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HANS OP DE BEECK

The Horseman and other stories

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Galleria Continua is pleased to present online the solo show of the Belgian artist Hans Op de Beeck "*The Horseman and other stories*". The exhibition showcases previously unseen and recently produced sculptures - mostly human figures portrayed while resting or making simple everyday gestures - and two large black and white watercolor paintings that are part of a new body of works where men and women of different social backgrounds and ages are portrayed in relaxed positions sitting or lying down. They are images that appear to be familiar, that trigger feelings of closeness and sharing and that provide food for thought on the search for our identity, on the pains and difficulties of existence but also on our dreams, our hopes for a better future and the search for peace and wonder.

Visual artist, but also theatre director, playwright and composer, Hans Op de Beeck moves between different languages and materials. For some years, beyond painting, sculpture, large immersive installations, art films and photography, he has developed a series of sculptures that depict human figures. Although many women, men and children have posed in the artist's studio over the years, these sculptures are not portraits but more like imaginary figures, characters that, alone or in dialogue with another person, tell a universal story in which eternity and actuality unite.

The exhibition "*The Horseman and other stories*" is populated by a few of these figures. Starting from two life-size sculptures: "*The Horseman*" - an enigmatic nomadic knight that evokes both the timeless solitary traveler and the homeless migrant of today, searching for a better life - and "*The Boatman*", a middle-aged man that has put his whole life onto a boat. "*Celeste & Egon*" and "*Celeste (smoking)*" are works in which Op de Beeck captures a concept that he had already faced in an animated film from 2015, that of the representation of man as a doll. The theme of waiting that articulates the various phases of life is perceivable in the faces marked by time in "*Mum and Dad*" who tight in an embrace venture into the night, just like in "*The Cliff*", where a couple of teenagers sit at the top of a promontory on the edge of a precipice; in their eyes is the sublime spell of first love that marks the loss of innocence and the transition into adulthood.

"*Dog*" marks the quiet flow of time, the life-size dog depicted while it sleeps; "*The Hideout*" evokes a fairytale atmosphere, Op de Beeck constructs a nighttime landscape inside the display cabinet. Even the figures portrayed in the two watercolors in the exhibition communicate a sense of serenity.

Correspondence with the observer is immediate, perhaps because of the size of the painting which makes us perceive them as life size, perhaps because they look you straight in the eye. Although they are in an enclosed space, the artist improvises glimpses of fantastic landscapes around them.

“I generally try to evoke an artificial world, a condensed version of reality that says something about us as human beings and that often awkwardly stages our life, our relationship to others, our environment and our mortality (...) Beyond the support I use, I hope my works are like a consoling hand on the shoulder, a warm hug and a mental oasis for peace and tranquility”, declares the artist.

And finally, a reflection on the transience of life in the two still-lives in the exhibition: the long stem of a lily that stretches towards the sky transmits a sense of vulnerability (*“Lily”*) and classic and contemporary decorative elements combine in harmony in *“Vanitas (variation) 29”*.

Hans Op de Beeck was born in Turnhout in 1969. He lives and works in Brussels and Gooik, Belgium. Op de Beeck has shown his work extensively in solo and group exhibitions around the world.

He had substantial institutional solo shows at the GEM Museum of Contemporary Art of The Hague, The Hague, NL (2004); MUHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, B (2006); Centraal Museum, Utrecht, NL (2007); the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, US (2010); Kunstmuseum Thun, CH (2010); Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos, Burgos, ES (2010); Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, IRL (2012); Kunstverein Hannover, D (2012); Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, USA (2013); the Harn Museum of Art, Gainesville, FL, USA (2013); FRAC Paca, Marseille, F (2013); MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Boston MA, US (2014); MOCA Cleveland, OH, US (2014); Sammlung Goetz, Munich, DE (2014); Screen Space, Melbourne, AU (2015); Château de Chimay, Chimay BE (2015); Espace 104, Paris, FR (2016); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, DE (2017); Fondazione Pino Pascali, Polignano a Mare, IT (2017); Kunstraum Dornbirn, DE (2017); Museum Morsbroich, DE (2017); Les Moulins, Boissy-le-Châtel, FR (2018); Scheepvaartmuseum Amsterdam, Amsterdam, NL (2018); Kunsthalle Krems, Krems an der Donau, AT (2019).

Op de Beeck has participated in numerous group shows at institutions such as The Reina Sofia, Madrid, ES; the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, AZ, US; the Towada Art Center, Towada, JP; ZKM, Karlsruhe, DE; MACRO, Rome, IT; the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, GB; PS1, New York, NY, US; Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Köln, DE; Hangar Bicocca, Milano, IT; the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, JP; 21C Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, US; The Drawing Center, New York, NY, US; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, AT; Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, CN; MAMBA, Buenos Aires, AR; Haus der Kunst, Munich, DE; Museo d’Arte Moderna di Bologna, Bologna, IT; Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, DE; Musée des Beaux Arts de Caen, Caen, FR; Kunstraum Dornbirn, Dornbirn, AU; Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, DE; Den Frie Center of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, DK; Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels, BE; Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, DE; Museum Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, DE.

His work has been invited to the Venice Biennale, Venice, IT; the Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, CN; the Aichi Triennale, Aichi, JP; the Singapore Biennale, Singapore, SG; Art Summer University, Tate Modern, London, GB; the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, IN and many other art events.

For further information about the exhibition and for photographs:
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