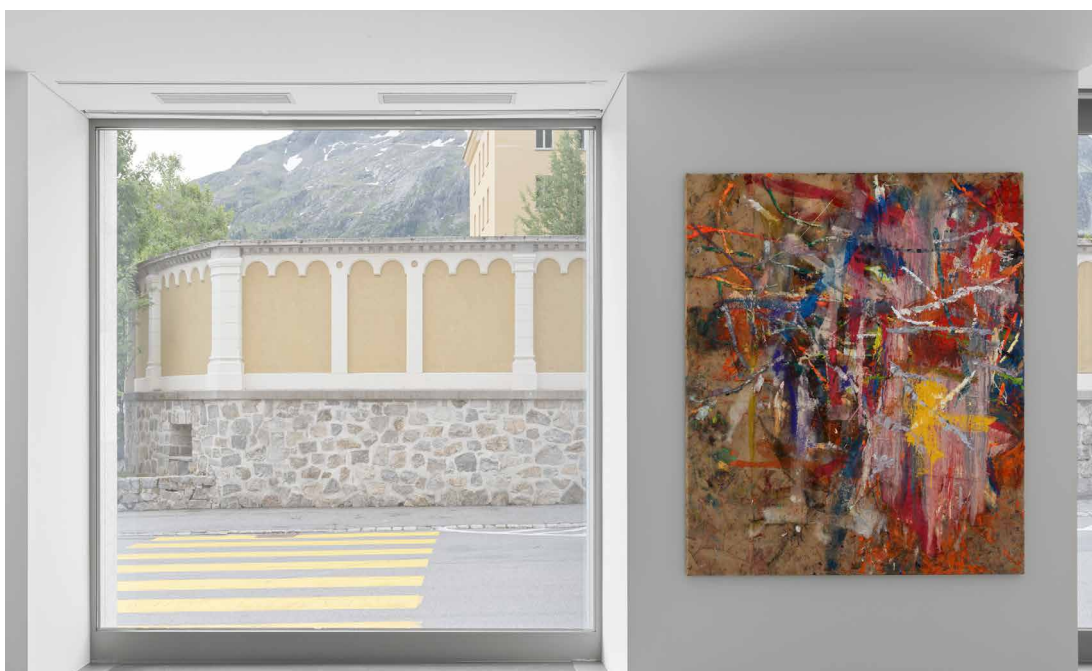


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Vito Schnabel's Art Gallery in the Clouds

November 2021



Images © Spencer Lewis; Photo by Stefan Altenburger; Courtesy the artist and Vito Schnabel Gallery

At the tender age of 16, Vito Schnabel staged his first contemporary art exhibition in New York. The son of the American painter and filmmaker Julian Schnabel and Jacqueline Beurang, a clothing designer, Vito's interest in art was not wholly surprising - but his prodigious passion surely was. With a special fondness for abstract painting, Schnabel has built relationships with many artists over the years, from the anonymous collective the Bruce High Quality Foundation, to celebrated relative newcomers, Laurie Anderson and Terence Koh. Now 35, Schnabel is an established curator and art dealer, and the director of 2 eponymous galleries - one in New York, and one in Switzerland.

The Swiss Vito Schnabel Gallery, in the Engadin valley region in the eastern Alps, is located amid a network of walking trails. The gallery's St. Moritz location and architectural white cube façade is surrounded by the resort town, and was established in 2015. As well as on-site exhibitions, the gallery intends to curate public spaces in St. Moritz, as an extension of its art programming. One of the Vito Schnabel Gallery's first exhibitions was by art world favourite Sterling Ruby, who staged a solo show, 'STOVES', there. In March, another exhibition by Ruby was set up, inspired by the activity of hiking, titled 'Mix Piz'. In it, Ruby represents that rural, wholesome pastime abstractly, through the colours

and shapes of the sun, the moon and the mountains, as well as through the anthropomorphic sculptures that represent hikers or 'DRFTRS'.

Currently, 10 new large-scale paintings on raw jute canvases of Spencer Lewis hang upon the Vito Schnabel Gallery walls. With its title "Susan Mary" a dedication to the artist's late mother, this solo exhibition is Lewis' first in Switzerland. Born in Hartford, CT in 1979, Spencer Lewis is recognized for his works on cardboard and jute, executed in swathes of bright, saturated pigment with a charged physicality expressed in heavily worked and tactile surfaces, streaked lines, smears of paint, and rough, slashed strokes that crisscross back and forth with visceral force. Lewis builds his compositions in layers through unbridled, even violent movements, deliberately subjecting his paintings to fatigue and brute overworking in order to unleash their organic power. Each line, each point, each staccato mark that Lewis lays down on the canvas is an expression of his philosophy of painting itself. The paintings to be presented at Vito Schnabel Gallery exude explosive, maximalist energy.

Definitely a worthwhile trip from your Alpine Art Nouveau bolthole, *Villa Flor*, only a beautiful 25-minute drive through the Engadin peaks.