ALMINE RECH

Hans Op de Beeck
Danse Macabre

Apr 11 — Oct 25, 2026 | Tenuta dello Scompiglio, Capannori, Italy

Associazione Culturale Dello Scompiglio presents Hans Op de Beeck's solo exhibition entitled 'Danse Macabre,' curated by Angel Moya Garcia and open to the public from 11 April to 25 October 2026.

Hans Op de Beeck works across a wide variety of media and forms, steadily developing a versatile body of works that includes installations, sculptures, video works, texts, drawings, photography and watercolour paintings. For the past decade, Op de Beeck has also been active in theatre, opera, and contemporary dance as a playwright, stage director, scenographer, and costume designer. He is perhaps best known for his monumental, immersive, sensorial installations which are structured as enigmatic, fictional scenes frozen in time that visitors can walk through or sit within, evoking silent contemplation and moments of wonder. His distinctive body of work delves into the complex relationship between humans and the world around us, while also addressing universal questions about the invisible framework of being.

The exhibition at the Tenuta Dello Scompiglio unfolds through a site-specific installation and an animated film. The former, entitled 'Danse Macabre,' appears as a black-and-white evocation of a nocturnal park composed of bare trees and puddles, where the path leads us to a life-size, monochrome grey afterimage of a carousel. This evocation of a fictional, colourless landscape acts as an accessible, cinematic and atmospheric "establishing shot" to potential stories in which *oil drums smoulder with fire, the treetops stand stripped bare, and the winding path draws us toward the abandoned attraction, immersed in a night of absolute blackness.*

The conventional carousel, as we still know it today in many variations, is usually a baroque, brightly coloured, glittering kitsch object that nostalgically evokes times gone by, when it still faced little competition from the noisy, crowded contemporary attractions. In 1999, at the beginning of his career, Op de Beeck created the video work "Blender", in which a pompous, colourful carousel slowly begins to rotate and then magically dissolves into an unreadable, cotton candy-like swirling motion, only to come to a stop again. Since then, the carousel has been a recurring theme in his work, as a metaphor for the human condition. The artist considers the merry-go-round a quintessentially human, somewhat tragicomic form of entertainment and also a rather absurd object because we pick up our children, place them on wooden horses, and then let them spin aimlessly in circles.

Such amusement objects or constructions that are not, or no longer in use, acquire a melancholic undertone. The muted or vanished cheerfulness gives these objects, primarily intended to be moving, crowded, and colourful, a sombreness, like the sobering emptiness after a party. The grey monochrome colour gives the carousel a completely petrified, inert appearance, as if it were a fossil, frozen in time. By removing all colour, the carousel is stripped of its last layer of vibrancy, further distancing it from the actual object. This work is a sculptural interpretation, not an imitation. The matte grey colour both smothers as well as uplifts the image into something entirely else, like an ash-covered remnant after a major fire, or, for example, an orphaned object left behind after a nuclear disaster or war.

The title "Danse Macabre" refers to the stationary procession of carriages, horses, and objects that allude to death, which Op de Beeck designed as a kind of enlarged still life. The still life as an historical genre has a tradition of being a "memento mori", a reminder of the transience and relativity of our lives. On the carousel, we encounter a whole family of skeletons, apparently enjoying themselves, piles of leftover plates, cake scraps, empty bottles and glasses, ashtrays, fruit and the like, which remind us of the battlefield of things left behind after a big party. Nothing is as it seems in this seemingly fossilized carousel, where a child's skeleton holds a roaring seal on a leash, a dandyish male skeleton calmly smokes a cigarette in a carriage, or where a toy airplane evokes a bomber from the First World War.

A musical soundscape, composed by Sam Vloemans and performed by the Hermes Ensemble (B), resonates from afar throughout the landscape, drawing us toward the second part, where the animated film *Vanishing Point* is screened, completing the exhibition. Its title, Vanishing Point, refers to a point in a picture plane of a perspective view where mutual parallel lines seem to converge. At the distance of a vanishing point, we can no longer perceive three-dimensional depth. Op de Beeck uses the term metaphorically, as a tipping point from which we shift from measurability and legibility into the unknown, indecipherable, and incomprehensible, or from the concrete to the abstract, mental to spiritual. The film starts with the image of a little boy resting peacefully on his back with his eyes closed. Next, we are transported to fictional landscapes, still lifes and figures. Together with the music, the watercolours are brought to life creating a sweeping, tranquil mood that invites one to briefly disappear into a moment of letting go.

Vanishing, on its own, means "disappearing suddenly and completely", or, in mathematical terms, "becoming zero". Op de Beeck is fascinated by the moments when, as human beings, we briefly become nothing or nobody — when we let us go out of our linguistic, logical, and rational understanding of the world and slip into a state of self-loss and timelessness.