



CALL FOR PAPERS

Mario Schifano Study Days

October 18-23, 2021

Deadline: Sunday, August 23, 2021

Center for Italian Modern Art

Keynote speaker: TBA

The exhibition *Facing America: Mario Schifano, 1960-1965*, curated by Dr. Francesco Guzzetti and currently on view at the Center for Italian Modern Art (New York), focuses on the early production of Italian painter Mario Schifano (1934-1998). At the turn of the 1960s Schifano developed his distinctive monochromatic idiom, displaying a precocious awareness regarding the artistic context of his time. Significantly, the so-called “monochromes” reveal the resolutely individual style which Schifano articulated in response to American art of the era. Given the widespread impact of culture and attitudes imported from the United States to Italy during the years of economic growth after World War II, artists based in Rome had extensive knowledge of American art in the 1950s and 1960s. Schifano’s unique visual vocabulary caught the attention of major Parisian dealer Ileana Sonnabend, and was included in the seminal exhibition *New Realists*, at Sidney Janis Gallery in New York in 1962. Subsequently, the artist traveled to New York for six months between 1963 and 1964 while he prepared for his solo show at Odyssia Gallery in 1964.

The works included in CIMA’s presentation bear witness to Schifano’s evolution from the abstraction of the monochromes to figuration, which the artist started to reintegrate within his compositions as soon as 1962. His combination of words and images and exploration of photographic practices such as framing and montage speak to his interpretation of representation. This phenomenon challenged standard definitions of Pop Art. Concentrating on a specific period in Schifano’s oeuvre, the exhibition presents a remarkable individual who bridged Italian modern and contemporary art, and whose work is scantily acknowledged in the US. The artist’s fascination with American art and culture reflects larger issues surrounding the European reception of American exports of all kinds following the aggressive imperialism of the US in international economies, geopolitics, and societies during the 1950s. Schifano’s work demonstrates the enduring influence of American art even before the infamous Venice Biennale of 1964 that, with Robert Rauschenberg’s victory, catapulted the US to the frontlines of the artworld. Through his examination of the pictorial surface and the medium of painting, as well as his later signature figuration, Schifano elaborated a body of work that dialogues with international Pop Art, including the earlier Nouveau Realists, and provides an alternative narrative on the development of painting in the early 1960s.

Taking cues from the stimuli this exhibition offers and current scholarship on the artist from around the globe, the 2021 CIMA Research Fellows invite proposals for the Mario Schifano Study Days to be held in a hybrid format—both online and in-person in New York—during the week of October 18-23, 2021. While the conference wishes to highlight main themes that emerge from the exhibited works, building on Schifano’s multi-media practice, we seek to gather scholars from diverse fields—including history of art and architecture, social history, studies in literature, photography, and cinema, and Italian Studies—to investigate Schifano within and outside of established scholarly and critical assessments.

Topics may include (but are not limited to):

- Schifano’s artistic production including painting, photography, and cinema;
- the role Schifano played in fostering connections between American and Italian art in the first half of the 1960s, especially regarding the internationalization and rediscussion of Pop Art; the persistence and development of realism and figurative painting towards the mid-1960s;
- the monochrome and the redefinition of the tenets of painting after Abstract Expressionism and Informel, both in Europe and in the US;
- research pertaining to visual studies or screen studies, analyzing the interplay between the picture plane and screens (whether cinematographic, photographic, or television);
- poet-painter relationships and artistic collaboration of the late fifties and early sixties in New York, especially within the circle of Frank O’Hara and the New York School poets;
- Schifano’s public persona and his artistic legacy across media, genres, and cultural spheres: cinema, comics, literature, music, politics;
- the perception of American culture in the Italian visual arts and literature through the '60s;
- the reception and circulation of American counterculture and underground culture in Italy in the sixties and seventies.

Please note: The conference will adopt a hybrid model, with presentations both online and in person scheduled over the course of the entire week. Please indicate in your proposal whether you prefer to take part in the conference in person or deliver your presentation through a digital platform (Zoom).

Please send an abstract (250–300 words), title, and a short biography (100–150 words) in English to info@italianmodernart.org with the subject line “Mario Schifano CFP” by Sunday, August 23, 2021. Please send these materials in a single PDF document. Please do not send multiple attachments.