

Press Release

Raoul De Keyser
March 7, 1990

March 5 – April 16, 2022
Opening: Saturday, March 5, 5–8pm

Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm

On March 7, 1990, Raoul De Keyser made twelve works on paper. They were all executed on the same type of paper in black, white and shades of grey, making use of the possibilities of pencil, ink, and gesso. Many exhibit the geometric forms that marked De Keyser's work at that time, others seem to indulge in the invigorating action of scribbling, still others allow ink to pool and bleed, letting intention and inadvertency play out in the mark making. Seen together, this suite forms an inventory of sorts of De Keyser's motifs on canvas at that time, referring—in some instances—to specific paintings and—in others—to themes and compositions that the artist had explored and would continue to in the years to come. De Keyser often worked on paper—speaking about this practice as a liberating and generative one. And while it was not unusual for the artist to make black and white versions on paper after works that were completed on canvas, creating them in such a formally concise series, and further bracketing them by the insistence on the day they were created, is singular in Raoul De Keyser's oeuvre.

In the exhibition, De Keyser's selective overview of his own work is accompanied by twelve paintings on canvas. Some of these paintings have a clear relationship to a corresponding work on paper. Others show the unexpected ways in which formal similarities and disparities occurred during this period of De Keyser's career. Seen together, these interrelated works offer insight into the elliptical ways in which De Keyser developed his oeuvre. In painting, this often meant repainting a composition or painting over earlier works, partially erasing them. He worked with keen understanding of his previous output, seeing it as both malleable and instructive—allowing this constant, introspective assessment and re-assessment of his artistic vision to also be the genesis of changes in his painterly method.

The series, *March 7, 1990* is not only about looking back; it is a mnemonic device, but it also looks ahead. Remarkably, the motifs in two drawings would only later appear on canvases. The first, *Oost*, 1992, is an all-over based on the branches of a monkey puzzle tree, which appeared in his work in the years prior but never as such an abstracted field. The second, *Noord*, 1992, is a densely worked, dark canvas, which has a white line extending from the bottom at a steep angle into the composition. On paper, the impasto brushwork is done in pencil, and the white line in thick gesso.

Raoul De Keyser's work sharpens our senses, our sensibilities towards shapes, colors, textures and size. His careful self-examination manifests in his oeuvre, calling on his viewers to look—just as he did—afresh at each of his works. In doing so, we can learn to mistrust our preconceptions. This oeuvre is not linear; De Keyser's paintings are rhizomatically connected. He picks up previous elements in unexpected ways, developing them further, creating his own context for his paintings, making them relatively immune to the changing trends and demands of their respective times. But this cosmos is not a strict, closed world, rather an open, playful architecture in which life has left its imprint in surprising and unpretentious ways.