

FINE ART CONNOISSEUR





O D D N E R D R U M G O E S

GLOBAL

The jury of MEAM's 2015 *Figurativas* Painting and Sculpture Competition included (left to right) Daniel Graves, Leandro Navarro, Lita Cabellut, Odd Nerdrum, José Manuel Infante, Antonio López García, Santiago Sánchez Echeberria, Tomás Paredes, and Richard Estes. At center is the top-ranked work by Manuel Castellero Ramirez (b. 1976).



(TOP) ODD NERDRUM (b. 1944), *Dustlickers*, 2000, oil on canvas, 80 x 106 in., on view at MEAM this autumn ■
 (BOTTOM) ODD NERDRUM (b. 1944), *Dawn*, 1990, oil on canvas, 80 x 113 1/4 in., on view at MEAM this autumn

It is going to be a very busy autumn for the Norwegian master Odd Nerdrum (b. 1944). On view soon (September 17–November 15) is a major retrospective of his figurative paintings at Barcelona's Museu Europeu d'Art Modern (European Museum of Modern Art). Included will be an array of large canvases in his signature manner, which deploys the muted palette and humid atmosphere of Rembrandt to animate a foreboding symbolist universe of Nerdrum's own making.

Rarely are these ethereal pictures easy to look at, yet they always draw us in, forcing us to marvel at Nerdrum's deft draftsmanship and lush brushwork, even as we try to work out exactly what's happening here. After he was expelled from Oslo's National Academy of Art, his skillful drawings elicited an invitation from the Düsseldorf-based conceptualist Joseph Beuys to work in his studio, but that experience also ended with expulsion. Nerdrum has since made his own way, so successfully that his works can now be found in museums and major private collections worldwide.

Also hanging in this much-anticipated show will be top examples by some of Nerdrum's former students, talents in their own right who traveled from around the world





Odd Nerdrum teaching in his studio

to work alongside him in Norway and France. Represented in Barcelona will be Nick Alm, Stefan Boulter, Jordi Diaz, Joakim Ericsson, Cornelia M. Hernes, Luke Hillestad, Caleb Knodell, Helene Knoop, Boris Koller, Guillermo Lorca, Per Trygve Lundgren, Nicholas O'Leary, Johan Patricny, Richard T. Scott, and Jan Ove Tuv. Though all of these artists have patently been influenced by Nerdrum, each has proceeded to follow his or her own path; it will be fascinating to see how they now relate to, and diverge from, their master.

Housed in the 18th-century Gomis Palace, the Museu Europeu d'Art Modern (MEAM) is the ideal venue for this exhibition. MEAM was founded, and is directed, by the architect and collector José Manuel Infiesta, who has created one of the few institutions anywhere that focuses on figurative art from both the 20th century and today. The collection is particularly rich in contemporary realism, Art Deco, and modern and Catalan sculpture.

Odd Nerdrum was engaged with MEAM in another capacity recently. For the second time in three years, he served on a jury with the artists Lita Cabellut, Richard Estes, Daniel Graves, and Antonio López García, the gallery owners Leandro Navarro and Santiago Sánchez Echeberria, the critic Tomás Paredes, and José

Manuel Infiesta himself. Their objective was to assign awards among the more than 2,400 artists from over 90 countries who entered the eighth edition of MEAM's *Figurativas* Painting and Sculpture Competition.

Ultimately, the top prize for painting went to Manuel Castellero Ramirez (b. 1976), who depicted a congressional chamber overrun by nature. The jury admired not only his scene's excellent technique, but also its evocation of the obsolescence of political power. The competition's six honorable mentions went to the artists Jorge Abbad-Jaime de Aragón, Wim Heldens, Fausto Martin, Jan Míkulka, Jamie Routley, and Charles Villeneuve. MEAM's exhibition of the top-placing works will be on view November 17–January 10, and, as noted on page 87, MEAM will co-host two exciting programs with the American-based Art Renewal Center on November 20–21.

That's not all for Odd Nerdrum this year, either. Last year, the artist's presence and comments electrified more than 350 registrants at The Representational Art Conference (TRAC), which is organized periodically by California Lutheran University (CLU). The next edition of that meeting is set for November 1–4, and running parallel to it (October 30–January 21) will be an innovative exhibition held at CLU's William Rolland Gallery of Fine Art. Curated by

faculty member and TRAC co-founder Michael Pearce, *Transmission* will present paintings, drawings, and sculptures that touch upon how the secrets of the studio are passed from one generation of artists to the next through a gradual sharing of technique and encouragement.

On view, therefore, will be fine examples not only by Odd Nerdrum, but also by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Lynn Christopher, Elizabeth Jane Gardner-Bouguereau, Giambologna, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Max Ginsburg, Daniel Graves, Luke Hillestad, Brad Kunkle, Hüicho Lé, Richard MacDonald, Antonin Mercié, David Molesky, Graydon Parrish, Michael Pearce, Alicia Ponzio, Jon Swihart, Ruth Weisberg, Gary Weisman, and Lea Colie White. The implicit conversations among their artworks will be instructive to overhear, and much credit is due to their lenders — the artists themselves, as well as the Ross Family Collection and Dahesh Museum of Art.

Peter Trippi is editor-in-chief of *Fine Art Connoisseur*.

Information: nerdrummuseum.com, forumgallery.com, meam.es, figurativas.org, trac2015.org, earth.callutheran.edu/rolland