

WORKING PAPER ABSTRACT

Fortunato Depero and the Space of Futurist Theatricality.

By Laura Chiesa, Spring 2005 at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America

The presentation is a selective reading of Fortunato Depero's writings and experimentations highlighting his spatial Futurist inventions. Depero's inventions are theatrical, in the sense that Marjorie Perloff suggests considering Futurist poetics "theatrical," as the "space between the arts." His 'plastic complexes', as proposed as early as 1915, are a free play and new configuration of abstract plastic constructions. The proposal of the 'plastic complex' doesn't proceed using opposition: space and place are in motion or suspended, constructions are not heavy and monumental but ephemeral and coloured. Depero later reworked the 'plastic complex' in the space of theater: in some of his short pieces for the 'synthetic theater' as well as in his later proposal for the reconfiguration of scenography where the set design should be constructed with multiple floors, creating spaces that allow for different proportions, distances and dimensions. At the end of the '20s, when Depero had already experimented in theater, graphic design, and temporary architecture, he lived for two years in New York. Several of his projects done during this stay were not achieved: among them: *New Babel*, a theatrical piece, and *New York – Film vissuto*, an experimental film with experimental music. Out of these experimentations, back in Italy Depero wove together part of the film project into the *Liriche Radiofoniche*, writings intended to be transmitted via radio, one of the more recent mediums in which Futurism was experimenting in the '30s. This presentation is a part of the research that I am conducting at the Italian Academy in which I analyze Depero's spatial inventions in different mediums-- theater, scenography, painting, graphics, advertising and writing-- not only on their own terms but also in comparison to other international avant-garde artists (Kiesler, Massine, Ruttman, Moholy-Nagy and other Futurist exponents).