

Magnus Plessen

Dein Gesicht in meinen Händen

Opening: 11 September 2025, 6 – 10 pm

Exhibition: 12 September – 1 November 2025

Wentrup is pleased to present *Dein Gesicht in meinen Händen (Your face in my hands)*, Magnus Plessen's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Magnus Plessen's latest body of work was shaped by a moment of personal reckoning: the death of his father and a return to childhood memories of ancestral portraits. Paintings emerge from this intimate landscape, turning memory and perception into tactile, layered images that oscillate between abstraction and figuration. The material density of his faces gives them a tactile immediacy, evoking the sense that they could be physically held in one's hands.

Thoughts from Tina Wentrup on the role of hands and gestures in the work of Pina Bausch and Magnus Plessen

Your Face in My Hands (Magnus Plessen) – *Your Arms Around My Body* (Pina Bausch)

Hands touch, attempt to hold, only to reach once more into air, into emptiness. The gentle rewriting of an embrace, the suggestion of a gesture suspended between worlds.

In Magnus Plessen's paintings, protagonists merge, collage-like, caught in intimate moments, yet they often dissolve into vast landscapes. Great-grandfathers and fathers overlap with present family members. Poses indebted to the spirit of their time are revealed as staged, constructed; a hand holding a cigarette in the portrait of his great-grandfather, who never smoked. Within family narratives, what is fact, and what is fiction?

Pina Bausch's *Café Müller* presents a scene with empty chairs, where past encounters can be sensed. Dancers sit briefly, only to spring up again, in a continual search to be held, to come close. Trust collides with hollow gestures that never quite fit. Uniting Plessen and Bausch is the fact that both draw from the reservoir of their own past and present to probe the human condition in all its facets - both bring themselves into the space of the stage or the picture. The tender capturing of gestures takes place on canvas in Plessen's work, on stage in Bausch's.

In both, bodies remain in flux, in an unending search to evoke emotions that words cannot contain. Precious moments of intimacy, a dance between finding and slipping away. When words fail, whether in pain, loss, or love, it is the hands that return to the fore in Plessen's work. They hold one another, or they cut through the picture, exposing layers underneath, which, as in *The Act of Painting*, may evoke the severing of the thread of life. Holding a cigarette is a recurring motif, which, like the smoke itself, allows the viewer's own stories and associations to rise and dissipate.

This wandering between worlds, between generations, becomes palpable through formal overlays and fusions — yet always evades concrete determination. Like the shadows cast on chairs in Bausch's work, shadows gather around and behind the figures in Plessen's paintings. Historical fragments and transgenerational traumas are evoked; how deeply one wishes to enter them is up to the viewer.

In psychology, the hand is considered an 'extended heart', an immediate expression of inner states; longing (outstretched, searching hands), grief or helplessness (hands hanging down), tenderness (a gentle touch). Both Magnus Plessen and Pina Bausch succeed in penetrating the viewer's inner depths, laying bare hidden emotions and revealing their constructed self, if only one allows it.

Magnus Plessen (b. 1967) is one of the most important painters of his generation. He has had solo exhibitions at The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Massachusetts (2014); Art Institute of Chicago (2005); Espace 315, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2004); Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, K21, Düsseldorf, Germany (2002); and MoMA PS1, New York (2002), as well as numerous solo gallery exhibitions, incl. White Cube (London and Hong Kong), Gladstone (New York), Konrad Fischer (Düsseldorf and Berlin) and Mai 36 (Zurich). He has participated in various international group exhibitions, including at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (2022), the Museu Serralves, Porto, Portugal (2007), the Goetz Collection, Munich (2006), and was represented at the 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

Works by Magnus Plessen have been placed in important international collections, incl. Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), the Art Institute of Chicago, the Kunstsammlung NRW K20/K21, the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), and the Pinakothek der Moderne (Munich).