

## **Helmhaus Zürich**

26 September to 16 November 2014

### **Albrecht Schnider**

### **Giacomo Santiago Rogado**

**The two Swiss artists Albrecht Schnider and Giacomo Santiago Rogado push the boundaries of painting to the limits. Both were born in Lucerne, and both have made Berlin their home. They apply their craftsmanship and insatiable curiosity to exploring the possibilities of painting in our time. The result is a form of “painting about painting” that thrives on the principle paradigms of art and nature. And: an exhibition of almost unbearable beauty.**

They are separated by a generation – yet they have in common an almost childlike curiosity and joy in experimentation: the two Swiss painters Albrecht Schnider (\*1958) and Giacomo Santiago Rogado (\*1979). Both pursue their calling – painting pictures – with a passion. And they do so in spite of all the difficulties of our visually overloaded world. Especially when it comes to creating beauty that prevails in the face of all that has come before, and all that will come afterwards.

There can be no such thing as virginal painting in this day and age. And yet, **Giacomo Santiago Rogado** trickles undiluted paint onto a seven-metre canvas as though it were the very first painting ever created. The immaculate canvas receives the paint untouched. The initial gesture of bringing colour to the canvas is spectacular in its impact, and the pigments that detach slowly move upon the canvas, taking on a life of their own, growing like blossoming corals – until, once dried, they come to a standstill. Rogado’s work oscillates between control and chance, between artifice and nature. Just as the artist intends: he surrenders part of his visual power as an author to nature – and sums up, with sobriety and romanticism in equal measure, “After all, I too am nature.”

For the Helmhaus exhibition, he has created one of the largest paintings in art history: measuring some 60 metres and surrounding an entire room. Looking at the painting therefore means being in the painting itself, enclosed by it, becoming a part of it. This is a form of painting that not only integrates the viewer standing in front of it but also the outside world behind it, which shimmers through the woven fabric of the canvas and becomes a part of the work, with varying degrees of intensity depending on the changing light conditions.

Rogado’s monumental meta-painting returns to the genesis of painting: the artist empties his visual memory and cultivates a new, marvelling originality. Which, ultimately, does indeed have to conform to his own preconceptions in order to endure. His belief in nature, magic, alchemy and mysticism preserves his faith in beauty.



**Albrecht Schnider** has questioned the role of the picture from an early stage – and over the years his doubts have sometimes driven him to the point of despair. Whereas Rogado's painting is long planned and then ultimately left partly to chance, Schnider abandoned the artisanal process in 2001 when he turned to acrylic spray. A technical assistant in his Zurich workshop sprays most of his acrylic works on film-coated canvas according to a vector graphic relayed from Berlin. However, this does not mean that this painting is not also based on a direct gesture: Schnider is passionate about drawing. His paintings, which appear painstakingly planned, are based on countless unconscious drawings. The transposition of the unconscious into a highly reflected visual language is one of the most exciting processes in painting today. It can be charted clearly in the Helmhaus exhibition by way of example of his latest works alongside a selection of older works, drawings, sketchbooks and sculptures.

Whereas Rogado's work is some 180 m<sup>2</sup> in size, some of Schnider's (landscape) paintings are smaller than a sheet of A4 paper. Yet this small format opens up immeasurable depths and dimensions. The landscapes are key works in the oeuvre of this visually critical artist. For 25 years, his path has veered to and fro between creating and destroying. Stylized figures, broken mirrors, grids, empty faces, neo-constructivist compositions (his most recent works), arabesques – the quest for images that still make sense in today's world is the unrelenting pursuit of this artist who conveys intellect and sensuality alike.

The exhibition of Albrecht Schnider's work will be accompanied by a **book** with an essay by curator Simon Maurer on this remarkable existential oeuvre. It will be published in mid-October by Verlag für moderne Kunst in Nuremberg.

Beauty and space in painting will be the subject of the **5-o'clock theses**: Daniel Morgenthaler in conversation with his guests Julia Gelshorn, associate professor of modern and contemporary art history at the University of Freiburg, and artist Livio Baumgartner who is also curator at Die Diele.

Seldom has an exhibition been so suited to **concerts** as this one – which should come as no surprise, given the musical affinity of both artists. Violinist Bettina Boller and pianist Walter Prossnitz will play a programme of classical and new music spanning a period right up to the present day among the works of Albrecht Schnider. And jazz pianist Colin Vallon will give an undoubtedly memorable solo performance in the room enveloped by the painting by Giacomo Santiago Rogado.

As ever, the programme is rounded off by guided tours and workshops for children and adults.