

Mario Merz

22 January – 13 March, 2026

Preview: 21 January 6–8 pm



Mario Merz, *La pianta della vite nella sfera occidentale*, 1991

Sprovieri is delighted to present a solo exhibition dedicated to Mario Merz, a central figure of *Arte Povera* and a leading voice in one of the most radical reflections on space, dwelling, and the relationship between nature and culture in the second half of the twentieth century. At the heart of the exhibition stands *La Pianta della Vite nella Sfera Occidentale* (1991), one of Merz's most intense and complex igloos—an in-between work, poised at the threshold of architecture, living organism, and thought.

The igloo—a hemispherical structure measuring three metres in diameter—emerges from a metal framework clad in bundles of wood, held in place by a mesh that follows their irregular inclinations. Among the vegetal fibres surface a metal funnel and a long cylinder of beeswax: silent, almost ritual presences that introduce a different sense of time—slow, archaic. The work is not built through accumulation, but through resting and contact: materials supporting one another, curves receiving planes, stability and tension coexisting.

Here, architecture sheds all functional rigidity and draws close to the growth of a plant. The cladding becomes a primary gesture, a founding act of space: not a wall, but a skin; not a closed structure, but a living surface. In this transfiguration of architecture into a natural organism echoes, from afar, the intuition of Gottfried Semper, for whom the origin of dwelling lies not in stone, but in weaving, in interlacing, in defining space through a flexible and mobile envelope.

The title of the work opens onto a layered symbolic horizon. The bundles of wood allude to the vine, a plant of growth and transformation, while the hemisphere suggests a fragment of the world—a terrestrial hemisphere, perhaps Western, perhaps mental. It is a poetic and cultural geography in which the “plant of life” rests upon the shape of the world, questioning its very foundations.

Since the 1960s, Merz has made the igloo a necessary form: neither house nor sculpture, but an autonomous and absolute space. A place that withdraws from use in order to become thought. The igloo does not welcome the body, but activates the mind; it does not protect, but exposes. It is a theoretical space that arises within practical space, establishing with it a direct—at times conflictual, yet always vital—encounter.

Resting directly on the ground, the igloo asserts its presence as an event: an elementary form immediately recognised by the eye, because it measures itself, without excess or reduction. Within it and around it, opposites coexist—inside and outside, light and dark, lightness and weight—the very contradictions that traverse human experience. In this tension, transposed into matter, the work finds its energy.

The exhibition thus becomes a site of passage: an encounter with a form that is at once archaic and profoundly contemporary, capable of making a concrete utopia visible. An impracticable architecture that offers no solutions, but opens questions. The igloo is accompanied by several paintings featuring geometric figures depicting tables and cones, recurring themes in Mario Merz's work. Here, when overturned and flattened, they lose their physicality, turning into images that transcend reality. All these works continue to interrogate our way of inhabiting the world.

The show is organised in collaboration with Fondazione Merz, with a sincere thanks to Galleria Giorgio Persano.