

LLOYD

Stefaan Vermeulen

Visual artist, Hasselt, Belgium, 1966

Born on Oct 6th, 1966 in Hasselt, Belgium, Stefaan Vermeulen grew up in Genk, a provincial mining town and melting pot of more than 60 nationalities. His master studies in art from Hugo Duchateau and Ado Hamelrijck influenced him to develop a preference for natural materials, human scale installations and a deep interest in contemporary pur-sang painting. Although one might find a layer of humour in some of his works, his drawings and paintings often show a sour and slightly melancholic view on the reality that surrounds him. Stefaan Vermeulen is studying the boundaries and meanings in today's way of depiction. He lives and works near Roman town Tongeren.

As a neo-impressionist, Vermeulen has worked in recent years on a wide range of large and small landscapes. He bases himself loosely on photographic material to create a poetic, semi-realistic representation in many layers of transparent acrylic on canvas or panel. In this way the subject becomes subordinate to light and colour, both of which are rendered with seemingly reckless and rough brushstrokes. His focus in recent years on painting landscapes is not a flight from reality, his work belongs in our time. It invites the viewer to look at the world in a different way, not from a nostalgic reflex but more caringly and slowly, with more consultation and reflection. How can we cherish without being conservative?

Unlike many painters who work in acrylics, Vermeulen does not use this medium in a thick pasty manner, instead he combines multiple, very thin layers (may be up to 20 layers sometimes) of paint. One could compare it to a way of painting that is more often used in watercolour, thus creating complex colour shades, transparencies and depth. Combined with a fairly 'bold' brush stroke, this results in a lot of details that almost occurs accidentally. He tries to create a painting that is in a way very true to nature, as in real life, where there's also a lot of coincidence in how structures as well as details are created.

"In recent years I have mainly been working as a landscape painter, a choice that has gone a bit by itself since I have lived in Haspengouw, which is like Belgian Tuscany. I don't paint landscapes from a romantic approach, I rather ask myself the question 'how' I want to depict something.

The reality that I see around me often seems inexplicably poetic to me. Maybe that is the eye of the artist, who does not look practically or problematically, but who is simply interested in the appearance of reality. It is in the translation into strokes of paint that I want to repeat that experience for the viewer, without using the original story I saw. So the final painting is not just an image of a landscape, it should autonomously replace the original image (which only I saw).

Subject or place are therefore not important, but the texture on the canvas, the strokes of paint and that part of my actions that is visible to the viewer. What is special about this is that the result is figurative. I actually use the means of an abstract painter (who leaves a lot to the paint and to chance) to get a figurative result in the end.”

stefaanvermeulen.be

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