

# The New York Times

COLD SPRING, N.Y.

## Mario Schifano

Through Jan. 8. Magazzino Italian Art, 2700 Route 9, Cold Spring, N.Y.; 845-666-7202, [magazzino.art](http://magazzino.art).



A few of the many variations on the square, a shape that recalls tube televisions and abstract color fields, in “Mario Schifano: the Rise of the '60s,” at Magazzino Italian Art. Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome; Photo by Marco Anelli and Tommaso Sacconi, via Magazzino Italian Art

Pop Art finally arrived in 1962, when Andy Warhol and 28 playful upstarts, displaying their wares in [“New Realists”](#) at the Sidney Janis Gallery, drove Mark Rothko, the master of sober, hovering shapes of color, to leave the gallerist in a pique.

One New Realist must have needed with special force: the proto-punk Mario Schifano. For across the 80 works in his big new exhibition, [“Mario Schifano: the Rise of the ’60s.”](#) it becomes obvious that this Italian interpreter of Coca-Cola (a logo he loves to quote) understood the goals of Abstract Expressionism even while he mocked them.

As with Rothko, his muse was the square — just the wrong kind. In pencil Schifano drafts rounded squares inside crisp-cornered ones, replicating the era’s tube televisions. Into them he mortars sloppy brushloads of enamel paint, the pigment of outdoor signage. In “Elemento per Paesaggio” (1962), squares stack up helter-skelter, recalling TVs in a pawnshop window.

Elsewhere, color lampoons consumer choice. In two untitled works from 1961, one square wears a yellow-and-cobalt reminiscent of the Spam tin, while the other is done in the signature cream-and-crimson of Coke. Across each foreground, Schifano draws a cartoon rope seat and bucket, vacant, as if the billboard painter has just taken lunch.

Schifano [knew](#) that studio painting had, through reproduction, joined mass media. Where Rothko’s generation yearned for pure, unmediated color, Schifano submits to modernity’s mediator: the screen. It’s fitting that in the stillness of the Magazzino’s Brutalist pavilion, no titles or dates clutter the exhibition. For those, you must download the app. *WALKER MIMMS*