

Hans Op de Beeck

Nocturnal Journey

Mar 22 — Aug 17, 2025 | KMSKA Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, Belgium

With 'Hans Op de Beeck: Nocturnal Journey', The Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA) presents the internationally renowned artist's largest solo exhibition in his own country. From 22 March to 17 August 2025, visitors will be immersed in an enchanting dream world, where Op de Beeck's lifelike sculptures take you on a personal journey through a mysterious nocturnal landscape.

From sculptures and video art to experimental soundscapes, Hans Op de Beeck's multidisciplinary oeuvre knows few boundaries. In his work, the lines are blurred and give way to a total experience. With this same multifaceted approach, the Turnhout-born artist shapes a universally recognisable yet poetic world for KMSKA. His international career proves that he strikes a universal chord. His works have been travelling the world for years with important exhibitions in Europe but also in the United States, China and Japan. In 2025, Hans Op de Beeck and the KMSKA are collaborating to present his largest solo exhibition in Belgium.

"With Hans Op de Beeck: Nocturnal Journey, the KMSKA presents a unique collaboration with a home-grown contemporary artist. The result is a fictional, nocturnal landscape that hovers between reality and dream. Here, Op de Beeck's sculptures are not ordinary objects, but companions. They invite reflection on deeply human sentiments such as beauty, emotion and everything in between." – Luk Lemmens, chairman KMSKA vzw

A total work of art

'Hans Op de Beeck: Nocturnal Journey' is a multi-sensory total artwork. Visitors walk past 39 life-size, monochrome sculptures, accompanied by a specially created soundscape. The journey ends with the video production *Staging Silence* (3).

As a visitor, you are not just a spectator but a fellow traveller who is part of the work of art. The characters present reflect different stages of life, emotions and everyday rituals. Both young and old, people and animals, objects and architectural installations evoke recognisable and personal associations. Dusk creates a mysterious atmosphere and an alienating feeling that is experienced differently by each visitor. The monochrome use of colour leaves room for personal interpretation, blurring the line between art and reality. The result is a timeless, dreamy world where thoughts and feelings are given free rein.

"The exhibition invites the visitor on a physical and mental journey through an environment that holds the silence and the meditative, but also the darkness and latent nocturnal disruption. Working anachronistically and eclectically, my sculptures attempt to arrive at a timeless essence of this fictional world. A place where everyone is free to dream." – Hans Op de Beeck, artist

An extraordinary dialogue

In *Nocturnal Journey*, Hans Op de Beeck elicits dialogue with the KMSKA's permanent collection. The exhibition touches on fundamental themes in art history, such as still lifes, transience (vanitas) and beauty. Although his sculptures look classical, Op de Beeck plays with materials, form and scale, reinterpreting familiar motifs in surprising ways. This allows visitors to experience timeless themes from a contemporary, everyday perspective.

A striking example is *The Horseman* (2020), in which Op de Beeck departs from the heroic equestrian tradition. Instead of a victorious figure, he depicts a lone traveller - an image that reflects the human experience through the ages. In *Vanitas XL*, too, the artist uses art-historical conventions to his advantage. Inspired by the compositions of 17th-century masters such as Francis Gijsbrechts, this monumental still life enlarges the traditional symbolism of mortality into an overwhelming, space-filling experience. Transience and beauty also converge in *Tatiana (Soap Bubble)*. A young girl, with eyes closed, blows a soap bubble - a vision that could pop at any moment. Op de Beeck freezes this fleeting moment and elevates it to a universal symbol of transience, just as old masters used the soap bubble in vanitas still lifes. *Nocturnal Journey* thus bridges the gap between past and present, and between classical imagery and contemporary interpretation.

"Questioning beauty is something artists have done throughout the centuries. Hans Op de Beeck's work also explores the many manifestations of beauty. In the process, the artist has a keen eye for the poetry of the small, the everyday. It is precisely for this reason that Op de Beeck is a guest at KMSKA." – Annelien De Troij, curator of *Hans Op de Beeck: Nocturnal Journey*

A world player with Flemish roots

The oeuvre of Hans Op de Beeck (°1969) is both timeless and hugely contemporary. He does not use his work as a pure imitation of reality, but abstracts from the recognisable, removes colour and thus captures the unguarded, pure moment. His stylised, dreamy figures are not hyper-realistic, but translate classical art themes into existential and social issues of today. For more than 20 years, his sculptures, as well as his video, animation and drawing art have been travelling the world. He is represented by five leading galleries and has exhibited at the Venice Biennale and at Tate Modern in London, among others. Major museums in Europe, the United States and Asia have already devoted solo exhibitions to Op de Beeck's oeuvre.

"Since its reopening in 2022, the KMSKA has been strongly committed to integrating contemporary artists within museum operations. The KMSKA is therefore particularly proud to realise - together with Hans Op de Beeck - his largest solo exhibition in his own country. Op de Beeck, too, plays with the balance between tradition and innovation. In addition to a fantastic exhibition, this dialogue offers visitors the chance to rediscover the permanent collection with a fresh perspective." – Carmen Willems, general director KMSKA vzw

An extensive range of activities

'Hans Op de Beeck: Nocturnal Journey' will come with an extensive range of activities. KMSKA LATE, for instance, will provide an exciting Thursday evening programme, some of which will be curated by Op de Beeck himself. After all, the performing arts are not foreign to him: in addition to his sculptures, he has worked on theatre, dance and opera productions as a writer, director and designer for the past decade. He now brings this unique network to the KMSKA. During the curator talks, visitors can broaden their knowledge by talking to Hans Op de Beeck, as well as to other experts in contemporary art. There are also several guided tours and creative workshops for all ages. Finally, an inspiring visitor guide invites everyone to write down or draw their personal journey during the exhibition.