It is relatively rare to laugh when visiting an exhibition where humour is not the aim that it deserves to be mentioned. Sylvie Fanchon's exhibition is funny. But more than just that. Presented alongside the artist's recent paintings are some pieces by other artists from the FrAC Bourgogne and Franche-Comté in a show titled Je m'appelle Cortana that combines concerns relating to language and words, and to what distinguishes high art from popular art, seriousness from humour. This mixture of derision and sarcdonic humour does not prevent a dark or critical tone. Words traverse the spaces of the exhibition and are at times authoritative and mocking, political and feminine. Various layers of reading are superimposed, creating echoes and a kind of punctuation, particularly via colour, and the use of reserve, derision, the performativity of language and the injunctions to which we are subjected. On entering the space, the phrase 'Je m'appelle Cortana' can be seen in a mural and in Fanchon's paintings—an affirmative redundancy mitigated by Marco Godinho and John Giorno. The former invites us to remember what is missing and the latter tells us to expect nothing. The suddenity with which they announce it (reversed phrase in ochre dust or watercolour) contrasts with the injunctive form. Everywhere one is spoken to or informed, but above all, one is asked, one is demanded. This tone—the neutrality of the artificial intelligence carried by Cortana—is that of any form of authority represented by language. According to Roland Barthes, language is fascist and Fanchon demonstrates this. However, language also contains the euphoric possibilities of puns and double-meaning that we find here in the work of Ernest T., Thomas Ruff, Corinne Marchetti and Annette Messager, who establish vanishing lines or overthrow the authoritarian dimension by inviting the viewer to participate in the meaning. Transformed into a reader, the visitor is implicitly present: such that the written words become an address. The exhibition space is punctuated by three murals by Sylvie Fanchon, remarkable achievements that evoke an urban palissade, movement and architecture: the paintings are spaces for oneself in front of which the viewer stands. Duotone dominates and simplifies the space of the painting to the sole elements background motif, avoiding any exaggerated expressiveness. Wherever words are present in Fanchon's paintings, a gesture reveals a palimpsest text contained within the colour of the background, playing with the expectations of abstract art. If the works are read as much as they are seen, they are never reduced to their linguistic meaning. Their meaning is as important as the materiality, gesture, colour and form from which they are composed. We witness shadow games in Amikam Toren's cut-out sentences, the visible DIY dimension of Richard Bezú's piece, Véronique Verstraete's synthetic fur and Angela Bulloch's machine that fires clay onto walls. If these are sometimes funny, they are also rather disturbing.

Translation: Emma Lingwood