

Walter Swennen is a painter committed to definitions and performances, in words and gestures as much as symbols. The short circuit between word and image occurs in the painted surface, with recognisable and playful motifs. These he usually plucks from mass media, the popular culture of collective, generally familiar characters. Like a hobbyist he assembles motifs, painted or drawn, from his vast depot, where he assembles, abstracts and retranslates them in a secure and painstaking manner. Swennen toddles into visible reality with disarming and highly alienating constellations, in which visual associations with irony and humour appear to the eye as witty riddles.

Walter Swennen's artistic production is not easy to pin down stylistically and remains unique within Belgian art. He conceptualises life in paintings that relate strongly to memory and imagination, but that at the same time are a treatise on the artistic practice of painting. Behind the lure of painted or drawn recognisability, lurks a world of poetry, wonder, and gentle 'anti-answers' to the art of today.

Walter Swennen is one of the most famous artists in the country. His artistic activity dates back to the mid 1960s, at which time his work could already be seen in a host of solo and group shows at home and abroad.

Dirk Snauwaert

Wiels, Belgium, January 2010.