

Adrian Ghenie

12 October - 25 November 2023



Tim Van Laere Gallery presents its seventh solo exhibition by Adrian Ghenie. This exhibition features a new series of oil paintings and charcoal drawings that focus on the strange shift that has occurred in the artist's studio practice over the last decade. According to Ghenie, the artist's solitude in the studio has changed due to social media: "We still have this need to be alone, but we are not. We are alone there, but at the same time with collective voices. There are people you can interact with through a tablet or a laptop or an iPhone. I'm not alone anymore, but neither connected either. The strange feeling that I'm somewhere in-between. This will eventually change the way we do art. You have these apps that allow you to modify, extend, blend things together. It made me think of science fiction, the species of the Borg who are all interconnected. It's me in the studio in this limbo with my thoughts. But at the same time with this collective mind inside, and that is the image of me. And I think we all start to function in this trinity."

Adrian Ghenie is one of the most significant contemporary painters today. His unique style is characterised by a remarkable wealth of pictorial fragments with a fluid and hallucinatory spatial arrangement, resulting in a collage-like assemblage of distinct pictorial motifs, a hedonistic sensuality and an innovative, radical and eclectic interpretation of the most diverse subjects. With a deep understanding of the dark side of human history, Ghenie explores the complex layers of our collective past and present. His artworks become visual time capsules, raising questions about human existence, complex developments throughout history and the limits of artistic expression. With this expressive painting and drawing technique, Adrian Ghenie demonstrates mastery of historical styles ranging from Baroque chiaroscuro to the lushness of abstract expressionism. His most recent works however show a new development in which he abandons his dark color palette for fresher tones. This shift is also noticeable in subject matter, where Ghenie moves away from his exploration of historical events to focus on the representation of the human body.

Adrian Ghenie: 'I think it's hard after so much figurative painting to just continue to depict the human body. So I have this need to deconstruct it, destroy it, put it back in this new type of silhouette, which I call 'the impossible body'. There is no anatomy. There is nothing. But still something recognisable there. The twentieth century painting started with that, started with Picasso dismantling the human body and continued with other people, including Duchamp, or people like Bacon, of course. This deconstruction is also present in cartoons. There is a genius in there, which I totally respect. This is one of the best productions of the 20th century. I like the way Dix and the generation of artists of the Weimar Republic relate to the history of painting, because there were in the middle of the modernist revolution. Everybody was radical. If you think of people like Malevich, they were so eager to cancel the tradition. But the Germans knew how to relate with their own history of painting, the German Gothic, and I think I'm part of the same family. For me, everything, which is until 1990 is public domain. You can steal it. They probably were the first ones who came up with this. So I like to believe about myself that I'm having the same attitude.'

Adrian Ghenie was born in 1977 in the Romanian city of Baia Mare. He graduated from the Art and Design University of Cluj-Napoca and now lives and works in both Berlin and Rome. In 2015 he was selected to represent Romania at the 56th Venice Biennale. His work is in important public collections worldwide, including: Metropolitan Museum, New York; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Long Museum, Shanghai; SFMOMA, San Francisco; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Hermitage, St Petersburg; Museum of Contemporary Art (M HKA), and Antwerp; S.M.A.K., Ghent.