

Press Release

44, rue Quincampoix
Mathieu Cherkit
*Tendrement*August 29
October 31, 202642, rue Quincampoix
Drew Dodge
*Earth-pourers*August 29
October 31, 2026**Mathieu Cherkit**
Tendrement

Semiose is delighted to open its post-summer break program with a major exhibition by Mathieu Cherkit at 44, rue Quincampoix. Featuring 15 hitherto unseen works, this first collaboration offers an overview of the work of one of the leading figures of the revival of figurative painting in France.

This overview of his painting could also be seen as an overview of his life in general, given how closely his work is linked to his daily and family life. The interior scenes painted by Mathieu Cherkit are disarmingly familiar, exploring domestic life in all its triviality. Even in his self-portraits and his street, garden and plant paintings, we are struck by a strange sense of déjà vu. Yet, despite his rendering of the smallest details down to the anecdotal, his painting seems suddenly to shift into a more historical and metaphysical dimension: historical, when he cites his predecessors in the field of painting, in particular those who produced abstract works, even though his own are viscerally figurative; metaphysical, through its temporal and spatial kaleidoscope, disrupting perspectives and intersecting planes in the manner of the Cubists or the Expressionists. Images by Fritz Lang and F.W. Murnau—and 1920s Expressionist cinema in general—spring to mind when viewing the deconstructed planes and distorted perspectives in Mathieu Cherkit's paintings: the viewer's gaze is swept into a kind of hypnotic vertigo, for example in *Matière Noire* (2026), where the stove is seen both from above and slightly from one side.

The atmosphere that suffuses these painting also resembles that of film noir. With this painter, more than almost any other, one must be wary of his images. The calm and tranquility of the subjects harbor all the elements of a trivial news story. Cherkit's scenes share the banality of those described in forensic reports; the various objects resemble pieces of evidence, particularly when they are found on the floor, such as is the case with the hair-dryer in *La Toilette* (2026) or the men's underwear in *Sleepy Solo* (2026).

Cherkit's paintings tells stories because it triggers the imagination. It makes use of the same techniques employed in suspense films, planting clues here and there and paying obsessive attention and the precision of a detective to certain details. The artist manipulates the eye of the viewer in an act of seduction, luring it into imagining all sorts of contexts. In *Tendrement* (2026), the legs stretched out at the foot of the painting are more reminiscent of a prone corpse than of an impromptu snooze. Even the innocent poppy with its bright red flower (*Papaver Rhoeas*, 2026) or the bush with its scarlet currents (*Ribes Rubrum*, 2026) have something suspicious about them—in the natural world, red is often synonymous with danger. The *Chat Noir* (Black Cat, 2026), with its piercing gaze suggests the same thing, as does the small pool of water in the mud—a view of the river Orval in the Yonne region, where the artist lives and where one could easily imagine one of Claude Chabrol's dramas unfolding.

Through his choice of subjects, Mathieu Cherkit constructs visual and material, emotional stories. He creates painterly fantasies, where his depictions of everyday life feign diversions in their narratives, as if to escape from a form of boredom. Beneath its thick impasto, this painting, captured from life, ultimately reveals the artist's tender, playful vision of the banality of everyday life. Through the act of painting, the commonplace of ordinary life is transformed, acquiring a renewed sensory presence.

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Opening
Saturday, August 29, 2026
from 11am to 8pm

The exhibition will be accompanied by an essay by Camille Richert and an exclusive photo-shoot portraying the artist in his home/studio will provide a photographic exploration of the spaces that inspire his paintings.

Born in Paris in 1982 and currently living in Vallery (Yonne department), Mathieu Cherkit graduated from the Nantes School of Fine Arts and the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig, and has become a major figure of the emerging generation of French figurative painters. He was a finalist for the Jean-François Prat Prize (2013), the Science-Po Prize for Contemporary Art (2013) and the Antoine Marin Prize (2011). His works are included in numerous public collections—the Centre National des Arts Plastiques, the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, the MO.CO. in Montpellier, the Musée Estrine in Saint-Rémy de Provence and the Musée des Avelines in Saint-Cloud. They also feature in private collections such as the Salomon Foundation and the Colas Foundation in France, as well as the Caldic Collection / Voorlinden Museum and the AkzoNobel Art Foundation in the Netherlands.