



Geert Marijnissen

FATHER FIGURE(S)

September 5 - October 26, 2019

Despite his young age, and despite being part of a generation of fast-paced 'digital natives', Geert Marijnissen's (°1993, Turnhout) practice as a painter comes across as being remarkably slow, characterised as it is by unceasing, consistent contemplation. Even though his technique might seem careless, Marijnissen sometimes spends literally months crafting his paintings in his studio. He often repaints these images – whether recent, or months or even years old – with several layers, thus constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing past (and future) actions. That is why, in Marijnissen's work, the evidence of many preceding decisions filters through, and remains partly visible to the spectator. This slow approach of repainting is illustrative of his continuous oscillation between intuition and thoughtfulness, boldness and doubt – lending his paintings a mature and elaborate depth as well as a tactile vulnerability.

A similar intuitive composure can be found in Marijnissen's remarkable choice for a diverse spectrum of painterly and visual-semiotic motifs – figurative, abstract or informal. When looking at his figurative motifs, their existential gloominess is striking, and leads the viewer to speculate whether they are rooted in Marijnissen's (troubled) treatment of his personal (auto)biographical world. His abstract motifs, on the other hand, are more playful, brimming with painterly pleasure. They function as tools in his analysis of the act of painting itself, and in his profound examination of the behaviour of painting as a medium. Through constant alternation between existential figuration and more light-headed, meta-pictorial abstraction, young Geert Marijnissen has developed a rich and mature palette of thematic and material-technical possibilities, which can be viewed – or read – in an almost linguistic fashion. For these diverse and recurring motifs appear as a sort of vocabulary – a highly personal 'alphabet of images' – offering the spectator an open and accessible insight into Marijnissen's imagery.

The title of the exhibition – Father Figure(s) – is also significant in understanding Geert Marijnissen's practice as a painter. On the one hand, the title (read as a singular noun) refers to his own autobiographical pedigree. On the other hand, the plural title implicitly honours a number of painters and artists who have been of great influence to Marijnissen, thus revealing a strong consciousness of his own artistic history – a mentality that is rather out of step with the fast-paced, hyper-contemporary and a-historical mode of thinking and acting of his fellow 'digital natives'.

In his fascination with existential (figurative) expressiveness, Geert Marijnissen feels akin to painters such as Philippe Vandenberg and Philip Guston, and in his treatment of paint one may discern the subtle influence of Raoul De Keyser, while his interest in the intersection of image and language descends from the work of Walter Swennen and Koenraad Dedobbeleer. The latter in particular – a sculptor, rather surprisingly – has influenced Marijnissen with his unique capacity to combine seemingly contradictory forms and contents. Moreover, in his at times fanatical search for the right title Geert Marijnissen often employs wordplay, song titles or poetic text fragments – another common trait in Dedobbeleer's work.

Acknowledging all these influences, Marijnissen has nevertheless developed an undeniably personal signature as a painter – one that can be perceived as a great, overarching rebus. His paintings, after all, reveal themselves as deceptively simple language games made up of a diverse and recurring amalgam of abstract and figurative motifs, in ever-changing combinations. In this way, his paintings escape all (verbal) definition, instead clearing the spectator's head to make space for something that might be described as 'purely painterly rebus riddles'.

Thibaut Verhoeven, Gent, september 2019