

Marius Bercea

Thieves of Time

January 4 - February 2, 2020

François Ghebaly is proud to present *Thieves of Time*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Romanian artist Marius Bercea.

In the title painting of the exhibition, a group of youths gather, slung across a living room. Their social relationships are unclear and despite physical togetherness, they appear more in dialogue with their own thoughts than with each other. The bookshelves are empty, a canvas is blank, the windows are dark. Like a film camera moving fluidly from one room to the next, this gathering continues across the works in the exhibition, capturing these thieves of time as they flit between our era and those that came before.

For two decades, Marius Bercea has developed a wide ranging body of work that uses a diverse set of painting languages to depict the social and psychological aftereffects of the Romanian Revolution, the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the influx of consumer capitalism in Romania. *Thieves of Time* turns Bercea's attention to portraiture, specifically focusing on the generation of Romanians born around 1989.

These figures represent the first generation to grow up entirely in the aftermath of tectonic ideological changes in Romania and across Eastern Europe. Many of them came of age not with their parents—who sought work abroad in the 1990's due to financial instability in the country—but with their grandparents, whose outlooks were indelibly marked by their experiences in the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War. Bercea's new paintings take up this generation, with its mixed sense of historical memory and its collaged experience of democracy and the free market.

Like his subjects, the paintings themselves are descended from influences scattered through time: the ritualistic film sets of Derek Jarman, the Nabi painters of late 1800's Paris, Blake Edward's 1968 Hollywood farce *The Party*, and a Pop exaltation of color, patterning and fashion. Bercea's world is one in which multiple systems of value are made manifest in the collision of distinct visual vocabularies and vibrant juxtapositions. Marked by a sense of inwardness and reflexivity, yet also self-possession and stateliness, the figures that anchor these works do not clearly show their desires, suggesting an atrophying of drive and a clouding of direction. In the artist's words, these figures "carry a foil over their souls," a shroud of uncertainty represented sometimes by a blurring that carries the quality of memory, sometimes by a textile patterning that seems emitted from within.

Marius Bercea (b. 1979) lives and works in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. His recent solo exhibitions include *Time Can Space*, Blain|Southern, Berlin (2018), *A Full Rotation of the Moon*, Cluj Museum of Art, Romania (2017), and *(On) Relatively Calm Disputes*, François Ghebaly, Los Angeles (2016). A new book of his photography, *Sun Tan Mustang*, was published in the summer of 2019. *Thieves of Time* is Bercea's fourth exhibition with François Ghebaly.