

SAMUEL VANHOEGAERDEN GALLERY

press release



26 JAN – 2 FEB 2025

70 BRAFA ART FAIR

BRUSSELS EXPO

GUEST OF HONOUR: JOANA VASCONCELOS

www.brafa.art

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PRIVATE BANK

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La Gamme d'Amour (Flirt of Puppets)

At Brafa 2025, Samuel Vanhoegaerden will present twelve drawings of James Ensor's ballet composition "La Gamme d'Amour (Flirt of Puppets)", offering a fitting conclusion to the Year of Ensor.

Although "La Gamme d'Amour" is less well known to the general public, it nonetheless forms a fascinating and significant part of James Ensor's oeuvre. To mark the occasion, a detailed monograph has been published in collaboration with Ensor expert Xavier Tricot. "La Gamme d'Amour" reveals Ensor's little-known interest in music and ballet to many and sheds new light on the versatility of his artistic curiosity.

James Ensor (1860 - 1949) is primarily known to the general public as the painter of masks and skeletons, but he was much more than that. In addition to his talent as a painter and skilled writer, Ensor was also a passionate music lover and a talented composer.

At Brafa 2025, twelve drawings of "La Gamme d'Amour" will be exhibited. These colored pencil drawings were created between 1910 and 1913. The puppet ballet, with its numerous colorful figures, is considered a bridge between Ensor's early and late work.

Ensor's ballet composition was performed on various occasions during his lifetime, both in his hometown of Ostend and in Brussels, Antwerp, and even abroad. Ensor was a pioneer of his time, as he did not limit his artistry to painting and drawing but also expanded it into other forms of artistic expression, such as music and ballet compositions. This versatility as an artist becomes strikingly evident.

The last ballet performance during the painter's lifetime took place on September 19, 1945. In a review by *Le Carillon* (a magazine that published reviews and articles about the art world), Ensor's talent was praised:

"Regarding the interpretation, this (ballet performance) was brilliant because the dancers understood their task: namely, to illustrate Ensor's music and evoke his world for us... Frankly, this evening was a revelation for us. James Ensor is not only an extraordinary painter but also a talented composer."

In his monograph on Ensor, art historian Paul Haesaerts (1901–1974) wrote in 1957:

"He [Ensor] had never studied music, but even in this field, he was one of those who knew without learning; music lived within him. Sensitive as he was to analogies between sensations and correspondences between the arts, we must, as he himself said, admit that he often painted like a musician, and that his canvases are full of musical elements."

Through his expertise, but above all his passion and love for James Ensor's oeuvre, Samuel Vanhoegaerden has collected these drawings over the years. With this Brafa exhibition and the accompanying monograph, he aims to once again draw attention to the versatility and boundless talent of James Ensor.



"Un Tambour"

Red, blue, and yellow wax pencils on paper
250 x 175 mm
Signed and dated lower right in red wax pencil



"Cinq Musiciens"

Red, blue, green, and yellow wax pencils on paper
250 x 175 mm
Signed lower right in red wax pencil



"Miamia"

Red, yellow, and blue wax pencils on paper
250 x 175 mm
Signed lower right in red wax pencil



"Trois Musiciens"

Red, blue, green, and yellow wax pencils on paper
250 x 175 mm
Signed and dated lower left in red wax pencil