

Kate Gottgens

Darkening Dusk

April 12 - May 25, 2025
Kustlaan 90, 8300 Knokke

MARUANI MERCIER is proud to present *Darkening Dusk*, the inaugural solo exhibition of South African artist Kate Gottgens, at their Knokke gallery. Recognized for her haunting, dreamlike compositions, Gottgens crafts works that exist in a state of liminality—never fixed, always in flux, and at times elusive. Just as the fading light of dusk blurs the boundaries of day and night, her paintings evoke a sense of transition, where familiarity dissolves into something more fluid, open-ended, and mysterious.

Gottgens builds her work from a variety of sourced imagery—anonymous snapshots found at flea markets, family vacation photos, or fragments retrieved from the vast digital archive of the internet. Stripped of their original contexts, these images become the raw material for a process of reconstruction and transformation. This gives rise to landscapes that feel both intimate and unplaceable, imbued with an unsettling, cinematic tension.

In this body of work, nature serves as both subject and entry point. The figures in her paintings appear to enter nature as much as nature enters them, dissolving the boundaries between body and environment. Water emerges as a recurring motif, not as a passive element but as a charged, transitional space. Pools reflect unnatural hues—electric blues and eerie greens—that disrupt the natural setting, generating a subtle yet palpable tension.



Kate Gottgens
Summoned by the tides, 2025
oil on canvas
150 x 110 cm
59 x 43 1/4 in

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Through this interplay, Gottgens explores the seductive yet deceptive nature of nostalgia. The pull of nostalgia can be dangerously alluring, smoothing over complexities and transforming history into a sentimentalized illusion. This, what she refers to as the “chocolate-box cliché”, is subtly punctured in her work, as she exposes the underbelly of these idealized memories of the past.

This ambivalence also permeates her depiction of leisure and privilege. Middle-class domestic scenes, such as backyard pools, summer evenings, and figures at play, evoke a world of comfort and ease, yet there is a lingering unease beneath the surface. Through dark satire, Gottgens critiques excess and recklessness, acknowledging the tensions that seep into these seemingly idyllic settings.

A feminist undercurrent runs through the works in *Darkening Dusk*, with Gottgens increasingly centering enigmatic female figures. Works like *Summoned by the Tides* depict women in quiet contemplation by the water, almost blending into the landscape. In contrast, a male figure takes center stage, his back turned to the tide, as though being called by something unseen. There’s a quiet pull, a moment of hesitation, as if caught between staying and surrendering to the call of the water.

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Kate Gottgens
Dusk and Venus, 2025
oil on canvas
78 x 78 cm
30 3/4 x 30 3/4 in

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However, as the series progresses, the female figures grow more commanding, with works such as *Dusk and Venus* revealing powerful, almost mythic representations of femininity. In *Dusk and Venus*, the figure materializes as if being (re)born from the pool, signaling a significant shift in Gottgens' portrayal of feminine strength and autonomy. Envisioned as contemporary *Birth of Venus*, the work evokes an ethereal strength and a sense of emergence—almost embryonic in nature. Yet, amidst this symbolism, Gottgens deliberately grounds the scene in the everyday. The presence of a pool noodle and floaty anchors the work in the mundane, offering a reminder of the contemporary and the ordinary within the mystical.

Her paintings do not offer clear narratives but instead invite viewers to respond instinctively, as if recalling a dream just beyond their reach. Suspended between the past and present, beauty and disquiet, her work lingers in the spaces where certainty fades and something more enigmatic takes hold.

Darkening Dusk invites viewers to enter a world where familiar images shift and dissolve, where beauty is tempered with tension, and where the boundaries between reality and memory, nature and self, are never fully defined.

Kate Gottgens was born in 1965, in Durban, South Africa, and is now based in Cape Town, South Africa. She graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town in 1987.

Gottgens work can be found in the collection of the: Pérez Collection, Miami, USA; Cassatt Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Majudia / Arsenal Contemporary in Montreal, Canada; Taylor Art Collection, Denver, USA; Luciano Benetton Collection, Treviso, Italy; The Royal Portfolio Collection, Cape Town, South Africa; The Leeu Collection, Franschoek, South Africa; The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa. Her work has also been featured in *100 Painters of Tomorrow* (2014) and *In the World : Essays on Contemporary South African Art* (2017). She was the recipient of the Ampersand Fellowship Award, UK.

The public opening will take place on April 12th, 2025 from 3 - 7 pm at Kustlaan 90, 8300 Knokke. For further information, please get in touch with:

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