

**AN INTERMEDIAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN CINEMA AND ITS
POSTERS: ITALY 1945-1969**

by

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Abstract

My thesis aims to explore the role of artistic creativity in Italian film *manifesti* in relation to the growing industrialisation and commercialisation occurring in Italy during the age of mass consumption. The timespan 1945-1969 is particularly significant for its evolving and formative nature because of the emergence of a consumer culture, which enabled film *manifesti* to convey socio-cultural transitions through their enticing images publicly displayed. The premise that creativity and artistic ability are central to film *manifesti* is put forward, with a predominant role for its *pittori di cinema* leading to advertising success. Through a comparative analysis of film *manifesti*, original drafts, and multiple artistic media, this thesis explores how Italian graphic artists dealt with the juxtaposition of their creativity and commercial needs. Socio-cultural challenges were faced, such as incorporating American marketing strategies for film advertising and censorship issues; I argue that these pressures enhanced the role of *pittori di cinema* as socio-cultural mediators. Pointedly, they have expressed their artistic creativity in a way that has influenced the choices of mass public. In summary, my interdisciplinary evaluation of the critical visual power of film *manifesti* demonstrates *pittori di cinema*'s role as catalysts for the development of a modern mass society.

Dedication

*I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved dad,
source of inspiration, optimism and fortitude.*

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Introduction



Figure 1

[...] Il mio occhio cercava i cartelloni piazzati da una parte dove si annunciava il film del prossimo programma, perchè là era la sorpresa, la promessa, l'aspettativa che m'avrebbe accompagnato nei giorni seguenti (Calvino, 1990, p. 44).

The impact of film posters

There was a time when people stopped in the streets to gaze upon film posters, those '*isole di colore*' (Santi, 2002) that were an integral part of the urban landscape.¹ There was a time when film posters² were catalysts for the imagination of passers-by who, after a short glance, could be convinced that the film in the advert that would be shown for a limited time at the cinema was worth seeing.³ The image above (Fig. 1) shows the captivating function of film *manifesti* that lies at the heart of the critical focus in this thesis, demonstrating the importance film posters had for Italian society during the post-war period.

¹ The posters as 'colourful islands' is an evocative description that Bruno Santi gave about post-war film posters as a critical counterpoint to the ruined and greyish cityscape absorbed by a precarious scenario in the aftermath of the Second World War.

² A full definition of the corresponding Italian word *manifesto*, which will recur throughout the thesis, is provided later in the introduction, in subsection *Definition of an advertising manifesto*.

³ Nowadays, the film poster remains an essential object in the film industry's strategy for publicity. It maintains the same function of promoting films to the mass public, calling people to the cinema. However, the most common means used today to provide a preview of film features are trailers, television clips and the Internet.

The 1976 film comedy *Il comune senso del pudore*, directed by Alberto Sordi, is divided into four episodes. They capture and represent a shift in the Italian collective sense of decency that took place during the 1970s when the spread of eroticism in the publishing and cinema industry was gaining momentum. In one of the episodes, a middle-aged couple, Erminia and Giacinto are shown choosing a film to watch in celebration of their anniversary (Fig. 1). They have stopped to examine the film posters at the entrance to several theatres and are struggling to choose the right film for themselves; this choice is being made primarily through the visual representations in the posters. They pour over every single poster but have naively misunderstood the evocative images displayed, thus misinterpreting each and every plot.

The illustrative and graphic layout of a film poster works in tandem to convey an advertising message and to provide a generalized idea of the plot. However, this plot might be misread by potential filmgoers, as in the case of Erminia and Giacinto. Nonetheless, Dave Kehr has pinpointed the role of film posters to build anticipation and entice people to see a movie at the cinema, ‘Although experience may seldom live up to expectation, we are always ready and eager to be seduced again’ (Keher, 2003, p. 9). An especially revealing example of the cultural impact of film posters and, at times, their misleading advertising message is given by the poster collector Maurizio Baroni (cited below). He pointed out that the *manifesto* exerted an irresistible siren-like hold over passers-by, mainly preparing them to watch a given film at the cinema. To quote:

Tu entravi al cinema se il manifesto aveva precedentemente attratto la tua attenzione. Se il film era bello ne eri felice. Ma quante volte questi cartellonisti ci hanno imbrogliato! Promettevano delle cose, delle scene meravigliose, che poi in realtà nel film non c’erano. Entravi ad ammirare una pellicola, poi quando uscivi [from the cinema theatre] possibilmente dicevi che era più bello il manifesto del film stesso.⁴

⁴ From Maurizio Baroni’s interview with me 19 July 2018, at the Cineteca of Bologna. See transcript of Baroni’s interview in appendix 2.

The above example from Sordi's film, as reflected in Baroni's statement, underscores the seductive power of advertising posters, in particular their crucial role in shaping a renewed society during the second half of the twentieth century. Additionally, they highlight the role of posters in the development of the post-war Italian cultural industry. Indeed, the spread of Italian advertising during the post-war years meant people could actually visualize that industry, thus reinforcing it as a mass phenomenon.⁵

Advertising media thus assumed a social role, and this can be seen by examining Italian poster artists between 1945-1960s from both an individual and a collective viewpoint. Baroni implies the existence of an almost magnetic effect, whereby passers-by would be taken in by film posters and then head inside the theatre. Hence, film posters had a representative function for cinema, a beckoning to consumers. The experience of the director and screenwriter Gianni Amelio (Magisano, 1945) reinforces this point. Amelio described the magnetism triggered by film posters on the general public in the second half of the twentieth century as such:

Quando sceglievo io [to watch a movie], lo facevo in base alla visione dei 'quadri', che erano le fotobuste, le locandine esposte sul corso. Non si andava al cinema se non dopo aver studiato i 'quadri', come li chiamavamo noi (Brunetta, 2002).

Amelio relates how seeing a movie at the cinema was preceded by the 'study' of the posters – he refers to them as 'paintings' – displayed along the main streets of the city. Only after this 'study' is he able to choose which film to see. It is possible to infer from this the persuasive power that visual communication offered the general public; specifically, engagement with a pictorial representation, with ideas and colours. Amelio's 'paintings' highlight distinguishing features of the film. The image is condensed into a poster which presents passers-by with surprise, promise, and expectation. In Calvino's words, 'I cartelloni erano la sorpresa, la promessa, l'aspettativa che m'avrebbe accompagnato nei giorni seguenti' (Calvino, 1990, p.

⁵ Cf. Calabrese, O. (2002) *Un artigiano della comunicazione*, in Longi, R. (2002) *Ritratti di cinema. L'arte dell'illustrazione di Carlantonio Longi*, pp. 145-148, Siena: Gli Ori

44), qualities to be addressed in order to garner the broadest possible audience. Lina Wertmüller (Rome, 1928), Italian screenwriter and film director, emphasised the eye-catching role of film posters with the following words:

Squillanti di colori e di tentazioni, di richiami all'avventura o all'amore, ai grandi romanzi e alle grandi imprese, i cartelli, le affiches cinematografiche sono sempre stati un tessuto di testimonianze e di ricordi per il cinema, attraenti ai miei occhi bambini come gli inviti alle straordinarie favole per grandi, che si raccontavano sui pallidi lenzuoli delle sale cinematografiche (Longi, 2002, p. 12).

Images displayed along the cityscape undeniably made their mark on people, capturing the substance of a film as much as the social and cultural frame of the period. As Marco Giusti (Grosseto, 1953)⁶ puts it, 'Il manifesto ti fermava per sempre un film nella testa' (Naitza, 1997, p. 15). Therefore, the advertising medium analysed in the current work goes beyond merely holding a mirror up to the social and cultural changes that took place over two and a half decades in Italy; it was also instrumental in shaping those changes. More broadly, this medium captures a shift in Italian artistic tastes in the twentieth century. More importantly, it anticipated and influenced modernisation of a lifestyle before such modernisation was more generally manifested within society (Brunelli and Ferraresi, 2003). This introductory chapter argues that the film poster is a valuable instrument of study in examining the relationships in Italy between cultural production, mass consumption, and social changes from 1945 to 1969. This introduction identifies the quintessential features that make up a film poster in the Italian context, which both recorded and promoted a critical transition in a post-war society.

⁶ Marco Giusti is a scholar, film critic and television writer, and long-time contributor to the Italian magazines *Il Manifesto* and *L'Espresso*.

Definition of an advertising *manifesto*

The Italian word *manifesto* is central to the current work. Herein it is deliberately used for its connotations in Italian, which are pertinent to the development of this discussion. Thus, before proceeding, it is crucial to elaborate on this specific terminology as employed in this work. Its use here is significant as it provides a more meaningful term than the English word *poster* and the French word *affiche*. Its importance stems from its etymology. The *Garzanti* Italian dictionary defines ‘manifesto’ as a Latin derivation meaning: ‘*manifestu*, literally, “take someone by the hand,” also ‘caught in the act’ and ‘obvious, clear.’⁷ [...] *Rendere manifesto*, ‘to show,’ ‘reveal,’ ‘unveil,’ ‘to make an intention clear.’ This explains why the art historian Arturo Carlo Quintavalle in the *Enciclopedia Treccani* defines ‘manifesto’ as follows: ‘Il manifesto costituisce una forma di comunicazione di massa la cui storia s'inserisce in quella più ampia e antica della divulgazione delle notizie di pubblico interesse, [...] a fini tanto di informazione o di richiamo che di vera e propria pubblicità’.⁸ Strikingly, the added value of the word *manifesto* is that it connects the reader/observer to its visual power, likewise reminding us that ‘the audience is also part of the making of the image’ (Dyer, 1986, p. 4). The *manifesto* expresses an idea and a message immediately and clearly but also artistically. The original Latin expression ‘prendere per mano’ (i.e., ‘take someone by the hand’) can be critically interpreted as: ‘taking [the viewer] by the hand’ and engaging that user in the message advertised. Hence, the Italian noun draws attention to this significative function of advertising *manifesti*, implying an interaction that might not be immediately evident with the equivalent English and French words. These, instead, refer to the action of posting something on a (public)

⁷ Verbatim: *manifestu* propriamente ‘preso per mano’, quindi ‘colto sul fatto’ e ‘palese, evidente’. [...] *Rendere manifesto*, ‘rivelare’, rendere noto”. In <<http://www.garzantilinguistica.it/ricerca/?q=manifesto%201>>. Retrieved February 2016.

⁸ Quintavalle, A.C., n.d., *Manifesto*, Treccani, viewed February 2016, <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/manifesto_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/manifesto_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/>).

wall.⁹ The *manifesto* serves its purpose through the expressive condensation of meaning achieved by means such as colours, figures, and graphic text, all assembled by graphic artists, using their creativity, techniques, and cultural knowledge. All of these elements are part of the same cultural and commercial project for which the *manifesto* was created.

In light of this etymological explanation, we shall look primarily at the film *manifesto* as a means of advertising communication; as such, it must respond to certain marketing requirements. Essentially, the main purpose that *manifesti* have is that of selling a product within a broader national market, and, in the modern age, a global market. In terms of cinema *manifesti*, the product is the film itself. Through *manifesti*, producers communicate with their consumers. This leads to the question: what is the exact meaning of the film *manifesto* as a ‘means of communication?’ The key term ‘communication’ expresses the notion ‘to disclose,’ ‘make known,’ and ‘share’ something with someone else. More importantly, the term ‘communication’ includes an inherent concept of the ‘comprehension’ and ‘acquisition’ of a message (information) from someone external to the source. Hence, when discussing any type of communication, it is essential to define the message as clearly as possible, which is then made to be understood by its target audience. For this purpose, a linguistic and visual code should be adopted that is recognisable to the recipient (Barthes, 1964). Otherwise, the act of communication merely remains an unfulfilled attempt to make something known to the general public. As Rodney Allen argued, ‘the poster [as a means of mass communication] is developed for public display and to attract public attention. It was designed to be understood at a glance, communicating an announcement or commercial to passers-by [...]. It uses popular symbols and popular idioms, the language of the spectators in its target audience’ (Allen, 1994). Allen’s words shed light on the importance for visual means of communication to use a shared, or

⁹ “The term poster was originally used about 1838 in England to refer to a printed sheet of paper that combined text and illustration”, in Rodney F. Allen, (1994) ‘Posters as Historical Documents: a Resource for the teaching of Twentieth-Century History’, *The Social Studies*, 82, pp. 52-61.

better, popular language that must be familiar to the public and in line with the intentions of the advertisers, thus ultimately generating the desired impact. The establishment of this shared language was a necessary factor for conveying the main characteristics of the *manifesto* as a means of visual communication that provides for reciprocity and sharing between the advertisers and the public.

An emblematic period: 1945-1969

This thesis is focused on the period 1945-1969. This period is emblematic for the development of any critical analysis centred around the *manifesto*. It was one of unprecedented transition in Italy, with wide-ranging, visible social and cultural effects. The fact that a fascist regime was no longer in power was particularly relevant, because it could no longer intervene in cultural productions.¹⁰ Additionally, consumerism began to grow in strength along with a general advancement of industrial mass society (Montini, 1979). Italian cinema reflected and contributed to this transition, and its promotional material, *manifesti* above all, did so especially through their images. Consumerism, particularly from the USA, began to penetrate Italian society, leading to radical and progressive changes in daily lifestyles. Hence, the period of political and economic reconstruction (post-1945) laid the cornerstone for the development of a mass consumer market, which reached new heights during the 1950s. As Stephen Gundle has argued, ‘consumerism was beginning to erode the old rigidity of the social hierarchy’ (Gundle, 2002, p. 111), and one of the most visible effects of this was the growth of mass society. Consumption of cultural and everyday consumer goods increased alongside industrial demand for such production, generating new cultural forms. Therefore, cultural contents and meanings

¹⁰ About the State intervention on cultural activity under fascism, see: Forgacs, D., and Gundle, S. (2007) *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Scarpellini, E. (2008) *L'Italia dei consumi. Dalla Belle Époque al nuovo millennio*, Bari-Roma: Laterza. About the relationship between fascism regime and Italian cinema, see: Ricci, S. (2008) *Cinema and fascism: Italian film and society, 1922-1943*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University California Press.

derived from mass consumption, especially during its peak (corresponding to the years of the economic boom, 1958-1963), can be observed through the development of the artistic *manifesto* for cinema, as a powerful means of communication. Cinema became the most important form of leisure in the post-war years (Ercole, Treveri Gennari and O'Rawe, 2017). As 'Italians went to the cinema more than almost any other nation in Europe' (Sorlin, 1996, p. 74), it helped to reconstruct national identity, propagate new socio-cultural trends, and create renewed promotional media (such as *manifesti*). Indeed, as Franco Ferrarotti has argued,

L'arco di tempo che va dal 1945 al 1960 é fondamentale per il cinema, ma in primo luogo per la società italiana. Si passa dal crollo del fascismo al consumismo e al commercialismo della società industriale di massa. Il cinema italiano riflette abbastanza puntualmente questo trapasso, ma i suoi manifesti ne indicano con la crudele chiarezza delle immagini sentimentali e melodrammatiche gli invalicabili limiti (Ferrarotti, 1979, p. 9).

The emphasis lies in the fact that cinema reflected both the historical and socio-cultural transitions of Italy and the status of Italians. *Manifesti*, which were at the service of cinema, mirrored not just reality, but also the limits (culturally determined) of the most potent forms of cultural media.

This time frame marks the period when the concept of mass culture took hold of society (following 1945) by regularly exposing society to that culture (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007). During the 1950s and the 1960s, with the growth of industrialization, this consumerist approach became increasingly widespread (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007). In this age of mass consumption, advertising messages acquired greater value than they had before 1945. They were recognised as a leading factor in creating and promoting consumer culture, which was defined as 'a society-wide structure of meaning and feeling organised primarily around acts of purchase' (De Grazia, 1989, p. 223). The end of the 1960s paved the way for radical social and cultural changes that would be critical during the 1970s. The 1960s saw a shift in public perception of social hierarchies, particularly around the mid-1960s, and especially felt by the younger

generation; this perception also impacted on the advertising language for cinema which experimented with greater use of expressive freedom (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999). This shift in public perception also increased questioning of authority and paralleled the weakening of oppressive sexual puritanism in Western culture that had gained strength following the Second World War (Maltby, 1989).

1969 marks the last year of the study I conduct in this thesis. I've chosen this cut-off point as 1970 points to a turning point in the style and fortunes of the *manifesto*. This period witnessed 'a revolution in the technology of broadcasting and the distribution of the visual media' (Maltby, 1989, p. 195); in particular, television became central to people's domestic environment. This medium gained popularity, becoming predominant in everyday life and somewhat reducing the appeal of cinema (Gundle and Guani, 1986). During the 1970s, it is also significant that the advertising *manifesto* for cinema takes on different features and functions in contrast to previous decades. As Mel Bagshaw puts it, 'The increased use of photography in the 1960s and 70s eventually led to the demise of the hand-painted poster' (Bagshaw, 2005, p. 17). Hence, the pictorial film *manifesto* – which used pictorial tools such as brushes, tempera colours, watercolours, as well as pencils to produce the effect of a painting – began to fade away. This occurred mostly for economic reasons and due to the more efficient use of refined technical tools and media (photography, computers, trailers, and television). The *manifesto*, as we know it during the golden years, was vanishing.

The role of graphic artists

Graphic artists involved in the cultural industry had a remarkable role in representing, and at the same time propagating, the socio-cultural atmosphere of the time. My thesis shall refer to these artists involved in the film industry as 'socio-cultural mediators.' They operated within an extensive network and mediated relationships between modern Italian society and the needs

of the cultural industry, visual arts, cinema, and advertising. This current work aims to give an account of the complex relationships among the artists, the industrial requirements, and the needs of society at that time. The purpose is to shed new light on the intersections between the artists and industry as the former apply their creative power and artistic approach to the *manifesto*. The Italian expression *pittori di cinema* will often recur in this thesis. This term is often utilised by scholars (Baroni, 2018) to elevate the work of these artists above the status of commercial graphic artists. However, the use of the Italian term in this thesis will allow for greater consideration of the aesthetic nature of the work of these artists in the promotional message of cinema. This is an essential aspect to explore: the expression *pittori di cinema* can lead to meaningful insights as it gives significance to the artisanal nature that Italian poster designers mostly maintained until the 1970s. This nature of film *manifesti* will be read in relation to other significant, inescapable commercial and socio-cultural circumstances. Andy Pratt and Paul Jeffcutt's study of creativity in the cultural industry has highlighted that 'Creative employees are given specific roles and responsibilities within a larger system and other departments are needed to deal with other aspects of the work' (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009, p. 28). Therefore, this work shall focus on an 'operational framework' (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009) constituted by multiple commercial, social, and cultural factors that influenced the view of graphic designers and their artwork in a multitude of ways. Indeed, the artwork and its significance can only be assessed as part of a broader network of commercial and cultural relations, without which it would not exist.

Thesis aims and objectives

This current work challenges the lack of a general recognition afforded to film *manifesti* and their designers in Italy during an age of mass consumption. Evidence for this absence includes the limited, or at best fragmented, studies focusing on the graphic artists who worked for film

industry. These artists marked an epoch which has been defining for the Italian cultural industry and its development towards a modern mass society. Ultimately, there is a need to elaborate the professional experience of these artists to evaluate their role fully in visual culture at that time. My thesis will explore the role of creativity in Italian film *manifesti* in relation to the growing industrialisation and commercialisation taking place in Italy during this age of mass consumption. Additionally, it will explore how graphic artists dealt with the juxtaposition of their own creativity and the industrial needs they had to meet, along with certain socio-cultural 'limits' on their work. In recent decades, exhibitions have afforded some of these graphic artists a degree of recognition and visibility in Italy (Brunetta, 2002; Longi, 2002; Cinelli *et al.*, 2008; Baroni, 2018). However, this more recent recognition has been driven by impassioned poster collectors, relatives of the artists, and experts in film studies. This has led to a piecemeal exploration of their work, which overlooks several key points (e.g., Americanisation and censorship) and often adopts a cinema studies and film studies perspective (see literature review in chapter one). This approach is limited because it neglects the deeper aesthetic, commercial, and creative features of the *manifesti* together with their relevance as historical documents of the era of mass consumption, as Rodney Allen also pinpointed (Allen, 1994). Hence, film *manifesti* still lack broad recognition, which is unfortunate given their crucial role in the Italian transition from a post-war society to a fully mass consumerist way of life. This transition included pushback against censorship and entailed wider socio-cultural ramifications.

This work shall explore the tangled network of interactions between the Italian cultural industry, popular tastes, patterns of consumption, and how graphic artists interpreted such links through *manifesti* for cinema. From a critical perspective, how did artists act as socio-cultural catalysts during the era of global commercialisation and mass consumption? Furthermore, how did graphic artists develop creative projects that accounted for consumer impulses while being

subjected to external commercial and socio-cultural pressures? In essence, the thesis argues that film *manifesti* should be seen as a nexus linking socio-cultural customs and patterns of consumption. Hence, functional decisions were made to ensure that *manifesti* were relevant to the target audience and would break through any potential socio-cultural barriers, so that any illustrations used would enhance the mass consumption of the given product advertised (e.g., a film).

Indeed, poster artists can be viewed as serving cinema by being unique protagonists of the figurative culture of consumerism who foregrounded posters as a means of shedding light on a broader cultural and social context. Hence, through an interdisciplinary perspective, this project aims to re-evaluate graphic art and some of the most representative Italian artists connected to the field of film posters who have made an essential contribution to the cultural development of post-war Italy (1945-1969). In focusing on *manifesti*, the current work will discuss not only the referent (i.e., the film advertised) but also examine the visual representative messages in depth, with their multi-layered implications (social, cultural, commercial, ideological) analysed in the context of mass society. Such effects are involved in a broader historical dimension that allows for the identification of the link between industry and artists, and the implications of this link concerning the development of social customs interpreted through a modern means of communication.

Methodology

In order to meet the aims and objectives of the thesis, I have crafted a solid yet flexible framework for analysing the corpus of primary sources (film *manifesti* and drafts, which include unrealised as well as realised designs) concerning the films they reference. The work investigates a range of approaches that arise from different disciplinary perspectives, focusing on historical, socio-cultural, and art historical scholarship, a few examples of which are listed

below. Firstly, I have tracked the history of Italian cinema (from the 1940s to the 1970s) (Micciché, 1995; Bondanella, 2001; Brunetta, 2004; Wood, 2005), and analysed the context of Italian graphic arts during the twentieth century (Coradeschi and Rostagno, 1987; Newark, 2002; Baroni and Vitta, 2012). Successively, I focused more specifically on the history of Italian film posters (Turconi, 1984; Baroni, 1996; Bagshaw, 2005; Della Torre, 2014), and the available exhibition catalogues and biographies related to Italian graphic artists in general and the artists central to my study (Marinozzi, 2011; Brunoro and Giacomini, 2016; Baroni, 2018). In order to contextualise graphic arts and artists I focused on art historians and critics' contributions (Berger *et al.*, 1972; Duncan, 1988; Robinson and Ormiston, 2013). I have also reviewed literature on the concept of creativity in the cultural industry (Amabile, 1998; Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009; Sagiv *et al.*, 2009) and marketing strategies for advertising, with a focus on the relationship between the American and Italian marketing systems (De Grazia, 1989; De Iulio and Vinti, 2009; Bini and Fasce, 2015); as well as on the psychology of the 'crowd' (Le Bon, 1896) as a basis for placing consumer behaviour in relation to mass consumption and the development of mass society, established progressively with specific features. I then examined issues concerning consumerism and censorship viewed from a Catholic perspective (Chinnici, 2003; Treveri Gennari, 2009; Brook, 2019), which have influenced creative development in film advertising. Issues concerning increased consumption and its connection with the use of women in images are only dealt with in the narrow confines related to specific imagery discussed for *manifesti* and, for instance, when relevant to specific arguments that may be discussed, such as the American star system.

One of the key areas focused on is the development and characteristics of mass consumption within an Italian context (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007; Scarpellini, 2008; Anania, 2013); and theories of cultural studies formulated explicitly around the concept of popular culture are included (Maltby, 1989; Storey, 2001). While one of the most common definitions

of popular culture refers to ‘a residual category, there to accommodate texts and practices that fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture’ (Storey, 2001, p. 6), such a definition is not particularly useful in the context of the work presented in this thesis. This is because it underestimates the innovation and complexity of the products of popular culture.¹¹ The two definitions of ‘popular culture’ provided by John Storey are more useful in this current work than the other.¹² On the one hand, they refer to a straightforward definition of popular culture as ‘simply culture that is widely favoured or well-liked by many people’ (Storey, 2001, p. 5). On the other hand, graphic artists provide a functional identification that focuses on the concept of popular culture as ‘mass culture [which is] mass produced for mass consumption’ (Storey, 2001, p. 8), which is useful for exploring the art of film *manifesti*, specifically by post-war graphic artists (as examined in chapters three, four and five of this thesis). In addition, these definitions are useful because they facilitate the contextual analysis of advertising *manifesti* as a powerful means of communication and, consequently, for the analysis of the work by graphic artists as socio-cultural mediators. Moreover, the thesis excludes the connotation that popular culture, when identified as mass culture, embraces ‘the notion of consumption as an automatic and passive activity’ (Storey, 2001, p. 8). The reason for excluding this is that the analysis undertaken through the study of film *manifesti* emphasises active involvement, including a change in social customs, adding greater significance to a cultural product (examined further in chapter five).

When a dogmatic notion prevails between mass culture and passive reception of consumption, ineluctable proximity to ‘an *imported* American culture’¹³ (Storey, 2001, p. 8) is evoked and identified under the complex phenomenon of ‘Americanisation’ (explored in

¹¹ ‘This definition of popular culture is often supported by claims that popular culture is mass-produced commercial culture, whereas high culture is the result of an individual act of creation’ (Storey, 2001, p. 6).

¹² These are in line with two of the definitions coined by Storey, referred to in his book as the third and fourth definition.

¹³ My emphasis.

chapter three). The latter is explored in this thesis as a phenomenon that reveals an Italian reinterpretation (of ‘Americanisation’) within a local context of socio-cultural development. In line with a positive critical evaluation of the concept of popular culture as mass culture,¹⁴ Richard Maltby argued that ‘popular culture provides [...] an escape for our utopian selves’ (Maltby, 1989, p. 14), interpreting popular culture as a dream world. Furthermore, he points out that ‘[i]f it is the crime of popular culture that it has taken our dreams and packaged them and sold them back to us, it is also the achievement of popular culture that it has brought us more and more varied dreams than we could otherwise ever have known’ (Maltby, 1989, p. 14). Therefore, the thesis will explore the subject of film *manifesti* and the practice of Italian graphic artists in the context of both terms of Americanisation and popular culture.

In order to meet my research objectives, I have mapped and subsequently explored public graphic archives in Italy to seek out original advertising materials for cinema (official posters, initial drafts, and rejected designs). I conducted five interviews with artists, directors of museums and collectors, and this helped build my assessment of the broader socio-cultural context in which they (artists especially) were working, as well as of the current status of film *manifesti* as representative of a bygone era. The central aim was to frame a dialogue between the artist’s experience, the constraints presented by the cultural industry, and the power of their creative and artistic visual communication as fundamental features of the era of mass culture and consumer society in Italy. Likewise, first-hand accounts from collectors (such as Maurizio Baroni and Paolo Marinozzi) who own a significant number of film posters have been meaningful to my research findings. They have provided a context whereby historical memories through the decades have been layered through the visual intermedial expression of the personal styles of graphic artists. The fieldwork and face-to-face meetings were fertile and innovative works of this study, and they were often surprising. The opportunity to conduct

¹⁴ Cf. Maltby, R. (1989) *Dreams for Sale: Popular culture in the 20th century*, London: Harrap.

interviews with graphic artists of the time was the most unique and unexpected side of the research. These interviews were a potential game-changer in terms of assessing the field of advertising for cinema during the period of interest.

This thesis focuses on the advertising *manifesto* at the service of cinema. Thus, it openly refers to another medium: film. Consequently, an individual film becomes the object of representation of the *manifesto*. It does so in a critical sense, as we are dealing with a relation between (at least) two media, as Jens Schröter puts it, ‘[an intermedial representation] must be a representation that refers explicitly to the represented medium’ (Schröter, 2011, p. n.p.), which is the *raison d’être* of film *manifesti*. By foregrounding the film *manifesto* as a particular form of creative practice that arises from the encounter of different media, it is useful to examine the *manifesto*’s intermedial nature ‘[...] so that one can understand the work and its significance’ (Higgins and Higgins, 2001, p. 53). Therefore, the analysis of film *manifesti* inevitably requires an intermedial ‘category’¹⁵ that is useful, in a broad sense, to develop a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective and to enhance interdisciplinary discussion.

Irina Rajewsky’s view on intermediality identifies ‘a wider variety of intermedial qualities’ (Rajewsky, 2005, p. 50); subsequently inferring three ‘subcategories’ from the umbrella term: medial transposition, media combination and intermedial references (Rajewsky, 2005). I believe that film *manifesti* are characterized by a ‘quality of intermediality’ in a broad sense. However, the need to more accurately categorise the main object examined throughout this thesis is unavoidable due to the blending of a variety of media, including posters, film, paintings, magazine/book illustrations. In my view, two of the subcategories identified by Rajewsky align with the main media focus of this thesis. I would classify film *manifesti* as a phenomenon of *medial transposition*, namely an intermedial quality that ‘has to do with the

¹⁵ Taking into account Irina O. Rjeswsky’s description and interpretation of “intermediality as a fundamental condition or category”, I will support this approach throughout the whole thesis.

way in which media products comes into being, i.e., with the transformation of a given media product (a text, a film, etc.) or of its substratum into another medium. [...] The ‘original’ text, film, etc., is the ‘source’ of the newly formed product’ (Rajewsky, 2005, p. 51). Thus, considered as the outcome of a process of ‘intermedial transformation,’ the film *manifesto* might be seen as an iconic and concise re-interpretation of a film’s storyline (its primary source). A *manifesto*, therefore, ensures continuity between imagery and object, as an image in motion is transformed into a still image, passing through the territory of painting.

To a certain extent, I view film *manifesti* as fulfilling the criteria of the ‘intermedial references’ (coined by Rajewsky). For this type of media relationship “one medium is materially present” (Rajewsky, 2005, p. 53), in our case the *manifesto*, which ‘thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another [*the film*],¹⁶ conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means’ (Rajewsky, 2005, p. 53). As will be seen over the course of the critical analysis of *manifesti*, graphic artists typically attempted to emphasise a ‘cinematic view’ (with close-ups, backgrounds in soft focus, crosscuts) through the use of pictorial and graphic instruments. Therefore, *manifesti* reference the original medium of film. According to the first model of medial transposition, such reference goes through a ‘transformation process’. As viewed through the lens of intermedial references, the media relationship reveals a transparent intention of simulating a narrative and formal level of the medium referred to, whilst maintaining the specific quality of the ‘referencing medium’.

The most evident result of an intermedial approach is a more detailed assessment of media relationships during the study of the film *manifesto*, interpreted as a specific form of media. Moreover, this approach justifies the adoption of visual comparisons of multiple forms of art (pictorial, graphics, or cinematic), which are useful in identifying distinguishing features of the Italian film *manifesti* analysed. Thus, considering the study of the film *manifesto* as an

¹⁶ My italics.

intermedial phenomenon, several modes of visibility of diverse media may overlap, whilst remaining within a single, diachronically developed medium (Rajewsky, 2005). My thesis is historically grounded, so that it focuses primarily on the way film *manifesti* have been conceived and perceived in relation to the historical context within which they developed. Furthermore, my analysis is specifically confined to the post-war period during which a progressive rise in mass consumption occurred; a time-period when the use of *manifesti* became particularly effective and iconic, eventually being assimilated by the mass culture of Italian society.

I shall employ my academic training in art history to carry out an in-depth visual analysis of *manifesti* and drafts, paying attention to iconography, composition, style, and technique. Likewise, artistic and individual distinctions by means of formal comparisons will be undertaken. This approach will enable me to verify Italian trends in the creative practice of film *manifesti* from 1945 to 1969, albeit in relation to an ever-greater global scenario. I shall read the series of signs that constitute film *manifesti* from an aesthetic point of view, and the message that they publicize from a broader perspective. My analysis will be organised chronologically by decade, situating the *manifesti* within the historical context of their production. This approach will allow me to examine the significance of film *manifesti* as both products and producers of social, cultural, and artistic change.

Consequently, the pictorial techniques and narrative effects used by the central case study of this thesis, the artist Averardo Ciriello (chapter four), are evaluated. His art and *manifesti* embrace these key points; in essence, he embodies the role that the art of film *manifesti* had on Italian culture and society as well as any single artist could. Moreover, Ciriello's career spanned the period of interest, from the aftermath of the Second World War until the late 1970s; hence, in addition to the graphic archives available which host most of his original designs for cinema, he represents a compelling and instructive case study.

Textual analysis is included in the assessment of *manifesti*, focused on exploring the figurative role of lettering, where relevant, and how word and image work together to produce meaning. Moreover, I will analyse the *verso* of original drafts (where accessible), which reveal details of the design brief issued to artists, providing insight into the commercial strategies of the film industry. The draft's *verso* and the notes gathered (where available) will enable significant and critical assessment of the relationship between the publicity departments of the film industry and the artist. By foregrounding the role of drafts, my analysis highlights their considerable importance for both *pittori di cinema* and advertising directors. During the design process of an advertising *manifesto*, different steps can typically be identified: a preliminary step involves sketches, a rough drawing of an object or scene outlined very briefly in monochrome using basic tools (e.g., pencil or pen); a draft (or a plurality of drafts) which is a more detailed description of the design's subject with a more precise guide as to the colours and any nuances in design, the draft often displays the effects of lettering (its final style and position); a final draft, where the designer finalises the draft with all ensuing details included and any changes are incorporated; lastly, a final *manifesto* is ready for printing. Therefore, the draft enabled artists to showcase their artistic creativity and ability to identify promotional ideas for advertising. Consequently, at the draft stage, artists had greater freedom to experiment with their artistic and narrative views of a film and to explore alternative creative responses. Multiple drafts were essential for the press agent (in charge of selecting the artist and promotional material for a film) to evaluate the most appealing and persuasive designs for a successful *manifesto*, striking a balance between competing priorities: commercial needs and creative quality.

Research fieldwork

As part of my study, I have undertaken extensive research trips in Italy, for a total of four months. This fieldwork represented the most critical and challenging part of my research, with unexpectedly positive results as well as less productive outcomes. My research trips focused on iconographic analysis of visual sources and meetings with poster collectors, academics, and graphic artists. The centres visited included graphic archives containing film posters, original drafts, and other advertising material central to my study. As such, I was able to gain first-hand access to primary visual material available in key centres in Italy.¹⁷ This material is central to my thesis as it evidences the typical graphic and artistic style of film posters of the period under consideration and its development through the decades. It has also allowed me to undertake a more in-depth investigation of the development of a modern Italian visual culture following the Second World War. While accessing primary research material, I focused specifically on drafts, as they are vital in enabling assessment of the creative process undertaken, including the tracing of art/style development employed within a *manifesto*.

During my first research trip, I had the opportunity to visit archives including the *Centro Studi Archivio della Comunicazione* of Parma (CSAC), where a significant number of drafts by Averardo Ciriello are preserved. This graphic archive was a veritable cultural resource. It provided access to invaluable research material and helped me effectively meet my objectives. It also allowed me to engage in a unique analysis of the transition in artwork both from draft to final *manifesto* across the decades. The availability of such rich archival material on Ciriello was central to the decision to focus on his artistic production as the central case study of my thesis as regards my analysis of the artwork available. It is important to access primary material to conduct this type of research because the verso of drafts in some cases still contain

¹⁷ Fondazione Cineteca and Renzo Renzi Library – Bologna; CSAC, Centro studi e archivio della comunicazione – Parma; Museum of the film poster, and archive, *Fermo Immagine* – Milan; Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia – Rome

information pertaining to the commercial brief for the artist. Furthermore, drafts leading to the final poster, enable the design process to be evaluated in detail; the variety of initial drafts is also important in itself as they evidence the range of creative ideas explored by the artist. In some cases evaluation of drafts also highlights how commercial pressures influenced the process of developing drafts and a final poster.

During my research trips, interviews were required with pivotal figures to enable assessment of the artistic changes that took place from a first draft to the final printed film *manifesto*. This also included exploration of the interplay between commercial needs and artistic creativity. Through my research, I identified key collectors (Maurizio Baroni, Paolo Marinozzi), and artists to interview, both formally and informally. I obtained ethical approval from the University of Birmingham to enable me to meet and interview these key figures to develop my research aims. Further, I have consulted research centres and museums, such as the graphic archive in the *Cineteca* of Bologna, *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* in Rome (CSC), the *Fermo Immagine* museum in Milan, and the *Cinema a Pennello* museum in Montecosaro.

I initially spent three months viewing archives, visiting museums, and networking at centres. The aim was to consult the primary material first-hand and interview vital figures all central to my thesis. Some of those interviews were undertaken during my second research trip (June-July 2018). The individuals able to make a meaningful contribution to my research due to the significance of their knowledge and viewpoints are as follows: Maurizio Baroni is a film poster connoisseur who donated his poster collection (25,000 pieces of original film advertising) to the *Biblioteca Renzo Renzi* - *Cineteca* of Bologna. Baroni has extensive connections with emblematic figures in film studies and graphic arts, including graphic artists from the historical period on which this thesis is focused. Paolo Marinozzi is the owner and director of the film-poster museum *Cinema a Pennello* (Montecosaro), the only museum of its

kind in Italy. It is the only exhibition centre in Italy entirely devoted to film *manifesti* and original drafts, as well as iconic objects from some movie sets. This museum has collected a significant amount of film advertising material made by *pittori di cinema*. Furthermore, artists from the epoch, although elderly, remained engaged in the field of graphic arts until recent times. Following initial discussion with some of them, I had the chance to meet Silvano Campeggi, known as ‘Nano’ (from Florence), who sadly passed away before the completion of my thesis; I also had the privilege of consulting the private collections of the graphic artists Giuliano Nistri (from Anzio) and Tino Avelli (from Rome).

There were few but significant hindrances encountered during my research trip that affected some of my original plans. The poster archives of the *Cineteca di Bologna*, the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* (CSC) in Rome, the *Museo Fermo Immagine* in Milan and the *Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione* in Parma do not have an online/hardcopy database to facilitate consultation. The archives are under-resourced and require upgrades to existing infrastructure: a limited number of staff work there; there is no in-built contingency to staffing (so if a specific member of staff is unavailable, the material cannot be accessed); in general, there are no updated criteria for cataloguing or systems to support the location of material. Thus, there were challenges in accessing the visual material I wished to consult. At the *Fermo Immagine* museum in Milan and the CSC in Rome, I had only limited access to the film posters I sought to view. As some posters were in delicate physical condition, I was not allowed to view these first-hand (instead, I was given access to digital copies).

I have effectively integrated the quantity and variety of research material necessary to sustain the study presented within this thesis. In my view, the selected material presented has enabled the analysis and evaluation of the critical points raised in this thesis. Furthermore, interviews with graphic artists, collectors, and other stakeholders have been used to help determine whether the artistic contribution evaluated in terms of its socio-cultural implications

are appropriate and meaningful. Not all of the visual material gathered and evaluated through my research has been integrated into my thesis. It is not feasible to collate, analyse, and present the substantial volume of material available within the different archives that I visited in this thesis. Therefore, it was necessary to restrict the analysis of the ample first-hand material of study based on clear criteria. The best-preserved corpus of *manifesti* and drafts, which were more easily manageable, were selected. Following this, where feasible, the artistic material chosen, to represent the history of advertising for cinema and graphic arts during the time period of interest, were selected based on how compelling they were in terms of the cultural industry's practices in relation to the development of mass consumption in Italy. However, given the research questions highlighted in this thesis, it is the complete set of advertising material (e.g., printed *manifesto* and its multiple original drafts) that were deemed invaluable in enabling the evaluation of the creative process in developing a *manifesto*; e.g., how did a graphic artist alter a *manifesto* based on commercial pressures or censorship? Such a question cannot be tackled by assessing a single *manifesto* in isolation.

Thesis structure

This thesis has been structured to meet the research objectives set out earlier, dealing with the evolution of the artistic *manifesto*, especially concerning the dynamics of the growth in mass culture, resulting in commercial pressure on an artist, international influences, and issues of censorship. Therefore, chapter one deals with the analysis of the context of the artistic and advertising *manifesto*. This analysis requires an assessment of the history and critical reception of the *manifesto*, reviewing the key literature from which my study has developed. The main conclusions of this chapter focus primarily on the current state of the study of *manifesti* and the significant gaps in the literature. Within the context of the study on Italian film *manifesti*, this

chapter demonstrates how my research opens new scenarios in the literature with an original perspective, as well as filling a gap in the academic literature.

Chapter two demonstrates how artists, around 1910, became part of a greater cultural and industrial project in experimenting with a new visual language in line with that period. With a historical approach to the research, this chapter intends to offer a critical overview of the first model for a modern advertising *manifesto*, which replaced the previously crucial role of town-crier in commercial exchanges (dating back to medieval times). This approach in analysing the origins of the advertising *manifesto* sheds light on the development of its intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics in connection with the growing needs of the demanding consumer society, which is a crucial context of my thesis. Moreover, the assessment of the historical progression of forms of advertising will enable a more authentic chronology of the multi-medial links to be identified. These have been developed as regards functional instruments, such as voice, lettering and figurative images, with the final aim of recognizing the role of artistic creativity in *manifesti* of the 20th century. From a critical viewpoint, this chapter aims to progressively place the *manifesto* within the context of mass society and mass culture. In this context, it is crucial to examine the dual nature of film *manifesto* (an artistic output with commercial ends) and the close ties it has always established with the tradition of figurative arts. With this in mind, the conclusion addresses the following questions: How and when did publicity for film *manifesti* and art intersect? Why did the artist's role become relevant in the development and dissemination of a new advertising language? How did a pioneering application of an expressive quality of art in advertising design open the door for *pittori di cinema*?

Chapter three defines the status of post-war graphic artists at the service of cinema and their close links to the growth of commercialization (industrial/social demands), mass culture, and the need for creativity by the cultural industry. The chapter aims, therefore, to portray

poster artists as crucial characters in the figurative culture of consumerism, developed during the second half of the twentieth century, in the context of the competitive development of industrialization. Additionally, this chapter formalises the entrance of mass (visual) media into modern Italian culture, consequently leading to increased involvement of graphic artists in the industrial creative process. Hence, the key questions are: How did graphic artists take part in an increasingly consumerist lifestyle? How did they establish themselves as socio-cultural mediators within the development of mass society? What historical changes enabled graphic artists to play the role of active mediator, linking commercial purposes, needs of creativity, and social development? Through this chapter, I argue that *pittori di cinema*, as artists involved in the cultural industry, had a powerful role in the shaping of public taste in art, promoting content, and inducing collective behaviour (while dealing with a variety of pressures). This chapter will explore how graphic artists faced challenges related to external pressures to maintain their pictorial and creative approach to the representation of films in *manifesti*. American influence must be seen as an element of commercial pressure as well as a (visual) role model for Italian advertising, which influenced the cultural industry more generally during the onset and development of mass consumption.

Chapter four is a case study of a post-war artist, examining the complex link between creativity and increasingly demanding commercial needs. The activity of the graphic artist Averardo Ciriello will be assessed, focusing on first-hand material such as film *manifesti* and drafts and, where relevant, undertaking a comparative analysis of contemporary visual culture. As we have seen, Averardo Ciriello had a long career in Italy as an advertising artist, experiencing cultural and social changes first-hand, from the early 1940s to the late 1990s. The 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were prolific for Ciriello's activity, specifically in the film industry, for which he designed approximately 3000 *manifesti*. Hence, he was extensively involved in the cultural industry, influencing the development of a society as it became culturally more

modern at a time when mass consumerism was starting to take hold. He was one of the graphic artists who re-shaped popular aesthetic tastes through the use of an appealing promotional language. A selection of first-hand drafts and, where available, final *manifesti* from 1943-45 to the 1960s, will be used to identify how Ciriello responded to industrial and commercial needs. They will also be examined for the consequent effects on his artistic creativity within the context of representing a film during the period of development of mass consumption. This assessment focuses on repositioning and re-evaluating the imagery of film *manifesti* from the perspective of one of its most prolific artists. The artwork by Averardo Ciriello has not yet undergone assessment in relation to the cultural industry or the needs of advertising within the context of global mass society. Therefore, mainly through the attentive analysis of compelling and valuable visual sources (e.g., original drafts), and the ensuing creative process toward a final, accepted *manifesto*, this chapter aims to tackle the following questions: How have commercial needs influenced the creative development of Averardo Ciriello's artwork and to what ends? How did Ciriello disentangle the competing interests between artistic creativity and commercialization in film *manifesti*?

The purpose of chapter five, the final chapter of my thesis, is to explore how religious and socio-political pressures influenced censorship and to examine the direct effect that Catholic moralism had on promotional campaigns for cinema. More specifically, this chapter evaluates how censorship influenced artists in producing their *manifesti*. Given the predominant influence of the Catholic Church and censorship during the 1950s and mid-1960s, films and advertising were frequently subject to political and religious policies focused on maintaining a collective sense of 'moral dignity.' The questions central to developing the interrelation between censorship, religious and socio-political perspectives in connection with film *manifesti* are: How did the revisions required by censorship affect creative development in film *manifesti*? How did artists resolve the tensions between artistic creativity and censorship in

film *manifesti*? To this aim, the chapter analyses selected advertising material for cinema, which is used to evaluate the effect of censorship in influencing the creative process of graphic artists. The analysis presented will highlight the role of film *manifesti* in this context as a powerful means of mass communication. One of the central resources to be analysed in this chapter is the first-hand account by the graphic artist Giuliano Nistri (whom I interviewed). It has enabled me to evaluate the effects that such pressures exerted on artists (at the service of cinema industry) and assess the commercially successful strategies employed by a flourishing artist at that time.

Additionally, this evaluation opens a window into the socio-cultural and political context – as well as religious conservatism – prevalent at that time in Italy. Critically, this analysis will consider graphic artists' creative ability to circumvent obstacles imposed by censors. It evokes the meaningful nature of film *manifesti* as emblematic cultural models of the time. They did not merely reflect society, but also acted as social catalysts, leading the transition into novel forms of cultural consumption. In the face of religious and political pressure, these *pittori di cinema* carved the way for this socio-cultural transition against censorship armed only with a paintbrush.

Chapter One

The manifesto: historical context and literature review

1.1 Introduction

Film and advertising are two forms of mass communication that have been closely linked from the inception of cinema. Similarly, the world of pictorial art and advertising have also enjoyed close connections, resulting in commercial *manifesti* where a modern sense¹ of commercial art appeared in Paris in the Belle Époque in the second half of the nineteenth century; when Jules Chéret, in 1859, began producing illustrated posters to great acclaim (Duncan, 2001; Ormiston and Robinson, 2013; Fasce, Bini and Gaudenzi, 2017). Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, working at the same time, also received significant recognition as the inventor of the pictorial advertising poster (Lodola, 2003; Ormiston and Robinson, 2013). From the Belle Époque onwards, posters began to showcase artistic technique and an expressive pictorial language (Brunelli and Ferraresi, 2003). The link between art and advertising was representative of the affirmation and development of industrialization, as well as the changing perception of society, which was moving towards modern consumerism. At the end of the nineteenth century, Italy too began to witness a revolution in consumption (albeit slowly); therefore, the initial effects of this transition also influenced the socio-cultural role of the means of communication (Scarpellini, 2008). Growing industrialization fostered the use of artistic forms to publicise commercial products, aimed at increasing consumer practices and encouraging people to take on the viewpoint of a consumer. This chapter is centred on reviewing the relevant literature, and it will first introduce how advertising art was initially received within the broader field of the

¹ The characteristics of a modern commercial *manifesto* are related to its size and formats, as well as its supports and the use of at least three colours. As Fasce, Bini and Gaudenzi states: “Lo caratterizzano anzitutto le dimensioni a grandezza naturale, che variano dal formato standard 140 × 140 a quello 200 × 300 cm e oltre. Poi i supporti che col tempo evolvono da ‘poche e mastodontiche tabelle in ferro [...] o i muri e gli steccati delle fabbriche’ a ‘leggeri ed eleganti quadri di lamiera zincata. Infine l’uso sapiente e immaginifico di almeno tre colori’ (Fasce, Bini and Gaudenzi, 2017, pp. 23–24).

visual arts. Then, it will explore how scholars have received and critically reviewed the advertising *manifesto*. It will contextualize the critical recognition of the advertising *manifesto* (from pre-war to the 1970s) and poster designers involved in this cultural project decade by decade, from the 1970s up to the present day. This chapter will focus specifically, albeit not exclusively, on film *manifesti*. However, as film *manifesti* form part of a broader context within the advertising arts, I shall provide an overview of the literature focused on contextualising the critical reception of the advertising *manifesto*. This broader analysis will be useful for providing the context for the formal and commercial components of visual advertising that can also be observed in film *manifesti*. Furthermore, this assessment helps highlight possible discriminating factors in the critical reception of distinct types of advertising posters (e.g., consumer goods, cultural products or events, and so on).

Until recently, graphic design occupied a peripheral position in the field of contemporary Italian studies and figurative arts (Montini, 1979; Quintavalle, 1996; Brunetta, 2002). Indeed, until recently it was neglected by scholars, despite the fact that it is a significant example of an artistic contribution with a set of recognisable expressive languages and which was important over a substantial period of time: from the end of the nineteenth to the twentieth century in Italy. This lack of attention is evidenced by the state of public poster collections, which are few, disorganised, often incomplete, and often not easily accessible to the public. These points demonstrate the need for a more structured approach and greater access to, and cataloguing of, archives. In 1979, Montini recognised at least two causes for this deficiency: the persistent lack of interest in the ‘applied arts’ (which have a commercial function) by the public sector (including general public, as well as public museums), despite their being part and parcel of Italian cultural heritage; secondly, the relatively low perceived status of advertising posters as objects of study in academic culture, both Italian and, to a lesser extent, international (Montini, 1979). Although there is a recent growth of scholarly interest in popular

culture and Italian advertising art, and specifically for film *manifesti* (Longi, 2002; Marinozzi, 2011; Della Torre, 2014; Baroni, 2018), its study remains fragmented, and generally appears of most interest to the field of film studies. Therefore, my research, in part, focuses on this gap in the literature. It also aims to broaden the approach to posters by taking on a wider range of perspectives, while still recognising an interest in the film *manifesto* as an object of study per se.

The type of interest in film *manifesti*, highlighted above, is in contrast to that in advertising *manifesti*. According to Alberto Bolaffi, what now attracts people to study Italian advertising *manifesti* is, above all, their intrinsic artistic language (Brunelli and Ferraresi, 2003). Scholars now appear more aware of this identifying aspect of the Italian film *manifesto* as well (Kehr, 2003; Bagshaw, 2005; Marinozzi, 2011; Baroni, 2018) and, in relation to specific artists (e.g., Anselmo Ballester, Angelo Cesselon, Silvano Campeggi), the creative facet is well developed. Despite this, our understanding of the *manifesti* could be further improved by demonstrating awareness of their links with consumerism, and how they are used to meet commercial ends, as well as better investigating other factors including political and cultural pressures, social norms, international influences, and so forth. These fascinating artworks were sometimes created by renowned artists who had training in art academies, such as Anselmo Ballester (1897-1974), Alfredo Capitani (1895-1985), and Luigi Martinati (1893-1983) (Kehr, 2003). More often, however, these graphic artists were unknown, despite being part of a broader cultural project that was closely linked to the development of modern mass society. For instance, many of these artists were not lacking in artistic commissions; in other words, they were known to industry, but not to the wider public. Throughout my thesis, I intend to focus on the role of artists as catalysts for a modern way of life compatible with a consumer-oriented society. With this in mind, the following literature review will progressively, and

chronologically, examine how advertising artists were critically recognised, if at all, and highlight the increasing interest – albeit gradual – from scholars and critics.

Compared to other European countries, such as Germany, France, and England, Italy's shift toward a more innovative style of graphic art was delayed. France, for example, boasted a rich production of posters of various genres since the eighteenth century (Maindrone, 1896). These have achieved recognition less for their commercial purpose than for their artistic value. In France, this resulted in earlier critical studies by scholars (Marx, 1962). The slow march of commercial arts in Italy toward innovation was associated with a delay in industrial progress and economic growth, which left Italy behind other industrialized countries at the time (Hunecke, 1977). However, it did not prevent Italy from having much to offer the world of commercial arts and graphic design. This delay did, though, impact on the critical reception of film *manifesti* within the wider visual arts; this is despite the fact that numerous artists contributed to what could be considered a golden age for Italian graphic arts. As Quintavalle highlights: 'Sarà bene ricordare che queste supposte 'arti minori,' come magari alcuni ritengono, sono invece i fatti chiave della nostra cultura. Non comprendere questi fatti vuol dire essere fuori della storia della cultura dell'icona, comprenderli vuol dire prepararsi a riscriverla. E non necessariamente come "storia dell'arte"' (Campari, Montini and Quintavalle, 1981, p. XXI).

The starting point of my analysis will be rooted in Quintavalle's assertion stated above. From this starting point, it is possible to draft a history of Italian *manifesti*, considering them as having an important impact on the cultural process in which Italy was involved. This was especially true in the second half of the twentieth century when practices of mass consumption were actively coming to the fore. Thus, it is useful to analyse film posters as an independent object of study, while emphasising their intermedial formal nature. From this

perspective, the intermedial dimension of film *manifesti* implies the crossing of media borders, which primarily exist to evoke an object of reference: the film.

The mapping of the critical study of the artistic *manifesto* will point out the remaining gaps in research, enabling me to pose a set of questions that are distinct from the existing literature. My focus is to shed new light on the enmeshed socio-cultural dynamics that differ from perspectives undertaken thus far by scholars and critics, specifically concerning post-war film *manifesti*.

1.2 Early critical work on *manifesti*: 1896-1970

My initial research into and analysis of the international critical literature related to Italian film posters has focused mainly on Italian studies on artistic film *manifesti* and advertising graphic art. It is clear that, when explicitly taking film *manifesti* into account, many of the major scholarly studies take a cinema studies approach (Baroni, 1996; Bagshaw, 2005) rather than an in-depth graphic arts perspective, with a few exceptions (Dell'Anno and Soccio, 1984; Lodola, 2003; Della Torre, 2014; Baroni, 2018). Additionally, literature has yet to provide a full account of the careers of key artists behind *manifesti*, although they contributed to the artistic-cultural development of a significant period in Italy. This has been a significant gap in the scholarship on graphic art that has only recently begun to be addressed (Brunelli and Ferraresi, 2003; Marinozzi, 2011; Della Torre, 2014; Baroni, 2018). It explains why this popular means of visual communication merits further study from a broader, and intermedial, perspective. An in-depth examination of Italian cinema and advertising through its *manifesti* will further the understanding of Italian culture and its society at large. Furthermore, it also serves to place more emphasis on graphic artists, who enriched this artistic and communicative language of commercial arts in the twentieth century in Italy.

Almost all of the bibliographical sources consulted date between the 1970s to the 2000s. The principal exception being that by Vittorio Pica (1862-1930),² whose three important essays on poster arts were republished in the book *Il manifesto. Arte e comunicazione alle origini della pubblicità*, a publication subsequently edited by Mariantonietta Picone Petrusa (Picone Petrusa, 1994).³ Picone Petrusa's book focuses on gathering the first Italian attempts to historicize the graphic genre of advertising poster. However, the few contributions by critics that precede the period 1970-2000 have not been accounted for.⁴ There are two underlying reasons for this. Firstly, it is quite challenging to find pre-1970s publications related to this field, arguably because interest in film *manifesti* as an object of research was marginal before the 1970s; hence, a more extensive search would be beneficial to lend a better understanding of the evolution of that interest, but investigation is limited by poor library cataloguing and holdings. Further, it is worth acknowledging that certain earlier contributions by scholars and historians, including those published during the decades taken into account (1970s-1980s), include inaccurate data related to posters and their artists, including such basic information as their names. This point highlights the difficulty in tracing and gathering biographical details within a field of commercial arts that was not fully recognised academically before the 1970s.⁵ Likewise, a considerable volume of film *manifesti* and original drafts have only recently come to light, becoming available via existing private collections (Della Torre, 2014). Moreover, the historical time frame examined in this thesis stretches from 1945 to the end of the 1960s, but

² For further information on the art critic Vittorio Pica see: Lacagnina, D. (2017) *L'officina internazionale di Vittorio Pica. Arte moderna e critica d'arte in Italia (1880-1930)*, Palermo: Torri del Vento.

³ Vittorio Pica's essays were originally published in the 1896 on the magazine *Emporium*.

⁴ E.g.: Lancellotti, A. (1912) *Storia aneddotica della réclame*, Milano, Riccardo Quintieri Editore; Lancellotti, A. (1926) *Mauzan. Cartelloni, opere varie*, Milano-Roma, Casa Editrice d'arte Bestetti e Tumminelli.

⁵ An example of unaccounted data is the catalogue edited by Lucio Scardino in 1988, in which the author does not know the artist's name under the pseudonym NANO (Silvano Campeggi), who actually was a poster artist of some note (Scardino, 1988).

inevitably most publications appear from the 1970s onwards; by the 1970s, a more reliable and comprehensive vision of the field began to emerge more clearly.⁶

This current review focuses on literature central to the research topic. The corpus of the literature analysed is composed of accounts by critics focused primarily on Italian posters related to advertising (Lodola, 2003) and specific catalogues of film poster exhibitions (Maioli, 1993). A few of these contributions focus specifically on artists (Dell'Anno and Soccio, 1984; Longi, 2002; Baroni, 2018).⁷ It is the intention of this study to extend its subject matter to the advertising mechanism of visual arts and its communicative and social role with regard to the history of Italian cinema (from 1945 to 1969).

Vittorio Pica (1864-1930), Italian art critic and writer, and frequent contributor to the Italian magazine *Emporium*⁸ spearheaded initial discussions on *manifesti* in Italy, which had been almost entirely absent in art critics before him. Vittorio Pica appears to have developed an interest in advertising posters around 1896 after seeing the poster *Ardenze a gas Auer* by Giovanni Mataloni (1869-1944) displayed on Italian street walls (Picone Petrusa, 1994). It has, henceforth, been considered the first modern poster of Italian graphic art (Various authors, 2002). Vittorio Pica provided a novel perspective on Italian graphic art. In fact, 'In Pica troviamo un nucleo di pensiero moderno quando si occupa di arti applicate e in particolare di manifesti e di grafica' (Picone Petrusa, 1994, p. 15). Pica appears to focus specifically on decorative (ornamental) features while analysing posters or *manifesti*. In 1904, Pica received a request from the Mele brothers, owners of the Grandi Magazzini Mele of Naples⁹ (Picone Petrusa, 1988). They wished to celebrate the first fifteen years of their business with a small

⁶ E.g.: Villani, D. (1946) *La pubblicità e i suoi segreti*, Milano: Editoriale Domus.

⁷ This catalogue focuses on three graphic artists considered the key contributors in the production of film posters: Anselmo Ballester, Alfredo Capitani and Luigi Martinati.

⁸ *Emporium* was one of the first Italian art magazines published by the Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche di Bergamo from January 1895 to December 1964. For a bibliographical reference, see: Mirandola, G. 1985. *Emporium e l'Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche 1895-1915*, Bergamo: Nuovo Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche.

⁹ The company, founded in 1889, was famous at the time for its modern marketing strategies and the commissioning of beautiful posters. Picone Petrusa's book is the catalogue of the exhibition of advertising posters held in Naples in 1988.

book on their graphic materials, including posters, along with a short catalogue with data related to artists and years of print. Mele's company was actively interested in the aesthetic quality of its promotional materials, which proved especially attentive and selective (De Iulio and Abruzzese, 1996). This exemplary collection of promotional material, *E. & A. Mele & Ci. 15 anni di affissioni*, from 1889 to 1904, was the first monograph on Italian advertising posters that was representative of a particular industry. Pica also added his own lively reviews to the work.

Pica's essays represented the first example of the recognition of artistic value and creativity associated with the medium of the *manifesto*. Consequently, he also provided initial recognition of the artistic merits of the artists responsible. Pica's evaluation of posters, which defined them as artworks in their own right,¹⁰ originated from the artwork made by French artists, such as Jules Chéret (1836-1932) and Henri de Toulouse Lautrec (1864-1901). Their contribution was fundamental to the art of illustration in general and instrumental for the development of graphic arts in Europe during the twentieth century. They are still perceived as the fathers of the modern illustrated poster (Quintavalle, 1996). The esteem with which Pica held French, English and American artists is documented in his essays and evidenced by his words of encouragement to Italian artists to follow their example, 'E finisco ancora una volta augurandomi che i nostri artisti si lascino persuadere dall'esempio del Mataloni e di tanti illustri pittori francesi, inglesi ed americani' (Picone Petrusa, 1994, p. 29).

Another modern attitude that Pica revealed in his account involved the area of industrial production and the need for beauty in advertising to industry: 'I nostri industriali ed i nostri commercianti, che hanno bisogno di réclame, diano loro (agli artisti) spesso occasione di dimostrare il proprio valore anche in questa sfera di produzione artistica, meno modesta di

¹⁰ To quote Vittorio Pica: "[...] questa sfera di produzione artistica, meno modesta di quanto si creda e certo piena di avvenire". See: Pica, V. (1896) "Due nuovi disegni di G. Mataloni", in *Emporium*, vol.3 (14). Taken from: Picone Petrusa, M. (edited by), (1994) *Il manifesto: arte e comunicazioni nelle origini della pubblicità*, Napoli: Liguori.

quanto si creda e certo piena di avvenire'.¹¹ This demonstrates the importance of advertising, which at the time certain scholars (such as Pica) understood and embraced, demonstrated comprehension of historical development and hopefulness toward this modern expressive language. Pica highlighted the extraordinary communicative impact of *manifesti*, their ability to interact with the public, and their contribution to the representation of social reality.

1.3 Recognition for the film *manifesto* commences

From the 1970s onwards, scholarly interest in graphic art and illustration, and more specifically film posters, has grown. This newfound interest has driven certain scholars to explore the field in greater depth. The film critic and scholar Roberto Della Torre has written on the development of such studies. He states, 'È solamente dai primi anni settanta che si diffonde un discreto interesse nei confronti di questo interessante *paratesto*¹² che, considerato generalmente il cugino meno nobile del manifesto pubblicitario, inizia a trovare il proprio spazio nei testi dedicati allo studio delle arti grafiche' (Della Torre, 2014, p. 10). This interest has evolved through the scholarship since the 1970s and is based mainly on published catalogues (Vv.Aa., 1979). Such attention was demonstrated in the first exhibitions of film *manifesti* (Scardino, 1988), and bore witness to the first attempts to collect and classify public and private collections (such as that of Ferdinando Salce).¹³ Strikingly, as Della Torre puts it 'Al manifesto cinematografico viene lentamente riconosciuta una propria identità linguistica e stilistica mentre si iniziano a definire 'artisti' coloro che ne hanno fatto la storia' (Della Torre, 2014, p. 10).

¹¹ Pica, V. (1896) *Due nuovi disegni di G. Mataloni*, already published in *Mattino* di Napoli, and in *Emporium*, vol. 3, n. 14, in Picone Petrusa, (1994), p. 29.

¹² My emphasis to stress that Della Torre, as a film critic, sees the manifesto as a 'paratext', namely a framing element helpful for an in-depth study in Italian Cinema.

¹³ E.g.: Brunetta, G.P. (2002) *Il colore dei sogni: iconografia e memoria nel manifesto cinematografico italiano*, Torino, Testo & Immagine; Various authors, (1996) *Cento anni di manifesti: la collezione Salce compie un secolo*. Treviso, Canova.

The first Italian film poster exhibition was held in 1977, evidenced by Lucio Scardino's catalogue from 1988.¹⁴ At the time, Scardino himself had offered his private collection to Antonio Azzalli, the manager of several movie theatres in Ferrara, for an exhibition of one hundred *manifesti*. Upon receiving approval to organise the exhibition, he selected the visual material for the exhibition from among two thousand posters from international films, publicising them as spanning from 1928 to 1977. That being said, his selection criteria were heterogeneous; Scardino had predominantly selected *manifesti* dated between 1950 and 1969. As the author himself explains in his catalogue, this was mainly due to the difficulty in finding material: 'Mi sono infatti rivolto al magazzino bolognese della S.A.C. [Servizi Ausiliari Cinema] un'agenzia che si occupa di pubblicit  murale: ebbene molti manifesti non erano mai passati per quegli scaffali, mentre altri erano gi  finiti al macero' (Scardino, 1988). Thus, through Scardino's research and his collection of *manifesti* for the exhibition, it became evident that most posters had simply been destroyed. This underscores some of the major challenges in the field. In particular, it highlights the lack of awareness and negligence by Italian production companies and advertising agencies concerning the historical and artistic value of their posters. Regardless of their commercial end, they also represented a strand of popular Italian art of the twentieth century. The loss of historical sources that would otherwise have provided snapshots of the development of advertising through the years is of particular concern. As Rodney F. Allen has argued: 'Today those posters are a powerful record of ideas, products, concerns, and events' (Allen, 1994, p. 52). They include customs and culture of post-war Italy, and their loss leads to a lack of current research and knowledge of these artists and their creative, communicative models. In light of the above, it is partly the intention of this thesis to respond to that inherent civic and documentary responsibility. It is relevant to

¹⁴ Lucio Scardino (Ferrara, 1957) is a well-known art historian, author of numerous studies and publications about national and local art (of Ferrara).

note that Scardino's work, at the time, was groundbreaking. The short film data section of his catalogue (which accompanied the black and white poster images) expressed an interest not merely in the film as object – which most other scholars had focused on through the decades – but also in the poster designs themselves. He described the iconographic aspects of the *manifesti*, noting features associated with technique, highlighting their aesthetic qualities and their ties with the broader art world. Furthermore, he noted that, although most of the graphic artists were little known (especially during his time), they were closely connected to the evolution of Italian poster design (recognised with the Italian word *cartellonismo*).¹⁵ Their images would gain prominence as icons, able to integrate into the mass culture in Italian society. In his own words, 'Seppure molti nomi di cartellonisti dicono poco, o forse nulla, alla piú parte del pubblico, tuttavia sono indissolubilmente legati all'evoluzione della cartellonistica e le loro opere immediatamente riconosciute' (Scardino, 1988, p. n.p). Scardino's observation that the posters were more recognisable than their artists underlines how the images shown through *manifesti* and posted on city walls made a lasting impression on passers-by. He describes them as powerful, 'colourful islands'. He confirmed the popular aspect of *manifesti*, recognizing them as figurative icons of the time. It is important, therefore, to assess the relationship between the public and the figurative messages conveyed to them through *manifesti*; i.e., the importance of the means of mass communication as a product for society and by society that uses alluring designs for promotion.

¹⁵ The Italian word *cartellonismo* relates to the physical medium (*cartellone* - billboard) used to design an advertising campaign.

1.4 The challenge of recognition for the film *manifesto* during the 1980s

Despite increasing enthusiasm for film posters in the 1970s, during the 1980s interest was limited to brief catalogues (Dell'Anno and Soccio, 1984). Moreover, film scholars showed little interest in examining figurative sources connected to the cinema on an analytical level, except through the attention paid to the film as object. This is nowhere more evident than in Davide Turconi's account from 1984, which is a catalogue that collects images of posters from international cinema. The catalogue never focuses on an iconographic analysis of the visual texts or their specific expressive language. For each image, he produced a short summary briefly outlining the film data, such as production year, director, and the original title of the film. Thus, close analysis of *manifesti* was beyond the scope of Turconi's project. Furthermore, the author added information regarding the film's popular success at the time, notable actor performances, technical characteristics of the film, and critiques at its release. Notably, he does not mention graphic artists by name, except for Anselmo Ballester (Rome, 1897-1974).¹⁶ Ballester was arguably one of the most famous poster artists and illustrators in the first half of the twentieth century, likely appreciated even more posthumously. In Turconi's description of the typographic and aesthetic appearance of the posters, he focused on emphasizing the importance of the communication that graphic artists brought on. He also mentioned the need to maintain similarities with scenes from the film and to adopt a multi-disciplinary dialogue. Nevertheless, the book largely neglects the artists' perspectives and the importance of their role in the promotion and success of the films being advertised.

Anselmo Ballester represents the challenges faced by the *pittori di cinema* when producing posters for the film industry. His account is particularly useful in offering a first-hand perspective of a graphic artist working within the film industry. In the catalogue *Anselmo*

¹⁶ He was an Italian painter and *cartellonista cinematografico* (film poster designer), one of the most recognised during the 1930s, 40s, 50s.

Ballester: le origini del manifesto cinematografico (Campari, Montini and Quintavalle, 1981), Ballester expressed his comments on the role of poster designers, and recreates the historical, social and artistic atmosphere linked to graphic art in the early decades of the twentieth century in Italy. He explains, for instance, the difficulties faced by poster designers at the beginning of the century in making a *manifesto* with the older printing technique, lithography.¹⁷ This technique limited artists' aesthetic perception in terms of colour usage and complexity up until the 1940s. Indeed, lithography required the use of flat colours, thus rendering handmade reproductions simpler (Campari, Montini and Quintavalle, 1981). Lithography was later replaced by a photomechanical reproduction system (off-set): the photolithograph which met artists' needs more efficiently, enabling the use of a wider spectrum of colours and the sfumato effect, with the general outcome being that reproductions were of higher quality by better representing the original draft.

However, a greater challenge is evidenced in the concern amongst artists regarding restrictions placed upon them by commissions: Ballester says, 'Ma non era soltanto il vincolo con la stampa che limitava le nostre capacità di pittori, poichè vi era stato sempre quello, peggiore, della inevitabile soggezione alle pretese dei committenti del cinema, che non si curavano tanto dell'opera d'arte (anche perchè d'arte non tutti se ne intendevano), quanto della efficacia e del richiamo che poteva avere il manifesto sul loro pubblico' (Campari, Montini and Quintavalle, 1981). A further assertion is even more revealing, 'Perciò la nostra capacità e fantasia di pittori poteva[no] meglio esprimersi sugli schizzi, che rappresentano la genuina ispirazione e l'eventuale abilità di ideatori, disegnatori e coloristi' (Campari, Montini and Quintavalle, 1981).

My research will take into account the preceding statement on the restriction of artistic

¹⁷ Lithography – Invented in the 1796 by the German printer Aloys Senefelder, was a method of printing from a stone or a metal plate with a smooth surface, exploiting a procedure dependent on the reciprocal aversion of oil and water.

expression. This is because the conditions revealed by Ballester, but not limited to him,¹⁸ will allow me to analyse the importance of drafting during the creative process. However, this thesis will consider these restrictions as challenges to be contended with by graphic artists involved in the film industry, and which have ultimately led to creative results through compromise (see chapters three, four, and five). My archival research has shown that the work produced at the draft stage was more experimental because it was more provisional; it represented the artists' artistic and, more broadly, cultural space where they could express their subjective style and vision fully, albeit in response to a design brief. In light of this, drafts may be the best medium to highlight the original ideas of an artist. Thus, Ballester's viewpoint, which belongs to the first generation of *pittori di cinema* (see chapter two), reveals that 'nel segno piú libero e nel colore piú ricco del bozzetto l'autore trova spesso una felicità espressiva maggiore rispetto all'elaborazione finale, a stampa e in grande formato, del manifesto' (Campari, 1981, p. 11). However, this artist highlighted the practical difficulties in implementing an integrated approach in advertising – which followed the inescapable guidelines from the film industry – while accounting for individual artistic sensibility. In other words, Ballester struggles to find the balance between the aesthetic expectations and function; in other words, quoting Quentin Newark, between 'the model of the artist, and the model of the artisan' (Newark, 2002, p. 11). This balance sought to blend aesthetic features with commercial function which, through a multi-step process, aimed to showcase a product and make it successful. This juxtaposition is investigated in the next chapter. Therefore, a novel contribution of this thesis can be found in its exploration of the distinctive note of creativity that can be extrapolated from the artists' original drafts when these are compared with the final posters. It thus sheds new light on the challenges that film industries and advertising agencies placed upon artists. The results, in my perspective, conveyed through their artwork highlight the plurality of identities expressed

¹⁸ For instance, Luigi Martinati expressed the same opinion in Dell'anno, M.; Soccio, M. (1984), p.72.

rather than merely a monolithic interpretation.

In 1988, a catalogue was published following an exhibition in Pinerolo, Turin (Marchiando Pacchiola, 1988). The catalogue focused on playbill (*locandine*), another visual advertising material connected to film production. Pacchiola compares and contrasts the larger *manifesto* with the smaller *locandina* found in public spaces in cities, such as cafés and shops. Two features stand out from analysis. First, the author dedicated a certain degree of attention to a secondary visual source linked to a given film's publicity. Second, the author's ability to examine the illustrative composition of each playbill, highlighting the associations with frames from the film itself. The author also underlined the lively and communicative nature of the playbill, despite its compact size and the fact it was not fully illustrated. It was, however, complemented by film set photographs. Pacchiola's methodology and the subject matter he identified are indeed significant. He described the playbill without neglecting examination of the print techniques, and he linked their graphic style to a given film production company. This is relevant in that the author identified the art form of twentieth-century graphic art, thus adding credibility and further justifying it as an object of art historical study. For instance, the author described a stylistic trend: 'Tra il 1949 e il '50 si erano ormai affacciate nuove esperienze grafiche che ampliano le dimensioni delle fotografie, generalmente impaginate verticalmente. Si sentiva la necessità di una ulteriore e più efficace comunicazione col pubblico per colpirne maggiormente l'immaginazione. La Fox, la Universal, la Columbia, la Warner, la Dear...giocano con questa trovata pubblicitaria non solo con i nuovi film prodotti, ma anche con le riprese dei titoli più famosi, di successo, leggendari' (Marchiando Pacchiola, 1988, p. 18).

Marchiando Pacchiola's work helps us both reconstruct a picture of artistic taste and better understand the film industry's marketing strategies in their choice of a graphic style. However, it also gives rise to questions regarding how certain selections were made. For

instance, Lux Film chose Carlantonio Longi's designs rather than those of Nano.¹⁹ Were the artists' styles relevant to the industry's preference, or was selection simply based on a perception of popular taste, following the success of past campaigns? Is it possible to trace any connections between commercial ends and the specific requirements of artistic style? One of the most significant aspects that can be inferred from these open questions is the importance of evaluating how the artistic choices made by industry were of consequence to film posters as a genre of graphic arts. It is my intention to explore the point in more detail.

1.5 Research on the *manifesto* in the 1990s

In the 1990s, publications related to Italian *manifesti*, particularly those linked to film promotion, were still found in catalogues accompanying specific poster exhibitions in Italy. They were contributions only dealing with posters that were used in particular locality, such as those connected to an exhibition in Turin (Bertetto, 1995) in 1995, which displayed posters from silent films from the first two decades in the twentieth century, or another in Florence (Chiantini and Vannini, 1995). The content of the catalogue from Florence still limits itself to brief comments upon the communicative and social role of the *manifesti*, which are now definitively interpreted as historical sources and defining images of their time. In these catalogues, authors underlined the craftsmanship of the artists, however, their artistic achievement across their lifetime remain neglected. Another example of this type of publication involves catalogues whose primary aim is to organise, collect, and create an archive of *manifesti*. This is the case of the cinematographic archive of Ravenna (Casadio, 1998), and the collection of Ferdinando Salce (Scardino, Manzato and et al., 1996).²⁰ From the end of the eighties until the end of the nineties, the importance of the social value of *manifesti* as historical

¹⁹ "Nano" is the stage name of the Italian painter Silvano Campeggi (Florence, 1923-2018).

²⁰ Called 'Nando' (1878-1962), he was an Italian collector. His collection of posters, nearly 25,000 items collected from 1895 to 1962, is now owned by the State and held in the Civic Museums of Treviso.

documents was frequently highlighted, as demonstrated in Gianfranco Casadio's monograph: 'Il manifesto é un obiettivo fotografico puntato sulla realtà sociale, che mette a fuoco i principali aspetti di essa. Anche se, a volte, l'immagine risultante é deformata (perché troppo ingrandita o ridotta), esso rimane un incontestabile documento storico' (Casadio, 1983, p. 8).

In the 1990s, scholarly research, art and film critics, as well as collectors and the relatives of artists turned their focus to *manifesti*, renewing the attention given to public and private collections of advertising material. Multiple factors supported this need to collect and organise iconographic sources into archives. The result of which was the need to know the existing visual material available in cultural centres. Early evidence of this renewed interest can be traced back to an exhibition held in Rome in 1989,²¹ which focused on several specific media, genres, and ages of Italian cinema. Moreover, the exhibition in Rome set a precedent for further expositions of film *manifesti* across Italy. For instance, in 1993, the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Librari e Documentari*²² in Bologna promoted an exhibition with the title 'Heroes of a thousand legends - Film posters from 1930 to 1960' (Maioli, 1993). It collected 320 *manifesti* with different formats from the private collections of Vincenzo Bellini and Roberto Eleonori and of Gabriele Marchesi (Casadio, 1998). In line with Gianfranco Casadio's²³ view that a *manifesto* enables the "documenting [of] an era", these exhibitions were essential in raising the public profile of Italian private collectors and in defining the number and organization of public archives. The exhibitions were also significant for their public impact. They led to effectively spreading awareness of and enthusiasm for film *manifesti* in Italy.

²¹ *Immagini in movimento memoria e cultura*. Bibliographic and iconographic exhibition on Italian cinema from 1905 to 1943. Rome, National Central Library, Vittorio Emanuele II, 20 June – 8 July 1989 (Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali). 420 items of publicising material were displayed.

²² This was an administrative body in Italy responsible for the protection of library goods related to the Region of Emilia-Romagna. For further information, see the online page: <http://archivi.ibc.regione.emilia-romagna.it/ibc-cms/cms.item?munu_str=0_1_3&numDoc=15&flagview=viewItemCaster&typeItem=3&itemDoc=037006-010>.

²³ Gianfranco Casadio (1937-2013) was the leader of the Cultural Service of Ravenna (Province) and an expert-*aficionado* of Italian cinema.

According to Casadio, the first brief cataloguing of donations to the Province of Ravenna occurred after the exhibition in Rome in 1989²⁴ and was quite basic. In essence, there was no data related to the *manifesti* provided, but only film data, such as title, production, year, and nationality. The only distinctive notes on *manifesti* were related to the standard format and the size of the poster, therefore the material in the collection conform to these sizes. The list below includes also the sizes of other advertising material used for cinema:

- *manifesto*, in one or more sheets: 70×100 cm (*1 foglio*), 100×140 (*2 fogli*), 140×200 (*4 fogli*), *manifesti* of 8, 12 and 24 sheets were all landscape format²⁵
- *locandina* (playbill),²⁶ 33×70 cm
- *fotobusta*, 46×66 cm, but in the 1930s and 1940s, it was also possible to find these in 33×33 cm.²⁷

Casadio concluded there was a shift in public interest that followed the example set by private collectors. Hence, after years of neglect of this cultural heritage, graphic art began to grow in stature and gain attention from public institutions (Casadio, 1998).²⁸ What emerges from Casadio's book is the increased awareness of the historical and social significance given to these cultural media. Therefore, scholarship in the 1990s finally began to recognise the role of *manifesti* in the film industry despite it being recognised by filmmakers at a much earlier stage. Indeed, as cited by Casadio in his book, Sergei Eisenstein pointed out that 'Il tempo impiegato

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²⁵ They were normally posted on the façade of buildings or on stands and were used for films with high expectations of success (e.g. with a well-known cast of actors/actresses).

²⁶ I found the English term 'playbill' somewhat ambiguous. Therefore, I decided to use, in this thesis, the Italian word *locandina* when appropriate.

²⁷ For formats of Italian film posters and fliers, and the so called *corredo pubblicitario cinematografico*, see: Albano, E. 12 August 2016, *Il cinema manifesto – Formati pubblicitari*, Museo Fermo Immagine, viewed December 2019, <<https://www.museofermoimmagine.it/cinema-manifesto-formati-pubblicitari/>>; Cinema su Carta, 29 April 2019, *Misure Manifesti, Locandine e Fotobuste*, viewed December 2019, <<https://www.ilcinemasucarta.com/misure-manifesti/>>.

²⁸ To quote Casadio: 'Sull'esempio dei privati, ora, per fortuna, qualcosa si è mosso anche sul versante pubblico e questo bene culturale dimenticato, a poco a poco, sta conquistandosi quella dignità e quell'attenzione che merita da parte delle istituzioni pubbliche, al fianco delle altre testimonianze della cultura del nostro secolo'. *Ibidem*, p. 11.

per progettare un film non si esaurisce con il tempo occupato dalle riprese e dal montaggio, ma anche quello misurato in ore di creazione al tavolo della sceneggiatura, del soggetto, della scenografia, [...] fino alla definizione del manifesto, del libretto di sala, del lancio pubblicitario' (Casadio, 1998, p. 7). Advertising material is, therefore, an integral part of a broader cultural project that follows, as well as hastens, social transformations.

During the 1990s, further studies were published that explored another crucial aspect of the *manifesto*. These studies considered the *manifesto* as a 'paratext' (Quintavalle, 1996), inextricably linked to its role in films advertising. In 1990, two significant exhibitions, *Art and Pub: art and publicité 1890-1990* held at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris,²⁹ and *High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture* held at the MOMA in New York,³⁰ posited questions on the relationship between art and publicity; i.e. the relationship between 'high' and 'low' forms of visual communication. Following these important exhibitions, Quintavalle claimed, 'Dopo queste rassegne ci si chiede se sia ancora lecito mantenere nette barriere tra prodotti detti artistici e prodotti definiti commerciali' (Quintavalle, 1996, p. 9). Consequently, communication and allure combined are equally necessary to the function of the advertising posters, and thus for film *manifesti*. Scholars of art history currently consider this issue as an organic, historical development in Italian popular culture that is witnessed through the growing awareness and respect for graphic culture from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. To quote Quintavalle, 'Il problema sembra posto oggi, ma in verità si identifica con la crescente consapevolezza della dignità della cultura grafica a fine '800 e si collega alla scoperta dell'importanza del manifesto e della sua nuova colorata immagine, quella di Toulouse-Lautrec, di Alphonse Mucha, di Pierre Bonnard, di Edouard Vuillard che, in quanto riconosciuti artisti, hanno finito per determinare un generale ripensamento del rapporto fra arte e produzione

²⁹ The exhibition lasted from the 31 October 1990 to the 25 February 1991 (Paris).

³⁰ *High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture*, catalogue of the exhibition, New York, MOMA, 7.10.1990 – 15.1.1991, New York, 1990.

moltiplicata' (Quintavalle, 1996, p. 9). Quintavalle argues for the importance of the communicative and aesthetic essence of the advertising *manifesto* and its link to the commercial role of the graphic artist. The examination of this assertion is revealing in considering the *manifesto* as 'parte della rivoluzione industriale, anzi, ne è la immagine mitica. E il colore è lo strumento per raccontare il mito, quello della esistenza e, naturalmente, del consumo' (Quintavalle, 1996, p. 9).

1.6 The reception of the *manifesto* in the 21st century

It was not until the mid-1990s and early 2000s that a growing, if belated, interest in cultural studies became apparent in Italy. This was witnessed in academic programmes (e.g., *L'Orientale* University of Naples)³¹ and international collaborations; and through the publications of new specialised journals (e.g., *Agalma. Rivista di Studi Culturali e di Estetica; Studi Culturali*).³² The spread of cultural studies and the tendency toward a flexible, interdisciplinary approach within cultural and social studies, likely contributed to broadening critical views in the field of mass cultural productions and practices. Therefore, the increased interest in *manifesti* shown by scholars from the 1990s onwards is notable. Scholars started to bring the *manifesto* to the attention of a multi-disciplinary academic audience (Lodola, 2003; Galluzzi, 2007). There is a noticeable, albeit slow, increase in interest in the artists themselves (Bertieri, 2000; Longi, 2002; Marinozzi, 2011; Baroni, 2018). They begin to be identified as responsible for the functional and creative mechanism of the consumerist cycle, which includes the promotion of a product that has been aesthetically enhanced by advertising. Hence, it can

³¹ The English sociologist Iain Chambers (MA at the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* at the University of Birmingham) has been professor of *Cultural and Postcolonial Studies* at the University in Naples since the 1994 and has been director of the *Centre for Postcolonial Studies*.

³² *Agalma* is a biennial academic journal of cultural studies, aesthetics and philosophy, founded in 2000 by Mario Perniola and other Italian and international intellectuals (see: <http://www.agalmarivista.org>). The journal *Studi Culturali* was founded in 2004 edited by the editor Il Mulino of Bologna (see: <https://www.mulino.it/riviste/issn/1824-369X>). Websites retrieved in June 2020.

be argued that poster designers started to be associated with a cultural project vis-à-vis their production of mass media.

Paola Lodola (Lodola, 2003), for example, focused on a private collection of advertising posters used to depict the image of Italy in the twentieth century. She gives significant weight to the interplay between the industrial client and the consumer's needs, noting the delayed development of graphic production in Italy compared with other European countries. Such delay was due mainly to slow development in the industrial sector. As Lodola claimed: 'Negli USA e in molti paesi d'Europa la cartellonistica conosce una stagione felice già a partire dagli anni '80 dell'Ottocento e si impegna a dare conto, non solo di spettacoli ed esposizioni, ma anche dei progressi dell'industria reclamizzando automobili e linee elettriche. In Italia invece essa conquista un proprio linguaggio espressivo solo alla fine degli anni '90 quando la *Ricordi*³³ [the publisher of Italian opera composers Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini] comincia a investire risorse nel settore' (Lodola, 2003, p. 6). In line with her point of departure, she has analysed advertising *manifesti* of a specific genre: those based on tourism as testimonies of an age and of the changes in Italian taste in art starting from the end of the nineteenth century.

Lodola underlines the significant bond between industry and poster design, highlighting the fact that the interplay between the two is the very *raison d'être* for every advertising *manifesto* (Lodola, 2003). Furthermore, the use of graphic design in advertising tended to develop more rapidly where industry was strongest. Turin, for instance, has been the most competitive and modern Italian industrial city since the end of the nineteenth century (Lodola, 2003). It was the hub for the nascent automotive industry in Italy. Thus, it also became a leading centre for the production of *manifesti*. While Lodola's work is concerned with tourism posters, it is significant in its focus on *manifesti* as an object of study, analysing their iconographic qualities

³³ *Casa Ricordi* is an Italian publishing company of mainly classical music and opera, founded in Milan in 1808 and still in existence.

and documentary function. Moreover, she dedicates considerable attention to the artists themselves and the figurative link with contemporary art; that is, she emphasizes the artist's role within the development of a cultural epoch in Italy and the change in popular taste. Lodola underscores the artists' contribution to the evolution of popular taste and customs. Furthermore, she identifies how it is possible to re-address the study of advertising art, giving credible attention to those who have taken part in this crucial historical-cultural process. Thus, as Lodola has argued, 'Spulciando nella biografia degli autori di manifesti turistici si scoprono quasi sempre attività diversificate, competenze, curiosità e interessi in ogni direzione. Gli artisti che hanno raccontato l'Italia a partire dalla fine dell'Ottocento sono illustratori ma anche scenografi, costumisti ma anche designers, pittori ma anche ceramisti. Le loro immagini sono documenti storici e sociologici, strumenti per comprendere il nostro passato e la nostra cultura' (Lodola, 2003, p. 15). Just as Casadio did at the end of the 1990s, Lodola pinpoints the socio-historical value of the promotional *manifesto* – the touristic poster in this case – with these *manifesti* being helpful in enabling a deeper understanding of Italian culture and its past. This approach to the medium has had a great impact on my work, supporting my considerations of film *manifesti* as a product of, and for, mass society. Identifying this significant function of film *manifesti* will also lead to a broader understanding of the links between the means of mass communication representative of Italian popular culture and factors such as commercial and socio-political pressures, and international artistic trends.

Among the various books on film posters published in the 21st century, *The Art of Italian Film Posters* by Mel Bagshaw (Bagshaw, 2005) is one that focuses on the film object. Bagshaw provides a historical overview of developments in poster design starting from the silent film era and referring, just briefly, to important artists such as Leopoldo Metlicovitz³⁴

³⁴ Leopoldo Metlicovitz was a famous painter, illustrator, stage designer and Italian advertiser who represented the Art Nouveau current. For further information on the artist see: Mocci, L. n.d., *Metlicovitz, Leopoldo*, Treccani, viewed April 2019, <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leopoldo-metlicovitz_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leopoldo-metlicovitz_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>); and

(1868-1944) in the process, without analysing specific examples in detail. Bagshaw's claim at the beginning of the book is that it 'is about the development of Italian film and the posters that announced them' (Bagshaw, 2005, p. 11). In contrast to the title, which suggests an 'artistic' analysis of film posters developed in the book with a specific interest in their figurative expression, the book, instead, places greater emphasis on the features of Italian films that have made Italian film history. The author only marginally examines posters that have represented those films and there is not a focus on their broader socio-cultural role.

The first chapter of Bagshaw's book focuses on the general characteristics of a *manifesto*, which include: the 'disposable nature' of its material; its ability to allure people to the film, which is the essential aim since the *manifesto* is a film's 'main vehicle for publicity'. In the subsequent chapters, Bagshaw's assessment is mostly limited to the impact of the most significant Italian films, decade by decade, and focused closely on the film directors. He lays out the distinct characteristics of each historical period in Italian cinema, examining styles and genres, accounting for Italian societal issues, and the political spectrum. Bagshaw underlines the importance of the *manifesto* as a 'historical document with its own cultural heritage' (Bagshaw, 2005). My research has developed in agreement with this view of the *manifesto*, and also in line with the aforementioned concepts by Casadio and Lodola. However, what previous contributions fail to provide is an innovative perspective on the evaluation of commercial needs and its impact on subsequent designs in film posters and original drafts. Pointedly, what remains relevant, from my perspective, is the value associated with the *manifesto* as a historical document that also establishes visible interconnections on multiple socio-cultural levels, and that these connections are crucial to a full understanding of a complex period in Italy.

<<http://graficheincomune.comune.milano.it/GraficheInComune/attdbs/aut/Bertarelli/Metlicovitz.%20Leopoldo.pdf>>, retrieved April 2019.

In 2002, Roberto Longi edited a catalogue (Longi, 2002) of the work of his father, Carlantonio Longi (1921-1980). It is enriched by ample biographical information in the context of a more comprehensive cultural scenario where cinema, advertising, arts, and politics are intertwined. This catalogue has drawn my attention to the analysis of iconic images within a wider international context, and with a focus on the period of mass consumption. Carlantonio Longi, described by Omar Calabrese as ‘Un artigiano della comunicazione’³⁵ (Micheli, 2002, p. 145), was one of the most prominent graphic artists in Italy, although he did not gain much scholarly attention. Longi’s catalogue is of interest for several reasons. First, his son Roberto provided a lively historical account of his father’s life, revealing his relationship with people in film industry, such as Nino Manfredi and Paolo Panelli. Carlantonio had built an extensive network of professional and personal collaborators, which constitute a compelling corpus of research material for any researcher in the field. Second, besides chronicling his father's life, with particular reference to his artistic training and various fortuitous encounters that marked his career, Longi provides an insight into the ‘backstage’ activity of a graphic illustrator in post-war Italy. The account includes anecdotes and interviews from a few Italian celebrities, which are useful in opening a new window into the context of the time.³⁶ The catalogue provides particular insights on how the work of graphic artists working in the film industry was organized from the 1940s to 1960s. It chronicles the exhibition of his father’s work held in Siena in 2002 and includes brief contributions from other scholars. Sergio Micheli’s account (Micheli, 2002), for instance, engages in a timely historical evaluation of the origin and meaning of the film poster. He analysed the illustrative capacity of the artist, who was able to interpret the various film genres with an increasingly suitable variety of expressions. Micheli noted, ‘Nell’esaminare l’opera di Carlantonio Longi si dovrà considerare l’ambiente dove egli

³⁵ The Italian expression can be literally translated as ‘artisan of communication’. The expression focuses on the hand-made practice of the poster artist, the refined executor, who engages in the socio-cultural role of producing publicity material as a means of mass communication aimed at promoting something to the larger public.

³⁶ I.e., the Italian actor Nino Manfredi (1921-2004) and the dubbing actor and singer Elio Pandolfi (1926).

si trovó ad operare, il rapporto con la committenza, quindi le soluzioni grafico-pittoriche che l'artista é risucito a mettere in atto per ottenere i risultati piú soddisfacenti possibile sia da un punto di vista iconografico, sia in relazione allo scopo al quale, nel campo della cartellonistica, risulta finalizzato il manifesto cinematografico' (Longi, 2002, p. 65).

The monograph that has had the most significant impact on my thesis is *Pittori di cinema* by Maurizio Baroni, which has only recently been published (Baroni, 2018). This publication stems from the experience of a cinephile and poster collector with boundless enthusiasm for film *manifesti*. The book is also the result of a desire to showcase the creative, expressive, and pictorial qualities of the artists who represented Italian cinema from the 1940s to the 1970s. The book, *Pittori di cinema* is explicitly dedicated to these Italian artists, specifically 29 of them who have created publicity material for international movies in their personal and figurative style. It is divided into sections for each artist, preceded by a brief biographical introduction that includes the perspective of an art historian, Alessandra Cesselon.³⁷

Akin to Maurizio Baroni's book, my thesis has been driven by a diachronic outlook on history, culture, and society. However, the methodological tools that best served his purposes are more limited in scope than in mine. His publication focuses primarily on reproducing film *manifesti* and drafts from his own collection, most of which have not previously been published or exhibited. Furthermore, Baroni gathered first-hand testimonies from several artists. In doing so, he provides a broader view of the narrative and pictorial nature of advertising material produced by *pittori di cinema*, whereas I aim to contextualise the multifaceted role that these artists played within a developing mass society. For instance, I will reflect on the status of *pittori di cinema* from 1945 to 1969 and the critical role they played in guiding popular taste.

³⁷ Alessandra Cesselon is the daughter of Angelo Cesselon (1922-1992), one of the most active poster designers of the post-war years.

In addition, they were also part of the process that determined a more robust, contemporary consumer society with modern needs. My argument will analyse the film *manifesto* and its figurative patterns alongside the socio-cultural significance attributable to it. The period of evaluation includes the post-war era, with a focus on the evolution of the age of mass consumption with the specific ends and characteristics pertaining to that epoch. I will analyse the *manifesto* as a valuable historical source *per se*, which contains distinct aesthetic attributes. Appropriate comparisons with international advertising language and examples from fine arts will support unique aspects of 'Italianità' in film *manifesti*.

1.7 Conclusion

Alongside the biographical literature on film posters, which often provides only a general idea of the art of the *manifesto* itself, as well as the artists' activity, I have underscored the lack of analysis of film *manifesti*, in literature, as a nexus between the cultural industry and societal development in the post-war years. As this chapter highlights, the starting point for many scholars has mainly been tied to the analysis of Italian films. Moreover, unlike the existing literature examined in this chapter, I intend to make explicit connections between the analysis of art, industry, socio-cultural impact and history, without neglecting an intermedial dialogue with the films referenced. This broader approach is framed within the period of mass consumption, when film *manifesti* had an active role in propagating crucial social transitions, which has not been evaluated in the available literature so far. There would also be novelty in analysing the design of drafts and *manifesti* with a specific focus on tracking the relationship between graphic artists and film industry, alongside commercial needs. Therefore, an interdisciplinary perspective applied to film *manifesti* would provide a broader viewpoint on the relationship between *manifesti* and the cultural industry for which they were made.

I intend to assess the close ties between industry and arts within the era of mass society,

focusing on questions such as: How were commercial needs and artistic trends at the time connected? Which expressive components employed were significant to the commercial ends of the film industry? How was mass society influenced by the design of film *manifesti*? Did they have a role as a catalyst within the development of such a mass society toward a more modern, enlightened society? How did trends in advertising arts contribute to the change in Italian social mores?

Chapter Two

The origin of the artistic *manifesto*: from the town crier to 1945

2.1 Introduction

The twentieth century brought considerable global changes. These developments involve an evolving relationship between arts and industry, concurrent with social transformation, and the subsequent phenomenon of mass consumption. Hence, from a critical point of view, this chapter seeks to increasingly position the film *manifesto* within the framework of mainstream society and consumer culture.

While *manifesti* are an archetypal form of modern mass communication, their origins lie further back than might initially be expected; therefore, the following questions will be central to this chapter: how and when did the film *manifesto* and art intersect? How did the extrinsic characteristics of the film *manifesto* develop once they were introduced? How did the pioneering application of artistic trends into the graphic arts open the door for the *pittori di cinema*?

Section 2.2 will explore modern visual communication as a descendent from the aural and verbal message. This will be relevant to understand the multifaceted progression of the artistic film *manifesto* from its visual-verbal origins (at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century), to the time under consideration in this thesis (1945-1969). The focus will be on the close ties that the film *manifesto* has established, from its outset, with the figurative arts and its traditions. Beside this connection, what will also surface is the industry's need to transform an advertising communication via written text into a figurative, more prolific vehicle of mass communication. This shift is relevant because written texts were not widely accessible at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (due in the main to high levels of illiteracy), whereas figurative drawings could be more readily interpreted by all; hence, they would become an increasingly powerful means for commercial publicity.

In the context of the overall thesis, this chapter introduces the concept that the production of a modern advertising *manifesto* is the result of a process of co-authoring.¹ The *manifesto* is, therefore, the product of a combined and collaborative process whereby the artist provides creativity in the pursuit of a balance between function and aesthetics.² The artists used a visual language that was replete with meaning and conceived for a broad audience. Pier Pietro Brunelli and Mauro Ferraresi go further by noting that a key characteristic in giving a *manifesto* wide appeal requires that it, ‘esprime non tanto la soggettività dell’artista, quanto la sua capacità di porre esteticamente in opera intenzionalità e sentimenti di carattere corale ed epocale’ (Brunelli and Ferraresi, 2003, p. 13). Therefore, this process of co-authoring requires the strategic resourcefulness of the customer (i.e., the film industry), the artistic quality of the printing services (e.g., typography), and the recipient (mass public), whose expectations would influence the taste and style of the advertising *manifesto*. The result would, ideally, be designed to inspire and cater to people’s desires. The creative contribution of the graphic designer developed according to marketing and social needs, and the receptive capacity of a consumer are central to the analysis of this thesis as a whole. They will begin to be evaluated in this chapter. Moreover, the need to underscore the relevance of an aesthetic feature enshrined in film *manifesti*, will become evident along with their contemporary artistic trends.

For this purpose, I make use of the analysis of two select *manifesti* created by artists working in the early 20th century, Achille Lucien Mauzan and Roberto Franzoni, as initial examples of pictorial film *manifesti* in Italy during the 1910s. Their approach follows the *Art Nouveau* movement, and they are used in this chapter to emphasise ‘the purpose of defeating the established order within the applied and fine arts’ (Duncan, 2001, p. 7). These two examples exemplify the beginning of the process of educating mass public taste, through the increased

¹ Cf. Brunelli, P. and Ferraresi, M. (2003) *Elogio del manifesto. Arte, società e vita sui muri del XX secolo*, Torino: Allemandi.

² Cf. Newark, Q. (2002) *What is Graphic Design?* Hove: RotoVision SA.

recognition and value of industrial products, such as films; hence, they are used to aid the interpretation of the arguments put forward in this chapter.

The first artist, Mauzan, was renowned in his home country of France, but he also became popular in Italy, where he worked as a graphic artist for approximately twenty years. Of all the graphic artists operating in Italy, he is one of the few who had a biographer, the well-known Italian art critic Arturo Lancellotti (1877-1968).³ The second artist, Franzoni, had a long artistic career. Unlike Mauzan, however, he never gained real recognition from critics, even in Italy (his native country). Nevertheless, he contributed to the development of early film advertising *manifesti*, which were evolving toward a more standard version of the *manifesto* for cinema, figurative and textual, eventually displaying a condensed plot for a film with much space dedicated to display the film's main characters.

I will argue that the two artists above were pioneers in their field. In distinct ways, these two artists embodied key elements of the aesthetic tradition of film *manifesti*: on one side, the pictorial representation of the film's narrative and, on the other side, the portrait of the main character. Furthermore, it should be noted that these two painters have academic backgrounds in the fine arts. Mauzan became well-known in Italy and abroad, following a career as an illustrator and advertising graphic artist. Although he was a reasonably well-established painter in France beforehand, this career did not give him the status he was subsequently afforded by his new role as *cartellonista* (poster painter). By contrast, Franzoni was engaged in a range of artistic practices as a representative of the nineteenth century aesthetic ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. During his long career as a painter, graphic artist and sculptor, he wholeheartedly embraced the styles associated with the Art Nouveau movement (Della Torre, 2014). At the heart of my choice to focus on him is the view, as Simona De Iulio has argued,⁴

³ Lancellotti, A. (1926) *Mauzan, Cartelloni opere varie*, Milano-Roma: Bestetti e Tumminelli.

⁴ De Iulio, S. And Abruzzese, A. (1996) *Lumi di progresso. Comunicazione e persuasione alle origini della cartellonistica Italiana*, Treviso: Canova.

that within a theoretical context of *Art Nouveau* the artists involved are likely to incline toward graphic arts and poster design. This is probably due to the fact that the roots of the Art Nouveau movement lie in both Ruskin's theory of utopian socialism (Mathis, 2016) and the William Morris Arts and Craft movement (Duncan, 2001). The underlying ideas behind utopian socialism point to the importance of reaching a balance in the relationship between fine arts and applied arts. That being said, they also entail an aesthetic experience that is open to everyone, thus extending the use of artistic language (De Iulio and Abruzzese, 1996).⁵ Franzoni, like many other graphic artists after him, did not receive great recognition for his involvement in cinema advertising, despite having received several commissions for the publicity of films during the early twentieth century (Della Torre, 2014).

This chapter seeks to highlight a critical fact relevant to this thesis: aesthetic features are included in Italian film *manifesti*, which are artisan in nature. If we study the origins of cinema, as illustrated by the examples of Mauzan and Franzoni, it is possible to recognize the expressive characteristics that belong to well-known artistic tendencies in European art history. The examination of their work will also show an early approach to marketing strategies. These strategies will be progressively implemented and developed by film *manifesti* of the pre-war years and subsequent. This development is considered a turning point for the initial discussion on *pittori di cinema*. Thus, the final section of this chapter will examine the contribution of the first generation of *pittori di cinema*, specifically identified with artists who worked from the 1930s up to the 1950s, enabling an initial comparative analysis with post-war *pittori di cinema* further developed in the subsequent chapter.

⁵ As Lucy Hartley argues, '[...] by using interest to explain the state of feeling proper to the observation of nature and art [landscape painting], he [Ruskin] rejects privileged access to art and pursues new ways of looking at beauty linked to different political positions and different publics'. The author believes in the political nature of Ruskin's art theory, for two reasons: firstly, because he understands that individuals and communities need support in defining a public role of art; secondly, because his theory provides the benefits of art 'in terms of a right or title to public property'. Hartley, L. (2017) *Democratising Beauty in Nineteenth Century Britain: Art and the Politics of Public Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 66-67.

2.2 The early artistic film *manifesti*

The birth of the artistic film *manifesto* parallels the emergence of the film industry in Italy and dates back to 1905 (Della Torre, 2014). Although the cinematograph appeared in Italy with occasional projections in 1896,⁶ its more extended use as an industrial structure for the “Seventh Art” did not emerge until later (1905).⁷ At which point, it heralded a more complex process for promoting films with a clearer commercial aim and marketing needs. The year 1905 marked a watershed, merging the first *corpus* of *manifesti* for the advertising of early Italian cinema, known as *tipografici*⁸ and the later corpus, known as the *manifesto artistico*. The first type of *manifesto* was widely used in the 19th century to promote, for instance, theatrical entertainment along with circus productions. It was largely textual and, therefore, very basic in terms of graphic design. This structure was in contrast to the artistic *manifesto*, which developed in Italy in the 19th century as advertising posters for commercial goods. In this form, the text was complemented by a central figurative illustration, but not without its visual function.

By the time the first Italian film studio emerged (1905),⁹ through the efforts of Filoteo Alberini and Dante Santoni, the artistic *manifesto* had already begun to represent and promote films. The space for the *manifesti* in the public sphere was still limited but it was showing promising signs. Historical sources and scholars¹⁰ believe that the first Italian film production:

⁶ According to historical sources in Italy there was a one-year delay in the inception of the cinematograph in comparison with France (1895) by the Lumière brothers.

⁷ Cf. Bernardini, A. (2001) *Cinema Italiano delle origini. Gli ambulanti*, Pordenone: Cineteca del Friuli.

⁸ Typographical poster which generally lacked a figurative image to draw the attention of the general public.

⁹ It was the first “Stabilimento Italiano di Manifattura Cinematografica Alberini e Santoni”.

¹⁰ The film *La presa di Roma* was one of the first subject movies (*film a soggetto*) according to literary sources (Brunetta, G.P. (1993) *Storia del cinema Italiano - Il cinema muto 1895-1929* (second edition), Roma: Editori Riuniti; Bernardini, A. (1980) *Cinema muto italiano: Industria e organizzazione dello spettacolo, 1905-1909*, Bari: Laterza.)

La presa di Roma (1905) by Alberini & Santoni,¹¹ a historical reconstruction of the event known as *La Breccia di Porta Pia*, was also the subject of one of the first Italian artistic *manifesti* for cinema. Unfortunately, the ephemeral nature of the early *manifesto* caused many of the oldest *manifesti* to be lost; for instance, a single advertising brochure (Fig. 3)¹² for *La presa di Roma* is the only remaining advertising material related to that film (Brunetta, 2002; Della Torre, 2014). Production companies and printing houses often sent *manifesti* and drafts to be shredded.¹³



Figure 2

¹¹ *La presa di Roma* is a short silent film lasting ten minutes. Today, only four minutes of the original projection remain. For an in-depth study of the film *La presa di Roma*, see: Canosa, M. (edited by) (2006) *La presa di Roma. Alle origini del cinema Italiano*, Genova: Le Mani.

¹² The image comes from the website page: <<https://associazioneladolcevita.wordpress.com>>.

¹³ Tracing original visual sources that date back to the early decades of the century is clearly challenging, in part because even if they still exist, they might not be available for public access, especially if they are in poor condition or are part of private collections.

From figure 2, we recognise a substantial change in the layout of the *locandina* as compared to a typographic *manifesto* for an early film; however, several similarities remain. For instance, from the outset, the industry has always had the need to publicise itself, above all, its production house.



Figure 3

Thus, at the top of the brochure, the name of the producers “Alberini & Santoni” is displayed in large format; subsequently, the company’s address and the address of the venue are included. Below, with the largest format, the title of the film and its technical features are included, followed by the ticket price. In comparison to the typographic *manifesto* above (Fig. 3), the introduction of the production company name onto the advertising material, and, more significantly, the image of a film frame¹⁴ to increase the public interest are both novelties. Della Torre also points out a remarkable detail; a ‘footnote’ under the photo-frame: “*Per comodità di réclame per i signori clienti abbiamo fatto eseguire una artistica riproduzione a colori di m*

¹⁴ The film frame selected for the *locandina* referred to the “*L’ultima Cannonata*” of the production (the last cannon shot).

1,16 x 0,81 al prezzo di L. 0,40 la copia” (Della Torre, 2014). This statement emphasises two concepts: first, the importance of an illustrated film advertising as not only promotional material but also a work of art, recommended as a further commercial reproduction available to purchase; second, that the more expensive, colourful copies of the brochure were difficult to print in large numbers (“per comodità di réclame”). Thus, access to these copies was restricted to a select part of the audience (who were able to pay extra). Whether in colour or black and white, the advertising for cinema would be illustrated from this time onwards. Such advertising material was enticing because it encouraged viewers to explore and imagine the content of the film being released. Henceforth, the industry felt the need to promote films through the use of such visual media, while maintaining the lettering associated with the advertising language and the layout used previously in popular shows, such as theatrical and circus performances (Fig. 4).¹⁵



Figure 4

As evidenced in the early examples discussed above (Fig. 2, 3), film *manifesti* were gradually evolving into *isole di colore* (Santi, 2002). Openly displayed, ‘these artefacts of what

¹⁵ Cf. advertising material for theatre on Della Torre, R. (2014). The image in figure 4 comes from the website: <<http://www.cesenatoday.it/eventi/teatro-bonci-mostra-170-anni-informazioni.html>>. Retrieved March 2019.

was arguably the most powerful cultural influence of the 20th century, the movies, allow us to envision and place in a historical, aesthetic, and cultural framework the films for which they were created' (Parmelee, 2009, p. 181). Furthermore, *manifesti* provide insight into the artists themselves as authors. They began to be recognized as part of a more comprehensive cultural project, able to lead and inspire the public's imagination and feelings of expectation at a given period in time.

The power of persuasion of the *manifesti* – and people's expectations of these – swelled as technical developments in printing took place. At the end of the 18th century, lithography was the system most commonly used (Vecchia, 2003; Della Torre, 2014). This technique enabled the reproduction of a design using a greasy ink to print on a flat stone or metal plate, such as limestone, zinc, or aluminium.¹⁶ The benefit of this technique was that it allowed the artist to draw on the matrix's surface rather than engrave it. It was, therefore, easier to create more complex and detailed images; a veritable sea-change from previous techniques such as the woodcut. Later, during the late nineteenth century, the silkscreen method and the offset system pushed print production forward, mostly by enabling colour refinement. The improved image quality was due to the strength of silk and the thickness of inks used in silkscreen printing. The quality of the image made using the offset technique (see further explanation in chapter three) was produced by the conformity of the rubber blanket to the texture of the printing surface. In both cases, final prints better represented the original designs, thus these techniques did not compromise print quality. Furthermore, from the mid-20th century, the first photosensitive emulsions that utilized a silkscreen method were introduced, allowing for finer detail and the use of brighter colours. As it were, the more sophisticated the technique employed, the greater the expense.

¹⁶ About the lithographic technique see: Porzio, D. (2003) *La litografia. Duecento anni di storia, arte e tecnica*, Milan: Mondadori Electa.

All the above considerations related to the use of figurative elements in the advertising material, has shown how the artistic *manifesto* is the result of the encounter between technological development and the increase in demands by the cultural industry.¹⁷ In addition to this, as we shall see in the following section, the aesthetic sensibility and professional qualities of artists will ultimately establish the essence of the Italian film *manifesto*.

2.3 Trends from Art Nouveau visible in film *manifesti*: Mauzan and Franzoni

The ephemeral nature of *manifesti* failed to ensure their existence and full availability to amateurs, collectors and researchers nowadays. However, Italian libraries and archives (including many private institutions) have preserved a fair number of *manifesti* from the early 20th century.¹⁸ These early artworks are valuable, visual material that can be used to trace styles and characteristics adopted by pioneering poster artists of the time, including those who were lesser known. The following examples of early artistic *manifesti* will help show the point of transition between the advertising brochure for *La Presa di Roma* (Fig. 2),¹⁹ and the introduction of the artist as creative executor of a *manifesto* for a film. They will also point to the visible connections with artistic trends then in vogue, which imply an element of harmony between the arts and publicity (Vecchia, 2003). A critical development in the artistic film *manifesto* took place in Italy during the 1910s. This period was influenced by art movements such as *Art Nouveau*, “an unprecedented epoch in the decorative, fine and graphic arts, a fusion of disparate philosophical and artistic ideas that found its apogee in Continental Europe and America” (Ormiston and Robinson, 2013, p. 6). Artists began to get involved in the promotion

¹⁷ Cf., Fasce, F., Bini, E. and Gaudenzi, B. (2017) *Comprare per credere. La pubblicità in Italia dalla Belle Époque a oggi*, Rome: Carocci.

¹⁸ Among these Italian museums and archives, there are: Ferdinando Salce’s private archive, today gathered in the *Museo Nazionale Collezione Salce* (Treviso) and *Museo Nazionale del Cinema* (Turin).

¹⁹ As illustrated in the previous section, and in contrast to what will follow, the only figurative component of the *manifesto* for “*La Presa di Roma*” was represented by a photography of a film frame.

and enhancement of films. Consequently, in order to be sure to gain significant public attention, the industry consigned the *manifesto* to the arts; and, more specifically, to artists.

Achille Lucien Mauzan (1883 – 1952) was the author of the *manifesto* for the film *La maschera tragica*,²⁰ dated ca. 1911 (Fig. 5). The film is based on the short story by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Masque of the Red Death*, published in 1842. Mauzan was French and studied at the Fine Arts Academy in the Palais Saint Pierre of Lyon. He excelled as a student and received recognition mostly for his still-life paintings. To further his training in fine arts, he moved to Italy (Milan) in 1905. There he developed a keen interest in the cinematograph. A few years later, eager to take part in the promotion of films as a *cartellonista* (poster painter), he moved to Turin, where many of the leading Italian film production companies were established. Once there, he contracted with film production companies to illustrate *manifesti*.²¹ One of these companies was Savoia Film,²² one of the most prolific film production companies in the early decades of the twentieth century.²³ The *manifesto* for Mauzan's *La maschera tragica* differs from the early artistic advertising material (such as the one displayed in Fig. 2) and is a far cry from the tradition of typographic models evidenced beforehand.

²⁰ *La maschera tragica*, by Savoia Film production, Turin. The *manifesto* was part of the private collection of Nando Salce, see: Brunetta, G.P. (2002) *Il colore dei sogni. Iconografia e memoria nel manifesto cinematografico* Italiano, Torino: Testo&Immagine.

²¹ Cf. Museo Fermo Immagine, 15 November 2016, Achille Luciano Mauzan, Museo Fermo Immagine, viewed March 2019, <<http://www.museofermoimmagine.it/achille-luciano-mauzan/>>.

²² The company was founded in 1911 in Turin by the painter Pier Antonio Gariazzo (1879-1964) and the Belgian entrepreneur Daniel Plucker. In 1911, most of the active production companies in Italy were located in Turin (to name just a few: Ambrosio Film, Savoia Film, L'Aquila Films, Navone Films...). For further details on early Italian cinema, Cf. Brunetta, G.P. (2008) *Il cinema muto italiano: da "La presa di Roma" a "Sole": 1905-1929*, Roma: Laterza; Bernardini, A. (2015) *Le imprese di produzione del cinema muto italiano*, Bologna: Persiani.

²³ Cf. Martinelli, V. (1994) 'Il cinema italiano nel 1913/Italian cinema in the year 1913', *Griffithiana*, 50, pp. 46-57.



Figure 5

In *La Maschera Tragica*, the figurative depiction typifies the key feature of the visual advertising message: it covers the *manifesto*'s surface in its entirety. It is possible to observe that, as a perfect counterpart to the typographic *manifesto*, in Mauzan's *manifesto*, the text-based component (for instance title, film specifications, producer trademark, etc.) is non-existent. However, the choice not to include such material can be explained. Italian *manifesti* of the early silent era "were meant to be used internationally – that, in a time when a film needed nothing but a new set of intertitles to be exported, the distributors in each country would paste a strip of paper over the poster imprinted with the title in the local language" (Kehr, 2003, p. 9). This explanation reveals a practical method of the early production of film *manifesti* in Italy, as well as how marketing and socio-cultural necessities tended to change from decade by decade, leading to significant adaptations in visual means.²⁴

La maschera tragica tells the story of Prince Prospero, who, to escape from the red death, barricades himself and other nobles in the walled abbey of his castle, which is located in an unspecified areas of Europe). The image represented by the artist refers to a crucial

²⁴ According to Dave Kehr, 'Though titles and the names of principal cast members had begun to appear on Italian posters by the 1920s, an unwritten law against excessive verbiage remained in effect' (Kehr, 2003, p. 9).

moment in the film. Within an elegantly decorated room, the artist illustrates the scene where, against the background of a masquerade ball, one of the noblemen removes the mask from a woman's face to see whether she shows signs of disease. Emphasis is placed on this dramatic moment with the man covering his mouth with his left hand. Apart from the drama that envelops the figures shown in close-up, the general atmosphere evokes the Parisian *Belle Époque*, by which the artist seems inspired, likely driven by his background. In this respect, the artistic style plays a compelling role in displaying trends related to the art of the late 19th century in France. For instance, the use of (few) colours, marked black edges, and the unbalanced poses of the two main characters in the foreground, are characteristic of the art of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (Fig. 6-7).



Figure 6

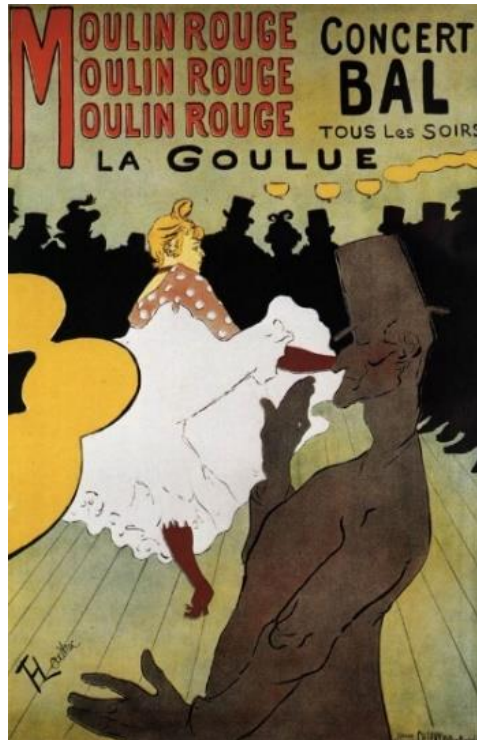


Figure 7

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were multiple models for illustration in Italy. For instance, Italian graphic art publications were prominent in Italian culture, with a keen interest shown by them in combining arts and publicity. In Italy, this field involved many artists and illustrators from throughout Europe.²⁵ A weekly art magazine, which was to become famous, emerged in Bologna in 1900, marking a watershed between the old and the new century: its title was *Italia ride* (Pallottino, 2011). Many famous Italian painters and graphic artists produced illustrations for this magazine using distinctive stylistic features. These generally came from Art Nouveau and often evoked the vibrant spirit of the Parisian *Belle Époque* (in the manner of Henry de Toulouse-Lautrec's paintings of modern life). In light of this flourishing period for popular publications, a combination of stylistic and pictorial motifs might be easily explained if one considers that the impact of new ideas, illustration patterns and artistic motifs extended far beyond the realm of the publishing industry. Indeed, the

²⁵ Cf. Pallottino, P. (2011) *Storia dell'illustrazione Italiana. Cinque secoli di immagine riprodotte*. Firenze: VoLo publisher.

foreground in Mauzan's *manifesto* (Fig. 5), evokes the *Liberty*²⁶ style of graphic art of the Italian artist and illustrator Luigi Bompard (1879-1953).²⁷

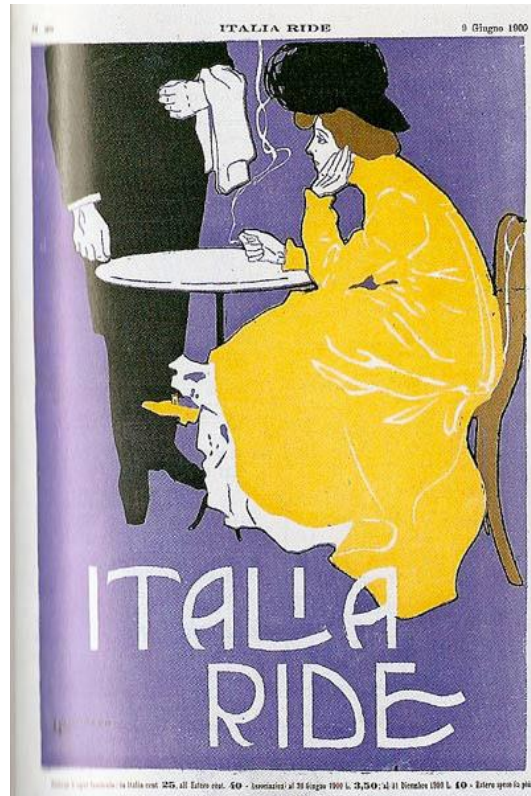


Figure 8

In one of the coloured covers of the magazine (Fig. 8), Bompard drew a close-up scene with a woman seated on a chair, probably in a restaurant or bar, and the half-figure of a waiter as a black silhouette. If one examines the image as a whole, the line is decorative, but is also central to the artistic expression of the illustration. Just as in Mauzan's *manifesto* examined above (Fig. 5), the marked black edges are a characteristic feature in both examples; the creases

²⁶ “Liberty” or “Stile Floreale” is the well-known artistic movement that aimed to interpret the national progress and modernity that spread across many countries in Europe. It was called by different names: in France it was Art Nouveau; the Anglo-Saxon word is Modern Style; in Germany it is known as Jugendstil and in Spain as Modernismo. It is worth noting that in English studies the French term is the one mostly used. For a bibliographical reference of “Stile Liberty”, see: Parisi, F. and Villari, A. (edited by), (2016) *Liberty in Italia. Artisti alla ricerca del moderno*, Milan: SilvanaEditoriale.

²⁷ For more about Luigi Bompard's biography and artworks, see: Pescatori, M. (2004) *Vagabondaggi di una matita. Luigi Bompard opere della collezione Gabriella Mencacci. Presentazione di Giorgia Bava*, Roma: Tipografia SPEDIM.

in the woman's clothes emphasise the natural posture of the body; even the use of flat-colour is a stylistic component in Bompard's illustration, which is also typical of the *Art Nouveau* movement. The image covers the entire space of the magazine's cover here too, and the only text is the title, "Italia Ride", with elegant and decorative lettering in the style of *Art Nouveau* integrated in the illustration.

As it began to flourish, the artistic film *manifesto* followed alongside the development of the fine art movements occurring at the same time, such as the *Belle Époque* from France, which was spreading across Europe. However, during this early period as the artistic *manifesto* evolved, it encompassed artistic motifs coming from various expressive forms (such as painting or magazine illustrations).²⁸ This is evidenced by a singular example of the artistic tradition of film posters in the early 20th century provided by the *manifesto* for the film *Marcantonio e Cleopatra*. The silent film directed by Enrico Guazzoni was a historical drama that adapted the theatrical work of Shakespeare and was released in Italy in 1913 by the film company CINES.²⁹ The *manifesto* for the film was produced by Roberto Franzoni (1882-1960), who was an eclectic Italian artist associated with Art Nouveau. Franzoni undertook artistic training at the Collegio Artistico Venturoli (Bologna) and exhibited particular skill from an early age with the use of lines in his art. This interest is shown in both his paintings and graphic work.

²⁸ Another crucial channel of transmission for (new) aesthetic motifs were the major (international) exhibition events, such as the *Exposition Universelle* held in Paris in 1900, and the first *Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa Moderna* held in Turin in 1902 (see: Bossaglia, R. (1994) *Torino 1902: le arti decorative internazionali del nuovo secolo*, Milano: Fabbri; Pica, V. (1903) *L'arte decorativa all'esposizione di Torino del 1902*, Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche); and the *Esposizione Internazionale di Milano* (or *Esposizione Internazionale del Sempione* –for the park in Milan where it took place) in 1906, where the proposed theme for the exhibition was transportation, in order to celebrate the completed work of the *traforo del Sempione* (Sempione tunnel), (see: Centimeri, C. (2015) *Expo 1906 in 3-D, L'Esposizione internazionale di Milano del 1906 nelle fotografie tridimensionali dell'epoca*, Milano: Cisalpino Istituto Editoriale Universitario).

²⁹ The *Italian Cines Company*, is a film company specializing in the production and distribution of films. It was founded in 1906. For more information see: Redi, R. (2009) *La Cines. Storia di una casa di produzione Italiana*, Bologna: Persiani Editore.

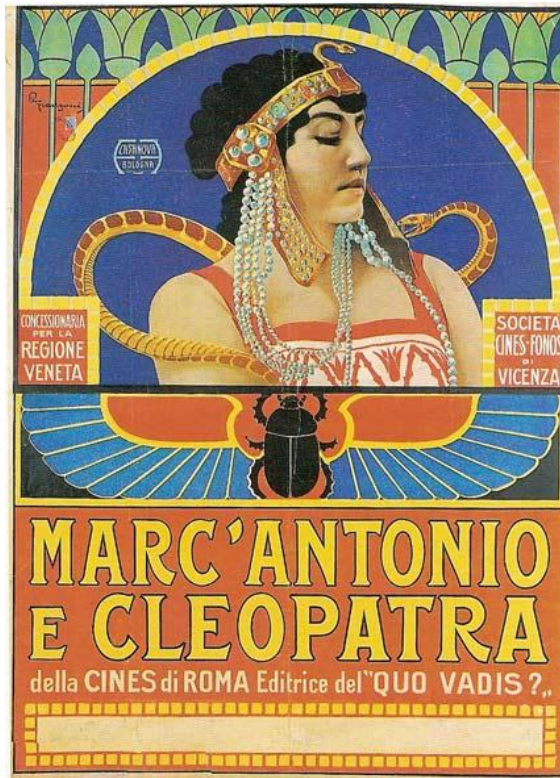


Figure 9

The *manifesto* for *Marcantonio e Cleopatra* (Fig. 9) is an excellent example which illustrates typical features of the Art Nouveau style visible in his work. The surface of the *manifesto* is densely decorated and embellished by pseudo-geometrical friezes, flower patterns, and motifs that embody typical Egyptian traits and ornaments (the scarab, for instance was a popular and powerful amulet in ancient Egypt, also used as typical Egyptian decoration). The taste for ornaments is expressed especially through the image of Cleopatra, an icon of beauty and protagonist of this famous play, enclosed in a semi-circle with a thick yellow outline. The Shakespearean “wrangling queen”, stately in appearance, represents the predominant figure of the entire *manifesto*. She is characterized generally by sharp outlines and bright, bold flat-colour backgrounds. The artist’s decision to represent Cleopatra in three-quarter profile is likely a reference to ancient Egyptian royal authority portraits, which typically show the head in static profile view and the body in frontal view. The queen’s hieratic position, albeit with her eyes closed, expressively reveals all the fierceness and power of her character. Unlike

Mauzan, whose *manifesto* (Fig. 5) sought to portray the characters rather than the actors (who at that time were less recognisable and therefore less important for marketing purposes), here Franzoni attempts to portray Cleopatra as the actress Gianna Terribili Gonzales (1882-1940) who was famous for her roles in silent film. While still far from the later emergence of the American “star-system”³⁰ as a strategy for film advertisement, Franzoni, in 1913, already sought to combine the artistic representation of Cleopatra with the likeness of her actress.

The *Marcantonio e Cleopatra manifesto* is composed of two main parts: It could be viewed as having a dominant pictorial component, with an image of the female protagonist covering two-thirds of the surface; and the remainder of the *manifesto* dedicated to lettering that includes selected information about the film like the film’s title in a large, bold font and shining yellow colour, followed by the name of the film production company (CINES), its location (Rome), and a reference to the most famous film it had produced (*Quo Vadis*). The advertising strategy adopted here is two-fold. Firstly, the *manifesto* was entrusted to an artist with an extensive background in fine arts, and whose style was consistent with one of the major artistic tendencies of the time (Art Nouveau). Secondly, to gain leverage with the public, the idea of a mnemonic reference was chosen: the mentioning of an older successful film released by the same film company and director, *Quo Vadis* – probably the first worldwide blockbuster in the history of cinema.

With the analysis of the two *manifesti* above (*La Maschera Tragica* and *Marcantonio e Cleopatra*), it is possible to trace the key components of a *manifesto*, as well as the first elements that were characteristic of such a film *manifesto*. Further, the evaluation of these

³⁰ The “divismo” (Italian version of the American ‘star system’) also spread quickly into Italian advertising illustration from the 1910s onwards; in particular, with the 1913 film *Ma l’amor mio non muore* where the actress Lyda Borelli plays a fundamental role in galvanizing the production system (Brunetta, 2008). On the topic Cf.: Brunetta, G.P. (2008) *Il cinema muto italiano: da “La presa di Roma” a “Sole”*: 1905-1929, Roma: Laterza; Kehr, D. (2003) *Italian Film Posters*, New York: Museum of Modern Art; Mcdonald P., (2000) *The star system. Hollywood's production of popular identities*, London: Wallflower Press; Dyer, R. (1986) *Heavenly Bodies: Film stars and society*, New York: St. Martin Press.

manifesti also clearly relates to the commercial strategies adopted to advertise films. This is seen both in terms of the information included in the poster and the use of a specific figurative language by graphic artists to catch people's attention and stimulate their imagination. Hence, interpretation of these *manifesti* demonstrates early attempts to implement figurative arts – in correspondence with contemporary European artistic movements – into Italian film advertising. This implementation is essentially related to a variety of aesthetic features from the formal language of *Art Nouveau* that were adopted with the intent of capturing the modern spirit of the *Belle Époque* (see Mauzan), evoking leitmotifs found in a wide range of artistic and commercial applications. This aspect made the artistic movement of the period particularly applicable to poster design. In conclusion, “In order to maximise its impact, a special artistic methodology evolved for the poster, consisting of strong colour harmonies, vibrant linear rhythms, silhouetted images and the subtle integration of the lettering into the composition as a whole” (Duncan, 2001, p. 86).

Following this current, succinct reconstruction of the evolution in Italian graphic arts, the next section will draw attention to the specificity of the advertising arts developed in Italy during the interwar period, when they became increasingly responsive to modern urban tendencies.

2.4 Inter-war graphic arts

After the First World War, graphic design found its role in society; namely, the interwar period was productive for graphic design in Italy. Indeed, ‘Nel periodo tra le due guerre, quando la società occidentale assunse definitivi caratteri di massa, la cultura visiva acquistò una crescente importanza’ (Baroni and Vitta, 2012, p. 130). Italian society faced both the contradictions and contamination between behaviours and values that belonged to a pre-industrial culture and the new attractive innovations of the world of consumerism (De Iulio and Abruzzese, 1996).

During the 1920s and 1930s, graphic design was inspired by several artistic trends, including, among others, the figurative culture of *Art Déco*,³¹ a continuation of the *Art Nouveau* movement,³² which came about at the end of the nineteenth century and continued, in Italy, until the 1920s.

The foundation of the European arts in the 1920s lay in the aesthetics and ideology of the British Arts & Crafts movement (see the introduction of the current chapter). The arts of that age then grew into a form of social art aimed at a wider public, and aimed at being integrated into public culture “in a more comprehensive way” (Ormiston and Robinson, 2013, p. 8). Thus, fine arts in the 1920s took inspiration from various art forms that engaged decorative arts and fashion, evidenced in Italy through the development of *grandi magazzini*.³³ In addition, fine arts were also involved in graphic design and illustration, which benefited from advances in the printing process,³⁴ driven by increased demand in the cultural industry. As a consequence of this socio-cultural development, more work for printers and artists was created (Robinson and Ormiston, 2013). New mass communication media were involved in such cultural progress spreading new models for fashion and novel editorial uses of graphic arts and their applications in advertising (Baroni and Vitta, 2012). The *Art Déco* movement is recognisable through a variety of features. Its style is eclectic, and one can distinguish decorative and ornamental motifs from the 1920s and the more functional Streamline of the 1930s. Such motifs include a curvilinear style of design, smooth lines, geometric shapes,

³¹ The term *Déco* was coined following the arts exhibition held in Paris in the 1925 with the title *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, of which it is an abbreviation. The date of the exhibition was postponed from 1915 to 1925 because of the outbreak of the World War I (Cf. Ormiston, R., Robinson, M, 2013).

³² The continuation is interpreted in terms of ‘lavish ornamentation, superlative craftsmanship and fine materials’ (Duncan, 1988).

³³ The Italian word for ‘department store’. The use of the Italian term here is emblematic as it represents, in Italy, a developing reality that characterized the modern age that was marked by increased productivity. Moreover, according to Vittorio Pica, the first organized catalogue of visual communication advertising was made by *the Grandi Magazzini Mele* (Naples) which promoted and supported the importance of an artistic *corredo pubblicitario* for the sale of their goods.

³⁴ These advances in technology brought about ‘brighter and multi-layered prints [...] new typefaces [such as modes of *sans serif*], more forms of colours’ (Robinson and Ormiston, 2013, p. 12).

streamlined forms, and bright, sometimes gaudy colours. By this time, the advertising poster was already the most representative means of visual communication in a given cityscape, a flexible medium for stylistic and formal experimentation that represented ‘a modern urban population’ (Robinson and Ormiston, 2013, p. 8).

In Italy, the most representative graphic designers of the interwar period were Marcello Dudovich (1878-1962), and Leonetto Cappiello (1875-1942). The latter pioneered a revolutionary graphic style that influenced advertising and visual communication in the twentieth century. During the 1920s, in the French journal *La Publicité Moderne* Cappiello advocated for an innovative approach to advertising posters, emphasising ‘the need to arrest the public’s attention in a fast-moving consumer society’ (Robinson and Ormiston, 2013, p. 157). Cappiello used diverse styles: he used strong flat colours on dark backgrounds, and grotesque figures which tended towards unusual symbolic imagery.³⁵ The emblematic motif was intended as a form of ‘mascot’,³⁶ independent of the advertised product (Priarone, 1989), which subsequently led to an association between the product and the illustration despite not including the product per se. Between the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, the figurative language of graphic design also followed trends in avant-garde art. In particular, as Carlo Vinti argues, ‘lo sperimentalismo ludico e vitalistico dei futuristi è rimasto un tratto identitario forte della grafica italiana grazie al lavoro di artisti come Fortunato Depero’ (Vinti, 2015, p. 6). Following the second wave of *Futurism* (from the 1918), the innovative contribution by Bruno Munari (1907-1998) was crucial for the future development of Italian graphic design; as Munari was ‘[o]ne of the front-runners of an artistic movement that helped to invigorate the art scene in Italy, in particular industrial design, and to move it towards a more

³⁵ For instance, cf. posters for *Spumante Gancia wine company*, 1921; and for *Asti Cinzano*, 1920s.

³⁶ Cf. Rennert, J. (2004) *The Posters of L. Cappiello*, New York: The Poster Art Library. For further details on Ciriello’s artwork see: Barontini, A. (2010) *Livorno 900: La grafica dei Maestri, da Cappiello a Renato Natali*, Manidistrega.

thorough integration with the productive world of technology and industry’ (Antonello, 2009, pp. 315–16).

The graphic arts of the twenties began to experiment with a new concept of simple but functional lettering. This approach had its roots in the Bauhaus school and movement founded by Walter Gropius (1883-1969) in Weimar in 1919.³⁷ The school and its founders ‘encouraged the usage of modern technologies and believed that form follows function and that the artist and craftsman should be [...] focused on the productivity instead of the mere beauty of the design’ (Moriarty, 2016). Following the Bauhaus focus on typography which was, as Moriarty puts it, ‘effective in conveying the message of the design’ (Moriarty, 2016), graphic designers balanced harmonious (geometric) figures, layout and vibrant colours in a concise image (Baroni and Vitta, 2012). As a legacy of this graphic tendency, in the 1930s a rationalist stream of artists developed alongside *Futurism*, bringing renewal to graphic design. This was mostly led by the Bauhaus movement, introduced in Italy through Milan’s *Triennale* of decorative and industrial modern arts in 1933,³⁸ but was also due to the emergence of specialist magazines, such as *Campo Grafico*.³⁹ This was an aesthetic and technical magazine founded in 1933 by Attilio Rossi (1909-1994) and Carlo Dradi (1908-1982), which has been recognised as the root of modern Italian graphic culture (Priarone, 1989), ushering mass visual communication into modern culture. Older and contemporary aesthetic experiences appeared in renewed forms in *Campo Grafico*.⁴⁰ This magazine supported new demands in the field of Italian graphic design, quickly identifying new tendencies in the sector; specifically, the rejection on the part of artists

³⁷ Cf. De Fusco, R. (2008) *Storia del design*, Bari-Roma: Laterza; Droste, M.; Bauhaus-Archiv, 2006. *Bauhaus*, Colonia: Taschen.

³⁸ See the official website of the *Triennale*’s archive: <<http://archivio.triennale.org/esposizione/24082-vtrn>>. Retrieved March 2020.

³⁹ For an online consultation of the digitalized pages of “Campo Grafico” from 1933 to 1939 and historical information, see: <<http://www.campografico.org/welcome>>. Retrieved March 2020.

⁴⁰ Cf. Dradi, C. (1973) *Millenovecentotrentatré: nasce a Milano la grafica moderna*, Milano: Ufficio Stampa Comune di Milano, p. 13.

of decoration and geometrical order (the latter introduced to Italy by Bauhaus).⁴¹ The aim of this rejection was to allow for greater freedom in the spatial arrangement of and relations between image and text. Graphic designers involved in this graphic modernisation have been described as follows, ‘Qualunque fosse la loro formazione, tecnica e/o artistica, erano menti aperte agli stimoli intellettuali che avevano caratterizzato le avanguardie europee nell’ultimo decennio’.⁴² This quote underscores the flexible mindset that characterised graphic artists of the time, which can be ascribed to the variety of training and cultural experiences they had accomplished.

The launch of the Studio Boggeri in 1933 was central to the establishment of modern graphic art culture in Italy. It was founded in Milan by the photographer Antonio Boggeri (1900-1990),⁴³ who was inspired by the work of Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy and the first in Italy to apply photography in advertising. Boggeri ingeniously created the post of art director for himself, a job previously unknown in Italy (Chiappini, 2012). His studio was essentially a training school for young graphic designers, most of whom became well-known in the field, for instance, Bruno Munari, Enzo Mari, Erberto Carboni, and Albe Steiner. From this point onwards, the use of photography in Italian graphic design increased (Baroni and Vitta, 2012). However, the same cannot be said for film *manifesti*, which retained a predominantly pictorial format and a tendency toward an illustrative nature until the 1970s (as discussed in chapter three), when economic factors and the increase of technological instruments replaced the artisanal work of *pittori di cinema*.

The previous paragraphs have outlined the innovative developments in graphic arts in

⁴¹ “Sul piano estetico occorre superare gli ormai angusti e inadeguati limiti delle simmetrie neoclassiche e della tipografia come arte, tradizionale cavallo di battaglia del “Il Risorgimento Grafico” di Raffaello Bertieri [...]”. See: <http://www.campografico.org/whatis>. Retrieved March 2020.

⁴² See quotation on *Campo Grafico* website: <http://www.campografico.org/whatis>. Retrieved March 2019.

⁴³ For a theoretical treatment of Antonio Boggeri and his studio, see: Fossati, P., Sambonet, R. 1974. *Lo studio Boggeri 1933-1973, Comunicazione visuale e grafica applicata*, Milan: Pizzi; Chiappini, C., ‘Antonio Boggeri. Considerazioni su un protagonista della grafica italiana’, *Ricerche di S/Confine*, 3 (2012), pp. 138-148.

the interwar period and how European art, such as Swiss and German, influenced Italian artists. Indeed, Boggeri and his studio nurtured innovation. Modern events such as the international artistic influences resulting from the *Triennale*; specialist magazines; Studio Boggeri in Italian graphic design during the 1930s, marked a clear distinction between the progression of publicity for commercial products and the distinctive identity of advertising for cinema. Moreover, the graphic arts of the 1930s significantly contributed to strengthening ties between advertising strategies, graphic design, marketing innovation, and arts. This triggered greater awareness in the industry of different needs and aspirations increasingly held by society. Further, it laid the groundwork for the subsequent establishment of American advertising agencies in Italy (mostly during the 1950s). In the 1930s, the industrial client had become increasingly conscious of the role of graphic arts in advertising for commercial success (Chiappini, 2012). Therefore, there was interface between industry/marketing requirements and the need to attract attention with a functional and alluring visual message. In light of this rapidly evolving need and the growth of a competitive landscape, the power of imagery was likely to grow further during and following the Second World War, and to an even greater extent during the 1950s and 60s. This growth was essentially linked to two factors: first, as Emanuela Scarpellini puts it, ‘La crescita dei consumi privati e il lancio dei nuovi prodotti sul mercato spingono molte più imprese a utilizzare forme pubblicitarie’ (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 204), the effects of which were based on consumer studies.⁴⁴ Second, ‘la contemporanea moltiplicazione dei media a disposizione contribuisce a dare alla pubblicità una visibilità sociale che prima non aveva’ (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 205). This social visibility strengthened the power of the advertising image.

Before and during the war, the images of propaganda used by dictatorships reinforced

⁴⁴ Those studies spread from America. Cf. Kotler, P. (1967) *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, and Control*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall; Toninelli, P.A. (2006) *Storia d'impresa*, Bologna: Il Mulino.

the link between cultural media and political power, in Italy and elsewhere. Governments recognised that product personalization⁴⁵ was critical to political and ideological success, but could also apply to business. The fascist regime exploited the *manifesto* for rhetorical purposes to extend a message of despotic and unquestionable power to the entire nation; at the same time, fascism used this medium in order to make the regime appear closer and more familiar through reassuring and involving slogans. The figurative style of such images was predominantly monumental, with a bottom-up perspective to glorify a heroic quality, and with the body as the recurrent focus of representation (Pinkus, 1995). This is stereotypical of dictatorships. The regime is represented through a few clear but simple signs, ‘to forge new bonds of loyalty and new symbols of nationhood’ (De Grazia and Furlough, 1996, p. 338). The image was always supported by a static, or even more ornamental, easily readable lettering (Baroni and Vitta, 2012).⁴⁶

Gino Boccasile (1901-1952) was one of the most representative artists of the fascist regime.⁴⁷ He began to produce propaganda for the regime in the 1930s. His was a personal, recognisable, graphic, and pictorial style: simple, but with high visual impact. Boccasile was typically associated with provocative and glowing figures of women, which dominated his work. The ‘tacit’ control of consumer culture by the regime was also intended, as Victoria De Grazia puts it, ‘to define women’s roles in Italian public life’ (De Grazia and Furlough, 1996,

⁴⁵ An expression which refers to a sign of recognition, and identifies a product studied *ad hoc* for the target it has to reach (and persuade). As Antonio Boggeri puts it when discussing the ‘brand’, which identifies a product for a specific industry, “[...] immediata identificazione, assenza di confusione, alto indice di ricordabilità e durata nel tempo. [...] il marchio assolve un compito fondamentale della comunicazione visiva, stabilire un certo rapporto tra azienda e mercato, fra prodotto e consumo”. Boggeri, A. (1969) ‘Appunti sul marchio’, in *Linea Grafica*, 3, pp. 204-205.

⁴⁶ Propaganda posters in this period used serif (more ornamental) and sans-serif (more precise and clean) typefaces. The sans serif typeface *Semplicità*, inspired by the Bauhaus *Futura*, was one of those used in this period.

⁴⁷ He formalised his adhesion to fascism in 1938 by supporting the *Leggi razziali fasciste*. In 1940, he was designated propaganda graphic artist by the War Office. In the post-war years he launched his own graphic art agency dedicating his work to advertising campaigns. Cf. Boccasile, G. (1981) *La signorina Grandi Firme*, Milano: Longanesi; Biribanti, P. (2009) *Gino Boccasile. «La signorina grandi firme» e altri mondi*, Roma: Castelvechi.

p. 338);⁴⁸ thus, they were a recurrent subject of public display in advertising posters, magazines covers and so forth. This use of women in advertising was also due to the increased involvement of women in ‘the new arenas of commercial culture’ (De Grazia and Furlough, 1996, p. 340) which led to their increasingly important role as proactive consumers. The women depicted by Boccasile, with their alluring smiles and poses, prosperous and buxom figures,⁴⁹ were the perfect representation of optimism in the 1930s and 1940s, a message the regime was keen to spread. However, Boccasile also depicted these women using a modern, sexualised feminine image. His twofold interpretation of the woman’s image is evident in the illustrations for the magazine *Grandi Firme*,⁵⁰ for which the artist illustrated covers during 1937-38. Starting in the mid-1920s, the magazine became ‘la rivista alla moda della buona borghesia italiana’ (Luti, 1989, p. 264), and led Italian fashion at the time. The ‘Signorina Grandi Firme’ became ‘la diva del momento col suo stile Novecento’, as per an Italian folk-song,⁵¹ emphasising frivolous, but modern feminine behaviour.⁵²

Having examined the development of interwar graphic design, the next section will explore the historical context of the pre-war generation of poster designers for film advertising in Italy. Early in the twentieth century, the film industry began to exploit the limited resources available to film promotion and began to share and publicise the early efforts of the ‘cinematograph’ in Italy. The market was not as large or competitive as it would become later

⁴⁸ More explicitly, the roles of “mothers, welfare claimants, workers and consumers” (De Grazia and Furlough, 1996, p. 340).

⁴⁹ This is significant as such features mainly represent (and honour) the role of mother, to which fascism relegated the feminine figure.

⁵⁰ “Le Grandi Firme”: Italian magazine founded by Pitigrilli (pseudonym of Dino Segre) edited in Turin between 1924 and 1939. It was a magazine of humorous novels and licentious stories by famous Italian and international writers of the time. Cf. Bribanti, P. (2009).

⁵¹ Cf. the 1938 folk song *Signorina Grandi Firme* by Carlo Moreno & Trio Lescano: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ngjau80OwDI>>. Retrieved May 2020.

⁵² This feminine model also become inspiration for one of the first *concorsi di bellezza* (named ‘Signorina Grandi Firme’) whose first edition come out in 1938. The winner of the contest *Signorina Grandi Firme* was the Italian theatre and cinema actress Barbara Nardi, pseudonym of Adelaide Barbara Ambrosioni (1917-2011). Cf. Quartieri, S., n.d., *A Miss Italia arriva la fascia della “Signorina Grandi Firme”: le cinque curvy che la conquistano accedono alle prefinali*, Leggo, viewed December 2019, <https://www.leggo.it/spettacoli/televisione/miss_italia_fascia_grandi_firme_cinque_curvy-4626530.html>.

(from the end of the 1920s⁵³ and early 1930s), and the marketing needs were simple and more constrained than during the following decades. Therefore, sophisticated advertising was not yet a necessity for film producers. Over the 1930s and 1940s, with abrupt changes in the historical, economic, and social scenario, the film industry adapted its priorities to deal with an increasingly competitive market. From the perspective of media and communications, Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robin state that, ‘In the face of changing market conditions and the globalization of competition, we are increasingly seeing the emergence of new corporate structures that are driven by strategies to achieve flexibility and to sustain competitiveness’ (Aksoy and Robins, 1992, p. 1). The marketing strategy has since perfected and refined its tools, aiming to maximise results. Therefore, the film industry saw that visual messages and iconic images had a robust, productive power to boost business, and they aimed at catching the attention of, and ultimately persuading, a wider public with an increasingly frenetic lifestyle to watch a particular film.

2.5 Development of mass advertising: the first generation of *pittori di cinema*

The chapter, so far, has shown how arts and advertising began to interact, with an emphasis on the iconographic application to the advertising material for cinema. As a function of that, artists became part of a broader cultural and industrial project to experiment with a visual language in line with the times. Moreover, during the inter-war period, to quote Bianca Gaudenzi, ‘Il quadro pubblicitario si presenta come un mosaico estremamente frammentato e in continua evoluzione, da cui [...] emergono due “correnti” principali, gli “artisti” e i “tecnici” della pubblicità’ (Gaudenzi, 2017, p. 44). However, this distinction has resulted in the progressive establishment of a scientific method as applied to advertising, which consolidated in the post-

⁵³ During the 1920s Italian cinema was in crisis; but in the 1929 Alessandro Blasetti directed a silent drama film named *Sole* (“The dawn of the Fascist film” (Reich and Garofalo, 2002, p. 235)), which marked a slow revival of Italian cinema (Brunetta, 2008).

war years following the import of American advertising agencies into Italy (see chapter three). The stylistic variety which informed commercial advertising, along with the distinction which emerged between artists and advertisers, lead to a greater discrepancy between commercial publicity and film advertising. This section will explore the development of advertising for cinema, marking the transition from artists to the first generation of *pittori di cinema*. This first generation were trained during the early twentieth century and were mostly active in the film industry during the 1930s until early 1960s.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was still a connection between the emergence of industrialisation and its slow, gradual development (at least in Italy), and the co-occurrence of the concept of ‘popular culture’. In this context, the latter is considered a logical consequence of industrialization and its proximity to mass cultural production such as the film *manifesto* of the post-war years. The question of popular culture is extensively addressed, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, by John Storey (Storey, 2015), with its definition widely debated among scholars in the field of cultural studies (such as Burke 2017 and Stramaglia 2016).⁵⁴ In relation to popular culture, the following analysis of the first generation of graphic artists associated with cinema will make use of the definition of popular culture as referring to a cultural product of and for people who are not yet fully exposed to a (mass) consumerist way of life. The film *manifesto* has been seen as a social product that took inspiration from the contemporary lifestyle but also promoted a new concept of modernisation inspired by external cultural phenomena (for instance, magazines and art exhibitions), and targeting a wide range of people. Historians such as Forgacs and Gundle have assessed the development of mass culture and consumption in Italy between the mid-1930s and the mid-1950s. They argued that ‘[...] In the act of consuming cultural products, people assimilate their

⁵⁴ Burke, P. (2017) *Popular culture in early Modern Europe*, London: Routledge; Stramaglia, M. (edited by) (2016) *Pop education: chiaroscuro pedagogici nella cultura di massa*, Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.

socially shared meanings by literally incorporating them [...]’ (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007). Hence, the connections between socio-cultural changes and the phenomenon of consumption can be seen as complementary, leading to a process of unplanned, and indistinct, assimilation of visual imagery. This gradually resulted in a collective transformation of social behaviour, which “integrated people into a more consumerist way of life” (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007). Moreover, in light of historical and social transitions, a more consumerist way of life indicates an evolution in the role of the artist engaged in the cultural and industrial process. Artists adjusted their own social roles and their contribution as part of a broader cultural system that was under development. Artists offered their creative ability to the service of industry and its products.

The way through which Mauzan and Franzoni had implemented stylistic features from *Art Nouveau* into their film *manifesti* (see section 2.3) was distinctive in early advertising for cinema. The *manifesto* ‘absorbed’ trends from fine arts, and graphic artists tended to showcase their artistic abilities and influences (Brunetta, 2002). The typographical innovations launched by the Futurist movement (for instance, the utilization of typography as a visual element, engaging the expressive force of words),⁵⁵ were equally significant for the establishment of graphic arts and advertising. However, they were mostly met with opposition from the conservative wing of Italian typographers (Vinti, 2015) and managers in the film industry. As a matter of fact, the revolutionary significance of the avant-garde movements cited above (for instance, Futurism and the modernism of Art Deco in the 1930s) did not lead to an imminent acquisition of the same type of language for film *manifesti* from the 1930s onwards. Instead, the figurative representation of a film emerges from the collaboration between a graphic artist and an industrial press secretary, or their behest. This figurative representation imported the use of pictorial realism through an expressive medium more closely linked to cinema: the

⁵⁵ Cf. Cundy, D. (1981) ‘Marinetti and Italian Futurist Typography’, *Art Journal*, 41, pp. 349-352.

photograph. In the late twentieth century, the latter has generally replaced illustration, as mentioned above. With few exceptions, non-photographic illustration would continue to dominate film *manifesti* in Italy for the period under consideration in this thesis (1945-1969). Indeed, this commitment to illustration came to be an identifying feature of *italianità* in film *manifesti*. Moving forward through the development of the artistic film *manifesto*, specific characteristics of the work of *pittori di cinema* can be identified and remain evident until the 1960s. The first generation of *pittori di cinema*, developed a distinct visual and cultural language. This language was more artistically oriented in comparison to the second generation of *pittori di cinema* (from 1945 to the 1970s), because these precursors usually had an academic artistic background, having received training at traditional artistic centres, such as fine arts academies (Della Torre, 2014), as evident from the two examples in section 2.3. This was also the case for the first generation of *pittori di cinema*, such as Anselmo Ballester (1897-1974), who trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome before running advertising for cinema; as well as Luigi Martinati (1893-1983), who attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, and Alfredo Capitani (1895-1985), who, despite starting as a scenographer, trained at the English Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. These artists were more commonly associated with a broader field of artistic practice, ultimately with a commercial aim, but not with the graphic arts, and found themselves on balancing art and function.⁵⁶ Therefore, Italian scholars referred to them as *pittori di cinema*, that is, painters who applied their artistic ability to the commercial ends of film industry.

The distinction between fine arts and commercial arts was less evident than in subsequent years (from 1945-1950s), when advertising structure, organization, and professional recognition for the activity in Italy of graphic design emerged. From a purely

⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that the professional figure of the graphic designer was born and trained in America (1922). This likely explains why the expression entered into common use in Italian following the Second World War. Cf. Newark, Q. (2002) *What is graphic design?* Hove: RotoVision SA.

practical point of view, most artists from the first generation dealt with technical limitations in the progress of their artwork until the 1940s, due primarily to the use of a timeworn lithographic method. In fact, because the *manifesto* was hand-made, it was a common (and good) practice only to use flat colours to ensure effective output from the printing process (Verdone, 1981).⁵⁷ The outcome being that reproductions were faithful to the original artwork (Vecchia, 2003).

Nistri described the first generation of graphic artists who dedicated their work to illustration for cinema as ‘I più anziani, da noi molto ammirati’,⁵⁸ as I will examine in more depth in chapter three. This well-respected group included Ballester, Martinati, and Capitani. Their work has been partially examined by international and Italian scholars (Verdone, 1981; Dell’Anno and Soccio, 1984; Maioli, 1993; Kehr, 2003; Marinozzi, 2011). In 1945, these artists founded and promoted a production company for cinema *manifesti*, known as BMC – from the initials of their surnames (Kehr, 2003). Ballester, considered the forefather of the post-war generation of *pittori di cinema*, expressed his creativity through a pictorial language that made his *manifesti* distinctive and recognisable. Michele dell’Anno and Matteo Soccio include quotes from Ballester’s notes in their book; these notes express his views on artists working for cinema: ‘Il cartellonista per il cinema dovrebbe riunire in sè tutte le qualità del pittore, del ritrattista, illustratore, decoratore....e avere nella mente una sfarzosa “tavolozza” di colori, e fertilità di idee preferibilmente geniali’ (Dell’Anno and Soccio, 1984). Ballester’s illustrations echo the diverse artistic qualities crucial to be effective as a *pittore di cinema*, which are also evidenced in his thousands of film *manifesti*. Indeed, he paid great attention to the expressive use of colour, tending toward dramatic effects, and this became a key characteristic in his paintings.⁵⁹ One of his stylistic signatures for illustrating film *manifesti* was the use of one

⁵⁷ Devised in 1796 by Alois Senefelder, the lithographic method is a printing technique of images on paper (or other suitable material). The printing is performed using a treated stone or a metal plate with a smooth surface on which, after the engraving, oil-based ink are applied.

⁵⁸ See in Appendix One, the transcript of Nistri’s interview.

⁵⁹ See examples of Ballester’s works, such as: the *manifesto* for the 1940 *Spie*, by Arthur Maria Rabenalt; the *manifesto* for the 1945 *Roma città aperta*, by Roberto Rossellini; the draft (1950) for the 1939 *Ombre rosse*

predominant image, typically oversized in comparison to the rest of the illustration, and this was often a portrait of the film's main characters. These characters are often enveloped in coloured silhouettes that are clearly distinct from the concise design of the plot narrated 'below' them. The entire illustration was usually designed on different levels and accompanied by scenes from the film in the background, the latter often shadowy or simply set as background through the use of darker colours (Fig. 10-11).

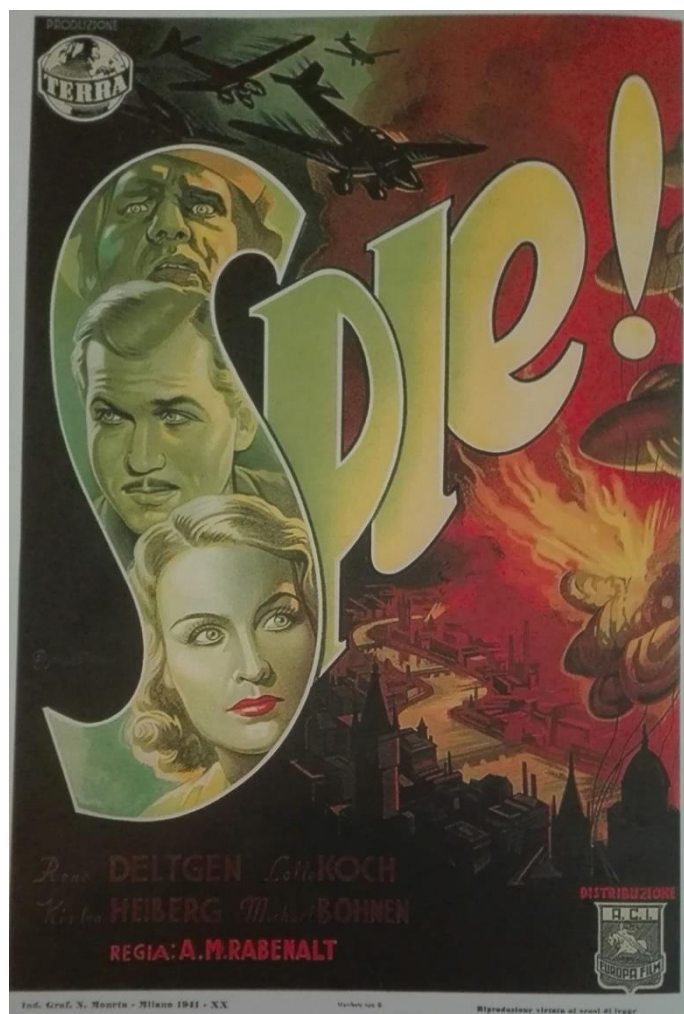


Figure 10

[Stagecoach], by John Ford; the 1951 *Morte di un commesso viaggiatore* [Death of a Salesman], by László Benedek.



Figure 11

Critically, post-war *pittori di cinema* were preceded by a first generation of precursors who established artistic and figurative patterns and styles for subsequent, post-war generations of artists to follow. The established approach of the first-generation artists to representing films in *manifesti* had roots in a cultural milieu where the display of artistic ability in commercial arts was essential to the work as a poster designer per se, and an inherent result of their training. For this reason, the pre-war *pittori di cinema* had more in common with artists identified with fine arts practices than they did with graphic designers. However, they were consciously oriented toward another field of artistic production with a commercial scope. Ultimately, their expressive medium did not have yet a form of professional recognition, such as a more specialistic terminology to define their practice; but rather, it was still part of the ‘commercial arts’ targeted to the mass society on a broader scale.

The artistic approach taken by the first generation of *pittori di cinema* was in line with the marketing needs of the time, which were in flux. For instance, this artistic modality had to respond to advertising developments in the modern world. Still, it was also a direct consequence of the fusion of Italian tradition with a new means of mass communication. The foundation established by the trio Ballester, Martinati, and Capitani set a benchmark for the second generation of *pittori di cinema* who were encouraged to adjust their work to be consistent with the artistic style of such precursors. As Michele dell'Anno argued, 'La generazione successiva a Ballester, Capitani e Martinati, (Geleng, Longi, Casaro, Ciriello, De Seta, Olivetti, Nistri) sarà costretta, dalla committenza, a rifarsi all'esperienza della B.C.M. mancando l'appuntamento con una possibile evoluzione dell'affisso cinematografico' (Dell'Anno and Soccio, 1984, p. 193).

2.6 An overview of European film *manifesti*: pre- and post-war period.

This chapter examined the transition from the predominant artistic and artisanal nature of Italian graphic art and its practitioners to a more technical and professional one. Graphic arts would then begin to firmly establish its cultural identity from this new context (Baroni and Vitta, 2012) without neglecting aesthetic appeal. This transition involved European countries in different ways and degrees. Criteria of development within mass consumption were established according to each country's cultural, economic, and social conditions and in line with specific objectives of mass communication. In the period between WWI and WWII, the first graphic design courses emerged in France, Germany and Switzerland. This marked a turning point in the advertising industry's transition from illustration to graphic design.⁶⁰ From the 1910s, advertising posters for cinema started to gain a 'position as the most popular form

⁶⁰ Cf. International Poster Gallery, n.d., *A Brief History of the Poster*, International Poster, viewed 4 March 2021, <<https://www.internationalposter.com/a-brief-history-of-the-poster/>>.

of mass entertainment' worldwide (Smith, 2018, p. 8). This media evolved in conformity with the increasingly industrial society.

In order to cogently situate the particular *italianità* of film *manifesti* discussed in this thesis, it is worth giving an illustrated overview of the broader European context of film *manifesti* in the pre- and post-war period. As previously mentioned, 'Posters as persuasive arts in society' (Gowans, 1984) have responded to needs connecting with the socio-cultural scenario in which they were produced; therefore, posters in each country came to reflect their society's distinct culture. During the 1920s, when Art Nouveau and Art Deco were (still) influencing advertising arts in some European countries such as Italy, France and England, German expressionism and Soviet constructivism were having a significant influence on cinema, and this was artistically reflected in film posters, too (Smith, 2018). In Germany, there was a revival of nationalism. German expressionist posters embraced it by producing something wholly German. One of the graphic artists involved in promoting German films was Otto Stahl-Arpke (1886-1943), the author of several posters for one of the most famous expressionist films, the silent horror movie *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920).



Figure 12



Figure 13

Emotional, non-realistic features are combined with chiaroscuro lighting while also implementing a dramatic use of colours and typography. The use of these elements were effective in projecting Dr. Caligari's psyche and subjective view of the world (Smith, 2018). Arpke's film poster depicts all these expressionist elements that physically transform a given world (Fig. 12). In the poster for the drama *Der blaue Engel* (Josef Von Sternberg, 1930) strong, bright colours typical of German expressionism remain (Fig. 13). However, what emerges in this second example is the predominant use of the feminine star in close-up (Marlene Dietrich) and another main character in the background. The cinematic best practice of shaping the image of a 'star' - typical in Hollywood since the 1910s - started to appear in Europe and was used as a central tool with which films were sold to audiences.

At the time, Russian poster art was characterised by a new design style, identified as constructivism. It was initially influenced by Russian futurism and suprematism and later incorporated photomontage (Smith, 2018) and bold geometric forms. Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956) was one of the most prolific artists of the constructivism movement and designer of one of the posters (Fig. 14) for the Soviet silent film *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925). Along with other artists involved in producing film posters, such as Anatoly Belsky (1896-1971),⁶¹ Rodchenko contributed heavily to the development of this radical poster style. These artists 'possessed their own form of montage, splicing together disparate images to create a coherent whole' (Smith, 2018, p. 47).

⁶¹ One of Belsky's key film poster of constructivism is shown in Figure 15, *5 Minutes* (A.S. Balagin, G.M. Zelondgev, Shipov, 1929).



Figure 14

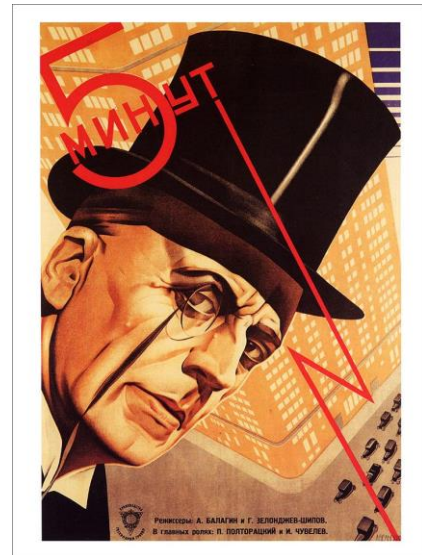


Figure 15

In France during the pre- and post-war years, Rene Péron (1904-1972) was one of the most prolific graphic designers involved in promoting cinema. Although he began from the Art Deco style, he tended toward eclectic pictorial design in the 1920s with particular attention to bold colours and expressive portraits, as shown in the film posters below. The poster designed for *La passion de Jeanne D'arc* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1928) in figure 16, and the other for *L'homme de Londres* (Henri Decoin, 1943) in figure 17, show the characters' portrait and a diegetic component as the predominant strategy for film promotion. Both works also pay greater attention to the typographic design, often using a font that complemented and supported the genre.⁶²

⁶² Cf. Adrian Curry, 2012, *Movie Poster of the Week: "The Passion of Joan of Arc" and the Widescreen Posters of René Péron*, MUBI, viewed 4 March 2021, <<https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/movie-poster-of-the-week-the-passion-of-joan-of-arc-and-the-widescreen-posters-of-rene-peron>>.

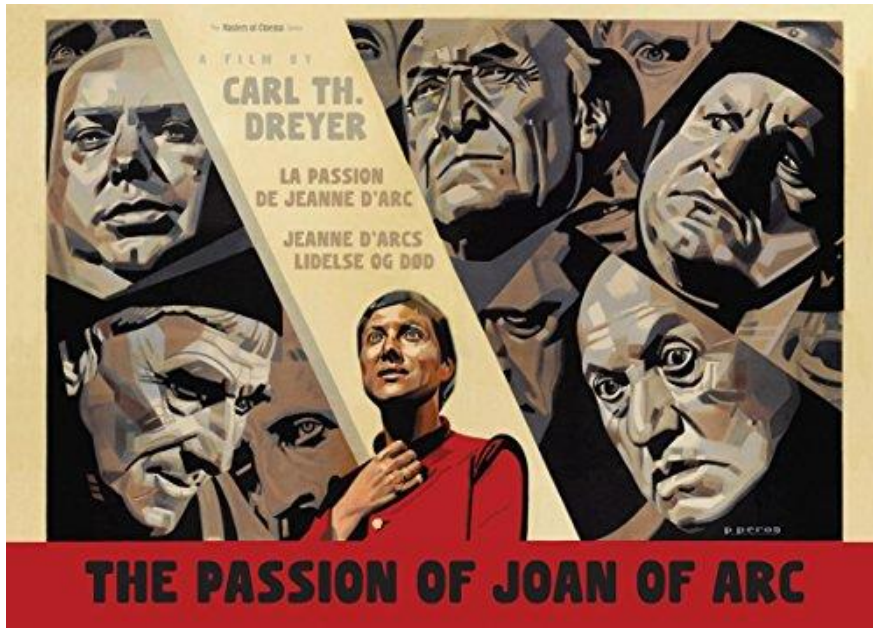


Figure 16



Figure 17

As Smith puts it, ‘Many 1920s designs featured a scene from a film, but in the 1930s the focus shifted onto the stars that appeared in the films or the characters they played’ (Smith, 2018, p. 55), although often those stars were represented as just floating heads.

By the 19th-century in Britain and Italy, text-heavy posters printed from woodblocks were commonplace. Still, the rise of colourful pictorial posters did not come about until the

middle of the century, after significant advances in printing techniques.⁶³ Examples of film posters of the 1930s for British productions (Fig. 18-19) show how the excessive use of bright colours creates a powerful visual effect on the viewers, neglecting any realistic dimension in the design's composition. The film poster created for the sci-fi drama *Things to Come* (William Cameron Menzies, 1936) in figure 18 displays a futuristic and otherworldly image. It is richly coloured and the name of the British science fiction writer H. G. Wells dominates its centre alongside the title; figurative elements related to the plot are drawn as an outline of the more central lettering. The same criterion in the graphic composition of the drawing was adopted for the poster promoting the thriller *The 39 Steps* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1935). However, the design here conforms to a thriller-romance genre and the subsequent need to display more straightforward, unadorned images with realistic depictions of characters (Fig. 19).



Figure 18



Figure 19

⁶³ Victoria and Albert Museum, n.d., *A Short History of the Poster*, VAM, viewed 4 March 2021, <<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/a-short-history-of-the-poster>>.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Italian neorealist phenomenon profoundly influenced future film movements and reinforced how Italian graphic artists visually interpreted film plots. Artists sought to maintain that naturalistic feature that always characterised Italian *manifesti* for cinema. Thus, film *manifesti* tended to represent their subjects conventionally, using a realistic approach to the figures that usually resulted in a design able to capture ‘the passion of the filmmakers and their narratives’ (Smith, 1997, p. 87). In contrast, film posters from other European countries favoured a polymath approach to the imagery that represented international films through a cultural, local perspective. An interesting example is given by one of the French posters for the Italian film *Roma città aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945), displayed in figure 20.



Figure 20

The poster shows the climax of the film. There is a close-up of a Nazi soldier clutching the arm of the female protagonist Pina (played by Anna Magnani), standing next to her son; in the background, the brutality of Nazi rule is conveyed through the bloodstain that runs through the

street where silhouettes, representing terrified civilians, are seen fleeing. Stylistically, the French poster adopted the figurative lexicon of political and propaganda posters: few essential colours, a predominance of red, black and white; thick, black lines and silhouettes; the figures have a stiff, formal demeanour with no emotional register.

For British comedy production, posters like the one for *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, 1949) and another for *Whisky Galore!* (Alexander Mackendrick, 1949) show a combination of pictorial motifs and photographs alongside a predominant use of lettering as an integral part of the figurative representation (Fig. 21-22).



Figure 21

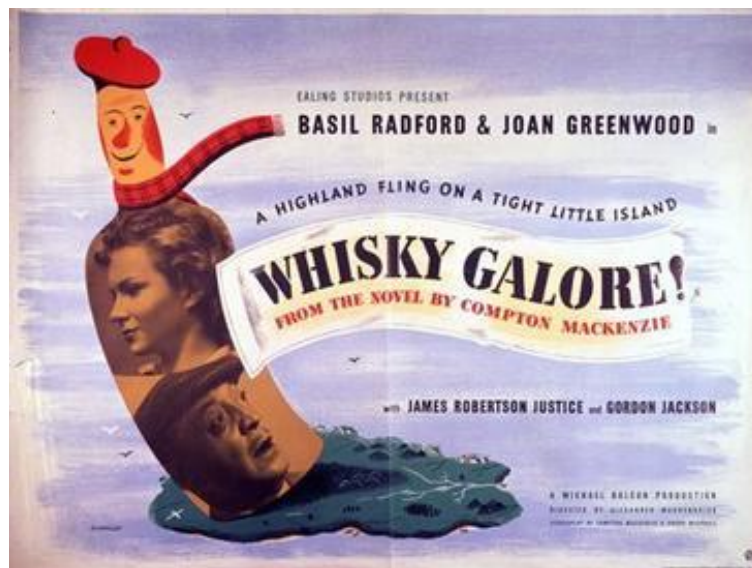


Figure 22

Having briefly explored the figurative nature of a selected number of European film posters in the pre- and post-war period, this section shows how they move from conventional artwork to bolder images that generally reflected the film genre and, more importantly, local and cultural conventions rooted in the country where the poster was produced.

2.6.1 Influence of Hollywood and US culture in post-war Italy

In order to frame the subsequent comparative analysis of Italian *manifesti* of American films and their original posters that will follow in this thesis, this sub-section outlines the historical context that fostered the relationship between America and Italy from the pre-war period, under the Fascist regime, to the aftermath of the Second World War.

It is possible to essentially identify two different moments in the reception of the American influence in Italy. During the Fascist regime and up to the Second World War ‘La conoscenza dell’America e la ricezione del suo modello sociale fu assai frammentaria, lacunosa e spesso rifiutata. Prima dalle élites politiche del periodo giolittiano, poi dalla cultura fascista, che vedeva nell’americanismo e nel bolscevismo due facce della stessa medaglia. [...] tuttavia, è indiscutibile che il mito dell’America fosse prepotentemente presente, minacciosamente democratico, potenzialmente destabilizzante gli assetti di una società profondamente diseguale’ (Donno, 2003). During the interwar period, as David Schmitz puts it, American leaders were working on a plan to restore Europe’s economy and to control the Bolshevik threat in Europe. These interests and concern with order and stability led American policymakers to support Fascism and Mussolini’s coming to power, despite the fact that such endorsement was against U.S. ideals (Schmitz, 1988). During the inter-war period in Italy there was an increase in public consumption; ‘Si tratta di consumi collegati al tempo libero: educazione, sport, cultura, divertimento’ (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 104), to which the regime had a pragmatical interest as a means of organizing consensus. This impulse to leisure and cultural consumption

was coming from the United States (Scarpellini, 2008). Hence, it was mostly through commercial and cultural products that United States have been able to export their power exploiting market's speed and its extension capability (De Grazia and Di Stefano, 1985). For instance, as a matter of fact, 'Hollywood has dominated cinema and the movie poster market since the early days' (Smith, 2018, p. 8) increasing, particularly during the 1920s, its 'foothold as the world's largest film industry' (Smith, 2018, p. 27). Notwithstanding, as it is widely known, the years following the Second World War were those that set forth the triumph of Americanism. Indeed, although the expression *mito americano* was introduced in the inter-war period, and 'used to refer to the intense interest in the United States that was manifested by a small number of Italian intellectuals' (Dunnett, 2005, p. 109), such as Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini, the relationship between Italy and United States was definitely cemented thanks to the Marshall Plan stipulated in 1948 (Gundle, 2002). At a time when the Italian economic and social system was undergoing drastic change as a result of the modernization phenomenon; arguably, the Marshall Plan guaranteed American cultural hegemony and economic expansion in Europe and especially in Italy. Hence, '[...] It was the Americans who were seen to hold the keys to the future, and who went on to provide most of the aid, money and propaganda, including a grand backlog of Hollywood films' (Alexander, 2006, p. 256).

In terms of transnational cultural influences between America and Italy, it is of a certain interest that, as De Grazia pinpoints, 'Nuovi prodotti e stili travalicavano così i confini dello stato e minacciavano di sovvertire quelle abitudini e quegli assunti nascosti che erano sottesi al consenso sociale condizionando il tempo libero, i ruoli di genere e il costume sessuale e che erano rimasti incontestati anche dalle opposizioni politiche' (De Grazia and Di Stefano, 1985, p. 96). Therefore, the idea of 'modernity' coming from the United States, which included political, socio-cultural and economic significances, were about to collide with a still traditional and pre-industrial culture, enabling the development of new forms of hegemony and control in

the cultural sphere (Forgacs, 1990). At the aftermath of the Second World War, those type of imports from America to Italy certainly determined a series of socio-cultural, political conflicts and temporary negotiations, involving the growing interest between the cultural industries and the state (Forgacs, 1990), but also between mass consumption and new social habits and lifestyle.

From the perspective of the cinema industry's development, the Hollywood empire has gradually established a global phenomenon, acting as a model to be matched by any advanced industrial civilization (Abruzzese, 2011). Stephen Alexander has evidenced how 'Well aware that the distinguished Italian film industry lay in tatters [at the aftermath of the WWII], the big American studios sent over 600 films in 1946, and even more in following years: by 1948 the figure was 668' (Alexander, 2006, p. 257). One of the tools used by the American cinema industry to expand the horizon of its advertising splendour was the star system, reinterpreted in Italy through a local *divismo*, which selected and filtered adaptations from American inspiration (Alexander, 2006). This phenomenon developed into the most fascinating and efficient marketing approach adopted by the film industry in an ever-growing capitalistic, consumer society.

Against this background, it is reasonable to conclude that American film posters play a substantial role in this thesis as a benchmark for the Italian production of film *manifesti*. However, as will be emphasised through the following chapters, this influence was embraced only to a certain extent. Beyond this, *pittori di cinema* and the Italian market established unique aesthetic, stylistic and narrative components that responded to local socio-cultural influences and needs, which will be thoroughly analysed in the following chapters.

2.7 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter has established the context from which later artists involved in the promotion of cinema emerged. The initial focus was on the cultural development, which recognised the decline of the nineteenth century educated elite, and the gradual emergence of a modern consumer society (Colombo, 1997). This transition has been well represented by products of such developing cultures: from the typographical *manifesto* to the artistic one. Therefore, the progression of the artistic and commercial interplay in relation to the practice of film advertising has been analysed. This interplay led to the implement of greater functional aspects and marketing advance towards the mid-twentieth century. The Italian approach to advertising *manifesti* began to undergo modernization around the early twentieth century, becoming more strategic in the process. For instance, the simple model of the typographical *manifesto* for cinema was replaced just before the 1910s by a combination of visual and written language that was used to more effectively communicate a message to a broader audience, rather than to a restricted elite. The basis for this change in strategy was later reinforced by studies in psychology⁶⁴ related to cognitive development, according to which, ‘[...] as visually oriented systems, humans are programmed to store more pictures than text in their long-term memories’ (Walston, 2006). This would explain why advertising campaigns engaged with a more effective visual pattern, as an eye-catching instrument, to consolidate the appearance of a product in people’s mind. The immediate result was the creation of a mutual dependency of visual and written components which, combined, enabled a more direct interpretation of consumer goods, cultural events, and so forth by the recipient. Hence, the dual nature of the advertising *manifesto* is suited to interdisciplinary analysis. As arts and advertising inevitably grew co-dependent, so did marketing strategies and aesthetic features. The study of media such

⁶⁴ Among these studies in cognitive psychology, emerged the one by the American Jerome Bruner (1915-2016), from the mid-1940s.

as film *manifesti* – characterized by multiple intersections of diverse disciplinary fields – requires an assessment of their relationship to other media, from which they either took inspiration, or which they represented in some form.

Considering that the focus of my thesis is on analysing the role of artistic creativity in *manifesti*, especially during the time from 1945 to 1969, a more thorough history of the *manifesto* itself and its predecessors (texts for which are available elsewhere)⁶⁵ is beyond the scope of my work. That said, there was an evolution which could be traced back to a typographical film *manifesto* through to an artistic *manifesto*. This is evidence, in itself, that artistic ability and creativity became central to advertising from the beginning of the twentieth century, when the active tendency of consumerism was gradually taking place within society (Colombo, 1997). This marked a revolutionary moment for the promotion of cinema. It transformed the way a film was interpreted, before it was seen, changing in accordance with a lifestyle in flux. Indeed, this transition demonstrated the need to provide robust support to the cultural industry in capturing a more fluid and dynamic society, and visual media rose to the occasion. Progressively, as Fausto Colombo puts it, day-to-day reality dealt with ‘[...] una semplice mobilitazione dello sguardo causata dal movimento consustanziale all’uomo urbano. È in larga misura questa mobilitazione a far emergere sulla superficie della città la comunicazione moderna delle insegne e della pubblicità’ (Colombo, 1997, p. 41). Therefore, film *manifesti* revealed their increasingly effective intermediality not just through verbal signs, but also through the use of artistic trends, such as *Art Nouveau*. This underscores the evolutionary process of this medium; thus, the advertising *manifesto* shows how different ‘material manifestations’ (Rajewsky, 2005), such as illustration and word, merged their

⁶⁵ Della Torre, R. (2014) *Invito al cinema. Le origini del manifesto cinematografico Italiano (1895-1930)*, Milano: EDUCatt; Della Torre, R. and Mosconi, E. (2001) *I manifesti tipografici del cinema. La collezione della Fondazione Cineteca Italiana 1919-1939*, Milano: Il Castoro.

communicative functions with the aim of being more effective in promoting a film to a wider public.

The underlying assumption this chapter has considered is whether the artist had direct involvement in the wider industrial network and what effect their intellectual contribution had on the organizational and promotional mechanism of the cultural industry. In his analysis of graphic designers as exponents of a cultural project, Carlo Vinti argues that, during the post-war years, there was an ongoing effort to interpret industrialization through the use of an aesthetic language (Vinti, 2007). To this end, the artwork of post-war graphic artists was closely connected to the 'ricerca di prestigio culturale da parte della grande impresa' (Vinti, 2007, p. 14), and this explains why graphic artists were described by Vinti as 'esponenti della cultura del progetto'. In light of the points analysed in this chapter, it can be argued that there was an aesthetic function that became integral to advertising, as part of an industrial process, which evidenced 'una società in transito fra le forme della civiltà preindustriale e quelle della cultura di massa' (De Iulio, 1994, bk. 261). Furthermore, this aesthetic ambition establishes itself as a distinctive characteristic of Italian advertising language (Vecchia, 2003). This is consistent with Vinti's point of view on the aesthetic approach to Italian advertising. American corporate advertising during the same time is in marked contrast to the qualities found in the link between Italian art and advertising. This contrast in the approach to film advertising will be developed further in chapter three.⁶⁶ However, a broader illustrated discussion of European film posters in the pre- and post-war period has been outlined in order to situate the peculiar identity of Italian film *manifesti* that is discussed in depth later in this thesis.

⁶⁶ For further details see: Vinti, C. (2016) *Grafica italiana dal 1945 a oggi*, Firenze: Giunti Editore; Vinti, C. and De Iulio, S. (2009) 'The Americanization of Italian advertising during the 1950s and the 1960s: Mediations, conflicts, and appropriations', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 1, pp. 270-294.

Chapter Three

Mass culture: the post-war generation of pittori di cinema

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I contextualize the changes which marked the evolution from the interwar generation of *pittori di cinema* to the post-war generation. These new practices developed at a time when ‘advertising and mass consumption were central elements in what [American observers and European visitors to the USA] understood to be a distinctively “American” version of modernity’ (Arvidsson, 2001, p. 151).¹ In addition, to assess the development of advertising art within mass society, it is useful to examine the definition of popular culture as mass culture, which developed in the wake of the phenomenon of ‘Americanization’ after 1945 (Storey, 2015). Hence, the post-war generation of graphic artists embodied the idea of ‘popular culture’, meeting the demands of a modern mass public. This was in contrast to the first generation, who played the role of cultural mediators during a transition period when their work was still decidedly artistically oriented and in dialogue with a public that was not yet fully exposed to the consumerist way of life.

In my interview with Giuliano Nistri (Rome, 1929) in 2016, Nistri, who was active as a graphic artist in the 1940s-70s, characterised the changes experienced by the post-war *pittori di cinema* as follows: ‘C’è stato un passaggio generazionale. Un cambiamento dovuto proprio al modo di lavorare. Tentavamo un genere pittorico che era un po’ diverso dai nostri predecessori (cartellonisti che avevano lavorato già negli anni prima della guerra); [...] però le [nostre] tendenze pittoriche erano diverse – noi eravamo aggiornati all’epoca in cui vivevamo. Loro venivano da esperienze diverse dalle nostre’.

¹ Cf. Marchand, R. (1985) *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity 1920–40*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

The first part of this chapter is inspired by Nistri's comments here. The quote above is particularly revealing in that four key points can be identified: a generational handover; different historical experiences between first-generation and post-war graphic artists; a change in the approach to their work (including technological development); a renewal in pictorial trends that were more closely aligned to modern times. The relevance of each of these points, which will be outlined further below, is twofold: they are first-hand accounts, and they correspond to the views of other artists I have also encountered and interviewed, such as Tino Avelli (1938) and Silvano Campeggi (1923-2018).²

I argue that a generational handover from the first generation to the post-war graphic artists in the years that immediately followed the Second World War marks a passage from artists trained during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to a post-war cohort of artists working within an era of consumption-oriented mass culture. Interwar arts already mixed with crafts and industrial applications, which led to innovative results and a distinctly Italian style (see chapter two). However, the first generation of graphic artists tended to align more closely to a traditional artistic perspective, likely retaining a greater sense of independent artistic impetus (even if outputs were commercial in nature). Further, artists' views on the practice of *cartellonismo* evolved, which distinguished the first from the second generation of *pittori di cinema*. This is salient because it also identifies a technical development in the approach used by graphic artists. Indeed, from 1945, technological and commercial progress consolidated a refined off-set technique, replacing the complex process of lithographic production (Various authors, 1979). The off-set method consists of the use of indirect printing, employing a planographic matrix.³ It is based on technology that enables 'liquid repulsion' (including water as well as inks and oil), which guarantees high resolution and definition of the

² Cf. (Naitza, 1997).

³ It refers to a flat matrix which during the printing process involves pressing and non-pressing parts at the same level.

final printed image.⁴ This led to a more elaborate pictorial technique from which a more faithful reproduction of the original designs could be obtained (Verdone, 1981).

The post-war pictorial inclination of artists in relation to the latest artistic trends is more challenging to analyse. Its very nature is ambiguous; are all artists not influenced by current trends in their field? Or rather, does each artist not have their own style that distinguishes them from their peers? For instance, Nistri highlighted the need for his generation of *pittori di cinema* to be affiliated with and recognised by the contemporary artistic establishment. Likewise, the first generation of graphic artists involved in the film industry were, undoubtedly, influenced by markedly different socio-cultural experiences from the subsequent generation of artists. Such differences likely manifested as distinctive outputs within graphic art and art movements with their own idiosyncratic creativity and specific sources of inspiration, ultimately leading to their influence over subsequent advertising art and art movements. Since the beginning of the twentieth century (see chapter two), there has been an interweaving between fine arts, avant-garde movements, and advertising art. The result was a relationship involving mutual exchange: does advertising follow the arts or do the arts follow trends set by advertising? In spite of the links between fine arts and its applications, Italian commercial art struggled to delimit its 'sphere of action' up to the post-war years. This also resulted in an unstable terminology (such as, *arte pubblicitaria/artisti pubblicitari*, *cartellonismo/cartellonisti*, *pittori di cinema*, *illustrazione/illustratori*, *grafica pubblicitaria/grafici*, and 'graphic design', an American expression which began to be used in Italy after 1945).⁵ In Italy, therefore, a lack of professional recognition in a formal sense has plagued graphic artists, and this went along with a general difficulty among scholars and the public to identify the creative merits of their

⁴ For further information on the off-set technique see: <<https://minimegaprint.com/blog/stampa-offset-cosa-e-e-come-funziona/>; <https://www.euronotizie.com/2014/07/08/stampa-planografica/>>. Viewed November 2019.

⁵ Cf. Livingston, A. and Livingston, I. (1994) *Graphic Design and Designers*, London: Thames & Hudson.

commercial-artistic activity.⁶ For this reason, the first part of the chapter will highlight how the graphic arts gained initial recognition as a profession with its own specific artistic and commercial requirements.

In this chapter, 1945 is viewed as a watershed moment between two distinctive generations of artists and practices involved in film publicity. It will be argued that after 1945 the advertising system in Italy shifted toward contemporary marketing and its complex, competitive demands. Consequently, the role of graphic artists in the cultural industry evolved as part of this commercial process. Hence, graphic artists wielded a cultural instrument that educated the masses toward a modern, albeit not avant-garde, aesthetic taste. They did so through a widely accessible means of communication that was targeted at all levels of society. This exposure influenced the graphic artist Tino Avelli (1938), for instance, who claimed that graphic artists were, to a considerable extent, ‘great communicators’, who represented the spirit of their time (Naitza, 1997). The actress Claudia Cardinale expressed a similar opinion on those artists who ‘con la loro arte creativa, hanno saputo illustrare volti e storie rimaste per sempre nella memoria popolare’ (Marinozzi, 2011, p. 9), embodying, therefore, that role of communicators to which Avelli referenced. As a means of communication, the *manifesto* was (and still is) at the service of industry (business) as well as civic society, and it spans a wide range of purposes (commercial, political, cultural, etc.). Therefore, the post-war *manifesto* functioned within a multifaceted consumer-driven society and culture. The advertising message spread by film *manifesti* was both an outcome of, and catalyst for, modern mass society; this message, though, was interpreted through the point of view of the individual artist who designed the given *manifesto*. The process of interpreting the advertising message was subject to commercial restrictions, something I will be exploring in greater detail in chapters four and

⁶ For a theoretical treatment of the link between arts and the means of mass communication and the approach by the recipient/society, see: Eco, U. (1964) *Apocalittici e integrati: comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa*, Milano: Bompiani.

five. Regardless of commercial applications, graphic artists were also at the service of a broader cultural project (Vinti, 2015) for which they adopted aesthetic features to publicise products, thus making them more appealing and desirable. This was partly because the cultural industry was aware of the visual power of images and their ability to mould the opinion of the masses, guiding people's tastes in art and orienting their consumer choices. However, the industry could not reach its broad, challenging target if it did not involve 'mediators' who, through their cultural work, could represent and activate the public's needs and aspirations. It is this final point, in my view, that has reinforced the status of the graphic artist as a key societal figure in the age of mass consumption, a perspective that will be explored further in this chapter.

As outlined above, this chapter aims to analyse the role of the graphic artist as social mediator during the onset of mass consumption, since the artist is the catalytic link between art and advertising. The research questions upon which I focus in this chapter include: which historical and cultural changes enabled graphic artists to play the role of active mediators, linking commercial purposes, personal creative needs, and the development of society? In what manner did they contribute to an ever more consumerist lifestyle? Why did American marketing strategies develop into a significant form of commercial pressure on the art produced for film *manifesti*? How did the demands on artists change due to mass consumption and increasingly global commercialization?

To address the research questions which form the focus of this chapter, I will first focus on the differences that arise between the generation of artists before and after the Second World War. Subsequently, the Americanization of marketing in Italy will be assessed; this marked a significant shift in the marketing strategies adopted afterward, and it is particularly important insofar as 'Italians made their transition to consumerism with the aid of American imagery' (Gundle, 2002). The continuity between the pre- and post-war periods will be identified. Subsequently, the chapter will explore how graphic artists faced new challenges regarding the

complex demands of contemporary (competitive) marketing, with the aim of maintaining their creative (yet strategic) approach to the representation of films in *manifesti*. The final sections of this chapter will also shed light on the effect of commercial and cultural influences on visual communication, analysing diverse stylistic responses on the part of the same artist to the same film. Final sections will explore the comparisons between Italian *manifesti* and the *manifesti* from America in order to identify and demonstrate the distinctive qualities of the Italian film *manifesto*.

3.2 The post-war professional graphic artist

In the cultural context of the post-war generation of graphic artists, novel social and economic structures were established. The socio-cultural changes that occurred from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s in Italy generally took place slowly, taking several generations to be accepted and regularly implemented. What radically changed, therefore, was the steady exposure to mass culture and routine use of consumption practices (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007). From the critical stance of cultural consumption in Italy, this section examines some of the cultural changes that enabled graphic artists at the service of cinema to play an active role as mediators, contributing to the increasing development of a consumerist lifestyle. From 1945 onwards, the entrance of mass (visual) communication means into modern Italian culture was legitimated by society's needs. This led to the increased involvement by graphic artists in the industrial creative process. During the post-war period, commercial practices and the cultural industry were restored slowly.⁷ The needs of mass society were based on economic/cultural directions and trends. Gradually, the demand for industrial products that appealed to the general public swelled, with

⁷ This process of reconstruction, during the period 1945 to the end of the 1950s, was characterised by civil and industrial works with the financial support from USA through the 'Piano Marshall'.

the result being greater dissemination of alluring, commercial urban images (Quintavalle, 1977).

In Italy, the artistic tradition accompanied and supported advertising from its inception. It provided this support until the emergence of instruments which enabled more refined printing and reproduction, such as the offset printing system, and more critically the emergence of new digital media in the mid-1970s and 1980s; when the artistic tradition became less important due to economic restrictions. Meeting the three artists Silvano Campeggi, Giuliano Nistri and Tino Avelli made me more aware of still imperceptible, yet understandable, differences in the way these post-war *pittori di cinema* perceive (and perceived) their status and artwork, foregrounding a sense of continuity with the previous generation. To be more accurate, Campeggi (also known as Nano), who welcomed me into the studio where he used to paint, adorned with canvases and pictorial tools, tended to emphasize his reluctance to yield to the pressing commercial demands from the head of the press office, who was untrained in aesthetic matters and solely market-oriented (Naitza, 1997; Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999; Baroni, 2018). Notwithstanding the fact that tension between artistic and commercial concerns was stressed by all the artists I met, it highlights the central need for the *manifesto* to be essentially commercial and led by marketing strategies and the priorities of the press agents. Nonetheless, Campeggi gave the impression of an artist who offered his creativity and ability as a painter and portraitist to the cinema, without allotting higher priority to the key concern of film *manifesti*: their market orientation. This seemed, to him, to undermine what he considered his position among the world's great classical artists.⁸ I believe that, behind his approach, there is a traditional and purely artistic training (whose *maestro* was Ottone Rosai), and the subjective

⁸ Silvano Campeggi was the first artist, among *pittori di cinema*, to expose his artworks in a personal exhibition held in an artistic setting par excellence: *Il Cinema nei Manifesti di Silvano Campeggi: Nano 1945-1969*, Museo Mediceo in *Palazzo Medici Riccardi* in Florence (18th of March-16th of April 1988). See the exhibition's catalogue: *Il Cinema nei Manifesti di Silvano Campeggi: Nano 1945-1969*, 1988, Firenze: Giunti.

vision of his artistic practice which, as he said, aimed to kindle the emotions of the potential spectator (Naitza, 1997). His controversial approach puts him on the borders between the first and second generation of *pittori di cinema*'s.

On the contrary, Nistri (and similarly Avelli) provided a more compelling view on the status of his work that openly referred not to the fine arts for their own sake, but rather, as he said, as 'un mestiere che aveva sicuramente risvolti artistici, però c'era chi pagava e aveva delle esigenze commerciali. Per cui tutto quello che a noi piaceva non era necessariamente funzionale al lancio del film' (Naitza, 1997, p. 80). This perception reveals a realistic and modern vision of the role played by these cultural mediators during the post-war years, as mass consumption and new marketing parameters grew in importance. In these terms, the practice of creating film *manifesti* inscribed itself in the broader context of post-war advertising which, as Silvia Grandi claims, 'comincia la sua escalation verso la conquista del ruolo di voce artistica del grande movimento consumistico, colmando il vuoto culturale delle masse' (Grandi, 2005, p. 2). The dual face of art and publicity gave rise to linguistic ambiguities, such as the ones highlighted in this chapter's introduction, and also to a wider level of professional uncertainty within an Italian context. The provision of work for graphic artists, at the service of cinema, was not stable and so it was difficult to use this as a means for a long-term profession; the limited long-term opportunities for artists may have been a consequence of advertising not being an independent expressive medium, with formal arrangement or well-structured. Indeed, there were problematic issues concerning employment rights; for instance, *pittori di cinema* did not receive a payment for the numerous drafts requested as preliminary work (Longi, 2002). Hence, it is important to evaluate how, up to the 1940s, the category of *pittori di cinema* was not adequately protected by the industry and had limited security and stability. These employment conditions generated anger from groups of graphic artists and led to a series of disturbances at the expense of the film industry. As a consequence, from the 1950s, the

recognition of rights among the group of *pittori di cinema* began to emerge with the establishment of the ANAPUC (*Associazione Nazionale Artisti PUbblitari Cinematografici*)⁹ (Longi, 2002). This recognition was one of the greatest changes in this field in the post-war period and was a key in distinguishing the first generation of *pittori di cinema* from the post-war generation. From this point onwards (the 1950s), this category of graphic artists became eminent professionals, an important feature that emerged from my interviews with Avelli and Nistri.¹⁰ In Nistri's words, 'la figura del designer grafico dagli anni del dopoguerra diviene una figura professionale'.¹¹ This new 'professional figure' may well have trained professionally through courses that specifically addressed posters; this was certainly the case for Avelli who, at the age of eighteen, moved from Catania to Rome to take a training course in *cartellonistica pubblicitaria* after three days of admission examinations.

In the post-war period the ability to illustrate became a crucial feature of the collaborative practices of advertising designers. This led to the use of employment agreements with distribution companies and typographies (Kehr, 2003; Della Torre, 2014). In Nistri's own words: 'La nostra situazione economico-professionale era in rapporto con la casa di produzione ma, ancora piú spesso, con quella di distribuzione'. Likewise, Campeggi noted that he had an agreement primarily with the *Zincografica* press company in Florence. That company agreed to pay him a percentage of the costs associated with the production of printed *manifesti*. Furthermore, from the moment the graphic artists were appointed a systematic procedure was

⁹ National Association for Cinema Advertising Artists'. It was founded to ensure, among other things, increased wages and payment of sketches even when unused. Cf. University of Bologna, n.d., *Pittore cartellonista di cinema*, UNIBO, viewed July 2020, <<http://sbn-ubo.sba.unibo.it/documenti-e-linee-guida/corredo-grafico-e-promozionale-per-il-cinema/allegato-5-pittore-di-cinema>>.

¹⁰ Nevertheless, what is noteworthy is that during the 1970s, some 'unprofessional habits' still remained, e.g., the practice of involving different artists in the early phase of commission who were secretly called to create individual sketches to depict the same film. Take for example the experience of Tino Avelli. He claimed 'Per il manifesto del film di Pasolini [*Il Decameron*, 1971] ci fu una specie di *concorso segreto*. Chiamarono alcuni pittori ai quali fecero vedere, separatamente, il film (questo lo venni a sapere dopo). Ognuno poi propose quello che voleva. Era un argomento delicato, quel film, lo sanno tutti'. Obviously, at the end of this process, the production company only chose one of them (Baroni, 2018, p. 47).

¹¹ I am interpreting this quote within the context of the work produced by graphic artists who engaged in film advertising.

activated whereby they received a set of photographs and film-stills from the production company; very rarely would they watch the film: ‘Piuttosto raramente, perchè se avessimo visto tutti i film che dovevamo rappresentare il manifesto non l’avremmo più realizzato!’ Nistri commented. After selecting several photos, artists would start preparing sketches, and these would lead to drafts that were presented to the distributor or the production company.

While some of the aspects described above show continuity with the first generation of *pittori di cinema*, others demonstrate the development of distinctive features of a modern and professional graphic artist who has entered a deeper relationship with a challenging consumerist mass society and industrial production system. Furthermore, the establishment of the ANAPUC in the 1950s marked a turning point in the recognition of the practice of the *pittori di cinema*. It aimed to guarantee rights to graphic artists working in the film industry, such as the payment of the drafts rather than just for the final *manifesto*, which had previously been neglected.

3.3 A popular, realistic language for film *manifesti*

Figurative motifs and expressive tendencies employed by the post-war generation of *pittori di cinema*, who had been released from contemporary artistic and stylistic trends, addressed the taste of the epoch in which they were living (Naitza, 1997). However, their pictorial language was interwoven with references to earlier graphic art production and the artistic language of their predecessors; they observed the figurative tradition of the film *manifesto*, while at the same time revisiting that language (Brunetta, 2002), thereby, creating something different. Their style evolved towards meeting the requirements of a new mass society that was prone to be fed by the pleasure of consumption and dreams (Gundle, 2002), such as the greater demand

for portraits of stars¹² and, typically, condensed narrative representation.¹³ What remained unchanged was an emphasis on narrative and a preference for naturalistic imagery. In Nistri's words, 'Eravamo aggiornati agli stilemi dell'arte coeva, ma anche autonomi. Perché era un periodo in cui andava un certo tipo di pittura, che non si accostava al genere cartellonistico, perché quest'ultimo doveva narrare il contenuto del film in modo realistico, [soprattutto per quanto riguarda] la rappresentazione degli attori: Mastroianni doveva essere Mastroianni insomma!'. This quote highlights the absence of a need to conform to artistic tendencies prevalent in Italy during the 1950s – focused on Abstraction and/or Informalism.¹⁴ Indeed, the artists of Informalism adopted, as Grandi puts it, 'un registro espressivo votato a dar corpo alle nuove inquietudini esistenziali, che ha ben poco in comune con le esigenze didattiche-educative della pubblicità del periodo' (Grandi, 2005, p. 2). Moreover, moving away from the Italian rationalism established during the 1920s and 1930s that openly served fascist propaganda was a difficult challenge for Italian culture and society, which 'was often discouragingly resistant to change' (Leavitt IV, 2016, p. 5).¹⁵ Replacing the traditional, collective taste using alternative cultural and artistic concepts was even more complex. Hence, that intellectual energy that had flourished and settled in America and Europe (through new forms of artistic movements, such as Abstraction and Informalism), failed to take root within advertising art or the highly influential realm of mass media. However, following the aftermath of the war, Italy gradually

¹² From the 1930s onwards, 'the world of illusion, mystery, seduction and enchantment has been found largely in media representations' (Gundle, 2002, p. 96); it was magnified at the aftermath of the Second World War by a social need of renaissance from the devastation caused by the war. The ideas of illusion, seduction, mystery and enchantment have been embodied, then, by Hollywood 'star system', 'in which dozens of young men and women were groomed and molded into glittering, ideal types whose fortune, beauty, spending power, and exciting lives dazzled the film-going public' (Gundle, 2002, pp. 96–97).

¹³ The growth in condensed narrative representation aimed to deliver the advertising message broadly and with immediate impact, due to an increasingly frenetic lifestyle.

¹⁴ The Italian phenomenon of Informalism was characterised by an elusive nature, which does not allow for easy definitions of the specific common intents of the artists involved. Due to its nature, this artistic movement also included any form of abstract art. For further reading on Informalism see: Pasini, R. (2003) *L'Informale. Stati Uniti, Europa, Italia*, Bologna: CLUEB.

¹⁵ About post-war continuities with fascism, cf. Forgacs, D. (1996) 'Post-War Italian Culture: Renewal or Legacy of the Past', in *Reconstructing the Past: Representations of the Fascist Era in Post-War European Culture*, Batram, G., Slawinski, M. and Steel, D. (edited by), 49–63. Keele: University Press; Focardi, F. (2005) *La guerra della memoria. La Resistenza nel dibattito politico italiano dal 1945 a oggi*. Bari: Editori Laterza.

came out of its autarchic period¹⁶ that had led to its flawed cultural isolationism.¹⁷ Therefore, the artists associated with the *Fronte Nuovo delle Arti* (Renato Guttuso, Giulio Turcato, Mario Mafai, Pietro Consagra, Leoncillo Leonardi), aspired to reconnect their own expressive language to international artistic trends.¹⁸ Indeed, the belated Italian phenomenon of Art Informel – which spread across America and Europe during the 1940s – only developed in Italy during the 1950s around experimentalism neglecting a figurative and realistic essence. Up until the end of the artistic cinema *manifesto* in the late 1970s or early 1980s, any form of expressive language that was not influenced by a figurative realism might have been misconstrued due to a potential lack of clarity. Hence, the advertising message would have been neither functional nor persuasive in terms of its objectives to inform, which aimed to target the broadest possible public and not merely a select elite. The informative nature of a promotion message seeks to connect its own meaning to the consumers' ability to identify it through a search for 'resemblances' belonging to their cultural backgrounds and value system, such as, in this case, that of mass society (Barthes, 1964, 1977; Eco, 1984). Considering that, using André Bazin's words, 'masses [...] identify resemblance on the one hand with photography and on the other with that kind of painting which is related to photography' (Bazin *et al.*, 2004, p. 13), the film *manifesto* seeks to convey the escapist nature of the film represented, and to mimic the essence of a photograph (Della Torre, 2014).¹⁹ After all, the filmic representation enables the 'creation of an ideal world in the likeness of the real, with its own temporal destiny' (Bazin *et al.*, 2004,

¹⁶ National self-sufficiency characterised the fascist economy, specifically between 1936 and 1940, as a response to the economic sanctions received by the League of Nations for Italy's invasion of Ethiopia.

¹⁷ As mentioned in chapter two, the influence of European artistic movements (e.g., the Bauhaus style through the Milan Triennale) is considerable.

¹⁸ Cf. the exhibition catalogue, Alleanza della cultura (organised by), *Prima mostra nazionale d'arte contemporanea*. Bologna, Palazzo Re Enzo, Salone del Podestà, 17 October – 5 November 1948. About the figurative neorealism of the Italian post-war, see Mislser, N. (1973) *La via italiana al realismo – La politica culturale artistica del P.C.I. dal 1944 al 1956*, Milano: Gabriele Mazzotta.

¹⁹ To reinforce the idea of the realistic nature attributed to photography, also connected to the cinema medium, Roland Marchand described the photography as follow, 'Common sense attributed to photography a literal, matter-of-fact realism that contrasted starkly with the exaggerated and emotion-laden abstractions of modern art' (Marchand, 1985, p. 149).

p. 10). Hence, the more realistic the representation of a subject, the more reliable and plausible the content of the film referenced becomes, inasmuch as the film can then be read as a reproduction of reality. Therefore, the resemblance factor was decisive for achieving the involvement of the masses. This explains why *pittori di cinema* were asked to develop artistic ideas within popular and naturalistic pictorial motifs (as Avelli claimed) that supported them in reflecting and propagating the *zeitgeist*. In other words, if the promotional visual message is in a harmonious and clear relationship with the immediate environment, it would be more easily able to activate and intensify interaction with consumers. Thus, by choosing a realistic advertising image, the film industry could effectively communicate the promotional message to the masses. A non-realistic representation of a film was likely to negatively impact sales. Indeed, evidence of a modern artistic language and its ‘unsuitability’ for film *manifesti* is evident from Renato Guttuso’s (1911-1987) experience.²⁰ This famous Italian artist tested his mettle in the art of the *manifesto* for cinema and in 1971 designed the *locandina* for *Per grazia ricevuta*, which had Nino Manfredi as writer, director, and leading actor (CINERIZ production).

²⁰ Under the complex commercial demands, this is a compelling example of the argument, though Renato Guttuso’s art was never abstract; however, it remains challenging to encapsulate Guttuso’s art within the confines of any specific aesthetic vocabulary (he was an exponent of the artistic movement *Fronte Nuovo delle Arti*).

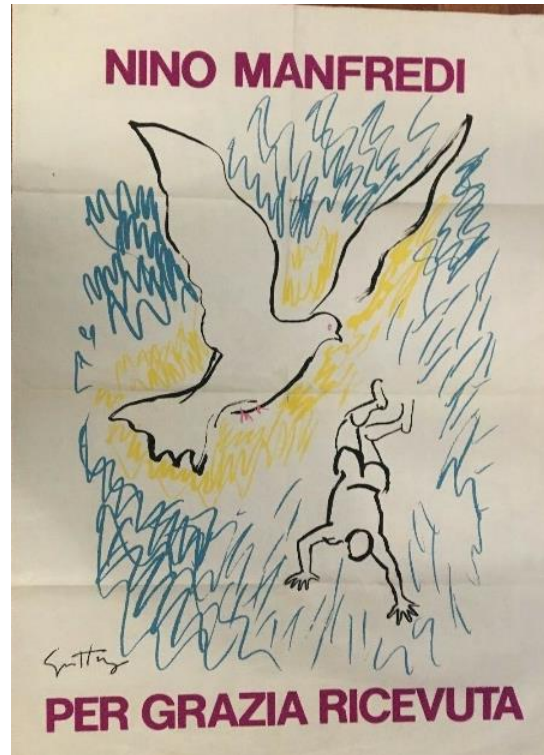


Figure 23



Figure 24

The expressionist design proposed by Guttuso (Fig. 23), composed of a few essential black lines adorned by symbolic elements and colours, was rejected; a design by the graphic artist Alessandro Simeoni (pseudonym Sandro Symeoni, 1928-2007) was chosen instead (Fig. 24). This example outlines two key aspects of the issue in hand. Firstly, that this expressive language, which was far from figurative realism and was inspired instead by avant-garde movements such as Expressionism, Abstraction, Futurism, and other European figurative trends, did not necessarily work coherently with the aim of cinema advertising (which needed to communicate with, and be received by, a majority immersed in popular culture); secondly, that artistic creativity at the service of the film industry was forced into compromise, regardless of the artist's fame. Therefore, *pittori di cinema* had to be aware of marketing needs when they answered commissions for the (elusive) visual interpretation of a film.

The demands of marketing partially limited the artistic impetus of graphic artists to ensure a commercial, condensed illustration; however, it simultaneously challenged their intellectual and creative ambition. Hence, as cultural mediators, *pittori di cinema* were subject to artistic stimuli associated with their cultural background and historical context and tended to respond with their own personal creativity. At the same time, their ability as artisans to create alluring imagery needed to be achieved within the confines of the advertisement and commercial needs of the product (Coradeschi and Rostagno, 1987). At the early, experimental phase in the production of a given *manifesto*, artists produced drafts to demonstrate their ability to blend their creativity and artistic style with commercially viable ideas. Typically, artists would look for a creative solution to a commercial problem. A common request from the film industry, which emerged during my research after viewing a considerable amount of advertising material for films and later from interviews with artists and poster collectors, was to draw the main actors and actresses of the film, making them a central part of the design. Italian *divismo* was in evidence before Americanization, however, it gained greater significance

after the emergence of this phenomenon.²¹ The so-called ‘star system’,²² which comes from the early twentieth century in Italy, played a more significant, culturally dominant role in film illustrations after 1945 as it promoted ‘images of desirability’ (Gundle, 2002, p. 95). Therefore, *divismo* was a typical selling point for post-war graphic artists – and likely an imported trend – although revisited in a national manner (Buckley, 2009; Noto, 2015),²³ which provides a clear illustration of a crossover of themes and styles used in the Italian film *manifesti*.²⁴ The visual representation of stars in *manifesti* reinforced the strategic, commercial need that needed to be conveyed in a realistic style (Della Torre, 2014).

However, there are examples of graphic artists who were assertive (Symeoni and Campeggi, among others), refusing to compromise and defending their personal vision up to the final print. A significant experience Campeggi brought to my attention, was related to the *manifesto* for the cinematic blockbuster *Ben-Hur* (William Wyler, 1959), the epic historical drama produced and distributed in Italy by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. As reported in Baroni’s volume, the artist claimed, ‘Quante battaglie per riuscire a convincere la MGM ad usare per questo manifesto solo le figure dei cavalli. Mi veniva contestato che il film, fatto di tante scene, potesse rimanere impoverito da questa presentazione. Fu [invece] un grande successo’ (Baroni, 2018, p. 113). The artist’s insistence on using the scene of the chariot race to represent the film was due to his awareness that it was the most significant scene of the whole film; hence,

²¹ About the phenomenon of *divismo*, Cf. Bernardini, A. (1982) *Cinema muto italiano. Arte, divismo e mercato. 1910/1914*, Roma-Bari: Laterza; Camerini, C. (1986) ‘E l’attore diventò un divo’, in *Bianco & Nero*, vol. 47 (2), pp. 20-41.

²² Born in the 1920s in America, this promotional organizational system was provided to create celebrities from the actors and actresses, generally anonymous to the public until that moment. For a theoretical treatment of the star system phenomenon, see: McDonald, P. (2000), *The Star System: Hollywood’s production of Popular Identities*, London: Wallflower Press.

²³ For a theoretical treatment of the Italian ideals of beauty (with a focus on film stars), and the relationship between feminine beauty and Italian identity and its effects on mass consumption, Cf. Gundle, S. (2007) *Bellissima: feminine beauty and the idea of Italy*, London: Yale University Press; Buckley, R. (2000) ‘National Body: Gina Lollobrigida and the cult of the star in the 1950s’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 20, pp. 527-247.

²⁴ For instance, there is substantial diversity between American ‘glamour’ and Italian ‘glamour’. Cf. (Gundle, 2002; Buckley, 2008).

Campeggi thought that the best way to interpret *Ben Hur* and to promote it to the mass public was to define the essence of the movie. This example is illustrative and compelling in giving a broader idea of the work of exchanging views that led to a compromise between the film industry and artists involved in promotional campaigns; indeed, even the artists were sometimes able to lead the cultural and commercial project to find a balance between consumerism and creativity. This example highlights the role of graphic artists in bridging a socio-cultural gap between advertising arts and the broader masses, and in so doing, they partially affected the development of art itself. As evidenced by Giorgio Pellegrini,²⁵ ‘Si capisce l’attenzione di tutta la Pop Art, americana ed europea, per quella “sottocultura” d’immagine – popolare appunto – capace però di infondere stimoli vitalissimi ai vertici della produzione estetica egemone’ (Naitza, 1997, p. 20). The Italian artist Mimmo Rotella’s (1918-2006) *manifesto lacerato*²⁶ (1955) is a compelling example of inspiration from the advertising art of film *manifesto* which was placed within the cityscape and in a direct dialogue with the mass public.²⁷

3.4 American inheritance: the star system

There was a move in the 1940s to find mechanisms by which to encourage European consumers to follow consumer behaviour which paralleled that of Americans. This was primarily led by American and European marketing personnel, with support from sociologists (Gundle, 2002). It was just after 1945 that the European market – previously sceptical and unprepared²⁸ – finally opened to mass consumption based on the American model (De Grazia, 1989). After 1945,

²⁵ Giorgio Pellegrini is an art historian who teaches at the University of Cagliari (Italy). One of his research works focus on the interrelations between the avant-garde and cinema, photography, and music.

²⁶ Artwork exhibited for the first time at the exhibition *I sette pittori sul Tevere a Ponte Santangelo* in Rome, 1955.

²⁷ About Mimmo Rotella, cf. Celant, G. (2014) *Mimmo Rotella: décollages e retro d'affiches*, Milano: SKIRA.

²⁸ According to Victoria De Grazia, in the 1930s, European markets individually tried to resist American-style modernity, which at the time was hotly contested.

‘Italy experienced progressive “advertising colonization”’ (De Iulio and Vinti, 2009, p. 273), mostly from the USA, and associated with its post-war political influence in Europe. Indeed, during the post-war years, there was a moderate absorption of competitive methods in marketing management and the subsequent development of advertising agencies based on the American system of functional organization.²⁹ This included, as De Iulio and Vinti argue, a more robust and practical business approach, a focus on marketing research and being consumer-oriented, and the division and specialization of tasks within the entire advertising process. The awareness of a competitive marketing system subsequently followed as the spread of knowledge of advertising methods grew, including practices imported by cultural mediators and advertising experts who travelled from the USA to Italy and vice-versa for training. However, as De Iulio and Vinti point out, the acquisition of novel methods by Italian advertisers has never been as dominant and exclusive. In truth, the local artistic traditions were (still) a stumbling block to the American system of marketing management. Hence, some Italian advertisers such as Ignazio Weiss, Head of Olivetti’s³⁰ advertising division, and the film producer and creative advertising director for advertising campaigns, Anton Gino Domeneghini (1897-1966), defended the aesthetic tradition of Italian advertising, which delivered marketing success. Moreover, in the Italian periodical *L’Ufficio Moderno*,³¹ Weiss declared that the art of advertising ‘[w]as able to help achieve strict marketing goals and also other noble objectives, such as the elevation of public taste and the appreciation of the visual arts’ (De Iulio and Vinti, 2009, p. 279). Hence, the artistic quality of Italian advertising *manifesti* was seen as confirmation of a product’s uniqueness within a global market.

²⁹ However, it is noteworthy to acknowledge the different cases of art-house cinema that ran counter to the Americanisation of the Italian film product. For a theoretical treatment of art house cinema, see: Wilinsky, B. (2001) *Sure Seaters. The Emergence of Art House Cinema*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

³⁰ Italian manufacturer company (typewriters, personal computer, etc...) founded in 1908 by Camillo Olivetti.

³¹ Weiss, I. (1957) ‘Panorama della pubblicità Italiana’, in *L’Ufficio Moderno*, Vol. 3, March, pp. 437-41. *L’Ufficio Moderno* was a “Milan-based advertising and management periodical [which] played a key role in the merging of American methods and Italian tradition” (De Iulio and Vinti, 2009, p. 276).

Moreover, the aesthetic value gave the industrial product a higher profile and a social, cultural role within modern mass society. The same point that Vittorio Pica had asserted as far back as 1896 (see chapter one).

Advertising agencies in Italy developed new communicative strategies under a complex set of social and cultural conditions. Considering the forward-looking American trends and directives, it is legitimate, within the analysis of the context of mass consumption, to raise the question: what systematic marketing strategies have the Italian film industry adopted to meet the needs of the new market? In order to exploit visual resources provided by the mediascape of the mid-twentieth century as effectively as possible, it was necessary for film advertising to be led by the global market leader: Hollywood. Thus, successful features of that system, such as ‘stars’ and ‘stories’, became the most effective ‘promotion machines’ (Bakker, 2001). In Italy, advertising agencies in charge of the graphic design and promotion of films, therefore, required specific visual elements for film *manifesti*. These elements included consideration of the concept of ‘glamour’³² coming from overseas, as identified by the American film industry during the 1930s. Reka Buckley defined glamour in this context as ‘a quality connected with material opulence and beauty, particularly of the deceptive kind’ (Buckley, 2008, p. 269). This definition embraces certain negative meanings that are closely related to an ostentatious display of (empty) wealth (Buckley, 2008). Specifically, as regards the film industry, such glamour was directly linked to the visual, consumerist heritage (in terms of commercial pressure) of post-war Italian advertising.

Soon after the Second World War, the portrayal of stars, and the renowned American glamour associated with them, became an integral element of the commercial strategy for the promotion of Italian film. Hollywood actors, and actresses in particular, introduced a vision of

³² According to Stephen Gundle, the term ‘glamour’ as we recognise it today, first entered into parlance in the 1930s and was developed by Hollywood (Gundle, 2002).

splendour and vigour in Italy from overseas, as well as sex appeal, which soon became a model to follow (Gundle, 2002, 2007; Buckley, 2008). As Gundle states, ‘Although glamour was part and parcel of the impact of the American model, Italy did not merely absorb an externally generated allure. Italian capitalism also gave rise to forms of enchantment of its own’ (Gundle, 2002, p. 95). Indeed, the representation of actors and actresses by the Italian mediascape was more natural and not manufactured,³³ resulting in a characteristic appearance for its respective stars.³⁴ Hence, Italian film *manifesti* tended to emphasize a ‘local magnetism (Gundle, 2002) that was more natural and spontaneous, distinct from the artificial American glamour, which was more openly inclined to associate feminine beauty with consumer goods (Noto, 2015).³⁵ Nonetheless, during post-war hardship, America soon turned into a land of promise, home of Italian fantasy and longing; indeed, ‘It was the American way of life that provided the framework of Italy’s boom and that helped integrate the country’ (Gundle, 2002, p. 116) within a consumerist and capitalist arena. In other words, according to Buckley (Buckley, 2008), Italians were encouraged to employ modern and urban American values to aid their social development and economic expansion.

Based on the view that ‘[...] The image constructs the star as a particular identity’ (McDonald, 2000), the image does not necessarily coincide with the body represented, but rather plays a productive role in the construction of femininity (in the visual example that follows), subjectivity and sexuality (Pollock, 1990). The next section will examine a compelling, comparative analysis of two *manifesti* from the American noir film: *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946). The two constructed images are undoubtedly representative of the social needs

³³ Hollywood stars were ‘manufactured’ by the studio system in the sense that it was ‘responsible for creating and establishing stars’ (Buckley, 2009, p. 524) also by manipulating their appearance (using the costume and make-up departments).

³⁴ Such ‘special attraction’ is related to the *divo* and *diva*’s power in soliciting an identification, and projection, between them and the viewer, reinforced by the fact that – in contrast to the Hollywood system – Italian stars ‘were largely responsible for creating and maintaining their own identity, image and publicity’ (Buckley, 2009, p. 524) in a way that may be appear more ‘authentic’ to the public.

³⁵ Although it is crucial to bear in mind that the ‘more natural and spontaneous’ appearance of Italian stars was also made into a commercial product for mass consumption.

of the referenced cultural context. Gilda was the name of the main character, portrayed by the popular American star Rita Hayworth (1918-1987). In the 1940s, Gilda represented the first icon of female sex-appeal to arrive in Italy from Hollywood. Indeed, as Gundle puts it, ‘Hollywood glamour was a potent force in Europe in the 1940s. People were dazzled by the beauty and sex appeal of the stars and delighted in imagining the dream world of prosperity and luxury that they inhabited’ (Gundle, 2002, p. 99). From this film onward, the actress was fully identified with her character, regardless of whether Hayworth’s true personality reflected Gilda’s.³⁶ In light of this, comparing two posters for *Gilda* – the one for the film released in Italy, designed by Alfredo Capitani (Fig. 25), and the other for the American public (Fig. 26) – a slight, albeit meaningful, difference can be seen in terms of representing the identity of the star. In both cases, the figure of Gilda dominates the space of the *manifesto*. Her figure embodies elegance, glamour, and sensuality, all specific features of her character. However, there are distinctive visual elements between the American and Italian poster for *Gilda* that reveal differences in the cultural and societal approach to the figure represented, as I will now argue.

³⁶ As McCormick has emphasised, ‘Having already established herself as a sex symbol Hayworth’s appearance in this film noir would encapsulate the image by which she will forever be remembered’. See: McCormick, R., 6th November 2017, *Gilda (1946)*, film history blogpost, viewed November 2019, <<http://ryanmccormickfilmhistory.blogspot.com/2017/11/gilda-1946.html>>; On the impact of American glamour established with *Gilda*, see Gundle, S. (2002) pp. 99-100; Guida, G. (1947) ‘Gilda’, *Cinemoda*, 6 April.



Figure 25



Figure 26

3.5 *Gilda*, post-war icon of sex-appeal: Cinecittà vs. Hollywood

Gilda is set in Buenos Aires and tells the story of a wealthy casino owner, Ballin Mundsén, who rescues the American gambler, Johnny Farrell, from an attempted mugging (Orpen, 2003). Seeing as he is particularly skilled in the field, Johnny gets hired at the casino and befriends Ballin. One day after a business trip, Ballin introduces him to his new wife, Gilda; at this point, the viewer discovers she was once Johnny's old flame.

The Italian *manifesto* for *Gilda* shows her in her renowned black dress,³⁷ worn during her performance of the song *Put the Blame on Mame*, one of the most famous scenes in the film, and one in which she improvises a short striptease (taking off just one long black glove). She is shown in an alluring pose (implying sexual availability), with her arms pulling her wavy auburn hair back – one of her typical sensual gestures – to let the viewer come closer and be engaged. Gilda is not represented in full-length, and her figure cuts across the surface and fades out with a sense of suspense. The artist omitted the lower body, thus foregoing the representation of the entire feminine figure. By focusing on the torso, the artist obtains the effect of greater involvement and a sense of attraction. Capitani's mechanism of visual representation may be ascribed to a sense of 'intermedial reference', as described by Rajewsky (Rajewsky, 2005). By suggesting a conceptual presence of the object referenced, the *manifesto* evokes filmic techniques such as the zoom shot and the fade-in/out, which affect the empathetic relationship between the spectator and the character. Therefore, the artist only suggests the presence of the woman's legs and thus leaves the viewer with a freer 'imaginary vision'. This communicative visual model, which is inspired by the syntax of film language, demonstrates an important goal in Italian film publicity (especially in the aftermath of the Second World War), which was to evoke a sense of dreaming and fantasising from both the male and female

³⁷ The black dress was designed by the American costumer designer Jean Luis, contributing to create the appearance of 'dark lady' as well as 'femme fatale' embodied by Gilda character.

gaze. Hence, graphic artists involved in the cinema industry made great efforts to combine pictorial, narrative elements and suggestive poses and subjects, so as to meet the goal of having the product be consumed in wonder (Gundle, 2002). In addition, Gilda emerges from a black background, evoking the cinematic fade-in/out effect, and is encircled by a brilliant aura that makes her look elusive and dreamlike. The average post-war Italian viewer would have seen Rita Hayworth in the *manifesto* for *Gilda* as the embodiment of the pure desire for the ‘American dream’, an illusion frequently disseminated by film advertising of that period. As Treveri Gennari highlights, the American myth was seen from the Italian perspective as an image ‘of a country where everything was allowed, a place in which people could express themselves in ways that they could not in Italy’ (Treveri Gennari, 2009, p. 22). This desire is finely expressed through a suggestive figure in the appearance of an unreachable (though available – even if only in a dream space) and iconic American *diva*, able to capture the eyes and fantasies of passers-by. In Capitani’s *manifesto*, even Gilda’s face seems to be moony, depicted in a freeze-frame while, apparently, in spontaneous contemplation of herself.

The American film poster (Fig. 26) differs from the Italian *manifesto*. Firstly, it is essential to highlight that, unlike the Italian pictorial version, the design of the American one has been produced by painting over a photograph inspired by a still shot (Fig. 26a). Typically, during the filming of a movie, a photography director is responsible for collecting shots of the stars, which become exclusive merchandise; this was also essential for the stars’ visual impact on the public/viewer. Therefore, a photographic set is designed to enhance the manufactured image of the star in glamorous clothing, with an alluring smile, and possibly in provocative poses.³⁸

³⁸ For a theoretical treatment of the expressive dimension of film editing, and how it articulates an actor’s performance and a star’s image (also with an examination of Gilda) see: V. Orpen, (2003) *Film Editing: The Art of the Expressive*, London: Wallflower, p.89-92.



Figure 26a

In the American poster, Gilda is shown in partial darkness, where she is the only light source. In this case, however, her figure is depicted in full-length, posing boldly and brazenly in front of the viewer. Her head is slightly tilted to the left, suggesting a certain daring, which is a trait of the character. The full-body shot gives viewers a long look at the length of her legs, one of them highlighted under a beam of light. Gilda's right arm hangs alongside her body, holding a fur coat confidently but casually, representing a scene performed during the film. Her right flank gracefully echoes this gesture. The left arm is folded. Her hand holds a cigarette whose smoke becomes part of the illustration. This has a specific communicative role. The cigarette is undoubtedly characteristic of Gilda's character, but it is also a symbol of American female emancipation at that time. Until the late 1920s, smoking was considered an entirely inappropriate and immoral act for women in America; indeed, there was legislation to this effect.³⁹ The cigarette became a symbol of emancipation and equality between men and women

³⁹ For instance, in 1908 the politician Tim Sullivan imposed a ban to woman on the use of cigarettes in public places. Online magazine: Rivista Studio, n.d., *Quando fumare era un atto femminista*, Rivista Studio, viewed April 2019, <<https://www.rivistastudio.com/donne-fumatrici/>>.

from 1929 with the Easter parade in New York, where women brandished ‘Torches of Freedom’⁴⁰ slogans. More specifically, as Allan Brandt states, ‘The cigarette was a flexible symbol, with a remarkably elastic set of meanings; for women, it represented rebellious independence, glamour, seduction, and sexual allure, and served as a symbol for both feminist and flappers’ (Brandt, 1996). Not coincidentally, the smoke snakes through the word ‘woman’ in the slogan at the top of the *manifesto*, providing a symbolic connection in the advertising message between the two.

In the American and European post-war collective imagination, it was still common to associate a woman smoking with the idea of seduction and rebellion. The American mediascape, and later the Italian one, disseminated a variety of images of women smoking, and not only in advertising campaigns for cigarettes.⁴¹ However, in the aftermath of the Second World War until the 1960s, Italian advertising tended to exercise caution in selecting what it displayed in public spaces. This was due to censorship restrictions and a sense of moral (Catholic) obligation (this will be discussed further in chapter five). In the American *manifesto* of *Gilda*, the slogan (typical of American advertising) at the top of the poster aims to complete the marketing message for the whole film advert: ‘There never was a woman like *Gilda*!’ This sentence, taken from the film’s dialogue, places emphasis on the uniqueness of the protagonist *Gilda*: a beautiful and talented woman, who promises much for the potential spectator. The font, an italic serif typeface, and the red colour used to emphasize the name ‘*Gilda*’, also adds to the complexity of the means of communication, using a multi-layered message constituted by integrated elements.

⁴⁰ For further information about ‘Torches of Freedom’ campaign, see: Chakraborty, R., 6 August 2014, *Torches of Freedom: How the world’s first PR campaign came to be*, Your Story, Viewed April 2019, <<https://yourstory.com/2014/08/torches-of-freedom>>.

⁴¹ Cf. examples of Italian publicities for cigarettes (Serraglio, CowBoy, Rosa D’Oriente, Macedonia) created by Carlantonio Longi (1950s), (Longi, 2002, p. 149).

In both the Italian and American examples of film posters for *Gilda*, we can observe relevant cultural elements that migrate from traditional and local infrastructure to the imagery model. In particular, certain elements allow us to infer two distinct messages intended for people with different cultural backgrounds. The male and even female gaze was surely attracted by the seductive allure of Gilda. That being said, her visual representation made her practically unapproachable due to the aloof and confident attitude she displayed as a ‘dark lady’.⁴² The female character is moulded to be the ‘active controller of the look’ by Hollywood studios, whose ‘style arose [...] from satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure’ (Mulvey, 2009, p. 16). Hence, the film spectacle constructs how the female character is presented through the spectacle itself; as film posters (and Italian *manifesti*) also aim to do. This effectively fuses the concept of cinematic spectacle, spectator’s expectations, and visual pleasure. Considerably, the American female spectatorship was recognised as part of the cinema audience of the post-war years (Stacey, 1994). Therefore, *Gilda* might be perceived by the female American public for her (strong) personality, confident, and a model of inspiration, and as an emancipated woman. A female viewer in this context would receive Gilda’s image as a promoter of wealth, freedom, and the values of independence. By contrast, the Italian version of *Gilda*, envisioned by Capitani, shows an object of desire subjugated to the male gaze, appearing far less emancipated than the American *Gilda*. This reflects Italian post-war socio-cultural stances and a patriarchal ideology, measurable through a male-driven society. In the aftermath of the war, female attendance at the cinema in Italy was limited, so the post-war Italian target audience of the *manifesto* for *Gilda* was male dominated. Moreover, according to Treveri Gennari, film-goers’ decision whether to see a film was strongly affected by the presence of specific actors (Treveri Gennari, 2015, p. 60).⁴³ However, if we consider that ‘in the late 1940s magazines regularly

⁴² For further reading on the American ‘film noir’ and the role/figure of the dark lady, see: Venturelli, R. (2007) *L’età del noir. Ombre, incubi e delitti nel cinema Americano, 1940-1960*, Torino: Einaudi.

⁴³ About cinema audiences in Italy during post-war years, see the AHRC project *Italian Cinema Audiences* led by D. Treveri Gennari, C. O’Rawe and Danielle Hipkins, <http://italiancinemaaudiences.org>.

printed Max Factor advertisements featuring Rita Hayworth as Gilda' (Gundle, 2002, p. 104), Italian women might be attracted by Gilda's beauty and invited to take part in her beauty ritual newly available to women outside America. Therefore, within the context of the poverty and uncertainty of Italian society after World War II, it is possible to imagine female film-goers who would be attracted by the charm and glamour embodied by *Gilda*. As Gundle puts it, 'She [Gilda] filled the demand in post-war Italy for a dream of abundance and freedom. With her perfect figure, luxuriant auburn tresses, and the costumes of Jean Louis, she entranced a generation' (Gundle, 2002, p. 99). For the success of the advertising message, Capitani combined pictorial and graphic elements in a concise representation, enabling the reinterpretation of cultural and social perspectives in the light of a personal style and sense of persuasion. The artist reinforces the view of Gilda as an icon of female sex-appeal of the 1940s in Italy, as well as rendering his promotional visual message distinct from the American model, which did not include a purely painterly element (and a subjective visual reinterpretation), conversely an essential characteristic of advertising *manifesti* in Italy. Therefore, just as the cinematic language tends to 'create a gaze, a world and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire' (Mulvey, 2009, p. 26); *Gilda's manifesto* previews an object of desire, with the film title inherently focusing solely on *Gilda* herself, suggesting that the aim was to foster a sense of fantasy for film-goers based on this character alone. The fact that the film narrative is ignored reinforces this view, as it is not being used to entice film-goers.

In the visual representation of stars and *divi* or *dive* (as explored with the two examples above), some scholars (Gundle, 2002; Buckley, 2008; Noto, 2015) have found profound differences between the Italian and American role model of actors and actresses. The *manifesto* visually expressed these cultural and social distinctions through the artists' interpretation of the natural features of the actors and actresses. As Paolo Noto has claimed with regards to the female role in films, and in agreement with Gundle, 'Italian female stars of the post-war years,

if compared with the American stars, put on display a de-glamorizing image that, to some extent, may undermine their erotic appeal, and that in general, the beauty of Italian divas is more spontaneous and natural than that refined by the studios and promoted by press agents in Hollywood' (Noto, 2015, p. 385). Nonetheless, a wider perspective that includes the analysis of an Italian connotation of 'glamour' has been explored by Reka Buckley, who offers a national version of glamour as an original alternative to the commonly-cited Hollywood version (Buckley, 2008). However, even when comparing *manifesti* representing the same star from the Hollywood realm, *Gilda* appears to be significantly reframed from an Italian perspective. Through the visual comparison of the two *manifesti*, Capitani's *Gilda* is able to communicate a simplified version of American glamour and to connect it to Italian roots, meeting the cultural expectations of the mass public. In Capitano's *manifesto*, *Gilda* was portrayed in an Italian frame of reference, which openly expressed the need (and desire) for an improved post-war lifestyle, nourishing fantasy, and enhancing the public's ability to imagine, as 'part of the development of a new industrialized imagination' (Gundle, 2002, p. 100). We can acquire an objective fact related to the experience of Italian film consumption. Exploring how film-goers made film choices from 1945, Treveri Gennari reports that when an audience chose to see an American movie, it was because 'American cinema is praised for its colour, novelty, expression of human possibilities, coupled with for being unreal, uplifting, escapist, a life to dream about, spectacular, more expansive, more modern, better acted and more light-hearted' (Treveri Gennari, 2015, p. 61). If, on the one hand, commercialisation within a greater consumerist society implied the use of a wider media-system, explicitly coming from overseas, and certainly evoking the American way of consumption; the resistance by the local mediascape is a reminder that there is also a domestic perspective to such advertising.⁴⁴ The

⁴⁴ Cf. firstly, the Italian film *La pupa del gangster* (Giorgio Capitani, 1975), where the crime boss of Milan, Charlie Colletto falls in love with a red, curly-haired girl (*la pupa*) because she reminded him of Rita Heyworth in *Gilda* (an actress he was in love with); secondly, the book *Amado Mio* (short-story collection) by Pier Paolo Pasolini published in 1982, where the title refers to the song sung by *Gilda* in the film that a group of

American character Gilda, as Gundle stated, entered into direct communication with the spectator (Gundle, 2002), in the case of both posters ‘packaged’ as a product for consumption. In light of this, advertising *manifesti* promoted films and stars with the graphic artist’s awareness that the viewer (potential film-goer) ‘[...] can select from the complexity of the image the meanings and feelings, the variations, inflections and contradictions, that work for them’ (Dyer, 1986, p. 4). Despite this common practice in advertising for cinema, distinctive characteristics of *italianità* in contrast to the dominant model of the American way of consumption were fostered through national expressions of creativity.

In contrast to the Italian approach, Hollywood reinforced the idea of an unreachable character by moulding actors as an artificial product of an industry. They became indispensable – and self-aware – objects of consumption for public viewers and a significant element for the success of the advertising message in achieving a blockbuster. As Annette Kuhn puts it, ‘The star system founded crucially on idealised images of women, constitutes those images as commodities which would, in a self-perpetuating cycle, generate further relations of exchange and increased profitability’ (Kuhn, 1985, p. 13). Therefore, another critical aspect to consider is that Hollywood had the power to create the star-identity (as previously mentioned through McDonald’s words), by building his/her image through the studio system’s machinations and its own publicity department (Buckley, 2009). Hence, studios worked on the artificial creation of the on- and off-screen images of their stars. This was unlike the Italian system, which did not apply the studio system in this way, nor did it engage publicity agents of this kind (Buckley, 2008). On the contrary, the Italian public was used to *divi* and *dive* being ‘largely responsible for creating and maintaining their own identity, image and publicity’ (Buckley, 2009, p. 524) and, above all, sex appeal was not part of the ‘star-making’ process at that time in Italy. This

Desiderio’s friends (the main character of one of the two stories) watched at the cinema in a post-war summer. These cultural productions took inspiration from *Gilda* as a notable visual icon.

attitude can also be observed (and explained) through the moralistic official climate that characterised Italy in the post-war years (examined in chapter five). Within this climate, as Gundle puts it, ‘the Church was seeking to win support for the re-imposition of conventional values, standards were rigid’ (Gundle, 2002, p. 103). It is primarily from this perspective that Gilda’s *manifesto* should be observed as the most prominent and powerful icon of sex-appeal of post-war Italy, helping a broad audience build their capacity for dreaming.

To conclude, in both visual examples examined here, the graphic artists of film *manifesti* sought to draw the public closer to the actors. The Italian *manifesto* created emotional involvement through an alluring pictorial reinterpretation of the star, highlighting ‘[u]n bisogno di realizzazione estetica che, nel cartellonismo, ebbe un peso predominante e che negli USA dall’inizio del secolo scorso [...] sarà invece un fenomeno episodico’ (Vecchia, 2003, p. 14). The essential parts of the Italian commercial strategy were to include both emotional involvement and a pictorial contribution for film *manifesti*; they were evoked through imagery through the use of an iconic power. This was a successful tool of advertising language adapted to the world of cinema.

3.6 Italian responses to the visual representation of American musicals

Americanisation has placed ‘the creation of transnational advertising networks on a global scale during the post-war era’ (Bini and Fasce, 2015, p. 8).⁴⁵ The domination of an American visual language on a global commercial landscape led to indirect, external pressure on international film advertising and on Italian graphic artists, too. Maintaining the comparative analysis set in place in the previous section, here the comparison is between *manifesti* and drafts originally made for the promotion of an American musical: *Fiesta* (Richard Thorpe, 1947). The

⁴⁵ Also Cf. Schwarzkopf, S. (2013) ‘From Fordist to creative economies: the de-Americanisation of European advertising cultures since the 1960s’, *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire*, 20 (5), pp. 859-879.

Italian *manifesto* will be analysed alongside the American version. This visual comparison of a different film genre will emphasise multiple aspects of the American model of film posters and the influence that this model had on the Italian context, also evidencing how Italian artists dealt with these issues; such evaluation will also highlight what the concept of *Italianità* encapsulated in the artistic film *manifesti* actually means, showing a modest absorption of such American influences. This section will first introduce and explore the Italian *manifesto* for the American musical, made by Averardo Ciriello, magazine illustrator and *pittore di cinema* from Milan. Artwork by Ciriello is covered in greater detail in chapter four, where the artist is analysed as my case study, with a focus on *manifesti* and drafts for Italian and European film production. Reference to his work here has, therefore, purposely been limited to the advertising material for the aforementioned musical (drafts, *locandine*, *manifesto*), which enables evaluation and assessment of the powerful if not dominant Americanisation of Italian film posters. The analysis looks at the guiding presence of commercial pressure exerted by a dominant role of the American capitalistic system.⁴⁶ Its influence on acting and the strategic promotion of the star system was generally spread not just through the ‘enormous quantity of Hollywood films that poured into Italy in the post-war years’ (Gundle, 2002, p. 100), but also via other media (magazines; newsreel and advertising campaigns, and so forth) and visually conveyed substantially in Italian film *manifesti* of that time.

The following comparative evaluation will shed light on how *pittori di cinema*, through the individual example of Ciriello, embraced elements of modernity as well as traditional artistic qualities and a distinctive mode of visual production. Furthermore, this section will underline how graphic artists established a linguistic code that was compatible with the dynamic logic of American marketing, all the while retaining a ‘local’ identity. However, at

⁴⁶ Considering a more general socio-cultural context of the post-war years, Stefan Schwarzkopf argues ‘The void which the war had left in European cultural and material production became filled with American imports of music, clothing styles, comic books and other consumer products, from chewing gum and instant coffee to Hollywood movies and refrigerators’ (Schwarzkopf, 2013, p. 861).

the same time, this process leads to the unavoidable exchange of cultural influences in visual media in broader terms.

La matadora (Italian title for *Fiesta*) is a musical romance set in Mexico.⁴⁷ The film tells the story of twins, Mario (Ricardo Montalbán, 1920-2009) and Maria (Esther Williams, 1921-2013), and their yearning to follow their own path, hindered by social, cultural patriarchal ‘morality’, and family honour. Mario is artistically inclined and wants to be a composer rather than follow his father’s wishes of pursuing a career as a bullfighter. Maria, however, is a natural in the ring and wishes to be a professional toreador, which would not have been acceptable for a woman. Two drafts for *La matadora* are preserved in Ciriello’s archive.⁴⁸ The final draft designed by Ciriello (Fig. 16) for the printed *manifesto*, places emphasis on the female protagonist of the film, the actress Esther Williams in the guise of Maria Morales. The latter is represented in this draft, as well as in the *manifesto*, dressed as a toreador, a visual choice that was an uncommon role for a woman, to spark public interest through the promotional message. Therefore, Maria ‘La matadora’ (the one who kills), is depicted as proud and resolute, confidently gazing straight ahead, bravely awaiting the incoming bull. The red cape, drawn with a natural texture, covers the bottom of the space, recalling two features: the typical attribute of any toreador, but also the pool of blood that follows any *corrida*. In the middle of the cape there is a thicker, blood-red streak as if real blood were flowing from the cape, foreshadowing the usual end of the performance and perhaps alluding to a dramatic event with greater significance for the film. Maria’s traditional costume (commonly called ‘Traje de Luces’ [suits of light]) is elegantly represented in its richness and complexity, with golden

⁴⁷ With regards to the film distribution in Italy, I have doubts about the stated date; although, the paper catalogue found at the CSAC refers to Ciriello’s draft and flier as made in 1947, however, I have some misgivings (the distribution should have taken place later than 1947).

⁴⁸ Unfortunately, I did not have access to a second draft, which according to the paper catalogue is preserved in the archive.

decorations and a variety of colours, with attention paid to detail; the same is true for her black headgear, which is finely depicted.

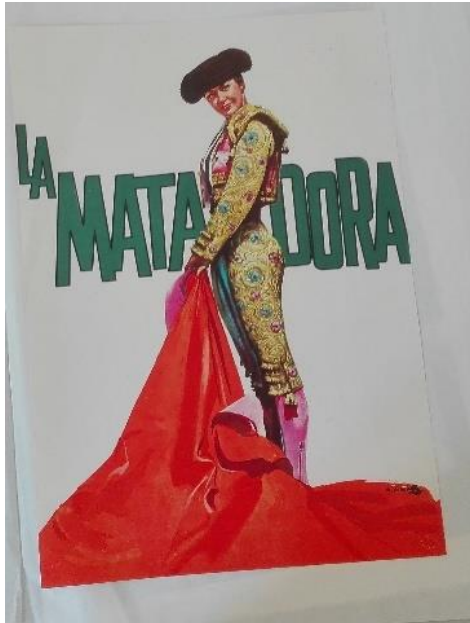


Figure 27



Figure 28

From one of the initial drafts (Fig. 28), it is evident that the artist aimed to describe the context of the film more widely, and a scene from the movie in particular. Indeed, in the limited space of the draft, Ciriello drew the black shape of a bull at an oblique angle in the bottom-right corner facing the bullfighter Maria. Another discernible figure is depicted behind her, lying on the ground, perhaps representing her twin brother Mario. The title, in yellow block capital letters, is placed close to the lower edge with asymmetrical, dynamic, and inelegant layout. In this representation, the artist likely sought to evoke a dramatic moment in the film plot to elicit curiosity from the public. However, the final *manifesto* diminished this narrative aspect, instead focusing exclusively on the main female character, placed against a neutral background and in her unusual role. The chosen lettering has been maintained as per the draft, but with a few exceptions: the colour was changed to green, it occupies the full width of

pictorial space, and is split down the middle by the figure of the ‘Matadora’. The effect is that ‘visually, you see content and form simultaneously’ (Newark, 2002, p. 100).

The American movie *Fiesta* allows for different film-poster interpretations according to the country in which it was advertised. This analysis is important in understanding how the international panorama of film advertising emphasises the defining features of “*Italianità*” in film *manifesti*. An American benchmark is used. This is due to the position of American cinema as the undisputed leader during the period under analysis, and because it was based on a robust foundation of modern marketing strategies.



Figure 29

The actress Esther Williams gained success in Hollywood in the early 1940s. Her role in this film brought her full recognition as one of the cinematographic greats in the USA. The American promotion for the film gave her visual attention while enriching the film poster with

other commercial and narrative components. The Italian version, in contrast, presents greater synthesis. The American poster (Fig. 29) displays a slogan typical of its national context⁴⁹ at the top right hand-corner: ‘The Biggest Technicolor Spectacle!’. This direct marketing-oriented message places emphasis on the promising technological development that will improve the experience of the movie; an effective, vibrant language that helps the American public remember the film advertised (and what makes it different from other films).⁵⁰ Moreover, this message is highlighted using a yellow shade clearly linked with the title *Fiesta*, in yellow capital letters. This combination promises the public that they will enjoy the movie as they might enjoy a party. Then, a dual image of the female star shows her boldness. Maria is represented in the act of disguising herself as Mario in the guise of toreador, waiting for the bull; at the same time, behind her and in faded black and white, she is represented in more conventional female clothes, foretelling her dual role in the movie. In the Italian final draft (Fig. 27), a close up of Maria’s figure reveals a proud smile; in the American version, Maria has an austere and enterprising look, holding in her right hand the flat, red cape on which the title is displayed. The cape is above a black and white figure who is lifting her dress, in a gesture typical of the Flamenco dance, which is performed in the musical. These representative selections aim to highlight the idea of ‘duality’ explicit in the film. In the American poster, the image is entirely depicted in flat colour, and the definition of the pictorial space is uncertain. On the right side of the poster, below the red cape used to highlight the title (through the dazzling combination of yellow and red colour), small black and white scenes from the film are displayed akin to a short sequence. These sketches include a dancing scene and one in the bullfighting ring, clearly the main scenarios of the film. They lead into the warm embrace

⁴⁹ Kristen Hamlin provides the following definition of an advertising slogan: ‘[It] is usually a short tagline that tells potential customers the benefits they can expect when choosing your product or service, or establishes your company brand’. See: Hamlin, K. n.d., *The importance of Ad Slogans*, Small Business, viewed January 2020, <<https://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-ad-slogans-31343.html>>.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*

between Mario and his young lover Conchita (Cyd Charisse, 1921-2008), which is encircled, and the other two well-known characters visible on the poster. The bottom-left corner includes all the names of the actors and actresses, starting with Esther Williams in a larger, red font, and the name of the director in a smaller font. Another promotional element is the blue circle with the initials of the distribution company and film genre reference: ‘M.G.M’s Romantic Drama with Music!’.

There are clear formal differences between the Italian *manifesto*⁵¹ for *La matadora* and the American poster. The former merges all the essential meanings that the advertising message aims to transmit to the potential filmgoer into one coherent picture. The female protagonist, unusually dressed as a toreador, stands proudly in front of the audience and smiles invitingly in a ‘come-hither’ manner. However, there are no further narrative attributes. It could be argued that, considering the more detailed narrative representation shown in Ciriello’s original draft (Fig. 28), the approach that captures the essence established for the final *manifesto* might suggest an industry preference rather than an artist preference. However, they are both distant from the American model. This Italian marketing interest highlights that, as Mark Lorenzen puts it, ‘Creativity is balanced with other concerns: the film industry’ (Lorenzen, 2009, p. 93). It is very noticeable, for instance, that the American poster shows an unrealistic frame which, upon careful analysis, might clash with the narrative function of the film plot. Indeed, *la matadora*, Maria, is depicted on her toes as if wearing high heels (implied as both legs seem to support a heel beneath them), which are not feasible in a bull-fighter context. But this design is clearly connected to the heels worn by the more conventionally feminine Maria standing behind *la matadora*. The Italian *manifesto* displays consistency with the film narrative frame, evidencing how Italian realism – a hallmark of so many Italian films and much visual

⁵¹ In order to evidence the use of the same design of Ciriello’s final draft for the printed *manifesto* and to see it, there is a copy for sale on: <https://www.ebay.it/itm/LA-MATADORA-Fiesta-ESTHER-WILLIAMS-A-TAMIROFF-MANIFESTO-ORIGINALE-4F-POSTER-/283160211099>. Retrieved October 2020.

advertising – plays a part in this. It is far from the spectacular intention of the American promotional message. The Italian *manifesto* focusses much less on female sexuality in line with Gundle’s argument that, ‘In the postwar years, American glamour and artifice contrasted with Italian grittiness and authenticity’ (Gundle, 2002, p. 104).

The strategy adopted by American advertisers to persuade film-goers was to include as much information as possible in a single promotional ‘message’; for example, making it clear that the film is good and that they would not regret watching it at the cinema. Indeed, the marketing strategy was to develop curiosity and interest through the implementation of technical elements of enticement (‘The Biggest Technicolor Spectacle’); the intriguing duality of Maria’s character displayed in two different costumes; the representation of small scenes that reveal, again, the duality at the heart of the narrative; the name of the main female actor in red capital letters (distinct from other names involved), and finally, the reference to a successful American distribution company: Metro Goldwin Mayer.

This comparative analysis of advertising materials for *Fiesta (La Matadora)* in the American and Italian versions shows how their respective creativity developed without suppressing distinctions of national culture. In addition, they operate in dialogue with the urban and social contexts to which they are addressed. These film *manifesti* show an adherence to dominant socio-cultural tendencies, which convey a diverse approach to marketing strategies. The typical American mechanism is to interact with the viewer, focussed on gaining attention by promising entertainment. Although the American poster might appear to be a blended combination of various visual components (and a recurrent photographic element), they are all led by a predominant *fil rouge*: the concept of spectacle and entertainment (working against the film narrative). Underlying this concept is the influential idea of ‘leisure as therapy’ that, in the words of Kirby, ‘became an industry to which advertisers catered, and which formed the bedrock of a consumer culture’ (Kirby, 1991, p. 7). Therefore, leisure and entertainment are

led through the concerted action of figures, colours, and graphic elements that together play a strategic marketing role for the public they address. That said, the Italian *manifesto* does promise spectacle and entertainment as well, as the nature of a bull-fight is, indeed, spectacular; but there is a difference. Ciriello's *manifesto* is more inclined to display the drama behind the bull-fight 'spectacle', revealing seriousness as a unique aspect of Maria's character, and neglecting secondary narrative components. Moreover, focussing on Mulvey's assessment that 'The presence of a woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story-line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation' (Mulvey, 2009, pp. 19–20); we can conclude that, by setting aside the spectacle of the female body, the Italian *manifesto* does not stop the action in the film and in its preview.

The close analysis undertaken so far reminds us that visual media for public display aligns its persuasive language to a broader referential scenario, so that '[i]n the organization of film industry, creativity is traded off against contextual issues – even to the extent that creativity is often subsumed under other concerns' (Lorenzen, 2009, p. 93), which will be further explored in chapters four and five.

3.7 Conclusion

By foregrounding the initial question used to introduce this chapter: 'how did the art of film *manifesti* and their designers change in the post-war period in Italy?', I first attempted to give an account of the figure of post-war *pittore di cinema*. In doing so, I stressed the differences and similarities with the previous generation of graphic artists. I took into account the personal experience of a few who were still alive (e.g., Nistri, Avelli, and Campeggi). Through their recollections and their artwork, they provided a glimpse into their (proud) status as artists at the service of the cultural industry during the age of mass consumption. This chapter first

explored changes in their profession, which characterised the category of graphic artists involved in the film industry in the aftermath of the Second World War. Indeed, from 1945 onwards, the *pittori di cinema*'s awareness rose of being professional figures working at the service of cinema, and therefore with specific rights; at the same time, the recognition of their creative and commercial activity as an independent cultural practice with marketing ends became a central issue for most of the artists involved. Admittedly, the aesthetic quality which had long informed the Italian advertising tradition also had to pass through 'out of touch' press agents (generally ill-informed about aesthetic issues), and this was not always easily accepted by the artists involved (see Campeggi). However, in Nistri's words (quoted in section 3.2) we can observe not just the expression of the 'soul of the artist', but also the pragmatic figure of the advertiser who, as Silvia Grandi puts it, 'non [è] più attento solo agli aspetti legati ad una cultura figurativa, ma anche a quelli ben più complessi dei nascenti mercato e cultura di massa' (Grandi, 2005, p. 2).

From the perspective of stylistic tendencies, the pictorial style of post-war graphic artists remained substantially unchanged from the first generation. As appropriately described by Tino Avelli, 'sperimentavamo dentro una struttura che era popolare' (Naitza, 1997, p. 53). This means that the artistic experimentalism of the *pittori di cinema* was elaborated within the boundaries of the recognised visual code used by their predecessors. That being said, the new generation faced several significant challenges that resulted in the creative use of an innovative yet 'traditional' language and distinctive individual, artistic style. The aforementioned inclination to the naturalistic language of this popular medium represents a significant feature (explored in the following chapters) that can be attributed to the essential, conflicting, dual nature (and function) of the film *manifesto*: the artistic and the commercial. Indeed, in order to meet specific business needs, the visual essence of the advertising message had to be recognisable, clear, realistic, and rhetorical. As Marco Vecchia puts it, '[...]se cambia lo stile

pittorico, se cambiano i riferimenti ai movimenti artistici contemporanei, quella che non cambia è la struttura retorico-persuasiva che se si fa sempre forte della propria appartenenza al mondo estetico e alla modernità, non sente contemporaneamente il bisogno di arricchire il proprio armamentario comunicativo' (Vecchia, 2003, p. 20). This rhetorical-persuasive attribute places emphasis on the unavoidable relationship of identification that the advertising language had to maintain with reality to be fully processed by the mass public. Therefore, the characteristic feature of the representation of films in Italian *manifesti* were naturalistic pictorial motifs and the ability to create portraits of actors and actresses who appeared almost photographic, yet distinctly painterly. To further reinforce the stringent need to express a clear and coherent narrative thread through a popular expressive language, Nistri argues: 'Noi dovevamo raccontare quello che *volevamo*⁵² (sul film) purché fosse accessibile al pubblico'. An abstract design created for the representation of a film would not have guaranteed 'access to the mass public', because its imagery would have been distant from reality and the film narrative. Thus, there were significant commercial pressures to avoid this disconnect. Consequently, to successfully fulfil their role, the *pittori di cinema* had to engage creatively and to mediate – through their pictorial tools and graphic knowledge – the two positions: the market and the consumer.

This chapter has identified the American marketing model as one of the strongest commercial pressures in the sector. But why was it so? The increasingly persistent demands by the Italian film industry to include the film stars' portraits suggested a consumerist view imported from the American capitalist system, which would become central in cinema advertising, almost a *conditio sine qua non*. The impact of the (broader) phenomenon of Americanisation linked to the socio-cultural development in the post-war years challenged the ability of graphic artists to negotiate commercial purposes, marketing strategies, the needs of

⁵² My emphasis.

creativity, and social expectations within an increasingly interconnected global context. Therefore, these ‘external demands’ combined with local traditions and national film industry guidelines resulted in graphic artists facing a creative challenge. This involved rendering pictorial style, eye-catching details, and originality as a whole to make the difference in selling the film in an increasingly competitive scenario.

On the one hand, the case of the *manifesto* for *Gilda* showed how commercial demands narrowed the field of action of its Italian artist Capitani; on the other hand, it distinctively restored his power to reorient *Gilda* to local sensibilities. In doing so, Capitani was empowered to mould the collective imagination through the isolated figure of a star who encompasses a broad spectrum of cultural and social significances for the Italian society of that time. Interpreting the American star/character as the perfect ‘elusive dream’ of Italians in the post-war hardship, Capitani endows the image with a greater sense of a timeless icon, integrating it into the mass culture of Italian society. Using an impactful Italian expression, which would become the title of a book of photography, *Gilda* as represented by Capitani enhanced the tangible concept of *tra sogno e bisogno*⁵³ of the Italian society in the aftermath of the Second World War. Thus, Capitani met both marketing and creative challenges to represent the worldwide American feminine icon of the late 1940s, rendering her suitable for the Italian public. Returning to the initial questions that informed this chapter, this also explains how the *pittori di cinema* were contributing to an increasingly consumerist lifestyle. To this end, Capitani offered a painterly version of the photographic American poster for *Gilda*, allowing for the socio-cultural values of the time, with the purpose of reflecting a recognisable way of seeing, offering escape and a moment of pleasure (or, in other words, an ‘isola di colore’). That

⁵³ Colombo, C. (edited by) (1987) *Tra sogno e bisogno*, Milano: Longanesi. This book, mostly illustrated and enriched by 306 photographs, is about the evolution of consumption in Italy between 1940 to 1986.

being said, it was all done within a still strongly patriarchal culture, a far cry from the more emancipated American society.

The final section of this chapter opened a window onto the representation of a different kind of imagery in film advertising, placing Hollywood once more as the global market leader. In relationship to the American benchmark, the comparative analysis of *manifesti*, drafts and fliers for the same film, show socio-cultural facets expressed through different pictorial and graphic styles. Again, aspects of resistance from Italian advertising art to the commercial global pressure on the cinema industry were identified through the analysis of *manifesti* and drafts for the promotion of the 1947 American musical *Fiesta*. Ciriello's draft for *Fiesta* showed a different design compared to that one of the final *manifesto* emphasising the discrepancy between the artist's inclination to visually narrate the film plot (with a little bit more context) and the final draft that the industry selected, highlighting its musical genre, far from the more complex American style. Consequently, Ciriello expressed his tendency to enrich an image through attention to detail. He represented the figure of the *Matadora* with greater precision, refining individual parts that constitute the whole character (dress, pose and facial expression included). This section has shown how Ciriello engaged with the complex and competing demands of contemporary marketing with the aim of maintaining his own style and the creative (yet strategically appealing) approach to the representation of the film in the small space of a *manifesto*.

To conclude, the 'Americanisation' of marketing and advertising in Italy led to a significant revision of the marketing strategies adopted before its "advent", and the star system clearly had a more profound impact during the age of mass consumerism. This was important insofar as 'Italians made their transition to consumerism with the aid of American imagery' (Gundle, 2002). This concept showed how, after 1945, demands on artists changed due to the establishment of mass consumption and increasingly global commercialization. A traditional

Italian dimension nourished by social values in transition did evolve, albeit slowly, from the pre-war generation of graphic artists to the post-war generation. This new generation were more responsive to the somewhat manufactured American mannerisms used for film advertising; more inclined towards the use of an artificial idea of spectacle and performance. Thus, while dealing with a range of pressures, graphic artists contributed to an increasingly consumerist lifestyle, enhancing their cultural role in shaping public taste, conveying new (imported and reinterpreted) modes of consumption, promoting content and, as it will be seen more clearly in the final chapter, inducing collective behaviour. This whole process of assimilation and reinterpretation strengthened the role that *pittori di cinema* played as active mediators in the aftermath of the Second World War. The next chapter will examine the relationship between commercial pressures and creativity in Italian film *manifesti*, with a specific focus on how Ciriello integrated industrial demands and how this pressure affected and enhanced the creative process.

Chapter Four

Creativity and commercial pressure: Averardo Ciriello, a case study



Figure 30

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the function of creativity in film *manifesti* in relation to the growing industrialisation in Italy from the post-war years onwards and, specifically, with increasing commercial pressures from the film industry. In advertising, creativity is key in achieving commercial success in a competitive global market (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009). In light of this assumption, I consider the approach taken by Andy Pratt and Paul Jeffcutt, scholars of cultural economy and creative industry, according to whom ‘Creativity needs to be placed in context and, in particular, connected to strategic responses to competitive and globalised challenge’ (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009, p. 3). Therefore, in line with this chapter’s aim, I will consider creativity as a strategic response to commercial challenges within the development of mass consumption. Such a focus aligns with some of the psychological theories of creativity ‘as an incremental process involving multiple stages of development and styles of thinking’ (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009, p. 23).¹ Moreover, creativity will be used in this context as an effective instrument in the hands of graphic artists to manage external pressures, such as

¹ Cf. Boden, M. A. (edited by), (1994) *Dimensions of creativity*, London: MIT Press; Sternberg, R.J., Kaufman, J.C. (edited by), (2018) *The Nature of Human Creativity*, Cambridge: University Press.

commercialisation, with ingenuity. In this chapter, I agree with the standpoint of Graham Drake, marketing director and advertising expert, who defined ‘creativity as a product of interactions’ (Drake, 2003, p. 511); namely, that creativity can be intended as an articulated space used to explore and solve issues engendered by the interplay between the externally imposed structure (e.g., commission requests) and personal artistic style. In this respect, another emblematic notion that will inform my approach is that, ‘One of the hallmarks of creative thinking is an ability to tolerate contradictions and encompass different styles of thinking’ (Pratt and Jeffcutt 2009: 25-26). I will argue that this forms part of the role played by graphic artists involved in the film industry during the period analysed. Despite the creative potential of graphic artists involved in the cinema industry and their ability to disentangle the conflicts related to the primary necessity to meet commercial demands, their proposed designs did not always satisfy the promotional function for the film; that is, they did not match the expectations of the press agents working on behalf of the industry. This led to the identification, following multiple visual drafts, of the most suitable artistic styles and key elements able to gain interest from potential filmgoers. As Tino Avelli explained during our meeting, press agents and general directors working on a film would typically request samples of drafts from different graphic artists, who might be unaware of this competition. Sometimes there were multiple commissions to respond to the variety of advertising material (locandine, *manifesti* distributed in different areas of the city) for the promotion of a film, and a second screening of the film usually required a new set of promotional material.

To evaluate the impact of external, commercial pressures and examine the factors that influence the final design as a component of the full promotional process, I will focus on the artwork of a prolific Italian graphic artist, Averardo Ciriello (1918-2016). He had a long career in Italy as an advertising artist and illustrator. He experienced a variety of cultural and social changes from the early 1940s until the early twenty-first century. His extensive involvement

with the cultural industry gave him a role in the development of a modern mass society and the blossoming of a complex historical period for cinema and mass consumption. Ciriello was the author of thousands of *manifesti* for cinema (Brunoro and Giacomini, 2016) that encompassed, through his own pictorial style, the artistic taste of diverse periods, as well as the memory of a golden age for Italian cinema. His designs gave the Italian public their first visual encounter with renowned national and international titles (such as *It's a Wonderful Life*, *La terra trema*, *Il cammino della speranza*, *Il maestro*, *The Deer Hunter*, and the *James Bond 007* series of the 1960s). The following statement from Ciriello evidences how the relationship between industry and graphic artists usually worked, explaining the process involved after the commissioning of a film *manifesto*, and the general approach of the film industry to artistic creativity:

Il capo ufficio stampa mi diceva quello di cui avevano bisogno e poi mi invitavano per esempio alle visioni private di film anche in lingua originale, ed era molto importante poter vedere il film; poi mi davano il playbook dal quale ricavo certi elementi, poi mi davano il pacco delle fotografie, e io cominciavo a fare degli schizzi, ne facevo due o tre, anche quattro e generalmente veniva scelto sempre il peggiore.²

In order to investigate how creativity in film *manifesti* responded to commercial needs, it was necessary to examine a varied corpus of advertising material. This is the main reason I have placed Ciriello's work at the centre of my thesis. This material will be assessed throughout the development of a film *manifesto* from its initial draft (where available) to the printed version. The use of original drafts allows for this assessment as it emphasises the role of the artists' creativity: their ability to overcome challenges posed by the interplay between the demands of the commission and their personal artistic view and style, and the development of the design towards the final *manifesto* or *locandina* (where the *manifesto* is no longer

² Cf. Ciriello's interview at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dup66gp3NqU>. Retrieved December 2019.

available). This approach allows one to interpret the final outcome as a result of a collaborative process of making a film *manifesto* (for instance, artists, head of the press office, directors, socio-cultural conventions, censorship, and so forth) focusing on commercial interests rather than a single artistic viewpoint. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to highlight the distinct stages in producing a film *manifesto*; establishing the key steps in the artist's 'ability to switch from one frame of reference to another' (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009, p. 25) as part of the creative process, while operating in the pressures of a commercial system. Therefore, analysis of a *manifesto*'s development from a draft to its published form enables us to identify and leverage the original artistic proposal in relation to industry demands.

I will proceed with an iconographic and stylistic assessment of Ciriello's work decade by decade to facilitate the assessment of film *manifesti* as a valuable product and producer of social, cultural, and artistic changes. These changes will be examined through the pictorial and narrative choices made by the artist. It is critical to place Ciriello's creativity in relation to the pressures of the film industry and the needs derived from effective advertising. This evaluation is particularly relevant because his artwork is representative of the Italian *manifesti* of an era encompassing the development of a global mass society. This set of circumstances make Ciriello a pivotal and compelling subject for my analysis. He was one of the protagonists who fully participated in the cultural transition from the 1940s to the 1960s, contributing to the reshaping of a popular aesthetic taste through the power of visual persuasion. The iconographic analysis of the visual material helps assess post-war Italian society at a time when mass consumption played a dominant role during the expansion of a modern, global Italian cultural industry.

4.2 Averardo Ciriello's early career

Vivevo a Trieste, da dove la mia famiglia era originaria. Ad un certo momento, siccome a Trieste non avevo grandi sbocchi, chiesi a mio zio se mi poteva ospitare e quindi andai a Milano, dove naturalmente cercavo in qualche modo di utilizzare questa mia capacità [pittorica] e venni assunto da un'agenzia di pubblicità che si chiamava *Non Plus Ultra*, [...] da dove andai via. Sono rimasto senza lavorare e allora mio zio mi disse "ti rimando a casa", e per me questo era un grande tormento, e cominciai a interessarmi dei negozi; facevo i cartelloni allora, con tutti i prodotti [commerciali], e per un po' di tempo sono andato avanti così.³

This quote describes how the artist's long career as a painter and illustrator in the advertising industry was launched. Born in Milan towards the end of the First World War, Ciriello produced designs for commercial products, advertising and illustrations for Italian journals.⁴ Before joining the film industry, he collaborated with the prolific advertising agency I.M.A (*Idea Metodo Arte*) founded in 1929 in Milan by Anton Gino Domenighini, probably the most important advertising agency of the time in Italy.⁴ With the outbreak of the Second World War, Ciriello enlisted in the Navy. During that period, he was involved in multiple design activities, designing medals, calendars and badges.⁵ However, due to his propensity for painting and illustration, he was hired by the Propaganda Press Office of the Navy in Rome. Here he collaborated with military propaganda periodicals, such as *Prore armate*⁶ and *Acqua salata* (Brunoro and Giacomini, 2016). These publications were editorial products with a precise fascist ideology, where images of military heroism were key. These publications show the development of Ciriello's distinctive style. A characteristic verismo emphasising naturalistic elements and his ability to use art for narrative purposes defined his illustrations. They became characteristic of the stylistic features he employed and were visible in much of his work for cinema. A focus on Ciriello's work for military propaganda also reveals how it

³ Cf. Artist's interview: *Averardo Ciriello, una vita per il cinema*. Interview and direction by Fabio Micolano, consultation by Maurizio Baroni. See: < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dup66gp3NqU> >.

⁴ For more information on Ciriello's background see: G. Brunoro, F. Giacomini (edited by), (2016) *Ciriello, Una vita per l'illustrazione*, Montepulciano: Edizioni Di.

shaped his preference (and proficiency) in expressing the climax of a story through a dramatic narrative approach. This is identifiable in many of his *manifesti* for cinema, especially for drama and action movies.

In the early post-war years, Ciriello collaborated with the publishing industry in Rome, working *inter alia* for the weekly comics magazine *L'Intrepido*, a comic magazine published between 1935 and 1998, and *La Tribuna Illustrata*, a weekly illustrated magazine, published in Rome between 1890 and 1969.⁵ In the 1960s, he also worked for *Domenica del Corriere*, a popular weekly Italian magazine founded in Milan in 1899 and closed in 1989. He also collaborated with some of the most popular Italian magazines, such as *Il Travaso*, published between 1900 and 1966 (re-opened for a short period in 1986-1988); and *Marc'Aurelio*, an Italian satirical illustrated magazine published between 1931 and 1958, both of which had a focus on humour (Brunoro and Giacomini, 2016). Through the wide spectrum of topics Ciriello covered in the publishing industry, he gained a wider understanding of broad visual themes. He was eventually able to exploit these in his artwork as a graphic artist for cinema. This may also explain the versatility and strategic support and his work made offered to the advertising industry. The result was that he adapted his expressive artistic language within multiple genres, ranging from drama, comedy, *giallo*, to western themes.

4.3 Ciriello's debut in the film industry: *manifesti* and drafts of the 1940s

In the 1940s, Ciriello began a professional relationship with *Lux Film* after meeting the journalist Vittorio Calvino (1909-1956),⁶ who was in Rome to run the press office of *Lux Film*. In 1943, Ciriello made his first *manifesto* for cinema: *Spie fra le eliche* (Fig. 31), a war and spy movie by Ignazio Ferronetti. It is likely that the plot matched Ciriello's experience, given his

⁵ To see some of the historical covers, see: <<https://illustrated-history.blogspot.com/search/label/Domenica%20Del%20Corriere>>. Retrieved January 2020.

⁶ Cf. Museo Fermo Immagine, 22 April 2016, *Averardo Ciriello*, viewed January 2018, <<https://www.museofermoimmagine.it/averardo-ciriello/>>.

familiarity with military propaganda and its repertoire of images. This *manifesto*, alongside the draft for the same film released later on, give insights into Ciriello's initial approach to advertising for cinema. Specifically, this example emphasises his initial stylistic tendency and the ability to express the same message differently from one *manifesto* to the other.

In *Spie fra le eliche*, a series of accidents take place in an airplane factory due to sabotage by a secret organization. Factory managers invite a famous private detective who, introduced as an engineer-inspector, investigates the accidents. A policeman in the story experiences a series of adventures, which develop from comic to dramatic, after which he manages to shed light on the acts of sabotage, despite being hindered in his investigation. With the help of a nurse in the factory, who at one point is held hostage and threatened with death, the detective finds the culprit, discovering that this individual was acting on behalf of another nation. The film has a happy ending.⁷

⁷ It

The *manifesto* for *Spie fra le eliche* (Fig. 31) reveals Ciriello's compelling ability to synthesize a film using essential, yet effective, narrative symbols. The artist chose three dominant colours to communicate the film's plot: black, yellow, and red (with limited use of grey). He used these for the figurative design as well as the lettering. The use of basic colours (the 'achromatic' black and white)⁸ and primary colours (yellow, red, blue) is often preferred among graphic artists as they have a strong initial impact given that 'their presence influences their neighbours, but they are not influenced by them' (Arnheim, 1998, p. 349). This chromatic preference can be observed directly, but it is also confirmed through interviews with artists and collectors.⁹ However, further examples of *manifesti* will evidence that Ciriello's use of wide-ranging colours had powerful expressive effects. In terms of *Spie fra le eliche*, Ciriello's design

⁷ About the plotline, cf. Cinematografo, n.d., *Spie fra le eliche*, viewed June 2019, <<https://www.cinematografo.it/cinedatabase/film/spie-tra-le-eliche/502/>>.

⁸ About the expression of colours with a psychological approach, cf. Arnheim, R. (1998).

⁹ During our meeting, Silvano Campeggi expressed a preference in using red, as he believed it had a great impact on the viewer; even the most distracted can be attracted by it. During the interview, Giuliano Nistri revealed the same consideration on primary colours; they were as effective, powerful, and eye-catching. Also, cf. Baroni, M. (2018) *Pittori di cinema*, Milano: Lazy Dog Press.

was composed of a few representative figures: he only drew three propellers on a black background, distant and at different levels. He reduced the full meaning of war planes, through the use of propellers, achieving a synecdoche. Hence, each component in his design evokes the general idea of the whole object it represents. Ciriello used the same method to represent the act of spying: he drew a pair of eyes in yellow around the propellers. This technique enabled viewers to interpret the objects represented, forcing them to use their imagination in order to interpret and also give meaning to the image. Therefore, the design of this *manifesto* offers a direct visual translation of the film's title, which itself reduces the planes to propellers; Ciriello captures the key concept of the plot and its image, and unifies them through a unique expressive sign (Buzzi, 1964).



Figure 31

Ciriello's use of an inductive approach to an image, which anticipates a *modus operandi* that was typical of Pop Art, was anchored in 1930s' Italian graphic experimentation. Examples of such experimentation can be found in outputs from Studio Boggeri and the practice of its exponents, such as Erberto Carboni (1899-1984) and Bruno Munari (1907-1998), but also in

artwork by Armando Testa (1917-1992). However, if we consider an overriding figurative and descriptive approach to the image, this approach was not necessarily indicative of a transitional phase in film *manifesti*, between inter- and post-war Italian graphic experimentations. It is important to note that, at that time, the spread of images was extensive, from fine arts to modern mass media and popular culture, which were embraced by artists through visual memory. Major illustrated magazines (some mentioned in section 4.2)¹⁰ were very popular from the inter-war period onwards; they were also an efficient vehicle for the transmission of contemporary art, which was represented through the photographic reproduction of artwork (Cinelli *et al.*, 2008). Some of those periodicals, such as *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo Italiano* (1923-1943), broadened their interest to include the international art scene. Therefore, '[appare piú fondata] la conoscenza della ricezione sia dell'arte contemporanea, sia del sistema artistico da parte del primo pubblico di massa italiano nelle sue principali articolazioni socio-culturali. Si delineano e fissano aspettative e gusti, legati a pubblici di differente cultura, ceto, formazione' (Cinelli *et al.*, 2008, p. 3). Indeed, the spread of images at the time enabled graphic artists to make use of their cultural heritage (enriched by images, expressions, experimentation and creative contributions from external stimuli) to conceive their own, versatile artistic style and to elaborate captivating ideas to respond to the demands of film industry. It is possible to surmise that artists in the cultural industry were capable of predicting, to some extent, the public's taste in art and their expectations for this art. These elements are central for the elaboration of a successful visual advertising message.

Averardo Ciriello's archive contains a draft of the *manifesto* for *Spie fra le eliche* (Fig. 32) which has a different design from the one above. Given the catalogue date of 1945, the draft was likely produced for a new *manifesto* requested for a later release of the film. Here the

¹⁰ Among others, we can mention *Il Secolo Illustrato* (1866-1927), *La Lettura* (1901-1946), *Omnibus* (1937-1939), *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani* (intended for a specialised readership, it was published in Milan just in 1925).

chromatic register was altered in favour of a clearer image with a yellow-orange background, while the design is focused on narrating the plot to a greater extent than the previous *manifesto*. It is difficult to say whether the different representation of the same film was inspired or requested. Certainly, the visual material circulating at that time and his direct experience in the army informed the artist's creative expression.



Figure 32

Figure 32 shows a human arm with claws dominating the space of the *manifesto*. It reaches for a document, presumably a military plan. The plane is flying at upper left and the shadow is cast on the document. The dominant presence of the arm entering from the upper right-hand corner reminds the viewer of persistent motif in political propaganda posters. The hand likely represents the saboteur of the aeroplane industry. Indeed, figure 33 shows an image of fascist propaganda that evokes the same dominant representation of a hand with claws (in this case the hand of Communism), threatening a conglomeration of monuments as symbols of European cities, effectively expressing aggressiveness and anger.



Figure 33

The intimidating hand is represented here stabbed by a knife and bloodstained. The message conveys that Communism (as the hammer and sickle are marked on the visible shirt cuff), the enemy, will be defeated by the power of fascism and dictatorship, identified, in the *manifesto*, by the knife. This propaganda poster does not include a date of production or the name of the artist who designed it. However, it was requested and authorised by the Italian Social Republic or Republic of Salò (RSI), which existed from 1943 to 1945. This timeframe matches that of Ciriello's draft for *Spie fra le eliche* (1945). Clearly, in designing a new draft for *Spie fra le eliche* (Fig. 32), Ciriello draws on inspiration from a national, visual repertoire unequivocally connected to the military and its propagandistic language that spread during the 1940s. Therefore, Ciriello may well have recalled and adapted this image as an example of the typical images circulating at the time; thereby, linking the topic of the film and his stylistic tendency with a specific visual subject. This is further supported by Ciriello's proximity to army

propaganda due to his professional involvement. Alternatively, Ciriello may have adhered to a specific linguistic code relevant at that time as shown by the propaganda poster analysed.

4.4 Transnational influences in *manifesti* and drafts of the 1940s

During the 1940s, Ciriello focused on a wide range of film genres and their representations. To introduce the artistic style adopted by Ciriello for the representation of a range of film genres and the typical characteristics associated with them, it is useful to start with the analysis of one of his most famous film *manifesti*. This *manifesto* was produced in 1948 for the neorealist film *La terra trema* (Fig. 34)¹¹ directed by Luchino Visconti;¹² incidentally, like several other neorealist films of the time, it was a failure in terms of public reception (Micciché, 1999). The *manifesto* epitomises the representation of the neorealist phenomenon¹³ of Italian cinema of the mid-1940s,¹⁴ developed up to the early 1950s; however, it is worth noting that the production of this genre of film was not comprehensive within that time-period.¹⁵ This is important to my study as it falls within the first decade considered and provides a visual and narrative text for the start of the time-period assessed. The figurative subject depicted dominates the entire surface of the paper, while the lettering takes up the lower part of it. The vigorous brushstrokes representing a dramatic scene are immediately striking. The use of these expressive and intense brushstrokes is congruent with the title choice of lowercase letters joined together (as they have been written using a brush) with a sinuous shape (apparently, *Brush script MT* font).

¹¹ Unfortunately, I did not find any drafts designed for the manifesto that could potentially tell us something about the creative process and possible significant changes or specific requests from the film industry.

¹² For a detailed reading on the analysis of Visconti's film, see: Micciché, L. (ed.) (1994) *La terra trema di Luchino Visconti. Analisi di un capolavoro*, Turin: Lindau.

¹³ Using Lino Micciché's words, '[i]l neorealismo [fu] un'aggregazione di fenomeni, [...] anzi come fenomeno ben definito e bene individuabile non fu affatto, poichè a livello dei risultati espressivi (cioè dei film) esso apparve scomponibile e ricomponibile quasi a piacimento' (Micciché, 1999, p. 27).

¹⁴ Cf. Pitassio, F. (2015) 'Intorno al neorealismo. I manifesti e il paratesto cinematografico', *L'Avventura. International Journal of Italian Film and Media Landscapes*, (1), pp. 121–140.

¹⁵ Cf. Micciché, L. (1999) *Il neorealismo cinematografico*, Venezia: Marsilio.



Figure 34

La terra trema narrates the exploitation of fishermen in the small Sicilian village of Aci Trezza (Catania). It focuses specifically on the Valastro family, an exemplary, traditional working-class family exploited by wholesalers. With the aim of providing a gritty depiction of reality, Visconti staged scenes depicting the strength of rebellion, sorrow, and hope that characterized poor people, adopting the perspective of fishermen as the film's protagonists. 'Ntoni, the eldest son of the Valastro family, decides to leave this life of hardship and become self-employed. In doing so, he convinces his family to mortgage their house. Because of their self-employed status (and debt), they are compelled to fish no matter the conditions. Everything goes well until the family's boat is destroyed by a storm, leaving them with nothing. The image in the *manifesto* for *La terra trema* selects this pivotal narrative event of the film, which marked a turning point in the plot.

Neorealist films were often shot on location and included performance by non-professional actors, as was the case for *La terra trema*. Therefore, in the advertising representation of a neorealist film, it would be paradoxical to draw attention to the actors/actresses and their popularity to persuade filmgoers to watch the film. Hence this approach is opposite to the “star system” as it emphasises a particular dramatic event rather than the individuality of a star. *La terra trema* displayed the stark reality of the marginalised social classes and their attempt to rise up against oppressors. Neorealist films required a more detailed design for the *manifesto*. They needed an impactful description of the events, or a recognizable background, which is visually more articulated. Hence, a commercial strategy requires functional and compelling aspects to be identified and be potentially oriented to a synoptic view of the plot, enhancing the narrative expression and the function of its singular, visual components. This is the approach taken by Ciriello in his *manifesto* for *La terra trema*. However, the visual frame depicted was not actually taken from a movie scene. It was conceptualised by the artist so as to put forth a notion from the director: the Valastros’ boat struggling during the storm. It is common to encounter film *manifesti* that depict a narrative picture from artist’s imagination rather than an actual frame from the movie. Critically, for film *manifesti* and marketing strategies related to them, the selection of the subject to be represented often depended on what was considered of greater impact for the potential filmgoer, regardless of a strict adherence to the film narrative. Furthermore, as pointed out in chapter three, graphic artists were usually unable to watch a film before preparing their drafts for a *manifesto*. Sufficient time was simply unavailable ahead of deadlines. Instead, they would look at photos from stills collected in set photographs. Based on those photos, they would creatively elaborate their visual subject for film advertisement.

There is a twofold narrative reference in the pictorial representation of *La terra trema*. This narrative reminds us that Visconti’s film is based on Verga’s novel *I Malavoglia* (1881).

In the novel, Verga emphasises the struggle of the Valastros family – known in the novel as the Toscano family – for survival against Providence, their enemy (ironically, the name of the family’s boat). As it has been widely discussed, Visconti instead focused specifically on the family’s fight against poverty, economic exploitation, and social exclusion. Hence, he rewrites ‘that misfortune – attributed to fate by Verga – as a consequence of social inequality’ (Pucci, 2013, p. 7). Furthermore, Visconti stages some of the family’s members’ desires to defend themselves against another enemy, the wholesalers. However, both accounts focus on the impossibility of emancipation or revolution, and in both narratives the leading character is ‘Ntoni, the eldest son. In Verga’s novel, he is represented as a ‘slacker’ driven by inertia and inclined to recklessness. In Visconti’s film ‘Ntoni is the idealist who yearns for his family’s economic empowerment. In light of this, Ciriello’s *manifesto* reveals a fight against the force of nature, Providence, more likely inspired by Verga’s *verismo*. However, by focusing on the representation of ‘Ntoni in a heroic pose, it is likely he also wished to embody the social idealism depicted by Visconti. The artist here uses the dramatic scene of the stormy sea with the Valastro crossing it while fishing as representative of the film as a whole. The evocative image of the Valastro family caught in the storm epitomises the disadvantaged, subdued, and permanent status of poor people, which is portrayed in the film, as well as a sense of *Verismo*. For the artist, the vision of a metaphorical and a real storm was central in presenting the film to the public. The *verista* style adopted by Ciriello is undoubtedly appropriate to the plot, as the image is a perfect reflection of the emotional struggles experienced by the fishermen, whether fighting against a storm or against wholesalers to survive. Furthermore, the artist’s ability to capture the psychological status of the characters in the film is expressed through robust brushstrokes, *chiaroscuro* effects, the sharp, solid features of the protagonists surrounded by empty space evoke a heroic dimension and a sense of the epic; facial features

are finely traced, guiding viewers to perceive the fishermen as fully conscious of the risks of their choices and, possibly, the fate that awaits them.

For this dramatic neorealist film, the artist's style is likely inspired by a specific realist current in painting. The *manifesto* evokes artistic works produced from American Realism during the late 19th and early 20th century. Indeed, the film critic Sergio Naitza connected Ciriello's style and American art influence as well (Naitza, 1997). He argued that one of Ciriello's artistic role models was the American illustrator Harold Von Schmidt (1893-1982), who specialised in the inner illustrations of magazines (such as *Cosmopolitan* and *The Saturday Evening Post*) (Naitza, 1997).¹⁶ In 1944, Von Schmidt was enlisted in the Air Force as a war correspondent in Europe.¹⁷ This might have enabled the circulation of images and illustrations, especially those related to the military milieu in which Ciriello operated at that time. However, their stylistic similarities are limited to naturalistic features, mostly regarding the representation of the ambience and people. As confirmed by the artist himself, Ciriello was aware of works from American Realism, and few similarities are identifiable in the *manifesto* for *La terra trema*, as both include painting and illustrations. In light of this, I believe echoes of Winslow Homer's (1836 – 1910)¹⁸ 1885 painting, *The Fog Warning* (Fig. 35), are identifiable in the *manifesto*; although, direct evidence of such influence has not been found.¹⁹ The stormy atmosphere is created by the use of similar shades of colour: cold tones of blue, grey, and white to represent the impact of the waves; neutral tones for the sky, in sand and grey colours, with a vigorous brushstroke. In both Ciriello's *manifesto* and Homer's painting the

¹⁶ For further information on the American artist, see: Haboush Plunkett, S., Livesey, M. (2017) *Drawing Lessons from the Famous Artists School: Classic Techniques and Expert Tips from the Golden Age of Illustration*, Beverly: Rockport Publishers; Reed, W. (1972) *Harold von Schmidt Draws and Paints the Old West*, Flagstaff: Northland Press.

¹⁷ Cf. Norman Rockwell Museum, n.d., *Harold Von Schmidt*, viewed December 2018, <<https://www.illustrationhistory.org/artists/harold-von-schmidt>>.

¹⁸ The American landscape painter, was interested in humble people as subjects, painting several scenes at sea with fishermen as an integral part of the landscape.

¹⁹ About American Realism in Arts, see: Laroni, G. (1980) *Realismo Americano. Immagini nell'arte USA 1865-1975*, Venezia: Marsilio. For a critical examination of the internationalised American Art history see: Groseclose, B. and Wierich, J. (2009) *Internationalizing the History of American Art: Views*, Penn State: University Press.

boat seems in the throes of a greater force of nature. In the former, fishermen have no control over the sea's superior strength, while in the latter, the image portrays a moment of worried contemplation of the imminent event. Even the transverse cropping of the wider seascape shows similarities in the two designs: the boat cuts diagonally across both the *manifesto* and the canvas. This arrangement creates a sense of emotional involvement in the scene. Indeed, viewed as an 'intermedial reference', Ciriello's *manifesto* is formally simulating the film to while maintaining the specific quality of a painting. The diagonal perspective generates a sense of empathy, evoking a 'cinematic view'. As Laura Magatelli states, 'Riprese con movimenti diagonali rendono più acuta la drammaticità della scena' (Magatelli, 2015, p. 16), putting emphasis on a movement towards the viewer, increasing interest in the scene.



Figure 35

In light of the iconographic and stylistic comparison, it is clear that Ciriello alluded to the American realist tradition, seeking to draw upon a pictorial style with which the Italian public might have already been familiar through the illustrated magazines mentioned above. In relation to the critical reception of post-war photojournalism, Maria Grazia Messina has argued that one was '[i]ntesa ad argomentare la centralità entro una cultura visiva ormai segnata dalla scelta di "verismo" della letteratura e del cinema neorealisti, in modi che si vorrebbero opposti alla politica di propaganda e consenso, [...] ma che ne proseguono le strategie affidate al gradiente di efficacia attrattiva e persuasiva delle immagini' (Messina, 2013, p. 101).²⁰ Therefore, Messina emphasises that a realist tradition was already well established in Italian culture and integrated through a variety of images that resulted in an attractive and persuasive effect on the public recipient. This is evidence of how aesthetic features were used and sheds light on the exploration of the use of artistic trends in film *manifesti*. Additionally, such interrelations underscore artists' abilities to articulate their pictorial inclinations through various artistic motifs to represent films and the effects that arise from those representations. This allows us to better assess the commercial demands alongside the artistic and individual tendencies of graphic artists involved in the cultural industry. They demonstrate familiarity with art history through their artwork at the service of cinema. This knowledge allowed Ciriello, specifically, to choose the most appropriate visual language for the subject matter.

4.4.1 International commercial strategies and modes of representation

In addition to designs for spy/war films and dramas, Ciriello made *manifesti* for musical films. I have already examined this genre in chapter three in a wider comparative analysis of international *manifesti* for *La Matadora*, including a *manifesto* by Ciriello. For this section, I have selected drafts, *locandine*, and *manifesti* for the musical film *Un giorno a New York* (*On*

²⁰ For further critic analysis, cf. Russo, A. (2012) *Storia culturale della fotografia Italiana*, Torino: Einaudi.

the Town), produced in the United States and distributed by MGM (Metro-Goldwin-Mayer) Studios. Assessment of this film takes into account a range of advertising material (four drafts, a *locandina*, two *manifesti*), which is fruitful for understanding the creative and commercial process behind the production of the *manifesto*. Hence, my analysis focuses on the key graphic, artistic and strategic features from one draft to another, and on the final outcome across a range of advertising material.

In Ciriello's archive (CSAC), four drafts and a playbill for the American musical movie *Un giorno a New York* are preserved, and I found another playbill for the film at the *Museo Fermo Immagine* in Milan. In order to examine the interplay between creative interest and commercial demands that lie behind the production of the film *manifesto*, it is significant to explore the different designs suggested by the artist and ultimately the playbills which usually included the same image, in a smaller format, chosen for the final *manifesto*.²¹

The musical comedy *Un giorno a New York* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1949) was released in Italy at the end of 1950. It tells the story of three sailors on 24-hour shore leave in New York: Gabey (played by Gene Kelly); Chip (played by Frank Sinatra) and Ozzie (Jules Munshin). While in the subway, Gabey falls in love with the picture of 'Miss Turnstiles' (named for the subway turnstiles), Ivy Smith, and dreams of finding her in town. Their day transforms into a lively, joyful experience for the sailors, accompanied by the unexpected presence of three women who are met separately: Claire, the student of anthropology (played by Ann Miller); Ivy Smith (played by Vera-Ellen); and the taxi driver Hilde (played by Betty Garrett). In one of the drafts (Fig. 36a), Ciriello depicted a 'static' scene with all the characters sketched at the same level on a white cloud looking over the city. The background is a dark blue sky and, at the bottom of the draft, the black silhouettes of New York skyscrapers are

²¹ The *manifesto* that I tracked for the musical, can be found online and for sale, as it currently belongs to a private collector. The image comes from the website: <<https://www.ebay.it/itm/MANIFESTO-4F-Un-giorno-a-New-York-On-the-Town-Donen-Gene-Kelly-Frank-Sinatra-/162662235126>>. Retrieved December 2019.

outlined, brightened by spots of light. The title emerges asymmetrically from the darkest part of these silhouettes, suggesting movement (or, more appropriately, dance) in red block letters and one word written in yellow.



Figure 36a

The second draft (Fig. 36b) shows a cheerful, memorable scene from the musical. Against the same dark background, Claire sits joyfully on the top of the Empire State Building. It is not easy to identify the individual characters accurately as it is a brief sketch made by the artist. The other characters are displayed below in several poses, dancing in circles around the central skyscraper. To counterbalance the dark colours at the top of the design, Ciriello used a flat, empty, white background in the lower part of the design. The title in this draft appears to be the result of fireworks, and is an integral part of the design.



Figure 36b



Figure 36c

The third draft (Fig. 36c), whose design was used for a final *manifesto*, was likely perceived as a more compelling proposal aimed at delivering an impactful image. It was chosen for the final *manifesto*. However, the artist has only loosely represented the ‘idea’ of the town, depicting few spots of light on a black, undefined background. In doing so, he gives us enough (schematic) detail to understand the context and continues with modes of representation established in Italian graphic art in the 1930s. This was also customary of the future movement of Pop art. This approach enabled him to emphasise each pair of characters and celebrate the hallmark of the musical: vivacity and entertainment through music and dance. The couples seem to jump up and down in the small space of the draft with expressive faces. The compact, bold title in yellow is outlined in red, covering the bottom-left corner of the depiction, and is harmonious with the overall composition. The draft image above (Fig. 36c) was used in a published *manifesto*, and therefore considered adequate for the promotion of the film in Italy.²² This image celebrated the joyful liveliness of an American musical and the equally significant presence of major Hollywood actors and actresses. However, as stated by Giuliano Nistri and Maurizio Baroni, it was not uncommon for multiple designs for the same film to be in circulation. Nistri, for instance, stated that, ‘Quando il film veniva dato più di una volta, i *manifesti* si rinnovavano, dunque ci sono casi in cui per uno stesso film vennero scelti due o più bozzetti’.²³ Another reason for having a range of designs to display in different cities and areas was that it enabled the industry to respond to the demands of a heterogeneous public (Maioli, 1993). In the fluid world of mechanical reproduction of mass media, a large number of images could circulate easily throughout an international mediascape, and so the need to refashion promotional images for films can easily be explained.

²² For the original source, see: <<https://www.ebay.it/itm/MANIFESTO-4F-Un-giorno-a-New-York-On-the-Town-Donen-Gene-Kelly-Frank-Sinatra-/162662235126>>. Retrieved November 2019.

²³ To read the interview in full, refer to it in appendix.



Figure 37

The *manifesto* from Ciriello's archive for *Un giorno a New York* (Fig. 37), presents figurative and graphic advertising features encompassed in a light-grey colour frame. For film promotion, essential characteristics and elements of the musical were selected: joyful characters and the white outline of New York City. In comparing the *manifesto* with the three drafts analysed above, it is remarkable that the preference here is given to light colours that recall daytime, rather than a dark, nocturnal, atmosphere. One of the final images chosen for public display and for film promotion is, in fact, a combination of iconographic details from the first draft (Fig. 36a) and the third draft (Fig. 36c). Indeed, the group of actors and actresses in the *manifesto* were represented together on a slightly lighter background, similar to the first draft (Fig. 36a). The difference being that in the *manifesto*, the cloud was replaced with a white, undefined – but clearly identifiable – shape representative of New York City. The characters are jumping arm in arm and their joyful demeanour is similar to the composition of the third draft (Fig. 36c). Above them, a waving yellow band includes the names of the directors and producer and emphasises the technical quality of the movie with the eye-catching script,

‘Technicolor’. The title, in bold light-blue lettering, is superimposed over an independent white strip at the bottom of the playbill, accompanied in the middle strip by the MGM lion, seemingly carved in stone. At the top of the flier in bold red lettering are the names of the main actors (Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra). In a smaller white font, the names of other cast members are included on the left and right side of the manifesto below the two main names.

As an exemplary illustration of a synergetic relationship between visual products of different countries, Ciriello examined the American poster for the musical (Fig. 38),²⁴ and sought to reinterpret that model according an Italian aesthetic tradition. Assessment of the connections mentioned thus far lead to identifying certain elements that suggest an interplay of multicultural features. This allows the observer to define a variety of promotional languages.



Figure 38

²⁴ The American poster I accessed comes from the following website:
<<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041716/mediaviewer/rm670249472>>.
Retrieved November 2019.

It is crucial first to examine the American poster and playbill (Fig. 38-39) to then identify the distinctive elements selected specifically for the Italian version. This comparison will underscore the American playbill's status (Fig. 39) as a 'composite-image' of diverse, yet complementary and re-adapted visual and commercial devices. As with the American poster for *Gilda* discussed in chapter three, we find the design has been produced by painting over a photograph inspired by a still shot (Fig. 40).²⁵ This was a common practice when making American film posters.



Figure 39

²⁵ The photograph comes from: <<http://www.filmreference.com/Films-No-Or/On-the-Town.html>>. Retrieved January 2019.



Figure 40

The playbill (Fig. 39) is a combination of painted artwork and live-action photography, with a secondary animated image of the characters presented. These characters cover the left space of the poster under the larger representation of two pairs of figures, which differs from the Italian version. Above and under this iconographic group, other figurative, graphic, and commercial elements are placed. Lettering appears in an arch at the top of the poster (with the names of the main characters), and again in a banner at the bottom of it, in an alternate use of yellow, red, and blue colours. Another part of the lettering is displayed in a ribbon across the group of six characters. In the middle of the poster, focus is on the faces of the two main actors, Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra, who are isolated using a white spotlight, accompanied by their partners in the movie: the actresses Betty Garrett and Vera Ellen. On the right, there is a photographic image of the actress, dancer, and singer Ann Miller immortalized in a dancing pose, sepia-tinted, likely used to isolate the group of still shots from the rest of the drawing. It

also gives her a dedicated space in which to be admired, as she was a popular dancer and actress at the time.²⁶

In the Italian *manifesto* (Fig. 37), the group of characters represented in the American poster are hand-painted, arm in arm, and are the central and unique predominant image. This arrangement was clearly inspired by the American poster (Fig. 38), which publicly celebrates the musical with the conventional American slogan/promises at the top of it: ‘They Paint the Town with Joy’. All the actors are jumping up in the city of New York, traversed by a yellow banner in red lettering with the name of the production house (MGM) and the ‘Technicolor’ credit. Resorting to the ‘star system’ is again the undisputed marketing strategy applied to film advertising in both cases. However, this facet is more accentuated in the American poster with the addition of two individual stars *par excellence*, Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra. They serve to attract potential cinemagoers and as emblems of the Hollywood industrial system.²⁷ Their representation is oversized, compared to the remaining figurative elements at the bottom of the poster; they are depicted with lively, cheerful expressions. Kelly and Sinatra frame the image of the ‘Big Apple’, the primary focus of the film itself, with New York idealised as the city epitome of joy. Both actors are shown and celebrated for their multiple artistic vocations as dancer, singer, performer, and actor. The portrait of this powerful duo plays a perfect role in representing the American liveliness associated with the musical genre. Together with the rest of the cast, they create the imagery of the hectic, joyful pace of New York City. As Paul Kerr argues, ‘[t]he film involves an accommodation to the conventions of the star system and to the expectations associated with specific star personae’ (Kerr, 1986, p. 65), and so did the design for the representation of the musical. Moreover, as Dyer has argued, the economic value of stars is a crucial factor in film advertising: ‘Stars are made for profit. In terms of the market,

²⁶ For an extended biography of the actress, see: <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ann-Miller>; <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0587900/bio>>. Retrieved March 2020.

²⁷ Cf. (Gundle, 2002).

stars are part of the way films are sold. The star's presence in a film is a promise of a certain kind of thing that you would see if you went to see the film' (Dyer, 1986, p. 18). Gene Kelly,²⁸ the 'king of musicals', and the charismatic Frank Sinatra,²⁹ had already enjoyed remarkable success as actors, dancers, and singers. The American poster for *On the Town* uses them as guarantees for successful entertainment, developing them as marketing objects, a status they have already established by this point. In the American poster, Kelly and Sinatra have the dual communicative function as the main actors (one also being a co-director of the film) and Hollywood stars whose worldwide success enabled them to capture public interest.

On the contrary, Ciriello's advertising material for *Un giorno a New York* (Fig. 37, 41) do not rely upon stardom, especially of the two male actors, in the same way. The artist has harmonised the general visual impact, giving to the actors the same level of visual importance. In the *manifesto* inspired by the American advertising poster (Fig. 37), they are all drawn in poses based on set photographs. The names of the two leading actors are emphasised simply through the use of bold, red, large lettering at the top of the *manifesto*. On the other *manifesto* (Fig. 41), the characters (actors and actresses) do not predominate in any single space. The American poster and playbill (Fig. 38, 39) demonstrate that the rhetoric of consumption in America involves supplementary and complementary components. For instance, they include the addition of oversized faces of the two leading actors, a slogan, a bit of film context, and a hint of romance. These features aim to make the advertising message ever more promising, persuasive, seductive, and spectacular to its own consumer base. Indeed, as Gary Rhodes emphasised in relation to imagery and stylistic features of American movie picture posters from the 1910s, American advertisers 'saw sensationalism as a method of gaining audience

²⁸ Gene Kelly debuted in the American film industry in 1942 with the film *For Me and My Gal* (with Judy Garland), and affirmed his fame in 1944 with *Cover Girl* (alongside Rita Heyworth).

²⁹ Frank Sinatra, of Italian origins, had already established himself with his songs and voice, occupying an important place in the international musical scene from the 1930s.

members' (Rhodes, 2007, p. 239), which remained a distinctive feature of American film posters in the years that followed.



Figure 41

As outlined in chapter three (sub-section 3.4.1) and in the current chapter (sub-section 4.2.1), these components, such as sensationalism, portrait of actors and actresses and slogans, influenced the global marketing language that was used, especially when the film genre was one of the most popular (the musical, in this case). Italy seems partially excluded from this phenomenon, maintaining instead a style that is unique and recognisably 'Italian', even where the design has been influenced by international precedents (as in Fig. 37). This is evident when assessing the Ciriello's creativity. For the *manifesto* based on the American model, Ciriello used one of the set photographs on which the American poster was made. This poster depicted all the actors and actresses jumping on the skyline of New York; he kept the yellow ribbon,

emphasising the Technicolor process typically used to film American musicals, but he left out the ribbon with the production company's name (MGM). Instead, he replaced that with its logo and full name at the bottom of the *manifesto*, giving it more emphasis. In contrast to the American poster, the image is fully coloured, revealing a bright spectrum; the characters are distinguished expressively, and the skyline of New York is merely evoked rather than photo reproduced. The effect of the overall *manifesto* is essentially more painterly than photographic whilst remaining realistically detailed in the facial features of the characters, which was crucial for the star system marketing strategy. Therefore, Ciriello borrowed visual components from the global advertising language. He adapted a specific alphabet (the American model, likely requested by the film industry) to a local tradition, a personal style and other cultural suggestions. In Ciriello's other *manifesto* (Fig. 41) inspired by one of his original drafts (Fig. 36c), he accentuates an enthusiasm and vivacity that was characteristic of musicals, thus employing his own artistic licence, which was accepted by the film industry. He achieved approval without relinquishing the concise visual structure that defined much of the advertising language in post-war Italy, and without abandoning his artistic idea to condense the plot with a few iconographic elements, as discussed earlier in relation to Ciriello's use of inductive design.

The iconographic and stylistic comparison of the examples above produces several important visual connections between American and Italian film advertising. From a commercial perspective, the analysis undertaken has pointed out the importance of following established modes of representation (in American advertising), especially regarding a genre which did not have a well-established tradition in Italy (the musical). This enabled visual promotion to exert its power over consumers and the public through an international, yet recognisable, approach. However, this assessment has also placed emphasis on Ciriello's creative solutions that encompassed Italian market needs and traditions; at the same time, the

iconographic excursus of the 1940s sheds light on the artist's personal style at work in the contemporary Italian and international panorama.

4.5 The 1950s: *manifesti* for drama

Ciriello expanded his activity in film advertising during the 1950s, producing hundreds of film *manifesti*, mostly for Italian films and Italian co-productions. Indeed, during that decade Italian cinema targeted co-productions first in Europe (Spain, France) and second with America (Danese, 2003). Strikingly, as Gundle argued, 'In the 1950s and 1960s the Italian film industry was the second most important in the world, producing half as many films as Hollywood and distributing them to 86 countries' (Gundle, 2007, p. 157), and the American weekly magazine *Time* remarked on this growth in production.³⁰ Another example of this growth was the establishment of the sales company Italian Film Export, founded in Rome in 1951 'to help Italian films transfer into the commercial arena' (Gundle, 2007, p. 159). Ultimately, during the 1950s, Italian cinema brought '[...] film entertainment to Italians on an unprecedented scale while capturing approximately 70 percent of all entertainment revenues' (Treveri Gennari and Sedgwick, 2015, p. 76). This section will explore drafts of *manifesti* made in this decade, which culminated in the economic boom in Italy. Cinema, in part, contributed to this boom, and *manifesti* did the same for film consumption. In the field of artistic *manifesti*, the 1950s saw the establishment of prizes for the best film *manifesto* or the best poster artist, which were awarded based on art and technique rather than commercial success; such as the "Spiga Cambellotti" prize, established by the graphic artist Luigi Martinati in 1952 and dedicated to the graphic and visual artist Duilio Cambellotti (1876-1960).³¹ In 1953 Averardo Ciriello

³⁰ Cf. Anon., "Hollywood on the Tiber", *Time*, 16 August 1954. Cited in: Gundle, *Bellissima...*

³¹ Duilio Cambellotti (1876-1960) was an Italian graphic artist, one of the most valuable representatives of the Art Nouveau in Italy. About the "Spiga" prize and its founder Martinati, cf. <https://www.astebolaffi.it/it/articles/martinati-un-artista-per-tutte-le-stagioni>. Retrieved January 2020.

receives the award “Spiga Cambellotti 1953” for the overall success of his artworks (Brunoro and Giacomini, 2016).

The 1950s is the quintessential decade for melodrama in Italian cinema (e.g. *La strada* (F. Fellini, 1954), *Senso* (L. Visconti, 1954), *Il grido* (M. Antonioni, 1957), *L'uomo di paglia* (P. Germi, 1958)), which achieved broad critical acclaim in Italy and abroad (Micciché, 1995).³² The visual analysis of material included in this section is exclusively related to dramas so as to focus evaluation on the expressive, artistic language tailored to a film's theme. As the client, the distribution company issued the artist with a list of requirements before and following the submission of the initial drafts. The artist had the challenging task of implementing those specific commercial demands while at the same time integrating marketing strategies into the creative process. They essentially had to maintain significant appeal, and produce persuasive images in their own pictorial style. The following analysis includes the advertising material for *Trapezio* (originally titled *Trapeze*, 1956) an American production, directed by Carol Reed, and the Italian film *L'uomo dai calzoni corti* directed by Glauco Pellegrini (1958).

The plot of *Trapezio* develops within a circus setting. A disabled trapeze artist, Mike (played by Burt Lancaster), guides a young, up-and-coming performer Tino (played by Tony Curtis) through rigorous training, and in so doing faces conflicting emotions. Their collaboration is undermined by another ambitious member of the circus, the manipulative and beautiful Lola, played by Gina Lollobrigida, one of Italy's 'attractive exportable images' (Gundle, 2007, p. 142) in her American debut. Lola creates tension in what would become a love triangle.³³ Examination of the draft and *manifesto* for this film shows compelling linguistic

³² Cf. Morreale, E. (2011) *Così piangevano: il cinema melò nell'Italia degli anni Cinquanta*, Roma: Donzelli.

³³ For a theoretical treatment of the cult of Italian stars of the 1950s and, in particular, for an evaluation of the place of Gina Lollobrigida (affectionately known in Italy as “Lollo”) in Italian culture, see: Buckley, Réka C. V. (2000) ‘National Body: Gina Lollobrigida and the cult of the star in the 1950s’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 20, pp. 527-547.

and expressive changes from the draft to the final product. In one of the three drafts (Fig. 42) there is a remarkable use of distinctive chromatic areas of blue, fuchsia and white/light grey, which carry forward the pace of a narrative. The tricoloured hues serve to identify relevant characters, their poses, and trigger curiosity. The artist essentially realized the attractive quality of his potential *manifesto* through chromatic substance. This structured composition emphasised a “trialogue” between characters: Ciriello grouped together three narrative *momenta*, a dramatic scene in the foreground; the theme and setting represented through the character in the middle; and the sentimental involvement between the male and female characters on the top. Ciriello sought to persuade the viewer through the oversized faces of stars with impactful colours. In addition, the recurrent symbolic “trilogy” underscored three significant attributes to promote the film for the general public: the drama, the recognition of the main topic, and romance. This method of identifying important visual and narrative elements responds to the need of the advertising *manifesto* to be not just ‘[u]na registrazione meccanica di elementi, ma l’afferrare strutture significanti’ (Carreras, 1979, p. 10), which the artist aims to express through the use of creative tools and graphic solutions.



Figure 42

One of the final *manifesti* (Fig. 43)³⁴ reveals a completely different interpretation of the movie, which might have been inspired by the American poster.³⁵ The dominant colours of the background are blue and red. These had a greater impact once printed compared to the colours of the draft. The artist depicted a full-length portrait of Gina Lollobrigida and Tony Curtis in the background and on two different levels, while the three-quarter figure of Burt Lancaster covers the foreground. His visual role – at the edge of the *manifesto* and closer to the viewer – is to draw the spectator ‘into’ the show. However, he is not looking at the viewer but rather he appears absorbed in himself, lost in intense thought, in a hieratic pose that also evokes a heroic attitude. The film setting is suggested solely through the acrobatic apparatus in an otherwise empty space, providing unstable support for the three ambitious trapeze artists. This evokes a

³⁴ The image comes from <<http://www.benitomovieposter.com/catalog/trapezio-p-13539.html?language=IT>>. Retrieved January 2020.

³⁵ To see the American poster, visit the website <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049875/>>. Retrieved January 2020.

metaphor of the character's emotional uncertainties, represented in the *manifesto* as individually isolated in an undefined space. However, the characterisation of a “triangle”, which refers to the sentimental involvement of the three main characters leading the plot, is still tangible. In terms of visual references, the background as depicted for the *manifesto* (Fig. 43), is reminiscent of the 1950s “inter-galactic” scenery designed for book covers of the popular science-fiction series *Urania* (Fig. 44).³⁶



Figure 43

³⁶ “Urania” is an Italian editorial series of science-fiction that has been published by Arnoldo Mondadori since 1952; the current editor is Giuseppe Lippi. Several Italian and foreign graphic artists illustrated the book covers, including Carlo Jacono, Kurt Caesar, and Karel Thole. For further information and for a list of issues, see: De Turrís, G. *Cinquant'anni di fantascienza italiana 1952-2001*, in Gallo, C. (edited by), (2001) *Viaggi straordinari tra spazio e tempo*, Verona: Biblioteca Civica; <<https://www.fantascienza.com/catalogo/collane/NILF70036/urania/>>. Retrieved December 2019; <<http://blog.librimondadori.it/blogs/urania/>>. Retrieved March 2020.

During the 1950s, the *Urania* series was quite popular. It was directed by Giorgio Monicelli (the older, half-brother of the film director Mario), a translator and expert of American literature. The publisher, Mondadori, conceived this science-fiction theme in two parts: novels published twice a month, inspired openly by the flourishing American mass-market paperbacks, and *Urania* magazine³⁷ with short stories, articles, and a section dedicated to the American magazine models of science-fiction. As a result of these international references, *Urania* became a series that fostered cultural interconnections in the broader, more prolific world of graphic design and publishing illustration in the 1950s. *Urania*'s novels became very popular with the general public, broadening the imagination of its Italian readers (Vegetti, 2002). Further evidence of its popularity, which carried on through the following decades, is evidenced through cinema. Indeed, a *Urania* book appears in the 1961 film, *Divorzio all'Italiana* by Pietro Germi. This occurs when Daniela Rocca (as Rosalia) waits in bed for her husband Ferdinando, played by Marcello Mastroianni, while reading a *Urania* book hastily grabbed from the nightstand.³⁸

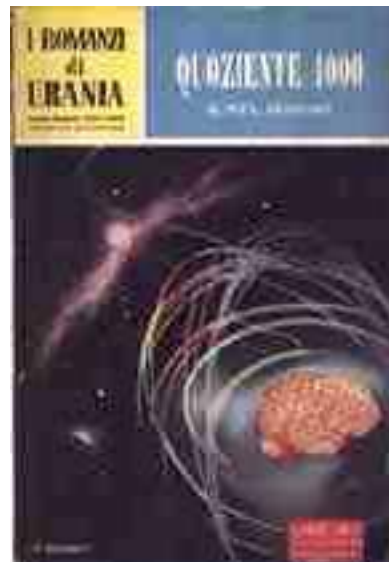


Figure 44

³⁷ The magazine did not enjoy the same success of the novels, and it stopped in 1953 after just fourteen numbers.

³⁸ See the video clip at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKSmmkE58U0>>. Retrieved January 2020.

The background for the *manifesto* in figure 43 strays far from the ambience of a real circus. It is akin to that of an endless galaxy within which the characters waver in an individual space with no explicit connection to one another (Cf. Fig. 44). Ciriello wanted to abstract the figures from the context, consequently generating ambiguities and suspense. At the same time, he also draws attention to the characters rather than the details of their context (similar to his first *manifesto* for *Spie fra le eliche* or, even more illustrative, one of the two *manifesti* for *Un giorno a New York* (Fig. 31, 41). This approach differs from the spectacle atmosphere of the American model. Ciriello provided his own interpretation of the film with a unique focus on drama and marked his *manifesto* with a sense of implicit disquiet, in line with the plot.

In the second *manifesto* by Ciriello (Fig. 45), the iconography has a different artistic view. Its synthetic and essential representation of the film is closer to the draft for the film *manifesto* (Fig. 42). The narrative components used are: the implied 'romance' inscribed in a rectangular window that opens in the top right, where warm colours, such as ochre, contrast with the flat black background. This visual feat seeks to catch the viewer's attention with reference to the intriguing, ambiguous relationship between Tino and Lola. A freeze-frame of male characters during an acrobatic performance is shown in the foreground. This visual group bisects the *manifesto* diagonally and extends beyond the pictorial space of the *manifesto*, evoking a sense of expansiveness. Although both actors are depicted in physical effort, one is portrayed from a frontal viewpoint (Burt Lancaster) and demonstrates greater psychological and expressive tension (more than physical) than the other actor. Ciriello, once again, characterises the figures with compelling emotional involvement via fine and expressive lines.

What was ultimately excluded from Ciriello's original draft was the dramatic representation of the visibly injured foreground figure (Burt Lancaster). From a commercial perspective, the strategic, industry choice was to increase the visibility of the well-known actor

(Lancaster) shown in his physical prowess, as a selling-point for the Italian public. This choice also limited the amount of plot information revealed in advance to the public (for instance the character's accident). Consequently, the choice was not only to make the star system more prominent, but to avoid giving away a key plot element.

The film was produced by the Hecht-Hill-Lancaster company, formed by the actor himself in association with his agent Harold Hecht, and James Hill. His enhanced visibility compared to actors and actresses is, thus, understandable.³⁹ Therefore, in both published *manifesti*, Lancaster dominates the space. However, other elements for the promotion of film were neglected. What seems less important in the *manifesto*, likely inspired by the American poster, are the romantic elements of the narrative, although these are still present in the *manifesto* through the representation of the female character played by Gina Lollobrigida. Little space is dedicated to romantic features in the printed *manifesto* in figure 45, where, as we have seen, a small but eye-catching motif (enclosed in a rectangle at the top right) is included.

³⁹ Lancaster was a former circus acrobat and performed several scenes in his role as trapeze artist without a stunt double. For more information about his biography and long cinematic career see: Andreychuk, Ed. (2005) *Burt Lancaster: A Filmography and Biography*, North Carolina: McFarland & Company.



Figure 45

These considerations help explain the complex relationships that determined how Ciriello worked. As a graphic artist, he sought to integrate cultural references with strategic visual elements in order to engage public interest.

4.5.1 Tracking commercial guidelines: *L'uomo dai calzoncini corti*

The two *manifesti* and the draft for the film *Trapeze* analysed above provide evidence of Ciriello's flexible expressive language. This is not to suggest that they defined his style in representing drama movies. As a case in point, the 1958 film *L'uomo dai calzoncini corti* by Glauco Pellegrini (thereafter re-titled *L'amore più bello*) shows different pictorial motifs and responds to a variety of dictates from the distribution company. Before outlining the plot, it is worth addressing the narrative of the movie through the preliminary reading of the visual text, as would have been the case for any potential filmgoer of the 1950s. In the draft for *L'uomo*

dai calzoni corti (Fig. 46) the artist represents four different levels of a theatrical stage where actors, in groups or individually, are performing their roles. The protagonists of the drama are emotionally compromised, and this is tangible from Ciriello's pictorial interpretation in his drafts. The protagonists are key figures of Italian and international cinema of that period: the young Edoardo Nevola (playing the role of the orphan Salvatore), Eduardo De Filippo (as Gennaro, the puppeteer), Memmo Carotenuto (playing Nando the thief) and Alida Valli (playing Carolina, the unknown mother of Salvatore).



Figure 46

Using a multi-perspective approach, Ciriello introduces a variety of subjects with characters and scenes grouped according to distinct emotional involvement and in mutual dialogue. There is a joyful momentum around the monochrome figure of De Filippo, who seems to block the view of the woman drawn at the back of the *manifesto* who, in contrast, seems melancholic and worried. She seems to have a connection with the boy represented in the immediate foreground, against a red band of colour. He shows the same melancholy and sadness as the woman. In the right foreground, there are two characters, a male and a female lying down: the

woman seems defenceless with her eyes closed and the man gazes at her, producing ambiguous imagery (a romance? a minor accident affecting the woman?). Interpretation of these two characters is uncertain at a first glance, nonetheless one might easily imply that romance may develop in the film. These two characters are near the boy, at the front of the image, and only these three foreground figures are represented in bold colour; the man's shirt is golden yellow and the woman's dress is shaded dark green, matching the green of the boy's backpack in the foreground. We can surmise that the full figurative representation appears to have been developed in accordance with symbolic allusions that Ciriello made to connect his narrative interpretation of the film, with no reference to setting.

Before analysing the playbill for the film and in order to shed light on the relationship between production companies and designers, it is instructive to examine the marketing requests shown in the list of names and percentages on a piece of paper pasted to the verso of the draft (Fig. 47). This source, the only one of such detail found in my primary archival research, is invaluable for identifying the kind of design brief Ciriello was given by the film industry. This finding leads us to surmise that such a list of requirements was likely issued to designers for most (if not all) commissions of film *manifesti*. This is evidenced by the verso of another draft found in the same graphic archive, which bears the traces of a similar piece of paper having been attached (Fig. 48). Moreover, the evaluation of such commercial demands in relation to the artist's response to them drives the argument towards a more concrete idea of how to situate personal and artistic creativity within the strategic approach used to market and sell a visual product.

The commercial request pasted to the verso of the draft for *L'uomo dai calzonni corti* shows a number of interesting elements. Next to the names of the actors Edoardo Nevola, Eduardo De Filippo and Francisco Rabal the value of “100%” is listed. This is also the case for the names of Memmo Carotenuto and Alida Valli (named as a special guest star). Beside the names of five other (secondary) actors and actresses, the value indicated is “60%”, the film director is given “70%”. We can see how Ciriello translated these requirements into the graphic elements of the *manifesto*. The percentage established the degree of importance assigned to each actor and actress involved, which was visually converted into different sizes and colours of lettering. We might expect that this would have involved the pictorial design as well.

The advertising apparatus for the film designed by Ciriello also includes a *locandina* (Fig. 49), which maintained a similar multi-perspective composition to the draft analysed above, with a few distinctions. A smiling, rather than sad, boy is depicted at the foreground of the *locandina*, occupying an independent space detached from the rest of the visual scenario. Immediately behind him, on the right-hand side, Ciriello included a melancholic woman, who was originally depicted in the drafts at the very back of the frame and now given greater visibility; a man (who resembles the actor Francisco Rabal, marked in the commercial demands with 100%) shouting from the window of a car emerges in the middle ground. This character seems absent from the original draft. Behind this individual are a man and a woman depicted in the same ambiguous poses as in the draft. Noticeably, the image of Eduardo De Filippo, already at the apex of his career, has been excluded from the pictorial representation, limiting his visibility to the text of his name. Therefore, it seems like the specifications pasted to the verso of the draft primarily refer to typographic components, and only secondly to pictorial elements.



Figure 49

The playbill dedicated a close-up in the foreground to the youngest actor Edoardo Nevola, who was one of the most popular child actors in Italy from 1954 to the 1960s.⁴⁰ As in another *manifesto* for the same film (Fig. 50), which does not display Ciriello's signature and may have been designed by another artist, Salvatore is represented as the key character of the story, the *raison d'être* for the film itself, and the only character central to the plot who is depicted directly.

⁴⁰ He played in several films, such as: *Lacrime d'amore* (Pino Mercanti, 1954); *Il ferroviere* (Pietro Germi, 1956); *L'uomo di paglia* (Pietro Germi, 1958); *Il maestro* (Aldo Fabrizi, 1958); *La 100 chilometri* (Giulio Petroni, 1959).



Figure 50

Italian dramas during the 1950s typically told stories of problematic subjects that often coincided with the figure of a young character, together with an existential (human) conflict (Morreale, 2011). It is plausible that the advertising material for *L'uomo dai calzoncini corti* had to centralise the child's figure as the main character of the drama, with the aim of involving the public emotionally, accentuating pathos from the public's first encounter with the film. His close-up image was present in all designs for the film's advertising material, and it contributes to the idea that 'The purpose of melodramas is [...] the reinforcement of pathos' (Bayman, 2014, p. 171) and child protagonists tended to enable this function. As the film critic Neil Sinyard puts it 'the main problem with children in films has always been the problem of sentimentality'.⁴¹ Therefore, we can argue that there is a twofold promotional value emphasised in this film advertising material: the recognisable star (Dyer, 1986), also represented by the

⁴¹ Sinyard, N. (1992) *Children in the Movies*, London: Batsford, p. 12. Cited in: Hipkins, D. and Pitt, R. (edited by) (2014) *New Visions of the Child in Italian Cinema*, Bern; Oxford: Peter Lang.

female main character played by Alida Valli, and the emerging child star. Likewise, as highlighted by the commercial requests on the back of the draft, De Filippo's name is still considered an eye-catching feature for public engagement and worthy of display as a major name of the cast, despite his minor role in the film itself.

The guidelines on the reverse side of the draft (Fig. 47) also identify delivery times of the final draft, expressed as a deadline ('consegna 24-08'). It is a remarkable sign of the pressure exerted on the poster designer, as they were urged to finish ahead of the deadline, as states in the guidelines ('possibilmente prima').⁴² This is another meaningful feature concerning the commercial pressures that may have impacted the creativity and outputs from graphic artists: firstly, a delay in the film's release and, secondly, a failure to complete the work in the prescribed period of time for the film's promotion to the mass public (usually, *manifesti* were posted from 7 to 30 days, depending on the length of time for which the film was screened at the cinema following its release). In my view, tight deadlines underscore a crucial aspect that emphasises the fundamental role that *pittori di cinema* played in the commercial success of the film: indeed, the *manifesto* was seen as fundamental tool for the promotion of film, making it more accessible. It encouraged potential film-goers to watch the movie at the cinema theatre, otherwise the film would have remained an under-sold product.

The figurative differences between the playbill and the *manifesto* highlight a change in the approach to developing material with specific functions as regards film promotion. The playbill was meant to be seen up close and displayed in public spaces such as movie theatres and other places of public gathering, rather than on the city walls. The *manifesto* was intended to be viewed at a distance and hastily. This is likely why the press office of distribution company charged with selecting promotional material, had to identify specific and suitable

⁴² Behind the imposition of deadlines, there were significant aspects to bear in mind, like the fact that the production company could not foresee the time required for printing the whole advertising material for the film and, even harder was to know the time for the approval for billposting by the local authority.

pictorial and figurative motifs alongside the graphic artists. A complex design might hinder understanding of the visual representation of the film, particularly in a context of fast-moving passers-by during the ‘economic boom’. Due to the increased use of cars and mopeds, advertising material was also viewed in motion (Ginsborg, 1990). As confirmed by the artist Silvano Campeggi, *manifesti* made for the second-screening of films ‘dovevano essere più raccontati, perchè finivano a tappezzare i muri delle piazze dei piccoli centri dove la gente si fermava più tempo a guardarli. Quelli di prima visione, per le grandi città, dovevano colpire subito l’attenzione dei passanti più frettolosi’ (Maioli, 1993, p. 30). The focus on the condensed representation of a film plot exerts a ‘stopping power’, namely the ability ‘to capture consumers’ attention in likable ways’ (Pieters, Wedel and Batra, 2010, p. 48), embraced as one of the most effective promotional strategies when combined with the ‘star system’. In the advertising material for *L’uomo dai calzoni corti*, highly expressive pictorial elements have been emphasised by the artist as a specific attribute of his own artistic language adapted to commercial demands.

4.6 Advertising material from the 1960s

Ciriello’s activity as *pittore di cinema* and as illustrator for the publishing industry continued to flourish during the 1960s. This was concurrent with the economic and socio-cultural development of the country during the economic boom. The artist was still involved in the representation of dramas (such as, *Delitto in pieno sole*, 1960; *La scuola dell’odio*, 1962), as well as comedies (e.g., *Il Mattatore*, 1960; *Divorzio all’italiana*, 1961); historical and epic films (e.g., *Messalina Venere Imperatrice*, 1960; *Angelica alla corte del re*, 1965), action movies and noir (e.g., *Operazione Zanzibar*, 1965; *Lo sciacallo*, 1963). This final section of this chapter will be dedicated to drafts and *manifesti* for the American drama *La scuola dell’odio* (original title *Pressure Point* directed by Stanley Kramer and Hubert Cornfield, 1962)

and the film comedy *Il divorzio* (Romolo Guerrieri, 1970). Through the analysis of the examples selected and the variety of the related visual material available, I shall demonstrate how diverse graphic artistic solutions for the promotion of films were ultimately the creative result of incorporating cultural, social, and commercial needs in the industrial/cultural project.

In 1962, Ciriello made four drafts for the American drama *La scuola dell'odio*. The plot tells of race hate in America during 1942 involving a young German American soldier with a psychopathic personality and a black army psychiatrist. Ciriello suggested a range of images to illustrate the film. In two versions of the same group of rough sketches (Fig. 51), it is possible to observe the initial intention of the artist to use a more traditional illustrative language for the film. This included characters grouped in colourful areas as the main focus of the design (Cf. draft for *Trapezio*, Fig. 42). They are all expressively characterised and portrayed in a lively manner.



Figure 51

In two later drafts (Fig. 52), instead, Ciriello made greater use of symbolic language. This resulted in greater visual impact, and the approach seems to anticipate certain graphic

elaborations of the 1970s for *gialli* and horror films (for instance, the draft for *L'occhio nel labirinto*, by Mario Caiano, 1972; the *manifesto* for *Profondo Rosso*, by Dario Argento, 1975, both designed by Sandro Symeoni).⁴² However, the artist retained a figurative element in the form of a female figure, suggesting fear through the folded position of the woman, drawn on her knees and from her back; and violence through the blood marks on her back.



Figure 52

The final *manifesto* (Fig. 53) commissioned to Ciriello merged the different stylistic components of the two groups of sketches and drafts. The picture is articulated as if viewed through a black grid, giving the illusion of prison bars. The complex image is made by a major pictorial group of characters in a monochrome grey-green colour representing two men who are trying to hold a prisoner (judging by his typical prison attire). Moreover, two of the small squares in the black grid contain stills from the film, against backgrounds of vivid colours of orange and yellow. In the former, the protagonist is a woman huddled on the floor in a state of distress; in the latter, another woman is shown kneeling, apparently pleading before a man who displays a threatening attitude. This *manifesto* also references modern graphic elements linked

to Andy Warhol's Pop language, testifying to the propensity of Ciriello to follow international artistic tendencies that evidence socio-cultural change.⁴³ The division of a *manifesto* into several narrative parts (involving geometrical elements), as well as bright, acid colours, became a modern eye-catching feature that formed part of the promotional message for films.⁴⁴



Figure 53

The last set of advertising material which this section will analyse is constituted by a group of three drafts and one *manifesto* for the 1970 comedy *Il Divorzio*, directed by Romolo Guerrieri, with Vittorio Gassman and Anna Moffo. Although *Il Divorzio* was released in April 1970, according to the material found at the *Centro Studi della Comunicazione* of Parma

⁴³ To condense the concept into a single image, Cf. Andy Warhol, *Ethel Scull 36 Times*, 1963; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; jointly owned by the Whitney Museum of American Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art (<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2019/02/05/andy-warhol-from-a-to-b-and-back-again/>).

⁴⁴ See further advertising material for cinema as examples of this trend, such as the draft for *L'appartamento* by Carlantonio Longi, 1960 or the draft for *Jules and Jim* by Enrico De Seta, 1962.

University, drafts were apparently made in 1969.⁴⁵ Some of the details related to the iconography and style that Ciriello employed with his artwork anticipate recurrent graphic and artistic motifs from the 1970s. These motifs, in turn, reveal a progressive change in social customs through advertising communication for cinema, in precisely the moment that the extensive use of the artistic *manifesto* begins to decline.

Guerrieri's film tells the story of a man, Leonardo (played by Vittorio Gassman), going through a mid-life crisis. He is eager to rediscover his youthful freedom at the expense of his fifteen-year marriage to Elena (Anna Moffo). Once he declares his intentions to divorce, he engages in short-lived romantic relationships with several women, including those substantially younger than him. However, dissatisfied with these experiences, he eventually decides to go back to his wife, who at that point is no longer available. The depictions which Ciriello made for his drafts (Fig. 54-55) give the immediate impression that the viewer is dealing with a comedy, with one exception that displays greater ambiguity (Fig. 56).

⁴⁵ This might imply a delay in the film release. However, I did not find any evidence to support this.



Figure 54



Figure 55



Figure 56

The design shown in figure 54 displays the dominant image of the main protagonist Leonardo (Gassman) portrayed with an intense expression that reveals a mixture of astonishment and despair with a fun and ironic mannerism. His gaze is turned towards a small-scale representation of a naked woman lying in bed opening her arms to him. The way the artist conceived this filmic representation, with typical expressive features of an Italian comedy, leads to a partial and misleading idea of the film's plot. It is possible to observe that the unbalanced depiction that constitutes this draft may interfere with the aims of its advertising message; namely, it complicates the interpretation and impedes it commercially.⁴⁶ Moreover, such a small feminine figure and the inclusion of an oversized male character, nearly in caricatural style, leads to an imbalance in the imagery from multiple perspectives; it puts the focus on the dominant representation of a single, popular star of the time as part of the

⁴⁶ For further reading about visual perception and its complexity, see: Attneave, F. (1954) 'Some Informational Aspects of Visual Perception', *Psychological Review*, 61 (3), pp. 183-93; Berlyne, D.E. (1958) 'The Influence of Complexity and Novelty in Visual Figures on Orienting Responses', *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 55 (3), pp. 289-96.

marketing strategies, with less focus on the main actress or actresses of the film (Anita Ekberg and Anna Moffo). Generally, the message transmitted may influence the perception of a varied public, but is inadequate for commercial purposes.

The second draft (Fig. 55) uses a playful representation of the film. Here the artist depicted a woman in a sensual nightgown, and the male protagonist in his night shirt. They are both in bed, and he is joyfully playing with a toy train and she is looking at him sceptically. In its visual and expressive signs, the scene conveys both comical and snide features. Nonetheless, in this balanced depiction, the artist enables the non-serious relationship to become part of the promotional message. The final draft to analyse (Fig. 56) depicts a passionate embrace between the two main characters, Leonardo and his wife Elena, translated directly from a film still (Fig. 57). However, the artist seeks to personalise the advertising illustration, foregrounding an extra visual device that is worth further examination.

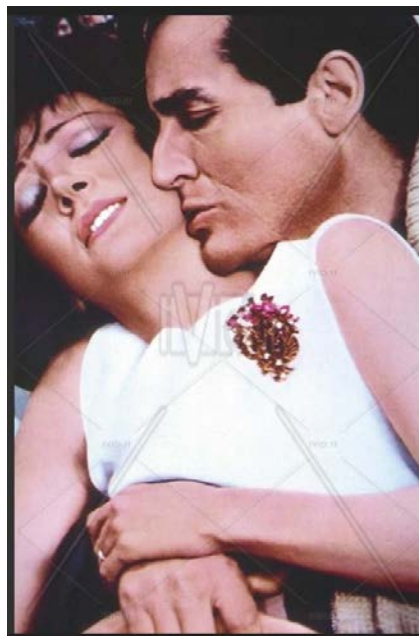


Figure 57

An upside-down bottle painted with a thick blue edge is filled with photographic strips, a collage. This montage of cut-up photos is intended to symbolise Leonardo's free lifestyle after

the end of his marriage. The draft in figure 56 explores different ways to arrange diverse narrative elements of the film plot; thus, through the innovative use of a collage in an object (a bottle) connected to the uninhibited and pleasant influence of alcohol, Ciriello enriched the advertising message of novelty alongside details about the film, providing appropriate space to the ‘stars’ involved. Moreover, there is an explicit intent of considering the film *manifesto* as an intermedial object that refers to and is connected to diverse art forms. This emblematic function of the film *manifesto* reminds us that “Media always already exist in relation to other media, never in isolation” (Schröter, 2011, p. 2). However, what this stylistic intervention mainly suggests is that experimentation was also a feature of advertising *manifesti* for cinema. This indicates that, when involved in the initial process for a commission, *pittori di cinema* acted as socio-cultural mediators (in a period of great change). They did so while seeking out innovative (for the field of film advertising) artistic elements to acquaint the mass public with new expressive languages with multi-medial references. Indeed, the public was otherwise mostly accustomed to a realistic and often standard representation of a film plot, displaying clear signposts to be easily interpreted.

The two final *manifesti* tracked for the film *Il Divorzio* include a painted *manifesto* by Ciriello (Fig. 58) and one by an unknown artist. From the foreground Ciriello’s *manifesto* displays, in crescendo, the repetition of a romantic duo composed of the male protagonist with different women, represented on a red background (undoubtedly the colour of passion). From a bottom-up perspective, the first passionate embrace between the two main characters, Leonardo and his wife Elena makes reference to the design from Ciriello’s third draft (Fig. 56). It is clearly conveying the message of a film centred on multiple, romantic relationships undertaken by the male protagonist, the popular *divo* Vittorio Gassman. Images of intimate affection between men and women were no longer scandalous. Times had changed, television was broadcasting a variety of images that did not exclude more explicit representations of

intimacy between men and women (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999), so the *manifesto* was also changing its own visual language.



Figure 58

In this way, visual signs were selected *ad hoc* in accordance with the film industry, and this likely made the *manifesto* more compelling. In this regard, it is fruitful to highlight the assertion of Carlo Alberto Balestrazzi (1925-2018), who was head of the press office for the *Titanus* production company in the 1950s. He claimed the following:

Ci sono delle cose importanti che bisogna valutare per un lancio efficace. Bisogna vedere quando esce il film, quali sono gli altri film che escono in contemporanea, e magari due sono film d'amore, quindi incentrati su immagini romantiche. Allora, bisogna puntare su un'immagine di diverso tipo. Se magari nel tuo film c'è una scena d'amore e il pittore ne resta colpito, può essere difficile spiegargli esigenze di questo tipo che sconsigliano un certo tipo di scelta (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999, pp. 59–60).

A photographic *manifesto* for *Il divorzio* was also produced (Fig. 59), likely a cheaper solution for a second screen. The *manifesto* is divided into three vertical bands. At the centre of these

bands the thoughtful face of the actor emerges and the actresses Anna Moffo and Anita Ekberg (in the guise of Flavia, one of Leonardo's lovers) appear on the sides. Both actresses were surely part of the Italian male imagination following the film *La dolce vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960). What triumphs in this photographic *manifesto* is the celebration of the star-system as the unique selling point. It is market-oriented more than product-oriented.⁴⁷ Indeed, no mention of the film plot is made with the stars being the sole element to catch the observers' eye; although we are invited to make connections between the juxtaposed images, so the viewer might easily deduce that this is a film about a man choosing between women, especially when read in conjunction with the title.



Figure 59

Thus, by implication of the photographic *manifesto* just evaluated, we would expect a decreasing trend in traditional pictorial methods as the 1970s progressed, and a greater

⁴⁷ For further reading on how advertising and production changed from the economic boom onwards, placing more emphasis on the market rather than on the product, see: Scarpellini, E. *L'Italia dei consumi* ..., p. 204-223.

introduction of photography in film promotional campaigns. This aspect was also emphasised by Bagshaw, who claimed that ‘The increased use of the cheapest photography in the 1960s and 70s eventually led to the demise of the hand-painted poster. Seen as a more contemporary mode of representation and a break with the illustrational styles of the past, this was the start of standardisation of the poster design and the beginning of a unification of poster campaign styles’ (Bagshaw, 2005, p. 17).

The analysis of the advertising material for *Il divorzio* by Averardo Ciriello points to and visualises the starting point of a future, radical change in the traditional manner of making film *manifesti* in Italy. As an example of this new stylistic and, certainly, commercial trend in advertising for cinema, the artwork of Ciriello includes specific inter-related facets: on the one hand we see his personal expressive language, his inclination to be current with contemporary trends and his own capacity to untangle industry restrictions; on the other hand, some elements of the visual complexity in film *manifesti* were closely linked to incoming, ever-changing cultural, economic and social facets. In conclusion, I see in those innovative impulses the opening of broader imagery to the mass society and, in the meantime, an endorsement of a modern socio-cultural scenario that was already in place.

4.7 Conclusion

The introductory picture at the start of this chapter (Fig. 30) portrays a young Ciriello captured in his studio, with the tools of his trade in the foreground. Though nowadays we typically associate the role of graphic artists with more modern and technological instruments (computer and software), at that time (1945-1969) in Italy, graphic arts were based on pictorial activity; it was a craft. This artist worked at the service of the film industry: namely, as a *pittore di cinema*. Reconnecting the artistic working ambience of a graphic artist with the artist’s extensive collaboration with the cultural industry draws attention to the intertwining of a

mechanical industrial process (printed reproduction), commercial criteria, and the artisanal work of artists involved in the process. Hence, behind the orchestral management of advertising for cinema, artists such as Ciriello were the creative heart of the process, and they bore a socio-cultural role (closely connected to the growth of industrialization) in society. Ciriello's *manifesti* display his signature, which underscores the desire of the artist to be recognised, to proudly assert his artworks' authorship. This aspect is revealing of the capacity of the artistic ego to react effectively to demands within a broader cultural project, despite acting behind a complex, hierarchical organisation; nonetheless, Ciriello, *inter alia*, was aware of his individuality as an artist and as a professional.

The main goal of this chapter was to understand the ways creativity was asserted in film *manifesti* and perceived from an artistic point of view under the greater complex demand of the cultural industry and its priorities. Through the analysis of a selected corpus of advertising material developed from the mid-1940s until 1969 and, where available, following the excursus from an initial draft to the printed *manifesto*, this chapter sheds light on the creative proposals by an artist in response to commercial requirements. I have argued that, even if *pittori di cinema* were not completely independent in their work, inasmuch as they were at the service of greater industry purposes, they relied primarily on their own artistic ability and personal style. It was this ability that tended to be emphasised rather than denied. The case of Ciriello shows how they challenged and overcame commercial necessities that sought to have priority. A close examination of this kind of work suggested the need to relocate artistic creativity in the film industry into a 'more integrated approach' (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009, p. 36). The approach I have taken in this chapter would have creative ideas face strategic objectives, ultimately involving efficient communication with the mass public.

For the critical evaluation of the relationship between artistic creativity and marketing, the unique material where specific commercial instructions on the draft's verso has been identified is of great relevance. In the case of the draft for *L'uomo dai calzoni corti*, the

remarkable indications include evident and practical examples of the needs prioritised by the film industry and considered useful for film marketing. Through the iconographic examination of changes from one draft to another and, finally, through the printed *manifesto*, it is possible to identify a level of patterns that aided the consumption for which the film industry yearned. For instance, the powerful star system, the presence of eye-catching women, the enhanced use of the effects of colour, and narration of the story.

During the course of preparation of drafts, the first artistic impulse of the artist is to reinterpret the fascination activated by a film shot (or set photographs from the film). They do this through their own personal style and expressive tools, and it is heavily subjective. Hence, because of this immediate impact on their own view, as this chapter also highlights, ‘È sul bozzetto che appare visibile l’estemporaneità, l’istintività del pittore, la sua vera versione non contaminate dal giudizio della committenza che spesso suggeriva modifiche, aggiunte, censure e così via’ (Micheli, 2002, p. 69). The draft carries the imprint of the artist’s first expressive idea and immediate style. It includes compelling pictorial motifs, so as to represent the film from their individual, yet graphic-artistic point of view; aiming for ‘una relazione fra segni che dà luogo a conseguenti atti di comunicazione’ (Micheli, 2002, p. 72). Indeed, although the design did not specifically offer a distinctive and clear synopsis of the plot, it adopted a number of signs and objects to lead the viewer towards the core of the visual message. Ciriello attributed his ability to look for innovative and resourceful iconographic ideas to his experiences and work as an advertising illustrator. Thus, thought-out designs were due to the fact that, in the artist’s words, ‘provenivo dalla pubblicità [commerciale] e questa mi aiutava molto ad avere delle trovatine’.⁴⁸ In line with this distinction that Ciriello emphasised, the film critic Mario Verdone argued that ‘Bisogna tenere presente che per i manifesti commerciali non

⁴⁸ Cf. Ciriello’s interview on <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dup66gp3NqU>>.

si hanno sempre temi obbligati come nel cinema, e quindi è più facile lavorare liberamente di fantasia e limitarsi ad un soggetto semplice e più pittorico' (Verdone, 1981, p. 43).

The decade-by-decade examination of Ciriello's advertising material has enabled an examination of the development of the expressive language used to advertise films over this period. This is connected to the creation of new artistic configurations and stylistic choices, also according to the socio-cultural shift of the time. As a product of the lively and feverish atmosphere of the 1960s, artists involved in any creative field, cultural industry included, were evidently tempted to 'experimentalism'. Hence, specifically in the 1960s, 'Per rendere la comunicazione più esplicita si è attuata una vera e propria commistione tra immagine grafica, pitturata e immagine fotografica' (Micheli, 2002, p. 65), and this was akin to a collage of artistic media that changed with cultural seasons, as the examples of this chapter have shown. However, even then, invention had to negotiate with the demands of commercial strategy. This examination was developed in the chapter, and in certain cases, innovative ideas did not meet commercial needs (as in the case of *Il divorzio*, whose poster design was then commissioned from other artists). Nonetheless, it is possible to identify recurrent pictorial motifs in film *manifesti* of the 1960s, which anticipate common practices found in the 1970s, such as the use of photographic cut-outs or whole figures (such as the *manifesto* for *Il Boom* by Enrico De Seta, 1963, one of the drafts for *Il divorzio* by Ciriello, 1969), symbolic illustrations and geometrical figures (such as the draft for *La scuola dell'odio* by Ciriello, 1962; the draft for *Il lungo addio* by Tino Avelli, 1973, the *manifesto* for *Profondo rosso* by Sandro Symeoni, 1975). Previous examples of the 1960s emphasise how the typical Italian use of a predominantly illustrative approach in representing a film was waning in favour of a renewed expressive synthesis. This approach looked to the near future in the making of film *manifesti*, up until the decline (end-1970s, early 1980s) of the pictorial *manifesto* for film advertising.

To conclude, the artwork – in the shape of a film *manifesto* – shows authentic signs of a socio-cultural and industrial cooperation; as a way of ‘producing patterns of collective activity’ (Becker, 1984, p. 1) that we can call, to paraphrase Becker, a ‘multifunctional art world’.⁴⁹ The commercial act is clearly visible in examining advertising material, but it is present alongside the artist’s intervention in designing appealing objects of consumption, revealing strong links with their own personal identity and a creative ability to interact with their public. The advertising material examined offered a unique window into this complex world of creative processes and commercial functions designed to provide mass cultural products. Therefore, as Ciriello’s last comment in the interview cited underscores, creativity involved in the film industry was not a matter of free invention, but rather the result of a cultural project in accordance with an industry model:

Credo di aver fatto tutto quello che era possibile fare e tutto quello che mi hanno fatto fare perché *non potevo inventarmi il lavoro*,⁵⁰ loro mi chiamavano ed io cercavo di eseguire il lavoro nella maniera migliore. **Averardo Ciriello**

⁴⁹ Cf. Becker, H. S. (1984) *Art Worlds*, Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press.

⁵⁰ My emphasis.

Chapter Five

Hard-line moralism: pressures of censorship on film manifesti

5.1 Introduction



Figure 60

The focal point for this manifesto depicts long, naked female legs entering diagonally from the edge of the poster-frame (Fig. 60), suggesting the sexual availability of an undefined woman. The finger-pointing '*moralista*' is the secondary narrative and figurative focus. The use of few colours, clear graphical structure, synthetic design, and figurative subjects have all been opportunely chosen to result in a clear and impactful (advertising) message, thus achieving the film *manifesto*'s remit. There is no need to draw the woman's body in full to represent the content of the film; the two figurative elements are sufficient to infer the core of the diegesis. Further, it clearly maps the power relationship between the two subjects, ensuring compliance with traditional gender roles at the time. The gesture by the *moralista* evidences his social power, and his hypocrisy is shown by where his finger aims (at the woman's thighs),

symbolically encompassing the critical and central message of the movie and subsequently, the *manifesto*. The telling image in figure 1, assembled by Giuliano Nistri in 1959, was designed for the film *Il Moralista* (Giorgio Bianchi, 1959) starring Alberto Sordi. The depiction stems from a need to evidence the allegations made by Agostino, the administrator of the O.I.M.P. (*Organizzazione Internazionale della Moralità Pubblica*), regarding the struggle against a supposed moral decay.¹ Critically, the film focused on the overzealousness of censors, depicted through Agostino's character, who seems on the brink of extreme neuroticism, a *moralista* par excellence. Indeed, the film purported to portray the Honourable Agostino Greggi (1920-2002), a key figure in the censorship and protection of social morality in Italy during the 1950s (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999). Greggi's figure was characterised by excessive, stringent bigotry, which may not necessarily have been an accurate representation (Sonogo, 1999). Nonetheless, Bianchi's film and Sordi's interpretation give insight into those years in Italy, where tensions between the Catholic Church, the neo-clerical centre-right coalition and opposition parties, Christian values and issues concerning morality, and cultural media were dominant across multiple levels.

As Graziosi and Raffaelli argue, power needs to be supported by censorship to suppress 'unconventional' or inconvenient ideas and concepts that might otherwise circulate, suffocating them under a semblance of legitimacy (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999). Hence, if we consider censorship a 'legislative constraint on cultural production and dissemination, [and] perhaps the most self-evident and coercive of all acts of intervention by the state [and Church] in the cultural sphere' (Bonsaver and Gordon, 2005, p. 6), this chapter then aims both to explore how religious and socio-political pressures influenced censorship and to evaluate the direct impact that Catholic moralism had on film *manifesti*. More specifically, this chapter examines how censorship significantly impacted the artists' work in producing their advertising images,

¹ Cf. Graziosi, M., Raffaelli, P. (1999) *Si disapprova*, Roma: Selegrafica 80.

how those artists creatively solved contextual issues, and how they responded to cultural changes. Although there were two different sources of censorship, one ‘in accordance with government or party policy and motivated on explicitly political grounds’ (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007), the other from the Catholic Church (based on moral and religious grounds), the latter ‘had its own apparatus of censorship alongside those of the State’ (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007).² Indeed, it is important to remember that, as Forgacs states, ‘the civic power of the Church and the Catholic movement and the central position of the DC [Christian Democrats]’ was a ‘keystone of post-war coalitions’ (Forgacs, 2005, p. 19), allowing for ‘a new conservative and neo-clerical censorship regime’ (Forgacs, 2005, p. 15). This is a significant issue to bear in mind when examining culture interventions. This aspect pinpoints the fine line between the State and the Church in the post-war years up to the early 1960s³ and how challenging it is to distinguish between acts of censorship applied to film *manifesti* by the State from those applied by the Church unless they are explicitly claimed in official documents.⁴ The Italian Communist party (PCI) played an equally important role in the cultural sphere. They were a distinct voice from the Catholic movement, and they had a different view on reality and modernization.⁵ However, the PCI’s direct involvement on issues of censorship did not explicitly emerge from my examination of the film *manifesti*.

During the 1950s and 1960s, profound social, economic, and cultural transformations were taking place; in addition, there were various forms of social tensions⁶ and a contextual

² For a detailed analysis on the relationship between Italian Government policy towards cinema during the period of 1945-60 and the reflection on Vatican cultural ideology on the Christian Democrats party, see: Treveri Gennari, D. (2009) *Post-war Italian cinema: American intervention, Vatican interests*, New York: Routledge.

³ In the early 1960s, the political order was changing with the ‘emergence of the centre-left coalitions between the DC and the Socialist Party (PSI), dominating the political landscape of the 1960s’ (Forgacs, 2005, p. 15).

⁴ As a key source of research for acts of censorship applied, specifically, on film *manifesti*, I considered the publication edited by Maurizio Graziosi and Pier Luigi Raffaelli which includes new material from the archive of film censorship and visual artworks. This material formed part of the exhibition entitled *Si disapprova*, organized by ANICA (Associazione Nazionale delle Industrie Cinematografiche) in 1999 at the Cineteca of Bologna.

⁵ Cf. (Forgacs, 1990).

⁶ For instance, tensions between modernity and tradition, as well as the desire of prosperity and the natural order praised by the Church; Cf. (Wood, 2006).

restructuring of society (Arvidsson, 2000; Wood, 2006; Forgacs and Gundle, 2007; Treveri Gennari, 2009).⁷ In the 1950s, the importance of the image's role emerged and was further enhanced by the global spread of publicity and marketing images in daily life. Indeed, extensive exposure to images was pivotal in leading to a significant shift in the relationship between consumers and industrial products and between the consumer and social behaviour and customs. This change is highly relevant in terms of advertising power, influencing people's purchases, and consequently, their taste and mindset. As Christopher Duggan has argued, 'The 'economic miracle' spread a constellation of powerful new ideas and images that challenged many of the traditional values of rural society – built as they have been around the precepts of the Church and an embedded sense of moral and material immobility - and threatened to destroy a culture that had certainly remained unchanged for a span of time [...]' (Duggan, 2008, p. 557). The author's questionable pessimism aside, it is clear that images (with their publicly narrative, alluring power) had a role not simply in reflecting cultural change, but also in propagating it. Therefore, after the war, the ongoing socio-cultural transformations, on the one hand, created increased wellbeing and greater trust in the future; however, on the other hand, they undermined deeply traditional values and behaviours (Scarpellini, 2008).⁸ Seen from this perspective, it is significant how, as Giovanni Fiorentino puts it, 'In un lunghissimo dopoguerra, l'occhio del consumatore si muove intensamente tra i manifesti affissi ai muri e le copertine dei periodici che rivestono le superfici esterne delle edicole, [...] dove l'immagine commerciale prende saldamente il controllo dell'immaginario' (Fiorentino, 2013, pp. 13–14). Such images of products, brand, faces and bodies, were placed in a powerful consumer

⁷ The 1950s and 1960s have been seen as the apex of Italian censorship applied to the cultural industry. However, it comes after decades of '[...] controls exerted over the press, radio and cinema by the Ministero della Cultura Popolare (MCP) and its antecedent organizations' (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007, p. 199). Cf. Cannistraro, P.V. (1975) *La fabbrica del consenso: Fascismo e mass media*, Roma; Bari: Laterza; Bonsaver, G., Gordon, R. S. C., (2005) *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, London: MHRA and Maney Publishing.

⁸ For a theoretical examination of socio-cultural and economic transformations in Italy between the 1950s and 1960s, see: Crainz, G. (2003) *Storia del miracolo italiano. Culture, identità, trasformazioni fra anni Cinquanta e Sessanta*, Rome: Donzelli.

interchange between Italy and America (Anania, 2013), as we have seen throughout this thesis. More importantly, these images occupied public and social spaces with their ‘accessibility and inescapability’ (Cheles and Sponza, 2001, p. 124). These were the same spaces shared by churches and other forms of political communication. Consequently, the anxiety caused by the entire process of modernization was certainly strengthened by the fact that ‘I mezzi di comunicazione permeano lo spazio sociale e ne creano del nuovo’ (Chinnici, 2003, p. 16), with the result of shaping people’s gaze. Because of their purpose as advertising posters (making a statement in public space to draw people out of their daily routine) Gian Piero Brunetta argued that ‘[...] le affissioni appaiono come un obiettivo primario [of censorship] perchè invadono lo spazio urbano, raggiungono più facilmente lo sguardo di tutti’ (Brunetta, 1999, p. 21). In the face of a modernization process, in part activated by media and aligned to ‘American-style’ cultural values, Church and State acted as social instigators aiming to keep modernity under control, viewing it as an alarming threat to the established ‘ideal models’ for Italian society (Liguori, 1996). In light of this, film *manifesti* were strongly implicated in that moral ‘decay’, thus becoming bull’s-eye for censors, especially conservative ones.⁹ Therefore, the central conflict that underpins the nature of advertising art is strongly linked to multiple socio-cultural and political pressures.

Mass communication had significant impact on social change, which was then a powerful vehicle for new values. The Church and conservative wings assessed these changing values as either moral or immoral. However, the Italian society of the 1950s, moving under a complex set of structural transitions (Gundle and Guani, 1986; Forgacs and Gundle, 2007; Scarpellini, 2008; Anania, 2013) and showing considerable consumer growth, underwent a redefining of values that it perceived as idiosyncratic in a traditional, Catholic society. Under

⁹ It is significant highlighting how the ruling coalition, the *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC), ‘[b]enefited from a more informal, but highly effective, propaganda vehicle: the Church’s vast, all-encompassing parish network’ (Cheles and Sponza, 2001, p. 126).

the perspective of social changes, this chapter takes into consideration the meaningful fact that ‘Più colpito dalla disapprovazione è naturalmente il corpo femminile’ (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999, p. 26), with censors’ (deceptive) attention focusing on the public display of women’s legs and thighs, rather than cleavage and breasts.¹⁰ The growing presence of women in society contributed to greater attention by neo-clerical and conservative powers to female representations in advertising. Women began to take a greater part in manufacturing and upper secondary schools, and this presence grew along with the phenomenon of mass consumption (Liguori, 1996; Arvidsson, 2000; Acerbi, 2003), which potentially drove them away from ‘patriarchal control and from subjection to the needs of the family’ (Wood, 2006, p. 61). This is the brief, contextual framework necessary to understand the wider network of socio-cultural implications closely linked to the public use of film *manifesti* and the Catholic reaction. Film *manifesti* often tended to show the film’s main plotline, which, especially during the 1950s, ‘use female stereotypes already present in Italian culture, but bear the imprint of the tensions between traditional social arrangements, and the realities of a modern world moving toward the economic boom of 1957 onwards’ (Wood, 2006, p. 60). These female stereotypes were increasingly open to open displays of sexual freedom, and it is how women are represented in some of the film *manifesti* during this period of economic boom, which falls within the analysis of sections 5.3 and 5.4.

Concepts of ‘morality’ and ‘immorality’ were changing, including in relation to the public view and cinema. Film *manifesti* contributed to this change. Likewise, the mass public’s perception was developing and aligning itself to a renewed awareness of the relationship between the mediatic image and the spectator (Chinnici, 2003). Given such an increasingly proactive role on the part of the recipients of public (visual) messages during the 1950s, Dario Viganò noted that ‘È maturata la concezione dello spettatore nel senso di un interlocutore con

¹⁰ Cf. (Graziosi, M. and Raffaelli, P., 1999).

cui il testo costruisce il proprio senso' (Chinnici, 2003, p. 27).¹¹ Civil and ecclesiastical authorities paid greater attention to the media in order to control its influence on society. In particular, the Catholic Church felt the urgent need to offer socio-educational guidance to the still hesitant mass public (Chinnici, 2003).¹² Therefore, we see various clashes among socio-political and religious pressures in an emerging society trying to redefine its sense of morality and tradition; film *manifesti*, as mass media, are central to this interplay because they provided the imagery society acquired by virtue of being publicly displayed across city walls.¹³ In accordance to what has been considered so far, I argue that film *manifesti* played an active part in social changes by enabling transition and by accelerating a sense of belonging to that changing lifestyle. Cases of mass media censorship were copious in Italy – with predominance during the 1950s and mid-1960s¹⁴ – when films and their advertising, as the 'intermedial reference', were frequently subjected to political and religious policies focused on maintaining a collective sense of 'moral dignity'.¹⁵

It is essential for my argument to understand how censorship applied to film *manifesti* when they were considered offensive to moral dignity. As claimed in the book edited by Graziosi and Raffaelli, 'I manifesti hanno subito una serie di interventi fino a che si è arrivati

¹¹ For the primary source, see: Viganò, D. E., (1997) *L'anima religiosa del cinema*, in Piersanti, A. (edited by), *Cento anni di biennale e di cinema: la presenza della Chiesa*, Venezia: Ente dello spettacolo, p. 63.

¹² With a specific reference to the weakest part of the society, lower classes and young people (see the Pope's speech on *Il film ideale*, 1955 - http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-xii_exh_25101955_ideal-film.html). Moreover, the older generation (generally conservative) was facing the newer one, who more more inclined to positive and modern impulses, leading to hesitancy in the mass public in the face of these irregular and traumatic generational encounters. Cf. (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999; Chinnici, 2003).

¹³ Cf. (Brunetta, 1999; Cheles and Sponza, 2001).

¹⁴ The 1950s and 1960s have been seen as the climax of the Italian censorship applied to the cultural industry. However, it comes after decades of '[...] controls exerted over the press, radio and cinema by the Ministero della Cultura Popolare (MCP) and its antecedent organizations' (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007, p. 199). Cf. Cannistraro, P.V. (1975) *La fabbrica del consenso: Fascismo e mass media*, Roma; Bari: Laterza; Bonsaver, G., Gordon, R. S. C., (2005) *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, London: MHRA and Maney Publishing.

¹⁵ According to Luigi Civardi's definition of immorality (exploring the relationship between morality and art), he claimed: 'anything which would threaten religious and civic authority, which would encourage rebellion and anarchy or which would discredit religion and the country was immoral' (Treveri Gennari, 2009). Main source: Civardi, L., (1940) *Il cinema di fronte alla morale*, Roma: Centro Cattolico Cinematografico.

alla famosa definizione di mettere “le mutande” ai manifesti; ciò corrispondeva ad un’iniziativa della Procura della Repubblica di Roma, in conseguenza della quale sulle immagini provocatorie veniva messo un apposito quadratino bianco’ (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999, p. 16). In other cases, the *manifesto* was simply rejected, and artists had to provide a new, acceptable version of the *manifesto* in a very short time that satisfied censors.

There are a number of questions central to developing the inter-relation between censorship, religious and socio-political perspectives in connection with film *manifesti*. For example, how did the cuts and revisions required by censorship challenge creative development in film *manifesti*? How was the conflict between artistic creativity and censorship (as another part of ‘externally imposed structure’, see chapter 4) in film *manifesti* overcome by artists? In the context of this research, it is relevant to analyse selected advertising material for cinema through which disruption of censorship in and the artist’s recovery of creative flow is visible. Furthermore, how artists dealt with cultural tensions (in the form of censorship) at the time must be explored. With this in mind, the first part of the chapter will examine – in parallel with the position of the State – the dominant role of the Catholic Church in Italy and its strong interest in guiding (and controlling) new mass media with its increasing power to influence social customs and public opinion. From section 5.3, this chapter will focus specifically on film advertising and *pittori di cinema*, assessing a select set of examples of banned *manifesti* (as well as other advertising material). The analysis will highlight the role of film *manifesti* in this context as powerful tools of mass media due to their impact on the public sphere, the confirmation of their role as vehicles for transformations of Italian daily life, and as indicators of complex social changes (Anania, 2013). This assessment will be supplemented by testimonies from graphic artists and a connoisseur and collector of film *manifesti* as to the scale of difficulties faced in ensuring artists’ artwork was ultimately displayed throughout the cityscape. One of the central features of the following evaluation will be the direct experience

of the graphic artist Giuliano Nistri (1929). This was gathered through an interview that has enabled me to account for the effects that such pressures exerted on artists (at the service of cinema industry) and the strategies they employed at that time. Through the study of specific film *manifesti*, the criteria used to evaluate the figurative content of advertising media can be evidenced more widely. Additionally, this evaluation is a window onto the socio-cultural and political context, as well as religious conservatism prevalent at that time in Italy, and how these factors played a more active role in determining the difficulties that artists' creativity faced to obtain public visibility with their film *manifesti*. Pointedly, the tensions that arose from the representation of women in *manifesti* that was far from the embodiment of maternity and family (e.g., film *manifesti* for: *Guendalina* (1957); *Miss spogliarello* (1957); *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960)) are examined in relation to censorship and the pressures coming from the conservative and neo-clerical wing on the *pittori di cinema*'s graphic choices. Section 5.5 will highlight the censorship applied to socially engaged cinema and film *manifesti*, thus including serious political implications.

The nature of film *manifesti* as emblematic cultural models of the time, not just as reflections but also as (social) catalysts leading to social transitions in cultural consumption are identified in a context of censorship, in addition to religious and political pressures.

5.2 Church and State: mass media interface

Although the current thesis prioritises the role played by film *manifesti* in Italian mass consumer culture, the *manifesto* is analysed as a means of communication with multiple socio-cultural and historical ramifications. This chapter argues that there is an important link between the Catholic Church, the State, and the way in which film *manifesti* developed. Because of its place in the public sphere, cinema and its publicity have enjoyed special attention on the part of these two institutions. As Forgacs puts it, 'The film industry became specially subject to

state intervention from early on for a number of reasons' and, among them, because 'films were shown to mass audiences over a wide geographical area and they frequently dealt with subjects (erotic, historical, social, religious) which made them subject to 'vigilance' or censorship' (Forgacs, 2005, p. 10). Hence, on June 16, 1913, the House approved the censorship law: it was called *vigilanza* (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999). At that point, a censorship body - the *Revisione Cinematografica* - was established in Italy: it was responsible for the moral protection of minors and, more broadly, of conservative moral opinion during a period of (supposed) decay of social mores. Hence, this body 'provvede ad autorizzare la proiezione in pubblico delle opera cinematografiche e l'esposizione del corredo pubblicitario ad esse collegato' (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999, p. 9).¹⁶ During the post-war reconstruction period, indeed, 'Film censorship was also discussed in the context of the Republican constitution with Christian Democrat politicians [...] insisting on the need to protect public morality and Italian youth' (Cooke, 2005, p. 121). Thus, the State played a crucial role in technical interventions on culture and mass media through different influential bodies. Before the 1950s, the authorization for film and publicity was granted firstly through the *Sottosegretariato allo Spettacolo* and later through the *Ministero dello Spettacolo*; from the end of the 1950s 'la competenza per le affissioni cinematografiche diventa di esclusiva responsabilità degli uffici dello spettacolo delle Questure che ancora oggi la detengono' (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999, p. 10). At this time, the Vatican saw cinema as an instrument of entertainment and presumed that any passive spectator would be easily influenced and therefore would need protection from its dangers (Chinnici 2003).¹⁷ The Catholic Church thus supported the civic censorship bodies which had their own assessment bodies;¹⁸ the official body involved in controlling the release

¹⁶ For further information on the *Revisione Cinematografica*, see also: Italia Taglia, n.d., *La revisione cinematografica in Italia*, Italia Taglia, viewed November 2019, <http://www.italiataglia.it/la_revisione>.

¹⁷ As Giuseppe Chinnici argues, cinema was seen from the Catholic movement as "[l]uogo di crescita civile e di consapevolezza sociale e cristiana" (Chinnici, 2003, p. 11).

¹⁸ They were 'organismi preposti alla valutazione', cf. Chinnici, 2003.

of films was the *Centro Cattolico Cinematografico* (CCC) established in 1934 (Chinnici, 2003). Forgacs and Gundle would state that ‘In the long period of DC-led centre-right hegemony that ran from 1947 until the first centre-left coalitions in 1963, Catholic control over film censorship worked both through the government bodies dominated by the DC, which in turn had powerful Catholic lobbies behind them, and directly through the CCC’ (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007). This gave rise to an overlap between the State censorship and the Catholic controlling bodies.¹⁹ Moreover, the *Azione Cattolica*²⁰ association had created an advisory system about the moral quality of films that, for few a decades, had the practical effect of guiding the mass public towards the right films to watch (Chinnici, 2003).²¹ To increase its impact, the Church acted to spread the Catholic message through all spheres of influence, consequently giving rise to a variety of documents and pronouncements communicated through and becoming the official, public voice of the Church.²² The Church’s ongoing attitude to cinema, film advertising, and its censorship remained substantially unchanged during the late 1950s and 1960s. This is confirmed by the 1957 encyclical *Miranda Prorsus*, where Pius XII stressed the extraordinary power that cinema could exert on the public masses; it was capable of ‘dragging [man] into the darkness, lead him into temptation, put him at the mercy of uncontrolled instinct’ (Treveri Gennari, 2009). This point of view also affected (as will be seen in the following sections) a multitude of film *manifesti* publicly displayed in the same years. The major concern was with crime and sex. The encyclical emphasised the sanctity of marriage

¹⁹ As Forgacs and Gundle evidenced, the political body handled by the DC party was the *Sottosegretario per la Stampa, Spettacolo e Turismo*, and more particularly the *Ufficio Centrale per la Cinematografia* that contained the state censorship body *Commissione per la Revisione Cinematografica*.

²⁰ ‘Catholic Action’ is an Italian Roman Catholic lay Organization whose origin dates back to 1867. Cf. <https://azionecattolica.it>.

²¹ The *Centro Cattolico Cinematografico* (CCC) classifications were published in parochial newsletters, and from the pulpit (Wood, 2006). For further details on the relationship between the Italian Church and cinema, see: Viganò, D. E. (1994) *Cinema e Chiesa: una storia che dura 100 anni*, Milano: Centro Ambrosiano.

²² For a theoretical treatment of the attitude of the Church towards the development of cinema, see: Brook, C. (2019) *Screening Religions in Italy: Contemporary Italian Cinema and Television in the Post-secular Public Sphere*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Treveri Gennari, D. (2009) *Post-War Italian cinema: American intervention, Vatican Interests*, New York: Routledge; Chinnici, G. (2003) *Cinema, chiesa e movimento cattolico italiano*, Rome: Aracne.

and ‘issues such as adultery, seduction or extreme scenes of passion [which] should not be explicitly treated’ (Treveri Gennari, 2009). These issues align closely with the censorship policies affecting the Italian film industry, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. Elements of seduction or scenes of passion, as well as elements of violence, became part of the advertising visual repertoire, and these often lead to the banning of those images (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999). Censorship was explicitly applied to the means of mass communication (of the time) in part because of an evolving modern lifestyle and in part to renew social conventions. In addition, because it hindered the needs of market, censorship also formed part of the sales strategies of cinematographic companies.

Pius XII encapsulated the Church’s viewpoint in his apostolic exhortation *Il film ideale* on June 21, 1955 (his first speech on the ‘ideal film’), delivered at Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome. It was addressed to the representatives of Italian film industry.²³ On that occasion, Pius XII described how cinema psychologically diverted those who took part in its spectacle:

Se lo spettatore resta veramente prigioniero del mondo che gli scorre dinanzi agli occhi, egli è sospinto a trasferire in certo modo il suo Io, con le sue disposizioni psichiche, le sue intime esperienze, i desideri latenti e non ben definiti, nella persona dell'attore. Per tutta la durata di questa sorte d'incantesimo, dovuta in gran parte alla suggestione del protagonista, lo spettatore si muove nel mondo di questo come se fosse il proprio, anzi, in qualche senso e grado, vive al suo posto e quasi in lui, in perfetta comunione di sentimenti (*Il film ideale*, 1955).²⁴

This highlights a salient point that provides useful context for the remainder of this chapter; it captures the Church’s fundamental attitude towards cinema, but also for all mass media. By highlighting the power of (visual) representation, censorship became the means through which Christian values could be defended against corruption and subversion. Hence, in this chapter I will explore the way cinema’s ‘incantesimo’ over people begins with provocative imagery

²³ For details see: Viganò D.E., (2002) *Cinema e Chiesa. I documenti del Magistero*, Torino: Effatá.

²⁴ For the full text of *Il film ideale*, see:< http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-xii_exh_25101955_ideal-film.html>. Retrieved January 2020.

displayed in public spaces, especially through film *manifesti*. Indeed, Pope Pius XII would express his displeasure through the daily press (see section 5.5). Additionally, the analysis of censorship applied to film *manifesti* will be evaluated against the backdrop of the Pope's statement cited above in order to better understand the oppositional position of the Church and State with regard to film advertising.

As already identified in this chapter, censorship served to control the cultural industry and its practices. The activity of the *pittori di cinema* was therefore marked by disruption and interference from civil and ecclesiastical authorities. In particular, during the 1950s and 1960s, the work of the censors resulted in many interventions, sometimes drastic, other times more measured, in relation to *manifesti*. These led to the creation of *manifesti* that were distinct from the original designs suggested by the artist, and which had initially been approved by the film company. Since a significant Catholic wing of Italian society was intent on safeguarding a shared sense of decency for society as a whole, but especially for minors, this was especially relevant to *manifesti*: public reception of advertising posters was involuntarily consumed by all age groups and regularly spread throughout the cityscape.²⁵ Therefore, advertising *manifesti*, as newspaper articles at that time will reveal, were seen as capable of corrupting vulnerable social groups, such as children, women, and the lower classes. Censorship operated as an influential weapon in the hands of conservative authorities aiming to prevent this corruption. They exerted pressure on artists and dominated the Italian cultural industry until the early 1970s, after which their influence eased.²⁶ Nonetheless, censorship remained a meaningful, influential factor that affected the artistic flow of ideas of graphic artists by subsuming the creative value of the art of film *manifesti* under specific concerns of moral degradation. The

²⁵ Cf. (Brunetta, 1999; Cheles and Sponza, 2001).

²⁶ The Church's shift in attitude towards modernity and ecumenicalism mainly occurred from the Second Vatican Council onward (1962-1965), as it moved towards a more progressive model of Catholicism. These were the first steps in introducing a new means of expressing 'social communication'. The Church began to dissect the term 'media', distinguishing between religious and secular uses of the means of mass communication.

restrictions faced by artists, to be discussed in the following sections, will shed light on the ongoing socio-cultural transformation during the 1950s and 1960s, where a protective political and religious perspective led to a stagnant, conservative milieu of censorship in modern Italy.

5.3 Limits to creative freedom in Nistri's *manifesti*

Specific examples of film *manifesti* subjected to censorship help to disclose and better define the socio-cultural context, which was mediated by the religious and political powers of the time. It proves difficult, however, to carry out systematic and fully supported research around the alterations that advertising material for cinema underwent. Indeed, the alterations are not always available anymore, thus hindering the goal of re-constructing the process which begins with a rejected *manifesto* and ends with the version which is accepted. Considering there is a limited amount of information in the secondary literature (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999; Baroni, 2018), the only chance of reconstructing (albeit partially) the censorship process was to talk to a living artist about their experience. Hence, Giuliano Nistri's accounts provide an essential, direct testimony of the time. They provide an alternative and useful method to reconstruct those events. Some of Nistri's *manifesti* and drafts will be analysed as examples of how an individual artist's contributions were affected by censorship. The analysis is complemented through an in-person meeting with the artist. This sheds light on the personal perspective by an artist as related to censorship, which enables original interpretation by highlighting strategies taken to deal with it. With an ironic and caustic tone, Nistri talked about his experience to me, emphasising the 'ridiculous', (his word) moralistic terms and the obsessive 'sense of decency' that characterised censors mainly during the 1950s and 1960s. He says, 'Quello della censura é davvero un tema stupendo! Censura voleva dire che il manifesto non poteva andare in stampa se tu non correggevi quello che secondo loro [the censors] non funzionava. Io sono andato due volte dal giudice, mandato da loro, e questi si fecero una risata. Io sono andato lí col bozzetto

dicendo: "guardi, questo é censurato, non me lo fanno passare se lei non mi dá l'approvazione".

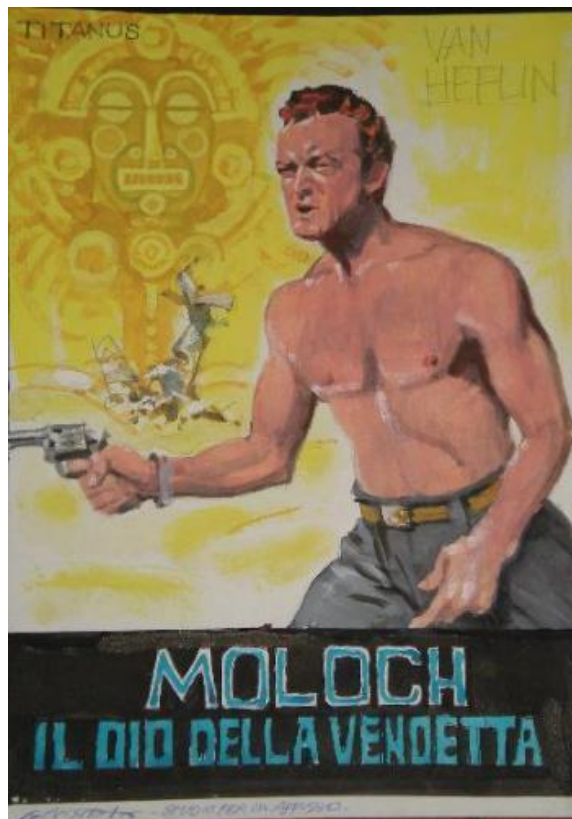


Figure 61

Giuliano Nistri's draft for the 1952 adventure film *Moloch, Il Dio della vendetta* (Fig. 61 - original title *South of Algiers*) by Jack Lee is a good example of the points raised by Nistri above. The main actor, Van Heflin, is represented crosswise in the foreground of the *manifesto*. He is depicted in his role as an American journalist, and he is bare-chested. The desert is in the background, together with a sketch of the mask of the God Moloch, the treasure which for which the expedition to North Africa was planned. The *manifesto* was considered unacceptable for public display because of the representation of Van Heflin's naked torso. Nistri's view is that, 'Se io non gli mettevo una camicia addosso, il manifesto non passava! Una cosa

spaventosa! Infatti io fui costretto [dall'ufficio censura] a mettergli su una camicia, che certo non c'entrava nulla nel contesto rappresentato'.²⁷

The scene depicted in the *manifesto* is of an airplane crash in the desert, which the journalist survived. He is armed and prepared to fend off attacks from indigenous people. It is not immediately obvious, implicitly or explicitly, why and how the image may have offended collective sensitivity or moral decency. Nevertheless, several considerations can be made by looking at figurative examples from the Catholic press that might play an interesting role in this discussion. The mid-1930s saw the fascist regime, together with the ecclesiastical authorities, intervening in popular culture. They aimed to hinder the wave of secular comics for young people (mostly coming from the USA),²⁸ considered harmful for children's education.²⁹ Indeed, the rapid spread of 'American-style'³⁰ cultural values often encountered outright resistance from traditionalist elites and religious authorities (Gundle and Guani, 1986). To tackle the problem, in 1937, a free copy of a new comic strip was circulated among young members of the *Azione Cattolica: Il Vittorioso*.³¹ The *Made in Italy* Catholic comic book for young people was published from 1937 to 1966. It reached the height of popularity during the 1950s and mid-1960s, and represents a morally irreproachable means to pedagogical ends.³² In essence, it was a well-orchestrated instrument for spreading Catholic principles (and political ideologies) through comic, thoughtful storytelling. *Il Vittorioso* occasionally illustrated bare-chested men in adventurous contexts (Fig. 62-64), so this might suggest that such

²⁷ As far I can deduce, an image of the revised, published *manifesto* for the film has not survived.

²⁸ The first American "cartoons" were actually introduced in Italy in 1908 and published in one of the most popular Italian weekly magazines for children, the *Corriere dei piccoli*. See:

<https://www.ilvittorioso.it/index.php>.

²⁹ Cf. Preziosi, E. (2012) *Il Vittorioso. Storia di un settimanale per ragazzi, 1937-1966*, Bologna: Il Mulino.

³⁰ Here I am referring to the attractive, exhibitionist lifestyle based on the capitalistic system, shaping a marketing-oriented society aligned to new models of behaviour inspired by well-being and consumption.

³¹ For detailed information on *Il Vittorioso*, see: Vecchio, G. (2011) *L'Italia del Vittorioso*, Roma: AVE; Preziosi, E., *Il Vittorioso*; Bono, G., 25 April 2015, Guida al Fumetto Italiano, *Il Vittorioso*, viewed December 2019 <<http://www.guidafumettoitaliano.com/guida/testate/testata/7629>>; Online page of *Il Vittorioso*, <https://www.ilvittorioso.it/index.php>. Retrieved December 2019.

³² Cf. <https://www.ilvittorioso.it/index.php>.

representation was not entirely rejected by hegemonic Catholic thought. The question to ask is this: which men are the bare-chested figures supposed to represent? In the examples illustrated below (dated from the 1937 to 1950), this nakedness seems to be a recurrent marker of racial difference, of non-whiteness.³³ The examples show, in adventurous contexts, exotic places, conflicts with native warriors, or against hostile animals, characters dressed in white and half-naked Indians. The ambiguous scenario presented by Nistri in his film *manifesto* (Fig. 61), instead, displays a close-up of a bare-chested white man in the middle of a sand desert. The consideration leaves one wondering: could the banned naked torso of the 1952 *manifesto* be a legacy of Italian colonial policies? Perhaps the detail fade into the background drawn in the *manifesto* might lead to misinterpretation and evoke – in post-war observers – the colonial past, thus it becomes an ‘indecent’ representation of a white man. Hence, it is curious how the popular *Il Vittorioso* of the 1950s can show bare-chested non-white men in their pages aimed at young people without incurring prohibitions while a *manifesto* for an adventure film cannot indiscriminately display to a mass public a white, naked torso. Yet, in the face of such apparently inexplicable visual prohibitions, Andall and Duncan’s argument states: ‘Rather than accepting the idea that these memories [of Italian colonialism] were repressed, what emerges is the sense that they were displaced’ (Andall and Duncan, 2005, p. 21). Perhaps traces of the Italian colonial conduct remain in certain cultural products of the post-war years, albeit under the guise of worry and concern.

What we do know is that the *Ufficio censura* rejected Nistri’s *manifesto* in its original form for its potential to cause outrage (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999) for the public recipient; thus, the law for ‘public decency’ was invoked (Article 726 of the penal code).³⁴

³³ There are also illustrations where nakedness is representative of the typical style of ancient Romans. Cf. <http://www.guidafumettoitaliano.com/guida/testate/testata/7629>.

³⁴ According to which ‘Gli atti contrari alla pubblica decenza ledono il normale sentimento di costumatezza, generando fastidio e riprovazione’. See: <http://www.gazzettaamministrativa.it/servizicu/bancadatigari/viewnews/5357>. For further details on the law, see the online page <https://www.brocardi.it/codice-penale/libro-terzo/titolo-i/capo-ii/sezione-i/art726.html>. Retrieved June 2020.



Figure 62



Figure 63



Figure 64

If interpreted as in conflict with common decency (and this is doubtful), the *manifesto* for *Moloch* (Fig. 61) presented above is a prime example of the narrow-minded interpretation of a narrative that was used for images displayed for public consumption at the service of cinema. Through his *manifesto*, Nistri genuinely and concisely presents the film plot through a key scene from the movie. Nistri viewed it as compelling and, therefore, valuable for promoting the film. Additionally, the Italian film distributor, *Titanus*, did not envisage the realistic depiction of the film to be vulnerable to censorship. The target audience to ‘protect’ from the visual message of this *manifesto*, with its adventurous and supposed indecent representation, is unclear. If the primary concern of conservative authorities focused on sex and violence – protective principles based on the American model of the ‘Hays Code’³⁵ – why should a journalist’s naked torso have been ‘immoral’ for the general viewer? In essence, it may have been perceived as disrespectful towards ‘manly dignity’, potentially undermining the social constructs at the time. Otherwise, the interventions spring from a dictate according to which, as Steve Neale puts it, ‘only women can function as the objects of an explicitly erotic gaze’ (Neale, 1983, pp. 14–15).

A further emblematic case of censorship is highlighted by the draft for the 1957 film *Guendalina* (Fig. 65), directed by Alberto Lattuada. The film focuses on a young protagonist (Guendalina) in Viareggio for summer holidays with her parents, who are rich and bored members of the bourgeoisie who have a conflictual relationship. Far from her friends, Guendalina meets a student and falls in love. Through this new relationship, she undergoes a journey of psychological self-discovery. In a film-shot, Guendalina wears a tight, brown jumpsuit, which becomes the inspiration for the film’s Italian *manifesto*. Nistri’s *manifesto* was subjected to revisions by the censorship office, ‘Sa perchè lo censurarono e lo dovetti

³⁵ The Motion Picture Production Code, known as the Hays Code after its inventor, was a set of rules governing American filmmaking from the 1930s onward that limited expression in American cinema for over three decades.

modificare? Io ho rappresentato il personaggio femminile, l'attrice Jacqueline Sassard, in piedi con addosso una tuta marrone attillata; effetti cromatici e di luce hanno evidenziato un triangolo piú scuro [on the pubic area] Quindi...ha capito perché?'.



Figure 65

Nistri's representation of *Guendalina* was deemed unseemly. According to authorities of the *Revisione Cinematografica*, the darker area at the intersection of the legs might lead to sinful thoughts, especially among youngsters. Most striking in the final design (Fig. 66), which was accepted for public display, was that it was no less 'provocative'. Although the design had been 'cleaned up' around the allegedly lustful darker spot, both the approved and censored designs were much alike. The draft shows an unpolished image, with a background barely outlined and lacking in detail. However, the artist had decided to interpret the entire plot through the figure of the main female character, to whom the film itself gave great importance (hence the name

of the film). The artist's choice was driven by the need to make the *manifesto* appealing for the film to sell, exploiting the charm of the young French actress Jacqueline Sassard (previously unknown to the general Italian public). Nonetheless, the artist was requested to make changes to make it appropriate for public display.



Figure 66

In the *locandina* (Fig. 66), Guendalina is depicted in a domestic environment, seemingly the interior of a house. As we can see, the *locandina* is slightly more detailed than the draft; the whole scene is in a monochrome brown shade and the white dog is the only distinguishable, bright feature. Thus, the artist's intent was likely to reduce the prominence of Guendalina's figure, who is still dressed in a tight, provocative jumpsuit that blends into the background. Nonetheless, the hieratic figure of Guendalina from the draft turns into a graceful, suave young woman with an apparently innocent and, at the same time, seductive appearance, and thus an

appeal for the male gaze. Furthermore, the fact that Guendalina avoids the observer's eyes has another crucial implication: with the unreturned gaze of the public, her body seems even more available to the viewer. This is due to a lack of engagement between the gazes of the viewer and the character, in essence this prevents a form of visual dialogue between the two. Nevertheless, this image was deemed acceptable for public display. Therefore, I argue that this example reveals the method Nistri adopted to circumvent the demands of censorship. Nistri's draft did present a lustful darker spot, which the minds of censors might have associated with the artist's intention, or simply to a poorly balanced chiaroscuro. However, censors asked that the darker spot be removed, but the overall image of the actress as represented was deemed appropriate for all eyes (minors included!). The artist's response was not to change his original idea substantially, but to find a way to satisfy critical demands.

Catholics were intent on reinforcing their authority through their struggle to uphold moral decency, which was being undermined by mass media. Indeed, as Giancarlo Zizola claimed, 'Le autorità ecclesiastiche avvertono che l'accesso delle masse nell'area del consumo culturale potrebbe emarginare drasticamente l'influenza delle agenzie tradizionali del consenso sociale'.³⁶ Therefore, the resulting fear would explain why tools for Catholic propaganda expanded, as they sought to contain the growing dynamics of a consumerist lifestyle and a greater openness prefigured by mass media. However, many of these modernist ideals against which the Church fought were also conveyed to the public through other visual models. In some cases, this required cautious manoeuvring, such as the stylistic strategies that graphic artists took in their modern approach to advertising.

³⁶ Zizola, G. *Cattolici e mass media*, in Lever, F., Rivoltella, P.C. and Zancacchi, A. (edited by) (2019) *La comunicazione. Dizionario di scienze e tecniche*, in <https://www.lacomunicazione.it/voce/cattolici-e-mass-media/>. Retrieved 25 September 2019.

5.3.1 When radical change occurs

An artist's first draft for a film *manifesto* contains their original idea and their first figurative view of the film to be displayed to the mass public. However, these drafts, as we see, often underwent extensive changes ahead of the production of a final *manifesto*. Evaluating the changes forced upon the graphic artist, therefore, allows us to assess the extent to which external pressures exerted by censorship altered the film advertising landscape. It also demonstrates the artists' ability and their flexibility in the use of different visual languages or visual models. Unlike the two previous examples, the following example shows how the artist made radical changes to his original idea to meet the censor's demands, creating a *manifesto* for a film comedy that satisfied its (comic) purpose. The draft for the Italo-British comedy *Cinque ore in contanti* (English title *Five Golden Hours*, Mario Zampi, 1961) focuses on a marriage of interest between a young man, the swindler Aldo Bondi, interpreted by Ernie Kovacs and the rich (although supposedly penniless) 'black widow' Sandra, interpreted by Cyd Charisse.



Figure 67

Nistri's original draft (Fig. 67) represents a large, male hand holding coins, which enters the *manifesto* from the right-hand side of the draft. A woman sits on this pile of coins with her legs

crossed; she is wearing a revealing black dress, a pillbox hat, and a veil, recalling the stereotype of the black widow. In Nistri's words, the film *manifesto* was 'Censurato perchè c'è il contatto del sedere della fanciulla con le monete, [che è stato] ritenuto amorale'. The figurative message of the draft reveals a line of communication that might seem indirect and not immediate, but it was aligned with the film title and what it evokes in the collective imagination. Therefore, narrative and figurative elements engage the public's fantasy and imagination, enticing their curiosity. The image of the miniature woman on a pile of golden coins, held by a large, male hand, with no apparent narrative thread and figurative context, invites the viewer to make an intuitive connection to understand the film's plot. Using the essential narrative elements, Nistri constructed an iconic representation of the film's central theme, which involved the prominent (yet ambiguous) idea of exploitation, although we cannot tell from the image who exactly is being taking advantage of. However, the original and apposite use of a few creative, narrative elements enables the film *manifesto* to whet the public's appetite, engaging their own aptitude for interpretation in a period where the role of the public was viewed as more active in relation to visual media. Without neglecting the reliance on stereotypes, such as the appearance of the rich black widow as a beautiful and unreliable woman, Nistri facilitated the advertising message, regardless of the observer's views. Effectively, this method worked to persuade before informing potential spectators about the film narrative. The artist gave significance to the original and interactive artistic form by displaying the portrait of actors and actresses; this approach was favoured over offering a more direct interpretation of the film's content to the public. In relation to the social changes of the 1960s, Nistri seems to find it more appropriate to present a less explicit and more captivating figurative language to the mass public. So that, as Giancarlo Buzzi puts it, 'Il linguaggio pubblicitario [...] deve colpire, sorprendere, sbalordire, catturare, proporre la novità atteggiandosi in modi nuovi' (Buzzi, 1964). The advertising message must have an intriguing and seductive effectiveness, exploiting an

emotional catalyst. In so doing, artists needed to find new and distinctive ways to promote a given product for consumption.

The draft for *Cinque ore in contanti* was replaced by another version where the original iconography was altered entirely. The resulting image (Fig. 68) conformed to a more generic, common trend used for advertising and film representation. For example, the film's protagonists, Sandra and Aldo, dominate the new *manifesto*, emerging from a pink background created with rapid brush strokes.



Figure 68

The somewhat comical nature of the *manifesto* was typified through the use of expressive and gestural elements, as if the two characters are caught in the act of playing their part, implying a (two-dimensional) film performance. However, this second attempt lacked any vestige of ‘impurity’, particularly when compared to the censored draft. While not impure, it is possible to note the position of the woman’s hips facing, improbably towards us, and certainly

interpellating a viewer. Ultimately, it conformed to the standard visual scenario. Further, the changes forced on the artist have a numbing effect on the artistic essence of the original design, which was working more with a metaphorical artistic language, and aimed at a simpler and clearer sense of humour. The radical change in Nistri's focus for *Cinque ore in contanti* springs from two interpretations of the same film. The common denominator is Nistri's ironic approach for both of his representations. On the original (rejected) draft, the artist focused on an intriguing and surprising symbolic visual code. In an unconventional manner, this code suggested the presence of a dominant figure in the plot (the large male hand coming from the right-hand side), the submissive role of a clichéd black widow, and the direct physical contact with a 'material interest' (coins) between the two. Following its censoring, Nistri embraced a more naturalistic image, placing stardom as the focal point of the visual transposition of the film; in other words, reverting to the use of film stars to persuade a potential audience, as normally requested by production companies (Bakker, 2001). Any social commentary concerning the role of money and the dominance of one gender over another is diluted and is no longer the primary hook to lure a potential audience.

The examples presented above are indicative of an underlying socio-cultural atmosphere in Italy, particularly during the 1950s when extensive change in social customs was taking place. The 1950s were a period of transition as Italy moved away from the fragmentation and rigor of the war, the burdensome legacy of fascism, and towards a libertarian revolution in social mores and the idiosyncratic mindset of the 1960s. Therefore, the examples presented gives evidence of the perceived decay attributed to the increasing spread of images through mass media. The resulting stringent censorship sheds light on what the censors and moralists considered to be potential enemies to social decency. Surely, the female body was the sinful adversary par excellence, but it was not the only one (for instance, the draft for

Moloch, Dio della Vendetta, Fig. 61). The cultural debate developed around the question of censorship and press promotion. This issue forced the Italian government to review its respective laws and to modernize legislation concerning the censorship of the cinema industry. In particular, the *querelle* around this topic was confronted by *La Stampa*, a newspaper with a moderate viewpoint; discussed further in Section 5.5.

5.4 Film *manifesti* in the face of religious influence

The 1950s were marked by expressive restrictions, which were in contrast to the burgeoning strength of new means of visual communication, which reflected on social attitudes and thus stimulated further changes in those attitudes. These points are evidenced through the evaluation of an article published in *La Stampa* on April 12, 1957, which was a symbol of the conflict between modernity and the representatives of conservative, moralism. The article's title was *Si costituiscono Parte Civile contro i manifesti della Ekberg. Un padre e due signore chiedono risarcimento per i loro figlioli sottoposti ad 'offese deleterie' dalle 'immagini oscene'*. The *manifesti* as discussed by De Santis, was concerned with the French 1956 comedy *Miss Spogliarello*, designed by Arnaldo Putzu (1927-2012) and released in Italy one year later; and the British 1956 adventure-drama *Zarak Khan*, designed by Angelo Cesselon (1922-1992). What did private citizens find so controversial? The Roman, Agostino De Santis denounced the 'obscenity' of these *manifesti* posted along city walls, stating the following to the magistrate: 'Sono impiegato, padre di quattro figli e mi domando come posso preservare i miei figli da questa ossessione sessuale dilagante soprattutto nella stampa e negli spettacoli'. The crucial points underlined by this statement emphasize the challenge faced by a father of four children. Critically, at a delicate age, the intention is to protect them from a 'rampant sexual

obsession' conveyed by press and (tv) shows.³⁷ The inferred fear involves being subjugated by the powerful designs of publicly displayed female bodies in revealing clothing, who aim to seduce and corrupt 'simple-minded' people. In response, the journalist opened the article by asking whether it is for film *manifesti*, *Miss Spogliarello* and *Zarak Khan*, to be considered 'obscene publications'. It raises the point as to which types of images can be exemplified as indecent and unseemly for that time and why. As far as we know, the only image currently available of the original *manifesto* for *Miss Spogliarello* (Fig. 69a) is a scanned copy of the newspaper page.³⁸ This page shows an historical picture of the large *manifesto* posted on a city wall (likely Rome),³⁹ under the gaze of teenagers and nuns. The picture was published in *L'Europeo*, a weekly news magazine, on 17 March 1957.⁴⁰

³⁷ According to Gundle and Guani, for most of the 1950s, the television was considered the cinema for the poorer classes. Although the television was not a common purchase at the beginning, people from lower classes were able to come to public spaces (such as bars) where they could watch television together. Between 1954 (the birth-date of television programmes in Italy) and 1958, the number of subscriptions to state-sponsored RAI-TV increased from 88.000 to more than 1 million people, and between 1958 and 1963 even to 4,3 million, which is a significant indicator to understand the spread of the medium during the early 1960s, (Gundle and Guani, 1986).

³⁸ The photograph of the scanned copy of the newspaper's page was kindly provided by the collector Maurizio Baroni.

³⁹ Cf. Cinelli, B. *et all.*, (2014) *Arte moltiplicata. L'immagine del '900 italiano nello specchio dei rotocalchi*, Milano: Mondadori.

⁴⁰ The magazine was published from 1945 to 1995, and subsequently from 2001 to 2013. It was founded in Milan by the editor Gianni Mazzocchi and, between 1954 to 1958, was under the direction of Michele Serra.



Figure 69a



Figure 69b

The original *manifesto* (Fig. 69a) showed the quadruplicated figure of the French actress Brigitte Bardot, alluding to a striptease that ends in a concealed naked image (the body's silhouette turns into the transparent design of a brick wall). In the 1950s and 1960s, Brigitte Bardot, fondly known as 'B.B.', was a female sex symbol, and thereby often in the limelight.⁴¹ She displayed an overly-confident manner for the time, an unmistakable, breezy style, and was likely seen as too vivacious. These aspects contributed to her becoming 'uno dei fenomeni divistici più luminosi del ventesimo secolo' (Scandola, 2014). Judging from the *manifesto*'s design, perhaps more seductive than her 'semi-naked' body was her own name which, in itself, evoked the idea of captivating sensuality. Indeed, the only naked parts of Bardot's body were the legs and arms, despite the 'striptease' performance sequentially drawn by the Roman artist Arnaldo Putzu. The long-lasting legal battle eventually led to both the head of the press office in the film industry⁴² and the artist of the advertising material having to pay a price. This will be described later in this section.

Proof of the social interest aroused by film *manifesti* is provided in figure 69a. It shows nuns looking at a large *manifesto* on a city wall. The position of the photographer here does not seem neutral; indeed, s/he framed the picture in a way that lets the viewer see first the nuns and then, below, young boys while they are looking at the *manifesto*. Hence, the 'posing of objects' is relevant because it is 'where the meaning comes from' (Barthes, 1977, p. 201). With the photographer's position and the way s/he assembled the 'objects', the viewer's attention is drawn to the stark contrast between the entirely clothed bodies of nuns and the partially unclothed body of the actress on the *manifesto*. Perhaps it aims to prompt a reflection on diverse perspectives, on a contrasting duality, and on changing socio-cultural dynamics; not to mention that it pokes fun at the church and the boys too.

⁴¹ For a biography on the iconic actress, see: Biography, 22 August 2019, *Brigitte Bardot*, viewed January 2020, <<https://www.biography.com/actor/brigitte-bardot>>.

⁴² At the time, the chief press officer of the film distribution house CEIAD Columbia was Enzo De Bernart.

In March of the same year (1957), *La Stampa* published two correlated articles that examined the theme of public morality from a Catholic viewpoint: the first one entitled ‘Commenti al discorso di Pio XII nel mondo politico e religioso’;⁴³ the second one ‘Austeri i manifesti e la TV dopo i richiami del pontefice’.⁴⁴ The first one focused on Pope Pius XII’s speech to the priests of the Diocese of Rome on March 5, 1957. He stated the need to staunch the pervasive immorality and, particularly, of preserving the sacred nature of the city of Rome. He exhorted the Catholic front to show their collective feeling against moral corruption: ‘Il Centro Cattolico di Stampa (C.C.S) ricorda che il Pontefice ha esortato i cattolici alla protesta contro gli eccessi del malcostume in modo da mostrare qual è veramente il ‘comune sentimento’ e imporre ‘alle autorità competenti’ di addivenire ai necessari provvedimenti’. Moreover, an additional passage points out that ‘obscenity’ is legally judged as such on the basis of common feeling (with the Articles 726, *Atti contrari alla pubblica decenza* and 527, *Atti osceni*, of the Penal Code); hence the pope urged people of faith to explicitly share such feelings so as to push the judiciary toward the prosecution of what would be commonly accepted as detrimental to morality.

Over a year after its original article (March 1957), *La Stampa* published another article⁴⁵ explaining the verdict: ‘Il Tribunale di Roma li ha considerati [the manifesti] contrari alla decenza – le persone che li fecero affiggere dovranno pagare un’ammenda – la denuncia partita da un impiegato: le immagini delle attrici avrebbero ferito l’innocenza dei suoi figlioli’. Therefore, the images of *manifesti* (such as those discussed above) are seen by the Tribunal to have offended and corrupted the innocence of minors. Further, those responsible for this lack of public decency had a duty to pay a fine and make compensation to the national body

⁴³ D.M. (1957), ‘Commenti al discorso di Pio XII nel mondo politico e religioso’, in *La Stampa*, 7 of March 1957.

⁴⁴ A.N. (1957), ‘Austeri I manifesti e la TV dopo i richiami del pontefice’, in *La Stampa*, 14 of March 1957.

⁴⁵ Guidi G. (1958) ‘Condanna per i manifesti pubblicitari riproducenti la Bardot ed Anita Ekberg’, in *La Stampa*, 24 of June 1958.

representing the moral protection of children.⁴⁶ The artist involved, Arnaldo Putzu, had to change his original idea for the representation of the film to serve the greater good in the form of social ‘needs’ for morality. Alternatively, there was a need to satisfy subjective views and radically conservative positions, which did not necessarily represent an ever-changing Italian society. The conviction, as reported in the article, was a firm reminder to film producers to exercise self-control, noting in Italy that the law supports those who wish to protect morality, stressing the exercising of public authority.

Throughout the trial, the contested *manifesto* was withdrawn from circulation in Italy and the movie release was postponed. Following its censorship, what happened to the advertising *manifesto* for *Miss Spogliarello*? How did it become publicly ‘acceptable’? The playbill that was eventually printed and distributed (Fig. 60b)⁴⁷ contains an equally evident sign of a striptease, although it now takes a different approach and shows a covered image of the actress’ body during her performance. Brigitte Bardot (playing the character of Agnese) has been covered during her implicit striptease by a large, ‘mischievous’, white hand that evokes the intervention of the censor, preventing viewers from seeing her imaginary naked body. The playfulness in the original *manifesto* persists in the second visual model. Ironically, the playbill’s design arguably focuses more readily on the object of desire, with a more seductive image than the original design. The representation of Agnese in the act of taking off her bra has been made more intriguing, with the effect of generating an intensified scene of seduction, putting the focus on the almost naked body of ‘B.B.’ Viewers are *prevented* from

⁴⁶ The Italian national body, *Ente Nazionale per la Protezione Morale del Fanciullo* (E.N.P.M.F.) was established in Rome on November 20, 1945, with the aim of reducing the phenomenon of abandoned children and juvenile delinquency. For further information see: Aiazzi, T. and Guarnieri, P., 31 December 2018, *Ente nazionale per la protezione morale del fanciullo*, ASPI, viewed September 2019, <<https://www.aspi.unimib.it/collections/entity/detail/407/>>.

⁴⁷ I only had access to the playbill because, as far as I can deduce, the original *manifesto* might not exist anymore. The playbill is currently part of the collection that Maurizio Baroni donated to the Cineteca of Bologna.

seeing the scene in full, so the public imagination is activated specifically from that ‘censor’s hand’.

With this new, ‘acceptable’ advertising image, did the prosecution really believe that innocent people were protected from the unrestrained obscenity circulating in visual media? Although that question may remain unanswered, the practices of censorship identified have an intrinsic, socio-cultural dimension that are directly linked to the Catholic’s powers that be. Reflecting on the above examples, the actual result of ‘morality contests’ often had precisely the reverse effect; resulting in more publicity (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999). Clearly, the demands of censorship drew even more attention to the object of ‘rejected desire’, in the film as well as in early advertising material. Moreover, the miscalculated impact of moral obligations may have fuelled people’s resolve not to be dictated to morally, triggering dormant reactions in favour of a modern lifestyle. This outcome is pointedly expressed by Gundle and Guani: ‘Nuove attrazioni e prospettive di vita e una serie di alternative quotidiane rispetto alle vie seguite dalle vecchie generazioni contribuirono alle due tendenze piú significative di quest’epoca: la graduale erosione della dimensione collettiva della vita sociale e la sua ricomposizione in un mosaico di bisogni e modelli di comportamento piú individualistici; la sostituzione delle tradizionali fonti di valori e di autorità con nuovi idoli e nuove norme’ (Gundle and Guani, 1986, p. 586). With the film *manifesto for Miss Spogliarello* the artist introduced a ‘new idol’ in a ‘novel form’, as Gundle and Guani say. Putzu’s artwork provides evidence of the role played by the creativity of the *pittori di cinema*, as an interplay between the externally imposed structure and personal artistic style, circumventing the demands of censorship and, at the same time, using those requests to fuel individual creativity and maintain their own tone and artistic mannerism.

5.5 Multiple challenges to artistic creativity

The challenges to creativity in film *manifesti* were of multiple natures. This chapter so far has analysed the contribution of film *manifesti* to challenging the moral code of a traditional Italian society that was using heavy-handed censorship. The ‘erotic appeal’ and sexualised images, were areas central to censorship during the 1950s, but they were not the only issue that caused film *manifesti* to be (mis)judged. This section aims to shed light on some further limits imposed by censorship. These limits relate to politics and the visual exhibition of violence, which led to alterations in the original designs for film *manifesti* during the 1960s. This shift in the focus of censorship, reflected historical and social changes which marked the decade from the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s. At the time there was also an increase in youth-crime. Indeed, as Scarpellini states, ‘Episodi criminali piccoli e grandi, atti di teppismo, comportamenti irrispettosi e devianti sembrano segnare la posizione dei giovani nella società’ (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 178). As a direct result of such an increment, public opinion ascribed these acts of violence ‘[a]ll’influenza deleteria di film e riviste dai contenuti violenti’ (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 178). This explains the change in focus for censorship at the beginning of the 1960s, including for films and its advertising.

Two examples will be used in this section to demonstrate how films and visual advertising material were exploited politically, with ‘socially engaged’ films being targeted. The so-called ‘cinema politico’ started to develop in the mid-1960s, becoming a witness of complex political and historical changes in Italy, posing worrisome questions, and reporting on the state of uncertainty (Brunetta, 2004). The ban on showing acts of violence in film advertising will be outlined to see what kind of visual patterns were contested and how they were replaced to respond to market needs and the expectations of the mass public. The examples in subsection 5.5.1 and 5.5.2 below have been collected from an interview I had with Maurizio Baroni in June 2018.

5.5.1 *A ciascuno il suo*: an inconvenient piece of evidence?

The 1967 film *A ciascuno il suo* by Elio Petri, based on Leonardo Sciascia's detective novel of the same name, was delayed due to the *manifesto*'s seizure (see *locandina*, Fig. 71).⁴⁸ Sciascia's novel is a '*giallo di mafia*' which was inspired by the real-life events surrounding Cataldo Tandoy, a police chief from Agrigento (Sicily), in 1960. Therefore, Petri's *A ciascuno il suo*, was an openly anti-mafia film, clearly expressing the director's ideological beliefs. It was tellingly defined by Micciché as 'il più civilmente violento e moralmente duro atto d'accusa alla mafia realizzato dal cinema italiano negli anni '60' (Micciché, 1995, p. 177). Petri was one of those directors defined as 'uomini contro', as Brunetta puts it, 'che continuano a vagheggiare un altrove di socialismo realizzato, a nutrire nostalgie per le rivoluzioni mancate del dopoguerra' (Brunetta, 2004, p. 197). Petri stated that his primary aim with *A ciascuno il suo* was to 'indagare criticamente sul corpo della realtà in cui si vive'.⁴⁹ The film *manifesto* was designed by Sandro Simeoni (1928-2008),⁵⁰ who was also chief press officer of the film's distribution company, Cineteca Lucana. Simeoni was a prolific *pittore di cinema*, whose work was subject to several cases of censorship. Simeoni's proficiency was characterised by his incessant search for an expressive, avant-garde style. This distinguished much of his art from the figurative and narrative visual language usually adopted in film *manifesti*. The *locandina* (Fig. 70) is much more moderate than the more explicit film-frame (Fig. 71). Simeoni's depiction represents Professor Paolo Laurana, played by Gian Maria Volonté, and the widow Luisa Roscio, played by Irene Papas, on the ground near the sea, while he is trying (forcibly?) to kiss her. The representation was judged immoral as it could suggest a 'rape', which potentially appear more explicit in the film frame, and the woman is shown trying to fend off

⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the *manifesto* published for *A ciascuno il suo* is no longer available, and during my research I did not have the chance to examine it.

⁴⁹ Cf. Petri, E. (2007) *Scritti di cinema e di vita*, Roma: Bulzoni.

⁵⁰ He was an artist who in fifty years of activity made more than 3000 *manifesti* for the majors Italian and American film companies.

the man. The design in the *locandina* shows a kiss between two people, although the woman's gestures and facial expression indicate it is not consensual. The artist clearly reinterpreted this specific narrative angle when representing the film plot. However, the plot itself is not about passion or love, which might be erroneously inferred by the image. This advertising image might refer to the director's aim of representing 'un'equivalenza tra immaturità umana o politica ed immaturità sessuale',⁵¹ which the image suggests through the professor's impulsive advances and the reluctant Luisa. This motif would become a trademark in Petri's films, and he might have been responsible for requesting this visual scene. Regardless, the approach seems led by the need to display the main actor and actress, rather than summarising the plot, for instance, in a more enigmatic scene of murder. Arguably, Simeoni left the substance of the story aside (mafia and links with the political and religious establishments). Instead, he chose to play with the effect exerted by love and the presence of the well-known actor and actress. This decision did not save it from censorship. Simeoni claimed, 'Non potendo colpire Sciascia, che allora era un personaggio impegnato politicamente, nè il signor Petri, censurarono la pubblicità di *A ciascuno il suo* giudicandola immorale: era una scena di un bacio tra un uomo e una donna' (Baroni, 2018). In March 1967, the Communist daily *L'Unità* devoted an article to Petri's film *A ciascuno il suo* defining it as a 'vigorosa denuncia alla mafia'.⁵² The article immediately revealed the core concern about the film, which depicted 'dopo l'uccisione di un giornalista, una grande festa a cui partecipano cardinali, vescovi, preti' (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999, p. 73). Consequently, because no direct attack could be made on the film, there was an urgent need to ban its advertising material and delay the film's release. At first, the journalist focused on the positive reception for the preview of the film in Milan. The general public realized the veracity of the film, including its political perspective. Although in the early 1960s

⁵¹ Cf.: Elio Petri, n.d., *A ciascuno il suo*, viewed November 2019, <http://www.eliopetri.net/?page_id=86>.

⁵² For further reading, see the article on *L'Unità* at: <http://www.eliopetri.net/html/images/stampa/7.pdf>. Retrieved November 2019.

ensorship began to relax with ‘a growing secularization of civil society and freeing up of sexual mores and the emergence of the centre-left coalitions between the DC and the Socialist Party (PSI) [...], there were fierce rearguard fights against this liberalization by conservative elements in the Church, Parliament and media’ (Forgacs, 2005, p. 15). Hence, concerns raised by some of those in power were made evident through the seizure of *manifesti* for Petri’s film (Baroni, 2018). This sheds light more on the political cause rather than the moral implication of the image displayed. Therefore, behind the withdrawal of the visual advertising material there was a will to control the expression of the director’s ideology (Petri, likewise Sciascia, embraced left-wing ideals) and perhaps to limit its dissemination, along with Sciascia’s non-conformist and politically engaged spirit (Baroni, 2018). The figurative subject of the *manifesto* and its playbills were covered and rendered unreadable to the public. This Italian practice of covering the banned image of a film *manifesto* was re-baptised as ‘mettere le mutande ad un manifesto’,⁵³ with a clear sarcastic inference: visually covering ‘intimate’ images judged under a prudish (often extreme) sense of morality. This practice, as well as the ironic expression to define it, refers to the Church’s covering of the nudes in the Sistine Chapel frescoed by Michelangelo in 1564.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the censorship against the film *A ciascuno il suo* ended up affecting mostly, if not exclusively, visual advertising and consequently impacted the *manifesto* artist’s chromatic and expressive energy. In this case, I argue that the artistic act was silenced in order to respond to political issues, rather than moral ones. The image on the *manifesti* was covered and, in order to enable the film’s release, Simeoni did not have the option to reinterpret his visual work.

⁵³ For further reading on this censorship practice, see: http://www.fotogrammicarta.it/album_censura/pagina_censura4.htm. Retrieved November 2019.

⁵⁴ At the time, the expression was “mettere le braghe” to Michelangelo’s nudes in the Sistine Chapel.



Figure 70



Figure 71

5.5.2 *La battaglia di Algeri*: an international incident

Simeoni was victim of a numerous acts of censorship. The following sub-section takes into account an emblematic example that, once again, involved politics. The subject was his draft (Fig. 72) for the historical film *La Battaglia di Algeri*, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo in 1966. The film documents the dramatic events that disrupted the city of Algiers between 1956 and 1962, when native Algerians rebelled against French colonialism. In a single figure, Simeoni's draft shows everything necessary to expressively represent the film's plot: a rebel fighter brandishing a machine gun in his right hand and the French flag held with disdain in the other. This figurative depiction of the film created an international incident with the French consulate in Rome, which forced the artist to cover the French flag in the *manifesto*. The French complained that the defiant stance of the fighter against a patriotic French symbol was inappropriate (Baroni, 2018), disregarding the topic of the movie. Hence, the original *manifesto* was seized by the Prefecture of Rome; it was replaced by the same but with the French flag covered by a photograph of film stills and only then accepted for public display (see *locandina*, Fig. 72a). Simeoni's draft contains the quintessential components of a political poster: it features a direct and incisive image against a white background; he uses a thick, black brushstroke and a loose sketch line; the restricted palette focuses on the contrast between black and white (with limited yellow hues). Moreover, the red lettering combines well with the entire visual and narrative message, with the word 'Algeri' depicted as if shattering. The artist was outraged by the censorship and decided not to sign the *manifesto*; he no longer recognised his image, and his refusal to put his name to it was in opposition to censorship and its 'logic'.

The example above again reveals the overused practice of censoring film *manifesti* driven, in this case, by the fear that images might become ideological instigators. Furthermore, it shows concerns about running the risk of unmasking the uncomfortable truth about

imperialism and diplomatic relationships. Furthermore, the case of *La battaglia di Algeri* highlights how censorship could alter the *status* of a graphic artist and restrict their creativity. Despite being mainly involved in the cultural industry, *pittori di cinema* put great effort into actuating their pictorial style and creative vision in their work. Simeoni's example, alongside the advertising material for *A ciascuno il suo*, shows that when political issues engage with visual mass media the tendency was to 'cover' the problematic image, and to characterise 'the poster as a means of attack' (Cheles and Sponza, 2001, p. 134). Therefore, the relation between artistic creativity and censorship was entirely placed in the hands of a larger, dominant system of power(s). This sterilised the concept of creativity.



Figure 72



Figure 72a

5.5.3 Excess of violence, excess of realism: *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*

Il Giudice Istruttore presso il Tribunale Civile e Penale di Catania ha pronunciato la seguente sentenza nel procedimento penale contro LUCHINO VISCONTI imputato del reato di cui all'art. 528 C.P., perchè realizzava, creandolo, il film *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* gravemente offensivo del sentimento del pudore [...].⁵⁵

On November 12, 1960, Visconti was subjected to legal proceedings and his film *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* underwent various cuts. The same fate befell the *manifesto* for Visconti's film, designed by Mauro Otello Innocenti, known as Maro (1927-2003). He was forced to make alterations to make it eligible for public display. The film tells the story of a farming family from the south of Italy who move to Milan to join the eldest child during the years of the economic boom. The family's troubles, especially the brothers Simone and Rocco – both in love with the same woman, a prostitute (Nadia) – break down the family unit and eventually end in a crime of passion and a tragic climax. Maro pictorially translated the climax of the plot, representing the famous 'scena dell'idroscalo', where Nadia is murdered, in his *manifesto*. In Maro's draft (Fig. 73), the figurative core is the dramatic *mise en scène* interpreted by two characters: Simone and Nadia, while she is stabbed. The artist portrays the pathos of the narrative juncture, emphasising the emotional upheaval through the characters' faces and gestures. Both Simone and Nadia are portrayed in the act of screaming, while he is holding a knife in his hand. The viewer imagines the painful shouting from the silent, still image. The figures are spatially and chromatically isolated in their black hues, with few lighting effects, framed by a yellow, secluded area (the 'Idroscalo' in Milan).⁵⁶ According to testimony left by the artist himself and collected by Maurizio Baroni (Baroni, 2018), Maro's original draft

⁵⁵ To read all the original verdict, see the *Sentenza del Giudice Istruttore*: <http://cinecensura.com/wp-content/uploads/1960/04/Rocco-e-i-suoi-fratelli-Sentenza-del-1969-contro-Luchino-Visconti.pdf>. Retrieved March 2020.

⁵⁶ Actually, this crime scene was shot in Sabaudia as permission to shoot such a violent scene at the Idroscalo of Milan had been denied. For further information, see: Il cinema ritrovato, n.d., *La censura. La 'grana' dell'idroscalo*, viewed September 2020, <<http://distribuzione.ilcinemaritrovato.it/per-conoscere-i-film/rocco-e-i-suoi-fratelli/la-censura.>>

(which is no longer available) shows a blood stain covering the body of the actress, designed to make the image realistic. However, censorship deemed the image too gory. The only way to ensure that the advertising material for Visconti's film could reach the public was to remove the blood stain, which the artist did.



Figure 73

The *locandina* for Petri's film analysed in the section above and the draft for Visconti's (figures 70 and 73) belong to different cinematic genres, with seven years separating their respective releases. That being said, in terms of advertising images, the artistic interpretation of the two film plots is quite similar. The images employ a popular visual structure: two figures, a man and a woman as the only narrative focus; they lie on the ground on the outskirts of somewhere. Both artists chose a yellow, indistinct background as an emblematic chromatism, and darker hues (generally black) for the characters in the middle of the scene. Hence, the viewer's emotional involvement is induced through the effects of chromatism. Indeed, the undefined yellow background in both *manifesti* evokes something sinister, while the group in black of the two characters represents the victim and the culprit.

The focus on the analogies between the two visual narrative subjects leads to an observation about the inconsistency in the censors' approach to Simeoni and Maro's works, which were highly contrasting. Simeoni's *locandina* for *A ciascuno il suo* was officially banned because it was considered morally indecent, as the two characters were portrayed in an obscene pose, whereas Maro's *manifesto* was deemed too violent solely for the blood stain, rather than for the general sense of aggressiveness, which emerges through the figure of Simone. Both *manifesti* show ambiguous contact and an immodest display of two supine bodies, a man and a woman, in the throes of uncontrollable impulses. Therefore, according to censors' viewpoint as we have examined so far, one might expect both images to be banned due to an offence to the 'comune senso del pudore'. This would be especially true in the Visconti's 1960s film, when censorship was still stringent. But this was not the case. Censors accepted the *manifesto* for *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* as the original design was, just without the blood stain. It could therefore be inferred that what the viewer actually saw publicly displayed along the cityscape in the 1960s (for instance, an act of violence against a woman) must be incidental, and not truly relevant for the defence of minors and morality. What was critical was the public exhibition of meaningful visual elements which have been exploited as mass media, subject of a greater critical interest.

Another aspect to consider is the gender implication and the potential, compromising messages spread through public images. Both cases of censorship tended to minimise violence against female characters. In point of fact, the effects of censoring these representations was to render violence against women less visible (although not unacceptable), and therefore less subject to a close examination by the general public. This undermined women's burgeoning attempts at public self-affirmation. Hence, advertising material was used as an instrument to limit profound social and cultural changes in mass society, its needs, and an adaptation to a modern lifestyle. Advertising thus sought to shape the direction of development. These changes

would have ruptured traditional values and the patriarchal notion of family, weakening the powerful mechanisms normally exerted by the State and the Church.

5.6 Conclusion

“*Le mutande della censura*” applied during the 1950s and 1960s to film *manifesti* and advertising material, which this chapter has critically examined, marked the transition in the period of reconstruction between the poverty of the immediate post-war period and the greater consumer development of the 1960s. It also characterised the changes and adaptations in society in the light of a modern lifestyle. Through the compelling use of visual sources, the vast majority of the evidence points to the power of external pressures on artistic creativity applied to the cinema industry. It also shows how artists exploited these pressures to develop a more functional and integrated approach to the *manifesto* by employing strategic objectives (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009). Some *manifesti*, playbills, and drafts analysed in this chapter emphasised different patterns that, for a variety of sometimes contrasting reasons required the intervention of censors. Furthermore, these examples illustrate the effects of external pressures that resulted in revised artworks. In these cases, creative artists working in film advertising had to find acceptable compromises between their own style, their individual approach, and the stringent requests made of them. These compromises sometimes resulted in work of questionable quality. This was the case of the *manifesto* for *Moloch il Dio della vendetta* (Fig. 61), where a bare-chested man became a source of scandal; ultimately, it was sufficient to place a shirt on the individual, even if contextually inaccurate in the light of the film plot from which artists were inspired. Nonetheless, to receive authorisation from the Ministero dello Spettacolo for the public posting of the *manifesto*, the artist adhered to the request and let the *manifesto* be printed. Nistri’s draft for *Cinque ore in contanti* linked the role of money with the dominance

of men over women, and this was criticised as potentially problematic for the general public. The result was a more direct representation of two characters, and essentially a less appealing and more standardised representation than the original idea. That being said, Nistri made a completely different image that remained faithful to his sense of humour, consistent with the comic plot, and in line with his experience as a satirical illustrator.

In some cases, external pressures led to artistic and creative effects which challenged censorship. This was the case of *Miss Spogliarello* which, paradoxically, transformed a less intense, while provocative, multiple image set of 'B.B.' into a highly seductive centralized image of her. In this case, the new version aimed to entice the viewer and confirmed an advertising strategy applied by the artist and the film industry, which was present in both the first and second version. This *manifesto* exploited the presence of the iconic actress Brigitte Bardot, 'displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men' (Mulvey, 2009, p. 22), both before and after censorship, placed at the forefront of the advertising, in other words, in a strongly connoted patriarchal society. Indeed, as Laura Mulvey puts it, 'In-built patterns of pleasure and identification impose masculinity as 'point of view'' (Mulvey, 2009, p. 31), using the female body as an object of desire. Additionally, the *manifesto* suggests that it is the *hand* of censorship that covers that body from public view, and so an ironic comment from the artist about the inconsistency of censorship practices. With further press involvement, as in the case of *Miss Spogliarello*, film and *manifesti* usually gained even more attention and publicity, thereby providing a basis for evaluating the counterproductive effects of censorship.⁵⁷

The visual examples offered in this chapter highlight the critical importance of the historical and social context of the time in question. They unveil equivocal aspects covered by a mask of moral rigidity, rather than a religious order which is prone to show its power. In

⁵⁷ The *manifesto* for *Miss Spogliarello* received adequate attention from the press, including from the papacy, becoming a more thrilling object of public attention (Cf. articles from *La Stampa*, 1957).

Italy, these issues focused on restricting independent attempts towards modernity. The film *manifesti* analysed run counter to the changing perceptions of morality within society, and restrictive actions applied by an elite who were reticent to social change and modernity. Sometimes, restrictions were also requested by members of the public. The article published in *La Stampa* in April 1957 clearly showed how publicly displayed *manifesti* impacted mass society. They were accused of perturbing minors with their obscenity. Thus, even the concept of ‘obscenity’ was changing in those years, and the film industry followed the wing that was more inclined to modernity and less devoted to stagnant traditional conventions.⁵⁸

The section focused on advertising material seized for its political messages reveals other aspects of censorship. These forms of censorship partially or fully covered the objects denied for public exhibition. A lack of consistency also emerged through comparison between similar visual patterns banned for differently reasons, which in all cases neglected the potential visual (and social) impact of violent acts against women. These instances highlighted the limited sensitivity towards women. The section shed light on how such structures impacted the artists’ perception of their own role as socio-cultural mediators in mass society. I believe that the bans altered the perception that *pittori di cinema* had of their own artwork at the service of the cultural industry, especially in such a complex period of change. Indeed, in developing their own identities as creatives at the service of cinema, for instance in the case of Simeoni refusing to sign his altered *manifesto*, there was also a growing awareness of the influence graphic artists had at the time in shaping a new consumer society and in triggering a new way of interacting with the visual mediascape and, consequently, their influence in modern transitions. Therefore, as Scarpellini argues, mass society absorbed ‘la cultura materiale per creare nuovi modelli di vita quotidiana, disegnando paesaggi culturali differenti da quelli tramandati dalle stratificazioni tradizionali’ (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 174). As a matter of fact, the socio-cultural

⁵⁸ It is important to recall that ‘the PCI’s popular culture strategy [in the Cold War period] did include some attempts at modernisation’ (e.g., the magazine *Vie Nuove*) (Forgacs, 1990, p. 156).

scenario of the 1970s started to change significantly. This occurred despite attempts from the censorship regime of the 1950s and 1960s to undermine such complex transformation.

In the early 1970s, censorship of mass media was no longer dominant and had become more relaxed and flexible. Indeed, it was also the decade when, as Forgacs argues, ‘more extreme forms of representation of sex and violence once again crossed the threshold of the newly established norms’ (Forgacs, 2005, p. 15), and this allowed for a review of old parameters of moral decency.⁵⁹ Film *manifesti* began to break free of the chains of censorship around 1973 (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999). This was the year when advertising for the ‘sexy’ comedy *Paolo il caldo* by Marco Vicario (Fig. 74) was accepted for public display. This date marked a turning point for freer circulation of images in the public sphere (Graziosi and Raffaelli, 1999). Indeed, the ordinary consumption of mass culture and the success of *manifesti* as mass-oriented media that occupied social spaces and developed within a dialectic of cultural plurality determined the spread of new ideas and ways of thinking. The modern *manifesto* was liberated in its visual, communicative function, activating a new linguistic and iconic code that was consumption-oriented; it also reflected a historical turning point in Italy in the 1970s, including more provocative representations that particularly affected popular imagery.⁶⁰ Substantially, this progressive approach seemed a rebellion against the arbitrary, erratic, and excessive nature of censorship to which the cinematographic industry had been exposed up to that point. The work produced by graphic artists as creatives must be seen as an interplay between multiple factors, especially taking into account that ‘To be creative an idea must also be appropriate - useful and actionable’ (Amabile, 1998, p. 78) not just original. Hence, *pittori di cinema* had to work appropriately within a socio-cultural context and follow a conservative

⁵⁹ For instance, two exemplary cases were *Last Tango in Paris* by Bernardo Bertolucci (1972) and Pasolini’s *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1975), accused of obscenity and then sequestered.

⁶⁰ In this regard, cf. the 1976 film *Il comune senso del pudore*, by Alberto Sordi.

sense of decency. However, their work had to be useful and actionable to meet public expectations and commercial needs.

In conclusion, to answer the question about ‘how has the conflict between artistic creativity and censorship in film *manifesti* been overcome by artists’, I argue that through the interplay between interventions on the part of censors and the artists’ responses to them, *pittori di cinema* overcame the issue by reinforcing their own role as mediators between traditional and modern habits using their individual stylistic preferences. Graphic artists played this role in both a social and cultural context, where consumption represented a significant vehicle able to ‘materializzare valori e comportamenti, [divenendo] il tramite per rapportarsi e in definitiva cercare un’integrazione nella società’ (Scarpellini, 2008, p. 139).

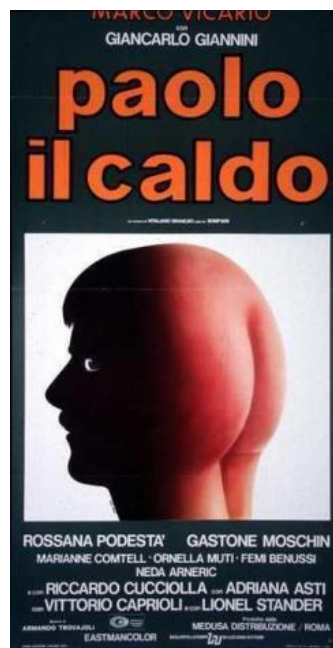


Figure 74

Conclusion

Ai manifesti pubblicitari compete l'indiscusso ruolo di essere stati i piú attenti "cronisti" del XX secolo.¹

The heyday of pictorial film *manifesti* came to an end in the 1980s. Still, they continue to attract collectors, enthusiasts, and to fascinate the popular imagination in general. The permanent collection at the *Cinema a Pennello* museum in Montecosaro offers a unique panorama of the history of Italian film *manifesti*, a place where nostalgic memories can be relived. It also offers an unusual narrative and visual pathway for the socio-cultural understanding of mass culture. As the collector, Paolo Marinozzi points out, "[s]e riusciamo a ricordare compiutamente il soggetto cinematografico è grazie all'immagine evocativa che solo un cartellone può rendere così bene "affisso" nella mente" (Marinozzi, 2011, p. 20). Through the powerful function of bringing to mind an evocative picture, film *manifesti* and their designers increased mass consumption in post-war culture (Calabrese, 2002).

This thesis has dealt with the critical visual power of Italian film *manifesti* from the post-war years to 1969 as catalysts for the development of mass consumption. Chapter one to chapter five have shown how "[t]he spread of consumer culture happened incrementally and, to a significant extent, within the grooves of existing traditions" (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007, pp. 272–273). This explains why local facets of 'Italianità', such as the close link with contemporary artistic and pictorial trends, have been emphasised, specifically, through the analysis of individual *manifesti*. My analysis has also taken account of advanced marketing perspectives and commercial strategies energised by American capitalism. I have firmly related

¹ Brunelli, P., Ferraresi, M., 2003. *Elogio del manifesto. Arte, società e vita sui muri del XX secolo*, Torino: Allemandi, p.7.

the eye-catching and evocative function of Italian film *manifesti* to the growth of industrialisation, increasing demands from the cultural industry and its own commercial needs, and international references, all while seeking for the successful impact of the visual advertising message.

The first part of my thesis highlighted how, from the early 20th century, the relationship between industrial production and consumption has been one of mutual influence (Scarpellini, 2008). More importantly, the increase of marketing needs in relation to the expansion of industrial production promoted greater demand for cultural practices connected to consumption. Hence, we have seen how artists accessed the cultural industry for commercial reasons, experimenting with the visual language of advertising that enabled the growth of consumption. In so doing, the artists involved in this cultural, industrial project provided a more distinctive and more competitive appearance to products in the national marketplace. Because of this crucial function that the cultural industry began to ascribe to the artists, their relevance in disseminating a new advertising language grew. This took place alongside their increasing role as socio-cultural mediators between producer and consumer in a period that experienced a multitude of social transitions. Artists adapted to their role at the service of a broader industrial project with socio-cultural interests. As Luca Somigli states, artists in modernity “have attempted to renegotiate and re-legitimate their role in a landscape characterized by profound and radical social and cultural transformations that, among other things, implicitly or explicitly called into question many traditional assumptions about the arts and their place in society” (Somigli, 2003, pp. 3–4). Early advertising for cinema embraced a traditional artistic language as an established visual mode that was recognisable and essentially available to the broadest public (e.g., in the form of *Art Nouveau* style). Moreover, these pioneering applications of expressive artforms in advertising design opened the door to *pittori di cinema* but, as mentioned in chapter two, only if they espouse commercial strategies imported from America. In the post-

war years, this type of advertising practice in the hands of artists brought visual language to public attention that conveyed the key features of a modernization process. Those features included forms of the American capitalism that enhanced the global mass-media landscape. They were primarily conveyed by cinema, the referenced medium of film *manifesti*, and consisted in emphasising wellbeing mostly embodied by a manufactured appearance of Hollywood stars, who soon became popular.

The star system was one of the most representative and permanent phenomena, imported into Italy, that informed the iconographic development of film *manifesti* throughout the decades. As a standard commercial criterion to be included in the design, the portrait of stars and *divi/dive* became a successful tool to capture mass public attention, to enhance popular imagination and sympathy towards the film actors and actresses, and to persuade viewers to ‘consume’ one film instead of another. The consumer, indeed, became a subject led by new practices of consumption, and was also involved in a new model of living which explored a different cultural landscape (Scarpellini, 2008). These new habits were conveyed by the powerful artistic designs that visually combined the interplay between the cultural industry, popular tastes and expectations, socio-cultural customs, and patterns of consumption.

Commercial and socio-cultural pressures (including international influence) on graphic artists and issues of censorship have been identified in this thesis as significant in a number of ways, and not only as “limitations” to the graphic artists’ work. Within this complex frame of reference, I have examined the crucial role of artistic creativity. As I have argued, the *pittori di cinema* demonstrated their ability to embrace different ways of thinking in their visual projects. They had to navigate a combination of requirements and necessities to create successful designs. This ability took on wider significance as the film industry became more competitive and demanding from the post-war reconstruction period to the end of the 1960s, requiring creative professionals to differentiate a successful product from another. This thesis has

examined artistic creativity as the quintessential defining feature of *pittori di cinema* engaged in the inter-medial representation of films for commercial ends. The originality of my work lies in what is revealed about the *manifesti* and their socio-cultural significance through this analysis. Indeed, I connected the creativity in film *manifesti* to the graphic artists' capacity to respond to challenges. They were called upon to mediate the views of the industry in gaining mass public reception.² From a commercial perspective, following established modes of representation (e.g., star system, figurative realism) was important for film *manifesti*. For artists, visually depicting the faces of stars meant referring to their photographic image to make their portrait as similar to the original as possible (Longi, 2002). My findings following analysis on film *manifesti* are broadly consistent with the view that, “È il cinema, in quanto riproduzione [fotografica] della realtà ad imporre soluzioni nella cartellonistica, sul medesimo piano” (Longi, 2002, p. 67). This tendency to privilege photographic resemblance underscores *pittori di cinema*'s skill as portraitists. Indeed, this ability highlights their distinctive capacity to reinterpret an actor's appearance according to their artistic style and emotional perception; as my analysis has shown, unlike the merely photographic American model (e.g., *Gilda, On the Town*). According to this assessment, as Dave Kehr states about film posters, “These fascinating works are at once commercial products of our global popular culture and intriguing personal visions of the poster artists” (Kehr, 2003, p. 9). The considerations above allow me to surmise why the figurative language of Italian film *manifesti*, in contrast to freer commercial advertising, tended to follow a rigorous academic realism that often dismissed an ‘experimentalism’ beyond a naturalistic figurative composition. Hence, considering that the two aspects of a naturalistic visual language of film *manifesti* and the required representation of stars are interdependent, we can argue that a unique feature of the *italianità* in film *manifesti*

² Cf. the theory around what business creativity is in: Amabile, T. “How to Kill Creativity”, in *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 76 (5), 1998, p. 76-87.

is also the result of a merging process of inter-cultural phenomena, such as the star-system and the Italian artists' capacity for pictorial reinvention. Moreover, the artistic creativity of graphic artists must be seen as an artisanal practice that was shaped according to commercial demands and socio-cultural challenges, which determined the idiosyncratic advertising language in Italy. This discussion has shed light on how industrial demands and marketing purposes were instrumental in determining the designs in film *manifesti* (Longi, 2002), but it also has shown how significant they have been in refining the final, complex output, which was the fruit of the graphic artists' labour and creativity. Ultimately, 'lateral thinking'³ in the creative process was a fundamental part of the broader cultural project to which *pittori di cinema* contributed in their role as mediators, representing the expectations of the industry and feeding the imagination of the public.

My thesis has sought to emphasise how film *manifesti* regularly catalysed both rapid and slower changes in an Italian society that was leaning towards modernity, becoming a faithful portrait of the contradictions and problematic concerns of the time. As evidenced in the discussion in chapter five, *manifesti* for the promotion of cinema and the graphic artists behind them facilitated and supported the spread of consumption and a new consumerist lifestyle and collective behaviours. In so doing, advertising artists openly contested the stagnant moralism of Catholic origin that dominated Italian society in the aftermath of the Second World War. The *manifesti* analysed in chapter five confronted the taboos of their epoch and established a new, modern scenario with hope and the sense of trust that characterised the boom years.⁴ Therefore, when mass communication came to play a more prominent role in national life (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007), the creative role of *pittori di cinema* was expressed in the

³ According to Pratt and Jeffcut's definition.

⁴ Cf. introduction to the exhibition of film posters, entitled *Il colore delle stelle. Mitografie del femminile nei manifesti delle collezioni CSAC*, held in Palazzo Pigorini, Parma, 1 April-14 May 2017, see: <https://www.csacparma.it/il-colore-delle-stelle/>. Retrieved January 2020.

‘realm of consumption’,⁵ influencing the common perception and behaviour of the modern mass society and “stimulating expectations” (Forgacs and Gundle, 2007, p. 272). Therefore, no matter how pragmatic or hesitant the engagement with the artistic context of film *manifesti* and their visual-narrative elements may have been, advertising material for cinema offered to the masses a highly imaginative setting. They were seeking to contrast the stagnant traditional rhythms that were no longer adequate for a modern society undergoing complex socio-cultural changes (mostly in terms of sexuality, the role of women in society, and the traditional family).

This thesis is enhanced through the use of a multidisciplinary perspective. Its originality lies in redefining the role of post-war *pittori di cinema* as socio-cultural mediators within a more complex network of interactions with the Italian film industry, popular tastes, and patterns of consumption in a broader, international perspective. I have considered the relevance of the film *manifesto* as a compelling intermedial object, which has enabled several cultural connections with a contemporary social-artistic scenario and the mediascape. A unique consideration of this thesis is the analysis of original drafts in light of commercial demands. This approach has led to an innovative perspective in the study of film *manifesti* that highlights their actual relation with the industry, not just with the initial, freer artistic view perceived at the draft stage. A clear network has emerged through the analysis presented in this dissertation, placing the *manifesto* as the nexus that links commercial needs and socio-cultural customs in conjunction with artistic trends of the time. Indeed, artistic trends were themselves subject to societal development, whether cultural (e.g., a more consumerist way of life, the changes in societal roles) or political (e.g., censorship as linked to authority and the church). I argue that the multitude of pressures, examined in my thesis, gave meaning to the role of *pittori di cinema*. Therefore, I have stressed the importance of including these graphic artists in a broader context of commercial needs, industrial strategies, and socio-cultural impulses that enabled them to be

⁵ Expression used by Forgacs and Gundle in the same book mentioned.

representatives of the period of mass consumption in Italy. They participated in its development and facilitated dialogue with the mass public. This approach to assessing *manifesti* has distinguished my research from existing texts, which have been confined to assessing this medium as ‘paratext’ valuable in a film studies perspective (Brunetta, 2002; Kehr, 2003; Bagshaw, 2005); or focusing on the role of artists (namely ‘*pittori di cinema*’) purely under the lens of pictorial originality and artistic ability as ‘painters’ at the service of cinema (Marinozzi, 2011; Baroni, 2018), thus neglecting their wider societal impact during a period of time in Italy that was critical to its modernisation.

By examining a variety of film *manifesti*, I have identified that they were used as creative vehicles to visualise socio-cultural developments. Indeed, I have argued that through their artworks, *pittori di cinema* became catalysts for the establishment of these social developments and instrumental in embedding them more widely within society. As evidenced, film *manifesti* impacted society, representing a crossroads where contrasting ideas and concepts of modernity met with varying significance. In so many words, *manifesti* were conveying a change in customs and cultural values. Indeed, as a collector of posters, Tony Nourmand noted that what he loves most of movie posters is that ‘[...] they are so immediate. And that immediacy is an intrinsic part of their mass appeal. [...] They are all around us [...] and we interact [with] them unconsciously’ (Nourmand, 2013, p. 13). This unconscious interaction between passers-by and the visual immediacy of film *manifesti*, evident in Nourmand’s statement, is what triggered this profound process of reflection at both an individual and collective level. It led to a prolific self-analysis of modern times, including its hustle and bustle. Furthermore, film *manifesti* publicly promoted a new code of imagery, renewing the cultural visibility of desires, bodies, and gender roles and manipulating visual pleasure.

Italian film *manifesti* such as *Gilda* (1946), *Miss Spogliarello* (1956), *Guendalina* (1957) and *Il Divorzio* (1970) gradually shifted their focal points and challenged the thin line dividing social practice, representation and imagination. *Manifesti* operated within these notions as a cultural and media domain. Hence, the central place given to the image of women in film *manifesti* redefines her role in society. Although the female figure has been consistently seen in film advertising as a subject to provoke visual pleasure, the artists' playfulness with representing these objects of desire changed from the 1940s to the 1970s. From the idealised, unreachable yet "available" woman like Gilda, the provocative and confident figure of Guendalina - portrayed under the guise of innocence - to the intensified scene of seduction by Brigitte Bardot in *Miss Spogliarello* where her nearly naked body is brazenly displayed, it is evident that women's bodies are portrayed as provocative, but also represent a changing perception of the female figure within society. From the 1960s onwards, film *manifesti* began to depict more explicit images of female bodies. In this way, the body became a means through which traditional values were challenged, contributing to transforming what had largely been a predominantly conservative country prone to censorship into a modern society exploring a new language of desire, thus weakening the patriarchal notion of family. Through the analysis which I present in this thesis, the portrayal of the female body by *pittori di cinema* is multi-faceted and serves several purposes. For instance, examples of images embody their need for social emancipation and contribute to the societal perception of women's role in society. However, works of art also represent female nudity, sexualising and objectifying it. Although this was partially driven to aid mass consumption in some cases, it is also clear that it was used by *pittori di cinema* as a vehicle to challenge censorship and social mores. Some of the examples detailed in chapter five demonstrate how censorship in some cases led to more provocative, if less revealing, *manifesti*. I have argued that this was also part of artists' challenge, which was commercial in part, but mainly required innate creativity to overcome

ensorship barriers while still creating highly provocative *manifesti* that would be highly effective at undermining existing, conservative societal views.

An in-depth analysis of gender and its implications for *manifesti* fell outside the scope of this thesis. However, preliminary analysis of the representation of the female body by *pittori di cinema* has allowed for an outline of that complex scenario. There is ample room for more in-depth analysis of *manifesti* in terms of their use by *pittori di cinema* to represent the paradoxical modernisation of women in society, including issues of empowerment, exploitation, sexualization and as a means to challenge censorship. An analysis of such should evaluate the differences in the approaches adopted when men and women are sexualised in visual representations.

Throughout my thesis I have analysed and highlighted the role played by film *manifesti* as catalysts during the timeframe under consideration. They drove socio-cultural modernisation, interacting with external, pre-existing structures. In support of such an assessment, the following statement by Gundle and Guani reveals the rift with the past as conveyed by mass media:

Gli aspetti piú personali della transizione da un mondo ad un altro illustrano forse meglio di qualsiasi altra cosa come l'accettazione di un nuovo modo di vivere dovette comportare un netto rifiuto di modi di vita ed esperienze precedentemente accettate. Ma questa rottura col passato é stato un fenomeno collettivo solo in apparenza. [...] Ogni persona e ogni famiglia si trovó coinvolta in una battaglia su piú fronti tra il vecchio e il nuovo che investiva e sconvolgeva l'equilibrio all'interno di un determinato ordine di relazioni sociali (Gundle and Guani, 1986, pp. 581–582).

A lively sense of socio-cultural transition is illustrated through the portrait of Giacinto and Erminia Colonna in the film *Il comune senso del pudore*, which opens this thesis. The episode in the film tellingly depicts the effects that images triggered in people who may be either

nostalgic, cynical, or naïve (Brunetta, 2002). A quote from Giacinto underscores the change this thesis is examining, which is also conveyed by film manifesti:

[...] Anche la vita coniugale ha subito una trasformazione, il rapporto uomo e donna non è più quello di una volta è cambiato, ecco perchè fanno sti film; per insegnare a quelli che non lo sanno che cosa devono fare per avere [...] nuove emozioni e magari più soddisfazioni.⁶

A reassessment of convictions previously considered immutable and implemented through the mass media reveals the male character's desire above to embrace (fully or partially) the changing times. Critically, film *manifesti* of the 60s and 70s employed a new expressive language inaccessible to the part of society still stuck in the age before mass consumption. Hence, 'morally indefensible' acts instigated by mass communication (first and foremost, cinema and visual advertising) underscored an unavoidable change in customs and mindset.

This thesis has brought together exemplary film *manifesti*, *locandine*, and drafts, considered their intermedial dialogue with cinema and other mass media and artworks. By restoring this advertising material to the socio-cultural context that produced it, this thesis has shown the *manifesto*'s wide-ranging capacity to drive the development of modern mass society in Italy. It is my hope that this thesis has also contributed to increasing recognition for *pittori di cinema*. Given the significant role played by film *manifesti* in the cultural development of Italy and their value in the study of the twentieth century, I have sought to pave the way for future analysis through a novel, interdisciplinary approach.

⁶ From *Il comune senso del pudore*, 1976. Dialogue between Giacinto and Erminia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnhM4alKgEU> (0:57-1:15).

Appendix One

Interview with Maurizio Baroni

Bologna, June 2018

M. Come comincia la tua esperienza da collezionista di manifesti cinematografici?

M. Io ho iniziato a 12 anni, quando andavo a staccare i manifesti dai muri o li portavo via dalle bacheche, questo é durato per un anno o due. Poi, quando mio padre l'ha scoperto, si é arrabbiato tanto e li ha bruciati tutti. Io ero impazzito, avevo 12 o 13 anni. Mio padre allora mi disse che se fossi stato promosso, saremmo andati alla SAC di Bologna e lì mi avrebbe speso 5.000 lire (che erano tanti soldi!). Mi ricordo che si partiva con la corriera, mio padre non aveva la patente, e nel tratto Castelfranco-Bologna mi diceva: "Maurizio, dimmi cos'è che ti piace, che se costa anche di più delle 5.000 lire, io te lo compro. Ma pensare di buttare via 5000 lire per comprare dei pezzi di carta che non hanno nessun valore, mi piange il cuore. Dimmi che cosa vuoi davvero, che io te lo compro." Io risposi che volevo proprio i manifesti. La cosa é durata anche negli anni successivi. Natale, compleanni, ricorrenze varie, il regalo era (sempre) quello! Si andava a Bologna, con 30.000/50.000 lire quello che era, per acquistare manifesti.

M. Attualmente, esiste ancora materiale pubblicitario alla SAC?

M. La SAC c'è ancora, ma il materiale non ce l'hanno più! Io ho conosciuto la SAC di Genova, quella di Torino, Milano, Ancona, Roma, e la SAC di Napoli. Quando penso a quella di Napoli, mi viene da ridere. Mi ricordo che entravi una sera di inverno e chiesi dei manifesti; mi portarono in questo grande magazzino pieno di scaffalature dove tengono tutti i pacchi numerati, solo che la scaffalatura era crollata, per cui c'era una montagna di carta, ed era impensabile trovare o tirare via un manifesto sotto questa tonnellata di carta. Ho conosciuto queste SAC sparse un po' in tutta Italia perché ciò che non trovavo a Bologna, lo cercavo altrove. A Bologna, c'era un quaderno, con tutti i titoli dei film e ogni filma aveva abbinato un numero. Quindi tu potevi trovare dei pacchi interi con tanta roba dentro, o dei pacchi vuoti perché la roba l'avevano finita o distrutta. conoscevo i numeri di tanti film. La cosa più difficile da trovare era la locandina, e il manifesto. Manifesti ogni tanto ce n'erano, ma le locandine non venivano restituite a la SAC, perché andavano incollate nei muri, messe dentro nei negozi, quindi poi le buttavano via. Le fotobuste invece venivano restituite, ma anche lì in un corredo fotografico possono esserci 8/10/12 fino a 20 fotobuste una diversa dall'altra. Trovare la fotobusta con la fotografia del bacio [ESE.] dei due protagonisti, quello era molto difficile; una scena di battaglia o una scena di una corsa di cavalli era facile perché nessuno la voleva. Per esempio trovare la foto del bacio tra i protagonisti di

Via Col Vento era impossibile, o l'immagine di Alberto Sordi che mangia gli spaghetti di *Un Americano a Roma*.... oggi una fotografia dell'epoca di quella portata costa migliaia di Euro. Io mi reputo comunque un ex-collezionista di manifesti, dal momento in cui ho ceduto tutto il mio materiale (25.000 pezzi) alla cineteca di Bologna. I manifesti li vedo ancora volentieri, perchè guai se non potessi vederli, e mi danno ancora tanta emozione.

M. Parliamo dell'effetto che un manifesto aveva sul pubblico che per strada si soffermava a guardarlo. Che effetto aveva su di te?

M. Guardare i manifesti affissi per le strade mi emozionava. Oggi potremmo tranquillamente paragonare quelle strade alle nostre gallerie d'arte – potremmo quindi averlo definito 'un museo a cielo aperto'. Tu passavi davanti ad un manifesto, te lo guardavi, te lo gustavi e ti veniva la voglia di andare a vedere il film. La ragione principale era quella, portare la gente al cinema. Sai quante volte aspettavo la mattina presto, sapevo che doveva uscire il tal film quindi aspettavo di vedere il giornale dove c'erano i flani che generalmente però erano diversi, come disegno dai manifesti. Quindi io non vedevo l'ora di andare davanti ai cinema del mio paese, e dicevo: "Ecco, hanno fatto un bel manifesto!" Guardando i disegni cercavo di capire la trama, e allora commentavo: "Sì, il film mi piace, lo vado a vedere!". Se il manifesto non era accattivante, non avevo la stessa reazione.

M. Quanto era importante il manifesto per la promozione pubblicitaria di un film?

M. Tanto del successo del film dipendeva innanzitutto dal manifesto! Francesco Rosi una volta mi disse (parole sante): "Sig. Baroni si ricordi, il 30% del successo di un film, indipendentemente che l'avesse fatto un regista importante, o l'avesse interpretato un attore famoso, era tutto dovuto all'arte dei cartellonisti". Tu entravi al cinema se il manifesto aveva attirato la tua attenzione, se il film era bello ne eri felice. Quante volte questi cartellonisti, per ragioni burocratiche, in base agli ordini dei committenti ci hanno imbrogliato. Promettevano delle cose, delle scene, che poi in realtà nel film non c'erano. Entravi ad ammirare una pellicola, poi caso mai dicevi "É piú bello il manifesto del film stesso"; la cosa assurda è che, nei titoli di coda sono menzionate tutte le persone coinvolte nella realizzazione del film, ma non sono mai stati menzionati i cartellonisti ("il manifesto é stato disegnato da..."). Tutt'oggi così è. Questo è assurdo, perchè tu entravi al cinema perché il manifesto ti aveva attratto.

M. Tu hai incontrato negli anni molti cartellonisti. Come ritenevano la loro attività?

M. Quello che mi ha rammaricato di quegli incontri, è l'aver sentito dalle parole di questi personaggi, la tristezza, l'amarezza, quanto Simeoni fosse arrabbiato per esempio; si sono lamentati che il loro lavoro è sempre stato disprezzato. Il capo ufficio stampa prendeva i bozzetti – facevano 4/5 disegni in base agli ordini che ricevevano dai committenti – e veniva regolarmente scelto il piú brutto. Come puoi leggere sul mio libro che riporta le sue parole, Anselmo Ballester – uno dei piú grandi pittori di cinema – si lamentava del fatto che sapevano fin dall'inizio di fare un lavoro per il quale non sarebbero mai stati

gratificati, a differenza di alcuni loro colleghi: c'era chi disegnava solo bottiglie, chi strappava le tele e attaccava degli stracci e dava uno spruzzo di colore sopra, e le chiamavano opere d'arte. Ballester diceva "Noi dovevamo essere in grado di saper disegnare qualsiasi cosa; da un volto perfetto di un attore, da una scena di indiani, da una battaglia navale, insomma ogni cosa... e in poco tempo!" (tra 15 giorni esce il film e deve essere tutto pronto!). Tutti mi hanno raccontato la stessa identica cosa. Gli artisti spesso e volentieri venivano mortificati. I critici dicevano che il manifesto era cartaccia, dunque si buttavano via. L'altra mortificazione dipendeva dalla qualità di stampa. Quando prendi in mano i bozzetti, sono perfetti, meravigliosi, ma venivano stampati innanzitutto su carta povera e venivano stampati male. Ad esempio: C'è un disegno di Silvano Campeggi per la reclame di uno di quei documentari che andavano di moda negli anni '60 (*Il paradiso dell'uomo*) dove è disegnata una donna, coperta da un enorme ventaglio, che nel disegno originale è viola, Nano lo ha disegnato nelle tonalità del fucsia e del viola. Il manifesto stampato riprodusse questo ventaglio in verde. E non c'entra assolutamente nulla con il disegno originale che aveva fatto Nano.

Anche **Maro**, che è stato il pittore ufficiale della Titanus, era talmente mortificato a fare questo tipo di lavoro che i suoi manifesti non li firmava, tranne in alcuni casi (*Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, *Cronaca familiare*, *Il giardino dei Finzi contini*). Tutti gli altri manifesti non li ha firmati, e non gliene fregava niente. Per lui il suo era un lavoro di routine, perchè doveva portare uno stipendio a casa e dunque per mantenere la famiglia; ma era talmente mortificato dai committenti che dicevano: "Devi fare così, non così, toglilo questo...", quindi la tua arte non potevi esprimerla. Non potevi fare effettivamente quello che eri in grado di fare, perchè erano PITTORI. Poi l'altro problema era non solo con i committenti, ma grossi problemi erano con la censura.

M. Altro tema che mi premeva trattare. Quali erano dunque i rapporti che il manifesto cinematografico – e gli artisti - ebbero con la censura?

M. Gli artisti avevano due ostacoli: non solo il committente, ma anche la censura – che non scherzava mica! Censura voleva dire subire un processo. Sandro Simeoni è stato uno di quelli più censurati in assoluto, ha subito 12 processi. Anche Giuliano Nistri col manifesto per *Guendalina*, e non soltanto, ha avuto la stessa sventura, per cose assurde poi! Anche il magnifico bozzetto di un film importantissimo di Visconti, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, venne censurato. Maro in questo caso ha voluto disegnare una delle scene culminanti del film, il delitto commesso da Salvatore. Se guardate attentamente questo disegno, che è atroce, perchè parliamo di un delitto appunto (Salvatore sta accoltellando Nadia), manca qualcosa in questo disegno, manca il sangue, nel corpo dell'attrice e sul pugnale. La censura ha detto NO! Era già abbastanza dire di sì a questa scena, che però era la scena clou del film. Ma è stata purgata. Se ne potrebbero raccontare a centinaia di episodi come questo!

M. Dicevi che Simeoni è stato uno di quelli più censurati, per esempio?

M. Quando Simeoni reclamizzò nel 1966 *La battaglia di Algeri* di Pontecorvo, il quale aveva espressamente chiesto a Simeoni un disegno nello stile di Guttuso, fece questo bozzetto dove ritrae un ribelle algerino che tiene con disprezzo in una mano la bandiera francese, e nell'altra mano una mitragliatrice. Venne fuori un casino con l'ambasciata francese, il pittore venne chiamato a Roma e gli dissero "la nostra bandiera tenuta in mano con disprezzo è impossibile [anche solo] pensarlo". La conseguenza fu che in Francia il film è uscito 15 anni dopo. Il manifesto in Italia è stato coperto da un fotogramma del film, sulla parte del disegno in cui compare il pugno e la bandiera francese. Simeoni ha commentato che gli avevano rovinato il disegno; e pretese che il suo nome venisse tolto dal manifesto, e aveva ragione.

Altro esempio, il manifesto per il film di Petri *A ciascuno il suo*. Per ragioni che riguardano più che altro la politica Petri realizzò questo meraviglioso film da un romanzo di Sciascia, ma chi era al potere allora voleva colpire il regista e l'autore del libro; e non sapendo come fare per poter penalizzare l'uscita del film attaccarono il manifesto. Nel manifesto un uomo e una donna, Gian Maria Volontè e Irene Papas, si stanno baciando. Si tratta di un banalissimo bacio tra due innamorati. Hanno sequestrato il manifesto, sequestrato il film, perchè la gente non poteva mica andare al cinema a vedere questa denuncia alla mafia! Simeoni fu condannato, perchè allora era anche capo ufficio stampa della Penta, la compagnia che distribuiva il film. Quindi condannato il film perchè si era accettato che venisse reclamizzato sui muri della città da questo manifesto, condannato perchè lo aveva disegnato Simeoni, e in quella maniera il film è stato penalizzato.

Un'altra vicenda riguarda un disegno di **Arnaldo Putzu** che reclamizza un film con Brigitte Bardot: *Miss Spogliarello*, dove si vede la figura della Bardot mentre esegue uno spogliarello (in cui si vedono perlopiù le gambe e il décolleté). In seguito alla denuncia di un cittadino che dice "questa immagine ha turbato i miei quattro figli", che non hanno visto il film perché era vietato ai minori di 16 anni, venne fatto un processo, condannato il pittore, il quale ha dovuto pagare 7000 lire di multa per il disegno, e versare 10.000 lire al fondo per la salvaguardia dell'innocenza del fanciullo. Accadevano delle cose che oggi diresti "É fantasia!" Molto probabilmente allora solo [pronunciare] il nome dell'attrice Brigitte Bardot era peccato.

M. Che rapporti c'erano tra i cartellonisti, rivalità, solidarietà...?

M. Per quello che mi hanno raccontato alcuni di loro, si erano create [tra loro] non tanto delle invidie, ma un senso di competizione magari... La categoria dei cartellonisti era composta da circa 15-20 nomi: c'era il cartellonista che lavorava per case cinematografiche a livello della Columbia e della Metro, come Capitani o Nano; per la Warner Bross, come Martinati. Poi insomma altri che lavoravano per case cinematografiche minori, piccole compagnie di distribuzione, che delle volte non pagano neanche. La Warner Bross saldava sempre i suoi conti, come la Columbia, come la Titanus, ma altre ditte che erano molto piccole, metti il caso che il film non avesse avuto successo, talvolta non pagavano neanche.

Delle ditte, non faccio nomi, non volevano neanche che venissero firmati questi disegni, quindi non avevi niente in mano che ti permettesse di dire “Quel disegno l’ho fatto io!”.

Quando ho incontrato Sandro Simeoni, mi diceva che tante volte per la realizzazione di manifesti di film minori, queste case di produzione non avevano il materiale fotografico da consegnare al quale poi il pittore si ispirava per fare il manifesto. Quindi, spesso capitava che lui si fotografava insieme alla moglie in casa, si mettevano in posa; parlo, ad esempio, di un film importantissimo del 1969 di Ingmar Bergman (regista e sceneggiatore svedese), *Il Rito*. Simeoni ha scattato delle fotografie della moglie e di lui inginocchiato che le bacia le cosce, e con quella foto lui ha disegnato il manifesto, chiaramente restituendo le sembianze degli attori principali, ma sono loro! Quindi si arrangiavano anche in questo.

M. Tra i pittori di cinema c’era anche chi aveva guadagnato un certo prestigio...

M. Ci furono pittori fortunati come Nano, che ha disegnato 3000 manifesti. Quando pensi a Nano pensi a *Ben-Hur* e a *Via col Vento*, due colossal. Simeoni fece più di 3000 disegni. Simeoni è uno di quelli che ha fatto il manifesto per *La Dolce Vita*, *Accattone* e *Canterbury*. Olivetti ha fatto dei manifesti meravigliosi, tra i quali un altro disegno per *La Dolce Vita*, uno tra i manifesti italiani più ricercato da tutti i collezionisti di tutto il mondo. Certo sono anche fortune. Magari altri pittori altrettanto o più validi, non hanno fatto il disegno del film che ha fatto la storia del cinema italiano o internazionale, e allora non hanno avuto lo stesso successo [e sono scomparsi dietro le quinte].

M. Ma qual era l’iter seguito dai cartellonisti per la commissione di un manifesto?

M. I cartellonisti facevano prima gli schizzi preparatori in bianco e nero con la matita, quindi guardando (per la maggior parte dei casi) il pacco di fotografie che venivano consegnate loro; invece quando erano fortunati guardavano direttamente il film, che spesso lo vedevano anche mal volentieri perchè erano quasi sempre in lingua originale; dovevano capire quali fossero le scene clou del film e poi riproporle nei loro disegni. Poi passavano ad uno schizzo colorato, poi da uno degli schizzi scelti facevano i bozzetti. “I” perchè dovevano portare al committente più di un disegno. Come ho già detto, regolarmente veniva scelto quello che non andava bene per l’artista (il più brutto). In un libro, Capitani dice: “A differenza dei miei colleghi, Ballester e Martinati, io [ad un certo punto] facevo un disegno solo, portavo quello e portandone soltanto uno non c’era l’imbarazzo della scelta; perchè già troppe volte succedeva che scegliessero quello che a me non piaceva. Allora poi evitavo di farne tanti, ne facevo solo uno, quello era e quello veniva scelto.”

M. Sarebbe bello poter tracciare il percorso dal bozzetto al manifesto finale...

M. Io nel mio libro l’ho fatto solo per un pittore, per motivi di spazio. Nella realizzazione di *Moby Dick*, eseguito da Alfredo Capitani, ho messo questi tre disegni, di cui il primo (e lui lo dice nel trafiletto che ho inserito sotto) forse è il manifesto più bello che abbia fatto. Aveva come sfondo un teschio, ma la committenza è stata rigida e non ha voluto il teschio, così per quello che doveva essere affisso sui muri,

ha dovuto disegnare *un banale* ritratto di Gregory Peck; ma per attirare la gente ci voleva la faccia o dell'attore o dell'attrice, quindi ...

M. La committenza sfidava parecchio gli artisti con le loro richieste?

M. All'interno delle case cinematografiche c'erano questi agenti, che si interessavano della distribuzione, quindi i capi redattori che si occupavano della pubblicità, e spesso erano agenti bravi nel loro lavoro, ma di arte non capivano niente! A riguardo, una storia bellissima me la raccontò Enrico De Seta e compare nel mio libro. Alla fine degli anni '40 fece un ritratto di Totò dove il naso di Totò forma la lettera T del nome dell'attore, e lo presentò per il film *L'imperatore di Capri*. Fu bocciato immediatamente! Dissero che Totò nei manifesti doveva comparire con le donnine. De Seta mi disse, "Io mi sono vendicato, ho fatto la figura piccola di Totò e intorno gli ho fatto 30/40 donnine vestite per l'epoca abbastanza provocanti; ma il manifesto era banale fatto così, eppure fu quello che è andato sui muri.

[M. Tuttavia Nano riuscì, qualche volta, ad avere più voce in capitolo...]

M. Te l'avrà detto Nano, che per far sí che accettassero il manifesto per *Ben-Hur* ha dovuto lottare. Cioè, reclamizza un film da 11 premi Oscar, che ha fatto la storia del cinema, importantissimo, costosissimo, fa il manifesto e non mette il volto di Charlton Heston, che allora era all'apice della carriera? No, lui mette soltanto 4 cavalli. Dunque non c'è un attore, non c'è nient'altro. Ha dovuto lottare con la committenza, ha detto: "Guardate bene che la scena clou del film è la corsa delle bighe, quindi non metto i due attori o i personaggi Ben Hur e Messala, no! metto i cavalli e basta." Per fortuna che hanno accettato, perchè il manifesto è un capolavoro. Questo manifesto pubblicitario (per il film di *Ben-Hur*) è stato utilizzato in tutto il mondo. Per fortuna c'era anche chi si convinceva di accettare manifesti diretti principalmente dall'artista.

M. Altri elementi chiave nel rapporto tra la committenza e i pittori?

M. Una storia me la raccontò Tino Avelli: quando dovevano commissionare il manifesto per il *Decameron* di Pasolini, dunque un film molto importante e, come ha detto Avelli, un manifesto molto difficile da fare per via della tematica (a incappare nella censura non ci voleva molto), dalla casa di distribuzione, chiamarono 4/5 pittori e li misero in stanze diverse. Nessuno sapeva della presenza dell'altro; gli hanno eseguire lì stesso i disegni, e poi hanno scelto quello che ritenevano più opportuno. Ciascun pittore ha saputo soltanto in seguito che c'erano degli altri colleghi in altre stanze che facevano disegno per quello stesso film.

Sai, sono aneddoti belli, ed è un mondo sconosciuto. Quello che mi rammarico è di non aver incontrato gli artisti col registratore, perchè me ne hanno raccontate!! Io ti sto dicendo solo quello che mi viene in mente, 24 anni son tanti! Per fortuna che la stragrande maggioranza degli artisti li ho almeno fotografati.

M. Il tuo libro *Pittori di cinema*, è un gran bel risultato...

M. Un libro come quello che ho appena fatto adesso lo fai solo se hai la passione. Se non hai la passione e se non avessi catalogato tutto questo materiale da quando è venuto fuori il pc, sarebbe stato impensabile. Non esiste nessun libro dove, di fianco ai titoli dei film usciti in Italia ti viene detto chi ha disegnato il manifesto; nessuno lo sa, e nessuno lo ha fatto prima. Oggi dovrebbe essere automatico collegare il manifesto di un famoso film al suo cartellonista...

Interview with Giuliano Nistri

Anzio (Rome), November 2016

M. Quando comincia la sua carriera nel cartellonismo?

G. La mia carriera nel cartellonismo comincia nel 1949, allora ero un ventenne. Cominciai a lavorare per il *Travaso*, un settimanale.

M. Come cambia il cartellonismo negli anni del dopoguerra, e durante gli anni '50, 60'..?

G. C'è stato proprio un passaggio generazionale, un cambiamento dovuto proprio al modo di lavorare. Tentavamo un genere pittorico che era un po' diverso dai nostri predecessori (cartellonisti che avevano lavorato già negli anni prima della guerra). I più anziani erano da noi molto ammirati e molto stimati; però le (nostre) tendenze pittoriche erano diverse – tutto qui. Eravamo aggiornati all'epoca in cui vivevamo, loro venivano da esperienze diverse dalle nostre. I tre più ammirati della generazione degli “anziani” erano Anselmo Ballester, Alfredo Capitani e Luigi Martinati, che erano molto bravi.

M. Possiamo dire che un po' hanno fatto scuola, quindi?

G. Certo! Fecero, anche se non ufficialmente, un tipo di scuola di cui noi usufruivamo. E la cosa bella è che andavamo molto d'accordo tutti; c'era una forma di coesione morale. Eravamo pochi, perchè quelli che facevamo molti manifesti saremo stati 15/16 circa (c'erano altri che facevano lavori minori). Eravamo aggiornati agli stilemi dell'arte coeva, ma anche autonomi. Perchè era un periodo in cui andava un certo tipo di pittura, che non si accostava al genere cartellonistico, perchè quest'ultimo doveva narrare – il contenuto del film in modo realistico per la rappresentazione degli attori: Mastroianni doveva essere Mastroianni insomma!. Tanto è vero che ci furono alcuni pittori – io ricordo Guttuso per esempio – che provò a fare i manifesti cinematografici e poi rinunciò perchè era indirizzato pittoricamente, su un altro fronte stilistico. Noi dovevamo raccontare quello che “volevamo” [sul film] purchè fosse accessibile al pubblico. E se noi al pubblico avessimo presentato un manifesto – per dire - astratto, [l'impatto sul pubblico] sarebbe stato addirittura negativo.

M. Qual era l'iter per la committenza di un manifesto?

G. Ci chiamavano di volta in volta. La nostra situazione economica-professionale era in rapporto con la casa di produzione o di distribuzione – anzi forse più spesso con quella di distribuzione (che distribuiva i film da tutte le parti), e lì c'era tutto un processo, cioè molto spesso andavamo a vedere i film, ma piuttosto non spesso, raramente! Perchè se avessimo visto tutti i film di cui dovevamo fare il manifesto, il manifesto non l'avremmo più fatto! Per cui sì, ogni tanto si andava a vederli. Comunque,

andavamo lì, ci davano un certo numero di fotografie di scena che noi sceglievamo; preparavamo gli schizzi, che erano proposte che presentavamo o al distributore o al produttore, l'uno o l'altro sceglieva quella che preferiva e dallo schizzo passavamo al bozzetto definitivo che andava in stampa, e da lì nasce il manifesto. Questo era l'iter.

M. C'erano delle persone in particolare, nella distribuzione o nella produzione, addette alla scelta del bozzetto?

G. Sì certo, l'ufficio pubblicità, e il nostro rapporto l'avevamo con l'ufficio pubblicità, non col produttore o chiunque fosse (salvo casi particolari, insomma). C'era un produttore italiano che si chiamava Fortunato Misiano e avevamo un contatto diretto con lui. Ma normalmente il nostro rapporto era con l'ufficio stampa e pubblicità.

M. Il regista dei film, era coinvolto nella scelta dei manifesti, o erano solo gli uffici stampa addetti a questa scelta?

G. Non sempre. Mi ricordo una volta Federico Fellini che io conobbi perché ero stato chiamato a fare un manifesto per *La strada*, e andai per scegliere delle fotografie e a un certo punto nella stanza entrò Fellini, ci presentammo, e mi disse: "E allora cosa pensi di fare?" e ci facemmo una chiacchierata, "Vorrei mettere in risalto Giulietta Masina con un ritratto, e la scena di violenza tra..." e così poi feci, ma ecco ci incontrammo per caso. Fellini però era un caso isolato essendo egli stesso disegnatore, disegnava per il giornale *Marc'Aurelio*. Per esempio mio fratello [Enzo Nistri] godeva della stima particolare di Luchino Visconti. Lì c'era questa intesa regista/cartellonista. Fece per lui 3 o 4 manifesti, tra cui *La caduta degli dei*. Però ecco, è un caso isolato.

M. Le case cinematografiche, invece, capitava che ricorressero agli stessi artisti quando commissionavano i manifesti per i loro film?

G. Loro sì! C'erano certe case cinematografiche per cui uno aveva lavorato un certo numero di volte, le sue cose erano piaciute, e quindi questa casa chiamava sempre lo stesso artista. Le posso citare la Warner Bros, per la quale lavoravo moltissimo; la 20th Century Fox; la casa di distribuzione italiana interfilm, molto affermata e importante; la Universal e la Metro Goldwin Mayer; Io ho lavorato un po' per tutte le case..., però per alcune di loro ho lavorato sempre, fino a quando c'è stato il manifesto. Si creava dunque un rapporto di collaborazione, loro sapevano come io lavoravo, io sapevo con chi avevo a che fare, e quindi andava benissimo. Perché mi capitava anche di ricevere una telefonata e mi si diceva "guarda Giuliano, ci serve il bozzetto domani...", e se era qualcuno per cui io lavoravo sempre, mi mettevo lì e facevo il bozzetto. Quindi c'era questo spirito di collaborazione che era molto importante.

M. Ma lei pensa la casa “x” si sentisse meglio rappresentata da un pittore piuttosto che un altro?

G. No, parlerei più che altro di questo spirito di collaborazione, quindi un rapporto professionale che funzionava da ambo le parti. Io pensavo al modo migliore per rappresentare quel film – la creatività in questo senso era molto importante per la riuscita del manifesto pubblicitario. Poi qualche volta riusciva bene, qualche volta meno, ma questo fa parte di qualsiasi attività. Cioè io sapevo di dover fare qualcosa che apparisse al pubblico con certo interesse.

M. Lei ha lavorato per la Lux Film, tra le altre, e lí – se non sbaglio – ha avuto un buonissimo rapporto con Augusto Favalli...

G. Ehe si! Io ho cominciato con Favalli e ci ho lavorato finché lui è vissuto, perché purtroppo morì anche piuttosto giovane, aveva 53 anni. Ma con Favalli ho avuto un rapporto magnifico, e lui era una persona incredibile. Era capo ufficio stampa della Lux Film. Lui aveva un suo studio personale a Piazza Dante a Roma, con altri disegnatori, io avevo un rapporto molto bello con Favalli. Furono due con cui cominciai la mia carriera nel cartellonsimo: uno era Favalli, e l'altro Leonardo Magagnini della RKO. Questi erano loro stessi artisti! Erano disegnatori, pittori. Cioè, era difficile occuparsi di queste cose, di questo lavoro, senza avere una personale esperienza nel settore, esperienza tecnico artistica voglio dire.

M. Eppure succedeva anche, no?

G. Non mi faccia ricordare quelli che non c'entravano niente ma che si occupavano lo stesso di questo mestiere! Infatti di competenti nel settore ci sono stati i due sopra citati, e forse altri uno o due, gli altri erano tutti così, arrivati lí e improvvisati. In quei casi il lavoro nostro diventava più difficile, infatti, perché avevi a che fare con gente che [diceva cose come] “ma quella macchia lì non va...” [ride] e così via.

M. Spesso dunque, qualcuno dei suoi colleghi ha affermato, che tra i bozzetti che venivano fatti veniva scelto il peggiore. Lei la pensa allo stesso modo?

È vero, è vero!

M. Parliamo del soggetto dei manifesti. Ciò che era veramente importante per la realizzazione del manifesto era la figura dell'attore in primo piano, in particolar modo il personaggio femminile del film?

G. Oh sì, infatti il bozzetto e manifesto con Mastroianni in primo piano è stato un'eccezione. E poi, logicamente, c'era anche il problema *bellissimo* della censura.

M. Esatto, e volevo arrivare proprio lì, ma lei mi precede!

G. Quello lì è un tema stupendo! Io le faccio vedere subito [mi mostra un libro dalla sua libreria] ecco *Si disapprova* è il suo titolo, questo fu fatto proprio dall'ANICA, perché ci fu un periodo di censura

ignobile. Ci sono dentro delle immagini censurate. Censura voleva dire che il manifesto non poteva andare in stampa se tu non correggevi quello che secondo loro non funzionava. Adesso io le faccio vedere, per esempio, questo: *Il moralista* di cui ho uno schizzo (questo però non andò censurato). Io sono andato due volte dal giudice, e questi si fecero una risata! E io andavo lì col mio bozzetto dicendo: “guardi, questo è censurato, non me lo fanno passare, se lei non mi dà il consenso”...

Bozzetto per *Moloch, il dio della vendetta*, 1952. Se io non gli mettevo una camicia addosso, il manifesto non passava! Si rende conto? Una cosa spaventosa! Infatti io fui costretto a mettergli su una camicia, che non c’entrava niente. Quest’altro, *Guendalina*, 1957, sa perchè lo censurarono e dovetti modificarlo? Perchè sul disegno di Guendalina, con addosso una tuta atillata marrone, compare una macchia più scura [sul pube della donna]. Quindi...ha capito? Aspetti, non ho finito! Questo è *5 ore in contanti*, 1961. Censurato perchè c’è il contatto diretto del sedere della fanciulla con le monete. Insomma, questo per farle capire un po’ cos’era la censura ufficiale dell’epoca. Il bozzetto non sarebbe andato in stampa se non ci fosse stata la correzione richiesta. Per fortuna poi durò poco, perchè era talmente assurda!

M. Ma c’erano dei modi per voi artisti di eludere in qualche modo la censura?

G. No, in quel caso proprio no! Semplicemente, non andava in stampa il bozzetto. Non c’era il visto per andare in stampa. Era un fatto ufficiale.

M. Come vivevate il rapporto con le “arti maggiori” e col generale minore riconoscimento nei confronti della vostra attività?

G. No, per noi esisteva il nostro lavoro che facevamo con grande passione. Guardi, il lavoro del cartellonismo è finito nel giro di qualche giorno, poi abbiamo saputo perchè: il cinema accusò la concorrenza della televisione. Per cui si ricorse alla economie interne, tanto è vero che alcune case cinematografiche cambiarono sedi, altre si associarono tra di loro, licenziarono parte del personale; in questa campagna di economia ci andò di mezzo il manifesto dipinto. Che poi non era certo la spesa che incideva di più, o così tanto! E siamo alla fine degli anni ’70! Ma le dico questo taglio avvenne da qualche giorno all’altro. Devo dire la verità, nell’ultimo periodo specialmente, guadagnavamo veramente bene!

M. Ma voi avevate dei contratti di lavoro con le case cinematografiche?

G. Indirettamente. Con le case cinematografiche, c’era un rapporto di fiducia, diciamo così. L’unico contratto che noi stipulavamo per lavoro era con la casa di stampa, perchè noi ci impegnavamo a far stampare tutti i nostri lavori presso quella tipografia che ci dava una percentuale sulle produzioni che facevamo stampare. Quindi noi, oltre a prendere i soldi dalla casa cinematografica, prendevamo dei soldi dalla casa di stampa, per questo prima ti ho detto che si guadagnava bene.

M. Ne ha incontrati o conosciuti di attori importanti, che le hanno fatto richieste particolari?

G. Io ho conosciuto delle attrici, ma non per motivi di lavoro, perchè quando noi venivamo chiamati per fare il manifesto, il film si era concluso, per cui tutti gli attori se n'erano andati ognuno per conto suo. Per cui arrivavamo quando il film era finito. Io ho conosciuto Silvana Mangano da ragazzina, lei aveva 12-13 e abitava vicino casa nostra, e siccome lei andava alla scuola di ballo della Ruscaglia (era famosa!) e allora [io con degli amici] le chiedevamo: "Silvana ci fai quel passo di danza..." E lei faceva sto passo in cui saltava, e noi glielo chiedevamo perchè saltando le si alzava (ride) Mascalzoni com'eravamo! Poi ho conosciuto Gina Lollobrigida che fece gli esami di maturità artistica con me [...] lei e una sua amica mi vennero a trovare, allora abitavo a Ostia, poi dopo ci siamo persi completamente di vista. Però ripeto sono consenze che non sono legate al lavoro. Quando abbiamo avuto contatti con degli attori erano casuali. Anche Mastroianni, per esempio, era amico dei miei fratelli, prima di fare l'attore da ragazzo perchè abitavamo nella stessa zona a San Giovanni a Roma.

M. Torniamo al manifesto: esso doveva rappresentare sinteticamente la storia del film...

G. Per me assolutamente sinteticamente! Non ho mai gradito il manifesto pieno, assolutamente. Non serviva, per me veniva meno l'utilità del manifesto. Perchè il manifesto scenografico doveva essere visto anche da chi passava con la macchina o con l'autobus, quindi la sintesi era fondamentale. Poi per me fa parte proprio del mio modo di lavorare, del mio stile.

M. Però poi quello che vi veniva richiesto era che i personaggi del film dovevano avere il loro primo piano sul manifesto, giusto?

G. Sì, certo, [questo era quello che attirava di più la gente a vedere il film]. Io ho fatto anche manifesti, di cui ho ancora gli schizzi, in cui non c'era la star, non c'era l'attore importante. [...] Nel manifesto era sufficiente che ci fossero i protagonisti, anche se il film era fatto di tante altre cose – seppure poi venivano ambientati nel contesto di riferimento. Ai fini pubblicitari era fondamentale ci fossero gli attori importanti in primo piano. Poi, lo stile adottato per ogni manifesto dipendeva ovviamente dal genere del film e dalla storia narrata.

M. Lei preferiva a qualche genere in particolare?

G. A me piaceva qualsiasi genere, dal giallo, al drammatico. Mi piaceva molto il drammatico perchè mi permetteva certe sintesi di colore e di disegno. Mi piaceva il comico per la mia naturale propensione. Andava bene tutto, quello che mi piaceva era il lavoro, che purtroppo poi è finito.

M. Quanto era importante la vostra creatività nei manifesti?

G. Io ripeto, la passione mia per il manifesto stava proprio nel mettermi lì e pensare qualcosa. Cosa che il mio lavoro di disegnatore satirico, per esempio, mi aiuta ancora oggi molto, perchè stare lì e pensare delle cose qualsiasi che per te vanno bene, per me è fondamentale. Cioè se il lavoro fosse consistito

[soltanto] nell'intervento del capo ufficio pubblicità che diceva "guarda devi fare questo, così e così..." (ed è anche capitato) però non era per niente divertente. Ecco, la creatività era fondamentale. Perché un film che poi magari quando usciva faceva poche lire, tu però eri riuscito a tirare fuori un manifesto che invece, da un punto di vista professionale, funzionava, quindi per me quello era fondamentale.

M. Ho sentito dire molte volte che un manifesto rischiava di essere perfino migliore del film stesso che pubblicizzava.

G. No no, sicuramente! Io ho degli schizzi di film che poi non hanno avuto alcun successo, perché non c'era l'attore importante.

M. Voi pittori cartellonisti vi occupavate anche della struttura grafica del manifesto (testi, titoli, etc)?

G. Tutto sì. Noi davamo il bozzetto con una velina sopra, e tutti i titoli tracciati come colore, come posizione, e poi anche una stampa del carattere/dei caratteri che avevamo scelto. Doveva essere tutto fatto da noi. Il manifesto per *La maschera del demonio* (copertina di un famoso libro americano dedicato all'Horror) è stato giudicato – in America - come uno dei 50 migliori manifesti al mondo. È un film che ha oggi un grande successo come manifesto, ma che non è stato però un grande film come altri. Qui c'erano degli elementi tali per cui uno veniva attratto da questa mano insanguinata; lei – l'attrice Barbare Steel, ancora viva e vegeta, appassionata, quando ha visto la sua immagine su questo manifesto ha mandato qualcuno a comprarlo qui da me e glie'ha portato. Il film importante poteva anche non avere un bel manifesto, mentre un film meno importante poteva invece avere un manifesto importante, ma non era intenzionale la cosa però.

M. Secondo lei, in America, l'arte dei manifesti cinematografici è stata maggiormente riconosciuta rispetto a quanto avvenuto qui in Italia?

G. Qui c'ho un libro americano, con una raccolta di manifesti dell'Horror, in cui ci sono un paio di manifesti miei, ha fatto questa sua classifica importante. Ma lei parla dell'America, ma guardi che anche l'Inghilterra, la Germania, la Spagna... son venuti degli spagnoli da Tenerife in questi giorni e hanno acquistati alcuni bozzetti miei e di mio fratello.

M. Forse all'estero l'arte del manifesto è stata riconosciuta più come tale, parte delle arti contemporanee...

G. Però le dico Maria, molto francamente, che non ce n'è fregato mai assolutamente niente! Lo dico con grande franchezza. Noi abbiamo sempre fatto il nostro lavoro in assoluta libertà ... poi gli esperti del settore dicano quello che gli pare. Però è vero che l'attenzione riconosciuta altrove nei confronti dei

nostri artisti non ha avuto la stessa risonanza in Italia. Però ripeto in questo periodo noi stiamo godendo di un interesse che forse non abbiamo mai avuto. Guardi sono giorni in cui ricevo telefonate d'ogni tipo, perchè ci stanno chiedendo bozzetti da tutte le parti, cosa che non mi dispiace per niente logicamente.

M. Ma sono lieta di vedere che stanno nascendo delle realtà dedicate al manifesto cinematografico, come il Museo di Montecosaro...

G. Il museo Cinema a Pennello è un museo meraviglioso. Paolo Marinozzi è venuto qui e non sa quanti bozzetti si è comprato miei e di mio fratello. Non viene data a questi musei e varie altre realtà l'importanza che meriterebbero. C'è per esempio Zelati che sta a Mantova, lui è un grande appassionato e sta mettendo da parte materiale pubblicitario e Maurizio Baroni, che ha donato 25.000 manifesti alla Cineteca di Bologna.

M. Secondo lei il manifesto come veicolo di comunicazione, ha sia registrato i cambi storici, sociali, di costume di un'epoca in Italia, ma li ha anche indotti in qualche modo?

G. A questo proposito, allora era difficile sapere fino a che punto [il manifesto] potesse influire sul costume o sul modo di pensare; però quello che sta accadendo oggi, da qualche anno, sull'interesse per i manifesti che abbiamo fatto allora, la dice lunga. Perchè quando io fui invitato alla Cineteca di Bologna c'era il salone pieno di giovani con le copie dei manifesti e stavano in fila aspettando che io mettessi l'autografo sul manifesto stampato. E allora che vuol dire? Questo era il risultato di un influenza del manifesto di allora che poi si è riaffermata nel tempo, negli anni, quando pure non te l'aspettavi più. Tu come mai ti occupi e ti interessi di cose fatte 50 anni fa? Sì, sapevamo di fare un lavoro importante per le case cinematografiche, infatti noi restammo esterefatti quando lo abolirono, perchè per noi il manifesto era una cosa importante, ai fini della distribuzione, ai fini pubblicitari. Mi ricordo che finchè non c'era il manifesto stampato il film non usciva insomma.

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