

Dürst Britt & Mayhew

Exhibition title: The clouds are charging colour

Artists: Willem Hussem, Paul Beumer, David Roth, Alejandra Venegas, Wieske Wester & Piet Ouborg

Venue: Dürst Britt & Mayhew, The Hague, The Netherlands

Date: 23 November 2025 – 14 February 2026

Photography: Gert Jan van Rooij / copyright the artist & Dürst Britt & Mayhew, The Hague

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100. Paul Beumer, Flight in formation, 2022, kimono linings on canvas, 130 × 80 cm

'The clouds are charging colour' is a group exhibition focusing on the interaction between Willem Hussem's (1900-1974) work and thoughts and those of other artists. When artists are in close contact and visit each other's studio there can be a direct personal dialogue. But what happens when Hussem's work is paired with artists from a different generation or geographical location?

The exhibition starts in the Frontspace with works by Hussem and his friend and colleague Piet Ouborg (1893-1956), with whom he shared an interest for Eastern calligraphy and philosophy and a fascination for non-Western art. Hussem and Ouborg met each other after they both settled in The Hague at the end of the 1930s after having spent long periods abroad; Hussem having lived in France (between 1919 and 1936) and Ouborg in Indonesia (between 1916 and 1938).

Indonesia had a profound influence on Ouborg's work and thoughts, specifically with regard to his investigation of the unconscious and to what lies behind the surface of external appearances. The animated world he inhabited and experienced there never lost its attraction and is at the root of his artistic practice; "Unconscious expressions could be called the basis for my work." Choosing between figuration or abstraction was therefore never an issue.

Hussem and Ouborg got along well, visited each other's studio and had a mutual influence on each other's practice. Both never concerned themselves with artistic movements or styles, although their work does align with prevailing trends during certain periods. Over time, Ouborg shifted from a figurative visual language, through magical realism, surrealism, and abstract images, to a lyrical, expressive style in the 1940s and 1950s. A quote from the French abstract artist Roger Bissière (1886-1964) illustrates well what both Hussem and Ouborg aimed to achieve: "I did not want to make paintings in the pompous sense of the word, but only colourful pictorial signs."

The disinterest in restricting oneself or adhering to a single style, is something that is quite familiar to artists of the current generation. Experimentation or the blurring of boundaries is much more common nowadays. In the main space of the gallery works by Hussem from different periods in his career are combined with the work of four of our represented artists. Paul Beumer (1982), David Roth (1985), Alejandra Venegas (1986) and Wieske Wester (1985) cannot say to have been directly influenced by Hussem, but - each in their own way - do seem to share his mindset.

Dutch artist Paul Beumer spends long periods of time in South East Asia and works with textiles from non-Western origin, for Austrian artist David Roth working outside in nature is an important part of his painterly practice, Mexican artist Alejandra Venegas works with various kinds of wood indigenous to her country, Dutch artist Wieske Wester's works straddle the line between figuration and abstraction. Their practices are not concerned with making sweeping statements, but with finding inspiration in the world they inhabit, an ongoing quest for simplicity and poetry. Juxtaposing their works next to Hussem makes for unexpected similarities and contrasts and proves Hussem's ongoing legacy. Hussem met kindred spirits during his lifetime, but in spirit he still does so today.

A table with archival material from Willem Hussem's estate has been compiled by Yannick Balk, who is also the author of the essay accompanying the exhibition which you can read [here](#).