

Vera Molnar

Ensemble de collages

12 May – 19 June 2026

Vera Molnar is a pioneering figure of computer art whose work fundamentally shaped the application of algorithmic thinking in visual art. She spent most of her life in France; in 1947, at the age of 23, she moved to Paris with her husband, François Molnar, where she established her artistic practice. Although her oeuvre is widely known for works created with the use of computers, from the outset her practice was centered on a systematic inquiry into order and disorder, repetition and variation, and the role of chance in visual structures.

In order to make each phase of her investigations traceable and analyzable, she developed a method that initially relied on an imaginary computer, and later on a real one. She referred to this imagined device using the term "machine imaginaire", borrowed from her friend, the French composer Michel Philippot. At first, she executed algorithms manually, step by step, in the form of hand drawings.

Molnar was among the first artists to use a computer in the creation of visual artworks; she began working with a real computer — "machine réelle" — in 1968. From that point on, the computer performed calculations and generated all possible variations of a given problem. However, this process is not merely a technological issue but also a visual and aesthetic one, which can be understood through the concept of redundancy. Redundancy refers to the repetition of visual elements that allows the perception of structure, yet becomes aesthetically compelling only when disrupted.

A central concept in Molnar's work is what she termed "one percent disorder". The term refers to a minimal deviation introduced into an otherwise perfectly ordered system—without which the image would remain visually inert. In Molnar's practice, chance is never arbitrary; it is always embedded within a predefined structure, heightening its perceptibility. Order and disorder thus unfold not as opposites, but as mutually constitutive conditions.

The works presented in *Ensemble de collages* are created using collage, a medium that recurs throughout Molnar's oeuvre over several decades. Built from simple geometric elements — primarily squares, circles, and their transformations — the compositions evolve through gradual shifts, rotations, and distortions. For Molnar, art was not the creation of a final form, but an ongoing process of investigation in which the image continuously transforms and unfolds through variations. The collages make this thinking visible: they simultaneously bear the traces of manual intervention and the logic of a rigorously constructed system. The exhibition opens with three triptychs. In each composition, Molnar attached differently sized and coloured squares onto identically proportioned surfaces, after cutting and folding the paper elements by hand. In *Coupé en 2 Clémentine*, larger squares are used; in *Coupé en 2 Orange*, the squares correspond to the size of the base paper, while *Carré Coupé* constructs the composition from smaller square elements. The *Collages Bleus* series consists of 18 unique collages that explore different shades of blue. Each collage is constructed through the combination of three tonal variations of blue paper. The middle tone used as the base colour always derives from the darkest shade of the preceding collage, creating a gradually darkening transition throughout the series.

Her works are currently on view in the solo exhibition *Possibilities* at the Kunstmuseum Basel, and in group exhibitions including *New Humans: Memories of the Future* at the New Museum and *To Open Eyes – Regards d'artistes* at the Centre Pompidou Málaga.

Boglárka Tóth

Vera Molnar (1924-2023) visual artist. Vera Molnar, who has lived in France since 1947, is a pioneer in computer art. In 1960, she was a founding member of Groupe de Recherche d'art Visuel (GRAV), and she participated in the exhibition titled *Konkrete Kunst* [Concrete Art], organized by Max Bill at Helmhaus, Zürich. In 1959, she began making combinatorial images and modelling mathematical patterns by a method which she called the "machine imaginaire". Then in 1968, she had a very early opportunity to exchange her imaginary computer for a real one. Molnar began to use the programming language as a generative tool in her artistic work when making her paintings and graphics. She creates images using a limited number of simple forms and produces sequences by gradually changing the proportions and the arrangement of the elements. In Molnar's case, the purpose of the seriality lays in the possibility of continuous comparison and analysis of the individual images, and in the possible visualisation of the changing process that takes place. Computer generated algorithmic chance plays a key role in Molnar's works, and the concepts of order and disorder, structure and freedom are important in her art. Her first solo exhibition was held in 1976 at the London Polytechnic, and her first artist's book titled *Ein Prozent Unordnung* [One Percent Disorder] was published in 1980 by Wedgepress & Cheese, Bjerred. Her works are continuously displayed at solo exhibitions in Hungary (e.g. *Lines, Forms, Colours*, Vasarely Museum, Budapest, 1990; *One Percent Disorder*, Kepes Institut, Eger, 2012; *Vera Molnar*, Art Gallery of Paks, 2007-2008; *Disorder in Order*, Kiscell Museum – Municipal Gallery, Budapest, 2019; *À la recherche de Vera Molnar*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest, 2024; *Vera Molnar: Possibilities*, Kunstmuseum Basel, 2026), and internationally (e.g. *(Un)Ordnung*, Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich, 2015; *Pomenades en carré*, Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch, 2020; *Vera Molnár: Parler à l'œil*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2024), and at group shows (e.g. *Elles*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2009; *Ein Quadrat ist ein Quadrat ist ein Quadrat*, Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch, 2015; *Thinking Machines: Art and Design in the Computer Age, 1959-1989*, MoMA, New York, 2017; *Degree Zero: Drawing at Midcentury*, MoMA, New York, 2020; *Art Enters the Computer Age, 1952-1982*, LACMA, Los Angeles, 2023). Her works can be found in the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), Centre Pompidou (Paris), a Forum Konkrete Kunst (Erfurt), a Hungarian National Gallery – Museum of Fine Arts (Budapest), MoMA (New York), Museum Ritter (Waldenbuch) and Victoria and Albert Museum (London), among others.

Coupé en 2, clémentine 1-3, 2022

collages, 500x500 mm each

Coupé en 2, orange 1-3, 2022

collages, 500x500 mm each

Carré Coupé 1-3, 2022

collages, 500x500 mm each

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Collages Bleus 1-18, 1983

collages, 60x40 cm each

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Cercle Rouge, 1969

collage, 275x275 mm