

**ASCONA (SVIZZERA) – MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE MODERNA
FROM 2 APRIL TO 25 JUNE 2023**

**THE FIRST SWISS RETROSPECTIVE OF
NANDA VIGO**

The exhibition, entitled *Alfabeto Cosmogonico*, traces the creative process of one of the most significant figures of the post-war period through 40 works created between the late 1950s and the 2000s.

**Curated by Alberto Fiz
in collaboration with Archivio Nanda Vigo**

The Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna in Ascona (Switzerland) opens its 2023 exhibition season with the first retrospective in Switzerland of Nanda Vigo (1936-2020), one of the most significant figures of the post-war period, entitled *Alfabeto Cosmogonico* (Cosmogonic Alphabet).

The exhibition, running **from 2 April to 25 June 2023**, curated by Alberto Fiz, and developed in collaboration with the Archivio Nanda Vigo, Milan, analyses the artist's entire creative journey **through 40 works created between the end of the 1950s and the 2000s**, documenting the most important phases of her creativity.

“Nanda Vigo's work,” **explains Alberto Fiz**, “represents for the viewer the opportunity of an immersive and totalising experience made explicit by the exhibition project presented in Ascona, which allows for a series of interactions with the works. The artist does not create dogmas but activates spaces of freedom where she intercepts an imperceptible and imponderable dimension that seems to connect with certain issues of science and mathematics”.

The exhibition, divided into thematic areas, starts with a section dedicated to architecture: **for the first time**, thanks to the collaboration of students from the Accademia di Architettura in Mendrisio who worked on original drawings, **two projects conceived in 1959 and 1965 respectively, such as the *Torri cimiteriali* (Cemetery Towers) (in this case, the cemetery is developed in height, creating the “Twin Towers for the Dead”, as Nanda Vigo put it) and the *Monumento per i morti del Vajont* (Monument for the Vajont Deaths), are reconstructed, which are fundamental for understanding her later research.** A series of video and photographic documents illustrate some of her most

famous projects such as the **Zero House** (1959-1962), the first of her immersive architectures, or **Scarabeo sotto la foglia** (Beetle under the leaf) (1965-1968) realised with Gio Ponti.

The public then engages with her most famous pursuit, **the one from the late 1950s related to “chronotopia”**, which represents the fusion of time (*chronos*) with space (*topos*) through light. **To create the Cronotopo** (Chronotope), Nanda Vigo uses simple forms: a quadrangular metal structure, within which she inserts sheets of industrial glass that filter the light, when it passes through or strikes them, in different ways depending on the time of day (time) and the angle at which they are struck (space), generating changing sensations, uncertain impressions of space and luminosity that are differently perceptible within concrete limits, capable of transporting the visitor into another dimension. In the exhibition, there are **five Chronotopes**, as well as the 1968 **Ambiente Cronotopico** (Chronotopic Environment) of over two and a half metres, **which allows for an immersive experience**: “Light goes and has no dimension, and you can travel far,” wrote Nanda Vigo, who has always conceived her research from an environmental perspective.

Leaving the room dedicated to “chronotopia”, one enters a space where the dynamism of light passes through the **Deep Spaces**, created between 2010 and 2015, radiant or directional works in mirrored glass with a blue light inside that recalls a cosmogonic dimension.

There is also a section dedicated to the **Light Trees** (1970-1985) that develop **an innovative idea of reflection on space, where nature and artifice** find a new dynamic. The *Light Trees* have as their reference the symbolism of the tree and as Nanda Vigo wrote: “roots in the earth, branches towards the sky, logical figuration, especially if the branch brings light whose propagation in space gives us the mathematical formulation, the only one that is not relative”.

On the second floor, the visitor is met by the **Parete Cronotopica** (Chronotopic Wall) of over four metres, **created for the occasion**, which radically changes the overall perception of the museum. **The Chronotopic Wall will remain permanently at the Museum of Ascona, enriching its contemporary art collection.**

The work is based on Nanda Vigo's designs for modular structures, which represent a fundamental aspect of her architectural interventions, as demonstrated by the presence of the *Chronotopic Wall* in her Milan home and in almost all of her most important works, up to the most recent ones.

The exhibition then gives the viewer the opportunity to immerse themselves in **Genesis Light, dated 2006 and 2007, two works in black crystal and red neon, that evoke infinite references to the cosmos and its symbolism.**

In this wide-ranging examination of Nanda Vigo's work, the exhibition takes an in-depth look at the profound relationship between the artist and the world of design, and on this occasion a real **living space is created where her most famous pieces can be found, including the Mobile Cronotopo** (Chronotope cabinet) (1974) or **Golden Gate** (1969), her **most famous lamp** with a fluorescent light that seems to spring directly from the chrome-plated steel. Other iconic objects include the **Due Più**

(1971) where the Mongolian fur seat and backrests appear almost suspended from the tubular steel structure or the **chandelier *Stars Fell on Alabama*** (2019) which winks at jazz music.

Leaving the area devoted to design, the viewer is met by the ***Goral*** (in Buddhist philosophy, representing the light of creation, and in the Jewish religion, the destiny chosen by each of us), two imposing contemporary obelisks made in 2015 that hold within them luminous signs evoking imaginary universes.

In a circular course, the work that gives the exhibition its title ***Alfabeto Cosmogonico*** (Cosmogonic Alphabet) (1980s) appears to conclude the exhibition with a series of trapezoidal structures of different sizes covered in mirrors. The works, depending on their positioning, reflect their surroundings, which become an integral part of the installation, creating a mysterious language. The perceptive mechanism is made explicit by ***Venerezia, Venezia è un'illusione cosmica*** (Venerezia, Venice is a Cosmic Illusion) **dated 1978, a rare film made by Nanda Vigo herself** in which she is the protagonist of a performance where mirror elements interact both with the architecture of the lagoon city and with her body using the same language as the *Cosmogonic Alphabet*.

The exhibition is accompanied by a **bilingual (Italian and English) catalogue published by Magonza** with **comprehensive documentation of the exhibition** at the Museum with essays by Ilaria Bignotti, Riccardo Blumer, Alberto Fiz, Fulvio Irace, Barbara Könches, Marco Meneguzzo and the Archivio Nanda Vigo.

Biographical notes

Nanda Vigo (Milan, 1936-2020) showed an interest in art from an early age, when she had the opportunity to spend time in the company of Filippo de Pisis, a family friend, and to observe the architecture of Giuseppe Terragni. After graduating from the École polytechnique fédérale in Lausanne, she decided to leave for the United States where she began an important internship in San Francisco. In 1959, Vigo opened her own studio in Milan. From 1959 she frequented Lucio Fontana's atelier and then approached the artists who had founded the Azimut Gallery in Milan, Piero Manzoni and Enrico Castellani. During this period, between several trips and exhibitions all over Europe, Vigo got to know the artists and places of the ZERO movement in Germany, Holland and France. In her work, Vigo operates in an interdisciplinary relationship between art, design, architecture, and is involved in multiple projects. In 1959, she began designing the *ZERO House* in Milan, which was completed in 1962. Between 1964 and 1966, she participated in at least thirteen ZERO exhibitions and in 1965 she curated the legendary *ZERO Avantgarde* exhibition in Lucio Fontana's studio in Milan. Between 1965 and 1968 she collaborated and created the house *Lo scarabeo sotto la foglia* in Malo, in the province of Vicenza, with Gio Ponti. In the 1960s she also worked on and created *Chronotopes*, from the Greek *chronos* (time) and *topos* (place). In 1971 Vigo was awarded the New York Award for Industrial Design for her development of lamps (*Golden Gate* lamp) and in the same year she designed and realised one of her most spectacular projects for the Casa Museo Remo Brindisi in Lido di Spina near Ferrara. In 1976 she won the 1st St. Gobain Prize for glass design. In the 1970s she created the series of works entitled *Trigger of the Space*, while in 1980 she produced *Alfabeto Cosmogonico*. Works such as *Genesis*, *Deep Space* and *Galactica Sky* date from the 2000s. She died on 16 May 2020 in Milan and was awarded the XXVI Compasso d'Oro alla Carriera prize on 9 September.

Ascona (Switzerland), March 2023

NANDA VIGO. *Alfabeto Cosmogonico*

Ascona (Svizzera), Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna (via Borgo 34)

2 April – 25 June 2023

curated by Alberto Fiz in collaboration with Archivio Nanda Vigo

Opening: Saturday 1 April 2023, 6.30 pm

Opening hours:

Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.; 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday and holidays, 10.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.; 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Closed on Mondays

Tickets:

Full, 10.00 CHF/Euro

Reduced, 7.00 CHF/Euro (students, seniors, groups)

Free, up to 18 years of age

Information:

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