

Adrian Ghenie

Shadow Paintings

11 October 2024 – 9 February 2025

Adrian Ghenie is honoring Egon Schiele, one of expressionism's most important visual artists, with a revolutionary exhibition. Based on a concept originated by Ciprian Adrian Barsan, it envisions a return of Schiele's lost works—known only from black-and-white photographs—courtesy of Adrian Ghenie's hauntingly emphatic artistic abilities.

Romanian artist Adrian Ghenie takes Schiele's lost works as an opportunity to embark on an impressive and unique search for traces with works created especially for this exhibition:

“Schiele was of course part of my intellectual archive, not in terms of style, but in terms of attitude. Together with Schiele, I share an interest in the deformation and stretching of the human form and playful experimentation with it. Deformation was a solution for representation, but also an expression of the freedom that came with modernism. Once you leave the traditional constraints of anatomy behind, the way you deform can become a portrait of character or the inner psyche on a deeper level. This play with the human form marked the beginning of something new.”

Adrian Ghenie

Immortal energy from lost works

Around one quarter of Schiele's paintings remain missing to this day or are known to have been lost or destroyed, for the most part prior to the Second World War. The exact circumstances surrounding their disappearance are still a mystery. These lost images, which revolved around weighty themes such as death, sexuality, self-reflection, the search for identity, distortion, melancholy, and faith, now exist only as shadowy photographs.

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The project “Shadow Paintings” takes viewers along on a metaphysical journey through dissolution and eventual reincarnation. The works referred to here as “Shadow Paintings” symbolize the dark night of the soul in which individuals find themselves confronted with their inner shadows—a process associated with concepts such as nigredo, tenebrosity, and melancholy.

Via his own deconstructive method, Adrian Ghenie lends these “Shadow Paintings” a new dimension that reaches far beyond mere form, transforming them into lively manifestations of the chromatic spectrum while also blurring the boundaries between reality and abstraction. In doing so, he strives not to follow a spiritual calling but rather to achieve a state of energetic euphoria. Ghenie creates “the impossible body” without anatomy—a reinvention of nothingness.

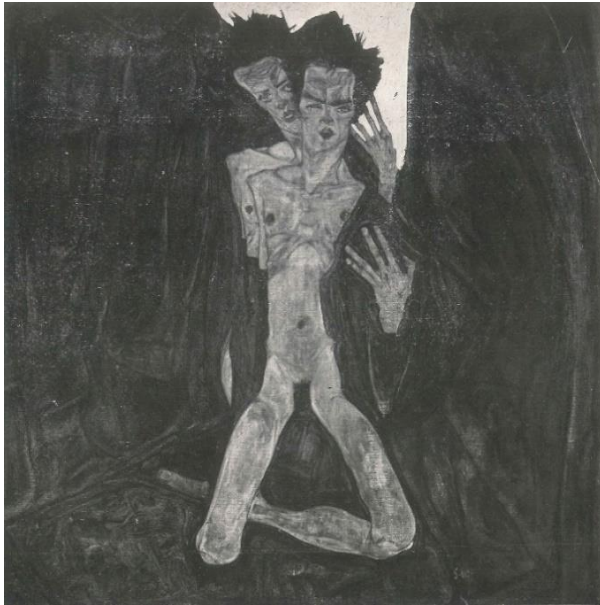
The emphasis in this new series of works is on the human body and on existence as such. It offers space for interpretations that range far beyond the physical, indeed diving into the transcendental. This process gives rise to deeper reflection upon the nature of perception itself and upon just how we construct and deconstruct reality. Schiele himself employed the human body as a medium via which to convey deep-reaching emotional and psychological states and pose questions as to human existence, sexuality, death, and spirituality.

Ghenie assumes the challenging task of not only resurrecting these works from the shadow world but also of physically re-embodiment and reviving them. The point here is to refrain from physically replicating Schiele’s own shadows and instead provide their deeper essence with a new, impossible embodiment.

Ciprian Adrian Barsan previously joined forces with the ALBERTINA Museum to realize the successful exhibition of works by Niko Pirosmani. This exhibition is likewise supported by Barsan’s Infinitart Foundation.

Curators: Klaus Albrecht Schröder, Ciprian Adrian Barsan (C.A.B.)

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Egon Schiele
The Self-Seers
From: Albert Paris Gütersloh, Egon Schiele. Attempt at a Preface, Vienna 1911



Egon Schiele
The melancholy of the World
From: Albert Paris Gütersloh, Egon Schiele. Attempt at a Preface, Vienna 1911



Adrian Ghenie
Study after The Self-Seers I, 2024
Charcoal on paper
140 x 120 cmFoto © Infitart Foundation



Adrian Ghenie
The melancholy of the World 1, 2024
Oil on canvas
210 x 150 cm
Foto © Infitart Foundation

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Egon Schiele
Kneeling male nude with raised hands (self-portrait)
From: Albert Paris Gütersloh, Egon Schiele. Attempt at a Preface, Vienna 1911



Adrian Ghenie
Kneeling male nude with raised hands 1, 2024
210 x 150 cm
Oil on canvas
Photo © Infinitart Foundation

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Egon Schiele

Resurrection

From: Albert Paris Gütersloh, Egon Schiele. Attempt at a Preface, Vienna 1911

Photo © Kallir Research Institute

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Adrian Ghenie
Resurrection 1, 2024
191 x 200 cm
Oil on canvas
Photo © Infnitart Foundation