

Sergio Lombardo

(Rome, 1939)

Before even turning twenty, in 1958 Sergio Lombardo made his artistic debut with a series of collages titled *Monocromi* which immediately appeared radically new. He sees himself as a scientific researcher, a technician or a craftsman: he cuts out a great many squares of fabric, with multiuse glue he sticks them to the canvas, then he paints the grid with industrial paints. It's an impersonal form of painting, replicable by anyone, with titles that do no more than to announce the number of pieces and the dominant colour. In the following cycle of works, *Gesti atipici*, he takes newspapers and reproduces the silhouettes of politicians of the day onto the support. His opening to the world of mass media also ensured that Lombardo was included among the ranks of the Roman Pop Art movement, even though it was the mechanical tracing procedure that interested him more than the icons he painted. Yet the seed of his 'Eventualist Theory' had been sown: he would mature in a non-expressive art, free from the arbitrary choices of the artist and generated by means of automatic practices. In his *Supercomponibili* of the mid-1960s, the painting becomes pure geometric object, a modular element in laminated plastic that anyone can put together or take apart as they please. It is also from this family that the work featured in the collection *Scatola con 30 aste* (1967) comes, for only through the combinatory action of the visitor may it be fully expressed. By this point, Lombardo's audience seemed ready to measure up to the next events he prepared, in a crescendo of unforeseeableness. They would be defined as *Situazioni d'emergenza* insofar as they attempted to trigger subjective and unexpected psychological and behavioural reactions, raising questions and definitively shifting the interaction with the work onto a mental level. It was in this period that Lombardo, together with the medical students Anna Homberg and Cesare Pietroiusti, founded the Centro Jartrakor and the *Rivista di Psicologia dell'Arte*, which would become the means by which to promote the results of theoretical research, studies on perceptology and experiments into induced dreams.

The decision to go back to painting in the 1980s provided Lombardo with the opportunity to compare Eventualism with the canvas space. The two 'stochastic paintings' in the TAN Colore Collection belong to this period (1983), as well as *Pittura Stocastica VIP-SAT* (1986). What at first sight look like abstract paintings generated by the casual falling of geometric cut-outs are in actual fact the result of a clear-minded procedure which entrusts their coordinates on the surface to the drawing of lots. While in an operation performed with the method known as TAN, the pieces of card – largely black and white – leave clear empty spaces between them, the SAT method opens up to colour, for the total saturation of the surface. In both cases, the prolonged observation of the pattern produces variable visual stimuli, optical illusions and arbitrary figuration. Lombardo would never abandon these random algorithms, continuing to develop new systems of shape generation even in the tessellations of the series produced over the last decade.

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