

ALESSANDRO RAHO
„FOREIGN SKIES AND PINK CHOCOLATE“

Opening on 21 September 2022 at 6 p.m.
21 September – 28 October 2022

ALESSANDRO RAHO was born in 1971 in Nassau in the Bahamas; his paintings follow in the long tradition of realistic and naturalistic art. Inspired by Gerhard Richter's paintings from the late 1960s and early 1970s, he first used existing pictorial material from films, newspapers and magazines as the starting point for his works, but he soon began to work from photographs he himself had taken. The individual characteristic of the motif is preserved in Alessandro Raho's paintings but by changing the picture section, emphasizing details and by abstract simplification compared with the photograph, the real location is typified and loses its individual features. Longing and nostalgia for the simple pleasures of life are inherent in his most recent works: enjoyment of a piece of high quality chocolate (*Box of Chocolates, Pink Chocolate*), reading a good book (*Still Life with Book and Poster*) swimming in a friends' pool (*Susan and Roy's Pool*), observing a sunset (*American Sky, Pink Sky, LA Rooftops, LA Sky, Blue Evening*).

As becomes clear from the title of our exhibition, **ALESSANDRO RAHO** refers in his new works to foreign countries: after many motifs which were created in the Bahamas, his birth place and where he spent his early childhood, he now focuses on the sky above the American continent in all (nocturnal) shades. All in all there are 19 small-scale works which are characterized by strong contrasts of light and dark. In free brushwork, details are applied with pastose colour to the smooth surfaces of glazed sections, producing an attractive alternation between concreteness and abstraction which emphasizes **ALESSANDRO RAHO's** masterful artistry. *Pink Sky* for example: the beach situation in the evening light is sketched by the artist with areal sections of colour. Then the shimmering sunset glow from orange to pink is applied to the canvas in masterful pointillist technique with separate incoherent points and lines. **ALESSANDRO RAHO** suggests a beach with palm trees in the foreground: the leaves of the plant on the left are shaped in great detail; the separate layers of the leaves are visible. The trees located in perspective further behind are only hinted at by means of separate black brushstrokes.

ALESSANDRO RAHO became famous by painting portraits of his friends. In 2004 he was commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery to make a portrait of Dame Judi Dench. The style and dress of the protagonists show them to be modern inhabitants of big cities. In the work entitled *Young Kim* in our exhibition we see an elegantly dressed young lady in an upper-class interior. The narrative elements in **ALESSANDRO RAHO's** painting become evident here: the pink sky in front of the outsize windows and the flowers in the garden suggest a Caribbean location. The elegant clothing and the high heels of the lady portrayed suggest a festive occasion or the pending visit of a high quality performance.

As regards their painterly and compositional sophistication **ALESSANDRO RAHO's** works are comparable to those by a 19th-century master such as Edouard Manet, yet their motifs clearly anchor them in our present. A blessing for the human eye at a time of NFTS and digital art.

Salzburg, August 2022

Katja Mittendorfer