

MARC DESGRANDCHAMPS SILHOUETTES

Exhibition from 12 May to 28 August
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon



Marc Desgrandchamps
Sans titre, 2020, oil on canvas, diptych : 200 x 300 cm
© Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon / Photo François Jay
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General presentation of the exhibition

In Spring-Summer 2023, the musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon will present a major exhibition devoted to Marc Desgrandchamps (born in 1960 in Sallanches, lives and works in Lyon), one of the most acclaimed French painters of his generation.

This event will take stock of the evolution of the artist's work over the last ten years, following the retrospective devoted to him at the musée d'art moderne of the city of Paris in 2011.

The Marc Desgrandchamps - Silhouettes exhibition, which is designed to complement the exceptional collection of paintings and sculptures in the musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, will also inaugurate the museum's new 3rd floor exhibition space, which will now be dedicated to temporary exhibitions with direct access to the rooms from the Cour de Bar courtyard of the former Palais des Ducs et des États de Bourgogne.

Marc Desgrandchamps - Silhouettes will bring together a significant group of 47 large canvases and polyptychs accompanied by a few drawings,

divided into six distinct rooms and themes, allowing us to trace the changes that have occurred in the artist's practice over the last decade: the appearance of new subjects, forms and motifs that have been asserted with intensity.

His work as a whole bears witness to the instability of perceptions and the ambiguity of the visible. Through the great visual originality of his work, Desgrandchamps has created a pictorial universe which is immediately identifiable, yet nevertheless resists interpretation.

His deep knowledge of art history is not limited to ancient, modern, or contemporary painting, but also extends to other fields such as film, music, and photography, not to mention literature. So many fields of curiosity that have nourished his artistic practice, full of multiple references. His works are based on the principle of cinematographic montage: the bringing together of images, scenes, and characters in urban or natural settings produces narratives that are at once evocative and yet complex to analyse.



Marc Desgrandchamps
Sans titre, 2011, oil on canvas, diptych : 200 x 300 cm
© Paris Musées, musée d'Art moderne, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image ville de Paris
© Adagp, Paris 2023

Although the phenomena of transparency continue to manifest themselves in Desgrandchamps' compositions, the works produced since 2012 show that the trickles that had become the hallmark of his work, particularly in the 2000s, were not in the end an indispensable condition of his painting. They have now largely disappeared, a sign that a cycle has come to an end for the artist, opening up new horizons. The exhibition Marc Desgrandchamps - Silhouettes will offer visitors to the musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, the chance to see these works, which have been recently created and come from the artist's own collection. The exhibition will also include exceptional loans (from public institutions - Musée national d'art moderne de Paris/Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Art Moderne of city of Paris, Centre national des arts plastiques, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg and Museum Frieder-Burda in Baden-Baden - and from private collections in France, Switzerland, and Germany).

The musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon will also use the opportunity to present two relevant recent acquisitions: the purchase by the City of Dijon of a diptych from 2020, which makes reference to The Flagellation of Christ painted by Piero della Francesca (circa 1460, National Gallery of the Marche in Urbino) and, thanks to the artist's donation, a work from 2012, which evokes the Mod culture born in London in the 1950s, a theme dear to the artist.

At the same time, a film directed by Judith Du Pasquier, entitled « Desgrandchamps, temps mélangés » (Desgrandchamps, mixed tenses) will be shown in the exhibition. The film takes place mainly in Lyon, in the artist's studio, between 2009 and 2022. It also delves into the older layers of the works, through the meticulously organized archive Marc Desgrandchamps created. The trust between the painter and the filmmaker, built up over the years, gives us intimate access to the gestures of the pictorial work, as well as to the artist's reflections and questionings.

Exhibition curators:

Frédérique Goerig-Hergott, Chief Curator of Heritage and Director of Dijon Museums

Pauline Nobécourt, art historian

Assisted by Virginie Barthélemy, project assistant at Dijon Museums

The exhibition is accompanied by an important 216-page catalogue, published by Skira, designed in close collaboration with the [mac] musée d'art contemporain de Marseilles, which is sharing a corpus of some fifteen works with Dijon in its own exhibition devoted to the artist, running from 15 December 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The exhibition is supported by the galleries Lelong & Co in Paris and Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig/ Berlin.

The exhibition path

From the very beginning of his artistic activity, whose foundations he laid in the 1980s, Marc Desgrandchamps developed a body of work in which the human figure is immediately addressed. The exhibition *Silhouettes* presented at the Dijon Museum of Fine Arts explores this recurring theme through nearly fifty paintings. However, his painting is not limited to this single component. By insisting on other issues and concerns raised by his work, the journey designed for this exhibition allows us to perceive other facets too. This presentation reveals a body of work that is attentive to the ambivalence of a world in the grip of numerous crises, but on that nevertheless reveals an unmistakable beauty, particularly in its landscapes. Engaged in a permanent and lively dialogue with ancient art and modernity, Desgrandchamps captures images and stories that take us from one point in time to another, in a pictorial practice that leads us to revisit art history with him. In 2011, Desgrandchamps had a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris. This new exhibition aims to take stock of the last ten years of his work, and to show the evolution of his practice over this period. It brings together a unique selection of recent works, presented to the public thanks to the support of Galerie Lelong & Co. in Paris and Galerie Eigen + Art Leipzig/Berlin, which represent the artist in France and Germany, respectively.

Focus 1 - Antinomies



Marc Desgrandchamps
Les Effigies, 1995, oil on canvas, diptych : 205 x 280 cm
Centre Pompidou - Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle, Paris
© Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais /Jean-Claude Planchet
© Adagp, Paris 2023

The exhibition opens with an iconic work from the 1990s, *The Effigies*, immediately illustrating the relationship that Desgrandchamps' paintings establish with issues related to the very context in which they were produced. Shocked by the return of deadly conflict in Europe during the Yugoslav wars, he erects disturbing silhouettes in the middle of a wasteland, which stand like a warning. Through them, the artist evokes the reappearance of a form of barbarism, at a time in history when this notion seemed to belong to a bygone era. The present, however, brings it to back the fore, and the tragic reality of this observation is never far from the considerations to which the artist refers. By varying perspectives, his paintings also address other issues, with subjects imbued with a lightness that shifts the scenes into a completely different register. A moment shared with loved ones, a bike ride, happy memories of holidays form another side of his creation, marked during the last decade by the blossoming of a luminous figuration.

Focus 2 - A peacetime morning

The 2010s mark a period of renewal in Desgrandchamps' practice. Large spaces predominate, unfolding in compositions that may include several panels placed side by side. The artist makes full use of the possibilities of this format and the combinations determined by the polyptychs, which he assembles like a film montage. The junction between the panels essentially translates into, to borrow a term from the world of cinema, "jump cuts", which break the continuity between the panels.

Slight shifts result, indicative of the way the artist conceives figurative art: in a keen awareness that the relative harmony of "a peacetime morning" - to use the title of a work from 2022 - can shatter at any moment. Although the landscapes to which his work takes us seem at first glance to be havens of peace, they are also crossed by more serious considerations, embodied in the unsettling appearances of monsters or Uncertain Centaurs - another title attributed to a painting from 2022 - which we see intruding alongside familiar figures.



Marc Desgrandchamps
Un matin du temps de paix, 2022, oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm
© Courtesy Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig/Berlin
© Adago, Paris 2023

Focus 3 - Landscapes



Marc Desgrandchamps
Sans titre, 2019, oil on canvas, 162 x 114 cm
Centre National des Arts Plastiques, dépôt Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen
© Cnap / Fabrice Lindor
© Adagp, Paris 2023

Along with the human figure, plant forms are among the silhouettes that frequently recur in Marc Desgrandchamps' universe. Trees in particular, whose structure can become the main subject of a work, or even of an exhibition. It is in fact under the title *Jardins obscurs* that he chose to exhibit in 2019 a group of works relating to this motif.

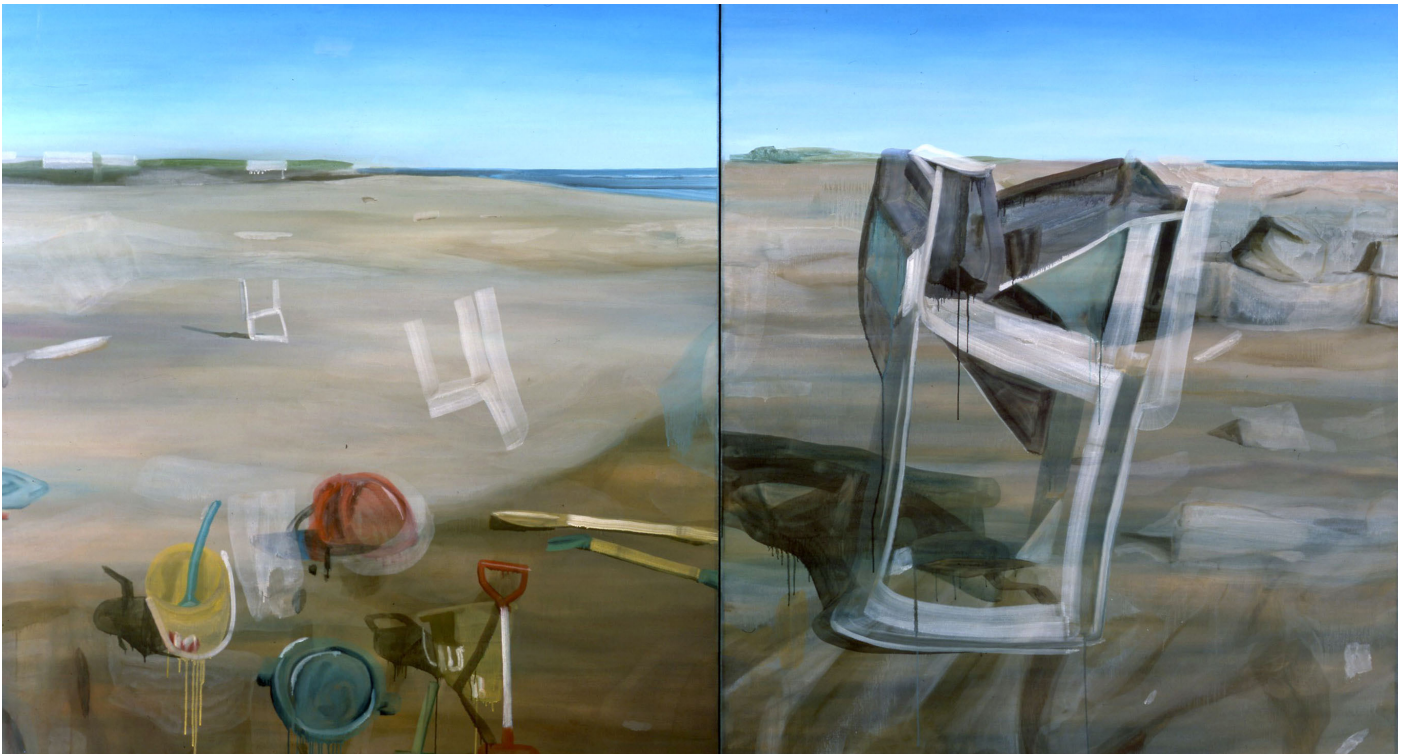
Domestic spaces are carefully avoided, in favour of urban, seaside or mountainous territories which nevertheless seem just as familiar to us.

It may well be that the artificial light of interiors simply does not suit the painting that Desgrandchamps invented. It is a painting that focuses on motifs referring to our own perceptions of the world and what we think we know about our time, starting with the objects it produces. Objects abandoned on the sand, neglected by their owners, which show us that the artist is also looking at a contemporary reality. Through it, he sends us back to a field of questions linked to the very meaning of these plastic objects, which have become as eternal as the marble of ancient statues.

Focus 4 - Between past and present

The scenes depicted by Desgrandchamps are permeated with references to an antiquity perceived as a vanished world – one which our contemporary culture appropriates and reinvents. The timelessness of the figures is paradoxically accompanied by phenomena of transparency, linked to the technique adopted by the artist. Rather than working with oil paint in its actual thickness, he dilutes it, thus obtaining a highly fluid material, which is the source of the superimposition effects always at work in his art.

At the beginning of the 2000s, vertical flows appeared in his paintings, which in the following decade gradually disappear. Taking advantage of the potential of these various processes, Desgrandchamps develops compositions in which forms and references intermingle. Some of the elements thus refer to the Mod culture of the 1960s, while others refer to earlier times. The artist sums up this principle of temporal superimposition in an enlightening statement: *"I am sensitive to the fact that a passer-by in the street can walk in the same way as a Pompeian woman did two thousand years ago"*.



Marc Desgrandchamps
Sans titre, 2000, oil on canvas, diptych : 200 x 290 cm
Musée d'Art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg
© Photo Musées de Strasbourg / M. Bertola
© Adagp, Paris 2023

Focus 5 - Déjeuner sur l'herbe



Marc Desgrandchamps
Sans titre, 2012, oil on canvas, diptych : 200 x 300 cm
Galerie Lelong & Co.
© Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co., Paris / Julien Bouvier Studio
© Adagp, Paris 2023

Among the aesthetic experiences that left a lasting impression on Marc Desgrandchamps, the discovery of Édouard Manet's painting, *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), holds a most fruitful place. The artist was moved by the transgressive force of this painting, which he remembers having seen at a very young age, as a reproduction in a monograph devoted to Paul Cézanne, before being able to rediscover it much later in the original, held at the Musée d'Orsay. The dialogue that is established with this founding work of modernity, or with the Pop version that Alain Jacquet produced in the 1960s, is perceptible in Desgrandchamps' practice.

Small groups of characters reduced to their silhouettes gather in a park or on the shores of a lake, exchange a few words, and set up a deckchair or a parasol near their towels. The scene in *Untitled* (2012) or *Untitled* (2013) could be taken from a family album, the plot of which only retains a peaceful memory. Conflicts or disasters that may occur simultaneously around the world remain in a non-tangential universe. What happens between the protagonists barely begins to form a story, intimately linked to the deeply rooted vision of a lunch on the grass of taken in absolute leisure.

Focus 6 - Perspectives on art history

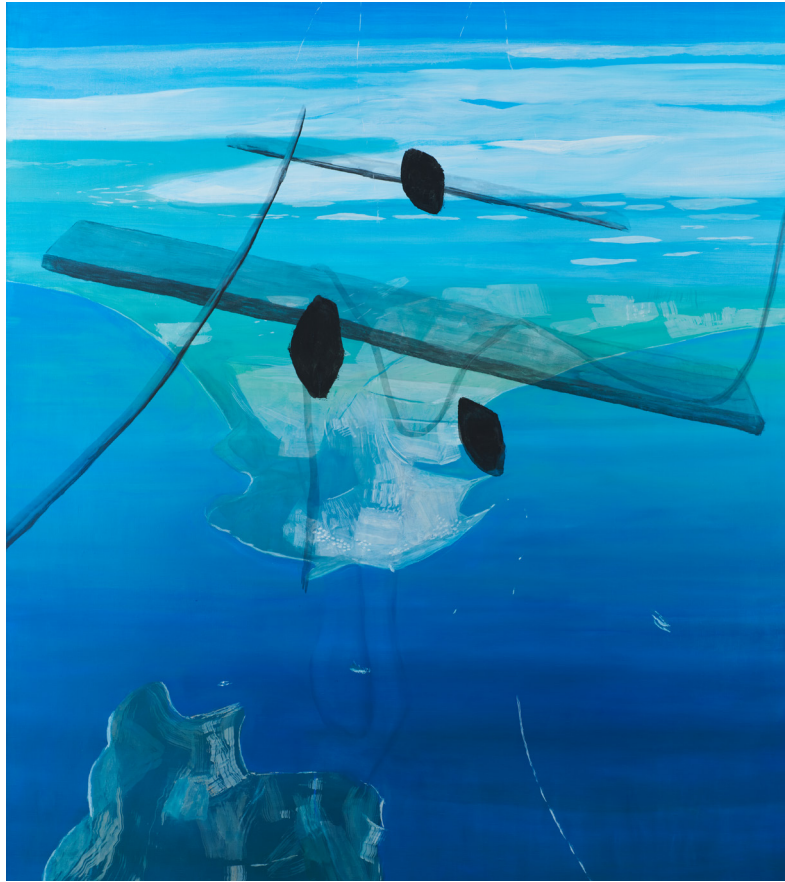
The diversity of visual sources used in Marc Desgrandchamps' works bears witness to the inexhaustible intellectual curiosity that constantly informs his practice. In the early 1990s, he began to work from photographic images, which brought about a great renewal in his painting. New subjects appear, linked to memories, or even to visual experiences that touched him, and which he undertook to revisit or retranscribe in paint.

Over the last ten years, continuing this fruitful and lively dialogue with the old masters as well as with those of modernity, he has launched into the creation of works which sometimes combine personal, even autobiographical themes, and broader reflections, taking us back to the origins of painting or drawing, in *Les Lettres* [The Letters] for example. Throughout the exhibition journey, the singularity of his approach is asserted, interweaving references and time periods to better question his own place in art history.



Marc Desgrandchamps
Les Lettres, oil on canvas, diptych : 200 x 150 cm
© Courtesy Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig/Berlin
©Adagp, Paris 2023

Focus 7 - Fragments



Marc Desgrandchamps
Une Traversée, 2022, oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm
© Courtesy Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig/Berlin
© Adagp, Paris 2023

In his painting, Marc Desgrandchamps does not seek to reconstitute a harmonious and coherent vision of the world. On the contrary, he assumes the heterogeneity of his visual sources, in so doing, creating smash-ups of images that can prove confusing. His attachment to rendering reality, captured in its shifting and unpredictable way, passes through a mode of representation in which forms close to abstraction are interposed. They unfold on the surface of the painting like a bundle of impressions, images or memories reappearing in bits and pieces, in a fragmented or altered form.

The same is true of the figures, whose often truncated bodies only partially materialise, as if to signify their status as patches. Other fragments appear, without revealing anything about the reality to which they refer, leaving each spectator to imagine or reconstitute their own scenario. While in recent years his practice has been dominated by a “human-level” vision of reality, a resolutely innovative point of view is adopted in *Une traversée* [A Crossing], thus opening up new perspectives for future works.

Biographical references

Marc desgrandchamps

1960
Born on January 31 in Sallanches, Haute-Savoie.

1978 - 1981
Marc Desgrandchamps enters the National School of Fine Arts in Paris.

1984
Moves to Lyon, where he still lives.

1985
Exhibition Vincent Corpet, Marc Desgrandchamps, Pierre Moignard at the Maison de la culture et de la communication (MCC) in Saint-Etienne.

1986
Group exhibition: Ateliers 86, choice of Rudi Fuchs, ARC musée d'Art moderne, city of Paris.

1987
Exhibition Vincent Corpet, Marc Desgrandchamps, Pierre Moignard, François Perrodin, Marie-Françoise Poutays, Michel Verjux at the National Museum of Modern Art - Centre Pompidou, Paris.

1995
A first solo exhibition at the Bernard and Gwénolée Zürcher gallery in Paris marks the beginning of a collaboration that will last until 2015.
Collective exhibition *Du Trait à la ligne*, graphic art cabinet, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

2003
The group exhibition *Voir en peinture*, at the Frac Île-de-France - Le Plateau, organized by Eric Corne in Paris, provokes the interest of some young artists.
Philippe Dagen includes Marc Desgrandchamps in the group exhibition *De Mémoires* that he organizes at the studio national du Fresnoy.

2004-2006
Several institutional and monographic exhibitions mark these years, in the modern and contemporary art establishments of Sables-d'Olonne, Saint-Gaudens, Strasbourg and Lyon in 2004, then at the Kunstmuseum of Bonn in 2005 and at the Espace 315 of the Centre Pompidou in 2006.

2008
Beginning of a series of drawings with fine point felt pen directly inspired by the environment, without the prior mediation of a photograph to retranscribe the visible. It is a graphic and temporal experiment, by which the artist tries to record the minute changes that can occur during the exposure time.

2011
An important retrospective is dedicated to him at the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris.

2012
Starts working with the EIGEN + ART gallery in Leipzig/Berlin, which exhibits his work and broadens its distribution.

2016
He begins to work with the gallery Lelong & Co in Paris, which devotes regular exhibitions to him.

Marc Desgrandchamps is included in numerous collections such as:

Baden-Baden, Frieder-Burda Museum
Dijon, Museum of Fine Arts
Lyon, Museum of Contemporary Art
Paris, Fonds national d'art contemporain
Paris, FRAC - Île-de-France - Le Plateau
Paris, Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris
Paris, National Museum of Modern Art (MNAM)
Beijing, Today Art Museum

Practical information and contacts

Opening hours of the museum

Open every day except Tuesday

From October 1st to May 31st : from 9:30 am to 6 pm

From June 1st to September 30th : from 10am to 6:30pm

Closed on January 1st, May 1st and 8th, July 19th, November 1st and 11th, December 25th

Free

All year long, the permanent collections are free for all.

Musée des Beaux-Arts

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The Fine Arts Museum is fully accessible to people with disabilities.

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