

# NICODIM

## Șerban Savu

April 23 - May 28, 2016



Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles is pleased to present 12 new paintings by Romanian artist Șerban Savu.

In the new body of works, Savu continues with his subdued, detached and cerebral idiom attained with a curious effect of haziness, as if everything were observed through a veil of cool atmosphere. However, the artist has departed from his previous voyeuristic perspective of the bird's-eye view, and lowers his vantage point to the eye level, bringing the viewer closer to the subjects. He even takes a further step in a few paintings to depict the interiors of a bedroom where a girl is tripping for the webcam, an unnamed hall where a man repairing a mural painting, and a waiting room at a train station where tired passengers are reposing. In each

571 south anderson street, suite 2  
los angeles, california 90033

Info@nicodimgallery.com  
www.nicodimgallery.com  
t 323.262.0260

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interior, there is a picture on the wall. The images-within-images or meta-paintings reveal the artist's critical attitude toward pictorial representation, inasmuch as historically, since even prior to the Renaissance, the interplay between the double imagerial representations has embodied a profound aspect of self-awareness and self-reflection, be it personal or collective, in visual terms.

The title of one of his paintings, *Impressionist Landscape With Thieves* (2016), elucidates the artist's allusion to plein-air painting by Impressionist masters, such as Alfred Sisley and Camille Pissarro who employed delicate, dry and slow dabs to render nature and seasons. Savu's landscapes and now interiors are meticulously constructed with diagonal lines to create spatial recession in the center, back to the horizon; trees and architectural structures function as frames for human actions within: a classical composition resembling Poussin's. The theatrical poses of figures that are accentuated by the dramatic staging of light and its induced shadow conjure a visual tension in the mis-en-scene. In *Menage a Trois* (2016), a voluptuous woman is lounging on the meadow turning her back toward the viewer but facing two men: one is cutting the other's hair. She is looking down without paying attention to anything. The man, sitting upright on a rock, is depicted with a three-quarter view gazing at the distance to the right; and the haircutter who is facing the viewer concentrates only on his job. They are oblivious to the viewer. However, it is their disconnected gazes that direct the viewer's eyes to explore the entire pictorial plane. In the background, the sun shines through a thick grove of trees and tall flowers onto a sparkling stream that emerges from the dark woods. The allegorical pastoral scene calls to mind *Pastoral Concert* (1509) that is now often attributed to Titian by many scholars. Savu fully exploits the tactile potential of the oil paint by applying it with varied densities: sometimes allowing the weave of the canvas to show through and at others building up the surface with layers of strokes.

Șerban 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), Overview, Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles (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), Unimportant Stories, Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles (2010), XS – Recent Small-Scale Painting, Knoxville Museum of Art (2008), Expanded Painting 2, Prague Biennale 3 (2007).

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