

An Atlas, a book taking us back to childhood, leafing through pictures of travel, mysteries, and worlds unknown; operating as a large collage of images cut from photographs and documents, used to retrace history, boundaries, facts and beliefs.

*Atlas* takes its title from Jorge Luis Borges' 1986 book of the same name, in which, he compiled fragments and musings from his journal alongside material from poetry, literature, and images. Evoking cartography, Borges created a personal geography. It is precisely this idea of cartography, cherished by the writer, that gathers the three young Belgian artists presented at MOTINTERNATIONAL Brussels: Nel Aerts, Kasper Bosmans and Julien Meert. All three pay particular attention to line, shape and graphic outcome, sharing an interest in enduring, antique imagery and signs, alongside incisive engagement with popular culture.

Julien Meert's portraits explore precisely this boundary. Constructed from numerous layers of paint, the artist builds multiple surfaces, reflecting his search for perfect accordance within his images. Meert's paintings result in intense, anonymous faces, which stare down the viewer with intimidating gazes.

Nel Aerts similarly works with the idea of layers. However, while it is difficult to ascertain the laborious processes that produce Meert's smooth, confident canvases, Aerts presents us with vibrant etched patterns. Covering both wooden panels and curtains, she scratches, chisels, pits, and sews to create motifs including raindrops or tears in her paintings and textiles.

This decorative aspect of painting is also reflected in the work of Kasper Bosmans. With an intuitive and functional approach, he explores remnants of local traditions and mythological iconography, investigating the spaces between nature and fiction, art and craft.

Through Bosmans's singular observations of the world, the awkward presence of Aert's tragicomic characters, and Meert's fascination for inscrutable images of faces, a strange territory is built, in which the borders between refinement and everyday life are eroded.

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