

Catalogue of the exhibition “La collezione Caproni”, 23.11.2007 – 13.01.2008, curated by Giovanna Nicoletti, Arco (Trento)

BRUNO MUNARI by Luca Gabrielli

In the first half of the 1930s, Bruno Munari began a lasting partnership with the magazine “L'Ala d'Italia” (The Wing of Italy), which resulted in the production of a large amount of preliminary photocollages for the article illustrations. These works are based on Munari's typical experimental approach, which even before the 1930s featured some interesting contaminations of photography, film and applied arts and which, in 1932, inspired by Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy, developed into photomontages and collages without a logic and generally comparable with the famous “useless machines”, i.e. machines with no practical function, made by Munari in 1933. The series of aviation-themed collages – four examples of which are shown here – are playful and imaginative and reveal the artist's fun-based approach to the portrayal of characters, objects and situations belonging to a world founded on irrationality and nonsense, conveying a sense of surreal irony unquestionably inspired by Dada art. Underlying these images – and, indeed, all of Munari's vast production – is the artist's refusal to necessarily give a precise explanation of the reasons for art: “a fully exhaustive explanation – he famously used to say – would cancel the function of the object, which has been created to stimulate the imagination”. These early works for the aviation world clearly reveal one of the most distinctive and original outcomes of Munari's artistic production, the invitation – for both the artist and the viewer – to keep the senses open to experimentation, in order to go beyond the artistic conventions, with respect to technique, subject-matter and imagery. The entire series of collages was purchased by the Caproni Collection after the war, following the sale of the archives of the publishing consortium that had previously published the “L'Ala d'Italia” magazine.

The operas:

“Nothing is absurd for a Pilot” ca. 1933, photocollage and ink;

“The Smell of Aircraft” ca. 1936, collage and ink;

“The Old Discharged Pilot”, photocollage and airbrush, pencil and ink;

“Eccomi in Breve”, photocollage and ink.