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ersiteit Leiden
n Rector Magnificus prof. mr. P.F. van der Heijden
uit van het College voor Promoties
n op donderdag 19 mei 2011
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Bruno Munari en de oorsprong van de moderne grafische vormgeving in Italië, 1928–1945

Ondanks de moeilijke omstandigheden onder het fascistische regime, ontdekte Italië zijn eigen vorm van Modernisme in het prille begin van de jaren dertig. Het was het resultaat van een veelzijdige wisselwerking tussen een aantal factoren: de opkomst van de reclame, de druk en vitaliteit van het Futurisme en het debat rond de rationalistische architectuur. Deze studie onderzoekt het werk, tussen het eind van de jaren twintig en het midden van de jaren veertig (eind van de tweede wereldoorlog), van Bruno Munari als grafisch ontwerper, met de bedoeling om de oorsprong van die modernistische beweging in Italië en zijn eigenheden, beter te begrijpen. Deze eigen ontwerpcultuur die zich aanvankelijk in Milaan ontwikkelde bracht op een eclectische manier twee verschillende, modernistische bewegingen samen. Aan de ene kant de plaatselijke tradities, vertegenwoordigd door de Futuristische avant-garde, en een Europese traditie die aansloot bij het Constructivisme. Munari (1907–1998) werkte gelijktijdig als kunstschilder en als reclameontwerper. Aanvankelijk deelde hij de brede culturele belangstelling van de Futuristen, maar niet zonder een zekere openheid voor andere bewegingen zoals het Dadaïsme en het Surrealisme, om uiteindelijk aan te sluiten bij de Abstracten. Hij was een exponent van het nieuwe reclamevak en zijn werk getuigt dan ook van de evolutie van het vakgebied, met een grote verscheidenheid aan referenties, ambities en begrenzingen. Door zich te beperken tot de stijlontwikkeling van Munari poogt deze studie de wisselwerking te onderzoeken tussen de Futuristische visuele vormtaal en de ideeën ontleend aan architectuur, fotografie, abstracte schilderkunst en de functionele typografie uit Noord Europa. Deze studie plaatst de ontwerper in zijn tijd en omgeving door zowel aandacht te schenken aan het bredere culturele kader als aan het eigenlijke werk.

De studie onderzoekt en beoordeelt ook de basis van Munari's reputatie tegen de achtergrond van een grote hoeveelheid bronnenmateriaal. Het is de eerste uitgebreide en gedetailleerde presentatie en studie van Munari's grafische productie en is zodoende een belangrijke basis voor een beter en vollediger begrip van zijn werk. Terwijl de evolutie van Munari's werk chronologisch is behandeld, onderstreept de analyse van het grafische werk de gebieden die van visueel belang zijn. Op die manier geeft de studie een afwisselende kijk op de onderliggende poëtische, thematische en formele kenmerken. De grote verscheidenheid in Munari's werk geeft niet alleen meer inzicht in de manier waarop modernistische ideeën werden ontvangen en opgenomen in het Milaan van de jaren dertig, maar ook in de manier waarop het vakgebied evolueerde van een beweging die aanvankelijk bij de avant-garde kunst hoorde tot het moderne begrip van grafisch ontwerp gebaseerd op rationele veronderstellingen en idiomen. Het is dan ook geen toeval dat Munari één van de leidende figuren is geworden van het Italiaans grafisch ontwerpen dat na 1945 tot ontplooiing kwam en waarvan de oorsprong alleen kan worden gevonden in de verscheidenheid van die culturele erfenis.

Despite the difficult political conditions under the Fascist regime, Italy saw its own modernist wave hit the commercial arts in the 1930s, resulting from a complex interplay of factors as diverse as the weight of Futurism, the rise of advertising, and the debate surrounding Rationalist architecture. This research examines Bruno Munari's work as a graphic designer from the late 1920s to mid-1940s, with the aim of understanding the emergence and characteristics of the modernist trend in Italian graphic design. Taking shape in Milan, this original 'design culture' eclectically brought together two quite different strains of Modernity: a local tradition represented by the Futurist avant-garde, and a European tradition associated with Constructivism. Munari (1907–1998) worked simultaneously as painter and as advertising designer: he debuted with the Futurists, whose broader cultural reach he shared, while also remaining open to other currents—such as Dadaism and Surrealism—and ultimately aligned himself with a more Abstractionist stance. Insofar as he was an exponent of the new advertising profession, his design work also reflects its evolution, mixed references, aspirations, and limits. Concentrating on Munari's stylistic development, the study seeks to explore the interaction between the Futurist visual vocabulary and conceptions coming from architecture, photography, abstract painting, and functionalist typography trickling in from central and northern Europe. Hence, the discussion positions the designer in his time and place, concentrating as much on the artefacts as on the broader cultural framework.

Secondly, the study attempts to assess Munari's reputation against a body of exemplary work, based on firsthand documentation. It is the first extensive, detailed record of Munari's graphic design output, and as such provides a substantial base for a full understanding of his œuvre. While Munari's evolution is dealt with chronologically, the analysis of his graphic works highlights key areas of visual interest, offering a cross reading that sheds light on their underlying poetics, themes, and formal attributes. In its trajectory, Munari's wide-ranging graphic design work shows how modernist ideas were received and assimilated in the Milanese environment of the 1930s, as well as the shift in conceptions of the graphic design profession—from one related to avant-garde art practice to a Modern one, based on rational idioms. The roots of modern Italian graphic design, which fully emerged after 1945, can be traced to this heterogeneous legacy—and it is no coincidence that Munari became one of the fields' leading exponents.

Acknowledgements

This research draws primarily on printed reproductions of Munari's work as well as a number of original artefacts from the interwar years, which are available in public libraries and in private collections. Pictorial and bibliographical research was carried out during holiday periods spent in Italy between 2005 and 2010, and in particular during a study leave from the Université du Québec à Montréal in the course of the academic year 2007–08, for which I am most grateful.

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Civica Galleria di Arte Moderna, Gallarate
Civica Raccolta Bertarelli, Milan

CLAC Galleria del Design e dell'Arredamento, Cantù
Fondazione 3M, Segrate
Fondazione ADI Associazione Disegno Industriale, Milan
Fondazione Arnoldo & Alberto Mondadori, Milan
Fondazione Corriere della Sera, Milan
Fondazione Fiera di Milano, Milan
Fondazione Jaqueline Vodoz e Bruno Danese, Milan
Fondazione Paolo Minoli Casa per l'Arte, Cantù
Galleria comunale d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Rome
ISISUF Istituto Internazionale di Studi sul Futurismo, Milan
MART, Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Rovereto
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In memoria di Marco Vettorazzo, partito 'in direzione ostinata e contraria' (1970–2006).

Contents

Mainstream narratives for the history of 20th-century graphic design are still based on the modernist canon first established in Weimar Germany, and later defined in the postwar Swiss and North American contexts. More inclusive visions based on recent research, however, have shown that, despite its crucial role, the constructivist paradigm can no longer be considered the only expression of Modernism in graphic design.[1] Next to the well-known exceptions of Britain and France, for instance, different regional developments existed in 'southern' regions such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, even Argentina and Brazil.[2]

Despite the difficult political conditions under the Fascist regime, Italy saw its own modernist wave hit the commercial arts in the 1930s, resulting from a complex interplay of factors as diverse as the weight of Futurism, the emergence of advertising, and the debate surrounding rationalist architecture. Taking shape in Milan during the interwar period, this original 'design culture' eclectically brought together two quite different strains of Modernity: a local tradition represented by the Futurist avant-garde, and a European tradition associated with Constructivism. The roots of modern Italian graphic design, which fully emerged after 1945, can be traced to this heterogeneous legacy.[3]

1. See Kinross 2004: 120–1; Branzi 2008: 11–3; cf. Burke 1998: 'Twentieth-century Modernism is a post-mortem phenomenon, an inevitably selective historical construction, extrapolated from the statements made by its young gods of the 1920s' (ibid.: 12).

2. Seminal texts on the history of graphic design are Twyman 1998 [1970], Meggs 1983, Hollis 1994, Jobling, Crowley 1996; works devoted to single countries and/or periods include Ainsley 2000, Wlassikoff 2005, Hollis 2006, Vinti 2007, and *Typography Papers* no. 8 (2009); also worth mentioning is the ongoing research by Marina Emmanouil (on Greece) and Mary Ann Bolger (on Ireland) at London's Royal College of Art.

3. Meggs maintains that 20th-century graphic design was a product of the 'collision' between Cubism and Futurist aesthetics (Meggs 1983: 274). Cf. Branzi 2008.

This research examines Bruno Munari's work as a graphic designer from the late 1920s to the mid-1940s, with the aim of understanding the emergence and characteristics of this modernist trend in Italian graphic design. Munari (1907–1998) worked simultaneously as painter and as advertising designer: he debuted with the Futurists, whose broader cultural reach he shared, while also remaining open to other currents—such as Dadaism and Surrealism—and ultimately aligned himself with a more Abstractionist stance. Insofar as he was an exponent of the new advertising profession, his design work also reflects its evolution, mixed references, aspirations, and limits. Concentrating on Munari's stylistic development, the study seeks to explore the interaction between the Futurist visual vocabulary and conceptions coming from architecture, photography, abstract painting and functionalist typography trickling in from northern Europe. Hence, the discussion positions the designer in his time and place, concentrating as much on the artefacts as on the broader cultural framework.

The study also attempts to assess Munari's reputation against a body of exemplary work, based on firsthand documentation. It is the first extensive, detailed record of Munari's graphic design production, and as such provides a substantial base for a full understanding of his œuvre, which is still affected by a fragmentary perception of the artist. In fact, the sheer variety and complexity of the activities in which he engaged over the years has made it difficult to pigeonhole his work, so that—despite the growing number of publications and exhibition catalogues—the focus placed on him as either artist, industrial designer, writer or pedagogue has tended to overshadow all other aspects of his practice.

As a graphic designer, Munari's name is nowadays associated mostly with book series and children's books designed in the postwar period, while his work from the 1930s is hardly ever mentioned, let alone reproduced. This kind of disinformation is in part due to the prejudices surrounding Futurism, long associated with the 'misadventure' of Fascism; but it also hints at an intrinsic problem in Italy's graphic design historiography. Its close connection with the fine arts has seriously affected critical and historical thinking, where art criticism has imposed its own methodologies and language. This literary imprint has influenced much of the existing literature, which is marked by unnecessary verbal clutter and a *modus operandi* that favours subjective interpretation; moreover, in Munari's case, the content is predominantly anecdotal or romanticising. These flaws have not only deterred more factual investigations, but also hindered circulation outside of Italy, thus marginalizing the Italian graphic design scene on the international level.[4]

While Munari's evolution is dealt with chronologically, the analysis of his graphic works underlines key areas of visual interest, offering a cross reading that sheds light on their underlying poetics, themes, and formal attributes—although these tend to correspond to subsequent phases in the artist's career.

4. A revealing example of the miscommunication between art critics and graphic designers is the Munari interview by Quintavalle (in *Bruno Munari*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979: 15–22). At the opposite end, welcome exceptions to this trend, which have proved valuable resources both in terms of information and insight into Munari's life and career, are the books by Tanchis 1987, and Meneguzzo 1993, a critical review by Menna 1966, as well as the interview by Branzi 1984.

The discussion takes its cue from the situation of Italian graphic design that had developed over the twenties, which on the one hand came to coincide with the consolidation of the Fascist regime and, on the other, with the introduction of theories regarding standardization and labour organization, which permeated industry and, by extension, related professional sectors such as advertising. With the progressive urban- and consumption-oriented evolution of Italian society, the professional field of commercial graphics—which had heretofore coincided with poster design—increasingly assumed a more complex conception of advertising modeled on American agencies.

Beginning with his formative years in the Veneto countryside, the first section brings Munari's Futurist militancy into perspective. Although the movement had lost part of its capacity for cultural agitation, Futurism was still an important force within the national artistic context. Once Futurism's first phase, focused on literature and painting, had been exhausted, after WWI Marinetti brought together a new generation of artists; they worked in the artistic fields most closely tied to industry and commerce—applied arts and advertising in particular—bringing an innovative force back into the movement. This was an extremely creative period for Munari, who took an experimental approach from those Futurist roots that would become his distinguishing stylistic mark.

The thesis's central sections address Munari's vast output of the 1930s and early 1940s, a long period in which he tried his hand at different media with a singular assimilative ability: illustration, book cover design, photomontage, advertising design, and installation. The work's examination is organized by type. Next to the central theme of Munari's transition toward a modern visual language, moulded on a fundamental rationality enlivened by an anarchic, humorous vein, the discussion focuses on two relevant aspects: the network of influences that acted upon his personality; and the intellectual class's accommodation toward the Fascist regime, which not even Munari—despite his substantially apolitical stance—voiced any dissent against.

Throughout the 1920s Italy's general backwardness and relative cultural isolation meant that the nation was substantially excluded from the spread of the Modernist aesthetic that had taken shape in Central Europe. Only in the early 1930s did the new Constructivist conceptions of New Typography spread to Italy, in close relation to the rise of Rationalist architecture and painterly abstraction. As for advertising design, determining influences came from various indirect sources rather than from contacts with champions of the European movements. These included reproductions in the trade press and the graphic layout of popular magazines, and were freely assimilated by a generation of self-taught practitioners. The presence of indefatigable figures who animated the theoretical debate in Milan—including the art critic Edoardo Persico and the typographer Guido Modiano, who were affiliated with the magazines *Casabella* and *Campo grafico*—was equally

important, as was that of Antonio Boggeri, who strived to update the Italian advertising scene by modelling it on foreign examples. An insight into aspects of Italian society under Fascist rule and developments in the graphic arts provides the framework within which to address the background theme of how 'modernity' was expressed in Italian graphic design of the 1930s: what were the characteristics and impact of the new theories based on the combination of typography and photography in Italy? What was retained of the complex aesthetic and social vision propelled by continental Modernism? What kind of relationship links this period to the mature Italian graphic design that emerged in the 1950s?

While the experiences of that period contain *in nuce* the central thread of Munari's multifaceted activity in the postwar years, the wartime period also marked another leap forward, toward a more controlled visual language and a conception of the trade that was more integrated with the system of production. When Munari assumed artistic direction of Mondadori's illustrated magazines he carved out a role that would carry him into the new cultural context of the 1950s. A chapter is specifically devoted to this aspect of his career, and serves to connect his earlier experiences with those of the postwar period.

Although the Futurist legacy is now recognized as one of the original components of 20th-century art and design history, the same period in Italian graphic design has not been sufficiently explored in all its implications as it relates to the broader European context. This research on Bruno Munari's wide-ranging graphic design work during the interwar period allows us to follow in his trajectory the transition from a conception of the profession related to avant-garde art practice to a Modern conception of graphic design based on rational assumptions and idioms. Although these developments came to full fruition after 1945, they result from the convergence of differing local and European trends in the peculiar Milanese environment of the 1930s. To analyze the actual work of one its leading practitioners within the original context allows us to draw an overall picture of that period, thereby contributing to a historical assessment of Italian graphic design.

Italy's most mechanical city[1]

Upbringing and debut

Bruno Munari was born in Milan on the morning of 24 October 1907 to Pia Cavicchioni and Enrico Munari, who had both recently immigrated to the large industrial city in Lombardy from the Veneto, a rural region in north-eastern Italy. His father was a waiter at the Caffè Gambrinus,[2] a popular venue among the political and artistic elite, located in the central Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, near the Duomo and the Teatro Alla Scala. His mother looked after him and helped the family make a living with her needlework skills. Munari's typical sense of humour can be seen in one of the many autobiographical profiles he wrote over the course of his life, in which he describes his proletarian background with graceful irony: 'All of a sudden, without warning from anyone, there I was, completely naked, in the middle of Milan, on the morning of 24 October 1907. My father had connections with some of the city's most noteworthy people, as he was a waiter at the Caffè Gambrinus. My mother put on airs, embroidering fans.'[3]

1. From the Futurist manifesto *L'arte meccanica* (Mechanical Art), 1922.
2. The Caffè Gambrinus opened in 1882, in the wing of the Galleria that opens onto piazza Scala (in the spot of the former Caffè Gnocchi), and in 1914 changed its name to Caffè Grand'Italia (Paolo Colussi, *Cronologia di Milano dal 1881 al 1890*, http://www.storiadimilano.it, , last accessed 9 April 2009).
3. Quoted in *Le persone che hanno fatto grande Milano*, 1983: 3.

The Munari family's arrival in Milan in the early years of the century and the arrival of their firstborn son, Bruno, took place within a rather particular political and, consequently, social context—above all with regard to the daily life of contemporary Italians. The so-called Giolittian era heralded the twentieth-century's first decade in a climate of moderate liberal reform that, despite its contradictions, marked a significant evolution in the country's productive and social relationships as Italy, in its own way, moved toward modernisation.[4]

The country was exiting a phase of complex, difficult transition. Unified as recently as 1861, which was relatively late compared to other European nations, Italy was still a young, poor nation, and remained behind its neighbours on an economic and political level; above all, it was still separated by major regional disparities. Beginning in the 1880s, despite the generally poor state of the economy and the serious agricultural crisis that had struck Europe, Italy had to transition from a primarily agricultural country to an at least partially industrial one.[5] Lombardy in particular was assuming an increasingly industrial profile, and Milan reinforced its role as 'the kingdom's economic and moral capital'[6]—as proven by the 1881 Esposizione nazionale held in Milan, which was Italy's first national exhibition[7]—drawing a significant percentage of the masses emigrating from the countryside. Urban drift as a result of an increasing demand for industrial labour, as well as the rural exodus triggered by innovations in agricultural equipment and practices,[8] caused the city's population to double in just twenty years.[9]

On a political level, at the end of a long period of stasis in the parliamentary regime, and lacking any real alternatives to the historic Right and Left—with the former determined by the landholders' and banks' interests, and the latter determined by middle-class and industrial concerns—the strong fin-de-siècle social and political tensions, heightened by both the economic recession and the government's repressive politics, culminated in the assassination of King Umberto I at the hand of an anarchist in 1900.[10] As colonial expansionism failed and the administration of Francesco Crispi brought the government ever closer to outright authoritarianism,[11] the following

4. For a more complete overview of the Giolittian era, see Procacci 1975²: 411–80; Carocci 1961 (in particular for political developments); Castronovo 1995: 107–97 (on the industrial boom); and the thorough summary in Aquarone 1988.

5. Thanks to a type of capitalist development similar to the Prussian model of economic transformation through government intervention (protectionist policies, a mixed credit system, and public works commissions), this first phase of industrialisation—still based primarily on familial entrepreneurship and small-scale production—mainly involved the steel, mechanical, electrical, and textile sectors, concentrated primarily in the so-called industrial triangle between Milan, Turin, and Genoa (Procacci 1975²: 331–2; Castronovo 1995: 160–5; Carocci 1961: 10–1).

6. Procacci 1975²: 363. With respect to the region's traditional sectors of production, Milan's new production centre was distinguished by strong growth in the steel and mechanical divisions, which were linked to the formation of economic infrastructure (transportation, electricity, and precision mechanics) and the agricultural revolution that was well underway (thanks to innovative farming mechanics) (industrialisation 1997: 25–6).

7. Bigatti 1997: 25.

8. The wave of agricultural modernisation that swept across northern Italy in the latter half of the nineteenth century benefited from new machinery, chemical fertilisers, new crops and crop rotations. The modes of production also changed radically, shifting toward more capitalist management, not without government intervention (through land reclamation and the establishment of trade schools and centres for agricultural research). Cf. Castronovo 1995: 115–20.

9. 1901 census (compared to the 1880 census), in Castronovo 1995: 111.

10. Notably the insurrection of Sicily's Fasci dei lavoratori (a labour organisation movement, literally 'bundle of workers') in 1893–94, and the Bava Beccaris massacre in Milan in 1898 (cf. Procacci 1975²: 436–7, 445–6).

11. Francesco Crispi's rule was particularly reactionary on the interior front (1887–91 and 1993–95, periods in which Italy launched campaigns for its own 'place in the sun' in East Africa), as was the government of Luigi Pelloux (1898–1900). King Umberto I was assassinated

political period, lead by Giovanni Giolitti (1901–1914), began under signs of a more moderate reformism and a progressive modernisation of the nation's government, which allowed for two major steps forward in the country's civil and social evolution: on the one hand it encouraged industrialisation, and on the other hand, it opened politics up to the agricultural and industrial working class, organised in the socialist and catholic movements, which up until then had been marginal political forces largely excluded from the mainstream political–institutional system.[12] A series of structural reforms and investments,[13] the expansion of electoral suffrage,[14] as well as economic policies aimed at increasing the spending power of the lower classes, all took place in the context of increasingly rapid economic development in the agricultural and industrial/financial sectors, both of which were fostered by the state's protectionist politics.[15] Yet despite the benefit of such protected conditions, Italy's economic expansion nevertheless had its downside, with difficult labour conditions for the working classes and high levels of emigration from the countryside to the city and abroad.[16] Indeed, in spite of the reformist climate, the first decade of the twentieth century was a period of stark social contrasts, characterised by frequent strikes and trade disputes.[17]

Nevertheless, while Italy on the whole remained an agricultural, poor, and largely illiterate country, a consistent part of the population gradually saw its standards of living improve: both the lower middle class (consisting primarily of shopkeepers and artisans) and the emerging middle class (public and private clerks, teachers), as

by an anarchist to avenge the protesters who had died during the violent repression of the May 1898 uprisings in Milan: the massacre was instigated by General Fiorenzo Bava Beccaris, upon whom the Savoy sovereign bestowed the highest honours.

12. Cf. Aquarone 1988: 37–60.

13. Among the reforms enacted under Giolitti over slightly more than a decade, one of the most important was the recovery of government finances, which were rebalanced by 1906. The primary investments went to infrastructure (nationalisation of the railways, the launch of major public works projects, reorganisation of the postal service, and municipalisation of various services), but other sectors also benefited, including education and social services (new laws on health care, women's and children's labour laws, and the first pension plans). Cf. Castronovo 1995: 171–2; Aquarone 1988: 190–206, 562–71; Croce 1963: 225, 230.

14. The 1912 law sanctioned a broadening of male suffrage, leading to universal suffrage for all male citizens, including illiterates, over thirty years of age who had done military service. Women were still excluded, and only gained the right to vote with the Republican Constitution of 1946.

15. The favourable economic situation continued up until World War I, with a median annual growth index of over 6 percent in the industrial sector (Procacci 1975²: 457; cf. Carocci 1961: 7), and brought about the first major growth concentrations. A few data provide a measure of how rapid Italian industrial expansion was: while in 1900 agriculture and industry constituted 51% and 20% of the gross domestic product, respectively, already by 1930 the value generated by industry far surpassed that of agriculture. While in the 1910s agriculture provided employment for 34% of the working-age population nationwide—twice that of industry—the aforementioned industrial triangle was a noteworthy exception, employing 40% of the population in Lombardy and Liguria, and 31% in Piemonte (Procacci 1975²: 471; Aquarone 1988: 397). To compare this situation with other European nations, data on foreign commerce from 1890–1907 show an annual growth of 118% in Italy, with respect to England's 55% and Germany's 92% (Croce 1963: 228; see also Aquarone 1988: 289–301; Castronovo 1995: 160–5).

16. At the beginning of the century, Italians' wages were among the lowest in Europe, thanks also to extensive reliance on women and child labourers (Procacci 1975²: 459–60; Castronovo 1995: 173–4). Emigration has been a significant phenomenon throughout recent Italian history: it was a safety valve for social tensions and overpopulation (in 1901 the country had 32 million inhabitants, and 35 just ten years later; see Croce 1963: 229); it also played an undeniably important role in the economy, thanks to the money emigrants sent home from abroad. A first mass wave of emigration of the poorest rural classes into the cities was sparked by an agricultural crisis in the 1880s; in the 1900s, however, the migratory wave intensified, especially from southern Italy to North and South America (it reached a maximum of 725,000 emigrants in 1905, equal to 20‰). Cf. Castronovo 1995: 111–5; Aquarone 1988: 378–93.

17. Favoured by the government's more permissive stance, which was limited to maintaining public order, the number of strikes in Italy grew exponentially: from 642 recorded in the two-year period from 1899–1900 to 1852 in the following two years; the first general strike was declared in September 1904 (Castronovo 1995: 174; Croce 1963: 220, 227; Procacci 1975²: 463–5).

well as at least a part of the urban and agricultural working classes (who belonged to specialised categories such as artisans and skilled workers). At the dawn of the century, for example, the expenditure of the average Italian family showed a decrease in the amount of income spent on groceries, while spending on clothing, home furnishings, and the first consumer goods (such as bicycles and sewing machines) gradually increased.[18] Consequently, the demand for education also increased, and, in step with the progress of public elementary instruction, newspaper readership and the nascent popular press also became more widespread. On a social level, and above all in the more developed regions of northern Italy, the Giolittian era was a particularly dynamic period, characterised by a prudent faith in the progress of the nation; on the whole, despite lingering shadows, the mere fact of people sensing this change was a positive enough force to stimulate social mobility.[19]

Badia Polesine (1913–1924)

Such was the general climate in which Bruno Munari's life began. Pia Cavicchioni and Enrico Munari were both from Badia Polesine[20] (or one of its bordering townships), a small town on the banks of the Adige River in the province of Rovigo, approximately 85 km south-west of Venice. Historically, the Polesine area, located along the lower reaches of the Po River, was a little-developed agricultural zone, hydrogeologically unstable due to frequent flooding of the Po and Adige rivers, with scarce infrastructure[21]—all of which explains why it was the source of so much emigration. Pia and Enrico Munari had moved to Milan at the turn of the century, and were helped by some of Pia's relatives who were already living there. Despite their working-class living conditions, the family nevertheless belonged to a relatively privileged group; they could count on a minimum level of education (in a country where, at the end of the 1900s, approximately 40%

18. Socrate 1995: 363–5. The 'upper middle-class layout' in Italy was made up of various social groups: landowners, professionals (solicitors, doctors), entrepreneurs, bureaucrats (public administrators of every level)—corresponding to 5% of the overall population—in addition to the middle class and small business owners. A heterogeneous portion of the population greatly benefited from raises in pay and shorter working hours, including government workers, specialised and skilled labourers, and the farm hands of several areas of the Valle Padana (Po River Valley) in which agricultural cooperatives were widespread. Cf. Procacci 1975²: 468–71; Castronovo 1975: 185–7; Castronovo 1995: 174–5.

19. In his observations collected in *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915* (A History of Italy, 1871–1915, first published in Italian in 1928), Benedetto Croce offers a frankly positive assessment of the Giolittian era: '[It was a time] of refreshment and peace, cheerfulness and prosperity. Such were for Italy the years in which the idea of a liberal régime was most fully realised' (American edition/translation, 1963: 214); and 'The activities of Parliament and of the Government during these ten years did not belie the hopes which had been aroused in 1901 (...)' (ibid.: 224). Cf. Procacci's opinion of Croce's historical viewpoint (Procacci 1975²: 470).

20. The family name partially confirms its origins in the north-eastern area of the country. The last name Munari, which is widespread and appears in several variants throughout northern Italy, is found particularly in the Veneto region and lower Po Valley, and supposedly derives from hypocoristic forms or dialect-based modifications of the term *munaro* or *munero* (miller). Cavicchioni is a hypocoristic variant of a family name present in the areas around Ferrara and Rovigo (as well as the border region between Tuscany and Emilia Romagna), and is derived from nicknames associated with the archaic term *cavicchio* (a peg or short, pointed pole). See http://www.cognomiitaliani.org, last accessed May 2009.

21. Although it originally referred to the 1880s, Procacci's description aptly captures the salient aspects of the landscape around Badia Polesine: '[It's] a landscape of embankments, of major drainage and land reclamation, of improvised villages—villages without even the usual, familiar presence of a church' (Procacci 1975²: 414). The provinces of the lower Po River Valley (Mantua, Ferrara, Ravenna, and the Polesine area) played a fundamental role in the history of the Italian labour movement, insofar as they were the birthplace and cradle that fostered the rapid growth of the socialist movement: 'The Po River Valley remained one of the hottest points of social conflict' (Castronovo 1995: 176). On the origins of socialism, rooted in farmers' protests throughout the countryside of the Po River Valley, see Procacci 1975²: 414–5, 434–9, and Castronovo 1995: 176–7.

of the population was still illiterate) and had professional experience as hotelkeepers, which guaranteed the family a modest degree of prosperity and put them in a position to invest in their children's education while looking for new opportunities for socio-economic advancement.

Although it is not known precisely why the Munari family decided to leave Milan and return to the Veneto countryside, aside from the probable family-related reasons, the chance to take up their own independent economic enterprise—like ownership and management of an inn—almost certainly was a deciding factor. In 1913, when Bruno was about 6 years old, the family left Milan to settle once again in Badia Polesine, where the Munari couple had acquired a mansion—originally a hunting residence of the Dukes of Este, from nearby Ferrara—which had already been transformed into an inn.[22] Named Albergo Sant'Antonio, after the section of street the former Este residence overlooked, the inn lay on the town's main road, near the crossroads of the two routes that connected Polesine to Padua, Ferrara, Verona, and Rovigo,[23] thereby guaranteeing the town a fair amount of local economic relevance. Recent land reclamation and drainage had gradually transformed the human and economic geography of the entire area, leading to further development centred on the introduction of new crops and related manufacturing industries (mills and sugar refineries in particular). On the eve of World War I, Badia Polesine was a peaceful provincial town of over 10,000 inhabitants with a theatre, a hospital, and a trade school.[24] Clearly the Munari family's return to Badia can be read in the positive light of the period in general, which must have lead them to seize upon new opportunities to improve their standard of living in a region that, despite remaining primarily agricultural, now offered improved economic conditions.[25]

> My father adapted a large building that has been the residence of the Dukes of Este, and I lived the life of a hotelier there, helping him out a bit; but I didn't like it, because it's a life without leisure. If no one comes to fill in after your shift, you go to bed at two in the morning, after the last guest has come back, and you get up at five to go for groceries. My mother had invented a saying, she

22. The so-called Palazzetto degli Estensi, whose construction is now attributed to the Venetian Gradenigo family, is a beautiful gothic building that dates back to circa 1430, during the first period of Venetian dominion in the area. The building is 'characterised on the lower levels by a portico with three different types of round arches, while the upper levels are distinguished by ogival windows and the sitting-room's mullioned window with three lights' (Barison, Occhi 2004). The transformation of this noble residence into a commercial building apparently occurred long ago: according to historic documents dating back to the arrival of Napoleonic troops in the area (1797), the inn already existed at the end of the eighteenth century (Paolo Aguzzoni, conversation with author, May 1, 2009).

23. On the other side of the iron bridge crossing the Adige River, the provincial route leads north toward Padua and south toward Ferrara. Another road leads along the riverbank: to the east, it runs upriver toward Verona; to the west, it runs down-river toward Rovigo.

24. The village takes its name from the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Mary at Vangadizza, originally founded in the tenth century, which by the thirteenth century already had a small town built up around it. Over the centuries it passed from the hands of the Este family into Venetian rule, and after the Napoleonic invasion it was occupied—like much of northern Italy—by Austria, up until the Veneto region was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy in 1866. For additional historical and geographic background, see http://www.comune.badiapolesine.ro.it/Informazioni/Storia.html, last accessed April 2009; for the demographic data cited above, the source was ISTAT, the Italian National Statistics Institute, from http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Badia_Polesine, last accessed April 2009.

25. With respect to the period of 1887–1901, in which it is estimated that nearly one-third of the population left the Polesine area for the industrial triangle or for South America, the industrial-agricultural development of the region led to a temporary decrease in emigration in 1911 (a national census year). Despite the fact that in that same period there were nearly 1,400 active industries in the Province of Rovigo, with a significant growth in employment opportunities, in the nineteen-twenties agriculture still employed over two-thirds of the area's inhabitants (compared to 55% on the national level).

> said you have to sleep in haste. I took after her, she was very agile, alert, and practical.[26]

The Munari family ran the hotel and restaurant for about eighteen years, until the early forties, when they gave up the business because both children had chosen different paths. Their parents continued to live in Badia at least until the end of World War II, and for a brief period in 1943–44 Bruno's family took refuge at his parents' home after fleeing Milan.[27]

Bruno was not an only child, but his brother Giordano was born ten years after him, in 1917. Giordano—who was trained as a mechanical designer, and later designed turbines for the Edison company[28]—joined his brother in Milan around 1935. He likely stayed with Bruno and his wife Dilma Carnevali, whom he'd married in 1934, or perhaps with his sister-in-law's family: sure enough, in a curious coincidence, Giordano later married Dilma's sister.

Upbringing

Even if one does not take a literal read of the various memories Bruno Munari wove together as a plot feeding into his personal, ever-growing mythology (along with much of the 'sentimental' criticism that followed him and his work), the childhood he spent in the natural and social atmosphere of the Veneto countryside evidently had a determining influence on his sensibility and intelligence.[29]

> There wasn't one decisive moment, in my childhood or my later life, in which I consciously realised my path would be that of an artist. There's always been a sort of 'fade-in, fade-out' between everyday small-town life (…) and my activity, an activity that would nowadays be called 'creative,' inspired by curiosity and the desire to do something out of the ordinary.[30]

This sentimental education left its mark, not least in his insatiable curiosity about natural phenomena, certainly rooted in his experiences of country life, which was still rather humble: typical children's games, stimuli found and discoveries made in the fluvial surroundings, paddle mills moored along the riverbanks, straw scarecrows, and the various characters and scenes of

26. Bruno Munari, quoted in Branzi 1984: 40.

27. Data confirmed by indirect evidence: 'From information gathered by those who knew Munari, the hotel was run by his parents from 1912–1913 (indeed, Bruno Munari arrived in Badia when he was 6–7 years old) until at least the 1930s. During the World War II his parents still lived in Badia Polesine' (Mara Barison, e-mail to author, April 30, 2009). After the war his parents also moved to Milan, where they were buried (Alberto Munari, e-mail to author, November 13, 2009).

28. For a brief period during the thirties, Giordano was employed as a designer of aircraft models for the Movo company, which was among Munari's clients (Alberto Munari, conversation with author, February 10, 2008).

29. The fact that over the years Munari steadily built a sort of public persona—carefully selecting facts, memories, episodes, and statements that effectively created a 'mythology'—is obvious to anyone who approaches him through his writings, testimonies, and works without other emotional influences or prejudices. See Meneguzzo: 'Too often the temptation to talk about Munari the way Munari talks about himself and his ideas has produced only apologetic books, inspired sheerly by sympathy for the character (…)' (Meneguzzo 1993: 3). The circumstances of the childhood he so often spoke of later on seem far from having anything exceptional about them, nor did they play such an absolute, almost deterministic role in his personality; rather, Munari loved to make it sound as if they did, and his telling became an essential ingredient of the myth of his natural genius—insofar as it corresponded to his interest in games, childhood, and creativity.

30. Munari, interviewed by Alberto Munari (1986: 74).

31. Tanchis 1987: 10. Badia Polesine sits at the confluence of the Adige River and its smaller tributary, the so-called Adigetto (Little Adige), which bisects the town; the riverside village of San Nicolò (named after Saint Nicholas, also known as Pizzon, which was destroyed when the bridge was bombed in 1945), was inhabited by fishers and millers, who maintained floating mills. There was also a small shipyard for boat building, a riverside customs house, an inn, and the church of Saint Nicholas, patron of mariners (http://www.comuneweb.it/BadiaPolesine, and http://www.castellonoratobadiapolesine.135.it, both last consulted April 27, 2009). The presence of the Adige left a lasting mark on

rural life.[31] The observation of nature not only inspired his capacity for reflection in rational, almost scientific terms—as well as the apparent verbal simplicity that characterised his prose—but it also served as a grounding orientation of his design methods, based as they were on a 'structural imitation of nature.'[32]

Another important legacy of his childhood came from one of his uncles, who was a violin maker and also the chef at the family hotel:

> (…) this uncle who made violins, and was also a chef (…) lived in a house with his workshop on the ground floor, and his living spaces and a large terrace on the floor above (…)[33]

> (…) and I often stopped by his workshop to see how he treated the sheets of maple to form the curvatures on the sides of the violin (…) In the workshop I could take scraps of cut wood, set them in the vice, and work on them with uncle vice splendid gouges. I really liked working with his craftsman's materials and tools, a lot more than helping my parents run the inn.[34]

The manual dexterity that distinguishes such naïve bricolage of materials and techniques, which later became another characteristic of his working method, can be traced back to that artisan's apprenticeship in his uncle's workshop. But his habit of playing around with a broad range of natural forms and everyday objects also stemmed from the games conjured up from nothing that he enjoyed creating along the riverbanks or in the courtyard and attic of the family inn:

> As a boy (and especially as a toddler) I never had toys like the ones every kid has today, but I made them up myself, and built them with whatever I found (…)

> Ever since I was a boy I was an experimenter, even when I built my own toys, or built them for friends, using bamboo shoots or other simple materials (…)

> In Badia, as a boy, I played in the immense attic above the inn. Some of my games, among others, included 'parachuting' the cats and tossing little strips of paper out of the window to observe how they moved through the air.[35]

It is interesting to discover, in these recollections, the childhood—even 'infantile'—source of many Munarian inventions, which were really just transposed into the more 'adult' context of art and design. His liking for play, understood in the cognitive sense as a tool for active discovery of the world, became an essential critiquing, designing, and teaching tool; it also fuelled his humorous and surreal veins, which made ample use of spoonerisms, semantic games, and word play. In this sense one could even read a transposition of childhood experiences into his work, which often enacts a connotative shift, changing a given action and thereby making it meaningful in a new way. For example, his 1969 performance in Como, 'Far vedere l'aria' (Air Made Visible), in which he let paper cut into different shapes fall from a tower, invariably comes to mind. As does the five-drop fountain created for Tokyo's Isetan department store in 1965:

Munari—'I'm fine in Milan, but I miss the river' (Tanchis 1982: 50)—as was also clear in his short story 'Le macchine della mia infanzia' (The machines of my childhood) written in the twenties and reprinted in the appendix of *Arte come mestiere* (Munari 1966: 251–2).

32. Meneguzzo 1993: 8.

33. Branzi 1984: 40.

34. Munari, interviewed by Alberto Munari (1986: 74); cf. Branzi 1984: 40.

35. Munari in Alberto Munari 1986: 74; Branzi 1984: 40; and Rossi 1962: 9, respectively. A more recent text in which Munari reflects on the many games and activities of his childhood is particularly illuminating: 'Un gattino vero miagolante' (A true cat whining)—originally published in the catalogue *Giochi e grafica* (Cremona: Comune di Soncino/Amm. ne Prov.le Cremona/Ass.ne Culturale Soncino, 1990), now reprinted in *C'era due volte* IV; 8 (September 1997): 38ff.

> And then in the courtyard I had a faucet that dripped. Obviously the washer was shot, so it no longer turned off properly. But the sound of those drips was quite interesting, because it was neither monotone nor monotonous. I don't know why, but listening closely you could hear that the interval between one drip and the next wasn't the same, and even the sound of each drip was different. One day I tried putting an empty bucket under the shower: *toc toc toc toc toc toc*; then a crumpled-up newspaper, *cha cha cha cha cha*; then an upside-down skillet, *ten ten ten ten ten ten ten ten*; then I let the drips fall into an empty jam jar, *tic tic tic tec tec tec toc toc tuc tuc boc buc tum*. A few of my friends and I tried singing some made-up songs following the rhythm of the drips. One song went 'pic pac pac pic patapic patapac pitopec pataluc,' and then you'd repeat the riff with individual variations.[36]

The advancement of primary public education and the fact that it was free—as it was entirely underwritten by the government—made it possible for Bruno to attend elementary school in Badia (beginning in second grade), and he also benefited from important reforms to the national scholastic system.[37] Early on, primary school provided several branches of study (after the basic four-year foundation program) to those who wished to pursue middle-school education upon passing their exams; and those who decided to finish their schooling, after two more supplementary courses, could be done by the age of twelve: this two-track system tended to severely limit social mobility, as it discouraged pupils from the lower and working classes from continuing on to secondary education.[38] In light of the path Munari took—later on he went to an *istituto tecnico superiore* (technical high school) for about a year—one can infer that he or his family had opted to continue his studies; he took the entrance exam for middle school,[39] although there are no records that he went to school beyond the obligatory age of twelve, and despite the fact that Badia had an applied arts institute, where he could have learned the rudimentary basics of drawing and design.[40] It should be pointed out that secondary education, which was still based on an eighteenth-century model (known as the Casati Law, passed in 1859), created a clear distinction between 'humanistic' and 'technical' courses of study, with the latter geared more toward professional preparation—which also carried obvious social repercussions.[41] It is therefore no surprise that secondary education, especially in the liberal arts and sciences (in the national system of *licei*, senior high schools that naturally led to university) were still the privilege of the more

36. Munari 1990a ['Un gattino vero miagolante'].

37. For the most comprehensive overview of the Italian school system under Giolitti, see Aquarone 1988: 522–62. The serious shortcomings of primary education at the beginning of the century were, if not fully resolved, at least dealt with through successive reforms—known as the Nasi (1903) and Orlando laws (1904). New regulations raised the compulsory age of attendance to twelve, stipulated the establishment of evening schools, and called for better working conditions for teachers. It also led to increased government funding, to the point where the State fully underwrote all public elementary instruction (which had hitherto been the responsibility of individual municipalities), as sanctioned by the Dane-Credaro law of 1911 (cf. Croce 1963: 226).

38. Moreover, while the agricultural and industrial development of northern Italy encouraged working-class families to invest in their children's education, it also created a demand for unskilled labourers—which were drawn from local primary schools, as shown by the slow growth of enrolment between 1901 and 1907 (Aquarone 1988: 552).

39. In an interview about his first school experiences, Munari admitted: 'No, I didn't really want to study. And I remember that in elementary school I was punished once, because I illustrated the subject. Drawing like that was quite forbidden at the time' (quoted in Barberis 1978).

40. The Dante Mazzari School of Applied Arts, founded in 1882.

41. This basic distinction was, effectively, a double-track access to higher education, with clear class connotations (Aquarone 1988: 546). On the one hand, the tuition—which was rather costly for high schools, but relatively inexpensive for trade schools—was a discriminating factor that determined students' chosen field of study; on the other, the different levels of government support—direct in the case of secondary schools, while leaving trade schools to rely upon the resources of local authorities, municipalities, and private donors—emphasised attendants' limitations and geographical differences.

well-to-do classes, since the subsistence of less well-to-do families often depended on the contribution of working-age children, and in any case the scarcity of such families' resources rarely put them in a position to pay the hefty school taxes; the best-case scenario for students from working-class families who opted to continue their studies was to enrol in the technical institutes—as Munari did.

> My relationship to my parents was a fairly traditional one (…) My family had a hotel, they were always incredibly busy and had very little time for me (…) [When I was nineteen] I came to Milan, because I wanted to be an artist. Naturally, my parents were against it, they'd have liked me to follow in their line of work (…) What I don't like about running an inn is its sheer repeatability, it's damaging, you do things only to then undo them: there was no way to take part in it in a creative way.[42]

Milan

Even if Munari's parents had wanted their son, who was already helping out in the hotel as an all-purpose factotum, to continue the business they had launched, they could not really oppose to their firstborn's aspirations[43] (they took a similar stance with their second son, Giordano, when he, too, moved to Milan). As a rowdy adolescent who could not stand the prospect of continuing a job he viewed as thankless, and consumed by a 'wholly provincial desire to go out and discover the world,'[44] Munari was able to pursue his studies thanks to one of his uncles. The husband of his mother's sister was an engineer, and had briefly lived in Badia before moving to Milan with his family. Considered the most well-to-do member of the family, Bruno's uncle Ugo had offered to help his nephew; the chance to do so came in 1924, when Ugo was hired to oversee the construction of a plant in Naples, and took Bruno along. Munari was seventeen at the time, and attended a technical school while in Naples—although he did not complete his studies, most likely because of the family's return to Milan less than a year later.[45]

In 1926, at the age of nineteen and with no further schooling behind him, Munari decided to move to Milan: 'I wanted to be a painter, and went to Milan.'[46] Between his stay in Naples and his arrival in Milan, Munari probably went back to Badia, where he could take the time to make a decision about his future and perhaps scrape together some money before his move, as well as lend his parents a hand running the hotel. As his son Alberto noted, one oft-overlooked aspect of that period was the relative poverty he experienced upon arriving in Milan, with practically no money and no work prospects.[47]

> I stayed with my mother's sister, aunt Amelia, who had married an engineer. They helped me a great deal (and I had a very cute cousin). My uncle taught me technical

42. Bruno Munari, quoted in Catalano 1994: 152.

43. Alberto Munari, conversation with author, February 10, 2008.

44. Tanchis 1987: 10. Cf. *Le persone che hanno fatto grande Milano*, 1983: 4–6: 'He liked painting, drawing, inventing games, and making machines that had no useful purpose. That's why he got bored of that Veneto town, and even got angry—because when a man can't do what he enjoys, it's only natural that he's unhappy, angry, and his blood grows bitter. So he took the train and came to Milan (…) and has never felt angry since (…).'

45. The information is cited in Naylor 1990, and was originally from an English-language profile of Munari from 1964, further confirmed by Alberto Munari (conversation with author, February 10, 2008). Nevertheless, neither the school's name nor its specialisation are noted. Generally speaking, most technical training of the time lasted four years, and included physics/mathematics, surveying, agronomy, commercial accounting, and industrial courses (Aquarone 1988: 546n).

46. Di Corato 2008: 209n.

47. Alberto Munari, conversation with author, February 10, 2008.

48. Bruno Munari, quoted in Catalano 1994:152. See also Giuseppe Tarozzi's summary of an interview with Munari:

> and geometric draughtsmanship, as well as how to draw building plans and sections, all of which was useful to me later on.[48]

Most sources say Munari had settled in Milan by 1927, which is also the date of his first participation in the group shows mounted by the Milanese Futurists. Nevertheless, considering that Munari permanently settled in Milan only around 1930, it seems likely that, at least in an initial phase of the transition, he was still periodically going from Milan to Badia—a situation that was likely facilitated by the blurred boundaries between his work life and family life.[49] In Milan, while waiting to find some kind of work, he was actually taken in once again by his uncle the engineer, who saw his aptitude for drawing and design and ended up taking him in to work as a technical draughtsman. Munari must have already felt a familiarity with design, which he had pursued on his own as an adolescent back in Badia: proud as he was of his autodidactic background, he later tended to minimise the importance of the technical instruction he had received in high school. In any case, ample historiographic criticism has highlighted the poor quality of most teaching at Italian technical schools of the day;[50] nevertheless, in light of his uncle's decision, it is difficult not to see a connection to his formative instruction, however rudimentary, at the institute in Naples. Be that as it may, that first professional experience brought him into contact with the engineering world and undoubtedly constituted a technical apprenticeship that was important for his growth, initiating him in the technical aspects of design that would later become such an essential part of his creative approach.

> I have no particular memories of my arrival in Milan. I was from a small town and, obviously, the scale was different. Milan felt like a very big, boundless city. Nevertheless, at least back then, Milan didn't seem like a metropolis. It was just big.[51]

Munari's technical apprenticeship with his uncle ended after a couple of years, in 1928, when Ugo left for America: from then on Munari, who was already a full-fledged member of the Milanese Futurist group, began to support himself by working in advertising. Like other artists of his generation, and following the ideological premises of Futurism, which spoke of an art launched without prejudice into daily life, Munari felt no separation between the art seen in galleries and that of advertising,

'He had seventy lire in his pocket and nothing much at all in the way of prospects. In Badia Polesine, where he'd started out, he helped his father and mother run a hotel. He was turning nineteen and really didn't that line of work. He liked painting, drawing, inventing games (…) That's why he got bored of that Veneto town, and even got angry (…). So he took the train and came to Milan. An uncle engineer took him in until he could find him another place. Then, because the boy was good at drawing, he asked him to help draw some of the designs he'd made' (*Le persone che hanno fatto grande Milano*, 1983: 4–6). Guido Vergani's account matches rather closely: '(…) He said he'd become a Milanese in 1926, when he came to town with only 70 lire in his pocket and a sole calling—that of no longer being a factotum in the little hotel his folks kept up amid the poverty of Badia Polesine' (Vergani in Finessi 2005: 160). Both Tarozzi and Vergani attribute the date of Munari's arrival in Milan (1926) to Munari himself.

49. Information deduced from an English-language biographical sketch, certainly written by Munari himself (evident not only from the English that is clearly moulded on Italian, but also from the type of information given, carefully selected to focus on both his childhood and his artistic experiences), provided by the Dutch publisher Steendrukkerij de Jong in 1964 for the launch of his illegible red and white book for the Kwadrat-Bladen series: '1930, leaves his parents in Badia Polesine and settles in Milan.' A copy of the book is now in the Domus Archives, Milan (Munari, file 22).

50. 'But I only studied a bit of engineering, which was utterly useless! I'm just curious, I'm an experimenter,' Bruno Munari, cited in Manera 1986: 153. On the Italian school system, see Aquarone 1988: 547.

51. *Le persone che hanno fatto grande Milano*, 1983: 6.

which was certainly a pioneering viewpoint in Milan at the close of the 1920s. This decision—which Munari repeatedly returned to over the years, making it an integral part of his reading of his own career—was dictated by a need for economic independence that would keep him from paying any heed to art-market logic, as well as his uninhibited, avant-garde vision of aesthetic activity, understood as unconfined creativity, which guaranteed him maximal freedom to practice whatever kind of visual research he wished—from painting to photography, poster design, mobile sculptures, trade-fair exhibitions, ceramics, theatrical sets, furniture design, and commercial graphics:

> I did it so as not to feel bound to any dealer (…) [I chose graphic design] with the same enthusiasm I did everything else with, because I don't believe there are any first-class or second-class actions in life: I approach everything with curiosity.[52]

Studio Mauzan-Morzenti

Early on, in 1928, Munari worked as a sketch artist in the Mauzan–Morzenti studio, an ad agency and poster publisher founded in 1924 by the French *affichiste* Achille Mauzan and the printer Federico Morzenti.[53] Doing the reverse of what Leonetto Cappiello had (leaving Italy for Paris to work for the publisher Vercasson), Mauzan had left Lyon for Italy (moving to Turin, then Rome, and finally Milan) prior to World War I, and made a name for himself illustrating postcards and posters during the golden age of silent film. Mauzan later worked primarily in advertising: first at the Officine Grafiche Ricordi, then at the Maga agency (founded by Giuseppe Magagnoli), and in 1924 he teamed up with his friend Federico Morzenti to create the Mauzan–Morzenti agency, with offices on via Castel Modrone in Milan.[54] The studio was a noteworthy success, as the staggering number of posters they made for countless clients in those years attests (particularly in such highly competitive sectors as food advertising), thanks not only to Mauzan's prolific output, but also through their contracts with other painters: among the young artists who worked with them were Gino Boccasile, Matteo Bianchi, Sant'Ambrogio, and Sepo.[55] Even after Mauzan left for Argentina at the end of 1926, the Mauzan-Morzenti studio remained active for many years (at least through the late

52. Bruno Munari, quoted in Catalano 1994: 151. Cf. also Tanchis 1987: 11: 'He was ever-faithful to his principle of always having a job (as advertising designer, art director, illustrator), so as to remain economically independent from the fickle art market.'

53. This information appears first in Pesavento, Palieri 1953, and was reprinted in the 1995 Bolaffi catalogue. Mirande Carnévalé-Mauzan, daughter of the French affichiste, does not recall her father ever mentioning Munari (letter to author, October 29, 2007), but that is not so surprising, given that Munari's collaboration with the Morzenti studio (1928) began after Mauzan left for South America (1926-1927). Achille (Luciano) Mauzan (1883–1952), was a French painter, illustrator, and art deco poster artist. His best-known poster was done for a loan program through the Credito Italiano (1917), which uses the device of a soldier pointing his finger at the viewer, first stylised in a poster designed by Alfred Leete featuring Lord Kitchener (1914). At the end of 1926 Mauzan left Italy for Argentina, where he remained until 1932 (his success as a commercial artist contributed greatly to the emergent Argentine graphic tradition), before finally returning to France, where his work gained little recognition. There are very few critical studies of his work, even in French: aside from the catalogue published by Alain Weill in 1983 (with an article on his Italian period by Luigi Menegazzi, curator of the Salce Collection in Treviso), see the catalogue raisonné edited and published by his daughter, Mirande Carnévalé-Mauzan, in 2001, of which there is also an abridged English-language edition focussing on his posters.

54. The illustration used as the logo on letterhead—portraying a Joker shouting into the ear of a Pierrot—is representative of Mauzan's later, more congenial caricaturistic style (reproduced in Carnévalé–Mauzan 2001: 23, 69). Mauzan was well known in Milan, even amongst the general public: in 1921 he co-organised an exhibition with Cappiello at the Castello Sforzesco, in which he exhibited ceramics and book illustrations made for the First International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Monza (1923) and the following Monza Biennial (1925).

55. Carnévalé–Mauzan 2001: 24.

1930s), and they made the most of each opportunity for long-distance collaboration between Buenos Aires and Milan.[56] Nevertheless, Munari's time at the studio—a period in which he began to sign his work with the Futurist pseudonym *BUM*, or simply *Bruno*—was not to last more than a few months, and by the end of that same year he began collaborating with artist brothers Carlo and Vittorio Cossio on animated advertisement shorts.

Animation

From the first attempts at film advertising—carried out in the 1920s with slide film and stop-motion animations—this medium had rapidly spread through Italy, apace with the rapid success of synchronised sound.[57] Animated films, which had also begun in Milan—and were pioneered by the artists working for the children's weekly *Corriere dei piccoli* (the first Italian comic-strip magazine, established in 1908 as a supplement to the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper)— had long been the artistic bastion of 'enthusiastic neophytes'[58] due to national film producers' reluctance to invest in a product so different from the successful genres of silent film, based on divas or D'Annunzian historical dramas. Even when the success of *cartoons* by Walt Disney, Max Fleischer, and Pat Sullivan revived public interest in the genre, Italian production in the field remained fairly small, given the ongoing lack of both industrial capital and technical know-how, and was primarily limited to adverts and publicity shorts produced with creative obstinacy and passion in small studios, often on custom-made equipment.[59] In fact, it was only thanks to the initiative and resources of the advertising field that an artistic and technical animation tradition was established in Milan between the two world wars; only after World War II was it to finally receive the broad public and recognition it deserved, thanks in part to the arrival of television.[60]

In 1928 two significant careers in animated advertising began: Nino Pagot debuted with Oscar and Guido Maestro; and the Cossio brothers began to work with Milan's Italiana di Pubblicità Cinematografica (IPC, film advertising company) under the direction of Marcello Maestro and Bruno Ditz. Munari introduced Carlo Cossio, who began as a comic-strip artist,[61]

56. See, for example, the 'Scampoli a metà prezzo' poster (Scraps at half price, 1938), reproduced in Carnévalé–Mauzan 2001: 182. In particular, with regard to the studio's relationship with Munari, see two posters (now extant only in reproductions of mock-ups in *L'Ufficio Moderno*, November 1932: 661–4) created by Ricas and Munari for 'Casa America, el hogar de la musica'—a shop in Buenos Aires that Mauzan designed four posters for between 1929–30 (reproduced in Weill 1983: 64–5 and Carnévalé–Mauzan 2001: 14–5)—which provide clear evidence of Ricas and Munari's collaboration (they had become associates in 1930) with the studio Mauzan-Morzenti.

57. For example, the first cinematic advertising company in Italy was Publi–Cine, founded in the twenties by the journalist Felice Minetti, which covered approximately half of the more than 1,200 cinemas nationwide (Ceserani 1997: 128). The first talkie film, *The Jazz Singer*, was produced by Warner Bros. in 1927, and one year later Walt Disney released the first feature-length Mickey Mouse animation with sound (*Steamboat Willie*). As for Italy, the first film with synchronised sound was produced in 1930 (Gennaro Righelli's *La canzone dell'amore*).

58. Gianeri 1960:188.

59. Both Gianeri (1960: 186–91) and Alberti (1957: 136–7) note that Italy, generally speaking, lacked a receptive audience: the American tradition of slapstick comedy—whose language was based on physical gags, and was widely used in cartoons—was alien to Italian culture, whose silent cinematic comedies favoured vaudeville and farce. See also Zanotto, Zangrando 1973: 21, 25; and Bucalossi 1966: 34–7.

60. Simply consider the creations (for film and later for television) of Nino and Toni Pagot, Gino and Roberto Gavioli, Osvaldo Cavandoli, Paul Campani, and Bruno Bozzetto, to mention only a few. For an overview of the most famous television commercials produced in Italy from the late fifties onward, see Croce 2008 (with enclosed DVD).

61. The first strip drawn by Carlo Cossio, with dialogue and texts by Mario Nerbini—*Le avventure aviatorie di un balillino*—debuted in 1928 as a supplement to the weekly comic *Il 420*, published by Giuseppe Nerbini. Of great historical significance, in 1932

as well as his brother Vittorio to Milan's animation scene, where they met other artists, including Giuseppe Perego and Ferdinando Corbella.[62] Munari collaborated with the Cossio brothers on a few brief advertising inserts with animated puppets,[63] wherein he was finally able to test out his inventiveness to resolve the formidable technical difficulties inherent to such a pioneering medium: 'Blessed be laziness! (…) mainspring of progress: they invented the compass and home plumbing so they'd no longer have to draw circles by hand and run with a bucket to the spring,' as Munari later said of his experiences there.[64] These were brief adverts animated in an artisanal manner, using figures cut from cardboard, fixed in place with pins, and filmed in a single cut:

> We gave them articulated limbs by putting little pieces of copper at the leg and arm joints, at the waistline, and at the bottom of the neck to hold the pieces together. Laid horizontally on the flat set, under a vertically mounted film camera, the characters were then moved by hand and photographed one shot at a time, one movement after another. Naturally their movements were limited to whatever could be shown with the cut-out profile, with jumps and similar actions—that is, without any perspectival depth. In order to obtain the effect of depth, we sometimes drew the character on the set; the character was then drawn again, with the necessary movements for each action and each shot, including the set.[65]

For other shorts completed in 1929 the Cossio brothers experimented with a new technique that consisted of drawing the puppets in white on black paper, and again shot one frame at a time; the following year, alongside Munari, they discovered the cel technique—named for the transparent celluloid sheets each successive drawing was made on.[66]

As he worked alongside the Cossio brothers, in the early thirties Munari also regularly worked for the IPC: between 1930 and 1935 he single-handedly completed 'a considerable number of advertising shorts (…) using a lead cable wire (…) [while] the sets were made of the most varied material, from cotton balls to glass and corrugated cardboard'—on these he was the sole creator, designer, and photographer.[67] Although no known copies of these shorts exist today, from their summary description it is easy to detect their formal analogies with the archetypal 'mechanical' figures Munari produced during this period, as well as their connection to contemporary investigations on the possible artistic

Nerbini became the first Italian publisher of *Topolino* (*Mickey Mouse*); two years later he launched a new weekly comic, *L'Avventuroso*, heralding the heyday of adventure comics (Telloli 2000).

62. In 1930, Carlo Cossio (1907–1964) founded Dibicoss, which later became Doricoss DB, both studios specialised in modern advertising art. In 1931, after a few ups and downs, Cossio moved to Paris to deepen his knowledge of cinema, and returned to Milan at the end of 1933, when he became the technical director of Milionfilm, an agency specialised in feature-length animations. In 1934 he left the world of animation to work in comics, and drew strips for various papers, until in 1938 he became successful with the character Dick Fulmine (Dick Lightning), whose adventures appeared in the pages of *L'Audace*. Other characters created at the tip of his pencil included the boxer Furio Almirante—which was then carried forward by his brother Vittorio (1911–1984)—Tanks pugno d'acciaio, Kansas Kid, and Buffalo Bill (Telloli 2000). Cf. Zanotto, Zangrando 1973: 25–9.

63. Zanotto, Zangrando (1973: 132) list in the appendix for 1928: shorts created and produced by Carlo Cossio, in collaboration with Munari, with photographs (in black and white) by Aldo Torelli.

64. Bruno Munari, quoted in Zanotto, Zangrando 1973: 27–8. The argument for minimum effort as the motivation for human progress appeared in *Design e comunicazione visiva* (Munari 1968: 68ff.); the close resemblance of Munari's example in both cases would seem to indicate that the quote dates back to the late 1960s.

65. Vittorio Cossio, quoted in Zanotto, Zangrando 1973: 25–6. Cf. Tanchis 1987: 28.

66. Bendazzi 1988: 59 mentions Munari alongside the Cossio brothers. Cf. also Gianeri 1960: 192. The cel, patented by the American artist Earl Hurd in 1914, allowed animators to draw the background separately, and then animate the characters by painting on transparent sheets of celluloid acetate, with each cel corresponding to a single frame of the sequence.

67. Zanotto, Zangrando 1973: 27–8, 132.

uses of industrial ('polymaterial') materials—which reveals the early influence of Futurist aesthetics on the young designer, as well as highlighting the ongoing osmosis between formal lines of research in both art and advertising design.

I was born of boccioni+depero[1]

Futurist militancy in 1930s Milan

In 1927 in Milan Munari met Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the tireless impresario of the Futurist movement, and immediately became part of the Milanese group. Munari often remembered his first contact with the avant-garde movement, and was amused by the paradox—verbal and otherwise—of a Futurist meeting in an antiquarian bookshop.[2] 'In my spare time I strolled around Milan, and I liked the bookshops in particular. In corso Vittorio Emanuele there was a little gallery, the Galleria De Cristoforis; its ceiling had a skylight, and it was an antique shop, with antiquarian books. In the window display I saw an essay on Leonardo da Vinci. I went in and asked if I could have a look. The shopkeeper was quite kind to me, I told him why I was in Milan and he told me about the Futurists.'[3] The shopkeeper in question was Michele Leskovic, a young poet from the Friuli region who wrote under the pseudonym Escodamè,[4] and a close collaborator of Marinetti, to whom he introduced Munari after seeing some of his 'mechanical' drawings.

1. Bruno Munari, letter to Tullio Crali, undated [1932]. Mart, Archivio del '900, fondo Crali, Cra_01_117.
2. See the interviews by Rossi 1962: 9; Branzi 1984: 40–1; Catalano 1994: 150; Di Corato 2008: 209.
3. Catalano 1994: 152.
4. The surname, coined in 1925, was a pun meaning roughly 'I take leave by myself,' with wordplay based strictly on assonance, and therefore was not merely an Italianisation of a foreign name (as Munari often said). Forced Italianisation of foreign names began only in the thirties, under the Fascist Party Secretary Achille Starace, along with other imposed nationalistic rules (such as using the Roman salute instead of the handshake, the obligatory black shirt worn by government employees, and the abolition of lei, the formal

Their encounter was not entirely casual—they must have met near the bookshop: either at the Trianon,[5] a well-known theatre (connected to the Hotel Corso, where Marinetti used to stay when he was in Milan) that had been one of the movement's laboratories and had hosted Futurist evenings and events; or at the Ristorante Savini[6] in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (another rendezvous point for the city's artists and literati, where Marinetti usually met with the young Futurists after dinner). Munari had heard talk of the Futurists from a guest who had stayed at the family hotel in Badia, and as a boy he had discovered painting by following two friends who were aspiring painters:

> I came into contact with a lot of people, because all sorts stopped in at the hotel (...) Before the war a lot of businessmen passed through and stayed one or two nights, and one of them told me about Futurism. I remember he had a handkerchief around his neck, which was strange at the time, because most people just wore a shirt and tie, and I was intrigued. I was about eighteen, and I started to do some drawings, but I didn't know how to do anything, I just made it up as I went. I had two painter friends (...) Gino Visentini and Gelindo Furlan: they went around with a little case of paints, and I went with them to paint some landscapes.[7]

> The first things I did were some paintings you might call naturalist works, which depicted the mills along the Adige.[8]

> We made little paintings we then exhibited in the windows of the town stationer's shop.[9]

Self-taught by his adolescent passion, and perhaps right after deciding to leave the disappointing experience of his incomplete technical studies behind him, Munari had nevertheless decided he would follow his artistic interests and move to Milan, a city with close ties to Futurism. From 1912 to 1924 Marinetti had managed the movement's official headquarters at the Ca' Rossa on corso Venezia 61, just outside the city's historic centre, and from those offices he published the Edizioni Futuriste di «Poesia» (Poesia Futurist editions).[10] He had also long entrusted the Tipografia Taveggia, a print-shop on via Ospedale, with the composition and printing of his *tavole parolibere* (words in freedom),[11] and in 1919 the movement regrouped around the Esposizione Nazionale Futurista (National Futurist Exhibition) at the Galleria Centrale d'Arte in Palazzo Cova.[12]

Milan was also home to the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera (Brera Fine Arts Academy) and other well-known schools of applied arts, such as the Scuola d'arte del Castello (Art school in the Castello Sforzesco) and the Istituto per le Arti Decorative e Industriali (Institute of Decorative and Industrial Arts) in nearby Monza;[13] but there

form of 'you': cf. Falasca Zamponi 1997: 118).

5. Damaged by the 1943 bombardments, the hotel and the theatre (designed by Angelo Cattaneo and Giacomo Santamaria) were torn down after the war and replaced in 1954 by the Fondiaria Assicurazioni building and the new Galleria De Cristoforis; the original Art Nouveau facade has now been reconstructed (with significant changes) in nearby Piazza Liberty (Paolo Colussi, *Storia di Milano*, www.storiadimilano.it/citta/Porta_Orientale/teatro_milanese.htm, last accessed September 2009).

6. The Savini was an expensive restaurant during the day, but after dinner 'the tables were cleared and the large hall with red sofas became a literary parlour' (Tofanelli 1986: 35).

7. Branzi 1984: 40–1. Gino Visentini (1907–?) worked in the film industry as critic and writer (he created, alongside Pier Paolo Pasolini and director Mauro Bolognini, *Il Bell'Antonio*, 1960). Gelindo Furlan (1907–1994) followed his friend Munari to Milan and joined the Futurist group. In 1934, along with Munari and Ricas, he signed the *Manifesto tecnico dell'aeroplastica futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Aeroplastics). In the forties he collaborated with Munari on the creation of two games, *Il Teatro dei bambini* and *Via dei Mercanti*. Cf. Barillari 2001: 491.

8. Barberis 1978.

9. Alberto Munari 1986: 74.

10. *Poesia* was the literary journal launched by Marinetti in his early years (1905–1909), which later evolved into the main Futurist publishing house.

11. In *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914) Marinetti mentions the foreman Cesare Cavanna.

12. Crispolti 1986: 73.

13. In 1920s Milan, opportunities for training in

are no records of Munari having ever wanted to take art courses, either professional or academic—had he expressed such an interest, he could just as easily have gone to study in Venice, which would certainly have been closer to Badia.[14] His decision seems instead to have been the conscious conclusion of someone equally intent on being an artist and on taking a less traditional route: to the eyes of a twenty-year-old who had just arrived in the big city and was unconditioned by a conventional education, Marinetti's movement must have looked like a breakaway force, a 'symbol of the new, perhaps a little noisy and rascally,' but all the more interesting because of its openness to all disciplines.[15] In choosing to live in Italy's industrial capital, Munari already demonstrated —despite his young age and inexperience—his refusal of the traditional dichotomy between high and low culture, pure and applied art. His convictions, although not yet fully explicated, and perhaps influenced by the Futurists' vehement claims, were nevertheless deeply felt and matched his natural inclination for experimentation.

The Second Wave of Futurism

The term 'Second Futurism' was coined by art historians writing in the 1960s to distinguish between the first and second waves of Futurism, which were split by World War I. Futurism was then experiencing a resurgence characterised by a generational turnover and the expansion of artistic intervention into every aspect of daily life. The latter was a response to the desire for a *Futurist reconstruction of the universe* as announced by Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero in the eponymous 1915 manifesto, which presaged a total work of art:

> (…) We aim to realise this total fusion in order to reconstruct the universe, making it more joyous, that is, wholly recreating it. (…) We will find abstract equivalents for all the universe's forms and elements, and we will combine them all, according to the whims of inspiration, to shape plastic complexes that we will then set in motion.[16]

the applied arts abounded: in addition to regular daytime courses of the Brera Academy of Fine Arts, the Scuola degli Artefici (Brera Artists' School, founded by Maria Theresa of Austria in 1776 to train artistic labourers for the construction of La Scala) offered evening classes focussed on copying historical styles, although graphic applications were not included in the course of study. The evening classes of the Scuola d'arte applicata all'Industria del Castello Sforzesco (School of Applied Arts and Industry at the Castello Sforzesco, founded in 1922 as an annex of the Castello's Art museum, later to become the Museum of applied arts) were modelled after a traditional art workshop; yet at the end of the twenties the curriculum was modernised. Moreover, given the variety of subjects offered at the two schools, many students attended both, facilitated by their proximity and their offset schedules. Milan also had the Scuola del Libro della Società Umanitaria (Humanitarian Society's School of the Book Arts, a non-profit organisation established in 1893 to elevate the condition of the lower classes through various activities, including vocational training), which offered courses in book arts and typesetting: both of these programs were also updated in the twenties. In nearby Monza, beginning in 1922 the Villa Reale (which since 1923 had hosted an international biennial of decorative arts) hosted the Istituto per le Arti Decorative e Industriali (Institute for Decorative and Industrial Arts), a bona fide university of applied arts with a pedagogical model similar to that of the Bauhaus. By the early thirties, the arrival of a few teachers who were actively engaged in contemporary cultural debates—Marcello Nizzoli, Edoardo Persico, Giuseppe Pagano (in Monza), Carlo Dradi (at the Castello), Atanasio Soldati (at the School of the Book Arts)—reflected changing attitudes toward the applied arts (Dradi 1973: 17–9; Pansera 2001a: 17; Pansera 2001b: 29; Origoni 1981: 2; cf. the websites of the aforementioned institutes (last accessed January 2010).

14. Cf. Antonio Marasco, 'Galleria. Bruno Munari' in *Origini* VII; 7–8 (May/June 1943): 6–7: '[Munari] didn't follow any academic studies, but came to art early on, creating remarkable drawings at an incredibly young age.'

15. Meneguzzo 1993: 27–8. Such a stance was practised by early Futurists such as Fortunato Depero.

16. The text of the manifesto *Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo* (Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe), written by Balla and Depero (with Marinetti's usual editing), was circulated as a pamphlet by the Futurist Directorate in Milan on 11 March 1915. For the full text, see Birolli 2008: 161–4.

The wording here is particularly significant, both in light of the later developments of Futurist activities throughout the twenties and thirties, as well as in regard to Munari's own lines of artistic research after World War II. The use of terms like *abstraction*, *colour* and above all *movement is vital*, as is the list of industrial materials with which they were to assemble the new aesthetic objects, *plastic complexes*:

> Coloured strands of wire, cotton, wool, silk, of every thickness. Coloured glass, tissue paper, celluloid, wire netting, every sort of transparent, intensely coloured material. Fabrics, mirrors, metal sheets, coloured tin-foil, and all sorts of incredibly gaudy substances. Mechanical, electrical, musical, and noise-making contraptions; chemically luminous liquids of variable colours; springs; levers; tubes; etc. With these means we will construct (…) plastic complexes rotating on a pivot (…) plastic complexes that disassemble themselves (…) plastic complexes that appear and disappear (…) fantastic toys to be viewed through lenses; little boxes to open up at night, from which pyrotechnical marvels will burst forth; contraptions in transformation, etc.[17]

This goal of achieving a total creative intervention, which transcended all traditional genre divisions, was in reality a process that had been triggered at the very beginning of the movement; it was implicit in the Futurist condition of abolishing any separation between art and life, such that Marinetti's initial literary aspirations spread like an oil spill to touch upon fields that were not always close neighbours, such as painting, sculpture, music, theatre, photography, and architecture.[18] Nevertheless, Balla and Depero's theoretical intervention explicitly 'stated the qualitative leap to a level of greater operative awareness, from synaesthetic affirmation to "reconstruction"': in other words, the jump up to creating three-dimensional, polymaterial, dynamic *plastic complexes*. And little by little, as 'the range of interests affected by Futurist interventions grew more precise and ever broader,' the Futurist activities of the twenties and thirties became truly interdisciplinary.[19] Setting the basis for a total design, Fortunato Depero and Enrico Prampolini *in primis*, along with the entire second generation of Futurists, were interested not only in advertising and publishing, but also in exhibition design, theatrical set design, interior furnishings, ceramics, clothing, and fashion accessories.[20]

While the 1910s brought about the development of poetics (above all literary and pictorial poetics) and strategies for self-promotion (borrowed from advertising), in

17. Ibid.

18. For a concise timeline of the proliferation of specialised manifestos: the founding manifesto of literary Futurism (which appeared in *Le Figaro* the 20 February 1909) was followed in 1910 by the *Manifesto dei pittori* (Manifesto of the Painters) and the *Manifesto tecnico della pittura futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting, signed by Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Severini, and Balla); in 1911 came music, with the *Manifesto dei musicisti futuristi* and the *Manifesto della musica futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Musicians and Manifesto of Futurist Music), followed by theatre, with Marinetti's *Manifesto dei drammaturghi futuristi* (Manifesto of Futurist Playwrights); in 1912 came sculpture, with Boccioni's *Manifesto tecnico della scultura futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture), while on the literary front Marinetti was developing *paroliberismo* (words-in-freedom) and the principles of Futurist typography in his 1912 *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura* (Technical Manifesto of Literature), and *L'immaginazione senza fili e le parole in libertà* (Imagination Without Strings and Words-in-Freedom). In 1913 Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Fotodinamismo futurista* (Futurist Photodynamism) appeared, and soon after came cinema, with the 1916 manifesto *La cinematografia futurista* (Futurist Film). See Crispolti 1980: 15–20.

19. As is amply attested to in the most recent Futurist historiography, following the fundamental research done by Enrico Crispolti: see, in particular, the exhibition catalogue *Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo*, specifically dedicated to this vein, from which the quotes herein have been taken (Crispolti 1980: 19, 22).

20. Crispolti 1986: ix–xvi. Anticipating the later interest in design culture, Balla and Depero's manifesto is an essential tool for interpreting Futurism in its entirety (Crispolti 1982: 176; cf. Pansera 2001a: 15–6; id. 2001b: 21–2). Tanchis in turn sees it as the origin of many of Munari's visual works, both during the 1930s as well as in the post-war period (Tanchis 1986: 11–2).

the early 1920s the progressive depletion of the subversive energies of Futurism (accentuated by defections and the absence of those who died in the war) carried the movement into a period of decline.[21] Milan in particular—which had been the cradle of Futurism— despite a few important exhibitions at Palazzo Cova[22] had lost its role as the movement's core. More and more activities moved to Rome, which also coincided with Marinetti's move to the nation's capital in an attempt to grow closer to the political regime.[23] In search of a broader audience and level of consensus in society at large, toward the mid-1920s Marinetti along with the young conscripts of the so-called second generation who surrounded him aimed to publicly position themselves in the role of innovators *tout court*, exponents of a mass avant-garde synonymous with modernity, less radical yet still open to a vast array of formal experimentation in relation to contemporary European currents.

The case of Umberto Boccioni is emblematic of this changed approach to commercial artistic practices compared to the beginning of the century: between 1907 and 1910 he worked as an illustrator in Milan, producing magazine covers, illustrations, and poster adverts; nevertheless, as soon as he joined the Futurists as a 'pure' painter, he abandoned all commercial work.[24] Yet by the early 1930s, many Futurists of the 'new guard' worked in both realms, making no distinction between the merits of pure art and applied art. In particular, this viewpoint was championed by members of the Turin-based group, led by Fillìa and Nicolaj Diulgheroff, and the Milan-based group, led by Munari—as well as two of the movement's notables who were often in Milan alongside Marinetti: Depero,[25] who had actively been involved

21. 'Futurism was born with a true predisposition for advertising' (Salaris 1986: 13–4), in the sense that Marinetti skilfully exploited the penetrating power of advertising techniques—an approach that had never been seen before within the cultural realm—to give their movement greater visibility in the media: from printed matter (brochures, flyers, posters, advertisements in newspapers), to books and magazines sent 'Courtesy of the Marinetti Company,' and lively Futurist soirées. On an iconographic level, advertising—seen as an integral, meaningful aspect of the modern urban and industrial landscape—was repeatedly used in fragmentary form in works of words-in-freedom and Futurist painting. See Salaris 1994: 17–9, 59–60; Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 119–21; Lista 1984: 63–4; Birolli 2008: 218–24.

22. Of the group of artists who had signed the first Futurist painting and sculpture manifestos, Boccioni and Sant'Elia had died in the war, Carrà turned to Metaphysics, Soffici and Sironi were looking for the return to order championed by the Novecento movement, and Russolo ventured into esotericism (Birolli 2008: 247–52; Scudiero 2009a: 9–10; Meneguzzo 1993: 27–8). Crispolti stresses the discontinuity between the work of the Futurists of the 1910s as compared to those of the 1920s and 1930s: the crisis, which was certainly also physiological, arose in part due to material progress—and the subsequent evolution of taste—of Italian society, which cancelled out the 'utopian/Futurist rejection' advocated by the first wave of Futurism (Crispolti 1986: xvii), and in part also as a result of the trauma of war, which demystified the Futurists' earlier warmongering. In 1917 the Galleria Centrale d'Arte in Palazzo Cova hosted a retrospective of Boccioni's work, and in 1919 the Great National Futurist Exhibition, which later travelled to Genoa and Florence, and in 1921 it mounted an exhibition of Depero's work, which was the last major Futurist exhibit until the later events at the Galleria Pesaro (Bassi 1992: 55).

23. Roman Futurism revolved around the ateliers of Balla, Prampolini, and Anton Giulio Bragaglia. After his initial adherence to combative Fascism during the election year, in 1920 Marinetti distanced himself from Mussolini's movement, finding it overly conservative. Marinetti's rapprochement with the political leader, who was now firmly in power, was completed in 1924 with the First Futurist Congress (organised in Milan, 23–25 November) and subsequent move to the capital city at the end of that year. Closer to the centre of political power, Marinetti constantly sought (albeit to little effect) an alliance with the regime in order to have the Futurist movement recognised as the official 'State Art.' See Salaris 1985: 113–25, 136–41, 190–2; Salaris 1994: 67–85; Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 51; Birolli 2008: 250–1.

24. See, for example, the advertisements and covers made in 1908 for the *Rivista mensile del Touring* (reproduced in Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 126–7). Yet we know from Boccioni's diaries that his attempts to remain a viable commercial artist were largely unrealised: see Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 126; and Poggi 2009: 73–4. For his diaries, see Z. Birolli 1971.

25. For Depero, in addition to Maurizio Scudiero's in-depth bibliography, see Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 38–40, 123–4, 128–31; Salaris 1986: 14–7. Fortunato Depero (1892–1960) is a key figure

in advertising since the early twenties, and Prampolini,[26] who by the early thirties travelled between Rome, Milan, Paris, and Prague, working primarily on theatre sets and installations.

An emerging design culture

Within the national context of the Futurist movement, the Milanese group not only seemed more diversified than others in its interests—which ranged from interior design to furnishing, objects, graphics for advertising and publishing, fashion, theatrical sets, and installations—but also more experimental, in terms of the formal languages explored. The group also constituted a significant element of the cultural climate that was widespread in Milan between the two world wars, characterised by the emergent relationship between art and industry—in which the later rise of Italian industrial design is rooted.[27] It is no coincidence that the two major architecture and interior design magazines, *Domus* and *La casa bella*, were both founded in 1928: straightaway both became fundamental venues for the spread of design in Italy, while in Milan the Fedele Azari and Cesare Andreoni studios established themselves as bona fide design workshops, producing objects and home accessories (ceramics, cushions, tapestries, toys).[28] Invariably these activities were tied to artisanal production methodologies that had become mechanised but were not yet part of a standardised serial production line—a point which reflects the country's cultural and economic backwardness—but they are

for understanding both the theoretical and practical developments of the Futurist movement in the twenties. Born in the Trentino region (which was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), he studied at the Scuola Reale Elisabettina in Rovereto (Royal Elisabethan School, a hotbed of the theories and poetics of the Viennese Secession, thanks to the teachings of Alvise Comel, and where Luciano Baldessari, Fausto Melotti, Gino Pollini, and Carlo Belli also studied; cf. Scudiero 2009: 6). He later moved to Rome and studied with Balla, with whom he signed the manifesto *Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo* in 1915. Depero was a thoroughly multidisciplinary artist (painter, sculptor, and designer of theatrical sets, costumes, interiors, tapestries, and advertising), and in 1920 he founded the Casa d'Arte Futurista (Futurist Art House) in Rovereto, which ran workshops through the forties. He was the only Futurist to have direct experience of the modern metropolis, as embodied in the collective imagination of New York, where he lived and worked from 1928 to 1930 and, after the war, from 1947 to 1949. In addition to his famous 1927 'bolted book' Depero Futurista, in 1931 he published *Numero Unico Futurista* Campari, a unique collection of writings, sketches, parolibere compositions, and advertisement sketches for Campari, which also contains his manifesto *Il futurismo e l'arte pubblicitaria* (Futurism and Advertising art). Although advertising provided Depero's main economic income, his work with industrial clients—aside from exceptional cases like Davide Campari, with whom he began a lasting collaboration in 1926—remained sporadic.

26. See *Prampolini dal futurismo all'informale* (Roma: Edizioni Carte Segrete, 1992). Enrico Prampolini (1894–1956), painter and scenographer. Travelling frequently outside Italy, Prampolini was directly in touch with European avant-garde groups, especially with those movements more engaged in abstract researches: adhered to Dada in Zurich in 1916, exposed with the Novembergruppe in Berlin in 1919, had connections with Der Sturm and the Weimar Bauhaus, and collaborated as set designer with Prague's National Theatre. Between 1925 and 1937 Prampolini lived mainly in Paris, where he contributed to Section d'Or and Cercle et Carré, was co-founder of Abstraction et Création with Vantongerloo and Arp, and came into contact with Surrealism. From Rome Prampolini directed the Futurist journal *Noi*. An early adherent to Futurism, his painting soon evolved towards Abstraction and was marked by the introduction of new materials; such modernist conception would eventually lead him towards scenography, wall decoration, and architecture (Crispolti 1986: 59, 239; Crispolti 1989: 165–7; 'Enrico Prampolini,' *Larousse*, http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/peinture/Prampolini/153954, last accessed March 2011).

27. In what is in many respects perhaps the most comprehensive interview given by Munari, Andrea Branzi emphasises how the Futurists' formal investigations were a precursor of Rationalism, and concludes, 'the phenomenon of Italian design in the fifties (…) has deeper roots in late Futurism then in the Modern movement' (Branzi 1984: 43). See also Crispolti 1992: 71–2; Pansera 2001: 15. Futurist examples of interior design (which, interestingly, they termed 'global' design) include: Balla's interiors for the Bal tic-tac (Rome, 1921); Depero's designs for the Cabaret del Diavolo in the basement of the Hôtel Élite et des Étrangers (Rome, 1922); Gerardo Dottori's decorations for the Ristorante Altro Mondo (Perugia, early 1920s); Fillìa's restaurant Ambiente Novatore (Turin, 1927); and Ivo Pannaggi's Casa Zampini (Esanatoglia, Macerata, 1925–26) (Crispolti 1980: 264–91; Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 46–7).

28. The model was Depero's Casa d'Arte Futurista (Futurist Art House), founded in 1919 in his native Rovereto. Dinamo-Azari, Fedele

nonetheless significant. The Italian Futurist installation at the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris proves the connection between the experimental openness of second Futurism and the emergence of design in Milan in the 1950s. Curated by Azari, the installation was entrusted to Balla, Depero, and Prampolini, who were perhaps the most active artists from the first generation still working in the vast field of decorative arts. The controversial exposition highlighted the contrast between two opposing conceptions of design: the traditional artisan, élite approach (which was predominant, even in the Italian pavilion); and the new rational, industrial production. The Futurist work presented to great acclaim in Paris represented (in the concrete works, if not the intentions behind them) an Italian flair for Rationalist, modern lines parallel to the ones seen in Le Corbusier's *L'Esprit Nouveau* pavilion and the work of Melnikov and Rodchenko in the Soviet pavilion.[29] Such affirmation on an international level provided yet more proof of the vitality of the network of relationships the Italian movement had with other European avant-gardes, particularly through Prampolini, who lived in Paris between 1925 and 1937. So, over the course of the 1930s, not only did the second generation of Italian Futurists aspire to operate within a broader European dialogue—despite the country's increasingly autarchic closure[30]—but also (particularly in Milan and Turin) showed a significant convergence with the Rationalist architecture movement and abstract art.[31]

In this sense Munari is perhaps the most explicit example—as he incessantly went from art to design and back again—of a path that crossed through all the many fields of a new phenomenon known as the *cultura del progetto*.[32] The Milan Triennale was the main point of reference and offered an essential forum for comparison and interaction on an international level, above all because it was more open to various types of design than the Venice Biennale and Rome Quadriennale, which focussed exclusively on the fine arts.[33] Critics and historians have repeatedly pointed out that, during this period of Futurist militancy, artists operated in two worlds: on the one hand, they experimented with different avant-garde languages, from the various declensions of Futurism (mechanical,

Azari's multipurpose art agency, opened in 1927 in via Sant'Orsola; Cesare Andreoni's Creazioni d'arte (Art Creations) workshop opened in 1928 in via Solferino (later moved to via Moscova), and specialised in tapestries, pillows, fashion accessories, and decorative objects. Other Italian art houses active in the twenties included Prampolini's Casa d'arte italiana in Rome, Thayaht's laboratory in Florence, and Diulgheroff's Officina d'Arte in Turin (Crispolti 1980: 313–21; Pansera 1992a: 145–52).

29. On events related to the Futurists' participation, see Pirani 1999. Initially excluded from the organising committee, the Italian Futurist group was admitted rather late, after long negotiations (and Mussolini's direct intervention), and even then was only allowed to show outside the Italian pavilion, in the Grand Palais. Balla exhibited large decorative panels and painted tapestries; Depero tapestries, pillows, shawl designs, toys, and furniture designs; Prampolini carpets and theatrical sets (Crispolti 1980: 39). Overall, their work was characterised by an abstract, colourful style, which (according to Crispolti) had been developed by Giacomo Balla in the mid-teens amid the Roman Futurists (alongside both Depero and Prampolini), and was therefore an alternative to the Boccioni-centric first wave of Futurism in Milan (ibid.: 23–5). Beyond the supposed supremacy Futurism vaunted over other European avant-garde movements, the Futurists' success at the Paris Exposition was undeniable, even amidst the sceptical Italian critics, who were generally hostile to Marinetti. On this occasion the art critic Vittorio Pica, secretary of the Venice Biennale, uttered his famous remark, 'The Futurists saved Italy in Paris' (quoted in Pirani 1999: 50).

30. Especially from 1935 on (with the Ethiopian War and the ensuing international sanctions), the Fascist regime increasingly isolated the country, restricting both commercial and cultural exchanges.

31. Crispolti 1986: 43.

32. *Cultura del progetto* is, literally, design culture; the term 'progetto' can be read as 'design,' but also as 'project' and 'plan.' In post-war Italy this new phenomenon encompassed architecture, product design, graphic design, fashion design, urban planning [Trans. note].

33. Crispolti 1992: 71–3.

cosmic, aeropictorial, polymaterial) to surrealism and abstraction.[34] On the other hand, they delved into the realm of applied arts, ploughing through advertising design, animation, illustration, photography, object design, furniture design, and architectural installations. Following the examples set by Depero and Prampolini, Munari developed a similar attitude toward all-encompassing creative acts and interventions: specifically, his work already tended toward a transgressive use of techniques and procedures (that were systematically called into question, be it even just on a semantic level, in some cases), which will become a distinguishing feature of his unmistakable stylistic signature.[35]

The Milanese group

For the Milanese Futurists, the years from 1927 to 1933 were particularly dynamic. They marked the end of a long transitional period, and saw the rise of significant new artists: next to Munari, Cesare Andreoni, Fedele Azari, Oswaldo Bot, Mario Duse, Ivanhoe Gambini, Carlo Manzoni, and Riccardo Ricas were also part of the initial group.[36] Munari had the good fortune of being in the right place at the right time, as 1927 was a crucial moment in Milan: in nearby Monza, at the III Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa (3rd International Decorative Arts Show), Depero designed a Book pavilion for publishers Bestetti Tumminelli Treves, creating a rare example of typographic architecture; the publisher Dinamo-Azari published the first book object, *Depero futurista/Dinamo Azari* (known as the 'bolted book');[37] Umberto Notari opened his Futurist bookshop in Milan;[38] and the Gruppo 7 sparked the Italian Rationalist movement in architecture.[39] Later that same year, after several years of quiescence—since Depero's exhibition at Palazzo Cova in 1921—Futurist exhibitions were once again organised in

34. Bassi 2005: 59.
35. Crispolti 1980: 41.
36. For the broader context and a detailed record of the Milanese Futurists' complex history, see the exhibition catalogue *Cesare* Andreoni *e il Futurismo a Milano tra le due guerre* (Milan: Archivio Cesare Andreoni, 1992), which features extensive critical appendices, in particular excellent contributions by Alberto Bassi and Enrico Crispolti, from which most of the information herein was drawn.
37. The design of the self-promotional volume was done by Depero, with Azari's collaboration on the cover and title page; the latter also came up with the idea of using nuts and bolts as a binding (cf. Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 38–9). A special edition with a metal cover was produced for prominent figures, such as Marinetti and Mussolini. Inside the book (which has 234 pages) deploys the entire range of Futurist typographic ideas, in the layout as well as in the use of different papers, colour inks, and overprinting. The book contains typographic compositions, proclamations, manifestos, photographs of installations, artwork reproductions, poems, and advertisements. Fedele Azari (1895–1930) was a pilot, artist, and artists' agent (in addition to acting as a mediator in the sale of Futurist works, he negotiated Depero's contracts with companies such as Campari, Presbitero, Linoleum, Bianchi). Appointed National Secretary of the Futurist movement, alongside Mino Somenzi and Umberto Notari he organised the First Futurist Congress in 1924; the following year he curated the Futurist Hall at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris. Azari died of a nervous breakdown (Pansera 1992a: 149–50; cf. Collarile 1992).
38. Umberto Notari (1878–1950) was a writer, journalist, Futurist publisher, and Marinetti's long-time friend; along with Fedele Azari, he was the main organiser of the First Futurist Congress in Milan in 1924. Founder of the Istituto Editoriale Italiano (Italian Publishing Institute), of the daily newspaper *L'Ambrosiano* (1922), and of the monthly magazine *La cucina italiana*, he also owned the I.I.I. advertising agency (known as The Three Is, named after the house organ *Le Industrie Italiane Illustrate*), who commissioned Depero his first advertising posters in the early twenties. In 1927 Notari opened the first Futurist bookshop in via Montenapoleone, the Libreria–Biblioteca Notari (a bookshop-library decorated by Luciano Baldessari, another member of the Milan Futurist group). See Salaris 1992b: 41; Bassi 1992: 57–8, e 57n22.
39. The Gruppo 7 was founded by a group of young architects from the Scuola Superiore di Architettura (School of Architecture—Ubaldo Castagnola, Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Gino Pollini, Carlo Enrico Rava, Giuseppe Terragni, and, later on, Adalberto Libera) united by their shared aspiration to renew Italian architecture through Rationalism. It rose to the fore in December 1926 with a series of articles published in the journal *Rassegna Italiana*—in which they announced new standards for modern architecture, in keeping with current European theories.

Milan, and continued annually through the mid-thirties, at various private galleries: Galleria Pesaro, Galleria delle Tre Arti, and Galleria del Milione.

Despite Marinetti's managerial skills, the Italian Futurist movement had never won significant critical or popular favour, as tastes tended toward more classical work, such as that of the Novecento movement. Futurism had taken over alternative spaces, thanks to their strategy of cultural agitation that garnered them a degree of visibility (soirées, theatrical performances, manifestos, and publishers' promotion), yet it continued to suffer a lack of tactical access and the means to mount official events that would have a broader appeal. The new exhibition season began in the autumn of 1927, when the Galleria Pesaro in via Manzoni hosted the *Mostra di trentaquattro pittori futuristi* (Group show of thirty-four Futurist Painters)—and event that marked the beginning of the gallery's long-standing relationship with the Milanese group: they went on to organise not only exhibitions, but also events such as conferences, soirées, poetry competitions, and the Second Futurist congress in 1933. Created as an auction house in the 1910s, Lino Pesaro's gallery had developed a detailed exhibition program of solo and group shows featuring both figurative and decorative art, which had sumptuous spaces (three large rooms with a library annex) in the prestigious Palazzo Poldi Pezzoli; all this was supplemented by his publishing venture, and soon became an important centre for the city's artistic and literary circles.[40]

> It was around 1929, during the second wave of Futurism, with Depero, Prampolini, and Dottori, and each year Marinetti organised a show at the Galleria Pesaro (…) For me it was a unique opportunity to exhibit something. (…) I was making paintings that were more abstract than they were Futurist, and I titled them *aeropaintings*. (…) Throughout Italy the Novecento movement reigned supreme (…) and I gladly stood by the Futurists, as they had a greater feel for freedom and respect for others.[41]

Munari 'was little more than a kid in that extraordinary city of art, architecture, intelligence, (…) the Milan of "threadbare bohemians" (…) that the Ristorante Savini put up with as they met for an affordable coffee, sipped slowly so as to last, at the tables that weren't already reserved for the high society,' as journalist Guido Vergani recalled.[42] From his first mechanical drawings 'based entirely on cones'—which earned him Marinetti's respect, as they directly referenced Depero's iconography, and perhaps similar work by Ivo Pannaggi[43]—Munari 'quickly moved on to more demanding paintings, showed his work again, and sold one painting, to a

40. In 1923 the Galleria Pesaro had launched the historic core of the Novecento group (Mario Sironi, Anselmo Bucci, Achille Funi, Ubaldo Oppi, Leonardo Dudreville, Emilio Malerba, and Pietro Marussi), which Margherita Sarfatti—writer, art critic, and Mussolini's mistress—supported as patroness and curator, contributing to its success in Italy as the regime's official art, despite Marinetti's efforts to have that honour bestowed upon Futurism instead. Lino Pesaro's collaboration with the Futurists continued through 1934, when their rapport ended for unknown reasons (that year the Milanese Futurists' annual exhibition was held at the Galleria delle Tre Arti). The Galleria Pesaro closed in 1938 after serious financial problems; later that same year, Lino Pesaro committed suicide. See Ciceri 1997; Bassi 1992: 56n9, 57n25.

41. Bruno Munari, quoted in Branzi 1984: 41.

42. Guido Vergani (1935–2005) in Finessi 2005: 160. The 'gruppo dei 'cappotti lisi' is literally the 'group dressed in worn overcoats' [Trans. note].

43. Ivo Pannaggi (1901–1981), painter, illustrator, set designer, graphic designer, architect, journalist. Alongside Prampolini, Pannaggi was one of the Italian Futurists most overtly linked to the European avant-gardes, especially the Russians. He was self-taught, and settled in Rome, where he joined the Futurist group affiliated with the Casa d'arte Bragaglia. He was a close friend of Vinicio Paladini's, with whom he shared both his non-representational pictorial style as well as his political orientation (which lead him to break with Marinetti). Through Paladini he discovered photomontage, and used it primarily

friend, for 50 lire: those were his first earnings as an independent artist.'[44] Without a doubt, the reality of being an artist must have been a good deal less flashy than it seemed in the papers: indeed, as Munari himself admitted, their exhibitions took place exclusively during the 'dead seasons' on the calendar, and the works exhibited were always the same and few in number.[45] Nevertheless, and despite his young age, beginning as early as 1927 Munari participated in almost all the Futurist exhibitions in Milan. He soon caught the critics' attention, as well as Marinetti's eye, and by October 1929 Marinetti unwaveringly called him the leader of the Milanese group.[46] His works were regularly shown at important national and international exhibitions: at each Venice Biennale from 1930 to 1936; each Rome Quadriennale from 1931 to 1939; and aeropainting exhibitions in France and Germany between 1930 and 1934. He also signed several of the theoretical manifestos: the unpublished 'Dinamismo e riforma muscolare' (Dynamism and Muscular Reform), co-authored with Aligi Sassu in 1928; the 1934 *Manifesto tecnico dell'Aeroplastica futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Aerosculpture), co-written with the Milanese group; and in November that year the manifesto *La Plastica murale* (Manifesto of Mural Art).[47]

Between World War I and World War II, Munari was intensely active at the core of the Milanese Futurist group. This period is characterised by a heterogeneous artistic output—his work shows both his assimilation of the styles and influences of other artists, as well as his experimentation with various creative materials and techniques. On the one hand, such open-mindedness led him to try out the various expressive modes of recent artistic trends; on the other, it let him work across all fields, without limiting himself solely to paint, canvas, and brush. His paintings from this time, although they show clear Futurist influences, remained fairly traditional, and included works on canvas, panel, and paper; overall, even though he continued painting through the fifties, it was a sideline for him. As Meneguzzo emphasises,

for publishing commissions. In the early twenties he began intensely working in illustration/caricature, set design, advertising graphics, and interior design. His work as a graphic artist range from advertising posters to book covers, and was clearly influenced by the Constructivists, with extensive use of diagonal compositions, photomontage, and geometric lettering. In 1926 he exhibited for the first time in the USA, at the Brooklyn Museum, on invitation of the Societé Anonyme. He intermittently studied architecture in Rome and Florence, and in '29 moved to Berlin, where in 1933 he attended the Bauhaus during its last semester before closure. In the thirties he worked as a foreign correspondent for several Italian newspapers and magazines (*L'Ambrosiano*, *Casabella*, *Edilizia Moderna*, *Domus*). He frequently travelled between Germany and Italy, and in '42 he moved to Norway, where he worked as an architect and designer. He returned to Italy in the seventies. Also alongside Prampolini and Paladini, Pannaggi penned the manifesto *L'Arte meccanica* (Mechanical Art) published in 1923 (Crispolti 1980: 392–3; Luciani 1995: 443–64; Lista 1985: 129; Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 84, 132, 195).

44. Rossi 1962: 9.

45. Munari, quoted in an interview with Bassi 1990a. Ricas concurred, stating that the shows' organisation, spearheaded by Marinetti, was fairly happenstance (in an interview with Bassi 1990b).

46. From Marinetti's catalogue introduction: 'The group of Milanese Futurist painters, led by the young and ingenious Bruno Munari, appears here in full force' (*Trentatré futuristi*. Milano: Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1929: 12; quoted in Crispolti 1992: 74).

47. The painting manifesto 'Dinamismo e riforma muscolare' (Dynamism and Muscular Reform), dated 31 March 1928, was signed by Munari and Sassu (quoted in Crispolti 1992: 74–5). The *Manifesto tecnico dell'Aeroplastica futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Aeroplastics) appeared with the signatures of Munari, Manzoni, Furlan, and Ricas on the back of the exhibition program for *Scelta futuristi venticinquenni* at the Galleria delle Tre Arti (March 1934) and was simultaneously published (with the addition of Regina's signature) in the Futurist journal *Sant'Elia* (no.66, 1 March 1934). The manifesto *La plastica murale* (Manifesto of Mural Art) was signed by Andreoni, Ambrosi, Benedetta, Depero, Dottori, Marinetti, Munari, Oriani, Prampolini, and Rosso, and was published in *Stile Futurista* (I; 5, December 1934) on the occasion of the *Prima Mostra Nazionale della plastica murale per l'edilizia fascista* (First National Exhibition of mural art for fascist building projects, Genoa, November 1934–January 1935) (Crispolti in Andreoni 1992: 82).

'Munari was more interested in the generically creative disciplines, the ones that gave him the means, techniques, and tools that were not yet codified into an established language.'[48] His decade-long engagement with the Futurists saw him progressively pass through photography, mural decoration, ceramics, illustration, and kinetic objects. Because this path was complex, had many branches, and operated simultaneously on several levels, it is worth taking a closer look at its more striking moments.

An experimenter's way

Already upon his debut at Galleria Pesaro in 1927, Munari showed a marked propensity for crossing over traditional disciplinary boundaries. In the first show he presented, in addition to paintings, a small ceramic sculpture, made according to his sketch at the Casa Giuseppe Mazzotti in Albissola, Liguria, an historic town renowned for its ceramics: this was the first in a series of stylised 'imaginary animals' and a prelude to his long collaboration with ceramist Tullio d'Albisola.[49]

The Futurist exhibitions in 1927 and 1929 really resonated with the Milanese art world; their success was augmented by the presence of several artists from the Futurist group in Turin as well, who were more closely tied to the European Rationalist movement and were particularly involved in architectural, interior, and poster design.[50] The 1927 catalogue featured the first use of the term 'complessi plastici polimaterici rumoristi' (polymaterial noise-making plastic complexes) as the medium that would supersede easel painting;[51] and the group show at the Galleria Pesaro in October 1929, titled *Trentatré futuristi. Pittura, scultura, arte decorativa* (Thirty-three Futurists: Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Art), showed work spilling over into the applied arts, with Diulgheroff and Fillìa's *cartelli lanciatori* (launch posters) and ceramic works by d'Albisola and Munari. Munari had a greater number of works in this second show: in addition to his paintings, characterised by dynamic planar compenetrations and vivid colours, he exhibited the complete series of ceramic animals produced with d'Albisola's workshop:

48. While Tanchis relegates Munari's painting to a secondary level compared to his use of other artistic media (1987: 24), Meneguzzo admits that, compared to the inventiveness of his graphics, Munari's paintings and drawings perhaps show 'somewhat less advanced formal characteristics' (1993: 30-1), emphasising, on the other hand, his extreme originality of thinking—which led to his creation of the *air machines* and *useless machines* throughout the thirties (ibid.: 29).

49. Over the course of the twenties and thirties, Tullio d'Albisola (pseudonym of Tullio Mazzotti, 1899–1971) profoundly renewed Italian ceramics, freeing the medium from traditional figuration. He collaborated with numerous Futurists from Liguria, Turin, and Milan. Within the still strongly artisanal context of ceramic production in Albissola at the time, Mazzotti's workshop offered both a commercial approach, focussed on modern design (decorative objects by Fillìa and Diulgheroff, and more utilitarian objects like Munari's), as well as a more experimental approach, which d'Albisola and Farfa explored (Ravaioli 1998: 11–2). As evidence of their strong, lasting ties to the Futurists, is the new factory built by Diulgheroff in Albissola Marina, 1932–34. As for Munari's ceramics, his rapport with the factory in Albissola continued through the end of the thirties: see, for example, the 1937 photograph of Munari and d'Albisola in front of the ceramics factory (Tullio d'Albisola's Archives, Albissola Marina; reproduced in Presotto 1981: 145), as well as the June 1938 portrait of Munari in Albissola (reproduced in Lichtenstein, Häberli 1995: 181). In addition to the exhaustive catalogue of Futurist ceramics edited by Crispolti (1982), on the history of the Mazzotti workshop see http://www.tulliodalbisola.it.

50. Crispolti 1992: 72–3. Nicolay Diulgheroff (1901–1982), artist, designer and architect of Bulgarian origin. After early studies at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna and the Der Weg in Dresden, Diulgheroff acquired a solid constructivist background at the Bauhaus in Weimar (1923). He moved to Turin in 1926, where he studied at the Scuola Superiore di Architettura of the Accademia Albertina, and joined the Futurist circle headed by Fillìa. Diulgheroff's eclectic activities range from painting to architecture, and include advertising, exhibition design, as well as design of furniture, objects, ceramics, tapestries. After the war he resumed work as architect, but devoted himself primarily to painting (Olivieri 2008; Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 187–8; Salaris 1986: 151–2).

51. Ballo 1964: 24.

> In 1929, at the group show of 33 Futurist artists held at the Galleria Pesaro in Milan, I had my own room, in which I showed a complete series of my Futurist ceramics (…). Nino Strada and Bruno Munari, two young Futurists from Milan, were my first collaborators (…). At the time, Munari made a series of imaginary animals.[52]

Munari's ceramic output was not particularly numerous, but it was detailed: the 1929 series consisted of small animal sculptures (Camel, Goose, Monkey, Owl, Hippopotamus, Hen, Elephant) assembled from elementary geometric forms; a second series, made around 1932–33 in terracotta-based majolica, consists of both stylised animals (including a Bulldog, in two versions) and accessories for home and office (including a pen holder). He also designed a series of utilitarian objects, including a decorated triangular plate set and a promotional ashtray for Sanpellegrino (the latter was never produced, but is known through his sketches)—attesting to the growing interest in the production of practical objects for everyday use.[53] Aside from the close relationship to his own 'mechanical' magazine illustrations of the same period, and in turn the likely influence of Depero's puppets and toys,[54] the two series of ceramic animals attest to his precise desire to test out the expressive possibilities of cast clay to create a standardised line. This aspect hints at the exploration of a given technique's limits, a cornerstone of Munari's design method as developed in the post-war years.[55] Lastly, at the Futurist show mounted by the Galleria delle Tre Arti in 1934, Munari and Ricas exhibited a series of ceramic objects whose banal appearance denied their ironic intent: each featured a semantic play between the work's surreal look and its title—such as the *Tassa delle imposte*, a goblet-like object whose title could be read as either 'cup with shutters' or 'tax levy'—proving the spontaneous irony that was often a counterpoint of Munari's creations.[56]

In the meantime, the Gruppo Giovani Futuristi Milanesi (Group of Young Milanese Futurists) had come together in 1928, and received full recognition at the opening conference organised by Marinetti for the show the following year.[57] It was during this period that Munari met Riccardo Ricas, who had joined the Milanese Futurist circle and showed his work for the first time at the exhibition at the Galleria Pesaro in the autumn of 1929.[58] Throughout the

52. From 'Le ceramiche futuriste di Tullio D'Albisola' in *Futurismo* I; 7 (23 October 1932), reprinted in Crispolti 1982: 169. In a subsequent text, Mazzotti also mentions Marinetti's role—in 1938 they wrote the manifesto *Ceramica e Aeroceramica* (Ceramics and Aeroceramics) together. 'In 1927 (…) Nino Strada, Bruno Munari, and Tullio d'Albisola met in Milan, with the poet Marinetti (…) to establish the guidelines of the work [to come]' (from *La Ceramica futurista*, Albissola Marina: Manifattura d'Arte G. Mazzotti, 1939; quoted in Crispolti 1982: 171–2).

53. Reproduced in Crispolti 1982: 112–7; see ibid.: 29–30. In the summer of 1934, in a letter to Tullio d'Albisola, Munari mentions, among other things, a sample plate and the changes he would like to make to some borderless soup plates—which indicates that he was working with Mazzotti on a Rationalist plate service (letter Munari to d'Albisola, [June] 1934, in Presotto 1981: 151).

54. See, for example, the wooden constructions Bear and Rhinoceros (1923), now at Mart, Rovereto (reproduced in Hultén 1986: 329). Depero exhibited with the Futurists at the Galleria Pesaro in 1927, but also showed at the Biennale di Monza in 1923 and 1927.

55. Crispolti has shown a correlation between these ceramics and Munari and Sassu's manifesto, reading them as an ironic, caricatured reversal of the mechanical approach of industrial production (1982: 30; 1992: 75). On the other hand, Biffi Gentili (2005: 54) rightly connects these works with the use of ceramic draw-plates, which the Mazzotti workshop had a primitive version of. For a discussion of Munari's method, see Meneguzzo 1993: 23.

56. Cf. letter Munari to d'Albisola, 18 February 1934 (in Presotto 1981: 146).

57. The group was already formed in 1928, according to the letterhead on which Munari and Sassu wrote their manuscript (1928, quoted in Crispolti 1992: 74). During 1929, after a show in Varese as the Gruppo Radiofuturista Lombardo (Lombard Radiofuturist Group, Crispolti 1992: 74n8), the collective assumed the name Gruppo Futurista F.T. Marinetti/ Movimento Futurista Milanese/Propaganda 'Radiofuturismo' (see letter Munari to d'Albisola, 30 April 1929, in Presotto 1981: 137).

thirties their working relationship—which remained flexible, as they worked both together and on their own—grew into a collaboration that ran much deeper than the average professional partnership. It reached such a degree that their visual languages were almost uniform; they mutually influenced one another, and both went from straight abstraction to more surrealist work (the style Ricas was best known for later on), as well as photomontage and kinetic art; ultimately, both held a stance that remained fairly non-aligned with regard to mainstream Futurist painting.[59]

Between the end of 1929 and the spring of 1932, Munari received additional recognition for his work. He took part in two Futurist exhibitions Prampolini organised in Paris, at the Galerie 23 (*Peintres futuristes italiens*, in which he was the only artist from the Milanese group), and at the Galerie de la Renaissance (*Enrico Prampolini et les aéropeintres futuristes italiens*), both with a lively opening gala thrown by Marinetti.[60] Further opportunities for the Italian Futurists to exhibit abroad soon followed, and Munari's work was featured in travelling group shows in Germany and France in 1934, as well as in a Vienna and Athens in 1935.[61]

The next major Futurist event at the Galleria Pesaro took place in the autumn of 1931 with the *Mostra futurista di Aeropittura e di scenografia* (Show of futurist Aeropainting and set design), accompanied by a solo exhibition of Prampolini's work. This was the first exhibition of aeropainting in Milan—it highlighted the latest trend in Futurist painting, which related to the widespread popularity of aviation and was based on principles of aerial perspective—and was repeated in another iteration the following year at the same gallery. On that same occasion the *Manifesto dell'Aeropittura* (Manifesto of Aeropainting) was published (its signatories included Balla, Depero, Fillìa, and Prampolini)—and although none of the Milanese members signed, the manifesto nevertheless is referred to in the exhibition catalogue text in which the group outlined its theoretical stance.[62] In the Second Futurism—and therefore also in Munari's work—one can denote two successive stages, corresponding to two distinct lines of research: the first is related to mechanical representations; the second to more surreal atmospheres.[63] From this perspective, the sheer experimental versatility of Munari's visual language appears even more complex, as he absorbed metaphysical and surrealist currents through Prampolini's work. Steering clear of the figurative resurgence that

58. Ricas 2005: 62; Bassi 1992: 58.
59. Bassi 1994: 14, 16.
60. Crispolti 1992: 75, 77; id. 1980: 564.
61. Cf. correspondence with Tullio d'Albisola, in Presotto 1981: 151; and Verdone 1988[2]: 241–2.
62. 'With remarkable clarity, the Milan group (…) raises the issue of renewing [art's] linguistic means in order to achieve an art of pure visuality, based on the use of colour fields and the combination of colour-materials,' wrote Filiberto Menna (1966a, now in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 72). Marinetti organised the *Prima mostra di Aeropittura dei Futuristi* (First Exhibition of Futurist Aeropainting) at the Galleria Camerata degli Artisti in Rome, 1–10 February 1931, followed by two exhibitions on the same theme in Florence and Trieste. A preview of the manifesto had been published by Mino Somenzi in the *Gazzetta del Popolo* (22 October 1929) (Bassi 1992: 60, 60n37; Birolli 2008: 211; Crispolti 1992: 76).
63. 'Early work, done between 1918–20 and 1927–28, is characterised by a predominance of formal analogies in mechanical subjects, and schematic images of landscapes schematised according to bright planes of colour, with uniform geometric fields of colour. All are based on the theories outlined in the manifesto *L'arte meccanica* (…) Later on, between 1927–28 and the end of the thirties, one notes a prevalence of sculptural, occasionally figurative formulations, transferred into a highly imaginative, almost 'neo-metaphysical' realm, and in many respects verging upon surrealism. (…) these were known as aeropaintings' (Crispolti 1986: 37–8). Lista correlates this focus on 'moods' with the interest (widespread at the time throughout the Milanese avant-garde) in the occult and other parascientific subjects (1984: 30). Munari was an avid reader of science and science-fiction texts: 'At the time I was reading many

characterised the more literal strain of aeropainting (which consisted of anecdotal landscapes seen from unusual viewpoints), Munari instead turned to the 'cosmic' vein championed by Prampolini and exponents of the Turin group. These artists were interested in the symbolic, fantastical transfiguration of mental states associated with the experience of flying, which therefore assumed the form of dreamlike visions, sometimes bordering on Abstract compositions.[64] Munari's surrealist ancestry—interestingly reminiscent of the graphic work of his contemporary Herbert Bayer—is also visible in the illustrations and photomontages he created for magazines.[65]

At the beginning of 1933 the Milanese group revived its activity by participating in the V Triennale with a Futurist pavilion for a civil airport, a project Prampolini spearheaded. Its Rationalist design (with elements of surrealism) called for a number of mural decorations involving many artists: Munari created aeropaintings for Agip (Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli, the national petrol company) in an underground passage.[66] The pre-eminent aspect of this installation was an intense interest in new materials and experimental building techniques, two currents that had also appeared in the sensational *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* in Rome the year before.[67] Additionally, in the Triennale's Aeronautical Press Pavilion Munari earned acclaim for a large wall-based photomontage. The photographic medium was increasingly central to Munari's work, and following his extensive experience with photomontage, he began to try his hand at cutting-edge techniques such as photograms, along the lines of those by Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy. In addition to the numerous images reproduced in magazines he was a contributor for—from *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* to *Natura*—his photograms were also exhibited in Rome at the *Mostra di Fotografia Futurista* (Exhibition of Futurist Photography) organised by Marinetti that same year.[68] They were shown again that December in Milan, in another Futurist show held at the Circolo Nazario Sauro, which is interesting for two reasons: not only is Munari's participation in the photographic section especially significant; as reviews attest, an artist named Dilma exhibited work with this group for the first time here—and this is clearly a pseudonym of Dilma Carnevali, Munari's future wife.[69]

books on astronomy, like *Chi vive sulle stelle?* [Bompiani, 1934; originally titled *Was lebt auf den Sternen?*] by Desiderius Papp, and after that—as a consequence of a constant expansion of the universe—I could no longer read ordinary novels' (quoted in Lichtenstein, Häberli 2000: 274).

64. Menna 1966a, now in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 72; Ballo 1964: 25.

65. Recent criticism has emphasised the dialectical relationship that bound Munari to the Futurists, in particular during the mid-thirties, when he was moving toward an increasingly 'unorthodox' practice compared to the peculiar themes taken up by aeropainting (see Meneguzzo 1993: 29). One revealing aspect is the allusive nature of his painting titles, which allowed Munari to maintain a certain relationship—albeit rather subtle and literal—to Futurism, while he was actually moving in a more abstract direction with his work. Cf. Munari himself: '(...) I made paintings that were more abstract than they were Futurist, which I called aeropaintings' (in Branzi 1984: 41).

66. Di Corato 2008: 223, 223n31; Crispolti 1992: 77; Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 49–50; Pansera 1978: 44, 263. The exhibition catalogue *Stazione per aeroporto civile—Padiglione del movimento futurista alla Triennale* was issued as a supplement to the June 1933 issue of the magazine *Natura*—for which Munari was a regular contributor. Cf. the catalogue *V Triennale di Milano*. Milan: Ceschina, 1933: 571. See also Prampolini's article 'Lo stile, la funzione e i nuovi materiali edili' in the same issue (*Natura*, VI; 6: 35–43), in which he describes the rooms, the works, and the materials used. Depero, Dottori, Fillìa, Andreoni, Thayaht, Rosso, Ricas, and Duse also contributed.

67. Organized in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the Fascist march on Rome: see Schnapp 2003.

68. Cf. http://www.munart.org, in particular the sections 'Dove ha esposto' (Where he exhibited) and 'Il passato futurista, 1927' (The Futurist past, 1927), last accessed February 2010.

69. Bassi 1992: 61n47.

In May 1933 a new exhibition opened at the Galleria Pesaro, titled *Omaggio Futurista a Umberto Boccioni. Aeropittura, polimaterici, quadri religiosi, architetture, scenografie, arte decorativa* (Futurist Homage to Umberto Boccioni: Aeropaintings, Polymaterial Works, Religious Paintings, Architectures, Set Designs, and Decorative Art). Within the framework of nationwide celebrations organised for Boccioni's fiftieth birthday—including a street named after him and a retrospective exhibition at the Castello Sforzesco—this show was a key event, and brought together works by more than 100 artists, creating an overview of the broad range of formal experimentation inspired by the Futurist movement. The work Munari exhibited featured a number of new polymaterial pieces—'paintings that incorporated metal, wood, and paper elements'—including a polymaterial work made for advertising, which was his principal professional activity at the time.[70] In June, together with Ricas—with whom he had founded the r+m design studio in 1931—he participated in the *Esposizione del cartello internazionale e del cartello italiano rifiutato* (Exhibition of International Posters and Rejected Italian Posters). This unique event, organised by Dino Villani, editor-in-chief of the advertising magazine *L'Ufficio Moderno*, and staged at the Galleria del Milione,[71] became an important point of contact between Milan's artistic circles and the European avant-garde, featuring work by Bayer, Cassandre, Carlu, Moholy-Nagy, and Soviet poster designers.[72]

Judging by the quantity and quality of the aforementioned works, Munari was clearly going through an exceptional period of artistic growth; this is also confirmed by his first solo exhibition at the Galleria delle Tre Arti, also in 1933, in which he exhibited the first *macchine inutili* (useless machines). These were structures suspended in the air or leaned on the floor and characterised by the free movement of forms and colours in space. Their main elements were based on geometric modules and constructed with lightweight materials so as to be easily moved by the air, and were prefigured in drawings for designs such as *macchine aeree* (Air Machines), done as early as 1930.[73] While on the one hand they signalled the degree of autonomy his artistic line of research had attained, they

70. Crispolti 1992: 78; Anzani 1995: 26. The exhibition was replicated in Rome later that same year. The quotation is from a contemporary article, 'L'omaggio degli artisti futuristi', which Munari kept a copy of, with no other references, but datable to early June (perhaps from the newspaper *L'Ambrosiano*?); photocopy kindly provided by Aldo Tanchis. See also the testimony of a contemporary columnist: '(…) a figuration of his titled, if I remember correctly, *Mormorio della foresta* [Forest Murmur], includes the application of small tree branches to the painting's surface, and elsewhere, going entirely beyond the confines of paintings, he invents a *Macchina per contemplare* [Machine for Contemplation], composed of a vial, tubes, and mysterious liquids. They're certainly oddities, but they're often amusing as well, such as *Radioscopia dell'uomo moderno* [Radioscopy of Modern Man]: this depicts a human skeleton of wood and metal, with a globe floating between his ribs—man carrying the world within' (from the article 'La mostra futurista in omaggio a Umberto Boccioni', n.p., 1933, reprinted in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 56).

71. Di Corato (2008: 225, 225n34) quotes the exhibition catalogue and an article about it published by G.L. Luzzatto in *L'Ufficio Moderno* IX; 6 (June 1933). Cf. also Dematteis 2003: 29–31.

72. See the bulletin *Il Milione*, no. 16 (3–30 June 1933): 1ff.

73. The first mention of the 'useless machines' appeared in an article by Luigi Pralavorio 'Delle macchine inutili e di altro' in *Cronaca Prealpina*, Varese, 28 May 1934 (now reprinted in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 57–8). But as early as December 1931 Munari had written to d'Albisola: 'My dear [Tullio], now I'm doing something important in terms of painting and aeroplastics (or, I might say, sensitive machines) but tommaso [Marinetti] understands nothing of such things (…)' (in Presotto 1981: 141). The origin of Munari's 'useless machines' has been liked to his encounter with Parisian surrealism during his trip there in 1932. A few years later Munari took stock of his own work, as well as that of other Futurists (Ricas, Furlan), in mobile objects through the article 'Che cosa sono le macchine inutili e perché' (What are Useless Machines, and Why?) published in *La Lettura* (XXXVII; 7, July 1937: 660–5). That article included a reproduction of *Universe*, a mobile Calder created in 1931, while underlining the differences between that and his own work. As

also, on the other hand, represent his clear break from Futurist orthodoxy and open participation in the broader realm of Italian Abstraction.

The Centrale Futurista di Milano

Aside from purely artistic production, the militancy of the Futurist group in the early thirties also benefited from Munari's active participation on an organisational level, at Milan's Centrale Futurista.[74] Contemporary correspondence shows that Munari and partners were organising a show at the Galleria Bardi set to open in May, but because of the economic stipulations set by the gallerist they decided to let that one go and wait for the exhibition scheduled at the Galleria Pesaro the following autumn.[75] Unrealised plans to build a centre for a proposed Centrale Futurista Alta Italia (Futurist HQ for northern Italy, which would be managed by Depero, who had just returned from a stay in New York) were also drawn up during this period. The new centre would have had Rationalist interiors and furnishings, and was to include a permanent exhibition space, with a storage annex for works as well as a specialised bookshop, where solo and group exhibitions, reunions and conferences could have been held. The project also called for a promotional campaign and an annual publication, in the aim of raising funds as well.[76] Although Munari does not appear as a member of the organising committee (which included Depero, Notari, Fillìa, Prampolini, and Andreoni), it is hard to imagine, given his role as group leader, that he would not have had some involvement on such a major project. Indeed in a letter he wrote to d'Albisola in 1929, Munari outlined his work schedule at the time, which seems to have been fairly equally divided between his own studio (in via Sant'Agnese), the Pensione Italia (in via Unione, where he slept and ate), and other activities, which almost certainly included his role as director of the Milanese Futurist group.[77] The group's management, at no. 14 via Carlo Ravizza, in a recently developed area near the Fiera campionaria (Trade fairgrounds),[78] moved in 1934 to the home-studio Munari shared with his friend and associate Ricas in the building next door, also in via Ravizza, at no. 16.[79]

for the much-discussed relationship of each artist's priorities in this field, Di Corato (2008: 217–8) has shown that Calder's mobile had appeared as early as 1932 in the first issue of *Abstraction création art non figuratif 1932*, which Munari would certainly have seen through Prampolini, who was amongst the magazine's contributors. Later on, Munari still felt a need to clarify his relationship with Calder in *Arte come mestiere* (1966: 7–15), a distinction he repeated years later in an interview with Irmeline Lebeer ('Qu'est-ce qu'un fricomacr?' in *L'art vivant*, no. 53, Novembre 1974: 4–8). A propos of his *macchine inutili*, see also Tisdall 1970: 136; Tanchis 1986: 34–7; and Meneguzzo 1993: 29.

74. Milan's Futurist Headquarters of sorts. The term has also a connotation of 'power plant' [Trans. note].

75. See the 1929 letters Nino Strada and Munari wrote to Tullio d'Albisola (Presotto 1981); cf. also Crispolti 1992: 74.

76. See letter Depero to Marinetti, 21 April 1931 (Mart, Archivio del '900), quoted in Bassi 1992: 59, wherein extended excerpts are reprinted.

77. See letter Munari to d'Albisola, 6 September 1929: '(...) Come visit me in Milan: Munari—via Sant'Agnese, 4 (from 4 to 6 [each afternoon]—mornings until 10) or at the Pensione Italia from 12½ to 2 (in via Unione) (...)' (in Presotto 1981: 137).

78. For the official opening of the Sempione Tunnel) in 1906, the area west of Porta Magenta held the Esposizione Universale di Milano (Milan's Universal Expo, cf. the famous poster by Leopoldo Metlicovitz). In 1923, for its fourth year, the Fiera Campionaria (Milan Trade Fair) was permanently moved to the former site of the Piazza d'Armi, which had been acquired by the government. Moreover, that year a royal decree greatly expanded the outskirts of Milan, such that the municipality now encompassed several small neighbouring villages. Naturally, such conditions triggered a building boom in the area of the fairgrounds between 1923 and 1929. Aside from the area's affordability, perhaps its association with the exhibition—seen as a concrete symbol of technological progress—also explains the Milanese Futurists' decision to open a branch in this area, even though it was relatively peripheral compared to the city centre.

79. As can be deduced from a letter Munari wrote to Thayaht (20 April 1934), on the letterhead of the Centrale Futurista

In addition to their studio practice together, Ricas and Munari also participated in the organisation of Futurist banquets held in Milan between 1930–32, when the Italian culinary tradition became the object of Marinetti's umpteenth offensive. These were goliardic festivities, based more on formal innovations or straightforward witticisms, and were first announced during a dinner at the local restaurant Penna d'oca in November 1930. The requisite manifesto of Futurist cuisine soon followed: *Manifesto della cucina futurista* was published in the Turin-based daily *La Gazzetta del Popolo* on 28 December, and sparked a series of Futurist conferences and banquets throughout the country; in March of 1931 the Taverna Santopalato (Saint Palate Tavern) opened in Turin; and finally, in 1932, the publishing house Sonzogno produced a cookbook titled *La cucina futurista* (Futurist Cookery) by Marinetti and Fillìa. While Ricas invented exotically named dishes, Munari contributed to the sets designed for these soirées, using silver foil as tablecloth and placing sculptures around the tabletop.[80] Other provocations of the sort, often in a humorous vein, inspired Ricas and Munari to carry out experiments in 'cinema odoroso' (scented cinema) by wafting scented air (salty sea breezes, freshly cut grass) into screening rooms, and produce 'concerti di silenzio' (concerts of silence) on the radio.[81] 'We also had some real rows in the gallery,' Ricas recalls, 'maybe Munari didn't get involved—actually, he'd look at us, a bit detached, he was never one for polemics.'[82] Such cultural agitation was, after all, a characteristic part of the movement, and from the very start Futurist evenings constituted an occasion for direct confrontation with the public, often ending in quite a racket. 'Infatuated with the aerial records set by De Pinedo (…) we showed up on purpose garbed in aviators' blue raincoats, with white spats and bowler hats, and people did double-takes on the street.'[83]

From Futurism to Abstraction

In March 1934 the Milanese Futurist group turned out in force for a new exhibition, which turned out to be their most cohesive moment, as well as their last major group show of the 1930s. From that point on—up to the 1938 group show at the Galleria del Milione—the group's strength dispersed, scattering into individual events, just as the Milanese Futurists' initiatives began to converge with those of other European avant-gardes. Munari's case is indicative of this; there was a particularly parallel aspect in the work of abstract artists in Milan and Como, and they joined forces in order to counter the attacks of the Fascist right against modern art.[84]

> This exhibition (…) will contain: paintings (which push the very limits of painting); aeroplastics (sculptures made to fly); landscape designs (models); useless machines (fantastical, brightly coloured new polymaterial furniture and moving objects); decorative polymaterial works encased in glass (English-style—a

di Milano and R+M (Mart, Archivio del '900, fondo Thayaht, 1.2.07.66).

80. '(…) Rose petals in hot broth, oranges with ice cream inside, and my own creation, called "balls of fire at the North Pole"' (Ricas, quoted in Lopez 1994: 8). Cf. Salaris 1986: 158; and Rossi 1962: 9: '(…) while Fillìa tends to the kitchen and serves *Carneplastico* [Sculptural meats] and dates with anchovies.' On Futurist cuisine, see Salaris 1985: 207–8; id. 1994: 58–9; Crispolti 1980: 325–8.

81. 'I recall one *Mutiny on the Bounty* at the Cinema Corso with sea-breezes pumped into the air by two fans …' Ricas, quoted in Lopez 1994: 8.

82. Ricas 2005: 63.

83. Ricas, quoted in Lopez 1994: 8. On Marinetti's mediatic operations and the dynamics of such Futurist soirées, see Lista 1984: 63–4 and Birolli 2008: 224.

84. Bassi 1992: 56, 63; Crispolti 1992: 74.

85. Letter Munari to D'Albisola, 18 February 1934 (in Presotto 1981: 146). From another letter,

> novelty); scratched mirrors (new); and a thousand other interesting things.[85]

With those words Munari wrote Tullio d'Albisola, telling him about the upcoming event. The exhibition, mounted at the Galleria delle Tre Arti and titled *Scelta futuristi venticinquenni. Omaggio dei futuristi venticinquenni al venticinquennio del futurismo* (Selected Twenty-five-year-old Futurists: an Homage of Twenty-five-year-old Futurists upon the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Futurism), practically involved only artists in Milan, including new members such as Gelindo Furlan, Franco Grignani, Regina and, once again, Dilma (who exhibited scratched mirrors and polymaterial compositions).[86] Munari was not only actively involved in the exhibition's organisation, he was also one of the key players in the lengthy calendar of related events: joining in alongside presentations by Depero, Marinetti, Farfa, Masnata, and Giuntini (an opening conference, poetry readings, debates, and musical performances), Munari compered two themed evenings—one on a recent art event held in Milan, the other on his own *useless machines*. An idea of the tone of these evenings can be gleaned from a contemporary article, which quotes a jocund exchange between Munari and the audience:

> And Munari explained how he arrived at his 'useless machines,' following his disillusionment with painting (...) You can just can imagine how the public took these arguments (...) But Munari, small as he may be in stature, skilfully held his own before all attempts to knock him. (...)
> 'But this is not art, and you are not artists! ...,' one visitor brusquely decided.
> 'What you mean by artist?,' asked Munari.
> 'Someone who makes art...'
> 'Perfect. Someone who makes art! ... But you, who bristle at the misuse of the qualifier *artist*, are you used to—as I am, as everyone is—addressing your barber and your cobbler as artist? ...
> A chorus of *ah! eh! ih! oh! uh!* erupts in the audience ...
> '... In fact, don't we usually say, "my barber shaves like a real artist!"... "My cobbler is a true artist!"?... "My tailor, what an artist!"?'
> 'Well, we'll just have to find a word to substitute the term artist!' an unidentified man in the audience ironically exclaims.'[87]

Munari was also the author of an introductory note titled 'Antipolemica' (Antipolemic), which was reproduced in the program flyer along with the text of the *Manifesto tecnico dell'Aeroplastica Futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Aeroplastics), signed by Furlan, Manzoni, Ricas, and Munari—who, as group leader, gave a public reading of it at the opening.[88] This

probably written in June (ibid.: 151) we know that the exhibition at the Galleria Pesaro was simply postponed until October, as the announcement of a national aeropainting contest (Concorso nazionale futurista della Galleria Pesaro) also attests, published in *Sant'Elia* (1 March 1934) along with the publication of the *Manifesto tecnico dell'Aeroplastica Futurista*. Perhaps because of disagreements with Lino Pesaro, the show never happened, nor did the Futurists have any further relations with his gallery.

86. There is scant information on the Galleria delle Tre Arti. Located in Foro Bonaparte 65, the gallery was open from 1931 to 1934. It was directed by Ugo Roffi, and its exhibitions focussed not only on painting and sculpture, but also on the decorative arts, which were granted ample space. The gallery was affiliated with the magazines *Domus* and *Orpheus*, and acted as a cultural centre open to the public at large through a program of lectures, concerts, and literary readings. It also offered a large collection of Italian and foreign magazines. Before the 1934 group show, a few Futurists had already exhibited there—Munari (1933), Nino Strada (1931) and Aligi Sassu (1933) had shown work, and Ottone Rosai (December 1933) and Gigi Broggini (1933) had had solo shows. The gallery also organised exhibitions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century old masters from the Hoepli collection (November 1933), and an exhibition of Jewish art (March–April 1934, immediately following the Futurist group show). Information based on a 1933 publication (*Galleria delle Tre Arti.* Milan: Galleria delle Tre Arti, 1933, in the Biennale's Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee, Venice) and some catalogues found in Italy's major public libraries.

87. Luigi Pralavorio, 'Delle macchine inutili e di altro' in *Cronaca Prealpina* (28 May 1934), now reproduced in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 57–8.

88. In the version published in the Futurist biweekly *Sant'Elia* (II; 5, 1 March 1934: 1) Regina's name also appears (Bassi

manifesto announced a line of visual research stemming directly from the *Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo*: '(...) a new art without a capital A (...) a manifestation that goes beyond painting and sculpture, to contain a synthesis of film (...) rhythm, material, air, and space'—and translated into landscape design projects that were almost architectural models of surreal environments, and extended the principles of polymaterial creation into three dimensions.[89] Moreover, Munari was also responsible for the design of the program flyer and, when the show moved on to Reggio Emilia that April, he printed up a typographic poster—almost the sole instance of such work in his entire career.[90]

As we have seen, the two years between 1933 and 1934 were a particularly intense period for both Munari and the Milanese Futurist group in general. Group members showed work in numerous exhibitions both in Italy and abroad, including the Venice Biennale and Rome Quadriennale, with the former being a key event on the international level and the latter being most relevant on the national level. Throughout the twenties, after an exhausting campaign to combat the prejudices of both critics and organisers of the Venice Biennale, Marinetti finally managed to secure the Futurists' participation, and from 1926 each biennial featured a section of Futurist painting.[91] As for Munari, he continually exhibited with the National and Lombard groups between 1930 and 1936, though his presence was still fairly minor.[92] At the Venice Biennale—which, despite the international scope and the leadership of Giuseppe Volpi and Antonio Maraini, remained bound to an academic conception of art— the Futurists' participation was clearly limited to painting and sculpture, and the work Munari exhibited there was no exception.[93] A significant number of Futurists took part in the XVII Biennale (1930), mounting a show in the recently renovated Palazzo delle Esposizioni; in 1932, next door to Depero's solo show, a group show focussing on aeropainting (curated by Fillìa) was installed in the Italian Pavilion, and it was an important theme again at the following Biennale in 1934. And despite Maraini's hostilities and the ample prejudices of the critics, the Futurist sections were always a great success with the public. At the XX Biennale in 1936 (the last one Munari took part in) the Futurists were assigned the Russian Pavilion, which

1992: 61–2, 209; Crispolti 1992: 79–80).

89. Quoted in Crispolti 1992: 79. In addition to Balla and Depero's 1915 manifesto, the new document 'relates to theses already posited by Boccioni in 1911 on the need to go beyond painting and sculpture, with means capable of synthesising movement and rhythm, space and matter' (Ravaioli 1998: 28n88).

90. A review of the two exhibitions in Milan and in Reggio ('I futuristi venticinquenni a Milano e a Reggio') appears in *Sant'Elia* (III; 67, 15 May 1934: 6). Note that Munari is mentioned alongside Carlo Manzoni as a 'poet'—which would indicate that he participated with Depero, Farfa, and Masnata in their *parolibere* readings and events.

91. For the relationship between the Venice Biennial and the Futurists, see Migliore, Buscaroli 2009 (esp. pp.36–66 regarding the period between WWI and WWII). In 1926, the Futurists were admitted to the fifteenth edition and exhibited in the Soviet Pavilion, courtesy of Moscow after the Soviets decided not to participate, thereby granting Marinetti ample exhibition space. For all Biennale events through 1942 Marinetti—who felt he need not be subject to the interferences of the Biennale's Directorship—acted as authorising commissioner, delegating exhibition curation to Prampolini; the Futurist artists were, nevertheless, prohibited from exhibiting individually there (ibid.: 36, 40).

92. As reported by the catalogue of artists and works published by the Biennale (*La Biennale di Venezia. Le esposizioni internazionali d'Arte 1895-1995. Artisti, mostre, partecipazioni nazionali, premi*. Venice: Biennale di Venezia/Milan: Electa, 1996), Munari exhibited one painting at each Biennale.

93. Despite the fact that Volpi and Maraini's co-management marked an important opening toward theatre, music, and film (Venice's International Film Festival, launched in 1932, was the first event of its kind in the world, and its extraordinary success led to its annual occurrence), the repertoire of visual arts present at the Biennale would not branch out to photography and architecture until the 1970s (Scalise 2009: 124; Di Martino 1995: 67).

had been renamed the Italian Futurist Pavilion (as had already happened at the V Triennale, with their project for a civil airport); the exhibition, which included a lot of Milanese artists, notably included 'plastic complexes' in addition to the usual paintings and sculptures.[94]

Similar developments took place at the other major Italian art event throughout the 1930s, the Rome Quadriennale, which, much like the Venice Biennale, favoured painting and sculpture. Because these two events largely refused any multidisciplinary work, and were entirely closed to the applied arts, the Milan Triennale stepped forward to feature those fields, along with the nascent field of serially produced design objects. The exhibitions in Rome repeatedly featured the work of the Milanese Futurists; Munari in particular showed there, and though the work he sent was limited to painting and sculpture, he nevertheless took part in their group shows there from the very first year, 1931, through the following quadrennials in 1935 and 1939.[95] The latter was particularly important, on both artistic and political levels, for the simultaneous presence of the Milanese Futurists (including Munari) and the Lombard abstractionists who showed with the Galleria del Milione (Radice, Rho, Soldati, Licini). The Lombard abstractionists had come together within the broader context of other Italian avant-garde groups' reactions to a campaign launched by the more intransigent wing of the Fascist right against 'degenerate art,' begun in 1938. The two groups again formed a mutual front at the XXII Venice Biennale in 1940 (in which Munari, however, did not exhibit), with an increase in the abstractionists' participation.[96]

Exhibition installations

It should be noted that, during the 1930s, Fascist political culture in the artistic realm strengthened extant institutions like the Venice Biennale[97] and Milan Triennale,[98] and fostered the creation of new events like the Rome Quadriennale.[99] The newly founded institutions fell under the regime's direct oversight, and were also

94. For details on each individual's participation, see Migliore, Buscaroli 2009: 19, 47, 53–8, 60–2.

95. As with the Venice Biennale, Marinetti again managed, thanks to his personal connections to Mussolini, not only to obtain a space for the Futurists—who were well represented until the V Quadriennale, in 1943—but also to maintain full responsibility of the selection of artists, which de facto resulted in a group presence that went slightly counter to the main selection criteria, which focussed more on the work rather than the individual artist (ibid.: 12–3).

96. Crispolti 1992: 85–6; Bassi 1992: 63; Salaris 2004: 45–51.

97. By becoming an autonomous entity in 1930 (the institution was originally controlled by the city council) the Venice Biennale came under the direct control of the Fascist government; it was overseen by the industrialist Giuseppe Volpi and sculptor Antonio Maraini, the National Commissioner of the National Fascist Fine Arts Union (Fagone 1982: 48; cf. Migliore 2009: 36–66). For a general history of the Biennale, see Di Martino 1995.

98. Even the Monza Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, founded in 1922, gradually fell under the increasing oversight of the regime (beginning in 1925) with the government's growing influence. All this culminated in 1929 with the Monza exhibition declared an autonomous institution, moved to Milan, and switched from a Biennial to a Triennial, as well as its inclusion in the *Bureau International des Expositions*. However, 'the Triennale managed to elude, to a certain degree, the autarchic measures inflicted on the Venice Biennale and the Rome Quadriennale' (Pansera 1978: 36). This was due in part to its more international scope, as well as directors like Guido Marangoni (founder and publisher of *La Casa bella* in 1928) and Gio Ponti (founder and publisher of *Domus*). For a general history of the Triennale during the twenty years of Fascist rule see Pansera 1978: 34–59.

99. The Rome Quadriennale was founded in 1927 with the specific goal of 'centralising the most representative Italian art into a single large display connecting provincial and regional exhibitions—organised by art unions—to the international realm of the Venice Biennale.' Entrusted to the directorship of Cipriano Efisio Oppo, a painter and Fascist deputy, the Quadriennale used the typical tool of forming artistic consensus through a complex system of incentives offered in the form of prizes, access to occasional chances to exhibit work, and an intense acquisition programme (http://www.quadriennalediroma.org, last accessed 8 March 2010; cf. also Fagone 1982: 47–9).

shaped by the more capillary, bottom-up operation of exhibitions organised by the Fascist National Fine Arts' Syndicate. The 1930s were also punctuated by major celebratory exhibitions 'that helped introduce the broader public to the work of artists within the political terms and functional content of the regime's "culture of propaganda".'[100] Worth remembering because of the Futurists' substantial contribution are the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, which opened in Rome in 1932 and remained continuously on view through 1934; the *Mostra dell'Aeronautica*, an Air Show held in Milan in 1934; the *Mostre nazionali di Plastica murale*, national exhibitions of mural decoration held in Genoa and Rome in 1934 and 1936; the *Mostra di Aeropittura Futurista*, an exhibition of aeropainting held at the Aeronautical Ministry in Rome in 1937; the *Mostra del Minerale* again in Rome in 1938; and countless other autarchic and colonial exhibitions throughout Italy.

In the early summer of 1934 the Milanese Futurist group once again set up shop at the Palazzo dell'Arte (new home of the Triennale) to install the *Esposizione Aeronautica Italiana*, a national air show to which they lent the best architects and graphic designers of the time, led by Edoardo Persico and Giuseppe Pagano (respectively, editor and director of the architecture magazine *Casabella*). Munari wrote Tullio d'Albisola at the beginning of that summer: 'My room for the air show is coming along very well, [P]agano says it's magnificent! If he says so…!'[101] This was as he was working on the mural decoration for the Sala d'Icaro (Icarus Room) designed by Pagano—which was, along with the Sala delle medaglie d'oro (Gold-medal Room) designed by Nizzoli and Persico, one of the event's most important installations—wherein he created a large, abstract fresco on the wall surrounding the large steel spiral symbolising the conquest of the air.[102]

December brought additional proof of Munari's keen interest in wall-based work within larger architectural projects (especially monumental public buildings)—an interest that was not limited to the Futurists, but rather shared by artists of opposing groups—when he participated in the *Prima Mostra Nazionale di plastica murale per l'edilizia fascista* (First National Exhibition of mural art for fascist building projects) organised by Prampolini and Fillìa at Palazzo Ducale in Genoa, for which he was also a signatory of the manifesto *La Plastica murale* (Manifesto of Mural Art).[103] Although the Futurist programme did not overtly nod to the ideological aspects of the relationship between art and politics, it nevertheless appeared to be a response to the poetics announced a few months before by the artist Mario Sironi. A key figure of the Novecento movement, Sironi postulated a social function

100. Fagone 1982: 43, 47–8.

101. Letter Munari to d'Albisola, n.d. [June] 1934 (in Presotto 1981: 151).

102. See the extensive review in *Casabella* VI; 80 (August 1934): 4–21. 'Bruno Munari's painting recalls Leonardo's earliest devices, his studies of bird flight, the first, heaviest cells, their gradual improvements, aerodynamic formulas, motors, and increasingly perfect outlines. These abstract images culminate in the great figure of Icarus, sculpted by Marcello Mascherini' (ibid.: 14–16). Crispolti (1992: 82n30) mentions Furlan, Asinari, Scaini, and Rossi (who nevertheless are not mentioned in the meticulous exhibition summary in *Casabella*, ibid.: 10–21), while Gambini appears as a collaborator with the architects Banfi Belgioioso Peressutti Rogers on the Sala dell'Alta Velocità (Hall of High-Speed), and Manzoni worked with the architect Guido Frette on the Sala D'Annunzio (D'Annunzian Hall). See also Pansera 1978: 45–7.

103. This manifesto appeared for the first time in *Stile futurista* (I; 5, December 1934) and was signed by Andreoni, Ambrosi, Benedetta, Depero, Dottori, Marinetti, Munari, Oriani, Prampolini, and Rosso. In 1936 Asinari, Regina, and Ricas added their signatures to the version reprinted in the exhibition catalogue for the show *Seconda Mostra Nazionale di plastica murale per l'edilizia fascista in Italia e in Africa Orientale* held in Rome's Trajan Markets in 1936 (Crispolti 1992: 83).

for mural decoration—understood as a tool for educating the masses within the Fascist state,[104] as exemplified by the work he showed at the V Triennale. The Futurists naturally adopted this same type of intervention, not just on the pictorial level, but extending it to the polymaterial and photographic fields as well (following the example set by the Russian Constructivists, chiefly El Lissitsky).[105] In his opening speech for the exhibition at the Galleria delle Tre Arti, Depero had already addressed the issue, and expressed his hope that in the 1933 show the traditional genres and techniques (fresco, window, and mosaic designs) could be overcome; above all, he called for a broadening of the formal vocabulary through the use of various industrial materials[106]—providing instructions that would appear again in the manifesto and be followed for the exhibition installations in Genoa. Nevertheless, despite their staunch dedication (which continued through the next event, organised in Rome in 1936 and focussed on wall sculpture, in which Munari, Ricas, and other Milanese artists took part), the Futurists still only occasionally found sufficient space and support for the interventions they dreamt of carrying out in public buildings and institutions. Because of this, their works were for the most part limited to temporary exhibitions[107]—which was a substantial failure in terms of winning commissions from the regime—but also made them relatively successful in terms of fair installations, which many of the most advanced businesses in Milan commissioned them to create.

Throughout 1936, in addition to confirming the Futurists' major interest in wall sculpture,[108] their contribution to the IV Triennale also led to their inclusion in the Mostra internazionale della scenografia teatrale (International exhibition of theatre set design), with several Futurists represented in the Italian section: Munari created a set of masks, a stage set model, and a dance tool.[109] On the one hand, Munari's new work drew upon the set designs Marinetti had created in the early 1930s, while on the other, they foreshadowed the polymaterial compositions he exhibited as *Oggetti metafisici* (metaphysical objects) in his solo show at the Galleria del Milione in 1940 and, in the advertising realm, the window displays he designed for the GiViEmme company, also in the early 1940s. Furthermore, the versatility and solidity of his graphic design work led him to collaborate with several architects on the 1936 exhibition, hence his contribution was particularly complex and interesting, if not always first-rate: for the Colorificio Italiano Max Meyer, for example, Munari created demonstrative panels with paint samples in a section of the Mostra dei sistemi

104. *Manifesto della pittura murale* (Manifesto of Mural Painting, signed also by Campigli, Carrà, and Funi), published in *La Colonna*, December 1933, quoted in Pansera 1978: 43–4. See also Fagone 1982: 46–7.

105. Fagone 1982: 46–7. Sironi's presence at the *Pressa* Expo in Cologne in 1928 is especially relevant for his direct knowledge of the Soviet Pavilion designed by Lissitsky.

106. Unpublished manuscript, in Mart, Archivio del '900, Rovereto; quoted in Bassi 1992: 62.

107. Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 43–51; esp. 49–51, wherein the authors examine the Futurist manifesto in light of the relationship between Marinetti and the architect Angiolo Mazzoni (head of the building department in the Ministry of Communications, and designer of many public buildings built in Italy in those years, especially post offices and railway stations, including Rome's Stazione Termini), thanks to whom the Futurists were able to mount major exhibitions in Trento, La Spezia, and Palermo.

108. Chiefly with Prampolini's design for the *sala di rappresentanza del Palazzo Comunale di Aprilia*—a design that was ultimately realised, with decorations done in collaboration with other Futurists (but not Munari). Cf. Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 49–51, 49n23, 50n24.

109. Of the Milanese group, in addition to Munari, Andreoni, Regina, and Ricas also exhibited; while Prampolini curated the international section (Bassi 1992: 210).

costruttivi e materiali edilizi (Exhibition of building systems and materials); for the Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana he made a photomontage mounted on a full-height stage curtain; in the Sezione internazionale di Urbanistica (International Urban Design section) he designed a large abstract glass-paste mosaic. That section was curated by Piero Bottoni, and included a particularly interesting large-scale photographic diorama, also created by Munari, made up of six thematic photomontages addressing various aspects of urban planning, later published in Bottoni's 1938 book *Urbanistica*.[110] Finally, it is worth noting that this was also when Munari first met Max Bill, who was briefly in Milan to install the Swiss Pavilion; Bill's concrete visual work had a lot in common with the work Munari was doing at the time.[111]

Munari and the Milanese avant-garde

The Milanese Futurists began exhibiting again in February 1938, in a group show titled *Gli Aeropittori futuristi* (Futurist Aeropainters) at the Galleria del Milione. On the one hand, this was an important moment of exchange with the abstractionists; on the other, it was also the last show to include all the group members who had been working in Milan since the late twenties.[112] The Galleria del Milione, located in via Brera just across from the academy of fine arts, was run by the Ghiringhelli brothers, and followed a model (common in France but fairly novel in Italy) that combined a bookshop and annexed exhibition space. Pietro Lingeri's interior design (one of the earliest examples of Rationalist architecture in Italy), as well as the artistic direction of Carlo Belli (who became Persico's successor there in 1931) and his abstractionist associates, meant that the Galleria del Milione quickly became one of the city's fundamental meeting places in the early thirties. It attracted the attention of Rationalist architects, abstractionists, and modern typographers (championed by the group that founded the magazine *Campo grafico*), all of whom had a deep affinity for each others' work. A rich programme of activities made it more of a cultural centre than just a straightforward art gallery: the bookshop, which offered visitors countless magazines and publications from all over Europe, became a rare window onto foreign avant-gardes; the exhibition spaces featured an average of two exhibitions each month, focussed on drawing, graphic design, set design, architecture, and books, and also hosted conferences (accompanied by a monthly bulletin that included reproductions of visual works and critical texts).[113] The gallery and its activities, while not committed to any one trend in particular—according to Munari, one of the gallery's most devoted regulars, Gino Ghiringhelli was 'in search of a vein of work that would sell well'[114]—nevertheless managed to counter the prevailing provincial cultural climate of the day by mounting a series of exhibitions, events, publications, and conferences. This continued through the mid-1930s, and brought Europeans artists like Friedrich Vordemberghe Gildewart, Josef Albers, Willi Baumeister, Wassily Kandinsky, and Max Ernst to Milan.[115]

110. For all the information regarding Munari, see *Guida della Sesta Triennale* [Milano: n.p.], 1936: 42, 51, 69, 115.

111. Pontiggia (1988: 49–50) notes, for example, an affinity between some of Munari's (non-suspended) *useless machines* and certain sculptures by Bill, such as a 1934 piece (reproduced in *Abstraction-Création. Art non-figuratif* no. 4, 1935).

112. Crispolti 1992: 83; Bassi 1992: 64–5.

113. Pontiggia 1988: 11–3.

114. Munari, quoted in an unpublished interview transcript by Alberto Bassi, 1990.

115. Belli 1980: 11. Cf. Pontiggia 1988: 11, 104–5.

> The 'Milione' was an irreplaceable centre (...) for clear, courageous ideas. The members of that group—architects, painters, sculptors, literary critics, poets, and philologists—created a cultural period that was just as felicitous as its surrounding climate was close-minded. The 'Milione' was, for a few brief years, the only little bit of Italy that remained part of Europe.[116]

By the latter half of the 1930s the Milanese Futurists had opened themselves up to collaborations with other avant-garde groups from Lombardy. In particular they worked with the Como abstractionists, associated with proponents of Rationalist architecture including Terragni and Lingeri, on exhibitions and publications. One of their joint exhibitions was *Dopo il Novecento* (After the Novecento), organised in 1938 by art critic Raffaello Giolli and the philosopher Franco Ciliberti (who also ran his own gallery) and held at the Galleria Dedalo. One of their joint publication projects was a magazine titled *Valori Primordiali* (Primordial Values, founded in 1938 by Ciliberti, along with Rho, Radice, and Terragni), around which the Primordial Futurist Group solidified in 1941, and also included Munari.[117] In any case, Munari's presence in the abstractionist circles that frequented places like the Galleria del Milione and Bar Craja, as well as his ties to Giolli and Ciliberti (in whose gallery he had a solo show in 1944),[118] clearly indicate that Munari was effectively an intermediary between the various groups of the Milanese avant-garde. Nevertheless, while it cannot be denied he was inching ever closer to abstraction—through his useless machines and his pictorial exploration of perceptive processes—it is significant that his work was not exhibited at the Venice Biennials or Rome Quadrennials during World War II, in which a near total acceptance and assimilation of Futurism and abstraction could be seen. In fact, such distancing betrays his deliberate autonomy with respect to the currents he was occasionally associated with: however, he nevertheless maintained a 'vibrantly dialectic rapport' with the abstractionism of the Galleria del Milione, refusing both its rigid geometries and its 'mystical' ideologies, as represented in Belli's theoretical text *Kn*. Meneguzzo quite aptly compares Munari's situation to that of an 'electron floating about amid the various nuclei (...)' of the artistic currents of those years.[119]

As the Fascists' anti-Semitic politics grew increasingly heavy throughout 1938, culminating in the passage of the racial laws, the extreme right—following the model of the purges carried out in Germany, as typified by the travelling exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) of 1937—enacted a violent campaign to denigrate modern art, which it accused of being 'Bolshevist' and in which the Futurists and Rationalists were directly implicated.[120] The attacks launched from the pages of the regime's most unscrupulous dailies and weeklies—including *Quadrivio* and *Il Tevere*,

116. Carlo Belli, *Lettera sulla nascita dell'astrattismo in Italia* (Milan: All'insegna del pesce d'oro, 1978): 14, quoted in Ponente 1980: 10.

117. Munari added his signature to the second version of the *Manifesto del Gruppo Primordiali Futuristi Sant'Elia* (June 1941), which was signed among others by Marinetti, Ciliberti, Rho, Badiali, Licini, Nizzoli, Prampolini, Radice, Sartoris, and Terragni. In December 1941 the group held a collective exhibition at Ettore Mascioni's gallery in Milan (Godoli 2001: 269–70, 568).

118. Bassi 1992: 63.

119. Anzani 1995: 27; cf. Meneguzzo 1993: 29. Belli's essay *Kn* was published in 1935 by the Edizioni del Milione, and was heralded by Kandinsky as the 'gospel' of abstractionism.

120. In 1937 the Fascist approval of the Nazi uprising in Munich appeared in many regime newspapers, including *Il Popolo d'Italia*. In 1938 the regime's more racist turn became clear: first through two official declarations, the *Manifesto del Razzismo italiano* (Manifesto of Italian Racism, 14 July) and the *Carta della Razza* (Race Charter, 6–7 October); followed in November by the notorious racial laws (Crispolti 1986: 221–2).

directed by Telesio Interlandi, and *Il Regime Fascista*, directed by Roberto Farinacci—provoked a reaction from all the Italian avant-garde groups and a few prominent figures such as Oppo and Giuseppe Bottai. The clash came to a head by the autumn of 1938, culminating in an event announced by Marinetti and Somenzi at the Teatro delle Arti in Rome on 3 December 1938, accompanied by a rather controversial issue of *Artecrazia* (the Futurist paper directed by Somenzi).[121] Although it is not entirely clear how the dispute ended, Marinetti deserves a certain degree of recognition since—beyond his collusion with the regime and his ascription to the idea of a revolutionary, utopian Fascism—he nevertheless managed to wage a cultural war in defence of modern art and personally showed up to lead a cross-party, united front.[122]

Beyond the political motives of any overlap with the abstractionists, the fact that the Futurists exhibited at the Galleria del Milione indicates the fact the scene was changing, and their cultural and artistic referents were evolving as well.[123] Indeed, toward the end of the thirties the activities of the Futurists seem to have been divided between figurative, documentary aeropainting (represented by the work of Andreoni and Crali) and the more imaginative, highly experimental vein of research carried out by Prampolini and Fillìa, whose forerunners lay in surrealism and abstraction.[124] Munari's painting also belonged to this trend, as confirmed by the non-partisan critic and painter Carlo Carrà: 'Munari works within surrealistic criteria, and tends to create magical, abstract atmospheres in his works (...)'.[125] Such a definition could be equally applied to Munari's graphic design work of the same period. At the dawn of the 1940s, however, with Italy's entry into World War II the activities of all artistic groups in Milan were abruptly interrupted. By then the line of research pursued by Munari no longer coincided with that of the Futurists: instead he lied 'outside any clearly defined field of pure art, only to delve completely into the realm of perception and gain a deeper understanding of new visual codes (...)'.[126] These aspects decidedly associate him more with design than with the traditional field of the fine arts. In short, Munari 'was by then alone with his playfully winking, impenitent experimentalism'[127]—as his 1940 solo show of *Oggetti metafisici* (Metaphysical Objects) at the Galleria del Milione and the 1944 exhibition of *Dipinti astratti* (Abstract paintings) at the Galleria Ciliberti attested to. Indeed, in the mid-forties he

121. Mino Somenzi, 'Italianità dell'arte moderna' (The Italianness of modern art) in *Artecrazia* no.117, 3 December 1938, followed in January by another controversial stance (no.118, 11 January 1939) that led to the magazine's suppression (Crispolti 1986: 222–3).

122. Salaris 2004: 45–50. This concurs with the opinion expressed by historian Renzo De Felice in *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1962): 358, quoted in Salaris 2004: 63. Cf. also Crispolti 1986: 224.

123. In 1940 at the XVIII Venice Biennale Marinetti invited the Como abstract painters Mauro Reggiani and Manlio Rho to exhibit alongside the Futurist aeropainters; their presence was even stronger at the following Biennale, in 1942 (Migliore, Buscaroli 2009: 62–63). At the IV Rome Quadriennale in 1943, the Lombard Futurists were represented by the group of Lombard abstractionists, who were by then acknowledged as Futurists (Crispolti 1992: 85).

124. Crispolti 1992: 83. Marinetti, in his introduction to the exhibition at the Galleria del Milione, identified Munari as one of the artists conducting research in 'stratospheric cosmic biochemical aeropainting' alongside Prampolini ('L'aeropittura futurista inizia una nuova era della plastica', in *Artecrazia* VI; 112, 11 February 1938, quoted in Bassi 1992: 64).

125. Carlo Carrà, 'Cronaca delle mostre. Pittura programmatica al Milione' in *L'Ambrosiano* n.d., 1938; quoted in Bassi 1992: 64.

126. Baroni, Vitta 2003: 194–5. Crispolti similarly concludes that there appear to be no points of contact between the group led by Munari until recently—with essentially allusive, analogous works reminiscent of surrealism and metaphysics—and the group of concrete artists from Como, whose work originated in post-cubist art and aimed in a strictly non-figurative direction (1992: 86).

127. Crispolti 1992: 86.

began to declare, 'I want to go see what lies beyond abstract art, you mustn't believe that these experiences can be surpassed by turning back,'[128] thereby staking his claim and paving the way for his visual work in the post-war years.

After more than a decade of intense activity, during the war years Munari allowed himself to take a break—in a way distancing himself from his previous advertising and graphic design work, which had culminated in a solo exhibition at the VI Triennale in 1940—and thereafter dedicated his energies to working with the Mondadori publishing house as art director for their new illustrated weeklies *Grazia* and *Tempo*.[129]

128. Quoted by Antonio Marasco in the article 'Galleria. Bruno Munari' in *Origini* VII; 7–8 (May/June 1943): 6–7.

129. Although in the 1940s Munari appeared to distance himself from Futurism, he nonetheless kept personal ties and friendships with many of his former mates, as proved by his participation in the historic reunion of February 1950 held at Marinetti's house (see the article 'Documenteranno il Futurismo', newspaper clipping [without author or date] in Mart, Archivio del '900, fondo Crali, Cra_03_342; see also Bassi 1992: 66.

In addition to serving as a model of mass-communication techniques for Futurism's self promotion, the advertising world had a profound influence on the nascent movement, forming a close relationship that operated on two levels: on the one hand it provided elements of the advertising language which were incorporated in the *parolibere* compositions, and on the other it led to the creation of artistic products conceived of as consumer products.[1] From another point of view, from a substantially subordinate relationship in which Futurist poetics took on the world of advertising, from the late 1920s on that relationship was reversed, or at least rebalanced, through the Futurists' contributions to advertising's formal language and practice. For many of the movement's proponents—Prampolini, Pannaggi, Paladini, Depero, Diulgheroff, and almost all the Milanese, Munari first and foremost—graphic design was not only their main activity

1. Cf. Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 119–21. On the other hand, the fact that advertising's novelty struck the Futurists as 'an epi-phenomenon representative of the new industrial and urban reality' (ibidem: 119), in a country like Italy, which under Giolitti's rule had just begun to experience such phenomena, is to a certain extent symptomatic of the country's backwardness: cf. Anceschi, who—in a rather optimistic take on the situation of artists in other European countries—read Marinetti's desire to 'fight Mallarmé's static ideal' as the 'position, tinged by a perhaps legitimate envy, [of a cultural worker who lives in] a backward situation, compared to other intellectuals, who are instead organically integrated into the formulation and realization of concrete marketing, productive, and cultural strategies.' (Anceschi 1981b: 6).

and source of income, there was often a substantial coherence between their advertising work and their artistic work. This continuous osmosis between the two areas could be seen, for example, in their tendency to recycle iconographic themes; in Munari's case, his experimentation with artistic expression not only had natural repercussions, but also led to parallel pursuits in the field of graphic design.[2]

After World War I Italian graphic design still reflected the situation that had existed at the turn of the century, not only in stylistic terms, but also in terms of work scope, and therefore the kind of work itself, which remained focused primarily on posters (linked to the development of major colour-lithography printshops, such as Ricordi in Milan) and magazine publishing. Posters were a large part of the advertising industry, heralding the first consumer products targeting a middle-class public, and on the cultural side covering opera and film. In publishing, literary and artistic magazines—and to a lesser extent children's illustration—were the sectors most influenced by the work of commercial artists. Although it was stylistically linked to European Art Nouveau, the Italian school of poster design—represented by Adolpho Hohenstein, Leopoldo Metlicovitz, Aleardo Terzi, and Marcello Dudovich, among others—had developed a visual language quite different from the formulas of the French *affiche* (typified by the work of Leonetto Cappiello) and the German *Sachplakat*. This was largely thanks to its emphasis on realism and the strong symbolic connotations of representation, which, through a refined sense of color as well as high technical quality, resulted in some of the best specimens of striking belle époque elegance, ensuring its widespread popularity.[3] Paradoxically for a country like Italy, which was still socially and geographically so disjointed, the spread of advertising had created a sort of unifying visual *koiné*.[4]

The advertising of the time, tied to a consumer market that had yet to develop, had neither coordinated national campaigns nor a significant number of advertisements in the press; above all, it lacked integration between the various means of communication. While poster design, addressed to the widest public, was entrusted (with the mediation of printers and dealers) to renowned poster designers, commercial printed matter was instead left to the printer. The former were painters or other specialized artists with a background in the fine arts (though in many cases such studies were spiked with the artist's personal communicative intuitions), whereas the latter were more technical laborers who dealt with the production of commercial printed matter, from letterheads to price lists, catalogues, and promotional announcements in the press. Munari recalled:

> At the time, publishers asked painters to do some sketches for book covers. Only a sketch, an illustration, not the graphic part, with titles and everything else. That work was left to the printers (…) The resulting product suffered from this design done by two people, neither of whom knew what the other would do. But that's how it was done.[5]

2. Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 129. Regarding Futurist graphic design in advertising, see also Salaris 1986.
3. Baroni, Vitta 2003: 52, 54; Hollis 1994: 13–4.
4. Scudiero 1997: xvi.
5. Bruno Munari, 'Grafica editoriale tra le due guerre' in *Editoria e Cultura a Milano tra le due guerre (1920-1940)*. Milan, 19–21 February 1981. Conference records. Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1983: 163–4.

This was an increasingly evident gap, and in the 1930s it fueled a major debate about a rethinking of the graphic arts; the field's renewal took place in Italy as well, through a dialogue with the more advanced visual arts.[6] The Italian poster tradition, however—apart from formal postcubist stylistic elements (already widely accepted, following the French example) and, in step with the regime's iconographic choices, elements of the Novecento movement's visual vocabulary—remained essentially unchanged by the innovations of modernism.[7]

Compared to the reassuring iconography of poster design, the graphic contribution of Futurism—which had initially remained confined to the typographic compositions of *paroliberismo*—from the late 1920s, coinciding with a new openness toward the applied arts, sped up advertising design's gradual transition from an artisanal realm to a markedly technical and vocational one, more up-to-date and informed by European functionalism. Of course, in 1920s Italy the graphic arts in general did not much reflect the Futurist innovations, whose most radical and innovative printing solutions are found solely in published material linked directly to the movement. And it is equally true that, with few exceptions (Campari for Depero, Cora for Diulgheroff), an ongoing relationship between Futurists working in advertising and any stable industrial patronage was generally lacking. Yet it was in advertising production (and exhibition installations) that the Futurist language—characterized by its symbolic representation of the product, its diagonal composition, the integration of text and image, and the figurative styles of mechanical art—gradually established itself as the Italian version of modern aesthetics. This development typified the work of artists like Araca, Nizzoli, and Garretto who, although not part of the Futurist movement, adopted more than a few of its formal solutions.[8]

It is also worth noting that the nascent Italian graphic design owed its modern reconfiguration—that is, the development of an autonomous language in both the pictorial poster and the typographic tradition, which through its integration with imagery acquired an aesthetic value and became a 'spectacle' in and of itself [9]—not so much to a shared aesthetic or social vision (as in Germany and the USSR), but rather to the initiative of individuals who, in lieu of adequate training, developed a personal sense of experimentation fueled by examples from architecture and the visual arts.[10] The work of this first generation of Italian

6. Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 9–10, 13. Cf. Baroni, Vitta 2003: 130–1. Speaking about the conditions surrounding the origins of a distinctly Italian approach to graphic design, Antonio Boggeri recalls: 'The reign of the typesetter lived on—that of the typsetter who'd always, and quite comfortably, set one line of lead next to another, to which he then added the image, in a sort of graphic declamatory that ended up being a schematic addition of various marks that were close to one another, but neither integrated nor organized' (cit. in Cremaschi 1967: 15).

7. Cf. Hollis 1994: 41.

8. Cf. Fioravanti, Passarelli, Sfligiotti 1997: 8; Salaris 1986: 18–9; Vinti 2002: 10; Priarone 1988: 8.

9. This expression (taken from the title of a collection of [work by Adolphe Mouron] Cassandre *Le Spectacle est dans la rue*, 1935) is Antonio Boggeri's: '[graphic design as a cultural product] was born the moment in which technical advances in printing challenged the traditional printer with new problems (…) as illustration was coming to the fore, with its visual values, its suggestive power (…) graphic design became spectacle' (cit. in Cremaschi 1967: 16).

10. As was shown by the leaders of the time, especially Boggeri, who felt the best Italian graphic design was 'initially carried out as an almost private type of experimentation, one not yet integrated into advertising production' (cit. in Cremaschi 1967: 17). Elsewhere Boggeri again affirmed: '(…) Italians owe their creation of a cultural heritage founded on the right choices to themselves alone—they chose their path in full autonomy. Carboni and Grignani were absolute autodidacts (…) as were Nizzoli, Munari, Ricas, and Muratore' (Boggeri 1981: 21). Cf. also Fioravanti, Passarelli, Sfligiotti, according to whom Italian graphic design of the time owed everything to a 'precise type of communicator, which is not the result of

graphic designers, who were invariably self-taught (and Munari was part of that group), was followed in the mid-thirties, and especially in the immediate postwar period, by the more technically advanced contributions of a few foreign graphic designers who passed through Milan. The work of Swiss designers like Xanti Schawinsky, Max Huber, and Carlo Vivarelli laid the groundwork for the emergence of a mature Milanese graphic design scene in the 1950s.[11]

The relative lateness of graphic developments in Italy compared to the rest of Europe was the result of two factors: the widespread unpreparedness of workers—which was in turn attributable to the inadequate training offered in vocational schools, the shortage of trade journals, and scarce exchange and exhibition opportunities; and the continuation of the poster's figurative tradition, which in turn reflected the public's and clients' substantial indifference to new artistic languages and advertising efforts.[12] The essence of Italian graphic design has been attributed to this backward situation, exemplified by the designers' autodidactic condition. It has been interpreted as a strongpoint and read as an inclination for 'experimentation, exploration, and an attempt at renewal' (Boggeri), while the Italian tendency to 'force technical means to the limit' has been emphasized, and considered the result of an inveterate bent for bricolage, 'a habit of competing with products made in other contexts, by appropriate technologies, and having to make do with archaic tools and technologies (...), and the habit of making up for the lack of normal working conditions with the substitute of creative imagination (...) (Anceschi).[13] Munari confirmed this reading, recalling with hindsight how the Futurists worked primarily at home, with modest means and cheap materials.[14]

Overall, the modern evolution of Italian graphic design in the 1930s resulted in a cross-pollination of various factors which, albeit belonging to different contexts, deeply innervated it into a complex interplay of reciprocal influences: advertising, which by then had all the characteristics of a substantial economic organization; the most advanced artistic movements, Futurism and Abstractionism, which were the avant-garde realms in which Munari worked quite freely; and the theoretical debate surrounding Rationalism, which—while primarily relating to architecture—was also reflected in the neighboring fields of art and typography.

study in the specific field of graphic design, but is rather the fruit of a stylistic, cultural, compositional maturation; a maturation whose most fruitful background is found in the worlds of art and architecture' (id. 1997: 11).

11. The historic judgment regarding the influence of the Swiss tradition on early Italian graphic design swings between two different positions: one recognizes its importance (be it substantial or merely accessory); the other claims Italian rationalist architecture had a decisive role. Boggeri, for example, spoke of the 'determinant character of foreign designs imported here in Italy' and at the same time recalled the pioneering role of 'some graphic designers, naturally very few (...) [who,] spurred on by the graphic bases brought to light by the Bauhaus, (...) reworked them, shaped them to our own tastes and needs' (cit. in Cremaschi 1967: 15). Conversely, in reexamining (albeit with a few inaccuracies) the national context—from the Futurist work of the teens through the Triennale exhibitions in the 1930s—Carlo Belloli links the advent of a modern Italian graphic design to the contributions of people like Persico and Pagano, and Italian Rationalism in general. Remarkably, Belloli mentions neither the Studio Boggeri nor the Swiss designers who were working in Milan (Belloli 1959).

12. Pigozzi 1982: 472.

13. Respectively, Boggeri cit. in Cremaschi 1967: 1; Anceschi 1981b: 5.

14. Bassi 1990, interview with Bruno Munari (unpublished typescript). Paola Ricas also highlighted how many of the drawings from those years (by both her father and by Munari) were often done in tempera on paper or small-format board, not so much as a stylistic choice, but rather because of a real state of destitution (author interview, 12 July 2006). This trait might have a direct bearing on Munari's later minimalist attitude to design problems.

The macroeconomic context

The painful victory in World War I, while strengthening the country's international position, had left behind an unstable domestic situation both politically and economically. The difficulties of recovery, the consequent stagnation of industrial production, and the collapse of public finances had resulted in unemployment, inflation, and waves of strikes, all of which exacerbated the social tensions resulting from the disorderly development of the previous decades.[15]

The Fascist regime's rise to power coincided with a favorable economic situation reinforced by public finance reform.[16] The liberal and protectionist economic policies of the late 1920s led to significant growth in industrial and agricultural production. However, that development occurred under 'maximum exploitation of labor at the lowest cost,' through wage freezes and fiscal pressures that particularly affected the poorest workers, farmers and laborers.[17] In this context, between 1923 and 1925, the Fascist government transformed into an outright dictatorship through a series of laws that suppressed political freedom and expression, limited local autonomy, put the head of government above legislative powers, and established an efficient repressive apparatus.[18]

Despite the dissatisfaction of the proletariat, the March 1929 elections established a broad consensus and the regime enjoyed the support of Italy's main powers—the Catholic Church, the monarchy, the armed forces, the industrial confederation (Confindustria), and the rentier class.[19] Positive signs were ably amplified by the regime's propaganda to fuel the nationalistic pride of a poor nation.[20] But the Italians' daily reality was far more prosaic and duller than the bombastic tones of official propaganda, and constituted, if anything, a 'modest, circumspect prosperity.'21 The initial spread of consumer goods, popular activities (sports, theater, cinema, popular songs, and escapist fiction), and leisure time (organized by the Opera nazionale dopolavoro, the National Recreation Institute) was accompanied by the usual phenomena of corruption and speculation.

It did not take long for the consequences of the Depression to reach Italy. To address reductions in production and consumption, the government relied on extensive state intervention to help industries in need, through the creation of new institutions,[22] direct commissions and public-works campaigns, and (in the latter half of the decade) autarchic policies.[23] The expansion of public spending paralleled a reduction in private consumption caused—despite many initiatives to mitigate the crisis, ranging from public assistance to

15. Castronovo 1995: 237.
16. Procacci 1975²: 507.
17. Procacci 1975²: 508; Castronovo 1995: 251, 325. Italy was the only industrialized nation to experience a fall in wages between 1921 and 1939 (Castronovo 1995: 327–8).
18. Procacci 1975²: 508–10.
19. Procacci 1975²: 511–12; Guerri 1982: 19.
20. The transatlantic flights of De Pinedo and Balbo (1925, 1930, 1933), the national football team's victory at the World Cup (1934), Primo Carnera's world heavyweight championship, the launch of the transatlantic liner 'Rex' (1931), Luigi Pirandello's Nobel Prize in literature (1934), the first Venice film festival (1932), just as on an international political level the Fascist model was viewed as an instrument for resolving class conflict in the face of the threat posed by a potential spread of the Leninist revolution (Guerri 1982: 20–1).
21. Procacci 1975²: 515.
22. The Italian Industrial Finance Institute (IMI, Istituto Mobiliare Italiano), the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI, Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale), and General Italian Oil Agency (AGIP, Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli).
23. While the Italian state was, among capitalist nations, the one with the greatest government control over its productive sectors, it was also a deeply 'feudalized' state beholden to the large economic, industrial, and financial groups (Procacci 1975²: 515–20). Autarchy was decreed as a response to the economic sanctions of the League of Nations following the war of conquest in Ethiopia (1935–36).

more demagogic programs—by lower earnings without any reduction in tax burdens. Economic growth during the Fascist period was 'extremely bumpy and geographically uneven as ever,' and produced no real improvement in living standards, such that the majority of Italians were forced to 'tighten their belts.' Statistical data and other evidence converge to paint a picture of significant poverty, insecurity, and frustration.[24] As for the middle class, apart from the constant growth of government staff, the tertiary sector of new communications professionals (like Munari) offered the most new career possibilities.[25]

Milan as industrial and cultural capital

Locally, expectations of a 'second industrial revolution' that would have bolstered Lombardy in the period following WWI were shattered by the Great Depression of '29. Between the wars Milan did not have the unique characteristics of an industrial or labor metropolis, but rather became 'the managerial and business-oriented heart of the city of Lombardy,' a multicentered territory in which industrial and residential zones were broadly and evenly spread.[26] During the two decades of Fascist rule the city, whose population exceeded one million inhabitants in 1936, 'continued its economic development, as well as its cultural and welfare activities, in the social groupings allowed or tolerated by the regime.'[27]

In addition to its status as a dynamic industrial city 'enriched by a pragmatic spirit, and amongst the most modern cities in terms of work organization,' in the early 1930s Milan was Italy's third cultural center, after Rome and Florence, and welcomed a variety of artists, writers, and intellectuals who came from all over the country and considered Milan its most 'avant-garde city' steeped in cultural fervor. The intellectual air of the time had nothing anti-conformist about it; rather, it was quite laboriously focused on work or, to put it better, on the need for sustenance, for employment—be it journalism and publishing for writers, or applied arts and advertising for artists: 'Milan guaranteed an income and, anyhow, a collaboration here and there that allowed you to keep going.'[28] Undoubtedly, amongst its most dynamic cultural factors were the new architectural and typographic paradigms promoted by the magazines *Casabella*, *Domus*, and *Campo grafico*, as well as the artistic and literary circles linked to the journal *Corrente* (hermeticism) and the Galleria del Milione (abstraction). It was also a leader on the industrial front, through the work of figures like Adriano Olivetti and, in the related advertising industry, the critical reflections carried out by Guido Mazzali's *L'Ufficio Moderno*. In a cultural climate receptive to European interest in the fine and applied arts a solid association formed between the literati, artists, architects, and exponents of advertising. This triggered a utopian culture

24. Procacci 1975[2]: 519–20; Castronovo 1995: 324–8. The average per-worker income for the 1935–38 period was the equivalent of 410 dollars in Italy, compared to 804 in France, 1206 in Great Britain, and 1309 in the USA; private consumption in Italy for the 1936–40 period was below that of 1926–30. The details of everyday life during the twenty-year Fascist rule as told by Gian Franco Venè in his book *Mille lire al mese* (1988) are particularly convincing.

25. With an annual growth rate of 1,8%, in 1936 this sector included four and a half million workers (Castronovo 1995: 327–8).

26. Vercelloni 1994: 181, 184.

27. Compared to a national and regional growth rate of approximately 10–12% (from 37.9 to 41 million), during the 1921–31 period Milan's population went from 700,000 inhabitants in '21, later integrated with the 100,000 inhabitants of the surrounding townships, to 961,000 in '31, and exceeded a million in '36, with an urban growth rate of 37.1% (Vercelloni 1994: 183–4).

28. Cf. Vergani 1989: 16–7.

characterized by a neo-humanistic quest for synthesis between arts and economics, formulated not in the academy, but rather in a more informal context.[29]

This cross-cultural movement's meeting places were: the Galleria del Milione, the heart of abstract art;[30] the editorial offices of *Casabella*, directed by Persico and Pagano; the Café Craja and the Trattoria All'insegna del Pesce d'oro; Olivetti's advertising office on via Clerici; and Antonio Boggeri's studio on via Borghetto.[31] The dialogue between Futurism and Rationalism, for example, took place through collaborative installations for exhibitions, trade fairs, and shops, allowing for the realization of innovative projects that would have been unfeasible in more traditional artistic contexts.[32] Moreover, the bond that united architects, abstract artists, and graphic designers, who shared the theoretical premise of a geometrical conception of space and representation, took shape early in January 1933 with the appearance of *Campo grafico*. This magazine launched the debate surrounding the renewal of Italian graphic design following European examples related to constructivist typography and, through Persico and Pagano, even the rationalists' claims. Not surprisingly, amid all this—it was a rather restricted environment, after all—Munari was, if not the only, one of the important elements that brought together the various powers at play.

Campari

Munari seems to have deliberately worked on two tracks at once, engaged as a visual artist in both art and graphic design, driven not only by economic needs, but above all by a spontaneous interest in all forms of artistic intervention. As early as the late 1920s, as we have seen, in addition to his activities with the Milanese Futurist group, Munari was also pursuing a technical apprenticeship at the Mauzan-Morzenti studio and animating short advertisements with the Cossio brothers.

> [In the 1930s I made my living] working as a graphic designer, and it was my salvation. While other artists were bound to some dealer (…) I worked as a graphic designer for magazines (…) I also did comics, but with a very different sense of humor. (…) I also worked with them [the rationalists], but I was a graphic designer—both to earn a living as well as to have freedom in other areas.[33]

His debut in graphic design was related to illustration, a genre well suited to his painting skills and the market's demands. His first works date back to 1927/28 and signal the beginning of an intense collaboration with several magazines and some important Milanese advertising firms, which lasted until the early 1940s. As an illustrator Munari was able to freely experiment with visual languages and themes ranging from caricature to comics, collage, photomontage, and the occasional layout.

In the advertising world of the 1920s, still characterized by a lack of attention to the latest American marketing techniques, Campari was among Italy's first

29. Lupo 1996: 7–8, 55. This particular link between the business and intellectual worlds was the most original aspect of a certain type of Italian capitalism in the postwar period (after 1945) through the early sixties: see the detailed analysis of that 'industrial style' in corporate design from companies like Olivetti, Pirelli, and Italsider in Vinti 2007.

30. Where you could 'even smoke while looking at a painting, without being bothered, or read a rare architectural magazine while stretching out on comfortable sofas, enjoy a wall [of art] all afternoon while relaxing in the breeze of a fan' (from 'Mostre milanesi' in *L'Italia letteraria* x; 23, 1934: 5; cit. in Lupo 1996: 11).

31. Lupo 1996: 11–8. Other meeting places were cafés—Tre Marie, Cova, Donini, Campari, and Savini after dinner (ibid: 12–3).

32. Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 47. Cf. Salaris 1986: 19–20.

33. Branzi 1984: 42.

companies to create an in-house publicity office.[34] The management of Davide Campari, who directed the ad office (until his death in 1936), was distinguished by an unusual openness to avant-garde artists, be they illustrators or graphic designers.[35] Moving beyond the elitist tone of the belle époque, in the period following WWI the company's advertising strategy had expanded, reflecting changes in social structure: this differentiation affected not only the messages' means, but also their visual language and form.[36] While Campari's posters highlighted the product, its print ads—as newspapers and magazines had become the favored media—launched a brand name campaign carried out in several series of black-and-white ads unified by an ironic tone and the emphatic repetition of the company's signature.[37] The relevance of promotional gadgets at the time is reflected in the ads' offers for various objects, such as calendars and date books,[38] as well as literary publications, short stories or poems featuring the brand or product, often entrusted to well known writers.

A typical ad from a literary culture like the Italian one at the time, Campari's |1| *Cantastorie* (Storyteller) were light poetry collections, anonymously written by playwright and critic Renato Simoni, which appeared weekly in the *Corriere della Sera* beginning in 1927.[39] Its numerous issues were periodically collected into single volumes, which Campari published as a limited edition between 1927 and 1932, illustrated in turn by Ugo Mochi, Sergio Tofano, Primo Sinopico and, lastly, Munari.[40] The fifth collection, which Munari illustrated, consists of 27 love poems and literary parodies of various types of love, all of which invariably conclude with the praise of Bitter Campari, as the drink is widely referred to; each poem is accompanied on the left-hand page by artwork inspired by the right-hand composition's theme. The publication as a whole is elegant and modern, with an ideal balance between the simple layout, classic typography—doubtless attributable to Raffaello Bertieri, who was also responsible for its impeccable production quality[41]—and the unique creative flair of Munari's illustrations, a refined synthesis of his previous work which highlight his mastery of the aeropictorial style assimilated into a personal, articulate language. Like

34. Valeri 1986: 68–70.

35. Sinopico, Dudovich, Nizzoli, and Depero all produced both posters and print ads for Campari; the illustrators included Tofano, Guillermaz, Rubino, Negrin, Mochi, and Munari. Depero was a special case, as he took an increasingly important role, and went on to do packaging (he designed the unique Campari Soda bottle), vending-machine design, and promotional gadgets (Pitteri 2002: 20).

36. Vergani 1990: 17.

37. Vergani 1990: 1, 29 (quoting Ferrigni 1937). Cf. Falabrino 2001: 95.

38. Like the *Prezioso Campari Vademecum per tutti*, launched in 1922. Pitteri 2002: 20.

39. Similar initiatives included Sem Benelli's *Sonetti Campari*, Corradino Cima's *Cento e più sonetti*, and the poetry in Milanese dialect published in *Meneghin Campari Seltz*, illustrated by Daniele Fontana (1932) (Falabrino 2001: 95–6). Renato Simoni (1875–1952) was a journalist, playwright, and theater critic. He wrote some popular comedies, and for many years was the theater critic of the *Corriere della Sera*, as well as a director and screenwriter.

40. *Il Cantastorie di Campari. Con 27 figurazioni grafiche di Bruno Munari*. Milan: Campari, 1932. Printing: Raffello Bertieri, Milan. 23.5×31.5 cm, pp.64 (n.n.), board covers and metal spiral binding (Spiralblock); edition of 1000 numbered copies (NFS). The first *Cantastorie* collection, with illustrations by Mochi, was published in 1927; the second, with a cover and plates by Tofano, was pubished in 1928; in 1930 the third collection was published; in 1932 the fourth, illustrated by Sinopico, as well as the fifth and last, illustrated by Munari, were published. All editions had the same format; the first was printed by Bestetti e Tumminelli, Milan/Rome; all the rest (except the second, whose printer was uncredited) were printed by Raffaello Bertieri, Milan.

41. Speaking at a conference in the 1980s, Munari explicitly confirmed that attribution: 'Of these typesetters, there were some really good ones: Bertieri, Lucini, Modiano, and a few others. They were the ones who focused more on quality than on quantity; people who were passionate about their work, who talked about type the way people today talk about sports. One day Bertieri triumphantly showed me a face inspired by Bodoni, which he had found: a Bodoni that, as a slight variant, had rounded tops. With that face he printed a book for Campari, and I did the illustrations for it' (in *Editoria e Cultura a Milano*

the previous volumes, Munari's collection boasts the modern forms of spiral binding and sheets printed on the recto and folded at half width. An article in the November issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno*, accompanied by an overview of graphic work by Ricas and Munari as well as a few illustrations from the recently published *Cantastorie*, commented:

> These illustrations are lovely, unconventional, and marvelously mischievous (...) The irony, though held in check by his unfailingly gracious visual style, clearly asserts itself. With his truly personal talents, Munari comments upon and highlights the issues Simoni narrates, bitterly and in good humor. He comments and highlights, but also adds irony to its irony, and spirit to its spirit. And without resorting to caricature, with a considered dryness of visual mark and tone—and it is a genuine, spontaneous transposition of an intense reality, penetrated to its essence, into the realm of fantasy.[42]

Although Munari's collaboration with the Campari ad office was intermittent, his work with them probably dates back to the beginning of his career as graphic designer if, as it seems, a few illustrations identified in ads from 1927–28 actually are his.[43] Aside from posters, print advertisements in the form of black-and-white classifieds were the main advertising vehicle at the time, as evidenced by the vast repertory of bianchi e neri (black-and-whites) conceived for Campari. Artists with deliberately different styles were commissioned to create the ads—Guillermaz, Sto, Nizzoli, Depero, Brunetta, Mochi, Rubino, Roveroni, Conalbi, Fontana, Negrin and Munari[44]—but all ads shared an emphatic repetition of the brand name and an amusing, often ironic tone. One of the most common formulas was the discursive ads, based on short literary or cultured compositions in the form of advice, Wellerisms, or verse compositions (which invariably end with the product name, Bitter and Cordial Campari), accompanied by a visual interpretation. Although that was a predominant advertising model in daily newspapers at the time, in Campari's case the ads featured not only stylized graphics associated with the expressive possibilities of lettering, but they were also organized in coordinated series.[45] As for Munari, chronologically speaking, his first ads belong to one of the best-known and longest series, |2| the *Memoranda* (which in turn included other series): the two examples found are from *I sei aforismi sull'appetito* (Six aphorisms on the appetite) and are signed by two studios—SAPPI and APRI, names not yet otherwise identified—while the drawings

tra le due guerre (1920-1940), 1983: 163). The typeface in question—which was used for the cover, the frontispiece, and the headers, paired with a classic Bodoni for the poetic texts—is difficult to identify, but has characteristics similar to Alessandro Butti's *Quirinus* (Nebiolo, 1939), which was in turn inspired by Imre Reiner's *Corvinus* (Bauer, 1929).

42. Noi due, 'Il futurismo alla pubblicità' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* VII, 11 (November 1932): 662. Di Corato (2008: 219–20) attributes the article to Ricas and Munari. However, the signature 'Noi due' (Us two) which takes up Mazzali's practice of signing 'Noi' (Us) under the brief editor's note that opened each issue. The article was most likely written by the magazines two directors, Mazzali and Villani, as can be inferred by the tone of the prose, which seems to be penned by an author with a more literary background; nor does it seem logical that the positive comments came from the artists themselves.

43. The Campari ads are reproduced in Ferrigni 1937, a deluxe celebratory volume published by Campari, edited and printed by Raffaello Bertieri. Although the text does focus on various aspects of the company's ads (from posters to interior fliers, ads, and objects), it does not provide any information regarding the artists or dates of the works' production.

44. Cf. Ferrigni 1937: 171–8; Vergani 1990: 21, 27–30; Falabrino 2001: 93–5. Among the more well know series: *Memoranda (Aforismi, Didascalie, Concludendo); Diario di Petronio and Petronius Dixit; il Decalogo nuovo; il Decamerone; i Proverbi; le Massime celebri; le Sintesi parolibere (parole Grego, grafica Nizzoli), le Sintesi pericolose; Nostalgie novecentiste; Campari, perché?; Concludendo; Talismani; Amari; il Consumatore è re; Libri; Opere liriche; Monumenti antichi; Problemi nuovi; Quattro stagioni* (Ferrigni 1937: 171–7).

45. For an overview of the various types of 'black-and-whites' of the period, see Bauer 1998a: 160–1.

humorously illustrate some rather banal food hygiene tips and are signed with an unusual B (like the pseudonym Munari adopted at the time, BUM). The handwriting and the comic strip–like hatching (the depiction is also reminiscent of American cartoons, and is a recurring feature in Munari's illustrations even after 1930) seem hesitant, as does the title lettering, reflecting the fact that they are the work of a novice, and may even predate the robotic 'mechanical' forms of the caricatures he began publishing in 1928.[46]

Some small drawings on the cover and
|3| inside one booklet, titled *Amare gli amari* (Loving Bitters) by one Dottor G. Ellas, are from the same period, if not earlier.[47] The author behind that pseudonym was Emilio Grego, a physician who became an advertising consultant to the Italian Government's General Staff during WWI and owned an ad agency. He had already worked with the Campari publicity office, and in the mid-twenties Campari hired him for a campaign aimed at spreading scientific word of bitters' health benefits (even with doctor endorsements, following the American hard-sell model), supported by a trilingual pamphlet distributed for free.[48] Munari can be identified as the illustrator because of the work's striking stylistic similarities to his first illustrations, published in magazines at the end of the decade, and based on those two black-and-white *Memoranda*—which would date the work toward 1927, when Munari had already settled in Milan.[49]

The dating and attribution of two other ads for Campari are less uncertain, as they were published in 1930–31, and were signed by Munari and Studio CREA. One, titled *I classici* (The Classics), was purely illustrative, and depicted some books held up by two classical bookends with two bottles—Bitter Campari and Cordial Campari—enthroned in the middle; it differs from his previous ads in that the illustration, in grisaille, is of a higher quality. The other ad instead falls fully within the tradition of figurative lettering (already widely used by Guillermaz, for example) and is based on the slogan 'Campari apre e chiude ogni banchetto' (Campari begins and ends each banquet), which Munari ably fit into a key/bottle opener–shaped logo. This attribution is based on the fact that the acronym CREA (Create) was actually an advertising initiative of the Milanese Centrale Futurista (Futurist HQ), which existed between roughly 1930 and '32, and was likely directed by Munari before he opened his own studio with Ricas.[50]

The two bottles reappear in a different project, in which Munari built on his polymaterial experience in painting. It is an
|5| interior/exterior sign titled *Carta di Identità Campari* (Campari ID), and features

46. The unusual B form shows up, for example, in his signature (ing. BrUNo/mUNari) in the drawing 'Progetto di locomotiva per la nuova stazione di Milano' published in the *Almanacco letterario 1933*; Munari was still using it in 1941, as proved by one of his letters to Zavattini (from the Archivio Zavattini, Biblioteca Panizzi, Reggio Emilia, M844/1).

47. Dottor G. Ellas [Emilio Grego], *Amare gli amari. Il breviario di chi vuol viver sano* [Milan:] Edizioni Campari, n.d. [c.1927], [Printing: Bertieri, Milan]. 11.8×16.2 cm, pp. 32. This pamphlet was printed in multiple languages: in French (*Aimer les amers, le breviaire de la bonne santé*, printed by Garagnani, Paris) and in German (*Du sollst das bittere lieben: amare amara*, printed by Grafica Nazionale, Milan). The Italian edition was reprinted by Edizioni Campari in the '60s. The original is in the Archivio Storico Campari, Milan (Vergani 1990: 27; Ferrigni 1937; Villani 1964: 171–2; Eligio Bossetti, author correspondence, autumn 2010).

48. Vergani 1990: 16, 27.

49. Ibid. This booklet is usually dated to 1925, which can either mean it is one of Munari's early debut pieces (done during a stay in Milan before he went to Naples) or that the dating is incorrect. The latter hypothesis seems more likely.

50. Both reproduced in Ferrigni 1937. The first (*I classici*) is signed M at lower right, while the CREA mark is visible at lower left; the second (*Campari apre e chiude...*) only carries the CREA mark at lower right.

an image created by skillfully combining cardboard silhouettes and elements of the bottles (labels, bands, cork seals) into a cubist-type collage. Optical play between orthogonal planes gives the composition a depth that, photographically reproduced, highlights the visual characteristics of the two products in a sharp, intriguing image. Munari began to experiment with multimaterial collage techniques around 1932, which allows us to date this work to that period.[51]

If Campari's only interlocutor thus far seems to have been Munari, his 1935 ad
|4| series titled *Dal diario di Petronio* (From Petronio's Diary) was entirely conceived, written, and drawn with Ricas—even if the signature 'Munari+R' seems to indicate who had the greater role. Like the others, this was a series of newspaper ads, worked into at least 10 different compositions based on reflections attributed to the author of the *Satyricon* (whose scholastic reputation as *arbiter elegantiae* is associated with worldliness) commented upon through vaguely surreal illustrations.[52]

As evidence of their lasting relationship with the company, the two also designed an ad for Bitter Campari, which—although it was rejected—is included as
|6| a sketch in an overview of the studio's projects published in *L'Ufficio Moderno* in 1935.[53] From a graphic point of view, this ad seems much more sophisticated and up-to-date, as it played with the integration of typography and photography in a clever, balanced way. It is hard to see why the proposal was rejected, as the company also used a typo/photographic language in its press ads from that period: perhaps it was not considered dynamic enough, or was too similar to other ads.[54]

Magazine publishing

In the 1920s, before the advent of rotogravure in Italy, although the range of illustrated periodicals offered a greater variety than the 'omnibus' newspaper formula accessible to a differentiated readership,[55] it was nevertheless still linked to the models of the period immediately following WWI. The illustrated weeklies founded at the dawn of the century were the Milanese *L'Illustrazione italiana* (1873), aimed at a middle-class readership, and popular illustrated newspaper supplements like the *Domenica del Corriere* (1899), aimed at an audience in the process of broadening its cultural horizons. However, despite the inclusion of photographs and color plates and their continual success, these

51. Specimen reproduced in Ferrigni 1937. The signature is visible at upper right.

52. The total can be deduced from the ads' numbering (cf. Ferrigni 1937; Vergani 1990). The Campari historical archives have 7 original ink drawings: (1) Dubbi (260×165 mm) [895]; (2) Intermezzo od epilogo (166×132 mm) [896]; (3) La greca (167×130 mm) [893]; (4) Novecento (165×130 mm) [894]; (5) L'Ora del thè (165×130 mm) [891]; (6) Distinzioni (165×130) [892]; (7) Gusti e paesi (165×128 mm) [889].

53. L'Ufficio Moderno x; 5 (May 1935): 252–3.

54. See, for example, the many Campari ads by Negrin (reproduced in Ferrigni 1937) and Carboni (in *Guida Ricciardi* 1936: 82); regarding the Ricas+Munari collaborations, see the ad for Indirizzi Delfini, c. 1935 (in *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5, May 1935, cit).

55. Murialdi 2000: 95. '(…) Italy [being] a country with a prevalently literary culture, with a very limited literary market, created the conditions for the so-called *omnibus* formula, meaning a newspaper for everyone, a newspaper that contains subjects that interest not only all members of a given family, but targets the kids through sports and theater, and the parents through other things—as well as different [social] classes. (…) The newspaper was created with the idea of the elementary-school teacher in mind—the high-school teacher or other cultured people. But within that same newspaper there was also something for their doorman. At the time almost all dwellings had a concierge who was interested in major court cases, which were big news, as well as minor local current events stories. The professor, the teacher, or other readers, all had the third page. That page, created in Italy, (…) was one of the literary pages' (Paolo Murialdi, interview 3 June 1998, titled 'L'evoluzione del giornale in Italia' available at www.mediamente.rai.it).

current-affairs weeklies remained largely unchanged in both content—world events, travel stories, political notes, cultural reviews, entertainment columns, advice, and quotidian curiosities—as well as in graphic layout, modeled on the historic illustrated magazines of France (*L'Illustration*) and Britain (*Illustrated London News*).[56]

While social and structural factors at the turn of the century—population growth and urbanization, the rail networks' extension, postal service improvements, the advent of the telegraph—enabled magazines to broaden their market despite widespread illiteracy (48.7% of the total population of 32 million in 1901), what most influenced the Italian publishing industry after WWI were economic changes: the abolition of duties on paper imports (1921), reduced postal rates (1922) and a new copyright law (1925), along with new concentrations of capital, created favorable conditions for publishing's expansion.[57] Milan in particular became 'the city that produces and consumes the most printed paper in Italy'; it was home to historical publishers like Treves, Sonzogno, Vallardi, Hoepli, Mondadori, and Rizzoli, for a total of 86 publishers, 75 printing plants, 455 typesetting printshops, and 18 gravure plants.[58]

Within a national landscape dotted with regional centers,[59] Milan gained supremacy between the late 1920s and early 1930s with the rise of new publishing companies, especially Mondadori and Rizzoli (focused on the book and magazine sectors, respectively). Their transformation from traditional small businesses to mass cultural industries had a major influence on illustrated periodicals.[60] Similarly to developments in the book sector, where the market's expansion into emerging demographics relied on a broad range of entertainment literature (romance, mystery, stories of major feats) and international fiction, the periodicals sector also expanded its genres and readerships, with a proliferation of new offerings aimed at the average reader (employees, shopkeepers, teachers, soldiers, professionals).[61] Despite the regime's official reticence toward new forms of commercial culture, during the Fascist period the number of registered publications went from 3,859 in 1921 to 4,927 in 1941, a figure that, despite its generality, indicates how readers' habits shifted in favor of magazines.[62]

Publishing's dynamism was also closely related to the 'conditioning presence of

56. Murialdi 1986: 102–3.

57. Murialdi 2000: 89, 121, 125; Tranfaglia, Vittoria 2000: 24–5.

58. *Annuario della Stampa 1924–25*, cit. in Lombardo, Pignatel 1985: 38.

59. The main regions and cities related to publishing included: Piedmont (De Agostini, Utet, Lattes, Sei); Florence (Vallecchi, Le Monnnier); Bologna (Zanichelli, Cappelli); Bari (Laterza); and Rome (tied to the government, Provveditorato dello Stato, and Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana) (Pedullà 1997: 350–5).

60. Forgacs, Gundle 2007 maintain in a recent study (based on oral accounts) that, despite Italians' scarse propensity for reading, during the 1930s there was a broad public that read periodicals—particularly sports, illustrated, and comic magazines: 'overall, weekly magazines had sales far larger than those of newspapers or books' (ibid.: 36).

61. Despite the progress schooling had created by enlarging the base readership, illiteracy (21.1% in 1931, with the usual imbalances from region to region) remained a major problem: from 1931–40 the average titles published annually was 10,947 (compared to approximately 9,000 before the war)—a level still quite far from the averages in France and Britain (registered around 16,000 titles) and Germany (c. 23,000). Cf. Pischedda 2001: 74; Pedullà 1997: 374–5; Lombardo, Pignatel 1985: 42; Tranfaglia, Vittoria 2000: 24–5.

62. Cf. Forgacs, Gundle 2007: 37, 96. Although the national statistics ignore publications' regional, social, and typological variations, the growth rate of individual periodicals (27%) in this period was higher than that of annuals (21%). Further confirming this fact, during wartime, despite stric quotas on paper, the number of periodicals in circulation remained formidable (3,978 publications in 1943, of which 79 were dailies) compared to the understandable reduction in book publishing (Pedullà 1997: 374, 380; cf. Tranfaglia, Vittoria 2000: 300).

Fascist power.'[63] Following the laws of 1925–26 and faced with full State control over the media,[64] the magazine industry was actually censored to a lesser extent than other sectors and, thanks to the regime's protection, experienced substantial growth in both supply and circulation.[65] Furthermore, the suppression of freedom of the press was countered by other significant compensations offered to publishers and journalists (subsidies and secret funding from the Government press office, and a journalists' association). All of this sparked, in response to the economic crisis as well, a strengthening of the Italian press from both a technological (modernization of production facilities) and editorial (increase in the number of pages, of editorial staff, and of special editions) point of view, enjoyed equally by newspapers and magazines.[66]

In the early 1930s, when Rizzoli brought rotogravure[67] printing to Italy, it was first used to produce magazines. That particular market was dominated by fiction and lifestyle (*La Lettura*, 1901 and *Le Grandi Firme*, 1929), popular science (*Natura*, 1928), travel and tourism (*Rivista mensile del Touring Club Italiano*, 1895), and technical periodicals; while the women's, sports, and young adults' sectors were still in their infancy.[68] The sudden success of the new rotogravure weeklies sped up the current trend toward a more mass-oriented cultural production: thus, over the course of the decade the periodicals sector grew and print runs were updated so as to supply readers in all classes and at all cultural levels, with particular success in women's magazines and comics—which, taken together, were perhaps the most significant phenomenon in Milanese journalism between the two world wars.[69] While the traditional French cultural hegemony was gradually giving way to the more pervasive American culture, in terms of graphics there was an explosion of color: between the mid-twenties and the early thirties nearly every magazine updated its look and layout, starting with the cover.[70]

Stile meccanico, Mechanical style

As an illustrator, over the span of a decade Munari worked exclusively with magazine offices based in Milan—both small and large publishers, covering various types of publication, ranging from literature to

63. Pedullà 1997: 357.
64. Carried out through property transferrals and managerial appointments at all major newspapers, as well as sequestrations and intimidations; from 1926 this was done through the regulations of the Government press office (from 1937 on known as the Ministero della cultura popolare, or Ministry of Popular Culture), whose ordinances controlled press content in an increasingly rigid fashion (Cambria 1994: 134–5, 141).
65. Lombardo, Pignatel 1985: 41. Cf. De Berti, Mosconi 1998: '(...) the popular press was a kind of duty-free zone compared to [those more rigidly controlled under] the regime's directives, at least up until World War II' (ibid.: 149). The relative tolerance of consumer-press censorship does little to minimize the fact that during the twenty-year Fascist period Italian culture 'existed in a substantially provincial realm' (Pedullà 1997: 361).
66. Murialdi 2000: 136–7, 146–8, 150–1.
67. The last printing technique to become mechanized, rotogravure (or photogravure/photoetching) was discovered in 1878 in Vienna (and later perfected in England, ca. 1895) by Karel Klíč (Karl Klietsch, 1841–1926). This procedure was used primarily for newspaper and periodical printing: in 1904 a section of the Berlin newspaper *Der Tag* was printed in rotogravure, followed in 1910 by the *Freiburger Zeitung*. With the development of reel-fed rotogravure and mixed reels (with both typographic and intaglio printing) after World War I the new procedure (capable of simultaneously printing recto and verso, and up to 3,000 copies per hour) led to the development of new journalism outlets, such as illustrated periodicals aimed at wider readerships (Twyman 1998[2]: 59; Lombardo, Pignatel 1985: 36–7).
68. Murialdi 2000: 95; Ajello 1976: 186n. The situation at the end of the 1930s: of 4,987 magazines in circulation in 1941, 2,388 could be traced back to the Catholic sector, 280 to Fascism and current politics, 353 to the technological and industrial realms, and the remaining 1,800 to other sectors; their publication was centered mainly in Lombardy, Piedmont, and the Veneto regions, followed by Lazio, Emilia Romagna, and Tuscany (Pedullà 1997: 374).
69. Cambria 1994: 142.
70. Pischedda 2001: 74–5; Pallottino 1988: 260.

current events, women's issues, humor, and specialized sectors like aeronautics. Conversely, Munari did not work with sporting magazines, nor those closest to the regime (dealing with politics), nor with the Catholic press (which occupied a substantial share of the market)—all of which implies an evident, not necessarily ethical, but rather aesthetic and commercial choice. As might reasonably be expected, Munari's illustrations and other graphic contributions were commissioned by those publishers who were sympathetic to Futurism and more or less open to modern visual culture, or at least the type of new visual culture most acceptable to the general public.[71]

> Bum is only nineteen years old and is from Milan, and his real name is bruno munari... with a lower-case *b* and *m*, as you can see on his business card. As a mechanical draughtsman enamoured of technique, about three years ago he began to extract, from the simplicity of lines he saw in complex contraptions, the elements of an art that, while still classifiable within the vein of Futurism, has already acquired a delightfully personal expression through a clear, humorous sensibility, coherent with the kind of life unfolding before the artist's observant eyes.[72]

In its initial phase, which ran from roughly 1928 to 1930, his magazine work consisted largely of line drawings—often but not always humorous—that reflected his Futurist 'mechanical' influences, as well as his interest in comics, whose popularity was rapidly on the rise in Italy. Such references are unmistakably clear in the first caricatures he published, which date to the summer of 1928 and appeared alongside a lifestyle

|7| article in the elegant fashion magazine *Lidel*.[73] Caricatures published the following year in two quite different magazines show similar characteristics. A short article on Munari's artistic experience, published in

|8| the *Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* (a current events monthly from the eponymous Fascist newspaper in Milan[74]) and a dedication penned by Marinetti in *L'Ala d'Italia*, a technical aviation journal,[75] were illustrated with prominent literary figures' portraits (the writer Orio Vergani, and Futurist artists Marinetti and Azari), executed in an elementary reduction of geometric features and generally depicted in profile.

A few unpublished aeronautics-themed drawings, whose current whereabouts are unknown, probably date to the same period. The first, chronologically, would ap-

|9| pear to be an ink drawing on a collage of aluminum foil and colorful papers, signed BUM with collaged letters from a typewriter: both the drawing's rough execution and imprecisely traced Bodoni-style and English cursive letters suggest it was a very

71. Cf. Meneguzzo 1993: 30.

72. From a review published in the Milanese press in 1927 on the occasion of the Futurist group exhibition at the Galleria Pesaro, which was also Munari's public debut (cit. without sources in Lichtenstein, Häberli 1995: 275).

73. Arturo Lanocita, 'L'arte di sembrare intelligenti' in *Lidel* IX; 7 (July 1928): 48–9; even the geometric lettering of the title and the article's closing can be attributed to Munari. *Lidel* was a fashion monthly, founded in 1919 by Lydia de Liguoro (an Italian journalist who adhered to Fascism from its very beginning and became known for her nationalistic campaigns). The title was taken from a derivation of the founder's pen name (Lydel), adapted as an acronym of Letture Illustrazioni Disegni Eleganze Lavoro (Readings, Illustrations, Drawings, Elegances, Work), the main themes the monthly dealt with. Because de Liguoro had a hand in Lydel Film, a production house in Turin specialized in film advertisements, it is possible she met Munari around 1928, as he was working with the Cossio brothers on animated shorts; it is also plausible that de Liguoro brought Munari into the editorial staff of the magazine she'd founded and then directed up until 1927 (cf. Vergani 2009: 'de Liguoro' and '*Lidel*').

74. (Manlio Morgagni) 'Un pittore futurista: Munari' in *La Rivista illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* VII; 6 (June 1929): 57. The text highlights how his caricatures are 'curious because of the sheer ability with which their creator made use of geometric elements—but especially interesting because of the artist's sure intuition in capturing the most characteristic and expressive lines of the physiognomy.'

75. The portraits of Marinetti and Azari appeared in *L'Ala d'Italia*, VIII; 10 (October 1929): 916.

early attempt or, more likely, a sketch for a primer (abecedarium), similar to others he made in the 1940s—which would make it the first evidence of Munari's recurring
|10| interest in the alphabet.[76] Two illustrations in tempera on cardboard for the aviation company Caproni, dating back to 1928–29, show a higher level of graphic design sensibility: the first depicts the famous Caproncino biplane; the second an imaginary aircraft labeled Caproni 3000 HP, and the third the twin-engined Ca.103. Although the circumstances surrounding their creation are unknown, it is conceivable they were meant to be reproduced as postcards.[77] In addition to the geometric decomposition and vivid background color (in keeping with Futurist stylistic elements), their typical art nouveau–style lettering is noteworthy, as it is quite different from the more immediate, geometric forms of art deco alphabets extensively used in advertising of the period, and suggests these may have been an apprenticeship exercise.

A portrait of the Futurist composer Luigi Russolo,[78] perhaps dating back to 1927, is perhaps an extreme case of such geometric minimalism in the vein of mechanical art, which over the 1920s had left behind the study of movement to become the dominant aesthetic of Futurist painting.[79] Beginning with the 1922–23 manifesto *Arte meccanica* (Mechanical Art) coauthored by Vinicio Paladini, Ivo Pannaggi, and Prampolini—who, alongside Depero, were its most significant proponents—exaltation of the machine as a visual analogy for states of mind tended toward a 'mechanical' depiction of figures composed of basic volumes (cones, cylinders, spheres). This aesthetic's most emblematic iteration was in theatrical sets, where the

76. The drawing, in the collection of the Massimo and Sonia Cirulli Archive, New York/Bologna, is dated c.1927 and is reproduced with the title *rRrR, Rumore di aeroplano* (rRrR, the Sound of an Airplane) in Pellegrini 2009: 121. 38×27 cm. The 1927–28 dating is also confirmed by the BUM signature, which can be traced back to the late 1920s. Even if, compared to the noteworthy quality of the drawings Munari did as an adolescent in Badia Polesine (a few are in the Jaqueline Vodoz and Bruno Danese collection, others in the possession of the Munari family), the possibilty that this is a childhood sketch cannot be excluded; the most probable hypothesis seems to be a parody of a childhood drawing (Antonello 2009: 7). Munari actually did do a series of abecedaria in the early 1940s and later on in the postwar years, a few of which were published by Einaudi (*Abecedario*, 1942 and *Alfabetiere*, 1960), while others remained mere tryouts or personal exercises (*ABC dadà*, 1944, coll. Hajek-Zucconi, Novara; and an untitled one made for Anna Boggeri's fourth birthday, 1944, coll. Boggeri-Monguzzi, Meride). These were followed by the book *Munari's ABC* (Cleveland/New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960), the educational game *ABC con fantasia* produced by Danese in 1973, and an installation Munari curated for the printer Lucini (*Alfabeto Lucini*, Milan: Lucini, 1987).

77. The signature Bruno, identical in all the drawings, allows us to hypothesize a similar date, around 1928–29. The drawings are now in the Maria Fede Caproni collection, Rome. 22×12 cm, 23.5×29 cm, and 22×12 cm, respectively. The Caproni Ca.100 aircraft, designed in 1928, was a commercially succesful single-engine aircraft that remained in production through 1938 in several variants: the dating of the drawing, therefore, is not problematic. The same cannot be said of the second case, insofar as the aircraft name seems to refer to the design of a hydroplane design for the Ca.60 Transaereo, created for transoceanic flight, a prototype of which was tested (but destroyed after the first flight) in 1920–21; it was a massive aircraft, capable of carrying 100 passengers, with three groups of triplane wings on which 6 motors were mounted for a total of 3,000 Hp. Yet Munari's drawing depicts a single-winged aircraft, with two motors and landing gears that do not match reality, except for their large size. The Caproni Ca.103 was a light-bomber biplane (derived from the Ca.73, developed between 1922 and 1924), known for being the first Italian aircraft built with an entirely metal structure.

78. Coll. Bruno Munari, Milan, riproduced in Lichtenstein, Häberli 1995: 26. The signed drawing is dated 1927. However, if one considers that none of Munari's compositions from this period—reproduced plates, illustrations, and photomontages—carries a date, while sketches given to collectors were almost always dated, it is logical to deduce that the date was added only later, and can therefore be taken with the benefit of the doubt. In this specific case, such suspicion is reinforced by the fact that the signature appears along the border of the sheet, not within the drawing itself, as was Munari's usual practice.

79. See Lista, Masoero 2009) in which the period divisions between early and late (primo and secondo) Futurismo are supplanted by the use of dominant aesthetic: mechanical art in the 1920s and aeropainting in the 1930s (ibid.: 19). Cf. Crispolti 1980: 149–51; Lista 2001a: 132–45.

body/machine made its most convincing appearance in costumes for the balletti meccanici (mechanical ballets).[80]

> WE FEEL MECHANICALLY. WE FEEL WE'RE BUILT OF STEEL. WE, TOO, ARE MACHINES. WE, TOO, ARE MECHANIZED! (…) WE FUTURISTS WANT: 1st, that the machine's spirit, not just its exterior form, be rendered (…); 2nd, that these expressive means and mechanical elements be coordinated by an original lyrical law, and not by some learned scientific law; 3rd, that, by 'essence of the Machine,' one understands the strengths, the rhythms, and the infinite analogies the Machine evokes (…)[81]

Because Munari's earliest works were so strongly shaped by both Depero and Prampolini, that impact was reflected not only in the works made for gallery settings, but first and foremost in his daily work as graphic designer and illustrator—which processed those influences into freer, more accessible, often ironic work.[82] Although its chiaroscuro volumes still followed in Prampolini's tracks,[83] this different approach was characteristic of a series of illustrations Munari did in 1929–30, which also responded to specific editorial criteria. These illustrations had two key features: affinities with comics, as was the case with those done for the *Corriere dei Piccoli*;[84] and a visible quest for an immediate, graphic signature with modern connotations, as was the case with those that accompanied sentimental short stories or entertaining pieces in *Lidel*.[85] Yet with respect to the theoretical assumptions of the manifesto, in his illustrations of this period Munari uses a 'mechanical' visual language while omitting all its 'cosmic' connotations.[86]

The illustrations accompanying Marinetti's theatrical text *Il suggeritore nudo* are done in the same style, and were reproduced in *Comoedia* on the occasion of its run at Rome's Teatro degli Indipendenti in December 1929.[87] The line drawings

80. From Pannaggi and Paladini's *Balletto meccanico futurista* (Casa d'Arte Bragaglia, Rome, 1922) to Depero and Casavola's ballet *Anihccam del 3000* (Teatro Trianon, Milan, 1924), Ruggero Vasari's *L'angoscia delle macchine* (performed in 1926, with costumes by Pannaggi and music by Casavola), and Prampolini's *Théatre de la pantomime futuriste* (Paris, 1927). Cf. Lista 2001a: 146.

81. From the *Arte meccanica* manifesto, signed by Enrico Prampolini, Ivo Pannaggi, and Vinicio Paladini, published in *Noi*, second series, 1; 2 (May 1923): 1–2; text reproduced in Birolli 2008: 194–8.

82. À propos of similar illustrations also published in *Lidel* during the summer of 1930, Di Corato writes of an 'ironic translation of Prampolinian aeropainting' (2008: 213). In fact, the playful tone also came from the Futurists' 'mechanical' theatrical works.

83. Crispolti 1992: 193. Within Prampolini's mechanical period, which went from 1924 to '28, Crispolti specifies two phases: the first characterized by planar geometric depictions, the second by an 'accentuated plasticity (…) of an almost "purist" order' in which the color is overlayed with chiaroscuro modeling. For a more in-depth discussion of the mechanical theme in Futurist art see Masoero 2009.

84. *Corriere dei Piccoli* XXI; 23 and 25 (9 and 23 June 1929, respectively), cit. in Di Corato 2008: 210. The weekly supplement of the *Corriere della Sera*, launched in December 1908 (conceived of by Paola Lombroso Carrara, but entrusted to the oversight of Silvio Spaventa Filippi), is considered the first Italian comic. Compared to North America, where comic strips were aimed at adults, within Italian culture they were generally seen as children's products and adopted for educational purposes. In addition to images created by American artists, acquired with exclusive rights, the *Corrierino* (as it was also known) featured numerous characters created by Italian artists—often major illustrators (like Sergio Tofano, who created the famous *Signor Bonaventura*, the character associated with the weekly for the longest period). Luigi Albertini, historic director of the *Corriere della Sera*, decided to replace the characteristic nuvolette (balloons) with rhyming lines of text (underneath the vignettes), which were considered more in keeping with middle-class tastes. Cf. Bona 1998; Santoro 1998b: 82–3).

85. *Lidel* X; 8 (15 August 1929): 22–3. For the story 'Fra due mantelli' by Lyana Cambiasi Munari made 3 line illustrations plus the title; the layout of text and images appears rather conventional, based on the page's central symmetry, and does not seem to reflect (as maintained in Di Corato 2008: 210) 'an initial intervention in terms of editorial graphic design.' Liana Cambiasi Negretti (1897–1995) adopted the pseudonym Liala for her first novel, *Signorsì*, published in 1931 by Mondadori, and became a very prolific author, as well as the uncontested queen of the romance novel.

86. Contrarily, this aspect was present not only in the pictorial works but also in the complex illustrations and photomontages created for the press during the 1930s, once again influenced by a 'cosmic realism' (a spiritual variant of aeropictorial poetics) Prampolini championed during that same period.

87. This work debuted 12 December 1929, directed by Carlo Ludovico Bragaglia, with set designs by Anton Giulio Bragaglia, and

illustrating a few of the play's scenes seem like preparatory sketches, or drawings obtained from the set curtains Munari (in his first theatrical experience) prepared, along with costumes, for the stage.[88] The experimental theater directed by Anton Giulio Bragaglia—who, alongside his brother Arturo, was a key exponent of Futurist photography—in Rome was one of the major reference points of avant-garde theater, and presented a broad range of domestic and foreign experimental, scenically innovative works.[89] Marinetti's text, considered among his best contributions to the genre, is a more balanced summary of earlier Futurist stagings,[90] constucted as 'a series of comic skits' of stereotypical characters based on the Pirandellian theme of the author's disappearance.[91] Although it is difficult to assess Munari's scenographic work without the help of contemporary documents, we can get an idea of it from published illustrations: the automaton-like figures, while lacking color, nevertheless show an unmistakable similarity to Depero and Pannaggi's mechanical costumes and stage sets,[92] which allowed Munari to come up with similar solutions—so much so that they are replicated on the promotional postcard.[93] Yet his fourth stage curtain is more interesting: built upon a typographic collage of letters with vaguely parolibero (albeit not particularly dynamic) compositions, it may have become the recurrent motif for the show's other curtains. Ultimately, the show met with a warm welcome from both critics and audiences.

A different approach, leaving behind geometric rigidity in favor of a more fluid mark making, characterized a series of illustrations published alongside lifestyle articles in *Lidel* in the summer of 1930.[94] These were small, hatched drawings, synthetic little pictures that drew literally, and sometimes jokingly, from the text, winking at the cosmic atmospheres of aeropainting through a play of perspectival planes. Printed in plain black or another color, set in the margin or within the text column, they helped animate the page, creating a unity with the headlines. More than the art deco geometric patterns predominant in French and Italian posters of the period, the titles' lettering (aside from their still uncertain outcome) recalled the stencil typefaces in vogue at the time and the deconstructed forms of Cassandre's *Bifur*.[95]

|12|

scenery curtains and costumes by Munari. The text 'Il suggeritore nudo. Simultaneità futurista in undici sintesi' appeared in *Comoedia* XI–XII; 1 (15 December 1929–15 January 1930): 38–44, with 5 drawings by Munari depicting the first, fourth, sixth, eighth, and eleventh scenes. For Marinetti's text, see Schnapp 2004: 381–408.

88. Schnapp 2004: 407

89. Like the Casa d'Arte Bragaglia gallery, an important center of the capital city's artistic scene, the Teatro sperimentale degli Indipendenti opened in 1922. Anton Giulio Bragaglia (1890–1960) managed it as a private club, where he staged (with his brother Carlo Ludovico as director) works by playwrights who were under-represented in Italian theaters (Campanile, Pirandello, Svevo, Shaw, Jarry, Apollinaire, Strindberg, Brecht), as well as pantomime, marionette, and dance performances. Marinetti's works staged there included (in addition to shorts and *Il Suggeritore nudo*)—*Bianca e Rosso* and *Fantocci elettrici* (Verdone 2005: 22). The theater's intense period of activity ended in 1931 because of serious financial problems and Mussolini's direct repression of the endeavor. Cf. Cappa, Gelli 1998; Archivio della Scuola Romana at http://www.scuolaromana.it; and http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teatri_di_Roma.

90. Verdone 1988: 173; cf. Girolami 1993: 1125; and Schnapp 2004: xxvi–xxvii.

91. Schnapp 2004: xxxvii. The opera's thematic core could be summarized as a series of characters who refuse their own author (Verdone 1988: 174).

92. In addition to the *Balletto meccanico futurista* of 1922, Pannaggi's book cover and costume designs for Ruggero Vasari's *L'Angoscia delle macchine* (1925–26) are also worth mention, as are the sculptural costumes designed for a dance set to music by Stravinsky at the Teatro degli Indipendenti in 1927 (reproduced in Lista 2001a: 147–9)—examples Munari was certainly aware of.

93. Example reproduced in Fanelli, Godoli 1988.

94. Luciana, 'Bibite estive' in *Lidel* XI; 7 (15 July 1930): 25; Lucio Ridenti, 'Sotto il tetto di un amico' in *Lidel* XI; 8 (15 August 1930): 50–1; Luciana, 'In cerca di funghi' and Dancing, 'Quest'inverno balleremo…' in *Lidel* XI; 9 (15 September 1930): 23 and 47 respectively; 'Cantano i bimbi' and Luciana, 'Trofei di caccia' in *Lidel* XI; 10 (15 October 1930): 20 and 26–7 respectively.

95. The Deberny & Peignot foundry, Paris, 1929.

The intensification of Munari's collaboration with *Lidel* is indicative of his early, increasing professional autonomy; during this period he expanded his network in Milan's publishing world, and began to collaborate with other periodicals, all while developing his illustration skills. Some caricatures published in 1930 in the current-events weekly *Il Giovedì* can be traced back to the previous period[96]—a small caricature of Buster Keaton, and another, fairly large series of 'synthetic' portraits published in the May issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno*,[97] a monthly business publication that became the forum for an intense debate on economic rationalization.[98] The magazine became a promotional voice for the GAR or Gruppo amici della razionalizzazione (Group of Rationalization's Friends), and Munari's personal involvment in their activities brought him into contact with the economic leaders most sensitive to new developments in advertising—a step that also coincided with his professional partnership with Ricas.

This openness of interests also led to a transition in his work. His stylistic sensibilities became more sophisticated, as can be seen in his cover for the July/August 1930
|14| issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno*, wherein two mechanical figures move within a rudimentary urban scene. The innovative touch with respect to earlier illustrations in the same genre comes from his accentuation of the two mannequins' volumes and their insertion in a scenographic space (however schematic), in which the magazine's title, reduced to basic forms, also appears.[99]

The cover for the November 1930 is-
|13| sue of *Lidel* was the last work Munari published with the magazine before their collaboation drew to a close,[100] and marked a definitive change in his visual language— noticeable also in his paintings of the same period, which fell decidedly within the cosmic vein of aeropainting (evident in the works shown in 1931 at the Galleria Pesaro). A stylized portrait of a woman, in a hybridized manner between abstract and art deco, appears to hover in a cosmic space shaped by the play between perspectivally projected planes and geomorphic shapes rendered in a strong chiaroscuro that accentuates the work's depth.[101]

Presented in no.9 (January 1929) of *Arts et métiers graphiques* (578–9), the graphic arts magazine published by the foundry itself. *Bifur* is an ornamental alphabet composed of deconstructed uppercase letters reduced to their minimal elements, which can be variably combined through four different variants with different parts fo the letter in black or hatched (cf. Wlassikoff 2005: 84–5). In addition to the obvious influence of Renner's *Futura Black* (Bauer, 1929), other stencil alphabets Munari was certainly aware of included Albers's experimental type (c.1925), used on the cover of one of the Bauhausbücher (Walter Gropius, *Bauhausbauten Dessau*, 1930) and lettering on a cover Prampolini designed for the Italian-American magazine *Broom* (no.3, October 1921).

96. M. Serandrei, 'Buster l'impossibile' in *Il Giovedì*, cit. without further reference in Di Corato 2008: 213.

97. *L'Ufficio Moderno, La pubblicità* v; 5 (May 1930), cit. in Di Corato 2008: 213.

98. Magazine conceived of and directed from 1926 on by Francesco Muscia, and (from 1929) by Guido Mazzali. *L'Ufficio Moderno* was the first Italian magazine dedicated to modern business office organizational systems, sales, and advertising. Cf. Valeri 1986: 60–3; Bauer 1998b: 162–4; Carotti 2001: 67–72.

99. *L'Ufficio Moderno, La pubblicità* v; 7–8 (July/August 1930). As was custom for most magazines up until the 1930s, aside from the background color, the cover remained the same, and was 'distinguished by a symbol—Mercury seated atop a line of books inside a gilt tondo set between the title (...) and the subtitle' (Bauer 1998b: 162–3). In 1929, when Mazzali took the lead, the magazine renewed its graphic layout and began to vary the color of the cover with each issue, entrusting the design to various commercial artists (Carotti 2001: 71).

100. Di Corato 2008: 214. Munari's collaborative relationship with *Lidel*, intermittent as it was, was tied to the management of Gino Valori, a journalist and comedy writer who had succeeded de Liguoro in 1927. Under his lead, the magazine's graphic look was entrusted to art director Francesco Dal Pozzo, who welcomed the contributions of young illustrators like Renato Gruau, Brunetta, Giorgio Tabet, and Munari, whose work with the magazine ended in late 1930, when Valori left the editorial team (Vergani 2009: '*Lidel*').

101. *Lidel* XI; 11 (15 November 1930). For the cover, Di Corato records the title *Futurismo* (2008: 214). In that same issue, Munari illustrated and likely did the layout for a brief article

The novelty of the illustration, which was a personal version of aeropictorial poetics, was also featured in similar solutions Munari adopted in some of his graphic work of the same period, directly related to Futurism: two published covers, a theater poster, and his participation in a disputed (it failed in the end) advertising project.

Munari's graphic design debut in the pub-
|15| lishing realm came in 1929 with *Aquilotto implume*, Giuseppe Romeo Toscano's adventure novel for young-adults, for which Munari made the cover and illustrations throughout.[102] The cover, in two colors, refers to the storyline celebrating the Italian exploration of Africa. Composed according to aeropictorial ideas, it depicts an aerial view of the African continent against a skewed blue background, against which the silhouette of an aircraft in flight stands out, done with the characteristic airbrushed gradient. Below, the novel's title appears in sturdy geometric lettering, and is integrated with the rest of the composition through its angled layout, echoing the airplane's orientation. The black-and-white illustrations accompanying the story appear more coarsly drawn, but are still interesting because of the contrast between elements, as well as their accentuated perspective.

Shortly afterward, yet with dissimilar effects, Munari designed the cover of a collection of theatrical works by the poet Pino
|16| Masnata titled *Anime sceneggiate,* published in 1930 by Marinetti's Edizioni futuriste di «Poesia».[103] In this case the illustration is unadorned, and plays upon a more allusive, raw composition, with a greater emphasis on the alphabetic elements (in keeping with contemporary art deco models) which close two stage curtains around two synthetic winged figures. Bare-bones as it is, the image successfully evokes the irrational dimension of Masnata's theatrical works, focusing on a scenic visualization of the characters' inner worlds (akin to the cinematic flashback).

The poster Munari created for the the-
|17| atrical run of *Simultanina* (1931), one of Marinetti's last plays, stylistically belongs to the same group of works.[104] Compared to their collaboration two years before, for Munari this was a more demanding test: it was the first time he had worked on a poster (a format he seldom returned to in later work), and on the one hand it affirmed the growing recognition he was gaining among the Milanese Futurists, while on the other the sheer visibility of the event served as validation for the artist. During the spring and summer of '31 the tour traveled to

on women's fashion, 'Sera' (60–1)—a drawing of two female figures, rather linear with the exception of the background, extended over a two-page spread, allowing for the inclusion of some photographs as well—and drew the headline for a serial novel 'La triste vittoria' (62), which featured the same design solutions he had previously used.

102. Giuseppe Romeo Toscano. *Aquilotto implume. Avventure di terra e di cielo*. Milan: Casa Editrice Gianbattista Rossi, 1929. The book was issued in another—identical and simultaneous—edition published by Ambrosiana Editoriale, Milan. 22.5×15.5 cm, paperback, pp. 178 (6); duotone cover, 4 b/w illustrations, 2 geographic maps. Printed by Officine grafiche Schor SA, Milan. Giuseppe Romeo Toscano (1895–1981), popular young-adult fiction author, teacher, and writer.

103. Pino Masnata. *Anime sceneggiate*. Rome: Edizioni futuriste di «Poesia», 1930. 13.5×20 cm, paperback, pp. 326; preface by F. T. Marinetti; duotone cover. A collection of the texts *La moglie infedele, Colori di laboratorio,* and *Francesca da Rimini* (written in 1927). A tempera sketch (not the final version) of the cover is in the Casaperlarte Fondazione Paolo Minoli collection, Cantù (reproduced in the catalogue *Mostra di Bruno Munari. Artista, designer, architetto, grafico, scrittore, inventore gioca con i bambini.* Mantua: Corraini/Cantù: Associazione Amici dei Musei Cantù, 1995). Pino Masnata (1901–1968) poet, playwright, and radio author (in collaboration with Carmine Guarino). Author of the *Manifesto del Teatro Visionico* (1920) and, with Marinetti, of the *Manifesto della Radia* (1933) (Bassi 2001d: 712–3; Bossaglia Zatti 1983: 85–7; Verdone 1988: 405–15).

104. *Marinetti/Simultanina/Tournée Teatro Futurista*. 100×140 cm. Printed by Industrie Grafiche N. Moneta, Milan. The image was also reproduced as a postcard (cf. the specimen at Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Giannina Censi: Cen 5.01). Marinetti's text was published in Milan by A. & G. Carisch (1931).

many Italian cities, and was accompanied by the usual notoriety Futurist soirées garnered.[105] Recalled Ricas:

> At the time, the Teatro Manzoni was across the street from San Fedele and the police precinct, and was later wiped out by bombs. [In '31] a heartbreaking *Simultanina* (played by the marvelous Anna Fontana, whose back was bare all the way to her buttocks) had two types of audience—those who admirered the show, and those who were shocked by it—and ran from 8 in the evening to 10 the following morning, with shouts, tossed tomatoes, and repeated intervention by the cops.[106]

The poster composition centers on the contrast between stylized airplane silhouettes and a synthetic female bust—a direct reference to the play's two main characters (Simultanina and the aviator), whose diversity is further emphasized by the background's contrasting colors and shapes. The aeropictorial stylistic elements not only allow for an immediate association with the Futurist world, but also, thanks to the image's allusiveness, relate to the symbolism of Marinetti's theatrical characters. Although it does not yet include references to the cosmic and surreal atmospheres that distinguished Munari's illustrations for most of the decade, the poster nevertheless shows a degree of maturity in the handling of the figurative and typographic elements, especially his ability to control different letterforms and visually articulate various levels of information in a striking image.[107] Note the presence, next to Munari's signature, of the acronym CREA, the advertising studio linked to the Milanese Futurists Munari was affiliated with.

|18|

Continuing with Munari's theatrical work, during 1931 he developed the set designs for the Futuristic drama *Dottor Mattia* by Angelo Rognoni,[108] staged for the first time on 10 May 1931 at the Sala Bossi in Milan by the experimental company Teatro Nuovo dell'Arte Drammatica, directed by Ettore Gian Ferrari.[109] Gian Ferrari chose Munari to design the sets, which were particularly well adapted to the Futurist text, and was completely satisfied with them: 'I love Munari's sketches. They are absolutely beautiful!'[110] Only four sets sketches are known of (created by the Milan-based Ercole Sormani company), and they confirm the maturity of Munari's pictorial style—even when, as in this case, the representation is more realistic, all the

105. The Compagnia del Teatro Futurista staged *Simultanina* at the Teatro Manzoni in Milan, opening on 10 May 1931. It was directed by Marinetti and Piero Cornabuci, with stage sets designed by Benedetta (made by Gino Galli), and music by Carmine Guarino with lyrics by Marinetti. The tour ran through August, with stops in Turin, Gorizia, Fiume, Trieste, Rome, Bari, Lecce, Brindisi, Potenza, Foggia, Padua, Modena, Mantua, Reggio Emilia, Ferrara, and Lugano (Schnapp 2004: 441, 821; Crispolti 1980: 566). Among the 'clever touches' that enlivened the show were interventions by Escodamè before and after the performance, the presentation of a *carneplastico* (a meat-based Futurist recipe) in the middle of the audience, a Futurist dance (performed by Giannina Censi), perfume wafting throughout the theater (a scent created by Gi.Vi.Emme), and an exhibition of aeropaintings in the foyer (cf. the show poster in Apice, fondo Reggi: 0003-0522).

106. Ricas in Lopez 1994: 8.

107. From the poster it is clear that the tour's ad campaign included other materials: 'Advertising material created from sketches by Benedetta and Munari (...)' (Apice, Fondo Reggi: 0003-0522). There is also a promotional postcard (in addition to the one reproducing Munari's poster) that draws upon one of the graphic syntheses in Benedetta's book *Le forze umane* (1924) (reproduced in Lattarulo: 1995).

108. Angelo Rognoni, *Il Dottor Mattia. Tre atti*. Pavia: Edizioni S.U.P.E.R., 1931, reprinted in 1942. Teatro series. Angelo Rognoni (1896–1957) was, alongside Masnata, a proponent of the Futurist group in Pavia; he was a painter, poet, and prolific playwright (Zatti in Godoli 2001: 979–80; Verdone 1988: 417–8; Bossaglia, Zatti 1983: 15–7, 28, 80–1).

109. Rognoni's work, which dates back to 1929/30, gained a degree of notoriety (for its opening night, Marinetti gave a presentation as well) thanks to the Gian Ferrari company's staging. The following season they staged another play by Rognoni, *La gelosia di Alfredo Rossi* (Bossaglia, Zatti 1983: 16n, 28). In addition to theatre, Ettore Gian Ferrari was also an art patron, and opened his eponymous gallery in 1936 (Grazia Gian Ferrari, email communication to author, 31 August 2010).

110. From a letter to Rognoni, cit. in Bossaglia, Zatti 1983: 80.

while maintaining his illustrations' synthetic line quality and rich colors.[111]

Futurist publishing

The context surrounding the ambitious |19| publishing project for the *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce*, an advertising publication, was more complex. Alongside Depero's *Numero unico futurista Campari* (1931), it was the Futurists' largest promotional project of the 1930s, and Munari not only took part in it, but he was also instrumental in its organization.[112] The idea of a Futurist annual summarizing 'all the arts, inventions, award winners, and industries' of Fascist Italy[113] aimed at the international luxury tourist circuit was launched by Oscar Fusetti, who founded the Edizioni Metropoli in Milan for that express purpose.[114] Announced several times over the course of 1930 to spread word of Marinetti's art direction and Fillìa's technical consultation, advance promotional copies designed by Diulgheroff began to circulate: these were done in the form of a brochure index[115] (of the first subscribers and collaborators) and a foldout flier116 for recruiting new subscriptions; this was followed by a lengthier specimen (program), presented at the IV Triennale di Monza[117] in May 1930, as well as the book pavilion of the Fiera di Milano in July, announcing a 30 December publication date. In his introductory text, Marinetti proclaimed:

> The typographic look will be entirely original: nothing ever seen or foreseen before. [It will include] a selection of papers and inks that can be compared only to the changing colors of airplanes between dawn and dusk. [It will have] a machine-gun launch. [It will have] repeat editions. —F. T. Marinetti, art director[118]

111. Done in tempera (24×32 cm): these were sketches for act I, scene 1; act III, scene 2; and another two for unidentified scenes (reproduced in Lista 1989: 253 and 1990: 119). They originally belonged to Vinicio Paladini.

112. The Edizioni Metropoli offices were located at 4 of the Galleria del Corso, in the center of the city, where Ricas and Munari opened their first studio in 1931 (cf. Bassi 1994: 8). They may have taken over the Edizioni Metropolis spaces following the failure of the *Italia Veloce* project. See Munari's letter to Thayaht, 20.9.1930, written and signed by hand on Edizioni Metropoli letterhead: 'My dear friend, thanks for the photos which, once Marinetti sees and selects them, will be published. Share the material I sent you as widely as possible. I'm awaiting the badge for uomini veloci (fast men). Best wishes from Hoscar Fusetti. Sincere regards, Munari' (Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Thayaht: Tha 1.2.19.11).

113. The inevitable homage to the regime is emphasized on both the letterhead (cf. Fusetti's letter to Thayaht, 20.10.1930: 'Almanacco dell'Italia veloce (...) the most Fascist book / dedicated to "Benito Mussolini, fast leader of fast Italy",' Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Thayaht: Tha 1.2.19.12) as well as in print advertisements (cf. *Il Giovedì* no.22, 9 October 1930).

114. Oscar Fusetti (1900–1947) joined the Florentine Futurist group in the early 1920s and directed the magazine Firenze Futurista; he also participated in the Futurist Congress held in Milan in 1924, but soon broke off his ties to Marinetti because of political differences. He returned to the movement in '29 through Fillìa, and launched the *Almanacco* publishing project. In the 1930s he was commissioner of Milan's Fiera (trade fair), worked as a journalist and documentary director, and taught at the experimental cinematography school in Rome (the Scuola sperimentale di cinematografia). He became a Partisan after '43, but his political career was cut short by his sudden death (Cammarota 2001: 491–2).

115. *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce: prime adesioni, primi collaboratori*. Milano: Edizioni Metropoli [1930]. In-16°; pp. 16, perforated index with increasingly large page size. It is quite likely that the idea for the format was influenced by Vladimir Majakovsky's *Dlia Golossa* (For the Voice), edited by El Lissitzky and published in Berlin in 1923 (Lutze & Vogt), the same year in which Diulgheroff attended the Bauhaus in Weimar (Salaris 1986: 151–2).

116. *Almanacco Italia veloce*. Milan: Edizioni Metropoli, 1930. Printed by Archetipografia, Milan. Foldout with 3 panels, 23×30 cm (closed); duotone printing (black and red). The specimen in the collection of the Biblioteca Braidense has a dedication to Mussolini written by Marinetti. In addition to the detailed list of subscribers, the document has typographic compositions created by Diulgheroff and clearly based on constructivist models. There is also a flier, with similar typographic layouts, in the collection of Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Thayaht: Tha 1.2.19.4-4.

117. The fourth Exposition of modern decorative and industrial arts was the last one to be held in the historic Villa Reale in Monza, from 11 May to 2 November 1930; with the shift of management to the state, the later expositions became triennial and were held in the Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan.

118. This quote was taken from the manifesto text published in both the foldout and in the promotional specimen.

The specimen, also laid out by Diulgheroff, was a collection of promotional compositions by Balla, Diulgheroff, Dottori, Munari, Pozzo, and Prampolini, interspersed with parolibero typographic compositions and photographs with commentary penned by famous supporters.[119]

The intention of the editors was that the publication's strength would lie not only in its content, but also in the shape of the printed object itself, presented as a repertoire of the technical possibilities and creativity of Futurist graphic design. A true typographic tour de force, the specimen features: an aluminized paper cover and the Edizioni Metropoli logo printed in relief with gold ink; eight types of paper with varying colors, finishes, and weights; and printing in metallic inks, serigraph, and on cellophane.[120] The financial investment for a publication of this sort—considering the volume's format (a quarto of 1,000 pages), planned print run (300,000 copies, printed in rotogravure), international distribution, the collaborators' compensation and subscription fee (rather high for the time), and the complexity of the various promotional efforts—evidently corresponded to the Futurists' ambitions, as they were always looking for the regime's support. However, despite the numerous and prestigious subscriptions received from the highest state offices and the culture sphere, the *Almanacco* project remained unrealized. The reasons for its failure are unknown, but the most obvious hypothesis is that funding was insufficient for an editorial achievement of such scale and technically complex requirements; and political factors certainly added to the difficulties (despite his interest in Futurism, Fusetti was tagged as an anti-Fascist and put under special surveillance).[121]

Munari's contribution to the specimen consisted of two advertising plates. The curators' selection criteria are not known, but the inclusion of two pages in his case, compared to the other participating artists (Diulgheroff was the other exception, as he created the overall constructivist graphics), can be read as a recognition of his role in the organization, or his growing professional achievement as graphic designer for advertisements. They are fictitious creations: the first plate is an aeropictorial depiction of a plane in flight through space—it feels like a sketch for an aviation-industry magazine cover, and even the title *Ali d'Italia* (Wings of Italy) recalls the *Ala d'Italia* Munari collaborated on the year before; the other is a sort of collage of dynamic symbols cherished by the Futurists (a ship, plane, car, gears, with the addition of a book) diagonally intersected by the title *Pubblicità a scoppio* (Internal-combustion advert),[122] in which certain elements (an economy of means, the absence of a background) foreshadow a more autonomous manner, freed from painting and open to graphic ideas from outside of the

119. *Programma Almanacco dell'Italia veloce*. Milan: Edizioni Metropoli, 1930. In-quarto, pp. 36.

120. Among the *Almanacco*'s announced publishing innovations were some pages in the form of discs with recordings of Il Duce and poetry performances. An idea Depero returned to in 1931 for his book-object project (never realized) *New York—film vissuto* containing parolibere plates, photomontages, and two discs (Lista 1984: 102).

121. Cammarota 2001: 491–2. Cf. Crispolti 1980: 408–9; Lista 1984: 102; Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 145, 147; Salaris 1995: 32; Ceriani 1998: 158–9; Cammarota 2006: 203. The envelope in Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Thayaht relating to the *Almanacco* is titled 'Aborto dell'Italia veloce' (The Abortion of Fast Italy), which is indicative of the delusion felt by the organizers, regardless of their significant dedication to it.

122. The sketch's title refers to the expression used to promote the publication: '(...) we will create the Futurist internal-combusion advert, full of unexpected, improvised contrasts, so as to create the atmosphere most favorable to the products' presentation' (letter sent to subscribers, 21.3.1930, on Edizioni Metropoli letterhead; in Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Thayaht: Tha 1.2.19.01).

movement. The latter echoes a similar illustration that appeared a few months later as the cover of a sports and travel magazine from Trentino titled *Vie Latine* (March 1931), for its special issue on the Fiera di Milano;[123] the previous January Munari had published a color plate in the magazine that anticipated his later explorations in collage.[124]

Therefore, in the 1930s the attempt to create a new advertising trend shaped by aeropictorial innovations (a trend Munari, Dottori, Diulgheroff, and Prampolini were associated with)—for which the *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce* was basically the most advanced experiment—met with moderate success and remained limited primarily to the Futurist realm; much as they had tried to do the previous decade with mechanical art, which remained far from becoming a dominant force.[125] While this held true in general for the poster, in Munari's case the transposition of the style into his illustrations was successful, as proven by his published work in 1929–31 and his cover for *Lidel* in November 1930. The latter were the first concrete examples of his application of an aeropictorial visual language to the field of graphic design, although they do not yet take full advantage of the expressive possibilities of the Prampolinian cosmic current that would come to the fore a little later. Indeed, the work where such 'cosmic' evocations were most evident was in his more distinctly painterly publishing projects, beginning in the end of '31 with the *Cantastorie* collection for Campari (1932) and the 'litolatta' or tin-litho *L'Anguria lirica* (1934), wherein a vaguely surreal atmosphere predominates.[126]

Lito-latte, Tin-litho books

In the spring of '33 in a letter to Tullio d'Albisola, between word play and poking fun at business correspondence, Munari mentioned he was very busy with work for the trade fair, but had nevertheless accepted the job of creating illustrations 'for eleven kisses,' whimsically adding that he had refused Campari's offer of '1,000 lire per drawing.' The conclusion is instructive, and helps one understand the kind of nonsense humor Munari so loved:

> We will pay no attention whatsoever to your graciously attractive letter, because we have a rather poor opinion of the crap you create (tin books) and if you would kindly accept a one-way ticket (at an 80% discount) for the Gates of Hell, we'll gladly arrange it for you. With our sincerest contempt, / Bruno Munari [and Ricas] / P.S. Dirty old man, do tell us the final submission date for these drawings. Go on.[127]

123. Monthly founded in 1921 and published in Trento by the Studio Editoriale Dolomiti. Its name was in continual flux up until 1926, when *Gazzetta del turismo* was substituted by the more Roman name *Vie latine*. How Munari came into contact with its editorial offices is unknown, but one could suppose it was through Depero (also from the Trentino region) or through the plant where the magazine was printed, the Officine Perego in Milan. Cf. Di Corato 2008: 214.

124. *Vie latine: Gazzetta del turismo* XI; 3 (March 1931) and 1 (January 1931), respectively. 23.5×30 cm. The cover image not only borrowed compositional elements from his two plates for the *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce*, but also took chromatic elements (hinged upon brown and green-blue tones) from his contemporary poster for *Sultanina*. The plate, titled 'Una visione futurista della Scala mentre la radio diffonde nel mondo l'eco degli spettacoli' (A Futurist view of the Scala as the radio spreads the sound of its performances throughout the world) shows an axonometric view of the Scala inserted into a planisphere emitting rays representing radio transmission (14.8×19.8 cm; duotone).

125. Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 145.

126. Tanchis writes of 'a propensity towards Surrealism (…) checked by a metaphysical estrangement, or by a cool constructivist approach' (id.: 1987: 13). Cf. Menna 1966: '(…) quite close to Prampolini's immanent declinations of aeropictorial poetics (…) Munari did not aim to create a collective stupor (…) as much as he instead aimed to create fabulous little worlds for what I would call a more everyday, domestic use' (orig. in *La botte e il violino* no.3, 1966, reprinted in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 73).

127. Letter Munari to d'Albisola, 6 April 1933, in Presotto 1981: 149.

Thus began the collaboration between the Ligurian ceramicist and Munari to create
| 21 | *L'anguria lirica,* a book-object made up of 21 litho-printed tin plates hinged into a tubular spine, published in 1934 by Edizioni futuriste di Poesia.[128] It is a long poem that describes the 'five typical stages of passion's trajectory (...) appearance of the woman and advent of passion; the insistent and persistent image of the woman; the fever of possession; alternations of hope and disappointment; and the joy of a dream come true,' for which d'Albisola had been proclamed Record Poet at the Second Circuito di Poesia (Poetry circuit) in Turin the previous year.[129]

It was a complex editorial project, an ambitious poetic work, and was Albisola's second tin-litho edition. It included contributions by Diulgheroff (the author's portrait), Vittorio Orazi (afterword), and the omnipresent Marinetti. It was produced and copublished by the industrialist Vincenzo Nosenzo (owner of a food-packaging factory in Savona), another supporter of the unique publishing initiative that had aroused the Futurists' enthusiasm two years before.[130] The tin books were, in fact, the culmination of the progressive dissolution of writing's linearity launched by Marinetti in 1912–13. Following the Futurists' various publishing experiences, his idea now came to the fore to challenge the book's traditional form and materials.[131] Materially, d'Albisola and Nosenzo's publishing project was connected to Depero's experiments with the book-object *Depero futurista/Dinamo Azari* (1927), and, more directly, to the experiments with metallic materials in advertising carried out by the Futurists of Turin and Liguria.[132]

128. Tullio d'Albisola. *L'Anguria lirica (lungo poema passionale)* [The Lyrical Watermelon (a Long, Passionate Poem)]. Rome: Edizioni futuriste di Poesia/Savona: Lito-latta, [August 1934]. Printed by Lito-latta, Savona. Edition of 101, of which 51 were NFS. 17×19.5 cm; pp. 42 (21 litho-printed tin sheets); tubular hinged binding; in a litho-printed metallic slipcase; 700 gr. Cover and 11 color lithographs by Bruno Munari, 1 black illustration (portrait of Tullio d'Albisola) and the Lito-latta logo by Diulgheroff. Preface by Marinetti, and an appendix by Vittorio Orazi. The book was first exhibited in Rovigo in July 1936 at the Seconda Mostra d'Arte Sindacale Polesana (Maffei 2002: 17; Cammarota 2006: 115; Lista 1984: 121; De Grassi 1986: 83–8; Iannaccone 2004: 4–6; Verdone 1988: 354; Mainieri 2009: 3).

129. Vittorio Orazi, from the 'Clarification' at the end of the book; cit. in Verdone 1988: 379. Poet, writer, critic, and playwright, Vittorio Orazi was the pseudonym of Alessandro Prampolini (1891–1976), brother of the more widely known painter Enrico. The 'Circuiti di poesia' (poetry circuits) were competitions held to elect Italy's Record Poet (the first year's final competition was held at the Galleria Pesaro on 31 October 1931) organized annually in various cities throughout Italy by local Futurist groups. As described by Marinetti: 'a cyclonic racket of aeropictorial, Futurist, critical, glasses-wearing, relaxing students and shouting paroliberi climbing atop others' shoulders' (from his preface to the *Anguria lirica*).

130. The first volume of this sort had been Marinetti's *Parole in libertà futuriste olfattive tattili-termiche* (Olfactive, Thermo-Tactile Futurist Words-in-Freedom), a collection of texts published in November 1932. It is easy to imagine the sensation this book created upon its arrival, as it was a book made entirely of metal, consisting of 15 litho-printed tin sheets hinged into a tubular spine and inserted into a metal slipcase, weighing a total of 850 gr. (Lista 1984: 103; Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 40; Mainieri 2009: 3).

131. The development of a typographic theory that, however fragmentary, could be pushed forward by the Futurists 'as a corollary to the theoretical elaboration of the words-in-freedom' began with the *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature, 11 May 1912), followed by the *Supplemento al manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (Supplement to the Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature, 11 August 1912), in which, drawing on Mallarmé, the idea of the poetic text as musical score was formulated, and ultimately led to the 'Typographic Revolution' Marinetti lucidly announced in *L'immaginazione senza fili e le parole in libertà* (The Wireless Imagination and Words-in-Freedom, 11 May 1913). See Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 11–2, 17; Cammarota 2006: 23–5; cf. also Ravaioli 1998: 12ff.

132. The use of metallic effects in the graphic arts (for its obvious mechanical connotations) gained solid footing as metallic papers and cardboards became available on the market (cf. the cover of the aforementioned specimen of the *Almanacco dell'Italia Veloce*), while earlier experiments had used metallic inks (Depero's 'bolted book' cover). Regarding the use of metalic materials in advertising, the most oft-cited precedents are: the '*cartelli lanciatori*' (enamel-coated metal notice boards printed on both sides) made in Turin by Diulgheroff for the Arturo Tucci advertising agency, as well as by Farfa (1928–29); and the aluminum cover of the menu at the Taverna Santopalato, also by Diulgheroff (1930). Additionally, in Liguria the Futurist group of Savona (Farfa and Giovanni Acquaviva) made a triumphal arch of tin on

The path paved by the new book-object was anything but linear. Already the choice of hiring Munari—who evidently was not sufficiently well known, despite the undeniable success of the *Cantastorie* book—gave rise to some controversy in Turin.[133] In the summer of 1934, in addition to the delay due to production difficulties, the volume's debut was further delayed by a distribution ban imposed by police because of two female nudes they considered scandalous; it was only thanks to Marinetti's political connections that the ban was lifted a month later.[134] The tin-litho edition of *L'Anguria lirica* was preceded by a first edition of the poem on paper, which was substantially identical in content, but illustrated by Nino Strada and published in July 1934 in Milan by Mario Chiattone's Officine d'Arti Grafiche.[135] The pamphlet's composition closely recalls the layout of the first collection, Marinetti's *Parole in libertà futuriste tattili termiche olfattive*, edited and illustrated by d'Albisola; it was spiral bound, and the text was freely distributed across the page, using a combination of different faces. Compared to the first collection, in which an approach inspired by the constructivist work of Diulgheroff prevailed,[136] with composition influences ranging from abstraction to Futurist *paroliberismo*, Munari made the most of his experience as an advertising designer, perfecting d'Albisola previous graphic look.[137] *L'Anguria lirica* was a typographically more sober work, beginning with its very format, which Munari made slightly smaller and brought into vertical proportions, facilitating the volume's easy handling. The page has narrow margins, with a justified block of text alligned with the exterior border; the verses—set entirely in a boldface *Semplicità*[138]—take up (with a few variations) two narrow columns, linked by syntactic alignments or according to their meanings, with a red thread framing prominent sections and headers. Additionally, Munari's layout (echoing the schematic used in the *Cantastorie*) is based on the double-page spread, with the facing illustration inserted into a smaller rectangle printed atop a metallic background, positioned to aid compositional balance with regard to the text as well.

the occasion of Mussolini's visit; in 1931 Farfa (who likely put d'Albisola in touch with the Nosenzo plant) published the parolibero poem 'Litolatta,' which was lithographically printed on a tin plate; and, following the success of d'Albisola's books, other objects were made in tin: passes, business cards, and calendars (Cammarota 2006: 22–5; Lista 1984: 103; Lista 2009a: 7–8; Crispolti 1980: 394–5; Salaris 1995: 31–2).

133. Just as Munari was accepting d'Albisola's offer, Fillìa wrote to ask: 'Why did not you invite Oriani, Pozzo, and Mino Rosso, who are much more important, as painters and sculptors, than Munari?' (letter Fillìa to d'Albisola, 2.4.1933, in Presotto 1981: 69, cit. in Iannaccone 2004: 4).

134. In asking d'Albisola for news, Fillìa wrote: '(…) In the bulletin that came out today we talk about your ceramics and your tin book (Marinetti says it's a myth, that it doesn't exist) (…)' (letter Fillìa to d'Albisola, 11.8.1934, in Presotto 1981, cit. in Iannaccone 2004: 7n).

135. Tullio d'Albisola. *L'Anguria lirica*. Milan: Officine d'Arti Grafiche Chiattone, [July 1934]. In-8°. Edition of 500 numbered copies. With 12 illustrations by Nino Strada. Pamphlet spiral bound with wire. À propos of the object's date, see the letter from Nino Strada to d'Albisola, 7 July 1934, in which the former tells the latter he has finished his illustrations for l'*Anguria*, which will be printed that same week (in Presotto 1981: 130); also cf. Mainieri 2009: 3. Nino Strada (1904–1968), Milanese ceramicist. After studying art at the Accademia di Brera, he began his career as a draughtsman, painter, and model-maker in Albissola Marina, where he became a part of the Ligurian group of Futurist ceramicists, with whom he showed work at all of Milan's biennial and triennial art exhibitions. In the 1930s and then after WWI he collaborated with various Italian ceramics manufacturers, primarily in Liguria and Umbria.

136. In the early 1930s Diuglheroff designed the Casa Mazzotti in Albissola Marina, the new headquarters of Ceramiche Mazzotti, in pure rationalist style (1934).

137. In the first tin-litho, with a layout by d'Albisola, the text had been composed in a column whose size/width varied from one page to the next, in a sans-serif face (*Super*, Schriftguss, 1930: see Jaspert, Berry, Johnson 1970: 343–4); while the illustrations followed the poem on the recto side of the sheet, rather than mirroring it across the gutter in a two-page spread.

138. This was a face from the Nebiolo foundry, designed under the management of Alessandro Butti (1930–31); it is clearly inspired by *Futura* (the

The 'abstractions' inspired by the poem are of the same tenor as those made for Campari two years earlier, based on a minimal design combined with an accentuated perspectival layout, rendered here in a limited color range which privileges the contrast between the black type and the warm red and orange tones. The cover features a perfect integration of image and typography, wherein the linear profile of a knife overlaid atop a red disc succinctly depicts the watermelon the poem is named for. Some time before, in a letter to Tullio d'Albisola, Diulgheroff had written: 'I see the future reader of your book calmly seated on a chromed steel chair, completely concentrated, turning the pages of colored tin atop a smooth plane of shatterproof crystal that is axonometrically projected and mirrored in the rectangle of inlaid linoleum floor spread across the room's 50 rational cubic meters, in a light-filled ambience full of lyricism'[139]—an evocative image that, in addition to including all the major symbols of modernity as borrowed from architecture, can easily be read as a comment on the many illustrations Munari made during this period.

Despite the uncontested success of the two tin editions, thanks also to d'Albisola's considerable promotional efforts, no other 'mechanical books' were ever produced (though another had already been announced in September 1935)[140]—except for the tin-litho with verses by Farfa made much later, again by Munari, with some of his drawings from the 1930s.[141]

Comic illustration

A graphic work done in a very different context, Munari's participation in the goliardic publication of the local University Fascist Group, titled *Cip! Cip!*[142] (Chirp! Chirp!), is interesting from a biographical point of view, and helps one understand the type of scene he frequented in Milan. It was a 'unique issue'—the traditional satirical newspaper published occasionally by students to raise money or show their irreverence toward authority—'to benefit the birds of the GUF (Gruppi Universitari Fascisti),' the student pilots of the aeronautics section. The aviation-related theme perhaps explains the presence of Munari as well as other Futurists like Franco Grignani and Carlo Manzoni. The humorous illustrations and short texts reflect the student-run context in which the publication was created: Munari did a series of drawings, hovering between his caricatures and his early mechanical puppets, which were evidently appreciated for their ironic take on the Futurist mechanical mythology; and he also designed one of the two savvy covers.

resemblance is most evident in the uppercase letters), but the lowercase letters take noteworthy liberties and have a real originality.

139. Letter Diulgheroff to d'Albisola, 2 January 1933, in Presotto 1981: 18–9.

140. For the launch of *Parole in libertà futuriste olfattive tattili termiche* a few pages printed separately were used as posters and hung up at various expositions; additionally, in Savona d'Albisola set up a store dedicated exclusively to selling the book. A third edition was announced by d'Albisola in an article published in *Stile futurista* (no.11–12, September 1935: 40) (De Grassi 1986: 83, 86–7).

141. On the occasion of the major Futurist retrospective at Palazzo Grassi, Venice, in 1986. The volume was titled *Farfa, il miliardario della fantasia* (Savona: Marco Sabatelli editore, 1986) and contained three verses by Farfa and six drawings by Munari; Marinetti's preface was taken from the original edition (1933) of the artist's verses, as was the 'distribution warehouse' (Riolfo Marengo 1987: 51–2).

142. *Cip! Cip! Gorgheggio unico dei goliardi milanesi* [Chirp! Chirp! The Unique Warble of the Milanese Goliards]. Milan: informally published, February 1931. Printed by S.A. Stampa Periodica Milanese, Milan. 25×35,2 cm; pp. 54. Below the frontispiece a note reads: 'a favore degli uccelli [piloti della Sezione Aeonautica del Guf] del Gruppo Universitario Fascista milanese' ('to benefit the birds [student pilots of the aeronautics section of the GUF] of the Milanese University Fascist Group'). Double cover in color designed by Munari and G. Duka; additional contributions by Carlo Manzoni and Franco Grignani (Bassi 2001b: 277–8; Di Corato 2008: 215–6).

The publication's original facing-page layout—logically attributed to Munari, as are the typographic illustrations of the double frontispiece—allows the work to be read in both directions, with a Dadaist parolibera image set in the middle of the pamphlet acting as a hinge between the two sections. The text titled 'Tragedia futurista' (Futurist Tragedy, signed with a laconic Mah?/Huh?), is probably also his.

A few years later Munari was again involved in another such initiative for the same group of Milanese goliards (including Carlo Manzoni, Bassano Erba, and Angelo Uglietti) titled *Latteria di Tripoli* (Tripoli Dairy) and released in early 1934. The pamphlet—published in a double edition of deluxe and common versions 'for the benefit of needy students'—beginning with its very title, is a parody of the homonymous lottery Lotteria di Tripoli (Tripoli Lottery) launched a year earlier by the Italian government.[143] The color cover, signed Munari/r+m, depicts a Disneyesque cow[144] with a student underneath wearing a tricked-out goliardic cocked cap and milking banknotes from its udder; furthermore, the composition jokingly riffs on a famous poster by Fabrizio Seneca.[145] The inside includes humorous short texts, cartoons, and photomontages by Munari, who was one of the magazine's editors (all depicted in a color illustration by Balilla Magistri), and alongside Ricas designed the layout. Compared to the caricaturesque tone of the cover illustration, Munari's develops a surreal tone in the vignettes—similar to the ones he published in the *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1933*— thereby proving that his hand had taken on a degree of adaptability to different contexts which, combined with his keen sense of humor, led him to develop an illustrational style suited to the humorous newspapers that were one of the decade's most important editorial phenomena.[146]

Comics, humour and literary newspapers

Munari's first illustrations for *Lidel* and the *Corriere dei Piccoli*, as well as his ads for Campari, marked his debut in comics—datable between 1927 and '29—and his ad shorts for the IPC can be traced back to the same period. Indeed, humour illustrations constituted an important part of Munari's illustration work during the 1930s, as they meshed well with his personal sense of irony and responded to the public's growing taste for the new comic strip and humourous newspaper genres. Despite the appearance of American comics in the *Corrierino*, aimed at an adult readership, In Italy comics were still considered a minor genre, aimed primarily at a younger or semi-literate readership.[147] Furthermore, conditioned by educational aims, the new medium was inevitably affected by the general climate under Fascist rule, yielding to become a vehicle of nationalist propaganda for both the regime and the Catholic

143. Paired with the Tripoli Gran Prix auto competition, the Lotteria di Tripoli (1933–41) was the first annual lottery run by the Italian government.

144. See, for example, the short film *Steamboat Willy* (1928).

145. Fabrizio Seneca, 'Lotteria di Tripoli' (1934), 34×48 cm. Salce Collection, Museo L. Bailo, Treviso.

146. *Latteria di Tripoli. Numero unico dei goliardi milanesi a favore degli studenti bisognosi*. Milan: unofficially published, [February/March] 1934. Printed by S.A. Stampa Periodica Milanese, Milan. 22.5×30 cm; paperback; pp. 64. With numerous caricatures; includes an advertisement for the r+m studio. An illustration by Balilla Magistri shows the editors Bassano Erba, Berto Andreoli, Carlo Manzoni, Angelo Uglietti, Pino Donizetti, and Bruno Munari—some of whom also authored work for the previous special issue, *Cip!…Cip!…* (Cammarota 2006: 226–7).

147. This prejudice did not, however, prevent the *Corriere dei Piccoli* from reaching a weekly circulation of 80 thousand from its first issue (1908) on, and reaching a vast readership that extended into the postwar period after WWII (Bona 1998).

Church.[148] It was primarily during the 1930s, in the wake of the economic crisis, that American adventure comics became a hit in Italy (thanks to all King Features Syndicate's main characters, from Tarzan to Mandrake, as well as Disney's, led by Topolino (Mickey Mouse), as evidenced by the appearance of countless new publications.[149] Their increasing success (which the regime tolerated until 1938) inspired original Italian productions, whose artists came primarily from the fields of illustration and, above all, satirical papers.

The juxtaposition of the two genres is not surprising, insofar as humour was, at the time, an emerging phenomenon of the cultural industry, capable of horizontally penetrating various broad, rather heterogeneous readerships.[150] Although in the previous decade the establishment of the regime severely limited freedom of the press, in the early 1930s comic papers—albeit with a different tone—made a comeback. Following on the tails of *Marc'Aurelio*'s (1931) phenomenal success,[151] a series of papers targeting an adult, bourgeois readership appeared; these periodicals marked the arrival of 'a new, intelligent formula for satire, made up of allusions, suggestions, and indirect swipes more than openly expressed things. It was the only kind of satire that could be done'.[152] It was a surreal humour, based on *nonsense* and word play, following in the footsteps of the absurdist humour Ettore Petrolini innovated in the theatre and Achille Campanile worked with in prose. Deploying a kind of humour that, ultimately, responded to the 'widespread presence, throughout Italy, of a repressed desire for criticism of Fascist-era rhetorics', those magazines became a custom of their own, and their characters and expressions were adopted for everyday use.[153] This explains why comics—which were so popular with a young readership, whose moods they interpreted, to a certain degree—also circulated and were appreciated in intellectual circles, and in Milan's literary and publishing world in particular: there's no other explanation for the collaborations publishers like Bompiani and Mondadori established not only with Munari, but also many other satirical artists, cartoonists, and authors.

148. Both *Il Balilla* (published by the Fascist daily *Il Popolo d'Italia*) and *Il Giornalino* (published by the Catholic Edizioni San Paolo) debuted in 1923–24.

149. The main publications: *Jumbo* (1932–38), to which the Cossio brothers also contributed; *L'Audace* (1934–41); *L'Avventuroso* (1934–43); *L'intrepido* (1935–43); *Topolino* (launched in 1932 by Nerbini, taken over by Mondadori in '35 under a Disney licence); *Il Vittorioso* (1937). Such widespread circulation ultimately led to the adoption of speech balloons instead of the rhyming captions originally used by the *Corriere dei piccoli* in the teens (Pallottino 1998: 318–20).

150. Just as it is not surprising that the main forces on the market were the two largest periodical publishers, Rizzoli and Mondadori.

151. *Marc'Aurelio* (1931–1943) was a comic paper founded in Rome in 1931 by Oberdan Cotone and Vito de Bellis. It gathered all the best satire writers from other papers of the early decades of the twentieth century (*Il Becco giallo*, *Il Travaso delle idee*), which had been muzzled by the laws and prohibitions imposed by the regime. Directed by the young Giovanni Mosca and Vittorio Metz, it featured some of the most famous contributors: Gabriele Galantara, Attalo (pseudonym of Gioacchino Colizzi), Mameli Barbara, Cesare Zavattini, as well as Metz and Mosca. It was a biweekly, published Thursday and Saturday. Characterised by a goliardic, slightly rude spirit (which was in turn characteristic of the Roman scene), it was an immediate success and between 1935 and 1940 reached weekly runs of over 350 thousand copies. See Gianeri (Gec) 1967: 148; Gianeri (Gec), Rauch 1976: 33–4; Mangini, Pallottino 1994: 163; Pallottino 1998: 324; Carpi 2002: 60.

152. Gianeri (Gec), Rauch 1976: 33; cf. Murialdi 1986: 103–4, 154.

153. Chiavarini 1998: 139. See also the observations of Oreste Del Buono and Italo Calvino: 'It does not seem insignificant that comics and humour papers were so popular at the time (...)' (Del Buono 1971: xvii); and '(...) certainly Bertoldo gave youth a 'somewhere else' where they could take refuge from the totalitarian language (...)' (Calvino, 'L'irresistibile satira di un poeta stralunato' in *La Repubblica*, 6 March 1984: 19, cit. in Mangini, Pallottino 1994: 164).

154. Cesare Pavese, article published in *L'Unità*, 3 August 1947, cit. in Braida 2003: 46. Cf. Pedullà 1997: 358, 360–1.

The publishing industry's dynamism affected both the periodical and book sectors: it was the decade of translations, as Cesare Pavese later said, and publishers both large and small aimed to popularize international literature—a goal facilitated by reduced royalties for foreign authors.[154] While Rizzoli focussed on mass-market illustrated magazines, especially women's magazines, the other key new publisher, Mondadori, made an upward leap from children's books and textbooks to literature, thanks to their aggressive author-recruitment campaign (which allowed them to offer more than the competition), their maniacal attention to books' graphic look, and their remarkable promotional efforts. Part of that strategy included the 1925 launch of the *Almanacco letterario*, an annual gift book of curiosities and unpublished texts.[155] In 1930 the *Almanacco letterario* was acquired and further developed by Valentino Bompiani—Mondadori's former secretary general, who in 1929 left to found his own publishing house, focussing on contemporary fiction, especially foreign titles[156]—who made it a key publication within his larger advertising strategy, aimed at a broad public rather than a more specialised readership.[157] Munari had already met Bompiani at the Libreria Unitas bookshop,[158] but his first contact with the editorial offices on Via Durini must have taken place in 1931, perhaps through Marinetti, who alongside Masnata was a contributor to the 1932 edition, in which Munari debuted with a series of caricatures similar to those of his early career.[159]

The compilation-oriented structure of the publication, centered on a review of the year's literature in Italy and abroad, initially conformed to the literary customs of the time, and therefore appeared in a medium-sized format with vignettes and drawings but without any photographs. Thanks to the new editorial formula launched in '33 (the first edition edited not only by Bompiani, but also Cesare Zavattini), the *Almanacco* soon became a more unusual publication, and its editors—attentive as they were to young talents, and open to innovation—allowed themselves (at least up until 1937) to indulge in unusual approaches to both the layout and images.

> I met him in 1930 (…) Bompiani was the new publisher, and his Almanacco featured work by new draughtsmen, painters, caricaturists, illustrators, graphic designers (…) who, alongside literary news, ironic texts, and gossip (…) published their drawings; the young architects showed architectural sketches and drawings; basically, this Almanacco introduced readers to a developing cultural spectrum that went beyond just Italian culture.[160]

155. Founded by Mondadori in 1925 and directed by Umberto Fracchia (literary director of the publisher's book division, and later founder of the magazine *L'Italia Letteraria*), the annual publication was edited by Valentino Bompiani and Enrico Piceni until 1928. The magazine went with him, as a gift from Mondadori, when Bompiani briefly went to work at the publisher Unitas, and from 1930 on it was run by Bompiani as part of his own publishing venture (Valli 1990: 18; Bompiani 1976: 6; Piazzoni 2007: 55–64).

156. Decleva in Rumi, Vercelloni, Cova 1994: 34–5, 40; cf. Accame 1989: 30–49.

157. Piazzoni 2007: 55. The publication was initially (from 1930 to '33) accompanied by an *Almanacco Aeronautico*, edited by Orio Vergani and Giuseppe Mormino (ibid). 'Bompiani was not a periodical publisher, and he knew it. (…) The *Almanacco Letterario* was not a periodical, but rather an annual book edition. It was only available in bookshops. It aimed to be a 'summary' of the year in culture. It created a chance for Italian writers, even from other publishers, to meet. It began with Zavattini in the 1930s (…)' (Silvana Ottieri, 'Valentino Bompiani: impaginare la vita' at http://rcslibri.corriere.it/bompiani/pantaeditoria/3.htm, last accessed 5 November 2010)

158. Opened by Bompiani during his brief period directing the small publisher (1928-29), it was frequented by Milanese writers, intellectuals, and artists (Piazzoni 2007: 43).

159. *Almanacco letterario 1932*. Milan: Bompiani, December 1931. Printed by Unione Tipografica, Milan. 15.5x20.5 cm, paperback, pp. 368 (11). Cover by Bruno Angoletta. It included 5 line drawings by Munari to accompany the 'Dialogo illustrato' text by Falconi and Biancoli (ivi: 189).

160. Munari in Accame 1989: 66.

In 1932 Munari designed the cover of a novel that became a bestseller for the
|24| small publisher, *Un'avventura a Budapest* by the Hungarian author Ferenc Körmendi, which was soon followed by another title, also designed by Munari.[161] For both covers the artist adopted an intentionally paired-down, against-the-trend approach, with the title rendered in informal, immediate writing, without relying on the support of any imagery whatsoever.[162] Published in the Letteraria Stranieri (Foreign Literature) series, the two books marked the beginning of a long collaboration with Bompiani designing covers; his work with them intensified in the 1940s, and continued even stronger in the postwar period. The success of Körmendi's books helps explain Munari's conspicuous role in the *Almanacco letterario 1933*, which explicitly credited him in the colophon.[163] In addition to a series
|67| of photomontages ('Atmosfera 1933') that attest to the editors' unusual attention to photographic imagery, Munari contributed
|25| illustrations for two texts by Marinetti ('Il teatro totale delle masse' and 'Il Futurismo al 1933') and numerous drawings to accompany literary reviews, divertissements, and miscellaneous columns.[164] On the whole, these were comic- and caricature-type illustrations, which sometimes veered toward the grotesque; the quality of his contributions is not always the highest, and the best examples are those in which his comic verve unites with a sure-handed mark making, in forms reminiscent of his aeropictorial works.[165]

Munari's collaboration with the *Almanacco letterario*—with the exception of his longer yet more intermittent collaboration with the monthly *L'Ala d'Italia*—constituted his most long-term professional experience of the 1930s. His name appears in each edition up to 1939 amongst those of Bompiani and Zavattini's closest collaborators; and in his role as graphic designer he was able to work not only with illustration and photography, but layout as well. Observing each successive edition of the annual, a clear transition from Munari's comics-inspired style to the use of various other techniques can be seen, from photomontage to collage to photograms, all the while maintaining his distinctive ironic tone. Even though small, light-weight line drawings (a few featuring collage) were still a part of the *Almanacco letterario 1935*,[166] by the 1934 edition photographic

161. Ferenc Körmendi, *Un'avventura a Budapest* (orig. title: *A Budapesti kaland*). Milan: Bompiani, 1932. In-8°, pp.414. Published in Italian the same year that it won the international competition run by the Associated English and American Publishers, this novel was issued in 13 editions over just a few years. Ferenc Körmendi, *Via Bodenbach*. Milan: Bompiani, 1933 (orig. title: *Pa. 7, 15 Via Bodenbach*). In-8°, pp.275. Both novels were published in the Letteraria series, which was the most long-lived. The two covers are reproduced in *Almanacco letterario 1935* (for an example of Munari's handwriting, see his graphic work in *Almanacco letterario 1936*: 99). Cf. Longoni in Braida 2003: 78.

162. A completely different approach applies to the cover design of the next novel, *La generazione felice* (Bompiani, 1935) which introduces a constructivist approach in his work.

163. Valentino Bompiani, Cesare Zavattini (ed.), *Almanacco letterario 1933*. Milan: Bompiani, December 1932. 15.5x20.5 cm, paperback, pp.(48) 384. Colour cover by Bruno Angoletta; Carlo Manzoni and Erberto Carboni were among the illustrators.

164. 'Progetto di locomotiva per la nuova stazione di Milan' (17), 'L'annata letteraria in Italia' (44–55), 'marzo nudista (...), maggio bellico' (141), 'Le grandi manovre navali della letteratura italiana' (143–7), 'giugno novellistico' (187), 'Viaggio a sorpresa' (193–4), 'Le donne letterate' (239), 'settembre avanti lettera' (301), 'Il teatro totale delle masse' (Marinetti) (302–7), 'Il Futurismo al 1933' (Marinetti) (312–5), 'Panzini and Pegaso' (316), 'ottobre statistico' (319), 'liriche di Luciano Folgore' (355), 'Indiscrezioni statistiche,' 'Milano proteste,' 'Dove va il romanzo?'.

165. For example, a few representations of the months (May, September), an illustration opening the text on Futurist theatre, and drawings interspersed throughout the annual literary review. Manzoni's work in the same volume shows similarities to Munari's graphic style, which was also evident in the photomontages and could be explained as a reciprocal influence or an exchange between the two young artists (as happened between Ricas and Munari in painting).

166. Valentino Bompiani, Cesare Zavattini (ed.), *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1935*. Milan: Bompiani,

|68| works—photomontage and photograms in particular—took the upper hand.[167] The relative weight of traditional illustration (ink drawings, albeit still in the style of comics), declined, making way for formal experiments in collage and montage, which led Munari—much like Manzoni and Carboni—to try his hand first at incongruous collage (following the example set by Max Ernst and Jacques Maret), and later at bona fide photomontage, often with graphic or pictorial elements.

This trajectory can also be seen in his contributions to *L'Ala d'Italia*, an aviation monthly published in Milan, whose editorial team, led by Federigo Valli, was surprisingly open to the innovations of the Milanese avant garde—while, conversely, aviation's 'mechanical' connotations made it an important meeting point between Futurism and Fascism.[168] In 1932 the magazine changed its format and layout; Munari's hand is evident on the covers as well as the layout of several articles that, in both their photographic cropping and text formatting, introduce a constructivist-type approach. Throughout his long collaboration with the magazine, which continued up until '39, Munari (sometimes alongside Ricas) produced noteworthy humorous and propagandistic photomontages, the first of which appeared in the February 1933 issue; and (as a unique case) the same issue featured line drawings analogous to the comics he had illustrated for Bompiani.[169]

The change in style appears fully com-
|71| pleted in the *Almanacco letterario 1936*, in which Munari published a series of collage images that supplanted comic drawings.[170]

Toward mid-decade, basically, Munari had definitively embraced collage, and showed a predilection for the manipulation of fin de siècle magazines and catalogues to disorienting and ironic ends: collage became his most relevant technique during this period, and he used it primarily to create illustrations for the most varied editorial contexts (but then abandoned it completely after WWII). In the following edition, titled *Almanacco antiletterario 1937*—which, as stated in the preface, was provocatively conceived of as a controversial and tongue-in-cheek book—photography in all its manifestations (photomontages, photocollage, photo sequences) did not act exclusively as a visual support for the text, but rather assumed its own role as an autonomous, parallel narration.[171]

1934. Printed by Tip. Pizzi & Pizio, Milan. 21×28 cm, paperback, pp.128 (civ). Colour cover by Erberto Carboni. Munari is incorrectly listed as 'C[arlo] Munari' amongst the contributors, together with Giorgio Tabet and Mario Vellani Marchi. His drawings (small coats of arms) accompany a collection of authors' declarations (12–3), while the divertissement 'Multa rinascentur…' recycles drawings already published in the 1933 edition (20). A curiosity: on p.38 an engraving by Eric Gill is reproduced, and was almost certainly taken from an article published in *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* (no.25, September 1931: 357–64).

167. V. Bompiani, C. Zavattini (ed.), *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1934*. Milan: Bompiani, 1933. 21×28 cm, paperback, pp.112 (lxviii). 'This catalogue was compiled by Valentino Bompiani and Cesare Zavattini with the collaboration of the painter Munari and the photographer Egone'. Cover by Erberto Carboni. Munari did various photomontages, photograms, and photographs for this edition, in addition to designing its layout.

168. The official publication of the Regio Aeronautico Club Italiano, founded in 1919 as *Gazzetta dell'aviazione*, but published regularly only beginning in 1922. Directed by Attilio Longoni, and later Federigo Valli. In 1935 *L'Ala d'Italia* was named 'the national periodical of Fascist aviation' and the publisher moved to Rome, into the newly built Ministero dell'aeronautica; the editorial offices remained in Milan. Regarding the connection between Fascism and Futurism, see Schnapp 2008: 146.

169. For the article by Pietro Maria Bardi, 'Attenzione, attenzione!', in *L'Ala d'Italia* XII; 2 (February 1933): 33–6. One of the three drawings is signed Munari+D (Mario Duse, of the Milanese Futurist group; Di Corato 2008: 224).

170. V. Bompiani et al. (ed.), *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1936*. Milan: Bompiani, 1935. 21×28.5 cm, paperback, pp., (lvii) 112 (2). Munari, in addition to doing the layout, created a series of collage illustrations ('Film documentario dell'anno 1935,' pp.19–28; 'Peccati letterari,' pp.42–43), two photomontages and a little graphic scherzo (p.99). Note also the photocollages by Carboni and the group of architects known as BBPR.

171. Emilio Radius, Dino Buzzati, Bruno Munari,

Setting aside political satire, which was effectively impossible, *Marc'Aurelio* marked the transition to a more imaginative humour as an end in itself: throughout the 1920s, the earlier satirical papers had experienced changes in direction and adaptations of their editorial line that ended up conforming to the climate imposed by the regime.[172] In addition to vignettes and short pieces making fun of Fascist Italy's enemy du jour, these papers took aim at the same bourgeois public of which their readerships consisted: 'pre-fab motifs: women in crisis, sterile couples, bon vivants and fat bourgeois'.[173] Rizzoli's *Bertoldo* and Mondadori's *Settebello* were the chief papers to fully perfect the formula begun by *Marc'Aurelio*, accentuating its surreal aspects: on a graphic level, that type of humour translated into a space without perspective or gravity, accentuated by a linear mark in which objects and characters are immersed.[174] Faced with the commercial success of *Marc'Aurelio*, in 1936 Rizzoli (which had tried to acquire the Rome-based publication to no avail) created its own humour weekly, *Bertoldo*, planned alongside Zavattini—who, however, due to a last-minute clash with the publisher, went to Rizzoli's competitor, Mondadori.[175] Rizzoli then entrusted Giovanni Mosca and Vittorio Metz with its management, and hired an editorial team of very young humorists adept at the new style, including Giovannino Guareschi, Carlo Manzoni, Walter Molino, Giaci Mondaini, and Saul Steinberg (who was an architecture student in Milan at the time).[176] Although he certainly knew and frequented several of the Rizzoli paper's authors and artists, Munari was not included in the circle of its contributors—who nevertheless almost all crossed paths again as the editorial team of *Settebello*, the competing humour weekly Mondadori launched in 1938, to which Munari was a regular contributor up until 1939.[177]

Il Settebello was associated with the editorial team of *Marc'Aurelio*, which Mondadori acquired and entrusted to Zavattini and Campanile to turn it into an illustrated magazine. For its relaunch, Zavattini focused on contributions from well known artists and writers (Trilussa, Campanile, Guasta, Steinberg, and Zavattini himself, all of whom formed the new editorial

Valentino Bompiani (ed.), *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani 1937*. Milan: Bompiani, 1936. 21×28.5 cm, paperback, pp. 236. Munari designed the layout, the cover, and a series of photomontages and collages. There are also two small line illustrations for the piece by Marinetti, but they are minimal (112–3).

172. Aside from *Marc'Aurelio*, the most widespread comic papers were *Il Travaso delle idee*, *420*, *Guerin Meschino*, and *Pasquino* (Gianeri (Gec), Rauch 1976: 32–4).

173. Gianeri (Gec) cit. in Aloi, Moretti 2006.

174. Mangini, Pallottino 1994: 41–2.

175. *Bertoldo* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1936–43). Biweekly (Tuesdays and Fridays), but when Rizzoli ended up acquiring *Marc'Aurelio* in 1940, *Bertoldo* turned into a weekly. The masthead was designed by Mario Bazzi, the layout (which remained virtually unchanged over the years) was by Guareschi, who was also managing editor until its closure. Aside from a few colour editions, the graphics were entirely black and white, in order to distinguish itself from illustrated women's magazines, which were identified more by the colour of the ink than by their content (Manzoni 1964: 20). See Manzoni 1964: 22–32; Gianeri (Gec) 1967: 151–152; Gianeri (Gec), Rauch 1976: 33–4; Mangini, Pallottino 1994: 37–47, 183; Carpi 2002: 62–4.

176. Zavattini: 'Rizzoli gave me some papers to manage (…) I brought out some young cartoonists and humour writers, Guareschi, Manzoni, Brancacci, because we'd decided to publish that kind of weekly', from an interview in *Parliamo tanto di me* (Milan: Bompiani, 1977): x, cit. in Mangini, Pallottino 1994: 39.

177. Founded in Rome in 1933 by Egeo Carcavallo and Bepi Fabiano, modelled on the French *Ric et Rac* (a comic-strip weekly published by Fayard, 1929), later compiled by the editors of *Marc'Aurelio*, in 1938 *Il Settebello* (1938–1943) was acquired by Mondadori, who moved its editorial offices to Milan and hired Zavattini and Campanile as directors. It has been called 'the most peripatetic paper in all Italian journalism, it passed through so many hands' (Gianeri (Gec) 1967: 151). In 1939 the paper changed its title to *Ecco*, and later switched back to *Il settebello: nipote settimanale del Bertoldo* and the newspaper format; in 1941 it was acquired by Rizzoli, with Giovanni Mosca as director. See Gianeri (Gec), Rauch 1976: 34; Cf. Mangini, Pallottino 1994: 38–39; Pallottino 1998: 324–5; Carpi 2002: 59–90.

board), on improving the editorial formula (with more vignettes and fewer texts), and on a new graphic look.[178] The contributors included those who worked with Rizzoli's *Bertoldo*, like Steinberg, Bazzi, Manzi, Molino, Mondaini, and new names, including Boccasile, Gec, Tabet. Munari, according to Zavattini's 'name policy', ran his own space in the paper: indeed, in his rather unique contributions he presented, following the example of the American cartoonist Rube Goldberg, a series of implausible contraptions that were as complicated as they were useless.[179] Whether it was a deliberate choice or not, Munari avoided the more hackneyed types of humour with his
|28| machines—for example, types of satire exploiting women and the more advanced cultural currents—and instead embodied the paper's nonconformist spirit, which was more popular with his younger generation. This ironic and detached attitude can also be seen in his use of surrealist collage in other editorial contexts (that were not specifically humour-based), where the technique allowed him to carve out his own original space.[180] In light of such developments, it is worthwhile to reflect on two interesting examples from the early 1930s: Tullio d'Albisola's letterhead, which Munari designed around 1932 or '33, featuring a drawing that foreshadowed such
|25| inventions; and an illustration that appeared in the *Almanacco letterario 1933* depicting an imaginary mechanism similar to the 'comic machines' that made him a success in the pages of *Settebello*.[181] Later on, in one of Zavattini's ventures, those images were collected into a book published by Einaudi, titled *Le macchine di Munari* (Munari's Machines, 1942).[182]

During the first phase of its relaunch, with editorial offices still centered in Rome, *Settebello* kept its large-scale format, albeit with variations to the original typographic layout; the editorial offices moved to Milan between October and November 1938, whereupon the weekly adopted a smaller format and different graphic look, with a colour cover and higher page count.[183] Although there is no concrete proof, Munari may have been directly involved with

178. Large format (40×56 cm) and 6 pages (later 8); news announced in issue no. 232, 16 April 1938 (Carpi 2002: 71).

179. Already well known in Italy: cf. Munari 1966 (*Arte come mestiere*): 15. Rube Goldberg (1883–1970), American cartoonist and draughtsman. He rose to fame with 'Foolish Questions', vignettes published in the *New York Evening Mail* in the teens, characterised by a surreal sense of humour. Beginning in 1914 he created a series of satirical vignettes featuring improbable gadgets that performed chain reactions to complete banal tasks. His success led to such inventions being named after him. Winner of the 1948 Pulitzer Prize.

180. Cf. Mangini, Pallottino 1994: 167–8. Munari himself considered his comic output with a slightly condescending eye, as if it belonged to his juvenilia: '(...) those comic [machines] that I drew *during my student years*, with the sole aim of making my friends laugh' (Munari 1966: 15, italics mine)

181. D'Albisola's letterhead can be seen in the Mazzotti-Thayaht correspondence dated 3 March 1934 (Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Thayaht: Tha 1.2.07.63); the illustration titled 'Settembre avanti lettera' is in *Almanacco letterario 1933*, cit.: 301.

182. See Munari's correspondence with Zavattini [late 1941/early '42], which clearly leads one to believe that Zavattini was at the root of it: '(...) I'll gladly accept *your proposal* but I think it would be advisable to revisit those machines and do them better, and in colour. I could also manage the graphic design and binding. I'd like to make it 'my book' (...)'; 'Dear Cesarissimo, the book I'm doing with Einaudi is in good shape and I often think of *your altruism* and your now long-standing friendship. I hope it is a success. Einaudi will also publish the *sillabario* (you remember the primer?) (...)' (Archivio Zavattini, Biblioteca Panizzi, Reggio Emilia: Zavattini/Munari correspondence, M844/4 and M844/1 respectively; italics mine).

183. The new format was 19.5×28 cm, pp.24/32. On 16 May 1939 the weekly changed its name, *Ecco Settebello* (later just *Ecco*) and returned to the newspaper format. The change can most likely be attributed to the goal of shutting the publication down; the regime did not approve of it, but because it was on good terms with Mondadori it offered them a way out: the weekly could continue publication for a year or so (but in 1940 both Campanile and Zavattini left) reducing the page count to 16 and modifying its content to a more literary focus. During the war, other Mondadori mastheads had to cease publication: *Il Milione* (which replaced *Le Grandi Firme*) and *Novellissima*, while the illustrated weeklies *Tempo* and *Grazia* carried on (Carpi 2002: 78–9).

the magazine's redesign; actually it is quite probable, since within the next few months (if not as early as November) he became an artistic consultant for another of Mondadori's illustrated magazines, *Grazia*—which paved the way for him to become art director of *Tempo* only a few months later.

As an illustrator, during this same period Munari occasionally contributed to another periodical associated with Zavattini: *Le Grandi firme*, a literary magazine founded and directed by the writer Pitigrilli.[184] In 1937 Zavattini had Mondadori acquire the Turin-based biweekly, became managing director, and turned it into an illustrated weekly, characterised by Boccasile's voluptuous colour covers.[185] While keeping the editorial formula of the short-fiction magazine, the new management secured (thanks to the publisher's strong catalogue) better authors, and the colour-illustration format, weekly schedule, reduced price, and inclusion of photography all helped the magazine gain greater visibility, setting itself apart from other literary and specialist periodicals.[186] Because it was a sui generis literary magazine, Munari's contributions were limited to a few line illustrations, such as the ones that accompanied an article by Angelo Frattini, 'La Lamentevole istoria di Giovannino rovinato dalla passione per il cinema,' in March 1938.[187]

Despite its success, the magazine was forced to shut down in October 1938, replaced by the new *Il Milione*, which continued along the same lines, with the same editorial team and graphic look. Yet even that became a brief experiment: by 1939 Mondadori was already working on the new illustrated magazine *Tempo*, which joined the women's weekly *Grazia* (launched in November of the previous year): thus the last issue of *Il Milione* closed with the editors saying their farewells to the readership by effectively saying 'see you soon in the pages of the new periodical.'

Realist style

Through this exposure to the complex realities of a major editorial group like Mondadori, Munari caught a glimpse of new possibilities for working within the nascent cultural industry. Such experiences were quite distant from both the niche environment surrounding Futurism as well as the editorial offices of minor magazines and publications not affiliated with an industrial group nor conceived of as illustrated magazines, which were the real publishing innovation of the 1930s. These possibilities were fundamentally different with respect to the paths taken up until then, insofar as they allowed for a broader and more capillary influence on the social landscape and mass communications. Therefore it was, once again, in Milanese magazine publishing, where he had already experienced his

184. Literary magazine founded and directed by Dino Segre (a.k.a. Pitigrilli) in Turin in 1924, *Le Grandi firme* was a bimonthly of novellas and serial novels, which adopted the French custom of including a facsimile of the original signatures (firme) below each text. Focussing primarily on comic novels and erotica, it became the fashional magazine of Italy's 'decent middle class' (Pallottino 1998: 256, 325; Carpi 2002: 91–120. Cf. http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Grandi_Firme, last accessed July 2010). Segre (1893–1975) was a writer, journalist, and spy for Ovra, the Fascist secret police.

185. As with *Bertoldo*, Zavattini originally planned to begin the endeavour with Rizzoli, but Mondadori ultimately made it happen. The provocative 'signorine grandi firme' were the Italian equivalent of American pin-ups, and entered the male psyche of the times with equal ease.

186. '(...) Today the public is not content to just read. They want photography. The stadium and the cinema have taught them to see. Between the columns of typographic composition and fantasy, they want to see some photographs, or some window into life and into reality' (Zavattini, from the editorial in issue no.308, 22 April 1937; cit. in Carpi 2002: 91).

187. In *Le Grandi firme*, XV; 357 (31 March 1938).

first significant graphic evolution—from comics and humour illustrations to collage and photomontage—that at the dawn of the 1940s Munari discovered a new professional realm as art director for Mondadori's periodicals. But he did not take this step without first exploring other possibilities in the broader field of illustration.

At the time, the field of graphic design was still developing, and reflected a practice that included disciplines now considered autonomous, even if complementary: illustration, photography, advertising, typography, exhibition design, interior decoration—Munari's experience went fluidly from illustration to advertising and vice versa (not to mention his strictly artistic endeavors). Along this open, non-linear route he did not hesitate to try out well beaten paths, if he felt they were the appropriate choice within his given context. Thus, parallel to his work in comic drawings, Futurist illustration, and avant-garde photomontage, Munari also explored traditional visual languages that were curiously close to the expressive values of the Novecento movement. He used a realistic approach for the covers of the periodicals most in keeping with the regime and the more generalist press. Many of his tempera illustrations from the early 1940s (at the height of the war) while documenting occasionally embarrassing political themes, often resort to an iconography that is anything but original, expressed in a crude mannerism. Incongruous as it may seem with his Futurist militancy and artistic inclinations, such a choice is explicable when one considers the communicative ends of the various publishing products he worked on.[188]

This type of repertoire belonged primarily to illustrated periodicals directly tied to the regime, like *La Rivista illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, and secondarily to illustrated current-events monthlies like *La Lettura* and *Natura*, which nevertheless reflected the increasingly repressive climate. The control the Ministry of Popular Culture wielded over any and everything that was published was exercised through both preventive censure and seizure as well as the self-censure of publishers themselves. Not surprisingly, beginning in 1935 with the war in Ethiopia and the international sanctions, there was a return to order in all sectors of culture that was clearly reflected in the press's esthetic choices and content.[189] The *Almanacco letterario Bompiani* is a case in point: as early as the monographic edition of 1938, dedicated to the passing of Luigi Pirandello, and even more in the following editions, the periodical's typographic look was decidedly more sober and traditional, and both comic illustrations and photomontage were newly absent.[190]

Beginning in the late 1920s, the availability of a broader range of columns and the appearance of illustrated supplements favoured newspapers' spread to ever greater swaths of the population.[191]

188. One must remember the meticulousness with which Munari constructed his own personal mythology during the postwar period, emphasising certain aspects of his work and excluding others that could seem contradictory, less original, or even embarrassing when compared to the *persona* of the rational, creative designer. Cf. Schnapp 2008: 144.

189. Braida 2003: 48.

190. *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1938*. Milan: Bompiani, 1937. 27,8×20,8 cm, paperback, pp. (lxiv) 160. Printed by Società Grafica G[iuseppe] Modiano, Milan. Munari was amongst the many compilers, alongside Bompiani and Zavattini; in addition to the duotone photomontage on the cover, Munari also did the layout. *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1939*. Milan: Bompiani, 1938. 27,8×20,8 cm paperback, pp. (xcviii) 192. Printed by Società Grafica G[iuseppe] Modiano, Milan. The typographic design basically followed that of the previous edition, while the cover featured a design based on a wooden texture (on which a sheet of letterhead is depicted) and the photographic illustrations (aside from the ones of architecture) were simple realist montages.

191. Cannistraro 1975: 202–3.

Of the Milanese newspapers, the Fascist daily *Il Popolo d'Italia*[192] had created its own monthly supplement in 1923, founded and directed by Arnaldo Mussolini and Manlio Morgagni.[193] As a widespread current-events periodical that was richly illustrated and played a strong role as a showcase for the regime's achievements, *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* enjoyed constant contributions by Mario Sironi—who strongly influenced its graphic aspect through his large repertoire of covers, illustratons, and headings—as well as those of important artists like Nizzoli, Garretto, Prampolini, Depero, and Sepo.[194] Between late 1931 and early '32 Munari also joined the magazine's team of contributors, initially doing aeropictorial illustrations and his first compositions based on photomontage. His collaboration with the magazine lasted until 1940, with alternations between more sophisticated illustrations and propagandistic covers modelled on pictorial realism.

His first cover appeared on the March
|29| 1934 issue, and depicted the foot of a colossal statue overlaid with the outline of Italy atop a blue background. Despite the form-emphasizing graphic treatment, it is ultimately just a retouched photograph inserted into a drawing: the image basically seems like an attempt at integrating, through concealment, the principle of photomontage with very traditional illus-
|30| tration.[195] Even the following cover, in November, was created by the same technique, and depicts a plough in the foreground while offering a glimpse of a tank in the background.[196] On the whole, the covers Munari did for the Rivista up until 1940 all featured political themes and iconography that were near and dear to the regime's rhetoric: toeing the magazine's line, the images translate themes like 'Roman-ness', autarchy, swamp drainage and land reclamation, the war in East Africa, the Empire; at times they are literal transpositions of propagandistic slogans (like the ubiquitous inscriptions covering the façades of public buildings). Beginning with the September 1935 issue, which painted a nationalist picture of the Ethiopian war, the montage technique was abandoned in favour of a less precise, more immediate type of drawing, which was part of a tendency that grew stronger over the years and culminated in an elementary, two-dimensional, almost childlike style.[197] Other covers, generally

192. *Il Popolo d'Italia*, historic Milanese Fascist paper founded by Benito Mussolini in 1914 (directed by his brother Arnaldo and, following his death in '32, by their brother Vito), remained a relatively widespread party paper (largest print run, 200,000 copies in 1938), despite the predominance of the *Corriere della Sera* (Cambria 1994: 135).

193. Manlio Morgagni (1879–1943) journalist and political figure closely tied to the regime: contributor, and later administrative director of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, along with Arnaldo Mussolini he founded *La Rivista illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* (1923), and later *Natura* (1928). He is primarily known for having been the general director of the Agenzia Stefani, the historic press agency that became the official mouthpiece of the regime in the 1920s. Morgagni was unwaveringly faithful to Mussolini, and committed suicide in July 1943 upon hearing news of his arrest.

194. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* (Milan, 1923–1943). General-interest monthly directed by Arnaldo Mussolini until 1931, thereafter by Manlio Morgagni. The subject matter it covered ranged from politics to sports, fashion, art, theatre, and literature (Pallottino 1988: 314, 256; Lattarulo 1995: 94; Margozzi, Rum 2007: 76–7). Mussolini's daily paper also published a weekly supplement, *L'Illustrazione fascista*, which had difficulty competing with established periodicals like *L'Illustrazione Italiana* and *Domenica del Corriere*; in 1931 the weekly became the official publication of the Opera nazionale dopolavoro, based in Rome, and one can easily imagine that the editorial offices in Milan would have decided to invest their new resources in a current-events monthly of its own, alongside the sumptuous editions of the *Almanacco fascista* (Cambria 1994: 141; cf. Margozzi, Rum 2007: 76–7).

195. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XII; 3 (March 1934). 33.5×24.5 cm, pp.92.

196. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XII; 11 (November 1934). 33.5×24.5 cm, pp.120. This issue is dedicated to drainage of the Pontine Marshes, and the image echoes Mussolini's motto 'È l'aratro che traccia il solco, ma è the spada che lo difende' (It is the plough that makes the furrow, but the sword defends it).

without any particular distinction in either the drawing quality or the choice of subject matter, followed at the rate of about one per year: in April 1936 (an image dedicated to autarchy, with an Italian flag waving from a chimney in front of the Coliseum);[198] April 1937 (on the occasion celebrating the 'birth of Rome' the cover depicts the tower of an industrial plant);[199]
|31| December 1937 (Roman legioneers' insignia, symbolising the Imperial subject matter);[200] September 1938 (wheat shocks against a blue sky crossed by three bombers);[201] March 1939 (Italy's intervention in the Spanish civil war, represented by a Fascist tank rolling forward);[202] May 1939 (a view of the Gulf of Naples, dominated by an Italian navy submarine);[203] and December 1940 (with the war underway, the image evokes a nighttime air raid).[204] From this brief overview it is easy to see how Munari adopted a deliberately paired-down, loose, almost sketch-like approach for the Rivista; and that choice is also visible in the magazine's masthead, which was often imprecisely outlined. Despite his falling back onto facile, mannered formulas, Munari's work for two other magazines, *Natura* and *La Lettura*, showed a greater degree of liberty, and, indeed, those publications were less politically driven; even in his realistic covers Munari sometimes managed to include his personal research on perceptive phenomena (tâches, textures, figure/ground).

|32| A cover created in 1936 for *L'Ala d'Italia* can also be traced back to this group, and its type of imagery was quite unusual compared to the photographic work Munari normally used for magazine. This cover shows a foreshortened view of the statue of Emperor Augusts overlaid by the schematic structure of an airplane wing, while a flock-like formation of large airplanes diagonally cuts across the background sky. It is quite probable that the stylistic choice, paired with ancient Rome-inspired iconography, was to some degree dictated by the publication's international context, as it was a collection of numerous technical and institutional texts and was published in five languages. Again here the illustration seems to be a compromise between drawing and photomontage; nevertheless, the asymmetrical, diagonal composition and the subtle play between planes give the image some dynamism and depth.[205] The illustration published in the January 1938 issue of *L'Ala d'Italia* is in the same vein, and celebrates Italy's victory in the Rome-Dakar-Rio de Janeiro aeronautical competition.[206]

197. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XIII; 9 (September 1935). 33.5×24.5 cm, pp.92. The iconographic choice of a colonial helmet hanging from a rifle, with a bunch of texts in honour of the Fatherland and Il Duce, appears fairly predictable… The same can be said of the other covers described here.

198. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XIV; 4 (April 1936). 33.5×24.5 cm, pp.188.

199. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XV; 4 (April 1937). 33.5×24.5 cm, pp.116.

200. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XV; 12 (December 1937). 33.5×24.5 cm, pp.80.

201. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XVI; 9 (September 1938). 33.5×24.5 cm, pp.80.

202. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XVII; 3 (March 1939). 33.5×24.5 cm, pp.80.

203. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XVII; 5 (May 1939). 33.5×27 cm, pp.80.

204. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XIX; 12 (December 1940). 33.5×27 cm, pp.80.

205. *L'Ala d'Italia* XV; 10–11 (October/November 1936). 21×28 cm. The statue is visibly retouched by a brush (to the point of appearing out of focus), while the airplane silhouettes are photo clippings glued onto the crudely painted sky. The image's propagandist content is unquestionable, and associates aviation with the celebration of the ancient Roman Emperor Augustus during the 'Anno Augustano' (Augustan Year) proclaimed by Mussolini to celebrate the conquest of Ethiopia and the proclamation of the empire. It was during this final phase that ancient Roman archaeology became yet another tool for reinforcing the idea of Fascist power: in 1937 the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* (Augustan Exhibition of Romanness) opened in Rome (cf. Silk 1996: 63; Schnapp 2008: 162n).

206. 'Sorci Verdi' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XVIII; 1 (January 1938): photo ill. The title was taken from the name of the 205th Squad of the Regia Aeronautica. The

The monthly *Popolo d'Italia* was printed by Alfieri & Lacroix, the most advanced typo-lithographic press in Italy; at the time, Antonio Boggeri worked in the office of Luigi Poli, who managed the illustrated supplement's production. For a short while (while still working for Poli), Boggeri was also art director of *Natura*, a publishing enterprise launched by Alfieri & Lacroix together with Morgagni (director of the *Rivista*) in 1928. *Natura* was among Italy's first popular science magazines and had a graphic look that was relatively sumptuous for that period.[207] Boggeri or Poli himself may have been the go-between connecting the editorial offices and Munari, who began to work with the monthly in the spring |34| of '32, with an impactful aeropictorial cover depicting a stylised agrarian landscape centred on the line of a furrow dug by a mechanical plough.[208] This example is also interesting because of how the masthead is designed, showing a gradual assimilation of the most advanced typographic work.[209] While the contributions Munari published between 1933 and '36 consisted primarily of compositions based on photomontage, toward the end of the decade he did a series of four illustrated covers that are particularly interesting on both a technical and compositional level. The first, titled 'Scher- |35| zo con agate', opened the February 1938 issue and differs from his previous covers in its hyperrealism (which depicts two agates and a beetle on a wooden surface). Both the foreground figures and background are rendered down to the smallest detail, to the point of looking more like a photomontage than a trompe l'œil; the same meticulousness seeps into the masthead, which the artist had fun with, varying its design and taking different typefaces as his model for each issue.[210] The following two covers, while less precise, show equally fascinating images—one hinged on the comparison of a prehistoric bird fossil and |36| a hummingbird, the other on a couple of electrical insulators and a lightning bolt piercing the night sky.[211] But more than all |37| the others the cover of issue 3–4 in spring 1942—the last one of this sort Munari did—marked a further, definite evolution of his work in illustration.[212] The abstract composition (which effectively winks, even in the title, at the cosmic vein of aeropainting of the 1930s) was created by pressing an object soaked in colour, which instead of

monochrome illustration is printed in green; the emblem and a photograph of the Savoia Marchetti SM79 fuselage are featured atop a schematic drawing of the transatlantic flight path (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sorci_Verdi, last accessed 23 November 2010).

207. Directed by Luigi Poli and published by Alfieri & Lacroix between 1928 and 1943, *Natura* was an illustrated monthly magazine (as stated in the subtitle) 'of 100 pages of high-quality paper with 200 prints and a colour cover by famous artists (...) it covers everything that could be of interest to a modern soul, from economics to science, art, nature, travel, and sports. The variety of subject matter and splendour of the printed illustrations make it the true magazine of the well-to-do family' (from an advert published in the bulletin *Il Milione*, October 1932). See Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 17; Monguzzi 1981: 2; Pansera 1984 in Iliprandi: 191; Lattarulo 1995: 96.

208. *Natura* V; 4 (April 1932), 26×34 cm. The drawing recalls the propaganda poster of the Stenberg brothers, 'To the Fallow Ground', constructed through the photographic repetition of a tractor in successively smaller sizes, which Munari could have seen in 1927 at the III Mostra Internazionale delle Arti Decorative di Monza, where the Soviet Union had five sections, including one dedicated to Books and Photography that exhibited constructivist film posters.

209. His awareness of Renner's *Futura Black* well before its 'discovery' during the Werkbund exhibition at the V Triennale in 1933 is evident. A specimen of the type was reproduced in *Arts et Métiers Graphiques*, no.18 (15 July 1930); and a few covers of the German monthly *die neue linie* (April 1931, February 1932) modeled their mastheads on its forms (cf. Rössler 2009: 141–2).

210. *Natura* XI; 2 (February 1938). 26×34 cm, pp.64.

211. *Natura* XI; 3 (March 1938). 26×34 cm, pp.64; the illustration is titled 'Attraverso i millenni'. *Natura* XI; 11 (November 1938). 26×34 cm, pp.64; the illustration is titled 'Alte tensioni'.

212. *Natura* XV; 3–4 (March/April 1942). 26×34 cm, pp.92; the illustration is titled 'Fantasia cosmica' and explicitly recalls similar compositions by Prampolini, Fillìa, and other Futurists who belonged to the cosmic aeropictorial current of the mid-thirties.

leaving a flat or chiaroscuro field of color actually made a chance texture. The receding ground creates a space in which this organic form is suspended, intersected by a thread rendered in a contrasting chromatic gradient. Both his abandonment of figurative representation for abstract form (which nevertheless still steered clear of pure geometry) and his investigation into the communicative value of organic forms prove Munari's new interests in the visual field, and make this image the tangible sign of a significant change in his approach to illustration—which ultimately found its ideal field of application (and further development) in his cover designs for Bompiani, Einaudi, and Club degli Editori in the postwar period.

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La Lettura, cultural supplement to the Corriere della sera, was a 'typical railway magazine'[213] that combined the characteristics of high-culture magazines with middle-class ones: the visually sober monthly offered articles, novellas, poems, books reviews, and current-events notes. Over the course of the 1930s, under the management of Mario Ferrigni and later Aldo Borelli, the magazine held its position in the marketplace and took on a more journalistic, consumer-product profile—while still maintaining a noteworthy cultural level. Next to entertainment columns, the so-called *elzeviro* (elsevier) was established (symptomatic of the gradual emptying-out of content), as an article of witty, light journalism entrusted to the pens of famous writers. Another of the magazine's strong points lay in its illustrations: the articles were accompanied by photographs, novellas and serial novels by drawings, and the colour cover was done by famous illustrators of the day (Sacchetti, Dudovich, Brunelleschi, Tofano).[214]

Munari worked with the editorial offices on via Solferino as an illustrator, and then as a graphic consultant as well, relatively late, between 1936 and '40, in the same period of the magazine's relaunch with a larger format and new illustrators to enliven and give a more youthful edge to its earlier look.[215] As with his work for *Natura*, Munari's contributions were generally photomontages and collage influenced by Surrealism, but he also published articles on various popular topics (which marked the beginning of his writing career)[216] and did a significant number of covers. Painted in tempera, these covers were characterised by a traditional pictorial style; nevertheless, in the best examples, in which there is a noticeable graphic and atmospheric refinement, one can detect a clear emulation of Bayer's graphic work, while the last covers from 1939–40 attest to Munari's use of solutions derived from his research into perception.[217]

213. Giuseppe Prezzolini (from *La coltura italiana*, Florence, 1927) cit. in Camerlo 1992: 10.

214. *La Lettura* (Milan, 1901–1945) was founded in 1901 by Luigi Albertini, who was also its director from 1900 to 1925, and created a series of periodicals aimed at emerging social classes to accompany the paper: *La Domenica del Corriere* (1898), *Il Corriere dei Piccoli* (1908), *Romanzo mensile* (1903). Albertini was succeeded by Giuseppe Giacosa (successful theatrical author and librettist), Renato Simoni (1906), Mario Ferrigni (1923) and, in 1934, by Aldo Borelli (who was also the newspaper's director) in tandem with Emilio Radius (Camerlo 1992: 10–1, 40–53; Contorbia 2007: 1772; Santoro 1998a: 76).

215. Although Munari's name does not explicitly appear in the colophon, his art direction is recognisable, at least during the 1937–39 period, in certain cuts and montages of photographs and illustrations at the beginning of articles and the headings of columns. Cf. Camerlo 1992: 48.

216. These first texts were dedicated to model airplanes ('I modelli volanti' in xxxvi; 11, 1 November 1936: 942–3), photograms ('Che cosa sono i fotogrammi e come si fanno' in xxxvii; 4, April 1937: 352–5), printing techniques ('Tipografia' in xxxvii; 5, May 1937: 438–43), suspended sculptures ('Che cosa sono le macchine inutili e perché' in xxxvii; 7, July 1937: 660–5), and the evolution of the chair ('Sedili' in xxxviii; 9, September 1938: 846–51). During the war years Munari refined his writing in the pages of *Tempo* and *Domus*.

217. Cf. Tanchis 1986: 45.

From a visual point of view, there are two noteworthy covers from 1937 wherein Munari offers a glimpse of the varied interests and graphic inventiveness he was capable of creating. The illustration that |40| opens the April issue was entirely created in mosaic, using small, coloured cardboard tesserae; the technique was naturally tied to the subject (the face of a Roman emperor), reinforcing certain connotations, but can also be situated alongside the experiments with texture Munari was carrying out at the time, as demonstrated by several other covers.[218] The cover of the July issue (which depicts an aerial view of a bather on the beach) took a completely different approach, between photomontage |40| and polymaterial compositions, and was made using a three-dimensional assemblage of various elements (photographs |42| cut into unusual contours, cardstock, fabric, sandpaper) created with a fairly 'tactile' technique.[219] The following covers, however, returned to the somewhat crude visual language evident in his work from the same period for *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, even if, compared to the latter, war-related and nationalistic subjects did not appear until conflict broke out. The cover of the October 1937 issue, for example, shows a pupil at the chalkboard seen from behind the teacher's back, which takes up half of the image; riffing on the scholastic subject matter, the masthead is also outlined in pen, as if a child had doodled on it. The November issue, with the faces of two newlyweds in profile, cleverly winks at the regime's rhetoric by depicting the groom wearing a helmet.[220] The cover |42| of the November 1939 issue was similarly made, aside from the war-related subject matter.[221] It is interesting to note that, in general, despite the broad fields of uniform colour that flatten the design, the composition is balanced by a degree of depth between the foreground and background, in a solution that perhaps took into consideration the magazine's eventual visibility within the newsstands.

The two illustrations opening the June and October 1938 issues are more aesthetically appealing, and are openly modelled on the subject of evasion, albeit still built around the relationship between planes that, like theatrical curtains, rhythmically divide the space. The first shows a foreshortened view of a ship's bridge with a large wind sock, with a few passengers looking at a distant island;[222] the second, showing a window opened onto the sea, plays upon the idea of a picture within a picture (with the palpable influence of Magritte).[223] Quite differently, the January 1939 issue features an unusual image, whose main element (more than the actual subject matter, a snow-covered tree) consists of so-called *tâches*, created with light brushstrokes, which Munari experimented with to depict natural phenomena like snow, waves, or reflections on water.[224] This and the following cover exhibit a more

218. *La Lettura* XXXVII; 4 (April 1937). 19×28 cm, pp.104. Examples of experimentation with pictorial means of creating natural textures can be seen in some details of the October (the fabric of the two jackets) and November 1937 (the bride's veil) issue covers, as well as the October 1938 (ocean waves) and January 1939 (snowflakes) issue covers.

219. *La Lettura* XXXVII; 7 (July 1937). 19×28 cm, pp.96. Well before the recent infatuation with stop-motion in the fields of advertising and animation, the creation of images made from three-dimensional paper objects had already been done in the 1930s (cf. Piet Zwart's puppets in his famous *PTT Boek*); in the sixties the technique experienced a revival, and was used primarily for illustrations.

220. *La Lettura* XXXVII; 10 (October 1937) and 11 (November 1937). 19×28 cm, pp.96.

221. *La Lettura* XXIX; 11 (November 1939). 19×28 cm, pp.76.

222. *La Lettura* XXXVIII; 6 (June 1938). 19×28 cm, pp.96.

223. *La Lettura* XXXVIII; 10 (October 1938). 19×28 cm, pp.96.

224. *La Lettura* XXIX; 1 (January 1939). 19×28 cm, pp.104.

decisive inclination toward visual experimentation and research, above and beyond the client's brief: similarly, in February 1940, the theme behind the compositional framing of a fighter-plane cockpit is actually the optics of camouflage.[225] During the war, a few Futurist artists were hired by the military to work on camouflage: between '41 and '43 Tullio Crali worked on camouflage for the Italian Supreme Command near Rome, and then in the camouflage centre in Macerata.[226] Called to arms in '41, Munari was sent to an anti-aircraft battery not far from Milan.[227] It is possible he had a chance to work on camouflage patterns; but even if he did not, it seems clear from a number of illustrations he did during this period that he was quite interested in it. Certainly his study of perception-based figure/ground relationships was the logical source of his additional research into *negative/positive* visual relationships carried out in the 1950s. This new line of pictorial research—like the one into organic forms and textures—was reflected in his graphic work as early as the 1940s, as can
|43| be seen in a few covers for novels published by Bompiani.[228]

From the cosmic style to photomontage

In the early 1930s, as Munari's painting and sculpture tended toward a more open abstraction—as an observer noted as early as 1931, 'Munari, the youngest of all, is gaining ground in abstract interpretations that reveal the temperament of an original, self-assured artist through their visual balance and pictorial harmony'[229]—his parallel work as an illustrator, while it did not exclude any specific styles, nevertheless went in a direction of more frequent use of collage, which he increasingly identified with as a flexible expressive technique well suited to his creative flair. Initially, in the black-and-white as well as colour illustrations published in various periodicals between 1931 and '33, the spatial illusion created by perspectival foreshortening was accentuated by the layering of abstract forms and polymaterial textures.[230] This period saw the beginning of Munari's collaboration with *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, where he soon published two aeropictorial compositions with an athletic theme:
|45| despite the typical presence of geometric elements, the first was dominated by a caricaturesque tone, while the second included a photographic cut-out that was one of his very first photomontages.[231] Yet the image's layout remained pictorial, much like
|44| the illustrations done for *Natura* toward the end of '32, in which cosmic overtones

225. *La Lettura* XXIX; 1 (January 1939). 19×28 cm, pp.84.

226. Cf. www.tulliocrali.it, last accessed November 2010.

227. Cf. letter to Zavattini, undated but evidently from the end of 1941, in which he speaks of a 'month-long licence' (Archivio Zavattini, Biblioteca Panizzi, Reggio Emilia: Zavattini/Munari correspondence M844/4). For a more recent quote, Munari himself said: 'At the beginning I did not go to war. I was rejected because of a problem with my chest (...) and in the last year I was summoned to an anti-aircraft battery just outside Milan (...) It was a sad experience, under a mafioso, profiteering commandant. (...) I was having stomach problems at the time and kept going to the infirmary, to no avail, but then a doctor sent me home for something I did not even have: that, too, was part of the Surrealism...' (in Branzi 1984: 42; cf. also Manera 1986: 153).

228. See for example, the cover of Donald John Hall's novel *Spinosa ospitalità*. Milan: Bompiani, 1943[4] (1938) [orig. title: *Perilous sanctuary*]. Letteraria series. 12×21 cm, paperback, pp.301. The image on the dust jacket has a green background and a piece of bark with the title in the middle. The actual cardstock cover has the series' standard typographic layout, with the publisher's logo.

229. Vittorio Orazi. 'La mostra di aeropittura' in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* VIII; 11 (November 1931): 49–51. This was a review of the Futurist show at the Galleria Pesaro in autumn 1931; the article opens with a reproduction of Munari's 'Sosta aerea'.

230. Cf. Ravaioli 1998: 22; Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 83.

231. 'Il tifoso' in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* VIII; 12 (December 1931): 72[1]; and 'L'inutile acrobazia' ivi IX; 2 (February 1932): 70[1]. Cf. Di Corato 2008: 218

rendered with a map-like precision were predominant,[232] and the commemorative illustration published in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* in August 1933, whose subject matter, although reminiscent of a previous cover, took on an unusually metaphorical aspect.[233]

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Elsewhere Munari made graphic modifications to photographic elements so as to insert them into aeropictorial compositions without creating an excessive break from the overall atmosphere. He soon adopted this technique for the covers that most closely approached propaganda, and it can also be seen in the illustrations published over the course of '33 in *L'Ala d'Italia*[234] and again in May '34 in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*,[235] in which graphic and photographic interventions combine, proving that it was one of Munari's tried and true procedures. In later examples—like the illustrations published in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* in November 1935[236]—the compositions were still a combination of drawing and photography, but the latter was dominant, and is evidence of his transition to photomontage.

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Influences

Up to that point, as we have seen, Munari utilised many different visual languages, going progressively from mechanical puppets to comics, aeropictorial illustration, and realism. Beginning in 1932–33 his expressive repertoire became more clearly defined, and this change indicates new points of reference. Indeed, on the one hand Munari absorbed the specific stylistic elements of aeropainting through the work of Prampolini, Fillìa, and Diulgheroff, all of whom worked in the cosmic vein;[237] on the other, he kept abreast of metaphysical

232. 'Meteora e pianeta spento' and 'Viaggio nello spazio' in *Natura* v; 11–12 (Christmas double issue, 1932). See also Raffaele Carrieri's article 'Munari: illusionista degli spazi' in the same issue (ivi: 67–70). Munari's interest in cartographic marks emerges in many of hiw works, both pictorial and graphic: see, for example, *Cartina cosmica*, 1930 (reproduced in the catalogue *Officina del volo*, 2009: 150–1) and the wall map he made for the V Triennale in 1933 (reproduced in *Natura* VI; 6 June 1933: 42–3).

233. 'Volo di Verona del 2 agosto 1919' in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XI; 8 (August 1933): 66. The composition recalls the crash in which a few pilots lost their lives (including Tullio Morgagni, the sports journalist who founded the first Giro d'Italia, as well as the magazine director's brother), and features an image that, beyond the symbolic value of the plough, also formally echoes the subject matter on the cover of the April 1932 issue of *Natura* (Di Corato 2008: 222).

234. 'I cento soldati di Balbo' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XII; 7–8 (July/August 1933): 48.

235. 'Giuochi atletici' in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XII; 5 (May 1934): 13. The composition depicts jumping athletes: aside from the aeropictorial backdrop, it is similar to the contemporary photomontages published in the *Almanacco fascista del Popolo d'Italia 1934* XIII (reproduced in Lista 1985: 79).

236. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XIII; 11 (November 1935): 58–9, 67, 127. This was a celebratory issue dedicated to the Fascist accomplishments of the previous year, including numerous illustrations and photomontages by Ricas/Studio Boggeri, Carboni/Studio Boggeri, Nizzoli, Depero, and Munari, who contributed three manually altered photomontages: the first was for a short article by Guglielmo Marconi (an antenna and two electrical poles are depicted against a starry sky dominated by an eclipse); the second was for Gino Rocca's article 'Scenario della nuova Italia' (on top of chimney silhouettes obtained through multiple printing, several image boxes show a group of citizens and, overlapping them, two theatrical masks, symbolising comedy and tragedy); the third was dedicated to the Italian advance into East Africa (illustrated by two photographic collages portraying two roman swords).

237. Munari's relationship to the two leaders of the Turinese Futurists, Fillìa (Luigi Colombo, 1904–1936) and Nicolaj Diulgheroff (1901–1982), although unintense, seem to have involved a mutual respect: in an article in *L'Ufficio Moderno* (VII; 11, November 1932), next to the work of Ricas and Munari, three trade show installations by Diulgheroff are reproduced; Munari had worked with him on the *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce* and more recently on d'Albisola's tin lithos. Beyond their occasional encounters (like at the Futurist-inspired soirée organised by *L'Ufficio Moderno* in February 1931), Munari also had a direct relationship with Fillìa, and in particular with *La Città Nuova*, the architectural and applied arts bimonthly he directed: although it does not seem to have published any images or texts by Munari (aside from a brief declaration on aeropainting in issue no.1, 6 February 1932), in a 1934 letter to d'Albisola Munari mentions having written to Fillìa to praise the magazine's layout (by Ugo Pozzo), but adds, 'Oh! My poor pages (...)', which suggests that he had written an article or perhaps overseen the layout of a particular section (undated letter, 1934, in Presotto 1981: 147).

and surrealist developments through the European examples he saw reproduced in foreign publications. Despite the closed intellectual climate imposed by the regime, consumer culture—cinema, comics, sports, and popular music (from America and elsewhere)—enjoyed a degree of flexibility and was sometimes able to slip through the censors' sieve, such that a few foreign publications on the applied arts and architecture were circulating in some of Milan's bookshops.[238] In addition to the bookshops affiliated with the Galleria del Milione and Lino Pesaro gallery, a few others are worth mention: first and foremost the Libreria Salto,[239] a constant point of reference for the spread of modernist culture in Milan; the Futurist bookshop run by Umberto Notari; and the publishers Sperling & Kupfer and Editoriale Domus, who acted as commission-based merchants for the publications reviewed in their magazines.[240] And it is likely that the Futurist Headquarters in Milan also had a library or archive. Certainly, as Giuseppe Salto recalled, such 'openness to the world, in a country as provincial and backward as Italy, could only last a few years', more or less into the mid-1930s, when the Italian involvement in Spain and annexation of Ethiopia sparked a return to autarchic order and restrictions, ending up in stark wartime isolationism.[241] As for art galleries, the Milione, Tre Arti, and a few other exhibition spaces offered 'free entry and consultation of books, newspapers, and art and literature magazines. [Access to] the modern debate in its entirety', as a period advertisement proclaimed.[242] The international magazines regularly distributed in Italy in the early 1930s included: *Cahiers d'Art*, *Cercle et Carré*, *Abstraction-Création*, and *Art Concret* for art; *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* and special editions of the Éditions Cahiers d'Art for architecture; *Arts et métiers graphiques*, *La Publicité*, *Gebrauchsgraphik* (distributed by the publisher Görlich), *Commercial Art*, *Farbe und Form* (published by the Reimann Schule in Berlin), and the series of Bauhausbücher and technical periodicals like *Deutsche Drucker*, *Archiv für Buchgewerbe und Gebrauchsgraphik* for commercial graphics.[243]

A few significant encounters between the Milan's cultural scene and the Central-European exponents of Surrealism and Constructivism are also worth mention: as early as 1927, at the III Mostra Internazionale delle Arti Decorative (Third International Decorative Arts Exhibition) in Monza, the Soviet Union had presented five sections, including one dedicated to books and photography, which included contemporary film posters (Prusakov, the Stenberg Brothers) that had never been seen in Italy;[244] and in '33 the exhibition installation

238. Cf. Forgacs, Gundle 2007: 272–3.

239. Opened in 1933 by Alfonso Salto, the Libreria Salto was a bookshop specialised in Italian and foreign publications on architecture and the applied arts. Located in the rear courtyard of via Santo Spirito 14, in the postwar period it was run by Alfonso's sons Giuseppe and Giancarlo, who also made it available as an exhibition space. In particular, it was the centre of many events surrounding the Movimento Arte Concreta (MAC Concrete art movement) (Salto 1996: 6; also Piera Salto, interview with author, 15 July 2009).

240. Di Corato 2008: 217 and 217n.

241. Nevertheless, although it catered to a small clientele, the Libreria Salto continued importing books from around the world, even during the war, through neutral Switzerland (Salto 1996: 7).

242. From an advert in the bulletin *Il Milione*, published by the eponymous Milanese gallery and edited by Giuseppe Ghiringhelli (bulletin of 7 November 1933, cit. in Pontiggia 1988: 16).

243. The magazines mentioned here were regularly distributed in Italy: see the announcement in *Campo grafico* (no.5, 1935: 65) and various reviews in the bulletin *Il Milione*. Crispolti (1992c: 81) mentions *Minotaure* as a source, but the magazine run by Albert Skira appeared only in 1933, well after the first evidence of Surrealism showed up in Munari's work (cf. Di Corato 2008: 213).

244. At the time, the striking contrast between Russian posters and the narrative style predominant in Italian posters provoked unmistakably perplexed reactions (Mori 2007: 64).

curated by Paul Renner for the Mostra delle arti grafiche (Graphic Arts Show) of the Deutsche Werkbund at the V Triennale caused a stir; on a more local level, in January 1932 the Galleria del Milione mounted an exhibition of French painting, including work by Max Ernst, which had significant consequences for Munari's work;[245] in '33 Villani of L'Ufficio Moderno organised an exhibition titled Cartello internazionale e cartello nazionale rifiutato (International Poster and National Reject Posters), which included the work of Bayer, Moholy-Nagy, Carlu, Cassandre, and the Russian constructivists; and through the mid-thirties there were solo shows by Kandinsky, Vordemberge-Gildewart, Albers, and Baumeister.[246] Although Munari did not travel much, his indirect personal relationships with artists and intellectuals must not be underestimated—at a time when modern means of communication (like the telephone) were just beginning to take hold in Italy, these contacts were a fundamental vehicle for exchange. One example from close artistic circles was the 'travelling salesman of Marinetti & Co.', as Prampolini was known, who lived in Paris for extended periods and was in contact with nearly all the European art movements; he also knew the fairly nonconformist artists Vinicio Paladini and Ivo Pannaggi, the only Italians to gain in-depth experience with the Soviets; finally, his friend Luigi Veronesi knew Moholy-Nagy personally and exhibited with Albers at the Galleria del Milione in 1934.[247]

As Munari himself recalled:

> I was continually keeping on top of things, looking for books and publications (...) but I did not have any direct ties. (...) I was trying to assimilate those developments through the newspapers, in whatever field they happened to be in, because I've never considered art to be divided into separate fields.[248]

Munari's exposure to such a range of stimuli pushed his visual language in two distinct directions: on the one hand, he developed a taste for the semantic bait and switch between graphically heterogeneous elements, clearly inspired by Ernst's collages; on the other, he deployed recurring metaphysical elements influenced by the work of Herbert Bayer, which ended up enriching and transforming his sense of aeropictorial space.[249] A key example of this is his cover for the January 1933 issue of *Natura*, a suggestive composition wherein the surrealist transformation of the Futurist

245. During the show copies of Ernst's romans-collage were probably available for purchase through the bookshop. In these works—*La femme 100 têtes* (1929) and *La jeune fille qui rêvait d'entrer au Carmel* (1930)—Ernst carried the technique of the 'disorienting collage' to its fullest heights.

246. The exhibitions at the Galleria del Milione generally lasted a fortnight or so. Aside from the aforementioned 'Tre pittori di Parigi: Jean Lurçat, Max Ernst, Louis Marcoussis' (9 January 1932), other show included 'Wassily Kandinsky' (24 April 1934); 'Frederick Vordemberge-Gildewart' (15 October 1934); 'Josef Albers/Luigi Veronesi' (23 December 1934); 'Willi Baumeister' (25 May 1935); 'Arp, Domela, Kandinsky, Magnelli, Seligmann, Sophie Täuber Arp, Vézelay' (5 March 1938); in the field of graphics, the Esposizione del cartello internazionale e del cartello italiano rifiutato, organized by Dino Villani of *L'Ufficio Moderno* (June 1933), and a solo show by Xanti Schawinsky (September 1934). Cf. Pontiggia 1988: 104.

247. Crispolti (1969: 13) mentions—à propos of the Lombard abstractionists affiliated with Milanese Futurist and rationalist circles—trips to Paris taken by Veronesi, Licini, Reggiani, and Veronesi's personal contacts with Moholy-Nagy, Vantongerloo, Max Bill, and Delaunay. The ironic statement about Prampolini was by Ivo Pannaggi, quoted in Verdone in Crispolti 1995: 50. Paladini was a vital link to Russian visual culture during the 1920s, while Pannaggi played a key role as a foreign correspondent in Berlin for many architecture newspapers and magazines.

248. Munari in Branzi 1984: 42.

249. Many critics cite Bayer with regard to the metaphysical overtones in Munari's work: see Crispolti (1992: 92) regarding the pictorial work, Tanchis (1987: 28, 45) regarding the graphic work. Nevertheless, such references remain fairly generic, and do not indicate how Bayer's graphic and pictorial work would have spread in Italy: at least Di Corato (2008: 217) provides some information on reproductions and reviews of it in the press.

legacy appears complete.[250] This photomontage, which depicts a sort of metaphysical dialogue between a Greco-Roman bust and an ultra-modern, metal tubular chair,[251] is noteworthy in many respects. It shows not only a perfect integration of photography within pictorial space, but also a radical leap forward compared to the esoteric evocations of cosmic aeropainting.[252] A number of illustrations published in '32–33 in *Natura*, *L'Ala d'Italia*, and *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* document this transitional style.[253]

Bayer and Moholy-Nagy

The playful approach Munari took to such illustrations is similar to Bayer's visual advertising vocabulary, and well ahead of its first appearance in Italy in the pages of *Natura*,[254] Munari must have been aware of his refined style, as the presence of the classical imagery proves.[255] It is difficult to think of any other explanation for certain formal similarities between Munari's graphic work of this period and the rarely exhibited compositions hovering between the abstract and the surreal that Bayer painted between 1925 and '28.[256] The most characteristic images include amorphous bodies, animated geometries, clouds, and stage sets, all recurring elements in Munari's aeropictorial work. In the advertising work of Bayer's Berlin period, he proceeded in similarly proto-surrealist vein, taking them into his own graphic repertoire, which clearly echoes surrealist work as much as functionalist typography. And yet, even though he made use of that visual vocabulary, Bayer aimed not so much at decontextualisation and disorientation as ends in themselves, but rather more for an evocative atmosphere, made up of concrete objects set within an irreal space, the end target being mass communications.[257] The allusion to the classical world falls into this approach; above all—especially in Fascist Italy, which was increasingly interested in returning to the image of ancient Roman monumentality—such a stance took on a strong nationalist resonance, if not explicit consensus. It is therefore difficult to sort out the references that are at work in the cover Ricas and Munari designed for *L'Ufficio Moderno* inMay 1935, and although it is technically a photomontage, it can be grouped with the aforementioned illustrations featuring altered photographic images. The cover depicts the face of a Roman

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250. *Natura* VI; 1 (January 1933). 26×34 cm, pp.84.

251. Just introduced in Italy by Columbus, under licence from Wohnbedarf, Zurich (1932).

252. Prampolini's pictorial works focus on the transfiguration of apparent reality: 'I see aeropainting as a means for crossing over the frontiers of visual realities (...) and experiencing the occult powers of cosmic idealism' (from 'L'Aeropittura. Valori spirituali della plastica futurista' in *Futurismo* I; 4–5, 1932, cit. in Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 82).

253. See the compositions at the beginning of Raffaele Carrieri's article in *Natura* V; 11–12 (November/December 1932): 67; 'Amori subacquei' in *Natura* VI; 7 (July 1933): 58; 'I 42 minuti di Colacicchi' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XII; 2 (February 1933): 12–3; 'Vertigini' in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XI; 2 (February 1933): 74.

254. Article by Luigi Poli, 'Herbert Bayer, un maestro dell'arte grafica' in *Natura* VI; 11–12: 53–60.

255. Greco-Roman statues had already appeared in the advertising work of Alexei Brodovitch (see Aux Trois Quartiers, reproduced in *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* no.14, November 1929 and no.18, July 1930) and reappear in Bayer's work for the Studio Dorland throughout the 1930s (see the exhibition catalogue *Das Wunder des Lebens* and the advert for Adrianol, 1935), just as they did in the work of his friend and colleague Xanti Schawinsky (the poster for Princeps Cervo, 1934). The atmosphere of this work owes more to the metaphysics of de Chirico than to Surrealism.

256. In 1929 Bayer exhibited drawings and paintings at the Galerie Povolozky in Paris and the Künstlerbund März in Linz, Austria; in '36 he exhibited at the Salzburg Kunstverein. His paintings had never been exhibited in Germany, although a number of his works were in German museum collections—such that they were eventually included in the 'degenerate art' exhibitions of 1937–38 (Cohen 1984: 41, 56n, 404–5).

257. Cohen 1984: 25–8, 43, 404n. Bayer was among the artists selected for the Dada and Surrealism retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1936, and upon his arrival in America he became associate more with Surrealism than with Modernism (ibid: 43).

statue in an extreme close-up that consumes the entire page; on half of it, conveniently out of focus and divided along the nose, a Futurist synthesis of Roman iconography appears. The graphic rendering of the image leans toward abstraction, but the linear elements seem to be deployed more as stylistic touches than in any functional sense.[258]

Compared to Bayer, however, in the photomontage-based illustrations Munari seems to make the most of the paradoxical implications created by the juxtaposition of incongruous elements precisely in order to create a surreal or comic atmosphere. So one cannot help but wonder why he so rarely turned to this type of composition in his advertising work, and instead limited its use to magazine illustrations. Obviously the answer can only be partial and would require further proof, but by observing what was being produced in Italy at the time—if, that is, even the work Schawinsky was doing in Milan appears conditioned by prevailing pictorial tastes—one could conclude that the most significant damper was the provincialism of patrons and clients as well as the public in general.[259] The fact is that photomontage, which Munari began to explore as early as 1930 following in the footsteps of Pannaggi and Paladini,[260] gradually allowed him to distance himself from Bayer's influence and find his own more controlled, minimal style halfway between the allusiveness of surrealist illustration and the dynamic contrasts of constructivist work.

Apart from occasional reproductions included in collections and articles,[261] the most accessible source in early-thirties Milan regarding Bayer's work was *die neue linie*, a luxury women's magazine also distributed in Italy.[262] This German monthly

258. *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5 (May 1935). 21.5×28.5 cm. Cover signed 'Ricas+Munari'. This image is similar to a photographic work Munari later made for the weekly Film, also reproduced in the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1938* with the title 'Antica e recente iconografia romana. La razza è sempre la razza' (ivi: 8).

259. This held to such an extent that his most famous posters, even though based on a dynamic composition with the use of montage, are nevertheless done with pictorial, not photographic means: see the posters Princeps Cervo (1934), Esposizione Aeronautica Italiana (1934), Aranciata S.Pellegrino (1935). His work for Olivetti was an exception, as were the works done within the context of regime propaganda (his 1934 'poster for the plebiscite', published in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*), which was to some degree more responsive.

260. Vinicio Paladini (1902–1971), painter, architect, set designer, graphic designer, and art critic. Born in Moscow to a Russian mother but raised in Italy, he kept close ties to Russian culture. He was self-taught, and joined the Futurist movement in 1922; along with Pannaggi he wrote the *Manifesto dell'Arte meccanica* and presented the *Ballo meccanico futurista* at the Casa d'Arte Bragaglia. He earned a degree in architecture (1931), and in the years between the wars he worked as both an art critic and set designer for both theatre and film, as well as doing work in graphic design and exhibition design (Padiglione dell'Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia, at the Exposition Internationale in Brussels, May 1935). Russian constructivism was a major infuence on his aesthetic and ideological stance, an in 1923 he publicly broke from Marinetti (only to return to the Futurists a few years later). In 1927 he co-launched a short-lived surrealist movement, the Movimento Immaginista (Imagist movement). He could not stand Italy's prevailing air of conformity, and constantly travelled throughout Europe (France, Germany, Belgium, Russia), and finally settled in New York in 1938, where he stayed until 1953, working as an interior architect and graphic designer. Rampant McCarthyism forced him to return to Italy, and his architecture and set-design career were cut short by his sudden death in late 1971 (Baldacci 2006: 6–11; Lista 1985: 129; Lista 2001a: 220; Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 84, 194–5).

261. Photographs by Bayer appear in Werner Gräff's *Es Kommt der neue Fotograf* (Berlin: H. Reckendorf, 1929, published on the occasion of the *Film und Foto* exhibition in Stuttgart) and in a special issue of *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* dedicated to photography (no.16, mars 1930, ed. Waldemar George); his advertising compositions are reproduced in *Publicité,* edited by Cassandre for the L'Art international d'aujourd'hui series (Paris: Editions d'Art Charles Moreau, 1929). Two articles on Bayer were also published in *Gebrauchsgraphik*: 'Umbo–Herbert Bayer' by Kurt Hirschfeld (no.7, 1930: 44–51) and 'Herbert Bayer' by H.K. Frenzel (no.5, 1931: 3–19) (Droste 1982: 198).

262. Published from 1929 to 1943 by the Verlag Otto Bayer in Leipzig, which specialised in women's magazines, *die neue linie* was a relaunch of the earlier magazine *Frauen-Mode*, with a new editorial approach and important redesign by Moholy-Nagy. Under the direction of Bruno E. Werner and Arndt Bayer, the magazine was an immediate commercial success, with an average print run of 35 thousand copies. Of these, approx. 10 thousand

stood out on newsstands and major Italian hotels thanks to its unusual large format and elegant graphics, which reflected the interests of its bourgeois target audience: fashion, domestic lifestyle, travel, and current events, all presented from a modern angle. Its publishing strategy included a rather sophisticated graphic presentation, which can be traced back to the formal innovations of the constructivist new typography: indeed, its typographic design and art direction were entrusted to László Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer, with the collaboration of many former Bauhaus students (including Irmgard Sörensen-Popitz, Kurt Kranz, and Georg Teltscher). Aside from a series of photographic covers, Moholy-Nagy also designed the format and layout, which remained essentially the same up until the war years, while Bayer designed the masthead, set in his famous universal alphabet, and numerous covers.[263] Moholy-Nagy determined the peculiar visual style of *die neue linie*'s covers through images based on a combination
|51| of photomontage and various illustration techniques, from line drawing to airbrush retouching, all characterised by an almost surreal atmosphere. It was precisely that approach that became Bayer's distinguishing style, and he ably made use of montage and the graphic manipulation of photography to create evocative images.[264] Although he translated such typo/photographic principles into his own less radical version, adapted to the realities of the commercial press, Moholy-Nagy's approach was also reflected in the use of photography, which played an essential role and was often entrusted to significant photographers like Umbo, Erich Salomon, Cecil Beaton, and Germaine Krull.[265]

This discreet yet constant presence within the Italian press could explain the broader interest in Moholy-Nagy and Bayer's work—which spread beyond the closed circles of Milan's avant-garde even before the well known Werkbund exhibition at the 1933 Triennale.[266] Indeed, within the covers of *die neue linie* it is possible to identify the themes and graphic cues later found in Munari's work, after he had assimilated them in various ways.[267] On the other hand, even though it was not the sole stimulus for the revivification of the graphic arts in Italy, *die neue linie* nevertheless is a concrete example of the channels through which that generation of advertising designers absorbed certain aspects of Central-European modernism—and in particular the stylistic elements less directly linked to rationalist architecture, which in Italy was the main vehicle for the spread of the new typography.

were distributed abroad, in over forty countries. A special issue dedicated to Italy appeared in January 1938, and another in August 1940 (Rössler 2009: 13, 19, 25, 39, 73). As proof of the magazine's circulation in Italy, a spread from *die neue linie* was reproduced in Guido Modiano's article 'Fotografia 1931', published in *Campo grafico* 11; 12 (December 1934): 276–7. Additional proof can be seen in the magazine's fairly broad availability in the antique publications market (confirmed by researcher Pasqualino Schifano, in correspondence with the author, 21 May 2010).

263. Presented in the pages of the magazine *Offset, Buch und Werbekunst* no.7 (1926): 398–400.

264. Rössler 2009: 41–5. Moholy-Nagy did a dozen covers in all, from the first issue (September 1929) to the May 1933 issue; Bayer did 26, beginning in 1930, espcially in the magazine's early years; in any case, up until '38 *die neue linie* remained one of the biggest clients of the Dorland-Studio, which he was director of.

265. The colophon of the first issue (September 1929) credits 'Prof. Moholy-Nagy, Berlin' with the magazine's cover and typographic layout; both Moholy-Nagy and Bayer are listed as members of the editorial committee in the December 1931 issue (Rössler 2009: 29–33, 35, 39–45, 47–53, 59).

266. Photographs by Moholy-Nagy appear in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* in June and August 1933; the same year, *Natura* hired Bayer for the cover and devoted an article to him in the December issue.

267. For example, the use of crumpled-up kraft paper to resemble rocklike forms (VI; 11, July 1935; by H. Bayer) recalls similar work by Munari for covers made in the postwar period; the cover image of the August 1935 issue (VI; 12; by E. Kreimer) recalls Munari's mosaic cover for *La*

> [With Kandinsky, Braque, Picabia, and Magritte I did not have] any personal relationship, just the awareness and study of their [work and] experiences, which I then tried out so as to understand them better. Ditto for Man Ray, Duchamp, and a few others (...) I made all these acquaintances through the Galleria del Milione, or through friends who had been to Paris, especially Prampolini (...) I've always dealt with graphics and visual research (...) During that period I was following and experimenting with the [work and] experiences of Arp, Bill, Schwitters, Cassandre (for the alphabets), Herbert Bayer, and others from the Bauhaus.[268]

Photography

Any consideration of the network of influences acting on a given artistic milieu, despite the risk of some schematic generalisation, is nevertheless useful for contextualising more precisely the activity of those working in the cultural field, especially in a context as closed-off as Italy was during the Fascist period. Concerning the inclusion of photography in Munari's work, his initiation into photomontage took place, even before the examples set by Moholy-Nagy and Bayer, through Paladini and Pannaggi—artists who were in contact with Europe's most significant avant-gardes, and whose graphic work Munari was certainly familiar with, despite their marginal status in the Futurist movement and their lack of direct ties to the Milanese group (as both lived in Rome). Likely of equal importance was his discovery of the imagist movement, which Paladini founded in 1926, and wherein Munari saw the same metaphysical atmospheres (Paladini actually knew both De Chirico and his brother Alberto Savinio quite well, and they often met up in Rome and Paris).[269] It is important to emphasise that, beginning with photomontage, Munari almost simultaneously began to try his hand with layout according to constructivist principles, and there, too, one can reasonably conclude that Paladini had a significant influence.

Like many of his contemporaries, Munari knew Moholy-Nagy's fundamental theoretical text, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film,* published in 1925.[270] The photographs reproduced in the book offered an up-to-date repertoire of the most recent international research, which made it—alongside the special issue of *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* (1930) and the two collections published on the occasion of the *Film und Foto* exhibition in Stuttgart (1929)—one of the first international resources to reach Milan in those years.[271] Although he did not know German, it was not hard for Munari to stay abreast of Moholy-Nagy's main theories, which were more or less explicitly adopted by almost everyone who favoured a revivification of Italian photographic culture, which was still strongly tied to pictorialism.[272] The significance of that text, which

Lettura (April 1937). More than a direct lift, these were primarily cues taken for visual experimentation with texture.

268. Munari in Quintavalle 1979: 15–6.

269. Founded by Paladini along with Roman literati and artists (Dino Terra, Umberto Barbaro, Antonio Fornari), the Movimento immaginista championed an aesthetic somewhere between that of the Dadaists and metaphysicists, but was short-lived (Baldacci 2006: 9–10).

270. The eighth book in the Bauhausbücher series, published by the Albert Langen Verlag in Munich in 1925 (and in a second edition in 1927). The volume consists of a theoretical introduction (c.42 pp.) and a collection of a hundred or so black-and-white photos (including work by Steiglitz, Renger-Patzsch, Man Ray, Lucia Moholy, Hannah Höch, and Moholy-Nagy himself), as well as a typographic storyboard for a film about the city (Moholy-Nagy). The reproduced images include, in particular, many photograms (Moholy-Nagy, Man Ray) and photomontages (Hannah Höch, Paul Citroen, Moholy-Nagy), as well as animated film sequences.

271. *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* no.16 (March 1930), cit.; Werner Gräff, *Es Kommt der neue Fotograf*, cit.; Franz Roh, *Foto-auge* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Dr. Fritz Wedekind & Co., 1929). In Munari's close circle, the architect Enrico Peressutti, who had taken part in the Stuttgart exhibition in '29, acted as a milanese spokesperson for the new photographic currents, and architects like Gian Luigi Banfi and Giuseppe Pagano were excellent photographers (Paoli 1999: 115).

introduced Italy to the principles of pure photography, was echoed in the controversies that erupted in trade magazines, fueling theoretical debate. In Italy, the argument had two opposing sides: according to one, the ideal photography would be subordinate to pictorial aesthetics; according to the other, it would explore the photographic medium's inherent possibilities. It is significant that Moholy-Nagy's book was taken up as a fundamental reference by those in Italy who—like Boggeri, Persico, and Ponti, that is, people outside of the professional photographic circles—sought to capture the essence of this 'new vision.' Indeed, over the course of the 1930s the influence of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Sobriety) movement found fertile terrain in Milan's artistic and literary avant-garde circles and cross-bred with the photographic practices of advertisers, graphic designers, and architects. In addition to Persico's reviews in *Casabella*, even a typographic magazine like *Campo grafico* dedicated ample space to the subject of photography, adhering to the precepts of the Bauhaus, which echoed throughout Boggeri, Modiano, and Veronesi's texts calling for an optically pure visual language:

> Another current (…) counters the photographic version of pictorial means, and trusts the inherent qualities of the medium itself to produce a different way of seeing the world and all its objects, unveiling the hidden photogenic character in never-before-seen images.[273]

Not that independent photographic research was not taking place within the Futurist movement, but after early experimentation with cronophotography—later abandoned because of the opposition mounted by the painterly current led by Boccioni[274]—it was not until 1930 that Tato's *Manifesto della fotografia futurista* (Futurist Manifesto of Photography, 1930) appeared, whereupon Marinetti belatedly condoned the field that many young Futurists working in graphics had already begun to investigate on their own. While contributions from the field of architecture leaned more toward formalist or documentary photography, and advertising explored the technical possibilities of framing and lighting to arrive at an abstract representation, graphic artists like Paladini, Pannaggi, Veronesi, Grignani, and Munari took a more 'technicist' stance, which turned to both optical/chemical procedures (like double exposures, solarisation, negative prints, and superimposition/overlapping) as well as experiments without any camera at all—like photograms and photomontage, in which the latent potential for interpreting reality in a non-objective, conceptual, or even metaphysical way enjoyed free reign.[275]

272. Almost all the main theoretical texts on modern photography from the early 1930s look to the ideas expressed by Moholy-Nagy: Antonio Boggeri ('Commento' in *Luci e ombre. Annuario della fotografia artistica italiana*, 1929), Giò Ponti ('Discorso sull'arte fotografica' in *Fotografia*, 1, 1932), Guido Pellegrini ('La nuova fotografia' in *Il Progresso Fotografico* no.3, 30 March 1933 and no.4, 30 April 1933; Pellegrini directed the magazine *Fotografia*). That same year, Moholy-Nagy published an article in Italian in *Note fotografiche* ('Su l'avvenire della fotografia' in IX; 2, August 1932) (Paoli 1999: 101–2, 105; Alinovi 1982: 409–10).

273. Antonio Boggeri, 'Commento' in *Luci e ombre. Annuario della fotografia artistica italiana*, 1929 (quoted in Monguzzi 1981: 8).

274. See the 'Avviso' published in *Lacerba*, 1 October 1913, by the group of Futurist painters including Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Balla, Severini, and Soffici, who excluded the idea of any link between the Futurist's pictorial research and the Bragaglias' 'photodynamism'. After 1914 Anton Giulio Bragaglia left photography to focus on cinematography and theatre (Lista 1985: 8–9).

275. Zannier 1978: 70–1; Alinovi 1982: 409–11; Paoli 1999: 106–12; Pelizzari 2010: 93–4. The broad horizons of *Fotografia*, the annual published by Domus in 1943, reflect the joint contributions of architecture and graphics: the review includes architects (Mollino, Pagano, Peressutti), graphic artists (Munari, Veronesi, Steiner, Grignani, Nizzoli), film directors (Comencini, Lattuada), photojournalists (Patellani) (Pelizzari 2010: 97–8; Paoli 1999: 109–11).

In the early 1930s photomontage enjoyed a fair degree of popularity in Italy as a form of modern illustration in periodicals, publishing in general, and advertising, as well as in the large-scale 'fotoplastici' (photomosaics) in trade-fair installations and exhibitions. 'Photomontage is the only type of modern illustration', Luigi Veronesi asserted.[276] Beginning with the very first rudimentary Futurist attempts,[277] the technique of photomontage appeared in Italy toward the mid-twenties, in the work
|54| of Paladini and Pannaggi, who, thanks to
|55| their close ties to Russian culture, helped introduce Italy to the work of the Soviet avant-garde. For both artists, that mediation took place through both their important work in art criticism,[278] as well as their own graphic work, modelled on photomontage. Between 1926 and '31 Paladini created many covers with photomontages, in which Dadaist humour melds with constructivist principles;[279] his photomontages regularly appeared in the magazines *Occidente* and *Quadrivio*, where they became characterised by large fields of colour, coloured papers, and photographic fragments, with results similar to Bayer's advertising work.[280] Compared to Paladini's style, which was more attuned to visual effect than formal balance, Pannaggi's photomontages have more controlled, scenographic or set-like composition, and are also set apart by their subject matter, taken from mechanical art (Pannaggi and Paladini penned the *Futurist Manifesto of Mechanical Art*, published in 1922).[281]

Various Milanese artists tried their hands at photomontage, including Nizzoli, Veronesi, Carboni, Munari, and Ricas, who preferred cropping and the syntactic juxtaposition of photographic fragments—often completed by the insertion of drawn portions—to the Futurists' technique of overlapping negatives. While superimposition lent itself to a poetic and psychological investigation of the subject,[282] collage, which worked with thematic short-cuts based on the semantic recombination of

276. Luigi Veronesi, Pallavera [pseudonym of writer and director Mario Soldati], 'Del fotomontaggio' in *Campo grafico* II; 12 (December 1934): 278; this was a special issue focussing on photography, including articles by Boggeri, Modiano, and Veronesi on advertising photography and photomontage (cf. Dradi 1973: 29–31).

277. In 1915 Carrà and Dottori made their first mixed collages, inserting photographic fragments into their graphic compositions, but this practice remained sporadic (Lista 1985: 11). As Paladini wrote in 1929: 'In Italy, as far as I know, Ivo Pannaggi and Vinicio Paladini were the only ones who felt the value of this new art. The former expressed it through procedures influenced by the constructivist aesthetic, and the latter did so through what one could call Proustian procedures' ('Fotomontage' in *La Fiera Letteraria* V; 45, 10 November 1929; cit. in Verdone 1995: 40, 448).

278. In addition to the articles published in various literary and art magazines, Paladini's book *L'Arte nella Russia dei Soviet* (Rome: Ed. La Bilancia, 1925) is particularly relevant. From the late 1920s Pannaggi was based in Germany and worked as a foreign correspondent for important magazines and newspapers.

279. Not just from avant-garde publishers (Edizioni d'Italia, Edizioni Alpes), but also from mass-market publishers (Bompiani, Corbaccio); see the covers of Dino Terra, *Ioni*. Milan: Edizioni Alpes, 1929; Diotima, *L'orologio innamorato*. Rome: Edizioni d'Italia, 1930; Elio Talarico, *Tatuaggio*. Rome: Edizioni d'Italia, 1931; Dino Terra, *Anima e corpo*. Milan: Bompiani, 1934; Armando Ghelardini, *Malessere*. Milan: Corbaccio, 1934 (reproduced in Lista 1984 and as ads in *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1934*).

280. See, for example, the photocollage series titled *Giochi olimpici*, 1934 (reproduced in Lista 2001b: 238–40). The shift in tone was a consequence of the 'imagist' period, as Pannaggi recalled: '(...) I went to Germany (...), Paladini slowly faded, or just distanced himself from Futurism to focus more on his post-metaphysical loves (...)' (cit. in Verdone 1995: 43).

281. In Pannaggi the influence of Russian models in particular recalls Rodchenko's photomontages for Vladimir Mayakovsky's books (*Pro eto*, 1923), while in his postal collages echoes con be seen of the abstract work of Schwitters, with whom he was in touch (Crispolti: 1995: 337–8; Lista 1985: 129; Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 84, 195). See the covers for: Vasari, *Raun*. Milan: Edizioni il libro futurista, 1933; SA Luciani, *L'antiteatro. Il cinematografo come arte*. Rome: La Voce, 1928; IDieci, *Lo zar non è morto*. Rome: Edizioni dei Dieci, 1929 (reproduced in Lista 1984).

282. From the Bragaglia brothers to Depero, Tato, Unterveger, Wulz, and others: see Lista 2001b: 225–7, 234–51.

elements taken from reality, allowed artists to build an image in a broader variety of registers, from the grotesque to the satirical, from the realistic to the surreal, from the narrative to the abstract—which was the compositional formula developed by both the Berlin Dadaists and the Russian constructivists.[283] Nevertheless, compared to the chaotic and subversive compositions of the former, the latter (Moholy-Nagy and Rodchenko in particular) opted for an approach based before all else on the composition's coherence, capable of expressing an *Uberrealität*. Moholy-Nagy emphasised the constructive and conceptual aspect of this type of photomontage, which

> are pieced together from various photographs and are an experimental method of simultaneous representation; compressed interpenetration of visual and verbal wit; weird combinations of the most realistic, imitative means which pass into imaginary spheres. They can however also be forthright, tell a story; more veristic 'than life itself.[284]

Basically, when compared to Dadaist anarchy, this type of photomontage was seen as a form of calculated disorder, and possessed a precise meaning and centre that allowed for its immediate comprehension; and it is precisely in that form, thanks to its associative powers, that photomontage gained its greatest popularity in the fields of advertising and poster design as well as political propaganda.

Munari's first attempts at photomontage date back to 1932; they were published as illustrations in the usual periodicals, and immediately showed his attentive awareness of the key Italian and foreign referents. Well aware of the new visual language's range of expressive possibilities, Munari initially followed the 'piled-up' approach commonly used by the Dadaists, with minimal reworking; but the meaning of the resulting images was not always immediately or clearly comprehensible. At the same time, and to an increasing degree, Munari was exploring formulas of allusive and narrative juxtaposition, which related to his interest in the spatial possibilities of the composition, and were also quite similar to Moholy-Nagy's work:

> Linear elements, structural pattern, close-up, and isolated figures are here the elements for a space articulation. Pasted on a white surface these elements seem to be embedded in infinite space, with [a] clear articulation of nearness and distance. The best description of their effect would be to say that each element is pasted on vertical glass planes, which are set up in an endless series each behind the other.[285]

In reality, a clear-cut demarcation between the various types of photomontage is quite rare: in any given composition the various options are often simultaneously present, regardless of one or another formula's predominance. The cover of the August 1932 issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno* exemplifies the first tendency: the photomontage is limited to a simple juxtaposition of two photographs symbolic of modernity (the American metropolis and the crowd), but with a

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283. The principle of montage signals a break not only from the fine arts tradition, but above all a shift in the syntactic and semantic levels of the image, as it ruptures the spatial continuity of Renaissance perspective and the coherence of the image (cf. Ades 1986: 48, 107–9; Spies 1991: 11).

284. Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, cit. (English translation, *Painting, Photography, Film*. London: Lund Humphries/MIT Press, 1969: 36). Moholy-Nagy repeatedly revisited his definition and practice of photomontage and photogram: see, in particular, 'Fotoplastiche Reklame' in *Offset Buch und Werbekunst* no.7 (Leipzig, 1926: 386–394) and 'Fotografie ist Lichtgestaltung' in *Bauhaus* no.1 (Dessau, Januar 1928: 2-9), both quoted in French translation in the catalogue *László Moholy-Nagy: Compositions lumineuses 1922–1943*. Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1995: 189–91 and 193–7, respectively.

285. Moholy-Nagy, commenting on the photomontage 'Leda and the swan' (1925) in 'Space, Time and the Photographer' (in Kostelanetz, 1970: 65).

more visible intervention in the masthead, positioned at the centre of the two images in order to create a visual connotation.[286] The result still seems rough and somewhat tentative, in both the photographic manipulation and the lettering. And yet just a few months later, the same idea of photographically describing the magazine's field of interest (labour organization and
|57| advertising) translated into a cover that exudes an entirely different compositional strength and balance, thanks to a different approach that is more informed about Moholy-Nagy and Baumeister's work. The image is centred on a perspectival play between a rationalist building and the façade's mosaic advertisement as observed by a group of passersby in the foreground: it is a minimalist composition that, through a surrealist-inspired approach, constructs a space that is at once plausible and abstract, |58| wherein the perspective and contrast in scale create an impression of great depth, reinforced by the red background.[287] The composition's synthetic nature and the simultaneity of everything taking place in the image appear fully in keeping with Moholy-Nagy's postulations, according to which photomontage's resulting image, aimed at expressing an idea, must be concentrated and economic in its means, so as to quickly activate the viewer's visual sensations and mental associations. Munari seems to have closely followed Moholy-Nagy's instructions, which mention simple overlapping and the importance of the verbal element—the title—in providing the key with which to read the image. Even the context and applications of photomontage |60| recall Moholy-Nagy's assertions almost literally:

> One can, among other things, use it to summarise an entire film or theatrical work, theatrical scripts or screenplays can be condensed into a single image of this sort. One can also use it to illustrate an idea or a feeling. [It can be used] for propagandist ends, for advertising, for posters. [It can be used] to satirise the current times, etc.[288]

Indeed, it is impossible to miss the relation to the comic and surreal realms Munari so readily explored in his photomontages, especially in his long series of illustrations completed around 1936 for the more general-audience magazines with which he collaborated, dominated by an allusive or metaphorical exploration of the assigned subjects. A good example is his composition 'Per il quinto di secondo', published in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* in 1932: this collage deals with athletics and depicts a runner set to sprint, in front of a background featuring a large stop-watch and a photographic frame showing a crowd of spectators. The image, which includes a few painterly interventions, shows his having surpassed the constructivist model taken from Paladini, evident in its minimalism and rigorous spatial construction.[289] This example is accompanied by many other, similar illustrations: the illustration 'Vertigini', published in the same magazine in February '32; the cosmic self-portrait and series of photomontages

286. *L'Ufficio Moderno* VII; 8 (August 1932). 21.5×28.5 cm. The cover is printed in duotone (black and red).

287. *L'Ufficio Moderno* VII; 11 (November 1932). 21.5×28.5 cm. This composition is unsigned, but in an advert for Studio R+M published in the following issue they specified that 'The cover of the previous issue was created by the scissors of the painter Munari'. The masthead, in simple sanserif capitals, appears within small white rectangles that echo Persico's work in negative for the titles and headlines of *Casabella* (see 'Città 1932' in *La Casa Bella* no.59, November 1932: 24–7), also taken up by Munari in the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1933*.

288. Cf. Moholy-Nagy, 'Fotografie ist Lichtgestaltung' in *Bauhaus* no.1 (Dessau, January 1928: 2–9), cit.

289. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* X; 6 (June 1932). Photo ill., 24.5×33.5 cm. Cf. Di Corato 2008: 218–9.

that accompanied the article by Raffaele Carrieri in *Natura* at the end of the same |61| year; the illustration 'Amori subacquei' in *Natura*, July '33; 'I bimbi d'Italia sui monti and al mare' in the August '34 issue of *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, with a polymaterial inclusion; the composi- |59| tions published in the *Almanacco fascista del Popolo d'Italia 1934*; and the splendid two-page spread titled 'Logica elementare |62| del rinnovamento' published in *Campo grafico* in February 1935.[290] All these compositions show how, beyond the strictly surrealist register, this type of montage (in Munari's hands) was also ideally suited to experimentation with the straightforward expressivity of the image, through dynamic compositions and surprising associations.

That approach also matches Veronesi's vision—he viewed the composition in photomontage primarily as a question of surfaces, forms, and colours, which only later are translated into photographic elements fit to obtain a 'lyrical whole'; a pictorial composition, therefore, that refers to a specific 'narrative content'.[291] And the attention to content is one of Munari's constant preoccupations, obviously tied to the publishing realm as well, where illustrations remain subordinate to the written text. Certainly, even in his case the captions affected the meaning of the images, specifying how they were to be read; but it was rare that his compositions ever lacked their own coherence and clear connection to their given theme. Whether the montage makes technical use of the juxtaposition or overlapping of fragments, or is articulated in a more complex and dynamic manner, the resulting image clearly suggests a meaning, outlined in a metaphorical, surreal, or, more often, comical fashion. And indeed, upon closer consideration, beyond the variety of forms it assumed, Munari's work in photomontage throughout the 1930s shows a constant quest for the independence of the visual register from the verbal register, which gradually led him to free his images from their subordinate role as mere illustrated comments. In the latter half of the decade, in fact, his investigation into photography splits—focussing on the one hand on surrealist collage inspired by Ernst, and on the other on the narrative implications of image sequences.[292]

L'Ala d'Italia

The use of photography was not limited solely to the interior illustrations of *L'Ala d'Italia*; beginning in 1934 Munari also used it on the cover. Up until then the covers of *L'Ala d'Italia* focussed exclusively on illustration, with an advertising layout that was occasionally entrusted to various artists who then freely interpreted an aeronautical theme: for example, during '33 as a cover for Shell Munari and Ricas proposed both an illustration (a schematic representation of the urban fabric, crossed by an automobile and the shadow of an airplane) and a photomontage (an association between various means of land, sea, and aerial transportation, unified within the oil company's trademark).[293] Although

290. In *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* x; 2 (February 1932): 74; *Natura* v; 11–12 (Christmas issue, 1932): 67–70; ivi, vii; 7 (July 1933): 58; *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* xii; 8 (August 1934): 10; Arrigo De Angeli (ed.), *Almanacco fascista del Popolo d'Italia 1934* (reproductions in Lista 1985: 79); *Campo grafico* iii; 2 (February 1935): 36–7, respectively.

291. Veronesi, Pallavera in *Campo grafico* ii; 12 (December 1934): 278.

292. The photomontage types outlined by Zannier (1988: 291ff), Ades (1986: 48, 107–9, 116–88, 135–6), and Pelizzari (2010: 89–90) are useful for such analysis.

293. These are two original sketches now in the collection of Maria Fede Caproni di Taliedo, Rome. One of the two drawings is mounted on an earlier cover, facilitating an exact date. 19×22 and 16.5×18.5 cm, respectively. There is also a third sketch from the same series, now in a private

|63| the January 1934 issue respected the cover's traditional advertising format, it also heralded, in no uncertain terms, the use of photography on the cover with a richly concise conceptual image. Munari and Ricas proposed an innovative solution based on minimalist photomontage, wherein the diagonal of the aircraft's reflectors converge in the night sky above the hybrid form of a bird/Stanavo-brand aircraft (the underwriters) printed over it in red.[294] In the following months the two designers continued to propose photographic solutions, even though they no longer remained anchored to one sole formula. The |64| February issue saw the disappearance of the frame that held the masthead and delimited the image on all four sides; the cover (unsigned, but certainly by Munari, who is the first illustrator credited) adopted a full-bleed image, once again a photomontage, but of a different type, centred on the juxtaposition of two photographs that are integrated with one another thanks to their dynamic cropping and chromatic separation of blue and sepia tones (the blue colour also maintained its visual association with the previous issue and those to come). The image shows a bunch of clouds 'pierced' by an aerial view of a city (probably Milan, where the Caproni company headquarters recalled on the cover were located, on the outskirts of the city).[295] This device was also used on the cover of the March issue, with a different photographic cropping yet similar effect (this time a group of biplanes stands out against the sky) that allows for the inclusion of an elegant, clear typographic summary.[296]

Over the span of a few months, then, the graphic layout Munari and Ricas developed for the cover seems to have been accepted |66| by the editorial team, but with the April issue, dedicated to the *Esposizione Aeronautica* (Aeronautics Show) in Milan, Munari once again changed the rules and used a more radical photomontage, featuring the profile of an aircraft in which typographic elements and photographs of the Palazzo dell'Arte (Giovanni Muzio's brand-new building for the Triennale) and the nearby Torre della Radio (by Ponti) are collaged. The image's iconic feel is the result of the synthetic collage's isolation within the blue background, the overall configuration (with intersecting diagonals), and the carefully chosen photographs highlighting the architectural structures and constructed forms of the aircraft.[297]

The following issues instead signalled the editorial team's return to illustration, and only toward the end of the year did Munari's name again appear on the cover, with a black-and-white photomontage (this time more realistic) with which he |65| packages an inevitably striking Christmas image: in the foreground is a pilot flying a plane, and on the horizon, beyond the clouds, a small comet appears, as if to evoke a modern crèche.[298] The cover of the following issue was again by Munari and Ricas, and again used photomontage, albeit with a return to more aeropictorial stylistic elements. The duotone image has a background gradient that goes from brown to blue, against which stylised profiles of airplanes are set, and through their shapes we catch a glimpse of the clouds.[299] This was

collection (I am indebted to Maria Fede Caproni for this information).

294. *L'Ala d'Italia* XIII; 1 (January 1934). 21×28 cm. Cf. Schnapp 2008: 147–8.

295. *L'Ala d'Italia* XIII; 2 (February 1934). 21×28 cm.

296. *L'Ala d'Italia* XIII; 3 (March 1934). 21×28 cm. The table of contents, which was a one-time experiment and never again appeared on the cover of *L'Ala d'italia*, was set in *Semplicità,* and the layout made able use of the type's various bodies and weights.

297. *L'Ala d'Italia* XIII; 4 (April 1934). 21×28 cm. Cf. Pelizzari 2010: 89–90.

298. *L'Ala d'Italia* XIII; 12 (December 1934). 21×28 cm.

the last cover Munari made for *L'Ala d'italia*: soon thereafter the Futurist Filippo Masoero was appointed photographic director of the magazine.[300]

Almanacco Letterario Bompiani

Compiling a list of the photography by Munari that appeared in the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani* between 1932 and '37 reveals a body of work with varied degrees of quality, and highlights his simultaneous creation of the different types of photomontage outlined above. The magazine was a special kind of training ground for the artist, given the type of publication it was, the intellectual context in which it was created, and the tastes of the readership of the time. The publication offered a singular mixture of serious and facetious work—something quite rare by the standards of today's literary reviews—with the precise goal of being popular and accessible. As Valentino Bompiani recalled, 'Literature did not make the news. The publication's excessive pleasantness and agreeability were a deliberate attempt at giving the writers a semblance of "citizenship" and presence, to somehow make them seem familiar'.[301] Basically, the *Almanacco Letterario* was a new genre, hovering somewhere 'between journalism and criticism, between information and advertising': in addition to literary reviews and current-events columns, it also gave ample space to cultural topics; and the caricatures, comic vignettes, and photomontages were 'intermezzos' of sorts in which irony and humour were given free reign. The formula was a success, judging from the print runs (quite respectable for the time, between 10 and 15 thousand copies).[302] Its informal style was accentuated beginning with the 1934 edition, with a new octavo format that left ample room for images and photographs.[303] It was precisely this visual aspect that, according to Munari, characterised the *Almanacco*'s look during that period:

> I made an effort to be sure that the image was never just a repetition of the text. I tried to set up a relationship between different images. [I did so] a bit through Dadaist techniques, through contrasts. Also with the techniques Max Ernst used in his collages. One time, for example, I edited the calendar of the year's events [1935]. There was, I remember, a black box with 'New York was left in the dark' written underneath. It was exhausting. For an entire year I had to choose all the most important events in the newspapers, cut them out, and archive the clippings. (…) [In the illustrations] I sought a visual parallel to the textual tone, and I brought these images together and also tried to give them a pleasing, communicative aspect. It is almost the same principle by which one should do a book cover (…). It seems to me that [this type of visual communication] was well received. The public does not distinguish between one type of visual communication and another. Everyone's used to it, it is all over the streets (…).[304]

In the 1933 edition, Munari published a series of photomontages indicative of his eye for a wide variety of formal solutions

299. *L'Ala d'Italia* XIV; 1 (January 1935). 21×28 cm.

300. Filippo Masoero (1894–1969), a member of the Roman Futurists, was a pilot, photographer, set designer, and director. In 1926 he was appointed director of photography and cinematography at the Aeronautical Ministry under Balbo's reign, where he made documentary films and experimented with aerial photography with effects similar to those of aeropainting; he went on to become director of the Istituto LUCE (L'Unione per la Cinematografia Educativa, the Union for Educational Cinematography, the State's film institute, whose acronym also means 'light'). He volunteered in the Ethiopian War, and made magnificent photographic covers for *L'Ala d'Italia* in 1937, which are sometimes incorrectly attributed to Munari (Lista 2001b: 268).

301. Bompiani 1976: 7.

302. Ibid. Cf. Piazzoni 2007: 55–64.

303. Valli 1990: 14, 40, 51. From 1936 on, such free spaces gradually diminished, to the point where the wartime volumes have a much more rigid structure and more serious content (Valli 1990: 22, 39). The 1937 edition, *Almanacco antiletterario*, on the other hand, met with a fair amount of controversy in the specialised press (cf. Valli 1990: 56n).

304. Munari 1976: 10.

and content.[305] Of the dozen compositions
|67| grouped under the title 'Atmosfera 1933' not all carry his actual signature, but their stylistic cohesion and type of humour hint at his hand. Some of them have paired-down compositions based on the juxtaposition of a few photos or photographic fragments (*Anno X°, Che cosa meravigliosa è l'uomo, Sport*), others have pictorial or collage insertions (*Ginevra, Dopo la guerra vien la pace, Arte moderna*), and still others are straightforward photographs with a humorous caption (*Nudismo razionale*). The images' uniqueness lies in their prevalent comic tone, at times vaguely surreal or Dadaist. Regarding their content, on the other hand, the repertoire includes: more or less openly political themes, spanning from a metaphorical celebration of the
|68| regime's accomplishments (*Anno X°, Radio*) to facile satire against the enemies of Fascist Italy (*Che cosa meravigliosa è l'uomo, Hanno eletto Roosevelt, Ginevra*), to explicit war propaganda (*Dopo la guerra vien la pace*); and lighter subjects, which included surprising effects (*Sport, Arte moderna, Sex appeal, Tendenze dell'architettura*) or witty jokes (*Nudismo razionale, Stars*). While the caricatural or disorienting effects were generally created through changes in scale and perspective, in certain instances they come instead from the overlapping of unrelated forms to create interpretative tension: from this viewpoint, the most graphically interesting photomontages are *Sex appeal* and *Tendenze dell'architettura,* which introduced the use of the bivalent object—an outlined shape filled with photographs whose content is read and creates connotations relating back to the object represented in the silhouette (here, the female figure and rationalist architecture).[306] This was an original variant that Munari also deployed in metaphorical and celebratory ways (for example, for *L'Ala d'italia*) but in other cases he used it for highly surprising formal experiments, like a photocollage (from the same period, but reproduced only in *Libro illeggibile 1966*) in which the human forms are 'expanded' through the outline, which is thereby transformed and takes on new shapes.[307]

The contributions to the following volume, whose layout Munari edited—taking full advantage of the new format—include not only photomontages, but also photograms, collages, and the first photographic sequences. The few photomontages stay within the humourous vein, and take aim at the traditionalist tendencies of Italian art. And although they are not signed, many of the visuals interspersed throughout the texts can be attributed to Munari, as they are based on an ironic play between photographs and captions, and include a Dadaesque collage titled *Una vetrina del museo letterario dell'anno 2000*.[308]

305. *Almanacco Letterario 1933*. Milan: Bompiani, 1932. 15.5×20.5 cm. 12 b/w photomontages titled 'Atmosfera 1933': *Anno X°*, *Ginevra* (Munari), *Dopo la guerra vien la pace* (Munari), *Radio* (Manzoni), *Che cosa meravigliosa è l'uomo* (Munari), *Tendenze dell'architettura* (Munari), *Hanno eletto Roosevelt* (photography), *Nudismo razionale* (photography), *Stars* (photography), *Arte moderna* (Munari), *Sex appeal* (Munari), *Sport*.

306. One peculiar characteristic of photomontage is that the photographic elements have a double aspect, as they are first perceived as objects, and then as symbols (John Berger, *The political use of Photomontage*, cit. in Ades 1986: 48).

307. This photomontage is reproduced in a portfolio consisting of loose sheets with photographs of the artist's work, enclosed in *Libro illeggibile*, published by the Galleria dell'obelisco, Rome, 1966 (cf. Maffei 2002: 119).

308. *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1934*. Milan: Bompiani, 1933; cit. Munari contributed three photomontages: *Sogno di Carrà* and *Sogno di Sironi* to accompany the article 'Annata artistica' (88); and the illustration *V Triennale* (91). Also attributable to Munari are a photomontage illustrating the article 'Festa del libro' (19) and the Dadaist collage *Una vetrina del museo letterario dell'anno 2000* (83), as well as various comic illustrations with photographs. The photographic sequence *Vita privata dello scrittore* (33) is also interesting, and likely portrays Munari himself in the act of making the gesture for 'silence' (photographed by Egone), which foreshadows his interest in gesture as a

In addition to the aforementioned legacies of Paladini and Pannaggi—one tied to Russian culture, the other to German culture—and the impact of Moholy-Nagy's book, Milanese artists stayed abreast of European artistic advances in the 1920s through numerous avant-garde magazines tied to Dadaism and constructivism that were distributed in Italian artistic circles (from the Hungarian *Ma* to the Polish *Blok*), as well as through commercial publications from the advertising sector (like *Das Plakat*).[309] At the beginning of the 1930s echoes of the Berlin photomontage exhibition mounted in 1931 by Domela probably reached Milan, as did word of other shows organised by members of the ring Neue Werbegestalter (New Advertising Designers),[310] who used photomontage not only in their sculptural and visual experiments, but even more often in their advertising work—even if it is hard to say exactly how much of the commercial work by Domela, Zwart, Schuitema, Baumeister, and Burchartz actually trickled all the way to Italy. What is certain is that in Italy—with the exception of theoretical texts, for which language was a virtually insurmountable barrier—reproductions remained the main vehicle through which people stayed informed.

So, from his first experiments with costructivism (an approach he continued to use in situations tied to propaganda), Munari passed with ease into working with conceptual photocollage, which was more flexible and adaptable to the allusive type of illustration the press often requested, and took more or less frequent dips into the bordering realms of the photogram and of collage. After taking a slight break from the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1935*—in which his role was limited to the layout and a few drawings—in the 1936 edition Munari returned to photomontage with renewed imaginative vigour.[311] The unique aspect of these new compositions, done in a clearly surrealist style, was the evident degree of maturity he had reached in combining heterogeneous elements and accentuating their dreamlike atmosphere, thanks also to his pictorial definition of space (in contrast to his earlier collage on a plain white ground). The collection also includes

form of language, further developed in the book *Supplemento al dizionario italiano*, published in 1958 in a non-commercial edition by Carpano (later reissued by Muggiani in 1963) [*Speak Italian: The Fine Art of the Gesture*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005]

309. The magazine *Ma* (1919–25) founded and directed by Lajos Kassak with Moholy-Nagy, was the mouthpiece of the main currents in modern European art, with many reproductions; Szczuka's photomontages appeared in *Blok* (1924–26), published by the eponymous group of artists (Strzeminsky, Szczuka, Berlewi); *Das Plakat*, which was internationally distributed, published many Dada photomontages (regarding avant-garde periodicals of the interwar years, see Bury 2008; cf. Ades 1986: 37, 116–8, 156). Lista insisted on the influence of Mieczysław Berman (1903–1975), a Polish artist who used photomontage as a means of personal expression (id. 1985: 11–2; id. 2001b: 220). However, that hypothesis is not very credible, insofar as—riffing on Heartfield's work—Berman did realist photomontages focussing on social issues. Despite some formal similarities in his first constructivist photomontages (published in the literary magazine 1930), it is unclear how Munari could have known his work, at least before the postwar period: the first exhibition of Berman's photomontages actually took place in Warsaw in 1936, with the Czapka frygijska (Phrygian Cap) group, while from 1930 on his attention shifted to realistic photomontage focussed on social satire. Furthermore, the formal resemblances can also be explained in light of the two artists' shared points of reference: Lissitsky, Rodchenko, Klutsis, and Moholy-Nagy. On Berman see *Mieczysław Berman* 1973.

310. Two exhibitions at the Gewerbemuseum in Basel, *Ausstellung Neue Typographie* (1928) and *Neue Werbegraphik* (1930) were among the most important in terms of public attendance, illustrated catalogue publication, and (last but not least) their geographic proximity to Milan. Cf. Hollis 2006: 41–2; Lavin 1992: 39–41.

311. V. Bompiani et al. (ed.), *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1936*. Milan: Bompiani, 1935. 21×28.5 cm, paperback, pp. (lvii) 112 (2). Munari oversaw the layout and contributed some photomontages and collages. The two photomontages are titled Il pubblico che fotografa (48): in the first image, a photo of a Greco-Roman statue and a lion wearing eyeglasses are set against a background of a branch-like structure (a negative print of tree branches); in the second, a representation of the vascular system is placed in front of a female figure playing golf.

a series of photomontages by Erberto Carboni (others were included in the 1937 edition), whose visual language appears at first to have many points in common with Munari's work, and can be traced back to the same models. Yet, comparing their compositions, a fundamental difference between the two artists becomes evident: compared to the minimalism of Munari's compositions, Carboni's not only have a more technically polished look, but they also have a more orderly structure, as well as a greater degree of control over the compositional, photographic, and typographic elements—and often include classical elements similar to those in the work of Bayer and Agha.[312] Munari, for his part, never seems to give up his natural inclination for ironic playfulness and disorientation, created by the subtle incoherence of juxtaposition, and it is precisely this aspect that sets him apart from other artists working with photomontage.

> The taste for graphic techniques has always been a kind of picklock for me, a tool for trying my hand at other, more articulated and composite expressive forms and instruments (…) As for my work in publishing (…) my first commissions came from Bompiani for their first issues of the famous *Almanacco letterario*. I continued to work for that publication for a long time, producing results that were unanimously considered absolutely brilliant.[313]

To get a sense of Munari's developed command of this medium (outside of the publishing realm), all it takes is a short look through an extraordinary, one-off docu- |70| ment titled *Le forze ignote dell'anima*, which was recently rediscovered.[314] This is a small, square-format book composed solely of colour photomontages; the compositions consist of photographic and typographic clippings taken from period prints, without any manual interventions, and are set up in a long sequence, with photomontages covering one and sometimes two pages. In its present condition it is impossible to determine whether this was a dummy for a publication that was never realised, a storyboard for an animated film, or perhaps a personal divertissement made for a friend. Certainly—judging by the variety and dynamism of the compositions, subtly balanced along the thin line between formal experimentation and surreal humour—these photomontages are absolutely among Munari's best work. They mine the artist's most highly original vein, and can be considered among the most successful examples of the art of photomontage in Italy.

The same is true of the following *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani 1937*, |72| in which everything, including the cover, is characterised by the good-humoured polemical tone of a call for a return to seriousness, a natural consequence of the surrounding political climate.[315] Munari, who was again one of the editors, contributed a notable

312. Scudiero 1997: xxii. The same is true of the photomontages produced by the architecture group BBPR (one appears in the 1935 *Almanacco*, while others were exhibited at the Galleria del Milione in January '37 in the Mostra insolita di Arte Grafica e Fotografica; see Pontiggia 1988: 22–3). Other artists working in photomontage in a comic or surreal vein similar to Munari's were Carlo Manzoni and Ezio D'Errico (a contributor to *L'Ala d'italia* and editor of the typography magazine *Graphicus*).

313. Munari in Borelli 1993: 110.

314. *Le forze ignote dell'anima*. Unique copy, with original collages. 19×18 cm, pp.48, stapled-bound. Now in the archives of the Istituto Internazionale di Studi sul Futurismo (ISISUF), Milan. A few spreads are reproduced in Maffei 2008: 52–3.

315. Emilio Radius, Dino Buzzati, Bruno Munari, Valentino Bompiani (ed.), *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani 1937*. Milan: Bompiani, 1936. 21×28.5 cm, paperback, pp.236. Munari's photomontages include: *Antidiluviani* (117), *Basta con la letteratura ortopedica* (119), *Basta con la letteratura da pianeti della fortuna* (121), *Basta con la letteratura da vin santo* (123), *Basta con la letteratura pullman* (125), *Che manchi davvero qualcosa al mio sistema?* (126), *Poeti* (127), *Nuove trame poetiche* (128), *Un ignobile genere letterario* (129), *Situazione della letteratura galante* (130, for the text 'Radio mattutina'), *La nostra radio quotidiana* (131), *Fuori l'autore* (132, for the article 'L'uomo

number of photomontages, photographic sequences, and collages, as well as the cover illustration. His photomontages in particular, which take aim at purportedly lightweight literary genres, are distinguished by their refined comic style (also evident in other work from the same period), and were made with an almost surrealistic collage technique. The main series has a background made up of newspaper clippings and other printed matter, on top of which he has created juxtapositions of photographs and illustrations whose meaning is completed by an ironic title, inserted into the composition within a black ribbon. The second series, alternated with the first, is instead based on the juxtaposition of titles and curious images. Even if in some cases these illustrations were made to accompany articles, generally speaking the full-page photomontages were no longer subordinates of the written texts; rather, the image-based contributions had by now assumed a parallel function within the publication, and were on par with the text-based contributions, to such an extent that even the figurative arts reviews (overseen by Carboni) had a purely visual execution.

Surrealist collage

Another significant innovation of Munari's contributions to the '36 *Almanacco* is a col-
|71| lage titled 'Film documentario dell'anno 1935' which is a succession of small images created with clippings from old line illustrations.[316] The importance of this long strip, which ironically comments on the salient events of the year, lies precisely in the technically innovative use of collage—which is doubtless due to the influence of Ernst, to whom Munari seems to have paid explicit homage, much as he did with the small collage included in the 1937 edition.[317] Indeed, collage was the medium in which Munari did a great number of illustrations (at least up until 1939), primarily for *L'Ala d'Italia* and *La Lettura*. Aside from Ernst's earliest photographic collages, which had been shown at the Galleria del Milione in January of '32, Munari's photocollages also drew inspiration from his romans-collage, *La femme 100 têtes* (1929) and *La petite fille qui rêvait d'entrer au Carmel* (1930), which could be viewed and bought at the gallery, and introduced the idea of using old print clichés as an expressive material.[318] Next to Ernst, Munari also likely took inspiration from the Feuillets inutiles of the French artist Jacques Maret, which was a unique poetry magazine intermittently published beginning in 1928 and

che viveva dei diritti d'autore', with drawings by Ricas) and, toward the back of the volume (after another series of photomontages by Carboni), *Carriera letteraria a 40 anni* (178) and *Cinema americano* (179). Cf. Valli 1990: 53; Piazzoni 2007: 62–3.

316. *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1936*, cit. The main collage, 'Film documentario dell'anno 1935' (19–28) consists of the series: *Nascita dell'anno 1935, Punti nevralgici d'Europa, In Germania, Il Giappone ha un appetito da Gargantua, La corsa agli armamenti, La delinquenza è in aumento, Intelligence service, La crisi fa un viaggio, Le pitture italiane a Parigi, Venizelos arriva a Napoli con i suoi non-Ministri, Inchiesta sulla fabbricazione di armi a Washington, Wotan aspetta la sua ora…, Lindbergh inventa il cuore artificiale, I pesci in fondo al mare si abituano all'uso del caffè, A Hollywood: nozze e divorzio, Inchiesta su San Giuseppe, Meteorologia delle stelle del cinema, La moda è questione di busti, Merci giapponesi in Mediterraneo*. Other comic collages were made for the article 'Peccati letterari' (42–3) and the volume also included a graphic scherzo titled *Finito di correggere le bozze dell'Almanacco, ho scritto una lettera d'amore* (99).

317. *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani 1937*, cit.: 63 for Enrico Sacchetti's article 'Niente da dire'.

318. '3 Pittori di Parigi: Jean Lurçat, Max Ernst, Louis Marcoussis', Galleria del Milione, 9–21 January 1932 (cf. Pontiggia 1988: 104). The collages, two of which appeared in *Fotoauge*, were exhibited for the first time at the Galerie Sans Pareil in Paris in 1921. The magazine *La révolution surréaliste* (1924–29) was also a likely source of inspiration for Milanese artists, not so much for photomontage (which, outside of Ernst, was not much used by the surrealists), as much as for experimental photography (photograms, solarisations, double prints, and double exposures); in any case, Ernst's collages were reproduced in the final issue (Ades 1986: 116–8). On Ernst's collages, see Spies 1991, and Aragon 1930.

was repeatedly presented in *Arts et Métiers Graphiques*: Maret's collage illustrations, made from found papers of all sorts, were modelled on the Dadaist taste for visual play as an end in itself, nonsense, and surprise, in both the images and the selection of poetic texts they accompanied.[319] The work of Ernst and Maret showed Munari how—unlike with photography, but rather by combining fragments from an unusual or past visual realm (independent of their literal meaning)—one could create the semantic paradox or ambiguity that, transposed into the everyday context of printed periodicals, readily lend themselves to comic play and humour. Thus, in the very same publishing world in which he had created allusive and propagandist photomontages, from the mid-thirties on the hybrid visual language of photocollage allowed him—in an increasingly suffocating political and cultural climate, as exemplified by the rapid shift in tone of the *Almanacco* after '36—to eke out a nonconformist space in which he could express his natural ironic and detached attitude.[320]

Regarding the boldly surrealist bent of the juxtapositions, some of the photomon- |73| tages Munari published in *L'Ala d'Italia* between 1933 and '34 could be read as previews of his upcoming work as an illustrator, which appeared for the first time in 1935.[321] A refined, clearly surrealist-inspired |76| composition published in *L'Ufficio Moderno* is from the same period, albeit from a different field.[322] Already in these early, particularly successful attempts one can see his formal preferences for mechanical structures (machines, motors, looms) and organic structures, which frequently returned in his work, in the most varied configurations. Aside from the mechanical theme, which clearly came from Futurism, no other personal subjects appear in this work, nor is there any sign of eroticism (which was an essential aspect of even Ernst's work) or engagement in social rather than political issues: instead, there is a degree of convergence with the graphic language of some cartoonists associated with *Bertoldo* and *Settebello*—Mosca, Manzoni, Guareschi—united by their use of period typographic collage material for their vignettes. Such mannered and emphatic forms, associated with *fin de siècle* bourgeois traditions—and therefore good alternatives to the bombastic rhetoric of the regime—took on a highly ironic charge in the vignettes. Similarly, in Munari's photocollages the strange combinations of forms and styles, often accompanied by piercing captions, could be compared to witty jokes, as they offer a humourous openness not through comic illustration but rather through the technique of photomontage—much as Moholy-Nagy had predicted.[323] Yet in this case an examination

319. See Max Jacob, 'Feuillets inutiles' in *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* no.38 (November 1933): 34–7 and Jean-Marc Campagne, 'Papiers collés de Jacques Maret', ivi no.45 (février 1935): 61.

320. After the call for a return to order in the 1937 edition, and the monographic issue dedicated to Pirandello (1938), the breezy tones that had characterised the *Almanacco* in the early 1930s began to dim, and the space given to photography and comic illustration was reduced to make way for the adoption of a more serious tone in keeping with the regime's totalitarian, war-mongering evolution (Piazzoni 2007: 62–3).

321. *L'Ala d'Italia* XII; 10 (October 1933): 43–5 (P.M. Bardi, 'Volare: pensieri e casi'); ivi XIII; 12 (December 1934): 51–6 (Adone Nosari, 'Mezzo pratico per non divenire aviatore'); ivi XIV; 3 (March 1935): 18–9 (Farinata degli Uberti, 'Eliche e parole'), 31–3 (Emanuele Recchia, 'Cos'è il "numero di ottano"'), 55–57 (Menka [Igino Mencarelli], 'Passeggeri–Propaganda'); ivi XIV; 4 (April 1935): 33–36 (Federigo Valli, 'Volerà o non volerà?'). Some compositions from 1935 were made and signed together with Ricas.

322. *L'Ufficio Moderno* X; 5 (May 1935): 238, for the column 'Consensi e dissensi'. Tanchis emphasises the frequent 'mechanical' representation of the human body in photomontages and collages, where it appeared in the form of anatomical diagrams, one of whose sources he identifies as a medical atlas with plates on transparent acetate (Tanchis 1987: 14).

of the circumstances leads one to see that it was Munari's work that had an influence on his colleagues at *Bertoldo*, and not vice versa (as they shared friendships as well as professional relationships).[324]

Even without occupying an exclusive spot within his larger versatile œuvre, Munari's work on collage illustrations hovering between the surreal and the humourous intensified in 1936, in particular in *L'Ala d'Italia*, where they were included alongside more straightforward visuals as well. In general, they illustrated literary texts (autobiographical memoirs, articles about customs and lifestyle), and more rarely popular science or technical texts. Even where the single images do not have any particular value or appear to be too
|75| stylistically different[325] a degree of cohesiveness is guaranteed by the conceptual uniformity of the whole, which acts as a bemused and complementary commentary to the readings. The best examples are nevertheless those in which the image is not only surprising but also has its own precise iconic strength, like the collage titled
|74| *Poeta incompreso* (Misunderstood Poet), published along with many other images in the October/November 1936 issue. The image depicts a radial engine suspended in a cloud-covered sky; on the lower right is a human bust (represented by an anatomical diagram), over which is placed a box with poetic verses aluding to the moon as 'aereo (…) astro d'argento [che] naviga il firmamento' (aerial/airplane … silver star that navigates the firmament): the play on words, with 'aereo' as both adjective (aerial) and noun (airplane), and the title's allusion provide the key with which to read the composition, which basically associates the role of the pilot to that of the poet.[326]

The surrealist style of Munari's collages with prints and photographic clippings grows even stronger toward the end of the decade; they continued to accompany articles with a relatively lightweight tone, for which he produced brilliantly concise and humourous images, like the series for 'La retorica del primo amore', evidently an homage to Ernst and Maret, the double article 'Realismo ed egocentrismo' and
|77| 'Tipi e temperamenti', and 'L'aeroplano innamorato', which proved the variety of his repertoire, in addition to being his last documented collaboration with *L'Ala d'Italia*.[327] By 1938, in response to the changing cultural and political climate, the magazine was returning to the use of more sober

323. Moholy-Nagy: 'Les humoristes de l'avenir ne travailleront vraisemblablement plus à partir de dessins mais à partir de photoplastiques' (from 'Fotografie ist Lichtgestaltung' in *Bauhaus* no.1 (Dessau, Januar 1928: 2–9), cit.

324. Guareschi used various collage techniques, ranging from drawing on photographs to photocollage, paper sculptures and stage sets, collage with clippings from old publications (almanacs, catalogues, papiers trouvés) which he then reused in his vignettes and as visual headers and footers for columns; Mosca also worked in a similar fashion, inserting period illustrations and photographs into his vignettes, often as a [visual] equivalent of the bourgeois world evoked in his intentionally affected prose; Manzoni also assimilated Steinberg's graphic manner, and in certain respects up until the mid-1930s he was highly influenced by Munari. Cf. Mangini, Pallottino 1994: 68–9, 82, 89, 99, 105.

325. Like in 'Aggiunte al vocabolario delle idee fulminanti…' in *L'Ala d'Italia* xv; 5 (May 1936): 59–63; 'La convivenza nello spazio' ivi xv; 7 (July 1936): 51–5; and 'L'uomo-ora e la strategia della produzione' ivi xv; 8 (August 1936): 13–16.

326. *L'Ala d'Italia* xv; 10–11 (October/November 1936). This issue contained numerous photo illustrations with colour photomontages (48^1, 120^1, 248^1, 312^1), full-page and smaller b/w photomontages (56, 78, 136, 152, 189, 191, 212, 213, 254); and a colour photomontage by Ricas (32^1). The compositions provide an inventory of sorts of the styles of Munari's photomontages: surrealist photocollages (*Poeta incompreso, C'è chi vola e c'è chi sta a terra*); photographic mosaics (*Forme della natura oppure natura delle forme*); photographic clippings inserted into illustrations (*Volo notturno, Il paracadute*) or into fine-art reproductions (*Invito al turismo*); and straightforward photomontages (*Precisione costruttiva, Sanzioni*).

327. In *L'Ala d'Italia* xviii; 1 (January 1938): 63–6; ivi xviii; s/n (1 December 1938): 25–6; ivi xx; 1 (1–15 January 1939): 57–60; ivi xx; 10 (1–15 May 1939): 41–47, respectively. Cf. Silk 1989: [9]: '[These] illustrations address a variety of issues and most are humorous, many with verbal-visual puns, some slyer and cleverer than others'.

graphics—first changing the masthead, then the cover, abandoning photography in favour of more traditional illustrations, and finally the interior illustrations, where photocollage replaced photomontage. Yet the end of Munari's collaboration with that magazine also coincided with his transition to art director of Mondadori's periodical division, which took place in early 1939. Thereafter, the original graphic approach of his humourous collages was taken up by other illustrators (including Canevacci, D'Errico, Ricci, and Guerra).

The association between surrealist illustration and light-hearted content also fit the bourgeois tenor of *La Lettura*, the magazine affiliated with the *Corriere della Sera*, which Munari began a long collaboration with in 1936. Once it had abandoned all references to constructivism, and was no longer chained to the directives of official rhetoric, his imagination freely expressed itself in
|78| photocollages that bordered between the ironic and the surreal, which became his characteristic style during this later period. In addition to designing the covers and the popular science articles he wrote, his graphic contributions can also be seen in almost every issue through late 1939, and his surprising images not only accompany articles, but also distinguished some of the
|79| column headings, like the fantastic 'Giochi, enigmi, bizzarrie'.[328]

Photomosaics

While in Europe photomontage had become a form of visual expression the public was accustomed to,[329] in 1930s Italy the montage technique still inspired some perplexity and reserve. Especially in the variants more closely tied to constructivism, it was viewed with increasing annoyance in intellectual circles, such that after its early success in the press, photomontage lived on in blander, more comic, and therefore less perturbing forms.[330] One exception to this general state was the field of exhibition design, which ever since the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution) in '32 had assimilated—under a different ideological guise, of course—the work of the Russian constructivists.[331] Therefore, in the field related

328. See, for example, *La Lettura* XXXVI; 11 (November 1936): 901–7 (G. Titta Rosa, 'Panorama della poesia italiana d'oggi'); ivi XXXVII; 6 (June 1937): 552–7 (Luigi Barzini jr., 'L'attesa dell'amore-passione nella società americana'); ivi XXXIX; 3 (March 1939): 283–7 (Ettore Allodoli, 'Parole moribonde e frasi fatte'); ivi XXXIX; 4 (April 1939): 317–20 (Dott. Andrea Doni, 'Splendore e decadenza dello svenimento').

329. In relation to the widespread presence and banality of the 'photomosaics' of the 1937 Exposition Universelle in Paris, Lavin records the opinions of Gisele Freund ('La photographie à l'Exposition' in *Arts et métiers graphiques*, no.62, March 1938: 37–41) and Amadée Ozenfant (in *Cahier d'art*, 1937: 242) (Lavin 1992: 35).

330. Although this refers mainly to the intellectuals linked to the regime, who supported its strong nationalism, it must not be forgotten that the Italian culture of the period was dominated by the idealism of Benedetto Croce: see Munari's statement: 'In those years Croce had significant influence, so the idea of thinking culture could also be made through visual images could have been irritating to some' (Munari 1976: 10).

331. Organized in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the Fascist march on Rome, the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* is a prime example of the regime's propagandist efforts. Set up in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni on via Nazionale in Rome, it opened the 28 October 1932 and remained open continuously for two years, with extraordinary public attendance (over 4 million visitors). Conceived of and directed by Dino Alfieri, who was affiliated with the Istituto di cultura fascista (Fascist Cultural Institute) in Milan, the exhibition reviewed the timeline of the 'revolution' beginning with the party's seizure of power in 1922 and illustrated the social and economic organization of the Fascist state. The monumental installations in various galleries combined to create a path made expressly to have a strong emotional impact on visitors through a modern use of architecture, photography, graphic design, and wall decoration never before seen in Italy. Its execution—carried out primarily by Sironi and the rationalist architects Terragni, Nizzoli, Libera, and De Renzi, with contributions from artists of various currents (including the Futurists Prampolini and Dottori)—was strongly influenced by Futurist and constructivist work, El Lissitsky's in particular, whose Soviet pavilion Sironi had seen at the 1928 *Pressa* Exhibition in Cologne (Schnapp 2003: 17–60;

to the major exhibitions promoted by the regime, photography and photomontage in particular held onto their relevance thanks to their role in propaganda. As early
|80| as 1933 Munari had created a large photomosaic for the Aeronautical Press pavilion at the V Triennale, probably thanks to his relationship with *L'Ala d'italia*.[332] For the VI Triennale in 1936, Munari collaborated with the architect Piero Bottoni on the installation of the Sezione Internazionale di Urbanistica (International Urban Plan-
|81| ning section), creating a large photomosaic diorama dedicated to the themes of urban planning, housing, production and distribution, transportation, and other aspects of collective living.[333] The photomosaic consisted of six panels, each of which featured a collage of photographs whose borders faded into one another to form a complex image in which the information-based and emotion-based aspects balance one another. Later on these compositions, with the addition of captions printed on translucent paper, were included in Botto-
|82| ni's book *Urbanistica*, published in 1938.[334] Munari was certainly aware not only of Paul Citroen's experiments in collage at the Bauhaus,[335] but also the famous *Tavola degli orrori* (Table of horrors) which Bardi exhibited at the Second MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale, Italian Movement for Rational Architecture) exhibition in 1931 and showed again sometime later at the Galleria del Milione.[336] Setting such precedents aside, and despite the fact that photomosaic remains a unique case in Munari's larger body of work, his experience with it nevertheless proves his willingness and ability to try out the expressive possibilities of every artistic medium.

Photograms and other experiments

Toward the end of the 1920s, Veronesi and Grignani were the main Italian artists to experiment with the technical manipulation of photographic negatives and prints, as well as the expressive possibilities of the photogram—the luminous image obtained

Kirk 2005: 88–92; Fraquelli 1995: 131; Coen 1995: 179n; Malvano 1988: 159–161; and http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Mostra_della_Rivoluzione_Fascista, last accessed December 2010).

332. The attribution to Munari is based on a short note in *L'Ala d'Italia* XII, 7–8: 108 (July/August 1933) (Di Corato 2008: 225). A portion of Munari's photomontages is almost certainly the one now in the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, New York/Bologna; reproduced in Pellegrini 2009: 21 (incorrectly credited to a brochure).

333. The photomosaic was mounted to the walls of the hemicycle, below a long title in relief ('L'urbanistica studia e risolve i problemi relativi' in uppercase sanserif letters), while a low wall separating a raised platform overlooking the main floor featured photographic enlargements of an eye with a mirror reflecting the diorama inserted into the pupil; this 'quip' was accompanied by photographs highlighting the main problems identified by urban planning studies. In the same section, Munari also made a large abstract mosaic composition (*Guida della VI Triennale*. s/l: s/n, 1936[2]: 48–51; see Zannier 1978: 62).

334. Piero Bottoni. *Urbanistica*. Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1938. This volume was part of the series Quaderni della Triennale, directed by Giuseppe Pagano; the layout was overseen by the architect Antonio Marchi (Zannier 1978: 62).

335. Paul Citroen (1896–1983), Dutch painter, photographer, and teacher. Born and raised in Berlin, he was in touch with Herbert Walden's artistic milieu, and made the first collages in the 'City' series in 1919; he attended the Weimar Bauhaus from 1922 to '25, where he made other photomontages, including the well known *Metropolis* (1923), exhibited at the Bauhaus Ausstellung that same year and included in Moholy-Nagy's *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*. Cf. Ades 1986: 99–100.

336. Pietro Maria Bardi (1900–1999), journalist, critic, gallerist. After the war he founded the Museum of Modern Art in Saõ Paulo. He ran the exhibition space in via Brera, which at the end of 1930 went to the Ghiringhelli brothers and was renamed Galleria del Milione. He moved to Rome, and opened his own gallery in the via Veneto in March 1931, where he mounted the Second MIAR exhibition, in an attempt to validate rationalist architecture as a response to the regime's renewal program (Crispolti 1986: 44). In that show, Bardi exhibited his famous *Tavola degli orrori*, a large photomontage that ridiculed the architectural eclecticism of the late nineteenth century and the classicism of architects like Marcello Piacentini. The controversy that inevitably ensued was presented, in an exhibition curated by the architects Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini, at the Galleria del Milione in June 1931 (Belli in *Anni Creativi al Milione* 1980: 17–9; Pontiggia 1988: 51; Benton 1995: 39).

without a camera, through the direct contact of objects with light-sensitive paper. Although somewhat less systematic, experiments similar to those carried out by Moholy-Nagy, Man Ray, and, of course, his friend Veronesi led Munari to try it as well. We do not know exactly when he began, but his early photograms were published almost simultaneously in early '34 in the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani*, *Natura*, and *L'Ufficio Moderno*, and others continued to be published up until '37.[337] From the published material it does not seem Munari had extensive experience with the medium, as it appeared intermittently as illustration (and more rarely as an image used in advertising graphics), but judging from the few reproduced examples it seems he had a reasonable degree of technical competence (albeit not on a particularly high level, especially when compared to the work of Veronesi) which suggests he had a fair amount of darkroom experience.

|84| |85|

The two photograms published in the |83| 1934 *Almanacco* are a figurative synthesis of two reviewed novels that, stylistically dissimilar as they are, lend themselves to interpretation in photograms (Campanile's for its absurd humour, Masino's for the magical realism of its childhood recollections).[338] The images are the fruit of experimentation aimed at creating poetic, dreamily atmospheric landscapes, which in this case is a direct transposition of the narrative.[339] The photograms appear to be made through placing cut-out masks and small objects (twigs, pieces of fabric, wristwatch parts) directly (or on a pane of glass) on the paper, and minimal graphic interventions then completed the picture. Working through 'analogous transposition', in this case Munari's approach is almost the opposite of Moholy-Nagy's abstract experiments, and is closer to the magical atmospheres of Man Ray, focussed on the enigmatic character of the light-related manipulation of objects. Yet, as Filiberto Menna preceptively noted, 'contrary to the techniques of the Dadaists and surrealists, Munari is not looking to capture the incongruous or the nonsensical, nor mysterious fantasy—rather, he wants to create, once again, fabulous, bright, limpid worlds pervaded by a vein of cheerful irony'.[340] The critic is referring in particular to the photograms published in an article in the January 1934 issue of *Natura*, many of which effectively express that magical feel.[341] However—and it is not surprising, given his fundamental openness—Munari did not limit his work to this one approach

337. Munari's first photogram experiments date back to 1932: see the profile reproduced in the exhibition catalogue from the Galleria dell'Obelisco, Rome, 1966, in which both Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy are explicitly named; see also Munari's interview edited by Quintavalle in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 27. Lista (1985: 128) situates the photograms in a phase that predates the photomontages, but such a reconstruction is disproven by the chronological dates of the reproductions. Munari combined photography and old turn-of-the-century illustrations in his photomontages only in the latter half of the 1930s.

338. The forms created by light inevitably evoke cosmic space; Moholy-Nagy had already faced the same issue, and was careful to avoid any verisimilitude in his compositions (cf. Molderings 2009: 23 and Heyne 2009: 29).

339. *Radiografia del libro: 'Amiamoci in fretta' di Campanile* (59) and *Radiografia del libro: 'Periferia' di Paola Masino* (61) in *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1934*, cit. The first image shows a small boat suspended by balloons near a black moon above an urban landscape; the second shows a wall diagonally dividing the scene, with trees in both the foreground and background, and the moon and a few clouds standing out against the sky.

340. Filiberto Menna, 'Munari o la coincidenza degli opposti' in *La botte e il violino* no.3 (Rome, 1966), reprod. in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 70–5. Menna's essay is one of the few critical contributions of use to design historians. Cf. also Zannier 1978: 70–1; Paoli 1999: 118; Molderings 2009: 15–25.

341. Carlo Manzoni, 'Munari palombaro della fantasia' in *Natura* VII; 1 (January 1934): 42–3. Six photograms illustrate the text: *Suoni, Paesaggio sulla collina, Un pianeta tra gli alberi, Costellazioni, Natura, Umidità dell'aria*, some of which are also reproduced in *L'Ufficio Moderno* in 'Quattro nuove (naturalmente!) interpretazioni futuriste' (IX; 3, March 1934: 168–9).

to the photogram: there is another group of compositions that date back to the same period yet use no such imitative effects. They reflect his investigation of compositional, light-based experimentation with abstract forms—in other words, with the basic possibilities of the photographic process—and in that respect are faithful to Moholy–Nagy's experimental approach.[342] In any case, it is a limited number of photograms.[343]

In 1936, again in *Natura*, Munari published a photogram titled *Fra due mondi*, which hints at a new direction that was partially related to his previous work with surreal landscapes, but now use exclusively organic forms (plant bits, insects, mineral fragments).[344] Similar photograms were published a few months later to accompany an article Munari himself wrote for *La Lettura*.[345] These experiments not only signal his new interest in natural textures, but, specifically with regard to photographic media, looked back to the late nineteenth-century photographic impressions made without a camera, by placing plant forms directly on the light-sensitive support.[346]

Finally, another photographic procedure with formal parallels to the photogram that Munari tried out, however briefly, is also worth mention: negative printing, or the inversion of the image made from a slide. Aside from its occasional presence in his photomontages, just one composition of this type is known, and was published in 1943 to accompany one of his articles in *Fotografare*,[347] while a second, similar image appeared in 1944 in *Fotocronache*.[348]

Munari also used photographic means, albeit only occasionally, for magazine covers (aside from the specific context of *L'Ala d'Italia*), with results that not only attest to his constant visual investigations, but also elude any risk of repetitiveness. An early, highly original image for *Natura* dates all the way back to late '32, and shows a close-up of a knit fabric, which then transforms into an abstract motif and material texture, within which the title was created, much like an inversion, by cutting the letters out of another photograph.[349] His

342. Moholy-Nagy: 'Les photogrammes doivent être créés à partir de leurs moyens propres et premiers, leur composition ne faire apparaître et ne signifier rien d'autre qu'eux mêmes' (from 'Fotoplastiche Reklame' in *Offset Buch und Werbekunst* no.7, 1926: 386–94, cit).

343. *Suoni, Umidità dell'aria, Costellazioni reproduced* in the cited issues of *Natura* and *L'Ufficio Moderno*, as well as *Alcool* (where it was also reproduced).

344. *Natura* IX; 11–12 (November–December 1936): 64. The image depicts two stylised human figures of different sizes on a background made with the veins of a leaf and other linear plant parts. Regarding Man Ray, Munari seems to have preferred organic forms with imprecise outlines.

345. Bruno Munari, 'Che cosa sono i fotogrammi e come si fanno' in *La Lettura* XXXVII; 4 (April 1937): 352–5. In the article (which takes up ideas from similar writings by Moholy-Nagy, cf. *UHU*, 1928 and *Kinematograph*, 1929) Munari summarily yet clearly explains his technical procedure, emphasising its aesthetic value: 'The photogram is a new artistic medium that can be grouped with woodcut, drypoint, monotype, etc., but it is closer to the modern sensibility because it is full of unexpected effects. When you make photograms, you view the world in transparency'. In addition to his *Due insetti su un pezzo di mica* and *Insetto e fili d'erba*, the article also features photograms by Ricas, the wife of architect Luigi Figini, and Dilma (Munari's wife).

346. This refers to the 'photogenic drawings' of William Henry Fox Talbot (1835–1839). In the nineteenth century, photographic procedures without the use of the camera were used solely for documentary or entertainment purposes, not as artistic procedures (cf. Molderings 2009: 16–7). During this same period Veronesi was also interested in photographic experiments with organic materials.

347. Bruno Munari, 'Fotografie col pennello' in *Numero unico: Fotografare*, Milan: Agfa Foto, February 1943: 9–11. 16×23 cm. This was a unique issue sent only to subscribers to complete (along with another unique issue of Pose Istantanee) the final year of the magazine *Note Fotografiche*, which ended with the 10 April 1942 issue by ministerial decree. In addition to Munari's photographs, the article is illustrated with a reversed print by Albe Steiner.

348. Bruno Munari, *Fotocronache. Dall'isola dei tartufi al qui pro quo*. Milan: Editoriale Domus, 1944: 72. These are clearly two shots from the same series, given that the contain practically the same objects, many of which are in the same position relative to the others.

349. *Natura* V; 11–12 (November/December 1932). 26×34 cm (cf. Di Corato 2008: 220).

|41| photomontage for the cover of *La Lettura* in the summer of 1937 was no less stunning, and once again exhibits his interest in material perception and the synthetic capabilities of a sophisticated conceptual image.[350] Lastly, at the other extreme of the broad repertoire of manipulations photomontage underwent in Munari's hands, |91| the cover for the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1938* is worth special mention. This was a monographic issue dedicated to the passing of Luigi Pirandello, and featured a photomontage created through overlapping on top of a portrait of the writer, in a visual translation of the Pirandellian myth of characters in search of an author.[351]

The amateur aspect of a parallel photographic practice (shared by many artists of that generation) allowed Munari to follow his surrealist inclinations even in photographic portraiture, with the most original |88| outcome being a series of humourous self-portraits in absurd costumes, apparently taken in a rural setting, perhaps on visits to his family in Badia Polesine.[352] Munari took constant pleasure in playing in front of the lens, even in the postwar period, and sometimes did so with photographer friends like Patellani and Ballo. At the same time Munari carried out abstract experiments begun with his work in the photogram, which were quite close to the work |92| of his friend Veronesi: one such work, *Studio per film astratto*—a colour photograph of moving objects (probably one of his useless machines)—was included in *Fotografia*, the annual published by Domus in 1943.[353]

From propaganda to documentary style

The propagandist photomontages Munari made for *L'Ala d'Italia* deserve separate consideration, and were largely inspired by constructivist models. The magazine, which primarily dealt with technical issues, awards, and aeronautical events, targeted a diverse readership consisting of military staff and aviation enthusiasts, and the unbreakable link between aviation and Fascism is reflected in the nationalistic tone of its content.[354] Because of its obvious modern connotations, flight was an important meeting point with Futurism—just think

350. *La Lettura* XXXVII; 7 (July 1937). 19×28 cm.

351. *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1938*. Milan: Bompiani, 1937. 21×28 cm, paperback, pp.(lxiv) 160. Munari is amongst the many compilers, along with Zavattini and Bompiani, Corrado Alvaro, Raffaele Di Muro, Stefano Landi, Guido Piovene, and Mario Robertazzi. In addition to the cover (a duotone print), he did the layout, which is sober and classical but also articulated, with a few asymmetrical openings.

352. Based on information provided by the artist, Tanchis confirms that Munari enjoyed dressing up in costume and taking such photographs when he returned to Badia Polesine on holiday, where he also photographed friends and relatives, around the mid-thirties. Although occasionally reproduced in works on his career (Aldo Tanchis, in conversation with author, December 2007 and January 2008; see also the catalogue *Bruno Munari. Opere 1930–1986* (edited by Meneguzzo); Lichtenstein, Häberli 1995; *Ricostruzione teorica di un artista 1996*) the photographs were never published, with the exception of a portrait of his brother Giordano, included in *Fotocronache*): the originals belong to the Munari family, but a few prints can be found in the archives of the Fondazione Ferrania 3M in Milan.

353. Ermanno Federico Scopinich, Alfredo Ornano, Albe Steiner (ed.), *Fotografia. Prima rassegna dell'attività fotografica in Italia*. Milan: Editoriale Domus, 1943. The book opens with an essay by Scopinich ('Considerazioni sulla fotografia italiana'), two essays by Ornano ('Tecnica di ripresa', 'Riproduzione nella fotografia a colori') and a text by Patellani ('Il giornalista nuova formula'). The graphics were edited by Albe Steiner. In the index Munari is portrayed in one of his typically humourous poses (Zannier 1978: 77, 80; Paoli 1999: 99–100; Pelizzari 2010: 98).

354. In 1922 *L'Ala d'Italia* (originally called *Gazzetta dell'Aviazione*) adopted its new name, inspired by a famous speech D'Annunzio gave at the Roman airfield at Centocelle, 'L'Ala d'Italia è liberata' (Schnapp 2008: 145). After the creation of the Aeronautical Ministry in 1923, the magazine allied itself with the regime: from 1929 to 1933, coinciding with Balbo's ministry, the cover featured the omnipresent fasces, and in '34 the subtitle changed to 'Periodico nazionale dell'aviazione fascista' (National periodical of Fascist aviation) and 'Nata in 1919 per volontà di Benito Mussolini' (Created in 1919 under the will of Benito Mussolini); in '35 its ties to the regime grew even stronger, with the publisher's move to the Ministero dell'aeronautica in Rome (see Silk 1996: 47–8, 73n; Schnapp 2008: 146).

of aeropainting. The beginning of Munari's (and Ricas's, occasional as it was) collaboration with the magazine dates back to 1932, and coincides with the redesign of its graphic look, which brought in a few modernist typographic innovations and gave more space to photography; the new editorial approach also called for political and artistic current events columns related to aviation. Although nothing was signed or credited as such in the colophon, in various issues from '32 there are changes to the
|93| layout of the main articles that reasonably indicate his participation. In such exercises Munari aimed to enliven the page through a more dynamic organisation of photos and texts, most often obtained through the use of diagonals and unusual cropping for the images (sometimes with painterly additions), in which one can clearly see an early attempt at approaching the layout through two-page spreads.[355] Such work was often uncertain, but was evidently inspired—aside from Soviet examples known only second-hand—by the celebratory volume *L'Italia fascista che avanza*, published the same year by the Istituto L.U.C.E. (on the occasion of the *Mostra della Rivoluzione fascista*) where the anonymous designer made ample use of photomontage and must have given a great deal of ideas to Munari.[356]

So, begining in the spring of '33 Muna-
|93| ri made his first mixed-media photomontages, combining photographic and drawn elements, in which he appears to waver between constructivist and aeropictorial influences, once again in search of a visual language that could be defined, modern, and accessibile at once.[357] In general, when his compositions accompany current-event articles—even though as a whole they maintain a degree of stylistic cohesion—they do not stray from the conventional approach of merely illustrative support material. In 1934 the magazine began the publication of a series of contributions by artists and intellectuals on the subject of 'mass-theatre'—a controversial 'total spectacle' promoted by Mussolini and staged in Florence in April 1934[358]—whose illustrations were in many cases done by Munari. He drew inspiration from relevant passages in the text, approaching the illustrations freely, often with the use of collage: for example, for Marco Ramperti's article 'L'aviatore come personaggio' (February 1934) a drawing, a mosaic of photographs, a photo completed by a comic illustration, and a collage of evocative, surreal images were strung together.[359] In other cases, some variants were tried out, such as overlapping schematic line drawings and aerial photographs, or collaging photographic images cut into the shapes of various objects.[360]

355. See for example the articles 'Gli 'Oceanici' a convegno' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XI; 5 (22 May 1932): 2–13; 'La settimana azzurra romana' ivi XI; 6 (23 June 1932): 10–21; 'L'Armata azzurra' ivi XI; 12 (22 December 1932): 54–5; 'Evoluzione della guerra' ivi XII; 3 (March 1933): 32–6; 'L'aviazione nelle Colonie Africane Francesi and il prossimo 'raid' del Generale Wuillemin' ivi XII; 10 (October 1933): 33–40.

356. *L'Italia fascista in cammino*. Rome: Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E., 1932. Octavo, pp. (xvi) 239 (with 516 photographs). Cf. Zannier 1978: 62. Similar cues came from the contemporary work of Paladini, who, in addition to publishing photomontages, also worked on the layout of the magazines *Occidente* and *Quadrivio*.

357. Interesting examples appear with the articles 'Il turismo aereo' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XII; 4 (April 1933): 66–9; 'Sesto Calende e il 55 x' ivi XII; 7–8 (July–August 1933): 96; 'Ogni epoca ha le sue macchine' ivi XII; 12 (December 1933): 10; 'L'aviazione sovietica' and 'Parla Lindbergh: basta trimotori! Risponde Fokker: distinguiamo!' ivi XII; 10 (October 1933): 25–6 and 46–7 respectively.

358. Regarding this extraordinary theatrical experiment see Schnapp 1996. For a list of the various articles published through April '35 on the relationships between theatre and aviation, see Schnapp 2008: 162n.

359. *L'Ala d'Italia* XIII; 2 (February 1934): 37–40. Cf. Schnapp 2008: 148.

360. See 'Il teatro di massa e l'aviazione' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XIII; 12 (December 1934): 21–4, and 'Il Teatro di Massa e l'aviazione. Risposta a Ramperti' ivi XIV; 1 (January 1935): 41–4.

As demonstrated by recent criticism, these collages—far from being simple artistic fantasies—played a part in the general propagandist climate of the time. Nevertheless, beyond their questionable political alignment, such an interpretation risks losing sight of the fact that Munari's main interest lay in visual languages, and that because of their fantastical or parody-like style these illustrations certainly do not fall within the conservative canons promoted by the regime, and instead seem calculated solely to enliven banal or dry texts.[361]

The discussion changes when it comes to compositions that explicitly celebrate Fascism's accomplishments: Munari actually did create a fair number of celebrative photomontages and layouts to show off propagandist themes, at least up until '36. In these cases the photomontages, included in articles or as illustrations unrelated to any text, were done in a resolutely constructivist manner. As in the April 1933 issue, where his hand can be seen in a photomontage that opens a summary of the celebrations held on the tenth anniversary of the Fascist ministry, which projected images of Mussolini and Balbo atop the air force lined up on the field, all framed in a large x (to indicate the year of the Fascist era, as was standard).[362] Other eloquent examples can be found in the following issues, like the July/August issue, dedicated to Balbo's transatlantic flight, which included no fewer than four celebratory aeropictorial illustrations;[363] while later photomontages adopt different solutions taken directly from Soviet examples, like in 'L'anno che finisce' (December 1936), where the detail of hands raised in a Roman salute, through which we catch a glimpse of the crowd, is proof that Munari knew of the installations designed for the *Mostra della Rivoluzione fascista* (Giuseppe Terragni's 'sala O' in particular), and had indirect knowledge of Klutsis's famous posters.[364] It must be said, however, that this type of photomontage appears to be of a lower quality than his other work, with occasionally mediocre or uncertain works next to compositions that are more interesting for their dynamic balance or unusual combinations.[365]

In any case, by the mid-thirties there is also a clear change in the content of the propagandist material, and constructivist-inspired photomontage gradually gives way to work on the layout, as a result of increased attention to the possibilities of typo/photographic composition: in this sense his work for articles like 'Il comandamento del Fondatore' (June/July 1934), 'Nuove forze giovanili dell'aviazione italiana' (February 1936), 'L'aviatore Mussolini' (September 1936), and 'L'anno che finisce' (December 1936) are interesting

361. Gerald Silk was the first researcher to question the reductive, purely aesthetic reading of these compositions, and by juxtaposing the images and the articles' content he proved their primary function was to support the propaganda expressed in the texts (Silk 1989, 1996; cf. Schnapp 2008).

362. '28 marzo 1933' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XII; 4 (April 1933): 8–9. The photomontage is not signed, but is certainly attributable to Munari, who also published other photomontages in the same issue (66–9). The custom of listing the names of illustrators at the bottom of the table of contents hadn't yet been adopted by the editors.

363. *L'Ala d'Italia* XII; 7–8 (July/August 1933). Munari and Ricas made various non-text-related contributions: a photomontage on a two-page spread, 'Aviazione italiana = massa' (34–5), a composition titled 'Italo Balbo' (38) and another for the article 'Disciplina dell'Impresa e del Capo' (39), the aeropictorial photomontage 'I cento soldati di Balbo' (p.48) and 'Du-ce, Du-ce, Du-ce' (88). Cf. Silk 1996: 48–53.

364. Federigo Valli 'L'Anno che finisce' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XV; 12 (December 1936): 10–7. The layout is particularly interesting in that, next to the central photomontage (14–5), it contains two images set according to the dynamic composition of the photographs.

365. Among the less convincing examples are the illustrations 'Aviazione italiana = massa' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XII; 7–8 (July/August 1933): 34–5, cit.; 'L'Italia deve raggiungere il Primato aviatorio' ivi XIII; 4 (April 1934): 2; 'Guerra' and 'I primi aviatori erano padroni del mondo' ivi XIII; 6–7 (June/July 1934): 89, 112.

for their use of the two-page spread.[366] But other contemporary works show a further stylistic jump toward documentary-style layouts, based on photographic sequences that tend to become more independent than the texts, which are often reduced to minimal length. His first work of this sort dates back to '35, with a long geopolitical
|99| reportage on Eritrea, in which the photographs still accompany the article, albeit in a lively layout;[367] those were followed in
|100| '36 by various articles set up as short photojournalistic essays,[368] that sometimes assumed the look of bona fide cinemato-
|101| graphic sequences, like 'Atterraggio', which appeared in the current events column of the August issue.[369] The series of photo-
|102| graphic illustrations published in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* in April 1936, dedicated to autarchic policies in response to international sanctions, show a similar tendency.[370] In the section on the XVII Fiera di Milano Munari created 7 double illustrations illustrating some of the key sectors of national manufacturing: the images are macrophotographic enlargements of raw materials with touches of colour (that recall the colours of the flag…) on black-and-white photos, while the other side shows a different photo without any retouching.

This venture into documentary, perhaps arrived at from the editors' photographic material, can in any case be related to Munari's contemporary research on movement in sculpture (with his *useless* and *arhythmic machines*) as well as his reflections on the structure of printed matter, which riff on cinematographic principles.[371] Curiously, all this seems to have happened simultaneously to his adoption of surrealist collage as a peculiar style for entertaining illustrations: in other words, both options—the surrealist vein, tied to themes of escape, and the documentary vein, tied to propaganda—constituted a two-pronged solution to the risk of getting stuck in earlier formulas made increasingly rigid by the changing political climate.

|103| 'Udite! Udite!' (Hear, Hear!), published in the *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani 1937*, is a bona fide hybrid of celebratory photomontage and photographic series. It is an articulated sequence of photomontages commented upon by quotes taken from Mussolini's speeches, and its technical distinction lies in a circular punch or cut-out through which you catch a glimpse of Mussolini's face, thereby creating a kind of double screen—a crossed projection aimed at replicating the effect of a cinematographic montage. Munari could have obtained a similar effect by reproducing a photo of Il Duce on each page, but the hole in the sheet creates a physical interaction that is more surprising for the reader. The 16-page signature opens and

366. In *L'Ala d'Italia* XIV; 6–7 (June/July 1934): 2–3; ivi XV; 2 (February 1936): 16–21; ivi XV; 9 (September 1936): 10–1; and ivi XV; 12 (December 1936): 10–7, respectively.

367. Arnaldo Cipolla, 'Eritrea italiana' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XIV, 4 (April 1935): 14–26.

368. See for instance 'Attualità aviatoria' in *L'Ala d'Italia* XV; 7 (July 1936): 33–48. The section consists of several short articles, including: 'Arma aerea/Civiltà romana/Segno ammonitore/Pace romana' (33–5), 'Gorrahei piana del sole' (36–7), 'Verso l'avvento delle fanterie aeree' (42–3), 'Con l'aviazione alla testa le truppe…' (44–5), 'Nostalgie somale' (46).

369. *L'Ala d'Italia* XV; 8 (August 1936): 33–40. Again here the column is subdivided into one- and two-page photoreportage: 'Atterraggio' (34–35), 'Turismo fotoaereo' (36), 'Vertigine della fotoacrobatica' (37), 'Da 12.000 metri' (38–9).

370. *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* XIV; 4 (April 1936). B/w photo ill. printed on both sides, with duotone overprinting on the recto. The subjects depicted are: wool and artificial fibres for textile production (100–1, 124–5), wheat grains for the agricultural sector, lab instruments for the chemical industry, a microscopic enlargement of a reaction for the electrochemical sector, gears and mechanical parts for the iron and steel industry (156–7), wood shavings for the furniture sector (160–1).

371. This refers to two articles by Munari, 'Ritmi grafici' (published in *Campo grafico*, May/June 1937) and 'Tipografia' (published in *La Lettura*, May 1937), cit.

closes with a starry sky, against which the image of a microphone stand out just be- |104| low the title, while the second and penultimate pages feature a sequence of images of Mussolini in different poses as he harangues the crowd, which is visible through the opening onto the following pages. The sequence deals with current issues in Fas- |105| cist politics, from autarchic demands and claims against the League of Nations to the proclamation of a colonial empire, from relations with Germany to the military intervention in Spain, from satire of enemy nations (England, France, the United States) to a critique of the capitalist and Soviet systems, from a eulogy on Japanese expansionism to the exaltation of physical activity…[372] Without a doubt, it was a bravura piece, not so much for its unique photocompositions (of ultimately questionable value) as for its use of the cinematographic concept of the sequence, which was a success. It is decidedly more difficult to catch the irony that Munari more recently spoke of as the real intent of those photomontages, despite their apparent exultation of Mussolini: 'You could not avoid doing these homages (…) But you could create some veiled satire, which was allowed because it was not understood'.[373] But such intent to revolt cannot really be found in the Bompiani publication or anywhere else, much less at that precise historic juncture—and anyway, it has been repeatedly denied by many of his contemporaries, including Zavattini.[374]

As proof of Munari's growing interest in visual narratives, the '37 edition of the *Almanacco* contained another humourous photosequence, titled 'Crisi interiore ovvero una giornata spesa bene' (Inner Crisis: or, A Day Well Spent). It features photos by Gianni Calvi, but Munari was certainly the brain behind the piece, and perhaps also wrote the captions that ironically comment upon the images.[375] This can be grouped with the storyboard *L'amore è un lepidottero* (Love is a Lepidopteran), which Munari published in 1941 in another literary almanac, the *Tesoretto*.[376] Be that as it may, his interest in the communicative possibilities of the unmanipulated photographic image anticipated the photojournalistic work published soon thereafter in the Mondadori-owned *Tempo*, where Munari was art director from 1939 to '43.[377] The original humourous articles Munari published there were equally characterised by the investigation of narrative through photographic means, and were later collected into a volume titled *Fotocronache*, published by Editoriale Domus in 1944, after *Tempo* was shuttered.[378]

372. 'Udite! Udite!' in *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani 1937*, cit.: 65–80. The titles of the individual illustrations are: Udite! Udite! (65), Duce (66), L'Italia è un'isola (67), Ginevra (68), A.O. (Africa Orientale) (69), Olimpiadi di Berlino (70), Spagna (71), Inghilterra (72), Giappone (73), URSS (74), America (75), Francia (76), Io non amo i sedentari (77), Annunci (78), Duce (79), Cielo stellato (80).

373. Munari 1976: 11.

374. '(…) none of us ever did political satire in those glorious days, it did not even cross our minds, nor did we have any desire to, under the eyes of the Minculpop [Ministero della cultura popolare, the Ministry of popular culture]. If anything we liked to create work on the verge of the absurd, stray a bit, talk about other things, but it was not possible to throw punches at Mussolini' (Zavattini in C. Carabba, 'La bussola satirica di Zavattini' in *Paese Sera*, Rome, 11/02/1977; cit. in Carpi 2002: 84).

375. *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani 1937*, cit.: 118–24. The photos are by Gianni Calvi.

376. *Il Tesoretto. Almanacco dello 'Specchio'* 1942. Verona: Mondadori, 1942: 290–5. The sequence's subtitle is *Cortometraggio a colori* and consists of 29 photograms accompanied by a description of the action. Schnapp hypothesises that it was a storyboard for an animated short that was planned but never realised by Munari and the Cossio brothers: given the use of montage in the images, the project likely dates back to the mid-thirties, perhaps 1937, as the absence of Ricas might suggest (Schnapp 2008: 154; and correspondence with the author, December 2010).

377. Cf. Schnapp 2008: 149–50, 154.

378. Bruno Munari, *Fotocronache*. Milan: Editoriale Domus, 1944. Cf. review in *Domus* no.201 (1944).

Ricas and Munari became associates with their own graphic design studio in 1931, and two adverts published a few years apart in the *Guida Ricciardi*, a famous advertising annual, give a good idea of the position their work occupied at mid-decade. The first, which appeared in the 1933 edition, is laconically la-

belled: 'Pittori Ricas+Munari Milano' (Ricas+Munari, Painters, Milan) and shows an evocative photomontage with aeropictorial retouching, which depicts a fantastical landscape wherein a passerby contemplates a photographic composition with a glove, a sphere, and a paintbrush.[1] The second advert, included in the 1936 edition, focusses not only on the suggestive nature of the image—again a metaphysical landscape—but almost equally as much on the text, about which it amusingly remarks: 'Our artistic imagination is at your disposal for any and every advertising challenge, especially the most difficult. Designs for adverts, surprise brochures, firecrackers, stamps, frescoes on skulls, photograms, triumphal arches. Ricas+Munari, Painters.'[2]

1. *Guida Ricciardi 1933: la pubblicità in Italia*. Milan: L'Ufficio Moderno, 1934.
2. *Guida Ricciardi 1936: Pubblicità e propaganda in Italia*. Milan: Ricciardi, 1935. This edition is graphically more elaborate, with photomontages and overprinting on translucent sheets created by the youngest graphic designer's of the time (Veronesi, Carboni, Dradi and Rossi), as well as numerous reproductions of print advertisements and posters.

Beyond the minor stylistic differences, which reflect the evolution of Munari's language in illustration, two considerations stand out: first and foremost, the two adverts show a persistent emphasis on surprise (deployed as an effect) and a generally pictorial approach, tied more to the allusive power of the image than to objective communication; secondly, although these two aspects are closely linked, the visual approach recalls that of French surrealism more than Central-European functionalist currents; and this aspect is even more evident when compared to the adverts of Veronesi or Dradi-Rossi, not to mention the Swiss-born designer Schawinsky, featured in the same edition. Ricas and Munari's position, therefore, although it was up-to-date in terms of photography (and on photomontage in particular), expresses a concept of graphic design still in evolution, yet also still substantially pictorial—which was precisely the stylistic element most evident in the pair's advertising work.

Reconstructing the events surrounding Ricas and Munari's professional collaboration is now extremely difficult, given the scarcity of available information—which is due in part to the scattering or destruction of their archives during the war, and in part to the delay and scarcity of the historical research devoted to the key figures of Italian graphic design. Furthermore, the lack of information can also be traced back (to a significant extent) to the substantial 'underplaying' adopted by both artists—especially by Munari—with regard to their professional experiences between the wars. Such an attitude might well be understood given the intellectual climate of Republican Italy, which, because of the ambiguous relationship that linked Futurism and Fascism, long relegated Marinetti's movement and everything connected with it to a grey zone—although the natural evolution of the artist's taste and aesthetic interests certainly counted as well. Be that as it may, the fact remains that virtually no mention of that period can be found in Munari's writings or numerous interviews, including more recent ones.[3]

> The first time I worked in advertising I was taken advantage of. It was in 1930. Some guy asked me to do a small job, but it was important for me, since I was just starting out. In the end the guy did not even pay the printer, who then forced me to pay. Even today, when I think about it....[4]

As we have seen, from illustration Munari went on to work in graphics as early as 1930, if we can trust the date given in this statement. Yet according to current research, after his earliest Futurist works, no other known examples of his graphic work predate 1931, when he opened his own studio with Riccardo Castagnedi, widely known by the pseudonym Ricas. The relationship between the two artists began around 1929, when Ricas, who was attending the Accademia di Brera, joined the Milanese Futurist group.[5] Younger than Munari, Castagnedi was born in 1912 in Colico, in the Valtellina, where his father, an electrician with the State Railways, had moved for work, but he grew up in Milan, where the family had moved in 1920. In 1926, still

3. Without the possibility of direct contact with the artist, any hypotheses regarding the reasons for such an attitude cannot but be partial and questionable: aside from critics' and historians' ostracism of Futurism, it is difficult to overlook Munari's accommodation to Fascism—a tendency shared by everyone in his generation, but of which (unlike other intellectuals) he never spoke. That is not the equivalent, however, of taxing Munari with Fascism: his disinterest in politics is unanimously recognized as a character trait, and after the war he proved to have an undoubtable sense of social committment.

4. Munari cit. in an undated [c.1985] newspaper clip (cortesy Aldo Tanchis, Milan).

5. Bassi 1994: 81.

a teenager, he found a job with the Officine Grafiche Ricordi as a *puntinàtt* (a draughtsman who transferred original drawings to lithographic stones for reproduction) alongside high-calibre poster artists like Leopoldo Metlicovitz and Marcello Dudovich; thereafter, he worked as a studio assistant for the painter Renzo Bassi, where he made his first graphic works. At the same time he took evening courses at Brera (where he earned his diploma in '43); nevertheless, the academy's conservative climate led him to frequent the Futurists, which is probably when he adopted the pseudonym Ricas.[6] In '29 he met Munari and exhibited work with other young Futurists at the Galleria Pesaro; that same year he won a competition funded by the Savinelli Pipe company to design an advertising poster, and did another for the Crippa-Berger pharmaceutical company, proving his major interest in the graphic design field.[7]

> It was 1928–29, we went to Brera each evening, I was taking the evening course at the academy (…) We met, we liked one another, and so we started working together. We had to try and make a living, and we did illustrations and adverts. We worked a lot, happily, in perfect harmony, always listening to music—one of us would do something, and the other added something else.
> (…) We had a large studio, in via Carlo Ravizza 14 [in reality at 16], with eight rooms—they were 'cleaned up' basement storage rooms: a studio/exhibition space with two paintings, on by me and one by Bruno; in the middle of the studio was a white cube with two beggars' shoes, destroyed from walking through the desert; a salon; our studio; two rooms for administration; and then two bedrooms, because we slept there.
> (…) Bruno was always straightlaced, always organized, in jacket and tie, he was an angel, always happy, very lively and friendly.[8]

The R+M associates' studio opened in Milan in 1931 and, insofar as it was expressly devoted to advertising design, was one of the first initiatives of its kind in Italy, and even predated the Studio Boggeri, which opened in 1933.[9] Regarding the circumstances surrounding the two young artists' friendship (Munari was 24 years old, Ricas just 19), a statement by Ricas[10] indicates their first studio was in the very central Galleria del Corso, across from the famous Sartoria Ventura[11] (where Dilma Carnevali, Munari's future wife, worked). One plausible hypothesis is that it was located at the same spot (no.4) where the Edizioni Metropoli had its offices in 1930: upon abandoning the *Almanacco dell'Italia Veloce* project, Fusetti may have left the space to Munari, who had worked with Metropoli's editorial team. The dates would seem to support this: indeed, the Futurist publication had been announced for the end of 1930, but the project must have somehow

6. Riccardo Ricas Castagnedi (1912–2005) probably adopted his pseudonym, derived from Ri[ccardo] Cas[tagnedi], when he joined the Futurist group. As his daugther recalls: 'Later on it became a legally recognized last name, and when I went to school I always had the two names, which still appear on all my documents' (Paola Ricas, author correspondence, 20.6.2010).
7. Lopez 1994 in Bassi: 8; Bassi 1994: 78, 81.
8. Ricas in Finessi 2005: 62–3.
9. In this sense, Ricas and Munari's studio differed from both the Dinamo-Azari gallery-laboratory (opened in 1927) and Cesare Andreoni's applied-arts workshop (founded in 1929), and was more like an advertising firm (Di Corato 2008: 212).
10. Ricas in Bassi 1990, interview given 20.2.1990 (unpublished transcript, courtesy of Alberto Bassi).
11. Milanese fashion house founded in 1815 by Domenico Ventura, which became famous in nineteenth-century Italy for its ability to re-create Parisian designs; its vast clientele belonged to the aristocracy and upper-middle classes. Its intense tailoring activities after WWI, directed by Vittorio Alberto Montana, with almost 800 workers at their locations in Milan, Rome, and Genoa, won it the 'Fornitore di Casa Reale' distinction (as supplier to the royal house); it reached the height of its fame in 1930 with the creation of a wedding dress for Princess Maria José of Belgium's marriage to Prince Amedeo of Savoy. The atelier closed in the early '40s (Vergani 2009: 'Ventura'; Gnoli 2005: 51n, 53). The Galleria del Corso, situated between the Duomo and San Babila, arose following demolitions carried out in Milan's historic centre in the twenties.

come to a standstill over the summer, as no other promos were published; Ricas and Munari must have launched their new business venture in 1931, parallel to, if not precisely coordinated with, the closure of the Futurist publishing house. In any case, it must have been a temporary setup, since by January '32 the studio had moved to via Ravizza 16, not far from the Futurist headquarters: 'a basement with windows, an amusing procession of ankles', recalled Ricas.[12]

Curiously, during that same period the Milanese Futurist group—also in via Ravizza, but at number 14—ran an advertising and publicity office under the name of
|107| Centrale Artistica (Artistic Headquarters), which offered graphic and PR services like 'furnishings, window displays, kiosks for trade fairs, advertising, posters, editions'.[13] In reality it was the C.R.E.A. advertising office, which had existed at least since the previous year, and for which Munari had not only made the *Simultanina* poster and some adverts for Campari, but also curated the interior design and furnishings.[14] All this indicates how, at the beginning of the 1930s, the Futurist group led by Munari aimed to professionally establish itself in the advertising sector, with the intent of extending its initiatives to the commercial realm. The situation also suggests that if Munari was not outright manager of the proto-advertising establishment, he was at least a close collaborator; nor can Ricas' probable collaboration be excluded. Therefore the opening of their own associated studio must have been an extension of their previous work with the C.R.E.A. agency, probably in the autumn of '31. Furthermore, the transformation of Milan's Centrale Futurista was completed in early 1934, when it moved into Ricas and Munari's studio just a few steps away;[15] this move could be read as an attempt to rationalise its overhead, or as a bona fide unification with the studio of the two artists—who were now considered key figures of Milan's graphic scene, and also had space available to house the Futurist movement.

Ricas and Munari's professional relationship lasted into the beginning of 1937, and was characterised by a remarkable flexibility and openness, allowing each of them to work both in tandem and individually, as the various signatures on their work indicate: 'MUNARI+R', 'RICAS+M', and 'R+M'. The adverts from their early period (up until about '33), as well as their illustrations and photomontages for magazines, were primarily signed by Munari, confirming his lead role—works signed solely by Ricas, much fewer in number, began to appear only in '35. It is therefore logical to assume that, at the beginning, the studio was conceived of more as a shared workspace (in addition to shared housing) where each worked independently, and that their collaboration gradually grew more intense as they undertook more demanding, more

12. Cf. letter from Munari to Tullio d'Albisola, 20.1.1932, on the letterhead of the Centrale Futurista di Milano (also signed by Ricas, Lepore, and Escodamè), in which Munari gave him the new address (in Presotto 1981: 142). The quoted statement is Ricas' (Lopez 1994 in Bassi: 8).

13. Cf. related advert in *La città nuova* no.2 (25 February 1932): 4.

14. Cf. photographs in 'Aspetti diversi del gusto attuale' in *Casabella* no.44 (August 1931): 24–7. The interior depicted on p. 25 as the 'advertising director's office at the C.R.E.A. studio in Milan' is the same as the photograph used in an advert for the Centrale Artistica in the Turin-based *La città nuova* six months later. The C.R.E.A logo is visible on the left-hand side of the *Simultanina* poster, under the frame showing airplane silhouettes, while Munari's signature appears in the upper right–hand corner of that frame. Around 1935 Munari and Ricas also designed the interiors and furnishings for the new R+M studio in via Ravizza: cf. 'Ricas e Munari, arredamenti e decorazioni d'interni' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* X; 5 (May 1935): 246–55.

15. Cf. the letterhead on which Munari's letter to Thayaht is written, [c. 20.4.1934], Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Thayaht: Tha 1.2.07.66.

complex projects, along with their repeated collaborations with ad agencies and other companies' advertising offices: the Mauzan-Morzenti studio, the Ufficio Propaganda Campari, the Ufficio Sviluppo e stampa Olivetti, and Studio Boggeri.

Toward a modernist style

A brief review devoted to Futurist advertising in *L'Ufficio Moderno* at the end of '32 focussed on the studio's first significant accomplishments.[16] Beginning with a polymaterial artwork for perfumes depicting a female head—probably an installation for a window display (an anticipation of the compositions Munari exhibited at the Galleria Pesaro the following year)—the works reproduced give a good overview of the services the studio offered, ranging from posters to catalogues, trade-fair installations, and interiors and furnishings. Two posters Ricas and Munari created for Casa America/el hogar de la musica (a radio shop in Buenos Aires) document an early collaboration with the Mauzan-Morzenti studio, still associated with the French poster artist then living in Argentina.[17] Both focus on a synthetic suggestion of the product, and both stylistically reveal their formal roots in aeropainting. The cover of a catalogue for ARSA (Anonima Riscaldamenti Sanitari e Affini, a boiler producer) in Bologna is equally interesting, and is laid out around a paired-down axonometric drawing reminiscent of a scientific diagram.[18] In this early phase the studio's work had a clearly figurative emphasis, evident not only in its printed work, but also in its trade-fair installations, wherein the graphic visual language, not yet drawing from constructivist models, relies heavily upon the suggestive powers of the representation. This can be seen in the stands installed for the Federico Dell'Orto company (producer of industrial kitchens) and the Carlo Erba pharmaceutical company,[19] which were quite conventional in terms of set design.

In the December 1931 issue of *Natura*, alongside an article about the Rodier textile manufacturer, a colouradvertisement by Munari was published: it is a hybrid, composite synthesis, which, although still linked to aeropictorial stylistic elements, integrates his discovery of photographic collage using textures to evoke the product, while the explicit message is spelled out in the geometric lettering style common at the time.[20] A similar solution appeared soon after in his advert for the Milanese Casa dell'arredamento, in which the drawing's accentuated axonometric lines are balanced by the photographic rendering of the textiles.[21] In both cases, the highly suggestive image not only echoed the formal possibilities of new inclusions like photography, but also indicated a redefinition of the Futurist register with the gradual substitution of figurative means with a more concise, abstract visual language.

Munari's interest in photography and developments in the graphic field outside Italian borders was shared by other Milanese artists working in advertising—even

16. Noi due, 'Il futurismo alla pubblicità' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* VII; 11 (November 1932): 661–4. The article is illustrated with work by Ricas/Munari and Diulgheroff, reproduced in b/w, accompanied by a short comment, but without any other indicators.

17. In 1929–30 Mauzan produced four posters for the same client (reproduced in Weill 1983: 64–5 and Carnévalé–Mauzan 2001: 14–5).

18. *Moderni impianti sanitari–Moderni impianti di riscaldamento–Il calore nell'industria*. Bologna: Anonima Riscaldamenti Sanitari Affini, n.d. [c. 1932]. Printed by Bertieri, Milan. 22×29.5 cm, pp. 36; bound by a ribbon and two reinforced eyelets. 3-Colour cover, illustrations and layout by Munari (Cammarota 2006: 158).

19. The photographs reproduced in the cited article are now all that remains of these installations.

20. *Natura* IV; 12 (December), 1931.

21. *La Casa bella* V; 50 (February), 1932.

those outside Futurist circles such as Carboni, Veronesi, and Muratore, who were nevertheless tied to the rationalist architects' quest for new aesthetic and functional canons. In 1933, amidst this crucial and rapidly shifting context surrounding the applied arts, a curious convergence of external influences came to Milan: Paul Renner's exhibition of graphic work by the Deutsche Werkbund was shown at the V Triennale; Xanti Schawinsky began working in Milan; Studio Boggeri opened; *Campo grafico* began publication; Persico and Pagano were appointed directors of *Casabella*; and the fourth worldwide advertising congress was held—all of which created an atmosphere ripe for the renewal of graphic visual language through an utterly new relationship with photography and architecture. The temporal and geographic convergence of these events created a unique cultural climate, which had long-lasting effects on graphics as well as the broader scope of visual arts throughout the 1930s in Italy—painting, photography, architecture, advertising. It is no coincidence that Ricas and Munari's professional paths, during the studio's most productive period between 1933 and '36, crossed the paths of both Antonio Boggeri and Olivetti, who were among their first close collaborators.

Olivetti

Intent on defining its own identity following the struggle to get off the ground in the 1920s, over the next decade Italian advertising continued with a gradually increasing professionalisation of the sector: specialists had a rudimentary idea of business communication, and the creation of the first few agencies was met with an increasing number of companies adapting their own internal ad offices.[22] Often called Uffici Propaganda (literally Propaganda Offices) or Uffici Stampa (Press Offices), they were generally run by journalists, cultural figures, or artists[23]—categories that could compensate for the lack of a specific technical or educational background.[24] Pushed away from journalism in particular by the repression of political rights and freedom of expression after 1925, important consultants like Guido Mazzali, Dino Villani, and Antonio Valeri began working in advertising; all of them associated with the magazine *L'Ufficio Moderno*.[25]

Because of its openness to collaborators of the most disparate cultural backgrounds, the Ufficio Sviluppo e Pubblicità (Development and Advertising Office) of Olivetti—founded in 1931 and directed by the photographer Renato Zveteremich (1931–38), then by poet/engineer Leonardo Sinisgalli (1938–40)—became a kind of experimental laboratory, in which

22. Pitteri 2002: 21–2; Valeri 1986: 68–70.

23. Regarding the two terms reclame and pubblicità (advertising) as used in the contemporary language, on the one hand they betray the probable influence of Fascist terminology (propaganda), and on the other [they indicate] a yet-to-be-determined disciplinary definition (press/print) (Falabrino 2001: 112). The designers who worked with famous companies included Federico Seneca for Perugina-Buitoni (1919–35), Dino Villani for Motta and later GiViEmme, Renato Zveteremich for Olivetti, Pier Luigi Balzaretti for Fiat (1921) and Rinascente, and Giulio Cesare Ricciardi for Alfa Romeo (1923) (Valeri 1986: 68–70).

24. The first initiative of this sort dates back to 1922; it was an evening course in advertising techniques promoted by the Milan Chamber of Commerce, but was soon abandoned because of the changing political climate (Ceserani 1997: 127). Advertising techniques were then taught in courses for managers and vendors, as well as in economics classes at technical institutes, but it was not until the thirties that, following the success of the International Advertising Congress held in Rome and Milan in 1933, regular courses were established in many cities' technical and commercial institutes (Valeri 1986: 58, 74). In the private sector, in 1928 the editorial offices of *L'Ufficio Moderno* began a correspondence course with the École supérieure de publicité pratique in Paris (Bauer 1998b: 164).

25. Falabrino 2001: 115–6.

collaborative and multidisciplinary production set the stage for the creation of the 'Olivetti style' of the postwar period.[26] The structure included—both internally and through external networks—collaborations with literati like Sinisgalli, architects like Figini and Pollini, graphic artists/designers like Marcello Nizzoli, printer-typographers like Guido Modiano, and even young graduates of Monza's ISIA (Istituto di Arti Decorative e Industriali) like Giovanni Pintori, Costantino Nivola, and Salvatore Fancello.[27] The Olivetti company, founded in Ivrea by Camillo Olivetti in 1908, was still relatively young, but was already distinguished by the quality of its typewriter models and rapidly established its place in the market.[28] In the early 1930s, as Adriano Olivetti gradually assumed leadership of his father's company, Olivetti was recovering from the economic crisis and exporting its brand internationally.[29] Beginning in 1928 its advertising campaigns, which had been entrusted early on to freelance painters and other unaffiliated suppliers,[30] were overseen by an embryonic in-house Servizio Pubblicità (Advertising), which gained increasing autonomy, leading to the creation of the Ufficio Sviluppo e Pubblicità in 1931 at the Milanese office in via Clerici. With the new setup the company shifted its advertising communications, making the most of collaborations with young professionals aware of the latest avant-garde international trends. In '34 Olivetti began working with Studio Boggeri and, through Boggeri, with Xanti Schawinsky; in 1936, on Pagano's recomendation, Nivola and Pintori joined the office; at the end of the decade, Pintori and Nizzoli became the chief creators of the Olivetti style, both in graphics and in industrial design. A prime example of this new approach—also resulting from the company's ties to Milan's rationalist cultural current—is the celebratory pamphlet *25 anni Olivetti* (25 Years of Olivetti) edited and printed by Guido Modiano (1933),31 in which Futurist innovations meet the new continental typography, featuring an album format, layout according to the 'two pages in one' principle, the use of photography and photomontages, sans-serif type and black rules, duotone printing, printing on cellophane, and a spiral binding.[32]

Munari was amongst Olivetti's earliest collaborators, although it is difficult

26. Cf. Vinti 2007: 28ff.

27. In the early thirties, Edoardo Persico (Decorative arts and advertising), Giuseppe Pagano, and Marcello Nizzoli all taught at the institute in Monza.

28. From the M1 in 1911 to the M20 in 1920, the semistandard M40 in 1930, the portable MP1 in 1932, and the Studio 42 in 1935—followed by the Divisumma line of calculators launched in the late forties.

29. Lupo 1996: 112. Referring to Elio Vittorini's definition of *umanesimo pubblicitario* (humanist advertising) formulated in a 1939 promotional publication (*Una campagna pubblicitaria*. Milan: Olivetti, 1939), the author maintains that the advertising office was 'one of the most interesting cultural crossroads in Milan, in the thirties, and to some extent returned to the synthetic ideals of fifteenth-century humanism' (ibid: 119–20, 223–8).

30. The first poster, depicting Dante Alighieri as an authoritative 'spokesman' for the M1, was designed by Teodoro Wolf Ferrari (1912).

31. Guido Modiano (1899–1943) printer and critic, was a key figure in the debate surrounding the renewal of Italian graphic arts. Upon the death of his father Gustavo (1916) he took over the family printshop (G. Modiano & Co.) and specialised in printing prestigious editions and cultural periodicals like *Quadrante*, *Edilizia Moderna*, and *Le vie d'Italia*. Both designer and printer, alongside Edoardo Persico he played a major role in the evolution of *Casabella*'s graphic look in the early thirties. As a critic, Modiano published numerous articles in all the main specialised magazines, maintaining the contributions of abstract art and architecture (later reworked in a long text published serially in *L'industria della stampa*, 1941–42), and for the VII Triennale in 1940 he was curator of the graphic arts exhibtion. Called to arms in 1935 and drafted into the anti-aircraft service, during the war he took part in the disastrous Russian campaign. He lost his life when his barracks were bombarded in Germany (Vinti 2005: 50–52ff; Baglione 2008: 21n; Chiabraudo 2006).

32. Pigozzi 1982: 469–70; cf. Vinti 2005, quote. For the history of Olivetti communications between WWI and WWII, which historians have yet to examine in a more in-depth manner, see the Olivetti Historic Archive website, www.storia-olivetti.it.

to pinpoint an exact date (a few sources point to 1928,[33] but 1930 seems more plausible). He was apparently commissioned to do a few newspaper adverts for Olivetti before Zveteremich's arrival; these were tiny, 1 cm–high black-and-white classifieds printed in columns, which Munari dealt with by placing the few lines of text on the diagonal, so they jumped out on the page.[34] In 1932–33 he did a few other adverts (still working independently of Ricas) for the famous Olivetti MP1 portable, an innovative product for the time. Compared to previous models, the MP1 was promoted not only for office work, but also for use in the home and for leisure activities, and therefore targeted a new clientele through adverts emphasising the product's elegance more than its technical strengths.[35] An
|111| early advert that, judging by the illustration style, can roughly be dated to 1932, subtly |113| |114| plays with the idea of leisure time: in an abstract landscape, almost like a theatrical backdrop, someone is intently writing on a typewriter while falling from the sky, suspended from a parachute; this visual |115| |116| quip nodded to flight as an icon of modern existence, and also breathed life into the scene through the depiction of sheets of paper flying down from the typewriter; the product is named on a sheet of paper in the foreground, and the composition closes with an angled photograph of the typewriter and the name Olivetti in large, all-caps *Futura*, another clear nod to modernity.[36]

The same angled photograph of the typewriter appeared again—in the same position and serving the same function, proving the campaign's continuity—in other adverts done in late '33 by Studio Boggeri.
|112| They are two variations on the same composition, wherein the concepts of speed and lightness are metaphorically translated into the form of an airplane and a dove, both cut from an enlarged image of the product, whose image is therefore doubly present. Its innovative aspect, aside from the use of photomontage, is the accentuated simplification of the layout, reduced to the minimum, and the importance of white, which cancels out any sense of depth—a solution that clearly reflects similar developments in Munari's illustration work.[37]

Another series of heterogeneous adverts for Olivetti from the same period can easily be attributed to Munari, perhaps through Boggeri, even though they're unsigned: an advertorial in *Casabella* illustrated in colour; a series of adverts based on a similar illustration, combined with a simple title set in *Bifur*,[38] for the M40 and portable models, whose illustrations and photomontages closely recall Munari's graphic mark-making, datable between 1934 and '35;[39] and an earlier advert that—although based primarily on text, and aside

33. Henrion, Parkin 1967: 86.

34. Lichtenstein, Häberli 2000: 275. The information provided by the curators of the 1995 retrospective in Zurich must be based on the designer's own account, but nevertheless gives no useful indication of the originals' whereabouts.

35. Cf. Schawinsky's 1934 poster, based on a photograph of an elegant woman with her hands resting on the MP1, in which the Olivetti name appears only on the typewriter's body. Cf. www.storiaolivetti.it.

36. The advert is reproduced in Salaris 1986: 156, with no further references.

37. The two adverts are reproduced in the appendix of a short feature on the photogram in *L'Ufficio Moderno* (IX; 3, March 1934: 168–70, cit). The Studio Boggeri/Munari signature is at lower right. One of the adverts (Veloce) appeared in *Domus* no.71 (December 1933): xii. The portable typewriter debuted in 1935, and based on the payoff of other advertisement series for it (some of which might be attributed to Munari)—'Olivetti Portatile / leggera elegante robusta veloce'—one could hypothesise that there were four photomontages, each paired with various adjectives (the dove would be associated with lightness, the airplane with speed, and so on).

38. In *Casabella* IV; 57 (September 1932) and *Domus* VI; 68 (August 1933), respectively.

39. 'Distinzione' in *Casabella* IV; 58 (October 1932); 'Evoluzione' in *Domus* no.75 (March), 1934: xvi; the series (Evoluzione, Solidarietà, Identica) in a smaller size in *Guida Ricciardi 1936* (1935): 79.

from the similar illustration style—took up the typographic layout and oblique slogan from the series for the portable typewriter.[40]

A brochure for Studio 42 that Munari designed between late 1935 and '36 deserves its own analysis. All that now remains of
| 117 | the project are a pair of layouts with printing instructions[41] (his handwriting is recognisable), from which we can surmise that the printed version was a loose riff on the layout of an earlier brochure for the M40 designed by Schawinsky. The fact that Munari was hired to do it—and not Schawinsky, who since '34 had played an essential role in the development of Olivetti's brand, and with the architects Figini and Pollini had been directly involved in designing the new typewriter—could mean that by the spring of '36 Schawinsky was no longer available. Indeed, at the beginning of the year Schawinsky returned to Milan after a trip to Paris and London (where he also got married) to complete his last works before emigrating to the United States that autumn, following Josef Albers' invitation for him to teach at Black Mountain College. Munari may have been chosen through Boggeri, with whom both Munari and Ricas collaborated throughout the 1930s. The fact that later adverts for the model were done by Nivola and Pintori, in-house graphic designers at Olivetti, suggests Munari was hired for contingent reasons, rather than any conscious preference.

Finally, one other work identified as Munari's remains somewhat mysterious: it is an airbrushed photo of the Divisumma 14 calculator whose purpose and production context are unclear; the product marked Olivetti's debut in the mechanical calculator market, which until then had been dominated by American producers. Designed by Natale Capellaro and Marcello Nizzoli, the calculator began production in 1948—so the photo must be from just after WWII,[42] which would confirm the otherwise undocumented relationship between Olivetti and Munari during the postwar period.

The Milanese advertising scene

Over the course of the 1920s, despite progress in the business world, the size and organisational scope of the advertising sector nevertheless remained limited. The few Italian advertisers, all perforce located in the major cities of the country's industrial triangle, and above all in Milan, worked in small artisanal organisations, despite the fact that the previous decade brought about the first initiatives independent of commissionary agents and graphic-arts printshops. Marcello Dudovich, for example, in 1920 founded his own agency Star, and at the same time stepped up to become art director of IGAP (Impresa generale di affissioni, or General Posters and Handbills Enterprise), which printed his posters. In step with the gradual, timid modernisation of market and psychological research, the range of available creative services grew more complex: by the end of the decade the Casa Maga, founded in 1920 by Giuseppe

40. 'Da ogni lettera sorge la vostra ombra' in *Domus* no.74 (February), 1934: iv. For a point of comparison cf., for example, a similar advert (Vacanze, in *Domus* no.79, July 1934), which nonetheless has significant differences in the layout and type used for the slogan/logotype, in the visualisation of the product through drawing (instead of photography) and in the mark-making and graphic style of the illustration accompanying the text.

41. Now in the collection of the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, Bologna/New York, exhibited at the restrospective in Milan's Rotonda della Besana, December 2007–February 2008. Unfortunately, in the Archivio Storico Olivetti in Ivrea there are no examples of any similar print.

42. Sketch in the collection of the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, Bologna/New York.

Magagnoli, was the largest Italian advertising studio, and offered a complete range of services—from a campaign's conception to its printing and distribution, aided by the most famous poster artists of the day (even producing its own in-house publication, *Il pugno nell'occhio*). In 1922, after extensive experience abroad (in the United States in particular), Luigi Casoni Dal Monte returned to Milan and founded the Acme-Dal Monte company, the first true advertising agency based on rationalist working methods; and in 1928, also in Milan, Erwa opened—this was an Italian branch of the American Erwin-Wasey agency, run by Nino Caimi (who had worked for some time in their US offices), which worked with the budget of brands like Ford, Texaco, and Camel, yet it was short-lived after the arrival of the American economic crisis. Nevertheless, the Italian advertising scene in the early 1930s was largely a continuation of the previous decade, despite the repercussions of the economic crisis.[43] In 1930 Caimi founded Enneci (responsible for important national campaigns for sugar, beer, and bananas); during that same period Anton Gino Domeneghini founded IMA (Idea Metodo Arte), which grew to twenty-odd employees; and Giulio Cesare Ricciardi and Pier Luigi Balzaretti opened Studio Balza-Ricc.[44]

Despite Italian agencies' references to the American model (almost all Italian advertisers and publicists had formative professional experiences with American agencies), the advertising practices within these structures ignored the subdivision of roles and teamwork so prevalent in America, and was instead shaped more by the personality of the owner—who came up with projects and slogans, while the visual work was usually delegated to outside collaborators, as we have seen with Campari and Olivetti. So the market consisted largely of freelancers, poster artists, and graphic artists who worked in their own studios, reflecting an artisanal concept of advertising.[45] In addition to major names like Federico Seneca (who settled in Milan after a long stint as art director for Perugina-Buitoni) and Marcello Nizzoli (consultant for Campari, and later on for Olivetti), the best graphic artists working in Milan at the beginning of the decade included young creatives from various backgrounds such as Erberto Carboni (architect), Luigi Veronesi (painter and photograper), Carlo Dradi and Attilio Rossi (printing technicians and founders di *Campo grafico*), Remo Muratore (architect) and, from the Futurist realm, Ricas and Munari.[46]

43. Although less drastic than in America and Germany, the effects of the 1929 crash caused prices and stocks to collapse in Italy as well, leading to a sharp curtailing of production and rise in unemployment. Nevertheless, despite the noticeable drop in wages and living standards, political-economic factors in the early thirties—the forced revaluation of the lira in 1927 to balance paybooks, political public-works initiatives, and state intervention on behalf of business—led to a situation that was generally favourable to the expansion of advertising in Italy, pushing the productive sector to further develop the domestic market. This trend grew stronger in ther latter half of the decade, following the proclamation of autarchy in response to international sanctions (imposed by the League of Nations following Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935–36) (Arvidsson 2001: 169, 179n; Procacci 1975² (1968): 517–20; cf. Falabrino 2001: 118–9).

44. See Abruzzese, Colombo 1994: 49, 57, 157, 165, 169, 253, 392; Valeri 1986: 56, 65–8; Ceserani 1988: 127–9; Falabrino 2001: 112–8; Pitteri 2002: 22; Arvidsson 2003: 48–9, 52–3; Arvidsson 2001: 169–75; Alberti 2007: 98; De Iulio, Vinti 2009: 63–4.

45. Pitteri 2002: 22; Valeri 1986: 67–8; Ceserani 1988: 104, 129; Falabrino 2001: 116, 137. The contrast between the American advertising tradition, tied to the development of marketing research, and the commercial arts tradition, grew more pressing and led to more interesting results in the postwar period following WWII: cf. De Iulio, Vinti 2009.

46. Valeri 1986: 68; Ceserani 1988: 104, 129–30; Falabrino 2001: 137. The names mentioned here appeared in the two editions of the Guida Ricciardi from 1933 and '36.

L'Ufficio Moderno and GAR

In terms of professional organisation, in 1924 the Sindacato nazionale pubblicitario (National Advertising Union) was founded in Milan, and was the first official association to welcome advertising technicians, middlemen, and industrial managers.[47] An important venue for research and reflection arrived in 1926 with the debut of *L'Ufficio Moderno*, a magazine dedicated to company organisation on all levels which soon became the centre to which the field's new practitioners flocked, and quickly became a point of reference for its most innovative figures.[48] In the early 1930s the magazine, directed by Guido Mazzali and Dino Villani, held convivial meet-ups at the La Penna d'Oca (a restaurant in via S. Carlo, in Milan's Navigli neighborhood),[49] where professionals from various fields united—poster artists, advertising technicians, journalists, administrative consultants, and manufacturers. The first meetings generated the idea of forming a group, which took the name Gruppo amici della razionalizzatione (GAR, Group of the Friends of Rationalisation) and met at irregular intervals beginning in February 1931 in a small room at the Orologio restaurant, just steps from the Duomo.[50] Within the broader context of the time, in which exchanges between professionals from different sectors were sporadic at best, it is understandable why such encounters also attracted economists, statisticians, legal practitioners—contributors to *L'Industria Lombarda* (the official publication of the general confederation of Italian industry) interested in a studied, 'scientific' organisation of labour[51]—as well as illustrators and advertising designers like Carboni, Nizzoli, Dradi, Brunetta, Munari and Ricas, brought together by their need to discuss common problems. The initial convivial format gradually morphed into more structured meetings, with thematic presentations on aspects of the economy, business modernisation, advertising, staff education, and corporate politics,[52] and Mazzali's magazine became the movement's de facto official publication, regularly reporting on the meetings.[53]

47. Ceserani 1997a in Cimorelli, Ginex: 127. With the imposition of the Fascist corporate system (codified in the 1927 Carta del Lavoro) advertisers were filed first in the Print and Press Corporation category (1926), and later on in the Commercial Auxiliary category (1928) under the label National Fascist Union of Advertising Agencies (Ceserani 1988: 103–4). The corporate-sector panorama was completed by: the Industrial Confederation, comprised of publicity and advertising producers; the Professional and Artists Confederation, comprised of graphic artists (like Munari) and text editors; and the Autonomous Federation of Artisanal Communities, comprised of sign- and gift-makers (Valeri 1986: 60). With the intent of creating a 'third way' as an alternative between capitalism and Marxism to resolve class conflict—which was in the state's greatest interest—employers and employees were associated with a broad range of corporations corresponding to their various economic activities, all controlled by the government and grouped under the Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni (Chamber of Fasces and Corporations) (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporativismo, last accessed 29 December 2010).

48. In the thirties the magazine actively promoted the introduction of the American advertising model, often through sideline initiatives like the office's launch of a correspondence class with the École supérieure de publicité pratique in Paris (1928), and also helped organize two advertising congresses in Rome in 1930 and 1931 (Valeri 1986: 62–3, 66; Abruzzese, Colombo 1994: 465). In January 1929 the monthly added the subtitle *La Pubblicità*, and in March came under the direction of Guido Mazzali (1895–1960). Mazzali was a journalist, publisher of *Avanti!* until its suppression in 1926, and collaborator of Erwin, Wasey & Co. In 1928 he met Francesco Muscia, who had founded the magazine in 1926, joined the editorial team, and then became director, aided on the editorial team by Dino Villani (co-director from 1931 on). Dino Villani (1898–1989), Italian advertiser. After working with Mazzali, in '34 he became director of Motta's advertising office, then of GiViEmme's, for whom he launched famous award competitions (Abruzzese, Colombo 1994: 277, 467–8; Ceserani 1997: 127; Bauer 1998 in Colombo: 162–4; Carotti 2001: 68–9, 69n; Alberti 2007 in Salsi: 99–100; Fioravanti 1997: 91).

49. La Penna d'oca restaurant was also a meeting point for the Milanese goliards (cf.. advert in *Cip! Cip!*, 1931).

50. See Valeri 1986: 71–2; Ceserani 1988: 99–100; Ceserani 1997a: 131; Bauer 1998: 164; Falabrino 2001: 149; Carotti 2001: 72–8.

51. Carotti 2001: 73. Bauer 1998: 164.

52. Cf. Carotti 2001: 76–7.

53. Given the potentially subversive character of the discussions (many

Even after the authorities forced GAR's dissolution, the head group at *L'Ufficio Moderno* continued organising cultural events: it mounted an international exhibition of advertising posters at the Galleria del Milione (June 1933); and helped organise the IV International Advertising Congress, held in Rome and Milan the 17–21 September 1933, to which the magazine devoted a special issue.[54]

As we have seen, Munari became affiliated with the magazine in 1930, where he published his first works. A photo from an evening at the Taverna degli artisti of the Penna d'Oca Club, published in February 1931, shows him amid key figures of the entrepreneurial, academic, and advertising worlds, and the article makes it clear he was directly involved in organising the event.[55] Munari and Ricas also had lasting relationships with the editorial team, and through 1937 contributed covers and illustrations, as well as managing the art direction of one issue, printed promotional material for the magazine, and adverts for businesses in the sector.[56]

Mazzali's appointment as director of *L'Ufficio Moderno* in '29 also brought with it visible changes in the magazine's graphic look, to reflect its broader interest in both advertising's technical aspects as well as its aesthetic aspects. Up until then the cover had remained tied to symbolist aesthetic elements, albeit with some graphic updating of its lettering, and each issue reproduced the same basic design—only the colours changed—as was standard for magazines in the early 1930s. Mazzali introduced the idea of having each new cover done by an emerging artist capable of assimilating the new trends, including Carboni, Araca, Hrast, Piombanti, and Nizzoli.[57] Nizzoli was likely responsible for the monthly's renewed graphic layout, visible in the masthead's restyling, in the stylised figure of the thinker (who replaced the old winged Mercury), and in the column headers (decidedly more controlled than Munari's), while the layout assumed a more modern tone through the exclusive use of the new *Semplicità* typeface, an Italian version of Futura produced by the Nebiolo foundry.[58]

intellectuals and academics were socialists, liberals, catholics), in 1933 the regime's control forced GAR to be absorbed into a 'Centre for the Study of Corporate Economics,' which effectively sanctioned its dissolution. A new initiative, limited to the advertising sector, was launched in 1938 by the so-called Brigata della Spiga (a name, taken from the Firenze restaurant in via della Spiga, assumed in order to pass through the censors' restrictions). The group tried to launch a national advertising prize, which nevertheless was not followed up on because of the climate surrounding the imminent conflict (cf. Gino Pesavento, 'La Brigata della Spiga' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* XIII; 6, June 1938: 321–3; and ivi XIII; 8, August 1938: 430). In '40 Mazzali and other collaborators were arrested and sent into exile; the building housing the editorial offices was destroyed by the bombardments of August 1943 (Valeri 1986: 72, 75–6; Ceserani 1988: 99–100; Bauer 1998 in Colombo: 164; Carotti 2001: 70–1, 74–6. For the references regarding the various reports of the GAR meetings that appeared in the magazine between 1931 and '35, cf. Carotti 2001: 88–91).

54. Published under the title Arte pubblicitaria 1900–1933, Milan: *L'Ufficio Moderno*, 1933. Supplement to the September issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno*, published on the eve of the IV International Advertising Congress. Edited by Dino Villani, the volume aimed to be a significant review of the state of Italian graphic arts: the first part contained a chronological overview of the evolution of advertising in Italy through the profiles of a few advertising companies and agencies illustrated by examples of their adverts; the second part dealt with poster design, graphic design studios, and printers. Curiously, neither Munari (who was included in the Mostra del Cartello publicitario internazionale, con bozzetti italiani rifiutati nei concorsi (Exhibition of International Advertising Posters and Italian Rejected Posters) curated by Villani at the Galleria del Milione from June 2–17 that same year) nor any other graphic designers of his generation were profiled. Nevertheless, among the adverts included toward the end of the volume, reproductions (by Alfieri & Lacroix) of Munari's cover for the January '33 issue of *Natura* and a photomontage from the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1933* are included (Ceserani 1988: 103–4, 129; Bauer 1998: 164).

55. 'I pubblicitari' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* VI; 2 (February 1931): 95–96 (Valeri 1986: 73; Di Corato 2008: 214–5).

56. It is equally probable that studio R+M received direct (or indirect, through Studio Boggeri) commissions for adverts through Mazzali, who was also a consultant for the Lagomarsino and Alpestre companies.

57. Bauer 1998: 162–3; Carotti 2001: 71.

58. Despite the temptation to attribute it to Ricas

Much like the covers created in 1932, in terms of advertising Ricas and Munari |118| designed a small promotional brochure for *L'Ufficio Moderno*, which from a stylistic point of view could be placed in the transitional phase following their involvement with aeropainting, as it shows an inclination toward modernism, and pays more attention to the typography and the use of photomontage, and can therefore be dated to around 1933.[59]

In the spring of 1935, opening the editorial team to collaborations with prominent Milanese graphic artists, Mazzali |119| made Ricas and Munari art directors of the May issue. The goal of the initiative, which was instructional more than aesthetic, was to document—as the editorial states—'how even a trade magazine, edited and printed to be read and meditated upon, can and must break out of the narrow confines imposed upon it by the publishers.' The formula's success led them to repeat the initiative, as can be seen in the October issue, edited by Xanti Schawinsky. The entire publication shows signs of the two artists' interventions, not only in the layout, but beginning with the cover and continuing through the many illustrations and adverts, as well as a long article on interior design in which the studio's stylistic marks are given ample attention.[60] The layout does not exhibit any significant shifts with respect to the usual typographic layout (it maintained the use of the *Semplicità* and *Landi* faces), but showed great flexibility in the arrangement of text and images according to variously symmetrical and asymmetrical schemas, in one, two or three columns, with a clear structure that took two-page spreads into consideration—thereby demonstrating its assimilation (albeit without excessive rigour) of the lessons learned from the new typography popularised in Italy by periodicals like *Casabella* and *Campo grafico*. The two graphic designers' interventions can most clearly be seen in the selection and positioning of the images (primarily cut-out photographs), in a few vertically positioned titles, and in the margins' balance, They carved out a space for typographic experimentation in the article on themselves, partially printed in duotone, with the text composed entirely in lowercase letters, reminiscent of some work done at the Bauhaus. The opening two-page spread is a fantastical composition that makes the most of the anamorphic reflexion of the studio and the stratification of various elements (a technical drawing, two pencils, a frame) almost creating a surreal rebus. Aside from the verbose introduction, the content of the article—with the exception of the reproductions of graphic artefacts—is highly photographic. It places an emphasis on interior design, even if in reality it does not show trade-fair or commercial installations, but rather their own studio on via Ravizza and the two artists' living spaces. The images of the studio, on the basement level, focus primarily on the furnishings,

and Munari, the magazine's look can more reasonably be attributed to Nizzoli: in addition to the illustration style, the editorial offices' letterhead (reproduced in no.5, May 1932: 115) and its use of typographic screens recalls both his 'Sintesi Parolibere' adverts for Campari (in Ferrigni 1937) and the poster 'La moda. Decorazione della donna', from 1930 (in Falabrino 2001: 117), in which Nizzoli uses screens and collages of decorative papers to create textures.

59. 'L'Ufficio Moderno. La pubblicità', 2-flap brochure, 18×10 cm closed (26×10 cm open), printed in 3 colours. Milan, n.d. [c. 1935]; only known copy, now in the Bruno Munari Collection, CIAC Galleria del Design e dell'Arredamento, Cantù. Given the presence of a typo in the text and the reproduction of a sketch rather than a photo of the open magazine, this is likely an unfinished blueprint.

60. *L'Ufficio Moderno, la pubblicità* x; 5 (maggio), 1935. This article, untitled and signed 'Armodio', is listed in the table of contents as 'Ricas e Munari, arredamenti e decorazioni d'interni' (246–5).

made up of work tables, desks, chairs and other rationalist-style pieces; aside from the showroom and administrative spaces, the studio appears filled with paintings, sculptures, 'useless machines', a long black panel for pinning up sketches, and is generally characterised by colour accents on both the furnishings and the walls; ultimately, they appear quite similar to the domestic interiors designed by Ricas and Munari (the latter had married in 1934[61] and lived not far from the studio, in via Vittoria Colonna 39, where he remained for the rest of his life). The variety of their graphic intervention and the works presented in the magazine, ranging from the field of graphic design to that of furnishings and interior decoration, made this issue a nearly complete review of Ricas+Munari's entire output, and therefore allows us to outline a survey of sorts of where they stood in the mid-thirties, when both artists had already gained solid experience in Milan's cultural scene.

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Changeover (1933–35)

The article features a review of graphic works including commercial brands, covers, adverts, and illustrations documenting the effective passage from the primarily Futurist first phase toward a more constructivist visual language. This new sensibility, undoubtedly affected by the debate surrounding the new typography—which influenced all the figurative arts a bit, especially in Milan—was characterised by the use of photography (even if Munari and Ricas primarily used photomontage, perhaps because as a medium it was closer to illustration), the use of white spaces to create compositional balance, and the use of duotone, all elements that heralded the passage to a different graphic approach.

The logotype for AVA, a company that made boilers and heating devices and was part of the Dell'Orto group (for whom Ricas and Munari had already curated trade-fair stands) is typographically built like a monogram, in which the vertical shifting of the central letter leaves room for a small concession to figurative representation. The logo was still in use in 1939[62] and, as proof of the company's lasting relationship with the studio, a dummy for a brochure or catalogue also survives, with photomontages and headlines, roughly datable to the mid-thirties.[63] The logotype for Aeromeccanica Marelli, on the other hand, appears based on a more figurative Futurist typography, in which the two overlapping letters form one stylised figure, without hindering the acronym's legibility in the least, thereby making it more memorable.

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Their configuration of the Movo logo was markedly more allusive and original—the company produced model airplanes, and the logo was based on a double positive/negative image that reflects the nature of the product: the design schematically combined the silhouette of an assembled model and the instructional diagrams that came with the package. The go-between linking engineer Gustavo Clerici, Movo's

61. Cf. letter to Tullio d'Albisola [spring 1934]: '(…) when you next come to Milan you'll see our new, typically 'Munarian' home and we'll have the honour, esteemed commander, of counting you first amongst our highly sought-after guests (…) I'll send you a little bag of confetti to share with our friends in Albisola (say hello for us) and a little bag for esa' (in Presotto 1981: 147).

62. See the advert in *Casabella Costruzioni* no.134 (February 1939), from which it is clear that, in addition to the boiler division, the company also had kitchen (Febo), electrical, and laundry (Lava) divisions; as for the 'paternity' of the respective brands, in lieu of any additional information, Ricas and Munari may well have played a role in their creation (although this is pure speculation).

63. The original sketch, attributed to Munari, belongs to the collection of the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, New York/Bologna. 50×34.5 cm.

founder and author of a highly successful model-airplane hobbyst's manual,[64] and Munari was his younger brother Giordano, who joined him in Milan in the mid-thirties: Giordano also had a technical background in mechanical draughting, and before taking a job with Edison as a turbine draughtsman and designer he worked for a time as draughtsman at Movo.[65] At the time, model airplane building was a hobby not many could afford, and Clerici, well aware of the importance of an image on par with the prestige aeronautics enjoyed—a phenomenon also nurtured and exploited by the regime, thanks to the record-setting flights of Ferrarin, De Pinedo, and Balbo[66]—entrusted a Futurist artist to promote Movo. The logo, which certainly appeared on the company's letterhead and other commercial printed matter (of which, however, no specimens have survived), predates 1935. Two years later Munari edited the company's annual
|123| catalogue of original models.[67] The precise
|124| date of the first exemplar is not known, nor is Munari's role in its creation; in any case, he definitely oversaw the 1937 edition, which was later reprinted (unmodified) the following year, and taken up substantially unaltered (aside from the cover) in the layout of the following editions up through the postwar period.[68]

The catalogue appeared in a small album format, which allowed for an articulated, varied layout combining texts and photographs, and was a successful experi-
|125| ment using a grid-based layout on both the interior pages and cover. The latter is divided into two horizontal stripes printed in blue, occupied by photographs of an airplane in flight and a model airplane, respectively; the upper portion features the letters of the company name, which emerge in relief thanks to a subtle use of shadow, while the centre has a black stripe with the text 'Modelli volanti and parti staccate' (Flying models and individual parts) and the store's address printed in negative. The same horizontal emphasis characterises the pages of text: some pages are based on a three-column module, with colour titles slightly unaligned (with

64. Gustavo Clerici, *Il modello volante. Vademecum dell'aeromodellista*. Milan: Edizioni Movo, 1938. There is no evidence of Munari's involvement in the volume's production, which typographically belongs to the category of technical instruction manuals (like those published by Hoepli).

65. Alberto Munari, author interview 1 February 2008. As far as is currently known, however, the reverse hypothesis cannot be excluded—that is, Munari may have introduced his brother to Movo. His brother (or perhaps Munari himself?) is depicted holding one of the models in a photograph accompanying the article 'I modelli volanti' published by Munari in *La Lettura* xxxvi; 11 (November 1936): 942–3.

66. Arturo Ferrarin (1895–1941) obtained worldwide fame in 1920 with his Rome-Tokyo flight; in 1928 he set the world-wide records for duration and distance of a nonstop flight by flying from Rome to Touros (Brazil). Francesco De Pinedo (1890–1933) carried out the exceptional feat (for the time) of flying from Rome to Melbourne, Tokyo, and back; in 1927 he flew from Italy to Cape Verde, Buenos Aires, and finally Arizona. Italo Balbo (1896–1940) led two Transatlantic flights: the first in December 1930 to Rio de Janeiro, and the second—on the occasion of the 1933 Universal Exposition in Chicago—to Montreal, Chicago, and (en route back to Italy) New York (source: wikipedia.it, last accessed 2 July 2010).

67. *Movo Modelli volanti e parti staccate*. Milan: Movo, 1937; printed by Muggiani, Milan. 22×14.5 cm; pp. 32; staple binding; printed in two colours. This edition is the oldest in the company's archives. The information claiming the catalogue's interior was overseen by Clerici doubtless refers to the content rather than the graphic layout (Alessandro Clerici, author interview 17 July 2009).

68. The catalogues' covers maintained the photographic layout of the original (with the exception that the photo in the lower portion changes) up until 1941. The later editions (including those of the immediate postwar period) have a different cover, no longer illustrated but rather typographic, and more traditional; the structure is similar, divided into two horizontal stripes, but of different colours and heights. Its creator is unknown—however, if compared to the case for *Mondo Aria Acqua Terra*, a collection of children's books published by Munari in 1940 (Milan: Italgeo), whose cover has a similar layout, it is possible that even the new typographic cover was designed by Munari. The interior, on the other hand—aside from a few new insertions and rearrangement of a few pages—largely followed the original layout of '37. The format and the graphic look of the Movo catalogues changed only in 1959.

respect to the columns); these alternate with pages based on a two-column module, dominated by photographs and diagrams accompanied by technical notes; and pages of tables follow, in various modular arrangements according to the function of their data. On a typographic level, the use of a single sans-serif face (*Semplicità*) gives uniformity and coherence to the effective arrangement of titles and headlines that—using a combination of sizes, weights, cases, and colours—facilitates the information's readability.

'A brochure must be thought of as a
|126| single strip'—wrote Munari in an article that appeared that same year in *Campo grafico*. Here for the first time he put into practice the principle of 'graphic rhythm', comparing it to a cinematographic sequence:

> a certain sense of movement, similar to cinema, created by a succession of pages much like the succession of film stills (...) has to balance the white space, text, and illustrations in a clear, fluid way, and above all it must remain as hidden as possible.[69]

In other words, speaking of the importance of the alignments as of an invisible 'central thread on and around which the other minor rhythms form the harmony of the whole', Munari postulates the modular grid, an innovation brought to Italy by Persico and Modiano's pioneering work for *Casabella* (in particular, their work from 1933 on); yet its elaboration remains primarily intuitive, far from the systematic concept of the grid that was already widespread in Central Europe. More generally, the formal solutions adopted in the Movo catalogue clearly indicate Munari's proximity to the precepts of the new typography and his evident assimilation of a few modernist stylistic elements, like the functional use of duotone, the layout based on the two-page spread, the importance of white in the composition, and the coherent arrangement of illustrations, texts, and captions, which recall the recurring recommendations that appeared in the pages of *Campo grafico* and Modiano's writings.[70] The Movo catalogue is without doubt one of Munari's best creations—and one of the best works in general within the graphic scene of the time, as the reproduction of its cover and some of its two-page spreads in an article by Giuseppe Pagano in a special issue of *Gebrauchsgraphik* devoted to Italy in autumn 1937 attests.[71]

Ricas and Munari's situation between 1933 and 1935 might best be summarised as a changeover. Their openness toward a more resolutely modern graphic approach, more apprised of constructive principles, came about through their intense collaboration with Antonio Boggeri's advertising studio, where the two artists were able to measure themselves against graphic designers like Xanti Schawinsky. Their cover

69. Bruno Munari, 'Ritmi grafici' in *Campo grafico* v; 5–6, June 1937: 33, 35. At the beginning of the article, Munari presents a modular grid, probably the same one used in the layout of the Movo catalogue. It is interesting to note that, among the images accompanying the text there are, in addition to a selection of individual pages from the catalogue, also works by studio R+M (an advert and cover) and an American catalogue by Lester Beall.

70. See, for example, the article 'Cataloghi' (in *Campo grafico* III; 1, January 1935: 6–8) in which, based on an example designed by Max Burchartz for Wehag, Modiano analyses the catalogue as a modern graphic product, discussing its twofold function of aesthetic and informative communication.

71. Giuseppe Pagano, 'Die Entwicklung der Typographie in Italien/Evolution of typography in Italy ' in *Gebrauchsgraphik* vol.14, no.10 (October 1937): 52–60. Reproductions of the catalogue also appear alongside Munari's article, 'Ritmi grafici', which appeared in *Campo grafico* (no.5–6, June 1937: 32–5), later reprinted with the illustrations in the 'Consensi e dissensi' column of *L'Ufficio Moderno* (XII; 9, September 1937: 441–6). Given its traditional layout, an unsigned advert for Movo that appeared in *L'Ala d'Italia* that same autumn (n.10, October 1937: xxxvi) is difficult to read, and therefore likely cannot be attributed to Munari.

design for *L'Ufficio Moderno*, successful as it is for the genre, still has not entirely shed the traditional pictorial heritage. The cover |128| designed a few months later by Schawinsky is characterised instead by the skillful integration of photography and typography, the controlled dynamism of the composition, and the expressive use of colour and typographic screens. A comparison between these examples shows the sheer distance that still separated the most advanced Italian graphic designers from the concept of modern graphics developed in continental Europe.[72]

This phase of research was also when Ricas and Munari participated in a textile design competition launched by De Angeli-Frua, an important textile firm, aimed at the exhibition of unique fabrics at the 1933 Triennale. The competition was announced in *Domus* and *Natura* in November '32 and, in addition to noteworthy monetary prizes, offered artists a chance to publish their own work in a prestigious context as well as contribute to the production of a textile series. The jury consisted of representatives from the company and the Direttorio (Steering Committee) of the Milanese exhibition, the directors of the two magazines (Gio Ponti and Luigi Poli), and artists and architects including Mario Sironi, Giuseppe Pagano, and Luciano Baldessari. The competition results were published the following February, and Ricas and Munari were among the winners with an aeropictorial-style design that (per the announced conditions) was exhibited at the V Triennale.[73] The next Triennale in 1936 also included a review of printed textiles, |129| and a number of recently rediscovered textile design sketches signed Munari/Studio Boggeri can probably be traced back to that occasion: these are particularly interesting examples, insofar as the drawings no longer show any trace of the old aeropictorial stylistic elements, and are instead modelled on organic and geometric motifs in coordinated ranges of spot colours.[74]

Also in 1933 Dino Villani, editor of *L'Ufficio Moderno*, organised an important exchange between the European avant-garde and the Milanese graphics and architecture scenes at the Galleria del Milione. |131| Proposing an Esposizione del cartello internazionale e del cartello italiano rifiutato (Exhibition of International Posters and Rejected Italian Posters), which included work by Munari and Ricas alongside that of high-calibre European artists such as Bayer, Carlu, Cassandre, Cappiello, Garretto, Sepo, Dudovich, and Soviet poster designers. Controversially, the Italian graphic designers exhibited only rejected sketches to criticise patrons' aesthetic incomprehension:

> Here [in Italy] people still ask that posters be nice illustrations, they want them to be full of laudatory descriptions, when instead

72. *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5 (May 1935) and ivi x; 10 (September 1935), by Ricas+Munari and Schawinsky, respectively.

73. Cf. Gio Ponti, 'Verso gli artisti…' in *Domus* no.59 (November 1932): 686–7 and 'L'esito del concorso per dieci stoffe d'autore bandito da De Angeli-Frua' in *Natura* vi; 2 (February 1933): 56–7. The competition was expressly designed without excessive stipulations in order to guarantee the participation of the best artists, and offered 10 prizes of 1,000 lire plus a special juried prize of 2,000 lire—by way of comparison, 1,000 lire was the equivalent of a decent monthly wage, as a famous song (*Mille lire al mese*) of the time attests. Among the ten artists whose designs were selected, in addition to Munari and Ricas, were Nizzoli (two prizes and the special prize), Lucio Fontana, Fausto Melotti, and Giulia Veronesi.

74. Now in the collection of the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, New York/Bologna. The lot includes drawings of various sizes (the smallest measures 10×16 cm, the largest 34×40.5 cm), done in tempera in different colour combinations (from 2 to 5); some compositions are only partially completed, with the main image sketched in pencil. All carry the artist's signature, often accompanied by an illegiblescrawl. The client they were done for, on the other hand, remains unknown.

they should consist of very few elements that instantaneously synthesise a concept.[75]

In terms of Munari's stylistic progress, 1934 was marked by two somewhat contradictory events: on the one hand, the professional recognition from a competition promoted by *Il Risorgimento Grafico*; and, on the other, a typographic poster created for a Futurist exhibition that exposed all the limits in his self-taught educational background. The competition was one in a series of promotional initiatives carried out in Bertieri's nearly forty years of activity: the assigned theme was a cover for the magazine, and was therefore inspired by the press and print world, and accepted work in two categories, artistic (illustrated) and typographic, evaluated by two separate juries. Despite the usual debates surrounding such initiatives, participation was quite high, with over 130 designs submitted between the two divisions. Not only did the magazine devote two issues to the competition results, publishing all the selected works, it also organised a public exhibition at the Istituto Bertieri. The designs by the three winners in each category were also published as covers of *Il Risorgimento Gra-*
|132| *fico* that year. Munari's composition won second place, and was published in the April issue.[76] It is significant that Munari submitted a figurative design, confirming his personal inclination toward pictorial expression rather than the rigour of typographic composition, even if the image did have a decidedly abstract aspect: the background is a geometric motif with alternating stripes, atop which the silhouette of a hand (made with typographic screens) is mounted, and atop the hand is a block of moveable type, the only really figurative element; the title of the magazine and other text appear within the horizontal stripes. The result appears even more noteworthy
|134| when compared to the typographic poster he produced for an aeropainting exhibition in Reggio Emilia during that same period. The exhibition was the same one organised in March at the Galleria delle Tre Arti in Milan, for which the artist had designed
|133| a brochure with a twofold function—acting as both a programme and a theoretical manifesto—quite effective in its striking simplicity.[77] In April, when the show travelled to Reggio Emilia, Munari created a purely typographic poster, an absolutely unique piece in his entire production. The composition seems to have been assembled directly on the press with moveable wood type, according to the artist's loose directions (perhaps aimed at achieving a Dada-esque effect), in the disorderly arrangement of the texts, which lacked any

75. Galleria del Milione, Milan, 3–30 June 1933. Cf. Dino Villani, 'Presentazione' and (ed.) 'In Galleria' in *Il Milione* no.16 (3–30 June 1933): n.p. Over the course of the 1932/33 season the Ghiringhelli brothers' gallery (thanks also to Persico's unflagging contributions) mounted significant group exhibitions on the emerging field of design, ranging from modern furnishings to set design and fashion.

76. 46th Competition announced by *Il Risorgimento Grafico* in September 1934. The two juries, composed of 3 members, included—in addition to the categories' union representatives, from the Unione Provinciale professionisti e artisti and the Sindacato Provinciale Fascista dell'arte grafica—respectively: Guido Marussig (illustrator, poster artist, set designer) and Raffaele Calzini (writer) for category A (art); Gabriele Chiattone (printer-typographer and art publisher) and Elio Palazzo (director of the Scuola dell'Umanitaria) for category B (typography). Cf. *Il Risorgimento Grafico* xxxi; nos.2 and 3 (February and March 1935), wholly devoted to the competition results. The exhibition opened to the public on 24 March and was installed in the printshop rooms, 'atop the typesetters' cases and the printshop's countertops' (ibid.). In addition to being published, Munari won 300 lire.

77. *Scelta futuristi venticinquenni*, brochure, 70×50 cm. Printed on the occasion of the exposition at the Galleria delle Tre Arti, Milan, 4–18 March 1934. The recto contains a short 'Antipolemica/Noi lavoriamo contando' presentation (by Munari), a calendar of events, and a catalogue of the works; the verso reproduces the *Manifesto tecnico dell'aeroplastica futurista* (reproduced in Lista 1984: 68).

clear structure, in the unusual horizontal format, and above all in the decision to print it on papers of various colours (reminiscent of the Italian flag, although it is not clear whether this gesture was deliberately playful or just plain nationalistic). But aside from the riff on the stylistic elements of Dada, the composition has no formal relation to the brochure of the Milan exhibition, and appears rather compositionally limp, in both its choice and use of type as well as in its tendency to fill the page, ignoring the white spaces.[78] Nor, truthfully, does it demonstrate any greater typographic competence than the plain self-promotional advert Ricas and Munari published in the goliard students' *Latteria di Tripoli*.[79]

The modernist controversy

The proposition Munari outlined in his brief contribution to *Campo grafico* took up current ideas from the heated modernist debate that throughout the 1930s pitted the traditionalism of book typography, embodied by Raffaello Bertieri and his magazine *Il Risorgimento grafico*,[80] against the new generations of technicians and graphic designers who, looking to the broader range of European work, saw a clear affinity—of both intent and, secondarily, formal qualities—between typography, architecture, and nonfigurative painting. The voices in favour of a rational, expressive renewal of the graphic arts—anticipated by the critical thinking and print work of exceptional typographers like Guido Modiano[81]—were heard in *Campo grafico*, the 'magazine of graphic aesthetics and techniques' founded in January 1933 by a group of technicians (typesetters, lithographers, printers) working at various Milanese printing plants, whose antagonism toward '*Il Risorgimento Grafico*' had a strong impact on the stagnant environment in Italy at the time.[82] The young 'campisti' shared an urgent desire to expand the typographic

78. *Mostra aeropittura venticinquenni futuristi*, poster, 100×70 cm. Printed by the Stabilimento tipografico P. Notari e figli, Reggio Emilia. Printed in three versions on green, white, and red paper. Reproductions in Lista 1984 (green), Mughini, Scudiero 1997 (white), Mughini collection, Rome (red). For the exhibition in Reggio Emilia cf. 'I futuristi venticinquenni a Milano e a Reggio' in *Sant'Elia* III; 67 (15 May 1934): 6.

79. 'Se vi trovate in imbarazzo (...)' in *Latteria di Tripoli. Numero unico dei goliardi milanesi a favore degli studenti bisognosi*. Milan: n.p., [February/March] 1934: p. 48. 22.5×30 cm.

80. Raffaello Bertieri (pseudonym of Carlo Lorettoni, 1875–1941), printer-typographer, bibliophile, and publisher. A pupil of typographer Salvatore Landi, at the beginning of the century he moved from Florence to Milan, where he sold presses. In 1906 he opened a printshop/graphic office with Piero Vanzetti, which in the twenties became the Istituto Grafico Bertieri (in 1926 Vanzetti and Luigi Vanoletti founded the eponymous printing facility). In 1902 Bertieri founded the trade magazine *Il Risorgimento Grafico* (literally 'The Graphic Resurgence'), which he directed for nearly forty years, becoming spokesman for a renewal of printing arts based on a return and revival of Renaissance and Bodonian book models. Director of the Scuola del Libro della Società Umanitaria (from 1919 to 1925), he also designed typefaces based on Renaissance (*Incunabula*, 1911; *Sinibaldi*, 1922–28; *Ruano*, 1926) and neoclassical calligraphic models (*Paganini*, 1926), all produced by the Fonderia Nebiolo, where he also supported the creation (in 1933) of the Art Studio run by Giulio Da Milano, later run by Alessandro Butti (Rattin, Ricci 1997: 63, 86–90, 97; Pigozzi 1982: 468). Despite the controversies in the specialised press that pitted conservatives against innovators for nearly a decade, thanks to the prestige Bertieri enjoyed as a 'cultural figure' he continued to receive important commissions for the Triennale: after the graphic overview he installed in the Padiglione della stampa (Print Pavilion) in '33, and the absence of any graphic arts presentation in '36, in 1940 Bertieri curated the book section of the Mostra dell'arte grafica (Graphic Arts Exhibition) installed by Guido Modiano, who also played a key role in creating Italy's new typographic style (cf. Vinti 2005).

81. Although the first texts date back to 1929 ('Del nuovo stile tipografico' in *L'Industria della stampa* no.9, September 1929: 275–280), in 1931 Modiano effectively opened the debate by launching *Tipografia*, a magazine published by the Fonderia Reggiani (a short-lived publication, with only 3 issues) and at the same time designed and printed graphic works according to the new functionalist criteria (catalogue Compagnia Continentale Sellerie ciclistiche e affini, 1932) (cf. Vinti 2005: 51, 55).

82. The magazine, launched in January 1933, ceased publication in May 1939. In the absence of any in-depth historic examination of the magazine, see the clear accounts given by its two main figures, Attilio Rossi and Carlo Dradi: Rossi 1973: 11–4; Dradi 1973:

field to include everyday printed matter (brochures, catalogues, magazines, in which the photographic image was assuming an ever greater role) overturning the traditional preeminence of the book, defended by *Il Risorgimento Grafico*, which represented the erudite side of Italian printing arts. *Campo grafico*'s uniqueness lay not only in the fact that it was a spontaneous publishing initiative, without great means, founded on the collaboration of its prime movers—material suppliers and the various plants in which it was printed.[83] Above all, it positioned itself as a 'demonstrative' magazine that, contesting the rhetoric of 'Italian-ness' in the neoclassical book-publishing model,[84] adopted an experimental formula that was reevaluated with each issue—whereby the cover, layout, and even the adverts became a 'training ground' of sorts in which to prove the inherent possibilities of the new typographic aesthetic. Beyond the strictly formal level, *Campo grafico* made important contributions to the modernist debate through its content as well, with polemical and theoretical writings, critical and popularising articles, technical columns, and reviews; all this was augmented by adverts with colour reproductions and a few monographs dedicated to contemporary artists, confirming the deep ties between typography and all the other manifestations of modern aesthetics.[85] And it was not an isolated instance. A similar attempt to rejuvenate typographic culture was carried out by a group of printer-typographers in Turin, led by Giulio Da Milano and Ezio D'Errico, who founded the magazine *Graphicus*; it took a moderately progressive stance, halfway between the more extreme positions held by the traditionalists and Futurists.[86]

Relationship to architecture

The modernist controversy arose amidst the broader context of Italian rationalism, characterised by age-old controversies regarding the role of modern architecture

19–23, 26–8, 36–7; Rossi 1983: 8–11. (Cf. also Pigozzi 1982: 468–9; Fioravanti 1997: 74–5; Baroni, Vitta 2003: 135–6; Caccia 2007: 49–52)

83. Each issue was edited, typeset, and printed after working hours at the various printing facilities in which the workers and technicians were employed, coordinating the various steps in weekly meetings. Even the distribution, as well as subscription enrollment, depended on volunteer work. Despite the economic difficulties, from January 1933 through mid-1939 a total of 66 issues were published; it grew from an original 16 pages to a total of 24 within the first year, although the print run generally remained around 500 copies (Dradi 1973; Rossi 1983; Dradi, Rossi 2003: 8).

84. Italian typographic traditionalism (championed by Bertieri, Cesare Ratta, and Alberto Tallone) was constantly targeted by the 'campisti' (contributors to *Campo grafico*): cf. Rossi, who derides the mentality of the illustrious printer-typographers 'who honed their tastes during the inauspicious floral period and then returned to the simplicity of Bodoni, which seemed to them a revolutionary step' (*Campo grafico* v; 9, September 1937) or Modiano, who, in a review about Tallone, labelled such 'tipografia granducale' (grand-duchy typography) anachronistic (*Campo grafico* III; 7, July 1935).

85. The technical articles offered information and solutions for common printing problems, as well as news on such topics as the use of metallic inks, printing on cellophane, etc.; the reviews covered exhibitions by known artists considered close to the field of graphics, such as the shows by Vordemberge-Gildewart (November 1934) and Willi Baumeister (May 1935) at the Galleria del Milione. Three important monographs were devoted to the work of painter Atanasio Soldati, sculptor Lucio Fontana, and architect Alberto Sartoris, accompanied by critical texts by Alfonso Gatto, Leonardo Sinisgalli, Edoardo Persico, and Raffaello Giolli. Even on the covers the editors always sought to combine aesthetic ends (commissioning work from artists in various currents: Veronesi, Soldati, Dradi-Rossi, et al.) and technical aspects (experimenting with printing on cardboard and other new materials, like metallic or velour papers, in some cases combined with offset printing) (Dradi 1973: 35).

86. A technical-typographic monthly founded in Turin in 1911 under the title *Piemonte grafico*. In 1932 *Graphicus* began a fruitful collaboration with the Scuola Tipografica Vigliardi Paravia, which led to a generational renewal of its editorial team and in 1934 a new directorship under Giulio Da Milano (who had previously run the Art Studio of the Nebiolo foundry), Edoardo Orecchia, and Ezio d'Errico, champions of a more decisive updating/modernisation of the graphic arts; in particular the covers of the thirties show a bona fide emulation of the work being done by the Milanese campisti (Solia 1969: 39–45; Dradi 1973: 12; Pansera 1984: 16n; Priarone 1989: 12).

in the Fascist state. In particular, the campaign for rational architecture regarded the exhibition installation and public competition sectors, but above all it occupied the specialised press (*Casabella* first and foremost), trade newspapers, and even the Camera dei Deputati (Chamber of Parliament).[87] Nevertheless, despite a few significant achievements, the attempt to develop an Italian modernism ended up inevitably yielding to the conditions imposed by the regime, and was forced to compromise with the monumentalism spreading through Italy's urban centres.

In 1926 the avant-garde Gruppo 7 (Group 7) came to the fore with a series of articles published in the magazine *Rassegna Italiana*. These texts were a kind of manifesto of Italian rationalism in which new principles for modern architecture, in line with the theoretical underpinnings of the International style, were announced: an adherence to the essential form, correspondence between form and function, and refusal of decoration—while nevertheless laying claim to ties with the underlying Italian tradition.[88] In 1928 the group organised the Prima Esposizione italiana di architettura razionale (First Italian Exposition of Rational Architecture) at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, which gave it a degree of notoriety on the national level, and in 1930 it grew into the MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale, the Italian Rational Architecture Movement), with the aim of increasing its visibility and influence through exhibitions, conferences, and publications. Although the first public launch did not garner any particular reaction, once the first works were built (Terragni's Novocomum in Como, 1929; Pagano's Gualino office building in Turin; Figini and Pollini's Casa elettrica at the Monza Triennale, 1930) it became clear that the rationalists' intentions were really too radical for the academicism dominant in Rome. Despite efforts to validate the rational style as a response to the reformational values of Fascism—which, it should be noted, many young architects, including Terragni and Pagano, staunchly supported—the Seconda Esposizione italiana di architettura razionale (Second Italian Exposition of Rational Architecture) at the Galleria Bardi in Rome in 1931 caused a great stir.[89] Marcello Piacentini—the most influential architect in Rome, and advocate of a 'simplified neoclassicism' in keeping with the regime's authoritarian vision[90]—accused the rationalists of 'Bolshevism' in the press; the architects' union, part of the Fascist corporate order, withdrew its support and threatened the participating architects with expulsion from the Order of Architects; the inevitable defections led to the dissolution of MIAR in September 1931.

87. Following the controversy—brought as far as Parliament—surrounding the plans for Sabaudia and the Florence railway station Mussolini intervened (up until then, as with all aesthetic issues, he had not gotten involved), and in June 1934 summoned Giovanni Michelucci's Gruppo Toscano to Palazzo Venezia and unexpectedly praised rationalist architecture: 'because, as an old revolutionary, he sensed that the architecture we proposed was a slap in the face of the lazy, sly bourgeoisie' (Carlo Belli 1980: 18).

88. The group included the young architects Ubaldo Castagnola, Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Gino Pollini, Carlo Enrico Rava, Giuseppe Terragni, and Adalberto Libera.

89. Despite Pier Maria Bardi's manoeuvres to win Mussolini's support of rationalism (*Rapporto sull'architettura [per Mussolini]. Polemiche*. Rome: Edizioni di Critica Fascista, 1931), what really got a reaction from academics was his 'Tavola degli orrori', a profane photomontage that implicitly attacked the eclecticism popular under King Umberto and Piacentini's monumental classicism.

90. In these years many Italian cities were redesigned: parts of their historic centres were demolished, new streets were opened, and many public buildings were redefined in an eclectic style inspired by the 'Roman-ness' championed by Marcello Piacentini. His 'simplified neoclassicism' was essentially an exterior modernisation characterised by simplified forms, smooth walls, full balconies, and blunted arches and columns, while the structure still had symmetrical plans and closed volumes.

From then on the more radical version of the rationalist movement was defeated, and internally lost steam as the architects gave up on winning any major public commissions, where the Fascist style promoted by the regime was rampant. Conversely, the collaborative strategy enacted by Piacentini managed to break the rationalist front, bringing in those architects open to compromise on broader projects like the Città Universitaria in Rome and, later, the Esposizione Universale E42 (commonly referred to today as EUR).[91] Nevertheless, individual architects managed to carry out a few important achievements: in 1933 work on the new railway station began in Florence (designed by the Gruppo Toscano led by Giovanni Michelucci); the urban planning of Sabaudia commenced (coordinated by Luigi Piccinato); and a few minor public buildings were completed (railway stations, post offices, and community centres known as Case del fascio).[92] That same year Bardi and Bontempelli launched the new architecture magazine *Quadrante*,[93] mouthpiece of the Fascist intellectual Left led by Giuseppe Bottai and his final attempt to defend rationalism, in opposition to intellectuals like Ugo Ojetti who defended Piacentini's architecture.[94] Furthermore, the broader backdrop of these complex events was the clash between proponents and opponents of modernism within the government and PNF, which influenced all forms of artistic activity; after the call for a return to sobriety imposed by the proclamation of autarchy, the Futurists and abstract artists sided with the rationalists in defence of the avant-garde.[95]

An attempt at establishing a direct link between Futurism and rationalism was mounted by the Turin group, and in particular by Alberto Sartoris and Fillìa who, after organising the first exhibition of Futurist architecture dedicated to Sant'Elia and Chiattone in 1928 in Rome, in 1931 published the first study of rationalism to appear in Italy, *La nuova architettura*. In this critical review he postulates a relationship between Futurism and rationalism, not unlike the presumed Futurist primacy with respect to the European avant gardes in the typographic realm: indeed, the Futurists—with a fair dose of presumption—repeatedly claimed chronological and creative paternity of the typographic renewal.[96] But

91. In 1932 Piacentini decided to include the rationalists in the installations for the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, for which Libera collaborated with De Renzi on the imposing façade and with Valente on the Memorial (the central element), while Nizzoli and Terragni curated the other rooms. For the completion of the new Città Universitaria (university campus, 1932–35) Piacentini invited Pagano, Minnucci, and Michelucci, amongst others; for the design of the Esposizione Universale (1936–42) Piccinato, Libera, Minnucci, BBPR, and Pagano (Kirk 2005: 88–90, 133–6; Schnapp 2003: 155–7; cf. Belli 1980: 18–9).

92. Amongst the most important designs built by the rationalists in Italy: the Casa del Fascio in Como (Terragni, 1932); the Istituto di Fisica at the Università degli studi di Roma (Pagano, 1934); the Università Bocconi in Milan (Pagano and G. Predeval, 1938–41); Casa Malaparte on Capri (Libera, 1938); the Case della Foce in Genoa (Luigi Carlo Daneri, 1936–40); and several exhibition installations for the Triennale (Albini, Figini and Pollini, Persico and Nizzoli, BBPR, 1933–40). Cf. Kirk 2005: 92–108.

93. *Quadrante* (1933–36), an architecture monthly founded and directed by Pier Maria Bardi and the writer Massimo Bontempelli, with the collaboration of the rationalist architects of Milan and Como, as well as Belli and the abstract artists of the Galleria del Milione. Compared to *Casabella* the magazine was more multidisciplinary, and dealt with literature, photography, cinema, art, music, and politics. It was supressed in 1936 under orders of the PNF Secrertary Starace because of a short controversial commentary by Bardi (Baglione 2008: 99–100; Belli 1980: 17).

94. As for general references for modernist architecture in Italy between the two wars: Benevolo 1971: 561–74; Fontana 1999: 133–58; Gregotti 1968: 9–37; Zevi 1961: 231–41, 277–81, 643–5; Kirk 2005: 67–141; and http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architettura_razionalista and http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIAR.

95. Crispolti 1986: 220–223; Poretti 2004: 467.

96. The Turin-based printer-typographer Carlo Frassinelli, in a letter published in *Il Risorgimento Grafico* in 1929 maintained: 'The Germans' 'elemental typography' (...); the French's elegant and delightful 'avant-garde typography'; the United States' 'modernist typography' (...) and, finally, the Italians' 'novecentist typography', all fundamentally stem from Italian Futurism' (ivi XXVI;

such proclamations—often tinged with a nationalist take on some presumed Futurist or Bodonian superiority (depending on the point of view, modernist or traditionalist)—dotted the drawn-out debate on modern typography and reveal the Italians' thinly masked inferiority complex with regard to the rest of Europe. And again in the early 1940s a similarly nationalist reading of Futurist typography appeared in two monographic issues of *Campo Grafico* and *Graphicus*.[97] But by then the prevailing atmosphere did not allow for any real confrontation or comparison with the European avant-gardes.[98]

Installations, set designs, window displays

With rationalism the new Italian typography proved it had more than just a straightforward formal affinity. Upon Persico and Pagano's 1930 arrival, Milan was at the centre of the debate and rationalist architecture's many innovations in Lombardy, which, in lieu of public commissions, depended on private-sector ties. Such projects included the interior designs for De Angeli-Frua, the Caffè Craja, the Nodari bookshop, and the creations for the Triennali that, ephemeral as they were, allowed for close collaboration between architects and artists. The early 1930s were a period of particular synergy between rationalist architecture and the most advanced graphic work being done in Milan, leading to the completion of important integrated projects.[99] Artists and graphic designers belonging to both the Futurists and abstract artists groups participated—and not only for reasons of survival—in any and all exhibition events or trade expos 'where the ephemeral character of the constructions allowed for experimentation with formal languages, techniques, and new materials, where the pictorial or sculptural element often staked out its own space', thereby managing to do more advanced formal research than would have been possible in a more strictly artistic realm.[100]

> 'My' painters no longer knew how to live (…) The architects got by somehow (…) but the abstract painters and sculptors were literally on the ground. Even Munari, ingenious inventor of forms and volumes, somehow eked out a living and survived by doing exhibition installations, decorations, and interiors, because his verve was always so pleasant, because he exuded such intelligence and elegance.[101]

The Fiera di Milano (Trade Fair) logically constituted a key commercial opportunity for graphic work tied to installations for business, industry, and manufacturing. Ricas and Munari certainly contributed to the fair, but aside from a few indirect references there does not seem to be any documentation that would allow for even a rough reconstruction of their creative work for it, or at least their business-world

7, July 1929: 387–9, cit in Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 36).

97. Vol. VII; 3–5, March–May 1939 (edited by Enrico Bona) and XXXI; 5, May 1942 (edited by Alfredo Trimarco), respectively.

98. Aside from recognizing the early Futurist contributions, Tschichold effectively ignored Italian developments in *Die neue Typographie* (1928), which is understandable, given the country's cultural backwardness in the late twenties. However, he ignored noteworthy examples of the new Italian typographic aesthetic also in his later treatments in *Eine Stunde Druckgestaltung* (1930) and *Typographische Gestaltung* (1935). According to Burke, Tschichold's negation of any significant developments in Italy probably derives from his refusal to align the European graphic avant-garde with the political right, as is further proved by the surprising lack of contact with Marinetti (Burke 2007: 129–30). The Bauhausbücher series is also worth mention, as it featured contributions by Marinetti and Prampolini on Futurism, which were never published, perhaps for similar reasons (cf. the prospective titles in preparation in 1926, reproduced in Fleischmann 1984: 150).

99. Gregotti 1968: 15; Ravaioli 1998: 53–4.

100. Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 47.

101. Belli 1980: 21.

affiliates.[102] It is different with the Triennale and other major (often propagandist) expos promoted by the regime, where the Futurists' idea of the 'plastica murale' (wall decoration) as a prime collective artistic expression—in the form of polymaterial decorations on social themes designed for public buildings—was brought to fruition. Although they contrasted with the bare surfaces of rationalist architecture, polymaterial wall decorations constituted a shared ground with modern architecture.[103] Limited as the Futurists' role in the V Triennale was, the Stazione per aeroporto civile (city airport) designed for the park was its most visible contribution; Prampolini draughted up the rationalist architectural design, and called upon the collaboration of several Futurists from Milan and Turin for its decoration and furnishings. The building was articulated in three sections: a circular central hall (with waiting areas and a café/bar for travellers); and two smaller wings to each side, housing the service areas (ticket counters, telephone and telegraph station, baggage check, customs, supply rooms and filling stations, and emergency medical services) all linked through an underground passage—where Munari created an aeropic-
|136| torial mural which, especially in light of its location, appears to have been a rather modest contribution. The technical aspects of the interior designs are more interesting, as they use the newest chemical and construction materials available—masonite, linoleum, aluminum alloys, synthetic paints, like the Silexore-brand paint used for all the pavilion's decorations—which were a response to protectionist measures as also gave the project a modern feel on par with its furnishings.[104] Munari's large mural
|137| decoration for the Sala d'Icaro at the Mostra Aeronautica (Icarus Room at the Aereonautics Show), organised in the Triennale's exhibition spaces in 1934, had a similar format and function, although it played a larger role in the overall installation.[105] the same is true of the 'photoplastics' and abstract mosaic for the urban planning section of the 1936 Triennale (previously discussed) and the composition with special Max Meyer enamels in the section on construction systems and building materials.[106] The only fully documented installation is the Mostra dell'arte grafica (Graphic Arts Exhibit) at the VII Triennale in 1940, curated by Modiano. It marked the conclusion of the decade-old debate between the 'campisti' and traditionalists, and summed up Italian graphic arts' overall situation on the eve of conflict; Munari contributed an important section on the relationships of modern figurative arts.

Also worth mention are Munari and Ricas's participation in two mural decoration exhibitions organised in Genoa in 1934 and Rome in 1936, which relaunched

102. In addition to the simple stands for Carlo Erba and Federico Dell'Orto (reproduced in *L'Ufficio Moderno* in late 1932), Munari hinted at a work he described only as a 'job for the trade fair' in a letter to Tullio d'Albisola in the spring of 1933 (Presotto 1981: 143).

103. The critic Aldo Ballo read the second wave of Futurism in terms of its set-design aspirations, and his most original contribution was identifying its 'concept of spatiality' in which experimentation in set design and polimaterialsm combined to effectively form an architectural context that responded to the 'need for a new spatiality'. The two most representative figures of this tendency were Prampolini and Munari (considered from the perspective of the work done in the postwar period, from projections to kinetic and programmed art (Ballo 1964: 26). Nor should it be forgotten that Munari shared Prampolini and Depero's deep interest in the use of industrial materials, which he took on as a constant of his method.

104. Pirani 1992: 287–8; Poretti 2004: 459–60. Cf. Enrico Prampolini, 'Lo stile, la funzione e i nuovi materiali edili' in *Natura* vi; 6 (June 1933):35–43, in addition to the event catalogue.

105. Cf. Giuseppe Pagano, 'La Mostra Azzurra' and (ed.) 'L'ordinamento delle sale alla esposizione dell'aeronautica italiana' in *Casabella* no.80 (August 1934): 4–5 and 10–21, respectively.

106. Cf. *Guida della sesta Triennale*. [s.l.: s.n.], 1936 (in part. p.42).

the Futurists' interest in architectural decoration and function, a imed primarily at the public works' sector (following the rationalist architects' failed attempts).[107] The Futurists proposed a modern decoration (in opposition to the return to fresco advocated by Sironi) adapted to the state's commission stipulations: hence both events featured designs and works for preset public building types, in which the rhetorical tones of propaganda were predominant. While Munari's participation in the first exhibition took a minor tone,[108] in the next exhibition the two artists jointly presented sketches, including proposals for Case del Fascio (on the theme of the Italian War in East Africa), government buildings in the colonies (on the theme of economic siege), a summertime marine resort (on the theme of aviation in Fascist Italy), and a Palazzo del Mare (Maritime building, on the theme of marine transportation), in which the figurative aspect and a reduced degree of formal experimentation prevailed.[109] Such contributions carry more value as lines of investigation than as concrete productions, although they do attest to the fact that the two graphic designers had unusually broad interests and a rare openness to collaborating with architects.

The only real documented example in that sense was a collaboration with rationalist architect Angelo Bianchetti for the Mostra del tessile italiano (Italian Textile Exhibition), which opened in Rome in 1937.[110] Ricas and Munari created two pan-

els for Lanerossi for the wools section; their work was done in a resolutely typographic style, with faint traces of aeropictorial remnants in the figurative elements. Yet even in this case their contribution seems secondary, at the same level as other artists involved in the decoration.[111]

> (...) later on I met the abstract artists of the Galleria del Milione (...) and also designed a type of exhibition quite novel for its day. At the time I had many architect friends (Albini, Figini, Pollini, Pagano, Gardella, Rogers...) who, when they installed an exhibition, usually built a nice brick wall and then, on the wall, would hang a sheet of paper with a drawing. Instead, I exhibited sheets of my graphic work like housewives exhibit their sheets when they hang them out to dry: on each wall I mounted a horizontal wire twenty centimetres from the wall and two metres from the floor, and on that wire I hung, at regular intervals, a bunch of white Bristol boards with my graphic work. This kind of installation cost less, was quicker to do, and did not take up too much of the space—rather, the shadows of the boards, all uniformly cast on the wall, gave it a pleasantly architectural look.[112]

107. Pirani 1992: 289–94; Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 49–51; Crispolti 1992c: 71–92.

108. *Prima mostra di plastica murale per l'edilizia fascista* (First Exhibition of Wall Art for Fascist Buildings), Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, November 1934–January 1935. Organised by Prampolini along with Marinetti, Fillìa, and F. Defilippis; Prampolini curated the installation alongside the architect Giuseppe (Pippo) Rosso. Cf. the exhibition catalogue (Turin: Stile futurista, 1934) and *Stile Futurista*, 1; 5 (December 1934): the absence of reproductions of work by Munari (who was amongst the signers of the *Futurist Manifesto of Wall Art*) would indicate a latent participation on his part, just as the hesittations he expressed in a letter to d'Albisola in early 1934 would suggest: 'will you come for the [exhibition at the Galleria] pesaro? I don't know whether to participate or not, and feel the same about the wall art show in genoa. is it serious? I received some half-assed architectural drawings, and these [things here], for example, are they windows, or what? and there's a door here? a protrusion? what do you think of it, do you suggest I submit something? (...)' (in Presotto 1981: 147).

109. *Seconda Mostra di plastica murale per l'edilizia fascista in Italia e in Africa* (Second Exhibition of Wall Art for Fascist Buildings in Italy and Africa), Rome, Mercati Traianei (Trajan's Markets), November 1936–January 1937. Organised by Marinetti, Prampolini, and Defilippis. Cf. catalogue published by the Edizioni futuriste di Poesia (Rome, 1936).

110. Cf. *Casabella* XI; 121 (January 1938). The collaborators included Bramante Buffoni, Costantino Nivola, Salvatore Fancello, and Leonardo Spreafico.

111. A profile of the fifties credits Munari with other exhibition installations from this period, including the Mostra del giocattolo (Toy Exhibition, 1930s?) and the Mostra della caccia e pesca (Hunting and Fishing Exhibition), of which, however, no documents or reproductions have been found (Pesavento Palieri 1953).

112. Munari interviewed by Quintavalle in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 15. This could refer to the Mostra

Another connection between rational architecture and the new generation of Futurist and abstract graphic artists was established when the Galleria del Milione opened its doors to contemporary set design, with an exhibition dedicated to young Milanese set designers held in the autumn of 1932, after a showing at Anton Giulio Bragaglia's gallery in Rome.[113] Like other avant-garde artists, Munari was also interested in theatre, even if only on a strictly experimental level: in 1935 he made two
|140| studies for Futurist set designs, one a choreography for actors performing on stilts, the other a set design in which acrobatic actors jump from one trapeze to another like birds in a cage.[114] He submitted more concrete and articulated proposals to the Mostra internazionale di scenotecnica teatrale (International Exhibition of Theatrical and Technical Set Design), which Prampolini organised at the 1936 Triennale: the Italian section in particular, overseen by Bragaglia, presented a review of 'scenotecnici senza teatri' (set designers without theatres) including the work of young Fu-
|139| turists from Milan. Munari's proposals—a set design model for Nô theatre (Joshitomo, act III), a few opera masks, and a dance instrument—were characterised by a minimal vision similar to the metaphysical strains of his illustration and polymaterial work, both in the fine arts and advertising realms.[115]

Beginning with Munari's first known polymaterial works (dating back to 1932) he shows a clear inclination toward three-dimensional compositions—not using drawing so much, but rather emphasising the use of the most varied materials, cut into special shapes and overlapped: he pursued this line of research in both figurative and abstract directions, relating to the Futurist project of injecting the expressive po- 148
tential of modern industrial materials into the artistic repertoire. Polymaterial applications also occasionally appear in his photomontages, used to build metaphysical landscapes or evoke the surface qualities of various materials. It is easy to imagine that realistic images of this sort would have been an original instrument for advertisements designed for displaying wares at points of sale or at trade fairs. Toward the end of the decade this interest took shape
|141| in a series of vitrines Munari installed for GiViEmme, a major perfume manufacturer and lead company of the Carlo Erba pharmaceutical group.[116] They were likely put in touch with Munari through Dino Villani, former editor at *L'Ufficio Moderno* who from 1938 on worked as an advertising consultant for Carlo Erba.[117] Munari's

insolita di arte grafica and fotografica (Unusual Graphic and Photographic Show), held at the Galleria del Milione in January 1937 (cf. Pontiggia 1988: 104–5).

113. Nove scenografi milanesi (Nine Milanese Set Designers), Galleria del Milione, Milan, 1–15 November 1932 (Pontiggia 1988: 19).

114. *Danza sui trampoli*, c. 1935, original drawing in the Hajek-Zucconi collection, Novara; and *Acrobati musicali in gabbia*, c. 1935, drawing reproduced in Tanchis 1987: 31.

115. Cf. *Guida della sesta Triennale*. [n.p.: n.p.], 1936: 67–71; De Angelis 1938: 157; *Continuità dell'avanguardia in Italia. Enrico Prampolini (1894-1956)* 1978: 52–3.

116. GiViEmme was one of Italy's largest perfumers in the thirties, created in 1921 by Count Giuseppe Visconti of Modrone, Milanese patrician and entrepreneur. The company's specialties was fragrances obtained from synthetic products (not plant or animal extracts): in fact, the GiViEmme catalogue included essences created by Visconti for the Carlo Erba brand (Contessa Azzurra, Dimmi di sì, Subdola, Nina Sorridi). In the twenties and thirties new perfumes arrived (La Rosa Giviemme, Acqua di Fiume, Giacinto Innamorato, Gardenia, Tabacco D'Harar), whose success (aided by refined packaging and the first market research carried out in Italy) led to the creation of a new plant in Dergano, a suburb of Milan (now in the Bovisa neighborhood), which allowed the company to broaden its production to include complete cosmetic lines. Its ties to the Carlo Erba pharmaceutical company were also strengthened by Visconti's marriage to Erba's daughter (sources: www.accademiadelprofumo.it and http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Visconti_di_Modrone, last accessed January 2011).

117. Previously, from 1934 on Villani had directed Motta's advertising office, bringing in high-calibre graphic artists like

compositions exude a surreal poetics, with artificial landscapes built of just a few elements (branches, butterflies, stones and pebbles, and various textiles) in which the products are arranaged with a calculated attention to colour balance.[118] As always, his parallel work in the fine art and advertising realms is evident here; and its formal convergence with the three-dimensional compositions he exhibited at his solo show *Oggetti Metafisici* (Metaphysical Objects) at the Galleria del Milione in the spring of 1940 is equally clear. Villani reviewed the show in *L'Ufficio Moderno*:

> Objects, pieces of wood, dried-out branches, broken mechanisms, butterflies, and popular figures all appear in these compositions and stay there, under the glass bell, supremely light, suspended in pure poetry. [They're] Magnificent vitrine subjects (…).[119]

Italian modern typography

Nineteen-thirty three was a time of major ferment for the visual arts in Italy, thanks to a unique convergence of events that took place in Milan over just a few months: parallel to the debut of *Campo grafico*, Persico and Pagano radically remodelled the
|144| form and content of *Casabella*; in May the V Triennale opened in the new spaces of the Palazzo dell'Arte, where the exhibition of graphic works from the German
|143| Werkbund curated by Paul Renner met with great acclaim;[120] and Antonio Boggeri opened his advertising studio, which would play a major role in updating Italian graphic culture, thanks in part to the direct contributions of Swiss graphic designers (including Schawinsky, Huber, and Vivarelli), who had techniques more in keeping with the new demands of commercial graphics.

> Attracted by the avant-garde movements, like all young artists, Italians turned to rationalist architects for inspiration (…) the installation of the sections [of the Triennale and other expositions] offered an opportunity to put forward experimental proposals. (…) thus the new Italian advertising art was born on the walls of those expositions. Nothing else was needed, it just had to be transferred to paper (…).[121]

There was enough going on to spark a lively debate amongst practitioners touching upon typography, rationalist architecture, and abstraction. In Italy, too, the debate sprung from a dialectic confrontation with outsiders, that is, artists, architects, and literati traditionally excluded from the printing trades, which implicitly touched upon the definition of the new professional figure of the graphic designer. Yet compared to the situation in Germany in the early 1920s the situation in Italy was quite different, as it lacked both the professional organisations (there were none comparable to the Werkbund or 'ring Neue Werbegestalter' groups) and adequate educational institutions (there was nothing like the Bauhaus or the many German applied arts schools) in which the new constructivist concept might have developed. In Italy the

Cassandre, Schawinsky, and Carboni; along with Zavattini he also began a hugely successful Christmas competition.

118. Munari's window-displays for GiViEmme were reproduced in *Tempo* no.80 (5 December 1940): 36; *Vetrina e negozio* II; 9–10 (September–October 1942): 18 and ivi II; 11–12 (November/December 1942): 10; and Valeri 1986: 78.

119. Dino Villani, 'Munari' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* XV; 3 (March 1940): 111 (emphasis mine).

120. In addition to the presence of work by high-calibre artists like Bayer, Baumeister, and Burchartz, Renner's comprehensive exhibition included all types of printed matter (from commercial forms to posters and books), which placed it on a more advanced level than the Italian overview of printing firms organised by Bertieri: cf. 'Arti grafiche alla Triennale' in *Campo grafico* I; 10 (October 1933): 171–3 (Vinti 2005: 52).

121. Antonio Boggeri, 'Advertising art in post-war Italy' in *Graphis* vol. 3; 18 (1947); the Italian text is reprinted in full in Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 31.

confrontation took place primarily in trade magazines, be they graphically or architecturally focussed.[122] Nevertheless, the quantity of polemical and popularising texts that appeared in the specialist press did not necessarily constitute a real articulate or coherent stance, since such reflexions echoed the custom (typical of the journalism of the time) of expressing views in abstract terms, with a lot of indirect allusions and scarce explicit references or examples.[123]

The subject matter dealt with (in the pages of *Campo grafico*, *Il Risorgimento Grafico*, and *Graphicus*) contemplated the central assumptions of elemental or rational (in Italy the preferred term, co-opted from architecture) typography drawn from the theories developed during the 1920s in Germany by Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, and Tschichold, which by then trickled into Italy:asymmetrical balance as a compositional principle, and the integration of the photographic image into current printed matter.[124] Other ideas, perhaps more pertinent to the Italian scene, recurred more frequently: in particular, the 'necessity of the sketch' or, from the printers' point of view, the 'collaboration with the artist'—aspects of a shared emphasis on the contributions of non-specialists to the graphic arts.[125] References to non-representational art and architecture (exhibition installations in particular)[126] were equally fundamental, and returned in the concept of *grafismo*, a term Modiano used to describe the convergence of various artistic veins in constructivist schemas—reminiscent of the implicit 'tendency toward openly geometric and elementary construction' in typographic composition.[127] The corollary of 'graphism' and foundation of the new typography in its Italian version—which Modiano claimed was an original contribution[128]—was the principle of 'two pages in one', that is, a layout based not on single pages divided by the binding but rather on the mirrored two-page spread. Indeed,

122. Vinti 2002: 8.

123. In addition to oblique ad hominem attacks and sterile debates on 'mohair issues'—an obvious makeshift solution to the lack of free expression. In this sense Modiano is a happy exception, who had 'an aptitude for deep analysis that could not be found in any other commentators of the period' (Vinti 2005: 51).

124. The main references are: El Lissitzky, 'Topographie der Typographie' in *Merz*, no.4, 1923, reproduced by Tschichold in *die neue typographie* (1928); Laszló Moholy-Nagy, 'Typophoto' in *Pasmo* 2, 1926 (Brno) reprinted in *Typographische Mitteilungen* 22, no.10, October 1925, reprinted (with some changes) in *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (1925); ibid. 'Zeitgemäße Typographie' in *Offset, Buch und Werbekunst* no.7 (July 1926); Jan Tschichold, 'Elementare Typographie' in *Typographische Mitteilungen* 22, no.10, October 1925: 191–214 (cf. Kinross 2004: 106–8). Nevertheless, a problem historians have yet to confront is the ways in which modernist aesthetics reached Italy. Aside from a couple of articles by Tschichold translated [into Italian] from the French and published much later (after '33), it is difficult to imagine how theoretical texts written in German could have been distributed and read in Italy in anything other than an indirect manner—that is, through hearsay—with the exception of Modiano, who probably knew German both because of his education and because of familiy tradition (he was Jewish).

125. 'Persico was a 'dilettant' in typography just as he was in architecture, but it is precisely thanks to his status as a cultured outsider that he earned the unbridled appreciation of many specialists in the field' (Vinti 2006: n.p.).

126. Cf. Dradi 1973: 28–9, 33–6; Pontiggia 1988: 22.

127. While on the one hand the observation of 'graphic' compositional schemas (linear, geometric, two-dimensional) in installations, window displays, and interiors led Modiano and other modernists to view rationalist architecture as a typographic construct in three dimensions ('Insegnamenti della pittura astratta' in *Campo grafico* II; 11, November 1934: 249), on the other he also drew compositional cues from non-representational art that were capable of renewing typography, beginning with its essentially geometric nature ('Un posteggio e una vetrina nel commento di un tipografo' in *Domus* XVII; 134 (February 1939): …; cf. Idem, 'Situazione grafica' in *Quadrante*, I; 1, May 1933). Such a concept developed along a parallel path in nearby Switzerland, and was taken up by Tschichold in his famous article 'Die gegenstandlose Malerei und ihre Beziehungen zur Typographie der Gegenwart', which appeared in *Typographische Monatsblätter* 3; 6, June 1935: 181–7 (cf. Burke 2007: 259–60).

128. Modiano claimed paternity in 'Lettera a Raffaello Bertieri' (*Il Risorgimento Grafico* XXXV; 8, August 1938: 333–40), albeit without answering the question of whether it was an imitation, an Italian discovery, or simply a coincidence: 'Whether they're references to what we've done, or [newly] discovered originals: it does not matter. What matters is the priority of the Italian application [of it]' (334).

aside from references to a 'continuous sequence of pages' mentioned by Lissitsky and Moholy-Nagy, the two-page spread as structural principle does not explicitly appear in the writings of leading European designers.[129] Instead, the new Italian typography took its first steps precisely in response to the invasive presence of photography in commercial printed matter,[130] which pushed the printer-typographer to rethink the traditional frameworks. The earliest attempts used a simple bleed for illustrations, which was not sufficient because it was still based on the symmetrical module of the single page; this gave way in the early 1930s (especially in the layout of illustrated periodicals) to a unified framework linking the two neighboring pages. The first experiments in this realm date back to 1931–32, in which Modiano tended to create a rhythmic unity by 'expanding the measure of the text column and the illustration modules' straddling the sewn binding to the point of linking the two pages.[131] But the rigidity and legibility problems of such solutions led to a more mature phase, in which the layout aimed to establish a dynamic balance between text and photo by 'fragmenting the measure and manoeuvering with smaller visual blocks', as seen in *Edilizia moderna*, *25 anni Olivetti* and the new *Casabella* layout done alongside Persico (1933–34).[132]

On the other hand, even in Italy the new constructivist concept was limited to a small minority, and did not extend beyond certain types of periodicals and the commercial printed matter of determined industrial sectors. Yet unlike Germany and other European countries, where the modernist renewal had reached even book publishing, in Italy—because of the lack of contact between the print worlds and graphic artists—the publishing world as a whole remained untouched by the new developments. There were a few exceptions, like book covers, for both niche publishers affiliated with Futurism and for mass-market publishers like Bompiani and Mondadori, but only toward the end of the decade.[133] This assumption may have provoked—not so much for mere controversy, but for the appeal of empirical proof—Munari's later investigations into the expressive possibilities of the codex form, above and beyond the book's textual and visual content.[134]

In short, the Italian concept reveals—through its constant reference to architecture and concrete art, but above all through its lack of real dialogue with the European avant-garde and any radically different political or social context—a formalist, at

129. El Lissitsky, 'Topographie der Typographie' (1923), cit; Moholy-Nagy, 'Zeitgemäße Typographie' (1926), cit. (cf. Kinross 2004: 105, 116). See the synthetic yet comprehensive overview of articles by Schwitters, Tschichold, Moholy-Nagy, Dexel, Baumeister, and van Doesburg in Fleischmann 1984: 325ff.

130. 'Not the book, but the magazine, the brochure, the catalogue are the archetypal products of our time', Modiano in *Quadrante* 1933: 21.

131. Catalogue Sellerie Compagnia Continentale (1931) and *Tipografia* (1932), as Modiano himself recalled ('Lettera a Raffaello Bertieri', 1938, cit.).

132. Guido Modiano in 'Lettera a Raffaello Bertieri' (1938), cit.: 339. Cf. Il Campista, 'Recensione tipografica a Edilizia Moderna' in *Campo grafico* 11; 10 (October 1934): 222–7. A similar position was taken by Attilio Rossi, historic founder of *Campo grafico* ('L'evoluzione della tipografia in Italia' in *Campo grafico* v; 9, September 1937: 4–7).

133. Modiano, like Renner, expressed a moderate position with regard to books, for which he reserved a more traditional typographic approach, insofar as it was a 'construction carried, by a centuries-long selection, to a form that is, perhaps, definite' ('Triennale 1936' in *Il Risorgimento grafico*, XXXVI; 1, 31 January 1937: 25). The printer-typographer refers to the literary book (as opposed to the illustrated or technical–scientific book, whose content brings it closer to the modern-day periodical), suggesting that there is nevertheless room for innovation by working with micro-typographic details rather than the old codified layout.

134. Think not only of his famous *libri illeggibili* (Illegible Books), but more specifically of his children's books, from the Albi Munari series (1945) to *Nella notte buia* (1956) and *Nella nebbia di Milano* (1968) and *Prelibri* (1980).

most stylistic, inclination, rather than any exquisitely functional or structural inclination.[135] Indeed, compared to Germany, in Italy there was only marginal discussion of the questions considered fundamental everywhere else—issues like: the function of print and consequent attention to the visual articulation of content; the legal aspects tied to industry and manufacturing, such as the standardisation of formats; not to mention aspirations to social renewal, which were intimately intertwined with the modernist debate in Central Europe. Even purely typographic details—like the preference for sans-serif faces, the exclusive use of lowercase letters, ragged versus justified text, and the relationship between leading and legibility—received less attention or were only considered in light of concrete examples, rather than broader theoretical pronouncements. Texts by foreign graphic designers and artists appeared only rarely,[136] proving that the debate—impassioned as it was regarding Central European examples—was not based on a true exchange of ideas with the non-Italian protagonists of new typography. Much like France, therefore, albeit for different reasons, Italy was, in its own way, a cultural exception to the modernist paradigm dominant in Europe at the time.

It is no coincidence that the most representative examples of the constructivist aesthetic were designed and printed by Modiano, who in those same years closely collaborated with Edoardo Persico on the graphic look of *Casabella*. Persico left his native Naples for Milan in late 1929, and as critic worked alongside Pier Maria Bardi directing Bardi's gallery—which a year later was left to the Ghiringhelli brothers, and changed its name to the Galleria del Milione—but their relationship ended after a few months, and in the spring of '30 Persico joined the editorial team of *La Casa Bella*, led by Arrigo Bonfiglioli. In 1932 the magazine was acquired by Editoriale Domus, owned by Gianni Mazzocchi, was renamed *Casabella*, and Pagano was appointed director. His first editorial announced a programme centred on rationalism and functionalism as synonyms of modernity and beauty: the magazine aimed to popularise contemporary design culture, and targeted a broader readership, no longer limited to the technical and specialised realm. Persico played a key role in the magazine's transformation, both in its editorial philosophy and graphic look.[137] In a fruitful exchange with Modiano,[138] he gradually modified the layout to make it more functional: he renewed the masthead

135. Fossati, Sambonet (1974: 13) highlight a degree of imprecision in defining the new graphic discipline, which sets the limits of the renewal promoted by *Campo grafico*, entrusted to modern taste as a stylistic criterion. Pansera maintains that the 'campisti' looked more at *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* which offered examples more in terms of artistic approach rather than of any underlying methodology (Pansera 1984: 16n). Equally interesting Persico's lucid analysis of Italian rationalism, whose fundamental contradiction he identifies as the desire to reconcile modernism and the Fascist regime, the classical tradition and modernity: 'The truth is that Italian rationalism was not born of any deep need, but rather of a type of dabbling (…) the controversy has only created confused aspirations (…) that don't in any way adhere to real problems, and have no real contenut (…)' (from 'Gli architetti italiani', 1933 cit. in De Seta 1983: 221). Such a reading could be applied—*mutatis mutandis*—to the Italian typographic realm, established on formal aspects to the exclusion of any and all social dimensions.

136. Jan Tschichold published two articles in *Campo grafico*: 'Schemi di tabelle' in III; 6, June 1935: 128–129; and 'Le proporzioni nella nuova tipografia' in V; 4, April 1937: 5–8. An earlier article signed 'Giovanni T.' appeared in the Turin-based magazine *Graphicus* in 1933: 'Della Nuova Tipografia' (ivi XXIII; 284, February 1933: 7–9; cit. in Vinti 2006). An article by Baumeister on his own theories appeared in *Campo grafico* on the occasion of his exhibition at the Galleria del Milione (ivi III; 5, May 1935: 17). Cf. Vinti 2002: 8–10.

137. Giuseppe Pagano 'Programma 1933' in *Campo grafico* V; 12, December 1932: 9–10.

138. 'Their partnership was founded on a fertile exchange of knowledge, through which Modiano learned how to be a critic, while Persico acquired many secrets of the typographic trade' (Vinti 2006; cf. Baglione 2008: 108n).

and its logotype as *Casabella*; he adopted a new, nearly square format that, thanks to the layout based on two-page spreads, facilitated the insertion of photographs and technical drawings.[139] In 1934 the interior grid was extended to the cover, featuring: a white background; 4-column grid across which line drawings (in a second colour), the issue number in the foreground, and the new masthead (in all caps Futura, printed atop the illustration) were distributed.[140] Alongside *Campo grafico*, in the mid-thirties Persico and Pagano's *Casabella* represented the height of modern Italian graphic design. Thanks to its alignment with architecture, it sharply distanced itself from the postcubist French tradition, the pictorial tradition prevailing in the autarchic poster design, as well as from the improvisations of Futurist experimentation.

The editorial team of *Campo grafico*, led by Attilio Rossi and Carlo Dradi,[141] was in contact with the Lombard abstract artists affiliated with the Galleria del Milione (Ghiringhelli, Reggiani, Soldati, Veronesi) and, thanks also to Persico's lasting role at the gallery, to the Milanese rationalist circles; the magazine's pages frequently included contributions by key figures like Boggeri, Modiano, and Veronesi.[142] As for Munari, although he was only an occasional contributor,[143] his proximity to the editorial offices on corso Vercelli was solid and continuous, as proven by his participation in the Esposizione del cartello internazionale e del cartello nazionale rifiutato (Exhibition of International Posters and Rejected Italian Posters) at the *Galleria del Milione* in June 1933 and the Mostra dell'arte grafica curated by Modiano at the VII Triennale in 1940.[144] Furthermore, he frequented—and was actually an integral

139. Persico worked on the margins, on the selection of typefaces (*Futura* and *Landi/Welt*, which became a classic pairing in Italy, used even by Munari in *Tempo*, for example), as well as text measures and leading, in which he also took into consideration the colour of the photographs (Baglione 2008: 97, 101).

140. In addition to the field of publishing, Persico was able to bring his graphic ideas into three dimensions through the exhibition installations he designed with Marcello Nizzoli: the Parker shops (1934–35), the Sala delle Medaglie d'oro at the Mostra Aeronautica in 1934, the structure built with Innocenti tubes and installed in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II for the 1934 elections, the Salone d'onore alla VI Triennale in 1936—in which a bona fide osmosis between typography and architecture is successfully created (Fioravanti 1997: 72–3; Vinti 2006; Baglione 2008: 17–8, 97). See also the lengthy article by Modiano on his recently deceased friend: 'Tipografie di Edoardo Persico' in *Campo grafico* III; 11–12, November/December 1935: 230–45).

141. Attilio Rossi (1909–1994), painter and graphic designer. Educated at the Scuola serale (evening school) of the Accademia di Brera, during his years at *Campo grafico* he worked as a print technician and graphic designer alongside Carlo Dradi. Following a clash related to the publication of propaganda posters created by Persico for the 1934 elections, Rossi resigned from the magazine's directorship—which went to Luigi Minardi (typographer and antifascist)—and in April 1935 emigrated to Argentina. He remained there until 1950, pursuing a career as illustrator, graphic designer (for the Casa Editrice Espasa Calpe, with whom he launched their first budget series, Austral), and publishing editor (he founded the Losada publishing house) as well as deeply integrating into South American culture. Parallel to his important artistic work as painter, Rossi worked as a graphic designer in the fifties, and continued to work in publishing even in Italy. Always at Dradi's side, he directed the design magazine *Linea grafica* and the Centro Studi Grafici in Milan (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attilio_Rossi last accessed 10/1/2011). Carlo Dradi (1908–1982), lithographer and graphic designer, co-founder of *Campo grafico*. In the thirties he worked alongside Attilio Rossi as a design studio. During the war, he worked with Munari in the editorial office of the weekly *Tempo*. After 1945 he continued his graphic design career, working notably for clients such as AGIP and Ferrovie Nord di Milano. He was co-founder of the Centro studi grafici and the design magazine *Linea Grafica* (*Catalogo Bolaffi del Manifesto Italiano*, Torino: Bolaffi, 1995).

142. For a complete list of contributors, see Dradi 1973: 21; Rossi 1983: 13.

143. Munari's only proven contribution was the aforementioned article from '37 (there is no evidence that could lead one to suppose he made other contributions under a pseudonym); of the 66 published issues not one cover carries his signature, even if his hand can probably be spotted in some of the photomontages, like that of the famous table 'Logica elementare del rinnovamento' (in *Campo grafico* III; 2, February 1935).

144. In addition to curating the section devoted to the relationships between modern typography and the historic avant gardes, Munari was also included in the review of 12 graphic designers, alongside Edoardo Persico, Guido Modiano, Marcello Nizzoli, Bramante Buffoni, Carlo Dradi and Attilio Rossi, Ezio D'Errico, Luigi Veronesi, Remo Muratore, Ricas, Erberto Carboni, Renzo Bianchi, and Raffello Bertieri (Vinti 2005).

part of—the artistic circle affiliated with
|145| the Caffè Craja, another meeting point of the Milanese avant garde, located in piazza Cardinal Paolo Ferrari, a stone's throw from the Teatro alla Scala. At the time such cafés were a fundamental locus for the exchange of ideas, and were just as important as time spent working in studio; the Craja was special insofar as it attracted artists and intellectuals from different currents and disciplines, all of whom shared a particular vision of modernity: abstract artists, 'campisti', rationalists, set designers, literati, and poets.[145] Much like the Milione's interiors, designed by Pietro Lingeri,[146] the Craja owed part of its draw to the rationalist interiors designed by architect Luciano Baldessari along with Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini. 'A group of artists managed to create its own café, built with the ideas and intentions of the group: essential, angular, glossy. In truth, it was a refrigerator. But we took care of heating it up'.[147] As evidence of the links not only between the various artistic communities in Milan, but also between the gallery and some of the protagonists of modern European culture, it is worth mentioning an attempt (unfortunately never realized) to establish in Milan with the help of Gropius an international training center similar to the Bauhaus.[148] Ultimately, through the relationships linking the various groups, the Craja and the Milione were the two main poles around which the protagonists of Milan's intellectual avant garde orbited.

This overview allows for a better understanding of the significance of such exposure—in terms of the concrete ideas and examples—to the modernist aesthetic, which Munari was able to assimilate (filtered through his own personal sensibility, of course) simply because he belonged to the multidisciplinary milieu that developed in Milan between the wars.

> The 'Milione' was frequented in those years—1928–1938 [actually 1931–1938], albeit without their feeling any committment—by figures like Nizzoli and Munari, who had a refined intelligence and prevalently graphic, artisanal, postcubist taste, which they brought to their vitrine and typographic works—as well as Dradi and Rossi from *Campo grafico*—in posters, layouts, the form of everyday objects, and so on, new typologies, foreshadowing the characteristic activity that appeared in Italy as well under the name of industrial design, modeled to a certain degree on the Bauhaus.[149]

145. In addition to the group of abstract artists affiliated with the Milione, the Caffé Craja was frequented by the poets Leonardo Sinisgalli, Alfonso Gatto, and Salvatore Quasimodo, the critic Edoardo Persico, architects Figini and Pollini, Banfi Belgioioso Peressutti Rogers (BBPR), Bottoni, and occasionally Terragni and Lingeri (both from Como) and abstract artists Radice and Rho, campisti Dradi and Rossi, and the group of set designers for the Scala (Kaneclin, Broggi, Montonati, Cagnoli) (Belli 1980: 15–7).

146. The Galleria del Milione, destroyed by the 1943 bombardments, was located at via Brera 21, across the street from the Fine Arts Academy. Opened at the end of 1930, its interior design was done by Pietro Lingeri: the entrance had a large door with windows (as novelty at the time) which opnened onto an atrium surrounded by the three exhibition spaces and the bookshop (cf. advert in the bollettino *Il Milione*, no.16, 3 June 1933) (Pontiggia 1988: 11). On the gallery's intellectual environment, cf. Lupo 1996: 162–4ff

147. Belli 1980: 15. The Caffè Craja was composed of two long, narrow rooms linked in an L shape, with a mosaico floor, walls with dark windows and an unframed mirror, little square tables with green slate tabletops, and a long red-leather seat; in the back of the second room was a fountain by Fausto Melotti (three atheletes in metal), while a sculpture by Nizzoli decorated the central window. The radical interior design, inspired by 'neoplasticism', was characaterised by the accentuated theatrical effect of the various materials—dark glass, mirrors, cromed metal surfaces—not unlike that of North American diners. It was demolished in 1960 (Belli 1980: 15–7; Dradi 1973: 23; Caccia 2007: 48–9; Geerts 2007: 155–8).

148. See letter Carlo Belli to Gino Ghiringhelli, October 1934: 'Last Monday I was all day with Gropius. It was a full day and he was really moved when he left Milan. He'll probably return this winter for a conference and an exhibition. We've been working for quite some time on an important and grandiose project. It's about creating a center open to international collaboration for the realization of the purest modernity. A kind of Bauhaus' (unpublished, in Fondo Carlo Belli, G. Ghiringhelli folder, cited in Lupo 1996: 94n).

149. Carlo Belli in *Lettera sulla nascita*

As we have seen, aside from a popular article published in 1937 in *Campo grafico*,[150] Munari did not participate directly in the theoretical debate that beset the graphic arts world between the two world wars; his contribution was, so to speak, of a practical nature. He expressed himself through his concrete production, where it is possible to follow the transition from a working concept tied to artistic practices to a form of modern graphics based on rational language and presumptions. If 1935 can be taken as the watershed between the two periods, the change occurs naturally by degrees, as exemplified by a promotional
|146| catalogue for the Oltolina cotton mill, produced in 1934, in which the presence of elements tending towards abstraction within an otherwise traditional configuration places it in a transitional phase.[151] The first signs of a new direction can be found in a
|147| group of advertisements in the May 1935 issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno* edited by Ricas and Munari. Even though these are not always signed, they clearly lead back to their work, certainly on assignment for the publisher. These are ad inserts for technical companies in the administrative and advertising sector, such as Lagomarsino, Indirizzi Delfini, Adrema (office machines), Pubblicità Tramviaria (posters) and Fotomeccanica (printing services). As a whole they seem marked by a minimalist approach, with compositions that favor white and are based on photomontage (which in general represents the typical stylistic code of R+M studio) expressed with various tones in style. These range from the purely typographic for Adrema to a style that is constructivist in nature for Delfini; from an image with a surrealist feel for Fotomeccanica to an approach that we might call 'conceptual' for Lagomarsino and Pubblicità Tramviaria, where the photocollage is conceived as a sequence that, graphically enriched by the two-color print, visually comments on the text, a rare example of copywriting signed by the two artists.[152]

Another ad published in the same is-
|151| sue and created for Studio Boggeri demonstrates a more complex composition, with a typographic structure based on the letter B, shaded and partially covered by a screen, within which are inserted images (the photography studio, prints, design tools) that illustrate the studio's uniqueness; and in a second version (published in *Guida Ricciardi* in 1936), the depth effect is accentuated by the second color.[153] This case also clearly shows the newness and the maturity of the language used, which attest to the search for a less intuitive more conceptual graphic language, designed according to more rational criteria and based on the typo/photographic combination.[154]

Studio Boggeri opened on via Borghetto in Milan in 1933, the *annus mirabilis* of Italian design, as a full-service agency dedicated to the design and creation of 'advertising publications and photographs.'[155]

dell'astrattismo in Italia. Milan: Scheiwiller, 1978: 28. Carlo Belli (1903–1991), writer, journalist, and art critic, author of *Kn*, an important theoretical text on Italian abstraction published in 1935 by Edizioni del Milione, the gallery he collaborated with as event organiser and consultant (Ciampi 2001: 129–30; Pontiggia 1988: 24; Belli 1980: 11–22).

150. 'Ritmi grafici' in *Campo grafico*, cit.

151. *Asso Nova* no.2, March 1934. (Como: Fratelli Oltolina). 16×23 cm; pp.16. Printing: Bertieri, Milan. The cover illustration is signed Ricas+Munari, and the central spread is also certainly theirs, with the collage of textiles; it is not certain who is responsible for the designs inside the pamphlet, probably provided by the company (cf. copyright note on the back cover).

152. In *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5, May 1935: respectively pp.268, 274, 2nd and 4th cover.

153. In *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5, May 1935: 233; also in *Guida Ricciardi 1936*. Milan: Ricciardi, 1935.

154. Cf. Ravaioli 1998: 42–3.

155. See Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 7–40; Boggeri in 'Una B rossa fra due punti' 1981: 20–21; Monguzzi 1981: 2–4; Fioravanti 1997: 76–79; Baroni, Vitta 2003: 136–139. Antonio Boggeri (1900–1990) opened his homonymous studio in

Antonio Boggeri had a solid background with experience as director of the major Milanese printing plant, Alfieri & Lacroix, where he had the opportunity not only to gain technical expertise in printing materials and processes, but also to oversee editorial planning (for the monthly magazine *Natura*), and above all, through foreign publications, to come into contact with what was going on in the graphic art world outside Italy. Essential references are the new European typography and photography, viewed as an independent artistic medium and in its complementary function to printing.[156] Boggeri carved himself out a role as the forerunner of the art director, also devoting himself to photographic research of an advertising (still life) as well as experimental (photogram) nature. Based on this premise, the studio's work from the outset, first in Italy, tended towards the most advanced graphic research favoring an eclectic typo/photographic language and, with respect to the functional approach borrowed from architecture, open to invention, seduction—for Boggeri advertising graphics are, first of all, spectacle, akin to a theatrical mise-en-scène.[157] This view targeted at communication is also apparent in the preference given to print ads, pamphlets, catalogues and folding cards, namely a 'slower' sort of advertising, or one that is more educated as compared with the ephemeral nature of a billboard.[158]

From the beginning and throughout the 1930s, facing a national situation that he considered behind the times, Boggeri was constantly searching for artists with more substantial experiences and methods. He found this initially in Imre Reiner and Käte Bernhardt, who in the fall of 1933 introduced the new German printing culture and techniques to the studio.[159] However, the fundamental figure in this first period, not the least for the influence that he exerted in the Milanese environment, is Xanti Schawinsky, permanently settled in Milan from the end of 1933 until '36; thereafter, from February 1940 and then from immediately after the war, it was Max

1933. It was one of the earliest in Italy to provide a full communication service, including graphic design. The studio had its heyday in the late fifties and early sixties; its customers included companies such as Olivetti, Roche, Glaxo, Dalmine, Pirelli. From the outset Boggeri worked with designers that would become internationally renowned professionals; in the postwar period these include Max Huber, Carlo Vivarelli, Walter Ballmer, Franco Grignani, Giancarlo Iliprandi, Enzo Mari, Remo Muratore, Marcello Nizzoli, Bob Noorda, Albe Steiner, Heinz Waibl, and Bruno Monguzzi. Boggeri was invited by the Alliance Graphique Internationale in exhibitions in Paris (1951), London (1956), Lausanne (1957) and Milan (1961); in 1957 he received the Gold Medal of the Triennale, and in 1970 was appointed honorary member of the Art Directors Club of Milan. He was active at the firm he founded until 1973 (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Boggeri, last accessed 31 March 2011).

156. Boggeri's interest initially went to the potential of photography, discovered in the examples of Steichen and updated in the theory on vision expressed by Moholy-Nagy in *Malerei Fotografie Film* (cf. Boggeri's Foreword to the annual *Luci e ombre*, 1929, reprod. in Monguzzi 1981: 7–8); while discovery of the new German typography came through an article by Tschichold in *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* ('Qu'est-ce que la nouvelle typographie et que veut-elle?' ivi no.19, 15 September 1930: 46–52) (Monguzzi 1981: 2; Fioravanti 1997: 76).

157. Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 25; Anceschi in Monguzzi 1981: 6–8.

158. Pigozzi 1982: 471.

159. Imre Reiner (1900–1987), illustrator, calligrapher and designer of type. Born in Yugoslavia, he grew up between Romania and Hungary. After studying in Frankfurt and Stuttgart (a student of Ernst Schneidler), he settled in Switzerland, in Lugano, in the early 1930s (cf. 'Chronology' in *Below the Fold* vol.1, no.3, winter 2003: 18). Contacted by Boggeri who had admired his work at the Werkbund graphic arts exhibit at the 1933 Triennale, Reiner traveled weekly from Lugano to Milan 'to do sketches, improvise solutions with amazing speed and the command of a cunning profession' (Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 19–20). Käte Bernhardt: 'The tall and elegant Boggeri walked back and forth trying to explain to me—in French—the work the had to be done. Any possibility for communication with the secretary was limited to smiles and a few gestures (...). In those days, time was not money. Once Boggeri got angry because I had given a client a certain deadline for completing a job. How could I know how many days it would take to achieve a suitable result? (...) We worked on many different kinds of projects: large installations for the windows of Motta; graphics and photography montages' (cit in Fossati Sambonet 1974: 20–1).

Huber's turn.[160] In a short time, then, the Boggeri studio became a center frequented by young recruits Ricas, Munari, Muratore, Veronesi, Buffoni, Carboni, even established graphic artists like Nizzoli, with whom Boggeri established external collaborations, adopting the language most suited to the specific nature of the job in hand, without imposing a predefined style. This sort of 'working school in the field made up for Italy's lack of specialized schools' and contributed to updating the visual repertoire of Italian graphic arts as well as to defining the special qualities of the new professional figure of the designer.[161]

> I was a graphic artist, a job that no one knew of because when I would say, "I am a graphic artist", people would reply, "A typographer?" No, not a typographer, but a graphic artist, the person who deals with the space between the type, who chooses the kind of type that is used.[162]

The studio's first identity was commissioned to the advertising office of the Parisian foundry Deberny & Peignot, which inspired Boggeri for the name of his agency: '(...) I wrote to Paris and a short while later I received a letterhead with the red B between two black dots which I used in the early years of Studio Boggeri.'[163] And yet, already during 1933, Boggeri must have felt the need for a trademark which was more suited to photography's importance in the studio's work. Munari would design the
|148| new logo, translating this emphasis into
|149| an effective graphic synthesis based on the principle of the camera obscura, where Boggeri's initial (which changes from the neoclassical elegance of Didot to the concreteness of sans serif) seems mirror-inverted in a square divided according to the golden ratio into two spaces defined by the red/black color contrast, subtly recalling the printing tradition. Boggeri would then entrust the logo to the capable typographic experience of Reiner, who would place it on the studio's letterhead designed in 1934.[164]

Perhaps it was Ricas and Munari's limited printing experience that motivated Boggeri's choice. Purely typographic examples, like R+M studio's different letterhead from the early 1930s, in fact, lack a definite direction, almost as if they were the

160. Max Huber (1919–1992) arrives in Milan from Zurich in February '40, on the suggestion of Gerard Miedinger: 'it is with his contribution that the stylistic profile of the studio is finally defined in a brand new relationship between "constructive" and "anarchic"' (Monguzzi 1981: 2; von Moos, Campana, Bosoni 2006: 82–6). After leaving for Switzerland at the outbreak of the war, Huber would return to Milan in the spring of 1945 to continue his collaboration with Boggeri. As for Schawinsky, Herbert Bayer states: 'Schawinsky's posters in the 1930s were a strong influence on the graphics of northern Italy; with a few exceptions, perhaps in Paris, the Italian industry seemed to be more sensitive and more open to new ideas than the German industrial world was' (in Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 3).

161. Boggeri in 'Una B rossa fra due punti' 1981: 20–1; Fioravanti 1997: 78; Steiner in Salsi 2007: 113. Cf. Anceschi: 'An entire series of graphic, or communicational, stereotypes that pertain to Italian industrial graphics [have] surfaced as archetypes, if not actually in "casa Boggeri", at least in his disciplinary and design surroundings' (1981c: 9).

162. Munari in Politi 1991: 106. In a context that was still for the most part craft-related, the Italian typographic environment was shifting between the classicist worship of tradition and the ambition for technical excellence; it is therefore natural that there would be serious resistance against mediation with the new professional figure of the graphic designer (Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 10–1).

163. Boggeri in 'Una B rossa fra due punti' 1981: 21. In addition to following the industrial work of the Deberny & Peignot foundry, in the mid-1920s Charles Peignot (1897–1983) launched an extensive program of initiatives aimed at promoting typography and modern decorative arts: from the printing type collections of *Divertissements Typographiques* (1928–1934) edited by Maximilien Vox to the eclectic magazine *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* (1927–1939); from the yearly publications dedicated to advertising and photography to the opening of the first advertising studio (Service Typographique) which would be adjacent to and then in 1930 absorbed by the photography studio (Studio Deberny-Peignot) led by Maurice Tabard with Roger Parry (Dufour 1994: 3–4, 16; Wlassikoff 2005: 71–4; cf. Amelia Hugill-Fontanel, 'Arts et Métiers Graphiques' at http://ellie.rit.edu:1213/ref.htm, last accessed 16 July, 2010).

164. Sheet 17.5×28 cm. 2-color print. The Boggeri-Monguzzi collection also has the original executive design of the logo (15×10 cm).

product of experiments improvised on a whim. One of the first examples (perhaps the strongest and most original) dates back to the beginning of 1932, with a rigorously typographic style (moreover, in the brand new sans serif font made by Nebiolo, Semplicità). Two large initials R+M with below a small square bordered in red, followed by the names written out in full (all upper case), while the address is aligned at the bottom; all the lines are justified to fom a column on the left side of the page, which is nearly square in shape. The result is simple, elegant and purely typographic, in keeping with the precepts of the new typography.[165] The style of a studio ad published in *L'Ufficio Moderno* in December 1932 is similar;[166] but at the same time, we find a new size of letter paper, long and narrow (17.1×27.8 cm), based on a less daring typographic choice, with a block of text aligned at the top right, in black Bodoni type and accompanied by the writing 'painters' placed on a line in upper case justified across the entire width.[167] A new letterhead follows in 1934, which takes a few elements from the 1932 version, except in this case the heading is double, including both the R+M studio and the office of the Milan Futurist group, together at the same location. Typographically, the design returns to the sans serif *Semplicità* and the bordered square reappears, but the heading is positioned horizontally across the width of the page, with a greater emphasis on the Futurist group, which is prominent.[168] Even though it includes an illustration that is somewhere between humorous and surreal, the letter paper for Tullio d'Albisola (created in 1933) also seems to be made according to a similar formula, in the sense that the part designated for the text is enclosed by a thin border, above which appears the name Mazzotti in large uppercase letters.[169] This is echoed a few years later in the letterhead of the *Tempo* editorial office (probably also by Munari) in which the magazine's logo is repeated by a square below where the various offices are listed, while the heading Anonima Periodici Italiani (the Mondadori periodicals branch) crosses the width of the page in simple English italics.[170] These examples show that despite the fact that there was no scarcity of typographic ideas, for some reason the two artists felt the need to vary their graphic identity incessantly, while maintaining (consciously or unconsciously) some formal ties between the different versions.

Ricas and Munari's working relationship with Boggeri would continue until at least 1937, when the two graphic artists would part ways. Even if the collection of designs created during the five-year span for the via Borghetto studio seems somewhat heterogeneous in the type of creations and in the visual language on which they draw, a common stylistic feature can be found in their resorting to photomontage, which in many cases seems to dominate over the other aspects (like the typographic ones). Going over the body of work, which seems highly diversified—starting from projects for Studio Boggeri (logo,

165. Tullio d'Albisola/Casa Mazzotti Archive, Albissola Marina: letter from Munari to Tullio d'Albisola [January 1932] (courtesy of Giovanni Rossello). 19.5×20.5 cm.

166. *L'Ufficio Moderno* VII; 12 (December 1932): 700.

167. Mart, Archives of 900, Rovereto: letter to Depero signed by Munari, Ricas, Manzoni (November 24, 1932), fondo Depero: Dep.2.9.10.

168. Mart, Archives of 900, Rovereto: letter to Thayaht signed by Munari [April 1934], fondo Thayaht: Tha.1.2.07.66. 21×27 cm.

169. Mart, Archives of 900, Rovereto: letter to Thayaht signed by Tullio d'Albisola (March 3, 1934), fondo Thayaht: Tha.1.2.07.63. 22×24.5 cm.

170. Mart, Archives of 900, Rovereto: letter signed by Munari [August 1941], fondo Thayaht: Tha.1.2.07.89.

advertisements, promotional brochure) to playbills (Lecco Quinquennial), folding cards (Scaglia, Motta, Olga Asta, Touring Club Italiano), catalogues (RIV, Linoleum), advertisements (campaign for sugar, Champion, Ulma), signs for counters or windows (Farmitalia, Arquebuse)—one can observe a graphic style becoming no longer | 151 | Futurist nor strictly functional. The graphics tend, instead, towards a rational formula without forsaking invention, which, after all, would be the constant aspiration of Boggeri, and from whom Munari could learn the profession of art director.

Apart from the heterogeneous nature of the projects for Boggeri, what first jumps out is the fact that these designs are disconnected; they are not secondary but they respond to occasional commissions. In any case, they are not organic in terms of communication strategy and coordination—as is the case instead with Schawinsky's collaboration with the Olivetti publicity office, for example. This does not imply a reductive opinion about the value of these creations, if anything a correct framing of their real dimension. In the second place, these are designs that appear less demanding from a typographic point of view, based essentially on the image. Boggeri entrusted these to the inventiveness of the two graphic artists, taking advantage of their playful spirit and surprising ideas. In the best cases the result is a sort of advertising graphic art that has the ability to play with the public's expectations through small semantic slips, closer to the French version of modernism (without social or political resonance) than to the constructivist models of central Europe.

The photomontage makes it possible to find a guiding thread in the different works Ricas and Munari did for Boggeri, grouping them according to their greater or lesser photographic emphasis compared with the illustrative approach predominant in the previous stage. This also implies a secondary typographic role. An early advertisement for the Studio Boggeri, perhaps preceding Munari's logo, already appears in *Guida Ricciardi* in 1933. This is characterized by a predominantly figurative style, resolved in the combination of photography and design in the picture of an archer, accompanied by the slogan 'colpisce nel segno' (hits the mark) which fills almost the entire page.[171] The next version, taken a couple of year later, shows an important adjustment in the formula through subtle changes that, in addition to the color effect of the red background, align the composition with a more constructive concept of the ad: uncentering the illustration on the left frees up space for a second column where an explanatory text and a schematic target are inserted, establishing a new focal point for the composition; a triangle is created between the symbolic figure, the text and the graphic mark, which gives the whole ad a compact and dynamic quality.[172]

Growing in complexity, we find the first collection of work resolved with a simple, instrumental montage, where the photographic element figures within the composition without being the main

171. *Guida Ricciardi: la pubblicità in Italia.* Milan: Editore L'Ufficio Moderno, 1933. Conceived by Giulio Cesare Ricciardi, contributor at *L'Ufficio Moderno* and owner of the agency Pubblicità Ricciardi (founded in 1932 after the dissolution of Balza-Ricc). Edited by Dino Villani, layout by Carlo Dradi. There were three editions in all (1933, 1936 e 1941–42), the last two published directly by Ricciardi (Priarone 1987: 12; Abruzzese, Colombo 1994: 49, 392). The ties that existed between the advertising environment and the group of leading graphic artists are borne out in a long and detailed technical chapter on printing prepared by the editorial office of *Campo grafico* for the 1936 edition of the Guida.

172. Proof in the Monguzzi-Boggeri collection, Meride (Switzerland). 22.5×17.5 cm; two-color print; signed and dated on the verso Ricas/Munari 1936.

|152| mechanism; the folding card for Scaglia Arredamenti (1933) in some way repeats the lesson of *Casabella*, also referenced by the square shape. The line drawing of the façade of Palazzo dell'Arte, counterbalanced by the trademark in the lower opposite corner, is cut by a wide diagonal colored stripe which isolates the symbolic element of the hand and acts as a hinge between the two illustrations and the text.[173] The card for |153| Motta (ca 1935), with the pop-up three-dimensional Duomo, represents an advanced level of complexity, in the controlled use of photography and color as narrative, along with an intelligent paper structure that resolves the subject of the ad with a surprising idea.[174]

In later ads for national campaigns, dating back to about 1936, Ricas and Munari's graphic language reaches sophisticated levels (in some ways even radical in the context of Italian advertising). A |154| double ad for the national sugar campaign (1936), which no longer played on the mechanical representation but rather on the association between the human figure and the car (where the engine becomes a metaphor for the metabolism), uses photo manipulation in a freer, almost anarchic, fashion. The two images do not adhere to a preset schema; they depend on the semantic juxtaposition of the elements, for a kind of surreal effect that plays on the emotional pedal.[175] Instead, a contemporary ad published in the same car-related |155| context for Champion spark plugs is resolved strictly constructively; the sheaf of lines converging on the photo of the spark plug, the text laid out in a strips inserted between the photo illustrations arranged according to a rhythmic module, determine precise geometrical structures. This is a more controlled, rigorous method that reveals its system, which supports the layout of the elements and is more functional for technical communication.[176]

A preliminary mock-up remains for the |157| design for a promotional brochure for RIV (1937) which returns to the combination of industrial photography and photomontage. In the sketch, the parts are quickly marked, defining the clutter as titles, text and photos. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the pamphlet consists of two distinct parts, one introducing the product and one celebrating recent airplane enterprises, connected by a central fold-out spread on silver paper, with an aerial view of the Turin factories. Undoubtedly the publication uses photography as the main instrument: the first part in the form of large still lifes alternating with designs; the second in the form of a synthetic photomontage, in keeping with the style developed by Munari for *L'Ala d'italia*.[177]

173. 'Scaglia Arredamenti presenta alla Triennale le più recenti creazioni Ar-Ca' (1933), a folding card, open 23×23.5 cm; two-color print; signed Studio Boggeri. Monguzzi-Boggeri Collection, Meride (Switzerland). An original note by Boggeri on the verso indicates that it is the first or second work created by the studio; 'the hand is mine, I don't remember the author!' —but in all likelihood the work can be attributed to Ricas and Munari.

174. 'Non si ha notizie dell'architetto...' (ca 1935), folding card (sketch), closed 9×13.5 cm; open 34.5×13.5 cm. Signed R+M on the opening flap. Monguzzi-Boggeri Collection, Meride (Switzerland).

175. 'La tensione nervosa sfibra i vostri muscoli...' and 'Lo zucchero è il distributore di energie...' (1936), ads respectively in *Motor Italia* x; 2 (February 1936): 2, and ivi x; 5 (May 1936): 2. 43×56.5 cm. Signed Ricas+Munari/Studio Boggeri. The existence of other ads from the same time, also created by Studio Boggeri with the collaboration of other artists (cf. 'Zucchero alimento prezioso indispensabile' in *Domus* no.98, February 1936) allows us to perceive a flexible communication strategy, that adapts its language according to the public in question; this explains Ricas and Munari's choice for an upscale magazine dedicated to motoring.

176. 'Champion. Perfetta accensione significa economia di benzina' (1936) ad in *Motor Italia* x; 1 (January 1936): 1. 43×56.5 cm. Signed Ricas+Munari/Studio Boggeri.

177. 'Con queste sfere' (1937), brochure sketch, in the Boggeri-Monguzzi collection, Meride (Switzerland). 16×23 cm; pp. 24. Unique features include the metallic paper for the central four-page fold-out and a circular hole in the second

The mock-up of a promotional publi-
|158| cation for Studio Boggeri called 'L'uovo di Colombo' (1935) is more defined in the layout of the text and illustrations. Even here the taste prevails for graphic inventions and collage atop designed backgrounds or printing screens. Square in shape, the brochure fits in a black card stock envelope, which bears the studio's trademark, uncentered. The pamphlet is protected by a tracing paper cover, with different drawn crops of Boggeri's famous photo of an egg balancing on a mirror (*L'uovo di Colombo*), visible through a circular hole on the first page, surrounded by Studio creations. In the center of the pamphlet, a photo collage schematically illustrates the principle of the photomontage and bears the names of the studio's main contributors; the following pages present two-color printing compositions, ending with a large letter B in bright red, visible in transparency.[178]

Yet another different option is seen in
|159| the Linoleum brochure (1936) that, besides the rationally structured photographic cover, works on the graphic invention of punching out holes in the pages which makes it possible to bring together different coating finishes in two backgrounds designed in a simple, linear style.[179] Photography is the main feature of a brochure for Colorificio Italiano Max Meyer (1938), characterized by the rhythm of large photographs,[180] as it is for a folding card for
|162| Olga Asta & C. (1938), whose lace and embroidery are effectively evoked by a photogram (enriched with the simple collage of a view of Venice), printed in color on the cover.[181] Not that the photograph exhausts the expressive repertoire used by the two artists in their collaboration with Boggeri, nor that all the work belongs to the same modernist trend. Some even deliberately return to pictorial language, both in the realistic sense and in the more monumen-
|160| tal sense. The sign for the Lecco Quinquennial (1937), a provincial farming/industrial trade fair, marks a re-entry to the more obvious iconographic designs, where the photocollage technique is diluted by the return to pictorial illustration, for a result that, all told, is rather commonplace (also because of the propagandist Fascio symbol).[182] The
|161| window sign for Alpestre Arquebuse liqueur

section. The date is based on the cover photograph (cf. similar in *Campo grafico* II; 12, December 1934: 274) and especially on references to the transatlantic flight of the 'Sorci Verdi' (Rome–Rio de Janeiro, August 20–21, 1937). The type of content leads one to think of the publication of an image intended for a wide audience. In the 1930s, the RIV Company factory of Villar Perosa, commonly known as RIV, part of the Fiat Group, was one of the major global manufacturers of ball bearings and precision mechanical components, with factories in Turin, France, Germany, Belgium, Argentina and the USSR (Bassignana 2008).

178. 'L'uovo di Colombo' (1935) promotional brochure sketch, in the Monguzzi-Boggeri collection, Meride (Switzerland). 16×15.5 cm; pp.12. Dust jacket in tracing paper; circular hole on the first page; black card stock envelope, with logo (17×17 cm). The collage in the central four-page folder has a painter's palette obtained from the photo of clouds and the name of Boggeri's main collaborators reproduced on the brush handles, while the facing page schematically illustrates the principle of the photocollage.

179. 'Linoleum' (1936), brochure, 20×14.2 cm, pp.8. The realism of the illustrations recalls the style of the stage design for *Il Dottor Mattia* by Rognoni (1931) and several ads for Olivetti (1932–33).

180. 'Diamanferro contro la ruggine' (1938), brochure in the Boggeri-Monguzzi collection, Meride (Switzerland). 18×22 cm, pp.16 plus cover, metal staple bound. Printing: Pizzi & Pizio Milan, Rome. 'The most interesting double-page is perhaps the last one [reproduced in Monguzzi 1981: 32–3] (...) Five other spreads feature letters of reference on the right page, and on the left images related to the specific field; for example, facing a certification issued by the Ufficio Materiale of the 27th Artillery Regiment there is a tank, next to a letter from the Navy Department is the photo of the bow of a ship, seen from the bottom, and the footer has a graphical representation of an ocean liner.' (Bruno Monguzzi, correspondence with author, 31 January 2011).

181. 'Olga Asta & C. Venezia' (1938–39), folding card, 19×16 cm, pp.4. Signed Ricas+Munari/Studio Boggeri. Stampa Lucini, Milan.

182. 'IV Quinquennale di Lecco' (1937), press ad or tram poster, 17.5×26.5 cm. B/w proof and color-printed sample, Monguzzi-Boggeri coll., Meride (Switzerland). Signed Studio Boggeri (Ricas and Munari). Note how this rough realistic illustration style is found in the contemporary covers for periodicals like *La Lettura*.

also returns to the pictorial style typical of poster production at the time; however, the use of the photographic image and the subtle typographic play (the curved title that enters and exits from the café) give the composition vibrancy.[183] Looking back, it becomes clear that Ricas and Munari show greater ease, expressing a style all their own in its slight playful subversion or graphic invention, in the more flexible and elaborate designs, such as brochures and folding cards, rather than single printed matter, such as posters, playbills or signs, where a more conventional style is preferred.[184]

Furthermore, a large batch of print
|163| sketches have been recently discovered, most of which bear the Studio Boggeri stamp and in many cases are signed Munari, along with autograph markings for the printing, which could not be identified. The group includes window signs, folding cards, catalogues, ads, often odd pieces, single copies, as well as retouched photographs, photomontages and colored backgrounds intended for overprinting. Despite the fact that their fragmentary nature prevents a precise classification, as a whole, these documents attest to a large variety of graphic design projects that Munari would work on, some perhaps on his own or more often for Boggeri, which leads us to believe that their collaboration was more intense than was known thus far.[185] No less importantly, these sketches also verify a considerable technical ability and fine drawing skills otherwise unexpected based on the magazine covers or later children's illustrations. In this regard, the most interesting creations are some window signs for Adisole and Neazina, pharmaceuticals made by Farmitalia, which can be dated to around 1938;[186] and sketches for a folding card and an ad for the launch of the *Guida Breve d'Italia*, edited by Touring Club Italiano in 1937. Also, noteworthy clients include Lagomarsino, Vedeme, Olivetti, ULMA and Tecnica (these last ones with Carlo Dinelli).

183. 'L'Alpestre Arquebuse' (1936), counter or window sign, 35×24.5 cm; silk-screen print. In the Monguzzi-Boggeri coll., Meride (Switzerland). The image is not unlike Carboni's (even if it is closer in its representation to the cubist styles) for the same product. The mediator role of Mazzali, editor of *L'Ufficio Moderno* and consultant for the company Arquebuse, should not be excluded.

184. Boggeri only seems to assign certain kinds of ads to Ricas and Munari, those connected to specific products or a particular client, while for the rest he relies mostly on Schawinsky, Carboni and Muratore (cf. Monguzzi 1981: 13).

185. The large batch of sketches (now in the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, Bologna/New York) comes from the Milanese printing plant Unione Artistica Arti Grafiche Pietro Vera. Numerous examples bear the Studio Boggeri stamp on the verso, and in many cases (but not always) Munari's signature (in full, but more often MUN, or a simple short M). Furthermore, his handwriting can sometimes be recognized in the printing notes on the recto or on sheets of tracing paper laid overtop. The majority of the work dates back to the 1930s, but there is a small group from the 1950s. It is not always possible to identify the client, as these are loose sketches or simple colored backgrounds intended for overprinting, therefore lack any information; in other cases, the name of the client is known but not the type of product. It was not even possible to identify the documents or find useful information by consulting Anna Boggeri and Bruno Monguzzi. As a note of caution, in at least two cases it was verified that the signature is false (probably added by the collector), despite the fact that other clues (handwriting or certain aspects in style) confirm the work as being Munari's.

186. Adisole is an tuna liver oil extract (launched by the regime to avoid the importation of cod liver oil, blocked by international sanctions) and Neazina is one of the first sulphonamides marketed in Italy: both these preparations were manufactured by Farmitalia beginning in 1938 (Sironi 1992: 125–126). The creation of the pharmaceuticals branch of Montecatini takes place in 1935, from the joining of the Schiapparelli plants and a branch of ACNA (an important Italian chemical company), but only later does it adopt the new name; given that beginning in 1937 Munari works for himself as an advertising graphic artist and that his clients are different companies that belong to the Montecatini Group (including ACNA, Duco, Società Generale Marmi & Pietre d'Italia, Lavorazione Leghe Leggere/Alluminio SA), it is highly probable that his relationship with Farmitalia occurred directly, without Boggeri's mediation, within this broader collaboration.

187. Bruno Monguzzi often quotes Boggeri who, referring to functional Swiss graphic design, once stated that a spider's web is useful only when broken by the fly that is trapped in it; cited in Nunoo-Quarcoo 1999: 42.

What, then, is Ricas and Munari's position as after their experience with Boggeri with respect to the ongoing debate on typography? In other words, where does their work fit within the contemporary panorama of graphic arts? With respect to graphic artists of the same generation, such as Carboni, Veronesi, Muratore? If, as we have seen, the work for Boggeri marks a gradual transition from a Futurist method to a more modern style, that is, updated on the constructive trends and on the integration of photography, it is also clear that this move does not embrace an extreme functionalism. There are two main reasons for this: in part because the two artists do not belong to the world of traditional printing (in the sense that they lack the technical training that could have influenced their development), but perhaps more so because of Boggeri's artistic direction, aimed at a type of 'emotional' advertising communication in which formal precision is not an end unto itself as much as a means to establish contact with the public.[187] In any case, by about 1936, the graphic work created by the duo R+M seems to be have taken a clear direction, which can be seen in a few significant designs (both for contemporary observers and from a historical perspective).

An early printed piece that seems to make the point about the level of stylistic maturity Ricas and Munari reached by the middle of the decade is the well-
|164| known *Tavolozza di possibilità tipografiche*, an illustrative brochure designed and coproduced with the printer Muggiani, for promotional distribution.[188] The square, spiral-bound booklet looks like a sort of catalogue of printing possibilities, using screens, lines, overprinted blocks, printing on celluloid, and fold-out inserts. Impeccably produced, the variety of effects and materials used garners favorable reactions in the Milanese advertising world, so much so as to be reproduced in the *Guida Ricciardi* in 1936. Nonetheless, a review in *Campo grafico* does not fail to emphasize how from a graphics standpoint the results betray the fundamental objective, that is, to show new modes of expression borne out of the collaboration between the printer and the new figure of the graphic designer: '(...) it became a work of costly reproduction transforming possibilities into problems.'[189] This critique points out what is lacking not so much at the production level (given the collaboration with experienced technical experts), as at the level of the typographic concept, which was overly difficult for the outcome obtained. In part, this comes from inexperience, but fundamentally it stems from a concept that is still related to artistry, dependent on a 'pictorial' result rather that derived from the technical possibilities inherent in printing—cited are recent printed materials created with an entirely different economy of means and visual impact, with a clear reference to the work of Herbert Matter for the Swiss national tourism office.[190] 'Reproducing and printing is therefore disproportionate to the effect obtained, making the brochure ineffective from an advertising point of view, because people who want to advertise are unlikely to pay

188. *Tavolozza di possibilità tipografiche*. Subtitle: *Esempio di collaborazione tra artisti e tipografo*. Milan: Officina Grafica Rinaldo Muggiani, December 1935. 19.5×19.5 cm, 12 pp; card, metal spiral binding, various printing processes. The pamphlet is placed in a three-color overprinted parcel paper envelope.

189. 'Recensioni' in *Campo grafico* IV; 3 (March 1936): n.p.

190. 'We cite, for example, certain Swiss tourism advertising cards where beautiful effects were obtained solely with two-color prints and others, printed in two-colors in a single printing on regular machines' ('Recensioni' in *Campo grafico*, cit.).

a lot for a job when they can get a job that produces the same effect at a lower cost.'[191] This contrast—which is reminiscent of the distance that separated the 'pictorialist' photographic vision and the new objectivity during those years —reveals a position that is undoubtedly receptive to the new modernist influences that Ricas and Munari tried to assimilate. However, they remained on a level of superficial imitation without understanding their structural principles which are at their very basis. In the end, the ambitious project was partially successful, despite the indubitable effect it provoked in the professional environment, and which was echoed one year later in a controversial exchange with Alcide Mengarelli, a traditionalist printer and editor-in-chief of the Roman magazine *L'Arte grafica*, who accused the 'three jolly guys' of 'extremely simple craft shop work that does not really represent the possibilities of Italian printing (...)'.[192] Beyond the controversy between those for and against modernism, the fact remains that the *Tavolozza* is affected by the desire to prove the artist's role in graphic arts with an excess of inventions which in the end are counterproductive; and in any event, from the aesthetic point of view, there is nothing extraordinary even by the standards of the day—in terms of comparison one thinks of type foundry specimens, paper mill samples, or even the *Divertissements typographiques* edited by Maximilien Vox for Deberny & Peignot.

Another advertising project, however, receives a positive reception, this one also created during the same period together with Muggiani, marked by an improved economy of means. It is the promotional brochure *Nero A.O. 1936* for the company Concentra/F.lli Hartmann,[193] and features a new printing ink, appropriately renamed with a nod to the war going on in Africa, as is the photographic idea on the cover; inside, instead, text and images alternate in a clear layout, with large, well-spaced type, printed in color and, on the front, suggestive black-and-white images (photomontage and typographic compositions) or demonstrative images displaying the product's qualities (print proofs with different screens). Enclosed in the February issue of *Campo grafico* for the occasion, it is accompanied by a positive review that, in addition to praising the client for their promotional choice that differs from the usual art reproductions, this time it emphasizes the total success of the collaboration between artist and printer that results in a 'clear work, that is convincing from an advertising point of view.'

The sedimentation of the language of elemental typography in Munari's work reaches a new stage in 1937, significantly connected to the Futurist environment. The moderate *paroliberismo* (words in freedom) reintroduced by Marinetti in the second half of the decade with his 'aeropoetry' readily lent itself to the advertising world, a development directly tied to the autarchic climate and the demands for promoting national products.[194] The first concrete

191. 'The envelope (...) required three printings, the cover (...) five, and so on' (ibid).

192. 'All'insegna dei tre buontemponi Ricas Munari Muggiani' in *L'Arte grafica* VI; 42 (January 1937): 3–4. In a review by Panfilo, the magazine had previously criticized the *Tavolozza* on the basis of reproductions appeared in *Campo grafico*, provoking an ironic response from Ricas and Munari, who sent a copy to Mengarelli, stirring up yet another of those heated debates that filled the Italian press at the time.

193. *Nero A.O. 1936* [where A.O. stands for Africa Orientale, or East Africa], brochure, 12.5×15.5 cm; pp.8, metal staple bound. Printing: Milan: Officina Grafica Rinaldo Muggiani, 1936. Two-color printing. Enclosed in *Campo grafico* IV; 2 (February 1936), the review is on p.29.

194. Aeropoetry, begun with *L'Aeropoema del Golfo della Spezia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1935) and followed by

example of sponsored poetic writing is *Il* |166| *Poema del vestito di latte* (1937), for which Munari handled the graphic design for the Snia Viscosa advertising office.[195] Marinetti's poetic inspiration tends to glorify new materials manufactured by the chemical industry, in this case the synthetic fiber, Lanital.[196] In addition to typographic skills, Munari's work seems to capitalize on the best results of his photomontage experience. The pamphlet's typographic style emphasizes Marinetti's text, that follows its free rhythm with a play of vertical alignments, and accentuates some words by varying the typeface. On this structure, he builds 'a sophisticated visual counterpoint'[197] made of clipped photographs, line drawings, duotone prints and overprinted cellophane sheets that interact with the poetic recitation. The result is as far from the Futurist style as it is from the hesitations of the first constructivist attempts, and it shows a personal assimilation of the modernist vocabulary tempered by a basic poetic attitude which better expresses Munari's position in the context of the new Italian typography. The effects used, such as inserting a cellophane sheet inside the pamphlet, do not appear to be the product of a desperate search for the element of surprise at all costs, but rather the result of intentionally accentuating and tying the two narrative levels, textual and visual.

The use of new materials like cellophane in the graphic arts of the 1930s is often cited as an example of the Futurist legacy. Despite Futurists' claims of priority (assertions often repeated by critics without confirmation), this appears unlikely enough given the country's backward technological situation. Cellophane was commonly used in food packaging; furthermore, since the 1920s, printing on cellophane was one of the processes used for offset printing of texts and images.[198] It is therefore more plausible that the first to test transparent materials such as cellophane or cellulose acetate were the printers themselves. And in other European countries similar experiments in the field of graphic arts had already been attempted with success—cellophane was used by Lissitsky at the *Pressa Ausstellung* of Cologne (1928), Bayer used it for the cover of the catalogue for the Section Allemande at Exposition de la Société des Artistes Décorateurs in Paris (1930), Zwart for the Reclame brochure (1931). In Italy, aside from the precedent of the *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce* (1930), cellophane was used by Modiano

Il poema africano della Divisione «XVIII ottobre» (Milan: Mondadori, 1937), recalls an impressionist type of narration, that is shown in its declamatory style with a new lexical richness and a marked descriptiveness. Aeropoetry gives way to the so-called Poetry of Technicalism, a definition following advertising poetry provided by Marinetti with the later *Poema di Torre Viscosa* (Snia Viscosa, 1938) (Salaris 1985: 214–7).

195. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Il poema del vestito di latte. Parole in libertà futuriste*. S.l. [Milan]: Ufficio Propaganda Snia Viscosa, 1937. Printing: Officina Grafica Esperia. 24.5×34 cm, pp.16; metal staple bound. Three-color printing, with a cellophane sheet insert overprinted in black. Text in *Luxor* type, the Italian version of *Memphis* (Stempel, 1929; Mergenthaler Linotype, 1935–36).

196. Lanital is a synthetic fiber obtained from milk casein, invented by Antonio Ferretti and manufactured by Snia Viscosa, a major European enterprise in artificial fibers. With the proclamation of the autarchy (1936), the advertising of Italian materials, already favored by a protectionist situation, affected every manufacturing sector, especially the chemical industry which provides many new products. In the textile industry, new artificial fibers were introduced on the market, both of plant origin (broom, ramie) and synthetic (rayon, cisalfa, fleece, cellulose by-products). Overall, in the 1930s Italy had attained a place of respect in the global production of synthetic fibers, whose main centers/figures, besides Snia Viscosa, were the Società anonima italiana per le fibre artificiali/Châtillon (rayon and its by-products); Rhodiatoce/Montecatini (acetate); and Bemberg (cotton linters) (Venturelli 1997: 423–4; Gnoli 2005: 87–8; see also Garofoli 1991).

197. Ravaioli 1998: 69.

198. The text was printed on cellophane sheets which were then covered using electrolysis with a layer of bronze dust, and mounted on a printing plate (Johan de Zoete, email exchange, April 2008; cf. Twyman 1998[2]: 58–9).

in *25 anni Olivetti* (1933). The Futurists' experiments during the 1930s can be traced back rather to the well-known *Mise en page: The Theory and Practice of Layout* by Alfred Tolmer, the original French graphic arts manual, as well as a true printing tour de force that at the time became a common reference in advertising.[199] Tolmer's book presented the most up-to-date summary of deco graphic art and, in addition to dealing with the subject of typography, layout, photography and illustration, employed an extraordinary variety of materials, processes and techniques: typographic printing, silk-screening, stencil printing; metallic paper, plastic-coated paper, wallpaper; collage, dry block.[200]

Another case is represented by a publication jointly designed by Ricas and Munari in 1937 (that is, after their studio partnership broke up), who undertake the artistic direction of the summer issue of
|167| *URIC*, a technical magazine for the footwear industry.[201] What is unique about their work for the cover, the pamphlet's layout, several illustrations and a few advertisements, lies in the overall graphic style. It tends towards the hybrid, revealing contradictions between elements of a Futurist origin and constructive solutions; while the photomontage on the cover seems consistent with Munari's work in other periodicals, the collage compositions combined with drawing that fill several two-page spreads inside, in certain ways, return to the aeropictorial styles that seemed obsolete.

On a different level, one of the factors that undoubtedly contributes to the modernization of the Italian graphic arts culture between the two world wars is the presence of foreign graphic artists (Swiss, in particular) in Milan connected to Studio Boggeri, not to mention Paul Renner's or Max Bill's exhibition designs at the Triennale. Numerous influences can be identified behind Ricas and Munari's new established code including, to a considerable extent, that of Xanti Schawinsky, who worked in Milan from 1933 to 1936, directly introducing Bauhaus teachings and the new German advertising graphics. Settling in Milan in the fall of '33, Schawinsky met the rationalist architect Baldessari and the Ghiringhelli brothers, owners of the Galleria del Milione, and through these, Boggeri who offered him work at his studio, where he would remain throughout 1934. He would later open his own studio on corso Venezia. Besides working for Boggeri, in

199. Alfred Tolmer. *Mise En Page. The Theory and Practice of Lay-Out*. Paris: Tolmer et cie. (French edition); London: The Studio/New York: William Edwin Rudge (English edition, with French text at the end of the book). 21.2×26.5 cm, pp.[117]; with 16 tipped-in full-page illustrations and photomontages utilizing metallic paper, linoleum, color-printing, embossing and stenciling. Bound in decorated boards. 'This book rather than Tschichold's disciplined *Die neue Typographie* became the bible of advertising agencies in the 1930s' (John Lewis, *Anatomy of printing*. London: Faber & Faber, 1970: 215; cit in Burke 2006: 128–9); this observation is as true for the United Kingdom as it is for Italy, given their marginal position within the northern European modernist paradigm (Ann Pilar, email exchange, June 2009; Christopher Burke & Paul Shaw, email exchange April 2008; Wlassikoff 2005: 96–7).

200. Lista (1984: 103) and other critics did not fail to point out how 'the Fascist cultural institutions attempted to reclaim these Futurist creations' citing as an example the impressive (36×46 cm) celebratory volume *Italia Imperiale*, published in 1937 by *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* which contains all the technical processes already used by the Futurists. These innovations spread progressively through Italy, which is confirmed by technical articles published in *Campo grafico* (cf. 'Stampa su cellophane' ivi VI; 1, January 1938: 14). During the span of a decade, these same processes would be reused in the special issues dedicated to Futurist typography by *Campo grafico* (March–May 1939, edited by Enrico Bona) and *Graphicus* (5, 1942 edited by Alfredo Trimarco).

201. *URIC* [*Unica Rassegna Italiana Calzature*], XII; 44 (summer 1937). Milan. 24.5×33.5 cm. In addition to the cover, the two graphic artists' work appears in numerous b/w and two-color plates (all for URIC creations, 18–9, 22–3, 26–7, 40–9, 51, 57, 72–5, 82–3), in the index (13) and the title pages (14–15), as well as in three ads for Everest typewriters (10), Calzaturificio Di Varese (14) and Inchiostri Concentra (96).

the next couple of years Schawinsky would work for Motta, Illy & Hausbrandt, Cinzano, S.Pellegrino, Cosulich and Olivetti designing posters, folding cards and catalogues; his work goes beyond two-dimensional graphics to interior layouts and industrial design. His Italian colleagues were not only surprised by the technical ability, but especially by the perfect synthesis in his work of graphic, typographic and photographic elements, which he would also be able to show to a wider audience with his one-man show at the Milione gallery (September 1934), in the commemorative poster for the 12th year of the Fascist revolution (enclosed in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, October 1934). Apart from considerations on the ideological implications of this last piece, it should be noted that not even Schawinsky was immune from the influences of the Italian context; in the two covers he was commissioned by *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* (December 1933) and by *Natura* (June 1934), it is clear that his language conforms to the prevailing contemporary taste. This is not the case for the cover created one year later for a special issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno* dedicated to him, which includes his own text on 'functional advertising' and a survey of his works from 1926 to 1935 in Germany and Italy. This provided yet another opportunity for Italians to examine closely these organically presented examples of the new modernist aesthetic.[202] With the war in Abyssinia, international sanctions and the subsequent closeness with Nazi Germany, the situation in the country became difficult. In fall of 1936, Schawinsky would end his period in Italy and emigrate to the United States.[203] His stay, however brief, leaves a lasting imprint on the Milanese environment, and by 1940 the young Max Huber would take his place at Studio Boggeri, continuing to nurture a fruitful exchange with Swiss functional approach to graphic design.

If the literary content in the *Poema del vestito di latte* allows Munari to graft his own poetic inspiration onto an open typographic schema, with the excellent proof of the Movo catalogue also designed in 1937, he perfects that formula by adapting it to the functional demands imposed by the information/content. His graphics seem to be aimed at a modernist lexicon, where photography and illustration serve to document and explain in an objective way. In fact, this is the role that Modiano invites Ricas and Munari to perform for
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the brochure *Il linoleum: Sua fabbricazione* published in 1938 by the Società del Linoleum, part of the Pirelli Group.[204] The assignment is reasonably issued by the company's advertising service, then driven by the poet Leonardo Sinisgalli (who towards the end of that year would become director of Olivetti's advertising office), who also probably wrote the text.[205] The brochure

202. Other articles would followed in '35 in *Domus* and *Quadrante* (Solmi 1975: 110).

203. Hahn 1986: 20 ff.

204. *Il linoleum. Sua fabbricazione*. Milan: [Società del Linoleum], 1938. 28×25 cm; metal spiral bound; pp. 32 n/n (including a fold-out spread). Printing: Milan: Società Grafica G. Modiano. From the typographic point of view, note the use of *Bayer Type* (Berthold, 1931).

205. Lupo 2002: 214–6; Lupo 1996: 223–4; Sinisgalli 1955: 22. From 1936 to 1938 Leonardo Sinisgalli (1908–1981) works as a journalist at the Advertising Service of the Società del Linoleum with the job of organizing new product promotion, by writing articles (published in *Edilizia Moderna*) and lecturing on modern interior design in northern Italian towns; in 1937, he publishes a popular article in the magazine *Sapere* entitled 'Come si fabbrica il linoleum' (How Linoleum is Made) (III; 60, 1937: 400), which is the basis for the brochure designed by Modiano. His friendship with Persico is essential to his intellectual education; it is through him that he works with *Domus* and *Casabella*. The Società del Linoleum, then managed by Giuseppe Eugenio Luraghi (manager of Pirelli after the war), was founded in 1898 by Pirelli & C. which had taken over a rubber-manufacturing plant in Narni, in Umbria.

describes the manufacturing process and the different product types and applications. The designer is Guido Modiano, who makes use of the 'figurative' contribution of painters Ricas and Munari, as well as of Luigi Veronesi for the cover. For Munari, working in collaboration with Modiano, the person most theoretically and practically committed to the achievement of the new typography in Italy, constitutes an implicit recognition of the stylistic maturity reached, even though the typographer's direction keeps Munari's inspiration, so to speak, under control, directing it towards the simple visualization of complex processes. The narration, in fact, relies predominantly on photography and diagrams (where Ricas and Munari's presence is more easily recognized), while the explanatory text actually plays a subordinate role. Modiano's artistic guidance is visible in the consistency of the grid used for the layout and in the uniform concept that informs the publication, appropriately recognized as a 'concrete manifestation of modern typography' and since celebrated as one of the best examples of Italian graphic design of the 1930s.[206]

|169| An elegant brochure on Lanital printed by Modiano in 1937 may have given Munari the opportunity to work with the noted critic and printer for the first time. If on the one hand, the booklet's rigorous typographic style leaves no doubt as to Modiano's responsibility, the numerous photomontages on the cover and inside seem to bear Munari's mark.[207]

Munari, along with Ricas, is one of the major figures at the Mostra insolita di Arte Grafica e Fotografica (Unusual Exhibition of Graphic and Photographic Art), which opened at the Galleria del Milione in January of 1937; this would be the gallery's last exhibit of the modern period. On display were works by the 'campisti,' layouts by Persico for *Casabella*, photomontages by the BBPR Group (architects Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti, Rogers), works by Figini and Pollini, Veronesi, Schawinsky and naturally, Ricas and Munari (who displayed the *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani*, among others).[208] New developments await Munari in 1937, however, starting with the professional relationship with Ricas, which by now had reached its end, for reasons which remain unknown. Not even in recent years have the two artists ever mentioned the circumstances of their separation, which in any event was anything but dramatic or sudden. From the little information available it seems that the separation must have been occurred gradually, considering that during 1937 Ricas and Munari are still working together on important projects, such as the installation at the Mostra del tessile, the publications on Linoleum or for Max Meyer, signed jointly. At least by the end of 1935, the r+m studio had moved to via Sebeto 1 (in the Cadorna

Strong in an expanding market (with demands especially coming from the public sector for hospitals, schools, buildings and transportation), the company would continue to be the main Italian manufacturer until after the war.

206. Cf. C.G., 'Una manifestazione concreta di tipografia moderna italiana' in *Campo grafico* VI; 12, (December 1938): 196–201.

207. *Lanital. La nostra lana*. [Milan]: Snia Viscosa, 1937. Printing Società Grafica G. Modiano. 23.5×32 cm, 92 pp, spiral bound. The colophon reads: 'Edited by the Snia Viscosa Advertising Office'. Cover with photomontage printed in two colors on golden metallic-finish paper; contains overprinted colored cellophane sheets (blue/green), and a series of fabric and yarn samples. Chiabraudo (2006: 69) suggests that Veronesi may have created the photomontages, but I would lean instead towards Munari, who used this technique far more extensively. Also, Antifascist that he was, it is unlikely that Veronesi would have agreed to create propaganda photomontages (like the one on the last page).

208. Pontiggia 1988: 49.

area, not far from Parco Sempione and home of the Triennale), which also marks a break in relations between the graphics studio's activity and the Milanese Futurist group.[209] Nevertheless, by the fall of 1936 the name that had defined them until then makes way for new independent names, 'pubblicità m' and 'Ricas'. What is significant is that this change seems to coincide with a new direction in the studio's activity, in which Munari specializes in advertising for large companies connected to technologically advanced sectors of industry, neglecting the more general commercial area and the publishing industry (with the exception of periodicals, of course). In the fall of 1936 the name 'pubblicità m' appears in ads published predominantly in *Domus* and *Casabella*; and from January 1937 onwards, except in isolated cases, projects by the two graphic artists in *L'Ufficio Moderno* or *L'Ala d'italia* would be done separately.[210]

Having left the studio with Munari, Ricas shares a space with Lucio Fontana and Fausto Melotti, continuing to work on illustration and graphics, but also increasingly on publishing. By 1934 he had already started a consulting relationship with the Editoriale Domus founded by Gianni Mazzocchi (publisher of *Domus* and *Casabella*) where he is able to establish a relationship with both Gio Ponti and Giuseppe Pagano, as well as with the Milanese rationalists; for example, the layout for Domus's collection Quaderni (1945) is his, as are the monographs edited by Raffaele Carrieri. At the 1936 Triennale, he exhibits his work at the set design show curated by Bragaglia and Prampolini, presenting a sketch for Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (which was to be staged the following year at La Scala); and again in '40, Ricas also has a space of his own at the graphic art exhibit set up by Modiano at the VII Triennale. Called up to military service during war, he would wind up in Rome with the General Staff of the armed forces, where he would be in charge of the artistic office along with important figures in the Milanese advertising and journalism fields (Sinisgalli, Bianconi, Flaiano), working on theater and film production (propaganda films for the Istituto LUCE) and weekly publications for the troops, among other things. In '43, a series of chance circumstances bring him to Brianza, in Lombardy, where he would get by designing textiles for a silk mill and, like Munari, during the most dramatic years of the conflict, he would even manage to exhibit in one-man shows. In the tumultuous period following the end of the war, he would embark on journalism; he was a contributor to Italia libera, then editor-in-chief of the daily paper *Il Mezzogiorno* and finally an editor on *Corriere della Sera*. Returning to Editoriale Domus, in '45 he would become one of the founders of the weekly news publication *L'Europeo*, along with Mario Pannunzio and Arrigo Benedetti. In the postwar period, after an interval in South America, his professional path would lead decisively towards the world of advertising organization connected to the dawn of television and to the publishing industry; first with Sipra, the Italian television advertising agency, where he was along from the beginning, inventing the advertising formula

209. Cf. the colophon in *Tavolozza di possibiità tipografiche* (December 1935), as well as the ad published in *Guida Ricciardi 1936*.

210. Several examples of ads or graphic projects created entirely by Ricas in 1937–38: Piaggio ad in *L'Ala d'italia* (October 1937), illustrations and photomontages for *L'Ala d'italia* (February 1937, January and June 1938) and *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani 1937* (1936).

for *Carosello* (1957–1977), then for Rizzoli and finally founding his own editorial and advertising company in the 1970s.[211]

Munari, instead, seems to be firmly committed to advertising, especially during the period from '37 to '39, also connected to Editoriale Domus. The type of company client for which he works—from chemistry (Montecatini, Duco, ACNA) to textiles (Snia Viscosa, Rhodiatoce), from advanced metallurgy (Lavorazione Leghe Leggere/Alluminio SA) to new plastic materials (Montecatini)—guides his choice of means towards the two main magazines on architecture and applied arts, *Domus* and *Casabella*. Even though the first advertisements by 'pubblicità m' appear during '36, Munari's advertising work clearly begins in January '37 and almost exclusively for companies which depend on the giant Montecatini, a unique coincidence that suggests some possible scenarios: that Munari got the job of overseeing communications for the different companies from a single office or company manager seems rather unlikely; an alternate explanation (which is the more plausible theory) would be that the Editoriale Domus did not only manage the sales of ad spaces in his publications but that he also offered the client creative graphic services to make the ads by relying on outside collaborators. This is the kind of relationship that existed between the editorial office and Luigi Veronesi or Franco Grignani, many of whose ads bear the double signature Domus/Veronesi and Domus/Grignani. And yet this aspect regarding the name gives rise to some confusion, because this never happened with Munari, who always and only signed 'pubblicità m'—which therefore leads to the conclusion that Munari worked as an independent professional with a client group assigned to him by the publishing house (however, this hypothesis remains speculative).

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The first ads chronologically appear during the summer of 1936 for ACNA, and important chemical company in the dye industry,[212] and for the Società Generale Marmi e Pietre d'Italia (Italian Marble and Stone Company), active in the mining sector, both belonging to the Montecatini Group.[213] In general, Munari's approach confirms his command of a modern language and in fact shows a remarkable variability in the formal solutions applied from one ad to the next, going beyond the predominance of one common stylistic code. Intended for an audience connected to architecture, the building industry and interior design, the ads are published monthly in *Domus* and *Casabella*, often reused in subsequent issues or later on (changing the second color), but without being repeated from one megazine to the other.

211. Lopez in Bassi 1994: 8; Bassi 1994: 16, 85–93; cf. Waibl/Fava 1988: 52; Prada 1977.

212. Created initially as an industry for manufacturing explosives, ACNA (Azienda Coloranti Nazionali e Affini) was transferred to Italgas in 1925 who re-launched the company for manufacturing dyes. Following some financial difficulties, the company was taken over by Montecatini along with the German IG Farben (1931). The company included three plants, in the province of Milan (Cesano Maderno and Rho) and Cengio (headquarters, between Liguria and Piedmont).

213. Founded in 1888 and initially devoted to exploiting Tuscany's copper and pyrite mines, after WWI, under the direction of Guido Donegani, Montecatini enters the chemical sector where it achieves a prominent position in the sector of fertilizers. During the 1920s, due to its closeness with the regime, the company develops quickly, expanding in similar sectors, eventually becoming one of the major Italian industrial groups. The group's activities expand to the sectors of artificial fibers (Rhodiatoce, joint venture with the French Rhône-Poulenc, 1928), dyes (Acna, 1931; Duco-Montecatini), pharmaceuticals (Farmitalia, another joint venture with Rhône-Poulenc, 1935), petrochemicals (ANIC, Azienda Nazionale Idrogenazione Combustibili, established with the Italian government, 1936), mining (including the Società Generale Marmi e Pietre d'Italia), metallurgy (including Lavorazione Leghe Leggere/Alluminio SA), as well as a strong presence in the field of hydroelectric production (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/ entries for Acna, Anic, Farmitalia, Montecatini, Rhodiatoce, last accessed January 2011).

The campaign for ACNA (created by Munari until the end of '38) uses black-and-white ads on a half-page vertical format, with a predominant emphasis on the illustration combined with the logo, which moves from the precision of the axonometric drawing to a leaner, two-dimensional representation, at times with simple additions of collage or retouched photomontages; however, from the end of '37 there is evidence that both the illustrative and typographic style becomes stiffer. On the other hand, the advertising for the Società Generale Marmi e Pietre d'Italia, done until the middle of '38, uses full-page ads, often with the addition of a second color, focusing decisively on the photography, namely on the juxtaposition of images corresponding to two product states (its being mined from the cave and its use in the building industry). Compared to 1936, January '37 begins to reveal a less dynamic style, as much in the photograph choice of public building interiors as in the simplicity of the type.[214]

The advertising for the line of paints by Duco-Montecatini[215] shows greater homogeneousness and continuity, from January '37 until the end of 1939. The half-page black-and-white ads, or more rarely full-page two-color, exhibit a coherent and well-constructed range of solutions over time, ensuring a more consistent brand image. Munari favors minimalist compositions based on the photographic image combined with graphic or typographic elements (such as, screens, geometric shapes, linear marks), occasionally a technical illustration, without any suggestion of decorativeness, alternating more allusive solutions with more informative ones. This style is also found in the ads for the aeronautical sector (published in *L'Ala d'italia*), despite the slightly careless general tone, confirming a precise communications strategy. A series of ads in the same format for Montecatini plastic materials, appearing in 1938, clearly use the same formula, based on the juxtaposition between photography and the printing screen.[216]

Similar reasoning holds true for the ads created for the Società Anonima Lavorazione Leghe Leggere (Light Alloy Manufacturing Co.) (later merging with Alluminio SA) and published through the end of 1939, except for a break during '37. Generally, Munari uses the two-color two-page spread (which makes it possible to reuse the ad by changing the second color) in order to maximize the panoramic effect, while the square format of *Casabella* allows him to use a single page. On an aesthetic level, Munari opts for a clearly constructive line, with Futurist-leaning echoes in the line drawings; predominant here are photography, the presence of the product's (anticorodal, an aluminum alloy) logo and line plays to accentuate the diagonal tension, even if, compared to Veronesi who takes his place for a good portion of '37, the composition of his ads are all told less dynamic, as well as less abstract. Munari focuses on the combination of photos and pictorial elements, and less on composition; nonetheless, from the summer '38 there are plenty of more balanced examples, with more emphasis on the

214. Ads for ACNA appear in *Domus* from no.103 (July 1936) to no.132 (December 1938); for the Soc. Gen. Marmi e Pietre d'Italia in *Domus* (from no.106, October 1936) and *Casabella* (from no.107, November 1936) as well as in the book *Italiani* edited by Ponti and Sinisgalli and published by Domus in 1937.

215. Company originally created as Dinamitificio Nobel (Avigliana, 1875) taken over by Montecatini in 1925, which, in addition to explosives, develops, with the authorization of the American chemical company DuPont, the production of nitrocellulose lacquers for iron works and the building industry.

216. Ads for Duco are published in *Domus* from no.109 (January 1937), *Casabella* from no.110 (January 1937), and *L'Ala d'italia* from XVII; 1 (January 1937).

suggestiveness of the photographic image and a more energetic formula, with photomontages, screens, rules (in particular the ads in *Casabella* often combined with photos of rationalist structures or interiors). It is interesting to note the presence of a new logo, beginning in 1939, reasonably created by Munari, who after a few variations seems finally to be combined with the type Landi.[217] At the same time, Palazzo Montecatini designed by Gio Ponti is |180| completed in 1938 in Milan.[218] Aluminum, marble and glass play a primary role in the building's appearance and throughout 1939 the building is the recurrent *Leitmotif* of the promotional campaign. Perhaps the marked presence of the architectonic image persuades Munari to form a more well-constructed visual discourse where photography, typography, abstract shapes and the use of color are integrated in coherent and expressive compositions.[219]

A more playful style seems to preside |178| over the publicity for Rhodiatoce, another company in the Montecatini Group operating in the artificial yarn industry, rayon in particular. The full-page, black-and-white ads handled by Munari until early '39 show a preference for a poetic atmosphere created predominantly by the photographic image, at time with illustrations; the repertoire of graphic ideas ranges from fashion illustration to back lit photography, from photomontage to drawing, unified however by the constant presence of the original logo. Similar poetic inspiration is found |179| in some ads created in 1937 for Sniafiocco, an artificial fabric manufactured by the competitor Snia Viscosa —perhaps for this reason unsigned, even if they are very likely by Munari. The full-page compositions are laid out on the photomontage, with effects not unlike certain aeropictorial solutions from the early 1930s, and completed with a minimal, elegant typographic presence.[220]

When, instead, the product is intended for a broader public, Munari does not hesitate to use more obvious language, yet with a slight modern inflection. This is the case for several ads for Rodina, the Italian version of aspirin also manufactured by Montecatini (Farmitalia), dating back to the end of 1938.[221] This more immediate, so-called popular language becomes prevalent in the advertisements created by Munari in the early 1940s, during the period he spent as magazine editor at Mondadori. Coinciding with the beginning of his role as art director for the publishing house, dating back to the beginning of 1939, one can see a progressive decrease in his print ads; while he is replaced by one young Albe Steiner for the ads for textile products (Rhodia, Sniafiocco), the new name of Pubblimont (later Servizio Pubblicità Montecatini) appears for other companies in the Montecatini Group, indicating the creation of a dedicated office within the company (graphically characterized by a return to a monumental style in the manner of Sironi).[222] At least for a few brands, until the

217. Commercial name of *Welt* (Ludwig & Meyer, 1931) distributed in Italy by the Nebiolo foundry.

218. Palazzo Montecatini (1936–38) is recognized as the first office building with a distinctly modern style in Milan, at both a structural level and at the level of technical systems (foundations, insulation from external vibrations, air conditioning and pneumatic dispatch).

219. Ads for LLL/Alluminio SA are published in *Domus* from no.109 (January 1937) and *Casabella* from no.110 (January 1937).

220. Ads for Rhodia appear in *Domus* from no.109 (January 1937) and *Natura* xii; 6 (June 1939). Ad for Sniafiocco in *Domus* from no.109 (January 1937). Uncertain attribution for a similar ad published in the *Guida della VI Triennale* (1936).

221. Ads for Rodina appear in *L'Ala d'Italia* xvii; 4 (April 1937) and *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1939*.

222. There are Rhodia ads in *Domus* nos.135, 136 (March, April 1939) signed by Steiner; and ads for LLL/Alluminio SA in *Domus* no.147 (March 1940) or Duco in *L'Ala d'italia* (May 15, 1940), signed by Pubblimont.

end of '39 Munari seems to want to keep the commitments he made, and he continues his advertising consulting, collaborating, however, with illustrators or graphic artists (Hrast, Carboni, Dinelli).[223] While at Mondadori, although handling the artistic direction of the illustrated weekly publications *Grazia* and *Tempo*, Munari is able to create ads for editorial products
|182| from the same publishing company (*Enciclopedia dei ragazzi*, *Grazia*, *Ecco*), without however refusing the occasional outside commission for the editorial office (RIM laxative, GiViEmme toothpaste), in which he adapts, in simplified terms, proven solutions based on illustration or basic forms of collage, even if sometimes a few compositions display a more lively and original inspiration.[224]

Finally, another publication for the
|183| Società del Linoleum deserves mention. In this publication, dating to 1938–39 and printed by Vanzetti and Vanoletti, Munari may have been the illustrator. The illustrations are rather unique, featuring a distinct, descriptive style (reminding Geerd Arntz's signs for Isotype), similar to the axonometric drawings Munari uses in several ads of this period; furthermore, there are retouched photographic elements which recall his photomontages. The print displays a layout that is rigorous and essential, but with no stylistic features to be able to establish a link to Munari, apart from the illustrations. If these can be attributed to him, they would confirm a Munari-ian vein so far unknown.[225]

During the short span of a decade in which he pursues a very complex, heterogeneous artistic and professional path, within the utmost stylistic openness, one has the impression that Munari slows his pace, not simply from the point of view of his work, which as we have seen continues to be rather intense, but instead from an aesthetic aspect, from the point of view of the creative tension. His absence from Milan's first Mostra del cartellone e della grafica pubblicitaria (Exhibition of advertising posters and graphics) organized by the Fascist Interprovincial Union of Fine Arts in Milan in the spring of 1938 is significant.[226] At the end of an exceptionally stimulating decade, during which time he

223. There is, for example, the Acna ad in *Domus* no.130 (October 1938), with illustration by Svetozar Hrast; or another ad for Albene in *Natura* XII; 6 (June 1939), with illustration by Franco Grignani (or Brunetta?). An ad for Lavorazione Leghe Leggere/Allumino SA which appeared in *Domus* (1939, reproduced in Poretti 2004: 460) with the double signature 'pubblicità m' and Erberto Carboni (creator of the photomontage) confirms Munari's studio's independence from Editoriale Domus.

224. There are ads for the *Enciclopedia dei ragazzi Mondadori* in *Grazia* no.22 (October 26, 1939) and no.30 (December 21, 1939); for RIM ivi no.22 (October 26, 1939); for the weekly publication *Ecco* ivi no.7 (July 13, 1939), for the film *Piccolo mondo antico* ivi no.84 (January 2, 1941). Again by Munari, an ad for the '5000 lire per un sorriso' (5000 lire for a smile) contest tied to GiViEmme toothpaste appears in the first issue of *Grazia*. The contest, conceived by Villani in collaboration with Mondadori periodicals and launched a few months earlier in *Grazia*, in the postwar period would turn into the 'Miss Italia' phenomenon. 'A classic "pseudo-event" that had no reason to exist if not for its capacity to generate publicity for its sponsors'— namely, GiViEmme and the weekly *Tempo* (Gundle 2008: 53; cf. Arvidsson 2003: 23–5). The competition featured regularly in *Tempo*, which published the results on the back cover—in which Munari may have had a role as the masthead's art director.

225. *Il linoleum nelle costruzioni scolastiche*. Milan: Società del Linoleum, s.d. [c.1938/39]. 22x29 cm, pp.132, spiral bound. 2-color print (3-color for the cover).

226. Set up in the Palazzo della Permanente in Milan, the graphic art exhibit was combined with the 9th Art Exhibition; it also displayed advertising work selected by printers or industry clients. Munari was not the only graphic artist not present, perhaps on account of the confusion in the selection criteria by the organizers, connected to the regime's union apparatus. However, the participants do include Nizzoli, Veronesi, Dradi-Rossi, the BBPR group and Seneca. Cf. Giulia Veronesi, 'La Prima Mostra del cartellone e della grafica pubblicitaria a Milano' in *Campo grafico* VI; 3 (March 1938): 85.

dedicated himself to exploring nearly all the means of expression technically available (illustration, photography, advertisement, installations, in the broadest sense), Munari is finally about to embark on the publishing industry, no longer in the role of illustrator, nor in an advertising role, but rather as the person in charge of the overall graphic style of magazine publications, products of the new mass cultural industry. His position within the framework of Italian modernism, which by then had been partly assimilated into the mainstream graphic style, seems to stand on a personal synthesis of modernist vocabulary, tempered however by a basic poetic or anarchic attitude that tends to place it more on the figurative than the functional or purely typographic side. It is with this natural feel that he will approach the layout and artistic direction for periodicals, which in a certain sense represents the final stop in a long formative journey, a moment of summing up the various trends assimilated thus far and confirming an approach that would remain unchanged in the postwar period.

An important moment of confirmation in Munari's situation is the Mostra dell'arte grafica (Graphic Arts exhibition) set up |184| within the VII Triennale in 1940. After the 1936 edition, marked by the untimely death of Persico and the cancellation of the Italian graphic arts show, the exhibit curated by Modiano three years later, although a smaller show, in many aspects represents an important summary and confirmation of the outcome of the long debate surrounding Italian modernism—with hindsight more significant being close to the dramatic break of the war. Modiano's show, along with another curated by Pagano dedicated to mass production, 'builds a bridge towards future Italian design scenarios,' as confirmed by the presence of names that would become leading figures in the Milanese design and graphic arts phenomenon of the 1950s: Munari, Muratore, Veronesi, Carboni, Nizzoli, Sinisgalli, Pintori.[227] Returning to the criteria and objectives already expressed immediately following the 1933 show,[228] the approach established by Modiano suggests, with a clear didactic intention, a modern position for the graphic arts, in a broader sense than the traditional concept centered on the book, which makes use of the collaboration of different kinds of graphic artists. The exhibition follows a course which embraces the entire field of typography from a modern viewpoint. It is divided into seven sections, assigned to separate curators. It begins with Veronesi and Munari who deal with the subject of the relationships with the other arts: Veronesi presents a panorama of printing systems and a diachronic panel that follows the evolution of typographic styles in relation to the history of art; in the second section entitled 'Il gusto moderno nella tipografia' (Modern Taste in Typography), Munari deals with the subject of the relationship between the typography and the visual arts. While the exhibit design as a whole is entrusted to Sinisgalli and Pintori, Munari and Veronesi personally curate their respective installations. Munari resolves his subject-matter in the way that best suits him, that

227. Vinti 2005: 50; cf. Vinti 2002.

228. In a letter signed by important representatives of the largest sector of graphic artists (Zveteremich, Rossi, Persico, Boggeri, Da Milano) and published in *Campo grafico* ('Tipografia e Triennale 1936' ivi III; 6: 126-127). See Vinti 2005: 51–2.

is metaphorically translating it into the shape of a tree, physically installed in the room (evidently inspired by similar solutions by Pagano for the Leonardo da Vinci Exhibit at the Palazzo dell'Arte the previous year). The tree trunk is surrounded by four frames with transparent screens on which are mounted modern-style illustrations and printed matter that express the close tie to contemporary plastic trends (Futurism, Surrealism, Abstractism), architecture, photography—in other words, that concept of 'graphism' at the foundation of elemental typography in Italy.[229] Modiano sets up the third and fourth sections dedicated, respectively, to an overview of the best graphic production and to outdoor advertising (posters, signs, press ads, installations). In the sixth section, D'Errico presents the situation of magazine printing, while the last section dedicated to art volumes and limited edition publications is left to Bertieri.[230]

The central space in the fifth section presents a series of monographic display cases that document the contribution of printers and graphic artists, in a climate of reconciliation between the two classicist and rationalist fronts: Bertieri, Bianchi, Buffoni, Carboni, Dradi, Rossi, Modiano, Munari, Muratore, Nizzoli, Ricas, as well as a homage to Persico. While the works
|184| chosen by Munari for the second section include a few creations that are more directly influenced by expressions of the avant-garde,[231] the few works exhibited in his display case give the impression of a less radical direction, with an albeit minimal figurative recovery. This confirms that tendency towards a certain withdrawal which can be seen in the advertisement production of the last two years. An example of this is the poster for the national coal campaign, set on a drawing of a simple outline of an open hand, against a blue background, with the collage of a cut-out enlargement of a piece of coal, with the autarchic slogan overprinted on it in a red rectangle.[232] However, in looking through several issues dedicated to Italy by foreign technical magazines, Munari's name cannot be found. In *Deutscher Drucker* (July 1941) Zveteremich maps out an account of the Italian situation (going back to the graphic exhibition at the previous year's Triennale), pointing out new names on the scene like Steiner and Muratore. An article in *Druck und Werbekunst* (January 1942) mentions Dradi and Carboni,[233] and the Swiss monthly magazine *Typographische Monatsblätter* (August–September 1942) presents (in addition to one about the young Huber) profiles on Dinelli, Steiner and Ricas.[234] It is as if Munari has vanished from the Milanese scene or, at least, he seems to have withdrawn into Mondadori, a convenient refuge on the eve of the impending war.

229. This is the definition provided by Modiano in the introductory text of the Triennial catalogue: 'that aesthetic atmosphere that living typography shares with the most up-to-date techniques in the exhibits (displays, shoe windows and the like),' which expresses the common recourse to modular schemas that recall the abstraction implicit in typography (*VII Triennale di Milano. Guida*. [S.l.: s.n.], 1940: 149–56; cf. Modiano, 'L'arte grafica alla VII Triennale' in *L'Industria della stampa*, July–August 1940).

230. Vinti 2005; *VII Triennale di Milano. Guida*. [S.l.: s.n.], 1940: 149–156. Cf. Pigozzi 1982: 473; Pansera 1978: 49–53.

231. Found in the archival photos are the letter paper of Studio Boggeri and one of the illustrated plates published in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* in November 1935, and probably also a typographic ad for *Grazia*.

232. The poster is reproduced (in color) in *Grazia* no.12 (July 17, 1939) accompanying the article by Arturo Tofanelli, 'La pubblicità è arte?' (ibid: 12–16). The size is not given.

233. Cit. in Vinti 2005: 59–61, 63n.

234. *Deutscher Drucker Deutschland–Italien Heft*, July 1941 (Berlin: Ernst Boehme); *Druck und Werbekunst* no.1, January 1942 (Leipzig: Karl Garte)—both cit. in Vinti 2005: 60–1. *Typographische Monatsblätter*, x; 8–9 (August–September 1942): 202.

Munari's transition from advertising graphic design to the world of art direction for publishing took place in a rather particular context within the broader Italian publishing industry. On the one hand, the technological novelty of the illustrated magazine printed by the rotogravure process—which allowed an integrated printing of both texts and photographs, and was both faster and cheaper for large print-runs—had first been tried out in Italy during the early 1930s, under the auspices of Milan's two main publishers, Angelo Rizzoli and Arnoldo Mondadori, in the women's magazine and comic magazine sectors in particular.[1] On the other hand, the mass distribution of print periodicals also corresponded with 'the increasingly intimate relationship of convenience between the cultural politics of the regime and the major national publishing conglomerates'.[2] With few exceptions, such as Einaudi and Laterza, the principal Italian publishing houses all had a good rapport with the regime, in the form of stable orders, general facilitation and financing—not so much for their ideological adherence to fascism, rather more from a commercial standpoint.[3]

1. See Murialdi 1986: 102–4; Ajello 1976: 184–90, in particular 186n; Carpi 2002: 123.

2. Lascialfari 2002: 440. The Mondadori publishing house benefited by receiving commissions from the National Fascist Party and Fascist youth organisations; these included production of the weekly *Il Balilla* and the biweeklies *Passo Romano* and *Donna fascista*, which altogether had annual print runs of 14 million copies. From 1940 onward, Mondadori also published Giuseppe Bottai's biweekly *Primato* (Decleva 1993: 244, 246).

3. Cf. the interview with historian Gian Carlo Ferretti in the Rai Educational documentary *Il Commenda e l'Incantabiss* available at url: www.lastoriasiamonoi.rai.it/puntata.aspx?id=478 (last accessed 30 January 2009).

Women's magazines were a particularly dynamic sector. They started from Milan and 'expanded in quantity and type reaching readers of every status, class and education level.'[4] Starting in the early 1930s this category included, along with magazines intended for the middle class (such as *Lidel*, *La Donna* or *Sovrana*), the new 'maid's magazines written for the servants but read by the ladies of the house,'[5] as Zavattini keenly observed—*Novella* (Rizzoli, 1930), *Rakam* (Rusconi, 1930), *Lei* (Rizzoli, 1933) and *Gioia!* (Rusconi, 1937), which could barely be told apart except for the printing color.[6] As for the content, apart from political propaganda, the illustrated magazines were based essentially on romantic stories, society news, advice (love, family relationships, cuisine, fashion, household handicrafts). Rizzoli held a prominent position due to a 'very shrewd editorial strategy that, while favoring a common public, aimed at product diversification' and offered, along with women's magazines and movie magazines, news periodicals like *Omnibus* and *Oggi*.[7]

Mondadori's commercial strategy targeted the same demographic of 'readers who were just beginning to grow accustomed to that sort of publication, which had virtually no established tradition in Italy.'[8] As compared to Rizzoli, the publishing house's earnings came primarily from the literary sector—which was tied to a fairly modest, bookshop-based market—and in part from the scholastic textbook market, determined chiefly by the government. Mondadori's periodicals division functioned quite well, especially after their purchase of new machinery for the plants in Verona, but their cover prices did not allow for high margins.[9] In addition to the important children's magazine division—which, from the debut of *Topolino* (Micky Mouse) in 1935, had an exclusive deal with Disney[10]—in the latter half of the decade Mondadori's strategy in the periodicals sector focussed on ensuring they had a magazine to counter each and every type of magazine released by its competitor Rizzoli, thereby guaranteeing a solid readership.

With the key collaboration of Cesare Zavattini—an essential figure in Mondadori's journalistic initiatives, who was brought aboard as publishing director after being fired from Rizzoli—the Anonima Periodici Italiani (a company founded in 1937 with the aim of merging all of Mondadori's periodicals) acquired the biweekly *Le Grandi firme*, which was then transformed into a large-format weekly centred on 'short stories by top authors,' to counter Rizzoli's homologous *Novella*. As we have seen, Zavattini was also responsible, alongside Achille Campanile, for the satirical weekly *Il Settebello*, competitor of Rizzoli's *Il Bertoldo*. Finally, in November 1938, as a response to the success of Rizzoli's *Lei*, Mondadori launched a new women's weekly, *Grazia*, whose fairly conservative formula (albeit with a slightly modern approach) paved the way to its commercial success with a middle-class readership.[11] And in the summer of 1939, Angelo Rizzoli and Arnoldo Mondadori reached an accord to help regulate their respective periodical regimes.[12]

4. De Berti, Mosconi 1998: 145.
5. Cesare Zavattini, cit. in Chiavarini in Colombo 1998: 139.
6. Carlo Manzoni: 'It is the time of the illustrated magazine with the love stories (…) The weeklies can be told apart more by the color of the print than by their content. *Novella* is printed in purple ink. *Cine Illustrato* in blue ink. *Lei* in sepia. *Il Secolo Illustrato* in brown' (1964: 20).
7. De Berti 2000: 7; cf. Lilli 1976: 276–7.
8. Lascialfari 2002: 442. Cf. Decleva 1993: 237–40.
9. Decleva 1993: 200.
10. Ibid.: 234–8.
11. Ibid.: 238–9.
12. 'The undersigned companies agree that (…), for a period of three years, they will not create uncomfortable situations

Grazia (1938–43)

Compared to the popular illustrated magazines published by Rizzoli and Rusconi, the new title launched by Mondadori aimed to stand apart from the competition by offering something different in the way of content. Mondadori had already previously published magazines intended for a female audience, later getting rid of them—for example, *Novella*, a weekly with love stories, transferred to Rizzoli in '27—to devote itself instead to the entertainment market, for which it launched successful series of romantic literature (Romanzi della Palma, 1932) and crime thrillers (Gialli, 1929) distributed periodically at newsstands, as well as a foreign stories series (Medusa, 1933). When the publishing company developed its intention to combat Rizzoli's hegemony in the market of illustrated weeklies, Mondadori's intuition was to invent—or rather, to bring to Italy based on foreign models, like later with *Tempo*—a different type of magazine intended for the emerging middle class. *Grazia* not only broadened its content offering, which encompassed fashion, beauty, current events, handicrafts, but above all—as suggested by the subtitle 'Un'amica al vostro fianco' (A friend on your side)—it changed the relationship with the public in the sense that, through advice and suggestions, the magazine offered a model woman who was more informed (yet aware of the inferior and essentially domestic social role assigned to them by Fascism). This publication's quick success confirmed that the formula responded to a real demand in the female public—causing an immediate reaction by Rizzoli who relaunched *Lei/Annabella* according to a similar formula.[13]

The weekly had a complicated beginning, with a journey that is not only interesting for understanding the publishing dynamic of the period, but also for reconstructing how Munari came into contact with Mondadori, ending up, within a few short months, assuming the role of art director for the API titles.[14] By the mid-thirties, Valentino Bompiani, in contact with Zavattini who at the time worked for Rizzoli, entertained the idea of entering the periodical magazine sector, without however managing to make the initial projects a reality. In the summer of '37, it seemed that Bompiani thought of launching a women's weekly at the same time that a similar project was being prepared at Mondadori. Through Zavattini, the two publishers decided to merge their initiatives: the detailed proposal (plan, format, frequency, price, type of layout, content and columns) was drawn out by Bompiani, who thought of a weekly aimed at Italian women of average circumstances, entitled *Essere bella*. The negotiations proceeded, but Mondadori went back to the original idea of adopting the formula of existing periodicals, like the French magazines *Marie Claire* and *Votre Beauté*; in the end, Bompiani accepted the compromise and became its

for any of their contributors; furthermore, they will reach an accord in complete good faith regarding all acts that serve to discipline the publications they produce'. Quoted in Albonetti 1991: 393, 408n; see also Decleva 1993: 243.

13. Decleva 1993: 239; Cantani 1983: 104–6. Published from 1933, in '38 *Lei* was officially forced to change its title to *Annabella* (to avoid the use of 'Lei', formal form for 'you', also meaning 'she') abolished by the zealous secretary of the PNF Achille Starace in favor of the more masculine 'Tu'). On this occasion, the magazine adopted a formula similar to that of *Grazia* with a female representation countering the regime's accepted view. (Chiavarini 1998: 139).

14. His name does not appear in the credits of *Grazia* (this use would not be introduced until after the war), while he is listed as the director of the artistic office in *Tempo*'s title page. However, in an announcement for an advertising competition which appeared in the news weekly at the end of 1939 (*Tempo* no.29, December 14, 1939) Munari is listed as 'director of the artistic office of API,' the company that controlled all the publishing house's periodical publications, including *Grazia*.

editorial director. Nonetheless, reorganizing the API structure with the inclusion of Alberto Mondadori created increasingly difficult personal relationship, which led to Bompiani's exclusion shortly after the launch in November of 1938. Even without discussing the merits of either side's reasons, it is clear that the event would, for a long time, mark the relationship between Bompiani and Zavattini, in the meantime firmly at the helm of API.[15] Once he was out of the picture, *Grazia* was initially assigned to Raul Radice (already at the editorial office of *Il Milione*, later for *Tempo*), later to be run by Mila Contini Caradonna.

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From the archive documents and evidence, it does not seem that Munari was involved in this initial stage of the magazine launch.[16] Nevertheless, from the magazine's appearance, his presence was already apparent beginning with the issues of January 1939, when the editorial office was reorganized with specialized contributors for the different sections.[17] The cover was illustrated with fashion designs, at first in two colors on a light background, like the masthead, positioned in the upper left and based, with some liberties taken, on the *Bayer Type*.[18] Only after July 1939 did the magazine begin to use color photography on the cover, with a close-up of a model. In '43, this look was modified with the redesign of the masthead and the use (like for *Tempo*) of a coloured band at the bottom, with different kinds of information on it. The inside (initially planned in black and white) was brightened with a second color, at times with four-color inserts, even if the choice seemed influenced more by the need to 'give the reader the impression of getting more for their money' than by an actual need of expression or function.[19] Munari's art direction was rather well-constructed, which can be seen, in addition to the graphic style of the table of contents (which went through several versions) and the story titles (often sketched by hand), in the overall layout of the articles, especially the ones—more often than not—which were based on the photographic image accompanied by a short text or anecdotes. The headings, in the usual informal writing, confirm Munari's overseeing *Grazia*'s graphic layout. He worked predominantly on the two-page spread, following an intuitive layout, without preset typographic outlines, giving himself a great deal of freedom in the combination of backgrounds and borders (where he alternated pictorial marks, screens, texturing, geometric patterns), the crop of the photographs, often going back to plain illustrations, similar to the style used in several covers of other periodical magazines of the day (and shortly thereafter in his own children's books). Taking advantage of the photographic montage of the elements on the

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15. Piazzoni 2007: 122–4.

16. In particular, I looked at the archives of the Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milan, and the Valentino Bompiani private archives, in Apice Library, University of Milan. Munari's absence would indicate that his participation was decided following the start of the editorial project. Particularly interesting is the analysis, following the premier issue of *Grazia*, written by Bompiani in a letter to Mondadori on 11/9/1938, which provides useful information on the editorial office and the initial project (Biblioteca Apice, Valentino Bompiani Archives, Personal papers of the publishing company/ series: Administrative papers/ UA 14 Contract [Maria?] Grazia/ envelope 2).

17. Due to the difficulty in finding the first years, it has only been possible to examine 1939, 1941 and 1943 at Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, and Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milan.

18. *Bayer Type*, designed by Herbert Bayer and sold by the Berthold foundry, 1933. The lettering of the masthead also used to a certain extent *Normande*, another Berthold product sold in Italy under the name *Normandia* (1931). Munari's typographic palette was limited to a handful of types, almost all included in the well-known *Tavolozza* (1935): *Semplicità* (sanserif), *Landi* and *Luxor* [Memphis] (Egyptian/slab serif), *Veltro* [Welt] (script), *Normandia* (fat face/neoclassical).

19. Bompiani letter to Mondadori, 11/9/1938 (cit): 1–2. From January '39, written on the cover it says, '80 cents. 32 color pages.'

page, Munari demonstrated an unusual ability and confidence in manipulating the rich repertoire of graphic solutions which he displayed through a continuous variation of ideas. It is also possible that Munari found inspiration for his work in *Grazia* in the pages of *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* or *die neue linie*—which could be the connecting link between his adopting a constructivist aesthetic and falling back on a formula that was less structured, more flexible, mannered, intuitive (in short, more in keeping with his temperament).[20] After the middle of '39, reports also appeared in *Grazia* that were clearly influenced by the work in the editorial office of *Tempo*: these were limited to photographic sequences similar to the journalistic 'phototext,' but with lighter subject-matters. This convergence with the news weekly is also apparent in the progressive graphic evolution of the table of contents that, beginning in '41, adopted a nearly identical typographic style.

Tempo (1939–43)

The illustrated weekly founded and directed by Alberto Mondadori, debuted on Italian newsstands on 1 June 1939 with a relatively cheap cover price. It was Italy's first full-colour illustrated magazine: large format, full-bleed photographic cover, sixty-odd pages divided into several different columns on politics, news, literature and art. In addition to photography, which was an essential part of its editorial formula, one innovative aspect of Mondadori's weekly was its graphic layout, which was designed and overseen by Munari.[21] The publication was an immediate success with readers not only in Italy, but also (beginning in 1940) abroad, with its several foreign editions; at its height, it sold over one million copies a week, and only closed its doors in September 1943, upon the German occupation of Northern Italy and the publisher's exile in Switzerland.

The structuring and direction of this new weekly lay squarely in the hands of young Alberto Mondadori,[22] and it is no accident that he also happened to be at the head of a group of young intellectuals, 'a generation of thirty-somethings who had not yet launched their careers,'[23] who paid attention to what was going on in photojournalism on a European level. It would be the political and cultural climate of the war that would ultimately attract a broad readership, as the public at large was still tied to the conservative and conformist models set by periodicals like L'Illustrazione italiana and *La Domenica del Corriere*.[24] Without his father's substantial financial backing, however, an industrial project like *Tempo* would never have been able to become a reality; for this reason, it seems clear that the new weekly was part of

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20. Retrospectively, Bayer and Moholy-Nagy were the figures who most greatly affected Munari's artistic path (in the broadest sense of the term, not limited to the field of graphic arts), as can be clearly noted by comparing their relative artistic paths. These show recurring points of contact, almost like a parallel evolution (even if at different times) of aesthetic and social interests; just think of the studies on light as a means of expression or thoughts on the role of the designer in society in Moholy-Nagy and in Munari.

21. See Lascialfari 2002: 443–4.

22. Arnoldo's first-born son already had experience working at the cultural youth-oriented biweekly *Camminare*, where, between 1932 and 1935, he became part of the debate regarding so-called leftist Fascism. Growing pressure from his family led him to leave a position as cinematic director's assistant in Rome (held between 1936 and 1937) to assume an active role in the family publishing business. Ultimately, he returned to Milan in 1938 upon being nominated CEO of the Anonima Periodici Italiani. Cf. Ferretti 1996: xiii–xxix; Decleva 1993: 240.

23. Albonetti 1991: 394–5. A year later, faced by the foreign competition of *Signal*, 'The enterprise fell back into Arnoldo's hands, and was strengthened in order to conquer the European market' (ibid.: 399).

24. Cf. Albonetti 1991: 389–90, 395.

the large commercial strategy of the Mondadori publishing house.

Italy's very first illustrated magazine, *Omnibus* (1937–39) was published by Rizzoli, jointly run for the first six months by Rizzoli and Mondadori on Mussolini's wishes. Sixteen large-format pages, it was a weekly focussed on current political events and literature, directed by Leo Longanesi.[25] 'This is the time for news, for images, for photographs of movie stars. Our new Plutarch is the Kodak lens (...) People and things, outside time and space and the laws of chance, become a vision; this is film. People go to the movies: so let's give them actresses' legs and lots of images alongside well-written text; this is a new kind of newspaper.'[26] According to Lamberti Sorrentino, a pioneer of Italian photojournalism and special envoy for *Tempo*, the originality of Longanesi's formula lay in his 'informative and controversial use of photography that had hitherto been neglected, relegated to a merely illustrative role, with the predictable cliché archive images (...),' photographs 'Longanesi cropped to fit his own, highly personal tastes' and that occupied roughly a third of the entire magazine.[27] The magazine reached a sales quota of 70,000 copies weekly, but was shut down by order of the Minculpop (Ministry of Popular Culture).[28] And both its successor *Oggi* and Mondador's *Tempo* would follow in its footsteps.[29] Nevertheless, with respect to the élitist tone of the 'more literary' journalism found in *Omnibus*, Mondadori aimed instead to reach a mass audience, taking full advantage of its industrial group organisation, empowered by conspicuous technological and financial resources.[30] Indeed, *Tempo* marked 'a more visible turning point in the general structure of magazine publishing'[31] by distinguishing itself equally in both its content and its graphic look, which gave it a decidedly popular American bent—to such a degree that a very similar editorial approach and graphic formula would be adopted again in the 1950s in the new *Epoca*.[32]

Despite the graphic design and technologically innovative rotogravure printing, *Tempo* (like Mondadori's other periodicals at the time) was 'a product of markedly artisanal roots, with a minimal editorial team.'[33] The first editor-in-chief was Indro Montanelli, who after a few weeks was succeeded by Carlo Bernard; the editors were Ettore Della Giovanna, Alberto Lattuada, Raul Radice and Federigo Valli; the sole special envoy, and later head of the editorial office in Rome, was Lamberti Sorrentino; there were just a few correspondents, and a rather limited number of columnists. Later on this staff gained reinforcement from various contributors, including poet Salvatore Quasimodo, Raffaele Carrieri and Arturo Tofanelli.[34]

25. From April 1937 up until the suppression enacted in January 1939, 40,000 copies were sold each week (cf. Murialdi 1986: 181). In June 1939 (a few days earlier than *Tempo*'s launch) Rizzoli replaced Longanesi's weekly with *Oggi*, which was directed by two young editors who had worked with Longanesi, Arrigo Benedetti and Mario Panunzio. Despite rampant conformism and a 'fair dose of imperial incence', in 1942 *Oggi*, too, was suppressed (Ajello 1976: 188).

26. Leo Longanesi, cit. in Mazzuca 1991: 79.

27. Sorrentino 1984: 63.

28. Cf. Cristiani, Venditti 2010, at http://www.mediazionionline.it/articoli/cristiani_venditti.html, last accessed January 2011).

29. *Oggi* (1939–42) would not fare any better than *Omnibus*: it was closed in 1942 for its non-conformist positions, especially on the subject of war (De Berti, Mosconi 1998: 151).

30. See also Carpi 2002: 123.

31. Ajello 1976: 190.

32. Ajello underlines this 'duality between the more literary tradition in journalism —such as Longanesi's—and the more straightforwardly industrial lineage, like the one *Tempo* was a part of (...)' and then in the post-war period by *Epoca*, characterised by an ever greater use of photography and colour, cultural and life-style articles as well as popular science articles, and above all the mosaic-like spread of contributions in each issue (Ajello 1976: 190, 203).

33. Decleva 1993: 241.

34. *Tempo*. Roma: Azienda Periodici Italiani, 1939–1943. 26×36 cm, pp. between 60 and 80. Printing: Rotocalco Vitagliano, Milan. Director: Alberto

Initially, *Tempo*'s editorial offices occupied the first storey of a palazzo in piazza San Babila, and were later moved to a building in corso di Porta Vittoria. Staff accounts describe a rather unusual working environment for late-thirties Italy, clearly inspired and modelled upon the American papers of the day: there was a large, open office all the editors shared, and a couple of side offices for the director and art department.[35] It seems the informal climate and friendly rapport between co-workers were especially unique aspects: 'people always worked together, went to lunch together, went to football matches together (...) We weren't mere employees, rather we were real collaborators, in the full sense of the term: from the editor-in-chief to the proofreaders, we were all on the same level' (Paolo Lecaldano);[36] 'Everybody was a family, bound by friendship, even with the bosses (...) [who] often invited five or six of us at a time to spend the week-end at their villa in Meina' (Lamberti Sorrentino).[37] It is hard to tell whether all this can be traced back to a precise decision on the part of management, or was simply a result of Alberto Mondadori's personality; regardless, a similar atmosphere would prevail again a decade or so later at the editorial office of *Epoca*.[38]

Alberto Mondadori and Bruno Munari likely came into contact for the first time through Zavattini, who had been the main editor of Bompiani's *Almanacco Letterario* since 1932. During his stay in Rome, in 1936–37, Mondadori had several more occasions to frequent Zavattini at the editorial offices of *Il Settebello* (before the magazine was acquired by Mondadori and its offices were moved to Milan), while in Milan Munari not only continued working with Bompiani on the graphic design of the *Almanacco*, but by 1934 was also one of the anthology's co-editors. In 1938 Zavattini and Alberto Mondadori found themselves heading the API, as editorial director and CEO, respectively: the decision to hire Munari as art director at the new weekly must have happened at some point towards the close of 1938,[39] while he was already the artistic consultant for *Grazia*—perhaps on the suggestion of Zavattini or Bompiani. By then Munari was also responsible of the graphic layout of the literary anthology *Il Tesoretto*, published from 1939 by Tofanelli's Primi Piani imprint, who was participated by Mondadori. When he received the invitation from Alberto Mondadori to join the weekly's staff, his commercial association with Riccardo Ricas had already come to an end and he was working mainly as an advertising designer. One plausible

Mondadori. Editor-in-Chief: Indro Montanelli (up until no. 4, 22/6/1939), then Carlo Bernard [Bernari]. Editors: Ettore Della Giovanna, Alberto Lattuada, Raul Radice, Federigo Valli. Managing editor (from 1940): Arturo Tofanelli. Correspondent: Lamberti Sorrentino, who acted as editor-in-chief of the Rome bureau. Art Direction: Bruno Munari. Between 1939 and 1940 Salvatore Quasimodo, Raffaele Carrieri, Fabrizio Clerici, Gino Visentini, Domenico Meccoli, Giuseppe Lanza, and Giacomo Mangeri joined the editorial team. From November 1940, section directors are listed: architecture, P.M. Bardi; art, Raffaele Carrieri; cinema, Domenico Meccoli and Luigi Comencini; literature, Arturo Tofanelli; politics and naval history, Giuseppe C. Speziale; politics and military history, Emilio Canevari; science, Gaetano Baldacci; sports, Vincenzo Baggioli. From 1942 onward, the editors and section directors are no longer listed. Photographic correspondents: Stefano Bricarelli, Giuseppe Pagano, Eugenio Haas, Pat Monterosso, Ilse Steinhoff. Photographic services: Istituto Nazionale LUCE, Foto API, Presse Hoffman–Foto, Schoepke, Associated Press, Black Star, International News Photo, Keystone Press, Opera Mundi, Foto Vedo (Source: Adriano Aprà, ed., *Luigi Comencini: il cinema e i film*. Venice: Marsilio, 2007; retrieved 19 February 2009 at http://www.pesarofilmfest.it/IMG/pdf/Bibliografia_di_Luigi_Comencini_Critico.pdf).

35. Arturo Tofanelli, quoted in Ferretti 1996: xxx.

36. Quoted in Schwarz 1977.

37. Sorrentino 1984: 65.

38. Alberto Cavallari: 'Overall, on a human level, Alberto made *Epoca* an enchanting world (...)' (quoted in Ferretti 1996: cxxxiii–iv).

39. Date surmised from Sorrentino's statements, wherein he speaks of 'excitement-filled six months spent preparing the weekly' (Sorrentino 1984: 65).

hypothesis is that his family life and home situation—married in 1934, by '39 he and his wife were planning, if not expecting, a child—as well as the impending conflict also pressed him into taking on the only stable, salaried job of his entire life.[40]

An Italian *Life* of sorts

Tempo was Italy's first weekly set up around the collaborative duo of correspondent and photojournalist. 'Dear Reader,' wrote Alberto Mondadori toward the end of 1942, '*Tempo* was created with an original look, which has been the secret of its success and wide distribution throughout Italy and Europe (...) our magazine's reportage is also told through photographs; the photographs are no longer strictly illustrative, showing episodes recounted in the articles, but rather are a form of reporting in and of themselves (...).'[41] While Alberto Mondadori's interest in cinema may also have played a role, the example set by the American weekly *Life* appears to have been an even stronger influence; its extraordinary success was based on the use of photography as a principal means of informative communication, rather than a mere accompaniment of the written texts. As shown by the controversy it met with from the very start,[42] among other evidence, *Tempo* certainly adopted *Life*'s formula, albeit without slavishly copying it. In Munari's words, the idea behind *Tempo*'s original graphic design was the 'parallel relationship between "audio" and "video", that is, what is told through the photographs isn't the same as what is told through the text.'[43] Indeed, that close relationship between writing and photography seems to be what distinguished *Tempo* from *Life*, in which the unsigned articles seemed more like sideline editorials.[44]

Regarding this adaptation of the American model within the Italian context, many of the leading journalists of the time seem to agree, while nevertheless emphasising its different tone in terms of content: according to Lamberti Sorrentino, Alberto Mondadori 'wanted to Italianise the model established by *Life* in both formatting and the distribution of the material covered, yet also leave room, in the written portions, for literary and more cultural currents in general; [he did this] by entrusting columns that elsewhere might have been viewed as secondary to major writers, for instance, having Massimo Bontempelli answer readers' letters in his Colloqui column.'[45] Arturo Tofanelli, who was deputy editor at the time, agrees that '*Tempo*'s innovation lay in its being an Italian *Life* of sorts, with a greater commitment to content. (...) *Tempo* also was a platform for the political views of major figures, from

40. Bruno Munari, quoted in Catalano 1994: 153.

41. Quoted in Lascialfari 2002: 456.

42. In particular, it is worth recalling the commotion caused (in reality as near blackmail, and soon quelled) by *Il Tevere*, the Fascist daily run by Telesio Interlandi. The 6 June 1939 issue featured a front-page photograph showing two people, each holding a magazine—*Life* and the newly created *Tempo*—to suggest that the latter was plagiarising the former. In the following issue, it was asserted in no uncertain terms that 'not only does it crib the cover, but the plagiarism is, one might say, total and totalitarian, from the columns' headlines to the list of contributors. More than just another case of "esterophily", this is a matter of downright shocking "esterophagy"' (Andrea Palinuro, 'Cose lette: esterofagia' in *Il Tevere*, Rome, 7–8 June 1939). See Decleva 1993: 242.

43. Bruno Munari, interviewed in Schwarz 1977. Large portions of this interview, as well as interviews with Arturo Tofanelli and Paolo Lecaldano, are also included in Del Buono 1995a. This nod to cinema is even more explicit in Alberto Lattuada's definition: 'It's like in the movies, the photos are like the image, the captions are like the narration, the articles are like the soundtrack' (quoted in Sorrentino 1984: 65).

44. Up until at least 1939, when—simultaneously with the outbreak of war in Europe—not only the graphic design was restyled, but also the editorial formula was modified to include signed articles alongside the photographic reportages.

45. Sorrentino 1984: 64.

Bontempelli to [Curzio] Malaparte.'[46] With respect to its American counterpart, *Tempo* distinguished itself by its elevated cultural content—understandably, since it was conceived in a country 'plagued by an excess of rhetorical classicism, academia and literature'[47]—and dedicated a lot of space to short stories, cinema, art, and scientific breakthroughs. It is no coincidence that many of *Tempo*'s contributors also appeared in the pages of Mondadori's *Tesoretto* and the series *Lo specchio*,[48] as well as in Giuseppe Bottai's review *Primato* (also published by Mondadori), which according to Alberto Cavallari attracted a good portion of 'the new literature, basically, in stark opposition to all the old blowhard Fascists and academics.'[49]

Significant differences can also be found in the major space *Tempo* granted political issues, and especially foreign politics, which were conspicuously absent (until the outbreak of war) in the pages of *Life*.[50] The main columns, like Affari Esteri (Foreign Affairs), dealt with political issues and current events, while Tempo perduto (Lost Time) focussed on a reading of history for controversial or propagandistic ends.[51] There were also sections dedicated to theatre, cinema and art—*Tempo* was also Italy's first weekly to include full-colour reproductions of artworks. The list of writers and intellectuals who appeared in *Tempo*'s columns between 1939 and 1943 is truly impressive. If, on the one hand, the literature columns—Narrativa (Short Stories) and Letteratura (Literature)—and book reviews—Fronte italiano (Italian Front) and Carta stampata (Printed Papers)—exhibit a decidedly European air, they also, on the other, gave Mondadori another way to promote authors from their own stable, and spread word of new inclusions in their own series, such as La Medusa[52]—much as the flap adverts were almost exclusively for the publishing house and its titles. Other noteworthy columns like Scienza (Science) and Dialoghi delle cose possibili (Dialogues on Possible Things) were somewhat characteristic of the magazine's commitment to popularising new discoveries.[53] Massimo Bontempelli's column Colloqui con i lettori (Dialogue with Readers) focussed on readers' letters, suggested

46. Quoted in Ferretti 1996: xxx.
47. Schwarz 1977.
48. Before working with Mondadori, Arturo Tofanelli had founded and directed the Primi Piani publishing house, which was specialised in the new literary movement known as Ermetismo (hermeticism), and produced the *Il Tesoretto* literary anthology, 'A highly prestigious publication that sold fairly well. I was also on press with several new poets, from Quasimodo to Cardarelli, Ungaretti, Montale, Saba and the rather young Sinisgalli, Gatto and De Libero. It was a non-commercial lineup, with great content.' In order to help bring Tofanelli into *Tempo*'s editorial team, as well as increase the visibility of the new series, Arnoldo Mondadori took over both the publishing house and the magazine: 'That's how I joined the editorial staff at *Tempo* and, alongside Alberto Mondadori, ran the Specchio collection, in which we published both new and old works by Italian poets (...)' (Tofanelli 1986: 81–2). See also Ferretti 1996: xxx–xxxi. Despite the absence of a signature or other printed indications, various clues in graphic style, as well as coinciding dates and places, suggest the graphic design of these anthologies was done by Munari: if not exactly in the whole layout, his style can be seen in the covers as early as the second volume of *Il Tesoretto*, published at the end of 1939, as well as in publications under the Primi Piani imprint (whose editorial staff already included Alberto Mondadori). Munari signed two unique contributions to the following two editions as well: an article titled 'Tutti felici' (Everyone's Happy), a short song-like text about Christmas (whose tone hints at his interest in children's books), and 'L'amore è un lepidottero' (Love is a Lepidopteran), a story-board of sorts for a short film, quite similar to the photographic sequences he experimented with in *L'Ala d'italia* and *Tempo*.
49. Alberto Cavallari, quoted in Ferretti 1996: xxx.
50. *Life*'s first issue, for example (published in November 1936), ignored main events on the international level: it made no mention of the Depression hampering the American economy, Nazi Germany's rearmament, the Spanish Civil War or Italy's annexation of Ethiopia.
51. See Lascialfari 2002: 445. Cf. ibid.: 453: 'Among the most common themes was anti-English propaganda, which—with thinly veiled mocking, critical tones—glossed over tidbits of the British press.'
52. See Lascialfari 2002: 445, 447, 449. Cf. Alberto Mondadori in *Tempo* no.55 (13 June 1940) quoted in Carpi 2002: 124.
53. Lascialfari 2002: 445.

readings and anecdotal news and played an important role in the magazine's growing popularity.[54]

Photography

As Tofanelli later surmised, 'Reportage in both black-and-white as well as colour photographs, accompanied by three or four highly researched, news-rich, well-documented and well-edited pages of text was one of *Tempo*'s key characteristics'.[55] For its launch issue, *Tempo* featured a reportage on the miners of Carbonia (Sardinia), and its cover depicted a black-and-white photograph of a miner taken at a sharp angle from below; the accompanying article was seven pages long, but the text ran to only two columns; the remaining space was filled by the photos.[56] As Sorrentino recalls, 'in the excitement-filled six months spent preparing the weekly, one of the many new things we came up with was the compositional approach we termed *fototesto* (phototext), a neologism we coined (...)
| 213 | My phototexts were received well from the very first issue (...) For each photo I wrote a really long caption, such that the editors could then cut it to fit the layout. And then I gladly sat down to write the article that tied it all together'.[57]

Although it did meet with some initial criticism,[58] the substantial originality of Mondadori's new weekly won it an immediate readership, with print runs oscillating between 100,000 copies the first week and 700,000 by the summer of 1943.[59] A keen awareness of their new photographic formula directed editorial decisions from the very start: 'Because the Italian photography market was fairly slim, Alberto Mondadori began with an absolute masterstroke; he snatched *Life*'s best photographer, John Phillips, and hired him for his weight in gold. The slightly less expensive but equally good Federico Patellani—Italy's sole great photographer—was also brought aboard with an exclusive agreement (...)'.[60] The photographic editorial staff, led by Patellani,[61] included first-rate photographers like Eugenio Haas, Francesco Pasinetti, Alberto Lattuada, Giuseppe Pagano (as well as rationalist architects Enrico Peressutti and Leonardo Belgioioso).[62] Among the editors' official objectives was the intent of creating an Italian photo agency (API Foto),

54. See Lascialfari 2002: 451.
55. Arturo Tofanelli, quoted in Schwarz 1977: 7.
56. Lascialfari 2002: 444.
57. Sorrentino 1984: 65–6. Following his debut article in the first issue, the first reportage to be officially termed 'phototext' appeared in no. 8 (20 July 1939), and was credited to Domenico Meccoli. Cf. Schwarz 1977.
58. A note by Ezio Maria Gray (publicist and director at Mondadori, as well as a prominent figure in the regime) to Alberto Mondadori is quite symptomatic of the cultural climate and reading habits at that time: Gray complained there was 'too little text compared to the excess of photographic material (...) one can easily read *Tempo* and its 56 pages, cover to cover, in a quarter hour or so. A cover-to-cover read of *Oggi*, at only 32 pages, takes at least an hour. You need some text, too' (quoted in Lascialfari 2002: 444–5).
59. Print-runs calculated from those indicated by Arturo Tofanelli (cited in Murialdi 1986: 183n) and Decleva (1993: 258–9)—whose numbers for 1943 are rather doubtful, i.e. far too small as compared to the official overall print-runs—and corrected based on research by Pasqualino Schifano.
60. Sorrentino 1984: 65.
61. Patellani, quoted in Aprà 2007. See also Patellani's text 'Il giornalista nuova formula' in *Fotografia. Prima rassegna dell'attività fotografica in Italia* (Milano: Editoriale Domus, 1943), in which he defined the new photojournalism in terms of clarity, comunication, speed, a good handle on framing and cropping, and an avoidance of commonplace subjects, 'such that the images look alive, current, throbbing [with energy], like stills from a film.' Federico Patellani (1911–1977) began his photography career in 1935, leaving his profession as a lawyer. His work for *Tempo* together with Lamberti Sorrentino documents the birth of the photojournalist in Italy. After the war he contributed to many Italian and foreign titles including, *Epoca*, *La Storia Illustrata*, *La Domenica del Corriere*. During this same period, Patellani devoted himself to film production, collaborating with Mario Soldati and Alberto Lattuada, and shooting several television documentaries.
62. Cf. Ennery Taramelli, 'Federico Patellani' in *Viaggio nell'Italia del Neorealismo. La fotografia tra letteratura e cinema* (Turin: Società editrice internazionale, 1995), cit. in Musto 2007: 37n.

which would enjoy exclusive rights on foreign sales and distribution of photographic material related to Italy and its empire.[63] In any case, a large part of the photojournalism related to foreign affairs was consistently acquired from major agencies, including the Istituto LUCE, Black Star, Keystone Press, and the Associated Press. The editors 'always held onto the idea of building and arranging the pieces, articles, and reportage like film shorts (...) above all when they started compiling descriptions of events unfolding in the war and on the various fronts, to the point that they virtually filled the entire magazine.'[64] As Paolo Lecaldano, one of the first editors, recalled,

> Alberto was the one who basically forced us all to take photos. We used the Leica and, on the way back after we'd done fieldwork, he expected us to have three or four rolls of film to develop. Munari always managed to find something of use in all that material. That's how the first phototexts came about. (...) Alberto cared a lot about the quality of the images, as he did for the texts, and as for Munari, he never once made a layout without having the photographer on hand'.[65]

And it was precisely the photography that | 194 | became the common ground, the shared terrain uniting an artist like Munari, who was open to all types of visual expression, to his journalist colleagues in the editorial department, who had fairly typical backgrounds in literature:

> I think I gave a useful suggestion to a lot of amateur photographers—I recommended that, after choosing their subject, they take the shot from a few steps back, in order to widen the visual field, thereby leaving some room for the person doing the layout to choose the right crop (...) One thing *Tempo* took from its model across the Atlantic was the custom of acknowledging all its collaborators on the colophon (...) the photographers, the graphic designers, everybody, just like in cinema.[66]

Aside from their editorial innovations, the phototext was born of

> the intention to realise film-like productions, to make documentaries with all those photographic images. But there were Lamberti Sorrentino's photos, and then there were Federico Patellani's photos (...) [which] were in a class of their own: because he started out as a painter, he really knew how to frame things, and what an image is with respect to its surrounding space. The literary guys did not really understand the grammar of images, they shot photos without really considering the frame—to such a degree that when their images were used, they were adapted, cropped, "framed" by the graphic designers who did the layouts.[67]

Photography was such a key element in *Tempo*'s success that the editorial office even promoted a few initiatives aimed at sensitising a broader public to the importance of the image and modern advertising: for example, they launched a photographic contest targeted at 'all amateur photographers working in documentary photography. Every submission must include a series of at least fifteen photographs illustrating an exceptional event or daily life, provided that the images contain a comic, tragic, or otherwise significant note. Above all, submissions must: be full of curious, particular things or events; be captured with a vivid, acute sense of observation; be realised with the intent of creating and sharing a contemporary, timely point of view—a clear, evident, interesting film of

63. Cf. Alberto Mondadori's letter (27/4/1939) addressed to the Istituto dei cambi in Rome to guarantee the necessary supply of foreign currency to acquire images from foreign photo agencies. Quoted in Lascialfari 2002: 443.

64. Lascialfari 2002: 456.

65. Paolo Lecaldano, interviewed in Schwarz 1977.

66. Bruno Munari, interviewed in Schwarz 1977.

67. Bruno Munari, inteviewed in Schwarz 1977.

sorts dealing with a fact or event and conceived of with a journalistic, narrative sensibility'.[68] Zavattini's influence can clearly be seen in such initiatives.[69] In December 1939 an advertising competition was even proposed on the best adverts published in the magazine, which echoed themes of the controversial debate on modern typography: not only did the competition aim to 'elevate the quality of advertising in Italy', but the jury brought together alongside Bruno Munari such prominent figures as the typographer Guido Modiano, Guido Mazzali of L'Ufficio Moderno, the painter Carlo Carrà, Alberto Mondadori, Federico Patellani.

Munari's contributions

Despite the tight editorial schedules for the Mondadori weeklies, it seems Munari was particularly active in this period, through various initiatives that in one way or another were all characterised as initial attempts at updating and reviving, or rather democratising visual culture. One undertaking that was closely linked to his own experience as a graphic designer, as well as his intent to reinvigorate culture in general, was an idea he developed together with Cesare Zavattini—a special publication that would appear alongside *Tempo*, which was unfortunately never followed through with. In July of 1939 Zavattini sent the publisher a proposal he, Munari and Fulvio Bianconi had put together:[70]

> (…) A file of a hundred-odd pages, some in colour, titled *Uomini nuovi* (New Men)— a temporary yet explanatory title. The concept is basically a year in review issue covering 1939, since the idea was to repeat the special edition once every year, every two years, or every four years: it could bee the quadriennale (quadrennial) of the Italian spirit—of Italian ingenuity. We would invite about sixty or so people, telling each one: 'Here's a page—do whatever you want on this page, follow the most ideal sense of liberty wherever your spirit wants to take it. In a certain sense, it means acting as a tuning fork of sorts, taking the pulse of the Italian intelligentsia. It would suffice to just choose sixty names with extraordinary rigour and care, ranging from poets to architects to draughtsmen and painters—and, look out!—journalists and typographers and printers and photographers, and from the fashion world to the sciences. We're approaching the eve of E42's unveiling. This overview would have particular value in light of the upcoming E42, an indicative, polemic, international value. The beauty and intelligence expressed by the crème de la crème of humankind will be seen in the architectural plans of a house, in a typographic letter, in an advertising poster, in a garment: it will give a unity to all these separate branches, all the various individualisms of the Italian creative spirit—everything there is that's new, and I don't mean amateurish (…) *Uomini nuovi* could be an extraordinary gift supplement to *Tempo* (…).[71]

Zavattini also emphasised the minimal cost this supplement would incur, and in order to prevent it being bogged down by adverts, he suggested a sponsor might be involved. A proposal of this sort—in both the 'choral

68. Quoted in Carpi 2002: 124.

69. Schwarz provides an interesting neorealist read of the Italian photography that appeared in *Tempo*, in which he detects 'a way of looking, with and through the camera, that is quite different from American photojournalism, and rather closer to the cinematographic neorealism presaged by Alessandro Blasetti's 1942 film *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* (Four Steps in the Clouds) and seen at its peak in Luchino Visconti's 1943 film *Ossessione* (Obsession)' (Schwarz 1977: 2). Not surprisingly, Zavattini was one of the screenwriters for Blasetti's film.

70. Fulvio Bianconi (1915–1996) was one of his generation's most important graphic designers, and also worked as an illustrator, painter, and glass artist. He began his artistic career in Milan in the early thirties, working for various publishing houses, and Garzanti in particular. In the early fifties he became a contributor to Epoca; his friendship with Munari evidently dated back to before the war, when both worked at *Tempo*. See Fioravanti, Passarelli, Sfligiotti 1997: 122.

71. Cesare Zavattini, in a letter to Alberto Mondadori dated 21/07/1939 on API letterhead; quoted in Carpi 2002: 125–6. E42 stood for Esposizione 1942, the international exposition scheduled to be held in 1942 in Rome, for which an entirely new city quarter was being built (which later came to be known as EUR).

survey' approach and the pro-nationalistic ambitions, not to mention the exceptionality of the event—was reminiscent of the *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce*, the failed publishing initiative conceived of by the Futurists in 1930. With respect to that first attempt, a decade later Munari not only had significant (and in many ways avant-garde) professional experience under his belt, but the very context in which the new project was being proposed had undergone a noteworthy evolution: the festivities and exhibition marking the tenth anniversary of the Fascist revolution made celebratory compilations of this sort familiar to a broad public.[72] The exact reasons why *Uomini nuovi* never came to be are not known, but the plans, in any case, display the dynamism and breadth of Munari's interests.

During his four years in the editorial office of *Tempo* Munari published no less than twenty or so articles, essentially based on the image and dedicated in general to curiosities[73] or especially in '43 during the most critical stage of the war, to pleasantries, always resolving with a humorous quip;[74] at times even intentionally on topics of war propaganda, in that case in a paternalistic tone.[75] In any event, besides a few popular articles on shop window displays, printing types or trends in photography,[76] Munari also had the opportunity to publish more experimental articles on *Tempo*'s pages, including: 'Letterina di Natale 1940',[77] 'Inez, l'isola dei tartufi' or 'L'uomo del mulino', with a similar layout;[78] and the amusing roundup of modern artistic trends in 'L'arte è una'.[79] Most of these articles, in many cases accompanied by his own photographs, were later collected in a volume as *Fotocronache*, which Munari published in 1944 with Editoriale Domus. In fact, the Mondadori weekly gave Munari the possibility to refine his work as an author which began in 1936 in *La Lettura*, and he produced a particularly significant number of articles in '41 and then again in '43 and '44 with an average of 7–8 articles per year. When *Tempo* closed because of the German invasion in northern Italy, Munari resumed publishing in *Domus* where he would continue to contribute until the end of '44.

Munari must have found a lot interesting cues and inspiration in the popular science articles that appeared in *Tempo* or elsewhere in the press at that time, and such sources would end up being useful in his later research on materials and techniques. They also helped him develop his own clear, level, rational language, which would become a key characteristic of his writing and pedagogical philosophy in general after the war:

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72. Similar objectives can be found in the general setup of some large-format illustrated publications produced by Domus publishers, from the volume entitled *Arte Romana* edited by Edoardo Persico (1935) to *Italiani* curated by Gio Ponti (1937); as well as in *L'Italia fascista in cammino* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale LUCE, 1932) or *Italia Imperiale* (Milan: Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia, 1937.

73. See for example Bruno Munari, 'Fantasia materia prima' in *Tempo* no.91 (20–27 February 1941): 11–2; 'Un leone in salotto' ivi no.101 (1–8 May 1941): 17–9; 'Barba e velocità' ivi no.183 (26 November–3 December 1942): 21–3, respectively.

74. See for example Bruno Munari, 'Per futili motivi' in *Tempo* no.180 (5–12 November 1942): 32–3; 'A tu per tu col qui pro quo' ivi no.203 (15–22 April 1943): 16–7.

75. See for example Mun., 'La giornata del Trio Lebùscano' in *Tempo* no.112 (17–24 July 1941): 11–2; or B.M. 'Tacere' ivi no.101, 1–8 May 1941): 28–31.

76. Mu. [Bruno Munari], 'Vendere' in *Tempo* no.80 (5 December 1940): 32–6; Bruno Munari, 'ABCDEFG' ivi no.83 (26 December 1940): 16–20; 'Fermare l'immagine' ivi no.206 (6–13 May 1943: 12–3).

77. Munari, 'Letterina di Natale 1940' in *Tempo* no.29 (14 December 1939): 20.

78. Bruno Munari, 'Inez, l'isola dei tartufi' in *Tempo* no.88 (30 January–6 February 1941): 16–7; according to Schwarz, this was 'an incredibly lucid example of photographic de-montage carried out on a banal Alinari postcard'. Idem, 'L'uomo del mulino' ivi no.191 (21 January 1943): 23.

79. Bruno Munari, 'L'arte è una' in *Tempo* no.197 (4–11 March 1943): 34–5.

> Another person I owe a lot to was an engineer, Rinaldo de Benedetti [a.k.a. Didimo]. He was a journalist, and wrote for the Corriere della sera. I admired his clarity, his simplicity, and so I tried to copy the way he wrote, and I often went to pay him a visit: [that's how] I learned to write in a clear way, accessible to all.[80]

The beginnings of some of his visual experimentation and research also surfaced during his years at *Tempo*; although many were never realised or never appeared in article form, they contain core ideas that Munari would later explore in the post-war period.

> I remember proposing a series of topics that might still be current. One of them was the colour of cities, in which you could really see that Bologna is orange, Venice is white and grey, Turin is brown, Alberobello is black and white. Another idea was to photograph streets [associated by name]—via Roma in Turin, via Torino in Milan, via Milano in Rome—with a whole description of everything that happens on these streets, to see how one city treats the other. Or show some masterpieces of classical art in colour but in negative, do an article on a factory of geographic relief maps and world maps, where there are different scales that would allow the photographer to show in a radically new way something that isn't new at all.[81]

It was in this same period that his deep interest in the foundations of visual communication—which would later become a consistent methodological orientation of his investigations—grew increasingly evident. Speaking of his role as art department director in relation to his journalist colleagues, Munari explained:

> Our was a rapport (…) of expertise—that is, we trusted one another's expertise—but with a few doubts, in the sense that a large part of the literati completely ignored the existence of even the slightest possibility of such a thing as visual communication (…) The only ones you could really talk about visual communication with were the photographers.[82]

Munari went on to extend the discussion to a more general pedagogical terms:

> (…) You could say that that was when a real visual discourse began to develop, and even today its still in the process of becoming clearer: [it dealt with] the use of the image as a means for communicating things that, if communicated verbally, would require a certain number of words—with no guarantee that the reader, when he begins to imagine whatever it is the text describes, comes up with the thing you ultimately want to communicate.[83]

Life vs. *Tempo* dispute

In confirmation of the relevance a publication of this sort had in Italy, *Tempo*'s launch was met by coverage in several newspapers, including *Il Popolo d'Italia* and the *Corriere della Sera*. 'Munari's graphic design for *Tempo* was proof that the main objective was to bring a new kind of illustrated weekly to Italian readers, inspired by weeklies from abroad, and above all *Life*'.[84] When interviewed many years later regarding the weekly's beginnings, Munari detailed its inspirations:

> As far as Italian publications are concerned, [we looked at] *Illustrazione italiana* and Leo Longanesi's *Omnibus*; with regard to foreign ones, [we looked at] France's *Vu*, Germany's *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* and *München Illustrierte*, Britain's *Picture Post*, and America's

80. Bruno Munari, quoted in Catalano 1994. See also Biagi 1998: 156.
81. Bruno Munari, quoted in Schwarz 1977.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Lascialfari 2002: 444.

> *Look* and *Life*. (…) Actually, at Mondadori they really wanted *Tempo* to be a copy of *Life*. At the time, I was working at Alberto's new weekly, and—naturally—I tried to do something different: but the trend back then was to copy the American model, because Italians always have a foreign model for everything they do. The imitation was so close and so evident, in the first few issues, that a few witty readers commented "Those who have *Tempo* don't wait for *Life*" [Those who have time don't wait around for life].[85]

Indicative as this was of Mondadori's attention to the latest trends of the international press, it is unlikely that the periodicals mentioned by Munari (above all because of their heterogeneity) actually were taken as precise models either for *Tempo*'s editorial style or typographic layout.[86]

Alberto Cavallari, editor of *Epoca* in the early 1950s, also mentioned the magazine *Signal* as one of their models.[87] This was a propagandistic German biweekly distributed in most European countries, including Italy. In reality, the reverse is more likely true: *Signal* was only launched in April of 1940, almost a year after *Tempo* debuted.[88] Only later, when Mondadori launched its foreign editions after an agreement was made with the Ministry of popular culture, was the German edition of *Tempo* (…) 'exchanged for the Italian edition of *Signal*'.[89] The German publication likely did, however, act as a model of communicative effectiveness with the special approach taken toward the information-based graphics—e.g. maps, diagrams, plans, tables—that accompanied the text and photo-essays. This new graphic aspect—most likely developed independently by the editorial offices in Milan, although possibly inspired by exemplary issues of *Signal*—relied above all else on the rational use of colour and illustration; thanks to the explanatory role it played it soon became one of *Tempo*'s more distinctive characteristics, since throughout the wartime period the weekly analysed the evolution of the conflict on multiple fronts, often in lengthy, well-investigated articles.[90] This is an interesting graphic development, which Munari would have a chance to perfect further in the layout and in original contributions which appeared in *Domus* during the time of his collaboration there (following the closing of *Tempo* and *Grazia* at the end of '43), which constituted his main body of work during the turbulent period of the Salò Republic (Italian Social Republic).

With regard to content, and especially the use of photographic material, Schwarz estimates that it was precisely the attempt

85. Bruno Munari, interviewed in Schwarz 1977.

86. On the other hand, in the many interviews he gave over the years, Munari's recollections are often somewhat imprecise. For instance, see Catalano 1994: 153: '[During the war] I was lucky, I was at Mondadori. That was the only only stable, salaried job I ever had; I was what would now be called art director for Mondadori's magazines. At the time (1938), Mondadori had stipulated an accord with the English Time Life to do a magazine titled *Tempo* (which I did the layouts for, in addition to *Grazia* and *Epoca*). Throughout the entire war I worked there, and then I left.' Aside from the understandably imprecise date (1938 vs. 1939) and nationality of Time Life, it seems *Tempo* never had any accord with the American publishers of Time Life—only in the fifties and sixties did Mondadori manage to acquire the rights to produce an Italian edition of some of Time Life's series (the contracts with American and English photo agencies to purchase images for the Italian weekly are another matter, and those relationships lasted throughout the war). *Epoca* was launched in 1950.

87. Quoted in Ferretti 1996: xxx.

88. Aside from Mayer's 1978 volume, which consists solely of reproductions from the English editions, the most historically up-to-date synthesis can be found in Rutz 2007: regarding competition with *Tempo*, see pp.69–72, 84–85. Detailed technical and historical information can be found at scholar and collector Pasqualino Schifano's site, http://www.giornalidiguerra.com (last accessed in February 2009).

89. Arturo Tofanelli, quoted in Schwarz 1977: 6. This was a concession arranged by both the Italian and German ministries whereby Italian copies of *Signal* were literally traded for German copies of *Tempo*.

90. Lascialfari 2002: 454. Information graphics were also effectively used in the popular scientific and technical columns (for subjects as varied as medicine, physics, urbanism, economics).

at inventing an updated type of journalism based upon a new kind of relationship between the visual realm and the verbal realm, which clearly distinguished *Tempo* from *Life*.[91] From a graphic standpoint, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the dispute regarding *Tempo*'s originality had some element of truth to it. Before all else, its format is striking, as it was based on the exact same proportions and
|202| was virtually identical.[92] The most glaring similarities appear right on the cover: in both cases the layout had a red rectangle in the upper left corner, atop a full-bleed black-and-white photo, with the title appearing in white, sans-serif, full caps: the letters of *Life* were generously spaced, in a boldface version of *Alternate Gothic No.393*; *Tempo*'s letters were more tightly spaced, and based on the narrower proportions
|203| of *Alternate Gothic No.1* (with a couple of the letters, P and O, slightly modified). In any case, whereas the American weekly featured a swath of red along the bottom, listing the date and price (justified on the right, diagonally opposite the title), *Tempo* was more discreet in inserting such details, and used a thin black stripe above the title block for the date, while the price was listed in red within a white circle at the lower right (again, diagonally opposite the title). Finally, in both cases, the cover story's title appears to the lower left, atop the photo, in black or reversed out, tightly spaced, full caps—*Alternate Gothic No.1* for *Life*, *Monotype Grotesque* for *Tempo*.[94] On the other hand, imitation—above all in cover style, in order to ride the success of the American model—was quite common among illustrated periodicals of the day, as can also be seen for instance from Britain's *Picture Post* (which debuted in 1938).

The magazine's interior has rather more subtle, less evident resemblances, but many of the typographic details belie Mondadori's more or less direct imitation. The table of contents, for example, is similar in both: it takes up a (vertical) half page, with a small title in grey at the top, and reproduces the cover image in a small inset; the few differences found in *Tempo* occur in the composition, which is asymmetrical with respect to the main column, uses a more contemporary face like *Landi*[95] and sets the colophon opposite the table of contents, instead of at the bottom of the page.

The layout of the average photographic spread also betrays close similarities between the two magazines: not so much in main compositional frames—which vary from three to four columns for both text and photos—as in the typographic details: from the type chose for the main body of text (be it *Scotch Roman* for *Life* or *Century Linotype* for *Tempo*, both looked to the same neoclassical English models) to the

91. Schwarz 1977.

92. *Life* measured 26.5×35.5 cm; *Tempo* measured 27×36.5 cm.

93. Designed by Morris Fuller Benton for the American Typefounders Company in 1903 and distributed by Linotype, this typeface consisted of three more or less narrow, bold variations, from No.1 to No.3. It is, essentially, a narrower version of Benton's other typeface designs, including *Franklin Gothic* (ATF, 1903–12) and News Gothic (ATF, 1908).

94. Based on nineteenth-century models issued by the English foundry Stephenson Blake, *Monotype Grotesque*, created in 1926 under the supervision of F.H. Pierpont, was one of the first revivals of a Victorian sans-serif typeface. The version that appeared on *Tempo*'s cover, in its headlines and in its captions was a narrow boldface variant, possibly Bold Condensed Titling (cf. Jaspert, Berry, Johnson 1970: 287–91).

95. Introduced to the Italian market by the Fonderia Nebiolo, this typeface is the same as *Welt*, created by Hans Wagner in 1931 and produced by the German foundry Ludwig & Mayer. It is an Egyptian typeface, characterised by thick, geometric serifs, associated (like many German sans-serif typefaces of the period) with the rationalist bent of new continental typography. Alessandro Butti, art director of the Studio artistico at Fonderia Nebiolo in Turin, added two ornamental versions, *Landi Linear* and *Landi Echo*. See Jaspert, Berry, Johnson 1970: 132, 239; Rattin, Ricci 1997: 99.

small sans-serif letters used at the opening of each article; from the page numbers, justified with the text at the top of the page, along the inner margin, to the captions, with a few words in boldface leading into the main caption text; and finally to the section heads, all caps and in *Futura* framed by an outlined box. In general, the margins were slightly broader in *Life* than in *Tempo*, while the latter had more effective title layouts, often spanning four columns and featuring a broader variety of typefaces.

On a technical level, however, a clear difference can be felt in the higher quality and finer finish of the American magazine's paper, which—combined with its offset printing (except the section reserved for the photo-essay, which was printed in rotogravure)—understandably made for a physically superior product. This was especially true with regard to the text's legibility, as *Tempo* was printed entirely in rotogravure, which meant that the text was composed of dots just like the images. The internal distribution of advertising and information within each magazine was equally different: in the pages of *Life* these are distributed in roughly equal measure between the three main components of text, photography, and adverts; in *Tempo*, on the other hand, the space occupied by adverts is still rather modest, and relegated to the opening and closing pages. Colour was also more present in *Life*, appearing throughout both photo-reportage and adverts, whereas *Tempo* occasionally used it for art reproductions and the duotone covers of the issues published between 1940 and 1941.

Thus, aside from a few minimal differences, *Tempo*'s adherence to the American model seems undeniable. Even when *Life* updated its graphic design in 1939, adopting a more varied and refined typography, Mondadori had evidently decided that *Tempo* should follow the early issues of *Life* in every single aspect.

Foreign editions

While *Tempo*'s foreign editions were an integral part of an ambitious marketing strategy Mondadori adopted to help guarantee significant participation in the periodical export market of Axis-occupied countries,[96] they were also a direct response to the competition introduced by the Italian edition of *Signal*, which had caused a fair amount of apprehension among Italian publishers upon its debut in April of 1940.[97] The German publication had briefly appeared in an Italian edition titled Segnale, which was replaced after a few issues by a bilingual edition titled *Signal*, the result of heated negotiations between the two country's Ministries of Propaganda. There is no evidence to disprove the idea that Mondadori was already considering an expansion into foreign markets, but the competition of the German biweekly—the first instance of a multilingual magazine distributed in multiple countries—certainly

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96. See Ferretti 1996: xxxiii–iv; Decleva 1993: 256–9; cf. Albonetti 1991: 393–400.

97. An Italian edition of *Signal* was available upon its debut in April of 1940, simultaneous with the French, English, and German editions. Italian publishers responded immediately, and by putting pressure on the ministry they managed to block distribution of the second issue, while waiting for adequate protective measures to be formulated through official venues. Overall, by 1945 a total of 26 editions were released, in practically all European languages. Because *Signal* was a foreign tool for propaganda produced by the Wehrmacht's Propaganda Kompanie (and under direct oversight of Goebbels' Propagandaministerium), the magazine was never distributed in Germany (Pasqualino Schifano, in conversation with the author, 25 February 2009). In 1941 *Tempo* dedicated an entire article to its competitor, signed by Alberto Mondadori as war correspondent: 'Compagnie P.K. La guerra vista dal soldato', in *Tempo* no.91 (20–27 February 1941): 21–5.

sped up the process. Mondadori's first contacts with the Minister of Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini, date back to July of 1940[98] and led to an initial commercial agreement in October of that same year, permitting the creation of a German-language edition of *Tempo* 'as a quid-pro-quo response to the bilingual edition of *Signal*.'[99] This agreement also provided important economic support, in the form of a subsidy for each copy printed, depending upon the various editions, with an inverse relationship such that as the print run increased, the subsidy decreased.

The Deutsche Ausgabe (German edition) debuted in October 1940. The fact that it appeared biweekly, rather than weekly, echoed the model set by *Signal*, while both the graphic design and contents logically followed the Italian edition of *Tempo*. The magazine's content included a selection of the best material published in the corresponding two issues of the Italian edition as well as new articles and photo-essays.[100] As for the initial print run of 50,000 copies, the success of German sales was surprising: in just a few weeks, with the Italian edition still at about 200,000 copies each week, the German edition grew to 100,000 copies.[101] As Tofanelli recalls, 'We really did not get why there was such a boom in Germany (...) And then we came to understand that German readers detected a certain wave of revolt in the Colloqui con Bontempelli, and therein caught a glimpse of the truth. Goebbels' lockdown was so fierce that all it took was a few modest reservations, the hermetic allusions our writer Massimo Bontempelli expressed, to make the magazine sell like hotcakes up there. Goebbels never realised that, but he did cancel the print run when he found out how unexpectedly high it had climbed'.[102] Over the following months further agreements were reached with the Ministry of Popular Culture that allowed for a successful launch of other foreign editions targeted for the areas of geopolitical influence closest to Mussolini's Italy: 1941 brought editions for Spain, Croatia, Greece and Romania; in 1942 came editions for Albania, France and Hungary.[103] The magazine was also distributed for free to Italian soldiers in the occupied territories, as well as in Turkey and, through Italian embassies, in countries throughout South America. In total, by 1943 the various editions of *Tempo* officially exceeded one million copies,[104] and the high demand required that the printing facilities be moved from Milan's Vitagliano printing facilities to Mondadori's own plants in Verona, which had a large MAN continuous-printing rotogravure press.

98. Lascialfari 2002: 447 quotes as evidence the undated memorial written by Alberto Mondadori and enclosed to his application to the Psiup (Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria) between 1944 and '46. About *Tempo*'s foreign editions, see ibid.: 447–8.

99. Decleva 1993: 258. The bilateral accord stipulated 'lockdown' conditions for both magazines with regard to their frequency, number of pages, number of colour spreads (as indicative of paper quality) and cover price (Pasqualino Schifano, in conversation with the author, 25 February 2009).

100. See letter Alberto Mondadori to Alessandro Pavolini, undated, quoted in Lascialfari 2002: 448.

101. Decleva 1993: 259.

102. Tofanelli 1986: 15. What the journalist offers here is but the official version of the story: the print runs for Germany (and possibly other foreign editions) were actually used as a cover for secret funding by the Ministry of Popular Culture.

103. The precise launch dates of each foreign edition are as follows: German edition, 3 October 1940; Spanish, 16 January 1941; Croatian, 22 May 1941; Greek, 28 August 1941; Romanian, 4 September 1941; Albanian, 15 January 1942; French, 19 March 1942; Hungarian, 26 March 1942. Cf. Albonetti 1991: 413n: these data were corrected based upon information provided the author by Pasqualino Schifano (3 March 2009).

104. The print run recorded in issue no.70 of the German edition (1–15 July 1943) is 1,312,120 copies (Lascialfari 2002; cf. Schwarz 1977) based on information included in the colophon of the parallel Italian issue. See also Decleva 1993: 258–9. Detailed edition print runs for July 1943 are as follows: German edition, 500,000 copies; French, 135,000; Romanian, 50,000; Spanish, 25,000; Greek, 27,000; Hungarian, 30,000; Croatian, 40,000;

The competition posed by *Signal*, as some scholars have pointed out, 'was a thorn in Arnoldo's side throughout that entire period'.[105] It was clear that the cover price would not cover the high costs of printing; whereas *Signal*'s budget gap was covered by the German Propagandaministerium, entrepreneur Mondadori had to beg for the support—both direct and indirect—of the Italian Ministry of Popular Culture and, ultimately, the regime's protection. Domestic distribution data[106] indicate that in 1942 *Signal* not only saw *Tempo*'s competition, but also raised it; the German magazine not only had strong advertising, but it also enjoyed the advantage of receiving photo-essays from the Eastern front, under the auspices of the Propaganda Kompanie.[107] Indeed, 'up until the spring of 1943 Mondadori never stopped battling *Signal* for their market share, and even carried out tight customs checks on all the trucks coming over the Brenner Pass'.[108] The recollections of journalist Gaetano Afeltra—a longtime friend and colleague of Alberto Mondadori—concur:

> What you have to keep in mind is the fact that all that [*Tempo*'s propagandistic role] was part of the magazine's business sphere, and was led and managed by the publishing house on behalf of much larger interests. It was an intermediary for a whole slew of concessions Germany had made, such as the one regarding foreign editions, which were paid for. All that was part of the illicit activity going on at the time, it was a bona fide exchange. It was, if you will, a form of protectionism that was necessary in order to move forward. And that was the reason, above all, that Mondadori was quarantened—because, basically, everyone knew about its precedents.[109]

Considering the support received from the Ministry in the form of both declared contributions as well as secret funding, the free distribution to Italian soldiers in occupied countries and the overall success of the various editions, indeed *Tempo* ended up being 'a good business deal for Mondadori in his relationship with the regime, which ultimately gave him noteworthy economic advantages and vast marketing strategies.'[110] The foreign editions were suspended, upon Ministerial decree, after the 25 July 1943.[111]

Albanian, 40,000—for a total of approx. 850,000 copies. According to the official data, then, the Italian edition must have been around 450,000 copies, which does not seem to match the weekly's actual distribution in Italy, and listing a print run even smaller than the German edition. However, the print runs billed by Vitagliano (now in Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori) indicate that the German edition was printed in quantaties that were roughly half of the officially declared amount. This would support the hypothesis that such inflated numbers served to obtain greater contributions from the ministry via secret means—a manoeuvre fully in keeping with the protectionist politics *Tempo* enjoyed at the time. Clearly any knowledge of such accords would have been kept from editorial staff like Tofanelli, who cites the official data. Additionally, based on the print runs of the most widely distributed illustrated magazines in France (*Match*) and England (*Picture Post*), charted at approximately one million copies per week at the time, and considering the extreme ease with which one can still find copies of *Tempo* on the Italian antiques market today (compared to the rarity of the German edition on the German market), one could reasonably estimate the 1942–43 Italian print runs at approximately one million (at least no less than 700,000) copies each week, including the 30,000 distributed to soldiers (Pasqualino Schifano, in conversation with the author, 25 February and 2 March 2009).

105. Cf. Albonetti 1991: 397–8. The author cites a letter (dated 26 November 1941) in which Arnoldo Mondadori, complaining about the preference both distributors and newsstand owners granted his German competitor, refers not only to his own desire to defend the magazine 'with any and all necessary means' (as *Tempo* had been called 'API's backbone'), but also to 'higher authorities' who would share his point of view (preserved in Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori).

106. Reports from SISE (Società anonima importatori stampa estera, an association of foreign press importers), quoted in Albonetti 1991: 399, 412n.

107. Contrary to Tofanelli's account that '[*Signal*] was not widely distributed in Italy' (Tofanelli 1986: 15).

108. Albonetti 1991: 399. Schifano cites a document (preserved in Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori) with a list of domestic periodicals featuring advertisement inserts for *Signal* (conversation with the author, 2 March 2009).

109. Statement quoted in Lascialfari 2002: 448.

110. Ferretti 1996: xxxiv.

111. Schifano cites ministerial correspondence (preserved in Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori) regarding the suspension of support (conversation with the author, 2 March 2009).

The fall of Mussolini, announced on the radio the evening of 25 July 1943, confirmed the arrival of a new situation, and with it a shift in *Tempo*'s style, albeit a shift that was anything but radical. Despite the spontaneous demonstrations of the general public nationwide, the press was initially rather cautious, and limited itself to reporting events as they unfolded, without any additional commentary; this was in part because Pietro Badoglio's military rule had immediately instituted not only a curfew, but also a preventive censorship of the press, which 'forbade it from dealing with the responsibilities of Fascism'.[112] This was the line of prudent non-involvement the directors of *Tempo* assumed at such a time of historic uncertainty.[113] In early August, in an editorial titled 'Libertà è responsabilità' the editors committed to 'working together to document the efforts of the Italian people to achieve justice and liberty', but the articles and photo-essays inside dealt with both fronts, as if from some neutral observatory room. A week later *Tempo*'s fundamental alignment with the government and its various entities became clear in an editorial in which Indro Montanelli invited people to remain calm: 'Yes, we want Fascism to be put on trial, but not right now, in arbitrary, empty gestures'.[114]

In addition to the political dimension, the publishing house's situation was particularly uncertain because of all the credit they owed the state government and foreign distributors—credit that would prove difficult to pay off. Heavy bombardments throughout August heavily damaged, and in some cases destroyed, the various offices: the director's office, the magazine division's editorial office and the advertising office.[115] The sixty airstrikes on Milan between 1940 and '45 caused, in all, approximately 2,000 deaths and the destruction of nearly one third of the city.[116] Atop all this came the practical difficulty of procuring paper supplies, not to mention the fact that staff members were continually being summoned to military service.[117] As Munari recalls,

> At the beginning I wasn't sent to war; I was dismissed for a thoracic 'insufficiency', (...) and finally they summoned me that last year to serve at an empty anti-aircraft battery just outside Milan (...) It was a really sad experience, under a mafioso, profiteering commander. (...) At the time I was having stomach problems, and I kept going to the infirmary, but to no avail, and finally a doctor sent me home by diagnosing me with something I did not have—that, too, was just another part of the surrealism...[118]

The first serious British air attacks on Milan came in October of 1942, and despite the modest amount of destruction they caused, they nevertheless provoked a civilian exodus: 'There was a lot of fear, and even more fear that the city wasn't

112. Del Buono 1971: xv. Cf. Decleva 1993: 272–5.

113. See Lascialfari 2002: 'In the week leading up to 25 July 1943, only a few hours apart, two editions hit the newsstands. In the first (...) the articles were the same as always, without any real changes. The second, however, announced the lead-up to what would become the tragic epilogue, (...) and the cover shows an Italian flag with a declaration in red: "The enemy attacks, on the Fatherland's own ground—Rise up, Italians!".' Inside, an editorial by Alberto Mondadori, free of any reference to the regime's typical rhetoric, called upon Italians to defend their country in a staunchly nationalistic tone (ibid.: 467).

114. See *Tempo* issues no.219, 4–11 August 1943 and no.220, 12–19 August 1943, quoted in Lascialfari 2002: 455.

115. Cf. Decleva 1993: 274–5.

116. See Mauro Colombo, 'I bombardamenti aerei su Milano durante la II guerra mondiale' at http://www.storiadimilano.it/Repertori, last accessed January 2011.

117. Cf. Decleva 1993: 259.

118. Interviewed in Branzi 1984: 42. Munari did his military service toward the end of '41 (cf. the letter to Zavattini cited thereinafter, which mentions a 'one month leave' (licenza di un mese) (in the Cesare Zavattini Archives, Biblioteca Panizzi, Reggio Emilia, file M844/4).

mounting any sort of defence (…) People began to evacuate. Families were separated, those who had work in Milan stayed there, and everyone else fled to find refuge in the countryside, at the lakes, in the foothills and lower mountains, with relatives, friends, farmers'.[119] By the end of November 1942 Mondadori's administrative offices were moved to Verona, and the business headquarters moved to Arona, on Lake Maggiore; the other Milan offices, including the magazine editorial offices, remained in up and running.[120] During the interval under the brief rule of General Badoglio following Mussolini's fall, and for obvious reasons of political opportunism, *Tempo* was directed by Arturo Tofa- |208| nelli, 'Not because I was some conspirator |209| embedded in the press, but rather because I was the least Fascist of all the professionally qualified journalists in management'.[121] The Allies' heavy bombardment of Milan, in particular those unleashed between the 10 and 15 of August 1943, caused major damages that paralysed a large part of the city's print and publishing houses.[122] 'Arnoldo Mondadori told me the new *Tempo* offices in Arona were ready. We all rushed out of Milan to reach Lake Maggiore, where we were going to try and regroup.The first few Germans showed up on the lake toward 10 September. (…) *Tempo*'s editorial office on Lake Maggiore worked as well as it could for a few weeks. We managed to get a couple of issues to the newsstands, and then we were forced to close shop. A lot more Germans had arrived, and they began dealing with other groups, not just the Jews'.[123] Munari also followed the editorial staff to Arona, but only for a short time. If Munari's family had not already fled to the countryside by the end of '42 —first to Badia Polesine, home to Munari's parents, then to Vaciago and later to Monte Olimpino, a fraction outside Como[124]— it is quite likely they had by August of '43, although it is not clear whether Munari was still working with the rest of the editorial staff at Arona during Badoglio's reign, as by 1942 *Tempo*'s colophon no longer listed the names of its contributors and editors.[125]

Upon hearing the 'bitter news of armistice',[126] *Tempo*'s editors produced one last issue dedicated to socialist politician Filippo Turati in an eloquent attempt at situating the magazine more to the left.[127]

119. Tofanelli 1986: 102–3.

120. Decleva 1993: 267.

121. Tofanelli 1986: 14. Tofanelli confirms that he was charged with the weekly's directorship by the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia (CLN, Upper Italian Committee for National Liberation), but that group was formed only after the armistice was announced; therefore, the position could only have been conferred by the CLN after 9 September. This does not exclude that Tofanelli might have acted as managing director as early as August 1943, when the editorial offices were moved to Arona, but the editorial line nevertheless remained one of non-involvement. A political shift became evident only in September, dedicating issue no.224 to anti-Fascist activist Filippo Turati—which was the last one ever to hit newsstands. Tofanelli, like the Mondadori family, went to Switzerland on the 20 September 1943; upon his return to Italy in April 1945, Tofanelli was nominated editor of *L'Avanti!*, a publication of the Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party), which at the time was one of the few daily newspapers nationally circulated.

122. Cf. Tofanelli 1986: 101: 'The reasoning behind the Anglo-American [Allied] bombardments—after the armistice had been signed, and as Badoglio's government was looking for a way out—never really was explained. There was nothing in Milan that would've been worth wasting a single bomb: no major troops (…); no major arms or munitions depots; no spectre of anti-aircraft capabilities (…). Their sole aim was to terrorise (…)'.

123. Tofanelli 1986: 112–3.

124. Alberto Munari, correspondence with author, 13 November 2009. Cf. Marcello Piccardo, unpublished manuscripts, 'Monte Olimpino' and 'Milano' (courtesy Andrea Piccardo).

125. Even today there is no stable archive of *Tempo*, perhaps due to the fact that it passed through various ownerships, or due to a deliberate destruction of compromising or 'inconvenient' documents. The archive of *Epoca* met with a similar fate, despite the fact that it remained in Mondadori's stable (Ferretti 1996: xlvii).

126. Correspondence Arnoldo Mondadori to avv. Mauri, Arona, 9 September 1943, in Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Api (quoted in Albonetti 1991: 400).

127. Issue no.224, 9–16 September 1943.

After that, as German troops took control of Northern Italy, magazine printing came to a halt, for obvious political and economic reasons.[128] Arnoldo Mondadori and his sons Alberto and Giorgio fled to Switzerland, while the 'Verona offices, which were immediately occupied by the Nazis, were largely dismantled; the presses were forcibly shipped to Germany, where they were used to print propaganda'.[129] Ironically enough, the 'reborn' Italian edition of *Signal* that appeared in October 1943 would be the only illustrated weekly available in German-occupied Italy.[130]

Propaganda and consensus

Tempo expressed 'before all else, and despite all else, the Mondadori company's adhesion to the regime, in view of precise editorial and economic interests'.[131] During the wartime period, the Ministry of Popular Culture orchestrated privileged relationships and mutually beneficial arrangements between Mondadori and the regime, and although there certainly was no shortage of clashes with the censors,[132] *Tempo* effectively played a key propagandistic role, in particular through its innovative use of photography, which 'could guarantee a highly effective amplification of propagandistic messages.'[133] A lot has been written about the fact that Mondadori's adhesion was strictly partial, due solely to company interests—it was anything but ideological. Guido Lopez, who was a young editor at the time, commented: 'Arnoldo never really got on with the man in power, who—over the following fifteen years—it became absolutely necessary to praise, if you wanted (…) not only to become a serious publisher, but a veritable colossus of Italian publishing.'[134] The fact that a lot of non-Fascist and Jewish intellectuals continued to work at Mondadori, as well as the company's refusal to obey the requests of anti-Semitic publications following the racial laws of 1938, have often been cited to mitigate any moral judgment of the publishing house.[135] This rather ambivalent attitude is also reflected in the judgements passed on *Tempo*: there has been a recurrent attempt at justifying, or at least minimising, the magazine's political orientation by citing its noteworthy, yet certainly not prevalent, cultural offerings. Lecaldano observed: 'Naturally, the magazine was accepted by the regime, it toed the line of the regime, but there's never been a more anti-Fascist

128. Cf. Decleva 1993: 274–5.

129. Lopez 1972: 63. Cf. also Tofanelli 1986: 15.

130. At least up until the launch of *Ora* in July of 1944. Cf. Rutz 2007: 83–6 and Schifano's website, www.giornalidiguerra.com (last accessed 26 February 2009).

131. Ferretti 1996: xxxiii.

132. See Lascialfari 2002: 456–8: 'In some cases such rebukes and admonitions were made with regard to the layout of photographic material (…) in other cases, orders from above determined not so much the specific subjects that were to be addressed, but focussed more on the amount of space they were to be given.' Ferretti also mentions some political difficulties—investigations into some of the editors and friction with some of the higher-ups (id. 1996: xxxii).

133. Lascialfari 2002: 457.

134. Lopez 1972: 61–2.

135. As for *Tempo*'s editorial staff, '(…) the editorial team included Salvatore Quasimodo, an anti-Fascist who was never persecuted for the simple reason that, as hermeticist poet and future Nobel Prize-winner, he was also quite hermetic in the way he spoke: in order to understand what he was trying to say, you had to be part of the tiny circle familiar with the labyrinthine structures of his sarcasm. Policemen easily mistook him for a fervent 'new Italian.' And we also had Ugo Arcuno [on the editorial staff], an openly communist journalist from Naples, a disciple of [Amadeo] Bordiga. No one could easily explain how it was that Ugo Arcano wasn't in prison. Maybe for the opposite reason Quasimodo wasn't either. Arcuno imperatively boasted about his conviction that we'd win, with the same degree of incisiveness, standing tall, his eyes flashing the same way Mussolini's did when he preached. His behaviour was so daring and audacious that no one even believed him (…)' (Tofanelli, quoted in *Le persone che hanno fatto grande Milano* 1983: 38). Cf. Sorrentino: 'When Montanelli resigned, the job of editor-in-chief went to Carlo Bernari, the "secret communist" and author of a successful novel titled I tre operai (The Three Labourers), which passed the censors not because of their generosity or tollerance, but rather because they weren't very astute' (Sorrentino 1984: 66).

group than that of *Tempo*'s staff.'[136] And Tofanelli asserted the degree of intellectual autonomy enjoyed by the editors: '*Tempo* was a new magazine that met with immediate success. We introduced black-and-white and full-colour photography as an informational element, and paired it with texts and columns written by major journalists and authors—writers who weren't servile toward the regime.'[137] Yet Sorrentino admitted: 'We discussed the focus of that inaugural article for a long time: we wanted it to be clear that we were following the guidelines of that period, [to] "get closer to the people." This focus on "the people"and "common folk" allowed some really refined columns—like Bontempelli's Colloqui, Augusto Guerriero's Tempo perduto (...), poems by Quasimodo, Eugenio Montale and others, and art reviews by Raffaele Carrieri—to be passed over, dismissed as secondary.'[138] Regardless of the nuances and implications of each individual's judgments, however, a close reading of the magazine's many issues reveals that despite its innovative look, 'its cultural openness and certain viewpoints inspired by leftist Fascism shouldn't be overestimated.'[139] Conflict was already on the horizon when *Tempo* was launched, and the subject of war was, naturally, a central theme for writers and correspondents to focus on, 'in some cases, with accents of emotional involvement that are difficult to reduce to a merely obedient observance of ministerial instructions.'[140] Although such a tendency to combine the need to entertain with the need to propagandise is not surprising to find at a time of war, in *Tempo*'s case it became a particularly relevant phenomenon due to 'the extreme homogeneity of its thematic content and symbolic evocations' around the topos of war.[141] On an iconographic level, this translated in countless covers depicting soldiers, and harking back to visual repertoires like sharp foreshortening, extreme close-ups, and the photographic blur—all of which had already been put to extensive use by the regime.

Beyond Mondadori's adhesion (or mere pragmatical accommodation) to the regime, the presence in *Tempo*'s pages of notable writers and intellectuals brings up the thorny issue of consensus versus disagreement inherent to the supposed Nicodemism of the illustrated weekly and its collaborators.[142] Any such discussion runs the risk—to echo Tranfaglia's accurate summary of the debate[143]—of getting bogged down in a sterile impasse between generic positions of absolution or condemnation, or getting stuck in the moralism that in the postwar years was an effective strategy for exorcising an embarrassing phenomenon—in particular for those who were one way or other implicated in everything that took place during the Ventennio.[144] To avoid this type of conditioning, the vicissitudes of *Tempo* and, specifically, Bruno Munari's artistic direction, must necessarily be viewed within their original context. This requires an understanding based upon

136. Paolo Lecaldano, quoted in Schwarz 1977.
137. Tofanelli 1986: 55.
138. Sorrentino 1984: 66. Sorrentino was the author of the article on the miners of Carbonia, that appeared in the very first issue.
139. Ferretti 1996: xxxi. Cf. Lascialfari 2002: 451.
140. Lascialfari 2002: 444.
141. Lascialfari 2002: 458–60. 'Just consider the extensive, in-depth attention—in a popular illustrated weekly aimed for mass consumption—paid to issues dealing with 'military culture (...) like topographic descriptions of battles and military movements, the ballistic calculation of munitions (...) or the tonnage of the naval force presented as a shared cultural patrimony, just like the nation's literature, cinema, music and theatre might have been' (ibid.).
142. See Lascialfari 2002: 439, 447; see also Ferretti 1996: xxxi-ii.
143. Nicola Tranfaglia 1971: viii–ix. Bergahus too is critical of such 'manechean' classifications, pointing out how in most cases artists's political orientation was rather contradictory (id. 1996: 258–61).
144. As the twenty years of Fascist rule are known.

an analysis that is as factual as possible (as opposed to emotional), allowing for the evaluation of its merits and weaknesses on both the synchronic level, that is within the broader field of Italian design, and the diachronic level, in view of Munari's overall career which spanned 70 years.

Fascist cultural policies in the 1920s lacked a definite orientation, relying on 'a combination of revolutionary rhetoric and conservative praxis' that attracted many intellectuals.[145] From the mid-twenties, in parallel with the suppression of the political rights and freedom of the press, the regime gradually brought existing cultural institutions under state control, and created new ones like the Istituto nazionale di cultura fascista (National Fascist Cultural Institute), the Accademia d'Italia (Italian Academy), and the Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana (Institute of the Italian Encyclopaedia). Within a few years the Fascist rule was already requiring that public employees of every type and level take an oath of fidelity to the party—only a handful of university professors refused to do so. As for the press, newspapers and magazines publishers had benefited from important technical upgrades, while journalists were offered a professional register and an enviable national contract. All these measures effectively increased a widespread degree of conformity.[146]

In order to understand how the 'generation of the difficult years' ended up conforming en masse,[147] it must be kept in mind that, in the artistic realm at least, the ambivalence of the regime's cultural programme allowed different artistic groups to exist and vie for official recognition.[148] The apparatus—albeit far less repressive than in Nazi Germany[149]—was nevertheless capable of controlling the general consensus and artists' adhesion to it through its manipulation of commissions, exhibitions, appointments and acquisitions, not to mention the unions regulating all professions.[150] Although in the 1930s 'there prevailed a conservative trend towards representational, pseudo-classical and naturalist art',[151] the lack of aesthetic definition allowed the coexistence of opposing tendencies—such as Futurism and Novecento—within an ideal aspiration to the Modern that espoused political ideology. In other

145. Berghaus 1996: 226–7.

146. Cf. Del Buono 1971: xvi. Journalist Filippo Sacchi's account is useful for understanding the mood of those who, at the time, decided to become party members even if they were not fully aligned with its principles: 'Naturally, you had to have a pass from Rome (…) [which] I easily obtained, on the sole condition that neither my signature nor my initials appeared in it [the newspaper] (…) When I went back to work at the Corriere [della Sera] nobody asked me any questions, I had no propitiatory visits, no withdrawals, no promises (…) I moved on, deluding myself that I'd found my little corner of reserved, personal activity, where nobody would ever stick their nose into my business—in short, my safe little nook. It was, of course, an incredibly stupid delusion… So one fine day, along comes Aldo Borrelli, the director; he calls me up and tells me that Rome has issued a decree that, from now on, union membership is subject to official party membership. Basically, you had to join the party or quit your profession. It was quite a slap in the face, quite a blow (…) I reviewed my home budget and came to the conclusion that, without my salary, we couldn't keep the books balanced (…) So, I decided I couldn't kill my mother, or my wife or my childern—I signed up. It's a terrible thing, because at the time, you're looking for some kind of justification (…)' (ibid.: 426–7).

147. From the title of a collection of intellectuals' accounts, edited by Ettore Albertoni, Ezio Antonini and Renato Palmieri (Laterza, 1962); this expression denotes those who, born between roughly 1910 and 1915, grew up under Fascism and were therefore more inclined to accept it as the natural order of things.

148. See Berghaus 1996: 229, 231–2 ; Fagone 1982: 43–52.

149. From September 1933 on, with the creation of the Reichskulturkammer under Goebbels's control, it became increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for German artists to work without the ratification of conformity (Gleichschaltung) to Nazi ideology issued by the Reichskammer für Bildende Kunste. For instance, Jan Tschichold would never be admitted to the Fachgruppe Gebrauchsgraphik (Burke 2007: 144).

150. The Confederazione dei Professionisti e degli Artisti (Confederation of Professionals and Artists) had more than 425,000 members in its ranks. Cf. Cannistraro in Braun 1989: 147–54.

151. Berghaus 1996: 231.

words, for these intellectuals and artists the aesthetic dimension had an explicit political significance, in that their activity expressed the values of the new national identity—a Fascist identity.[152] However, even if nationalism was a common element to Futurism and Fascism, political positions among that generation of avant-garde artists were rather heterogeneous, ranging from straight consensus to indifference or veiled resistance—open opposition was rare—but in the end 'the majority of artists were a-Fascist.'[153] It seems the most common attitude among artists and intellectuals was that of opportunistic accommodation with the fascist institutions, which translated into 'paying lip-service to the régime or demonstrating apparent obeisance so that they might gain relative freedom to produce their work without interference from the State.'[154]

It is not surprising then—given Italians' deep-seated conformist nature, resulting from centuries of history, counterreformation and foreign dominion—that Italian culture was overrun by a general 'transformism' and that a vast majority of intellectuals 'adapted and acquiesced to that climate out of practical necessity or sheer ambition'.[155] For commercial artists like Munari the principal control system was represented by the Confederazione nazionale dei sindacati fascisti dei professionisti e degli artisti (National Confederation of fascist syndicates of professionals and artists), made up of some twenty trade unions. Certainly, in keeping with yet another typically Italian habit, the rigour of surveillance was anything but uniform or transparent. Signing up for the union was necessary, but not so for the National Fascist Party; moreover, the private sector offered a relatively safe harbour from the government's interference, at least until the mid-thirties.[156] This situation perhaps explains how Munari managed, at least until 1939, to avoid officially signing up for the National Fascist Party card, despite the militant bent of the Futurist group in Milan and the numerous commissions they received for the Triennale and other exhibitions. Ultimately, it was his journalistic contract with Mondadori that made membership inevitable for him.

> When I was art director at *Tempo* Illustrato [sic], Alberto Mondadori was forced to sign me up as a member of the Fascist Party, and they later summoned me for military service at an empty anti-aircraft battery just outside Milan.[157]

Apart from his wartime art direction at Mondadori, in the course of the 1930s Munari and Ricas hardly ever dealt as graphic designers with autarchic campaigns, or with advertisements for events sponsored by the regime.[158] Interestingly, their work did not appear in the pages of *Pubblicità d'Italia* (the organ of the National Fascist Syndicate of advertising agencies), nor did

152. Branzi 2008: 108, 110–1.
153. Berghaus 1996: 229.
154. Ibid.
155. Tranfaglia 1971: xii. For a thought-provoking reading of Italian history in relation to its design culture, see Branzi 2008.
156. See Berghaus 1996: 231–2. Fascist Corporativism was effectively enforced after 1934; and in 1937 the Ministry of popular culture was established.
157. Munari, quoted in Manera 1986: 153. After extensive research carried out at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Central State Archive) in Rome and at the Archivio di Stato (State Archive) in Milan, I was able to find neither membership lists of the national Fascist unions nor any other such documents with Munari's name. This is the only explicit mention of the issue. Nor is it clear whether, in order to work at Mondadori, Munari signed up as an advertising artist or—as is more likely—as a journalist. Note Tofanelli's account in this regard: '(...) neither of us had become a member of the party. Piazza never signed up, despite the fact that, at a certain point, he was a correspondent for the *Popolo d'Italia*. As for me, later on, I did join' (Tofanelli 1986: 215).
158. For an overview of this type of advertising, see those reproduced in *Guida Ricciardi 1936*.

they ever collaborate with UPI (Unione pubblicità italiana), the agency of choice for the collective campaigns for national products.[159] These best represented the mainstream trend in advertising, in which a realist approach, centered on a straightforward presentation of the product or user, often matched with a vigourous appeal to fascist beliefs, was predominant, while the modernist idiom developed by the futurists and commercial artists working in a similar vein was considered inadequate for mass communication.[160] The only instances of advertising work done by Munari in this nationalistic vein are a poster for UPI, titled *Forze dell'Impero*, dated 1936–37 and of which a mockup survives, and the poster for *Carboni nazionali*, which was shown at the Mostra grafica at the 1940 Triennale.[161] While the first design makes use of the familiar photomontage technique to promote mechanical industries such as Caproni, Reggiane, Isotta Fraschini, the latter recurs to the straightforward illustration style found in his contemporary magazine cover designs, and portrays an open hand holding a piece of carbon ore. All told, it does not seem this amounts to a serious political engagement on his part.

À propos of *Tempo*'s predominant rhetoric, Munari later noted that 'many of *Tempo*'s photographers had a fairly ironic outlook, and as soon as you so much as even slightly exaggerated it, it fell, or could easily fall'.[162] This is an arguable view, which Munari has now and again used in recent years to justify some of his graphic contributions, in which the use of formal innovations from the modernist repertoire served as a vehicle for conservative values.[163] Precisely how modern graphic design could serve Fascist ideology would become a point of contention and misunderstanding between Munari and Albe Steiner, despite the two Milanese designers' long friendship.[164] On the other hand, Munari certainly was not alone: several other pioneers of modern graphic design rather unscrupulously collaborated with the Fascist regime: Schawinsky, Persico, Nizzoli, Pintori, Depero, to name a few.[165] As for Munari, judging from clues scattered throughout his correspondence and writings from the 1930s (including his own articles published in *Tempo*), despite his more mature age, it does not seem that he was any real exception to the exaltation-inclined spirit of his generation. Several young intellectuals, architects and artists took awhile to recognise the error of their former belief in Fascism, even in the 'leftist Fascism' manifest in the attitudes of Bottai and others, and some of them paid with their own life—like

159. Published from 1937 and directed by Ugo Zampieri, an active union leader, *Pubblicità d'Italia* was also circulated abroad as part of larger propaganda efforts to promote the regime on an international level. It focused mainly on autarchic campaigns, and featured numerous ads by UPI, and as such embodied the realist approach favoured by state functionaries. See Arvidsson 2003: 36–8.

160. Arvidsson 2003: 38.

161. The original artwork is now in the Massimo e Sonia Cirulli Archive, New York/Bologna; 61×85 cm, photocollage and tempera; reproduced in the catalogue Pellegrini 2009: 189. The second poster appeared in *Tempo* no.12 (17 July 1939): 14, for an article by Arturo Tofanelli titled 'La pubblicità è arte?'. It is reproduced in colour (light blue, red, and black); size unknown (from photographs taken at the VII Triennale it would seem to have been rather small).

162. Quoted in Schwarz 1977.

163. Cf. Eco 1964: 64.

164. Steiner used to show around an example of what he deemed an aberrant use of modern graphic language; it was a flier Munari had designed, similar to the aforementioned photomontage for 'Udite! Udite!' (conversation with Lica and Anna Steiner, 20 July 2006).

165. Xanti Schawinsky's 1934 *Si* poster comes to mind, which was issued as an insert in the *Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* for the general elections that year. On the same occasion, Persico and Nizzoli created a series of Fascist propaganda posters, mounted in Milan's Galleria (that led Attilio Rossi to dismiss himself from the editorial staff of *Campo grafico* in disagreement about their publication). Even Pintori designed war propaganda posters prized at a national contest in 1942–43 (cf. Renato Zveteremich, 'Rubrica della pubblicità' in *Domus* no.174, June 1942: iiiff).

Giuseppe Pagano and Ludovico Belgioioso.[166] It does not seem Munari ever admitted to or denied having such sympathies; in any case, he always demonstrated a degree of reticence when asked to speak of the work he had done under the twenty years of Fascist rule—although here one might also invoke the attenuating role played by his fundamental indifference to politics.

> From 1939 to September 1943 I worked side-by-side with Bruno Munari. The rest of us were the sad, fibbing, terrible words—he was the drawings, the creativity, the shelter from the storm. Our editorial team was rather unique, as it was that of a magazine that went along with the regime during wartime (…) Munari waited for us in his somewhat secluded art director's office. He swiftly did the layouts for the texts and photographs we brought him, without ever really getting into their content. There was nothing to remind you of the war on his walls, just his things: compositions, abstractions, drawings. One day I walked in and saw his first *macchina inutile* (useless machine) hanging from the ceiling; it was an indescribable gadget with revolving colours, but it was no less explicit or major than everything the world outside that magical little room had to offer.[167]

This reluctance to any public political engagement came to characterise his overall career in the post-war period—and clearly marked his distance from the kind of political commitment displayed by fellow designers Albe Steiner or Enzo Mari—even in the case of projects entailing major social implications. Which is not to say that Munari eschewed any political dimension in his work. One could in fact legitimately assert that, from 1945 onward, Munari proceeded with a series of graphic and object-oriented projects that, on the one hand, tended toward a democratisation/desacralisation of art and, on the other hand, tended to hint at the idea that designers be more actively involved in contemporary society. As a logical consequence of his reflection on the social role of design, which he felt deeply about, he undertook a series of didactic design projects focussed on children; and in these projects we are led back to the very root of his ambition to bring about social reform (or even create a utopia, some would say). This was an integral part of modernism in its original conception, regardless of the successive transformations the term took in the second half of the twentieth century.[168] This involvement, this intellectual lucidity constitutes the awakening of Munari's political awareness.

The new typography and popular weeklies

Within the history of Italian publishing and graphic design, *Tempo* was the first illustrated weekly to fully include photography as an integral informative element. This was, effectively, a modern update in response to new needs expressed across the fields of advertising and the graphic arts. Like many other illustrated periodicals produced throughout Europe in the late 1930s, *Tempo* was not substantially different from its American model. Aside from its memorable covers combining full-bleed photographs with the magazine's title graphic, the layout of *Tempo* did not show any signs of influence from the New Typography, which had been the object of much debate. Despite the unquestionable novelty

166. See Zangrandi 1962: 210–1.
167. Arturo Tofanelli, quoted in *Le persone che hanno fatto grande Milano* 1983: 38.
168. In this regard see Norman Potter, *What is a designer: things, places, messages* (Londres: Hyphen Press, 2002): 36–45 in particular.

of a photographically illustrated magazine, *Tempo* was, all told, not very innovative from a design point of view—if compared to publications like *Casabella* and *Campo grafico*. It features few formal innovations: its use of the typeface *Landi* is its sole concession to rational typography. Indeed, it looks more closely related to the typographic eclecticism of French publications like *Paris-Soir*, *Vu* or *Match*.

In his advertising work Munari had proved to be able to skilfully assimilate new graphic idioms. If, therefore, *Tempo* does not seem a particularly vanguard piece of publishing in its layout, as its association with Munari might lead one to believe, it might well be attributable to a deliberate choice on the publisher's part, aiming either for a reassuring repeat of the style already seen in *Life* or to adopt a more conservative guise in order to appeal to the predominantly conservative taste of the Italian public. If anything, the quality of Munari's artistic directorship at *Tempo* is manifested in the skilful editing of photographic material, as well as his intuitive development of the potential inherent to graphic tools such as diagrams, charts and explanatory drawings to visualise information. Munari must also be recognised for maintaining the magazine's graphic coherence, despite the difficult conditions in which the production team often worked,[169] and nevertheless doing so without emerging as a noted personality—that is, without leaving a visible, personal imprint in its layout.[170] In any case, when put to the test, the magazine's photographic formula and its graphic design —which lay somewhere between the eclectic and the popular—ended up becoming a longstanding success in Italian publishing. To such a degree that a similar approach would return in the immediate post-war years to help establish Mondadori's new illustrated magazine, *Epoca*—once again overseen by Munari.

Domus (1943–44)

Given the continued good relations between the two artists, it is plausible that the dissolution of Munari's and Ricas' joint studio was brought about by Ricas being hired to join Editoriale *Domus*. If this were the case, it may have been Ricas himself who suggested Munari's name to run the campaigns for the companies in the Montecatini group. Whatever the course of events, with the exception of the relationships with the various magazines which (aside from *La Lettura* published by the *Corriere della sera*) belonged to modest-sized publishing companies/that did not have the same industrial size as Mondadori or Rizzoli, by the end of the decade, Munari had two main clients; on the one hand, he was connected to Bompiani (as an editorial contributor) and on the other hand to Editoriale Domus (as an advertising graphic artist). His entry into the editorial world of Mondadori was probably helped along by Bompiani or Zavattini, both, as we have seen, involved in the launch of *Grazia*, who may have suggested him as art director for the new weekly. When, in September '43,

169. Alberto Mondadori, in a note written to the public toward the end of 1942, admits the difficulty, in wartime, of maintaining impeccable production standards: '(...) to obtain [high-quality photographic prints] one needs good paper and good inks—two things that, at the moment, are quite lacking. (...) Unfortunately, we cannot yet say with any precision when the paper and ink supplies might improve; indeed, we cannot rule out the possibility they might in fact worsen' (*Tempo* no.187, 24 December 1942: 25; quoted in Lascialfari 2002: 456).

170. As happened, albeit in a rather different context, during that same period under the artistic directorships of Alexander Libermann, Alexey Brodovitch and Mehmet Agha.

the *Tempo* venture came to an abrupt end, Munari re-established relations with the editorial office of *Domus* (following the break in advertising work in '39 after being hired by Mondadori). The editorial staff—Ponti had not been at the helm of the magazine for a few years—included a team comprised of Melchiorre Bega along with Lina Bo and Carlo Pagani, and without his former partner Ricas. In his new relationship with the editorial office, Munari assumed the role of the magazine's graphic art director and also wrote provocative observations on design/aesthetic issues. The importance of this new relationship was confirmed in 1944 with the publication of his collection *Fotocronache* for Editoriale Domus.

Domus was an integral part of that fervent intellectual period open to modernity which, in the 1930s, was centered in Milan. More eclectic and general than its counterpart *Casabella*, the magazine founded by Gio Ponti in 1928 represented a meeting point for applied arts, architecture and graphic arts. The two magazines—since 1932 both titles belonged to the same publishing company—were initially focused on modernity in the sense of new culture for the home, that is where decorative arts and architecture converge. More than pursuing an organic discourse, Ponti offered a varied range of items corresponding to his personal eclecticism which allowed him to address a cross-section of the middle-class, not an exclusively technical audience, and with a strong female impact, fostered by columns on interior design, gardening and cuisine.[171] In comparison with this general direction was the single-subject specialization of *Casabella*, especially after '32 under the direction of Pagano who would make it the mouthpiece of Italian rationalism. Thus, *Domus* took the subtitle 'L'Arte nella casa' (Art in the Home), while *Casabella* was called the 'Rivista di architettura e di tecnica' (Review of Architecture and Technique).[172] In November 1940 Ponti left Mazzocchi to go to work on the new magazine *Stile*, published by his competitor Garzanti.[173] Thus, beginning the following January, the direction of *Domus* was taken over by a trio comprised of writer Massimo Bontempelli and architects Melchiorre Bega and Giuseppe Pagano, who steered the magazine more decisively towards architectural subjects.[174] In addition, in 1940 Mazzocchi also enlisted Pagano to run the bimonthly *Panorama* (at first run by the same editor), in which Munari published one of his typical photomontage exercises in a propaganda article in which he quips ironically about the United States.[175]

171. In '29 Gianni Mazzocchi and Gio Ponti went into partnership and took over the magazine, with Ponti as president and editor-in-chief and Mazzocchi as managing director. Cf. *Gianni Mazzocchi editore* 1994; Fossati 1972: 31; Spinelli 2006 (1): 8–11; ibid (2): 6–9; Irace 2006 (1): 15–7).

172. Baglione 2008: 99–100, 105–6.

173. The disagreement between Mazzocchi and Ponti originated from a re-organization of the publishing company which took place in February of that year. This left Ponti in charge of *Domus* decreasing his administrative role. There was also an irreconcilable difference in opinion between Mazzocchi who was interested in opening up the magazine to a wider audience, embracing a didactic attitude, while Ponti maintained an essentially elitist attitude. After the long association, the split even involved legal consequences. However, Mazzocchi and Ponti once again came to a mutual understanding in '47, when the founder took back control of his magazine. In 1938 Aldo Garzanti acquired the Treves publishing house and with it two magazines, *Architettura* by Marcello Piacentini and the historic *Illustrazione italiana* (De Giorgi 2006 (2): 10–3; Martignoni 2002: 12–4).

174. Baglione 2008: 105–6; Martignoni 2002: 12–4. The editorial office was constantly being reshuffled: in '42 Pagano (who directed *Casabella* at the same time) was called up and then replaced by Giancarlo Palanti; Bontempelli left in January '43. Guglielmo Ulrich joined the two editors, Bontempelli and Bega, from October '42 to October '43, leaving his place to Lina Bo with Carlo Pagani (De Giorgi 2006 (2): 10–3).

175. Munari, 'L'incredibile Delano' (The Incredible Delano) in *Panorama* no.1 (April 1939): 39. 14.5×22 cm, pp.160. The article, with 8 b/w photographs annotated by

In '44 *Domus* magazine, to which Munari contributed constantly, had become predominantly about architecture. After the allied bombings of Milan in the summer of '43, the editorial team set up a temporary office in Bergamo. After a series of ups and downs, in January '44 Bega was on his own and joined by Lina Bo and Carlo Pagani. Compared to the rather strict and rationalist direction during the period under Bega, Bontempelli and Pagano, during |215| the subsequent period the magazine enjoyed a more open, easy respite, and Munari's presence in the editorial office was not unrelated to this. Growing economic difficulties connected to locating paper and to distribution in the context of the German occupation of northern Italy halted publications for the entire year of 1945.

> It was 1944, a difficult and gloomy year. But Munari's spirit was always calm, indomitable, optimistic. He contributed to *Domus* which I directed as part of a threesome (...) There were only a few of us left and Bruno stayed with us. (...) In early '44, Bruno offered me an analysis of the succession of styles over time. The graphic that appeared in *Domus* in February of that year indicated a fluctuation in the line of art between rigorously controlled forms—Reason—and highly intricate ones—Imagination. In an increasingly rapid succession one wondered, 'What will the new style be like?'[176]

Compared with the format and the restrained typographic appearance (neoclassical overall, though somewhat open to modern taste) Ponti used beginning in '32, the magazine cover during the war years reflected the editorial changes, as exemplified in issue no.176 (August 1942) that was in line with the rational aesthetic of *Casabella* coinciding, as chance would have it, with Guglielmo Ulrich's arrival on the editorial scene. During the war, the scarcity of materials forced simpler and more economical solutions, such as the one-color cover repeated identically in '43, with the only changes being a different background color and moving the graphic pendulum (cf. no.187). Starting from issue no.191 (November 1943) the cover returned to a rational graphic setup, reflected in the table of contents and the magazine layout in general which bears Munari's unmistakable mark. Without, however, abandoning the vertical format, the cover designed by Munari took a few cues from *Casabella*, at the same time highlighting his particular way of playing, as if disobeying the strictness of the new constructive typography: a rectangular black-and-white photograph aligned to the right was placed on a white background, under the masthead logo; the lower portion bore the magazine numbering and a black line which cut slantwise across the page separating the footer and the box containing information on the issue and the publisher. The masthead was in a second color, and for subsequent issues, the cover was printed in three colors. The table of contents also displayed a new vivacity which stemmed in particular from a clever use of color.

Similarly, the inside of the magazine |216| was laid out on a precise modular grid |217| with flexible positioning of the text, photo- |218| graphs and graphic elements. This reflected the experience he acquired with *Tempo*. The pages seamlessly alternated structures of

Munari, followed an article in which the author declared that the United States was examining a corporative system similar to the Fascist one (Odon Por, 'Gli Stati Uniti verso l'autarchia' ibid: 36–8), and attacked Roosevelt and various myths in the American democratic system.

176. Carlo Pagani, in Finessi 2005: 172–3.

2, 3, 4 or 5 columns which allowed for a greater variety of rhythms without losing sight of an effective division of the content and the basic coherence between sections. With remarkable skill and control Munari seemed to adopt the best graphic solutions previously tested in *Tempo* to visually |219| translate complex information, which can be likened in many aspects to what is today called information design. Simple two-color designs or overprinting on photographs and line drawings or architectural sketches made it possible to liven up the pages. Furthermore, the second color was used to serve as a visual accent, giving the page depth, and to divide the information effectively, with the white of the paper coming into play with the rhythmic structure of the pages. One could say that the materials at *Domus* were more suited to this kind of work and stimulated Munari towards this research on the visual communication of complex information. On the other hand, the gradual movement from collage and photomontage to independent photographic narration, seen in the brief period of the 1930s, was clearly demonstrated in the editorial work for *Tempo* where the phototext institutionalized, so to speak, this documentary-related tendency.[177] In addition, numerous articles created for the Mondadori weekly during |210| the four-year span showed this new inter- |211| est in an informative graphic approach; the |212| articles in question were on architecture,[178] and later war reports,[179] or columns on the economy.[180] Herein the analytical/informational factor was predominant, and its merit must justly be attributed to Munari and to the group of contributors who worked in the art department under his direction (these included Fulvio Bianconi, Carlo Dradi and Gelindo Furlan).

In addition to his input in the magazine's graphic appearance, in '44 Munari often contributed with articles that dealt, from his artistic point of view, with subjects tied to issues of reconstruction (a trend shared by Ponti's *Stile* during those dramatic events) or more general aesthetic questions, already projected beyond the end of the war. In these articles, written in a tone that shifted between didactic intention and ironic provocation, the visual support was essential; the text, in fact, often functioned as a simple 'lead' to the photomontages, sequences of unusual photographs or effective graphic diagrams. This then was the general impression taken from his presence behind the page, where, beyond the precision of the typographic choices, the use of images taken from old prints or manual interventions tempered the seriousness (in certain cases, the dramatic nature) of the subjects at hand.

Inside the cultural industry

In fully considering Ricas' and Munari's professional paths following their separation, they shared a common trait, beyond their common experience in the Futurist movement and advertising graphic arts from the early 1930s onward: during the brief decade, in fact, both left

177. Schnapp reported similar observations in reference to several of the articles cited (which, among other things, confirms our interpretation) (Schnapp 2008: 149–50, 154–6).

178. See for example 'Il dramma della città' in *Tempo* no.26, 23 November 1939: 9–15; 'La città in cura' and 'La città nuova' ivi no.27, 30 November 1939: 13–20, as well as the cover 4th—articles created working side-by-side with BBPR architects.

179. For example, 'Economia di guerra' in *Tempo* no.25, 16 November 1939; 'Il bloccante bloccato' ivi no.64, 15 August 1940: 25–7; 'Risorse economiche dell'America latina' ivi no.71, 3 October 1940: 25–9; 'Un bilancio ammonitore' ivi no.141, 12 February 1942: 3–9.

180. For example, Gaetano Ciocca, 'Discorsi sulle cose reali' in *Tempo* no.204, 22–29 April 1943: 18–9.

the avant-garde field to join the cultural industry, the Milanese publishing sector in particular. This early entry into the industry—Editoriale Domus and Mondadori, respectively—placed the two artists in an uncommon position for the time, in certain respects anticipating later consolidations which did not occur in the Italian graphic arts world until the '50s. While at the time Olivetti (with Pintori and Nizzoli) was practically the only instance, during the postwar period there were various examples of synergies between intellectuals and a cartel of large, most advanced industries (Olivetti, Pirelli, Italsider, Rinascente, Rai).[181]

In the early 1940s, therefore, Munari had the opportunity to forge a permanent relationship with the publisher Mondadori which was not, however, limited to directing the art department for the periodicals branch. In fact, by 1940 his name was already associated with I Libri per Tutti—an inexpensive series with texts on political, scientific and literary history—for which he designed the graphic format for the cover. The layout Munari created had a rather austere style, featuring a simple background in color (solid or shaded) and a black square bearing the title and name of the author (in a neoclassical typeface), placed high on the bookplate.[182]

Munari's relationship with the Bompiani publishing company was the longest and most well-defined and it would extend to after the war, but as it happens, it had already gotten a solid start in the '30s. In fact, it is important to distinguish between his editorial consulting, such as for the *Almanacco Letterario* which continued uninterrupted until 1938, and the graphic work on the covers of published volumes, which occurred on a less regular basis. Beginning in 1932, that is, starting from the novels by Körmendi, it seems Munari worked on the graphic look of novels for Letteraria, the publishing house's main series devoted to Italian and foreign contemporary fiction, for which Munari designed a fair number of book jackets—and it is possible that he had a role in some other series (such as La Zattera, launched in '42).[183] It is no surprise that Bompiani, being a publisher particularly aware of all the modern types of advertising promotion, sought out Munari's talent for those publishing products intended for a more general audience, which therefore demanded covers with great visual appeal. Compared to the graphics for the 'Hungarian' novels featuring the nearly exclusive presence of informal handwriting, which was also reused in several advertisements,[184] in the middle of the decade and especially in the early '40s, a different kind of graphic research prevailed, wavering between two somewhat anti-figurative styles: one that focused on exploring the values of material textures created by drawing or

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181. For an examination of the peculiar season of Milanese graphic arts connected to businesses like Olivetti, Pirelli, and Italsider following WWII until the sixties, see Vinti 2007.

182. The series I Libri per Tutti was launched by Mondadori in 1940 and included a handful of titles: Antonio Beltramelli, *L'uomo nuovo* (Benito Mussolini) (1940); Mario Appelius, *Asia tragica ed immensa* (1940); Silvio Crespi, *Alla difesa d'Italia in guerra e a Versailles* (1940); René Fülöp-Miller, *Rasputin e l'ultimo zar* (1940); Guido Milanesi, *Racconti di tutti i mari* (1941–1944). Munari's role in creating the covers is expressly indicated on the promotional flyer for the series (coll. Giorgio Maffei, Turin). Cf. Mondadori's historical catalogue in the Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milan.

183. The reconstruction of Munari's graphic arts production for the Bompiani publishing house in the thirties is based (often to a decisive extent) on analysis of the covers, crosschecking this with the information in the *Catalogo generale Bompiani 1929–2009* (Milan: Bompiani, 2009) and in Piazzoni 2007.

184. See the covers for Ferenc Körmendi, *Un'avventura a Budapest* (1932) and *Via Bodenbach* (1933); the later *La generazione felice* (1934) is an exception, featuring a decisively constructivist style. Cf. also Guido Piovene, *Lettere di una novizia* (1941), where handwriting and script type are combined.

photography;[185] the other that tended rather towards dividing the cover space in order to create a central area that would then be filled with typography.[186] These graphic devices almost seemed to undo the realistic depiction, even to 'pierce' the two-dimensionality of the paper. This was achieved both through the layering of shapes which accentuate the illusion of depth (somehow reminiscent of aeropainting) and through a marked stylization of shapes to the point of turning them into abstract patterns. As for the typographic choices, the titles unmistakably show a retrieval of neoclassical letterforms, that were revised by Munari by adapting (by hand) alphabets taken from typographical specimens. It is also important to recall Munari's contribution to the highly successful *Enciclopedia pratica*, one of the first large works put out by Bompiani. Conceived and compiled by Bompiani and Cosimo Cherubini, the encyclopedia drew on the contribution of many intellectuals, professionals and political figures to write the subject entries, including Munari. And considering the project's complexity, as well as a few stylistic indications in the cover illustrations and the illustrations on the box that held the two volumes, it is not unlikely that Munari also played a role, though not exclusively, in the layout of the volumes and in creating the illustrations.[187]

Munari as author

This kind of work on the exterior graphics of book products for large publishing houses represented a new area of endeavor for Munari and was an early indication of what his predominant interest in the graphic arts field would be in the 1950s and '60s. In that which we could call his maturity, whether it be for stage-of-life reasons (Munari was approaching forty years of age) or for his extensive professional experience (also in journalism, as we have seen), during the war Munari came to contend with the conception of books also as an author. In the span of three years, from 1942 to 1944, the Milanese designer published no less than five books for different publishing houses. The volumes were all rather heterogeneous in nature as well as in the degree of involvement in the content production, and they revealed his personal areas of interest: humor, photography and, a significantly new focus, the world of children.

Once again it was his friend Zavattini who introduced Munari to Einaudi, a small but firmly established publishing house founded in Turin in 1933 by a group of young intellectuals centered around Giulio Einaudi.[188] Einaudi began as a publishing house fundamentally dedicated to essays, yet in late '41 it put out a series of wide-ranging editorial publications with the purpose of expanding on the national market. Responding to this ambition to position itself in new market sectors, such as contemporary fiction and inexpensive books, Einaudi's new collections demonstrated an openness to a wider, less educated and more diverse audience. Relying

185. See the covers for M.K. Rawlings, *Il cucciolo* (ca.1942) and Donald J.Hall, *Spinosa ospitalità* (1944) and, in the La Zattera series, Indro Montanelli, *Gente qualunque* (1942).

186. See Archibald J Cronin, *Caleidoscopio* (1940), Mario Sobrero, *Di padre in figlio* (1942), Erskine Caldwell, *Il piccolo campo* (1940), John Steinbeck, *La battaglia* (1940).

187. *Enciclopedia pratica Bompiani. La cultura, la vita civile, la famiglia*. Milan: Bompiani, 1938. 2 vol. (see Piazzoni 2007: 120–1; and *Catalogo generale Bompiani 1929–2009*).

188. With Giulio Einaudi, son of economist and journalist Luigi Einaudi (and future president of the Italian Republic) were Leone Ginzburg, Massimo Mila, Norberto Bobbio and Cesare Pavese, later joined by Natalia Ginzburg and Giaime Pintor. Cf. http://www.einaudi.it, last accessed 3 February 2011.

on the Roman editorial office, assigned to Mario Alicata and Carlo Muscetta, it undertook ambitious projects (such as the new collection, Biblioteca Universale and the *Enciclopedia Einaudi* which, in addition to an economic commitment, demanded a significantly wider circle of authors and contributors. Alicata was in charge of several projects including the series Libri per l'infanzia e la gioventù created according to an innovative vision of children's literature—'the education of children granted among adults on an equal footing', this was the series' pronounced intent—with an editorial plan that included authors such as Morante, Brancati, Alvaro, Vittorini and Longanesi.[189] As for Munari, it was Zavattini who, in a letter written at the end of '41, told him about his proposal to create a book out of his humorous illustrations which had already appeared in *Settebello*.[190] Munari responded to this by offering, in turn, to redo the drawings and personally see to the book's layout. Negotiations with Einaudi proceeded quickly and even planned for a second volume for the same series, almost surely suggested by Munari; Alicata, in requesting that the contract be sent to Munari for the *Abecedario* (ABC
|223| Book) and *Le Macchine di Munari* (Mu-
|224| nari's Machines) expressed his pleasure at having 'snatched' him away from Mondadori.[191] In much the same way as with Bompiani and Mondadori, this marked the beginning of a long and profitable relationship with Einaudi during which time, in the years following the war, the Milanese designer would make a definite contribution to defining the Turin publishing house's distinct image.

Published in the fall of '42, the *Macchine* book displayed a cover in red with a collage of found letters which formed the title, and an image made up of clippings of illustrations, old prints and photographs forming a kind of puzzle which hinted at the book's content.[192] The inside presented some fifteen 'humorous machines' redrawn in color, accompanied by the original text which describes each device presented on the facing page, in a tone that lies somewhere between nonsense and scientific language. Munari's original design was for a long, narrow format, and a cover with only the typographic collage on a black background;[193] logically, therefore, the actual format must have been imposed by the publisher. During the print preparation, then, Munari and Einaudi corresponded closely to discuss many details regarding the layout: from the type to use for the text to the appearance of the title page, to choices concerning the binding.[194] The

189. To enjoy the good graces of Giuseppe Bottai, then Minister of National Education (Mangoni 1999: 116n). However, only 4 titles appeared in the series: *Le bellissime avventure di Caterì dalla trecciolina* by Elsa Morante, *Caccia grossa fra le erbe* by Mario Sturani, as well as two titles by Munari—all published in 1942 (cf. *Cinquant'anni di un editore* 1983: 567).

190. See Munari's letter to Zavattini, s.d. [end of 1941 or January '42], in the Cesare Zavattini Archives, Biblioteca Panizzi, Reggio Emilia, file M844/4. Cf. also a later letter from Munari to Zavattini, s.d. [1942], ivi file M844/1.

191. Correspondence from Alicata to Einaudi, March 10, 1942; cit. in Mangoni 1999: 121.

192. *Le macchine di Munari* (Munari's Machines). Turin: Einaudi, 1942. 21.5×28.5 cm, pp.32 n.n.; hard paperback binding, black cloth spine. Cover illustrated in color, three-color printing inside.

193. See original mock-up, 12×35 cm; now in the Giancarlo Baccoli coll., Riva del Garda.

194. Einaudi insisted on using *Landi* roman instead of *Bodoni* black condensed recommended by Munari, but he accepted doing the title, text and notes in the same typeface. Einaudi, about the introduction: 'I am thinking of absorbing into one page the title page—which in of itself is not necessary, since we are dealing with a sort of album, but would nonetheless be missed—and the introduction, decorating it with the wonderful drawings stolen here and there from your tables (...)'. Munari, for his part, recommended cutting the hard paper cover on a edge with the pages, and the black cloth spine (Einaudi Archives at the Archivio di Stato, Turin: Italian collaborators/Bruno Munari fonds: file 140 (pages 7, 9, 12, 20, 21, 23, 30, 34).

layout used color for the illustrations and the cover only, leaving the other (few) pages in black: the author's photographic self-portrait on the inside flap; the preface (the famous nonsense 'Attenzione attenzione') which was the first clear example of those 'semantic disturbances' which best express the typical Munariesque humor; and finally a black square with a false errata corrige at the end of the book.[195]

Einaudi and Munari did not meet in person until after the war, but Munari was not short on suggestions for the book launch. He proposed setting up the window displays with objects taken from his 'machines' or with an upside-down umbrella filled with books (he even offered to take care of this personally for the Milan area…), or a blurb on the book which would read 'A book for children from 8 to 80'—ideas that, albeit somewhat costly according to the publisher, would in part be carried out.[196]

From another point of view, the cover of *Macchine* demonstrated those alphabet shapes that captured Munari's interest during that period, attested to by other attempts by the artist, though in single, Dadaist examples: the collage series en-
|225| titled *ABC Dadà* (1944),[197] the ABC book given by his son Alberto to Anna, Anto-
|226| nio Boggeri's daughter (1944),[198] or the
|227| personal notebook containing clippings and drawings of letters and alphabets (c.1940).[199] As for the editorial produc-
|231| tion, in 1942 Munari published the *Abecedario* for Einaudi, another book belonging to the same children's series. It presented the letters of the alphabet accompanied by images of objects with corresponding initials.[200] Created in collaboration with an illustrator,[201] the book had an unusual square format, suggested, it seems, by Munari.[202] Both the front and the back of the cover displayed nine colored circles containing letters and objects; inside, the left pages displayed the upper-case version and their respective italic versions on a colored background, while the pages on the right had the lower-case version with the illustrations overprinted in black. Even though the book's contents did not stray substantially from the usual style of this kind of tool, Munari's *Abecedario* was distinct in the lightness and simplicity of the layout, livened up by the expressive use of color, and in its emphasis on the alphabetical shapes chosen, which make (as was the artist's intention) the book especially accessible and stimulating for preschool children.[203]

195. The *semantic disturbances* (or as defined by Gillo Dorfles, lexical leaps) 'are based on a slight shift in meaning, for example between the definitions of two synonymous terms, and especially on their lightning-fast conciseness' (Umberto Eco, in Finessi 2005: 197). Example: 'É vietato l'ingresso ai non addetti al lavoro/È vietato l lavoro ai non addetti all'ingresso/È ingrassato l'addetto ai non vietati al lavoro/È lavato il gessetto ai non addetti all'ingrosso (…)'. [Play on words in Italian]

196. See letter Munari to Einaudi, 21 October 1941 (Einaudi Archives, cit).

197. *ABC Dadà*, 1944. Mixed techniques and collage on cardboard, 22 plates 21.5×31.5 cm. Now in the Hajek-Zucconi coll., Novara.

198. *Abecedario*, 1944, collage on cardboard. 9.2×32.5 cm (closed), 36.6×32.5 cm (open). Now in the Boggeri-Monguzzi coll., Meride (Switzerland).

199. 'Appunti grafici solo visivi (non da leggere)', notebook with collage and pencil drawings, 1940. 12×35 cm. Now in the Giancarlo Baccoli coll., Cavalese.

200. *Abecedario* (ABC Book). Turin: Einaudi, 1942. 23.5×23.5 cm, pp.40 n.n. Hardbound cover, printed in four colors, with cloth spine; illustrations in two colors.

201. Cf. letter Munari to Einaudi, 20 July 1942 (Einaudi Archives, cit). The designer's name is not known, but it was probably Gelindo Furlan, which whom Munari also created two paper game boxes in the early forties, *Il teatro dei bambini* and *Via Mercanti*.

202. Cf. letter Munari to Einaudi, 16 June 1942 (Einaudi Archives, cit), in which Munari explains: 'the ABC book was designed in a square format, and all the shapes on the pages are in harmonic proportion with the square; even the cover made up of nine disks is in harmony if it stays closed in square of the page (…)' and suggests trimming 7 cm off the format of the series (21×28) so at to create a 21×21 square. Einaudi gladly accepts.

203. The type is a bold condensed version of *Clarendon* and may have been designed ad hoc, as Munari seems to suggest:

A few days after the war ended, Munari quickly wrote Einaudi to propose a new book to go with the *Abecedario*, similar in format and style, dealing with numbers: the *Numerario*, completed the previous year—perhaps inspired by a similar book published by Veronesi in 1944—and left in a drawer awaiting a return to normalcy.[204] On the occasion, in thinking of the next |229| reprinting, perhaps together with the third book,[205] Munari attached a new drawing to replace an embarrassing illustration for the letter H (Hitlerian Youth) which could no longer be used; but the *Abecedario* was never reprinted, and the new volume on numbers remained unpublished.[206] Instead, the idea resurfaced at the beginning of the 1960s with another innovative book for children on the alphabet, the *Alfabetiere*, and an original North American edition entitled *Munari's ABC*.[207]

Munari's interest in the world of children was certainly a reflection of his own experience with fatherhood (his son Alberto was born in 1940) and it took on growing importance in his professional work. Even before the books for Einaudi, in 1940 he published a box set of four small books |228| called *Mondo Aria Acqua Terra* (World Air Water Land), which, for all intents and purposes, was the first publication in his name.[208] This was a popular scientific text for children in which Munari once again emphasized images, created in the customary 'unadorned' style seen on the covers of periodicals during this same period (see *La Lettura*), intended to capture the imagination of young readers: 'Arranged like many movie frames that come one after another in regular succession, you will find unusual pictures in this book. Look at them and be transported on a wonderful journey.'[209] Also in the early 1940s, in collaboration with Gelindo Furlan—a childhood friend, as well as a Futurist painter from the Milanese group and a contributor with the Mondadori art department)—who created the illustrations, Munari designed two toy boxes published by Editore Gentile: *Teatro dei bambini* (Children's Theater) and *Via Mercanti* (Merchants Street).[210] Overall, these were inexpensive publishing products (cut-out toys were common at the time), based predominantly on illustration, even if both the album format and the typographic cover of the books as well as the square format of the box for the two toys were graphically interesting. As for the

'For the colored backgrounds (...) and for the letters of the alphabet (...) you could have wooden blocks made, this would save you considerably' (letter to Einaudi, June 16, 1942, cit).

204. The Second World War ended in Italy on 25 April 1945; the letter (hand-delivered) to Einaudi was dated 8 May (Einaudi Archives, cit). Luigi Veronesi had published two similarly styled children's books, *I numeri* and *I colori* (Milan: M.A. Denti, 1944).

205. The first edition's print runs are not known, but it is unlikely that they exceeded 1,000 copies; in any case, the text of the letter seems to indicate that the two previous volumes had sold out.

206. 'I am also sending you a drawing for a HANGAR to put on the H page in the ABC book, in place of the other drawing with has fallen out of favor' (Munari to Einaudi, 8 May 1945, cit). Thanks to Giorgio Maffei for pointing it out. These 'tributes' to the regime were somehow necessary in order to get permission from the Minculpop, if even an anti-Fascist publisher like Einaudi could endorse these kinds of illustrations. Curiously, today the book cannot be located in any Italian public library.

207. Bruno Munari, *Alfabetiere*. Turin: Einaudi, 1960; *Munari's ABC*. Cleveland/New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960. By a strange coincidence, the second volume in English which would have been called Munari's *Numerary* was also never published; in any case, its complete mock-up does exist, now in CSAC, Parma (reproduced in Bianchino 2008: 118–22).

208. Bruno Munari, *Mondo Aria Acqua Terra. Immagini geografiche per ragazzi*. Milan: Italgeo [1940]. 14.5×19.5 cm; pp.26 n.n.; 4 staplebound volumes; cardboard case. Cover and illustrations in color. A new edition was republished by Orlando Cibelli Editore of Milan in 1952.

209. From the text, cit. in Maffei 2002: 50 (our italics).

210. *Il Teatro de bambini* and *Via Mercanti*. Milan: Editore Gentile, s.d. [1940–42c]. Printing: Ricordi & C., Milan. Toy-books with cut-out figures. 22×23 cm for both. Covers and panels in color. The first contains a card with four flaps to be mounted in the shape of a theater, with 5 panels for the backdrops; the second consists of seven punched out cards to be mounted (in the shape of a shop window), which can hold the cut-out images of different products.

illustrations, they seemed to take on that basic, simplified style that Munari would later adopt in the books published for Mondadori in 1945 immediately following the war, those Albi Munari (Munari Picture Books) that introduced an innovative vision in the children's publishing world of the day, distinguishing him as an original author.

Before the war was over, in '44, Munari planned and edited the publication of several other books related to his main interests, not always relevant from a graphic arts point of view, but worthwhile examining nonetheless. If *Le Macchine* took his humorous inventions and adapted them in a children's tone—opening him up to a new field of study that would take on major importance in the postwar period—his passion for humor offered him the opportunity to edit a collection of cartoons, |230| the *Catalogo illustrato dell'umorismo* (The Illustrated Catalogue of Humour), a compilation of examples taken from different kinds of publications, rearranged according to subject and presented in alphabetical order.[211] In addition to the choice of subjects, Munari was probably responsible for the short humorous texts that introduce each chapter. The layout, on the other hand, seems rather anonymous; the cover is a little more interesting, with its arrangement of titles and especially the insertion of the table of contents, but essentially, it has the overall look of a cheap travel book.

His work on the layout of *Taccuino* |232| *dell'aiuto regista* (The Assistant Director's Notebook) by Aldo Buzzi, edited by Hoepli in 1944, seems more demanding.[212] Stemming from his experience on set and written during the evacuation after armistice (8 September 1943), Buzzi's book showed quite a bit of affinity with Munari's style of writing and irony, so that considering the presence of his work (a photomontage, a schematic storyboard), one may suspect his role as co-author in preparing the materials. Despite the smaller format, the book's layout seems simple yet varied, while adhering to the typology of technical manuals put out by the publisher; even the cover—like the one for Domus edited by Munari during those same months—was laid out on a subtle, deliberate, graphic imbalance. The central alignment of the titles which are put in boxes on a red background, is in fact contradicted by a small square photograph (depicting a theater curtain) placed on the outer edge. Munari's participation in the project attests to his continued interest in cinema, a natural extension of his research on photographic sequences, indicated in some way by the successful volume *Fotocronache* (Photo reports) published by Editoriale Domus in 1944.[213] This was a compendium of articles that had previously appeared in *Tempo*, re-offered here—even if the magazine was never mentioned, perhaps to avoid problems with censorship—in a new layout that, although freer in its arrangement as compared with the weekly's dense graphics, essentially respect the original cropping and

211. Bruno Munari (edited by), *Catalogo illustrato dell'umorismo*. Milan: Ultra, 1944. 18.5×24.5 cm, pp.128; paperback binding. Printing: Stabilimento Grafico R. Scotti, Milan. Cover in three colors, illustrations in b/w.

212. Aldo Buzzi, *Taccuino dell'aiuto regista*. Milan: Hoepli Editore, 1944. 12×18 cm, pp.80; paperback binding. Inside there is a small photomontage (p.31) and 'Piccolo film a colori' (Small color film), a schematic example of an illustrated storyboard (pp. 63–64). Aldo Buzzi (1910–2009) was a scriptwriter and author.

213. [Bruno] Munari, *Fotocronache. Dall'isola dei tartufi al qui pro quo*. Milan: Editoriale Domus, 1944. 16.5×24 cm, pp.96, paperback bound. A passage from the correspondence with Einaudi implies how proud Munari was of the articles published in *Tempo*: '(...) and my articles in *Tempo*, have you seen them?' (letter from Munari to Einaudi, Einaudi Archives, cit, page 34).

sequence. The visual index of the photo credits is interesting, as is the inclusion of a photo report on the river sweeps which originally appeared not in Mondadori's magazine but in *Stile*, the magazine under Ponti's direction in the '40s.[214] The importance of Munari's book for the publishing house was underscored by a review and by various ads which appeared in *Domus* in the fall of '44.[215]

The events of the war would inevitably mark an important break in Munari's artistic path. The last books published, *Fotocronache* and *Taccuino* in particular, tend to confirm the new course, characterised by a re-definition of the constructive graphics that we have seen Munari develop since the '30s in an industrial publishing context. This can be resumed as a formula that is modern, but not strictly functional, intuitive, artisanal and in certain respects a little negligent in the typographic dimension. In order to weigh his achievements, while in the context of mainstream periodicals Munari seemed to proceed with a modern graphic style all his own—corresponding to his falling back on more mannered and intuitive formulas—it should also be pointed out how his layout work for *Domus* was absolutely some of most mature typographic examples (which should also include the postwar covers for *Grazia*) wherein he truly demonstrated an uncommon skill and verve. And yet, as much as this may seem contradictory, strictly speaking, Munari never was a true typographer, at least not in the sense of a designer whose background or specialization is in printing (like Bertieri, Modiano or Attilio Rossi, to name but a few of his contemporaries). Significantly, his name does not appear among the regular contributors to *Campo grafico*,[216] nor did he ever publish in *Il Risorgimento grafico* or *Graphicus*. And after the war, although his career was predominantly focused on editorial graphics, working for important publishers such as Einaudi, Bompiani, Mondadori and Rizzoli on the graphic line of book covers and series, he would rarely attempt the purely typographic work on the page layout, especially in text-filled books. Even his own books—from those published by Scheiwiller to the later volumes for Laterza and Zanichelli—confirm in their inside design (not the covers) that his strength did not lie in typography, where his solutions look slipshod in the details, clinging to commonplace models, hence removed from the preoccupations of functional typography that was by then the predominant reference worldwide.

214. In the column 'Curiosità' in *Stile* no.30, June 1943: 55. Munari's relationship with Ponti was also attested to (in this issue) by the review of the Abecedario and by the report 'Una piccola casa a Fiumetto' (A Small House in Fiumetto, pp.18–9) regarding a house design by Munari. At the time Carlo Pagani and Lina Bo worked in the editorial office, and towards the end of the year they moved to *Domus*, perhaps bringing Munari there in the role of art director.

215. R.G., 'Munari con la macchina fotografica' in *Domus* no.201, September 1944: 335. For the ads, see nos.202 and 203 (October and November 1944).

216. Over the publication's six-year lifespan, Munari designed not one cover, and his name appears on only one of its articles.

Conclusion
A quiet revolution

> All my work has followed two main paths: one experimental, the other pedagogical (…) Because of this work I've always been considered someone who plays (given that superficial types think experimentation is useless) rather than someone who makes art (for pedagogy).[1]

For Munari, the role of editorial art director for Mondadori and Domus in the 1940s was an important professional caesura, which temporally coincided with WWII. As such, it signalled the beginning of a new season, which in many respects distanced itself from the work he had done over the previous decade. In fact, Munari 'reemerged' after 1945, inventing a new career for himself—not only as an artist and graphic designer, but also as industrial designer and pedagogue devoted to democratizing culture. Indeed, among the avant-garde Futurist works and the Italian graphic design of the immediate postwar period there is a clear continuity—not so much on a formal level, but rather in their fundamental approach.[2]

Compared to European models, Italian modernity had its own unique characteristics that stemmed from the country's cultural and structural backwardness, and on the lack of a comprehensive theory in particular. Besides the radicalism of their constructivist aesthetics, the inroads made by the new European advertising designers had also depended on their ability to turn those ideas into operational principles against which their own

1. Bruno Munari in *Didattica 2. Perché e come* (1977), reprinted in *Bruno* Munari 1979: 50.
2. Branzi 2008: 94, 98–100; cf. Branzi 1984: 'The phenomenon of fifties Italian design (…) has more roots in late Futurism than in the modern movement' (ibid.: 43).

work was to be measured. Instead—as the situation of Munari and others who had had a brush with Futurism shows—in lieu of unifying points of reference, Italian graphic design was born of artists who were largely self-taught—artists who, in a certain sense, 'lived off reflected light.' Of course, this tendency to imitate should not be seen in the reductive sense of slavish copying, but rather as evidence of a formal line of visual research that moved forward intuitively, by trial and error, sometimes pulling together discordant idioms. Such 'bricolage' allowed for a different development of the basic set of ideas and values underlying modernism: compared to the rationalist definition of modernity, which can ultimately be traced back to the Enlightenment, the Italian approach seems instead to have responded more to a 'personal calling to follow a process of mediation' between extremes such as Futurism and the retreat into tradition.[3]

Exposure to Swiss graphic culture was another key factor that led to the birth of the 'Milanese style' of the 1950s. But the intimate connection with the fine-arts milieu, which in the 1920s and 1930s made up for the lack of adequate training in the graphic arts, persisted for a long time, and to a large extent determined the specificity of Italian graphic design. Rather than springing from an established tradition or a new, shared vision, this can be described as the spontaneous achievement of a generation of self-taught artists whose common background was in the pioneering field of applied arts. Their formative years fell between WWI and WWII when, prior to the arrival of any Constructivist theory, the Futurists' post-Cubist tradition remained predominant. The Swiss influence, which acted as a direct intermediary with the legacy of the Bauhaus, was therefore grafted onto *that* particular heritage, which had slowly concentrated into the Milanese avant-garde that counted Munari amongst its leading exponents.

As far as graphic design is concerned, Italian Modernism developed in two distinct phases. In the first, which occurred in the 1930s, the Modernist paradigm assumed peculiar features contingent on the political situation under the Fascist rule, and was limited to the assimilation of values on a strictly formal level. This left all social, utopian components out of the picture, although they were essential to the discourse of the 'new advertising designers' in Europe.[4] In addition, this formalistic reception of New Typography principles was totally oblivious of its fundamental functional aspects, from which all other compositional principles ensued as a corollary.[5] While the social dimension was

3. Branzi 2008: 14–6, 18–9. The central axiom of Branzi's analysis is the fundamental Italian inclination towards discontinuity, which supposedly reflects its long history: 'Italy is a country that has never had a revolution.' The lack of radical turning points would explain the constant opposition between modernity and tradition throughout the twentieth century (ibid: 15).

4. Regarding the overlap between the modern movement's claims to an artistic nature and social nature, see Paul Schuitema's recollections: 'His [the artist's] designs must make true statements and clearly convey to the public the properties of particular products (…) Our activities in the workshops and factories were intended to provide people with things which are better designed' (Schuitema 1961: 16). Schuitema, like the other proponents of modernism, does not question the fact that the realm of artistic intervention coincides with the commercial realm of advertising—that is, he does not sense any ideological paradox between the two aspirations: industry is accepted as necessary fact, but the work of the designer, despite its commercial ends, can and must be conceived as having informative ends (analogous to the assertions of Swiss graphic designers in the 50s). Cf. Kinross: 'the familiar paradox in the modern movement: a system of beliefs that often encompassed revolutionary socialism and (capitalist) theories of business efficiency' (Kinross in Tschichold 1995 [1928]: xxvii).

5. In Tschichold's words: 'In my graphic design, I attempt to achieve maximum purposefulness [Zweckmäßigkeit] and to unite the individual component parts harmonically: to design [zu

absent from the debate pitting traditionalists against advocates of the modern, the stylistic elements based on the combination of typography and photography were widely exploited—alongside a monumental version of the Futurist vocabulary—for their modern connotations, not only in the field of advertising, but also in the regime's propaganda. Hence, the new visual language appeared in Italy with an ideological polarity that was the exact opposite of its original context. The contradiction between aesthetic form and transmitted values was somewhat resolved through an 'artificial' view of Fascism, corresponding to the 'revolutionary' ideology of Giuseppe Bottai's so-called Fascist Left, with which many of the Milanese and Lombard avant-garde exponents identified.[6] Furthermore, the political accommodations of the Italian intellectual class during the twenty-year Fascist rule was also favoured by relatively tollerant cultural policies, assuring its acquienscence, if not active support. Although Munari, all told, appeared to be a fairly apolitical man, he nevertheless took part in the predominantly nationalistic climate, or at least did not steer clear of the inevitable homages to power.

The second phase coincided with the country's material and moral reconstruction after 1945, which translated into a rediscovery of the social and progressive aspects of art production in relation to industry. After the regime's value system had failed, the artist's role was called into question with an increasing sense of urgency, as was the integration of the creative realm with that of the neocapitalist economy based on mass consumption that was to rapidly transform Italy.[7] Even if in seeming contradiction with his previous consensus to the Fascist climate, a progressive social utopia sustained Munari's artistic experience throughout the postwar period. First with the Movimento Arte Concreta (MAC, Concrete Art Movement), later through his writings and his commitment to teaching, Munari turned himself into the spokesman of the designer's social role as the modern artist in the service of society. In so doing he revitalized the debate, effectively affiliating himself with the ideological premises set forth by the Modernist culture of the interwar period, which in Italy at the time was an absolute novelty.[8] Even in such a difficult context, with Futurism considered unacceptable and the political Left having refused abstractionism, Munari's position, which remained staunchly on the side of abstraction, nevertheless reclaimed the social dimension of art through design, which directly became a part of the everyday.[9] So, despite the fact that he was not involved in politics, he publicly proclaimed the moral need for artists to renew their sense of social engagement, and thereby became a de facto progressive.

gestalten]' (from *Gefesselter Blick*, 1930, quoted in Kinross 1995: 70).

6. Although the architects' and abstractionists' rationalism was synonymous with modernity, it was nevertheless used explicitly in the service of the Fascist state: 'Politically, however, Antifascism wasn't the motor behind this reversal with respect to the muscular exhibitions of "twentieth-century" figuration (...) [That] constructive, ordered ideal (...) can be viewed as an offer to collaborate with the regime' (Calvesi 2000: 27).

7. Cf. Kinross 2004: 'The conditions of scarcity and disarray in the aftermath of 1945 did provide a proper context for a typography that was guided by considerations of need and use. Such conditions were general in Europe (...) They were the background for visions of the reconstruction of a social order that had so far resisted modernization. Design was recognized as having an important role in presenting this vision (...)' (ibid: 139).

8. For Munari, the 'political plan' to democratize art meant not so much the economic aspects, but rather the conceptual tools and conditions that allow one to access art (Alberto Munari in conversation with the author, 10 February 2008).

9. Culture's hostility (expressed as Antifascism) towards Futurism was paralleled by a revolt against abstractionism, which was accused of shirking social commitment: at the height of the Cold War the PCI (Italian Communist Party)—that attracted most of the

> Today, the artist must step off his pedestal and deign to design [even] the butcher-shop sign (if he knows how). (…) the artist [must] become an active person amongst others, aware of current techniques, materials, and working methods, and—without abandoning his innate aesthetic sense—humbly and competently answer the questions one might pose. The designer is now the point of contact (…) between art and the public (…) It's no longer the painting for one's living room, but rather the kitchen applicance. Art mustn't be separated from life: [with] beautiful things to be looked at and ugly things to be used.[10]

It has been argued that Munari is the only designer of his generation that did not succeed in successfully earning a living from his work. This is possibly due to his intuitive experimental attitude and the range of his intellectual interests, that in the eyes of art critics looked like triviality. Notwithstanding the number of highly original visual researches, establishing his own identity in the graphic design scene—which he partly found in publishing—was increasingly problematical to Munari. By the late 1950s he appeared to be tied up to an outdated modernist formula which was more pictorial in character than typographically structured. However, if this approach somewhat hampered his professional success as a graphic designer, it did nevertheless allow him a widespread popular recognition that few of the Milanese designers have attained.[11]

Munari's œuvre carries a twofold legacy: on the one hand, in his relationship to technology the artist and his work remained closely tied to the principles of Futurism; on the other, he looked to prewar modernism for a sense of the social worth of his artistic practice.[12] As we have seen, modern Italian graphic design has its roots in the crossbreeding of two distinct traditions of the Modern—Futurism and Constructivism: so it is not surprising that both strains are present in Munari's work as it unfolded in the latter half of the twentieth century. On the one hand, the unconditioned experimental openness to techniques, materials, and processes which is at the core of his creative practice goes back to his futurist legacy; on the other hand, the social role of the designer which he championed after 1945 witnesses a modernist legacy, rooted in the theories articulated in Europe during the 1920s. In other words, while the Futurist aesthetic guided his formal research, the modernist attitude brought a progressive dimension to it.

Those ideals of social order, coupled to this double legacy, enlivened his artistic initiatives throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and eventually culminated in the creative workshops for children, a far-reaching educational project that occupied almost exclusively the last part of his life. As the economic and political crisis of the early 1970s forced him to reposition himself, instead of assuming a public critical stance, Munari directed his attention to the world of infancy. In his allegedly most important project, he devoted his efforts to

cultural avant-garde—took a conservative stance that led to a sterile debate between realists and abstractionists, culminating in Togliatti's condemnation of abstractionism in '52 (Ginsborg 2000: 54).

10. Bruno Munari, *Arte come mestiere* (Bari/Rome: Laterza, 1966): 19.

11. In Gillo Dorfles' opinion: 'Others, in his shoes, would have made the most of their artistic work on the market (…) but Munari, after the relatively brief period in which he worked with the MAC (…) primarily devoted his efforts to design and to educating children. (…) Unlike other artists, Munari never really marketed his work. He was always a disinterested experimenter (…) This doesn't mean that every invention is a work of art, but it does attest to an invariably creative methodology and approach to life' (Dorfles in Fiz 2000: 23–4).

12. According to Branzi, the main characteristic of Italian design lies 'in the use of technique for its aesthetic possibilities, and of aesthetics for their technical possibilities,' and is perfectly suited to describe the essence of Munari's method (Branzi 2008: 14). On the other hand, the attention to technological aspects falls fully within the prerequisites of modernism.

the development of methods and tools to stimulate the creativity of new generations, bringing his entire array of experiences to fruition. In a sense, these final attempts at contributing to an egalitarian society brought his work full circle. Hence, Munari's implication with and for children assumes an explicit ideological connotation, that makes him one of the most 'radical' Italian designers of the 20th century.

> Childrens' workshops are the logical consequece of all my work up to now (...) I think that (...) [they help] develop, in the best way possible, the personality of the various individuals in the younger and youngest generations.[13]

> [These workshops for children are] very important because of their formative value for collective cultural growth, without which our revolutions would leave the world as they found it.[14]

13. Bruno Munari quoted in A. Munari 1986: 74.
14. Bruno Munari in *Didattica 2. Perché e come* (1977), reprinted in *Bruno Munari* 1979: 51.

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