

TEMPLON



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JAN VAN IMSCHOOT
The dance of elusive evil
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Jan Van Imschoot, *Couper des fleurs par malheur / Cutting flowers by misfortune*, 2023

As the spectacular retrospective of Jan Van Imschoot's art at the Ghent SMAK comes to an end, the Flemish painter unveils his latest work in Brussels: an exploration of evil through the ages.

This latest show is the fruit of a rigorous and meticulous process of exploration inspired selected museum masterpieces and archives. Jan Van Imschoot narrates a story unfurling across 17 baroque and colourful canvases. The butterfly, symbol of the soul or the psyche, flutters unobtrusively through the paintings, now an opulent, dark form concealing, eclipse-like, a Mexican firing squad, now landing on the face of Leopold II, the dynastic figure behind the bloodthirsty colonisation of the Congo by Belgium. Capital punishment is a recurring theme: as an object of fantasy, source of intimidation, vestige of history or national folklore. Under the discreet patronage of Caravaggio, Van Imschoot offers a fresh interpretation of the myth of Holofernes murdered by the seductive Judith. He depicts the enchanting Mata Hari, victim of occupied France. He portrays a scene from Chinese television, fictional but perverse, of the last day of

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a sentenced woman, held captive by two police officers and draws the outlines of a young South African woman in the hands of her executioner in a white jacket and top hat.

“For the world to be believable, we need diverging views and confrontation between these views,” explains the artist. “Art, in all its forms, plays a vital role in this humanist necessity. Art makes our thinking more flexible, lets our minds travel beyond borders.”

In his hands, the painting becomes a playground for exploring the triangular relationship between his three greatest passions: art, language and truth.

Born in 1963 in Ghent, Jan Van Imschoot has been living and working in France since 2013. The Ghent SMAK held a first 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 Fondazione Volume! in Rome (2012). In 2018, he took part in the group exhibition Sanguine/Bloedrood curated 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 Interiors series. The Ghent SMAK is holding a major retrospective of his work, The End is Never Near, from October 2023 to March 2024. Jan Van Imschoot has been represented by Galerie Templon since 2015.