



andriessse
 **eyck**
galerie

exhibition catalogue

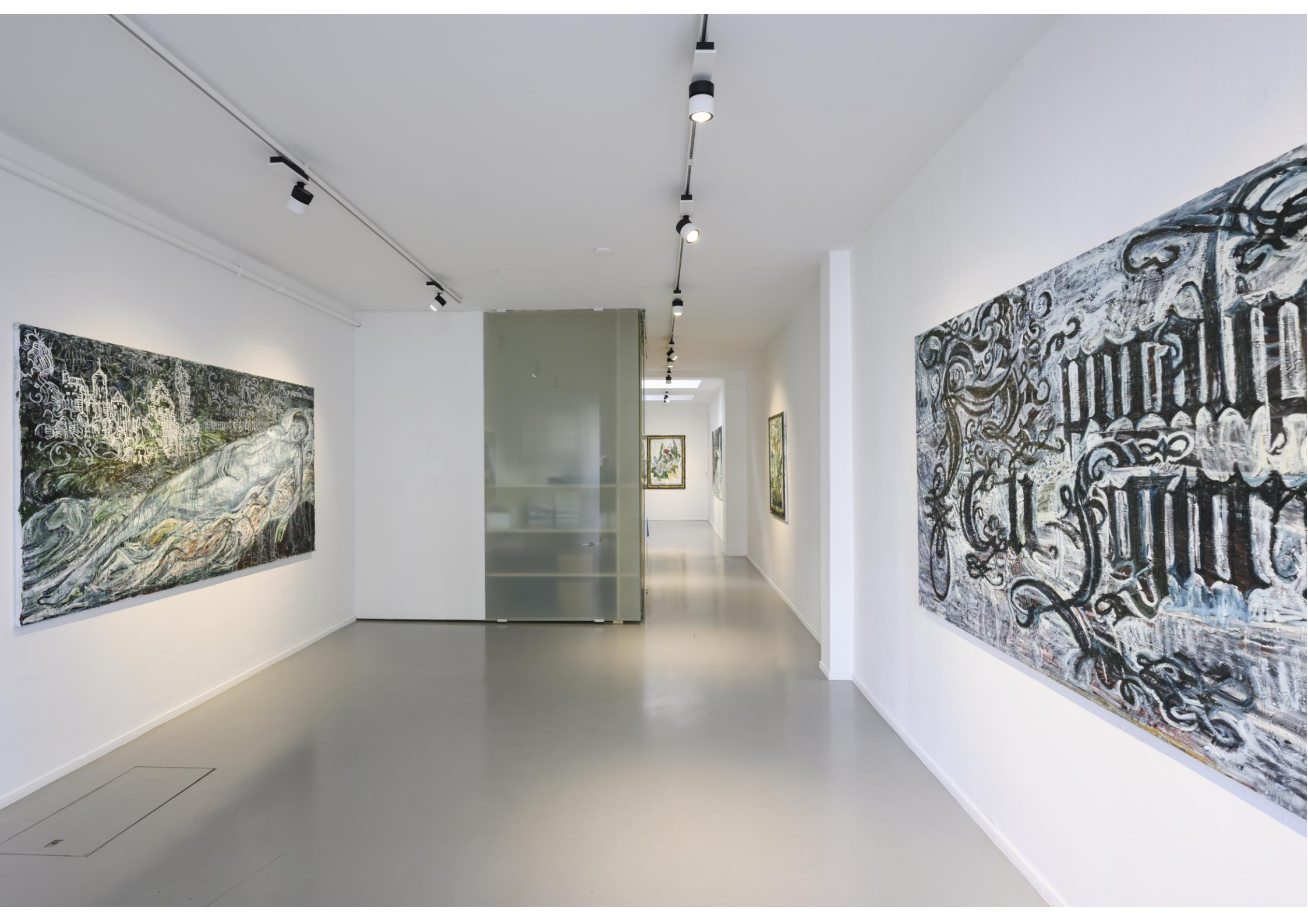
LES FLEURS DU MAL

25 March — 13 May 2023



In the end, a painting must comprise layers of accumulated images, added together to create a new image ... It is a process of redigesting material and ideas.

– Natasja Kensmil





andriesse ~ eyck gallery is proud to present the solo exhibition *Les Fleurs du Mal* with new paintings by Natasja Kensmil.

Art historical images and iconographic traditions are an important frame of reference in Natasja Kensmil's work. For Kensmil, painting is a way of critically examining the past and historiography. Fascinated by the hidden and enigmatic, while painting she unravels the myths and clichés surrounding themes such as power, oppression, war and loss that are embedded in these historical images. Her paintings add a critical new layer to our collective memory, challenging deeply ingrained images and steering them in a new direction. The same holds true for her new series of paintings *Les Fleur du Mal*.

The central motif in the *Les Fleurs du Mal* series is the classic figure of the reclining nude. A well-known variation on this theme, and a favourite subject in 19th-century Western painting, is the odalisque, the seductively enticing oriental slave girl reclining on a divan. In 1814, Ingres painted his *La Grande Odalisque*, as did Manet and Matisse some years later. In the painter's studio, the models' naked bodies were moulded to conform to the male ideal of beauty. The stereotyped and sexualised image of the odalisque was a product not only of the eroticising male gaze, but also of the exoticising western gaze.

With *Odalisk*, *Muse*, and *Myth*, the three large paintings at the heart of the exhibition, Kensmil pays tribute to the age-old tradition of the female nude. However, Kensmil's naked females are not eroticised, nor do they embody a male ideal of beauty; her bodies appear frigid, cold, stiff and dead. The paintings are accompanied by still lifes with flowers, the classic 17th-century Vanitas symbol that served to remind viewers of their mortality and impermanence. The combination of reclining nude and flower opens up a spectrum of possible interpretations surrounding the status of the female body today. But, the artist argues, the flowers in the Vanitas paintings were often exotic specimens from the colonies, symbols of status and wealth, and thus also refer to the exploitation and abuses of the colonial history of the Netherlands.

The title of the exhibition *Les Fleurs du Mal* is taken from the seminal book of poetry by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) in which the French poet reflects on the beauty of evil and other dualities that define man and the world around him. This dualism and the ambivalence of our view of (art) history are also recurring themes in Kensmil's exhibition - and in her artistic practice as a whole.



Natasja Kensmil
***Sodom (Les Fleurs du Mal)*, 2023**
oil paint on canvas
120 x 100 cm



Natasja Kensmil
***Muse (Les Fleurs du Mal)*, 2023**
oil paint on canvas
140 x 250 cm



W. L. Miller
h. 1815
in h. 1815
in h. 1815

Postrema Veron



Natasja Kensmil and the dark sides of (art)history
by Flor Linckens in Gallery Viewer

“...director Lisa Boerstra followed the artist for four years for the (Dutch) documentary *Close Up: Natasja Kensmil - You want it darker*. Viewers get a glimpse into her studio, which is filled with hundreds of newspaper clippings, art books and (occasionally explicit) photos of historical and contemporary rulers and events. These images help her shape her thoughts about the world, which she sometimes considers quite scary, chaotic and unpredictable — an atmosphere that is definitely reflected in her work. At the end of a working day, Kensmil turns the painting she is working on to its back, so that she is not directly confronted with it the next day. It is precisely this review process that she considers an essential part of the overall process, which she wants to deal with in a conscious way.

In the exhibition at andriesse eyck gallery, Kensmil shows a series of new works. In *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Kensmil plays with the infamous 'reclining nude' and in particular the so-called 'odalisque', which can be seen in the work of Ingres, Manet and Matisse, among others. The depicted woman in these paintings is an enslaved woman from an Eastern culture. By playing with this visual language — which also conceals complicated power relations — Kensmil not only considers the eroticizing male gaze, but also the exoticizing western gaze. As expected, her nudes are anything but conforming to the male and heteronormative ideal of female beauty. The title of the series refers to Charles Baudelaire's influential collection of poems from the nineteenth century, in which he, among other things, elaborates on the beauty of evil. In addition to paintings from this series, the gallery also shows a series of flower still lifes by Kensmil, which refer to the classic Vanitas. She highlights an interesting aspect: the flowers from the original 17th-century paintings often originated in the colonies and are therefore a symbol of both status and exploitation.”

Full article: <https://galleryviewer.com/en/article>





Natasja Kensmil
L'ideal (Les Fleurs du Mal), 2022
oil paint on canvas
140 x 260 cm



Natasja Kensmil
Sisina (Les Fleurs du Mal), 2022
oil paint on canvas
120 x 100 cm





In haar solotentoonstelling geeft Natasja Kensmil haar blik op de traditie van het vrouwelijk naakt
by Bart Dirks in de Volkskrant

“Kijkers vinden de schilderijen van Natasja Kensmil vaak gruwelijk, wreed, op het morbide af. Maar de jury van de prestigieuze Johannes Vermeerprijs noemde haar werk in 2021 ‘helend, opbouwend en kritisch tegelijkertijd’. Macht en onmacht, het aardse en het spirituele, opoffering en geweld zijn nooit ver weg.

In haar solotentoonstelling *Les fleurs du Mal* in de Amsterdamse galerie Andriess-Eyck toont Kensmil nieuw werk. Met *Odalisk*, *Muze* en *Mythe*, drie grote schilderijen, brengt ze een ode aan de eeuwenoude traditie van het vrouwelijk naakt. Maar de lichamen ogen kil, koud, stijf en doods...”

Full article: <https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur>



Natasja Kensmil
Myth (Les Fleurs du Mal), 2022
oil paint on canvas
140 x 250 cm



Natasja Kensmil
Sylvide (Les Fleurs du Mal), 2023
oil paint on canvas
140 x 100 cm











Begraven en opgraven

Interview with Cornel Bierens in kM

CB: Bij jou is de gelaagdheid vaak heel opzichtig. Dan lijkt een schilderij al af en teken je toch nog met een witte kwast een soort kooi over de figuren heen bijvoorbeeld.

NK: Daarmee bevorder ik dat het oog blijft bewegen en niet te lang bij een punt blijft hangen. Het oog moet als het ware een reis kunnen doormaken, over het doek heen maar ook in de verhaallijn. Als ik zo'n tekening over de dikke lagen aanbreng is het of je door een web kijkt, dat verandert het verhaal. Er zijn ook lagen die in elkaar opgaan maar als ze op een zichtbare manier van elkaar losstaan brengen ze ieder een eigen verhaal mee dat op zichzelf staat. De relatie tussen die verhalen roept dan de noodzakelijke beweging op.

Full interview: <https://kunstenaarsmateriaal.nl/artikelen>



Natasja Kensmil
***Salo (Les Fleurs du Mal)*, 2023**
oil paint on canvas
120 x 100 cm



Natasja Kensmil
***Odalisque (Les Fleurs du Mal)*, 2022**
oil paint on canvas
140 x 250 cm



andriessse
 eyck
galerie

Leliegracht 47
1016 GT Amsterdam
www.andriessse-eyck.com

T +31 (0)20 623 6237
info@andriessse-eyck.com