

Editor. "Kris Martin in Ghent–The quiet prayer." *Monopol*. March 10, 2020.

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*Kris Martin, Altar, 2014. Photography: Benny Proot*

## **Kris Martin's art combines minimal gestures with sacral pathos. Now he is responding to the great Van Eyck year with an exhibition in Ghent**

The Belgian artist Kris Martin has a talent for ironically breaking the religious pathos of the Old Masters - and at the same time conveying some of their grandeur with his minimal interventions. In Ghent, Martin's most extensive institutional solo exhibition in Belgium is now taking place in the Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK) - in keeping with the great Van Eyck anniversary year, to which the contemporary show is supposed to be an answer.

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Kris Martin, born in 1972 in Kortrijk, has become known for works that laconically comment on famous elements from art history and still develop a discreet

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poetry. For example, he wraps a statue of the Virgin Mary with anti-bird tips. A brutal halo - or a modern "don't touch me" message from Our Lady. From the Ghent Altarpiece by the Van Eyck brothers (1432-35), which is currently being shown in the Museum of Fine Arts next to it and has just been restored, Martin leaves only the shape of the wooden frame. Where the devotional scenes belong, there is emptiness. At the same time, the environment now appears as a picture in the windows. The profane is canonized in the familiar wing shape.

## **Adam and Eve don't feel like each other**

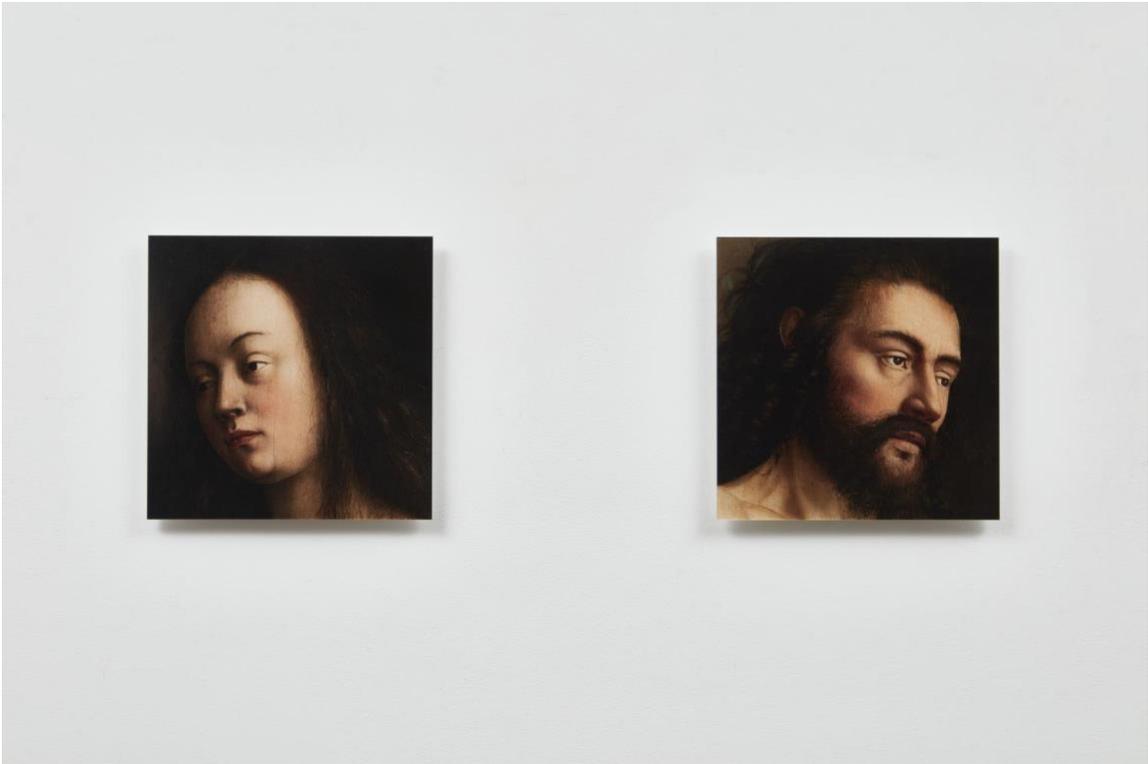
The work "Eve & Adam" also responds to Van Eyck's masterpiece. To do this, he takes the figures of Adam and Eve, which populate the outermost panels on the altar and look at each other. If you close the wings, the two naked bodies are united in the heart of the altar. Kris Martin, on the other hand, isolates the couple's faces and arranges them so that they look in different directions. Adam and Eve obviously don't feel like each other anymore.

One of Kris Martin's best-known works is an original-sized walk-in hot air balloon lying on its side. The colorful balloon silk inflates ambitiously by a fan, but always pushes the limits of the room. Taking off is out of the question. A succinct picture of the will to leave, which Kris Martin - confidently and calmly, as it is his way - immediately turns into pitiful.



*Kris Martin "Annunciata", 2016*

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*Photo: Jason Wyche, Courtesy Kris Martin and Sean Kelly*



*Photo: Courtesy Kris Martin. Kris Martin "TYFFSH", 2009*

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*dpa The partially restored Ghent altar by Jan van Eyck (ca.1390-1441) from the St. Bavo Cathedral in the exhibition "Van Eyck. An optical Revolution" at the Museum of Fine Arts*