

# RENATO CASARO

## SCENERY

Since its inception, film poster painting was considered a "minor art" but it had a great, even cultural, impact and a profound effect on the emergence of a new collective imagination, to such an extent that cinema won over the masses, bringing success to new legends and narratives.

This phenomenon exploded in Europe and Italy in particular after the Second World War as people, eager to forget the recent past, felt the need to cultivate a more worldly and modern attitude, thanks in part to the widespread love of cinema which was in constant evolution, creating a new mass culture based primarily on visual images.

Most people were drawn by what they saw on the screen but the images which spilled out of the dark cinemas onto the roads and towns in the shape of posters and flyers could be found everywhere in towns, cities and provinces.

The cinematographic text, namely the film, was now accompanied by a huge amount of other material, commonly known as 'paratext' (flyers, posters and advertising), which often had a greater effect on people's imagination than the film itself, creating icons and popular legends.

Soon the so-called major arts realised the potential of these dynamics, especially the *nouveau réalisme* movement founded by art critic Pierre Restany. One of its followers was the German artist Wolf Vostell, who probably invented *décollage*, the practice of tearing posters from the walls and turning them into works of art, a technique which was also used by Jacques Villeglé and Mimmo Rotella in Italy.

There has always been a certain amount of overlap between *major arts* and *minor arts*, but there is no doubt that thanks to this unusual and prolific short circuit, the works of minor arts, like film posters, have physically entered the halls of the major arts through the front door; this phenomenon exploded with Pop Art and continues even today.

Incidentally, it is highly plausible, if not probable, that torn pieces of Renato Casaro's posters have ended up in contemporary art museums, incorporated into works of *décollage* by famous artists.

## BIO

In the years after the Second World War, with the boom of Italian filmmaking around the world and the glorious success of Cinecittà — the heroic "Hollywood on the Tiber" — film art, considered a more "minor art", saw the emergence of a number of talented painters in Italy who went on to forge successful international careers in the coming years.

Renato Casaro is undoubtedly one of the most important and prestigious of these names, especially in the international film industry.

Casaro, who was self-taught and whose natural talent was decidedly rare, was a keen cinema-goer and while he was still studying at a typography art school in his home town

of Treviso, he began drawing large billboards as was the tradition in those days for the cinema he regularly visited in exchange for free tickets.

The owner of the cinema pointed him out to a major advertising agency in Rome, Studio Favalli, which at the time was the most famous agency in the capital for movie campaigns. Without giving it a second thought, Casaro embarked on this great adventure and moved from Treviso to Rome in 1953. Not yet twenty, he began his apprenticeship at the agency, where he learnt the secrets of his profession and met the man he considers his first real master: Angelo Cesselon, a cinema painter who, like him, was from the Veneto region. It was not long, however, that Casaro, bursting with talent and the ambition to do great things, decided to open his own studio.

Casaro's first big international success came in 1965 with the key art of the blockbuster *The Bible*, produced by Dino De Laurentiis; for the very first time his artwork was displayed on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood.

His friendship with Sergio Leone also began that year and he produced the poster images, mainly for foreign markets, of the Clint Eastwood saga, as well as posters for his other films which will remain forever in the collective memory.

After that, Renato Casaro was courted by the major studios in Hollywood (where he lived and worked for a couple of years), London and New York, collaborating with great directors and production companies on a variety of different films.

Casaro's artwork featured in the films of Claude Lelouch, Francis Ford Coppola, Wolfgang Petersen, Bernardo Bertolucci, Luc Besson, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Francesco Rosi, Giuseppe Tornatore, Milos Forman, Percy Adlon and many more.

The strategy for the launch of the film *My Name is Nobody* (based on an idea and produced by Sergio Leone) has gone down in movie history: the large poster with just an image set against a white background - the subject was enigmatically only seen from the back -, with no clue as to the film it was advertising, caused great curiosity and hype. It was only in the second definitive poster starring Terence Hill, was the same but now his face was visible and recognisable) that the public was able to read the title of the film and all the usual information.

As the last century drew to a close and with the advent of digital technology, Casaro, at the height of his success, decided to retire temporarily from the film industry, devoting himself entirely to painting, as he had always been much appreciated by numerous experts and collectors.

He turned his attention to painting wildlife, those large open spaces of the African savannah and the Arabian deserts which he was familiar with, thanks to his frequent travels which enabled him to study their fauna.

His original passion for the cinema and its stars, however, resurfaced continuously and he produced works of pure artistic fantasy, where the iconic stars of the screen were portrayed in spatial structures inspired by famous Italian Renaissance works of art.

In the past few years, Casaro has "almost" exclusively focused on pure painting, even though he is still best-known for his film artwork and producers and directors still seek him out for their projects, like his admirer Quentin Tarantino and Carlo Verdone.