Press release

From October 10 to January 10, Merano Arte presents:

**Alois Kuperion - Painting is My Purpose in Life**

**Retrospective on Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Artist's Death**

**Press conference:** Friday, October 09, 2015 at 11.00 a.m.

**Opening reception:** Friday, October 09, 2015 at 7.00 p.m.

**Curator:** Ursula Schnitzer

**Monograph:**  Alois Kuperion, ed.: Cultural department of the Merano municipality, in

cooperation with Merano Arte, 207 pages, 120 illustrations,

with contributions by Eva Maria Baur, Paul Preims, Ursula Schnitzer and

with new biographical details;

Raetia Verlag, ISBN 978-88-7283-548-7

Merano: on occasion of the 50th anniversary of the death of Alois Kuperion - he passed away on January 17, 1966 - , Merano Arte will hold a large retrospective of the life and works of the wandering painter from the Vinschgau from October 10, 2015 to January 10, 2016. In his honor, the cultural department of the Merano municipality has published a comprehensive monograph with the latest biographical details, roughly 100 color illustrations, and numerous historical portrait photographs.

After having spent his childhood and youth in the Vinschgau and then in Austria, Kuperion (1891–1966) returned to South Tyrol after World War II. He spent a number of years in Kastelbell, but in the 1950s, Merano became his adoptive home.

During the 1950s, Kuperion succeeded in independently developing an abstract style of painting. With his sense of color, his intuition, and his airiness, he surpassed

many contemporary painters who made great efforts to overcome representationalism, and he influenced a whole row of domestic artists.

"His work is a rarity in the history of painting" (Antonio Manfredi, 1954), and it goes to show how a loner without a large cultural or intellectual burden - Kuperion was a simple agricultural worker - was able to develop a dense world of color in a high quality in the remote Vinschgau, purely from his inner drive and passion. Following the last comprehensive show in Latsch and Bolzano in 1988, and picking up the threads of his first exhibition in 1961 in the Merano Kurverwaltung, this exhibition is intended to once again introduce Kuperion to the interested public.

Thanks to the support of 40 private lenders, we have succeeded in compiling more than 100 of his best works for the exhibition. All in all, his oeuvre probably comprised roughly 1,500 small-format pictures. 500 to 600 are now privately owned in South Tyrol, hundreds were cast away, and many probably belong to families who have kept them as souvenirs of their holidays the and promenades of Merano.

This exhibition is not presented according to a chronological or technological order; instead, we have tried to make Kuperion's spontaneous advancement towards abstraction as well as his formal and chromatic intuition visible on the basis of various groups of works. Color, surface, composition, the blending of techniques, and the structure of the pictures bear witness to his virtuous and spontaneous fantasy. The color combinations of the pictures are surprising, and they result in assertive works of art. In a carefree manner, he consolidated the many isms and avant-garde movements of the first half of the 20th century in a personal style of painting.

In Merano, Kuperion found 'art lovers' and was able to fully dedicate himself to painting. In 1955, he wrote: "Art, painting was my prime purpose in life." In Merano, if only at times, his dream of being an artist and no longer a simple farm hand, did come true. Yet, even here, alcohol and poverty drove him toward loneliness. His placement in Merano old-age home in Gampenstrasse in 1962 set an early end to his career as an artist. Kuperion died in Merano on January 17, 1966.

**Alois Kuperion**

**July 20, 1891 - January 17, 1966**

**1891** Kuperion was born on the Schuggerer-Hof in Tarsch in the Vinschgau (father: Josef Kuperion, **mother: Anna Platzer).**

**1897 – 1905** Elementary school. Kuperion lives with an uncle who was the pastor of Kuens and later also of Tarsch and Tschars.

In **1909,** his father purchased the Öhlschlaghof farm in Morter and moved there. Death of the mother.

**1912/13** Farming school in Rotholz (Tyrol). Kuperion also takes lessons in drawing and makes first attempts at drawing natural motifs in a naturalistic manner.

In **1913**, his father remarries.

**1914** Kuperion is not quite suited for farmwork, so he is sent to the Swiss canton of Thurgovia to further attend school.

**1915/18** During World War I, Kuperion does military service in the second Tyrolean "Kaiserjaeger" regiment, at times on the front line in the Dolomite mountains.

Together with his second wife and the twelve children, Kuperion's father moves to Kufstein in **1926** and then to Teipl in Styria. Kuperion does not join his family.

In **1929**, Kuperion is forced to undergo eye surgery in Innsbruck.

**1939 – 1949** Kuperion lives in Austria and works in North Tyrol as an agricultural worker.

**1941 – 1943** He works at an airplane factory in Wiener Neustadt. Visits exhibitions at the Albertina.

In **1945**, Kuperion returns to North Tyrol and sees the works of modern painters (Manet, Matisse, Picasso) for the first time.

**1949** Return to the Vinschgau, where he lives in the attic room of the "Ettlbauer" in Galsaun (Kastelbell municipality).

**1950** Kuperion visits Florence and Rome.

**1951** His father dies in Styria at the age of 83.

**1954** Kuperion travels a lot and also visits the 27th Venice Biennale. In Merano, Kuperion is now in regular exchange with his 'art friends' (Antonio Manfredi, Luigi Serravalli, Anton Frühauf, Oswald Kofler, Emilio Dall’Oglio, Karl Plattner). Manfredi publishes a first article about Kuperion in "Der Standpunkt"; its title is "Der Fall Kuperion" ["The Kuperion Case"].

**1957** Kuperion moves to Merano for good and stays at the hotel Goldener Löwe in Postgasse (now Leonardo da Vinci Strasse).

**1961** First Kuperion exhibition with 69 pictures at Kurverwaltung Meran (June 3 - 30); in the series of the Milano publisher Vanni Scheiwiller "All insegna del pesce d’oro",

no. 27, the first Kuperion monograph appeared, authored by Antonio Manfredi. Since Kuperion can no longer pay the rent at Goldener Löwe, he is placed in the old-age home in Gampenstrasse.

**1962** Palmiro Boschesi publishes a second monograph about Alois Kuperion; exhibitions in Lugano, Milano, and Florence.

**1966** Kuperion dies in Merano.

**1986** Exhibition at the Landesfürstliche Burg on occasion of the 20th anniversary of Kuperion's death.

**1988** Exhibitions in Latsch and at the Museum of Modern Art in Bolzano; comprehensive monograph by Roland Kristanell and Paul Preims as Arunda 24.

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**Opening hours**: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., closed on Mondays

**Admission fee:**  EUR 6.00

Reduced fee for senior citizens aged 65 and above, groups, and for persons with handicaps: EUR 5.00

Students up to age 26: EUR 2.00

Free admission for children up to age 14, as well as for press and AMACI members

**For more information, please visit:** Merano arte

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