

A Transcultural Figure. Portrayals of Mario Schifano from the 1990s to the 2010s

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My paper addresses a heterogeneous selection of case studies regarding the literary and visual representations centered on the figure and on the works of Mario Schifano. The selection involves portrayals and depictions of the artist and his art, produced in multiple creative contexts, from the 1990s until 2020s: Fulvio Abbate's novels *Dopo l'estate* ('After the Summer', 1995), and *Quando è la rivoluzione* ('In the Time of Revolution', 2008); Gerard Malanga's poems "Mario... Mario Schifano" (2013), and "Mario Schifano Perfetto" ('Mario Schifano Perfect', 2017); Leonardo Crudi's works on paper and fabric: *Mario Schifano* (2018), *Mario Schifano* (2019), *Schifano 1934-1988* (2021), and *Trapianto, consumo e morte* ('Transplant, Consumption, and Death', 2021). The analysis of Schifano's creative reception in this period, especially the literary and visual portrayals devoted to him, makes a case of transculturality (a sort of culture crossing milieux, national borders, and generations) and allows a greater understanding of the elaboration of Schifano's figure on the part of other artists, especially since he reached an international status of master by the 1980s.¹

My essay will therefore show how representing Schifano through artistic and literary eyes, on one side facilitates the creation of a myth of Schifano, equaling Schifano to the iconic value of a "rockstar,"² adhering to a codified imagery involving the figure of the artist: a shamanic, unconventional, unpredictable, "absolute"³ figure, whose role is to question societal rules, and whose talent allows him/her to do what common exponents of society cannot.⁴ On the other, the representations of Schifano carry specific reflections on the role of his art in society, the relevance of his artistic discourse, the importance of his work for posterity. In other words, by discussing these case studies, I will demonstrate how Schifano fits Michel Foucault's definition of the author as a function of the discourse: a tool for the affirmation, circulation, and functioning of discourses in society.⁵

This study represents the ideal continuation of a preceding essay I wrote, as part of my project for CIMA Winter Fellowship,⁶ on the topic of the international, cross-generational, and cross-media reception of Schifano's art and figure, through visual and literary portrayals, covering the years 1964-1986. In that article, I analyzed a corpus of 12 works, produced by some of the most influent personalities in various arts and milieux of 20th century: poets like Frank O' Hara, Dacia Maraini, Nanni Balestrini, and Achille Bonito Oliva; novelists like Goffredo Parise; fine-art photographers, like Ugo Mulas, and Alain Jacquet; painters like Renato Guttuso, and Franco Angeli; comics artists like Stefano Tamburini, Tanino Liberatore, Andrea Pazienza; musicians like the Rolling Stones. This preliminary research meant to show and contextualize the growth of Schifano as an iconic figure explored and exploited by different artistic genres. In other words, Schifano becomes, early on, the subject of a privileged aesthetic intention, confirming, through the importance of his artistic peers' works and fame, his becoming a *maestro*, if not a model, in line with Catherine M. Soussloff's definition of the artist as a cultural figure who continuously affirms and motivates new instances in culture.⁷ Otto Kurz's and Ernst Kris' notion that "nor the role that the artist plays in any given society, derives from a fixed set of conditions" and that artists' figures "are subject to innumerable

modifications,”⁸ lets us understand how the different media and contexts involved contribute to making Schifano a malleable, polygonal, and mutable icon. At the same time, in shaping the imagery connected to Schifano, the two corpora (1964-1986 and 1995-2019) at the center of my research converge on many points: the picture that comes up is very coherent with his art and inspiration.

Interested in problematizing media, experimenting with multiple forms, attracted to various visual and verbal expressive means, Schifano tended to incorporate “tutto” in his art, to quote one of the critical cruxes that are often connected to his figure,⁹ as well as one of his recurring titles.¹⁰ As such, it is not a surprise that his reception involves figures active through an extremely various set of genres and creative practices: novel, short story, poetry, photography, painting, comics, rock music, cinema. Beyond collecting the seeds that Schifano’s art left, these works also witness the progressive fall of hierarchies between forms of expression that involves the intellectual debate through the ‘60s and ‘70s, and reaching a climax through the ‘80s.¹¹ The intersection of multiple intellectual milieux, with different generations meeting and spending time together, was recollected by Dacia Maraini as a key phenomenon of her times, when she addressed her friendship with Schifano in relation to the poetic portrait of him “Angelo Coniglio,” during an interview that she gave to CIMA.¹² The cross-media featuring – and, sometimes, the proper thematization – of Schifano’s figure and his art corroborates Thomas Crow’s conception that that the artists and the artists groups are not individuals fixed in one place, but rather elements that move wherever it is most convenient to them, make friends, reach the same city (such as Rome, NY, or Paris, in Schifano’s case), influence each other.¹³ In this sense, the international reception of Schifano follows this trend: one of the most recurring motifs in Schifano’s reception is how magnetic his persona was, and how his art had the power to inspire others, as Goffredo Parise points out in his short story “Eleganza” (‘Elegance’).¹⁴

Another element of convergence shown by the two corpora is that, in the case of the elaboration of Schifano’s figure, a perspective on his art is never missing.¹⁵ For example, in a presentation of Schifano in the occasion of a 1965 exhibition at Galleria Odyssia in Rome, Parise stated that Schifano and his art are the same thing;¹⁶ this idea is emphasized also in a poem on Schifano written in 1968 by Achille Bonito Oliva,¹⁷ and emerges as well in Nanni Balestrini’s poems:¹⁸ life and art for Schifano were the same thing, both in the sense that he had dedicated to art his whole life, and in the sense that his art was a realistic one, close to society, politics, commentary on his times, and therefore fully inserted in the intellectual debate. All the artists, writers, illustrators, photographers (etc.) that I considered in my study share this same idea, and are not interested in the sensationalistic aspect of his biography, but rather express through his figure various conceptions: their archetypical vision of the artist as a voice standing in society, such as Pazienza’s *San Sebastiano – Omaggio a Schifano* (‘Saint Sebastian – Homage to Schifano’, 1986); their will to take a stance on the importance of his art, indicating him as a model, sometimes a young, new model, such as in the case of Guttuso’s *Ritratto di Mario Schifano* (‘Portrait of Mario Schifano’, 1966), or in Mulas’s photographs (especially one of those taken during the inauguration of Venice Biennale 1964); some others, Schifano is treated as a master to follow and celebrate, such as in the Stefano Tamburini and Tanino Liberatore’s comics series “Ranxerox” (*Frigidaire* #3, 1981); some others as a peer, a friend and colleague sharing the a similar view on painting, like in Franco Angeli’s *Ritratto di Mario Schifano* (Portrait of Mario Schifano, 1971). In other cases, Schifano is thematized as an anti-heroic icon of a new generational way to live life, such as in the rock song “Monkey Man,” by the Rolling Stones (*Let It Bleed*, 1969).¹⁹ These cases of converging attention to Schifano’s art and persona emphasize how the artist was immediately recognized by authors and intellectuals not only as charismatic individual, but as a true source of inspiration.

Therefore, this research can also contribute to breaking down the perspective on Schifano as a “personaggio,” an approach still dominant, although often misleading, in his critique.²⁰ At the same time, it provides a concrete foundation for studying the ways his art has been understood by contemporary and later generations of authors, in the various contexts of its circulation.

In this sense, I mean to expand Soussloff definition, showing how, through the case study of the creative elaborations of Schifano and his art, an artist like him could nowadays be considered a “transcultural figure,” a figure that crosses the contexts and whose reception trajectory can help us read multiple cultural phenomena of the 20th century, and beyond. Another core intention of this research is, at least partially, to fill a gap in the study of the reception of Schifano’s art. This topic represents a lack in Schifano’s critique, which is due, on one side, to the substantial instability of a systematic examination of Schifano’s art, despite his popularity and commercial success;²¹ on the other, Schifano’s transcultural and cross-media legacy demonstrates that artistic reception must be searched for both inside and outside the channels of institutional art, involving a wider circulation of cultural phenomena.

Fulvio Abbate’s Novels: Schifano as an Italian Master

The ways Schifano is portrayed by Italian writer, journalist, and art critic Fulvio Abbate (Palermo, 1956) in his novels *Dopo l’estate* (1995), and *Quando è la rivoluzione* (2008), point clearly towards the recognition of him as an Italian master of painting, and, specifically a “pittore civile.”²² In both novels, his figure and art are not simply paid a homage, but represent a crucial mechanism for fiction, and a core element of Abbate’s vision, deeply concerned with the Italian politics and customs of his times, and especially with the history of the Italian leftist parties, often depicted through an ironical gaze, coherently with Abbate’s satirical poetics. Abbate’s interest in Schifano is in fact very much related to his political themes, as well as his closeness to the Italian leftist parties Rifondazione comunista and the Italian (Marxist–Leninist) Communist Party, the journal *Stella Rossa*, and the Italian extra-parliamentary left.²³

Schifano’s presence in Abbate’s work dates to 1990, when the artist’s famous painting *Compagni compagni* (‘Comrades Comrades’, 1968) is evoked in the bildungsroman *Zero Maggio a Palermo* (May 0th in Palermo). This novel, set in the beginning of the Seventies in Palermo, revolves around the sentimental and political education of a young man and his best friend, Ale and Dario, who grow up in the myth of the communist revolution, and enthusiastically follow the communist ideal, so much that they constantly filter their everyday life through voices, anniversaries, anecdotes, and legends connected to the communist imagery. The novel is narrated in first person through Ale’s still naïve and quixotic take on the world, and is all pervaded by his fantasies, dreams, family memories, local folklore, and reflections on the current national and international politics. Although the artist’s figure is not present in this novel, this case of reception is interesting for the role given to *Compagni compagni*, which is first seen by the protagonist on a print appearing on a box of matches, the so called “bustine di Minerva.” The painting is presented in a description by Ale, who identifies himself and his best friend with the two workmen depicted. The protagonist affirms that, by looking at the painting, he feels the same “aria pura di maggio” (‘pure May vibe’), an air imbued with idealism and hope for a better future, with its “political and seductive smell.”²⁴ Schifano’s work is addressed here to qualify the main character, his *Weltanschauung*, the culture he is merged into, and it appears together with many other references, such as the poem *Vom armen B. B.* (‘Of the Poor B. B.’), by Bertolt Brecht, Giacomo Leopardi’s *Le ricordanze* (‘Memories’), Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Ivanovo detstvo* (‘Ivan’s Childhood’), and, most of all, William Galt’s (*nome de plume* of novelist Luigi Natoli) *I Beati Paoli* (‘The Blessed Pauls’). This equipment of explicit or implicit references to these and other authors, such as “Albert Camus, Pier Paolo

Pasolini, Raymond Queneau, Mário de Andrade [...], Italo Calvino [...], Goffredo Parise,” contribute to achieve what Abbate defines his “double intention to create both a sentimental bildungsroman set in a city defined by its places and stories, and to create a new and somehow absurd genre: the civil fiction.”²⁵

Abbate personally met Schifano in 1984,²⁶ and was a friend to him until his death. In *Dopo l'estate* and *Quando è la rivoluzione*, the character of Schifano combines real events from the artist's biography with fictional elements. Schifano is depicted as one of the central critical voices of his times, and voice of dissent, as well as an artist who is immersed in the same system he draws a critique about. On one side, this way to represent Schifano is coherent with the figure of the artist as an exceptional, contradictory individual, dominating the Occidental imagery.²⁷ On the other, this idea intertwines with the recognition of Schifano of the status of Italian master. Specifically, in *Dopo l'estate*, Schifano is a friend and a business partner of the protagonists, in an enterprise dealing precious stones, and he gives as his percentage in the deal a painting of 1994, *Il parto numeroso della moglie del collezionista* ('The Numerous Delivery of the Collector's Wife'), sold by the protagonist a few hours after receiving it. The gesture of using his own works as a reliable funding, pointing towards the status of master reached by the artist, is often associated with Schifano in Abbate's fiction – and corresponds to multiple episodes in Schifano's biography.²⁸

In the socio-political fiction *Quando è la rivoluzione*, Abbate stages a dystopia, set around 1975, where a leftist association imposes a Maoist dictatorship in the city of Rome. Here, Abbate reflects on the Maoist illusion that pervaded the Italian leftist intellectuals after 1968, and, in the words of its author, it is intended to answer a question: “How could we ever think that Maoism could be an answer to our desire for freedom?”²⁹ The character of Schifano is shown here as the artist funding the group of rebels, playing the role of “the Michelangelo of this political power, of this new red sun of Mao, that would open up, and rise on the Italian landscape... This Michelangelo could be no one but Schifano,” who “in some years stayed in Paola, where Maoists had organized a guerrilla, and occupation.” In this choral novel, following various protagonists from multiple social classes, Schifano is, together with Alberto Moravia, Marco Bellocchio, Ugo Tognazzi, and other real and fictional (but plausible) exponents of the Roman creative milieu of the time, the object of a sharply satirical reflection, and a key figure to contextualize Abbate's meditations on the hopes for a better society nourished by the leftist intellectuals in a precise moment of the history of Italy.

Among other references, *Dopo l'estate* connotes Schifano as the artist who incessantly takes pictures of the television screen, “as if someone had appointed him to keep up to date a never-ending archive,”³⁰ dedicating to retouching his polaroids with enamel: “It was not enough for him to record what was going on the TV. In fact, Schifano in the end retouched the figures printed on the photograph paper. He was giving them a new birth in his own way.” These quotations show Abbate's perspective on the way the character of Schifano understands his art as a lifetime mission. His figure corresponds here to a shamanic one, mediating between the character in which the reader identifies (who narrates in first person) and the artistic act as an act of divine impulse. Introducing his character, which is presented in his studio, surrounded by his works and art tools, Abbate reports a piece of conversation that happened between the two, when he clarifies the meaning of his photographic work: “These images fulfill me with joy. They do not compose a diary, because I never look at the past [...], but I know that in these images all my intentions sediment. It is true that all my work comes from the outside, from the existing, from the things everybody sees, maybe it would be enough to take pictures of them. Because I retouch them, I think they have also become money, and when they become money, they start existing.” This introduction points clearly towards the recognition of Schifano as a painting master, who devotes to his art all his time and thoughts

and reveals the meaning of art in his epoch to the people surrounding him, bringing it into their lives. This take on Schifano becomes explicit through another parallelism with a painting master – this time Pablo Picasso – when the artist is addressed as the author of what Abbate defines “Schifano’s own *Guernica*,” the painting *Tearful*, examined by the writer in an article appeared on *L’Unità*.³¹

The relevance of Schifano in these novels, and, more in general, on Abbate’s writing, is evident since the covers of these three books’ first editions, all displaying paintings by Schifano: *Zero Maggio a Palermo*’s was created specifically for the publication – “He found a way to set in a red monochrome his *Compagni, compagni*, placing some palms, that were part of his set of icons,”³² while *Dopo l’estate*’s cover reproduces his painting *Family way lifestyle* (1990); finally, *Quando è la rivoluzione*’s cover shows an untitled painting (1968) that Schifano created during the above mentioned Maoist occupation of the city of Paola.

Gerard Malanga’s Poems: Schifano as an Ethical Model

The portrait emerging from “Warhol superstar” Gerard Malanga’s poems “Mario... Mario Schifano” (2013),³³ and “Mario Schifano Perfetto” (2017)³⁴ is one of profound admiration for Schifano’s personality and work.³⁵ An emblematic protagonist of the New York underground scene in the ’60s and ’70s, and prolific author, whose works intersect multiple genres and intellectual milieus (as a poet, photographer, director, actor, and dancer), Malanga befriended Schifano during the time he spent in Rome in 1967-68.³⁶ Their friendship is framed in the Roman artistic environment of those years, and is connected to the names of many other protagonists of this season, that Malanga came in touch with, such as Moravia and Maraini, Elsa Morante, Franco Angeli, and Pier Paolo Pasolini, who published one of his poems in *Nuovi Argomenti* (“Una cartolina postale blu”, ‘A Blue Postcard’, 17, January-March 1970, translated by Maraini). Malanga’s trip to Italy occurred in the circumstances of the presentation of his short movie *In Search for the Miraculous* (1967), premiering at the Bergamo Film Festival (November 1967). The two had briefly met in 1963, in the occasion of Schifano’s trip to New York, through their common friend Anita Pallemberg.³⁷ In Rome, they collaborated to multiple projects, as Malanga was a choreographer and a dancer in the concert “Grande angolo, sogni e stelle” (‘Wide Angle, Dreams and Stars’, December 28, 1967, Piper Club, Rome), and an actor in Schifano’s short movie *Souvenir* (1967), which has been pointed as an influence by the American artist.³⁸

Both the compositions dedicated to Schifano are coherent with Malanga’s poetics, very much devoted to the exposition of an inner dialogue with familiar entities: family, friends, and favorite authors (poets, artists, musicians), whose voices, acts, and biography blend with the personal story of their writer, and his own thoughts.³⁹ Written many years after the period in which Malanga and Schifano were close, these poems seem to continue a deeply meditated dialogue begun long time before. “Mario... Mario Schifano” is a reflection on the value of their creative experience, their ideals, the pursuit of art that made them close: here, Schifano appears like an epiphany, and is the recipient of a series of questions about the meaning of their dedication to art in their life, their experience as protagonists of a key artistic moment in history: “was there truly any bliss?”. Malanga refers specifically to Schifano’s capacity to merge into work (“Not when so few decades look ahead in haste/ with the least distractions for your work”) – an idea that occurs also in the second poem at the center of this analysis – and that the poet addressed in an interview, defining Schifano a “workaholic.”⁴⁰ The poem evokes Schifano as a benevolent spirit, that keeps sadness and worries away from the writer, who feels peaceful and reassured by the memory of him (“I was expecting you!”, “Keep me company, so that the dark does not intervene.”), his dedication to art, and his smile: “You smiled your most

endearing smile until the last...” This memory is reassuring, as it reminds the writer that their life was not vain, of their lifetime mission, the way they actively intervene on the cultural milieu they operated in and participated to changing the course of art history. Another reference to Schifano’s work is the experimentation with the television screen, recurring in two verses: “Your face filling up the TV screen with the sound turned way down, way low [...] and then the screen went black.”

Malanga’s admiration for Schifano, and especially his “ethics,” is at the center of “Mario Schifano Perfetto”. The poem evokes the memory of a specific episode that happened in Rome in 1967, involving Malanga’s ex-girlfriend Benedetta Barzini, and the fact that Schifano did not want to hide to his friend the love affair he had with her. Malanga compares the way Schifano lived and behaved to the way he approached art, with honesty and dedication. This is clearly spelled in the verses “he was too honest to wanna copy/ what he already copied”, and “he was simply too focused/ on ‘a thing of beauty is a joy forever’,” a definition of art that Malanga expresses through a quotation from John Keats’ *Endymion* (1918). Schifano here is therefore presented as an ethical model, whose behavior impressed young Malanga when they met, and that makes him reflect later in his life, when he recalls him. The poem implies the idea that Schifano could not have done anything but his art, which is addressed with specific references to his style, such as “copy,” and “transfer,” two techniques that characterize many of Schifano’s works from the Sixties⁴¹, and “yellow” and “black,” colors that often appear in his monochromes:⁴² “Too honest to walk the straight line or paint the / straight line as anything other than transferred.” In Malanga’s vision, Schifano obeys to his inspiration, without contrasting it for an easy success, with the same honesty he obeys to ethics in his behavior: the verse “Too honest to paint yellow, when black would suffice” implies that he would not make reality seem different than what it was, both in his art and in his life.

Leonardo Crudi’s Posters: Schifano as an Alternative Icon

I will conclude my essay by focusing on a young Roman artist, Leonardo Crudi, often employed in the redevelopment of urban public spaces.⁴³ Discussing Crudi’s relationship with Schifano sums up what I have been describing so far: active in open space exhibitions, and mural art, as well as in Roman contemporary galleries, Crudi often re-proposes portraits of cultural icons, from Pasolini to Claudio Caligari, from Dario Bellezza to Carmelo Bene, in poster-like works characterized by a constructivist-style frame, whose powerful visual impact can quickly catch the attention, and bring the audience to reflect on the proposed themes.⁴⁴

Crudi elaborates Schifano’s figure through four pieces authored between 2018 and 2021, within a comprehensive will to channel the wider audience of the urban spaces, as well as the specialized public of the art galleries, towards submerged cultures. In this sense, the role of Schifano, a recognizable and iconic master – especially for the Roman audience – who entertained multiple connections with less known and less institutionalized movements and artist – is to trigger the public’s attention towards underground and alternative aesthetics: “The way I work is generally that of beginning with the representation of the most known personalities to introduce both the gallery audience and the street public – in the hope that these publics will be more and more coincident – to my research in submerged and forgotten avantgardes.”⁴⁵

In Crudi’s vision, Schifano becomes, together with many other artistic/intellectual groups, movements, and personalities of the 20th century to whom he pays homage in his work, the icon through which the artist can negotiate with the public segments of alternative culture. In Crudi’s view, the understanding of submerged culture by citizenship can be improved by urban art, to which he dedicates through mural paintings, and ephemeral posters attached to the

walls of various Roman neighborhoods, especially in the peripheral areas: an “art propaganda, directed to promote the rediscovering of works, personas, and stories, that have somehow been relegated to the margins of the official culture.”⁴⁶ Schifano’s icon must therefore be framed in Crudi’s will to propose artistic enjoyment in public areas as a way to take care of “common and shared spaces such as streets and squares,” to corroborate “participation and dialogue,” and to respond to “the need and the desire for spaces to animate, for a sense of collectivity and community, of art and experimentation.”⁴⁷

Schifano’s legacy is evident in multiple constituents of Crudi’s art: I refer particularly to the attitude towards a civil art, some of the subjects portrayed, such as the Italian working class,⁴⁸ and the artistic appropriation technique, as well as in the titles, often enigmatic, ironic, and suspended.⁴⁹ Crudi affirmed that his fascination with Schifano and his art regards “Schifano’s ability to dive into different milieux, which enabled him to innovate the artistic language, and to incorporate diversified stimuli, still maintaining his own discourse; he crossed multiple cultures, and actively innovated them.”⁵⁰ Beyond employing Schifano’s persona as an attractive icon to educate the public to his own artistic discourse, Crudi shares similar intentions with the artist and his contextual provenance: “my art has been associated with the Scuola di Piazza del Popolo,⁵¹ as we share the same root: for example, the Roman pop art ‘revisited’ Futurism, as an icon, the same way I ‘re-elaborate’ artistic icons; our research is similar, and I think it is possible to find many analogies.”⁵² In his rereading the works by Schifano and the Scuola di Piazza del Popolo, Crudi is inspired by these artists’ capability to create a participated culture: “they were able to communicate their artistic discourse to a broad audience.”⁵³

Appendix

Mario... Mario Schifano.

Ciao! Ciao! Mario!

I was expecting you!

Where have you been?!

Sit... stay awhile. Have a latte.

Keep me company, so that the dark does not intervene.

So that it's never late.

So that the rain will not arrive on time.

Some other time perhaps.

But not now.

Not our time.

Not when so few decades look ahead in haste
with the least distractions for your work.

It's amazing you got anything done
for as long as memory lasts.

The remaining stories unabashed you passed the privilege on:

All the faces, all those places as obscured as histories go, unraveled now.

Your face filling up the TV screen with the sound turned way down, way low.

Can you hear me now?

You smiled your most endearing smile until the last...

and then the screen went black.

Mario... Mario...

was ever idleness like this? Was there truly any bliss?

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- ¹ Giorgia Gastaldon, "Schifano, Mario," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 91, 2018. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/mario-schifano_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ (accessed: January 5, 2022). All the translations of quotations from Italian authors are mine.
- ² Luca Beatrice, *Mario Schifano, Andrea Pazienza, Mimmo Paladino* (Torino: Allemandi & C., 2011), 11.
- ³ Catherine M. Soussloff, *Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 4.
- ⁴ Eloisa Morra, and Giacomo Raccis, "Editoriale," *Elephant & Castle*, no. 25 (June 2021), 4. <https://elephantandcastle.unibg.it/web/uploads/saggi/010d03d37931a1b8d0b643da7a2f15684a7a8488.pdf> (accessed: January 5, 2022).
- ⁵ Michel Foucault, *Scritti letterari* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010), 9.
- ⁶ Carlotta Vacchelli, "Dall'uomo scimmia a San Sebastiano. Rappresentazioni di Mario Schifano tra letteratura, musica e arti visive," *Elephant & Castle*, no. 25 (June 2021), <https://elephantandcastle.unibg.it/web/uploads/saggi/78e99ebef05861a5b513adead9e3dc06c4b6632c.pdf> (accessed: January 5, 2022).
- ⁷ Soussloff, *Absolute Artist*, 3.
- ⁸ Otto Kurz and Ernst Kris, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist* (New Heaven-London: Yale University Press, 1981). Ebook edition.
- ⁹ Luca Ronchi, *Mario Schifano. Tutto* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2001). DVD.
- ¹⁰ As is shown by his works *Tutto* (All, 1964), *Tutta propaganda* (All Advertisement, 1963), or *Inventario Tutto* (Inventory All, 1973-74).
- ¹¹ The foundation of the magazine *Frigidaire* in November 1980, to which Schifano contributed, donating funds and art pieces to the magazine's directors, is a clear example of the final collapse of the boundaries among arts over this decade. The magazine was created with the clear intention to adopt a "cold eye on the world," performing a common "soul" in different creative means (comics, painting, photography, fiction, cultural/societal reportage). See the interview to the founders of *Frigidaire*, Vincenzo Sparagna and Filippo Scòzzari: Center for Italian Modern Art, *Schifano and Friends: Frigidaire* (2021), <https://vimeo.com/541127324#> (accessed: Jan 5, 2022). Video.
- ¹² Center for Italian Modern Art, *Schifano and Friends: Dacia Maraini* (2021), <https://vimeo.com/channels/1236855/53109-2314> (accessed: Jan 5, 2022). Video.
- ¹³ Thomas Crow, "New York Pop Art as an Immigrant Affair," *Mario Schifano Study Days* (October 2021). Lecture.
- ¹⁴ Goffredo Parise, *Sillabari* (Primers, Milano: Adelphi, 2011). Ebook edition.
- ¹⁵ To limit my set of case studies, I excluded those works that fall in the genre of the mere bearing of witness, those work that are clearly identified only as critical perspective, and those work featuring a reference to Schifano's art without representing him, such as the movies *Dillinger è morto* (Dillinger Died, Marco Ferreri, 1969), and *Manhattan Baby* (Lucio Fulci, 1982), and Paolo Volponi's *Le mosche del capitale* (The Capital's Flies, 1989). I took such works into account, but I did not treat them as case study, as I am concentrating on forms of fiction and figuration, to see how the aesthetic reception shapes Schifano's figure.
- ¹⁶ Goffredo Parise, "Schifano (à propos de...)" (About Schifano), in *Mario Schifano* (Rome: Galleria Odyssia, 1965). Page numbers missing.
- ¹⁷ Achille Bonito Oliva, "L'eudemonismo di 'occhio'," in *Gruppo 63. L'antologia* (Turin: Testo&Immagine), 73.
- ¹⁸ Nanni Balestrini, "particolare della pubblicità", in *Mario Schifano* (Rome: Galleria Odyssia, 1964). Page numbers missing.
- ¹⁹ These and other examples have been analyzed in depth in my study, Vacchelli, *Dall'uomo scimmia*, 2021. I refer to this research for a more precise reading.
- ²⁰ Giorgia Gastaldon, *Schifano. Comunque, qualcos'altro. 1958-1964* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2021), 7.
- ²¹ Gastaldon, *Schifano. Comunque, qualcos'altro*, 8.
- ²² 'Political painter.' Fulvio Abbate, "Il pittore 'civile'," in *Mario Schifano, approssimativamente*, ed. Luca Ronchi (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2001), 87.
- ²³ For example, in 1994, Schifano gave his permission to Rifondazione comunista's secretary Sergio Garavini, to print his iconic painting *No* (1960) on the posters of the party. Abbate, "Il pittore 'civile'," 89.
- ²⁴ Fulvio Abbate, *Zero maggio a Palermo* (Milano: La nave di Teseo, 2017). Ebook edition.
- ²⁵ Abbate, *Zero maggio a Palermo*. This and other translations are mine.
- ²⁶ Center for Italian Modern Art, *Schifano and Friends: Fulvio Abbate* (2021), <https://vimeo.com/596331571> (accessed: January 10, 2022). Video.
- ²⁷ Giacomo Raccis, "Appunti per una teoria del personaggio-artista nel romanzo italiano contemporaneo," *Enthymema*, no. 26 (2020), 248,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350387273_Appunti_per_una_teoria_del_personaggio-artista_nel_romanzo_italiano_contemporaneo (accessed: January 15, 2022).

²⁸ For example, Schifano's gesture to pay with his art is remembered by Marianne Faithfull, whom he had an affair with: "Once, in Rome, before we went to the countryside, he took me to an haute couture shop. It was cold. He bought me a long coat that he paid with his painting, and I remember that the shop owner was enthusiastic about it and kept thanking him. Actually, it was not even a painting, it was just a drawing, that he signed in front of him. I was very impressed." This quotation comes from Luca Ronchi, *Mario Schifano. Una biografia* (Monza: Johan & Levi, 2012), 135.

²⁹ This quotation and the following ones come from: Center for Italian Modern Art, *Schifano and Friends: Fulvio Abbate*.

³⁰ This quotation and the following ones come from Fulvio Abbate, *Dopo l'estate* (Milano: Bompiani, 1995), 20-21.

³¹ Fulvio Abbate, "Schifano rosso spray," *L'Unità*, August 7, 2004.

³² Center for Italian Modern Art, *Schifano and Friends: Fulvio Abbate*.

³³ This poem, which is published in this essay for the first time, was sent to me by the author, who authorized its publication.

³⁴ Frank O'Hara, Mario Schifano, *Words & Drawings* (Rome: Archivio Mario Schifano, 2017), 367.

³⁵ In a private interview Malanga gave me, he stated that Schifano was one of the greatest postwar artists, together with Mimmo Rotella. He also insisted on how much he admired his ethics.

³⁶ A recollection of Malanga's trip to Italy (September 1967 – February 1968) is present in Gerard Malanga, *In Remembrance of Things Past* (North Salem: Bottle of Smoke Press, 2017), 225-251.

³⁷ Most of the information, present in this article, about Malanga's and Schifano's friendship come from a private interview the poet gave me on March 31, 2021.

³⁸ "The style was vintage Mario with all his tricks that included turning the camera on its side: a horizontal frame transformed vertically in one swift dizzying camera move. A device I easily mimicked later on, always with Mario in mind." Malanga, *In Remembrance of Things Past*, 229.

³⁹ An example of Malanga's poetic memoir, steeped in literature, art and music, with references and echoes from the milestones of the Western tradition (from Dante to Edgar Allan Poe; from Rimbaud and Mallarmé, to Virginia Woolf) mixing with the poet's thoughts, friendly voices and shadows from the past is *The New Melancholia & Other Poems* (North Salem: Bottle of Smoke Press, 2021).

⁴⁰ See note 35.

⁴¹ For example, *Grande particolare di propaganda* (Large Detail of Advertisement, 1962), *Leonardo* (1963), *Futurismo rivisitato* (Futurism Revisited, 1965).

⁴² Such as *Standard* (1961), and *Venus de Milo* (1961).

⁴³ For example, his mural work *Mamma Roma* (Mother Rome, in collaboration with Elia Novecento and the Collettivo La Talpa, 2020) is situated in Casal Bernocchi (Rome); another open air urban art is *Fantasia in piazza* (Fantasy in the Square), in the square Piazza dell'Immacolata, in the Roman neighborhood San Lorenzo.

⁴⁴ Most of Crudi's works, interviews and information about his exhibitions and projects can be found on his artistic archive online, <http://www.leonardocrudi.com/en/> (accessed: January 26, 2022).

⁴⁵ The quotation comes from a private interview Crudi gave me on January 25, 2022. Not by chance, Crudi and Schifano's works are put in a dialectic in the exhibition "SPQR: Siamo popolo quanto re," which took place at the gallery Contemporary Cluster (Rome, inaugurated on January 21, 2022).

⁴⁶ Editor's note, "Arriva Cinepugno, la mostra che dà vita alle locandine dei film di nicchia," *The Roman Post*, May 7, 2021, <http://www.theromanpost.com/2021/05/arriva-cinepugno-la-mostra-che-da-vita-alle-locandine-dei-film-di-nicchia/> (accessed: January 15, 2022).

⁴⁷ Simona Galateo, "San Lorenzo, l'arte diventa azione civica," *Il Manifesto*, May 12, 2021, https://ilmanifesto.it/san-lorenzo-larte-diventa-azione-civica/?fbclid=IwAR2Oj_6IMy4bij5fswep7o9YLW4wfd-aHztsHONla7RQplZmijpPYzCfRGU.

⁴⁸ His personal exhibition "Simil-prop" (Rome, Spazio Cerere, May 26 – June 1, 2016), was dedicated to this theme.

⁴⁹ Such as *Lavoratori o...* (2016, <http://www.leonardocrudi.com/de/lavoratori-o-2016-de/> last accessed January 26, 2022), or *Lavoratori contro* (2021, <http://www.leonardocrudi.com/ru/italiano-lavoratori-contro-2021-manifesto-230x125-cm-smalti-su-carta/> accessed: January 26, 2022).

⁵⁰ From a private interview, see note 37.

⁵¹ To which Crudi dedicated a cycle of works in the occasion of the personal exhibition "Roma pop anni '60" (Rome, Galleria Fidia, December 10 – 16, 2018).

⁵² From a private interview, see note 37.

⁵³ Giuseppe Sansonna, *Ombre elettriche* (Electric Shadows, Rome: Rai, 2019), <https://www.raiplay.it/video/2021/03/Ombre-elettriche-2186e0a5-b74b-4154-aca9-8fbf05003673.html> (accessed: January 26, 2022).

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