

BEN SLEDSSENS

An Apple for the Road

3 September - 10 October 2026



In his solo exhibition, *An Apple for the Road*, Ben Sledsens presents a new series of paintings in which wonder, attentiveness, and imagination take center stage. The exhibition marks a subtle yet significant shift within his artistic practice. While his work remains immediately recognizable through its vibrant use of color, monumental compositions, and dreamlike imagery, this new body of work reveals a renewed search for spontaneity, freedom, and a conscious embrace of the naïve as an artistic strength.

This new series of paintings emerged mainly from an extensive group of works on paper that Sledsens has developed over the past several years as a freer and more intuitive counterpart to his paintings. Whereas a large canvas often requires a lengthy process of construction and refinement, paper offered the possibility of responding more quickly to ideas, observations, and associations. From these experiments grew new compositions, unexpected perspectives, and motifs that eventually found their way into the paintings. What initially began as a search for simplicity ultimately led to an expansion of his pictorial vocabulary. Close-up views of water lilies, rhythmic structures of reeds, floating flowers, an anthropomorphic cloud, and mystical landscapes introduce a greater sense of freedom into the compositions. Graphic rhythms and repetitions assume a more prominent role, while the paintings simultaneously retain a remarkable lightness.

At the heart of this new body of work lies a world of small, familiar experiences: a swan gliding across the water; a walk through a snow-covered landscape; a sailboat on a quiet sea; a bouquet of flowers beside an open window; an encounter with a frog, an owl, or a blooming water lily. These are not images of spectacular events, but rather moments in which time seems to briefly stand still. Water serves as an important anchor throughout the exhibition. Ponds, reflections, water lilies, and mirrored surfaces recur as places of tranquility, encounter, and contemplation. For Sledsens, water represents a universal attraction: a place where people, animals, light, and landscape converge. The water's surface becomes a pictorial space in which color, reflection, and atmosphere continuously interact. Light also assumes a new role in this exhibition. In several works, the visible landscape seems to give way to something more fleeting and difficult to define. Mist, twilight, and reflections create atmospheric images in which forms dissolve and reappear. The artist seeks not only to depict a landscape but also to convey the experience of it: the humidity in the air, the disappearance of a horizon into snow, the flicker of light on water, or the almost tangible presence of silence. As a result, his paintings increasingly occupy the threshold between the recognizable and the elusive.

Although these works originate in observations drawn from everyday life, they are not literal records of reality. Sledsens constructs a world in which he himself would like to live; a personal universe where memories, impressions, desires, and echoes of art history converge. The paintings reveal not so much what the world looks like as how it can be felt, remembered, or dreamed. In this respect, his work aligns with a long art-historical tradition. Just as Claude Monet made the act of seeing his subject, and Pierre Bonnard fused memory and perception within intimate and deeply personal worlds, Sledsens builds a universe in which color, light, and emotion generate their own reality. At the same time, the mysterious quality of his imagery evokes associations with the Symbolists, for whom beauty was not merely an aesthetic quality but a gateway to imagination and inner experience.

At its core, the exhibition celebrates a profound belief in the power of beauty. In the contemporary art world aesthetics are often regarded with suspicion or dismissed as superficial, Sledsens however deliberately occupies a different position. For him, beauty is not simply a form of escapism but a way of looking more attentively at the world. It creates space for wonder, contemplation, and connection. This attitude echoes an idea that has resurfaced throughout the history of art. For Henri Matisse, art was a source of calm and mental clarity - a place where

viewers could momentarily escape the turbulence of everyday life without turning away from reality. Beauty assumes a similar significance in Sledsens's work. It is not just an escape from the world but a means of experiencing it anew. It is precisely in this regard that the exhibition finds its relevance. In an age defined by relentless streams of information, moving images, political tensions, digital acceleration, and constant visibility, these paintings create a rare space for attention. They invite viewers to slow down, to look longer, and to become receptive once again to what so often goes unnoticed. The aesthetic experience thus becomes more than visual pleasure alone; it becomes an invitation to encounter the world with renewed wonder.

With this exhibition, Ben Sledsens reveals an artistic practice in motion - one that remains faithful to its enduring fascination with nature, light, and beauty. These paintings remind us that meaning does not always reside in the extraordinary or the spectacular, but is often hidden within the small, the everyday, and the seemingly simple. It is precisely there, in this attentiveness to the fragile and the fleeting, that the distinctive power of his work unfolds.