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Recommended Citation:

POZZOLI, V. Letter from Brazil: P. M. Bardi to Valentino Bompiani. MODOS: Revista de História da Arte, Campinas, SP, v. 5, n. 3, p. 15–41, 2021. DOI: 10.20396/modos.v5i3.8666881. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/mod/article/view/8666881>.

Image: *O Cruzeiro*, September 1947; *Tempo*, April, 1951. Detail.

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Carta do Brasil: P. M. Bardi para Valentino Bompiani

Viviana Pozzoli*

ABSTRACT

The research addresses a previously unknown segment of the journalist and art dealer Pietro Maria Bardi's trajectory by highlighting the centrality of the publishing issue in his activity as an organizer of artistic culture. Starting from the letters exchanged with the publisher Valentino Bompiani from 1946 – date of Bardi's arrival to Brazil, together with Lina Bo – to the early 1950s, the paper traces the common projects, between Italy and South America, in a transnational perspective, thus opening new insights into Bardi's role within the coeval illustrated art publishing industry and better focusing the planning of his early Brazilian years at the head of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo's modernist project.

KEYWORDS

Art publishing. Book design. Photography. Cultural networks. Museu de Arte de São Paulo.

RESUMO

A pesquisa aborda um segmento até então desconhecido da trajetória do jornalista e marchand Pietro Maria Bardi, destacando a centralidade do tema editorial em sua atividade como organizador da cultura artística. A partir das cartas trocadas com o editor Valentino Bompiani de 1946 - data da chegada de Bardi ao Brasil, juntamente com Lina Bo - até o início da década de 1950, este artigo traça os projetos comuns, entre Itália e a América do Sul, numa perspectiva transnacional, abrindo portanto novos insights sobre o papel de Bardi dentro da indústria editorial de arte ilustrada daquele momento e detendo-se no planejamento de seus primeiros anos no Brasil à frente do projeto modernista do Museu de Arte de São Paulo.

PALAVRAS CHAVE

Publicação de arte. Design de livro. Fotografia. Redes culturais. Museu de Arte de São Paulo.

The finding of unpublished archival sources pertaining to the journalist and art dealer Pietro Maria Bardi significantly enriches our knowledge about a key player in the framework of the artistic relations between Italy and Brazil. In this perspective, the correspondence with the publisher Valentino Bompiani¹ represents an exceptional document, allowing to integrate the results of the latest researches on the journey undertaken by Bardi in 1946 with his wife, the architect Lina Bo, that would lead them to move overseas and become protagonists of the Brazilian cultural scene².

The study of the letters enables to better focus the context, the motives and the purposes of that event, thus opening up to new reflections and investigations, backwards, relating to the role and the work of Bardi from the late 1930s to the beginning of the following decade, namely a crossroads of his biographical and professional trajectory substantially omitted from historiography, almost compressed between the most documented Italian activity as gallerist and contributing writer and the second season of his life³. At the same time, the letters with the publisher provide an interesting testimony of Bardi's early Brazilian years, since they intercept his plans, the approach and the evolution of his relationship with the new country⁴. Connected to Bompiani by a friendship, as well as by a long professional bond, Bardi didn't miss to keep him informed about his activities and projects⁵.

The correspondence in question has been traced among the papers of the publisher's historical archive⁶. The folder contains both missives by Bardi and some drafts by Bompiani, for a total of about seventy records, as well as several documents related to publishing projects. To these must be added other three drafts stored in the personal archive of Bompiani⁷. Letters by the publisher were also found in the archive of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, which preserves thirteen records⁸, whereas the Bardi's papers in Milan hold a postcard and a telegram dated 1935⁹. Except for the latter, the documentation covers a time span from 1938 to 1970s. Nearly all

the letters, however, chronologically belong to the time of the departure to South America and the very first years of Bardi in São Paulo, until about 1950.



FIGS.1-2. O Cruzeiro, September 1947; Tempo, April 1951.

The figure of Bompiani played in fact a not secondary role in these events and accompanied Bardi since his arrival to Brazil as entrepreneur and cultural mediator. In 1951, the Italian illustrated magazine *Tempo* published the article “Un italiano ha creato il più grande museo del Sudamerica” (R.S., 1951). At that date the Italian Bardi was the ascending director of the MASP, which had recently inaugurated its renewed headquarters in the Diários Associados building¹⁰. In the picture portraying him we can distinctly see a Bompiani volume, the first tome of the *Enciclopedia pratica* (1938), used like

an architrave to explain the architectural elements, as the caption reads. The shot was earlier and came from an astonishing service by Peter Scheier published in *O Cruzeiro* in September 1947 to introduce the rising museum to the public, even before the official inauguration of the following month (Silva, 1947)¹¹. Therefore, it's through this photograph that the image of Bardi and his work, his new Brazilian activity, was disseminated on both sides of the ocean. And it's not by chance that the name of Bompiani appears in the picture.

The 1946 journey

The Bardis departure – for a long time generically presented by historiography in reminiscent tones as a personal nature resolution – proved to be tied to a precise plan for the commerce and the promotion of the Italian art in South America achieved by the Studio d'Arte Palma, the marchand's innovative artistic organization combining exhibition, trade and conservation activities that had been founded in Rome in 1944¹². The enterprise was part of a mission journey of the COREITAL, authority established in October 1945 as a private association aimed at fostering the development of commercial relations between Italy and Latin America. Bardi was one of its partners, member of the committee “crafts, art, exhibitions, fairs”¹³. The attentive project of trade penetration developed by the Palma provided for the fulfillment of three exhibitions dedicated to ancient art, modern art and applied arts respectively, revealing a sensitive interest in the export of Italian art and taste in countries of strong immigration and with important market opportunities (Pozzoli, 2014).

For this reason, several works of art found place on the *Almirante Jaceguay*, the ship that sailed the Bardis from Genoa on September 23, 1946. But apparently not only that, since sources report that there were also

“books and booklets”¹⁴, and in the beautiful letter that Bardi wrote from Rio de Janeiro on November 7 to his friend, the great poet Giuseppe Ungaretti, he also spoke about periodicals: “I’m going to São Paulo in a few days and I’ll present your greetings and the reviews, along with the art magazines that I have with me”. “Brazil is in activity – he remarks –, amazing activity: it’s a great country requiring a humanism. Italian culture could do a lot, rather it will have to do. You’ll want to like some coffee beans. I’ll write you longer, and meanwhile a faithful greeting, your affectionate Bardi”¹⁵.

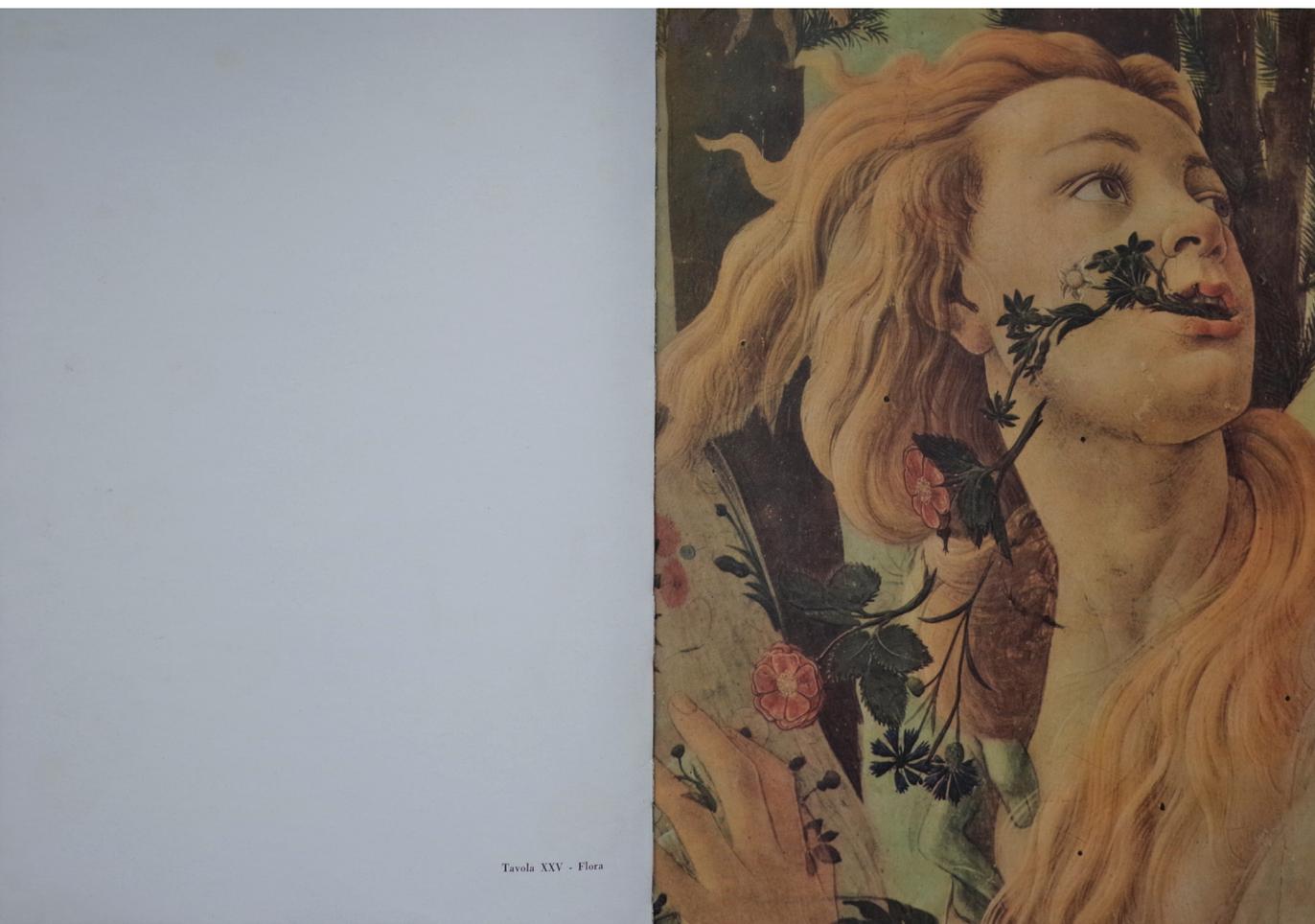


FIG.3. *Flora*, plate XXV, in Bardi, P. M. *La Primavera di Sandro Botticelli*, “Apologie dei capolavori dell’arte italiana riprodotti nelle misure originali” series. Milan: Bompiani, 1946.

It turned out, therefore, that alongside the works of art, for exhibit and sale, Bardi brought with him several publications. Bompiani publications, especially, and first of all a volume of which himself was the author, *La Primavera di Sandro Botticelli* (Bardi, 1946), first issue of the series of monographs titled *Apologie dei capolavori dell'arte italiana riprodotti nelle misure originali*, namely “Apologias of the Italian art masterpieces reproduced in the original dimensions”. It’s a high quality illustrated edition, large format, composed of a short text, articulated in a biography of the artist, the analysis of the painting and a technical note, and to follow the plates printed full page on offset coated paper, which allows high resolution of detail, according to an experimental graphic proposal summarized in the subtitle: “the painting in color, twelve color details and twelve in black in the original dimensions”¹⁶. A deeply innovative publishing feat, indeed, and how not to think of Botticelli’s *Primavera* as the icon *par excellence* of the Italian art in the world?

Doubtless Bardi used the volume as a sort of calling card. It’s no coincidence that a report on his first weeks overseas activities, which was transmitted to the Italian Ministry, informs us that he “offered” such publications “to Brazilian libraries and journalists”¹⁷. But there is more, since the letters with Bompiani highlight how, most concretely, the two had plans for the expansion of the Milanese publishing company in South America¹⁸. They intended to consider the possibility of setting up a branch, or even of entering into a company with local publishers – Brazil is mentioned, but initially it’s Argentina above all¹⁹ – with the aim of promoting a publishing production of co-editions to be essentially consecrated to the arts sector, whose curator would be Bardi himself.

Hence, alongside the most well known reasons of the art trade, the publishing issue strongly arise in the framework of Bardi’s expedition, against the backdrop of the resumption of relations among foreign countries led by the renewed geopolitical balances after the Second World

War²⁰. Moreover, the publishing dimension had a decisive weight in Bardi's practice and action in the system of the arts, starting from his beginning²¹. Man of the 20th century, trained in the newspaper editorial offices and attentive to communication strategies, he has been a disseminator, as well as a great organizer of culture²². And in that crossroads too he proved himself to be very sensitive to such aspect, thus revealing, furthermore, how beyond contingent commercial purposes the decision to undertake the journey found grounds in a coherent idea of art and culture diffusion possibilities.

A month before leaving for Rio de Janeiro, on August 14, 1946, he wrote to Bompiani reminding him of the *Apologie*: "It would be very important that I could bring my volume to America. Make sure you push for it"²³. Among the letters, a document not without interest has been found. It's a note drafted by Bardi, submitted for its approval to the publisher, relating to the presentation of the monographs series overseas, which reads:

The processes of the photomechanical arts, in Europe and in Italy, are destined to revolutionize the tradition of the didactic and exemplary material in the field of the history of the arts. It's the decisive new advance towards a wider contact of the whole world with the facts of painting. In this field too, space and time are gradually being abolished. Every part of the world must be able to have in view all that the human spirit has produced and is producing in the other part of the world. And painting, the superior and eternal game of color, is an absolute game of the human spirit. To disclose the most precious documents of great painting through reproductions that are as faithful as possible to the originals, this is one of the tasks that the publisher Bompiani has assumed in Italy. (...) Italian art, and its culminating moments, can thus be better known, more closely and more serenely contemplated throughout the world²⁴.

In this regard, it's important to note that Bardi was not only the author of the first volume, *La Primavera*, nor simply an interested promoter of the series, but the same creator – and editor – of the entire publishing project, as the sources reveal²⁵. A project that, even if achieved in those months of

1946, was not expressly conceived in relation to the South American plans of the two friends, having a previous history linked to the work of Bardi for *Civiltà*, the luxurious art magazine of the planned 1942 World's Fair in Rome published by Bompiani from 1940 to 1942.

Art, photography, color

Between the end of the 1930s and the early '40s, a scarcely documented moment of his biography, Bardi worked a lot and with unusual mobility, especially in the publishing field, as it's being clarified. We now know that he contributed to several magazines, including *L'Almanacco letterario Bompiani*, *Il Vetro*, *Tempo*, *Aria d'Italia*, *Civiltà*, *Italia*, *Lo Stile*, and he undertook a fruitful collaboration with the graphic art company Pizzi & Pizio, from 1939 Grafitalia (Pozzoli, 2018). The latter was one of the most important and long-lived Italian graphic enterprises, at that time engaged in the development of the Fotocolor system, a reproduction and print process based on the new coeval achievement in the field of color photography, in step with the international experimentations²⁶.

Bardi showed a precocious attention in this technology and became its promoter. He initially resorted to Fotocolor with commercial intent, probably in the context of Minio, the company founded together with his brother Giulio in 1938 and active in the field of graphic design, advertising and documentary production²⁷. In the same year, he chose it for the launch campaign of the Fiat refrigerator²⁸ or, again, for the anonymous volume *Il palazzo per uffici Montecatini*, whose author is actually Bardi himself²⁹, a product of advertising propaganda with many Pizzi & Pizio Fotocolor plates, which presented the Milanese headquarters of the company designed by Gio Ponti ([Bardi], 1938)³⁰.

But, naturally, Bardi was particularly interested in the noblest and

most difficult application of the Fotocolor, namely the art reproduction, as he explained in the programmatic article “Il Fotocolor nell’arte della stampa” published in 1941 on the official magazine of the Italian print sector *L’Industria della Stampa* (Bardi, 1941). Thanks to color film, the process promised to give an unprecedented answer to the old question of the fidelity of reproduction of the work of art, by custom entrusted to black and white standards, thus offering itself as a great modern possibility, a form of realism³¹.

Bardi, who had always been captivated by photographic languages³², soon engaged with the new films becoming photographer, a color photographer. He worked for ENIT, the National Agency for Tourism, by documenting artworks and monuments³³, and collaborated, among others, with Bompiani for *Civiltà*, whose sumptuous color plates were printed by Grafitalia. So, he contributed to the magazine essentially as a photographer: it’s Bardi the author, for instance, of the shoots dedicated to the great pictorial cycles by Masolino in Castiglione Olona and Giotto in Assisi therein published (Cecchi, 1940; Toesca, 1942). The pictures reproducing Giotto, from photos taken during the frescoes’ restoration by Mauro Pelliccioli, were contextually asked by the art historian Pietro Toesca to be acquired from the University of Rome as study materials³⁴, thus suggesting the quality of the print product. *Civiltà* proposed not only perfect reproductions but an updated aesthetics, a visual syntax based on unusual cuts and glimpses, large format details whose montage embodied the suggestions of the culture of modernism, from graphic and exhibit design to documentary expressions. The Fotocolor system, in fact, allowed enlargements without losing quality of the image, a feature that, jointly with the chromatic revolution, introduced a new way of communicating art. Even the art of the past could be read through the lens of a current and contemporary sensitivity, perspective which was familiar to Bardi and would be crucial for his future projects, as for the Studio d’Arte Palma conception³⁵.

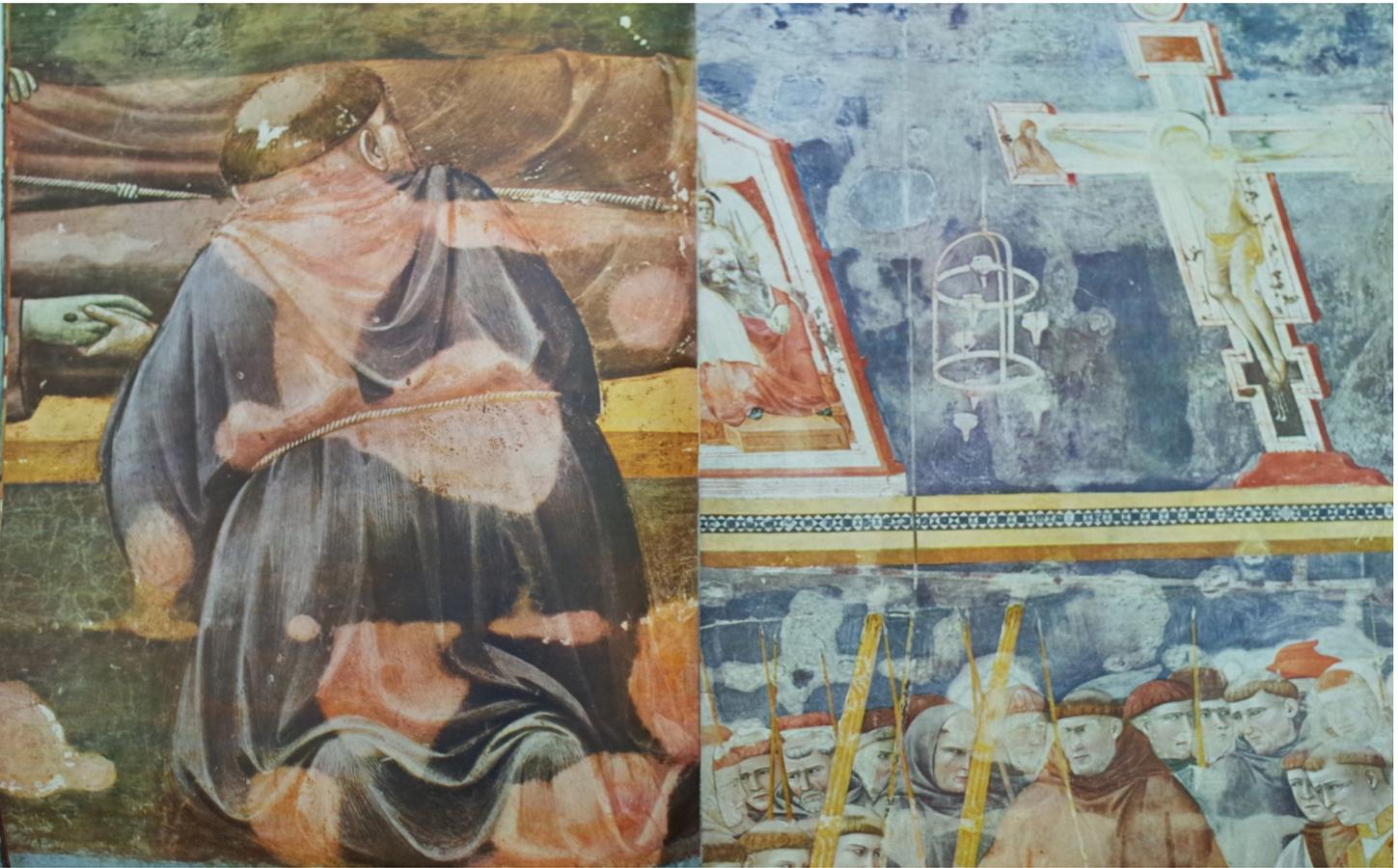


FIG. 4. A double page of *Civiltà*, January 1942, with details from Giotto's frescoes of Saint Francis in Assisi. Photos by P. M. Bardi, Fotocolor reproduction and print process by Grafitalia.

More generally, the color, with its potential of bringing people closer to art, was leading a real paradigm shift in art reproduction. Bardi offered a first-hand contribution to the early diffusion of such chromatic awareness, which would open a new season for the cultural industry. There was no lack of coeval experiences, especially in the French area (Kolokytha, 2013), but it's in fact in the Postwar period that this process would fully establish. Whether internationally we can remember, upon all, the UNESCO projects³⁶ (to which also Pizzi collaborated³⁷), in Italy it would perhaps be the consideration of the art historian Roberto Longhi to officially introducing

the pressing topic of the color in the public debate, thus legitimizing not without delays its use within the art books design (Longhi, 1952).

The pioneering launch of the *Apologie* series in 1946 was set against the backdrop of this cultural climate and was at once conceived on an international scale³⁸. At the same time, as mentioned, Bardi thought about the project since the years of *Civiltà*: his first idea was to excerpt the color plates of the magazine publishing them in monographic issues³⁹, and this planning would then lead to the monograph series⁴⁰, which is discussed also in the correspondence with another privileged interlocutor of that moment, Gio Ponti, already from 1941⁴¹.

“Pensamento da America”: publishing networks and educational strategies

Civiltà, the color plates excerpts and the *Primavera*, first monograph of the *Apologie*: it's with such sort of sample case that P. M. Bardi presented himself in South America⁴². This is the editorial line he intended to pursue with Bompiani, by pushing on the issues of dissemination and education, as the aforementioned note about the improvement of photomechanical processes suggests. In his first interview in Brazil, published in November 1946 in *Pensamento da America*, illustrated supplement of the newspaper *A Manhã*, Professor Bardi – as he is promptly renamed – declared: “Brazil has a task to accomplish in the field of art: that of contributing to world culture, and for this reason it has all the elements. Splendid elements, of first order. But it urgently needs tools of expression” (Schneider, 1946). A statement that eloquently reflected his earliest idea of the New World and lead his contextual course of action.

The South American plan envisioned with Bompiani would deal with the translation of Italian publications and, in the meantime, the development

of an original production within the local scenario⁴³. Print products would be in two languages, Portuguese and Spanish, to cover the entire Latin American market, as well as a slice of the European one. Whether, as mentioned, the main activity of the consortium would promote art co-editions, from the very beginning the Milanese publishing company had, actually, far wider aims and introduced on paper a series of complementary proposals. A prospectus dated August 5, 1946 reads: “reduced edition to a single volume of the *Enciclopedia pratica*; Italian Narrators series; possible series of Foreign Writers (whose rights should be acquired); etc”⁴⁴.

That of Bardi represented therefore an exploratory journey. His task was to report his assessments on the concrete market opportunities and to manage relationships. At first, he referred to be in touch with Valcarengi and Giacropol of the American Ricordi (Buenos Aires and São Paulo branches)⁴⁵, then he was directed by Bompiani towards the SEPA company in Rio de Janeiro⁴⁶, while Gino Chiappe, director of the Milanese publishing company, seemed to personally enter into business for the Argentinian side⁴⁷. The network of relations within which they moved emerges through the letters: a rather smoky network, indeed. Essentially, it had more to do with extemporaneous attempts than with an organized plan, and it must be said at once that the partnerships wouldn’t find real fulfillment.

Whether before the departure Bardi affirmed optimistic “it’s the right time”⁴⁸, in his first letter from Brazil he wrote to his friend: “Dear Bompiani, I’ve been here for 10 days and, among the first things, I studied the situation. It’s very complex, very difficult from the points of view of selling Italian books, your installation here”⁴⁹. However, he discussed the possibility of co-editions, encyclopedias, illustrated and children’s books “suitable for this very special audience” to be printed in Italy, given the costs in face to the quality guarantees, by already partially adjusting the program⁵⁰.

Certainly, they first of all bet on the *Apologie* project and they soon found an interlocutor. The result was the Brazilian translation of the *Primavera* (Bardi, 1947)⁵¹, which was released in 1947 in co-edition with a singular

publishing company, not surprisingly related to the Italian migration *milieu*. It was the Instituto Progresso Editorial of São Paulo, the ambitious enterprise founded the same year by Rodolfo Crespi⁵² and the rising art patron Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho⁵³, in a meaningful circularity of art and publishing networks against the backdrop of transnational routes⁵⁴.



FIGS.5-6. The *Primavera* Brazilian edition: A *Primavera de Sandro Botticelli*, “Apologia das obras-primas da arte italiana reproduzidas no tamanho original” series. São Paulo; Milan: Instituto Progresso Editorial; Bompiani, 1947, frontispiece and dust jacket.

The Bompiani archive keeps the draft contract for the sale⁵⁵, not only of the *Primavera* di Sandro Botticelli but also of the second issue of the series, the *Deposizione di Raffaello Sanzio* by Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti (Ragghianti, 1947)⁵⁶. The documents stipulated that Bompiani would provide the illustrated plates and the Instituto Progresso Editorial would be responsible for the translation and printing of the texts as well as the binding. It would have been slower to reach an agreement on the print run. Initially, they thought of 3000 copies, with a selling price of 4 dollars⁵⁷, but Bardi informed

Bompiani that 500 copies could be the maximum allowed for that market: “there is no audience for this kind of publications – he wrote – (...) we need to build starting from zero”⁵⁸. At its release, the reviews didn’t fail to present the initiative as a decisive step in the development of the art book industry in Brazil (Sete dias, 1948).

In Brazil for some months, Bardi had in the meantime achieved both the *Exposição de pintura italiana antiga do século XIII ao século XV* and the *Exposição de objetos de arte para decoração interior* with the refined productions of the Studio of Villa Giulia by Enrico Galassi, and was preparing to start new important projects. He wrote this to his friend in February 1947:

Dear Valentino you’ll be surprised that I haven’t continued for Argentina for now. I found Brazil very different from the last time⁵⁹. I thought I’d get by in two months. But no. (...) Then, add that here I’ll realize my purpose: I had the task of founding and running an art museum. It’s a very important thing. The assignment came from a patron here, the owner of the largest newspaper and radio trust in South America, a very smart gentleman who has 29 newspapers and 20 radios. (...) I have complete authority and I’m in the fortunate condition to take the luxury of buying on behalf of the museum fabulous artworks. I’ll talk to you in depth about my venture⁶⁰.

The passage is interesting and, confirming once again the initial intent of a South American *tournee* and not of a targeted Brazilian run⁶¹, it directly reports about the assignment of founding the museum. We know that Bardi immediately organized the institution in an experimental way and next to the collections he ordered the so-called *Exposições Didáticas*, a series of educational exhibitions of art history and civilizations designed for the public of the new museum and significantly composed by photographic reproductions⁶², many of which in color⁶³. Even in this occasion, his inclination to the publishing actualization of the projects and his attention towards dissemination would quickly reveal: even before the opening of the museum, he suggested Bompiani to draw inspiration from the educational exhibitions to conceive international publications: “It’s a great idea: the primers of art history – he wrote – of course, here it’s already ready the

co-edition”⁶⁴.

A few months later, in November 1947, Bardi would exactly present his educational experiment in an international venue, since he was invited to the ICOM Congress in Mexico City. In a postcard he informed his friend about his report, then published in the UNESCO magazine *Museum* (Bardi, 1948), and the success he met, which would continue to grow in the following months, thus offering Bardi an official acknowledgement of his figure and work⁶⁵. The plan would then become the export of educational exhibitions and their diffusion “in museums around the world”, starting from South America and the United States⁶⁶. This was confirmed during the Figurative Arts International Conference held in Florence in 1948 by Francesco Monotti, Bardi’s partner and, after his departure, director of the Studio d’Arte Palma, whose staff took care of the exhibitions’ conception (Monotti, 1948).

In this regard, Bardi invited Bompiani to think seriously about an international edition of the imagined primers, with plates printed in rotogravure and captions translated in all languages, in large print runs⁶⁷. The project, that was never realized without knowing the reasons, should have been the first release of the Bompiani Arte, company created in 1948 and never taken off, which counted Bardi himself among its founders: “You – the publisher wrote him – who were the first creator and supporter of this activity”⁶⁸.

The real ambition, however, was to found a magazine, “a great international magazine” to entrust the promotion and diffusion of the art books⁶⁹. Bardi discussed about it at least as early as 1946⁷⁰ and this aspiration cyclically emerges within the correspondence. “I’d like to dedicate myself to a great magazine and I would like to do it with you. Not standing still but travelling, knowing, realizing outside the country”, he wrote, thus explaining: “An accurate, meticulous, active tour of the world with the first issues of a well-made magazine and some well-printed publications could give an unexpected result of adhesions, material, publicity”⁷¹.

None of these projects would be accomplished, and in the meantime also the joint venture with the Instituto Progresso Editorial would face many difficulties after the publication of the *Primavera*⁷². In parallel, the company of Crespi and Matarazzo would close soon, in 1949.

Epilogue

Bardi himself would have seemed progressively less interested in carrying on the projects with Bompiani, who reprimanded him: “With the authority you have acquired, why don’t you take this matter a bit seriously?”⁷³. From 1948 the MASP director appeared more and more absorbed by the museum and by renewed programs. At the same time, the decision to stay in Brazil matured in him, a choice in which Lina, who initially had perhaps followed him overseas in a sort of training trip, certainly played an important role. A letter of March 1949 reads:

Dear Bompiani, you don’t know what America is. You never come back. I keep postponing my departure. Now many interests bind me here, especially the museum, which continues to grow (...) and the work of a new museum in Rio de Janeiro. On the other hand, my wife has a large studio with three workshops and begins to build. (...) In Italy it’s not possible, in my field, to activate works like this. We are in the middle of a thousand hardships (...). Staying here is beautiful, because you can work as you aspire to work. This is to tell you that I’ll postpone my trip to Italy and that I’ll actually wind up the Palma in Rome to concentrate here all my doing⁷⁴.

The closure project of the Studio d’Arte Palma also seemed to bring with it the abandonment of that precise publishing strategy conceived in the early ’40s with Bompiani. The relationship between the two didn’t end, and so the correspondence that would continue, although less dense than before, until the ’70s. Their collaboration, however, seemed to close there.

Meanwhile, Bardi had recommended to Bompiani the name of a young Brazilian writer, Jorge Amado, writing him: “he is our man”⁷⁵. And, in fact, *Terras do sem fim* would be published by Bompiani in 1949 in the Portuguese translation by Mario da Silva (Amado, 1949), Bardi’s close friend and important support at the time of his arrival to Brazil⁷⁶.

In those years, also thanks to the work at the museum and a series of trips undertaken on the coasts between São Paulo and Rio and in the inland of the country, Bardi seemed to approach with renewed attention to the reality he was living, thus showing an authentic sensitivity – although always filtered by the legacy of European modernist experiences – for the discovery of landscapes and cultures of Brazil⁷⁷. Around him, he created a team of work, giving space to young artists, often *emigrés*, and he dedicated himself to increasing the role of MASP in relation to art culture diffusion as a driving force of the country development and its international achievements.

In April 1950, he so recounted Bompiani about his work, in the last letter from Brazil that we’re going to read:

Dear Bompiani, how the years pass fast, now. And the more you work, the more you realize that everything rolls over time. I got into a jumble of things. Though, the museum I’m making is the greatest satisfaction of my life. The opening of the new spaces will take place in May and a dear friend of ours, Nelson Rockefeller, MoMA’s President, will be the godfather. Sambonet will have told you what we’re doing. Next month the industrial art school opens with over three hundred students. I believe that São Paulo will be the center of many art activities in three or four years⁷⁸.

The references in the letter are related to the renewed museum design by Lina (O Museu, 1950), the constitution of the Instituto de Arte Contemporânea (IAC)⁷⁹, and to the young Italian artist Roberto Sambonet, who arrived to Brazil in 1948 and soon joined the MASP school. His work would embody the experimental line of the museum, in the name of

interdisciplinarity, synthesis of the arts and a crossing borders hybridization process of the artistic languages (Rusconi, 2020a).

It's not surprising that, once again, this time within his museum, Bardi translated his insights into a publishing perspective. For the 1949 exhibition of Sambonet he created not only a catalogue (Sambonet, 1949) – as for the previous show dedicated to Candido Portinari, that was still published with the Instituto Progresso Editorial (Portinari, 1948) – but he would conceive a book, a four-handed publication by the “Museu de Arte de São Paulo editor”⁸⁰ in which the work of the artist and the fishing village where it had taken shape, Massaguassú, were presented by text and photographs by Bardi himself (Massaguassú, 1949). An avant-garde print product that, starting from the format, the graphic layout, the editing of the contents, among which Bardi's unpublished shots of the Brazilian reality played a decisive role, was a radically innovative publishing experiment.

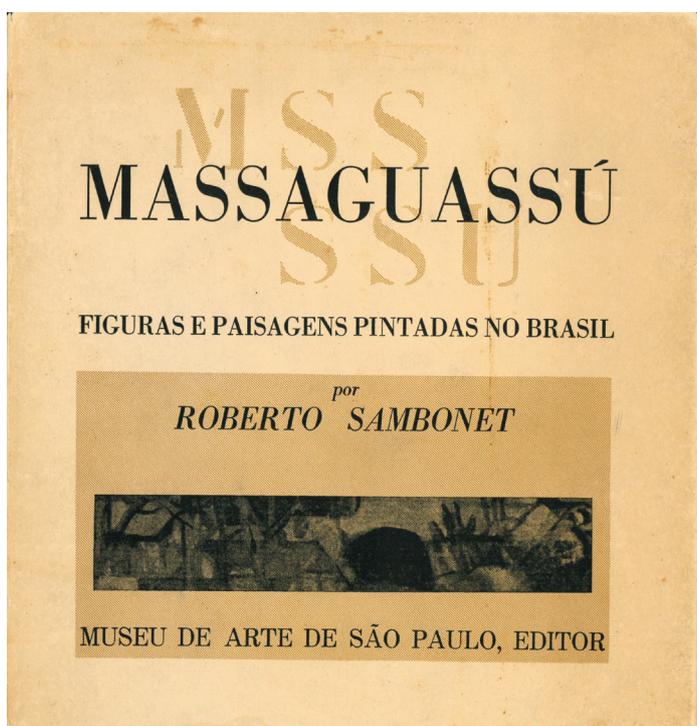


FIG. 7. *Massaguassú: figuras e paisagens pintadas no Brasil* por Roberto Sambonet. São Paulo: Museu de Arte São Paulo Editor, 1949.

Bardi talked satisfied about it to Bompiani⁸¹, who got excited for the work and in May 1950 he decided to publish a nice excerpt in *Pesci Rossi* (Roberto Sambonet, 1950). It wasn't the only proof of attention: the book was reviewed in the magazine *Domus* (Negri, 1950) and successfully welcomed by the major Italian galleries like Il Milione and Il Secolo⁸². We also know that MoMA, Metropolitan and Frick collection's bookshops hosted it⁸³, while Max Bill personally expressed his appreciation for the graphic result showing a special interest in the original square format⁸⁴.

Documents allow us to follow the processing of the volume⁸⁵, that was printed in São Paulo by the Ipsis company from *cliché* Futimond in 975 copies, 200 of them with signed lithographs and 25 with an original drawing by the artist too. Brazilian cultural context didn't remain indifferent: the reception of the book is witnessed by the press, which highlighted its characters of deep novelty within the reference publishing scenario⁸⁶.

With its programmatic tensions, *Massaguassú* aimed to be a Brazilian book, a product of the modern Brazil. It enclosed Bardi's composite conceptions about the art book object and collected approaches and ideas of the country that would be largely merged into *Habitat*, the magazine project organized together with Lina from 1950.

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Pietro Maria Bardi's Archive, Civic Historical Archive and Trivulziana Library, Milan.

Roberto Sambonet's Archive, CASVA, Milan.

Valentino Bompiani's Personal Archive, Apice Center, University of Milan.

Notes

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1 Valentino Bompiani founded his company in Milan in 1929 and soon became one of the most important Italian publishers. On his figure and work see (Piazzoni, 2007).

2 See (Pozzoli, 2014).

3 For a Bardi's biographical outline see, particularly, (Tentori, 1990; Rusconi, 2018; Aguilar, 2019).

4 On these topics see also (Rusconi, 2020a).

5 They collaborated since the early '30s. A memoir of the friend is in Bompiani's autobiography (Bompiani, 1973).

6 The Bompiani's Historical Archive (hereinafter BHA) is held at the Corriere della Sera Foundation in Milan.

7 The Valentino Bompiani's Personal Archive (hereinafter BPA) is held at the Apice Center of the University of Milan, together with his library.

8 São Paulo, MASP Research Center, MASP's Historical Archive (hereinafter MASP-HA), Dossier 39: Bompiani. All the letters are by Bompiani and written on the letterhead of the publishing company, three of them correspond to the copies held in Milan at the Corriere della Sera Foundation.

9 The P. M. Bardi's Archive in Milan is held at the Civic Historical Archive and Trivulziana Library. The Bardi's papers held at the Instituto Lina Bo e P. M. Bardi of São Paulo are still under organisation.

10 The museum and its new spaces designed by Lina Bo are extensively presented in the first issue of the magazine *Habitat. Revista de artes no Brasil*, see (O Museu, 1950). On the history of MASP see Bardi's narrative in (Bardi, 1956; 1992).

11 On Peter Scheier and the MASP see (Costa, 2015).

- 12 On the Studio d'Arte Palma see (Pozzoli, 2016).
- 13 University of Florence, Faculty of Architecture's Library, Marcello Piacentini's Archive, folder 51, file 287, COREITAL Bulletin, January 1946. This and the following quotations in the text are translated from Italian by the author.
- 14 Rome, Central State Archive, Ministry of Education papers III 29-60 (hereinafter CSA-ME), folder 126, file "Mostre d'arte antica all'estero", report dated March 3, 1947
- 15 Florence, G.P. Vieusseux Scientific and Literary Cabinet's Contemporary Archive, Giuseppe Ungaretti's Archive, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to G. Ungaretti, November 7, [1946].
- 16 On the series see (Pozzoli, 2018).
- 17 CSA-ME, folder 126, file "Mostre d'arte antica all'estero", report dated March 3, 1947.
- 18 On the history of the publishing company see (Piazzoni, 2007), for its complete catalogue see also (Bompiani, 2009).
- 19 See for instance BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, August 5 and 14, 1946; February 13, 1947.
- 20 It should be remembered that at that time South American market was considered with great interest by Italy, as in the field of the arts, also by the publishing industry. Many parallel ventures took place in the same months of the Bardi-Bompiani's expedition, that is the case of the Italian book *tournee* curated by Alberto Compagnucci, or the fair sailing aboard the Motonave Lugano, which especially promoted the publishing production (Notiziario, 1947).
- 21 From *Belvedere* to *Quadrante* and the several contributions to the illustrated press scene. See (Rusconi, 2009; 2014; 2017).
- 22 On Bardi's dissemination activity in Brazil see (Migliaccio, 2014).
- 23 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, August 14, 1946.
- 24 BHA, Correspondence, folder P. M. Bardi, note "Apologie" attached to P. M. Bardi's letter dated September 20, 1946.
- 25 The correspondence allows to trace genesis and developments of the project. Bardi was paid L. 100.000 for the "transfer of the series concept", see BHA, Correspondence, folder P. M. Bardi, document dated October 7, 1946.
- 26 The Agfacolor film was patented in October 1936, thus surpassing the Kodachrome's revolution of the previous year. Pizzi experimented the new direct color photography since 1937 and developed his Fotocolor system in the wake of the German technology. On these topics see (Pozzoli, 2018).
- 27 Minio was active from 1938 to 1942. The company is mentioned in (Colombo, 2017: 42).
- 28 As Bardi remembered in a coeval testimony, see (Bardi, 1941).
- 29 See Milan, Gio Ponti Archive (hereinafter GPA), Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to G. Ponti, November 20, 1940.
- 30 The book is mentioned in (Grillo, 2020: 192-193).
- 31 After the infatuation for the trichromy process experimented – between imbalances and chromatic saturation – at the beginning of the century, the art reproduction oriented itself to black and white visual values. For an overview on the color reproduction processes see the standard contribution (Hamber, 1999).
- 32 His deep interest in photography developed since the time of the modernist battle during the '30s and would continue in the Brazilian years, see (Bardi, 1987).
- 33 See BHA, Correspondence, V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, April 19, 1943.
- 34 See BHA, Correspondence, E. Cecchi to V. Bompiani, February 10, 1942.
- 35 In 1941, Bardi began to contribute to the magazine of Gio Ponti *Lo Stile* by editing the column titled *L'Antico e Noi*, namely "Antiques and us", where he elaborated new theoretical and taste art proposal in the name of a crossing between ages and styles strictly guided by a contemporary sensitivity. This experience would be a decisive workshop for the ambitious project of the Studio d'Arte Palma, see (Pozzoli, 2016).
- 36 It should be remembered the great UNESCO utopic project of creating an archive of colour photomechanical prints of world's chefs-d'oeuvre, thus promoting, in turn, publishing and exhibition educational initiatives. See the UNESCO catalogues (Catalogue, 1949; 1950).
- 37 See, for instance, (Masaccio, 1949).
- 38 The *Primavera* colophon announced editions in several languages, as it is discussed in Bardi-Bompiani correspondence. See, particularly, the letters between 1946 and 1948 and the related papers in BHA, Administrative Area – Contracts, file "Apologie", including reports on foreign markets and documents concerning

- to the monographs copyright registration in other countries.
- 39 They would then be published only in the Postwar years, see the catalogue (Bompiani, 1947).
- 40 This clearly emerges from the archive documents, see BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi's note dated June 23, 1942. The process of the project, in fact, began early, during the war years, between difficulties and delays: in the summer of 1943 Bompiani made sure that there was "everything needed for the work of the *Apologie* to proceed", while two years later Bardi aimed to "resume and fulfill" the series. See BHA, Correspondence, V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, July 19, 1943; P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, July 9, 1945.
- 41 See GPA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, March 16, 1941.
- 42 See BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, February 13, 1947.
- 43 See BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, August 14, 1946.
- 44 See BHA, Correspondence, V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, August 5, 1946.
- 45 See BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, August 14, 1946.
- 46 See BHA, Correspondence, Bompiani company to P. M. Bardi, November 16, 1946.
- 47 See BHA, Correspondence, V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, January 13, 1947.
- 48 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, August 14, 1946.
- 49 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, October 26, 1946.
- 50 See *Ibidem*.
- 51 The text translation was curated by Menotti Del Picchia. See the review (Notizie d'Arte, 1948).
- 52 He was the grandson of the renowned homonymous businessman emigrated to Brazil and dead in 1939. His mother married in second marriage the Italian journalist Francesco Malgeri, formerly director of *Il Messaggero*, who moved to Brazil after the war and became director of the Instituto Progresso Editorial at its constitution, thus keeping the relations with Bardi e Bompiani. Crespi and Malgeri also arranged a company of art trade based in Rome and São Paulo, the "Ital-Brasil. Arte antica-esportazione". See (Di Nicola, 2012: 93).
- 53 It is well known the contribution to the Brazilian system of the arts by Matarazzo, in the same years engaged with the creation of his famous collection. See (Magalhães, 2013; 2016).
- 54 On the Instituto Progresso Editorial see (Neves, 2011).
- 55 See the preliminary letters, particularly BHA, Correspondence, V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, January 23, 1947, and the final contract dated May 30, 1947.
- 56 See BHA, Correspondence, folder P. M. Bardi, Bompiani company to Instituto Progresso Editorial, January 23, 1947 and the attached contract draft. There is no information about the fulfillment of the Portuguese edition of the *Deposizione*, which was published in French in co-edition with the Parisian publisher Charlot (1947).
- 57 See BHA, Correspondence, folder P. M. Bardi, contract draft January 23, 1947.
- 58 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, June 6, 1947.
- 59 Bardi first travelled to South America in 1933-34, when he arranged a propaganda journey to promote the new Italian architecture. See (Rusconi, 2020b).
- 60 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, February 13, 1947.
- 61 As it is discussed in (Pozzoli, 2014).
- 62 The project is presented in *Habitat*, see (O Museo, 1950). A first study on the educational exhibitions is (Politano, 2010).
- 63 As it is testified by Emilio Villa, Bardi's collaborator and main organizer of exhibitions' project. See MASP-HA, folder 1, "Exposição didática A-1947", file 22 and "Exposição didática B-1947", E. Villa to P. M. Bardi, June 21, 1947.
- 64 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, February 13, 1947.
- 65 See BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, November 15, 1947 and also the previous letter dated October 15, 1947.
- 66 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, July 12, 1948.
- 67 See *Ibidem*.
- 68 BHA, Correspondence, V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, June 3, 1948. The details about the company are in the same letter.

- 69 See BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, July 12, 1948
- 70 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, October 1, 1946.
- 71 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, July 12, 1948.
- 72 See BHA, Correspondence, V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, March 26, 1949; P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, August 25, 1949; October 26, 1949.
- 73 BHA, Correspondence, V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, October 14, 1949. See also V. Bompiani to P. M. Bardi, October 10, 1950.
- 74 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, March 14, 1949.
- 75 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, February 14, 1947. See also Bompiani company to P. M. Bardi, March 13, 1947.
- 76 See BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, October 26, 1946.
- 77 A perspective of those years is traced in (Rusconi, 2020a).
- 78 BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, April 2, 1950.
- 79 On IAC see (Leon, 2014).
- 80 As it is indicated in the cover and the colophon, see (Massaguassú, 1949).
- 81 See BHA, Correspondence, P. M. Bardi to V. Bompiani, February 22, 1950.
- 82 See Milan, CASVA, Roberto Sambonet's Archive (hereinafter SA), R. Sambonet to P. M. Bardi, February 13, 1950.
- 83 See SA, P. M. Bardi to R. Sambonet, July 19, 1950.
- 84 An excerpt of the concerning Bill's letter to Bardi is in SA, P. M. Bardi to R. Sambonet, [August 1950].
- 85 As for the lithographs printing sample, see SA, P. M. Bardi to R. Sambonet, August 17, 1949. The final print of the volume took place in November 1949.
- 86 See the print reviews, particularly, (Atividades editoriais, 1950; As edições, 1950; Bento, 1950; Livros, 1950; Noticiário, 1950)

Article received in August 2021. Accepted in September 2021.
[Artigo recebido em agosto de 2021. Aprovado em setembro de 2021.]