

FILIPPO SCIASCIA



GODSPEED

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GODSPEED

“Godspeed, John Glenn” were the three famous words transmitted by radio to the American astronaut as the world watched him lift off into space and become the first American to orbit the Earth in 1962. This phrase became so well known that Internet searches for the term “godspeed” spiked following his death in 2016. Contemporarily, “godspeed” is commonly used to express good wishes to someone starting a journey. The term originates from a Middle English phrase “god spede”, ‘spede’ meaning to succeed or prosper.

As a non-native English speaker, Filippo Sciascia found the meaning and usage of the word “Godspeed” to be peculiar, and piqued his interest. Conversely, he always read it as two separate words “God speed”, and interpreted it as the idea of God speeding up nature through the process of evolution. The exhibition, GODSPEED, sees Sciascia deconstruct pre-existing notions of the popular phrase, workings which have resultantly produced fresh re-readings and new conceptions of the term. The show extends from his ongoing Lux Lumina series that explores the concept of light, and examines familiar themes of light in the context of science, archaeology, and the evolution of human society.

A prolific artist with an extensive and considerable portfolio of works, Sciascia expresses himself with a variety of techniques through mixed media paintings, ranging from representative, figurative, to abstract and minimalist works. To produce his images, the artist refers to a range of photographic sources and films that he encountered during his research on his ideas. The exhibition captures his contemplations about the speed of evolution as well as God’s relationship with mankind. Whilst creating works for this exhibition, Sciascia coincidentally found himself retracing his own journey and evolution as an artist.

PAINTING, SCUPTURE, OR INSTALLATION?

A liminal figure, Sciascia constantly straddles between the Western traditions he grew up with, and the rich culture of the East where he is currently based. Born in Italy, he studied Western fine arts and techniques at Institute of Art, Nordio and Trieste and Fine Arts Academy, Florence. He then moved to Bali in 1997 where he continues to live and work today. His experiences in the later years of his life influenced him to rethink painting traditions and western aesthetics. He is constantly faced with the idea of the in-between, and his works partake in the discourse of art that are neither exclusively Western or Eastern. Sciascia also pushes beyond visual aesthetics in his works, provoking further reading into his works to grasp its rich contents and complexities.

“I did sculpture by doing painting.” While painting is at the core of his works, Sciascia does not see the type of work to be independently a painting, sculpture, or installation. He quoted the example of how classical Greek sculptures were traditionally painted as well and not simply a white marble sculpture. Not limited in terms of materials, styles or techniques, he believes various types of art can coexist and overlap simultaneously. Thus, he introduces the three-dimensional into conventionally two-dimensional paintings by integrating the use of other materials. He demonstrates this with his use of plaster, a material traditionally used for sculptures, on his paintings to create his well-known cracked paintings. Hence, we see an evolution in painting and art from the traditional, where the lines between painting, sculpture, and installation become blurred.

EVOLUTION

We understand mathematics through numbers, and literature through words; with the evolution of life we do so through phylogenetics. Phylogenetics illustrates the evolutionary development and diversification of a species or group or a particular feature of organisms, and is often used to study the evolution of mankind, tribes, and races. Through Sciascia’s works we observe his curiosity and research into the process of evolution from the primitive to the modern man. Phylogenetics of Resources (*page. 12*) traces the evolution of mankind by depicting nature and natural light on the bottom half, and modern LED lights and aluminium on the top half. Inspired by the shape of phylogenetic diagrams he encountered through his research, he reproduced and traced its form onto the work.

To seek shelter and hide from beasts that lurk in the dark, prehistoric mankind were known as cavemen having lived in caves for a period of time. They hid in caves for safety, waiting for daylight to come before leaving. The circadian rhythm or commonly known to us as our “body clock” is a 24 hour cycle in the physiological processes of living beings that determines our sleeping and waking patterns. Having a home to go back to at night is thus a habit that has been embedded in us from our ancient history and genetics, directed by the day and night cycles. While exploring this concept of the cave and the primitive man, Sciascia discovered that it is an image he enjoyed reproducing as it introduces interesting geometrics into the works’ composition as seen in *Lux Lumina Cave* (page 15). The painting is layered by a variety of shapes: the rectangular shape of the canvas, the circular shape of the cave, and figures arranged to be triangular. He found this composition to be fascinating and of ideal proportions, and confidently reproduces variations of this image.

With the work *Fat Old Sun* (page 10) he cuts the black painted area on the top of the composition with light rays creating the shape of a roof. The cutting of the darkness and its shape signifies how light provides safety and shelter. The work also features Sciascia’s popular cracked painting technique. The cracks emphasize the materiality and process of constructing the work, and how the artist masterfully manipulates the plaster and paint in an unconventional manner to create texture. The cracks are typically seen as flaws of “arte povera” visual aesthetics similar to the works of the Arte Povera artists who explored using a range of materials apart from the traditional oil and canvas. In the same vein, Sciascia uses both plaster and oil paint to convey a kind of humble beauty and amplifies the details in the art piece through them. He wishes to give conventional paintings “a different skin” that reflects a contradiction on a surface that appears solid and fragile at the same time.

LIGHT

In Sciascia’s work, he explores the influence light has on the evolution on homo sapiens. Light allows us to perceive and see the world, and the capturing of its effects is a perennial concern in art. The main source of light, the sun, has been associated with life and survival as it provides food, warmth and protection. Important to mankind, the Sun and light are widely associated with Gods and the spiritual, worshipped in religion for thousands of years. This trend can be observed in art history by Renaissance painters who often depicted light coming from the direction of Christ or Mother Mary as the source in their paintings.

Highly conceptual in his works, Sciascia does not see light as a tool or medium but rather, references it as an artistic device to showcase the concept as something fundamental and essential to human life. In *Lumina* (page 3) a girl is seen reaching out for a ball of light, which serves as a metaphor for mankind reaching for knowledge and safety with the ability to perceive our world, as well as progress and evolution to keep improving our lives.

Godspeed (page 5), the work that gave the exhibition its title, depicts illuminated neon lights shaped to form the word. Instead of writing the word in neon lights, Sciascia chose to ironically represent the neon lights using oil paint on canvas, further enhancing the conceptual qualities of his work. He uses gesso to prime the canvas surface to accept the oil paint and capture the luminous glowing effect from the neon lights. In this painting, he employs traditional, classical techniques of chiaroscuro to render the light emanating from the glass tubes in a dramatic style. Only invented recently in the early 20th century, neon lights are a contemporary light source and it is unusual to depict it in a traditional technique in painting. The stark contrast of the old and new however finds balance in this piece.

FIRE

Dating back to prehistoric times, we have a primordial need for light to keep us safe and warm. The invention of fire changed the course of mankind to be no longer afraid of the dark and had to seek shelter in caves. Humans evolved to have control of a light source, such that they are still able to see and create even when the sun was no longer up. Our contemporary sources of light however come from another milestone in human evolution – electricity. The discovery of fire and electricity signified the free man, liberated from being dependent entirely on nature (the Sun) as the sole source of light.

However, mankind has taken nature for granted. We have become so dependent on the internet and data, broken down to electricity which is ultimately still harvested from natural resources such as fossil fuels, the wind, water, and the Sun. Sciascia comments on this relationship between mankind and electricity as an artificial light source in *Lux Chlorofilliana* (page 21/39). He incorporates LED lights to illuminate a painting of nature depicted through leaves, to illustrate the relationship between man and light. The collocation of a fluorescent light, an aluminium sheet and a realistic painting of tropical leaves creates layers and a more detailed reading of this work as to whether it is a painting, sculpture, or installation.

CHLOROPHYLL

By grinding leaves and extracting the juice from them in an almost ritualistic manner, Sciascia uses this process to obtain chlorophyll essence and then mixes this with natural pigments to make green paint. He symbolically uses the authentic sources of his concepts in his works instead of merely painting it on, in this case chlorophyll, which captures light and turns it into food for the plant through photosynthesis. Similarly, he has previously also used materials like crushed melatonin pills and symbolically applied it to his works, to allude to the circadian cycle and how it regulates our sleep cycles.



Lumina – Size 100x100 cm – Oil On Canvas – 2019

Through this process, Sciascia amplifies the conceptual dimensions of the work with a raw representation of chlorophyll, the mechanism that literally captures light. He breaks away from the academic style of strictly realistic, representational painting and connects nature to the production of his work.

Fotosintesi Clorofilliana (*page 6*) uses green pigment made from chlorophyll pigments extracted from leaves to paint a field of monochromatic green. The natural and organic in this abstract work is intensified, through its juxtaposition against the aluminium used in the work. Aluminium being a hard, industrial material commonly used during the Industrial Revolution contrasts against the soft monochromatic paint mixed from organic pigments.

BAUXITE

While exploring the concept of light, Sciascia built a greenhouse for Lux Lumina at NUS Museum and Castel dell'Ovo. After the shows, he tore apart the greenhouse and reused the aluminum in his later works. He then did further research on aluminum and discovered that it came from an ore called bauxite. One of the oldest natural material, bauxite has been used by mankind for centuries since the prehistoric era to make bronze for a variety of objects and tools. Sciascia's interest in archaeology and ancient primitive societies led him to study the ore, and how it has evolved in its usage. Since the Industrial Revolution, bauxite is used to make building materials like aluminum and bricks up till today. Hence, we are unknowingly surrounded by the ancient that we take for granted as our view is obscured by contemporary technological advancements. Incorporating these raw materials into three of the works in this show, he comments on the old and the new, history and technology – the evolution of mankind and their inventions.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

Grappling between the concepts of the old and the new is not something new to Sciascia. In his previous show Matahari, he makes references to Classical Greek and Roman art that he studied in school. Again where he currently resides in Bali, he encounters the clash between modernization of the island for tourism and preserving the traditional cultures along with its natural, untouched landscapes. The process of evolution is often viewed from a linear perspective where mankind always strives towards better and further advancements. Yet, we observe Sciascia's deep appreciation for the ancient and its presence in modern society. More often than not, his works are a culmination, an interaction, a conversation between the old and the new.

Trisnacros (*page 9*) is the old Greek name of the island of Sicily where Sciascia was born. The name means three corners, which make up the shape of the island. Paying homage to his hometown, Sciascia painted Trisnacros depicting three balls of light illuminating the night sky. As mentioned earlier, Sciascia often engages with ideas of painting traditions and the reinterpretation of them. Resultantly, Sciascia places a lot of emphasis on the conceptual and the process in his works. When asked what the sources of light in the painting were, he said it could be anything from ancient comets where the first light of the universe came from, to modern day firecrackers, missiles in times of war, or light flares calling for help. Here, the artist gives autonomy to the viewers to interpret the source of light and meaning of the work in their own ways. However, beneath the different interpretations Trisnacros sends a uniform message of how significant advancements in human civilization from the past to the present always began with a spark of light – the first fire, the discovery of electricity, the invention of the internet and computers.



Godspeed – Size 99x99 cm – oil on cracked plaster on canvas – 2019



Fotosintesi Clorofiliana – Size 102x198 cm – natural pigments and leafes paste on wood and aluminum – 2019



Trisnacros – Size 100x100 cm – oil on canvas – 2019



Fat Old Sun – Size 100x142 cm – oil on wood – 2019



Pylogenetic Of Reseources – Size 103x199 cm – oil on syntetic canvas, led light and aluminum – 2019



Lux Lumina Cave – Size 100x100 cm – oil on canvas and aluminum – 2018



Lux Clorofilliana, Detail

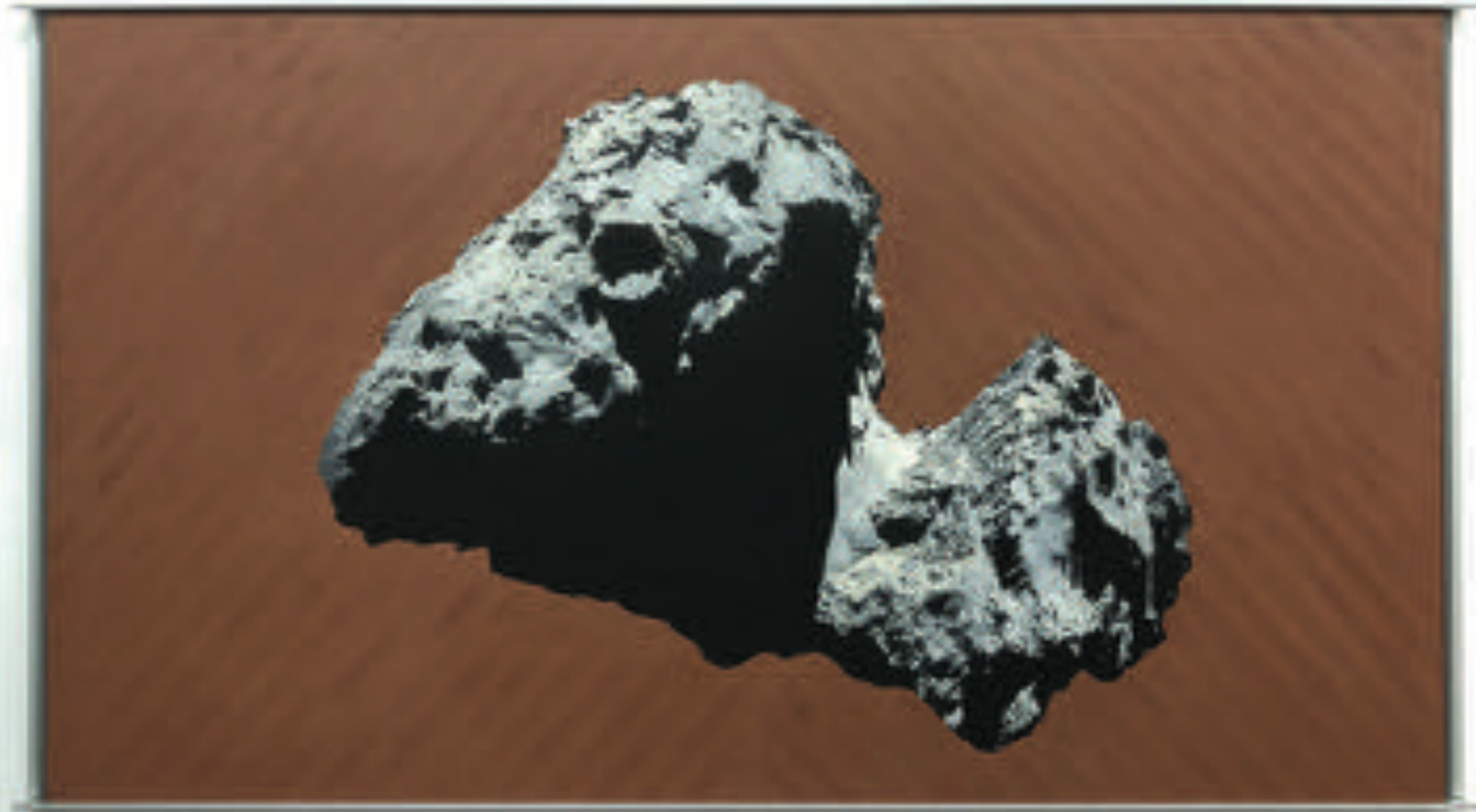


Lux Clorofilliana – Size 100x100 cm – oil on wood, perspex, led light and aluminum – 2019





Lumina Clorofiliana - Size 233x191 cm - lacquered photo aluminium and led light - 2019



Rosetta – Size 127x211 cm – oil on canvas applied on wood – 2016



Araldica – Size 36.8x26 cm – oil on canvas mounted on wood – 2017



Lumina Clorofiliana – Size 66.5x50 cm – oil on canvas mounted on wood – 2017



From left to right:

Primitive Mornings – Size 8x61 cm – painted led light and concrete – 2019

Primitive Mornings – Size 88x74 cm – oil on canvas – 2018

Lumina Fotosintesi – Size 65x34 cm – oil on wood and concrete – 2017

A horizontal, dark, textured concrete bar is mounted on a light-colored wall. The words "PRIMITIVE MORNINGS" are inscribed on the bar in a red, sans-serif font. The letters are illuminated from within, casting a soft red glow. The background wall has a subtle gradient from light pink to white.

PRIMITIVE MORNINGS



Interstellar – Size 77x75 cm – oil and engraving on canvas, plaster mounted on wood – 2019



Primitive Morning, Detail



Primitive Morning – Size 27x94 cm – oil on wood, led light and aluminum – 2019





Lumina Clorofiliana – Size 50x60 cm – oil on canvas applied on wood – 2018



Lumina Clorofiliana – Size 188x153 cm – lacquered photo aluminium and led light – 2019



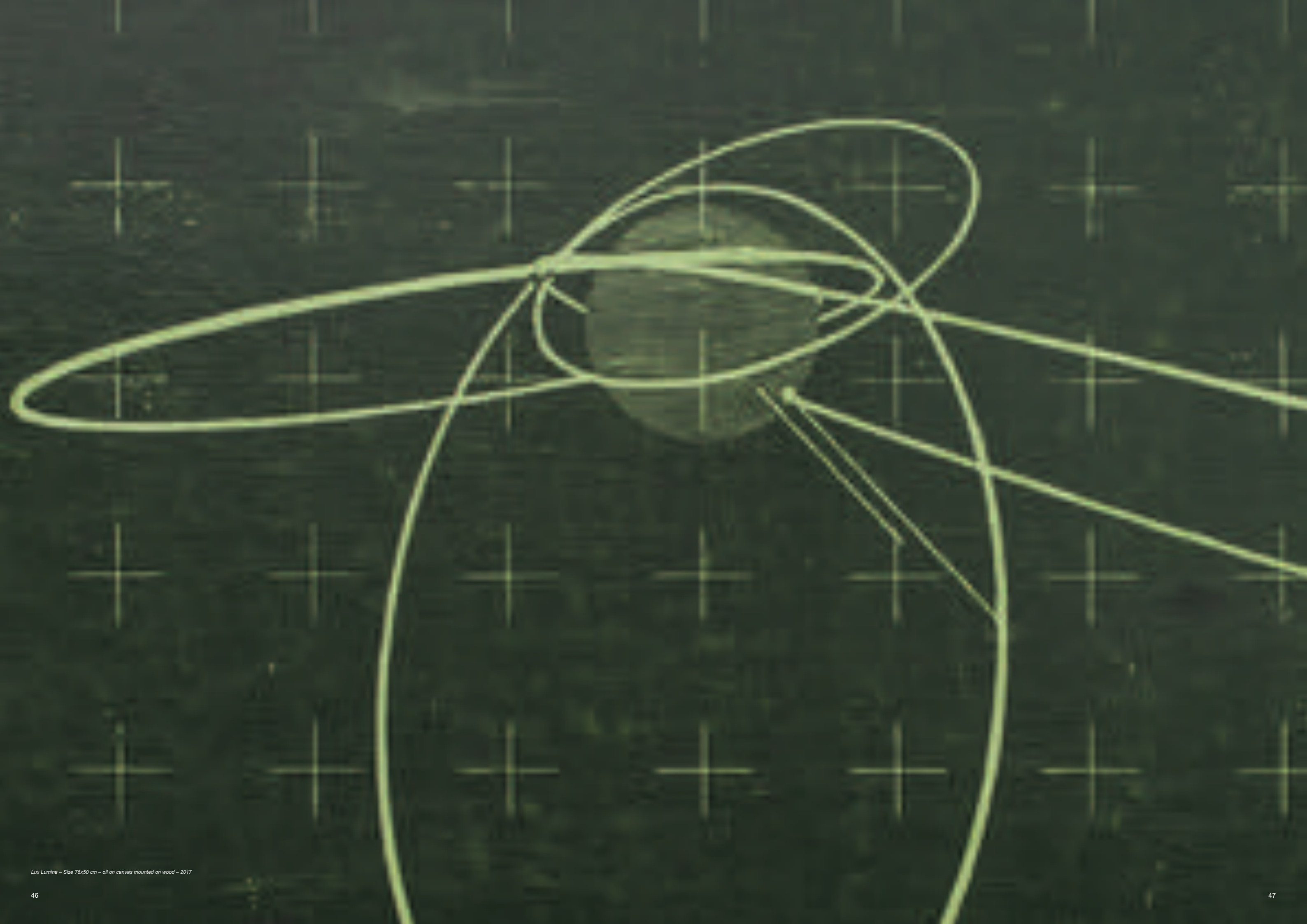


Self Portrait – Size variable – lime stone, sika, natural color pigment, authentic balinese temple – 2018



Lux Lumina – Size 54x94 cm – oil on canvas – 2018





Lux Lumina – Size 76x50 cm – oil on canvas mounted on wood – 2017



Lux Lumina – Size 190x230 cm – oil on canvas – 2016

Filippo Sciascia (Palma Di Montechiaro Sicily 1972 Italy)

He is an Italian artist based in Bali, Indonesia and Florence, Italy.

He studied art in Italy and America, He has had exhibitions in various venues in southeast Asia, Europe and America. Sciascia references light as a fundamental artistic device in his works across painting and sculpture His “Lux Lumina” project deals light in relation to the human condition, examining science, archeology, evolution of society since the beginning of man’s history to the same pre- occupations in contemporary day. Images in his works are drawn from photographic sources, where forms and materials from everyday life work together to present a dialogue between the painted and sculpted image. Collecting artefacts, found objects and images.

The myriad of his techniques are comprised of but not limited to painting, using melatonin powder and the natural leaf paste and green juice from leaves to create pigments, using cement and repurposing found objects amongst others. The conceptual choice of using such materials that connect nature to the production of these works lead to creation = human creativity = art. In an installation hang, he “edits” the objects and paintings, to place them together in a way to form a reading or narrative about the collection.

Exhibitions:

Solo Show ■ *Group Show* □

2019

- Godspeed. Yeo Workshop - Gilmann Barracks. Singapore (17 August - 16 September 2019)
- We didn’t mean to break it (but is ok we can fix it). Galeria Pedro Cera. Lisbon, Portugal. Curated by Cristina Sanchez -Kozyreva (27 June - September 2019)

2018

- The Great Archipelago. The Embassy of Italian and Italian Cultural Institute with Cittadella dell’arte Michelangelo Pistoletto Foundation, at Kayu Lucie Fontaine and Setia Darma House of Mask and Puppets, Bali. Indonesia. (31 October – 9 November 2018)
- Beyond The Myths. ArtBali 2018. Nusa Dua. Bali. Indonesia (10 October – 9 November, 2018)

2017

- Written in the sky. Honold Fine Art. Bali. (23 November – 24 December 2017)
- Apertures. Yeo Workshop. Singapore (24 June – 3 September 2017)

2016

- Prima Visione#2 – Matahari. OFCA International, Sarang I, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (22 October – 6 November 2016)
- Ritiro. Kayu Lucie Fontaine. Rumah Topeng And Bukit Rhema. Yogyakarta. (4 – 15 December 2016) / (20 December 2016)
- Follow the White Cube. Honold Fine Art. Bali. (26 November – 15 December 2016)

2014

- Matahari, Complesso Post Industriale - Galleria Poggiali Ex-Marmi, Pietra Santa. Italy. (July 5 – August 8, 2014)

2013

- Bali Bule. Filippo Sciascia, Ashley Bickerton and Luigi Ontani. Archeological National Museum of Naples, Italy. (October 20, 2013 – January 6, 2014)

2012

- Lumina Mense. Equator Gallery, Singapore. (3 – 25 November 2012)
- Lux Lumina II. Museum Castel Dell’Ovo. Naples, Italy. (7 – 28 June 2012)
- Marcel Dhuchamp at Equator Gallery. Singapore. Curated by Tony Godfrey. (14 September – 21 October 2012)

2011

- Ex Voto. Spazio Culturale - foundation Ratti, Ex Chiesa S.Francesco, Como, Italia. (27 April – 15 May 2011)
- “Bring Illuminance Home” Langgeng Art Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Curated by Enin Supriyanto. (29 January- 4 March 2011)
- 54. Exposition of Venice biennial. (4 June – 27 November 2011)

2010

- Illuminance. NUS Museum Singapore. (14 August – 14 November 2010)
- Faith And Reason. Manila Contemporary. Philippines. Curated by Willie Valentine (22 May – 13 June 2010)
- A Thousand Times Yes. Manila Contemporary. Philippines. Curated by Willie Valentine (6 – 24 February 2010)

2009

- Lux Lumina I. Langgeng and Kendra Gallery. Bali. Indonesia. (12 December – 14 January 2010)
- Recent Works. Valentine Willie Fine Art. Kuala Lumpur.Malaysia. (2 – 19 December 2009)
- Undercover. L’archimede Gallery. Roma Italy.(28 October – 28 November 2009)
- Comunita Esistente. Consorzio Project. Le Marche. Italy.

2008

- Koi Dan Trinacria. National Gallery Jakarta. Indonesia. Curated by Rifky Effendy (4 – 15 April 2008)
- Filippo Sciascia and Ugo Untoro. Biasa Art Space, Bali – Indonesia. (24 July - 26 August, 2008)
- 1571 Caravaggio 1610 Willie Valentine Fine Art Singapore. Curated by Enin Supriyanto. (12-30 November 2008)

2007

- Fetish II. Biasa Art Space. Jakarta. Indonesia. (27 July -31 August 2007)
- Trinacria (Part 2). The LAB Gallery. New York. U.S.A. (12 – 21 September 2007)

2006

- Sophia 19:38. Gaya Gallery. Bali. Indonesia. (12 August – 12 September 2006)
- Drawing From The Stock Room. Biasa Art Space. Bali Indonesia. Curated by Hendro Wiyanto.(25 September – 15 November 2006)
- Beyond. Jakarta Biennale 06. Indonesia.(May 23 – 25 June 2006)

2005

- For Your Consideration Only II. Cemeti Art House. Yogyakarta. Indonesia. (20 November – 14 Desember 2005)

2004

- Video<>Painting Kadek II. Cemara 6 Gallery. Jakarta. Indonesia. (November – December 2004)
- Video<>Painting Kadek I. Selasar Sunaryo Art Space. Bandung. Indonesia. (22 May – 14 June 2004)
- Opposite Attract. Filippo Sciascia-Made Wianta. Gaya Gallery. Bali. Indonesia.(17 December – 30 January 2005)

2003

- Frame Of Mind. Battaglia -Milan
- Open Biennale 2003. CP Foundation In Cooperation with National Gallery Jakarta. Indonesia.(4 September – 3 October 2003)
- A Nudo. In collaboration with Studio D’Arte Cannaviello. Milan. Italy

2002

- Figurare. Gaya Gallery. Bali. Indonesia.(March – April 2001)

2001

- Nuovo Arte Segno. Udine. Italy In Collaboration with Studio D’Arte Cannaviello. Milan. Italy.
- Corte Delle Giare. In collaboration with Studio D’Arte Cannaviello. Parma. Italy.

2000

- 40×40. Barone Arte Contemporanea. In collaborazione with Studio D’Arte Cannaviello. Bari. Italy.

1999

- Visuto Immaginato Visto. Grafio Gallery. Prato. Italy.
- Il Nuovo Ritrato. Spazio Consolso. Milan. Italy. Curated by Alesandro Riva.

1998

- Doveva Accadere I. Sergio Tossi Arte Contemporanea. Italy.
- Doveva Accadere II. La Meridiana. Modena. Italy. (6 – 14 June 1998)
- Cronache Vere. Spazio Consolso. Milan. Italy. Curated by Alesandro Riva. (July 1998)

