



Is there a lonelier profession than an artist? Sure, some have a studio with collaborators, many have a rich and nurturing network of friends, fans or collectors, some share a studio with like-minded people, but in essence every artist is someone who creates on his own, however much he surrounds himself in this activity. absorbed and processed. His art remains the result of processes that take place in the confines of what takes place in his own defined environment. Loneliness therefore comes in various forms, from physical, whether or not imposed or self-selected, spatial isolation, to spinning around in your own compulsive mindset that makes it impossible for you to enter into an essential relationship with other people, and all shades in between. Solitude is rich, multifaceted and, Positive or negative, it turns out to be a self-feeding mechanism: "It could be that the empathic faculties of the second person block immediately because of the fear-inducing nature of what the loneliness of the first person radiates", Frieda Fromm- Reichmann already. This may be true for relational, physical contacts with isolated persons, but when they express this essential state and the feelings it evokes in images, something else happens to the empathetic viewer. The work may well form a bridge between the two, a gateway to the isolated person.

It's a thought that accompanied me regularly at the *Splendid Isolation* exhibition at the SMAK. The title immediately indicates it: for whatever reasons the artists have isolated themselves from society, it can produce a wonderful result. Also, a very different one, as the selection of 22 artists indicates.

Some personal highlights:

## Danny Bergeman

The explanation of the works can be found in the catalog that is for sale in the bookshop (I came home with many books except the catalogue). However, it is best to visit the expo without prior knowledge and let your imagination run wild. For example, it seemed obvious to me that Bergeman's

series was made during the lockdown, which turned out to be completely wrong when the nameplate was checked. His series, which starts with abstract (house) blocks and admits recognizable signs and buildings towards the end, nevertheless came across as a slow awakening from a nasty, very real dream. A special experience.

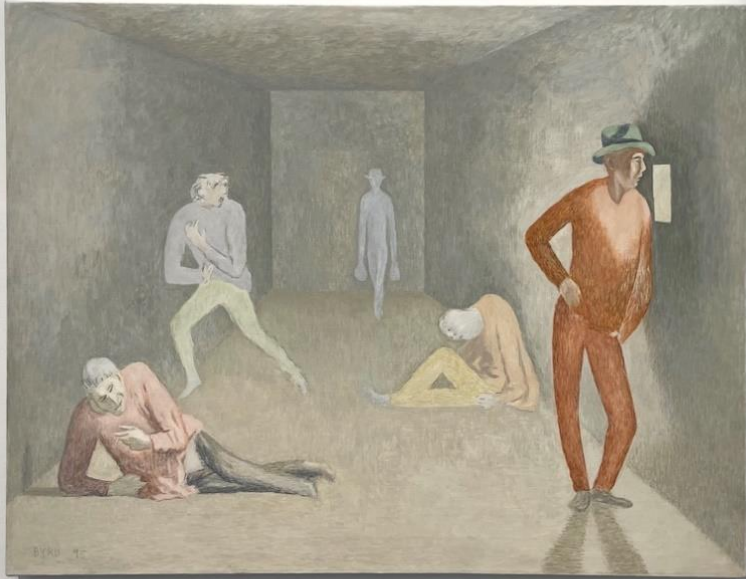


photo: TheArtCouch

## David Byrd

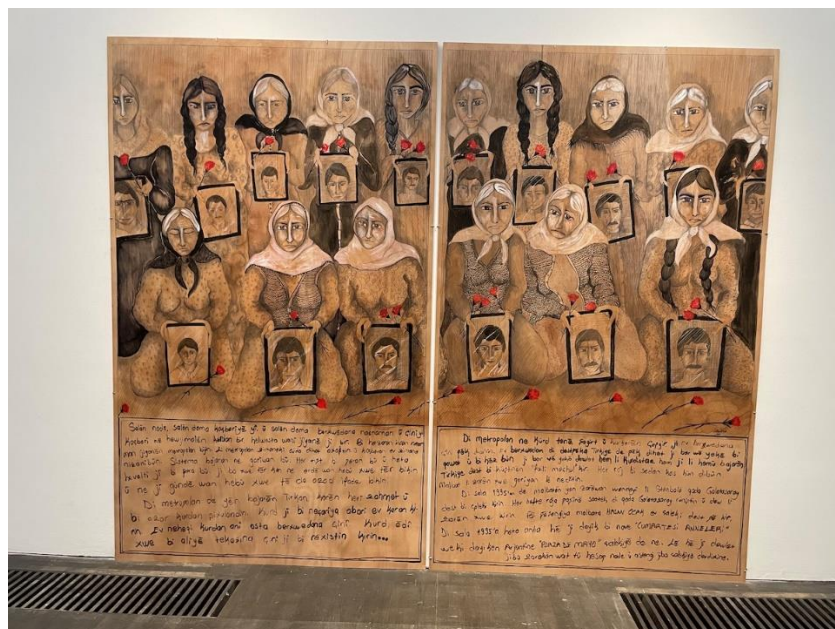
It was only afterwards that I learned that Byrd was a nurse in a psychiatric institution, and that is where he got the inspiration for his paintings. With or without knowing this, his work nevertheless has an immediate, reflective impact. Everyone feels secluded in one of the ways they portray, perhaps all of them, when you think about it more deeply and free yourself from the fears associated with your self-image. His work struck me immediately and deeply, partly because of his soft, almost transparent way of painting.





# Zehra Doğan

Impossible to take your eyes and thoughts away from the horror that Zehra Doğan portrays in her work, and the very specific form of isolation that life as a Kurdish prisoner in the beastly Turkish prison must be. Shocking, repulsive, moving too, in a way. That may be the intention, her work undoubtedly has an activist purpose, but also apart from its specific context it offers a picture of the extremes that people are capable of in their relationship with each other, and how isolation can be used to manipulate people. and to break. If I have understood correctly (I looked through the letters she wrote from prison in the bookshop), however, she came out strengthened. You don't just break a person.





photos: TheArtCouch

## others

There is still a lot more to discover, but it is not the intention to write the catalog about this, so I will limit myself to a visual selection of what I noticed:













## Lydia Ourahmane

If I have understood correctly, Lydia Ourahmane's installation is not part of the *Splendid Isolation* exhibition . Nevertheless, it could have been done. She points to a very specific form of isolation, which arises from the confines of one's own living environment (a premise that Olivia Laing explores further in her fantastic book *The Lonely City*, which I bought in the bookshop).

In any case, there is some disagreement in art circles about the importance of this installation in the SMAK. Wonderful that art can still cause controversy! In my opinion, one is justified. The tearing out of banal, everyday objects from their natural habitat is a technique that is more common in art, but it is therefore not necessarily less relevant. I viewed the installation more from the intention of the filmmaker Lars Von Trier in *Douville* , to play with the capacity and tendency of the human brain to see wholes, to form a new entity through connections between separate elements that makes sense. has, though each part of it has none of its own. It made me think differently, which is exactly why I love art...



photo: TheArtCouch

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The expos *Splendid isolation* and *Lydia Ourahmane* will take place until September 18 in the SMAK, Ghent. [Click here for all information](#) .

For the occasion, the bookshop was enriched with a number of fascinating publications on the theme, not only monographs by the artists, but also a number of fascinating reading books. Be sure to stick around a little longer! ...and you can also take a free copy of TheArtCouch's summer newspaper!