

## HAUSER & WIRTH

Press Release

### Berlinde De Bruyckere Met tere huid / Of tender skin

Hauser & Wirth London, South Gallery

27 November 2014 – 10 January 2015

Opening: Wednesday 26 November, 6 – 8 pm

Hauser & Wirth is pleased to present an exhibition of new sculptures and drawings by Belgian artist Berlinde De Bruyckere. For 'Met tere huid / Of tender skin', De Bruyckere develops recurring themes within her oeuvre, including the monumental 'Kreupelhout – Cripplewood' project that she created for the Belgian Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013.

De Bruyckere works with a refined visual vocabulary and consistently returns to certain forms or materials, yet with each variation she reinvents her subject anew. The Met tere huid series is a group of textural hanging wall sculptures figured in wax, leather, cloth, rope, iron and epoxy resin, compositionally similar to The Wound, a body of work from 2011 – 2012. In both series, the bulbous sculptures hang slack from iron hooks in a state of collapse, with innards spilling from cavities within the overstuffed abstract forms. However, the pinkish tones of The Wound series have given way to a darker palette of sombre reddish browns and blacks in Met tere huid, referencing the bodily tones of horses as opposed to human skin.



Equine imagery has been consistently employed throughout De Bruyckere's practice and she has been working with horse skins as an artistic material since 1999. Last year, for the first time, the artist visited a skin trader in Anderlecht. The proximity of the abattoir triggered an immersive sensory experience that initiated the Met tere huid series of the exhibition's title:

'Maybe it was the amount of available skins, neatly stacked on iron pallets, or the smell of freshly slaughtered animals, the salt on the ground mingling with blood into a wet slush, I still don't know, but I saw powerful images. I was unable to avert my eyes... I knew I had witnessed something I needed to transcribe.'

– Berlinde De Bruyckere

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The memory of this encounter is given tangible form in the *Met tere huid* series, where De Bruyckere pairs fragile layers of flesh-like wax with tough or abrasive surfaces. She uses the incompatibility of these materials to evoke the complex dualities of male and female; hard and soft; rough and smooth; violence and peace, and vulnerability and resilience. The sculptures are subtly erotic, harbouring a rawness that both repels and attracts.



'After Cripplewood I, 2013 – 2014' (2014), displayed in the second room of the gallery, is a development of 'Kreupelhout – Cripplewood' (2012 – 2013). This large-scale encaustic sculpture is an abstraction of fallen tree trunks, bound together with tattered fabric and subtly pigmented using a palette that closely resembles human flesh. The anthropomorphic waxy forms appear as rheumatoid joints and bone, bandaged as if undergoing a prolonged healing process. The work rests on a makeshift trestle that recalls a medical stretcher – a visual reference that De Bruyckere has used in previous work. In contrast to the bare wooden planks forming the trestle, the gnarled and calcified mass of 'After Cripplewood I, 2013 – 2014' appears living, though momentarily silenced. Another large-scale sculpture from the same body of work is also on display in the main room.

In their stillness, De Bruyckere's works quietly confront the connection between mortality and sensuality. A new series of works on paper in pencil, watercolour and collage continues these themes. The abstract drawings are connected to the *Met tere huid* series and are loosely based on the stacks of flayed skins De Bruyckere encountered at Anderlecht, and on the opera 'Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons'. In Greek mythology, Penthesilea is a warrior who fights for Troy's defenders in the Trojan War. She slays many men before being killed by Achilles who becomes enamoured with her upon viewing her corpse. De Bruyckere also presents two other groups of drawings, one relating to her ongoing series of glass domes and another relating to 'Kreupelhout – Cripplewood' and the forest.

'Met tere huid / Of tender skin' coincides with 'Berlinde De Bruyckere. Sculptures and Drawings 2000 – 2014' at S.M.A.K. Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium, curated by Philippe Van Cauteren, on view until 15 February 2015. In 2015, De Bruyckere will also present solo exhibitions at Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, Netherlands, Kunstraum Dornbirn, Dornbirn, Austria and Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria.

De Bruyckere's first monograph has recently been published by Mercatorfonds, Belgium and Hirmer, Germany, and includes texts by Emmanuel Alloa, Gary Carrion-Murayari, J. M. Coetzee, Angela Mengoni, Caroline Lamarche and Philippe Van Cauteren.

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## About the Artist

Berlinde De Bruyckere was born in Ghent, Belgium in 1964, where she currently lives and works. Since her first exhibition in the mid-eighties, De Bruyckere's sculptures and drawings have been the subject of numerous exhibitions in major institutions worldwide. These include 'Berlinde De Bruyckere. In the Flesh', Kunsthaus Graz, Graz, Austria (2013); 'Philippe Vandenberg & Berlinde De Bruyckere. Innocence is precisely: never to avoid the worst', De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg, Netherlands (2012) which travelled to La Maison Rouge – Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris, France (2014); 'We are all Flesh', Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2012); 'The Wound', Arter, Istanbul, Turkey (2012); 'Mysterium Leib. Berlinde De Bruyckere im Dialog mit Cranach und Pasolini', which opened at Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle, Germany and travelled to Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland (2011); DHC / ART Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montreal, Canada (2011); and 'Eén', De Pont Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tilburg, Netherlands (2005).

In 2013 De Bruyckere was selected to represent Belgium at the 55th Venice Biennale where she unveiled her monumental work 'Kreupelhout – Cripplewood', currently on view at S.M.A.K. and due to travel to Kunsthaus Bregenz in 2015.

## Current & Forthcoming Exhibitions:

### 'FREEZER BURN'

Organized by Rita Ackermann  
8 November – 20 December 2014  
Hauser & Wirth New York, 69th Street

### Thomas Houseago

'MOUN ROOM'  
10 November 2014 – 17 January 2015  
Hauser & Wirth New York, 18th Street

### Bharti Kher

'three decimal points. of a minute. of a second. of a degree'  
22 November 2014 – 10 January 2015  
Hauser & Wirth Zürich

### Anri Sala

'The Present Moment (in B-flat)'  
22 November 2014 – 10 January 2015  
Hauser & Wirth Zürich

### Pipilotti Rist

'Worry Will Vanish'  
27 November 2014 – 10 January 2015  
Hauser & Wirth London

### 'John Chamberlain. Gondolas'

29 November 2014 – 22 February 2015  
Hauser & Wirth Somerset

### Pipilotti Rist

'Stay Stamina Stay'  
29 November 2014 – 22 February 2015  
Hauser & Wirth Somerset

### 'Richard Tuttle'

29 November 2014 – 22 February 2015  
Hauser & Wirth Somerset

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Berlinde De Bruyckere  
Met tere huid I, 2014  
2014  
Wax, cloth, rope, leather, wood, iron, epoxy  
96 x 33 x 59 cm / 37 3/4 x 13 x 23 1/4 in

Berlinde De Bruyckere  
After Cripplewood I, 2013 – 2014  
2014  
Wax, cloth, wood, iron, polyester, epoxy  
150 x 306 x 99 cm / 59 x 120 1/2 x 39 in

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