

Carole Vanderlinden

Keep a promise

30 May – 11 Octobre 2026

S.M.A.K., Ghent



From 30 May to 11 October 2026, the Belgian artist Carole Vanderlinden presents a selection of paintings and works on paper from the past five years in her first museum solo exhibition at S.M.A.K.

Carole Vanderlinden's paintings and works on paper immediately capture the imagination. Their power lies in how diversity is freely approached and foregrounded. Even as a child, Vanderlinden discovered that art could be a way to explore the world - to immerse herself in it by engaging with diverse cultures, techniques, and forms of expression across disciplines. Faced with the complexity of life, painting and drawing became a means to observe and gather a multitude of visual details, enabling her to participate more fully in her surroundings.

Her work is simple and compact yet highly layered at the same time. In the creative process, the artist works without a preconceived plan. Depending on the materials, colour and rhythm, she allows compositions to develop gradually on paper or canvas. In this process, she draws on images from her personal memories, details from her research notebooks, and references to art history, literature, music and philosophy. In unexpected yet deliberate ways, she creates new connections and patterns that resist a single, unambiguous meaning.

For Vanderlinden, each painting and drawing is a meeting place with her audience. Drawing on their own experiences, the visitors are offered the freedom to interpret what they see. In this way, they help to complete the work.

Carole Vanderlinden's oeuvre does not follow the classic narrative of artistic development, in which an artist's work is often read chronologically, as a journey culminating in a 'final' vision or in clearly defined series. Over the years, Vanderlinden's same energetic, improvisational visual language persists, while motifs, themes and brushstrokes recur, such as the house, the mask and the zigzag stripe. She creates change by continually playing, varying and experimenting within this framework.



Publication

In May 2026, the first comprehensive monograph on the work of the artist will be published. The publication brings together an extensive selection of works from the past twenty-five years and features contributions by writer Jean-Philippe Toussaint, musician Joëlle Léandre, curators Ory Dessau and Ann Hoste, and art critic Hans den Hartog Jager. The book is published by Zolo Press and was produced with the support of S.M.A.K. and Karma, New York.

About the artist

Carole Vanderlinden's (b. 1973, Brussels) artistic practice, which she has been developing since the mid-1990s, is primarily focused on painting but also encompasses drawing, watercolour, collage and small objects. Vanderlinden has exhibited in various Belgian cultural institutions. Recent exhibitions in 2024 and 2025 include presentations in New York, Los Angeles, London, and Paris. Her work is included in the collections of S.M.A.K., M HKA, the National Bank of Belgium, and the Flemish Community collection. Carole Vanderlinden has a keen interest in artists' books, and several publications have been dedicated to her oeuvre.

Curator: Ann Hoste

The exhibition has been made possible with the support of:

Karma

Important dates:

Press visit: Thursday 28 May 2026, 11am

Public opening: Friday 29 May 2026, 7pm

Artist talk and book launch: Sunday 14 June 2026, 2pm

Images :

Carole Vanderlinden, *The Jury*, 2025, oil on canvas, 44,5 x 35 cm. Photo: HV-studio

Carole Vanderlinden, *Keep a promise*, 2023. Oil and collage on canvas, 208,4 x 165 x 2,9 cm. Photo: HV-studio

Carole Vanderlinden, *Face to face*, 2025, oil on canvas, 30 x 39,5 cm. Photo: HV-studio

Contact

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About S.M.A.K.

S.M.A.K. shows art from its own collection in dialogue with works of contemporary artists from all corners of the world. By means of contemporary art, S.M.A.K. seeks and gives meaning to this complex and fragmented world. In doing so, the museum makes every effort to be accessible and inclusive, because art is for everyone.

www.smak.be

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