

PAULA SEEGY

GALLERY

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Via San Maurilio 14 – Milan

Gillo Dorfles. Ibridi e personaggi *Curated by Martina Corgnati*

20 November 2025 – 31 January 2026
opening Thursday 20 November, 6 p.m

The **Paula Seegy Gallery** pays tribute to **Gillo Dorfles**, a multifaceted figure in the contemporary artistic and cultural scene, with the exhibition 'Gillo Dorfles. Ibridi e personaggi' curated by Martina Corgnati, on display from **20 November 2025 to 31 January 2026**.

Through a careful selection of works including pieces on paper, canvas, sculptures, ceramic plates and bowls created between 1946 and 2013, the exhibition traces the intelligent, brilliant, charismatic and ironic presence of the artist and critic on the art scene. Throughout his life, both as a theorist and as an artist, Dorfles cultivated a position detached from conformism and academic rules, which allowed him to develop critical insights, innovative theories and, at the same time, an original visual style; two sides of the same inseparable research.

The exhibition illustrates the salient stages of Dorfles' long artistic career, from his beginnings to the founding of the MAC Movimento Arte Concreta (Concrete Art Movement), where he found fertile ground for the growth of his poetics and critical activity, until, following a hiatus lasting about twenty years, a unique stylistic signature and an expressiveness that he never abandoned, which took shape in his experimentation with different techniques, from ceramics to pencil, tempera and acrylics. His remarkable versatility can also be seen in his use of colour, which ranges from aqua green to candy pink, from fuchsia to blue, as can be seen in the works *Un occhio, una mano* (1989), *Il regno vegetale* (1989), *Due schieramenti* (2001) and *Lumacone* (2004).

The walls are populated by papers and canvases featuring "hybrid characters", as Martina Corgnati puts it, *'amoeboid jugglers, distinguished gentlemen wearing bow ties, even an irreverent portrait of Sigmund Freud, prodigious and big-eared couples, all fluid and ready to suddenly return to those pure games of lines and arabesques in childish colours from which they emerged, apparently just a moment before'*.

An unmistakable style and iconic visual language can be found in the plates and bowls that dominate the centre of the room next to the large fibreglass sculpture measuring 148x78 cm.

Among the works on display, visitors can also admire a depiction of "Vitriol", an esoteric character invented by Dorfles, in whom he saw himself reflected and who often appeared in his drawings and notes from 2010 onwards. The meaning of the acronym often used by alchemists, "Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem", or "Visit the interior of the earth and, through successive purifications, you will find the hidden stone", becomes a sort of mantra that sees in figuration the possibility of bringing hidden aspects of the unconscious to the conscious level.

Far from geometric schematics and pre-established rules, the artist prefers to represent images that come to mind, figures dictated by the imagination in an instinctive, unfiltered way. Soft lines,

sinuous volumes and fluid shapes, animated by symbolic elements, intertwine in a visual texture that reflects a free gesture, almost entrusted to the spontaneity of the hand and its unconscious intelligence. From one image to another, from one mark to another, an ironic and poetic thread unfolds, describing the many facets of a creative, free and unconventional personality, unique in the Italian and international scene.

Biographical Notes

Gillo Dorfles was born in Trieste in 1910. After the outbreak of the First World War, his family moves to Genoa, where the artist spends his childhood. When the war ends, he returns to Trieste where he studies at the Classical Lyceum. He moves to Milan in 1928 to study medicine, but after three years he decides to complete his university studies in Rome under Cesare Frugoni; he graduates in 1934, specializing in neuropsychiatry.

In the 1930s he is active as an art critic and essayist, contributing to *La Rassegna d'Italia*, *Le Arti Plastiche*, *La Fiera Letteraria*, *Il Mondo*, *Domus*, *Aut Aut*, *The Studio*, *The Journal of Aesthetics*.

He starts painting in the 1930s. In 1948, together with Bruno Munari, Atanasio Soldati, and Gianni Monnet, he founds the Movimento Arte Concreta (MAC), whose aim is to breathe life into a new artistic language, capable of assimilating and superseding the European abstract research in the previous decades. The 1950s mark the beginning of Dorfles' theoretical and critical activity, which is unquestionably innovative and disruptive with respect to the still-dominant assumptions based on Croce's ideas. Dorfles is especially interested in the phenomena of mass communication, fashion, design, as well as painting, sculpture, and modern and contemporary architecture. Since the 1960s he has taught aesthetics in several Italian universities (Milan, Trieste, Cagliari), and since the 1980s he has gone back to painting and graphic art, which he had been forced to interrupt owing to his work.

His numerous publications include: *Discorso tecnico delle arti* (1952), *Le oscillazioni del gusto* (1958), *Il divenire delle arti* (1959), *Ultime tendenze nell'arte d'oggi* (1961), *Nuovi riti, nuovi miti* (1965), *L'estetica del mito* (1967), *Artificio e natura* (1968), *Kitsch. Antologia del cattivo gusto* (1968), *Elogio della disarmonia* (1986), *L'intervallo perduto* (1988), *Itinerario estetico* (2011).

In 2010, Gillo Dorfles. *Calalogue raisonné*, edited by L. Sansone, Edizioni Mazzotta, Milan is published; the volume documents all of Dorfles' paintings, graphic art, and ceramic work.

In 2015 *Gli artisti che ho incontrato*, edited by L. Sansone, is published by Skira; it is a collection of contemporary art essays published by Dorfles from the early 1930s to 2015.

Dorfles has been internationally acknowledged as both an artist and a critic. In recent years exhibitions dedicated to his work have been held in Milan, (PAC, 2001, "The clandestine painter", his first retrospective exhibition, Palazzo Reale, 2010, Fondazione Marconi, 2014), Bologna (Circolo Artistico, 2002), Trieste (Museo Revoltella, 2007), Chiasso (Max Museo, 2010), Rovereto (Mart, 2011), Urbino (Casa Raffaello, 2014), Rome (Macro, 2015).

Exhibition details

Title Gillo Dorfles. *Ibridi e personaggi*

Venue Paula Seegy Gallery, via San Maurilio 14 - Milano

Date 20 November 2025 – 31 January 2026

Exhibition opening Thursday 20 November, 6 p.m

Opening hours Tuesday to Friday, 12 p.m – 7 p.m

Free admission

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