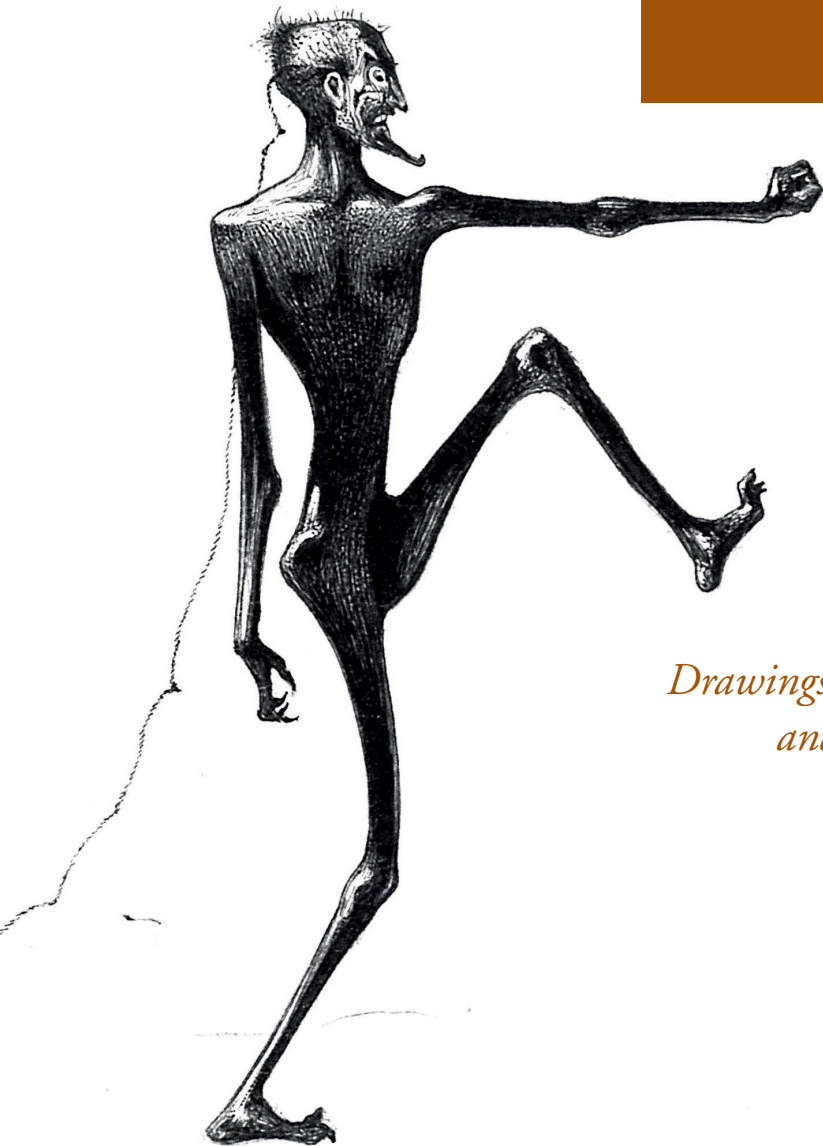


Alessandro Botta

ALBERTO MARTINI

**“THE PEN IS THE
ART’S SCALPEL”**



*Drawings for Edgar Allan Poe
and other themes*

GALLERIA CARLO VIRGILIO & C.



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ARTE ANTICA MODERNA E CONTEMPORANEA

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Alberto Martini, in a photographic portrait by the Gatti Fredy studio, Venice 1920 (by permission of the Historian Archive of the City of Turin)

Alberto Martini. The journey of an illustrator in Italy and Europe

“A cerebral artist, smitten with symbols, allegories and satirical reveries.”¹ These are the words that Vittorio Pica uses in one of his first pieces dedicated to Alberto Martini to define the characters in the young Italian illustrator’s artistic production, focussing on the aspects that make him intrinsically distinguishable from other Italian and European draftsmen. In 1904, when the Neapolitan critic (one of the greatest art experts active in the country at the time)² published these reflections in the periodical “Emporium,” Martini was already a well known and admired artist, with behind him a large number of exhibitions and commissions in editorial illustration.³ Born in 1876 in Oderzo, in the area of Treviso, and initially trained by his father, the young Alberto did not waste time, swiftly taking up drawing as his favourite manner of expressing the creative impulse, in line with a sensibility towards the graphic medium begun more or less thirty years before in Europe and only later reaching Italy.⁴ In France, Germany and above all England, the interest in drawing – and more generally in illustration – had led to a progressive rediscovery and appreciation of graphic techniques, aided by the growing evolution of large scale printing processes. An interest that prompted drawing to be considered as a form of autonomous representation, no longer subordinate to the major arts but in fact the preferable medium (given its marked features of reproducibility) for the democratisation of art, hoped for (by many) for some time.

From the start, Martini’s attention was focussed on themes and motifs taken from the literary and poetic field, in an open challenge not only of the most noted and ambitious contemporary interpreters but also of the Italian tradition of the illustrated book, well established for centuries. In one way or another, this tendency to interpret literary texts would mark his entire artistic production, even his later activities, through a revival of the graphic cycles that had characterised and distinguished his early works.

Already by 1895, at only eighteen years of age, he had made thirteen illustrations for *Morgante Maggiore* by Luigi Pulci (cat. 1-4). The comic-chivalric poem, that describes the extraordinary adventures of the paladin Orlando, parodying the tradition of the Carolingian cycle, presents Martini with the possibility to get close to an ironic and light-hearted literary source, fully in line with the English graphic revival inspired



The article *I giovani illustratori italiani: Alberto Martini* by Vittorio Pica, “Emporium”, August 1904



Drawings for *La corte dei miracoli* reproduced in the Munich magazine “Dekorative Kunst”, 1899

by the neo-medieval, popularised through the illustrations of Walter Crane, William Morris and Robert Anning Bell that circulated in Italy over those years.⁵ However, the project was soon cast aside in favour of the mock-heroic poem *La secchia rapita* (cat. 9-11) by Alessandro Tassoni, this time explored more extensively and taken up again after a long time.⁶ A literary choice – leaning towards the mock-epic genre – that had the illustrious precedent of the work of Aubrey Beardsley in *The Rape of the Lock* by Alexander Pope, published in London in 1896 and containing nine illustrations by the English artist.⁷

Martini’s exhibition debut and contact with critics comes early, in 1897. At the second International Venice exhibition, Martini entered the series of fourteen illustrations under the title of *La corte dei miracoli* (cat. 8) drawn between 1896 and 1897.⁸ The characters described in the illustrated tale – grimy, lame, mal-nourished vagabonds – are redolent of the subjects and historical contexts previously encountered by Martini in *Morgante Maggiore* and *La secchia rapita*. However, the epic aspect, typical of the mock-heroic genre, here leaves space for tragic and pathetic sentiment that Martini softens with the almost caricatural grotesque humour that is distinctive in all his works from those years. His creations for *La corte dei miracoli* show a clear and accurate reference to Northern European sixteenth century drawing, whose ideal continuity is underlined by the use of an initialled signature clearly ascribable to Dürer. Always carried out in reduced format, they reference a culture that is not limited to the maestros of the north, but also extends to the seventeenth century French engraver Jacques Callot, some of whose notorious *Gueux* subjects Martini clearly seems to revive in the beggars and tramps that populate his drawings.⁹ Interest in *La corte dei miracoli*, in its irrepressible novelty (at least in Italy), does not take long to reach and cross the national borders: after Venice in 1897 his illustrations are exhibited the following year in Munich, at the Münchener Jahres-Ausstellung,¹⁰ in conjunction with an educational sojourn of “several months”¹¹ that the artist passes in the Bavarian city. In Munich, in those years the epicentre of the most prolific circle of illustrators, his drawings are reviewed and reproduced in the decorative arts publication “Dekorative Kunst,” and seen in relation to the graphic works of Joseph Sattler, one of the most celebrated German illustrators active at the time.¹²

A new cycle entitled *La vita del lavoratore* (which would become *Il poema del lavoro*) (cat. 5-7) appears for the first time at the Turin Fine Arts exhibition running from May to October in 1898,¹³ a series that, demonstrating the success

and interest generated, would be shown with some additional works at Venice the next year, and later exhibited in London, Munich and Berlin in 1901.¹⁴

The illustrations for *Il poema del lavoro* display technical characteristics and a graphic *ductus* similar to those adopted in *La corte dei miracoli* but, in this case, the artist chooses to use larger dimensions, in a horizontal setting, giving himself more room for narration. Although there are no definite ties with well-known literary works, the series has its origins in Martini's – undeclared – reading of those years. The drawings should be understood as belonging to a climate of artistic research aimed at highlighting themes and social issues related to employment, which were particularly prolific in Italy from the end of the 1870s.¹⁵ A field of investigation that has noteworthy success above all in illustration into the early years of the twentieth century, all over Europe (one thinks of the series of engravings *Bauernkrieg* by Käthe Kollwitz, or the *Bilder aus der Zeit des Bauernkrieges* collection by the abovementioned Sattler) and that Martini seems still to be adopting fully at the close of the century.

Moreover, the exhibition in Turin, according to Vittorio Pica's later testimony, sanctions the meeting – the start of what would be a long lasting association – between the young illustrator and the Neapolitan critic:

Was it in Turin in the spring of 1898 that Alberto Martini first presented himself to the scrutiny of public and critics? I cannot be absolutely sure, but if I am mistaken it is only by a few months or, at most, a year.¹⁶ What I remember very well is that it was the occasion on which I had the good fortune to make his acquaintance both as an artist and as a person.¹⁷

The first time we find Martini involved in a project explicitly aimed at publishing was the illustration of the *Divine Comedy* by Dante, which the artist later returned to in the 1920s (cat. 36) and the 1940s.¹⁸ The occasion came about as a result of the Concorso Alinari, a competition announced in May 1900¹⁹ and open to Italian artists, with the goal of publishing an illustrated work that could compete with the more illustrious examples of foreign products in the area of illustrated books: such as the famous and highly successful series by Gustave Doré, re-printed – in economical format as well – by the Milanese publisher Sonzogno from 1868, on various occasions.

Vittorio Pica directly points Martini towards the Florentine editor's initiative, and also mentions his name to Alinari along



Illustration by Alberto Martini for the frontispiece of the *Divine Comedy*, Fratelli Alinari Edition, 1902



Cover illustration of the magazine “Poesia”, founded in 1905

with that of the Neapolitan illustrator Vincenzo La Bella. In the series of drawings destined for Alinari, the artist produces illustrations that are totally different from his previous work. The references to Northern European graphics that up until then had characterised his work are not so obvious, although still apparent in places. Martini seems to be moving in an autonomous manner, exclusively focussed on the visual interpretation of Dante’s poem and openly distancing himself from the model – which was over familiar and cumbersome – of Doré.

International recognition, although already confirmed in previous exhibitions, now earns a new significance: indeed Martini is appointed to represent the artistic expression – in his case conspicuously in drawing – of his own country, in two important reviews in 1904. In April of that year his works appear in the Italian section of figurative arts at the world fair Louisiana Purchase Exposition,²⁰ while in June some drawings from the series *Il poema del lavoro* are displayed at the Italian Exhibition held at the Earl’s Court of London, and were the subject of an enthusiastic article that appeared in the daily newspaper “The Times,” which considers his illustrations among the most interesting works, alongside the paintings of Giovanni Segantini and Francesco Paolo Michetti, the only other Italian artists worthy of mention.²¹

In the meantime his commitments are growing in number, taking shape not only in exhibitions but also as undertakings tied to precise publishing initiatives. Martini begins to be approached – thanks to direct encouragement from Pica –²² by the more important reviews of the day: besides collaborating regularly with the Istituto Italiano d’Arti Grafiche di Bergamo (the editor of “Emporium” and of the series *Attraverso gli Albi e le Cartelle* directed by Pica), in 1904 he is offered an initial collaboration for the pages of the monthly review “La Lettura,” attached to the daily paper “Corriere della Sera,” while from 1905 – although in a more sporadic manner – he works for the periodical “Varietas,” edited by the publishing house Sonzogno of Milan. Again in this period he designs the cover for the literary monthly “Poesia,” founded by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who would use it uninterruptedly – in different colours on each occasion – until the close of publication in October 1909.

The involvement of the artist from Treviso it is not limited over the course of 1905 to reviews and periodicals, it is now the season in which he begins to produce covers and illustrations for the books of some national publishing houses. His activity in the field is permanently tied to the Libreria Editrice Lombarda, founded that year in Milan by Tommaso

Antongini and Arnaldo De Mohr, for which he designs the entire illustrative apparatus for the volume *Le Commedie di Terenzio*,²³ the first job that sees the artist faced with a complex undertaking involving the substance of a whole book, and the covers of the collections of poems *I canti delle stagioni* by Luigi Orsini, *Le malie del passato* by Giovanni Bertacchi and *Olympia. Volteggi. Salti mortali. Ariette e varietà* by Remigio Zena.²⁴

Chronologically, the last job destined for Antongini is in the setting for the imprint of *Biblioteca fantastica moderna*, that seems to foreshadow, both in subject matter and in compositional choices, the illustrations for Edgar Allan Poe on which Martini – from that very year – is beginning to mull over.²⁵

While until then Martini's work for publishers is confined to the national territory, in 1907 a foreign involvement contributes to marking his production in a significant manner. Invited to London by the editor William Heinemann,²⁶ he designs four illustrations and a cover for the volume *Raw Edges. Studies and Stories of These Days* by the English writer and journalist Perceval Landon, published a year later in 1908.²⁷ They are the illustrations that from a compositional and stylistic point of view come closest to the drawings for Poe. The unorthodox choices, as well as the isolation of the subjects and some descriptive details, make them quite similar to the drawings made for the American writer.

When, in 1905, Martini begins to carry out the first drawings for Poe (cat. 12-20, 22-23),²⁸ the American writer had been known for a good fifty years in Italy: introduced into the country by means of studies and translations into French by Charles Baudelaire, it was welcomed with curiosity and his short stories began to be read, studied and in turn translated into Italian. Awareness of the writer of *Tales* spreads rapidly over the national territory thanks above all to the literary reviews that, although in a specialist manner, open the way to a wider distribution of his works, which is also seen gradually in the popular periodicals. The appeal of the “extraordinary” tales (indeed, from the start these are the best known and appreciated) is not slow to arrive, conditioning – to a greater or lesser extent – the production of the Italian writers of the period.²⁹ A wide consensus that, from the 1880s, extends further, to all bands of the public, thanks to the publication – in Italian translation – of the *Tales* by the Milanese publishing house Sonzogno.

For the generation of readers around the turn of the century



Cover and internal illustration for *The Plays by Terentius*, Libreria Editrice Lombarda, 1905



Cover for the “Biblioteca fantastica Moderna” series of the Libreria Editrice Lombarda, 1905

Poe still remains – and perhaps for too long – the accursed writer conveyed, emphasised, by Baudelaire, the inquirer into obsessions, the narrator of the deformed, nightmare and death, that so stimulated the collective imagination. Artists – both in Italy and, above all in the rest of Europe – were no strangers to the lure of cursed suggestions and willingly let themselves be caught up in this climate, locating in Poe’s narrative and poetical themes a fertile terrain for their figurative research: welcoming the imaginative stimuli that his writing could give them, in a moment when developments in international art find in the representation of the symbol and idea a cause for special, lyrical research in open opposition to realism.³⁰

It is perhaps not by chance that Poe, among modern writers, is the one most illustrated and visually interpreted. The iconographic success of his *Tales* and *Poems* is due, most of all, to the very characteristics of his works, that lend themselves to a twofold consideration: on the one hand the allusive content of the texts is particularly well adapted to an idealised return to the literary motif, on the other the minute – almost visual – description of elements and characters that populate the stories offers the artist a solid base of hints to work from.

Besides Martini, the works of Poe were illustrated by a multitude of well-known artists: Edouard Manet, Gustave Doré, Odilon Redon, James Ensor, Aubrey Beardsley and Louis Legrand. In different ways and at different times, each took on the American writer’s tales and poems, the younger generations confronting themselves with the previous artists. The list could be a good deal longer if taking into account (besides the artists who produced single works of Poe) the illustrated editions conceived by less famous designers, who, from the 1880s, spread through Europe a genuine iconography that was tied, above all, to his *Tales*.

For Martini, the choice of episodes to illustrate corresponds to the titles and quantity in the translations by Baudelaire that appeared in the volumes *Histoires extraordinaires*, *Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires* and *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses*,³¹ French editions that the artist used for the elaboration of his drawings, preferring them to the Italian versions that were already in circulation. He produced illustrations without following the articulation of the tales to the letter. The greatest number of drawings don’t go chronologically beyond 1910, while only seven were carried out after the 1930s: in some cases Martini made more than one illustration of the same tale and in one case he produced a generic illustration, intended as a frontispiece for the whole series. Working characteristics allow us to identify two distinct categories

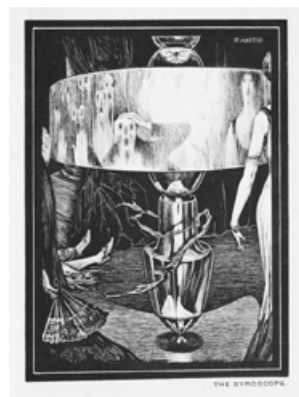
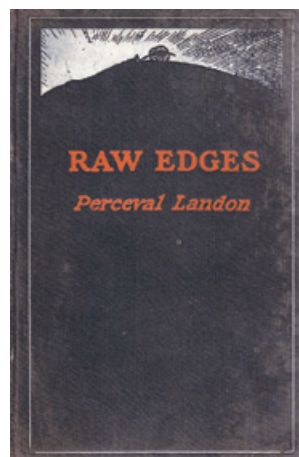
that can be referred to a specific production: indeed, Martini made both large format illustrations – fifty-seven in number – set vertically, and smaller format illustrations – forty-eight in number – most probably intended to be interspersed in the text or at the end of the tales. The illustrations for Poe were all carried out in pen and India ink, adopting different drawing and drafting techniques from one to the next, to suit compositional and figurative necessity. The artist himself clarifies these interpretative requirements in his autobiography, drafted in several versions from the end of the 1930s:

The pen is the art's scalpel, a tool that is as sharp and tricky as the violin [...]. I worked with the world's thinnest pens, "Made in England," on *piccolo cavallo* paper that I had sent from Germany and that you can no longer get hold of today, with India ink that came from Japan. I sharpened the extremely fragile pen on Indian stone, never enough, and to obtain certain greys I had to turn it over, and if it still wasn't enough, dilute the ink. Depending on the case, my pen was as strong as a burin and as light as a feather...

For the transition from white to black, modelling flesh, veils, velvets, hair, water, clouds, light and fire I used a very fine weaving of traits, that I elaborated with the back of the pen, later stippling and finally retouching with the steel tip. [...] With this passionate technique, I composed the drawings for Poe, Shakespeare, Mallarmé, the erotics and others³²

As he extensively interpreted the *Tales* by the American writer, Martini often seems to move away from the text and go beyond the episode narrated, in search of a figurative synthesis that was aware and sometimes dazzling, but nonetheless finalised to transmitting a particular state of mind triggered during the reading of the tales. A form of free and autonomous interpretation that is often charged with suggestions deriving from contexts – especially figurative – unrelated to Poe's tales, that become instrumental to express his own interpretation of the text, through a process of continual re-semantisation between different languages.³³ A progress that follows a precise work plan, established by the artist himself when composing his illustrations for Poe, that marks in the text the point of departure of a process aimed at subjectivity and suggestion: "I. *Let./Read*, II. *Ved./Look*, III. *Ferm./Stop*, IV. *Illustr./Illustrate*."³⁴

The diffusion and awareness of these series, launched by



Cover and internal illustration for the *Raw Edges* collection by Perceval Landon, William Heinemann, 1908



Frontispiece of the article *Un illustratore italiano di Edgar Poe* by Vittorio Pica, created by Martini for the collection *Attraverso gli albi e le cartelle*, 1908



The article *Un gran intérprete italiano de Edgar Poe* by Juan José Soiza Reilly, published in the Argentine magazine “Caras y caretas”, July 1909

Martini in 1905, would only arrive three years later, in 1908, thanks to Pica’s direct good office. Indeed, it would be the Neapolitan art critic to act as mindful and staunch promoter, offering the artist opportunities, as much in publishing as exhibitions, to popularize his drawings to a public that was not only Italian, but more widely European. From the publication of the article *Un illustratore italiano di Edgar Poe*, that appeared in “Emporium” in April 1908 and was successively enlarged for the collection of *Attraverso gli albi e le cartelle*,³⁵ Pica would take advantage of all possible opportunities and all his personal acquaintances to promote their circulation, convinced of Martini’s value and still more of the exceptional quality of his drawings for Poe.

Exhibited for the first time at the Venice Biennale in 1909, Martini’s illustrations immediately attracted the attention of the international press and were commented on, often at the request of Pica, by the main specialised French, English and German reviews. A process that very soon went beyond national confines, even compensating the limitations imposed by the collective exhibitions that did not always succeed in highlighting – between the multitude of paintings and sculptures – the most refined pencil experimentation. Already the following year, in 1910, thanks again to Pica’s help, Martini does indeed obtain a personal show at the 4^{me} Salon Annuel de l’Estampe,³⁶ which opened in January in Brussels. An occasion, devoted exclusively to the techniques of drawing and engraving, where he presented the almost complete collection of his Poe drawings and received gratifying comparisons and associations from the critics, who established concrete links between his work and the illustrations of Felicien Rops and Odilon Redon.

From the Belgian event, the exhibition arrangements of the Poe drawings became increasingly targeted at an overall display of the series rather than an episodic selection of single illustrations. In the same year, a dedicated room at the annual exhibition of the Società d’Amatori e Cultori di Belle Arti di Roma (in a display reflecting the elements shown previously in Brussels),³⁷ anticipates what would be, four years later, the most significant exposition of his illustrations for Poe, organised in March 1914 at Goupil & Co in London³⁸, the British subsidiary of the more famous Parisian gallery.

While on previous occasions it was the good offices of Pica that brought a successful outcome to exhibition projects, in London events took shape thanks to the editor William Heinemann, admirer of Martini since 1907. Exhibited with a precise setup, specified by the gallery (“Il y a deux lignes de dessins le long de nos murs – les grands dessins en cadres

blancs en haut, les petits en cadres noirs dessous»),³⁹ the works for Poe – never so many – won great plaudits from the public, and resulted in an equally noteworthy coverage in the newspapers, who associated the name of Martini with the visionary painter and Romantic William Blake. Defined “Italian pen-and-ink genius” by the daily paper “Newcastle Illustrated Chronicle”,⁴⁰ Martini would return to London to exhibit some of his Poe drawings in 1916, on the sidelines of an exhibition organised by the Leicester Gallery, focussed on Italian satirical illustrations made during the war years.⁴¹ To show his drawings for *Tales*, by now well known and popular, was a choice that transformed into a clear exhibiting strategy, common in years to come. The Poe illustrations appeared both in the personal show at Galleria Pesaro in 1920 and in that organised in Paris in 1925, at the Galerie d’Art Siot-Decauville,⁴² becoming a retrospective of the artist, alongside which he displayed the new productions linked to the activity of pastellist and painter that occupied him from the 1910s.

Martini’s European vocation, which began in the very years he worked on and promoted the illustrated cycle for the short stories by Poe, would represent a crucial choice for his entire artistic and human path, culminating in the decision to move to Paris, which came about in 1928. In the area of Montparnasse, Martini would go on with his surrealist research, initiated in total isolation in the early 1920s; a path that found in Poe the seminal episode of a highly personal artistic development, in continual evolution.



Illustrations for the tales by Edgar Allan Poe and for the *Hamlet* by Shakespeare reproduced on the English weekly magazine “The Tatler”, 25 March 1914

¹ V. Pica, *I giovani illustratori italiani. Alberto Martini*, in "Emporium", vol. XX, 116, agosto 1904, p. 150.

² For the activity Vittorio Pica as art critic see D. Lacagnina (ed. by), *Vittorio Pica e la ricerca della modernità*, Mimesis, Milano Udine 2016; id. (ed. by), *L'officina internazionale di Vittorio Pica. Arte moderna e critica d'arte in Italia (1880-1930)*, Torri del Vento, Palermo 2017; G. Villani, *Un atlante della cultura europea. Vittorio Pica, il metodo e le fonti*, Olschki, Firenze 2018. On the epistolary relations between Alberto Martini and the critic V. Pica, *Un'affettuosa stretta di mano. L'epistolario di Vittorio Pica ad Alberto Martini* by M. Lorandi, Viennepierre, Monza 1994.

³ Fundamental in a reconstruction of Martini's artistic path is M. Lorandi (ed. by), *Alberto Martini*, (Milano, Palazzo della Permanente, dicembre 1985 - gennaio 1986), Electa, Milano 1985.

⁴ With regard to illustration in Italy, for the period in question see G. Bacci, *Le illustrazioni in Italia tra Otto e Novecento. Libri a figure, dinamiche culturali e visive*, Olschki, Firenze 2009; P. Pallottino, *Storia dell'illustrazione italiana. Cinque secoli di immagini riprodotte*, La casa Usher, Firenze-Lucca 2020.

⁵ Cfr. G. Pieri, *The Influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Fin de siècle Italy: Art, Beauty, and Culture*, MHRA, London 2007.

⁶ For an extensive reconstruction of the illustrated cycle see M. Lorandi (ed. by), *Alberto Martini. La secchia rapita di Alessandro Tassoni*, Grafica e arte Bergamo, Bergamo 1988.

⁷ A. Pope, *The Rape of the Lock. An Heroi-comical Poem in Five Cantos. Embroidered with nine drawings by Aubrey Beardsley*, Leonard Smithers, London 1896.

⁸ Cfr. *II Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia. Illustrated catalogue*, (Venezia, aprile - ottobre 1897), C. Ferrari, Venezia 1897, p. 169, no. 19. The quantity of drawings exhibited, not indicated in the catalogue, is clarified in V. Pica, *I giovani illustratori italiani. Alberto Martini*, cit., p. 141.

⁹ Many years later, Martini himself was to declare his interest in Jacques Callot, as part of an interview published in 1945: "When I began that piece of work [*La corte dei miracoli*] I had the good fortune to see some prints by the Bavarian illustrator Sattler and illustrations of the famous 'Gueux' by Callot, which struck me intensely for the coincidence: Sattler for the costume of 'pappafico' that suited my work well, Callot for the picturesque tatters of his beggars and rogues" (G. Balbi, *Un mago del bianco e nero. Alberto Martini*, Editoriale Italiana, Milano 1945, p. 34).

¹⁰ Cfr. *Münchener Jahres-Ausstellung. Glaspalast. Katalog*, (München, Glaspalast, 8 giugno - [?] 1898), Münchener Künstlergenossenschaft, München 1898, p. 118.

¹¹ V. Pica, *I giovani illustratori italiani. Alberto Martini*, cit., p. 141. For the impact of his sojourn in Munich on Martini's drawings see A. Botta, *Influenze monacensi nella grafica di Alberto Martini: il caso de La bocca de la maschera*, "Studi di Memofonte", 14, 2014, pp. 80-100.

¹² *La corte dei miracoli*, in "Dekorative Kunst", a. II, band III, 1898-99, p. 229.

¹³ Cfr. *Esposizione Nazionale del 1898. Catalogo delle Belle Arti. Illustrated catalogue*, (Torino, maggio - ottobre 1898), Tipografia Roux Frassati, Torino 1898, p. 25.

¹⁴ Cfr. *III Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia. illustrated catalogue*, (Venezia, aprile - ottobre 1898), C. Ferrari, Venezia 1899, p. 77, n. 68; *Catalogue of the loan exhibition of modern illustration*, (London, South Kensington, Victoria and Albert Museum, [January] 1901), William Clowes and Sons, London 1901, p. 117; *Offizieller Katalog der VIII Internationalen Kunstausstellung. Glaspalast zu München*, (München, Glaspalast, 1 Juni - Oktober 1901), A. Bruckmann's Verlag, München 1901, p. 65, n. 1144.

¹⁵ Cfr. *Arte e socialità in Italia. Dal realismo al simbolismo 1865-1915*, (Milano, Palazzo della Permanente, giugno - settembre 1979), Società per le belle arti ed esposizione permanente, Milano 1979.

¹⁶ In effect, the previous year Martini had already participated in the *II Esposizione Internazionale* in Venice.

¹⁷ V. Pica, [introduction], in *Mostra Alberto Martini*, (Milano, Galleria Scopinich,

gennaio 1927), Rizzoli, Milano 1927, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸ In relation to this cycle see C. Gizzi (ed. by), *Alberto Martini e Dante*, (Torre de' Passeri, Casa di Dante in Abruzzo, 23 settembre - 30 novembre 1989), Electa, Milano 1989; P. Bonifacio (ed. by), *Alberto Martini e Dante. E caddi come l'uomo che 'l sonno piglia*, (Oderzo, Pinacoteca Civica, 30 ottobre 2004 - 1° maggio 2005), Canova, Treviso 2004.

¹⁹ Regarding the competition see C. Cresti, F. Solmi (ed. by), ... *E nell'idolo suo si trasmutava. La Divina Commedia novamente illustrata da artisti italiani*, (Bologna, Galleria d'arte moderna, settembre - ottobre), Grafis, Bologna 1979.

²⁰ Cfr. *Official catalogue of exhibitors. Universal exposition, St. Louis, U. S. A. 1904*, Department B. Art, exhibition catalogue, The Official Catalogue Company, St. Louis, 1904, p. 256, nn. 244-247.

²¹ *Italian art at Earl's Court*, "The Times", 8 June 1904, p. 3.

²² Indeed, in his article for "Emporium" in 1904, he complained: "Alberto Martini, a twenty-seven-year-old from Treviso, who, although he has exhibited in four international shows in Venice, the Turin fine arts exhibition in 1898 and the black and white exhibition in Rome in 1902 a not insignificant number of drawings of noted interest and particular attraction for the imaginative subtlety of notion, knowing ingenuity of composition, firm confidence of hand and, above all, for the decorative grace of masses, shadows and minute details, revealing a rare approach to adorning the printed page, has so far found only one Italian publisher, whom, following my friendly advice, has approached him: Alinari of Florence. What better proof is there of the sluggish and dismissive complacency of those who, in Italy, out of professional duty and business interest handle book and newspaper illustration?" (V. Pica, *I giovani illustratori italiani. Alberto Martini*, cit., p. 140).

²³ P. Terenzio Afro, *Le Commedie di Terenzio*, Italian version by Umberto Limentani, masks by A. Martini, Libreria Editrice Lombarda, Milano [1905].

²⁴ L. Orsini, *I canti delle stagioni*, Libreria Editrice Lombarda, Milano [1905]; G. Bertacchi, *Le malie del passato*, Libreria Editrice Lombarda, Milano [1905]; R. Zena [G. Invrea], *Olympia. Volteggi. Salti mortali. Ariette e varietà*, Libreria Editrice Lombarda, Milano [1905].

²⁵ Only two volumes were published in the series: L. Antonelli, *L'Orang-Utang*, Libreria Editrice Lombarda, Milano [1906]; R. L. Stevenson, *La strana avventura del dottor Jekyll*, translation by A. Nichel, Libreria Editrice Lombarda, Milano [1906].

²⁶ The meeting with the editor and consequent sojourn in London are recalled in the pages of his autobiography *Vita d'artista*: "I was invited to London by William Heinemann, then the most important editor in the world. [...] I did not stay long in London, as my unquenchable Latin sacred fire would not be adjusted like a paraffin lamp by the cold, staid English control. I said no to fortune and returned happily to gay and spiritual Paris, where I spent my earnings well, and then returned almost penniless to Milan (it is very easy to return penniless from Paris!). I confessed to my esteemed Italian critic, Vittorio Pica, that I didn't feel I could become English, giving up my complete creative freedom for sterling, and finally I returned to my poetical Treviso, to draw for *Poe* and *La Secchia rapita*" (A. Martini, *Londra 1907*, in Id., *Vita d'artista*; riprodotto in M. Lorandi, *Disciplina e Trasfigurazione. Alberto Martini e il Teatro*, [Milano, Museo Teatrale alla Scala, 28 febbraio - 28 marzo 1992], Selis, Milano 1992, p.130).

²⁷ P. Landon, *Raw Edges. Studies and Stories of These Days*, William Heinemann, London 1908.

²⁸ For the reconstruction and study of the illustrated study see M. Lorandi (ed. by), *Alberto Martini illustratore di Edgar Allan Poe*, F. M. Ricci, Milano 1984; A. Botta, *Illustrazioni incredibili. Alberto Martini e i racconti di Edgar Allan Poe*, "Biblioteca Passaré. Studi di arte contemporanea e arti primarie", Quodlibet, Macerata 2017.

²⁹ Cfr. S. Rossi, *E. A. Poe e la Scapigliatura lombarda*, in "Studi americani", 5,

1959, pp. 119-139; C. Apollonio, *La presenza di E. A. Poe in alcuni scapigliati lombardi*, in "Otto/Novecento", a. V, 1, gennaio-febbraio 1981, pp. 107-143; C. Melani, *Effetto Poe. Influssi dello scrittore americano sulla letteratura italiana*, Firenze University Press, Firenze 2006.

³⁰ On the graphical success of the works of Poe see I. Conzen-Meairs, *Edgar Allen Poe Und Die Bildende Kunst Des Symbolismus*, Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, Worms 1989; B. R. Pollin, *Images of Poe's works. A comprehensive descriptive catalogue of illustrations*, Greenwood press, New York- Westport-London 1989.

³¹ E. Poe, *Histoires extraordinaires*, traduction de Charles Baudelaire, nouvelle édition, Michel Lévy Frères, Paris 1875; id., *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, traduction de Charles Baudelaire, nouvelle édition, Michel Lévy Frères, Paris 1875; id., *Histoires grotesque et sérieuses*, traduites par Charles Baudelaire, nouvelle édition, Michel Lévy Frères, Paris 1871.

³² A. Martini, *Leterna corte dei miracoli*, in Id., *Vita d'artista*; riprodotto in M. Lorandi, *Disciplina e Trasfigurazione. Alberto Martini e il Teatro*, cit., p. 131.

³³ In the context of this precise cycle of illustrations, the study of visual sources is abundantly covered in A. Botta, *Illustrazioni incredibili. Alberto Martini e i racconti di Edgar Allan Poe*, cit.

³⁴ Martini's note, referring to the period 1908-1909, can be found in M. Lorandi (ed. by), *Alberto Martini illustratore di Edgar Allan Poe*, cit., p. 75.

³⁵ V. Pica, *Un illustratore italiano di Edgard Poe*, in "Emporium", XXVII, 160, aprile 1908, pp. 266-280; id., *Un illustratore italiano di Edgar Poe (A. Martini)*, in *Attraverso gli albi e le cartelle*, terza serie, 8° fascicolo, cap. XXII, [dicembre] 1908, pp. 106-136.

³⁶ *l'Estampe. 4^{me} Salon Annuel*, (Bruxelles, Musée Moderne, 6 - 30 gennaio 1910), Bruxelles 1910, pp. 67-71.

³⁷ *Mostra individuale di Alberto Martini*, exhibition catalogue, Società d'Amatori e Cultori di Belle Arti di Roma, Roma 1910.

³⁸ *Pen drawings by Alberto Martini*, (London, Goupil & Co, March 1914), London 1914.

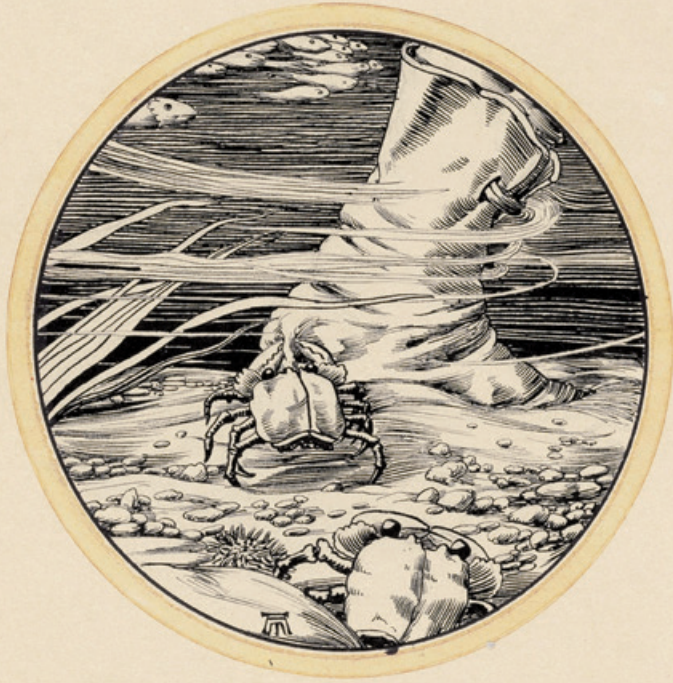
³⁹ Letter form the Goupil gallery to A. Martini, 28 February 1914, Oderzo, Fondazione Oderzo Cultura, Archivio Alberto Martini, I.1.1.80.

⁴⁰ *Italian Pen-and-Ink Genius*, in "Newcastle Illustrated Chronicle", 20 March 1914.

⁴¹ *Italian Artists and the War*, (London, Leicester Gallery, June-July 1916), London 1916.

⁴² *Mostra individuale di Hans St. Lerche, Alberto Martini, Mario Cavaglieri*, (Milano, Galleria Pesaro, gennaio 1920), Milano 1920; *Alberto Martini. Exposition de peintures, dessins, gravures, théâtre*, (Paris, Galerie d'Art Siot-Decauville, 25 mars - 11 avril 1925), Paris 1925.

PLATES



CANTO XX°

ALB. MARTINI

ALBERTO
MARTINI
◇
DISEGNO A PENNA
ORIGINALE
PER
IL MORGANTE MAGGIORE
DI
PVLICI
◇
1895

1. *Tondo with Crab and Boot, Canto XX* (illustration for *Morgante Maggiore* by Luigi Pulci), 1895



CANTO IX°

ALBERTO
MARTINI
✦
DISEGNO A PENNA
ORIGINALE
PER
IL MORGANTE MAGGIORE
DI
PULCI
✦
1895

2. *Tondo with Ape and Boot, Canto IX* (illustration for *Morgante Maggiore* by Luigi Pulci), 1895



3. *Canto XIX* (study for the *Morgante Maggiore* by Luigi Pulci), 1895



ALBERTO MARTINI - DISEGNO A PENNA ORIGINALE PER IL MORGANTE MAGGIORE DI PULCI - 1895.

Canto XIX

4. *Canto XIX* (illustration for the *Morgante Maggiore* by Luigi Pulci), 1895



5. *The Emigrants' Song* (drawing for the graphic series of "The Labourer Poem"), 1897
6. *The Apostle* (drawing for the graphic series of "The Labourer Poem"), 1897



7. *The Holy Thorns* (drawing for the graphic series of “The Labourer Poem”), 1897



8. *The Philosopher* (drawing for the graphic series “The Court of Miracles”), 1897



9. *Troops Crossing* (illustration for “The War of the Bucket” by Alessandro Tassoni), 1896



10. *Canto IX, outside-text plate* (illustration for “The War of the Bucket” by Alessandro Tassoni), 1899



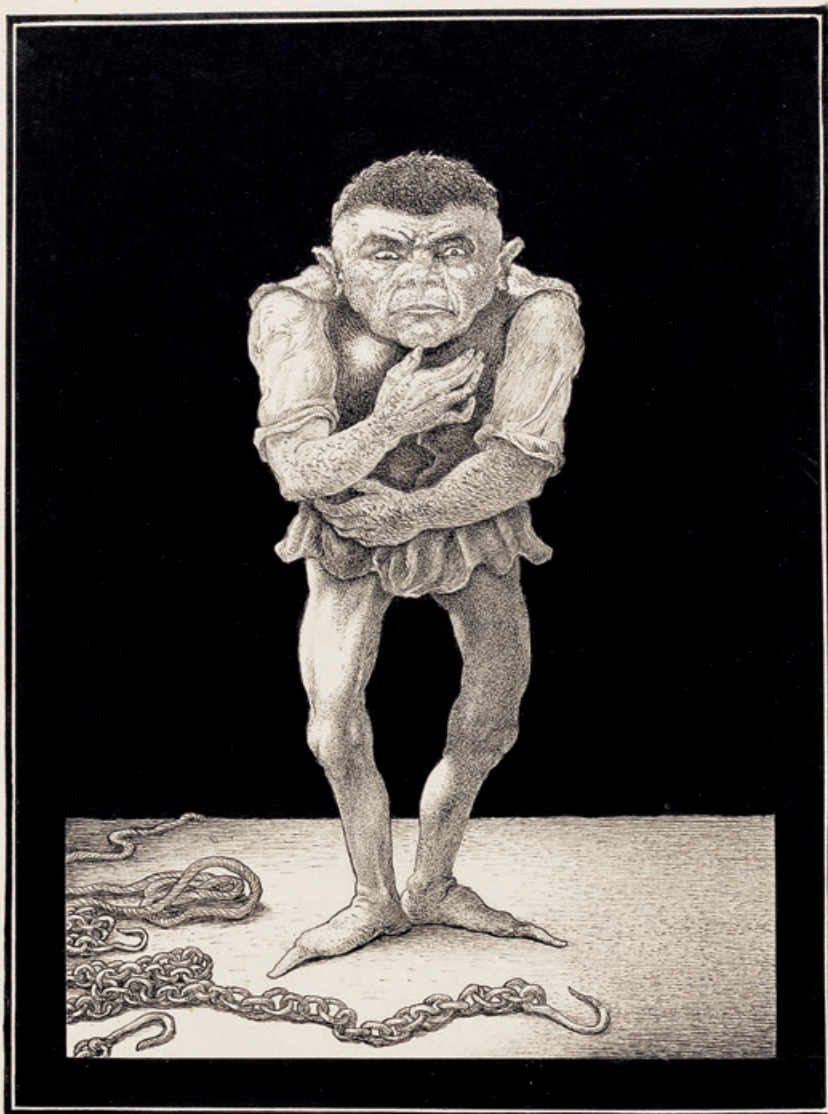
11. *Military Supplies* (illustration for "The War of the Bucket" by Alessandro Tassoni), 1903



ALBERTO MARTINI-1906

HOP-FROG

12. *Hop-Frog* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1906

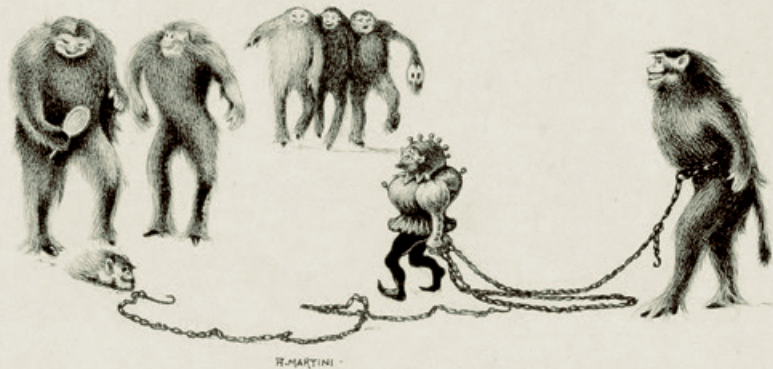


ALBERTO MARTINI 1907.

HOP-FROG
E-A-PÖE

B

13. *Hop-Frog* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1907



HOP-FROG

14. *Hop-Frog* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1907



J.-MARTINI -

LA GENÈSE D'VN POËME
LE CORBEAU

15. *The Genesis of a Poem/The Raven* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1907

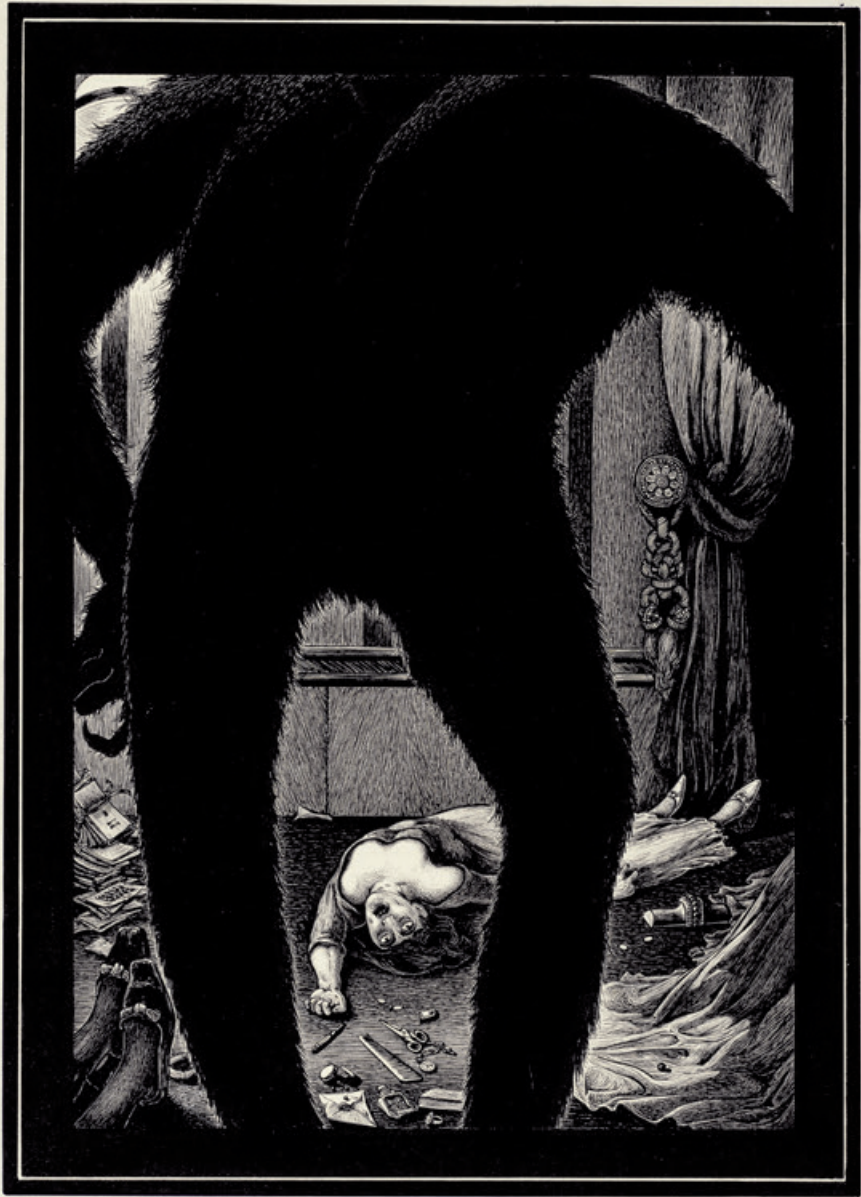


LE DOMAINE D'ARNHEIM

16. *The Domain of Arnheim* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1907



17. *The Pit and the Pendulum* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1907



ALBERTO-MARTINI

DOUBLE ASSASSINAT DANS LA RUE MORGUE †
EDGAR ALLAN POE †

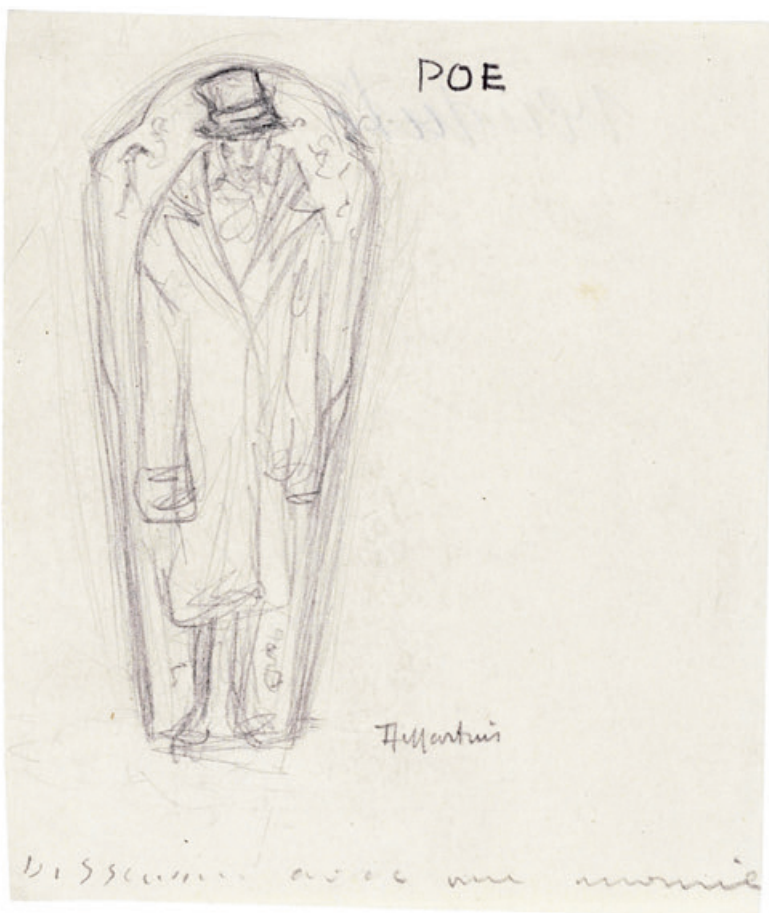
F. MONTAIGNE

18. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1908



DOUBLE
ASSASSINAT
DANS LA RUE MORGUE

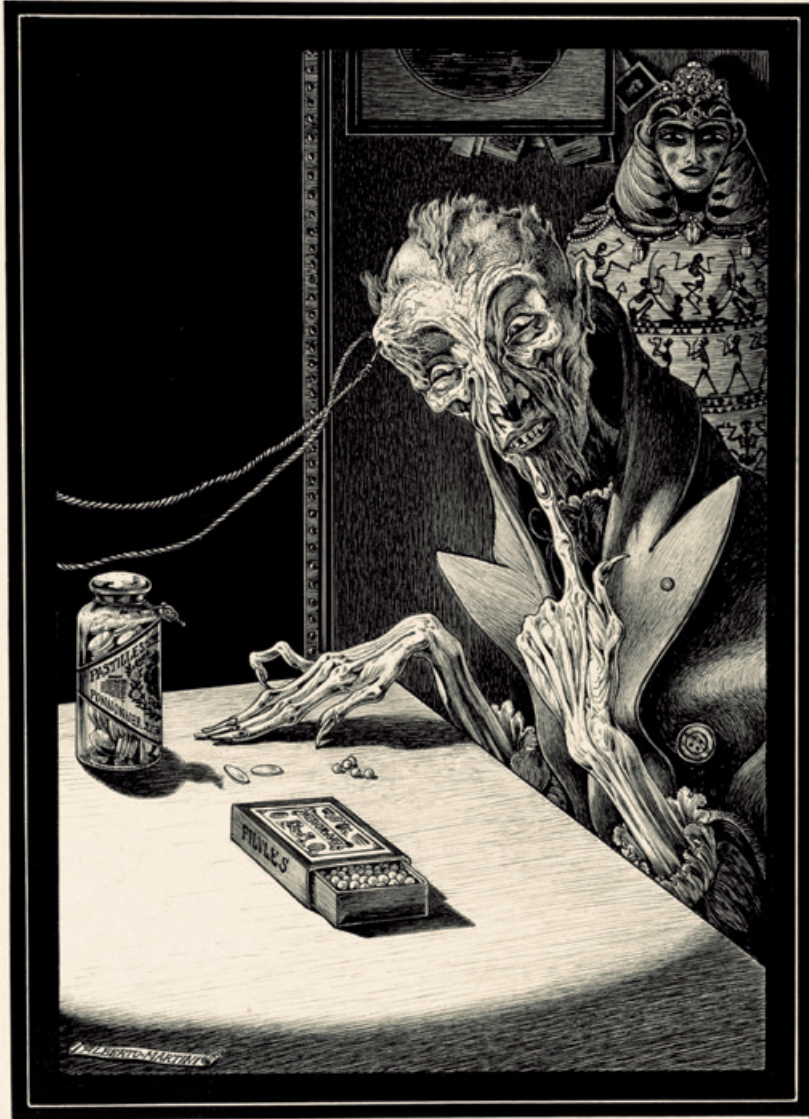
19. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1908



20. *Some Words with a Mummy* (study for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), [1908] (real dimension)



21. ADOLFO WILDT, *Death*, 1913

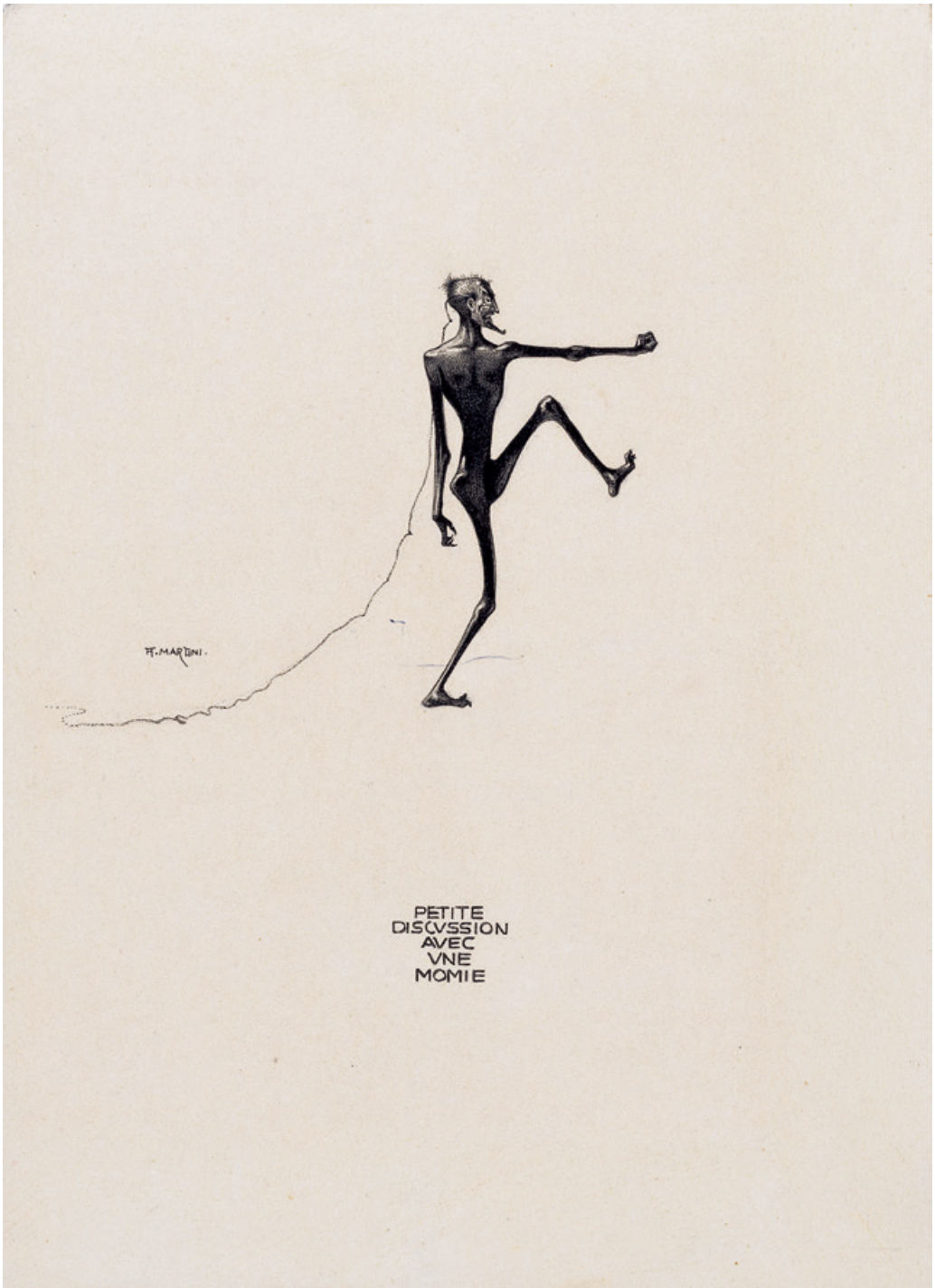


PÖE

PETITE DISCUSSION AVEC VNE MOMIE

H. Martin

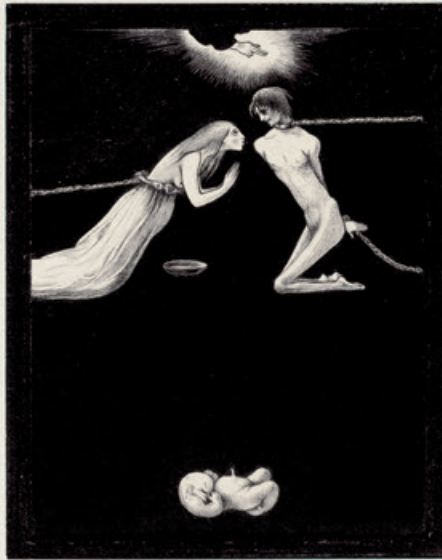
22. *Some Words with a Mummy* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1908



H. MARTINI.

PETITE
DISCUSSION
AVEC
UNE
MOMIE

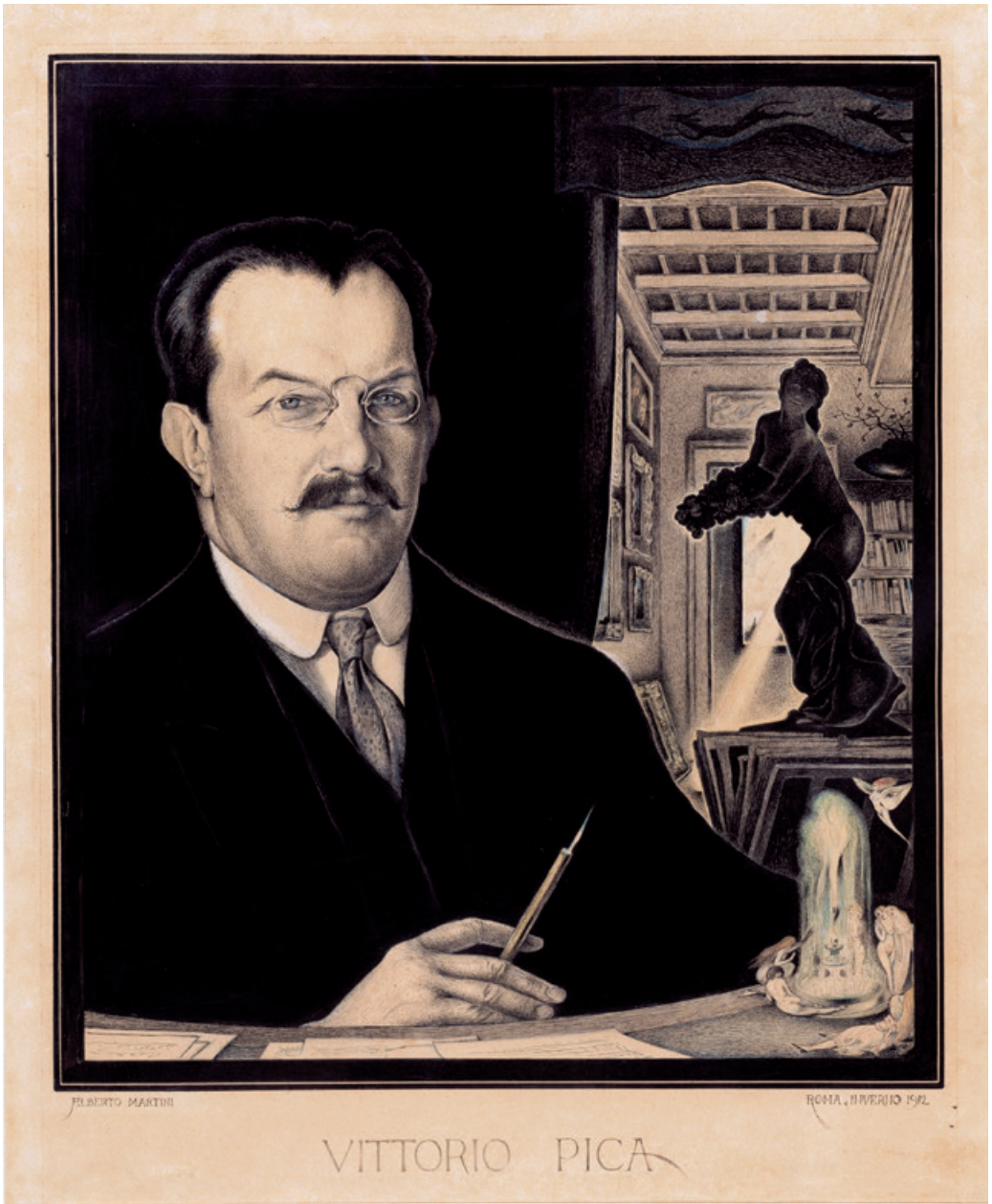
23. *Some Words with a Mummy* (illustration for *Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe), 1908



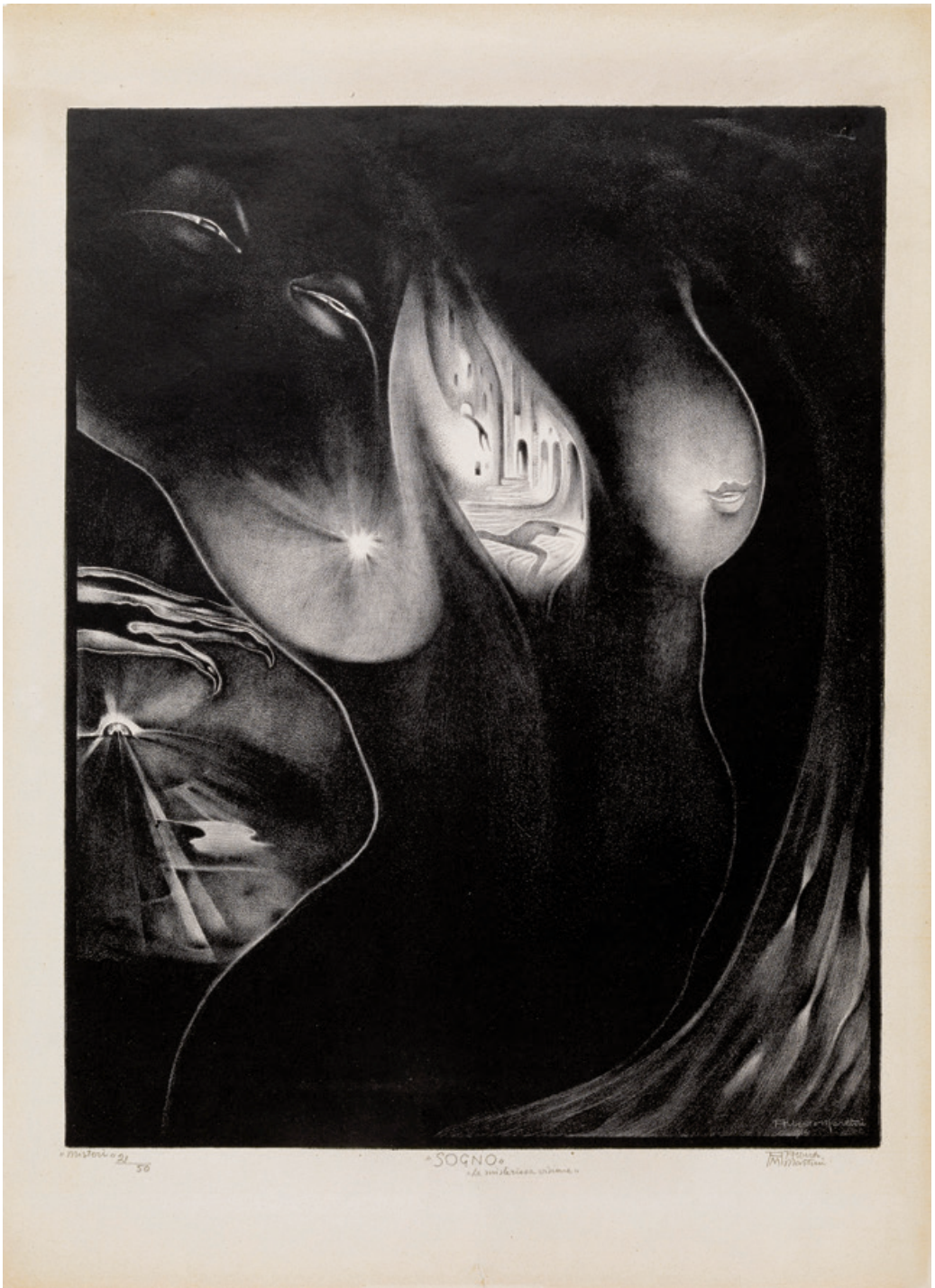
IL CARCERE

— IM VYTERKOSKACHEN KARKER —

24. *Prison* (illustration for *Zemnaya os'* by Valerij Brjusov), 1910



25. *Portrait of Vittorio Pica*, 1912



26. *Dream* (graphic series *Mysteries*), 1915



27. *Madness* (graphic series *Mysteries*), 1914



28. *Love* (graphic series *Mysteries*), 1914



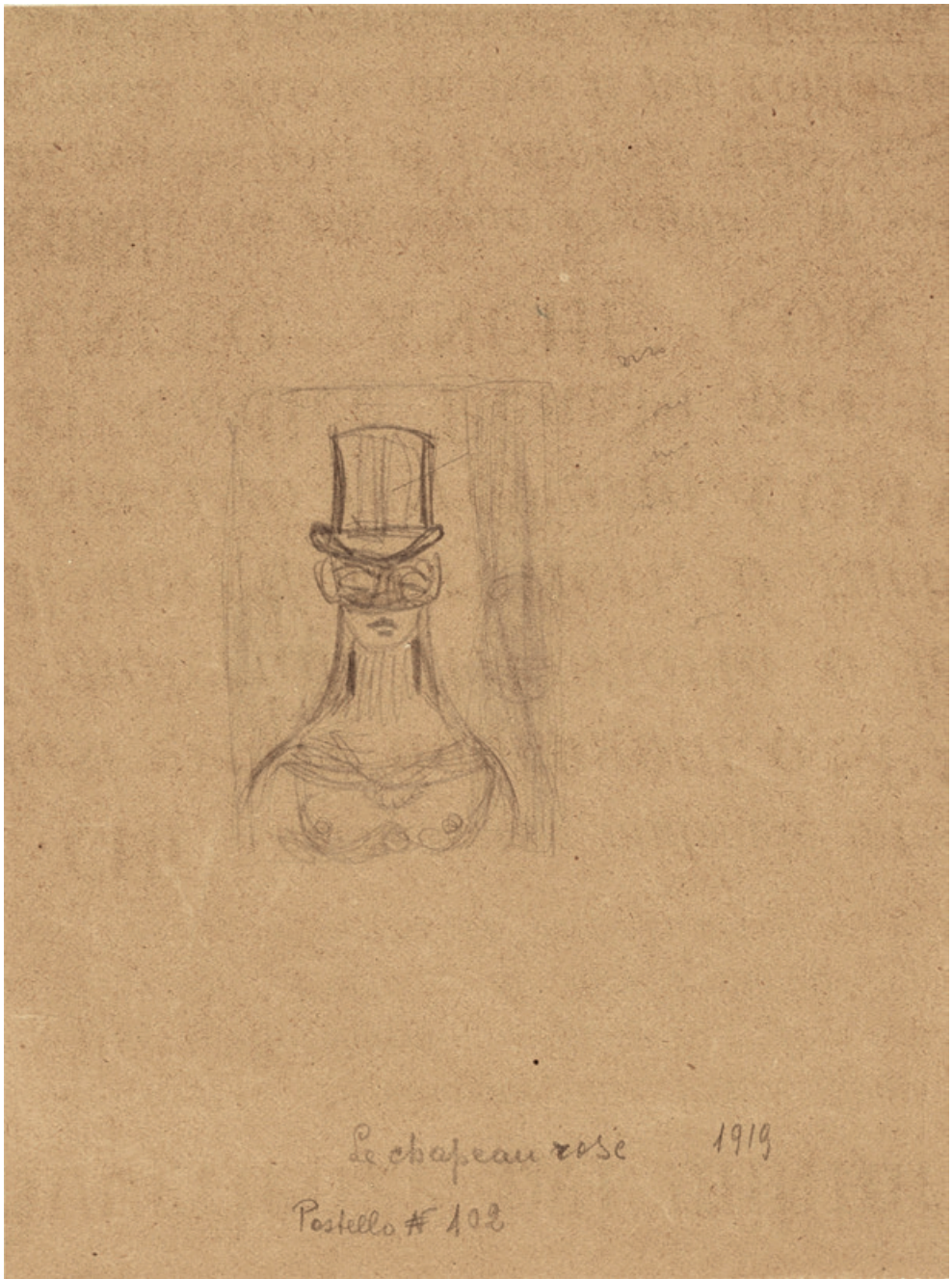
29. *Infinity* (graphic series *Mysteries*), 1914



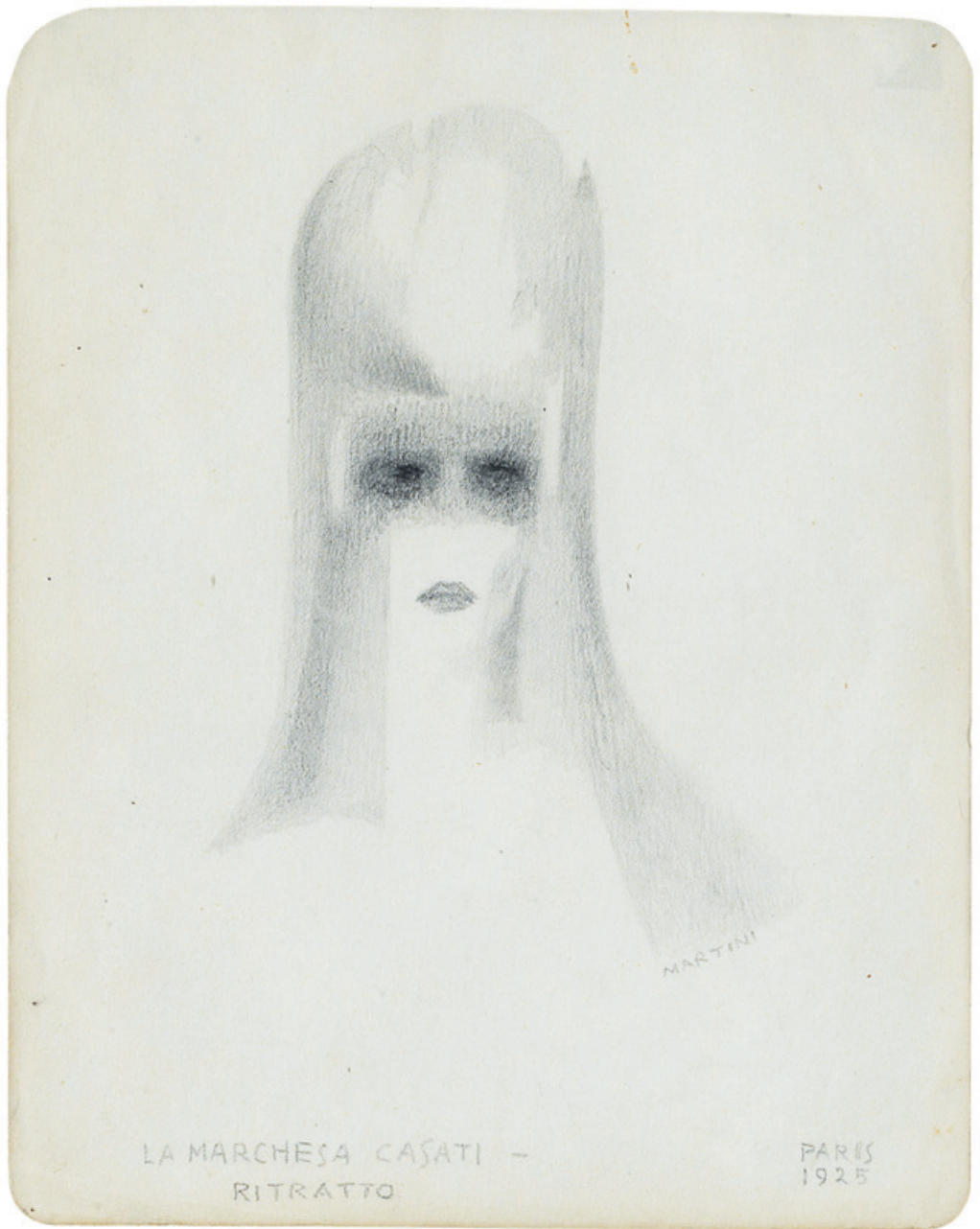
ALFRED MARTINI - 96 - DONATO A ROMA ORIGINALE -



31. *Harlequin with Sun and Moon* (front) *Florindo and Rosaura's Fan* (back) [1919] (real dimension)



32. *The Pink Hat* (study), 1919 (real dimension)



33. *La Marchesa Casati – Portrait* 1925



34. *Vanitas with Self-Portrait* [1920]



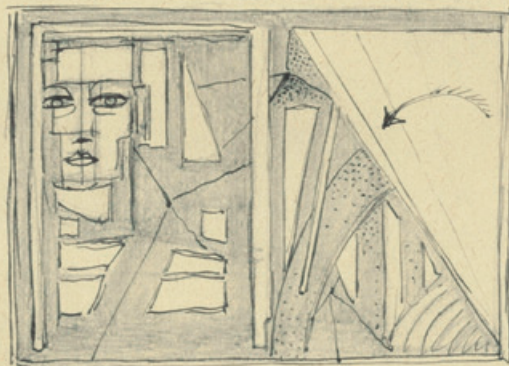
35. *Portrait*, 1919



36. *Forese* (illustration for the *Divine Comedy*), 1922

autoritratto poliedrico, che poi generò l'Autoritratto Amateo.
esposto più volte a Parigi e a Milano (dal 1928 al 1934) (vedi Esposit)

Alberto Martini



(Autopsichogramma profeta)

37. *Multifaceted Self-Portrait*, 1928 (real dimension)



38. PAOLO TROUBETZKOY, *Gabriele D'Annunzio*. 1911



EX LIBRIS PER L'OPERA OMNIA DI D'ANNUNZIO

"DE-INEDITO"

→ L'ALTISSIMO POETA *
DISEGNO A PENNA - DI
ALBERTO MARTINI -
◇ IN MORTE DI
GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO ◇ . 3.III.1938 - XVI.



CATALOGUE



1. *Tondo with Crab and Boat, Canto XX*
1895

China pen on paper, 170 x 142 mm

Signed in pen lower centre, with the monogram: *AM* and outside the tondo lower right: *ALBERTO / MARTINI / DISEGNO A PENNA / ORIGINALE / PER / IL MORGANTE MAGGIORE / DI / PULCI / 1895*; titled in pen lower left: *CANTO XX^o*; signed in pencil lower centre: *ALB.MARTINI*
On the back of the support, label: *XXVIII Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Venezia 1956 e Società per le Belle Arti ed Esposizione Permanente, Milano, esposizione Alberto Martini*

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: VENICE 1956, room II, no. 62; MILAN 1985-1986, no. 6 (ill.); CHIAVARI 1998-1999, p. 11 (ill.); MILAN/TREVISO 1999, no. 5.



2. *Tondo with Ape and Boat, Canto IX*
1895

China pen on paper, 169 x 145 mm

Signed in pen lower centre, with monogram: *AM* and outside the tondo lower right: *ALBERTO / MARTINI / DISEGNO A PENNA / ORIGINALE / PER / IL MORGANTE MAGGIORE / DI / PULCI / 1895*; titled in pen lower left: *CANTO IX^o*

[this work is framed with the above drawing;

for information regarding the back of the work see above notes]

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: VENICE 1956, room II, no. 61; MILAN 1985-1986, no. 6; CHIAVARI 1998-1999; MILAN/TREVISO 1999, no. 5.



3. *Canto XIX (study)*

1895

Pencil on paper, 180 x 250 mm

Titled in pencil in the centre: *CANTO XIX ARGOMENTO*

Provenance: Italy, private collection



4. *Canto XIX*

1895

China pen on paper, 228 x 278 mm

Signed and dated in pen lower right: *A. Martini 1895*; signed, titled and dated lower centre: *ALBERTO MARTINI. DISEGNO A PENNA ORIGINALE PER IL MORGANTE MAGGIORE DI PULCI. 1895*; written in pencil lower right: *canto XIX^o*

On the back, written in pencil: *MORGANTE MAGGIORE / 900/13 / 21X13 / 1895 / Argomento Canto XIX^o*

Provenance: Italy, private collection

At the age of eighteen Alberto Martini received his first illustrating job, to accompany the text of *Morgante (Maggiore)* by Luigi Pulci. From that moment on his interest in literature would represent a constant throughout his artistic career. The drawings shown here belong to a series of illustrations drawn by Martini in 1895, which he put aside that same year to take on a new series of illustrations, to accompany

The War of the Bucket (La Secchia rapita) by Alessandro Tassoni. The mock-heroic poem *Morgante*, that describes the unusual adventures of the paladin Orlando, parodying the Carolingian cycle tradition, offered Martini the possibility of working on a literary source that was ironic and light-hearted, suiting his artistic temperament. Although young, Martini was already capable of mastering fully the graphic medium and skilfully realising arranged illustrations, in line with the neo-medieval taste in vogue in Europe for some time. A graphic and compositional expertise formed through an ample and documented familiarity with authors, not only ascribable to the more illustrious protagonists of modern illustration (consider Walter Crane, William Morris, Robert Anning Bell and Aubrey Beardsley) but also the master engravers of the European *cinquecento*, attentively studied during his years of training



5. *The Emigrants' Song*

1897

China pen on paper, affixed to paper support, 154 x 340 mm

Signed and dated in pen lower right: *AMARTINI. 97*; signed, dated and inscribed on the support, lower left to right, in pen: *ALBERTO MARTINI 1897. | IL CANTO DEGLI EMIGRANTI | IL POEMA DEL LAVORO*

On the back of the support, label: *Arte e Socialità in Italia dal realismo al simbolismo 1865-1915, Società per le Belle Arti ed Esposizione Permanente, Milano e Società per le Belle Arti ed Esposizione Permanente, Milano, esposizione Alberto Martini.*

Provenance: Milan, Bogoncelli collection; Falcon Trading; Italy, private collection
Exhibitions: TURIN 1898, room C, no. 103 (series of drawings); LONDON 1901, no. 1273; ROME 1902, room O, no. 1208; [MILAN 1919, nos. 110-111]; MILAN 1979, no. 96 (ill.); MILAN 1985-1986, no. 13 (ill.).

Bibliography: PICA 1904, pp. 141,144; MILANI 1944, s.p. (ill.).



6. *The Apostle*

1897

China pen on paper, affixed to paper support, 130 x 300 mm

Signed in monogram lower right: *AM*; signed, dated and inscribed on the support, lower left to right, in pen: *ALBERTO MARTINI 1897 | L'APOSTOLO | IL POEMA DEL LAVORO*
Provenance: Milan, Bogoncelli collection; Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: TURIN 1898, room C, no. 103 (series of drawings); LONDON 1901, no. 1274; ROME 1902, room O, no. 1206; [MILAN 1919, nos. 110-111].

Bibliography: PICA 1904, pp. 141,144; MILANI 1944, s.p. (ill.).



7. *The Holy Thorns*

1897

China pen on paper, affixed to paper support, 158 x 345 mm

Signed and dated lower right on title block: *AMartini 97*; signed, dated and inscribed on the support, lower left to right, in pen: *ALBERTO MARTINI. 1897. | LE SPINE SANTE | IL POEMA DEL LAVORO*

On the back of the support, label: *Società per le Belle Arti ed Esposizione Permanente, Milano, esposizione Alberto Martini*

Provenance: Milan, Bogoncelli collection; Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: TURIN 1898, room C, no. 108 (series of drawings), s.p. (ill.); LONDON 1901, no. 1275; ROME 1902, room O, no. 1207; ST. LOUIS 1904, Italian section, no. 246; [MILAN 1919, nos. 110-111]; MILAN 1985-1986, no. 12 (ill.).

Bibliography: PICA 1904, pp. 141,144; MILANI 1944, s.p. (ill.).

Alongside the series of drawings inspired by literary works, in his early years of activity, Martini also carried out illustrations with a freer and more autonomous content, focussed on social themes tied above all to working life in the fields. Initially defined by Martini with the title *The Labourer's Life* (*La vita del lavoratore*), the graphic series of *The Labour Poem* (*Poema del lavoro*) engaged him between 1896 and 1898. A period in which he was simultaneously involved in producing illustrations to accompany the text of *The War of the Bucket* by Alessandro Tassoni (cat. 9-11) and also continuing his *Court of Miracles* (*Corte dei miracoli*) series (cat. 8), stylistically similar to the series in question. It was a period of great productivity for Martini, which translated in just a few years into a success that went beyond the confines of Italy, above all determined by the positive reception of these illustrations in the European exhibitive context. Certainly familiar with the idealistic and social debates going on in the final quarter of the century in Italy, Martini shows his labourers as from another time, sharing in a collective suffering, pervaded by a melancholy and nostalgic feeling towards their existence. The field labourers' song at dusk is thus turned into a sombre celebration of the dying day, intended to ward off uncertainties and fears for the future. In *The Holy Thorns*, on the other hand, the woodsmen's dedication and working sacrifice are ideally compared by Martini to the suffering of Christ, who breaks into the middle of the drawing like a redeeming and providential vision. A reference to Christian religiosity that returns in the work entitled *The Apostle*, in which the rendering of the figures is the closest to the contemporary works for *The Court of Miracles*. The three drawings, dated 1897, all belong to the same primordial nucleus of the series. A group of illustrations that Vittorio Pica, in 1904, recalled as belonging to the series "exhibited in 1898 in Turin and then in 1902 in Rome, [...] now partly in Saint-Louis."



8. *The Philosopher*

1897

China pen and ink on paper, 131 x 88 mm, affixed to paper support, 210 x 175 mm

Signed with a monogram and dated lower centre: 18 AM 97

On the back, label: *Società per le Belle Arti ed Esposizione Permanente, Milano, esposizione Alberto Martini*

Provenance: Milano, collezione Bogoncelli; Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: VENICE 1897, room M, no. 19; MUNICH 1898, no. 1381a; ROME 1902, no. 1209; [MILAN 1937]; [VENICE 1956, nos. 26-28]; MILAN 1985-1986, no. 14.

Bibliography: PICA 1904, (large format fig.); PICA 1905, p. 142 (ill.); PICA 1907, p. 183 (ill.); SIBELIUS 1919, p. 181 (ill.); TRECCANI 1934, (ill.); MILANI 1944, s.p. (ill.).

This drawing belongs to the series *La corte dei miracoli*, undertaken by Martini in 1896 and continued in the following year. Exhibited for the first time in Venice in 1897 with another thirteen drawings from the same series, *The Philosopher* represents perhaps the high point of the whole cycle and one of the most indicative works of his early production. The drawings for *La corte dei miracoli*, depicting grubby, underfed vagabonds, were born of Martini's reflection on European illustration. Indeed, the artist seems to be evoking the sixteenth century tradition of Northern Europe, emphasised by the use of a monogrammed signature with an obvious nod to Dürer. A game of references that holds a parallel with seventeenth century France in the form of an author like Jacques Callot, from whose notorious *Gueux* Martini clearly takes inspiration. Perhaps influenced by the novels of Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables*, Martini

would tend to make use of his own personal experiences in his drawings, some episodes of his youth. In his autobiography "Vita d'artista," written at the end of the 1930s, he would comment on these drawings: "Rain or shine, chill or heatwave, from dawn to dusk a beggar sat on a sack of rags that stuck out here and there. He had one bandaged eye and over the other, which was half closed, sat the moth-eaten brim of a hat, stained black with old filth, but I knew he could see perfectly well. [...] His clothes were reduced to rags, so grimy and stinking that you wouldn't have touched them. Beside him was a poor dog, often trembling from enforced immobility [...]. He was sitting in a dignified manner on a strange cushion made of waxed cloth, next to a small child so bundled up in rags that it looked ill. [...] From the window of my studio I often observed the beggar, the dog and the miserable child, a strange family that inspired my drawings for *La corte dei miracoli*."



9. Troops Crossing

1896

China pen on paper, affixed on paper support, 167 x 58 mm

Signed and dated in pen lower left: *MARTINI / 1896*

On the back of the support, label: *Galleria Fonte d'Abisso Edizioni, Modena e Galleria Milano, Milano*

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: [VENICE 1901, room U, no. 20 (pen drawings)]; [VENICE 1903, room H, no. 35 (mock-heroic drawings)]; MODENA 1979; CHIAVARI 1998-1999, p. 12 (ill.); MILAN/TREVISO 1999, no. 7

Bibliography: LORANDI 1988



10. Canto IX, Triptych

1899

China pen on paper, 170 x 146, affixed on support paper, 322 x 244 mm

Signed in pen lower centre, with the monogram: *AM*; Dated in pencil on the support, lower right; 1899; inscription in pencil lower right: *C. IX / St. 23. and foll*;

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: [VENICE 1901, room U, no. 20 (pen drawings)]; [VENICE 1903, room H, no. 35 (mock-heroic drawings)].

Bibliography: PICA 1904, p. 145 (ill.); PICA 1907, p. 179 (ill.); BELLOLI 1954, p. 10; LORANDI 1988.



11. Military Supplies

1903

China pen on paper, 162 x 132, affixed on paper support, 320 x 244 mm

Signed and dated top right, with initial: *A 1903*; title in pen lower centre: *Le salmerie*; on the support, inscription in pencil lower right: *Finale C. VI° s. 29*

On the back, inscription in pencil: *inedito*

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Bibliography: LORANDI 1988.

The War of the Bucket (La secchia rapita) by Alessandro Tassoni (as well as the tales of Edgar Allan Poe and the *Divine Comedy* by Dante) is among the texts that most attracted the attention of the young artist, passionate about literature. The commission for the mock-heroic poem by Tassoni, undertaken in 1895 and lasting until 1903, would see Martini create approximately two hundred and fifty drawings in total (a calculation that includes both the definitive illustrations and preparatory sketches). In line with the

historical contextualization researched at the same time for the illustrations for *Morgante* by Luigi Pulci and for the series of *The Court of Miracles* (*Corte dei miracoli*), Martini rendered the image of a biting and mocking Middle Ages, populated by dog-faced soldiers, farmers and knights, highly coherent with Tassoni's text. In his drawings, Martini seems to take reference from a precise graphic culture, not just from the illustrated reviews of the time but particularly thanks to an educational trip to Germany in 1898. That very year Martini spent several months in Munich, where he entered into contact with the prolific circle of illustrators active in the city, led by artists such as Josef Sattler, Julius Diez and Otto Seitz. Martini developed his illustrations with a compositional sensibility that went beyond the possible German encroachments (in particular from Sattler), implementing stylistic choices that were by now fully mature and autonomous. A freedom that is quite apparent in the illustration for Canto IX, in which Martini breaks with the fixity and schematism of traditional illustration, experimenting the narrative potentials offered by the composition of a triptych.



12. *Hop-Frog*

1906

Pen and India ink on paper, 354 x 253 mm

Signed and dated in pen lower right: ALBERTO. MARTINI. 1906 and in pencil lower down: 1906 / Alberto / Martini; title in pen lower centre: HOP-FROG

Provenance: Saronno, Tischer collection; Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: [BRUSSELS 1910, no. 334]; [ROME 1910, room T, no. 42]; [LONDON 1914, no. 55];

[MILAN 1920, no. 352]; [PARIS 1925]; BRESCIA 1954, no. 19; VENICE 1956, room II, no. 92, fig. I; OSTEND 1967, no. 153; ODERZO 1967, no. 45; TORRE DE' PASSERI 1989, no. 13.

Bibliography: ZANOTTO 1968, p. 111 (ill.); LORANDI 1984, pp. 103 (fig.), 210; BOTTA 2017, no. 29 (ill.).

A subject particularly dear to Martini, he used more plates for the tale of *Hop-Frog* than for any other episode of Poe. An entirely autonomous choice (he normally limited himself to two drawings) that shows how much the tale stimulated his imagination to go beyond what he himself had planned. The first drawing, made in 1905 (not shown here), led on to two further large format illustrations (besides this one, cat. 13) and then a smaller version (cat. 14), drawn in 1906 and 1907. The tale, among Poe's most famous and interpreted a few years before by the painter James Ensor, tells the story of court midget Hop-Frog and the vengeance he took against his own king and his ministers during a masked ball. Object of continual mockery, Hop Frog devises a stratagem to get his own back: after dressing them up as apes and chaining them up, he raises them to the ceiling in the middle of the room and sets fire to them. In the drawing Martini depicts the now charred bodies of the king and ministers hanging from the chain in which they were trapped. In the foreground, on the left, a masked female figure has fainted in a chair. To the side, a comic mask is lying on an elegant small table, probably left by a fleeing guest.

Such a large number of illustrations – dedicated to a single tale and bearing the same title – makes identifying the drawings difficult in the context of historical exhibitions, so they are indicated hypothetically.



13. *Hop-Frog*

1907

Indian ink on paper, 353 x 253 mm

Signed and dated in pen lower right: *ALBERTO. MARTINI. 1907.* and in pencil lower down: *Alberto Martini 1907*; title in pen lower centre: *HOP-FROG / E-A-PÔE*

Provenance: Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: [BRUSSELS 1910, no. 334]; [ROME 1910, room T, no. 42]; [LONDON 1914, no. 55]; [MILAN 1920, no. 352]; [PARIS 1925]; BRESCIA 1954, no. 20; ODERZO 1967, no. 47; MILAN 1983, no. 11; TORRE DE' PASSERI 1989, no. 12.

Bibliography: LORANDI 1984, pp. 105 (fig.), 210; BOTTA 2017, no. 81 (ill.).

Martini, in this later illustration for *Hop-Frog*, focuses his attention directly on the dwarf, protagonist of the tale. His physiognomy follows the descriptions given by Poe, who highlights the prominent stomach and congenital protuberance on his head, as he does the bandy legs that mean the Hop-Frog is incapable of walking like other human beings. Shown isolated within the composition, the midget Hop-Frog – offended and wanting revenge – stands out from the unbroken background, aiming his penetrating gaze directly at the observer. Only the detail of the hooked chains and cords, located at the base of the drawing, link it with the tale's complex narrative.

As in the case above, such a large number of illustrations dedicated to the tale of *Hop-Frog* makes identifying the drawings precisely difficult in the context of historical exhibitions, so they are indicated hypothetically.



14. *Hop-Frog*

1907

Pen and India ink on paper, 251 x 180 mm

Signed in pen lower centre: *A. MARTINI*; title in pen lower centre: *HOP-FROG*

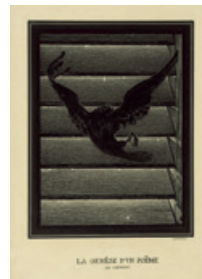
Dated on the back in pencil: 1907; stamped: *Galleria d'Arte Spotorno Milano*

Provenance: Saronno, Tischer collection; Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: BRUSSELS 1910, no. 463; ROME 1910, room T, no. 58; LONDON 1914, no. 56; [PARIS 1925]; MILAN 1954; VENICE 1956, room II, no. 93.

Bibliography: LORANDI 1984, p. 210 (ill.); BOTTA 2017, no. 81 (ill.).

The figure of *Hop-Frog* assumes the role of protagonist in the picture imagined as the finale of the chapter. This “minor” illustration of the tale, intended to be placed at the end of the story (in a hypothetical illustrated publication of the tales of Poe), shows with precision the passage in the text in which Poe describes the king and his seven ministers disguised as apes, just before they are chained up. Martini is very careful to render the text without falling into contradiction. Indeed, although there are six and not eight apes in the drawing – unlike in the story – the close observer can see two masks (one at the feet of the ape with the mirror and the other held by an ape in the background) that have yet to be put on by two characters that do not appear in the scene.



15. *The Genesis of a Poem/The Raven*

1907

Pen and India ink on paper, 355 x 253 mm

Signed in pen lower right: *A. MARTINI*; title in pen lower centre: *LA GENÈSE D'UN POÈME / LE CORBEAU*

On the back, dated in pencil: 1907.

Provenance: Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: BRUSSELS 1910, no. 484; ROME 1910, room T, no. 38; LONDON 1914, no. 5; MILAN 1920, no. 324; [PARIS 1925]; BRESCIA 1954, no. 16; TURIN 1969, no. 347, p. 299 (ill.); TORONTO 1969, no. 320, p. 277 (ill.); TORRE DE' PASSERI 1989, no. 10.

Bibliography: PICA 1908A, pp. 270 (ill.), 278; PICA 1908B, pp. 123 (ill.), 130; LORANDI 1984, pp. 91 (fig.). 205; BOTTA 2017, no. 55 (ill.).

When taking on the illustration of the works of Poe Martini relied not so much on Italian versions of the text but on the French translations by Charles Baudelaire, already published in France in the 1840s. Indeed, the figure *La genèse d'un poème* recalls the title attributed by Baudelaire to the essay *The Philosophy of Composition* by Poe, published by the French writer together with the translation of the famous poem *The Raven*. The theme of the raven, previously interpreted by Gustave Doré and Édouard Manet in two cycles that were fundamental to the success of the American author, finds in Martini an interpretation that is equally attentive to externalizing the peculiar characters of the famous poem. The concept of the drawing, which shows a raven beating its open wings against the shutters of a window, takes its inspiration from a particular passage in the poem:

'Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,

Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.

"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;" lines in the poem that become for Martini the cue to imagine the action going on outside the room.



16. *The Domain of Arnheim*

1907

Pen and India ink on paper, 360 x 255 mm

Signed in pen lower right: A. MARTINI.; title in pen lower centre: LE DOMAINE D'ARNHEIM

On the back, dated in pencil: 1907.

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: BRUSSELS 1910, no. 481; ROMA 1910, room T, no. 19; LONDON 1914, no. 37; MILAN 1920, no. 348; [PARIS 1925]; MILAN 1970, no. 508, p. 150 (ill.); PARMA 1982, no. 5.

Bibliography: PICA 1908B, p. 126 (ill.); LORANDI 1984, pp. 143 (fig.). 237; BOTTA 2017, no. 52 (ill.).

In the drawing for the short story *The Domain of Arnheim* Martini translates the atmosphere of hovering expectation evoked in Poe's text, in which he narrates the existence of a marvellous landscape garden, far from the city. An isolated and enchanted place that can only be reached by following a stretch of sea and then a river deep in a rocky gorge: the traveller leaves the vessel that has brought him thus far to board a light canoe of ivory decorated inside and out with arabesques of a vivid scarlet. The canoe's bow and stern rise high out of the water into sharp tips, taking the shape of an irregular sickle moon. It lies in the bay with the proud grace of a swan. In describing the boat, Martini's imagination yields to the biographical and spatial suggestions dear to him, transforming Poe's "canoe" into a typical Venetian gondola. He was fascinated by Venice (not far from Treviso, where he lived) and in those very years turned the fascination into a series of drawings dedicated to the city and its lagoonal context. Following Poe's descriptions, Martini's boat, enchanted and needing no oarsman, turned slowly on itself until the prow pointed towards the sun.



17. *The Pit and the Pendulum*

1907

Pen and India ink on paper, 256 x 182 mm
Signed in pen lower right: A. MARTINI; title in pen lower centre: *LE / PUIITS / ET / LE / PENDULE*

On the back, dated in pencil: 1907; stamped: *Galleria d'Arte Spotorno Milano*

Provenance: Saronno, Tischer collection; Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: ROME 1910, room T, no. 87; LONDON 1914, no. 46; [PARIS 1925]; MILAN 1954.

Bibliography: LORANDI 1984, p. 220 (ill.); BOTTA 2017, no. 80 (ill.).

For the episode of *The Pit and the Pendulum*, Martini chooses to concentrate on the figure of the inquisitor who imposes the death sentence on the hapless protagonist of the tale. Playing on the contrast between the white of the paper and the black of the India ink, at the centre of the drawing's composition is the figure of the hooded judge surrounded by a series of imaginary instruments of torture. True to his proverbial irony, Martini does not fail to introduce an element of sarcasm into the drawing: the spectral inquisitor – almost jokingly – is holding and swinging a miniature version of a pendulum, the terrible torture to which the story's unfortunate protagonist was subjected.



18. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*

1908

Pen and India ink on paper, 355 x 252 mm
Signed in pen lower right: ALBERTO. MARTINI and below in pencil: *Alb. Martini*; title in pen lower centre: *DOUBLE ASSASSINAT DANS LA RUE MORGUE /*

EDGAR ALLAN POE

On the back, dated in pencil: 1908

Provenance: Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: LONDON 1914, no. 72; MILAN 1920, no. 326; [PARIS 1925]; VENICE 1956, room II, no. 87; VENICE 1962, no. 37 (Sezione Grafica Simbolista Italiana); TORRE DE' PASSERI 1989, no. 17.

Bibliography: PICA 1908B, (large format fig.); SOIZA REILLY 1909, s.p. (ill.); "THE STANDARD" 1914; LORANDI 1984, pp. 157 (fig.), 245; BOTTA 2017, no. 2 (ill.).

The short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, among the most significant of Poe's works in the field of detective stories, describes the events that lead the detective Auguste Dupin to solve an apparently insoluble case, that occurred inside a dwelling in Rue Morgue, Paris. An orang-utan from Borneo, escaped from a Maltese ship, is responsible for a double murder, carried out on two women: the older, Madame L'Espanaye, has had her throat cut with a barber's razor and the younger woman, her daughter Camille, has been barbarously strangled. Martini's invention places the figure of the orang-utan with his back to the observer, horribly oversized, to the point of occupying most of the space in the illustration. The foreshortening created by the orang-utan's shape places the drawing in a precise moment of the narration: the animal, after killing the older woman (evoked at bottom left, by the presence of her feet) and having thrown himself at Camille and strangling her, is preparing to hide the bodies, throwing Madame L'Espanaye out of the window and hiding her daughter in the chimney. Martini's care in visually rendering the story, even accessories, is obvious in the details of his drawing, some of which are very small. For example, the marks on the neck of the young girl, faithfully following Poe's words as they describe how the orang-utan sank its fingers into her throat until she was dead.



19. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*

1908

Pen and India ink on paper, 251 x 182 mm
Signed in pen lower centre: *A / MARTINI*; title
in pen lower centre: *DOUBLE / ASSASSINAT / DANS LA RUE MORGUE*

On the back, date in pencil: *1908*; stamped:
Galleria d'Arte Spotorno Milano

Provenance: Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: BRUSSELS 1910, no. 449; ROME
1910, room T, no. 60; LONDON 1914, no. 108;
[PARIS 1925]; MILAN 1954.

Bibliography: LORANDI 1984, pp. 245 (ill.);
BOTTA 2017, no. 59 (ill.).

The second illustration for *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, smaller than the previous and intended for the end of a hypothetical publication of the short story, also depicts the orang-utan from Borneo, guilty of the brutal murders in the Parisian apartment in Rue Morgue. Martini shows the animal as it flees, still carrying the sharp razor with which he had cut the throat of the ill-fated Madame L'Españaye. The orang-utan's violent aspect is emphasized by the sinister presence of a spirit – Martini's addition, not present in the book – who rides the orang-utan, clinging to its shoulders.



20. *Some Words with a Mummy* (study)

1908

Pencil on paper, 123 x 103 mm

Signed in pencil lower right: *A Martini*; title
lower centre: *Discussion avec une momie*;
inscription in pencil top right: *POE*

Provenance: Rome, private collection

When he produced his illustrations to accompany the works of Poe Martini followed a precise working programme. This drawing, in small format and with a more cursive execution than the others, shows the phase that comes before the final production and finalization of his illustrations. Indeed, *Some Words with a Mummy* is an idea for an illustration for the homonymous story that remained as a study, fixed on paper but never brought to completion. Sticking to Poe's tale, Martini takes a somewhat ironic passage from the text in which the mummy, revived from a thousand year sleep and freed from the bandages that were initially wrapped around him, is dressed in common contemporary clothes – a white burlap overcoat, a hat, leather boots, yellow calf leather gloves, a monocle, a pair of sideburns and a cravat) awkwardly large for his small frame.



21. ADOLFO WILDT

Milan 1868 – 1931

Death

1913

Bronze, 27 x 14 x 14, on marble base, height:
2 cm

Signed on right side: "A. WILDT"

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: VENICE 1989-1990, no. 16;

DARMSTADT 1990, p. 138 ill., p. 139; BRESCIA 2000, nos. 13-14; FORLÌ 2012, cat. 12, pp. 162-163

Bibliography: Paola Mola, in *ADOLFO WILDT* 1989, p. 168 no. 16; MOLA 1995, pp. 153-155; E. Pontiggia, L. Giudici, in *ADOLFO WILDT* 2000, pp. 62-63, 174, nos. 13-14

This work is part of a diptych with another bronze of similar dimensions, *Life*, that can be dated to 1913 on the basis of a handwritten note by the artist's son Francesco Wildt. The central idea of *Life* is a whirl of movement, symbol of nature's incessant transformation, with a female figure holding out a slender child.

While *Death* is ideated as a hieratic idol, a severe volume, compact on the outside, bent forward and only modulated at the sides by the deep folds of the drapery, recalling the centuries-old tradition of the mourning figure. The front of the statue opens in a dramatic plastic composition of fulls and empties, that isolates the skull of Golgotha and the candle of *pietas*, comforted by the act of prayer of a figure that appears as a compassionate, if inexorable, element of a cycle with *Life*.

The study, which was the only version in bronze fused by Wildt, was given the following definition by the artist himself: "Death is a black sphinx, solely lit by the candle of *pietà*" (*DISEGNI* 1988, no. 18). The artist would later take up both subjects again, on squared paper in pencil and dated by Francesco Wildt to 1917, where *Life* also becomes a majestic, erect figure draped in robes (MOLA 1995, p. 153; *ADOLFO WILDT* 1989, p. 118).

Stefano Grandesso



22. *Some Words with a Mummy*

1908

Pen and Indian ink on paper, 354 x 254 mm
Signed and dated in pen, on the border, lower left: *ALBERTO. MARTINI / 1908* and in pencil beneath to the right: *A. Martini*; title in pen lower centre: *PETITE DISCUSSION AVEC UNE MOMIE*; inscription in pencil, centre: *PÖE*

Provenance: Milan, Giuppani collection; Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: VENICE 1909, room 18, no. 11; BRUSSELS 1910, no. 441; ROME 1910, room T, no. 21; LONDON 1914, no. 4; [PARIS 1925]; BRESCIA 1954, no. 9; VENICE 1956, room II, no. 96; VENICE 1962, no. 40 (Sezione Grafica Simbolista Italiana); OSTEND 1967, no. 154; ODERZO 1967, no. 51; MILAN 1983, no. 6; TORRE DE' PASSERI 1989, no. 18.

Bibliography: PICA 1908A, pp. 268 (ill.), 278; PICA 1908B, pp. 125 (ill.), 130; SOIZA REILLY 1909, s.p. (ill.); MOUREY 1909, p. 180 (ill.); HELLENS 1910, p. 18; "THE TATLER" 1914; "THE CONNOISSEUR" 1914, p. 43; PICA 1916-1917, p. 211 (ill.); LORANDI 1984, pp. 95 (fig.), 207; BOTTA 2017, no. 38 (ill.).

Among the most famous and most reproduced at the time in which Martini exhibited his series for the works of Poe is the drawing depicting the tale of *Some Words with a Mummy*. Martini illustrates the episode of an Egyptian mummy, from a tomb found in the Libyan mountains, brought back to life by some scholars by means of an electric charge applied with wires directly to the temporal muscle of the cranium. The drawing contains several moments in the narration and is not concerned with the consequentiality of events established in the tale. Although the electrical wires represent only a fleeting episode in Poe, for the illustrator they are transformed into a stable element in the characterisation of the ancient mummy. A procedure that is repeated with the jar of Ponnonger pastilles and the box of Brandreth pills, elements that play a marginal role in the complex account but that for Martini are useful to suggest to the observer the period into which the mummy has been catapulted. According to Vittorio Pica's coeval opinion, behind the mummy's

shrivelled face hides the self-portrait of Martini himself, wryly metamorphosed and aged to take on the lugubrious features of an ancient artefact.



23. *Some Words with a Mummy*

1908

Pen and India ink on paper, 253 x 182 mm

Signed in pen lower left: *A. MARTINI*; title in pen lower centre: *PETITE / DISCUSSION / AVEC / UNE / MOMIE*

On the back, date in pencil: 1908

Provenance: Rome, private collection

Exhibitions: BRUSSELS 1910, no. 469; ROME 1910, room T, no. 79; LONDON 1914, no. 31; [PARIS 1925]; BRESCIA 1954, no. 15.

Bibliography: LORANDI 1984, p. 206 (ill.); BOTTA 2017, no. 88 (ill.).

In this drawing for *Some Words with a Mummy*, smaller than the preceding one and destined to be published at the end of a hypothetical publication of the short story by Poe, Martini uses passages from the text that describe the improbable reawakening of the mummy, brought about by an electric charge administered to the temporal muscle in the cranium; the mummy first raised its left knee almost to its abdomen and then, extending the limb with incredible force, gave Doctor Ponnonner a kick that catapulted him like an arrow out of the window.



24. *Prison*

1910

China pen and ink on paper, 363 x 256 mm

Signed in pen lower right: *ALBERTO / MARTINI*; title in pen lower centre: *IL CARCERE*; inscription in pen lower right: *IM UNTERIRDISCHEN KERKER*

Provenance: Milan, Finarte, auction 888, 15 March 1994; Rome, private collection

Bibliography: BRJUSOV 1910; PICA 1912, p. 14; BALBI 1945, p. 17; PICA 1916-1917, p. 212; PICA 1994, p. 120.

Martini's illustrations for the works of Poe, exhibited on numerous occasions and circulated by means of printed reproductions, earned the artist a reputation that reverberated at several levels, in the artistic sphere and the publishing world. In January 1910 the Russian symbolist writer Valerij Brjusov invited Martini to design a series of drawings for a new edition of *Zemnaya os'* (*Terrestrial Axis*), a collection of fantasy and visionary texts, published for the first time by the author in 1907. Having seen Martini's work for Poe's books – and some illustrations for the review "Vesy" from Moscow, in 1909 – Brjusov assigned the task of graphically interpreting his novellas and short stories, leaving the illustrator full freedom of expression. The collaboration with Martini for the volume, begun in January 1910 and concluded before the end of the year, resulted in seven illustrations (set at the beginning of each tale) plus a drawing for the cover.

The illustration *Prison*, that opens the illustrative structure of the book, was asked of the artist towards the end of April, when Brjusov and the editor decided to increase the total number of drawings by two. To interpret Brjusov's text,

Martini used a German translation of the tales, sent to him directly by the writer before taking on the job of illustrator. A peculiarity that is confirmed on the sheet itself by means of an inscription handwritten by Martini (located low down on the right hand side), that gives the title of the tale in German.



25. Portrait of Vittorio Pica

1912

Pen and India ink on paper, with traces of light green, blue and brown watercolour, 675 x 535 mm

Signed in pen lower left: *ALBERTO MARTINI* and dated lower right: *ROMA. INVERNO 1912*; title in pen lower centre: *VITTORIO PICA*

On the back, label: *Galleria Pesaro, Milano e Società per le Belle Arti ed Esposizione Permanente, Milano, esposizione Alberto Martini*

Provenance: Vittorio Pica collection; Milan, private collection; Nino Calori collection; Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: VENICE 1912, room 19, no. 29; MILAN 1919, no. 108; MILAN 1931, no. 35 (drawings); MILAN 1985-1986, no. 77.

Bibliography: MOUREY 1912, pp. 212 (ill.), 220; PILO 1912, p. 73; OJETTI 1912, p. 157 (ripr.); PICA 1912; PICA 1920, (large format fig.); CALZINI 1930, p. 263 (ill.); BALBI 1945, p. 18; MARCHIORI, BENVENUTI 1978, p. 11 (ill.).

Exhibited for the first time in Venice in 1912, as a pair with the portrait of the sculptor Hans Stoltenberg Lerche, the work remained in Vittorio Pica's collection until his death in 1930, and was sold in 1931 to the Casa d'Artisti di Milano with the rest of his art collection. Structured according to the models of earlier

paintings, the portrait shows the art critic half-length, sitting at his desk, with a pen in hand (an attribute alluding to his profession of art writer). Martini depicts his surroundings – quite likely inspired by Pica's actual home – roundly declaring the critic's passions: the walls in the background are covered in paintings, just as folders of graphics – in the typical wooden storage rack – emphasize his affection for pictures and above all the graphic arts, of which Pica would be a committed promoter in Italy from the start of the century. The friendship between Martini and the critic, which dated from the end of the 1890s, consisted in reciprocal exchange, in which it is above all Pica who provides work opportunities for the younger artist. Besides innumerable commissions for the review "Emporium," that materialise into title pages, covers, figurative initials and headers for the periodical, Pica entrusts his artist friend with the design of his own *ex libris*, calling cards and season's greeting cards.



26. Dream

1915

Lithograph on China paper, picture 538 x 422 mm; support 665 x 485 mm, number 21/50

Signed and dated lower right: *Alberto Martini / 1915*; outside the picture, lower from left to right, in pencil: "*Misteri*" 21/50 | "*SOGNO*" / "*La misteriosa visione*" | *AM Alberto Martini*

Print run: 4 copies, in sanguine, signed and numbered in Roman numerals; 50 copies, in black, signed and numbered in Arabic numerals; 10 artist's proofs, signed and numbered sequentially.

Provenance: Rome, private collection



27. Madness

1914

Lithograph on China paper mounted on canvas, picture 534 x 419; support 689 x 500 mm, number 50/50

Signed and dated lower left: *Alberto Martini / 1915*; outside the picture, lower from left to right, in pencil: "*Misteri*" / 50/50 | "*Follia*" / "*La tragedia delle passioni*" | AM *Alberto Martini*

Print run: 4 copies, in sanguine, signed and numbered in Roman numerals; 50 copies, in black, signed and numbered in Arabic numerals; 10 artist's proofs, signed and numbered sequentially.

Provenance: Rome, private collection



28. Love

1914

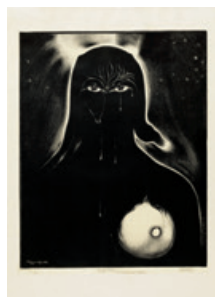
Print with rubber matrix, picture 355 x 285 mm, support 540 x 412 mm; number 20/24

Signed and dated lower right: *Alberto Martini / 1914*; outside the picture, lower from left in pencil: *Tiratura 24 prove / numerate / N 20 e a d.: Alberto Martini*

Print run: 4 copies, in sanguine, signed and numbered in Roman numerals; 50 copies, in black, signed and numbered in Arabic numerals; 10 artist's proofs, signed and

numbered sequentially; 90 copies, in black, signed and numbered in Roman numerals; 24 copies printed with rubber matrix, in sanguine, signed and numbered progressively.

Provenance: Rome, private collection



29. Infinity

1914

Lithograph on China paper, image 540 x 430 mm; support 685 x 495 mm, number 30/50

Signed and dated lower left: *Alberto Martini / 1914*; outside the image, lower left to right, in pencil: "*Misteri*" / 30/50 | "*Infinito*" / "*La Madonna dell'Infinito*" | AM *Alberto Martini*

Print run: 4 copies, in sanguine, signed and numbered in Roman numerals; 50 copies, in black, signed and numbered in Arabic numerals; 10 artist's proofs, signed and numbered progressively.

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Bibliography: PICA 1915, pp. 269-272; PICA 1916, pp. 246; "BOTTEGA DI POESIA" 1924, pp. 15-20; BALBI 1945, p. 20; FENINI 1950, p. 30; BELLOLI 1954, p. 19; MARCHIORI/PEROCCO 1963, pp. 23-26; ZANOTTO 1968, pp. 114-115; BENVENUTI 1969, pp. 37-38; MELONI 1975, nn. 8 (*Sogno*), 10 (*Follia*), 11 (*Amore*), 13 (*Infinito*); MARCHIORI/BENVENUTI 1978, pp. 9, 15, 19-21, 24, 25, 37, 109; BELLINI 1991, p. 86; HOPKINSON 2005; HOPKINSON 2007, pp. 119-121.

These works are part of the graphic series "Mysteries," made up of a total of six lithographs that Martini created between 1914 and 1915 (besides those shown here, the series includes *Birth* from 1915 and *Death* from 1914). Printed in 1915 in a limited run by the typographer, Longo of Treviso, they were only published and distributed in a

folder by Bottega di Poesia of Milan in 1923, with a preface by Emanuele di Castelbarco. Martini, having shaken off all affectation of style, is free to go into the themes of the human passions and the unconscious, taking advantage of the delicate passages of tone and nuances offered by the medium of the lithograph. The series, defined in 1915 by Vittorio Pica as “an interesting evolution of Martini’s art, which [...] takes a sophisticated art lover to be understood and appreciated, as only they will find that rare and keen intellectual delight,” depicts a further accentuation of the oneiric sense of his art, that seems to herald – and at the same time lay the foundations for – his coming surrealist phase.



30. *Rose*

1914

Pen and India ink on paper, 254 x 364 mm
Signed in pen lower right: *A MARTINI*
and beneath: *ALBERTO MARTINI. 1914.*
DISEGNO A PENNA ORIGINALE.
On the back, title in pencil: “*Rosa*” / (*Fogazzaro*)
Provenance: Rome, private collection

Following the indications on the back of the picture, the drawing by Martini might refer to the poem *Ultima rosa* by Antonio Fogazzaro, published in the collection *Poesie* of 1908. The relationship between Martini and the author – again mediated by the art critic Vittorio Pica – dates from at least 1904, when the artist designed an *ex-libris* for Fogazzaro, which was particularly appreciated by the writer and abundantly reproduced in the reviews of the time. When Martini drew *Rosa*, in 1914, Fogazzaro had been dead for three years. The drawing might have been the result – as is often the case – of the artist’s autonomous decision, or on the contrary, of an editorial assignment aimed at the publication of the poems.



31. *Harlequin with Sun and Moon* (front) *Florindo and Rosaura’s Fan* (back)

[1919]

Pencil on paper, 90 x 67 mm

Inscription in pencil on *front*, lower centre:
Arlecchino tra sole e luna; on *back*, lower centre:
Laristocrazia and in the right margin: *Don*
Florindo e il ventaglio di Rosaura

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Venice always represented a place of great attraction for Martini. Explored for its character of melancholy and crepuscular city in a series of China pen drawings between 1907 and 1909, it would remain for Martini a favourite subject of research throughout the 1910s and 1920s. An observation of the city that is not limited to urban and historical aspects but extends to the society and customs of the lagoonal capital, that is rendered with his usual proverbial sense of irony. These rapid sketches, drawn on the back and front of the same piece of paper demonstrate Martini’s interest in masks from the *Commedia dell’Arte*, linked more specifically to the carnival in Venice. The themes of mask and masquerading, already central to his interests in the series *Il libro delle ombre* of 1904, becomes in 1913 a favourite motif that leads to pastel works, continued in the post war years. The drawings in question should be considered preparatory studies for other works, which in the case of *Harlequin with Sun and Moon* is finalised in the homonymous pastel from 1919 (*Harlequin with Sun and Moon*, Milan, private collection).



32. *The Pink Hat* (study)

1919

Pencil on newspaper, 177 x 131 mm

Title and date lower centre: *Le chapeau rose*
1919 / *Pastello N 102*

Provenance: Italy, private collection

This drawing must be considered a preparatory study for the more famous pastel *The Opera Hat*, produced in the same year and exhibited at the Pesaro gallery in Milan in 1924 and later at the Siot-Decauville gallery in Paris. The enigmatic female portrait, wearing a typical Venetian mask and a man's opera hat – despite some discernible changes above all in the background – is very similar to the final work.



33. *La Marchesa Casati – Portrait*

1925

Pencil on paper, 229 x 180 mm, affixed to a card support, 370 x 300 mm

Signed in pencil lower right: *MARTINI*; title below: *LA MARCHESA CASATI – / RITRATTO*
place and date to the right: *PARIS 1925*

On the back of the card support, label: *Galleria Fonte d'Abisso Edizioni, Modena; Galleria Milano, Milano, n. 7053*

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: MILAN 1978-1979, s.p. (ill.); MILAN 1985-1986, no. 290, p. 234 (ill.); CHIAVARI 1998-1999, pp. 29 (ill.), 61; MILAN/TREVISO 1999, no. 8, pp. 29 (ill.), 61.

This drawing is part of a consistent series of portraits of Marchesa Luisa Casati, executed by Martini from 1905 and continued into the 1930s. The artist himself, in a page of his autobiography, recalls the assiduity of their meetings, that were very often in the sitter's sumptuous Parisian residence: "She posed, as a great artist and *grande dame*, for the world's best portraitists. In a wing of her palazzo in Paris she had a gallery full of beautiful portraits. From 1912 to 1934 he made thirteen portraits, and she wanted them increasingly large, reaching a height of three and a half metres [...]. Every year I had to go to Paris, and if I didn't go, she would come in Milan and invite me." It was an association that certainly took on a crucial importance for Martini's career, allowing him access – by means of his works and his talent – to the most refined and cultured circles of Europe, gathered around the marchesa. The pencil portrait depicts her face in a simplified manner, divested of any descriptive artifice. In the drawing Martini concentrates almost entirely on the woman's expression, rendered through two dark patches, aimed at defining her famous bistre eyes.



34. *Vanitas with Self-Portrait*

[1920]

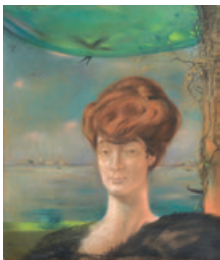
Pastels on paper, 54 x 46 cm

Signed in the centre with a monogram: *AM*
and in full: *ALBERTO MARTINI*

Provenance: Italy, private collection

In this *Vanitas with Self-Portrait*, classically

set with cloths decorated with metamorphic motifs, Martini collects a series of symbolic elements that suggest the author's personality and vision. The shell is the emblem of the initiated, visionary artist's esoteric knowledge. The skull does not only allude to the transience of human life but also to a taste for the macabre, leaning on the volume that recalls the literary inspiration of the illustrator's graphic series' of Poe, Dante and Shakespeare. The peacock feather, symbol of the cosmic unfolding of the spirit and of the immortality of the work, is sticking out of a vase in which Martini's face is reflected, not unlike the iconography of his *Self-Portrait* in pen of 1911 (Oderzo, Pinacoteca Civica "Alberto Martini"). The portrait recalls the famous description by Ettore Cozzani for the monographic number of the review *Eroica* in 1927: "Tall, thin, pale, with the dress and walk of aristocratic composure. His face immobile and his eyes fixed straight ahead of him," "in a proud expression of impassivity" that distances itself "from common life in refined and cruel dream."



35. *Portrait*

1919

Pastels on paper, 67 x 57 cm

Dated and signed lower left: *A Martini / 1919*

On the back, label: *Galleria Pesaro, Milano*

Provenance: Milan, Galleria Pesaro; Milan, private collection

From 1912 Martini focussed increasingly on the genre of the portrait. Initially imagined as a form of exclusive homage, destined for his closer friends and acquaintances (see *Portrait of Vittorio Pica*, cat. 25) the portrait became for him a theme of recurrent research at the

end of the decade, leading to a good number of commissions and to being recognised as a specialist in the sector. Interpreter of the nobility and gentry of Milan and Venice, above all Martini would become famous for the numerous works he dedicated to Marchesa Luisa Casati (cat. 33), or again due to the portrait of his friend Wally Toscanini, daughter of the renowned conductor. This process of research was not limited to private commissions but also extended into the more intimate and private life of the artist, witnessed by a long series of portraits of his wife, aria. The *Portrait* presented here, made in 1919 in pastel technique, belongs to a group of female subjects exhibited regularly at Galleria Pesaro in Milan, a point of reference in those years for the artist's commercial activity. Following a traditional structure, the half-bust portrait depicts a wealthy Venetian lady dressed in an elegant black dress. The sitter's face – showing a timid smile – is turned towards the observer and stands out from the sunny panorama of Venice's lagoon, unmistakable theatre for many of Martini's other works.



36. *Forese*

1922

Lithograph, 203 x 153 mm, affixed to paper support, 305 x 240 mm

Signed, monogrammed and dated top left: *ALBERTO MARTINI / AM / 1922* title top right: *PURGATORIO XXIV*: Signed in pencil on paper support lower right: "AM / Alberto / Martini"

Artist's proof, ex numbering, with no dry stamp. 103 numbered copies of the *Divine Comedy* edited by G. & P. Alinari, Florence

1922

Provenance: Italy, private collection

Bibliography: MELONI 1975, no. 106; ALBERTO MARTINI E DANTE 1989, pp. 204 (ill.), 399; ALBERTO MARTINI E DANTE 2004, p. 26.

Involved from 1901 in the Alinari competition for the illustration of the *Divine Comedy*, over his life Martini would make more than two hundred and fifty drawings for Dante's poem; a body of illustrations on a literary theme that is the richest and longest-running of Martini's entire production. The lithograph *Forese*, created with *Gli indovini (The Diviners, Hell, XX)* and *Beatrice (Paradise, XXII)* are from a later return to Dante occasioned by a new illustrated edition of the *Divine Comedy*, once again published by Alinari in 1922.



37. *Multifaceted Self-Portrait*

1928

China pen on paper, 161 x 102 mm, affixed to paper support, 235 x 157 mm

Signed and inscribed in pen at top: *autoritratto poliedrico, che poi generò l'Autoritratto Amletico. / esposto più volte a Parigi e a Milano (dal 1928 al 1934) (vedi Eroica) / Alberto Martini;* inscription in pencil, lower right: (*autobiografia grafica*)

Provenance: Italy, private collection

The *Multifaceted Self-Portrait* was made in Paris in 1928, the year in which Martini decided to move to the French capital in search of new artistic and intellectual stimuli, having become despondent due to continual misunderstandings received in

Italy. The drawing is a seminal idea for his *Self-Portrait: Hamlet*, realised in pen in the same year and published in the first number of 1935 of the review "L'Eroica," directed by Ettore Cozzani. In the drawing, the artist's face is reflected in a solid mirrored polygon that shows not only the features of his face (from several angles) but details that are both internal and external to the composition: like the sun in the background landscape or, alternatively, a female nude unrelated to the scene, reflected in the top of the polyhedron. The theme of the self-portrait, which recurs frequently in Martini's production, finds a new configuration in this drawing (reiterated in the lower part of the drawing, with more geometric synthesis), which can be interpreted thanks to comments by the artist that appeared in his autobiography from the late 1930s. Addressing himself directly to the reader, he roundly declares his subjective and spiritual approach to reality, with metaphors that echo the shapes and contents of the *Multifaceted Self-Portrait* of 1928: "remember that only our arbitrary vision of life is 'true': if, seeing a thing very differently from me, seems distorted to you, think and think again that everyone inevitably sees everything in a different way, since everything is a mirror reflecting our soul, and all our souls are different."



38. PAOLO TROUBETZKOY

Intra 1866 - Suna 1937

Gabriele D'Annunzio

1911

Bronze, lost wax, with dark patina, 43 x 31 x 32 cm

Signed and dated at base: "Paul Troub[...]"

1911”; foundry stamp: “C. Valsuani Cire Perdue”

Provenance: Italy, private collection

The long-lasting friendship between D’Annunzio and Troubetzkoy, witnessed by their meetings, correspondence and a poetical dedication from D’Annunzio to the sculptor, was punctuated by two portraits.

The already established writer was depicted in the youthful bust in Naples in 1892, when Troubetzkoy was entering the competition for the monument to Garibaldi. D’Annunzio praised his sketch in the “Martino” as “the best of all” those put forward, due to the converging of “purposes” and the mastery of “features,” with nothing ornamental, in the sublime hero’s head, through the simplicity of the pyramidal shape. (D’ANNUNZIO 2003). The portrait was carried out in the open air “on a terrace in Mergellina” for the Contessa Marine de Béarn (Gardone Riviera, Fondazione “Il Vittoriale degli Italiani”, cfr. Paola Pizzamano, in *GLI SCULTORI DI D’ANNUNZIO* 2015, pp. 200-203). In its rapid and rugged modelling, the work fully interpreted the capture of light and spatial ephemera demonstrated by the Lombard Scapigliatura, based on the formal reflection not only of Troubetzkoy, but also Medardo Rosso.

The depiction of the poet seated in full figure was carried out later in Paris, where both writer and sculptor had moved and where, in 1911, D’Annunzio put on his play *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*, set to the music of Claude Debussy, with stage design by Léon Bakst and Ida Rubinstein as protagonist, at which we know Troubetzkoy made an appearance from one of his letters conserved in the poet’s archive.

It was in that year that D’Annunzio posed for his friend in the famous studio at Neuilly-sur-Seine, where Troubetzkoy, by now prince and sculptor of great fame, from Russia to the Americas, received cosmopolitan high society. This time the sculptor underlined the poet’s elegance and meditative attitude. And in the reduced format of the portrait, the sketch-like style of the Scapigliatura, he referenced the results of international impressionism and dialogued with the essential paradigm of Rodin, as the figure emerges from the phenomenal shapelessness of the setting.

D’Annunzio modelled then, as a “caricature sitting in an armchair” – according to the term in the artistic tradition used by the sculptor’s son Luigi (TROUBETZKOY S.D., p. 27) – was comparable to the virtuosic and worldly force of Boldini’s portraits. A visitor of the *Secessione romana* of 1913 could read this attitude of elegance with subtlety: “the full body statuette in bronze, today exhibited in Rome, is an elegant work in which the man of the world is portrayed with grace rather than as the indefatigable ‘worker of words’ (“*L’Illustrazione Italiana*”, n. 16, aprile 1913, p. 386).

The original plaster model of this portrait is conserved at the Gipsoteca Troubetzkoy at the Museo del Paesaggio di Verbania Pallanza (cfr. P. Castagnoli, in *PAOLO TROUBETZKOY* 1988, pp. 102-105; S. Frezzotti, in *PAOLO TROUBETZKOY* 1990, no. 154, p. 199; A. Pinget, in *ITALIE 1880-1910* 2000, no. 39, p. 154). In 1952 a bronze version of the work, belonging to the surveyor Gagliardi, was exhibited at Pallanza. Since that date, the version shown here is the first to be revealed to experts, fused in lost wax by the famous Parisian foundry of Claude Valsuani. We do not know if the artist originally made more bronze copies or just this one. In any case, the work found immediate and substantial success, being exhibited in the bronze version in Buffalo in 1911, in Toledo, Ohio and at the *Salon de Paris* the following year, at the *Permanente* in Milan and the *Secessione romana* in 1913, and again, among numerous other occasions, at the Venice Biennale of 1922.

Stefano Grandesso



39. *Ex libris for the Complete Works of D'Annunzio*

1938

China pen on paper, 290 x 195 mm

Signed in pen top right: *ALBERTO MARTINI* and pencil below: *A Martini 1938*; title in centre: *L'ALTISSIMO POETA*; inscription in pencil at centre: *EX LIBRIS PER L'OPERA OMNIA DI D'ANNUNZIO / "DIS. INEDITO"*; dedication in pen lower right: *"L'ALTISSIMO POETA. / DISEGNO A PENNA DI / ALBERTO MARTINI. / IN MORTE DI / GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO. 3.III.1938-XVI."*

Provenance: Milan, Finarte, auction 643, 19 May 1998; Italy, private collection

Exhibitions: BRESCIA 1954, no. 3.

Bibliography: FRAGONARA/FEDELI 1993, no. 190, p. 79.

This work is one of Martini's large production of *ex libri*, undertaken from the first decade of the century until the 1950s. Intended to accompany the edition of the complete works of the writings of Gabriele D'Annunzio, the drawing depicts the face of the writer from Abruzzo rising in profile above the clouds, wearing a laurel crown that according to tradition alludes to poetic glory. Martini drew the illustration on the emotional wave following his death, on 3 March 1938, only two days after the news of his passing, which occurred on the first day of the month. Having known D'Annunzio since 1914 (the year in which he sent him his visionary postcards of the *Danza macabra europea*) Martini would stay in constant contact with the poet, even in the years of his "exile" to Vittoriale in Gardone Riviera. In 1928, on the occasion of the exhibition organised in honour of Vittorio Pica at Galleria Scopinich in Milan, D'Annunzio would address his message of good wishes directly to Martini, promotor of the event, publishing it in the pages of the "Corriere della Sera." On that occasion he would coin the felicitous and acute definition of "Alberto Martini of the Mysteries," destined to be indissolubly linked to the image of the artist.

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H. MARTINI.

A decorative wavy line, possibly a signature flourish or a stylized underline, extending from the left side towards the right edge of the page, positioned below the text.