

Langage (saussurelment)

by Arslohgo



Arslohgo, "Langage (saussurelment)". Digital Composition. CMYK, 300 dpi.

Translating the Untranslatable

In "langage (saussurelment)," Arslohgo undertakes an ambitious project: the transformation of a chanson into visual language—and thus the translation of what is, in essence, untranslatable. The work, which takes Zaho de Sagazan's song "Langage" as its point of departure, is at once a meditation on Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic categories and an intimate study of emotional communication.

Composition and Visual Structure

The horizontal composition divides into two distinctly different zones. The left half is dominated by a grid of calendar pages—twelve entries spanning early December 2025 through early January 2026. Each page shows the same man in varying emotional states, annotated with handwritten-style notes: *désespérement, ennuyé, agressif, triste, distrait, suffisant, refusant, ironie, méprisant, indifférent, tendu*. It is a catalog of illegibility—an attempt to capture fleeting moods in words and thereby fix them in place.

The right half of the image belongs to a figure with long hair woven into a braid, dressed in a simple white shirt. The depiction deliberately oscillates between genders—an "updating" of the heteronormative source material, as the artist himself notes. In the background, ghostly and like a fading memory, the partner's face appears once more. Hovering over everything, rendered semi-transparent, are the lyrics of de Sagazan's song.

The Inner Calendar as Vocabulary

The central visual concept—the calendar as a system for organizing emotional experience—proves extraordinarily fertile. The protagonist (the gender ambiguity is programmatic) maintains what amounts to a lexicon of the beloved, an attempt to systematize his "langage." Yet it is precisely the accumulation of entries that reveals the failure of this endeavor: the adjectives contradict one another, the moods shift without discernible pattern. On December 23rd, he appears twice—once *suffisant*, once *refusant*. The system collapses in on itself.

Here, Saussure's insight becomes visually palpable: *langage*—the individual, emotional mode of expression unique to each person—resists systematization. One can collect vocabulary, note dates, record observations—and yet the other ultimately remains illegible.

The Lyrics as Palimpsest

The superimposition of the song lyrics over the right half of the image functions as a palimpsest—a translucent layer that both reveals and conceals. The lines "*Laisse-moi le temps de l'apprendre / Ce temps est précieux*" acquire an oppressive urgency against the backdrop of the calendar: time is running out, the entries accumulate, and understanding remains elusive. The repetitive "*Je t'aime*" at the end of the text corresponds to the

obsessive repetition of the calendar images—love as iteration, as a desperate attempt at approach.

Gender and the Gaze

The decision to render the observing figure gender-ambiguous is more than a fashionable update. It universalizes the experience and decouples it from heteronormative role assignments. At the same time, it complicates the lines of sight: Who is looking at whom here? The androgynous figure gazes leftward, toward the calendar, toward the images of the beloved—yet their gaze goes nowhere, turns inward. This is not seeing but remembering, a mental leafing-through.

Critical Assessment

"langage (saussurelment)" succeeds in translating a complex theoretical framework—Saussure's distinction between *langage*, *langue*, and *parole*—into an emotionally accessible image without lapsing into didacticism. The work is intelligently composed: the cool grid structure of the calendar pages contrasts with the warm, almost Renaissance-like quality of the main figure. The muted color palette—gray tones, broken white, the pale green of the shirts—creates a melancholic undertone appropriate to the subject matter.

One might ask, however, whether the text overlay is too explicit, whether the work might be stronger if it left more interpretive labor to the viewer. Yet this objection may miss the point: the visibility of the text is itself part of the statement. The words are there, legible, comprehensible—and yet they do nothing to help us understand the other person.

Conclusion

Arslohgo's "langage (saussurelment)" is a multilayered work that weaves together music reception, linguistic theory, and the phenomenology of love into a coherent whole. It demonstrates that translation between media—from music to image, from theory to emotion—is possible without sacrificing the complexity of the source material. The work invites us to linger, to decipher—and ultimately confronts us with the realization that some languages cannot be learned, no matter how hard we try.

"Laisse-moi le temps et la chance / De comprendre ton langage"

Zaho de Sagazan set it to music, Arslhgo rendered it in an image. The plea remains unanswered. Therein lies the beauty and the sorrow of this work.

Medium: Digital Composition
