

# **BEN SLEDSSENS**

## **Between Fish and Stars**

### **29 August - 5 October 2024**



Tim Van Laere Gallery presents *Between Fish and Stars*, Ben Sledsens' sixth solo exhibition at the gallery. In this exhibition, Sledsens presents a new series of paintings and introduces a new series of charcoal drawings on paper.

Our perception ranges from between the fish to the stars, and that is exactly where Ben Sledsens draws his inspiration. He observes and takes everything in from his environment; from deep woods and vast landscapes to a flower arrangement in a living room. There is no hierarchy in his subjects; anything that catches his eye is worthy of painting. However, Sledsens' work does not represent reality rather an interpretation of it. He searches for the utopian in the mundane and directs our gaze to the beauty in the things that surround us. In his universe, he abstracts his observations to their essence and searches for the absolute total experience of light and color. He questions our ways of seeing, our perceptions and our assumptions about the reality that surrounds us and the truth behind their meaning. Sledsens' dialogue with his canvases is an open and honest one, in which form, line, composition and color are always the main subjects.

Each step he undertakes in his painting process is well thought out to find the right touch for each part of his composition. To do this, he carefully looks at the work of his predecessors. "Art history is shaped by generations. What is being made now would be impossible without what was before. I go through those generations, look at what inspires me and incorporate that into my work" says the artist. Sledsens has a broad and diverse palette of sources of inspiration and measures himself against his predecessors. His landscapes share compositional similarities with Pieter Breughel the Elder and Henri Rousseau, while his play with light and color evokes the works of James Ensor, Claude Monet, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard and even the abstract expressionists like Mark Rothko who explored the extremes of light, color, and form. However, Sledsens never completely distances himself from the figurative; he abstracts in search of essence and beauty within the recognizable forms of his subjects. In doing so, he invites viewers to take in the familiar shapes around them and to become aware of the beauty in their daily impressions.

In this exhibition, Sledsens also introduces his charcoal drawings for the first time alongside his paintings, in which he completely abandons his play with colors and focuses on the essence of composition and the interplay of lines and shapes. He chose charcoal, one of the oldest drawing materials, because of the fluidity and freedom this technique provides him on paper.

Ben Sledsens (b. 1991, Antwerp) lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium. His work is included in several international collections, such as Centraal Museum, Utrecht; 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 and Nassima Landau Art Foundation, Tel Aviv.