

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

JORIS VAN DE MOORTELE

Foolhardy Boarding a Lost State of Mind

Thursday 17 March - Saturday 7 May 2022



Europe and the Triumph of dance of death (after Triumph of Death, ca. 1562, P. Breughel and The Ancient of Days, Europe a Prophecy, 1794, W. Blake), 2021
Woodcut and oil on Belgian linen, UV varnish, 100 x 170 cm
© Joris Van de Moortel

Nathalie Obadia has the pleasure of presenting *Foolhardy Boarding a Lost State of Mind*, a new exhibition by Joris Van de Moortel, in her Brussels gallery. The works presented in this exhibition explore an apocalyptic imaginary, mixing references from art history and the Middle Ages, from Christianity and popular folklore, as well as from literature and music. They invite us to reflect on our current situation and our relationship with the world, of which we seem, through the artist's work, to be both masters and victims. Throughout his oeuvre, the artist has used a wide range of media: collages, installations, musical performances, drawings... This exhibition presents his most recent artistic exploration: large paintings on canvas, a continuation of his watercolours first shown in the exhibition *Les Paradis Artificiels* (2021).

In these new works, Joris Van de Moortel takes up a medium that historically echoes the references he invokes in his work. The artist dialogues with the paintings of the Flemish Pieter Brueghel, the English painter William Blake and the Belgian James Ensor. Motifs such as the Dance of Death (taken from the works of Hans Holbein) or the figure of Urizen (the old man who embodies wisdom, the architect of the universe) are applied to the canvas with the woodcut technique, which the artist already used earlier in his installations, and onto which he then applies layers of oil paint. The imprecision of this medium blurs certain details, inviting the viewer to immerse him or herself in the depicted scene in order to grasp all of its nuances. According to the artist, "*these works turn the worldview of the 16th century on its head and hold up a mirror to the struggles of our time, reflecting, in this way, a chaotic era.*"

Installations made up of various elements, such as neon lights, broken guitars, Plexiglas etc. evoke both the assemblages of Robert Rauschenberg as well as the surrealist and mythological universe of Leonora Carrington. Joris Van de Moortel creates performances that are based on improvisation, music and experience, using heterogeneous elements such as water, fire and wax (glass, wax, fire, white, smoke, nature, vandal - the artist's personal reinterpretation of the seven sacraments of the Catholic faith). The works *If 6 turned into 9 (i don't mind) le trou du fou (guitar)* and *If 9 turned into 6 (i don't mind) le trou du fou (door for a hat head)* are remains of performances, with a carefully considered arrangement and aesthetic. They function as *memento mori* of the destructive energy that flows between the artist, the spectators, his musicians and his props during these often unpredictable performative moments. This is evidenced in the video

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Weird Weirdness - Bizarre Bizarrierie, to which we can trace the genesis of several of the works presented here. These performances are also a way for Joris Van de Moortel to write his own mythology, which he extends with the development of a Tarot card deck, also shown here in the exhibition for the first time.

The phenomenon of a change of state, of transition, fascinates the artist and can be seen throughout his artistic practice. Both the form and the subjects of certain works evoke passages in the broadest sense of the word: the passage from life to death, symbolised by the ship (*Ship of Fools*), guided by *The Figure of the Fool*, which takes its passengers to a fate as murky as the water on which they are sailing. The passage from the divine to the earthly, from order to chaos, is evoked by the Tower of Babel, the ultimate symbol of human hubris, or by the figure of the transi (a masked skeleton with a human face who entices the living so as to take them to the world of the dead).

In this exhibition, Joris Van de Moortel continues his exploration of our time and his place as an artist, both observer, alchemist and participant in our dissonant world. Through his works, he invites us to embark on a ship with an uncertain destination, whose safe arrival we oddly seem to be responsible for.

« *But all that is broken can be fixed so let's get started* » Joris Van de Moortel

Born in 1983 in Ghent, Joris Van de Moortel lives and works in Antwerp (Belgium).

He graduated from the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin (Germany) in 2013 and from the Higher Institute of Fine Arts (HISK) in Ghent (Belgium) in 2009. Joris Van de Moortel is one of the most noticed artists of the Belgian contemporary art scene.

Joris Van de Moortel has received notable solo exhibitions, including *Guitare préparée* at Sint-Lukas Galerie (Brussels, Belgium) in 2019; *Cachivage Bugui Bugui* at BOZAR (Palais de Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium) in 2018; *Pink Noises*, his first solo exhibition in the United States, at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta in 2016; *Are you interested in architecture?...* at the Be Part Art Centre (Waregem, Belgium) in 2015.

In 2019, Galerie Nathalie Obadia exhibited Joris Van de Moortel's new series of pieces on paper at the Art on Paper fair (BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium), and also devoted a second solo exhibition to him in Paris entitled *The ne'er do wells set out for a dubious pilgrimage* on the occasion of which his first monograph was published. In the same year, Joris Van de Moortel received the Grand Jury Prize for his participation in the 13th International Art Biennial in Cairo (Egypt).

Joris Van de Moortel has participated in numerous manifesto group exhibitions, including *Fiat Lux*, *Pilar* (Brussels, Belgium), *Watou Arts Festival* (Watou, Belgium) and the Kortrijk Triennial of Contemporary Art (Courtrai, Belgium), *Mirror Infinities* organised by the nomadic art project *The Agnognostic Temple* at Tour & Taxis (Brussels, Belgium) in 2021; *Een blik achter de muur* at the Blikfabriek (Antwerp, Belgium) in 2020; *Eyes East Bound* at the 13th edition of the Cairo International Art Biennial (Egypt) in 2019; *Danser Brut* au LaM (Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, Villeneuve d'Ascq, France) in 2018; *Ecce Homo* at the Mayer Van Den Bergh Museum (Antwerp, Belgium) in 2017, which brought together some fifty other Belgian artists including Luc Tuymans, Michaël Booremans, Ann Veronica Janssens; *Rebel, Rebel* at the MAC's (Museum of Contemporary Arts of the Walloon Federation Brussels, Grand Hornu, Belgium) in 2016; *Passion - Fan behaviour and art*, a travelling exhibition in 2015 and 2016 at the Ludwig Museum (Budapest, Hungary), Stadtgalerie (Kiel, Germany), Künstlerhaus (Nuremberg, Germany), and Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin, Germany); *Des choses en moins, des choses en plus* at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France) in 2014; *Upside down Part 2 Let's Dance* at SMAK (Ghent, Belgium) in 2013; *Spontaneously* at the Zacheta National Gallery of Art (Warsaw, Poland) in 2012; and *Exploded view* at the Centraal Museum (Utrecht, The Netherlands) also in 2012.

In 2021, Joris won the Prix de la Monnaie de Paris followed by a residency to realise his project *La Médaille et son double*.

In 2024, the S.M.A.K. in Ghent will devote a solo exhibition to him.

His works are included in important institutional and private collections such as the Vehbi Koç Foundation (Istanbul, Turkey); the Dena Foundation for Contemporary Art (Paris, France/New York, USA); the Centraal Museum Collection (Utrecht, The Netherlands); the Raja Collection (Roissy-en-France, France); the Ghisla Art Collection (Locarno, Switzerland) and the Belfius Art Collection (Brussels, Belgium).

Joris Van de Moortel has been represented by Galerie Nathalie Obadia Paris/ Brussels since 2013.

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Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Brussels

Charles Decoster

Joris Van de Moortel

Foolhardy Boarding a Lost State of Mind

March 17 - May 7, 2022

Guillaume Leblon

May 19 - July 9, 2022

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Cloître Saint-Merri I et II

Youssef Nabil

Memory of a Happy Place

March 19 - May 8, 2022

Shirley Jaffe

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Paris

Saint-Honoré

Valérie Belin

Modern Royals

24 March - 14 May, 2022

Brook Andrew

May 24 - July 23, 2022