

BERNHARD KNAUS FINE ART

Press release

Robert Zandvliet, *Stage of Being*

September 7 through to November 24, 2018

We are delighted to announce the second solo exhibition in our gallery by Dutch artist Robert Zandvliet. He will be presenting works from two series: **Stage of Being** and **Crucifix**. A catalogue and a special edition will be issued to accompany the exhibition.

A small painting created in 2014 provided the first stimulus for paintings that form the *Stage of Being* series. Despite its small format of 30 x 40 cm it has an extraordinary presence. A broad, slightly curved screen stands out against the dark violet background of the surrounding space. In the middle a shape in the same violet color divides the screen into two parts. The artist's first association was this being an opening, but this quickly gave way to the impression of it resembling the contours of a human figure in front of a display. Depending on the way in which the viewer's eyes convert what they see, the silhouette-like figure may be absent or present, oscillating between back and foreground, between space and matter.

Three years later, Zandvliet revisited the theme again, giving it space both in a formal and metaphorical sense in his piece *Stage of Being*. The lightly curved screen stretches across the entirety of the canvasses spanning about four meters. The human figure in the middle has been strongly simplified and reduced to a long, stretched-out shape. Zandvliet has created seven paintings based on these pictorial elements. In them, the theme is manifested in very different ways, both visually and in terms of its emotional content. Each painting sees the screen and the figure enter into a different relationship, a liaison that not only can be gleaned from the subtle differences in the compositions, but also and most notably from the structure of the painted surface, the character of the brush marks and the intensity and tonality of the colors used.

In *Stage of Being*, Zandvliet gives the subject matter with which he has been working for over 20 years a new twist. His desire to get to the bottom of the nature of painting and to reinvent it was his prime motivator even during his years at the art academy. Zandvliet was seized by the magic of the medium from an early point onwards. "I wanted to understand it so badly, but I just couldn't grasp it. I just wanted to discover what makes up the magic of a painting."

Over the years, Zandvliet has analyzed a highly diverse range of different aspects to the painting medium in the grey zone between abstraction and representation, always taking the systematic and analytical approach that is so typical of his work. Drawing freely from painterly traditions, he chooses themes and genres, but also specific works by other artists as the starting point to his search for what it is that painting is able to do.

So far, the human figure was often noticeably absent from Zandvliet's oeuvre. Worried that he might burden the theme – with all of the narrative and emotional connotations it involves too heavily with personal anecdotes, he always avoided it. But this is slowly changing. In the past two years, he already included parts of the human body, such as the hand and the eye, in his paintings. He has now expanded this by a hazy depiction of a human figure in the series **Stage of Being**, and by a portrayal of Christ in the series **Crucifix**. Robert Zandvliet was born in Terband (Holland) in 1972 and lives and works in Haarlem. He is one of Holland's most successful artists. His works are part of renowned international private, corporate and museum collections.

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