

THIS LONG ROAD THAT
LEADS TO THE SELF
至己之长路

EXPOSITION BY CÉCILE SAVELLI

塞西尔·萨韦利个展

CURATOR : MYRIAM KRYGER

策展人：柯梅燕

ICICLE CULTURAL SPACE SHANGHAI

19 APRIL – 31 JULY 2025

OPENING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ARTIST SATURDAY 19 APRIL



*Untitled, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 55 cm,
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*

Shanghai's ICICLE Space opens its new cultural season with Cécile Savelli, one of the most compelling voices on the Marseille art scene.

Her first exhibition in Asia, presented as part of the *Croisements* festival in Shanghai, brings together forty paintings created between 2009 and today. Curated by Myriam Kryger, the selection—comprising mainly acrylics on canvas, in both small and large formats—offers a rare opportunity to explore fifteen years of Cécile Savelli pictorial practice, placing this essential facet of her work into perspective.

"Exploring the intimate themes of the domestic and family sphere, Cécile's works—nourished by her daily life—become both fields of plastic experimentation and mental spaces. They are like quiet attempts to soothe, to restore a sense of order to the world."

Is it because life was brutal from the start that Cécile seeks silence and tranquillity in her art? In search of formal simplicity, she eliminates frills and details, retaining only the essential. This paring-down is the result of a long process—reflected, too, in her palette: shunning the intensity of saturated hues, she creates her own colours, composing a score of broken tones, a nuanced chromatic melody played on mute.

In this refuge of harmony, which protects from the tumult of the world, Cécile allows herself everything. She varies techniques, experiments with materials, and dares unexpected perspectives and bold compositions. How do you arrange the figure, the motif, the masses of colour? How do you find the right hue, the ideal texture? The balance and harmony that life has denied Cécile are the central quest of her pictorial exploration."

Myriam Kryger, exhibition curator



*Untitled, 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 55 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



*Untitled, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 61 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



Untitled, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 55 cm
 Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris



Untitled, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 30 cm
 Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris



Untitled, 2024, Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 61 cm
 Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris



Untitled, 2024, Acrylic on canvas, 97 x 130 cm
 Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris

ICICLE



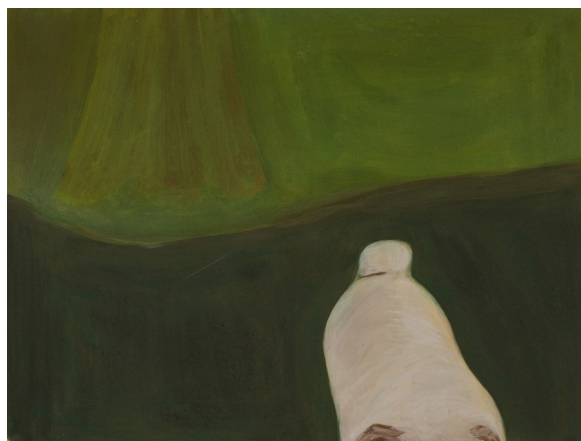
*Untitled, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 61 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



*Untitled, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 42 x 61 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



*Untitled, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 61 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



*Untitled, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 61 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*

THIS LONG ROAD THAT LEADS TO THE SELF

by Myriam Kryger, exhibition curator

"The simplest means are those that best allow the painter to express himself".

Sharing with the master of Fauvism the same quest for formal simplicity, Cécile Savelli could make Matisse's statement her own. Eliminating frills and details to retain only the essential, she prioritises minimalism. Each of her works attests to this. Paring down is the fruit of a long process: it begins with a sketch and continues with a drawing on canvas that gradually disappears under multiple layers of paint. Patiently refined to eliminate the accessory and achieve an internal pictorial coherence, each painting requires slow maturation.

"This long road that leads to the self" marks Cécile Savelli's first exhibition in Asia. It plunges visitors into the artist's work from 2009 to the present day. As if to make up for the time lost to a life where creation once eluded her, Cécile has painted tirelessly for the past fifteen years in her Marseille studio.

Centred on intimate themes of domestic space, Cécile's works—rooted in her immediate daily experience yet not bound to reality—focus on compositional balance and the pursuit of precise tone. ***Shunning saturated hues***, she makes her own colours and plays a muted chromatic melody of broken tones. Emphasis and exaggeration are foreign to this great colourist, ***who allows colours to vibrate without ever letting them clash***. In this refuge of harmonies, sheltering from the world's violence, Cécile holds nothing back. She varies techniques and materials, ***dares unexpected perspectives*** and bold compositions that sometimes tilt the image.

When figures appear, often inspired by family photos, they are integrated into a purely pictorial space, *without hierarchy between background and subject, centre and periphery*. All parts are worked with equal attention. As Matisse wrote, *"Expression does not reside in the passion that bursts forth on a face or asserts itself through a violent movement. It is everywhere, in the whole layout of the painting."* In life, as in art, the challenge is to make disparate elements coexist and interact as a whole.

While dogs and cats are a common sight in Cécile's domestic spaces, other, more unexpected presences occasionally appear—such as the orangutans depicted on large oilcloth canvases. Troubled by their astonishing capacity for empathy, and fascinated by the contrast between their agility and their heaviness, Cécile has devoted long hours of observation and study to these primates who resemble us so deeply, in order to bring them into her world. After all, why shouldn't they, too, be part of the family? In the end, what forges connection? This quiet, persistent question haunts the artist and runs through her work.

Paintings of sensation and atmosphere, Cécile's interiors are as much fields of plastic experimentation as they are mental spaces— attempts to soothe and restore order to the world. They are places of consolation, where damaged ties are patiently rebuilt.

Is it because life was brutal from the start that Cécile seeks silence and tranquility in her work? Born in France in the 1960s, just after the painful uprooting of her parents repatriated from Algeria, she had barely opened her eyes when her father died accidentally. Her mother was left to raise six children alone in a country she had only just arrived in. Exile, bereavement, precarity—life's harshness arrived early and unrelenting. It was perhaps this initial violence, followed by many others, that drew Cécile to art, a way to transcend reality.

"You can't be an artist without a great misfortune intervening", wrote Jean Genet. The balance and harmony life denied her became the central pursuit of Cécile's pictorial exploration.

From childhood, she took refuge in drawing and immersed herself in the art books her mother sold door-to-door—one of the many jobs she did to support the household. A troubled teenager, Cécile visited museums regularly and passionately before enrolling at the Beaux-Arts in Avignon in 1981. But after graduating, a feeling of illegitimacy, a lack of confidence, and early motherhood gradually distanced her from artistic practice.

Faced with the difficulties of life, Cécile had to work to raise her three children. Her sketchbook was never far from reach, though time to fill it was scarce. Life went on, no kinder than it had been before. After a twenty-year detour, she finally found her way back to the studio.

The *Household Self-Portraits* were among the first series to mark her return to creation. The artist depicts herself from behind, engaged in washing dishes, mopping the floor, or hanging laundry. This posture, unusual for a self-portrait, highlights the invisibility of so many women consumed by domestic work. By becoming the subject of paintings, these trivial tasks—usually kept out of the realm of art—are elevated. They are softened further by pastel hues and blurred wax effects. Advancing masked beneath a veil of apparent gentleness, Cécile Savelli invites the viewer, with aplomb, to confront this female figure from behind and question the place assigned to her.

It would be ten years before the artist dared to represent herself full-face and in large format, arms spread wide and open in the series of *Self-Portraits with Dresses*. A true renaissance in art, and a true renaissance through art.

Myriam Kryger, Paris, March 2025



*Household self-portrait , 2009, wax painting on wood, 30 x 50 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



*Household self-portrait , 2009, wax painting on wood, 50 x 30 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



*Household self-portrait , 2009, wax painting on wood, 50 x 30 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1962 in Versailles, Cécile Savelli lives and works in Marseille and Paris.

As a student at the Beaux-Arts d'Avignon in the 1980s, Cécile Savelli took a two-decade diversion before returning to the path she had chosen in her youth and which the trials and challenges of life had kept her from.

It takes a great deal of courage, passion and determination to resume an artistic career after a long hiatus. Cécile has proved this every day for the last fifteen years, working tirelessly in her Marseille studio. There, she explores a wide range of formats and media with complete freedom: oil and acrylic on canvas, ink, pencil and charcoal on paper. More recently, she has incorporated weaving into her practice. The family sphere and domestic space are at the heart of Cécile's creations, and she draws her inspiration from the intimate and everyday. An abundant bestiary, extending even to orangutans, widens the circle of those closest to her.

Cécile Savelli is now considered one of the most compelling figures on the contemporary Marseilles art scene, presenting a solo exhibition every year. In 2021, a monographic publication was dedicated to her work, accompanied by the refined prose of renowned art critic Michel Nuridsany. Her works are part of both public and private collections in France.



*Untitled (dialogue series) , 2016, Printed fabric and acrylic on canvas, 46 x 61 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



ICICLE PARIS-SHANGHAI 2025 SEASON THE DEPTH OF TIME

« In 2025, ICICLE is consolidating its platform for cultural exchange and continuing its commitment to promoting French artists in China and Chinese artists in France. This new cross-programme between Shanghai and Paris is dedicated to artists who are resolutely on the side of sensation and poetry. The four artists featured in the first half of 2025 are faithful to the world of the senses, rooted in everyday reality and at odds with the cult of speed and performance, shaping their work in the depth of time.

« Shi Qi, Luo Quanmu, Cécile Savelli and Lola Bret have taken winding roads and detours. They have sometimes doubted and groped in the dark. In the meanders of their trajectories, they have layered life experiences, nourishing their works with a deeper truth, a more particular vibration. Far from the formatted norms imposed by straight, marked-out lines, they have woven, each in their own way, unpredictable wefts, where every diversion, every silence and every restart reveals a stronger authenticity. They have followed the long path of questioning, experimentation and perseverance that leads to self and creation.»

— Myriam Kryger, Cultural Director of ICICLE
and General Curator of Exhibition Spaces in Paris and Shanghai

EXHIBITION CALENDAR

ICICLE SPACE – PARIS

*Shi Qi,
Into the folds of time*
19 March - 15 May 2025

Luo Quanmu
3 June – August 2025

ICICLE SPACE – SHANGHAI

*Cécile Savelli,
This long road that leads to the self*
19 April – 31 July 2025

Lola Bret, Our invisible ties
June – August 2025

ICICLE CULTURAL SPACES IN PARIS AND SHANGHAI

ICICLE opened a cultural space comprising an art gallery and a bookstore within its flagship in Shanghai in 2016, followed by a second in Paris in 2019. These two spaces converge to create an artistic platform based on the two pillars of visual arts and books, aiming to enhance exchanges and discoveries.

Informed by a philosophy of the importance of encounter, the cultural programme articulates this desire for dialogue and hybridization. The ICICLE Cultural Spaces are home to a community of artists, writers and thinkers for whom aesthetic research and ethical reflection are inseparable.



*Untitled, 2017, Acrylic on oilcloths, 127 x 105 cm
Courtesy Cécile Savelli @ ADGAP, Paris*



ICICLE

ICICLE was founded in Shanghai in 1997, crafting high-quality clothing and accessories from the finest natural materials with an emphasis on comfort. It has since achieved international recognition as a manufacturer and retailer of exceptional contemporary ready to wear and accessories with sustainability at heart; a way of dressing for modern life, signed 'MADE IN EARTH'. The success of ICICLE is the vision of a couple, the founding partners, YE Shouzeng and TAO Xiaoma.

Their company philosophy is based on a trinity of Chinese values:

敬天 (Jing Tian) : Sincere reverence for nature.

爱仁 (Ai Ren) : Kindness for others.

惜物 (Xi Wu) : Cherish what is given to us.

The mission is to connect man and nature by proposing clothes to live and work in, with respect for the environment and always paying tribute to the natural. Vertically integrated, the company employs an uncompromising approach to sourcing premium materials, pioneering intentional design and cutting-edge manufacturing techniques in its own factories. Products are created to last as long as possible, with a refined design aesthetic, where rigour meets relaxed elegance, espousing a responsible design process so as not to waste resources. This gentle minimalism ensures garments of intrinsic natural beauty which are friends for life. Today, ICICLE has developed 241 stores in more than 100 cities in China. In 2013, a Creative Centre was established in Paris, with the appointment of Bénédicte Laloux as Creative Director. ICICLE opened its global flagship store at 35 Avenue George V in Paris in 2019.

ICICLE is part of ICCF Group (Icicle Carven China France), a Franco-Chinese fashion group with international stature established in 2021 that unites ICICLE in China with the Parisian fashion house CARVEN in France. This unique alliance materialized in 2024 through the inauguration of ICCF Garden—an architectural embodiment harmoniously housing the group's pillars, ICICLE and CARVEN, alongside the artisanal culinary experiences of Silex Restaurant and Silex Gourmet Café, on the exclusive Hengshan Road of Shanghai.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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EXHIBITION BY CÉCILE SAVELLI

19 APRIL – 31 JULY 2025

Exhibition Curator : Myriam Kryger

ICICLE Cultural Space
1-2F, Building 2, No 2570 Hechuan Rd, Shanghai
Monday to Sunday, 10am - 8pm

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