

Sounds are fleeting. The perfection of an aural moment—the thud of swollen feet on pavement, a horn in the distance, a cry—is all too often over by the time it can be processed (“*hey, what was that?*”).

What is left is a feeling. Feelings too exist in the past tense: we’re never happy till we feel sad again, only truly know love once we’ve been heartbroken. Words never seem sufficient to describe emotions.

This ineffability, this ephemerality of feelings and sounds is central to Julien Meert’s new body of paintings, presented on the occasion of his first major solo exhibition in his native Brussels, at C L E A R I N G.

Across five canvases lone figures slink, lope, plod, and ultimately dance through non-spaces of tertiary colour, in voids unflattened only by airbrushed shadows and the occasional allusion to architecture.

As one proceeds through the exhibition, a cathartic movement through mental states unfolds. Each painting carries the aura of an accompanying soundtrack: unheard cries and footsteps that crescendo with the emergence of a joyful horn player (perhaps the long lost musician to Matisse’s *Dancers*) in a sudden burst of vibrant red, green, and blue.

Julien’s figures are delineated using charcoal strokes, a material usually associated with preparatory mark-making but which is here pushed to the fore. Like his longstanding musical side projects, Julien’s painting practice is closely aligned to a dedication to continuous sketching: quick doodles, moods that blurt forward and populate every corner of his studio.

Artists often mourn the loss of fluidity, of spontaneity that comes from the transposition of sketch to canvas, but here Julien’s strokes settle mysteriously between layers of paint so that the beginning and the end of his process is ultimately obscured. The brevity of his painterly decisions is thus drawn out, leaving space for the curious complexity of the emotions they depict to vibrate forward.

Julien Meert, born 1983, lives and works in Brussels. In 2015 he had a solo show, *Colossal Youth* at Balice Hertling, New York and participated in *Un-Scene III*, a group show at WIELS, Brussels.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*