



laboratorio d'arte
palazzo delle esposizioni



Giuseppe Chiari, art/tapes/22
Photo © Gianni Melotti,
Archivio Gianni Melotti, Florence

for activity
for kids

GIUSEPPE CHIARI

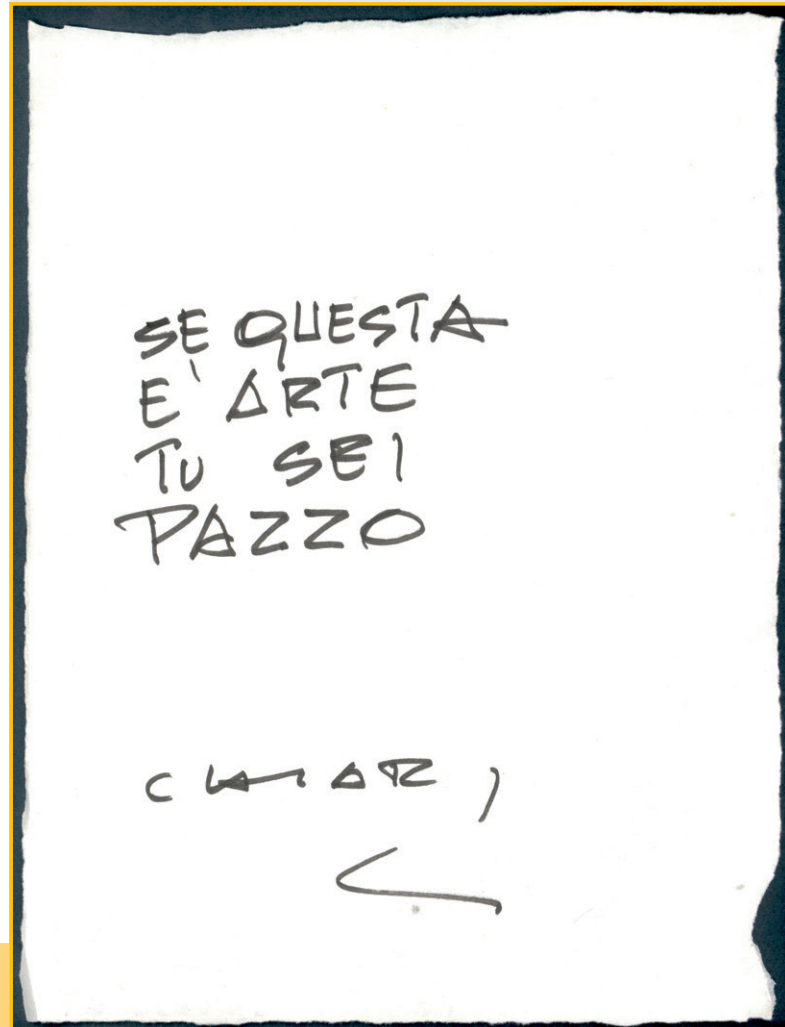
was born in 1926 in Florence where he studied mathematics,
engineering and the piano.

He became a composer and all his life he never stopped searching,
experimenting, listening and exploring. He was a painter, musician,
performer, theoretician and a visual artist, a decidedly eclectic
and eccentric figure like several others who were presented at the
Rome Art Quadriennale in 2020.

He took an interest in conceptual art* and, in particular, in the experiments of John Cage who was famous for revolutionising musical composition using silence and chance.

Giuseppe Chiari was also attracted by visual music* experiments and in his research he began to cause arts traditionally considered different from one another to interact, combining hearing and seeing. In fact he propelled the two forms of expression towards one another, causing them to meet so that sound became visual and drawing became sound. With him, musical scores* were no longer simply a way of conveying musical thought, they became independent objects in their own right, objects that can be gazed at and mused upon for their own intrinsic aesthetic qualities.

Chiari also mixed gesture and language with music and image, using all the means at his disposal: drawings, collages, written texts and stamps on musical staves, even including his own performances which he called "action music", where the artist combines highly unusual sound elements with traditional instruments.



If This Is Art..., 1999
Felt-tip pen on paper 27 x 20 cm
Liliana Dematteis collection
Courtesy Simone Frittelli arte contemporanea, Florence

The use of words, of short statements such as “art is easy”, “music is easy” or “art is a little thing”, was a ploy the artist used to reaffirm his belief, with irony and a hint of provocation, that any gesture, any sound, any noise can be art.

Does music exist only when there are sounds organised on the basis of a specific rhythm or melody? Do you only play music sitting down and looking all prim and proper? In 1960 Chiari stopped composing music on the pentagram* the way he’d been taught at school and started to perform in the first person, anywhere and everywhere and playing any kind of instrument, turning his back on the traditional notion of composing music for other musicians because in his view you can’t split the composer from the performer or the listener.

He gave public performances of his *Gestures on a Piano* (1963) and his *Methods for Playing* (1976) the piano, cello and guitar but also water, stones, dried leaves, nets, ladders, paper, bodies and even entire rooms! His concerts turned into action-packed theatricals, and music entered art galleries and the artistic research of many contemporary artists.



* glossary

CONCEPTUAL ART This movement, which got off the ground in the 1960s, refers to works of art built around ideas and concepts. Artist expressed themselves using objects, actions and conduct to highlight the mental process that spawned the work.

VISUAL MUSIC Also known as *music in colour*, this is a kind of music that uses different types of media to explore the potential pairing up of sound and image.

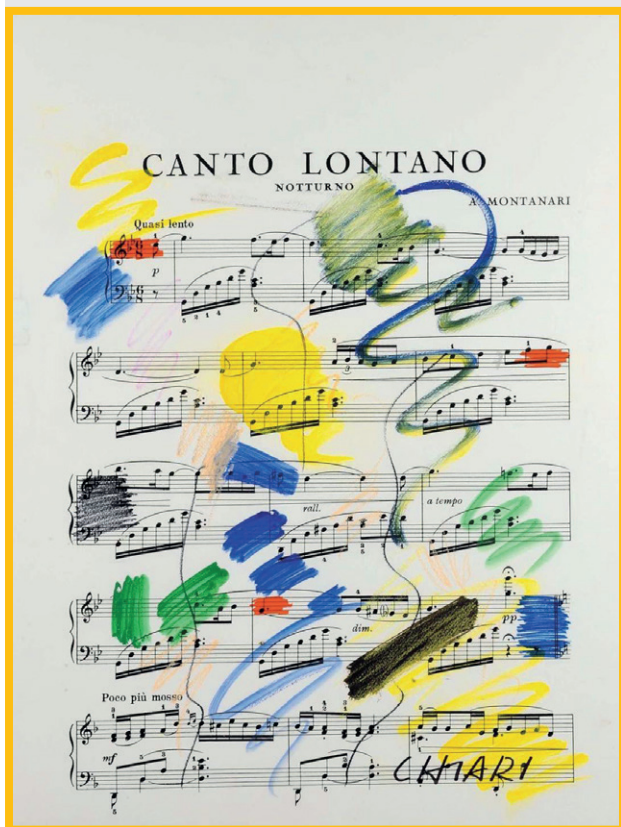
MUSICAL SCORES This is the graphic organisation of a musical composition in which the composer uses conventional symbols to indicate notes, rhythm, chords, beat, silences and refrains.

PENTAGRAM Also known as a musical stave, it consists of five parallel lines with a space in between each where composers write the notes, pauses, tempo and pace of their music. The word comes from the Greek *penta* (five) and *gramma* (writing). The lower notes are written lower down on the pentagram and the higher notes are written on the upper lines.

*Art isn't a a a a a a a a a a a a
/ art is a b c d e f g h i l / art
doesn't exist / art is related
to art / art exists / it's a
relationship between art
and art*

fun fact

In 1968 Giuseppe Chiari performed an action-concert that has gone down in history, entitled *Playing a Room*. It was a radical experiment in which the artist made musical instruments take a second-row seat in order to play with his own hands and with a wooden stick on the walls, floor, light switches and anything else he could play in the room using percussion-like or rubbing gestures.



Distant Chant, 2006
Mixed technique,
88 x 72 cm
Courtesy Archivio Chiari

Send a photograph of your work to our e-mail address: laboratoriodarte@palaexpo.it and we'll publish it on the *Give Us a Sign* page on our website: www.palazzoesposizioni.it



In any event, we can now say what music is. Now we know. Music is playing. Music is playing. Music is playing. Music is playing.

With his painted musical scores Giuseppe Chiari showed how music can interact with graphic work. Several artists both today and in the past have worked on the relationship between art and music, transcribing into painting what they felt when listening to a tune, a note, a rhythm or a sound.

Get hold of an empty musical score, or else print the example on the last page, and choose your favourite pastel, tempera or water colours. Choose a song and, listening to it really hard, try to reproduce in drawing and colours the feelings you get when you hear the various bits of the tune. You can listen to it several times over if you like. Your score will show an alternation of full and empty spaces, different rhythms and atmospheres associated with thin, straight, curved or zigzagging lines, splotches of colour, squirts and squiggles, black dots and thick marks drawn either slowly or quickly. Don't be afraid of the result, the aim of this activity is to get you to step outside the box and find new ways of expressing your personal ideas!

now you try!

