

# Art in America

## VAN HANOS

By *Lexie Mountain* February 25, 2016 12:27pm



Van Hanos: *The Good Samaritan*, 2015, oil on linen, 78 by 60 inches; at Rowhouse Project.

**Van Hanos**'s exhibition came at the midpoint of a three-year series of site-specific shows at **Rowhouse Project**, a venue in **Baltimore**'s rapidly gentrifying Remington neighborhood. Prior exhibitions took place concurrently with the extensive process of gutting the house. Subsequent exhibitions will accompany renovations of the property, culminating in its sale, the proceeds from which will (ideally) fund the entire project.

While other artists installed their shows in the house and left, Hanos chose to make his an ad hoc residency, imbuing his project with the raw possibility and openness of intention that a shell of a house deserves. He set up a studio where the kitchen used to be, creating new paintings on-site and distributing the fresh canvases throughout the space in response to each room's particularities. The oils Hanos has made for the last two years present dense, hermetic environments, displaying—and playing with—the technical mastery of 18th-century academicism and postwar hyperrealism. For Rowhouse, however, he left several of his compositions incomplete, to mirror the transitional character of the site.

Hanos's project had just opened to the public when I visited, and it was dominated by large works in nascent stages. He continued to work on the pieces throughout the course of the show, while also rearranging them in the space and changing their titles. When I visited, I was greeted on the first floor by Hanos's version of Morot's *Good Samaritan* (1880), in which a man hefting a body is aided by an overloaded donkey plucking its way through a rocky landscape. In Hanos's painting, the donkey seems ready to step through the layers of sand, plaster and exposed brick on the wall around the work. The limp body at the center of the image seems barely more than a sketch, yet the effort required to carry it is still visible in the fully rendered features of the man bearing its weight. He appears to regard the viewer both as a source of relief to be found in the distance and as another burden on his journey. On the second floor, portions of a large abstraction, tentatively titled *The Low Temperatures of Sorrow*, echoed the arched lines of a scratch coat of plaster revealed in the latest round of demolitions. Elsewhere, small canvases leaned against the walls in stacks half a dozen deep; other petite paintings hung individually offered nostalgic homilies. A delicate rendering of roses in a vase was installed over a well-worn armchair. When viewed up close, this arrangement delivered a paean to the domestic, yet it seemed forlorn when glimpsed from down the hall through the gaps between century-old rough pine studs.

"Intercalaris," the exhibition's title, alludes to Feb. 29, the last day of Hanos's residency and the extra day inserted in the calendar to keep it on track with the seasons. The project might be seen as an interjection in the artist's career as well. His physical presence in the exhibition space interrupted the cycle of studio work and gallery exhibition, creating a space of pensive inquiry.