

## Adrian Ghenie

January 23 - March 6, 2010

Mihai Nicodim Gallery is pleased to present the second solo show of Adrian Ghenie in the gallery. Adrian Ghenie, born in 1977, draws his inspiration from personal memories of growing up in communist Romania under the dictatorship of Ceausescu. He witnessed history being written and rewritten, first hand, and that period of transition left a deep impact on him. The artist takes the viewer on a journey through some of the darkest states of human existence - oppression, abjection, tragedy, persecution, poverty, loneliness and misery, hoping to find himself in the grey area between a movie script and real life. In a society thrown in fast forward, Ghenie feels like he is passing through a series of rooms loaded with history and subconscious dark private fears. The mantle of history surrounds Ghenie's work as well as the artist himself, his paintings are like mental snapshots of crime scenes taken by an uninvolved observer, a material portrayal of the human condition in which the baggage of history weighs heavily on the shoulders of the present.

In this new body of work, Ghenie offers a contemporary position on a universal theme of those abusing power and those abused by them. It's not just the execution of his paintings that reminds us of the heavy substance of the mantle of history, but also their content, which is narrative filled with historical facts, though not explicitly telling a clearly defined story. That's the case for the „Berlin Zoo“ series which carry the metaphor of the traumatic collective experience of the Iron Curtain. The Iron Curtain was the way Europe was viewed after World War II. Physically, it took shape in the Berlin Wall.

Berlin Wall served as a longtime symbol of the ideological, military, economic and physical boundary between Eastern and Western Europe. The ideological division put to the East all the countries connected to or influenced by the former Soviet Union, ruled by communist dictators and which struggled for freedom until the fall of the Berlin wall.

The collective struggle in communist Romania ended up in 1989 with the brutal execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu, the abusive dictator and his wife, by a secret military tribunal which found them both guilty of genocide and crimes against the state. In „The Trial“, Ghenie's powerful painterly language navigates from the grotesque to the sublime in depicting the last minutes before the execution of the dictators by a firing squad, ending the dictator's 24 years as communist party leader and Romania's president - during which he suppressed all opposition using brutal force.

The trial lasted for just under an hour. Watching the proceedings, one is filled with a queasy sense of history at its rawest, stripped to brutal fundamentals. Here are two living people, once powerful rulers of their country, now defenseless, about to become dead. How would it have been, one wonders, to see the show trials of King Louis XVI of France or Marie Antoinette or the trumped-up trial of Anne Boleyn? This comes pretty close. Once the sentence was pronounced, four soldiers approached the couple to tie their hands with a crude ball of twine. The intention was apparently to shoot them one at a time but they insisted on dying together. The footage of the trial takes on an unrefined, unedited quality far more dramatic than any Hollywood production.

Adrian Ghenie recently showed in the Liverpool Biennial (2009), Prague Biennale (2009, 2007) and had solo shows at Haunch of Venison Zurich and London, Tim Van Laere, Antwerp, Nolan-Judin, Berlin and Galeria Plan B, Cluj and Berlin. He is currently having a solo show at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest and his upcoming solo at S.M.A.K., Ghent opens December 2010. His work is in the permanent collections of Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, MOCA, Los Angeles, S.M.A.K., Ghent and Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp.