

**Press Release**

Under the title 'Enter the Void,' Sam Ballet and Dirk De Cock present their first exhibition at the Michèle Schoonjans Gallery in Brussels, taking place from November 5th to December 16th, 2023.

**'Enter the Void' : Where the Worlds of Dirk De Cock and Sam Ballet converge**

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The work of Sam Ballet and Dirk De Cock exhibits some intriguing unmistakable similarities. Both artists bring a strong imagination to their work, and their creations have something mysterious and even 'uncanny.' However, their approaches are quite different. While Sam Ballet starts from a personal dream world, Dirk De Cock ventures into open spaces and landscapes. Sam Ballet's drawings are often small, dark, and intense. They resemble miniature sets suitable for a film or theater performance. Sam invites the viewer to come closer and discover details for themselves. The viewer is drawn into a personal, mysterious dream world filled with unexpected events. Although these scenes may appear idyllic at first glance, closer inspection reveals that this is not the case. The atmosphere becomes ominous and claustrophobic, and melancholy and nihilism are never far away. The medium Sam uses, simple coloured pencils and paper, is a perfect fit for his work.

Dirk De Cock draws from the collective memory. In contrast to the detailed work of Sam Ballet, Dirk De Cock's paintings are often of a straightforward nature. Large open spaces serve as a backdrop for simple scenes. Details are absent, and the landscapes and scenes are recognisable but far from realistic. The composition is static, and the atmosphere is changeable. The viewer here is more of an observer and stands outside the action. They look at a snapshot and do not know whether everything has already passed or is yet to come.

It is precisely this approach that makes Dirk De Cock's work so special. Although the work of Sam Ballet and Dirk De Cock is very different, they share romance, melancholy, and a sense of emptiness. 'Enter the Void' is an invitation to a unique experience."

**The dream world of Sam Ballet.**

Sam Ballet's dream world is central to his work. Armed with coloured pencils and paper, he seeks to capture his dreams and nightmares as precisely as possible. The typically smaller works he initially sketches in his diaries and then further refines exude an atmosphere of mystery. Upon closer examination, a distinct sense of emptiness and loneliness becomes apparent. Characters rarely appear in Sam's meticulously detailed coloured pencil drawings. The viewer enters a dream world and, as it were, becomes the character experiencing the world from the front row. He or she becomes a character left with many questions. When a character does appear in the work, they are often absorbed in thought and in a state of melancholy. In such cases, it seems as though the viewer enters at an inopportune moment.

One could say that Sam Ballet's images contain a cinematic element. They resemble film scenes that, individually but especially when placed together, take on a narrative quality. Although the subjects often evoke a sense of emptiness, the work is also oppressive and in some cases, almost claustrophobic. The spaces, rooms, and landscapes that he meticulously captures on paper often have something sinister or foreboding about them. Through the small details that the viewer only notices when they approach the work, things are not what they seem at first glance. Something has happened or is about to happen.

## MICHÈLE SCHOONJANS GALLERY

Regarding the materials Sam uses, we can be brief. Coloured pencils and paper, the materials he always had as a child and which were the starting point for his artistic journey. After completing his master's degree in painting at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent, he came to the realisation that these materials were the most interesting for him to document his world and thought process. He often works with different layers of colours, giving his works a painterly quality.

The fact that all the drawings bear the title "Untitled" is not an unconscious choice. When a title is given to the artwork, it provides a certain anchor in the field of view for both the viewer and Sam himself. The title can create a specific idea, potentially limiting a broader perspective, and he aims to avoid this as strongly as possible.

By opting for the title "Untitled," combined with the concept of dreams, it ensures that the viewer is left with many unanswered questions. This interaction with the viewer makes it intriguing to delve deeper into the artwork. Each time, it becomes an adventure in itself.

### **The work of Dirk De Cock encourages contemplation**

His works often originate from everyday, mundane elements, such as a sequence from a film, a news report, an image picked up along the way, a photo from a magazine, a song, a piece of text, or a poem. All of these can serve as inspiration for his new works. However, it's not the image itself that takes center stage, but rather its meaning and profound impact. What does this image tell us? What feelings does it evoke? This forms the foundation of his work. Subsequently, the quest begins for the way these feelings can take on a visual form. He searches for visual elements that carry these emotions and strips them of unnecessary details, retaining only the essential.

The combination of visual elements also plays a crucial role in this creative process. The question is which element can enhance the other, with the aim that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The final image chosen is often rooted in our collective memory or has an archetypal meaning, connected to the collective unconscious. It's no longer just a mountain or a table; it's "The Mountain" and "The Table." Because details are omitted, the placement of each element is of great importance, starting with the perspective. Often, this perspective is elevated and contemplative, with the viewer distancing themselves from the scene. The central composition of the work emphasises the almost religious character of the final image.

The work process is often lengthy and time-consuming. It begins with rough sketches on paper, a reasonably rational start. Once the work starts on canvas, it becomes an emotional process of trial, addition, and subtraction. There is frequent reference to the original idea for further refinement.

As a result, the final image is often markedly different from the initial concept. This fusion of rational and emotional aspects makes the end result intriguing. It leads the viewer to question. The images are recognisable, but the way they are used raises questions. Is this a metaphysical image, a politically charged work, a purely poetic creation, or a combination of all these?"

#### **USEFUL INFORMATIONS**

**Sam BALLET x Dirk DE COCK - Enter the Void**

#### **EXHIBITION DATES**

05.11 au 16.12.2023

#### **VERNISSAGE**

**05.11.23 from 2-7 pm / RIVOLI OPEN SUNDAY 03.12.2023 from 2-6 pm**

#### **ADDRESS**

Rivoli Building • Chaussée de Waterloo 690 / 25 • 1180 Brussels • (><Inno  
Bascule)

#### **OPENING DAYS/TIME**

Open Thursday to Saturday from 12 noon to 6 pm &/or by appointment

#### **CONTACT**

[info@msgallery.be](mailto:info@msgallery.be) • Mob/+32 478 716 296 • [www.micheleschoonjansgallery.be](http://www.micheleschoonjansgallery.be)