Vera Molnar

What Matters is the Adventure

January 31 – March 6, 2026

Vera Molnar, Lettres de Ma Mere (Letters from My Mother), 1990, Computer ink and handwork on paper, 12 1/2 x 16 3/8 in, 31.8 x 41.6 cm (VM 039)

Van Doren Waxter is pleased to present *What Matters is the Adventure*, showcasing works by the pioneering computer artist, Vera Molnar (b. 1924 – d. 2023). Encapsulating five decades of Molnar's career, *What Matters is the Adventure* shares works that have never been shown outside the artist's studio, including her pre-computer hand drawings and collages, as well as her computer-generated works. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog with an essay by the curator and art historian, Isabelle Dervaux.

At the center of this exhibition lies a challenging and pertinent question: What happens to art when the human way of thinking is perpetually affected by a computer? In the modern day, we interpret our lives through a digital calendar that organizes our schedule, and the pixelated images of people and products percolate into every aspect

of our consumption. As one of the first artists to incorporate computers in her practice, Molnar's work serves as a comprehensive example of art in the age of the computer.

Molnar's practice grew from a strong foundation in geometric abstraction. Starting from Cubism learned through the works of Picasso and Braque, to the Concrete Art movement in Paris in the 1930s and the 40s, Molnar was visually inclined to geometry, and methodically inclined to modular systems. Before she gained access to a computer in 1968, Vera Molnar had already implemented algorithmic structures into image-making. When drawing with her hand, she imposed a set of rules with variable permutations, which led to a series of different images. Like throwing dice to decide the positions and colors of squares on a gridded canvas, the authority of chance remained, but it was partially transferred to the dice from the artist. This curiosity for automation developed into a collaborative practice when Molnar started using the computer. To instruct a computer as big as herself, with a mechanical arm that transported the blotter pen on top of paper, Molnar repeated the process of feeding an instruction, reviewing the results, and then modifying the instruction. The interventions of the artist were informed by the surprises that the machine delivered, which were images produced with alternating combinations of variables at a speed and accuracy that the artist could not accomplish on her own. Towards the computer-generated images, Molnar took aesthetic authority to determine which images incited a visual sensation.

In Vera Molnar's generative process, the computer is not an independent machine that creates art, but the result of human desire to explore every possible outcome. Through Molnar's works, we reflect on the collapse of boundaries between art and science, and the ultimately human power to determine what moves us.

Additionally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Laurence Shopmaker and Isabelle Spaak, who have been instrumental in seeing this exhibition to fruition.

Vera Molnar, *30 lignes (sur 60 possibles) au hasard liant 2 a 2 horizontal et vertical alternativement (30 lines out of 60 possibilities by chance linked 2 by 2 horizontal and vertical alternatively)*, 1959, Glossy tape collage on board, 15 3/4 x 15 3/4 in (40 x 40 cm) (VM 018)

About the Artist

Vera Molnar (b. 1924 – d. 2023) is one of the pioneers of computer and algorithmic arts. Trained as a traditional artist, Molnar studied for a diploma in art history and aesthetics at the Budapest College of Fine Arts. She iterated combinatorial images from as early as 1959. In 1968, she began working with computers, where she began to create algorithmic paintings based on simple geometric shapes and geometrical themes.

In the 1960s, Molnar was a founding member of two artist collectives: GRAV (Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel) a collaborative that expanded the boundaries of kinetic and optical art, and Art et Informatique, the focus of which was algorithmic art and color variables. Molnar learned the early programming languages of Fortran and Basic, and gained access to a computer at a research lab in Paris, where she began to make computer graphics drawings on a plotter.

Vera Molnar's works have been widely exhibited around the world, and her works reside in public collections, including but not limited to: Centre Pompidou, Paris; The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.