

Mendes Wood DM is proud to present Kasper Bosmans's first solo exhibition in Paris, *Plums, Under Cover*.

To mark the occasion, the Brussels-based artist embarked on a fantasy-filled foray, taking as the starting point the discovery of a 16th-century belvedere, located in the Royal Garden of Prague Castle, and which later became the site of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II's self-isolation. According to legend, the Bohemian ruler's queer sexuality led to his consequent deposition from power and to a reclusive life dedicated to the study of astronomy. Such noncanonical (his)stories often inspire Bosmans to create new narratives that shed light on the past and help to project new possibilities for the future. Bosmans is drawn to stories that allude to queerness, an umbrella term that the artist feels most comfortable with to build a practice based on visual poetry.

In *Plums, Under Cover*, Bosmans imagines stories that trespass time: Lovers cruising in the cherry orchards of medieval towns, woodpeckers that double as time travelers, and cuckoo birds chirping about sexual awakening. The deliberate whimsy of the works on view speaks to the artist's desire to present stories that are perhaps more entertaining than historically accurate. The characters that inhabit this show are often constructed on the margins of what was considered important by tradition, yet it is their peripheral status that makes them vital contributions. The reoccurring animal motifs, such as bats, carp, or whales, in this way contribute to one of the show's leading narratives. Enduring power dynamics and numerous expectations that humans place on animals find ideal allegorical representation in Bosmans's works. Similarly, the artist plays with ideas of time and reality, offering surprising encounters that break down the fourth wall within the exhibition.

Across the two floors of the Place des Vosges gallery, visitors discover sculptures, drawings, paintings, and playful installations. Their thought-provoking titles borrowed from folklore, mythology, or oral traditions again echo the influence of precious anonymous knowledge in our everyday experiences. Finally, in the last room of the exhibition, Bosmans creates his own version of the belvedere: A vantagepoint for stories born out of liberation rather than isolation. In this forest-like room, described by the artist as a self-portrait – himself a man (*man*) of the woods (*bos*) by the Dutch-language definition – it is a magical gateway that cedes to the imagination.