

PREVIEW

Guy Degobert & Marcel Maeyer *Belgian Hyperrealism from the 70s*

(DATE) 12.09 – 26.10.2024

(LOCATION) Livourne 32, Brussels

rodolphe janssen is pleased to announce Belgian Hyperrealism from the 70s , with two key figures of the Belgian hyperrealist movement: Guy Degobert & Marcel Maeyer. The exhibition opens on 12 September 2024 at Livourne 32.

The origins of Hyperrealism are situated in the United States in the late 1960s, early 1970s, when artists such as Ralph Goings, Richard Estes, Charles Bell, Duane Hanson and John de Andrea sought to counteract the abstract and conceptual art dominant in the preceding decades. Hyperrealist painters and sculptors developed an illusionistic approach to their subject, without seeking to achieve situational realism.

Much like the Pop artists, Hyperrealists were interested in subjects and techniques of consumption and mass media. The Hyperrealist movement was notable for its technical prowess, with artists using photography as a tool and employing techniques such as airbrushing and the meticulous layering of paint to achieve their hyper-realistic effects. More so than the given reality, the photographic representation of that reality was at the center, creating images that might seem unlikely in composition or proportion.

Artists like Guy Degobert, Marcel Maeyer, and Roger Wittevrongel were at the forefront of this movement in Belgium. They drew inspiration from American Hyperrealism, but infused their work with a unique European sensibility, often incorporating subtle social and political commentary. Their works frequently depicted urban landscapes, mundane objects, and human figures in a way that emphasized both the beauty and banality of modern life.

Belgian Hyperrealism from the 70s will be focusing on Marcel Maeyer and Guy Degobert, two pivotal figures in Belgian Photorealism. While both artists shared a commitment to hyperrealistic techniques, their individual styles diverged significantly. By juxtaposing the works of Maeyer and Degobert, this exhibition highlights the rich diversity within Hyperrealism.

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INFO@RODOLPHEJANSSEN.COM – WWW.RODOLPHEJANSSEN.COM

Marcel Maeyer, is renowned for his meticulous depictions of everyday objects and still lifes. Employing a classical oil painting technique, he crafts serene and timeless works that emphasize the tangible qualities of his subjects. In contrast, Degobert's art is more vibrant and dynamic, drawing inspiration from pop culture. While both artists utilized photorealism, Maeyer focused on the object's intrinsic beauty, while Degobert employed the technique as a platform for social commentary, criticizing consumerism and media influence. Maeyer's work is characterized by a restrained palette and a traditional approach, while Degobert experimented with various media and techniques, including collage and assemblage.

Landmark exhibitions such as the 1972 "Approches de la réalité," at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and the 1973 "Hyperrealisme in België," curated by Huguette van de Woestijne-Vanagt, at the Fine Arts Museum in Ghent were instrumental in bringing Hyperrealism to the forefront of the Belgian art scene. These groundbreaking shows showcased the work of pioneering artists, including Maeyer and Degobert, and ignited public interest in this innovative movement. Coupled with the insightful writings of art critic Karel J. Geirlandt, who championed Hyperrealism and contextualized its significance, these exhibitions solidified the movement's impact on Belgian art.

Karel J. Geirlandt, a visionary art critic, recognized the potential of Photorealism, which emerged in the United States during the 1960s. Convinced of its significance for the Belgian art world, Geirlandt dedicated himself to promoting the movement through his writings and curatorial endeavors. His critical insights and curatorial efforts, alongside the impact of exhibitions like "Approches de la réalité" and "Hyperrealisme in België", further solidified Hyperrealism's position within the Belgian art landscape.

About the artists

Guy Degobert (1914-1988) was a pioneering figure in Belgian Hyperrealism. With a background in advertising, he embarked on a transformative artistic journey in the mid-1960s. Degobert's solo exhibitions at Galerij Defacq (1967), Milan (1970), Brussels (1971), and Paris (1973) marked significant milestones. His artistic ascent culminated in a solo show at the prestigious Palace of Fine Arts, Brussels, in 1976. His participation in group shows at the Stadshalle, Triënnale, Bruges (1968) and the Palace of Fine Arts, Brussels (1972) solidified his position in the contemporary art scene. His work is preserved in the esteemed collections of the S.M.A.K. in Ghent and Mu.ZEE in Ostend.

Marcel Maeyer (1920-2018) was a Belgian curator, art history professor, and painter. He was deputy curator at the Royal Fine Arts Museum in Brussels in the late 1940s and at the Royal Fine Arts Museum in Antwerp in the 1950s, where he became a specialist of James Ensor. He was a professor at the Ghent University until the mid 1980s. His artistic practice developed only in the 1960s, with his first exhibition in 1964 at Gallery Ciranna in Milan. In 1976, Maeyer represented Belgium at the Venice Biennial and later participated in the São Paulo Biennial (1979) and Documenta IX in Kassel (1992). Important solo exhibitions were held at MuHKA in Antwerp (1997), Royal Fine Arts Museum in Antwerp (2009), Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens in Deurle (2007).