

## SAME OLD, SAME OLD

24.01.2026 – 19.04.2026

Opening Saturday 24 January 2025 | 15.00 – 18.00

Saturday, January 24, 3:30 pm: presentation of the catalogue produced on the occasion of Frieze Masters, Berlinde De Bruyckere (Gli Ori, 2025), with Valentino Catricalà, Carlo Falciani, and Berlinde De Bruyckere

**GALLERIA CONTINUA** is pleased to host in San Gimignano one of the most powerful and widely recognized voices of the contemporary art scene, Berlinde De Bruyckere. For more than thirty years, the Belgian artist has established an oeuvre in which the body, often portrayed as a hybrid entity with human, animal and plant features, speaks the language of desire, suffering, and transformation. Her works are metaphorical images that convey horror and beauty, violence and tenderness, wounds and healing, generating an overwhelming sense of human connection. The exhibition presented in San Gimignano, titled *Same Old, Same Old*, brings together a substantial selection of drawings along with several sculptures from the early days of her artistic practice. Spanning her production from 1987 to the present, these works explore the human experience in all its complexity—vulnerability, existential solitude, the desire for protection and connection, the precariousness of existence, and the fragility of the body—transforming them into symbols of lived experience and collective memory.

The title of this solo exhibition highlights a central aspect of the artist's practice: the thematic continuity that runs through her work from the 1990s to the present. The repetition of visual motifs across decades—from the iron cages and colourful blankets of her early works to more recent pieces made with disintegrating blankets and topics like the Arcangelo, imprisoned under a

heavy cloak of animal skin—suggests that many of the major narratives of crisis, violence, and forced displacement have not come to an end, but have instead become embedded in our everyday experience. The title, *Same Old, Same Old*, thus becomes an acknowledgment of this painful cyclical reality. Art emerges as a space in which to confront it with emotional intensity and awareness.

As Valentino Catricalà writes in the catalogue produced on the occasion of *Frieze Masters, Berlinde De Bruyckere* (Gli Ori, 2025) to be presented by the author together with Carlo Falciani and the artist on the day of the opening – De Bruyckere's body is not only a physical, cultural, and spiritual entity, but also a political act: the interpretation of a new social body that exists in a delicate balance between absence and presence, between a given physical structure and continual metamorphosis. One might speak of the "formless," in the sense proposed by Bataille, not merely as a philosophical concept but, as we shall see, as a driving force in our present—an act of reflection and action toward a new human condition, both existential and political. The artist, in fact, dismantles the body—animal or human—not only as an existential or biological entity, but as a political one, as a site upon which power, control, and social dynamics are exercised. Her work speaks to us about ourselves and about our existence today, about the possibility not only of breaking apart and reassembling, but of constructing new

forms of corporeality and, consequently, new social bodies. It is no coincidence that the artist draws inspiration from disruptive events in which our societies have seen every notion of identity and civic order radically collapse. As in the past, so too today we live in a time in which our societies—as we have conceived them culturally and politically—are in crisis, bringing the same images and fears back to the surface. We must begin again from the body, the artist tells us, a new body, no longer defined by stasis but by continual metamorphosis.

Berlinde De Bruyckere makes no distinction between animate and inanimate objects; every material she uses assumes a pose or a characteristic of a living organism. These organisms are never fully resolved, appearing instead as if in a state of becoming, suspended within an ongoing process of transformation. In some instances the sculptures are placed beneath glass cases; in others they are suspended from the ceiling; and in still others, as with the works on view *Zonder Titel I, 2000–2025* and *Zonder Titel II, 2000–2025*, they rest on wooden supports, in this case resembling easels or hat stands. These supports become an integral part of the works, contributing to their conceptual construction. The human body becomes more distinct in *Spreken, 1999*. Beneath a thick layer of blankets—which conceals any defining features or physiognomy—two human figures are hidden. Turned toward one another, they appear to interact within an intimate, protected space. The expressiveness of the figures is conveyed not through the face, but through posture and material.

*I Never Promised You a Rose Garden, 1992* functions as a reflection on the relationship between imagination and reality, promise and disillusionment. The work takes the form of wicker baskets filled with roses folded from thin sheets of lead; the roses—traditional symbols of love and beauty, accompanying every stage of our lives (from the bride's bouquet to the funeral wreath)—are transformed into heavy, cold, static, and even poisonous objects, overturning their conventional meaning and suggesting a break from idealized narratives. The baskets are related to the installation of the same name (collection of *SMAK Ghent*) consisting of a monumental rack, on which countless wicker baskets and plastic buckets, filled to the brim with lead roses, serve as an archive of memory and desire, frozen in time. In the group of works titled *Kooi*, De Bruyckere repeatedly depicts cages: enclosures

within which the (often absent) body is confined and compelled, a framework that controls and directs it. Cages and wings also take shape through ink. Among the drawings on view are two works entitled *De vrouw ontvangt de vleugels van de zoon*—literally, “the woman receives the wings from the son.” These works offer a metaphorical reference to the possibility of transformation and signify a very early presence of the salvational figure of the angel, a key theme in De Bruyckere's current work, recently culminating in her 2024 installation for the Basilica di San Giorgio Maggiore during the 60th Biennale di Venezia. At the end of the exhibition path stands *Slaapzaal IV, 2000*, part of the dormitory-like in situ installation the artist created inside an old train coach for the 3rd Biennale of Louvain La Neuve, Belgium in the same year. The empty bed alludes to the latency of a person; absence amplifies presence, making the body the symbolic center of the work. Supported by unusually tall and slender metal legs, the heavily laden, yet neatly made bed seems to have been affected by a giant parasite, eroding its sacred intimacy.

About the artist:

**Berlinde De Bruyckere** was born in Ghent, Belgium, in 1964, where she currently lives and works. Since her first exhibition in the mid-1980s, her sculptures and drawings have been shown in numerous exhibitions at major institutions worldwide. Recent exhibitions include *Lift Not the Painted Veil*, Ernst Barlach Haus, Hamburg, Germany (2025); *Khoros*, Bozar, Brussels, Belgium (2025); *City of Refuge III*, a collateral event of the 60th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2024); *No Life Lost*, Artipelag, Stockholm, Sweden (2024); *Crossing a Bridge on Fire*, MAC CCB, Lisbon, Portugal (2023); *City of Refuge II*, Diözesanmuseum, Freising, Germany (2023); *City of Refuge I*, Commanderie de Peyrassol, Flassans-sur-Issole, France (2023); *PEL – Becoming the Figure*, Arp Museum, Remagen, Germany (2022); *Plunder / Ekphrasis*, MO.CO, Montpellier, France (2022); *Engelenkeel*, Bonnefanten, Maastricht, the Netherlands (2021); *Aletheia*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy (2019–2020); *Il Mantello* (5x5x5 event for Manifesta 12), Church of Santa Venera, Palermo, Sicily (2018); *Berlinde De Bruyckere*, Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland (2018); *Embalmed*, Kunsthal Aarhus, Denmark (2017); *Suture*, Leopold Museum, Vienna, Austria (2016); *No Life Lost*, Hauser & Wirth New York (2016); *Berlinde De Bruyckere*

- *Penthesilea*, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg, France (2015); *The Embalmer*, Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria (2015); *The Embalmer*, Kunstraum Dornbirn, Dornbirn, Austria (2015); and *Berlinde De Bruyckere*, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, the Netherlands (2015).

Her works have joined the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY (US); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY (US); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (US); MOMA, NY (US); The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC (US); Des Moines Center for the Arts, Des Moines, Iowa (US); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC (US); National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (US); Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine (US); The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina (US); ISelf Collection, London (UK); AGI Collection, Verona (IT); Sara Hilden Foundation, Tampere (FI); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (IT); Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart (DE); Kunsthalle Hamburg, Hamburg (DE); De Pont Collection, Tilburg (NL); Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris (FR); Sammlung Olbricht, Berlin (DE); Friedrich Christian Flick Collection, Berlin (DE); MONA, Hobart (AU); Collection Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL); The Roberts Institute of Art, London, (UK); Collection Francès (FR); Omer Koç Collection, Istanbul (TR); Belfius Art Collection, Brussels (BE); Collection Claude Berri, Paris (FR); Collection Flemish Community, M HKA, Antwerp (BE); Bonnefanten, Maastricht (NL); Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Den Haag (NL); Museum Beelden aan Zee, Den Haag (NL); Collection Fundació Sorigué (ES); Tony Podesta Collection, Washington, DC (USA); Marc & Livia Strauss Family Collection, Chappaqua, NY (USA); Collection of Sherry and Joel Mallin, NY (USA); Aaron and Barbara Levine Collection, Washington, DC (USA); Collezione La Gaia, Busca (IT); Collection Pei-Cheng Peng, Taiwan; VERDEC Collection (BE).

In 2013, De Bruyckere was selected to represent Belgium at the 55th Venice Biennale, where she presented her monumental work *Kreupelhout - Cripplewood*, created in collaboration with Nobel Prize-winning writer J. M. Coetzee. More recently, she has expanded her practice into the performing arts, working as a set designer in close collaboration with photographer Mirjam Devriendt. Notable projects include *City of Refuge IV*, Ruhr Triennale 2024, Bochum, Germany (2024); *Mariavespers*, Holland Festival, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (2017); *Nicht Schlafen*, Les Ballets C de la B, Ruhrtriennale,

Bochum, Germany (2016); and *Penthesilea*, La Monnaie, Brussels, Belgium (2015).

#### About the gallery:

Fondata nel 1990 a San Gimignano, Italia, GALLERIA CONTINUA ha espanso le sue sedi a Pechino, Les Moulins, L'Avana, San Paolo, Roma e Parigi. GALLERIA CONTINUA rappresenta desiderio di continuità tra epoche e la volontà di scrivere una storia attuale. In trentacinque anni di attività, grazie all'impegno profuso nel riqualificare e dar nuova vita a luoghi dimenticati e non convenzionali, la galleria ha sviluppato un'identità forte e inusuale. Collocata all'interno di un ex-cinema teatro degli anni Cinquanta, GALLERIA CONTINUA San Gimignano ha ospitato, negli anni, numerose mostre offrendo agli artisti la possibilità di creare, per questi spazi così particolari e caratterizzati, installazioni site specific memorabili e progetti espositivi ad hoc.

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#### **For further information about the**

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