

David Schutter

Neighbors

7/11/2024- 26/1/2025

Magazzino is thrilled to announce *Neighbors*, the second solo exhibition by the American artist David Schutter at the gallery after *Pergamena* (2016). The show will open November 7th, 2024 and run through January 26th, 2025.

John Constable's painting *The Admiral's House in Hampstead, called The Grove* (1821-22) hangs in the permanent collection of the Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin. The British landscape painter returned to its theme in a number of paintings with various titles, including *A Romantic House at Hampstead*. Before Constable's own residency across the way from the Grove, it was believed to be the final home of Admiral Matthew Barton, the retired officer who led fleets in the War of Jenkins' Ear, the protracted contest with the Spanish to secure the Asiento de Negros, or contracted routes for the trade of slaves across the Atlantic. For his service in this campaign, Barton was awarded a commission on the *HMS Lichfield* to capture the Island of Gorée, an important historical station in the trade of slaves from Senegal, beeswax, gum Arabic, peanuts, and ivory. It was during this commission when his fleet was posted offshore of Morocco that Barton's ship with over three hundred crew members ran aground on the rocky coast of El Jadida. Barton was among the 230 survivors of the wreck and was sentenced by the order of the Emperor of Morocco to imprisonment and forced labor and served for eighteen months before being ransomed and released to the British Navy. Admiral Barton further served in the critical colonial battle, the Siege of Havana, whereupon he contracted fever and soon thereafter retired, with full honors but weakened health, to the bucolic grove in Hampstead neighboring the lot of John Constable.

Constable found the Admiral's House a source of Romantic projection as is apparent from his titling and framing of the scene as well as conveyed materially in his cottony swirls of cumulus clouds and lithely bending trees (in the version in the Victoria and Albert Museum he included a rainbow). But his series of paintings belies more his and his era's selective memory of the effects of empire and the inability to see landscape painting as a historical form always associated with the expansion of European imperial power. These seen and unseen elements came together in Constable's backyard. In the public literature of the collections that keep the Admiral's House paintings there is no mention of the above history, but rather biographical or anecdotal information on Constable himself, as a Romantic artist who looks upon a house on the hill as a site that signifies his own position of reverie. Much in the same way Constable's paintings of the River Stour and its locks are written primarily as the pastoral element unifying nature and labor, rather than as signifiers of England's nationalist project of new industry and the continual flow of capital necessary for the growth of its empire.

David Schutter has rendered his own series of paintings after Constable's *The Admiral's House in Hampstead, called The Grove* from Berlin for this exhibition. The paintings are part of an ongoing project in which the artist studies landscape paintings from public collections that have fraught relations to the Enlightenment's ultimate totalizing principle under the specter of capital, that all of nature is a raw material for domination, including the human. Schutter has "remade" his source subject on a one-to-one scale with like materials, such as historical pigments, canvas, and ground, and without aid memoirs, resulting in objects of inquiry that are both familiar and estranged. Less a test of memory, Schutter's practice is more a phenomenological study that discusses the distances and problems encountered when making a painting. The works in the exhibition are as much performative re-enactments of their source as they are discrete paintings, and as such form a painter's repertory of extended rehearsals that ruminate on the disturbing recurrence of form over content. Schutter locates his practice within the traditions of philosophical investigation by beginning with the surface of things. His questions elicit responses to how we re-stratify our knowledge of the past while developing representations of the present, how we can uncover circumscribed categories and make new knowledge from the experience, and how repeated questions come to be ultimately ways of description in a world where the past is often a difficult and arguable anteriority.

About the artist

David Schutter (born in 1974, lives and works in Berlin) has had solo exhibitions at the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin; the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica in Palazzo Poli, Rome; Verein by Association, Zurich; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. His work was included in documenta 14, wherein he exhibited his forensic renderings of Max Liebermann drawings from the Gurlitt Art Trove, the cache of artworks discovered hidden in the Munich apartment of Cornelius Gurlitt in 2012. Schutter is the recipient of a Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, the Berlin Art Prize from the Akademie der Kunst, Berlin, and received a Guggenheim Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. A monograph on his work is forthcoming from Holzwarth Publications, Berlin, and Black Madonna Press, Chicago.

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Opening hours: Tue-Sat 11AM-8PM

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