

## BIOGRAPHY

Giovanni Anceschi was born in Milan on 12 September 1939.

He is a Kinetic artist.

He is also a graphic and multimodal designer, an art and design theoretician, essayist, and an organiser of the culture of visibility.

In 1959, together with Boriani, Colombo, and Devecchi, he founded Gruppo T.

For more than fifty years he has been involved in programmed, metamorphic, interactive, and immersive art, as well as information aesthetics.

For more than forty years he has taught basic design as well as communicational and interactive design in universities in Italy and abroad. Since 2001 he has been an emeritus professor.

## THE START OF A CAREER

In the art context a particular mention must be made of the beginnings of his career in art. As a child, in his father's milieu, he came into contact with such twentieth century writers as Montale, Ungaretti, and Gadda, and had a childhood correspondence with the writer Gianna Manzini.

With regard to the art world, he was very close to Enrico Paolucci (of the Gruppo dei Sei in Turin), who had a house in Rapallo where the Anceschi family went on holiday. He also came to know Giulio Carlo Argan, a guest of Paolucci. Fausto Melotti would drive him to Rapallo in his Millequattro car.

He personally knew Carlo Carrà (who gave him a "La Galleria di Milano" lithograph), the abstractionists (Soldati, Radice, Rho) and the Concretist group: Gillo Dorfles and, later on, Luigi Veronesi and his sister Giulia. In the Galleria del Naviglio as a child in 1949, he had the luck to see Lucio Fontana's "Ambiente spaziale a luce nero".

As an adolescent, in about 1953, he tried out many ways of painting, to arrive at a Post-Cubist/Para-Futurist output, 1955, and then a series of ink works reflecting the work by Crippa, Dova, and Wilfredo Lam.

Finally, having come into contact with Enrico Baj, he began to produce gestural, mixed media, and lyrical abstraction works. Together with Baj he exhibited in the Parisian gallery "Le soleil dans la tête" in December 1958.

His real avant-garde debut, though, was when he published a figurative work, "Marziani fossili", in Lucio Fontana's magazine "Gesto interplanetario", together with works by Enrico Baj and others. The magazine, however, was published only in 1959.

He also knew Manzoni and Castellani. With others from the future Gruppo T, he collaborated on the foundation of the Galleria Azimut.

He enrolled at Milan University where he studied philosophy and followed courses held by Enzo Paci (the course on Husserl's Cartesian meditations) and by Cesare Musatti (perceptology and psychoanalysis).

At the same time he followed, as "auditor", the courses by Achille Funi at the Brera Academy, where he came to know Davide Boriani, Gianni Colombo, and Grazia Varisco and, through them, Gabriele Devecchi. While at the decorative design school, the four undertook a large fresco on the amorous metamorphoses of Zeus (Anceschi, who was the smallest and lightest and so could climb higher up, painted the scene of the Eagle for the Ganymede myth). The four also had a deep interest in black humour.

In a memorable meeting at the back of a small bar in Via Brera, Milan, Anceschi's multi-media collages were appraised by his colleagues (Boriani, Colombo, and Devecchi), and as a result Anceschi became part of this group of artists who organised a show of their work (ranging from late lyrical abstraction to the abandonment of figuration) in the Galleria Pater in September 1959, which sparked off the activity and zealous rethinking that was to lead to the birth of Gruppo T.

## GRUPPO T

From October 1959 to January 1960, Anceschi, Boriani, Colombo, and Devecchi developed and published their statement "Miriorama 1", a manifesto echoing Berson's ideas about *Élan vital* and Husserl's phenomenology, a philosophy that was to make them receptive to the present and anticipated future developments through a scientific and technological vision of the world.

In the context of the Miriorama programme of events, which began in the Galleria Pater in January 1960, Anceschi participated in the group show "Miriorama 1". With his "Miriorama 5" solo show the programme was concluded.

Together with the members of Gruppo T, he was to realise the first fourteen Miriorama events (for example, in Milan, Tokyo, Genoa, Padua, and Rome) and was to be a protagonist of the shows and cultural activities of this international movement for Programme Art, Optical Art, and for New Tendencies.

In the context of the group's activities, his works covered various areas. He made works or, as was the word in the group's idiolect, "effects", such as, for example, "Quadri clessidra", 1959, "Tavole di di possibilità liquidi", 1959, and "Percorsi fluidi", helical or rotating "Percorsi fluidi elicoidali", 1962, and spiral, and cubic ones, 1962. All these led to interactive participation by the public, and explored the possibilities of figural variation produced by chance metamorphoses of the material.

Various versions of these "effects" were to be produced over the years.

Encouraged by Umberto Eco and Bruno Munari, he published two programmed graphics in the 1962 Almanacco Bompiani (in which he explored the perceptive limits of repeatability-interference by interweaving, the interference between successive programmes, and the interference of sequences of stimuli), thus anticipating what was to be called Generative Art.

Later on he realised works animated electromechanically: for example, his a-chrome and tri-chrome "Structure", 1963, (in which he dealt with the threshold of perception and reception through experiments with dotted, projected, intermittent and rotating interweaving), and his virtual, cylindrical "Strutturazioni", 1963, (concerned with the perceptive disorientation caused by cyclic and interfering kinetic stimuli). And finally, his modular three-dimensional (square or hexagonal) "Struttura", 1963, which was filmed by the Monte Olimpino Experimental Centre.

He inquired into sensorial destabilisation through the loss of spatial boundaries and the effect of temporal condensation and dilution in "Ambiente a chock luminosi", Paris 1964. These inquiries by Anceschi continued until 1965 as collaborations with, above all, Boriani, to produce "Ambiente stroboscopico", Eindhoven.

Without leaving the group, in 1962 Anceschi enrolled with the Hochschule für Gestaltung, Ulm, where he studied with Tomàs Maldonado.

With his starting point in Ulm, between 1964 and 1966 he developed, together with Boriani, an extremely important project: "Ambiente per un test di estetica sperimentale", a scientific inquiry that aimed at measuring aesthetic enjoyment (Zagreb 1965).

His relationship with the group continued until 1968 with his participation in projects organised by Boriani and Colombo. But then, Gruppo T, unlike other such groups, has never officially disbanded.

#### THE ULM SCHOOL AND INFORMATION AESTHETICS

In 1961 Gillo Dorfles had told him about a South American friend, Tomàs Maldonado, who was rector of a school in Ulm, Germany, "that was the successor to the Bauhaus" and where "you learn design". In September 1962 Anceschi was informed that the school had accepted his application, and he decided to go there. Besides Tomàs Maldonado (basic design and semiotics), Max Bense and Abraham A. Moles (aesthetic information theory), Anceschi also studied with Horst Rittel (structural theory), Gui Bonsiepe (visual rhetoric), Dolf Zillman (semantic differential), and Müller-Brockmann (visual methodology). He was teaching assistant to Otl Aicher.

In Ulm he had close relationships with the cinema school (Alexander Kluge, Edgard Reiz, Detten Schleiermacher), above all with Claudia von Aleman, Oime! May, and Marion Szeeman; he took part in ideation, realization, and shooting, and he also, together with them and Anne Preiss, became involved in political activities (SDS). With Lothar Spree he developed an experimental method of script conception, quite similar to Burroughs' and Balestrini's "cut in".

In contrast to a certain anti-artistic prudery of conservative Ulm, he published in the students' magazine "output" an important article about Kinetic and Programme Art, and about the New Tendencies movement. While still in Ulm, in October 1964, together with Kohei Sugiuri, he undertook a nocturnal performance "Candle Planning", accompanied by the "Water Music" that Toru Takemitsu had dedicated to Giovanni Anceschi's liquid works on the occasion of a show by Gruppo T in the Minami gallery, Tokyo. In Stuttgart he met Judith Malina and Julian Beck, and discovered that the tableaux vivants of the "Mysteries" has a lot in common with his environments and "luminous shocks".

#### THE THIRD WORLD AND COMMITMENT

Anne Preiss, his colleague in Ulm, invited him to go to Algeria and share with her the direction of the Sérvise Fabrication of the Société Nationale du Pétrole Algerien (SONATRACH). They undertook a complete programme of coordinated images, and designed, for example, stamps and a silkscreen "exhibition/package" which opened concurrently in seven cities for the Société Nationale des Pâtes Alimentaires. (Algiers was experiencing an amazing post-colonialist period and they went to parties at the Russian and Chinese embassies, saw the Cuban film "Female Detachment", went to shows of Cuban or even American graphics, and followed the developments of 1968 in Paris on the radio. Among others, Anceschi came to know Agostino Neto, of Frelimo, Mozambique, and Johnny Makatini, of the ANC, South Africa.)

At the end of 1968, on the invitation of Giulio Carlo Argan and Filiberto Menna, he left Algeria and moved to Rome where he taught basic design and communication design at ISIA. In Rime, Balestrini introduced him to Negri, Piperno, and Scalzone, and Anceschi, together with Fabio Bonzi, planned the weekly paper "Potere Operaio".

#### VISUAL POETRY, TOTAL POETRY

In the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s, Anceschi was close to visual poetry, performances, and readings of the poetry group connected to the "Tam Tam" magazine (for which he designed the masthead and the editorial layout): Adriano Spatola, Corrado Costa, Giulia Niccolai, and Milli Graffi. The group was involved with the idea of "total poetry". Besides publishing in "Tam Tam", he also published a series of poems including "comunicattiva", "Questa non è una pipa: 'oh na nie!'", "Mnemo", "Parentesi rosa", and "Milligraphy". His visual poems were also published in, for example, Julien Blaine's "Docks", and Franco Beltrametti's "Sperlonga-Manhattan express". Besides the masthead for "Tam Tam", Anceschi also designed the logo for

the magazine "Invisible city", San Francisco. As a performer, he took part in the world premiere of "Aviation-Aviateur" by Adriano Spatola (P77, Magazzini del Sale, Venice, 1977), where he exhibited the installation "Queste sono mille lire false". He collaborated on the realisation of "La poesia è un luogo/Poetry is a place/Poesie is een oord/Dichtung ist ein ort, curated by Milli Graffiaand" in "de Knipscher", Amsterdam 1978, with Franco Beltrametti. In the context of P78, "One Poetry World", in Amsterdam, he met William Burroughs and Ted Barrigan and, above all, he discovered that Bryon Gysin used the "Dreamachines", kinetic and luminous objects, during his readings. Milli Graffiaalso made use of the "Fluid Fasching" multimedia programme, realised by Anceschi while in Ulm, as a scenic effect for her poetic performance "Salnitro".

#### HYPERREADYMADE

In 1974 Anceschi began his "Hyperreadymade" activity, in which he signed sheet from a multiple taken from the "Tavole di possibilità liquide", made in the United States.

In 1959 Anceschi had not bothered to patent the liquid works which were to be repeatedly plagiarised and imitated in the Milanese art world, even by members of New Tendencies, and were to have an endless extra-artistic diffusion across the planet. He currently possesses a collection of "para-tavole di possibilità liquid", in other words packaged liquids in such forms as ties, walking sticks, sandals, breakfast placemats (Brazil), and postcards (United Kingdom).

The Hyperreadymade project, curated by Pietro Costa, was presented at "Domus circular", ideated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Stefano Boeri, in the San Siro stadium in Milan, on 14 April 2005. It was presented again, curated by Cornelia Lauf, as part of the art seminars organised by the faculty of art and design at IUAV University, Venice, in 2006.

#### REDISCOVERY

It should be underlined that, from 2000 onwards, an internationally-wide cultural movement (with important shows in, for example, the United States, Germany, France, and Austria) has been re-evaluating the whole New Tendencies movement. The May 2007 issue of "Artforum", the most prestigious American art magazine, was devoted to Op Art. With reference to the defeat this European movement had once suffered by a real counter-campaign sparked off by American Pop Art, it was defined in the magazine as a "beautiful loser" that today merits a radical re-evaluation. The New Tendencies artists were at last presented as front rank protagonists, and an image of Anceschi's "Struttura tricroma" was reproduced full-page, together with Victor Vasarely and Bridget Riley.

In other words, even if more than fifty years have passed, the work by these artists has maintained a relevant role in the current climate of creative innovation.

This relaunch of the works by Anceschi and the artists of the New Tendencies movement was testified to by the presentation, in the Mayfair premises of Christie's, of the private selling exhibition "Turn Me On: European and Latin American Kinetic Art 1948-1979", 24 February - 7 April 2014, London.

#### WORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Museo del Novecento, Civici Musei di Milano, Milan, IT  
MART Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Rovereto (Trento), IT  
MAMbo Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Bologna, IT  
Cantiere del '900, Collezione Intesa San Paolo, Milan, IT  
VAF-Stiftung, Frankfurt, DE  
Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch, DE  
MACBA Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires, AR