

view

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**IRIS VAN DONGEN**  
**SPELLBOUND**  
30 April - 23 May, 2026  
Press Release

dépendance VIEW is pleased to present *Spellbound*,  
a solo exhibition by Iris van Dongen.

Iris van Dongen's work moves between historical painting traditions and contemporary subcultures. Her portraits of women show distant, absent gazes reminiscent of 19th-century Pre-Raphaelite painting, but are reframed through references to fashion photography, death metal aesthetics, and contemporary styling. Clothing and ornament function as a visual language through which gender roles and identity are tested and unsettled through choices of fabric, pose, and styling rather than abstract symbolism, often producing an uneasy stillness rather than open-ended disquiet. *Spellbound* theatrically incorporates a skull that echoes one of James Ensor's recurring motifs, where masks and vanitas symbolism blur the boundaries between satire, mortality, and disguise.

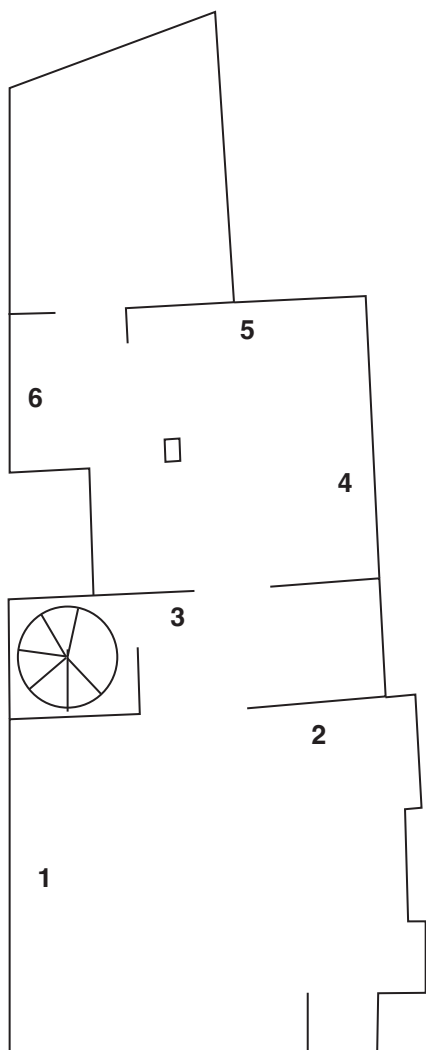
Her works use layered applications of pastel, oil, and charcoal to construct figures through visible revisions, smudges, and overlays, where bright pigments emerge sharply against dark, matte backgrounds. The compositions consistently arise from a tension between dense black abstraction and defined figuration, creating a dialogue between presence and obscurity.

The portraits are staged as still scenes with deliberate posing, where hands, hair, and fabric are carefully arranged and folded so that small details like stitching, strands, and cloth become the main carriers of meaning. Each figure can be read as a tarot card, a self-contained image charged with symbolic tension that resists resolution. This creates a suspended state in which the subject appears both revealed and withheld, producing a psychological atmosphere where the figure seems momentarily spellbound.

Her rural Danish settings are grounded in close observation: gardens, overgrown forests, and shifting weather conditions directly inform the works. Nature is not treated symbolically but as an active set of conditions that shapes composition and spatial logic. In *One Misty Moisty Morning*, the figure's dress spirals outward, dissolving into the surrounding landscape, while the presence of a cat introduces a reflective counterpart that implicates the viewer through its gaze.

Iris van Dongen (1975, NL) lives and works in Denmark. She has had solo exhibitions at Museum van Loon, Amsterdam; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; and Stigter van Doesburg, Amsterdam. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Sadie Coles HQ, London; Kunstmuseum, The Hague; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; Frac Franche-Comté, Besançon; Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; the Tirana Biennial and the Athens Biennale. In 2014, she created an official portrait of King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands.

## Floorplan



- 1 *Je Transformais***  
2012  
Soft pastel, pressed charcoal,  
and acrylic on paper (unframed)  
150 x 84 cm  
59 x 33 1/8 in
- 2 *Teunisbloem***  
2023  
Soft pastel, pressed charcoal,  
and acrylic on paper, mounted on wood  
102 x 76 cm  
40 1/8 x 29 7/8 in
- 3 *In the Garden***  
2026  
Soft pastel, pressed charcoal,  
and acrylic on paper (unframed)  
60.5 x 47.5 cm  
23 7/8 x 18 3/4 in
- 4 *Spellbound***  
2026  
Soft pastel, pressed charcoal,  
and acrylic on paper (unframed)  
61 x 48 cm  
24 x 18 7/8 in
- 5 *One misty moisty morning***  
2026  
Soft pastel, pressed charcoal,  
and acrylic on paper (unframed)  
104 x 74 cm  
41 x 29 1/8 in
- 6 *August***  
2025  
Soft pastel, pressed charcoal,  
and acrylic on paper (unframed)  
81 x 60 cm  
31 7/8 x 23 5/8 in