

MOUSSE

08/05/2025

## “Painting After Painting” at S.M.A.K., Ghent

08.05.2025 - Reading Time 4'

**“Painting After Painting” is a comprehensive overview of the Belgian painting scene that seeks to articulate the impact of recent artistic developments and theoretical shifts on the medium. It is the most extensive exhibition of its kind in 25 years in Belgium.**

Over the past two decades, painting has experienced an international resurgence. While this revival is global in scope, it has considerably shaped the thriving Belgian art scene, revivifying a long tradition of painting in the region that can be traced back to Jan van Eyck and the Flemish Primitives. When considering the country’s complex national identity, it becomes nonsensical to limit the significance of Belgian painting to the country’s borders. Therefore, the exhibition seeks to avoid the use of national identity as a criterion in illuminating the landscape of contemporary painting in the country. The featured artists have either lived in Belgium for an extended period or are based in the country. They not only shape the dynamic in the painting scene but also embody its international character.

“Painting After Painting” intentionally takes as its starting point the work of a younger generation of painters, while connecting with artists who began to engage with the medium at the turn of the twenty first century. In doing so, it traces the gradual evolution from a time of waning enthusiasm for painting—dominated by post-Duchampian reflections on art, the continued rise of digital art forms and renewed assertions of post-historicity—to a context in which painting practices no longer require justification. The medium’s ability to critically question, defend and reinvent itself over the past century has led it to shed clear definitions. While contemporary painting is not free from ideological tensions, these are not confined to the act of painting alone but extend to a wider discursive landscape. The exhibition therefore outlines broader social paradigms: how does the medium relate to visual culture, modernity, economic value production and technology?

“Painting After Painting” demonstrates how artists explore evolving interests and positions as they lay the foundations of their work, while also engaging in intergenerational exchanges. Viewed through a historical lens, it becomes evident that contemporary painters draw inspiration from a much broader range of historical periods within the field of art. The title also alludes to painting’s post-medium condition. Although the question of what painting can be after its still-disputed obsolescence has been repeatedly debated, the answer is often naturally incorporated into a more encompassing approach to visual imagery. Artists continue to produce works that critically engage with the medium—even in the most traditional way—with paint on canvas. As such, the exhibition *Painting After Painting* seeks to provide a contemporary perspective on painting, while acknowledging the near impossibility of making universally valid statements about the medium.

With over 150 works—including several new in-situ creations—almost all of which have been created in the past three years, the exhibition also features a dedicated painting studio. Designed by Nico Dockx, Voet Architectuur, and Studio Zuidervaart, this studio offers individual visitors and groups the opportunity to engage in their own artistic explorations during the museum’s opening hours.

**Participating artists:**

The exhibition features works by Adam Leech, Anastasia Bay, Anna Zacharoff, Anne Van Boxelaere, Anthony Ngoya, Antoine Goossens, Aurélie Gravas, Bart Stolle, Ben Sledsens, Bendt Eyckermans, Bram Demunter, Briec Dufour, Carlotta Bailly-Borg, Carole Vanderlinden, Charline Tyberghein, Charlotte Vandenbroucke, Che Go Eun, Diego Herman, Dieter Durinck, Emmanuelle Quertain, Felix De Clercq, Frederik Lizen, Gijs Milius, Hadassah Emmerich, Hannah De Corte, Helmut Stallaerts, Henrik Olai Kaarstein, Jannis Marwitz, Jérôme Degive & Manuel Falcata, Joëlle Dubois, Jonas Dehnen, Julien Meert, Julien Saudubray, Karel Thienpont, Kati Heck, Koen van den Broek, Kristof Santy, Leen Voet, Libasse Ka, Lisa Vlaemminck, Loïc Van Zeebroek, Louise Delanghe, Luís Lázaro Matos, Lysandre Begijn, Mae Dessauvage, Marie Zolamian, Matthieu Ronsse, Melissa Gordon, Michaël Van den Abeele, Michiel Ceulers, Monika Stricker, Natasja Mabesoone, Nel Aerts, Nelleke Cloosterman, Nelson Louis, Nina Gross, Nokukhanya Langa, Pieter Jennes, Pieter Vermeersch, Samuel Hindolo, Sanam Khatibi, Sarah Smolders, Shirley Villavicencio Pizango, Stijn Cole, Tatjana Gerhard, Thom Trojanowski, Tina Gillen, Vedran Kopljar (& parents), Veerle Beckers, Victoria Palacios, Vincent Geyskens, William Ludwig Lutgens, and Yann Freichels

**Curated by**

Tanja Boon, Ann Hoste, Philippe Van Cauteren, and Liesje Vandebroeck, in collaboration with Sam Steverlynck.

**At [S.M.A.K., Ghent](#)**

until August 26, 2025



“Painting After Painting” at S.M.A.K., Ghent, 2025. Photo: We Document Art



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Installation view 'Painting After Painting', S.M.A.K., Ghent, 2025. Photo\_ We Document Art (4)



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