

# ARTE PROGRAMMATA

## ITALIAN KINETIC ART FROM THE 1960s

**M&L FINE ART, LONDON, 4 OCTOBER - 20 DECEMBER 2016**

In collaboration with  
The Mayor Gallery, London

**M&L FINE ART**

15 Old Bond Street  
London



Exhibition *Opere d'Arte Animate e Moltiplicate*, Galleria Danese, Milan, 1960

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 M&L Fine art, London, 4 october - 20 december 2016  
 edited by Marco Meneguzzo

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## THE ITALIAN APPROACH TO OPTICAL-KINETIC ART 1959-1968

BY  
MARCO MENEGUZZO



Gabriele De Vecchi, Giovanni Anceschi, Davide Boriani, Gianni Colombo, Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni, 1960

Italian "Arte Programmata", Programmed Art, was not simply another aspect of international Kinetic Art: it was a part of it, of course, but it was also something radically new, just as the context and circumstances in which it developed in the early 1960s were radically new. This brief essay, written for those not particularly informed about this very particular historical moment, will attempt to indicate, in simple even if analytical terms, the concepts, characteristics, ramifications, and even prophecies of a movement whose imaginative and formal content should and could have had a greater impact on the international scene.

Today the Italian art of that period tends to be seen as directly descending from Lucio Fontana; such mainstream artists as Piero Manzoni, Enrico Castellani, Agostino Bonalumi and their friends and followers have been considered as a single conceptual and formal block, recognised and recognisable. This is mainly true, even though at the time these artists were not considered the most representative of Italian art – quite the contrary! However, a slight change in our view of them allows us to appreciate their differences and to deepen our awareness, and our pleasure in a vast, and for the period, new artistic galaxy based on concepts and elements different from the dominant ones of the times. The common enemy of the young Italians born between 1930 (Castellani) and 1937 (Gianni Colombo, Alberto Biasi, Gruppo T, and Gruppo Enne) was, of course, the Informale movement: a way of making art and, above



THE ITALIAN APPROACH TO OPTICAL-KINETIC ART 1959-1968 9



Gabriele De Vecchi, Davide Boriani, Giovanni Anceschi and Gianni Colombo from Gruppo T with the artwork *Scultura pneumatica*, exhibition *Miriorama 1*, Milan, 1960

all, of considering an artist as an aggregate of unconscious instincts, automatic gestures, and intense individualism. For this reason too, at the end of the 1950s, and not just in Italy, “groups” of artists were formed, the most famous today being the Azimuth group (Manzoni and Castellani; Bonalumi withdrew from it after a short time). However, if it is looked at from a conceptual and ideologically coherent point of view, it was less important as a group than Gruppo T in Milan, which came just after it, or Gruppo Enne, formed in Padua a few months later, in 1960.

When you are young, the difference of a few months can be all-important; it can lead in different directions, and can even create generational clashes. And so, if it is true that Manzoni – the leading spirit and animator of his group – invited the young men, only slightly younger than him, from the T and Enne groups to exhibit in the Azimut gallery in Milan, we can assume that he thought he would find some followers and could reinforce the myth of himself that he was clearly constructing. However, these young artists, even while recognising his intelligence and a certain “primogeniture” in openly tackling the preceding art languages and systems, had no intention of following his conceptual and Dadaist vocation; above all, they had no interest in glorifying artists to the point of making them works of art (something that was present and, at times, all-important for Manzoni). On the contrary, even while they all used a Dadaist streak of irony in their early work (for example, Gabriele De Vecchi of Gruppo T had made “a sculpture to be kicked”, while Gruppo Enne, which at first had insisted on strict anonymity, organised the show of a non-existent baker – Giovanni Zorzon! – and exhibited as sculptures all the existing forms of bread in Italy), they had formed into groups in order to avoid excessive individualism. Their other aim was to see if it was possible to make a critical and fundamental rationalisation of their works,



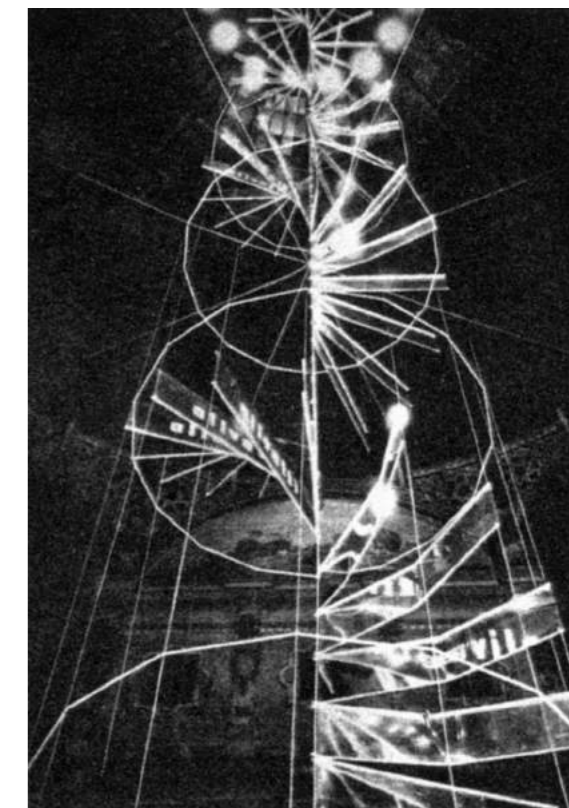
From left: Alberto Biasi, Toni Costa, Edoardo Landi and Manfredo Massironi, 1962 (photomontage created by Alberto Biasi)



Alberto Biasi, *Cinoreticolo spettrale n.1*, 1962



*Struttura elicoidale*, a spiral structure by Enzo Mari in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan. Decoration for the city of Milan, 1962



*Struttura elicoidale*, a spiral structure by Enzo Mari in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan. Decoration for the city of Milan, 1962

without any kind of romanticism, to the point of creating works by the whole group together after a series of discussions between the members (this was especially so for Gruppo Enne). In this idealistic context, the “group logic” was already in itself a declaration of poetics: it is possible to have a common language and, unlike the avant-gardes at the beginning of the century, this language can be defined while it is being made and not a priori, thanks to the contribution of everybody. In this way there was already excluded the construction of a “psychological” language that was too personal and reliant on a state of mind. Instead there was a search for linguistic elements unequivocally tied to a common vision that can be perceived and interpreted in the same way. The objectivity of vision and its effect were at the heart of this approach, and not psychological or emotive empathy with the work, as was the case when viewing Informale lyrical abstract works. Furthermore, the

group became a kind of “structured antagonist” of the rising art system and not just a marginal aspect of it: the very organisation of the work – which also included its diffusion and not just its production – became a part of the work itself, as was being demonstrated at the time by Manzoni’s energetic self-promotion. But a part of this was also the method of exhibiting, producing, and inquiring into the cultural and economic relationships outside the usual art circuits, as was being attempted by the T and Enne groups (less historically lucky groups rapidly followed suit and just as rapidly disappeared).

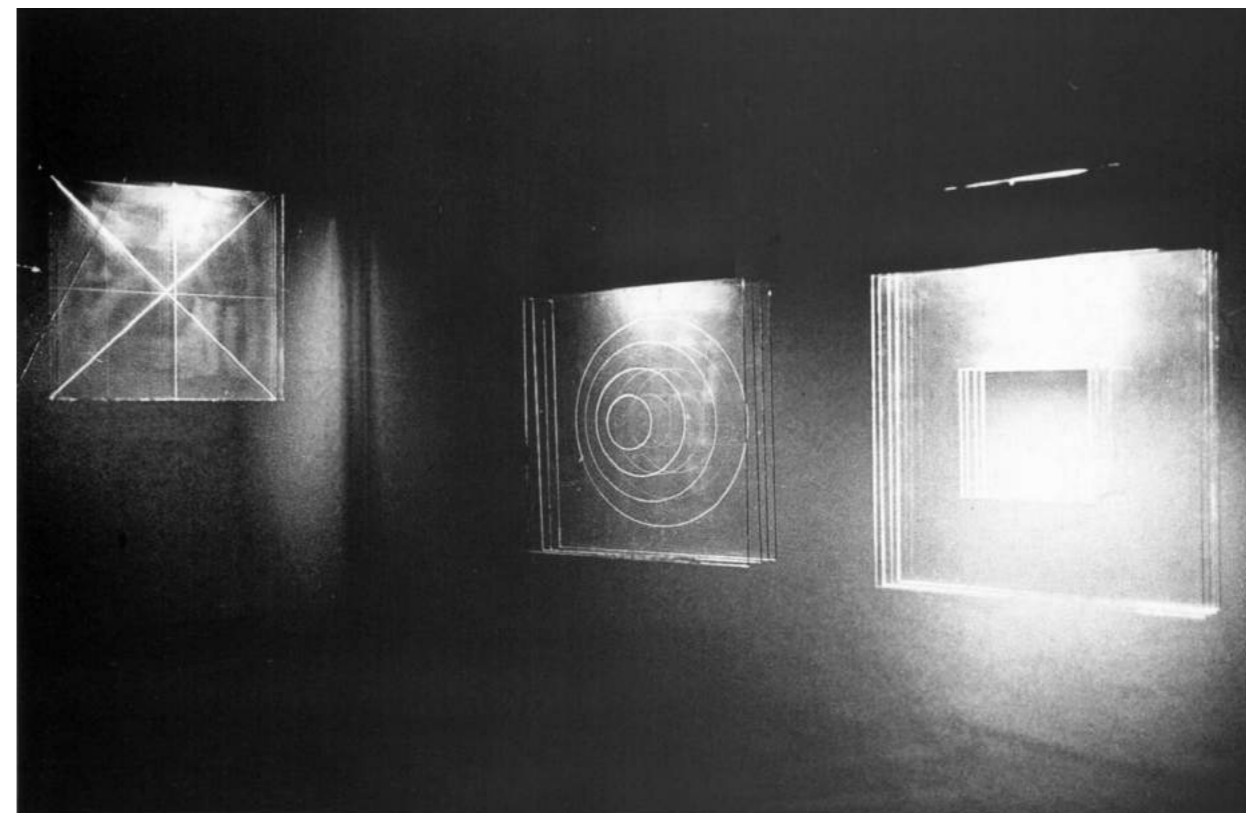
It could be objected that this operative approach is typical of a nonconformist social and cultural condition as well as of great internal contradictions, ones incapable of supporting their own cultural production. This happened with Italian Futurism (still remembered by all post-war Italian groups) and with Russian



Gruppo T (Anceschi, De Vecchi, Varisco, Boriani, Colombo), 1964

Futurism: both came about in a backward agricultural society with just a few modernist highpoints. But Italy in 1960 was undergoing great industrial and technological development, so much so as to create a yearly GNP increase that today we might call “Chinese”, and with “technologic niches” that placed it at the forefront of the world’s avant-gardes. Examples of these include the field of nuclear energy for civilian use and, above all, the small electronic computers that Olivetti was developing as a result of the far-sightedness of Adriano Olivetti, an illuminated businessman at the head of one of the most important and innovative Italian firms for calculating machines and typewriters.

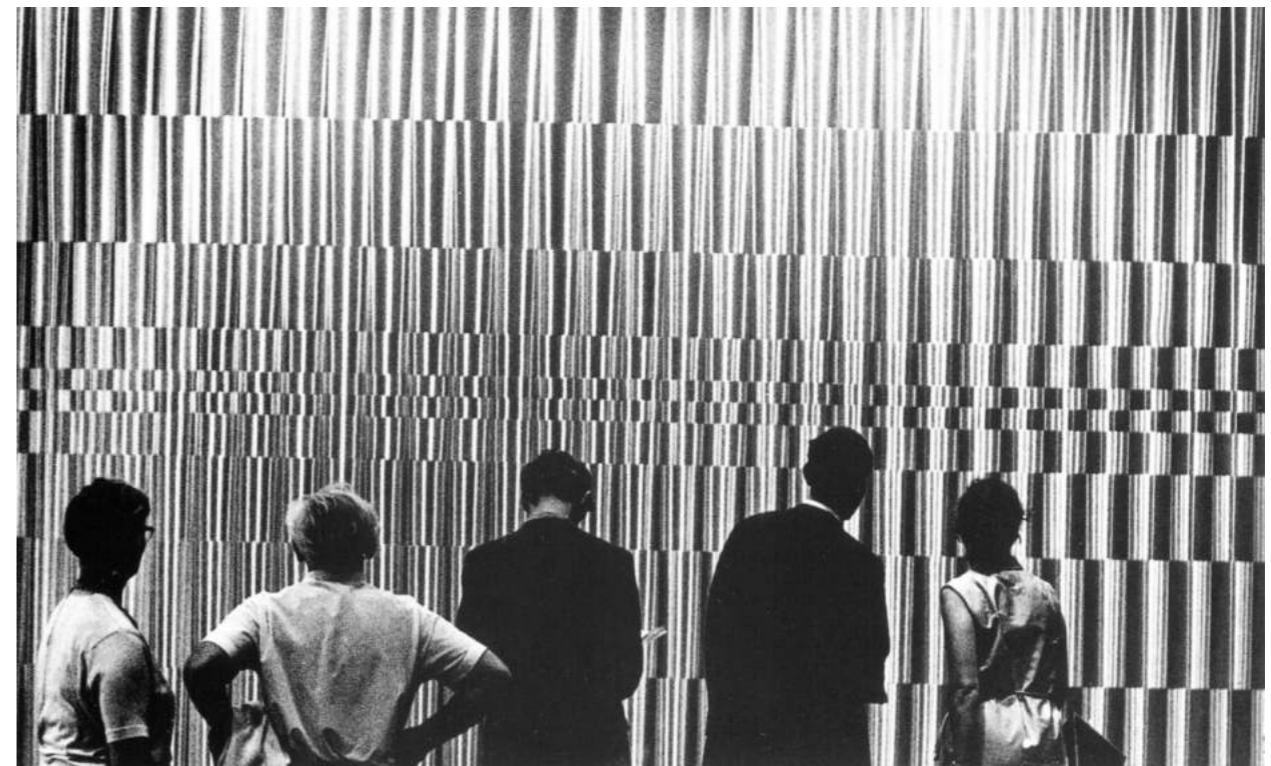
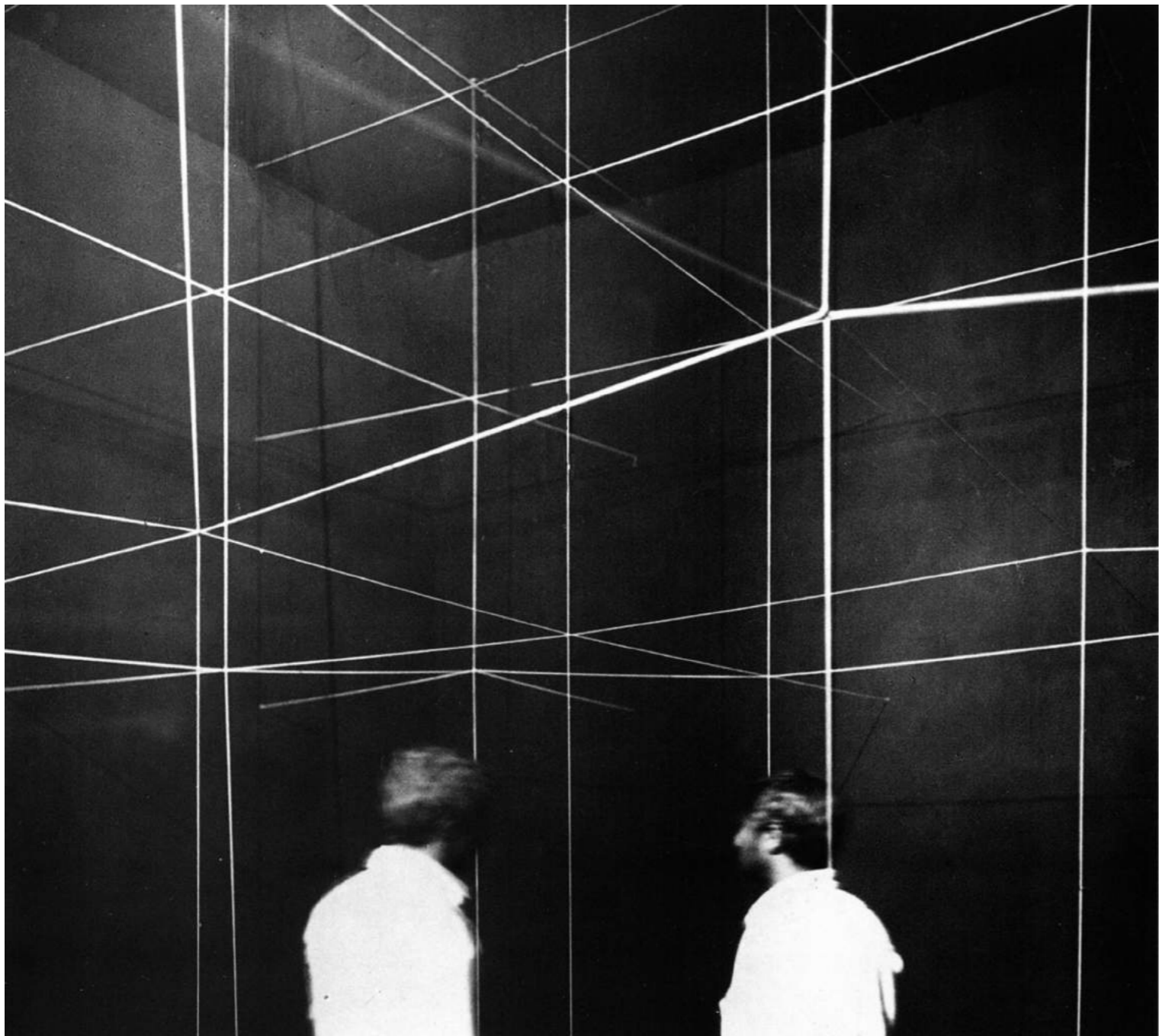
And what was true for design was also true for technologically advanced industry in the post-war craze for reconstruction. An illuminated industrial class asked for the collaboration of intellectuals, even ones with no prior knowledge of the object being produced, in order to try out and even invent new forms and find new paths to follow. It was not by chance that the designer of the chassis of one of the first Italian computers – the ELEA 9003, famous for being the world’s first wholly transistor-activated computer – was Ettore Sottsass Jr. who, with classical simplicity (though it is difficult to speak of “classical” for one of the first computers!), interpreted this important object as one that in the future would inhabit every area of thought, research, and work. It was in such a climate that in 1961 there came into contact, on the one hand, such intellectuals and writers as Giorgio Soavi and Umberto Eco, and artists, designers, and teachers as Bruno Munari (born in 1907) and, on the other hand, the very young protagonists of the T and Enne groups, together with such isolated fellow-companions as Enzo Mari, Getulio Alviani or Marina Apollonio. In December of that year the “Almanacco Bompiani 1962” was issued – an annual publication by various authors from various disciplines concerned with up-to-date questions of customs and social life – wholly devoted to the new areas of communications and expression that binary codes and electronic programming would bring about in the life, communications, and art of every day. At the time of this publication there was coined – and it is still uncertain if by Soavi or Munari – the definition “Arte Programmata”: an art that followed new criteria for communicating without, however, losing its aspects of creativity, of linguistic independence, and of freedom.



Exhibition in Bochum Gallery, 1972. Artworks created by Gianni Colombo from the series *Strutturazione ritmica*, 1964

In fact, “programming” art in no way excluded the unpredictability of the result: it simply allowed for it as one of the most interesting possibilities of this more rigorous and rational preparation of the end result. In other words, the artist set up a visual machine with the help of motors or optical devices that were all openly declared and even very simple: the most popular were the French Creuzet motors, invented for programming the wash cycles of early washing machines... Their combination, however, was often backed by materials with a known composition but an unpredictable quantity, layout, or timings that were almost always incalculable and unrepeatable, and gave rise to a mental and visual process that forced – and still forces – rethinking about the rational repetition and ordering of the cause, and the uniqueness of the effect, in a linguistic context that is, however, common to all the viewers, because the perceived phenomenon does not require particular states of mind, previous knowledge, or sentimental participation: programming, then,



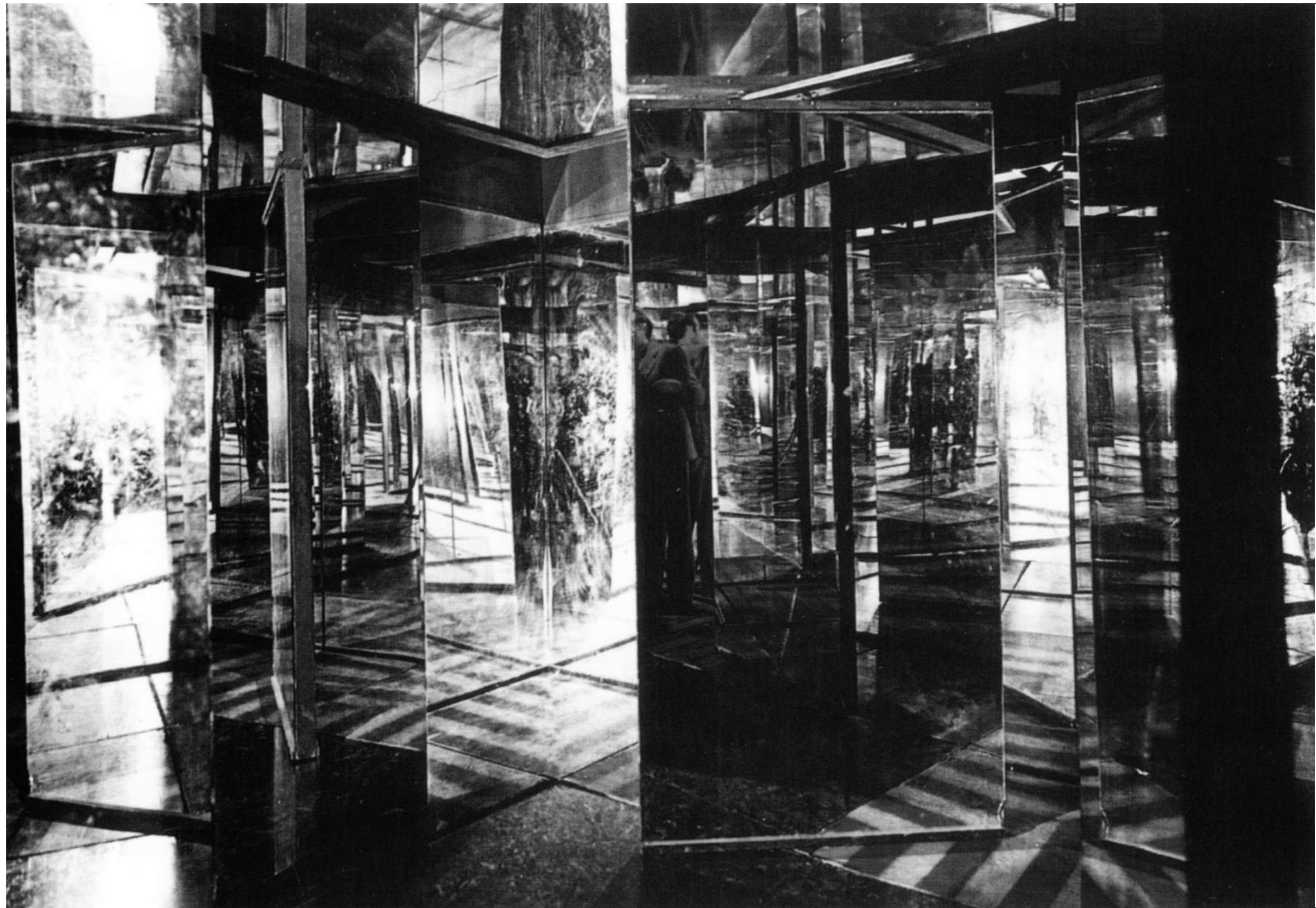


Getulio Alviani *Superficie a testura vibratile*, 1962-1967, Aluminum, 350 x 500 cm

as a paradoxical element of unrepeatability and of continuous variation. And it really doesn't matter much if Gruppo T concentrated on real kinetics with the use of motors, magnets, and moving liquids, while Gruppo Enne tended to make optical-dynamic objects in which the movement was supplied by the movement of the spectator's eyes, because each artist – even those who were not part of these groups, above all Munari, an inspiration and example almost of the same importance as Fontana – was perfectly aware of experimenting with a completely new area of kinetic art and, perhaps, of indicating a future vision of the world, a way of looking at reality, updated for the new society.

The proactive and lively ideas and works of Arte Programmata, then, became fully mature in about 1962 and continued at least until the first ideological and political protests at the end of the decade (though Kinetic/Programmed art lasted to a certain extent until halfway through the 1970s, with the contribution

◀ Gianni Colombo, *Ambiente 'Spazio elastico'*, 1964, realized for the exhibition *Trigon '67*, 1967



Davide Boriani, *Camera stroboscopica*,  
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, 1965-1967



of important artists who were too young to be working in the previous decade). Those on the side of the protesters considered Arte Programmata too detached from society or too compromised with the world of industrial production which Arte Programmata wanted to exploit for its possibilities for diffusion and production: this it had done by becoming part of a kind of parallel mass-aesthetic production, in the conviction that it could produce an art that could contribute to a greater collective harmony.

Its high point and, to be honest, a show that is still unsurpassed for the reasoning behind it, was the exhibition "Arte Programmata" which opened in the Olivetti shop in Milan in May 1962. It then travelled until 1965 with stops at Venice, Trieste, Rome, Düsseldorf, New York, Columbia, and Ithaca. The essay by the Italian semiologist Umberto Eco underlined the concept of "the open work", an idea he had theorised shortly before. However, the firm's insight, supported by Soavi and Munari, was to make the show a genuine industrial product and to change our viewpoint of works of art. In this sense, Olivetti was not only the show's sponsor but also its "employer". In fact, there had been a lot of correspondence between the artists and the firm. The artists indicated such things as the costs of the materials, their working hours, extras for devising the works, as though they were dealing with an industrial contract: conceptually this was the end of the art market as it had been organised until then, and the possible beginning of an aesthetic and an art within everyone's reach (something that was taken to extremes, above all by Enzo Mari, in the third edition of the show "Nove Tendenze" held in Zagreb in 1965).

It was an art that had purposely given up its aura of uniqueness and genius in order to gain the possibility of really being at the service of the community through the widespread diffusion of multiples: a kind of "Holy Grail" of the avant-gardes, and one of the final aims of twentieth century art movements. In fact, the distinct groups and individual artists of Italian Arte Programmata can and must be considered a neo-avant-garde. Of course, in order to set in motion this passage from a perceptive moment to a social aim, the field of art research had to fulfil, ideally and operatively, certain requirements. The first of these was to pinpoint perceptive elements and answers common to all the observers and, therefore, universal ones, as I have hinted at above. The idea of a verifiable and even measurable aesthetic – as was being theorised at the time by Max Bense – is at the heart of Italian Arte Programmata which, with some possible future social role in mind, contributed a lot to both the psychology of form and to perceptology: it was no longer a question of experimenting but of indicating the path for a new way of seeing, one in perfect harmony with the premises and promises of the new languages that would have changed society.

New languages, above all programmed and programmable binary language, have radically changed the world and society: art has not changed so radically, and so Arte Programmata – in part thanks to the triumph of the pragmatism of Pop Art, its contemporary "rival" and alternative – was for many years relegated to being a neo-avant-garde utopia. However, as we know, at times, perhaps in other forms but with the same ideas, utopias can come true.

Marco Meneguzzo

# CATALOGUE

ENTRIES EDITED BY  
SARAH BOGLINO

## GETULIO ALVIANI

(Udine 1939)

*Superficie a testura vibratile*, 1962

aluminium

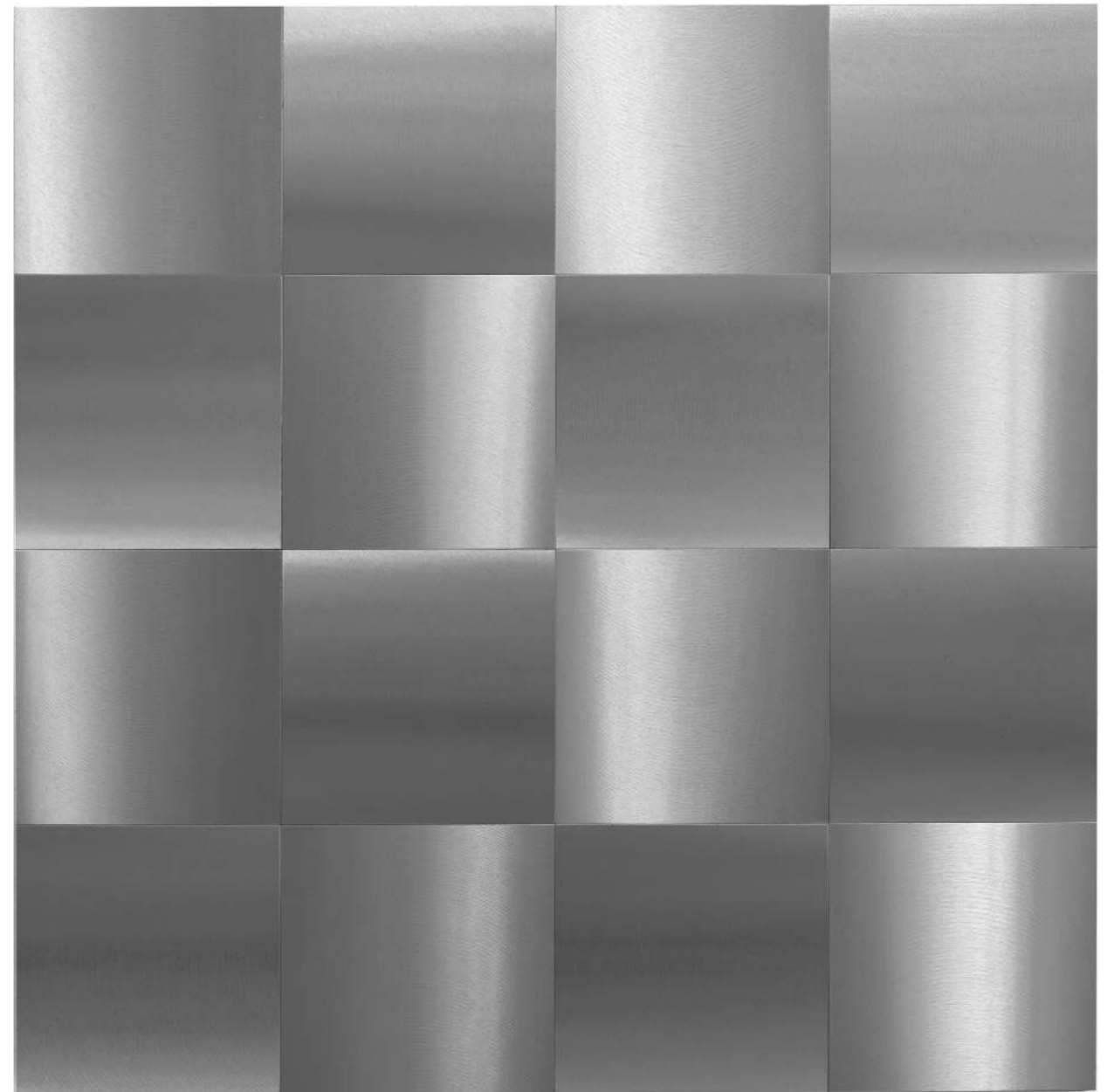
56 x 56 cm., diagonal 78 x 78 cm.

This work dates from the early part of his career, before the kinetic light pieces with thermo-mechanic movements from the second half of the 1960s. At the time there was still a great deal of thought being given to the relationship between art and industry, stimulated by the teachings of the Bauhaus and by Gestalt theories. This work is made from aluminium modular structures each measuring 14 x 14 cm., and milled and scratched in order to make a surface that can channel light and cause it to vibrate, creating virtual depths according to the spectator's viewpoint. For Alviani, the 1960s were a period when he took part in lively debates about art and exhibited in international-level shows. In 1960 he became a member of the Groupe de Recherche Art Visuel; in 1962 he took part in the travelling show "Arte Programmata" (Venice, Roma, Düsseldorf, Leverkusen); in 1963 he joined the international movement Nouvelle Tendences, and was awarded a gold medal at the "Oltre l'Informale" biennale in the Republic of San Marino; in 1964 he took part in the "Mouvement" show at the Venice Biennale while, in 1966, his work was to be seen in the show "The Responsive Eye" at MoMA, New York.

Provenance: Getulio Alviani, Udine; Ewan Phillips Gallery, London; Galleria La Polena, Genoa; Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna; Galleria Seno, Milan; private collection, Milan.

Exhibitions: *Alviani, de Rosny, Scheggi: three European artists*, Ewan Phillips Galler, London, 1966.

*Al di là della pittura - VIII biennale d'arte*, Palazzo scolastico "Gabrielli", San Benedetto del Tronto, 1969. *Alviani Castellani Colombo*, Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna, 1972.



## GIOVANNI ANCESCHI

(Milan 1939)

*Struttura tricroma*, 1963

Wood, screen projection, electric motor

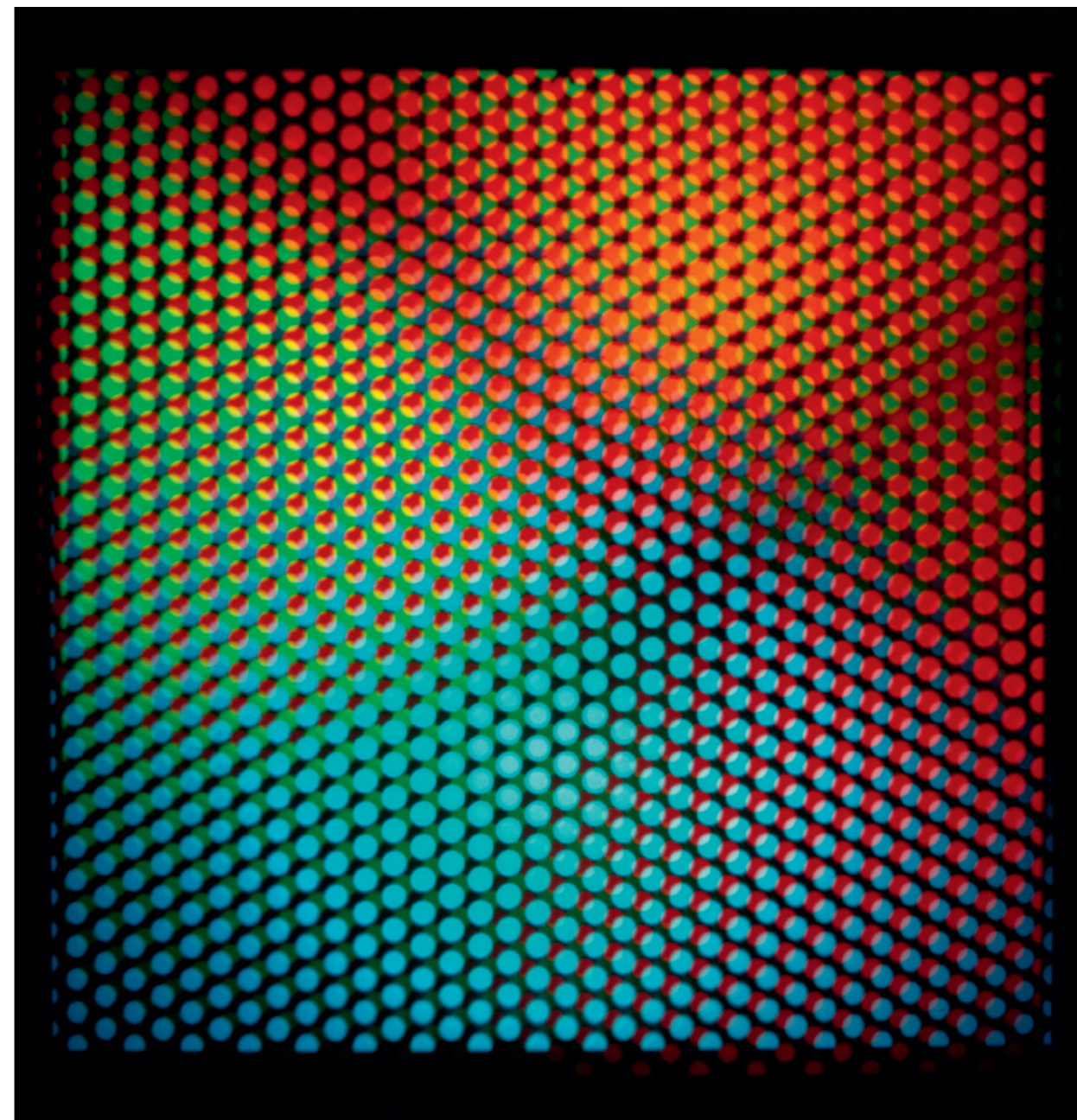
51.5 x 51.5 x 51 cm.

In 1959 he cofounded Gruppo T in Milan, together with Borriani, Colombo (a fellow student at the Brera Academy), and De Vecchi; Grazia Varisco joined them the following year. He collaborated on the foundation of the Galleria Azimut, and was one of the co-signers of the Miriorama 1 manifesto. He took part in solo shows and group shows with Gruppo T (Time): his first solo show, Miriorama 5, was held at the Galleria Pater, Milan, in 1960. Encouraged by Umberto Eco, the theoriser of the "open work", and by Bruno Munari, he published two programmed graphics in the Almanacco Bompiani in 1962 (issued in December 1961) for the "Arte Programmata" exposition that opened in the Olivetti store in Milan. Again in 1962 he enrolled at the Hochschule für Gestaltung, Ulm, where he was taught by, among others, Tomas Maldonado (basic design and semiotics), Max Bense (theory of "micro-aesthetics": measurable emotive reactions to tiny programmed aesthetic variations), and Abraham A. Moles (theory of aesthetic information). Echoes of their teachings about the impact of informational programming on aesthetics can be found in works of his based on the art-industry coupling. This work is part of this area of research and undergoes continuous changes of colour (red, green, blue, yellow) as a result of a rotator placed between the screen and the light source. However, the predictability of the programmed movement is interrupted by the spontaneous and random action of the viewers using a switch. His works are to be seen in important public collections, including MART, Rovereto; MACBA, Buenos Aires; Cantiere del '900, the Intesa San Paolo collection, Milan; and the Ritter Museum in Germany.

*Provenance*: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

*Exhibitions*: *Luce, movimento & programmazione: kinetische Kunst aus Italien 1958/1968*, travelling exhibition: Ulm, Ulmer Museum, 8 September – 4 November 2001; Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle, 17 November 2001 – 10 February 2002; Gelsenkirchen, Städtisches Museum, 27 February – 14 April 2002; Kiel, Stadtgalerie, 14 June – 11 August 2002; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum, 23 August – 24 November 2002; Klagenfurt, Alpen-Adria Galerie, 11 December 2002 – 7 March 2003; *Un secolo d'arte italiana: lo sguardo del collezionista. Opere dalla Fondazione VAF*, MART, Rovereto, 2 July – 20 November 2005; *Light Art from Artificial Art. Light as Medium in 20th and 21st Century Art / Lichtkunst as Kunstlicht. Licht als Medium der Kunst im 20. Und 21. Jahrhundert*, ZKM Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, 19 November 2005 – 6 August 2006; *FASTER! BIGGER! BETTER! Signetwerke der Sammlungen*, ZKM Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, 24 September 2006 – 7 January 2007; *Op Art*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 17 February – 20 May 2007; *Viaggio in Italia. Italianische Kunst 1960 bis 1990 aus der Sammlung der Neuen Galerie Graz und der VAF-Stiftung*, Neue Galerie Graz, Frankfurt am Main, 14 June 2008 – 25 January 2009; *Gruppo T. Miriorama, le opere, i documenti*, P420 Arte Contemporanea, Bologna, 15 May – 26 September 2010.

*Literature*: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 2012, p. 397, no. VAF 674.



**GIOVANNI ANCESCHI**

(Milan 1939)

*Percorsi fluidi*, 1961

Polyethylene tube, coloured liquid, lacquered wood

44 x 48 x 6 cm.

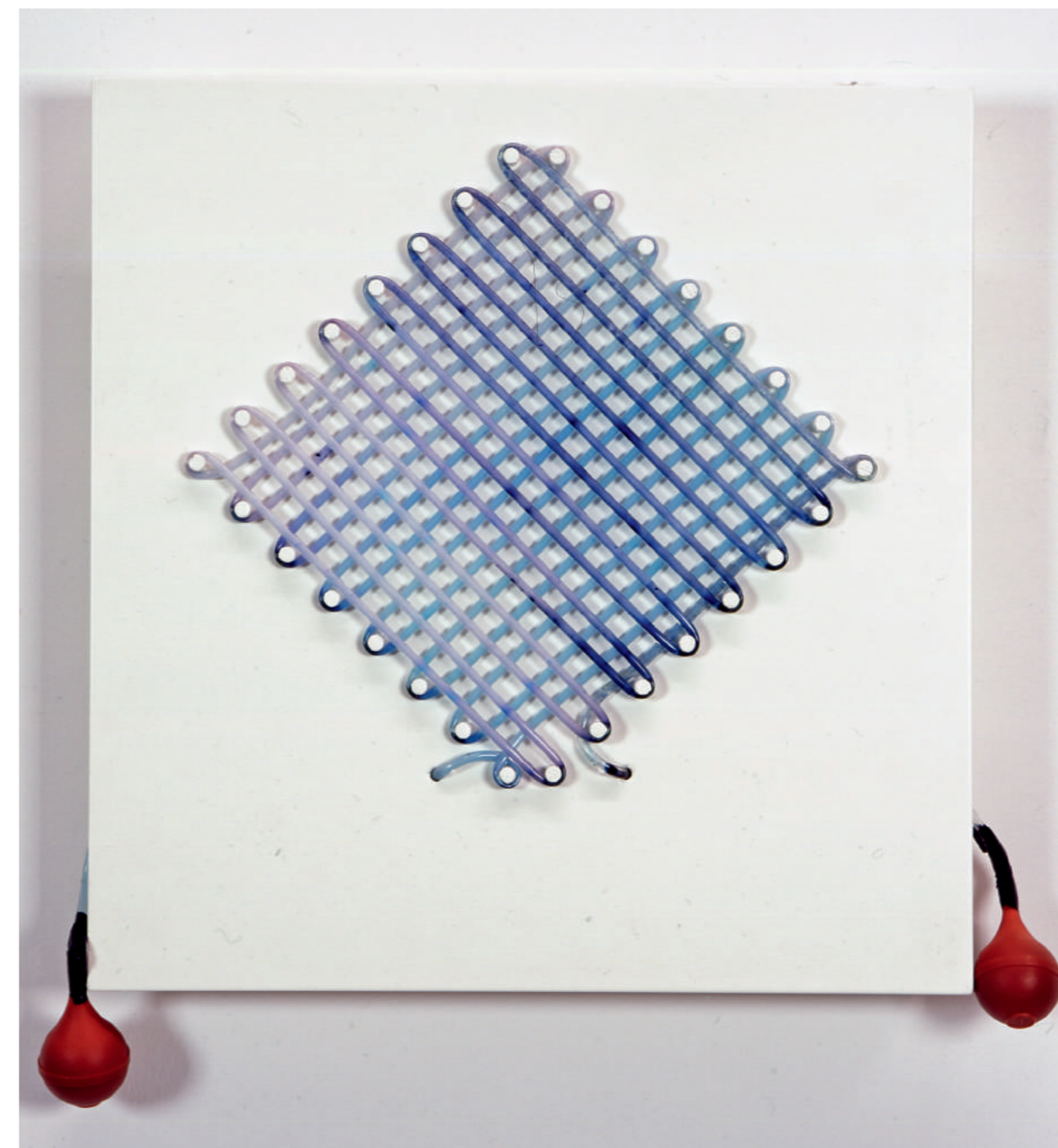
The beating quadrangular heart gives us a vision of an art body in which oxygen and blood are injected by the viewer who changes the pressure with the use of two small pumps placed at the sides. The bubbles and thick liquid running along the PVC tubes alter the colouring.

Other versions of the work are to be found in the collections of Intesa San Paolo, Milan; the Museo del Novecento, Milan; Mambo, Bologna; and Mart, Rovereto.

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibitions: *Luce, movimento & programmazione: kinetische Kunst aus Italien 1958/1968*, travelling exhibition: Ulm, Ulmer Museum, 8 September – 4 November 2001; Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle, 17 November 2001 – 10 February 2002; Gelsenkirchen, Städtisches Museum, 27 February – 14 April 2002; Kiel, Stadtgalerie, 14 June – 11 August 2002; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum, 23 August – 24 November 2002; Klagenfurt, Alpen-Adria Galerie, 11 December 2002 – 7 March 2003; *Gli ambienti del Gruppo T: arte immersiva e interattiva*, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, 14 December 2005 – 1 May 2006

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo 2012, p. 397, no. VAF 673



## GIOVANNI ANCESCHI

(Milan 1939)

*Strutturazione cilindrica virtuale*, 1963/1964

Wood, metal rods, electromechanical animation

45.5 x 60 x 60 cm.

This nine-cylinder version was first seen in 1964 at Miriorama 14 in Ulm. The idea was derived from *Hexacone*, a project he never completed that involved a cube hung from the ceiling from which fell six couples of small black and white striped boats. The variable high speed of the circular motion, activated by six small motors hidden in the central body, caused the appearance and disappearance of some cones. Placing small rods at the base modified the project so that, in the place of cones, we perceive cylinders continuously alternating between dissolution and revelation.

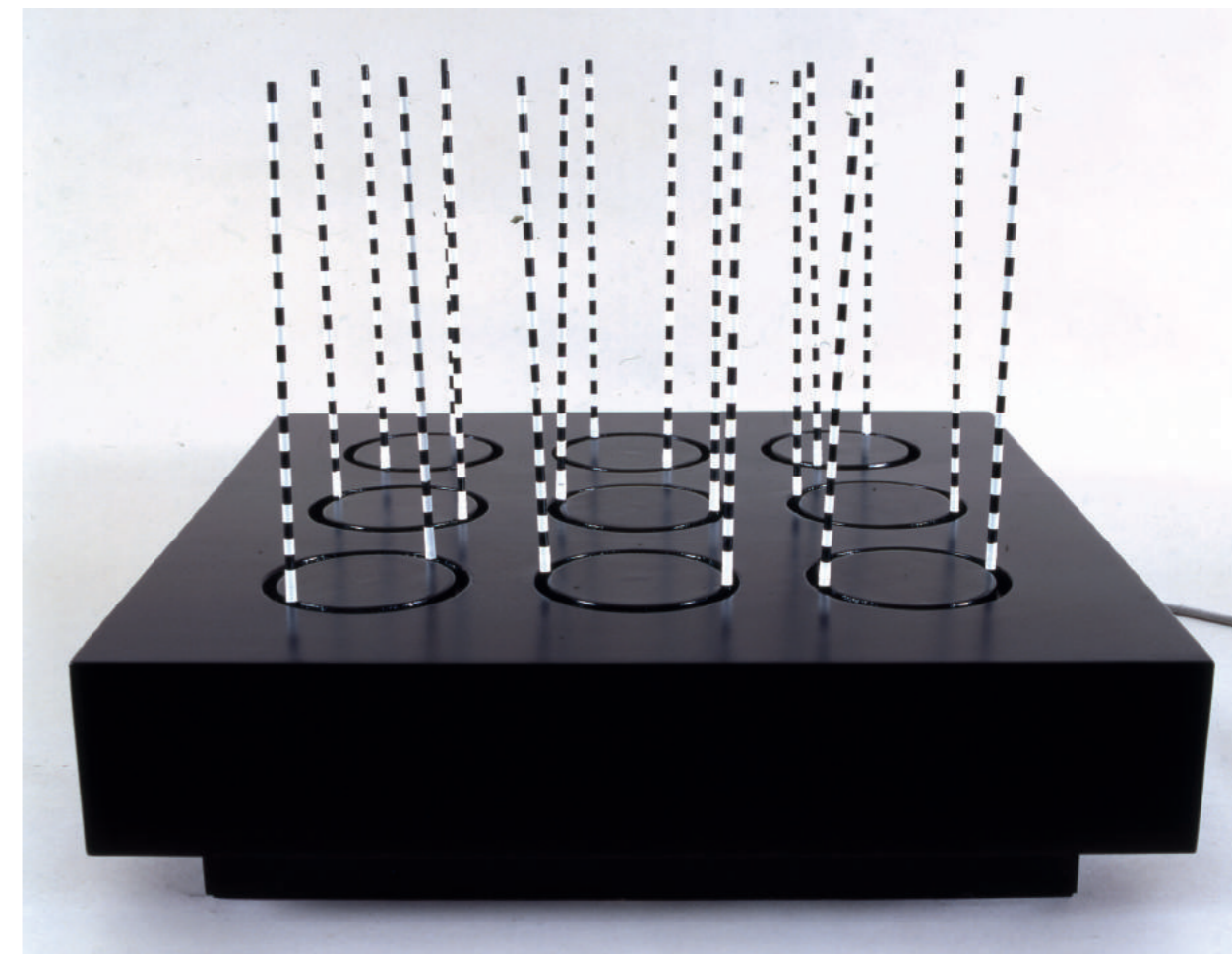
Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibitions: 1964, Miriorama 14, Studio F, Ulm

*Arte Programmata e cinetica in Italia 1958-1968*, exhibition catalogue, Parma, Galleria Niccoli, 2000

*Luce, movimento & programmazione: kinetische Kunst aus Italien 1958/1968*, travelling exhibition: Ulm, Ulmer Museum, 8 September – 4 November 2001; Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle, 17 November 2001 – 10 February 2002; Gelsenkirchen, Städtisches Museum, 27 February – 14 April 2002; Kiel, Stadtgalerie, 14 June – 11 August 2002; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum, 23 August – 24 November 2002; Klagenfurt, Alpen-Adria Galerie, 11 December 2002 – 7 March 2003; *Gruppo T. Miriorama, le opere, i documenti*, P420 Arte Contemporanea, Bologna, 15 May – 26 September 2010

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (edited by), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 2012, p. 397, no. VAF 675





**MARINA APOLLONIO**

(Trieste 1940)

*Dinamica circolare cratere II*, 1968

Nitro on Perspex, rotating mechanism

50 x 50 cm., ø 40 cm.

Daughter of the well-known art historian Umberto Apollonio, even as a young woman Marina followed the precepts of Arte Programmata. She exhibited for the first time in 1965 together with Alviani, Biasi, Colombo, Dadamaino, Mari, and Scheggi. Her *Dinamica circolare* series dates from 1964; the artist, who was part of Gruppo Enne, took part in the fourth edition of Nove Tendenze in Zagreb. Critics and international institutions unanimously recognised the theoretical implications of these works.

The viewer rotates a circular plane painted with alternating black and white stripes. This movement causes an extreme optical and perspectival effect of concentric concave and convex circles. The eye's natural tendency to be drawn "towards the simplest configuration permitted by the sense of vision", in the words of Rudolph Arnheim, is here overturned.

Provenance: Private collection

Exhibitions: *Marina Apollonio. Retrospective Exhibition*, Rovereto, Mart, 10 January – 11 April 2015

Literature: *Marina Apollonio*, 10 A.M. Art, Milan, 2015, p. 143



**ALBERTO BIASI**

(Padua 1937)

*Light Prism*, 1964

Prisms, light, electrical motors, mirrors, and wood

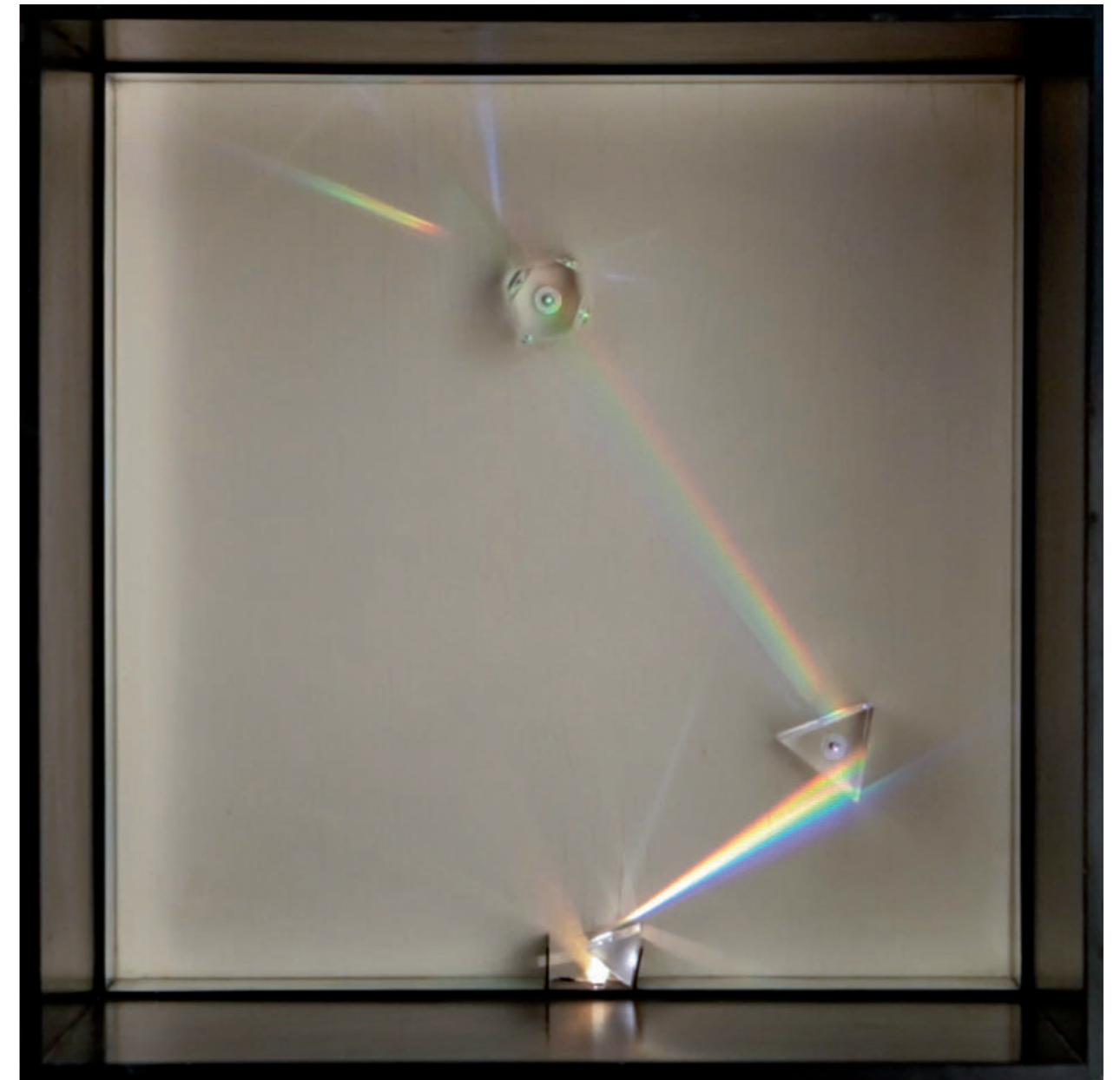
50 x 50 x 50 cm.

In 1960, together with his inseparable friend Manfredo Massironi, Biasi founded Gruppo Enne in Padua, which was also joined by Toni Costa, Ennio Chiggio, and Edoardo Landi. Enzo Mari and Bruno Munari were to join them later. The group came flanked by the Milanese group, Gruppo T (Anceschi, Boriani, Colombo, De Vecchi, and Varisco) in the historic show called by Munari "Arte Programmata", which opened in 1962 in the Olivetti shop in Milan; this was the first stop of the show which was to travel around Europe: Rome, Venice, Trieste, Düsseldorf, and London. This was also the year of the first series of *Light Prism* works, something of an exception in Biasi's output which was otherwise characterised by optical effects rather than real kinetics, and in this case was perhaps determined by the competition with the visual-kinetic researches of the Milanese group. Produced in a limited edition, *Light Prism* in fact makes use of a spotlight that projects a ray of white light which collides with a rotating prism from which in turn, as with a pinball machine, it is bounced back and broken down into the colours of the spectrum of the other prisms placed on a mirroring screen. The *Light Prism* works were made on different scales and even became, in 1969, genuine synaesthetic environments.

Provenance: Marco Meneguzzo

Exhibitions: *Alberto Biasi. Ricerca dal Gruppo Enne all'ottico-cinetico*, Galleria Allegra Ravizza, Milan 2011; *Alberto Biasi, Opera dal 1959 al 2013*, Galleria Allegra Ravizza, Lugano 2013

Literature: Marco Meneguzzo, *Alberto Biasi*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 2013, p. 136



**DAVIDE BORIANI**

(Milan 1936)

*Superficie magnetica modulare n. 1, 1959-1960*

magnets, electric motor, aluminium, glass

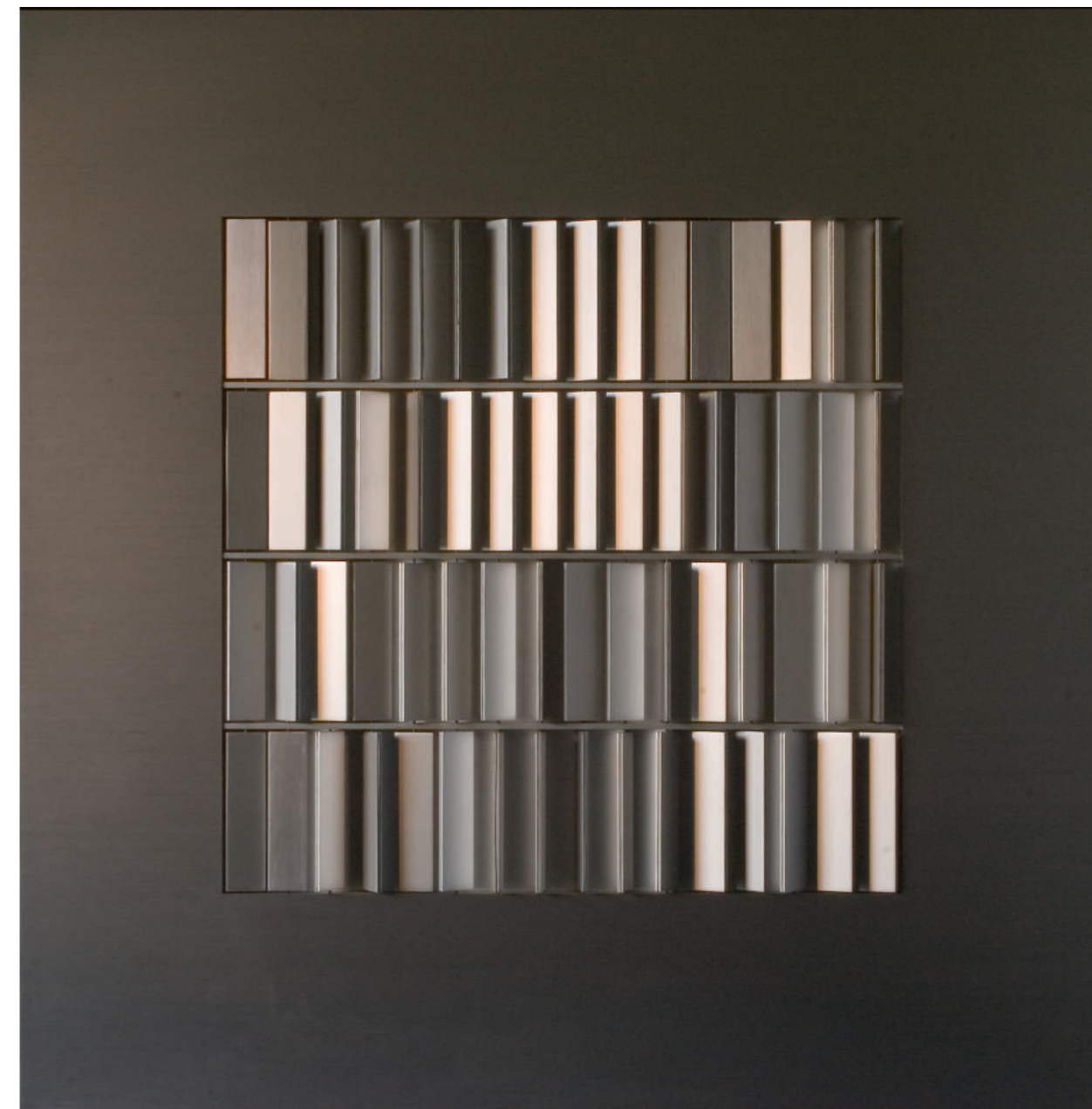
90 x 90 x 18 cm.

A fellow student of Anceschi, Colombo, De Vecchi, and Varisco at the Brera Academy, in 1959, together with his colleagues from Gruppo T, he founded and, from 1960 to 1964, took part in Gruppo T's various group and solo shows titled Miriorama (his solo show, Miriorama 2 was in 1960). Of all the various ideas being pursued at the time in Italy and abroad, Gruppo T shared an aversion to the attention-seeking and isolation of artists as well as their role in the art market. Instead they proposed group work and making works together. The involvement of the public as a vehicle for randomly initiating infinite compositional variations, and an interest in the theories of Max Bense and François Molnar about informational theories, are at the heart of *Superficie magnetica modulare* where, even though there might be an apparent reminiscence of Alvarò's mirroring and modular patterns, the movement, activated by the viewer, is in fact physical and not optical: the metallic segments are operated by a small motor placed at the back that makes them tilt longitudinally. This creates an effect of surprise and alienation in the viewers.

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibition: Gregor Jansen, Peter Weibel (curators), *FASTER! BIGGER! BETTER! Signetwerke der Sammlungen*, ZKM Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, 24 September 2006 – 7 January 2007

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana 2012, p. 436, no. VAF 1151



**DAVIDE BORIANI**

(Milan 1936)

*Ipercubo*, 1961/1965

5 cubs of printed methyl methacrylate, 4 motors, 2 lamps

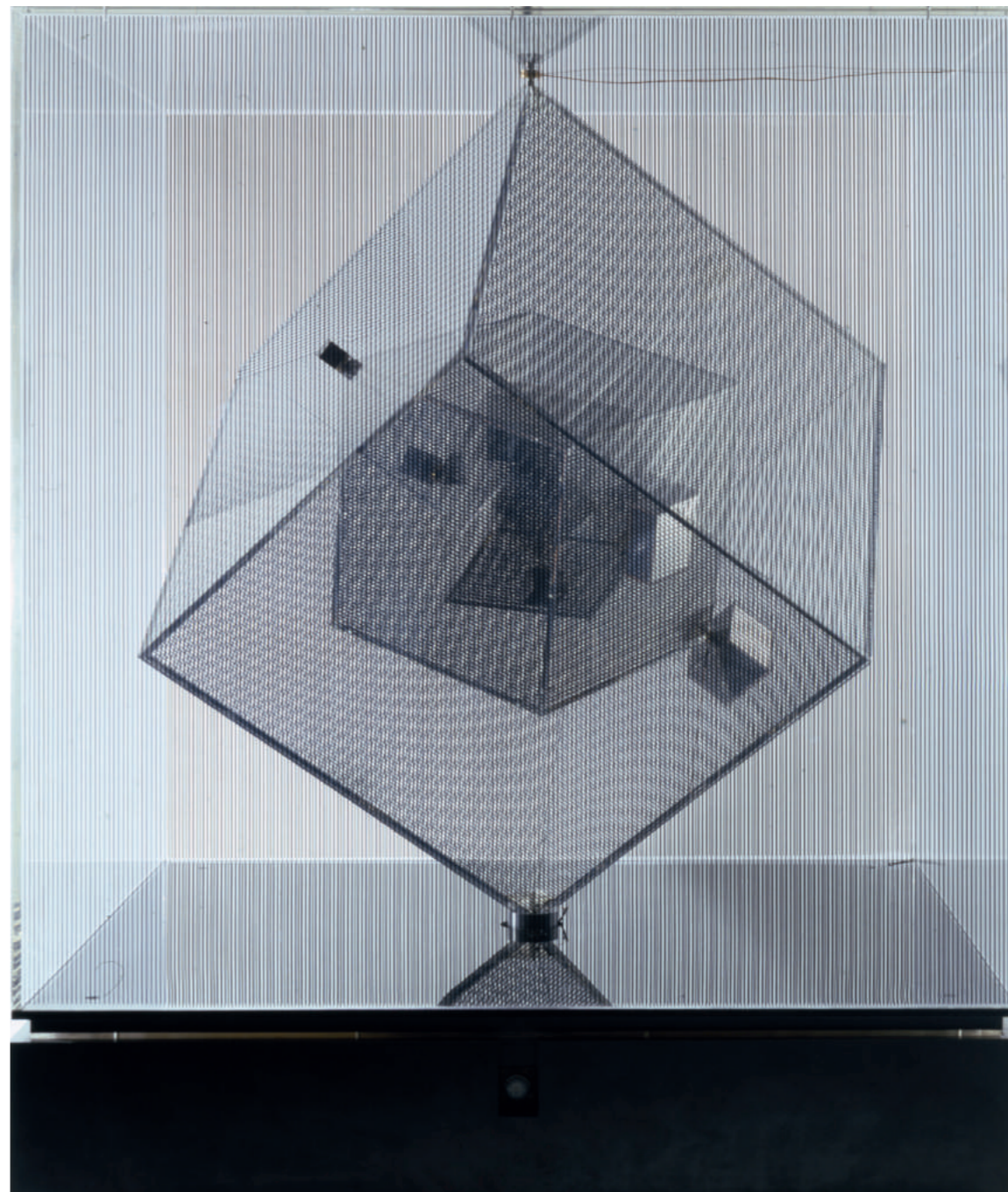
87,5 x 87,5 x 87,5 cm.

Five concentric cubes, placed in a series ranging from the smallest to the largest, rotate around the same axis. As the artist has explained, "The variations progressively add up because of the increase in the dynamic values of the structure, from the outside towards the inside and, with the viewers as their channel, they pass beyond the threshold of perceptible and memorisable information". The speed, inversely proportional to the size of the cubes, and the direction of the movement are activated by switches, consistent with the randomly programmed ideas of Arte Programmata. The first *Ipercubo* dates from 1961. It was followed by variants of different sizes and using different materials (a steel conduit, mirroring metal and a luminous central cube, aluminium sheeting, transparent methacrylate, and silkscreened lattice in black or four colours).

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibitions: *Gli ambienti del Gruppo T: arte immersiva e interattiva*, Galleria Nazionale Arte Moderna, Rome, 14 December 2005 – 1 May 2006; *Programmare l'Arte*, Museo del 900, Milan, 2012; *Programmare l'Arte*, Negozio FAI-Olivetti, Venice 2012

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 2012, p. 436, no. VAF 1165



**DAVIDE BORIANI**

(Milan 1936)

*Ph-scope*, 1964

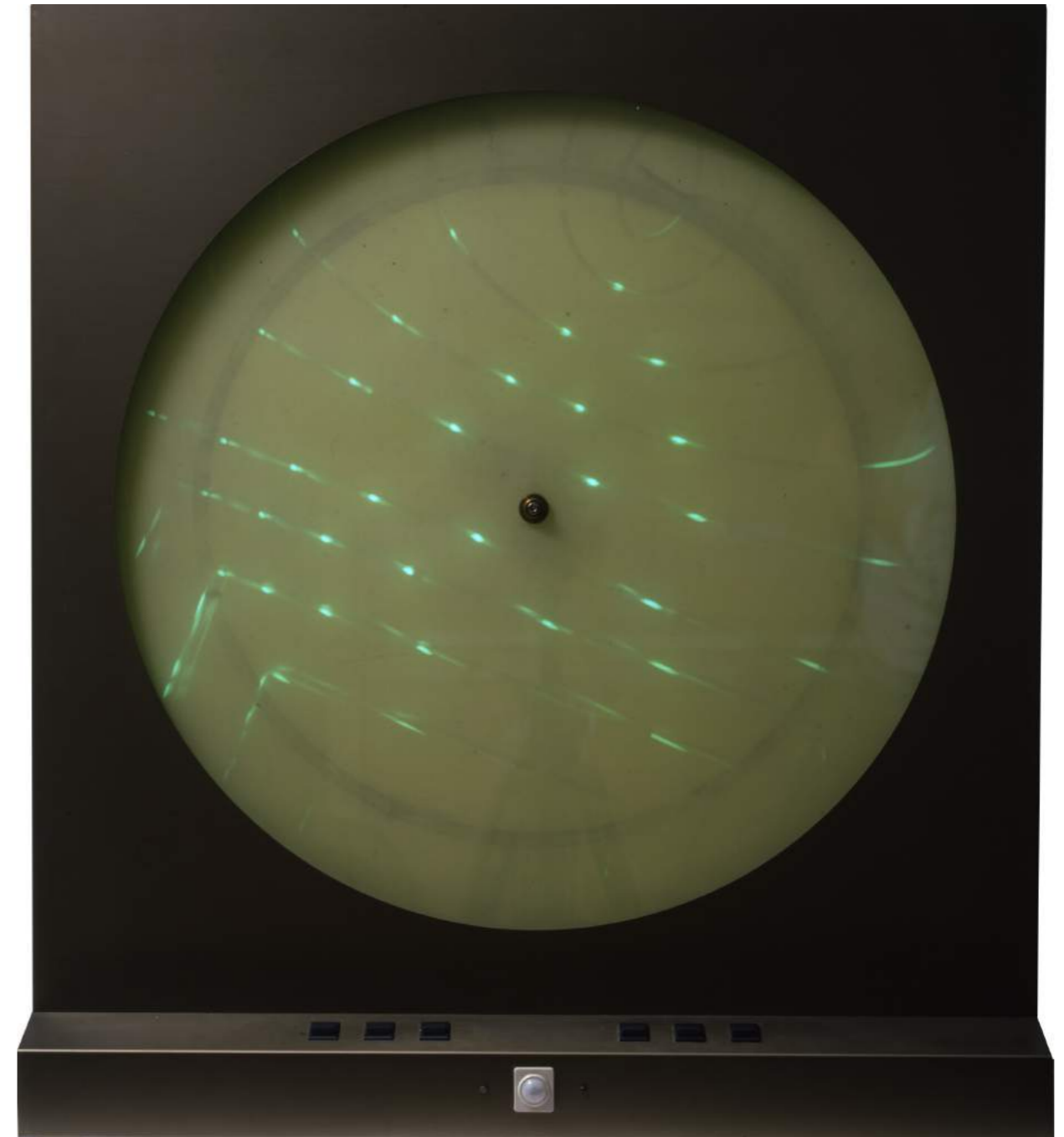
UV lamp, steel, electric motor, aluminium, glass

94 x 84 x 36 cm.

This work, conceived for the Milanese showing of "Arte Programmata" in 1962, was made in eight successive and different versions. Spindly threads of light draw continuously moving structures on a screen to give an effect similar to fireworks. This is obtained by projecting UV light that, by penetrating the holes of a rotating disc, acts on the fluorescent surface of a final, dark screen. The persistence of the image on the photosensitive support creates the effect of the luminous dot being dragged across it. The compositions change according to the sequences combined by the viewers as they activate the three switches.

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana 2012, p. 437, no. VAF 1475



**DAVIDE BORIANI**

(Milan 1936)

*Ph-scope*, 1964/1966

UV lamp, steel, electric motor, aluminium, canvas

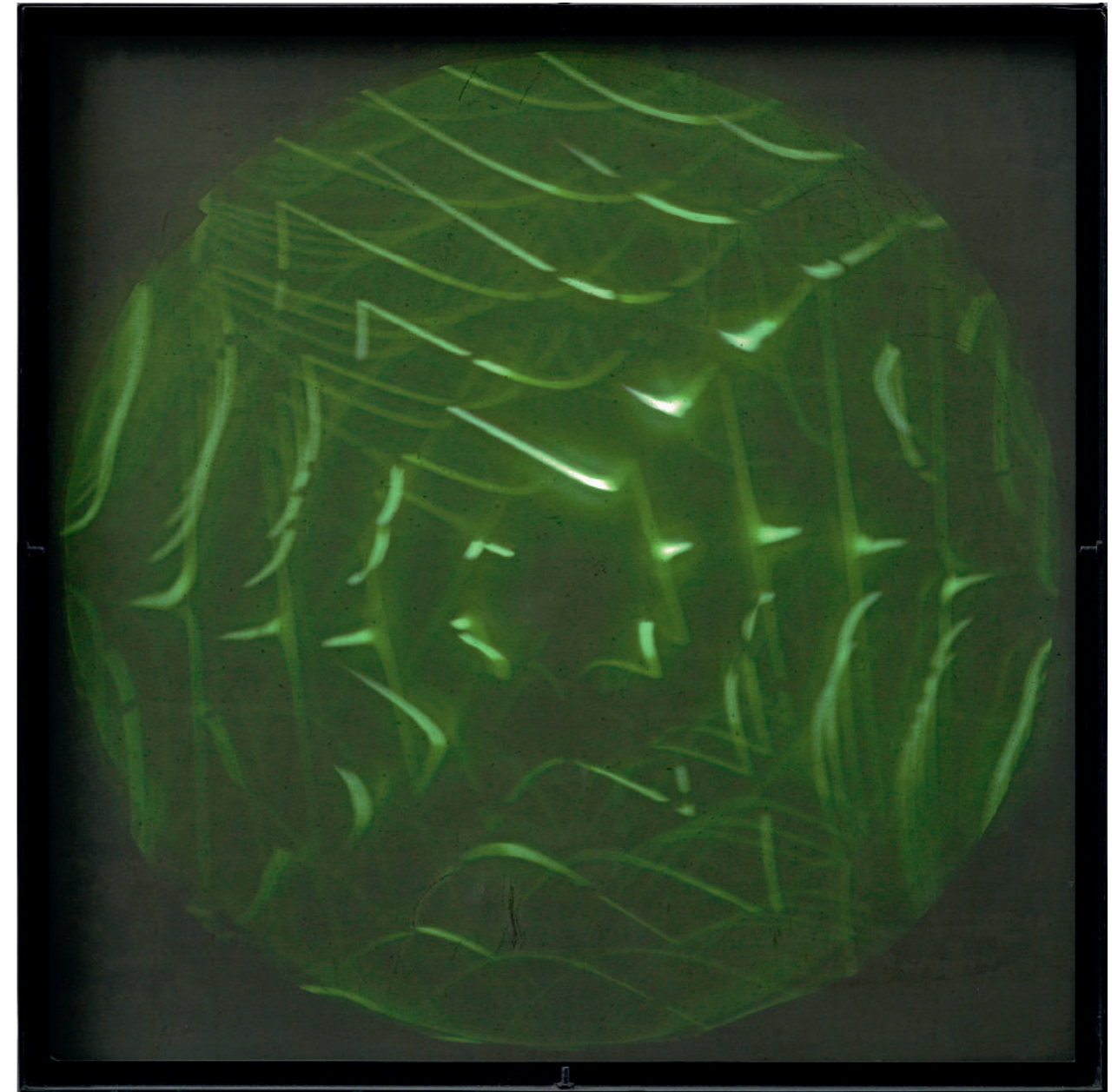
40 x 40 x 20 cm.

Similarly to the previous work by Boriani, this variant of *Phi-scope* is based on the use of UV light.

Provenance: Private collection

Exhibition: Alessandro Pasotti, Fabrizio Padovani (curators), *Gruppo T. Miriorama, le opere, i documenti*, P420 Arte Contemporanea, Bologna, 15 May – 26 September 2010

Literature: Alessandro Pasotti, Fabrizio Padovani (editors), *Gruppo T. Miriorama, le opere, i documenti*, exhibition catalogue, Bologna, P420 Arte Contemporanea, p. 56



## GIANNI COLOMBO

(Milan 1937 – Melzo 1993)

*Strutturazione pulsante*, 1959

Polystyrene and wood with electric motor

50 x 50 cm.

Signed and dated on the back Gianni Colombo 59.

Authentication by Archivio Gianni Colombo n. 1134 (22/07/2009).

The work is recorded at the 1964 Venice Biennale. This was one of the numerous shows where it was exhibited as an exemplar of the artist's technological anthropocentrism. Already in 1960, at the Miriorama 4 show, Gianni Colombo was attempting to "Establish height differences on the picture-object plane so that the viewer's eye, when running over the surface, would be forced to rise up and descend from dense areas and to enter and exit from cavities, in order to investigate the aspects that the natural variations of light on the picture". The monochrome paving of white polystyrene bricks in a wooden frame was thrown into disorder due to the raising and lowering of the individual blocks, like pulmonary alveoli when they are inflated or compressed by breathing. This was one of the mechanisms that Gianni Colombo, a member of Gruppo T (Tempo) in Milan, wanted to contribute to the transformation of spectators into technicians; in other words, according to the artist, "by directing them towards an intellectual understanding of the concepts on which artistic invention is based, and the rules and methods that lie behind the invention itself". The apparently calm white monochrome surface is, in fact, also disturbed and moved by the shadow zones in the spaces between the individual destabilising units. This was almost a radicalisation of the experiments being undertaken by certain exponents of Spatialism on monochrome surfaces, which they animated by shaping them. In fact, together with the works by Castellani, Bonalumi, and Manzoni, as well as those by Anceschi and other artists, *Strutturazione pulsante* was first seen in 1959 at the Galleria Azimut in Milan. Even though quite small, it is part of the artist's aim of overturning architecture as a pure abstract construction with its illusory certainties, and of making works that oblige the viewers to become aware of themselves as a perceptive/cognitive barycentre. A part of this aim was *Spazio elastico* which won the artist the painting prize at the 1968 Venice Biennale.

Rubber stamp on the back: Milano, Arte Struktura, 1988

Exhibitions: *31 operatori cromoplastici inoggettivi: percettivo minimale*, curated by Carlo Belloli, Milan, Arte Struktura, 1988

III Biennale d'arte contemporanea at the Milan fair, *Arte costruita: incidenza italiana*, curated by the artist at Arte Struktura; it then entered the Fondazione Gian Franco Bossani collection, 1989 ; *Gianni Colombo. Opere dal 1959 al 1989*, 07 October – 22 November 2010, Studio Gariboldi, Milano



**GABRIELE DE VECCHI**

(Milan 1938 – 2011)

*Luce/Diaframma/Movimento*, 1966

various materials, electric motor

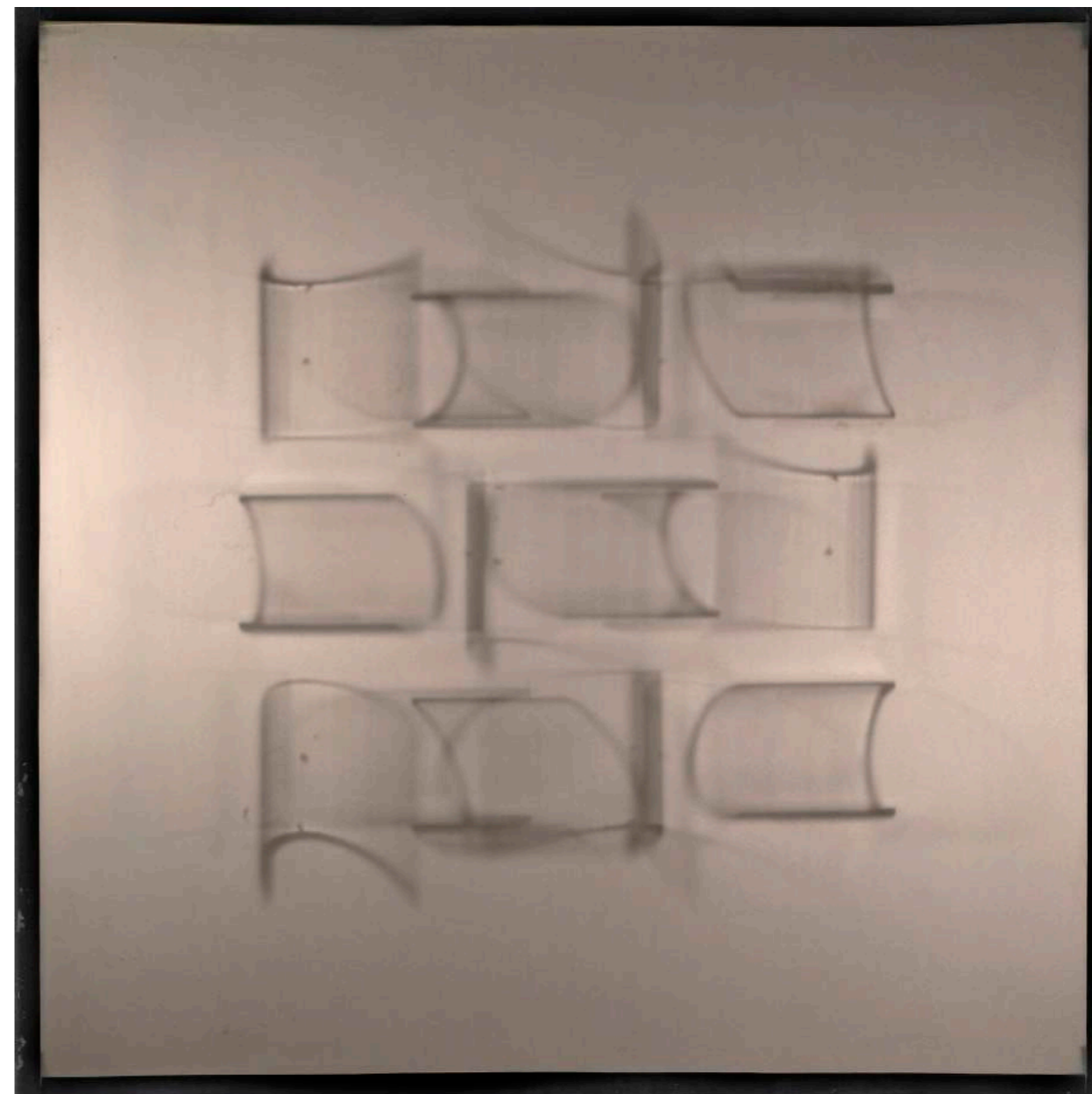
51 x 50 x 30 cm.

Prototype for the Centro Duchamp Gavina.

His first solo show, Miriorama 3, took place at the Galleria Pater in 1960. Other shows with Gruppo T continued until 1967. He too was one of the artists in the "Arte Programmata" show in which the group joined together with the Nouvelles Tendences movement (1963-69); they also exhibited at the 1964 Venice Biennale. In 1966 he created for the Van Abbe museum in Eindhoven an immersive work, *Ambiente a ombre portate*, for the show "Arte-Luce-Arte", organised by the Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Rome. The disorientation created by the ambiguous relationship between real and virtual images is the present work's theme. The rotating movement of the light struck the solid bodies applied to the back of the Plexiglas diaphragm. The front, covered with canvas, hides the mechanical part and creates the stereometric and metamorphic volumes of the rotating concave and convex shapes. The work is a particularly precious exemplar, having been specifically conceived for the Centro Duchamp, founded in San Lazzaro in 1967 by Dino Gavina.

Provenance: Private collection

Exhibition: Luca Massimo Barbero (curator), Azimut/h. Continuità e nuovo, 20 September – 19 January 2014, Guggenheim, Venice





**GABRIELE DE VECCHI**

(Milan 1938 – 2011)

*Strutturazione triangolare*, 1963

steel, Plexiglas, electric motor

50 x 50 x 37 cm.

A mirroring surface angled at 90° reflects a triangle that rotates around a central pivot. As it rotates, the real triangle is mirrored and creates three virtual triangles. "In the syntax between what is real and what is virtual, there is obtained a plane that rotates and modifies a cubic, three-dimensional space".

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibitions: XXXII Biennale Internazionale d'Arte, Venice, 20 June – 18 October 1964 ; *Arte Programmata e cinetica in Italia 1958-1968*, Parma, Galleria Niccoli, 2000 ; *FASTER! BIGGER! BETTER! Signetwerke der Sammlungen*, ZKM Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, 24 September 2006 – 7 January 2007

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (curator), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 2012, p. 484, no. VAF 1667



**GABRIELE DE VECCHI**

(Milan 1938 – 2011)

*Strutturazione a cerchi/Deformazione Kerki*, 1964/1965

white-painted aluminium, Plexiglas, electric motor

42.5 x 42.5 x 11 cm.

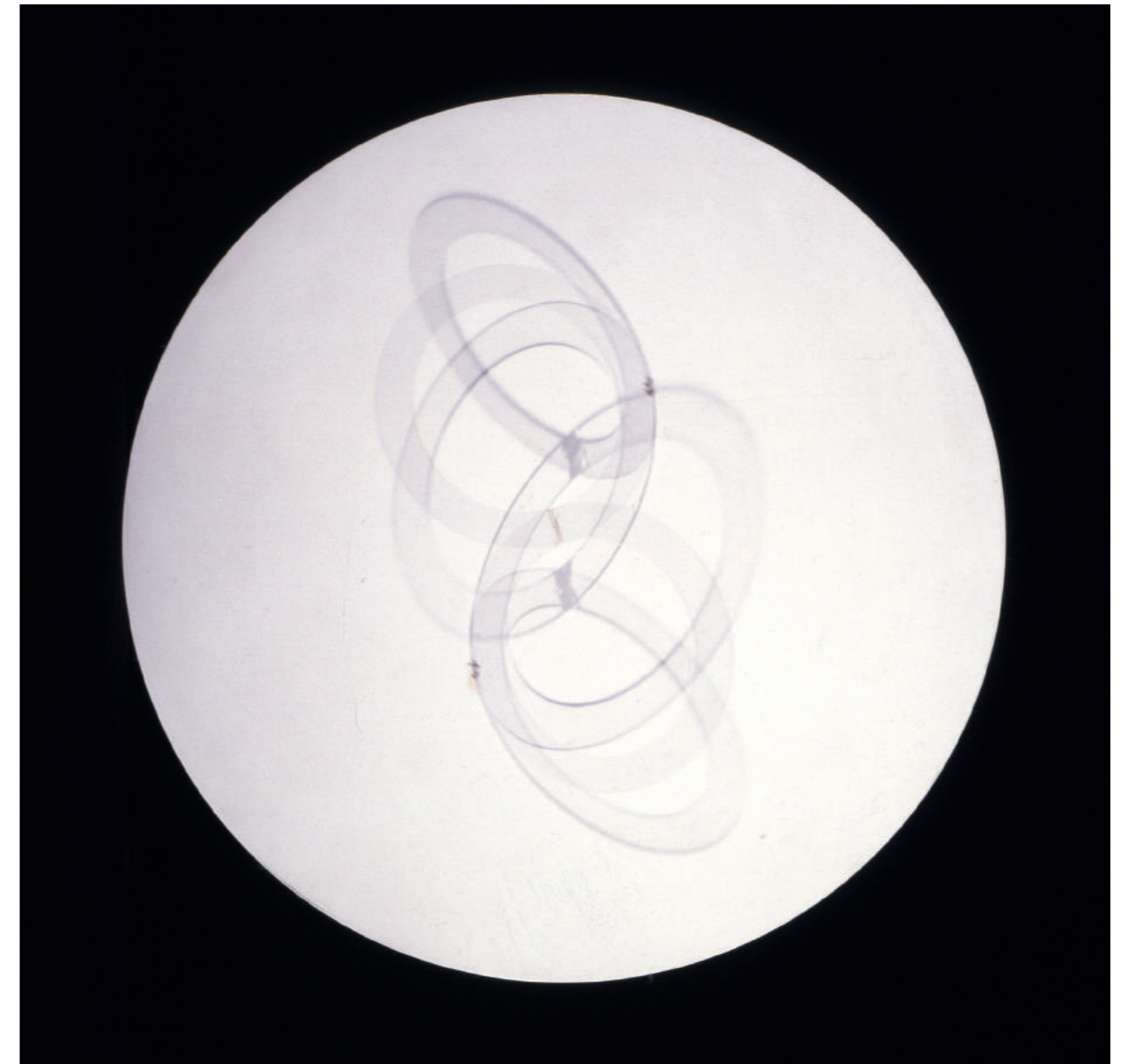
This work is part of the artist's output from the 1960s characterised by the projection of the shadows of geometrical elements onto a plane. In this case, two Plexiglas circles move against a white background to create a continuous interweaving of real circles and virtual ellipses.

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibitions: *Gabriele De Vecchi*, Galleria Vismara, Milan, 1966

*Luce, movimento & programmazione: kinetische Kunst aus Italien 1958/1968*, travelling exhibition: Ulm, Ulmer Museum, 8 September – 4 November 2001; Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle, 17 November 2001 – 10 February 2002; Gelsenkirchen, Städtisches Museum, 27 February – 14 April 2002; Kiel, Stadtgalerie, 14 June – 11 August 2002; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum, 23 August – 24 November 2002; Klagenfurt, Alpen-Adria Galerie, 11 December 2002 – 7 March 2003.; *Viaggio in Italia. Italianaische Kunst 1960 bis 1990 aus der Sammlung der Neuen Galerie Graz und der VAF-Stiftung*, Neue Galerie Graz, Frankfurt am Main, 14 June 2008 – 25 January 2009

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (edited by), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo 2012, p. 485, no. VAF 746



## EDOARDO LANDI

[San Felice sul Panaro, Modena 1937]

*Cineriflessione sferica variabile*, 1967-1969

chrome-plated steel and printed cardboard

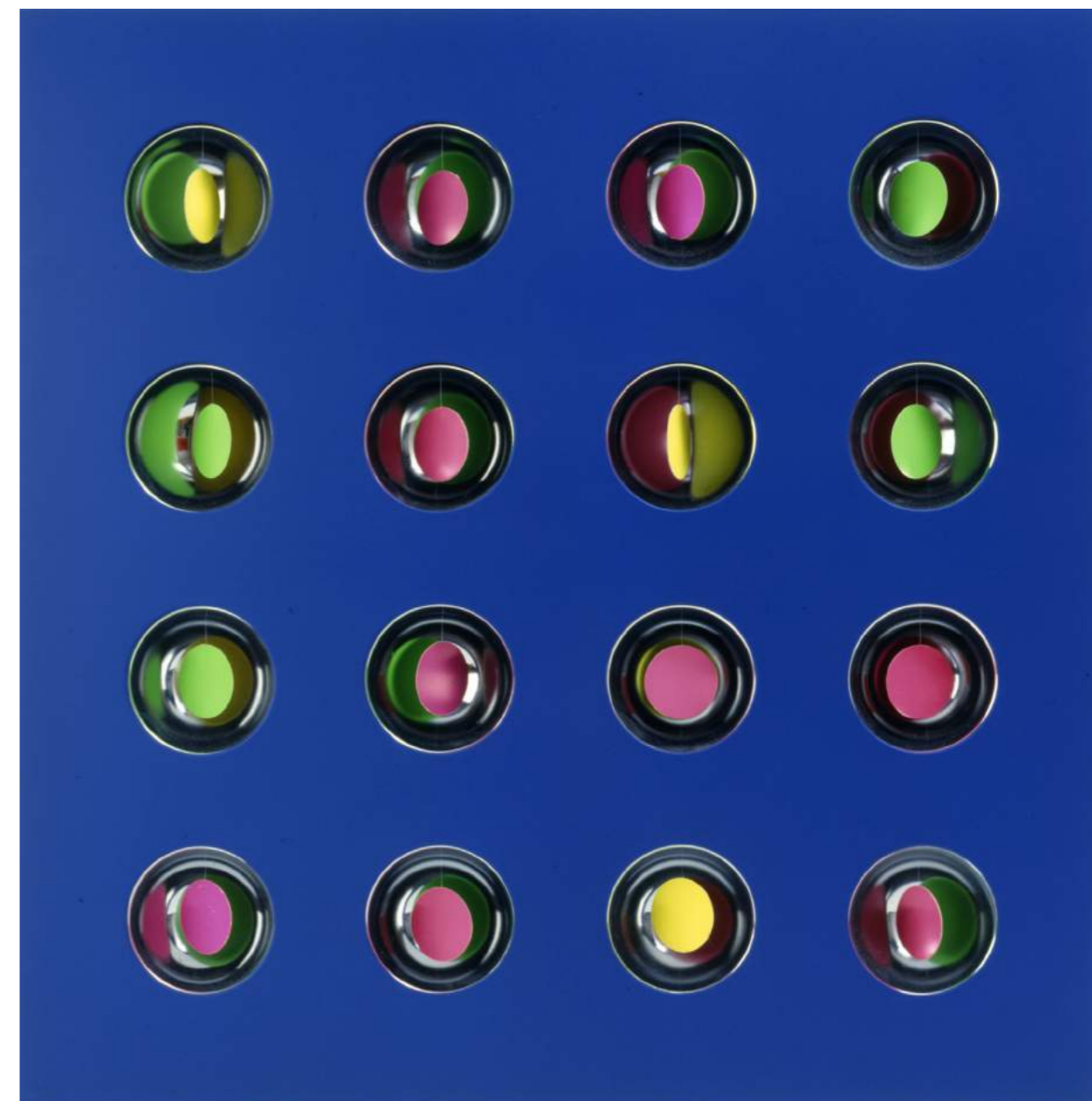
74 x 73 x 9 cm.

After his studies in industrial design at high school, and having obtained a degree in architecture from Venice University, he joined Gruppo Enne with which he had in common a passion for provocation and for opposition to the art market system. He took part in the exhibitions "Nessuno è invitato a intervenire" in 1960 and in 1962 in "Arte Programmata" at the Olivetti shop in Milan; in 1961 became part of Nouvelles Tendences. After the dissolution of Gruppo Enne in 1965, the result of the difficulty in selling works signed by the whole group, he founded Gruppo ENNE 65, together with Masironi and Biasi. Dating from this period are his multi-sensorial and immersive works, the interpretation of which varies according to the spatial relationship with the viewer. This work consists of an abstract geometrical plane, a blue square in which sixteen glass spheres contain double-faced cardboard discs that, when reflected on the concave part of the sphere, give rise to an optical effect that changes according to the position of the spectator. By moving, the spectator can observe the iridescent reflections of the discs.

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibitions: *Italianische Kunst des XX. Jahrhunderts*, travelling exhibition: Bochum, Städtische Kunstgalerie, 5 – 30 May 1968; Berlin, Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Kunst, 8 – 29 June 1968; Marco Meneguzzo (curator), *Arte Programmata e cinetica in Italia 1958-1968*, Parma, Galleria Niccoli, 2000,

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo 2012, p. 594, no. VAF 972



## ENZO MARI

[Novara 1932]

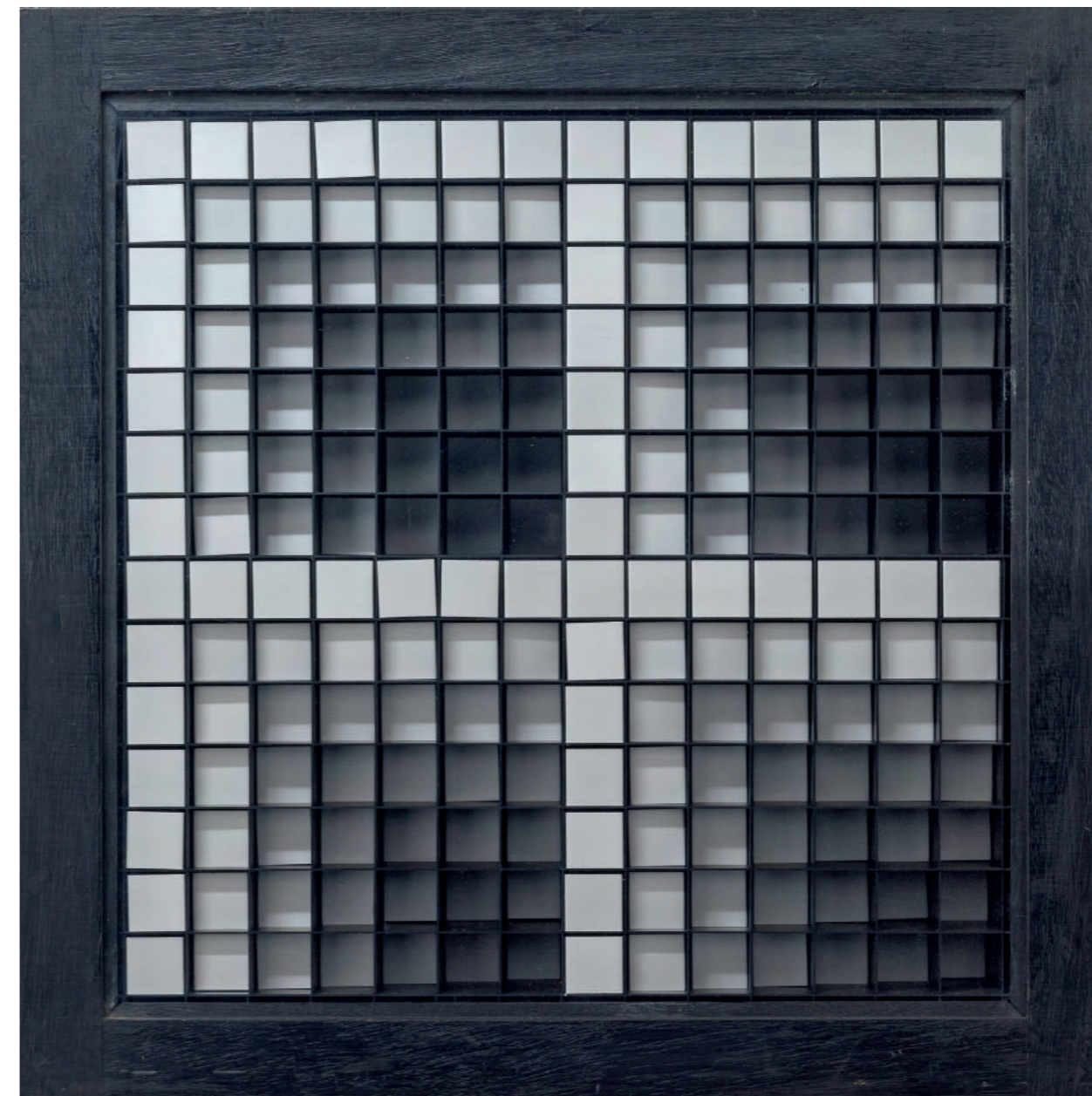
*Struttura n. 1065*, 1965

natural and black anodized aluminium

48 x 48 x 10 cm.

He enrolled at the Brera Academy but did not graduate, even though he had written a polemical thesis "on the various ways of hammering in a nail". In the 1950s he became a good friend of with Bruno Munari and Max Bill who wrote a small monograph about him. In 1963 he became the coordinator of the Italian sector of Nouvelles Tendences and, in 1965, he organised its third show. In 1964 he was invited to take part in the Venice Biennale. In Milan and Rome he taught "planning methodology", and his art and design became focussed on the crafted production of industrial objects and on experiments with the rhythmic programming of luminous structures. In 1968 he refused to take further part in official group shows; he explained his position in a tract, *Un rifiuto possibile*, to which Castellani, Massironi, and Boriani associated themselves. His art is based on an ascetic vision of form from which "there must be eliminated what is superfluous in order to make it pure". This is exemplified by this work whose very title, *Struttura*, reveals the essential facts about this construction, one based on modular units that are three-dimensionally distributed on various planes, which by way of depressions and reliefs animate the surface.

Provenance: Artist's family



**MANFREDO MASSIRONI**

(Padua 1937)

*Struttura*, 1960

Wood, strings, Plexiglas

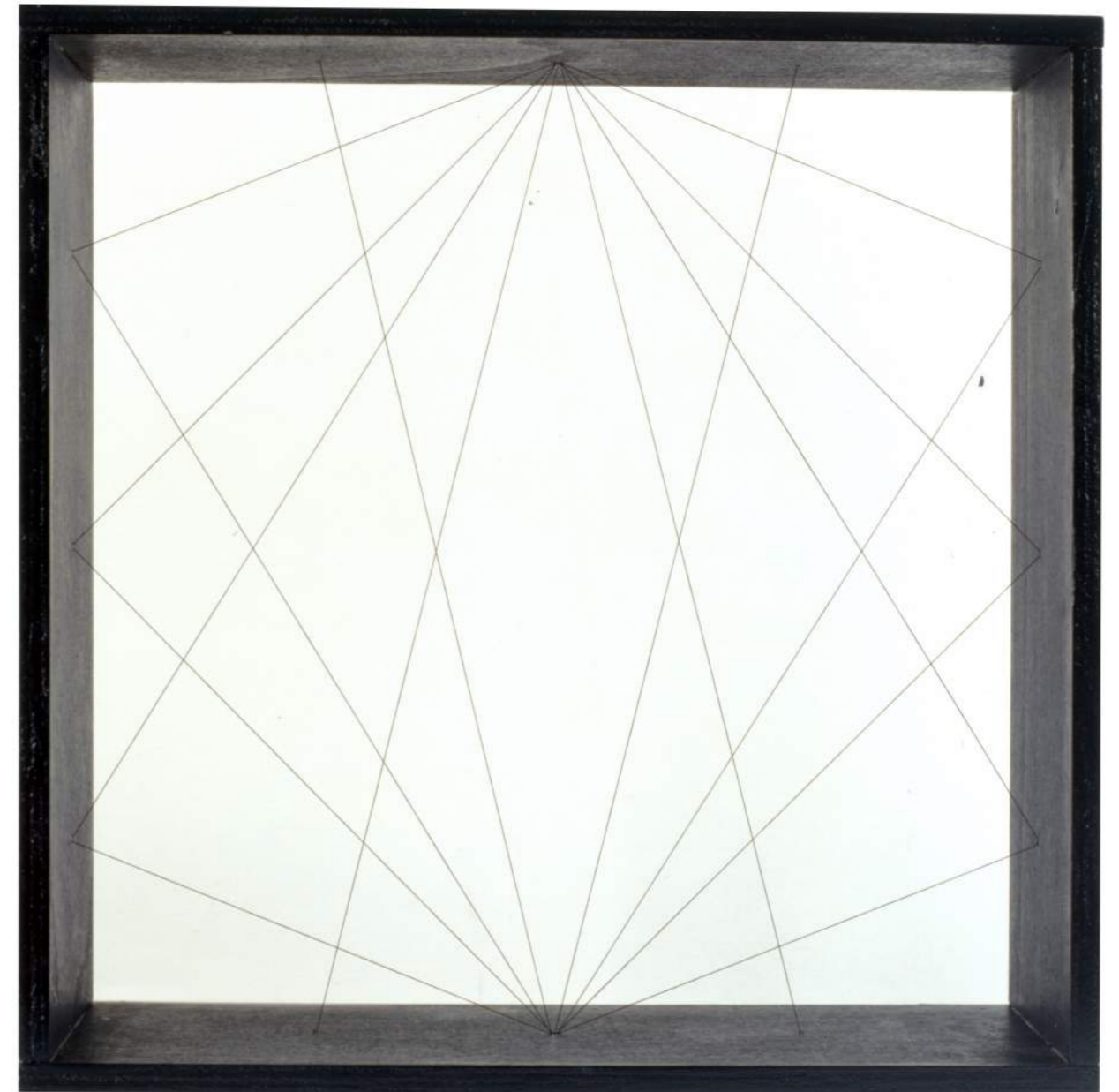
50 x 50 x 15 cm.

He studied architecture at Venice University and was one of the theoreticians of Gruppo Enne. The work he exhibited at the 1959 San Fedele Prize show in Milan caused a national outcry: was it possible to consider a piece of corrugated cardboard as a work of art only because its grooves caused an optical effect? An educational aim permeates all his output and his ideas are concretised in works of art that are wedded to technique. This *Struttura*, a logical consequence of this way of thinking about art, reveals itself in all its simplicity as a visual demonstration of the geometrical relationship between the triangular areas defined by stretched strings.

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibitions: Volker W. Feierabend, Marco Meneguzzo (curators), *Luce, movimento & programmazione: kinetische Kunst aus Italien 1958/1968*, travelling exhibition: Ulm, Ulmer Museum, 8 September – 4 November, Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle, 17 November 2001 – 10 February 2002; Gelsenkirchen, Städtisches Museum, 27 February – 14 April 2002; Kiel, Stadtgalerie, 14 June – 11 August 2002; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum, 23 August – 24 November 2002; Klagenfurt, Alpen-Adria Galerie, 11 December 2002 – 7 March 2003.

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 2012, p. 616, no. VAF 814



## BRUNO MUNARI

(Milan 1907 – 1998)

*Polariscop*, 1966

various materials, electric motor

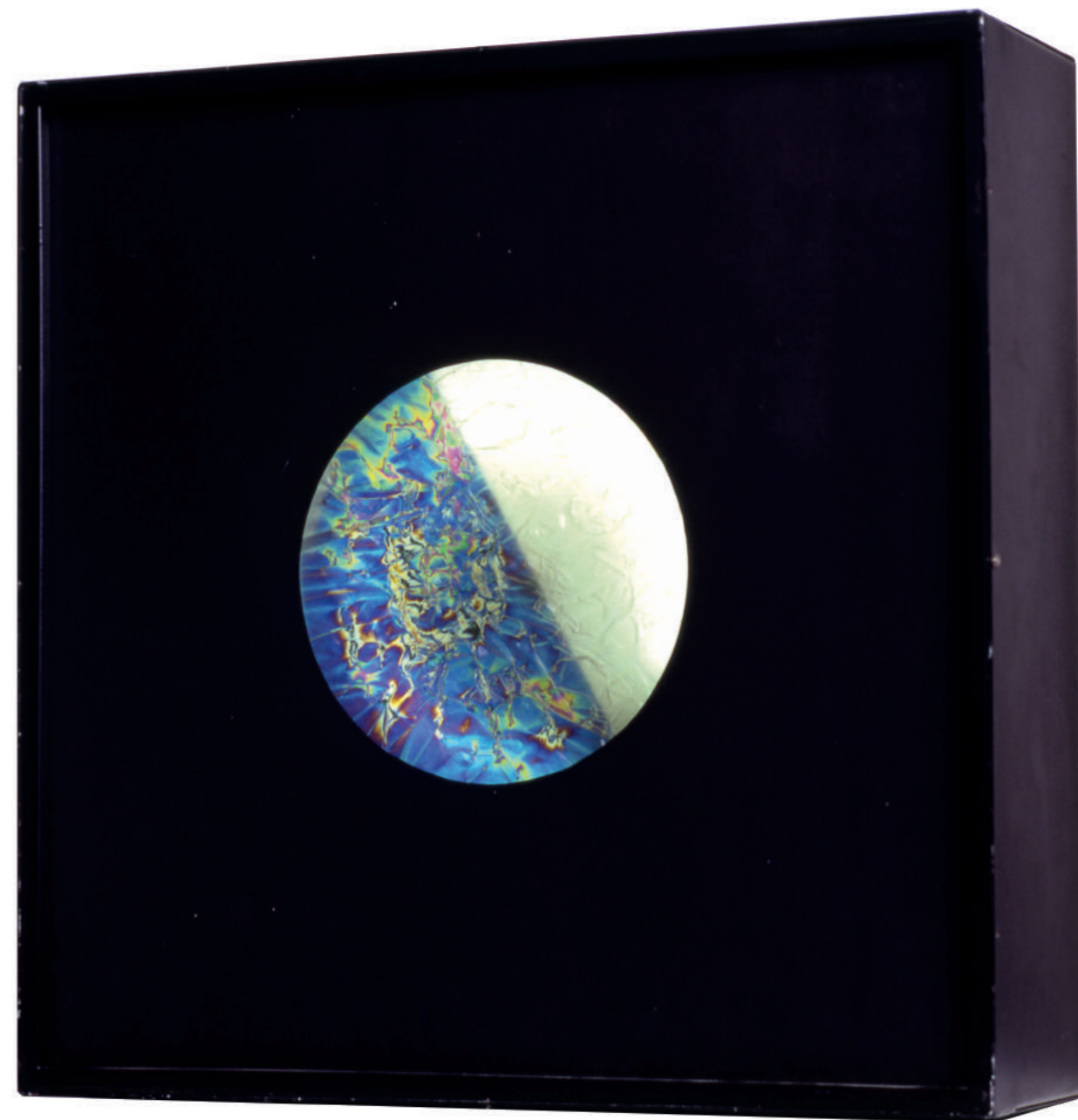
50 x 50 x 15 cm.

Munari's activity stretched over a lengthy period of time and included the influence of such avant-gardes of the 1920s and 1930s as Constructivism, Surrealism, Dadaism, and abstract Rationalism. His personal style, marked by his preference for structural simplification and a refusal of decoration, was significantly influenced by the Bauhaus, from which he inherited the planning aim to be found at the heart of his all-inclusive art, something that he also expressed through his use of industrial materials. In 1948 he became a protagonist of the Concrete Art movement (M.A.C.), and became its president in 1953. His work is marked by a mocking approach aimed at overturning market values, and by his basic ideology of an art for all. His output includes pure art (for example, his "useless machines"), design, graphics (his works for Campari), and publishing (in 1974 he was awarded the Andersen prize). His Arte Programmata works (*Sequenze*, *Positivi negativi*, *Proiezioni a luce diretta*, and *Proiezioni*) date from the 1950s and concretised what Lazlo Moholy Nagy had predicted in *Painting, Photography, and Design*, 1925, in which he stated, "Future development will attribute great importance to the projection of kinetic compositions". In 1962 Munari and Giorgio Soavi inspired the exhibition "Arte Programmata" held in the Olivetti shop in Milan. In the 1961 "Almanacco Bompiani" he declared, "Painting can even disappear, as long as art continues to exist". His *Polariscop n. 4, 5, 6, and 7* were shown at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale in 1966; they continued his search for an immaterial and dynamic art, something he obtained through the use of humble materials, such as in the case of this work from 1966. It consists of a box in which a colourless material is placed on a Polaroid sheet; a second semicircular filter rotates in such a way that you can see half of the colours, which vary according to the light, while the other half remains indistinctly opaque. The viewer, by turning on the light, helps to vary the colours.

Provenance: V.A.F Collection, Frankfurt

Exhibitions: *Luce, movimento & programmazione: kinetische Kunst aus Italien 1958/1968*, travelling exhibition: Ulm, Ulmer Museum, 8 September – 4 November, Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle, 17 November 2001 – 10 February 2002; Gelsenkirchen, Städtisches Museum, 27 February – 14 April 2002; Kiel, Stadtgalerie, 14 June – 11 August 2002; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum, 23 August – 24 November 2002; Klagenfurt, Alpen-Adria Galerie, 11 December 2002 – 7 March 2003; *Un secolo d'arte italiana: lo sguardo del collezionista. Opere dalla Fondazione VAF, MART, Rovereto*, 2 July – 20 November 2005; *Bruno Munari*, Rotonda della Besana, Milan, 2007; *Bruno Munari*, Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome, 2008;

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 2012, p. 436, no. VAF 83



**GRAZIA VARISCO**

(Milan 1937)

*Tavola magnetica a elementi lineari 5B 5N*, 1959

Magnetic board, magnets, 10 wooden elements

45 x 43 cm.

A fellow student, colleague, and friend of Anceschi, Boriani, Colombo, and De Vecchi, whom she got to know in 1960 when she became part of Gruppo T. In the same year she took part in *Miriorama 6*, held at the Galleria Pater, and exhibited for the first time two magnetic boards similar to this *Tavola magnetica*, where elementary geometric forms can be freely shifted and applied by the viewer. Her career in the 1960s included many shows as well as collaboration as a graphics consultant for "Rinascente" and "Abitare". At the end of the 1960s she travelled to the United States where for a year she experienced the American art situation. Her works are to be seen at MoMA (New York), the Ritter Museum, (Waldenbuck) and at the Museum of Modern Art in Toyama (Japan).

Provenance: V.A.F. collection, Frankfurt

Exhibition: *Annicinquanta. La nascita della creatività italiana*, Palazzo Reale, Milan, 4 March – 3 July 2005

Literature: Daniela Ferrari (editor), *VAF Stiftung. La collezione*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 2012, p. 709, no. VAF 890





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