

**PRESS RELEASE****Raoul De Keyser****oeuvre****22.09.2018... 27.01.2019**

**Raoul De Keyser**, *Sejour*, 2001, Oil on canvas, 71x50 cm  
Private collection, Japan

From the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2018 onwards, S.M.A.K. presents *oeuvre*, the first posthumous museum survey devoted to the work of Raoul De Keyser (1930-2012). He is widely considered in Belgium and beyond to be a great but discrete master of painting. This exhibition plots De Keyser's artistic trajectory with more than a hundred paintings, including works never previously exhibited, and an extensive selection of drawings and watercolours.

By unfolding De Keyser's oeuvre chronologically, the exhibition choreography tracks his artistic career from the very beginnings in 1964, when his practice oscillated between Pop Art and Minimalism, to his final works, done in 2012. At the same time, a part of the exhibition emphasises the general characteristics of De Keyser's oeuvre: from specific motifs to the overpainting of canvases and making smaller versions of existing paintings. In

addition, a selection of works on paper from the Museum of Fine Art in Ghent will be shown, which is part of a gift that De Keyser donated to its collection in 2008.

De Keyser is often described as a 'painter's painter'. Although he derived his visual idiom from seemingly trivial scenes in his immediate surroundings, his practice was in fact devoted unceasingly to the questioning and undermining of the painting medium. Once he had broken away from *Nieuwe Visie*, the local Pop Art movement, in the course of the 1960s, De Keyser drifted in the direction of fundamental painting in the 1970s. These periods laid the foundation for the liberation of his work as from the 1980s, when the range of his vocabulary became increasingly broad and fluid.

During his increasing international popularity from the 1990s, including his participation in Documenta IX at the invitation of Jan Hoet, De Keyser started to look back. He regularly returned to images he had created in the past, and as a result his oeuvre became a place both of recollection and looking ahead. Neither abstract nor representational, Raoul De Keyser's works convey great physical presence, since they always faithfully follow the painted line and the layering of colour, which at the same time expose a continual loss of content.

### **Publication**

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive catalogue, published by S.M.A.K. and Pinakothek der Moderne in association with Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Koenig (Cologne) and Mercatorfonds (Brussels). This richly illustrated book contains the first comprehensive chronology of the artist's life and work which was created in collaboration with the Archives Raoul De Keyser at Ghent University. In addition to articles by the exhibition's curators Martin Germann (S.M.A.K., Ghent) and Bernhart Schwenk (Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich), the book also includes newly commissioned essays on the role of other media such as photography and paper in De Keyser's oeuvre, written specially for this publication by Steven Jacobs (Ghent University) and Luk Lambrecht (Strombeek Cultural Centre). The catalogue also contains a personal letter to the artist from Philippe Van Cauteren, the artistic director of S.M.A.K., and several short pieces by a series of international artists expressing how they relate to De Keyser. Designed by Inge Ketelers, the book contains 240 pages and more than 200 illustrations and is published in three languages (English, German and Dutch).

This publication has received generous support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts in New York.

### **Film programme**

Belgian art historian Koen Brams will present a wide-ranging film programme of television and film excerpts on the art and life of Raoul De Keyser.

### **For more information:**

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