

KETELEER GALLERY is very pleased to present *L'embrasement*, a solo exhibition by Antoine Roegiers (°1980. Braine l'Alleud, Belgium. Lives and works in France). The artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery consists of drawings and videos and a completely new series of oil paintings.

For this exhibition Antoine Roegiers presents three chapters of an ongoing story he's been developing for a few years now. In 2019 Roegiers showed us the first works of part one, *Carnavals*, in his eponymous solo exhibition at Brendonck. Taking inspiration from the Old Masters whom he regards as his personal artistic fathers, *Carnavals* is an allegorical feast portraying the vanity of our society, a feast of chaotic excitement and unadulterated pleasure. Like a child playing with puppets, Roegiers borrows bits, pieces and backgrounds from famous paintings by Rubens, Breughel, Bosch and also Ensor, adds a hefty dose of imagination and lets his creatures run wild to party as if there is no tomorrow, thus revealing our carelessness.

Although each chapter follows the previous one, Roegiers never gives us the whole explanation. He shows fragments of multiple stories happening at once and leaves it to us to connect the dots and fill in the blanks. By reviving elements and styles of art history the artist creates a fantastical new universe with his paintings. But he doesn't stop there. As if his elaborate and meticulously detailed scenes weren't enough to awaken our imagination, Roegiers also turns his paintings into video animations, unveiling a wondrous sliver of his characters' secret lives.

Part two, *In the shadows of the clouds* (2020/2021), is the rude awakening – a chapter inspired by the artist's own confinement during the pandemic. Blind jubilation makes way for desolation and alienation. This work began with a pictorial narration in paint. All the paintings form a single story. In addition to the paintings, the artist decided to set his canvases in motion to make an animated film, turning each series of paintings into a chapter of the film. These animated chapters were then assembled to be framed as objects, accompanied by a unique oil painting on wood representing a still from the video. The story begins with two revelers roaming the eerie deserted landscapes to find that there are no humans left, only skeletons collecting the masks left behind after the party. A threatening storm approaches as the revelers head towards a mysterious hangar where an aircraft is stored...

*L'embrasement* (2022), the fourth series (which will also be animated in the future), shows the destruction of our natural world, a magisterial inferno brought on by the zeppelin's explosion spreading its way through the fields and forests, chasing all inhabitants away – a direct reference to our current climate crisis, the result of our reckless indulgences.

Roegiers' paintings offer a plethora of possible storylines but the pictorial aspect is still the most important to him. "*The story is the pretext to paint a climate, the wind, the storm, the light, the clouds, flames, heat, light and the air.*" A testament to his profound love for the medium, his persistent dedication to technique accomplishes a wonderfully unique revival of the magic lurking in his beloved predecessors' works while remaining true to the age-old allegorical style by mirroring our modern society back at us.

Lauren Wiggers, 2023.