

## Gianni Colombo\*

(Milan, 1937 – Melzo, Milan, 1993)

Gianni Colombo's art occurs in the space between the work and those who encounter it. Author of a consistent body of work, he was part of the Gruppo T with Giovanni Anceschi, Davide Boriani, Gabriele De Vecchi, and Grazia Varisco, and participated in investigations into kinetic art. In the late 1950s, he was already defining each of his works as "tests" through which he could experiment with and observe the behavioral reactions of visitors. Introducing elements of perceptual ambiguity, he experimented with wide-ranging formal freedom over the course of his career, remaining faithful, however, to the concept of "open work," to be interpreted and experienced on various levels and whose final image is produced by the viewers themselves. Emphasizing this idea of active participation, the artist preferred to use the term "user," and thought of the public as "technicians."

With the series *Strutturazioni pulsanti (Pulsating Structuralizations)*, 1959–1973, to which the work in the collection belongs, Colombo creates "visual objects" formulated as square or rectangular fields, resulting from the juxtaposition of three-dimensional parallelepipedal elements made from styrofoam. A manual or electronic device produces slight eversions that animate the points where the internal orthogonals intersect. For Colombo, these works, intentionally free of similarities to reality, could establish visual communication with viewers, openly declaring the "rules of the game" that the artist used at the moment of their construction. Using plays of light, in subsequent years Colombo created rapidly moving structures, experimenting with the possibility of activating after-images, residual images in the viewer's retina. *Roto-Optic*, 1964, belongs to this series. Here, the rapid movement of two shafts characterized by squares painted in complementary red and green colors produces luminous tracks that capture the eye and delineate a complex variety of dynamic forms.

Investigating art as a participatory space, the artist directed his research towards the creation of environments in which the condition of the visitor's passage through the work is an essential component. He used Wood's light, elastic cords, projectors, and, beginning in the 1970s, arches, columns, and other architectural elements that he manipulated and distorted. *Bariestesia (Baryesthesia)*, 1975, belongs to this line of inquiry. Organized as a path with steps at different slopes, the environment alters its habitual morphology, thus contradicting the expectations of the person moving through it and provoking a disorienting effect. The subject of the work becomes the staging of the perceptual state of each visitor engaged in traversing the environment. (MB)

## Additional Works in the Collection

*Disegno per Bariestesia (progetto di Modigliana)*, (drawing for Bariesthesia – Modigliana project) 1975, ink on paper, pencil on paper, 2 elements: 26 5/8 × 23 3/8 inches; 8 7/8 × 8 7/8 inches