

*Imago. Studi di cinema e media*  
*n. 27, first semester 2023*  
*Call for papers*

**A Pop Masterpiece**  
**Media, costume and desire in the global image of Raffaella Carrà**

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Raffaella Carrà (1943-2021) is one of the most important figures in our audiovisual and musical culture: a dancing, noisy and incandescent star, who has been shining for seventy years. Multitalented and multifaceted - "one and three" (Barlozzetti 2021) or "one thousand, no one, only one" (Barra 2021) - Raffaella, born Pelloni, participates in and shapes with her image the different faces of visual culture at the turn of the 20th century, from the angelic and childlike child capable of converting her gangster father in her early film debut in Mario Bonnard's *Tormento del passato* (*Torment of the Past* - 1952) to the magnetic force with which her visual icon with her laughter, her dialectic artistry and her unmistakable blond bob still vitalises the television talk show in her last TV appearance as Fabio Fazio's guest on *Che tempo che fa* in November 2019.

If we consider the evolution of her career, from her first appearances on the big screen to her theatrical adventures, from radio projects to her recording success, from TV dramas to hosting the biggest TV shows ever, in a continuous dialogue between Italy and the rest of the world, one can touch the growing power of the pop icon, the symbolic strength of the body that moves and dances disheveled, the revolutionary and deflagrating meaning of her pop music in the rigid context of the black and white television at the turn of the sixties and seventies, the mirror of a country that is changing, but does not yet know how to say so.

With Raffaella Carrà, her theme songs, choreographies, and great variety shows, Italy found the words and ways to accept the pleasure of life, discovered a taste for visual and sound modernity, legitimised economic independence and enjoyed sexual liberation. With the more familiar Carrà, the "lady of the beans" (famous prize game in which contestants had to guess the exact number of beans

contained in a glass jar) and of the *carrambate* (the surprises realised in the programme *Carramba che sorpresa*, starring ordinary people), Italians get on the phone to call her, and invade the everyday public space of a private never before shared. With Raffaella queen of the visual and identity imaginary, viewers, admirers, connoisseurs and fans appropriate a global icon and consume her, exalting her in every remediation, from Pride to Tiktok, passing through the global successes of films and songs that cite and reread her, venerating her cult.

There are no studies in the intermediality framework, but neither are there more specific focuses on established theoretical paradigms. Carrà is a figure who eludes categorisation, and has often hinged on generic and scenario-based approaches that have not infrequently resolved Raffaella's being superficially and dogmatically, avoiding a real and in-depth examination of her activity and its various aspects. It is no coincidence that monographic works on her are scarce, and the few that do exist - Canino, Mancinelli 2006; Locatelli, Rita 2022; Mucciflora 2000; Rita 2019 - are not always immune to the temptation of becoming the creators of further media storytelling processes.

This dossier intends to shed light on the various ways in which Raffaella Carrà transformed popular entertainment, not only nationally, in an articulate and in-depth manner, ways on which still, a year after her death, ways on which still, a year after her death, there has been insufficient reflection. We certainly do not intend to deny or diminish the centrality of her icon in mirroring the ambivalent relationship history and culture entertain with the small screen, often the epitome of the clash between commitment and the realm of the ephemeral condensed in Raffaella's features, clothes, musical refrains and moves and poses. This is hinted at by Marco Bellocchio in *Buongiorno, notte* (*Good Morning, Night* - 2003), showing the terrorists of the Red Brigade viewing her Saturday show *Ma che sera* as much as they do the televised appeals of politicians or reports on Soviet military parades. If Carrà's image has escaped the transience and easy obsolescence of television, it is, however, also because of its more articulated structure and, as we said, the richness, stratification and complexity of her figure, combined with the strength of her evidence, capable of transiting between different ages and media, that this issue of *Imago* would like to focus on.

There is room, therefore, for studies that delve into the Carrà icon in its embodiment of various models of the feminine, in the dialectic between

eroticism and its removal, up to the Raffaella working woman of the 1980s, to the more commercial one of the Caroselli and the transition to Fininvest, and to the mature one that strengthens her own myth with coherence and without distorting it, up to her consecration in the Olympus of the secular divinities of the queer world.

Lacking, and therefore welcome, are analyses of the music written for the star that no one defines as a singer; explorations of the association between Carrà and certain authors - Paolini and Silvestri, Boncompagni, Malgioglio for the lyrics, Pisano, Bracardi, Ormi for the melodies and arrangements - and of the musical cultures that have sprung up around her successes, in Italy and in many other countries. If with Mosconi (2019) we focus on Raffaella Carrà's performances paired with Mina in *Milleluci*, in the dichotomous sisterhood experience that the two women undergo while collaborating on a complex programme, which sees them go through very different moments of their respective careers, reflections on the most iconic television performances would be equally useful, such as the theme songs of the various programmes - from *Canzonissima* to *Ma che sera*, passing through the aforementioned *Milleluci*, from *Millemilioni* to *Fantastico 3* up to *Pronto Raffaella* -, which bring lyrics and dances imbued with energy and desire to the heart of the TV show, or such as the grandiose duets with Ella Fitzgerald or Stevie Wonder in *Buonasera Raffaella* broadcast from the United States.

These and other points, as in the list below, constitute the guidelines for a multifaceted dossier that aims at framing the phenomenon within the context of the major changes taking place in popular culture and entertainment:

- Beyond the light showgirl: female conducting in television variety shows;
- The challenge of new television genres, the style and image between queen and TV host;
- Becoming an actress: Centro Sperimentale, film appearances and television theatre;
- Choreography, style, dancing as a recipe for the modernisation of television;
- Radio, speech, talk, the deep bond with Gianni Boncompagni;
- Costume, disguise and fashion in Raffaella. Corrado Colabucci and Luca Sabatelli's magic;
- Mediating the challenges of modernity: commercial communications and the advertising business;

- Raffaella and her fandom, between contemporary art and popular appropriation;
- Compositional strategies from cinema to discography: Bob Sinclair, *La Grande Bellezza* (*The Great Beauty* - Sorrentino 2013) and *Ballo Ballo* (*Explota Explota* - My Heart Goes Boom!, Nacho Álvarez, 2020)
- Raffaella vs. the rest of the world. Between music and TV in Spain, the United States, Latin America;
- The diva and her private life: criticism, reception, acclaim in the popular press;
- The challenge to the Catholic world: Raffaella Carrà and female emancipation between Italy and Spain;
- The Carrà phenomenon to the test of popular culture theories;
- Raffaella Carrà as 'lifestyle' (P. Almodovar) and queer icon.

To propose an article, we welcome abstracts (max 2500 characters) in Italian or English, plus 5 essential bibliographical references, 5 key words and a biography (max 5 lines). Proposals should be sent by email to both editors (marta.perrotta@uniroma3.it and paola.valentini@unifi.it) by 30 October 2022. The results of the selection will be communicated by 10 November, and the complete essays (maximum 40,000 characters), written in Italian or English, possibly accompanied by a maximum of 8 images (jpg or png, 300 dpi, possibly already manipulated for publication in black and white), must be sent no later than 12 February 2023 for double blind review.