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Franz-Josefs-Kai 3
A-1010 Vienna
T 059905 919
bawagcontemporary.at
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Michaël Borremans

MAGNETICS

November 23 – February 17, 2012
Opening: Thursday, November 22, 7 p.m.
Press preview: Thursday, November 22, 10 a.m.

BAWAG Contemporary is pleased to present *MAGNETICS,* the first solo exhibition of Belgian artist Michaël Borremans in Austria.

Michaël Borremans's paintings are still and their somnambulant characters, use of shadows, and accentuation of hands and gestures at times recall old silent films, their plot and emotions likewise transported by images alone. An essential aspect of these *nature morte* pictures is that they bring the enchanted characters so completely to life on the canvas that one cannot imagine them as living somewhere else. Some of them, which one might call the living dead, are painted in a pensive pose or semi-conscious state right in the middle of the composition. While their faces are largely obscured, the atmosphere is psychologically charged. The figures are captured in various stages of reverie so total as to negate the presence of the viewer.

They suggest corpses lying in state, the appear as objects on display in glass cases, the faces recall death masks, while the objects themselves seem like personifications of mental states. The gruesome sight of the female figure in *The Case* (2009), taken from a horror movie or a forensic photograph permits no reverie—she could be the victim of a secret crime or simply asleep. Yet, against one's will, the delicacy with which this painting is executed has a stimulating effect. *Red Hand, Green Hand* (2010) shows two hands engaged in what might be some kind of necromantic divination. The painted hands place the psychic séance's magically charged gesture at an unbridgeable remove. The sense of familiarity and intimacy gives way to an intense disturbance.

Borremans's recent pictures flaunt their own fading, the color receding, if possible, even behind the canvas. The painting grows thinner, seems to dissolve, while the reality grows evermore unreal. In paintings such as *The Load* (2009), or *Magnetics* (2009), one seems to be looking through some sort of drifting smoke or veil at colors and shapes of diminished physicality, so to speak, images of a faded world, a milkmaid

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wearing a strange cap on her head, a Columbine who lowers her gaze when one looks at her. These faces appear out of the unearthly darkness like "shadows of reality seemingly arising out of nowhere, like memories that return to us in the middle of the night, only to fade away again when we try to hold them fast, like a photographic print left for too long in the developer" (W.G. Sebald). Shapes and colors dissolve in the haze of this twilit world in which there is no more contrast, no shades, only flowing, light-quickened transitions, a single blur from which only the most fleeting phenomena emerge.

BAWAG Contemporary
open daily from 2 to 8 p.m.
Accompanying events
Guided tours
each Thursday at 6 p.m.
Admission free

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Christine Kintisch
Organization:
Elisabeth Hofbauer
Technical coordination:
museum standards, mu.st. OG

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Stephen Mathewson

Educational program:
Wolfgang Brunner

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Photography:
Oliver Ottenschläger
Graphic design:
Angela Althaler, a+o
Architecture:
propeller z

Press relations:
Mag. Christina Werner
w.hoch.2wei.
Kulturelles Projektmanagement
t 43/1/ 524 96 46-22
f 43/1/ 524 96 32
werner@kunstnet.at

Press Download:
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Michaël Borremans
Biography

Michaël Borremans (born 1963, Geraadsbergen) most recent solo exhibition took place at the Württembergischen Kunstverein Stuttgart in 2011; the retrospective was subsequently shown at the Mücsarnok Kunsthalle, Budapest and the Kunsthalle Helsinki. Additional solo exhibitions: Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo and the Royal Palace in Brussels (2010); Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover (2009); de Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam (2007); La maison rouge, Paris (2006); Kunsthalle Bremerhaven and the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel (2004); Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent; Parasol unit Foundation for contemporary art, London; Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin and Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio (2005).

Borremans's work is included in the following collections: Art Institute of Chicago; High Museum of Art Atlanta, Georgia; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Musée d´Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Michaël Borremans lives and works in Ghent.

Special Events

For details see bawagcontemporary.at
Subject to alteration
Free admission