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# PHAIDON



Serban Savu (right) and Weekend (2006)

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Figurative painter Serban Savu's skillfully rendered canvases capture the daily existence of contemporary Romanians at work and leisure. Savu treats his protagonists' facial characteristics in a generic manner, causing their individual identities to remain elusive. Interior scenes depict people unaware of our gaze and absorbed in their own worlds, viewed through glass and embedded in compositions governed by architectural features. Exterior rural landscapes often portray solitary figures in the middle-distance, isolated and overwhelmed. The result is a series of poignant, observational 'snapshots' that obliquely reveal the psyche of the 'ordinary' Romanian as the country experiences political change and economic growth.

### **Who are you?**

Do you expect me to know the answer to this question?! Probably at the end of my days I will have a general idea about who I was. I try to answer this question through my painting because I believe that painting is like a fingerprint, it doesn't lie about the personality of the artist.

### **What's on your mind right now?**

To be honest, I have just returned yesterday from a ski holiday in Austria. I needed a break, but it is always challenging to focus on your work after a break. If before leaving I had a particular logic of ideas, now I feel that a new logic will take over. Anyhow, on the way back to Cluj, my hometown in Romania, I stopped for one day in Vienna to revisit the [Kunsthistorisches Museum](#) and to recharge myself with some new energy from the old masters that I love so much.

**How do you get this stuff out?**

I like to follow what [Leonardo](#) said: "Pittura e una cosa mentale" (painting is a mental occupation). In my case, everything starts with an idea, then I do my own photographic research. Afterwards, I feel like a puppeteer when I play in Photoshop to 'order' the composition by moving the characters around. In the end, the 'preparatory drawing' looks more like a collage. After I do all these boring preparations, painting comes as a relief.

**How does it fit together?**

What bounds them together is the language. I try to find the right voice or tone for each painting. It is a mixture of intuition and lucidity and my goal is to find the right balance - balance that gives a certain fluidity to the painting.

**What brought you to this point?**

Ever since I was a teenager, I was interested in the subjects that I am painting now, but I didn't know that they could be painted. After my stay in Venice, Italy between 2002 and 2004 ("Vietato l'ingresso ai non addetti ai lavori", Cube Gallery, Venice, Italy "Ichtyos", Spazio Arte Pisanello, Verona, Italy) when I came back to Cluj I was able to see more clearly the reality around me, I could understand better what triggered me and I knew I had found my way.

**Can you control it?**

Actually I wait for the moments when I lose control. In general I control everything in my painting, starting from the geometry underneath the painting to the way the light envelops the characters and the surroundings. I consider the moments I lose control to be revelations.

**What's next?**

I don't know what is next and I am not really keen to find out. I like to focus on the present and what I am doing now.

Serban Savu is represented by [Nicodim Gallery](#), Los Angeles; [Galerie Hussenot](#), Paris, [Plan B](#), Cluj, and [David Nolan](#), New York.