

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL • REVIEW

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

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Leonardo Silaghi: Untitled
#116606, 2011, oil on canvas, 78
¾ by 118 inches; at Marc Straus.

LEONARDO SILAGHI MARC STRAUS

The inaugural show at this new Lower East Side gallery was the second solo for the young painter Leonardo Silaghi (b. 1987) outside his native Romania. Nine impressive large paintings, all from 2011, depict industrial machinery and vehicles in a palette dominated by shades of gray, and freely mix abstraction and figuration in a fashion reminiscent of the New Leipzig School of painters.

In these unpeopled scenes, Silaghi's subjects usually appear in shallow spaces. The cab of a large truck in *Untitled #115501* and the nose of a train engine in *Untitled #115803* nearly run off the right side of the canvases, contributing to a feeling of compression. When backgrounds do exist, they are usually cursorily indicated.

Bold diagonals frequently enliven the compositions—for example, the arm of a crane in *Untitled #116104*, or the aircraftlike structure being towed by the truck in *Untitled #115501*. Objects are strongly modeled with contrasting light and shade, while the surrounding areas are brushy. At the bottom of each canvas, imagery gives way to plentiful drips running down from dark underpainting. Because of the transitions from convincingly rendered space to loose

abstraction, the canvases are full of energy and have a dreamlike urgency.

Most paintings are brightened by colorful accents, sometimes serving only formal purposes. In *Untitled #115903*, one side panel on a massive piece of otherwise gray machinery is covered in yellow and green paint, and nearby, a yellow stripe seems to float just above the floor. In *Untitled #116104*, the area behind the crane is occupied by a gauzy yellow and green. The giant tubing in the upper section of *Untitled #116606* is precisely drawn in black over thin green and blue underpainting, causing the color to come forward and fill out the form.

Silaghi was just two years old at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, of which Romania was a part. After a bumpy decade economically, the country began a fairly smooth transition to a market system. The press release describes the artist's subject as "the brash and powerful machinery of the new," but Silaghi's hulking subjects seem neither clearly old nor definitely new, identifiable neither as relics of Stalinist industry nor as the first mechanisms of a new democratic market society. The artist's country, dotted as it is with abandoned factories and incomplete infrastructure projects that testify to its continuing transition, finds an intense mir-

ror in these striking paintings, which also seem to hang somewhere in between.

—Brian Boucher