

# VAN HERCK EYKELBERG

**PRESS BRAFA 2025**

Van Herck - Eykelberg Gallery - Stand 122 - [contact@van-herck.com](mailto:contact@van-herck.com)



Jean Brusselmans - Les compagnons de l'art (1950) - Gouache on paper - 74 x 70 cm.  
Presented at BRAFA 2025.

*With clockwise starting left under: Constant Permeke, Oscar Jespers, Gustave De Smet, Henri Puvrez, Luc Haesaerts, Paul Haesaerts, Edgard Tytgat, Hippolyte Daeye, War Van Overstraeten, and in the middle below Jean Brusselmans himself.*

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At BRAFA 2025 Van Herck - Eykelberg Gallery will dedicate more than half of its booth to artists of the artists association «Les Compagnons de l'art». The important work with the same title by Jean Brusselmans will be the central piece.

At present time oddly enough little research has been done about «Les Compagnons de l'art». It was founded in 1937 by the brothers Paul en Luc Haesaerts who organized a first exhibition in the summer of 1938 in the Centre for Fine Arts (Palais des Beaux-Arts) in Brussels. This 'exhibition of Belgian contemporary art' presented 32 artists, going from Rik Wouters to René Magritte, from Léon Spilliaert to James Ensor: mildly put, a very diverse company.

The introduction accompanying the exhibition makes, however, immediately clear that the ambition is - in the footsteps of «Les XX», «La Libre Esthétique», or «Sélection» - to promote and defend contemporary art, indifferent of artistic styles or movements and in all artistic liberty:

*Les "Compagnons de l'Art" continuent une tradition. Celle de la libre création artistique. L'art, selon eux, n'est pas une formule apprise ou imposée à laquelle il s'agit de rester fidèle. L'art est invention, joie, vigueur, équilibre, présence d'esprit, perception aiguë de la vie et de ses spectacles.*

When we read these first lines of the introduction we can think of the presentation Jean Brusselmans made in his gouache and eponymous works. We find indeed a joyous gang, celebrating life and the balance that is mentioned in the introduction is taken literally by some artists (War Van Overstraeten in handstand). We can also think of the Antwerp chamber of rethoric 'De Violiere' that was founded in the 15th century and their catch phrase 'Wt lonsten versaemt', which means as much as to convene in affection or more freely: to come together to have fun.



Hendrik van Balen I  
Jan Brueghel I  
Frans Francken II  
Sebastiaan Vrancx

Blazon of the Chambers of rethoric 'De Violiere' (1618) with on the frame "Wt lonsten versaemt"  
Oil on panel  
75 x 75 cm

Collection Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp. Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen.



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Following the exhibition in the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels in 1938 other exhibitions of «Les Compagnons de l'Art» took place at amongst others Galerie Giroux and Galerie Dietrich in Brussels and the Salon des Contemporains in Antwerp. This bustling start and the new impetus to the Belgian art scene was, however, halted with the outbreak of WWII.

Right after the end of the war «Les Compagnons de l'art» organized at the end of 1945 a homage exhibition to Gust. De Smet, Frits Van den Berghe, Fernand Schirren and Hippolyte Daeye, and at the end of 1947 one dedicated to Léon Spilliaert but after that it remains remarkably quiet. It is unclear when exactly «Les Compagnons de l'art» demise but it seems to be in the period when Jean Brusselmans paints this large gouache.

The work is more than a caricatural presentation of «Les Compagnons de l'art», Brusselmans tells in one image the story of artistic connection and friendship. It is a homage to the work of the brothers Haesaerts, for what they meant to Jean Brusselmans but as well to the Belgian art scene at the time and at another level for artists and people that come together in affection for each other and for the arts.



Rik Wouters - Self portrait (1908) - Charcoal on paper - 75 x 57 cm.  
Presented at BRAFA 2025.



Léon Spilliaert - The dream (1916) - Pencil, Indian ink, pen, aquarelle on paper - 25x25 cm  
Presented at BRAFA 2025.

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James Ensor - Shells, Rumps and Molluscs(1937) -Oil  
on canvas - 60x50 cm.  
Presented at BRAFA 2025.



René Magritte - The Intelligence (1946) - India ink op  
paper - 22,1 x 19 cm.  
Presented at BRAFA 2025.