

TEMPLON

ii

JAN VAN IMSCHOOT

BRUZZ, January 11, 2019

Jan Van Imschoot and this crazy little thing called Love

The passion of the painter

EN As modest as he is brilliant, the painter Jan Van Imschoot comes to gallery Daniel Templon for his second solo exhibition. "Amore Dormiente" offers phantasmagoria and contemporary symbolism.

— MICHEL VERLINDEN



TEMPLON



JAN VAN IMSCHOOT

BRUZZ, January 11, 2019

An artist who paints out of synch with his time is a great thing. This is true of Jan Van Imschoot, a painter born in Ghent in 1963 who now lives in the anonymity of the French countryside (Haute-Marne). In his time, people often struggle to understand the explosive compositions of this talent whose work is in a dialogue with the greatest masters of painting. Just like those of Rubens, Van Imschoot's paintings encapsulate, in their way, "the highest expression of Flemish nature," in the words of art historian Elie Faure. We see him as Luc Tuymans's flamboyant other half, a sort of inverse twin. Restrained and in control, Jan Van Imschoot opposes the all-powerful, the excessive, the intense, and the grotesque. "There is no masterpiece in which the extremes do not crave one another. Without hell, there is no heaven; without a body, there is no soul; no love without kindness," he likes to say. We met with him just before "Amore Dormiente", his new exhibition at Daniel Templon.



"In light of the #MeToo movement, I wanted to show the cruel side of Cupid. He is the one that chooses"

We last saw your work exhibited in Antwerp at Luc Tuymans's exhibition "Sanguine". It was part of the year of baroque art. What is your relationship with that artistic school?

JAN VAN IMSCHOOT: I have a very different conception of baroque art from that of art historians. For example, I do not consider Rubens a baroque painter. The baroque painters are Velázquez or Zurbarán. Rubens was the last painter of the Renaissance, he was a humanist, and he also may have been the first Romantic. The same goes for Caravaggio and El Greco.

Their paintings are far too flamboyant to fit the aesthetic of the Counter-Reformation which is, in a sense, minimalist. The Jesuits wanted to simplify everything: for Christ to be Christ and stand against a black background. Rubens is not included in those canons, he is far too full of life. He was a bourgeois anarchist. It's always the bourgeois who make the best anarchists. We mustn't forget that it was Rubens who, in *The Drunken Silenus*, painted an African like a human being for the first time.

The next exhibition you will present at Daniel Templon is fittingly described as "anarcho-baroque". What does that mean?

VAN IMSCHOOT: I consider myself part of a line of non-academic painters, the ones who don't give a damn about the rules. The absolute master of this is Tintoretto. He is the source of everything, it was by looking at his work that Caravaggio developed his chiaroscuro. He is at the pinnacle of painting, along with Jan van Eyck.

Your paintings convey an intimate relationship with darkness.

VAN IMSCHOOT: Yes, because I love to paint at night. I wait until everyone is asleep to begin. I generally start at about two o'clock in the morning and I finish seven hours later. I enter a state not unlike a trance. I need concentration, like an actor who is acting in a play.

What guides your work?

VAN IMSCHOOT: Freedom, or at least the idea of it. I come from a family that didn't know about art. It was when I saw the Ghent Altarpiece at the age of ten that I had a revelation about painting. For me, painting has always been a way of representing the world according to my desires, without having to comply with exterior demands. Imagination is closely related to the idea of freedom.

TEMPLON



JAN VAN IMSCHOOT

BRUZZ, January 11, 2019

You are inspired a lot by mythology.

VAN IMSCHOOT: Yes, my paintings are often inspired by history and current events. Like in a Joachim Beuckelaer painting, I like to combine the trivial and the sublime. For me, that is the definition of a masterpiece. I also like to turn chronology on its head: placing history and mythology in a modern context and transposing current events into a historic setting. For example, for the next exhibition about Bruegel at Château de Gaasbeek, I will be presenting nine paintings on the subject of Boney M. That will be in April.

Why did you leave Ghent and go to France?

VAN IMSCHOOT: First and foremost, I left the city for the countryside. Living in a city was distancing me from my work. There was too much commotion there. I think it's also related to age. When I would go to a bistro, the young people around me could have been my grand-children... It was time to leave that behind. Now, I am in a calm environment, I can concentrate and be revitalised. As a child, I grew up with nature. I wanted to leave it to go to the city. Now, I am reconnecting with it. It is important for me to live with the seasons.

What does "Amore Dormiente" consist of?

VAN IMSCHOOT: Twelve pieces. They were started at the end of 2016. The idea comes from Caravaggio paintings that I saw twenty years ago in Florence: *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist*, *Sleeping Cupid*, and the

Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt, Grand Master of the Knights of Malta. In them, power, the beheading which is the result of power, and Cupid sleeping were all connected. Evidently, I had to do something with that. In light of the #MeToo movement, I wanted to show the cruel side of Cupid. He is the one that chooses.

Those paintings are very cinematographic. Your work conveys a real fascination with cinema.

VAN IMSCHOOT: That's right. When I was little, I was very influenced by the films of Jean Gabin. Later, it was Italian cinema, Pasolini in particular. But my favourite full-length film is *Malpertuis* by Antwerp film-maker Harry Kümel. The story is inspired by Jean Ray's fantastic novel. In it, Orson Welles plays the part of a god slumped in his bed. That type of magic realism, in which temporalities are all mixed together, inspires me deeply. 📺

NL De even bescheiden als geniale schilder Jan Van Imschoot keert terug naar galerie Daniel Templon voor zijn tweede solotentoonstelling. *Amore dormiente* paart fantasmagorie aan hedendaags symbolisme.

FR Peintre aussi modeste que génial, Jan Van Imschoot débarque à la galerie Daniel Templon pour sa deuxième exposition personnelle. Fantasmagorie et symbolisme contemporain au programme.