

### The Undiscovered Country

Ever since the surge of abstraction in the mid-20th century, representational painting has struggled to regain solid footing against accusations of being irrelevant, especially as photography increasingly defines how we depict the world we live in. The Undiscovered Country, a breathtaking exhibition holding court at UCLA's Hammer Museum of Art (through January 16), brings together works spanning a 40-year period that illustrate how rich the possibilities of painterly repre-



● *Soft Pink Landscape* (1971-72), oil on canvas, by Richard Hamilton, from *The Undiscovered Country* at UCLA Hammer Museum

sentation still are, and traces the influence earlier artists continue to exert on today's generation.

With its title cued from Hamlet's after-life description as a place "from whose bourn no traveler returns"—as well as the broader idea that each blank canvas is an undiscovered country for the artist who stands before it—this exhibition comprises 65 works by 23 artists from Europe and the United States. Younger contemporary artists such as Edgar Bryan, Jochen Klein, Laura Owens, Mari Eastman, and the amazing Lukas Duwenhogger (whose *Perusal of Ill-Begotten Treasures* is a show-stealer), are shown in context with paintings by established 20th-century masters such as Vija Clemins, Philip Guston, Fairfield Porter, Gerhard Richter, and Richard Hamilton (his wispy *Soft Pink*

*Landscape* is one you'll want to climb into). Included are portraits and the human figure, rural landscapes, interior studies, cityscapes, and conceptual approaches to figurative painting—all sending a message about ways of seeing accessible only through the power of painting. The Undiscovered Country is one of the most beautiful and compelling shows I've seen in quite a while, and the



● *Perusal of Ill-Begotten Treasures* (2003), oil on canvas, by Lukas Duwenhogger, from *The Undiscovered Country* at UCLA Hammer Museum

kind of exhibition that takes newer viewers of contemporary art to the next level with plum aha! moments.

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