



## EDI HILA

### PENTHOUSE

December 13 – February 1, 2014

Vernissage : Thursday December 12

JGM. Galerie is pleased to announce the second solo show of Albanian artist Edi Hila from the 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2013 to the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, 2014. For his new exhibition which has been titled *Penthouse*, the artist presents a new series of paintings which have been realized this autumn in Paris during a residency at Le Couvent des Récollets.

As an important figure of the Balkan arts scene, the work of Edi Hila has for the last 20 years bared witness to the profound changes experienced by societies in post communist Europe. Having refused to emigrate to a more economically prosperous country, Hila remains living in Tirana where he has developed a practice which reflects on the transitory nature of Albanian history (its geography between east and west) and on the position of Albanian painting in Mediterranean art history.

Hila's most recent series has placed an emphasis on urban environments and in particular the architecture which has become an expression of a complex and unexpected Albanian identity. The attitudes and cultural heritage of his homeland materialize themselves in street scenes or through ghostly architectures. Hila's painterly manner manifests these studies with mysterious and almost supernatural character. In his paintings the view of everyday life seems to take place in a science-fiction backdrop.

For the exhibition *Penthouse*, Hila has created seven paintings which align themselves to one clearly defined idea: He repeatedly uses a single building which is pictured in front view or three-quarter view, the composition is narrowed. Two thirds of the bottom parts of the building are left as simple walls, while the last floor concentrates all the ornamental elements. At first sight these utopian structures seem to freely mix references to vernacular and modernist architecture. But at the highest point, the "Penthouse" floor, it focalizes the audience's attention in a visual study of the flashy and garish ostentation which is used by its owners in a display of social standing and individuality. Across these monolithic, absurd and inward structures, Edi Hila is concerned with the psychology of their owners, and the underlying social and cultural environment within which they exist. The artist takes a look at both the ironic and benevolent aspects that form our quest for identity and need for recognition.

Edi Hila was born in Shkodër, Albania in 1944. Since 1991 he has taught painting at the Tirana Academy of Arts (where he has notably educated artists such as Adrian Paci and Anri Sala). He has taken part in numerous international exhibitions including the Venice Biennale (1999), "After the Wall" at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm (1999), the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin and the Ludvig Museum in Budapest (2000) as well as "Blood and Honey – The Future's Balkan" curated by Harald Szeeman at the Essl Museum in Vienna (2003) and the Liverpool Biennale (2010). His works have recently been acquired by the collections of the Musée d'art Moderne Centre Pompidou, FRAC Pays de la Loire and the Fonds Municipal of the Ville de Paris.

Edi Hila is the laureate of the program of international residencies City of Paris / Institut français aux Récollets.