

Baronian

Press Release

Rue de la Concorde 33
1050 Brussels

12.09 - 02.11.2024

Opening

Thursday 12.09
18 - 21h

Michel Frère

Michel Frère, a Belgian artist born in 1961 in Brussels, has embarked on a brief yet impactful career, before tragically passing away at the age of 38. Widely recognized as one of the finest Belgian painters of his generation, his work is for example celebrated in Joost De Geest's "500 Masterpieces of Belgian art, from the 15th century to the present" (2006).

In December 1985, Albert Baronian organized Michel Frère's first solo exhibition at his gallery in Knokke, marking the beginning of a series of worldwide solo and group exhibitions that showcased Frère's remarkable talent.

Though initially studying photography at La Cambre (Brussels), his artistic endeavors expanded to painting, pastel, sculpture, and drawing. His materialistic approach involves layering paint mixed with sand, lead, or ashes, creating compositions filled with objects and dominated by geometric lines, a technique that draws comparisons to Eugène Leroy. His early large canvases also show affinities with German painters he admired, such as Markus Lüpertz, Sigmar Polke, Anselm Kiefer, and Georg Baselitz.

Frère's work allies opacity and light, and delves deeply into the human condition, capturing a wide spectrum of emotions. His art transcends reality, sweeping away figurative elements with matter, creating thick yet infinitely moving textures that seem to give birth to and extinguish the world. His painting is neither in line with a trend nor a fashion but transcends its time while being anchored in it, questioning the history of painting. Michel Frère has cut himself off from all fashion effects, drawing exclusively on the source of the intuition by which he intended to seize the world.

Around 1988, Frère began creating *églomisés*, paintings where the frame's glass is painted on. The artist scratched part of the glass to reveal a form through which the material on the canvas could be perceived. These works marked a shift in Frère's focus, to focusing on material as both support and subject.

Following this work, Frère approached painting with a new, more contrasting color range. By the mid-1980s, Frère transitioned from acrylics to oil paints, embracing impasto techniques by the early 1990s. His paintings and bronze sculptures, characterized by dense layers, reflect a process of accumulating errors and disillusionments.

In 1995, Laurent Busine dedicated a major solo exhibition to Frère at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi. Despite his untimely death, Michel Frère's influence on the art world endures. His invitation into a profound reflection on humanity's complexities and his ability to transform reality through his work have left an indelible mark on the Belgian art scene and beyond.

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Frère has had solo exhibitions abroad, including at the galleries Tanit (Munich), Pamela Auchincloss (New York), Brooke Alexander (New York), Jan Turner (Los Angeles), Sidney Janis (New York), Ghislaine Hussenot (Paris), Durand-Dessert (Paris), Jean Bernier (Athens) and Dhondt-Dhaenens (Deurle). He has also exhibited nine times since 1985 at Albert Baronian (Brussels and Knokke) and four times since 1993 at Gentili Arte Contemporanea (Florence).