

MARIUS BERCEA

QUI VIVRA VERRA

SEPTEMBER 18 - OCTOBER 23 2010

For his first show in Culver City, François Ghebaly is thrilled to present *QUI VIVRA VERRA*, a new body of work by Marius Bercea.

Sensuous paint oozing from shoddy concrete walls becomes a metaphor of hope for Marius Bercea in his new series of paintings. Bercea makes the re-purposed buildings of his native post-Soviet Romania become sites of unpredictable abstraction expressed through vibrant, bright colors that seep through the cracks of gray Fascist architecture. He observes how even in a “free” society the buildings still manage to lump human presence into collectives. In some of the works, the artist brings people into closer view but he conspicuously blurs the details of their faces and bodies while embellishing the backdrop of a cavernous bath house or some other public space.

Formalist shapes are the unabashed surprise in these new works revealing a nostalgia Bercea has for Abstract Expressionism, a nineteen-forties and fifties art movement where artists considered painting a cathartic, religious experience. His fearless use of Abstract Expressionism’s “push-pull” concept in 2010 looks strangely refreshing. He earnestly engages the theory without resorting to ironic apologies for using traditional concepts and materials, an almost unheard of tactic in today’s contemporary painting.

Abstract Expressionism was a critical moment in High Modernism but so was Fascist architecture. Abstract Expressionism has been criticized for being Fascistic in its intransigent go-round of rule-making. But since it was barricaded to a small group of willing artists, its self-imposed strictures became if not laughable, then at least interesting. At its best, it was a watershed moment in art history. The Fascist architecture that creates the cities where Bercea lives and grew up express the immutability of High Modernism to full-blown effect. It intentionally shaped and re-shaped entire cultures leaving its citizens little choice about where and how they live. Bercea suggests that a love for extreme discipline and rigor may produce beautiful results within the private universe of the artist but applying the same idea as a modus operandi for the masses results in crumbling nightmares.

The artist skillfully weaves an intricate comparison between Abstract Expressionism and Fascism using a visual language that speaks with an articulation well beyond his twenty-eight years. He tells the timeless story of how evil and good can grow from the same parent showing how the West puts context under a microscope using it to enhance the idea of the individual but the East used it to broaden and grow society. East or West aside, Bercea’s paintings remind us that Modernism has been the same everywhere.

- Lara Taubman

For further information, please contact Karisa Morante at karisa@ghebaly.com