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

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Ricas and Munari became associates with their own graphic design studio in 1931, and two adverts published a few years apart in the *Guida Ricciardi*, a famous advertising annual, give a good idea of the position their work occupied at mid-decade. The first, which appeared in the 1933 edition, is laconically labelled: 'Pittori Ricas+Munari Milano' (Ricas+Munari, Painters, Milan) and shows an evocative photomontage with aeropictorial retouching, which depicts a fantastical landscape wherein a passerby contemplates a photographic composition with a glove, a sphere, and a paintbrush.¹ The second advert, included in the 1936 edition, focusses not only on the suggestive nature of the image—again a metaphysical landscape—but almost equally as much on the text, about which it amusingly remarks: 'Our artistic imagination is at your disposal for any and every advertising challenge, especially the most difficult. Designs for adverts, surprise brochures, firecrackers, stamps, frescoes on skulls, photograms, triumphal arches. Ricas+Munari, Painters.'²

1. *Guida Ricciardi 1933: la pubblicità in Italia*. Milan: L'Ufficio Moderno, 1934.

2. *Guida Ricciardi 1936: Pubblicità e propaganda in Italia*. Milan: Ricciardi, 1935. This edition is graphically more elaborate, with photomontages and overprinting

on translucent sheets created by the youngest graphic designer's of the time (Veronesi, Carboni, Dradi and Rossi), as well as numerous reproductions of print advertisements and posters.

Beyond the minor stylistic differences, which reflect the evolution of Munari's language in illustration, two considerations stand out: first and foremost, the two adverts show a persistent emphasis on surprise (deployed as an effect) and a generally pictorial approach, tied more to the allusive power of the image than to objective communication; secondly, although these two aspects are closely linked, the visual approach recalls that of French surrealism more than Central-European functionalist currents; and this aspect is even more evident when compared to the adverts of Veronesi or Dradi-Rossi, not to mention the Swiss-born designer Schawinsky, featured in the same edition. Ricas and Munari's position, therefore, although it was up-to-date in terms of photography (and on photomontage in particular), expresses a concept of graphic design still in evolution, yet also still substantially pictorial—which was precisely the stylistic element most evident in the pair's advertising work.

Reconstructing the events surrounding Ricas and Munari's professional collaboration is now extremely difficult, given the scarcity of available information—which is due in part to the scattering or destruction of their archives during the war, and in part to the delay and scarcity of the historical research devoted to the key figures of Italian graphic design. Furthermore, the lack of information can also be traced back (to a significant extent) to the substantial 'underplaying' adopted by both artists—especially by Munari—with regard to their professional experiences between the wars. Such an attitude might well be understood

given the intellectual climate of Republican Italy, which, because of the ambiguous relationship that linked Futurism and Fascism, long relegated Marinetti's movement and everything connected with it to a grey zone—although the natural evolution of the artist's taste and aesthetic interests certainly counted as well. Be that as it may, the fact remains that virtually no mention of that period can be found in Munari's writings or numerous interviews, including more recent ones.³

The first time I worked in advertising I was taken advantage of. It was in 1930. Some guy asked me to do a small job, but it was important for me, since I was just starting out. In the end the guy did not even pay the printer, who then forced me to pay. Even today, when I think about it....⁴

As we have seen, from illustration Munari went on to work in graphics as early as 1930, if we can trust the date given in this statement. Yet according to current research, after his earliest Futurist works, no other known examples of his graphic work predate 1931, when he opened his own studio with Riccardo Castagnedi, widely known by the pseudonym Ricas. The relationship between the two artists began around 1929, when Ricas, who was attending the Accademia di Brera, joined the Milanese Futurist group.⁵ Younger than Munari, Castagnedi was born in 1912 in Colico, in the Valtellina, where his father, an electrician with the State Railways, had moved for work, but he grew up in Milan, where the family had moved in 1920. In 1926, still

3. Without the possibility of direct contact with the artist, any hypotheses regarding the reasons for such an attitude cannot but be partial and questionable: aside from critics' and historians' ostracism of Futurism, it is difficult to overlook Munari's accommodation to Fascism—a tendency shared by everyone in his generation, but of which (unlike other intellectuals) he never spoke.

That is not the equivalent, however, of taxing Munari with Fascism: his disinterest in politics is unanimously recognized as a character trait, and after the war he proved to have an undoubted sense of social commitment.

4. Munari cit. in an undated [c.1985] newspaper clip (cortesy Aldo Tanchis, Milan).

5. Bassi 1994: 81.

a teenager, he found a job with the Officine Grafiche Ricordi as a *puntinàtt* (a draughtsman who transferred original drawings to lithographic stones for reproduction) alongside high-calibre poster artists like Leopoldo Metlicovitz and Marcello Dudovich; thereafter, he worked as a studio assistant for the painter Renzo Bassi, where he made his first graphic works. At the same time he took evening courses at Brera (where he earned his diploma in '43); nevertheless, the academy's conservative climate led him to frequent the Futurists, which is probably when he adopted the pseudonym Ricas.⁶ In '29 he met Munari and exhibited work with other young Futurists at the Galleria Pesaro; that same year he won a competition funded by the Savinelli Pipe company to design an advertising poster, and did another for the Crippa-Berger pharmaceutical company, proving his major interest in the graphic design field.⁷

It was 1928–29, we went to Brera each evening, I was taking the evening course at the academy (...) We met, we liked one another, and so we started working together. We had to try and make a living, and we did illustrations and adverts. We worked a lot, happily, in perfect harmony, always listening to music—one of us would do something, and the other added something else. (...) We had a large studio, in via Carlo Ravizza 14 [in reality at 16], with eight rooms—they were 'cleaned up' basement storage rooms: a studio/exhibition space with two paintings, one by me and one by Bruno; in the middle of the studio was a white cube with two beggars' shoes, destroyed from walking through the desert; a salon; our studio; two rooms for administration; and then two bedrooms, because we slept there.

(...) Bruno was always straightlaced, always

organized, in jacket and tie, he was an angel, always happy, very lively and friendly.⁸

The R+M associates' studio opened in Milan in 1931 and, insofar as it was expressly devoted to advertising design, was one of the first initiatives of its kind in Italy, and even predated the Studio Boggeri, which opened in 1933.⁹ Regarding the circumstances surrounding the two young artists' friendship (Munari was 24 years old, Ricas just 19), a statement by Ricas¹⁰ indicates their first studio was in the very central Galleria del Corso, across from the famous Sartoria Ventura¹¹ (where Dilma Carnevali, Munari's future wife, worked). One plausible hypothesis is that it was located at the same spot (no.4) where the Edizioni Metropoli had its offices in 1930: upon abandoning the *Almanacco dell'Italia Veloce* project, Fusetti may have left the space to Munari, who had worked with Metropoli's editorial team. The dates would seem to support this: indeed, the Futurist publication had been announced for the end of 1930, but the project must have somehow

6. Riccardo Ricas Castagnedi (1912–2005) probably adopted his pseudonym, derived from Ri[ccardo] Cas[tagnedi], when he joined the Futurist group. As his daughter recalls: 'Later on it became a legally recognized last name, and when I went to school I always had the two names, which still appear on all my documents' (Paola Ricas, author correspondence, 20.6.2010).

7. Lopez 1994 in Bassi: 8; Bassi 1994: 78, 81.

8. Ricas in Finessi 2005: 62–3.

9. In this sense, Ricas and Munari's studio differed from both the Dinamo-Azari gallery-laboratory (opened in 1927) and Cesare Andreoni's applied-arts workshop (founded in 1929), and was more like an advertising firm (Di Corato 2008: 212).

10. Ricas in Bassi 1990, interview given 20.2.1990 (unpublished transcript, courtesy of Alberto Bassi).

The Galleria del Corso, situated between the Duomo and San Babila, arose following demolitions carried out in Milan's historic centre in the twenties.

11. Milanese fashion house founded in 1815 by Domenico Ventura, which became famous in nineteenth-century Italy for its ability to re-create Parisian designs; its vast clientele belonged to the aristocracy and upper-middle classes. Its intense tailoring activities after WWI, directed by Vittorio Alberto Montana, with almost 800 workers at their locations in Milan, Rome, and Genoa, won it the 'Fornitore di Casa Reale' distinction (as supplier to the royal house); it reached the height of its fame in 1930 with the creation of a wedding dress for Princess Maria José of Belgium's marriage to Prince Amedeo of Savoy. The atelier closed in the early '40s (Vergani 2009: 'Ventura'; Gnoli 2005: 51n, 53).

come to a standstill over the summer, as no other promos were published; Ricas and Munari must have launched their new business venture in 1931, parallel to, if not precisely coordinated with, the closure of the Futurist publishing house. In any case, it must have been a temporary setup, since by January '32 the studio had moved to via Ravizza 16, not far from the Futurist headquarters: 'a basement with windows, an amusing procession of ankles', recalled Ricas.¹²

Curiously, during that same period the Milanese Futurist group—also in via Ravizza, but at number 14—ran an advertising and publicity office under the name of [107] Centrale Artistica (Artistic Headquarters), which offered graphic and PR services like 'furnishings, window displays, kiosks for trade fairs, advertising, posters, editions'.¹³ In reality it was the C.R.E.A. advertising office, which had existed at least since the previous year, and for which Munari had not only made the *Simultanina* poster and some adverts for Campari, but also curated the interior design and furnishings.¹⁴ All this indicates how, at the beginning of the 1930s, the Futurist group led by Munari aimed to professionally establish itself in the advertising sector, with the intent of extending its initiatives to the commercial realm. The situation also suggests that if Munari was not outright manager of the proto-advertising establishment, he was at least a close collaborator; nor can Ricas' probable collaboration be excluded. Therefore the opening of their own associated studio must have been an extension of their previous work with the C.R.E.A.

agency, probably in the autumn of '31. Furthermore, the transformation of Milan's Centrale Futurista was completed in early 1934, when it moved into Ricas and Munari's studio just a few steps away;¹⁵ this move could be read as an attempt to rationalise its overhead, or as a bona fide unification with the studio of the two artists—who were now considered key figures of Milan's graphic scene, and also had space available to house the Futurist movement.

Ricas and Munari's professional relationship lasted into the beginning of 1937, and was characterised by a remarkable flexibility and openness, allowing each of them to work both in tandem and individually, as the various signatures on their work indicate: 'MUNARI+R', 'RICAS+M', and 'R+M'. The adverts from their early period (up until about '33), as well as their illustrations and photomontages for magazines, were primarily signed by Munari, confirming his lead role—works signed solely by Ricas, much fewer in number, began to appear only in '35. It is therefore logical to assume that, at the beginning, the studio was conceived of more as a shared workspace (in addition to shared housing) where each worked independently, and that their collaboration gradually grew more intense as they undertook more demanding, more

12. Cf. letter from Munari to Tullio d'Albisola, 20.1.1932, on the letterhead of the Centrale Futurista di Milano (also signed by Ricas, Lepore, and Escodamè), in which Munari gave him the new address (in Presotto 1981: 142). The quoted statement is Ricas' (Lopez 1994 in Bassi: 8).

13. Cf. related advert in *La città nuova* no.2 (25 February 1932): 4.

14. Cf. photographs in 'Aspetti diversi del gusto attuale' in *Casabella* no.44 (August 1931): 24–7. The interior depicted on p. 25 as the 'advertising director's office at the C.R.E.A. studio in Milan' is the same as the photograph used in an advert for the Centrale Arti-

stica in the Turin-based *La città nuova* six months later. The C.R.E.A. logo is visible on the left-hand side of the *Simultanina* poster, under the frame showing airplane silhouettes, while Munari's signature appears in the upper right-hand corner of that frame. Around 1935 Munari and Ricas also designed the interiors and furnishings for the new R+M studio in via Ravizza: cf. 'Ricas e Munari, arredamenti e decorazioni d'interni' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5 (May 1935): 246–55.

15. Cf. the letterhead on which Munari's letter to Thayaht is written, [c. 20.4.1934], Mart, Archivio del 900, fondo Thayaht: Tha 1.2.07.66.

complex projects, along with their repeated collaborations with ad agencies and other companies' advertising offices: the Mauzan-Morzenti studio, the Ufficio Propaganda Campari, the Ufficio Sviluppo e stampa Olivetti, and Studio Boggeri.

Toward a modernist style

A brief review devoted to Futurist advertising in *L'Ufficio Moderno* at the end of '32 focussed on the studio's first significant accomplishments.¹⁶ Beginning with a poly-material artwork for perfumes depicting a female head—probably an installation for a window display (an anticipation of the compositions Munari exhibited at the Galleria Pesaro the following year)—the works reproduced give a good overview of the services the studio offered, ranging from posters to catalogues, trade-fair installations, and interiors and furnishings. Two posters Ricas and Munari created for Casa America/el hogar de la musica (a radio shop in Buenos Aires) document an early collaboration with the Mauzan-Morzenti studio, still associated with the French poster artist then living in Argentina.¹⁷ Both focus on a synthetic suggestion of the product, and both stylistically reveal their formal roots in aeropainting. The cover of a catalogue for ARSA (Anonima Riscaldamenti Sanitari e Affini, a boiler producer) in Bologna is equally interesting, and is laid out around a paired-down axonometric drawing reminiscent of a scientific diagram.¹⁸ In this early phase the studio's work had a clearly figurative emphasis, evident not only in its printed work, but also in its

trade-fair installations, wherein the graphic visual language, not yet drawing from constructivist models, relies heavily upon the suggestive powers of the representation. This can be seen in the stands installed for the Federico Dell'Orto company (producer of industrial kitchens) and the Carlo Erba pharmaceutical company,¹⁹ which were quite conventional in terms of set design.

In the December 1931 issue of *Natura*, alongside an article about the Rodier textile manufacturer, a colour advertisement by Munari was published: it is a hybrid, composite synthesis, which, although still linked to aeropictorial stylistic elements, integrates his discovery of photographic collage using textures to evoke the product, while the explicit message is spelled out in the geometric lettering style common at the time.²⁰ A similar solution appeared soon after in his advert for the Milanese Casa dell'arredamento, in which the drawing's accentuated axonometric lines are balanced by the photographic rendering of the textiles.²¹ In both cases, the highly suggestive image not only echoed the formal possibilities of new inclusions like photography, but also indicated a redefinition of the Futurist register with the gradual substitution of figurative means with a more concise, abstract visual language.

Munari's interest in photography and developments in the graphic field outside Italian borders was shared by other Milanese artists working in advertising—even

16. Noi due, 'Il futurismo alla pubblicità' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* VII; 11 (November 1932): 661–4. The article is illustrated with work by Ricas/Munari and Diulgheroff, reproduced in b/w, accompanied by a short comment, but without any other indicators.

17. In 1929–30 Mauzan produced four posters for the same client (reproduced in Weill 1983: 64–5 and Carnévalé–Mauzan 2001: 14–5).

18. *Moderni impianti sanitari—Moderni impianti di riscaldamento—Il*

calore nell'industria. Bologna: Anonima Riscaldamenti Sanitari Affini, n.d. [c. 1932]. Printed by Bertieri, Milan. 22×29.5 cm, pp. 36; bound by a ribbon and two reinforced eyelets. 3-Colour cover, illustrations and layout by Munari (Cammarota 2006: 158).

19. The photographs reproduced in the cited article are now all that remains of these installations.

20. *Natura* IV; 12 (December), 1931.

21. *La Casa bella* V; 50 (February), 1932.

those outside Futurist circles such as Carboni, Veronesi, and Muratore, who were nevertheless tied to the rationalist architects' quest for new aesthetic and functional canons. In 1933, amidst this crucial and rapidly shifting context surrounding the applied arts, a curious convergence of external influences came to Milan: Paul Renner's exhibition of graphic work by the Deutsche Werkbund was shown at the V Triennale; Xanti Schawinsky began working in Milan; Studio Boggeri opened; *Campo grafico* began publication; Persico and Pagano were appointed directors of *Casabella*; and the fourth worldwide advertising congress was held—all of which created an atmosphere ripe for the renewal of graphic visual language through an utterly new relationship with photography and architecture. The temporal and geographic convergence of these events created a unique cultural climate, which had long-lasting effects on graphics as well as the broader scope of visual arts throughout the 1930s in Italy—painting, photography, architecture, advertising. It is no coincidence that Ricas and Munari's professional paths, during the studio's most productive period between 1933 and '36, crossed the paths of both Antonio Boggeri and Olivetti, who were among their first close collaborators.

Olivetti

Intent on defining its own identity following the struggle to get off the ground in the 1920s, over the next decade Italian advertising continued with a gradually increasing professionalisation of the sector: specialists

had a rudimentary idea of business communication, and the creation of the first few agencies was met with an increasing number of companies adapting their own internal ad offices.²² Often called *Uffici Propaganda* (literally Propaganda Offices) or *Uffici Stampa* (Press Offices), they were generally run by journalists, cultural figures, or artists²³—categories that could compensate for the lack of a specific technical or educational background.²⁴ Pushed away from journalism in particular by the repression of political rights and freedom of expression after 1925, important consultants like Guido Mazzali, Dino Villani, and Antonio Valeri began working in advertising; all of them associated with the magazine *L'Ufficio Moderno*.²⁵

Because of its openness to collaborators of the most disparate cultural backgrounds, the *Ufficio Sviluppo e Pubblicità* (Development and Advertising Office) of Olivetti—founded in 1931 and directed by the photographer Renato Zveteremich (1931–38), then by poet/engineer Leonardo Sinisgalli (1938–40)—became a kind of experimental laboratory, in which

22. Pitteri 2002: 21–2; Valeri 1986: 68–70.

23. Regarding the two terms *reclame* and *pubblicità* (advertising) as used in the contemporary language, on the one hand they betray the probable influence of Fascist terminology (*propaganda*), and on the other [they indicate] a yet-to-be-determined disciplinary definition (press/print) (Falabrino 2001: 112). The designers who worked with famous companies included Federico Seneca for Perugina-Buitoni (1919–35), Dino Villani for Motta and later GiViEmme, Renato Zveteremich for Olivetti, Pier Luigi Balzaretto for Fiat (1921) and Rinascente, and Giulio Cesare Ricciardi for Alfa Romeo (1923) (Valeri 1986: 68–70).

24. The first initiative of this sort dates back to 1922; it was an evening course in

advertising techniques promoted by the Milan Chamber of Commerce, but was soon abandoned because of the changing political climate (Ceserani 1997: 127). Advertising techniques were then taught in courses for managers and vendors, as well as in economics classes at technical institutes, but it was not until the thirties that, following the success of the International Advertising Congress held in Rome and Milan in 1933, regular courses were established in many cities' technical and commercial institutes (Valeri 1986: 58, 74). In the private sector, in 1928 the editorial offices of *L'Ufficio Moderno* began a correspondence course with the *École supérieure de publicité pratique* in Paris (Bauer 1998b: 164).

25. Falabrino 2001: 115–6.

collaborative and multidisciplinary production set the stage for the creation of the 'Olivetti style' of the postwar period.²⁶ The structure included—both internally and through external networks—collaborations with literati like Sinisgalli, architects like Figini and Pollini, graphic artists/designers like Marcello Nizzoli, printer-typographers like Guido Modiano, and even young graduates of Monza's *ISIA* (Istituto di Arti Decorative e Industriali) like Giovanni Pintori, Costantino Nivola, and Salvatore Fancello.²⁷ The Olivetti company, founded in Ivrea by Camillo Olivetti in 1908, was still relatively young, but was already distinguished by the quality of its typewriter models and rapidly established its place in the market.²⁸ In the early 1930s, as Adriano Olivetti gradually assumed leadership of his father's company, Olivetti was recovering from the economic crisis and exporting its brand internationally.²⁹ Beginning in 1928 its advertising campaigns, which had been entrusted early on to freelance painters and other unaffiliated suppliers,³⁰ were overseen by an embryonic in-house Servizio Pubblicità (Advertising), which gained increasing autonomy, leading to the creation of the Ufficio Sviluppo e Pubblicità in 1931 at the Milanese office in via Clerici. With the new setup the company shifted its advertising communications, making the most of collaborations with young professionals aware of the latest avant-garde international trends. In '34 Olivetti began working with Studio Boggeri and, through Boggeri, with Xanti Schawinsky; in 1936, on Pagano's recommendation, Nivola and Pintori joined the office; at the end of the

decade, Pintori and Nizzoli became the chief creators of the Olivetti style, both in graphics and in industrial design. A prime example of this new approach—also resulting from the company's ties to Milan's rationalist cultural current—is the celebratory pamphlet *25 anni Olivetti* (25 Years of Olivetti) edited and printed by Guido Modiano (1933),³¹ in which Futurist innovations meet the new continental typography, featuring an album format, layout according to the 'two pages in one' principle, the use of photography and photomontages, sans-serif type and black rules, duotone printing, printing on cellophane, and a spiral binding.³²

Munari was amongst Olivetti's earliest collaborators, although it is difficult

26. Cf. Vinti 2007: 28ff.

27. In the early thirties, Edoardo Persico (Decorative arts and advertising), Giuseppe Pagano, and Marcello Nizzoli all taught at the institute in Monza.

28. From the M1 in 1911 to the M20 in 1920, the semistandard M40 in 1930, the portable M1 in 1932, and the Studio 42 in 1935—followed by the Divisumma line of calculators launched in the late forties.

29. Lupo 1996: 112. Referring to Elio Vittorini's definition of *umanesimo pubblicitario* (humanist advertising) formulated in a 1939 promotional publication (*Una campagna pubblicitaria*. Milan: Olivetti, 1939), the author maintains that the advertising office was 'one of the most interesting cultural crossroads in Milan, in the thirties, and to some extent returned to the synthetic ideals of fifteenth-century humanism' (ibid: 119–20, 223–8).

30. The first poster, depicting Dante Alighieri as an authoritative 'spokesman' for the M1, was designed by Teodoro Wolf Ferrari (1912).

31. Guido Modiano (1899–1943) printer and critic, was a key figure in the debate surrounding the renewal of Italian graphic arts. Upon the death of his father Gustavo (1916) he took

over the family printshop (G. Modiano & Co.) and specialised in printing prestigious editions and cultural periodicals like *Quadrante*, *Edilizia Moderna*, and *Le vie d'Italia*. Both designer and printer, alongside Edoardo Persico he played a major role in the evolution of *Casabella's* graphic look in the early thirties. As a critic, Modiano published numerous articles in all the main specialised magazines, maintaining the contributions of abstract art and architecture (later reworked in a long text published serially in *L'industria della stampa*, 1941–42), and for the VII Triennale in 1940 he was curator of the graphic arts exhibition. Called to arms in 1935 and drafted into the anti-aircraft service, during the war he took part in the disastrous Russian campaign. He lost his life when his barracks were bombed in Germany (Vinti 2005: 50–52ff; Baglione 2008: 21n; Chiabrado 2006).

32. Pigozzi 1982: 469–70; cf. Vinti 2005, quote. For the history of Olivetti communications between WWI and WWII, which historians have yet to examine in a more in-depth manner, see the Olivetti Historic Archive website, www.storia-olivetti.it.

to pinpoint an exact date (a few sources point to 1928,³³ but 1930 seems more plausible). He was apparently commissioned to do a few newspaper adverts for Olivetti before Zveteremich's arrival; these were tiny, 1 cm–high black-and-white classifieds printed in columns, which Munari dealt with by placing the few lines of text on the diagonal, so they jumped out on the page.³⁴ In 1932–33 he did a few other adverts (still working independently of Ricas) for the famous Olivetti MP1 portable, an innovative product for the time. Compared to previous models, the MP1 was promoted not only for office work, but also for use in the home and for leisure activities, and therefore targeted a new clientele through adverts emphasising the product's elegance more than its technical strengths.³⁵ An early advert that, judging by the illustration style, can roughly be dated to 1932, subtly plays with the idea of leisure time: in an abstract landscape, almost like a theatrical backdrop, someone is intently writing on a typewriter while falling from the sky, suspended from a parachute; this visual quip nodded to flight as an icon of modern existence, and also breathed life into the scene through the depiction of sheets of paper flying down from the typewriter; the product is named on a sheet of paper in the foreground, and the composition closes with an angled photograph of the typewriter and the name Olivetti in large, all-caps *Futura*, another clear nod to modernity.³⁶

The same angled photograph of the typewriter appeared again—in the same position and serving the same function, providing the campaign's continuity—in other

adverts done in late '33 by Studio Boggeri. They are two variations on the same composition, wherein the concepts of speed and lightness are metaphorically translated into the form of an airplane and a dove, both cut from an enlarged image of the product, whose image is therefore doubly present. Its innovative aspect, aside from the use of photomontage, is the accentuated simplification of the layout, reduced to the minimum, and the importance of white, which cancels out any sense of depth—a solution that clearly reflects similar developments in Munari's illustration work.³⁷

Another series of heterogeneous adverts for Olivetti from the same period can easily be attributed to Munari, perhaps through Boggeri, even though they're unsigned: an advertorial in *Casabella* illustrated in colour; a series of adverts based on a similar illustration, combined with a simple title set in *Bifur*,³⁸ for the M40 and portable models, whose illustrations and photomontages closely recall Munari's graphic mark-making, datable between 1934 and '35;³⁹ and an earlier advert that—although based primarily on text, and aside

33. Henrion, Parkin 1967: 86.

34. Lichtenstein, Häberli 2000: 275. The information provided by the curators of the 1995 retrospective in Zurich must be based on the designer's own account, but nevertheless gives no useful indication of the originals' whereabouts.

35. Cf. Schawinsky's 1934 poster, based on a photograph of an elegant woman with her hands resting on the MP1, in which the Olivetti name appears only on the typewriter's body. Cf. www.storiaolivetti.it.

36. The advert is reproduced in Salaris 1986: 156, with no further references.

37. The two adverts are reproduced in the appendix of a short feature on the photogram in *L'Ufficio Moderno* (ix; 3, March 1934: 168–70, cit). The Studio Boggeri/Munari signature is at lower right. One of the

adverts (*Veloce*) appeared in *Domus* no. 71 (December 1933): xii. The portable typewriter debuted in 1935, and based on the payoff of other advertisement series for it (some of which might be attributed to Munari)—'Olivetti Portatile / leggera elegante robusta veloce'—one could hypothesise that there were four photomontages, each paired with various adjectives (the dove would be associated with lightness, the airplane with speed, and so on).

38. In *Casabella* iv; 57 (September 1932) and *Domus* vi; 68 (August 1933), respectively.

39. 'Distinzione' in *Casabella* iv; 58 (October 1932); 'Evoluzione' in *Domus* no. 75 (March), 1934: xvi; the series (*Evoluzione*, *Solidarietà*, *Identica*) in a smaller size in *Guida Ricciardi* 1936 (1935): 79.

from the similar illustration style—took up the typographic layout and oblique slogan from the series for the portable typewriter.⁴⁰

[117] A brochure for Studio 42 that Munari designed between late 1935 and '36 deserves its own analysis. All that now remains of the project are a pair of layouts with printing instructions⁴¹ (his handwriting is recognisable), from which we can surmise that the printed version was a loose riff on the layout of an earlier brochure for the M40 designed by Schawinsky. The fact that Munari was hired to do it—and not Schawinsky, who since '34 had played an essential role in the development of Olivetti's brand, and with the architects Figini and Pollini had been directly involved in designing the new typewriter—could mean that by the spring of '36 Schawinsky was no longer available. Indeed, at the beginning of the year Schawinsky returned to Milan after a trip to Paris and London (where he also got married) to complete his last works before emigrating to the United States that autumn, following Josef Albers' invitation for him to teach at Black Mountain College. Munari may have been chosen through Boggeri, with whom both Munari and Ricas collaborated throughout the 1930s. The fact that later adverts for the model were done by Nivola and Pintori, in-house graphic designers at Olivetti, suggests Munari was hired for contingent reasons, rather than any conscious preference.

Finally, one other work identified as Munari's remains somewhat mysterious: it is an airbrushed photo of the Divisumma 14 calculator whose purpose

and production context are unclear; the product marked Olivetti's debut in the mechanical calculator market, which until then had been dominated by American producers. Designed by Natale Capellaro and Marcello Nizzoli, the calculator began production in 1948—so the photo must be from just after WWII,⁴² which would confirm the otherwise undocumented relationship between Olivetti and Munari during the postwar period.

The Milanese advertising scene

Over the course of the 1920s, despite progress in the business world, the size and organisational scope of the advertising sector nevertheless remained limited. The few Italian advertisers, all perforce located in the major cities of the country's industrial triangle, and above all in Milan, worked in small artisanal organisations, despite the fact that the previous decade brought about the first initiatives independent of missionary agents and graphic-arts printshops. Marcello Dudovich, for example, in 1920 founded his own agency Star, and at the same time stepped up to become art director of IGAP (Impresa generale di affissioni, or General Posters and Handbills Enterprise), which printed his posters. In step with the gradual, timid modernisation of market and psychological research, the range of available creative services grew more complex: by the end of the decade the Casa Maga, founded in 1920 by Giuseppe

40. 'Da ogni lettera sorge la vostra ombra' in *Domus* no.74 (February), 1934: iv. For a point of comparison cf., for example, a similar advert (Vacanze, in *Domus* no.79, July 1934), which nonetheless has significant differences in the layout and type used for the slogan/logotype, in the visualisation of the product through drawing (instead of photography) and in the mark-making and graphic style of the illustration accompanying the text.

41. Now in the collection of the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, Bologna/New York, exhibited at the retrospective in Milan's Rotonda della Besana, December 2007–February 2008. Unfortunately, in the Archivio Storico Olivetti in Ivrea there are no examples of any similar print.

42. Sketch in the collection of the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, Bologna/New York.

Magagnoli, was the largest Italian advertising studio, and offered a complete range of services—from a campaign's conception to its printing and distribution, aided by the most famous poster artists of the day (even producing its own in-house publication, *Il pugno nell'occhio*). In 1922, after extensive experience abroad (in the United States in particular), Luigi Casoni Dal Monte returned to Milan and founded the Acme-Dal Monte company, the first true advertising agency based on rationalist working methods; and in 1928, also in Milan, Erwa opened—this was an Italian branch of the American Erwin-Wasey agency, run by Nino Caimi (who had worked for some time in their us offices), which worked with the budget of brands like Ford, Texaco, and Camel, yet it was short-lived after the arrival of the American economic crisis. Nevertheless, the Italian advertising scene in the early 1930s was largely a continuation of the previous decade, despite the repercussions of the economic crisis.⁴³ In 1930 Caimi founded Enneci (responsible for important national campaigns for sugar, beer, and bananas); during that same period Anton Gino Domeneghini founded IMA (Idea Metodo Arte), which grew to twenty-odd employees; and Giulio Cesare Ricciardi and Pier Luigi Balzaretti opened Studio Balza-Ricc.⁴⁴

Despite Italian agencies' references to the American model (almost all Italian advertisers and publicists had formative professional experiences with American agencies), the advertising practices within these structures ignored the subdivision of roles and teamwork so prevalent in America,

and was instead shaped more by the personality of the owner—who came up with projects and slogans, while the visual work was usually delegated to outside collaborators, as we have seen with Campari and Olivetti. So the market consisted largely of freelancers, poster artists, and graphic artists who worked in their own studios, reflecting an artisanal concept of advertising.⁴⁵ In addition to major names like Federico Seneca (who settled in Milan after a long stint as art director for Perugina-Buitoni) and Marcello Nizzoli (consultant for Campari, and later on for Olivetti), the best graphic artists working in Milan at the beginning of the decade included young creatives from various backgrounds such as Erberto Carboni (architect), Luigi Veronesi (painter and photographer), Carlo Dradi and Attilio Rossi (printing technicians and founders of *Campo grafico*), Remo Muratore (architect) and, from the Futurist realm, Ricas and Munari.⁴⁶

43. Although less drastic than in America and Germany, the effects of the 1929 crash caused prices and stocks to collapse in Italy as well, leading to a sharp curtailing of production and rise in unemployment. Nevertheless, despite the noticeable drop in wages and living standards, political-economic factors in the early thirties—the forced revaluation of the lira in 1927 to balance paybooks, political public-works initiatives, and state intervention on behalf of business—led to a situation that was generally favourable to the expansion of advertising in Italy, pushing the productive sector to further develop the domestic market. This trend grew stronger in the latter half of the decade, following the proclamation of autarchy in response to international sanctions (imposed by the League of Nations following Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935–36) (Arvidsson 2001: 169, 179n; Procacci

1975² (1968): 517–20; cf. Falabrino 2001: 118–9).

44. See Abruzzese, Colombo 1994: 49, 57, 157, 165, 169, 253, 392; Valeri 1986: 56, 65–8; Ceserani 1988: 127–9; Falabrino 2001: 112–8; Pitteri 2002: 22; Arvidsson 2003: 48–9, 52–3; Arvidsson 2001: 169–75; Alberti 2007: 98; De Iulio, Vinti 2009: 63–4.

45. Pitteri 2002: 22; Valeri 1986: 67–8; Ceserani 1988: 104, 129; Falabrino 2001: 116, 137. The contrast between the American advertising tradition, tied to the development of marketing research, and the commercial arts tradition, grew more pressing and led to more interesting results in the postwar period following WWII: cf. De Iulio, Vinti 2009.

46. Valeri 1986: 68; Ceserani 1988: 104, 129–30; Falabrino 2001: 137. The names mentioned here appeared in the two editions of the Guida Ricciardi from 1933 and '36.

In terms of professional organisation, in 1924 the Sindacato nazionale pubblicitario (National Advertising Union) was founded in Milan, and was the first official association to welcome advertising technicians, middlemen, and industrial managers.⁴⁷ An important venue for research and reflection arrived in 1926 with the debut of *L'Ufficio Moderno*, a magazine dedicated to company organisation on all levels which soon became the centre to which the field's new practitioners flocked, and quickly became a point of reference for its most innovative figures.⁴⁸ In the early 1930s the magazine, directed by Guido Mazzali and Dino Villani, held convivial meet-ups at the La Penna d'Oca (a restaurant in via S. Carlo, in Milan's Navigli neighborhood),⁴⁹ where professionals from various fields united—poster artists, advertising technicians, journalists, administrative consultants, and manufacturers. The first meetings generated the idea of forming a group, which took the name Gruppo amici della razionalizzazione (GAR, Group of the Friends of Rationalisation) and met at irregular intervals beginning in February 1931 in a small room at the Orologio restaurant, just steps from the Duomo.⁵⁰ Within the broader context of the time, in which exchanges between professionals from different sectors were sporadic at best, it is understandable why such encounters also attracted economists, statisticians, legal practitioners—contributors to *L'Industria Lombarda* (the official publication of the general confederation of Italian industry) interested in a studied, 'scientific' organisation of labour⁵¹—as well

as illustrators and advertising designers like Carboni, Nizzoli, Dradi, Brunetta, Munari and Ricas, brought together by their need to discuss common problems. The initial convivial format gradually morphed into more structured meetings, with thematic presentations on aspects of the economy, business modernisation, advertising, staff education, and corporate politics,⁵² and Mazzali's magazine became the movement's de facto official publication, regularly reporting on the meetings.⁵³

47. Ceserani 1997a in Cimorelli, Ginex: 127. With the imposition of the Fascist corporate system (codified in the 1927 Carta del Lavoro) advertisers were filed first in the Print and Press Corporation category (1926), and later on in the Commercial Auxiliary category (1928) under the label National Fascist Union of Advertising Agencies (Ceserani 1988: 103–4). The corporate-sector panorama was completed by: the Industrial Confederation, comprised of publicity and advertising producers; the Professional and Artists Confederation, comprised of graphic artists (like Munari) and text editors; and the Autonomous Federation of Artisanal Communities, comprised of sign- and gift-makers (Valeri 1986: 60). With the intent of creating a 'third way' as an alternative between capitalism and Marxism to resolve class conflict—which was in the state's greatest interest—employers and employees were associated with a broad range of corporations corresponding to their various economic activities, all controlled by the government and grouped under the Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni (Chamber of Fasces and Corporations) (<http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporativismo>, last accessed 29 December 2010).

48. In the thirties the magazine actively promoted the introduction of the American advertising model, often through sideline initiatives like the office's launch of a correspondence class with the

École supérieure de publicité pratique in Paris (1928), and also helped organize two advertising congresses in Rome in 1930 and 1931 (Valeri 1986: 62–3, 66; Abruzzese, Colombo 1994: 465). In January 1929 the monthly added the subtitle *La Pubblicità*, and in March came under the direction of Guido Mazzali (1895–1960). Mazzali was a journalist, publisher of *Avanti!* until its suppression in 1926, and collaborator of Erwin, Wasey & Co. In 1928 he met Francesco Muscia, who had founded the magazine in 1926, joined the editorial team, and then became director, aided on the editorial team by Dino Villani (co-director from 1931 on). Dino Villani (1898–1989), Italian advertiser. After working with Mazzali, in '34 he became director of Motta's advertising office, then of GiViEmme's, for whom he launched famous award competitions (Abruzzese, Colombo 1994: 277, 467–8; Ceserani 1997: 127; Bauer 1998 in Colombo: 162–4; Carotti 2001: 68–9, 69n; Alberti 2007 in Salsi: 99–100; Fioravanti 1997: 91).

49. La Penna d'Oca restaurant was also a meeting point for the Milanese goliards (cf. advert in *Cip!* *Cip!*, 1931).

50. See Valeri 1986: 71–2; Ceserani 1988: 99–100; Ceserani 1997a: 131; Bauer 1998: 164; Falabrino 2001: 149; Carotti 2001: 72–8.

51. Carotti 2001: 73. Bauer 1998: 164.

52. Cf. Carotti 2001: 76–7.

53. Given the potentially subversive character of the discussions (many

Even after the authorities forced GAR's dissolution, the head group at *L'Ufficio Moderno* continued organising cultural events: it mounted an international exhibition of advertising posters at the Galleria del Milione (June 1933); and helped organise the IV International Advertising Congress, held in Rome and Milan the 17–21 September 1933, to which the magazine devoted a special issue.⁵⁴

As we have seen, Munari became affiliated with the magazine in 1930, where he published his first works. A photo from an evening at the Taverna degli artisti of the Penna d'Oca Club, published in February 1931, shows him amid key figures of the entrepreneurial, academic, and advertising worlds, and the article makes it clear he was directly involved in organising the event.⁵⁵ Munari and Ricas also had lasting relationships with the editorial team, and through 1937 contributed covers and illustrations, as well as managing the art direction of one issue, printed promotional material for the magazine, and adverts for businesses in the sector.⁵⁶

Mazzali's appointment as director of *L'Ufficio Moderno* in '29 also brought with it visible changes in the magazine's graphic look, to reflect its broader interest in both advertising's technical aspects as well as its aesthetic aspects. Up until then the cover had remained tied to symbolist aesthetic elements, albeit with some graphic updating of its lettering, and each issue reproduced the same basic design—only the colours changed—as was standard for magazines in the early 1930s. Mazzali introduced the idea of having each new cover done by

an emerging artist capable of assimilating the new trends, including Carboni, Araca, Hrast, Piombanti, and Nizzoli.⁵⁷ Nizzoli was likely responsible for the monthly's renewed graphic layout, visible in the masthead's restyling, in the stylised figure of the thinker (who replaced the old winged Mercury), and in the column headers (decidedly more controlled than Munari's), while the layout assumed a more modern tone through the exclusive use of the new *Semplicità* typeface, an Italian version of Futura produced by the Nebiolo foundry.⁵⁸

intellectuals and academics were socialists, liberals, Catholics), in 1933 the regime's control forced GAR to be absorbed into a 'Centre for the Study of Corporate Economics,' which effectively sanctioned its dissolution. A new initiative, limited to the advertising sector, was launched in 1938 by the so-called Brigata della Spiga (a name, taken from the Firenze restaurant in via della Spiga, assumed in order to pass through the censors' restrictions). The group tried to launch a national advertising prize, which nevertheless was not followed up on because of the climate surrounding the imminent conflict (cf. Gino Pesavento, 'La Brigata della Spiga' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* XIII; 6, June 1938: 321–3; and *ivi* XIII; 8, August 1938: 430). In '40 Mazzali and other collaborators were arrested and sent into exile; the building housing the editorial offices was destroyed by the bombardments of August 1943 (Valeri 1986: 72, 75–6; Ceserani 1988: 99–100; Bauer 1998 in Colombo: 164; Carotti 2001: 70–1, 74–6. For the references regarding the various reports of the GAR meetings that appeared in the magazine between 1931 and '35, cf. Carotti 2001: 88–91).

54. Published under the title *Arte pubblicitaria 1900–1933*, Milan: *L'Ufficio Moderno*, 1933. Supplement to the September issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno*, published on the eve of the IV International Advertising Congress. Edited by Dino Villani, the volume aimed to be a significant review of the

state of Italian graphic arts: the first part contained a chronological overview of the evolution of advertising in Italy through the profiles of a few advertising companies and agencies illustrated by examples of their adverts; the second part dealt with poster design, graphic design studios, and printers. Curiously, neither Munari (who was included in the *Mostra del Cartello pubblicitario internazionale, con bozzetti italiani rifiutati nei concorsi* (Exhibition of International Advertising Posters and Italian Rejected Posters) curated by Villani at the Galleria del Milione from June 2–17 that same year) nor any other graphic designers of his generation were profiled. Nevertheless, among the adverts included toward the end of the volume, reproductions (by Alfieri & Lacroix) of Munari's cover for the January '33 issue of *Natura* and a photomontage from the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1933* are included (Ceserani 1988: 103–4, 129; Bauer 1998: 164).

55. 'I pubblicitari' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* VI; 2 (February 1931): 95–96 (Valeri 1986: 73; Di Corato 2008: 214–5).

56. It is equally probable that studio R+M received direct (or indirect, through Studio Boggeri) commissions for adverts through Mazzali, who was also a consultant for the Lagomarsino and Alpestre companies.

57. Bauer 1998: 162–3; Carotti 2001: 71.

58. Despite the temptation to attribute it to Ricas

Much like the covers created in 1932, in terms of advertising Ricas and Munari [118] designed a small promotional brochure for *L'Ufficio Moderno*, which from a stylistic point of view could be placed in the transitional phase following their involvement with aeropainting, as it shows an inclination toward modernism, and pays more attention to the typography and the use of photomontage, and can therefore be dated to around 1933.⁵⁹

In the spring of 1935, opening the editorial team to collaborations with prominent Milanese graphic artists, Mazzali made Ricas and Munari art directors of the May issue. The goal of the initiative, which was instructional more than aesthetic, was to document—as the editorial states—‘how even a trade magazine, edited and printed to be read and meditated upon, can and must break out of the narrow confines imposed upon it by the publishers.’ The formula’s success led them to repeat the initiative, as can be seen in the October issue, edited by Xanti Schawinsky. The entire publication shows signs of the two artists’ interventions, not only in the layout, but beginning with the cover and continuing through the many illustrations and adverts, as well as a long article on interior design in which the studio’s stylistic marks are given ample attention.⁶⁰ The layout does not exhibit any significant shifts with respect to the usual typographic layout (it maintained the use of the *Semplicità* and *Landi* faces), but showed great flexibility in the arrangement of text and images according to variously symmetrical and asymmetrical schemas, in one, two or

three columns, with a clear structure that took two-page spreads into consideration—thereby demonstrating its assimilation (albeit without excessive rigour) of the lessons learned from the new typography popularised in Italy by periodicals like *Casabella* and *Campo grafico*. The two graphic designers’ interventions can most clearly be seen in the selection and positioning of the images (primarily cut-out photographs), in a few vertically positioned titles, and in the margins’ balance. They carved out a space for typographic experimentation in the article on themselves, partially printed in duotone, with the text composed entirely in lowercase letters, reminiscent of some work done at the Bauhaus. The opening two-page spread is a fantastical composition that makes the most of the anamorphic reflexion of the studio and the stratification of various elements (a technical drawing, two pencils, a frame) almost creating a surreal rebus. Aside from the verbose introduction, the content of the article—with the exception of the reproductions of graphic artefacts—is highly photographic. It places an emphasis on interior design, even if in reality it does not show trade-fair or commercial installations, but rather their own studio on via Ravizza and the two artists’ living spaces. The images of the studio, on the basement level, focus primarily on the furnishings,

and Munari, the magazine’s look can more reasonably be attributed to Nizzoli: in addition to the illustration style, the editorial offices’ letterhead (reproduced in no.5, May 1932: 115) and its use of typographic screens recalls both his ‘Sintesi Parolibere’ adverts for Campari (in Ferrigni 1937) and the poster ‘La moda. Decorazione della donna’, from 1930 (in Falabrino 2001: 117), in which Nizzoli uses screens and collages of decorative papers to create textures.

59. ‘L’Ufficio Moderno. La pubblicità’, 2-flap brochure, 18×10 cm closed

(26×10 cm open), printed in 3 colours. Milan, n.d. [c. 1935]; only known copy, now in the Bruno Munari Collection, CIAC Galleria del Design e dell’Arredamento, Cantù. Given the presence of a typo in the text and the reproduction of a sketch rather than a photo of the open magazine, this is likely an unfinished blueprint.

60. *L’Ufficio Moderno, la pubblicità* x; 5 (maggio), 1935. This article, untitled and signed ‘Armodio’, is listed in the table of contents as ‘Ricas e Munari, arredamenti e decorazioni d’interni’ (246–5).

made up of work tables, desks, chairs and other rationalist-style pieces; aside from the showroom and administrative spaces, the studio appears filled with paintings, sculptures, 'useless machines', a long black panel for pinning up sketches, and is generally characterised by colour accents on both the furnishings and the walls; ultimately, they appear quite similar to the domestic interiors designed by Ricas and Munari (the latter had married in 1934⁶¹ and lived not far from the studio, in via Vittoria Colonna 39, where he remained for the rest of his life). The variety of their graphic intervention and the works presented in the magazine, ranging from the field of graphic design to that of furnishings and interior decoration, made this issue a nearly complete review of Ricas+Munari's entire output, and therefore allows us to outline a survey of sorts of where they stood in the mid-thirties, when both artists had already gained solid experience in Milan's cultural scene.

Changeover (1933–35)

The article features a review of graphic works including commercial brands, covers, adverts, and illustrations documenting the effective passage from the primarily Futurist first phase toward a more constructivist visual language. This new sensibility, undoubtedly affected by the debate surrounding the new typography—which influenced all the figurative arts a bit, especially in Milan—was characterised by the use of photography (even if Munari and Ricas primarily used photomontage,

perhaps because as a medium it was closer to illustration), the use of white spaces to create compositional balance, and the use of duotone, all elements that heralded the passage to a different graphic approach.

The logotype for AVA, a company that made boilers and heating devices and was part of the Dell'Orto group (for whom Ricas and Munari had already curated trade-fair stands) is typographically built like a monogram, in which the vertical shifting of the central letter leaves room for a small concession to figurative representation. The logo was still in use in 1939⁶² and, as proof of the company's lasting relationship with the studio, a dummy for a brochure or catalogue also survives, with photomontages and headlines, roughly datable to the mid-thirties.⁶³ The logotype for Aeromeccanica Marelli, on the other hand, appears based on a more figurative Futurist typography, in which the two overlapping letters form one stylised figure, without hindering the acronym's legibility in the least, thereby making it more memorable.

Their configuration of the Movo logo was markedly more allusive and original—the company produced model airplanes, and the logo was based on a double positive/negative image that reflects the nature of the product: the design schematically combined the silhouette of an assembled model and the instructional diagrams that came with the package. The go-between linking engineer Gustavo Clerici, Movo's

61. Cf. letter to Tullio d'Albisola [spring 1934]: '(...) when you next come to Milan you'll see our new, typically 'Munarian' home and we'll have the honour, esteemed commander, of counting you first amongst our highly sought-after guests (...) I'll send you a little bag of confetti to share with our friends in Albisola (say hello for us) and a little bag for esa' (in Presotto 1981: 147).

62. See the advert in *Casabella Costruzioni* no.134 (February 1939), from

which it is clear that, in addition to the boiler division, the company also had kitchen (Febo), electrical, and laundry (Lava) divisions; as for the 'paternity' of the respective brands, in lieu of any additional information, Ricas and Munari may well have played a role in their creation (although this is pure speculation).

63. The original sketch, attributed to Munari, belongs to the collection of the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, New York/Bo-logna. 50×34.5 cm.

founder and author of a highly successful model-airplane hobbyist's manual,⁶⁴ and Munari was his younger brother Giordano, who joined him in Milan in the mid-thirties: Giordano also had a technical background in mechanical draughting, and before taking a job with Edison as a turbine draughtsman and designer he worked for a time as draughtsman at Movo.⁶⁵ At the time, model airplane building was a hobby not many could afford, and Clerici, well aware of the importance of an image on par with the prestige aeronautics enjoyed—a phenomenon also nurtured and exploited by the regime, thanks to the record-setting flights of Ferrarin, De Pinedo, and Balbo⁶⁶—entrusted a Futurist artist to promote Movo. The logo, which certainly appeared on the company's letterhead and other commercial printed matter (of which, however, no specimens have survived), predates 1935. Two years later Munari edited the company's annual catalogue of original models.⁶⁷ The precise date of the first exemplar is not known, nor is Munari's role in its creation; in any case, he definitely oversaw the 1937 edition, which was later reprinted (unmodified) the following year, and taken up substantially unaltered (aside from the cover) in the layout of the following editions up through the postwar period.⁶⁸

The catalogue appeared in a small album format, which allowed for an articulated, varied layout combining texts and photographs, and was a successful experiment using a grid-based layout on both the interior pages and cover. The latter is divided into two horizontal stripes printed

in blue, occupied by photographs of an airplane in flight and a model airplane, respectively; the upper portion features the letters of the company name, which emerge in relief thanks to a subtle use of shadow, while the centre has a black stripe with the text 'Modelli volanti e parti staccate' (Flying models and individual parts) and the store's address printed in negative. The same horizontal emphasis characterises the pages of text: some pages are based on a three-column module, with colour titles slightly unaligned (with

64. Gustavo Clerici, *Il modello volante. Vademecum dell'aeromodellista*. Milan: Edizioni Movo, 1938. There is no evidence of Munari's involvement in the volume's production, which typographically belongs to the category of technical instruction manuals (like those published by Hoepli).

65. Alberto Munari, author interview 1 February 2008. As far as is currently known, however, the reverse hypothesis cannot be excluded—that is, Munari may have introduced his brother to Movo. His brother (or perhaps Munari himself?) is depicted holding one of the models in a photograph accompanying the article 'I modelli volanti' published by Munari in *La Lettura* xxxvi; 11 (November 1936): 942–3.

66. Arturo Ferrarin (1895–1941) obtained worldwide fame in 1920 with his Rome-Tokyo flight; in 1928 he set the worldwide records for duration and distance of a nonstop flight by flying from Rome to Touros (Brazil). Francesco De Pinedo (1890–1933) carried out the exceptional feat (for the time) of flying from Rome to Melbourne, Tokyo, and back; in 1927 he flew from Italy to Cape Verde, Buenos Aires, and finally Arizona. Italo Balbo (1896–1940) led two Transatlantic flights: the first in December 1930 to Rio de Janeiro, and the second—on the occasion of the 1933 Universal Exposition in Chicago—to Montreal, Chicago, and (en route back to Italy) New York (source:

wikipedia.it, last accessed 2 July 2010).

67. *Movo Modelli volanti e parti staccate*. Milan: Movo, 1937; printed by Muggiani, Milan. 22×14.5 cm; pp. 32; staple binding; printed in two colours. This edition is the oldest in the company's archives. The information claiming the catalogue's interior was overseen by Clerici doubtless refers to the content rather than the graphic layout (Alessandro Clerici, author interview 17 July 2009).

68. The catalogues' covers maintained the photographic layout of the original (with the exception that the photo in the lower portion changes) up until 1941. The later editions (including those of the immediate postwar period) have a different cover, no longer illustrated but rather typographic, and more traditional; the structure is similar, divided into two horizontal stripes, but of different colours and heights. Its creator is unknown—however, if compared to the case for *Mondo Aria Acqua Terra*, a collection of children's books published by Munari in 1940 (Milan: Italgeo), whose cover has a similar layout, it is possible that even the new typographic cover was designed by Munari. The interior, on the other hand—aside from a few new insertions and rearrangement of a few pages—largely followed the original layout of '37. The format and the graphic look of the Movo catalogues changed only in 1959.

respect to the columns); these alternate with pages based on a two-column module, dominated by photographs and diagrams accompanied by technical notes; and pages of tables follow, in various modular arrangements according to the function of their data. On a typographic level, the use of a single sans-serif face (*Semplicità*) gives uniformity and coherence to the effective arrangement of titles and headlines that—using a combination of sizes, weights, cases, and colours—facilitates the information's readability.

[126] 'A brochure must be thought of as a single strip'—wrote Munari in an article that appeared that same year in *Campo grafico*. Here for the first time he put into practice the principle of 'graphic rhythm', comparing it to a cinematographic sequence:

a certain sense of movement, similar to cinema, created by a succession of pages much like the succession of film stills (...) has to balance the white space, text, and illustrations in a clear, fluid way, and above all it must remain as hidden as possible.⁶⁹

In other words, speaking of the importance of the alignments as of an invisible 'central thread on and around which the other minor rhythms form the harmony of the whole', Munari postulates the modular grid, an innovation brought to Italy by Persico and Modiano's pioneering work for *Casabella* (in particular, their work from 1933 on); yet its elaboration remains primarily intuitive, far from the systematic concept of the grid that was already widespread in Central Europe. More generally, the formal solutions adopted in the

Movo catalogue clearly indicate Munari's proximity to the precepts of the new typography and his evident assimilation of a few modernist stylistic elements, like the functional use of duotone, the layout based on the two-page spread, the importance of white in the composition, and the coherent arrangement of illustrations, texts, and captions, which recall the recurring recommendations that appeared in the pages of *Campo grafico* and Modiano's writings.⁷⁰ The Movo catalogue is without doubt one of Munari's best creations—and one of the best works in general within the graphic scene of the time, as the reproduction of its cover and some of its two-page spreads in an article by Giuseppe Pagano in a special issue of *Gebrauchsgraphik* devoted to Italy in autumn 1937 attests.⁷¹

Ricas and Munari's situation between 1933 and 1935 might best be summarised as a changeover. Their openness toward a more resolutely modern graphic approach, more apprised of constructive principles, came about through their intense collaboration with Antonio Boggeri's advertising studio, where the two artists were able to measure themselves against graphic designers like Xanti Schawinsky. Their cover

69. Bruno Munari, 'Ritmi grafici' in *Campo grafico* v; 5–6, June 1937: 33, 35. At the beginning of the article, Munari presents a modular grid, probably the same one used in the layout of the Movo catalogue. It is interesting to note that, among the images accompanying the text there are, in addition to a selection of individual pages from the catalogue, also works by studio R+M (an advert and cover) and an American catalogue by Lester Beall.

70. See, for example, the article 'Cataloghi' (in *Campo grafico* III; 1, January 1935: 6–8) in which, based on an example designed by Max Burchartz for Wehag, Modiano analyses the catalogue as a modern graphic product, discussing its twofold function of

aesthetic and informative communication.

71. Giuseppe Pagano, 'Die Entwicklung der Typographie in Italien/Evolution of typography in Italy' in *Gebrauchsgraphik* vol.14, no.10 (October 1937): 52–60. Reproductions of the catalogue also appear alongside Munari's article, 'Ritmi grafici', which appeared in *Campo grafico* (no.5–6, June 1937: 32–5), later reprinted with the illustrations in the 'Consensi e dissensi' column of *L'Ufficio Moderno* (XII; 9, September 1937: 441–6). Given its traditional layout, an unsigned advert for Movo that appeared in *L'Ala d'Italia* that same autumn (n.10, October 1937: xxxvi) is difficult to read, and therefore likely cannot be attributed to Munari.

design for *L'Ufficio Moderno*, successful as it is for the genre, still has not entirely shed the traditional pictorial heritage. The cover [128] designed a few months later by Schawinsky is characterised instead by the skillful integration of photography and typography, the controlled dynamism of the composition, and the expressive use of colour and typographic screens. A comparison between these examples shows the sheer distance that still separated the most advanced Italian graphic designers from the concept of modern graphics developed in continental Europe.⁷²

This phase of research was also when Ricas and Munari participated in a textile design competition launched by De Angeli-Frua, an important textile firm, aimed at the exhibition of unique fabrics at the 1933 Triennale. The competition was announced in *Domus* and *Natura* in November '32 and, in addition to noteworthy monetary prizes, offered artists a chance to publish their own work in a prestigious context as well as contribute to the production of a textile series. The jury consisted of representatives from the company and the *Direttorio* (Steering Committee) of the Milanese exhibition, the directors of the two magazines (Gio Ponti and Luigi Poli), and artists and architects including Mario Sironi, Giuseppe Pagano, and Luciano Baldessari. The competition results were published the following February, and Ricas and Munari were among the winners with an aeropictorial-style design that (per the announced conditions) was exhibited at the V Triennale.⁷³ The next Triennale in 1936 also included a review of printed textiles,

[129] and a number of recently rediscovered textile design sketches signed Munari/Studio Boggeri can probably be traced back to that occasion: these are particularly interesting examples, insofar as the drawings no longer show any trace of the old aeropictorial stylistic elements, and are instead modelled on organic and geometric motifs in coordinated ranges of spot colours.⁷⁴

Also in 1933 Dino Villani, editor of *L'Ufficio Moderno*, organised an important exchange between the European avant-garde and the Milanese graphics and architecture scenes at the Galleria del Milione. Proposing an *Esposizione del cartello internazionale e del cartello italiano rifiutato* (Exhibition of International Posters and Rejected Italian Posters), which included work by Munari and Ricas alongside that of high-calibre European artists such as Bayer, Carlu, Cassandre, Cappiello, Garretto, Sepo, Dudovich, and Soviet poster designers. Controversially, the Italian graphic designers exhibited only rejected sketches to criticise patrons' aesthetic incomprehension:

Here [in Italy] people still ask that posters be nice illustrations, they want them to be full of laudatory descriptions, when instead

72. *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5 (May 1935) and ivi x; 10 (September 1935), by Ricas+Munari and Schawinsky, respectively.

73. Cf. Gio Ponti, 'Verso gli artisti...' in *Domus* no. 59 (November 1932): 686–7 and 'L'esito del concorso per dieci stoffe d'autore bandito da De Angeli-Frua' in *Natura* vi; 2 (February 1933): 56–7. The competition was expressly designed without excessive stipulations in order to guarantee the participation of the best artists, and offered 10 prizes of 1,000 lire plus a special juried prize of 2,000 lire—by way of comparison, 1,000 lire was the equivalent of a decent monthly wage, as a famous song (*Mille lire al mese*) of the time attests. Among the

ten artists whose designs were selected, in addition to Munari and Ricas, were Nizzoli (two prizes and the special prize), Lucio Fontana, Fausto Melotti, and Giulia Veronesi.

74. Now in the collection of the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, New York/Bologna. The lot includes drawings of various sizes (the smallest measures 10×16 cm, the largest 34×40.5 cm), done in tempera in different colour combinations (from 2 to 5); some compositions are only partially completed, with the main image sketched in pencil. All carry the artist's signature, often accompanied by an illegible scrawl. The client they were done for, on the other hand, remains unknown.

they should consist of very few elements that instantaneously synthesise a concept.⁷⁵

In terms of Munari's stylistic progress, 1934 was marked by two somewhat contradictory events: on the one hand, the professional recognition from a competition promoted by *Il Risorgimento Grafico*; and, on the other, a typographic poster created for a Futurist exhibition that exposed all the limits in his self-taught educational background. The competition was one in a series of promotional initiatives carried out in Bertieri's nearly forty years of activity: the assigned theme was a cover for the magazine, and was therefore inspired by the press and print world, and accepted work in two categories, artistic (illustrated) and typographic, evaluated by two separate juries. Despite the usual debates surrounding such initiatives, participation was quite high, with over 130 designs submitted between the two divisions. Not only did the magazine devote two issues to the competition results, publishing all the selected works, it also organised a public exhibition at the Istituto Bertieri. The designs by the three winners in each category were also published as covers of *Il Risorgimento Gra-*
[132] *fico* that year. Munari's composition won second place, and was published in the April issue.⁷⁶ It is significant that Munari submitted a figurative design, confirming his personal inclination toward pictorial expression rather than the rigour of typographic composition, even if the image did have a decidedly abstract aspect: the background is a geometric motif with alternating stripes, atop which the silhouette of a

hand (made with typographic screens) is mounted, and atop the hand is a block of moveable type, the only really figurative element; the title of the magazine and other text appear within the horizontal stripes.

The result appears even more noteworthy when compared to the typographic poster he produced for an aeropainting exhibition in Reggio Emilia during that same period. The exhibition was the same one organised in March at the Galleria delle Tre Arti in Milan, for which the artist had designed
[133] a brochure with a twofold function—acting as both a programme and a theoretical manifesto—quite effective in its striking simplicity.⁷⁷ In April, when the show travelled to Reggio Emilia, Munari created a purely typographic poster, an absolutely unique piece in his entire production. The composition seems to have been assembled directly on the press with moveable wood type, according to the artist's loose directions (perhaps aimed at achieving a Dada-esque effect), in the disorderly arrangement of the texts, which lacked any

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75. Galleria del Milione, Milan, 3–30 June 1933. Cf. Dino Villani, 'Presentazione' and (ed.) 'In Galleria' in *Il Milione* no.16 (3–30 June 1933): n.p. Over the course of the 1932/33 season the Ghiringhelli brothers' gallery (thanks also to Persico's unflagging contributions) mounted significant group exhibitions on the emerging field of design, ranging from modern furnishings to set design and fashion.

76. 46th Competition announced by *Il Risorgimento Grafico* in September 1934. The two juries, composed of 3 members, included—in addition to the categories' union representatives, from the Unione Provinciale professionisti e artisti and the Sindacato Provinciale Fascista dell'arte grafica—respectively: Guido Marussig (illustrator, poster artist, set designer) and Raffaele Calzini (writer) for category A (art); Gabriele Chiattoni (printer-typographer and

art publisher) and Elio Palazzo (director of the Scuola dell'Umanitaria) for category B (typography). Cf. *Il Risorgimento Grafico* xxxi; nos.2 and 3 (February and March 1935), wholly devoted to the competition results. The exhibition opened to the public on 24 March and was installed in the printshop rooms, 'atop the typesetters' cases and the printshop's countertops' (ibid.). In addition to being published, Munari won 300 lire.

77. *Scelta futuristi venticinquenni*, brochure, 70×50 cm. Printed on the occasion of the exposition at the Galleria delle Tre Arti, Milan, 4–18 March 1934. The recto contains a short 'Antipolemica/Noi lavoriamo contando' presentation (by Munari), a calendar of events, and a catalogue of the works; the verso reproduces the *Manifesto tecnico dell'aeroplastica futurista* (reproduced in Lista 1984: 68).

clear structure, in the unusual horizontal format, and above all in the decision to print it on papers of various colours (reminiscent of the Italian flag, although it is not clear whether this gesture was deliberately playful or just plain nationalistic). But aside from the riff on the stylistic elements of Dada, the composition has no formal relation to the brochure of the Milan exhibition, and appears rather compositionally limp, in both its choice and use of type as well as in its tendency to fill the page, ignoring the white spaces.⁷⁸ Nor, truthfully, does it demonstrate any greater typographic competence than the plain self-promotional advert Ricas and Munari published in the goliard students' *Latteria di Tripoli*.⁷⁹

The modernist controversy

The proposition Munari outlined in his brief contribution to *Campo grafico* took up current ideas from the heated modernist debate that throughout the 1930s pitted the traditionalism of book typography, embodied by Raffaello Bertieri and his magazine *Il Risorgimento grafico*,⁸⁰ against the new generations of technicians and graphic designers who, looking to the broader range of European work, saw a clear affinity—of both intent and, secondarily, formal qualities—between typography, architecture, and nonfigurative painting. The voices in favour of a rational, expressive renewal of the graphic arts—anticipated by the critical thinking and print work of exceptional typographers like Guido Modiano⁸¹—were heard in *Campo grafico*, the

'magazine of graphic aesthetics and techniques' founded in January 1933 by a group of technicians (typesetters, lithographers, printers) working at various Milanese printing plants, whose antagonism toward '*Il Risorgimento Grafico*' had a strong impact on the stagnant environment in Italy at the time.⁸² The young 'campisti' shared an urgent desire to expand the typographic

78. *Mostra aeropittura venticinquenni futuristi*, poster, 100×70 cm. Printed by the Stabilimento tipografico P. Notari e figli, Reggio Emilia. Printed in three versions on green, white, and red paper. Reproductions in Lista 1984 (green), Mughini, Scudiero 1997 (white), Mughini collection, Rome (red). For the exhibition in Reggio Emilia cf. 'I futuristi venticinquenni a Milano e a Reggio' in *Sant'Elia* III; 67 (15 May 1934): 6.

79. 'Se vi trovate in imbarazzo (...)' in *Latteria di Tripoli. Numero unico dei goliardi milanesi a favore degli studenti bisognosi*. Milan: n.p., [February/March] 1934: p. 48. 22.5×30 cm.

80. Raffaello Bertieri (pseudonym of Carlo Lorettoni, 1875–1941), printer-typographer, bibliophile, and publisher. A pupil of typographer Salvatore Landi, at the beginning of the century he moved from Florence to Milan, where he sold presses. In 1906 he opened a printshop/graphic office with Piero Vanzetti, which in the twenties became the Istituto Grafico Bertieri (in 1926 Vanzetti and Luigi Vanoletti founded the eponymous printing facility). In 1902 Bertieri founded the trade magazine *Il Risorgimento Grafico* (literally 'The Graphic Resurgence'), which he directed for nearly forty years, becoming spokesman for a renewal of printing arts based on a return and revival of Renaissance and Bodonian book models. Director of the Scuola del Libro della Società Umanitaria (from 1919 to 1925), he also designed typefaces based on Renaissance (*Incunabula*, 1911; *Sinibaldi*, 1922–28; *Ruano*, 1926) and neoclassical calligraphic models (*Paganini*, 1926),

all produced by the Fonderia Nebiolo, where he also supported the creation (in 1933) of the Art Studio run by Giulio Da Milano, later run by Alessandro Butti (Rattin, Ricci 1997: 63, 86–90, 97; Pigozzi 1982: 468). Despite the controversies in the specialised press that pitted conservatives against innovators for nearly a decade, thanks to the prestige Bertieri enjoyed as a 'cultural figure' he continued to receive important commissions for the Triennale: after the graphic overview he installed in the Padiglione della stampa (Print Pavilion) in '33, and the absence of any graphic arts presentation in '36, in 1940 Bertieri curated the book section of the Mostra dell'arte grafica (Graphic Arts Exhibition) installed by Guido Modiano, who also played a key role in creating Italy's new typographic style (cf. Vinti 2005).

81. Although the first texts date back to 1929 ('Del nuovo stile tipografico' in *L'Industria della stampa* no. 9, September 1929: 275–280), in 1931 Modiano effectively opened the debate by launching *Tipografia*, a magazine published by the Fonderia Reggiani (a short-lived publication, with only 3 issues) and at the same time designed and printed graphic works according to the new functionalist criteria (catalogue Compagnia Continentale Sellerie ciclistiche e affini, 1932) (cf. Vinti 2005: 51, 55).

82. The magazine, launched in January 1933, ceased publication in May 1939. In the absence of any in-depth historic examination of the magazine, see the clear accounts given by its two main figures, Attilio Rossi and Carlo Dradi: Rossi 1973: 11–4; Dradi 1973:

field to include everyday printed matter (brochures, catalogues, magazines, in which the photographic image was assuming an ever greater role) overturning the traditional preeminence of the book, defended by *Il Risorgimento Grafico*, which represented the erudite side of Italian printing arts. *Campo grafico*'s uniqueness lay not only in the fact that it was a spontaneous publishing initiative, without great means, founded on the collaboration of its prime movers—material suppliers and the various plants in which it was printed.⁸³ Above all, it positioned itself as a 'demonstrative' magazine that, contesting the rhetoric of 'Italian-ness' in the neoclassical book-publishing model,⁸⁴ adopted an experimental formula that was reevaluated with each issue—whereby the cover, layout, and even the adverts became a 'training ground' of sorts in which to prove the inherent possibilities of the new typographic aesthetic. Beyond the strictly formal level, *Campo grafico* made important contributions to the modernist debate through its content as well, with polemical and theoretical writings, critical and popularising articles, technical columns, and reviews; all this was augmented by adverts with colour reproductions and a few monographs dedicated to contemporary artists, confirming the deep ties between typography and all the other manifestations of modern aesthetics.⁸⁵ And it was not an isolated instance. A similar attempt to rejuvenate typographic culture was carried out by a group of printer-typographers in Turin, led by Giulio Da Milano and Ezio D'Errico, who founded the magazine *Graphicus*; it

took a moderately progressive stance, halfway between the more extreme positions held by the traditionalists and Futurists.⁸⁶

Relationship to architecture

The modernist controversy arose amidst the broader context of Italian rationalism, characterised by age-old controversies regarding the role of modern architecture

19–23, 26–8, 36–7; Rossi 1983: 8–11. (Cf. also Pigozzi 1982: 468–9; Fioravanti 1997: 74–5; Baroni, Vitta 2003: 135–6; Caccia 2007: 49–52)

83. Each issue was edited, typeset, and printed after working hours at the various printing facilities in which the workers and technicians were employed, coordinating the various steps in weekly meetings. Even the distribution, as well as subscription enrollment, depended on volunteer work. Despite the economic difficulties, from January 1933 through mid-1939 a total of 66 issues were published; it grew from an original 16 pages to a total of 24 within the first year, although the print run generally remained around 500 copies (Dradi 1973; Rossi 1983; Dradi, Rossi 2003: 8).

84. Italian typographic traditionalism (championed by Bertieri, Cesare Ratta, and Alberto Tallone) was constantly targeted by the 'campisti' (contributors to *Campo grafico*): cf. Rossi, who derides the mentality of the illustrious printer-typographers 'who honed their tastes during the inauspicious floral period and then returned to the simplicity of Bodoni, which seemed to them a revolutionary step' (*Campo grafico* v; 9, September 1937) or Modiano, who, in a review about Tallone, labelled such 'tipografia granducale' (grand-duchy typography) anachronistic (*Campo grafico* iii; 7, July 1935).

85. The technical articles offered information and solutions for common printing problems, as well as news on such topics as the use of metallic inks,

printing on cellophane, etc.; the reviews covered exhibitions by known artists considered close to the field of graphics, such as the shows by Vordemberge-Gildewart (November 1934) and Willi Baumeister (May 1935) at the Galleria del Milione. Three important monographs were devoted to the work of painter Atanasio Soldati, sculptor Lucio Fontana, and architect Alberto Sartoris, accompanied by critical texts by Alfonso Gatto, Leonardo Sinisgalli, Edoardo Persico, and Raffaello Giolli. Even on the covers the editors always sought to combine aesthetic ends (commissioning work from artists in various currents: Veronesi, Soldati, Dradi-Rossi, et al.) and technical aspects (experimenting with printing on cardboard and other new materials, like metallic or velour papers, in some cases combined with offset printing) (Dradi 1973: 35).

86. A technical-typographic monthly founded in Turin in 1911 under the title *Piemonte grafico*. In 1932 *Graphicus* began a fruitful collaboration with the Scuola Tipografica Vigliardi Paravia, which led to a generational renewal of its editorial team and in 1934 a new directorship under Giulio Da Milano (who had previously run the Art Studio of the Nebiolo foundry), Edoardo Orecchia, and Ezio d'Errico, champions of a more decisive updating/modernisation of the graphic arts; in particular the covers of the thirties show a bona fide emulation of the work being done by the Milanese campisti (Solia 1969: 39–45; Dradi 1973: 12; Pansera 1984: 16n; Priarone 1989: 12).

in the Fascist state. In particular, the campaign for rational architecture regarded the exhibition installation and public competition sectors, but above all it occupied the specialised press (*Casabella* first and foremost), trade newspapers, and even the Camera dei Deputati (Chamber of Parliament).⁸⁷ Nevertheless, despite a few significant achievements, the attempt to develop an Italian modernism ended up inevitably yielding to the conditions imposed by the regime, and was forced to compromise with the monumentalism spreading through Italy's urban centres.

In 1926 the avant-garde Gruppo 7 (Group 7) came to the fore with a series of articles published in the magazine *Rassegna Italiana*. These texts were a kind of manifesto of Italian rationalism in which new principles for modern architecture, in line with the theoretical underpinnings of the International style, were announced: an adherence to the essential form, correspondence between form and function, and refusal of decoration—while nevertheless laying claim to ties with the underlying Italian tradition.⁸⁸ In 1928 the group organised the Prima Esposizione italiana di architettura razionale (First Italian Exposition of Rational Architecture) at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, which gave it a degree of notoriety on the national level, and in 1930 it grew into the MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale, the Italian Rational Architecture Movement), with the aim of increasing its visibility and influence through exhibitions, conferences, and publications. Although the first public launch did not garner any

particular reaction, once the first works were built (Terragni's Novocomum in Como, 1929; Pagano's Gualino office building in Turin; Figini and Pollini's Casa elettrica at the Monza Triennale, 1930) it became clear that the rationalists' intentions were really too radical for the academicism dominant in Rome. Despite efforts to validate the rational style as a response to the reformatory values of Fascism—which, it should be noted, many young architects, including Terragni and Pagano, staunchly supported—the Seconda Esposizione italiana di architettura razionale (Second Italian Exposition of Rational Architecture) at the Galleria Bardi in Rome in 1931 caused a great stir.⁸⁹ Marcello Piacentini—the most influential architect in Rome, and advocate of a 'simplified neoclassicism' in keeping with the regime's authoritarian vision⁹⁰—accused the rationalists of 'Bolshevism' in the press; the architects' union, part of the Fascist corporate order, withdrew its support and threatened the participating architects with expulsion from the Order of Architects; the inevitable defections led to the dissolution of MIAR in September 1931.

87. Following the controversy—brought as far as Parliament—surrounding the plans for Sabaudia and the Florence railway station Mussolini intervened (up until then, as with all aesthetic issues, he had not gotten involved), and in June 1934 summoned Giovanni Michelucci's Gruppo Toscano to Palazzo Venezia and unexpectedly praised rationalist architecture: 'because, as an old revolutionary, he sensed that the architecture we proposed was a slap in the face of the lazy, sly bourgeoisie' (Carlo Belli 1980: 18).

88. The group included the young architects Ubaldo Castagnola, Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Gino Pollini, Carlo Enrico Rava, Giuseppe Terragni, and Adalberto Libera.

89. Despite Pier Maria Bardi's manoeuvres to win Mussolini's support of rationalism (*Rapporto*

sull'architettura [per Mussolini]. Polemiche. Rome: Edizioni di Critica Fascista, 1931), what really got a reaction from academics was his 'Tavola degli orrori', a profane photomontage that implicitly attacked the eclecticism popular under King Umberto and Piacentini's monumental classicism.

90. In these years many Italian cities were redesigned: parts of their historic centres were demolished, new streets were opened, and many public buildings were redefined in an eclectic style inspired by the 'Roman-ness' championed by Marcello Piacentini. His 'simplified neoclassicism' was essentially an exterior modernisation characterised by simplified forms, smooth walls, full balconies, and blunted arches and columns, while the structure still had symmetrical plans and closed volumes.

From then on the more radical version of the rationalist movement was defeated, and internally lost steam as the architects gave up on winning any major public commissions, where the Fascist style promoted by the regime was rampant. Conversely, the collaborative strategy enacted by Piacentini managed to break the rationalist front, bringing in those architects open to compromise on broader projects like the Città Universitaria in Rome and, later, the Esposizione Universale E42 (commonly referred to today as EUR).⁹¹ Nevertheless, individual architects managed to carry out a few important achievements: in 1933 work on the new railway station began in Florence (designed by the Gruppo Toscano led by Giovanni Michelucci); the urban planning of Sabaudia commenced (coordinated by Luigi Piccinato); and a few minor public buildings were completed (railway stations, post offices, and community centres known as Case del fascio).⁹² That same year Bardi and Bontempelli launched the new architecture magazine *Quadrante*,⁹³ mouthpiece of the Fascist intellectual Left led by Giuseppe Bottai and his final attempt to defend rationalism, in opposition to intellectuals like Ugo Ojetto who defended Piacentini's architecture.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the broader backdrop of these complex events was the clash between proponents and opponents of modernism within the government and PNF, which influenced all forms of artistic activity; after the call for a return to sobriety imposed by the proclamation of autarchy, the Futurists and abstract artists sided with the rationalists in defence of the avant-garde.⁹⁵

An attempt at establishing a direct link between Futurism and rationalism was mounted by the Turin group, and in particular by Alberto Sartoris and Fillia who, after organising the first exhibition of Futurist architecture dedicated to Sant'Elia and Chiattoni in 1928 in Rome, in 1931 published the first study of rationalism to appear in Italy, *La nuova architettura*. In this critical review he postulates a relationship between Futurism and rationalism, not unlike the presumed Futurist primacy with respect to the European avant gardes in the typographic realm: indeed, the Futurists—with a fair dose of presumption—repeatedly claimed chronological and creative paternity of the typographic renewal.⁹⁶ But

91. In 1932 Piacentini decided to include the rationalists in the installations for the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, for which Libera collaborated with De Renzi on the imposing façade and with Valente on the Memorial (the central element), while Nizzoli and Terragni curated the other rooms. For the completion of the new Città Universitaria (university campus, 1932–35) Piacentini invited Pagano, Minnucci, and Michelucci, amongst others; for the design of the Esposizione Universale (1936–42) Piccinato, Libera, Minnucci, BBPR, and Pagano (Kirk 2005: 88–90, 133–6; Schnapp 2003: 155–7; cf. Belli 1980: 18–9).

92. Amongst the most important designs built by the rationalists in Italy: the Casa del Fascio in Como (Terragni, 1932); the Istituto di Fisica at the Università degli studi di Roma (Pagano, 1934); the Università Bocconi in Milan (Pagano and G. Predeal, 1938–41); Casa Malaparte on Capri (Libera, 1938); the Case della Foce in Genoa (Luigi Carlo Daneri, 1936–40); and several exhibition installations for the Triennale (Albini, Figini and Pollini, Persico and Nizzoli, BBPR, 1933–40). Cf. Kirk 2005: 92–108.

93. *Quadrante* (1933–36), an architecture monthly founded and directed by Pier Maria Bardi and the

writer Massimo Bontempelli, with the collaboration of the rationalist architects of Milan and Como, as well as Belli and the abstract artists of the Galleria del Milione. Compared to *Casabella* the magazine was more multidisciplinary, and dealt with literature, photography, cinema, art, music, and politics. It was suppressed in 1936 under orders of the PNF Secretary Starace because of a short controversial commentary by Bardi (Baglione 2008: 99–100; Belli 1980: 17).

94. As for general references for modernist architecture in Italy between the two wars: Benevolo 1971: 561–74; Fontana 1999: 133–58; Gregotti 1968: 9–37; Zevi 1961: 231–41, 277–81, 643–5; Kirk 2005: 67–141; and http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architettura_razionalista and <http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIAR>.

95. Crispolti 1986: 220–223; Poretti 2004: 467.

96. The Turin-based printer-typographer Carlo Frassinelli, in a letter published in *Il Risorgimento Grafico* in 1929 maintained: 'The Germans' 'elemental typography' (...); the French's elegant and delightful 'avant-garde typography'; the United States' 'modernist typography' (...) and, finally, the Italians' 'novecentist typography', all fundamentally stem from Italian Futurism' (ivi xxvi;

such proclamations—often tinged with a nationalist take on some presumed Futurist or Bodonian superiority (depending on the point of view, modernist or traditionalist)—dotted the drawn-out debate on modern typography and reveal the Italians' thinly masked inferiority complex with regard to the rest of Europe. And again in the early 1940s a similarly nationalist reading of Futurist typography appeared in two monographic issues of *Campo Grafico* and *Graphicus*.⁹⁷ But by then the prevailing atmosphere did not allow for any real confrontation or comparison with the European avant-gardes.⁹⁸

Installations, set designs, window displays
With rationalism the new Italian typography proved it had more than just a straightforward formal affinity. Upon Persico and Pagano's 1930 arrival, Milan was at the centre of the debate and rationalist architecture's many innovations in Lombardy, which, in lieu of public commissions, depended on private-sector ties. Such projects included the interior designs for De Angeli-Frua, the Caffè Craja, the Nodari bookshop, and the creations for the Triennali that, ephemeral as they were, allowed for close collaboration between architects and artists. The early 1930s were a period of particular synergy between rationalist architecture and the most advanced graphic work being done in Milan, leading to the completion of important integrated projects.⁹⁹ Artists and graphic designers belonging to both the Futurists and abstract artists groups participated—and not only

for reasons of survival—in any and all exhibition events or trade expos 'where the ephemeral character of the constructions allowed for experimentation with formal languages, techniques, and new materials, where the pictorial or sculptural element often staked out its own space', thereby managing to do more advanced formal research than would have been possible in a more strictly artistic realm.¹⁰⁰

'My' painters no longer knew how to live (...) The architects got by somehow (...) but the abstract painters and sculptors were literally on the ground. Even Munari, ingenious inventor of forms and volumes, somehow eked out a living and survived by doing exhibition installations, decorations, and interiors, because his verve was always so pleasant, because he exuded such intelligence and elegance.¹⁰¹

The Fiera di Milano (Trade Fair) logically constituted a key commercial opportunity for graphic work tied to installations for business, industry, and manufacturing. Ricas and Munari certainly contributed to the fair, but aside from a few indirect references there does not seem to be any documentation that would allow for even a rough reconstruction of their creative work for it, or at least their business-world

7, July 1929: 387–9, cit in Fanelli, Godoli 1988: 36).

97. Vol. VII; 3–5, March–May 1939 (edited by Enrico Bona) and XXXI; 5, May 1942 (edited by Alfredo Trimarco), respectively.

98. Aside from recognizing the early Futurist contributions, Tschichold effectively ignored Italian developments in *Die neue Typographie* (1928), which is understandable, given the country's cultural backwardness in the late twenties. However, he ignored noteworthy examples of the new Italian typographic aesthetic also in his later treatments in *Eine Stunde Druckgestaltung* (1930) and *Typographische Gestaltung* (1935). According to Burke, Tschichold's negation of any

significant developments in Italy probably derives from his refusal to align the European graphic avant-garde with the political right, as is further proved by the surprising lack of contact with Marinetti (Burke 2007: 129–30). The Bauhausbücher series is also worth mention, as it featured contributions by Marinetti and Prampolini on Futurism, which were never published, perhaps for similar reasons (cf. the prospective titles in preparation in 1926, reproduced in Fleischmann 1984: 150).

99. Gregotti 1968: 15; Ravaioli 1998: 53–4.

100. Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 47.

101. Belli 1980: 21.

affiliates.¹⁰² It is different with the Triennale and other major (often propagandist) expos promoted by the regime, where the Futurists' idea of the 'plastica murale' (wall decoration) as a prime collective artistic expression—in the form of polymaterial decorations on social themes designed for public buildings—was brought to fruition. Although they contrasted with the bare surfaces of rationalist architecture, polymaterial wall decorations constituted a shared ground with modern architecture.¹⁰³ Limited as the Futurists' role in the V Triennale was, the Stazione per aeroporto civile (city airport) designed for the park was its most visible contribution; Prampolini draughted up the rationalist architectural design, and called upon the collaboration of several Futurists from Milan and Turin for its decoration and furnishings. The building was articulated in three sections: a circular central hall (with waiting areas and a café/bar for travellers); and two smaller wings to each side, housing the service areas (ticket counters, telephone and telegraph station, baggage check, customs, supply rooms and filling stations, and emergency medical services) all linked through an underground passage—where Munari created an aeropictorial mural which, especially in light of its location, appears to have been a rather modest contribution. The technical aspects of the interior designs are more interesting, as they use the newest chemical and construction materials available—masonite, linoleum, aluminum alloys, synthetic paints, like the Silexore-brand paint used for all the pavilion's decorations—which were a

response to protectionist measures as also gave the project a modern feel on par with its furnishings.¹⁰⁴ Munari's large mural decoration for the Sala d'Icaro at the Mostra Aeronautica (Icarus Room at the Aeronautics Show), organised in the Triennale's exhibition spaces in 1934, had a similar format and function, although it played a larger role in the overall installation.¹⁰⁵ The same is true of the 'photoplastics' and abstract mosaic for the urban planning section of the 1936 Triennale (previously discussed) and the composition with special Max Meyer enamels in the section on construction systems and building materials.¹⁰⁶ The only fully documented installation is the Mostra dell'arte grafica (Graphic Arts Exhibit) at the VII Triennale in 1940, curated by Modiano. It marked the conclusion of the decade-old debate between the 'campisti' and traditionalists, and summed up Italian graphic arts' overall situation on the eve of conflict; Munari contributed an important section on the relationships of modern figurative arts.

Also worth mention are Munari and Ricas's participation in two mural decoration exhibitions organised in Genoa in 1934 and Rome in 1936, which relaunched

102. In addition to the simple stands for Carlo Erba and Federico Dell'Orto (reproduced in *L'Ufficio Moderno* in late 1932), Munari hinted at a work he described only as a 'job for the trade fair' in a letter to Tullio d'Albisola in the spring of 1933 (Presotto 1981: 143).

103. The critic Aldo Ballo read the second wave of Futurism in terms of its set-design aspirations, and his most original contribution was identifying its 'concept of spatiality' in which experimentation in set design and polymaterialism combined to effectively form an architectural context that responded to the 'need for a new spatiality'. The two most representative figures of this tendency were Prampolini and Munari (considered from the perspective

of the work done in the postwar period, from projections to kinetic and programmed art (Ballo 1964: 26). Nor should it be forgotten that Munari shared Prampolini and Depero's deep interest in the use of industrial materials, which he took on as a constant of his method.

104. Pirani 1992: 287–8; Poretti 2004: 459–60. Cf. Enrico Prampolini, 'Lo stile, la funzione e i nuovi materiali edili' in *Natura* vi; 6 (June 1933): 35–43, in addition to the event catalogue.

105. Cf. Giuseppe Pagano, 'La Mostra Azzurra' and (ed.) 'L'ordinamento delle sale alla esposizione dell'aeronautica italiana' in *Casabella* no.80 (August 1934): 4–5 and 10–21, respectively.

106. Cf. *Guida della sesta Triennale*. [s.l.: s.n.], 1936 (in part. p.42).

the Futurists' interest in architectural decoration and function, aimed primarily at the public works' sector (following the rationalist architects' failed attempts).¹⁰⁷ The Futurists proposed a modern decoration (in opposition to the return to fresco advocated by Sironi) adapted to the state's commission stipulations: hence both events featured designs and works for pre-set public building types, in which the rhetorical tones of propaganda were predominant. While Munari's participation in the first exhibition took a minor tone,¹⁰⁸ in the next exhibition the two artists jointly presented sketches, including proposals for Case del Fascio (on the theme of the Italian War in East Africa), government buildings in the colonies (on the theme of economic siege), a summertime marine resort (on the theme of aviation in Fascist Italy), and a Palazzo del Mare (Maritime building, on the theme of marine transportation), in which the figurative aspect and a reduced degree of formal experimentation prevailed.¹⁰⁹ Such contributions carry more value as lines of investigation than as concrete productions, although they do attest to the fact that the two graphic designers had unusually broad interests and a rare openness to collaborating with architects.

The only real documented example in that sense was a collaboration with rationalist architect Angelo Bianchetti for the Mostra del tessile italiano (Italian Textile Exhibition), which opened in Rome in 1937.¹¹⁰ Ricas and Munari created two panels for Lanerossi for the wools section; their work was done in a resolutely typographic

style, with faint traces of aeropictorial remnants in the figurative elements. Yet even in this case their contribution seems secondary, at the same level as other artists involved in the decoration.¹¹¹

(...) later on I met the abstract artists of the Galleria del Milione (...) and also designed a type of exhibition quite novel for its day. At the time I had many architect friends (Albini, Figini, Pollini, Pagano, Gardella, Rogers...) who, when they installed an exhibition, usually built a nice brick wall and then, on the wall, would hang a sheet of paper with a drawing. Instead, I exhibited sheets of my graphic work like housewives exhibit their sheets when they hang them out to dry: on each wall I mounted a horizontal wire twenty centimetres from the wall and two metres from the floor, and on that wire I hung, at regular intervals, a bunch of white Bristol boards with my graphic work. This kind of installation cost less, was quicker to do, and did not take up too much of the space—rather, the shadows of the boards, all uniformly cast on the wall, gave it a pleasantly architectural look.¹¹²

107. Pirani 1992: 289–94; Fochessati, Millefiore 1997: 49–51; Crispolti 1992c: 71–92.

108. *Prima mostra di plastica murale per l'edilizia fascista* (First Exhibition of Wall Art for Fascist Buildings), Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, November 1934–January 1935. Organised by Prampolini along with Marinetti, Fillia, and F. Defilippis; Prampolini curated the installation alongside the architect Giuseppe (Pippo) Rosso. Cf. the exhibition catalogue (Turin: *Stile futurista*, 1934) and *Stile Futurista*, 1; 5 (December 1934): the absence of reproductions of work by Munari (who was amongst the signers of the *Futurist Manifesto of Wall Art*) would indicate a latent participation on his part, just as the hesitations he expressed in a letter to d'Albisola in early 1934 would suggest: 'will you come for the [exhibition at the Galleria] pesaro? I don't know whether to participate or not, and feel the same about the wall art show in genoa. is it serious? I received some half-assed architectural drawings, and these [things here], for example, are they windows, or what? and there's a door

here? a protrusion? what do you think of it, do you suggest I submit something? (...)' (in Presotto 1981: 147).

109. *Seconda Mostra di plastica murale per l'edilizia fascista in Italia e in Africa* (Second Exhibition of Wall Art for Fascist Buildings in Italy and Africa), Rome, Mercati Traianei (Trajan's Markets), November 1936–January 1937. Organised by Marinetti, Prampolini, and Defilippis. Cf. catalogue published by the Edizioni futuriste di Poesia (Rome, 1936).

110. Cf. Casabella xi; 121 (January 1938). The collaborators included Bramante Buffoni, Costantino Nivola, Salvatore Fancello, and Leonardo Spreafico.

111. A profile of the fifties credits Munari with other exhibition installations from this period, including the Mostra del giocattolo (Toy Exhibition, 1930s?) and the Mostra della caccia e pesca (Hunting and Fishing Exhibition), of which, however, no documents or reproductions have been found (Pesavento Palieri 1953).

112. Munari interviewed by Quintavalle in *Bruno Munari 1979*: 15. This could refer to the Mostra

Another connection between rational architecture and the new generation of Futurist and abstract graphic artists was established when the Galleria del Milione opened its doors to contemporary set design, with an exhibition dedicated to young Milanese set designers held in the autumn of 1932, after a showing at Anton Giulio Bragaglia's gallery in Rome.¹¹³ Like other avant-garde artists, Munari was also interested in theatre, even if only on a strictly experimental level: in 1935 he made two

[140] studies for Futurist set designs, one a choreography for actors performing on stilts, the other a set design in which acrobatic actors jump from one trapeze to another like birds in a cage.¹¹⁴ He submitted more concrete and articulated proposals to the Mostra internazionale di scenotecnica teatrale (International Exhibition of Theatrical and Technical Set Design), which Prampolini organised at the 1936 Triennale: the Italian section in particular, overseen by Bragaglia, presented a review of 'scenotecnici senza teatri' (set designers without theatres) including the work of young Futurists from Milan. Munari's proposals—a set design model for *Nô* theatre (Joshi-tomo, act III), a few opera masks, and a dance instrument—were characterised by a minimal vision similar to the metaphysical strains of his illustration and polymaterial work, both in the fine arts and advertising realms.¹¹⁵

Beginning with Munari's first known polymaterial works (dating back to 1932) he shows a clear inclination toward three-dimensional compositions—not using drawing so much, but rather emphasising

the use of the most varied materials, cut into special shapes and overlapped: he pursued this line of research in both figurative and abstract directions, relating to the Futurist project of injecting the expressive potential of modern industrial materials into the artistic repertoire. Polymaterial applications also occasionally appear in his photomontages, used to build metaphysical landscapes or evoke the surface qualities of various materials. It is easy to imagine that realistic images of this sort would have been an original instrument for advertisements designed for displaying wares at points of sale or at trade fairs. Toward the end of the decade this interest took shape

[141] in a series of vitrines Munari installed for GiViEmme, a major perfume manufacturer and lead company of the Carlo Erba pharmaceutical group.¹¹⁶ They were likely put in touch with Munari through Dino Villani, former editor at *L'Ufficio Moderno* who from 1938 on worked as an advertising consultant for Carlo Erba.¹¹⁷ Munari's

insolita di arte grafica and fotografica (Unusual Graphic and Photographic Show), held at the Galleria del Milione in January 1937 (cf. Pontiggia 1988: 104–5).

113. Nove scenografi milanesi (Nine Milanese Set Designers), Galleria del Milione, Milan, 1–15 November 1932 (Pontiggia 1988: 19).

114. *Danza sui trampoli*, c. 1935, original drawing in the Hajek-Zucconi collection, Novara; and *Acrobati musicali in gabbia*, c. 1935, drawing reproduced in Tanchis 1987: 31.

115. Cf. *Guida della sesta Triennale*. [n.p.: n.p.], 1936: 67–71; De Angelis 1938: 157; *Continuità dell'avanguardia in Italia*. Enrico Prampolini (1894–1956) 1978: 52–3.

116. GiViEmme was one of Italy's largest perfumers in the thirties, created in 1921 by Count Giuseppe Visconti di Modrone, Milanese patrician and entrepreneur. The company's specialties was fragrances obtained from synthetic products (not plant or animal extracts): in fact, the

GiViEmme catalogue included essences created by Visconti for the Carlo Erba brand (Contessa Azzurra, Dimmi di sì, Subdola, Nina Sorridi). In the twenties and thirties new perfumes arrived (La Rosa Giviemme, Acqua di Fiume, Giacinto Innamorato, Gardenia, Tabacco D'Harar), whose success (aided by refined packaging and the first market research carried out in Italy) led to the creation of a new plant in Dergano, a suburb of Milan (now in the Bovisa neighborhood), which allowed the company to broaden its production to include complete cosmetic lines. Its ties to the Carlo Erba pharmaceutical company were also strengthened by Visconti's marriage to Erba's daughter (sources: www.accademiadelp profumo.it and http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Visconti_di_Modrone, last accessed January 2011).

117. Previously, from 1934 on Villani had directed Motta's advertising office, bringing in high-calibre graphic artists like

compositions exude a surreal poetics, with artificial landscapes built of just a few elements (branches, butterflies, stones and pebbles, and various textiles) in which the products are arranged with a calculated attention to colour balance.¹¹⁸ As always, his parallel work in the fine art and advertising realms is evident here; and its formal convergence with the three-dimensional compositions he exhibited at his solo show *Oggetti Metafisici* (Metaphysical Objects) at the Galleria del Milione in the spring of 1940 is equally clear. Villani reviewed the show in *L'Ufficio Moderno*:

Objects, pieces of wood, dried-out branches, broken mechanisms, butterflies, and popular figures all appear in these compositions and stay there, under the glass bell, supremely light, suspended in pure poetry. [They're] Magnificent vitrine subjects (...).¹¹⁹

Italian modern typography

Nineteen-thirty three was a time of major ferment for the visual arts in Italy, thanks to a unique convergence of events that took place in Milan over just a few months: parallel to the debut of *Campo grafico*, Persico and Pagano radically remodelled the form and content of *Casabella*; in May the V Triennale opened in the new spaces of the Palazzo dell'Arte, where the exhibition of graphic works from the German Werkbund curated by Paul Renner met with great acclaim;¹²⁰ and Antonio Boggeri opened his advertising studio, which would play a major role in updating Italian graphic culture, thanks in part to the direct contributions of Swiss graphic designers

(including Schawinsky, Huber, and Viva-relli), who had techniques more in keeping with the new demands of commercial graphics.

Attracted by the avant-garde movements, like all young artists, Italians turned to rationalist architects for inspiration (...) the installation of the sections [of the Triennale and other expositions] offered an opportunity to put forward experimental proposals. (...) thus the new Italian advertising art was born on the walls of those expositions. Nothing else was needed, it just had to be transferred to paper (...).¹²¹

There was enough going on to spark a lively debate amongst practitioners touching upon typography, rationalist architecture, and abstraction. In Italy, too, the debate sprung from a dialectic confrontation with outsiders, that is, artists, architects, and literati traditionally excluded from the printing trades, which implicitly touched upon the definition of the new professional figure of the graphic designer. Yet compared to the situation in Germany in the early 1920s the situation in Italy was quite different, as it lacked both the professional organisations (there were none comparable to the Werkbund or 'ring Neue Werbegestalter' groups) and adequate educational institutions (there was nothing like the Bauhaus or the many German applied arts schools) in which the new constructivist concept might have developed. In Italy the

Cassandre, Schawinsky, and Carboni; along with Zavattini he also began a hugely successful Christmas competition.

118. Munari's window-displays for GIViEmme were reproduced in *Tempo* no.80 (5 December 1940): 36; *Vetrina e negozio* II; 9–10 (September–October 1942): 18 and *ivi* II; 11–12 (November/December 1942): 10; and Valeri 1986: 78.

119. Dino Villani, 'Munari' in *L'Ufficio Moderno* xv; 3 (March 1940): 111 (emphasis mine).

120. In addition to the presence of work by high-

calibre artists like Bayer, Baumeister, and Burchartz, Renner's comprehensive exhibition included all types of printed matter (from commercial forms to posters and books), which placed it on a more advanced level than the Italian overview of printing firms organised by Bertieri: cf. 'Arti grafiche alla Triennale' in *Campo grafico* I; 10 (October 1933): 171–3 (Vinti 2005: 52).

121. Antonio Boggeri, 'Advertising art in post-war Italy' in *Graphis* vol. 3; 18 (1947); the Italian text is reprinted in full in Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 31.

confrontation took place primarily in trade magazines, be they graphically or architecturally focussed.¹²² Nevertheless, the quantity of polemical and popularising texts that appeared in the specialist press did not necessarily constitute a real articulate or coherent stance, since such reflexions echoed the custom (typical of the journalism of the time) of expressing views in abstract terms, with a lot of indirect allusions and scarce explicit references or examples.¹²³

The subject matter dealt with (in the pages of *Campo grafico*, *Il Risorgimento Grafico*, and *Graphicus*) contemplated the central assumptions of elemental or rational (in Italy the preferred term, co-opted from architecture) typography drawn from the theories developed during the 1920s in Germany by Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, and Tschichold, which by then trickled into Italy: asymmetrical balance as a compositional principle, and the integration of the photographic image into current printed matter.¹²⁴ Other ideas, perhaps more pertinent to the Italian scene, recurred more frequently: in particular, the 'necessity of the sketch' or, from the printers' point of view, the 'collaboration with the artist'—aspects of a shared emphasis on the contributions of non-specialists to the graphic arts.¹²⁵ References to non-representational art and architecture (exhibition installations in particular)¹²⁶ were equally fundamental, and returned in the concept of *grafismo*, a term Modiano used to describe the convergence of various artistic veins in constructivist schemas—reminiscent of the implicit 'tendency toward openly geometric and elementary construction' in

typographic composition.¹²⁷ The corollary of 'graphism' and foundation of the new typography in its Italian version—which Modiano claimed was an original contribution¹²⁸—was the principle of 'two pages in one', that is, a layout based not on single pages divided by the binding but rather on the mirrored two-page spread. Indeed,

122. Vinti 2002: 8.

123. In addition to oblique ad hominem attacks and sterile debates on 'mohair issues'—an obvious makeshift solution to the lack of free expression. In this sense Modiano is a happy exception, who had 'an aptitude for deep analysis that could not be found in any other commentators of the period' (Vinti 2005: 51).

124. The main references are: El Lissitzky, 'Typographie der Typographie' in *Merz*, no. 4, 1923, reproduced by Tschichold in *die neue typographie* (1928); Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 'Typophoto' in *Pismo* 2, 1926 (Brno) reprinted in *Typographische Mitteilungen* 22, no. 10, October 1925, reprinted (with some changes) in *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (1925); *ibid.* 'Zeitgemäße Typographie' in *Offset, Buch und Werbekunst* no. 7 (July 1926); Jan Tschichold, 'Elementare Typographie' in *Typographische Mitteilungen* 22, no. 10, October 1925: 191–214 (cf. Kinross 2004: 106–8). Nevertheless, a problem historians have yet to confront is the ways in which modernist aesthetics reached Italy. Aside from a couple of articles by Tschichold translated [into Italian] from the French and published much later (after '33), it is difficult to imagine how theoretical texts written in German could have been distributed and read in Italy in anything other than an indirect manner—that is, through hearsay—with the exception of Modiano, who probably knew German both because of his education and because of family tradition (he was Jewish).

125. 'Persico was a 'dilettant' in typography just as he was in architecture, but it is precisely thanks to his status as a cultured

outsider that he earned the unbridled appreciation of many specialists in the field' (Vinti 2006: n.p.).

126. Cf. Dradi 1973: 28–9, 33–6; Pontiggia 1988: 22.

127. While on the one hand the observation of 'graphic' compositional schemas (linear, geometric, two-dimensional) in installations, window displays, and interiors led Modiano and other modernists to view rationalist architecture as a typographic construct in three dimensions ('Insegnamenti della pittura astratta' in *Campo grafico* 11; 11, November 1934: 249), on the other he also drew compositional cues from non-representational art that were capable of renewing typography, beginning with its essentially geometric nature ('Un posteggio e una vetrina nel commento di un tipografo' in *Domus* xvii; 134 (February 1939): ...; cf. *Idem*, 'Situazione grafica' in *Quadrante*, 1; 1, May 1933). Such a concept developed along a parallel path in nearby Switzerland, and was taken up by Tschichold in his famous article 'Die gegenstandlose Malerei und ihre Beziehungen zur Typographie der Gegenwart', which appeared in *Typographische Monatsblätter* 3; 6, June 1935: 181–7 (cf. Burke 2007: 259–60).

128. Modiano claimed paternity in 'Lettera a Raffaello Bertieri' (*Il Risorgimento Grafico* xxxv; 8, August 1938: 333–40), albeit without answering the question of whether it was an imitation, an Italian discovery, or simply a coincidence: 'Whether they're references to what we've done, or [newly] discovered originals: it does not matter. What matters is the priority of the Italian application [of it]' (334).

aside from references to a 'continuous sequence of pages' mentioned by Lissitsky and Moholy-Nagy, the two-page spread as structural principle does not explicitly appear in the writings of leading European designers.¹²⁹ Instead, the new Italian typography took its first steps precisely in response to the invasive presence of photography in commercial printed matter,¹³⁰ which pushed the printer-typographer to rethink the traditional frameworks. The earliest attempts used a simple bleed for illustrations, which was not sufficient because it was still based on the symmetrical module of the single page; this gave way in the early 1930s (especially in the layout of illustrated periodicals) to a unified framework linking the two neighboring pages. The first experiments in this realm date back to 1931–32, in which Modiano tended to create a rhythmic unity by 'expanding the measure of the text column and the illustration modules' straddling the sewn binding to the point of linking the two pages.¹³¹ But the rigidity and legibility problems of such solutions led to a more mature phase, in which the layout aimed to establish a dynamic balance between text and photo by 'fragmenting the measure and manoeuvring with smaller visual blocks', as seen in *Edilizia moderna*, 25 anni Olivetti and the new *Casabella* layout done alongside Persico (1933–34).¹³²

On the other hand, even in Italy the new constructivist concept was limited to a small minority, and did not extend beyond certain types of periodicals and the commercial printed matter of determined industrial sectors. Yet unlike Germany and

other European countries, where the modernist renewal had reached even book publishing, in Italy—because of the lack of contact between the print worlds and graphic artists—the publishing world as a whole remained untouched by the new developments. There were a few exceptions, like book covers, for both niche publishers affiliated with Futurism and for mass-market publishers like Bompiani and Mondadori, but only toward the end of the decade.¹³³ This assumption may have provoked—not so much for mere controversy, but for the appeal of empirical proof—Munari's later investigations into the expressive possibilities of the codex form, above and beyond the book's textual and visual content.¹³⁴

In short, the Italian concept reveals—through its constant reference to architecture and concrete art, but above all through its lack of real dialogue with the European avant-garde and any radically different political or social context—a formalist, at

129. El Lissitsky, 'Topographie der Typographie' (1923), cit; Moholy-Nagy, 'Zeitgemäße Typographie' (1926), cit. (cf. Kinross 2004: 105, 116). See the synthetic yet comprehensive overview of articles by Schwitters, Tschichold, Moholy-Nagy, Drexel, Baumeister, and van Doesburg in Fleischmann 1984: 325ff.

130. 'Not the book, but the magazine, the brochure, the catalogue are the archetypal products of our time', Modiano in *Quadrante* 1933: 21.

131. Catalogue Sellerie Compagnia Continentale (1931) and *Tipografia* (1932), as Modiano himself recalled ('Lettera a Raffaello Bertieri', 1938, cit.).

132. Guido Modiano in 'Lettera a Raffaello Bertieri' (1938), cit.: 339. Cf. Il Campista, 'Recensione tipografica a Edilizia Moderna' in *Campo grafico* 11; 10 (October 1934): 222–7. A similar position was taken by Attilio Rossi, historic founder of *Campo grafico* ('L'evoluzione della tipografia in Italia' in *Campo grafico* v; 9,

September 1937: 4–7).

133. Modiano, like Renner, expressed a moderate position with regard to books, for which he reserved a more traditional typographic approach, insofar as it was a 'construction carried, by a centuries-long selection, to a form that is, perhaps, definite' ('Triennale 1936' in *Il Risorgimento grafico*, xxxvi; 1, 31 January 1937: 25). The printer-typographer refers to the literary book (as opposed to the illustrated or technical–scientific book, whose content brings it closer to the modern-day periodical), suggesting that there is nevertheless room for innovation by working with micro-typographic details rather than the old codified layout.

134. Think not only of his famous *libri illeggibili* (Illegible Books), but more specifically of his children's books, from the Albi Munari series (1945) to *Nella notte buia* (1956) and *Nella nebbia di Milano* (1968) and *Prelibri* (1980).

most stylistic, inclination, rather than any exquisitely functional or structural inclination.¹³⁵ Indeed, compared to Germany, in Italy there was only marginal discussion of the questions considered fundamental everywhere else—issues like: the function of print and consequent attention to the visual articulation of content; the legal aspects tied to industry and manufacturing, such as the standardisation of formats; not to mention aspirations to social renewal, which were intimately intertwined with the modernist debate in Central Europe. Even purely typographic details—like the preference for sans-serif faces, the exclusive use of lowercase letters, ragged versus justified text, and the relationship between leading and legibility—received less attention or were only considered in light of concrete examples, rather than broader theoretical pronouncements. Texts by foreign graphic designers and artists appeared only rarely,¹³⁶ proving that the debate—impassioned as it was regarding Central European examples—was not based on a true exchange of ideas with the non-Italian protagonists of new typography. Much like France, therefore, albeit for different reasons, Italy was, in its own way, a cultural exception to the modernist paradigm dominant in Europe at the time.

It is no coincidence that the most representative examples of the constructive aesthetic were designed and printed by Modiano, who in those same years closely collaborated with Edoardo Persico on the graphic look of *Casabella*. Persico left his native Naples for Milan in late 1929, and as critic worked alongside Pier Maria Bardi

directing Bardi's gallery—which a year later was left to the Ghiringhelli brothers, and changed its name to the Galleria del Milione—but their relationship ended after a few months, and in the spring of '30 Persico joined the editorial team of *La Casa Bella*, led by Arrigo Bonfiglioli. In 1932 the magazine was acquired by Editoriale Domus, owned by Gianni Mazzocchi, was renamed *Casabella*, and Pagano was appointed director. His first editorial announced a programme centred on rationalism and functionalism as synonyms of modernity and beauty: the magazine aimed to popularise contemporary design culture, and targeted a broader readership, no longer limited to the technical and specialised realm. Persico played a key role in the magazine's transformation, both in its editorial philosophy and graphic look.¹³⁷ In a fruitful exchange with Modiano,¹³⁸ he gradually modified the layout to make it more functional: he renewed the masthead

135. Fossati, Sambonet (1974: 13) highlight a degree of imprecision in defining the new graphic discipline, which sets the limits of the renewal promoted by *Campo grafico*, entrusted to modern taste as a stylistic criterion. Pansera maintains that the 'campisti' looked more at *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* which offered examples more in terms of artistic approach rather than of any underlying methodology (Pansera 1984: 16n). Equally interesting Persico's lucid analysis of Italian rationalism, whose fundamental contradiction he identifies as the desire to reconcile modernism and the Fascist regime, the classical tradition and modernity: 'The truth is that Italian rationalism was not born of any deep need, but rather of a type of dabbling (...) the controversy has only created confused aspirations (...) that don't in any way adhere to real problems, and have no real content (...) ' (from 'Gli architetti italiani', 1933 cit. in De Seta 1983: 221). Such a reading could be applied—*mutatis mutandis*—to the

Italian typographic realm, established on formal aspects to the exclusion of any and all social dimensions.

136. Jan Tschichold published two articles in *Campo grafico*: 'Schemi di tabelle' in III; 6, June 1935: 128–129; and 'Le proporzioni nella nuova tipografia' in V; 4, April 1937: 5–8. An earlier article signed 'Giovanni T.' appeared in the Turin-based magazine *Graphicus* in 1933: 'Della Nuova Tipografia' (ivi xxiii; 284, February 1933: 7–9; cit. in Vinti 2006). An article by Baumeister on his own theories appeared in *Campo grafico* on the occasion of his exhibition at the Galleria del Milione (ivi iii; 5, May 1935: 17). Cf. Vinti 2002: 8–10.

137. Giuseppe Pagano 'Programma 1933' in *Campo grafico* V; 12, December 1932: 9–10.

138. 'Their partnership was founded on a fertile exchange of knowledge, through which Modiano learned how to be a critic, while Persico acquired many secrets of the typographic trade' (Vinti 2006; cf. Baglione 2008: 108n).

and its logotype as *Casabella*; he adopted a new, nearly square format that, thanks to the layout based on two-page spreads, facilitated the insertion of photographs and technical drawings.¹³⁹ In 1934 the interior grid was extended to the cover, featuring: a white background; 4-column grid across which line drawings (in a second colour), the issue number in the foreground, and the new masthead (in all caps Futura, printed atop the illustration) were distributed.¹⁴⁰ Alongside *Campo grafico*, in the mid-thirties Persico and Pagano's *Casabella* represented the height of modern Italian graphic design. Thanks to its alignment with architecture, it sharply distanced itself from the postcubist French tradition, the pictorial tradition prevailing in the autarchic poster design, as well as from the improvisations of Futurist experimentation.

The editorial team of *Campo grafico*, led by Attilio Rossi and Carlo Dradi,¹⁴¹ was in contact with the Lombard abstract artists affiliated with the Galleria del Milione (Ghiringhelli, Reggiani, Soldati, Veronesi) and, thanks also to Persico's lasting role at the gallery, to the Milanese rationalist circles; the magazine's pages frequently included contributions by key figures like Boggeri, Modiano, and Veronesi.¹⁴² As for Munari, although he was only an occasional contributor,¹⁴³ his proximity to the editorial offices on corso Vercelli was solid and continuous, as proven by his participation in the Esposizione del cartello internazionale e del cartello nazionale rifiutato (Exhibition of International Posters and Rejected Italian Posters) at the *Galleria del Milione* in June 1933 and the Mostra

dell'arte grafica curated by Modiano at the VII Triennale in 1940.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, he frequented—and was actually an integral

139. Persico worked on the margins, on the selection of typefaces (*Futura* and *Landi/Welt*, which became a classic pairing in Italy, used even by Munari in *Tempo*, for example), as well as text measures and leading, in which he also took into consideration the colour of the photographs (Baglione 2008: 97, 101).

140. In addition to the field of publishing, Persico was able to bring his graphic ideas into three dimensions through the exhibition installations he designed with Marcello Nizzoli: the Parker shops (1934–35), the Sala delle Medaglie d'oro at the Mostra Aeronautica in 1934, the structure built with Innocenti tubes and installed in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II for the 1934 elections, the Salone d'onore alla VI Triennale in 1936—in which a bona fide osmosis between typography and architecture is successfully created (Fioravanti 1997: 72–3; Vinti 2006; Baglione 2008: 17–8, 97). See also the lengthy article by Modiano on his recently deceased friend: 'Tipografie di Edoardo Persico' in *Campo grafico* III; 11–12, November/December 1935: 230–45).

141. Attilio Rossi (1909–1994), painter and graphic designer. Educated at the Scuola serale (evening school) of the Accademia di Brera, during his years at *Campo grafico* he worked as a print technician and graphic designer alongside Carlo Dradi. Following a clash related to the publication of propaganda posters created by Persico for the 1934 elections, Rossi resigned from the magazine's directorship—which went to Luigi Minardi (typographer and antifascist)—and in April 1935 emigrated to Argentina. He remained there until 1950, pursuing a career as illustrator, graphic designer (for the Casa Editrice Espasa Calpe, with whom he launched their first budget series, Austral), and publishing editor (he founded the Losada publishing house) as well as deeply integrating into

South American culture. Parallel to his important artistic work as painter, Rossi worked as a graphic designer in the fifties, and continued to work in publishing even in Italy. Always at Dradi's side, he directed the design magazine *Linea grafica* and the Centro Studi Grafici in Milan (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attilio_Rossi last accessed 10/1/2011). Carlo Dradi (1908–1982), lithographer and graphic designer, co-founder of *Campo grafico*. In the thirties he worked alongside Attilio Rossi as a design studio. During the war, he worked with Munari in the editorial office of the weekly *Tempo*. After 1945 he continued his graphic design career, working notably for clients such as AGIP and Ferrovie Nord di Milano. He was co-founder of the Centro studi grafici and the design magazine *Linea Grafica* (Catalogo Bolaffi del Manifesto Italiano, Torino: Bolaffi, 1995).

142. For a complete list of contributors, see Dradi 1973: 21; Rossi 1983: 13.

143. Munari's only proven contribution was the aforementioned article from '37 (there is no evidence that could lead one to suppose he made other contributions under a pseudonym); of the 66 published issues not one cover carries his signature, even if his hand can probably be spotted in some of the photomontages, like that of the famous table 'Logica elementare del rinnovamento' (in *Campo grafico* III; 2, February 1935).

144. In addition to curating the section devoted to the relationships between modern typography and the historic avant gardes, Munari was also included in the review of 12 graphic designers, alongside Edoardo Persico, Guido Modiano, Marcello Nizzoli, Bramante Buffoni, Carlo Dradi and Attilio Rossi, Ezio D'Errico, Luigi Veronesi, Remo Muratore, Ricas, Erberto Carboni, Renzo Bianchi, and Raffello Bertieri (Vinti 2005).

part of—the artistic circle affiliated with the Caffè Craja, another meeting point of the Milanese avant garde, located in piazza Cardinal Paolo Ferrari, a stone's throw from the Teatro alla Scala. At the time such cafés were a fundamental locus for the exchange of ideas, and were just as important as time spent working in studio; the Craja was special insofar as it attracted artists and intellectuals from different currents and disciplines, all of whom shared a particular vision of modernity: abstract artists, 'campisti', rationalists, set designers, literati, and poets.¹⁴⁵ Much like the Milione's interiors, designed by Pietro Lingeri,¹⁴⁶ the Craja owed part of its draw to the rationalist interiors designed by architect Luciano Baldessari along with Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini. 'A group of artists managed to create its own café, built with the ideas and intentions of the group: essential, angular, glossy. In truth, it was a refrigerator. But we took care of heating it up'.¹⁴⁷ As evidence of the links not only between the various artistic communities in Milan, but also between the gallery and some of the protagonists of modern European culture, it is worth mentioning an attempt (unfortunately never realized) to establish in Milan with the help of Gropius an international training center similar to the Bauhaus.¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, through the relationships linking the various groups, the Craja and the Milione were the two main poles around which the protagonists of Milan's intellectual avant garde orbited.

This overview allows for a better understanding of the significance of such exposure—in terms of the concrete ideas and examples—to the modernist aesthetic,

which Munari was able to assimilate (filtered through his own personal sensibility, of course) simply because he belonged to the multidisciplinary milieu that developed in Milan between the wars.

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The 'Milione' was frequented in those years—1928–1938 [actually 1931–1938], albeit without their feeling any commitment—by figures like Nizzoli and Munari, who had a refined intelligence and prevalently graphic, artisanal, postcubist taste, which they brought to their vitrine and typographic works—as well as Dradi and Rossi from *Campo grafico*—in posters, layouts, the form of everyday objects, and so on, new typologies, foreshadowing the characteristic activity that appeared in Italy as well under the name of industrial design, modeled to a certain degree on the Bauhaus.¹⁴⁹

145. In addition to the group of abstract artists affiliated with the Milione, the Caffè Craja was frequented by the poets Leonardo Sinisgalli, Alfonso Gatto, and Salvatore Quasimodo, the critic Edoardo Persico, architects Figini and Pollini, Banfi Belgioioso Peressutti Rogers (BBPR), Bottoni, and occasionally Terragni and Lingeri (both from Como) and abstract artists Radice and Rho, campisti Dradi and Rossi, and the group of set designers for the Scala (Kaneclin, Broggi, Montonati, Cagnoli) (Belli 1980: 15–7).

146. The Galleria del Milione, destroyed by the 1943 bombardments, was located at via Brera 21, across the street from the Fine Arts Academy. Opened at the end of 1930, its interior design was done by Pietro Lingeri: the entrance had a large door with windows (as novelty at the time) which opened onto an atrium surrounded by the three exhibition spaces and the bookshop (cf. advert in the bollettino *Il Milione*, no.16, 3 June 1933) (Pontiggia 1988: 11). On the gallery's intellectual environment, cf. Lupo 1996: 162–4ff.

147. Belli 1980: 15. The Caffè Craja was composed of two long, narrow rooms linked in an L shape, with a mosaico floor, walls with

dark windows and an unframed mirror, little square tables with green slate tabletops, and a long red-leather seat; in the back of the second room was a fountain by Fausto Melotti (three athletes in metal), while a sculpture by Nizzoli decorated the central window. The radical interior design, inspired by 'neoplasticism', was characterized by the accentuated theatrical effect of the various materials—dark glass, mirrors, chromed metal surfaces—not unlike that of North American diners. It was demolished in 1960 (Belli 1980: 15–7; Dradi 1973: 23; Caccia 2007: 48–9; Geerts 2007: 155–8).

148. See letter Carlo Belli to Gino Ghiringhelli, October 1934: 'Last Monday I was all day with Gropius. It was a full day and he was really moved when he left Milan. He'll probably return this winter for a conference and an exhibition. We've been working for quite some time on an important and grandiose project. It's about creating a center open to international collaboration for the realization of the purest modernity. A kind of Bauhaus' (unpublished, in Fondo Carlo Belli, G. Ghiringhelli folder, cited in Lupo 1996: 94n).

149. Carlo Belli in *Lettera sulla nascita*

As we have seen, aside from a popular article published in 1937 in *Campo grafico*,¹⁵⁰ Munari did not participate directly in the theoretical debate that beset the graphic arts world between the two world wars; his contribution was, so to speak, of a practical nature. He expressed himself through his concrete production, where it is possible to follow the transition from a working concept tied to artistic practices to a form of modern graphics based on rational language and presumptions. If 1935 can be taken as the watershed between the two periods, the change occurs naturally by degrees, as exemplified by a promotional catalogue for the Oltolina cotton mill, produced in 1934, in which the presence of elements tending towards abstraction within an otherwise traditional configuration places it in a transitional phase.¹⁵¹ The first signs of a new direction can be found in a group of advertisements in the May 1935 issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno* edited by Ricas and Munari. Even though these are not always signed, they clearly lead back to their work, certainly on assignment for the publisher. These are ad inserts for technical companies in the administrative and advertising sector, such as Lagomarsino, Indirizzi Delfini, Adrema (office machines), Pubblicità Tramviaria (posters) and Fotomeccanica (printing services). As a whole they seem marked by a minimalist approach, with compositions that favor white and are based on photomontage (which in general represents the typical stylistic code of R+M studio) expressed with various tones in style. These range from the purely typographic for Adrema to a style that is

constructivist in nature for Delfini; from an image with a surrealist feel for Fotomeccanica to an approach that we might call 'conceptual' for Lagomarsino and Pubblicità Tramviaria, where the photocollage is conceived as a sequence that, graphically enriched by the two-color print, visually comments on the text, a rare example of copywriting signed by the two artists.¹⁵²

Another ad published in the same issue and created for Studio Boggeri demonstrates a more complex composition, with a typographic structure based on the letter B, shaded and partially covered by a screen, within which are inserted images (the photography studio, prints, design tools) that illustrate the studio's uniqueness; and in a second version (published in *Guida Ricciardi* in 1936), the depth effect is accentuated by the second color.¹⁵³ This case also clearly shows the newness and the maturity of the language used, which attest to the search for a less intuitive more conceptual graphic language, designed according to more rational criteria and based on the typo/photographic combination.¹⁵⁴

Studio Boggeri opened on via Borghetto in Milan in 1933, the *annus mirabilis* of Italian design, as a full-service agency dedicated to the design and creation of 'advertising publications and photographs.'¹⁵⁵

dell'astrattismo in Italia. Milan: Scheiwiller, 1978: 28. Carlo Belli (1903–1991), writer, journalist, and art critic, author of *Kn*, an important theoretical text on Italian abstraction published in 1935 by Edizioni del Milione, the gallery he collaborated with as event organiser and consultant (Ciampi 2001: 129–30; Pontiggia 1988: 24; Belli 1980: 11–22).

150. 'Ritmi grafici' in *Campo grafico*, cit.

151. *Asso Nova* no.2, March 1934. (Como: Fratelli Oltolina). 16×23 cm; pp.16. Printing: Bertieri, Milan. The cover illustration is signed Ricas+Munari, and the central spread is also certainly theirs, with the collage of textiles; it is

not certain who is responsible for the designs inside the pamphlet, probably provided by the company (cf. copyright note on the back cover).

152. In *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5, May 1935: respectively pp.268, 274, 2nd and 4th cover.

153. In *L'Ufficio Moderno* x; 5, May 1935: 233; also in *Guida Ricciardi 1936*. Milan: Ricciardi, 1935.

154. Cf. Ravaioi 1998: 42–3.

155. See Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 7–40; Boggeri in 'Una B rossa fra due punti' 1981: 20–21; Monguzzi 1981: 2–4; Fioravanti 1997: 76–79; Baroni, Vitta 2003: 136–139. Antonio Boggeri (1900–1990) opened his homonymous studio in

Antonio Boggeri had a solid background with experience as director of the major Milanese printing plant, Alfieri & Lacroix, where he had the opportunity not only to gain technical expertise in printing materials and processes, but also to oversee editorial planning (for the monthly magazine *Natura*), and above all, through foreign publications, to come into contact with what was going on in the graphic art world outside Italy. Essential references are the new European typography and photography, viewed as an independent artistic medium and in its complementary function to printing.¹⁵⁶ Boggeri carved himself out a role as the forerunner of the art director, also devoting himself to photographic research of an advertising (still life) as well as experimental (photogram) nature. Based on this premise, the studio's work from the outset, first in Italy, tended towards the most advanced graphic research favoring an eclectic typo/photographic language and, with respect to the functional approach borrowed from architecture, open to invention, seduction—for Boggeri advertising graphics are, first of all, spectacle, akin to a theatrical mise-en-scène.¹⁵⁷ This view targeted at communication is also apparent in the preference given to print ads, pamphlets, catalogues and folding cards, namely a 'slower' sort of advertising, or one that is more educated as compared with the ephemeral nature of a billboard.¹⁵⁸

From the beginning and throughout the 1930s, facing a national situation that he considered behind the times, Boggeri was constantly searching for artists with

more substantial experiences and methods. He found this initially in Imre Reiner and Käte Bernhardt, who in the fall of 1933 introduced the new German printing culture and techniques to the studio.¹⁵⁹ However, the fundamental figure in this first period, not the least for the influence that he exerted in the Milanese environment, is Xanti Schawinsky, permanently settled in Milan from the end of 1933 until '36; thereafter, from February 1940 and then from immediately after the war, it was Max

1933. It was one of the earliest in Italy to provide a full communication service, including graphic design.

The studio had its heyday in the late fifties and early sixties; its customers included companies such as Olivetti, Roche, Glaxo, Dalmine, Pirelli. From the outset Boggeri worked with designers that would become internationally renowned professionals; in the post-war period these include Max Huber, Carlo Vivarelli, Walter Ballmer, Franco Grignani, Giancarlo Iliprandi, Enzo Mari, Remo Muratore, Marcello Nizzoli, Bob Noorda, Albe Steiner, Heinz Waibl, and Bruno Monguzzi. Boggeri was invited by the Alliance Graphique Internationale in exhibitions in Paris (1951), London (1956), Lausanne (1957) and Milan (1961); in 1957 he received the Gold Medal of the Triennale, and in 1970 was appointed honorary member of the Art Directors Club of Milan. He was active at the firm he founded until 1973 (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Boggeri, last accessed 31 March 2011).

156. Boggeri's interest initially went to the potential of photography, discovered in the examples of Steichen and updated in the theory on vision expressed by Moholy-Nagy in *Malerei Fotografie Film* (cf. Boggeri's Foreword to the annual *Luci e ombre*, 1929, reprod. in Monguzzi 1981: 7–8); while discovery of the new German typography came through an article by Tschichold in *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* ('Qu'est-ce que la nouvelle typographie et

que veut-elle?' *ivi* no.19, 15 September 1930: 46–52) (Monguzzi 1981: 2; Fioravanti 1997: 76).

157. Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 25; Anceschi in Monguzzi 1981: 6–8.

158. Pigozzi 1982: 471.

159. Imre Reiner (1900–1987), illustrator, calligrapher and designer of type. Born in Yugoslavia, he grew up between Romania and Hungary. After studying in Frankfurt and Stuttgart (a student of Ernst Schneider), he settled in Switzerland, in Lugano, in the early 1930s (cf. 'Chronology' in *Below the Fold* vol.1, no.3, winter 2003: 18). Contacted by Boggeri who had admired his work at the Werkbund graphic arts exhibit at the 1933 Triennale, Reiner traveled weekly from Lugano to Milan 'to do sketches, improvise solutions with amazing speed and the command of a cunning profession' (Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 19–20). Käte Bernhardt: 'The tall and elegant Boggeri walked back and forth trying to explain to me—in French—the work he had to be done. Any possibility for communication with the secretary was limited to smiles and a few gestures (...). In those days, time was not money. Once Boggeri got angry because I had given a client a certain deadline for completing a job. How could I know how many days it would take to achieve a suitable result? (...) We worked on many different kinds of projects: large installations for the windows of Motta; graphics and photography montages' (cit in Fossati Sambonet 1974: 20–1).

Huber's turn.¹⁶⁰ In a short time, then, the Boggeri studio became a center frequented by young recruits Ricas, Munari, Mura-tore, Veronesi, Buffoni, Carboni, even es-tablished graphic artists like Nizzoli, with whom Boggeri established external collab-orations, adopting the language most suited to the specific nature of the job in hand, without imposing a predefined style. This sort of 'working school in the field made up for Italy's lack of specialized schools' and contributed to updating the visual repertoire of Italian graphic arts as well as to defining the special qualities of the new professional figure of the designer.¹⁶¹

I was a graphic artist, a job that no one knew of because when I would say, "I am a graphic artist", people would reply, "A typographer?" No, not a typographer, but a graphic artist, the person who deals with the space between the type, who chooses the kind of type that is used.¹⁶²

The studio's first identity was commis-sioned to the advertising office of the Pa-risian foundry Deberny & Peignot, which inspired Boggeri for the name of his agen-cy: '(...) I wrote to Paris and a short while later I received a letterhead with the red B between two black dots which I used in the early years of Studio Boggeri.'¹⁶³ And yet, already during 1933, Boggeri must have felt the need for a trademark which was more suited to photography's importance in the studio's work. Munari would design the new logo, translating this emphasis into an effective graphic synthesis based on the principle of the camera obscura, where Boggeri's initial (which changes from the neoclassical elegance of Didot to the

concreteness of sans serif) seems mirror-inverted in a square divided according to the golden ratio into two spaces defined by the red/black color contrast, subtly recall-ing the printing tradition. Boggeri would then entrust the logo to the capable typo-graphic experience of Reiner, who would place it on the studio's letterhead designed in 1934.¹⁶⁴

Perhaps it was Ricas and Munari's limited printing experience that motivated Boggeri's choice. Purely typographic exam-ples, like R+M studio's different letterhead from the early 1930s, in fact, lack a defi-nite direction, almost as if they were the

160. Max Huber (1919–1992) arrives in Milan from Zurich in February '40, on the suggestion of Gerard Miedinger: 'it is with his contribution that the stylistic profile of the studio is finally defined in a brand new relationship between "constructive" and "anarchic"' (Monguzzi 1981: 2; von Moos, Campana, Bosoni 2006: 82–6). After leaving for Switzerland at the outbreak of the war, Huber would return to Milan in the spring of 1945 to continue his collaboration with Boggeri. As for Schawinsky, Herbert Bayer states: 'Schawinsky's posters in the 1930s were a strong influence on the graphics of northern Italy; with a few exceptions, perhaps in Paris, the Italian industry seemed to be more sensitive and more open to new ideas than the German industrial world was' (in Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 3).

161. Boggeri in 'Una B rossa fra due punti' 1981: 20–1; Fioravanti 1997: 78; Steiner in Salsi 2007: 113. Cf. Anceschi: 'An entire series of graphic, or communicational, stereotypes that pertain to Italian industrial graphics [have] surfaced as archetypes, if not actually in "casa Boggeri", at least in his disciplinary and design surroundings' (1981c: 9).

162. Munari in Politi 1991: 106. In a context that was still for the most part craft-related, the Italian typographic environment was shifting between the

classicist worship of tradi-tion and the ambition for technical excellence; it is therefore natural that there would be serious resistance against mediation with the new professional figure of the graphic designer (Fossati, Sambonet 1974: 10–1).

163. Boggeri in 'Una B rossa fra due punti' 1981: 21. In addition to following the industrial work of the Deberny & Peignot foundry, in the mid-1920s Charles Peignot (1897–1983) launched an extensive pro-gram of initiatives aimed at promoting typography and modern decorative arts: from the printing type col-lections of *Divertissements Typographiques* (1928–1934) edited by Maximilien Vox to the eclectic magazine *Arts et Métiers Graphiques* (1927–1939); from the yearly publications dedi-cated to advertising and photography to the opening of the first advertising stu-dio (Service Typographique) which would be adjacent to and then in 1930 absorbed by the photography studio (Studio Deberny-Peignot) led by Maurice Tabard with Roger Parry (Dufour 1994: 3–4, 16; Wlassikoff 2005: 71–4; cf. Amelia Hugill-Fontanel, 'Arts et Métiers Graphiques' at <http://ellie.rit.edu:1213/ref.htm>, last accessed 16 July, 2010).

164. Sheet 17.5×28 cm. 2-color print. The Boggeri-Monguzzi collection also has the original exe-cutive design of the logo (15×10 cm).

product of experiments improvised on a whim. One of the first examples (perhaps the strongest and most original) dates back to the beginning of 1932, with a rigorously typographic style (moreover, in the brand new sans serif font made by Nebiolo, *Semplicità*). Two large initials R+M with below a small square bordered in red, followed by the names written out in full (all upper case), while the address is aligned at the bottom; all the lines are justified to form a column on the left side of the page, which is nearly square in shape. The result is simple, elegant and purely typographic, in keeping with the precepts of the new typography.¹⁶⁵ The style of a studio ad published in *L'Ufficio Moderno* in December 1932 is similar;¹⁶⁶ but at the same time, we find a new size of letter paper, long and narrow (17.1×27.8 cm), based on a less daring typographic choice, with a block of text aligned at the top right, in black Bodoni type and accompanied by the writing 'painters' placed on a line in upper case justified across the entire width.¹⁶⁷ A new letterhead follows in 1934, which takes a few elements from the 1932 version, except in this case the heading is double, including both the R+M studio and the office of the Milan Futurist group, together at the same location. Typographically, the design returns to the sans serif *Semplicità* and the bordered square reappears, but the heading is positioned horizontally across the width of the page, with a greater emphasis on the Futurist group, which is prominent.¹⁶⁸ Even though it includes an illustration that is somewhere between humorous and surreal, the letter paper for Tullio

d'Albisola (created in 1933) also seems to be made according to a similar formula, in the sense that the part designated for the text is enclosed by a thin border, above which appears the name Mazzotti in large uppercase letters.¹⁶⁹ This is echoed a few years later in the letterhead of the *Tempo* editorial office (probably also by Munari) in which the magazine's logo is repeated by a square below where the various offices are listed, while the heading *Anonima Periodici Italiani* (the Mondadori periodicals branch) crosses the width of the page in simple English italics.¹⁷⁰ These examples show that despite the fact that there was no scarcity of typographic ideas, for some reason the two artists felt the need to vary their graphic identity incessantly, while maintaining (consciously or unconsciously) some formal ties between the different versions.

Ricas and Munari's working relationship with Boggeri would continue until at least 1937, when the two graphic artists would part ways. Even if the collection of designs created during the five-year span for the via Borghetto studio seems somewhat heterogeneous in the type of creations and in the visual language on which they draw, a common stylistic feature can be found in their resorting to photomontage, which in many cases seems to dominate over the other aspects (like the typographic ones). Going over the body of work, which seems highly diversified—starting from projects for Studio Boggeri (logo,

165. Tullio d'Albisola/Casa Mazzotti Archive, Albissola Marina: letter from Munari to Tullio d'Albisola [January 1932] (courtesy of Giovanni Rossello). 19.5×20.5 cm.

166. *L'Ufficio Moderno* vii, 12 (December 1932): 700.

167. Mart, Archives of 900, Rovereto: letter to Depero signed by Munari, Ricas, Manzoni (November 24, 1932), fondo Depero: Dep.2.9.10.

168. Mart, Archives of 900, Rovereto: letter to Thayaht signed by Munari [April 1934], fondo Thayaht: Tha.1.2.07.66. 21×27 cm.

169. Mart, Archives of 900, Rovereto: letter to Thayaht signed by Tullio d'Albisola (March 3, 1934), fondo Thayaht: Tha.1.2.07.63. 22×24.5 cm.

170. Mart, Archives of 900, Rovereto: letter signed by Munari [August 1941], fondo Thayaht: Tha.1.2.07.89.

advertisements, promotional brochure) to playbills (Lecco Quinquennial), folding cards (Scaglia, Motta, Olga Asta, Touring Club Italiano), catalogues (RIV, Lino-leum), advertisements (campaign for sugar, Champion, Ulma), signs for counters or windows (Farmitalia, Arquebuse)—one can observe a graphic style becoming no longer Futurist nor strictly functional. The graphics tend, instead, towards a rational formula without forsaking invention, which, after all, would be the constant aspiration of Boggeri, and from whom Munari could learn the profession of art director.

Apart from the heterogeneous nature of the projects for Boggeri, what first jumps out is the fact that these designs are disconnected; they are not secondary but they respond to occasional commissions. In any case, they are not organic in terms of communication strategy and coordination—as is the case instead with Schawinsky's collaboration with the Olivetti publicity office, for example. This does not imply a reductive opinion about the value of these creations, if anything a correct framing of their real dimension. In the second place, these are designs that appear less demanding from a typographic point of view, based essentially on the image. Boggeri entrusted these to the inventiveness of the two graphic artists, taking advantage of their playful spirit and surprising ideas. In the best cases the result is a sort of advertising graphic art that has the ability to play with the public's expectations through small semantic slips, closer to the French version of modernism (without social or political resonance) than to the constructivist models of central Europe.

The photomontage makes it possible to find a guiding thread in the different works Ricas and Munari did for Boggeri, grouping them according to their greater or lesser photographic emphasis compared with the illustrative approach predominant in the previous stage. This also implies a secondary typographic role. An early advertisement for the Studio Boggeri, perhaps preceding Munari's logo, already appears in *Guida Ricciardi* in 1933. This is characterized by a predominantly figurative style, resolved in the combination of photography and design in the picture of an archer, accompanied by the slogan 'colpisce nel segno' (hits the mark) which fills almost the entire page.¹⁷¹ The next version, taken a couple of years later, shows an important adjustment in the formula through subtle changes that, in addition to the color effect of the red background, align the composition with a more constructive concept of the ad: uncentering the illustration on the left frees up space for a second column where an explanatory text and a schematic target are inserted, establishing a new focal point for the composition; a triangle is created between the symbolic figure, the text and the graphic mark, which gives the whole ad a compact and dynamic quality.¹⁷²

Growing in complexity, we find the first collection of work resolved with a simple, instrumental montage, where the photographic element figures within the composition without being the main

171. *Guida Ricciardi: la pubblicità in Italia*. Milan: Editore L'Ufficio Moderno, 1933. Conceived by Giulio Cesare Ricciardi, contributor at *L'Ufficio Moderno* and owner of the agency Pubblicità Ricciardi (founded in 1932 after the dissolution of Balza-Ricc). Edited by Dino Villani, layout by Carlo Dradi. There were three editions in all (1933, 1936 e 1941–42), the last two published directly by Ricciardi (Priarone 1987: 12; Abruzzese, Colombo 1994: 49,

392). The ties that existed between the advertising environment and the group of leading graphic artists are borne out in a long and detailed technical chapter on printing prepared by the editorial office of *Campo grafico* for the 1936 edition of the *Guida*.

172. Proof in the Monguzzi-Boggeri collection, Meride (Switzerland). 22.5×17.5 cm; two-color print; signed and dated on the verso Ricas/Munari 1936.

|152| mechanism; the folding card for Scaglia Arredamenti (1933) in some way repeats the lesson of *Casabella*, also referenced by the square shape. The line drawing of the façade of Palazzo dell'Arte, counterbalanced by the trademark in the lower opposite corner, is cut by a wide diagonal colored stripe which isolates the symbolic element of the hand and acts as a hinge between the two illustrations and the text.¹⁷³ The card for |153| Motta (ca 1935), with the pop-up three-dimensional Duomo, represents an advanced level of complexity, in the controlled use of photography and color as narrative, along with an intelligent paper structure that resolves the subject of the ad with a surprising idea.¹⁷⁴

In later ads for national campaigns, dating back to about 1936, Ricas and Munari's graphic language reaches sophisticated levels (in some ways even radical in the context of Italian advertising). A |154| double ad for the national sugar campaign (1936), which no longer played on the mechanical representation but rather on the association between the human figure and the car (where the engine becomes a metaphor for the metabolism), uses photo manipulation in a freer, almost anarchic, fashion. The two images do not adhere to a preset schema; they depend on the semantic juxtaposition of the elements, for a kind of surreal effect that plays on the emotional pedal.¹⁷⁵ Instead, a contemporary ad published in the same car-related |155| context for Champion spark plugs is resolved strictly constructively; the sheaf of lines converging on the photo of the spark plug, the text laid out in a strips inserted

between the photo illustrations arranged according to a rhythmic module, determine precise geometrical structures. This is a more controlled, rigorous method that reveals its system, which supports the layout of the elements and is more functional for technical communication.¹⁷⁶

A preliminary mock-up remains for the design for a promotional brochure for RIV (1937) which returns to the combination of industrial photography and photomontage. In the sketch, the parts are quickly marked, defining the clutter as titles, text and photos. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the pamphlet consists of two distinct parts, one introducing the product and one celebrating recent airplane enterprises, connected by a central fold-out spread on silver paper, with an aerial view of the Turin factories. Undoubtedly the publication uses photography as the main instrument: the first part in the form of large still lifes alternating with designs; the second in the form of a synthetic photomontage, in keeping with the style developed by Munari for *L'Ala d'Italia*.¹⁷⁷

173. 'Scaglia Arredamenti presenta alla Triennale le più recenti creazioni Ar-Ca' (1933), a folding card, open 23×23.5 cm; two-color print; signed Studio Boggeri. Monguzzi-Boggeri Collection, Meride (Switzerland). An original note by Boggeri on the verso indicates that it is the first or second work created by the studio; 'the hand is mine, I don't remember the author!' —but in all likelihood the work can be attributed to Ricas and Munari.

174. 'Non si ha notizie dell'architetto...' (ca 1935), folding card (sketch), closed 9×13.5 cm; open 34.5×13.5 cm. Signed R+M on the opening flap. Monguzzi-Boggeri Collection, Meride (Switzerland).

175. 'La tensione nervosa sfibra i vostri muscoli...' and 'Lo zucchero è il distributore di energie...' (1936), ads respectively in *Motor Italia* x; 2 (February 1936): 2, and *ivi* x; 5 (May 1936): 2. 43×56.5 cm.

Signed Ricas+Munari/Studio Boggeri. The existence of other ads from the same time, also created by Studio Boggeri with the collaboration of other artists (cf. 'Zucchero alimento prezioso indispensabile' in *Domus* no. 98, February 1936) allows us to perceive a flexible communication strategy, that adapts its language according to the public in question; this explains Ricas and Munari's choice for an upscale magazine dedicated to motoring.

176. 'Champion. Perfetta accensione significa economia di benzina' (1936) ad in *Motor Italia* x; 1 (January 1936): 1. 43×56.5 cm. Signed Ricas+Munari/Studio Boggeri.

177. 'Con queste sfere' (1937), brochure sketch, in the Boggeri-Monguzzi collection, Meride (Switzerland). 16×23 cm; pp. 24. Unique features include the metallic paper for the central four-page fold-out and a circular hole in the second

The mock-up of a promotional publication for Studio Boggeri called 'L'uovo di Colombo' (1935) is more defined in the layout of the text and illustrations. Even here the taste prevails for graphic inventions and collage atop designed backgrounds or printing screens. Square in shape, the brochure fits in a black card stock envelope, which bears the studio's trademark, uncentered. The pamphlet is protected by a tracing paper cover, with different drawn crops of Boggeri's famous photo of an egg balancing on a mirror (*L'uovo di Colombo*), visible through a circular hole on the first page, surrounded by Studio creations. In the center of the pamphlet, a photo collage schematically illustrates the principle of the photomontage and bears the names of the studio's main contributors; the following pages present two-color printing compositions, ending with a large letter B in bright red, visible in transparency.¹⁷⁸

Yet another different option is seen in the Linoleum brochure (1936) that, besides the rationally structured photographic cover, works on the graphic invention of punching out holes in the pages which makes it possible to bring together different coating finishes in two backgrounds designed in a simple, linear style.¹⁷⁹ Photography is the main feature of a brochure for Colorificio Italiano Max Meyer (1938), characterized by the rhythm of large photographs,¹⁸⁰ as it is for a folding card for Olga Asta & C. (1938), whose lace and embroidery are effectively evoked by a photograph (enriched with the simple collage of a view of Venice), printed in color on the cover.¹⁸¹ Not that the photograph exhausts

the expressive repertoire used by the two artists in their collaboration with Boggeri, nor that all the work belongs to the same modernist trend. Some even deliberately return to pictorial language, both in the realistic sense and in the more monumental sense. The sign for the Lecco Quinquennial (1937), a provincial farming/industrial trade fair, marks a re-entry to the more obvious iconographic designs, where the photocollage technique is diluted by the return to pictorial illustration, for a result that, all told, is rather commonplace (also because of the propagandist Fascio symbol).¹⁸² The window sign for Alpestre Arquebuse liqueur

section. The date is based on the cover photograph (cf. similar in *Campo grafico* 11; 12, December 1934: 274) and especially on references to the transatlantic flight of the 'Sorci Verdi' (Rome-Rio de Janeiro, August 20-21, 1937). The type of content leads one to think of the publication of an image intended for a wide audience. In the 1930s, the riv Company factory of Villar Perosa, commonly known as riv, part of the Fiat Group, was one of the major global manufacturers of ball bearings and precision mechanical components, with factories in Turin, France, Germany, Belgium, Argentina and the USSR (Bassignana 2008).

178. 'L'uovo di Colombo' (1935) promotional brochure sketch, in the Monguzzi-Boggeri collection, Meride (Switzerland). 16×15.5 cm; pp.12. Dust jacket in tracing paper; circular hole on the first page; black card stock envelope, with logo (17×17 cm). The collage in the central four-page folder has a painter's palette obtained from the photo of clouds and the name of Boggeri's main collaborators reproduced on the brush handles, while the facing page schematically illustrates the principle of the photocollage.

179. 'Linoleum' (1936), brochure, 20×14.2 cm, pp.8. The realism of the illustrations recalls the style of the stage design for *Il Dottor Mattia* by Rognoni (1931)

and several ads for Olivetti (1932-33).

180. 'Diamanferro contro la ruggine' (1938), brochure in the Boggeri-Monguzzi collection, Meride (Switzerland). 18×22 cm, pp.16 plus cover, metal staple bound. Printing: Pizzi & Pizio Milan, Rome. 'The most interesting double-page is perhaps the last one [reproduced in Monguzzi 1981: 32-3] (...) Five other spreads feature letters of reference on the right page, and on the left images related to the specific field; for example, facing a certification issued by the Ufficio Materiale of the 27th Artillery Regiment there is a tank, next to a letter from the Navy Department is the photo of the bow of a ship, seen from the bottom, and the footer has a graphical representation of an ocean liner.' (Bruno Monguzzi, correspondence with author, 31 January 2011).

181. 'Olga Asta & C. Venezia' (1938-39), folding card, 19×16 cm, pp.4. Signed Ricas+Munari/Studio Boggeri. Stampa Lucini, Milan.

182. 'IV Quinquennale di Lecco' (1937), press ad or tram poster, 17.5×26.5 cm. B/w proof and color-printed sample, Monguzzi-Boggeri coll., Meride (Switzerland). Signed Studio Boggeri (Ricas and Munari). Note how this rough realistic illustration style is found in the contemporary covers for periodicals like *La Lettura*.

also returns to the pictorial style typical of poster production at the time; however, the use of the photographic image and the subtle typographic play (the curved title that enters and exits from the café) give the composition vibrancy.¹⁸³ Looking back, it becomes clear that Ricas and Munari show greater ease, expressing a style all their own in its slight playful subversion or graphic invention, in the more flexible and elaborate designs, such as brochures and folding cards, rather than single printed matter, such as posters, playbills or signs, where a more conventional style is preferred.¹⁸⁴

[163] Furthermore, a large batch of print sketches have been recently discovered, most of which bear the Studio Boggeri stamp and in many cases are signed Munari, along with autograph markings for the printing, which could not be identified. The group includes window signs, folding cards, catalogues, ads, often odd pieces, single copies, as well as retouched photographs, photomontages and colored backgrounds intended for overprinting. Despite the fact that their fragmentary nature prevents a precise classification, as a whole, these documents attest to a large variety of graphic design projects that Munari would work on, some perhaps on his own or more often for Boggeri, which leads us to believe that their collaboration was more intense than was known thus far.¹⁸⁵ No less importantly, these sketches also verify a considerable technical ability and fine drawing skills otherwise unexpected based on the magazine covers or later children's illustrations. In this regard, the most interesting creations are some window

signs for Adisole and Neazina, pharmaceuticals made by Farmitalia, which can be dated to around 1938;¹⁸⁶ and sketches for a folding card and an ad for the launch of the *Guida Breve d'Italia*, edited by Touring Club Italiano in 1937. Also, noteworthy clients include Lagomarsino, Vedeme, Olivetti, ULMA and Tecnica (these last ones with Carlo Dinelli).

183. 'L'Alpestre Arquebuse' (1936), counter or window sign, 35×24.5 cm; silk-screen print. In the Monguzzi-Boggeri coll., Meride (Switzerland). The image is not unlike Carboni's (even if it is closer in its representation to the cubist styles) for the same product. The mediator role of Mazzali, editor of *L'Ufficio Moderno* and consultant for the company Arquebuse, should not be excluded.

184. Boggeri only seems to assign certain kinds of ads to Ricas and Munari, those connected to specific products or a particular client, while for the rest he relies mostly on Schawinsky, Carboni and Muratore (cf. Monguzzi 1981: 13).

185. The large batch of sketches (now in the Massimo & Sonia Cirulli Archive, Bologna/New York) comes from the Milanese printing plant Unione Artistica Arti Grafiche Pietro Vera. Numerous examples bear the Studio Boggeri stamp on the verso, and in many cases (but not always) Munari's signature (in full, but more often MUN, or a simple short M). Furthermore, his handwriting can sometimes be recognized in the printing notes on the recto or on sheets of tracing paper laid overtop. The majority of the work dates back to the 1930s, but there is a small group from the 1950s. It is not always possible to identify the client, as these are loose sketches or simple colored backgrounds intended for overprinting, therefore lack any information; in other cases, the name of the client is known but not the type of product. It was not even possible to identify the documents or find useful information by

consulting Anna Boggeri and Bruno Monguzzi. As a note of caution, in at least two cases it was verified that the signature is false (probably added by the collector), despite the fact that other clues (handwriting or certain aspects in style) confirm the work as being Munari's.

186. Adisole is a tuna liver oil extract (launched by the regime to avoid the importation of cod liver oil, blocked by international sanctions) and Neazina is one of the first sulphonamides marketed in Italy: both these preparations were manufactured by Farmitalia beginning in 1938 (Sironi 1992: 125–126). The creation of the pharmaceuticals branch of Montecatini takes place in 1935, from the joining of the Schiapparelli plants and a branch of ACNA (an important Italian chemical company), but only later does it adopt the new name; given that beginning in 1937 Munari works for himself as an advertising graphic artist and that his clients are different companies that belong to the Montecatini Group (including ACNA, Duco, Società Generale Marmi & Pietre d'Italia, Lavorazione Leghe Leggere/Alluminio SA), it is highly probable that his relationship with Farmitalia occurred directly, without Boggeri's mediation, within this broader collaboration.

187. Bruno Monguzzi often quotes Boggeri who, referring to functional Swiss graphic design, once stated that a spider's web is useful only when broken by the fly that is trapped in it; cited in Nunoo-Quarcoo 1999: 42.

What, then, is Ricas and Munari's position as after their experience with Boggeri with respect to the ongoing debate on typography? In other words, where does their work fit within the contemporary panorama of graphic arts? With respect to graphic artists of the same generation, such as Carboni, Veronesi, Muratore? If, as we have seen, the work for Boggeri marks a gradual transition from a Futurist method to a more modern style, that is, updated on the constructive trends and on the integration of photography, it is also clear that this move does not embrace an extreme functionalism. There are two main reasons for this: in part because the two artists do not belong to the world of traditional printing (in the sense that they lack the technical training that could have influenced their development), but perhaps more so because of Boggeri's artistic direction, aimed at a type of 'emotional' advertising communication in which formal precision is not an end unto itself as much as a means to establish contact with the public.¹⁸⁷ In any case, by about 1936, the graphic work created by the duo R+M seems to have taken a clear direction, which can be seen in a few significant designs (both for contemporary observers and from a historical perspective).

An early printed piece that seems to make the point about the level of stylistic maturity Ricas and Munari reached by the middle of the decade is the well-known *Tavolozza di possibilità tipografiche*, an illustrative brochure designed and co-produced with the printer Muggiani, for promotional distribution.¹⁸⁸ The square,

spiral-bound booklet looks like a sort of catalogue of printing possibilities, using screens, lines, overprinted blocks, printing on celluloid, and fold-out inserts. Impeccably produced, the variety of effects and materials used garners favorable reactions in the Milanese advertising world, so much so as to be reproduced in the *Guida Ricciardi* in 1936. Nonetheless, a review in *Campo grafico* does not fail to emphasize how from a graphics standpoint the results betray the fundamental objective, that is, to show new modes of expression borne out of the collaboration between the printer and the new figure of the graphic designer: '(...) it became a work of costly reproduction transforming possibilities into problems.'¹⁸⁹ This critique points out what is lacking not so much at the production level (given the collaboration with experienced technical experts), as at the level of the typographic concept, which was overly difficult for the outcome obtained. In part, this comes from inexperience, but fundamentally it stems from a concept that is still related to artistry, dependent on a 'pictorial' result rather than derived from the technical possibilities inherent in printing—cited are recent printed materials created with an entirely different economy of means and visual impact, with a clear reference to the work of Herbert Matter for the Swiss national tourism office.¹⁹⁰ 'Reproducing and printing is therefore disproportionate to the effect obtained, making the brochure ineffective from an advertising point of view, because people who want to advertise are unlikely to pay

[164] known *Tavolozza di possibilità tipografiche*, an illustrative brochure designed and co-produced with the printer Muggiani, for promotional distribution.¹⁸⁸ The square,

188. *Tavolozza di possibilità tipografiche*. Subtitle: *Esempio di collaborazione tra artisti e tipografo*. Milan: Officina Grafica Rinaldo Muggiani, December 1935. 19.5×19.5 cm, 12 pp; card, metal spiral binding, various printing processes. The pamphlet is placed in a three-color overprinted parcel paper envelope.

189. 'Recensioni' in *Campo grafico* iv; 3 (March 1936): n.p.

190. 'We cite, for example, certain Swiss tourism advertising cards where beautiful effects were obtained solely with two-color prints and others, printed in two-colors in a single printing on regular machines' ('Recensioni' in *Campo grafico*, cit.).

a lot for a job when they can get a job that produces the same effect at a lower cost.’¹⁹¹ This contrast—which is reminiscent of the distance that separated the ‘pictorialist’ photographic vision and the new objectivity during those years—reveals a position that is undoubtedly receptive to the new modernist influences that Ricas and Munari tried to assimilate. However, they remained on a level of superficial imitation without understanding their structural principles which are at their very basis. In the end, the ambitious project was partially successful, despite the indubitable effect it provoked in the professional environment, and which was echoed one year later in a controversial exchange with Alcide Mengarelli, a traditionalist printer and editor-in-chief of the Roman magazine *L’Arte grafica*, who accused the ‘three jolly guys’ of ‘extremely simple craft shop work that does not really represent the possibilities of Italian printing (...)’.¹⁹² Beyond the controversy between those for and against modernism, the fact remains that the *Tavolozza* is affected by the desire to prove the artist’s role in graphic arts with an excess of inventions which in the end are counterproductive; and in any event, from the aesthetic point of view, there is nothing extraordinary even by the standards of the day—in terms of comparison one thinks of type foundry specimens, paper mill samples, or even the *Divertissements typographiques* edited by Maximilien Vox for Deberny & Peignot.

Another advertising project, however, receives a positive reception, this one also created during the same period together

with Muggiani, marked by an improved economy of means. It is the promotional brochure *Nero A.O. 1936* for the company Concentra/F.lli Hartmann,¹⁹³ and features a new printing ink, appropriately renamed with a nod to the war going on in Africa, as is the photographic idea on the cover; inside, instead, text and images alternate in a clear layout, with large, well-spaced type, printed in color and, on the front, suggestive black-and-white images (photomontage and typographic compositions) or demonstrative images displaying the product’s qualities (print proofs with different screens). Enclosed in the February issue of *Campo grafico* for the occasion, it is accompanied by a positive review that, in addition to praising the client for their promotional choice that differs from the usual art reproductions, this time it emphasizes the total success of the collaboration between artist and printer that results in a ‘clear work, that is convincing from an advertising point of view.’

The sedimentation of the language of elemental typography in Munari’s work reaches a new stage in 1937, significantly connected to the Futurist environment. The moderate *paroliberismo* (words in freedom) reintroduced by Marinetti in the second half of the decade with his ‘aeropoetry’ readily lent itself to the advertising world, a development directly tied to the autarchic climate and the demands for promoting national products.¹⁹⁴ The first concrete

191. ‘The envelope (...) required three printings, the cover (...) five, and so on’ (ibid).

192. ‘All’insegna dei tre buontemponi Ricas Munari Muggiani’ in *L’Arte grafica* vi; 42 (January 1937): 3–4. In a review by Panfilo, the magazine had previously criticized the *Tavolozza* on the basis of reproductions appeared in *Campo grafico*, provoking an ironic response from Ricas and Munari, who sent a copy to Mengarelli, stirring up yet another of those heated

debates that filled the Italian press at the time.

193. *Nero A.O. 1936* [where A.O. stands for Africa Orientale, or East Africa], brochure, 12.5×15.5 cm; pp.8, metal staple bound. Printing: Milan: Officina Grafica Rinaldo Muggiani, 1936. Two-color printing. Enclosed in *Campo grafico* iv; 2 (February 1936), the review is on p.29.

194. Aeropoetry, begun with *L’Aeropoema del Golfo della Spezia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1935) and followed by

example of sponsored poetic writing is *Il Poema del vestito di latte* (1937), for which Munari handled the graphic design for the Snia Viscosa advertising office.¹⁹⁵ Marinetti's poetic inspiration tends to glorify new materials manufactured by the chemical industry, in this case the synthetic fiber, Lanital.¹⁹⁶ In addition to typographic skills, Munari's work seems to capitalize on the best results of his photomontage experience. The pamphlet's typographic style emphasizes Marinetti's text, that follows its free rhythm with a play of vertical alignments, and accentuates some words by varying the typeface. On this structure, he builds 'a sophisticated visual counterpoint'¹⁹⁷ made of clipped photographs, line drawings, duotone prints and overprinted cellophane sheets that interact with the poetic recitation. The result is as far from the Futurist style as it is from the hesitations of the first constructivist attempts, and it shows a personal assimilation of the modernist vocabulary tempered by a basic poetic attitude which better expresses Munari's position in the context of the new Italian typography. The effects used, such as inserting a cellophane sheet inside the pamphlet, do not appear to be the product of a desperate search for the element of surprise at all costs, but rather the result of intentionally accentuating and tying the two narrative levels, textual and visual.

The use of new materials like cellophane in the graphic arts of the 1930s is often cited as an example of the Futurist legacy. Despite Futurists' claims of priority (assertions often repeated by critics without confirmation), this appears unlikely

enough given the country's backward technological situation. Cellophane was commonly used in food packaging; furthermore, since the 1920s, printing on cellophane was one of the processes used for offset printing of texts and images.¹⁹⁸ It is therefore more plausible that the first to test transparent materials such as cellophane or cellulose acetate were the printers themselves. And in other European countries similar experiments in the field of graphic arts had already been attempted with success—cellophane was used by Lisitsky at the *Pressa Ausstellung* of Cologne (1928), Bayer used it for the cover of the catalogue for the Section Allemande at Exposition de la Société des Artistes Décorateurs in Paris (1930), Zwart for the *Reclame brochure* (1931). In Italy, aside from the precedent of the *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce* (1930), cellophane was used by Modiano

Il poema africano della Divisione «XVIII ottobre» (Milan: Mondadori, 1937), recalls an impressionist type of narration, that is shown in its declamatory style with a new lexical richness and a marked descriptiveness. Aeropoezy gives way to the so-called Poetry of Technicalism, a definition following advertising poetry provided by Marinetti with the later *Poema di Torre Viscosa* (Snia Viscosa, 1938) (Salaris 1985: 214–7).

195. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Il poema del vestito di latte. Parole in libertà futuriste*. S.I. [Milan]: Ufficio Propaganda Snia Viscosa, 1937. Printing: Officina Grafica Esperia. 24.5×34 cm, pp.16; metal staple bound. Three-color printing, with a cellophane sheet insert overprinted in black. Text in *Luxor* type, the Italian version of *Memphis* (Stempel, 1929; Mergenthaler Linotype, 1935–36).

196. Lanital is a synthetic fiber obtained from milk casein, invented by Antonio Ferretti and manufactured by Snia Viscosa, a major European enterprise in artificial fibers. With the proclamation of the

autarchy (1936), the advertising of Italian materials, already favored by a protectionist situation, affected every manufacturing sector, especially the chemical industry which provides many new products. In the textile industry, new artificial fibers were introduced on the market, both of plant origin (broom, ramie) and synthetic (rayon, cis-alfa, fleece, cellulose by-products). Overall, in the 1930s Italy had attained a place of respect in the global production of synthetic fibers, whose main centers/figures, besides Snia Viscosa, were the Società anonima italiana per le fibre artificiali/Châtillon (rayon and its by-products); Rhodiatocce/Montecatini (acetate); and Bemberg (cotton linters) (Venturelli 1997: 423–4; Gnoli 2005: 87–8; see also Garofoli 1991).

197. Ravaoli 1998: 69.
198. The text was printed on cellophane sheets which were then covered using electrolysis with a layer of bronze dust, and mounted on a printing plate (Johan de Zoete, email exchange, April 2008; cf. Twyman 1998²: 58–9).

in *25 anni Olivetti* (1933). The Futurists' experiments during the 1930s can be traced back rather to the well-known *Mise en page: The Theory and Practice of Layout* by Alfred Tolmer, the original French graphic arts manual, as well as a true printing tour de force that at the time became a common reference in advertising.¹⁹⁹ Tolmer's book presented the most up-to-date summary of deco graphic art and, in addition to dealing with the subject of typography, layout, photography and illustration, employed an extraordinary variety of materials, processes and techniques: typographic printing, silk-screening, stencil printing; metallic paper, plastic-coated paper, wallpaper; collage, dry block.²⁰⁰

Another case is represented by a publication jointly designed by Ricas and Munari in 1937 (that is, after their studio partnership broke up), who undertake the artistic direction of the summer issue of

[167] *URIC*, a technical magazine for the footwear industry.²⁰¹ What is unique about their work for the cover, the pamphlet's layout, several illustrations and a few advertisements, lies in the overall graphic style. It tends towards the hybrid, revealing contradictions between elements of a Futurist origin and constructive solutions; while the photomontage on the cover seems consistent with Munari's work in other periodicals, the collage compositions combined with drawing that fill several two-page spreads inside, in certain ways, return to the aeropictorial styles that seemed obsolete.

On a different level, one of the factors that undoubtedly contributes to the

modernization of the Italian graphic arts culture between the two world wars is the presence of foreign graphic artists (Swiss, in particular) in Milan connected to Studio Boggeri, not to mention Paul Renner's or Max Bill's exhibition designs at the Triennale. Numerous influences can be identified behind Ricas and Munari's new established code including, to a considerable extent, that of Xanti Schawinsky, who worked in Milan from 1933 to 1936, directly introducing Bauhaus teachings and the new German advertising graphics. Settling in Milan in the fall of '33, Schawinsky met the rationalist architect Baldessari and the Ghiringhelli brothers, owners of the Galleria del Milione, and through these, Boggeri who offered him work at his studio, where he would remain throughout 1934. He would later open his own studio on corso Venezia. Besides working for Boggeri, in

199. Alfred Tolmer. *Mise En Page. The Theory and Practice of Lay-Out*. Paris: Tolmer et cie. (French edition); London: The Studio/ New York: William Edwin Rudge (English edition, with French text at the end of the book). 21.2×26.5 cm, pp.[117]; with 16 tipped-in full-page illustrations and photomontages utilizing metallic paper, linoleum, color-printing, embossing and stenciling. Bound in decorated boards. 'This book rather than Tschichold's disciplined *Die neue Typographie* became the bible of advertising agencies in the 1930s' (John Lewis, *Anatomy of printing*. London: Faber & Faber, 1970: 215; cit in Burke 2006: 128–9); this observation is as true for the United Kingdom as it is for Italy, given their marginal position within the northern European modernist paradigm (Ann Pilar, email exchange, June 2009; Christopher Burke & Paul Shaw, email exchange April 2008; Wlassikoff 2005: 96–7).

200. Lista (1984: 103) and other critics did not fail to point out how 'the Fascist cultural institutions attempted to reclaim these

Futurist creations' citing as an example the impressive (36×46 cm) celebratory volume *Italia Imperiale*, published in 1937 by *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* which contains all the technical processes already used by the Futurists. These innovations spread progressively through Italy, which is confirmed by technical articles published in *Campo grafico* (cf. 'Stampa su cellophane' ivi vi; 1, January 1938: 14). During the span of a decade, these same processes would be reused in the special issues dedicated to Futurist typography by *Campo grafico* (March–May 1939, edited by Enrico Bona) and *Graphicus* (5, 1942 edited by Alfredo Trimarco).

201. *URIC* [*Unica Rassegna Italiana Calzature*], xii; 44 (summer 1937). Milan. 24.5×33.5 cm. In addition to the cover, the two graphic artists' work appears in numerous b/w and two-color plates (all for *URIC* creations, 18–9, 22–3, 26–7, 40–9, 51, 57, 72–5, 82–3), in the index (13) and the title pages (14–15), as well as in three ads for Everest typewriters (10), Calzaturificio Di Varese (14) and Inchiostri Concentra (96).

the next couple of years Schawinsky would work for Motta, Illy & Hausbrandt, Cinzano, S. Pellegrino, Cosulich and Olivetti designing posters, folding cards and catalogues; his work goes beyond two-dimensional graphics to interior layouts and industrial design. His Italian colleagues were not only surprised by the technical ability, but especially by the perfect synthesis in his work of graphic, typographic and photographic elements, which he would also be able to show to a wider audience with his one-man show at the Milione gallery (September 1934), in the commemorative poster for the 12th year of the Fascist revolution (enclosed in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, October 1934). Apart from considerations on the ideological implications of this last piece, it should be noted that not even Schawinsky was immune from the influences of the Italian context; in the two covers he was commissioned by *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* (December 1933) and by *Natura* (June 1934), it is clear that his language conforms to the prevailing contemporary taste. This is not the case for the cover created one year later for a special issue of *L'Ufficio Moderno* dedicated to him, which includes his own text on 'functional advertising' and a survey of his works from 1926 to 1935 in Germany and Italy. This provided yet another opportunity for Italians to examine closely these organically presented examples of the new modernist aesthetic.²⁰²

With the war in Abyssinia, international sanctions and the subsequent closeness with Nazi Germany, the situation in the country became difficult. In fall of 1936,

Schawinsky would end his period in Italy and emigrate to the United States.²⁰³ His stay, however brief, leaves a lasting imprint on the Milanese environment, and by 1940 the young Max Huber would take his place at Studio Boggeri, continuing to nurture a fruitful exchange with Swiss functional approach to graphic design.

If the literary content in the *Poema del vestito di latte* allows Munari to graft his own poetic inspiration onto an open typographic schema, with the excellent proof of the Movo catalogue also designed in 1937, he perfects that formula by adapting it to the functional demands imposed by the information/content. His graphics seem to be aimed at a modernist lexicon, where photography and illustration serve to document and explain in an objective way. In fact, this is the role that Modiano invites Ricas and Munari to perform for the brochure *Il linoleum: Sua fabbricazione* published in 1938 by the Società del Linoleum, part of the Pirelli Group.²⁰⁴ The assignment is reasonably issued by the company's advertising service, then driven by the poet Leonardo Sinisgalli (who towards the end of that year would become director of Olivetti's advertising office), who also probably wrote the text.²⁰⁵ The brochure

202. Other articles would follow in '35 in *Domus* and *Quadrante* (Solmi 1975: 110).

203. Hahn 1986: 20 ff.

204. *Il linoleum. Sua fabbricazione*. Milan: [Società del Linoleum], 1938. 28×25 cm; metal spiral bound; pp. 32 n/n (including a fold-out spread). Printing: Milan: Società Grafica G. Modiano. From the typographic point of view, note the use of *Bayer Type* (Berthold, 1931).

205. Lupo 2002: 214–6; Lupo 1996: 223–4; Sinisgalli 1955: 22. From 1936 to 1938 Leonardo Sinisgalli (1908–1981) works as a journalist at the Advertising Service of the Società del Linoleum with the job of organizing new product promotion, by

writing articles (published in *Edilizia Moderna*) and lecturing on modern interior design in northern Italian towns; in 1937, he publishes a popular article in the magazine *Sapere* entitled 'Come si fabbrica il linoleum' (How Linoleum is Made) (III; 60, 1937: 400), which is the basis for the brochure designed by Modiano. His friendship with Persico is essential to his intellectual education; it is through him that he works with *Domus* and *Casabella*. The Società del Linoleum, then managed by Giuseppe Eugenio Luraghi (manager of Pirelli after the war), was founded in 1898 by Pirelli & C. which had taken over a rubber-manufacturing plant in Narni, in Umbria.

describes the manufacturing process and the different product types and applications. The designer is Guido Modiano, who makes use of the 'figurative' contribution of painters Ricas and Munari, as well as of Luigi Veronesi for the cover. For Munari, working in collaboration with Modiano, the person most theoretically and practically committed to the achievement of the new typography in Italy, constitutes an implicit recognition of the stylistic maturity reached, even though the typographer's direction keeps Munari's inspiration, so to speak, under control, directing it towards the simple visualization of complex processes. The narration, in fact, relies predominantly on photography and diagrams (where Ricas and Munari's presence is more easily recognized), while the explanatory text actually plays a subordinate role. Modiano's artistic guidance is visible in the consistency of the grid used for the layout and in the uniform concept that informs the publication, appropriately recognized as a 'concrete manifestation of modern typography' and since celebrated as one of the best examples of Italian graphic design of the 1930s.²⁰⁶

[169] An elegant brochure on Lanital printed by Modiano in 1937 may have given Munari the opportunity to work with the noted critic and printer for the first time. If on the one hand, the booklet's rigorous typographic style leaves no doubt as to Modiano's responsibility, the numerous photomontages on the cover and inside seem to bear Munari's mark.²⁰⁷

Munari, along with Ricas, is one of the major figures at the Mostra insolita di Arte Grafica e Fotografica (Unusual Exhibition of Graphic and Photographic Art), which opened at the Galleria del Milione in January of 1937; this would be the gallery's last exhibit of the modern period. On display were works by the 'campisti,' layouts by Persico for *Casabella*, photomontages by the BBPR Group (architects Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti, Rogers), works by Figini and Pollini, Veronesi, Schawinsky and naturally, Ricas and Munari (who displayed the *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani*, among others).²⁰⁸ New developments await Munari in 1937, however, starting with the professional relationship with Ricas, which by now had reached its end, for reasons which remain unknown. Not even in recent years have the two artists ever mentioned the circumstances of their separation, which in any event was anything but dramatic or sudden. From the little information available it seems that the separation must have been occurred gradually, considering that during 1937 Ricas and Munari are still working together on important projects, such as the installation at the Mostra del tessile, the publications on Linoleum or for Max Meyer, signed jointly. At least by the end of 1935, the r+m studio had moved to via Sebeto 1 (in the Cadorna

Strong in an expanding market (with demands especially coming from the public sector for hospitals, schools, buildings and transportation), the company would continue to be the main Italian manufacturer until after the war.

206. Cf. C.G., 'Una manifestazione concreta di tipografia moderna italiana' in *Campo grafico* vi; 12, (December 1938): 196–201.

207. *Lanital. La nostra lana*. [Milan]: Snia Viscosa, 1937. Printing Società Grafica G. Modiano. 23.5×32 cm, 92 pp, spiral bound. The colophon reads: 'Edited by the Snia Viscosa Advertising

Office'. Cover with photomontage printed in two colors on golden metallic-finish paper; contains overprinted colored cellophane sheets (blue/green), and a series of fabric and yarn samples. Chiabrado (2006: 69) suggests that Veronesi may have created the photomontages, but I would lean instead towards Munari, who used this technique far more extensively. Also, Antifascist that he was, it is unlikely that Veronesi would have agreed to create propaganda photomontages (like the one on the last page).

208. Pontiggia 1988: 49.

area, not far from Parco Sempione and home of the Triennale), which also marks a break in relations between the graphics studio's activity and the Milanese Futurist group.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, by the fall of 1936 the name that had defined them until then makes way for new independent names, 'pubblicità m' and 'Ricas'. What is significant is that this change seems to coincide with a new direction in the studio's activity, in which Munari specializes in advertising for large companies connected to technologically advanced sectors of industry, neglecting the more general commercial area and the publishing industry (with the exception of periodicals, of course). In the fall of 1936 the name 'pubblicità m' appears in ads published predominantly in *Domus* and *Casabella*; and from January 1937 onwards, except in isolated cases, projects by the two graphic artists in *L'Ufficio Moderno* or *L'Ala d'Italia* would be done separately.²¹⁰

Having left the studio with Munari, Ricas shares a space with Lucio Fontana and Fausto Melotti, continuing to work on illustration and graphics, but also increasingly on publishing. By 1934 he had already started a consulting relationship with the Editoriale Domus founded by Gianni Mazzocchi (publisher of *Domus* and *Casabella*) where he is able to establish a relationship with both Gio Ponti and Giuseppe Pagano, as well as with the Milanese rationalists; for example, the layout for Domus's collection Quaderni (1945) is his, as are the monographs edited by Raffaele Carrieri. At the 1936 Triennale, he exhibits his work at the set design show curated by Bragaglia

and Prampolini, presenting a sketch for Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (which was to be staged the following year at La Scala); and again in '40, Ricas also has a space of his own at the graphic art exhibit set up by Modiano at the VII Triennale. Called up to military service during war, he would wind up in Rome with the General Staff of the armed forces, where he would be in charge of the artistic office along with important figures in the Milanese advertising and journalism fields (Sinisgalli, Bianconi, Flaiano), working on theater and film production (propaganda films for the Istituto LUCE) and weekly publications for the troops, among other things. In '43, a series of chance circumstances bring him to Brianza, in Lombardy, where he would get by designing textiles for a silk mill and, like Munari, during the most dramatic years of the conflict, he would even manage to exhibit in one-man shows. In the tumultuous period following the end of the war, he would embark on journalism; he was a contributor to *Italia libera*, then editor-in-chief of the daily paper *Il Mezzogiorno* and finally an editor on *Corriere della Sera*. Returning to Editoriale Domus, in '45 he would become one of the founders of the weekly news publication *L'Europeo*, along with Mario Pannunzio and Arrigo Benedetti. In the postwar period, after an interval in South America, his professional path would lead decisively towards the world of advertising organization connected to the dawn of television and to the publishing industry; first with Sipra, the Italian television advertising agency, where he was along from the beginning, inventing the advertising formula

209. Cf. the colophon in *Tavolozza di possibilità tipografiche* (December 1935), as well as the ad published in *Guida Ricciardi* 1936.

210. Several examples of ads or graphic projects created entirely by Ricas in

1937–38: Piaggio ad in *L'Ala d'Italia* (October 1937), illustrations and photo-montages for *L'Ala d'Italia* (February 1937, January and June 1938) and *Almanacco antiletterario Bompiani* 1937 (1936).

for *Carosello* (1957–1977), then for Rizzoli and finally founding his own editorial and advertising company in the 1970s.²¹¹

Munari, instead, seems to be firmly committed to advertising, especially during the period from '37 to '39, also connected to Editoriale Domus. The type of company client for which he works—from chemistry (Montecatini, Duco, ACNA) to textiles (Snia Viscosa, Rhodiatocce), from advanced metallurgy (Lavorazione Leghe Leggere/Alluminio SA) to new plastic materials (Montecatini)—guides his choice of means towards the two main magazines on architecture and applied arts, *Domus* and *Casabella*. Even though the first advertisements by 'pubblicità m' appear during '36, Munari's advertising work clearly begins in January '37 and almost exclusively for companies which depend on the giant Montecatini, a unique coincidence that suggests some possible scenarios: that Munari got the job of overseeing communications for the different companies from a single office or company manager seems rather unlikely; an alternate explanation (which is the more plausible theory) would be that the Editoriale Domus did not only manage the sales of ad spaces in his publications but that he also offered the client creative graphic services to make the ads by relying on outside collaborators. This is the kind of relationship that existed between the editorial office and Luigi Veronesi or Franco Grignani, many of whose ads bear the double signature Domus/Veronesi and Domus/Grignani. And yet this aspect regarding the name gives rise to some confusion, because this never happened with Munari,

who always and only signed 'pubblicità m'—which therefore leads to the conclusion that Munari worked as an independent professional with a client group assigned to him by the publishing house (however, this hypothesis remains speculative).

The first ads chronologically appear during the summer of 1936 for ACNA, and important chemical company in the dye industry,²¹² and for the Società Generale Marmi e Pietre d'Italia (Italian Marble and Stone Company), active in the mining sector, both belonging to the Montecatini Group.²¹³ In general, Munari's approach confirms his command of a modern language and in fact shows a remarkable variability in the formal solutions applied from one ad to the next, going beyond the predominance of one common stylistic code. Intended for an audience connected to architecture, the building industry and interior design, the ads are published monthly in *Domus* and *Casabella*, often reused in subsequent issues or later on (changing the second color), but without being repeated from one magazine to the other.

211. Lopez in Bassi 1994: 8; Bassi 1994: 16, 85–93; cf. Waibl/Fava 1988: 52; Prada 1977.

212. Created initially as an industry for manufacturing explosives, ACNA (Azienda Coloranti Nazionali e Affini) was transferred to Italgas in 1925 who re-launched the company for manufacturing dyes. Following some financial difficulties, the company was taken over by Montecatini along with the German IG Farben (1931). The company included three plants, in the province of Milan (Cesano Maderno and Rho) and Cengio (headquarters, between Liguria and Piedmont).

213. Founded in 1888 and initially devoted to exploiting Tuscany's copper and pyrite mines, after WWI, under the direction of Guido Donegani, Montecatini enters the chemical sector where it achieves a prominent position in the sector of fertilizers. During

the 1920s, due to its closeness with the regime, the company develops quickly, expanding in similar sectors, eventually becoming one of the major Italian industrial groups. The group's activities expand to the sectors of artificial fibers (Rhodiatocce, joint venture with the French Rhône-Poulenc, 1928), dyes (Acna, 1931; Duco-Montecatini), pharmaceuticals (Farmitalia, another joint venture with Rhône-Poulenc, 1935), petrochemicals (ANIC, Azienda Nazionale Idrogenazione Combustibili, established with the Italian government, 1936), mining (including the Società Generale Marmi e Pietre d'Italia), metallurgy (including Lavorazione Leghe Leggere/Alluminio SA), as well as a strong presence in the field of hydroelectric production (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/entries_for_Acna,_Anic,_Farmitalia,_Montecatini,_Rhodiatocce, last accessed January 2011).

The campaign for ACNA (created by Munari until the end of '38) uses black-and-white ads on a half-page vertical format, with a predominant emphasis on the illustration combined with the logo, which moves from the precision of the axonometric drawing to a leaner, two-dimensional representation, at times with simple additions of collage or retouched photomontages; however, from the end of '37 there is evidence that both the illustrative and typographic style becomes stiffer. On the other hand, the advertising for the Società Generale Marmi e Pietre d'Italia, done until the middle of '38, uses full-page ads, often with the addition of a second color, focusing decisively on the photography, namely on the juxtaposition of images corresponding to two product states (its being mined from the cave and its use in the building industry). Compared to 1936, January '37 begins to reveal a less dynamic style, as much in the photograph choice of public building interiors as in the simplicity of the type.²¹⁴

The advertising for the line of paints by Duco-Montecatini²¹⁵ shows greater homogeneousness and continuity, from January '37 until the end of 1939. The half-page black-and-white ads, or more rarely full-page two-color, exhibit a coherent and well-constructed range of solutions over time, ensuring a more consistent brand image. Munari favors minimalist compositions based on the photographic image combined with graphic or typographic elements (such as, screens, geometric shapes, linear marks), occasionally a technical illustration, without any suggestion of decorativeness, alternating more allusive

solutions with more informative ones. This style is also found in the ads for the aeronautical sector (published in *L'Ala d'Italia*), despite the slightly careless general tone, confirming a precise communications strategy. A series of ads in the same format for Montecatini plastic materials, appearing in 1938, clearly use the same formula, based on the juxtaposition between photography and the printing screen.²¹⁶

Similar reasoning holds true for the ads created for the Società Anonima Lavorazione Leghe Leggere (Light Alloy Manufacturing Co.) (later merging with Alluminio SA) and published through the end of 1939, except for a break during '37. Generally, Munari uses the two-color two-page spread (which makes it possible to reuse the ad by changing the second color) in order to maximize the panoramic effect, while the square format of *Casabella* allows him to use a single page. On an aesthetic level, Munari opts for a clearly constructive line, with Futurist-leaning echoes in the line drawings; predominant here are photography, the presence of the product's (anticorodal, an aluminum alloy) logo and line plays to accentuate the diagonal tension, even if, compared to Veronesi who takes his place for a good portion of '37, the composition of his ads are all told less dynamic, as well as less abstract. Munari focuses on the combination of photos and pictorial elements, and less on composition; nonetheless, from the summer '38 there are plenty of more balanced examples, with more emphasis on the

214. Ads for ACNA appear in *Domus* from no.103 (July 1936) to no.132 (December 1938); for the Soc. Gen. Marmi e Pietre d'Italia in *Domus* (from no.106, October 1936) and *Casabella* (from no.107, November 1936) as well as in the book *Italiani* edited by Ponti and Sinisgalli and published by Domus in 1937.

215. Company originally created as Dinamitificio Nobel (Avigliana, 1875)

taken over by Montecatini in 1925, which, in addition to explosives, develops, with the authorization of the American chemical company DuPont, the production of nitrocellulose lacquers for iron works and the building industry.

216. Ads for Duco are published in *Domus* from no.109 (January 1937), *Casabella* from no.110 (January 1937), and *L'Ala d'Italia* from XVII; 1 (January 1937).

suggestiveness of the photographic image and a more energetic formula, with photomontages, screens, rules (in particular the ads in *Casabella* often combined with photos of rationalist structures or interiors). It is interesting to note the presence of a new logo, beginning in 1939, reasonably created by Munari, who after a few variations seems finally to be combined with the type Landi.²¹⁷ At the same time, Palazzo Montecatini designed by Gio Ponti is completed in 1938 in Milan.²¹⁸ Aluminum, marble and glass play a primary role in the building's appearance and throughout 1939 the building is the recurrent *Leitmotif* of the promotional campaign. Perhaps the marked presence of the architectonic image persuades Munari to form a more well-constructed visual discourse where photography, typography, abstract shapes and the use of color are integrated in coherent and expressive compositions.²¹⁹

A more playful style seems to preside over the publicity for Rhodiatoce, another company in the Montecatini Group operating in the artificial yarn industry, rayon in particular. The full-page, black-and-white ads handled by Munari until early '39 show a preference for a poetic atmosphere created predominantly by the photographic image, at time with illustrations; the repertoire of graphic ideas ranges from fashion illustration to back lit photography, from photomontage to drawing, unified however by the constant presence of the original logo. Similar poetic inspiration is found in some ads created in 1937 for Sniafiocco, an artificial fabric manufactured by the competitor Snia Viscosa —perhaps for this

reason unsigned, even if they are very likely by Munari. The full-page compositions are laid out on the photomontage, with effects not unlike certain aeropictorial solutions from the early 1930s, and completed with a minimal, elegant typographic presence.²²⁰

When, instead, the product is intended for a broader public, Munari does not hesitate to use more obvious language, yet with a slight modern inflection. This is the case for several ads for Rodina, the Italian version of aspirin also manufactured by Montecatini (Farmitalia), dating back to the end of 1938.²²¹ This more immediate, so-called popular language becomes prevalent in the advertisements created by Munari in the early 1940s, during the period he spent as magazine editor at Mondadori. Coinciding with the beginning of his role as art director for the publishing house, dating back to the beginning of 1939, one can see a progressive decrease in his print ads; while he is replaced by one young Albe Steiner for the ads for textile products (Rhodia, Sniafiocco), the new name of Pubblimont (later Servizio Pubblicità Montecatini) appears for other companies in the Montecatini Group, indicating the creation of a dedicated office within the company (graphically characterized by a return to a monumental style in the manner of Sironi).²²² At least for a few brands, until the

217. Commercial name of *Welt* (Ludwig & Meyer, 1931) distributed in Italy by the Nebiolo foundry.

218. Palazzo Montecatini (1936–38) is recognized as the first office building with a distinctly modern style in Milan, at both a structural level and at the level of technical systems (foundations, insulation from external vibrations, air conditioning and pneumatic dispatch).

219. Ads for LLL/Alluminio SA are published in *Domus* from no.109 (January 1937) and *Casabella* from no.110 (January 1937).

220. Ads for Rhodia appear in *Domus* from

no.109 (January 1937) and *Natura* xii; 6 (June 1939). Ad for Sniafiocco in *Domus* from no.109 (January 1937). Uncertain attribution for a similar ad published in the *Guida della VI Triennale* (1936).

221. Ads for Rodina appear in *L'Ala d'Italia* xvii; 4 (April 1937) and *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani* 1939.

222. There are Rhodia ads in *Domus* nos.135, 136 (March, April 1939) signed by Steiner; and ads for LLL/Alluminio SA in *Domus* no.147 (March 1940) or *Duco* in *L'Ala d'Italia* (May 15, 1940), signed by Pubblimont.

end of '39 Munari seems to want to keep the commitments he made, and he continues his advertising consulting, collaborating, however, with illustrators or graphic artists (Hrast, Carboni, Dinelli).²²³ While at Mondadori, although handling the artistic direction of the illustrated weekly publications *Grazia* and *Tempo*, Munari is able to create ads for editorial products from the same publishing company (*Enciclopedia dei ragazzi*, *Grazia*, *Ecco*), without however refusing the occasional outside commission for the editorial office (RIM laxative, GiViEmme toothpaste), in which he adapts, in simplified terms, proven solutions based on illustration or basic forms of collage, even if sometimes a few compositions display a more lively and original inspiration.²²⁴

Finally, another publication for the Società del Linoleum deserves mention.¹⁸³ In this publication, dating to 1938–39 and printed by Vanzetti and Vanoletti, Munari may have been the illustrator. The illustrations are rather unique, featuring a distinct, descriptive style (reminding Geerd Arntz's signs for Isotype), similar to the axonometric drawings Munari uses in several ads of this period; furthermore, there are retouched photographic elements which recall his photomontages. The print displays a layout that is rigorous and essential, but with no stylistic features to be able to establish a link to Munari, apart from the illustrations. If these can be attributed to him, they would confirm a Munari-ian vein so far unknown.²²⁵

A new path

During the short span of a decade in which he pursues a very complex, heterogeneous artistic and professional path, within the utmost stylistic openness, one has the impression that Munari slows his pace, not simply from the point of view of his work, which as we have seen continues to be rather intense, but instead from an aesthetic aspect, from the point of view of the creative tension. His absence from Milan's first Mostra del cartellone e della grafica pubblicitaria (Exhibition of advertising posters and graphics) organized by the Fascist Interprovincial Union of Fine Arts in Milan in the spring of 1938 is significant.²²⁶ At the end of an exceptionally stimulating decade, during which time he

223. There is, for example, the Acna ad in *Domus* no.130 (October 1938), with illustration by Svetozar Hrast; or another ad for Albene in *Natura* xii; 6 (June 1939), with illustration by Franco Grignani (or Brunetta?). An ad for Lavorazione Leghe Leggere/Alluminio SA which appeared in *Domus* (1939, reproduced in Poretti 2004: 460) with the double signature 'pubblicità m' and Erberto Carboni (creator of the photomontage) confirms Munari's studio's independence from Editoriale Domus.

224. There are ads for the *Enciclopedia dei ragazzi Mondadori* in *Grazia* no.22 (October 26, 1939) and no.30 (December 21, 1939); for RIM ivi no.22 (October 26, 1939); for the weekly publication *Ecco* ivi no.7 (July 13, 1939), for the film *Piccolo mondo antico* ivi no.84 (January 2, 1941). Again by Munari, an ad for the '5000 lire per un sorriso' (5000 lire for a smile) contest tied to GiViEmme toothpaste appears in the first issue of *Grazia*. The contest, conceived by Villani in collaboration with Mondadori periodicals and launched a few months earlier in *Grazia*, in the postwar period would turn into the 'Miss Italia' phenomenon. 'A classic

"pseudo-event" that had no reason to exist if not for its capacity to generate publicity for its sponsors'—namely, GiViEmme and the weekly *Tempo* (Gundle 2008: 53; cf. Arvidsson 2003: 23–5). The competition featured regularly in *Tempo*, which published the results on the back cover—in which Munari may have had a role as the masthead's art director.

225. *Il linoleum nelle costruzioni scolastiche*. Milan: Società del Linoleum, s.d. [c.1938/39]. 22x29 cm, pp.132, spiral bound. 2-color print (3-color for the cover).

226. Set up in the Palazzo della Permanente in Milan, the graphic art exhibit was combined with the 9th Art Exhibition; it also displayed advertising work selected by printers or industry clients. Munari was not the only graphic artist not present, perhaps on account of the confusion in the selection criteria by the organizers, connected to the regime's union apparatus. However, the participants do include Nizzoli, Veronesi, Dradi-Rossi, the BBPR group and Seneca. Cf. Giulia Veronesi, 'La Prima Mostra del cartellone e della grafica pubblicitaria a Milano' in *Campo grafico* vi; 3 (March 1938): 85.

dedicated himself to exploring nearly all the means of expression technically available (illustration, photography, advertisement, installations, in the broadest sense), Munari is finally about to embark on the publishing industry, no longer in the role of illustrator, nor in an advertising role, but rather as the person in charge of the overall graphic style of magazine publications, products of the new mass cultural industry. His position within the framework of Italian modernism, which by then had been partly assimilated into the mainstream graphic style, seems to stand on a personal synthesis of modernist vocabulary, tempered however by a basic poetic or anarchic attitude that tends to place it more on the figurative than the functional or purely typographic side. It is with this natural feel that he will approach the layout and artistic direction for periodicals, which in a certain sense represents the final stop in a long formative journey, a moment of summing up the various trends assimilated thus far and confirming an approach that would remain unchanged in the postwar period.

An important moment of confirmation in Munari's situation is the *Mostra dell'arte grafica* (Graphic Arts exhibition) set up within the VII Triennale in 1940. After the 1936 edition, marked by the untimely death of Persico and the cancellation of the Italian graphic arts show, the exhibit curated by Modiano three years later, although a smaller show, in many aspects represents an important summary and confirmation of the outcome of the long debate surrounding Italian modernism—with

hindsight more significant being close to the dramatic break of the war. Modiano's show, along with another curated by Pagano dedicated to mass production, 'builds a bridge towards future Italian design scenarios,' as confirmed by the presence of names that would become leading figures in the Milanese design and graphic arts phenomenon of the 1950s: Munari, Muratore, Veronesi, Carboni, Nizzoli, Sinisgalli, Pintori.²²⁷ Returning to the criteria and objectives already expressed immediately following the 1933 show,²²⁸ the approach established by Modiano suggests, with a clear didactic intention, a modern position for the graphic arts, in a broader sense than the traditional concept centered on the book, which makes use of the collaboration of different kinds of graphic artists. The exhibition follows a course which embraces the entire field of typography from a modern viewpoint. It is divided into seven sections, assigned to separate curators. It begins with Veronesi and Munari who deal with the subject of the relationships with the other arts: Veronesi presents a panorama of printing systems and a diachronic panel that follows the evolution of typographic styles in relation to the history of art; in the second section entitled 'Il gusto moderno nella tipografia' (Modern Taste in Typography), Munari deals with the subject of the relationship between the typography and the visual arts. While the exhibit design as a whole is entrusted to Sinisgalli and Pintori, Munari and Veronesi personally curate their respective installations. Munari resolves his subject-matter in the way that best suits him, that

227. Vinti 2005: 50; cf. Vinti 2002.

228. In a letter signed by important representatives of the largest sector of graphic artists

(Zveteremich, Rossi, Persico, Boggeri, Da Milano) and published in *Campo grafico* ('Tipografia e Triennale 1936' ivi III; 6: 126-127). See Vinti 2005: 51-2.

is metaphorically translating it into the shape of a tree, physically installed in the room (evidently inspired by similar solutions by Pagano for the Leonardo da Vinci Exhibit at the Palazzo dell'Arte the previous year). The tree trunk is surrounded by four frames with transparent screens on which are mounted modern-style illustrations and printed matter that express the close tie to contemporary plastic trends (Futurism, Surrealism, Abstractism), architecture, photography—in other words, that concept of 'graphism' at the foundation of elemental typography in Italy.²²⁹ Modiano sets up the third and fourth sections dedicated, respectively, to an overview of the best graphic production and to outdoor advertising (posters, signs, press ads, installations). In the sixth section, D'Errico presents the situation of magazine printing, while the last section dedicated to art volumes and limited edition publications is left to Bertieri.²³⁰

The central space in the fifth section presents a series of monographic display cases that document the contribution of printers and graphic artists, in a climate of reconciliation between the two classicist and rationalist fronts: Bertieri, Bianchi, Buffoni, Carboni, Dradi, Rossi, Modiano, Munari, Muratore, Nizzoli, Ricas, as well as a homage to Persico. While the works chosen by Munari for the second section include a few creations that are more directly influenced by expressions of the avant-garde,²³¹ the few works exhibited in his display case give the impression of a less radical direction, with an albeit minimal figurative recovery. This confirms that tendency towards a certain withdrawal

which can be seen in the advertisement production of the last two years. An example of this is the poster for the national coal campaign, set on a drawing of a simple outline of an open hand, against a blue background, with the collage of a cut-out enlargement of a piece of coal, with the autarchic slogan overprinted on it in a red rectangle.²³² However, in looking through several issues dedicated to Italy by foreign technical magazines, Munari's name cannot be found. In *Deutscher Drucker* (July 1941) Zveteremich maps out an account of the Italian situation (going back to the graphic exhibition at the previous year's Triennale), pointing out new names on the scene like Steiner and Muratore. An article in *Druck und Werbekunst* (January 1942) mentions Dradi and Carboni,²³³ and the Swiss monthly magazine *Typographische Monatsblätter* (August–September 1942) presents (in addition to one about the young Huber) profiles on Dinelli, Steiner and Ricas.²³⁴ It is as if Munari has vanished from the Milanese scene or, at least, he seems to have withdrawn into Mondadori, a convenient refuge on the eve of the impending war.

229. This is the definition provided by Modiano in the introductory text of the Triennial catalogue: 'that aesthetic atmosphere that living typography shares with the most up-to-date techniques in the exhibits (displays, shoe windows and the like),' which expresses the common recourse to modular schemas that recall the abstraction implicit in typography (VII Triennale di Milano. Guida. [S.l.: s.n.], 1940: 149–56; cf. Modiano, 'L'arte grafica alla VII Triennale' in *L'Industria della stampa*, July–August 1940).

230. Vinti 2005; VII Triennale di Milano. Guida. [S.l.: s.n.], 1940: 149–156. Cf. Pigozzi 1982: 473; Pansera 1978: 49–53.

231. Found in the archival photos are the letter

paper of Studio Boggeri and one of the illustrated plates published in *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* in November 1935, and probably also a typographic ad for *Grazia*.

232. The poster is reproduced (in color) in *Grazia* no.12 (July 17, 1939) accompanying the article by Arturo Tofanelli, 'La pubblicità è arte?' (ibid: 12–16). The size is not given.

233. Cit. in Vinti 2005: 59–61, 63n.

234. *Deutscher Drucker Deutschland–Italien Heft*, July 1941 (Berlin: Ernst Boehme); *Druck und Werbekunst* no.1, January 1942 (Leipzig: Karl Garte)—both cit. in Vinti 2005: 60–1. *Typographische Monatsblätter*, x; 8–9 (August–September 1942): 202.