

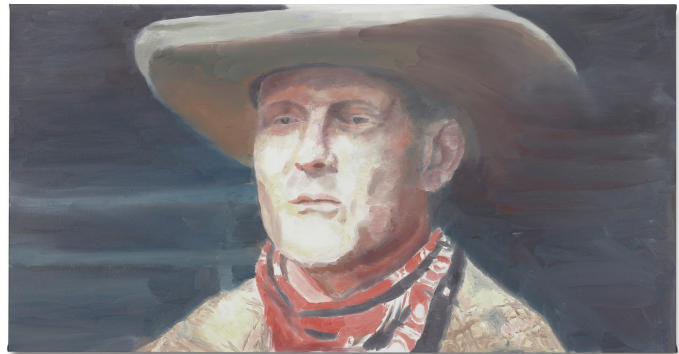
David Zwirner

New York London Paris Hong Kong

Luc Tuymans *Good Luck*

October 27 – December 19, 2020

5–6/F, H Queen's, 80 Queen's Road Central
Hong Kong



Luc Tuymans, *Still*, 2019
© Luc Tuymans
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by the renowned Belgian artist Luc Tuymans (b. 1958) at the gallery's Hong Kong location—his first solo presentation in Greater China. On view will be a selection of recent paintings and a new single-channel animated video that are drawn from a range of historical and contemporary images. Together the works share an undercurrent, as suggested by the exhibition's title, of paradox and uncertainty.

Tuymans has become known for a distinctive style of painting that demonstrates the power of images to simultaneously communicate and withhold. Emerging in the 1980s, Tuymans pioneered a decidedly non-narrative approach to figurative painting, instead exploring how information can be layered and embedded within certain scenes and signifiers. Based on preexisting imagery culled from a variety of sources, his works are rendered in a muted palette that is suggestive of a blurry recollection or a fading memory. Their quiet and restrained appearance, however, belies an underlying moral complexity, and they engage equally with questions of history and its representation as they do with quotidian subject matter. Tuymans's canvases both undermine and reinvent traditional notions of monumentality through their insistence on the ambiguity of meaning.

The present exhibition brings together a wide range of global, historical, and contemporary references that reflect ongoing themes of interest for the artist. Among the works on view are a group of canvases painted from snapshot images of Delft tiles, which originated in the context of seventeenth-century Dutch imperialism. Initially made and distributed in response to increasing demand in Europe for prized Ming dynasty ceramics at a lower price during the golden age of Dutch trade, these tin-glazed objects mimic both the appearance and techniques of fine Chinese porcelain and often take banal scenes of everyday life adapted for a European context as their subject matter. Tuymans, who is half Dutch and lives and works in Antwerp, an original site of ceramic production before workshops were relocated to Delft, focuses on a solitary figure in each of these tiles to underscore the hybrid and evolving nature of this iconography, as the tiles continue to function as global consumer goods. Other paintings in the show address history, including *Cell* (2019), an enigmatic image of an anonymous prison cell door in use in Berlin in the 1930s that has two viewing holes, as if to conflate the gaze of the prison keeper with that of the imprisoned. The ever-accelerated connection between past, present, and future is explored in

Shenzhen (2019), which depicts an aerial view of the Chinese city, painted by the artist from a documentary still captured from his laptop. Overlaid with play, rewind, and fast-forward symbols, the otherwise generic cityscape takes on an air of nostalgia for both the past and an unknown future.

Also on view is *Outfit* (2019), which depicts a costume worn by the early Hollywood actor Tom Mix, who appeared as a cowboy in nearly three hundred American Westerns in the first half of the twentieth century. Westerns were exported internationally and served, in part, to function as archetypal representations of the United States. Here, the cowboy is presented as a disembodied prop in a museum, heightening a sense of artifice that suggests a parallel to the United States' evolving, shifting role in the export of both culture and goods within the global marketplace. The exhibition also includes the monumentally scaled *Anonymous I* (2018), a painting based on a series of black-and-white images of forensically reconstructed faces. Depicting an individual who in reality may or may not exist, the artist^[3] has imbued the figure with an uncanny presence. Tuymans's longstanding fascination with the idea of the face as an object sets up a tension between immediacy and withholding, and the real and the constructed.

Featured in the exhibition is *Owl* (2019), an animated work that reflects Tuymans's ongoing interest in the relationship between moving and static images. Here, an owl is shown taking flight. The nocturnal bird can be seen to embody a dichotomy—at once a symbol of wisdom and the perfect predator, because it can approach its prey silently and with stealth. Like Francisco de Goya's representation of an owl in his [4] famous 1799 etching *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, made in another time of crisis, Tuymans's owl appears as a kind of premonition.

As the critic Su Wei describes in the accompanying exhibition catalogue, Tuymans's works provide "avenues for reconsidering emotions, morals, and understandings of history in an unstable world."¹ Or as the artist himself has noted, the works in this exhibition are "not unlike the times we are living in now and moreover like the anachronism that painting is itself."²

A new publication on the artist's work will be available on the occasion of the exhibition, featuring texts by Su Wei and Éric de Chasse, as well as a republished essay by Luc Tuymans from the 2007 catalogue *The Forbidden Empire: World Views of Chinese and Flemish Masters*, for the exhibition he co-curated with Yu Hui at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, and the Palace Museum, Beijing.

Born in 1958 in Mortsel, Belgium, Luc Tuymans is one of the most important painters of his generation. His first major museum presentations were held in 1990 at the Provinciaal Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Ostend, Belgium, and the Vereniging voor het Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent. In 1992, the artist participated in *documenta IX* in Kassel, in addition to having a solo exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern, which helped cement his growing reputation in Europe. In 1994, *Luc Tuymans: Superstition* debuted at Portikus, Frankfurt, and traveled to David Zwirner, New York; the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto; The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; and Goldie Paley Gallery, Moore College of Art & Design, Philadelphia, establishing him as a major influential artist abroad. In 2001, the artist represented Belgium at the Venice Biennale to great acclaim.

¹ Su Wei, "The Path of Globalization and its Footnote: On Luc Tuymans's Encounter with China," in *Luc Tuymans: Good Luck*. Exh. cat. (New York/Hong Kong: David Zwirner Books, 2020), p. 30.

² Luc Tuymans, cited in *ibid.*, p. 31.

Tuymans has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions at prestigious institutions worldwide. Major presentations of his work include those held at Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2019); De Pont Museum, Tilburg, The Netherlands (2019); Museum aan de Stroom (MAAS), Antwerp (2016), which traveled to the National Portrait Gallery, London; QM Gallery Al Riwaq, Qatar Museums, Doha (2015); Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2009), which traveled to San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Dallas Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and BOZAR – Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; and Tate Modern, London (2004), which traveled to K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

Tuymans has received numerous awards and honors, including the Medal of Honor, International Congress of Contemporary Painting (ICOCEP), Porto, Portugal (2019); Coutts Contemporary Art Foundation Award, Zurich (2000); and Flemish Culture Award for Visual Arts (1993). His works are featured in museum collections worldwide, including Art Institute of Chicago; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Fondazione Prada, Milan; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; The National Museum of Art, Osaka; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Pinault Collection; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Tate, London.

Tuymans's catalogue raisonné of paintings, from 1972 to 2018, is now available from David Zwirner Books and Yale University Press. The three volumes feature full-color images and documentation of more than five hundred paintings.

Tuymans has been represented by David Zwirner since 1994, and this is his thirteenth solo exhibition with the gallery. He lives and works in Antwerp.

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