



A ruined world in which chiaroscuro gives architectural depth to a flat backdrop, setting for a music drama at Rome's Teatro Valle, 1951, "The Favor of the King and of the Wise Woman," with music by Carlo Orfi, book by Pavolini. Below: sketch for "Death of a Salesman."



Gianni Polidori



Polidori's "Composition on a Cross," in oils, 1947, has the same power of emotional evocation and illusions of perspective and light which characterize his scenic designs. (Collection of Baron Giorgio Franchetti, Rome.)

interiors for the camera, by Polidori



Polidori is equally an artist whether his work is taken in terms of its final cinematic purpose, or in its primary form, as an ink or pencil drawing. Many of his preliminary sketches such as those above, are in private collections in Rome and New York.



In the setting for Jean Renoir's film, "The Golden Coach," (above) architectural detail accumulates into fairy-tale nightmare. Drawings and film shots of Alberto Lattuada "The Coat" (below) show how accurately Polidori's conceptions translate into three-dimensions.

Born showmen as well as able designers and craftsmen, the Italians have taken over in one field after another since the war — eclipsing rivals in architecture, painting, sculpture, furniture, fabrics, fashions, and the cinema. Where the pre-war foreign film was a highbrow specialty, the turbulent actresses and raw fables of the most successful Italian films have enabled them to storm our neighborhood and small-town circuits. But even these high-pitched cinematic screeches are beginning to pall—and we do not regret them, for Italy's movie makers have more varied harmonies at their command.

Italian films best known to American audiences until recently were often without designed sets—the cameras having been turned on the streets, slums, shops, and ruins of Rome, on the mills and rice fields of the Po, on the rivers and in open country. So we have remained unaware of sophisticated scenic artists like Gianni Polidori, and of the Experimental Movie Center in Rome which has served him as a workshop.

At 29 Polidori is the youngest "movie architect" in Italy, but he already has twenty films to his credit, and has been designing stage settings for seven years. He is actually no architect but an artist—a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome—with specialized training in the technicalities of scenic vision.—O.G.

