

Serban Savu

Pictures at an Exhibition

Opening: Wednesday, September 16, 18 - 21 h

September 16 – October 31, 2015

Tuesday - Saturday, 12 – 18 h

Potsdamer Strasse 77 – 87, 10785 Berlin

Galeria Plan B is pleased to announce the solo exhibition of Romanian painter Serban Savu (born 1978, lives and works in Cluj), to open on Wednesday, the 16th of September in the framework of the Berlin Art Week and the abc gallery night 2015.

Figurative painter Serban Savu creates a wide range of compositions capturing the daily existence of the contemporary man at work and leisure; his paintings, characterized by empathy and close scrutiny, observation and abstraction, reduction and re-composition, are capable of initiating an assessment of the present moment understood in a wider, historical sense. The new series of paintings created for the exhibition is evolving around art history and reality as the main references guiding his work.

The interview realized by Mihai Pop with Serban Savu to accompany this exhibition is eloquent in this sense:

M.P.: As to what naturalness means for me when speaking about your works: it is the moment when you manage to come up with an image that we all carry with us, that we all know, and this even before seeing it among your works, where we only recognize it. This is the case with *The Guardian*, the painting with a guardian sleeping in the museum, included in this exhibition; it is clearly a well-built image, which is simultaneously very familiar – we seem to know it already. As if we would have all seen it before. At the same time, it says a lot about everydayness and the world of the museum.

S.S.: I was in Milano and I just finished the opening that I had last year there and I wanted to visit the Pinacoteca del Castello Sforzesco, and there I met in real life this scene in the painting; that is, I did not create it, I only adapted it. And I bumped into something familiar. It was a scene that could have happened also here, not only there. But what is interesting is the atmosphere of the museum. Everything was familiar and this scene all the more. This is where the idea of the current exhibition and of the work with the sleeping guardian has started. He was guarding the room in which they keep Filippo Lippi's painting, but, because of his position in the room, he was formally communicating, in his sleep, with the painting. The guardian was in direct relationship with the painting. This is how I perceived the whole scene – he simply entered the world of the painting. Painting as a reverie, something that you cannot grasp or understand the same way you understand everyday reality... This is something that surpasses us, and the fact that the guardian was guarding Filippo Lippi's painting seemed interesting to me. He is an artist that I love, but I was not especially attracted by that particular painting. When I saw it, I was not impressed. Instead, I was impressed when I re-painted it. I understood how extraordinary it is... You know, this is also a technique of learning how to write – copying a novel, not only reading it. To copy it word by word in order to have a deep understanding of its structure. When you read it, you are in a dream, in a different stage, you are in the imaginary world of the novel, but when you copy it, you recreate it and you are in its grammar, in its bowels.

M.P.: At the same time, you have continued your program of carefully observing man, workers in general, in their condition... [...] This work is emblematic for a whole series in which you practically portray the painter as a sort of social worker, who works with color and geometry, line and composition. Tell me more about the whole series. What connects the paintings in the exhibition?

S.S.: [...] I was interested in the way I see painting and my relationship with art history, but also with the world, with reality. The two, art history and reality, are my main references. They lead me as some guides, and I was especially interested in how they touch each other, as in my *The Allegory of Painting*, for instance, which is clearly a reference to art history – to Vermeer's famous work with the same title –, but

simultaneously represents what I believe about the relationship between art and reality. This subject captivates me very much: to what extent art is anchored in reality or detached of reality – this limit, the borderline between the two. I ask myself the same question from the perspective of a spectator and consumer of art.

M.P.: Several images in your works build precisely on proximity and distance. Sometimes you are very close to culture in the sense of art history. Some other times you are painfully anchored in reality.

S.S.: Exactly. I permanently oscillate between these references.

M.P.: There are two types of perception. The question is how to combine or connect them. This attempt at taking over art history and its topics, citations and compositions, to pass them through the filter of present times is risky. It was done many times.

S.S.: That's true – it is a recurrent question. But for me this is not necessarily what is at stake. I do not search for this, but when I look at the world, at what I see, I also have this filter of art history. One can look at my works without necessarily knowing the references I cite from art history. They do not depend on these landmarks. And I did not especially look for these consonances. I did not search for certain situations. [...] In fact, it is something very personal. I did not refer to general things, but rather to my relationship with things, to how I see painting today and the personal meaning I attach to the relationship between reality and art.

The complete interview realized by Mihai Pop with Serban Savu in August 2015 will be available as a printed text in the exhibition.

Serban Savu, born 1978, lives and works in Cluj. Previous solo exhibitions include: *Sometimes my Eyes are the Eyes of a Stranger*, Monica De Cardenas Galleria, Milan (2014), *Daily Practice for the End of the World*, Plan B Berlin (2012), *Under the Radar*, PM Gallery and House London (2011), *Close to Nature*, David Nolan Gallery New York (2011). Previous group exhibitions include: *A Few Grams of Red, Yellow, Blue. New Romanian Art*, Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2014) *Scènes Roumaines*, Espace Louis Vuitton Paris (2013), *Hotspot Cluj. New Romanian Art*, ARKEN Museum for Moderne Kunst Ishøj (2013), *European Travellers: Art from Cluj Today*, Kunsthalle Mücsarnok Budapest (2012), *XS - Recent Small-Scale Painting*, Knoxville Museum of Art (2008), *Expanded Painting 2*, Prague Biennale 3 (2007).

For more information, please contact the gallery at contact@plan-b.ro and +49.172.3210711.