



## PRESS RELEASE

### EXHIBITION DIRK EELEN - INTO THE GATHERING 5 SEPTEMBER – 30 OCTOBER 2021

Husk Gallery is pleased to present the second solo show with Dirk Eelen in its gallery space. The exhibition *Into the Gathering* features a new painting series about togetherness, reflecting on physical contact and social distance, on individual behavior and group dynamics.

Dirk Eelen's recent oil paintings draw thematically and stylistically upon his earlier series. The Belgian artist started with *'Into the Gathering'* in 2020 just before the outbreak of the pandemic. For this specific project Dirk Eelen invited about 60 people dressed in white, in a dark space, to create images in a special realm and to depict images in a spatial and temporal vacuum. By staging and filming his own scenes with 'volunteering actors', as he did before to create former series, Dirk Eelen creates his own narrative images. In line with oil paintings of 17th-century old Spanish masters, Dirk Eelen is a contemporary painter intrigued by images, continuously in search of special framings and modelling his figurative subjects through light on a dark background.

The Belgian artist uses a contemporary approach to history painting. Dirk Eelen doesn't refer to historical themes, mythology or biblical subjects in the classic sense, his themes rather mirror the human condition. He is beyond any doubt a real observer of contemporary life by using photographs and movies, but also by inviting people to perform and direct his own images. In the past years Dirk Eelen has been working in series inspired by specific topics. The artist searches and depicts themes that are relevant in our current western society. Observations on the human figure without a moralizing position, such as solitude versus brotherhood and new rituals, are recurring themes in his artworks. Dirk Eelen presents a contemporary perspective to painting by the representation of his own perception of personal and collective images with an extraordinary intimacy.

In an age of global communication, Dirk Eelen uses figurative painting to examine contemporary narratives, seeking to rediscover and reinvestigate the human condition. The artist's perspective visualizes individualized senses to deeper-level social behavior or codes of conduct. As in his series *I see a Darkness* (2015) and *Rituals* (2018) he presents a contemporary view of a society dominated by the digital media but also a society with a huge need for personal meaning and individual self-reflection. It goes beyond saying that communications available through our smartphones and computers control the interpersonal communication as we can see when we look at a work like the emblematic and awarded *I see a Darkness* shown in the Belgian Museum M in Louvain. In *Rituals* and *Into the Gathering* he clearly raises the question of how people in everyday life are searching to intensify their personal contacts and to feel social connectedness.

**Dirk Eelen** is an artist pur-sang with a broad oeuvre of paintings. The Belgian painter explores specific themes and uses films and/or photographs for his paintings. He investigates their narrativity via a thorough selection of stills or photographs, which he presents in series. His iconography is mainly figurative in a representative meaning. The smooth surface of his oil paintings relates to 17<sup>th</sup> century Tenebrist style with dark backgrounds. Dirk Eelen's paintings are characterised by a subdued colour pallet and modelling light, which provides the subject with a soft touch.

#### *Short artist's CV*

*Dirk Eelen (°1974, Louvain) is a Belgian artist who lives and works in Louvain. After graduating in Archaeology at KU Leuven University, he obtained a master's degree of Visual Art at Sint-Lukas Brussels. Since 2004 he is a full-time painter. In 2019 Dirk Eelen has been awarded with the first prize of the fifth Open M contest, organized by Museum M in Louvain. Solo exhibitions include Fair Encounters (2019) in Husk Gallery, Brussels, Shallow Waters (2019) and Nuit debout (2018) in Gallery 15/17, Antwerp, Belgium; Il faut cultiver notre jardin in Chateau de Voltaire, Ferney-Voltaire, Switzerland (2016) and Syria - as seen on YouTube in the Egg, Brussels, Belgium (2013). He has also taken part in several group exhibitions in Belgium and abroad*

**Opening** Sunday 5 September 2021 from 2 to 7 pm

**Opening hours** during exhibitions > Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 1 to 6 pm

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