

Francisco Sierra. *Alfombra*

21.9.25 – 1.1.26

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, first floor

Shiny horses against sea spray, sunsets, parquet-patterned carpets, a greyhound, and a towering neon spider: Francisco Sierra (*1977 in Santiago de Chile, now lives and works in Cotterd (VD), Switzerland) takes us into a world full of fantasy that seems at times familiar, then dreamlike – a world that wavers between reality and imagination. Golden musical notes on the façade herald the artist's solo exhibition on the second floor of Kunstmuseum Solothurn. New works specifically made for *Alfombra* combined with already existing ones in various places enter into a dialog with works from the museum's permanent collection.

An autodidact, Sierra has appropriated his own pictorial language, which is characterized by technical precision, wit, and conceptual tension. He is interested in the illusion of reality, the fluid transition between fact and fiction, and the possibility of creating by his own hand an artistic universe where prevailing laws are overruled in a both virtuous and subversive manner. Painting serves the trained violinist as a medium of metamorphosis. The love of experimenting, the questioning of rigid categories, and the linking of the everyday with art historical tradition inform his works. Always evident – be it in detailed depictions of animals, seemingly banal still lifes, or grotesquely exaggerated figures – is Francisco Sierra's interest in the ambivalence of the image between surface and depth, reality and appearance, seriousness and irony. The artist uses self-made clay models, stock photos, or found kitschy objects as models, which he deliberately isolates, artistically alienates, and transfers to new contexts and scales. In doing so, he is not so much interested in perfect reproduction but rather in the tension between the original and the result.

Sierra already presented his drawings at Kunstmuseum Solothurn in 2013. Today, 12 years later, using new materials and relating to local events in site-specific sculptures, he is continuing his investigation into value systems in art full of delight and cunning. It is only logical that the thin-legged spidery creature, which has long inhabited Francisco Sierra's imagery, finally leaves the picture frame for the exhibition and expands into the third dimension, in glowing neon, as *The Holy Spider* (2025).

As aptly as subtly, the artist keeps subverting expectations: In the room installation *O sole tuo* (2025), Instagram-inspired sunsets on parquet-patterned carpets are mounted into seven oversized plexiglass advertising panels, where they mutate into clichéd landscapes of longing in which the seductive potential of the colors wrestles with the slight trashiness

of the motif. The tradition of landscape painting resonates permanently, as in the triptych *SPA, 2020/21*, for the landscape is always a cultural construct, a projection surface that speaks of great emotions and of the relationships between humans, nature, and the environment. When Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918) created *Blick ins Unendliche (View to Infinity, 1913–17)*, he described it in his own words as «a monument of admiration for nature». Sierra confronts this legacy of landscape painting with mass media-conveyed images in order to explore the relationship between art historical heritage and contemporary art from his own perspective.

Alfombra (English: carpet) provides insights into Francisco Sierra's universe, in which childhood memories, biographical disruptions, music, everyday life and longings condense into tuneful experiences that challenge our perception. Obsessions and peculiarities of people, traditions of painting, the banal and the sublime float through spaces of light and pigment. Nothing is swept under the carpet here.

Co-curated by Katrin Steffen and Tuula Rasmussen.

Publication

A bilingual publication (German/English) will accompany the exhibition, published by Hirmer Verlag, featuring an essay by Stefanie Gschwend, Director, Kunstmuseum / Kunsthalle Appenzell, and an in-depth interview with the artist conducted by Katrin Steffen and Tuula Rasmussen.

Design: Studio Philippe Karrer. The book launch will take place on Saturday, November 29, 2025, at 4 p.m.

Short biography

Francisco Sierra (*1977) grew up in Santiago de Chile, moved to Switzerland with his family in 1986 and now lives in Cotterd (VD). After training as a violinist in Schaffhausen and Utrecht (diploma in 2003), he turned to painting as a self-taught artist. From 2018 to 2023, Francisco Sierra was a research assistant at ETH Zurich.

His solo exhibitions comprise *Guppy*, Art Basel Unlimited (2024); *Corniche*, Kunsthalle Appenzell (2023); *Lunar Conveniences*, von Bartha, Basel (2021); *Shanghaien*, Francisco Sierra & Reto Müller, AUTO, St. Gallen (2020); *Clearasil*, Grand Palais, Bern (2018); *Part Dieu*, Galería Bacecos, Madrid (2014); *Avalon*, Manor Kunstpreis St. Gallen, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen and *Works on Paper*, Kunstmuseum Solothurn (both 2013); *The Universe*, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen am Rhein and *Caravan 1/2009*, Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau (both 2009).

His works have been shown in group exhibitions including *Wir sind hier!*, Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2025); *Uncanny Unchained: The Power of Weird*, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen (2024); *In Prima Persona Plurale*, MACRO, Rome (2023); *Indice Ultraviolet: Out*, CAN Centre d'art Neuchâtel (2022); *MASKE in der Kunst der Gegenwart*, Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau (2019) and *Merets Funken. Surrealisten in der zeitgenössischen Schweizer Kunst*, Kunstmuseum Bern (2012); *Comme des bêtes. Ours, cochon, chat et Cie*, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2008).

Francisco Sierra has received numerous grants and awards for his work, including the audience award Art Basel Unlimited (2024); Kulturförderpreis Alexander Clavel Stiftung (2023); Werkbeitrag Landis & Gyr Stiftung (2022); Manor Kunstpreis St. Gallen (2013); Swiss Art Award (2007) and Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Kunstpreis (2006).

www.fsierra.com

www.vonbartha.com/artists/francisco-sierra/

www.instagram.com/francisco__sierra

For further information, please contact:

Tuula Rasmussen, Assistant Curator

+41 32 626 93 94, tuula.rasmussen@solothurn.ch

KUNSTMUSEUM SOLOTHURN