

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

Press Release 2014/03/04

Michaël Borremans: The Advantage

January 11 (Saturday) – March 30 (Sunday), 2014

The Hara Museum of Contemporary Art (Shinagawa, Tokyo) is proud to present *Michaël Borremans: The Advantage*, the first solo exhibition at a Japanese museum by the Belgian artist Michaël Borremans featuring over 30 oil paintings that portray the fate of humans living within a complex and uncertain world.



[1]



[2]

As an artist who worked with photographic expression, Michaël Borremans turned to painting during the mid-1990s. He has since skyrocketed to fame for work that has been compared in style to early-modern and modern-era artists such as Diego Velázquez and Édouard Manet, and in spirit to the Surrealistic tradition of his native Belgium. In his paintings, a vague dis-ease permeating the stillness of his images draws the viewer into a deep contemplation. His main motifs are people divorced from reality in a temporal and spatial sense, mindlessly engaged in some private ritual or task.

"It's not important who they are or what they're doing exactly. They're more universal, symbolic metaphors. I paint various kinds of people, but in each case they're important not as portraits of particular people but as general 'human beings'."*1

In most cases, his images deftly defy theorization, making interpretation difficult. One thing that can be said, however, is that Borremans conveys the feeling of another era with a style rooted in the history of painting, at times using old photographs as the basis of his work, at times preserving the individuality of his subjects by capturing the uniqueness of their faces. And yet his subjects appear as creatures with a common universal existence, saddled with a fate that comes from being human. Such images mirror the difficult lives that many in Japan face today, and are sure to strike a chord that transcends national boundaries.

Several years ago, during a visit to the Hara Museum, Borremans was struck by the museum's architectural history and appearance. The desire to hold a solo exhibition there took hold of him from that moment on. As the former home of the Hara family, it was originally a place of rest. It would go on to survive the war and then continue its quiet existence as an art museum. In this place, Borremans discovered an atmosphere that resembled his own work.

Applying the strictest standards, the artist has limited the output of paintings that he considers finished. He has described his attitude as follows:

"It must move me, cut me at a certain point, 'a knife in the eye'."*2

This exhibition of 30-some pieces selected by the Borremans himself thus represents a rare opportunity to become acquainted with the work of this very special artist. Also introduced are video pieces which Borremans began producing in recent years.

*1. From an interview of the artist. *ART iT*, http://www.art-it.asia/u/admin_interviews/xNYKImdkuo5grM1Jqw8V/?lang=en

*2. *Michaël Borremans - A Knife in the Eye*, VRT CULTUUR voor CANVAS, 2009.

[Exhibition Details]

Title: *Michaël Borremans: The Advantage*

Dates: January 11 (Saturday) - March 30 (Sunday), 2014

Venue: Hara Museum of Contemporary Art 4-7-25 Kitashinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo 140-0001

Tel: 03-3445-0651 E-mail: info@haramuseum.or.jp Website: <http://www.haramuseum.or.jp>

Mobile site: <http://mobile.haramuseum.or.jp> Blog: <http://www.art-it.asia/u/HaraMuseum>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/haramuseum> (in Japanese only / account name: @haramuseum)

Organized by: Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

Supported by: Flemish authorities

Sponsored by: CoSTUME NATIONAL

Cooperation provided by: Gallery Koyanagi, Zeno X Gallery

Hours: 11:00 am – 5:00 pm, Wednesdays until 8:00 pm (last entry 30 minutes before closing)

Closed: Mondays (open on January 13), January 14

Admission: General 1,000 yen; Students 700 yen (high school and university) or 500 yen (elementary and junior high); Free for Hara Museum members, students through high school every Saturday during the school term; 100 yen discount per person for groups of 20 or more.

Directions to the museum: 5 minutes by taxi or 15 minutes on foot from JR Shinagawa Station (Takanawa exit); or from the same station take the No.96 bus, get off at the first stop (Gotenyama), and walk 3 minutes

[Related Events]

Title: *Meet the Artist: Michaël Borremans x Minoru Shimizu (art critic)*

Date: Saturday, January 11, 2014 14:00-15:30

Venue: The Hall at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

Fee: Free (requires museum admission)

Capacity: 80 people (bookings will be accepted until the capacity is reached)

Please send an e-mail to event@haramuseum.or.jp with "Meet the Artist" on the subject line and your name and phone number in the text body.

Title: Screening of the Documentary *A Knife in the Eye* (Language/ English, Duration / 53 minutes)

Date and time: Wednesdays at 17:00, 18:00 and 19:00 (three screenings per day)

Venue: The Hall at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

Cooperation provided by: VRT-Canvas

Fee: Free (requires museum admission)

Capacity: 50 people per screening

* No need to book in advance. Please come directly to the venue.

**H A R A
MUSEUM**

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[Concurrent Exhibitions]

MICHAËL BORREMANS at Ryosokuin Temple, Kyoto,

February 20 – 25, 2014

Organized by: Kyoto University of Art & Design

Contact: Planning Office Tel: 075-791-9360

Michaël Boremans at Gallery Koyanagi,

January 11 – March 1, 2014

Contact: Gallery Koyanagi Tel: 03-3561-1896

[Artist Biography]

Michaël Borremans was born in Geraardsbergen, Belgium in 1963 and is currently living in Ghent. After shifting from photography to painting during the mid-1990s, he has held exhibitions at leading museums and art spaces within Belgium and throughout the world, and has shown work at such international art fairs as the Berlin Biennale (2005). In recent years, he has extended his enigmatic vision into filmmaking, which he does in conjunction with his painting. In the summer of 2010, the Queen of Belgium commissioned Borremans to create a series of paintings that were placed on public view at the Royal Palace. In Japan, Borremans held the solo exhibition *Earthlight Room* at Gallery Koyanagi in 2008 and showed work at the Yokohama Triennale in 2011. Two of his works are in the collection of the National Museum of Art, Osaka. He will hold a solo exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts (Brussels) from February 33 to August 3, 2014.

[Images for Publication]



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[6]

[1] *Mombakkes II*, 2007 oil on canvas 36 x 30 cm ©Michaël Borremans
Courtesy of Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp / Photo by Peter Cox Private Collection

[2] *Magnolias – (I)*, 2012 oil on canvas 140 x 120 cm ©Michaël Borremans
Courtesy of Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp / Photo by Peter Cox Private Collection

[3] *The Racer*, 2012 oil on canvas 50 x 40 cm ©Michaël Borremans
Courtesy of Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp / Photo by Peter Cox Private Collection, Indonesia

[4] *Automat (3)*, 2008 oil on wood 24.4 x 18 cm ©Michaël Borremans
Courtesy of Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp and Gallery Koyanagi Collection of The National Museum of Art, Osaka

[5] *The Quest*, 2006 oil on wood 22.3 x 30 cm ©Michaël Borremans
Courtesy of Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp / Photo by Peter Cox MV Collection, Belgium

[6] *Gone*, 2003 (reference image) oil on wood 20.9 x 26.5 cm ©Michaël Borremans
Courtesy of Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp / Photo by Peter Cox Private Collection

*Please include the credit along with the captions.

*Please do not trim or alter the images. Putting text over the images is prohibited.

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[Upcoming Exhibition]

Nicolas Buffe, The Dream of Polifilo

April 19 (Saturday) – June 29 (Sunday), 2014

*Details will be announced on our website soon.

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For publicity materials, please contact the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art (Watanabe, Kajita) by telephone or e-mail.
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