

BEN SLEDSSENS
Un Nuovo Viaggio
18 November 2023 - 3 February 2024



In the historic Palazzo Donarelli Ricci located at Via Giulia 98 in Rome, Tim Van Laere Gallery will open its new space on November 18, 2023. This space will be inaugurated with a solo exhibition by Ben Sledsens. The title of the exhibition *Un Nuovo Viaggio* is an allusion by the artist to a new chapter in his own practice, but also in that of the gallery.

Ben Sledsens' oeuvre offers a glimpse into his imaginary world, a utopia in which he wants to live himself. His carefully constructed compositions and their vibrant color palette open up to the viewer's eyes and invite them to explore the unexplored world of his imagination. With his great pictorial insight, Sledsens creates an intriguing puzzle of references by constantly using motifs, themes and objects, building a recognizable and coherent body of work in which he magnifies, emphasizes and idealizes certain elements of nature and his everyday environment whereby they surpass our realistic perception.

Central to the work is his profound understanding of painterly tradition. His large format canvases where he plays with color and reinterprets the landscape, exist in a long tradition of painting that reference Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, James Ensor, Claude Monet, Henri Rousseau, and Pieter Bruegel the Elder, yet his works are part of a bigger poetic universe that is all his own. While in his previous exhibition Sledsens mainly focused on the influence of light on our perception of color and explored the possibilities of a monochrome palette, he now returns to a more nuanced and complementary color scheme.

Sledsens attaches great importance to the power of color to evoke moods in the viewer, resulting in a visual journey of discovery that can evoke different emotions, memories and stories

in each spectator. Nature is a central theme within Ben Sledsens' oeuvre, but his landscapes are always composed from his own imagination and not painted from reality. His landscapes are never merely the background scenery for his figures, but act as an active element that enters into dialogue with the viewer. Apart from the artist and his muse and girlfriend Charlotte De Geyster, all characters are fictionally composed, with all characteristics selected in the same way as the different parts of the landscape. These characters wander through the landscapes, without any indication of how they got there or where they are going. He stages them as 'chance encounters', on the one hand between the character and the landscape, on the other hand with the viewer. To encourage these encounters, the artist often deliberately creates different paths through his works, inviting the viewer to step into his world.

Ben Sledsens (°1991, Antwerp) lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium. The artist's work is found in several international collections, including the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (San Diego), M HKA (Antwerp), CAC (Malaga), Fundacion Canaria para el Desarrollo de la Pintura (Las Palmas De Gran Canaria), the Hermitage (St. Petersburg), Nassima Landau Art Foundation (Tel Aviv).