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#iamstayinghome

Galleria Fumagalli pays homage to Italian master **Maurizio Nannucci** a few days before his birthday, on 20th April, with a special focus featuring selected texts and images from the gallery's archive.

The focus' content will remain available at the page [#iamstayinghome](#) of our website.

MAURIZIO NANNUCCI



Maurizio Nannucci, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 2011. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

Born in 1939 in Florence, Maurizio Nannucci lives and works between his hometown and South Baden, Germany.

Since the early 1960s he has been exploring the relationship between language, writing and image, creating unprecedented conceptual works characterised by the use of different media: neon, photography, video, sound. **Nannucci analyses the spatial-conceptual sphere but also the perceptive-sensorial level of language, starting from the single letter. Through the introduction of neon in his works, he engenders a totalising involvement where words, light and colour stimulate the viewer's perception and thought.**

Part of Maurizio Nannucci's research is aimed at the diffusion and circulation of art: for this purpose he was the founder of the artist-run spaces Zona (Florence, 1974-1985) and Base/Progetti per l'arte (Florence, since 1998), besides being author and collector of multiples, records, books and artist's editions.

Since the early 1990s he has been collaborating with renowned architects such as Fritz Auer, Renzo Piano, Massimiliano Fuksas, Mario Botta, Nicolas Grimshaw and Stephan Braunfels. He realised several projects for public buildings, as for example **the latest neon work for the public art park ArtLine in Milan (2020) and the permanent work for the Pilotta Monumental Complex in Parma (2019).**

Countless international institutions dedicated solo exhibitions to him, among the most recent: MAMCO in Geneva (2017), Museo Marino Marini in Florence and Museo d'Inverno in Siena (2016), MAXXI in Rome and Museion in Bolzano (2015), Musée d'Art Moderne Saint-Étienne Metropole (2012), Uffizi Gallery in Florence (2010), Villa La Magia in Quarrata, Pistoia (2009), Palazzo della Triennale in Milan (2006), Altes Museum in Berlin and MART in Rovereto (2005), Art Metropole in Toronto (2003), Sprengel Museum Hannover (2002). Over the years Maurizio Nannucci has been invited to take part in the Biennale di

Venezia (2011, 2000, 1995, 1990, 1978, 1969), in Documenta, Kassel (1987, 1977), in the Biennials of San Paolo (1981), Sydney (1990, 1982), Istanbul (1995), and Valencia (2003).



Installation view of *Maurizio Nannucci. What to see what not to see*, Galleria Fumagalli, Milano, 2017. Ph. Antonio Maniscalco. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

THE BEGINNINGS

In the early 1960s the artist's investigation of the function of language was influenced by new interdisciplinary ways of expression and emerging phenomena such as the concrete poetry.

«I was interested in various areas of investigation: from new visual frontiers to electronic music, and from experimental theatre to new forms of language and literature. In that climate of great openness I felt an urgent need to find more congenial milieus that would offer me the chance to express, through my work, the full potential of the changes underway. So I immediately moved away from the so-called academic disciplines, giving up painting and preserving only black-and-white and monochrome, though not for long. Likewise, I decided to use drawing only as a design tool. Then I went on to investigate the possibilities of employing **unusual materials, experimenting with new media, which I explored in various forms - visual, audio, or purely communicative - that evolved into full-fledged collective projects and publishing initiatives.**» M.N.

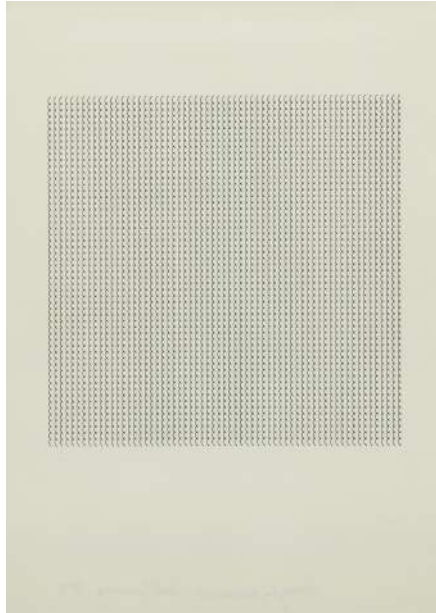


Maurizio Nannucci. Ph. Gabriele Detterer. Courtesy the artist

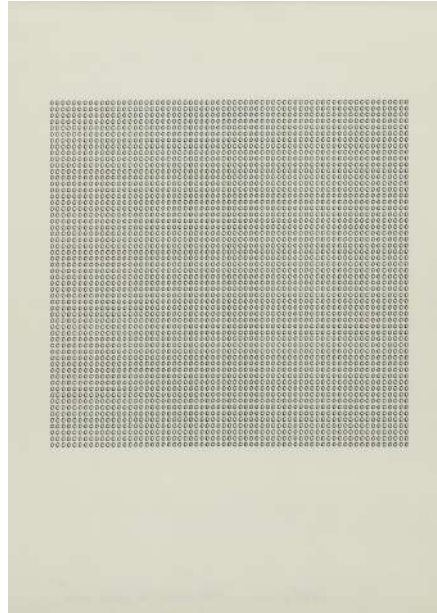
DATTILOGRAMMI

Maurizio Nannucci's search for the spatial, perceptive and emotional implications that language conveys if related to a context. The research started from the single letter, as in the *Dattilogrammi* series, actual examples of concrete poetry where the focus has been transferred from the content of the text to its constituents - words, syllables, phonemes, letters - whose typographical and geometrical effect is enhanced.

«In 1964 I made the first *Dattilogrammi*, a series that would last a couple of years, using a small Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter that was my mind-machine, my media, my creative tool; along with sheets of white or coloured paper, my preferred surface on which to structure a word or sign as a pure geometric form, in its linear and minimalist specificity. I didn't need a studio; all it took was a table, wherever I was. In 1967 several *Dattilogrammi* were published in the *Anthology of Concrete Poetry* edited by Emmett Williams; the same year, I made several pieces that were key to the development of my work: they included *M40*, a mapping of the typewriter keyboard, whose repeated marks generated an infinite series of combinations and textures.» M.N.



Maurizio Nannucci, *Dattilogramma* (, 1964, typewritten text on paper, 31,5x22,5x1,7 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli



Maurizio Nannucci, *Dattilogramma o*, 1965, typewritten text on paper, 31,5x22,5x1,7 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKS

Alongside the studies on the word/letter, Maurizio Nannucci investigates the theme of colour perception.

«This was also the period of my first photographic works, like the black-and-white photos with inserted text; I'm thinking of *Moving Stars* and other pieces that explored the relationship between natural and cultural, artificial and environmental... One example is the *Giardini Botanici* series, still in progress, and the sequence of *Sessanta verdi naturali*. The latter explored the specific nature and the declination of one colour through all its different possibilities, in the universe it belongs to... Nature, of course.» M.N.

Starting from the sampling of 60 plant species, the study *Sessanta verdi naturali* aims at showing the evident insufficiency of the word/concept (green) compared to its actual manifestation in nature, and therefore to suggest a more correct chromatic nomenclature.



Maurizio Nannucci, *Sessanta Verdi Naturali*, 1977. One folded page published by Galerie Im Taxispalais, Innsbruck & Renzo Spagnoli Editore, Florence. Edited by Maurizio Nannucci & Peter Weiermair, 33,5x11,3 cm. Courtesy the artist

LIGHT - COLOUR

Since the late 1960s Maurizio Nannucci has introduced neon. The light and colour emanated from the neon tubes define the spatial aspect of the work and activate an exchange with the viewer, motivating them to a more in-depth and renewed relationship between their own sensorial and conceptual perception, and the surrounding.

«Neon allows me to shape and reshape space into sensations and concepts that come very close to the degree zero of representation, while opening up new perspectives and horizons of perception and interaction with the reality.» M.N.



Maurizio Nannucci, Blue, 1970, blue neon, acrylic tempera on canvas mounted on wooden panel, 150x150x8 cm.
Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

The first tautological researches, shown in the work *Blue* where the artist evokes the constitutive elements of the work through the word "blue", are followed by a practice that expresses an open language in relation to the physical context and the personal projections - psychological and emotional - of the viewer.

In his works the single word is usually linked to others to form sentences, or, if isolated, it connects visually to what is around thanks to its halo of light and color, thus **evoking conceptual connections in the viewer's mind**.

«The word, always suspended between the possibility of significance and the physical, chromatic reality of sign, opens itself up to dialectical interaction with the surrounding space. [...] By using colour and light as elements that both blend and delimit word and architecture, I make the work take shape as a new reality: of sign and meaning.» M.N.



Installation views of *Maurizio Nannucci. Neon Words*, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 2005. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

Nannucci's writings suggest comparison and dialectic. The meaning remains elusive, unresolved, but the purpose of the artist is not to offer closed solutions, but to reflect and allude to the different possibilities of reading and interpreting the signs that surround us.

For example, the strict dialectic between two opposite sentences does not express a peremptory affirmation, but rather a continuous suspension of the semiologic and semantic components of the reality in a precarious but generative space between affirmation and negation.

«I believe that the image transcends the limits of representation, becoming a mental image, a virtual image that is born of a dream or an eye-catching dream, a visual and relative image, which can be summoned by a word, a sound, or a scent» M.N.



Maurizio Nannucci, *What to hear what not to hear*, 2017, neon, 310x170x5 cm. Ph. Antonio Maniscalco. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

LIGHT - ARCHITECTURE

In the early 90s Nannucci started to collaborate with internationally renowned architects such as Fritz Auer, Renzo Piano, Massimiliano Fuksas, Mario Botta, Nicolas Grimshaw and Stephan Braunfels, conceiving large neon installations for important Italian and European institutions.

In these cases it is even more evident how light, along with the content of writings, creates a strong physical, conceptual and even emotional tension with the lines, angles, surfaces of the space where the work is placed.

The writings are often set up in places that solicit the active participation of the viewer, such as in the case of the work at the Bury Art Gallery Museum, *Different languages same places different places same culture different cultures same horizons*, which can be read only by rotating on themselves. No punctuation, no beginning, no end: the self-reflectivity of the text visually and conceptually works, celebrating the interactions between peoples and languages.



Maurizio Nannucci, *Different languages same places...*, Bury Art Gallery Museum, Bury (UK), 2005. Courtesy the artist

«I felt the need to redefine my work spatially, moving from the emblematic space of the white page to an architectural one, as a medium to be dialectically connected to the word. Occupying space with the word - which in addition to expressing a concept also represents a physical form - makes the text come out of the page, become an environment, invade the architecture, then expand into the urban landscape, taking it over.» M.N.



Maurizio Nannucci, *More than meets the eye*, MAXXI, Rome, 2015. Ph. Musacchio&Ianniello. Courtesy the artist

DIFFUSION OF ART: THE ARTIST-RUN SPACES AND THE PUBLISHING ACTIVITY

In 1974 Maurizio Nannucci founded **Zona**, a non profit artist-run spaces in Florence (active until 1985): **this is another way to actualise the continuous search for relationships with the physical environment and the audience, but also with the artistic context.**

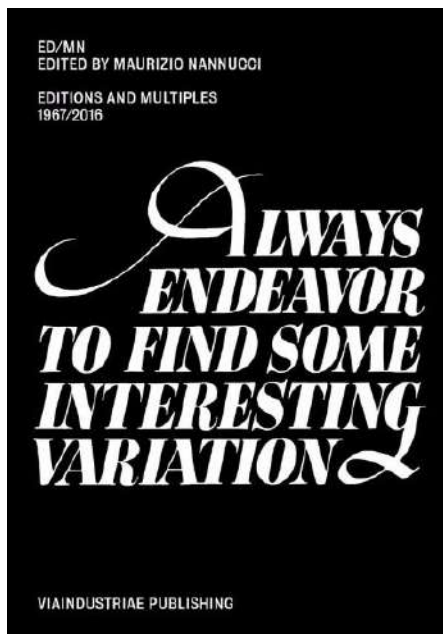
Zona aimed at being a place of art diffusion, an alternative to the spaces institutionally dedicated to the art exhibition. Involving the experimental artistic movements of the 1970s and 1980s (multimedia art, concrete poetry, conceptual art, performance), Zona sought an overcome of the traditional borders between disciplines, and the geographical spread of contemporary experimentations. It promotes artist's film festivals and since 1981 the creation of the radio station Zonaradio, only intended for the broadcasting of experimental music. Although the space was closed in 1985, Maurizio Nannucci continues its publishing activity through **Zona Archives**.



Installation view of *Concrete Poetry Cabinet*, curated by Maurizio Nannucci and Gabriele Detterer, in collaboration with Zona Archives Collection - Florence, MAMCO, Geneva, 2016. Ph. Annik Wetter. Courtesy MAMCO, Geneva.

In 1998 the artist founded **Base/Progetti per l'arte** in Florence. From Zona it inherited the management by a collective of artists, however it became a meeting point not only between international experiences but also between different generations.

«Though it's inspired by the same concepts and principles, Base grew out of a social and historical context that had radically changed since the era of Zona. While the latter was a full-fledged workshop involving young artists, Base is a space of research and dialogue, but involving different generations, in terms of both the members of the collective and the artists invited to take part in the project. I like to think of it as a link between past and present, past and future.» M.N.



Always pursuing the objective of creating an artistic network, over the years the artist has realised multiples, records, artist's books (with the Zone Archives, Recordings and Exempla editions) both as author and publisher.

The multiple and the edition, as well as the collective undertakings, the anthologies, the collaborations, are for Maurizio Nannucci a way not only to expand the circulation of his work, but also to structurally change its nature, pushing its material and semantic boundaries and extending the creative process to the entire range of social, geographic, verbal connections in which the artist moves.

His extensive and prolific publishing production, which involves the most important museums, publishers and many international artists, has been recently cataloged and published, featuring multiples, photographs/prints/posters, catalogs, editions, artist's books, audiovisuals, from 1967 to 2016.

ED/MN EDITED BY MAURIZIO NANNUCCI / EDITIONS AND MULTIPLES 1967/2016, catalogue raisonné of all the artist's editions and multiples from 1967 to 2016, edited by Maurizio Nannucci, published by Viaindustriae and Colli publishing platform, 2016.

Last November Maurizio Nannucci presented the largest permanent work in Italy, **TIME, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**, created for the Pilotta Monumental Complex in Parma.



Featuring 55 neon letters made of Murano glass illuminated by blue light, the 190-meter-long installation is the winner of the IV edition of the Italian Council (2018). Set along the sides of San Pietro's courtyard at the Pilotta Monumental Complex in Parma, the writing refers to the verses from *Burnt Norton* by Thomas S. Eliot «Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future», **evoking the overcoming of traditional past/present/future categories and proposing the idea of fluid time.**

[WATCH THE VIDEO →](#)

Video published by Lara Facco P&C. Directed by Francesco Campanini / Filmed by Matteo Fornari (Comune di Parma), Daniele Fratta (Protezione Civile) Claudio Rangoni (Polizia Municipale). Courtesy Pilotta Monumental Complex, Parma.

To learn more about the artist's work, visit [Galleria Fumagalli's website](#).

Texts partially drawn from the conversation between Maurizio Nannucci and Hou Hanru, from the texts *Words and Images* by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi and *Let's Talk About Art. The Multiples of Maurizio Nannucci* by Stefano Chiodi, included in the catalog of the exhibition *Maurizio Nannucci. Where To Start From*, curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, held at the MAXXI, Rome (26 June - 18 October 2015); from the text *Creating Space, Defining Place: Maurizio Nannucci's Text Interventions* by Lóránd Hegyi, included in the catalog of the exhibition *Maurizio Nannucci. There is another way of looking at things*, held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Étienne Métropole (23 June - 30 September 2012).
