

DIRK ZOËTE



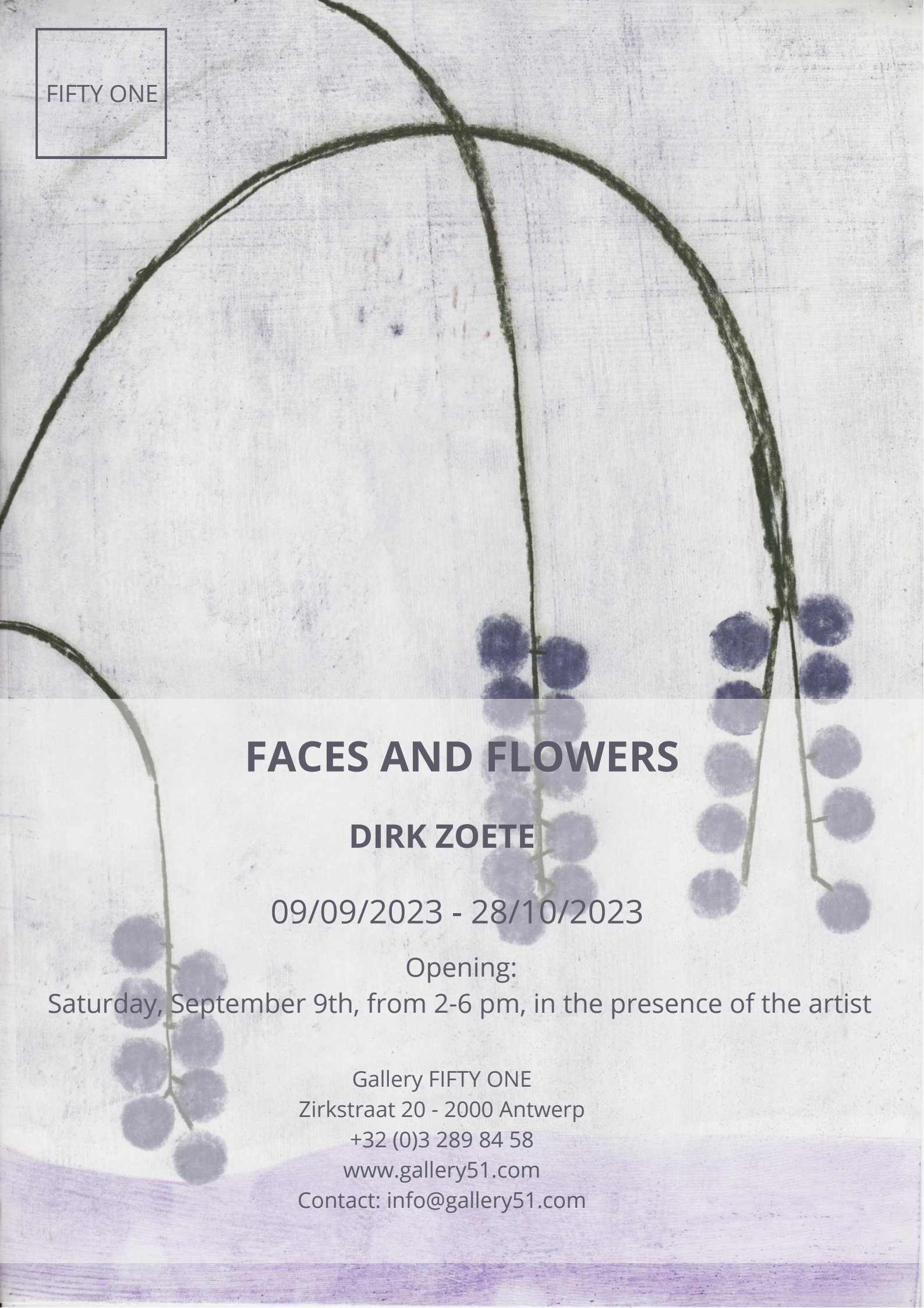
FACES AND FLOWERS

09/09

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28/10/2023

GALLERY FIFTY ONE



FIFTY ONE

# FACES AND FLOWERS

DIRK ZOETE

09/09/2023 - 28/10/2023

Opening:

Saturday, September 9th, from 2-6 pm, in the presence of the artist

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## Faces and Flowers

By Dirk Zoete



Opening: Saturday, Sep. 9th 2023, from 2 to 6 pm, in the presence of the artist  
Show: September 9th - October 28th 2023

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Gallery FIFTY ONE is pleased to present the second solo exhibition of Belgian artist Dirk Zoete (°1969). In 'Faces and Flowers' Zoete shows new work in which his fascination for the everyday, people and nature come together. Besides a comprehensive overview of his colourful botanical drawings from 2019 until now, Zoete will also present a series of never-before-seen (self)portraits, combined with a few new metal sculptures. This exhibition is prompted by his most recent publication 'The Cactus Derivatives: Volume two' (June 2023, published by Gallery FIFTY ONE) which is a sequel to the previous edition 'The Cactus Derivatives: Volume one' (2020, also a FIFTY ONE publication).

Drawing forms the core of Zoete's oeuvre. It is the basis for his multifaceted artistic practice, which extends to scale models, sculptures, installations and animation films. In his drawings, Zoete always starts from observable reality. He then gives free rein to his imagination and, in a way, remodels reality into a two-dimensional play of lines and shapes that represent an organically conceived universe. The resulting drawings aren't finished images, but stages of a research and observation process that are created through association and in which he allows himself to be guided by coincidence and imagination. The subsequent schematic compositions that arise from this process are characteristic of Zoete's drawing style. Their playful naivety and simplicity emphasize the beauty and poetry of imperfection.

Zoete grew up in the countryside. His father was a farmer, and nature has therefore always been an important source of inspiration since his childhood. He started creating cactus-like drawings in 2019; a series in which he revisits earlier nature drawings from his study period and, like an imaginary botanist, compiles a catalogue of his improvised plant world. In doing so, Zoete experiments with various materials such as pigment, chalk, pencil and oil pastel and uses frottage, which allows him to imitate the relief and structure of a cactus. Furthermore, a printing technique he developed using different pigmented paper sheets - related to the monotype - allows him to partially recreate a certain drawing, but with different colours and additions. Both methods provoke more volume, depth, but above all, an explosion of colour. Because one drawing flows naturally and organically from a previous one, certain motifs keep recurring. The cacti, flowers, trees, plants... created in this way gradually evolved into more abstracted and imaginative flora that reflect the artist's freedom and his pleasure of drawing.

Zoete's (self)portraits, which he has been working on for two years and which are shown here for the first time, also fluctuate between reality and the artist's imagination. The self-portrait is a recurring theme in Zoete's oeuvre and has previously formed, among others, the starting point for several series of masks-made of diverse materials such as plaster, concrete and aluminum. In this new, extensive and ever-evolving series - there are now about 150 drawings - the artist once again starts from the "classical" self-portrait. He is guided by his subconscious and experiments with different materials and techniques. For example, he uses unconventional materials such as spray paint in which he mixes ash, pigment and sand, and thus challenges the limits of the medium. As in Zoete's cactus drawings, one drawing inspires the next, with the portraits gradually transforming into deconstructed silhouettes that become increasingly schematic and abstract. The results are universal façades composed of typologies that look at the viewer with a blank stare.

In addition to these two series of drawings, Zoete also shows several new sculptures made of metal but created in such a way as to give the impression of being made of cardboard or paper. These works are an extension and continuation of the drawings on view here. These are simplified abstracted human figures in which color, plant form, and portrait come together.