

SALVO*Salvo è vivo*

January 23 – March 8, 2014

Opening January 23, 2014 from 6 p.m.

As first exhibition of 2014, the gallery Mehdi Chouakri is very happy to present *Salvo è vivo* – a selection of both recent and historical works from the Turin based Italian artist Salvo.

Born Salvatore Mangione in 1947, as a child he moved with his parents from Leonforte, Sicily, to Turin in Italy's North, an industrial city being marked by political unrest at the time. For a while the young artist developed an engagement with anarchistic-subversive elements of artistic activism, which in 1967 led him to become acquainted with the politically conscious circle of the Turin-based Arte Povera artists. Abandoning his given name of Salvatore, he chose Salvo (saved, unscathed, holy) as his future artistic name, standing at the same time as synonym for the artist at large. His contribution to *documenta 5* in 1972—there was no work of his physically installed at the exhibition—consisted of his name, only written out in capital letters in the catalogue: SALVO. Soon after his attempts to separate himself from the dogma of the “last avant-garde” (J.-Chr.Ammann)—for which in 1970 above all stood the dominating Conceptual Art movement—brought him to painting. Albeit essentially still “conceptual”, more than purely pictorial, Salvo's engagement with this previously dismissed medium was seen as scandalous and set him as an outsider against the artistic tendencies of his generation. By the end of the 1970s however, his position was modified as a new generation of artists (first in Italy with the Arte Cifra / Transavanguardia movement), establishing painting as a medium in its own right, able to stand alongside other forms of respected artistic expression—hence also demonstrating the importance of Salvo's early painterly work within the art-historical context.

In his earlier paintings Salvo formulates relationships of art historical references, paraphrasing important (often Renaissance) paintings, sometimes replacing the faces of the main figures with his own image. In other works he takes the names of famous Italian or Sicilian poets, philosophers and painters to inscribe the outline of the geographical form of Italy, ending always in his own name, Salvo: the living artist as the last link in a long back-reaching chain (H. Dickel).

By the mid-1970s Salvo increasingly abandoned this conceptual construct in his work, making space for a development into a broader spectrum of themes. The blending of realistic and freely imaginative motives result in strongly colored, almost metaphysical “dream pictures” (mostly city- and landscapes): images of an almost not existent world. The magical tension in his work draws on a conflict between radically reductive abstraction and visually exuberant excess, “too good to be true—the artwork as a transformation of reality into appearance.” (U. Zeller)

We would like to express our gratitude for their support to Norma Mangione, Paul Maenz and Gerd de Vries.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a full-color catalog.