

David Zwirner
525 West 19th Street
New York, NY 10011
tel (212) 727 2070 fax (212) 727 2072
information@davidzwirner.com
www.davidzwirner.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 8, 2006

EXHIBITION: Michaël Borremans *Horse Hunting*

DATES: March 7 – April 1, 2006

RECEPTION: Tuesday, March 7, 2006, 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Opening on March 7, 2006, David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Belgian artist Michaël Borremans. This will be Borremans' second solo exhibition at the gallery. In 2005, he had a one-person exhibition of drawings and paintings at S.M.A.K. in Ghent, Belgium (the painting exhibition then traveled to Parasol Unit in London, England and the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin, Ireland; the drawing exhibition traveled to the Cleveland Museum of Art in Cleveland, OH). In 2004 he was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bremerhaven in Germany, as well as the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Switzerland. His work will be included in the upcoming *4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art*, Berlin, Germany (March 25-May 28, 2006), and a solo exhibition will be held at *La Maison Rouge* in Paris, France (June 8-September 24, 2006). His work has been included in numerous prestigious group exhibitions in the United States and abroad.

The exhibition will include a group of new canvases exploring the depiction of mental states through the careful release and withholding of visual and conceptual clues. With a traditional style akin to Baroque and Rococo portraiture and pastoral scenes, Borremans' paintings reside in an uncomfortable place – one that is best understood through introspection rather than imposed rationale. Haunting yet familiar enough to evoke buried memories, Borremans' images are peaceful upon first encounter, yet they intensify and become eerily unsettling after prolonged viewing.

The title *Horse Hunting* is a metaphor for the attempt to achieve something that is just short of attainable; in this case referring to an artist's creative process as well as that of human nature as a whole. This notion that the desired cannot be realized (or cannot be completely processed from either a physical or spiritual point of view) leaves Borremans' paintings in a transformative and mystified state. Adding to their psychological intensity, the works' lustrous surface of visible brushstrokes, bringing to mind Manet or perhaps Velasquez, are rendered in palettes of diffused, shadowy browns, oranges and grays.

In this exhibition, the paintings fall loosely into three points of view. The "Portraits" feature young male subjects with pensive expressions, cropped in a non-conventional manner to reveal just the head, neck and shoulders, as in passport photographs. These are quasi-anonymous individuals; they are not named or further defined, hence they become versatile forms able to contain a multitude of references, much like political portraits in which the sitter's ideology is embedded (one thinks of Mao Tse-Tung as a historical example). In *Portrait* (2005), the sitter's eyes, heavy-lidded under an equally heavy brow, seem to impart both arrogance and pity.

The "Bodies" suggest a parallel to Goya's *The Third of May* (1808) and Manet's *The Execution of Maximilian* (1867-68). In Borremans' *Three Men Standing* (2005), two of the three men, who stand in a line against a wall, are cropped at the canvas' left and right edges. A sense of violence – both conceptual and formal – imbue the composition with the feeling of impending terror. In other paintings, subjects lie on the floors of shadowed interiors with eyes closed; we are left to wonder if they are dead or merely asleep.

In other, more allegorical works, Borremans eschews direct associations in favor of an ambiguous absurdity. In *The Hare* (2005), two young boys, one with hands politely behind his back and the other holding an outstretched hare, gaze down at the animal (which Borremans has lit romantically on its underside) without recognizable intention. In *The Appearance* (2005), three men stand around a table, hands outstretched and palms up as if in séance, suggesting the otherworldly or vaguely supernatural. It is in these and other small details – the unnoticed eccentricities of human expression – that Borremans' fleshes out his unusual psychological agenda.