

MILANO
GALLERIA 10 A.M. ART
FROM 26 SEPTEMBER TO 29 NOVEMBER 2024
“GIOVANNI PIZZO. WORKS FROM THE 60s TO 2022”
A project in collaboration with Fabio Cherstich

From September 26 to November 29, 2024, the 10 A.M. ART gallery in Milan, at its venue in Corso San Gottardo 5, is organizing the exhibition “Giovanni Pizzo. Works from the 60s to 2022”. The project includes a series of events exploring the artist's life and work.

"My research, if I still have the time and energy, will involve multiplying the combinatory coefficient of images to create an increasingly rich dynamic of references, in terms of light and colour, between one group of images and another. I want to expand this dynamic, more and more. Something akin to what Pollock did in the field of signs, with his drip technique. Pollock multiplied the fragmentation of the sign in an informal manner. I aim to do the same in an orderly fashion. I would like to turn beauty into an operational canon, where there is no human intervention, just myriad elements that proliferate according to mathematical logic, but which are naturally humanized by their transposition onto canvas or board."

Giovanni Pizzo
Conversation with Fabio Cherstich, August 2022

After the monographic exhibition devoted to Lucia Di Luciano, we are presenting a "twin" show as a tribute to Giovanni Pizzo, who was Lucia's life and artistic partner for almost 70 years. Like his wife, Pizzo is now being rediscovered, which has brought the work of both artists to the attention of international critics and collectors. The exhibition offers a brief review of his landmark works and, for the first time, introduces the public to a series of recent creations, all executed in his studio at Formello, in the countryside near Rome. One of the leading exponents of Arte Programmata (kinetic art), Giovanni Pizzo experimented with the Gestalt potential of modules, geometric forms and mathematical language. His career as a painter began in the 60s, influenced by his studying Bertrand Russell and Albert Henry Munsell. Pizzo developed a personal form of artistic research, based on the use and combination of geometric modules, lines, squares and rectangles, initially by means of a minimal palette of whites and blacks, and later including saturated colours like blue and red. The title *Sign-Gestalt* reflects the importance of the operational process that leads to form, which the artist considered of more primary importance than form itself. On this occasion, I have decided to share with the public an extract from the last conversation I had with the painter in August 2022, just a few months before his demise.

Fabio Cherstich
Milan, August 2024

FC: I'd like to begin this conversation by discussing a moment of crucial importance in your career: the Mondrian exhibition curated by Palma Bucarelli in 1956 at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome. How did it influence your artistic practice?

GP: Before Mondrian, my painting was figurative and academic, but afterwards it evolved towards an informal model, partly based on signs, and partly on texture, with an explicit reference to ancient rock-paintings: a sort of 20th-century take on primitive painting. I was astounded when I saw Mondrian's works. Here we had a great classical painter who had abandoned naturalistic views and figuration to devote himself to pure geometry, to what would become the ABC of my own practice.

FC: So a painter must be able to jettison his certainties to evolve?

GP: Exactly. I was fascinated by the evolution of Mondrian's research, especially by the way in which he would reduce a tree to the barest essentials: increasingly simplified tree trunks and branches. It was a search for the essence, for abstraction. The exhibition triggered fierce arguments between friends, but in the end I decided to abandon figurative art, and to adopt a more linear approach, drawing my inspiration from

Mondrian himself. This I did with my wife, Lucia Di Luciano, who is also a painter. An extraordinary one. We were young, it was the 60s, and together we founded Gruppo 63.

FC: How did your work change after the Mondrian show?

GP: I began to simplify forms, eliminating the superfluous from my figures. Over time, I developed a characteristic, abstract sign, which was not connected with the real world. Following Mondrian, my work became a combination of geometric elements, with the aim of expressing purely mental concepts.

FC: You have said that in the 60s your work was linked to mathematical calculation. What is the process underlying your paintings?

GP: It is a mental process. I was inspired by the logic and mathematics of Whitehead and Russell, using combinations and progressions to create complex structures. Each sign and colour element had a precise function, organized through rigorous calculation. The goal was to create a dynamism in the geometric figures of the work, a rhythm.

FC: Although your painting is abstract, there is actually a link to reality. You have said to me that men became numbers thanks to the computer, that we are all numbers subject to calculations, and that your art anticipates this idea, applying it to the surface of a square... Does this make your work a metaphor for society?

GP: It may appear to be a metaphor, but the goal is purely an aesthetic one. My work is not political or social. It's abstract-geometric. There is nothing ambiguous about it.

FC: How would you explain your work to a child?

GP: I would simplify it, as follows: take three numbers, each corresponding to a geometric form. By changing their position, ever-new and surprising combinations are created. It's a simple game, but an effective one.

FC: What is art, for you?

GP: For me, art is first and foremost beauty, that is beyond question. This beauty has to do with the chromatic variation of the elements that make up the picture. By changing their position, the chromatic elements offer differing and dynamic visions of the same "pixel" – let's call it that – which changes colour depending on the sequences. This enrichment of colour gives joy, and creates an optical dynamism that stimulates the viewer's perception, making him see that the beauty, continuity and variation occur within the context of this combinatorial mental faculty. This is what making a painting means for me. Without this enrichment for the viewer, the picture has no value.

At the vernissage on 26th September, the gallery will host a piano recital by Oscar Pizzo, the artist's son, who is a classical pianist of international repute. At 8 p.m. he will offer the Milan public a dialogue between painting and music, performing a programme of minimalist contemporary pieces. At the end of the exhibition there will be the presentation of the volume *WORKS*, the first publication to establish a dialogue between the art of Lucia Di Luciano and that of her husband, the painter Giovanni Pizzo. The book, edited by Fabio Cherstich and featuring a text by Natalie Du Pasquier, is published by Apartamento in collaboration with 10 A.M. ART and the Archivio Lucia Di Luciano Giovanni Pizzo.

Biographical note: Giovanni Pizzo (Veroli, 1934 - Rome, 2022). Came to Rome and graduated in architecture in 1955. In 1959 he married Lucia Di Luciano. In 1963 he founded Gruppo 63 with her, Francesco Guerrieri and Lia Drei, adopting a logical-mathematical approach aimed at defining geometric modules to allow art to be combined with industrial design and architecture. The association was short-lived, and in 1964 he and Lucia Di Luciano founded Operativo R, also involving Carlo Carchietti, Franco Di Vito and Mario Rulli. The works produced in that period featured a blend of scientific research and virtuosic technique. His study of Bertrand Russell's texts on mathematical logic and his desire to conform to strict geometric rules determined the creation of a "sign-image" where colour, as a potentially emotional and subjective factor, is banished. He mostly worked on Masonite or in any case plates, whose dimensions are based on the proportional ratios of the golden section. His compositions feature the prefix *Sign-Gestalt* in the title: a sort of primary element of a fundamental alphabet, developed according to progressions and rhythmic structuring of geometric modules. His return to colour would be accompanied by further study of optical perception, in a so-called "geometric-rational" phase during which Pizzo discovered the potential of Albert H. Munsell's *Atlas*.

“Giovanni Pizzo. Works from the 60s to 2022”

**Milan, galleria 10 A.M. ART (Corso San Gottardo, 5)
26 September – 29 November 2024**

Opening day: Thursday 26 September 2024 at 5 p.m.

**Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.
All other days, by appointment only**

Free entry

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