

self through humour and fantasy, as in the work *Elefantenman*; after ascending a grand staircase, the viewer confronts a man with the head of an elephant.

Initially conceived for Kunsthalle Baden-Baden and expanded for the Museum der Moderne Salzburg, this exhibition presents a significant assembly of Balkenhol's work that includes drawings in addition to the artist's woodcuts and sculptures. The exhibition is laid out so that large pieces like *Ikarus* (one of the few bronzes in the exhibition) and *Großes Frauengortait* (a gargantuan bust of a woman) are juxtaposed with small relief portraits hung on a nearby wall or pint-sized figures who seem to be in the process of assessing their oversized neighbours. The contrasts in scale and ambiguous relationships among the sculptures make it impossible for the viewer to resist reading connective narratives into the work. by Ann Danilevich

## Luc Tuymans

ZENO X GALLERY, ANTWERP

As part of a recent spell of Luc Tuymans fever in Antwerp, Zeno X Gallery presented an exhibition of the artist's new watercolour works on paper. The series *The Spiritual Exercises* investigates one of Belgium's "ghosts," the Jesuit order. Derived from filmic and photographic sources, the images are carefully cropped and framed with thick white borders. Tuymans preserves the impression of a moving picture captured in a flash-frozen frame. Despite the concept of "belatedness" he has espoused for painting, there is still a strong sense of immediacy.

In typical Tuymans fashion, meanings are ambiguous, though the work's imagery is intense. *The Spiritual Exercises 1* seems to depict a seated warrior-like figure impaled by multiple swords, while *The Spiritual Exercises 3* shows a figure struck by what appears to be a beam of heavenly light. While physically small and pale, the images are nonetheless loaded with history and potential meanings. Each frame is moody and melancholic. Tuymans's paint handling adds to the sense of spirituality: his lines are fluid and flexible, yet confident. To a viewer unversed in Jesuit history, these images still make a commanding impression and could convince even a cynic of the power invested in them.

Tuymans has a fine understanding of paint as a medium, and specifically of watercolour. In the second section of the gallery, he shows complicated geometries that are simultaneously delicate and severe. Simple bumpy lines culminate in complex, precise and mathematically correct structures. What the eye registers as a soccer ball is in fact a *Truncated Icosahedron*. In depicting these objects of many faces, shapes such as *Small Rhombicosidodecahedron*, Tuymans plays a little game with us. Dizzying scientific etymology collides with banal visual language in the form of straightforward lines and the colours red, green and blue. Indeed, there is something childlike and playful in the works, like objects created from a toy construction set.

The relationship between the two parts of the exhibition remains uncertain. Is there hidden meaning in the juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory areas of focus? Are the geometries steeped in their own religiosity, pitting science against spirituality? Tuymans draws his audience into a realm of mystery and intrigue. This is the power of the image as harnessed by a painter who knows how to communicate just what he intends. by Charlene Lau

LUC TUYMANS *Saint Xaverius*  
2007 Watercolour on paper Top  
image 27.7 x 23.3 cm; lower four  
22.8 x 27.3 cm each PHOTO PETER COX

