



WALL TEXTS

**RAOUL DE KEYSER. ŒUVRE
05. APRIL UNTIL 08. SEPTEMBER 2019**

Room 21.1

The works shown in this room have been selected from each of Raoul De Keyser's different creative phases. In his artistic cosmos all works appear to be linked to one another, from the first picture (1964) to his last (2012). Surprisingly, both paintings (on the left on this wall) are in the same small, square format.

From the very outset Raoul De Keyser's painting relates to details from his immediate surroundings. In his early works these are still clearly recognisable: a window frame, the garden, a corner of his studio, the family dog 'Baron'. The soft, long branches of the tall monkey puzzle tree that De Keyser could see from his studio are among his recurring motifs. In his later period, when his pictures became more abstract and occasionally larger, everyday observations continued to form the starting point. In this process the artist played with the effect of photographic close-ups and not uncommonly drew on his own photographs as a source.

Room 21.2

De Keyser repeatedly preoccupied himself with his pictorial compositions. He varied and corrected them, took them apart and added new layers. Over the years the concrete motif became lost to abstraction that generates surprising associative spaces. For the sports commentator Raoul De Keyser – a job the artist carried out until 1970 – the football pitch held a special attraction. He was especially fascinated by the white chalk lines on the green grass that were repainted before every match. De Keyser's observations led to variations on white lines that were soon to form an important fundamental element within his work. While, to start with, these were executed completely realistically, the painter later added them in an increasingly abstract fashion. The motif of the double line appears more frequently from the 1980s onwards.

Room 22

In the 1960s international Pop Art became an important point of reference for Raoul De Keyser. In this respect the 'Nieuwe Visie' – a group of artists centred on the painter Roger Raveel, to which De Keyser belonged for a short time – was of special significance. At this period a graphic simplification in his pictorial language can be observed in his work together with a clearly reduced palette of colours at the same time. Playing with close-ups alienates concrete motifs and their materiality, enabling the viewer of these artworks to gain a certain distance to the things themselves. As Raoul De Keyser always saw his works as objects, he occasionally developed these three-dimensionally. He referred to his freestanding pictorial structures as 'Linnen dozen' (canvas boxes).



Room 23

At the beginning of the 1970s De Keyser reduced painting to its fundamental elements and began increasingly to think in series. A work such as the five-part 'Notebook III' reveals his different treatment of the pictorial motif, the application of paint and the spatial perspective in an exemplary fashion. In his works entitled 'Zeilen heuvels' (Sails, Hills) De Keyser continued playing with the ambiguity of line, form and colour. Abstract shapes can be interpreted as hills but equally well as sails or the bow of a boat. The title these works share suggests that they are part of a series. What is typical of De Keyser, however, is that he questions the principle of the series, consciously interrupting its coherence by varying the pictorial language or using a different format.

Room 24

At no time in his career does Raoul De Keyser question the importance of the medium painting. Consequently, his works created in the 1980s have an especially radiant quality as they never follow any rules governing the depiction of an object; instead, the use of colour, the overlapping of layers of paint or the dimensions of a picture become the subject. De Keyser's painting repeatedly demonstrates the loss of the concrete motif quite clearly. As a result, the artistic work of Raoul De Keyser, in all its phases, is primarily one thing – a declaration of love to the medium of painting.

Room 25

Throughout his life Raoul De Keyser gained inspiration from his immediate surroundings, from the names of places he had visited or where he had exhibited, from materials with which he worked or from what critics wrote about his work. He frequently drew on chance happenings to make artistic decisions with an infallible sense for the poetic, be it for compositions or for picture titles. In one group of works, De Keyser provoked the unpredictable by throwing the brush at the support he was painting from a certain distance so that it left one or several blobs of paint on the canvas. In contrast to an expressively working artist, De Keyser transferred the driving impulse to the painting tool, turning the canvas into a skin-like projection surface.

Room 26

In the works Raoul De Keyser painted in the last ten years of his life it is noticeable how the painter's movement became more constrained. The artist's work and body drew closer together. This creative phase once again recalls De Keyser's numerous different approaches to painting and highlights an oeuvre defined by intuitive but equally constant and consistent experimentation. The recollection of earlier works and modified ties to old pictorial ideas remained important factors in this process. The works assembled here can, as such, be seen as an echo and the sum of earlier experiences. Playful lightness, humour and a sense for an individual aesthetic form are to be felt to the last.