

2011 – the year of Gagarin

In 2011 AS.IT.AF. celebrated Gagarin with "Fifty Years of Human Spacelight" and organized – with the support of Thales Alenia Spazio and the sponsorship of the Piedmont Region, the Province of Turin, the Municipality of Turin, and with the support of other companies involved in aerospace – a memorable international meeting which took place at the Congresses Center "Torino Incontra" in Turin and at the Science Museum in Milan. Special Guests were the American astronaut **Walt Cunningham** (Apollo VII), the Russian cosmonaut **Valeri Tokarev** and the Italian astronaut **Maurizio Cheli**, who animated a nice debate on the space race that began at the end of the 50s, in the midst of the Cold War. Among the speakers were personalities from the Italian aerospace industry and institutions, such as Ernesto Vallerani, founder of Aeritalia and first President of Alenia Spazio, and Luciano Guerriero, first President of the Italian Space Agency (ASI).



*Left: Umberto Cavallaro opens the Conference
Right: Astronauts Cunningham, Tokarev and Cheli during the debate*

On the opening day of the Conference, the Italian Gagarin stamp was issued in Turin. This was **the first stamp sponsored by AS.IT.AF.**, and also marked a first in Italy, as it was the first dedicated to a foreign personality in our Country (after a long "negotiation" with the Ministry of Economic Development).

The **official bulletin**¹ for the stamp is signed by Enrico Saggese (ASI) and Umberto Cavallaro (ASITAF).

A **non-competitive exhibition** was organized during the meeting, with **18 collections**: the largest exhibition of astrophilately and space-related thematic philately held so far in Italy. Even this non-competitive exhibition was an important opportunity for exhibitors to train to exhibit according to the official FIP rules.



¹ See www.asitaf.it, Section **ABOUT US/STAMPS AND POSTMARKS**



On the left and in the centre, the two cancellations used in Turin respectively for the issue of the postage stamp and for the inauguration of the Astrophilately exhibition. To the right; cancellation requested by AS.IT.AF. to pay homage to Partner Paul Calle who had passed away a few months earlier, at the end of December. The cancellation, designed by his son Chris Calle, takes up a well-known self-portrait of Paul.



Left: the official poster of the exhibition (by Alec Bartos). Right: visits to the exhibition: above, Annibale Rega, with Mariarosa Sirna (Thales Alenia Space) and Maurizio Cheli; below, Alec Bartos with Valeri Tokarev

The graphics of the event were entirely developed by the artist Alec Bartos.

As a representation prize, the President of the Republic assigned to the event the prestigious medal of the Head of State.



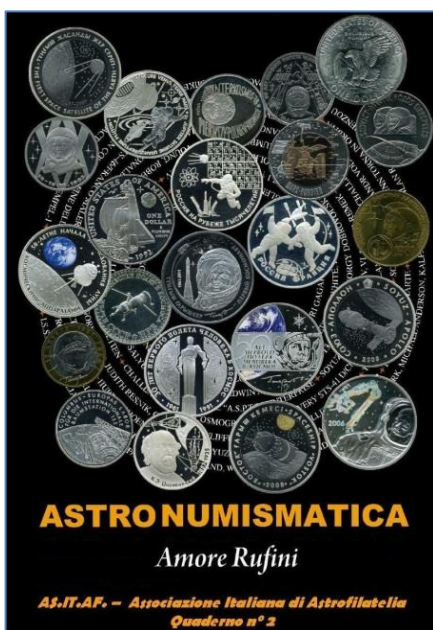
In a nice ceremony held at the premises of AS.IT.AF. in Villarbasse, the plaque of Honorary Member was presented to Walt Cunningham.



*ASITAF welcomes Honorary Member Walt Cunningham (Apollo 7)
From left: Annibale Rega, Luciana Cavallaro, Luisa Rega, Walt and Dot Cunningham, Umberto Cavallaro and Ferdinando Santandrea.
(photo by Alec Bartos)*

Faithful to the commitment – as stated in its Statute – to promote studies, research and publications on the historical and technical aspects relating to astrophilately, AS.IT.AF. was active since its beginning and published booklets and books.

During the Conference, the book ***“Propaganda e Pramatismo in gara per la conquista della Luna”*** (“Propaganda and Pragmatism, in Race to the Moon”) was presented.. The book, unique in its kind, retells in the historical context of the Cold War – recounted in an original way – some peculiarities of philately used, especially on the Soviet side, as a powerful propaganda tool, and warns against the many "fakes" produced in the golden years of the space race. Some philatelic curiosities on the American side are also illustrated. An enriched English version of the book was released in 2018.



During the conference was also presented "Astronumismatics", the original ASITAF booklet No. 2 edited by Amore Rufini. The booklet deals with a new subject on which a systematic study was still missing. It transfers into the world of numismatics the consolidated rules of Astrophilately. And takes into consideration only the "space coins" issued by the Countries taht are involved in the space race, and that participated in the missions with their own astronauts or provided technologies and components.

The booklet lists over fifty coins issued by USSR/Russia, USA, Poland, East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Cuba, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, France, Canada, Ukraine and Austria.

Like all AS.IT.AF. booklets it brings a stamp on the last cover page. In this case the Gagarin stamp is used, canceled on the day of issue.

8 astrophilately exhibits participated in *VeneziaFil 2011* from April 29 to May 1.

After many years, astrophilately was returning again to official competitions and. achieved gratifying results. 4 collections were awarded the Gold Medal.

*VeneziaFil 2011.
Umberto Cavallaro presents the "Best in Class"
award and the gold medal to Alec Bartos,
in the presence of Michele Caso,
Commissioner of the Italian Federation*



From 6 to 8 May the ASITAF collectors moved to the Museo di Piana delle Orme in Borgo Faiti (Latina), where many took part in a non-competitive exhibition, used again as an "educational training" for collectors wishing to qualify for official competitions. On the initiative of AS.IT.AF. another special Gagarin postmark was made.



In September we contributed our collections to the exhibition organized in Crescentino for Gagarin's 50th anniversary.

In November 2011 we were present with our booth at VERONAFIL



The ASITAF booth at VeronaFil 2011, presided over by Luigi Bussolino and Pietro Della Maddalena, acquires a new Member: Luigi Festa.

On 15 December Paolo Nespoli, joined by his wife Sasha who lives in Houston, gathered a few friends and collaborators to celebrate in Milan the first anniversary of the launch of the **MagISStra** mission. The name of the record breaking Italian mission, incorporates the Latin “**Magistra**”, meaning “teacher” and the acronym of the International Space Station **ISS**. It recalls the Italian culture and the humanistic value of the mission: the human figure that dominates the logo scene embraces the three elements around which the mission revolved: science, technology and education.



On 15 December 2010 Verano Brianza, the birthplace of Paolo Nespoli, had dedicated to the MagISStra Mission a special postmark designed by Massimiliano Chiolo, member of ASITAF, who was Mayor of Verano for many years.

«A year ago – Nespoli recalled, introducing the brief presentation – I was on the same launch pad from which Gagarin had left 50 years earlier».

It was a special evening: in the welcoming venue

Milano a Memoria which was open to the public for the first time. Nespoli presented the result of the stereophotography experiment he conducted in space where, with special equipment, he photographed around 400 3D images. The few first stereo-photographs of the Earth are also very suggestive.

«I would like everyone to try flying in space, because from up there you can look at the Earth in a different way. It will soon be possible with commercial carriers. Everyone should go there. They would come back with a different vision of the world ».

