

JOSÉ VAN GOOL

Passion and Movement

José van Gool's paintings pry into the relationship between color and movement. They follow, one to the next, a certain pattern. A solitary dancer, a pair of dancers, or a group of three or four are always the presumed focus of the composition. These subjects are women, strong women, with coal black hair. The red dresses they wear, revealing brief stretches of marble-carved shoulder, neck, and arm, suggest emotional music, a passionate sound that calls for vigorous movement. But these paintings inhabit a movement unique to van Gool, one she summons up through her dramatic charge of color.

The paintings develop resolutely from the top of the canvas to the bottom. At the top, the figures' faces and upper torsos are either clearly defined or softly impressionistic, but they convey each time a sense of focus and readiness, perhaps of gravity. The downward movement, however, dissolves this clarity, and those dancing gowns break down into fields of color, maddening reds and oranges, so that what the viewer beheld at first seems to have sparked into an uncertain environment, more abstract and unknown, but more passionate as well. Van Gool's mastery of color drives these emotional works, as the dancers she creates in effect lose themselves, consumed by the hot, dry matter of the world, like fallen, brittle leaves about to burst into flame.