



Kloser Contemporary Art is a digital online gallery representing international artists. Our program highlights the global artistic dialogue taking place today, transcending generational movements, artistic expressions and geographical borders to exhibit artworks that carry a universal message through their unique visual form. We aim to bring collectors closer to artists.

Parallel to its strategic drive to show artworks digitally for exclusive time periods, K.C.A. hosts annual group shows in European capitals and continuously engages international art networks to promote its artists. The gallery also proposes curated exhibitions for art spaces and creatively accommodates international exhibitions with museums.

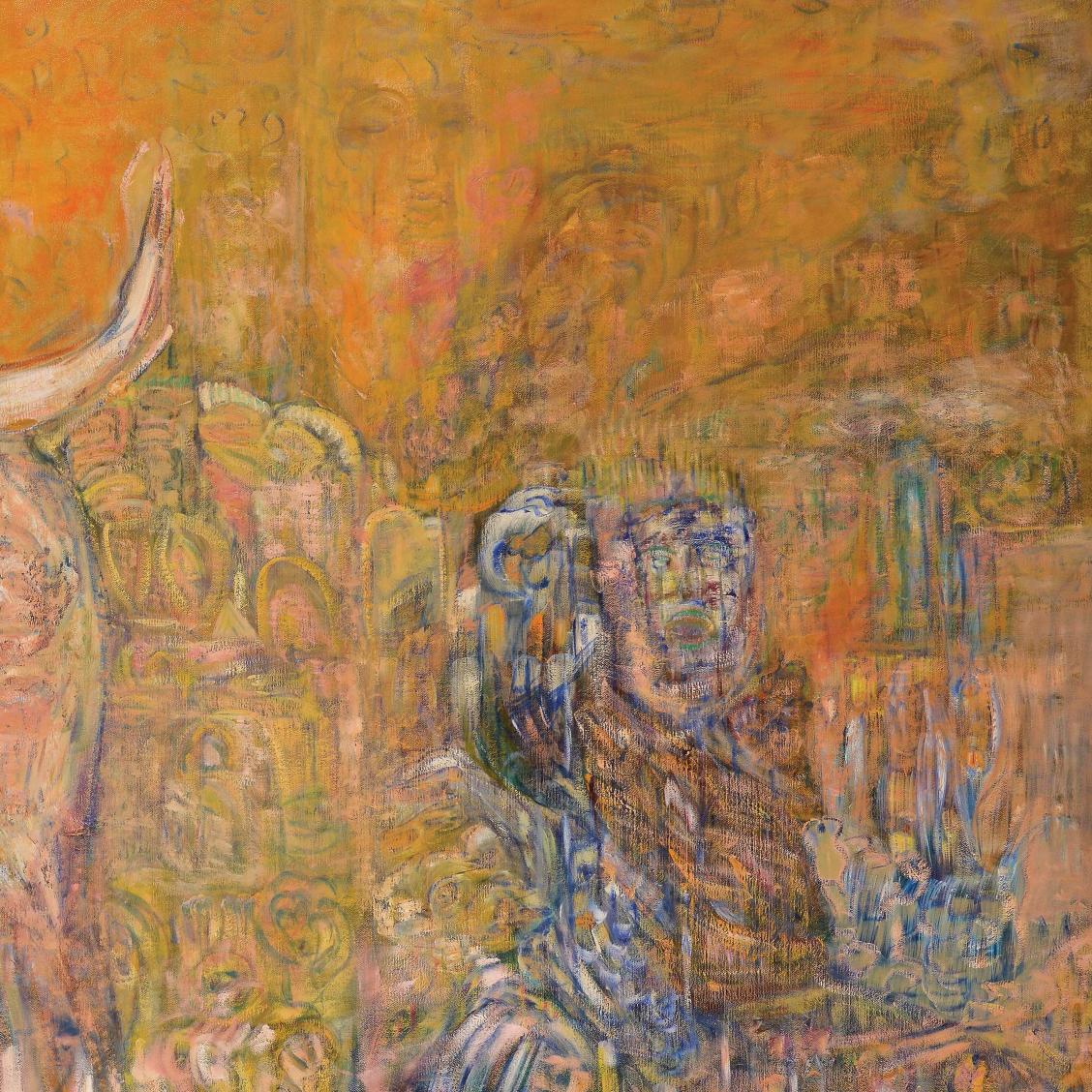
In time, K.C.A. will participate in international art fairs. But it will first expand its digital network of art with a special focus on engaging the artist-collector relationship through studio visits, regular news flow and curated digital publications about its exhibitions and the work of the artists it represents.

Founded in 2018 by art collector Klaus Pas, K.C.A. is currently collaborating on designing its first 8 online solo shows, by partnering with international artists, established, mid-career and younger talents from Morocco, Belgium, South Africa, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Tunisia, Vietnam, and the D.R.C., and this is only the beginning of the adventure.

This book is celebrating the first year of Kloser Contemporary Art and the artists it was honored to represent.

May their passionate work conquer the souls of all.





ALI LAGROUNI

(Morocco, 1956)

Born in Morocco in 1956, Ali Lagrouni lives and works in Geneva. His paintings, using a range of techniques and materials, are like expressionist windows into his emotions relating to life, identity and homeland. Deeply anchored into a Moroccan painterly heritage, his unique visual language often translates into mystical representations of personal stories, making them universal and timeless.

Lagrouni leaves Fez (Morocco) aged only sixteen. He lives in Paris for a while before settling down in Switzerland, where he still works. Self-taught, his first paintings come as a nostalgic expression of his youth near the old Moorish capital. A conservatory percussionist, Lagrouni gives jazz music an overwhelming voice in his brush and compositions. His singular blue and warm metaphors echo the heritage of modern Moroccan painting championed by masters like Hassan El Glaoui or Jilali Gharbaoui. Freely transcending figuration and abstraction, Ali Lagrouni's work is an affirmation of identity, constantly redefining balance in this world, acting as a stylized shield against the psychological aggressions from the outside.



EXHIBITION - MAY 1st TO JUNE 30th, 2018

ALI LAGROUNI - SOLAR BLUE MYSTIC

Solar Blue Mystic is an invitation into the magic of Moroccan landscapes that are bathed in a yellow sun and filled with characters who are often delineated in contrast with the use of the renowned blue of Fès, the former imperial city of Morocco. Kloser's first digital exhibition focuses on about three decades of artistic creation by Ali Lagrouni, who was born near Fès in 1957.

Settling in Switzerland in 1972, after a few formative years as a self-made artist in Paris in the late sixties, Lagrouni has progressively created a unique visual language that evolved greatly over the years. By maintaining a truly Moroccan painterly identity while expanding on themes linked to the searching of one's identity when living abroad - a recurring subject in the artistic creations of the diasporas - Lagrouni also allowed his talents as a pianist and percussionist to penetrate the canvas and orchestrate movements and compositions. Jazz music in particular can be seen as a major influence through many of his signature brush strokes.

Exhibitions of Ali Lagrouni's works truly started in the French speaking region of Switzerland in the second part of the 1980s (mostly in Geneva, Lausanne and Montreux), culminating with an exhibition at the United Nations in Geneva in 1988.

In the 90s, he regularly showed his work at Europ'Art (the former Geneva Art Fair), but had numerous shows in Switzerland, France and Morocco. He was the guest of honor for Morocco at the Art Basel Fair in 2002, exhibited his work at the Royal Academy of Arts (UK) in 2004 and won the 25th Prix de Rome the same year, only to return twenty years later with a new solo exhibition at the United Nations in 2008.

Throughout the past decade, Lagrouni has allowed his painting to progressively move further into abstraction, almost capturing what I would qualify as "Genesis Landscapes" bringing up to one's imagination the birth of our Planet and the arrival of the first Spirits, of the first Men.

We are thrilled to be able to show three emblematic pieces from the early 90s. Lagrouni's painting was then at it's most figurative expression. *Hinde* (1991) is the his personal symbolic interpretation of the majestic power of women and how they embody the future of our world, while *Passion* (1991) represents the artist's idea of waiting, of lingering in a state of transcended emotion.

Ten years later, *Root* (2001) announces a "back to the roots period" in the work of the artist, who respectfully embraces the heritage of modern Moroccan painting, which predominantly transpires through works like *Festival of Joy* (2002), *Supreme Protection* (2002) or *Touareg* (2005).

Today, Ali Lagrouni's work has become a unique expression of painting within a prolific Moroccan artistic diaspora, eventually finding its place among the work of the already established great masters of his country, like Hassan El Glaoui (1924), Jilali Gharbaoui (1930-1971), Mohamed Drissi (1946-2003) or Mahi Binebine (1959).



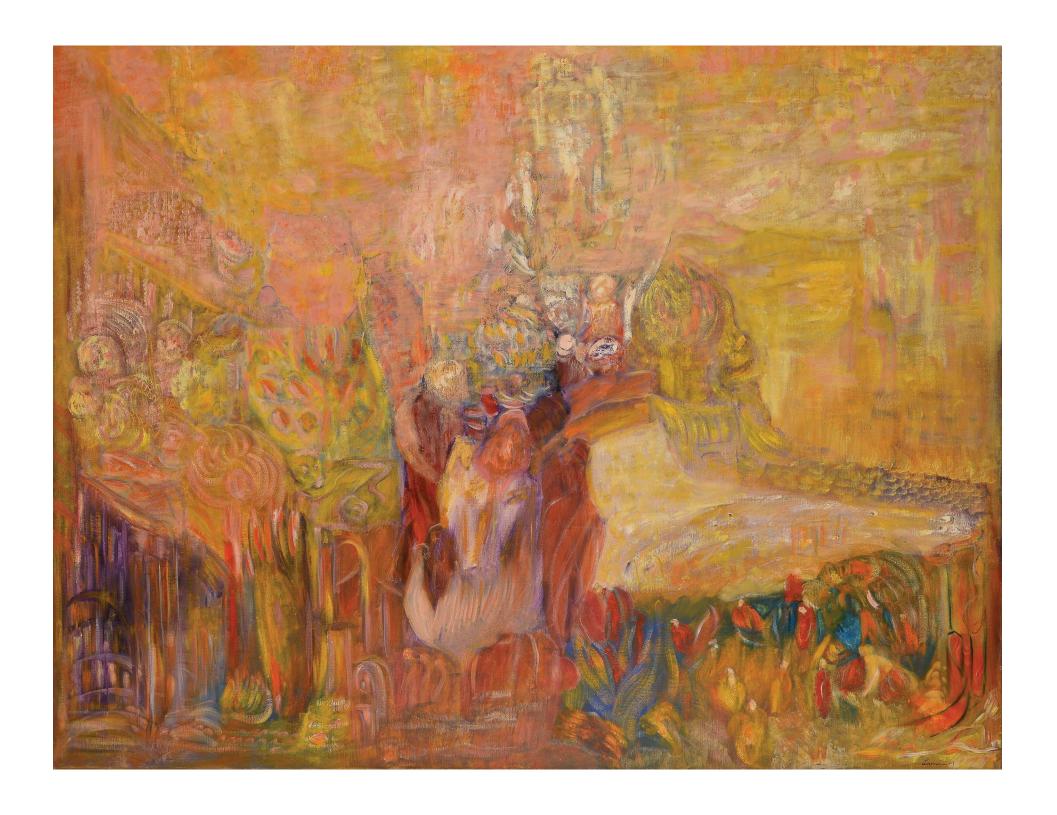
Hinde (1991)

Oil on Canvas, 200 x 300 cm



Ali Lagrouni (1956)

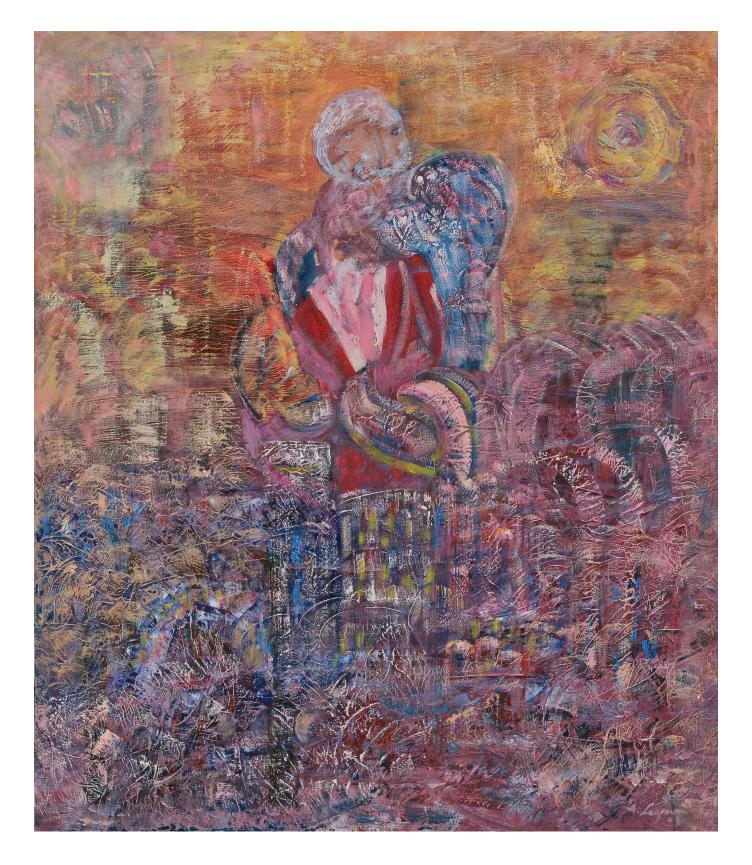
Passion (1991) Oil on Canvas, 280 x 200 cm



Welcoming (1991) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 300 cm

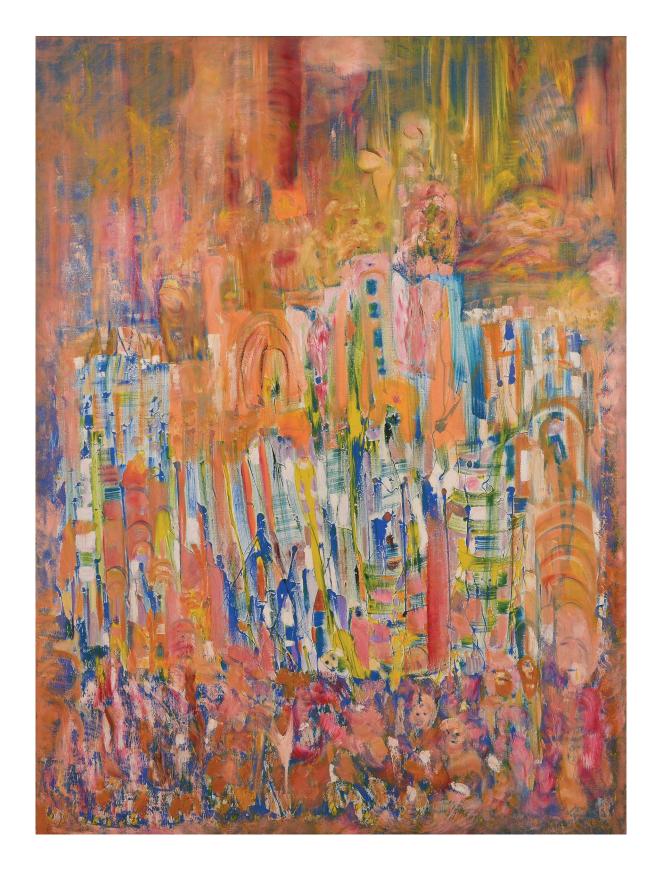


 $Egyptology \end{tabular} (1996)$ Oil on Canvas, $120 \times 100 \end{tabular}$ cm



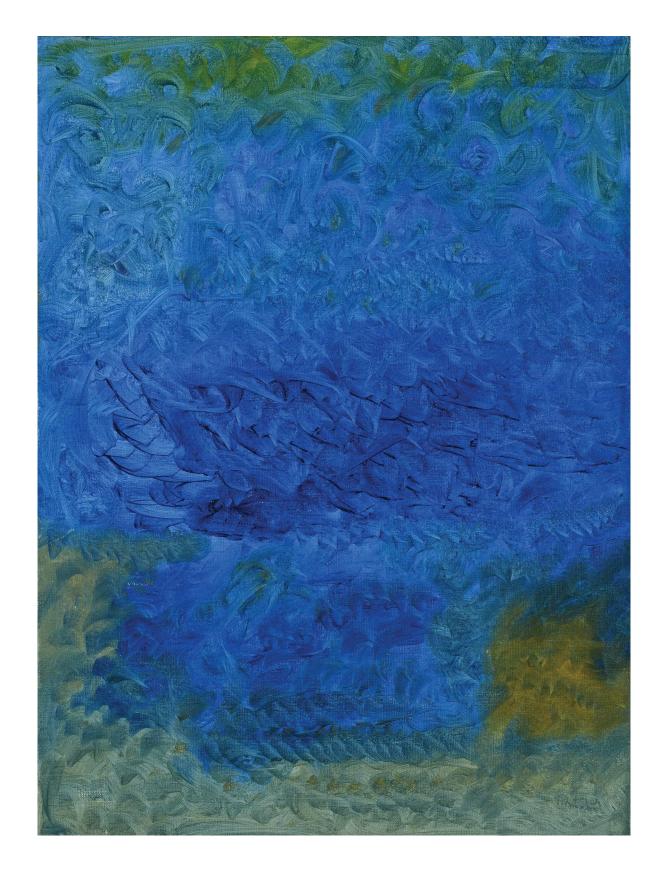
Ali Lagrouni (1956)

 $\begin{array}{c} \textit{Root} \\ (2001) \\ \text{Oil on Canvas, } 80 \times 60 \text{ cm} \end{array}$



Ali Lagrouni (1956)

Festival of Joy (2002) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 150 cm



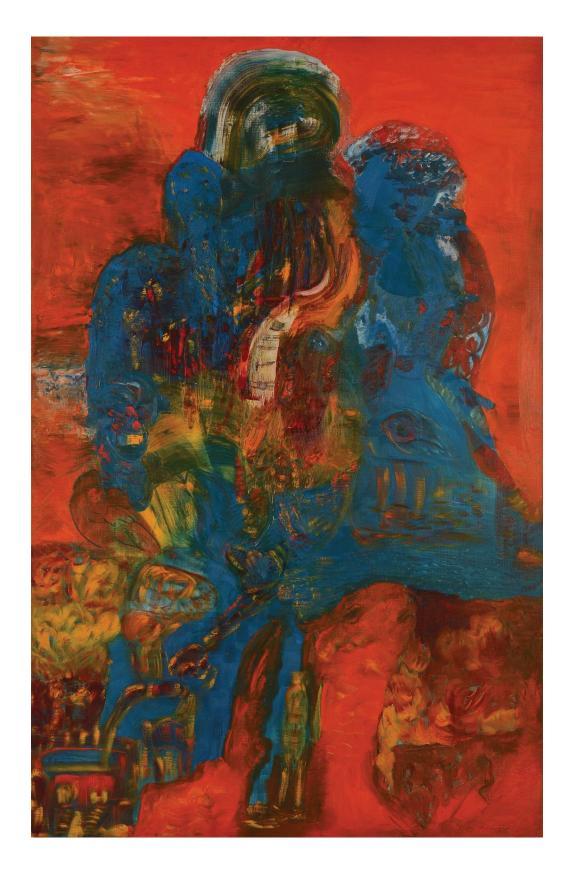
Ali Lagrouni (1956)

Depth
(2005)
Oil on Canvas, 80 x 59 cm



Ali Lagrouni (1956)

Supreme Protection (2005) Oil on Canvas, 260 x 200 cm



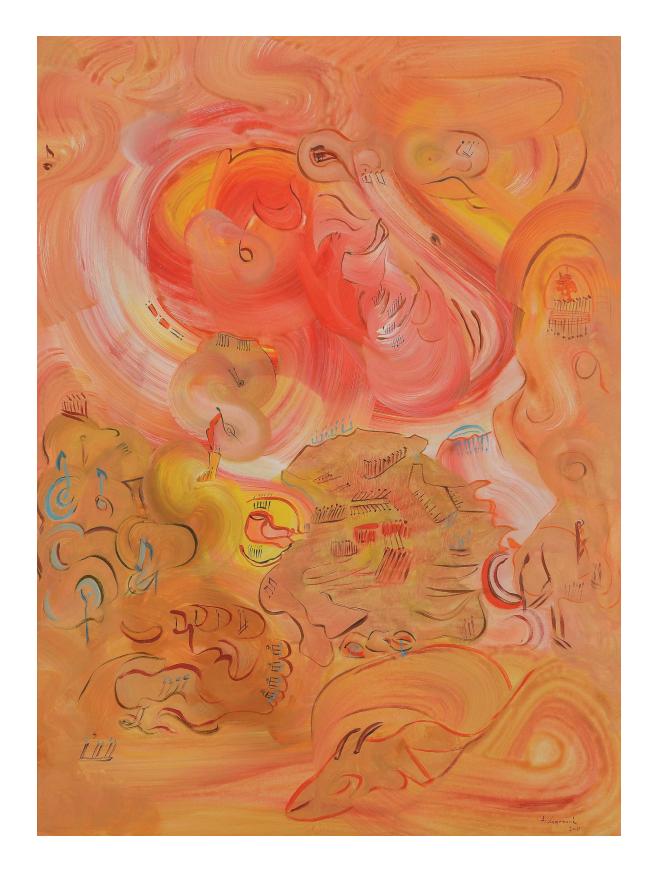
Ali Lagrouni (1956)

Touareg (2005) Oil on Canvas, 250 x 160 cm



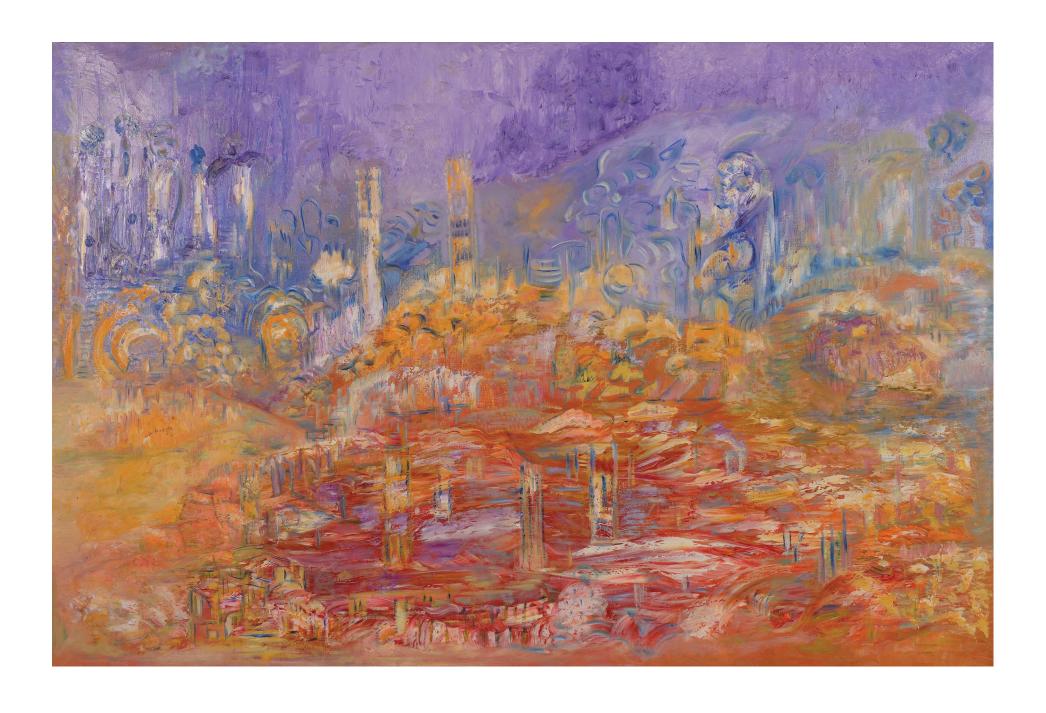
Ali Lagrouni (1956)

Body, Soul and Spirit (2011) Oil on Canvas, 120 x 100 cm

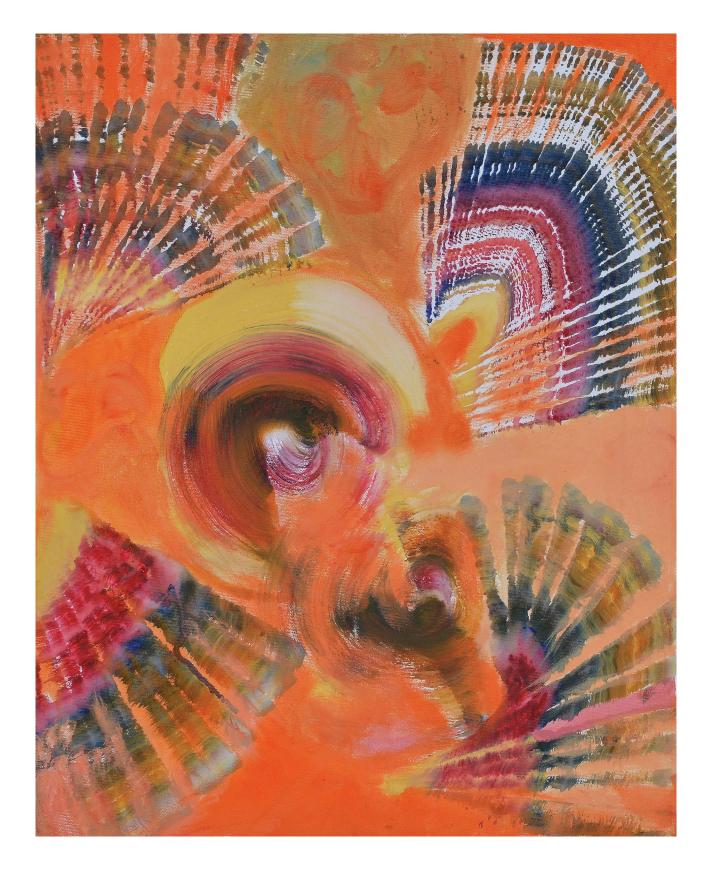


Ali Lagrouni (1956)

Composition
(2001)
Oil on Canvas, 107 x 80 cm



Renaissance (2012) Oil on Canvas, 130 x 194 cm



Ali Lagrouni (1956)

African Dance (2012) Oil on Canvas, 50 x 40 cm



Complementarity
(2012)
Oil on Canvas, 130 x 194 cm



Ali Lagrouni (1956)

Duality
(2012)
Oil on Canvas, 100 x 80 cm



Light of Morocco (2012) Oil on Canvas, 129 x 195 cm



Oceanic (2015) Oil on Canvas, 90 x 128 cm



Blue Note (2015) Oil on Canvas, 120 x 120 cm



Angel of Love (2015) Oil on Canvas, 120 x 160 cm



The Great Blue (2017)
Oil on Canvas, 200 x 300 cm



Flight over Monaco (2018) Oil on Canvas, 100 x 130 cm

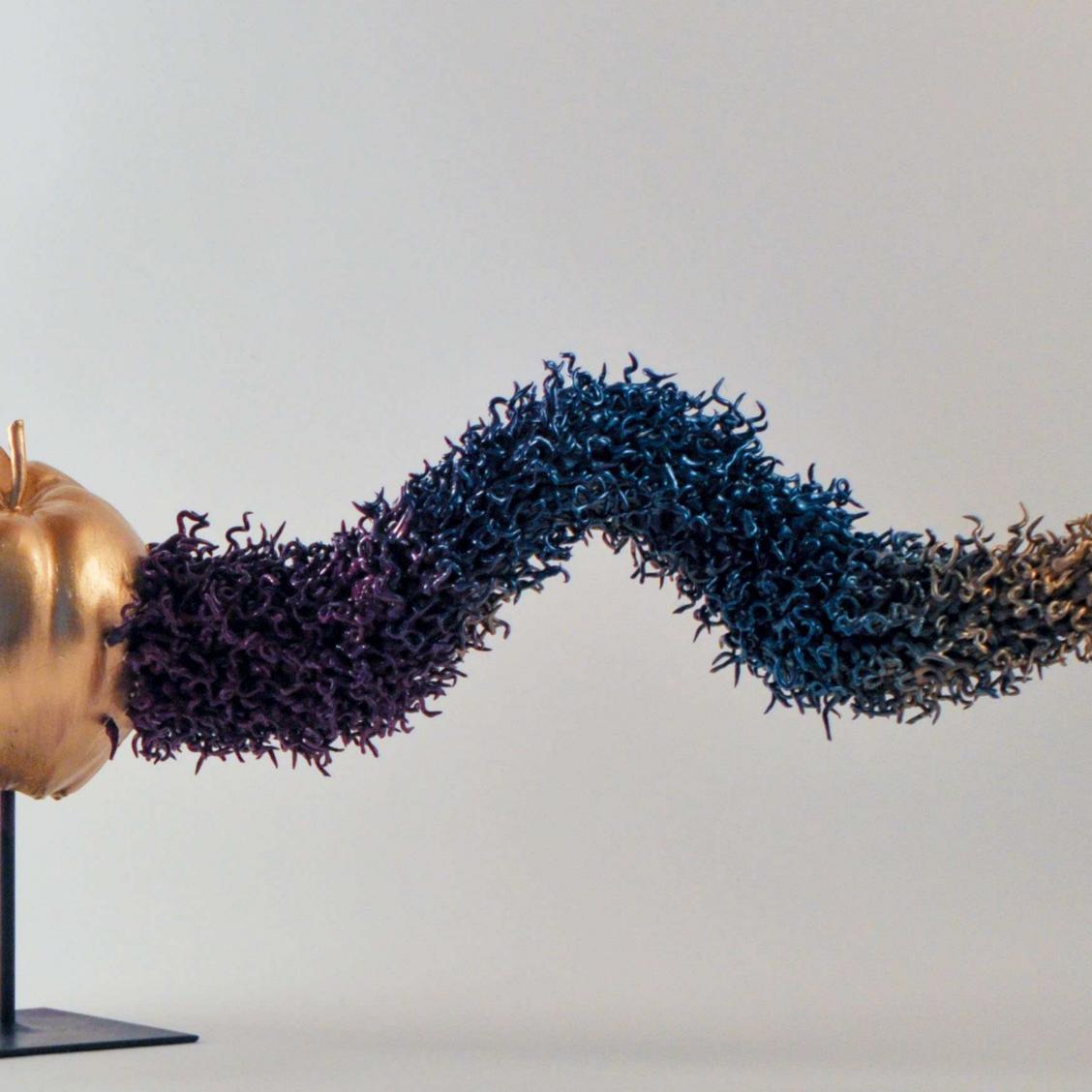
Exhibitions (selection)

- · 2009 -2017 Galerie Villa Esprit3, Geneva (CH)
- · 2008 United Nations, Geneva (CH)
- · 2006 Galerie de LA Fontaine, Geneva (CH)
- · 2006 Contemporary Art Fair of Montreux (CH)
- 2005 Galerie Art & Francophonie, Amsterdam (NL)
- · 2004 Nominee for the 25th Prix de Rome, Fontana di Roma (IT)
- · 2004 Royal Academy of Arts, London (UK)
- · 2004 Galerie Riviera, Nice (FR)
- · 2003 Galerie de la Chapelle, Beaulieu-sur-Mer (FR)
- · 2003 Bank Von Ernst, Monaco (MC)
- · 2002 Basel Art Fair, guest of honor for Morocco (CH)
- · 2000 2001 Galerie Expressions, Geneva (CH)
- · 1999 Galerie Bagnoréa, Annecy (FR)
- · 1994 Galerie Bassamat, Casablanca (MR)
- · 1994 Palmeraie Golf Palace Marrakech (MR)
- · 1992 -1993 Europ'Art Art Fair, Geneva (CH)
- · 1991 Manoir de Cologny, Geneva (CH)
- · 1989 Galerie L'Embellie, Montreux (CH)
- · 1988 United Nations, Geneva (CH)
- · 1987 Galerie d'Art Contemporain Britannique, Lausanne (CH)
- · 1986 Espace Adriatica, Geneva (CH)
- · 1985 Galerie L'Olivier, Geneva (CH)
- · 1976 Galerie du Ring, Bienne (CH)

Private and Public collections (selection)

- · The Art Collection of State and City of Geneva (Geneva, Switzerland)
- · Fondation Gandur pour l'Art (Geneva, Switzerland)
- · The Jan Krugier Collection (Geneva, Switzerland)
- · The Guy & Ingrid Pas Chaudoir Art Collection (Antwerp, Belgium)
- The Art Collection of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco (Geneva, Switzerland)
- · Art Collections of the following Banks: Bank of America, Arab Bank, Société des Banques Suisses, Crédit Suisse, etc.
- · The Art Collection of the Ambassador of Russia (Bern, Switzerland)
- · The Art Collection of Mr. Azedine Berrada (Casablanca, Morocco)
- · The Art Collection of Ms. Isabelle Nobs (Montreux, Switzerland)





NEL-14512

(Belgium, 1986)

Born in Etterbeek (Belgium) in 1986, Nel-14512 is a Belgian symbolist-surrealist sculptor.

Her body of work is born out of the inventive blending of a figurative style tainted by pop art with the deconstruction of the French language. At first sight, the viewer discovers works that play with expressions and their mental projections to perpetually oscillate between the symbolism of a concept and its literal representation.

What is the meaning of an image? Must it be one with its explanation? Thus being one with its title? Following this very interrogation and this play on signifying and signified, Nel-14512's work undeniably adopts the visual style of surrealism, with the same attention to detail and resemblance, but her own use of language does not translate into an absence of link between the word and the image. It is quite the opposite, for her sculptures dive deeper into the meaning of their title, gracefully exhausting its symbolic meaning.

Nel-14512's technical and documentary research all aim at creating a visual shock resulting from the juxtaposition of images, words and objects, whereby she expresses herself almost philosophically, shamelessly shaking some of our core beliefs.



EXHIBITION - JULY 1st TO AUGUST 31st, 2018

NEL-14512 – NOT ETERNAL

Not Eternal. When observing the work of Nel-14512 over the past four years, I was struck by her ever-subtle representation of time within the context of the preciousness of Life in all its fragile forms, confronted to inescapable Death. By doing so, the young Belgian artist caresses a rather classical panel of themes found in western, often religious, art. But her technique and the form she chooses for her sculptures and assemblages is all but classical.

New Belgian surrealism is perhaps a way of explaining Nel-14512's journey so far. I would rather think of her as a graceful visual poet mixing her love for popular art and the (French) word with a much wider heritage of artistic expression from her country of origin, but not only. She says Magritte and Duchamp are still major influences on her work, but I can think of an even more international crowd when I look at the exhibition we put together, ranging from Frans Snijders to Jan Fabre - while some works echo my lasting impressions of Ai Wei Wei, Edvard Munch and even Chaim Soutine.

In the end, Nel-14512's artistic expression is truly unique and her own. Her modern portraits of the soul transcend human emotion, spoken or silent, inviting us to consider our own personal story, our relationship to God, to Love, to Sex, to Beauty, to Knowledge and most of all to Life.

Living in Liege, Nel is a self-taught artist and has had several exhibitions since 2012, mostly in Belgium. Her synergetic relationship with the Belgian Gallery of Namur (BE) has allowed her work to meet international collectors through art fairs and solo shows, culminating with the very successful "De la Suie dans les Idées – Un Clin d'Oeil Surréaliste de Magritte à Nel-14512" (D'Arc – Scène National – le Creusot, France - 2018) exhibition which featured a retrospective of her work in conversation with that of Masters of Belgian Surrealism like Magritte and Delvaux.

Her humor and wit taint every piece she delicately makes in her studio at home. And so, we start this exhibition with two sculptures from 2014, where snails serve as a reminder of our consciousness of the evolution and expansion of Life. To the ancient Egyptians, the spiral (and by association, the snail) was a symbol of the progress of Life spiraling out and expanding. Here they also represent inevitable decay. Then come three pieces of 2016 – all visual and literary reminders that our time on earth is limited. Yet Nel's artistic comment is never pathetic or sad, but always an invitation to live fully.

Au Nom du Père / In the Name of the Father (2017), Ecce Homo (2017) and Accoupler le Souffle / Breath Taking (2018) are religious comments that can be read in many ways but clearly question how much suffering one should endure for one's belief? What makes a Man? Is the church truly open to unconditional love?

The brain is often overwhelmingly present in Nel's work. The brain as a sexual organ (a thought also often developed in the work of Jan Fabre), the brain as a precious and fragile organ, at times ready to be filled with ideas (*Science Infuse / Infused Science* – 2018), at times closed and protected like the pearl-brain shielded by a shell and glass dome in *Perle Rare / Rare Pearl* (2018).

Yet the brain is little without the flesh or without the heart, both recurring elements to be found in different uses like in *Enveloppe Charnelle / Carnal Envelope* (2017), where the flesh may contain secrets, or like in *Coup de Coeur / Crush* (2017) where a giant leather heart teases the viewer into wondering how much a heart can truly take.

I chose *Pas de Fumée sans Feu / No Smoke without Fire* (2018) to be the closing piece of this exhibition. To me, the title suggests it is a direct homage of Nel-14512 to Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une Pipe* and to Duchamp's famous signature, acknowledging that she would not be there without them. Surrealism has surely encouraged us to think outside of the box, to consider things from different angles, to be open to the unknown – it rose out of the bitter ashes of the Great War – and NOW is perhaps the perfect time to once again look at ourselves from a different eye. We are after all, not eternal.



Nel 14512 (1986)

L'Air du Temps (2014)
Polymer, Lacquer, Epoxy and Fake Fur, 29 x 29 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Chaise Percée (2014) Polymer, Lacquer and Wood, 100 x 54 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Pacemaker (2016)

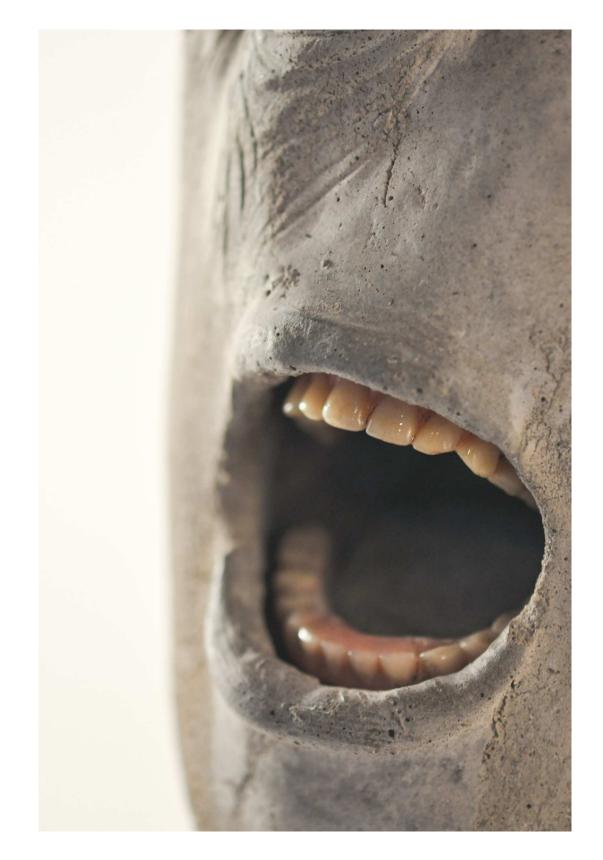
Polymer, Synthetic Porcelain and Wheels, 13×27 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

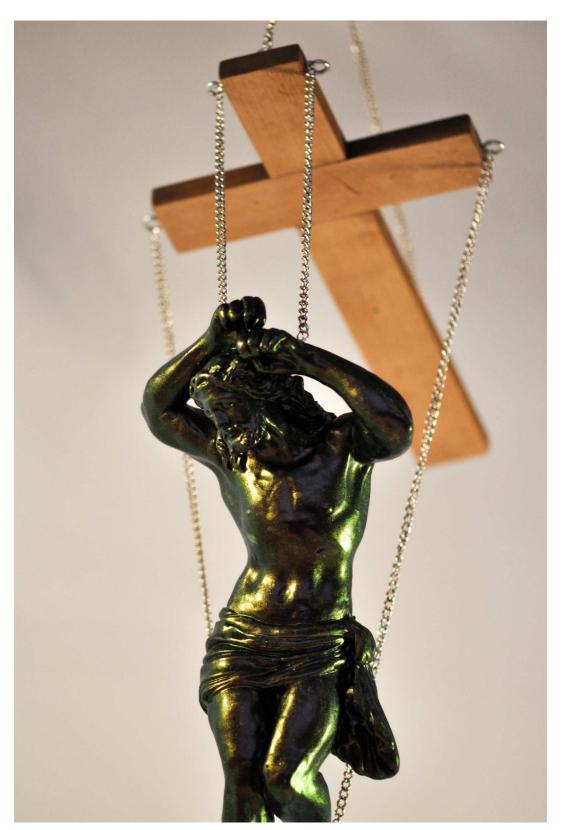
Douceur de Vivre (2016) Polymer, Epoxy and Fake Fur, 45 x 33 cm





Nel 14512 (1986)

Cri du Coeur (2016) Concrete and Resin, 47 x 25 cm





Nel 14512 (1986)

Au Nom du Père (2017) Polymer, Epoxy and Wood, 40 x 30 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Ecce Homo
(2017)
Polymer and Epoxy, 26 x 13.5 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Coup de Coeur (2017) Polyester, Leather and Chains, 130 x 55 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Fruit de la Passion (2017) Polymer, Lacquer and Epoxy, 30 x 110 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} $Mot\,Doux \\ (2017) \\ Polymer, Epoxy and Fake Fur, 50 x 120 cm \end{tabular}$



Nel 14512 (1986)

L'Oiseau de Mauvaise Augure (2017)

Taxidermy, Polymer, Synthetic Porcelain and Gold Powder, 60 x 30 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Enveloppe Charnelle (2017) Polymer, Epoxy and Wash, 28.5 x 28.5 cm



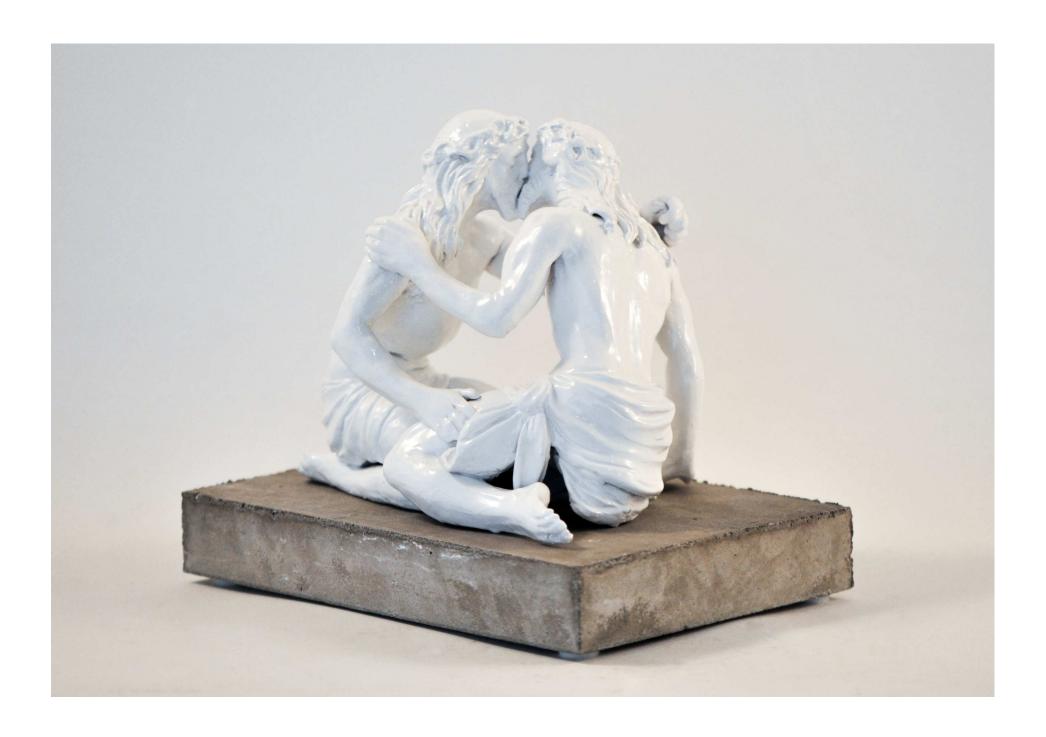
Nel 14512 (1986)

Perle Rare (2017) Polymer, Epoxy and Wash, $34 \times 14 \text{ cm}$



Nel 14512 (1986)

Science Infuse (2018) Polymer, Epoxy and Lacquer, 32×13 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Accoupler le Souffle (2018) Polymer, Epoxy and Lacquer, 20 x 25 x 17.5 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Entrer sans Frapper
(2018)
Taxidermy, Polymer, Epoxy and Lacquer, 65 x 36 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

Pas de Fumée sans Feu (2018)
Polymer, Epoxy and Blue of Klein, 34 x 13 cm



Nel 14512 (1986)

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} $L'Esprit\ Ouvert$\\ (2018) \end{tabular}$ Taxidermy, Polymer and Synthetic Porcelain, 35 x 12 cm

Selected Exhibitions

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 Festival d'Art Contemporain Namur, Belgium
- 2017-18 « De la suie dans les idées » L'Arc Scène Nationale Le Creusot, France
- 2017 Belgian Gallery Namur, Belgium
- 2015 « ELLIPSES » Galerie AMAP Galeries de la Reine Brussels, Belgium
- 2015 Festival de Jazz Galerie AMAP Liege, Belgium
- 2015 heart2gallery Mons, Belgium
- 2014 I-N-T-R-O-D-U-C-I-N-G Closed Art Gallery Antwerp, Belgium
- 2013 Crossing Gallery Liege, Belgium

Nel-14512 received the Audience Award at the 2017 Festival d'Art Contemporain of Namur, Belgium.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 Group Show Down to Art Gent, Belgium
- 2018 « Entrez en matière » Bettina Von Arnim Art Contemporain Paris, France
- 2018 Art Paris Belgian Gallery Paris, France
- 2017 Festival d'Art Contemporain Belgian Gallery Namur, Belgium
- 2017 Group Show Château de la Hulpe Belgian Gallery Brussels, Belgium
- 2016 Group Show Château Bayard Belgian Gallery Namur, Belgium
- 2014 Galerie NN70 Brussels, Belgium
- 2014 « corps @ corps » LAGALERIE.BE Brussels, Belgium
- 2014 Closed Art Gallery Antwerp, Belgium
- 2013 « Qui Dit Mieux » Théâtre Marni Brussels, Belgium
- 2013 « Get Art Of Here » Le Fiacre Liege, Belgium
- 2013 « Confiance aux artistes » Juste Art Brussels, Belgium
- 2013 LAGALERIE.BE Brussels, Belgium
- 2012 « Au fil de l'eau » Totem Gallery Fumal, Belgium
- 2012 Le Hangar You ART Liege, Belgium
- 2012 Art expo You ART Luxembourg







BRUCE CLARKE

(South Africa / United Kingdom, 1959)

Visual artist and photographer, Bruce Clarke was born in London in 1959 from South African parents. He now lives in France.

It was at the Fine Arts School at Leeds University in the 1980's that he was initiated to the *Art & Language* movement around Michael Baldwin, David Bainbridge, Terry Atkinson, Harold Hurrell. In the wake of these pioneering conceptual artists, Clarke's work engages with contemporary history, the writing and transmission of this history and hopes to stimulate thought on the contemporary world and its representations. Deeply anchored in a school of *critical figuration*, his artistic research integrates codes finally to use them to criticise and demystify structures of power and injustice.

Bruce Clarke became politically and artistically engaged in the struggle for change in South Africa during the period of apartheid. In parallel he followed the evolution of the situation in Rwanda and the planned and proclaimed genocide, participating in the creation of a collective for solidarity with the Rwandese people. It was whilst doing a photo reportage in Rwanda for this collective in the days following the end of the genocide that he realised the importance of art in the process of the conservation of memory and the writing of history. A few years later he started to work on the creation of a memorial site near Kigali, the *Garden of Memory*, a monumental installation project on-going since 2000, in close collaboration with survivors' families, civil society associations and the Rwandese institutions as well as UNESCO. He later worked on a large-scale mural project for the 20th commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda entitled *Upright Men* in Rwanda and elsewhere in the world (Ouidah, Geneva, Lausanne, Brussels, Paris, Montreal etc...)

As resident artist invited by the Conseil Général de Guadeloupe (French Caribbean), he produced an exhibition *Fragments of tomorrow's History* relating the link between the slave trade, colonialism and globalisation. Collaborator in the Lille based Fest-Africa organisation's project on Rwanda: *Write, Film, Paint in Memory*, he has also worked with the Afrika Cultural Centre in Johannesburg and led visual arts workshops in South Africa, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Benin, Tanzania, Zambia and France. In 2006 he published *Dominations* with Editions Homnisphères and in 2016 *Fantômes de la Mer* with ARTCO.

As a photographer, he has published photo reports on South Africa, the reconstruction of Rwanda, the return of Liberian refugees and Palestine. His work has been exhibited in Europe, in Africa and the United States.



EXHIBITION - SEPTEMBER 1st TO NOVEMBER 30th, 2018

BRUCE CLARKE - BIRTH OF AN ICON

I met Bruce Clarke by chance. He was standing in a moving bus in Dakar. We were both about to fly back to Brussels. Our brief chat informed me that Bruce was coming back from the island of Gorée, where he was showing his life-size works of *Sea Ghosts*. This travelling series of paintings by Clarke is foremost a homage to the political and economic refugees who fall victim to trans-Mediterranean human trafficking. Men and women are painted into the water; Clarke artistically merging their body and soul with the sea that claimed them, forever. Although I missed the exhibition at that time, I discovered it later, on the artist's website, and could not help but noticing the disturbing echo with Gorée's darkest history. The island was once a very active hub for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, mostly from the XVIIth - XIXth Century. In some way we are all witnesses of the human drama going on every day all over the planet and while most of us stay fatalistically on the sidelines, many men, women and children are actively trying to better things, for themselves and for others. Bruce Clarke is one of them. Without label, I would consider him to be an *activist artist*, moved by a soul and a spirit that he translates into artistic gesture and shares with passion.

Months later I asked Bruce if he would want to create paintings for this exhibition, to narrate a visual story with his most recent work. What surfaced was a triangle of the human condition, a sort of philosophical questioning of what makes us who we are. And although this combination of three series of paintings offers some answers, it rather raises more questions, engaging the viewer's subjective reading of the visual narration, and hopefully debate and sharing. For only through engaging into thoughtful communication can such world issues (as migration, resistance, genocide...) be deciphered and perhaps healed and prevented.

Such engaging reactions to works of art could seem abstract and blurry to many but Clarke's murals and installations of his works in public spaces leaves no viewer idle. His visual style is solidly figurative, thus championing its subject matter. A second visual layer revolves around the use of language, extracted from real news titles and written media coverage of current affairs mostly, deeply anchoring each series of paintings into its own time, sometimes more, sometimes less. The third dimension of his art as I see it is color. Notably, his remarkable orange that I personally associate with fire, the fire of the heart, the fire of the mind, the fire that needs to spread for things to change.

This Fire, Bruce talks about it in his gripping portrait of Angela Davis, which he titled after James Baldwin's novel *The Fire Next Time*. Perhaps it is interesting to start with her *Icon* (from the 8 *Icons Series* paintings in our show) as she is the only one of them still living. The other human beings he portrays, who became *Icons* through their actions and ideas, now mostly live on through the spectrum of their very icons. *Angela Davis*, like nearly all others in this series of Clarke, was an outcast, an undesired, a hunted exile. These icons that we so often look up to in order to illustrate or emulate ideals of human resolve, of revolutionary spirit against injustice, these "modern martyrs", were once outcasts, non grata, forced into exile, retreat, imprisonment or crime before society selectively altered its view of what they stood for.

Clarke's other portraits of Mandela, Devi, Sankara, Fanon, Lumumba, Pankhurst, Midnel and Louverture have in common their proportional iconic frontality as if filmed by the same lens, while in reality their lives were uniquely different, yet icons are often pantheonized according to History's fragmentary standardization of the truth. As much as we long to be told tales of the prevailing of justice, each of the struggles that brought justice were and are in fact unique journeys, most personal and complex. For me, Clarke's seemingly uniform formal approach of these *Icons* is an invitation to look deeper into who they were and what they stood for, to dive into the literature extracts in their background and the washed-out images hiding in their shadows.

Discovering that first series led me to question who these people were before they became activists and revolutionaries? How did their intent form and why? In common, our icons travelled around, by will or by force, and moving has always been a trigger for thinking outside of the box. The grass is certainly not always greener elsewhere but there is greatness everywhere and there are other models that we can learn from to help our societies at home - a sort of societal biodiversity that has been vital to our species' survival. Thousands of migrants reach the European shores every year, in hope of a better future. This ongoing phenomenon that has been peaking again this last decade has exacerbated political divide throughout Europe, threatening perhaps the Union's very existence, while the fundamental question has been blinded out by the intestine debate over the migrants.

Who are these faces coming off the boats? What is the intention of these men walking in our direction? What do these women and children want? A better life, sure, but what better life? In *Ready for This* (2016), about 20 men walk towards us, some of them mere shadows. As their faces and the title suggest (a title which appears in a dark shadowed newspaper collage in the center), their mind is set on something – intent generating movement, after what must have been a heavy choice, to risk all, leave everything behind and embrace hope.

Is it not their intentions rather than the men that scare us? We instinctively fear what we don't know. Without dialogue it goes without saying we'll never know. Perhaps it is a recurring historical irony that our downfall may once again be the result of our stubborn ignorance. What Bruce Clarke proposes with this second series dedicated to *Migrants* is a study of people in movement, both physical and intellectual. Each of his group portraits plays with our perception of an undefined human mass in a different way, sometimes capturing specific expressions in detail, sometimes blurring them slightly or completely to remove our understanding of what these people want. The *Migrants Series* has been one of the artist's main subjects of research over the past ten years. Human beings have always migrated, throughout history, often clashing over territory, water, resources and beliefs. Clarke's XXIst Century artistic study of this phenomenon and his invitation to investigate how many of tomorrow's icons hide in today's masses is a stimulating approach to elevate the debate.

The third series is the most recent one in Clarke's work. *Suspensions* poetically freezes victims of trauma in time and in space. The five suspended full-body portraits shown here make me think of prisons of the mind, where people whose lives have been cancelled by war, genocide, rape or torture are stuck in a moment they can never escape from. Their existence sometimes continues in parallel. They survive on the outside but are trapped on the inside. With his painting titled *Sens/Feel*, the artist depicts the subject in a pose of physical suffering, his hands opened in demand, his facial expression almost lost in the shadows. This painting, like others in this series, is reminiscent of a Christian tradition of portrayal of the Saints in suffering, in demand of God's guidance, in need of faith. If their lives have become prisons, how to escape? How to be reborn? Perhaps here again, movement is a solution, shaking off the ashes of a burned soul to be reborn as someone else, with new beginnings, new challenges and a future.

With such a reading, I can personally connect all three series of paintings into a narrative triangle or circle that can lead to more openness of mind and of heart, helping us focus on the win-win rather than on the lose-lose to help the icons of tomorrow to be born out of the forced journeys of today.

Klaus Pas, September 2018

BIRTH OF AN ICON

(of outcasts and exiles)

"You're a nigger too."

James Baldwin speaking to Elia Kazan

Angela Davis once banished, hunted down and condemned by the establishment is now revered as an iconic intellectual and forceful voice for woman's rights and black emancipation. She could, just as easily have been slain in her youth as her companion, George Jackson was. She was forced into internal exile, underground, to survive.

The line between fame and ignominy is fine. It depends on time; it depends on surviving, on holding onto your ideas and your life. And so often involves exile, foreign or local.

Exceptions exist. Thomas Sankara was cut down early, but his legacy goes on, as does Lumumba's. Their foothold in history remains strong, too strong for their successors to extirpate.

Had Mandela died in prison, would he be lauded as he is today?

Famous exiles, migrants, from Einstein to Freud, from Marx to Lenin, Dante to the Dalai Lama, Victor Hugo, Louise Michel, or even Seneca found fame and flourished in exile. An idol in exile is far from an idle idol.

Other less well-known migrants build wealth and wisdom, culture and cognisance in foreign lands. In August 2018, the *Fields* prize – the equivalent of the *Nobel* for mathematicians – was won by an Iranian Kurdish refugee who had fled to Britain several years earlier.

In Syria, Sudan, Somalia, in Eritrea and Turkey, in many other countries, the vital forces of societies are massacred and silenced. Forced to flee, humiliated on their journey, dehumanised on their arrival. How many, Einsteins or Hugos, how many Steve Jobs or Elia Kazans are amongst them?

In 1938, at the Conference of Evian – called to discuss the flow of Jewish migrants and attended by 32 countries - the Dominican Republic, alone, agreed to accept Jewish refugees. Short-term political expediency in dealing with the "migrant problem" is not new. A year later, in 1939 the St Louis ocean liner made the journey from Hamburg to Cuba with a thousand refugees aboard, mostly Jewish. Under pressure from the USA, Cuba refused permission for the passengers to land as of course did the USA and Canada. The ship was obliged to return to Europe. A last luxury Caribbean cruise for most of the passengers who disappeared into the maelstrom of Nazi occupied Europe. Freud and Einstein, luckily, took another ship.

The migrants who opt to cross the Mediterranean today "by boat" will see the historical irony in the voyage of the *St Louis*. History repeats itself in pathetic farce at enormous human cost.

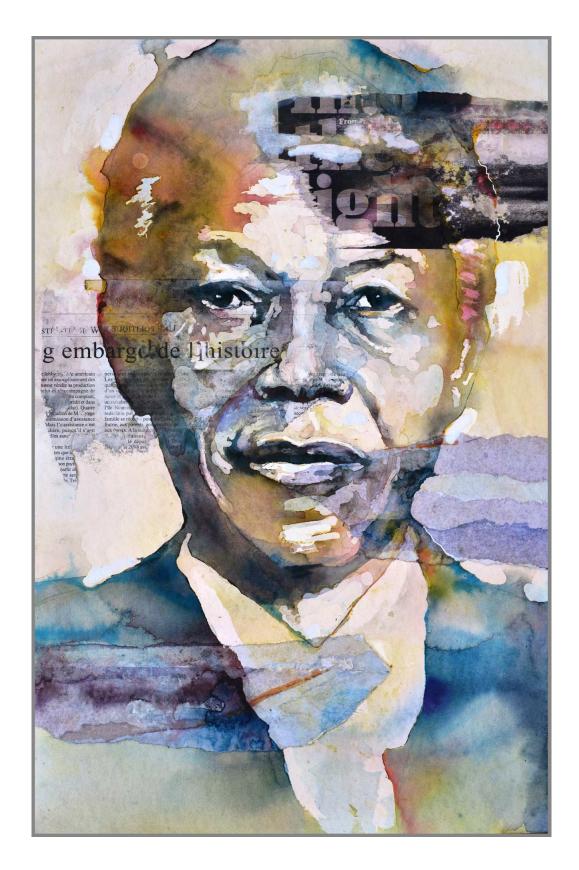
Not all migrants become idols in a foreign land, but what idols and migrants have in common is their humanity. And what is undeniable is that new blood, new ideas, nourish and nurture us, make us more human.

By bringing together these apparently dissociated themes, *Icons* and *Migration*, I attempt to underline the way in which seemingly unrelated phenomena in this world can converge giving us a different perspective and understanding of contemporary events. I believe that in the simplicity of stating evidences through painting we can better apprehend the world.



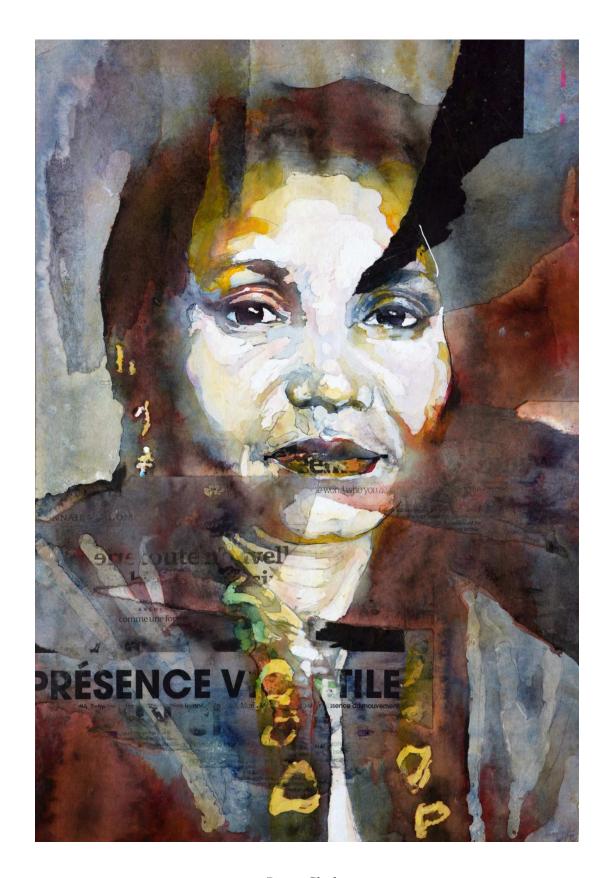
Bruce Clarke (1959)

The Fire Next Time (Angela Davis)
(2017)
Acrylic and Collage on Canvas, 116 x 89 cm



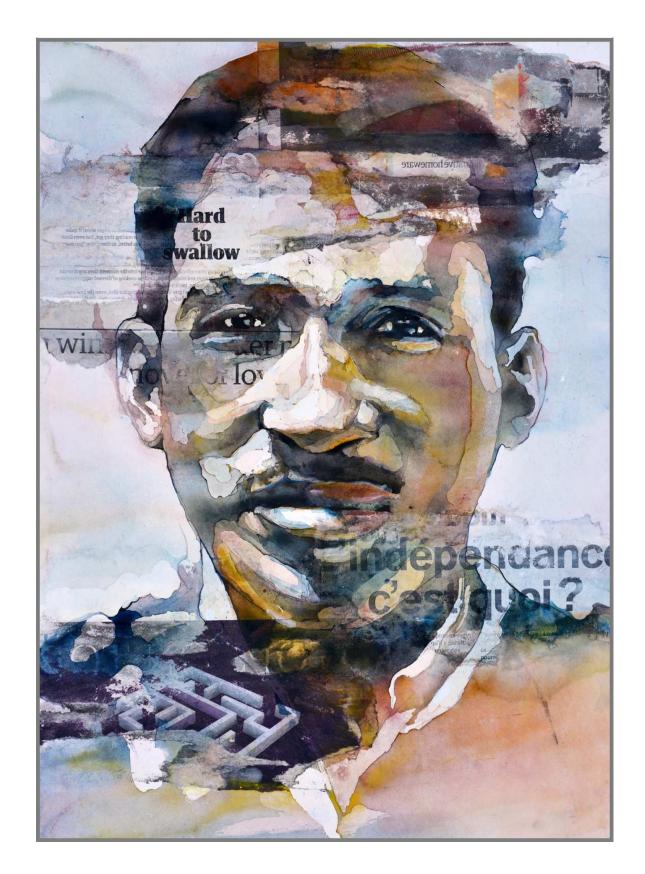
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Embargo on History (Nelson Mandela) (2018) Watercolor and Collage on Paper, $70 \times 50 \text{ cm}$



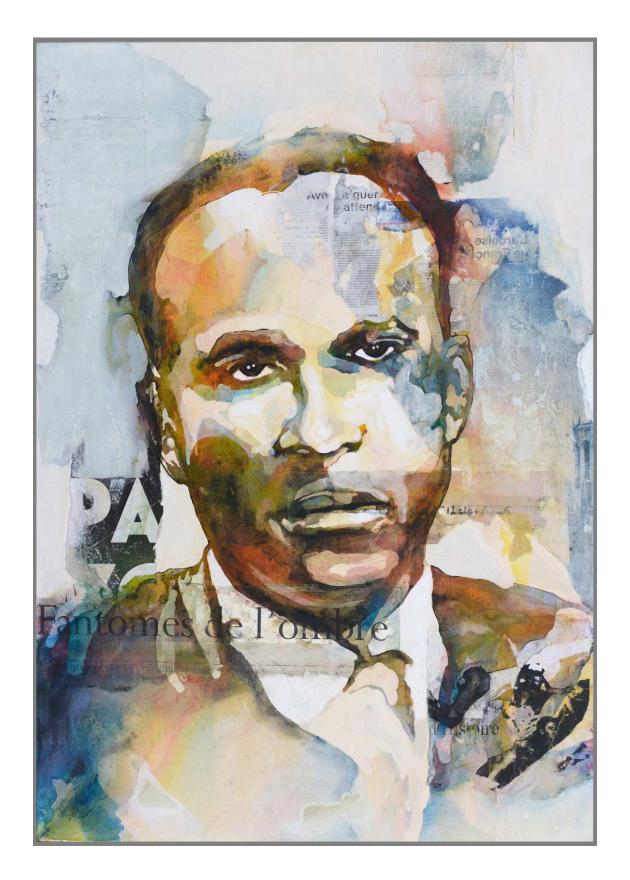
Bruce Clarke (1959)

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} \it Volatile Presence (Phoolan Devi) \\ (2017) \end{tabular}$ Watercolor and Collage on Paper, 70 x 50 cm



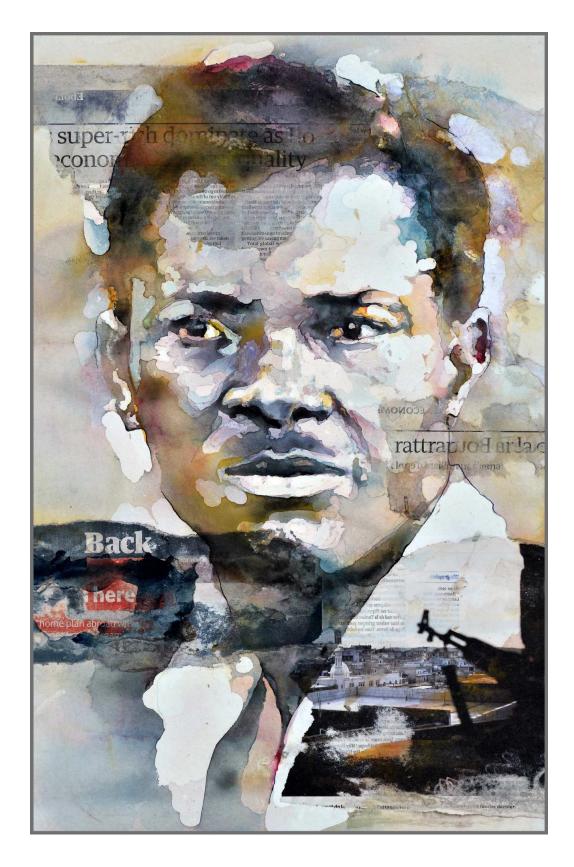
Bruce Clarke (1959)

What is Independence ? (Thomas Sankara) (2018) Watercolor and Collage on Paper, $70 \times 50 \text{ cm}$



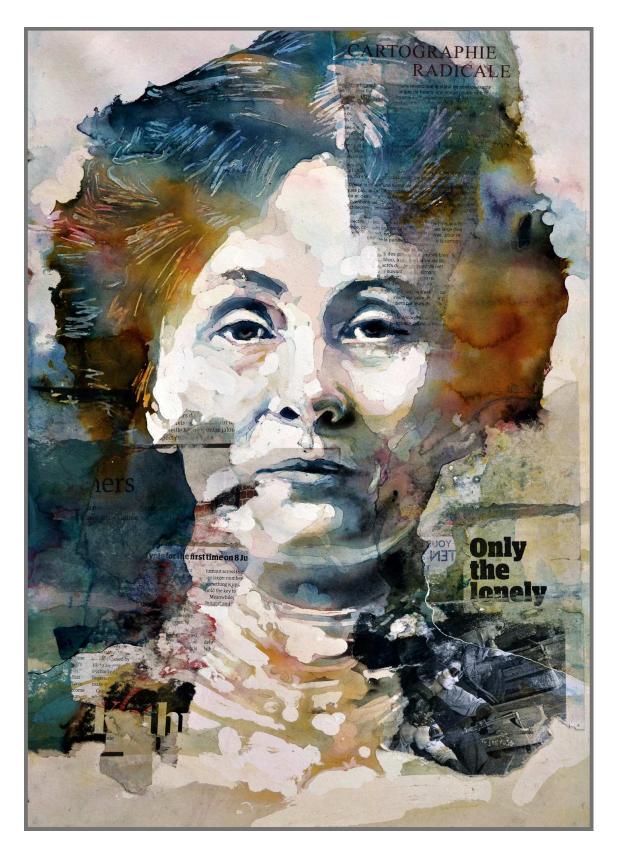
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Ghosts of History (Franz Fanon)
(2017)
Acrylic and Collage on Canvas, 116 x 89 cm



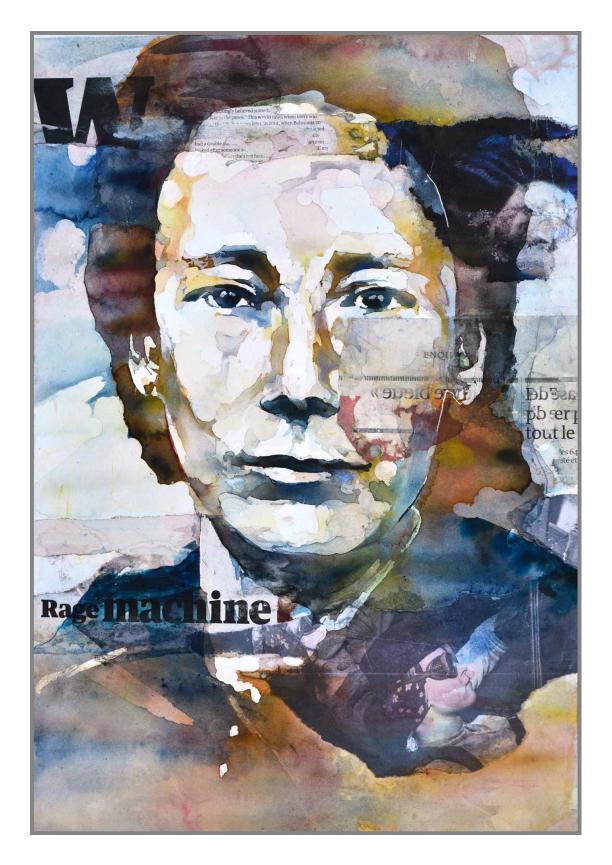
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Back Here (Patrice Lumumba) (2018) Watercolor and Collage on Paper, $70 \times 50 \text{ cm}$



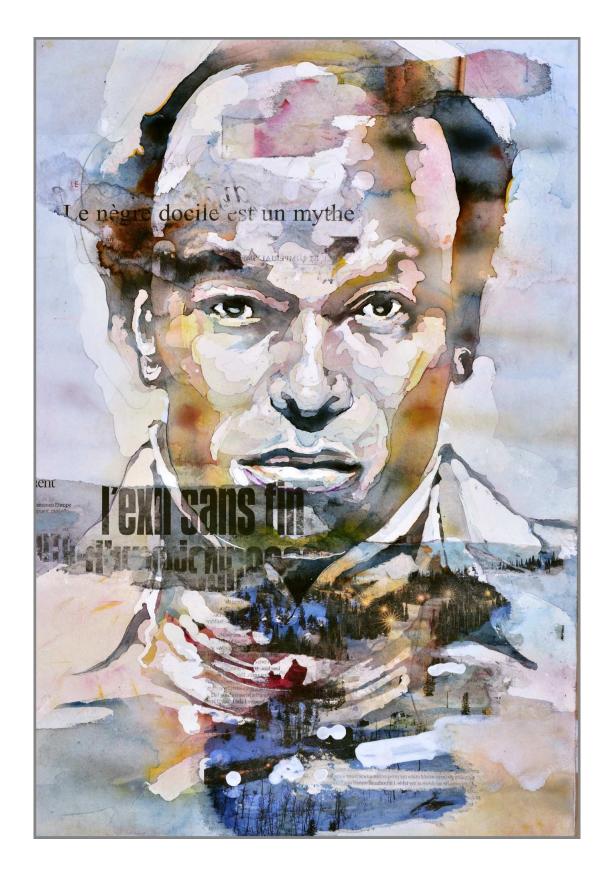
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Only the Lonely (Emmy Pankhurst) (2018) Watercolor and Collage on Paper, 70×50 cm



Bruce Clarke (1959)

Rage Machine (Louise Michel) (2018) Watercolor and Collage on Paper, $70 \times 50 \text{ cm}$



Bruce Clarke (1959)

The Obedient Nigger is a Myth (Toussaint Louverture)
(2018)
Watercolor and Collage on Paper, 70 x 50 cm



Bruce Clarke (1959)

Ready for This (Migrants Series)
(2016)
Watercolor and Collage on Paper, 55 x 90 cm



Bruce Clarke (1959)

Paranoid, Delusional (Migrants Series)
(2017)
Watercolor and Collage on Paper, 50 x 80 cm



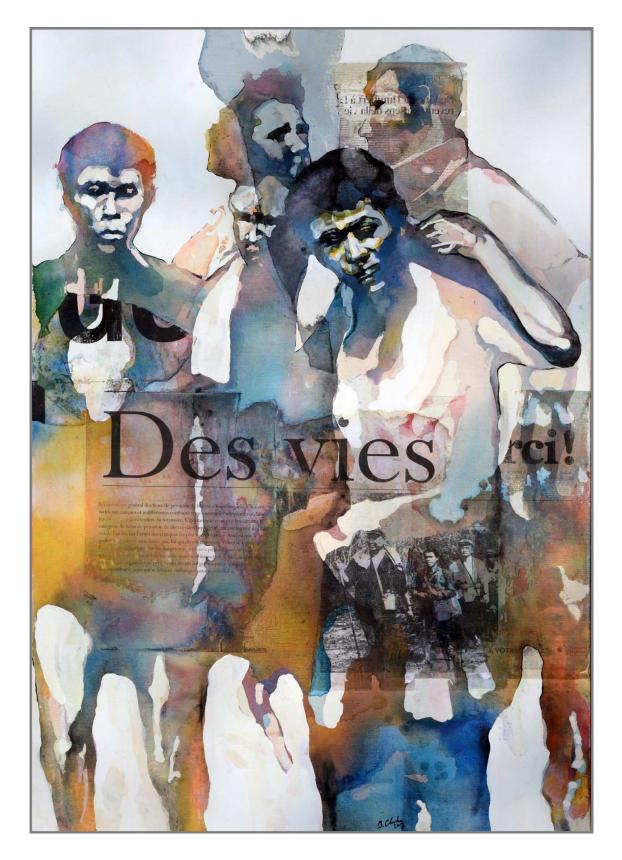
Bruce Clarke (1959)

On the Border (Migrants Series)
(2015)
Acrylic and Collage on Canvas, 120 x 120 cm



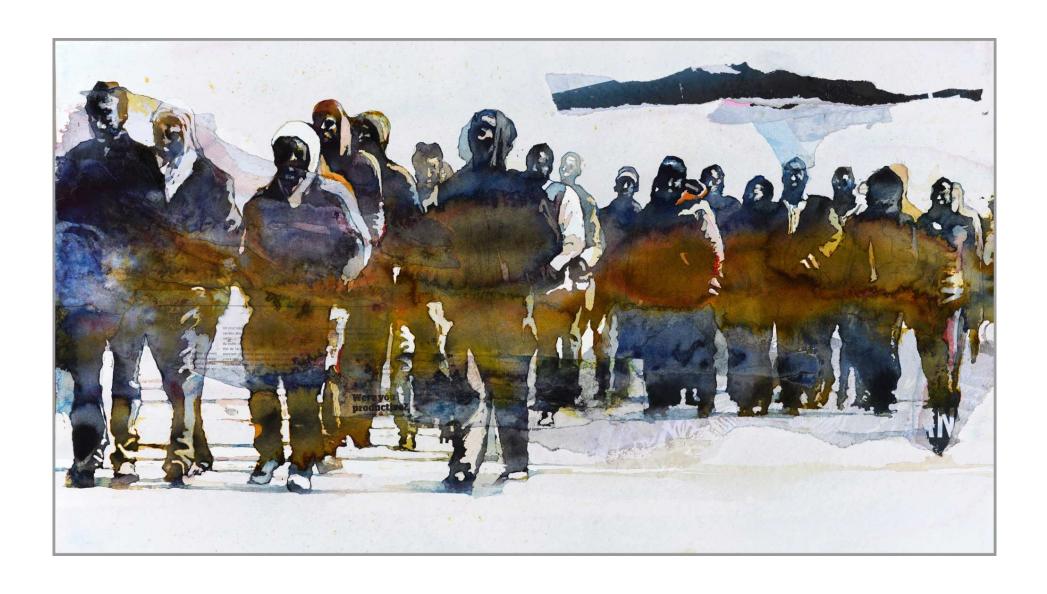
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Running on the Line (Migrants Series)
(2018)
Acrylic and Collage on Canvas, 114 x 89 cm



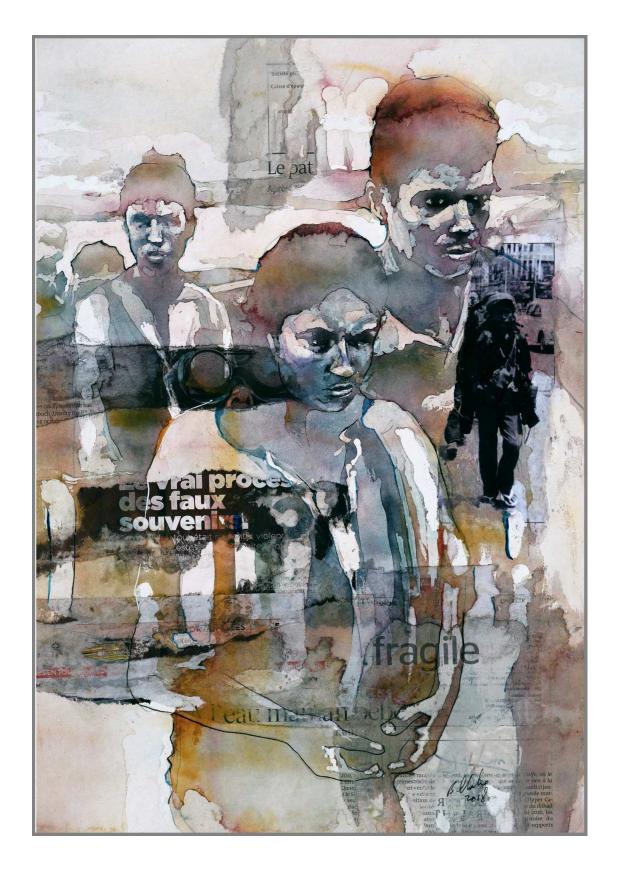
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Lives(Migrants Series)
(2017)
Acrylic and Collage on Canvas, 130 x 81 cm



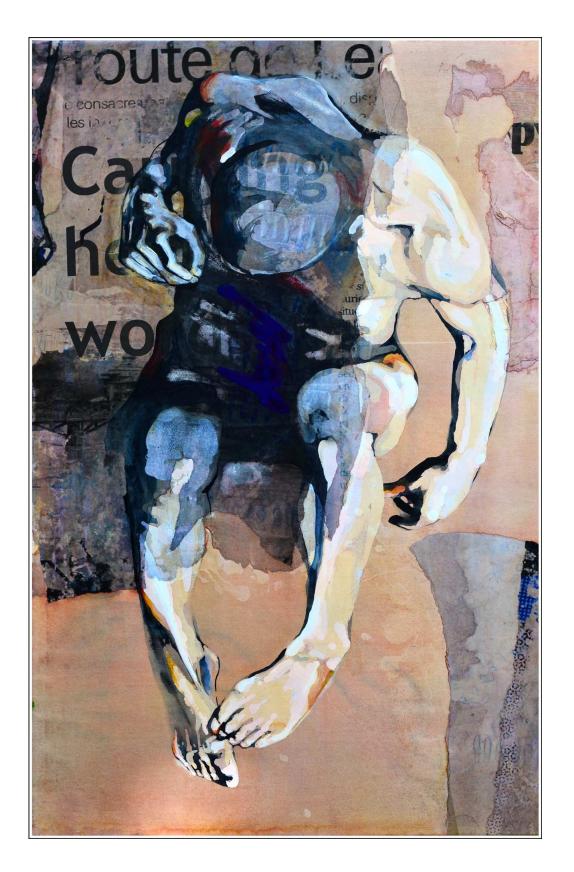
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Were You Productive? (Migrants Series)
(2016)
Watercolor and Collage on Paper, 55 x 90 cm



Bruce Clarke (1959)

False Memories (Migrants Series)
(2018)
Watercolor and Collage on Paper, 70 x 50 cm



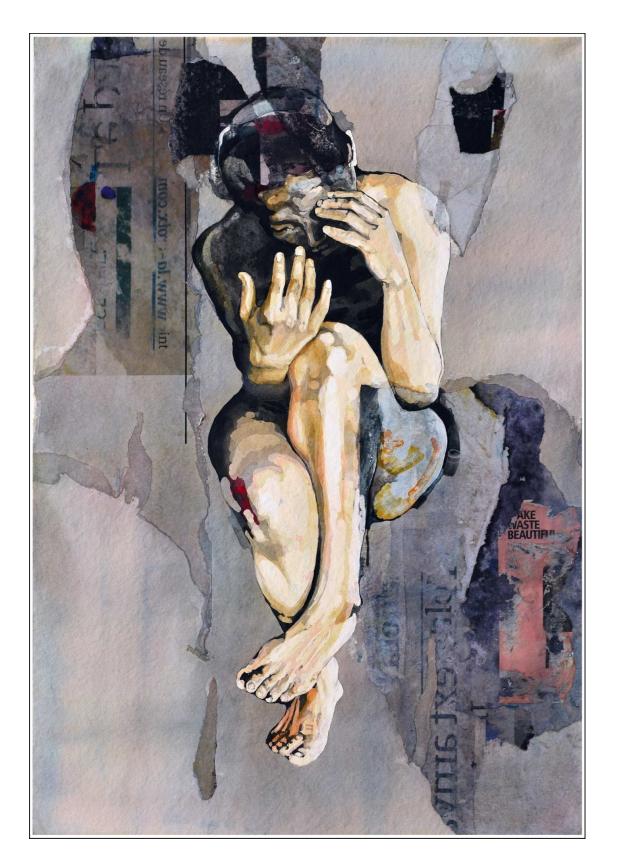
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Carrying Heavy Words (Suspensions Series)
(2018)
Acrylic on Paper, on Stretcher, 116 x 81 cm



Bruce Clarke (1959)

Flew In (Suspensions Series)
(2018)
Acrylic on Paper, on Stretcher, 116 x 81 cm



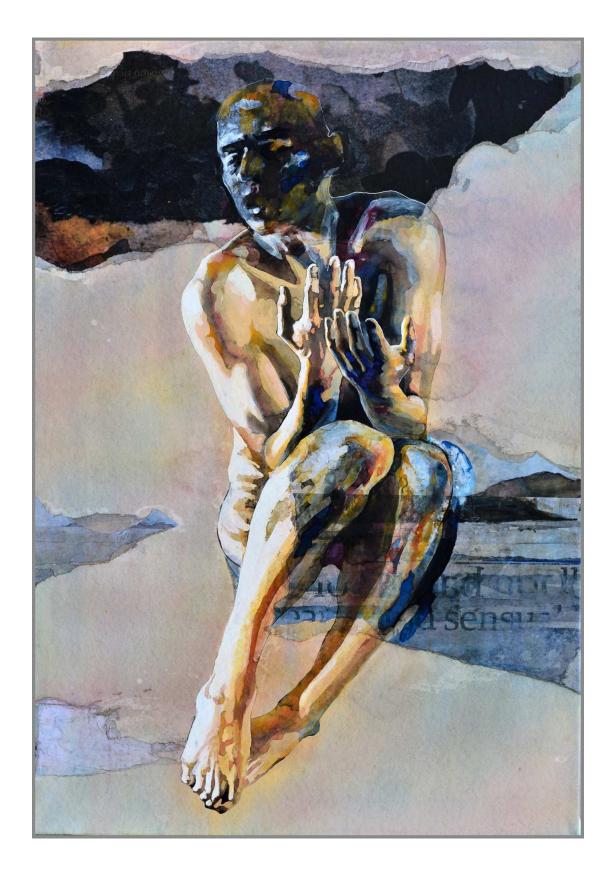
Bruce Clarke (1959)

Waste is Beautiful (Suspensions Series)
(2018)
Acrylic on Paper, on Stretcher, 116 x 81 cm



Bruce Clarke (1959)

Days of Wandering (Suspensions Series)
(2018)
Acrylic on Paper, on Stretcher, 116 x 81 cm



Bruce Clarke (1959)

Feel (Suspensions Series) (2018) Acrylic on Paper, on Stretcher, 116 x 81 cm

Solo exhibitions (selection)

2018	Front Line, Espace Anis Gras, Arcueil, France
2018	Alliance française de Lusaka, Zambie
2017	Living Memory and Upright Men, Coutances Museum, France
2016	Sea Ghosts, French Institue, Nouakchott, Mauritania
2015	Daily Violence, Multimedia centre Lormont, France
2014	Humanities Gallery Out of Africa, Sitges, Barcelona, Spain
2014	En toute impunité, Gallery Les Naufragés du Temps, St Malo, France
2014	Upright Men, Simultaneous exhibitions (Geneva, Lausanne, Paris, Brussels, Luxemburg, Kigali, Limoges, Liège) for the 20th
	commemoration of genocide in Rwanda
2013	Precarious Lives Gallery Julio Gonzalez, Arceuil, France
2013	Janus Gallery, Montreux, Switzerland
2013	M.I.A. Gallery Seattle, United States
2013	Body and Souls, Grenoble, France, Maison de l'International
2012	Artium Gallery, Luxemburg
2012	Fondation Zinsou, Cotonou, Benin
2011	Who's Afraid , Musée des Arts Derniers, Paris
2010	Neumünster Abby, Luxemburg
2010	Artium Gallery, Luxemburg
2010	Bekris Gallery, San Francisco, United States
2010	Musée des Arts Derniers, Paris, France
2009	Geneva Book Fair, Switzerland
2007	Other(s), l'Art et la Paix Gallery, France
2006	Musée des Arts Derniers, Paris, France
2006	Arcima Gallery, Paris, France
2006	Troubled identity, mixed identity, Plein Sud Festival, Cozes, France
2005	Arrêt sur Image Gallery, Bordeaux, France
2004	I'm writing to you from the Garden of memory - installation, Dak'Art off, St Louis, Senegal
2004	Les Naufragés du Temps Gallery, St Malo, France
2002	Fragments of tomorrow's History, L'Artchipel, Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe
2001	Centre Rémy Nainsouta, Guadeloupe, French Caribbean.
2000	I'm writing to you from the Garden of memory - Installation, Gallery Porte 2a, Bordeaux, France
2000	Château de St-Ouen, Saint-Ouen, France
1999	French Cultural Centre, Kigali, Rwanda
1999	Fragments of History, Grenoble International, Grenoble, France
1997	Rayon Vert Gallery, Nantes, France
1997	South African Embassy, Paris, France
1997	Museum of Romans, Romans, France
1996	Marina Gallery, Avignon, France

Public collections

Tilder Foundation, France
Zinsou Foundation, Cotonou, Benin
Contemporary Art Museum, Ouidah, Benin
Blachère Foundation, France
Artocarpe, Guadeloupe contemporary art museum, France
Cities of Paris, Bordeaux, Bègles, Arceuil, Vénissieux, France
Museum for Palestine, UNESCO, Paris





ARNY SCHMIT

(Luxembourg, 1959)

Arny Schmit is a storyteller, a conjurer, a traveler of time and space.

From the myth of Leda to the images of an exhibitionist blogger, from the house of a serial killer to the dark landscapes of a Caspar David Friedrich, he makes us wander through a universe that tends towards the sublime. Manipulating the mimetic properties of painting while referring to the virtual era in which we live, the Luxembourgish artist likes to surprise by playing on the false pretenses. In his paintings he creates bridges between reality, fantasy and nightmare. The medieval, baroque or romantic references reveal his profound respect for the masters of the past. Extracted from a different time era, decorative motifs populate his compositions like so many childhood memories, from the floral wallpaper to the dusty Oriental carpet, through the models of embroidery.

Through fragmentation, juxtaposition and collage, Arny Schmit multiplies the reading tracks and digs the strata of the image. The beauty of his women contrasts with their loneliness and sadness, the enticing colors are soiled with spurts, the shapes are torn to reveal the underlying, the reverse side of the coin, the unknown.



Portrait of Arny Schmit by Miikka Heinonen

EXHIBITION - DECEMBER 1st, 2018 TO FEBRUARY 28th, 2019

ARNY SCHMIT - WILD

13 windows with a view on the wilderness. Recent works by Luxembourgish painter Arny Schmit depict his vision of a daunting and nurturing nature and its relationship with the female body. A body that Schmit likes to fragment by imprisoning it into frames of analysis, each frame a clue into a mysterious narrative, a suggestion, an impression. His northern forests become the haunted realms of women from the middle ages to the renaissance who lure blond, black haired and brunette beauties into their bountiful womb. For Nature feeds on Nature, in an endless cycle of Life.

Through his first solo show with Kloser Contemporary Art, Schmit invites the viewer to time travel the wider history of art, freely feeding on Flemish renaissance portraiture (*Le Jardin de R.*) or the Lynchian landscapes made famous in the 1980s. His red thread is Nature, one he invites us to dissect and love through two *Seelenlandsdaften* (Landscapes of the Soul), *Into the Light I & II*. Nature empowers the artist to further dissect the female subject made defenseless through his process of fragmentation. The latter undoubtedly placing the stories within the oneiric world of fiction.

For me, Arny Schmit's signature lies within the dialogue through the frames and across his paintings. By creating multiple narratives inside a single work, the artist creates counterpoint, new meaning and interrogates. What are we seeing? What does a decaying forest clearing tell us about the girl in the red dress? (White Dots) A shot within a shot is a familiar figure in the grammar of cinema, but it is probably Schmit's mad passion for comic books (he collected over 5'000 from all over the world) that most nourished his artistic language, for his body of work has now mutated from a period where text was used to sublime image into this new phase, where silence and suggestion are now dominant. A silence that seems to give space to imaginary music and sounds.

Wild is in reference to the overwhelming presence of Nature in each of the 13 paintings in this show, but also suggests a wilderness within the human kind. At first motherly and inviting, Nature's wilderness soon seems to reach an encroaching overprotectiveness that wounds its children, like yet another warning that too much of anything is never a good thing. The series of paintings then becomes a presage of our need to protect Nature and by doing so, to protect ourselves. This is perhaps my very personal reading of the environmental emotion in these works, but we are after all at Nature's mercy.

I come back to the impressionist qualities of these recent works by Arny Schmit who translates Nature's emotions (and his own) through elaborate fields of undefined color that give birth to highly texturized organic brush and spatula strokes making up these forests, fields, valleys, rivers and lakes. Like Renoir and other impressionists, Schmit focuses his artistic study on women, capturing them in every angle, always beautiful, always fragile. This is the visible.

Perhaps then, the invisible is the fate of these women that Nature claims, for the stains of blood (*The Bride*) and drippings of red (*The Shore*), these fading pants (*The Vanishing*) and fuming craters (*Under the Volcano*) all point to the uncontrollable nature of their desire. Human passions render us unaware of the dangers around us, as illustrated by this Ophelia-like character floating in the brownish waters of *Torn*. Taking this further, I can only witness the constant rape of our Nature and our denial of it, as we slowly drift towards a more dangerous future. What then of our children? A point that finds echoes in Schmit's last work in the show: *The Swing*.



Arny Schmit (1959)

Into the Light I
(2018)
Oil on Canvas, 150 x 110 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

The Table
(2017)
Oil on Canvas, 160 x 200 cm



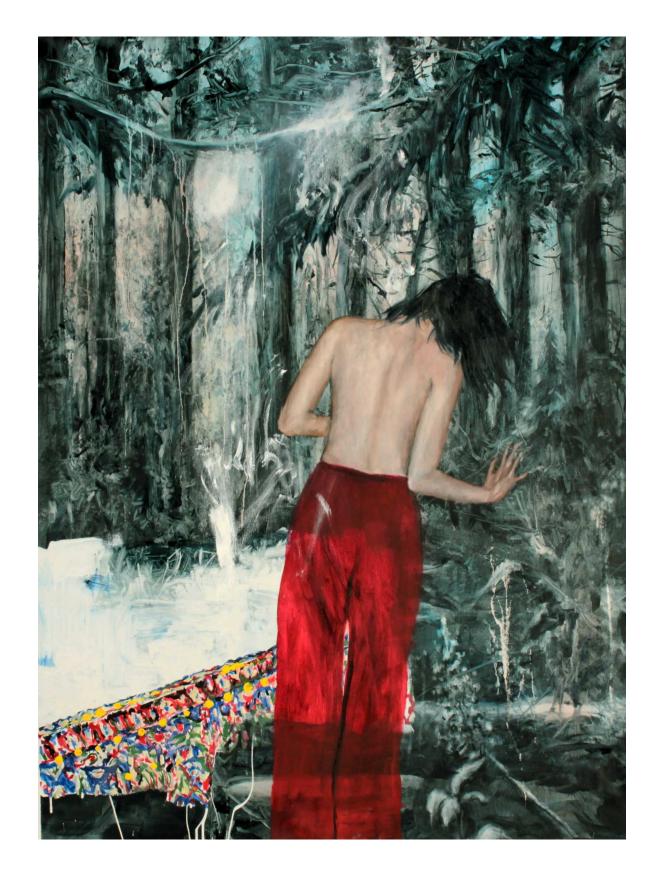
Arny Schmit (1959)

The Medallion (2017) Oil on Canvas, 150 x 110 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

Windows
(2018)
Oil on Canvas, 150 x 110 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

The Vanishing
(2018)
Oil on Canvas, 150 x 110 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

Under the Volcano (2017) Oil on Canvas, 150 x 110 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

White Dots
(2018)
Oil on Canvas, 150 x 110 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

The Bride (2017) Oil on Canvas, 160 x 200 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

The Garden of R. (2017)
Oil on Canvas, 150 x 110 cm



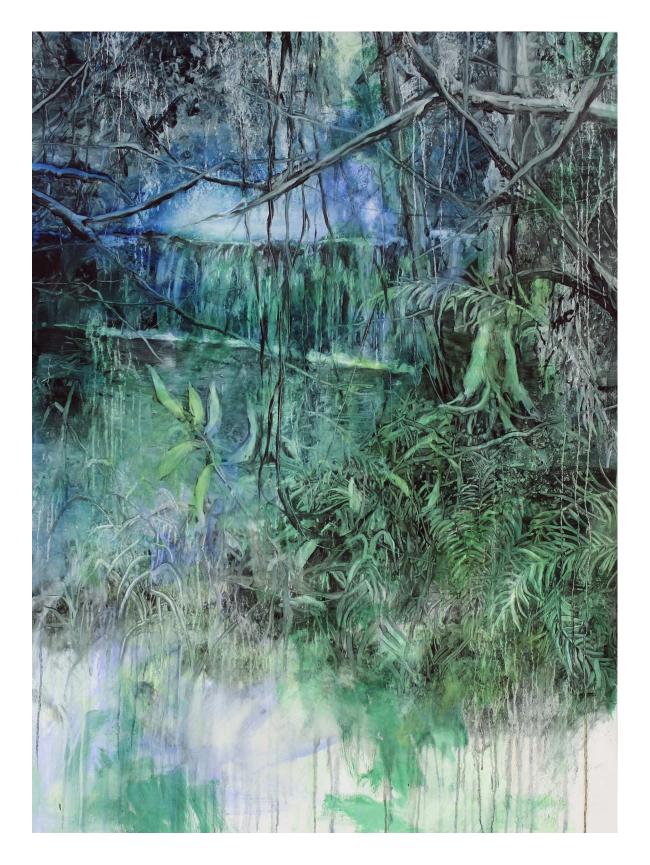
Arny Schmit (1959)

The Shore
(2017)
Oil on Canvas, 160 x 200 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

Torn (2017) Oil on Canvas, 160 x 200 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

Into the Light II
(2018)
Oil on Canvas, 150 x 110 cm



Arny Schmit (1959)

The Swing (2017)
Oil on Canvas, 160 x 200 cm

Solo exhibitions (selection)

2018 Wild - Kloser Contemporary Art - Online Show Journal intime de L. - Wild Project Gallery, Luxembourg 2016 2015 Galerie Art Container - Echternach, Luxembourg 2015 Coco & Neoba Rock - Galerie Toxic, Luxembourg 2015 Brains are where you find them - Galerie Hoste Art Residence, Bruges, Belgium 2012 Juste des figurants - Galerie Alphonse d'Heye/Knokke, Belgium 2011 Vive les privilèges - Galerie KJUB - Luxembourg 2010 Mol dru kraze goen - Galerie Toxic, Luxembourg 2009 Embassy of Luxembourg - Berlin, Germany Garage Pirsch – Luxembourg, Luxembourg 2007 "Jo, et geht, mä..." - Galerie Schweitzer, Luxembourg 2006 Galerie Box 38 / Ostende, Belgium 2005 Art Forum / Antwerpen, Belgium 2004 Galerie Schweitzer - Luxembourg 2003 Galeria VILLALBA I BADIA - Barcelona, Spain Galerie BOX 38 - Ostende, Belgium 2002 Spirit of paintings - Banque UBS Luxembourg - Luxembourg Spirit of paintings - DZ Bank Luxembourg - Luxembourg Galerie DECLIC, Luxembourg, Luxembourg 2000 CAMOES Institute - Embassy of Portugal, Luxembourg Galerie GNG - Paris, France Galerie A. Spiren - Strassen, Luxembourg 1999 Galerie DECLIC - Luxembourg, Luxembourg Espace PARAGON – Luxembourg, Luxembourg 1998 1993 Theaterstiffchen - Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Public collections (selection)

Ministère de la Culture - Luxembourg
Banque et Caisse d'Epargne de l'Etat - Luxembourg
Camoes Institute - Embassy of Portugal - Luxembourg
Commission de Surveillance du Secteur Financier - Luxembourg
Commune de Strassen - Luxembourg
ULB - Bruxelles - Belgium
Banque EFG - Luxembourg
Private Collection of Ms. Catherine Deneuve – France







(Macedonia / France, 1945)





A lawyer turned journalist, Kiro Urdin studied art and cinema in Paris in the seventies and has been painting since 1985. He is known for his energetic paintings which have been exhibited worldwide since 1986 in cities like Paris, Yokohama, Los Angeles, London, Stockholm and Bratislava. During the same period, in 1988, Kiro went to New York and Hollywood to pursue his film ambitions. There he directed four films, and he keeps on directing documentaries and experimental films today.

In 1996 Kiro embarked on an epic journey around the world to create the first painting to be worked on all over the world. His idea was to incorporate a piece from every place he visited, thus symbolically bringing the world together in one undivided unity. It took him two years and over thirty locations, from big urban cities to ancient world sites: the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and the Tomb of Jesus Christ, New York, The Berlin Wall, Ohrid, Brussels, Knokke-Zoute, Bruges, Paris, Rome, Pompeii, Pisa, the Suez Canal, London, Stonehenge, Athens, the Nile, the Great Pyramids in Giza, Kenya, Machu Picchu, Cuzco, Bangkok, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall of China, Tokyo, Kamakura, Mont Saint-Michel, and Eindhoven.

The result of Kiro's two-year journey is a 48 square meter oil painting entitled *Planetarium*.

A Macedonian film crew was hired to document the effort. *Planetarium*. the documentary film was subsequently released. Directed by Ivan Mitevski, it won *Best Documentary* at the *New York International Independent Film and Documentary Festival* in 2005. A monograph with photos taken during the two-year trip by Marin Dimevski was released simultaneously to the movie. Today the painting is exhibited at the *Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum* in Bratislava.

Planetarium Dance is collaboration project between Kiro Urdin and Toronto-based choreographer Debbie Wilson. On seeing the film, Debbie approached Kiro and proposed to expand the Planetarium experience through a new medium - dance. Macedonian composer Venko Serafimov was called onboard to compose the music for the dance. The ballet features eight dancers from Wilson's own troupe, a local Toronto contemporary dance company, and seven from the classically trained Macedonian National Theatre. Planetarium Dance premiered at the Toronto Dance Theater (Canada), and since has been performed in Ohrid, Heraclea, Skopje, Chicago, Ankara, and during the commemoration of the United Nations 60th Anniversary in Geneva (Switzerland).

Urdin's work has evolved beyond traditional media like film and paintings to include dance, sculpture, literature, photography, philosophy and design. He has published over 15 books, some with his thousands of aphorisms, and one book of poetry entitled *Novel*, from which his poem *Light* was selected for the *Pushkin Festival* in Moscow.

Working from Belgium, Macedonia and the U.S.A., Kiro Urdin is vibrantly driven in his efforts by one unifying philosophy: to bridge different cultures together, and to bring all art forms into one. Or as he defines the slogan of the *Planetarism* movement which he founded:

"One Point everywhere, everything in one point. One Art everywhere, everything in one Art."

EXHIBITION - MARCH 1st, 2019 TO MAY 31st, 2019

KIRO URDIN - ENTER THE WAVE

Kiro Urdin's art is an invitation to enter a wave of life, of raw energy, of ancestors, and of all art forms in one point. His fifty shades of blue draw us into his universe, into his ocean so we may find an inner peace to connect with the rest of humanity. Such is the mission of the founder of the Planetarism movement. To quote the master: "Although time and space are without beginning nor end, man is trying to limit them, define them... Man is doing the same with art, dividing it into painting sculpture, music, cinema, literature, design or theatre, as if they were hermetically locked in themselves. Planetarism is conceived as a result or common denominator of multiple arts, with each one retaining its own specificity."

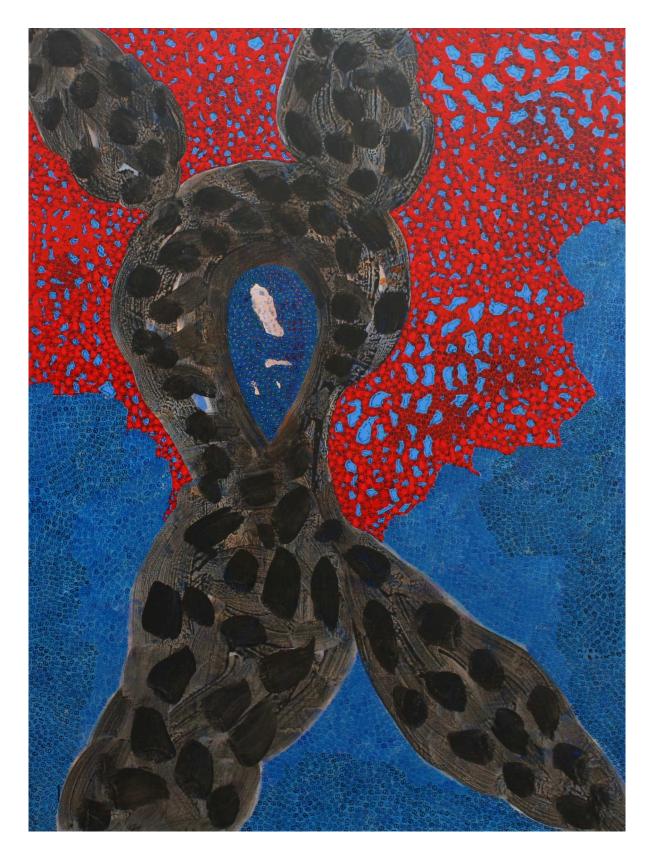
Kiro embodies this idea we all have of Parisian painters during the *Années Folles (1920s)*. He knows no limits and he breathes art in and out. But the young 74-year-old is also a global contemporary artist spending his creative time between Belgium, the USA and his home city of Skopje (N. Macedonia). Although I met Kiro when I was only 10 and was bewitched by his super-expressionist figurative paintings of the early 90s, I followed his career closely and saw his compositions evolve towards more cosmic abstractions built upon layers of super-impressions and patterns that give his work a distinctive feel, almost divine. For Kiro worships pigments above all else. Blue is the universal color of expansion for the artist who favors Blockx Belgian blue oils and Russian red cadmium tubes to express love and passion on his massive triple thread linen canvases.

In 1996, Kiro Urdin decided to make a global painting that would be symbolically painted all over the world. So he gathered a team and took a two year trip to create what would become his largest work by far and be called *Planetarium*. The eponymous film follows his legendary journey from the Macedonian church where he baptized his daughter Donna, to the heights of Machu Picchu, Kiro painting every step of the way, with goat milk or sand depending on what he would find along the ride.

After having shown his work all over Europe, from the East Coast to the West Coast of the USA, in Central and South America and extensively in Asia, most regularly in Japan, Urdin is currently working in China. His recent solo show at the architecturally daring *Ningbo Museum* opened the doors to this giant country and its passionate art collectors. As he often says, he is only warming up for his most accomplished work which is still to come.

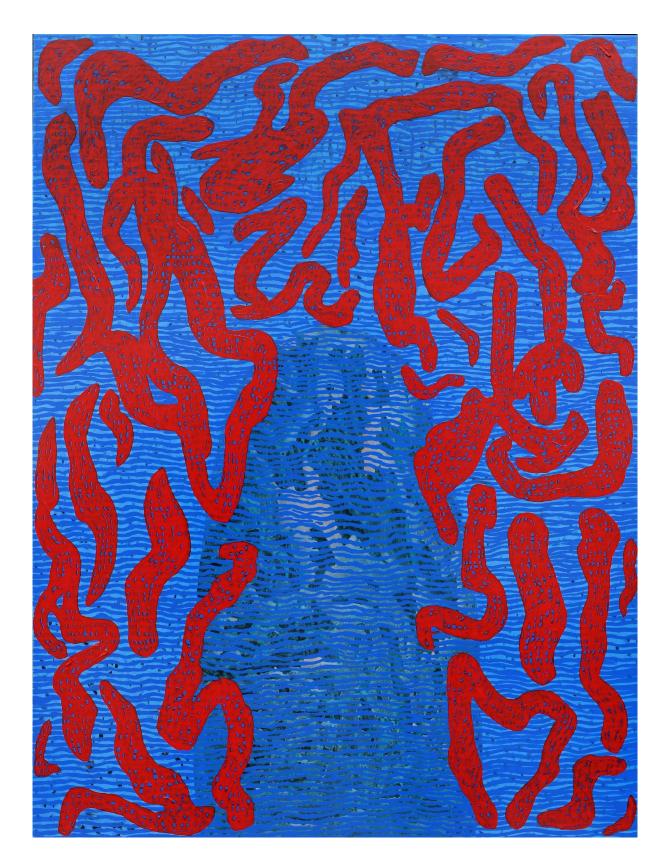
Considered a master of oil on canvas, Kiro likes to think that his true mastery lies in his vibrant watercolors on paper, often made of dozens of layers of paint. His pencil and ink drawings open a whole new realm, like his sculpture and film works, yet all are connected and part of a same *Planetarism*, "a free electron of the human spirit that can be reincarnated from one kind of art into another, or into all of its individual parts together". Kiro's artistic journey illuminates the universal formula of the cosmic cure for the human soul, started thousands of years ago by our forefathers.

From the Parisian place du Tertre, surrounded by fast-food painters into the land of the Dogon people in Mali, Kiro has left a mark wherever he was, certainly because of his overwhelming kindness mixed with his rock and roll attitude, but most of all because none who have seen his work can ever forget it. I wish this new solo show which looks back at some twenty years of creation, including some freshly painted works, will introduce Kiro's work to new crowds all over the world so they too may enter his wave.



Kiro Urdin (1945)

Red Night
(2018)
Oil on Canvas, 200 x 150 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

Big Bang Theory
(2018)
Oil on Canvas, 200 x 150 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

Dilemma (2017) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 150 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

Arizona Dream (2017) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 150 cm



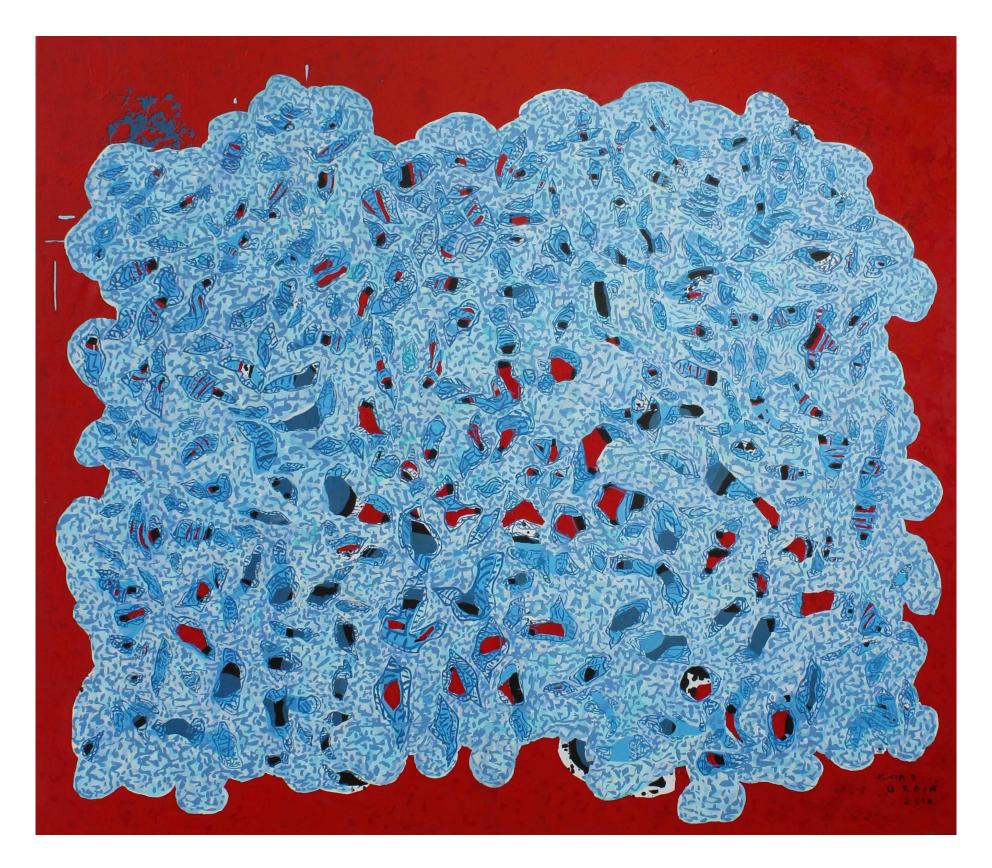
Kiro Urdin (1945)

Aimer Toujours (2016) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 120 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

Secret Message (2015) Oil on Canvas, 180 x 120 cm



Love Forever (2010-2018) Oil on Canvas, 140 x 160 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

My World (2010) Oil on Canvas, 180 x 150 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

Rhino (2010)
Oil on Canvas, 170 x 150 cm



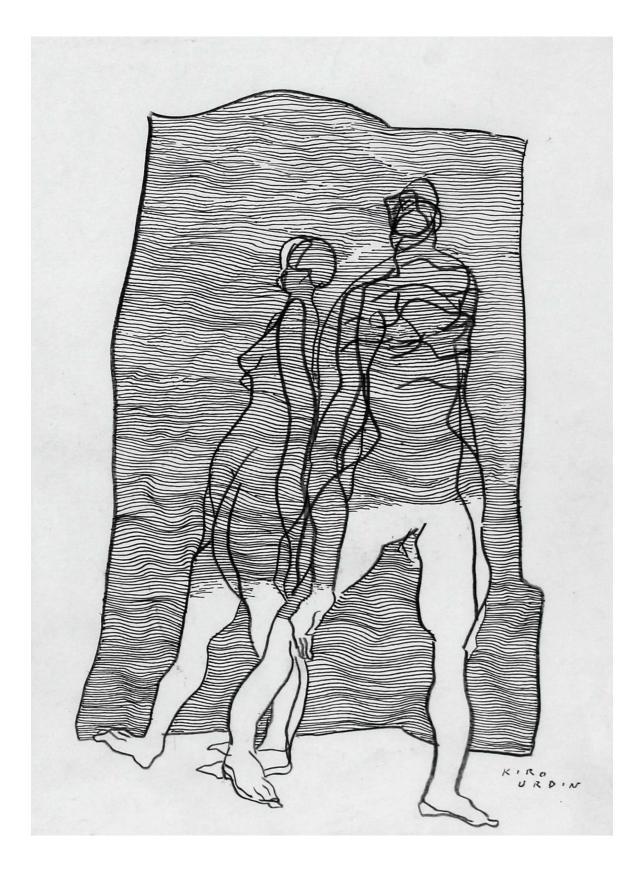
Red Sea (2010) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 330 cm



Amour et Trahison (2001) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 300 cm



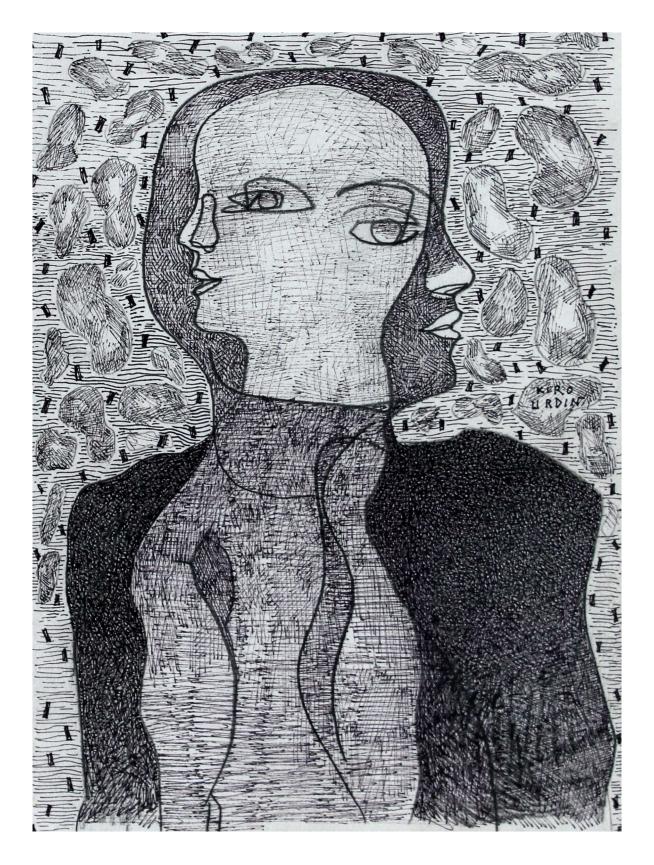
Cosmogonie Dogon (1999) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 400 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

The Walk (2004)

Pencil and Ink on Paper, 37 x 27 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

Janus (2003)

Pencil and Ink on Paper, 37 x 27 cm



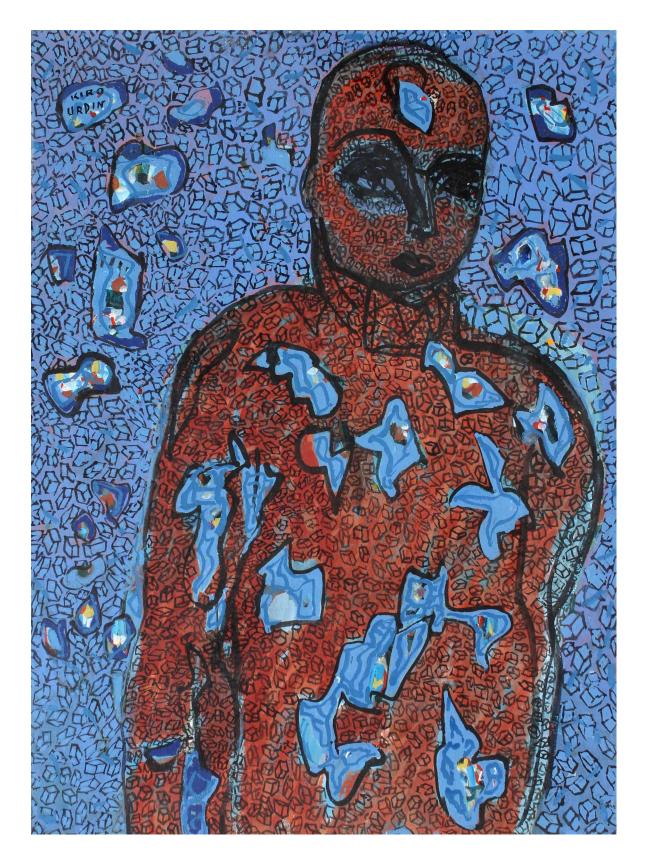
New York (1999)

Pencil and Ink on Paper, 37 x 27 cm



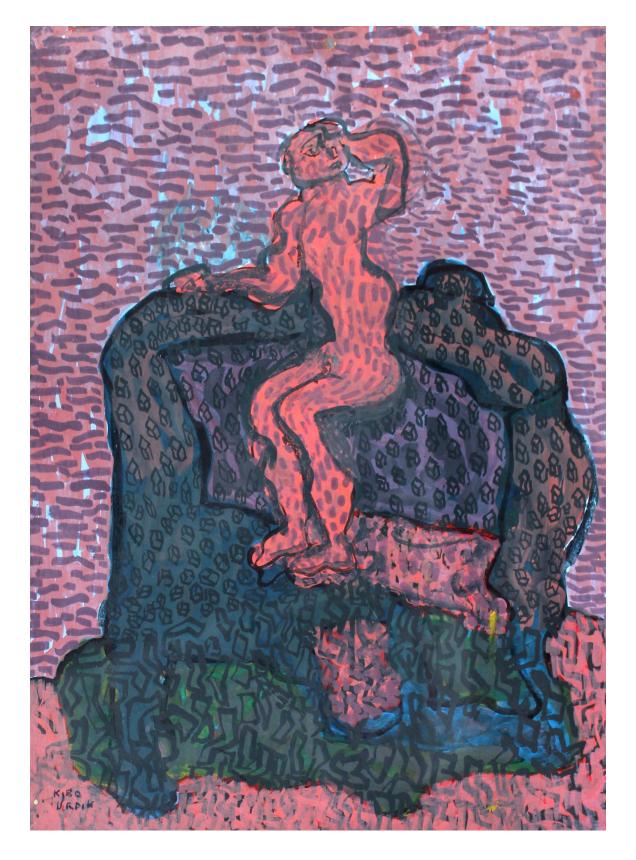
Citizen (1995-2018)

Watercolor on Paper, 57 x 76 cm



Blue Night (2008)

Watercolor on Paper, 76 x 57 cm



Kiro Urdin (1945)

Work (2006)

Watercolor on Paper, 76 x 57 cm



Self Thought (2005)

Watercolor on Paper, 57 x 76 cm

Solo exhibitions (selection)

- 2018 Ningbo Museum, Ningbo, China
- 2018 Robert Kidd Gallery, Detroit, USA
- 2017 MM Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- 2016 Tom D. Jones Gallery, Knokke-le-Zoute, Belgium
- 2015 MM Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- 2014 Ningbo Museum, Ningbo, China
- 2013 Museum of the City of Skopje, Skopje, Macedonia
- 2012 Danubiana Museum, Bratislava, Slovakia
- 2009 National Gallery, Nuremberg, Germany
- 2009 Galerie Frédéric Moisan, Paris, France
- 2008 Represented Macedonia at the Festival de la Francophonie, Moscow, Russia
- 2007 Galerie Paris, Yokohama, Japan
- 2005 Restrospective at the Macedonian Academy of Science and Arts, Skopje, Macedonia
- 2004 Gallery Kamil, Monte Carlo, Monaco
- 2003 Gallerie Anouck Vilain, Belgium
- 2002 Guy Pieters Gallery, Saint-Paul de Vence, France
- 2000 Danubiana Museum, Bratislava, Slovakia
- 1999 Gallery Kamil, Aspen, USA
- 1998 Galerie Frank, Paris, France
- 1996 Miura Museum, Hokkaido, Japan
- 1996 Galeria Urania, Ohrid, Macedonia
- 1995 Gallery Arthur Danziger, NYC, USA
- 1995 Museum Yuyu Yang, Taipei, Taiwan
- 1994 Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, Macedonia
- 1994 Hirol Gallery, Matsuyama, Japan
- 1993 Gallery One, NYC, USA
- 1993 Galerie G., Helsingborg, Sweden
- 1993 SCAG, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 1991 Royal Ginza Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 1990 Timsit International Galleries, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 1990 Robinsons Gallery, Knokke-le-Zoute, Belgium
- 1989 Galerie Corinne Timsit, Paris, France
- 1989 Gummesons Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden
- 1989 Catherine van Notten Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland
- 1988 Warner Gallery, LA, USA
- 1988 I.A.C. Fine Art, Beverly Hills, LA, USA
- 1988 Printemps Gallery, Mastuyama, Japan
- 1987 Paris Gallery, Yokohama, Japan
- 1987 Melys Gallery, NYC, USA
- 1986 Galerie Messara, Paris, France

Public collections (selection)

Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan

National Gallery, Skopje, Republic of Northern Macedonia

Contemporary Art Museum, Skopje, Republic of Northern Macedonia

Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Bratislava, Slovakia

Ningbo Museum, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, China





CONTINUUM II9 - A BELGIAN ART PERSPECTIVE

EXHIBITION - APRIL 15th, 2019 TO JULY 31st, 2019

Art does not belong to anyone, it usually passes on from one artist to the next, from one viewer to the next. We inherit it from the past when it served as a cultural testimony to who we were, and we share it with future generations, so they may understand who we are, what we fear, what we love and what we value. Over centuries, civilizations, societies and individuals have built identities around art and culture. This has perhaps never been more so than today.

As an off-program exhibition, I decided to invite five Belgian artists whose work I particularly like, to answer back with one of their own contemporary works to a selection of older works that helped build my own Belgian artistic identity. In no way do I wish to suggest that their current work is directly inspired by those artists they will be confronted with. No, their language is mature and singular. But however unique it may be, it can also be looked at in the context of the subtle evolution from their history of art, as mutations into new forms that better capture who these artists are, and the world they live in. Their work can be experienced within an artistic continuum, in which pictorial elements are part of an inheritance, all the while remaining originally distinct.

On each of these Belgian artists, I imposed a work from the past, to which they each answered back with a recent work of their own. The exercise is as fictitious as it is deeply informative of certain movements that have shaped the history of Belgian art in the XXth century, and therefore of the echoes still reverberating in contemporary artistic creation, however more globalized it may have become. Thus, looking at an arbitrary continuum spanning over 119 years since 1900, allow me to briefly and chronologically introduce ten artists I admire.

Let us first embark on a small wooden boat, floating at dusk in the middle of lake probably in the region of East Flanders. The year is 1900. Gustave De Smet (1877-1943), a young painter from Ghent, was about to come under the influence of *Luminism* and of the painter Emile Claus (1849-1924). *De Palingvisser* (1900) depicts a local eel fisher, waiting for the perfect catch, blended into the crouching darkness of the water and the trees, barely lit by a dying orange sun. The subject of the painting however is clearly the twilight atmosphere bathing the beauty and the grandeur of Nature. De Smet would indeed become famous a few years after he made this painting, at first with beautiful *impressionist* renderings of women and landscapes, then after returning from exile during WWI, with his own avant-garde take on what was to be labelled *Flemish Expressionism*.

His influence lives on, consciously or not, in the work of many Belgian artists today. Olivier Legrain (1970) is one of them. He acknowledges that heritage. As an aficionado of De Smet and Permeke especially, he allows his work to similarly let atmosphere and impression prevail, as in *The Shelter* (2017). This recent painting is one of several landscapes by the Brussels-based artist and film maker, whose work so far has been overly concerned with human figuration, at times relying on a cinema-based iconographic process not so different from that of Antwerp-based artist Luc Tuymans (1958), but representing his very own confrontation of human cynicism and fragility. Legrain's *The Shelter* serves both as a warning against the dangers of the wild, and as an invitation to take refuge, to save ourselves. The title suggests there might be someone in that abandoned cabin. If not, the point of view could be that of someone about to take shelter in the wooden house.

If De Smet creates the impression of orange sun beams dying into shades of green through numerous overlays of paint texture to translate his vision of light, Legrain's palette is decisively darker and more monotonous. His work on paper mounted on a wood panel is even scarred with what resembles 35mm negative scratches. Both works symbolically bare witness to a changing world. De Smet's natural harbor and peaceful way of life would soon enough be disrupted by the Great War, while Legrain's setting could as much be a homage to great American westerns of old, as it could depict a post-apocalyptic stopover from the movie *The Road* (2009).

Nel-14512 (1986), a pop-surrealist sculptor from Liege, was charged with the tricky task to rebound on a very peculiar work by artist Prosper de Troyer (1880-1961), who developed a form of magical realism in the 20s, inspired by the people, the bible and nature. His work Prelude (1925) is currently prominently highlighted at the Tate Modern in London, as part of the Magical Realism: Art in Weimar Germany 1919-33 exhibition which runs until July 14, 2019. While Sacred Heart of Jesus among the People by De Troyer, born on Christmas Day nearar Gent, belongs to a rich period of figurative works started in 1922, after a fauvist and later a more famous cubist period, its somewhat naïve style and colorful expressionism often placed it along the lines of the German movement Neue Sadnlichkeit which took place between 1918-1933. In many ways, this period of De Troyer still needs to be (re)discovered by the wider Belgian public.

Born more than a hundred years later, Nel-14512 has worked along the veins of *pop art* and *surrealism*, in sculpture mostly. Yet her work is equally concerned with human figuration, social consciousness and religious discourse. Recurring themes include feminism, sexuality, the climate and religion, and she was immediately engaged when I showed her De Troyer's *The Sacred Heart of Jesus among the People*. While Proper De Troyer questions the role of religion and the church among the people of Belgium in the years following WWI, touching on the intricate social struggles at play, Nel's sculpture is concerned with Christ as an individual, and his relationship to his Father. *Laisse pas trainer ton Fils* (2014), a pun on the famous title of a rap song by *NTM*, is her contemporary take on the responsibility of fathers to their children, of our generation to the next. Her Christ seems to be accusing his father of denying him the very same values he wishes him to teach. Showing us an abandoned son, bound to a tragic life on earth, the artist questions what the love of God (or universal love) truly means. If we are made in God's image, then why would his own failure at fatherhood not get back at him in the form of a lonely disillusioned son, a Christ who is the opposite of the one depicted by De Troyer, a dissocialized savior. The artistic continuum here lies more in the diversion of popular religious images to comment on contemporary social issues, but their realistic approach also follows similar iconography.

I met Olivier Pauwels (1974) five years ago. He was busy making big machines out of scrap materials in a huge hangar in Ostend, where he currently lives and works. Pauwels was also filling his unique metallic universe with cyberbabies, unusually blessed with huge heads, often seen behind helmets. The images and the art stuck with me. Around the same period Pauwels was lucky to collaborate with George Miller on the movie *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), a visual next-level post-apocalyptic epic that rocked me in my chair, and for which the art department where he worked won an Oscar in 2016.

That same year I came across an enigmatic work by another multifaceted artist, this time from Antwerp. Born in 1920, Pol Mara navigated the Belgian seas of painting, making his way from *surrealism* into *lyrical abstraction*, only to reach fame with his *pop art* work in the 1960s. His compositions were concerned with popular culture as conveyed through magazines, television and other media, which he distilled and rearranged into very personal portraits for which he won a prize at the 1967 *Tokyo Art Biennal*. Like Pauwels, Pol Mara was a recycler of our popular iconographies. Today his *pop art* works are considered iconic in the Belgian art scene of the 60s and are part of many museum collections. They are also on display at the *Pol Mara Museum* in Gordes (France). *Two Women in Mirrors* (1975) is a typical nude by Mara, who was then overwhelmingly concerned with female portraiture. In a rather philosophically *cubist* fashion, he recomposed these twin portraits of the same woman by splitting the perspectives of their upper and lower body parts, and imprisoning their beauty in mirrors, perhaps as a warning of the increasing power magazines were to have on generations of women reading them.

When I proposed *Two Women in Mirrors* to Olivier Pauwels, he quite naturally decided to answer with two twins of his own. This time, the media mirror is replaced by TV heads imprisoned in space helmets - and like Mara, Pauwels reuses materials to create his statues. His two *Guestronauts* are part of a series of eleven clones created between 2013 and 2014. Through them, Pauwels questions the influence of the media, science, and cloning in particular, as well as our survival on this planet. Through his many depictions of female beauty as portrayed in the media, Pol Mara was also questioning his contemporary world and particularly the emancipation of his sparkling young women through the media. Although the work of both artists evolved in totally separate spheres, there is an artistic continuum that can be observed in their approach to recycling materials to make their own figurative portraits of popular culture.

I recently had the opportunity to make a film about Wilfried Pas (1940-2017), a distant family member at first, who I became close to while making the documentary about his work, before his premature and unfortunate passing. Through him I was introduced to the work of Fred Bervoets (1942), a pioneering artist of the Antwerp scene of the sixties along Pas, Goossens and Cox. I later often came across Bervoets's work at *De Zwarte Panter*, the emblematic Antwerp gallery founded by Adriaan Raemdonck more than fifty year ago. Bervoets was a friend of Maurice Wyckaert (1923-1996) who, along Cox, certainly influenced his work. Tom Liekens (1977) studied painting under Bervoets at the Academy in Antwerp, and although their work is seemingly far apart, there are elements that continue from one generation to the next.

The two works in communion here are separated by some 30 years of art history, a lifetime for Tom, a few periods for Fred. Both works are self-portraits. While the large *untitled* and unstretched canvas by Bervoets gives space to a *super-expressionist* portrait-based narration, where a central bird-like figure splits the pictorial plane into four distinct compartments populated by his typical beasts (as well as family and friends perhaps), the birds chasing Liekens (or is he chasing them) obey a more structured composition where the artist is central to a clean white space only disrupted by woodcut overlays which fade into the background, creating the illusion of action. Both artists have worked in very large formats, and in the latter part of the 1980s, Bervoets was slowly putting an end to what is now called the *Cicatrice* paintings (*Scar* paintings). His *untitled* work here belongs to that period, according to me one of his best, although I admire the whole body of work which keeps on expending into new territories. It was made in late 1987 and shown at the *Vlaams Cultureel Centrum de Brakke Grond* in Amsterdam (NL) early in 1988. The artist's ironical and at times almost comical approach to dramatic and tragic subjects like war or love make each of his paintings a journey of its own, with no place for repetition. With Fred, humans are the main protagonists. Himself, usually the main actor in his creations

Tom's work was a discovery, an instant love story. His realm is the animal kingdom where humans appear as rare guests, on occasion. In his work I found the same raw energy as in Bervoets's *expressionist* renderings, where color is free. Tom's paintings often pay a ravishing chromatic homage to old masters like Delacroix or Van Gogh, so it is an interesting and daring choice by the artist to propose a black and white woodcut collage on canvas as an echo to his friend's *Cicatrice*. *Birds* (2018) nonetheless carries echoes of his mentor's work, at times made of massive black and white etchings. Although not taken from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963), Liekens often uses film frames as a basis on which he expands his own universe as in his recent *King Kong Series*, or as in his work based on *Lust for Life* (1956), the Kirk Douglas biopic about Vincent Van Gogh.

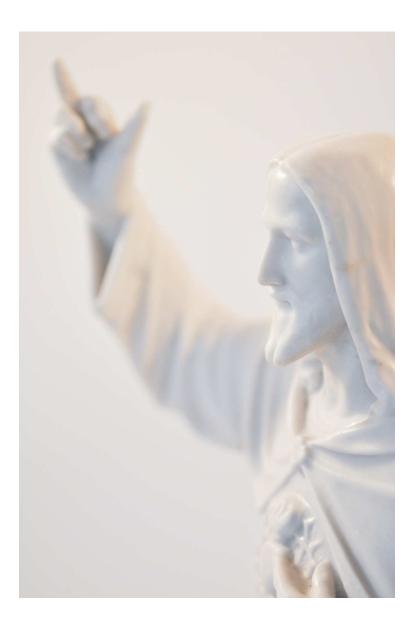
The fifth and final artistic face-to-face is the one I proposed to Peter Depelchin. I confronted him with one of Pjeroo Roobjee's majestically complex canvases, in a typical green hue for the Gent-based artist: *The Illness of P. (K. von S.) or the Tragical End of Silence (with Reiner going to the Horses of Knokke)*, dated 1988-1989. I must admit I secretly hoped Peter would answer back with what I consider to be his masterpiece so far: *Hortus Conclusus I* (2014). Both works have in common that it is impossible for the viewer to grasp their essence at first sight. They each require time, immersion and engagement to dissect the pictorial elements, their linkages and the artistic process through which they imbricate. To me both works projected sound first, like baroque compositions justifying the richness of the motifs and decorations. They made me want to dance, to fly, to be in motion, which I suddenly was, for I needed to zoom in, to walk closer, to step back to consider that the whole is only made of details; that life is an endless sequence of fast and slow breaths which both artists express in lines and colors, representing a disappearing world, with fear and hybridity in the case of Depelchin, and with ostentation and nostalgia in the case of Roobjee.

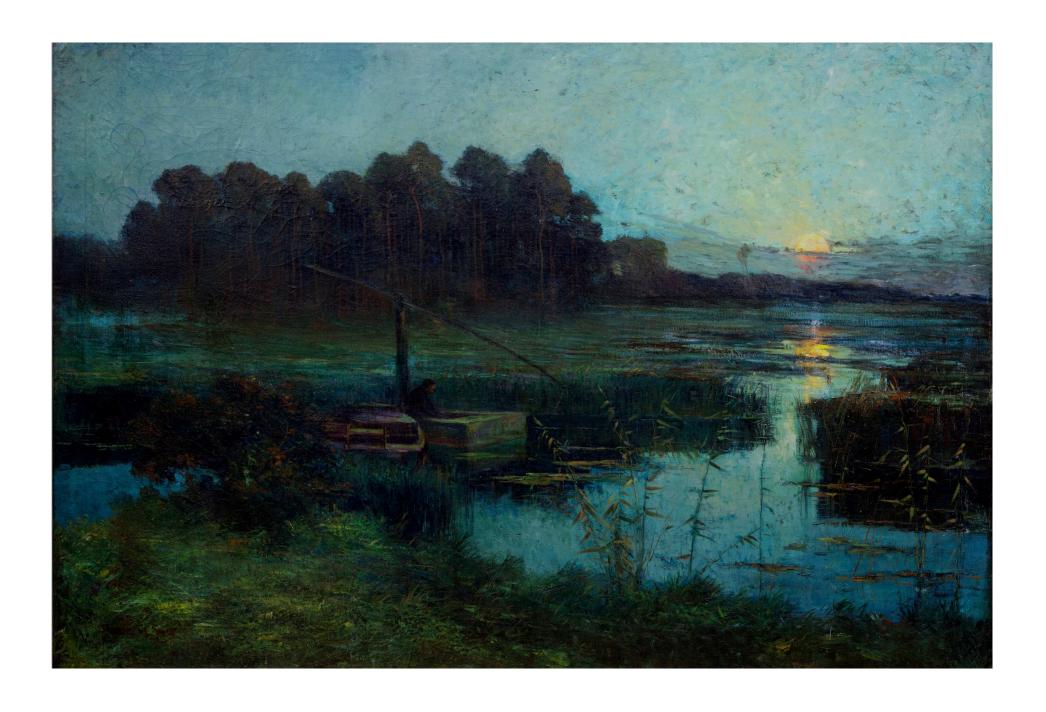
Upon first laying my eyes on it, I sat down in front of the Peter's *Enclosed Garden*, the first of a detailed series, and tried to imagine how he spent years researching, inventing and drawing a universe of characters who appeared as if they belonged to both our future and our past, at the crossroads of civilizations, as if our icons and our gods all met in a limbo of despair, waiting for us to call them back into our faiths. I could have stayed there, sitting in front of his 172 x 323 cm drawing for the rest of my life. Its raw sexual power is hidden in lace-like ink patterns that draw the viewer into what looks like the organized stage of a theatre of chaos, perhaps a visual metaphor for human existence, torn between unlimited freedom and societal survival.

I first met Pjeroo through books of his paintings, and later in the flesh. Just like Peter after him, the artist elaborated a personal universe of stories, images and colors that perfectly coexist on canvas. His work investigates our history, our history of art, and his personal history, to then twist it all with irony and wit. A master illusionist, a modern wizard, Roobjee's paintings are open windows into a magical world. In his *Tragical End of Silence*, the artist paints a smiling woman who seems to emerge from the sea, like a siren, naked but wearing a double-faced monstrous scarf on her shoulders. All around her, hundreds of creatures seem to be laughing, while her flaming fingers disappear into the mouth of a red hare. And this is only the first layer of pictorial elements which one has to go through to start grasping the ensemble. The continuum here lies in their approach to the multitude of elements making the whole and perhaps also in the joyfulness of chaos which transpires in their works.

I hope this introduction will encourage you to jump into this *continuum 119*, as I call it. An exercise that ends up making a lot of sense to me. It informs me on my tastes, my conceptions of visual narration and of vital energy. It confirms that the history of art which we so often break down to better understand it, is foremost a continuity, never interrupted, always reinvented.

Klaus Pas, April 2019





Gustave De Smet (1877-1943)

The Eel Fisher (1900) Oil on Canvas, 122 x 181 cm



Much like in the painting of Gustave De Smet, the work I here propose is at first sight a depiction of calm and serenity. The title I gave it is no coincidence because it is a "refuge" (*The Shelter*). Although mysterious through its light coming from nowhere, it refers to the night and to dreams. It is a Lynchian light.

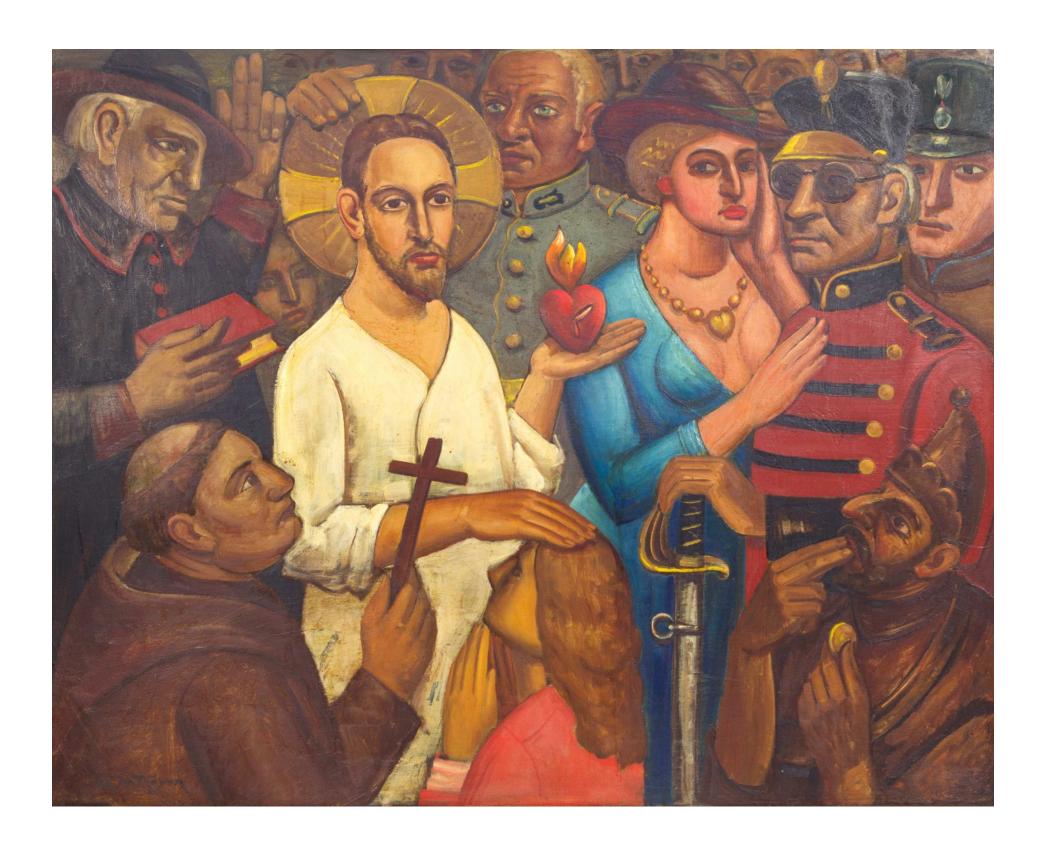
In *The Eel Fisher*, we find a more realistic light with the sun on the horizon. Yet we do not know if it is dawn or the end of the day. There too, time does not precisely exist. In *The Shelter*, we are moving forward in a sort of divine light that appears more surreal. Much like in dreams, it shines on the snow that covers the ground in front of the cabin, which seems abandoned. It is an isolated location like the pond of Gus De Smet. Whether in a cabin or on a boat, there is a similar feeling of loneliness and a communion with nature.

In *The Shelter*, although poorly insulated, the cabin remains a place to protect oneself from the cold, to hide. Sound is suffocated by the snow and one can barely perceive the wind blowing or footsteps in the distance.

However, despite its immobility, the universe of *The Shelter* seems more hostile than that of *The Eel Fisher*, because the night is much darker, and we have no information on the background. At any moment, anything could come out of the dark. A little girl, a doe, a bear, a storm or a serial killer. Yet we are drawn to this small wood house. From there we could see without being seen. It is a refuge, a hiding place, just like the pond is for this man on a boat, in the middle of nature. This light makes us feel like preys to the surrounding darkness and we can't wait to get to that cabin. And just like the darkness, the depths of the water also hide a calm and invisible secret in the large canvas by Gustave de Smet.

Olivier Legrain (1970)

The Shelter
(2017)
Mixed Media on Paper
mounted on Wood Panel,
74 x 107 cm



Prosper De Troyer (1880-1961)

Sacred Heart of Jesus among the People (1926)
Oil on Panel, 123×154 cm

If time had not been running out so fast, a new work should have seen the light of day in response to Prosper De Troyer's *Sacred Heart of Jesus among the People*. It would have born the same title to illustrate with irony a contemporary reinterpretation of the expression of faith, of sharing, or even of the value of Christianity.

Here is a brief description of the work that should have been:

A bench, a metal bar, some evocative details, a graffiti... Gray/monochrome sculpture, except for a sacred bright red heart. A seated Christ, in a subway, a young man almost lying on the bench, legs spread under his dress, nonchalant air. A hand on his thighs, looking at his smartphone, absent ... On the smartphone, a sacred heart, and no one to see it...

The objective with this piece would have been to capture of a great loneliness escaping from the setting, highlighting the growing religious disinterest, or the disinterest for sharing, by extension. The work would have been the prequel of another piece that I made in 2014, titled *Laisse pas trainer ton fils (Don't let your son hang around)*, in reference to the famous *NTM* song. An opposition approach between the signified / signifiers as is almost always the case in my work.

In the end, this earlier existing work is the one I chose to treat the resonance of our respective pieces. In my cultural lexicon, this sculpture evokes a disillusioned and/or honest vision of an abandoned father/son relationship. It is a representation of a son abandoned to his fate by a father who seems very poorly sensitized to the notions of support, education and trust.

"Don't let your son hang around, if you do not want him to fall..." (lyrics of the song). If God is Love, and especially in our image, why then would his lack of paternal involvement not get back at him, like a boomerang, in the form of a disillusioned and dissocialized son? For me, it was a question of humanizing the divine figure, and without a doubt to also humanize the paternal figure. Once made human, God/father would be more likely placed on an equal footing, at times forgiven, perhaps understood.

This dialogue between the work of Prosper De Troyer and mine was an opportunity for me to discover the work of this artist. In fact, it seems that some of our semantic research have followed similar paths. At least, as far as the treatment of Christian subjects is concerned.

In his work, I detected a touch of irony or at least a desire to distort reality so as to inspire in the viewer an emotional reaction. It has to do with distorting a well-known and defined subject by drawing on its symbols, however unconscious, to create a new expressive intensity. The result should be in an invitation to decipher a superior reality that can be broken down into multiple levels of reading. And even if the first layers might seem light, this process stems from a desire to see successive levels of reading as steps going down, one after the other, to an ever more serious understanding of the subject.

Moreover, if our artistic aesthetics are far apart, his work triggered in me the melancholy of the Belgian landscapes, the coldness of this country that needed a long time to seduce me. But it is precisely these melancholic sensations that remind me that our common country is deeply rooted inside me, and that it nourishes the expression of a Belgianhood now fully claimed in my work.



Nel-14512 (1986)

Don't let your Son hang around (2014)
Polyester and Marble Powder, 53 x 20.5 cm



Pol Mara (1920-1998)

Two Women in Mirrors (1975) Mixed Media on Paper, 107 x 68 cm

Apart from the fact that we received the same education and that I also started my career as a graphic designer in the advertising world, there is no real link between my work and Mara's later global work.

Although... Pol Mara (1920-1998) is part of generation in which many of my idols had their place in art history such as Vic Gentils (1919-1997) and in particular Paul van Hoeydonck (1925).

Paul van Hoeydonck... through his inspiring work I started visual work, the fact that Paul van Hoeydonck and Pol Mara were both members of the avant-garde group *G58 Hessenhuis* certainly reinforces my connection to Mara's work and especially the period.

There is clearly a certain link, call it a resemblance, between the work I proposed and *Two Women in Mirrors*, in which two women are depicted with their heads trapped in an elliptical bubble. As a spectator, it is not immediately clear what Mara means by this. Is it a kind of futuristic image? Are they astronauts of some sort? Whatever his intention, it brought me immediately back to my *Guestronauts*, where I also trap the faces (via TV) in a spherical helmet that is part of a bigger astronaut suit.

It is a strange feeling to see these faces, apparently trapped in a kind of sphere. Trapped in a static robot that can come alive at any time. Trapped in a closed world. Our world. My intention is for the face on this TV to be that of a guest, hence the title *Guestronaut*. Up to each collector to then choose which guest to record and to trap into the space suit! The Guest becomes the artwork!



Olivier Pauwels (1974)

Guestronauts (2013-2014)

Mixed Media with TV and DVD System, 63 x 25 x 25 cm each



Fred Bervoets (1942)

Untitled (from the Cicatrice Series)
(1987)
Mixed Media on Canvas, 198 x 144 cm



I studied at the *Royal Academy of Fine Arts* in Antwerp where Fred Bervoets (1942) was then a teacher. Although our work is very different, there is undoubtedly common ground. Just like in Fred's work, my work is a mix of pathos and drama, topped with a relativizing irony. We obviously also share a preference for monumental formats and crowded compositions.

In my self-portrait *Birds* (2018), birds play a violent leading role: dozens of pigeons are harassing me. It looks like a scene from *The Birds* (1963) by Alfred Hitchcock. And just like in Fred's self-portrait from the *Cicatrice* series, I place myself in the leading role of a self-created universe.

Tom Liekens (1977)

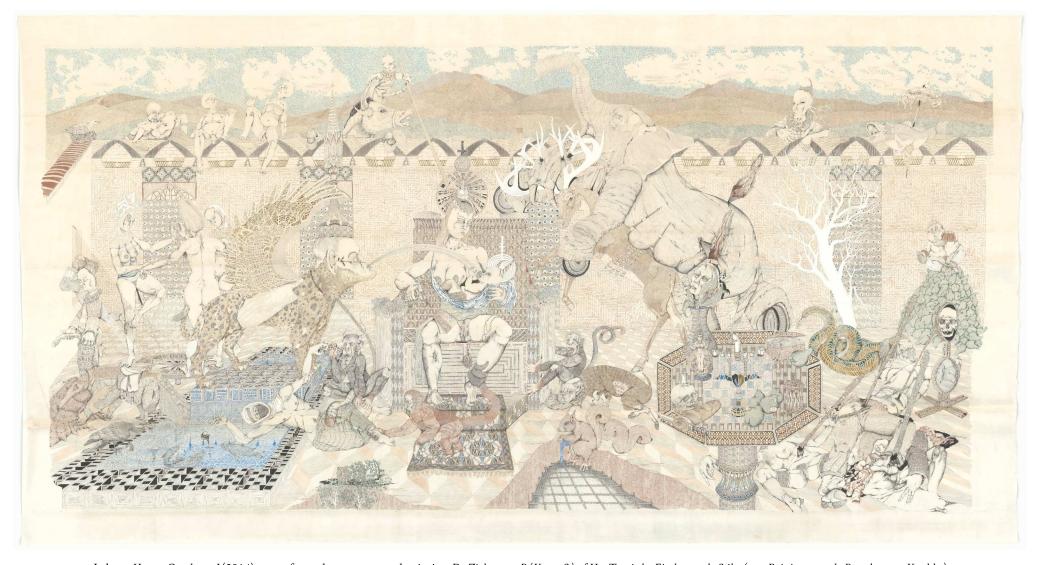
Birds (2018)

Collage and Woodcuts on Canvas, 152 x 102 cm



Pjeroo Roobjee (1945)

The Illness of P. (K. von S.) or the Tragical End of Silence (with Reiner going to the Horses of Knokke) (1988-1989) Oil on Canvas, 200 x 200 cm



I chose Hortus Conclusus I (2014) to confront the monumental painting De Ziekte van P (K.von S.) of Het Tragische Einde van de Stilte (met Reinier naar de Paarden van Knokke) of Belgian artist Pjeroo Roobjee. Roobjee's 1988-1989 composition was made after a memorable day with the Dutch painter Reinier Lucassen spent in Knokke. It appeared to have been a journey full of spleen and sadness, the end of an era. Their farewell seemed for good (thus time has proven), especially when Reinier and Roobjee shook hands and kissed goodbye. The used iconography in Roobjee's painting evokes a lost Arcadia. He included symbols of a desired universe.

Providentially, my monumental drawing is all about a lost Arcadia. However, I turn this mythical wood into a horrendous enclosed garden where one doesn't wish to get in, nor to get out. I wish to attract and repel at the same time. And so does Roobjee. His central figure stands for all the Moirai (the Fates in Greek mythology) and is inspired by a bourgeois lady of the beau monde of Knokke. My virgin is originally a "Maria Lactans", but likewise she is represented in a far more decadent way.

Next to these comparisons of content, there are lots of visible parallels between both our works; their strong *expressionist* style, for example. I manipulate space to evoke this *expressionist* effect (as Robert Wiene did in his all-time classic *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920)), whereas Roobjee paints in an expressive, almost modernist way. Consequently, we both strongly refer to the past, use iconography and sample art-historical imagery. Not to speak of our passion for small iconographic details as for example, the crucifix in Roobjee's painting, the gallipot, the still life, the snake around the lady's neck (Garden of Eden) or the skulls she speaks of. All kinds of similar visual elements are to be discovered in my *Hortus Conclusus I*.

Peter Depelchin (1985)

Hortus Conclusus I
(2014)

Pen, Chinese Ink and Bistre on Chinese Silk Paper, 172 x 323 cm

Gustave De Smet (1877-1943)

Gustave Franciscus De Smet was a Belgian painter. Together with Constant Permeke and Frits Van den Berghe, he was one of the founders of *Flemish Expressionism*. His younger brother, Léon De Smet (1881-1966), also became a painter.

Gus de Smet was born in Ghent in 1877. His father, Jules, was a set decorator and photographer. Both Gustave and his brother began working in their father's studio, then attended the *Royal Academy of Fine Arts*, where they studied under Jean Delvin. Unlike Léon, Gustave was considered to be an indifferent student.

In 1908, he and his wife followed Léon to the artists' colony in Sint-Martens-Latem. There, they initially came under the influence of *luminism* and the painter Emile Claus, who lived in nearby Astene. At the beginning of WWI, he and his family joined his friend Van den Berghe, and fled to the Netherlands. From 1914 to 1922, they moved about, visiting and staying at the art colonies in Amsterdam, Laren and Blaricum. His meeting with the *expressionist* French painter Henri Le Fauconnier (1881-1946) marked a turning point in his style which, up until then, owed much to *cubism*.

It was in Deurne in the late 20s, that his mixture of *expressionism* and *cubism* peaked, with a series of works depicting circus, fairground and village scenes. After his death in 1943, his house in Deurle was preserved as a local museum. Gustave De Smet's work is part of national museum collections in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Prosper De Troyer (1880-1961)

Prosper de Troyer was born in Destelbergen in 1880 into a family of twelve children on Christmas day, in a barn surrounded by water as a result of the break-up of the Scheldt river dike, which his father was busy trying to repair. Prosper received his first artistic training at *Saint-Luc* in Oostakker but when his mother died in 1894, he had to leave school to provide for his family and worked as a blacksmith.

The pictorial evolution of De Troyer obeyed an internal logic that lead him from *realism* to *abstraction* in the 1920s. He then evolved towards *neo-impressionism*. During WWI, he painted close to the spirit of *Brabant Fauvism*. He was part of the circle around Paul van Ostaijen (1896-1928) and attended Brussels artistic circles.

He assimilated *fauvism* and *cubism* into his work at the end of the war, when he discovered Marinetti's *Manifesto of Futurism*. It is Marinetti who made sure that De Troyer's drawings appeared at futuristic exhibitions in Florence. With Paul Joostens and, before him, Jules Schmalzigaug, De Troyer is one of the few Belgian artists to have adhered to this mode of expression. From 1920, he shortly moved fully into *abstraction* and adopted the "pure expression", which he applied to abstract works where his vision became more geometric. Malevich's *supremacism* particularly attracted him in those year.

1922 is the year that marked the artist's return to *figurative* painting. With themes such as the mother, the child, the man, landscapes and religion, De Troyer evolved towards a very personal *expressionism* close to the German movement *Neue Sadnlidhkeit* (*New Objectivity*), the theories of which he applied to powerful and monumental compositions, with simplified forms and themes borrowed from family life and the Bible.

The work of the artist is part of museum and private collections notably in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Mechelen and Ostend.

Pol Mara (1920-1998)

Pol Mara, a pseudonym for Louis Leysen, was a Belgian painter, draftsman and lithographer. Born in 1920 in Antwerp, he studied at the *Royal Academy of Fine Arts* and later at the *National Higher Institute of Fine Arts* in Antwerp from which he graduated in 1948. He then started working as a graphic designer for *Janssen Pharmaceutica*.

At the start of his artistic career, Pol Mara worked as a *surrealist* painter before moving on *to lyrical abstraction* in the 1950s. In 1958, he founded the Antwerp avant-garde group *G-58 Hessenhuis* along with Paul Van Hoeydonck, Mark Verstockt, Filip Tas and Dan Vanseveren.

In the 1960s, Pol Mara introduced photorealistic elements in his work, linking up with emerging mass communication by interweaving elements from the world of television, film and illustrated magazines. He thus ventured contemporaneously with Robert Rauschenberg into the *pop art* scene. Pol Mara often painted a dream world in which beautiful young women were regularly found in light undergarments. His figures clearly displayed a kinship with the world of fashion magazines and advertising. By creating this aesthetic world of illusions, Pol Mara wanted to criticize the injustice and the repulsiveness of his contemporary society.

Along with Evelyne Axell (1935-1972), Pol Mara was at the forefront of the *pop art* movement in Belgium. In 1974 he painted murals in the *Montgomery* metro station in Brussels. Since 1972, partly for health reasons, he spent most of his time in Gordes (France), where the *Pol Mara Museum* opened in the castle of Gordes in 1996, displaying two hundred of his works.

Fred Bervoets (1942)

Fred Bervoets was born during WWII and grew up in the smoke of the factories in the port of Zwijndrecht and in the shadow of the church of Burcht. He studied at the *Royal Academy of Fine Arts* in Antwerp and at the *Higher Institute of Fine Arts*.

The oeuvre of Bervoets does not show homogeneity or continuity in the strict sense of the word. His themes and style undergo many changes throughout the years and are thus often categorized in "series". The period from 1964 to 1970 was characterized by influences of the *CoBrA* movement, although the works were already closely relating to the life and ideas of Bervoets.

From 1970, snakes and intestinal figures often appear in his monumental paintings, coining the name *Spaghetti Canvases* – busy tales in a psychedelic world. From 1972-1974 he abandons this detail intensive process and creates *Totems* and *Cabinets*. In addition, he increasingly uses assembly techniques, whereby he cuts and combines etchings, sticking them on fabrics, or fastening them with nails and ropes. During this period, Bervoets mostly made use of gray, blue and green with aggressive red intrusions, giving birth to what is now referred to as the *Grays* series.

In his following period, anger and sadness come to reflect the loss of his painter-brother Jan Cox in 1980 and the drama of Wounded Knee in 1973. In 1982, Bervoets exhibits at the KMSKA in Antwerp and a year later receives the Lobende Anerkennung from the jury of the European Graphical Art in Baden-Baden, after his participation in the 17th Biennal of São Paulo.

From 1987 his works are characterized by mutilated self-portraits and scars which were often made in the darkness of the night with acrylic paint on unprepared canvases. That same year is also marked by the *Nevada series*, made of impressions - mostly on brown wrapping paper or camouflage cloth - of his trip to the Mojave Desert and his visit of his friend Albert Szukalski (1945-2000).

In 1991, he receives the *State Award for Fine Art* and in 1994 exhibits his work besides that of Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) under the title *A Museum in the making* at the *Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts* in Scottsdale (USA).

Pjeroo Roobjee (1945)

Pjeroo Roobjee, a pseudonym for Dirk De Vilder, is a Flemish artist who studied at the *Royal Academy of Fine Arts* of Ghent, where he was born in 1945. He later attended the *Rijksacademie* in Amsterdam (NL).

Roobjee works as a painter, draftsman, graphic artist, actor, author, theater director, entertainer and singer. His plastic as well as his literary works have earned him many awards, notably *Le Prix de la Jeune Peinture*. He was a laureate of the *Leo J. Kryn Prize* for his debut novel *De Nachtswrijver* and in 1984 received the *Eugène Baie Prize*. In 1994, he was awarded the *Louis Paul Boon Prize*, the *Ark Prize of the Free Word* in 1998 and in 2004 was a laureate of the *Culture Award* of the city of Ghent for the ensemble of his literary work.

Roobjee was a co-founder of the Ghent branch of the *Kabouter* movement in 1970, for which he participated as a leader in the municipal elections. From the early 1970s, he actively wrote in various literary genres. His play *Ubu Kaka Pipi* premiered in 2000 at the *Gravensteen* in Ghent and was published by *Theater Taptoe*. The theater group *De Verrukking* played his *Omhelzingen* the same year. In 2011, Roobjee made his debut as an actor in the animated film *De Veer van César*, a melancholic reverie about an orphan toy dealer.

His plastic work revolves around painting and drawing, where he expresses his passion for freedom across artistic forms, revisiting European history, its great master painters, and its many demons in a personal celebration of life through a richly painted universe.

Olivier Legrain (1970)

Born in Brussels in 1970, Olivier Legrain is a painter, illustrator and storyboard artist. After studying at *Institut Saint Luc* in Brussels, he begins to practice music and for a moment hesitates between professional drummer and illustrator.

The storyboard of IP5 (a feature film by Jean-Jacques Beineix), published in 1992, helps his choice.

Soon enough, drawing, painting, music and cinema start being more intertwined in his different professional experiences. He even makes heavy metal album covers for a while, before a few years of lay-out at *TBWA*, *Duval-Guillaume*, *Publicis* and other advertising companies.

His first cinema break-through is as screenwriter of the now cult *Dikkenek* (2006), with its golden cast and amazingly fresh and politically incorrect comedy that inspired so many films since. This first collaboration with *EuropaCorp* soon leads Olivier to storyboard *Go Fast* (2008), while collaborating with Michel Gondry's *Partizan* at the same time.

Thus, storyboarding becomes Olivier's specialty and he starts showing his work in galleries, notably at *Pierre Hallet* in Brussels. He works on storyboards for several film directors, among which Du Welz, Garbarski, Roskam and Polanski.

In 2014, Olivier Legrain's paintings are noticed by the *Belgian Gallery* which soon organizes the first exhibition of his work on canvas. His paintings are overly concerned with the treatment of light. Their main subject is the human body, which Legrain tortures in fleshy compositions tainted by a violent chiaroscuro. He is never afraid to use new techniques to draw and paint, ranging from ecoline, Indian ink, bleach, pastel, fat, acrylic, walnut husk and oils.

Olivier Pauwels (1974)

Olivier Pauwels, also known by his tag BOHI, is a Belgian artist. He started his career as a painter and graphic designer, but quickly turned his attention towards three-dimensional assemblages. With an eye for detail and a strong preference for old materials, combined with sweet little babies, Pauwels creates an apocalyptic image track. This track seeks the balance between humor and threat, violence and love, renewal and reconditioning.

Famous for his cyber babies: android creatures, born from classic toy dolls and old machine parts, Pauwel's humanoid contraptions, which originally were given an undeniably steampunk look or donned military attributes, are moving as well as fascinating. Through them, the artist guides us towards a surreal world of 'Cyber Babies' and futuristic machines. It's an escape from reality, as well as a statement about launching every baby, every new-born, into an outrageous world. A world in which the mass hysteria of the constantly wanting more determines our rhythm of life. These babies are the seed for the next generation. They're a blank slate on which we can project our wishes, fears and dreams of the future.

In his work, objects are decontextualized and are given a new dimension, a new identity, whereby they lose all connection with their past. "Where the life of an object stops... the dream world of the artist begins." The artist's specific way of assemblage got him in touch with film legend George Miller in 2010 and he participated in shaping the image of the movie *Mad-Max Fury Road* (2015), which was rewarded with 6 Oscars.

Tom Liekens (1977)

Tom Liekens Tom Liekens has a completely unique position in the Belgian art landscape. Both his subjects and the way in which he elaborates them into monumental paintings and collages make him one of the most original painters of his generation. His interest in nature is striking. He is fascinated by the unrealistic way in which fauna and flora are presented in paintings, in fairy tales or in films. The artificial world of zoos, natural history museums and tropical greenhouses is also a permanent source of inspiration. Again and again his work is overloaded with art and cultural-historical references.

Tom Liekens lives and works in Antwerp where he graduated in 1999 from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Since then he has participated in numerous exhibitions, won the Camille Huysmans Prize for Painting (2006), and was nominated for the Visual Arts Prize of the Province of Antwerp (2005). Three large monographs of his work have already been published. His work is part of numerous private collections as well as public collections such as the Museum of Contemporary Art (MUHKA), Bank Belfius, National Bank Belgium, Artesis Antwerp University, Antwerp University, Art collection Province of Antwerp and Museum Van Bommel-Van Dam Venlo.

Peter Depelchin (1985)

Peter Depelchin grew up at the Western Flemish sea side, spent some years in Italy and New York City and nowadays lives in Brussels. His artwork witnesses of each of these places and unstoppably evokes new places Peter wishes to discover and to interpret through art. This cultural gourmandize is the motor behind his mentality, art and work.

Depelchin's artistic practice is articulated in two main steps: first, a research phase, for which he develops an amount of studies and small writings. These preliminary examinations result in series of sketches or collages. In a second movement, after having studied his subject at length and after having set-up the outlines of the intended artworks, he starts drawing, printmaking, filming or creating installations. The initial sketches are clearly put to use either as a stable point of departure for later artwork, or as autonomous artworks in their own right. Notwithstanding his interest and experience with a variety of media, drawing makes up the core of his artistic practice. The materials he uses to develop allegoric drawings are pen, Chinese ink, bistre and silk paper. This combination justly evokes visionary images with both Eastern and Western cultural influences. Likewise does his grip on several ancient printmaking techniques such as woodcut and intaglio.

Peter's recognizable artistic universe comes into being thanks to an intense art-historical and literary observation followed by a personal interpretation. As a matter of fact, he wants to create a new intercultural imagery containing a symbiosis of art history and topicality and avoiding cultural appropriation. To this end he explores art-historical characteristics of aesthetics and the power originating from an image when reversing its beauty or toying with the significance of artistic subjects, themes, archetypes and symbols: de-contextualization and neo-contextualization. As the recycled images are part of our enormous visual culture, their reinterpretations consequently have a strong effect on the spectator. He wants to break open the collective cross-cultural consciousness, starting from the concept of the "human identity". Hence, he searches for the "human being" and the "being human" exploring humanity. Finally, he accomplishes step by step a new, more universal imagery that draws from the past and reflects on the present.

Peter has been very active on the international art scene, with residencies in The Netherlands (Vlissingen 2008-2009), in Italy (Rome 2014-2015) and in the USA (New York, 2015-2016), exhibitions in Rome (*MAXXI*), Brussels (*Kasteel van Gaasbeek*) New York (*Brilliant Champions Gallery*) and London (*Young Masters*). He is involved in an artistic P.hD. program and plans several new exhibitions and residencies in its framework.

Nel-14512 (1986)

Born in Etterbeek, Nel-14512 is a Belgian symbolist-surrealist sculptor.

Her body of work is born out of the inventive blending of a figurative style tainted by *pop art* with the deconstruction of the French language. At first sight, the viewer discovers works that play with expressions and their mental projections to perpetually oscillate between the *symbolism* of a concept and its literal representation.

What is the meaning of an image? Must it be one with its explanation? Thus being one with its title? Following this very interrogation and this play on signifying and signified, Nel-14512's work undeniably adopts the visual style of *surrealism*, with the same attention to detail and resemblance, but her own use of language does not translate into an absence of link between the word and the image. It is quite the opposite, for her sculptures dive deeper into the meaning of their title, gracefully exhausting its symbolic meaning.

Nel-14512's technical and documentary research all aim at creating a visual shock resulting from the juxtaposition of images, words and objects, whereby she expresses herself almost philosophically, shamelessly shaking some of our core beliefs.





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