

For immediate release

MICHAËL BORREMANS

Black Mould

13 June – 14 August 2015

Private view: Friday 12 June, 6 – 8 PM

Press preview with the artist: 10 AM



Black Mould (Disaster), 2015
Oil on canvas
83 x 71 cm (32 3/4 x 28 inches)

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Michaël Borremans. On view at 24 Grafton Street in London, it marks the artist's first show at the Mayfair gallery and his first solo presentation in the city in ten years.

Black Mould includes small- and large-scale paintings that feature anonymous, black-robed characters. Alone or in groups, they perform mysterious acts within monochromatic spaces reminiscent of an artist's barren studio. Seemingly behaving according to a symbolic language of their own, they pose alone or interact in communal dances, with some figures holding torches and others exposed naked from the waist down. Their facelessness opens up ambiguous narrative possibilities, like empty canvases with which to construct meaning.

Exquisitely painted with dramatic contrasts between light and dark areas, the series reaffirms the tension between the real and the imaginary that exists within Borremans's oeuvre. The solemn yet playful mood feels inexplicably up-to-date, with the almost cinematic sequence of paintings constituting an allegory of contemporary society. The lack of context or details provides a neutral, yet psychologically charged atmosphere. Like archetypes capable of embodying shifting meanings, the blank figures become a mould for the human condition, at once satirical, tragic, humorous, and above all, contradictory.

While Borremans's technical command of his medium recalls classical painting—the rich tactility and special glow of his painted surfaces evoke the Old Master tradition and artists such as Francisco Goya—his compositions elude traditional interpretative strategies. Subtle elements within their pictorial structure defy expectations and leave attempts at decoding their narratives open-ended. The small size of the majority of the works within the series—dimensions vary, but most are no bigger than thirty by twenty-five centimeters (twelve by ten inches)—further challenges conventional standards, miniaturizing the subjects and highlighting the artificiality of representation more generally. The elusive reality presented in *Black Mould* seems both topical and timeless, just as the robed figures emerge like actors without a clear script. The secrecy may ultimately signify the murky intersection within

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today's society of faith, morality, and politics, but can also be seen to underscore the ritualistic nature of human life across centuries and cultures. In the process, Borremans's minimal, affective paintings affirm the medium's resilient ability to provide a space for introspective, nonverbal meaning.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue published by David Zwirner Books and designed by Kim Beirnaert in close collaboration with the artist.

Michaël Borremans was born in 1963 in Geraardsbergen, Belgium. In 1996, he received his M.F.A. from Hogeschool voor Wetenschap en Kunst, Campus St. Lucas, in Ghent. Since 2001, the artist's work has been represented by David Zwirner. Previous solo exhibitions at the gallery in New York include *The Devil's Dress* (2011), *Taking Turns* (2009), *Horse Hunting* (2006), and *Trickland* (2003), which marked his United States debut. *Black Mould* marks his first solo presentation at David Zwirner, London.

Consisting of one hundred works from the past two decades, *Michaël Borremans: As sweet as it gets* is a major museum survey presented at the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas (through 5 July 2015). The exhibition was first held in 2014 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and travelled later in the year to the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Also on view in 2014 was the artist's first museum solo show in Japan, *Michaël Borremans: The Advantage*, at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo.

Over the past decade, Borremans's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at a number of prominent institutions. In 2011, a comprehensive solo show, titled *Eating the Beard*, was presented at the Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, which toured to the Műcsarnok Kunsthalle, Budapest and the Kunsthalle Helsinki. In 2010, he had a solo exhibition at the Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo as well as commissioned work on view at the Royal Palace in Brussels. Other venues which have hosted solo exhibitions include kestnergesellschaft, Hanover (2009); de Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam (2007); Kunsthalle Bremerhaven, Germany; and the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel (both 2004). In 2005, he had a one-person exhibition of paintings and drawings at the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent. The paintings then travelled to Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, London and The Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, while the drawings were presented at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio.

Work by the artist is held in public collections internationally, including The Art Institute of Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Borremans lives and works in Ghent.

For all press enquiries and to RSVP to the 12 June press preview, contact

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