

mihai nicodim gallery

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MICHIEL CEULERS

“Comment Tuer l’Amant De Sa Femme Quand On A Été Élevé Comme Moi Dans La Tradition?” (“How to Kill Your Wife’s Lover When You Were Raised with Tradition?”)

May 19 – June 30, 2012

Opening reception: Saturday, May 19, 2012, 6–9pm

Mihai Nicodim Gallery is pleased to announce our exhibition with Belgian artist Michiel Ceulers. Setting off from a blithe and basic beginning, Ceulers has spent many long nights with painting: stripping it down, lovingly caressing it, kicking it around the room, taking its bent limbs and girding them with humor and grace, manhandling the poor thing so that you can witness every bruise and tear, each scrape and scratch, the mystical sprays and the many whispering brushstrokes he's dragged across its long face.

When they finally wander out of the studio to hang against the stark white walls of far-flung galleries, the paintings bear all the marks of his love affair.

He strips the medium right down to its skeleton, peeling away all the unnecessary accouterments laden on poor painting by thousands of years to find out as best he can what the act can presently and personally mean. He endeavors to renovate the ancient practice with works wearing proudly their labors, sometimes singly and sometimes coupled together in handsome pairs. A rapid rigor reveals itself, unwinding through stripes and grids leaving the paintings at the end of the process curiously tender and refreshingly human.

Yes, this show is named after a jazzy little Jaque Brel tune which roughly translates to "How to kill your wife's lover when you were raised with tradition?" Painters are still raised with tradition, but how do they go beyond and like Brel how do they make it sound like so much fun? Ceulers doesn't forget or forgo where we came from, except when we need it. Ezra Pound's modernist diktat to "make it new" still haunts us, though it seems stupid to forget all the hard progress already made. The cavalcade of history with its pageantry and lineage is tough to get past, hellish sometimes to march beyond the endless hallways lined with the blood and sweat of ten thousand painters, beyond the *nature morte* and noble portraits of long dead masters, the corporeal smears and industrial edges of expressionists and abstractionists who spent this last century making colors and canvas bend and warp to reflect the shape and hue of their new times.

Here, without too much bloodshed but hardly with ease, Michiel Ceulers gladly goes beyond.

Michiel Ceulers (b. 1986) lives and works in Brussels and Berlin. A recent resident at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, he was the youngest artist ever to be accepted in the program. In 2011, Ceulers was nominated for the Young Belgian Painters Award. He has had solo exhibitions in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Brussels, London, Zurich and New York and is currently included in comprehensive survey "Tracing the Grid. The Grid in Art after 1945" at Kunst Museum Stuttgart.