DARK MATTER

Aldo Tambellini, together with Otto Piene, was the maker of a fundamental work, *Black Gate Cologne*: the first television program ever created by artists, which also bears witness, in its sequences, to the artist's involvement with the American Civil Rights movement. An outstanding figure on the New York underground scene, activist, artist and poet, Tambellini is deservedly though belatedly gaining widespread attention, which sheds light on his activities and his commitment, with the Black Gate Theater, the Center for Advanced Visual Studies of MIT and the Zero Group. Ute Meta Bauer provides a thorough portrait of the artist and analysis of the recent work shown at the Venice Biennale.

The revolutionary artist and poet Aldo Tambellini was a formative figure of the New York underground scene of the 1960s. His perspective as an artist was first shaped through experiencing the death and destruction of World War II up close, while living in Italy with his family. Traumatic occurrences, along with memories of the oppressions of the Fascist regime, have had a lasting impact on him. Tambellini moved back to the United States after the war, received his MFA in 1959 from the University of Notre Dame, and then went to New York. Living on the Lower East Side, where he became part of the avant-garde scene, he continued his practice as a sculptor and painter but also began to engage in light-based performances. His ambition expanded to create direct sensorial experiences through art, and he invented so-called "art actions" before such practices were widely established. He presented his works primarily in public spaces such as churches, theaters, and the streets. Together with his then-wife, Elsa Tambellini, as well as Ron Hahne, Don Snyder, and Ben Morea, he organized and cofounded Group Center, an underground activist and counterculture collective that worked across various media, combining poetry, photography, choreography, and filmmaking. Interested in politics and resisting injustice, he was close to African American literary circles, primarily the Umbra Group.
Aldo Tambellini, a New York-based artist, was known for creating installations and performances that explored the idea of "black." His work often involved using black as a symbol of anti-material, anti-war, and anti-authoritarian themes. He was associated with various groups in the 1960s, including the Black Gate Theater, which was important for its avant-garde programming.

The Black Gate was a space in New York where artists could present their work without the constraints of traditional venues. It was run by Ute Meta Bauer and became a hub for experimental art and performance. Tambellini frequently presented his work there, and it was a space where he could experiment with new ideas and technologies.

Tambellini's work often involved using 35mm slides, which he projected onto buildings and walls. He would use a slide carousel to project different images, creating a dynamic and immersive experience for viewers.

The Black Gate was significant not only for its programming but also for its role as a meeting place for artists and activists. It was a space where ideas were shared and where artists could collaborate on new projects.

In a recent interview, Tambellini reflected on his work and its impact. He said, "Black" has always been a symbol of resistance for me. It's a color that represents anti-material and anti-war themes. I've used it in many of my performances and installations to convey my ideas to my audience."

Tambellini's work continues to be influential in the art world today, and his contributions to the movement of performance art and installation art are still being studied and appreciated by artists and scholars alike.
Hand painted glass slides, 1965-1968, from “Study of Internal Shapes and Outward Manifestations”.
Courtesy: Aldo Tambellini Archive, Cambridge, MA

Photo: © Tate Photography/Gabrielle Fonnae Johnson, 2012

Bottom - Black Gate Cologne, WDR TV, Cologne, 1968. Courtesy: Aldo Tambellini Archive, Cambridge, MA
Tambellini participò a politicamente caricate performance events che includono musicisti jazz come Bill Dixon e Archie Shepp. Il suo coinvolgimento con la comunità letteraria di attivisti neri, e il suo apprezzamento per la musica jazz come movimento culturale.

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