

Art History Supplement

Free, full text online, e-journal since 2011



PETRO BRUEGEL, PICTORI.

*Quis nouus hic Hieronymus Orbi Macte animo. Petre. mactus ut arte
Boschius ingeniosa magistri Namque tuo, veterisque magistri
Somnia peniculoque, styloque Ridiculo, salibusque refero
Tanta imitauer arte peritus. In graphice genere in chita laudum
Ut superet tamen interim et illum? Præmia ubique, et ab omnibus vlllo
Artifice haud leuiora mereris*

Giorgio Bacci, Davide Lacagnina, Veronica Pesce, Denis Viva: Spreading visual culture; a digital project for contemporary art, literature and visual culture. State of the art, perspectives and collaborations

The article will present some of the already reached results (one year after the official start, in March 2013) of the Firb project *Spreading visual culture: contemporary art through periodicals, archives and illustrations* (<http://www.capti.it>), shared by four Universities (Scuola Normale Superiore as P. I., Genoa University, Siena University and Udine University), lasting three years and financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research.

The project address contemporary art in innovative ways, bringing together different humanistic fields and developing new informatics tools. The web platform (and of course the project) aims to become a point of reference in the field of visual studies in general, and in contemporary art and literature in particular, allowing the user (either the academic community or a non-specialist audience) to do cross-searches, discovering, as in a real archive (a huge web-archive), different materials such as letters, periodicals or original illustrations, which had been previously catalogued, “tagged” and digitalized. *

General introduction

The Firb 2012 project *Spreading visual culture: contemporary art through periodicals, archives and illustrations*,¹ lasting three years and financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research, is divided into four research units (Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa as national leader, University of Genoa, University of Siena and University of Udine).

* Giorgio Bacci: author of *General introduction* and *Unit of Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa*
Davide Lacagnina: author of *Unit of Siena University*
Veronica Pesce: author of *Unit of Genoa University*
Denis Viva: author of *Unit of Udine University*

All links have been last accessed on April 7, 2014.

¹ <http://www.capti.it>

This article, about one year after the official start (21 March 2013), takes stock of the situation, analyzes the results, future prospects, potential areas to be strengthened and further collaborations. So, firstly there will be a general overview of the situation and then specific paragraphs dedicated to each single research unit will follow.

The research aims to address contemporary art in innovative ways, bringing together different humanistic fields: not only art history, but also fashion history, sociology, semiotics and, of course, literature and publishing history. Therefore, contemporary art seen as a clue to understanding society nowadays, intending the historical period between the late nineteenth century and the 1980s [an in depth description is available at Capti,² the website of the project]. Anyway, in a nutshell, some of the objectives of the Project, which aims to combine a rigorous and philological approach with innovative techniques, are: analyze the spread of contemporary culture through magazines; develop a critical-historical reflection on the relationship between “high” and “low” culture; deepen the problematic related to the dialogue between art and society, obtaining new tools for interpreting the contemporary world; realization of an on-line common platform (thanks to the Laboratory of Art-Historical Documentation³ at the Scuola Normale Superiore,⁴ from which consults the different databases, structured with a particular attention to the individual needs.

These objectives were enucleated both in the presentation of the project and in a previous article: it's possible to say that, after one year, the initial wishes and declarations of intent are gradually becoming concrete reality and results. This especially due to the structuring of a web platform which is not only an innovative application of informatics technology to cultural heritage, but which also faithfully reflects the methodological, critical-path that is being carried out. The

² <http://www.capti.it/index.php?lang=EN>

³ <http://velasquez.sns.it/homepage.html>

⁴ <http://www.sns.it>

platform, as said earlier, is freely accessible at <http://www.capti.it>, and it makes interrelated researches possible, connecting together the various databases, individually developed in accordance with the particular needs of each sector. The complexity and the effectiveness of the project at both a critical and methodological level, will become more evident by further describing the platform, verifying and examining the potentialities of the informatics tool.

The web interface is divided according to a system of abscissas and ordinates, so the vertical bar on the left contains the descriptions of each individual research unit and the active collaborations, while the horizontal band at the top enucleates the fields of study covered by the project. In particular, these sections are: periodicals, drawings (originals), letters and archival documents. The user can search through the entire platform (using the advanced search options in the box in the top right), or focus on the area of interest, accessing the model “advanced search” available in each subsection.

The cross-searches⁵ reveal a particularly complex and articulated situation, providing a picture that will become more and more rich over the years, of the visual, literary and critical culture of the 20th century Italy. For example, we can follow the story of an artist like Kienerk, present in different databases – illustrations (Salani), letters and archival documents (in connection with Mario Novaro) and periodicals (*La Riviera Ligure*) –, or study the *Inno all'olivo*, by Pascoli, in the autograph section or, at the final stage, in the liberty Genoese periodical (*La Riviera Ligure*). It's impossible to describe all the possibilities related to different interests: the user can check the presence (and absence) of the principal critics in art magazines of the sixties and seventies, or take into account, speaking about Visual Poetry, Sarenco as an artist or as an author of articles, and observe

⁵ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?lang=EN&ParamCatID=19>

when the two activities are intertwined, a result worthy of critical reflection.

The examples could go on endlessly, but it is more appropriate, now, to see the cataloging and digitalization method. Firstly, I would like to stress the digitalization and cataloging aspect: this is already a first datum which underlines the originality of the project, compared to other similar experiences, considering that the goal is not limited to the acquisition of digital images, but extended to carrying out an indexing of the data, in accordance to the advanced search options. Let's take the case of the periodicals: at a first stage the user gets an overview of the magazine (for example, *Lotta Poetica*⁶); after that he accesses all the scanned issues (by clicking on "Number of installments"), and then ("Installment description") to the analysis of a single number,⁷ which is available in different ways: the user can simply scroll through the articles, or see the "Articles list alphabetically ordered", or even browse the fully digitalized number ("Riffle the installment").

The choice we have made is, however, not to limit the cataloging at the article level, but also to catalogue and describe each page individually, divided between pages related to an article or not (in this case "Other pages in the installment"). Besides that, the pictures reproduced in the pages have also been studied, using a system already developed in social networks, but not yet in the academic field: the "tag" system, which outlines the catalogued image when a user "clicks" on the image. This strategy places the "Capti" project at the leading ledge of other European initiatives, such as the ones carried out by the British Library together with other British universities (for example *Lost Visions* project⁸), or the similar experiences of INHA.⁹

⁶ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=1&id=6&lang=EN>

⁷ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=10&IDFascicolo=25&artgal=6&lang=EN>

⁸ <http://cardiffbookhistory.wordpress.com/2014/02/09/lost-visions/>

⁹ <http://bibliotheque.inha.fr/iguana/www.main.cls?surl=bibliotheque-inha>

In this way, it is possible to develop very detailed researches, permitting the user to have a rich set of information: the author, the identification of the work, the location, the typology of the image, the position in the page (demonstrating great attention to the layout itself). The search forms are extremely flexible and they have been conceived in order to host magazines of different types: from those of purely art-history criticism to the more sectorial ones. *Il Risorgimento Grafico* (published between 1902 and 1941) is a significant case: thanks to the “tag” system it is possible to save specific information such as ink, paper, printing machines, allowing us to carry out a meditation about the relationship and connections between scientific-technical progress (photography and the new techniques of reproducing images), the history of publishing, illustrated magazines, and the history of taste (examining the most reproduced works of art), while also developing a historical and geographical map (the most photographed monuments). The importance given to the field of photography is confirmed by the distinction between “Photographic reference” and “Photographer”, thus demonstrating a new and careful philological sensibility, also predisposing the database to future developments in the field of illustrated periodicals of photography.

Thus, comparing it to similar projects (such as the Italian Apice,¹⁰ CIRCE,¹¹ the digital Braidense library,¹² the digitalized periodicals in BIASA¹³ just to name a few), *Spreading visual culture* is more articulate, planned to be open to further and external collaborations, and not by chance the website is available also in English. In this context, an essential reference point is certainly provided by the Laboratory of Art-Historical Documentation of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, where over the years (and

¹⁰ <http://www.sba.unimi.it/Biblioteche/apice/8116.html>

¹¹ <http://circe.lett.unitn.it>

¹² <http://emeroteca.braidense.it>

¹³ <http://periodici.librari.beniculturali.it>

even now) the experimentations concerning informatics applied to cultural heritage have achieved significant and important results: the digitalization and cataloguing of the *Emporium*¹⁴ magazine, the digital acquisition of the original drawings preserved in the historical archive of Adriano Salani Editore,¹⁵ up to the prints,¹⁶ caricatures¹⁷ and fashion plates¹⁸ projects.

So, *Spreading visual culture* is the most recent result of this attention to the preservation of archival and documentary heritage, thanks to the effective interaction among the four universities, especially in the definition of an efficient and interactive database, made up of documents and images which are useful and valuable witnesses in defining Italian 20th century visual culture. Born in Italy with prestigious foreign collaborations, the project wants to affirm itself internationally, having already reached results of absolute importance. These include the re-evaluation of the original illustrations preserved in the historical archives of some of the most important Italian publishers (Salani,¹⁹ Giunti²⁰), and the online consultation of the most important Italian liberty magazine.²¹ in all its richness (also from an archival point of view, thanks to Mario Novaro Archive²² [in Genoa]). The reconstruction and definition of the multiple forms of art criticism in the Sixties and Seventies (through agreements with several publishers) is likewise important, as is the rediscovery and further deepening of an artistic and truly international movement (Visual Poetry, thanks to the fundamental collaboration with the MART Archive²³).

¹⁴ http://www.artivisive.sns.it/progetto_emporium.html

¹⁵ <http://www.artivisive.sns.it/salani/index.php>

¹⁶ <http://www.artivisive.sns.it/stampeditraduzione/index.php>

¹⁷ http://www.artivisive.sns.it/archivio_caricatura.html

¹⁸ <http://velasquez.sns.it/figurini/index.php>

¹⁹ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=8&id=2&lang=EN>

²⁰ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=8&id=1&lang=EN>

²¹ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=1&id=2&lang=EN>

²² <http://www.capti.it/static/ang.php?lang=EN>

²³ <http://www.capti.it/static/mart.php?lang=EN>

As said in the opening, I believe that through the consultation of the web platform the characteristics of the project will emerge. This project, thanks to a multidisciplinary approach effectively integrated into a system of broader considerations, presents itself as a meeting point for different disciplines. Significantly, the chronological terms of the project are comprised between the late 19th century and early eighties of the 20th, with the birth and development of the modern mass society, starting from a reconsideration of the studies that appeared around the fifties and sixties. Just to name a few of these: *Mythologies* (Roland Barthes, 1957), *The Hidden Persuaders* (Vance Packard, 1957), *The Open Work* (Umberto Eco, 1962). As the reader may have noticed, I cited books which are not closely related to the history of art: indeed, the intent of the project is to bring together different ideas in order to develop a thorough reconsideration of the culture of the last century, through a study that is philologically rigorous but innovative in instrumentation, destined to the academic community but also to a non-specialist audience.²⁴

Giorgio Bacci

Unit of Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa

The Unit of the Scuola Normale,²⁵ hosted by the Laboratory of Art-Historical Documentation, demonstrating great innovation both in the web structure, and in art-historical methodology, studies the central theme of the reception of contemporary art from the late nineteenth century to the 1980s, in a multidisciplinary perspective, combining figurative and semiotic analysis, editorial and historical issues.

²⁴ For the state of the art and references, we decided not to overload the present article and each subsection, inviting instead to go to http://www.capti.it/static/progetto_5.php?lang=EN.

²⁵ <http://www.capti.it/static/urp.php?lang=EN>

In 1957 Roland Barthes published *Mythologies*, Vance Packard *The Hidden Persuaders*, while in 1962 *The Open Work*, by Umberto Eco, appeared. The list of significant dates could obviously continue *ad libitum*, but what I wish to emphasize is the beginning of a reflection on the actual meaning of the images, analyzed with the competence of semiotics and sociology, literature and history of art. Not surprisingly, in 1961, Eco wrote *The Informal art as open work*, trying to study contemporary art with the tools of semiotics. The concept of image and illustration, however, goes beyond the boundaries of the major arts, involving the wall billboard, advertising, and television: in short, the global “reception in distraction” which Benjamin had already studied in the thirties of the twentieth century.

Significantly, the beginning of the modern society of images is identified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the rapid growth of the system of “mass communication”. From this point of view, illustrations, art nouveau, art deco, realism and symbolism, are carefully re-read, studying the reception of “high” artistic models in the publishing culture. Not only the figurative analysis, but also, as mentioned above, semiotics, trying to understand the process which led, in the same span of years (Sixties and Seventies), to reflect on the meaning, for example, of the illustrations in “installment publications” of the early 20th century and, at the same time, to develop experiments in the field of “Visual Poetry”.

The Unit of the Scuola Normale therefore conducts this analysis following two lines: the semantic relation between text and image and the links between “major and minor arts”, starting from the semiotic theories of perception developed from the Sixties. These, on one hand, led to carry on experiments about verbal-visual communication, arriving to a new

conception of work of art, and, on the other, to a detailed study of the figuration of the early twentieth century.

In particular, significant cases will be studied and digitized, such as the periodicals *Il Risorgimento Grafico* (1902-1941),²⁶ *Lotta Poetica* (1971-1975, 1982-1984 and 1987)²⁷ and the archive of drawings of the publishing house Bemporad/Giunti.²⁸

Il Risorgimento Grafico and the Bemporad archive of drawings represent a valuable opportunity to analyze the evolution of graphics in the first half of the twentieth century, when innovative possibilities (both technical and expressive) are experimented. Furthermore, the comparison between a periodical among the most respected in its field, and the activities of a fundamental publisher such as Bemporad, will also allow the reader to follow in real terms the figurative discussion, such as the one for the illustrated edition (1901) of *Pinocchio* by Carlo Chiostrì.²⁹

Exactly on the pages of *Il Risorgimento Grafico* (January 1907) Bertieri thundered against the Florentine artist (Chiostrì himself), who was guilty, he said, of “rendering the appearance of the wooden protagonist insipid and unlikable”³⁰. As if he had read the article (which is more than likely), Bemporad decided to commission a new set of illustrations to Attilio Mussino,³¹ allowing Antonio Rubino, in the number of November 1907, to proudly affirm, presenting the graphic work of Mussino, that the decision of

²⁶ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=1&id=32&lang=EN>

²⁷ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=1&id=6&lang=EN>

²⁸ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=8&id=1&lang=EN>

²⁹ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=8&id=1&volume=70004&lang=EN>

³⁰ R. Bertieri, *Le illustrazioni nei libri scolastici*, in *Il Risorgimento Grafico*, a. V, n. 1-2, 1907, p. 4.

³¹ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=8&id=1&volume=70012&lang=EN>

Enrico Bemporad arrived thanks to the observations of *Il Risorgimento Grafico*.³²

But the magazine directed by Bertieri also features the first news of the emerging mass society, such as wall posters, of which Cesare Ratta, in *L'arte nella strada*³³, sharply analyzed the figurative and social mechanisms. Observing the rise of chromolithography, the critic noted that the posters had changed the cityscape, flooded with the advertisements of various companies (from the “Bicycle Manufacturers” to the bookshops) but also, in a near future, with simple but interesting foresight, of faces of political candidates. However, the fashion of wall posters, Ratta explained, also had positive consequences, transforming the streets “in a permanent exhibition [...]. It's the museum of the poor”³⁴. The periodical, however, was not limited to housing theoretical articles, but also offered the reader some visual examples of publishing and figurative innovations: from postcards to bookplates, from the competitions for the covers to those for the stamps. On the pages of the periodicals appears some of the greatest artists of the time: among others Antonio Rubino, Attilio Mussino, Aleardo Terzi, a young Bruno Munari (which is second in the contest for the cover of 1929).

Many of these illustrators are also present in the archive of the publisher Bemporad, allowing the matching of the figurative controversies with the real works, in a highly significant monitoring of iconographic models.

³² A. Rubino, *Gli Artisti del libro: Attilio Mussino*, in *Il Risorgimento Grafico*, a. V, n. 11, 1907, pp. 193-198.

³³ C. Ratta, *L'arte nella strada*, in *Il Risorgimento Grafico*, a.III, n. 1-2, 1905, pp. 9-12.

³⁴ *ivi*, p. 10.

Precisely the role of images, even in scholastic publications, is at the heart of the reflections of Enrico Bemporad, who, differently from the prevailing educational ideas at the time, was convinced of their importance, as attested also by the publication of *Grammaticchetta illustrata della lingua italiana*, in 1898: “the drawings which illustrate the text are an effective means to encourage the child to learn and to give the teaching a very practical form. Teaching through images requires less effort, makes children understand better and requires less time and, more importantly, helps the child to remember the things learned, since the memories of images are more powerful and lasting than the things read or heard.”³⁵

Preserved largely intact, the archive of Giunti allows a fascinating journey through the illustration of the early twentieth century: among others, Vittorio Corcos illustrated the cover of *Il Raccontafiabe* by Luigi Capuana, with drawings by Enrico Mazzanti and Eugenio Cecconi, Umberto Brunelleschi adorned the cover and the pages of *L'albero delle fiabe* by Antonio Beltramelli in 1909, Aleardo Terzi illustrated *Come Orsetta incontrò Fortuna* by Teresah (Corinna Ubertis Teresa Gray) in 1912, and Duilio Cambellotti worked at *L'ultima fata*, 1909, by Cordelia (Virginia Treves).

If the “reproduced image” in this first part of the project, has been examined as “illustration”, the second part aims to study the mechanisms of reversal of a predetermined code of communication. Word and image, therefore, become the protagonists of a revolutionary work of art, where figurative language and meta-historical-critical reflection often coincide. Theoretical reflection on

³⁵ G. Orsat Ponard, *Grammaticchetta illustrata della lingua italiana con duecento figure ideate dall'Autore ed eseguite dai pittori G. Anichini e C. Casaltoli*, Firenze, Bemporad, 1898, p. X.

the contemporary and early industrial mass society (developed by Eco, Barthes, Dorfles, Pignotti, etc..) led, along with other elements of course, to the birth of a new artistic movement, Visual Poetry. In this case, profiting from the work carried out by the other research Units (from the Art Nouveau atmosphere of *La Riviera Ligure* to *Marcatrè*), we will focus our attention on the magazine *Lotta Poetica*. As Sarenco writes in the first issue (June 1971)³⁶: the periodical “was created with the purpose of «unifying the forces» between De Tafelronde editions (Antwerp) and Amodulo editions (Brescia)”³⁷. The magazine was the heir of various periodicals that arose in the fifties and sixties all around the world: from *Techne* (Italy) to *Agentzia* (France), from *Ovum 10* (Uruguay) to *Diagonal Cero* (Argentina), from *Kontexts* (England) to *Vou* (Japan).

A little further on still Sarenco says that “the title *Lotta Poetica* is an affirmation of our commitment, as poets and artists in general, to wage a constant battle at two levels: a) the linguistic level, for the destruction of the structures of the bourgeois culture, b) the political level, sustaining the vanguard of the working class and the student movement”³⁸.

Lotta Poetica, among the few militant magazines to have a significant duration (50 issues in 32 installments between 1971 and 1975, then 17 between January 1982 and August 1984 and the final two of 1987), is a useful opening, not only to understand the verbal-visual movement, but mainly because it allows the reader to get to the heart of the historical and artistic controversies of the time: from the refusal (by the verbal-visual group) to participate in the Biennale of 1972, to the accusation of plagiarism addressed

³⁶ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=10&IDFascicolo=25&artgal=6&lang=EN>

³⁷ Sarenco, *editorial 1*, in *Lotta Poetica*, a. I, n. 1, 1971, p.3.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

to conceptual art. Beginning from when the magazine became monographic (March 1974), it is possible to encounter, in addition to the verbal-visual poets (Sarenco, De Vree, Arias Misson, etc.), also Fluxus artists (Joseph Beuys, who carried out a specific performance for the periodical), Constructivist-Concretists (Hilgeman) and personalities from different backgrounds (Enrico Baj, who publishes photos of his performance of 1969 in Como).

Giorgio Bacci

Unit of Genoa University

Within the aforementioned multidisciplinary framework the Genoese research team³⁹ which is part of the Department of Italian and Arts Studies (University of Genoa) has been studying one of the most interesting examples of early 20th-century culture on both the Italian and European scene, i.e. the high-profile artistic and literary journal *La Riviera Ligure*,⁴⁰ analysing this multi-faceted cultural phenomenon with a new methodological approach.

Its history is well-known: the journal was founded in 1895 to serve as the commercial bulletin of the Ditta dell'Olio Sasso in Oneglia (nowadays in Imperia) by being bundled with the oil crates shipped to customers. Its firm-related and promotional purposes emphasising both the product quality and its country of origin remain one of its distinctive features, even though they were absorbed into a different cultural project: its editor and owner Mario Novaro – intellectual, poet, philosopher and entrepreneur – overhauled it in a few years, making it a privileged bleeding-edge looking point on early 20th-century Italian poetry, but also

³⁹ <http://www.capti.it/static/urg.php?lang=EN>

⁴⁰ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=1&id=2&lang=EN>

on graphics' culture, for example predating the Italian Liberty boom.

Novaro's archive⁴¹ is a core element of this project: it started as a N.P.O.⁴² in 1983 with the aim of promoting 20th-century Ligurian culture and Mario Novaro's cultural legacy in particular.

This size of the archive has grown over the years and nowadays it collects over 4000 original works, letters and pictures by the most important early 20th century poets and artists who collaborated to the journal (Giovanni Pascoli, Plinio Nomellini, Luigi Pirandello, Umberto Saba, Giuseppe Ungaretti among the others. The list itself includes over two hundred people and features many relevant literary and artistic personalities.⁴³ *Riviera* was a synthesis of different cultural elements, therefore the archive cannot but reflect this, indiscriminately mixing "high" and "low" culture, advertising materials and fine artistic and literary works. *La Riviera Ligure* has been thoroughly studied by many of the greatest scholars of Italian Liberty - one name for all: Rossana Bossaglia - and its critical appreciation has grown over the years. Yet, academic sectionalism has narrowed the scope of critical approaches and methodologies.

We are following a new methodological approach which aims at a comprehensive analysis and brings together text and image, as requested by the high cultural value of both the archive and the journal. First of all, the journal is being digitalized and uploaded online (cataloguing and indexing texts, advertisings and pictures included), making complete cross-searches possible.

⁴¹ <http://www.capti.it/static/ang.php?lang=EN>

⁴² <http://www.fondazionenovaro.it/new/index.php>

⁴³ Many letters are edited (1900-1912). We are working on the fourth volume (1913's letters).

The archival research we are pursuing entails digitalization of late 19th-century documents; some of them were written by German people, thus leading us outside of the Italian borders and making us re-evaluate the experiences of Mario Novaro himself in Vienna and Berlin, where the future director of *Riviera* studied philosophy and witnessed the birth of the first journals that would make the history of the international Liberty (*Pan, Jugend, Ver Sacrum* etc.). This brave decision perfectly fits with the intellectual-entrepreneur who, as described by his friend and collaborator, “dà cinque/sei ore al commercio poi legge Hobbes ride di Croce” [deals with trade for five/six hours, then he reads Hobbes and laughs at Croce, *my translation*]; he had been taking care of the whole graphical Liberty orientation of the journal since the beginning, hosting poets and artists as well as giving a high and early recognition of the dignity of artwork as an autonomous work by detaching pictures and texts, without necessarily requiring the artist to become an illustrator of other people’s ideas and going as far as paying for pictures as much as for pieces of poetry. Recognition of the real role of cultural mediation between Italy and Europe carried out by *Riviera* cannot be postponed any more: an early and emblematic pattern in terms of visual culture, and original accomplished synthesis of different languages (figurative and verbal) that will have a strong weight in both “high” and popular culture.

The aforementioned website structure points out the historical value of one of the first European Organ-Houses, a nexus where Plinio Nomellini’s illustration for the Giovanni Pascoli’s *Inno all’olivo* (*Hymn to the olive tree*) (1901) may become the well-known *Muse to the olive tree* of the Sasso’s house advertisement, then reproduced on labels of oil-bottles: an incredible intersection of art, literature, advertising communication and corporate mentality.

Users could look for Pascoli's *Inno all'olivo*⁴⁴ published on the journal, exploring immediately other linked documents, such as Nomellini's relative illustration, advertisings and all other occurrences of the query.

The same instruments offers the chance of assessing the global influence of the journal, especially by contributing to create a precise image of the Ligurian Coast (exactly named *Riviera*): the same heading is very significant on this regard. Art and literature have been, partly at least, a tool for advertising and promotional purpose. They contributed to create the image of a (literary, artistic and socio-economic) landscape functional to propagandistic purposes. Our team is examining these aspects in connection with the purposes of the *European Landscape Convention*.

The presentation on the World Wide Web will grant a new visibility to the journal and its archives and an innovative way to use these materials, giving back to the journal and the archive the socio-cultural value which is due.

The process of cataloguing and marking texts, para-texts, graphic components, illustrative and advertising increases usability and directs it towards a non-sectorial but comprehensive review. This offers the possibility to launch queries at various levels and jointly research across archive, periodical texts, authors, illustrators and graphic designers. For instance the user may go directly, by one "click", from the before mentioned *Hymn to the olive* published on "Riviera", to the autograph written by Pascoli or the poster by Nomellini or their letters to Novaro.

Eventually some working hypotheses have been developed. By introducing the optical character recognition (O.C.R.) we are building a list of concordances within the journal, powered with annotations on texts that will allow drawing of

⁴⁴ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?lang=EN&ParamCatID=18&action=s>

precise textual, lexical or thematic paths which may later become the subject of scientific analysis and commentary, from the compilation of frequency indexes for critic texts documenting the dissemination of authors and critical categories to more complete reflections on the literary language of the area of fragmentism and its common points with the figurative arts' language so well represented in *La Riviera Ligure*.

Veronica Pesce

Unit of Siena University

The University of Siena 2012 FIRB Research Unit⁴⁵ is focusing its attention on the activity of art criticism by Vittorio Pica (Naples, 1862-Milan, 1930), a leading personality of the *fin-de-siècle* art system, especially investigating his role of art dealer, advisor of many museums and cultural institutions and populariser of modern culture in Italy.

Pica is well renowned as translator, critic and supporter of French symbolist Literature - he was primarily acknowledged as the “first champion of French symbolism in Italy” in Anglo-American scholarship already in 1958⁴⁶ - but his monumental production of art criticism is still today very little known and investigated, especially if we consider the wide spectrum of the interests cultivated and the extraordinary net of contacts kept during his life, developed through key-figures of the artistic and literary Symbolist *milieu* around the world: from Fernand Khnopff to Maurice Denis, from Maurice Barres to Emile Verhaeren, from Felix Fénéon to André Fontainas, from Eugenio de Castro to Rubén Darío.

After four editions under his direction (1920-1926) and two

⁴⁵ <http://www.capti.it/static/urs.php?lang=EN>

⁴⁶ O. Ragusa, *Vittorio Pica: First Champion of French Symbolism in Italy*, in *Italica*, n. 35, 1958, pp. 255-261.

ones as vice-secretary (1912-1914), Pica's forced resignation from the secretariat of the Biennale in 1927, for the benefit of Antonio Maraini, artist and critic welcomed by Mussolini, is not only evidence of Italian fascist cultural policy - Pica was considered too cosmopolitan in artistic taste - but also a clear disclaiming of his reputation, that may explain, at least in part, his lack of critical consideration over the years. After his death, Maraini refused to acquire the author's personal library and papers for the Biennale Archives, so that it is extremely difficult today to reconstruct the multiple facets of his activity in its real extent: that is exactly what the University of Siena Unit intends to realize.

The Unit, established only in August 2013, is carrying out an extensive bibliographical and archival-documental survey, as preliminary step to a coherent selection and digitalization of the materials identified, in order to edit them on the data base CAPTI⁴⁷ and return a virtual archive of Pica's critical and institutional activity; in facts: a) going through the bibliography of art criticism by Pica (still far from being complete) through Italian and foreign newspapers and art magazines, exhibition catalogues, monographs etc. b) inventorying all public and private archival funds which preserve materials produced by Pica himself and given, when possible, as free access documents available for consultation. As for the published titles, and especially for the articles or the small catalogues of exhibitions in private galleries, very difficult to locate and dissipated in various libraries in Italy and abroad, the on-line open-access will confirm immediately the wide range of visual resources displayed by Pica to the audience of his "beloved readers". The data collected will also usefully provide first-hand documentation of many clue-events of the art system in Italy between late 19th and early 20th century: think only of the different editions of the Venice Biennale, since the very first one (1895), within the exhibitions curated and presented in

⁴⁷ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?lang=EN>

catalogue by Pica himself, or the books he dedicated to the first seven editions of the exposition (1895-1907). The exemplar work led by the Laboratorio Arti Visive of the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa on the magazine *Emporium* (see the on-line database for the articles signed by [Vittorio Pica](#)⁴⁸) may give only a partial idea of the variety of contents and images spread by the Italian critic in his huge bibliography in so many different areas of interest: a) history of modern art, history of collecting and taste, history of cultural institutions; b) different geographical areas (Italy, Eastern Europe, the Scandinavian Countries, Continental and Mediterranean Europe, the Americas, the Far East and Japan, Africa and Oceania as for Primitivism and *Japonisme*), c) critical-historical and yet theoretic relevance (art and literature, art criticism and reception theory, architecture, decoration, graphics, decorative arts, design, museum studies and exhibitions display).

As for the archival documents, besides the researches already undertaken on Pica's correspondence with Ugo Ojetti and August Rodin, other significant results have been achieved over the last few months by screening the funds "Grubicy-Benvenuti", "Depero", "Carrà" and "Sarfatti" conserved at the Archivio del Novecento of the MART-Museo d'arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto and the fund of the "Centro internazionale di studi Lionello Fiumi" of the Biblioteca civica of Verona.⁴⁹ Detailed notice of the materials discovered will be given in due time, by the end of the first year of activity of the University of Siena Unit. The recovery of Pica's bibliography and critical and institutional work will fill in the gap, which exists in

48

<http://www.artivisive.sns.it/fototeca/ricerca.php?type=OR&all=&segnatura=&titoloArticolo=&autoreArticolo=Pica&autoreManifattura=&categoria=&soggetto=&collocazione=&rifFotografico=#http://www.artivisive.sns.it/fototeca/ricerca.php?type=OR&all=&seg>

⁴⁹ The 2012 FIRB Project, as far as the University of Siena Unit is concerned, integrate and complete the aims of the two-years research *Vittorio Pica, critico "d'eccezione". Arte moderna e istituzioni culturali in Italia*, funded by the Foundation CARITRO (Cassa di Risparmio di Trento e Rovereto), under my own scientific coordination, with the support of the MART-Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto and the Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna di Ca' Pesaro.

historiography on Symbolism, of an updated voice capable of evaluating the specific contribution of Italy to international debate. The focus on Pica will allow, in such an emblematic way, to integrate modern art, art criticism, historiography, art collecting and historical contexts in a system of international relations in order to define an 'other' line for European art, between Symbolism and avant-garde movements. Currently at the centre of a renewed interest, painters and sculptors of the *fin-de-siècle* appear extremely relevant to better understand avant-garde and the interwar years visual culture, politics and poetics in Italy and Europe. As well as many other critics interested in Symbolism and only recently returned to art criticism historiography through a new generation of scholars,⁵⁰ Pica's fortune also suffered from that modernist orientation of art criticism, according to which any genealogy was to be included in that particular evolutionary line - Impressionism-Cézanne-Cubism - that has long prevailed over all other critical approach to modern art historiography. Considered too old-fashioned and backward-looking, Pica was also looked suspiciously by reactionary critics for his lack of interest in promoting a nationalist idea of Italian art within the country and abroad and his attraction, on the other hand, for foreign 'macabre' artists (as Symbolist artists were somewhat considered by Italian critics) or for those 'artisti d'eccezione', as Pica used to call Les Nabis, post-impressionists, japonistes, secessionists, idealists and 'decorative artists' he so much liked.

Original results are expected, for instance, on the position - so far undervalued - Pica assumed in defence of Italian futurism or on his refusal of the Novecento Italiano group led by Margherita Sarfatti and of the reactionary adrift of

⁵⁰ See for instance the most recent F. Lucbert, *Entre le voir et le dire. La critique d'art des écrivains dans la presse symboliste en France de 1882 à 1906*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2005, C. Méneux, ed., *Regards de critiques d'art. Autour de Roger Marx (1859-1913)*, Presses universitaires de Rennes-Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Rennes-Paris, 2009 and F. Lucbert and R. Shryock, ed., *Gustave Kahn. Un écrivain engagé*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2013.

Italian cultural policy under fascism.

Davide Lacagnina

Unit of Udine University

The skill and interest of our Cultural Heritage Department (DIBE) in Italian Art of the Second Post-World War period lead the University of Udine Unit⁵¹ to the study of the art avant-garde periodicals since 1945 up to 1980. Actually this kind of primary sources is becoming irreplaceable in order to reconstruct the events of this period, one of the most relevant for Italian Art History considering its international achievement. Art periodicals are probably the only dynamic documentation able to bear witness of the hectic development of Italian Art from the debate between Realists and Abstractionists up to the crisis of Conceptual Art at the end of the Seventies. In this way, the digitization campaign has selected eleven representative reviews from this range, trying to follow this sort of evolution: from the older *AZ Arte d'oggi* founded in Milan by Mario Ballocco in 1949 and *Arti Visive* born in Rome in 1952 thanks to Gruppo Origine, to the most recent *Data* by Tommaso Trini, published until 1978.

This selection takes into account two different moments of the avant-garde and Art Critics periodicals in Italy. The first one ended around the beginning of the 60s and it was characterized by a “partisan”, “militant” approach and self-promoted initiatives conducted by artists without the support of professional publishers. During the 50s, the birth of *AZ Arte d'oggi*, *Arti Visive*, *Il Gesto*, *L'esperienza moderna*, *Appia Antica* and *Azimuth* corresponded to the lack of professional and well distributed avant-garde reviews in Italy. In that moment the older and most distributed art Italian periodicals fallen into a crisis and decline (sometimes

⁵¹ <http://www.capti.it/static/uru.php?lang=EN>

stopping their activity) by persevering in a conservative view on arts and a loss of identity and targets. The undeveloped avant-garde art system in Italy and the inclination towards Realism of the official leftist institutions seemed to leave only a self-promotion space for artists as a strategy for building an avant-garde and international network. These reviews embodied the artists' need for updating, informing, sharing international debates and, at the same time, promoting and spreading their ideas and artworks to an elite audience.

The second phase concerns the increasing professionalization of the art periodicals since 1960. Often started by single intellectual promoter, *Metro* (by Bruno Alfieri), *Marcatré* (Eugenio Battisti), *D'Ars Agency* (Oscar Signorini), *NAC. Notiziario d'Arte Contemporanea* (Francesco Vincitorio) and *Data. Dati internazionali d'arte* (Tommaso Trini) ended up finding a publisher support that could assure them a good distribution and a reliable periodicity. Mitigating that previous "militant" approach of the 50s and opening to a more pluralist debate and creative environment, these periodicals are a remarkable source of information and contents in many respects: reviews, art advertising, circulation of information, photo-documentation of display and site specific works, etc.

While the first phase journals' irregular periodicity and limited press run/distribution justify the digitizing process because of their rarity and sometimes cheap, perishable print materials; the second phase periodicals' digitizing is very interesting to help the data mining process. So, it's not only the preservation of this unquestionable cultural and book heritage that give reasons for digitizing. The comparison of information, the cross-disciplinary approach that this digitizing now allows would be in fact a starting point for offering new perspectives on some Italian Art topic like for example the increasing crisis of Formalist approach to artworks, the reception of the historical avant-gardes lesson,

the connection between Art and the political protests, the mutual reception between Italian, European and American Art.

At present, the University of Udine Unit brought to the conclusion its collaboration with the Laboratorio Arti Visive⁵² to conceptually design and adapt the very open database of CAPTI to its main and specific subject. Consequently it has started the digitizing and cataloguing process from two pivotal examples of reviews of the first historical phase: *L'esperienza moderna*⁵³ and *Azimuth*.⁵⁴ Their cataloguing allows to make clear some important aspects on three topics: the reception of *Dada* historical movement in Italy; the relationship between avant-garde Art and Graphic Design; and the history of the art reviews –an aspect still to be examined in depth by literature.

L'esperienza moderna was founded in Rome by two artists, Achille Perilli and Gastone Novelli, which were very active in Roman abstract avant-garde after the Second World War. The protagonists of *L'esperienza moderna* progressively figured out how their aim for an international connection depended on their capacity to leave and overcome the exhausting Italian debate on the contrast between Abstraction and Realism. As leftist intellectuals, their first form of engagement was to protect their autonomy and freedom of expression from every ideological interference. No previous category was valid anymore and the periodical can even redefine a New Image Painting (*Nuova figurazione*) in terms of “going beyond the visible” and “drawing on the secret of the World by other means in spite of the traditional shape-color relation”⁵⁵ - here, the critic Cesare Vivaldi is

⁵² <http://www.artivisive.sns.it/>

⁵³ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=1&id=11&lang=EN>

⁵⁴ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=1&id=26&lang=EN>

⁵⁵ Cesare Vivaldi, *Nuova figurazione nella giovane arte italiana*, in “L'esperienza moderna” (<http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=10&IDFascicolo=21&artgal=11&lang=EN>), n. 3-4, december 1957, p. 24.

talking about the founders Achille Perilli and Gastone Novelli among others. Many articles in 1957 and in the last issue of 1959 were pointed out that these new means of representation (“different materials, scratch, chap, mark, spot”) can now give a “truthful and deep *image* of life”⁵⁶ and bring the group in relation with the practice of American and European movements (like Abstract Expressionism or *Informel*, to name a few) without any political complex. But this claim of freedom was also in search of its forefather in the avant-garde tradition: a kind of historical legitimacy that found in Dada’s reception its higher point of awareness. The opening of the second issue of *L’esperienza moderna* (august-september 1957)⁵⁷ [] was dedicated to Kurt Schwitters; in the same way the following issues have recovered poems, images, statements of Hans Arp (n. 3-4, december 1957)⁵⁸ and Raoul Hausmann (n. 5, march 1959).⁵⁹ At this first stage, Dada’s reception was more about the autonomy of expression, a form of personal and existential engagement that has introduced some fundamental Surrealist means like the association between chance and imaginary aspects: words, images, materials can now coexist in the same artwork. It was only a little bit later, with the publication of *Azimuth*, that Dada’s lesson of freedom become the definitive farewell to any traditional distinction between the Arts (especially between Painting and Sculpture) and the drive to an unmediated relationship between Art and Life.

Founded by Piero Manzoni and Enrico Castellani in Milan, the artists’ review *Azimuth* (digitizing underway),⁶⁰ will turn Dada’s legacy into the disruptive start of the Sixties art along with American *New Dada*, considering Kurt Schwitters -and implicitly Marcel Duchamp- as the main interesting

56 Ibid.

⁵⁷ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=10&IDFascicolo=12&artgal=11&lang=EN>

⁵⁸ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=10&IDFascicolo=21&artgal=11&lang=EN>

⁵⁹ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=10&IDFascicolo=35&artgal=11&lang=EN>

⁶⁰ <http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=1&id=26&lang=EN>

examples of Dada: the first issue of 1959 reported the well-known Schwitters' "Merz" statement and the *New Dada* of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns.⁶¹

In any case, from a Graphic Design point of view, neither *Azimuth*, nor *L'esperienza moderna* can be considered as extreme experimental examples. Cecco Re, the designer of the latter review, limited his creative and brilliant intervention to the cover, while the layout of the pages still remained quite regular and sober. Illustrations and texts have a conventional relation apart from some few artistic attempts to shift some typographic effects into art: a blue-Klein whole page or Manzoni's *Alfabeto* (both n. 2).

On the other side, except from its unusual size and elongated shape, *L'esperienza moderna* tends to simplify the layout by separating the illustrated pages from the texts and by stressing the autonomous/associative relationship between poems and paintings. Also here just few examples tried to transform illustration into layout composition through the pervasive presence of *Informel* style signs that broke the layout grid. Also for *L'esperienza moderna* we can find only one example of creative Graphic Design due to artists: a collaboration between Achille Perilli, Gastone Novelli and Man Ray for celebrating the Sputnik 1 satellite in orbit⁶². Under no circumstances these reviews were conceived as art or creative objects themselves. They just responded to a refined need for self-promotion (the editors of *L'esperienza moderna* tried to organize some exhibitions on the group while *Azimuth* had its own gallery called *Azimet*), documentation and information which were their first goals. Their circulation and their well-informed contents were destined to an international - at least European⁶³- and avant-

61 The First issue guests the definition of "Merz" by Kurt Schwitters, an article of Francis Picabia, and some reproductions of Robert Rauschenberg's and Jasper Johns' work.

62 The intervention overlaps photos and text collages in the first pages of the issue number 3-4 (<http://www.capti.it/index.php?ParamCatID=10&IDFascicolo=21&artgal=11&lang=EN>).

63 *L'esperienza moderna* hosted texts in French and English, and translations from Russian and German. The second issue of *Azimuth* -actually the catalogue of the exhibition held at *Azimet*, titled *La nuova concezione artistica*- offered its articles in three languages (Italian, French and English).

garde audience. So their lack of budget and publisher support (the headquarters of *Azimuth* was Manzoni's home address itself) was probably the main reason of their limited approach to experimental editing and design. They corresponded in some extent to the paradigmatic artistic review of the Fifties, published, supported, designed and edited by the artists themselves in collaboration with a willing team of few people and with a short-term collection of issues (three years for *L'esperienza moderna* and barely two for *Azimuth*). Anyway, this direct engagement of the artist in the publication and editing process will be a forerunner example for some relevant periodicals of the Sixties like *Marcatré*, where Graphic Design, Poetry, Visual Arts and reports on every kind of Performative Art were combined into a new and unrepeatably pioneering ensemble.

The research and the digitizing will progress in the next months examining these and also other aspects connected with Art periodicals. One of the major goal will be to strengthen the collaboration with important partners like the Biblioteca and Archivio del '900 of The Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (Mart) and the protagonists of this story (Piera Panzeri and Dedalo Editore for *Nac*; Tommaso Trini and Prearo Editore for *Data*; Fondazione D'Ars "Oscar Signorini" for *D'Ars Agency*) and also to open new collaboration with foundations and other institutions that can help providing a whole and interconnected history of Art and Art periodicals in Italy rather than a delimited focus on each, single case.

Denis Viva