



Le avventure di Aldo

04.03 —
05.06.2022

Archives
connecting
times

curated by Francesca Zanella

FMAV – Museo della Figurina
and Sale superiori, Palazzo Santa Margherita
Corso Canalgrande 103, Modena

BIOGRAPHY

Aldo Spoldi was born in 1950 in Crema, where he now lives and works. He studied at the Beato Angelico art school and the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan. Ironic, playful and theatrical, he is a painter, sculptor, musician, writer, teacher at the Brera Academy and member of the Società di Patafisica.

His career has developed in line with the transformations in art and society, each of which is reflected in the various phases of his work.

In 1968, the year of youth demonstrations and rampant Marxism, he put together a group of schoolmates who put on mocking burlesque performances on the city streets. In 1977, the year of the fall of Marxism and the birth of the postmodern, he first set up the Teatro di Oklahoma and then began his artistic career painting theatrical images. In 1985 and the years of financial intangibility, he transformed the Teatro di Oklahoma into a bank, a private limited company and finally into the public limited company B.D.O. S.p.A. In 1996, as a United Europe was being built and the Internet was becoming popular, via B.D.O. S.p.A., he launched a project for his students to create virtual characters (the artist Cristina Show, the photographer Met Levi, the philosopher Andrea Bortolon and the critic Angelo Spettacoli) and published the books *Lezioni di educazione estetica*, *Cristina Show*, *Frammenti di vita* and *Lezioni di filosofia morale*. In 2007, year of the great financial crisis and the search for concreteness, he decided to set up the Accademia dello Scivolo and in 2011 he published the book by philosopher Andrea Bortolon, *Un Dio non può farsi male*.

Accademia dello Scivolo is an association-crew devoted to research on beauty. It is regulated by pataphysical articles of association and funded by the interest accrued on the purchase of ETCs and ETFs on water and woods. Its motto is “Qui non si lavora, si gioca” (We don’t work here, we play). It was founded by Angelo Spettacoli and the virtual characters Cristina Karanovic, aka Cristina Show, Andrea Bortolon and Met Levi in Aldo Spoldi’s studio in “a very precise moment of history: 2007-2008 when the postmodern fell into a crisis that undermined its own survival and the survival of the system of art that it generated, leading to the fear of a collapse of the economy and the downfall of the West”. It was the same moment that the Banca di Oklahoma crashed, almost contemporaneously to Lehman Brothers.

The Accademia dello Scivolo takes forward the research begun by Aldo Spoldi in 1974 with the Teatro di Oklahoma, which then developed into the Banca di Oklahoma S.p.A. and the production of virtual characters. All his artistic and publishing products have been prompted by this climate of crisis. In 2011, in search of simpler economies, he published the book *Un dio non può farsi male* by Andrea Bortolon, Edizione Mousse, in collaboration with Fondazione Marconi, and in 2012 he kitted out a camper as a mini-art system incorporating artist, critic, collector, museum, public and theatre, whose aspiration was to be an open work of art, an itinerant theatre. The Accademia dello Scivolo published a booklet of the same name for the numerous stages on its journey (Accademia di Brera, Galleria Vigato, Bergamo, Carnevale di Viareggio, Galleria Frittelli, Florence, Villa Celle, Santomato di Pistoia, Albereta, Erbusco). The logo, stamp and flag also point towards a new economy and world. These emblems and motifs are taken from the sculpture *Il mangiatore di mondi* (The World Eater) which Aldo Spoldi made for the carnival of Viareggio, the same sculpture that allowed him to acquire the plot of land next to the studio known as Vascavolano.

The aim of the Accademia dello Scivolo advisory board, comprising Patrizia Gillo, Cristina Karanovic, Andrea Bortolon, Angelo Spettacoli and Met Levi, is to create a new economy. The Accademia also collaborates with external professionals and young fine arts scholars, so they can put – however modestly – the theses they supported and debated in their academies and schools empirically to the test.

ROOM I

Le avventure di Aldo – Aldo’s Adventures – exhibition is a reflection on the connection of times through the comparison of two ways of understanding the role of archives.

Making its way through the FMAV exhibition rooms and the Museo della Figurina, the show arises from the need to combine this historical research method and analysis of complex systems of images with creative practices and the perspective of contemporary visual artists. Not only that, it is a way to bring the collections back to life.

The exhibition/workshop features artist Aldo Spoldi, invited because of the theoretical aspect of his work, the system of images and characters that he has created during his career, and above all the particular language he uses, with its montage-based narrative and performative style. Spoldi composes his narratives by treating the surface (whether a wooden board or a wall) as the space of action for his “characters”, as a chessboard that becomes the playing field for his army of toy soldiers. This method can be seen in the new work, *La Fondazione Aldo* (The Aldo Foundation), created by Spoldi for FMAV and opening *Le avventure di Aldo*.

Drawing from his archive and therefore from stories already told, from *Il mondo nuovo* (The New World, 2006/11) and *La notte di Novalis* (The Night of Novalis, 2006), to *La tromba delle scale 2* (The Stairwell 2, 2018) and *Il barone rosso* (The Red Baron, 1992), an ironic homage to Modena, the storytelling is opened by the latest of Spoldi’s alter egos, *Il vigile* (The Traffic Warden, 2021), who is painting his first self-portrait. The space-time sequence built by Spoldi is captured by Met Levi who photographs the field of play and adventures from the end of the wall: “I randomly found an old photo of me as a traffic warden in the Accademia dello Scivolo archive. It immediately gave me an idea. This child dressed up as the friend-enemy of the law and armed with a notebook became the author of all the adventures I painted. So, I transformed the notebook into a palette and put a paintbrush in the left hand stopping the traffic. Then I equipped him with two more paintbrushes held in a quiver. He had become the orchestra conductor of future painted pictures. The captain of artistic troops going to explore the future.”

The personal archive (the self-portrait made as a child) therefore generates a new work by reassembling old fragments and new figures: not just *Il vigile* but also the NFTs of the virtual characters Angelo Bortolon, Il Mangiatore

di Mondri (The World Eater) and Cristina Show.... which are not a marketing operation but an army that wants to play (as Aldo Spoldi writes): “Ha ha ha, it’s playing, not just working, that raises the GDP.”

In *Le avventure di Aldo*, the artist therefore displays a big, new composition involving some constants in his reflection (the layers of time, play, the economic aspect of art) which take on further meanings and create new worlds.

ROOM II

The two dimensions – of space and images (Spoldi's narration of his new work and the reassembly of the series of trading cards taken out of the archive) – of *Le avventure di Aldo* exhibition propose a reflection on how time is connected by different forms of reappropriation, starting from an investigation into what archives are all about.

Spoldi wrote in January 1981, "I don't cut up images, I build images. **To compose is to make fragments into a form**, chaos into order, to cut up, dismantle, is exactly the opposite"; so the trading card and popular image printers and publishers Minot, Clarey, Bognard..., commissioners such as Le Bon Marché department stores or L'Alsacienne, Lombart Chocolat, Perles du Japon or the Liebig extract of meat company, disseminated fragments of stories, which were put back together in albums or got lost in boxes or drawers in children's or collectors' bedrooms.

The Museo della Figurina houses all these products of nineteenth-century popular publishing, which come from many different collections to form a large archive of images. They are strange objects to collect: they are not works of art in the traditional sense but documents that are part of the wider system of visual and written communication. So, it is an archive of signs that allows us to reflect on the image and the literary or poetic text as translated by the communicative machine.

In Spoldi's reflection on archives, his stories employ figures and places (the circus, clowns, Pierrot) and some narrative structures that fit perfectly with the Museo della Figurina collections: magazines (the Accademia dello Scivolo magazine), his *emblemata* trademark works and trading card albums.

Spoldi assembles and reassembles, fascinated by illustration and comics: "I don't invent anything. For a long time, everything has been ready-made in some document, book or paper. I cannot say what I feel when I look at a **trading card album**. Of course, I prefer an album to a sunset ... When I see a well-illustrated book, I feel something atheist flow inside me, in my stomach. I chew, **I mull over the images** that are offered to me, I never question them" (1979).

So, he assembles and reassembles, much like trading cards in collections. Trading cards are segments of a story defined by a publishing plan and advertising strategy. The images are part of a story that develops in series. Coming out over time, the icons follow some rules of rhetoric and slot

together to create an advertising message whose aim is either to tickle our fancy or spread knowledge. As such, this communicative machine comes to include at once the results of scientific and technological research, descriptions of food, raw materials, the natural world and populations, as well as the reproduction and translation of artistic and literary works. Trading cards live inside a story, but they can also be independent segments, or elements that overturn the order.

Therefore, the exhibition aims to short-circuit the imagination; Spoldi's irony rereads *Pierrot Lunaire*, representations of the world, battles and ranks of toy soldiers, Aesop's fables, La Fontaine of *One Thousand and One Nights* which advertise toys, chocolate, exotic foods...

FM MAV
Fondazione Modena Arti Visive

fmav.org

SOCI FONDATORI / FOUNDING MEMBERS

IN COLLABORAZIONE CON / IN COLLABORATION WITH



Comune di Modena



FONDAZIONE DI **MODENA**



UNIMORE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI
MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA