

Van de Weghe Fine Art is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Lui Shtini. Born in Kavaje, Albania in 1978, he received his BFA in 2000 from the Academy of Arts in Tirana. Shortly thereafter, he moved to New York, where he has continued his practice for the past nine years. In the Spring of 2007, he was accepted to the prestigious Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. This exhibition marks Shtini's first solo show in New York.

Lui Shtini grew up observing and drawing the objects and spaces around him and continues to use the vocabulary of the everyday in his painting, even while turning it on its head. By referencing domestic spaces: a bathroom (*Untitled*, 2006), a doily-draped tabletop (*Dentures With Ants*, 2007), a work table (*Untitled*, 2008), Shtini draws us into what initially appear to be identifiable, generic environments. Upon further inspection, an eerie stillness gives way to a subtle form of sci-fi horror. The aforementioned bathroom is overrun by a voracious mold; the dentures that rest on the doily are picked clean by a swarm of ants; the electric pencil sharpener and cutting mat on the tabletop are employed in the bizarre processing of chicken parts. The paintings are seductive in that everything that is depicted is recognizable and clearly, almost photorealistically, rendered. They are disarming for the same reason, like waking up to find oneself in a bad dream.

There is a striking attention to detail and technique as well as a surreal, often dark imagination in the work. One recent painting (*Untitled*, 2008), evokes the work of both Caravaggio and Francis Bacon and is powerful for what it does not explicitly reveal. It depicts an empty throne, in dark surroundings, on which rests a variety of objects including suspenders, jewelry, and a whip. There is a sense of uneasy anticipation of the sitter that will never arrive. Shtini's paintings are theatrical in that they set the stage for a mysterious and unknown action or occupant, and the suspense that this creates is precisely what makes his work so intriguing.

Van de Weghe Fine Art will host an opening reception for Lui Shtini on Thursday, February 26th from 6-8 pm. Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm, and by appointment. For further information, please contact Astrid Hill at [Astrid@vdowny.com](mailto:Astrid@vdowny.com) or 212-744-1900.

VAN DE WEGHE FINE ART

**NEW WORK BY LUI SHTINI**

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