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Bruno Munari and the invention of modern graphic design in Italy, 1928 - 1945

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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).

Mondadori and Italy's publishing industry 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 Disney¹⁰—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 Arnaldo 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

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.

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

15. Piazzoni 2007: 122–4.

16. In particular, I looked at the archives of the Fondazione Arnaldo 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 Arnaldo 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

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. Arnaldo'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 Arnaldo'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 Mondadori'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 incense', 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.mediaziononline.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 Briccarelli, 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 Telezio 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 Tofaneli 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 Sinigalli, Gatto and De Libero. It was a non-commercial lineup, with great content.’ In order to help bring Tofaneli into *Tempo*’s editorial team, as well as increase the visibility of the new series, Arnaldo 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 (...)’ (Tofaneli 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 *phototesto* (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 Declava (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, communication, 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, interviewed 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 be 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 '42's unveiling. This overview would have particular value in light of the upcoming '42, 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 impor-

tant 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. '42 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 exceptional-ity 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 curiosities⁷³ or especially in '43 during the most critical stage of the war, to pleasant-ies, 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:

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, 'ABC-DEFG' 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. Lasciari 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 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.

[203] 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

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 1940⁹⁸ 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 data¹⁰⁶ 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 quarantined—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 quantities 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 Tofanelli, 'Not because I was some conspirator 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 Como¹²⁴—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 Arcuno 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 tolerance, 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 debate¹⁴³—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 'maneclean' classifications, pointing out how in most cases artists' 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 Germany¹⁴⁹—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 children—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 Künste. 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 vigorous 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, photcollage 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 *Sì* 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: iiiiff).

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 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 (neo-classical 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 was laid out on a precise modular grid with flexible positioning of the text, photographs 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 the four-year span showed this new interest in an informative graphic approach; the | 210 | | 211 | | 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

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 Arnaldo 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 Gianni 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 Book) and *Le Macchine di Munari* (Munari'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 Cateri 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 corrigé 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 entitled *ABC Dadà* (1944),¹⁹⁷ the ABC book given by his son Alberto to Anna, Antonio Boggeri's daughter (1944),¹⁹⁸ or the personal notebook containing clippings and drawings of letters and alphabets (c.1940).¹⁹⁹ As for the editorial production, in 1942 Munari published the *Abece-*

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 *Abece-* 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 lightening-fast conciseness' (Umberto Eco, in Finessi 2005: 197). Example: 'È vietato l'ingresso ai non addetti al lavoro/È vietato il 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. *Abece-*, 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. *Abece-* (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 as 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 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: Italgio [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, 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 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

[234] 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.