

Biographical Notes

1907

"Suddenly, without anyone having warned me, I found myself completely naked in the city of Milan, on 24 October 1907". Some years later the family moved to the Polesine district to the south of Venice where the artist passed his childhood. "At six years old I was deported to Badia Polesine, a beautiful agricultural town where silk worms and sugar beet were cultivated. On the town square, wholly of pink marble, you walked barefoot on summer evenings."

1926

After having moved back to Milan, Munari immediately came into contact with various exponents of the Futurist movement (the poet Lescovich [Escodamé], Depero, Prampolini, Marinetti, Buzzi, and others) and, together with Aligi Sassu, he was attracted by the theories of Boccioni.

1927

He began to exhibit his works in Futurist group shows in Italy and Europe. "We were then the Lombardy Futurist group, aero-painting, aero-sculpture, radio-painting plastics multimedia, useless machines, we sent them to all the shows in Italy, France, throughout the world."

1928

With Aligi Sassu he signed the 'Dinamismo e pittura muscolare' manifesto (*Dynamism and Muscular Painting*), celebrating with Futurist passion the creation of a "completely new and original mechanical, animal, and vegetable world".

1929

He began to work in the field of advertising and graphics. He contributed to the foundation of the *Gruppo Lombardo Radio-Futurista* (Lombardy Radio-Futurist Group) which made its collective debut in Varese. With a large number of works he took part in the group show *Trentatré Futuristi* at the Galleria Pesaro in Milan. In the catalogue Marinetti mentioned Munari: "The group of Milanese Futurist painters, led by the very young and very gifted Bruno Munari, presents itself in all its efficiency."

With Severini, Russolo, Depero, Balla, Prampolini and others, he took part in the show *Peintres Futuristes Italiens* at the Galerie 23 in Paris. He designed sets and costumes for *Il suggeritore nudo* by Marinetti at the Teatro degli Indipendenti in Rome.

1930

He created the *Macchina Aerea* (Aerial Machine) and began to plan his *Macchine Inutili* (Useless Machines). He took part in the 17th Venice Biennale. With Ricas (Riccardo Castagnedi) he opened the *Studio R+M* graphic design studio. He designed advertisements, booklets, posters, fair booths, and began to collaborate with such magazines as "La Lettura", "Natura", "L'Ufficio Moderno", "L'Ala d'Italia", "L'Almanacco letterario Bompiani". With 16 works, he took part in the group show *Mostra Futurista Arch. Sant'Elia e 22 pittori futuristi* at the Galleria Pesaro in Milan.

1931

He took part in the 1st Quadriennale in Rome. Together with Andreoni, Duse, Manzoni, Gambini, and Bot he signed the *Manifesto della aeropittura dei futuristi milanesi* in which it was stated that "artistic creation must be a precise and complete whole with and from

which to explore the infinite chromatic atmospheres that surround the plastic totality, definable as an aerial island in which all the laws of nature have to be abolished”.

1932

He took part in the group show *Enrico Prampolini et les aereopentres futuristes italiens* at the Galerie de la Renaissance in Paris. He took part in the 18th Venice Biennale. With 27 drawings he illustrated *Il Cantastorie di Campari*, an advertising booklet.

1933

The Studio R+M began a collaboration with the Studio Boggeri in Milan. He took part in the group show *Omaggio futurista a Umberto Boccioni* at the Galleria Pesaro in Milan. For such magazines as “L’Ala d’Italia”, “Natura”, “La Lettura”, and “L’Almanacco letterario Bompiani” he created photo-montages and photo-collages; with his photograms, he participated in the exhibition of Futurist photography organised in Rome by F. T. Marinetti. He exhibited his first *Macchine Inutili* at the Galleria delle Tre Arti in Milan.

1934

Together with Manzoni, Furlan, Ricas, and Regina, Munari signed the *Manifesto tecnico dell’aeroplastica futurista* in which it was stated that, in order to create a new art, it was necessary to have “*the euphoria of space and of volumes of air, the Aesthetics and rhythm of the dematerialisation of material, a mechanical Sense in its purest state (machines = art), that is the invention of useless machines*”. He continued to exhibit his *Macchine Inutili* in Futurist shows, attracting the attention of Depero and Marinetti. He took part in the 19th Venice Biennale. He illustrated *L’anguria lirica (Lungo poema passionale)* by Tullio d’Albisola. He bought the only picture to be sold in the first show in Italy by Kandinsky, held at the Galleria del Milione in Milan.

1935

He began his collaboration with the Studio Boggeri and printed the book *Tavolozza delle possibilità tipografiche (Palette of Typographical Possibilities)*.

1936

He took part in the 6th Triennale in Milan with a large abstract mosaic. He took part in the 20th Venice Biennale.

1937

He illustrated *Poema del Vestito di Latte* by F. T. Marinetti (*Poem of the Milk Dress*) with advanced graphic inventions.

1939

He worked as art director of the magazine “Tempo”.

1940

A show of *Oggetti Metafisici (Metaphysical Objects)* at the Galleria del Milione in Milan, with a presentation by the future Nobel Prize winner Salvatore Quasimodo.

1942

His book *Le Macchine di Munari (Munari’s Machines)* was published by Einaudi and so began a collaboration with this publishing house for the graphic design of its books that was to last for more than forty years.

1944

“Domus” published his book *Fotocronache (Photochronicles)*. A solo show of abstract paintings at the Galleria Ciliberti in Milan.

1945

With the utilisation of the movement of a spring-loaded alarm clock, Munari designs a kinetic multiple *Ora X*, which was then to be produced by the Danese firm in Milan in 1963.

1946

At the first *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles* in Paris, a show of concrete art, Munari presented his *Concavo-Convesso* environment (*Concave-Convex*). A solo show of abstract paintings, *Dipinti astratti*, was held at the Galleria Bergamini in Milan.

1947

He took part in the first post-war international exhibition of abstract and concrete art, *Arte astratta e concreta*, held in Palazzo Reale, Milan and organised by the architect Bombelli, together with Swiss exponents of concrete art. In Paris he participated in the show *Réalités Nouvelles*. In its end-of-the-year issue, “Domus” magazine devoted a folded insert to the work *Concavo-Convesso*, one which was well adapted to a photographic interpretation.

1948

He took part in the foundation of the *Movimento Arte Concreta* (M.A.C.) together with Gianni Monnet, Gillo Dorfles, and Atanasio Soldati. He exhibited the *Macchine Inutili* and *Concavo-Convesso* in his solo show at the Galleria Borromini in Milan, with a catalogue presentation by Dino Buzzati: “*He is the only painter, I believe, in Italy and abroad who can make a performance out of an exhibition. I mean to say that Munari, among abstract painters, is the only one who makes even his own painting move*”. He began his series of paintings titled *Negativo-positivo (Negative-Positive)* in which the distinction between the figure and the background was annulled to create a sense of perceptive instability. “*We are dealing with a line that draws from both parts and not as happened before by outlining only one part.*”

1949

Munari designed *Il gatto Meo (Meo the Cat)*, a foam rubber toy that could be modelled, for the Italian Pirelli firm. He participated in the Milan fair with an installation of the *Macchine Inutili* in the Montecatini pavilion.

1950

Munari continued his work with M.A.C. and created *Proiezioni di Luce (Light Projections)*, utilising slides in which he inserted his own painted compositions. He held a show of his *Libri Illeggibili (Illegible Books)* at the Salto bookshop in Milan, with a presentation by Alberto Mondadori: “*These ‘Illegible Books’ are the first examples of a new language that is closely related to cinema and music and, I believe, could one day become a ‘genre’, just like today with the ‘Useless Machines’ side by side with sculpture*”. These books were conceived of as unique pieces and, without the use of words, they told stories through the means of images, coloured lines, pages that were cut, folded or transparent, and with cotton threads and other insertions. He designed a *Macchina Inutile* twelve metres high for the Motta pavilion at the Milan trade fair.

1951

He began his series of *Macchine Aritmiche (Arrhythmic Machines)*, the randomness of which was produced by the movement of a spring-loaded mechanism. He exhibited at the *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles* in Paris. A solo show of *Oggetti Trovati (Found Objects)*, with a presentation by Ernesto N. Rogers, at the Galleria dell'Annunciata in Milan, where he exhibited his collage *Frammenti di manifesti trovati in Rue Monsieur le Prince, a Parigi, su una staccionata di legno, un poco scoloriti dalla pioggia (Fragments of Posters found in Rue Monsieur le Prince, in Paris, on a Wooden Fence, a bit Washed-out by Rain)*.

1952

The French magazine "Art d'Aujourd'Hui" devoted a monographic issue to Italian abstract art with a *Negativo-positivo* on its cover. A show of *Quadri quadrati plastici e nuove macchine inutili* was held at the Galleria Bergamini in Milan. For the 26th Venice Biennale he made an open-air fountain at the entrance to the central pavilion. For Pirelli he created the *Scimmietta Zizi (Zizi the Monkey)*, a new, interactive foam rubber toy with a copper armature that could be modelled. The exhibition *L'arte e il caso (The Rule and the Chance)* at the Galleria dell'Annunciata in Milan.

1953

A show of *Libri Illeggibili* at the Italian Book & Craft, New York, and a show of children's books at the New York Public Library. The first public *Proiezioni Dirette* in Milan at the Studio B24 and in Gio Ponti's studio. He began to use polarised filters for making the *Proiezioni a Luce Polarizzata (Polarised Projections)*.

1954

He won the *Compasso d'oro* prize (*Golden Compass Award*) for the *Scimmietta Zizi*. He presented his *Proiezioni dirette* in the studio of Leo Lionni in New York and then at MoMA. He designed the logo for the 10th Triennale in Milan.

1955

He presented some new *Proiezioni dirette* at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Rome. He argued publically with Vasarely for the use of some of his own definitions as part of the presentation yellow manifesto for the show *Le Mouvement* at the Galerie Denise René in Paris. Together with Alvin Lustig he took part in the show *Two Graphic Designers* at MoMA, New York, where Munari presented his *Libri Illeggibili* and *Proiezioni dirette*. He exhibited his *Negativi-positivi* at the Gallerie Apollinaire in Milan. For the Milan fair he designed two fountains with rotating elements moved by the water in a random manner.

1956

At the Galleria S. Babila in Milan he exhibited his series of works *Ricostruzioni Teoriche di Oggetti Immaginari in base a frammenti di residui di origine incerta e di uso sconosciuto (Theoretical Reconstruction of Imaginary Objects Based on Residual Fragments of Uncertain Origin and of Unknown Usage)*, begun in Panarea in 1955 with the performance and invention of *Museo Immaginario delle isole Eolie (Imaginary Museum of the Aeolian Islands)*. First *Proiezioni Polarizzate* at the Studio B24 in Milan.

1957

For the Danese firm in Milan he created the *Cubo* ashtray, sold throughout the world and today to be seen in the collection of MoMA in New York. With his *Proiezioni*, he took part in the show *Source of Inspiration* at the American Institute of Graphic Arts in New York. In the July issue of "Domus" magazine he presented his *Forchette Parlanti (Speaking Forks)*.

In September "Domus" devoted its cover to a *Proiezione a luce polarizzata*: "These projections bring movement to colour".

1958

He published his book *Le Forchette di Munari* and, at the Galleria Montenapoleone in Milan, he exhibited his *Sculture da Viaggio (Travel Sculptures)*, portable and foldable sculptures made from coloured cardboard. With *Proiezioni dirette*, he took part in the Stockholm Avant-Garde Film Festival, organised by Pontus Hulten, a great admirer of his.

1959

He began to produce and exhibit the *Fossili del 2000* works (*Fossils of the Year Two Thousand*), compositions obtained from immersing technological remnants in a Perspex brick. With his *Strutture Continue* multiple (*Continuous Structures*) he contributed to the Multiplication d'Arte Transformable (M.A.T.) editions produced in Paris by Daniel Spoerri.

1960

He presented his *Proiezioni dirette* at the Sôgetsu Hall in Tokyo, accompanied by Toru Takemitsu's concrete music, and the *Proiezioni a luce polarizzata* at the Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art.

1961

He exhibited in group shows of kinetic art curated by Pontus Hulten at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, and at the Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek.

1962

A solo show with Enzo Mari at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence curated by C. L. Ragghianti. Together with Giorgio Soavi, and sponsored by Olivetti, he organized the show *Arte Programmata (Programmed Art)* in the Olivetti stores in Milan, Venice, and Rome. He founded the *Studio di Monte Olimpino*, a studio for research cinema.

1963

In the Danese firm's showroom in Milan he presented the serial production of *Ora X*, a kinetic multiple he had conceived in 1945. He made a film, *I colori della luce*, about the breakdown of light with a polarizing filter. The refined publisher Scheiwiller in Milan released his book *Good Design*.

1964

He shot a short film *Tempo nel tempo* in which an event lasting one second was extended to three minutes. Munari began to experiment with the creative possibilities of Xerox photocopying machines to produce unique works he called *Xerografie Originali (Original Xerographs)* by moving images during the photocopying process. The *Arte Programmata* show arrived in America; its first stop was at New York University. The metro opened in Milan and, for the occasion, Munari designed a poster advertisement for Campari, today in the collection of MoMA in New York, that could even be read from the train while it was travelling.

1965

He presented *Tetracono*, a kinetic object planned in two versions, one with a motor and the other without, at the Danese store in Milan. He exhibited at the Isetan department store in Tokyo where he undertook a performance by creating *Xerografie Originali* with random

elements found on the premises, a *Fontana a 5 gocce d'acqua*, and a *Libro Illeggibile bianco e nero*. With experimental films he took part in *Nova tendencija 3*, Zagreb.

1966

He took part in the Venice Biennale with a room devoted to works with polarised light (*Polariscop*). He took part in the show *The Object Transformed* at MoMA, New York. A solo show at the Howard Wise Gallery, New York. At the opening he used a Rank Xerox 914 for a demonstrative performance of the creation of *Xerografie originali*. Laterza published his book *Arte come mestiere*.

1967

He exhibited *Opere in serie dal 1958* at the Galleria Vismara in Milan. He was invited to hold a series of lessons about visual communication at Harvard University Cambridge (U.S.A.). He published *Libro Illeggibile N.Y.1* for MoMA, New York.

1968

For the Danese firm he produced his *Flexy* multiple. He rewrote, for the Galleria Sincron in Brescia, the *Manifesto dei Multipli*, later published by Einaudi in the book *Codice Ovvio*. He participated in the show *The machine as seen at the end of the mechanical age* at MoMA, New York, and at SFMOMA, San Francisco. His Harvard lessons were published by the Laterza publishing house in the book *Design e Comunicazione Visiva*.

1969

Together with the Centro Sincron he organised an event titled *Undici giorni di arte collettiva* in Pejo (*Eleven days of collective art*), in the province of Trento, with the participation of 250 artists. He took part in the event *Campo Urbano (Urban Field)*, held in Como, with his performance *Far vedere l'aria (Made Air Visible)*, with polarised projections on moving screens, and he also created the graphic design of the catalogue.

1970

He took part in the 35th Venice Biennale with *Proiezioni dirette* and *Proiezioni a luce polarizzata*. Furthermore he undertook a creative performance with a Rank Xerox machine. For this occasion Rank Xerox published a book, not for sale, *Bruno Munari. Xerografia. Documentazione sull'uso creativo delle macchina Rank Xerox*. He took part in and organised *Sagra Fuoco e Schiuma*, a happening against the pollution of the river Lambro at S. Angelo Lodigiano, with the participation of more than 100 artists.

1971

He took part in *Multiples. The First Decade* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. For the art editions of Danese, Milan, he reproduced ten examples of the 1930 *Macchina Aerea*, destroyed while moving home. Einaudi published his books *Codice Ovvio*, Laterza published *Artista e designer*, and Emme Edizioni published *Da lontano era un'isola*.

1973

Solo show of *Scritture Illeggibili di popoli sconosciuti (Illegible Writings of Unknown People)* at the Galleria Sincron in Brescia.

1974

For the first time he presented to the public, at the Galleria Sincron in Brescia, the series of works *Colori nella Curva di Peano (Colours in Peano's Curve)*, inspired by the work of the famous Italian mathematician.

1980

Together with Davide Mosconi and Piero Castiglioni, he create the light show for the performance of *Prometheus* by Scriabin at the Teatro Comunale of Florence. Solo show *Olio su tela (Oil on Canvas)* at the Galleria Sincron in Brescia.

1981

For the Galleria Sincron in Brescia he created suspended airborne structures made from aluminium tubes and variously coloured cables, titled *Filipesi (Threadweights)*.

1985

The show *Da lontano era un'isola* at the Natural History museum in Milan. The stones, collected by the artist since the 1940s, were the protagonists of visual stories and tales.

1986

Anthological show Munari dalla a alla zeta. Opere dal 1935 al 1986 at the Galleria Sincron in Brescia. He took part in the show *Futurismo e Futurismi* at Palazzo Grassi, Venice. A solo room at the Venice Biennale with the series of works *Olio su tela*. Anthological show *Bruno Munari opere dal 1930 al 1986* at Palazzo Reale, Milan. He designed the graphics and, together with Aldo Tanchis, edited the anthological volume *Bruno Munari* for Idea Books and MIT Press.

1988

Anthological show *Bruno Munari. Works 1933-1988* at the museum in Jerusalem.

1989

He took part in the show *Arte Italiana – Presenze 1900-1945* at Palazzo Grassi, Venezia. An anthological show at the Sant'Agostino museum and the architectural faculty of Genoa where he was awarded an *honoris causa* degree in architecture.

1990

He exhibited some large sculptures in weathering steel on the Neapolitan seafront. For the Sincron gallery in Brescia he created a new series of works titled *Alta tensione (High Tension)*, sculptures related to the *Tensostrutture (Tensostructures)* works he had planned in the 1930s.

1994

He presented his series of works titled *Alberi (Trees)* at the Galleria Corraini in Mantua.

1995

Solo show *Far Vedere l'Aria (Made Air Visible)* at the Museum für Gestaltung in Zurich.

1997

Exhibition of 'original xerographs' entitled *Portraits and Self Portraits* of the artist's collector friends at the Galleria Sincron.

1998

Munari died in Milan on 29 September. He was buried in Memorial Chapel of the main cemetery in Milan.