

GREGORIO VARDANEGA

b. 1923, Possagno, Italy  
d. 2007, Paris, France

Born in Possagno Italy, Gregorio Vardanega's family relocated to Buenos Aires when he was three years old. As a young man, he studied in the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes (1939-1946) in Buenos Aires, and graduated as professor of drawing. In 1946, he participated in the exhibitions organized by the Asociación Arte Concreto-Inventiva, and two years later, he traveled with Carmelo Arden Quin to Europe. The trip was an important moment in the artist's formation; a year later, he showed work at the Salon de Amérique latine in Paris, and this exhibition put him in contact with the important figures involved in Paris's growing kinetic movement, including Denise René, Georges Vantongerloo, Nicolas Pevsner, Sonia Delaunay, Max Bill, and Constantin Brancusi. When he returned to Buenos Aires, he began making his earliest kinetic works, using metal bands and celluloid.

At the center of many of Argentina's avant-garde artistic circles, Vardanega was a founding member of the Asociación Arte Nuevo in 1955 and, the following year, of Artistas No Figurativos Argentinos (ANFA). In 1957, he was included in the group exhibition 14 Pintores abstractos at the Galatea gallery in Buenos Aires. He received the gold medal in the International Exposition in Brussels in 1957, and was included in the IV São Paulo Bienal.

In 1959, Vardanega moved to Paris with Martha Boto, and began experimenting with Plexiglas spheres, illuminated with moving projections of colored lights. All of his subsequent work explored the aesthetic of light, movement, color, and electronic programs. He was especially drawn to the cultural phenomena of machines that "think." As did many kinetic artists, Vardanega thought of his work as in dialogue with architecture and urban planning. He hoped his towers and light works would be accompanied by music and other modes of performative work; he considered many of the sculptures to be prototypes for large-scale public projects. His first major exhibition in Paris, Chromocinétisme (1964), was a two-person show with Boto at the Maison des Beaux-Arts. His work has subsequently been included in numerous important surveys of kinetic art.

Vardanega died in Paris in 2007.