

Source: Fomo-Vox

Title: Art Anvers #2 : Sofie Van de Velde « Being a gallerist isn't a goal, it's a tool »

Date: 07/12/2022

Journalist:

URL: <https://fomo-vox.com/2022/12/07/art-anvers-2-sofie-van-de-velde-being-a-gallerist-isnt-a-goal-its-a-tool/>

Art Anvers #2 : Sofie Van de Velde « Being a gallerist isn't a goal, it's a tool »



Sofie Van de Velde is one of the leading galleries of the new Antwerp art scene. Following her father's steps, Ronny Van de Velde, who founded his gallery in the 70s, she opened a spaced shared with PLUS-ONE Gallery at the Nieuw Zuid district, from a collaborative perspective. While sharing the same vision and philosophy, they stay far away from a conventional competition-minded gallery model. The gallery builds partnerships with over 30 galleries around the world to offer greater visibility to their artists on a very cutting-edge base. The gallery opened a second space, located in the Antwerp South district, with a focus on solo exhibitions by Belgian and international artists. Sofie Van de Velde is participating for the second time in Art Antwerp, following the success of the previous edition despite the pandemic period. Her passion for art and commitment is great, inventing her way and defining herself as « an entrepreneur in art ».

What factors do you think explain the success of the first edition of Art Antwerp ?

This success is due partly to the flourishing and stimulating contemporary Antwerp art scene, with leading institutions such as M HKA , Fomu, MoMu... But also the KMSKA for old the Flemish Masters and historical places such as the cathedral with the Rubens’ masterpieces. Every time I Invite people from abroad, they are all impressed by this mixture of fashion, contemporary art and history in a rather small and cosmopolitan city. Antwerp is very close to The Netherlands, but it’s also close to Germany and thus creates triangle with Belgium. It’s very easy to come from Paris by train (only 1hour and ½) That’s why so many people want to come to Art Antwerp, because of this special historical and geographical context.



Ives Maes, Forbidden Fruits Create Many Jams
26.11.2022—08.01.2023 Nieuw Zuid

You will once again have a joint stand with PLUS-ONE gallery, what will be your shared goals ?

I want to show young artists living in Antwerp who are connected to this historical background through interesting contemporary paintings, whereas our colleagues from PLUS-ONE Gallery will show digital and more accurate issues regarding the market.



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What will be on view in the gallery during the fair?

Since we are two galleries sharing the same space, PLUS-ONE Gallery is showing the Irish artist Damien Meade, based in London, who creates paintings that find their origin in sculpture. Gallery Sofie Van de Velde presents a solo exhibition of the Belgium artist Ives Maes, based in Antwerp. He is an artistic researcher to KASK School of Arts Ghent and the Hogent Arts Research Fund. Working mainly with installations and photography, Ives Maes is a multidisciplinary artist who has developed several long-term projects that revolve around the concepts of temporary architecture, nomadism, ruination, and ephemerality. He has an amazing exhibition at KMSKA « COSMORAMA », right now, dealing with the World's Fairs which emerged together with the invention of photography. Due to the veracity of the medium, the organization teams were able to provide lasting documents of their temporary pavilions. Maes' eerie images begin with the first exhibition in London in 1851 and end in Milan, at the 2015 Expo. They are 'afterimages', remnants of fading dreams. Many of these structures were made only to disappear again. Often, they remained standing, like forgotten ruins. Others were indeed built to stay. And have survived wars, earthquakes and pandemics.

In between our two galleries we have the Wunderwall, a central wall devoted to artists who are not (yet) bound to a gallery, that can be collected in a mix & match manner.

It's a self- curated backdrop of small (or affordable) artworks by the hand of young and emerging artist in various media and styles. This Wunderwall project forms the common ground between emerging artists, who are looking for visibility, and young collectors, who are looking for new discoveries.



The Wunderwall Sofie Van de Velde PLUS-ONE Gallery

Being a gallerist is part of a family tradition for you, how will this new generation move forward ?

Naturally, I'm a product of my family's background and father, as I started working in the gallery as a teenager and there were always artists in our home. My business partner Jason Poirier dit Caulier, director of PLUS-ONE Gallery, and I are working 7 days /a week and all our families are involved with the gallery's activities. Nowadays, the new generation of gallerists are more focused on the balance between private and professional life with less hours spent. They are not less concentrated or involved, or passionate and I think it's a better way of living, much healthier.



Pieter Jennes
bewitched, bothered and bewildered, 2022

What do the artists living in Antwerp have in common ?

Artists such as Jesse Tomballe, Bendt Eyckermans, Pieter Jennes or Heidi Ukkonen are all living at Antwerp and even when they don't realize it, they share a unique heritage and historical background. If we compare their paintings to others, they have a special use of colors and 3 dimensional effects.

What is your definition of art ?

I find it difficult to answer this question. Art is my life, art is reflection, art is a very strong way to see the world through the lens of more creative, out of the box thinking people: the artists. Art is giving me a lot of energy. If I have a problem or when I'm looking for a solution, I go and see art and new ideas emerge. A great artist is someone capable of mixing a historical background with nowadays issues in a unique response.



Jesse Tomballe
Jongen aan het raam, 2022