

Gemina

Once a share parking of **Montedison** (then owned by **ENI**), in 1981 Gemina (Generale Mobiliare Interessenze Azionarie) passed under joint control of **Mediobanca** and **Fiat** and bought a large parcel of Montedison shares from **ENI**, thus giving Enrico **Cuccia** and his allies control of the chemical giant. Led by Cesare **Romiti** and later by Giampiero Pesenti, during the 1980s Gemina abandoned Montedison (which was nationalized again) but bought Rizzoli-**Corriere della sera**, a giant publishing group then on the verge of bankruptcy, became a shareholder in AmbroVeneto, a Catholic banking group, and eventually turned itself into a holding of merchant banking and insurance activities. In 1995 Mediobanca planned to transform it into a giant chemical conglomerate, SuperGemina, which had to amalgamate Montedison (in deep crisis after **Ferruzzi's** collapse) and chemical companies of the Fiat group. The project was given up after an enormous loss in Rizzoli's balance sheet was discovered and Gemina's managers were prosecuted. More recently, Gemina has given up control of Rizzoli to HDP (Holding di Partecipazioni), a financial holding of which Gemina itself is a shareholder, has abandoned the financial services business and has focused on merchant banking in favour of emerging middle-size companies.

STEFANO BATTILOSSI

Germanà, Mimmo

b. 1944, Catania, Sicily; d. 1992, Milan

Painter

Germanà studied at the Accademia d'Arte in Rome at the same time as Sandro **Chia**. He completed his studies in 1970 and in 1980 he moved to Milan. His first solo exhibition was in 1970 at the Galleria L'Attico in Rome. His paintings are representational, vibrantly coloured and strongly expressionistic. From 1977 to the mid-1980s, Germanà was one of the artists included in the broad current known as the **transavantgarde**, although by the late 1980s he was no longer numbered amongst its active members.

OLIVIA DAWSON

Germi, Pietro

b. 14 September 1914, Genoa; d. 5 December 1974, Rome

Film director

Once characterized by **Fellini** as ‘il grande falegname’ (the great carpenter), Germi was undoubtedly one of the best artisans of Italian postwar cinema. Having begun his directorial career with dramatic films, he nevertheless became one of the undisputed masters of the comic genre with films which, for all their comedy, offered some of the most mordant and incisive critiques of contemporary Italian society.

Germi studied acting and film-making at the **Centre Sperimentale di Cinematografia** in Rome under Alessandro **Blasetti**, and then started by making neorealistic films marked by a visibly dramatic vein. In 1948 he made *In nome della legge* (In the Name of the Law), a gripping story about the Sicilian **mafia**. This was followed by his neorealist masterpiece *Il cammino della speranza* (The Path of Hope) (1950) which narrated the epic journey of a group of Sicilian workers to France in search of a better life, a film which patently reflected the influence of **Visconti’s** *La terra trema* (The Earth Trembles) (1948) as well as being a stylized reprise of the narrative patterns of the classical Hollywood Western as exemplified in the films of John Ford. In fact, the narrative rhythm of Germi’s films would always owe much to American cinema, and he was much loved in the USA, especially by Billy Wilder.

In 1961, Germi moved suddenly to comedy with *Divorzio all’italiana* (Divorce Italian Style). *Divorzio* was slightly removed from the then traditional ‘comedy Italian style’ in theme, but similar to it in terms of its satirical intent. The film marked the birth of the so-called ‘Southern comedy’ which became a genre in itself because the economic boom was taking place well away from the South where human beings were not being faced with a fast-paced, industrialized society, but rather with the ancestral southern civilization. However, in spite of their difference from the so-called ‘comedies Italian style’, Germi’s comedies were quite as aggressive and ferocious. In fact, *Divorce Italian Style* was initially meant to be a dramatic film, and yet, at the completion of the script, Germi realized that in the backward Sicily that served as the setting for the story, even the most dramatic events, such as the *delitto d’onore* (crime of honour), then still sanctioned by the penal code, could easily take on farcical tones.

In 1964 Germi directed *Sedotta e abbandonata* (Seduced and Abandoned), in which he portrays a monstrous society caught up in an almost medieval and tribal culture. The film is nearly an anthropological documentary on a barbaric world where an archaic penal code allows, and almost encourages, the use of matrimony to repair the ills caused by sexual violence and exploitation. The same kind of remoteness which characterizes Germi’s Sicily qualifies his Veneto in *Signore e signori* (Ladies and Gentlemen) (1966) where Germi again investigates backward sexual and social behaviours. With *Le castagne sono buone* (Chestnuts Are Good) (1970), *Alfredo, Alfredo* (Alfred, Alfred) (1973) and his last but unfinished film, *Amici miei* (My Friends) (1975), completed by his friend Mario **Monicelli**, Germi returned to comedy to express bewilderment at the new and nostalgia for the past.

A fairly isolated but important figure in the history of postwar Italian cinema, Germi constantly attempted to combine two apparently opposing tasks: cinema as entertainment and cinema as commitment to social and political commentary.

Further reading

Giacovelli, E. (1991) *Pietro Germi*, Milan: Il Castoro (a concise and useful survey of Germi's career and his films, with a complete filmography and selected bibliography on individual films).

MANUELA GIERI

Geymonat, Ludovico

b. 11 May 1908, Turin; d. 29 November 1991, Passirana di Rho

Philosopher and historian of science

Appointed in 1956 to Italy's first chair of Philosophy of Science at the State University of Milan, Geymonat was the foremost Italian representative of empiricist or logical positivist thought, although Geymonat himself often preferred the term 'neopositivist'. In his many publications, Geymonat's chief concern was to bridge the gulf he saw between science and philosophy in Italy since the CounterReformation. At times locked in fierce debate with his coeval, Norberto **Bobbio**, Geymonat also had a long history of anti-fascist political activism, including participation in the armed **Resistance** and membership of the Communist Party in the immediate postwar years. Having abandoned the **PCI** in the 1970s, he stood as an independent candidate for **Democrazia Proletaria** (Proletarian Democracy) in the national elections of 1983. In 1985 he was awarded the Feltrinelli prize by the national Accademia dei Lincei.

SUZANNE KIERNAN

Giacosa, Dante

b. 3 January 1905, Rome; d. 31 March 1996, Turin

Engineer and industrial designer

After graduating from the Milan Polytechnic in 1927, Giacosa joined the **Fiat** motor company. Displaying much talent and promise, he was soon given the pressing task of designing a car for the mass Italian market which would be small, cheap and economical to run. Giacosa's solution, unveiled in 1936, was the legendary 500cc economy car which came to be universally known as the Topolino (little mouse) because of its look and diminutive size. Although successful, the model remained out of the reach of most Italians and was eventually discontinued in the early 1950s to be replaced by a 600cc model and a new 500cc, both also designed by Giacosa. The new 500cc, a tiny but efficient two-door sedan with a foldback sunroof, affectionately known as the Bambina