

MARCELLO DUDOVICH 1878-1962: A CHRONOLOGY

1878 Marcello Dudovich is born on 21st March in Trieste, the third of four children of Antonio Dudovich and his wife Elisa Cadorin. His siblings are Maria, Itala, and Manlio.

1893/1894 Attends the Scuole Reali in Trieste. His performance is unremarkable; he achieves high marks only in drawing. His diary reads: “at school I couldn’t muster any enthusiasm for anything. I began drawing as a little boy, on exercise books, on walls, on the margins of newspapers; once I made drawings also on a bedsheet which had been hung to dry, which caused my mother to slap me on the face. I never passed my exams [.....] during lessons I passed the time filling with figures great and small every white sheet on which I could lay hands”

His cousin Guido Grimani introduces him to the “Circolo Culturale Triestino” (“Cultural Club of Trieste”), where he meets the leading personalities of the cultural life of Trieste, such as Eugenio Scomparini (Triest 1845-1913) and Arturo Rietti (Triest 1836-1943).

At the time, Trieste is particularly open to European culture; many of its citizens are of remote foreign origin, therefore more receptive to what is written or published elsewhere in Europe, where the Secession is making the first waves. Many artists now living in Trieste turn their backs on the 19th-century Venetian painting tradition to follow the solid realism taught by Franz von Lenbach and Max Liebermann – lit-up by dense, vibrant brush-strokes.

There is historical evidence that in these years the young Dudovich follows with admiring attention the Munich realism, thus beginning to become aware of himself as an artist.

1895/1896 First journey to Munich, where he attends the Art Academy; he takes lessons in drawing from the nude, and also takes an interest in decorative art. In a letter to his parents, he writes: “Of this innovative and splendid city I will always keep a religious memory, as the city which consolidated my painting vocation and my juvenile enthusiasm. Here I have learnt the true meaning of drawing and form, and only now have I understood the line which connects mind, spirit and hand [.....] Franz von Stuck and Arnold Böcklin are now, in my opinion, what Tintoretto and Veronese were for 16th-century Italian painting.”

Following this first experience in Munich, Dudovich will find his own way, sharing the path laid down by the European Secessionists. He is influenced in particular by the teachings of all the contemporary German artists, such as M. Klinger, E. Liebermann, and W. Leistikov. Together with Berlin, Munich is the undisputed centre of cultural life; and it is in Munich, as well as in other centres at the cultural avant-garde of “*Mitteleuropa*”, that applied arts will be put on a par with fine and other forms of art, thus avoiding the trap of “historicism” in order to pursue a more rigorously modern line of research, perfectly attuned with the spirit of the Art Nouveau.

The Secession is the modernist catalyst which attracts Dudovich's attention and becomes the main focus of his artistic interests. Endowed with a lively and alert personality, Dudovich is also open to the modernist appeal of the Wiener Sezession, which stresses the importance of drawing – the common starting point of all avant-garde artistic movements. Artists like Klimt and Moser leave a deep and tangible mark on Marcello Dudovich; the stimuli he derives from the new artistic currents can be easily detected in his work. Thus his first European experience leads him to develop an iconic and essential style of painting.

1897 With the help of Leopoldo Metlicovitz (Triest 1868 – Ponte Lambro, Como, 1944), painter, poster artist, illustrator and stage designer, Antonio Dudovich sends his son Marcello to the Officine Grafiche Ricordi (Ricordi Printing Works) in Milan, in order to learn the job of “colourist”. The Officine Ricordi are in these years the best Italian lithographic printing works, with several branches both in Italy (Milan, Naples, Florence, Rome) and abroad (London, Paris, Leipzig, New York). The constant contact of the Officine Ricordi with foreign countries represents an inexhaustible source of information and visual stimulation for Dudovich, who can thus keep up-to-date with the new artistic and publishing developments, mixing the most disparate international artistic influences.

The international character of the Officine Grafiche Ricordi manifests itself also in the presence of artists coming from other countries (Adolfo Hohenstein, Leopoldo Metlicovitz, F. Laskoff, Aleardo Villa, Giovanni Mataloni): endowed with strong personalities, they create a fertile breeding ground in which the new European modernist developments can take root, and, even within the consolidated 19th-century tradition of poster art, they succeed in elaborating innovative communication formulas in the field of visual advertising art.

The Officine Grafiche Ricordi become in Italy what the Imprimerie Chaix, created by Jules Chéret, is in France: a stimulating breeding ground for artists capable of following all the stages of their work step by step, from the sketching phase to chromolithographic reproduction on stone, zinc, or aluminium plate – collaborating with the printers, supervising directly the work in all its phases, refining and adding further touches.

Giulio Ricordi, director of the Works, doesn't take long to notice the young Dudovich's talent. From simple copier and colourist he is promoted to designer and regular collaborator. It is necessary to stress how important this compact and numerous group, which includes the best “signatures” of Italian poster art, is for Ricordi.

Artists like Hohenstein and Metlicovitz have absorbed a great deal of German figurative art, but are also well aware of developments taking place in France, and are drawn to Mucha's Gothic-like inventions. Other artists working for Ricordi, such as Franz Laskoff, are attracted instead to models of English design. As a consequence, the Officine Ricordi are a place where cultural exchange is encouraged and promoted, thus providing a rich fabric of artistic suggestions which makes the Milanese workshop the

most important in Italy and also one of the first European breeding grounds for graphic artists. It is in this lively artistic and cultural environment that Dudovich spends the first years of his working life.

1898 Attends academic drawing lessons and classes in drawing from the nude at the “Società Artistica Patriottica” (“Patriotic Artistic Society”) of Milan; he opens a workshop together with Toni Metlicovitz and the Greek painter Arvanitaki. He begins to produce graphic advertising work as a free-lancer, not only for Ricordi but also for other lithographic printing works, such as Gualapini, Cantarella, and Modiano.

1899/1905 In 1899, a turning point in the history of Italian poster art, Dudovich leaves Milan and moves to Bologna, accepting an offer from the famous and well-established Printing Works of Edmondo Chappuis; however, he maintains his free-lance collaboration with the Officine Grafiche Ricordi. 1899 is the date of Marcello Dudovich’s first autonomous, signed works. He remains in Bologna for six prolific years, obtaining in this town the recognition already achieved in Milan.

In this period Dudovich also maintains artistic contact with the town of Florence, where Alfonso Robbiani and his school of young artists have been active for many years. Dudovich moves between Bologna and Florence; his advertising posters are evidence of this important moment in his artistic life. While working for Chappuis in Bologna, he experiments successfully with a new concept of the study of images, projected towards Europe and the international dimension of the Art Nouveau, which is constantly evolving in its many artistic forms.

The Chappuis Printing Works attract to Bologna the best contemporary designers and become the incubator of the new Italian 20th-century style. It is in Bologna that the review “Italia ride” is founded: like a Secessionist manifesto, the review openly declares its distaste for the typical painting of the period, mocking and debunking both the decadent and naturalistic styles of the time. In these years Dudovich becomes the painter of the day, the most sought after, the ladies’ favourite, and the apple of the art critics’ eyes. From 1900 onwards (and for three consecutive years) the young painter from Trieste wins numerous competitions launched by the “Società per il risveglio cittadino” (literally, “Society for the revival of town life”) with posters commemorating the “Feste della primavera” (“Spring Fêtes”). During this period Dudovich makes some short European journeys – Brussels, Amsterdam, Paris, Ostend, Antwerp – which fuel his artistic imagination.

1900 During his sojourns abroad he takes part in many national competitions with works that witness the evolution of poster art, reflecting the transformation of line and design which is at the roots of the Art Nouveau. In 1900 he obtains an important recognition by winning a gold medal at the Universal Exhibition in Paris.

Following these repeated national and international triumphs he begins collaborating with many 20th-century art reviews and modernist publications, working for them as an illustrator: he draws covers,

graphic plates, vignettes and cartoons, ornated headings and initial letters of the alphabet etc. Dudovich collaborates with the Bolognese review “Italia ride”, for which he produces many satirical and decorative vignettes and cartoons with a decisively modern taste, inspired by international models: French (“*Le rire*” and “*Revue Blanche*”), German (“*Jugend*”, “*Simplicissimus*”, “*Ver Sacrum*”) and English (“*The Studio*”).

The most important personalities of the Italian cultural and artistic avant-garde collaborate with “Italia ride”: Augusto Majani (artistic director, with the pseudonym of Nasica), Alfredo Baruffi, Augusto Sèzanne, Luigi Bompard, Ugo Valeri, Franz Laskoff, Ardengo Soffici, Galileo Chini, Adolfo Magrini, and many, many others. The review becomes a reference point for many young Italian talents who will successfully develop the Italian Liberty style.

In these years begins the career of Leonetto Cappiello (Leghorn 1876 – Cannes 1942), an important figure in the history of poster art; nowadays Cappiello and Dudovich are the only two Italian poster artists to appear in art encyclopaedias.

In his Bolognese years Dudovich meets and marries Elisa Bucchi, born in the town of Faenza where Dudovich attends the salon of Domenico Baccarini (a sculptor, painter and designer very active in the field of ceramics and pottery). Elisa represents the prototype of all the female figures that will feature so prominently in Dudovich’s work.

1902 He takes part in the renowned International Exhibition of Decorative Art in Turin with the poster “*Fisso l’idea*”, achieving first place under the name of the Artistic Cooperative “*Æmilia Ars*”. This Cooperative is well known because of the jewels, creations in leather, furniture and ceramics realised by its other artists following Renaissance models. Under the aegis of “*Æmilia Ars*” the collaboration of numerous artists will create another fertile ground for research and developments in design.

In the same period Dudovich works as an illustrator for the review “*Fantasio*”, published in Rome. It features literature, criticism, and miscellaneous features, and promotes the most audacious and modernist aesthetic proposals. Dudovich also wins the competition launched by the Town of Bologna for the festival “*Maggio Bolognese*”; in the following year (1903) he makes it a double and is acknowledged as the undisputed best graphic in Bologna.

1904 During his Bolognese period Dudovich starts a collaboration with the literary and artistic yearbook “*Novissima*”, directed by Edoardo De Fonseca. “*Novissima*”, published for 10 years, is considered as the “*Manifesto of Modern Graphic Art*”: it plays a pivotal role in the promotion of the Liberty style and of young illustrators, among whom there are, besides Dudovich, Baruffi, Bompard, Terzi, Valeri, Kienerk, Casorati, Nonni, Nomellini, Balla, Bistolfi, Previati, Mataloni, and Majani.

1905 The collaboration with the Chappuis Printing Works becomes more sporadic. Dudovich moves to Genoa, where, for a few months, he collaborates with the publisher Armanino, realising sketches. Subsequently he returns to Bologna, where he produces his last poster for Chappuis: the memorable poster commemorating the inauguration of the Simplon Tunnel, which wins an international competition but, for obscure reasons, will never be printed.

1906/1911 After the golden Bolognese period Dudovich is regarded, in Italy and abroad, as the rising star of graphics at the beginning of the new century. He puts an end to the fruitful collaboration with Chappuis, probably because of his ever-present wish to maintain professional freedom in order to pursue new experiences – which he is much more likely to do in more industrialized towns like Milan.

27-year-old Dudovich looks with great attention to the new Expressionist movement, which will influence his work. In these years several European movements develop, such as Fauvism, started by Matisse after the decisive meeting with Gauguin, and the Dresden group “Die Brücke”, gathered around Kirchner.

In 1906 Dudovich decides to return to Milan, where he revives his relationship with the Officine Grafiche Ricordi. At the age of 28, together with other poster artists working for Ricordi (Hohenstein, Metlicovitz, Mataloni), he takes part in the competition launched for a poster advertising the 1906 International Exhibition in Milan. The jury awards a prize to each of the four; their works will be printed on different materials and subsequently used for various advertising purposes, ranging from postcards to stamps.

Following the tributes and recognition thus obtained, Dudovich is invited to decorate the external walls of the Italian Pavilion of Decorative Art at the International Exhibition of Milan, destroyed, like the adjacent Palazzo dell’Architettura, by a fire. Both buildings are reconstructed without respecting their former architectural style, with the implementation of architectural innovations which will sanction the increasing interest for the “new ideas” in the field of applied arts.

For the Officine Grafiche Ricordi Dudovich realizes until 1910 a great many posters, for which the best chromolithographic techniques are used as well as innovative experiments involving photolithography and photogravure. Dudovich also produces works which are better balanced from the point of view of composition and more rigorous from the point of view of form; he progressively reduces the floral ornamentation typical of the Liberty style to concentrate on the human figure, which is almost always female.

Dudovich settles down in Milan and works for the advertising campaigns of the Grandi Magazzini Mele, an important department store in Naples (1906-1914). These years are happy and characterised by an abundant and justly acclaimed output: he realizes some of the best posters of his long career, among which the one with the famous “lady in a check dress”. Like Bologna, Milan will acknowledge Dudovich as “the poet of the Belle Epoque”, a refined illustrator of human life, and an acute portraitist. In this period he also collaborates with many reviews and journals, among which is “Ars et Labor”, a

sophisticated monthly aiming at readers interested in music, theatre, dance, ballet, and art in general; “La Lettura”, “Il Giornalino della Domenica”, and “Rapiditas”, all periodicals of cultural and historical relevance, with which personalities of the Italian cultural avant-garde - such as Florio, Brunelleschi, Terzi, Sacchetti, Cambellotti, Bompard, Sto, Anichini, Viani e Nomellini - collaborate as writers and illustrators.

Dudovich attends assiduously various Milanese circles, coming in contact with the great personalities who animate the metropolitan cultural life. He meets and becomes friends with the architect and writer Camillo Boito, as well as the great artists and literary people of the Milanese clubs, such as Pozza, Cotronei, Rovetta, Carcano, Alciati, Boccioni, Andreotti, and Faenza-born Sem Benelli who, at the time, is writing “La Cena delle Beffe”.

He goes regularly to the Caffè Biffi, the Restaurants Savini and L’Orologio, getting in touch with fashion people. He is helped in this by his wife, Elisa Bucci, who works as chief correspondent for some renowned Italian fashion magazines. Dudovich is thus able to perceive and represent a turning point in the history of fashion, emancipating the female figure and endowing it with all the accessories of seduction: gloves, bows, flounces, stockings, as well as cigarettes in cigarette-holders. The female figure is shown as playing a wider role in society, no longer relegated to the house as it was at the end of the 19th century.

In 1910 32-year-old Dudovich has reached the top drawer of early 20th-century Milanese society; he is the chronicler and the illustrator of upper class life.

In 1911 he reaches the top of his artistic career with the poster which wins the competition launched by the G.B. Borsalino Company to advertise their “Zenit” hat. The prize, awarded to him although the poster isn’t even officially entered in the competition, will always represent for Dudovich the highest tribute and recognition.

1911/1915 Dudovich’s name is now well known beyond the national borders. The Publishing House “Albert Langen” of Munich offers him a collaboration as a reporter and social correspondent for the famous political-satirical-literary review “*Simplicissimus*”. Dudovich accepts enthusiastically and, in full autonomy, he puts together for this important client a vast production of watercolours, inks and drawings which will illustrate the pages of “*Simplicissimus*” from 1911 to 1915, replacing those of the late great designer and graphic artist Von Reznicek.

This long and fruitful period brings Dudovich in close contact with the best known German graphic artists, such as Kainer, Schultz, Heine, Thoeny, Gulbrandson, and Obermeier, who collaborate with the same review. In his Munich years Dudovich also collaborate with other German publications, such as “*Die Meggendorfer Blätter*”. This second sojourn in Munich represents a very important chapter in Dudovich’s life, in that it allows him to experience first-hand the European artistic movement which will subvert the traditional way of conceiving images. It is in Munich that the Deutscher Werkbund is founded, to which Gustav Klimt also subscribes; it will provide solid foundations for a transformation of

artwork into industrial production controlled by the artist who makes the drawings. Between 1911 and 1914 a group of painters animated by a deep need to break with naturalism and oriented towards the Expressionism assembles in Munich, led by the group of “*Der Blaue Reiter*” and Kandiskij’s strong artistic personality.

In these years German poster art is flourishing in Munich, and its most celebrated name is that of Ludwig Hohlwein, whose fame by 1911 is no longer confined within the national borders. Munich is in a stage of endless developments: it is here that, like Dudovich, many poster artists and illustrators will succeed in getting rid of much superseded Secessionist baggage. It is here that, in these years, great masters, such as Franz von Stuck, Gulbrandson, Moos, Heubner, Glass, Schwarzer, Preetorius, and Heine, hold avant-garde technical and practical lessons. Dudovich lives these years with the utmost enthusiasm, also because his role as “Special European Correspondent” for the social page of “*Simplicissimus*” takes him to the most beautiful and fashionable European resorts, bringing him in close contact with the upper-class international community.

He moves between Paris, London, Montecarlo, Ostend, Brussels and other places, filling his sketchpads with images of “beautiful women, elegant social events, and sophisticated fashion details”. His publisher, Albert Langer, encourages him to put together an exclusive album consisting of 36 chromatic graphic plates, published in 1913 with the title “Corso” (that is to say “Boulevard”).

At the beginning of the First World War, Dudovich’s collaborations in Munich come to an end. He writes in his journal: “ Let me dwell with joy on a time in which special correspondents weren’t sent to the battlefields, but to the horse shows and the golf courses of Paris, Berlin, Ostend, and, by way of Deauville, London and Montecarlo, in order to portray beautiful women, elegant social events, and sophisticated fashion details; one could travel from one country to another without either passports or identity cards: which was a marvellous thing. There also existed a kind of international community of intelligence which ignored all national borders and potential political disagreements. It was a time when it was impossible not to have faith in the future; a time when people were free to think, write, act, and create

Even during his collaboration with “*Simplicissimus*”, Dudovich always includes Milan in his European travel itineraries, maintaining his contacts and the collaboration with Ricordi, which is revived with his definitive return to Milan in 1915. The Expressionist component of his art is made stronger by the German experience, especially as far as an antinaturalistic use of colour is concerned.

1915 At the beginning of the First World War Dudovich returns to Milan. Here he sees a great many men leave for a front from which few of them will return. Great artists like Boccioni, Sironi, Carrà, Marinetti, Erba, Funi, Piatti, Battaini are enlisted and sent to fight in the trenches in the Alps. Dudovich doesn’t join up because, although his father fought with Garibaldi, the Italian authorities accuse him of being Germanophile on the grounds of his long-standing collaboration with “*Simplicissimus*”. The Military Court wants to send him to a place of internment, but Dudovich is saved by the intervention of his old and influential employer Giulio Ricordi. However, he is kept under special surveillance for the

whole duration of the war, and is obliged to go every week to the police headquarters to undergo repeated checks of his political opinions.

As a matter of fact, Dudovich will never subscribe to any political movement; his life is devoted exclusively to art, and no political current, either Italian or German, could influence him. On the contrary, his allegiance to Italy is sincere and deep-rooted in a patriotic way, and it is the reason why he leaves "*Simplicissimus*", in whose pages, after Italy's declaration of war on Turkey and the occupation of Libya, a contemptuous anti-Italian attitude prevails. During these years he takes part in the "First Italian Exhibition of Caricatures and Humour", an itinerant exhibition which reaches Turin, Milan, and Genoa.

1915/1920 These are transition years, full of uncertainty and unrest for the whole of Europe. The old aristocratic world disappears definitively, and with it the "*dream of the Belle Epoque*" vanishes for ever. In painting, the tendency called "*Ritorno all'Ordine*" ("Return to Order") predominates, whereas in the figurative arts, as well as in literature, new models emerge; Joyce, Proust, and Kafka demolish the intimate and rarefied atmospheres of the bourgeois novel.

Dudovich will remember this period as "the age of fear", in which the various artistic movements, hitherto grown impetuously, enter a regressive and involutinal phase. His long-standing relationship with Ricordi deteriorates, for reasons which are still unclear; Dudovich produces a few posters, of a "frivolous" character, for some lesser printing houses, as well as for his old and dear friend Chappuis of Bologna. Poster art is literally paralyzed by the world war. Almost all the posters of the time deal with the various aspects of war: they encourage men to enlist and urge the population to "do their duty", for instance by contributing to "national war loans".

These years also see the first posters advertising the film industry, until now deemed of lesser interest. In 1915 Dudovich establishes new business contacts in Turin, where he works prevalently as an illustrator for the reviews and magazines "Numero", "Pasquino", "Satana Beffa", "Novella", and "Novissima".

In 1917 the artist moves to the capital of Piedmont in order to realise a series of works for the film industry. He receives many commissions from the young publisher Polenghi, who is conducting an ambitious project based on the new technique of the "*pochoirs*", realised with an unusual printing procedure involving a press and compartmentalised areas of colour. It is Polenghi's intention to implement these techniques with the works of known artists such as Dudovich and Sacchetti. The initiative is remarkably successful, and is followed by well received exhibitions in Turin and Milan.

Dudovich remains in Turin until 1920, when he rekindles his friendship with the great, French-born but naturalised Italian, graphic artist Luciano Achille Mauzan, who creates film posters – an activity for which he is particularly suited. Both Mauzan and Dudovich used to work for the Officine Ricordi, and their friendship will lead them to a collaboration in the sad aftermath of war, when all historical and artistic reference points have disappeared.

The intense cinematographic activity of these years forces the two poster artists to overwork; they are completely absorbed in their present activity, which leads them to make new discoveries in graphics. It is a turning point for Dudovich, who, without realising it, unconsciously lays the artistic foundations for later important developments: bidimensionality is denied, while plasticity is restored with a constructive use of chiaroscuro.

1920 Dudovich settles down definitively in Milan. He continues collaborating with several reviews and magazines, but he also creates models for the Lenci doll factory. He realises posters for cinema and the theatre, as well as strictly commercial posters. Together with the lawyer Arnaldo Steffenini he creates the Publishing Company “Star”, of which he’ll be artistic director from 1922 to 1936. Thanks to “Star”, Dudovich pioneers, and experiments with, new forms of composition, taking part in many artistic competitions which he usually wins, obtaining commissions for the creation of new advertising images. His greatest success is an oil painting of rare accomplishment, entitled “*La signora dalla veletta*” (“The Lady with the Hat-veil”), presented in 1920 at the XII Venice Biennale. It portrays an elegant female figure, for which the model was very probably his wife Elisa. In dimensions and subject matter this oil painting recalls Dudovich’s traditional production; however, it shows something that will also appear in his later posters, that is to say a truly new female iconography - the same that is emerging in the illustrations of the contemporary reviews for which Dudovich supplies covers, plates, and sketches. With the cover of the April 1920 issue of the review “La Lettura”, entitled “*La donna misteriosa*” (“The Mysterious Woman”), Dudovich will establish the model of female figure of the new decade, which will become a template of comforting charm and beauty, absolutely devoid of disquieting or evil accents. In all these works his lines remain elegant, sinuous, light, but, at the same time, marked and precise.

1922/1924 The Publishing House “Star” merges with I.G.A.P. (Impresa Generale Affissioni e Pubblicità), which owns printing works in Milan, Genoa, and Rome, as well as concessions for production all over Italy. Through I.G.A.P. Dudovich clinches a contract of continuous collaboration with the department store “La Rinascente” of Milan, for which he will produce more than fifty posters over thirty years. The posters realised for La Rinascente, which constitute a remarkable artistic *corpus*, show a further development in Dudovich’s poster art, and his new, increasingly evident willingness to handle form and volume which will be the new “reading key” of 20th-century aesthetics. Despite his continuous work for La Rinascente, in 1924 Dudovich finds the time to exhibit an oil painting, entitled, “*Ritratto di Pina Brillante*” (“Portrait of Pina Brillante”) at the XIII Venice Biennale. He also collaborates with the publications “*Illustrazione Italiana*” and “*Le grandi prove ippiche*” (“Great Horse Shows”) - until 1933. His works continue to show an impeccable hand, combined with a true ability to come up with winning ideas which bring him an unending stream of commissions for work.

Dudovich's signature is now widely recognized in the world of Italian and European poster art. In these years he works extensively for leading Italian and foreign industrial companies, such as Pirelli, Shell, Agfa Film, Bugatti, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, the liqueur-makers Martini and Campari, Assicurazioni Generali, Assicurazioni RAS, Motta, Alemagna, and many, many others.

1925 / 1927 Dudovich continues to produce 5-6 posters a year for "La Rinascente", advertising their "Autumn-Winter" and "Spring-Summer" collections, their sports range, as well as beach- and country-wear, children's wear, and "Home Accessories and Furnishings". The images he chooses concentrate essentially on tailor-made models and the items to advertise, reflecting the most reassuring face of society - essentially, a female face. "La Rinascente" is the department store where the middle classes make their purchases, offering good quality products at a reasonable price. Through mass production the population becomes more homogeneous.

Dudovich is recognized as a master not only for his undisputed graphic ability, but also for his ability to convey messages which interest and attract millions of people. In his works for "La Rinascente" he prefers to feature only one (exclusively female) figure at a time, in the centre of the poster, thus giving full attention to the fashion model.

Dudovich's fashion illustrations are in fact characterised by a marked seductive content, instrumental to the creation of desire for the garment in question, with the ensuing achievement of the primary commercial goal – sales.

His award-winning posters for the 1926 "International Horse Show of Milan", the "Horse Show of Stresa", and his series of posters for Alfa Romeo will make history.

1929 In this year Dudovich lends his pencil also to the magazine "La Donna", with illustrations featuring increasingly sophisticated female figures. This collaboration marks a further development in Dudovich's style: due to the more rigorous attitude to fashion of the emerging Fascist regime, he dresses his female figures in clothes which don't stress the silhouette lines of the body, but follow them naturally. Under the influence of an increasingly active censure, skirts lengthen considerably, while waists, which had risen to breast-height in the 1910s and descended to hip-height in the 1920s, return to their natural position.

1931/1932 The consolidation of the Fascist regime leads Dudovich, against his own will, to a transformation of his female models which will propel him into the 1930s. He tries to keep his constantly developing ideas as free as possible, to preserve the expressive strength shown in the first three decades of the century, and to renew himself to keep up with the times.

In the 1930s the so called “myth of aviation” emerges, replacing, at least in part, the “myth of the car”. The sky becomes, at least in some measure, the new theatre in which to project one’s dreams. For this reason Dudovich is summoned to Rome in order to realise a series of tempera frescoes for the walls of the dining hall of the Ministry of Aviation. These first works also show the development of the artist as painter of frescoes in 20th-century style.

Marcello Dudovich signs, together with Marcello Nizzoli and other great contemporary names, some new advertising posters, and collaborates with the publications “La Festa” and “La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d’Italia”. These are years in which politics breaks violently into daily life, influencing lifestyle - and also the posters that for so long have preserved freedom of style.

The first signs of an epoch-making change begin to appear; the clearest evidence of such change will be apparent in posters with war-related subjects. Dudovich produces more austere posters, but he avoids, in so far as this is possible, lending his pencil to the posters which will cover the walls of buildings doomed to be destroyed by the bombs of the Second World War. Then Dudovich will refuse to realise posters advertising blood, heroism, and death; in those same posters the central feature will no longer be an image but words in cubital letters, drawn in the Fascist style.

Dudovich tries to soldier on with a more restrained “*joie de vivre*”, even though his production in this period can still be classified as significant in his artistic curriculum.

1933 Dudovich continues with his numerous collaborations, some of which have been going on since the beginning of the 20th century, such as the one with “La Lettura”. He works as an illustrator for the fashion magazine “Dea”, whose editor is the already famous Boccasile and which includes among its collaborators Brunetta and Sacchetti. In this period of political isolation, the Fascist influence imposes itself forcefully, establishing the parameters which will inspire the new posters. The “Belle Epoque” is definitively replaced by the ideal of the family: women work and remain emancipated, but men are the dominating figures and make the decisions which determine the future. Sport reaches the highest level of importance: in advertising posters the sophisticated female figures are replaced by tense-muscle bodies in rigid positions. These are the new images the regime wants for its propaganda; Dudovich refuses to produce them, and delegates the execution of these posters to an assistant called Walter Resentera.

1936/1937 On an invitation from Italo Balbo, Dudovich travels to Libya with the official purpose of decorating the churches and buildings of the Italian colony. He remains there for several months, staying in the house of a niece, and produces a series of drawings and tempera paintings which chronicle his experience of the Orient and colonialism. Thus Dudovich adds an African experience to his European background. In this period he realises many works in charcoal, pencil, and ink, filled with images reflecting his daily life in Libya: snake-charmers, flute-players, caravans and caravanserais,

minarets, oases, nomads, and veiled women are his favourite subjects, and will come to represent a consistent artistic commitment in the course of his life.

1940/1944 He moves between Milan, Varese, and Riccione. In 1943, invited by his friend Alessandra Drudi (known as the actress Gea della Garisenda), widow of the industrialist Borsalino, he moves to the Villa Amalia, a place dear to him near San Marino, where he realises some tempera frescoes in trompe-l'oeil on three of the drawing-room's walls. The general effect is of four pavilions opening on to the outside, with drapes, curtains and flags at the sides, leading the viewer into the landscape beyond. The work shows a clear 15th-century inspiration, and is executed to exert a subtle didactic action on the viewing public. It also features allusions to Paolo and Francesca, as the Villa is located in the geographic area which was the background to their tormented love story, recounted by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*. For Dudovich, the decoration of the Villa Amalia represents a diversion from the bitter reality of the ongoing war, a return to Mediaeval art, almost an escape into a legendary world.

1942 Personal exhibition at the Galleria Dedalo in Milan, which includes portraits, decorative panels, projects for large-scale wall decorations, and landscapes.

1945/1950 Dudovich's wife, Elisa Bucchi, dies of cancer. He confines himself to the activity of painter, decorator, and portraitist. These years, characterised by so little grace and sensitivity, are devoid of that particular "atmosphere" Dudovich loves so much. At the beginning of the 1950s he finds himself unable to reflect the surrounding world in his works; he still produces posters, but his difficulty in measuring himself against second-generation poster artists, officially called "designers", is evident. Advertising has become an exact science, disciplined by rigid market laws. The time of "disposable" goods has begun. Advertising posters are no longer works of art; they feature small visual symbols, easy to understand, aiming at conveying a quick advertising message, and are immediately replaced by other posters with the same goal.

From 1945 onwards Dudovich reaps satisfactions through various tributes paid to him as a great master and epoch-making poster artist. In 1950 he realises his last significant poster, "Ricorda Persil" ("Remember Persil"), in which the simple image of a handkerchief with a knot conveys a concise but clear and lasting advertising message.

1951 He travels again to Libya, almost to retrace the footsteps of his first, innovative experiences with the oriental style. The Association of the Italians still living in Libya organises an exhibition of his works, paying tribute to his African visit.

1953/1956 A series of exhibitions are organised in Milan, in the galleries Gian Ferrari and Montenapoleone; Rome, in the gallery Il Sagittario, and Bologna. They include mainly tempera paintings of the Belle Epoque. In the same period an exhibition of posters, tempera paintings, and drawings covering his whole career is organised at the Villa Ada, near Gardone. He receives a gold medal commemorating his career.

1962 - Marcello Dudovich dies on 31st March in Milan.

Milan, October 2002

The artistic director

Gianmario Tomatis

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