

TEMLON



JAN VAN IMSCHOOT

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Belgian painter Jan Van Imschoot opens an exhibition at Galerie Templon



Jan Van Imschoot, La présentation des absents, 2021. Oil on canvas, 170 × 190 cm, 66 7/8 × 74 6/8 in.

PARIS. - Following on from his 2020 exhibition, *Le bouillon de onze heures*, an homage to Dutch artist Willem Claeszoon Heda, Flemish painter Jan Van Imschoot unveiled the second part of a trilogy dedicated to the masters of Western painting. *La Présentation des absents* sets up an encounter between two imaginaries: the artist's and that of the man he considers to be the unrivalled master of modern French painting, Édouard Manet.

Van Imschoot wanted first and foremost to pay tribute to Manet's deep-reaching knowledge of the traditional Northern School and his admiration of Flemish painting, possibly sparked by his relationship with Dutch pianist Suzanne Leenhoff who went on to become his wife. Van Imschoot set himself the task of studying Manet's language, much as Shakespearean language is learned, with a particular focus on his intriguing palette, constantly shifting between "Inquisition grey" and "the light taupe of Dutch religion."

L'échange des bêtises, *La Présentation des Absents* and *L'empire se trompe* give us a glimpse of the modernist's scenes, from *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* to *Un bar des Folies Bergères*, or the series of seascapes and still lifes with asparagus.

Just as Manet did with his predecessors, Van Imschoot amuses himself by taking liberties with the history of art. "*Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, for example, echoes *Susanna and the Elders* by Tintoretto, a particularly amusing allusion because his wife was called Suzanne. I felt his mischievousness was very similar to my own approach," Van Imschoot explains in the exhibition catalogue.

He takes hold of every aspect of the master's work: "I am convinced that art can and should be questioned, including Western painting." He sometimes chooses to make use of absence to raise questions, such as the absence of the waitress in his ode to the *Folies Bergères* or of nature in his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*. At other times he disconcerts with a profusion of absurd, erotic or historical connotations, such as his pear shapes, the symbol of adultery, floating like feathers against a black background, or the portrait of a woman admiring her naked reflection in the mirror, her foot covered in blood.

As always in Van Imschoot's work, the painting becomes an ideal playground for exploring the triangular relationship between his three greatest passions: art, language and truth. The *City of Light's* riverboats are depicted as the insects referred to in their name in French, *bateaux-mouches*, literally "fly boats", in *Le Pari de Paris*. And Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* appears more than once on the surface of the *Fameux Paresseux Heureux*.

As Van Imschoot sees it, the beauty of painting lies in the fact that it alone can shatter the codes of language and truth. "What is true? What is thought of and what is dreamed of? All these questions prove to me that reality and truth have no place in art. The relationship between language and image remains open ground; words meet their limits there, while art flies above it, free as a bird."

A 99-page catalogue in French and English will be published to accompany the exhibition, featuring a text by Barbara De Coninck (ISBN: 978-2-917515-42-6).

Born in 1963 in Ghent, Jan Van Imschoot has been living and working in France since 2013. His work is exhibited in Belgium as well as internationally. The Ghent SMAK held a major solo exhibition of his work in 2002. More recently, his paintings have been shown at the Dusseldorf Kunstpalast (2005), Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens in Deurle (2008), National Art Museum of China in Beijing (2010) and Fondation Volume ! in Rome (2012). In 2018, he took part in the group exhibition *Sanguine/Bloedrood* conceived by Luc Tuymans for the M HKA in Antwerp and *Fondazione Prada* in Milan, and in *Feast of Fools, Bruegel Rediscovered* at Château de Gaasbeek in Belgium in 2019. The Roger Raveel Museum hosted the 7th Biennial of Painting on the theme of inner spaces in 2020, where Van Imschoot showed four large paintings from his *Intérieurs* series.

Jan Van Imschoot has been represented by Galerie Templon since 2015. This will be his first solo show with the gallery in Paris.