

KETELEER GALLERY is very pleased to present SYMBIOSIS, a new solo exhibition by Belgian mural artist ROA (Ghent, BE). ROA is the only artist who already presented a solo exhibition in every exhibition space of the gallery and this fourth one exists of a completely new series of paintings on metal.

ROA, born in Ghent, Belgium, is considered to be one of the most influential contemporary mural artists of our times and his public works on buildings and walls across the world where photographed countless times. His characteristic style immediately catches the eye of the passer-by: black and white paintings of animals that are native to or have made a new home in the places he exhibits, sometimes including the skeleton or colorful internal organs. The meticulously detailed paintings and their enormous scale, sometimes up to 50 meters high, aid the artist's ambition: to remind the modern man in his day-to-day life of the nature from which he originated.

For this exhibition, ROA revisits a beloved material he also used for his *La Bête Humaine* (2019) exhibition: repurposed metal. This material was chosen deliberately for its symbolic meaning. It's a typical discarded product of our industrial world which he recycles and transforms to create awareness. This new series consist of 10 works on metal panels, including a series of archival drawers from a closed down French energy plant – a reference to the institutions put in place to make nature work for man.

The theme of this new series is symbiosis, a concept from biology that stands for all close and interdependent relationships between different biological species or between flora and fauna. This prolonged association can be mutualistic and thus be beneficial for both parties, commensal, where one benefits and the other neither benefits nor suffers, or parasitic, where one benefits at the expense of the other. With SYMBIOSIS, ROA reminds us that the relationship between man and animal is also one that can move along this spectrum, and that we have a choice in it! SYMBIOSIS is thus, just like his entire oeuvre, first of all about the impact man has on nature, how the city conflicts with the jungle if you will, but here specifically it's also about how everything is connected and therefore every organism plays a crucial part in the whole.

With this new series, ROA wants to draw attention to the beauty but also to the fragility of this interdependency of our natural world and he does so without reprimanding or patronizing. His immeasurable love for animals and dedication to bring them to life with diligent detailing allow them – without the need for words – to truly speak to us.

*Lauren Wiggers, 2023.*

Opening 24 September, 11am – 6pm.

The exhibition will be on view until 22 October, 2023.