

The hour the ships come in - Antoine Waterkeyn

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When I enter a studio space with a low ceiling, filled with fifteen large paintings, I am overwhelmed by an oppressive feeling. My body resonates with the works. The vibrations create a strange sensation, I am speechless.

'The hour the ships come in' is the new series of paintings by the in Brussels living and working artist Antoine Waterkeyn. The first encounter with these works immediately provokes an intense feeling.

We all create our reality on the basis of concepts and these determine our view of the world. With his work, Waterkeyn breaks open those images and concepts. What is behind it? He searches for boundaries and he takes us beyond the image. With his work he makes us look at reality in a different way and shows something that is not in our pattern of thinking. It does not leave us unmoved.

For his current work Waterkeyn departs from tarot cards. These cards consist of two groups, the Large and the Small Arcana (Latin for 'secrets'). He relies mainly on cards from the Great Arcana, the most symbolic part of the tarot. These cards represent through archetypes and symbolism important changes in our lives. Waterkeyn collects cards from various periods because they refer to art history. The makers followed movements and trends from their time.

It is no coincidence that Waterkeyn chooses tarot cards. These form a signpost for growth and development into self-knowledge. In his recent series of paintings, Waterkeyn searches for something inexpressible. In order to find that, he has gone to the limits both physically and mentally. He worked on this series for thirteen months in a suffocating room without windows. He does not simply depict the tarot cards, but works away the images and makes them disappear into the background. They are transparent images and he shows how relative our gaze is.

The paintings sing and radiate a mysterious light. The works function as a window, sucking us in and appealing to all our senses. The scattering of colours and patches sets the image in motion and evokes changeability. The bright, contrasting colours intensify the visual bustle. Each facet demands the same amount of attention, so that the image reaches us like a field. The work is so present that we are absorbed in it. The large format of his canvases reinforces this feeling.

When we focus on looking, we perceive the figuration. Then we also notice the materiality of the work. All the paintings are printed and most of them are painted afterwards. Waterkeyn uses a technique in which he first makes his paintings on the computer and carefully determines each colour touch. For the processed prints he uses cheap lacquer paint in combination with expensive silver and gold paint. In this way he continues his research into the interrogation of painting. When are we talking about a painting? How decisive are the method of presentation, the material, the tactile and the manual?

This brings us back to the reasoning behind the work. Thinking and feeling go hand in hand. With this new series of paintings, Waterkeyn knows how to stop our thoughts, allow feelings to flow and evoke amazement. After this discharge, our thoughts are nourished to start looking for answers again.

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