

Mario Schifano 1960s

Preview: 13 October, 6 – 8pm
14 October – 18 December 2026



Detail of Mario Schifano, *Futurismo rivisitato*, 1966
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Sprovieri is pleased to present *Mario Schifano 1960s*, organised in collaboration with Gió Marconi, Milan, Italy. The exhibition brings together a selection of fourteen works by Mario Schifano dating from 1960 to 1967.

“It all happened in that decade. There is a “before the 1960s” and an “after the 1960s”. Mario Schifano (1934–1998) lived through them in the full force of his powers and at the height of his expressive strength, and he “saw everything”. His production from those years demonstrates this clearly, perfectly encapsulated in this selection of fourteen works, some of them genuine masterpieces that have featured in the artist’s most important retrospective exhibitions.

Schifano’s work is usually included within the somewhat nebulous category of Italian Pop Art, but such a definition risks being reductive when confronted with the potential of so singular an artist, one who was selected by Ileana Sonnabend for her Paris gallery in 1962. He had begun with the “Monochromes” (1960–1962, five examples of which are included in the exhibition), which were, however, portions of reality rather than reflections on the purity of abstract language, before moving rapidly towards contemporary landscapes, whose defining characteristic is that they are always “filtered” through a mechanical image, such as the photographic shot (the rounded edges recall, for example, the frames of photographic slides; and towards the end of the decade the artist engaged continuously with experimental cinema), yet always “redeemed” by the presence of painting, by that intimately “human” element capable of constructing and deconstructing every image, every memory fixed within the individual and collective imagination.

A famous photograph — the image of the explosion of the H-bomb, like the portrait of the Futurists in Paris in 1912, both represented by works in the exhibition — or the open window of his own studio, or again the simplicity of a starry sky, halfway between the American flag and the stars drawn by children: everything enters the recording of the artist’s memory as a flow of images. “It enters my eye before it enters my feelings” is the title of a work similar to *Vicolo delle Grotte 52 – Inizio del viaggio* (*Vicolo delle Grotte 52 – Beginning of the Journey*), which is exhibited here, and it provides the key to interpreting Schifano’s entire body of work, from his beginnings through to the 1990s. A kind of “cine-eye” (“Kinoglaz”) in the manner of Dziga Vertov, a “readymade” of the image, transformed, renewed, revitalised and put back into circulation through the intrinsic power of painting.”

Marco Meneguzzo, October 2026

Mario Schifano (Homs, Libya, 1934 – Rome, Italy, 1998) first came to prominence in 1960 with the exhibition *Five Roman Painters: Angeli, Festa, Lo Savio, Schifano and Uncini*, presented by Pierre Restany at Galleria La Salita in Rome. He attracted critical attention with his monochrome paintings, conceived as screens on which numbers, letters, road signs and trademarks such as Esso and Coca-Cola began to appear.

After signing an exclusive contract with Ileana Sonnabend, Schifano travelled to the United States in 1962, where he encountered artists and writers including Jim Dine, Franz Kline, Frank O'Hara, Jasper Johns, Mark Rothko, Andy Warhol and Gregory Corso. That year, he participated in *The New Realists* at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York.

During the 1960s, Schifano exhibited extensively in Italy and internationally and received several awards. His artistic language evolved rapidly: after ending his collaboration with Sonnabend in 1963, he began incorporating imagery from Italian art history and developed his *Paesaggi anemici* (Anaemic Landscapes), presented at the Venice Biennale in 1964, followed by works dedicated to Futurism.

Schifano also became increasingly interested in photography, cinema and multimedia experimentation. Between 1966 and 1967 he developed series including *Ossigeno Ossigeno*, *Tuttstelle*, *Oasi* and *Compagni*, while collaborating with Giorgio Marconi from the mid-1960s until the end of the 1970s. He produced experimental films including *Anna Carini vista in agosto dalle farfalle*, *Satellite*, *Umano non umano* and *Trapianto*, *consumazione e morte di Franco Brocani*. His engagement with music and multimedia also led to *Le Stelle di Mario Schifano*, whose 1967 performance at Rome's Piper Club became an early Italian multimedia live show.

In the following years, periods of personal and artistic crisis led Schifano to revisit both art history—reinterpreting artists such as Magritte, De Chirico, Boccioni, Cézanne and Picabia—and his own work of the 1960s in the *Sintetico dall'Inventario* cycle.