

The Queens

« (...) Natacha Mercier has opened a fertile field of pictorial experimentation around the forest and the thematics of night. It is only logical that she now pursues her singular quest through blackness and obscurity. What could be more natural for an artist concerned with the limits of vision than to devote herself to darkness — that which erases, that which lets forms slip into disappearance. As in her earlier works, the pursuit remains: to lend consistency to what appears evanescent, intangible, resistant to representation. Her plunge into the nocturnal and the forest is another way of playing with light, no longer through its dazzle, but through its near-absence.

Across the passing hours and changing seasons, Natacha Mercier discovers in the forest a profusion of forms, shifting perspectives, and the play of shadow and light. For her, the forest is an immense field of experimentation, offering space to unfurl the full extent of her painterly virtuosity.

In each work of *The Queens* series, the artist explores a wide variety of compositions and treatments of light. Always deeply nourished by artistic references, her work is also the fruit of her sensitive experience of the world. Her interest in the forest is a way of renewing her subjects and, in a sense, returning to a state of virgin nature. The artist works from photographs and does not make explicit reference to existing works. In *The Queens* series, she notably draws on childhood memories and evokes the lingering presence of various images and primal sensations experienced during nocturnal walks, allowing her to reconstruct an imaginary forest.

Through branches and crowns, a distant glimmer appears. This faint halo, piercing the darkness, produces a blur, as if the image were describing an experience where space and time fold into one another (...).

Through their perfectly smooth surfaces, which ceaselessly oscillate between opacity and transparency, between concrete material surface and illusionism, between figuration and abstraction, Natacha Mercier's paintings establish a staging of the gaze, a mode of reception, and a play of scenography. Stripped of any cultural reference, her nocturnal landscapes reclaim a purely exploratory function of the world of experience and of the living. The artist reveals the share of night in the creative act as a primordial material giving rise to a dreamed nature, to original spatialities and luminosities (...).

Ultimately, the endeavor of Natacha Mercier's black paintings could be summed up in a single question: *What happens during the night, while we sleep?* »

Excerpt from the text "*Quand la lumière se fait jour*" by Jérôme Carrié, exhibition curator, art critic, and lecturer, 2024.