MASI Lugano
Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

Via Canova 10
CH – 6900 Lugano

comunicazione@masilugano.ch
+41 (0)58 866 42 40
www.masilugano.ch

Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
La pittura 2024/25

15 March 2026 – 9 August 2026
Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano

Curated by Tobia Bezzola and Ludovica Introini

PRESS RELEASE
Lugano, 12 March 2026

With the exhibition "Jean-Frédéric Schnyder. La pittura 2024/25", MASI Lugano pays tribute to one of the most original, influential names in the world of Swiss contemporary art. Boasting a career that spans over 60 years, Jean-Frédéric Schnyder (Basel, 1945, lives in Zug) has worked with photography, sculpture, performance and painting. His practice has always set him apart yet remained central to the art scene, and been ever faithful to a guiding vision of art as an everyday craft, an exercise in both freedom and discipline.

This approach can also be seen in the new pieces presented at MASI: more than a hundred oil paintings, on show for the first time, that Schnyder worked on continuously for two years, 2024 and 2025. In addition to studio paintings featuring a range of subjects, the artist has created a series of plein-air landscapes, painted in different regions of Switzerland, where nature takes centre stage. These "visual notebooks" follow a set of rules he established at the outset: each one was painted on a single day, calling for many hours of full concentration, something that elevates the experience of painting to an almost visionary practice.
This disciplined approach to observing the world is reflected in the MASI show in the way the pieces are presented in strict chronological order, accompanied by captions written in pencil by the artist, with the date and place. Indeed Schnyder attentively oversees the way his works are exhibited, and how visitors view and experience them, an approach that now more than ever comes across as a subversive invitation to reimagine the act of looking.

Alongside the recent works, two iconic creations by the artist are also on display, the monumental *Stilleben* (Still Life, 1970) and the series *Billige Bilder* (Cheap Paintings, 2000–2019), which opens the show.

The 162 small canvases in this series line the walls of the first room, from floor to ceiling, an immediate celebration of painting in its most everyday, tangible dimension. Indeed Schnyder created these pieces over a period of almost 20 years, systematically collecting the rags he used to clean his brushes - hence the title "cheap paintings". They pay tribute to a frugal, down-to-earth approach to painting, in which nothing must be wasted, and at the same time they allude to the existence of other paintings, in the form of these conscious traces.

Main Partner
UBS

For Schnyder, everything revolves around discipline, even his plurality of styles: popular pictorialism, realism, symbolism, abstract, references to pop art and kitsch all coexist naturally in the new works exhibited at MASI. Along the walls of the large central space of the venue, the studio works alternate with a series of small paintings of natural scenes. As previously mentioned, the subject matter sought and captured in this series is the Swiss landscape. Although Schnyder's landscapes are characterized by his own independent, personal approach, aesthetic and results, he nonetheless plays his own part in Switzerland's enduring history of art. According to Schnyder's self-imposed rules, the landscapes portrayed had to be devoid not only of human presence, but also of its most distant, most indirect traces, such as lamp posts, railway tracks or even felled trees: a radical, all-encompassing cancellation which makes this series different from all those of the past.

The artistic practice and method applied are those which brought Schnyder fame in the 1980s and 90s, and which he returned to 20 years later. Each painting is preceded by meticulous preparation work, from consulting maps and the timetables of the postal vans he uses to travel from his home in Zug to the locations he chooses to paint, to packing his backpack with the technical clothes he needs for a whole day outside, and readying his art supplies: paints, canvas and portable easel. Alongside these tangible elements, which the artist can exert control over, there is a factor that is beyond his control: "In his solo excursions, however, the artist has a "travel companion" to take into account: the weather. It is the weather that dictates the time available and whether he will be able to finish the work or not; that decides if he will have to paint quickly because it's getting colder, or might need to use different colours due to sudden changes in the light," observed Ludovica Introini, curator of the exhibition.

In the exhibition at MASI, the small landscapes are offset by a monumental still life of 1970, presented at the end of the pointed tip of the museum, a dominant position in which the exhibition space interfaces directly with the outside world. The subject matter (a jug with ears of wheat, a loaf of bread, a candle, a bottle and a glass of wine, a pineapple, a watermelon, a plate of fruit and a plant) were first drawn by Margret Rufener, the graphic designer and artist who Schnyder is married to, and then painted by him in oils.
Despite – or perhaps because of - the conspicuous clumsiness of its style, and its improbable angles, the painting exudes a distinctive, enigmatic charm, a simple, undescribable form of beauty, that still has the power to capture the viewer.

“Behind Jean-Frédéric Schnyder's apparent simplicity lies a profound reflection on painting and how it is perceived. The artist is not trying to be irreverent or show off; rather he wants to display his serious yet joyful approach to painting. It is therefore no surprise that Schnyder has long been, and continues to be, a point of reference for younger generations of artists. In this balance between simplicity and depth, between restrained irony and quiet seriousness, lies the lasting strength of his art: an art that, without fanfare, continues to show us just how extraordinary the ordinary can be", explained Tobia Bezzola and Ludovica Introini, curators of the exhibition.

In parallel to the exhibition, Margret Rufener has produced a notebook presented in the form of an artist's book: an orderly, chronological sequence of sketches, images and sources of inspiration which acts like a visual tool to help interpret the exhibition.

MASILugano

Press contacts

MASI Lugano
Press office
+41 (0)58 866 42 40
comunicazione@masilugano.ch

Exhibition venues

LAC
Piazza Bernardino Luini 6
CH – 6900 Lugano

Palazzo Reali
Via Canova 10
CH – 6900 Lugano

MASILugano

Founders

Repubblica e Cantone Ticino

Città di Lugano

Institutional Partner

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Dipartimento federale dell'interno DFI
Ufficio federale della cultura UFC

Main Partner

UBS

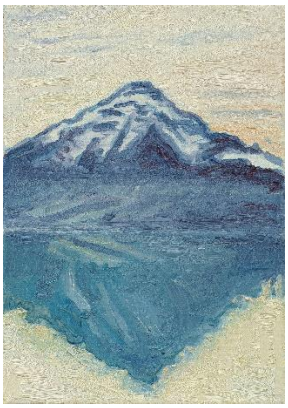
Scientific Partner

IBSA FOUNDATION for scientific research

MASILugano

Press Images

01.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Die Rigi
17.12.2024
Oil on canvas



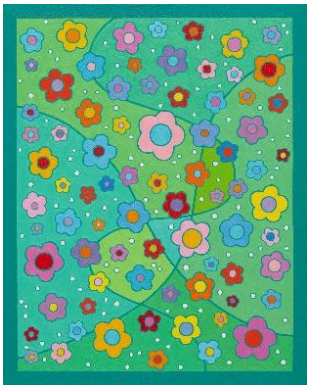
02.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Sonntag
2024
Oil on canvas



03.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Winterhorn
17.6.2025
Oil on canvas



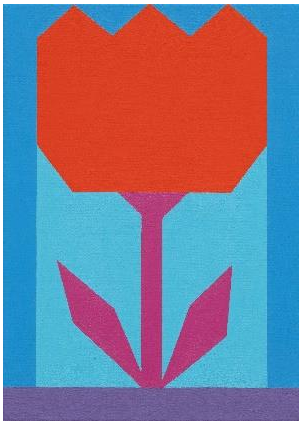
04.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Bild
2024
Oil on canvas



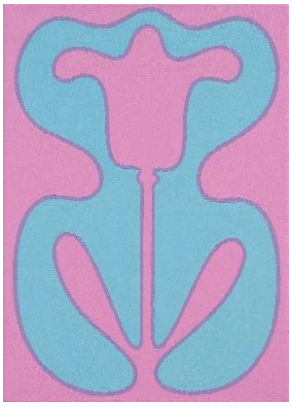
05.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Zugersee
21.10.2024
Oil on canvas



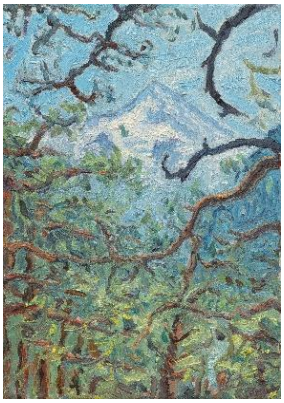
06.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
rote Blume
2024
Oil on canvas



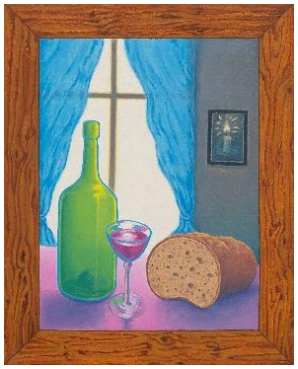
07.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
In einem Stich
2024
Oil on canvas



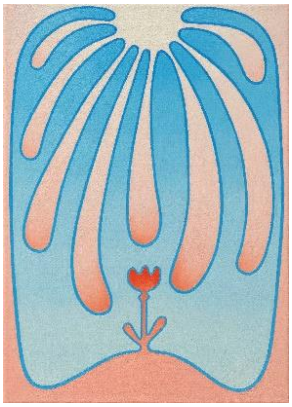
08.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Bristen
3.4.2025
Oil on canvas



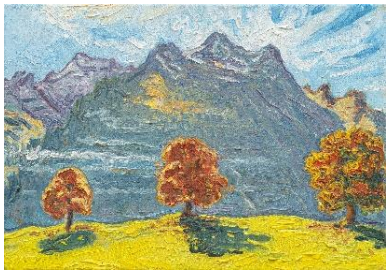
09.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Stilleben
2025
Oil on canvas



10.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
EOS
2025
Oil on canvas



11.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Urigen
8.10.2025
Oil on canvas



12.
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Plan dal Saut
29.10.2025
Oil on canvas



13.
Installation view
“Jean-Frédéric Schnyder. La pittura 2024/25”
© MASI Lugano
Photo: Cosimo Filippini



14.
Installation view
“Jean-Frédéric Schnyder. La pittura 2024/25”
© MASI Lugano
Photo: Cosimo Filippini



15.
Installation view
“Jean-Frédéric Schnyder. La pittura 2024/25”
© MASI Lugano
Photo: Cosimo Filippini

