

## Ana Cristea Gallery

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### Alexander Tinei: All About Me

Curated by Jane Neal

January 14th through February 20st, 2010

Opening Reception:

Thursday, January 14, 2010, 6 – 8 pm



Ana Cristea Gallery is delighted to announce 'All About Me', the first US solo exhibition by Moldovan artist Alexander Tinei, curated by Jane Neal.

Tinei has produced a series of arresting and moving new works especially for the show. The figures depicted in these paintings all bear the emblematic trace of tattoos. The notion of being different, or 'marked' is an emotive concept for Tinei. He sees the tattoo as an act rooted in pagan culture and Eastern belief systems and the means by which a person can express their devotion to a particular cause or ideology through the signing of an agreement in blood. Tinei's preoccupation with depicting highly individualised, ambiguously sexed figures whose poses and the contexts they occupy often point towards marginalisation and alienation from mainstream society, reveal him to be someone concerned by identity and the quest to discover and express the 'self'. Tinei's interest in an individual's transformation could in part be traced to the history of his own personal evolution. Born in Moldova before it became a republic and while it was still part of the Soviet Union, Tinei describes himself as: 'an absolute product of a Soviet culture, transformed into Western culture, transformed into myself.'

Tinei left Moldova and travelled to Budapest as a young man. Two experiences in his new found life in Hungary were to have a profound effect on both the artist's life and art. The first was his encounter with the Bible and the beginnings of his new found Christian faith. Feeling himself transformed into a cosmopolitan person with a new identity in Christ, Tinei saw himself as reborn, and his faith began to be increasingly reflected in his work. Tinei's figures often resemble hybrid humans – neither fully human nor fully alien. They represent what the artist describes as a "lost identity" (by choosing to reject God and His love they make themselves separate from God and ultimately suffer).

The second experience that was to transform the young artist was his first encounter with the work of Andy Warhol. Shortly after moving from Moldova to Budapest, Tinei went to see his first Warhol retrospective at the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art. The show made him realise he had a number of questions to ask himself about his own (at that time), very traditional, classically underpinned practice, and he also needed to think about the question of identity itself and how he might find new ways of addressing it.

Hungary was adapting to post communist life much faster than Moldova and Tinei began to consider the impact of materialism, pop culture and the East's new passion for fashion, and fashion magazines on both his life and art. With capitalism came over commercialisation, but also a new kind of freedom – graffiti began to decorate or deface buildings. For Tinei the parallel between the modern urban landscape and the condition of the post modern, post communist world was all too easily apparent: 'When we think about modern urban landscape we see a landscape with graffiti covered buildings. So when I imagine a contemporary portrait I see graffiti on this too. The pollution or degradation of the environment is a condition of the life we live. Everything starts from an idea.'