

# ELINE VANSTEENKISTE

10 APRIL - 17 MAY 2025

Tim Van Laere Gallery is pleased to present the first solo show by Belgian artist Eline Vansteenkiste (°1991, Ghent).

Vansteenkiste's work exists at the intersection of medieval world-building, cartographic imagination, fantastical storytelling, and cinematic landscape composition. Drawing from the intricate and surreal traditions of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel, she crafts densely populated, chaotic yet controlled scenes that reflect the perpetual struggle between order and disorder. Like Bosch's vivid moral allegories, her paintings teem with grotesque creatures and bright landscapes, serving as metaphors for the tensions within the human psyche—where forces of life and death, creation and destruction, continuously intersect. With her small scale oil paintings on wooden panel, Vansteenkiste captivates a world of fantastical landscapes. They are brightly colored, structured, surreal and exude a certain serenity. These landscapes are occupied by women who roam the world, battling for survival, power and victory. It's about our inner instincts, how we claim our position in the world, our fears, and our battles.

Vansteenkiste deeply explores the landscape as a space of both narrative and psychological weight. Her world-building bears a striking resemblance to the cartographic tradition of the 16th century, particularly Gerardus Mercator's maps, where empirical geography coexisted with speculative elements such as sea monsters and the mythic Terra Incognita. At the same time, it references the medieval worldview, in which artists sought to structure their landscapes to resemble divine order. Vansteenkiste constructs alternative cosmologies in much the same way, placing the known and the unknown side by side, as if charting the edges of an imagined world. Like the margins of medieval maps—where hybrid creatures and mysterious lands were drawn beyond the boundaries of the familiar—her paintings create spaces where reality and myth converge.

Her approach to landscape also resonates with the panoramic and atmospheric compositions of Joachim Patinir. Known as one of the pioneers of landscape painting, Patinir infused his sweeping, layered terrains with symbolic and narrative depth, treating nature not merely as a backdrop but as an active force within the composition. Vansteenkiste follows this lineage, constructing vast, surreal topographies where multiple perspectives unfold simultaneously, allowing for both micro and macro readings of the scene. Additionally, her work draws inspiration from the vast, sprawling compositions of Bruegel, where human activity is enmeshed within nature's rhythms, as well as from the cinematic treatment of the landscape of Andrei Tarkovsky. His slow, meditative camera movements transform terrain into psychological and mythological space (*Stalker*, *Andrei Rublev*). Much like Tarkovsky, Vansteenkiste's worlds feel imbued with memory, history, and an eerie timelessness.

Similarly, Sergei Bondarchuk's sweeping war epics (*Waterloo*, *War and Peace*) provide striking parallels to her panoramic compositions, where large-scale battles unfold with intricate detail, orchestrating chaos and order within a single frame. Her landscapes often function in a way similar to filmic long takes, where the eye moves across the terrain, uncovering layers of meaning and narrative as if scanning an expansive tableau. You could compare it to the way we experience the *Bayeux Tapestry*, which similarly weaves a detailed, continuous narrative through landscape and action. However, Vansteenkiste's protagonists who occupy her landscapes aren't just warriors referencing a historic battle. They are depicted as primordial women with long, tangled hair who explore the land and aren't afraid of visceral confrontations with animals, grotesque creatures, and other human figures they encounter. Their vulnerability, unarmored and exposed, underscores both fragility and resilience and tether them to primal forces, reinforcing their connection to an untamed natural world and the chaos that pervades it. They are faceless and timeless representations of the artist, who visualizes her primal instincts with a sense of bravery, humor, marvel, and determination.

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