Il MUSEO DELLA FIGURINA

From precursors to modern trade cards



1. PRECURSORS

This section showcases vintage engravings, original moulds and reproductions of a series of printed images that influenced picture card iconography. Appearing in Europe as of the 15th century, these engravings were printed using xylography (woodcut) and chalcography (copper-plate engraving) techniques. The reproductions are a selection of the oldest and most significant examples and are organized according to the popular print classification theorized by Achille Bertarelli. We will see how prints became progressively more secular over the centuries, leaving behind their original function as religious precepts. And so the picture card universe developed into an "encyclopaedia" ironizing, chronicling and above all circulating knowledge.

THE OLD COLLECTION

The engravings conserved in the old collection, from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, possess some of the typical features of picture cards: the title, legends, small format and division of themes into sets or sequences of images. Prints, in particular popular prints, were (and are) always made in sets, linking distinct but related subjects in order to analyse different aspects of a specific argument. In many cases, such as Callot's *Balli di Sfessania*, the characteristic 17th-century "backward telescope" perspective makes the figures leap out of the paper.
Of particular interest are the educational playing cards wanted by Cardinal Mazzarino (1602-61) for the Dauphin of France, the future Louis XIV (1638-1715): *Jeu des fables* (relating to mythological figures), *Cartes des rois de France* (kings of France) and *Jeu des reynes renommées* (famous queens).

THE DEITY

In the West, the first method used to reproduce images was xylography or woodcut, adopted to make prints, chiro-xylographic books or block books with images and short texts engraved on a single block and, with the advent of movable type, illustrations and vignettes. Most of the oldest known woodcut documents – from the Bois Protat and Saint Christopher to the Madonna of the Fire – were religious, with devotional and cult images inspired by the Scriptures: Apocalipsis (The Apocalypse), Biblia Pauperum (The Paupers' Bible), Vita et passio Jesu Christi (The Life and Passion of Christ), Ars Moriendi (The Art of Dying) and Imagines Mortis (Images of Death). These topics were not found in the substantially "enlightened" picture cards, however. As for the Liebig card series at least, excepting the lives of some saints and prophets, the relationship with the sacred tended to stop at the key popular events in the Old Testament.

THE WORLD AND ITS BEINGS

Starting from primeval chaos, images of the delicate and fascinating passage from astrology to astronomy documented the iconographic results of an investigation of the universe that progressively went past late-medieval knowledge. They were divided into four elements – air, fire, water and earth; twelve constellations that formed the zodiac; and seven planets, including the sun and moon, which held sway over human characters and activities. Images helped explore the four parts of the known world, by land and sea, and the characteristics of the different peoples. They described the travels undertaken by the great explorers, the first maps put together on the basis of Ptolemy's cartographic notions, and views, real or invented, of far-off countries and lands.
The terrestrial world was also portrayed through images of the sky and meteorological events, with breathtaking depictions of the weather alongside tales of the changing months. The seasonal rules were given for farm workers for the unchanging cycle of sowing seeds, growing and harvesting plants. In addition to the plants described in the first herbals, there were also descriptions of animals, from pets to wild animals, and imaginary and mythical creatures such as Albrecht Dürer's powerful *Rhinoceros*, on the edge between legend and reality. So, more and more often the anonymity of the early engravings was replaced by the names of the biggest producers of popular science images and illustrations: from the endless print runs of calendars for farmers to the melting pot of knowledge in the *Hortus Sanitatis* natural science encyclopaedia.

THE HUMAN BEING

The link between animals and humankind could lay in Della Porta's *De humana Physiognomonia* with its engravings describing the similarities between animals and human beings. The caricature was the inevitable upshot of this nexus, involving a series of artists from Leonardo through the Carraccis to William Hogarth. So images investigated every aspect of humanity, from the spiritual, metaphysically represented by Matthaeus Merian's illustrations of the astrological text by Robert Fludd, to the physical, describing the four temperaments, seven complexions and four ages. The undisputed fortune of this last topic was sharply summed up by a deluge of prints with endless variations on the topic of the ladder of life leading to bodily death or infirmity, investigated by the first inventories of Renaissance anatomical and clinical studies.
Humanity's spiritual pathway was principally marked by events concerning the rejection or acceptance of the great moral precepts. Hence, an iconography was formed with a series of allegories of the theological and capital virtues or the seven deadly vices, and picturesque descriptions of their consequences. Vanity, Anger and Envy were portrayed through images of hypocrisy, arguments, bad government, war, famine and plagues; Greed, through images of gluttony and the triumph of Bacchus; Avarice, through the thirst for gold, cupidity and profit; Lust, through prostitution; Sloth, through laziness. Instead, the commercial and professional activities in human society were referred to in Larmessin's "Arcimboldesque" costumes of the trades or the famous plates in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, with their meticulous descriptions of the various phases and tools of every craft.
Alongside descriptions of the traditional divisions of human society and the estates of the realm into the clergy, nobles and bourgeoisie, with the respective orders relating to the noble professions, the liberal and chivalric arts, trade, commerce and industry, there was an increase in prints investigating the urban as opposed to the rural world, as well as images describing good and bad luck; love and marriage with their joys and delusions; the real and ideal world, culminating in the endless satirical versions of the world turned upside

down; parties and popular amusements with dancing, fairs and theatrical performances; the ancestral hunger generating the utopian Land of Plenty; Lent against the triumphs of the Carnival with the jeering faces of the masks, and popular games like *il gioco dell'oca* (literally, game of the goose, similar to snakes and ladders), dice and cards.

BODY AND MIND

Alongside the increasing number of portraits of commerce, industry and trades, other images specifically referred to the human body. These even included images celebrating the legends of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the foundation of cities and the construction of buildings in addition to those applauding the great achievements of men and women who since ancient times had challenged themselves and others in the various sporting disciplines. It is no coincidence that the Olympics were named after the sacred city at Olympus, home of the gods. So humanity was embodied in myth. The human body became a metaphor for mind-body experiences and burst into the realm of thought, as shown by the echoes of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the psychological attributes given to the symbolic creatures of *Les fleurs animées* (flowers personified).

As of the Renaissance, parallel to increasingly accurate interpretations of the universe of natural and physical sciences, there was also a burgeoning of images documenting the evolution of all spheres of humanistic culture and thought. As every sector of social life was subject to more and more investigation, the fields of art, music, theatre and literature took on particular importance alongside the production of illustrated manuals on subjects ranging from cooking to hunting, handwriting to dancing. Illustrations, now omnipresent, helped to expand the success of classic texts, chivalrous poems and popular novels while fables and fairy tales offered the opportunity to invent a range of extraordinarily aesthetically pleasing icons which have come down to us through the centuries.

2. CHROMOLITHOGRAPHY

The birth of the picture card and the wide spread of images in the second half of the 19th century were the upshot of a print method which would revolutionize the world of graphic art: chromolithography, officially patented in Paris in 1837 by Godefroy Engelmann (1778–1839). Although polychrome prints were already possible either using different coloured moulds or watercolours to colour the prints by hand, chromolithography enabled the production of a large quantity of images at a low cost. Furthermore, compared to previous techniques, chromolithography enabled a more extensive colour range and a hitherto unimaginable accuracy of detail. The chromolithographic technique developed from lithography, invented in Munich in 1798 by Aloys Senefelder (1771-1834) and initially used to reproduce music scores.

CHROMOLITHOGRAPHY STONES

A new feature of the chromolithographic technique was the use of a Kehlheim or Solenhofen stone. A chemical process smoothed the stone to make writing easier and clearer. Furthermore, with respect to the previous print methods, the design was not reproduced from a relief or engraved mould, instead it was drawn, the wrong way round, using a grease pencil. The ink was spread over the specially dampened stone and it naturally only stuck to the part that had been drawn on. Then, once a stone had been prepared for each colour, the image was printed using the press, putting one colour on top of the other. The first shows the so-called "key stone", that is, the complete drawing inverted like in a mirror. The lithographer then used this stone to add the outlines for the single colours present in the original sketch.

OVERPRINTING

THE LIEBIG CHROMO PRODUCTION STAGES trade card set illustrates the chromolithographic print procedure. The complexity of the procedure can be seen in one of the few remaining Liebig overprinting booklets. Page 1 shows the key stone print, in which the outlines of the 12 colours are carefully separated by the chromist starting from the artist's sketch. The following pages show the print of every single colour, also reproduced in black, and the sequence of colour overprints.
Developments in chromolithography led to the present-day procedure of offset printing, also illustrated in the Liebig LITHOGRAPHIC ART set from 1964 which highlights the use of the three basic colours.

ORIGINAL SKETCHES

This section is a showcase of some original sketches. From the strictly artistic point of view, chromolithography took hold thanks to the soft halftones, the possibility of obtaining a lot of shades and bright colours, as well as the almost photographic precision of the detail. The peculiarity of the chromolithographic technique was contingent upon the skill of the artist doing the drawing. Much more than in lithographs, the quality of chromolithographic prints depended mainly on the "touch" of the artist, who not only had to be creative but also technically skilled. Another important role was played by the printer who had to deal with any technical hitches that could arise during the process.

THE USES OF CHROMOLITHOGRAPHY

Chromolithographs, initially without writing, were used to decorate objects such as furniture, boxes, fans and the cases of various products, while larger formats were used as furnishings. The printed images were often cut out and used for various pastimes, in particular decorating and personalizing albums and scrapbooks; print retailers also drew profit from these pastimes by selling special sheets, often in series, with various subjects to cut out. In the second half of the 19th century, images started to be printed directly onto different materials, such as cardboard, wood and tin, with slogans to advertise the product for sale.

3. ORIGIN AND SPREAD

The first trade cards most probably appeared in France in the second half of the 19th century, but they quickly spread throughout Europe and the United States thanks to the fortuitous encounter between chromolithography and the need for advertisements spawned by the Industrial Revolution.
Consisting of small colour prints with an advertising slogan, 19th-century trade cards were different in many ways from the current trading cards. Generally produced in sets of six or twelve on the same theme, the cards were given out in shops and department stores to encourage customers to come back.
The formula proved such a sales hit that very soon many lithographic printing works started to print images especially for the purpose, at times leaving blank spaces within scrolls, posters, sails and so on, to make for a more artistic message. In others, objects alluding to the business, such as a watch for a watchmaker, were included on the cards at the retailer's request.
Some companies, such as the Bon Marché department store, started to commission original and exclusive images.

THE BEGINNINGS IN FRANCE

The first definite date in the history of trade cards is 1867, the year in which the Bognard lithographic printing works issued a set illustrating the pavilions at the Universal Exposition. From the same year, we find the first set advertising the Bon Marché department stores, printed by Appel, with two six-month calendars on the back.
In addition to their advertising function, some of the first trade cards had a practical function too, as receipts for the payment of tram fares and later the *bateaux mouches*, and for the hire of chairs in Paris's parks, made even more inviting by the ambient music.
In this case, they were known as "chair cards". It is not yet clear whether retailers distributed them as advertising and a free gift for their customers, or if they were simply tickets with an advertising image that were sold on site.
Around 1885-90, the lithographic printing works had catalogues and price lists with the card series that they produced. It was not rare – it was almost the norm – to come across identical sets of trade cards with information on different or even competing businesses. Before long, the need was felt to use not only the front of trade cards but above all the back to show not just names and addresses, but also the product's strengths or price.

UNIVERSAL EXPOSITIONS

During the 19th century, universal expositions – heirs of local fairs, festivals and markets where buyers and sellers came together during religious festivities – were the preferred place to exhibit commercial products to consumers. Their purpose was not just to buy and sell goods, they were also testbeds for market research and economic strategies that were tried out in a closed environment before being extended to general use. The goods were presented against a spectacular backdrop which revolved around the modern myths of machines, electricity and everything progress-related, stimulating the visitors' emotions and hitting the note that triggered consumption. The first exposition was held in Paris in 1798, the prototype of a model that substantially took off in London in 1851, prompting a period of rivalry between the various European capitals vying to become the location of the future exhibitions. The exhibition venues were often temporary; however, on several occasions they stood out as the epitome of modernity: from Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace in London in 1851, through Alexandre Gustave Eiffel's tower in Paris in 1889 and the German pavilion by Mies van der Rohe in Barcelona in 1929, to the geodesic dome by Richard Buckminster Fuller in Montreal in 1967.

BON MARCHÉ

A key event in the passage from artisan to industrial production was the birth of the first big department stores, usually dated to 1852, the year when Aristide Boucicaut created the Bon Marché in Paris, made famous by Zola's novel *Au Bonheur des Dames* (*The Ladies' Paradise*, 1883).
It has gone down in history that the same Aristide Boucicaut first had the idea to distribute trade cards to encourage customers to come back to buy goods in his emporium. The first known set, SCENES IN 18TH-CENTURY COSTUME, dates from 1867 and was printed by the Appel lithographic printing works.
At first, generic images were used, which were also found in advertising for other products. Later, exclusive, original trading cards were commissioned which are still collected by specialists today. Other successful companies that were willing to invest in their corporate image and advertising, such as Liebig, Suchard and Stollwerk, also did the same.
The Au Bon Marché trade cards were issued until 1914. They did not follow the same encyclopaedic line as Liebig, but mainly dealt with themes such as children's games, the circus, fairy tales, uniforms, women's costume, landscapes and flowers. In addition to these generic topics, other constants were universal expositions and sovereign visits to Paris. In addition, the trade cards often featured several changeable images.

SUCHARD

As one of the first European businessmen to have the idea – in the 1860s – to include a set of trade cards in the packaging of his chocolate bars, Philippe Suchard (1797-1884) is considered the third of the trade card founding fathers together with Boucicaut and Liebig.
From a family of varied passions, Philippe first came into contact with chocolate at the age of six, when he went on a long walk to get the "tonic" ordered by the doctor for his ill mother. After a trip to New York, he returned to his homeland with the firm intention of setting up a chocolate-making business, which he did in Neuchâtel in 1825.
In 1840 he started to promote four types of chocolate bars and drops called "*diablotins*". However, Suchard's first real speciality was MILKA milk chocolate, created in 1901, with highly refined packaging in the Art Nouveau style, an unmistakable lilac colour and a reproduction of the Swiss Alps in the background. The initial face of the brand was not the famous cow, devised in 1972 by the Young & Rubicam advertising agency, but a Saint Bernard dog (Suchard company advertising fan, no date).
Suchard took great care over the packaging of all its products. First sold wholesale in trunks and barrels, the products were then packaged in tin foil, also to prevent the cocoa

butter coming to the surface, with small relief print images on glossy paper with a serrated edge attached to the sides. From here, probably influenced by the advertising card custom already used in America in 1856 (see Prang from Boston), it was a short step to trade cards. A total of 309 catalogued sets were issued between 1880 and 1914, although more were printed in packs, above all in the 1960s. Like the Liebig cards, the themes ranged from generic to scientific subjects. Despite their aesthetic worth, they were not signed by the artist.

SWITZERLAND

The history of trade cards in Switzerland is closely linked to the chocolate manufacturers who made extremely effective use of the small chromolithographs as their preferred advertising channel. The great adventure of Swiss chocolate started thanks to the sound business skills of some young entrepreneurs who learnt the basics of the craft to then go on, first of all in Turin, to introduce a series of new ideas to the sector, while continuing to offer good, authentic products. These entrepreneurs included François-Louis Cailler (1796-1852), who worked as an apprentice for four years at Caffarel, initially located in Milan; Philippe Suchard (1797-1884), considered the third founding father of trade cards along with Boucicaut and Liebig; Henri Nestlé (1814-1890), German refugee in Switzerland and inventor of condensed milk; and Daniel Peter (1836-1919) who began the production of milk chocolate.
Other notable chocolate companies in the chocolate-trade cards pairing were Sprüngli, Maestrani and Tobler.
After the end of the Second World War, the Silva advertising company produced some particularly smart trade card albums, with a wealth of legends. The trade cards could be obtained with points vouchers found inside the packaging of a range of non-rival products.

GERMANY-STOLLWERCK

Towards the end of the 19th century, chromolithographs started to be produced in Germany too. First used as greetings cards, soon they also found an advertising vocation.
One company that stood out was the Stollwerck chocolate manufacturer's: in 1887, it made the first chocolate vending machine, selling chocolate bars with trade cards attached. These particularly beautiful trade cards were designed by great artists of the time, such as Gustav Adolf Closs (1864-1938), Adolf Menzel (1815-1905), Max Liebermann (1947-1935) and many more besides.
Other high-quality German trade cards were those of publishers Dreser in Hamburg and the advertising cards of Schlinck & Cie., producer of Palmin coconut fat. The Palmin cards were issued from 1903 to 1914.

GERMAN ALBUMS

On the eve of the First World War, in France trade cards had begun their demise. Contemporaneously, in Germany they were booming. The peak came in the 1920s, when cigarette manufacturers gave out cards as free gifts to put in original albums featuring texts often written by specialized scholars. At the dawn of Nazism, at first picture cards seemed to fall into disgrace. However, Goebbels sensed their communicative potential. So, apparently upon his intervention, the Ministry of Propaganda started to directly produce numerous albums on Germany, Hitler and Nazism, which were printed in millions of copies.
After the war, for a period picture cards disappeared, although some sets with Socialist propaganda were published in East Germany. Towards 1950, picture cards reappeared in West Germany too.

ITALY

A large part of the trade cards issued in Italy were associated with the chocolate industry, whose capital was Turin. Caffarel, Talmone, Venchi, Moriondo and Gariglio: Piedmont's main city was the starting point for the story of both some of the most renowned companies and famous trade cards, such as Caffarel's set of photographic images of pleasant Italian locations and views of the most important cities.
A promotional strategy worthy of particular mention was the one adopted by Talmone, with the ironic comparison of its products' nutritional facts with others, often supported by distinguished scientific authorities. Another chocolate company worthy of mention is Majani from Bologna, made famous by a chocolate that is still loved today, invented in 1911 when Fiat launched a competition to invent a new sweet.
Nor must we forget the plethora of images advertising liquors: from Ramazzotti to Fernet-Branca and medical tonics such as Ferro Malesci and Ferro-China Bisleri.

ITALIAN PRIZE COMPETITIONS

Without a doubt, the most famous trade card collection prize competition in Italy was the one organized by Perugina-Buitoni, which took place in parallel to the airing of the Nizza and Morbelli Four Musketeers radio transmission (THE 4 MUSKETEERS, 1937) from 1934 to 1937. The most famous trade card in the competition was The Fierce Saladin designed by Angelo Bioletto. On the wave of the incredible success of the trade cards by Aramis and friends, many other companies decided to invest in promoting their image through trade card collections: just think of the Saiwa Pinocchio competition (PINOCCHIO AND HIS ADVENTURES TRADE CARD PRIZE COMPETITION, 1937) illustrated by Mussino, the Signor Bonaventura trade cards (BONAVENTURA COMPETITION, 1937) designed by Sto and sponsored by Barilla, or the Mickey Mouse competition (MICKEY MOUSE, 1936), with 100 trade cards reproducing Disney characters.
Instead, numerous albums and trade cards were linked to Italy's colonial ventures (which began in 1869 with the Rubattino company of Genoa's purchase of land in the Bay of Assab and ended in 1943 with the defeat of the Italian army in the African campaign), showing the heroes of the imperial campaign between 1935 and 1939 and episodes from life in the colonies. Liebig also dealt with the topic in 1937, in the set designed by Lai on the Italian empire of Italian East Africa.

BELGIUM AND HOLLAND

In the Netherlands and Belgium, trade cards were used as a means of advertising by various companies producing extract of meat, clothing and personal hygiene products. Nevertheless, owing to the large number of production companies, chocolate played the lead role here too.
After the Spanish, the inhabitants of Flanders were the second in Europe to have tasted the delicious drink prepared with grated cocoa imported from America: the first laboratories were set up in Brussels at the end of the 17th century and, at the end of the 18th century, various windmills on the Dutch River Zaam were converted to mill cocoa beans. One of the most important companies in Belgium was set up in

1857 by Jean Neuhaus, whose grandson (of the same name) invented the praline in 1912. The Côte d'Or trademark instead dates from 1883.
In Holland, the famous chocolate factory founded by Coenraad Van Houten in 1815 issued trade cards from the late 1870s to the First World War, also distributing a few sets between 1918 and 1940. In the 19th century, chocolate powder was a speciality of other big Dutch companies, including Bensdorp, De Zaan, Gerkens and Blooker.
Belgian companies standing out for their trade card advertising included Remy, producer of a renowned starch; Lever Brothers, established around 1880, producer of personal hygiene products; and Cibils, extract of meat producers.
Cibils was a rival of the more famous Liebig, using strategies that often verged on plagiarism. It was absorbed by Liebig in 1903. The Cibils trade cards were printed in French, Flemish, German, English, Danish, Swedish and Italian. Around 290 sets were distributed. The majority were genre art, with a small number of almost-impossible-to-find cards on cultural subjects (Schillers' dramas, geographical images). The trade cards were primarily printed by French and Belgian printing works, but also by print works in Germany and Italy, such as Armanino in Genoa. In addition to trade cards, calendars, postcards and menus were also issued.

THE ANGLO-SAXON WORLD

At the end of the 19th century, in parallel to the spread of cigarette cards, in the United States and Great Britain trade cards began to be developed to advertise a vast range of goods ranging from food to personal hygiene products, fuel, fabrics and much more besides. Often featuring detailed legends, in many cases the format of the trade cards was the same as the biggest cigarette cards.
The first chromos were imported to Britain from France and Germany: while the image remained the same, because the company could have branches in various countries, indications such as the reseller's name changed. Pure British trade cards became a reality a few years later. They stood out because of the topics – many of which were pure British – and the smaller sets. The cards produced for Huntley & Palmers, one of the most famous British 19th- to 20th-century trademarks, established in 1822 when Joseph Huntley opened a biscuit factory west of London in Reading, were some of the most beautiful.
In the United States, a lot of the first trade cards were imported directly from France and Britain too. The first cards produced locally were engravings or woodcuts. However, in the last two decades of the 19th century, America began to use the same lithography and colour printing regularly used in Europe. One of the most renowned American printers was Louis Prang who often tested new colour ranges while using the chromolithography procedure.

4. LIEBIG

Without doubt, the history of trade cards would not have been the same without the essential contribution of the company which linked its name to the printed cards more than any other – Liebig, producer of the famous extract of meat. The formula was published in 1847 after several years of research despite the legend of its discovery by Justus von Liebig after a night spent in his lab looking for a cure for his daughter's friend who had been struck down with typhus.
The company did not only produce trade cards, but an enormous quantity of gadgets and printed objects, such as menus, place markers, coasters, calendars and so on and so forth.
To get an idea of how famous Liebig products were, just think that when Henry Morton Stanley went on his travels to Africa in search of David Livingstone, he took a jar of Liebig's with him; in 1954 the climbers of K2 did the same; even Jules Verne had the characters of his book *Around the Moon* drink some tasty cups of Liebig broth.

JUSTUS VON LIEBIG AND THE BIRTH OF THE EXTRACT

The concentrated extract of meat formula was the brainchild of German chemist Justus von Liebig (1803-1873), considered one of the main founders of organic chemistry. Published in 1847 after several years of studies, legend has it – as described on the back of one of the menus in the SCOTTISH VIEWS set ([SCOTTISH VIEWS], 1901) – that it was discovered by von Liebig after a night spent in his lab in search of a cure for the friend of his daughter struck down with typhus. The cure that he found was the extract, a concentrate of energy added in tiny doses to various dishes. Its nutritional properties deleted the gap between food and drug and at first it was sold in chemists.
Liebig's intuition, which notably improved the European diet, was prompted by a real fact: the big herds of cattle were mainly found in America and transporting them to the Old Continent was made particularly tricky by slow ships and a lack of fridges. So it was best to process the meat in situ.
It was German railway engineer Georg Christian Giebert who, after a trip to Uruguay, asked Liebig for authorization to use his invention in a factory in Fray Bentos, a small port on the river on the Uruguay-Argentina border. Industrial production began in 1863 under the name of "Fray Bentos Giebert & Co." (as of 1865 "Liebig's Extract of Meat Company"): the headquarters were in London, then a packaging plant was added in Antwerp and advertising offices in Paris.

FABULOUS LIEBIG

In all likelihood, Liebig adopted the trend – already begun in France some years before – of giving out free trade cards in a period when sales were struggling. Initially distributed now and then, on an irregular basis, the company started to use a points system, and picture cards became its main advertising vehicle. It produced 1,871 sets between 1874 and 1975.
First, the company used chromolithographs that were already on the market, then they adjusted them according to requirements. Finally, they ordered cards with exclusive designs for their customers. They often used famous artists who were banned from signing their works.
Around 1878, Liebig started to standardize their trade cards: all the cards were the same size, with an image of the jar, the Liebig signature and details of the prizes won on the front. The beauty of the images, bright colours and wealth of details made the cards a universal success: indeed, they were published in French, German, Italian, Flemish, English, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Bohemian and Hungarian.
The golden era for Liebig trade cards lasted from 1890 to approximately 1910, when over 45 million sets, that is, over 250 million cards were issued.

WOMEN ON LIEBIG CARDS

One of Liebig's strategies was to list subjects in an immense number of categories. Women were a favourite. They were seen from all sides, from real people embodying a profession or lifestyle, to highly non-realistic, allegorical or symbolic interpretations of the female gender, with fantastic or mythological overtones.
Various iconographic topics came down to the last century with very little variation from the classical tradition. The main literary reference and source of a good part of the formal inventions of the history of art was without doubt Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, showing the contiguity between the vegetable, animal and mineral worlds and humanity as part of the same substance as other kingdoms.
Floral women or flowers personified were recurring themes. Both their single iconographic details and the general compositional choices drew directly from Grandville's plates (1803-1847) for *Les fleurs animées* (*Belle-de-nuit*), which were inspired by the symbolic and psychological attributes traditionally given to the various species of flowers and collected in the immensely famous volumes *Say it with Flowers* and *Language of Flowers*.
Floral women were also one of the symbols of Art Nouveau. This symbol was almost abused in the vocabulary of illustrators who also saw it as representing fertility, the Great Mother and the source of creativity.
However, Art Nouveau images of women were not only linked to the fantastic or symbolic dimension: in some cases they became modern and active, at times also challenging male clichés, smoking or doing traditionally male sports such as motor racing. In addition to giving rise to a substantially new female ideal, all of this responded to precise male requirements: in these sports, the women could be dressed in more tightly fitting clothes or swimsuits.

EDUCATION

To keep up the attention, Liebig used a great variety of subjects on its trade cards. Divided into different categories, they ended up becoming a sort of "people's encyclopaedia" also thanks to the exhaustive explanations on the back. Hence, they could be used for teaching purposes and not just collecting.
The forefather of the idea for illustrated encyclopaedic learning aids was Jan Amos Komensky (1592-1670), better known as Comenius. He was author of the *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (Visible World in Pictures), first published in Nuremberg in 1658, the first illustrated text book designed with the attention that children naturally pay to pictures in mind. The first children's books of illustrated nomenclature appeared in Italy in the 19th century. They not only provided the basics on science, botany and literature and the necessary notions for day-to-day life, but they also suggested "good manners". Some trade cards took up topics already dealt with in encyclopaedias, illustrated spelling books, and in particular subjects such as "ladders of life" stemming from popular practice but strongly rooted in visual forms commonly used in teaching.

COLLECTING

Liebig was the trade card collection par excellence: not only were a huge number of series produced, but they were distributed in numerous countries, favouring swaps between collectors. The cards were distributed throughout Europe, to part of Eastern Europe (Russia, Hungary, Bohemia and Czechoslovakia), North Africa, Canada and the United States. At present, most collectors are in Italy.

The museum's collection comes from a merger between the two most important collections in Italy, belonging to Giosuè Casnedi and Francesco Bellone, both from Milan.

This section shows some of the rarest and most valuable sets, such as GLOBES ([GLOBES (GOLD BACKGROUND)], 1883-85) and COUNTRY CHILDREN ([COUNTRY CHILDREN], 1875-77). Equally as rare is the series EXTRACT OF MEAT FACTORY IN FRAY BENTOS 1 ([EXTRACT OF MEAT FACTORY IN FRAY BENTOS 1], 1877-78).

THE PRODUCT AND ITS IMAGE

To stand apart from its rivals illegally using its name and using it as a synonym for extract of meat, Liebig had to take extreme care over every aspect linked to its product communication. This started with the packaging, which came to be the characteristic white ceramic jar with the label featuring a blue facsimile of Justus von Liebig's signature. The jar changed shape over time, becoming increasingly modern in style. However, it remained the hallmark of the product. It appeared in the background of the trade cards, at times without any link to the represented image, or as an essential piece of the narrative.

For a short period, the extract was also sold in tin tubes, but they were quickly taken off the market. In fact, they were only dedicated two sets of cards. The stock cubes introduced in 1912, then transformed into bars, were a winning idea.

Towards 1930, the jars disappeared from the trade cards, with very rare appearances of the products on the front.

PUBLICITY

In addition to trade cards, whose quantity and circulation made them one of Liebig's main means of advertising for about a century, the company used a great variety of other advertising materials. In some cases, they were strictly for advertising purposes – placards, posters, labels and brochures – illustrating the virtues and advantages of the extract; in others, they were actual gadgets, free gifts given to entice customers to make the purchase and increase circulation of the product's image.

An interesting example of publicity, frequently used by other companies too, was when the advert became the actual subject of the image, as seen in some trade card sets depicting groups of people looking at the advertising bills posted on walls or special columns.

Other gadgets included a version of the popular *gioco dell'oca* (literally, game of the goose, similar to snakes and ladders) revolving around the economic conquest of the Empire. This combination of political propaganda and advertising was quite widely used during the Fascist period.

LIEBIG HOUSEWIVES

Women – the main buyers of Liebig products – were a frequently recurring image in the company's advertising materials, in particular in cook books showing them intent on cooking delicious dishes, thanks to the help of the precious extract. These materials show us changes in customs and lifestyles. Elegant housewives seated comfortably on large stock-cube armchairs highlighted how it was more and more difficult to give up a product that was practical and gave them time for themselves.

The original sketch by Dudovich, one of the outstanding designers used by the company, is particularly valuable.

AT THE TABLE

The custom of giving diners lists of the courses in a meal arose in Paris at the start of the 19th century, prompted by the new, rich bourgeoisie and subsequent advent of restaurants in the modern sense of the word and the introduction of "Russian banquets". The "French banquets" previously in vogue for gala lunches elegantly set out all the courses on the table for guests. Despite the eye-catching effect, they came under criticism for the food that was neither cooked right nor the right temperature. However, in "Russian banquets", brought to Paris by the ambassador of Tsar Alexander I in around 1810, the courses arrived one by one, timed to the minute and sequenced to a tee. While in restaurants the menu allowed customers to choose at leisure, in "Russian banquets" they allowed diners to regulate themselves according to the courses. At first little more than lists, with the advent of the era of the image most of all towards the century's end, menus soon became real decorative objects to keep as a souvenir in the same way as place markers. Later, with refined decorations and often designed by celebrated artists, these menus were used by restaurants and various companies as a means of advertising.

COMPETITORS

In order to understand the great success of extract of meat, we have to remember that, in the mid-19th century, broth was considered a tonic for all ills. An undisputed gastronomic legend, it appeared in all the recipe books and was used for consommés, soups, braised meat and for risottos in Italy. Despite its cost, extract of meat seemed to have the ability to cure anyone. In order to dole out some of that "liquid well-being", in the big cities, cheap restaurants sprang up offering boiled meat in its juice or street sellers offering cups of broth and slices of meat. Furthermore, people's kitchens appeared selling big portions of healthy food at reasonable prices, to eat in or to take out. The first people's kitchen appeared in Italy in 1880 in Modena. Hot broth was deemed "excellent food". To realize its importance, just think that rich business men, such as Swiss entrepreneur of Italian origin, Julius Maggi, with his quick soups and stock cubes, also produced by Knorr, intervened to guarantee it for the less well-off, coming to their aid both out of philanthropy (secondarily) and for profit (principally).

And so we can understand the enormous competition facing Liebig. In Great Britain, having lost the case against firms using the Liebig name as a synonym for the extract, the company even had to change its name to LEMCO (Liebig's Extract of Meat Co.) as explained on the back of a menu from the REMBRANDT TERCENTENARY MENUS (REMBRANDT TERCENTENARY MENUS, 1911).

The most enterprising companies started to publish trade cards too, often bearing a remarkable resemblance to the original Liebigs. Between the 19th and 20th centuries, Liebig absorbed some of these rival companies, such as Kemmerich and Cibil.

The comparative advertising became so bitter that Bovril, the umpteenth competitor on the market, even claimed that one gram of its meat broth contained more nutritional elements than 50 grams of Liebig extract.

5. MORE THAN JUST TRADE CARDS

In the same way that Gutenberg's invention of movable type in the 15th century caused the transition from oral to written culture, the invention of lithography and later chromolithography brought about a major transformation in the cultural and anthropological landscapes.
We are so used to being surrounded by all kinds of images that it is difficult for us to imagine what it meant emotionally for people in the 19th century to be able to get their hands on and collect large numbers of colour images. They offered new opportunities in terms of knowledge and the creation of imaginary worlds. These small colour images enabled people to visit far-off lands, discover animals and plants they had never seen before, reflect on current events or simply have fun. In short, they were a gateway to wonders.
At the same time, they responded to new needs in communication prompted by the transformations going on in European and North American societies: industrialization, large-scale retail and urbanization. Many producers and sellers soon realized the magnitude of the appeal exerted by colour images and started to use them to package their goods and advertise their benefits, or simply gave them away to customers to gain their loyalty. This led to all sorts of labels – cigar bands, poster stamps, matchboxes, business cards – all adorned with brightly coloured chromolithographs. And no matter what they were, they all became collectors' items.

CIGARETTE & TRADE CARDS

Cigarette cards originated in the United States, probably around the 1870s. At the time, when mechanical production was just beginning, the custom was to reinforce cigarette packets with pieces of card. To make the product more appealing, it was soon decided to print colour images on the cards. The precise date when this took place is not yet clear. Nevertheless, in a recent study of the Burdick collection housed in the New York Metropolitan Museum, which is mainly a collection of advertising materials revolving around tobacco production, a cigarette card was found dating to around 1877.
The first cards were not in sets but separate images reproducing single subjects. Later, manufacturers started to produce sets of cards on specific topics in order to encourage smokers to buy the same brand to complete the collection. Since the great majority of smokers were men, at first the most common subjects were actresses, beautiful women, sports players, politicians, cowboy scenes and famous Americans, a range of topics that grew with time.
Towards 1885, US tobacco king James B. Duke decided to try to conquer the British market, by way of cigarette cards. And it was in Great Britain that cigarette cards would become a triumphant mainstay. At first, around 1885, ready-made cigarette cards – mainly featuring geographical and zoological subjects, principally tropical birds - were imported from America, but soon they started to be produced independently. The two different cigarette card formats corresponded to the small and large packet sizes. Both were also used to advertise other products, coming to be called "trade cards".

DIE-CUT PRINTS AND PERIOD ALBUMS

Until the middle of the 19th century, images were quite hard to come by; in the 19th century people tended to treasure any object bearing an image. A whole host of prints were kept and archived, almost like relics, accumulated like precious documents, to admire to pass the time of day.
The 19th-century passion and fascination for colour images can be seen in scrapbooks where they were collected and kept. The English term is also used in Italian, as a homage to the place of the phenomenon's birth, Britain, and its maximum splendour, the Victorian age.
They were books in which collectors put together a whole assortment of printed papers, in particular trade cards and matchboxes, creating pages according to their own aesthetic taste, decorating them with frames or various kinds of borders, and using anything that was considered worthy of being handed down, including episodes from their own lives. What is more, there was a remarkable tendency to classify the images, dividing the pages by subjects such as animals, means of transport, military uniforms, clothes and much more besides. They anticipated the requirement to publish albums to collect trade cards sets.
Another particular characteristic frequently found among scrapbookers was the tendency not just to cut up books, but also to cut around the figures printed on loose, rectangular leaves. The only reason for this choice can be aesthetic, that is, preferring shaped images over more or less standardized squares and other forms. All this takes us to a special type of trade card that reflected the taste for rounded or irregular shapes: die-cut prints that were also often embossed, that is, with reliefs.

POCKET CALENDARS, MENUS AND BOOKMARKS

Popular printed paper materials commonly used for advertising purposes in the second half of the 19th century included menus, bookmarks and calendars. Enjoying particular success were pocket calendars, the "modern" version of farmers' almanac wall calendars, with farming news, star signs and weather forecasts, and well-wishing "keepsakes", which were booklets with illustrations and tales by more or less famous authors.
These little almanacs were drenched in fragrance and used as a means for advertising perfumes, cosmetics and soaps. Initially distributed in department stores, perfume stores and hairdressers, they rapidly became the exclusive domain of barber's shops.
Like mini wall calendars with the months, days, saints' days and holidays, the pocket calendars were often adorned with captivating images and useful news, no longer concerning rural but urban matters. While the subjects varied, as the calendars were mostly aimed at a male public, they almost always showed images of women, first of all just for decorative and later also for erotic ends.
In Italy, pocket calendars started to arrive in 1870, but it was only in the following decade that they started to expand. They were mainly used by the Migone, Bertelli and Cella companies, the Sirio perfume store in Milan and Borsari in

Parma. The Bemporad publishers in Florence were a case apart, issuing pocket calendars for many years, but without the characteristic perfume. Many more were made by chocolate and confectionary manufacturers.

CHROMOLITHOGRAPHY AND TOBACCO: MATCHES AND…

Chromolithographic printing was used not just used by chocolate and extract of meat manufacturers and department stores for advertising and to make packaging more captivating, but also by everything to do with tobacco, from matches to cigars and cigarettes.
Matches first came into being between the late 1820s and early 1830s, but it was as of the mid-1860s that their sales and advertising boomed, sparking that particular form of collecting that would be called "phillumeny".
On one hand, the labels provided a real chronicle of contemporary events and on the other a visual encyclopaedia, with an openly didactic purpose. So, the boxes had the task of both educating children and adults with cartloads of images that catalogued the world, and giving an ironic and critical vision of society, somehow taking the place of newspapers and pamphlets. The matchbox phenomenon was a popular trend, a custom: not just the royal family, but also cinema stars, historic figures, sportspeople, people of letters and artists found room in this popular display case. Numerous sets were dedicated to the life of Garibaldi (LIFE OF GARIBALDI, 1880-1905). A lot of sets illustrated works of literature, recounting the plots in a sort of episodic tale: one set on the Divine Comedy that drew inspiration from the plates by Doré created great interest. The Belle Époque, an era defined as "theatrocratic" by scholars, was a golden moment for lyrical works: the melodramas of Verdi, Mascagni, Donizetti and Puccini were put on twice, on stage and on matchboxes. They were also parodied, with the illustration evidently referring to the opera, but the accompanying text was completely invented and had a comedic intent that often completely escapes us today. The little images that were often cut out and glued into scrapbooks were also used as furnishings by housewives who sewed them together to make lampshades, table mats (Table mat made of sewn together matchboxes), floor mats, fireguards and screens.

…CIGARS

Already existing in Yucatan 1,000 years ago, cigars were discovered when Christopher Columbus and his crew landed in the future land of America. In particular, the sailor Rodriguez de Xeres told of the natives' custom of having a sort of stub in their mouths all the time that was lit at one end and made of a certain type of dried herb. On returning to his homeland, the unfortunate Xeres flaunted an enormous cigar on the streets of Seville, causing his arrest for witchcraft and ten years' imprisonment. Cigars would later become popular in Europe thanks to the buccaneer Delpierre who raided a Dutch ship full of the new product, introducing it to France.
It seems that Catherine II the Great, tsarina of Russia, was not only a passionate smoker, but even the inventor of cigar bands owing to the unpleasant yellowish tinge left on her fingers by the burning tobacco. Instead, according to other sources, the initiator of the new fashion of putting a band around cigars was Gustavo Bock, a European tradesman who moved to Cuba. His reason was to protect smokers' fingers but also to strengthen the wrapper leaf that keeps the cigar together and mark his products with a sort of brand. The invention of a paper object immediately led to its collection, which in this particular case was given an unusual name, "vitolphilia", which comes from the Spanish word "*vitola*" (the word for the cigar band which actually means shape, measurement) and the Greek "*philia*".
Tobacco also became the subject of some sets of trade cards in both a comic and scientific key (TOBACCO OR SWEETS, 1897).

ADVERTS

Until the invention of movable type printing, advertising was entrusted to barkers, newsvendors and town criers. The first print advertisement, by the publishers W. Caxton, appeared in 1476. After that, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the economically more developed countries saw a veritable boom in advertising in gazettes and specialist advertisement periodicals. But it was with the Industrial Revolution that advertising as we understand it today came about, characterized by the need to acclaim the goodness of a product by highlighting its unique and unrepeatable characteristics. The word used in Italy to indicate the forms of persuasive communication adopted in the 19th and early 20th centuries is "*réclame*". Borrowed from French, it describes all the forms of advertising of that period, made by typographers and designers who relied on their creative talent rather than skills acquired in specific studies. Only in 1925 did Daniel Stach publish the first treatise on advertising techniques, laying down the five rules at the basis of advertising: be seen, be read, be believed, be remembered, urge the customer to buy.

THE GAMBINI-RUGGERO COLLECTION

One of the most sizeable collections in the museum is the Gambini-Ruggero collection. A prime example of how eclectic paper collecting can be, it is a sizeable collection of poster stamps, along with hotel labels, chocolate wrappers, advert cuttings and much more besides. The collector carefully glued every object on special pages, often decorated with rich hand-drawn frames. Hotel labels rank among the most original and graphically interesting materials.
Initially born with the utilitarian function of preventing travel chests getting mixed up or identifying the station or port of arrival, around the 1870s labels to glue to luggage became hotels' main means of advertising. At the same time, the middle classes saw them as the most simple and eloquent way of self-proclamation. No longer did they need heraldic symbols and coats of arms, but modern labels, witness to their globetrotting and economic potential. One of the first hotel labels issued was by the Hotel Dunkerque in Brussels. Published between 1873 and 1877, it is however not present in the collection.

POSTER STAMPS

They were used to seal envelopes and communicate a message through the illustration.
Therefore, by function, poster stamps descended from the wax seals used to seal letters before envelopes came into existence, and by form and content, from postage stamps which, invented in 1840, celebrated kings, queens and crown princes in effigies and then came to commemorate eminent figures, famous events and anniversaries.
First of all, poster stamps followed in the footsteps of postage stamps but then they went much further because they started to announce events – such as fairs and exhibitions – and above all to convey advertising messages. So, poster stamps became an all-round communication tool putting

across all types of commemorative, celebratory, promotional and advertising messages. And, by being posted, they could reach out globally, transmitting and spreading their message, something which actual posters – to which they were related – could not do.
It comes as no surprise that the period of poster stamps' greatest splendour coincided with the period of the birth and affirmation of modern industry and the advertising that glorified it, and that image-diffusing television was still missing. Despite appearing towards the end of the 19th century, the beauty and number of poster stamps blossomed between 1900 and 1940. After this short but intense period, the inevitable, television-induced decline began, compacted more recently by the Internet-induced postal crisis.
In short, poster stamps accompanied the birth of modernity. Poster stamps never had any postal value as they were not issued by postal administrations but private entities who wanted to promote their initiatives or advertise their products. Hence, they were free of charge. If they had a face value, it was because they were charity stamps: for example, raising money for the victims of the earthquake in Messina and Reggio Calabria (Aid for Sicily and Calabria, c. 1909), war orphans, the war wounded, political refugees, etc.
As they were not issued by institutions, poster stamps were free from regulations. They provided carte blanche for the greatest graphic designers, illustrators and artists of the time and so, although not many know it, together with billboards and illustrated postcards, they are one of the most beautiful and important iconographic products of the first half of the twentieth century.
Called poster stamps in English, in Italian they are called "*chiudilettera*", in French "*vignettes*" and in German "*Reklamemarken*".

PLAYING CARDS

In addition to their primary function as a play item, like other picture cards, playing cards were used as a means of advertising, political propaganda and, since Renaissance times, for teaching. Topics present on playing cards and also recurrent on other picture cards were illustrious figures, customs, arts, trades, zoology, music, literature, calligraphy, landscapes, proverbs and wars.

NOTGELD

The museum has a small collection of *Notgeld*, a German term referring to the "emergency bank notes" printed in Germany, and to a lesser extent in other German-speaking countries, in moments of monetary difficulty, such as the two world wars and the early years of the Weimar Republic. Various city councils, associations, banks and private companies already started to issue them around 1914 to make up for the disappearance of coins, taken out of circulation and put away by the population because of the tiny percentages of gold or silver they contained. At the end of the First World War, owing to rising inflation, *Notgeld* had the task of replacing the big banknotes. Th notes' face value progressively increased until at the end of 1923 it reached billions of marks.
Both from the quantitative and graphical point of view, the most interesting *Notgeld* was the low-value, so-called "*Kleingeld*" (little money). The most graphically interesting and refined notes were printed from 1916 to 1922 by the excellent professionals who, despite the war, worked in Germany at that time. The portrayed images, very different from the classic, institutional images of traditional banknotes, were often linked to the place of issue and the popular imaginary. In addition, unlike banknotes which were copperplate printed to avoid falsification, *Notgeld* was lithographic and hence rich in intense colours, with greater graphical freedom.
Notgeld is mainly collected in German-speaking countries and often, like postcards, at a regional level.

CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES

The museum's various collections include the collection donated by Ruggero Tagliavini and Anna Maria Roccatagliati from Modena. Comprising around 514 Italian children's magazines from 1812 to the 1950s, the collection significantly documents the history of print and customs.
The first children's magazine, inspired by French models, appeared in Italy in 1812. Published in Milan by Giuseppe Pirotta, it was called "L'amico dei fanciulli" (The Children's Friend). Despite its short life, it managed to focus the pedagogues and parents' attention on a new way of educating children. Twenty years later, numerous magazines started to appear, all laden with pedantic rhetoric, superfluous advice and edifying examples, with text predominating over images. Only towards the end of the century did the first magazines proposing models of fantastic evasion appear, with a host of colour images. The first American comic strips also appeared between the 19th and 20th centuries, but without the speech bubbles containing the dialogue which were replaced by rhyming verse.
From 1922 to the outbreak of the war, even though some scholars would restrict the field to 1929-38, we can quite rightly speak of the golden era of periodical literature for young people. Fascism, attentive to a whole host of forms of propaganda, quickly understood the importance of accompanying young people by hand, also in their free time, towards a suitable political and civic formation, while inhibiting all national tendencies towards foreign impulses. From the outset to the 1950s, around 300 magazines appeared on the market. A surprising phenomenon considering the level of illiteracy and the poverty rife in Italy.

FRUIT AND SWEET WRAPPERS

Other paper materials that have become collectors' items are the wrappers used to cover oranges or other types of fruit. As early as 1860, Thackeray praised the beauty of some blue wrappers, which had replaced the corn leaves and shavings previously used for packaging. The first wrappers printed on tissue paper or silk paper appeared at the start of the 20th century. Impregnated with diphenyl for preservation, they were usually decorated with a circle, surrounded by simple floral and geometric patterns, stars and planets, and at times actual vignettes. The endless number of subjects often included smiling people of colour, often with caricatural features, American black minstrels with colourful suits and top hats dancing the cakewalk, sexy women or cinema divas, historic figures, monuments, saints, costumed figures, sports champions, Ferraris and especially the sun, reminding of the climate where oranges are grown. Production countries such as Sicily and Spain often prompted iconography that was strongly connected to the local area.
Other niche collectors' items include sweet wrappers, often decorated with bright images and colours.

6. MODERN TRADING CARDS

The Second World War split the 20th century in two, leaving Italy defeated, suffering, on the floor. The country was divided and searching for the energy to rise again and find peace with itself.
Sport was the glue to stick the country back together: the extraordinary feats of Coppi and Bartali in cycling and the legendary adventure of the Turin football team gave the Italian people new symbols to identify with, restoring their enthusiasm and will to dream. It was in this climate that modern trading cards set down their roots, gradually shaking off their bonds with other products. And sport provided the drive for small but active publishers to let their creativity loose and try out new formulas, in just a few years making trading cards a standalone product. So the seeds were sown for businesses whose sole specialization was the production of trading cards.

REBIRTH

Rudely interrupted by the war, the creativity of the 1930s was now a memory. Nevertheless, the bases built at the time, with the first experimental sports albums, would not be lost. A large number of often related brands, company names and trademarks came on and off the scene, which was the inevitable price to pay for the confusion reigning at the time. All the same, we can pinpoint the main players in the rebirth of the picture card, the true pioneers of its new lease of life. In Milan, Nannina began publishing on 2 April 1947. Exceptionally, the owner and heart and soul of the publishers was a woman, the courageous and enterprising Luisa Grossi. Alongside Nannina, against an invigorating field of competitors, were Cicogna from Villasanta (Milan) and B.E.A., also from Milan, established by Giuseppe Rizzi, the brains behind the first full-colour collector's album (Stadium trading cards). Over the 1950s, after abandoning the topic of sport, B.E.A. developed a praiseworthy series of educational albums.

SIMPLE BUT BEAUTIFUL CARDS

The world of picture cards and the Milan area were given a boost with the establishment of Lampo, and Lotario Vecchi's return to the publishing scene after the 1930s. In Verona, Antonio Venturini's V.A.V., which had also been active before and during the war, proposed a series of sporting products that took them right through the 1950s. Except for rare exceptions, the products were made on low-grade paper, with no particular care over the print quality. However, the cards were inspiring, with very imaginative graphics. In Naples, Edizioni Sport made interesting editorial forays that were unusual for the time. Companies like Lavazza in Turin and Elah in Genoa which again used picture cards as promotional vehicles for food products showed growing attention to the texts and information included in the albums and on the cards, encouraging a leap in quality. At this time, all publishers were trying to develop their own style and formats.

PLAY CARDS

At the start of the "fab" 1960s a new trend burst onto the scene. The advent of special dispenser machines led to the popularity of trading cards printed on rigid, resistant cardboard. Difficult to put in collector's albums owing to their accumulated weight, they were more suited to play than collecting: kids liked them because they lasted longer and because they could play with them. Numerous publishers were attracted by this new format, which they also adapted to sell in packs. During this period, football was publishers' top choice of subject. Newspapers and magazines were also involved the growing general success of trading cards, producing various types of collection and albums.

MORE THAN JUST FOOTBALL

New names in the list of publishers already focusing on football were Mira from Piacenza and Imperia from Milan, forging a shared path through the 1960s. In search of new market opportunities, in the previous decade old and new publishers had already shown an openness towards the female public who were interested in non-sporting topics. So, history, fairy tales, education or show business became popular topics, in particular thanks to B.E.A. and Lampo. As TV took a hold, new scenarios and opportunities became available. Film had always guaranteed material, generally providing large numbers of characters. And so we got trading cards of epic films that had made the history of cinema, such as William Wyler's *Ben Hur* or Cecil B. De Mille's *Ten Commandments*. Television advertising and the characters created in adverts found space in albums too.

INFORMATION CARDS

Trading cards were informally legitimized as a teaching aid. In schools, trading cards gradually came to be tolerated: no longer just considered a pastime distracting from study but a tool providing knowledge, so long as the topics were dealt with by competent hands. Collecting the cards was not just fun, this small paper medium was also useful for learning. School became the most productive place for promoting sales and carrying out propaganda activities. To launch new collections, publishers used skilled promoters who distributed free albums and trading cards near these natural gathering places for young people. This trend was compounded towards the end of the 1970s when the only new name going in the same direction as the historic publishers was Edis in Turin. Once again offering a good range of sporting themes, Edis was active in the edutainment sector too.

MODENA AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

Giuseppe Panini and the newspaper distribution agency run with his brothers in Modena came into contact with the Nannina publishers in Milan. Then, at the end of 1960, he bought the unsold trading cards from the "Giant Goal Album", the large-size version of the mini-format collection of the same name. He put them in packs, along with a balloon. Sales soared, which encouraged him to do several reprints. At the start of the 1961-62 football season, Panini started to create its first collection of brand trading cards – "Footballers". Hand-produced, the album already contained the ingredients that would make it a publishing sensation over the following years.
And this was the start of Edizioni Panini of Modena.

THE TRADING CARD INDUSTRY

The repeated success of 1962-63 supplied the conditions to set up a real company. The four Panini brothers, Giuseppe, Umberto, Benito and Franco Cosimo, soon got together, each bringing his own specialization to the business. In the early years, the main products were the Footballers sets, which were then joined by the first educational collections in 1964 and 1965: World Flags and Aeroplanes and Missiles. Despite the tough competition, the football albums were real bestsellers. A strong point was that they kept the same basic structure, which nevertheless underwent small but significant improvements with every issue. Great care was paid to quality: of the images, reproduction, print and editorial contents. After creating collector loyalty through services such as the "missing card helpdesk" and expanding the range of products, Panini from Modena turned its gaze outside Italy.

REACHING OUT IN THE WORLD

1970 was the year when everything started. Mexico 70, the collection dedicated to the Football World Championship, was the first Panini collection devised for the international market. A publishing formula was created that made minimum adaptations for the local versions, while safeguarding the central body of the album and above all the trading cards. They could circulate freely in any country, with obvious advantages for their distribution. From now on, the magic of trading card packs would expand to the whole world. Sport, and football in particular, once again paved the way to other topics which very soon would add to the international catalogue of the company from Modena. Imagination was just about the only limit. The planetary reach of phenomena such as the football World Cup remained unchanged over time and in 2006 Panini published its tenth consecutive collection.

TRADING CARDS AND SHOW BUSINESS

As shown in this section of the museum, other publishers – in particular Lampo – already had a relationship with the world of show business. Panini waited until 1968 before tackling a set on singers, which would be followed by others. In 1972, when the self-adhesive paper revolution was about to shake up the world of trading cards, came the first contact with television. It would be the TV adaptation of the "Adventures of Pinocchio", directed by Luigi Comencini, that sparked the trend of trading cards inspired by the big film and TV productions. Over the years, the publisher's skill in choosing the subjects for its trading card sets would cement its position on the market. For example, the success of the album inspired by the unforgettable series "Sandokan" was a match for the best results of the "Footballers" collection.

TRADING CARDS, COMICS AND CARTOONS

The albums and trading cards on display in this section show some historic Panini albums on the vast fantasy universe and media. Fantasy has many subgenres, originating from the worlds of literature, toys, comics and cartoons. The interest in these subjects was a boost for trading cards, giving them new life and expanding their circulation. It was a win-win relationship. The emotion of opening the pack and revealing the mystery contents inside gave the subjects depicted that extra something, creating a special, often unforgettable relationship with them. The wait was emotional too, looking for the missing card to complete the album, which became every single collector's own, original creation.

7. THE 1980s AND 90s

With the breakthrough of the first Japanese cartoons (or *anime* to use their proper name) on television at the end of the 1970s, and their unstoppable success in the following years, there was a radical shift in the aesthetic and narrative models of children's culture, for the past 50 years firmly anchored around Disney and American canons and European fairy tales.
Alongside epic battles of space robots, from Japan we got characters from (almost) forgotten Western children's literature, Heidi, Remi and Anne of Green Gables, and series on sport (football, tennis, volleyball…), about the adventure of growing up, marked by an ethic of sacrifice. At the same time, there were more and more adventure stories featuring female leads: Cat's Eye, Lady Oscar and Sailor Moon.
The world of trading cards reflected this TV cartoon universe, expanding it to other media. What is more, the albums were like storyboards that children could put together and take apart as they wished. So, trading cards became an antidote to television's customary "passiveness".
The characters and stories that sparked children's imagination as they watched them day after day travelled along a multimedia chain from *anime* to *manga*, from picture books to toys and trading cards. The trading card albums rejigged the storylines and images along different time scales and in different ways to the television medium. And so the texts were "transcoded" by an edutainment tool that was mainly ignored by schools.
At this time, the television schedule was progressively expanding and TV confirmed its role as the medium that "dictated the rules" and formats of mass culture. Trading cards were not only a gadget for television phenomena, they were also a "sensor" of popular children's and teen culture: the albums of Take That and the Spice Girls as well as other youth fashions of the time helped them stick in the fans' memory, taking them past the short duration of a fleeting fad.
In the 1990s, trading cards confirmed their tradition by adapting to changes in popular culture. At the same time, they also demonstrated their vitality as a medium, above all as collectible and play items. Serial collections were designed to come to life through play. Albums were no longer the only container to give trading cards shape and meaning; now they were used in different forms of play, creating a different discourse every time.

Roberto Farné

THE 1980s

After their debut in the second half of the 1970s, the almost undisputed leaders in the trading cards market were the Japanese cartoons, *anime*, which glued children and teens to the television screen. In Japan, these cartoons were also aimed at adults. This resulted in censorship, which often changed them radically, and they were bitterly criticized by pedagogues, parents and commentators. Instead today, academic studies have blossomed that recognize *anime*'s important place in international animated film as well as giving it credit for reinventing genres such as science fiction, feuilleton-style light entertainment and sitcoms.
Film became an increasingly popular topic for trading cards, with films – especially Hollywood movies – watched on the moviola to select the most suitable images, frame by frame. The domination of cinema and TV led to a decrease in educational publications, while collections continued to be dedicated to football championships and the World Cup as well as the European Cup for the first time.
In Italy and around the world, there were more and more music card collections and fashion found a place too.

THE 1990s

Despite the censorship of the *anime*, as of the mid-1980s and for the next decade, cartoons continued to be the subject of most trading cards, also thanks to the diffusion of the genre in the home video market; at the end of the 1990s, some television networks started to transmit uncensored *anime* in the evening, aimed at an adult public. Alongside the albums dedicated to Japanese cartoons, there were more and more on American animation, following the revival of the sector in the United States. The hegemony of cinema and TV was also evident from the collections of trading cards dedicated to films – including prequels, which had come into fashion at this time – and television series – especially the enormously successful teen dramas. However, they also covered phenomena such as wrestling, the typically 1980s sport-spectacle which experienced a phase of renewed popularity at the end of the 1990s. While educational publications continued to be relegated to the background, albums appeared which dealt with current affairs such as the Gulf War.

(Translation: Karen Whittle)