

# RIBOT

CORRADO LEVI

*Lettere agli amici*

*a project curated by Beppe Finessi*

10 December 2025 - 17 January 2026

Opening on Wednesday 10th December from 6 pm to 9 pm  
The artist will be present.

RIBOT gallery  
Via Enrico Nöe 23 – Milan

Opening hours: from Tuesday to Saturday / from 3 pm to 7.30 pm  
also by appointment

He has always loved writing. He has composed short treatises, kept diaries, distilled poems, played with rhyme, and sought (and found) a place entirely his own between visual poetry and concrete poetry with his sublime *Canti Spezzini*.

With words he has created works, and with the letters of the alphabet in particular he has experimented on several occasions — perhaps because imagining a new way of writing means “bringing the world into the world”, as his dear friend Alighiero once suggested.

So it was exactly a year ago, as a way of smiling at his friends, that Corrado Levi began painting an L for Lia, an A for Anna, an E for Elisa, a P for Primo, another L for Luisa, an F for Fabio, an S for Sandra, a G for Giacinto, an R for Rosa Maria, an O for Otto, an M for Monica... and from there began an undertaking that could not possibly end with New Year's greetings, as it had the energy and vision to go further and give life to a series of alphabets, each created through a different process. As doing the same thing while following different rules is one of his recurring methods, and certainly a homage to the beloved Raymond Queneau and his *Exercices de style*.

Thus, for the past fifty weeks, with daily dedication, he has embraced this new challenge, arriving today at over fifty sequences of twenty-six works/letters — series that differ from one another yet remain internally cohesive and coherent, all born of the same design logic.

Some series feature his beloved “three colours”, which he does not call “primary” but “those of art”: the reds, blues and yellows that here merge into a single whole. Others use the three colours of the Italian flag — green, white and red — blended in one sweeping “stroke”. But there are also monochrome sequences: one entirely blue that seems to recall the Majorelle of his years in Marrakech; one entirely red in homage to Mario Schifano, whom he had admired from the very beginning and supported in the early 1980s; one entirely black, where broad swathes of paint laid down with a wide spatula are then worked with its very tip to bring further marks into the “substance”; one entirely yellow, where the pencil underdrawing emerges and prevails over that bright yet transparent colour; and another entirely white, echoing the mischievous Piero Manzoni and the legendary Robert Ryman.

At first, the acrylic was applied straight from the tube, irregularly, sometimes in great quantity, while in the more recent series it is the spatula — in various sizes — that governs the distribution of colour. Yet the methods can be mixed: in one series the “spatulated” black letters sit on the right side of the sheet, while on the left three vertical yellow, red and blue stripes are applied directly from the tube. In a twin series, paying homage to the *Tour de France*, yellow letters (like the winner's jersey) are counterpointed by three blue, white and red signs, like the country's flag; while in yet another the letter is light blue and the three marks are those of the Italian tricolour (hip hip hooray!).

In one sequence, large letters challenge broad black Xs laid down earlier; in another, a brown frame (as if made of wood) borders the sheet and becomes the outline of a polychrome alphabet; and in yet another, a silvery circle enfolds a letter drawn freehand with a tube of gold paint.

# RIBOT

If acrylic dries on the cap and forms a little coloured concretion, even that can enter the composition, crystallising into a trio of “confetti” falling freely onto the sheet, balancing with their presence the drawing of the letters, which has meanwhile become more contained in scale. Levi has often used adhesive tape in his work — sometimes as a practical tool, sometimes as a material for mixed media. Thus one series is drawn by applying colour over fragments of masking tape, while in another the tape is removed after painting (as he did in his legendary action *Pittura su muro e porta*, 1985), leaving the letters incomplete and partly enigmatic, as in the sequence where only half of each letter is coloured and the other half is left to a thin trace of graphite.

Small gambles are not lacking, such as a series marked by holes made by driving a thick nail through the sheet — his homage to Lucio Fontana, a family friend. There are doodles that seem pure *divertissement*: games of marker lines like climbing vines twining through the structure of each letter, and other strokes doubled, tripled, quadrupled by holding a bundle of markers together. And there is also a clear short-circuit: a sort of tangle where, in black marker, all twenty-six letters are inscribed inside one another, like an intricate spider’s web.

There are alphabets where pencil joins marker, and others where the latter mixes with acrylic. Others still where pencil alone races swiftly across the sheet, as fluid as that of his friend Lisa Ponti. Others where the double stroke of oil pastels is then spread with the fingers, gently blurred and softened.

And then, as always for him, comes the everyday life around him: if his friend Lilli brings a bag filled with buttons, some of those little discs will become part of a constellation from which new vowels and consonants will be born; if an olive tree on the terrace, now sadly dried up, offers its branches for a new series, those twigs and little sticks will lie over the letters, becoming part of their mark, their form, their profile.

In defining each sequence, the artist’s signature often plays an additional role, concluding and at times balancing the drawing — seeking out spaces between the letters, slipping among them or stepping aside, and sometimes “overlapping”, yet always on tiptoe (pencil tip, that is): unmistakably, *à la Corrado*.

Beppe Finessi