

Roots and ruins :

An archaeology of the Christmas Tree.

« At the intersection of reality and appearance, my latest works probe the troubled destiny of the Christmas tree; an ephemeral emblem of consumer folklore, uprooted from sylvan mythologies and transplanted to the disenchanting peripheries of the city. In this series, the conifer slides from festive icon to urban residue, hovering between illusion and abandonment. The Christmas tree becomes a critical operator, a liminal object traversing regimes of image, apparition, and loss. From ritual tree rooted in Europe's forests to post-festive refuse lying inert on asphalt, it condenses a becoming, a fractured temporality, an economy of the visible.

My gesture aligns with Walter Benjamin's « reading of ruins »: what modernity forgets, the image inadvertently preserves. One thinks of Victor I. Stoichita's *Short History of the Shadow*, in which shadow is a double — a first step toward art, and toward disappearance. Here, trees projected onto concrete walls remain only as simulacra, captive to an urban theater where the light is raw and origin uncertain. What is seen is not so much the tree as its afterimage — a visual echo standing in for its body.

I do not denounce; I document a mutation: the shift from object of belief to ornament, then to debris. Through painting, I re-inject time, ambiguity, and silence into this absurd migration. The Christmas tree, the seasonal figure par excellence, becomes witness to the becoming of images and beliefs, at a time when folklore dissolves into spectacle, and nature into the city. »

Natacha Mercier, June 2025.