

INÈS VAN DEN KIEBOOM

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Inès van den Kieboom (b. 1930 in Ostend; lives and works in Antwerp) has been painting since the 1960s, yet she has only exhibited her works three times: twice shortly after she started creating her work, and once very recently in Antwerp where, since 2022, she is represented by Tim Van Laere Gallery. From March 23 to May 20, 2023, she will have her first solo exhibition at the gallery, featuring a new series of paintings as well as early, never-before-seen works.

Van den Kieboom finds inspiration primarily in her everyday surroundings, but also in art history, popular culture, and current events. She paints and draws her subjects through a filter of memories and impressions, which ensures the elimination of superfluous details and abstracts her subjects to their figurative essence. Painting from memory gives van den Kieboom room for painterly invention, allowing her to bring visual elements of a particular moment and the emotion associated with it to an image. This is also what appeals to the viewer and elevates Inès van den Kieboom's everyday themes to universal truths.

Much like the French painter Henri Rousseau, van den Kieboom has had no artistic training. This immediately explains the kinship of her work with that of “Le Douanier” Rousseau, both have developed their very own style unfettered by traditions of classical training. They define their own rules of their painterly universe, appropriating the freedom to represent things as they perceive, remember or feel them. In Henri Rousseau's work *The Wedding Party* (1905) we see what looks like a photographic portrait of a wedding party. Strangely, however, the bride appears to be floating in the air. Her veil is on top of the grandmother's dress, which contradicts the perspective suggested by placing the characters at different levels in the composition. This was a very deliberate choice by the painter, who often adds an element of strangeness to reality. In her work, van den Kieboom also often plays with the depiction of reality in such humorous ways. Her wedding portrait *In de Wolken* (1990) shows a bride and groom who appear to be standing in a cloud. Similarly, in the work *De Gevelde Scheidsrechter* (1981), van den Kieboom depicts a twisted reality of a match between two wrestlers. The flat perspective and hierarchical relationships of the various characters remind us of the imagery of the ancient Egyptians and of medieval miniatures.

Van den Kieboom paints what she sees: slippers on a colorful carpet, a prostitute at the window, dancing people in a café, lemons in a bowl, her mother-in-law dressed in her blue kimono, a trapeze artist in the circus, and so on. Usually, she does not paint on canvas, but rather on cardboard or pieces of found wood, such as cabinet doors. In addition to her paintings, van den Kieboom makes collages and viewing boxes. In these, she often incorporates elements from current events, such as refugees arriving via the Mediterranean Sea, Trump's wall, and Greta Thunberg's climate march.

Van den Kieboom's works are always confident, animated, and energetic. With her unique visual language, she reaches out to us with new perspectives on how we observe the world.