

Press Release

LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN PRESENT THE FIRST UK GALLERY EXHIBITION OF MARIO SCHIFANO (1934 – 98), ONE OF ITALY’S MOST SIGNIFICANT POST-WAR PAINTERS

Mario Schifano 1960 – 67

27 June – 16 August 2014

Private View: Thursday 26 June, 6 – 8 pm



'Incidente', 1963. Enamel on paper, laid on canvas, 200 x 200 cm.

Luxembourg & Dayan is delighted to announce an exhibition of seminal works by Mario Schifano (1934–98), one of Italy's most significant post-war artists. Schifano was a truly radical figure who considered painting to be the frontier of the avant-garde, an intrinsically human art form capable of capturing the lifeblood of contemporary culture. His prodigious talent was at its height in the '60s, a decade in which he experimented extensively with media and techniques, traversing a wide spectrum of styles that he made entirely his own. By focusing upon the years when his artistic output was at its most intense, the exhibition 'Mario Schifano 1960 – 67' demonstrates the artist's extraordinary range of techniques and materials during this era. The works featured in the exhibition have important early provenance - some passing through the hands of legendary dealers like Giorgio Marconi and Ileana Sonnabend - others previously in inspired collections like Franchetti in Rome.

1960 was a watershed year for Schifano, marking the appearance of unconventional materials into his work and catapulting him into critical attention in both his home city Rome, where he held his first solo exhibition in 1961 at La Tartaruga (the venue also for debuts by Cy Twombly and Janis Kounellis), and New York where a few months later he showed at Sidney Janis Gallery for 'The New Realists' exhibition alongside Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Tom Wesselmann. Creating 'Monochrome' paintings at the start of the decade, Schifano eschewed notions of purity, instead embracing non-traditional pigments and supports such as



'Propaganda', 1965. Enamel and graphite on canvas and perspex, 80 x 100 cm.

enamel and parcel-paper and the drips, dirt and unevenness of gestural painting. By 1962, his canvases were appropriating iconic advertising logos and text; further urban signs and details of motorway landscapes followed exploring 'photodynamism'; and in 1963 Schifano was making 'Incidente' paintings, images of car accidents which parallel the 'Car Crash' works Warhol was making at the same moment, whilst differing dramatically in their focus more on mechanisation and automation than on death. His 'Paesaggio anemico (Anaemic Landscape)' works of the mid-'60s incorporated transparent and chequered sheets of perspex and plexiglas bolted onto the canvas, presenting mechanical landscapes whose dynamic lines referred to works by Picabia and Brancusi. A year later in 1966 he began experimenting with spray-paint, a medium that he exploited to the full in his 'Tutte Stelle' paintings of 1967, scintillating depictions of stars and palm trees often seen through a prism of plastic.

The speed and quantity of Schifano's investigations with materials are matched by the numerous and diverse influences he brought to bear on his works: from the inclusion of contemporary culture that affiliate him with American post-war frontier artists like Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and Jim Dine, to colour planes and arabesques that recall Matisse, and to an Italian legacy that equally drew from Renaissance and the Futurist artists.¹ He considered the past to be 'a find, not to throw away but to recuperate,' yet the immediacy of his images and treatment of sources had a conceptual component that was entirely contemporary. Unifying this voracious experimentation and influence is a signature elegance of line, colour and composition — the isolation of detail and provocative shifts of focus that reveal a constantly creative approach to the act of looking. 'I have tried to work with images that everyone sees or has seen, developing and making their essence, their germinal and primary possibilities emerge,' Schifano explained, 'looking is the first action, then there is lingering.'²

1 Mario Schifano, quoted in 'Schifano. Tutte Stelle', exh cat., MdM Museum, Porto cervo, May - October 2009, p. 57

2 Mario Schifano, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 238

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'Mario Schifano 1960 – 67' is organised in collaboration with Giorgio Marconi, Schifano's dealer during the 1960's. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue featuring a new text by Claire Gilman (Ph.D. Columbia University), who is currently Curator at The Drawing Center, New York. She has taught art history and critical theory at many institutions including Columbia University, The Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, The Corcoran College for Art and Design, and MoMA. She has also written extensively for publications including Art Journal, CAA Reviews, Documents, Frieze, and October.

Mario Schifano

Mario Schifano was born in 1934 in Khoms (Libya) and moved to Rome with his family in the immediate Post War years. Although he received no formal art training, by the early 1960s he had risen to prominence and went on to become one of the most irreverent and kaleidoscopic Postmodern Italian painters. Using a wide variety of media ranging from painting to collage, photography and video; Schifano was very much an artist of his time, embodying the Pop aesthetic which artists such as Andy Warhol, Tom Wesselmann and Roy Lichtenstein were spearheading in the USA. Following decades of struggle with depression and substance abuse, the artist died in Rome in 1998, leaving behind an eclectic and compelling body of work, which has been a constant source of inspiration to contemporary artists and theorists alike.

His work has been exhibited widely both in Italy (Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Arte e Critica, 1980; Venice, 40th and 41st Biennale, 1982 and 1984; Ferrara, Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, 1989; Milan, Palazzo della Triennale, 1995; Verona, Palazzo Forti, 1997) and internationally (Paris, Centre Pompidou, Identité italienne, 1981; San Francisco, Italo-American Museum, 1985; Oporto, Museo di Arte Contemporanea, 1986; Frankfurt, Kunstverein, 1987; London, Royal Academy, 1989; Brussels, Palais des Beaux Arts, 1989; New York, Solomon Guggenheim, 1994; Beijing, International Exhibition Center, 1997) and is included in a number of major international museum and private collections.

Luxembourg & Dayan

Launched in 2009, Luxembourg & Dayan presents curated, museum-quality exhibitions of works by modern and contemporary artists across gallery spaces in New York and in London. Since opening Luxembourg & Dayan has held a number of critically-acclaimed exhibitions, ranging from historical surveys of artists, such as Marcel Duchamp, Alberto Burri and Domenico Gnoli, to thematic shows including 'Unpainted Paintings' and 'Grisaille'. Recent exhibitions in London include 'Arp is Art', 'Nouveau Réalisme', 'Rob Pruitt's Autograph Collection', 'Pistoletto Politico', 'Jerzy "Jury" Zieliński: Paintings 1968-1977' and 'A Not So Still Life: Naked Portraits by Lucian Freud'.

Luxembourg & Dayan London is open Tuesday to Friday 11am-4pm and Saturday 12pm-4pm.

Press enquiries

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