

## Bruno Munari

### *Ognuno vede ciò che sa (Everyone sees what they know)*

kaufmann repetto is pleased to announce *Ognuno vede ciò che sa (Everyone sees what they know)*, an exhibition of works by Bruno Munari curated by Alberto Salvadori. The show has been realized in collaboration with Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, who organized the first comprehensive exhibition of the artist's works in the United States this May 2018.

Bruno Munari (1907-1998) was a versatile character in 20th century art, a man who created a genuine idea of an alternative reality over the course of his career. He is part of that narrow handful of key-figures consistently out of sync with the various movements and manifestos of his time; his strong sense of self-irony, a distinctive element of his personality and art, has always shielded him from belonging to any singular group or artistic movement. A leading graphic designer and designer of objects, an artist, an inventor, and a pedagogist; Munari has constantly been in dialogue with myriad artistic and technical languages, representing, in many ways, one of the few minds with a truly Leonardo-esque outlook that we have come to recognize in the recent history of art. It is only throughout certain dichotomies - geometry and refined spirit, imagination and method, rigor and irony - that we may enter Munari's world, an artist who grew up in the period of avant-gardes and came into contact with many of them in an interstitial manner.

The year 1962 represents a key moment for Munari, when he staged the exhibition *Arte programmata. Arte cinetica. Opere moltiplicate. Opera Aperta (Programmed Art. Kinetic Art. Multiplied Works. Open Work)* for Olivetti, then one of the most innovative companies on the planet, in their Milanese showroom inside the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele. 'Arte programmata' ('Programmed Art') is Bruno Munari's own linguistic invention that defines works in which pre-determined movement is the constitutive element of the work itself, and as such is programmed, not random: the artwork thus becomes a visual subject/object, designed to produce a particular gestalt experience. A part of the title introduces an extremely important concept: that of the 'open work', initially proposed by Umberto Eco in his book of the same name. This text constituted a basic theoretical reference to expand our understanding of connections between the time of perception, and the time of experience with art. Simultaneously, it introduces us to the acts of conscientious freedom that liberate the work and the spectator from themselves and activates a series of inexhaustible relationships that exist outside of a predetermined form or an internal organization of interpretation.

It is around this specific aspect of Munari's work that the exhibition titled *Ognuno vede ciò che sa (Everyone sees what they know)*, a quote by Munari himself, unfolds. By approaching the medium, which is at once experimental, technological and artisanal, the artist makes the audience both consumer and inventor, participant of his art.

In September 1966, coinciding with the XXXVIII Venice Biennial, Bruno Munari exhibited in New York, at the Howard Wise Gallery, a selection of works that reflected his idea of programmed art: *Polariscop, Concavo convesso (Concave-convex), Tetracono (Tetracone) and Ora X (X Hour)*. Today all of these works are included in the exhibition at the gallery with the exception of *Ora X*, which is housed in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

By that time, Munari had experimented with creative forms linked to different aesthetics, including the *Xerografie Originali (Original Xerographies)*, in which the artist's intervention was completed in an intentional gesture, which generated a random effect. The photocopier was thus used as a tool to produce unique works within their serial matrix: an outright paradox.

At the experimental section of the XXXV Venice Biennial in 1970, Bruno Munari made a RX 720 photocopier available to both the artists and the public, allowing them to use it in order to produce their own works of art.

That same year, exactly during the Biennial, Bruno Munari presented a book published by Xerox titled *Bruno Munari Xerografia. Documentazione sull'uso creative delle macchine Rank Xerox* (*Bruno Munari Xerography. Documentation of the creative use of Rank Xerox*): a selection of 110 xerographies realized since the early sixties. A number of works from this selection are included in the exhibition at the gallery, highlighting the expressive power of this simple gesture.

The earliest *Sculture da viaggio* (*Travel Sculptures*) date back to the fifties; they represent Munari's further investigation into the possibilities of an art for all, conceived with the innate irony that informs the most brilliant of intuitions. Xerox and *Sculture da viaggio* promote modes of production and distribution that enable an art of adaptability and accessibility. They are made of everyday materials, which come from serial production processes themselves. They are works that quintessentially extend Munari's motivations; they are artworks for everyone.

Bruno Munari's work is currently the subject of an exhibition on view at the Setagaya Art Museum of Tokyo, after being shown at the Museum of Modern Art, Hayama, the Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art and the Iwate Museum of Art, Japan. Other recent exhibitions include Palazzo Pretorio, Cittadella, 2017, Museo Ettore Fico, Turin, 2017, Museo del Novecento, Milan, and the Estorick Collection of Italian Modern Art, London, 2012. Munari exhibited extensively throughout his lifetime, participating in major international exhibitions that include Documenta 3, 1964, Documenta 4, 1968, Kassel, and nine editions of the Venice Biennale. In 1955, he had a two-person exhibition with Alvin Lustig at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and in 1966, had a solo exhibition at the Howard Wise Gallery, New York. His work has also been exhibited at institutions that include Prada Foundation, Milan, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Hayward Art Gallery, London, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Munari's works are held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Museo del Novecento, Milan, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among others.

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