

Ana Cristea Gallery



Zsolt Bodoni: The Foundries of Ideology

October 15th through November 21st, 2009

Opening Reception:

Thursday, October 15, 2009, 6 – 8 pm

For its inaugural exhibition, Ana Cristea Gallery is delighted to present **The Foundries of Ideology** - an exhibition of new paintings by the young Hungarian artist, Zsolt Bodoni (b. 1975) and his first solo show in New York. Bodoni has become increasingly recognized on the international stage for his richly atmospheric and vigorously painted canvases that dramatically evoke the violent struggles of Hungary's past. For Bodoni, an ethnic Hungarian who grew up in Romania during the last years of Ceausescu's dictatorship, the tangled politics of his region's history are especially poignant.

Looking back as an adult on his region's turbulent past, the artist was struck by how the arrival of each new 'empire' in history not only brought with it new heroes, but new monuments. The Hungarians have always celebrated their founding Magyars with statues of their warrior leaders, but they also favor a bird known as a 'Turul' – a mythical, falcon-like creature, said to have lead the Magyars to their land. Much later, leading Imperial figures such as Andrassy, the patriotic general, and Horthy, (regent of the Kingdom of Hungary in the interwar years), were immortalized in stone and bronze.

Past works of Bodoni's were focused on these iconic symbols of Imperialism, many of which were to meet a sorry fate at the hands of the Communists (they melted down some of the most popular statues and re-cast them as idols of their own new state). Recently though, as demonstrated in the new paintings exhibited in this show, Bodoni has become increasingly concerned with and focused on the monuments of Communism. He is intrigued by the fact that despite its propaganda slogans, films and statues, Communism was to prove no better protector than Imperialism for its heroes - with its protagonists lasting only as long as the regime itself, and in some cases even less time, as with the gargantuan statue of Stalin, erected in Budapest in 1951 and deposed only five years after its grand unveiling and in the most dramatic fashion during the year of the Hungarian uprising (over one hundred thousand protestors set about the statue's destruction and 'Stalin' was ripped from the pedestal leaving only his boots behind).

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Bodoni's works provide us with a revealing insight into the commanding presence and sinister implications of a type of sculpture intended to inspire or affirm the prowess of a victorious army or people. Additionally, the artist's paintings address the ideological implications that accompany the decision to erect or remove a particular figure or symbol from a public place; for there is something terribly poignant about the image of a statue that has been consigned to storage or is in the process of being shipped to a foundry for 'recycling'. Without confronting 'head on' the horrors of war, or the fervor of revolution, Bodoni nonetheless succeeds in evoking it in this exhibition of powerful new works.