

KETELEER GALLERY is delighted to present *Wild Lemons*, the first solo exhibition of Guy Van Bossche at the gallery.

Guy Van Bossche (b. 1952, Mortsel, BE) is one of the most remarkable artists who has left his mark on Belgian painting since the early 1980s. His body of work, based on both existing and self-conceived imagery, is characterized by a critical and in-depth exploration of the human condition. Van Bossche describes his work as an ongoing investigation into "the qualities of discomfort." In his artistic practice, he questions our place within a changing world, addressing themes such as violence, mental cruelty, censorship, freedom, power, identity, and transience, reshaped through the lens of painting.

A defining feature of Van Bossche's work is the influence of photography. His paintings reveal a fascination with framing, cropping, and close-ups. By starting with photography, he reduces a three-dimensional scene into a flat constellation, deliberately freeing the act of painting from the restrictive task of reproduction. Through unusual framing of seemingly banal subjects, such as interiors, stages, and swimming pools, hidden layers of meaning emerge. This approach imbues the relatively innocuous scenes with a cinematic, surreal quality. The subdued colours and dramatic use of light contribute to a detached painting style, enhancing the alienation and unease that radiate from his works.

Iconographic concerns are crucial to his work. His paintings remind us that pictorial representation matters because our sensory experiences inherently challenge any straightforward interpretation of a scene as realistic. His work transports us to a world of meaning where technique and subject bend to their own logic. In pieces such as *Darkpool*, *The Ventriloquist*, and *Inflatable Objects*, the emptiness surrounding the central motif takes on a disturbing presence. Van Bossche sometimes omits the most defining elements of his paintings, creating an enigmatic ambiguity. He erases superfluous narrative context, often stripping images of characters and details or placing them entirely outside their original setting. Remarkably, with the sparse information that remains in the paintings, he initiates a process of tension and estrangement, transforming familiar images into something intriguing and unsettling.

In the *Wild Lemons* series, Van Bossche addresses societal and political issues through an indirect, cryptic, yet always sharp visual language. Motifs like the lemon and melon, which in the tradition of painting refer to abundance, sexuality, and exoticism as well as to transience, decay, and mortality, also become metaphors for the oppression of the Palestinian people. Painterly additions such as a stool, a leg, or a pair of feet disrupt the visual tranquillity of the seemingly idyllic forest. This approach creates a sense of timelessness and eeriness, lending the depicted scenes a profound resonance from which personal associations and complex meanings may arise.

His paintings embody a certain detachment and an analytical perspective on reality, where uncomfortable truths hide behind the façade of everyday life. They serve as tools for reflection and introspection, inviting viewers to peel away layers of meaning and uncover a multifaceted reality.

Guy Van Bossche has held major solo exhibitions at institutions such as the M HKA – Antwerp, BE; Centro de Arte – Salamanca, SP and De Garage – Mechelen, BE. His work is included in museum collections such as S.M.A.K. in Ghent, BE; M HKA in Antwerp, BE and MU.ZEE in Ostend, BE.

The exhibition will be on view 18 January – 8 March, 2025.