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PROJECTS & DOCUMENTS

PINK

Representations of Women and Women Graphic Designers

Paola Ciandrini

Università di Macerata

Francesco E. Guida

Politecnico di Milano



1. Introduction¹

From 9th to 28th of October 2020, Laboratorio Formentini per l'Editoria in Milan hosted the exhibition “PINK. Representations of Women and Women Graphic Designers”. The event, initially postponed due to the pandemic, was organised by the Aiap CDPG² in collaboration with the Fondazione Mondadori and the Master on Digital Archives FGCAD held by the Università di Macerata and was curated by the authors (Francesco E. Guida and Paola Ciandrini) with Lorenzo Grazzani (Aiap CDPG).

The exhibition opened the 9th of October 2020 with a round table attended by Annalisa Rossi (MiBACT Soprintendenza Archivistica e Bibliografica della Lombardia), Valeria Bucchetti (Politecnico di Milano), Raimonda Riccini (Università Iuav di Venezia) and Anty Pansera (President of the Association DcomeDesign).³

2. The Exhibition Concept

Two were the main aims of PINK. On the one hand, to show the representations of women curated by graphic designers (both male and female) from the golden age of Italian design (approximately between the 40s and early 70s).

1 The authors co-wrote this contribution. Francesco E. Guida dealt specifically with paragraphs 1 and 2, Paola Ciandrini with paragraph 3.

2 The Graphic Design Documentation Centre of Aiap, the Italian Association of Visual Communication Design, was opened in 2009 and today host more than 70 founs of various consistencies. Among the others, it holds founs registered to Simonetta Ferrante, Anita Klinz, Brunetta Mateldi and Claudia Morgagni, as well as materials produced by Carlo and Maddalena Angeretti, Umberta Barni, Jeanne Grignani, Lora Lamm, Ornella Linke-Bossi. <http://aiap.it/cdpg/>.

3 The official video registration of the panel (in Italian) is available here: <https://www.fondazione-mondadori.it/evento/pink-rappresentazioni-femminili-e-donne-graphic-designer/>.

On the other, to reflect on the contribution of the women designers in a period conditioned by stereotypes and preconceptions about female roles in a social context subject to significant changes. The exhibition and the related discussion panel intended to question and argue on the role of history, sources and gender studies; on the presence of women designers in the profession in the post-WWII period and their absences in the great histories of design. And on how visual artefacts of design return a possible reading of society and its complexity, allowing different and richer interpretations of our history.

In PINK there were micro-histories of women graphic designers, showed through samples of their work, such as Brunetta Mateldi (Fig. 1), Anita Klinz (Fig. 2), Claudia Morgagni, Simonetta Ferrante, Jeanne Grignani (Fig. 3), Lora Lamm, Ornella Linke-Bossi.⁴ Beyond their professional contribution, the quality or the styles of their work, the dimension and variety of their clients, in the exhibition were considered the multiple roles they interpreted, both at a social (women, wives, mothers) and professional levels (educators, active in associations, artists). Those criteria were used not just to fill supposed absences, but to discuss issues to take into account to write a more inclusive history of graphic design, as already proposed by Scotford (1994) on the need of understanding private and public roles available to women at a particular time.

4 Some of the mentioned names are presented and analyzed in the essay “Beyond Professional Stereotypes” published in this issue of the journal by Francesco E. Guida. Most of the issues here shortly discussed are indeed argued by M. Àngels Fortea in her essay.



Figure 1. Brunetta Mateldi Moretti, cover for the magazine “Il Dramma”, Società Editrice Torinese, 1943, courtesy Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori.

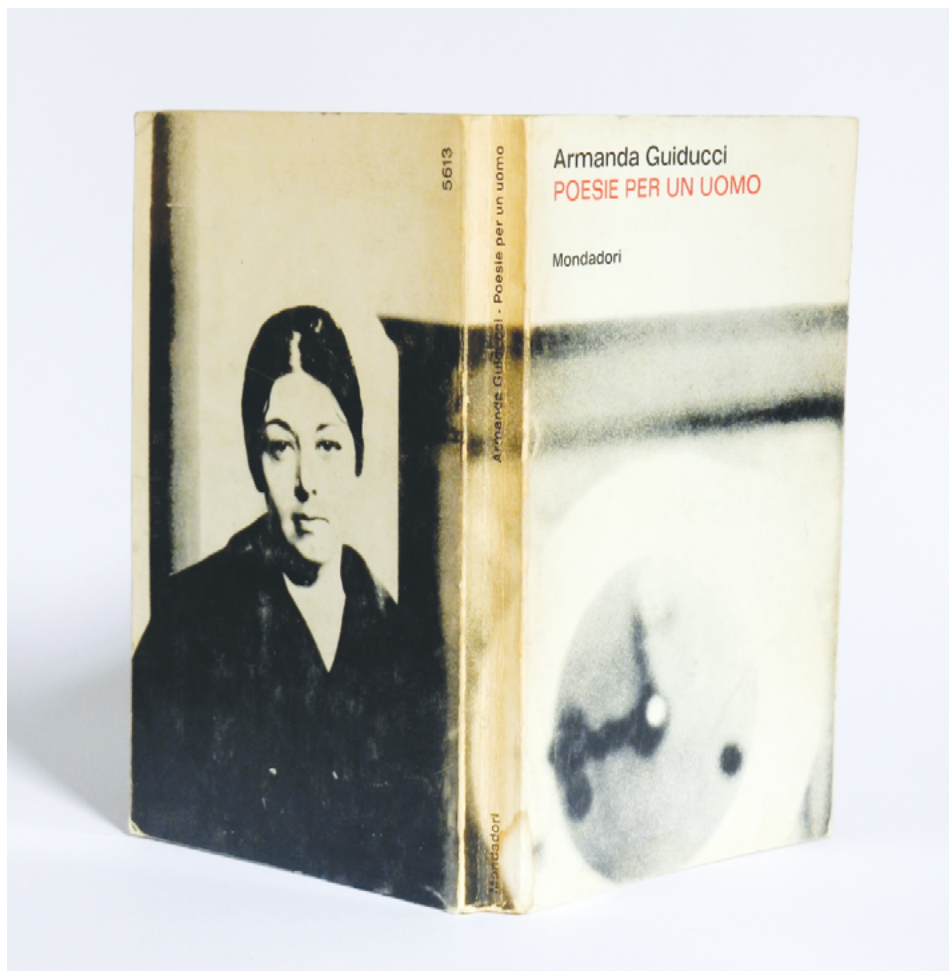


Figure 2. Anita Klinz (with Ferruccio Bocca), cover for “Il Tornasole” book series, Mondadori, 1965, courtesy Aiap CDPG.



*fate
come
me!*

Ho acquistato
una macchina per cucire NECCHI
e sono due volte felice!
Perchè ho finalmente la macchina
che ho sempre sognato di possedere
e perchè ho a mia completa disposizione
in qualsiasi momento
il più prezioso aiuto
che una donna possa desiderare:
il "NECCHI SERVIZIO".

NECCHI 
SERVIZIO

In ogni negozio NECCHI
troverete sempre assistenza,
consigli e suggerimenti
sull'uso della macchina per cucire
nuove idee per la Vostra eleganza
e tutti gli accessori indispensabili
ai Vostri lavori di cucito.

Troverete i famosi CUCINECCHI
i modelli in stoffa già tagliati
e pronti per la cucitura
facilissimi da realizzare.

NECCHI

10.000 negozi 80.000 collaboratori
in tutto il mondo



Figure 3. Jeanne Michot Grignani and Franco Grignani, advertisement, Necchi, 1955-60, courtesy Aiap CDPG.

PINK also showed how the image of the woman and its representation made by female and male hands (e.g., Silvio Coppola, Salvatore Gregorietti, Antonio Tubaro, Franco Mosca, Ilio Negri and Giulio Confalonieri, Massimo Vignelli, Pino Tovaglia) allows us to re-read the changes in Italian society and at the same time to reflect and discuss the use of the female body through visual artefacts. And how much it has eventually changed over time.

In the exhibition, some strong contrasts were emphasized, not necessarily in purely chronological order. Through the displays designed by Antonio Tubaro for furniture and household appliances during the late 50s and early 60s, it is possible to observe women suspended between stereotypes (the queen of the house) and possible emancipation (Fig. 4). Far later, the use of photography by well-known designers and art-directors allows to emphasise the affirmation of stereotypes or analyse the use of female bodies as objects. As it is in the adverts by Giulio Confalonieri for Filiclair (1968), in a series of posters by Silvio Coppola (1968-69) for Laminati Plastici-Formica (Fig. 5) or in a couple of posters by Walter Ballmer for Olivetti (1966-1967). Different art-works, in which female bodies are used with sexual appeal malice or to represent stereotypical women (e.g. the “stupid” secretary) (Fig. 6).

On another level, there is, among others, the 1972 advert for the Bambole sofa series by Mario Bellini for C&B Italia. In this advert (Fig. 7), the photographer Oliviero Toscani and the art-director Antonio Trabacchi chose a famous model, Donna Jordan, “who is pictured topless and heavily made-up in poses that combine doll-like stiffness with sexual availability [...]”



Figure 4. Antonio Tubaro, shaped counter display, Magnadyne, 1962 ca., courtesy Aiap CDPG.

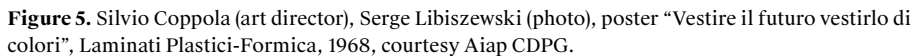




Figure 6. Walter Ballmer, poster “Copia II”, Olivetti, 1966, courtesy Aiap CDPG.

...bambole che passano... su BAMBOLE che restano

Ti puoi sedere sulla BAMBOLA:
cedevole e viva,
flessuosa e partecipante,
che ti abbraccia
per come è fatta dentro;
sei ancora soltanto seduto
con la bambola
e hai già trovato
infiniti modi di stare
e forse è inutile sapere
come è fatta dentro.
Ti puoi sedere anche d'angolo
sul BAMBANGOLO
anche senza bambole,
con un bracciolo in meno
e un movimento in più;
e se non ti cadono le braccia
senza braccioli,
siediti sulla BAMBOLINA cedevole,
viva e flessuosa
e partecipante come prima
per come è fatta dentro.
O si può stare tanti e tante bambole
seduti in ogni modo, riunendo
BAMBOLINE, BAMBOLE e BAMBANGOLI
con le mani nelle mani,
le gambe d'angolo,

le mani sui braccioli,
le braccia abbandonate,
le reni scivolato,
i piedi sul BAMBOUFF
le mani sulle bambole,
gli occhi sul giornale
e non ci diranno mai
cosa c'è dentro.
Si può stare con una BIBAMBOLA
o con una TRIBAMBOLA
vestite a fiorellini;
in due, tre o quattro alla volta
o più comodamente di traverso,
le schiene d'angolo,
quasi distesi,
le braccia sprofondano come ali,
le teste poggiate pensosi,
sprofondati nel sonno
o nel desiderio di una BAMBOLEUSE
più profonda come un letto
ma avvolgente ancora.
Puoi stare con Beethoven
stereofonico e la testa
persa nel morbido guanciale

di una BAMBOLONA o
di una BAMBOLONGUE dalla seduta lunga
e perdere la testa
per come è fatta dentro,
arrendevole e viva
flessuosa e partecipante
che ti abbraccia anche senza braccioli.
Si può stare lunghi e distesi
anche sul BAMBOLETTONE
e sul BAMBOLETTONE;
o poggiare la nuca, il collo,
le spalle, le reni nel loro guanciale,
sul loro schienale;
e perchè non il viso,
il petto e la vita, le mani,
i polsi le braccia, i piedi
e le gambe guardandosi in faccia,
comodamente
come su tutte le BAMBOLE
cedevoli e vive
flessuose e partecipanti
che ti abbracciano
anche senza le braccia.



C&B
ITALIA

Figure 7. Enrico Trabacchi (art director), Oliviero Toscani (photo), advertisement, C&B Italia, 1972, courtesy Aiap CDGP.

The semi-clad Jordan and the sexual passivity of her poses make her the epitome of the to-be-looked-at female” (Rossi, 2009, p. 252).

To more in-depth discussing the male-gaze theme, it is interesting to observe the illustrative work of Jeanne Grignani for Necchi (Fig. 3). She used to draw women who look into the eyes of the observer, inviting the spectator to look at with provocative poses. On the opposite, Lora Lamm’s work is where the female bodies are nearly abstracts, synthetically drawn, with no explicit reference to forms or age (Bucchetti, 2016).

However, the objective of the exhibition was not to compose a gallery of artefacts to be demonised, but rather to re-read them from a different point of view, recognising their value and quality and at the same time having in mind the context in which they were created. The goal was to emphasise history and sources as indispensable tools for re-reading and interpreting our present. The sources and the places of their conservation – the archives, the places of memory – offer the possibility and allow to work on different research paths, always new, even on contemporary issues.

Archives as a memory to counter stereotypes, as evidence to return the kaleidoscope of characters, styles and design languages that contributed to visual communication as we can intend it today. In this sense, it is appropriate to quote Giovanni Baule’s words (2005), commented by Bulegato (2013, p. 104): “Our ‘need for memory’ is a requirement as the design world risks going adrift in contemporary communica-

tion-based society. And the memory housed in archives is the memory of the future”.⁵

3. The Role of the Sources

Baule’s words offer a key to understanding the activities of the Aiap CDPG dedicated to archival heritage. In spring 2019 the CDPG launched a project for the description and enhancement of the archives kept, with a co-financing from Regione Lombardia and the collaboration of the Master on Digital Archives FGCAD, the doctorate Memories and Digital Humanities and the Ibridamente.it project of the University of Macerata. This brief report aims to illustrate the methodology adopted and the results achieved, with particular attention to the forms of PINK project dissemination and enhancement of the archival sources preserved by Aiap: an exhibition path and an encounter open to citizenship were born from the finding aids created by Aiap, consistent with the themes of “Archivissima 2020” and “Creativa 2020. I talenti delle donne” (“Creativa 2020. The talents of women”), respectively promoted by ANAI – Associazione Nazionale Archivistica Italiana (National Italian Archival Association) and the Municipality of Milan.

An archive is always a complex system. A particularly and eloquent noun and adjective: the term “complex” derives from the Latin *complector*, girders, keeping tightly bound. By metaphorical extension, the word expresses embracing, understanding, uniting everything in itself, bringing it together un-

5 Original text: “Il nostro ‘bisogno di memoria’ è l’esigenza in un mondo del progetto che rischia la deriva nella società della comunicazione. E la memoria degli archivi è la memoria del futuro”.

der a single thought and a single denomination. From which link, network, network of relations.

Archives are the documentary by-product of human activity retained for their long-term value.

They are contemporary records created by individuals and organisations as they take care of their business and therefore provide us with a direct window on past events. This is the authoritative definition by ICA, International Council on Archives. So, archives are complex systems of all records, regardless of the form or medium: complex systems of records created, received, accumulated and used by a person, family or corporate body in the course of the activities and functions of their creator.

The Italian for “Creator” in the archival language is “Soggetto produttore”: who produced that precise, organised system. Archives can be composed in a wide range of formats, and Aiap CDPG testifies this multidimensionality of format, organisation, and contents. Aiap is both the custodian of archives produced by different creators and the creator of new archival complexes, including the archive of the association which boasts over 50 years of activity.

Hans Tuppy, the internationally renowned biochemist, opened the four-year ICA congress in 2004 and presented the archives as DNA, the molecule par excellence: the molecule of memory. Let's try to formulate an example starting from the archive concept as the DNA of society and its being a democratic tool. To be of value to society archives must be a trusted resource, and to achieve this, they must have the four qualities.

Authenticity: the record is what it claims to be, created at the time documented, and the person that the document claims to be created by. Reliability: records are accurately representing the event, although it will be through the view of the person or organisation creating that document. Integrity: the content is sufficient to give a coherent picture. Usability: records must be in an accessible location and usable condition, over time and through the time. The action of Aiap CDPG for its archival heritage took place in this scenario, reflecting on the famous five laws of Ranganathan⁶ declined in an archival way: 1. Records are for use; 2. Every person his or her record; 3. Every records its user; 4. Save the time of the user; 5. The archive is a growing organism.

Aiap CDPG as a service for preservation, research, enhancement. What is the basis? A massive operation of description, of creation of finding aids. Only with a competent description and organisation operation, the archival heritage becomes a shared asset at the community's service.

Only in this way, the Aiap DNA becomes accessible and investigable. And to support the user audience, "compasses" are needed: multi-level tools, different finding aids as a guide to Aiap fonds, and inventories for each archive kept. The first year of collaboration between Aiap and the University of Macerata produced two results: a guide and an inventory, the latter dedicated to the Tubaro archive, involved in the PINK exhibition.

6 Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan (1892-1972), Indian librarian and educator who was considered the father of library science in India and whose contributions had worldwide influence. His "Five Laws of Library Science" (1931) was widely accepted as a definitive statement of the ideal of library service: 1. Books are for use, 2. Every person his or her book, 3. Every book its reader, 4. Save the time of the reader, 5. The library is a growing organism.

On the occasion of PINK, the Aiap heritage also became the subject of a thematic podcast for the “Sound Atlas of Italian Archives”, a dissemination project dedicated to archival sources: in the podcast – titled “When the archive is a need”⁷ – the story is dedicated to the Aiap fonds. Created to highlight women’s presence in graphic design, the podcast traces Claudia Morgagni’s profile through the voice of a potential user – Valentina de Poli, journalist and copywriter – who tells about materials, studies, perspectives and emotions caused by contact with the archive.

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⁷ Original title: “Quando l’archivio è esigenza”; credits: text and voice Valentina de Poli, producer Matteo Scandolin, publisher Archivissima.

Links

<https://www.laboratorioformentini.it/eventi/pink-rappresentazioni-femminili-e-donne-graphic-designer/>

<https://www.laboratorioformentini.it/pink-rappresentazioni-femminili-e-donne-graphic-designer-materiali-esposti-da-aiap/>

<https://www.laboratorioformentini.it/pink-rappresentazioni-femminili-e-donne-graphic-designer-materiali-esposti-da-fondazione-arnoldo-e-alberto-mondadori/>

<https://www.archivissima.it/2020/eventi/342-puntata-9-quando-larchivio-e-esigenza/>

<https://www.archivissima.it/2020/>

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Author of *Storie di Architettura attraverso i sensi* (Bruno Mondadori, 2000), *Invisible Architectures. Experiencing places through the senses of smell* (Skira, 2006) and *Sensi, tempo e architettura* (Postmedia Books, 2012), *Sensefulness, new paradigms for Spatial Design* (Postmedia Books, 2019) and many other publications.

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Her interest involves visual and gender identities in communication design field. She studies theoretical aspects of identity systems and their communication components and developed projects of basic and applied research. She is a member of the Ph.D design board and of "Centro di Ricerca interuniversitario Culture di genere".

She won the "Compasso d'Oro" Design Award as co-author of the project for the multimedia catalogue of the Poldi Pezzoli Museum (Milan, 1995) and received Honourable Mention, Compasso d'Oro ADI (XXV), for the project "WeMi. La città per il welfare". She is author of several books: *La messa in scena del prodotto* (1999), *Packaging design* (2005), *Altre figure. Intorno alle figure di argomentazione* (2011), *Anticorpi comunicativi* (2012), *Un'interfaccia per il welfare* (2017), *Progetto e culture visive* (2018).

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Architect and Visual Designer, Cinzia Ferrara holds a PhD in Industrial Design: she is Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Palermo, where she performs a series of duties such as conducting research on Visual Communication Design and holding courses for both the BA in Industrial Design and the MA in Design & Culture of the Territory. She's also the course leader for a series of masters and workshops, and an organiser of cultural events, conferences and exhibitions. From 2015 to 2018, she has been National President of Aiap (the Italian Association for Visual Communication Design) after serving as Vice President from 2009 to 2015. In 2017, she was one of 100 designers selected to be World Design Ambassadors for the Italian Design Day.

She's author of books and essays published on national and international journals: she's also part of editorial committees, observatories and European projects. She lives and works in Sicily, which is a continent, rather than just an island.

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Marinella Ferrara

PhD, associate professor of product design in the School of Design of the Politecnico di Milano. Since 2014 she has been the head of MADEC, the Research Centre of Material Design Culture in the Department of Design. Her researches are mainly focused on design-driven innovation, design for materials (advanced and smart materials), news technologies integration in product and interior design, Future Design Scenarios. With her research, she has made a significant contribution to methodologies of Design for Materials and historiographical work. Moreover, she deals other research topic like the design in Mediterranean countries, gender issues in design and Design History.

Co-founder of *PAD. Pages on Arts & Design* journal, since 2011 she has been the PAD editor in chief. Since 2015 to 2017 she has been a member of ADI's executive board, and currently coordinates the technical-scientific committee for long-life professional training of design professionals.

Since 2019 she has been a member of the executive committee of *AIS/Design. Storia e Ricerche* scientific journal.

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In the research field, she is member of GREDITS (Design and Social Transformation Research Group). She has specialized on Historical and Historiographical Research of Design. Her research work is focused on Pop Art Design, and specifically on the development of graphical Pop Art in Catalonia and Spain as a result of her PhD thesis.

She is currently interested on research projects that seed to make visible the contribution of female graphic designers.

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Francesco E. Guida

Assistant professor at Politecnico di Milano (Department of Design, School of Design, Bachelor in Communication Design), he is secretary of the BSc + MSc Communication Design Courses. PhD in Design and Technology for the Enhancement of Cultural Heritage, he has more than 25 years of experience as a graphic design consultant.

Board member of Aiap (the Italian Association for Visual Communication Design), actually he is coordinator of activities and researches for the Graphic Design Documentation Centre (Aiap CDPG). Since 2013 he is a member of the editorial committee of *AIS/Design. Storia e Ricerche* journal and since 2014 of *PAD. Pages on Arts & Design* journal.

Starting from 1997 his contributions on graphic design and visual communication are published in journals, books and conference proceedings.

His main research activities are in the fields of visual identities, speculative and experience design, and graphic design micro-histories.

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Chella Quint

She is a Brooklyn, US-born, Sheffield, UK-based designer, writer, performer, researcher and founder of the Period Positive movement. In between performing feminist sketch comedy and studying for an MA in Education, she coined the term 'period positive' to describe the zeitgeist of her zines, art and craftivism, and developed the concept into a well-known desing initiative and campaign to find long-term solutions to menstrual illiteracy. She launched the first annual Period Positive Week in May 2019.

She has recently joined Lab4Living's 100 Year Life and Future Home project at Sheffield Hallam University. Her doctoral research explores ways to navigate aging and lifecycle changes where embodied shame can be a barrier to agency in co-design. She co-hosts the annual Sheffield Zine Fest and her zines are held in a number of international zine libraries and collections. She performs and exhibits regularly at science, literary and comedy festivals.

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Aiap CDPG, the Graphic Design Documentation Centre. Working to collect, catalogue, archive, enhance and promote any documents related to graphic design and visual communication. These documents (originals as well layouts of projects, books, posters, prints, catalogues, correspondence, photographs) help reconstruct the history of graphic design in Italy and support research and educational activities, as it is the CDGP's intention to make these documents widely available.



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