



Research Area: ENABLE – Design and Art Competences, Material Culture and Human Development | Project Timespan: 2014-2022

Fortunato Depero and Depero futurista 1913–1927

A study of a book published during the Fascist era — a promotional and commercial tool but also a Futurist work of art — which aims to more accurately define the role of Depero futurista 1913–1927 in the history of design.

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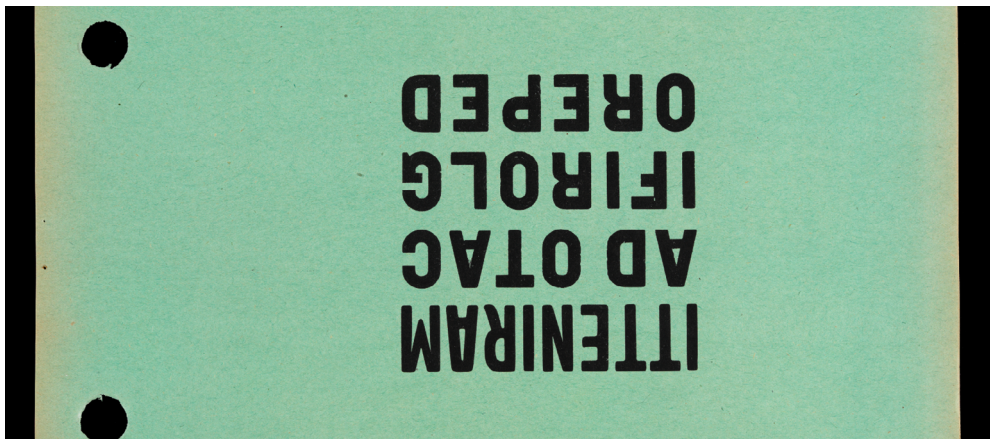
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Following a long period that had seen him involved in various professional collaborations since the early 1910s, Futurist artist Fortunato Depero (1892–1960) created a book in 1927 which sought both to foreground his multi-disciplinary output and to promote his artistic activity. The book was titled Depero futurista 1913–1927.

This research seeks to describe and examine Depero futurista 1913–1927 against recent historical and critical re-evaluations of the Futurist movement which, nevertheless, still fail to give a full and detailed account of this important work. Through an examination of the context in which the book was produced and its editorial and physical form, I was guided by the following questions: what is Depero futurista 1913–1927? How does it relate to the wider avant-garde in typographical modernism? How can Depero futurista 1913–1927 become a research tool to shed light on aspects of Depero that are

still unclear or unexplored? In order to answer these overarching questions, the analysis will consider a set of preliminary research questions: considering the historical context in which Depero futurista 1913–1927 was published, what does it tell us about the relationship between the Futurist aesthetic, the work of Depero, and the Italian Fascist Party? Through its connection to the field of advertising, is it possible to describe Depero futurista 1913–1927 in terms of an activity of commercial design as well as an artwork? To what degree can Depero futurista 1913–1927 be regarded as an artwork in book form?

Despite the widespread attention that Depero has enjoyed, various aspects of the artist remain unexplored and Depero futurista 1913–1927 laments the lack of an in-depth study. Depero futurista 1913–1927 can be understood as both a unique artwork and as a promotional book. It is an atypical work of art as it is a book rather than a sculpture or a painting, which might go some way towards explaining why it was initially overlooked by art historians. The design of many of the pages of Depero futurista 1913–1927 would have been unthinkable without the Futurist words-in-freedom and free-word tables which, rather than freestanding artistic-literary experiments, were part of a pan-European movement in the field of visual poetry. Depero's aesthetic embraced this broad panorama of innovations, resulting in the subsequent and more self-aware concept of the work of art in book form.



In addition, *Depero futurista 1913–1927* was the product of the publishing practices of the avant-garde — the most fervid of which were the Futurists, Constructivists and Dadaists — which would lay the foundations for the development of graphic design and modern typography; however, the book was produced by an artist-cum-designer, so similarly it has received relatively little in terms of comprehensive inspection by design historians.

My analysis of *Depero futurista 1913–1927* examines it as both a work of art in the form of a book and as a tool for publicising and celebrating its author. The goal of this study is to address the gaps in the account of this book and its author by analysing it in greater depth than any previous existing one and devising a research methodology that can fit its specific qualities.

My analysis is therefore divided into two distinct parts, which reflect the approaches I have adopted in this research. In the first part, I aim to present an analysis of the book object and its context in art and design. I begin studying the artistic and graphical context, paying close attention to the forms of typography and publishing that developed around the time of the book's release, to understand the circumstances in which it was published. This is followed by a detailed examination of Depero's correspondence with publisher Fedele Azari and the professional relationship between Depero and the Mercurio printing works, in order to understand the design methodologies adopted by Depero during the process of creating the book. My analysis moves onto the book as an object, focusing on its content and formal features — its structure, typefaces and layout — and on the typesetting and printing processes that led to its creation.

The second part of my research is more speculative: I use *Depero futurista 1913–1927* as a research index from which to extrapolate other related areas of focus, highlighting pages that refer to a certain topic and presenting my own critical discussion. By 'index' I mean a list of areas connected with *Depero futurista 1913–1927* and Depero which are referenced directly by the book's content. Through this, I aim to show how this book-work relates to existing historical and critical accounts of Depero's work; moreover, my aim here is to show how *Depero futurista 1913–1927* might act as a multifaceted, contextual, and reflective device as well as an experimental, formal exercise of book design and production.



The approach suggested in this introduction, involving several disciplines that combine and influence each other, is the underlying theme of this book: a graphical and typographical study of a book published during the Fascist era — a promotional and commercial tool but also a Futurist work of art — which aims to more accurately define the role of Depero futurista 1913–1927 in the history of design and established narratives of modern graphic design and typography. A study aimed at professionals, academics or simply design enthusiasts, who understand this discipline, and all of its facets, dimensions and associated topics, in its entirety. Hence, from each of these perspectives mentioned above, the book deserves a re-evaluation.

Link:

<https://storiadigraficaitaliana.it/talks/fortunato-depero-e-depero-futurista-1913-1927>

<https://www.boltedbook.com/page-by-page/>

<https://www.store.rubbettinoeditore.it/catalogo/fortunato-depero-and-depero-fururista-1913-1927/>