

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – February 12, 2016

Dirk de Bruycker Memorial Exhibition

Exhibition Dates: February 26 – March 20, 2016
Opening Reception: Friday, February 26, 2016, 5 – 7

Memorial Celebration: Sunday, March 13, 1 pm
Open To The Public

Gallery Hours: Mon. – Fri. 10 – 6; Sat. 10 – 5

**THE EXHIBITION IS ACCOMPANIED BY A PRINTED
AND ON-LINE CATALOG WITH ESSAY**

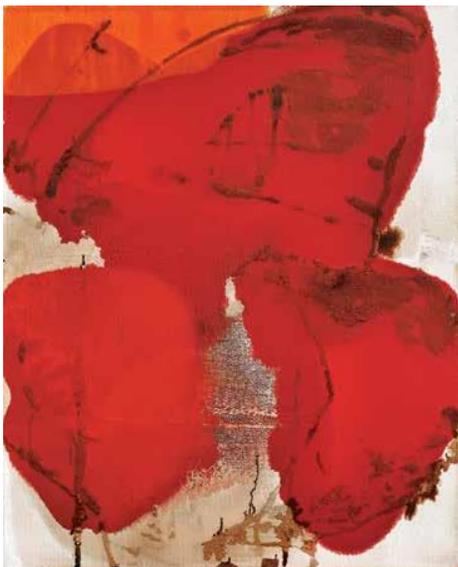
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Dirk de Bruycker, *Lunule*, 2009, Asphalt, gesso, cobalt drier and oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

Santa Fe, NM – Dirk de Bruycker’s sudden and untimely death last summer deprived Santa Fe of one its most important artists. A native of Belgium who trained originally as a lithographer in his grandfather’s Ghent atelier, this quiet and highly introspective painter evolved an abstraction of honesty and became known for a deeply intuitive and process-oriented body of paintings and works on paper that expressed intense, direct responses to both the terrible and the beautiful in life.



Dirk de Bruycker, *Salto Rojo*, 2005, Asphalt, gesso, cobalt drier and oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

LewAllen Galleries presents a major memorial exhibition surveying the artist’s nearly 35 career, bringing together wide-ranging milestones from each of several periods illustrating a career spent exploring for deep and authentic meaning. An intensely contemplative man, de Bruycker drew inspiration mainly from within himself, acutely aware of the creative possibilities within contrasts between the beauty in life and its tragedies. The integrity of his art exists as an emanation of the intense emotional resonance of each.

The exhibit is united by a thread that runs distinctly through the artist’s entire career and unites his art with his life: the rejection of artifice and a deep abiding embrace of authenticity. It stems from a pilgrimage he made at age 20 to India, a place he felt was his spiritual homeland.

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Instead of finding enlightenment there, de Bruycker was struck by the suffering he saw and, upon returning to Belgium, he committed himself to a “life without self-delusion.” The occasion of this memorial exhibition affords an opportunity to reflect upon and reassess the varied and complex career of this extraordinary artist and how his asserted dedication to authenticity can be seen to have been a driving influence in his work.



Dirk de Bruycker, *Big Pipe*, 1988, mixed media collage, 32" x 68"

What might have seemed, especially in work from later in his career, as only lush, beautiful color field profusions can, in the larger context of this memorial survey, be understood more fully as part of a life-long evolution of art concerned with the overwhelming enigmas and disruptions in the human condition. The quiet constancy of this motivating force – and the subtle way it manifests in much of his work with use of collage, corruption of cultural symbols, and new ideas about the sublime – makes de Bruycker an under-recognized figure in the post-modern ethos of art with conceptual as well as aesthetic importance.



Dirk de Bruycker, *Epilogue V*, 1997, Asphalt, gesso, cobalt drier and oil on canvas, 84" x 72"

The memorial exhibit includes works from earlier in his career in which de Bruycker appropriated cultural iconography derived in part from 17th and 18th-century watermarks associated with privileged European society and bequeathed to him by his printer grandfather. These images became for de Bruycker a tool in his art that he displaced from their original context. In what he termed a "corruption" of the icons, he shifted their psychological weight and obscured their previous symbolic associations in order to force a visual reinvention of meaning. He saw this as analogous to the way life itself compels constant change and the reconceiving of what only seemed immutable.

In work from the early '90s, de Bruycker began projecting watermarks inherited from his grandfather onto canvases and through pouring, painting and technical mastery, would create striking and haunting “burning icons.” He wrote that “The idea [behind this series of paintings] is based on the *memento mori* or the moralistic contemplation of death ... like dangling a skeleton in front of your nose so that you would contemplate the fleetingness of life.” With these paintings he explored the fragility of existence and the idea of death as the natural completion of the transitory cycle of life.

Other '90s paintings in the show evince an overall mood that is dark, almost brooding, often rooted in the enigma of displacement, both personal and, more broadly, relating to his perception of the constant flux in contemporary existence. The fluid movement evident in the facture of the work from this period is metaphor for his emotional response to the fleeting and transitory nature of that existence.

Many works in the memorial exhibition are representative of de Bruycker's later career and are leading examples of his more familiar painterly florescences of vibrant pigment applied in varying viscosities and floating on underlying shadows of image rendered in asphaltum. Symbolic of the beautiful but transitory nature of life, these works had their inspiration in an experience the artist had after establishing a studio in Nicaragua in 1999:



Dirk de Bruycker, *Yellow II*, 2012, Asphalt, gesso, cobalt drier and oil on canvas, 84" x 72"

I entered my studio in Nicaragua and on the tile floor lay a dead splendid Cocoa Mort Blue butterfly, her body consumed by ants. I gasped, overwhelmed by both the beauty and the tragedy of the event.... I think I've been trying to capture the moment of gasping ever since in my paintings.

Symbolizing the transitory nature of life, the butterfly and its beautiful but short life cycle became a poignant inspiration for de Bruycker's later work. The process he evolved from this experience was, he wrote, "largely intuitive and allows for a measure of chance, coaxed to an extent." His mastery of color became a language of passion, the contrasting translucency and opacity, vivacious color and dark areas, conferring what the artist called a sense that the paintings were "dangerously alive."

From his experience of the poverty, suffering, disease, and displacement he encountered in places like India, Morocco and Nicaragua – as well as the breath-taking beauty of the colors and nature there – de Bruycker could not help but be influenced by the sense of melancholy inevitably residing in the contrast. By refusing the temptation to ignore it and, instead, embracing his experience of melancholy's wrench, he transformed it into a personal art of authenticity that endures as sublime.