

24



FUTURE

HERITAGES



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PAD

via Festa del Perdono 1 – 20122 Milano – Italy
via Roma 171 – 90133 Palermo – Italy
info@padjournal.net – editors@padjournal.net

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Memories of Italian Graphic Design History

Digital Dissemination and Immaterial Circulation of Visual Communication Heritage

Raissa D'Uffizi

Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza

Orcid id 0000-0002-9674-2265

Keywords

Italian Graphic Design History, Digital Archiving, Cultural Heritage, Visual Communication.

Abstract

Posters, brochures, advertisements, catalogs, and magazines constitute a fascinating cultural heritage to retrace the history of Italian graphic design. From the 1930s to the 1970s, graphic design enriched Italian communication with a revolutionary visual language. Various societies, foundations, associations, and public or private archives preserve graphic materials today. The result is the difficulty in creating a single place to preserve graphic design projects physically. This condition also reflects the digital archiving process of graphic materials. The absence of official digital conversion has facilitated the emergence of independent entities that make graphic artifacts accessible online. Sometimes online dissemination does not provide historical sources, and it is not primary digitisation. The contribution analyses the online diffusion and immaterial circulation of graphic artifacts. The research presents some emblematic cases to define original and no-original archiving processes. *Archivio Storico del Progetto Grafico* by Centro di Documentazione sul Progetto Grafico (CDPG), the digitalisation of magazines like *Campo Grafico* and *Stile Industria*, or independent projects such as *Archivio della Grafica Italiana*, are only some examples. The purpose is to identify critical and strong points of these archives and digital platforms, imagining a new digital archive for the Italian graphic design heritage.

1. Preliminary Considerations

“Is graphic design part of design?” is the question Gillo Dorfles reflected on in 1963. The critic answers, associating graphic design with the vast universe of industrial design. For Dorfles (1963, p. 43), graphic design is:

Any project destined for a complex graphic operation, such as the creation of a trademark, a logotype, or a coordinated image referring to a company or a business, and in general, any form of design that may be two-dimensional or three-dimensional (in the case of packaging) even if this design will be essentially graphic rather than objective in nature.

Anty Pansera has defined communication design as “the first misunderstood object produced by design culture” (2020, p. 17). Communication design has gained value in the sociological and cultural evolution in Italy. Graphic artefact signal “ubiquitous, many and unstable characters”, revealing that their “cultural-historical value does not live in the original pieces” (Vinti, 2019, p. 122). If an advertisement in a magazine is reproduced on many printed copies, it is not a “unique piece”. In contemporary studies, Catherine de Smet investigated graphic design as an exclusive object (2017; 2020). Considering its material history, she analysed relational factors such as function and context. Italy’s graphic design heritage has been re-evaluated as a cultural asset in recent decades. It is a patrimony to preserve and enhance. Even albeit with obvious difficulties due to the geographic dispersion of materials. Simona De Iulio and Carlo Vinti (2019, p. 8) state that graphic design projects, such as posters or advertising mate-

rials, are “ephemeral devices”. Graphic designers create their artefacts with limited action in time. These are no prospects of use in the future and are not at all intended for intentional historical archiving (p. 10). The difficulty of finding and grouping materials and producing a complete historical review is obvious. Nevertheless, “a complete systematic survey of the industrial visual communication sector” (Iliprandi et al., 1984, p. 9) was carried out in Italy in 1983. It followed the exhibition held in Milan in the same year on the occasion of the International Council of the Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) congress.¹ The project defined a “Caso Italiano” of visual communication. It represented a multitude of graphic design works by well-known designers from 1933 to 1983. The need for an Italian graphic design history led to an awareness of preserving this heritage. However, only in 2011 were graphic design and design archives included in the project cataloguing the architecture archives of Lombardy. The cataloguing project began in 1998 as a census dedicated to architecture archives and was published for the first time in 2003. In 2012 the updated catalogue was published, including design and graphic design archives. The research resulted in an initial survey with 178 archives (Ciagà, 2012), then updated in 2021 with thirty-six new archives (Ciagà, 2021).²

Fiorella Bulegato investigated the relationship between Italian graphic design and archives (2013). She founds the physical

1 The review and the editorial project were curated by Giancarlo Iliprandi, Alberto Marangoni, Franco Origoni and Anty Pansera.

2 The work was the result of a joint effort between the Soprintendenza Archivistica and Politecnico di Milano (Area Servizi Bibliotecari di Ateneo, Archivi storici) and with the collaboration of Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive –CASVA. The census was online updated in 2016 by Maria Teresa Faraboli, <https://lombardiarchivi.servizirl.it/projects/256>.

lack of a specific national archive for communication and visual design. Bulegato highlights the need for digital preservation operations using “digital media” as the “sole custodians of memory” (p. 102).

To date, the Associazione italiana design della comunicazione visiva (AIAP, the Italian Association of Visual Communication Design) manages the Centro di Documentazione sul Progetto Grafico (AIAP Graphic Design Documentation Center, CDPG), the University of Parma curates the Centro Studi e Archiviazione della Comunicazione (CSAC).³ Other institutions also play a central role in physically preserving materials. Politecnico di Milano preserves the Historical Archive of Albe and Lica Steiner.⁴ Then, others enhance the heritage of design archives and museums, like the Circuito Lombardo Musei Design (Lombardy Design Museums Circuit).⁵ For graphic design, in addition to the AIAP Graphic Design Documentation Center, the Giancarlo Iliprandi Association and the Origoni Steiner Archive are part of the network.

Furthermore, a part of Italian graphic design is linked to corporate identities. Many materials are now preserved in the historical archives of companies such as Olivetti, Kartell and Artemide.

3 The CSAC, among over five hundred funds related to art, architecture, design, photography, fashion, media and entertainment sectors, is also in possession of relevant documents in the field of Italian graphic design, such as the collections entitled to Silvio Coppola, Giancarlo Iliprandi, Bob Noorda, Michele Provinciali and Ettore Vitale. <https://www.csacparma.it>.

4 <https://www.biblio.polimi.it/sedi-e-orari/archivio-steiner>.

5 <https://museidesign.it/>.

The lack of a single national archive for graphic design and the division into smaller collections implied slow digitisation of materials. This absence is not optimal for virtually archiving such a conspicuous and multiform graphic design heritage. There have been some attempts that have led to the circulation and online use of graphic design artefacts. This condition had an ambivalent result. On the one hand, the accelerated usability led to a devaluation of the materials. On the other hand, their digitisation led to enhanced visibility, albeit to different degrees. This granted, partially their preservation from possible material and geographical dispersal. However, it is necessary to distinguish between digital archives and web platforms. Original contents are for the digital archive, while non-original ones are for the digital platform. These examples have different retrieval methods, structures, organisations, purposes, and objectives.

The first part of the present contribution analyses some examples of digital dissemination. Original graphic design materials come from associations, institutions, and private and company archives. First of all, the *Archivio Storico del Progetto Grafico* is a choral example. It shows several items from graphic designers and archives and preserves artefacts. Graphic designers Ilio Negri and Pino Tovaglia's digital platforms are individual archiving. The management is to heirs, and the approach is more circumscribed in a personal tale. Examples of digital magazine archives are also included. *Campo Grafico*, *Stile Industria* and *Domus* are entirely digitalised and consulted online. They are significant for the visualisation of graphic artefacts published in them.

There are also some examples of corporate archives, such as Pirelli, Barilla and Rinascente. It is self-preservation and documentation to safeguard the corporate's heritage.

In the second part, two digital realities are described. These are dissimilar from the previous ones. *Sitographic* and *Archivio Grafica Italiana* have a non-original content retrieval. They allow a digital circulation of graphic design artefacts through a more “democratic” modality. They have a synthetic cataloguing, no primary sources and are irrelevant to scientific research. Through case studies, the analysis presents a typological status trace. Digital archives and digital platforms have been crucial in disseminating the Italian graphic design heritage. Each archive showcases its unique approaches and structural configurations. The contribution emphasises the strengths and weaknesses of the studied models, intending to contribute to constructing a digital archive for Italian graphic design heritage.

2. Original Archiving and Circulation

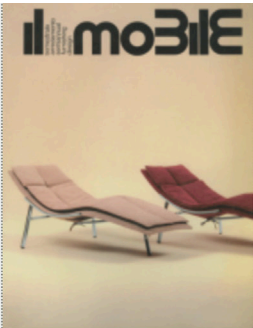
The Centro di Documentazione sul Progetto Grafico (CDPG) manages the *Archivio Storico del Profetto Grafico*, curated by AIAP, guardian of the “history of Italian graphic design” (<https://aiap.it/2000-2020/cdpg/index.html>). As Guida stated, the Centre is “a place, but more than that, it is an idea, where the collected materials provide evidence of a specific, though diversified, activity [...]. The Centre is not a collection or a mere repository; it is rather (or aspires to be) a dynamic place, where the findings preserved may become key points for the construction of historical pathways and inspirations for new projects” (2022a, p. 24).

There are more than 70,000 graphic design artefacts. They were acquired through progressive donations and bequests from heirs or professionals or through direct purchase. It maintains 89 Funds (AIAP, 2023). The goal is to activate studies, lines of research and enhancement projects through exhibitions or publications (Guida, 2022b).

Despite its physical nature, the CDPG highlights the first steps toward a digitised materials perspective. In support of scientific research, the centre supports users “by making the materials available, asking if these have not been digitised and, if this is a necessity, to make digital reproductions available to us” (Guida, 2022a, p. 26).

The CDPG website also features a visual showcase of graphic design artefacts. The operation includes a visual reconnaissance to view the Centre’s materials. An index allows one to select each fund and collection. Configuring some of the archive’s graphic design artefacts in detail is also possible. Each fund or collection has one page. Each graphic design object is represented with a small “sticker”, a brief introduction, and some other information such as the title, the subject, the company, and the year (Fig. 1). By clicking on each object, it is possible to open a summary list of the product and view the image in a larger format.

Cataloguing is a digital filing of materials in the Milan archive. It provides an excellent tool for the visual archiving of Italian graphic designs and a helpful tool for the online enjoyment of the materials. The operation is to be appreciated and valuable for public study and research. It is a rich presentation of Italian graphic heritage but is limited to the materials preserved by the association.



Il mobile
*Semestrale arredamento
 semiannual furnishing
 design*
 Editrice Publiser, IT,
 1981-06-01



Dante Bigli
Catalogo Sheriff
Linea, confort, riposo
 ISA Industria
 Arredamenti, IT, 1963



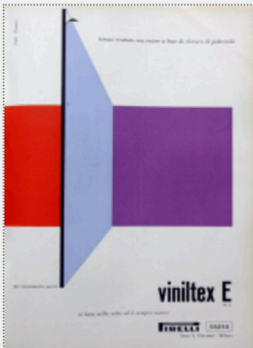
Dante Bigli
Pagina pubblicitaria - Sheriff
 ISA Industria
 Arredamenti, 1964-08-01



Dante Bigli
Pagine pubblicitarie - Mobili Gavina
 Gavina, IT, 1964-10-01



Dante Bigli
Annuncio pubblicitario Necchi
 Necchi S.p.A., IT, 1962-11-01



Dante Bigli
Pagina pubblicitaria per Viniltex E - Pirelli Sapsa
 Pirelli/Sapsa, IT, 1960-11-01

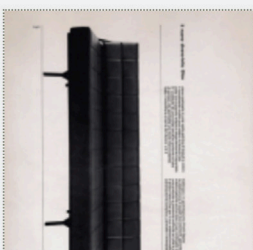


Figure 1. Mosaic for some projects belonging to the Fondo Dante Bigli on the Archivio Storico del Progetto Grafico, 2021 (credits © AIAP. All rights reserved).

There are also more personal archives as opposed to collective projects. The archives of Ilio Negri (1926-1974) and Pino Tovaglia (1923-1977) are examples. Ilio Negri's platform is an official website to show a selection of his works (<https://www.ilionegri.it>). It is to say that the before-mentioned AIAP CDPG keeps the material archive. Luca Negri, Ilio's son, maintains the site, also presenting biographic and bibliography sections. Navigation is divided into four categories (Publishing, Brands, Advertising, and Video). When one opens each image, one finds a summary with the year of production, category, and client name (Fig. 2).

The Pino Tovaglia's platform is a digital archive (<http://pilotovaglia.it>) designed and maintained by the daughter Irene Tovaglia. It presents navigation around the graphic designs of Pino Tovaglia (Fig. 3).



Figure 2. Summary of the advertising project created by Ilio Negri for Superga on Ilio Negri's website, 2021 (credits © Luca Negri. All rights reserved).

Pino Tovaglia

progetti AM.O.R.E vita

pubblicità

Show All

ACNA

Alitalia

ASA Alluminio

DUCO

Fincantieri

Lanerossi

Monteshell

Nebiolo Fonderie

Pirelli

RAI

Splügen Bräu

Total

Valenti



Figure 3. Visual grouping of Pino Tovaglia's advertising projects on the site dedicated, 2022 (credits © Irene Tovaglia 2022. All rights reserved).

Users can choose from nine subcategories in the “Projects” sections: layouts, publishing, posters, brands and identities, objects, advertising, typographic studies, drawings or sketches and studies.

Each section presents an arrangement of the most important projects with a concise caption and the possibility of an in-depth photographic display.

In both cases, the visual archiving effort by the heirs represents a revitalisation of these graphic design artefacts with a conversion from “material” to “digital”.



Figure 4. Overview of *Campo Grafico* covers in the magazine’s digital archive, 2021 (credits © Associazione Culturale Campo Grafico. All rights reserved).

The usability of graphic design on digital platforms becomes interesting in the case of Italian design magazines. Italian design magazines are communicative artefacts and primary historical sources. They are useful for reconstructing a parallel narration of the history of Italian graphic design. For example, *Campo Grafico* (1933-1939), an expression of experimentation in the 1930s, underwent a complete digital scanning process (Fig. 4). The official website (<https://www.campografico.org>) collects 66 issues and 1650 pages. It concretises the goal of “popularising and preserving the historical memory of a collective cultural phenomenon unique in its atypicality and recognised worldwide” (*Campo Grafico Welcome*, n.d). At the same time, the operation also shows the intention of the promoters to revitalise and enhance a niche and elitist magazine.

Also, the forty-three issues of *Stile Industria* (1954-1963), edited by Alberto Rosselli, can be consulted at the digital archive of the Biblioteca Lombarda (<https://www.bdl.servizirl.it>). The journal has been scanned and made available online to various audiences at no cost.

A very similar result was offered by the digitisation of *Domus* (<https://www.domusweb.it>) starting with its first issue (January 15, 1928), but consultation is limited to a periodic subscription. In contrast, *Casabella* (<https://casabellaweb.eu/the-magazine/>) makes free-of-charge covers of all issues (from 1928 to the present day) and some historical issues. About twenty-five historical issues are available. Most of the digitised content belongs to the 1941 issues.

In 2015, Tecno acquired the brand and historical archive of the magazine *Ottagono*. Tecno intended to create a digital archive for the dissemination of all content. The archive is not yet open.

COMUNICARE L'IMPRESA
gli house organ e la stampa aziendale italiana nel Novecento

home

TESTATE

CRONOLOGIA

AZIENDE

GALLERY

PERSONE

il progetto
link
colophon

cerca

contatti

◀ ▶ 1 / 2



GALLERY DELLA TESTATA

pagine da 56 a 96

formato cm. 18 x 35

illustrato si

bn/colore colore

CALEIDOSCOPIO

Pubblicata dal Gruppo Busnelli per più di 25 anni, *Caleidoscopio* è stata innanzitutto una rivista culturale di notevole importanza per gli sviluppi del dibattito sull'architettura e sul design.

Dopo gli esordi più convenzionalmente aziendali e promozionali, a partire dal 1969, il periodico viene curato da Gianni Sassi e Sergio Albergoni, che gli imprimono una svolta significativa, mirando di fatto a un pubblico formato non più soltanto da rivenditori, agenti, architetti o arredatori ma anche ad un ampio ventaglio di lettori interessati al design, all'arte e alla cultura.

Nonostante i numerosi cambiamenti, *Caleidoscopio* ha conservato fino alla fine degli anni '80 un'impostazione di ampio respiro e una curiosità vivace verso molti ambiti della ricerca artistico-intellettuale, che l'ha portata a svolgere un ruolo vitale per la cultura del progetto italiana.

[Leggi tutto >](#)

titolo Caleidoscopio

sottotitolo Semestrale di design, tecnica e produzione del mobile edito e distribuito in omaggio dal Gruppo Industriale Busnelli poi Semestrale di design, immagine, comunicazione, tecnica e produzione del mobile, edito e distribuito in omaggio dal Gruppo Industriale Busnelli

azienda Busnelli

durata 1965 (a. I, n. 1) -

periodicità Semestrale

distribuzione in omaggio

direttore Sergio Albergoni, Fernanda Gaslini, Franco Busnelli (Direzione editoriale)

art director Gianni Sassi (Al. Sa), Marco Sbernardoni (Adm - marketing), Hironobu Imai (McCann Erickson), P&T Pubblicità, G&R Associati, Gigliola Marzorati (P&T Pubblicità e Marketing), Aurelia Raffo

contributi Giulia Andemärk, Adriano Antolini, Herta Beloit, Thereza Bento, Rara Bloom, Patrizia Brambilla, Angela Bocciarelli, Sergio Carpinelli, Patrizia Colleoni, Gianni Fodella, Emilio Giannone, Anna Giudici, Vigo La Pietra, Angelo Lucini, Vittorio Mangili, Laura Mantovani, Franco Maralini, Carlo Mauri, Mario Perego, Antonio Pilati, Franco Pinna, Fausta Randazzo, Gianni-Emilio Simonetti, Antonio Steffenoni, Tiziana Vigo

stampatore Grafiche Milani, Arti Grafiche La Monzese, Arti Grafiche Bellomi, Arti grafiche DP, Garzanti Editore, Litoart Seregini, Tipolitografia Mariani

Figure 5. *Caleidoscopio* tab on “Comunicare l’impresa. Gli house organ e la stampa aziendale italiana nel Novecento”, 2010-2022 (credits © Fondazione Isec e Isec. All rights reserved).

Finally, it is necessary to mention the research project “Comunicare l’impresa. Gli house-organ e la stampa aziendale italiana nel Novecento”. The project was supported in 2009 by Fondazione ISEC and in collaboration with the Istituto Lombardo per la Storia Contemporanea (<http://www.houseorgan.net>). The research systematises all house organs and company periodicals, such as *Caleidoscopio* from Busnelli Group, edited by Gianni Sassi and Sergio Albergoni (Fig. 5), or Kartell’s magazine *Qualità* edited by Giulio Castelli. These magazines were published in Italy between 1939 and 2000. They are “textual and iconographic documents that constitute a histor-

ical source of primary importance” (*Il Progetto. Comunicare l'impresa. Gli house organs e la stampa aziendale italiana nel Novecento*, n.d). It is a review of individual magazines and a repertoire of articles, images, photographs, and cover designs. The goal is to enhance the magazines as a tool of interest for the historical formation of corporate memory. It is also possible to filter the titles by region or view a chronological mapping of *house organs*.

The relationship between Italian graphic designers and companies has been crucial in creating corporate identities. Their collaboration blended the different skills to shape the new Italian industrial reality. The role of the graphic designer, starting after World War II, gave “an aesthetic face to industry” (Vinti, 2007, p. 14). The creation of graphic designs was fundamental to business culture through the “spirit and novelty of a style” (Piazza, 2011, p. 324). Skilful graphic designers were able to shape and enrich corporate identities.

Today, some companies such as Pirelli, Barilla, and Rinascente have shared historical archives to attest to the decisive role of graphic design in their history. Their memory is tangible by transferring their material to a digital platform.

The Pirelli Foundation has created an online archive to explore sources and materials. The setup allows the user to select the type of documentary medium (documents, photographs, drawings and posters, audiovisuals, or publications and journals) or search by keyword.

The archive contains all the corporate communication materials, such as many posters designed by Albe Steiner, Studio

Boggeri, Bob Noorda, Bruno Munari, Pino Tovaglia and Massimo Vignelli, among many others.

Also, in 2018, the Barilla company established its website with the Barilla Historical Archive (<https://www.archivios-toricobarilla.com>). The mission is to “preserve the testimonies of life, projects, strategies, products, and people who have worked in Barilla” as an updated living reality (*Storia dell'Archivio storico Barilla*, n.d).

Through the web pages, it is possible to explore the platform by search criteria, choosing a category, subject or year. Among the 50,000 units, it is possible to find, for example, Telecom Italia's phone card in collaboration with Barilla, with “farfalla” pasta and the motto “W la pasta” (Fig. 6).

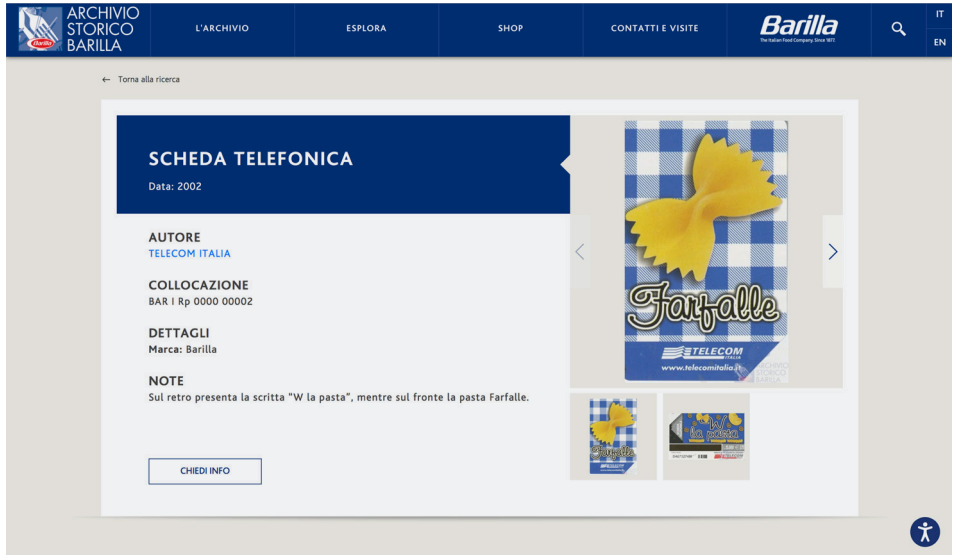


Figure 6. Telecom Italia's phone card in cooperation with Barilla, Archivio Storico Barilla, 2002 (credits © 2018 Barilla G. e R. Fratelli S.p.A & Materiale Archivio Storico Barilla).

Rinascente Archives (<https://archives.rinascente.it>) is an interesting project born in 2015 and directed by Maria Canella and Elena Puccinelli.

The main purpose is the digital reconstruction of the corporate archive. Many events have compromised the original archive (*Rinascente Archives. The project*, n.d). The online archive results from digital donations from numerous foundations, archives and collections and creates a unique collection (Vinti, 2017).

Reconnaissance is not concluded but is a continuous growth of materials and knowledge. The online reconstruction of the archive has also made it possible to tell the visual story of La Rinascente. The platform offers many digitalised artefacts: catalogues, brochures, posters, photographs, advertisements, flyers, and gift cards. Their digital version can be accessed free of charge in an open-format document. La Rinascente expresses the significant contributions that graphic designers such as Albe Steiner, Max Huber, Roberto Sambonet, and Giancarlo Iliprandi have made to the company's design.

A rich deposit, accessible and consultable by users on the web through different paths (graphic design and visual communication IR; Rinascente posters; la Rinascente è donna!), themes (people, places, events, fashion, design, communication) or in the archive and library contents.

Through the digital windows, it is possible to see varied and curious materials, such as the catalogue of the “Summer Festival, la Rinascente” designed by Lora Lamm in 1956, or the 1966 advertisement for “Casa 66. IR” by Salvatore Gregoriotti with a photograph by Aldo Ballo (Fig. 7). Each article can be opened in a larger view with a summary tab. In some cases, publications or catalogues can be viewed in Portable Document Format (PDF).

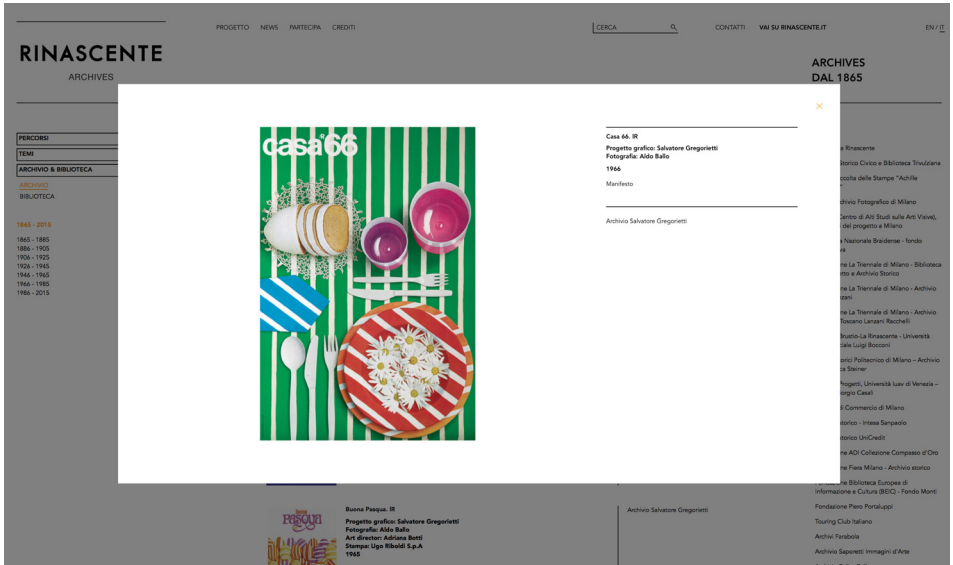


Figure 7. Poster “Casa 66. IR” directed by Salvatore Gregoriotti with photography by Aldo Ballo, Rinascente Archives, 2022 (credits © Rinascente Archives & Archivio Salvatore Gregoriotti).

3. Non-original Circulation

Finally, two cases are relevant for the free circulation of graphic design artefacts on the web when there is no mandatory credit mention of the graphic design’s source.

The first one is the *Archivio Grafica Italiana* (<http://www.archiviograficaitaliana.com/>), a project born from the idea of Nicola-Matteo Munari to promote and disseminate Italian graphic design from the 1930s to the contemporary, showing designs examples by seventy-five graphic designers. The project is “a complete overview of the Italian graphic design heritage”, supporting “Italian graphic design as a national cultural heritage and as a collective cultural asset” (Munari, 2016). Among the aims, as declared in the manifesto on the

site, is to disseminate “‘culture of quality’ that is typical to the Italian design tradition by allowing to explore the fundamental aesthetic and cultural contribution brought by Italian graphics all over the world”.

The archive’s visual identity and layout is well organised and developed. On the opening page, the user finds a visual mosaic with many projects of different authors, years, and types (Fig. 8). Clicking on each box, the user goes to the in-depth project page, where images with an analytical sheet presenting the work are available (Fig. 9). There are eight sections: Title, Designer, Studio, Year, Client, Medium, Notes and Tag). One can advance the search through different choices:

- the type of project in the “Project” section, through seventeen medium categories (advertising, book, brochure, calendar, catalogue, flyer, leaflet, logotype, manual, mark, packaging, periodical, poster, signage, specimen, stationery and typeface);
- the nine decades from 1930 to 2010, which are in turn divided into individual years in the internal subdivision pages;
- in relation to graphic designer, in the “Designer” category, where each profile is introduced, with black-and-white photographs and a biography;
- by “Firm” when the project is signed by a specific working group, as in the case of Studio Boggeri or Unimark;
- and finally, by “Client” with respect to the company for which the graphic artefact was produced. It is also possible to search for materials by entering a free-choice keyword.

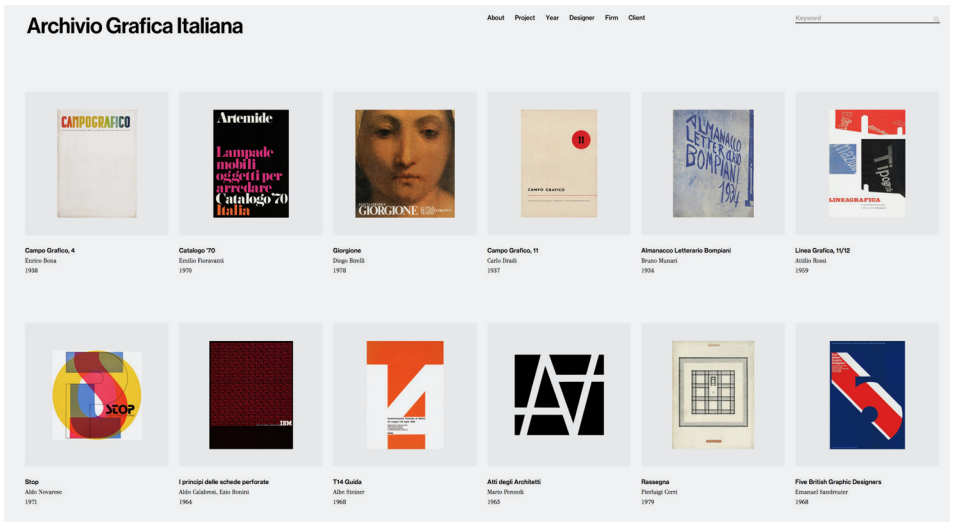


Figure 8. The landing page of the platform *Archivio della Grafica Italiana* by Nicola-Matteo Munari, 2021 (credits © 2015-21 N.M. Munari. All rights reserved).

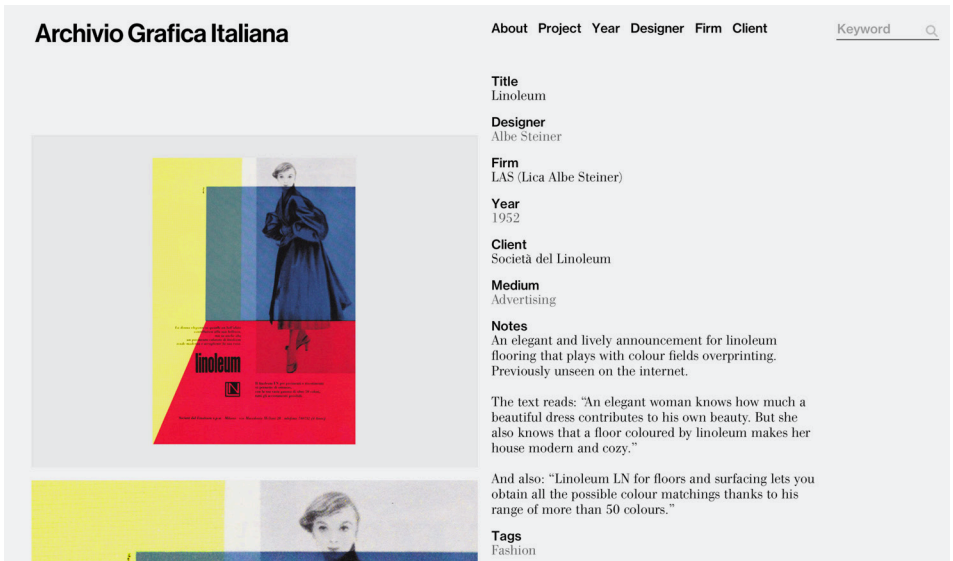


Figure 9. Configuration of the project board for Linoleum company advertising by Albe Steiner, *Archivio della Grafica Italiana*, 2021 (credits © 2015-21 N.M. Munari. All rights reserved).

Archivio Grafica Italiana was born in January 2016 and is essential for the partial usability of the Italian graphic design heritage. It is constantly updated, and anyone can propose a design that is evaluated and published if it meets the proper requirements. However, the archive offers an arbitrary selection of materials. The choice of graphic design artefacts does not reflect explicit selection criteria. Finally, the lack of direct reference to historical sources and the non-referentiality of the materials limit the platform's value. The project is not useful for historical research but is directed to a more generalist audience.

The second case is *Sitographic* (<http://www.sitographics.it/>), a digital platform launched in May 2012. The content focuses on the great masters of graphic design. The site is “an in-depth tool for those interested in graphic design” in which one can view extensive galleries with ninety-nine graphic designers (only thirty names are Italian or worked in Italy) and their works. The homepage displays five macro themes: Famous Graphic Designers; Graphic; Printing; Art; Photography. The “Famous Graphic Designers” section is the most interesting, listed alphabetically.

Users clicking on each name are linked to a personal section with a photo portrait. More or less comprehensive biographies of the designer are presented, correlated with some historical images that enrich the narrative. A rich gallery of image projects is available for each designer (Fig. 10). A small caption accompanies each project indicating the year and the item's format. Visual galleries provide a general overview of the designer's work. The description does not allow in-depth exploration of the project's content, and interaction with the image is limited.

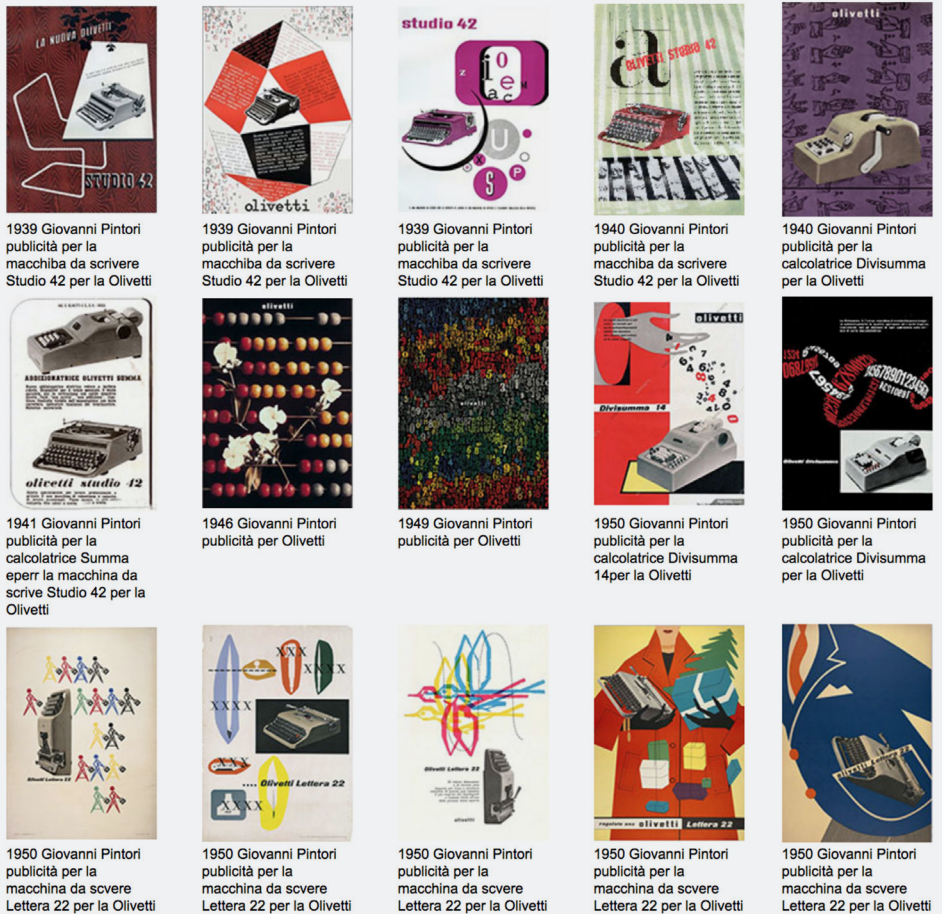


Figure 10. A typical display of Giovanni Pintori's project board on the *Sitographic* site, 2022 (credits *Sitographic* by Aldo Gorla. All rights reserved).

For example, the images have low quality, and they are not interactive. It is not possible to select the image and enlarge it. A grid of five columns arranges the images, and the number of elements is variable. The length and size of the gallery are proportional to the popularity of the designers. Some graphic designers, such as Max Huber, Albe Steiner, Bruno Munari, and Bob Noorda, have a more significant number of projects.

The project is incomplete, and the website also shows some international authors. Images show graphic artefacts without any reference to design with sketches or drawings. The impossibility of independent research is a negative aspect. Overall, the project is very immature and underdeveloped in its structure. It is also weak in graphic design but commendable for the visual cataloguing work. *Sitographic* represents the effort to create a collection of graphic design artefacts for a non-professional audience.

From the perspective of a non-original circulation of artefacts, it is necessary to mention *The People's Graphic Design Archive* (<https://peoplesgdarchive.org>). *The People's Graphic Design Archive* is a platform with the aim to “create a virtual archive that recognises and preserves the broad and inclusive history of design and graphic culture” (Archive of Graphics of the People, 2023). The most relevant difference between the *Archivio Grafica Italiana* and *Sitographic* consists in citing the credits and indicating the sources of the web links with the authors.

4. Final Considerations

Following the analysis, it is necessary to highlight some recurring characteristics. The cases mentioned above, differing in typology, tend to approach the materials' communication differently. Common elements include the absence of in-depth analysis, credits, and contextualisation. The images always appear to lack a detailed description of the graphic design artefact. Information on the design process or cultural context is also omitted.

Another common problem is the poor image quality and the inability to zoom in. Also, the digitisation of graphic design artefacts entails the loss of three-dimensionality. In fact, in the digital version, the materiality of the product is annihilated. The interesting properties such as size, paper weight or brightness are neglected.

Brochures, flyers, posters, or book covers appear the same. The digitisation increments the two-dimensionalises of the artefact. Each one is more or less the same in its visualisation. Moreover, digital archiving implies converting graphic design artefacts from a tool to a product. The artefact is revitalised and re-presented to a different audience. It is necessary to consider the social and cultural parameters of the new target users. From the study, two problems emerge. Firstly, different realities were born. The cause is the nonexistence of an official digital archive for graphic design. Online platforms such as *Sitographic* are not a tool for scientific research.

Diversification has also reached a variety of users. Thus, the public's spectrum is broadened outside the scientific community. Indeed, material dispersion also reflects arbitrary dissemination on digital platforms. Independent projects and arbitrariness of digital use increased the process of image dissemination.

Today, seeing an advertising poster online means tearing it away from its material dimension. The artefact is devoid of its real, tangible configuration. It means converting it into a perfect, untouchable and timeless representation. The digital use of materials allows for the circulation of images. The circulation increases the knowledge of the Italian graphic heritage.

On the other hand, the hyper-digital exposure of artefacts may lead to media overexposure on the web. Considerations related more to the protection of image privacy could be stimulated. The online circulation of Italian graphic design projects previously documented has led to the sharing of a heritage's "digital memory". However, it implies a diffusion not always suitable for scientific research without sources. The dematerialisation of the product also implies the loss of direct contact with the user. It causes an arbitrary replication through capturing or saving. Also, the accessibility of graphic design works accelerates spontaneous processes of sharing. Instagram and Pinterest are some examples of social networks. Recurring structures characterise the configuration of online platforms. Dario Scodeller has defined this mode as a "window dressing conception of content" (2017, p. 29): visual galleries create contemporary libraries of images without official sharing. Visual heritage becomes accessible, but its value diminishes due to the fusion within a digital universe of an infinite number of images daily.

Some considerations from this study could be instrumental in creating a new digital platform to preserve the heritage of Italian graphic design. The digital platform should provide a hyperconnection between all materials. It would recreate the complex connections network between graphic designers, companies, photographers, and social and cultural contexts. It would be necessary to contextualise the content and avoid using only short captions. It would also seem useful to render the three-dimensionality of the artefacts by showing multiple images from different viewpoints. An implementation of

linking tools would lead back to the primary sources, with an additional, in-depth focus on archival documents.

In addition, it would be helpful to use high-quality images and a less window dressing mode of visual configuration. The choice allows the different types and three-dimensional nature of materials to be appreciated.

The platform must indicate the artefact's origin and historical and archival provenance. Active collaboration with archives, libraries, funds and associations is a fundamental requirement. Thus, the content will be exhaustive and organic, building a complex but integral archive of Italian graphic design heritage. This is not an easy operation. Nevertheless, it is necessary to officially preserve and disseminate Italy's graphic design with dynamic and contemporary knowledge.

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