

PHILOSOPHY OF ART

DOI: 10.24234/wisdom.v15i2.346

Lucio GIULIODORI,
Valentina ULIUMDZHIEVA,
Elena NOTINA,
Irina BYKOVA

THINKING BEYOND, LIVING BEYOND: FUTURISM

Abstract

Living *in* the future, constantly thinking over it, incessantly inventing it, anticipating it, more than a *Weltanschauung*, a state of consciousness. It is not about predicting if not living the prediction, experimenting with it, chasing the words to describe it, imagining the machines to produce it.

The futurists' undertaking was fueled by an overwhelming desire to overcome their present time through art and influence, by dint of its momentum, the society, culture and life that thrived around it, shifting their current world and the one to come by virtue of an overflowing power of insights as well as an innovative and creative strength.

This is what Futurism was, and its constant, compelling self-supersession was its ontological matrix as this movement was projected and installed in a dimension of time that had severed both the past and the present.

This study aims to frame this avant-garde based on this chief cornerstone.

Keywords: Futurism, Avant-gardes, Marinetti, Aesthetics, Italian Studies, Italian art, Italian culture.

Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, at the midst of the industrial development, Italy and more generally Europe underwent several innovations and transformations which overturned the face of society by sewing a modern dress on it.

It is a period marked by the positivist faith in progress and science which, however, eventually ended out shattering in the theories of Nietzsche and Bergson in philosophy and those of Planck and Einstein in physics¹. At the turn of

this crucial, fascinating contradiction, i.e. the industrial society that is continually renewing itself and the discrediting of mechanism, Futurism was born. Italy at that time, from an industrial point of view was only partially competitive, whereas art was still living in the wake of the decline inherited from the end of the Baroque.

In Europe, the situation was different from both perspectives, and it looked prosperous on

Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Georges Sorel as tutelary gods. This philosophy was in line with what the leading scientific research of the time was elaborating, including Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, to which the manifesto seems to refer mentioning the end of traditional time and space. Futurism contrasts intuition, vital and creative impetus, primordial energy with the values of the old culture dominated by the primacy of reason" (Salaris, 2009, p. 6. My translation).

¹ "Marinetti develops his own Heraclitean philosophy of becoming, having Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich

the industrial level² as well as on the artistic one with Expressionism and Cubism dominating the scene – the latter though was still unaware of the “crazy train” that was departing from Italy, with destination “future”.

In a society where industry and scientific progress seemed to take precedence over everything, art itself which already, as pointed out, was struggling to take off, seemed to have lost itself; its role, once inspiring, central, elitist and exclusive, was now struggling to carve out a leading role in the eternal fight between beauty and usefulness, aesthetics and science.

Moreover, Italy is a country where the weight of a glorious artistic past has always made itself felt towards artists who therefore have always had to deal with it in terms of production. Futurism, however, had an exceptional relationship with the past, a relationship as drastic as “wild”: wipe the slate clean and begin from scratch. To their perspective, getting rid of the past specifically meant getting past it.

Futurism had no inferiority complexes not even towards *that* past, since precisely in its clear refusal it poses a priori conceptual bases that allow this movement to develop new languages, which were indeed faithful to the name “Futurism”, languages capable of reading the dizzying transformations of their current era and even exceeding them. Pervading every area of society, all-encompassing it innovatively and compellingly, was the purpose of Futurism; an attempt to merge art and life in order to make them live in unison. Furthermore, as a matter of fact, they pulled it off eventually.

On the whole, Futurism managed to bring Italian art back to the international scene after long oblivion. It was also facilitated by Fascism

² The disparity between the north and the south was very strong, the south still remained tied to agriculture and the problem of emigration.

which unlike Nazism and Communism did not persecute its artists, nor censored them³; indeed Mussolini even imitated Marinetti’s style, borrowing some of his narratives as he realized they did work in terms of communication⁴, *il duce* saw that they struck the public, seducing and “loyalizing” them, as we would say today in marketing language. Marketing which was “foreseen” by Futurists who, just by using some of its basic principles, built their resounding success.

Nevertheless, today that success is overlooked precisely because of the above closeness between Fascism and this emblematic cultural movement that was born ten years before it.

Futurism, however, must be looked at and admired with the eyes of its time, not with those of today who are indeed horrified by individual attitudes and certain statements⁵; as Eugenio

³ “The cultural policy of Italian Fascism differed from that of the totalitarian regimes in Germany and Russia, where modern art was mercilessly attacked and forcibly suppressed. Although Mussolini raised the canon of classical art with its Roman mythology and tendency to the monumental to the rank of official state art, modern trends were nevertheless tolerated” (Martin, 2017, p. 24).

Art and politics were even two merging concepts in Mussolini’s view, in one of his speeches he said: “There is no doubt that politics is an art. It is certainly not a science. Not even empiricism. It is therefore an art, also because politics involves a lot of intuition. The “political” creation as the artistic one is a slow elaboration and a sudden divination. The artist creates through inspiration, the politician through decisions. Both work the matter and the spirit... To give wise laws to people you have to be a little artistic” (Mussolini, 1934, p. 279. My translation).

As Falasca Zamponi asserts: “In Mussolini’s view, aesthetics was a central category for decoding human existence. Life itself was a blank canvas, a block of raw marble to be transformed into a work of art and often the Duce proclaimed his nietzschean will to make his life a masterpiece” (Falasca Zamponi, 2003, p. 34. My translation).

⁴ In which futurists were masters and innovators.

⁵ The famous, provocative phrase, in perfect Marinetti’s scandalous style, “the war is the only hygiene of the world” is in the eyes of a contemporary, after two world wars, simply unacceptable, however it must be

Montale says: “Young people who try to get an idea of Futurism through the pages of literary stories or the encyclopedias entries will always be disappointed because the character of the young Marinettian adventure cannot be separated from the colour of that time. The same books of that time would remain incomprehensible if they were read in a different modern edition” (Montale, 1961).

This study was also born out of the idea of limiting the above distance in order to look at the movement for what it was: an overwhelming desire to takeoff beyond time through a blast of a new and innovative kind of art, a blast of vitality and “creative violence”. By virtue of its overflowing power, the futurists aimed at influencing culture, society and life around them: run over them by dint of their overwhelming momentum made of poetry, scandals, contradictions, the challenge for the reason and victory over time.

Living in the Future

Marinetti was a stateless person who only later became a patriot, being born abroad and having lived abroad for a long time, has probably influenced his move⁶. He spent all his youth abroad, went to school in Alexandria in Egypt and attended high school in Paris, then when he moved to Italy, he was already an experienced person, probably more mature than his peers. All these factors, combined with his open mind and creativity certainly out of the ordinary, would make him that phenomenal and inexhaustible

framed in the context of 1910 which precisely preceded those wars.

⁶ It is well known that those who live outside their country for many years develop a relationship with it that is sometimes unusual and often not in line with the attitudes of those who have always lived there; the gaze is obviously different, the perspective farther away but sometimes cleaner and more objective.

generator of ideas, scandals and innovations, the demiurge and the main and constant thinking mind of Futurism.

Marinetti must be credited with grouping countless artists with innovative perspectives, and he was a sort of channeler of this great energy that they not only fully embodied but above all shared, increasing their creative power, ready to go off. Futurism dropped a real bomb onto the art world of its time. When he said, in the Manifesto, that he wanted to destroy museums, that was obviously a metaphor, Marinetti did not want to destroy anything, he himself had a considerable art collection. That was his language though, a bursting language that faithfully mirrored his destructive impetus: a clean sweep with the past for the irruption into the new, here and now.

Marinetti could not know what would happen in the future, but somehow he sensed it and managed to do it because his mind lived constantly projected in the thought of the future. Here are his words: “The man of the future will have a mediocre need to know what his ancestors did but will have a constant need to know what his contemporaries do at all times, in every point on earth. This will be facilitated by the electricity and a victorious mechanic who will keep his land harnessed in the network of his omnipresent speed”⁷. He practically predicted the internet yet not only the internet but also a particular use of the internet: social networks and our relationship with them. In the text *The electric war* of 1915, in which inter alia he talks about cordless telephones, mechanical agriculture and clean energy, he says that the men of the future will live in air-conditioned atmospheres, they will control everything that happens through

⁷ Quoted by Simona Cigliana in *Il balzo in avanti*, Retrieved June 2020, from: <https://vimeo.com/channels/-816746/page:2> (my translation).

electric keyboards, and they will write in nickel books:

“They sit in front of the distribution panels, and they make counters, keyboards, regulators and switches and the splendid flash of the cranks everywhere on the right and on the left. ... Those men can write in nickel books, the thickness of which does not exceed three centimetres, costs only eight francs and contains, at least, one hundred thousand pages.

Since heat, coolness and ventilation are regulated by rapid mechanisms, they finally feel the fullness and resistant solidity of their will. ... They regulate, from the height of their monoplanes by means of cordless telephones, the lightning speed of the sowing trains that cross the plains two or three times a year for hectic sowing. ... Wherever plants grow abnormally, due to the effort of high voltage artificial electricity. Electrical irrigations and drains”⁸.

As a matter of fact, he could not have the language to describe things that had not yet arrived, the names of the things he spoke of had not yet been coined. As Simona Cigliana states: “Marinetti gets to predict genetic engineering, saying that it will be possible to procreate without resorting to the reproductive system of women. Then he says that men in the future, overwhelmed by an intense lifestyle, will use a meagre language with a few words without punctuation, they will use the signs of mathematics to achieve greater synthesis and even signs that will reproduce facial expressions. He practically imagined emoticons. He foresees all these 100 years in advance. Then he talks about the sexual liberation of women, the end of the marriage and the following crisis of the male universe because

of this, and about that, he even speaks of an achieved semi-equality. To this regard, he proves Benjamin is right when the latter said that the true avant-garde creates the necessity of things before they are there because it glimpses what the future will produce, it glimpses the need today without this still existing”⁹.

Marinetti even envies the men of the future by thinking of them and describes this feeling with a beautiful poetic image: “Oh! How I envy the men who will be born in a century in my beautiful peninsula, wholly vivified, shaken and harnessed by the new electric forces! The obsessive vision of the future tears my soul in delicious bursts...”¹⁰.

The same goes for futurist architecture: the works of Sant’Elia, which unfortunately have remained drawings because of his early death, are the mirror of many skyscrapers of today. The futurists were able to peek into the world we live in today, and this experience was exciting for them, even intoxicating. Cesare Poggi in *Futurist architecture* says: “Architecture, or rather, the architectural physiognomy intuited by Sant’Elia about twenty years ago, with logical, constructive penetration, has come true. It is now reaching its apogee. In America, it is reaching the top of its ascending parable. Futurism means anticipating the times, that is, thinking about what to do and not resting on one’s laurels. Tomorrow skyscrapers will no longer have reason to exist” (Poggi, 1933. My translation).

This boundless optimism, this blind tetragonal trust with which they framed the future, with which they related to it, is what is the most striking about futurists. Something incomprehen-

⁸ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *La guerra elettrica*, 1915. Retrieved June 2020, from: <https://www.memofonte.it/files/Progetti/Futurismo/Manifesti/1/99.pdf> (my translation).

⁹ Simona Cigliana in *Il balzo in avanti*, Retrieved June 2020, from: https://vimeo.com/channels/816746/page:_2 (my translation).

¹⁰ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *La guerra elettrica*, op. cit.

sible for us contemporaries who, if we look to the future, presumably have more negative than positive feelings: the precarious geopolitical balance, the possible outbreak of other wars and what this would ensue in terms of atomic weapons, leads us to have, towards the future (and towards war as well) an attitude even opposite to the futurists'. This makes an objective understanding of the movement at hand extremely difficult; Futurism is sometimes abysmally far from us in terms of cultural sensitivity, yet endearing. Once again, Futurism requires us to look at it through its own eyes rather than ours, the gaze of 1910 not that of 2020.

The "Italian intelligencia", however, still hasn't got this yet simple matter and we have ended up relegating Futurism almost on the brink of oblivion.

Painting a New World

One of the Futurisms' numerous innovations relied on removing art from its distant and sophisticated high horse where it stood and brought it down into everyday life at the mercy of everyone and the mercy of everything, cinema, art, theatre, music, etc. Furthermore, Futurism was a very democratic movement unlike the other much more elitist "isms"; famous is the slogan coined by Marinetti: "off to the young!" (*largo ai giovani*). Futurism was indeed a young movement. Marinetti and his fellows were all about thirty at the time of the first Manifesto. He was addressing to *all* young people, anyone could become futurist, and it was at a time when young people did not enjoy great credit as they do today.

Futurism, on the other hand, became a touchstone for all those young people who wanted to oppose the world of adults for some rea-

sons, all these young fellows were more than welcome to join the movement, and they could feel futurists instantly, no "initiation" was needed whatsoever, only a special feeling to be shared, a newfangled attitude towards the future, in one word a modern mind.

Only the Beat Generation long afterwards managed to do something similar, and in fact, the same Allen Ginsberg admitted it¹¹.

Marinetti urged young people to always go against the grain, to challenge authority, to challenge teachers, even violently but always under intellectual purity. Somehow he also anticipated the spirit of the riots of Sixty-eight. "When we will be 40 years old other men younger and more talented than us will throw us in the bin like useless manuscripts" (Marinetti, 1909. My translation), Marinetti stated.

Young people felt involved because Futurism exalted boxing, running, movement, action and rejected book culture. This actually, is extremely original because even if they rejected books and museums, they were cultured and refined artists, and this contradiction is utterly wonderful.

Through the countless Manifestos, Marinetti aimed to provoke the collective imagination and challenge the world of his time, a society he already understood as mass and mechanized. The machine itself was seen as an extension of man, of his desire for escaping, for reality, for the future; at times it could even take on erotic outlines¹².

¹¹ "But also abroad – in the USA, Germany, France and Switzerland – a revived interest in prewar Futurism could be observed. Allen Ginsberg and his fellow poets declared that in the Beat Generation, "the prophecies of Marinetti are coming true; some of them, the wilder, more poetic ones"" (Berghaus, 2019, p. 3).

¹² In April 1921 Marinetti published the novel *L'alcova d'acciaio* (The steel alcove), on the cover of which we see a sensual female body penetrated by a war machine. The book was immediately censored.

Renewal and innovation, however, obviously passes primarily through painting and therefore through the power and immediacy of the image. It was February 1910 when Marinetti involved Carrà, Russolo and Boccioni in the drafting of a new Manifesto¹³. The goal was to show they had had enough with the landscape painters, portrait painters, mountaineers, and all those “holiday painters”.

Boccioni’s painting *Riot in the gallery* (1910) perfectly frames the new “creative violence” of the futurists, Boccioni also created a work deemed the most modern sculpture of its time *Unique forms of the continuity of space* (1913) which is still remembered today, depicted in the Italian twenty-cent euro coin.

In painting, the futurists fundamentally insisted on the violence of colour, on the merging between the figure and the environment, on the fact that the colours from the outside are reflected on the complexion. In addition to that, they were used to seek simultaneity, that is, the co-presence of different moments in the same painting (see for example Boccioni’s *The laugh* and Russolo’s *The Revolt*, both of 1911), i.e. the perception of the present, the memory of the past and the expectation of the future, all together. In this way, the picture ends up becoming a synthesis of these different times by dint of great dramatic might, to this regard see Boccioni’s *The city rises* (1910) and the famous and beautiful *Simultaneous visions* (1911).

Giacomo Balla is also one of the leading representatives as he best embodies the soul of Futurism, when he joined the Movement he auctioned all his previous works announcing that Balla was dead and that Futurballa was born. *Dynamism of a dog on a leash* from 1912 or *Street light* from 1909 impeccably outline this

proposed spirit of renewal.

What Balla furnished to the movement, was a massive contribution in terms of expression. Futurballa strikes the viewer’s eye through a dynamic visual translation of the concept of acceleration, a sort of “tendency towards and reaching somewhere” was portrayed by his art; a kind of immobile cinema was rendered through the modularity of a repeated gesture aimed at exposing the direction. From 1912, *Girl running on a balcony* flawlessly expresses that notion. In conclusion, for Balla and for the futurists in general, a picture must no longer be the moment stopped but life on the move.

A further Futurism’s significant contribution lies on placing the viewer at the centre of the artwork: whoever looks at a picture, listens to music or goes to see a theatrical performance is no longer considered a passive consumer or an external element.

In the second Futurism, Prampolini developed “polymaterism”, i.e. pictorial compositions made with extra pictorial materials like wadding feathers and glass, anticipating in this way contemporary art forms such as Arte povera and Pop art¹⁴.

Futurism sought to pierce life, and it coveted to aestheticize every day by touching all sides of life. Many of the artists who came later are in debt to Futurism and more, in general, all the other avant-gardes, basically the whole century owes a great deal to Marinetti who has given a vigorous boost to art, so violent and forward that for the whole century it was disorientated.

¹⁴ As Maurizio Scudiero states: “Depero anticipated Pop Art by 50 years, even though his art was not an industrial one, but an artisanal one: each work was unique even in the multiplicity of its creations”. In *Depero, la Pop Art Anticipata di cinquant’anni*, Retrieved June 2020, from: <https://www.bresciaoggi.it/home/cultura/-personaggi/depero-la-pop-artanticipatadi-cinquant-anni-1.6022086> (my translation).

¹³ The first Manifesto was dated 1909.

A Total Artistic Revolution

In 1912 the Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature was released. According to it the word must also be seen, it can be drawn and can be represented visually and graphically through a typographical revolution, the letters must have different sizes, different bodies and all this was meant to acquire expressiveness, a stronger emotional charge. It is the so-called *paroliberismo* or “words set in freedom”.

From the books to the stage. There were several Manifestos of the Futurist Theatre which rebel against the old concept of performance as they wanted to destroy the barriers between the various genres and indeed mix them¹⁵. Also, they assumed that the classic show was too long and therefore offered cuts, for example, a scene from ten minutes became a two-minute scene.

Nevertheless, the real mind, as usual, was him, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti who had the idea of “total theatre” a theatre that kept all five senses of the audience engaged, a sort of multimedia and sensory theatre, something that would have been possible to build fifty years later. At that moment he did not even have the means to put it into practice, that is, he was so far ahead that he could not achieve what he conceived and only today many of those ideas have become commonplace.

From theatre to architecture. The Sant’Elia mentioned above did the drawings for *The new*

city, a futuristic vision of Milan, a masterpiece of modernity that will inspire, among other things, the film *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang.

With architecture on board, Futurism was no longer only art, and it began to burst into daily life by influencing people’s behaviour. The environment, the furniture, the spaces in which people live, everything had to be modelled according to futurist principles so that art merged with life and life was created as an art form.

From architecture to music. Balilla Pratella wrote the futurist music manifesto. Luigi Russolo even ceased his pictorial activity to devote himself entirely to the musical one. In his Manifest letter sent to Pratella entitled *The art of noises* he wrote that in music, noise must have the same dignity as notes. Together with Ugo Piatti, he invented the *intonarumori*, “tuned noises”, instruments that were meant to reproduce the sounds of modern civilization.

Futurist music, in the wake of *paroliberismo*, was primarily based on improvisation and here again we can see how Futurism is a movement of freedom, which constantly seeks and unceasingly creates freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of creation.

Russolo had practically overridden the first half of the century’s research on music in one fell swoop; this idea of “tuning noises” inspired even electronic music itself’.

Today music is created with electronic instruments; however, using the *intonarumori* Russolo already processed sounds mixed with noises, just through the mechanics. In order to implement what the futurists dreamed of, we had to wait for the advent of the synthesizers. John Cage himself owes a lot to Futurism which de facto created silence first¹⁶.

¹⁵ “One must completely destroy all logic in Variety Theatre performances... Systematically prostitute all of classic art on the stage, performing for example all the Greek, French and Italian tragedies, condensed and comically mixed up, in a single evening – put life into the works of Beethoven, Wagner, Bach, Bellini, Chopin by inserting Neapolitan songs... play a Beethoven symphony backward...boil all of Shakespeare down to a single act... have actors recite *Hernani* tied in sacks up to their necks – soap the floorboards to cause amusing tumbles at the most tragic moments” (Marinetti, 1972, pp. 120-121).

¹⁶ “Silence is heard against the background of sound; silence becomes equal to sound as an aesthetic tool.

Overall, if we gather all the futurists' inventions and "predictions" what we have is just the globalised world in which we are living today. Futurism changed everything or tried to change everything around itself. There is even a Manifesto of Futurist Mathematics¹⁷. From the 1920s' onwards, Futurism also expanded, even more, impacting the most diverse forms of art: fashion, furnishings, cuisines, stage sets, costumes, decor, ceramics, graphic art, advertising. Art and life began to intermingle harshly.

To enter firmly into the social fabric, however, Futurism needed an innovative political program as well. Upon returning from the war, Marinetti drew up the manifesto of the Italian Futurist Party among whose priorities were: social security, a maximum of eight hours of work, minimum wages seized to the needs of life, equality of male and female work, easy divorce, universal suffrage for men and women (which by the way discredits all of its alleged hatred of women)¹⁸, consumer protection, freedom of

strike, Italy's "devaticanization", free justice, regional administrative decentralisation and abolition of the Senate and even law enforcement agencies. They were all extremely advanced if not visionary points that actually put Futurism far from the sphere of any type of dictatorial system; some of them are ideas of freedom and even anarchy in the presence of which the only possible comparison is with Sixty-eight, as already highlighted.

However, as always, the various Manifestos are inter-connected, Futurism is a prism where the various sides shine together. The political renewal was preparatory to cultural and artistic renewal; the Futurists craved freedom because they, themselves, were free within, political regeneration was the natural consequence of the powerful release of the creative forces of genius. Marinetti is peremptory in this regard:

"We want to free Italy from the papacy, from the monarchy, from the Senate, from marriage, from Parliament. We want a technical government without Parliament, vivified by a council or excitatory of very young people. We want the abolition of permanent armies, courts, police and prisons so that our race of geniuses can develop as many free, strong, fast, hardworking and innovator individuals as possible. ...

To your immense system of communicating and levelled womb, to your tedious membership refectory, we oppose our marvellous anarchist paradise of absolute freedom art genius progress heroism fantasy enthusiasm, cheerfulness, variety, novelty, speed, record" (Marinetti, 1920).

Obviously thoughts of this kind have much to do with the ideas of John Cage" (Kirby, 1986, p. 144).

Mladen Ovadija in his book *Dramaturgy of Sound in the Avant-Garde and Postdramatic Theatre* dedicates a paragraph to this matter: *Radio sintesi: prefiguring Cage's concept of silence in music and performance*. In it he asserts: "Marinetti thus appears as a follower of Bergson's philosophy of duration and a precursor of Cage in his concept of duration as the essence of a music that encompasses sound, noise and silence. [...] Marinetti's equal treatment of sound and silence in radio prefigures some of John Cage's principles of sound composition" (Ovadija, 2013, p. 231).

¹⁷ The Manifesto is dated 1940 (as evidence, inter alia, of a very long-running movement, Dadaism, conversely, lasted only seven years) and it was written by Marinetti in collaboration with the mathematician Marcello Purna. Cfr. *I numeri del Futurismo nel manifesto del 1940*. Retrieved June 2020, from: http://www.tutto-mondone.it/numeri_futurismo/#:~:text=Nel%201940%20venne%20pubblicato%20il,%2C%20nonch%C3%A9%20chirurgo%2C%20Pino%20Masnata.

¹⁸ The same applies for the phrase about war, Marinetti in the Manifesto does not take it out on the woman himself, he himself was happily married and also had three daughters: Luce, Ala and Vittoria. His contempt on the other hand, was as usual for "passatism", for an

ideal of a gentle woman praised by the romantic artists of the late nineteenth century, with whom he obviously wanted to break, break in his style: vehemently, with violence. Nevertheless, it is not violence to hurt, it is rather the will to totally eradicate past canons and replace them immediately with new, revolutionary ones, almost opposed to them.

Advertising

As a matter of fact, Futurism had an enormous resonance in Italy and abroad, we could certainly put this down to Marinetti's massive financial resources, inherited by his extremely wealthy father. Marinetti's car was an *Isotta Fraschini*, probably the most expensive car you could dream of in the early twentieth century, something even difficult to compare with today's standards. Probably, it does not even correspond to a Ferrari, if not to a private jet. This could suffice to give you an idea of what kind of well-off person Marinetti was.

On his first trip with his new car, he went off the road, turning over and destroying it; however, he miraculously remained unharmed. Facing death, though, perhaps pushed him to the creation of a movement that impacted with the culture of its time with the same destructive force as that accident. The first Manifesto was written straight after the accident, in 11 points.

Immediately after drafting, Marinetti had an intuition, a challenging and ambitious target: to publish it on the best media organ in the world at his time: the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. How to do that? With his fervent creativity and his *savoir faire* with women¹⁹, Marinetti immediately found a spot-on solution. He began to woo the daughter of an Egyptian pasha who was co-owner of the newspaper. The daughter interceded, and his goal was achieved. After the publication, he left the girl²⁰.

The publication on *Le Figaro* made an international outcry, yet the publication in Italy of

his first novel *Mafarka the futurist*²¹ made even more clamour. Marinetti was even sued for pornography, and it was obviously a joy, a real stroke of luck for him. He took advantage of talking about his movement which, to his great satisfaction, elicited conflicting opinions.

In the first Manifesto he had declared his contempt for women which, as previously pointed out, was only a provocation and a sort of protest against the cliché of the slavish women of nineteenth-century literature. His provocation though, immediately hit the mark: the French writer Valentine de Saint-Point decided to answer him with the Manifesto of Futurist Woman and then with the Futurist Manifesto of Lust. Valentine advocated the complete emancipation of women and claimed the positive value of pleasure and sensuality.

Marinetti was increasingly convinced that provocation and scandal were very effective means of promoting his ideas.

For many years their ideal propaganda tool was precisely these *serate futuriste* (futurist evenings) whose audience was composed of all layers of social classes, the entrance was in fact free because Marinetti who rented the theatres out of his pocket, as a witty entrepreneur of his movement, had understood that the real gain was advertising.

He was not interested in earning money. That is why the entrance was free, and his only aim was spreading a new *Weltanschauung* nationally and internationally through his movement²².

From the stages of theatres all over Italy, the futurists spread their provocative message, de-

¹⁹ In this regard, see Marinetti's famous manual of erotic poetics *Come si seducono le donne* (How to seduce women), Milan Bur: 2015.

²⁰ It should also be noted that when the Manifesto appeared on *Le Figaro* in 1909, the movement still practically did not exist, Marinetti therefore preceded the times as in his style.

²¹ Cfr. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Mafarka il futurista*, Mondadori, Milano 2003.

²² With reference to Futurism as *Weltanschauung*, as philosophy see the very detailed essay *Trattato di Filosofia futurista* by Riccardo Campa, Roma: Avanguardia 21 Edizioni, 2012.

claiming poems, exhibiting paintings, representing theatrical and musical scenes that question the past-certainties of those present. The audience came alive reacting vehemently, often with violence in a crescendo that involved everyone, indiscriminately, people used to throw everything at them especially vegetables, and this is how they achieved their goal: the day after the press mentioned them. New controversies and new publicity around: they were not looking for anything better.

The spectators who were provoked beyond measure contested the futurists. They believed they were doing something autonomously, but in fact, everything was prepared before by the futurists who had set up the trap. The public felt involved and automatically outdid itself as it was no longer just a show audience but the protagonist of it. The audience could have its say, even ending up doing it ardently, violently: the public was part of the work of art, and it was part of it in a disruptive, transgressive, violent way, here is Futurism: the interaction between work and spectators, *between art and life*²³.

It should also take into account that it was often the workers who defended the futurists from the attacks of the bourgeois who frequented the theatres where the evenings were staged, this is because those evenings, which were free, were open to everybody. The futurists themselves, as previously remarked, invited everyone to follow them, not specific groups, social classes or people belonging to specific political visions, futurists' invitations were transversal, the only preference they had was for young people, but again, all the young people.

²³ The great changes in the society in which they lived were also reflected in the figure of the artist, as Anna D'Elia says: "The figure of the artist changes, transforming itself into a cultural animator, with the aim of "innovating the morals", change and make change the lifestyles" (D'Elia, 1988, p. 5. My translation).

After publication in *Le Figaro*, the Manifesto spread around the world. Russian artists who lived in Paris sent reproductions of futurist paintings to Moscow, and this is why very quickly Russian artists received and revised the formulas of Futurism to their own taste and style.

As a consequence, Cubo-Futurism and Rayonism were born in Russia, the exponents of these movements shared many of the principles of Futurism, but instead of technology, as we know, they focused on the concept of "new man" in order to renew society. In line with Futurism's philosophy, they used to call themselves "men of the future"²⁴.

However, Futurism did not only make its way to Russia, but countless countries were also "infected" by the futurist electrification, in Brazil, they even called trains with the name of Marinetti so much they associated them to him²⁵.

On no accounts, speaking of innovation, advertising and marketing, one cannot fail to mention Fortunato Depero, perhaps the one who put the art of selling and self-selling best into practice, thanks to his creation the famous Campari advertising he is still very popular today. His lines, shapes and colours were shockingly modern for his time.

As Ilaria Riccioni (2018) asserts, Depero "did not need to work hard and rebel against the past. From the beginning of his artistic activity,

²⁴ About Futurism in Russia see the very detailed essay by Cesare De Michelis, *L'avanguardia trasversale. Il futurismo in Italia e in Russia*, Padova: Marsilio 2009.

²⁵ Among the countries where Futurism has taken root, let us mention: Argentina, Armenia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, England, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Holland, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, Uruguay, America, Venezuela, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and obviously Russia.

To delve deeper into the theme of Futurism around the world, see Claudia Salaris, *Futurismi nel mondo*, Pistoia: Gli Ori 2015.

he already felt free. He is, therefore, a futurist but seems to enjoy a privilege that distinguishes him from other futurists... reinventing reality and living within it” (p. 6. My translation).

In 1931, Depero wrote *Futurism and the advertising art* in which he peremptorily affirms: “The art of the future will be powerfully advertising” (Depero, 1931. My translation). Practically he foresaw the world in which we live today: “Our splendor, our glories, our men, our products, need an equally shining new art, equally mechanical and fast, enhancing the dynamics, the practice, the light, of our subjects - even art must march hand in hand with industry, science, politics, fashion of the time, glorifying them - this glorifying art was started by futurism and advertising art - the art of advertising is a decidedly colourful art, obliged to synthesis - a fascinating art that boldly placed itself on the walls, on the facades of buildings, in the shop windows, in trains, on the floors of the streets, everywhere; an attempt was even made to project it onto the clouds - living art, multiplied, and not isolated and buried in museums - art free of any academic restraint - playful art - bold - exhilarating - optimistic - art of difficult synthesis, where the artist is struggling with authentic creation - the cartel is the symbolic image of a product, it is the ingenious plastic and pictorial found to enhance and interest it - exalting with genius our products, our businesses, that is, the prime factors of our life, we do nothing but the purest and most true, modern art - advertising art offers completely new themes and artistic field - advertising art is fatally necessary - fatally modern art - fatally daring art- fatally paid art - fatally lived art”²⁶.

²⁶ Fortunato Depero, *Il Futurismo e l'arte pubblicitaria*, 1931. Retrieved June 2020, from: http://futurismo.academiadellacrusca.org/immagine.asp?idscheda=129-&file_seq=1 (my translation).

Conclusion

Futurism is not restricted to its yet very long official life which essentially goes from the first Manifesto (1909) till Marinetti's death (1945). Gerardo Dottori painted until his last days, his last exhibition was in 1974, in Trieste²⁷. As the studious Vitaldo Conte outlined, many are the next experiences like for example the Journal “Futurismo-Oggi” directed by the futurist Enzo Benedetto and active from 1969 till 1993²⁸.

However, Futurism projected itself even further than the Nineties, how could we not mention Graziano Cecchini and his Red Trevi Fountain? From the “Manifesto of Futurism 2009”, he states: “We glorify the futurist masters, and we brutally reclaim the 1909 manifesto and all the being and the beauty that come from it” (Cecchini, 2009, p. 63. My translation)²⁹.

Futurism is then still alive, the scholar Mario Verdone (1994) argues that it is not only still in action, but also it is the century Zeitgeist: “At least a part of our century Zeitgeist acts within Futurism's spirit” (p. 82. My translation).

When Marinetti, by means of the principle of youngness, said that he and his fellow should have been thrown in the bin as soon as they turned forty, he was provoking as he and especially he, knew that Futurism meant future. Futurism was a marvellous collector of shameless,

²⁷ About Dottori see my paper *Umbrian Futurist landscapes: Gerardo Dottori's Aeropainting*, Proceedings of the Conference “Eco Sapiens-ecological consciousness of the XXI century in science, education and society”, 18-19-20/10/2019, Ruden University, Moscow, Russia.

²⁸ “The same chronological delimitation of the so called historical futurism, framed by some scholars from 1909 till '15 or '19 could sound like a forced and simplistic filing” (Conte, 2011, p. 68. My translation).

²⁹ G. Cecchini, *Il Manifesto del futurismo 2009*, in “Divenire. Rassegna di studi sulla tecnica e il postumano”, vol. 3, a cura di R. Campa, Sestante Edizioni, Bergamo 2009, p. 63. Sito [33]. My translation.

brave ideas, born to last. As he affirmed: “Are there any outdated futurists ideas, any to be discarded? Nothing to discard. The victorious ideas firmly keep their conquered position” (Marinetti, 1968, p. 135. My translation).

Though the historical context changed, futurist ideas are indeed still alive. The conclusion that this study comes to is that Futurism today, against all the odds and against who rejected it, still stands.

Arbasino said that Marinetti, together with D’Annunzio, is the most massive corpse in the cellar of all kinds of the literature of all time, their relationship with fascism has undoubtedly set aside the enormous influence that their cultural legacy has had in Italy and abroad. However, the recent works of scholars such as Giordano Bruno Guerri, points out a substantial distance of the two poets towards the regime.

The contribution which was brought about by Futurism in the world of art was and still is remarkable and worthy of being delved deeper. Futurism was the most important artistic movement that Italy had after the Renaissance, persisting to snub it only because of Fascism is not only wrong but even bizarre.

REFERENCES

- Berghaus, G. (2019). *Handobook of International Futurism*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Cecchini, G. (2009) *Il manifesto del Futurismo*. “Divenire. Rassegna di studi sulla tecnica e il postumano”. (Vol. 3). Vergamo: Sestante Edizioni.
- Conte, V. (2011). *Pulsional Gender Art*. Roma: Avanguardia 21 Edizioni.
- D’Elia, A. (1988). *L’universo futurista. Una mappa, dal quadro alla cravatta*. Bari: Edizioni Dedalo.
- Depero, F. (19319). *Il Futurismo e l’arte pubblicitaria*. Retrieved June 2020, from: <http://futurismo.accademiadellacrusca.org/immagine.asp?idscheda=129&fileseq=1>.
- Falasca Zamponi, S. (2003). *Lo spettacolo del Fascismo*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino.
- Kirby, M. (1986). *Futurist Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications.
- Marinetti, F. T. (1909). *Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo*. Retrieved June 2020, from: <http://futurismo.accademiadellacrusca.org/scheda.asp?idscheda=1>.
- Marinetti, F. T. (1920). *Al di là del comunismo*. Milano: Edizioni La Testa di Ferro. Retrieved June 2020, from: <http://futurismo.accademiadellacrusca.org/scheda.asp?idscheda=94>.
- Marinetti, F. T. (1968). *Teoria e invenzione futurista*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Marinetti, F. T. (1972). *Selected Writings*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Martin, S. (2017). *Futurism*. Köln: Taschen.
- Montale, E. (1961) *Buzzi-Cangiullo-Onofri*. Milano: Corriere della Sera.
- Mussolini, B. (1934). *Scritti e discorsi*. Milano: Hoepli.
- Ovadija, O. (2013). *Dramaturgy of Sound in the Avant-Garde and Postdramatic Theatre*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press
- Poggi, C. (1933) *Architettura futurista*. Retrieved June 2020, from: <http://futurismo.-accademiadellacrusca.org/scheda.asp?idscheda=156>.
- Riccioni, I. (2018). *Depero. La reinvenzione della realtà*. Chieti: Solfanelli.
- Salaris, C. (2009). *Futurism. The First Avant-Garde*. Milan: Giunti.
- Verdone, M. (1994). *Il futurismo*. Roma: Newton.