

MARIO MERZ

Galleria Christian Stein Milano, Corso Monforte 23

May 19 – September 16, 2022

La Galleria Christian Stein is delighted to announce the *Mario Merz* exhibition, running from May 19 to September 16, 2022 at Corso Monforte 23 in Milan. The event is a tribute to the late Italian artist (d. 2003) in honor of the close bond we shared since 1967, hosting twelve solo exhibitions.

The gallery now features a reprise of the 1999 Mario Merz exhibition. Maintaining its original design, the exhibition is still surprisingly up to date, challenging visitors to ponder the fragile relationship between nature and culture, between existence and the cosmos. Merz saw nature as something that anticipates culture, a living organism that enfolds humans and reveals itself to them via the organic geometry of the underlying forms and mathematical laws, such as the golden ratio and Fibonacci numbers. Culture, on the other hand, is generated where language encounters history and action encounters intuition in a gnosiological dialectic that has always accompanied people on earth in their encounter with reality, experience and transcendence, art and life, material and spiritual drives.

The exhibition is a true singularity, a unique work made up of a few elements, as essential as they are emblematic of Merz's oeuvre, real objects and figurative imaginings that have always inhabited the artist's world, one of the major forces in the renewal of art since the 1960s. A table without corners, five glass vessels, one of them filled with wine, the nectar of the gods, sacred to Dionysus, father of tragedy, and then neon lights that cross the sheets of paper hanging on the walls, to which dark silhouettes of apparently prehistoric animals are glued. The table is composed of three sections that combine into a spiral filling nearly the entire gallery. The neon lights form a series of numbers against the paper, each number the sum of the two preceding numbers, a series identified by Leonardo Da Pisa, known as Fibonacci, son of Guglielmo dei Bonacci. It describes a mathematical order that structures living organisms, both plant and animal, and even galaxies. We continually find it transfigured in our culture of symbols, in various visual forms, such as the spiral.

On the walls a sequence of animal profiles—fantastic, mysterious forms—challenges our desire to classify. Archetypical forms, imaginings and reminiscences of a primordial life on earth before history, prehistorical, evoke times and ages when art played a ritual and magical role, as well as helping us know our world and relate visually with the mystery of life and the presence of the sacred in every aspect of nature, in the earth itself.

We do well to contemplate a thought Merz had regarding these arcane presences: "The animal is the carrier of time... it is a stunning image because it combines the incommensurable time of the remote past, the prehistory that did not see us exist, and the future, also the future we will not see and that will exist even without us. In the middle is the time of our existence, which can be calculated as a brief stretch within a numerical series."

The art of Mario Merz is always relevant, because in some measure it stands outside history but inside life, and it is comprehensible in a greater, immense vision of reality. In this sense, the visions of Merz are always forms, images, elements that belong as much to the remote past as they do to the future. Or, as Laura Cherubini wrote back in 1999: "neither futuristic nor ancient—or perhaps the two things together."

This future—organic and mathematical, cosmological and existential—is demonstrated by the numbers in the Fibonacci sequence, which grows progressively combining one silhouette with another: 1,1,2,3,5,8,13... to infinity. The space of the gallery thus merges into that of the cosmos, and our existence limited to historical time pours into the infinite and eternal time of the universe, and we are part of all of it. Everything is connected as Merz loved to say, citing a famous verse of Hölderlin. The table, lastly, is the element that gathers us together into a community, a supporting instrument, a base raised to the level of conviviality. It is effective at fostering dialogue and sharing, as art does, drawing us into a total experience of sensory knowledge and transcendent vision. The wine reminds us of the earth, which generously gives us its fruits, mother earth, as well as the power of the red nectar of the vineyard, sacred to people and gods alike, a vehicle for ecstasy and a higher order of imagination, both spiritual and mantic, as we learn from the myths and texts of ancient spiritual wisdom.

Merz's oeuvre thus lies at a borderland, continuously oscillating between the absolute and the contingent, personal and social, to reconnect the experience of the observer with the eternal immanence of the laws of the cosmos. Something real and present that emanates energy and resonances that make the work a potential occasion for civil and political engagement, something that renews itself and speaks of the prehistory of the earth in a contemporary idiom.

Following those of Michelangelo Pistoletto and Marco Bagnoli, the Mario Merz exhibition is part of an exhibition program that seeks to focus attention, in this period of transition, on the relevance and potentials of liminal zones, interpreted by the artists both from a physical and perceptual point of view and also spiritually, socially, and politically.

Milan, Corso Monforte 23

Monday to Friday 10am–7pm Saturday 10am–1pm and 3pm–7pm

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