

UPSTREAM
GALLERY

RONALD OPHUIS

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SHOULD ALL
WOUNDS
BE
HEALED?





Should All Wounds Be Healed?

In the exhibition *Should All Wounds Be Healed?* Ronald Ophuis takes several recent histories as his subject: the concentration camps in World War II, the Fall of Srebrenica and, more recently, the situation of political prisoners in Egypt. Ophuis chooses to paint these traumatic images, often in large format, and makes it impossible to look away. "Time heals all wounds," says the proverb. But according to Ophuis, it is necessary and urgent to ensure that this does not always happen: "If painful histories do not hurt people who have not been a direct witness, then society is evolving towards a false historical sense and guilt-free morality. It is child's play to find traitors and corrupt consciences. We should not prevent people from becoming victims, but prevent people from becoming executioners."

Ophuis bases his works on historical, documentary and journalistic material, on the stories of relatives and survivors, and conversations with witnesses. His work is about how we want events to be remembered and what images may be part of our collective consciousness. There is always a tension between attraction and repulsion in the work: the paintings contain a beauty but at the same time cause a shudder. With his characteristic paint treatment and meticulous compositions, Ophuis makes strategic use of what the possibilities of painting offer him. But the subjects he chooses are often confrontational, expecting the viewer to take a position on what is depicted. He turns viewers into an emotionally involved witness, challenging them to relate to the content of the work.



Teatro la Tregua. Poland July 1945, 2014
Oil on canvas
340 x 525 cm



In his novel, *La Tregua – The Truce*, Primo Levi, as a survivor of Auschwitz, describes his turbulent return to Italy upon the liberation of the concentration camp by the Russian army in January 1945.

Levi talks of the difficulties he and other survivors had come across when trying to return to their hometowns. Their journeys being heavily affected by the then still on-going war as well as the devastated state Poland was in.

During their travels in search of shelter and food through war-torn Europe, Levi and other survivors organized occasional theatre and dance performances as a means of dealing with their trauma, healing and feeding the soul.

In his work, Ronald Ophuis depicts an imagined still from such performances. We see a love scene in which a young lady is trying

to climb out of her trauma and begin to open up and learn how to trust humankind once more. She is seen unsteadily standing on the thin steps of a ladder, holding early bloom Spring flowers in her hand. Two young men stand below her, unable to take the same action, their trust in humanity has been lost.

Upon the liberation of Auschwitz, all prisoners, including Levi, were given civilian clothes to change into. Levi, however, made sure to also take his uniform with him back to Turin and had placed it on the desk at which he wrote his novels. All of the depicted actors are seen wearing concentration camp uniforms as a tribute to Primo Levi.



Writer V.S., 2019
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Prison. Egypt 2015, 2016-2018
Oil on canvas
200 x 340 cm



Abdul Fatah al-Sisi has been President of Egypt since 2013. According to Human Rights Watch, Egypt now has 60,000 political prisoners. On the painting "Prison. Egypt 2015" Ophuis shows the degrading conditions of a political prisoner in Egypt. The prisoner is tied up in an area where standing upright is impossible. The situation in Egypt has not changed in the past five years.







Civilian, 2019
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Civillian, 2019-2020
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Refugee A.E., 2019
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Writer A.O., 2019
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



In the summer of 1995, more than 8,000 men were murdered in and around Srebrenica. Ethnic cleansing was carried out by Bosnian Serb militias on the Muslim refugees, who felt safe in Srebrenica under UN protection. The painting "The widows of Srebrenica. Bosnia and Herzegovina 2005" shows three widows on a winter day in front of their shattered houses in Bosnia. The painting is a depicting of a community from which the men have disappeared.





Widows of Srebrenica. Bosnia and Herzegovina 2005, 2020
Oil on canvas
340 x 525 cm



Civilian, 2019
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Iraq, 2003, 2018
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



In a recent line of work by Ophuis, the painter takes the alienation to nature as the subject. The painter more often makes a connection with themes that in the past century were usually reserved for the domain of folk art. The young calf seen here is mythical. A vanishing archetype.

Calf, 2019
Oil on canvas
250 x 200 cm







Wild Flowers, 2020
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Flowers, 2018
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Wild Flowers, 2020
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Flowers, 2018
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Calf, 2020
Oil on paper
29.5 x 41.5 cm



Civilian, 2019
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm





Iraq, 2003, 2018
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Owl, 2016
Oil on canvas
85 x 120 cm



Cowshed, 2016-2020
Oil on canvas
50 x 75 cm

Ronald Ophuis (1968) lives and works in Amsterdam. He studied at the Aki Academy of Fine Arts in Enschede and the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. He won various awards including the Jeanne Oosting Prijs (2004), the Charlotte Köhler Prijs (1998) and the Kunstprijs Provincie Overijssel (1997). He had solo exhibitions in the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, Jan Cunen Museum Oss and in a variety of international galleries. His work was also shown in a large variety of group exhibitions in The Netherlands and abroad, including the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Museum Arnhem, Museum De Paviljoens Almere, Fondation Francès Senlis, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Kunstraum Innsbruck, Kunsthal Rotterdam and Stedelijk Museum Zwolle. His work is included in leading collections of private, corporate and museum collections such as the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Centraal Museum Utrecht and Museum De Fundatie Zwolle.

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