

GALERIE LAMY
CHABOLLE



A Pair of Varnished and Ebonised
Wooden Obelisks with Hardstone Inlay,
by Renzo Mongiardino

Varnished and blackened wood, marble, breccia, granite, por-
phyry, and alabaster

Milan

1970s

80 cm x 16 cm (31.5 x 6.3 in.)



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It is to Renzo Mongiardino, the celebrated Italian decorator of the second half of the twentieth century, that the design of these obelisks is owed. An architect of theatrical temperament and the scenographer of Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, Mongiardino became internationally renowned for his stage sets and interior designs. Among his distinguished patrons were Gianni and Marella Agnelli, Aristotle Onassis, Lee Radziwill, Guy and Marie-Hélène de Rothschild, Gianni Versace, Valentino Garavani, and Princess Firyal of Jordan, for whom he created interiors epitomising his characteristic style, marked by precision, a taste for trompe-l'œil, and the maximalist richness of Mannerist and Baroque inspiration.

As is often the case in stage and film design, Mongiardino frequently created bespoke objects and furnishings for his interiors. These pieces, often interspersed with genuine antiques, were typically executed by Milanese artisans — cabinet-makers and stone inlayers trained in the techniques of *pietre dure* and *tenere*, in the tradition of Renaissance *opifici*. His baroque taste for illusionism was frequently accompanied by an interest in imaginary architectural forms, a tendency reflected in his recurring use of obelisks.

A similar pair of obelisks, inlaid with *pietre dure*, was indeed designed and installed by Mongiardino in the Zanussi apartments in Milan in the late 1970s. The present pair — inlaid with marble, *breccia*, granite, porphyry, and alabaster — stands apart from other known Mongiardino obelisks by its construction in natural varnished wood, only partially heightened with black: a variation on Mongiardino's more common obelisks, which are typically executed entirely in ebonised wood.

Sources

Martina Mondadori Sartogo, *Renzo Mongiardino. A Painterly Vision*, New York, 2017.

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