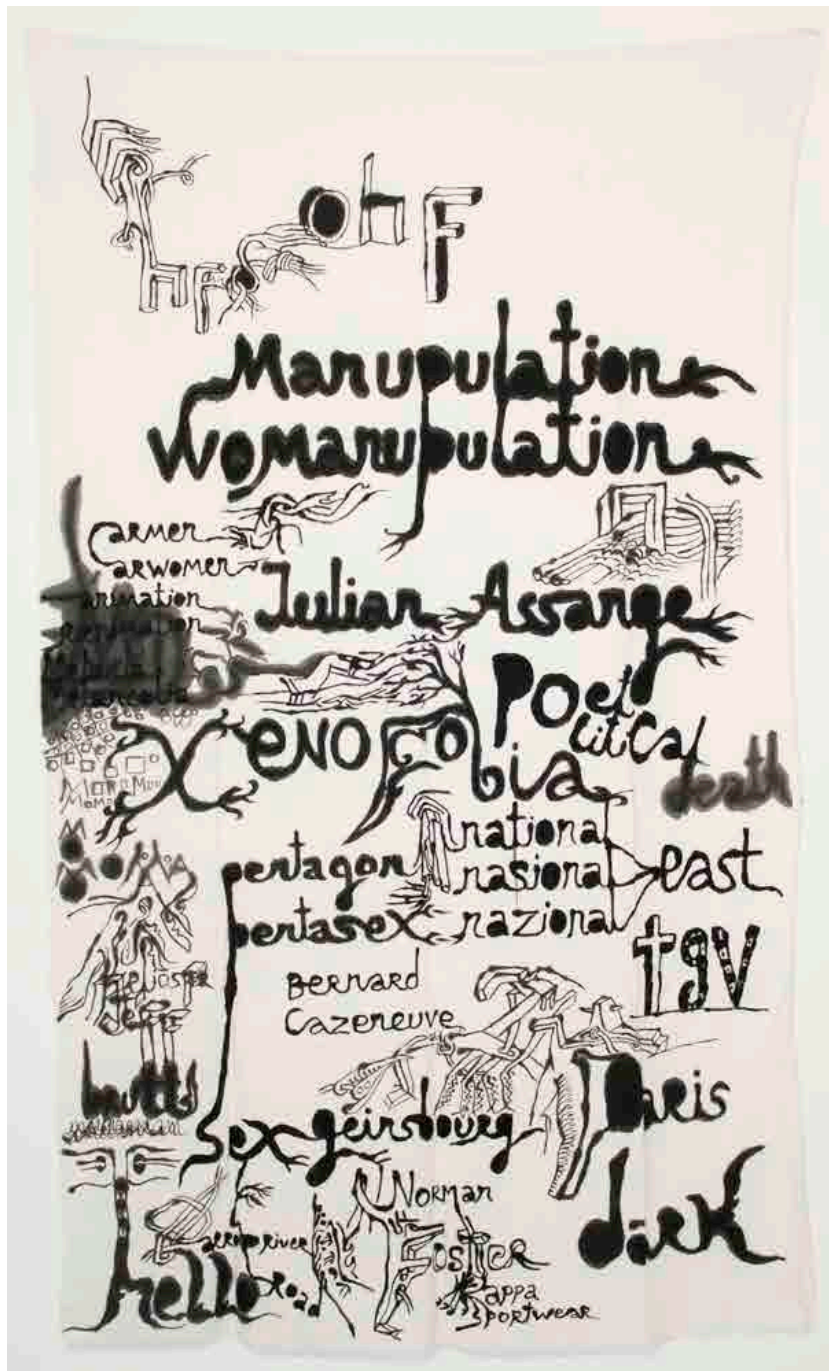
Life From My Window [group show]
Laura Bullian Gallery, Milano (IT)

From Pages to Sculptures [group show]
White Space Gallery, London (UK)

Babi Badalov
Art contemporari
2015
Painting on fabric
181 x 232 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



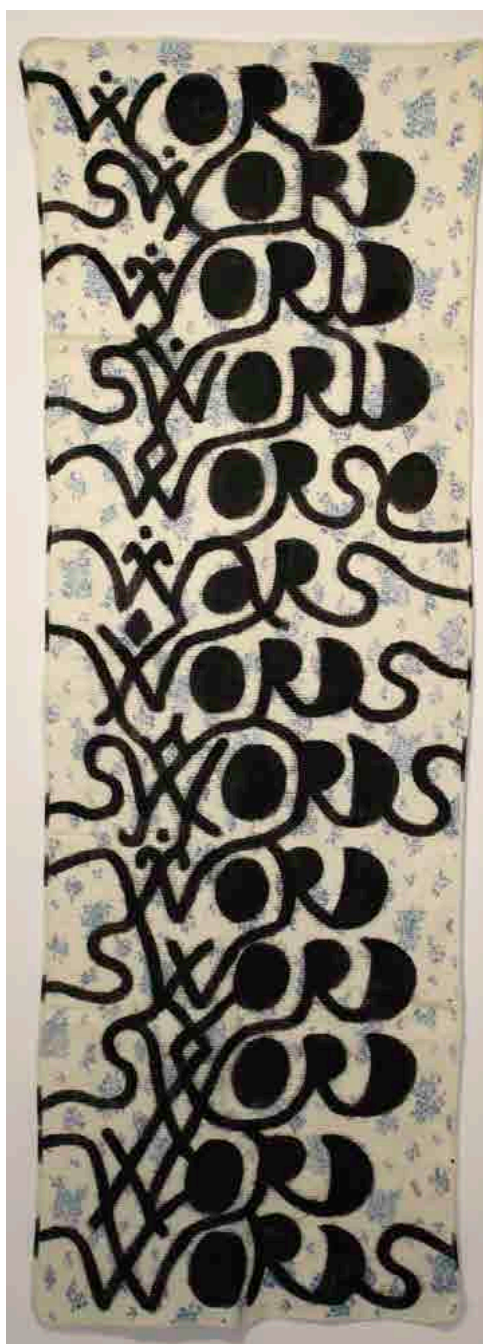
Babi Badalov
My Mission Mixing Culture
2015
Painting on fabric
1121 x 143 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



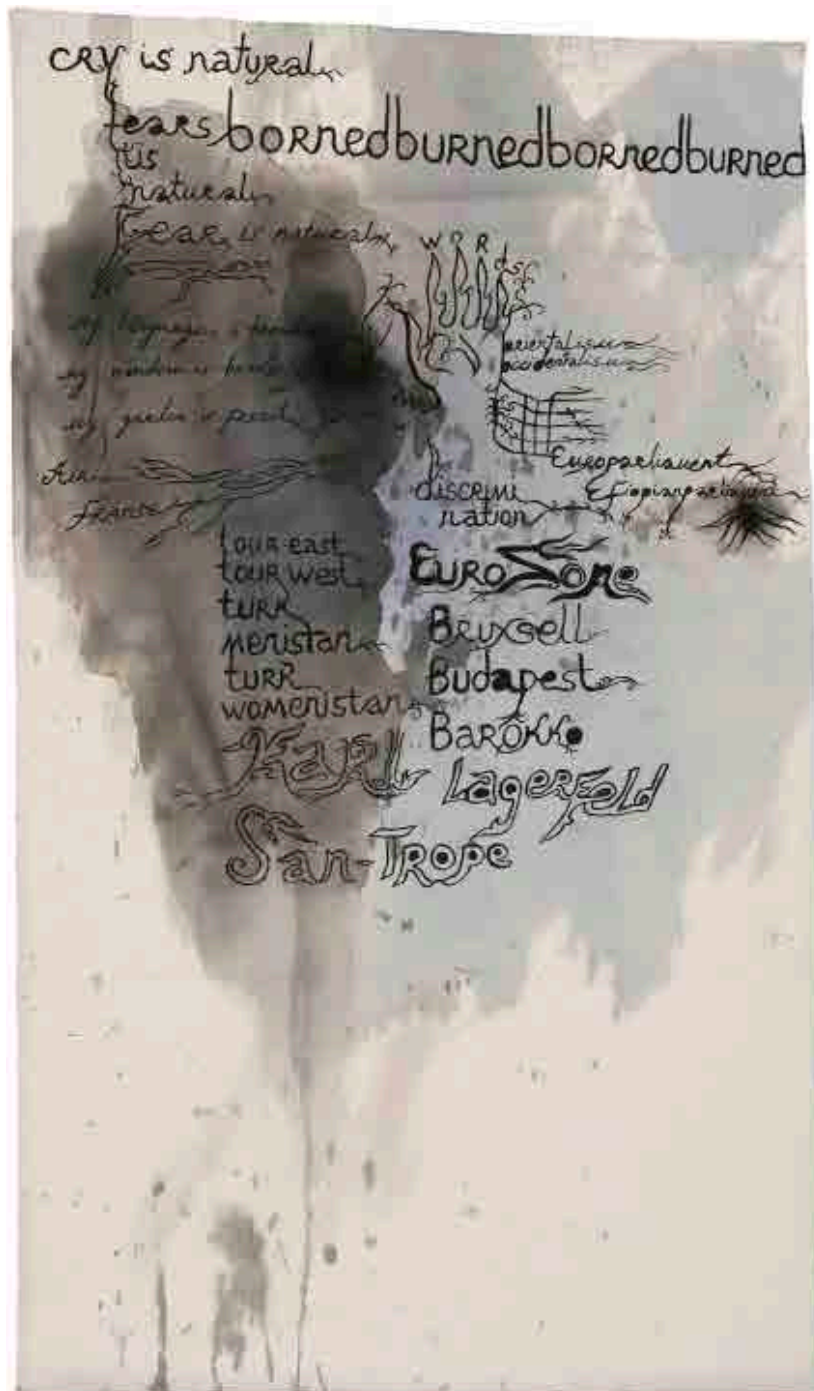
Babi Badalov
Whomanism
2017
Painting on fabric
143 x 174 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



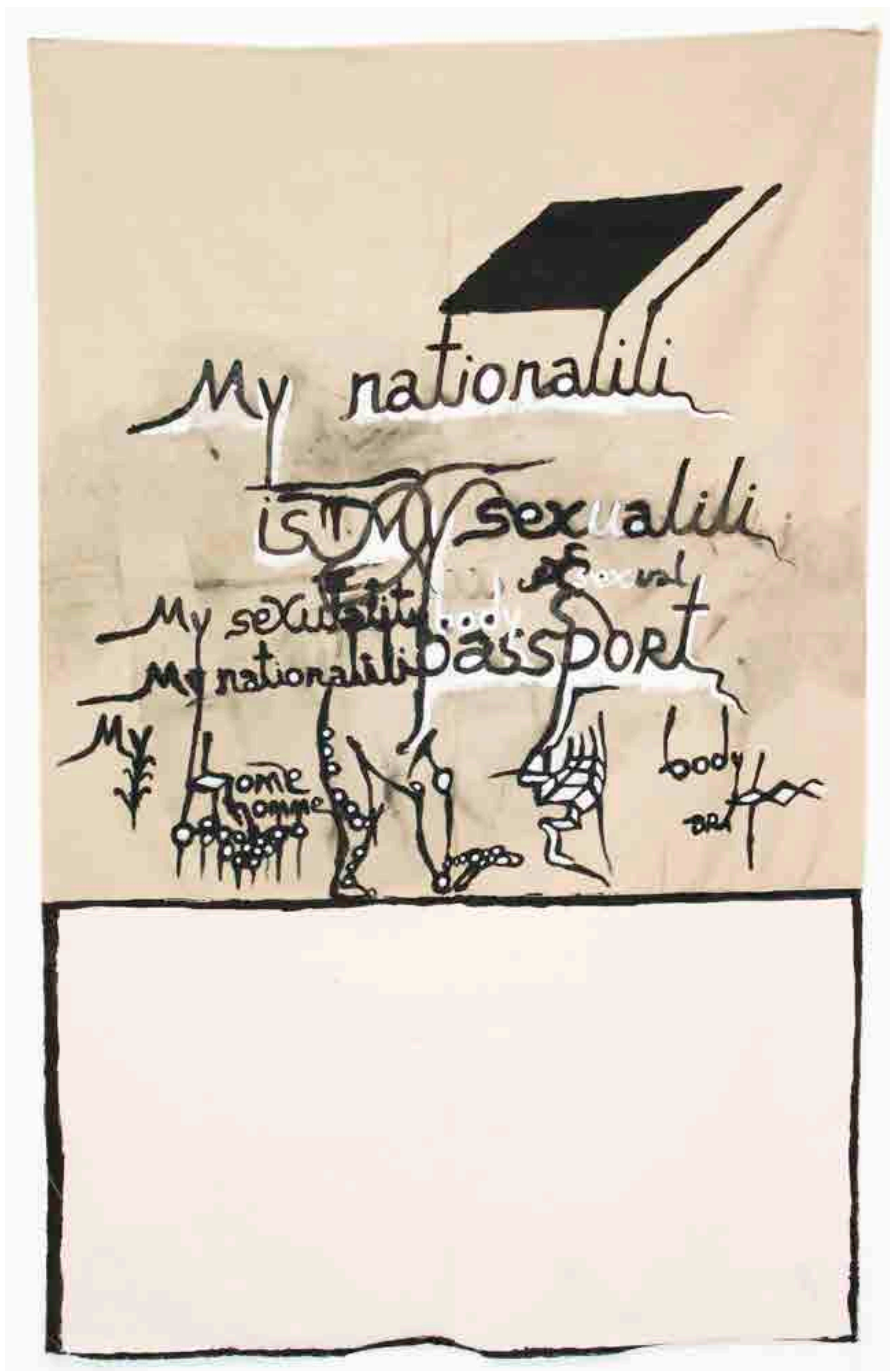
Babi Badalov
Word
2017
Painting on fabric
194 x 63 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



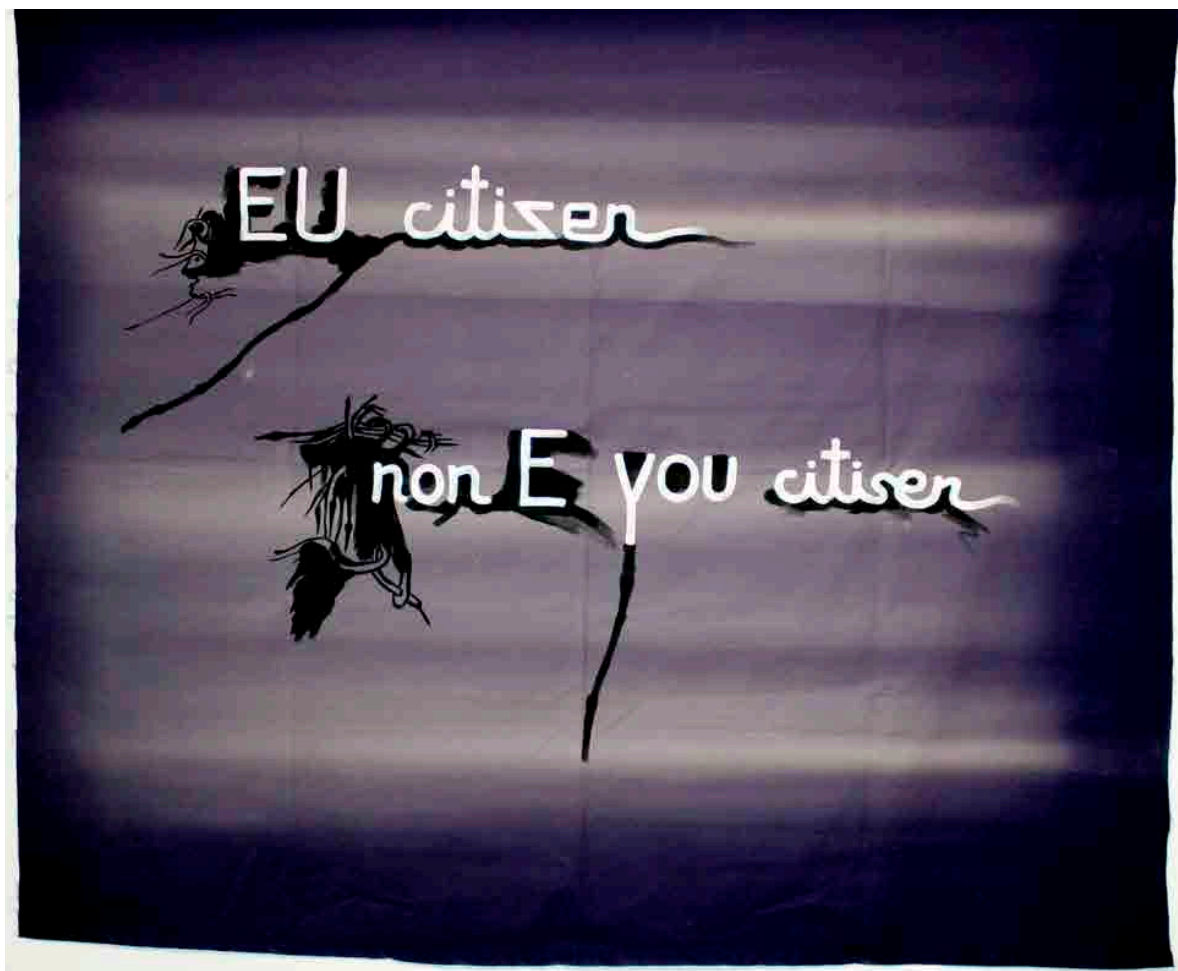
Babi Badalov
Cry is natural
2015
Painting on fabric
134,5 x 77 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



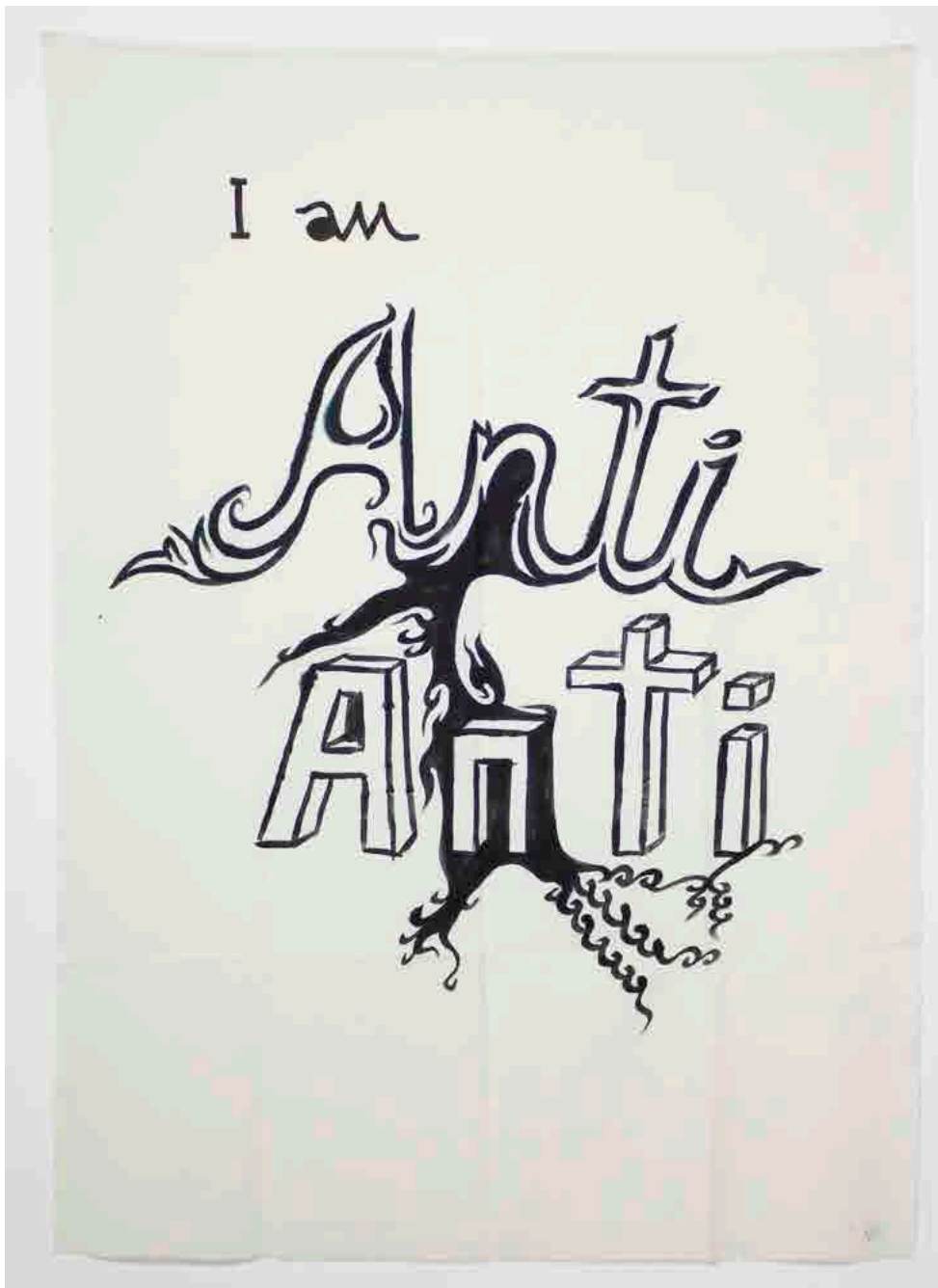
Babi Badalov
My nationaliti is my sexualiti
2017
Painting on fabric
133 x 84,5 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
EU citizen
2017 Painting on fabric
142 x 170,5 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
I am Anti Anti
2016
Painting on fabric
139 x 99 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Legal illegal
2017
Painting on fabric
90,5 x 116 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



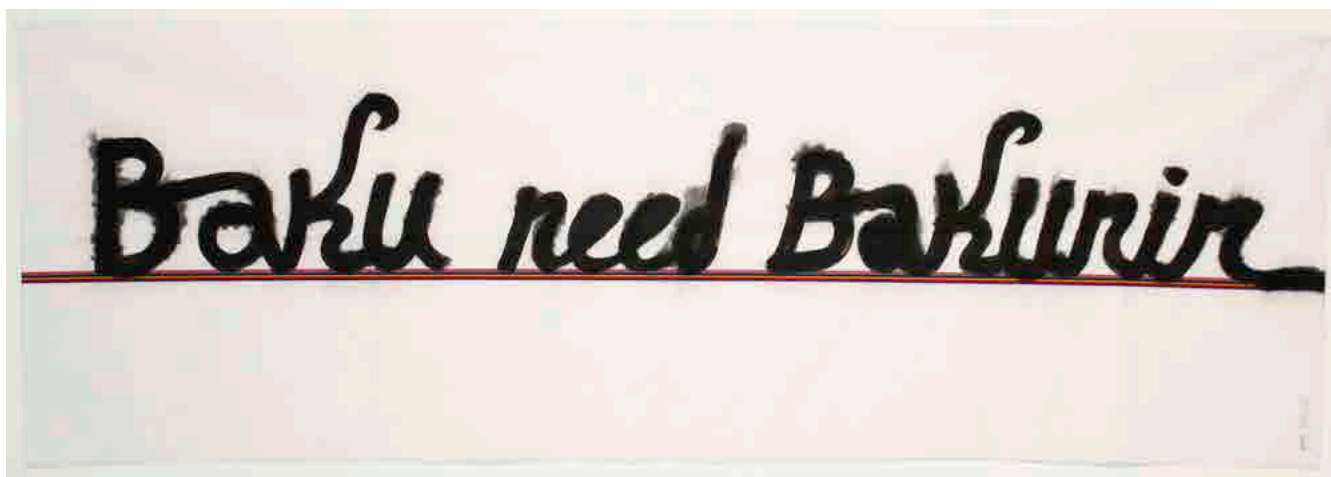
Babi Badalov
Always Alone
2017
Painting on fabric
130 x 202 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Art research
2016
Painting on fabric
126 x 145 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Baku need bakunin
2017
Painting on fabric
52 x 153,5 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



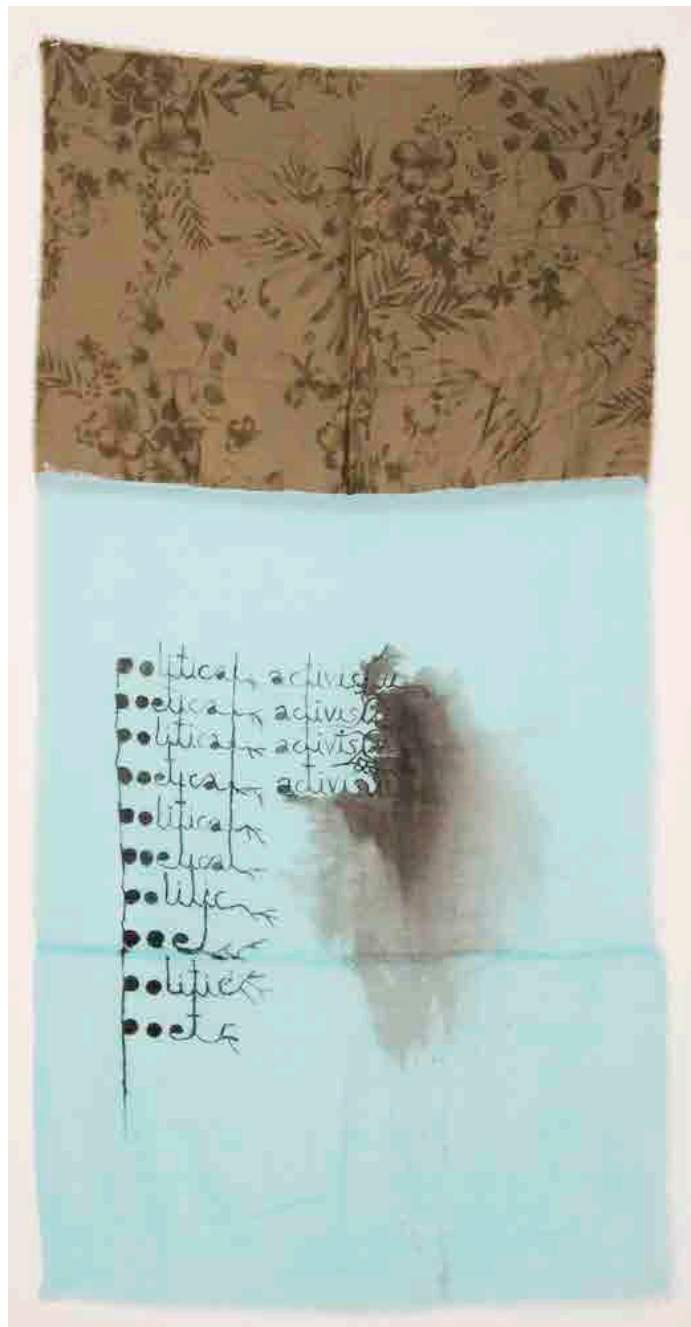
Babi Badalov
One man, black man
2017
Painting on fabric
107 x 134 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Communism
2017
Painting on fabric
51,5 x 96 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



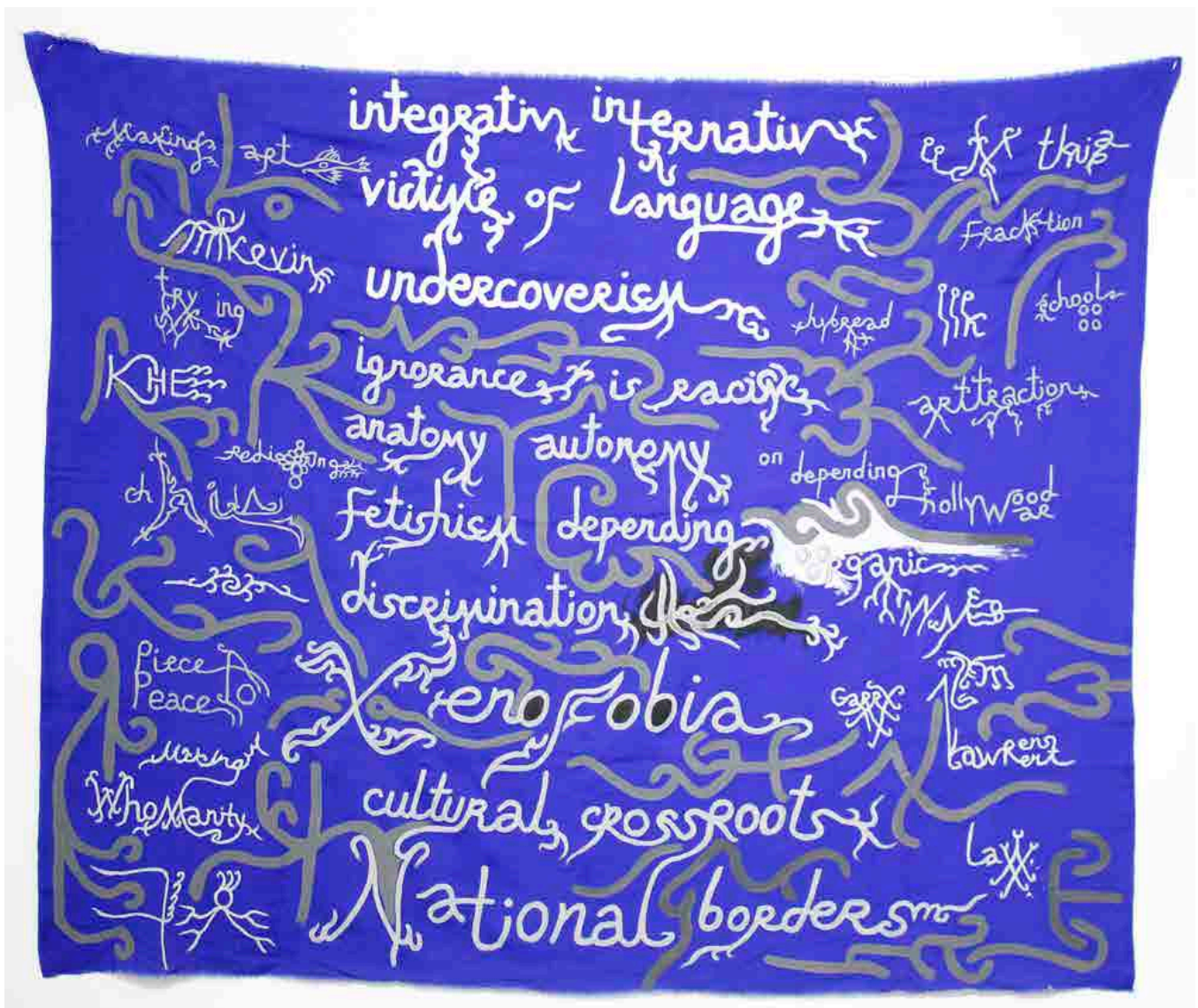
Babi Badalov
Political activism
2015
Painting on fabric
61 x 126 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Freedom
2017
Painting on fabric
89,5 x 74 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Integratin
2015
Painting on fabric
121,5 x 142 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Histori of art
2016
Painting on fabric
100,5 x 92cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



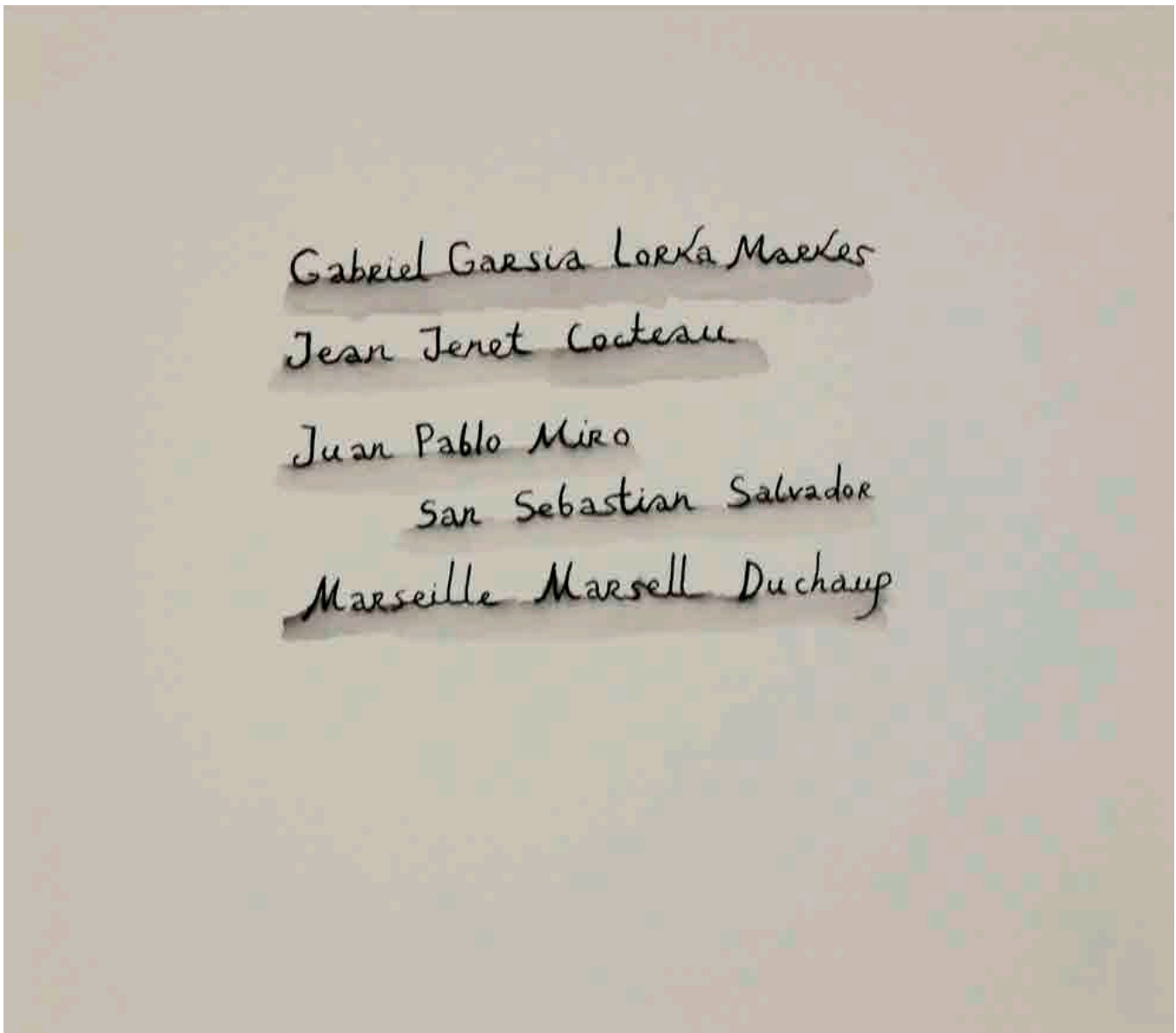
Babi Badalov
Migration
2014
Ink on paper
21 x 29,7 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



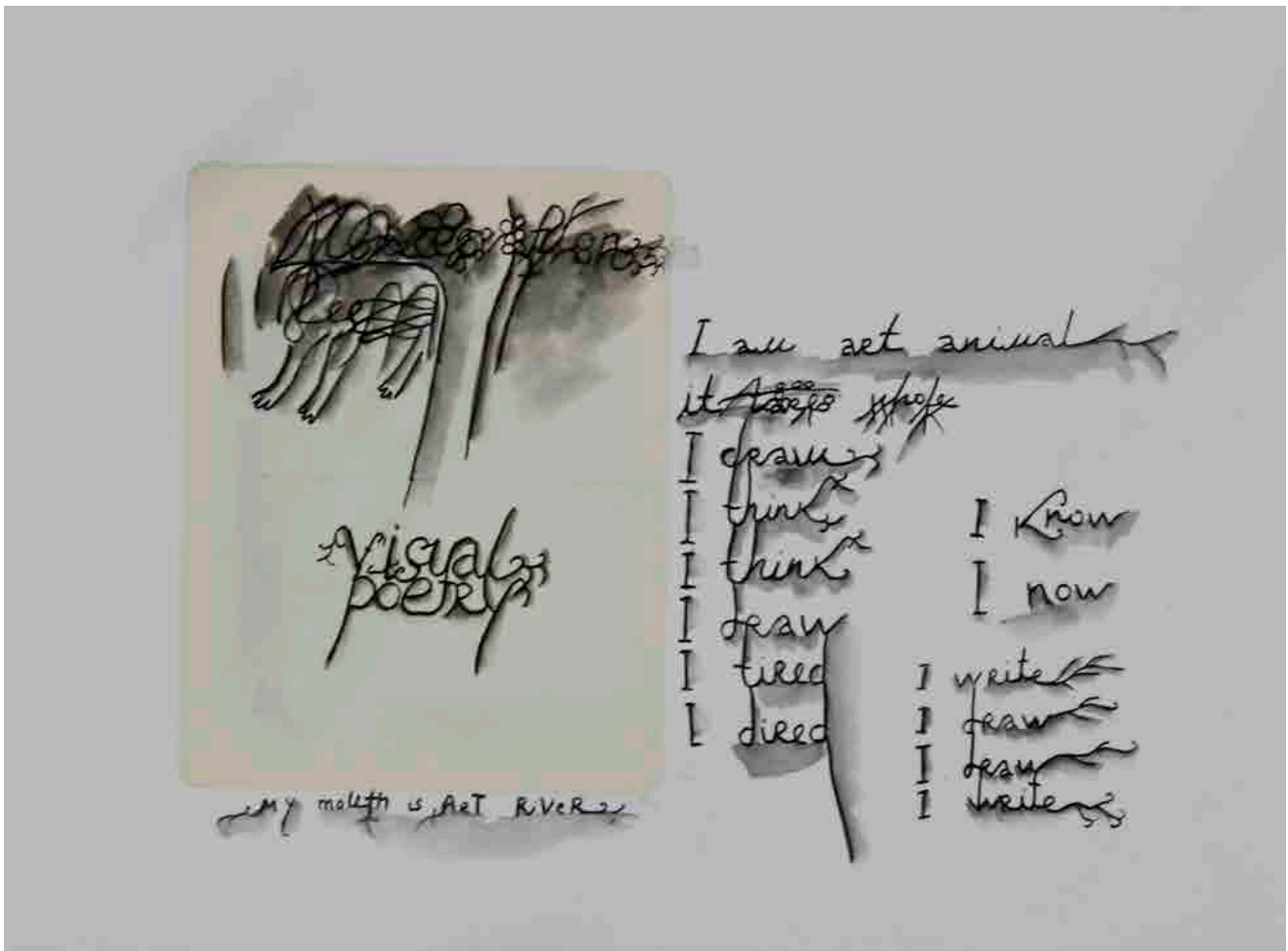
Babi Badalov
Art piece
2014
Ink on paper
36 x 46 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Gabriel Garsia
2014
Ink on paper
24 x 32 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Babi Badalov
Visual Poetry (I am art animal)
2014
Ink on paper
21 x 29,5 cm
Unique piece
Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



Galerie Jérôme Poggi

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Mar. – Sam. 11.00 – 19.00
Tue. – Sat. 11 am – 07pm

EXHIBITIONS / EXPOSICIONES

| *Drawing by Numbers* - group show
From February 3rd, to March 3rd, 2018
Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris

ART FAIRS / FERIAS

| **ZONA MACO MEXICO**
February 7th to 11th, 2018
Babi Badalov

| **THE ARMORY SHOW NYC**
March 8th to 11 mars, 2018
Kapwani Kiwanga, Larissa Fassler

| **ARCOmadrid**
February 21th to 25th, 2018
Georges Tony Stoll, Sidival Fila

| **ART COLOGNE**
April 19th to 22th, 2018
Kees Visser

ARTISTS / ARTISTAS

| Babi Badalov (AZ, 1959)
| Fayçal Baghriche (DZ/FR, 1972)
| Anna-Eva Bergman (NO/FR, 1909–1987)
| Maxime Bondu (FR, 1985)
| Gregory Buchert (FR, 1983)
| Julien Crépieux (FR, 1979)
| Cédric Eymenier (FR, 1974)
| Larissa Fassler (CA, 1975)
| Sidival Fila (BR, 1962)

| Yona Friedman (HU, 1923)
| Kapwani Kiwanga (CA/FR, 1978)
| Bertrand Lamarche (FR, 1966)
| Wesley Meuris (BE, 1977)
| Sophie Ristelhueber (FR, 1949)
| Société Réaliste (FR/HU, 1982/1972)
| Georges Tony Stoll (FR, 1955)
| Marion Verboom (FR, 1983)
| Kees Visser (NL, 1948)