

ANNIE GENTILS GALLERY

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We are pleased to announce the fourth exhibition of the Antwerp based artist Marc Vanderleenen (° Mechelen 1952) at the Annie Gentils Gallery.

The exhibition *'Umwelt'* by Marc Vanderleenen will open on Sunday the 27th of October 2019 – 3/7 pm.

Marc Vanderleenen uses the term “Umwelt” to describe his new series of paintings, drawings and sculptures. The insight that each organism has his own history and therefore experiences his surroundings on a very specific way, was formulated by Jakob von Uëxkull (1864 - 1944) who introduced the term 'Umwelt'.

Marc Vanderleenen chooses the word Umwelt to describe his new series of paintings, sculptures and drawings. “ Some (artists) immediately start chatting, singing or even shouting to shatter an uncomfortable silence, while others continue repeating the silence with a stutter. This latter group of artists, who with each choice seem to have to begin again and are repeatedly reminded of the fact that once there was nothing (and one day there will also be nothing), certainly includes Marc Vanderleenen.

When you look at his paintings, sketches and models, you always see the beginning of the work and the delicate structure of choices that derived from it showing through; all the hesitations, strokes and layers. The work is figurative, but not a naïve return to the imitation of nature. Its intention is perhaps to better understand the experience of objects and bodies, but at the same time it is meant to short-circuit this understanding, or rather, to present the genesis of the understanding and to obscure it in mist, almost literally in Vanderleenen's case.

'All I say cancels out, I'll have said nothing' wrote Samuel Beckett in his 1946 story *The Calmative*. This is an existential movement that constantly recurs in Beckett's work, whereby speech dismantles itself in an almost ritual manner: I see it reappear not only in the way Vanderleenen paints, but also in what his paintings show the viewer: figurative images that sometimes seem to refuse so stubbornly to assume solid form that they can hardly still be called figurative. (...)

Vanderleenen's work does though display the wish to capture the observed world in a recognisable image, but then in light of the fact that one time this image was not there, and that it was then made anyway.(...)

Beckett once again, this time from the 1951 novel *Molly*: ‘To restore silence is the role of objects’. Perhaps this is what Vanderleenen does in his work: try hopelessly to make the observed world be silent, by presenting in painting the myth of their initial silence – which, tragically enough, is only possible with a meaningful image. The uncomfortable result is a sort of painting from which the viewer is, time and time again, only just unable to withdraw, and repeatedly has to seek out the meaning that will not be tied down.”

(Koen Sels in: *On the work of Marc Vanderleenen*, cat. *Aboutness - Marc Vanderleenen*, De Garage Ruimte voor Actuele Kunst, Mechelen, 2014)