

KETELEER GALLERY is very pleased to present *From Here on Out*, a solo exhibition by Joëlle Dubois. Joëlle Dubois' second solo exhibition at the gallery features an entirely new series of paintings and drawings.

In *From Here on Out*, Joëlle Dubois presents a poignant series of works exploring themes such as loss, grief, contemplation, memory and love. As a continuation of her previous exhibition, *Forget me Not* (2022), she delves deeply into her personal world, where feelings of sorrow and uncertainty intertwine with a longing for physicality and tangibility. There is also room for humour, highlighting the absurdity of tragedy and allowing us to find calm when stress becomes overwhelming. Joëlle Dubois aims to emphasize the fluidity of moods, the place where vulnerability and strength coexist in a constant, tension-filled interplay.

Dubois portrays the emotions associated with the loss of her mother, who suffered from Alzheimer's, and the grief that is inextricably linked to it. The loneliness that accompanies such an illness feels almost like a delusion, where our deepest selves struggle with the growing distance from people and moments drifting further away from us. The fading and eventual loss of individuality and identity are woven throughout the exhibition. Central to *From Here on Out* is the question: how do we hold on to what is constantly slipping away from us?

Dubois offers an intimate glimpse into her emotional world, sharing both her immense loss and her enduring hope. In her paintings, Joëlle Dubois explores the delicate tension between memory and reality, often depicting herself alone in darkness, caught between two worlds. The meditative silence seems deceptively in harmony with the emotional intensity of the work. Whether accompanied by her loyal dog Milo or not, her dreamy reflections provide a fleeting connection with lost loves and memories that fade as the day approaches. Milo, her mother's dog, is also the last tangible connection between them and thus serves as a poignant symbol of their enduring bond.

Her recent works mark a new direction in her oeuvre, where not only her personal story takes centre stage, but also a shift in her artistic style becomes visible. The line between safety and danger, between calamity and calm, increasingly blurs to the point where we forget whether to laugh or cry. Joëlle Dubois shapes these confused feelings through a more monochromatic colour palette, a subdued visual language, and simple compositions, creating a sense of openness and space where emotion takes centre stage.

The loss of her mother is most directly addressed in her series of drawings. In these drawings, Dubois depicts herself in various interactions with the mother figure, from a loving dance to a claustrophobic struggle with the umbilical cord. In the virtuoso lightness of these images lies a poetic contradiction, as they symbolize the most substantial loss.

The window is a powerful and versatile motif in visual art. In various historical contexts, the window has symbolized different ideas, ranging from the divine and the everyday to the metaphysical and the existential. For Dubois, the window is a metaphor for a threshold between different worlds—the internal and the external, reality and imagination. Dubois believes that a window should be opened when someone dies so that the soul can depart; similarly, her windows symbolize the transition between life and death. Just as with Magritte and Hopper, they frame scenes of loneliness and introspection, and Dubois uses windows to evoke feelings of isolation, voyeurism, and the uncanny. Combined with the subtle colour palette, dominated by blues, greens, and reds, the windows create a sense of depth and mystery.

In the exhibition, where transformation is a recurring theme, the portrait *Cut to the Core* plays a meaningful role. Change and renewal recur in various motifs, including windows, but also butterflies, candles, and hair cutting. Shaving or cutting hair is a tradition in many cultures that symbolizes mourning a deeply personal loss. For instance, in Native American cultures, as well as in Buddhism and Hinduism, it is believed that hair holds memories, and cutting it signifies releasing the memory and associated pain. This ritual represents spiritual renewal and the letting go of the old to embrace the new.

In *From Here on Out*, Joëlle Dubois once again presents herself naked and exposed, vulnerable and honest, with nothing to hide from or behind. The nudity is both physical and emotional, emphasizing the autobiographical nature of her work. The intimacy of these images is striking; each piece is a fragment of herself, presented to the viewer in an almost voyeuristic way. Through her heartfelt depiction of loss and grief, her works also transform into a potential space for healing and hope. From here on out.

*Koen Leemans, 2024.*