

Raoul De Keyser *Replay Again*

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Raoul De Keyser, *Closerie I (Berliner Ensemble)*, 1998
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Courtesy Family Raoul De Keyser and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Raoul De Keyser: Replay Again*, on view in Hong Kong. This exhibition expands on the gallery's presentation of De Keyser's work in Hong Kong in 2021. Among the notable works that will be on view are representative paintings from the Belgian artist's seminal *Come on, play it again*; *Hal*, and *Hayward* series, made during the height of his career, from the middle of the 1980s to the 2000s.

De Keyser (1930–2012) is known for his sophisticated and tempered paintings that subtly and evocatively explore the relationship between color and form. Made up of simple shapes and painterly marks, his works allude to the natural world and representational imagery while avoiding suggestions of narrative or reductive frameworks that limit experience and interpretation. Despite—or precisely because of—their spare compositions, De Keyser's works convey a visual intensity that inspires prolonged contemplation, mirroring the artist's own sustained, reflective process. As the art historian and curator Ulrich Loock notes: "In the case of De Keyser, the autonomy of painting is not an overarching, ultimate goal to be reached by a detour through its opposite. Rather ... De Keyser succeeds in creating a situation in which his painting is kept free from pure subjective construction and is able, through mimesis, to acknowledge a reality outside itself.... Through a particular kind of self-referentiality, he manages to balance depiction and the autonomy of the image, avoiding a compromise between the two."¹ A true painter's painter, De Keyser possessed an ability to constantly challenge and expand the possibilities of the medium of painting and has inspired generations of artists across the globe. Attesting to his continued relevance to young artists today, De Keyser's work will be featured in the upcoming group exhibition *Friends in a Field: Conversations with Raoul De Keyser* at Mu.ZEE, Ostend, Belgium, which situates his paintings alongside the work of historical painters such as Forrest Bess as well as numerous contemporary artists whose practices continue to be directly influenced by him.

¹ Ulrich Loock, "Drift," in *Raoul De Keyser: Drift*. Exh. cat. (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2016), p. 13.

Several paintings from De Keyser's seminal *Come on, play it again* series will be on view in the exhibition. First presented at De Keyser's inaugural show at David Zwirner in 2001 in New York (also titled after the series), each of these works seems to follow a different compositional logic, while nevertheless relying on an economical use of biomorphic and geometric forms, squares, lines, and dots. The title of the series carries musical connotations, as if encouraging an improvisational jazz pianist, while simultaneously suggesting the possibility of infinite variation. *Hayward I* (1993), part of a series of works that De Keyser made on the occasion of the important 1994 group exhibition *Unbound: Possibilities in Painting* at the Hayward Gallery, London, will also be included in the show. Featuring planes of paint that hug the edges and margins of the support and push toward—yet remain decidedly separate from—the central vertical axis, *Hayward I* is a key example of the subtle experimentalism and radicality of De Keyser's painterly project. As the curator of *Unbound*, Adrian Searle, noted: "Raoul De Keyser's paintings have the concentration of a stare.... There's nature in them, and buildings, and quiet weather, and the sounds of a man working alone in an upper room."²

Several of the notable earlier works on view highlight recurring visual motifs within the artist's oeuvre. These include *Hal* (1984/1985) and a related work, *Untitled* (1984–1985), both of which see the continuation of the artist's chalk-line motif, which first appeared in works from the beginning of De Keyser's career in the 1960s and early 1970s and is characterized by two thick white lines dividing the composition and interacting with other fields and layers of color.

Presented ten years after the artist's passing, the selection of works on view are a reminder of the subtle ingenuity of De Keyser's lifelong exploration of the painted surface and the inexhaustibility of his vision.

Raoul De Keyser was born in Deinze, Belgium, in 1930. Since 1999, his work has been represented by David Zwirner. Previous solo exhibitions at the gallery in New York include *Come on, play it again* (2001), *Remnants* (2003), *Recent Work* (2006), *Terminus: Drawings (1979–1982) and Recent Paintings* (2009), *Freedom* (2011), and *Drift* (2016), which was first on view at David Zwirner London (2015).

Since the mid-1960s, the artist's work has been the subject of several solo exhibitions at prominent institutions. In 2000, a large-scale retrospective was presented at the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, which traveled to the Goldie Paley Gallery, Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, and The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. A major survey of the artist's paintings traveled extensively from 2004 through 2005 to the Whitechapel Gallery, London; Musée de Rochechouart, France; De Pont Museum for Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands; Museu de Serralves, Porto, Portugal; and the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland. In 2009, his paintings were exhibited in a retrospective at the Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany, and his watercolors were presented jointly at the Museu de Serralves, Porto, Portugal, and the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin.

Other venues that have hosted important solo exhibitions include the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent (2001); Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2002); Museum van Deinze en de Leiestreek, Deinze, Belgium (2007 and 2013); Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, France (2008); De Loketten, Flemish Parliament, Brussels (2011); the Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (2015); and Museum van Deinze en de Leiestreek, Deinze, Belgium (2017). Work by the artist has been featured in countless group exhibitions worldwide, including Documenta IX in Kassel, Germany, in 1992, and at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007.

² Adrian Searle, "Raoul De Keyser," in *Unbound: Possibilities in Painting*. Exh. cat. (London: South Bank Centre, 1994), p. 48.

In 2018, a major retrospective of the artist's work opened at the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.) in Ghent and traveled to Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2019). In 2018, Cultuurcentrum Strombeek Grimbergen, Belgium, presented *Raoul De Keyser: In Print. Zeefdrukken, Lithografieën, Linosneden, Etsen*.

Work by the artist is held in permanent collections worldwide, including the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent.

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