

For Immediate Release
May 28, 2009

FIRST U.S. RETROSPECTIVE OF THE WORK OF LUC TUYMANS DEBUTS AT WEXNER CENTER IN SEPTEMBER, FOLLOWED BY 4-VENUE TOUR

Exhibition Offers Unprecedented Overview of the Artist's Career and Influence

Columbus, OH—The first U.S. retrospective of the work of Belgian contemporary artist Luc Tuymans—and the most comprehensive presentation of his work to date—debuts at the **Wexner Center for the Arts** in Columbus, **September 17, 2009 to January 3, 2010**, followed by a cross-country and international museum tour. **Jointly organized by the Wexner Center and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)**, *Luc Tuymans* spans every phase of the artist's career and features more than 70 key paintings from 1978 to the present.

After the Wexner Center presentation, *Luc Tuymans* will appear at **SFMOMA** (February 6 to May 2, 2010), the **Dallas Museum of Art** (June 6 to September 5, 2010), the **Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago** (October 2, 2010 to January 9, 2011), and the **Bozar Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels** (February 11 to May 8, 2011). The retrospective is co-curated by Madeleine Grynsztejn, Pritzker Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (and SFMOMA's former Elise S. Haas Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture), and Helen Molesworth, Maisie K. and James R. Houghton Curator of Contemporary Art at the Harvard Art Museum (and former chief curator of exhibitions at the Wexner Center). The exhibition is accompanied by a definitive catalogue.

“Without question, the time is ripe for an in-depth retrospective of Tuymans's work in this country,” said Wexner Center Director Sherri Geldin. “We are thrilled to collaborate with SFMOMA on this exhibition, which is certain to reveal new insights into the creative, intellectual, and political forces that have propelled Luc's unique and vastly influential body of work over the last 25 years.”

“Luc Tuymans is a crucial figure in contemporary art, yet he remains relatively unknown to broader audiences in the United States,” said SFMOMA Director Neal Benezra. “SFMOMA has a long track record of presenting important artists at a pivotal moment in their careers, and we are pleased to partner with the Wexner Center to bring this timely exhibition of Tuymans's work to audiences nationwide.”

Luc Tuymans (b. 1958) is considered one of the most significant European painters of his generation, and has been an enduring influence on younger and emerging artists. Born and raised in Antwerp, where he lives and works, Tuymans is an inheritor to the vast tradition of Northern European painting. At the same time, as a child of the 1950s, his relationship to the medium is understandably influenced by photography, television, and cinema.

Interested in the lingering effects of World War II on the lives of Europeans, Tuymans explores issues of history and memory, as well as the relationship between photography and painting, using a muted palette to create canvases that are simultaneously withholding and disarmingly stark. Drawing on imagery from photography, television, and film, his distinctive compositions make ingenious use of cropping, close-ups, framing, and sequencing, offering fresh perspectives on the medium of painting, as well as larger cultural issues. Tuymans's paintings might initially suggest relatively innocuous depictions of everyday life—whether interiors, landscapes, or figural representations—but there is almost always another meaning lurking beneath the surface. The artist's more recent work approaches the postcolonial situation in the Congo and the dramatic turn of world events after 9/11; these series have led Tuymans to a sustained investigation of the realms of the pathological and the conspiratorial.



Top: Luc Tuymans, *Der Diagnostische Blick V* (The Diagnostic View V), 1992; oil on canvas; 22 7/8 x 16 1/2 inches (58.1 x 41.9 cm). Private collection; © Luc Tuymans; photo courtesy Zeno X Gallery
Above: Luc Tuymans, *Chalk*, 2000; oil on canvas; 28 1/2 x 24 1/4 inches (72.4 x 61.6 cm); Private collection, promised gift to the San Francisco Museum of

Filling the entirety of the Wexner Center's galleries, *Luc Tuymans* highlights the fluid progression of the artist's work. Because his career began with filmmaking, Tuymans's approach to painting often draws from montage: one image links to another, and additional meaning is conveyed by the pieces' adjacency. The retrospective reunites the paintings in groupings originally set out by the artist, thus restoring the intended dialogue among the works. The presentation also demonstrates that although Tuymans remains loyal to the medium of painting, his tendency to work in suites and at an ever-larger scale have made it imperative to consider him in the light of current installation and site-specific practices.

Tuymans's deep engagement with the legacy of painting is also emphasized in the exhibition. His signature brushwork and palette offer an innovative response to the great 20th-century schism between figurative representation and abstraction. At the same time, he treats all genres—including still life, landscape, and portraiture—with the same measured approach as a grand history painting. Indeed, Tuymans may be said to have reinvented history painting for the present day, using moments from the recent past to shed light on the fragile nature of memory. In using this traditional painting genre to depict contemporary political events, he also explores disengagement from the realities of the present.

The exhibition catalogue—coproduced by SFMOMA and the Wexner Center for the Arts, in association with Distributed Art Publishers, Inc.—is the most comprehensive volume on the artist to date, with original essays by co-curator Helen Molesworth; Bill Horrigan, director of the Media Arts Department at the Wexner Center for the Arts; Joseph Leo Koerner, professor of art history and architecture at Harvard University; and Ralph Rugoff, director of The Hayward at Southbank Centre in London; as well as a joint introduction by the co-curators. The extensive illustrations are accompanied by text entries that illuminate the painter's primary subjects and themes. The catalogue (\$60 hardcover and \$35 softcover) are available in the Wexner Center Store.

Tuymans will be in conversation with scholar T.J. Clark November 10 at 7 pm at the Wexner Center.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Luc Tuymans is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, Columbus.

Lead support is generously provided by Bruce and Martha Atwater. Significant support is provided by Carla Emil/Rich Silverstein and by Flanders House, the new cultural forum for Flanders (Belgium) in the United States. Accommodations in Columbus are provided by The Blackwell Inn.

Promotional support is provided by *Ohio Magazine*.

All Wexner Center exhibitions and related events receive support from Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation and Wexner Center members, as well as Greater Columbus Arts Council, The Columbus Foundation, Nationwide Foundation, and the Ohio Arts Council.

VISITOR INFORMATION: *Luc Tuymans* is on view to the public September 17, 2009–January 3, 2010 at the Wexner Center for the Arts, 1871 N. High St. (at 15th Ave.) on the campus of The Ohio State University in Columbus. Gallery hours are Tuesday–Wednesday and Sunday 11 am–6 pm; Thursday–Saturday 11 am–8 pm; closed Mondays. Walk-In Tours starting September 24 will be held Thursdays at 5 pm and Saturdays at 1 pm. The **press preview** and **opening party** will be held Wednesday, September 16. Admission to the galleries is \$5; free for Wexner Center members, college students, and visitors 18 and under; free Thursdays from 4 to 8 pm and the first Sunday of the month. More info: wexarts.org or 614 292-3535.

Media contacts: Karen Simonian, Wexner Center, ksimonian@wexarts.org or 614.292.9923
Robyn Wise, SFMOMA, rwise@sfmoma.org or 415.357.4172

Lo-res images of select works from the exhibition can be viewed here: www.wexarts.org/info/press/tuymans

The Wexner Center for the Arts is The Ohio State University's multidisciplinary, international laboratory for the exploration and advancement of contemporary art. Through exhibitions, screenings, performances, artist residencies, and educational programs, the Wexner Center acts as a forum where established and emerging artists can test ideas and where diverse audiences can participate in cultural experiences that enhance understanding of the art of our time. In its programs, the Wexner Center balances a commitment to experimentation with a commitment to traditions of innovation and affirms the university's mission of education, research, and community service. www.wexarts.org