

BRUNO VEKEMANS ON BRUNO VEKEMANS

BRUNO VEKEMANS : THE MAN, THE ARTIST.

“I was seven years old when I went to a holiday camp at the seaside. On the promenade, an old man was painting views of the sea (oil on canvas and very small). His wife would hand him the brushes and oil paint and he completed a painting every 15 minutes. The other kids revelled and played but I was obsessed by this painter. The colours, the smell of the canvas and the turpentine, the paint on his fingers, the speed of painting etc.”

Bruno Vekemans did not merely gaze in admiration. Quite the contrary. He is now a painter in his own right and a completely different kind than the old man from his childhood days.

Drawing, observing, creating... He started very young and as a teenager he discovered other examples, new heroes who elevated his thoughts to greater heights and opened his mind. He adored Ensor, Spilliaert, and Permeke. He immersed himself in the universe of Balthus, Goya, Picasso and Floris Jespers. Like many a true artist, he began to experiment: with collages, imitations and impressions.

His quest has resulted in the building of a sound and comprehensive career over the last few decades, during which he has experimented with different styles and painting techniques, bringing these together effortlessly and as a matter of course.

Vekemans' forte is painting. His earlier work consisted mainly of gouaches on cartridge paper but nowadays he mostly paints with oil on canvas or behind glass and some work and/or studies using mixed techniques: gouache, aquarelle, ink on paper.

“In my paintings, I believe it is the image that counts, not the message. I do not want to express social commitment through my work. Reality is more overwhelming than imagination. How the paint was applied to the surface tells the story, not the actual rendering which is only of secondary importance.”

Vekemans has chosen resolutely for figurative painting. Images he found or images stored in his memory, but always recognisable and distilled from what is called “real life”. He records these images using his own, personal style and without overshadowing conceptualism.

His work does not make any sharp criticism, metaphoric reflection, and sociological considerations. Bruno Vekemans is only interested in the actual image, the picture that acquires power and authority through its own content.

He shows scenes from reality which will make you quiver with emotion. His paintings depict moments of tranquillity and intimacy although they are placed within the context of activity. Some viewers may experience melancholy, quietness or a special atmosphere but this is real beauty in the eyes of Bruno

Vekemans. His palette reveals much about him: colours that balance between opening and covering but which are always intense and convincing.

“Why do I paint?” Because the world is a strange and unreal place for me. Because groups of people make me nervous. Because you do not need anybody to be able to paint. To banish my fears by creating something beautiful. It's slightly autistic: only painting works while everything else fails. Because painting, music and literature are important and all the rest is superfluous.”

*Bruno Vekemans, 21 June 2002
edited by Peter De Potter*