

Upsurge

It has snowed hard for several days and here and there some cracks are already beginning to appear in the blanket of snow covering the garden, out of which shoot slender green stems heralding those little flowers that will brighten up the coming spring. Clémence van Lunen's latest works, seen in her studio, share something with that upsurge. Today, entering the studio, the "little flowers" seem to leap into your vision, unmissable, their enormous size contrasting with a certain lightness, the presence of a breath of wind as in the fields of wild flowers that run alongside country roads. Self-evidently, the flowers that emerge from Clémence van Lunen's strong hands are not just flowers, in the same way that her dragons were not just dragons and her breaking waves not just breaking waves. The artist grasps the clay, tortures it, kneads and twists it in order to wrest from it something that is almost its opposite: an extreme lightness, a subtle presence into which our gaze can physically penetrate and then, deeply sensing that pure physical presence, escape towards other realms of poetry. Born in Flanders, Clémence bears within herself that very particular disposition which gives artists from that part of Belgium such a remarkable life-force and creative drive; far removed from the Cartesian and Catholic cast of mind that so often dogs France, so very different from Germany's romantic and sometimes wild nostalgia, it is a peculiarly Flemish trait that explodes through its laughter, its distance its refinement beneath an initially rustic appearance. Just as hand-to-hand combat with clay gives it that subtle fragility, so the apparent brusqueness of the application of paint, of glaze, wildly daubed, almost to the point of deliberate kitsch, on what is now sculpture here also achieves a distance that lifts the flowers into another dimension, a constituent of the work of this prolific artist who captures us and tips us into her own world. From the simple image of these flowers emanates an unmistakable feeling of melancholy, of sudden gaiety, of real sadness. Clémence van Lunen's whole journey, her entire quest now enable the artist to bring such works before us, the receptacles of an experience, of a vision nourished by the stuff of existence that take us beyond the seen into the experience of a moment of life generously shared.

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