



ROBERT DEVRIENDT
THE MISSING SCRIPT, Objet de culte

23.01.2026 – 21.03.2026

Since 2016, Robert Devriendt has been working on a series of artworks entitled “The Missing Script.” This ongoing project consists of small series of paintings in which diffracted narratives allows strange, unexpected elements to seep into his images. These small-format paintings reveal the possibility of a sequence or story that can be freely invented by the viewer.

The artist has taken inspiration for many of his series during from his walks in the country, where he follows the same path several times. What strikes him most are not the natural elements themselves, but the disturbances that are in evidence there – mundane objects such as an abandoned perfume bottle or a parked car with its headlights on. These situations could be seen to evoke a “party” in a lush rural setting. Ultimately, though, his works simply show isolated characters.

A few curious, unlikely details – a deserted motorway, a crushed can, sports cars or a neon lamp in the grass next to a solitary high-heeled shoe, found objects – are the only clues suggesting this possible party. Devriendt’s alluring series have no single meaning; they invite viewers to make their own connections and create a fragmented narrative.

Each picture, each series is an independent piece of a larger, unusual and enigmatic puzzle. Devriendt’s works are characterised by a captivating blend of sequential cinematic processes and a kind of pictorial meticulousness reminiscent of the refinement of classical Flemish painting. His series suggest the atmosphere of a movie trailer interspersed with disturbing flashes. Editing techniques and optical codes from contemporary visual culture are integrated into his paintings, revealing another perception of reality. Elements such as staging, props and references to specific film genres, such as film noir, play a central role in his art.

“Objet de culte” (Cult Object) series does not break with his earlier work, but there is a difference: the works in this exhibition are conceived as a single, coherent series. As he explains in the interview he gave us.

Objects play a regulatory role in everyday life; they abolish many neuroses, soak up tensions, and that is what gives them a “soul” and makes them “ours.” They thus become the backdrop for a persistent mythology. Here, the painter and the series of objects in his paintings, appropriated by his figures and models, are free. They form *a coherent system of signs*, to use Jean Baudrillard’s terms. The staging of these found objects in the artist’s paintings brings about a certain transfiguration of the mundane. Every work has an implicit intentional structure.

The subjects represented by the artist exude a certain poetry and lightness that give this work real depth. It encourages contemplation through the polysemy of the images.

Patrick Amine
January 2026

Interview with Robert Devriendt

Patrick Amine: Why did you choose the title “Objet de culte,” in the singular, for your new works? Your paintings often feature objects scattered in a natural setting, sometimes held by figures. How does this play out in this new series?

Robert Devriendt: For the past ten years or so, I have been working on paintings grouped under the generic title “The Missing Script.” Together, these works form a kind of open and fragmentary storyboard. In my previous exhibitions, I often used to put several paintings in direct relation to one another, so that the meaning was found not in an isolated image but in the space between them. In the exhibition “Objet de culte” I intend the paintings to function as a single large series. Each work influences the others, both in terms of content and form. The meaning is not set in advance; it emerges in the perceptions of viewers, who are invited to establish the connections between the images for themselves. Although each exhibition of “The Missing Script” has a subtitle, all of these subtitles actually refer to the same fundamental concept. The title “Objet de culte” is deliberately ambiguous. On the one hand, it refers to the motifs depicted – objects and figures often occupy a central place – and, on the other hand, it refers to the paintings themselves, which I consider to be objects of worship. The title therefore doesn’t just designate a subject, it also reflects my position towards painting as a practice. Nature and landscape play an important role in “Objet de culte.” Some subjects appear during walks, others are the result of a more precise search for objects or people that hold a special value for me. This in no way excludes spontaneous impulses – quite the contrary. The principle of *wild thinking*, a form of associative, uncodified thinking, is essential to my work. The proximity with which I approach my subjects is also decisive. I often work in close-up. Sensuality is a fundamental aspect of the painting process.

P. A.: Is the viewer supposed to have an experience comparable to what you go through during the act of painting?

R. D.: I start from the premise that the intention with which a painting is created can be conveyed to the viewer. My extreme focus when I am painting gives the elements depicted another meaning, which Simone Weil describes as *a form of attention that transcends the subject*. During the painting process, there is often a moment when all recognition disappears. Perception fragments into colours, shapes and bodily impressions, with sensuality strongly to the fore. This state of concentrated attention is close to what Jiddu Krishnamurti calls *choiceless awareness*: an open, undecided perception into which the ego temporarily withdraws. From this perspective, the work does not require interpretation, but rather a form of counter-attention. As in a ritual, the ordinary is elevated to the sacred – not through mystification but through the intensity of true looking. The work thus touches on an existential dimension: it focuses on fundamental experiences of consciousness, presence and the construction of meaning, without seeking a one-way explanation or a fixed meaning.

P. A. : Can each object in your work be understood as an encounter? Think of the animals, the solitary figures in the landscape, or the sometimes melancholic relationship between human beings and objects. How does this relate to the fetishistic aspect of certain paintings, where elements – sometimes seemingly arranged at random – appear in a natural setting?

R. D.: I see painting, ultimately, as an attempt at communication. Maybe painting is primarily about what is not shown – like literature, where meaning often lies in what is not written, or cannot be. Many of the objects I paint are found objects, things I feel an attachment to. My affinity with fetishism is explicit in this respect. When, for example, a gold jacket and purple shoes are placed on a sawn-off tree stump, this constellation acquires – via the concentrated attention given to it – the status of a cult object. This attention, greater than what is usually accorded to it in everyday use, gives the object a strange, surreal character. The viewer is then invited to complete the “Objet de culte” with their own associations.

Interview by Patrick Amine, January 2026