

PRESS RELEASE

Settore Musei Civici Bologna | MAMbo- Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

Sergio Lombardo 1960-1970

Curated by Anna Mecugni

January 28 - March 24, 2024

Opening Saturday 27, 2024 at 5:00 pm

Bologna, January 26, 2024 - From January 28 to March 24, 2024 the exhibition venue of Villa delle Rose in Bologna is pleased to present *Sergio Lombardo 1960-1970*, a show that aims to shed new light on the first decade of the Roman artist and psychologist's career, in the crucial transition from his beginnings in the late Fifties to his departure from painting to embark on the path of conceptual research that characterizes his work starting in 1965.

Curated by Anna Mecugni, specializing in postwar Italian art and global contemporary art, and presented through a partnership between Archivio Sergio Lombardo and the Settore Musei Civici Bologna | MAMbo- Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, the solo exhibition originates from the research project *Superquadri / Superpaintings*, selected among the winners of the VII edition of Italian Council, the program supported by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Italian Ministry of Culture, aimed at promoting contemporary Italian art internationally, presented by Untitled Association (Rome) with the cultural partners of MADRE - Museo d'arte contemporanea Donnaregina, University of New Orleans (USA) e Istituto italiano di Cultura di Toronto (Canada).

The exhibition project presented in Bologna brings together for the first time in a museum context a considerable group of collages, objects, and installations part of four pioneering, but little-known series: *Superquadri (Superpaintings)*, *Supercomponibili (Supercomposables)*, *Punti extra ("Extra" Dots)*, and *Sfera con sirena (Sphere with Siren)*, conceived by Sergio Lombardo (b. 1939), among the leading Italian artists who have revitalized the European and international artistic language since the late 1950s. This exhibition documents how at the time, alongside other avant-garde artists from various countries around the world, Lombardo was already experimenting with strategies to engage the audience in participation.

Sergio Lombardo 1960-1970 will open on Sunday, January 27, 2024, at 5:00 PM as part of ART CITY Bologna, the institutional program of exhibitions, events, and special initiatives promoted by the Municipality of Bologna in collaboration with BolognaFiere on the occasion of Arte Fiera.

During the Sixties, Sergio Lombardo emerged as a protagonist of the so-called Pop avant-garde and an independent figure devoted to research and experimentation of aesthetic strategies lat-

er also associated with Conceptual art, Minimalism, and Postminimalism.

The exhibition held at Villa delle Rose showcases some **fifty works** from various series. The format, medium, and style of the works are diverse, at times seemingly contrasting: abstraction and figuration in painting; tactile, modular, reconfigurable objects in Formica; “plans” on paper for structures and installations that document an activity that anyone can complete following a given algorithm with specific variables, including the use of dice and experiments in psychokinesis; provocative, potentially aggressive, dangerous works in which concrete, recognizable elements, such as the high-pitched sounds of an emergency siren and a poison like nicotine, can evoke associations with the risk of death and prompt reflections on unpredictable human behaviors.

The result of in-depth research, the exhibition invites visitors to look beyond the visual differences between the various series and appreciate the common threads that run through Lombardo's work. As the exhibition curator Anna Mecugni states, *“during a time marked by intense social change and challenges - from the economic miracle to the economic crisis and social unrest that peaked with the student and worker struggles of 1968-1969, followed by the onset of the tragic ‘years of lead’ - Lombardo sought to radically redefine the traditional model of spectatorship, utilizing his work as a stimulus or catalyst to actively engage the viewer on a perceptual, psychological, and behavioral level”*.

On the first floor of Villa delle Rose, the first two galleries include works dating between 1960 and 1964 from the earliest series by Lombardo: *Monocromi (Monochromes)*, *Gesti tipici (Typical Gestures)*, and *Uomini politici colorati (Colorful Political Men)*. The **Monochromes** - his response to the subjective expressionism of Art Informel - are collages of small squares or rectangles glued onto a cotton canvas according to a grid arrangement and covered with unmixed industrial enamel. The **Typical Gestures** - his best-known work - and the **Colorful Political Men** are large paintings from his period as a member of the Scuola di Piazza del Popolo. They render, as imposing shadows or abstractions that recall the flat bands of color in a political map, the images of political leaders as seen on television screens and in the press of the time: Khrushchev, J. F. Kennedy, Fanfani, Mao.

On view also in the first gallery and in the remaining spaces of Villa delle Rose are works from later series. They represent a considerable group of works, conceived between 1965 and 1970, and produced at the time and later, including in recent years, that remain little known. They are gathered here for the first time in a museum context. These works are the focus of the exhibition: the **Superquadri (Superpaintings)**, **Supercomponibili (Supercomposables)**, **Punti extra (“Extra” Dots)**, and the group of **“emergency situations”**, which include the series *Sfera con sirena (Sphere with Siren)* and *Progetti di morte per avvelenamento (Projects of Death by Poisoning)*.

With these works, Lombardo set aside the medium of painting to explore, as Mecugni underscores, *“the spatial and experiential potential of objects and installations that could stimulate a deeper, more direct involvement of the spectator, and even require their participation to temporarily complete the work, effectively making the spectator a co-producer of the work. In line with one of the main avantgarde tendencies of the time, one may think, for instance, of the work of GRAV, the Groupe de recherche d’art visuel, active in Paris in the Sixties, but with distinctive characteristics linked to Lombardo’s interest in experimental psychology and other scientific disciplines, these works - continues Mecugni - challenge the traditional idea of art as a self-contained, static object and spectatorship as the contemplation of predetermined forms and content, conceived by the artist, to embrace a notion of art as experience, dynamic and indeterminate, intended for an embodied, active subject. Called by Lombardo ‘non-contemplative experiences,’ these works share a reductionist aesthetics - or ‘expressive abstinence,’ to use the artist’s words - based on principles of seriality, simple geometry, and modularity, in part present in the earlier works and now in service of a key new element: functional open-endedness directed at both centering and decentering the experience of the public”*.

There are roughly thirty works on paper, which the artist calls **“plans”** (progetti): they are collages of cut-and-pasted laminated paper that render schematically, in a precise but abbreviated fashion, one module, a structure, or an installation with various modules, in one of the many possible configurations. There are fourteen works constructed based on these plans, including four installations arranged specifically for the spaces of Villa delle Rose: on the first floor, *Superpainting with 32 modules* (1965-2020) and *Superpainting with 12 Circular and Elliptical Modules* (1965-2020); on the second floor, *50 “Extra” Dots* (1966) and *Supercomposable* (1967-1970s).

The exhibition closes with works from the group of the **“emergency situations”**, some on view for the first time in over thirty years, including the newly restored *Sphere with Siren* (1968-1969), and a gallery with archival documents and exhibition catalogues from the period.

“The main ambition of this exhibition and the research project from which it stems - explains Mecugni - is to contribute to the understanding of a key chapter in twentieth-century art history that continues to be relevant today, given the ongoing interest of artists, internationally since the Nineties, in questions of audience engagement and participation”.

The research that led to the exhibition will culminate in the bilingual volume (English/Italian) *Sergio Lombardo: From the “Superpaintings” to “Sphere with Siren”, 1965-1970*, edited by Anna Mecugni and published by Bruno, Venice, to be released in the first semester of 2024. The book features the most complete visual documentation of these works to date. It presents unpublished art-historical texts by Mecugni and other scholars of postwar Italian art - **Christopher Bennett, Elizabeth Mangini, and Simone Zacchini** - along with a selected anthology of the most important critical texts about these series and of the most relevant theo-

retical writings by **Lombardo**, nearly all published in English for the first time.

The exhibition's central themes and the works on view will be discussed at a **talk on Saturday, February 3, at 5:00 pm**, in the area Book Talk of **Arte Fiera**. Speakers will include **MAMbo Lorenzo Balbi** (director of MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna of Bologna), **Sergio Lombardo** (artist), **Anna Mecugni** (art historian and curator), and **Simone Zacchini** (art historian). On this occasion, the book by **Sergio Lombardo, *Scritti. Volume I. 1963-1999*** (Arezzo: Magonza, 2023), edited by Zacchini, will also be presented.

BIOGRAPHY OF SERGIO LOMBARDO

Born in Rome in 1939, Sergio Lombardo is among the leading Italian artists who have renewed the European and international artistic language since the late 1950s. After studying law, he devoted himself to artistic research and the psychology of aesthetics, producing works against the idea of "inspired" or "romantic" art. Lombardo founded the Eventualist Theory, from which an artistic and theoretical movement based on experimental methods was born.

He debuted in 1958 with *Monochromes* and in 1961 with the series of *Typical Gesture*, joining the Scuola di Piazza del Popolo, composed of Mario Schifano, Mimmo Rotella, Jannis Kounellis, Pino Pascali, Cesare Tacchi, and Renato Mambor, among others. Together with them, Lombardo participated in some of the most important group exhibitions at the Galleria La Tartaruga in Rome, which he left in 1966 in disagreement with the artistic choices of Plinio De Martiis. Later, he approached the Galleria La Salita, where he exhibited works from the series of *Supercomposables* (1965-1968), *Sphere with Siren* (1968-1970), *Projects of Death by Poisoning* (1970-1971), *Aleatory Concerts* (1971-1975) and *Experiments in Psychokinesis with Dice Rolling* (1974), moving ever more radically toward an overtly scientific artistic practice.

After opening his studio as a research laboratory, together with Anna Homberg and Cesare Pietroiusti in 1977, he founded the Centro Studi Jartrakor, which later also became an exhibition space, and in 1979 the Rivista di Psicologia dell'Arte as a platform for the dissemination of research.

In 1980, he began the complex research of Stochastic Painting based on mathematical algorithms and randomization programs: *Stochastic Painting Tan*, *Sat*, and *Ran* (since 1980), *Tiling* (since 1990), *Quiling* (since 2017), and *Extra Human Faces* (since 2021 and currently in progress).

Sergio Lombardo has exhibited his work at museums, foundations, and galleries around the world, including the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo (1967), the Venice Biennale (1970, 1993, 2009, 2013), the Jewish Museum in New York (1968, 1999), the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (1969, 1995), the Philadelphia Civic Center in Philadelphia (1973), the Scuderie Papali at the Quirinale in Rome (2001, 2007), the MLAC at La Sapienza University in Rome (1995, 2021), the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2015), the Dallas Museum of Art (2015), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2016), the Tate Gallery in London (2016).

His works are part of the permanent collections of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome, Philadelphia Museum of Art, MACTE - Museo di Arte Contemporanea in Termoli, MADRE Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina in Naples and GAM in Turin. In parallel to his artistic production and in support of it, Lombardo devotes himself to in-depth theoretical research. Since 1982, he has been a professor of the Theory of Perception and Psychology of Form at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome, where he is now Professor Emeritus. His research writings have appeared in the Journal of Art Psychology, Kunst und Therapie, Iskusstvo i Emozii, Empirical Studies of the Arts, Problems of Informational Culture, Psychology and the Arts, Nodes.

The Archivio Sergio Lombardo was established in Rome in December of 2022. It is dedicated to the cataloging, preservation, and promotion of the work of Sergio Lombardo. To this end, it organizes, participates, and collaborates in research and exhibition activities aimed at exploring Lombardo's work and theory from the beginning of his practice to the present day.
sergiolombardo.it

BIOGRAPHY OF ANNA MECUGNI

Anna Mecugni is an art historian who specializes in postwar Italian art and global contemporary art, with interests in the intersection of art and politics, particularly concerning social movements and social justice themes; feminist and queer theories and histories; performative practices, participation, sound, and music in art. She earned an M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Art History from the City University of New York Graduate Center and a Laurea in D.A.M.S. from the Università degli Studi di Bologna.

She is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of New Orleans. Earlier, she taught at the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, and Vassar College; she held curatorial positions at grassroots arts centers, academic museums, and large institutions such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Venice Biennale in Italy.

In New Orleans in 2022, she curated *The Slow Drop: Musicians' Village*, a work of sound art and a community-engaged project co-produced with artists Angel Nevarez and Valerie Tevere, bridging performance, music, and social practice. At the U.N.O. Gallery, New Orleans, in 2019, she curated a show of works by activist artist Dread Scott and a participatory performance by Nevarez and Tevere.

She is the co-editor with Carlos Basualdo of *Embracing the Contemporary: The Keith L. and Katherine Sachs Collection* (Yale University Press, 2016) and the co-author with Robert Storr of *Sergio Lombardo: Monochromes, 1958-1961* (Silvana Editoriale, 2018). She is the editor of the forthcoming bilingual volume, in English and Italian, *Sergio Lombardo: From the "Superpaintings" to "Sphere with Siren", 1965-1970* (Bruno Books, 2024). Forthcoming and future publications include an article on Luigi Ontani that contributes to a queer historiography of 1970s Italian art and an essay on Helen Cammock's recent film work weaving music, poetry, and documentary interviews to unearth forgotten stories of resilience by women.

Mecugni's scholarly and curatorial projects have been supported by entities including the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Harpo Foundation, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, the Louisiana Board of Regents, and the Italian Ministry of Culture.

WORKS

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for 127 Cubes, 1968

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, and graphite on smooth paper

Private collection

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Conic Corner-Fitting Superpainting, 1965

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and graphite on smooth paper

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Curved Supercomposable of N Modules, 1966

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and graphite on smooth paper

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Circular Superpainting, 1965

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and graphite on smooth paper

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for a Module of Transversal "Extra" Stripes, 1966

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, and graphite on smooth paper

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Superpainting with Undulating Cut, 1965/2020

Formica, wood, and plywood

Edition no. 2/3 + 1 AP

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Undulating Corner-Fitting Superpainting, 1965/2020

Formica, wood, and plywood

Edition no. 2/3 + 1 AP

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Black 77, 1960

Cut-and-pasted paper, Vinavil glue, and enamel on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Blue 121, 1961

Cut-and-pasted paper, Vinavil glue, and enamel on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Superpainting with 32 Identical Modules, 1965/2020

Formica, wood, and plywood

Edition no. 2/3 + 1 AP

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Mao Tze Tung, 1964

Enamel on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Kennedy and Fanfani, 1963

Enamel on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Khrushchev, 1961-63

Enamel on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Superpainting with 12 Circular and Elliptical Modules, 1965/2020

Formica, wood, and plywood

Edition no. 2/3 + 1 AP

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
127 Cubes, 1968
Formica, wood, and plywood
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Box with 56 Cubes, 1968
Formica, wood, and plywood
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Box with 50 Cubes, 1968
Formica, wood, and plywood
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
50 "Extra" Dots, 1966
Formica, wood, and plywood
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for a Random Arrangement of 50 "Extra" Dots, 1966
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and graphite on Fabriano textured paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for an Arrangement of 120 Poles, 1967
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and graphite on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for a Box of 18 Poles, 1967
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and graphite on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Box with 30 Poles, 1967/2017
Formica, wood, and plywood
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Box with 10 Poles, 1968
Formica, wood, and plywood
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Supercomposable, 1967/1970s
Formica, wood, and plywood
Private collection

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for Three Modules of "Extra" Stripes, 1966
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and ballpoint pen on textured paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for a Module of Right-Angled Supercomposable, 1965
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and graphite on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for Superpainting with 32 Identical Modules, 1965
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and graphite on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for Two Modules of Undulating "Extra" Stripes, 1966
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and ballpoint pen on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for Curved Supercomposable, 1966
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, ballpoint pen, and graphite on textured paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for an Arrangement of 300 "Extra" Dots, 1967
Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and felt-tip marker on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo
Plan for an Arrangement of 300 "Extra" Dots, 1967

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and felt-tip marker on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for an Arrangement of 300 "Extra" Dots, 1967

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and felt-tip marker on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for an Arrangement of "Extra" Dots in Variable Number, 1967

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and felt-tip marker on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for "Extra" Painting, 1965

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and ballpoint pen on textured paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for 126 Cubes, 1968

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and ballpoint pen on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for "Extra" Object, 1965

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and graphite on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Superpainting with Undulating Cut, 1965

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and graphite on smooth paper
Private collection

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Undulating Corner-Fitting Superpainting, 1965

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and graphite on smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Archival materials and exhibition catalogues

Courtesy of Archivio Sergio Lombardo

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Sphere with Siren, 1968

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and traditional typographic screen on smooth paper

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Sphere with Siren, 1968-69

Pigmented fiberglass, plywood, stainless steel, La Sonora CS-136 emergency siren, battery, tilt switches, and relay

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Sphere with Siren, 1968

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and traditional typographic screen on smooth paper

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Sphere with Siren, 1968

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper, felt-tip marker, and traditional typographic screen on smooth paper

Private collection

Sergio Lombardo

Project of Death by Poisoning, 1970

Glass vial, raw nicotine, and envelope

Courtesy of the artist

Sergio Lombardo

Plan for Sphere with Siren, 1968

Cut-and-pasted laminated paper and ballpoint pen on smooth paper

Courtesy of the artist

TECHNICAL SHEET

Exhibition

Sergio Lombardo 1960-1970

Curated by

Anna Mecugni

In partnership with

Archivio Sergio Lombardo

Settore Musei Civici Bologna | MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

Venue

Villa delle Rose

Via Saragozza 228/230, Bologna

Duration

January 28 - March 24, 2024

Opening

Saturday, January 27, 2024 at 5:00 pm

Regular opening hours

Friday 2:00 - 4:00 pm

Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Extraordinary opening hours during ART CITY Bologna 2024

Thursday, February 1 10:00 am - 8 pm

Friday, February 2 10:00 am - 8 pm

Saturday, February 3 10:00 am - 10 pm

Sunday, February 4 10:00 am - 8 pm

Admission

Free

Contacts

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