

## MARIO MERZ

*Senza Titolo*, 1975, pencil on paper, 85,4 x 63,5 cm

Mario Merz (1925-2003) is one of the major figures of the Italian Arte Povera movement of the 'sixties and 'seventies. He developed a conceptual practice based on the use of organic materials, industrial elements or inert objects frequently associated with phrases or numbers in neon.

The work shown here has a historic side, considering the year in which it was created, but also because it shows clearly one of the foundations of Merz's work: the Fibonacci sequence. This mathematical sequence was published in 1202 in Pisa by Leonardo da Pisa, also known as Fibonacci. It is based on a simple idea that each number in the sequence is the sum of the two that precede it. For example:  $0+1 = 1$ , then  $1+1 = 2$ , then  $1+2 = 3$ ,  $2+3 = 5$  and then exponentially to infinity. Written in sequence, that gives: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 88, ... The sequence expands rapidly and grows like a living being. Obviously there is no end to this operation; it is infinite. The idea of a space without limitations and the existence of a harmonic law of the future have led Merz to use this sequence as a leitmotiv in his work. It is also interesting to consider what Giovanni Lista pointed out in a text about the artist: "The symbolic significance of the Fibonacci sequence is that any forward progression is based on the past". A good example in situ is on a famous historic building in the city of Turin, the Mole, where Merz installed in 1998 *Il volo dei numeri* (The flight of numbers) with a neon Fibonacci sequence which rises skyward.

The drawing shown in the Wunderkammer is quite simple and uncluttered and refers to various works of the 1970s in which he applies this principle of growth to the object "table", which is a recurring element in his work. Seeing it as a convivial item, bringing together a community, fostering interaction and symbolising rites of meeting, Merz wrote in 1973 in the catalogue of the exhibition at the John Weber Gallery in New York:

"I reject linear, one by one, or assembly-line fabrication of spaces. I reject the idea that there can be a fixed number of people in a space. Tables which belong to the *reality of daily life* have to be made either for a full space or for an empty space... For one person. For another person. For two people then. For three people. For five people. For eight people. For thirteen people. For twenty-one people. For thirty-four people." Le titre du catalogue est "*It is as possible to have a space with tables for 88 people as it is as possible to have a space with tables for no one*"...