

The background is a complex collage of textures and colors. On the left, there is a large area of green with a fine, woven fabric-like texture. Overlaid on this green is a red, somewhat abstract shape that looks like a splatter or a brushstroke. To the right, there is a dark, almost black area with some lighter, greyish-green patches, suggesting a rough or layered surface. Below this dark area is a large, solid block of orange-red color. At the bottom right, there is a blue grid pattern, possibly representing a mesh or a technical drawing. The overall composition is layered and textured, with a sense of depth and complexity.

EMBLEMA / SOVAK

*DIALOGUE*



# Dialogue

## Salvatore Emblema & Pravoslav Sovak

During the first half of the year Rothschild & Co's *Hosted* exhibitions provide an exclusive platform for the discovery of artworks from private collections and artists' estates. In this second edition of our *Hosted* series, we are delighted to present a selection of works from the estates of Salvatore Emblema (IT, 1929 - 2006) and Pravoslav Sovak (CZ, 1926 - 2022).

While the professional paths of these two exceptional artists probably never crossed, the ostensibly visible kinship in their work stems from parallels in their respective biographies and the circumstances under which their oeuvres evolved. Working alone on the peripheries of the international art scene, both Emblema and Sovak developed bodies of work that explore themes of landscape and civilization with a curiosity and steadfast pursuit of greater universal truths.

Despite their distinctly different methodologies, both Emblema and Sovak arrived at artforms that appear symbolic of their time, reflecting the preoccupations of artistic and cultural production in the years and decades of reawakening after World War II.

Bringing together works from different periods of Emblema and Sovak's artistic practice, we pay homage to two great artists of the last century, whose respective contributions are beginning to find their due place in the pantheon of art history.

We would like to thank the lenders and all contributors to the exhibition for their generous support and look forward to introducing you to this latest exhibition in our series.

**Giovanna Lagutaine**

Managing Director

**Jonathan Levy**

Art Expert & Curator

**Andreas Feller**

Head of Private Banking,  
Zurich

# Salvatore Emblema

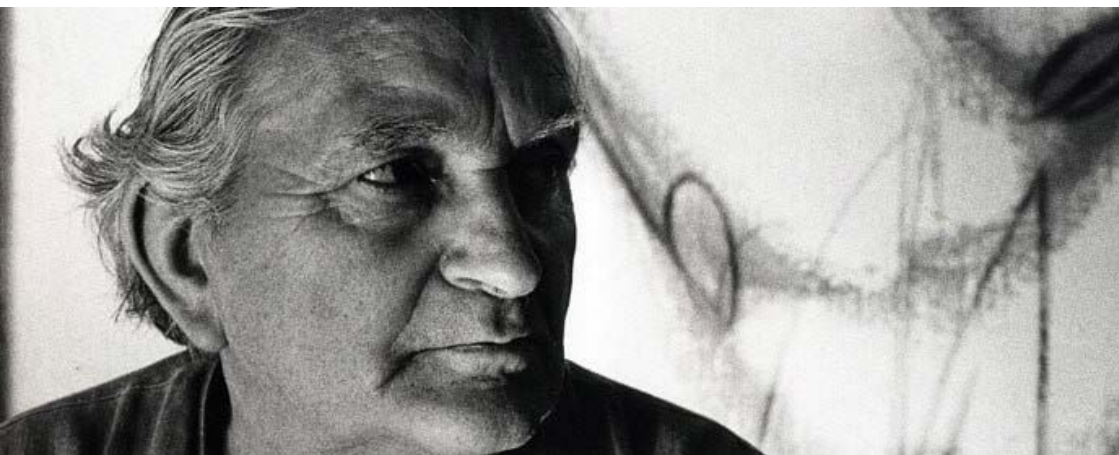
Italy, 1929 - 2006

Terzigno (Ter-Ignis), the name of Salvatore Emblema's birthplace at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, references the village's three nearly catastrophic encounters with the nearby volcano. Looming over it as a constant threat, Mount Vesuvius acts as a reminder of nature's whimsical power to take, conserve, or give life,

Growing up against this unyielding backdrop, Emblema was used to working with nature's elements. He studied in the Torre del Greco art school for cameo engravers and learned to work with Corals, before moving to Rome to become a set designer at the Cinecittà studios, where he aged furniture, by burning and blackening it, using various techniques. Handywork and craftsmanship are inherent to Emblema's life. They include original solutions to construction problems in his own home. Handles of discarded shovels could be reworked into handrails for a stairwell and old bedsheets were painted to give them a new lease of life as tablecloths.

Unlike the idealistic and seemingly rebellious attitudes of Arte Povera that formed in response to a crisis of painting in the wake of World War II, the use of humble materials in Emblema's art is a genuine reflection and consequence of the artist's precarious personal circumstances. His luminous, powdery pigments are derived from the ashes and fertile soils of Terzigno and its surrounding landscape, while the Jute supports for his paintings are fashioned by the artist from everyday flour sacks.

After several smaller gallery exhibitions in Rome, Emblema embarked on a trip to New York. He was prompted by an open invitation by David Rockefeller, who had acquired a work of Emblema's during a recent visit to Rome in 1957. It is during this nearly year-long trip that Emblema would befriend Mark Rothko and his circle of New York-based Avant-Garde artists, critics and art dealers.



During this and a later trip to the vibrant New York art scene of the late 1950s and 60s, Emblema discovered his true calling as an artist. Upon his return to Terzigno he embarked on an artistic journey that begins by dissolving the artist's grand evocative gestures in favor of unified, monochrome color fields and, later, the creation of compositions where the physical support of the artwork itself would be de-woven and de-constructed in an effort to probe the pictorial effects of dismantling an artwork's structure.

While such deconstructive interventions became integral to the concurrent European movement of *Art Informel*, Emblema was never really affiliated with any self-proclaimed group or manifesto. His path between multiple movements – *Spatialism*, *Op Art*, *Arte Povera* and *Art Informel* – is merely coincidental and, palpably, the result of a greater fixation on the endless possibilities that art has to offer.

## Biography & Major Exhibitions

- 1929 - 1949      Raised in Terzigno  
Graduates from the *Scuola del Corallo* in Torre del Greco  
Travels around Europe, including France, England and  
The Netherlands
- 1950              Settles in Rome
- 1954              First small solo exhibition at Galleria San Marco, Rome  
Starts work as a set designer at the Cinecittà film studios
- 1956              Marriage with Raffaella Auricchio in Rome
- 1957 - 1958      David Rockefeller buys a portrait made with dried  
leaves and invites Emblema to visit New York for a study  
residency
- 1958 - 1964      Returns to Rome and continues work at the Cinecittà film  
studios
- 1965              Second trip to the US and meeting with influential Italian  
art critic, Giulio Carlo Argan
- 1971 - 1979      Various solo and group exhibitions in Rome, Rotterdam,  
Turin, Milan, Naples, and Ferrara
- 1980              Invited to participate in the Arsenale group exhibition at  
the Venice Biennale
- 1982              Invited to participate in the Italian Pavilion at the Venice  
Biennale
- 1985              Exhibition at Palazzo Reale in Naples
- 1990 - 2000      Retreat to private home where he isolates himself from  
the Italian art scene to work on the idea of a *house  
museum*

- 2001 Official establishment of the Museo Emblema in Terzigno
- 2003 - 2006 Representing Italy at the *Aichi Universal Expo* in Japan  
*Color and Transparency* exhibition travels to various venues in Brazil and Mexico

**Salvatore Emblema dies on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006**

- 2022 *Salvatore Emblema* exhibition, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, Naples
- 2023 *Salvatore Emblema* exhibition, Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich

**Further information on**

[www.salvatoreemblema.it](http://www.salvatoreemblema.it)

[www.galleriafonti.it/salvatore\\_emblema](http://www.galleriafonti.it/salvatore_emblema)

# Pravoslav Sovak

Czechoslovakia, 1926 - 2022

Pravoslav Sovak's career as an artist began during a period of political upheaval in Czechoslovakia. The Prague Spring only lasted from January to August 1968, when the Czechoslovak public and its leader, Alexander Dubček, saw their dream of Socialism with a human face crushed by invading Soviet troops. On August 21<sup>st</sup>, the first day of the Soviet-led invasion, Sovak decides to leave the country. He travels first to Germany, where he opens an exhibition at the Museum Folkwang in Essen, before moving to Switzerland, where, in 1969, he settles down near the Lake of Lucerne.

As a highly trained and experienced graphic designer, Sovak's work was already known in the West. Rooted in technical drawing and etching techniques, Sovak developed an idiosyncratic oeuvre that he clustered into groups with distinct titles, such as *Walls*, *Beauties*, *Museumsblätter*, *Installations Imaginaries* and *Collages*.

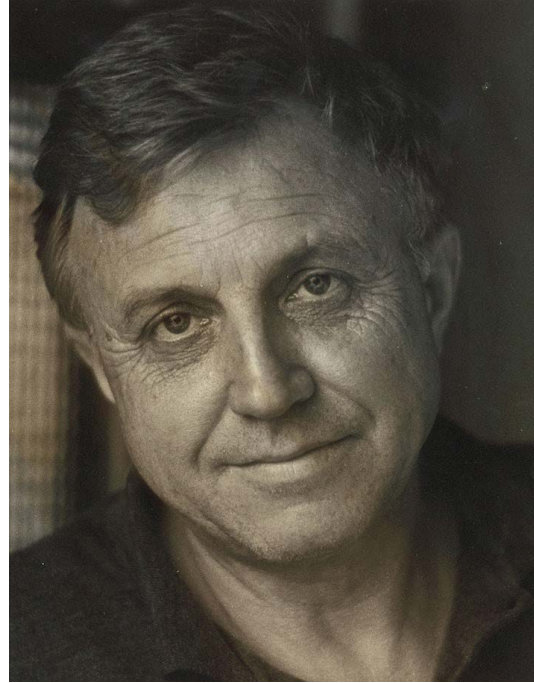
Sovak's early works are executed as classical etchings and individually colored prints. He later created tightly detailed drawings in which he would paint geometric fields of watercolor on top of clusters of repeating parallel lines. Sovak later developed a fascination for Kinetics and generative modes of picture making. Inspired by the aura and the political potential described in Walter Benjamin's seminal essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* from 1935, the artist began to create what he referred to as *digital works*. Introducing photography and collage elements into his printmaking process, his technique became so advanced that he could use as many as 14 plates for a single print, before adding colored hues and placing his distinctly stylized signature.



The deeply autobiographical and self-referential oeuvre grapples with socio-political and philosophical tropes. Sovak is fascinated by precise manmade structures designed to capture and force nature into submission.

Equipped with the tools of mathematics and geometry, he basks in civilization's greatest achievements, from high culture to feats of man-made engineering.

On his many journeys, and wherever his gaze fell, Sovak found profound beauty, dark irony, and glimpses of aesthetic salvation. The work is located precisely where Sovak seems to have learned to make a home: As the displaced commentator on the periphery. Working alone with practically no affiliations to other artists, Sovak keenly observed the transitions between nature's unpredictable outgrowths and man's hapless struggle to contain it by all means.



## Biography & Major Exhibitions

- 1926 - 1941 Childhood in Vysoké Mýto and Pilsen
- 1942 - 1944 Studies graphic design in Prague and ceramics in Bechyně
- 1945 - 1945 Works in a chemical factory and completes his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague
- 1946 First public street performance in Prague
- 1946 - 1948 Visits Paris before starting work as an assistant at the Palacký University in Olomouc
- 1950 - 1953 Works in Prague's heavy industry, then on the construction of the Vltava dam, in the coal mine in Ostrava and in the steel rolling mill in Kunčice
- 1954 - 1959 Returns to Prague and learns the technique of Drypoint Etching
- 1960 - 1967 First solo exhibitions at Staatliche und Städtische Kunstsammlung Kassel and The Royal Collection of Copper Engravings, Copenhagen, followed by a study trip to the Paul Klee archive in Bern
- 1968 - 1969 Escapes Czechoslovakia and emigrates to Germany Switzerland grants asylum and Svak moves to Lucerne
- 1970 - 1974 Various trips to the USA and England  
First exhibition at the Rehn Gallery in New York, from which MoMA acquires a 16-part portfolio  
Participation at the Venice Biennale (1972)  
Retrospective of the Graphic Work at Kölnischer Kunstverein (1974)
- 1975 - 1991 Professorship for free graphics at the Cologne University of Applied Sciences for Art and Design

**1980s - 2022** Participation in *Printed Art - A View of two Decades* MoMA, New York (1980)  
*Retrospective*, Kunstverein Mannheim (1984)  
*Graphic Retrospective*, National Gallery, Prague (1995)  
*Works on Paper - A Retrospective* exhibition at the Albertina Graphic Collection, Vienna (2002)  
Exhibition at State Russian Museum, St. Peterburg (2007)  
Exhibition: *From Warhol to Richter. Graphics between Photo and Print*, Museum Folkwang Essen (2014)  
Exhibition: *A retrospective*, Kunsthaus Zug (2016)  
*Sovak. Clear vision(s)*, Kunsthalle Mannheim (2016)

### **Pravoslav Sovak dies on June 10th, 2022**

**2023** Exhibition: *Pravoslav Sovak: Volume of Silence* at National Gallery, Prague (2023)

**Further information on**

[www.sovak.ch](http://www.sovak.ch)

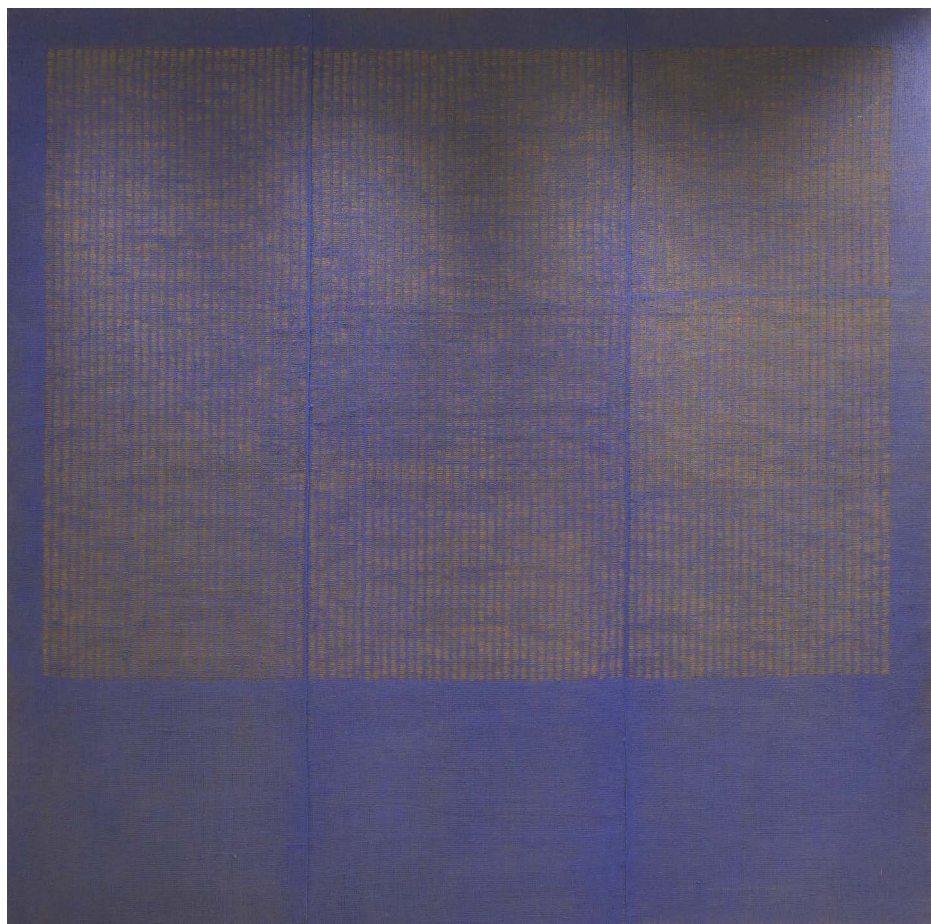
## Artworks

Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1959  
Tinted soils on jute canvas  
180 x 170 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Gymnasion*, 1985-1993  
Etching in colours  
25 x 33.6 cm





Salvatore Emblema

*Untitled*, 1978

Dyed overlaid and de-threaded jute canvases

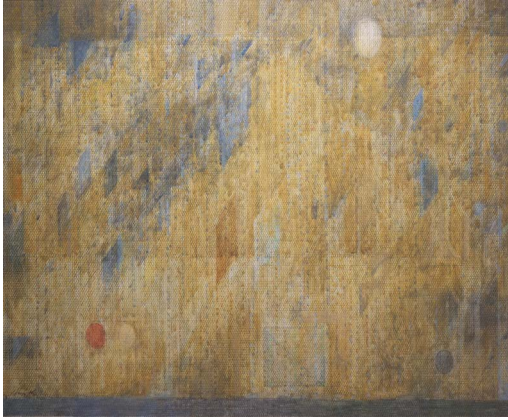
300 x 300 cm



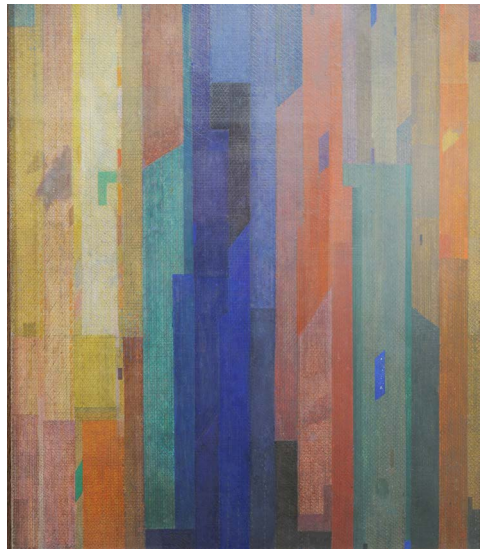
Salvatore Emblema  
*Senza Titolo*, 1976  
Dyed and de-threaded jute canvas  
150 x 200 cm



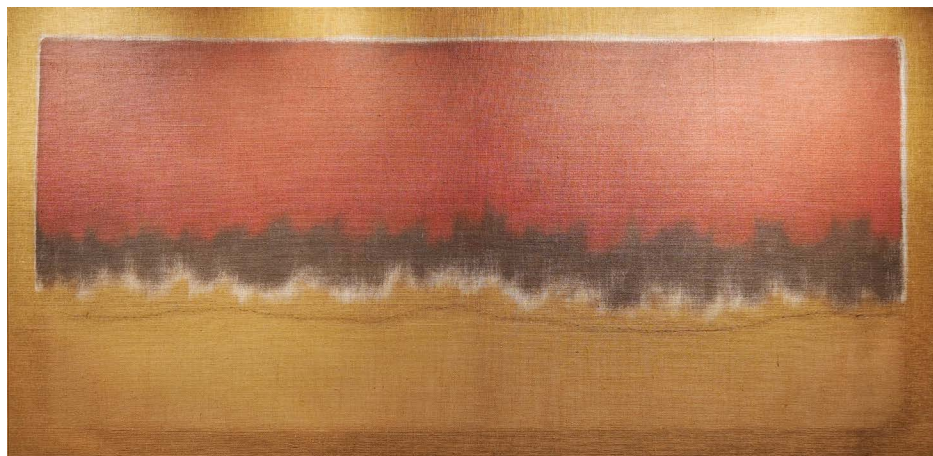
Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 2004  
Tinted soils and knots on  
jute canvas  
90 x 100 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Walls Terrain*, 1988  
Watercolour and pencil on paper  
65.5 x 79.5 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Big Walls*, 1987-1991  
Watercolour and pencil on paper  
78 x 65.5 cm

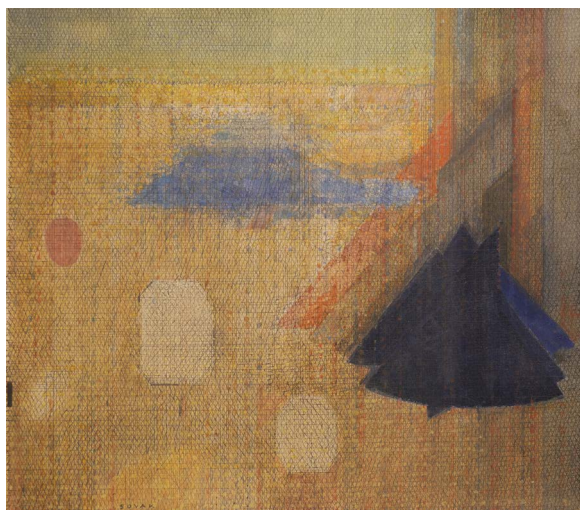


Salvatore Emblema

*Untitled*, 1979

Tinted soils on over-stitched canvases

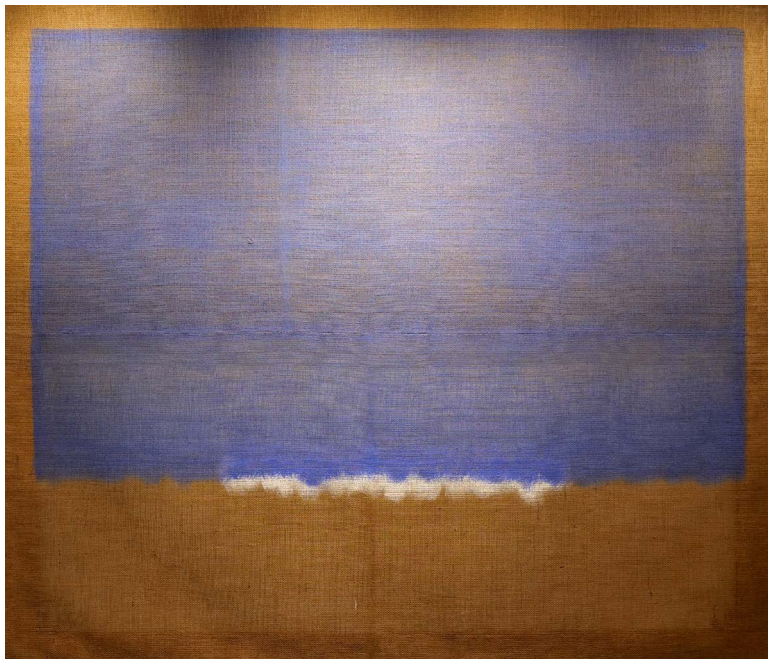
150 x 300 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Border*, 1987-1992

Watercolour and  
pencil on paper  
35 x 39 cm

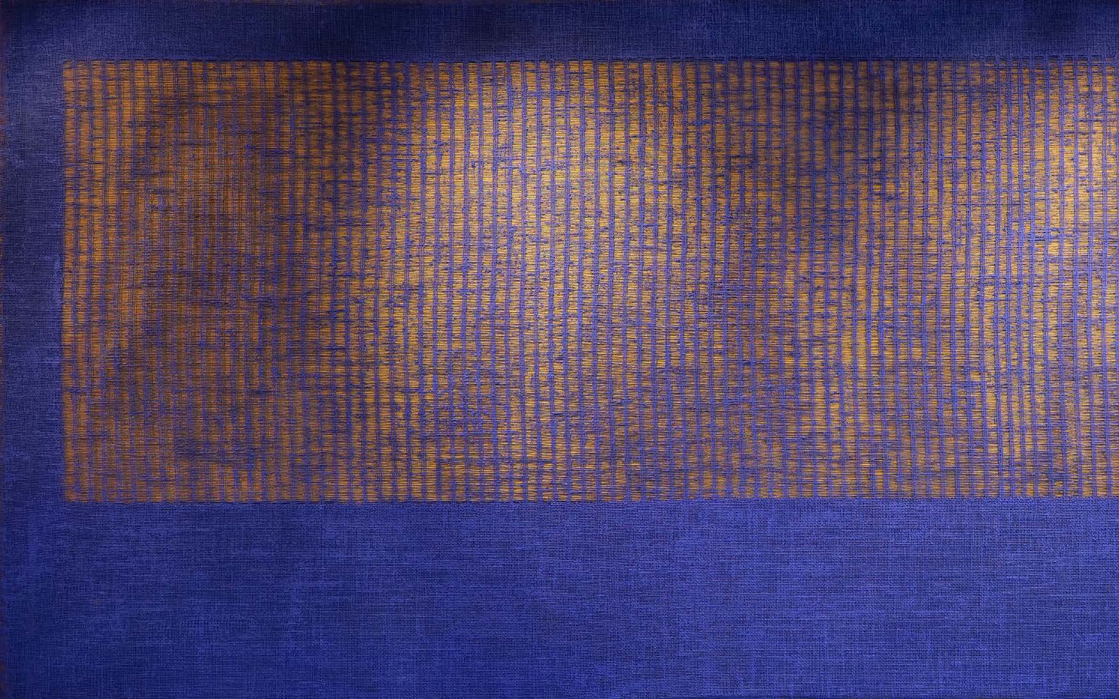




Salvatore Emblema  
*Senza Titolo*, 1978  
Tinted soils on over-stitched canvases  
180 x 200 cm

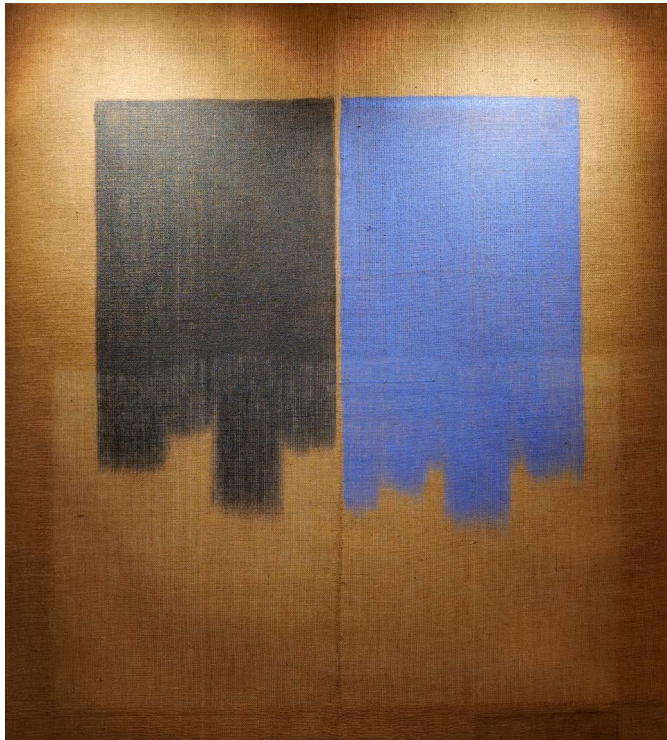


Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1959  
Tinted soils on jute canvas  
60 x 50 cm



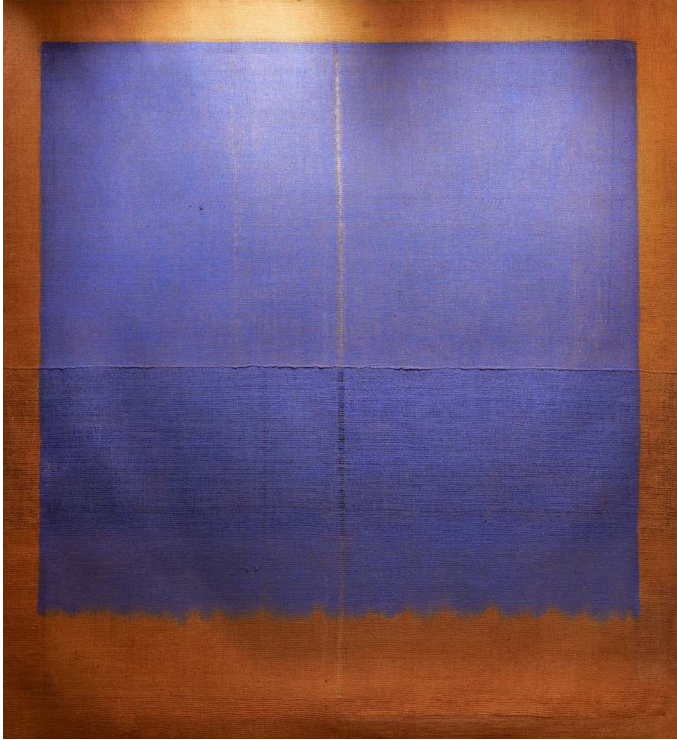
Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled, 1978*  
Tinted soils on de-threaded jute canvas  
140 x 320 cm

Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled, 1978*  
Tinted soils on over-stitched canvases  
200 x 180 cm





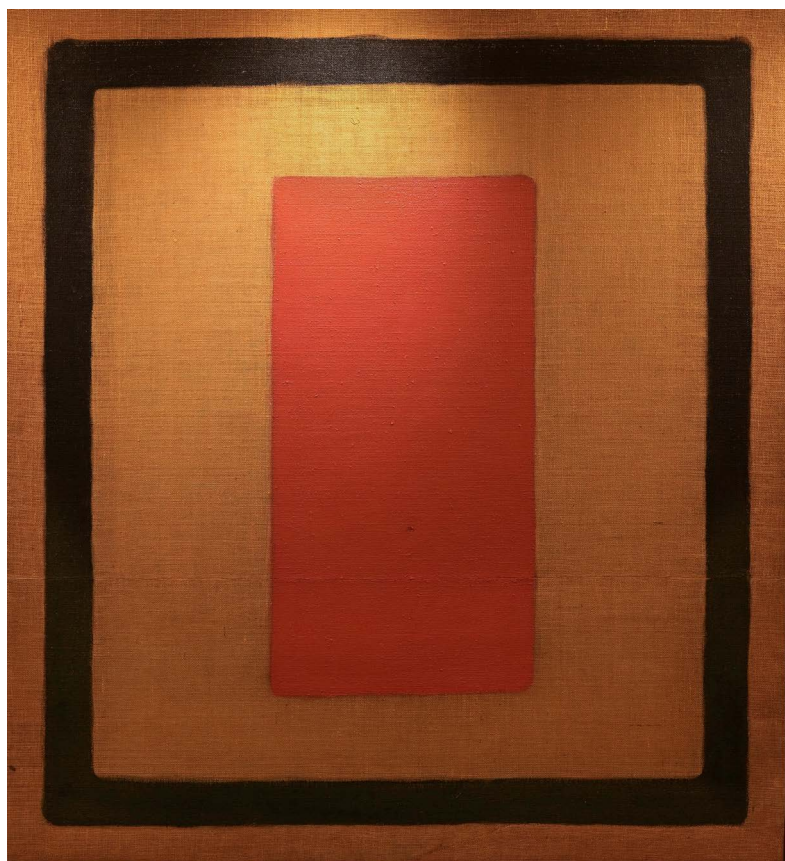
Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1979  
Tinted soils on de-threaded jute canvas  
200 x 180 cm



Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1979  
Tinted soils on de-threaded jute canvas  
200 x 180 cm







Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1969  
Tinted soils on jute canvas  
200 x 180 cm





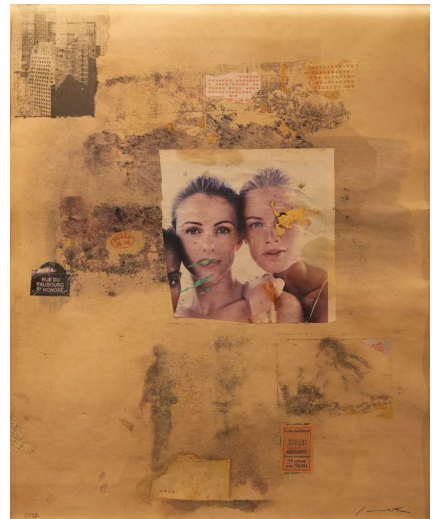
Pravoslav Sovak  
*Gelbe Tulpen mit Accessoire*, 2012  
 Collage  
 19.5 x 22.8 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Late Afternoon Südböhmen*, 2012  
 Collage  
 20.5 x 23.5 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Berg der Erinnerung*, 2012  
 Collage  
 32.5 x 40.3 cm

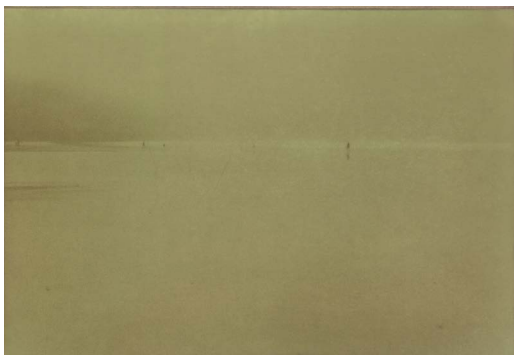


Pravoslav Sovak  
*Transparente Verhältnisse*, 2011  
 Collage  
 41.7 x 37.7 cm

Pravoslav Sovak  
*Ithaka*, 1988-1993  
Etching in colours  
32 x 47 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Mainaden*, 1988-1993  
Etching in colours  
32 x 47 cm

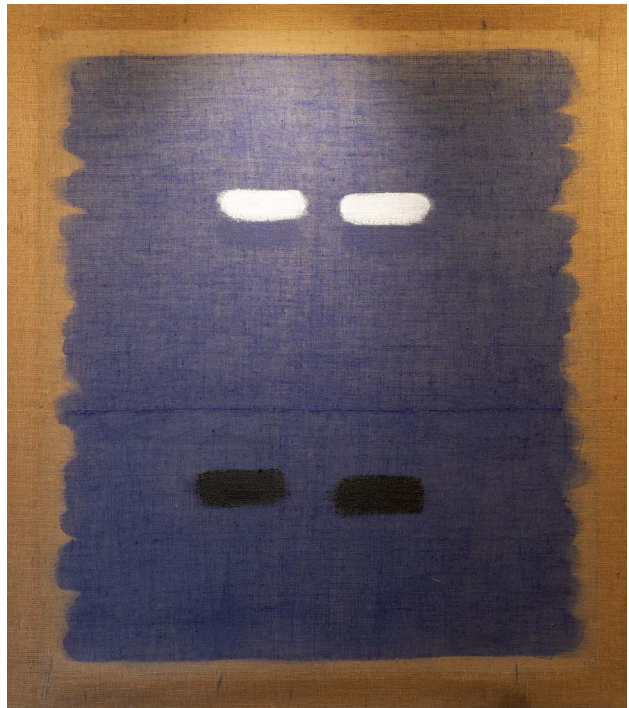


Pravoslav Sovak  
*Ariadne*, 1988-1993  
Etching in colours  
32 x 47 cm





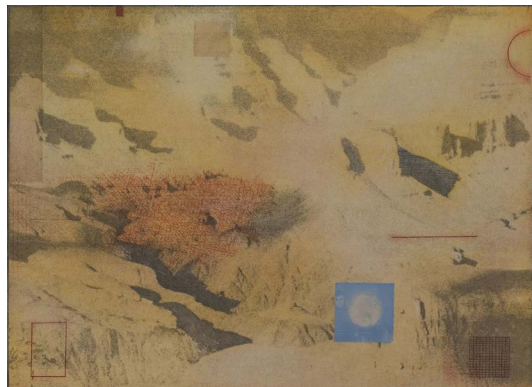
Pravoslav Sovak  
*Hermes*, 1988-1993  
Etching in colours  
32 x 47 cm



Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1997  
Tinted soils on de-  
threaded jute canvas  
180 x 160 cm



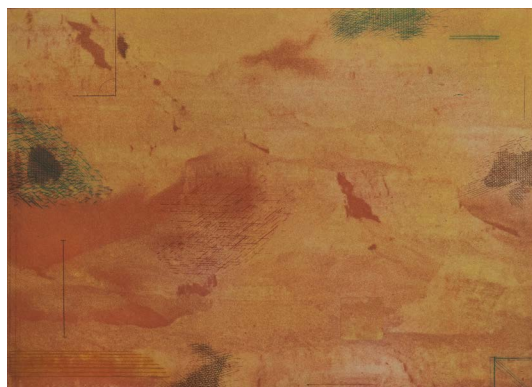
Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1981  
Tinted soils on jute canvas  
170 x 130 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Desert Walls - Blue Sign*,  
1981-1998  
Etching in colours  
48.1 x 64.5 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Desert Walls - Purple*,  
1981-1998  
Etching in colours  
48.1 x 64.5 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Desert Walls - Yellow*,  
1981-1998  
Etching in colours  
48.1 x 64.5 cm

Pravoslav Sovak  
*Beach Red*, 1976-1998  
Etching in colours  
43.8 x 64.7 cm

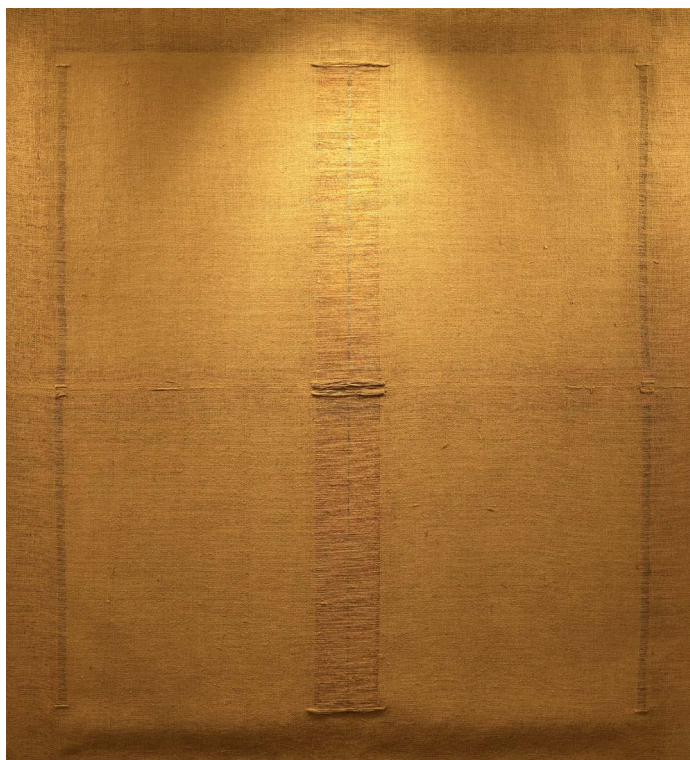


Pravoslav Sovak  
*Beach Yellow*, 1976-1998  
Etching in colours  
43.8 x 64.7 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*About Sacred Mountain*,  
1984-1986  
Watercolour and pencil on paper  
43 x 54.5 cm





Salvatore Emblema

*Untitled*, 1970

Tinted soils on de-threaded jute canvases

200 x 180 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Nebel in Hergiswil*, 1996-1997  
Etching in colours  
29 x 41.2 cm

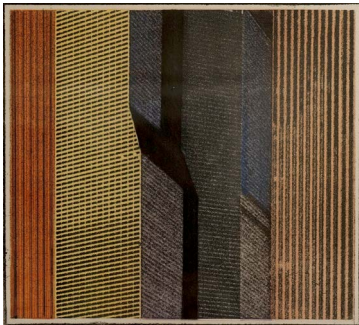


Pravoslav Sovak  
*Walls - Rain NY*, 1993  
Etching in colours  
49 x 54.1 cm



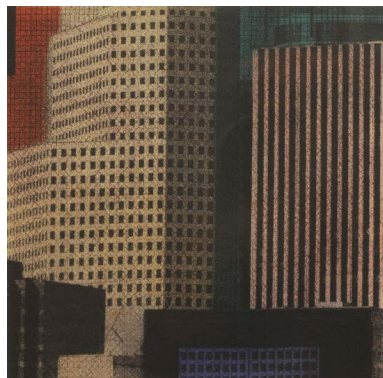
Pravoslav Sovak  
*View with Flowers*, 1987-1993  
Etching in colours  
34.5 x 48.7 cm





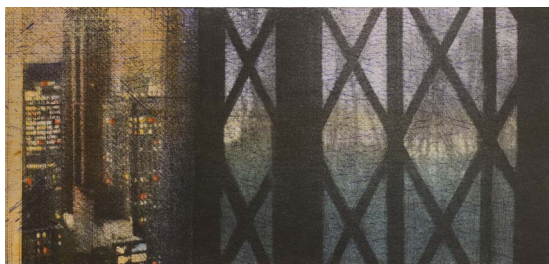
Pravoslav Sovak  
*Walls VI...*, 1991  
Etching in colours  
18.5 x 20 cm

Pravoslav Sovak  
*Walls VII*, 1991  
Etching in colours  
28.3 x 25.6 cm



Pravoslav Sovak  
*Walls II*, 1991  
Etching in colours  
20.6 x 21 cm

Pravoslav Sovak  
*Durchblick*, 1988-1997  
Etching in colours  
22.5 x 46.3 cm





Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1961  
Tinted soils and ashes on jute canvas  
180 x 200 cm

Salvatore Emblema  
*Untitled*, 1998  
Tinted soils on dyed and de-threaded jute canvas  
150 x 180 cm



