

NICODIM

Șerban Savu
Regolith

Nicodim, Los Angeles

March 25 – May 1, 2021



Șerban Savu, *Thracian Tomb*, 2020

"Memory is the scribe of the soul." — Aristotle

"Write your injuries in dust, your benefits in marble." — Benjamin Franklin

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Dust is the ultimate inevitability: the origin and final resting place for us all. It serves as a metaphor for age, forgetfulness, and the process of forgetting and being forgotten. It's dirty, it gets everywhere, but not necessarily uncomfortably so; dusty objects require a bit of a shaking-off, a light dusting. Regolith is the stony material that lies loosely on top of bedrock, the dust before the dust.

Șerban Savu was born in Sighișoara, Romania, near Transylvania, while the country suffered under the corrupt and brutal pseudo-Communist autocracy of Nicolae Ceaușescu. When the Soviet empire crumbled in 1989, Romania was flooded with western culture, capitalism, and all that comes with it. People were no longer hungry, but a thin layer of dust soon gathered on the collective memory for the way things were.

Regolith, Savu's fourth exhibition with Nicodim, continues his examination of sentimentality for a past in which suffering was omnipresent. His palette is muted and dusty, with tones not dissimilar to the way one recalls an old photograph, or a film seen only once. The compositions weave new nostalgias with the old, subverting present desires with those for a time that may or may not have actually existed. In "Renovations," 2020, two figures either cover-up or restore a 16th century Catholic fresco—in 17th century Transylvania, the Protestants covered up Catholic art in an effort to eradicate ornamentation, then the Marxist-Leninists eliminated the Protestant imagery in their campaign for an atheistic society, then the capitalists entered and brought their own icons. Whether the painting within the painting is emerging from or returning to the dust depends entirely on the viewer's mnemohistorical reference points. "Thracian Tomb," 2020, is set within an archaeological excavation of artwork initially intended for funerary purposes as it is unveiled in service of a new ideology. The excavation site itself predates the Roman history of the Romanian region, and spotlights the relativity of inherited memory; there was a Romania before there were Romanians, and they curated their own cultural history. "Mask," 2020, and "Concretion," 2020, both immerse the viewer in their own beginnings and endings, from dust to regolith to dust again, the osmosis of soul from one generation to the next.

The past is a living thing to Savu, not the way it was, but the way it thrives in memory. "Growing up, I had ethnic German neighbors in Transylvania, who managed to flee Romania before 1989. Things immediately became much better for them after they left. Still, they have nostalgia for living under Ceaușescu, when they were poor, hungry. The nostalgia is not necessarily for the bad times—those they have forgotten—but for youth. It is youth they remember."

Șerban Savu (b. 1978, Sighișoara, Romania) lives and works in Cluj, Romania. He attended the University of Art and Design in Cluj, Romania (2001). Considered part of the group of painters known as the Cluj-school, Savu's skilfully rendered canvases capture the daily existence of contemporary Romanians at work and leisure. Recent exhibitions include *Șerban Savu, Adrian Ghenie, Ciprian Muresan, and Geta Bratescu*, La Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, Rome, Italy (2020); *En dérive/Adrift*, Centre d'art le LAIT, Albi, France (2019, solo); *Șerban Savu and Ciprian Muresan: L'Atelier Sans Fin*, Atelier Brancusi, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2019); *The Influencing Machine*, Galeria Nicodim,

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Bucharest (2019); *BioPerversity*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2018); *Disruptive Imagination - Making Windows Where There Were Once Walls*, Gallery of Fine Arts, Ostrava, Czech Republic and the Ferenczy Museum Center, Szentendre, Hungary (2017); *Șerban Savu: New Works*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2016, solo); *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Plan B Gallery, Berlin, Germany (2015, solo); and *The Edge of the Empire*, David Nolan Gallery, New York, NY (2009, solo).

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Șerban Savu

° Born 1978, Sighișoara, Romania
Lives and works in Cluj, Romania

Education

2001 University of Art and Design, Cluj, Romania

Solo Exhibitions

- 2021 *Regolith*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 *En dérive*, Centre d'art Le Lait, Albi, France
The New Life, Galeria Dawid Radziszewski, Warsaw, Poland
- 2018 *Heroes, Saints and Other Figures*, Galeria Plan B, Berlin, Germany
Serban Savu, Museo Pietro Canonica, Rome, Italy
- 2016 *New Works*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2015 *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Plan B Gallery, Berlin, Germany
Manastur, Dawid Radziszewski Gallery, Warsaw, Poland
- 2014 *Sometimes My Eyes are the Eyes of a Stranger*, Monica de Cardenas Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2012 *Daily Practice for the End of the World*, Galeria Plan B, Berlin, Germany
Overview, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2011 *Close to Nature*, David Nolan Gallery, New York, NY
Under the Radar, Pitzhanger Manor House & Gallery, London, United Kingdom
- 2010 *Unimportant Stories*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Essay on Limits, Galerie Hussenot, Paris, France
- 2009 *Recent Paintings*, Galeria Plan B, Berlin, Germany
The Edge of the Empire, David Nolan Gallery, New York, NY
Behind the Walls, Laika, Cluj, Romania
- 2007 *Harvest*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Girls, Plan B Gallery, Cluj, Romania
Along The River, FA Projects, London, United Kingdom
- 2006 *The New Man*, Mie Lefever Gallery, Ghent, Belgium
Clock Card, H'art Gallery, Bucharest, Romania
- 2004 *Vietato l'ingresso ai non addetti ai lavori*, Cube Gallery, Venice, Italy
Ichtyos, Spazio Arte Pisanello, Verona, Italy
- 2001 *Other Marine Species*, Radio Gallery, Cluj, Romania

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Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2020 *Serban Savu, Adrian Ghenie, Ciprian Muresan, and Geta Bratescu*, La Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio, Rome, Italy
- 2019 *Ciprian Muresan et Serban Savu: L'atelier sans fin*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Ex-East, Past and Recent Stories of the Romanian Avant-Garde, Espace Niemeyer, Paris, France
The Influencing Machine, Galeria Nicodim, Bucharest, Romania
- 2018 *BioPerversity*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Ciprian Muresan et Serban Savu: L'entretien infini, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
The state We Are In, Collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Galeria Labirynt, Lublin, Poland
Art on Stage, Art Safari, Bucharest, Romania
Double Heads Matches, New Budapest Gallery, Budapest, Hungary
- 2017 *Disruptive Imagination - Making Windows Where There Were Once Walls*, Gallery of Fine Arts, Ostrava, Czech Republic; Ferenczy Museum Center, Szentendre, Hungary
Hierophant, Nicodim Gallery, Bucharest, Romania
The 3rd Mediterranean Biennale: Out of Place, Sakhnin, Israel
On the Sex of Angels, Galeria Nicodim, Bucharest, Romania
- 2016 *...Hounded by External Events...*, Curated by Michael Bracewell, Maureen Paley Gallery, London, United Kingdom
George Grosz: Politics and His Influence, David Nolan Gallery, New York, NY
Layers, Galeria Nicodim, Bucharest, Romania
Landscapes After Ruskin: Redefining The Sublime, Curated by Joel Sternfeld, The Hall Art Foundation, Reading, VT
Berlin Show #4: Inventory, Plan B Gallery, Berlin, Germany
Track Changes, Mendes Wood DM Gallery, Sao Paulo, Brazil
The Factory of Facts and Other (Unspoken) Stories, Salonul de Proiecte, Bucharest; Domino, Cluj, Romania
- 2015 *Tracing Shadows*, PLATEAU, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea
Appearance and Essence, Art Encounters Biennial, Timisoara, Romania
Pocket Revolutions, Korea Foundation, Seoul, South Korea
Group Exhibition, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2014 *Defaced*, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, CO
Through the Collector's Eye, The Office, Cluj, Romania
A FEW GRAMS OF RED, YELLOW, BLUE: New Romanian Art, Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, Poland
This Side of Paradise, SI2 Contemporary Art Gallery, Sotheby's, London, United Kingdom

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- 2013 *Romanian Scenes*, Espace Culturel Loius Vuitton, Paris, France
Km/h, Utopies automobiles et ferroviaires (1913-2013), Musée du château des ducs de Wurtemberg, Montbéliard, France; Musée de Belfort, Belfort, France
Hotspot Cluj, New Romanian Art, Arken Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 2012 *Nightfall: New Tendencies in Figurative Painting*, curated by Jane Neal, Centre for Modern and Contemporary Art in Debrecen, Hungary; Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague, Czech Republic
European Travellers: Art from Cluj in the New Millenium, Mucsarnok Kunsthalle, Budapest
Referencing History, Green Art Gallery, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Salonul de vara, Plan B Gallery, Cluj, Romania
- 2011 *Anthem of People's Love*, Mihai Nicodim, Los Angeles, CA
Communism never happened, Charim Gallery, Vienna
Salonul de mai, Plan B Gallery, Cluj, Romania
East Ex East, Brand New Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2010 *Figurative Painting in Romania 1970-2010*, Club Electro Putere, Craiova, Romania
Mircea Pinte Collection, Museum of Art, Cluj, Romania
After the Fall, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Peekskill, NY; Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, TN
Berlin Show #2, Galeria Plan B, Berlin
Romanian Cultural Resolution, Spinnerei, Leipzig, Germany
Route tournante en sous-bois, Upload Art Project, Trento, Italy
- 2009 *I've Watered a Horseshoe as if It Were a Flower*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Invisible Body, Conspicuous Mind, curated by Lara Taubman, Luckman Fine Arts Complex, Los Angeles, CA
Expanded Painting 3, Prague Biennale 4, Prague, Czech Republic
Show Me a Hero, curated by Jane Neal, Calvert 22, London, United Kingdom
- 2008 *Size Matters: XS – Recent Small-Scale Painting*, Knoxville Museum of Art, Tennessee
Re-construction, Biennial of Young Artists, Bucharest, Romania
Berlin Show #1, Galeria Plan B, Berlin, Germany
Closer Still, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Days Become Nights, Galerie Hussenot, Paris, France
- 2007 *Across the Trees: Romanian Art Now*, David Nolan Gallery, New York, NY
Eastern European Painting Now, Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, TX
Expanded Painting 2, Prague Biennale 3, Prague, Czech Republic
- 2006 *Cluj Connection*, Haunch of Venison, Zurich, Switzerland
Please Drive Slowly Through Our World, Kontainer Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Grants and Awards

- 2004 "Nicolae Iorga" postgraduate research grant, Venice, Italy

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Selected Public and Private Collections

Centre Pompidou, Paris

Hall Art Foundation, Derneburg; Reading, Vermont

Hort Family Collection, New York

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California, USA

Ambassador Nicholas Taubman and Mrs. Jenny Taubman Collection, Roanoke, Virginia

Dean Valentine and Amy Adelson Collection, Los Angeles

Zabludowicz Collection, London; Sarvisalo; New York