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**Press release**

**Iris VAN DONGEN**

***The Hunter from Noland***

Opening on Thursday, April 14, from 7 pm to 9 pm

Until May 28, Tuesday to Saturday, 11 am to 12:30 and 2 pm to 7 pm

For her new solo exhibition at the gallery, entitled *The Hunter from Noland*, Iris VAN DONGEN (b. in 1975 in Tilburg, Netherlands, lives and works in Berlin) presents a series of new drawings mixing gouache, soft pastel and pressed charcoal, and in which the artist recomposes elements from different styles and cultures, from Art nouveau to Asiatic art, and in which she associates personal references, specters presences and samourais' stories.

*The Hunter from Noland* displays works that, although entirely autonomous, are part of a whole, a fragmented fresco, a story that unfolds on several levels of interpretation. Representing landscapes, characters and a suspended temporality, these new productions are like contemporary vanitas, in which the protagonists are young ghostly women. These ghosts, sharing an ambivalent nature that is closer to the one of the spirits that haunt Asian cultures pervaded by animism than to the one of some monsters, are not frightening. They express a melancholy that runs through all of the artist's work.

Between two alcoves that seem to come from the drawings, the exhibition is inhabited by feminine representations. With their slender arms, and dressed in colourful, printed and floral kimonos, that sometimes merge with the vegetation that surrounds them, they recall Indonesian Wayang dolls and Gustave KLIMT's female figures. Through these feminine representations, one can see a samourai with a grotesque face that reproduces a Delft Blue ceramic plate from the artist's private collection, or even a character without a head dressed in a traditional outfit.

If the references to Asian art, from Japan to Indonesia, are nothing new in Iris VAN DONGEN's work, they're more obvious here, and are rooted in personal and collective sources: a profound interest in ghost stories inherited from her childhood, an Indonesian grandfather, the influence of Asian and Indonesian arts on Dutch artistic production—especially through cultural exchanges during the colonial period—, the work of Dutch-Indonesian painter Jan TOOROP—an iconographic reference to his work is made in the drawing entitled *Hand of Toorop*—, and even Delft Blue pottery, which the artist collects. In her paintings, one also finds an extraordinary decorative abundance, and a central place accorded to the fauna and flora representations, characteristic of Art Nouveau, a movement that was also influenced by Asian art.

In *The Hunter from Noland*, the artist reflects upon the human condition, and more particularly on the antagonism between the spirit's timelessness and the earthly, perishable nature of matter and bodies. This reflection intersects with a broader reflection—one that is essential in the artist's work—on the fundamental oppositions between representation and abstraction, between the rational and the irrational. An impressive vitality emanates from all of the drawings that make up *The Hunter from Noland*, and from its figures of female nomadic hunters, warriors and adventurers. Resulting from the reconstruction of extremely varied worlds and coming from that *no land*, from that territory constituted by Iris VAN DONGEN's imagination, they seem caught in the both linear and cyclical time of a perpetual quest, that of the artist.