

*Signor Marconi,
the Accademia dello Scivolo has commissioned
me to undertake research for a retrospective.
Therefore last year I tried looking back.
I may be a bit crazy, but by looking into my past
I found the future history of the world.
You know, I saw three or four worlds born and perish, and you,
Signor Marconi, saw at least one more . . .*
(From a letter by Aldo Spoldi to Giorgio Marconi, 2013)

Aldo Spoldi

The History of the World

Curated by Patrizia Gillo, the “invented critic”

Inauguration: 20 September 2018 from 18.00
From 21 September to 10 November 2018

After the summer break the new season at Fondazione Marconi will begin with an exhibition exclusively dedicated to the work of Aldo Spoldi.

The project, curated by Patrizia Gillo, a virtual character invented by the artist, was commissioned by the Accademia dello Scivolo, an association founded by Spoldi in 2007, which is “centred on a search for the perceptibly beautiful”.

But let's start at the beginning: the inspiration for this exhibition comes from a letter that Aldo Spoldi sent to Giorgio Marconi in which he says that looking back over his past made him want to create a new painting which he would call *Anthology*, since past and present coexist in it, and other paintings, other stories and other exhibitions would derive from it.

In fact this new work is consistent with the surreal and extraordinary story of Aldo Spoldi's entire artistic career from 1968 to the present day; a sort of gigantic theatre in which the artist-puppeteer controls the strings from above, making the figures move in the search for a multiplicity of combinations.

Twelve signs placed at the exhibition entrance delineate the stages of the adventure, which starts in the basement then continues with a playful parade of images up to the Foundation's second floor. Interspersed along the way are creative periods, gallery owners, collaborators, and characters who have inspired and accompanied him.

In the 1970s Aldo Spoldi combined conceptual art with theatrical projects, part of a generation of artists who tried to overcome conceptual rigour and rigidity by returning to an expressivity that offered a new narrative, drawing their tools indiscriminately from art history, everyday images and contemporary culture.

Spoldi's distinctive approach lies in his refusal to be confined by the dimensions of the “painting”, in his creation of large-scale installations, and in the way he takes inspiration from a universe of images from childhood, cartoons and comics to create imaginary and delicately stylised icons.

Spoldi's collaboration with Giorgio Marconi has been constant since the 1980s.

Among the most recent exhibitions held at Fondazione Marconi have been *La tromba delle scale* (2006) and *Il mondo nuovo* (2011). The former was based on a large-scale vertical picture that it was “impossible to see in full”; the second was inspired by an imaginary situation in which a number of invented characters – art critic Angelo Spettacoli, philosopher Andrea Bortolon, photographer Met Levi and artist Cristina Karanovic (aka Cristina Show) – who, alarmed by the financial crisis of 2008, found refuge in Spoldi's atelier where they set up a new school of art, *L'accademia dello Scivolo*, and afterwards had no desire to leave.

It is clear once again that “the game” is the constant that underpins the exhibition, starting from Spoldi's fictitious curator Patrizia Gillo.

The story, told vertically, is conceived as a “handmade” e-book and tempera-painted “database”. It conjures up an infinite number of references and connections that are the key to further research and analysis, and which, as the artist says himself, “provide access not only to my past, to Marcuse's ‘great refusal’, to Adorno's ‘negative dialectics’ and to *l'arte povera*, but also to the history of the world”.

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication of *Quaderno n. 20 della Fondazione Marconi*, which contains a text by Patrizia Gillo, together with colour illustrations of the works.

Finally, from 9 October to 17 November a number of Aldo Spoldi's works never previously shown will be presented at the Battaglia Gallery, via Ciovasso 5 (www.galleriaantonibattaglia.com), an ideal occasion for celebrating not only the fiftieth anniversary of a revolutionary era such as 1968 but also Spoldi's artistic career, which in those years was taking its first steps.

(Auto)biographical notes

Aldo Spoldi was born in 1950 in Crema, where he still lives and works. He attended the Beato Angelico Art High School and the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan. A playful, ironic, theatrical artist, Spoldi is a painter, sculptor, musician, writer, professor at the Brera Academy, member of the College of Pataphysics since 1983 and signatory of the *E Il Topo Manifesto* (2014).

His work as an artist parallels the transformation in art and society, both of which are reflected in the various phases of his work. In 1968, the year of youth protests and the spread of Marxism, he organised a group of high school classmates to perform burlesque shows in the streets of a number of cities, later recorded in the catalogue *Ben venga maggio*, published by the Diagram Gallery / Luciano Inga Pin in 1972.

In 1977, the year of the fall of Marxism and the birth of postmodernism, he formed the *Teatro di Oklahoma*, which exhibited at the Diagram Gallery / Luciano Inga Pin in Milan. It represented an opportunity to engage in an ironical critique of Body Art, presenting it as if it were a still life, dressed in clothes by Elio Fiorucci, and captured in Giorgio Colombo's large black and white photographic panels based on Spoldi's sketches.

Immediately afterwards, concurrent with the Transavanguardia art movement, Spoldi began to paint, his work characterised by theatrical images that opposed conceptual rigour. Achille Bonito Oliva commented: "We are faced with a theatre of the sign, in which the sheet of paper simultaneously becomes the proscenium and curtain, the prompter's mouth and a series of stage wings." Spoldi was invited to participate in Renato Barilli's "Nuovi Nuovi" art movement and Flavio Caroli's "Magico-Primario". In 1978 he exhibited at Luciano Inga Pin's gallery in Milan and at Enzo Cannaviello's galleries in Rome and Milan; in 1981 at Studio Marconi, London's Hayward Gallery, the Paris Biennial and Galerie Daniel Templon in Paris (where he returned in 1985). In 1982 he was at the Venice Biennale and in 1983 at Holly Solomon's in New York.

In 1985 and in the years of financial immateriality Spoldi transformed the humanistic "Theatre of Oklahoma" into the "Bank of Oklahoma", then into "Srl" and, finally, into "BdO Ltd", a limited company based in Lugano with himself as president and CEO. The company's aim was to transform its work and activities into a work of art.

In 1993 Spoldi presented the BdO at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and later that same year at the exhibition *Business Art-Art Business* curated by Frans Haks and Loredana Parmesani at the Groninger Museum.

He has composed two operas in the form of singing sculptures: *Enrico il Verde* (1987) was presented at the Rotonda della Besana in Milan, at Giuliano Gori's Celle Art Space (with music specially composed by the group *Elio e le storie tese*), and at the Franco Agostino Theatre Festival in Crema. The second opera, *Capitan Fracassa* (1989), was performed by invitation at the L. Pecci Museum in Prato.

In 1994 he created one of his most important works for Marconi: *Il museo degli umoristi*, a project for a new museum and an attempt to "overturn Duchamp". In 1996, during the years of the creation of a united Europe and the diffusion of the internet, he used BdO Spa to create a teaching project involving several virtual characters (artist Cristina Show, photographer Met Levi, philosopher Andrea Bortolon and critic Angelo Spettacoli), who were the key figures in exhibitions held in Milan, at Care Off (2000), at the Fondazione Ambrosetti (2003), and at the Paris Biennale (2006). He has published the books *Lezioni di educazione estetica; Cristina Show. Frammenti di vita;* and *Andrea Bortolon. Lezioni di filosofia morale*, which were later presented at the Fondazione Ambrosetti and at the Cittadella dell'arte at Biella. In 2007, the year of the great financial crisis and the search for concreteness, he planned and set up the *Accademia dello Scivolo*, which he presented at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, in 2011 at the Fondazione Marconi, and in 2012 at Giuliano Gori's Fattoria di Celle. He has also published virtual philosopher Andrea Bortolon's book *Un Dio non può farsi male*.

Throughout the years he has continued to paint, and in collaboration with Fondazione Marconi presented the exhibition *Operette morali* (2002), curated by Sandro Parmiggiani, *La tromba delle scale* (2006), and *Il mondo nuovo* (2011). He also designed the painted camper van commissioned by the *Accademia dello Scivolo*.

Spoldi's major group exhibitions include *Scultura italiana del XXI secolo* at the Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro (2005); *L'Orlando Furioso: incantamenti, passioni e follie: L'arte contemporanea legge l'Ariosto* at Palazzo Magnani in Reggio Emilia (2014); and *Alfabeta 1979-1988* at the Civic Gallery in Modena (2017).

Among his most recent solo shows was *Banca di Oklahoma di Aldo Spoldi 1988-1994* at the Civic Museum of Crema and Cremasco (2016).

Fondazione Marconi

Via Tadino 15 - 20124 Milan - Tel. + 39 02 29 41 92 32 - Fax + 39 02 29 41 72 78

info@fondazionemarconi.org - www.fondazionemarconi.org

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Opening hours: from Tuesday to Saturday 10-13, 15-19 (closed 1 November)

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Press office: Cristina Pariset - Tel. + 39 02 4812584 - Fax + 39 02 4812486 - mobile + 39 348 5109589 - cristina.pariset@libero.it

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