

Esther Schipper

Anri Sala

Noli Me Tangere

March 21- May 11, 2024

Esther Schipper, Seoul

Esther Schipper is pleased to present **Noli Me Tangere**, a solo exhibition by Anri Sala, the artist's second with the gallery and first in Seoul. On view will be a new series of frescoes and a work from the artist's series of animated modified snare drums.

Anri Sala is best known for his films and cinematic installations that interweave the properties of one medium with that of another—filming music, editing film according to musical compositions, employing architecture to structure content, form and presentation of art works and entire exhibitions. Sala has had solo exhibitions at major institutions such as the Bourse de Commerce-Pinault Collection, Serpentine Galleries, Centre Pompidou, Mudam Luxembourg and The New Museum and has participated in major biennials such as the Venice Biennale (where he represented France in 2013), the São Paulo Biennale, the Berlin Biennale, the Gwangju Biennale, and Documenta. His work is held in many prestigious art institutions, among them Centre Pompidou, Paris, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Tate Gallery, London, Fondation Luis Vuitton, and Pinault Collection.

The new body of work, presented for the first time in Korea is conceived with the *al fresco* technique, combining different geological and historical temporalities, once again creating a lush interweaving of formal, historical and conceptual associations. A technique practiced in Italy for centuries, the frescoes are painted on specially prepared panels using the ancient method of painting with pigment dissolved in water onto wet plaster (*intonaco*). Set into the *intonaco* are also pieces of marble that are integrated into the compositions, flush with the surface of the plaster. Varying in size between 63 x 41 cm and 120 x 102 cm, the works are hung on the wall.

The new frescoes have different motifs. **Noli Me Tangere Inversa (Fragment 1)** is based on a famous fresco by the Italian Renaissance artist Fra Angelico, painted between 1425-30 in the San Marco convent in Florence. Fra Angelico's work depicts the moment of before the resurrection of Jesus Christ (in which Jesus tells Mary Magdalene *Noli Me Tangere*, "don't touch me", not to hold him back, as he ascends to heaven after death). By using a detail from Fra Angelico's work, Sala makes clear the link to the history of the medium. Yet, he inverts the colors and brings into play another, more recent but perhaps soon equally anachronistic medium: the effect is known from analog photography when the colors of a negative are reversed.

Another group of frescoes, entitled **Surface to Air**, takes as point of departure the artist's own photographs of clouds captured from airplanes. Their billowing abstract shapes represent the epitome of changeability and constant flux, introducing to the new frescoes a layer of temporal dissonance. Thus, fresco—a medium that necessitates an execution of multiple layers of pigment within a relatively short time (*giornata*), but then can survive over centuries or, under the right conditions, even millennia—and photography—a medium that records a moment in

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time—here capture a meteorological phenomenon, a formation created by an unimaginably complex interaction of unseen natural forces.

Another important aspect of these new works is the marble inlays. Playing on the colors of the fresco, the distinct material recalls the marble dust traditionally included in the rough ground (*arriccio*) on which the finer plaster (*intonaco*) is applied. The pattern of the marble pieces recall the frequent painting of faux-marble surfaces and the practice of intarsia, the creation of images from inlaid pieces marble, popular in the Italian Renaissance. At the same time, the inlays also evoke an even broader temporal register, that of the geological time it took to produce the crystallized stone with its distinct colors and striations.

The framed drawing **Transfert (Noli Me Tangere, Fragment 1)** gives insight into the production process of Sala's frescoes. Akin to the cartoons used by Renaissance artists to transfer the motif onto the wet plaster. The sheet's back surface is lightly covered with dried plaster, evidence of the process.

In the Window, Sala presents **In-Between the Doldrums (Pac-Man)**, two custom-made snare drums—one standing on the gravel-covered floor, mirrored by another suspended from the ceiling at a slight angle. The custom-made snare drums conceal a set of inbuilt speakers, playing high and midrange frequencies (corresponding to the audible sounds) and inaudible low frequencies (that create vibrations on the drum skin, prompting the rat-a-tat of drumsticks). Notwithstanding its mechanical aesthetic, the work is also very touching. Not only because it is indeed about tactility but because the reciprocal contact of the two drums seems to be animated by more than just mechanics: It feels as if we are witnessing an intimate dialogue.

This emphasis on an unlikely dialogue represented by hands (or drumsticks) makes **In-Between the Doldrums (Pac-Man)** a cornerstone of Sala's exhibition concept, linking frescoes and sculpture. It finds an echo in **Noli Me Tangere Inversa (Fragment 1)** which takes the motif of two hands not touching from Fra Angelico's depiction. The space between the non-touching hands in the biblical scene marks the tension between the corporal and the divine, and in the context of this exhibition perhaps has a broader meaning, invoking a space between the concrete and the abstract, a moment when sand, limestone and pigment take form and become art.

Anri Sala was born in 1974 in Tirana, Albania. He received his BA in Painting and Sculpture from the National Academy of Arts Tirana, studied Video at the École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and completed post-graduate studies in Film Directing at Le Fresnoy–Studio National des Arts Contemporains in Tourcoing. The artist lives and works in Berlin.

Recent solo exhibitions include: **Time No Longer**, Bourse de Commerce | Pinault Collection, Paris (2022); **AS YOU GO**, Winsing Art Center, Taipei (2022); **Anri Sala. Transfigured**, Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo (2022); **Anri Sala**, Kunsthau Bregenz (2021); **Anri Sala: The Last Resort**, MUDAM, Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg (2020); **AS YOU GO (Châteaux en Espagne)**, Centro Botín, Santander (2019–20); **Anri Sala. Le Temps coudé**, MUDAM, Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg (2019–20); **AS YOU GO**, Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2019); **The Last Resort**, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2018–19); **Clocked**

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Perspective, Fundación Jumex, Public Plaza, Mexico City (2017); **The Last Resort**, 33rd Kaldor Public Art Projects, Observatory Hill Rotunda, Sydney (2017); **Anri Sala**, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City (2017); **All of a Tremble**, Benesse Art Site, Teshima Seawall House, Teshima (2016); **Anri Sala: Answer Me**, New Museum, New York (2016).