

KETELEER GALLERY proudly presents a duo exhibition by Belgian artist Guillaume Bijl (b. 1946, Antwerp) and Danish artist Peter Land (b. 1966, Aarhus).

Peter Land is a versatile artist who paints, draws, sculpts and makes videos. His artistic practice is best described as an ongoing performance filled with provocative, grotesque elements. Although his works often exude a sense of anxiety and abandonment, his sense of humour is unmistakable. In works like the ominous *Wunderkind* from 2012, he merges innocence with the terrifying in the malevolent gaze of a young violin prodigy. In his second exhibition at Keteleer Gallery, Land explores themes such as the subconscious and self-image, blurring the lines between memory and expression, childhood play and nightmare, despair and idyll. His art often originates from personal experiences but also provides a critical look at a society obsessed with perfection.

A striking example of Peter Land's observations on the fundamental futility of life is the sculptural installation *Back To Square One* from 2015. This impressive work, in which he also satirizes himself as an artist, demonstrates Land's ongoing, humorous, and poignant exploration of the male figure, often embodied by the artist himself. In the new video works, Peter Land breaks open and hollows out existing meanings through the stereotypical representation of the self-assured, successful man. In *22 Handshakes* (2023) and *Hope* (2023), he deliberately chooses stock images that function as ready-mades—generic visual material specifically created for use in commercials, business presentations, and other forms of advertisements. In both loops, what appears to be a highly recognizable action shifts beyond recognition, beyond parody or satire, and flows into the absurd. Land's four recent paintings exemplify his work, evoking feelings of existential alienation and wonder, leaving the viewer confused but amused.

Like Peter Land, Guillaume Bijl enjoys using clichés and stereotypes. Bijl is known for his large-scale installations and visual realism, through which he depicts and critiques various aspects of Western culture and its consumer society. By employing ultimate stereotypes, he produces an archaeology of our time in an alienating and often tragicomic manner.

In his third exhibition at the gallery, Bijl presents a series of new *Sorry* works, which vary in form but always fall from banal reality into the surreal. Central to this is an imposing *Sorry* installation, where Bijl arranges twelve objects on a red carpet—from small to large, from black to colourful, and back again—into one of his characteristic contemporary still lifes. Flanking this are two *Sorry* compositions that display a similar materiality and are equally exemplary of Bijl's pronounced sense of detail and realism. His typical situational irony is also evident in three new pedestals filled with souvenirs, memorabilia, and display materials. The two works on paper offer a unique insight into the visual thought process and the germination of the artist's ideas. Bijl transforms the gallery into a semiotic thrift store or amusement park, where his light-hearted compositions transcend the trivial, kitschy context from which they arise. Through a conceptual detachment, his work stimulates and questions the viewer's critical capacity.

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Both Guillaume Bijl and Peter Land offer sly, witty, and always pertinent commentaries on society, mercilessly puncturing the often illusory nature of our contemporary existence. While Land intertwines the personal and existential with a critical examination of social ideas and the human condition, Bijl dissects the distorted value judgments and absurdities of the consumer-oriented society.

Koen Leemans, 2024.

The exhibition will be on view 22 June – 31 August, 2024.