



Painterly Affinities: Cornel Brudașcu and Alin Bozbiciu

December 2022

By Paul Laster

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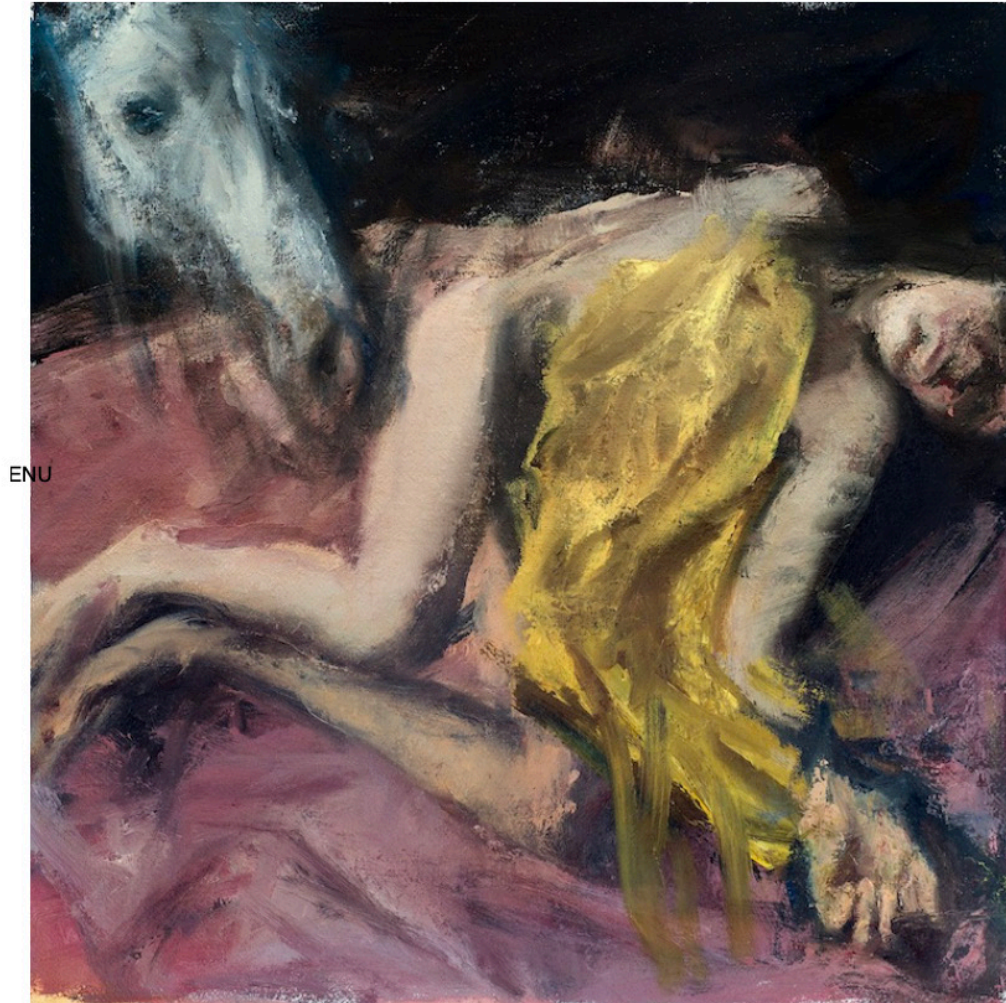
Alin Bozbiciu, Sketch, 2022. Courtesy the artist and the European ArtEast Foundation, London

By PAUL LASTER, December 2022

Spotlighting the work of two Romanian artists associated with the acclaimed Cluj School, the exhibition “Painterly Affinities

(https://europeanarteast.com/cornel_brudascu_and_alin_bozbiciu)” presented small-scale paintings by 85-year-old Cornel Brudașcu (<https://www.plan-b.ro/artist/cornel-brudascu>) paired with larger canvases by 33-year-old Alin Bozbiciu (<https://www.suzanne-tarasieva.com/artist/alin-bozbiciu/?lang=en>). Co-curated by Maria Rus Bojan and Thierry Morel, the engaging exhibition, which was on view December 7–19 at Cromwell Place in London, examined the master-apprentice relationship and steadfast friendship between the remarkable painters, who beautifully blur the boundary between figuration and abstraction in related, dreamlike ways.

A source of inspiration to younger artists in Transylvania's largest city, Brudaşcu came of age as a painter under the former Communist regime in the 1960s, when there were opportunities to show but virtually no art market. His avant-garde, Pop Art paintings of the 1970s, however, would bring him international recognition years later, when they were exhibited in the celebrated "The World Goes Pop" exhibition at Tate Modern in 2015. Now in the collection of the Centre Pompidou and Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, these photo-based portraits of friends and appropriated figures from Western magazines have progressed into gestural compositions that represent the human body in a darker, more deconstructed manner.



Cornel Brudaşcu, Laying figure with horse, 2020. Courtesy the artist and the European ArtEast Foundation, London

Graduating from the Painting Department of the Cluj University of Art and Design in 2013, Bozbiciu has let the working methods of Brudaşcu enter his thoughts and work, while also looking further into art history for other points of departure. Born in 1989—the same year as the fall of the Berlin Wall and Romanian Revolution, which ended the 42 years of Communist rule and the life of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu—Bozbiciu's allegorical paintings have drawn upon sourced subject matter from such great painters as Caravaggio, Poussin, Géricault and Caillebotte, as well as the more modern movies of Tarkovsky. Portraying fragmented figures with expressive brushwork and a pale palette, he captures 21st-century-man in motion—speeding through abstract, cloudlike forms while headed toward uncharted realms.

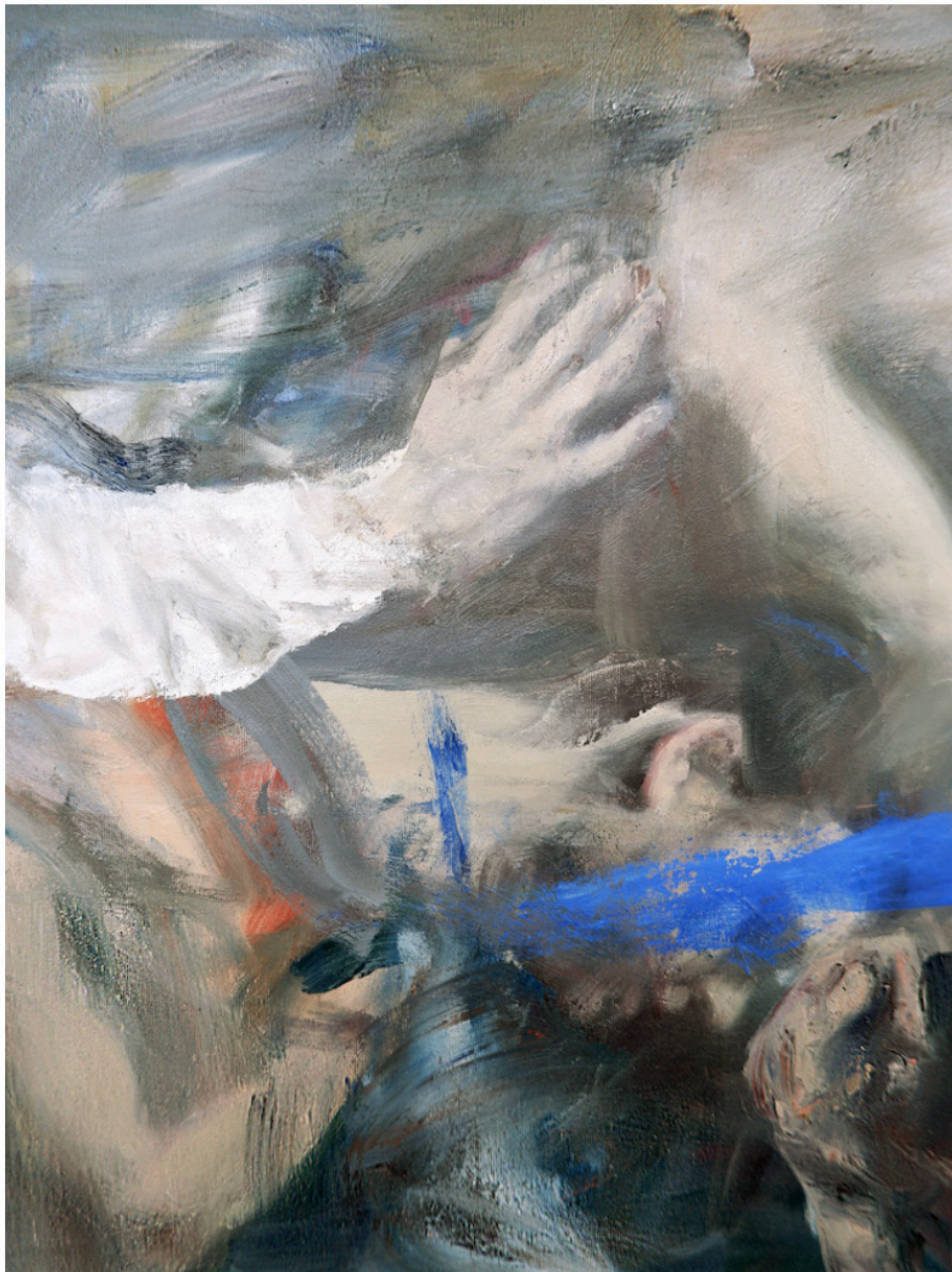


Alin Bozbiciu, *Composition*, 2022. Courtesy the artist and the European ArtEast Foundation, London

In the “Painterly Affinities” presentation, Bozbiciu continues his series of paintings of struggling figures, which were based on the story of Cain and Abel and first exhibited in his solo show at Suzanne Tarasieve in Paris in 2020. Inspired by Géricault’s *Raft of the Medusa*, Poussin’s

Abduction of the Sabines at the Louvre and Caillebotte’s *Raboteurs de parquet* (The Parquet Planers) at the Musée d’Orsay, as well as ancient Roman bas reliefs of battling soldiers, Bozbiciu’s disjointed bodies seem to be tearing limb from limb as they appear and disappear in a sea of abstract strokes from his bold brushes. In the 2022 painting *Sketch*, shadowy figures look on as observers or orchestrators of the action, while his canvas *Composition*—from the same year—sets the action in an earthlier realm through the application of colors that highlight contorted limbs and dismembered heads blindly battling on.

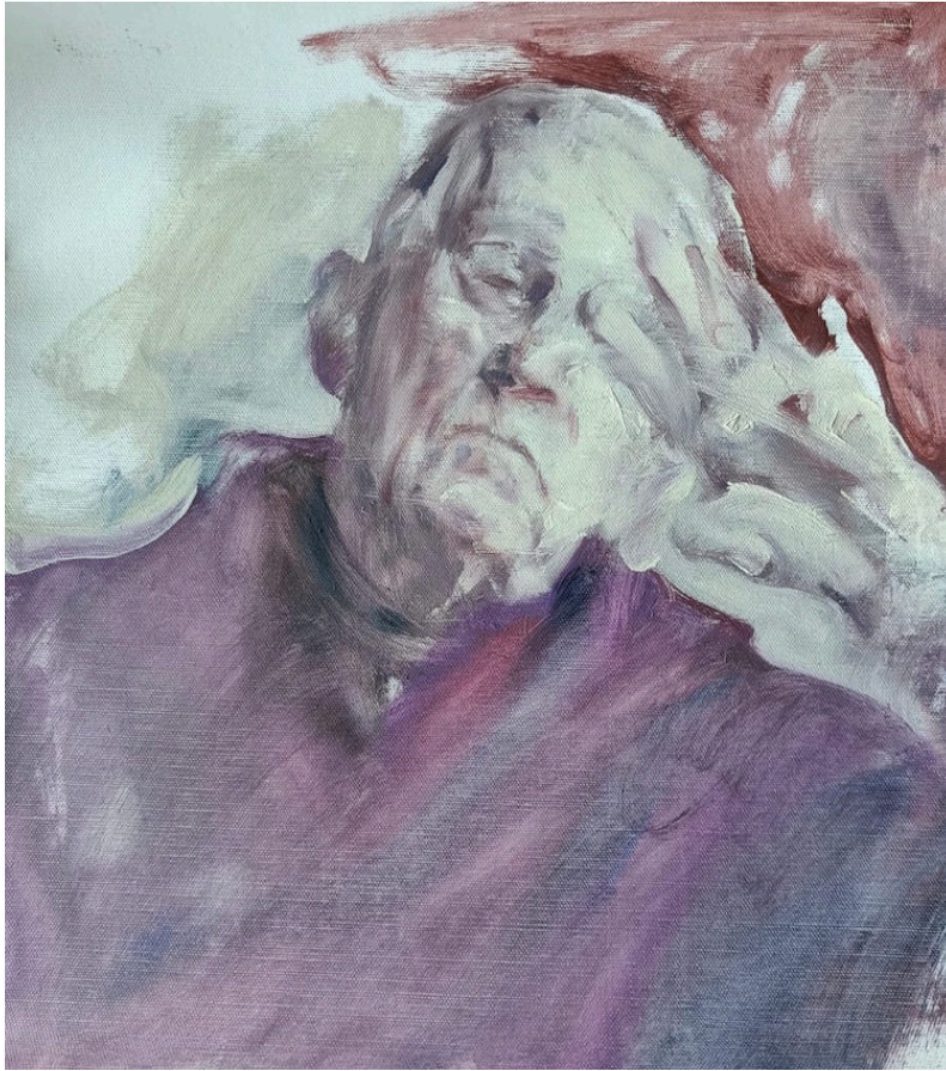
Brudaşcu also fragments the figure, but to a different end. An admirer of Freud and Bacon, he paints realistically yet can equally distort the body abstractly. A painter of frolicking male nudes, naked dancers and angelic young boys, Brudaşcu is drawn to the expressionistic touch and vibrant palette of El Greco, the 16th-century Spanish master who has influenced countless modern and contemporary artists, from Picasso to Bacon and beyond. In the show, his 2020 painting *Figure lying with horse* captures a partially covered youthful nude, lying in the collapsed state of a fallen angel, being awoken from his reverie by a curious horse, while his canvas *Boy in Garden*—from the same year—portrays a naked young man in a surreal field of yellow ochre and Twombly-like squiggles that suggest surrounding flora.



Cornel Brudascu, *Composition with Alin*, 2021. Courtesy the artist and the European ArtEast Foundation, London

One of the special features of the exhibition was a selection of recent canvases that the artists and longtime friends painted of each other. Brudaşcu's painting *Composition* (2020) seems to represent the face of the younger artist draped in a ruby red cloth, which would have been right at home in an El Greco painting of yesteryear, but amidst the flurry of markmaking and partial body parts it's hard to tell. Without a doubt, however, *Composition with Alin* (2021) puts Bozbiciu in the center of the action, where an extended hand touches flesh and the apprentice's body is propelled through the emotionally brushed space of the canvas.

Relatedly, Bozbiciu portrays his mentor in a purple sweater, holding a handkerchief to his face and lost in contemplation while posing in a chair. *Brudi on chair* (2022) has El Greco-like drapery folds on the sleeves of Brudaşcu's white shirt. Bacon's abstract figurative distortion of the body come to mind when viewing *Brudi with handkerchief* (2022). Meanwhile, the focal point of *Brudi in purple sweater* (2022) is not the lifelike portrayal of his face or abstracted sweater, rather the hand of the older artist, which is in flux—in continuous motion, continuously at work, creating. **WM**



Alin Bozbiciu, Brudi in Purple sweater, 2022. Courtesy the artist and the European ArtEast Foundation, London



Installation view of Painterly Affinities: Corneli Brudascu and Alin Bozbiciu at Cromwell Place, with Corneli Brudascu's Composition with dancers, 2022; Man laying down, 2022; and Boy in Garden, 2020. Courtesy the artist and the European ArtEast Foundation, London



Installation view of Painterly Affinities: Cornel Brudașcu and Alin Bozbiciu at Cromwell Place, with Alin Bozbiciu's Support and Support II, 2022 and Brudi on chair, 2022. Courtesy the artist and the European ArtEast Foundation, London

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Paul Laster is a writer, editor, curator, artist and lecturer. He's a contributing editor at ArtAsiaPacific and Whitehot Magazine of Contemporary Art and writer for Time Out New York, Harper's Bazaar Arabia, Galerie Magazine, Sculpture, Art & Object, Cultured, Architectural Digest, Garage, Surface, Ocula, Observer, ArtPulse, Conceptual Fine Arts and Glasstire. He was the founding editor of Arkrush, started The Daily Beast's art section, and was art editor of Russell Simmons' OneWorld Magazine, as well as a curator at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, now MoMA PS1.

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