

Press release

# Adrian Ghenie

## ROMAN CAMPAGNA

### *New Paintings and Drawings*

18 April—30 May 2026

Opening Saturday 18 April 2026, 6—8pm

Thaddaeus Ropac

Paris Marais

7, rue Debelleye, Paris, France



Adrian Ghenie, *The Sunrise*, 2026  
Oil on canvas, 130 × 165 cm (51.18 × 64.96 in)

Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais presents *ROMAN CAMPAGNA*, an exhibition of new paintings and charcoal drawings by Adrian Ghenie. Created in his studio in Rome following his recent relocation, these works mark a decisive shift in the artist's practice, drawing on landscape painting as both subject and form. Ghenie reworks the genre from within, folding art-historical reference into

his distinctive painterly language to create works poised between pastoral idealism and contemporary unease.

In his new oil paintings, Ghenie portrays flurried figures atop the cobblestones of a well-preserved stretch of the Appian Way, where he now lives. One of the earliest and most significant Roman roads, the Appian Way

cuts through a landscape central to the development of European painting. Ghenie cites Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain, whose atmospheric renderings of this region helped establish landscape as an autonomous genre. Retracing this lineage, Ghenie explores the idea of the ‘invented landscape’ and the tradition of the *capriccio*, in which real and imagined elements are brought together to create scenes that feel at once composed and mnemonic. Using familiar devices – wide vistas, *repoussoirs* – he constructs landscapes that are, in his words, ‘recognisable, but not descriptive’: images that evoke a shared visual memory shaped by art history, yet subtly undone through his deconstructed pictorial language. ‘Working’, as art historian James Hall observes, ‘in that tradition of European visionary sublime painting’, Ghenie reconfigures fragments of the visible world into works that are at once art-historically coded and psychologically charged.

A defining tension in the works on view arises from the encounter between backdrops punctuated with ancient ruins and contemporary figures equipped with trainers, back-



Adrian Ghenie, *The Shepherds of Arcadia*, 2026  
Oil on canvas, 190 × 130 cm (74.8 × 51.18 in)



Adrian Ghenie, *Roman Campagna 2*, 2026  
Oil on canvas, 110 × 115 cm (43.31 × 45.28 in)

packs, umbrellas or hiking poles. These sharply rendered, lucid details function as what Ghenie calls ‘anchors’, tying the otherwise turbulent, abstracted scenes to the present day. As the artist says: ‘You have to see the reality, process it, and come up with a set of symbols which will evoke that reality for you.’ In *The Shepherds of Arcadia* (2026), he reimagines Poussin’s painting by the same name (1637–8).. In Ghenie’s version, instead of pausing to contemplate a tomb, the passerby – with jester-like legs recalling those of Pablo Picasso’s *The Actor* (1904–5) – stops to urinate next to the ruins. For the artist, humour is a means of probing the friction between antiquity and modern life. This approach, at once irreverent and unsettling, is indebted to Philip Guston’s *Roma* series, painted in the same region in 1970–71: a key reference whose distinctive pink palette is echoed in Ghenie’s *Roman Campagna 2* (2026).

*On one hand, I work on an image in an almost classical vein: composition, figuration, use of light. On the other hand, I do not refrain from resorting to all kinds of idioms, such as the surrealist principle of association or the abstract experiments which foreground texture and surface.*

— Adrian Ghenie

While rooted in the landscape tradition, several of the paintings incorporate elements of cluttered studio interiors that recall Giorgio de Chirico’s illogical architectures. In *Studio Scene with the Tomb of Seneca* (2026), cobblestones collide with floorboards at an ambiguous threshold, collapsing distinctions between exterior landscape



Adrian Ghenie, *Studio Scene with the Tomb of Seneca*, 2026  
Oil on canvas, 190 × 120 cm (74.8 × 47.24 in)

and interior reflection. Landscape and studio become inseparable, binding the act of painting to its subject. On the first floor of the gallery, a group of large-scale charcoal drawings offers insight into Ghenie's process. He assembles fragments from magazines and photographs into collages, which he translates into charcoal and finally into paint. Favouring charcoal for its responsiveness, he builds the drawings through incessant erasing and reworking, while the block-like structure of the collages remains visible in the planes of colour that characterise the paintings. Some of the works portray the artist himself holding a paintbrush, further emphasising the reflexive nature of this body of work. Though not always self-portraits, all the figures are derived from the artist's own silhouette, which he breaks down and recomposes. As he explains: 'Once you leave the traditional constraints of anatomy behind, the way you deform can become a portrait of character or the inner psyche.'

Ghenie's engagement with art history unfolds as an imagined dialogue, shaped by admiration, rivalry and 'a desire to reply'. In his depictions of bodies – at once restless and controlled – we find the masked faces of James Ensor and the fibrous brushstrokes and carnal treatment of Chaim Soutine's carcasses. His relationship to the landscape itself is marked by both attraction and resistance. The particular light of the Roman countryside shapes this body of work, introducing a new palette of olive greens and silvery atmospheric blues, as do sculptural stone pines and pillow-like clouds, even as the artist mounts painterly resistance to this 'unbearable' beauty. Distorted forms, bruised colours and agitated shadows disrupt the classical harmony of the works, suggesting the past buried beneath the commotion of the present. In the artist's words, these paintings engage not only with the history of painting but with 'painting the texture of history'. 'This', he says, 'is what painting does, paints not an image but the texture of an era.'



Adrian Ghenie, *Study for "The Roman Road"*, 2026  
Charcoal on paper, 140 × 100 cm (55.12 × 39.37 in)

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by curator Cecilia Alemani.



Portrait of the artist

### About the artist

Born in 1977 in Baia Mare, Romania, Ghenie lives and works in Rome and Berlin. He was selected to represent Romania at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015. In 2022, two site-specific paintings by the artist were permanently installed in the historic setting of Chiesa della Madonna della Mazza, Palermo in an independent project curated by Alessandra Borghese. Alongside his paintings, the artist has created several installations conceived as a 'room within a room': *The Dada Room* (2010), now in the permanent collection of S.M.A.K., Ghent, and *The Darwin Room* (2013–14), in the collection of the Centre Pompidou. Previous solo exhibitions have taken place at Albertina Museum, Vienna (2024); Kupferstich-Kabinett, Dresden (2024); State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (2019);

and Palazzo Cini, Venice (2019); Villa Medici, Rome (2017); CAC Málaga, Spain (2014); Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver (2012); Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent (2010); and the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest (2009).

Ghenie has also participated in group exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016); Fondation Vincent van Gogh, Arles (2016); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2012); Palazzo Grassi (2011); and Tate Liverpool (2008), among others. His work is held in important public collections including those of the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate, London; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Long Museum, Shanghai.

Press release

For any enquiries:

Marcus Rothe  
Thaddaeus Ropac Paris  
[marcus.rothe@ropac.net](mailto:marcus.rothe@ropac.net)  
Telephone +33 1 42 72 99 00  
Mobile +33 6 76 77 54 15



Share your thoughts with:

@thaddaeusropac  
#thaddaeusropac  
#adrianghenie

All images © Adrian Ghenie  
Photos: Giorgio Benni

**Thaddaeus Ropac**  
London Paris Salzburg Milan Seoul