

Manuel Resch x Maximilian Maria Willeit

*Spero sempre di fare quadri senza inutili volontà di spiegazioni.*

- I always hope to make paintings without useless desire for explanations. ~Mario Schifano

*Se non fossi Andy Warhol vorrei essere Mario Schifano.*

- If I weren't Andy Warhol I would be Mario Schifano. ~Andy Warhol

Italian art has such a long, deep-rooted history that to be a contemporary artist, one must look to the past with the intention to obliterate it. The duo Manuel Resch x Maximilian Willeit are doing just that. They walk in a procession that others have modeled, but beyond human touch.

The late Austrian, Viennese Actionist artist Hermann Nitsch made work in Napoli in the 1970s, much of which is in the collection of Giuseppe Morra housed in the Hermann Nitsch Museum and dedicated to the artist's time in the southern city. Nitsch was interested in nature, in releasing life in its truest form, even if that meant through death. While his practice was often perceived as violent, on the contrary, he sought to remind us of the fragility of our human and animal essence. Similarly, Mario Schifano responded to culture and history as a way to communicate on a deeply philosophical level disguised through the lens of Pop Art in the 1960s and 70s. Known globally for its largely American aesthetic, Pop Art relied heavily on culture, commercialism, and what some might see as the repurposing of brand identities. Schifano and Nitsch rejected categorization in favor of the invention (or proposed invention) of new ways to make marks on a surface. Fast forward through time, and Resch and Willeit take the desire to conceptually and physically disconnect even further, by making work that is heavily process driven, while also negating any European cultural or historic resonance in favor of dissecting the art making in a layered conversation that makes much more sense under the umbrella of Abstract Expressionism.

Resch and Willeit use embroidery, spray paint, and very little hands-on applications to make their work. As a part of the Post-Internet generation, their machination mindset is rather crafty instead of dismissive. Working intuitively, they deconstruct images digitally before sending files and a specific yarn to Asia to be sewn onto canvases. The process is extremely specific and requires a global journey before completion. After three-dimensional digital forms are translated linearly, the canvases return to the artists and go through CNC routed printing techniques utilizing raw pigments. All of these processes for the most part do not require human fingerprints, but do require human presence. There is something to be said about digital processes, whereas these works are very much about humanity even if somewhat removed.

Information is fragmented and not always legible, but this body of work evaporates any specific need for traditional components associated with painting, and instead is evidenced through the recording and decoding of information.

In a thematic and environmental transition, Resch x Willeit have made work that is the synthesis of collaboration. While they have been based in the same city and will return to their home country, this work moves through time and space borrowing notations from a dissected—nearly rejected—history and finds a conceptual solution through authors, who needn't be in the same room to bring their individual vision to a collective solution.

~Katy Diamond Hamer, Brooklyn, 2024