

Francesco Pellizzari

## Michele Provinciali the Image Poet and the Tonda

*The book Michele Provinciali the Image Poet and the Tonda was officially launched at a special presentation held in the Salone d'Onore of the Triennale di Milano on 27th May 2008.*



*Michele Provinciali was awarded the ADI 2008 Compasso d'Oro career award.*

*26/06/2008. The TONDA display case by IFI S.p.A. received SPECIAL COMMENDATION from the international jury of the XXI ADI Compasso d'Oro awards. With this commendation, TONDA enters the Historic Collection of the ADI Compasso D'Oro as "national heritage".*

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*“Well... goodbye and thanks for everything.”*

*“Thank you for all the work you’ve done. I’ll call you in a few days, I need to think on this one.”*

*Within a few minutes, the two representatives from the agency had gone. Canale, the Sales Manager, left the meeting room soon after to deal with the usual shop-floor crisis.*

*Tonti, left on his own, picked up the draft of the catalogue and leafed through it slowly. Deep in thought, he went through it page by page trying to imagine the sensations it would pass on to its readers, trying to understand the message it conveyed regarding the Tonda and IFI. He imagined the catalogue in the hands of new customers, representatives and handed-out at meetings and exhibitions. In the end, he had to admit that he wasn’t fully convinced. Yes, the job had been ‘well done’, was professionally correct and there was no real cause for concern, yet deep down he still wasn’t totally satisfied.*

*Despite the urgency, he would have to speak to the agency again. He couldn’t just approve something that for him wasn’t quite perfect. The secretary had to knock twice before managing to jerk Tonti out of his deep thoughts.*

*“Excuse me... sorry to disturb you... but there’s someone here who has been waiting over half-an-hour to see you. He’s in the small meeting room next to the management offices. I’ve already taken him two cups of coffee.”*

*“Ah yes... of course, yes... I’m on my way. Can you put this catalogue on my desk, please? I’m off to the meeting room.”*

*It was after half-past seven before Tonti managed to get back to his office to pick up the documents he needed for his meeting with the bank manager the next day.*

*Inevitably, his eyes fell on the catalogue; he had been so busy it had completely slipped his mind. He stopped for a second and decided to take it with him. With a bit of luck he could look through it at his leisure after dinner.*

*This he did, but his mind was still not at peace. Instead, his uncertainty increased; the catalogue did not have the heart and soul that Tonda had and deserved. He wanted something more, something special that announced to the world that the Tonda was new, original, a message that expressed that ‘extra something’ he could feel but somehow could not express. He wanted to do it for IFI as well, the company to which he had dedicated his entire life. He wanted to leave IFI with an indelible mark, an unforgettable reminder of his time as manager. He remembered the old days when the company was a modest, family run, craft business. Now things were different, IFI was an industry, or rather an industrial group with a turnover of almost one hundred million, a hundred or so employees and thousands of customers. IFI was important, and it was for this reason that it had to find a position in the market coherent with its size. The company needed to move forward, develop culturally and widen its horizons, and*

*had developed Tonda precisely for this purpose.*

*Sitting in the armchair under the old Liberty style lamp, he felt a sort of anger, an inner fury because he couldn't give any substance to what he felt deep down. For him, Tonda wasn't just a new product, it was much more. He remembered all the hard work, the planning, the technical know-how and the dedication that had gone into the previous five years in order to create it! He also remembered his first meetings with Makio Hasuike, the famous Japanese designer hired in order to guarantee a professional approach. And the number of arguments he had with the technicians who said that the shape was unworkable, that it was impossible, too difficult, as well as too expensive. Then he had to fight against the scepticism of those who put their trust in "this is the way it's always been done", and the misgivings of the traders who always put what they call sellability first.*

*"Ah! Sellability!... the justification for always being at the service of the customer." With the Tonda, instead, he wanted to take IFI forward in the market, he wanted to offer something that had never been offered before!*

*These thoughts rekindled the uneasiness that he had felt in the pit of his stomach for several hours now.*

*He didn't sleep well, he tossed and turned in his bed, annoyed with himself for disturbing his wife. He got up at half-past six with a grim look on his face, a face that showed the signs of a sleepless night.*

*He managed to restrain himself until just after half-past seven and then called Tonucci.*

*Without beating about the bush or excusing himself for the time, he came straight to the point: "Tonucci, I'm sorry but the catalogue is not right, I want something more for the Tonda... Yes, I agree there are no serious flaws in it, but the Tonda deserves something special. I've thought and thought about it. I'm still not sure exactly what I want, but what I do know is that the catalogue doesn't say anything about what the Tonda actually is.*

*The agency has done a good job, painstaking and correct... but it's not right, I have this feeling of inconsistency. I don't know if I'm making myself clear or whether you understand, but I want something special".*

*Tonucci, still sleepy, didn't immediately grasp Tonti's urgency. He mumbled a few words of reply, managing only to say that the agency was the best one around. But when he heard Tonti interrupt him by saying: "You have to help me find an alternative, at any cost", he realised that he was floundering in the useless defence of a job that had already been rejected.*

*So he played the only card that he thought could possibly work: "Well, here in Pesaro, we have someone of extraordinary talent, someone who has played a leading role in Italian graphic design and who has trained numerous youngsters at ISLA. And he really is good".*



*"Perfect! What's his name?"*

*"Michele Provinciali", said Tonucci, then allowing an "it's just that..." to escape from his lips.*

*"Just what? What is it?"*

*"Hmm, let's just say that he is getting on a bit, he's got a few aches and pains and I'm not sure whether he can manage such a demanding task. If he were younger, he would undoubtedly be able to solve the problem..."*

*"Hey, come on, we're not exactly spring chickens are we? How old is he?"*

*"Eighty six".*

*Tonti was speechless: "Wow!" he managed to utter and immediately thought of Cardinali, his teacher and mentor who, at ninety-nine years old was more lucid and active than many others, younger and supposedly fitter than him.*

*"The air here in Pesaro is good, the fact that it comes from the sea and the mountains makes it a healthy place to live. So let's meet him. For the Tonda, I want a team that's special, and with someone of his age we are well on our way. Contact him and try to convince him, at least so we can meet and get acquainted."*

*"I'll try, but no guarantees... Provinciali is not exactly an easy person to get on with... it won't be that simple. Let's hope for the best."*

*Tonucci's preparations went well. In fact, after just a few days, Tonti saw the arrival of the 'grand maestro' in his office, accompanied by Mauro Filippini, his irreplaceable right-hand man. He saw himself in front of a man suffering from the usual ailments of one who has lived life to the full, a man who walked with some difficulty, leaning on a stick helped along by Mauro. He also wore glasses with thick lenses that magnified his limpid eyes.*

*Tonti felt a little embarrassed and somewhat guilty in the face of that senile fragility. He went to meet him, full of respect and concern.*

*As they shook hands, they looked each other in the eyes and Tonti immediately sensed the dignity of a strong spirit, a testimony to the man's vast experience.*

*A couple of minutes and a few sentences were sufficient to melt away any embarrassment he had and increase his respect for his visitor.*

*They went to the factory to see the Tonda 'first hand'.*

*From Provinciali's questions, curiosity and comments, Tonti soon realised that the man who had journeyed such a long way through life was still 'all there', living in the present, alert, with a refined sensitivity and extraordinary lucidity.*

*He saw the eyes of an artist, as agile and as curious as the thoughts that flowed behind them. This man, so different from other professionals he had met up until then, so full of life's experiences, this man of immense culture definitely had something to say. He was*





*suddenly optimistic.*

*At the end of the presentation, Filippini asked for some photographs of the Tonda.*

*Provinciali paused at one photograph taken from above. The pans full of different flavoured gelato, seen in plan, formed multicoloured segments inside the circular perimeter of the machine.*

*“Look Mauro, it looks just like a paint palette. The colours of the gelato...”*

*“The colours of the Tonda...” said Filippini, interrupting him.*

*At that moment, Tonti turned to Provinciali saying: “Professor, I believe you are the man we need and I hope that you can help us produce a brochure, a poster, a catalogue... in short, the Tonda message. We, in turn, will do all we can to help you.”*

*After a two-hour meeting, Michele Provinciali was exhausted, all that information had tired him out and it would have been pointless continuing discussions as he had already made up his mind: he would accept the job. He felt vitalised by the new challenge. He glanced at Mauro Filippini and felt reassured: as always, he would be his protector.*

*“Ok, let’s try it,” he said, and then immediately continued with: “But that’s enough for now, you’ll have to excuse me, I need to go home and rest.”*

*His tone was decisive.*

*On the days that followed, Provinciali and Filippini set to work, they looked through the Tonda photographs again and again, read the technical specifications and analysed the sketches drawn by Makio Hasuike. Mauro also showed the IFI website to Michele.*

*They worked at the home of the Maestro, they talked, hypothesized and discussed their feelings on the catalogue and poster. They were frequently interrupted by telephone calls from Tonucci and Canale who added details, expressed new needs and indicated ulterior objectives.*

*At the time, these telephone calls seemed helpful, in that their purpose was to clarify certain aspects or emphasise points of apparent importance. In reality, they were of no help at all.*

*As soon as the two ‘ideas men’ thought that they had managed to find a solution, another telephone call arrived to ‘clarify needs and objectives’, but all these calls seemed to do was contradict some of the previous objectives and add new ones.*

*After a while they found themselves somewhat confused.*

*They seemed to be stuck on practical aspects such as “How big should the poster be?”, and on more general aspects such as “What will the communication strategy be?”.*

*At one point, Provinciali even asked: “What exactly is it we have to communicate? What is our true objective?”.*

*Filippini had no answer and IFI had too many.*

*Tonucci became aware of the confusion and asked for a meeting*



*with Tonti and Canale in order to clarify the situation once and for all. The meeting resulted in a list of objectives and requirements that were objectively quite reasonable and appropriate for the company, but which were no different to those they already knew.*

*Both men were still in the dark.*

*Meanwhile, Provinciali's unease increased. He just could not come up with any ideas; ideas that were there but somehow seemed to be caged in by too much information. And Mauro Filippini just did not know how to help him.*

*His lengthy experience working alongside Provinciali had taught him that the initial phases of a new project inevitably involved experimenting, rewriting or even starting again, and sometimes with a few eruptions along the way. This was because, as he worked, Provinciali always allowed his innermost feelings to take control. In this way, his creativity would be allowed to flow out in an outburst of pent up emotions. In his previous projects, his initial attempts to find what he was looking for, successful or otherwise, were always channelled in one particular direction. If one is lost, for example, at least one knows that the direction to head in is North rather than West. Provinciali and Filippini still did not know whether they should go North or West, and what's more, they didn't even have a compass!*

*They headed in random directions unable to learn from the mistakes made along the way. They were forever having to start again from scratch, and getting nowhere, all this amid a growing tension that manifested itself in feelings of impotence.*

*Michele Provinciali was exhausted, he had dedicated body and soul to his past creations and was eager for success, but the Tonda project, still without any precise direction, was slowly consuming all his remaining energy.*

*The evening was cold, he felt weak and he had no appetite for dinner.*

*"Lucetta, my dear, I'm not hungry," he told his wife, "I'm going to have a lie-down and maybe read for a while before going to sleep."*

*She smiled sweetly: "I'm not hungry either. You go on, I'll join you in a short while".*

*He looked at her lovingly through his thick glasses.*

*His eyes dwelled on her face for a moment. Lucetta had lost the splendour of her youth but not the elegance of her features. Michele felt a pang in his heart when he realised that his Lucetta was losing some of her radiance.*

*Colour was part of his life, his colour sensitivity was legendary, and the thin veil that shrouded his wife's natural radiance, and which probably he alone could see, frightened him intensely.*

*Once in bed, he continued reading the book that his son Federico had just given him. The book was rather special, it had been written*

by an old friend of his, Francesco Pellizzari.

Michele loved the story it told. Most of all, he liked the description of the characters accomplished using a rather effective combination of summary and detail. He was also surprised to discover that Francesco, who he had known simply as a company strategy consultant, had an aptitude for story-telling.

While he was reading a particularly absorbing part of the story, something that had been playing on his mind for some time suddenly became clear: Francesco was the man for the Tonda, the co-ordinator that the project needed to synchronize the efforts of all those involved, and give some form of direction to both IFI's strategy and to the design team.

He called his son Federico in Milan that same evening.

"Federico, do you think that Francesco would be interested in working on the IFI project? Do you think he would be of any help to us?"

In Milan, Federico smiled: "Of course he would, I don't know anyone else who can do the job you have in mind.

Francesco is your man, and if you ask him I'm sure he'll accept straight away." reassured Federico.

So Provinciali mentioned Pellizzari to Tonucci, who then talked to Tonti.

"Somebody else for the catalogue? Why's that? Aren't there enough of you?"

Tonti asked Tonucci, adding "There are already three of you!" He failed to understand the reason behind the request: "Who is this Pellizzari anyway? Why is he so indispensable? Just because he wrote a novel that Provinciali likes?"

He wondered whether he was entering into a vicious circle...

Canale, a sceptic by nature, expressed another misgiving.

"Another consultant? And how much will he cost us?" he asked, highlighting his rightful concern for company costs.

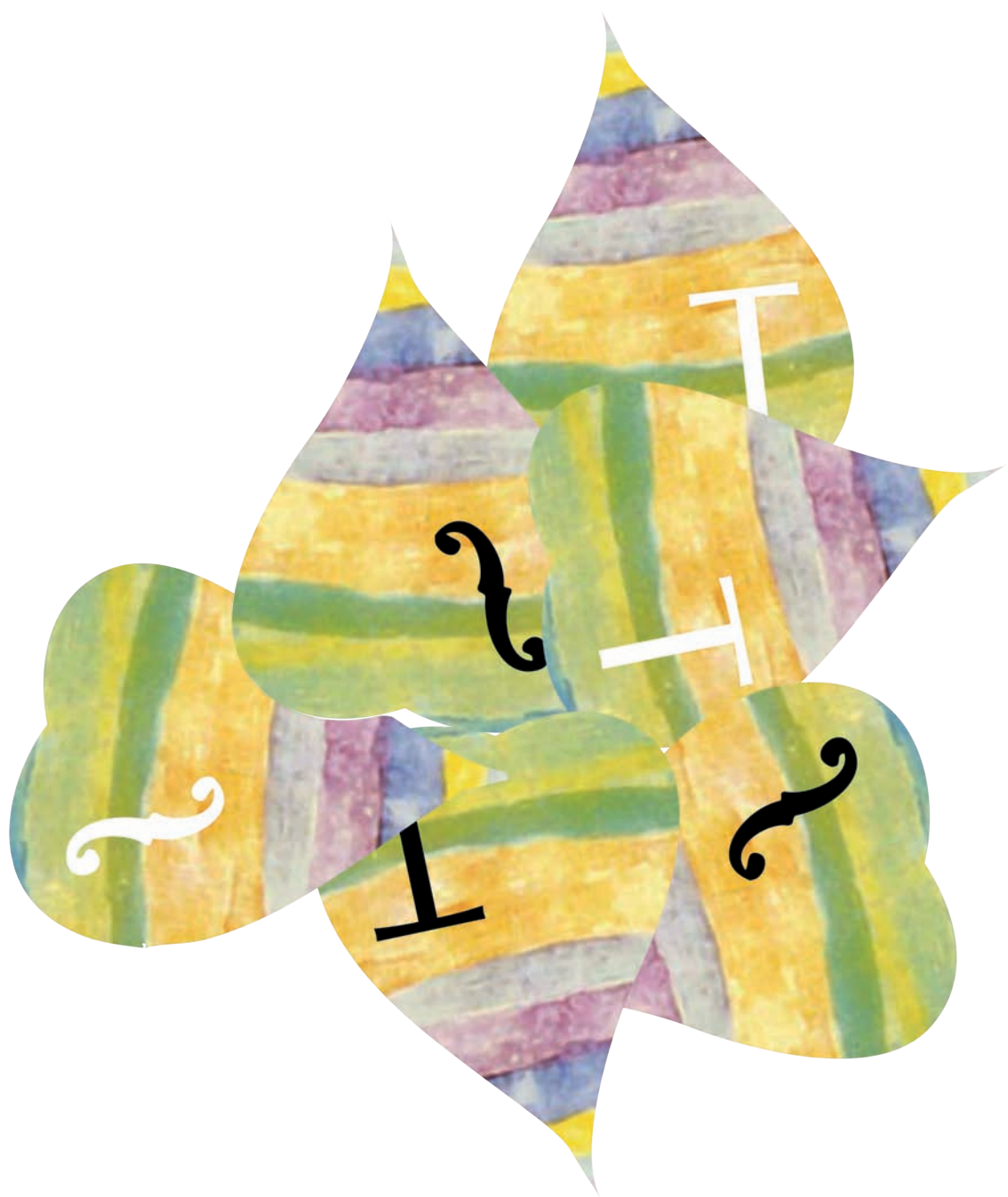
However, Provinciali added his full weight to the argument and eventually both Canale and Tonti were convinced.

And so Pellizzari also became part of the Tonda team... But to do what?...

This wasn't clear to anybody, not even him. The only reason he left for Pesaro was because Michele had called him. On the phone, in fact, he hadn't really understood what use he could be in helping to 'design a catalogue' for a gelato machine. Nevertheless, curiosity overcame scepticism: in his professional life, he had seen dubious starts lead to exciting results on too many occasions.

Tonti, Canale and Tonucci had to recite, for the umpteenth time, the ritual of the Tonda presentation to Pellizzari. Tonti explained the strategic value of the product and the need to have one or more tools for a publicity campaign. The reason they hadn't been satisfied up until then was because 'they hadn't been able to





*make it fully understood what the Tonda message was all about'.*

*Pellizzari made a mental note of everything: the Tonda, the company, Tonti's enthusiasm as well as the disillusioned and pragmatic approach of Canale.*

*He also sensed that there were some doubts as to his own presence there. He wasn't offended at all, but instead understood their caution: What could a consultant from Milan, an amateur novelist, possibly do for the Tonda catalogue?*

*At one-o'clock, they went to one of the best restaurants in Pesaro. A good lunch seemed the best occasion to get to know each other.*

*Pellizzari didn't ask for any more technical information on the Tonda, instead he asked about the history of IFI and wanted to know some personal details about Tonti and Canale. Seeing that they were quite willing to talk openly, Pellizzari tried to understand the company's philosophy and the strong values that motivated the entrepreneur and his manager.*

*He learned that Tonti was very proud of IFI, above all its humane aspects.*

*"You see, Pellizzari" said Tonti at a certain point, "what pleases me most is the rapport we have with our workers and our staff.*

*Here at IFI, there are no strikes or conflicts. The atmosphere throughout the company is always one of co-operation and teamwork at all levels. This gives us strength and lights our way towards our new horizons. A fundamental requirement of the working environment is mutual respect, in other words, we must try to deal with others in a fair and proper manner in order to have a company that is an asset to everyone, always active, healthy and something to be proud of."*

*It was clear that Tonti truly believed in what he was saying, he had even stopped eating, and the look on his face was one of utter sincerity.*

*"This is the most important thing I learned from Cardinali. Intelligence, competence, skill and accepting risks are fundamental aspects, yes, but these can only develop if there is respect for one's fellow workers, suppliers and customers. This human aspect, which also includes a 'love' for the company and for one's colleagues, is a crucial factor in IFI. And I am convinced that this is our true strength."*

*He paused briefly and then, almost as if shaking himself out of a dream, added: "This is the way I like it, and this is why I'm here today working with the same enthusiasm I had on my first day over forty years ago."*

*Pellizzari, in turn, talked about his love of writing and travelling, and told a few short stories of events that had occurred during his working life. By the time coffee was being served, an unexpected sense of mutual co-operation had been instilled and all concerned felt a little more reassured. As they left the restaurant, Tonti gave Pellizzari a book on the life of Cardinali.*

*Pellizzari was convinced that this could be an interesting*



*project to work on and made a mental note to drop them and the others a line.*

*During the long lonely drive home, Pellizzari thought once more about the Tonda, the people he had met and the IFI group. This was a typical case of entrepreneurship, genial in ideas, practical in deeds and full of humanity, in which everyone, right from the entrepreneur himself down to the cleaner, considered themselves 'part of a team'. A sort of company 'made in Italy', with extraordinary merits but also with the defects that come with those merits.*

*He then thought about Provinciali, his personality, his work and his creativity. He also thought about the Tonda and started to compile a list of 'fors and againsts' in his usual manner. He soon realised that the classic dictates of marketing management would not work in this particular case. He reformulated the problem and considered it in general terms. What was needed was something 'all'italiana', a clever graphic designer and a new product which, over and above its technical characteristics, had its own personality, starting with the name itself: "Tonda".*

*"Catalogue, poster? No way." he thought, "Here we must find something that unites, something fundamental that everybody can recognise and identify themselves with."*

*He realised that what he was working on was more a problem of 'identity' rather than communication. First of all he had to make Provinciali's job a little easier by deciphering, tidying up and giving some form of priority to the information received from IFI, all in a language that he could understand. The problem would be solved if he could just guide Michele towards a single precise objective.*

*He prepared the brief and sent it via e-mail the next day.*

*The main points were as follows:*

*The Tonda is a product with a huge personality capable of giving real meaning to the environment in which it is placed. The product's personality is undoubtedly its distinctive feature.*

*My idea is that we must find a 'sign', a 'pattern', a 'symbol' that incorporates, summarises while at the same time highlights the Tonda's personality. Or better still, one that actually becomes a part of its personality, a 'distinguishing feature' that can be written on its identity card.*

*Working on the 'personality of the Tonda' to create a distinguishing feature will be my contribution to the work of the team.*

*Once the 'Tonda symbol' has been created – together with any graphic variations – the next stage will be the catalogues, brochures, videos, various objects, etc...*



*He was pleased with himself. The good seed had been sown and was ready to take root in Provinciali's fertile ground.*

*When Canale read the note, his immediate reaction was: "Is that all? But wasn't he supposed to provide us with a communication strategy?"*

*Tonti, although just as disappointed, did manage to be a little more optimistic.*

*"Well, we don't have any formal agreement with Pellizzari," he replied, "Let's wait and see what the outcome is, then we'll decide. Let's just leave things as they are for now until we can see some results."*

*While this was happening, Filippini and Provinciali were also scrutinising Pellizzari's work.*

*"Perfect, clear-cut, and just right," was Provinciali's immediate reaction.*

*"Yes... it's ok, maybe a little vague though." commented Mauro.*

*"No, no, it's ok as it is... I'm also sure that we need to create the 'Tonda symbol'. Now I know what to do, I feel better already. Francesco has given us the brief we need. Let's get started."*

*Filippini felt reassured seeing his mentor back to his old self.*

*And so they concentrated on the personality concept, then on the rapport between 'round' and 'gelato', which conjured up images of a cone and the wonderful gelato balls of the past sitting in a glass, also round.*

*They worked hard, no longer lacking confidence, even though they were still a long way from obtaining a result.*

*"I'm thirsty," said Michele, "Would you like a drink of water?"*

*"Yes, please."*

*And while Michele was opening the fridge, Mauro asked:*

*"What do you imagine when you think of the word roundness?"*

*Michele's eyes inevitably fell on the eggs sitting on the shelf above the bottles of mineral water.*

*"This!" he exclaimed, picking up an egg "This is a good example of roundness!"*

*And then handed it to him.*

*"Hold it, touch it, just feel how perfect it is. See, not only is it round but it also has perfect roundness."*

*"Perfect roundness, almost sensual." continued Mauro.*

*Michele sipped some water and smiled.*

*"Well! If sensuality is now coming into play... then when I think of roundness I think of a woman. In fact, at this moment I have one rather particular image in mind: Kiki Montparnasse in a photograph by Man Ray."*

*He got up, picked up a book and opened it.*

*"There she is." said Michele, pointing to her.*

*Filippini looked at the photograph, one that he had already seen a hundred times before.*

*"Yes, this is indeed a perfect example of roundness," he replied.*

*"Just look at the fullness of her rounded hips, the soft upward curve of her back..."*

*mmm... roundness, soft and sensual, almost sinful, enhanced by the soundholes of a cello, and that's it. That's the whole idea, the sign that identifies Kiki and makes her unforgettable." added Michele.*

*"The sign that inspires the personality of the image," concluded Mauro.*

*"Yes, that's it, but we have to provide a gelato machine with an image, where does the woman come into it? Sin? I don't think so, we need to refer to something a little lighter, something less sensual..."*

*"In that case, why not a pear?" said Mauro as he picked up a Williams from the fruit bowl on the table.*

*"Roundness somewhat imperfect, but nevertheless full. See how the round body elongates up to the brown stalk, which is to the pear what the soundholes are to Kiki." observed Michele.*

*He then takes the pear, raises it in the air and turns it upside down.*

*"Look, upside down it resembles a gelato cone."*

*Mauro nodded in agreement and continued: "If a woman makes you think of sensual roundness, what image does a gelato conjure up?"*

*"Childhood, happiness." answered Michele without any uncertainty.*

*"Same for me! Eating a gelato was one of the things I most enjoyed as a child. I just loved strawberry and vanilla. I was always so happy when they took me to the gelato shop. It was such a wonderful place because something nice always happened to me there."*

*"So let's go there then! Let's go and see what children do in a gelato shop. Maybe we can come up with some new ideas." said Michele.*

*"Seems like a good idea to me." agreed Mauro.*

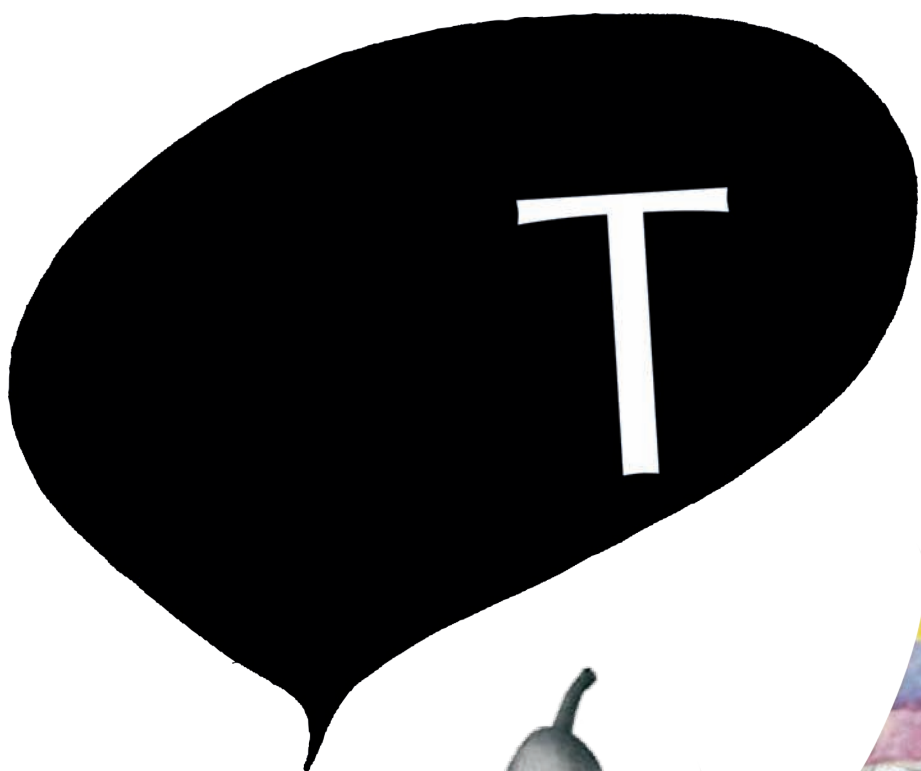
*So off they went to the best gelato shop in Pesaro. They watched the people leaving the shop with gelato cones in their hands listening to what they were saying and looking at the expressions on their faces.*

*A man entered the shop with his six or seven year-old son.*

*With his nose almost pressed up against the glass, as if he were trying to smell what was behind it, the little boy chose strawberry, pistachio and plain gelato for his large three-flavoured cone.*

*As his father leaned down to give him the gelato, the little boy looked up in excitement.*

*"Be careful and don't drop it and don't push too hard with your tongue..." warned his father. The little boy stopped for a second, smiled*





up at his father, took the cone that had come from heaven and happily started to lick it.

Provinciali followed the entire scene, taking in the minutest detail. There was something important in what he had seen, but for the moment he couldn't think what it was.

It was getting late, so the two men said their goodbyes, arranged to meet the next day and went home.

Michele couldn't help but think: "Roundness, woman, pear, gelato, child, excitement, flavours, colours." He went back over the scene he had witnessed with the little boy and his father, he studied each and every detail in slow motion looking for that something that still eluded him.

Picking up his pencil, he started to draw a few shapes: An oval, a pear, a cloud...

"That's it! That is it! That gelato was a cloud that had fallen from the heavens! A cloud that spoke happiness to the little boy."

He continued sketching until he found a shape that more or less convinced him: A speech balloon.

It was an interesting theory, that pointed tail implied a strong presence. He started to get excited sensing he was actually getting somewhere.

Inside the balloon he wrote "Tonda" then, remembering Kiki's soundholes, just a T.

"No, that's too sad," he thought, "gelato is happiness, we need colour..."

He picked up his crayons and started colouring-in the balloon. Yes, that was a good idea, a coloured balloon, not like those that contain words. He drew four or five examples. He still hadn't arrived at what he wanted, but at least he felt he was on the right track.

He went to bed exhausted but satisfied. His Lucetta had been waiting for him.

And after many days he was finally able to enjoy a long sound sleep next to her.

The following day, Mauro found Michele to be a different person. He was no longer anxious about the research work but instead excited at his discovery.

"Look... what do you think Mauro?"

Mauro looked at the sketches, turning over the pages a number of times.

"Yes... I think we're there, you should work on the colour, just the colour.

I'll take care of perfecting the lines, the shape of the balloon..."

Michele resumed his work, reinvigorated. After a while, he switched from crayons to watercolours. He immediately felt more at ease.

Now he and his tools could work together. His watercolours gave him inspiration and ideas, responding to his creativity.

Mauro encouraged him in his rediscovery of his artistry.



*He helped him, he made suggestions. He picked up the photograph of the Tonda once again.*

*“Here’s your palette...” he says “the colours of the Tonda... created directly from this.”*

*“My dear Mauro, you understand me well! That’s exactly what I was looking for. Yes, this palette is ideal for the moment.”*

*And so they searched for a colour balance, a sequence of colours and shades and arranged them inside the balloon. The watercolours flowed freely on the paper, the improvements becoming more and more evident.*

*They tried different combinations over the next few days.*

*“There it is... beautiful! That’s it!” said Mauro, convinced.*

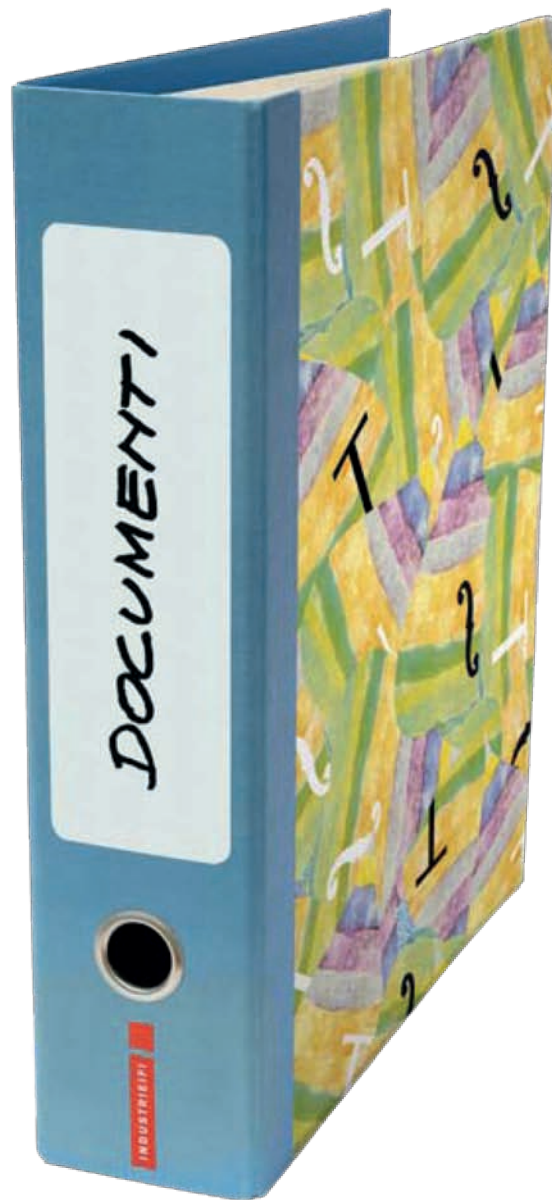
*Michele stopped working and took one step back from the watercolour: “Yes, that’s the one.” he confirmed.*

*It was done. There before eyes was ‘the sign of the Tonda’.*











## IFI, Communication and Culture

*The Tale of the Tonda is a true story based on events that actually took place, it provides an insight into the company and its entrepreneurial activities.*

*First of all, the figure of the far-sighted entrepreneur who imagines the future and senses the potential of an innovative product that goes beyond numbers and reason. His capacity to feel things inspires energy and optimism (often far beyond the comprehension of others) and steers him towards an 'intuitive understanding' of the various parts of a project. Hence the reason for rejecting the first catalogue proposed: "well done, but not quite right for the Tonda".*

*In the end, it was this same intuition that motivated the work of the design team. The team, in fact, tried to find an immediate link between the reasoning behind the product and its representation by means of trial and error. But it was only when Provinciali and Filippini managed to unite the concepts of roundness, childhood and happiness did the balloon shape actually materialise, with the colours emerging after being dictated by the Tonda itself seen as a painter's palette.*

*It could therefore be said that IFI has performed an interesting cultural operation, by not only giving Michele Provinciali the chance to add a new and unique piece to his artistic inventory, but also providing the company with a new approach in its rapport with the market. Tonda's message to the world has become a thing of culture because it is written in a powerful iconographic language that can be easily understood by the final consumer and the public in general.*

*With Provinciali's Cloud, IFI has revived a great Italian tradition for poster art that dates back to Dudovich and Depero, an art that could well represent the biggest contribution made by Italian advertising to business communications throughout the world.*





## *Michele Provinciali and the Tonda Cloud*

*The Tonda Cloud was presented to the IFI management in a specially convened meeting held in a large hotel in Pesaro.*

*After the initial confusion in being presented with such an unexpected result, both Tonti and Canale began to appreciate the work, then they fell in love with it, to the extent that a few weeks later they commissioned Michele Provinciali with other works in watercolours based on the Tonda Cloud.*

*Hence the creation of the panels that complete the Tonda artwork. The "Water lily", the "Boat and Airship", "the Dove and the Fish", the "Music stand" all represent a small set of artistic designs portraying the launch of the Tonda and its message to the world.*

*How is it that the Cloud and the other panels in the Tonda Series can communicate such a strong message? What is the secret that makes these compositions created by Provinciali so late in life, so well-balanced, light and happy? One is tempted to use the term "sweet, soft expression" as a general description, an idiom once confined to the anthologies of the Dolce Stil Novo literary movement.*

*With his Tonda Series, Michele Provinciali has managed to come up with a compositional and chromatic vitality that has its roots somewhere in the distant past: it is possible to immediately recognise the cultural derivations of his latest creations in his other works such as "The Gelato Sticks", "The Chalks", "The Soaps" (and also in "The Clothes Pegs" or "The Champagne Corks").*

*There is, however, a big difference: the subject is not present.*

*The Tonda Series evolves towards a vitality and gracefulness that is almost spiritual.*

*It actually seems as if Michele senses that his earthly path is nearing its inevitable conclusion and that he is already prepared for an incorporeal existence. These words, which may seem sad, cynical or simply inappropriate for a man who is not only alive and well but is also still creatively very fertile, are instead full of respect and happiness. They underline the greatness of a person who lives through all the various phases of his life evolving with it towards the lush pastures of heaven where he will join his beloved wife Lucetta who left him on the day of the Tonda presentation.*

*The only constant is the poetry that radiates from his images: once depicted in humble everyday objects and now in watercolours. Michele Provinciali: "Image Poet".*



## Ring a ring o' roses

*Throughout my life, I have always collected reminders of the passing of time: common clothes pegs and aristocratic champagne corks, refined soaps and fragile chalks and even coloured ice-lolly sticks. Motionless and silent objects they may be, but it is for this precise reason that they are long-standing witnesses to human life and its passing. Metaphors able to recall events of the past and their profound emotions, able to reconstruct memories fragment by fragment and the meaning of life itself.*

*For me, design means looking for and developing signs and symbols capable of expressing the intimate rapport between the client's immediate and future demands, and then going beyond them in order to be able to express the infinity of humanity that each one of us has within.*

*As a writer, a professional and a teacher, I have always tried to resolve the apparent contradiction that exists in design between industrial production and human culture. A difficult path to follow, in that it is either ignored or trivialised by the logics of profit and market research. I have always refused to think along pre-established lines and use pseudo-creative methods. In doing so, I have had support from entrepreneurs, colleagues and students alike, people who were able to see beyond the banality of linear processes, guiding the research and the task in hand to where effort acquires a more humane and profound significance.*

*And as such, if this round steel tub can contain the joyous innocence of childhood and recall the tasteful and almost sensual lightness of a multicoloured cloud, then this new industrial product will no longer be just an innovative display case, but instead will become a happy and colourful meeting place in which to experience what we have all lived through and which has become an intimate part of us.*

MP







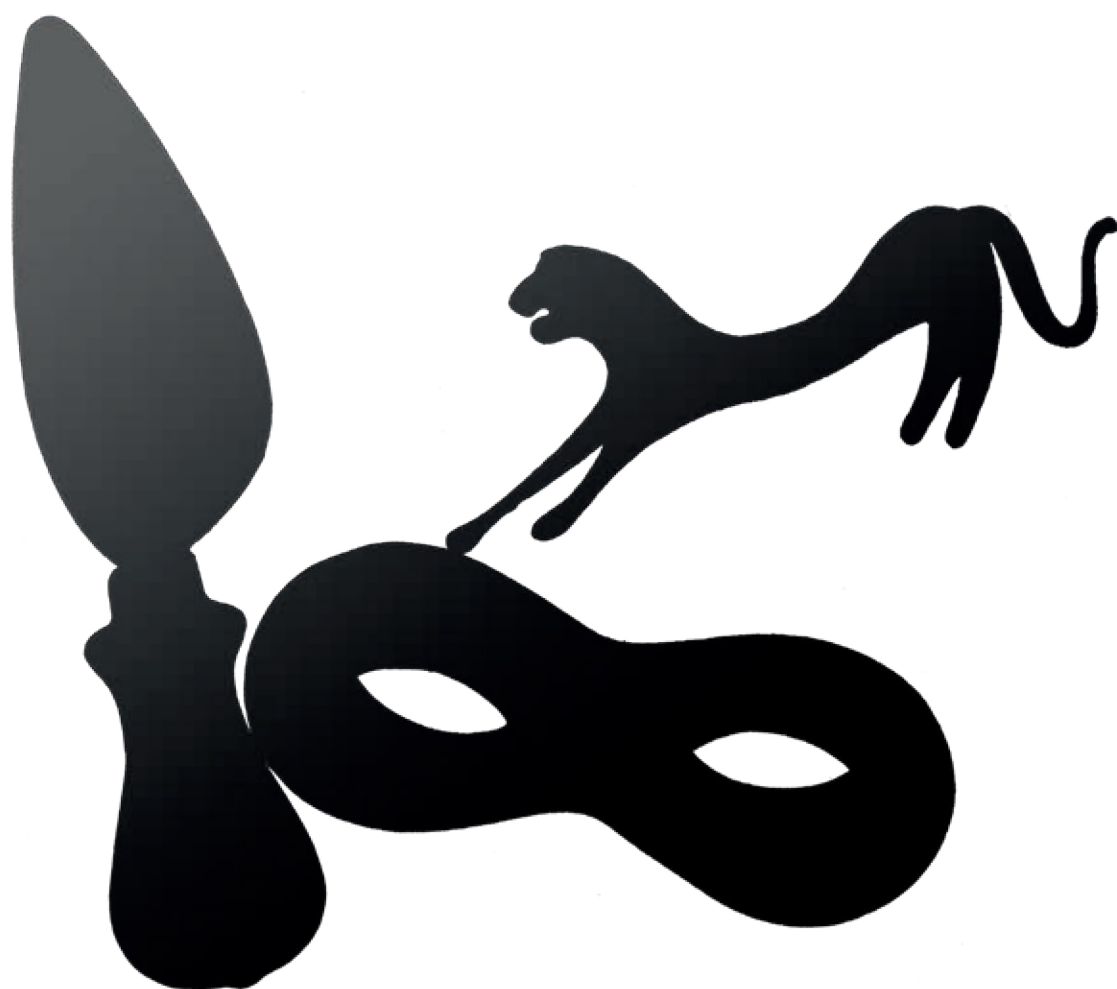








*Preliminary design for the “consortium of mountain municipalities in the Le Marche region” (1981).*



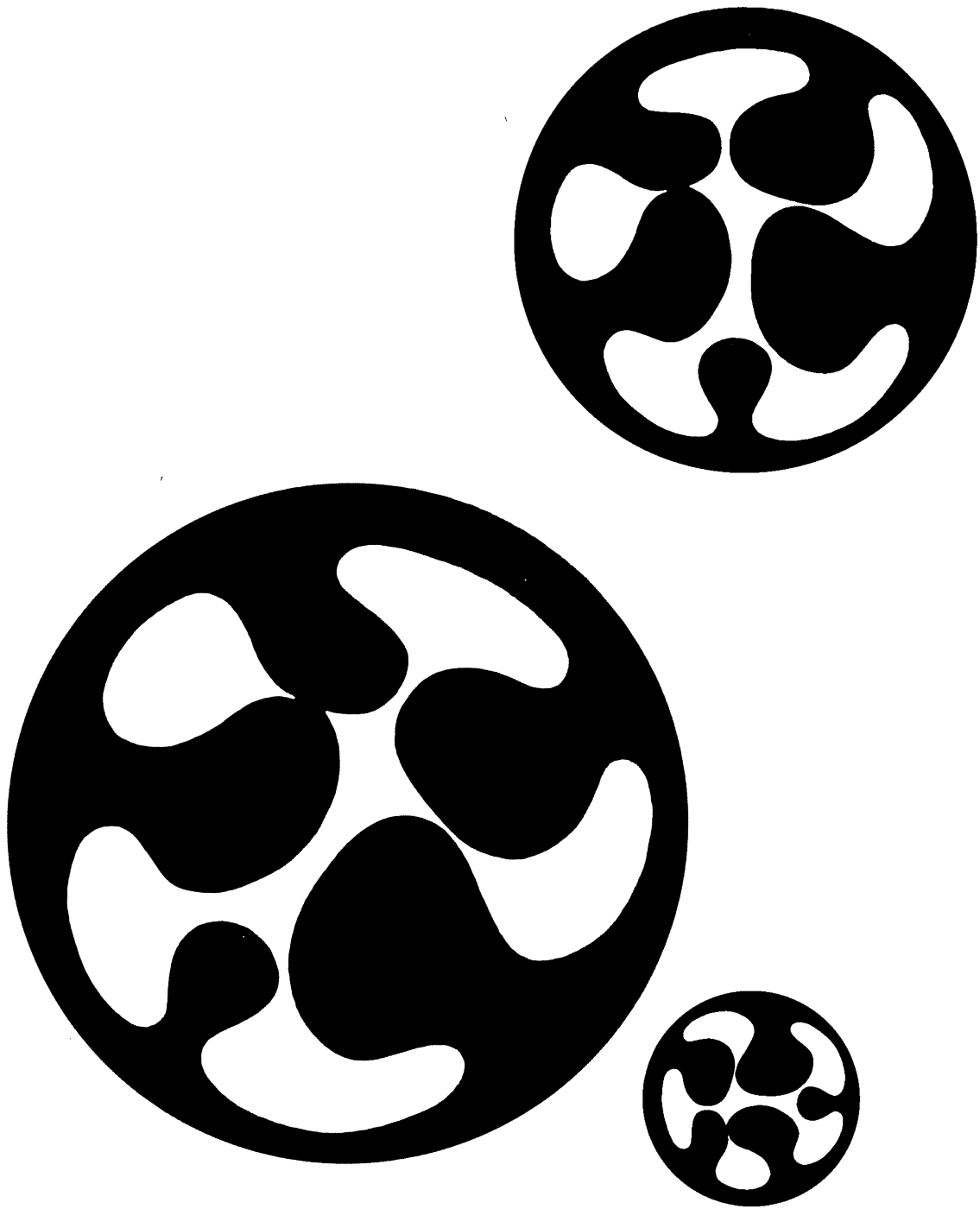
*Symbols of the publication "Provinciali sentimenti del tempo"*  
*Text by Gillo Dorfles, Grafis edizioni (1986).*







*The "Rosa di Pietra" closely resembling the original, was created using coloured chalks (1980).*



*“Eta Beta” Symbol for the “International Plastics Exhibition” (1956).*

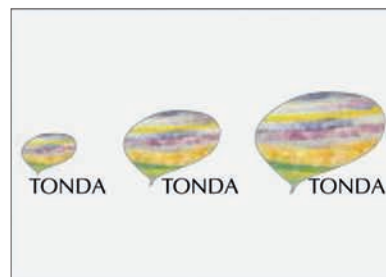
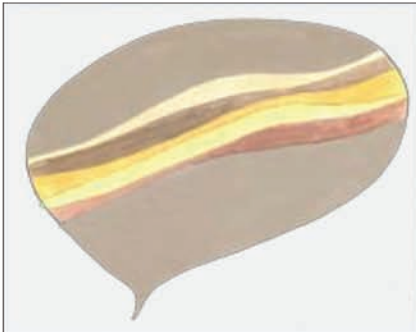
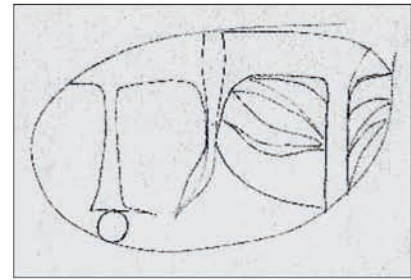
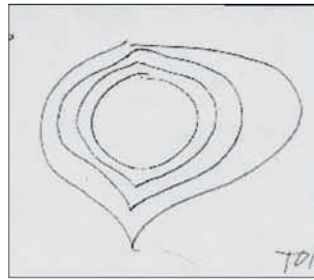
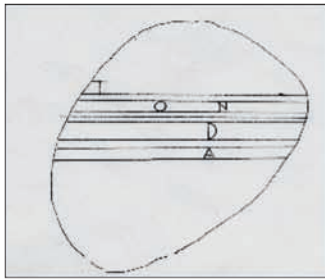






Michigan Prominence April 1975

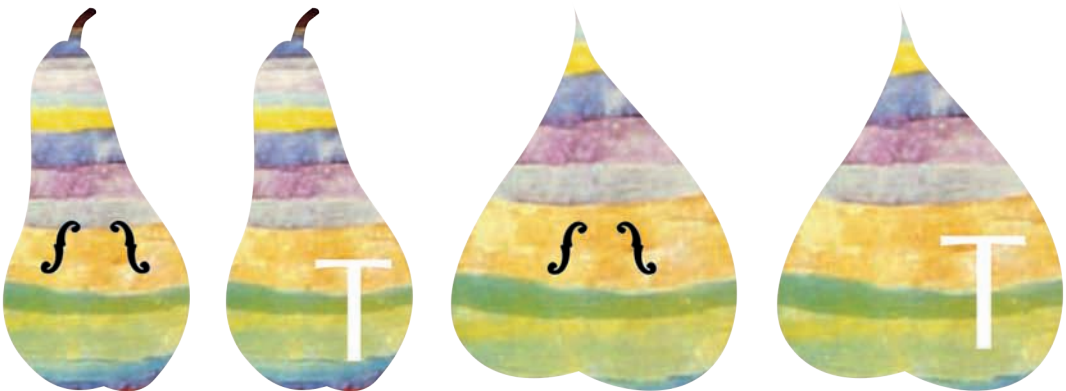
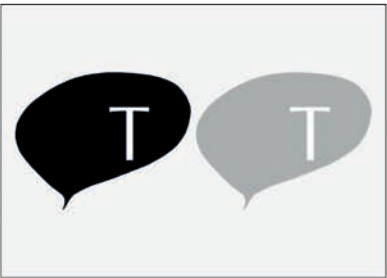
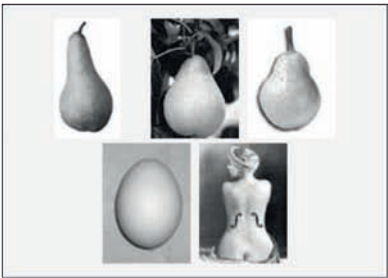




*Hypotesis, Attempts,  
Appraisal... Reflection,  
Comparison... Opinion,  
Approval.*

*And, finally: Trust.*





*A.D. and project*  
*Michele Provinciali*

*Collaboration*  
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*Co-ordination*  
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*Corrado Belli*

*Photographs of the “Tonda”*  
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