

Francisco Sierra. Avalon MANOR Art Prize 2013

The MANOR Art Prize St. Gallen is being awarded for the 12th time in 2013 and this year's winner is Francisco Sierra. Born in Chile in 1977, the artist emigrated to Switzerland with his family in 1986 and grew up in Herisau and St.Gallen. The breathtaking perfection of his photorealistic paintings and the complex motifs with a charming, ironic touch of social criticism have already attracted considerable attention. The MANOR Art Prize is associated with an extensive exhibition of new paintings, most of which were created for the exhibition at the Kunstmuseum St.Gallen.



„Im Park“, 2011, Oil on canvas, 210 x 290 cm, Courtesy: Francisco Sierra

Francisco Sierra provides multiple answers to the question of what contemporary figurative painting could look like. The unexpected shifts in the form and materials of the items portrayed make his work ambiguous and irritating at the same time. As a result, they are fascinatingly contemporary, particularly because they invoke the great classical traditions of painting. The objects are hardly ever what they appear to be. While he was studying violin, Francisco Sierra taught himself how to paint. The MANOR Art Prize, which was initiated by the company Maus Frères SA in 1982 and is now awarded in 12 Swiss cities in collaboration with their art museums, is one of numerous awards that the artist has had the privilege to accept so far. In addition to the Swiss Art Award and a studio scholarship from Landis & Gyr, Sierra has also been a repeat recipient of the Kiefer Halblitzel Prize for the Visual Arts. Just as Francisco Sierra is interested in the pitfalls of contemporary photographic images and the transforming possibilities of painting, he also elegantly reflects upon surreal and conceptual visual ideas, which always revert to the ordinariness of the things he sees. For the viewer, the virtuoso handling of materials, objects and suggestion comes together to create an impressive, visual experience.

Press Release

Duration of the exhibition

15 November 2013 – 2 March 2014

Press conference

Thursday 14 November 2013
11:00 a.m.
Kunstmuseum St.Gallen

Opening of the exhibition

Thursday 14 November 2013
6:30 p.m.
Kunstmuseum St.Gallen

Press contact

Irina Wedlich
Kunstmuseum St.Gallen
Communications
Museumstrasse 32
9000 St.Gallen

T +41 71 242 06 85
F +41 71 242 06 72
irina.wedlich@kunstmuseumsg.ch
www.kunstmuseumsg.ch



„Joint“, 2013, Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm, Courtesy: Francisco Sierra

With his series of works entitled “Formology of Avalon” he takes a journey to the mythical location of Avalon from the legend of King Arthur. The seven large-scale paintings (170 x 130 cm) in the series, all of which depict abstract reliefs, are initially reminiscent of formalistically construed modern art. Comic-like pencil sketches, which the artist quickly drew in series, served as the starting point for the work. In the case of “Formology of Avalon”, the theme is the abstract exploration of forms. The artist recreates these drawings in the same A4-format using a plaster-like material, resulting in white relief plates with three-dimensional, nonrepresentational structures, whose contour lines correspond to the preceding sketches. And this is where the coherent visual aspect of his paintings, which meticulously copy the appearance, begins. Varying shades of white characterise the abstract, small reliefs, but the colour white is no longer found in the paintings. In infinitely differentiated approaches using a meticulously developed brushstroke technique that realistically portrays things with photographic accuracy, Sierra completely distances himself from the reference objects, precisely because he portrays them so realistically. The objects are reinvented once again on the large-scale canvas. They now serve as the starting point of an artistic process, which makes the perception of the object something that can be experienced thanks to the help of a differentiated language of brushstrokes.

The key question of the visual arts regarding depiction and perception mechanisms is the central focus of this research. The fascinating, excessive clarity of the painting allows us to reconsider our own point of view as if under a magnifying glass.

During the exhibition at the Kunstmuseum St.Gallen, a presentation with sketches by Francisco Sierra is being held at the Kunstmuseum Solothurn from 28 September 2013 to 2 February 2014. A joint, richly illustrated catalogue has been published to accompany the complementary exhibitions.

Factsheet

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Exhibition Duration	15 November 2013 – 2 March 2014
Exhibition Location	Kunstmuseum St.Gallen
Press Conference	14 November 11:00 a.m. Kunstmuseum St.Gallen
Exhibition Opening	14 November 6:30 p.m. Kunstmuseum St.Gallen
Curator	Roland Wäspe
Opening Hours	Tu-Su 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wed 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Mo closed
Admission	CHF 10 Free admission for members of the Kunstverein St.Gallen
Press Contact	Irina Wedlich T +41 71 242 06 85 irina.wedlich@kunstmuseumsg.ch
Homepage	www.kunstmuseumsg.ch