

Rik Moens

Pretiose in speculo mentis cuiusque refulgentia

13 November - 20 December, 2025

Abstract, atmospheric horizons appear to detonate colourfully from within, giving way to precise geometric arrangements that interrogate spatial illusion itself, punctuated by bursts from comic books and stray fragments of text that keep pulling the image back into play. Rik Moens' oeuvre refuses to be pinned down to a single style or method. It is subversive. As a viewer, you circle around the image, reflect on it, want to crawl inside it, and then withdraw again. The works contradict each other and overlap, yet they also build a recognisable field of tension that is convincing as a whole. However, beyond the formal play, Moens' paintings possess a surplus that defies interpretation. In the spirit of Jean-François Lyotard, who described art as not merely a cultural object, but as containing “an excess, a rapture, a potential of associations that overflows all the determinations of its reception and production”(1), Moens allows his paintings to express precisely that residue.

His working method is extremely calculated and methodical, yet he allows the material itself to play a decisive role within that rigid framework. His panels are created layer by layer in a slow, 'alchemical' process, where each addition — resin, adhesive or thickener — influences the surface's transparency and physical density. While it may appear at first glance to be a purely controlled construction, it is in reality permeated by moments when the paint eludes the artist's intention, shrinking, wrinkling and drying in unpredictable ways. Such unforeseen reactions are not errors but arguments within the image. Moens imposes order on the material, but at the same time allows it to breathe and follow its own laws. The paint is not subservient to the concept; it remains autonomous. The painting thinks by doing.

Moens has come to see that, today, painting can no longer be naïve. In a culture where images have been devalued by mass reproduction, rapid production and casual consumption, and where ‘unique’ images with critical relevance are almost immediately subject to speculation and financial calculation, he seeks to redefine the role of the medium. In *Untitled (Label Painting)*, 2007, he works on shop-bought canvases of the kind used by hobbyists with the factory logo exposed, enlarging and repainting the apples from the corner-label onto their own packaging. Treating his signature as a logo, he converts hobby procedures and their attendant dilettantism into deliberate tactics, an irony that functions as method and opens space for meaning to emerge rather than be imposed. In that disclosure the surplus announces itself. What outruns intention persists as a charge within the image. Thus, Moens positions painting as a practice that reveals its own conditions, whereby the work simultaneously becomes image, object and reference.

In this exhibition, one of Moens' enigmatic kinetic sculptures is displayed in the kitchen. It slowly contracts and relaxes, pulls and pushes, and holds and releases, all with an erotically charged undertone that the artist himself calls “mental attractors”. The mechanism consists of an open spatial frame with a collar-shaped element that slowly slides back and forth and turns from black to white, so that what was inside becomes outside and what is visible temporarily disappears. His machines are reminiscent of his early site-specific installations and at the same time form a key to his painting practice. This same rhythmic reversal, just as in his painting, creates a tangible tension between order and chance, between revealing and concealing, and between surface and depth. The mechanical movement has no purpose in itself but it shows a continuous reversal of opposites, and how they are inextricably intertwined.

- Pieter-Jan De Paepe

(1) Jean-François Lyotard, “Critical Reflections”, *Artforum*, April 1991 (Vol. 29, No. 8): p. 93.

Rik Moens (b. 1969 in Ninove, lives and works in Wachtebeke) has had exhibitions at Museum M, Leuven; Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Sint Martens Latem; Annie Gentils Gallery, Antwerp; Gallery Bruges-La-Morte, Brussels; KIOSK, Ghent; Almine Rech, Brussels; and S.M.A.K., Ghent.

Main Floor

1. *Icarus*, 2025
Acrylic and vinyl on canvas
110 x 115 cm
2. *Untitled*, 2011
Acrylic on canvas
140 x 200 cm
3. *Untitled*, 2025
Acrylic and vinyl on canvas
200 x 170 cm
4. *Untitled*, 2014
Oil and acrylic on canvas
170 x 150 cm
5. *0-1 prototype (Mental Attractor)*, 2019
Fabric, metal hardware, perspex, motor
50 x 150 x 50 cm

