

## Raoul De Keyser *Touch Game*

January 16–March 1, 2025  
519 & 525 West 19th Street, New York



Raoul De Keyser, *Come on, play it again nr. 2*, 2001 © Raoul De Keyser/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SABAM, Belgium Courtesy Family Raoul De Keyser and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of work by Raoul De Keyser (1930–2012) at the gallery's 519 and 525 West 19th Street locations in New York. Curated by Helen Molesworth, this exhibition will feature major works by the artist with a focus on the mature phase of De Keyser's career from the 1980s to the 2000s. The exhibition marks the first time the gallery has shown such an expansive selection of De Keyser's oeuvre. *Touch Game* follows David Zwirner's celebrated presentations of the artist's work in Hong Kong in 2021 and 2022, and *Raoul De Keyser: Drift*, his last solo exhibition in New York in 2016, which was first on view at David Zwirner London in 2015–2016.

Throughout the course of his highly influential career, De Keyser engaged in a singular investigation of the potential expression and pictorial capabilities of abstract painting. Made up of simple shapes and painterly marks, his works allude to the natural world and representational imagery while avoiding suggestions of narrative or reductive frameworks that limit experience and interpretation. De Keyser's ability to find new and exciting ways to invigorate his surfaces has resulted in his reception as a major influence for several generations of contemporary painters—"an artist's artist."

Among the works that will be on view are several paintings from the 1980s, including representative works from De Keyser's important *Zinkend* and *Hellepoort* series, which reflect a notable turn in the artist's practice toward more dynamic, gestural facture. Specific formal elements frequently appear in these and several other seminal paintings from the 1980s and 1990s. Most notable among them is the "chalk-line" motif, which De Keyser first began incorporating into his work in the early 1970s—an important example of which will be featured in the exhibition. Like many of his recurring forms, these bold white lines originated in De Keyser's observation of his immediate surroundings—in this case the chalk lines applied to soccer pitches and sports fields. In certain works, the lines appear as parallel crossbars that divide the support into registers, while in other works, assertive dashes of white contrast

with more frenetic applications of paint, creating a kind of visual syncopation that unifies the entire composition.

De Keyser's inclusion in Jan Hoet's highly celebrated documenta IX in Kassel, Germany, in 1992 signaled a serious turning point in the artist's career as he started to gain greater international recognition. Several of the works in the exhibition are from this time, including *Front*, 1992, which was featured at documenta. These paintings, some of which have not been exhibited previously in the United States, are notable for De Keyser's sensitive treatment of surface, whereby figure ground distinctions appear to dissolve into sensuous clouds or diffusely rendered painterly streaks and blurs.

Among the late period works that will be on view are several paintings from De Keyser's seminal *Come on, play it again* series from the early 2000s, which was first presented at the artist's inaugural show of the same title at David Zwirner's original Green Street location in New York in 2001. Each of these works seems to follow a different compositional logic, while nevertheless relying on a canny use of biomorphic and geometric forms, squares, lines, and dots. The title of the series carries a musical connotation, as if encouraging an improvisational jazz pianist, while simultaneously suggesting the possibility of infinite variation.

As curator Helen Molesworth notes, "A De Keyser painting deliciously halts the human impulse to make meaning. Instead, his paintings offer us the everyday as the accrual of small forms and gestures designed to heighten and focus our increasingly scattered attention. 'Touch game' refers to someone who possesses the skill of a delicate or light touch. De Keyser's paintings operate in precisely this manner."

Though De Keyser has been the subject of numerous surveys and solo exhibitions at museums and institutions in Europe since the 1970s, this exhibition will be a rare opportunity for New York audiences to experience the breadth of his practice, his beguiling sense of color, his deft and delicate surfaces, and his sometimes poetic, sometimes mysterious, sometimes rigorously formal paintings.

Raoul De Keyser was born in Deinze, Belgium, in 1930. Since 1999, his work has been represented by David Zwirner.

Since the mid-1960s, the artist's work has been the subject of several solo exhibitions at prominent institutions. In 2000, a large-scale retrospective was presented at the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, which traveled to the Goldie Paley Gallery, Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, and The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. A major survey of the artist's paintings traveled extensively from 2004 through 2005 to the Whitechapel Gallery, London; Musée de Rochechouart, France; De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands; Museu de Serralves, Porto, Portugal; and the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland. In 2009, his paintings were exhibited in a retrospective at the Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany, and his watercolors were presented jointly at the Museu de Serralves, Porto, Portugal, and the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin.

In 2018, a major retrospective of the artist's work opened at the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.) in Ghent and traveled to Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2019). In 2018, Cultuurcentrum Strombeek Grimbergen, Belgium, presented *Raoul De Keyser: In Print. Zeefdrukken, Lithografieën, Linosneden, Etsen*. Among the many notable monographs on the artist is *Raoul De Keyser, Early Works: Catalogue of Paintings, 1964–1980*, published in 2024 by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter und Franz

König, Cologne. This important catalogue accompanied the exhibition *Long Time No See: Raoul De Keyser 1946–1964–1980* at Vandenhove Centre for Architecture & Art, Ghent University, Belgium.

Other venues that have hosted important solo exhibitions include the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent (2001); Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2002); Museum van Deinze en de Leiestreek, Deinze, Belgium (2007 and 2013); Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, France (2008); De Loketten, Flemish Parliament, Brussels (2011); Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (2015); and Museum van Deinze en de Leiestreek, Deinze, Belgium (2017). Work by the artist has been featured in countless group exhibitions worldwide, including Documenta IX in Kassel, Germany, in 1992, and at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007.

Work by the artist is held in permanent collections worldwide, including the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent.

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