

GLADSTONE GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mario Merz 530 West 21st Street Opening September 18, 2008

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of historic work by Mario Merz. A major figure in the Arte Povera movement of the 1960s and 70s, Merz's use of both organic and industrial materials was at the forefront of the movement's artistic identity. Roughly translated as "poor art," Merz along with counterparts such as Alighiero e Boetti and Luciano Fabro wanted to separate the art object from consumer capital, emphasizing conceptual process and everyday forms as the most transcendent methods of universal communication. Best known for his igloos and neon Fibonacci sequences, Mario Merz's shamanistic installations become spaces both primal and technological, where the scientific basis of organic life confronts the roaming imagination of man.

The igloo began appearing in Merz's work in 1967 and continued throughout his life. He saw the mobility of this typical shelter for nomadic wandering as an ideal metaphor for the space of the artist. Delineating interior and exterior, the igloo allows the artist domain anywhere, and for any time, along the spectrum of human existence. In this exhibition, the gallery will show two igloos that incorporate Merz's signature use of metal, neon lights, and animal forms. Often bringing together disparate ideas or forms, the igloos straddle dichotomies: as Merz said: "I work with contradiction – neon and canvas, glass and wax, electrical technology and mud. Everything is a contradiction because without that there is no life."

In addition to the igloo, Merz was fascinated by the Fibonacci sequence, the mathematical pattern (named for the Italian monk who discovered it) that reveals the growth rate of many organic materials (the nautilus shell, leaves, pinecones, antlers, etc.). The pattern is identifiable as a sequence of numbers in which any given number is the sum of the two numbers that precede it: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, etc., *ad infinitum*. Fashioned in neon and draped along walls, often punctuating the hemispheres of his igloos or marking the facades of buildings, Merz's use of the Fibonacci sequence speaks to the artist's strong belief in the potentiality of growth and the ability to transform through eternity. His belief in the omnipresent domain of the human experience, its continuing power to grow, and his transformation of waste into the conduits of his concepts speaks directly to his empathic embrace of life.

Mario Merz was born in 1925 and died in 2003. He was awarded the Ambrogino Gold Prize, Milan; the Oskar Kokoschka Prize, Vienna; and the Arnold Bode Prize, Kassel. He was the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at institutions around the world, including Fundação de Serralves, Porto; Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisberg; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. His work is currently on view as part of "Life on Mars: 55th Carnegie International" in Pittsburgh, PA. The Fondazione Merz in Turin, Italy, regularly displays both the works of its namesake and sponsors exhibitions by living artists.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm
For further information please contact Eric Nylund
T: 212 206 9300 enylund@gladstonegallery.com
At 515 West 24th street: Jean-Luc Mylayne opening September 10