

**MILANO**  
**GALLERIA 10 A.M. ART**  
**FROM 22 MAY TO 4 JULY 2025**  
**“X INCANTAMENTO.**  
**MARINA APOLLONIO, LUCIA DI LUCIANO,**  
**HELGA PHILIPP, ESTHER STOCKER”**  
**Curated by Gianluca Ranzi**

The exhibition brings together the work of four artists from different generations, united by a shared investigative approach to the operational dynamics of the act of seeing, commonly referred to as Programmed Art. While acknowledging the natural distinctions within each artist's individual practice, the exhibition highlights a unifying characteristic: the fusion of objective, rational, and even scientific principles in the creation of art, with the concurrent emphasis on the artwork's capacity to open itself to the viewer. This notion – art as receptive to mobility and transformation, integration and participation, possibility and variability – was already insightfully articulated by Umberto Eco in *Opera Aperta* (1962). We thus move seamlessly from objective perception to a form of vision that verges on wonder and perceptual enchantment for the viewer.

The title, with its ironic allusion to one of Dante's most famous sonnets, underscores the delightful ambivalence of the work, balancing the rigour of its operational predetermination (the X as a planned and programmed element) with the unfolding of a multifaceted and varied phenomenology of becoming, instability and complexity. Within this, the viewer's participatory eye ventures and is even enchanted. In this way, we discover how the mathematical and geometric programme opens itself to life and indeterminacy; how the logical-operational framework liberates the audience, rather than constraining it. It subtly introduces doubt about what is being seen, disorients the physiological function of the eye and immerses the observer in an unprecedented visual situation that becomes, at once, mental, participatory and sometimes open-ended.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's statement that in the grand order there must also be a little disorder applies to the selection of works on display, which spans historical pieces from the 1960s to more recent creations: the progression of the *Dinamiche Circolari* (Circular Dynamics) to the *Gradazioni* (Gradations) by Marina Apollonio (Trieste, 1940), the theme of rhythmic variation that is liberated in colour with Lucia Di Luciano (Syracuse, 1933), the kinetic rigour that becomes an open and dialoguing field in Helga Philipp (Vienna 1939–2002) and finally the deconstructed grid of tense and free spaces by Esther Stocker (Schlanders, 1974).

In the case of Marina Apollonio, the kineticism of the *Dinamiche Circolari* does not merely provide global and standardized information about the optical phenomenon; rather, it raises doubts in the viewer's mind about whether it is the movement that is problematic, or the presumed stability of the system – a stability that, in fact, does not exist. This begins with the static nature of classical painting, which these works question, if not entirely refute. Over the historical progression of these works, it becomes evident that not only does the rule allow for exceptions, but that these exceptions can, in turn, become new rules. This is part of an ongoing process in which the rigour applied has nothing to do with, and indeed excludes, any rigidity, whether conceptual or formal. The same principle applies to numbers, where the norm should not be considered rational numbers, but rather irrational ones. Similarly, simple and “smooth” curves are not the norm; rather, increasingly irregular curves are, which cannot be reduced to a simple form like a straight line, as demonstrated by mathematician Benoît B. Mandelbrot.

The desire for a depersonalized art, which, in varying ways, underpins the languages of the four artists, thus highlights the ambiguity of appearance and, through the method of questioning reality, places it within a broader vision of nature. This vision is not only psychological and gestaltic, but also extends to science and the world of things. The theory, and its subsequent impact on the work, gradually reveal points of knowledge that are both insightful yet always temporary approximations – virtuous exceptions to the order that demonstrate how chaos is inseparable from the cosmos.

It is the perception of art as a fluctuating motion between equilibrium and crisis, much like the catastrophe theory developed by mathematician René Thom in the 1950s and 1960s. This resonates in Marina

Apollonio's work, both in the dynamic between compression and chromatic expansion in the *Gradazioni* and in the continuous shift between concave and convex in the *Dinamiche Circolari*.

Lucia Di Luciano's work has been the subject of extensive exhibition activity in recent years, a trend that will continue after this show with a solo exhibition at Herald Street Gallery in London, followed by a presentation in 2026 at Gavin Brown in New York (a partner of Barbara Gladstone). In her work, a black-and-white grid is explored through a series of multiple variations that define her pieces from the 1960s. In these pieces, the dynamic interplay of graphic elements and tonal contrasts is never merely graphic; instead, it gradually introduces new complexities, rhythms and spatial modulations, including those in depth. The grid here introduces a turbulence between geometric complexity and modular variation, sometimes verging on illegibility. This creates two-tone architectures whose rhythms evoke the contemporary experimental music scores of Earle Brown and Morton Feldman, as well as the electronic compositions of Michael Nyman and Cornelius Cardew.

The artwork thus transforms into actual sound recording diagrams, pulsating variations that accumulate and then stretch out again, functioning like fields of possibility. When colour was introduced in the 1970s, the modular frequencies became even more dynamic: at times, they thickened almost to silence, while at other moments, they asserted their constructive value within virtually infinite structures. In these, a multidimensional chromatic form sometimes seemed to slip away, making the firm compositional architecture of the whole appear more ethereal. Upon closer inspection, Lucia Di Luciano's work reveals no continuity in artistic production; even in her most recent pieces, she naturally develops certain characteristics that have always been present in her practice, albeit under different linguistic codes. Since the 1990s, rhythm, variation, rigour and tension have been expressed in compositions of light and airy forms, in movements that cross the canvas like a breath of wind. These lead towards the poetic and essential luminosity of free forms, where colour and mark pulse with life and emotion.

In the first half of the 1960s, Helga Philipp embarked on a rigorous *Optical* research project in black and white, stripping away any remaining psychological connotations associated with colour. Instead, she emphasized a perceptual connection that binds the viewer to the work, encouraging the deciphering of continuous transitions between foreground and background, between spatial illusion and two-dimensionality, and between kinetic objects and optical interference. These effects were achieved not only through painting but also through the superimposition of perforated optical grids that resonate with the background. In some of her most refined works, the intertwining of optical planes reaches such a high degree of density that it borders on a monochrome surface – a direction that would later become a defining aspect of Helga Philipp's practice. Over the forty years of her artistic career, the artist cultivated a precise poetic dimension by exploring the logic of drawing and the transformations it can evoke in the viewer. She challenged the illusion of depth, flattening space into a film-like surface that is, in fact, multidimensional. Indeed, the intricate *Optical* weave of the 1960s later evolves into structures that engage with the diaphanous transparency of overlapping Plexiglas and the reflections of mirrored steel that form the backdrop. In these works, the surface comes alive with a dynamic energy, featuring circular shapes in which curved lines, organic modulations of grey, the rhythmic interplay between filled and empty spaces, and the arabesque of an unusual sinuous line composed of semicircles, all contribute to the spectacular animation of the piece. This carefully considered and poetic visual structure achieves effects of open spatiality in the works of the 1990s, which also feature delicate graphic elements, tonal scales played on transparency, dialogues between open and closed forms, and perceptual exchanges between fullness and emptiness.

Esther Stocker, the youngest artist in the exhibition, draws on the same visual language dedicated to geometric rigour and the abstraction of black, white and grey. However, she translates this into environmental installations and paintings where space expands and contracts, following a model that prioritizes perceptual surprise, sensory disorientation and the enchantment of the imagination, rather than strictly adhering to geometric and constructive logic. Order here serves merely as a distant starting point, playing on the instability of vision and resonating with a suggested instability of space. In other words, the powerful emotional dynamics staged by these three-dimensional environments, which also "work" within the absolute two-dimensionality of the painting, bring together chaos and cosmos, disorder and order, as has been extensively explored by scientific and philosophical investigations (to recall Felix Guattari's concept of "chaosmosis"). Thus, Esther Stocker's chaotic plunge into space, the momentary loss of fixed points, and the discovery of new spatial and temporal configurations mark an unprecedented osmosis between the act of abolition (the breaking of spatial connections) and rediscovered complexity (the chaotic magic of challenging the norms of representation).

An emotional disorder such as this deeply affects those who experience Esther Stocker's space: the sensation of distant and metabolized logical references, the redefinition of space and the ways in which it is represented according to new parameters, and, finally, a systemic vocation of art that is inseparable from the emotions it evokes in viewers and from their enchantment.

**“X incantamento. Marina Apollonio, Lucia Di Luciano, Helga Philipp, Esther Stocker”**

**Milan, galleria 10 A.M. ART (Corso San Gottardo, 5)  
22 May - 4 July 2025**

**Opening day: Thursday 22 May 2025 at 5 p.m.**

**Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
All other days, by appointment only**

**Free entry**

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