

Keteleer Gallery is pleased to present *DUM ANIMA EST SPES EST*, a solo exhibition by ROA (Ghent, BE). ROA is a muralist known for his often monumental depictions of animals. He travels the world painting local, often overlooked fauna on walls in public spaces. This fifth solo exhibition at the gallery presents an entirely new body of work, created on used and reconfigured school blackboards.

Staying true to his habit of working with discarded, aged materials as a support for his meticulously painted animals, ROA this time has chosen to focus on the classic green schoolboard — a seemingly mundane object that is nevertheless charged with symbolism. Evoking a core memory from our school days, the blackboard becomes a symbol of those early moments when the wonders of the world were first introduced to us. Through chalk-drawn stories, images, numbers, and formulas, the mysteries of nature were slowly revealed.

A blackboard is, of course, also defined by the erasability of the chalk marks it bears. As such, it becomes a symbol of impermanence: species of animals and plants are under threat, the old order is shifting, and the balance of our climate is growing ever more fragile.

Green is the unifying thread of the exhibition — literally, through the dominant, familiar green colour of the blackboards, alluding to the knowledge systems through which humans seek to classify and control the world. But also metaphorically: as a symbol for the essence of life itself — nature, hidden beneath the concrete jungle of the city. Green is also the colour of hope, and perhaps that is the most essential, albeit subtle, clue to the true intent of these works.

ROA's new series is undeniably critical. But this is not a message of doom or a call to cynicism — quite the opposite. Beyond its critical perspective, the painted works offer a lasting visual homage to vanishing nature, inviting renewed wonder and a deeper sense of connection. Just as a *memento mori* is ultimately a plea for life, so this exhibition reminds us, above all, of what matters: *DUM ANIMA EST SPES EST* — where there is life, there is hope.

Opening: June 28, 2025, 4 – 8 PM.

On view through August 30, 2025.