



Pino Trogu

Michele Provinciali Imprinting of a master

for the conference:

Michele Provinciali

Il mondo pensato per oggetti

(A world imagined through artifacts)

Pesaro, 15 September 2012

The first meeting with Michele Provinciali was during the entrance exam at the school in Urbino.

The next meetings were in the big common room at the school, during his lectures, and lessons, which were different, and went straight to the heart.

Michele made us sign our drawings and collages, like painters do, to make ourselves feel closer to our work. To sign our work as a Leo Lionni or a Paul Rand would sign their work, or as Michele himself would sign his work.

Michel's typographic rules were strict, but dictated more by emotion than by technique: sometimes the character spacing in a line, the kerning, was as simple as that of metal type, at other times it was a matter of sensations, such as in the infinite possible pairings of an upper case V and a A. Imagination and dreams were more important than technique. When I asked him how I should photograph a Sardinian musical instrument made of reeds, he said, "Like small Greek islands seen from an airplane above."

Heart and feelings. Michele said that he liked to imagine things as already past, in order to enjoy immediately the pleasure of remembering them. His humanistic approach to graphic design reflected his passion for objects as a mirror of people. He told us to observe everyday objects, but also to read, a lot. One of my classmates, Antonio Grasselli, transcribed this phrase: "A graphic designer should read a lot. The more books he reads, and the less design magazines he looks at, the healthier he will stay." So reads the little piece of paper, signed by Michele.

Every now and then I would send him small things from the US: books, pictures. He would reply with brief poetic letters. Over the years, the imprinting of Michele's teaching would surface in my own work and in my teaching. There is no doubt that Michele Provinciali was the biggest influence on me at the school in Urbino.

The first assignment in Michele's class was the "personal planet," a self-portrait to be presented through a found or a built object that in our view would represent ourselves. Found objects, constructed ones, thorny ones, shining and introverted ones, they were always revelatory. Another classmate, Marcella Cannalire, currently a psychoanalyst in Milan, remembers the project:

"(...) the experience of the personal planet has awakened in me something that was already there and has subsequently developed further: an interest and affection – I would say – for objects, especially

if used, as a trace of a life, a memory, emotions, thoughts, history. I remember that I reacted enthusiastically to the invitation of Provinciali to make a personal planet, feeling that it was something really mine, something that used a vocabulary near me. It was an invitation that addressed the inner world of each of us and I think that in this Provinciali wanted to teach us that, beyond the work on all the tools and means of representation and expression – the outside – we also had to take into account the inside. (...) I went in that direction in my later work, with psychology and psychoanalysis and therefore directly and decisively towards the world of “internal objects”. But I kept an interest in the artistic and creative act in general, with a predilection for collage and for textures. So it is still part of my attention for concrete objects, for some materials, for the aggregation of these, hoping to do something with them in both psychoanalytic and expressive activities. Even though I have lost my personal planets, they remain an expressive way for developing ideas, which I definitely thank and trace back to him.”

And so, speaking through objects, through the same analog objects cherished by Michele and that keep us connected to our inner world, that I remember the teacher Provinciali.

Thanks Michele, for those objects that continue to speak to us from a distance but in a concrete way, helping us to keep a balance in an environment that is more and more abstract and virtual.

Pino Trogu
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English translation - September 30, 2012

This text was read at the conference on Michele Provinciali in Pesaro, Italy, on Saturday, September 15, 2012, while a short film was being projected. The 6-minute film, *Michele Provinciali, Imprinting of a Master*, tries to capture the influence of Provinciali’s teachings on my own work and teaching. In the film, look for Provinciali’s initials (MP) and mine (PT) at the bottom of the screen to identify the work.

The film can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THYWwUe9678>