

Text by Luca Raffaelli

from the critical apparatus of the exhibition

“On Monday I was writing the story of the six daily strips, on Tuesday I was drawing them, on Wednesday inking, on Thursday refining, on Friday I was starting with the Sunday page, drawing it on Saturday and inking it on Sunday. On Monday the loop of the daily ones was starting again.”

Milton Caniff

Comics as mass phenomenon starts on the USA daily newspapers about the end of the XIX century. First on the colour Sunday supplement, then, in black and white, on the daily comics section of the paper. Many authors and characters appeared both on Sunday's colour panels and on weekdays' black and white ones, and so on during 40 years, Caniff delivered every week six black and white strips and one colour panel.

With very few exceptions, strips are composed by four vignettes of different size: the first one to have the overview (Caniff is very good in avoiding useless redundancies), the last one to let you in high suspense until the strip of the day after. Usually Caniff's balloons are pretty full of words, to make reading time of the strip not too short. On Sunday colour panels the first vignette shines with the Title of the Series. Caniff after the first vignette builds up the panel on 9/10 ones, often of the same size, to give rhythm and regularity to the reading.

Also, Caniff's colour panels give us the magic of comics. His storytelling capability to create awaiting and emotion belongs to an absolute master, always able to surprise and innovate. About drawing, his black and white style is astonishing: influenced by the colleague Noel Sickles (who chose illustration over comics) Caniff created a style where the comparison between white masses with black ones is essential.

Hugo Pratt often said to be inspired by Caniff, and also added that the so-called “clear line” was not born in France but in the mind and fingers of the creator of Terry and Steve Canyon.