

Press Release

Salvo, Andreas Schulze

About Painting

November 12–December 20, 2024

Public Reception: November 12, 6–8pm

Sprüth Magers, London

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The paintings of Andreas Schulze (b. 1955) and Salvo (1947–2015) depict intriguing worlds unlike any other. Across vibrant landscapes and eccentric interiors, their unique conceptual approaches to painting evolved over decades of experimentation with color, light and form. Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are proud to present *About Painting*, an exhibition of new works by Schulze alongside paintings by Salvo that bring into focus their parallel trajectories and contributions to the discourse of contemporary painting. Originally conceived by the late Pasquale Leccese, who knew both artists intimately, this exhibition is dedicated to his memory.

Born Salvatore Mangione, Salvo came of age as an artist in Turin in the 1960s, home to the vibrant avant-garde scene that birthed the Arte Povera movement. He was close with Alighiero Boetti and moved in circles alongside Mario Merz, Guisepppe Penone and Gilberto Zorio, developing his own conceptual practice often with text at its basis. Despite receiving recognition for this work, including participation in *Documenta 5* (1972) and solo exhibitions, in 1973 Salvo made a radical departure and embraced oil painting in a style that looked to traditional art histories from Giotto and Boticelli to Italian Futurism and Surrealism. Using bright, contrasting colors that reveal their artifice, Salvo managed to infuse his landscapes and cityscapes with resplendent light effects that seem true to life, if also dreamlike and perpetually still.

Andreas Schulze has played a key role in German painting for over four decades. Like Salvo, he was a participant in the heady artistic dialogues around him – in Schulze’s case, Die Neuen Wilden (The New Fauves) of Cologne’s Mülheimer Freiheit group. Yet he developed his own distinctive painterly methods that balance representation and abstraction, adopting styles derived variously from Surrealism, Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism and infusing his scenes of everyday bourgeois life with humor and irony, as well as an intermittent sense of foreboding. At every turn, Schulze both celebrates and defamiliarizes his domestic interiors, urban views and lush landscapes, rendering them strange and absurd through his deft manipulations of paint and compositional space.

In Schulze’s *Untitled (Black cloud)* (2024), for example, flowing diagonal bands cut through the sides of the work, pouring down its surface in a nod to Abstract Expressionist painter Morris Louis’ celebrated “Unfurled” canvases. This hyperreal, graphic rendition of Color Field painting is filtered through Schulze’s characteristic delineation of black, white and color, which give way to a more abstract, amorphous background reminiscent of Helen Frankenthaler’s pours and stains. Schulze plays overtly with our desire to spot figuration in even the most abstract passages, with the “black cloud” of the work’s title hanging heavily over a pale yellow horizon.

Salvo's *La città* (2010) also lays bare the artist's historical precursors, specifically De Chirico, with an enigmatic city view and a palette of brown, gold, green and red echoing the Italian Surrealist master. Like Schulze, Salvo depicts scenes from everyday life – in this case, a bus moving through town at night. Both artists revel in simple things and reduce everything down to its most concentrated form, as well according to geometrical systems all their own. In Schulze's large-scale diptych *Untitled (Concrete and clay)* (2024), the artist takes this to a literal conclusion: cube-like forms emerge from a shaft on the left of the composition, trailing one after the other as if in flight across a moody, obscure setting.

Each artist, in his own way, tends to collapse foreground and background – a flattening out that sometimes, all of a sudden, expands dramatically into great physical depths. This sense of receding space is present in Salvo's *Novembre* (2004): in the foreground, a quick shift from dark green on the left to a much brighter green hue on the right implies a quick recession, coupled with the large tree at the center turning the perspective onto its head with its tufts of bold yellow flowers. Works such as Schulze's *Untitled (Cabinet with curtain)* and *Untitled (At home)* (both 2024) illustrate a similar flattening and expansion of space in his work, just as they reveal one of his recurring tropes: the curtain and the stage, and the theatricality that they both imply.

Salvo's ability to capture an array of light effects comes to the fore in works such as *Reykjavik* (2009). Contrary to his usual, almost fluorescent, tonalities associated with Sicilian light, he has moved onto the cooler, paler shades of northern lands at dawn or dusk. Together with the frequent references to locales, seasons and times of day in his titles, Salvo's paintings invariably evoke narratives and the passage of time. And though humans are conspicuously absent in both artists' work, they are usually implied – through Schulze's curtains and homey objects, for example, or the domestic architectures and manicured vegetation that populate Salvo's scenes.

Working at similar moments in time – though Salvo's career ended with his death in 2015 – both artists fully embrace the tradition of painting, not trying to deconstruct or reimagine the medium as some of their contemporaries have done, but rather using it to instigate and reinvigorate our understanding of the world through color, light, texture and mood.

Salvo (1947–2015) lived and worked in Turin. A major retrospective of Salvo's work, entitled *Arrivare in tempo [Arriving on time]*, is on view at Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin, from November 1, 2024 to May 25, 2025. Solo exhibitions include Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome (2022), Museo d'Arte della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano (2017, with Alighiero Boetti), Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Lissone (2015), Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin (2007), Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bergamo (2002), Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes and Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (both 1988), Kunstmuseum Lucerne (1983), and Mannheimer Kunstverein and Museum Folkwang, Essen (both 1977). In addition to participating in Documenta 5 (1972) and the 1976 and 1988 Venice Biennales, recent group exhibitions include Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands (2023), Kunsthau Glarus, Switzerland (2022), Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2021) and Menil Drawing Institute, Houston (2020).

Andreas Schulze (*1955, Hanover) lives in Cologne. Selected solo exhibitions include The Perimeter, London (2023), Kunsthalle Nürnberg (2022), Fuhrwerkswaage, Cologne (2021), Kunsthalle Bielefeld (2018), Villa Merkel, Esslingen, which traveled to Kunstmuseum St. Gallen and Kunstmuseum Bonn (2014–15), Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2014), Falckenberg Collection, Hamburg and Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, Dueren (both 2010), Sprengel Museum, Hanover (1997) and Monika Sprüth Galerie, Cologne (1983). Group exhibitions include Centre d'art contemporain, Meymac (2020), Aishti Foundation, Beirut (2018), Groninger Museum, Groningen (2016), Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2015), Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2000), Triennale di Milano (1997), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1988), Museum of Modern Art, New York (1984), and The Tate Gallery, London (1983).

For further information and press inquiries, please contact Felix Lorenz-Wohnhas (felix@spruethmagers.com).

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