

JOSÉ VAN GOOL

Impressionist Inspiration

José van Gool's paintings of impressionist inspirations and city expressions are playful, rich, and sometimes mournful gestures of a seductive world. The human figure, alone or existing with others, is the central force of each canvas. At times, the figures contrast sharply with the warm, misty backgrounds they are set against, and in other paintings, they melt into these backgrounds, seemingly absorbed. There is little notion of outside disturbances in the compositions. Instead, they dwell in self-contained worlds, nourished by color, comforting and sweetly strange to the viewer who studies them.

A series of these paintings includes women wearing hats and posing in washes of golden yellow, auburn, and brick red. They appear to look out and confront the world, but in each case the brim of the hat casts a shadow, and the true expression in each woman's eyes is left in doubt, leaving an impression of coquettishness and mystery. In other pieces, the figures are walking, a mass of hazy color, sometimes deep, sometimes cool. In a bold shift, a group is walking straight on, coming right at the viewer. Van Gool also places her figures in cafés, sitting over coffee, or waiting in the cavernous rooms of train stations. These are everyday scenes, all of them, but the painter transforms them into dreamscapes, hypnotic and vast.