

BRUNO MUNARI

WORKS FROM THE MERRILL C. BERMAN COLLECTION

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Nicola Lucchi wishes to thank Luca Zaffarano for his help in tracking Munari's engagement with the journal *L'Ala d'Italia* (The Wing of Italy).

Cover image:
Munari and Filippo Masoero
Senza titolo (Untitled), before 1934
Photomontage, gelatin silver print
9 1/4 x 7 inches (23.5 x 17.7 cm) by sight

The Merrill C. Berman Collection (see pp. 20-21)

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Bruno Munari: Forging the Aesthetics of Consumer Culture

The work of Bruno Munari (1907-1998) resists simple categorizations. With an artistic career spanning over seven decades, Munari engaged with every major European and extra-European avant-garde movement, with modern and postmodern aesthetics and languages, and with an incredible range of artistic media. Munari placed his signature on paintings, sculptures, photocollages, artistic photographs, xerographs, typographic experiments, advertising campaigns, toys, children books, and a substantial corpus of theoretical pronouncements on art and design. Munari's work, while particularly well-known in Italy, has also been recognized around the world through countless exhibitions, as well as acquisitions by museums and private collectors.

With greater success than most Futurist artists, Munari developed an original approach to the avant-garde dicta promulgated by Giacomo Balla and

Fortunato Depero in their 1915 manifesto, *Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe*. Whereas the manifesto encouraged artists to invest themselves in all fields of economic activity—suggesting, for instance, the manufacturing of toys alongside clothes and furniture—most of these attempts remained squarely in the field of highbrow artistic production. On the contrary, Munari paired the visual impact of contemporary art with the practical needs of industrial product design and mass advertising, while turning the vitriol of both Futurist and Fascist propaganda into an instrument for product placement and public relations. The Munari works in the Merrill C. Berman Collection precisely map the aesthetic, historical, and intellectual coordinates of this multifaceted commercial production, which developed in dialogue with Munari's own artistic and intellectual growth. Through objects such as posters, photographs, and commercial brochures, Munari quenched the insatiable thirst for

powerful images that characterizes advertising since the inception of industrial production and mass consumption.

Munari's multi-decade engagement with the advertising industry began in the mid-1920s, when the artist moved to Milan from the Veneto region where he had spent his youth. At first, collaborations with advertising agencies served him primarily as a reliable source of income in an extremely competitive art world but soon Munari realized how work in advertising could play a key role in his development as an artist. Many Italian companies at the time vied for an original and daring advertising language that would position them at the forefront of a sophisticated visual culture, and Munari understood how these commercial projects would allow him to explore freely the aesthetic and semantic correlation between images, words, and objects.

By 1931 Munari had inaugurated his own advertising agency, Studio R+M, alongside his colleague Riccardo (Ricas) Castagnedi. Working independently as well as on subcontracts from other important advertising firms such as Milan's celebrated Studio Boggeri, Munari came into contact with Italy's major industrial and commercial concerns of the interwar era. His work in advertising and graphic design in the 1930s helped advance the corporate image of textile and pharmaceutical companies, aeronautical factories, and the food and beverage sector. By the time of Italy's "economic miracle" in the early decades after World War II, Munari had secured commissions and working relationships with some of Italy's most prominent companies, famous not only for the commercial success of their products but also for their innovative corporate strategies and advertising campaigns. I refer to industrial entities such as Olivetti, Pirelli, Agip, and Campari.

Munari stepped into Milan's interwar art and design world with the enthusiasm of a young, self-trained artist accepted among the ranks of second-gener-

ation Futurists. He engaged with Futurism at a time when the group began its turn towards the so-called *aeropittura*—Futurist Aeropainting—a technologically and spiritually-driven aesthetic that brought the avant-garde movement ever closer to a compromising political entanglement with the Fascist regime. Some of Munari's work from the 1930s, such as his aeronautical-themed photo-collages and his collaboration with the Fascist-influenced magazine *L'Ala d'Italia* (The Wing of Italy), demonstrates the extent of these political tensions and accommodations. At the same time, Munari maintained high formal and compositional standards in most of these politically-tainted engagements, while the frequent use of sarcasm derived from Dada and Surrealist motifs—which Munari employed in his aeronautical-themed work during the 1930s—points to a veiled critical distance from the bombast that characterized both Fascist and Futurist rhetoric.

Munari's artistic sensibility, however, does not end with his observation of Futurism. The photo-collages, brochures, and posters in the Merrill C. Berman Collection reveal a wealth of influences and crosspollinations: besides the aforementioned reliance upon Dada and Surrealist motifs, Munari also engaged with the visual language of Russian Constructivism and with the typographic experiments of Northern and Central European avant-garde groups, a connection that has been explored with great accuracy by scholars such as Alessandro Colizzi in his recent dissertation (University of Leiden, 2011), among others. Furthermore, Munari's use of puppet-like figures, classical fragments, and deserted landscapes recalls the atmosphere of Metaphysical Art, while the playful interactions prompted by many of his brochures and books point to a creative, commercial reinterpretation of kinetic art.

In terms of scholarship, attention to Munari's graphic design and advertising projects has progressively increased during the last few decades (see Selected Bibliography in this volume). For many years, given

the nature of Munari's eclectic career in a multiplicity of fields, scholars had found it necessary to subdivide a critical analysis of his work along disciplinary lines. The main museum exhibitions dedicated to Munari focused on his production as a painter and sculptor, while his work in the fields of children literature, typography, and industrial design received praise and recognition in trade-specific venues. Some of these separations may have been prompted by the fear, among art critics, that a contamination between Munari's strictly artistic oeuvre and his more commercial ventures would have diminished the status of the former, and given undue attention to the latter.

On the contrary, it is now clear that Munari's design aesthetics should be read in direct dialogue with, and frequently in anticipation of, his artistic pursuits. Munari himself never thought of his career in advertising and industrial design as a lesser endeavor: in fact, his vast corpus of theoretical writing on the matter points to highlighting the crucial role that design plays in the diffusion of artistic values and sensibility across civil society. These beliefs are at the center of countless books, magazine and newspaper articles, poems, and even a substantive series of lectures Munari gave at Harvard University during the 1960s.

In light of these theoretical and aesthetic continuities, the study of Munari's interwar career as a graphic designer and advertiser allows us to trace a compelling portrait of his artistic and intellectual qualities. Despite the distance between Munari's conceptual art, mobile sculptures, and the projects for brochures that may entertain the customers of a furrier shop, these disparate objects reveal formal mimicries, a consistent aesthetic sensibility, and an overarching desire to place art at the service of society, to mediate the workings of economic exchange through the lens of creativity.

The works in the Merrill C. Berman Collection dem-

onstrate just how crucial photography, graphic design, and advertising proved to Munari's remarkable career both as an artist and to his towering status in the history of twentieth-century industrial and graphic design. Photocollages, original maquettes for brochures, posters, books—examined both together and individually—chart the emergence and evolution of Munari's artistic language: from his early engagements with Futurism, to his dialogue with Constructivism and Dada; from his ironic and quasi-Surrealist experiments with photocollage, to his fascination with machine aesthetics and the world of labor. In addition to revealing the vast and stratified network of Munari's visual and intellectual sources, the Merrill C. Berman Collection also paints a portrait of Italy's economy between the world wars, and of the birth of a capitalistic consumer culture—a culture whose visual dimensions Munari contributed to delineate.

Nicola Lucchi
October 2017

Senza titolo (Untitled), 1934
Gelatin silver print
8 3/4 x 6 3/4 inches (22.2 x 17.2 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Verso:
Signature: Munari, in pencil

In ink:
Su 2 col. Il saluto delle Ali Fasciste alla loro Esposizione
[On two columns: The salute of the "Fascist Wings" to
Their Exhibition]

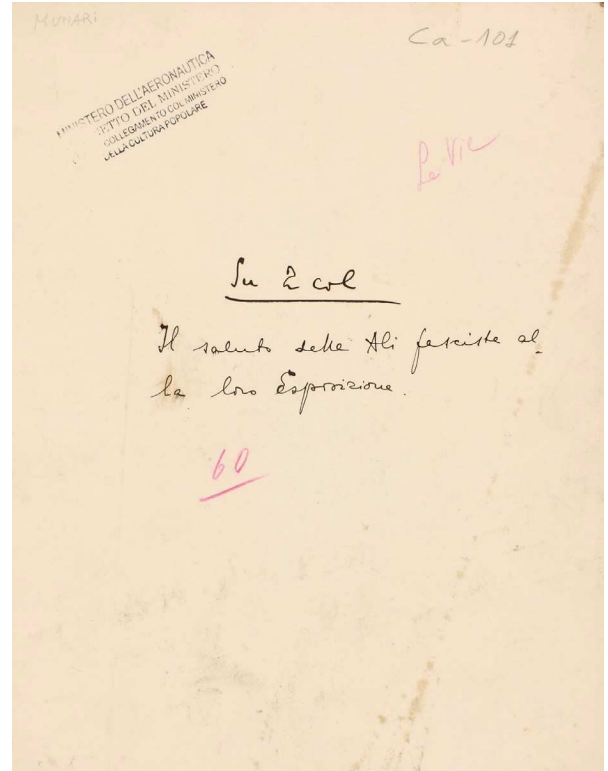
Stamps:
Ministero dell'Aeronautica
Gabinetto del Ministero
Ufficio di collegamento col Ministero della Cultura Popo-
lare
[Ministry of Aviation
Cabinet of the Minister
Coordination office with the Ministry of Popular Culture
(Propaganda)]

In pencil:
Le Vie (possibly in reference to the magazine *Le Vie
d'Italia*)
Numerical annotations

Note:

This photograph, taken on behalf of the Ministry of Aero-
nautics and possibly destined to the touristic magazine
Le vie d'Italia (The Roads of Italy), depicts the passage
of an airplane formation over the site of the 1934 Ital-
ian Aeronautical Exposition in Milan. Munari captures
the squadron as it flies over the expo's facade, which
was designed by the architect and graphic designer
Erberto Carboni. The airplanes in the sky dialogue with
the white aircraft silhouettes portrayed by Carboni in

Verso:



the top left corner of the facade. Munari evokes the language and aesthetics of photomontage by capturing words, objects, geometric elements, and flattened surfaces in a single frame. The image communicates a sense of Constructivist strength and dynamism: the upward angle of the shot and the multiple intersecting lines create numerous contrasting wedges that subdivide the space of the photograph with powerful juxtapositions of light and shade.



Senza titolo (Untitled), mid-late 1930s
Gelatin silver print
11 1/4 x 7 5/8 inches (28.5 x 19.3 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Marks and inscriptions:

In pen:

Roma il 31-1-'69

Alla gentile signora Maria Fede Caproni
Perché si ricordi del Generale Pezzi
Affettuosamente Maria Pezzi

[Rome, January 31, 1969]

Esteemed Mrs. Maria Fede Caproni
So that you may remember General Pezzi
Warmest regards, Maria Pezzi]

In pencil:

Foto di Munari-[illegible name]

[Photo by Munari-(illegible name)]

Stamp

Ministero dell'Aeronautica

Gabinetto del Ministero

Ufficio di collegamento col Ministero della Cultura

Popolare

[Ministry of Aviation

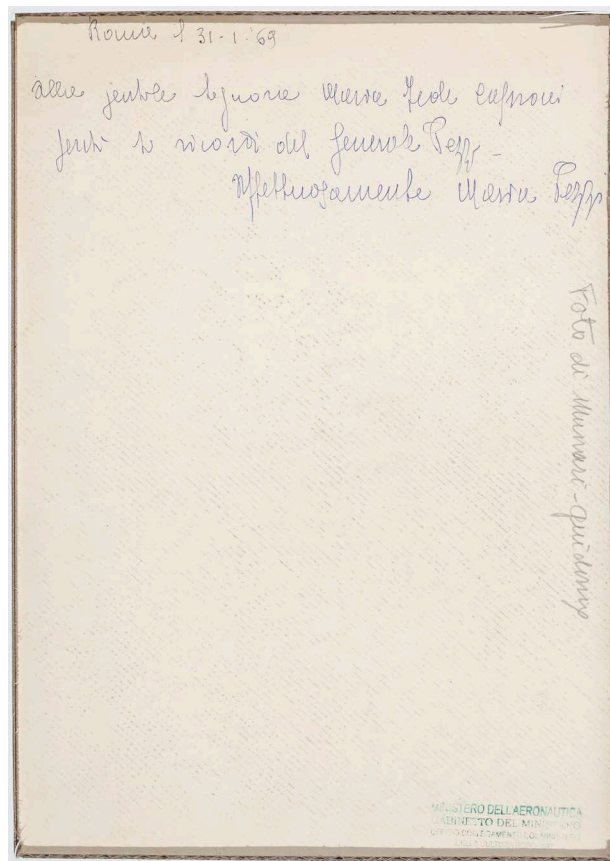
Cabinet of the Minister

Coordination office with the Ministry of Popular Culture
(Propaganda)]

Note:

Munari's photographic work dedicated to aviation demonstrates how his interests in both technology and avant-garde aesthetics could come together to create powerful representations of modernity. The present photograph portrays an Italian biplane, possibly an experimental Caproni Ca. 161, seen from beneath the lower wing. The profile of the aircraft becomes the very architecture supporting the photograph: the slightly staggered wings cut the composition vertically into substantially symmetrical halves and into

Verso:



smaller geometric shapes that transform the subject in a formalist experiment informed by Constructivist aesthetics. At the same time, the modulations of chiaroscuro in the wings and their extreme perspectival representation suggest three-dimensional values and tangible physicality. The position of the observer is lower than the aircraft's center of gravity, thus casting the vehicle as the dominating presence in the picture. Even with its landing gear firmly set on the ground, the airplane and its technology overpower those who stand below its wings.



Senza titolo (Untitled), mid-late 1930s
Photomontage gelatin silver print
15 1/2 x 19 1/8 inches (39.5 x 48.8 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Verso:
Signature (pencil): Munari

Stamp:
Ministero dell'Aeronautica
Gabinetto del Ministero
Ufficio di collegamento col Ministero della Cultura
Popolare
[Ministry of Aviation
Cabinet of the Minister
Coordination office with the Ministry of Popular Culture
(Propaganda)]

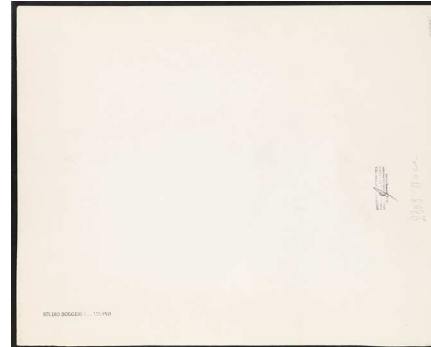
Pencil markings

Stamp:
Studio Boggeri S.A. Milano

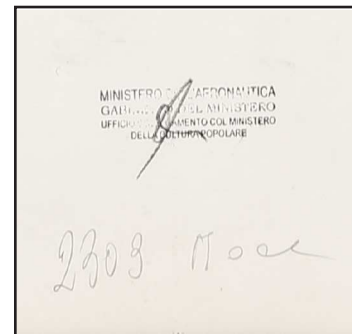
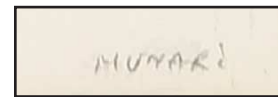
Note:

When left to his own imagination, Munari tackled the topics of military technology and prowess with poetic connotations that hinted at his Surrealist sarcasm. The present photomontage combines an open landscape, anchored by hills and mountains in the background, with a massive parachuting exercise. Scores of individuals, possibly soldiers, fall from the sky at varying distances from the viewer and descend upon an empty field to create a scene at the same time relaxing and concerning. Like jellyfish floating in an impossible aerial aquarium, the parachutes reach the ground and their canopies deflate softly, donning grace and peacefulness. The irksome contrasts at the core of this vision, however, makes the enjoyment of this fantastic picture impossible. Suspended between the poetics of a dreamy scenario and the suggestion of a military exercise, the viewer is constantly alert to the possibility that this may represent an attack, or an ominous preamble of wars to come.

Verso:



Verso details:





Munari and Filippo Masoero
Senza titolo (Untitled), before 1934
Photomontage, gelatin silver print
9 1/4 x 7 (23.5 x 17.7 cm) by sight

Marks and inscriptions:

Verso:

Stamps:

L'Ala d'Italia [journal]

Ministero dell'Aeronautica
Gabinetto del Ministero
Ufficio di collegamento col Ministero della Cultura Popolare
[Ministry of Aviation
Cabinet of the Minister
Coordination office with the Ministry of Popular Culture (Propaganda)]

Bruno Munari

Filippo Masoero

In pencil:

Markings about journalpage numbers.

Note:

A serialized portrayal of an airplane engine and its spinning propeller, this photomontage constitutes a preliminary stage of *Vittoria dell'aria* (Victory and the Air; 1934), one of Munari's most celebrated photographic artworks (see Fig. 1). In that instance, the artist superimposed the image of a winged victory sculpture to this sequential representation, establishing a connection between the themes of aviation and war, between ancient and modern myths of flight, and between classical and contemporary artistic expressions. This artwork represents *Vittoria dell'aria's* indispensable premise, a modernist—and industrially

Detail of verso, inscriptions seen through cuts in backing board:

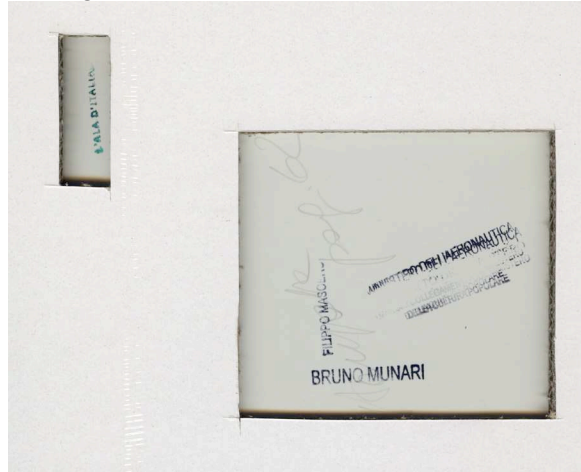
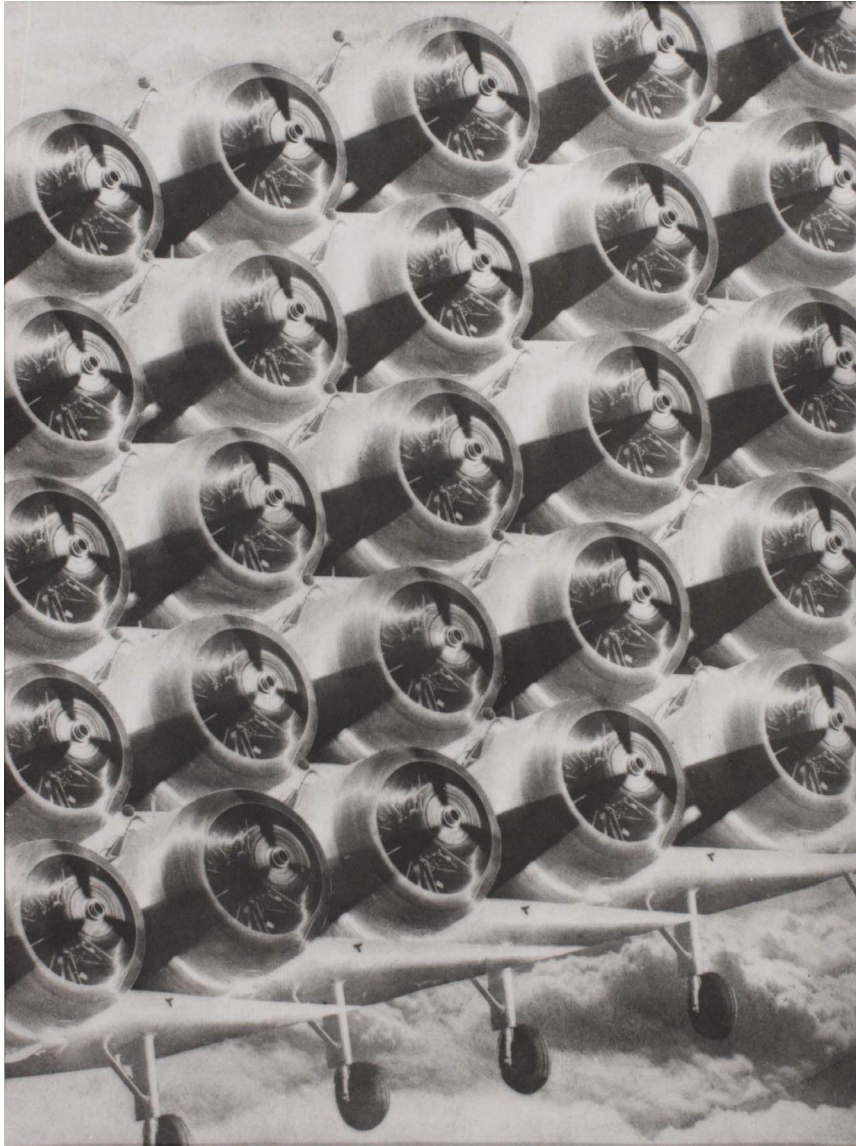


Fig. 1

modern—grid waiting to be inscribed with further meaning. Already at this stage, the composition demonstrates Munari's ingenious eye. The sequential photomontage creates a motif similar to the modular fabric patterns that the artist later conceived for the Milan Triennials in 1951 and 1954, thus revealing an aesthetic continuity between his prewar and postwar oeuvre. At the same time, the obsessive repetition of a single object signals Munari's early gesturing towards the aesthetics of Pop Art, as well as his understanding of the power of the grid as a system to generate, collect, and organize information.



Munari with Studio Ricas
Aeroplani in formazione (Airplanes in formation), 1930s
Photocollage with gelatin silver prints on card
7 1/2 x 6 1/8 inches (19.2 x 15.7 cm)

Note:

This photomontage depicts the low-altitude passage of an airplane formation. Munari provides a minimum of contextual clarity by delineating the stylized silhouette of a cloud, which elicits a perception of the sky above the airplanes. From a compositional perspective, this object confirms Munari's sensibility towards Futurist cosmic aeropainting and the work of artists such as Fillia and Enrico Prampolini. The phantom-like appearance of the cloud in the background and the complete lack of visual references to any element of the landscape grant the composition a timeless dimension, and evoke the—admittedly remote—possibility of a non-politicized fruition of the image. The airplanes, however, can be clearly identified as belonging to the Italian Royal Air Force, whose frequent participation in aeronautical exhibitions and appearance in Futurist artworks supported the fascist propaganda effort centered around Italy's militaristic and technological superiority.



Senza titolo (Untitled), n.d.
Gelatin silver print
12 x 14 7/8 inches (30.5 x 37.5 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Verso:
Signature (pencil): M

Stamps:

Ministero dell'Aeronautica
Gabinetto del Ministero
Ufficio di collegamento col Ministero della Cultura Popolare
[Ministry of Aviation
Cabinet of the Minister
Coordination office with the Ministry of Popular Culture
(Propaganda)]

Bruno Munari

Filippo Masoero

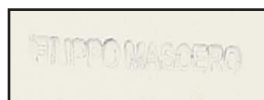
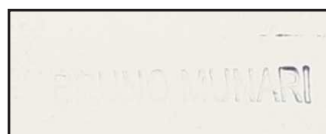
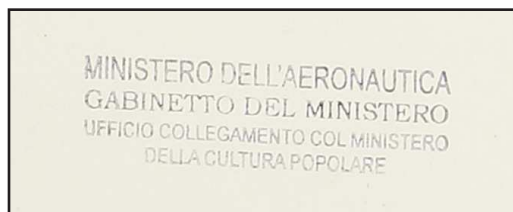
Note:

As part of his advertising work as well as his collaborations with various parties involved in Italy's aviation industry, Munari and his collaborators had access to manufacturing facilities where they could take stock of architectural spaces, machine tools, and assembly processes. In this particular image, the photographer captured a factory floor and machine tools without any metalworkers in attendance. The perspectival lines departing from the leftmost column reach towards two vanishing points, to the left and to the right of the column itself; the viewer's gaze is aided in this path by the windowed partition that separates the shop floor from another section of the factory. In capturing the modular repetition of spatial subdivisions and the rows of identical machine tools, Munari highlights the modern industrial practices employed by this company, and the clockwork efficiency of its mass production output.

Verso:



Verso details:





Senza titolo (Untitled), n.d.
Photomontage, gelatin silver print
12 x 13 1/8 inches (30.5 x 33.4 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Verso:
Signature (pencil): M

Stamps:

Ministero dell'Aeronautica
Gabinetto del Ministero
Ufficio di collegamento col Ministero della Cultura Popolare
[Ministry of Aviation
Cabinet of the Minister
Coordination office with the Ministry of Popular Culture
(Propaganda)]

Bruno Munari

Filippo Masoero

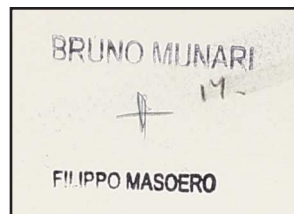
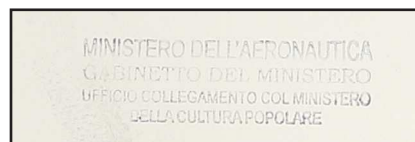
Note:

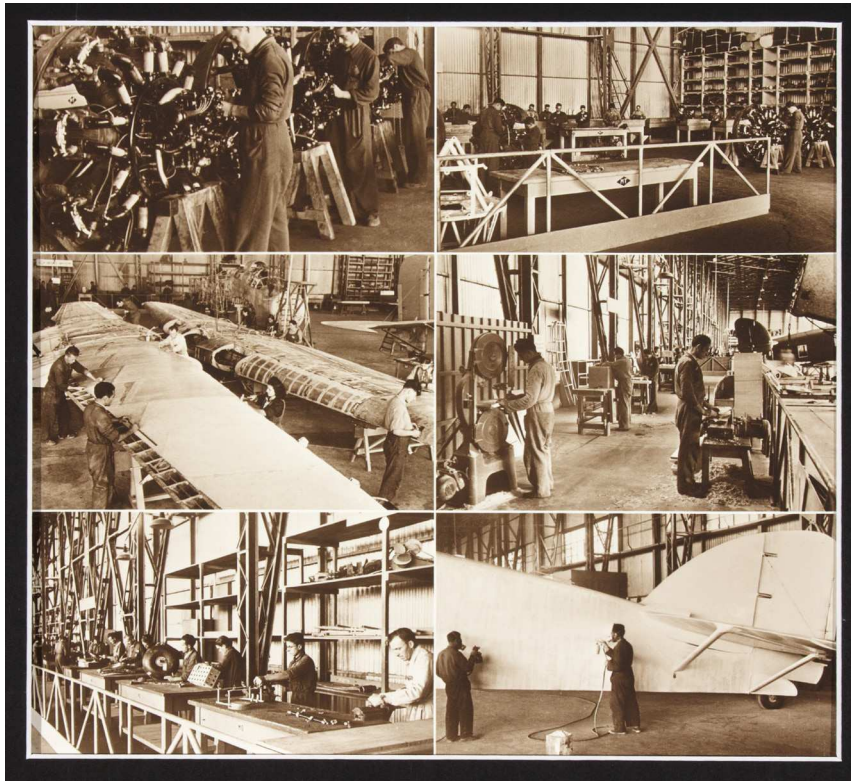
Surveying the manufacturing activities at the Caproni airplane factory, this photomontage captures various phases of production involving radial engines, wings, fuselage, and the machining of smaller components. The juxtaposition of images follows two different patterns: while both photographs in the top row illustrate metalworkers toiling around engines, the middle and bottom rows alternate and intersect the documentation of work on the plane's body and on smaller mechanical components. The bright white reflection on the wings and fuselage in the center-left and bottom-right quadrants draws an ideal diagonal line across the entire composition, while the emphasis on perspectival qualities and a faraway vanishing point lends the other two illustrations a greater depth, and a more contemplative character in accordance with the precise manufacturing activities documented.

Verso:



Verso details:





Senza titolo (Untitled), n.d.
Photomontage, gelatin silver print
12 x 13 1/2 inches (30.5 x 34.3 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Verso:
Signature (pencil): Mun.

Stamps:

Caproni collection stamp, with motto by Gabriele D'Annunzio: "Senza cozzar dirocco" [I hit without clashing in battle]

Ministero dell'Aeronautica
Gabinetto del Ministero
Ufficio di collegamento col Ministero della Cultura Popolare
[Ministry of Aviation
Cabinet of the Minister
Coordination office with the Ministry of Popular Culture (Propaganda)]

Bruno Munari

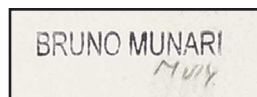
Note:

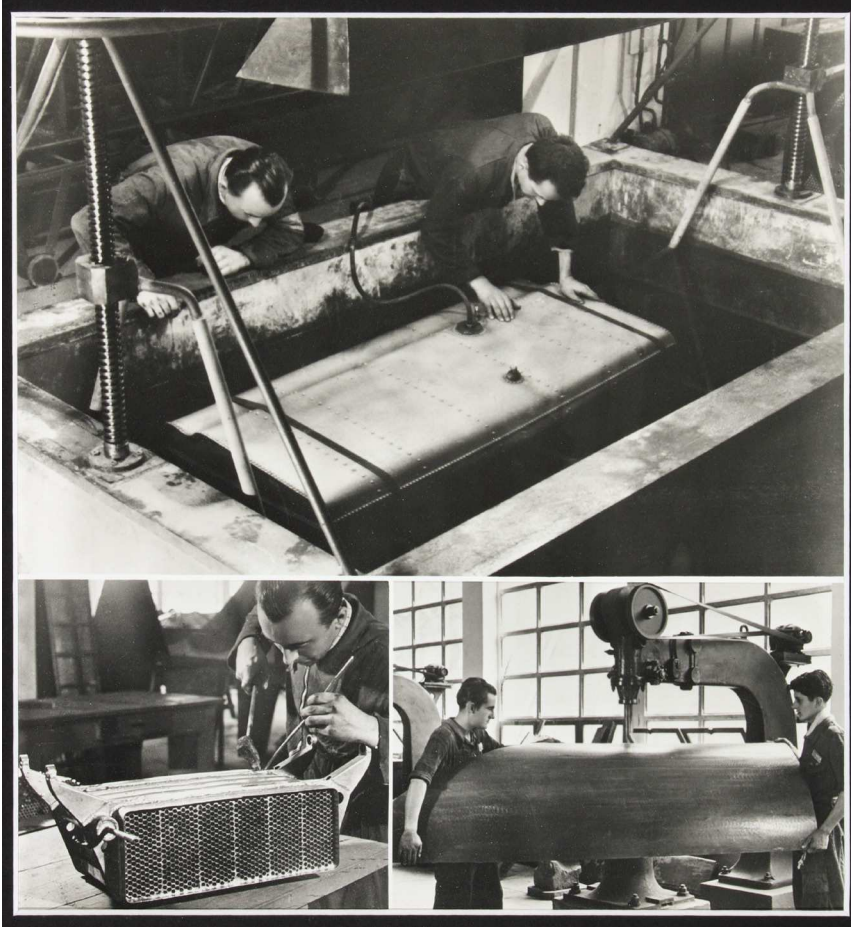
This photomontage details various phases of an airplane's manufacturing and assembly process. The single photographs, different in size, illustrate activities such as the leak-proof test of a tank and the finishing of a sheet metal piece with a machine tool. While offering precious historical documentation about the activities of the Caproni airplane factory, the photographs also remain anchored to a solid artistic vision: the interaction between figures, spaces, and mechanical objects is orchestrated in accordance with formal and geometric concerns. Tanks, basins, window panes, and sheet metal organize the overall picture through diagonal vector lines, criss-crossing patterns, and solid fields of shape and color. The resulting ensemble testifies to the technological advancement of the Caproni enterprise and to the aesthetic qualities and possibilities that industrial design offers to the eye of a modern viewer.

Verso:



Verso details:





Senza titolo (Untitled), N.D.
Photomontage, gelatin silver print
12 x 13 1/2 inches (30.5 x 34.3 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Verso:
Signature (pencil): Mun.

Stamps:
Caproni collection stamp, with motto by Gabriele
D'Annunzio: "Senza cozzar dirocco" [I hit without clashing
in battle]

Ministero dell'Aeronautica
Gabinetto del Ministero
Ufficio di collegamento col Ministero della Cultura Popolare
[Ministry of Aviation
Cabinet of the Minister
Coordination office with the Ministry of Popular Culture
(Propaganda)]

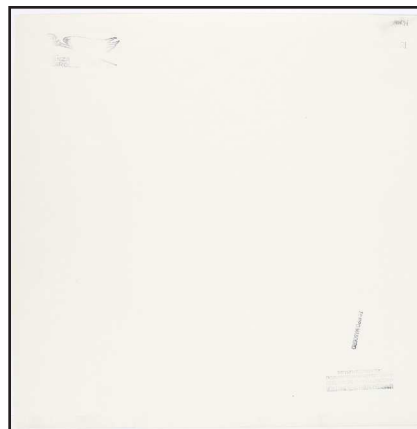
Bruno Munari

Filippo Masoero

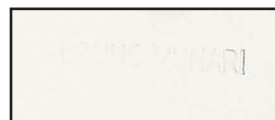
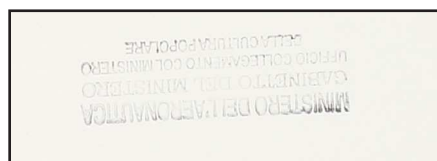
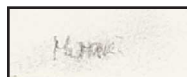
Note:

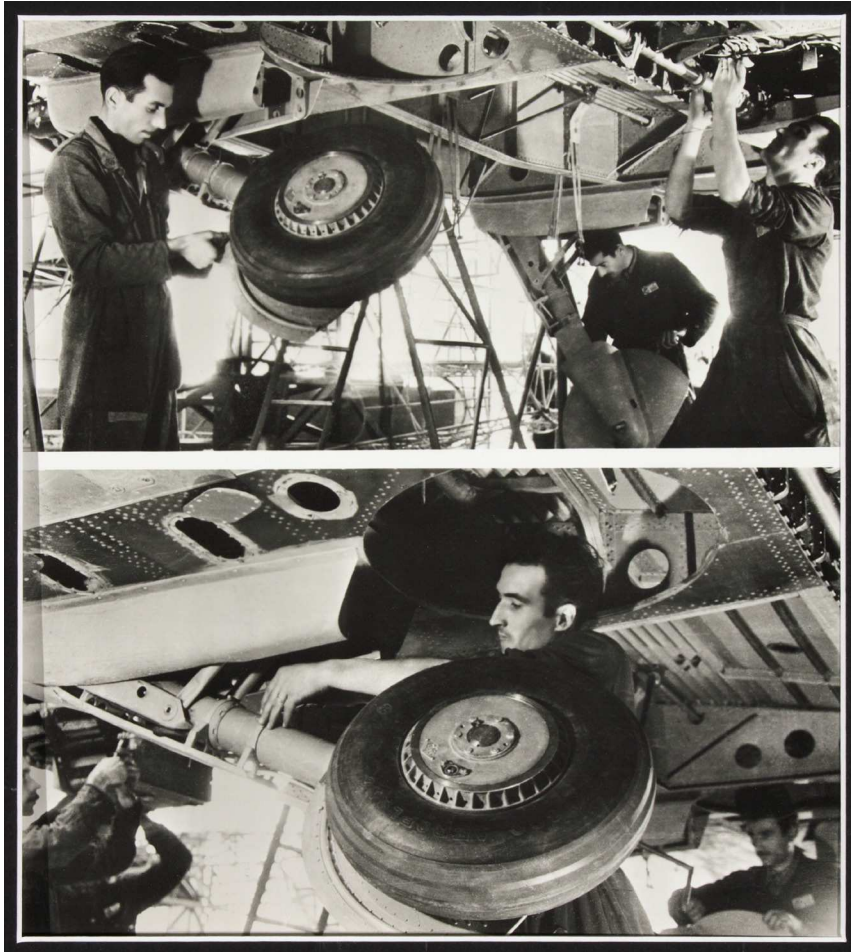
This photomontage illustrates two phases in the installation of an airplane's landing gear. While apparently pedestrian in subject and framing, the two photographs capture a camera movement from an overview of the assembly process to the specific assembly of a strut, prompting the perception of closer inspection and greater documentary value. Furthermore, the photographs engage playfully with trademark elements of Munari's graphic design aesthetics: in both instances, the large airplane tire in the foreground echos the artist's frequent use of large, circular shapes in his advertising posters and commercial brochures, a feature that can be observed in many of the objects in the Merrill C. Berman Collection. The circular shapes create a center of "visual gravity" in the images, highlighting for the observer one distinct primary subject and ancillary paths of vision.

Verso:



Verso details:





Senza titolo (Untitled), 1936

In two parts

Photocollage with gouache and gelatin silver prints
mounted on card

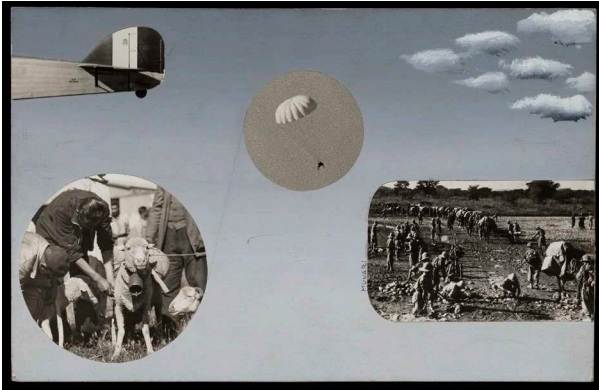
6 3/8 x 9 7/8 inches (16.21 x 25.1 cm) - each

Marks and inscriptions:

Signature: Mun.

Note:

The two photocollages constitute the originals for an illustration that accompanied an article on the Italian parachute industry, published in the state-sponsored journal *L'Ala d'Italia* (The Wing of Italy) in 1936. The article delves into the technological development of Italian parachutes, and their employment in the East African colonial campaign for the delivery of ammunition and livestock. Munari's take on the subject demonstrates his skill in securing a space for artistic independence within a politically-charged context, a result that he achieves by handling the material through a lyrical and Surrealist approach. The photocollage allows observers to articulate multiple interpretations: the tail of an airplane, the clouds, and the ethereal background evoke a generic aerial scenery and the idea of flight, but the viewer is left to decipher these signs in absolute freedom. Highlighted through the use of cutouts, parachuting sheep and Italian soldiers in attendance offer a narrative marked by ironic and Surrealist undertones. The composition provides an original counterpoint to the aesthetics of Futurist Aeropainting: rather than speed and danger, its dominating themes are slowness and safety.



La buca (The Hole), 1936
Photocollage with gelatin silver prints, ink and pencil

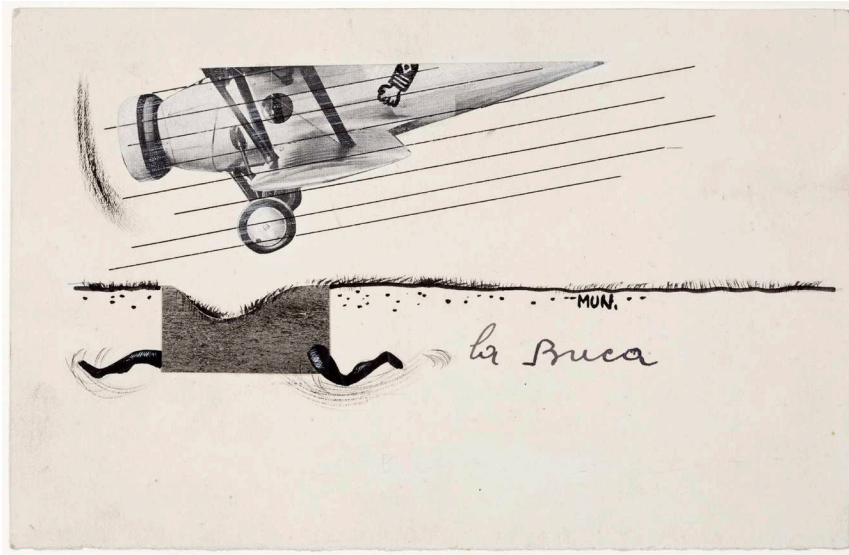
Marks and inscriptions:

Signature: Mun.

la Buca (the Hole)

Note:

This photocollage appeared on the journal *L'Ala d'Italia* (The Wing of Italy) in 1936 as the visual counterpart to a sarcastic text by Igino Mencairelli. *La buca* presents a compelling synthesis of Munari's visual vocabulary: sarcasm, technology, and the relationship between the human body and material objects combine in a surreal composition that constitutes an antiheroic foil to Futurist aeropainting. Munari places the profile of a plane in a daring nosedive maneuver but transforms the scene into an imminent crash-upon-landing by drawing the line of the ground very close to the aircraft. Ironically, the hole caused by the impending accident already exists in a state of frenzied anticipation, rushing with human legs to the site of the catastrophic impact. Body parts play a role in this tragic comedy as visual markers of a senseless willpower: the disembodied closed fist of the cartoonish airplane pilot sporting a military uniform symbolizes a death wish counterbalanced by the equally cartoonish legs of the hole in the ground.



Eccomi in breve (Here I am, briefly), 1936-1938
Photocollage with gelatin silver prints and ink
5 7/8 x 9 1/2 inches (15 x 24 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Signature: Mun.

base 6 con riga nera; NB fare filo nero; —6—; —eccomi in breve— [base 6 with a black line; nota bene add the black contour; —6—; —here I am, briefly—]

Note:

This photocollage appeared as the illustration for the literary description of an “egocentric type”, published in a sarcastic article in the journal *L'Ala d'Italia* (The Wing of Italy) in 1938. The artwork represents a semi-human figure whose visible legs are capped by a single-eyed, overturned container surmounted by the neck of a bottle which, in turn, supports the balancing act of a toothpick, two forks and a cork. The bizarre Cyclopic figure represents a playful review of Munari's artistic path: from the Futurist fusion of men and machines, to the discovery of photocollage, to the illogical world of his *useless machines*. The artwork intersects the complexity of Munari's aesthetic path with Surrealist humor, while at the same time hinting at a highly sublimated approach to aeropainting, which constitutes the main theme of the article that accompanied this illustration. The forks and cork can be interpreted as a makeshift propeller, while the half human figure, the container, and its exhaust pipe may constitute the engine and fuselage of an improbable aircraft.

brevet ~~no~~ 6
ca. ing. n. 12



N^o 12 fare filo nero

~~100/100~~

- brevet 6 -

Munari with Studio Ricas

Aerei in formazione, fatto sparire il campo, ombre proprie e portate (Airplanes in formation, field made to disappear, form shadows and cast shadows), c.1935

Photocollage with vintage silver gelatin print on cardboard
3 7/8 x 12 5/8 inches (10 x 32 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

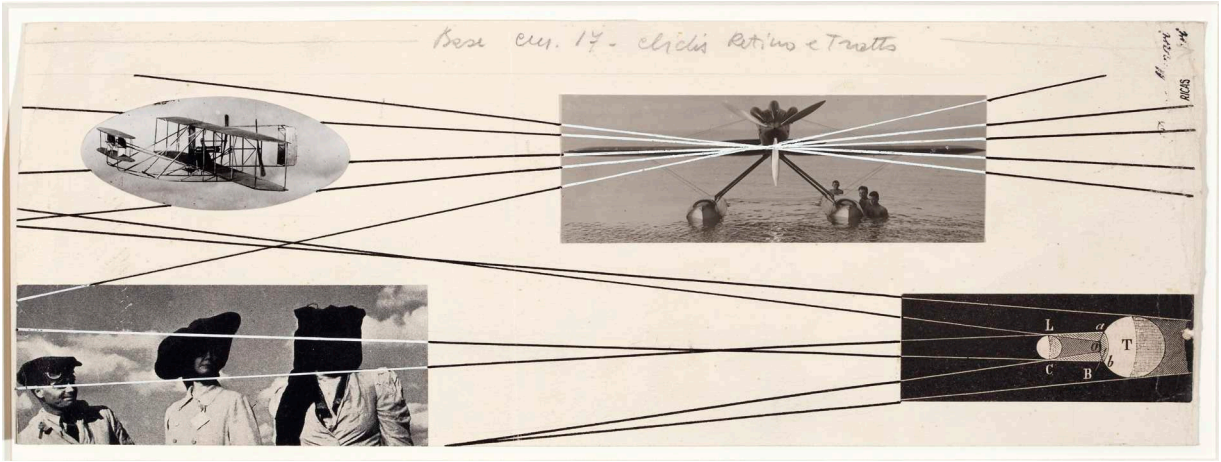
Stamped Munari and signed Ricas, top right

Base cm. 17 — clichés retino e tratto

[Base 17 centimeters — clichés with halftone and lines]

Note:

This piece suggests a fragile narrative involving an out-dated aircraft, a modern racing seaplane, spectators, and what appears to be the schematic representation of an optical projection. The artwork, published in 1938 in the journal *L'Ala d'Italia* (The Wing of Italy), accompanied an essay dedicated to the human thirst for speed and the evolution of the very concept of velocity during the age of aviation. Observed in this context, the photocollage reveals Ricas and Munari's preoccupation with displaying the technological evolution of flight, from the early attempts of aeronautical pioneers to the contemporary conquests of engineering and aerodynamics. The composition is bound together by linear projections departing from the optical schema and from the propeller of the seaplane: the multiple intersections of these lines create a pattern of wedges that connects the various photographic images and engender a sense of dynamism. Both the photographic cut-outs and the drawn lines emphasize the horizontal character of the artwork, which at the same time questions and reinforces the landscape orientation of traditional visual narratives.



Munari with Studio Ricas
Al centro del volo (At the heart of flight), 1934-1935,
Photocollage with gelatin silver print, and cut-and-pasted
lithographic illustrations on card
6 3/8 x 7 5/8 inches (16.2 x 19.3 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Signature: R+M, top left

Note:

This artwork accompanied an article dedicated to the impressions of first-time flyers, published in *L'Ala d'Italia* (The Wing of Italy) in 1935. The photocollage revolves around the circular silhouette of a radial engine—possibly a Fiat A.70—pasted at the center of the composition and surrounded by different typologies of flying creatures: a sparrow, a cherub, a bat, and an insect. The four creatures appear to be cut-outs from old book illustrations pasted onto the background. Their anachronistic contrast with the photograph of a shiny new engine provokes a strong sense of displacement and an irredeemable experiential divergence between these natural and literary forms of flight and their technological counterparts. The background too plays a part in reinforcing this division between fantasy and reality: on the right side of the composition, Munari pastes a photograph of clouds as seen from an airplane window; on the left, the blank page interrupts the panoramic view and forces viewers to complete the image with their own imagination.



Munari with Studio Ricas

...Hanno inventato anche questa - il mondo è impazzito...

(They have even invented this, the world has gone mad),
1930s

Photocollage with rotogravure, ink and pencil on board
6 3/4 x 9 1/4 inches (17.3 x 23.4 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Base 10; ...Hanno inventato anche questa - il mondo è
impazzito...; 3

[Base 10; They have even invented this, the world has
gone mad; 3]

Note:

This photocollage offers a commentary on the world of technology marked by Munari's trademark sarcasm. The composition presents three theatrical caricatures of older individuals presented in the foreground musing about the supposed insanity of an unnamed invention. Their contrarian thoughts are made explicit by the title, penciled in a note at the bottom of the board: "They have even invented this, the world has gone mad." The contraption at the center of the old men's concerns is the man-airplane creature hovering behind their backs, which Munari created by cutting the figure of an athletic diver to resemble the silhouette of a generic, toy-like aircraft. The hybridization between humans and technology through the metaphor of a man-airplane may constitute a reference to the early days of Futurism, as Marinetti's first futurist novel, *Mafarka the Futurist* (1909), precisely narrates the attempt by the warrior-king Mafarka to generate a mechanical son-airplane without the help of a woman. Munari isolates key elements of these Futurist themes—as well as their patent absurdity—on a blank board, allowing the observer not only to interrogate the narrative undertones of the composition, but also to create a sharp contrast between avant-garde and technological discourse (photography, photocollage, technology) and its reception among the general public.

Linea 10



-- hanno inventato anche questa
il mondo è impazzito --

3

Studio per pubblicità VeDeMe (Study for VeDeMe Advertising) No. 4, 1930

Photocollage with tissue, gouache, gelatin silver print, and airbrush on board

16 3/4 x 13 5/8 inches (42.5 x 34.6 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Printed on glassine overlay inscription: Manifatture di lusso in grande serie [Large-scale production luxury textiles]

Note:

Munari's work for VeDeMe (Venegoni – De Capitani – Menni, Industrie Riunite Passamanerie), an important textile manufacturer based in Milan, adapts avant-garde photocollage technique to develop an advertisement aimed at documenting work at the textile mill. The juxtaposition of photographs illustrates the factory spaces and various phases of its activities, accompanying the viewers in a surrogate visit to the company. The images also celebrate the important contracts VeDeMe fulfilled for the Italian state: the textiles being produced in the photographs are Italian flags and an official banner. Additionally, the lower left photograph contains a poster of Mussolini, high on the factory wall, overseeing the toil of the female laborers. Munari subdivides the space of the study board with vertical and horizontal lines that create logical and visual partitions accentuated by color; furthermore, he cuts the photographic images in a shape that recalls rolls of fabrics weaved by an industrial loom. While the rolls—or reels—of “photographic fabric” organize the visual fruition of the composition along vertical lines, the company logotype in the bottom third of the board suggests a horizontal parsing, and nothing impedes the viewer from scanning the photographs in a similar fashion. By relying upon the modularity of a grid, Munari thus creates a space for contemplation that fixes the attention of the viewer into the very products VeDeMe sought to sell.

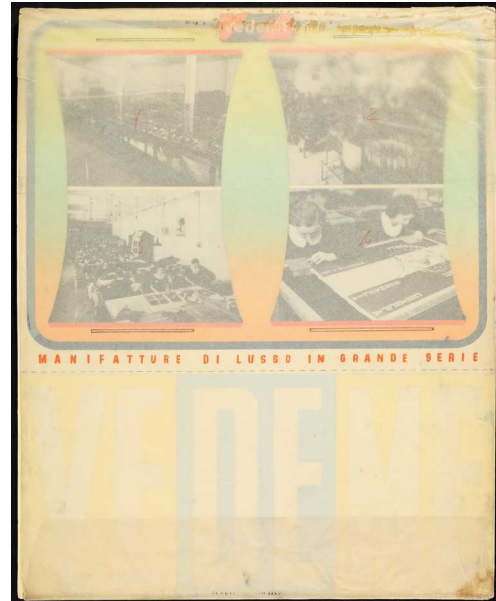
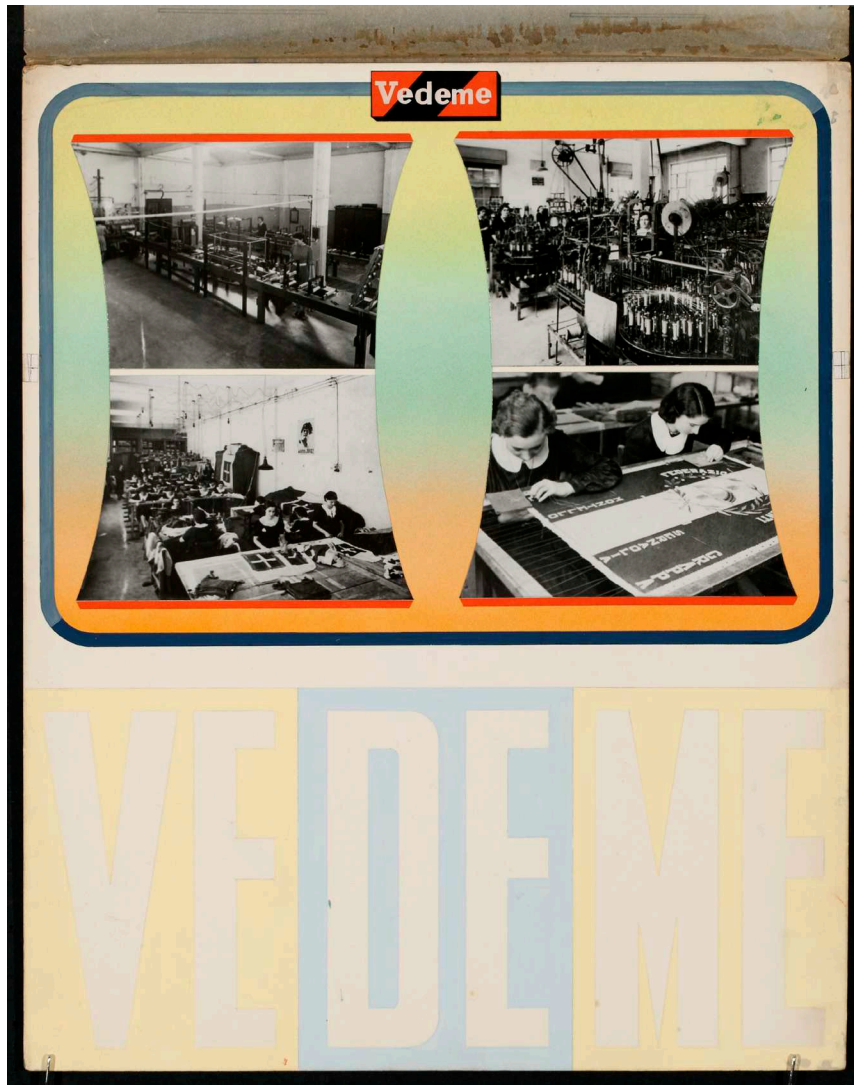


Fig. 1: Glassine overlay



Caglio Hansen (Hansen Rennet), c. 1936
Brochure, lithograph on paper
7 1/8 x 26 inches (18.2 x 66.2 cm) - open

Marks and inscriptions:

Stamped: Bruno Munari and Studio Boggeri S.A. Milano
on the back of the brochure

Text:

Covers: *imitato sempre, eguagliato mai!* (always imitated, never matched!)

Note:

Munari's approach to advertising transforms rennet—a product related to the food industry, deeply connected to Italy's agricultural roots—into a fashionable icon of typographic modernism. The front cover of the brochure for Caglio Hansen displays the name of the company through a powerful chromatic contrast of red and black, placed on a diagonal line that conveys a sense of dynamism. A large, diagonal arrow intersects and highlights the name of the company and carries the motto "always imitated, never matched!" from the bottom right of the composition towards the center. The back cover of the brochure illustrates the company's products—liquid and powdered rennet—in a style that recalls an avant-garde collage, as the photograph of the products seems pasted onto a background drawing. Throughout the composition, the artist adopts different typefaces according to the character of the message at stake: from bold, monumental ones, to others that aim for clarity with a sans-serif design. Overall, the simplicity of the front and back covers displays Munari's modernist aesthetic sensibility. The foldout pages of the brochure confirm this, as silhouetted figures of scientists, suspended objects, and geometric symbols illustrate Caglio Hansen's qualities through a figurative language that borrows from Futurist aeropainting, Constructivism, and Metaphysical Art.

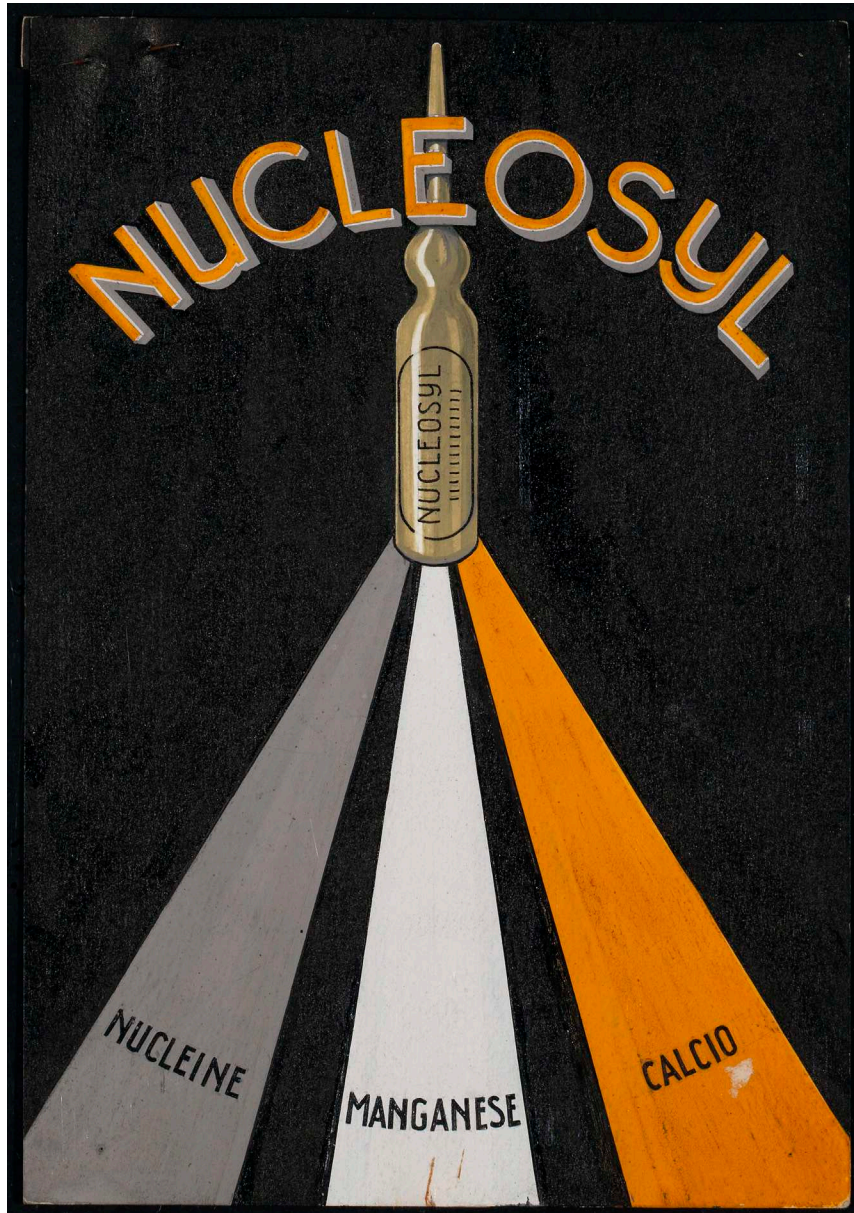


Fig. 1: Front and back covers

Nucleosyl, early 1940s
Gouache on card
9 5/8 x 6 5/8 inches (24.4 x 16.8 cm)

Note:

Munari's work for the advertising firm Studio Boggeri best exemplifies the synergy between avant-garde aesthetics and commodity culture that first appeared in Italy during the interwar years. This brochure for Nucleosyl, an immunostimulant, illustrates the creative tension at play between artistic language and the needs of product placement. On the brochure's cover, the artist orchestrates a simple, linear composition cast against a black background that highlights the importance of the advertised product. Munari doubles the role of Nucleosyl's glass vial, which appears not only as a commercial product but also as an idol-like object of contemplation. The active ingredients of the medicine—nuclein, manganese, calcium—irradiate from the cusp of an imaginary architecture that recalls both the dynamic force-lines typical of Futurist aesthetics and the strong perspectival construction of Metaphysical art. The back of the printed brochure for which this is a maquette (see p. 55), on the other hand, illustrates the package design of the medicinal product so that customers could learn to recognize it in a pharmacy. Three adjectives—tonic, hematopoietic, mineralizing—offer insights as to the qualities of the medicine and counterbalance the three active ingredients found on the cover. As one can observe in Munari's personal annotations on the brochure's maquette (p. 55), the artist followed the phases of production closely with an eye to the role color plays in the composition. He suggests that the vial should be processed through a halftone screen in order to best render the chromatic amalgamation of the three ingredients.



Nucleosyl, early 1940s

a. lithograph on paper with collage (mock-up booklet)
9 5/8 x 6 3/4 inches (24.4 x 17.1 cm) - folded

Marks and inscriptions:

From top to bottom:

(on top of letter E) levare arancio

[remove orange]

(on the orange line) fiala + verde

[vial + green]

(on the annotation) "Nucleosyl"; 20/2/40; Lavorare la fiala anche con nero retinato che combinandosi col giallo-arancio dovrebbero dare una tinta più verdognola. - Come per tutti alzare la targhetta dell'indirizzo di almeno 4/5 mm. Chiedere il n. progressivo di spedizione da agg. dopo il 1940. -N--? Levare arancio che cresce sulla E.

["Nucleosyl"; February 20, 1940; Work on the vial with the black halftone, as it combines with the yellow-orange it should yield a greener hue. - As for all of them, raise the label for the address by at least 4/5 millimeters. Ask the progressive shipping number to add after 1940. -N--? Remove the orange that grows atop the letter E.]

b. brochure, lithograph on paper
9 5/8 x 13 1/4 inches (24.4 x 33.6 cm) - open

Marks and inscriptions:

Stamped: Studio Boggeri S.A. Milano on the back of the brochure

Text:

Cover recto: nucleine - manganese - calcio (nuclein - manganese - calcium)

Cover verso: tonico - emopoietico - rimiralizzante (tonic - haematopoietic - mineralizing)

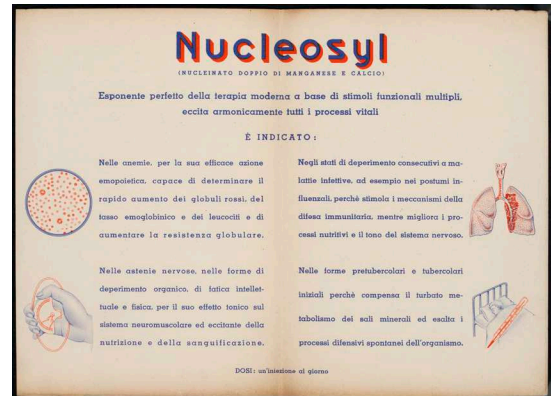


Fig. 1: interior of the brochure



a.



b.

Matchbox advertising Pibigas, late 1940s
Printed matchbox with matches
4 x 3 1/4 inches (10.1 x 8.2 cm)

Text:

Recto:

Il gas per tutti e dappertutto. In bottiglie verdi.
[The natural gas for everyone, everywhere. Sold in green tanks]

Verso:

Concessionari in ogni provincial. 5500 stazioni servizio.
[Dealers in every province. 5500 service stations]

Note:

One of Munari's most memorable advertisements, the Pibigas campaign also represents a turning point in the history of Italy's economic progress. At a time when the country had not yet developed a widespread natural gas network for urban and rural areas, compressed natural gas (CNG) sold in tanks was a fundamental element in the distribution of energy among the Italian population. Munari highlights the door-to-door reach of this energy source by drawing the figure of a Pibigas delivery person, intent on ringing the doorbell of a customer's home for the consignment of a brand-new gas tank. Reducing anatomical detail, Munari presents the delivery person as an homunculus manikin, with traits borrowed from the puppet-like protagonists of interwar Italian advertising: the figure embodies the blue color tonality of methane gas, thus prompting the idea that, thanks to the Pibigas tanks, natural gas delivers itself to Italian homes. The advertising also insists on the reliability of the Pibigas distribution network: while not delivered through a piped-in utility grid, the company motto remarks upon the "everywhere" presence of Pibigas dealers, a concept reiterated in the circular drawing depicting a stylized bird carrying a gas tank that captures the observer's attention in the back of the matchbox.

Recto:

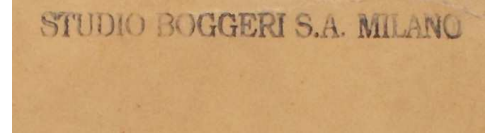


Verso:



Munari and Filippo Masoero
Pellicceria Brivio (Brivio furrier's shop), 1930s
Collage with gouache, ink and rotogravure mounted on board with irregular brown and black paper
11 1/4 x 14 1/8 inches (28.8 x 35.8 cm) – collage, irregular shape when open

Stamp detail:



Marks and inscriptions:

Stamped: Studio Boggeri S.A. Milano, left half of the composition

Note:

Munari and Masoero's draft for this potential commercial brochure rests upon highly artistic elements and a playful design. When closed, the object recalls an abstract artwork, with a disembodied and fragmented female head—seemingly the retouched photograph of a classical sculpture—framed by geometric shapes that organize the space with solid fields of color. Once opened, the brochure reveals the name of the furrier shop at the center of the advertising. *Pellicceria Brivio*, the company name, illustrated in bold characters, recalls the lettering of shop signage and neon advertising. An apparently insignificant black circle in the left portion of the composition draws the eye precisely to this name and suggests the correct reading of the wording from top to bottom. As a counterpoint to the black circle, the artists include the photographic cutout of a stretched fur in the bottom right of the composition, giving an obvious and ironic visual reference to the company's line of business. Well beyond a merely Futurist language, Munari's reliance upon classical statuary, geometry, photocollage, and typography speaks volumes to his attentive observation of Metaphysical art, Surrealism, and Dada.

Closed:



Open:



Munari and Filippo Masoero
La pubblicità. L'Ufficio Moderno (Advertising. The Modern Office), 1930s
Collage with gouache, ink and rotogravure mounted on black paper with red cover
12 x 9 1/4 inches (30.4 x 23.5 cm) – collage irregular shape when open

Marks and inscriptions:

Signature: Munari

Stamped Studio Boggeri S.A. Milano, left half of the composition

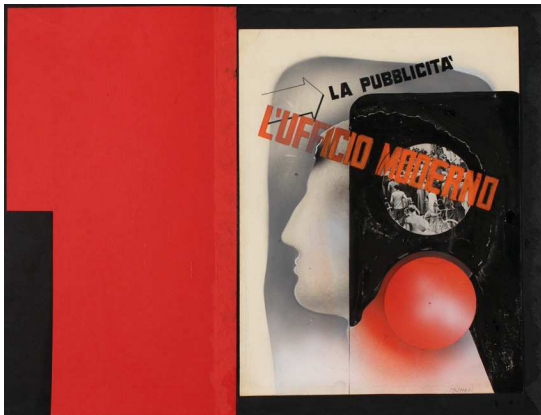
Note:

This brochure proposal follows the same design structure of the proposal for Pelliccerie Brivio (pp. 58-59), but its bold colors and diagonal lettering adopt a stronger Futurist and Constructivist stance. Instead of relying upon classical elements infused with irony, this project presents an assertive and repeated contrast between red and black elements, which alternate in rectangular forms, spherical ones, as well as in the lettering of the advertisement. Possibly a brochure for the activities of the Italian trade magazine *L'ufficio moderno* (The Modern Office), a journal dedicated to office furniture and equipment design—of which Munari was a frequent collaborator—the composition borrows heavily from Futurist cosmic aeropainting. Thanks to the ideal downward movement of the sphere in the foreground, the observer can peer into the thoughts of the disembodied head profiled in the background, which is cast between a black surface—akin to an x-ray sheet—and a nondescript environmental element. In the head, a photographic cutout illustrates a metropolitan crowd on its way to or from work, perhaps suggesting the importance of placing strategic advertising signs along these individuals' work commute.

Closed:



Open:



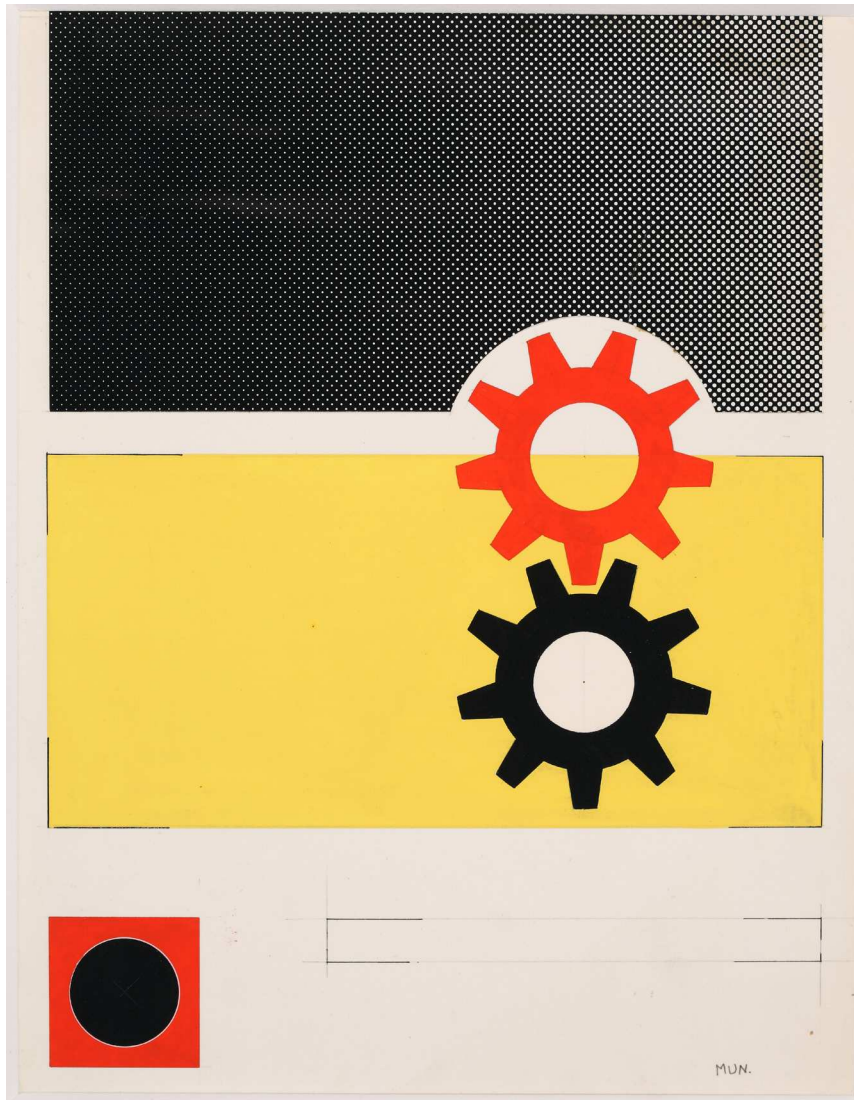
Ingranaggi (Gears), 1935
Collage and mixed media on card
8 1/2 x 11 inches (21.5 x 28 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Signature: Mun.

Note:

The gears of this collage illustrate the extent of Munari's attentive eye towards the work of Northern and Eastern European avant-gardes, with a particular focus on Constructivism. The artwork captivates the viewer with a basic palette and strong juxtapositions of shapes and colors. This apparent simplicity results in a well-balanced image, while the interactions between shapes, objects, and backgrounds create a smooth, visual mechanism. The presence of several circular shapes is characteristic of Munari's visual design vocabulary and seeks to capture the viewer's attention by creating anchor points throughout the composition. Despite these legible elements, the composition as a whole lacks a clear narrative and begs an approach informed primarily by formalist considerations. Munari's adoption of reprographic techniques, such as the use of halftone to simulate a chiaroscuro variation, anticipates Roy Lichtenstein's conceptual retooling of mass-produced typographic techniques to artistic ends.



Munari with Tullia D'Albisola, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti,
Francesco Cangiullo
Libertà - Correre (Freedom - Running), 1934
Brochure, letterpress on paper
9 3/8 x 8 5/8 inches (23.8 x 21.9 cm) - folded

Note:

This brochure is a typographic homage to multiple Futurist publications. Besides the folded cover plates—which respectively turn a typeface into an ornamental motif, and adopt Munari's eye-catching circular shape—Munari's contribution to the piece consists in the reproduction of his illustrations for the Futurist metal book *L'anguria lirica* (The Lyrical Watermelon), a poetic composition by D'Albisola. Decontextualized from their original source, these artworks convey the full power of Munari's creativity. One of the plates in the brochure's verso offers the optical illusion of a smiling face, composed of a slice of watermelon and a water sprinkler: the interaction between the drawing and the background permits the physiognomic features of the objects to emerge from the white page, and anticipates in part the lyrical inventiveness of the useless machines drawings published in 1942. The other images on the right adhere more closely to Futurist dictums, both thematically and aesthetically. In one case, a dynamic silhouette pulls the lever of a fantastic mechanical machinery, which in turn emanates an ethereal, female body. In the other, a silhouetted spectator observes the passage of a train over a stylized bridge. The remaining plates of the brochure include freewordist poems by Marinetti and Cangiullo. Both of Munari's images conform to "cosmic" Futurist aesthetics of the 1930s and seem particularly reminiscent of Futurist theatrical stage design, authored by artists such as Enrico Prampolini.



Fig. 1: Folded cover

LIBERTA' - CORRERE


Marchia futurista
Parole in liberta di Marinetti

MAAA GAAA LAAA
MAAA GAAL LAAA

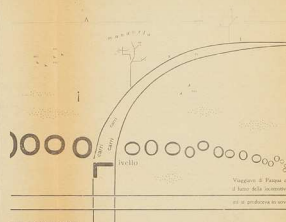
RANRAN ZAAAF
RANRAN ZAAAAAF

ZANGUMTUM
ZANGUMTUM

MARINETTI, futurista



Pessaggio a livello - uova di Pasqua
parole in liberta di P. Cangiullo - futurista



Pessaggio a livello -
uova di Pasqua

MARINETTI, futurista



ritratto olfattivo di una donna
parole in liberta


NON VEDEVA PIUMELA

A. DENTISTE

A. DENTISTE

STOP

A. DENTISTE




Shell, 1934

Gouache and cut-and-pasted gelatin silver prints on card
7 1/4 x 6 1/2 inches (18.3 x 16.6 cm)

Note:

By adapting avant-garde techniques to the needs of consumer marketing, the maquette for this advertisement aims at demonstrating the importance of Shell products for all modes of modern transportation. Munari articulates this message visually through simple geometric combinations, superimposing a tripartite circle to a tripartite background. Each partition represents a field of modern transportation: the car in the lower left calls for a background formed by a modern cityscape; the speedboat in the lower right appears ready to face the waves of the open sea; and the hydroplane at the top of the composition traverses the sky. At the center of the draft, the word *Shell* and the company's corporate logo remind consumers how all these modern endeavors are possible because of Shell's petroleum-derived products. The diagonal tilt of the word and the partitions hint at sensations of dynamism and vehicular movement.



Forze dell'Impero (Forces of the Empire), 1936
Photocollage with gelatin silver prints, paper, ink and
gouache on paper
18 1/2 x 23 3/4 inches (47 x 65.5 cm)

Marks and inscriptions:

Signature: Mun.

Text:

Top to bottom:

Forze dell'Impero [Forces of the Empire]
per la difesa nazionale [for national defense]
per l'agricoltura [for agriculture]
per l'industria molitoria [for the milling industry]
per i trasporti [for the transportation industry]
"Areoplani Caproni" [Caproni airplanes]
"Reggiane" [Reggiane (mechanical works)]
"Isotta Fraschini"

Note:

Munari's advertisement for the Caproni-Reggiane-Isotta Fraschini industrial conglomerate well illustrates how avant-garde techniques could serve both economic interests and political rhetoric. This photomontage presents a radial engine and a V-cylinder engine, a cannon, an agricultural machine tool, an airplane, a modern mill, a truck, and a train. Despite its collage-like juxtapositions, the ensemble is harmonized by the distribution of the single elements along strong diagonal, perspectival vectors, which communicate the idea of dynamism and a singularity of purpose. The airplane hovering in the upper half of the composition transforms itself into the silhouette of an eagle, one of the

most common symbols through which the fascist regime evoked its penchant for classical *romanità*. At the same time, the engines, cannon, and agricultural machinery constitute the building blocks of a fascio, the ancient Roman ceremonial weapon that gave Fascism its name. These metamorphoses between images of industrial might and political symbolism congeal with the nationalistic and imperial rhetoric fostered by the fascist regime during the mid-1930s. The power of the images is reinforced by Munari's limited use of words. The artist employs a few, select slogans that portray the Caproni-Reggiane-Isotta Fraschini conglomerate as a purpose-driven enterprise, and a strategically important one in Italy's imperial campaign.

FORZE DELL'IMPERO



PER LA DIFESA NAZIONALE
PER L'AGRICOLTURA
PER L'INDUSTRIA MOLITORIA
PER I TRASPORTI

"AREOPLANI CAPRONI" "REGGIANE" "ISOTTA FRASCHINI"

Mostra aeropittura venticinquenni futuristi (Aeropainting exhibition, twenty-five-year-old Futurists), 1934
Letterpress on paper
27 1/4 x 39 5/8 inches (69.2 x 100.6 cm)

Text:

Gruppo Futurista reggio emilia; macchine inutili; polimaterici; dibattiti; conferenze; atrio municipale; 22 aprile 6 maggio XII
[Reggio Emilia Futurist Group; useless machines; polymateric objects; debates; conferences; municipal entrance hall; April 22nd May 6 XII]

Note:

Text-only advertising requires the careful orchestration of words, spatially arranged to capture the attention of casual onlookers. Munari's advertisement for a Futurist Aeropainting exhibition sets a high mark for typographic creativity. The poster makes use of different font types and sizes in order to communicate various details about the event. The largest font is dedicated to the exhibition itself and crosses the entire page with the two most significant keywords, *aeropittura venticinquenni*, thus signaling the subject of the exhibition and the young age of the artists. The dates and organizers of the event are relegated to the left corners of the composition, while the bottom right of the poster reveals the multiple events that will take place at the exhibition, as well as some of the objects in the show. Among these items, it is interesting to notice how Munari represents his own useless machines: the word *inutili* (useless) is written part vertically, part upside-down, in an effort to crystallize, at the typographic level, the effete nature of such artworks. Most of the advertisement is composed without the help of lines, arrows, and other geometric shapes, but there exist remarkable exceptions: for instance, the words that indicate the venue of the exhibition, *atrio municipale* (the entrance lobby of Reggio Emilia's city hall) are enclosed by a rectangle that literalizes the real space of the exhibition into the visual language of the poster.

gruppo **f**uturista ■→ **mostra**
reggio emilia

aeropittura venticinquenni



macchine in futuristi

22 aprile XII
6 maggio XII

polimerici ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
dibattiti - conferenze

REGGIO EMILIA - GALLERIA MUNICIPALE



Olimpiadi (Olympic games), 1936
Photomontage, lithograph on paper
30 5/8 x 23 inches (77.8 x 58.4 cm)

Text:

L. 7 la copia; 2° ediz. ampliata e arricchita; 200.000 spettatori assistevano ogni giorno negli stadi di Berlino alle gare dell'XI OLIMPIADE; "OLIMPIADI" 84 pagine - 270 fotografie - 25 grafici è lo specchio fedele dei GIUOCHI DI BERLINO.

[7 lire each copy; 2nd edition, enriched and expanded; 200,000 spectators watched every day the competitions of the 11th Olympic Games in the Berlin stadiums; "Olimpiadi" 84 pages - 270 photographs - 25 graphs - is the faithful mirror of the Berlin Games.]

Note:

This advertisement for a companion publication to the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games turns into an exercise in avant-garde graphic design, in which Munari takes full advantage of the compositional surface in order to orchestrate an orderly and effective advertisement. The lithograph presents information about both the book and the Olympic events, establishing an equation between the original spectators in Berlin and the readers who can enjoy the competitions through 270 photographs and 25 graphs. Two photographs help establish the connection between reader and spectator, focusing on a sporting event and an excited crowd. Both images are dissected by vertical cuts that interact with the white background of the lithograph and resemble the lanes of a running track, hinting through graphic design at spatial signifiers of the original events depicted. Once again, the large, circular shape dominating the composition prompts the viewer to pause and decipher the intersecting lines, words, and images that occupy that space. With this advertisement, Munari demonstrates his mastery of graphic design techniques and the communicative potential of both photography and typography.



" OLIMPIADI

L. 7 la copia

2° ediz. ampliata e arricchita

200.000
SPETTATORI

assistevano ogni giorno

negli stadi

di Berlino

alle gare

dell'XI OLIMPIADE

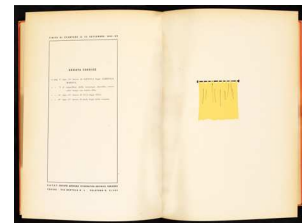
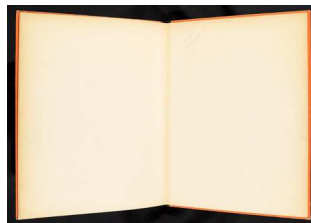
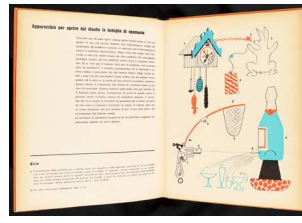
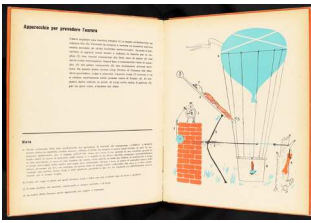
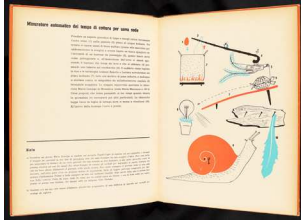
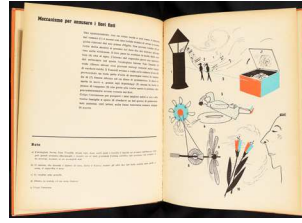
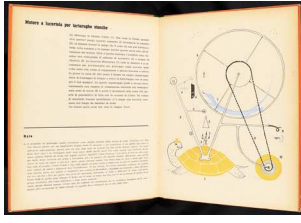
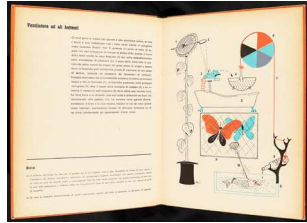
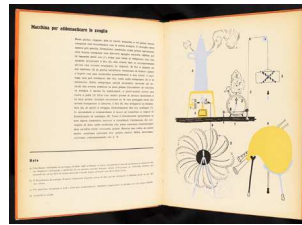
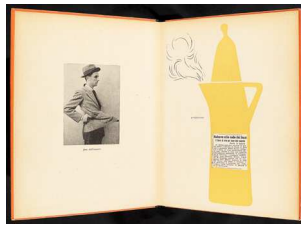
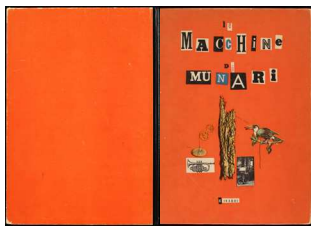


«**OLIMPIADI**» 84 pagine - 270 fotografie - 25 grafici
è lo specchio fedele dei **GIUOCHI DI BERLINO**

Le macchine di Munari (Munari's Machines), 1942
Book published by Einaudi, Turin, 52 pages
11 1/4 x 8 3/8 x 1/4 inches (28.3 x 21.1 x 0.7 cm)

Note:

Munari's interest in useless machines dates to the early 1930s, when he began sketching and building mobile sculptures composed of metal, wood, plastic, thread, and wire. Thanks to their complex joints and interacting parts, these machines could move to the touch or with wind and other atmospheric events. Useless machines embrace the aesthetics of kinetic art while providing insights into Munari's attitude towards the world of technology and science. For the artist, machines serve the higher cause of art: once stripped of their usefulness, their mechanical surplus value consists of an aesthetic experience, while their complete lack of meaning represents an opportunity for training the viewer's fantasy. Munari's projects for *Le macchine di Munari* (Munari's Machines), published by Einaudi in 1942, push these theoretical propositions towards irony and self-irony. The drawings represent imaginary, over-engineered machines similar to the ones popularized by Rube Goldberg's cartoons in the 1920s and 1930s. Their diagrammatic, expository style illustrates their senseless function in great detail, providing an escapist and ironic counterpart to the standardized, economic reliability of industrial production.



Il venditore di animali, 1945
(English edition: *Animals for Sale*, 1957)
Book published by Mondadori, Milan
12 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches (31.7 x 24.1 cm)

Note:

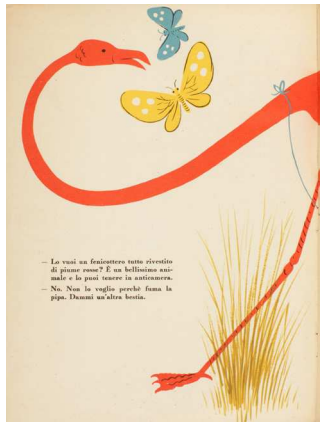
Alongside ironic art books such as *Le macchine di Munari*, during the 1940s the artist also began to explore the potential uses of graphic design in children literature for both entertainment and pedagogical purposes. Possibly the earliest example of this particular research trajectory, *Il venditore di animali* is a short book narrating the comedic story of a tall, bearded, and distinguished gentleman who is seeking to sell various live animals to potential buyers. The imaginary buyers always find some problem with the proposed deals and ultimately suggest that their ideal animal is a roasted turkey with potatoes. The book employs simple, large illustrations that dominate the otherwise blank pages, highlighting at the same time the bidimensionality of the medium and the oneiric character of the fairytale narrative. Furthermore, Munari orchestrates the presentation of each proposed animal sale on a different page, and each page decreases in size from the previous one. Thus, the physical design of the book plays an integral role in the advancement of the narrative and in the irony of the work as a whole. While the salesman figure remains a constant presence on the right of each page spread, the animals on sale vary from a rather cumbersome flamingo to a diminutive centipede, only to conclude with the diminutive illustration of an oven-roasted turkey.



I LIBRI MUNARI

1. Mei cantanti
2. L'uomo del camion
3. Tu tu tu
4. Il pinguiccolo verde
5. Storia di tre uccellini
6. Il venditore di animali
7. Cigi cerca il suo barattolo
8. Bobò cerca Bobò
9. Il pinguiccolo giallo
10. Buona notte a tutti

6



R+M Pittori (Riccardo Ricas + Bruno Munari Partners),
envelope and letterhead, 1930s
Lithograph on paper
5 x 6 1/8 inches (12.7 x 15.5 cm) - envelope
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm) - letterhead

Note:

The Ricas + Munari logotype illustrates the graphic design sensibility of the two artists, who articulate a succession of serif and sans-serif typefaces in order to distill legible information in a limited space. The vertical arrangement of the address and telephone number optimizes the writable portion of the envelope, as it leaves plenty of room for the inscription of an addressee. At the same time, the spacing between the horizontal lines communicates a sense of clarity and preordained logic. The letterhead logotype slightly differs from the one used in the envelope: instead of alternating between bolder and finer typefaces, this arrangement provides a top-down gradual transition from the boldest fonts to the more ethereal and sparse ones. In both cases, however, the first line of the logotype also frames the paper with the word *pittori*—painters—well-spaced across the length of the objects as if to embrace them from a corner. This persisting allegiance to the fine arts world while employed as contractors for advertising firms demonstrates Munari and Ricas' adherence to the basic principles of the "Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe," a 1915 manifesto which advocated the redesign of material and consumer culture through Futurist aesthetics and practices. Worthy of note is also Munari's signature on the letter, for its creative use of the letters U and N, which appear twice in the artist's full name. Here, Munari plays with the architectonics of words by using different sizes to interconnect the letters of his first and last name, economizing with irony on the number of signs necessary to compose his signature.

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Nella notte buia. Milan: Muggiani Editore, 1956.

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Arte come mestiere. Bari: Editore Laterza, 1966 (Also available in English as Bruno Munari, *Design as Art*. Translated by Patrick Creagh. London: Penguin, 2008.).

Design e comunicazione visiva. Bari: Editore Laterza, 1968.

Da cosa nasce cosa. Bari: Editore Laterza, 1981.

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Sammicheli, Marco and Giovanni Rubino, eds. *Munari Politecnico*. Varese: Nomos Edizioni, 2015.

Quintavalle, Arturo Carlo, ed. *Bruno Munari*. Parma: CSAC Università di Parma, Quaderno N. 45, Feltrinelli, 1979.

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Hájek, Miroslava and Luca Zaffarano, eds. *Bruno Munari: My Futurist Past*. Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art. Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2012.

Lichtenstein, Claude and Alfredo Haberli, eds. *Air Made Visible: A Visual Reader on Bruno Munari*. Baden: Lars Müller Publisher, 2000.

Meneguzzo, Marco, ed. *Bruno Munari*. Milan: Electa, 1986.

