

RESEARCH THEME

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Title of the doctoral research

Italian Typography Redefined: the Nebiolo Type Foundry, 1852–1978

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Abstract

Founded in Turin in 1852, Nebiolo was Italy's most important manufacturer of foundry type and printing presses, both in terms of market share and international reputation. Thanks to its Art Studio, headed by distinguished designers such as Raffaello Bertieri, Giulio Da Milano, Alessandro Butti and Aldo Novarese, throughout the 20th-century Nebiolo created highly influential typefaces – including Semplicità, Neon, Landi, Hastile, Augustea, Garaldus, Recta, Eurostile, Forma, Stop. More than four decades have elapsed since the foundry's closure in 1978: due to the dispersion of the company's archives, the lack of primary sources hampered research, and despite its importance, a history of the foundry has yet to be written. Yet, Nebiolo remains a key reference in Italian and European graphic design, and its legacy is highly relevant.

The research group Nebiolo History Project (Marta Bernstein, James Clough, Alessandro Colizzi, Riccardo De Franceschi, Massimo Gonzato, Riccardo Olocco) is actively trying to fill the gap in order to produce a scholarly publication about the Nebiolo foundry. Using methodologies that integrate documentary evidence and oral history testimonies, the research involves systematical collection and collation of data, in order to provide a complete, cross-checked background which is key to a proper critical assessment.

The research is ongoing and open to new paths. In addressing Nebiolo's heritage, the goal is to transcend disciplinary, national or period boundaries. Topics we are keen to explore include (but are not limited to): business and/or cultural relations with north-European foundries; the company's industrial history; the factory organization; the role of lesser-known figures within the company; the technical workflow at the Studio artistico; discernible trends in the company's type catalogue; the relevance of non-Latin scripts; the history and evolution of their printing presses. Research proposals can focus on archival materials, data analysis, oral history, or a critical assessment of any aspect of the history of the Turin foundry.

Keywords

Typeface technology, Typography, Printing