



ABBAZIA DI  
SAN GIORGIO  
MAGGIORE  
BENEDICTI  
CLAUSTRA  
ONLUS

DRAIFLESSEN COLLECTION



## LUC TUYMANS - *BASILICA DI SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE*

### Two new canvases by the great Belgian artist for the altar of San Giorgio Maggiore Abbey

Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice  
9 May – 23 November 2025

**Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore – Benedicti Claustra Onlus** and **Draiflessen Collection** are pleased to present a new commission for the altar of the Palladian Basilica from **9 May to 23 November 2025**: two new paintings by **Luc Tuymans** (Mortsel, 1958), one of the most important painters of his generation.

Commissioned by the Benedictine Community - led by Abbot Stefano Visintin osb – and Draiflessen Collection, these works will temporarily replace the large presbytery canvases by **Jacopo Tintoretto** (Venice, 1518-1594): *The Last Supper* and *The People of Israel in the Desert*, which are currently undergoing conservation - their first restoration in over fifty years - thanks to the generous support of **Save Venice**. Luc Tuymans returns to Venice - following an important retrospective at Palazzo Grassi in 2019 - in dialogue with the Benedictine monks of San Giorgio Maggiore, who have been committed for over a decade to restoring a meaningful relationship between the Church and Contemporary Art.



Luc Tuymans, *Heat*, 2025, detail, oil on canvas, 380 x 600 cm

The paintings, which have been created for the monastic presbytery and inspired by memories from the Artist's travels - fragments and glimpses of everyday life - capture attention through unusual colour palettes, disorienting perspectives and surreal, often contrasting atmospheres. What emerges is a narrative without a clear storyline, capable of revealing traces of the divine within the ordinary, reflecting the journey of the faithful through culture and spirituality in the sacred space of the Basilica.



Luc Tuymans, *Musicians*, 2025, detail, oil on canvas, 380 x 600 cm

As part of this important project, Tuymans will paint a **contemporary illuminated manuscript** which will be displayed soon on the lectern of the *badalone* in the centre of the choir - an area dedicated to communal prayer and praise. The manuscript will join an evolving collection of contemporary manuscripts that was established for the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in 2019, featuring works by artists collaborating with Benedicti Claustra Onlus, its non-profit branch.

The exhibition is curated by **Carmelo A. Grasso**, Director and Institutional Curator of Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore – Benedicti Claustra Onlus, **Dr. Corinna Otto**, Director of the Draiflessen Collection, and independent curator **Ory Dessau**.

Over the centuries, the Church has played a significant role in supporting and promoting the arts, contributing to the creation of a vast heritage that continues to bear witness to the convergence of faith, culture and aesthetic sensibility. In more recent times, this relationship with the world of art has diminished, and the Church is less active as a patron

of new works. In an age where visual and symbolic languages remain central to communication, it is interesting to reconsider how the Church might re-engage with Contemporary Art - not merely to decorate sacred spaces, but to open up new forms of dialogue and expression, offering opportunities for reflection and meaning for both believers and those who approach the spiritual dimension in a broader way.

It is with this spirit that Luc Tuymans has entered into dialogue with the Benedictine Community, with a view to creating his new works. With this project, the monks reaffirm their role as promoters of culture and bold commissioners of art, while the artist is given space to share his vision and artistic expression with the many worshippers and visitors who enter the Palladian Basilica.

Since the late 1980s, the Belgian artist has created complex works rich in symbolism and layered meanings. Characterised by soft colours and blurred contours, his paintings resist easy categorisation, alluding to the unrepresentable dimensions of history and reality. Tuymans' use of conceptual and aesthetic reduction invites deep viewer engagement. In the project for San Giorgio Maggiore, his focus shifts to personal introspection and memory. As such, his work brings together the question of representation in painting with the possibility of depicting something absent by making it tangible - which gives Tintoretto's two missing works a distant yet appropriate contemporary echo.

Tuymans' intervention for the Basilica, which is a unique and unrepeatable occasion, should not be misunderstood as a reinterpretation of Jacopo Tintoretto's works. That is not the aim of the project. Rather, he was invited to engage with the sacredness of the space and its history - just as Tintoretto once did centuries ago - exploring visual perspectives, the architectural dimensions of the presbytery, and the interaction of the faithful within the liturgical setting. The presentation of *Luc Tuymans – Basilica di San Giorgio Maggiore* offers a rare opportunity to witness how the Artist's work can resonate with and acquire new layers of meaning in dialogue with its surroundings.

## **LUC TUYMANS**

Luc Tuymans is an artist based in Antwerp and is widely regarded as one of the most important painters of his generation. His works have been exhibited in major cities including Frankfurt, New York, Toronto, Chicago, London, Philadelphia, Paris, Osaka, and Beijing. Tuymans frequently addresses traumatic historical events such as the Holocaust (*Gaskamer*, 1986), Belgian colonialism (*Mwana Kitoko*, 2000), and terrorism (*Still Life*, 2002), using everyday imagery to first disorient and then prompt personal, critical reflection. He first participated in the Venice Biennale in 1997 during the 47th International Art Exhibition, presenting *Illegitimate II*. In 2001 he represented Belgium at the 49th edition with *Mwana Kitoko. Beautiful White Man*, which tackled Belgium's colonial past leading up to the Congo's independence in 1960. In 2019, Tuymans held his first solo exhibition in Italy, *La Pelle*, at Palazzo Grassi, showcasing over 80 works created since 1986. His most recent exhibition, *L'Orphelin*, featuring four new fresco-painted panels, is currently on view at the Rotonde Valentin de Boulogne in the Louvre Museum.

## **BENEDICTI CLAUSTRA ONLUS**

The exhibition project is organised by Benedicti Claustra Onlus, the non-profit branch of the Benedictine Community of San Giorgio Maggiore, led since 2019 by Abbot Stefano Visintin osb. For over a decade, the organisation has promoted initiatives in art and artistic research. Within the spaces of the Palladian Basilica, it hosts cultural programmes of high artistic and spiritual value. The presence of contemporary artworks within this sacred space has reawakened the sensitivity of both the faithful and visitors, sparking meaningful encounters that open new perspectives for evangelisation and dialogue. Its activities form part of a broader initiative called “L’Arte Salva l’Arte” (*Art Saves Art*), where proceeds from cultural events are reinvested in restoration projects for the preservation and promotion of the Abbey’s historical and artistic heritage. In recent years, this new openness toward Contemporary Art has proven to be both a challenge and a vital opportunity - enriching spiritual life and contributing to the ongoing development of cultural and spiritual heritage.

## **DRAIFLESSEN COLLECTION**

Founded in 2009 by the German-Dutch entrepreneurial Brenninkmeijer family, the Draiflessen Collection became a non-profit art museum in 2017. It regularly presents exhibitions that explore a variety of themes across different time periods, engaging with contrasting areas of interest such as tradition and future, faith and doubt, boundaries and freedom, reality and fiction. The exhibitions aim to shed light on these topics through both artistic and scholarly perspectives, fostering open dialogue and deeper understanding. To this end, the Collection places particular emphasis on the educational value of art and the conversations it can spark.

Since its inception, the Draiflessen Collection has been envisioned as a vibrant place focused on people and their essential need for connection, inspiration, exchange and dialogue. It’s a place where individuals can share and pass on experiences that go beyond the boundaries of art and culture. The Draiflessen Collection also consciously fosters other collaborations, initiating and developing joint projects with international partners in the cultural sector.

### **Luc Tuymans – Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore**

Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice

9 May – 23 November 2025

#### **Opening hours:**

May–September: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.

October–November: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Closed on Mondays

Free admission

#### **For more information:**

[abbazia@abbaziasangiorgio.it](mailto:abbazia@abbaziasangiorgio.it)

[www.abbaziasangiorgio.it](http://www.abbaziasangiorgio.it)

[www.draiflessen.com](http://www.draiflessen.com)

[www.luctuymans.be](http://www.luctuymans.be)

**Vaporetto:** LINE 2 / San Giorgio stop

**Social:**

Facebook: Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore

Instagram: @abbaziasangiorgiomaggiore

#AbbaziaSanGiorgioMaggiore

#BenedictiClaustraOnlus

**Press contacts:**

**CASADOROFUNGHER Comunicazione**

**Elena Casadoro Kopp**

m +39 3348602488

elena@casadorofungher.com

**Francesca De Pra**

m +39 345 2535 925

francescadepra@casadorofungher.com

**Chiara Carraro**

m +39 327 8945 115

chiara@casadorofungher.com

[www.casadorofungher.com](http://www.casadorofungher.com)