

Mulino Bianco story

(1973-1993)

The Yom Kippur war and the resulting oil embargo were a shock to the Western World. Inflation rose rapidly and the government of Italy froze the prices of essential foods, while the producers were faced with increased costs of raw materials. Barilla decided to diversify into products that were not subject to the price freeze: this is how Mulino Bianco was born. Below, 1973: austerity, poor shopping in the supermarkets. Right, a Kodak advertisement clearly referring to fuel rationing and to Sundays without cars. Facing page, a drawing prepared by Gio Rossi as a proposal for the "Mulino Bianco" ("White Mill") logo.

A Mill that came in from the cold

ALBINO IVARDI CANAPINI

In 1971 Pietro and Gianni Barilla retired. The "American period" began with the presentation of the holding company W.R. Grace of New York, which had bought the company. It had European plans in the food industry, it intended to develop and diversify. The US company had no intention of running Barilla; the group had specialized in the chemicals field. They intended to control the company from afar, laying out general lines of development, leaving the everyday running of the company to the local managers. Thus Engineer Manfredo Manfredi, Director General of the company since 1961, became Chief Executive. In order to enhance its control from the other side of the Atlantic, the holding company reinforced its administrative systems, already based on a five-year budget, with detailed analytical accountings which were more like yearly reports.

This would help the planning and marketing sections which would have access to precious monthly forecasts and sales reports on the different products marketed.

In 1971 the total sales turnover of the company was 50 billion lire. It continued to rise at the same rate as the previous years: in 1973 it reached the figure of 63 billion lire, while market share in the pasta sector remained at 15%. But new ideas were about to come out from under their bushels. A single word, "diversification", had set in motion the marketing department in the search for new fields, sure as it was that the new goals would never be reached through the production of biscottes, breadsticks and instant cake products alone, areas in which Barilla was already active. This was the incubator from which the "Mulino Bianco" ("White Mill") brand name would emerge in 1975.



The most significant acceleration in this direction came at the end of 1973. The year of the Yom Kippur war between the Arab nations and Israel; the oil crisis forced up the prices of all raw materials throughout the world's markets. Wheat cost more abroad than within the EEC; inflation came in from abroad and the Italian market followed suit.

The inflation rate reached 20%. The Government brought in the easiest and most demagogical of solutions: on the 13th of August it decreed a price freeze on a series of basic foodstuffs, among which was pasta. However much wheat was grown, the price of pasta as it stood on that day was to be maintained, infringement would lead to imprisonment. The whole sector was hit. Obviously the situation could not last long.

In 1974 the "administration" price of pasta was introduced (to increase the price of pasta, permission had to be obtained from the



government, answers taking up to six months to arrive).

Many smaller pasta producers preferred closure. Barilla and other major producers were therefore forced to fill the gaps. As a result the company's market share rose to 18% between 1975 and 1976. The government softened the blow by supplying wheat at special prices through the AIMA.

The Americans were literally shocked by the price freeze, which was inconceivable (but not only for them) in market economies. From then on pasta became a "political" product and the US head office asked the management to give the company a second leg to stand on.

Until then Barilla had been a single product company.

But its problems were not all resolved with the appearance in 1975 of the poster whose slogan was "Tomorrow morning stop-off at the mill".

It would be uphill all the way for the company and for its accounts in 1976 and 1977. The new products needed to be perfected, they caused considerable outlay in research and marketing, were not immediately profitable, but they did have potential which was encouraging.

And the company needed encouragement. It had had to grit its teeth and tighten its belt. The order of the day was efficiency and cost reduction, and even advertising was rationed. The Barilla staff had understood what the times required and had shown great team spirit. They were also very proud not to have ever sent in accounts in the red nor to have ever lowered the quality of their products.

There were also times of glory. At Christmas of 1974 the sales personnel celebrated the reaching of the 100 billion lire turnover figure. The "administration" price of pasta ended in 1978. Mulino Bianco had taken off (and reached a market share figure of 8.5% as compared with 3% in 1973), and sales turnover had reached the 200 billion lire mark.

And Pietro Barilla flew backwards and forwards, to and from New York more often.



How the Mulino Bianco began

GIANNI MAESTRI

Touching the heart of Italian families

The Mulino Bianco brand name has centred around it a deep urge for renewal. It could be used as an example for the younger generations to be more creative and determined in their rôle as the force behind the country's industries. It was a success outside Italy's frontiers and is quoted as an example to be imitated abroad: and that is why it has so many "fathers" and "relations".

When it was declared a success, researchers, consultants, advertising designers and managers all came forward to take the applause.

As a reaction to this I have so far never written about my rôle in it. Today I willingly recall my own very special professional rôle and take the opportunity to honour the hard working people who came together to create recipes, bake, test and create the "Carosello" commercials, sell, and who were incredibly patient. My task was to create the idea behind the project, direct it, as it were, and manage it for eight years until 1980.

Worthy colleagues continued the job and extended the product line and the market: sweet snacks, crackers, breads, etc. Today, in 1994, the Mulino Bianco trade mark enjoys 1,400 billion lire of sales and employs 3,000 people.

There are three key dates in the journey that began with Grace's European plans and Barilla's worries about having to engage in an uphill battle at a time of national crisis.

Spring 1971: Grace entered the European market through the acquisition of the Tanara ice cream company and Barilla, and organized an assault on other markets: it set up its head quarters in Paris and accelerated the creation of a development plan through the acquisition of other food companies in Europe.

Barilla was asked to sell products of other

countries (cheeses, oils, jams, etc.) as required by a conglomerate policy which was popular in the US at that time. Luckily it never came about. Grace therefore asked Barilla to formulate a plan for diversification including several criteria:

- the sector in question had to be large, large enough to develop sales equal to those of the pasta side of the company;
- it had to be a sector in which consumption was on the rise;
- it also had to have a low level of competition;
- and it had to be compatible with the expertise that already existed in the company and to exploit synergies within the sales force and distribution networks;
- it had to be linked with wheat in some way.

In parallel and as a possible alternative, unsuccessful research was carried out into external development, ie into opportunities for acquiring other companies and these included larger bakery and cake producers such as Maggiora-Talmone, Lazzaroni, Galbusera, Bistefani, Tettamanti, Colussi of Milan and Perugia, Tre Marie, Besana-Frontini etc.

Confusion was added by other hypotheses of development including expansion outside the sector such as into the wine, cooked meats and chocolate sectors. I remember that for a year we sold Parma cheese forms in enormous boxes and with the Barilla trade mark; strange ideas that generated only fatigue and frustration.

I began working on solid ground when I created three working groups: biscuits and crackers, snacks and bread, attempted sales.

Let's take a look at the first group. We looked at the world of biscuits to learn, create alliances, find new products and production methods. All producers were in some way linked with the larger biscuit producers and none of them helped us. A very useful reference point for our work was a small biscuit producer of the Valtellina: Mario Galbusera, a master of quality baking and a great bowls player. End of 1972: we were in London to meet a technologist with a solid biscuit baking background: George Maxwell would be central to the development of Mulino Bianco, a true master pastry maker who worked for three years mixing

dough and cooking biscuits in the Via Veneto oven. Dozens of recipes for biscuits were the result.

The lack of resources at that time led us to look for industrial products outside the company: we discovered the term "co-packer" which would become familiar within Barilla; we opened first at Mortara and then at Udine. The first company's entrance hall (Parein-General Biscuit) bore a marble plaque which made reference to the 120,000 quintals of product made and sold in the five years since the birth of the company. We began to hope too.

But what was happening in that sector? The general picture was grim: Barilla had failed in its second launch of its "eggs and milk" line; Chiari e Forti had failed twice, once in its launch of cereal-based biscuits and the second time in its launch of Fattorie and Pandeia. The same went for Plasmon in its launch of the line "Il forno in Via Archimede".

And what was happening in the companies operating in the sector traditionally? Venchi Unica had announced the bankruptcy of Maggiora and Talmone; Pavesi was in the doldrums; Lazzaroni was not doing too well either, nor was General Biscuit Parein, which later closed its factory.

October 1975: the Sales Director held the first press conference to launch the biscuit line. We were all there. The atmosphere was tense, but positive; it underlined the desire to leave behind us the pessimism of those years. The first shop I visited a week later, just inside Milan's city limits, had sold all it had taken. In a gesture of thanks, and to bring us luck, we unloaded all the boxes of biscuits we had brought in our car. The Mulino Bianco adventure had begun.

A small mill lost in the midst of a green field had just re-opened; a wheel had begun turning grinding six little biscuits: *Tarallucci*, *Macine*, *Pale*, *Mugnai*, *Campagnole* and *Galletti*. Six types of bread followed and six sweet snacks, six cakes, like so many assault troops opening holes in all the segments of the Italian bakery market. The yellow wall met anyone entering the supermarkets and would soon be known to all.

By 1976 our work was downhill all the way.



Mulino Bianco bread sticks were launched and sales soared and with them came a new production line at Caserta; then came the biscuit plant at Pedrignano, then the biscottes line which no one believed would be a success under a different trade mark. In a year market share rose from 15% to 20%.

Then the sweet snacks were launched through a specially created distribution network; a handful of colleagues managed the line with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and success was total on all fronts.

During an audit in 1976 in Via Veneto, Mr Freeborn, one of the many country experts that had succeeded each other in the job asked "What about biscuit 2nd generation?" To this imperiously phrased question which called on us to do more, I replied two minutes later with a silver tray carrying exquisite pastries. He was surprised again by our creative capacity and by our speed of implementation. I had just bought them from the Folli pastry shop in Via della Repubblica: the era of pastries had just begun.

We had created a shiny and powerful machine that included a system for bringing innovative products to the market to supply demand under



an umbrella that involved a unique promotion and advertising mechanism that had touched the heart of the Italian family.

The recipe

1. *Positioning* (which is an ugly word used to describe a value of a certain product for a certain customer).

The idea of using the Barilla trade mark for biscuits was set aside after tests carried out showed that the Barilla name was associated with pasta and that it was difficult to associate biscuits with pasta.

Then we thought of using the characteristics and the culture of the country where biscuits originated – Britain; we therefore invented a series of brand names and created the packaging for "Biscuit House" and "Mary Ann". But further research led us to set aside this line as it was too foreign.

Then we decided to locate our product in the "good food of yesteryear" area, associating it with traditional and natural values; the slogan *Mangia sano, torna alla natura* ("eat healthily, return to nature") has remained the same for twenty years. At that time consumers were beginning to lose confidence in industrially produced foods (which meant adulterated foods, non-natural and unhealthy foods).

2. *The brand name*. This was the strong point of the project and was the result of three fundamental elements:

- wheat ears and flowers are symbols of all that is natural. They are to be found in a print of the turn of the century and represent fertility as contained in by Pietro Cascella's paintings;
- the small mill sums up the idea of tradition and evokes a fabulous and dreamlike world, we could describe it as the small mill of Pepperidge farm;
- the name Mulino Bianco ("White Mill") brings together the concepts of genuine foods and health. The mill is the simplest way of producing wheat foods, as in the past, which evokes nostalgia; white is the colour that sums up concepts of purity, strength and light.

After having looked at hundreds of geographical names and food cultures and patron saints, we found a poster used in the 1960s to advertise Barilla white flour with the slogan *Fresca di Mulino* ("Fresh from the mill"); hence "Mulino Bianco".

3. *Tarallucci & Co.* The names of the products are not common in today's language and bring back memories of the past and of the rural atmosphere. The drawings and the biscuit forms are imprecise purposely so as to create the impression of non-industrial biscuits. We registered 72 different drawings.

Tarallucci, Macine and Galletti are the names of biscuits that have dominated the market for twenty years under the brand name Mulino Bianco. I remember that we also invented two other interesting names for biscuits – Mostaccioli and Spigole – which were eventually dropped.

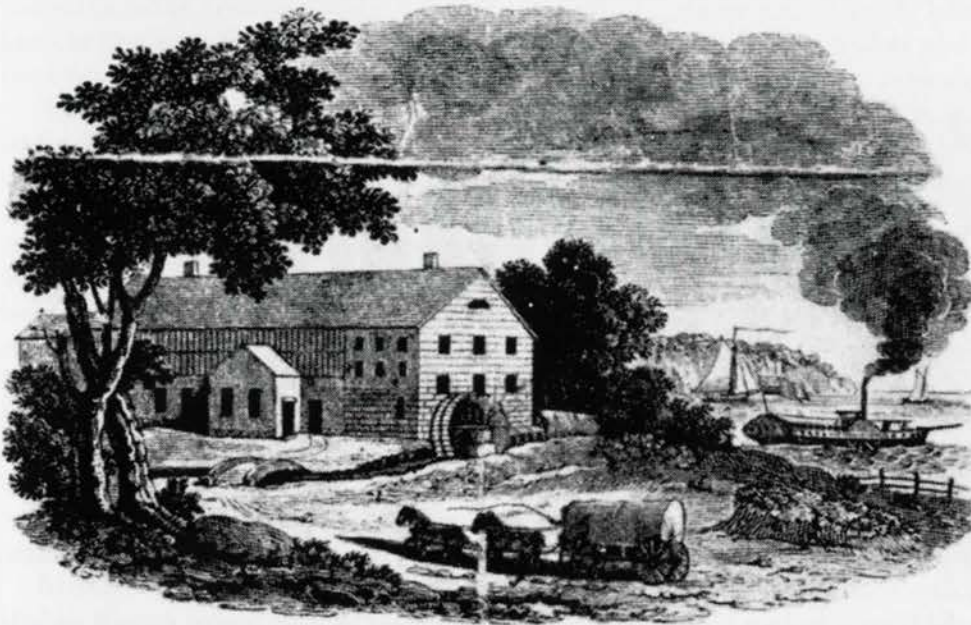
4. *The bags*. The bags recall the paper bags in which bakers sold bread, in line with the whole principle of recalling values of past. The design was found during a fair in Cologne. The packaging line had already been created by Desler.

5. *Tap dancers and the rainbow*. We had thought of using Ella Fitzgerald for the television commercial – her deep voice singing the sweet melody of *Moon River* and her dark face contrasting with the white mill. The contract was written, the fee of about ten million lire agreed to and the air ticket bought. Unfortunately she fell ill at the last minute and it all had to be cancelled. The ideas for slogans included *Martin Muma più legger di una piuma* ("Martin Muma lighter than a feather") and *Non far sapere al contadino quanto sono buoni...* ("Don't tell the farmer how good..."). The final version contained music that echoed the tones of *Sayonara* and this accompanied television commercials with a painted backdrop of green hills and blue skies, called "Happy Valley". The film *L'Albero degli Zoccoli* was popular at the time, so the tone was right.

6. *The bowls*. The creative power of the project was reinforced by the invention of a milk bowl which was collected by thousands of Italian families: *Il Coccio*. Its original rôle was as a



A series of graphic elements and preparatory studies marked the long development of the Mulino Bianco brand name: old 19th century prints, mainly of English origin, with pictures of mills and wheat ear decorations with corn flowers, delicately painted with water colours and printed using colour lithography techniques. This page shows some of the designs created by Gio Rossi for the brand. The "fable" version of the mill is curious and was used in the cartoons of the "Little White Miller" (see p. 308).



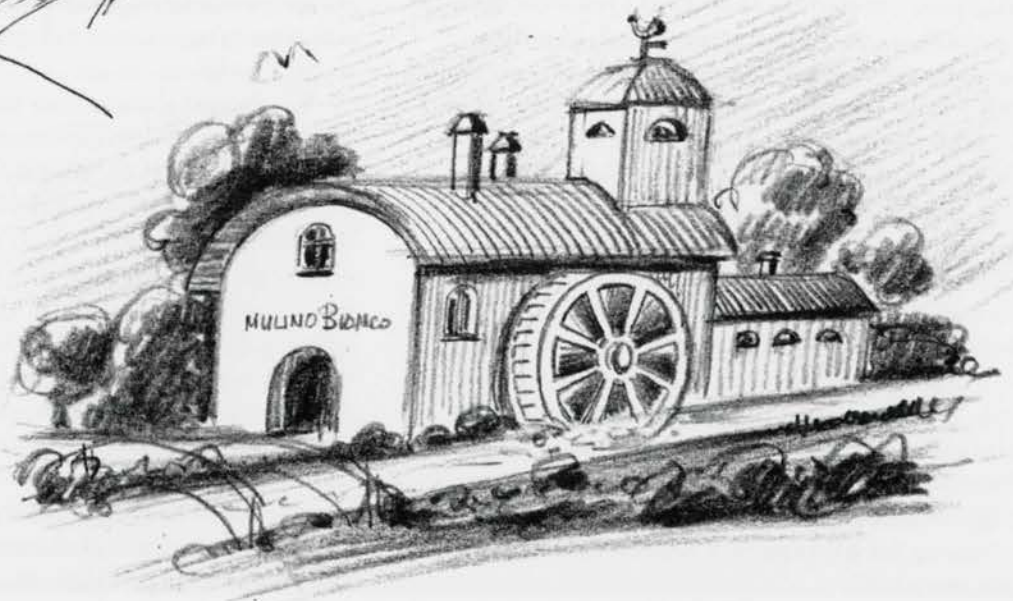
promotional item but the organization behind it since developed into a powerful machine at the disposal of the marketing department of the biscuits and pasta sectors. All these elements, efficiently brought to the public's attention by the advertising campaign, proved to be highly successful: the brand name, the product and the communications policy reached their target, and introduced a whole new way of perceiving the communications game.

What was the magic formula?

A professional and entrepreneurial approach: a team of professionals had put into practice all they had learned in so many years of hard work.

Good ideas: curiosity, exploration and research were all the life blood of creativity; the best ideas came out early in the morning.

Synergies: we started with nothing in hand except low retail prices and transport costs. These synergies were entirely deviated to product quality and television commercials. The most difficult step was persuading the US company to believe in the idea, overwhelmed as it was by setbacks.



The development of the image draws to its conclusion: combining the name as identified by the company and other psychological historical and graphical elements collected in months of research, Gio Rossi created the first complete layout of the Mulino Bianco logo. Right, the definitive version based on the sketches of Gio Rossi, drawn by Cesare Trolli who had been a designer and colour lithographer of biscuit boxes for all his life.



*New York, Hotel Algonquin,
44th Street*

1975. The hotel was one which had hosted famous personalities of the theatre and of the musical worlds, and had photographs of the artists hanging on all their walls; there was a smell of closed rooms. This old hotel had been assigned to our group during the period in which our plans were being presented by Peter Grace. Our Swiss colleagues of the chemicals industry did better, with a Plaza Hotel in front of Central Park: they were doing better on the market.

N.Y. Grace Building, 1014 Avenue of the Americas. On the top floor Carl Graaf counted out the numbers of 700 crystals. I had placed a handful of yellow M.B. bags that I had brought with me on the table. They all came down from the auditorium and tasted the biscuits with very few words of comment, except to say that they were good. They all understood that they were good but none of the Americans understood that the bags contained the formula that would have allowed Barilla to come out of its impasse. Pietro Barilla came to understand only later.

At the end of the 1970s Grace was not doing well. They decided to drop their European companies one by one. The last to go was Barilla, whose many qualities they admired and many of whose managers they respected, but they saw no reason for keeping it. I believe they regretted their decision.



Growth and maintenance of a complex system

From the story told hitherto we see that the Mulino Bianco brand name was the result of complex marketing engineering, and as in all complex systems, needed continuous updating during its life.

We should always bear in mind that part of entrepreneurial success comes from sheer hard work, the fatigue created by the system which is the result of the continual effort needed to keep the product's appeal and to update continually the communications policy that relates to it. These two aspects have kept the Mulino Bianco brand name alive.

The first problem related to the extension of the product line. Lately many new products have been launched under the Mulino Bianco brand name. Whenever the traditional line of development of the original product's position in the market was abandoned, for example with the introduction of products that were foreign to our

food tradition or simply basing a product on the "me too" principle, the market was far less receptive.

The products that have been most successful are those that fall in line with the original thought processes behind the Mulino Bianco name, those that were "good to think of", ie those that were in line with the promises made by the brand name (natural content, simplicity) and those that responded to latent needs of the consumer.

This is the thread that links a long series of successful inventions: "chocolate embraces" ("Abbracci"), a carrot cake, an apple-filled biscuit, a small bread loaf with an original texture and structure, a soft plum cake made with yoghurt; milestones in the updating and maintenance of the Mulino Bianco brand name.

The second great area of upkeep and maintenance has been in the communications field. The success of the Mulino Bianco line is largely due to its ability to interpret the emotional needs of the consumer. This has led to the need to update the plots and the symbols used in the

The newly created logo spoke for itself, as had the 1910 trade mark for Barilla, summing up in a nutshell a series of values and meanings which were immediately perceivable by the general public. Thus the first advertisement created by Landò and Mambelli in 1975 [ASB, Rbma 75] showed only the new biscuits and the new logo on the yellow background which was common to the packages and which would soon become familiar. Mulino Bianco had begun its long career.

communications relating to the product so as to keep in line with the social and cultural climate in the country.

The profound change in social values and styles of life of the 1980s led to a change in the way Mulino Bianco communicated with its consumer, and these changes were basically three: the decline of anti-industrial prejudice, the increase in the tendency of the consumer to buy branded products and the acceptance by society at large of the spectacular advert. The 1980s however also saw several trends that were continuations of those of the 1970s: the acceptance of the cake, the search for a balanced and natural diet, a tendency to see a link between health and food and the boom of the "Italian breakfast".

In other words, while the products of the Mulino Bianco brand were in total harmony with consumer trends that were to emerge at the end of the 1980s, its communications began to fall behind in terms of current culture. The brand

name was correctly placed in market terms but the narration plots and the symbols of its communication policy needed to be rapidly updated to take into account recent social and cultural developments. After a transitory phase the solution of transforming the White Mill from a metaphor into a physical entity was adopted.

With the materialization of the mill (1990) a distinct change was brought about with the substitution of the symbolic content of the commercial: from an idealized past (nature as a fable, the refuge of memory, nostalgia for an archaic society) to the concrete present (the mill as a place to live today).

The ideological life blood of the Mulino Bianco brand remains the countryside. It is no longer seen however as a refuge from city life but as the final goal of a good life, everyday life brought back to human scale, the return of harmony in family life, the relaxing atmosphere of weekends extended to every day of the year.



Looking back

DARIO LANDÒ

I don't think that any marketing campaign has ever provoked such a widespread reaction nor one of such a varied nature.

I remember the ingenuity of so many companies who came to us after the operation had proved its effectiveness, ending their meeting with the phrase "yes, I believe we too need a 'Mulino Bianco'", as though all they needed to do was press a button or to order one as you order a "Capuccino" at the bar.

I remember the frustration of the TV production company when after such hard work in the production of fine TV commercials, it insisted in sending its best commercials to the Cannes festival

only to come home with its tail between its legs; the green envy of a highly qualified competitor who went around Italy, including Parma, saying "Oh, it's only a bad copy of Pepperidge Farm"; the short sightedness of those who asked to see the "case history" of the marketing campaign, of purely academic interest, who would then ask "well, where's the method that you are so proud of? It all started by chance."; the jealousy of marketing professionals who commented: "So what? With all those billions at my disposal I could create hundreds of Mulino Biancos"; the lies, often rather touching, of the many (consultants, directors, sociologists) who were not in the kitchen when the roast was cooked but who later declared their part: but we all know that victory has many fathers.

And I would add the very human conflict of the Chairman of the company on his return finding it had grown stronger than when he had sold it.

Everyone talked about us. We had become an

example for the world, but the miracle had happened during the years in which he was not at the helm.

And it was a period in which the brand name Mulino Bianco almost outshone the Barilla trade mark. His joy was mingled with a touch of hurt pride. Then came the Fellini years, the stories with cats found under the rain and everything came right again.

Here we are on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the first advertising campaign (Autumn 1975 and the poster read "Do you remember those good biscuits that tasted of butter, milk and flour? Tomorrow, stop off at the white mill" which was immediately criticised, the slogan as being considered too long and the colours too soft). I feel that it is right, and possible, to take a closer look at the origins of the operation so as to better define the professional values that were behind it.

A four hands campaign

DARIO LANDÒ

It is often said (or once it was said, before the creative designers took control of the agencies and of the job as a whole) that successful campaigns were carried out using two pairs of hands – a good client and a good agency.

This did not mean that everyone did everything, but on the contrary, the client had to remain the client and the agency, hopefully, was to remain an efficient agency.

This may sound facile, obvious. But in actual fact this reciprocal respect is very rare and every time it occurs people call it a miracle.

This was the miracle on which the Mulino Bianco story was based, as of the very first day, which is more or less accepted to be the middle of March 1973.

There was a key event which showed the spirit that moved those working in the team, without prejudice and taking nothing for granted, even opening the client's brief to debate.

The brief was certainly good, and asked us to research into a possible biscuit product. It was a single page long, it was clear, logical, and accompanied by a market survey. There was also an introduction by Gianni Maestri, who at that time was the director of the New Products division, which told us of the company's intention to create "Barilla Biscuits".

The research data that they gave us was very clear and actually quite obvious. It was perfectly normal that a solid company such as Barilla should start making biscuits. But what biscuits?

At that time, for a single product company whose only product, pasta, had its price frozen, it was clear that diversification would have been of use only if it brought about significant revenue. We discussed this in depth and began a series of verifications of the consumer's preferences.

By chance on the first floor of Via Cerva 13



(Mambelli and I had opened Pubblicitari Associati s.r.l. together with Cardile) was what was left of Roland Berger of Monaco's Italian office.

The contract with Buton which had been the reason they had come to Italy had expired and the brands Petrus, Donbairo and Rosso Antico had been launched with various levels of success. Berger was starting anew and the only person who had remained was the Director of the institute, Mariano Frey.

We began involving him in the analysis of the market data that the company was giving us and above all of what the company meant by biscuits. We carried out an ad hoc study which Maestri authorized immediately.

This was how the *modus operandi*, which we were to keep to faithfully until the end of the project, was born.

There was no standard text which laid down how we should proceed and how we should work together. All we had was the sensitivity and professional attitude of a few gentlemen who found themselves working more or less by chance on the same project and who were engaged, with great humility and without taking anything for granted and with a great sense of partnership, in the same operation.

I would say, with hindsight, that the Mulino Bianco method was the following.

1. Never take anything for granted.
2. Never take any decision before having verified the opinion of the consumer through rapid mini market research studies.
3. Base each study on projections and using ad hoc creative stimuli so as to avoid the



consumer telling you exactly what billions of lire spent of communications have told him.

4. Marketing operations must be central to all the other company operations involved.

The procedure involved: triangular discussions between the client, the agency and the research institute; definition of a strategic line of development; creation. Ad hoc research. Analysis of the results and other hypotheses.

Some might think, (and some have said) that the creation of the Mulino Bianco brand name was the result of a series of uncertainties, a comedy of errors. I believe that this is the most flattering compliment that can be made to professionals in this field.

The steps in the Odyssey were the following.

The first fact that emerged clearly was that Barilla could certainly make biscuits, that they would have been good, healthy and honest biscuits but would have no particular distinction with which to beat the competition and therefore would have had to be located in the middling price range and in turn that this would not have produced the revenues the company was looking for. Not only would the ultimate aim of diversification not have been reached, but the sector might even be hiding unforeseeable obstacles. Barilla was not seen as having enough market authority to make premium price biscuits. We immediately carried out a second market research study to find out more about the "Bermuda Triangle" we were about to fall into.

The provocation involved the creation of two brand names for biscuits which evoked the home of the biscuits, which was seen as Britain.

The long history of Mulino Bianco packaging. In this page the boxes proposed by Landò and Mambelli, for the initial Barilla biscuit line under the name "Mary Ann" or "Biscuit House", deliberately bringing to mind the British biscuit box styles, England being considered the home of the biscuit, then going on to the first Mulino Bianco boxes but with a Barilla style. The second series in a blue and white box already showed the forms of the biscuits. [ASB, O, Mulino Bianco].



One brand name was "I Biscotti di Mary Ann", and the design was very much along "Aunt Mamie" lines; the other "Biscuit House" echoed Harrod's type packaging. Both were given a logo, complete packaging and promotion campaign.

The survey showed that the "British concept" was not wrong but only for the upper portion of the sample population. The majority did not see why good biscuits had to be made in England. And this was where the second vital piece of information was discovered: biscuits have no nationality, they belong to the stomach of each one of us and we are all born with the biscuit idea.

Even the most unbelieving are difficult to persuade. In this case the agency did not like having to give up the historical and geographical option and find another brand name in alternative to "Mary Ann" and "Biscuit House". They believed that if Britain was wrong then France might work better, or Denmark or even Germany.

They therefore produced a list of names for each of the countries they considered in alternative to "Mary Ann" and "Biscuit House". Among the French names was Moulin Blanc.

The client Maestri intervened with authority. He told us that we had played about enough: Frey's research was quite clear, the name Moulin Blanc believed corresponded perfectly to the values desired, with the nostalgia for childhood, protecting warmth etc. etc., which the product's image would contain. He told us to stop wasting time with foreign countries and that the Italian version sounded just fine: Mulino Bianco.

What an insight! We didn't realize it at first so another mini-survey was carried out using the name only.

Personally I adore qualitative surveys. It is great when you offer a consumer a theme which he can develop and which fills pages and pages of paper, the report is full of points and there is no need to stimulate him.

This is exactly what happened with "Mulino Bianco". It turned out that nearly all the subjects interviewed had spent their youth in a mill although it is well known that mills (being close to water and often located in wooded valleys for obvious hydrological reasons) are almost every colour except white. And today's mill, Testa's mill, is more like a manor house than a mill.

This is the power of the imagination and of a sector that starts the imagination running.

But what content could we give to the idea of the White Mill? Again it was the consumer himself who gave us the answer through three parallel mini-surveys based on three mini-campaigns involving different concepts. Obviously the biscuits involved were connected in some way with the rural world but the three concepts were different: in one case the countryside was an "atmosphere", a mental state; in another it was represented by healthy appetites of the working man and in the third by natural ingredients, such as unskimmed milk, fresh eggs etc.

The latter was the favourite. And despite what the critics of Mulino Bianco may say – and they say that the brand name is the pure and simple result of a marketing campaign with no root in the product – the R&D department of Barilla

engaged in the creation of products based on natural ingredients, little used in industry: fresh eggs and not egg powder, fresh milk and not dried milk and cream and not only milk etc.

When, several years later, the communications phase was reached and Sacis attacked the use of images such as the pouring of milk, the falling of egg yokes, the company won the legal battle on the basis of the truth of their campaign. The White Mill might have lived only in the imagination of the consumer, but the biscuits were all they promised to be in terms of production techniques.

Once the brand name had been created and its market position defined, the long road to the creation of a message, of packaging and of the product itself was begun, faithfully following the principles outlined above.

Looking back at the work generated to inch our way closer to the end result – the attempts made and failed, the approaches that involved more atmosphere here or more product there and with the aid of the consumer alone (apart from a few exhortations from Maestri) – it feels as though twenty centuries have gone by rather than twenty years.

The times were not happiest either. The crisis that had followed the Yom Kippur war was still with us and the years of political terrorism just beginning, industry was still struggling to become competitive. But we did believe that the company's fundamental asset were its brand names; we communicated through concepts, not through scandal. We all believed that the consumer should be listened to, not flooded out.

This is why the birth of "Mulino Bianco" was a great event, the most significant of the whole period in terms of the development of consumer demand. I should also mention three elements (or should I say three miracles) that allowed Mulino Bianco to be so successful. The first was the marketing formula used.

Centripetal marketing was what Ing. Manfredi called it instinctively when after many months of gestation the project was presented to him officially. And it is of little interest to know that the formula was the result of fear.



Facing page, an overview of the studies and proposals made by Gio Rossi for Mulino Bianco boxes, from the rustic, "country", naïf, paralleled by the form of the biscuits themselves. The last package design shows the definitive form of the mill which would later be inserted in the round stamp and the band, shown in the version at the bottom and right on the page. Right, the final layout of the packet. Only the shape of the biscuits would change radically while the introduction of the "bags" would give the line its definitive look [ASB, Mulino Bianco].

The problem that the company had to face with the freezing of the price of pasta and the fact the project was born in the poorer quarters of the company, totally ignored by the rest of the company personnel, added to the fact that my partner at the time was not an extremely optimistic person, meant that although we had put all our energy into the project, we were sure that we would never have received the financing to put it into action.

This was a stroke of luck. Mambelli's idea was that since there would be no financing for media communications, the brand name would have to find its way to its natural position in the market through the components making up the product itself: in other words the brand name, product packaging, the names and forms of the biscuits and above all their content.

More than a hundred forms of biscuit were designed in our agency, all with simple natural tastes and extremely evocative names. And to convince the client we selected a few and made terracotta models. I don't remember how many names were studied, all inspired by the world of the white mill; nostalgic in form and linked with the rural world in their content – healthy, energy-packed and robust.

We designed the packaging in such a way that it would support the product not only in terms of its outer dressing but also in its form. And while the biscuits industry was rapidly developing the packet as being less expensive and more practical, Mulino Bianco came out with the bag.

We have already mentioned the ingredients, which were the second miracle of the Mulino Bianco brand. The company allowed the marketing division to decide, making all the company's operative divisions, even the most strategic, work towards the central objective.

Our profession can but be grateful to the two angels of the R&D department (Mrs Solzi and Mrs Manfredi) who, shut off in their unit, were

driven to distraction trying to satisfy the request of the marketing people, however unusual and far from the industrial processes they may have seemed.

Then came poor Armellini's contribution of patience and all his ability to go on to the industrial process, adapting formulas that did not contain any aids to food processing, allowed by law but which were absolutely unusable in this brand name, to the production line.

Another miracle occurred later as the project took on body and began involving other resources inside and outside the company.

The risk was that a brand that had been created from nothing, that had no tradition, might be overwhelmed by the personal contribution of the people involved in the team working on it or of those called upon to evaluate work done or to authorize further work.

The client and the agency were a strong, compact and extremely rigid team. Luckily the research done beforehand was so comprehensive

that it stood up to attempts to change the project, to doubts and worries. But above all it was strong enough to give the product its own identity early on, which everyone would have to respect.

In 1973, when Maestri selected Gio Rossi to design the logo and the packaging, competing against the agency, "the longest moustache in the packaging world" came up with a proposal that was absolutely revolutionary for the packaging standards of the time, but complied perfectly with the brief.

Later, when the brand entered production and alongside Maestri came Gianfranco Virginio then Andrea Allodi and Riccardo Carelli, all the newcomers tried to add something to the product, but very soon they became convinced and faithful upholders of the brand as it was.

I believe that, professionally speaking, the best thing about Mulino Bianco was the total loyalty of the happy few that had worked on the project as of the beginning to bring it to life and of the many that worked on it to make it grow.



Yellow like chocolate: a short history of great decisions

GIO ROSSI

Ill slowly go back over events, step by step. Twenty years have gone by since I began working on this project.

I had already worked for Barilla when I was called upon by CPV in the mid-1960s to resolve the packaging problems that had arisen in the bakery product sector – breadsticks, bread loaves, biscottes and “pan braciato”.

We made several proposals and attempts. Since it was difficult to “sell” such specialized work, the account managers of the agencies, among whom Carlo Darecchio of Parma, a nice man, would bring me with them: that is how I came to know Barilla and Barilla came to know me. Some time later we entered into direct contact.

For several years running I was engaged in “innovative” work and designs. I designed the first Barilla sauce jars, a little short, small neck and the label on the neck to hide the floating oil which was necessary to keep the product fresh but not nice to see. I was also involved in the creation of the “tortellini” bags: I used a red cloth motif on a bright yellow background on which the recipes were carried. The cloth recalled the dish cloths that were one used in the kitchen; it was successful and eventually spread to the whole line of egg “tagliatelle” packaged in cellophane-wrapped cardboard trays, which needed an updated image.

One day, Gianni Maestri, coordinator of the “Working group on diversification” gave us an unusual brief. We were no longer asked to renew the image of a product: “Now we are creating an entirely new one; we’re making biscuits. But we have to make them different if we want them



“Campagnole”, “Galletti”, “Molinetti”, “Pale” and “Tarallucci” shown in their definitive packages ready for their market launch. left, the mock-up of the package for the “Mugnai” biscuits [ASB, O Mulino Bianco; Na]. The packages designed by Gio Rossi were the culmination of a long series of contents, from the idea of genuine foods and rural atmospheres, to the forms and names to the selection of the bag alongside traditional forms of packaging, to the logo and the yellow colour of the background.



to be a success”. I was a newcomer to a project that had already begun.

They asked me for a strong sense of atmosphere and so I asked myself what that atmosphere might be derived from. I wanted to reach the essential nature of the product and thus find keys that would bring out emotion.

At that time I was working for Unilever in Paris and had come to understand the dynamic nature of the self-service system; later I was able to deepen my knowledge of packaging processes when working for the Container Corporation – from research into the trees from which cellulose could be made, to automatic packaging machinery, to the design of delicate packaging machinery for delicate packages which work in synergy with the machinery itself.

At the beginning of the 1970s industrial thinking subordinated the product to its package and the display in sales outlets was reduced to a hysterical search for visual contact through coarsely American-type modernistic styles.

The request for strong emotional content –

unexpressed by me but that is what I felt was required – led me to make a deeper analysis of the question. I thought to myself “if I don’t find different forms of stimulus I’ll end up in the same queue as all the others and I’ll get nowhere”. And I must say that while working on the initial layout there was a conflict between the need to create “impact” and “emotion”.

At last I was told the name of the product, chosen among the many proposed by the creatives: the new line would be called Mulino Bianco. The highly evocative name opened up wide vistas of development. Several areas were explored and the company was given an idea as to what form the new product might take, presumably from careful market research.

Initially we worked in an imitation mode: forms and formats were not considered innovative yet. At that time the grand aim of all biscuit makers was to make biscuits that were identical to each other, like buttons, and the greatest success was considered to be the realization of large series of perfect products because they

With the selection of the name Mulino Bianco for the new biscuit line, the creative working group Landò and Mambelli began putting together ideas for an advertising campaign. Below, the first series of advertisements, based on the theme of healthy foods, rural values and the return to the countryside [ASB, O, Mulino Bianco].



were the most easily managed. So the biscuits marketed at that time were either sold as rolls or lingots. I therefore developed the idea of recovering the identity of the product. Every one imitated each other, even Adriano Celentano (the famous singer) sang in an American "Twang". I wanted to try to recover a lost identity. At that time it was common when speaking of legendary quality to refer to "before the war"; and so I went to the pre-war period to search for images and creative stimuli which had been forgotten, erased by the modern world of the 1950s.

I remembered my life in the countryside, among the vines, the biscuits baked in the wood-fuelled oven of the local baker. But biscuits had been made in the city too. In the pastry shop they sold pastries, which were distinct from biscuits. Recovering this forgotten world and transferring it to the industrial plane led to a series of theorems that could be developed only because Maestri had the right attitude; he accepted this line of development and transferred it to colleagues and the creative working group.

At that time I also worked often with Nestlé International and had a trans-national vision; I worked in Australia, in South Africa, in Chile, in the US and Northern Europe. I had come across a type of package called "nostalgia" which appealed to traditional values which went back to the earliest days of mechanization of the artisan production processes. However, it was the artisan nature of the product that gave it its added value. Thus I was led to understand that

whatever was non-industrial might be a market success.

These thoughts led to interesting operational prospects. If a product is non-industrial it may still have a chance on the market; if not being industrial, the product has artisan undertones then it will appeal to the emotions; if the product is like the one of the past that is no longer produced and tastes "like the ones made by my aunt" then it becomes irresistible.

So how should we proceed? The biscuits were not to be like buttons. I found a few catalogues of biscuit press makers. I found out that the old presses bought in the bric-à-brac shops, used to make artisan biscuits, used a specific symbology. I thus entered the ancient world of bread making and whole new vistas opened up to me.

After having ended my journey through the local traditions of bread and sweetbread makers I frenetically sought dialogue with anthropologists. They were all far too academic to be of any use to me. Until I met a rather more poetical student and together we managed to focus on several ideas that I had never been able to concentrate on sufficiently.

Our biscuits had to be different from those industrial culture and current culture offered, because they were to be the apology of the quality artisan world which lived in the collective subconscious. The display had to be different too: in music when all the instruments are playing together a silent bar is more incisive. Non-impact equivalent to impact.

The time had come to put colour and form to the idea...

A long process of transfusion of ideas from Barilla to me and viceversa took place, as between my group and the creatives Landò and Mambelli.

Barilla had in the mean time set up a fine research laboratory. I remember Marisa Solzi who was to write the recipes, who put into the task so much energy and all her professional skills. As an advertising professional I was a little suspicious, especially in the verification of the theories. The laboratory was extraordinary: I made suggestions and they were followed to the letter. We were on the same wavelength. This was decidedly non-industrial.

This complex operation gave us a general understanding of what the product should be. The biscuits were not like those produced by others but were just like "the ones made by my aunt", made using the wooden oven forms. Dr Solzi resolved a whole series of small problems such as: "How do you glaze only the parts of the biscuit in relief? With egg white". The press designer had to resolve a number of problems too: "If it is too thin, it will burn here..." and I learned that the form and type of baking also changed the recipe and the taste.

In the meantime the idea that the biscuits would offer a feast every day led us to prefer the rich biscuits – hence the butter biscuits as opposed to dry biscuits. We also realized that they could not be packed in lingots, so the bag was used, which met with the opposition of the technicians.

Other studies for the advertising campaign for Mulino Bianco, in line with the packaging style (see pp. 288-289). The central theme was still the "good foods of yesteryear" and "country flavours". Bottom of page, the layout of a full page advertisement, with the definitive logo, very close to the way the campaign actually used would look (see following pages) [ASB, O, Mulino Bianco].



They became agitated: "What, in a bag? They'll get broken! Then the bag is soft, its can't be set up in a display. They'll all arrive broken".

The colour of the display: this was to evoke tenderness. And tenderness is mainly to be found in childhood, so they had to be the colour of milk flour, the colour of biscuits stolen from your mother before they are put in the oven, or of beaten eggs. It had to be a rich, generous and affectionate colour. I looked back to two colours of my childhood: one was white chocolate and the other was a vitamin syrup that had the same colour and was particularly good. I had always hoped to fall ill so that the doctor would prescribe it for me.

This is how that yellow was born, about which others have created different theories but which is still the colour of Mulino Bianco products.

As for the brand mark, I used old catalogues of 1915, of 1923 and of the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1925. Again I went round the flea markets of Europe looking for advertisements and promotional objects.

What I was looking for was a rustic style of rural world influenced by the city culture. I did not want to evoke the pastry maker, nor the town baker with his steam oven; mine was to be a bakery on the outskirts of town just outside the suburbs and just before the fields.

The drawings had to contain elements that

would bring back the smells of the past and the fragrance of those happy moments. Memories of harvest time led to the creation of the bushell of wheat and flowers. The colours were to be soft and the drawing water-coloured; they were to remind one of the pinks and blues used by the older lithographers to highlight the features of photographic portraits. I asked for the help of Cesare Trolli who had spent his life as a draughtsman and lithographer of biscuit boxes, to create the tones I was looking for. He was to be the artist that would actually create the first Mulino Bianco trade mark, based on my drawings.

The Mill: We discussed the landscape in which it was to be located. Wisely we decided that it would be located in place we remembered but as though it were an old factory mark, used to give prestige to the company. So the little mill was drawn as though it were a small woodcut or old engraving.

The product launch was to involve the brand alone – which was considered in itself evocative enough – and the product. Thus a total synergy between advertising campaign, product, packaging and brand name was achieved and this would make Mulino Bianco the success it is accepted as today, far greater than anything we could possibly have hoped for.

But without white chocolate...

To provoke emotions, recall the smells and flavours "of yesteryear", the biscuits made at the mill had to be different from the "buttons" that the biscuits industry had produced until then. Great care was used therefore in the invention of new forms which would remain compatible with modern production techniques. Below a selection of the hundred forms proposed by Landò and Mambelli and, left, a historical picture of 1975 with the first biscuits that exited the experimental production line: "Campagnole", "Galletti", "Molinetti", "Pale" and "Tarallucci" [ASB, O, Mulino Bianco; O, design prodotti].



Who invented Mulino Bianco

MARIA LUISA SOLZI

In 1973 Gianni Maestri created a working group to develop a biscuit line and asked me to be member of it as a technologist of the Research and Development Directorate of Barilla. In the past I had been involved with the development of bread sticks, biscottes, condiments and cake mixes, both in the selection of raw materials and in the creation of recipes as well in the selection of technologies and production processes.

When the company decided to launch the Mulino Bianco brand, quality objectives were set which we in the research and development laboratory were to follow while developing the recipes and then in their transfer to industrial production. Mulino Bianco was to be identified with natural products.

When we decided to enter the butter-based biscuit segment of the market, as always we carried out a careful screening of all the products that were available on the market, to evaluate their strong points and their weaknesses. As a result of this research we decided to create very simple products whose fundamental characteristics were the quality of the raw materials used. We therefore used a lot of butter, fresh milk (at that time our competitors used powdered milk), honey etc.

Another aspect that occupied us greatly was the shape the biscuits were to have. The idea of giving biscuits special shapes and custom-made designs was new to Italy at that time. The forms and designs had to be naïf and irregular so as to give them a non-industrial image.

Once the prototypes had been finished and the consumer tests carried out, we passed on to the industrial phase. This was an enormous job as reproducing industrially the characteristics of an artisan product was difficult and we did not have much experience in sweet bakery products.





Since our main aim was to create a high quality product and use absolutely natural raw materials, eliminating any additives, we proceeded to a careful selection of suppliers. We were also very careful in the selection of packaging material. For the egg-based biscuits we selected an aluminium-backed bag which caused problems in terms of cost, easy breakage of its contents and suboptimal use of space, but which did allow for the perfect conservation of the product until it reached the consumer and allowed for great flexibility between formats.

Another factor that was difficult to reproduce industrially was the irregular forms. This involved the use of plant that in some cases had to be perfected within Barilla.

As far as the production lines went, we decided to use external suppliers so as to be able to reduce risk should the product not be successful on the market or so as to be able to increase production rapidly should it be a success. Over the years the proportion of product produced outside the company has steadily fallen and at the time of writing nearly all products marketed under the brand name Mulino Bianco are produced within Barilla factories. I believe that this is the only way of assuring a high quality and quantity of production.

This policy, aimed at providing the consumer with what had been promised through the communications campaigns, was repeated every time a new product was launched.

As of the beginning we knew that the Mulino Bianco brand name would cover a whole series of products.

About a year and a half after the launch of the Mulino Bianco line the breadstick product of



Barilla was transferred to it, as were the biscottes.

In 1977 we launched the snacks and after that the bread loaves. The introduction of the fresh products that had a shorter shelf life (about 40 days) as compared with pasta, meant that we had to introduce a second distribution network alongside our existing system, which would visit sales outlets more frequently. A new division dealing with fresh products alone was set up to ensure a rational distribution network and to manage the different production plant used.

In 1983 the line "I dolcetti delle feste" ("party cakes") was launched. After having created the first biscuits in 1977 we had already begun examining the characteristics of the second generation of biscuits which we would have been called upon to present. As of then we realized

Left, a few of Gio Rossi's sketches with proposals for biscuit forms in which the main ingredient was "illustrated" [ASB, O, Mulino Bianco].

Below, a picture of 1974 showing the English biscuit maker Edward George Maxwell with Sergio Perazzo of the Research Department beside the experimental biscuit production line. The biscuits seen are "Rigoli", "Galletti" and "Tarallucci", which had been approved and which are still in production [ASB, O Mulino Bianco].

that the second generation of biscuits would necessarily have to be closer to a pastry product and this is how the "Dolcetti per le feste" came into being.

By 1984 we had already reached second place behind Pavesi in terms of market share in the industrial pastry sector.

In 1985 we entered the "cracker" market segment. At first this segment had been left aside because of the competition from three major producers. By 1985 the situation had changed. By then we had a strong brand name and consumers saw in Mulino Bianco a natural producer of crackers. It is interesting to note that in 1981 a market survey showed that 70% of all women thought that Mulino Bianco already produced crackers.

A year only after our entry into the segment we had become the third largest producer of crackers with 13% of the market.

During the last months of 1986 we began the distribution of Mulino Bianco cakes. In 1987 the "Pandolci" ("Sweetbreads") appeared which were half way between dry biscuits and the butter biscuits and in 1988 alongside the classical "pan carré" bread loaf and "Pagnottelle" we introduced "Pani morbidi" table bread; "Granetti" and "Pangrì" closer to the breadstick, were also launched in the same year.

Parallel to Mulino Bianco's expansion into other sectors, the brand also underwent considerable expansion in each individual segment. All products have maintained the promise of natural content that has been implicit in the name since 1975. Having started from scratch has helped us to be more innovative and coherent with our values.

Mulino Bianco: a total experience

SERGIO MAMBELLI

The circumstances of the birth of Mulino Bianco have been explored in depth and although I had a strategic rôle in its creation I shall only take a look at the areas in which I was particularly closely involved.

As the general idea had come into being as a first step, we felt as of the beginning that there was a need to create a coherent system of communications around it. The product itself was one of these instruments and came after the development of the brand name and the packaging. We believed that the product itself should fall in line with the guiding principles behind the operation.

Thus I found myself developing communications around pieces of biscuit. I tried to put into the biscuits signs that would bring to mind the rural world that Mulino Bianco was designed to evoke. Here I should mention the fine biscuit maker Maxwell who managed to give the first biscuits we produced the rustic feel, the warmth of a hand-made product that we asked for insistently but did not know how to obtain.

This is how a new form of communication was born – or a whole series of pieces of communication, as many as were the biscuits in production: “Tarallucci”, “Macine”, “Pale”, “Campagnole”, “Mugnai”, “Galletti”. Then at last came the product launch.

It was not a launch in grand style. Not every possible means was used. It was almost discreet: a poster. I mention it with pleasure because the poster had a deeper and more complete meaning than most. It contained the embryo, all the concepts, emotional and relating to form, the later historical Mulino Bianco communications policy were to possess.

The tone of voice (nostalgic) “Do you remember those good biscuits...”, the nutritional

After two years of research and study the first advertisements appeared in the press, towards the end of 1975. “When Mills were white”, opened the long series of adverts. Below left a page promoting the 1976 line (alongside “Galletti”, “Tarallucci” and “Campagnole” the new biscuit “Pettirossi” had appeared) [ASB, Rbma 76].

In 1976 the Barilla bread sticks and biscottes passed under the Mulino Bianco brand, with great trepidation. Their market share rose from 15% to 20% in one year. The whole bakery production line was sold in uniform packages which would be immediately recognized.





"When Mills were white..." sounds like the opening of a fairy tale and while the television advertisements used the symbology of an alphabet book with the soft rural world as a background, the press campaign used the individual letters almost as though they were ancient illuminated capitals on parchment, surrounded by illustrations of the healthy ingredients: butter for the "Campagnole", wheat ears for the "Molinetti", the hen and her eggs for the "Tarallucci", the cow just milked for the "Rigoli". They would also be used on the bags to highlight the globality of the system. Left, the original drawing for the "Mugnai" biscuits [Riassuntivo e Macine 1979, "Pannocchie", 1982, ASB, Rbma].



value "which tasted of butter, milk and flour". The biscuits themselves were shown resting not on a silver tray but on wheat ears and the yellow background and the brand name that rendered superfluous any need to show the packages.

After that we turned to the saga of the good world of the countryside. We used the sincerity, the serenity and the simplicity of human relationships from that world. We evoked styles of life, working the land and its products. It was natural for us to represent realistically what we called "the happy valley". A plain with wheat fields, soft wooded hills and in the centre situated by a river stood a small mill.

This bucolic picture and the wording that brought back happy memories "Of when mills were white..." was the starting point for all our communications relating to all our product lines as they came under the Mulino Bianco umbrella: biscuits, biscottes, bread sticks, crackers, snacks and cakes.

That happy valley, which was in fact our rural past, became a sort of saga of true sentiments, natural ingredients that were loved and respected. The television commercials showed stories of farmers, their lives and the relationship that existed between them and their work, which involved making flour, milk and butter, gathering fresh eggs.

The first director asked to make a television commercial was Giuseppe Fina. He was a film and TV director whose sober style gave the Mulino Bianco commercials the tone of documentaries on rural life that had long since disappeared. The actors in the commercials were nearly always real farmers. We believed that only they would be able to go through the actions credibly. Then we discovered that they alone could interpret the simple and true values of the farming world. The style of photography (by Pino Colla) echoed oil paintings of the 19th century. Later Fina was replaced by more famous directors such as Massimo Cacciari who would complete the cycle of Mulino Bianco commercials.

A press campaign relating to each individual line of product was also created and released along with the radio and television commercials.



This was all there was to the launch of the Mulino Bianco line. Among the press advertisements, one in particular stands out in my memory. It was created to respond to the need to highlight the characteristics of each individual biscuit within the Mulino Bianco product line. It was based on the principle of the alphabet for children.

Every advert carried a large letter that was the first letter of the biscuit's name. T for Tarallucci, C for Campagnole and so on.

This approach was considered so effective that the large letters were eventually also used on the packages themselves. This is just one of the many examples of integrated communications in the Mulino Bianco line.

And talking of examples, we should also mention the breakfast bowl that we called a "Coccio" (terracotta cup) which was also the first promotional item in the history of Mulino Bianco.

Its shape was based on the old milk and coffee bowls.

The colours and decorations were based on the biscuit packs and were reproduced as though they were hand-painted.

Marketing professionals will remember the "Coccio" as a legend. It would be fair to say that it also became a cult object for the consumer too.

The need to change

In 1985 the epic phase of the Mulino Bianco story closed. By "epic phase" we mean the period in which the brand name was given the value and meanings that eventually made it the best recognized food brand on the market.

This phase ended because our research showed that there had been a change in society's attitude to industry and industrial values. The strong sense of hostility to the industrial world that had brought Mulino Bianco to life were weakening and we felt the need to promote the brand through more concrete and objective values.

Obviously we realized how difficult and dangerous an over-violent change from communications entirely based on an imaginary



world to the use of concrete and objective concepts might be.

In other words we were passing from the dream to the real world. This is how the girl with the guitar, singing a folk song which told the viewer how Mulino Bianco represented a continuation of rural values, came into being. The white mill was sung about by this modern girl in words and music specially written by Bruno Lauzi. This ended my active participation in Mulino Bianco communications.

The baton was passed to other creative designers and then other agencies.

In 1977 the bell image was used to announce the novelties both on the television and in the press. Alongside the biscuits were now the sweet snacks. Above, the press advertisements for the "Crostatina" and the "Saccottino" [ASB, Rbma 77] and the "Crostatina" poster of 1978 [ASB, Rcmb].

Mulino Bianco communications

Positioning and main evolutionary phases

SILVANO GUIDONE, ROBERTO PORRONE,
FRANCO CARRER

Over the years the Mulino Bianco trade mark has built up among the trade community and among consumers a solid and exclusive reputation for being good, healthy and innovative.

With its wide range of bakery products Mulino Bianco has become a constant in the Italian family's daily consumption, satisfying all its needs for bakery and pastry products.

Mulino Bianco is present in the every day lives of the Italian family and is close to its individual components in the most simple but fundamental moments of the day: it is the credible and sincere companion in the small-but-great events in life.

The placing of the brand in this position is the result of several factors that have worked together in synergy:

- product quality and its continual innovation;
- originality and exclusivity of its packaging;
- the strength and wide ranging distribution system;
- the pricing policy;
- the setting up of a communications system;
- the far sighted management of promotional events which has become an essential and strategic component of the marketing process.

The brand has been kept modern and in line with social developments, interpreting universal values and aspirations in most cases common to the whole of Italian society. They are positive values and reference values that have become positive characteristics of the product.

Barilla, in fact, as a producer of foods and

sweet products for the whole of society and as sector leader has never followed fashion or tried to anticipate changes but has interpreted the state of mind or reference values of the majority of its target, which is the core of Italian society.

Birth and development of "Mulino Bianco" (1975-1985)

The economic miracle had ended and the loud protests of 1968 had subsided. The high hopes that had accompanied change seemed to have been drowned in worry. Bombs, political terrorism and permanent conflict undermined society. The 1970s were dominated by violent demonstrations and Italian evenings were characterized by empty streets with frightened people shut up in their homes.

Everything seemed to be under attack: families, institutions, work, progress threatened by the oil crisis. Italy was no longer a great agricultural country but an advanced industrial nation, but that change had not been painless.

Slowly a sentiment of nostalgia for the past took shape. There was a desire for simpler human relations, a search for universal values that seemed to have been lost; there was a need for a sincere handshake and a smile.

Even the daily relationship of each Italian with his food was influenced by nostalgia for the past. The industrial product began being looked at with suspicion. It became the symbol of all that was artificial, manipulated, polluted. Small is beautiful: the farmer's wine, the peasant's salami, fresh market eggs, granny's old recipes. This was the genuine food of the past.

Nature as nostalgia

This was the context in which a simple but extraordinary concept came into being: Mulino Bianco. It was a single content – product and communications policy together in symbiosis, integrated and created as of the very beginning by the agency Troost, Campbell & Edweld.



Simple recipes that could be made at home – which was explicitly said on the bags; the ingredients were genuine and were entirely in line with traditional baking techniques: eggs, milk, flour, butter and cream. The product names were chosen to evoke serenity and simplicity.

"There are things that time just can't change" This is a philosophy and a way of life, a communicational tone that is exactly in line with the desires and dreams of the consumer of the 1970s. The television commercials and especially the early black-and-white ones were full of atmosphere: the turn of the century rural world was evoked, with farmhouses, large kitchens where biscuits full of butter, fresh smelling pies, soft cakes were made and where nature was "loved and respected".

The scenery was the countryside, where people worked, and where the fruit of the earth was gathered in after honest fatigue, where human relationships involve respect, simplicity and timidity.

This is how the Mulino Bianco world was born, with its strong values, good products, and emotional depth.

Above all the company ensured the quality of its products, Mulino Bianco began to be a container of positive values, a friendly presence, a reference point for "ethical" behaviour.

This situation was unique in the Italian industrial and communications world, and this continues today.

Over time Mulino Bianco brand would widen the range of products it offered and in 1983 the "Dolcetti delle feste" line was launched. These were rich biscuits with evocative names: "Crespatelle", "Nocchie", "Canestrini", "Ciocchini", "Baiocchi" which were contained in the exclusive "tower shaped" package specially designed by the Barilla technicians. In 1985 the excellent market position of "Mulino Bianco" brand and changes within the market segment allowed for the launch of "Sfoglia di Grano", the crackers line. This page shows the Mulino Bianco posters for sweet snacks (1980), "Dolcetti" (1983) and "Crackers" (1985) [ASB, Rcmb].

The middle period (1986-1989)

The "Mulino Bianco" products never betray the consumer, they are faithful to their own image, and coherent with the values they express. "When mills were white" seems to be the best possible response to the consumer's desires. Communications developed over the years and the products became a true range marked with an unequivocal brand and by yellow bags.

But time flies and society changes. The roaring Eighties came along. The strong universal values were still widely appreciated but the way they were seen changed. The individualistic nature of Italian society was coming to the fore as ideologies declined together with the various social dogmas. Family values also gained strength with the professional career as the outward expression of success and the family as an intimate refuge.

The result was a strange mix of uncertainty and wealth. Society consolidated its urban roots and the new generations lost their traditional links with "the land" and with the countryside. The good old times are now synonymous with fatigue, the need to bend over to gather the fruits of one's work.

Average life spans lengthened, more widespread wealth led people to spend more on themselves and with the spread of schooling there was a greater understanding of the contents of food. Healthy foods were no longer seen as being enough; what was called for was foods that would be good for the consumer, they needed to be made in uncontaminated land, far from any use of pesticides and from the drama of Chernobyl.

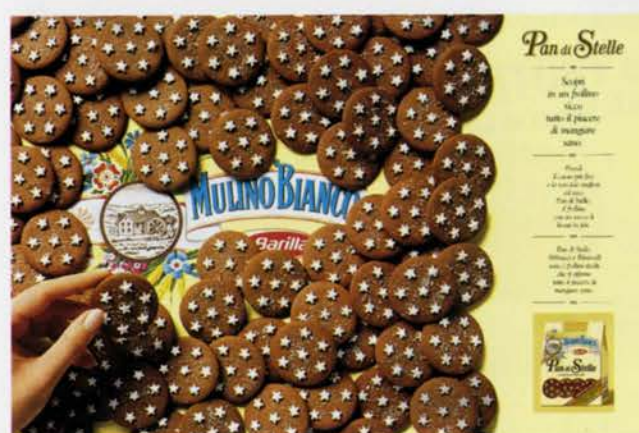
Industry, especially large industry, became a source of reassurance, a way of guaranteeing quality and had by then lost the negative connotations that it had acquired in the 1970s. Among the most award-winning industries were those that proposed new solutions for the protection of the health of the consumer. The challenge was "living a healthy life and eating healthy food".

The factors on which the Mulino Bianco communications policy had been based changed:





During the second half of the 1980s the Mulino Bianco brand reinforced its market position and a whole new series of products were created: in 1987, in the wake of the health foods fad, the "Pandolci" dry biscuits came on the market (left, the three page press advertisement [ASB, Rbma 87]), with a characteristic satin finish package. Also in 1987 the "Frollini Ricchi" with gloss finished packets: "Pan di Stelle", "Ritornelli" and "Abbracci", the latter particularly interesting with the two colour pastry used. Below the double page spread advertisements [ASB, Rbma 87].



social expectations had changed. Within Barilla and in the advertising agency (in the meantime Mulino Bianco had passed, along with Sergio Mambelli, to Young & Rubicam in 1984), the phenomenon had been identified and the need for change accepted. Ten years of success with such an efficient communication was no joke.

Thus in 1987 Mulino Bianco tried to update its message through a television commercial in which a girl with a guitar sang a song which highlighted the claim by which "there are things that time can't change".

The new message was artificial and proved ineffective in updating the Mulino Bianco image. The two worlds shown were foreign to each other and did not interact; they even felt a little old-fashioned and the commercial therefore lost credibility. Furthermore, the products were absent in several commercials and appeared only briefly in others, at the end of the story; they were not accompanied by information relating to consumption and use (moment, target, benefit).

In 1988 Mulino Bianco would try another step forward after having discovered that the old rural world still offered credible values of the simple life and honest relationships.

It was therefore decided to update the Mulino Bianco image with the introduction of simple emotions. Universal and unchanging values as shown by stories set in the present.

Each "family" of products was given its own specific personality, associating it with a specific feeling (fraternity, friendship, sweetness, intimate feelings...). All the films produced were identifiable by and rooted in a single concept which was the honest emotion and the Mulino Bianco world was moved from the rural world to the realm of human feelings – in other words to natural sentiment.

The break with the past was too violent however: a brand identity that connected the different stories; was missing, the factor that linked the commercials to the atmospheres of the past was also missing.

The new communications system (1990-1994)

In 1989 Barilla turned to Armando Testa to create the Mulino Bianco communications system. The analysis carried out was not very different from the one described above. The "good times of the past" was no longer effective but the message could not break with the past altogether.

The city is the place where most people work and earn a living, where they are forced to spend most of their lives. However the desire for "a place in the country", and a place where the quality of life could be cultivated, became increasingly strong.

Environmentalism, man's relationship with the environment in general, became a part of each individual's life. Man's relationship with nature began to change. Living in the country no longer meant breathing clean air only, but also having time to go for a walk with friends. It also meant educating one's children better, giving them more space, getting them used to animals and plants. Living in the country means resisting the stresses of one's working life, looking after one's health, noticing the little things that we usually do not see in our working life.

This was no longer nostalgia for the past, nor flight from responsibility and from social rôles; it was a way of life, or a choice of a part of a way of life.

Alongside the desire to live a healthy life stands the need to "be healthy".

This means recovering the good elements of the past communications system and transferring them to a modern world in harmony with the desires of the majority of Italian society. And all this was to be done in a completely original tone, unique to Mulino Bianco.

Mulino Bianco was by this time part of the social and cultural heritage of Italian society. Its evolution was required to identify and maintain essential elements of its image such as:

- the simple life (serenity, spontaneous emotions, harmony and happiness);
- family relationships (affection, cohesion, sincerity and openness to the outside world);

The Mulino Bianco communications system had for many years been based on the archaic and serene rural world, but times changed and new social priorities came to the fore; hence the adverts associated with nutritional themes – left, the child pulling an enormous bag in 1984 [ASB, Rbma 84] or the general evocation of sentiments – bottom of the column, left, which matched the TV commercials for biscuits, sweet snacks and biscottes [ASB, Rbma 88].

In 1988 the "Pani Morbidi" were put on the market alongside the classical bread loaf "Pan Carré" and "Pagnottelle"; the "Granetti" were also launched. These were hard breads close to the breadstick – below and bottom of page [ASB, Rbma 88]. In 1989 the "Grancereali" line was launched. These were biscuits which were particularly rich in vegetable fibre, in line with the whole-meal market requirement.





Plum cake

il risveglio morbido

MULINO BIANCO
Barilla

Cuor di Mela

il biscotto nuovo ripieno di mela

MULINO BIANCO
Barilla

Mangia sano, torna alla natura.

PANGRÌ

TUTTO IL SAPORE DEL PANE

MULINO BIANCO
Barilla

NOVITA'

MICHETTI

LEGGEREZZA E BONTÀ A TAVOLA

MULINO BIANCO
Barilla

NOVITA'

Cracker DI 5 CEREALI: IL BENESSERE INCONTRA IL SAPORE

MULINO BIANCO
Barilla

A number of new products were launched in 1992 and 1993: these included the "Pangrì" line which was half way between bread and breadstick, "Michetti" crackers, tasty and light and in the sweet snack line the "Plum Cake" with yoghurt content. In 1993 came the "Cuor di Mela" biscuit, with its apple filling, which won the "Vassoio D'Argento" (Golden tray) prize for the best bakery product of the year; also the "Orsi Sgranocchini" were protein enriched and the five cereal containing breads and crackers [ASB, Rbma 92; Rbms 93]. In 1992 the Armando Testa advertising agency – which had stepped into Young & Rubicam's shoes in 1989 in managing the Mulino Bianco advertising campaign – proposed a new way of creating "dynamic advertising" on public transport with an interesting design of the interiors, upper row on this page, and an attractive campaign for the "Camille" carrot cakes created in 1989 [ASB, Rbma 92; Aa Campagne].



From the archaic peasant world where mills were white to a modern family which decides to leave the city to set up home in an old mill in the countryside, which really is white. Left, Silvano Guidone, the creative director of the Armando Testa agency and creator of the new campaign launched in Summer 1990. Below, left, the Chiusdino mill in the province of Siena where the series of commercials would be filmed, as it was initially and as it appeared in the advertisements and the "family at the Mill" all together [Archivio Testa; ASB, O, Mulino Bianco].



- nature (a balanced and active relationship with nature, and a modern attitude to environment protection).

The simple life, as seen in the preceding system as nostalgia for the past had become a value to be cultivated and brought to life, a model of life. It was accompanied by the expression of a desire to live in the countryside in touch with nature in a modern relationship with it. Nature was seen no longer as something to be protected but as an instrument to be used to allow us to live better lives and as a source of wisdom.

The house in the country is the context in which the average Italian family develops its models of life, it is the testimonial of the values incorporated in the Mulino Bianco brand name.

A family in a mill

To be a commercial success "Mulino Bianco" had to be, before anything else an ideological success. It entered the collective subconscious like a modern legend. Mulino Bianco would not be

conceivable without a world to represent it, in which the legend and its products could come to life.

The ideal break with the past came at the end of the 1980s with the materialization of the mill. The brand became a renovated country house; a mill in which a real family had decided to live the simple life.

The family was close-knit, and we came to know it from spot to spot; over the years it created strong ties of affection with the viewers.

Thus in 1990 the first "serial" of Italian advertising began, directed by Giuseppe Tornatore and set in a real 13th century mill near Siena, to which a family made up of a young couple, two children and a grandfather moved. Around them stood a green environment, a village and a group of characters that entered the serial from time to time.

Research carried out over the past years have provided irrefutable evidence of the success of the commercial.

Whoever decides to live a healthy life (like the family at the mill) certainly eats healthily. Once

again the "ideological" image of Mulino Bianco was transferred to the product, which was seen as being simple, healthy, genuine, light but good to eat, absolutely in line with the promise made by the producer: cakes without additives, with a high standard of quality control of the raw materials, a high level of research into excellent production standards. Thus as the advertisement developed over time, the Mulino Bianco brand name anchored to the nature-health food market position.

In the meantime the number of stories increased, new everyday problems arose and new characters appeared. The system was a container that hosted all the products, including the new market launches.

Another important value that this advertising system expressed, interpreting the state of society, was the use of sober language, balance, relaxing irony, used by the model family towards outsiders who often used aggressive, vulgar and over-sophisticated language.

The family lived in the mill for over five years, but someone was thinking of tomorrow.

Mulino Bianco commercials

GIANNI RONDOLINO

We have spoken of the Mulino Bianco spots – the long series of commercials that began in 1976 – as a family saga. By this we mean that the characters, the locations, the everyday stories and the atmospheres evoked take up and keep up with the typical Italian idea of the family. On the one hand we have the comfortable, simple but modest home, with all the objects that are commonly used, the places where calm reigns and where children are happy, evoking the memories of the past spent between the walls of the family house, while on the other the characters of the saga represent continuity and security – a family atmosphere in which everything seems to come together in harmony.

These images and the symbology used to uphold them might seem repetitive and sentimental, essentially reactionary in terms of aesthetic and advertising content: the models of behaviour shown are outside the present time, are asceptic and therefore false and illusory. This would be true if the style of each commercial, with its refined forms, nostalgia for the things past, the free-flowing story lines and the careful settings did not highlight a stronger set of ethics. It is as though the return to the past was not so much intended to oppose forms and habits of the past to the present without appeal, as much as to uncover the fundamental principles of the past, including the cult of beauty and the desire for purity together with memories of childhood, bringing together a wider picture of ethical and cultural values to be used in the present.

In other words the series of commercials shown on the small screen year after year gives a single overview of both the past and the present as we search for balance between the two, the thread that links them, including the recovery of social and cultural traditions and above all a new

relationship with modern times. They offer a way of living today, with today's knowledge and usages, without losing our memory of the past (although it might be said that since the commercials look back to our memories they use excessively "stylized" and soft images, in an excess of "visual poetry").

This family saga which has developed over the years – although with quite a number of variations and modifications – might be seen as excessively rigid and repetitive if we were not to take a closer look at each individual advertisement, the situations shown and the characters that people the spots, to underline the differences between them, the innovations and the repetitions. And if the Armando Testa commercials seem to have defined the situation clearly, the same is not true of the films that precede them whose possible dramatic development is far from clear. Not should we ignore that cartoons, which are not a minor category in the evolution of Mulino Bianco advertising, and mini-stories of the "Little miller" and "Bella Clementina" which, although they advertise similar products such as the "Tegolino", the "Crostatina" and the "Saccottino" belong to a completely different form.

We can use the 1990 and 1991 commercials as a basis upon which to analyse the development of the aesthetic and advertising content of the whole series. Let us take the first "The family at the mill" films¹. We see four different elements that are brought together at the end, a dénouement that brings the four sub-plots together and explains them. The teasers consist of four interviews that set the characters in their environment: a man stuck in a traffic jam in a city; he is a journalist and a father; two children watching birds in a cage, their names are Andrea and Linda, they are his children; an old man trying to cross the street with a grandfather clock, in vain, the grandfather; a young woman walking up and down between school desks, a teacher, the mother. What they want most of all is to live in the country. As in every fairy tale their wish comes true: the opening sequence of the first commercial – directed by Giuseppe Tornatore – shows them driving through green fields in a



BMW until they come to the old mill that has been rennovated and turned into a magnificent white house in the country – the white mill.

The film is organized in a short series of episodes supported by attractive music reminiscent of Ennio Morricone and split up into scenes and sequences that are brought together not only in a fluid and smooth running whole, but also with considerable charm; it could be considered both the end point of a series of commercials that started with the beautiful film of 1976 in black and white with the nursery rhyme² (created by the agency Troost Campbell Ewald) and the starting point for a whole new series of situations in which the different characters, now with their individual names and rôles appear in new episodes which are wholly integrated into the ongoing story. The hours and days of life in the countryside, in the mill-cum-house, in the garden and on the lawn, along the stream etc: the tender beauty of a foal³, breakfast that inspires the journalist⁴, the play school of Andrea and Linda⁵, the practical joke of the kite and the glasses⁶,

In 1976 Mulino Bianco launched on the television with a series of "Carosello" nursery-rhymes based on the "memory" concept. The sweet melodies sung by the mother called to mind a world that is represented tangibly only through a few ears of wheat. However the second series – left a few frames from the legendary spot of the child on horseback, still in black and white [Rem 77/3] – was set in a rural atmosphere and brought to the fore values and human feelings. In January 1978, (the film *L'Albero degli Zoccoli* directed by Ermanno Olmi would come out a few months later) the long rural "saga" began, with dreamy atmospheres in which the small things in life are given new value. Below, a few frames from the "Tarallucci" spot [ASB, Rem 78/1].



intimate friendship between grandfather and grandson⁷, mother and children breakfasting on the lawn⁸, mother and father's race through fields on bicycles⁹, the first love of Andrea for his schoolfriend Anna¹⁰, receiving the wishes of friends after ten years of marriage¹¹, father's running race¹² and so on. The situations and events unravel with few variants in what is a true family saga, of a well-off Italian family, happy, harmonious and carefree. It is the advertising and cinematographical integration of the past and the present, of the desire for tradition and the reality of modern life. The countryside is no longer a dream or a memory of past times, the idyllic representation of a lost world, the representation of a dream, but is a modern reality in itself, a possible way of life, part of today's world.

The strength of this new advertising campaign, based on the evolution over the preceding ten years of a view of nature, lies in the mingling of the narrative and visual concepts of the past and present. The 1980s were the years of development (hypertrophic, inflationistic and illusory, in many

ways) of Italian society. These commercials, shown at the end of the decade, reflect this development and show through techniques that are halfway between dream and reality, between desire and achievement of that desire: responding in other words to the desire for stability, wellbeing and happiness of the working and well-to-do population, for whom the 1980s had been years of social success and growth.

Taking this significant result as a starting point, we can work our way back over the many Mulino Bianco commercials to identify the elements of content and form that have been used, modified and updated as time passed. Although the family saga concept has been crystallized definitively only at the end of the road, we find all the elements that it contains in the very first spots, in which the rural world made up of details of daily events and poetic intuition would become the "trade mark" or the "key" in which the whole Mulino Bianco series would develop.

It has been said that the style of these

commercials are reminiscent of Ermanno Olmi's *L'Albero degli Zoccoli*, with the warm colours in which the farming world is seen; but this is to forget another fact that corrects our view of the aesthetic influences in them. Not only were the first colour Mulino Bianco commercials¹³ broadcast as of the 5th January 1978, five months before Olmi's masterpiece was presented at the Cannes festival and nine months before it entered the cinema circuit, but they also contain the artistic elements (form, content, images) that were already present in the 1976 and 1977 spots filmed in black and white.

If we look at the first of the series¹⁴ which we have already mentioned we find a beautiful series of exchanges of glances and close-ups on the face of the mother and her child who recite a nursery rhyme. The refined images and the isolation of the characters do not as yet allow for a setting to be included but the spot does contain two emblematic portraits. Then as of 1977 the setting became better defined with the drawn mill as an opening and the musical leitmotiv by Franco Godi

The pictures in this page cover nine years of advertising echoing ancient gestures of the rural world and shown throughout Italy. These related to the birth of a baby, ploughing, harvesting, a village fête, games in the courtyard, return of the son from military service, falling in love, a nest of chicks, threshing wheat, which introduced the biscuits, sweet snacks, breads or biscottes containing natural ingredients. As of 1982 in support of the advertising campaign aimed at the adult audience a new series of

adverts was broadcast in the afternoon slots which presented the adventures of the "Little white miller" which related the attempts of the clever but unlucky miller to make the beautiful Clementina fall in love with him by making excellent cakes. But every setback stimulates his optimism; things will go better the next time round with the next cake! A few frames are shown in the central column [ASB Rem 86/5].



In 1987 the Mulino Bianco communications system began showing the first signs of being distant from the needs of society. Although it was not easy to leave a theme that had been developed over a decade, times certainly had changed. An attempt was therefore made to introduce a modern character into that year's commercials, which were written with particular care: the "girl with a guitar", facing page, would sing music and words written by Bruno Lauzi and presented life in the fields in a more symbolic than realistic

tone but lost along the way the family atmospheres that had been the characteristic of the previous commercials, giving the whole story a rather "fantastic" or dreamlike tone [ASB, Rem 87/2; Rem 87/7]. The attempt to update the commercial was not fully successful. The agency Young & Rubicam abandoned the rural scenarios and offered in their place spots relating to values of the rural world, but still unconvincingly.

which introduced the world of the farmhouse and the rural environment. Rather than a "family saga" this would be better defined a "rural saga" with at its centre a family and above all a mother and her children around which the whole community revolved.

Furthermore the family and its components were never the same: the faces, the characters and the rôles changed constantly. The environment, the atmosphere and the visual poetry of the situations represented were the same. The kitchen and the farmyard were the main locations; in the first the mother prepared the biscuits, bread and cakes under the eager gaze of the children; in the second the children played and then retired under a portico or to the steps of a staircase to eat their breakfast or a snack. This is the representation of everyday serenity (poetic and dreamy and idealized in childhood memories) of life in the countryside which Olmi would use in a different historical context in *L'Albero degli Zoccoli*.

From commercial to commercial the same dramatic content is repeated until 1986. However there is some variation. For example two young people falling in love ¹⁵, the relationship between father and son ¹⁶, young fiancés playing practical jokes on one another ¹⁷ or the different structure with the introduction of the illustrated book, whose pictures come to life as we have seen before, advertising the different products according to the letter of the alphabet they begin with (G= Galletti, M= Macine, R= Rigoli, T= Tarallucci). Or in wide-open fields of wheat among bushells, with the whole community working together in the midst of nature as though the hard work of the fields was nothing more than fun-and-games in the country. The choral scenes advertised the biscottes line. These are the most beautiful scenes, the ones with wider vistas in which the sequences are edited in such a way as to create the impression of an animated fresco. These scenarios widen the range of possible narrative opportunities: the little girl on the hay cart ¹⁸, making bushells ¹⁹ courting a young girl ²⁰, the soldier returns ²¹, threshing ²², the water bearer ²³, ploughing the fields ²⁴, a pause in the day's work ²⁵ and so on (with the beautiful



In 1990 the Armando Testa agency took the place of Young & Rubicam in the management of the Mulino Bianco commercials, and proposed a series of commercials relating to a family that has decided to go and live in the country, in an old mill. Thus the "family at the mill" started with a teacher mother, a journalist father, a grandfather and the children Linda and Marco, below seen in the teasers and right and in the facing page in the first spot of the series as they arrive at the mill [ASB, Rem, 90/10]; they attracted the attention and sympathy of millions of consumers. In the facing page the family applauds at the starting up of the wheel and at the bottom of the page, a few shots of the product and the closing sequence of the spot.



variants relating to work in the farmyard ²⁶). This was the basis in which the commercials of 1987 and 1988 were developed ²⁷ which modified the structure of the story line with the introduction of the girl with the guitar singing a song written by Bruno Lauzi which represents "life in the fields" more symbolically than realistically, more in representative than narrative terms, losing some of the familiarity of the preceding spots but giving the whole concept an extra dreamy or fantastic touch, introducing music and poetry (with the undesired introduction of kitsch elements) that was not amiss.

We could go on for ever, dealing with other spots and other environments (for example the animated drawings of Grazia Nidasio have been left out purposely as they were broadcast in the afternoon slots and were aimed at a young target, supporting the main campaign) going deeper into the sociological and anthropological analysis. But we can very well stop here. We could repeat that the long television saga of Mulino Bianco has, by its very nature, which is both innovative and repetitive, lyrical and realistic, concerned with the past and the present, covered twenty years of our history leaving its unequivocal mark, especially in what has in the past been called the collective imagination and which today is more precisely called the sum of our memories and of our imagination. Our dreams and hopes.



Notes

- ¹ See film *Famiglia del Mulino*, ASB, Rem 1990 /10
- ² See film *Filastrocca*, ASB, Rem 1976 /1
- ³ See film *Puledrino*, ASB, Rem 1990 /11
- ⁴ See film *Computer*, ASB, Rem 1990 /12
- ⁵ See film *Gioco della scuola*, ASB, Rem 1990 /13
- ⁶ See film *Aquilone*, ASB, Rem 1990 /14
- ⁷ See film *Stelle cadenti*, ASB, Rem 1990 /15
- ⁸ See film *Recita del gallo*, ASB, Rem 1990 /16
- ⁹ See film *Corsa in bicicletta*, ASB, Rem 1991 /15
- ¹⁰ See film *Primo amore*, ASB, Rem 1991 /17
- ¹¹ See film *Anniversario di matrimonio*, ASB, Rem 1991 /19
- ¹² See film *Maratona*, ASB, Rem 1991 /20
- ¹³ See films *dal 1978 in poi*, ASB, Rem 1978 /1 – 1993/12
- ¹⁴ See film *Filastrocca*, ASB, Rem 1976 /1
- ¹⁵ See film *Innamoramento*, ASB, Rem 1977 /2
- ¹⁶ See film *Cavallo*, ASB, Rem 1977 /3
- ¹⁷ See film *Lo scherzo*, ASB, Rem 1977 /4
- ¹⁸ See film *Raccolta del fieno*, ASB, Rem 1978 /5
- ¹⁹ See film *Bruscolino*, ASB, Rem 1980 /8
- ²⁰ See film *Corteggiamento*, ASB, Rem 1982 /2
- ²¹ See film *Il ritorno del soldato*, ASB, Rem 1983 /3
- ²² See film *Spigolatura*, ASB, Rem 1982 /4
- ²³ See film *Acquaiole*, ASB, Rem 1982 /5
- ²⁴ See film *Aratura*, ASB, Rem 1983 /1
- ²⁵ See film *Pausa*, ASB, Rem 1983 /2
- ²⁶ See film *Battitura del grano sull'aia*, ASB, Rem 1980 /5 e 1980/6
- ²⁷ In particular see the films *Mietitura*, ASB, Rem 1987/2 and *La scuola*, ASB, Rem 1987 /7.



Mulino Bianco was to have been presented by Ella Fitzgerald but between 1976 and 1987 used a melody written by Franco Godi which would become a sort of "musical logo", reminiscent of music box music, which has undoubtedly left its mark on advertising history. It was even played in schools and has made the brand recognizable everywhere. In 1988 the tune and words written by Bruno Lauzi would take its place, as sung by "the girl with a guitar". As of 1990 the music was by Ennio Morricone, with its reassuring tones to illustrate the "family at the mill" shown in these pages [ASB, Rem, 90/10-16; Rem 91/1-20].



Music and the mill

GIAN PAOLO MINARDI

The Mulino Bianco chapter of Barilla's history begins, as we have said elsewhere, in 1975 as creation of the directorate for "other development products". The "other" was referred to the products, not to the general philosophy and basic values associated with pasta, with which the brand is wholly in line. The underlying principle is the same: good things of yesteryear, aimed at reaffirming the natural basis of the industrial processes used which were increasingly seen by the general public as being unnatural. On a musical plane the original idea that was to accompany the new brand name, the white mill, and the wheat ear and flowers with Ella Fitzgerald, the contrast between black and white expressing the innate force of nature. Once this opportunity had been lost due to an illness of the great singer, the musical content of the advertisements, that were to last from 1976 to 1987, was concentrated in a motif by Franco Godi. It was little more than a "motto", a musical logo which, if we listen to the first spot of 1976, sounds more like the music of a music box. But the strength of this motif and obviously the ability of the composer, lie in its ability to be subject to variations and to be bent to illustrate different situations, for example to take on rural tones through a variant for flute accompanied by the guitar (Horse-"Tarallucci" commercial, 1977) but also to open wholly new horizons.

Godi's motif should be seen in the context of the aesthetic tones used in the different films. We should remember that the visual elements of the commercials were closely associated with the positive attitude to the rural world created by the film *L'Albero degli Zoccoli*, a clean, optimistic world expressed in extremely elegant terms. The melody showed all its flexibility in the different situations shown by the films, changing every time a new situation arose but remaining fundamentally the same. This was its strength.



Thus we see it acquire particularly strong rhythm in the "Dolcetti delle Feste" of 1983, extend into neoclassical tones in film n. 1 of 1985 or develop poetic-naturalistic traits in a Ravel-like variation of the Daphnis and Chloé genre (Biscottes 1985), return to a soft romantic tone ("Morbide promesse" 1985) or liven up to become a rustic waltz ("Gemme di neve" 1986). It paralleled the development of the clearly rural themes but was equally effectively used for the cartoons by Grazia Nidasio advertising the "Tegolino", "Crostatina" and "Little Miller".

Ten years keeping up an image is a long time in a world of ever changing tastes. The atmosphere created by *L'Albero degli Zoccoli* was by then a little too stylized, aseptic and possibly felt to be a little false; there was a need for a stronger medium to put forward the "return to nature" theme which is behind the Mulino Bianco brand name.

The musical backing to this new series of advertisements (the first was the "Granetti" spot of 1987 and called to mind Pellizza da Volpedo)

was provided by Bruno Lauzi (1937). The Genoese singer and composer wrote several songs for the commercials which were sung by a young farming girl and accompanied by a guitar; the subjects of the film were wheat, love seen in terms of a happy family and presented simply and directly: Lauzi's simplicity transferred to the advertising context the sensitivity and sentimental undertones of the French tradition while giving it an all-Italian touch which has roots in Italian popular song.

These deeper tones might have been the reason why especially the younger viewers who were no longer used to this form of eloquence did not identify unanimously with the commercial.





*Have you ever seen wheat?
It is like a fair sea
that moves
and moves you deep down;
beautiful from afar
but have you ever held
wheat in your hand?
Have you ever seen wheat?
Long ears, yellow in colour,
born of the earth out of love
and day after day;
there will never be a day
without wheat ... as long as the world
has love.*

(Bruno Lauzi)

In parallel with the rustic Lauzi songs between 1987 and 1989, lighter music was used for the "Pandolci", the "Tenerezze", the "Camille" and "Crostatine". The old Mulino Bianco theme was taken up again and from it were derived variations, at times archaic and at others sentimental and intimate or highly evocative (the "Crostatina" spot of 1988 of the "Little Miller" series which recalls the light and elegant Grieg in "Morning").

The 1989 spots find the music at the end of the sequence, again different variants on the Godi theme.

With 1990 a whole new approach seemed to be established: each individual spot was seen as an episode in a longer series which would last over time, whose main characters were the members of a "happy family" who live in the country, in the green valley of the white mill, which is materialized among the hills around Siena near the famous Abbey of San Galgano.

This project, with its single thread led to the creation of a musical leitmotiv that renewed the idea of continuity within each episode, and this was a music that would suggest affection and serenity, but subtly; it was both simple and sophisticated; this was not to be a jingle or the base for variations but a melody proper, sinuous and articulated over eight bars.

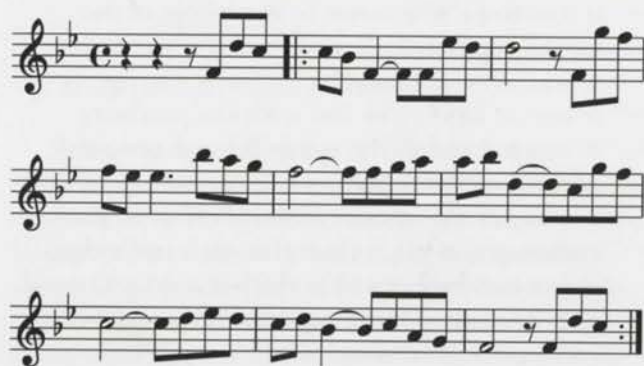


These characteristics could but find expression in the work of Ennio Morricone (1929) whose experience in the cinema field is incredibly vast as well as being marked by great originality of themes.

The motif used in the Mill advertisement contains the traits inherited from Morricone in so many scores written for the cinema: in particular what is clear is the sensitive use of different styles, never however introduced gratuitously; his specific capacity is the bringing together

of heterogeneous elements in a coherent whole.

The other characteristic of Morricone's music which we see in the variety of tones that our motif takes on as it develops and as the screen play unfolds, is the use of the whole range of instruments and textures without excessive concentration on the melody-tone component.



The Mulino Bianco communications system allowed for the creative and coherent use of promotional objects, closely related with the environments represented in the advertising. This is how the "Coccio" milk bowl was created – below, the first press advert [ASB, Rbma 78] and the original milk bowl on which the model was based [Coll. Guatelli]; it was to be a free gift and a communications event together and the first of a long line of gifts including cups, sugar bowls, biscuit holders, tea pots, milk jugs, plates, trays and table cloths with naïf designs.

The virtues of the promotional object

IVO MOROSINI

The situation

Someone in the past has said that the recent history of promotion policies has been strongly influenced by Mulino Bianco. I don't know if this is true; all I can say is that we have worked hard and have tried to give this medium a whole new significance.

Mulino Bianco promotions were to become a strategic weapon rather than purely tactical as they had been seen previously. For this to happen we had to change approaches, concepts, methods and above all models of investment.

The year was 1978 and three years since its market launch Mulino Bianco held the second largest share of the bakery products market. This result was considered good but not enough. Consumers of these products were (already) very unfaithful to the brand; they liked to change product and brand often. This was an obstacle to growth.

We decided to work on the strong point of the brand which seemed to appeal most to consumers – the variety of products. Here Mulino Bianco had an advantage over its competitors, with more than 10 types of biscuits, various snacks, biscottes and various forms of breadstick. What we needed to do was to stimulate loyalty to the brand; as long as the consumer was loyal to the brand his gift was assured.

The approach was unusual, at least at the time. Once the aims of the promotion campaign had been established we began creating a team that included not only the promotions agency, as was the usual course of action, but the advertising agency too, so as to ensure that the promotion would express the same values as the communications campaign. Communications synergies were sought after even in the smallest details.

The team developed strong partnership ties,



which I had never seen occur before, and I believe that this was one of the reasons why we were very successful over very long periods of time.

The first Mulino Bianco gift

The ideal gift was to have various characteristics:

- it was to be of interest to the whole of the target population;
- it was to be collectable;
- it was to have close ties with the products
- it was to express the symbolic and evocative content of the brand;
- it was not to require excessive effort in the consumption of product (for each individual object) and was to offer different quantities of gifts according to the amount of product consumed (flexibility).

As of the 1980s the free gifts were accompanied by a series of surprises, more than 650, for the child consumer and immediately available in the packet. They were designed to stimulate play and the imagination which in turn would become part of the communications effort. Facing page, an overview of the "surprises" [ASB, Rgma] and an advertisement carried by "Corriere dei Piccoli" of 1984 [ASB, Rbma 84]. As of 1988 the "Mill" would be turned into an alarm clock, the "Artists' Mill", the "Mill of Secrets", "The Archimedes' Mill" which would contain a series of games and activities for children [ASB, Rgma]. Right, top, the bread basket in white porcelain offered by a single family of products from 1991 to 1992.

After having looked at many ideas, we chose one that seemed best to respond to the objectives: the "Coccio" or milk bowl. The terracotta bowl and plate were inspired by old milk bowls and bore the same decorations and motifs as used in the advertising, making the bowl both a promotional item and a means of communication. This means of communications was strong and coherent with the values contained in the communications of the whole Mulino Bianco range.

The promotional campaign was immensely successful and several millions of Italian families collected the whole set of bowls.

The initial proposal continued to be successful for six years. To complete the line we created milk jugs, sugar bowls and breakfast trays.

The aim of increasing the consumer's loyalty to the trade mark had been achieved and Mulino Bianco had in the meantime become market leader of the bakery sector.

Target children

The success of the milk bowl was particularly marked in families with children. Children themselves were often involved in cutting out the marks, which could also be found in their sweet snacks, and sticking them on the cards. However the snack line felt the need to appeal to children in particular. The gift was to be immediate and particularly original and unique like the gifts for adults.

Thus in the early 1980s each packet of snacks contained a surprise, which consisted of a small





box the size of a matchbox which contained a different gift from one packet to the next.

The promotion was so popular among children that it was renewed and developed for many years after. More than 650 different gifts were designed, all contained in the modular boxes.

The second generation of gifts: "a feast for mothers and children"

The promotional campaigns paralleled the evolution of the communications policy which began as of the 1980s changing its original content with its references to the rural world, shifting increasingly to the real world.

The promotional objects over the same period lost the characteristics that had accompanied the initial brand and were based on more objective values such as their practicality and their economic value, while the campaign highlighted the joy of being together (for the target population).

This was the period of table cloths (for mothers) and mills (for children). Both the table cloth and the mill were simple enough at first (the table cloth was of cotton and the mill hid a number of surprises), but over the years the table cloths became richer, more elegant, embroidered and the mills increasingly sophisticated. The series ended in 1993 with the Flanders linen table cloth and the Archimedes-Mill. Several millions of Italian families have collected the table cloths and the mills enthusiastically.

A range of gifts offered by a single product range

Towards the end of the 1980s, with the significant growth of the product range and expansion of the biscuits, snacks and breads business, there was a need to create a specific range of gifts which would be referred to a single family of products alongside the promotion campaigns related to the brand name in general,



"Natura Amica" was almost certainly the most widely distributed Italian publication as it is sent free by Barilla to several millions of families who have consumed its products. It was a simple publication of a few pages only which was born at the beginning of the 1980s to communicate with consumers who had been collecting the "marks" to obtain the promotional items. It was later extended to pasta consumers with the theme of good-eating habits and diet, cooking and domestic sciences, in line with Barilla communications policy.

Below the poster advertising the "Mill" promotions in 1993. The long series of table cloths ended that year – here we see the embroidered and Flanders linen versions – as did the mill series, with the solar energy "Archimedes Mill". Right, the embroidery on the table cloth of 1993.



and this was to further increase the loyalty of the consumer to each single family of Mulino Bianco products.

Thus applying the same principles of coherence with the basic business, three additional promotional campaigns were begun:

- one for breakfast products: cups and coffee machine
- one for snacks: "Scoprinatura" ("discovering nature")
- one for the bread range: the bread basket.

These were relatively successful but were judged as being inefficient and were stopped in 1993.

Third generation gifts: from dream to reality

Consumers change and their loyalty declines, while the competition becomes increasingly aggressive. The need to be more efficient began being felt and led to the concentration of all effort on a single promotion campaign, giving the consumer greater choice. The gifts lost many of their symbolic contents and became increasingly concrete and rational.

The following criteria were adopted:

- 1) Offer highly useful objects with a high perceived value.
- 2) Offer exclusive objects possibly created specially for the company by great names in the sector.
- 3) Offer objects that appeal to the target population of buyers or consumers (children).

After an intense period of team work we created "I desideri 94" ("The desires of 1994"): "Pesa & Informa" (kitchen scales), "Il nuovo fornello" (tabletop grill-cum-oven) "Cappuccina", "Giulietta e Romeo", "Micro sound system": three gifts for mothers and housewives and two for children.

All the gifts have in common that they are modern, technological and guaranteed by great production names. The campaign would try to highlight these characteristics, without losing the warmth of the household and the brightness of the child's world. The promotion was being launched in spring 1994.

A global image

VALERIA BUCCHETTI

Mulino Bianco is an exemplary case of corporate strategy and production diversification but it should also be seen as a significant image projection operation. It is one of the most significant examples of a global image project based around a product line.

Mulino Bianco¹, opened a new era in communications.

The product was no longer simply described and shown but also related to the construction of a world that would take on the rôle of the "ideal context" in which the actor-product existed and belonged.

This world consists of atmospheres, qualities and attributes; it came to life through a series of images and physical and material attributes, dominated by the elements of the communications campaigns.

It was to be the definition of this universe that would determine the basic concepts with which the different communications events would be organized.

The name itself and the potential it contains are like a character in a novel who comes to dominate the author and creates the plot alone, developing his own personality; creating images coherent with this reference world would give the brand its packaging, advertising campaign and promotion campaigns etc².

The choice was for a "global image"³ in which every communications event was based on a fundamental concept and in which the same event was no more than a single step in a wider narration process perfectly integrated into the entire communications chain.

With hindsight, we see that the forms each event took were inevitable given the overall policy expression of that policy would have been impossible except in the form it was given.



Product design

The central rôle in this process went to the product design and what is most interesting is that we are speaking of product design in the food industry. This is a particularly rare phenomenon, as the concept of design is foreign to the food industry.

The new Mulino Bianco biscuit was to have functional aspects, aesthetic and communicational content which once made into prototypes, tested and checked, were to be introduced into industrial production processes. In other words both the type of product – which was to correspond to consumer demand, etc. – and its shape and as a consequence its image, were all created in the design phase. And on top of that, a different name was to be given to each product, each with roots in the same semantic field.

First of all the biscuit was to have a core principle which it was to reflect by being very simple, and this was to be recognizable in the ingredients used as well as each biscuit type

having a specific character, the common trait of being irregular in shape.

The final version was to look like a hand-and-homemade biscuit and therefore was to lose the precise lines of the industrial product, which would allow the consumer to perceive the human hand in its making, giving it a "rustic" feel.

The biscuit forms of the hand-made product had to be examined so as to understand fully the characteristics that would enable a perfect "simulation of imperfection" to give the final industrial product all the attributes of the hand-made version.

Agrarian symbology

The defining of the product's image started with the examination of symbolic elements related to rural life, from the wheat field with its plough furrows, the mill wheel blades turning, the forms and decorations used in wooden molds for biscuits; this was followed by a second stage in



Left, a comparison between "open" packages of the "Galletti" biscuits, one of the major products of the biscuits line, which allows us to see the changes that have taken place over time, in many cases hardly noticeable. From the top: the 1977 wrapping, in the centre the 1985 version and bottom, the 1990 version. The front of the packs initially held only the picture of the products but later would include promotional flashes which would also occupy part of the backs of the packs as the number of products coming under the brand increased. The changes in the size of the lettering is also interesting to note as is the change in their overall setting. Below the open "Crostatine" box, the sweet snack line as seen in 1990 and the "Ciocchini" biscuit line of 1985 [ASB, Nma].



which the most appropriate forms were chosen and three dimensional models created to simulate the product.

The product therefore was to have a series of characteristics resulting from the research phase which the industrial process was to maintain, including the irregular forms that were to recall old fashioned biscuits.

The requirement for an industrial production system to produce objects that bring to mind artisan or small scale productions is certainly not new. The history of industrial development shows many examples of this requirement, which come mainly at the end of development cycles and with the introduction of new technologies, but in this case the most significant effect was to be seen in terms of product image and the requirement on the part the consumer that the product contain values that were felt to have been lost in the industrial production processes.

The product, the brand, and its packaging

The need to combine the qualities of a handmade product with the requirements of the industrial production line led to a further need in communications terms, for an more flexible image creation system; this in turn led to a splitting of responsibility and specialization of the communications teams⁵. The global image of the product shows this dual personality.

In brief we could attribute to the Barilla trade mark the institutional rôle of representing the industrial content of the product and thereby all its rational elements, while the "Mulino Bianco" brand was required to present the symbolic values of the pre-industrial world and to act on the emotional level. The plan was therefore composed of all these different elements and every communication event acted as a thread that linked these two sides of the project.

The packaging itself carried the wider theme of the mill and responded to the concepts illustrated above although it did show how difficult it could be to extrapolate the bag from

the global image of the product, inevitably leading it to be a synthesis of the product's image rather than a separate object.

The bags – designed by Gio Rossi – became one of the main forms of expression of the brand name and every component of the package existed only in relation with the overall image of the brand. This is true especially of the logo which is a form of story in its own right and unlike most logos of the time, purposely did away with the concentration of meanings in favour of a longer narrative element built up through a complex picture.

The logo therefore expresses its values through a series of pictures, with the unification of a central picture of a mill – isolated through the use of a frame – with floral elements set around the band bearing the Mulino Bianco wording.

An analysis of the different studies carried out before reaching the final version shows how difficult giving each element its correct weight in the whole was, both as far as their representation and their position were concerned.

This is particularly true of the mill which in the early phases was given a whole series of different aspects obtained through the accentuation of different details – or truthful details⁶ – each of which shed a different light on the nature of the mill. These included naïf mills as as found in childrens' alphabet books, to others that were far from the Italian tradition and looked more like ranches, and others again that were over-fairy tale like, until one without geographical or historical connotations, but which was a mix of various elements, from the geographical (mountains in the background), and architectural (the form of the roof and the chimneys) which allowed it to enter the imagination of all potential consumers.

Colours

Alongside the different semantic elements another characteristic that contributed significantly to giving the logo its identity were the colours used.

The pale yellow used was initially selected for the biscuit bags and then extended to the whole line of products with varying intensities and has become one of the most significant elements for the identification of the brand, as it covers the whole surface of the bag so as to produce the greatest impact the same colour is also used for the other products of the Mulino Bianco line and therefore reinforces the product identity through the creation of a coordinated image.

Colour was used to great effect in differentiating the brand from others in the same sector, as yellow had never been used before and therefore became a clear sign for the easy identification of the product within the market sector.

Over time the choice of images has changed as the range of products has expanded, but within extremely rigorous lines and keeping as closely as possible to the same uniform design.

The primary elements described above are repeated on all packages no matter what the content, and keep the same characteristics, from the constructive elements to the layout, leaving the photograph of the individual product to specify the package's content while reinforcing the brand's identity through the use of different structures.

The image system described above is thus suitable to the development of separate and parallel requirements to those of the company; Mulino Bianco is an umbrella brand⁷ which, thanks to its rapid consolidation, can host any product that in some way is linked with the baking process, with wheat, flour and the wheat ear which is the major symbolic element.

An innovative form

The form and structure of the package are part and parcel of the graphic elements that cover it although the latter may in some cases be required to fulfil other functions such as conservation of content, standardization, capacity to be stacked, etc.; in any case packaging was conceived as part of the communications policy, whatever forms it

Two other interesting comparisons. In this page the biscotte product package in waxed paper, of 1975, after they had passed from the Barilla trade mark to Mulino Bianco and, right, the 1994 version in opaline cellophane which allows for better conservation. The representation of the product is radically different, as seen in the colour of the logo and in the intensity of the background colour. The back of the 1994 package is enlivened by nutritional information while the sides of the packet carry promotional information, user

instructions and consumer services including the "toll free" number. The product is shown with greater care making it more appetizing than the first version. Bottom, the "Pani Morbidi" logo which was carried on a transparent cellophane which allowed for the quality and colour of the product to be seen by the consumer [ASB, Nma].



may have taken or materials it may have used.

The package that was selected in 1975 to launch the products on the market is a typical example. The choice of the bag format gave priority to the communications contents of the product; it was an innovative package for the times because it was completely dissimilar from other products on the market which were sold in packets; furthermore it included symbols connected with the past, bringing to mind wheat flour kept in bags but also unpackaged product sold to customers in paper bags.

Alongside these aspects were the technological requirements in which the combination of paper and aluminium allowed for good levels of conservation up to the time of final consumption, thus increasing the quality of the product.

As with most innovations which imply a change in consumer habits, the bag met with initial resistance and had to face a few problems.

These spanned from the requirements of the distribution networks that were beginning to condition the choices of many companies, which

were particularly hostile to the bag as it interfered with the shelving criteria of the product – boxes can be stacked, bags can't and therefore require more shelf space – to problems associated with the packaging line itself which had to be substantially renewed.

However the advantages on the communications level were overwhelming. In this form of package the content passed from a typically industrial shelving disposition – straight, ordered and in stacks that were easily managed by machines – to a disordered form of shelving; closer to the gestures connected with consumption, allowing the consumer to handle the product in order to collect the content, thereby repeating actions that are normally part of the household environment.

This form of package furthermore was a step towards satisfying consumer needs that had hitherto never been considered by packaging technicians, offering a better "service". The different levels of packing that traditional boxes contained were eliminated with the bag which was

A comparison between the "Grissini Torinesi" (Breadstick) packets: below the 1977 version with the single colour logo applied to a background consisting of a photograph of the product and below left, the 1992 version characterized by a greater specialization of the various areas. We have left out the rear of the packages on purpose, where the difference in the use of areas is even greater. It is worth noting that in 1977 the transfer of the product from the Barilla trade mark had caused some concern in the marketing department, hence the use of the Barilla brand on the sides of the packet, leaving the "Mulino Bianco" logo only on the front.



simpler, while the materials used allowed for better conservation of the contents once opened as the bag could be closed easily (all that was necessary was to read the instructions carried on the upper edge of the bag, today this is common), offering freshness rather than wholeness of the product.

Furthermore, being flexible, it allowed the bag to be folded according to the amount of content left inside, reducing its size, which could not be done with traditional boxes whose volume cannot be modified however empty they are.

The bag format was also used for other products of the brand and was the basis on which variations were developed which were better suited to the use of other materials, such as plastic film, and other contents – for example the “tower format” for the pastries or the twist close bread bags. Several characteristics of the original bags were kept and a highly individual series of forms was developed which was adapted to each different product.

The packages therefore were, and still are, part

of its contents, contain it, protect it and give it an identity, or better a personality so that it is easily identified.

Through perfect coherence between inside and outside, content and container and beyond the package's primary rôle which is to protect, conserve the product and allow it to be transported, here the package is also part of the brand's narrative. This narration plot projects the consumer into the dimension selected, takes him from one product to the next, tells him all about the product and eventually brings him to the promotion area.

Packaging is also required to fulfil a second task which is to act as a support medium for communications concerning areas near the product, from the additional communications, which for example involved the cartoon characters such as “The little Miller” drawn by Grazia Nidasio and aimed at the younger consumer – to information relating to promotions.

Promotion

The innovative aspect of the Mulino Bianco promotional objects – which have had a fundamental rôle not only in the consolidation of the products – is connected with the very nature of the items, which were completely different from those that had preceded them, which were generally limited to a single area and related to functional kitchen or household objects usually selected from a catalogue.

The “Coccio” initiative, the first promotion developed was followed by the sugar bowl, the cup, the biscuit bowl and the plates, the tray and the different “Marvelous Mills”, “Archimedes’ Mill”, “Artists’ Mill”, table cloths (a different version every year); the consumer was promised a single object created especially for him, a symbol of his belonging to the Mulino Bianco world and which responded well in the 1980s to the increased popularity of the gadget.

The choice of objects above all had to be coherent with the overall image of the product.

With the milk bowl which was based on a design of 1919, the most characteristic symbol of the line was chosen, the mill, which was painted with rapid brush strokes which was most similar to the handmade product possible. Several versions were created so as to highlight for those who collected them, the difference between one piece and another, which industrialized production techniques would have rendered impossible.

But apart from the details, the most significant aspect was the new position that the promotional object now had, no longer based on the selection of gift objects that have nothing to do with the product but part of the communications effort revolving around the product, and part of the reference environment both in so far as the intrinsic characteristics of the object itself are concerned and through the images that the object uses.

One example are the wheat ears, bushells or mills on the packages that represent the number

of "points" collected to allow the consumer to receive the promotional object, in line with the fundamental philosophy in which each object is part of the whole overall message.

Notes

¹ Cfr.: DANTON DE ROUFFIGNAC Peter, *Packaging in the Marketing mix*, Oxford, 1990.

² MORACE Francesco, *Il Boom Mulino Bianco: le radici di un biscotto*, in BROGNARA Roberto, COBBI Linda, MORACE Francesco, *I boom: prodotti e società degli Anni Ottanta*, Milan, Lupetti & C., 1990, pp 15-42.

³ Cfr.: BUCCI Ampelio, *L'impresa guidata dalle idee*, Milan, Domus Academy, 1992.

⁴ Cfr.: BONSIEPE Gui, *Teoria e pratica del disegno industriale*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1975.

⁵ BUCCHETTI Valeria, *Un'immagine per la marca*, in *Lineagrafica*, 1992, September, n. 5.

⁶ Cfr.: ANCESCHI Giovanni, *L'oggetto della raffigurazione*, Milan, Etas, 1992.

⁷ Cfr.: KAPFERER Jean-Noel - THOENIG Jean-Claude, *La marque*, Paris, Mc Graw-Hill, 1989.

Mulino Bianco Chronology

- 1973-1974 Strategic project for the definition of a new Barilla line
- 1975 Launch in Italy of the first six types of biscuit bearing the Mulino Bianco brand
- 1977 The first sweet snacks enter the market alongside the biscuits; during the same year the products launched were : Pan Carré (bread loaf), while Barilla Grissini (Breadsticks), Fette Biscottate (Biscottes) come under the Mulino Bianco umbrella
- 1983 The "Docetti delle Feste" (pastries) are launched, the second generation of biscuits, closer to the pastry.
- 1985 Mulino Bianco launches its crackers.
- 1986 Alongside "I Dolcetti delle feste" the "Torte fresche" (fresh pies) are launched which also compete with the artisan pastry sector.
- 1987 Launch of the "Pandolci" line, half way between the dry biscuit and the butter biscuit. Among the butter based biscuits "Pan di stelle" and "Spicchi di Sole" are launched.
- 1988 Alongside the classical "Pan Carré" and the "Pagnottelle", the "Pani Morbidi" table bread product is launched; "Granetti", hard breads similar to the bread stick are also launched.
- 1989 launch of the "Grancereale" biscuit and the "Camille" sweet snacks.
- 1992 Launch of "Pangrì" and "Michetti" and of the "Plum Cake" in the sweet snack line.
- 1993 Launch of the "Orsi Sgranocchini" and "Cuor di mela" biscuits.
Launch of the different "pani" breads and the "Crackers ai cinque cereali".