

Massimo Missiroli

NON HO MAI LETTO UN LIBRO



I've never read a book:
stories of a "pop-up designer"

You went blind at the age of 49 due to two detached retinas, one eye after the other; without seeing what I was doing, you always encouraged me to move forward because you saw that I was creating beautiful things, beneficial for children.

You, who wished I would study medicine and wanted me to become a doctor, so that you could be my nurse and work with me to take care of those who needed us.

Do you remember what you used to tell me when I played in my cardboard spaceship, saying that when I grew up, I wanted to be an astronaut?

“Nanì, it will be hard for you to become one, there are only a few astronauts because it's a very challenging job.”

Little did you know, Mom, that I ended up in a profession where there are only 30 of us in the world, far fewer than astronauts!

This book is for you.

Your Nanì.

(Nanì is a term Italian sweet mothers use to affectionately refer to their little baby boy)

Chapter 1: Not Even One
Chapter 2: And Then, That Award
Chapter 3: I WAS SUPPOSED TO WORK IN A BANK (and perhaps have a career)
Chapter 4: My Early Beginnings
Chapter 5: A Military Shirt
Chapter 6: Guitars, Cameras, Clenched Fists, Photography, and Other Careers
Ando Gilardi: "Do Not Photograph..."
Chapter 7: Time for Two Lives
Chapter 8: Finally, I Discover Pop-Ups
Chapter 9: Finally, I Decide to Make Pop-Ups
Chapter 10: Right, But How Do You Make a Pop-Up?
Chapter 11: The Book Has Three Dimensions
Chapter 12: Books, Courses, and Recurrences
Chapter 13: Of Course, Some Say No
Chapter 14: Back Then, Pop-Ups Were Printed in Colombia
Chapter 15: My First Autograph (with Dedication)
Chapter 16: Being Famous
Chapter 17: My Handshake Collection
Chapter 18: Italian Books
Chapter 19: Gifting a Book to the Bank's CEO Where I Work
Chapter 20: Before the Lumière
Chapter 21: Robert Becomes Sabuda
Chapter 22: The TV
Chapter 23: Me and... The Pooh
Chapter 24: A "Sui Generis" Banker?
Chapter 25: The Markets
Chapter 26: Me and... David A. Carter
Chapter 27: Me and... Disney
Chapter 28: Esslinger, There and Back
Chapter 29: Me and... Mauricio de Sousa
Chapter 30: For Me, She's Just Giovanna
Chapter 31: To America and Back
Chapter 32: Me and... Kenzo
Chapter 33: Massimo Missiroli, Pop-Up Publisher
Chapter 34: For Important People
Chapter 35: Cattelan Can't Be Here With Us
Chapter 36: Who Killed Grandma?



Receiving the "fake" plaque, but one that contains a "true" piece of information.

I had also prepared another:

*Special jury award
to Massimo Missiroli
in the section
"the one who enjoys the Fair the most"*

but I chose the one that certifies my 50 years at the Fair.

Chapter 1

Not Even One

In 2023, the Bologna Children's Book Fair celebrated its sixtieth anniversary: the first time I walked through its doors was in 1973, and I haven't missed one since. If you tally up all the days I've spent there, it's an entire year of my life. Considering that the fair has been around since 1963, there's a staggering and surprising fact: I'm probably the person who has attended the most fairs of all, even more than the staff.

But there's an even more staggering and surprising fact, and that is I've never read a book.
Not even one.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not boasting about it, but it's a fact. And perhaps that's what pushed me into this profession: to make books.

I hope this translation captures the essence of your writing. Let me know if you need any further translations or adjustments!

And since I've never read a book, whenever I share my stories, I find myself opening a new chapter each time, always turning the page with a special effect, with some colorful surprise unfolding.

I've never read a book, but I've made several: because I've lived many lives, and in the most exciting of all my lives, I made pop-up books.

I never read a book as a child: and my parents would tell me I should read. I never read a book even in elementary school, aside from homework: and my teacher would tell me the same, that I should read. And I never read a book in middle school, and then in high school, even though I graduated with top marks.

I never read a book, precisely because I was supposed to: and I've always believed there are so many things that can make you feel alive, and none of them have anything to do with obligation.

So, later on, yes, I did read many books because I wanted to learn many things, because I wanted to see the pictures, and maybe certain books were also handy

for impressing others. Sometimes I bought a book because I imagined myself sitting elegantly in an armchair, with the perfect lamp casting just the right light, then I would put on Mozart on a flawless, noiseless player, and I saw myself from the outside: reading looks so cool, I thought.

I hope this captures the sentiment and nuance of your original text. Let me know if you need any more translations or adjustments!

And it's important to have someone by your side who understands what pleasure means because they don't need explanations: I'm someone who falls in love. I fall in love with a cover, with a unique paper engineering solution, with something beautiful. And I don't need time, slowness, or a complete absence of background noise. I need the book to see me and make me feel something.

To me, pop-up books are just that: three-dimensional books. For quite some time at the Bologna Fair, I had my own booth, and it was named: "The Book Has Three Dimensions" (with the "a" prefixed by "h". "H" for "has", it's not a spelling mistake nor a typographical error).

Even though, to me, many books are flat books, they only gain a third dimension when I start interacting with them, when I learn, when I discover, when I immerse myself in them, and when I come out making a lot of sketches.

I have many flat books in my library.

I also have Mozart somewhere.

I'm getting set up for the armchair.

I hope this captures the essence of your narrative. Please let me know if you need any further translations or adjustments!

But I no longer believe that one day I'll read as my teacher would have wished. It will never happen.

In 2001, I was awarded the Andersen prize in Sestri Levante, in a packed theater. I was overjoyed, but entirely unprepared. So when they honored me, I exclaimed: "I thank the entire jury of this literary award for recognizing someone who has never read a book..."

This made several people laugh.

Everyone thought I was referencing Pennac and his reader's rights decalogue.

The first right is the "right not to read."

I was just telling the truth.

The truth has this effect on me: it's always the most beautiful story.

In 2008, I was at the Mantova Literature Festival, and there, a journalist from Radio Svizzera Italiana interviewed me.

I spoke about not reading.

But, in the name of truth, I added:

"I don't want other children to experience what happened to me.

That's also why I create pop-up books for preschoolers. They play with my books. For them, reading, or listening to those few lines, is tied to a game.

I've endeavored to capture the nuances of your narrative. Please let me know if you need any more translations or further adjustments!

But then they don't place that object, which they don't yet know is called a book, in the toy box, but on a shelf. Over time, that shelf will have other similar objects with more and more words and fewer and fewer games inside.

But for the children, who will have grown as the words in the book grew, they will always be games, and the joy of reading will remain within them.

It's my way of guiding children to reading, and I can do it."

The interviewer was so moved that her voice trembled when asking the next question: we had to redo the interview. She later told me that mine was one of her most memorable interviews.

There you have it.

That's the crux of it.

I've never read a book.

I love books. And the illustrations inside them. And mind you, it's not absurd.

Without people like me, "Silent Books" wouldn't exist.

Then there's another thing, a sort of plot twist.

All these years, while in one life I was creating pop-up books, in another I was a bank cashier.

And this too can be something wonderful: but I'll tell you about it in the next chapter.

Pop-ups are like this: you open a page and there's a wonder inside, and when you're done losing yourself, you turn the page and a new marvel appears.

In traditional books, I've been told, this is done with chapters.



I was born on May 3rd, 1957.

At 4 in the morning.

I don't believe in the zodiac, but I was born under the sign of Taurus with a strong Pisces ascendant, or so I was told.

Those who have read my astrological chart claim that the ascendant influenced my creative nature, and the sign of Taurus represents my banking mornings.

I was born at home with the assistance of a midwife.

Here, my mother introduced me to the Missiroli family.

It was my first public appearance.

Chapter 2

About that award

That award, the Andersen Award, had a rather peculiar justification. I received a fax from Gualtiero Schiaffino, the *deus ex machina* of Andersen, with a few words written in large with a marker: "We awarded you as if you were a book."

I had won the award for the "best artfully made book."

In a way, in this profession, not the banking one, the other one, that of the pop-up book author, of the pop-up designer, we are a bit artists and a bit "works of art": each of us has his own signature, his own solutions, his own passions, the directions in which he pushes his research. Our work sometimes starts from a problem that requires a practical solution, other times from an image, from a thought in three dimensions.

It's hard to say how many pop-up book authors there are in the world. Those who do it consistently, the book-men and book-women, currently number around thirty.

I've been asked many times: why are there so few of you in the whole world? The American authors have a ready, very direct answer.

They say, "We are few because we are special people."

Now, since I am one of these thirty, I should keep the secret and nod.

Of course, I'm a special person. Who isn't?

But the truth is less fanciful.

There are 30 of us because every year, fewer than 90 pop-ups are printed worldwide.

If you don't publish at least 3 books every year, you can't earn enough income to live "normally."

Imagine for a moment you too had studied accounting: $90 \text{ divided by } 3 = 30$.

If we were 350, how many pop-up designers would be out of work?

I, for one, had, or rather have, two jobs: in the morning a bank cashier, and in the afternoon a pop-up author. I liked both jobs.

I enjoyed the mornings at the bank because if you manage to create empathy with the customer, you discover that the cashier is the only area in the bank where the customer comes in and needs a service.

And you, with all your humanity, have to be able to solve each of their problems the best you can.

I've always been self-taught and I love challenges.

When I face a challenge, I learn: whether it's a musical instrument, a person, a book. Something that needs me.

Thus, I loved being at the counter because I could talk (I like to talk), find solutions (I love solutions), and get to know people (and I like people).

Then one might think that in a bank, there are only those who love money! Money is just a tool to solve some problems, nothing more.

That's not what my father thought: so we have to go back and start from the beginning, which is my beginning and the beginning of many, because many of us have faced the same challenges and tried many similar solutions. Because history is also this: a series of challenges and more or less similar solutions for everyone (not exactly for everyone, but just to give an idea: there's always someone who has fewer challenges, or at least different ones).

My father had a universal solution to all problems: I had to work in a bank.



My mother always told me that I was a little boy with blonde hair, but it turned brown suddenly.

She always recounted how she kept me with her, always close, throughout the first six years of my life.

Our house was about three meters away from the elementary school.

Despite this, my mother would escort me to the school entrance every morning, watching me until I entered the building.

And at 12:30, she would come to fetch me. Only when I grew up did I understand the reason for such affection.

I was blonde, I kept saying, but I found it hard to believe her, thinking it was just a faded photo.

When my mother passed away, while going through her jewelry box, I found a little bag with a blonde curl. She had kept it for 60 years among her golden possessions.

The blonde curl of her "nani," as she used to call me then, and right up until she passed away six years ago.

Chapter 3

I HAD TO WORK IN A BANK (and perhaps even climb the ladder)

Yes, that's what my father would say. He'd repeat it, sometimes several times a day.

I don't know about where you come from, but in Forlì, when someone abruptly says, "you should work in a bank", it's as if they're answering a question, as if continuing a conversation. Romagnolo is a strange language, made of answers to unexpressed questions, as if Romagnolo speakers spent their days perched on a rock uttering proverbs and clichés.

What was my father responding to?

My interests, anything I liked.

If I had a passion, my own passion, the response was always the same, monotonous. I had to work in a bank.

On the other hand, my father never tolerated that my interests were what they were: I didn't follow any sports, didn't frequent bars, didn't dress well, didn't have a decent car but a Renault 4.

It wasn't as if I came about by accident. He had hoped for me, as people back then wished for a male child to continue the family legacy.

I came seven years after my sister, and life hadn't exactly helped him shape me the way he wanted.

I had to work in a bank and perhaps even make a career out of it.

This would allow me, and my future family, a peaceful life and a serene old age. But to him, my passions were insubstantial, literary, abstract.

He didn't have the words to express it, so he'd use a term in dialect.

I was just there doing *snament*, which means to frolic, to lose myself in games like children, always joking around.

After all, I worked for children, with children.

A *fér snament*.

To my father, who became an orphan at two years old (my grandfather had been killed by the Blackshirts two weeks after the March on Rome), no one had taught him how to be a father.

He believed he needed to toughen me up to face life, and he did it with the only tool he had: anger. So he'd get mad at me over everything, convinced that I'd grow stronger from one argument to another.

He certainly had a lot of anger, and he used all of it.

He always belittled everything I did. Even when I showed him the first royalty check I received as an advance from the United States, he said I was just playing games and that "I had to work in a bank".

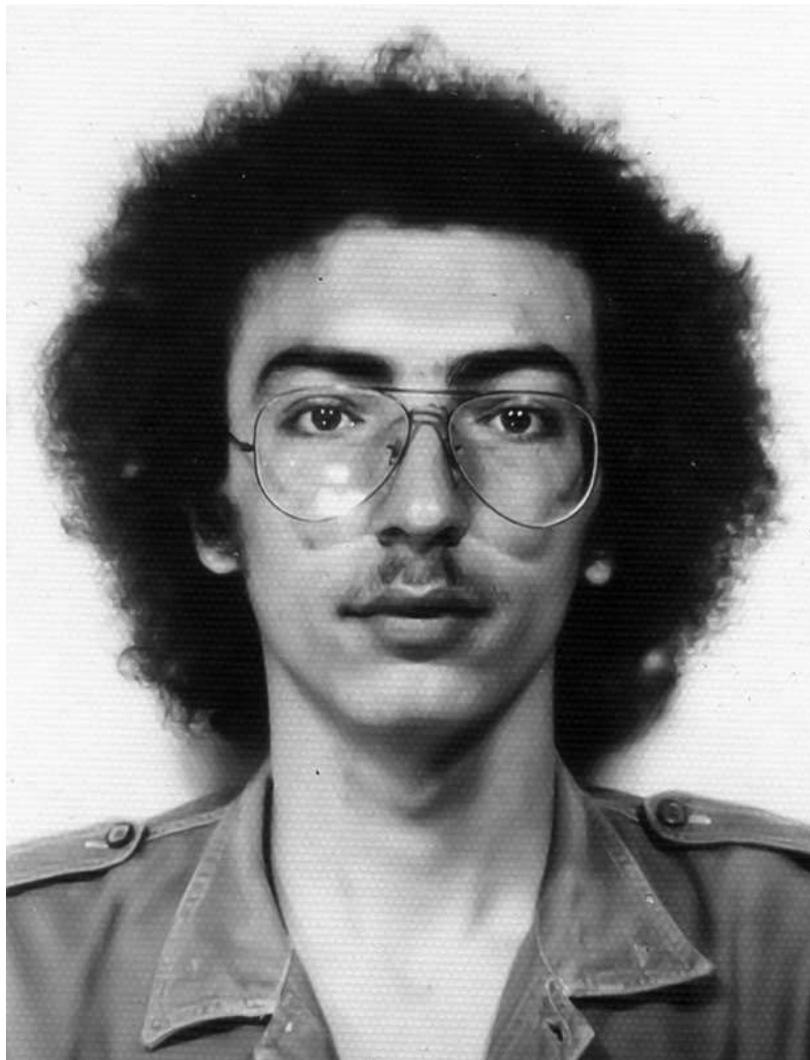
How many times, angered, did I stop eating and storm out of the house to cool off.

My mother, on the other hand, always supported me. Blinded in both eyes at just 49 due to two retinal detachments, at a time when lasers in ophthalmology were still sci-fi, she'd always reassure me by saying, "I can't see the things you create, but I know they're beautiful because you make them with your heart."

My world consisted of mornings and afternoons, of multiple lives.

And since I couldn't fully live out my passions, I let each one carry me away.

I was fortunate enough to experience a thousand beginnings.



Here I am at 16, the first time I stepped foot into the Bologna Children's Book Fair.

My older graphic designer friends, all adults, made me pass as an eighteen-year-old. It's plausible. Looking at this photo, one might even believe it.

I continued to have this hair until I was drafted into the CAR in Barletta: there, I challenged the battalion barber, who shaved my head, signaling a change in tune.

Chapter 4

My First Beginnings

I was in my first year of accounting when I started attending Claudio's advertising graphic studio. They made logos, advertisements, but above all, they printed in silkscreen.

It wasn't the first studio I'd been to, but it was certainly the longest-lasting experience.

I spent my afternoons there. I'd chat, learn, and I even had my own task: I selected images in films for quadrichrome printing.

I'd place a transparent acetate sheet over the design, attach adhesive screens, cut them with a rotating knife, and stick on Letraset or Mekanorma fonts. There, I learned photomechanics, photographic processing, and many other things.

Beyond what I learned with my hands, there were things I learned with my eyes. Claudio always said that you had to be one step ahead of others: he invested heavily in graphic design magazines and advertising agency yearbooks, mostly American.

That's how I came to know the works of Milton Glaser and many American designers who were at the forefront at the time.

We'd talk to the client, try to understand what they wanted, then I'd start flipping through magazines until I found three or four images that could inspire us. Then photomechanics, solarization, and by redrawing everything, we'd prepare the job.

Things were done with hands, but even more so with the eyes.

Claudio taught me that you can do everything at the last minute.

If the next morning we had to deliver t-shirts printed in silkscreen, Claudio would set a meeting for midnight, and only then would we start the work.

So the question remains: was it wasted time? Was it inefficient?

Time is primarily for thinking, for imagining something new: then, when there's no more time, you move to realization.

And then all that previous time gives you a significant push forward.

Time isn't money: it's freedom. If you monetize it, you lose all the freedom you could have had.

I was hungry for freedom and to meet free individuals.

I was perhaps 16 when I met the first significant person, the painter Remo Brindisi. We were the art print shop he used for his silkscreens.

We prepared the silk frames with a selection of colors, then he oversaw the printing, viewed the first author's proofs, and finally, we printed the number of copies he requested. In the end, we broke the frames to ensure that the multiple couldn't be reproduced again. Besides the printing, I was in charge of cutting the frames with a cutter.

Before going into the studio, at the age of 13, I drew on transparent paper and printed posters using heliography. It was a way to earn some extra cash. I had heard about this technique from my engineer cousins who used it to draft house plans.

By the time I was under eighteen, I felt capable of running and managing an advertising graphic studio. So I asked my father for money to buy some equipment that I would need: I certainly couldn't ask for a loan from the bank because I couldn't provide any guarantee.

And my father's response was that I should work in a bank.

Indeed.



One of my first drawings, done at the age of 15.

The influence of pop-art artists and cutting-edge graphic designers of that era is evident. I created these posters, which I then printed in multiple copies using heliography to earn some pocket money.

Chapter 5

A Military Shirt

It was the time of my final exams. I studied very little, yet I was the best in my commission and received one of the highest scores in the entire Commercial Institute.

At that time, banks were rapidly expanding and needed accountants.

You didn't even need to apply.

If you had a good score, the banks would contact you directly.

That's how I received several invitations from various HR departments.

Back then, I wore jeans and a used military shirt I had bought from the Montagnola market in Bologna.

I showed up at the bank dressed like that, with long, tousled Jimi Hendrix-like hair.

Since they had written to me, I felt it right to respond: and since they hadn't seen me, I wanted to present myself with all the things that represented me the most.

I sat down, thanked them, and explained that I wanted to be an advertising designer when I grew up, not a banker.

Then I stood up and said goodbye.

Kids do silly things.

I could've just stayed home and said nothing.

Then I enrolled at the ISIA in Urbino, but I didn't pass the admission test: however, that was the only course I wanted to attend. So, I returned home with no prospects.

Meanwhile, I also received another postcard, the military one.

Without even reading the destination, I tore it into a thousand pieces and threw it all in the trash. Me in the military? NEVER!

My father pieced the postcard back together and bought me a train ticket to Barletta (one-way).

So I left for my military service, completed it without learning much, and upon my return, I wandered around agencies and studios for several weeks. I was looking for a job, had a lot of experience, but no formal qualification, so no one offered me anything.

I reconsidered the bank's invitation.

I cut my hair, shaved: after all, that's what the military is for.

I dressed better and reintroduced myself.

Of course, I was coming back. It's not that I wasn't interested in the bank.

In fact, I was extremely interested.

Damn.

It's just that, out of commitment, I had to first complete my military service.

To show commitment.

So that they'd understand. So that they'd accept.

And they did.

The hiring selection process began.

I had an interview, then another, and yet another, sometimes in Bologna, sometimes in Milan: there were five meetings in total.

Meanwhile, I found myself a job: a sales representative for a dairy company.

One evening, at the end of July, I received a phone call.

It was the bank, a man cheerfully informing me that I was hired and that I could start on the first of August.

I replied that I couldn't, I had to complete the week's deliveries for my clients.

On the other end of the phone, the man became stern and told me curtly, "You don't realize that you will be working for a bank; there's a long line behind you."

Oh.

I had deadlines, and the dairy products had expiration dates.

In the end, I prevailed.

I was hired on the 7th of August, after completing my delivery round of cheeses and other items.

For the bank, it was an unusual hiring.

Hires always started on the first of the month.

Mine, uniquely, started on the 7th.

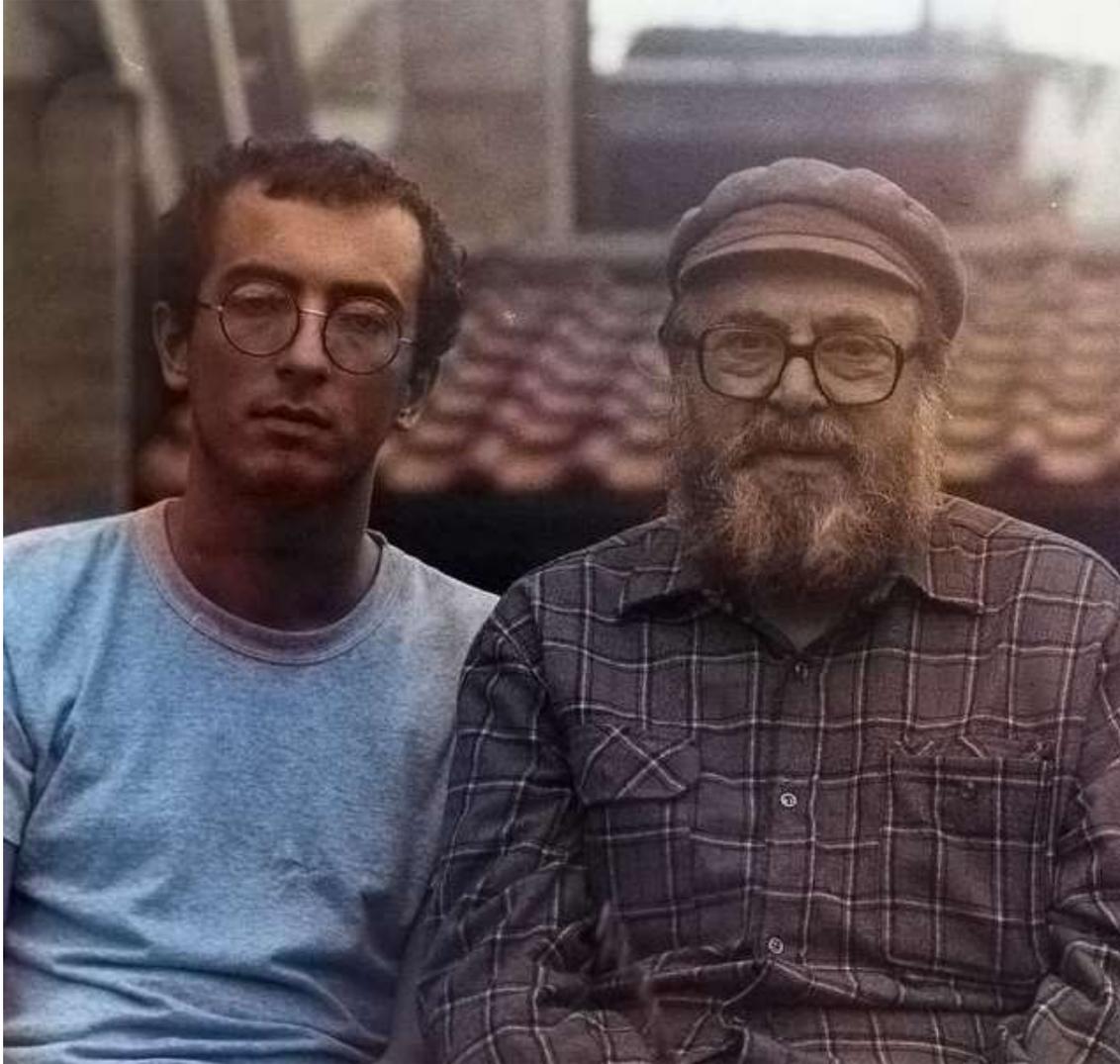
I spent my three-month probation period dressed nicely with short hair.

I was interested in the job, as I had said.

Then one day, they gave me the confirmation letter: the probation period was over.

I left the bank, went to register with the CGIL trade union, and the next day, I returned in jeans. That was my attire every day as a banker.

At first, things went well: I left the bank at 5 and there was always someone to spend some time with before dinner, and then, after dinner, there was the cinema, theater, or tavern.



Ando Gilardi and I. A natural genius.

Ando was the person who influenced my photographer's training the most.

With his way of interpreting images, he somewhat revolutionized how I see.

I think just as I was fond of him, Ando was fond of me. He gave me many tokens of appreciation.

Being able to spend time with him (and the "Gilardi gang" as I referred to it) was already a precious gift.

Here, at his house in Caldasio, near Acqui Terme, where I spent several days during summer vacations for several years.

Chapter 6

Guitars, cameras, raised fists, cameras, and other pursuits

Let me take a step back, so you don't think that while I was in school I wasn't doing anything else.

For instance, on the afternoon of Christmas Eve 1975, I was 18 years old. True to the principle of doing everything last-minute, I was setting up the Christmas tree.

And in adherence to the second principle of never doing just one thing at a time, I was listening to the radio, which was alternating between Christmas music and studio commentary.

It was a free radio station: Radio Alternativa.

It broadcasted from a church hall where a priest had bought an FM transmitter for the parish kids.

Anything but a social center's radio, in short. My mother listened to it because they broadcasted the Mass in the evening, even before Radio Maria became popular.

On the radio, the host asked listeners to share their thoughts on the meaning of Christmas, and I called in.

It was a rather long conversation that ended with an invitation to visit them at the broadcast studio.

So I did.

At the end of the meeting, they asked if I was interested in hosting an afternoon show.

I accepted and, from the following week, from 5 pm to 6 pm, I had my very own show about Italian singer-songwriters.

I did everything myself. I brought my tapes and vinyl records. They taught me how to mix, and for one hour I was alone and could say whatever I wanted. I was convinced that nobody was listening: in Forlì at that time, there were more than thirty independent radio stations.

That's how I expanded the program by inviting students from the student collective, union leaders, members of the Italy-Vietnam committee, and the Russell Tribunal.

A church hall filled with revolutionaries.

Nobody supervised me.

Then I discovered that independent radio hosts could get accredited for concerts and even interview artists in the press room.

With accreditation, I saw Branduardi's concert, Ivan Graziani's, and Edoardo Bennato's, whom I interviewed. What an experience!

During that period, I also played the folk guitar and the 12-string guitar, accompanied myself with a kazoo and harmonica, and had made a tambourine that I played using a pedal.

Yes, I had also learned to play. I took classical, blues, and folk guitar courses. I had a great "educational" motivation: in collectives, the comrade who plays and sings in the tavern is always viewed with interest by the militant female comrades. So, I learned, I enjoyed it a lot, and singing in the tavern was truly fun.

However, playing never came naturally to me.

I can easily admit that. Thankfully, I accompanied others and wasn't a solo guitarist.

Among the other listeners of my radio broadcasts was the owner of a Free Radio that aired from May to October in the Ferrara beaches. She was a friend of Claudio, the owner of the advertising agency where I was an apprentice. To her, I had a pleasant voice, and I was also very confident. With a bit more experience, I would become a skilled DJ.

She believed I could continue my journey in that field and transition from amateur to professional, so she offered me a contract with her Free Radio. But the game was no longer appealing to me, so I declined.

I'm not sure what I was seeking, precisely.

I always had a strong instinct to discern if something would entertain me. I dived into all ventures headfirst, always pushing forward with the zeal of a self-taught enthusiast.

And if I was lucky enough to meet someone with the genuine joy of creativity, I followed them.

It's possible to lead life this way if you're fortunate.

In 1978, as I mentioned, I was hired by the bank. With my first paycheck, that same August, I bought a camera: the Canon AT1.

I had desired it for years, but as a student and soldier, I never had the funds to purchase it. Thus, I became the typical weekend photographer. The camera was always with me (and naturally the bag with zoom, wide-angle, telephoto lens, filters, and tripod). I also entered photo competitions and won several. Over three years, I took almost 4,000 photos. Later on, I volunteered at a community center and suggested inviting Ando Gilardi to conduct a course on arbitrary photography. Ando is remembered as the most influential philosopher in the

history of Italian photography. On the second day of the course, I discarded the Canon AT1 and began taking photos with shoeboxes and pinhole apertures.

Ando appointed me as the head of the Forlì branch of his research group Foto/gram, and for about 5 years I followed him (during my vacations) all over Italy. It was a unique experience. Since then, I've stopped photographing. To clarify: I stopped taking photos with a camera, except on very rare occasions. Photography wasn't about capturing a moment or collecting instances.

It was a way to see something, to train one's eye.

I took my pictures by inventing my own devices to look through, and I could even build them myself using boxes and canisters.

I also joined the international pinhole study and research society based in Paris. In my research, I developed the photographic box and made several, even with 12 pinholes, allowing for multiple photos.

This research of mine was published, and it amazed the members of the association.

Absolutely innovative.

I then invented a camera with a liquid developer that allowed you to see your portrait forming in real-time.

For Ando, it was the most intelligent research done in photography since the invention of Daguerre's photography in 1832, and he mentioned this in his lectures.

But as we know, Ando was generous (and a bit "mad").

In those years, I came up with the most curious ideas.

I even proposed a photography course for housewives in which I developed photos in the darkroom using a wooden board and iron.

However, time was always against me: I saw my friends less and studied more. I was searching for something, still.

I frequented taverns less, spent less time with my girlfriend, and my outings gradually became sparse.

During that time, I would leave the bank and rush home to study.

Sometimes I wouldn't eat and would remain locked in my study room until the wee hours of the night.

Living many lives wasn't enough for me anymore; I also wanted to live my ideas and see them realized.

Similarly, I continued to vote, always leaning left, but I was a less "committed" left-wing extremist: I grew tired of the meetings.

To me, communism is just an unattainable dream.
A dream so beautiful that it makes you think that if humans willed it, they could build a better world.

And I've always been very fond of this idea of building.

Ando Gilardi: "Do not photograph ..."

To all those who believe in the phrase, "A picture is worth a thousand words," I dedicate the manifesto by Ando Gilardi, endorsed by the entire FOTO/GRAM group to which I belonged.

Do not photograph the ragged, the jobless, the hungry.

Do not photograph prostitutes, beggars on church steps, retirees on solitary benches waiting for death like a train in the night.

... Do not photograph the humiliated Black people, the young victims of drugs, the alcoholics who sleep their horrific dreams. Society has already taken everything from them; don't also take their photograph.

Do not photograph those handcuffed, those put against the wall, those with raised hands, because they cannot push you away.

Do not photograph the one who commits suicide, the murderer, and his victim.

Do not photograph the accused behind bars, those entering or leaving prison, the condemned walking to the gallows.

Do not photograph the jailer, the judge, or anyone wearing a robe or a uniform. They have already endured violence; do not add yours. They must use violence; you can refrain from it.

Do not photograph the mentally ill, the paralyzed, the hunchbacked, and the crippled.

Leave those who struggle with crutches in peace and those who stubbornly give military salutes with their heroic stump.

Do not portray a man just because his head is too big, or too small, or deformed in some way.

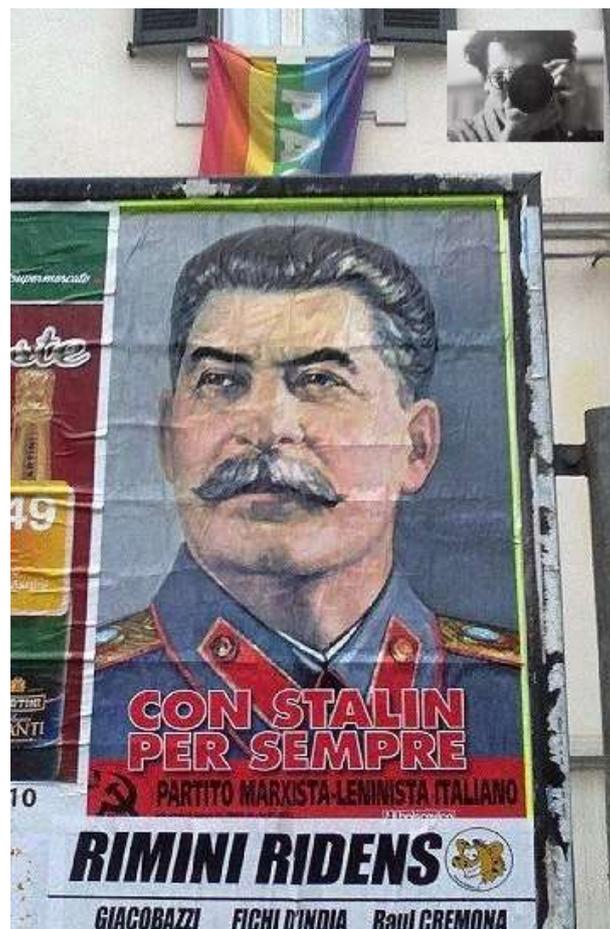
Do not chase with flashes the girl disfigured by an accident, the old woman masked by wrinkles, the actress ravaged by time. For them, mirrors are a nightmare; do not add your photographs.

Do not photograph the murderer's mother, or even the victim's. Do not photograph the children of the one who killed a lover, nor the orphans of that lover. Do not photograph those who suffered harm: the raped girl, the beaten child.

The worst photographic infamies are committed in the name of the right to information. If it truly is human solidarity that drives you to visit the old folks' home, the mental hospital, or the prison, prove it by leaving your camera at home.

Do not photograph those who photograph; perhaps they are simply satisfying a natural need.

How would we judge a painter in bohemian attire, seated with brushes, palette, and easel, creating a beautiful painting in front of the cage of one sentenced to life, the hanging corpse swaying, the prostitute shivering in the cold, a torn body emerging from the ruins? Why do you assume that a free-lance outfit, a bag of accessories, three cameras hanging around your neck, and a fired flash can justify you?



The last photo taken before I stowed away my camera and started taking photos with cardboard boxes, stencils, and pinholes.

I've always liked it because it's an unintentional composition that I happened to capture in an instant.

PEACE FLAG

MARX-LENIN ITALIAN PARTY (poster)

RIMINI RIDENS (comic actor poster)

a very good mix

Chapter 7

Time for Two Lives

It also seemed that, as my father would have wanted, I could have had a promising career.

Even though I was a rather unconventional banker, always wearing jeans (the uniform of my life), and despite donning colorful espadrilles, I became a head of office in just a few years (not automatically, as my career path did not foresee this, but through my own merits).

When I stood in for the real head of the main office, I coordinated about 15 people, most of them older than me and all dressed in suits or jackets.

It was amusing how many customers, when they came to the bank asking to speak with the counter manager, would often overlook me.

One time, a client exclaimed to the cashier, who had asked me to step in, that he did not want to speak with a mere clerk.

So, a promising career it was.

One day, the personnel manager invited me into his office, and along with the branch manager, said, "If you want to advance your career in banking, now is the perfect time. We are promoting you and transferring you" (I don't remember where, but it was quite far away).

But no, that wasn't for me!

And candidly, I responded, "No, I cannot take the promotion. I have just met Ando Gilardi, and he has invited me to be a part of the FOTO/GRAM group. Can you imagine the satisfaction?".

The manager pointed me to the door, and both he and the personnel director bid me goodbye.

I never told my father about this brief conversation.

When you reflect on such episodes, when you recount them, one might say, "that could have changed your life". It did change my life, in a way: because I realized how much I loved that city, Forlì.

Firstly, out of laziness, because I don't like moving around much.

Then, for me, Forlì, in those years, was also a place of great possibilities: in the province, perhaps far from where things were happening. But in the perfect spot to make them happen for everyone and with everyone.

In Forlì, thanks to councilor Flavio Montanari in the late '70s, Youth Centers were born, inspired by the experiences of larger cities like Turin, which was a pioneer.

These were gathering places for young people.

I volunteered at the "Lo Specchio" Youth Center, which focused on visual arts. Inside, there was an engraving workshop, dark rooms, studios for animated cartoons, and a video workshop.

I also frequented the music center, the theater center, and the arts center.

One winter evening, a tall, thin young man in a smoky gray coat walked in. His name was Maurizio. He was from Padova but had moved to Forlì because his girlfriend was from the area.

I welcomed him that evening because the municipal coordinator wasn't around. I showed him around the Center.

He liked experimenting and was intrigued by the idea that one center could offer so much.

He asked to return, and we set a date.

For the next five years, we saw each other regularly. Not only at the center but also in everyday life.

It was Maurizio (and still is for me), and in the subsequent years, he would become Maurizio Cattelan.

Maurizio often visited me at the bank. Whenever I could, I'd step away from the counter, and we'd chat. Other times, when there was a line, he'd queue up, and when it was his turn, he'd hand over a deposit slip with small pieces of paper or puzzle pieces that I had to assemble to read his message.

I must admit it.

To me, he was a genius. Simple, modest, and utterly charming.

He was the only artist I truly followed.

In my eyes, he always produced magnificent works.

Whenever there was a small article about him, I'd clip it out, creating a little collection of his mentions in the newspapers.

Forgive my choice of words; I was "envious" of his creative and artistic flair because to me, he was a true natural genius.

One year, he served as the artistic director of the video section for an emerging artists' event called Ambientarte. Among others, he showcased an experimental video I had created with a betacam video camera (at that time, I was also dabbling in film-making) set to the ambient music of Brian Eno, shot in the ancient park of a noble family's estate, pretending to be a bee flying amongst the flowers.

It was 1990, just before Christmas, when we decided to collaborate on a project.

He would build an automaton with a television in place of its head, and I, using pixillation, would broadcast moving images from the films Golem and Frankenstein, animating the automaton's movements.

Then he decided to change cities because he felt that the chapter of his life in Forlì had come to an end.

When he came to tell me, he gifted me the automaton he had just completed. We hugged, and I must admit, a few tears trickled down my face.

That very day, I rented a safety deposit box and placed his automaton inside. Back then, Maurizio's works didn't carry a significant monetary value, but to me, the memory of that moment was worth keeping in a safety deposit box, holding the memory close to me, at the bank.

I had to bid farewell to a friend I probably wouldn't see again.

Because I understood he wouldn't return to Forlì.

For the last time, he told me I should find the strength to resign from the bank and become an artist.

Resigning wasn't an option because that job, my early morning work commitment, gave me a sense of freedom.

However, I did make a change a few years later: at 40, I shifted my full-time job to part-time. This allowed me to split my time and live two lives. Mornings as a cashier, and afternoons, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays delving into the world of publishing.

I kept on studying, experimenting, playing, but always alone and confined to my room.

"Massimo, come to the tavern?" No, I want to try making a pinhole camera box.

"Massimo, it's a sunny day?" No, I'd rather make an animation.

There was only one person I continued to regularly see: a volunteer I had met at the Youth Center who appreciated my work, supported me, and encouraged me: my greatest friend of all time.

I won't say more: I'd love to, but she's very private.



*London, Wax Museum. And who would miss the chance to get a picture next to Lenin?
Mind you, back in Lenin's time, the closed fist was held like that.*

Chapter 8

My introduction to Pop-Ups

I remember my first encounter with pop-up books vividly.

I had just started working at the bank; it was September 1978.

After finishing my work, I would always take some time for myself and walk.

I would stroll through the city, just because.

Sometimes I would step into a record store (I would buy records even though I didn't have a stereo because it was too expensive) and other times I'd wander into a bookstore where I was fascinated by all the colorful covers, even before seeing the images they might contain.

The ones with just words, I'd bypass.

I needed a feast for my eyes.

Maybe Warhol did the same when he wandered supermarkets, seeing the Campbell's soup and already envisioning it as a piece of art. But I wasn't on that level.

I walked, I searched, but I didn't know exactly what I was looking for.

Then one afternoon, I had an epiphany!

There was an open book with raised figures.

Was it possible? I had never seen such a thing.

It was a reproduction of a book by Ernest Nister, a 19th-century pop-up book author.

The pages were alternating. There were poems by Roberto Piumini and then a double-page spread with three-dimensional images.

How beautiful that book was. How truly magnificent a book like this could be. So, I bought it.

I didn't read Piumini's poems (who I met later, but with words, I have this quirk where I can't read them in sequence, I need to deconstruct and play with them). However, I remember the images vividly, and if I close my eyes, I can leaf through the book in my mind.

I return home, look at it over and over.

It's truly beautiful.

The following afternoon, I go back to the bookstore and ask if they have more of the same kind. They do. I walk out with 12 pop-up books!

That's how my collection began.

And that's how my passion for pop-up books began.

Above all else, I have always been, and always will be, a collector.

I love to open them, close them, peek inside, store them, and even smell them. I observe how they're made, and I like having multiple copies of the same one – just in case.

Each one is unique, and I cherish every single one.

When I set up the exhibition in Shanghai, I was interviewed by a newspaper. The next day, the headline read, "42 Years of Salary for 5,000 Books."

Indeed, because all that remained of my paycheck would manifest into books. It has been a delightful journey.

It still is, to an extent. Now that I'm older, I'm faced with the dilemma of where and to whom I should bequeath my collection.

Five thousand books is a lot, and currently, it's one of the most significant and important collections in the world – no exaggeration.

I'd love to gift it to a library or a museum, but it's so hard to find people who cherish these books the way I do. So, if I must have an heir, I want them to at least be like me.

Otherwise, I might just commission a grand pyramid to house all my collections.



I've always been fascinated by the story of Pinocchio.

I haven't even read that book, but having watched Walt Disney's cartoon, I roughly know it.

Some friends believe I like it because I tell a lot of lies. Who knows.

Chapter 9

Finally, I decide to make Pop-Ups

Mirca Modoni Georgiou, a writer and contributor to the magazine "Andersen," who worked as a senior official for the Department of Culture of the Municipality of Ravenna, one day took notice of me.

She came with a colleague to view my first pre-cinema exhibition in the attic of a historic building in Piazza a Forlì. It was 1985.

I had been experimenting for a while: for me, talking about pre-cinema meant understanding how moving images were born, to show not just relics but an experimentation that was still alive, vibrant, and for heaven's sake.

Walter Fochesato from the magazine "Andersen" had recommended the visit to her.

Despite the crudeness of the exhibition (I had made everything with cardboard and photocopies), she told me later that she had sensed something new in what I was offering.

So, a few days later, she returned with the Municipal Councillor of Ravenna and proposed that I organize a training activity for kindergarten teachers in Ravenna.

I was only 28 years old and had never taught teachers before.

Over the next 5 years, I became a consultant for the Department.

I learned a new job in the field: training adults.

We began with photography using cardboard boxes, hand-drawn slides, flip-book cartoons, and video books.

Some things were undoubtedly experimental. We met every 14 days, and they implemented all the things I taught with the children of the Ravenna kindergartens.

Then one year, I had a brand-new idea: electronic cross-references in work with children aged 3 to 5.

With a Commodore 64, you could create animations overlaid on educational documentation videos.

Was it challenging?

It was too challenging.

Some teachers asked to suspend the course because it was too complicated for them to do these things in class with such young children.

However, an idea came to one of them. I had so many pop-ups. Why not make a Christmas pop-up card with the kids?

I took my time and said I'd think about it.

I was honest and added, "I don't even know how to make a fold."

I returned home and that same day began to open some pop-ups with a different perspective. Not that of a collector, but that of a pop-up designer. One who looks at the book not as an object that amazes you, but tries to understand how those cardboard folds become wonder.

I prepared the card, proposed it very awkwardly in the course, the teachers made it, then repeated it with their kids, and everyone, starting with me, had fun.

It wasn't much, but I enjoyed it, the teachers did too, and the children even more so.

It was at that point that Dr. Modoni proposed that I abandon the technology and hold a pop-up course. She gave me a month to prepare the lessons and draft the program.

It was my first pop-up course. Perhaps even the first in Italy, structured in that way.

Back then, there wasn't YouTube for video tutorials and Amazon would start selling books 7 years later. Kubasta was still alive.

The course went really well.

And after that, the following year another one with many new ideas, and then another.

Dr. Modoni, in the meantime, wrote articles for various magazines she collaborated with about all my educational insights, and jokingly, one day she offered to become my official biographer. And she truly became one: I kept sending her information on all the "things" I did later, even outside Ravenna. She collected the material, gave an educational twist to all my proposals, and published articles.

Her perspective was important and very formative for me; I remember our conversations and her observations with joy and melancholy. Sadly, a few years later, a cardiac arrest took her from us when she was just in her fifties.



The transformation into Santa Claus.

For several years, starting around the age of 20, I'd turn into Santa Claus by mid-December. On Christmas night, I'd deliver gifts to friends' children.

Here I am in Ravenna. Mirca Modoni, a city official, had an idea. She asked me to organize a series of evening meetings titled: "An Evening in Santa's Workshop."

I taught parents how to make pop-up cards, cardboard objects, and more.

It was sweltering beneath those clothes. I'd enter dressed as Santa Claus and leave without removing the beard and hair. No one ever knew who was beneath that disguise.

What if it was the real Santa Claus?

Chapter 10

So, how do you make a Pop-Up?

I had a request, after all.

A month, maybe two, to put together a course on pop-ups.

I knew that world, but I had no idea how one could learn it.

Absolutely none.

I was only familiar with self-taught pop-up designers, who worked at Intervisual in Los Angeles, and a few English authors.

And what could I, a cashier from Forlì, do?

I threw myself into the task with enthusiasm. It was a new challenge.

After two months, I had my path to learn how to create pop-ups.

Probably the first course in Italy, because from that point on, they started calling me from everywhere. It seemed I was the only one who knew how to do it.

The demand for courses grew until, for the first time in my cashier life, I took a leave of absence, and for 4 months I changed jobs. I decided I would quit to become an author.

But someone wisely advised me to opt for part-time instead. I've said it before, but it's worth repeating: one doesn't live on courses alone. And then, at the ripe age of 39, my life in the publishing world would finally have more time.

I had time.

I realized then that the time I had was not for working, but for the luxury of learning. To learn how to make pop-ups, I decided to take this route: I wouldn't practice on contemporary authors, but on the classics of the nineteenth century. So, the first book I created was quite unique!

It was the *Inferno*, from the *Divine Comedy*, illustrated by Gustave Dorè.

Thirty years later, it would be my "first" book again, meaning the first pop-up printed with my publishing house. But at that moment, I couldn't even imagine it.



And here I am at the bank while I'm making a transaction at the counter. Once, the floor manager even had me sit inside the teller's booth because one of our clients wanted to be served by a cashier dressed as Santa Claus.

Chapter 11

A book HAS three dimensions

Dante/Dorè became my training ground. Three months later, when I felt proud enough of it, I took it to Bologna for the Children's Book Fair. I wanted to show it off, to get feedback.

It went rather well: Abrams, the very famous American publishing house, asked me for the rights to print it. True, it was returned to me only three months later and ended up in a drawer. But in the meantime, I had found my path: my hands had learned, but even more so, my eyes had.

From that point, or perhaps a little before, when I look at an image, I see it in three dimensions.

I perceive its depth, not due to some optical effect; it genuinely appears to me as a pop-up, with spaced layers. And that's not all. I also know how to create it and which folds to make to bring it to life.

Even today, if you show me any image and then give me cardboard, scissors, and glue, I can instantly create a pop-up for you.

For me, a book has three dimensions.

This is also the name I've given to my booth in Bologna and my activities for years.

I only need to look at an image to see it in three dimensions, and I am surrounded by images I love. Since then, I continue to practice on dated images. Once, after recently watching Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*, I bought a copy of *Shockheaded Peter* in a bookstore.

Its hair reminded me of mine when I was young.

And that child also bit his nails, just as I did.

What was the book about? Who knows, I've never read a book.

And then, the copy I had was in German, *Struwwelpeter*, a classic by Heinrich Hoffmann.

At school, in accounting, I studied German (as a second foreign language), but I only know 4 or 5 words. Every year I wasn't graded because I really didn't understand a thing. I lacked the basics and every year, out of their kindness, the other teachers in agreement with the German one, gave me a "courtesy six" so as not to ruin the average grade of 8 I had.

It would have been pointless to have me re-sit in September. I understood nothing, absolutely nothing, of the German language.

So, I've never read a book, especially not *Struwwelpeter*, even though I made a pop-up from it which turned out to be a good editorial success in Germany.

Hildegard Krahè, a respected historian of children's literature, wrote that I had managed to interpret more than anyone else the essence of the book's words. Words that I had never read, but I had fallen in love with the images. And I was so ignorant that I didn't even know that it's the quintessential classic of German children's publishing.

But let's go in order. In the early '90s, I was already a known collector, offering my workshops, and also building pop-up books, but I hadn't published anything yet.

And I kept attending the Children's Book Fair in Bologna.

Since 1992, I had a booth as an importer of pop-up books and a mail-order sales catalog. Meanwhile, I was making contacts starting from the foreign publishing houses from which I bought books.

One of the most interesting meetings was with Orchard Books, Watts Group from London.

It was 1993. I was supposed to meet the sales manager but ended up speaking with the editorial director. Out of our conversation, an invitation sprang to go to London to work ten days at their publishing house. A great experience. Ten days of vacation in London, working in the city at one of the most important publishing houses in the UK.

The second meeting, the following year, was with a packager who was simply a legend for those who made pop-ups: Intervisual of Los Angeles.

The company of Wally Hunt.

Back then, the editorial director was Peter Seymour, a gentleman of at least seventy, tall, with white hair, always impeccably dressed in a suit and tie.

Editorial and marketing directors look like everyone else in the rest of the world: they travel in business class and wear suits and ties, only to then sell the ideas of creatives who arrive in jeans and t-shirts traveling in economy class. And that's okay.

What was I to do at Intervisual?

Well, any excuse was a good one.

It was magnificent; they had the latest pop-up innovations, and there were incredible figures like Waldo Hunt, the legendary grandfather of the pop-up world. Without him, many of the contemporary pop-ups would not have been published.

I would approach their stand, get close to the tables where they negotiated deals worth thousands of dollars, and I'd gasp in amazement at every dummy book I glimpsed.

I didn't realize I was disturbing them.

A few years earlier, Waldo Hunt himself had gone to the fair's office asking for security to escort me out. Despite this, we became, and remained, friends throughout his life, mind you.

You might have lost the thread there, but I had to tell that part.

Let's pick up again: 1994, the fair, Intervisual. What was I doing there, considering I couldn't even let out a spontaneous and obligatory squeal? I had to meet Seymour, the well-dressed director, right.

A few hours earlier, around dinner time, I had finished setting up my booth. Yes, because at the fair, I did everything: I rented the free space, built the panels, booked the "Amico Mio" van from Maggiore, brought everything to Bologna, and set up the booth. Then, from the first day of the fair, I became the booth exhibitor. That year, around 11 p.m. the night before the fair started, I realized I had thought of everything except what to actually display.

Damn, it was already late, and I needed to sleep. I was exhausted.

You know those sudden ideas that flash through your mind? I grabbed some cardboard pieces and crafted a 10 cm x 10 cm prototype, then cut out figures and arranged some velcro to attach and detach them.

I titled it "WHERE and HOW." On the first page, there's a car on a road with a tab that allows it to move; then a ship, a plane, and finally a lunar rocket.

The velcro enabled the repositioning of the subjects. So, attach and detach, the car goes into the sea, and the ship orbits Earth like a lunar rocket: countless combinations in the mind of a child who wants to fantasize. It was three in the morning. I went to bed satisfied.

Oh, I had every reason to be pleased, but I didn't fully grasp why.

The next morning, jeans versus suit and tie, I went to see Seymour. Just as I was about to show him my little book, he stopped me.

He said, "I feel so unwell that even if Warhol were here to show me his work, I'd tell him I'm not interested. Do you know what I would be interested in, Massimo? A Diger Selz. Every time I come to Bologna, I kick off with a feast of tortellini and other Bolognese specialties... but last night, I overdid it, and those tortellini are still sitting heavy. You get it? Show me whatever you want, but just know I'd much rather have a Diger Selz right now."

I went to the fair's pharmacy, bought what Seymour was asking for, and he thanked me, suggesting I come back in the afternoon.

So I did.

Seymour looked at my little book and said, "Trust me on this, don't show this to anyone else because Intervisual is going to print this," and he pocketed the book. "Now, your idea belongs to us." Beside him was the general manager of

Simon & Schuster. They exchanged a quick glance. "100,000 copies for Little Simon?" The other replied, "YES!"

And it was precisely 100,000 copies. Actually, 110,000 with the co-edition copies.

A week later, a DHL package arrived containing the contract and an envelope with a check signed by Wally Hunt as an advance on the royalties for my concept.

This marked the beginning of my career as a pop-up designer.

One more detail, though.

Wally Hunt and I never discussed business. He wanted us to be friends because, according to him, we were the only two in Bologna who loved pop-ups.

So, for my proposals, I would speak with Seymour or other managers.

Wally and I only talked about pop-ups.

Over the years, we gifted each other fabulous pop-ups for our collections.

And after I gifted him one of the most beautiful books printed in Italy in the 1940s, he sent me the luxury edition of the pop-up "Andy Warhol's Index (book)" a few days later.

It was Wally who had convinced Warhol to create that book for Random House. He gave me that copy, still shrink-wrapped, with stickers from 1968.

The third crucial meeting, chronologically, was with Schreiber Verlag, a historic German publishing house. A distinguished publisher that in the 19th century printed beautiful pop-up books, including those by Lothar Meggendorfer, which they continue to republish even today.

True gems for a collector, and I have their books in my catalog.

So that year, I again visited their booth for a simple courtesy greeting. However, I brought with me some pop-up pages of "Pierino Porcospino", the Struwwelpeter, created with the original illustrations.

I showed them, merely out of curiosity, to the sales manager.

I saw his eyes light up. He called over other booth staff. Everyone was excited.

The editorial director arrived, and within less than five minutes of looking at the sheets, he shook my hand and said: we will make the pop-up.

I was happy but thought they were teasing me or that it was some form of ancient Prussian courtesy. However, a few days later, the contract arrived.

I found out later that they had been searching for years for a pop-up designer capable of creating a pop-up version of Struwwelpeter, but no one had satisfied them. I, on the other hand, using only minimal and essential folds, had not distorted their sacred text.

In short, within a few days, I finished the book, completing the missing pop-up sections. But I wasn't sure how to continue the work, especially when it came to marking the die-cut lines.

I was stuck.

I knew the books were printed in Colombia, and I had to provide something both understandable and reproducible, even remotely and without much explanation.

So, I sought help, starting with the technicians from the Mancol Division of the Carvajal printer: I knew them because in Bologna they had a booth packed with wonderful pop-ups, and I always hung out there. We began to communicate, exchanging faxes: this way, they taught me the basics, and I also came to understand the terms used in Colombia.

The book was released in January 1998 and was a success.

Following that was Max und Moritz, which currently is one of the best-selling pop-ups in Germany.

I was dubbed the "Italienischer Papierkünstler", meaning the Italian paper artist. In English, someone who does the same job is called a "paper engineer" (who in printer contracts are also those who design packaging for boxing).

But can you compare? "Papierkünstler" sounds so much more beautiful.



And me... with Piero Chiambretti (famous italian anchorman) In Imola for the technical trials of the 1990 World Cup.

In Imola, there was the hotel that hosted the team from the United Arab Emirates, which Chiambretti sponsored.

I would leave the bank at 5 pm, and in less than half an hour, I was with his crew in Imola, staying there the entire evening.

Chiambretti gifted me the white veil and the headband worn by Arabs.

Chapter 12

Books, courses, and recurrences

I've always been very curious. As curious as a child.

Whenever I discovered a new game, I immediately felt the need to share it.

First, at the Youth Center, and from a certain point onward, with teachers.

Because they are the true intermediaries, in school, between people like me who have skills and children.

To share my knowledge, ever since I began creating pop-ups, I've been conducting courses and workshops.

I must have conducted hundreds of them and have trained at least 2,000 teachers, especially those teaching early childhood and primary education.

Courses, in particular, are more valuable because they provide grounding and, sometimes, even wings. Let me explain: when I conduct a workshop, it ends there. However, when I offer a course, the activity can expand to all the children in the school, and it can also spark new ideas.

Now, I administer a Facebook group where I post school activities every day. 20,000 teachers follow me there.

And I continue to do what I do best: when I discover a new game, I study it, deconstruct it, understand it, explain it, and it becomes a teaching unit right away.

It's always been like this.

I'm self-taught, but I know how important it is to study.

And teaching is an excellent way to help study properly.

Once, I was in Savignano to conduct a course, and along with the teachers, there were also the director and a university professor of pedagogy.

Good people, for sure, but I immediately felt as if I was under examination.

I began the course, and at one point, to clarify a step, I said: "At this juncture, you need to cut out the air between the card and the cardboard sheet."

The university professor asked if she could interrupt the explanation.

Alright, I had explained it wrong; there's no air in the cardboard.

I could already see the red pencil mark.

However, she said, "Did you all understand what the instructor just told you? 'Cut out the air'?" and for ten minutes or even more, she went on about how good I was and how adeptly I could condense concepts.

I looked at her, listened, and thought, "Did I really say all that? Wow, I'm amazing!" And I knew I wouldn't remember any of her pedagogical jargon. I lack the background; I love books, but I don't read them.

So, when something strikes me, curiosity drives me to study, and when I need to test what I know, curiosity compels me to share.

That's always been my motivation.

And I like people, I mean, the genuine human interaction with someone.

I'm not saying that this is the way to go. I'm just saying that this is how I've always done it: I might not have invented much, but I've shared a lot and theorized nothing.

Not everyone agreed, agrees, or will agree with me.

And that's okay.

It's just that what I do has always blended with who I am.

One year, at the Bologna Fair, I even put a 'New' sticker on myself, as if I were the product being presented at the fair. But that's a story for another time.

In the end, this is really how it all began.

I became passionate about photography and met someone who explained to me how the human eye works and how the inverted image is formed on the retina. I was thrilled: and when I had the opportunity to share this knowledge, I cut up dozens of black garbage bags and darkened all the classroom windows. I had all the children close their eyes to adjust to the darkness. Then, with scissors, I made a hole in the plastic, simulating a large pupil. And like magic, on the wall opposite the window, everything outside appeared, but inverted.

That's the crux of it.

From there, you can build many connections.

How does one deceive the eye with movement? This is the question at the heart of pre-cinema.

To understand this, I needed the thaumatrope, a cardboard disk that on one side has an empty cage and on the other, a bird: when you spin it quickly, you see the bird inside the cage.

Wonder, curiosity, and the desire to add a twist.

I'll discuss this in more detail in Chapter 20.

Why not create a little machine with a crank and gears that rotate the disk?

So, I started discussing it, having reached a point where my knowledge was lacking: but I knew people, particularly the bank's customers.

Specifically, an employee from Enel with a woodworking hobby and one from the railways whose hobby was welding and blacksmithing.

Sometimes, all I had to do was visit a hardware store, bombarding the clerks with questions, and then leave laden with pulleys, gears, and cranks, imagining in my head a way to recreate the zoetrope.

Step by step, I found myself holding several pre-cinema machines, so I decided to put them on display.

Then, the exhibit grew.

The first time, in 1984, it consisted of just a dozen machines. It grew to include about 50 by the last version in 1990, when, under the patronage of the then National Cinema Museum of Maria Adriana Prolo, I built the final version of the exhibit that later toured Italy and also went to Hannover as a guest of honor at the first European Children's Film Festival.

But I wasn't satisfied yet.

I wasn't happy with the exhibit's entrance.

By then, I had been spoiled by pop-ups and expected an immediate twist when opening a book. However, when entering an exhibit, there's often just a large panel with a meter to a meter and a half of explanations.

So, I built a cylinder two meters tall with a diameter of ten meters.

I had met a gentleman who designed truck tarps, so I asked him if he could design the panels for me. Well, on them were all my images from the 1800s. Inside the exhibit, visitors entered this large cylinder and immediately felt the atmosphere of 100 years prior, even if they were inside a sports hall.

Then all the machines were arranged chronologically, each machine with its information and instructions.

And as visitors exited the exhibit, they received a 100 x 70 poster with all the games to recreate at home or in class, using just some cardboard.



And after the Divine Comedy - Inferno, here's my first pop-up for children.

It's an alphabet book.

The illustrator who designed it is Pat Paris. She is quite famous in the United States. She had worked at Intervisual and earlier in Friz Freleng's animation studio; she was also a designer and animator for the Pink Panther.

In this book, in the garden, there are many flaps, and each hides an object and its name. In the end, there's the entire alphabet.

Back then, Pat Paris was also an executive at Compass Production in Long Beach.

Both Robert Sabuda and I worked there.

Chapter 13

Of course, some say no

I take a moment to breathe.

Biographies are those things where everything seems to go well, or perhaps there were only minor hitches, but in the end, you are someone special, because all thirty pop-up authors are special.

The truth is, everyone likes to remember the things that went well. And the bigger truth is that not everything does.

Sometimes it seems like your ideas are worthless: but then you see them being copied, so they must have had some value, right? Or is that just my banker's way of thinking?

Sometimes it seems that the most respected people are those who consider themselves important. However, every now and then, fortunately, you meet someone whose superb humility changes your mind.

And sometimes, many times, you get no's.

There are those who don't have time to look at your project.

There are those who glance at it quickly and say, "Interesting, send it to us for evaluation" and then never give you a response, sending it back. There are those who look at it, like it, and say, "Give us an estimate."

There are those who say, "It's nice, but children won't like it, there's little to play with."

And there are those who say, "Children won't like it, there's too much to play with."

There are those who are completely fascinated by it, but conclude with the phrase: "Pop-ups, they're so expensive! Maybe in 3 or 4 years, post-pandemic, we can do something. If you haven't already sold it by then, come back to us."

There are those who say there's too little text.

There are those who say there's too much text.

So, do you find it strange that at one point in my life I wanted to become a publisher and even founded my own record label? Because I've met many such people, and you will too if you choose to become a book author.

The meetings that will remain in your life, you'll see, will be different.



David A. Carter and I in a photo for journalists during a Workshop we held together in San Lazzaro di Savena the day after the end of the Book Fair in 2010.

David and I were both born in 1957.

It's a curious play on numbers. He was born in March, 57 days before me and has published, to date, 57 more books than I have.

Chapter 14

Back then, pop-ups were printed in Colombia

I often designed pop-ups on commission.

Understand me: without too many compromises regarding my vision of the project they were proposing.

My job at the bank allowed me to be independent and choose whom to work for.

But I've done many commissioned works, for well-known or anonymous companies, for shows and records, for various special occasions.

One day, I was contacted by an Italian tractor factory. I went to their headquarters.

The owner, a very friendly gentleman who was also the CEO, wanted me to design a pop-up book telling the story of one of their tractors that befriends children. Let's not mention names, alright.

But let's give the tractor a name: "Trattò."

I presented myself at the reception. They had my name and a badge ready for me.

On the badge, Massimo Missiroli, paper engineer, had become Engineer Massimo Missiroli.

The receptionist greeted me formally. "Good morning, Engineer!"

I immediately thought of my cousins. In our family, we have 2 civil engineers and 2 surveyors, and my uncles owned a construction company.

I too was an engineer, in a way, but the houses I built were made of cardboard.

Clearly, the engineer's spirit is in our DNA.

So, I embraced this engineering role: and every employee I encountered in the corridors, while following the receptionist, greeted me in the same manner.

"Good morning, Engineer Missiroli." It sounded quite good.

Oh, being addressed as an engineer made me feel quite spirited, it made me even more talkative.

Not that it ever was an issue, mind you.

Thus, I found myself discussing my work, but wanting to make it sound even grander.

After all, it was an engineer's talk, not an accountant's.

The conversation shifted to the printing process, and I began to share.

Back then, pop-ups were printed in Cali, Colombia: by that Mancol Division of Carvajal to whom I had previously consulted.

Child labor was an issue in this industry too: to dispel any doubts, Mancol would invite you to monitor the entire production of your book, directly on-site.

You cover your flight, and then you're their guest.

I could have gone too.

They printed three of my books there.

And this, to me, sounds very much like an engineer's endeavor.

Background.

At that time, Colombia was also known for another reason: the narcos. And the narcos triangle, as it was known to the entire world, had three vertices: Cali, Medellin, and Santa Fe de Bogotá.

At some point, they also invited me to Colombia, and everyone started warning me about the narcos, even my fellow paper-engineers.

Not that there were narcos in the factory. But the area was dangerous. In a series produced in the United States, in one episode, the FBI discovers a heroin shipment hidden inside pop-ups.

Astonishing, right?

Anyway, a few months later, it really happened.

The narcos intercepted a container and filled it with drugs.

So I continued my story...

Come on, I could see that the owner of the Tractor company was curious, increasingly curious, so I pressed on.

My friends had told me that Western visitors were treated with the utmost care and were escorted from the airport to the printing press.

But come on.

There's nothing wrong with indulging such curiosity.

My imagination ran wild.

So, I transformed the transfer car into an SUV with bulletproof windows, and the bodyguards became two mercenaries hired to protect me, armed to the teeth.

And I concluded: it's scary living there, right? Even just for a few days.

I was talking about a place 14,000 kilometers away, where I had never been.

I thought I could say anything (wrongly).

It felt like I had two narcos right in the living room, from the way I was speaking: really bad and mean, even worse than mobsters.

And all the while, I was thinking about "Scarface".

At that moment, the Tractor company owner interrupted me and said to the employee: "Bring Pierluigi here," who turned out to be his son, a lively young boy with long hair.

The father asked: "Why didn't you tell us about the dangers you face when you go to visit Manuelita?"

I didn't understand, or rather, I understood all too well.

Pierluigi was having a relationship with Manuelita, a girl from Cali he was deeply in love with.

"Pierluigi, meet Engineer Missiroli, who, unlike you, is very wise and doesn't fly to Colombia every three months. We'll discuss this before dinner tonight." Pierluigi gave me a couple of very hostile looks. And me? Like any good paper engineer, I didn't bat an eye.



These are the people to whom I owe a lot. The two Guillemos, executives of the Mancol Division of Carvajal in Cali.

Exceptional individuals.

They enriched my collection by gifting me many pop-ups they produced every year at the end of the fair.

And then they had me guided in my early works by their technicians, who provided all the information by sending me faxes.

Without this help, I would have never learned the craft of a pop-up designer.

Chapter 15

My first autograph (with dedication)

In the 1990s, I began to sign my books as an author, but only for other paper engineers, in an exchange between collectors and professionals.

The real autographs would come later.

I remember the first time.

I was in Foggia, in 2008, having held a workshop at the Ubik Bookstore.

Everything ended, the children were happy (the most important thing for me), and so were their parents.

We lingered, chatting a bit. Me, the booksellers, and the librarians who had invited me for the workshop.

A little girl tugged at my sweatshirt.

She had a book I had crafted as a paper engineer, just released in stores.

I looked at her, she looked back at me and said, "Massimo, can you dedicate it with your signature?"

I had never written a dedication, nor had I given an autograph.

I think Catia had never asked for a book dedication before either.

It intrigued me.

I would expect this if I were Cristina D'Avena, Topo Gigio, Maya the Bee, or Geronimo Stilton.

But me? A folder and gluer of cardboards?

I slowly leaned down and whispered so no one else could hear, "Catia, do you really want a dedication and signature?" She replied, "Massimo, I don't know what a dedication is, but mom told me to ask you like this."

Too sweet.

Now I think: what do you write in a dedication for a child?

"With love", no... "with best wishes", not quite.

Catia isn't overly concerned about the moment. She smiles at her dad and mom, who continuously take photos and videos of her.

She doesn't care about what will be written in the dedication.

However, I'm sweating.

In the end, I decide.

The dedication will be concise: "Catia, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2008. Massimo"

Fantastic!

It has everything; I already feel like a great writer.

My hand trembles.

I'm so excited, I can't even say. It's Catia who should be the excited one, not me. However, I am excited, and Catia becomes Katia, and Happy 2008 becomes Happy 2007.

A mess.

I offer to replace the book, but her mother says, "Don't worry! Even her teachers at school sometimes write Katia with a K, and we'll just pretend it was signed last year."

In the following years, I gained more confidence.

And since I also became the publisher of my 1,000 copies of pop-up books, I sign all the books and many I dedicate as well, besides autographing them.

Then I send them: I've sent one to my CEO, the one from the bank; and then to popes and presidents of the republic.

But I'll talk about that later.



Foggia, Ubik Bookstore. My first dedication and my first autograph.

Chapter 16

Being Famous

Often, when I conducted workshops or refresher courses, some teacher, followed soon after by others, would say I was famous.

I always joked about this, and to cut short the conversation, I would recount two anecdotes.

"If you know things, you know them; if you don't, you make them up," was written on a wall of the Sorbonne during May '68.

I know because I typed it into a computer about thirty years later. Or maybe I made it up. Who knows.

The two anecdotes.

You then turn the page, close the pop-up, and there's a risk I could get lost.

The first anecdote: the Book Fair is always inaugurated by a famous personality, who is escorted through the various pavilions of the fair, stopping at certain stands to shake hands while photos are taken and videos are recorded.

That year, the famous personality was an actor, and one of the stands chosen for handshakes was that of Intervisual, the most renowned pop-up producer, the one by Waldo Hunt. Yes, I mentioned it earlier.

The next day the photos were ready, and the Fair's managers asked me to deliver them to the stand where they were taken, the Intervisual one.

At that moment, other publishers were present, practically the crème de la crème of American publishing. So, they asked me who was in the photos, "A very famous actor," I say. "How many Oscars has he won?" another asks. "I think none," I reply.

In short... then he wasn't famous.

And now, the second anecdote.

The genuinely famous person from Forlì is Tugnì (Antonio), a 76-year-old man who grew up at the Casa del Popolo di Malmissole and is a world champion of bocce with a free bocchetto.

He has hundreds of trophies and medals won worldwide at home. Journalists visit almost daily, but his neighbors don't know it.

What would Forrest Gump say?

Being famous is what you make of it, more or less.

I believe being famous means arriving somewhere and being already known.

It happened to me once with Enzo D'Alò, a lifelong friend, in Pisa, at the Biennale del Cinema dei Ragazzi, for the premiere of "La freccia azzurra."

We were late for dinner, so we rushed to the cinema filled with people waiting just for him to start.

Enzo and I entered together, heading to our reserved seats. The moment we walked in, they recognized him, the buzz stopped, giving way to silence, and then everyone applauded.

At that moment, I experienced what it surely feels like to be famous.



Hall 25 – Booth A1 Have you ever been to the Bologna Children's Book Fair?

You start with the illustrators' exhibition, then leave a business card or a drawing on the illustrators' wall, and then... you start your visit to the Fair.

You have the first hall on the right, number 25, and the first on the left, number 26.

Where do you start? I'd say on the right, number 25.

Aisle A or B? Let's not get confused; let's choose A.

Which booth to start with? Number 1.

For about 15 years, my booth was in Hall 25, Aisle A, No. 1. Practically the first booth to visit.

Many publishers, my neighbors, envied me, and rumors circulated that I had special connections.

Who knows, perhaps, without even realizing it...

Chapter 17

My collection of handshakes

When you're a collector, you collect everything. I collect pop-ups, among other things. The quirkiest collection is that of handshakes. Rule: there should be no photographs depicting them. The handshakes are solely mine and remain my property, just like the objects in my other collections.

In the nineties, I amassed many handshakes. Everyone found this amusing, and at the Book Fair, the general manager would have me shake many hands during the gala evening. After this flurry, I wouldn't always remember the names of all the famous writers and illustrators whose hands I'd shaken. You see, this was important for the classification of the collection. I'd seize every opportunity, taking advantage of every meeting. I will never reveal the handshakes I've collected. Someone might commission a theft.

I'll only mention the three most memorable ones. The first was with Fausto Bertinotti in Ronta di Cesena, in the open countryside of Cesena, during the Rifondazione Comunista party gathering. A heartfelt handshake with "The Internationale" performed by the Red Army Choir in the background.

The second was with Antonio Ricci from "Striscia la Notizia". I spent a lovely evening with him in Pisa, walking around Piazza dei Miracoli. The next morning, before he left with his crew, he shook my hand to say goodbye. Then he thought better of it, stepped out of the blue Fininvest car to give me another, saying, "This one's for your collection."

The last was from Silver (creator of Lupo Alberto). Gualtiero Schiaffino, who was fond of my collection, introduced us. After chatting, we said our goodbyes, and I offered my hand again. Silver withdrew his, saying, "I get it! You want a duplicate so you can exchange it with other collectors!"

I was told that one day in Rome, at the home of Ugo Pirro (yes, the famous Italian neorealism screenwriter who had married a literature teacher from Forlì whom I knew), there were Guglielmi (then director of RAI Tre) and Maurizio Costanzo. Ugo Pirro mentioned my quirky collection, and everyone laughed heartily. Costanzo noted down my name to have his team invite me to the Maurizio Costanzo Show. That call never came. Oh well.

Mind you, I was never a handshake hunter. I knew these people or was introduced to them. I was never like those who chase celebrities just to snap a selfie for the thrill of the moment. I stopped in 2020 because of Covid. No one could shake hands for over a year. But I'll always remember the handshakes I've received.



Bologna Book Fair, 2006.

These gentlemen who are looking at the books I created are three giants in the paper engineering world.

From left to right: Ron Van Der Meer, Jim Roger Diaz, and David Pelham.

If you check the colophons of pop-ups from the last 50 years, you'll find their names in over 250 books.

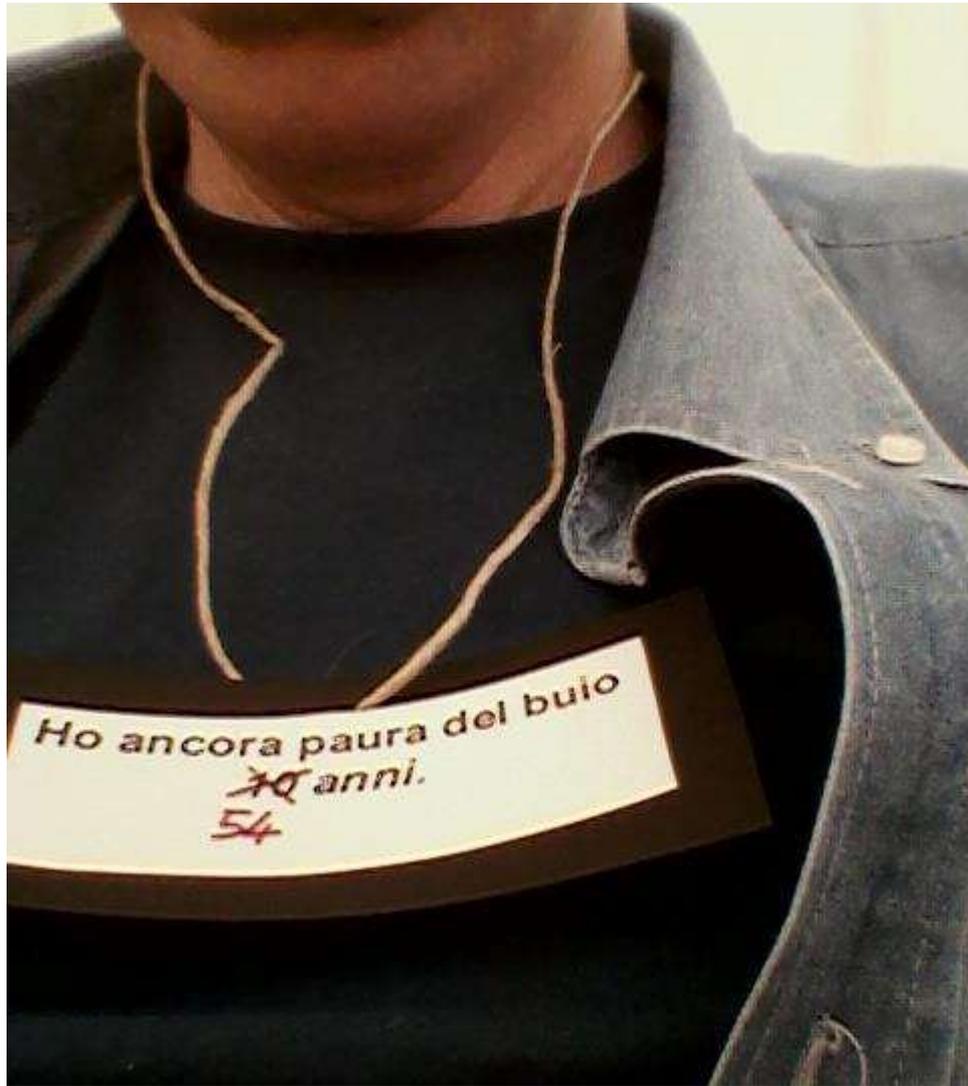
Why were they at my booth?

To give me a beautiful gift: to welcome me into the family.

In Los Angeles, at Wally Hunt's Intervisual, paper engineers were all men, and they called themselves "THE FAMILY BROTHER."

They were brothers; they were family.

That day, the three elder brothers (Ron, Jim, and David) told me that even though I hadn't worked in Los Angeles, they had decided to make me part of the family.



'I am still afraid of the dark. 54 years of age'

Cagliari, Tuttestorie Festival. The theme of the year: "Don't tell anyone". You could choose a tag and admit a small weakness. I pick this one and correct it. Now I could update it by writing 66 underneath. Because I admit: I still sleep with the light on at night. I'm so scared there might be a bogeyman under the bed!

Chapter 18

Italian Books

I began working with foreign publishing houses.

Later, I designed books for Italian publishers as well: Emme Edizioni, for which I created "La Mucca Moka" with Agostino Traini, "Fred Lingualunga" and "Pinocchio" with Lucia Salemi, and then De Agostini, for which I designed five pop-ups again with Agostino Traini (and we signed as AgoMas, AGOstino and MASsimo).

We signed as AgoMas due to the long-standing issue that a pop-up designer, if they don't illustrate, doesn't get their name on the cover, but only in the colophon. It's (almost) always been and will be like this. In the publishing process, the paper mechanism design is considered a work service.

For Agostino, however, we had equal status. And since one can't fight windmills, he found this workaround. Later, during the same period, I collaborated with Gallucci publishing house for which I produced "Il Presepio", illustrated by Cristina Lastrego, who reworked the drawings of Emanuele Luzzati: it was 2009. Had I not hurt my back, Luzzati and I would have worked together directly, but initially, we did so from a distance. Sadly, less than a month later, he passed away.

He was Jewish and I, an atheist. We created what many consider one of the most beautiful Catholic nativity scenes in the history of pop-up books, and based on the data I have, it's one of the most appreciated Italian pop-ups in our country, thanks to his wonderful illustrations.

I also designed toys for Quercetti (a toy and game publisher), where we reintroduced a copy of a pre-cinema game, the zoetrope, and a series of cards and build-it-yourself pop-up books packed in school kits with all the necessary materials to assemble them.

I collaborated with several Italian illustrators. With others, I designed books that unfortunately never got published.

I met almost all of them at the Bologna Book Fair.

At one point, meeting people became more important to me than seeing new books (which I could also buy by mail order).

One year, I met Altan (for whom I designed the pop-up version of Kamillo Kromo, which he loved, but was not published) at the Quipos booth (which was

near my stand). The next day, I brought to the fair all his books that I had owned for years, published by Milano Libri.

I arrived at Quipos with a sizable bundle: Trino, Colombo, Cuori pazzi. And for each one, I asked for an autograph: "To Massimo, Altan".

Then I pushed further.

I requested a drawing of Pimpa for my (imaginary) nephew named after me: Massimo.

Returning to my stand, I showed my friends my treasures and exclaimed, "I even got Pimpa!".

But I felt guilty for the fib I had told, and once back home, little Massimo, who lived in the apartment below, received the drawing and was overjoyed. Pimpa was his favorite character.

Simple things often work best, and this applies to names too: I think Agostino Traini is the most talented at naming. For the characters we chose for De Agostini, he came up with such fitting names like Tina, Flip, Pic, and Paper. Initially, he had named it SuperPaper, which had a dual meaning: the protagonist was a Super(hero) duck, and Ago and I were doing Super things with paper.

Thanks to Agostino, I became a character in a children's book called "Massimo missile fills up with milk", published by Food in 2008.

When my "Italian" books began to be released, I also formed several friendships with booksellers who, along with librarians and teachers, are often true advocates of the book world. I am particularly proud to be friends with Sergio Guastini, aka Raccontalibri.

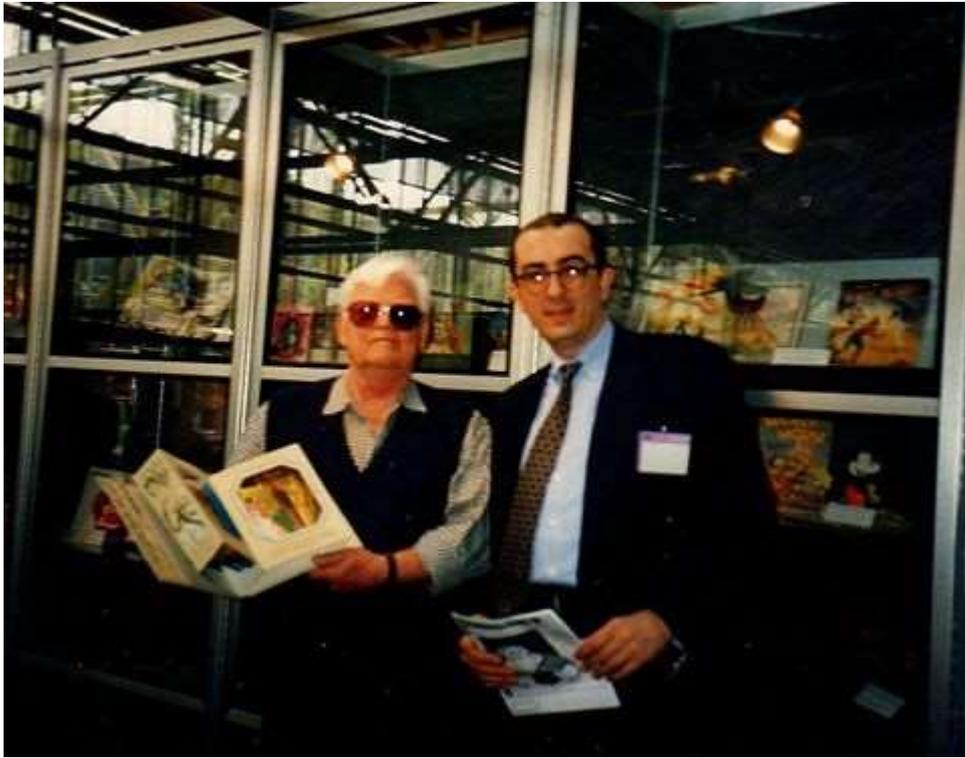
The bookseller from Sarzana.

Whenever he travels to some far-off country, he takes one of my pop-ups in his suitcase and reads it in "baby language" to the local kids.

I believe Sergio can only speak Italian and, indeed, baby language, but he doesn't need anything else to communicate; his infectious energy suffices.

Seeing him work with my books, even just in photos, has shown me the power of pop-ups: books that speak for themselves in an international language.

When Sergio travels, sometimes he ends up giving the books away: he told me he donated one of my books to the National Library of Cuba, and then in Samarkand, in India, and Vietnam. It's wonderful to know my books have traveled the world, more than I ever did myself.



Me and... Wally Hunt.

Wally is holding a pop-up that I just gave him.

One year, the Bologna Book Fair presented him with a lifetime achievement award. Wally was also the president of the A.B.A., American Booksellers Association.

I had insider information about this.

During those days, he declared in an interview that his love for pop-up books began after seeing a carousel pop-up book in Germany during WWII.

Is it true? False? I never found out.

I sourced a German carousel book from a Bolognese antique dealer. To me, it was that very book.

The Fair organizers allowed me on stage after their award presentation.

I handed the book to Wally, saying, "To me, the book you saw in Germany is this one." He played along and confirmed it, becoming emotional.

For the entire duration of the Fair, he never left that book and showed it to everyone he met.

His emotion lingered after the Fair. Given that we exchanged books, he sent me the fabulous "Andy Warhol Index Book" in its luxurious 1968 edition, still shrink-wrapped with the period labels. Never opened.

It was Wally who commissioned Andy Warhol to create his pop-up, and there's even a dedication/thank you note from him.

If you come across it, look for it.

Chapter 19

I gift a pop-up book to the CEO of the bank where I work

It's 2007.

Prompted by a friend who had taken a position at the Head Office in Milan, I decide to send an autographed copy of my Pinocchio pop-up to the CEO of the bank where I work.

I believe there was also an inscription that might have read, "From one of your 60,000 employees."

My recommending friend told me, "You'll see, he'll thank you."

But I put it out of my mind.

Until one morning... imagine the scene...

I'm at the teller counter with many clients in front waiting to be served.

The switchboard operator of our branch puts through a call, which had been announced by a secretary from the Milan Head Office.

The young lady said, "I'm transferring the CEO to you."

Of course, the CEO is calling me, I thought.

On the first floor, we had a colleague who entertained everyone at dinners because he was an exceptional impersonator.

I told him that the impersonation was spot-on.

The fellow cashier working next to me informed me it couldn't be Franco because he was home sick.

If it's not the impersonator, then... it's the impersonated.

Stammering, I apologized.

He thanked me, commenting on the beautiful work I had done, and mentioned he would always cherish it. My responses were incoherent, until I blurted out without thinking, "I apologize, but I have to hang up. I have a queue at the counter and the clients are complaining that they're not being served because I'm on the phone."

How do you end a call with the CEO with such a statement?

Some bank colleagues, aware of my union involvement, speculated that my gift might have also contained a subliminal message, which, honestly, had never crossed my mind and which I would never have intentionally sent.

Even though I was an unconventional banker, I always had the utmost respect for the managerial hierarchy.

According to them, the message could loosely translate to: "Never be like Pinocchio, or your nose might grow."

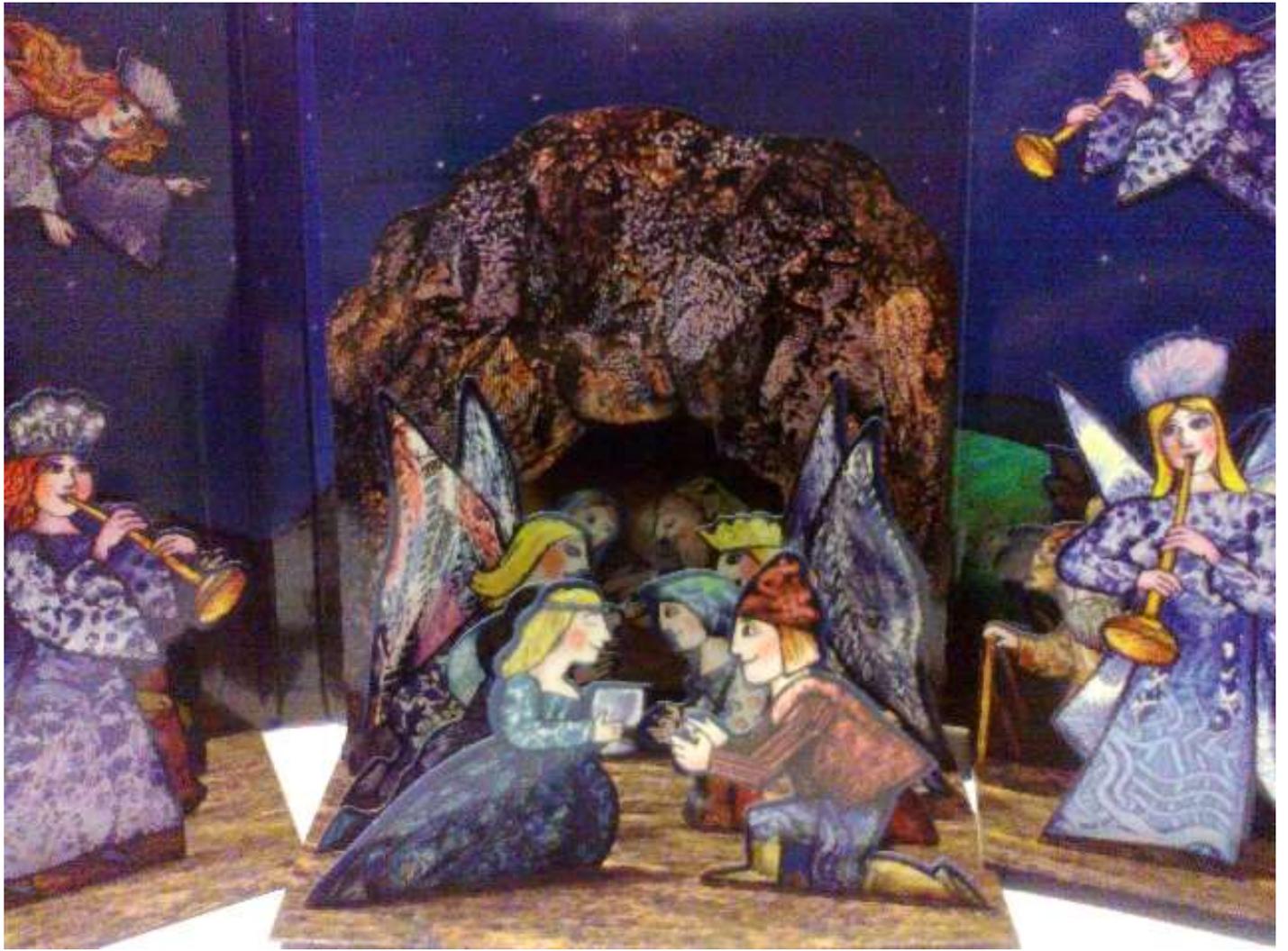
A few days later, our CEO would testify in Parliament, along with other leaders of the ABI (Italian Banking Association), discussing the role of credit institutions in the Italian economic landscape.

You see, sometimes you may have kind and respectful intentions, but others might interpret them entirely differently.

I was merely pleased that after this gift, my CEO had one of my books on his home bookshelf.



Paolo Poli, (one of the most famous Italian actor) invited to the show "Le invasioni barbariche", gifts host Daria Bignardi a copy of my pop-up book The Nativity, published by Gallucci Publisher with illustrations by Emanuele Luzzati. The illustrations were redrawn by Cristina Lastrego, Studio Lastrego e Testa, for the animated film produced by RaiTrade The Advent Days. Paolo Poli, a friend of Emanuele Luzzati, during the interview says that this book, for him, is the most beautiful book printed in Italy after World War II. What an honor. He doesn't mention me, but I still feel he's talking about me too. I also gifted a copy to Pope Francis, admitting that this appreciated Catholic Nativity was made by a Jew, Emanuele Luzzati, and an atheist, Massimo Missiroli. Despite this, Pope Francis thanked me with a beautiful letter of his own.





The world is small.

Only a few years ago, I found this picture in an album of a friend from Forlì.

She hadn't recognized me. She had taken this shot, and I hadn't noticed her among the Venice Carnival celebrations.

For several years, I dressed up like this. As Puck the Elf. With a black suit, colorful fabric strips with bells at the ends that rang with every move. I wore a blue wig and painted my face with makeup given by a German clown I had met.

I had to be careful with my dressing.

Months before, I was officially reprimanded by the regional personnel director who saw me in Bologna's Montagnola park dressed as Harlequin (and it wasn't carnival time).

He scolded me, reminding me that a banker should dress well and respectfully both inside and outside the bank.

He already tolerated me coming to the bank in jeans, but seeing me in Harlequin pants, espadrilles, and a bright yellow t-shirt in Montagnola was unacceptable.

Luckily, there were no spies from his office in Venice!

Chapter 20

Before the Lumière Brothers

In some ways, my life, my lives, are the result of a series of interlocking pieces. I've done so many different things, but they all revolve around how we look at images. I've never read a book, but I've learned many things that later proved useful. Many revolved around images, including those of cinema, that is, moving images. I studied the early steps of pop-up, photography, cinematography, and experienced the wonder of the viewer to study how our gaze works. For me, this sense of wonder comes naturally. I close one page and open another, but I remain here, right.

Once again, the Book Fair.

It's around 1980. I stop at the stand of Troubador Press, a small publishing house from San Francisco, which publishes books fresh out of the Californian counterculture world. They look like hand-written mimeographs and are mostly manuals.

Somehow, my eye falls on a book: "Paper movie machines" by Budd Wentz, 1975.

Somehow, I don't remember how, I manage to get a copy.

On the other hand, it was there waiting for me, as we collectors say.

"Paper movie machines" showcases experiments on how to make movies with paper.

A revelation, and my hands begin to itch.

Until then, anyone who wanted to teach film and cartoons at school used a movie camera. I was already working on photography, and also on animation (I even invented a new technique: I removed the butterfly located in front of the camera's shutter, then I built a transparent table in my studio with which I directly impressed the film). And I really liked all the new things. In "Paper movie machines," there were many 19th-century optical games to recreate with paper: this was a new, exciting way to learn to make films, which I would embark upon by discovering, building, and inventing.

But not right away.

In fact, from what I remember, the book remained unused for at least 5-6 months.

I was already making flip books at school with the kids. Those small books in which you flip the pages between your fingers to animate the images. But in my mind, the perception of movement could only exist with projection.

Then one day, following the book's instructions, I cut out a disc and discovered what a phenakistoscope was in 1832.

A whole new world opened up for me. Pre-cinema, the period of research, the time of scientific cinema, of motion machines. We were between 1820 and 1895.

I distinctly named the path I created: "Before the Lumière Brothers," that is, before 1895 and the invention that would lead cinema down the path of fiction. Every time I made a discovery, I introduced it as an educational sheet for school, writing instructions to repeat the experiment in class.

I produced dozens and dozens of sheets, bundles of material.

In the end, I had a ton of stuff: enough to make a book and the exhibition I already mentioned.

In Forlì, in October 1984, they organized an animation film festival: I presented my research there, met Emanuele Luzzati, Giannini, D'Alò. The most curious of all was Cavandoli, who even drew a sequence for me, for the zoetrope, of his famous "Linea."

The exhibition took shape, with twelve installations, twelve games spanning the entire 19th century.

In 1985, I was invited to the Children's Film Biennial in Pisa, and there the novelty exploded. Amid dozens of groups working in schools with cameras, I arrived with a 100 x 70 poster containing everything needed to explore animation with paper: perhaps until then, the power of movie machines had been somewhat underestimated!

Of course, motion machines were known, but they were viewed more as curiosities than educational tools.

Soon after, wanting to learn more, I made contact with the Cinema Museum in Turin, the first one, the real one, the original, founded by Maria Adriana Prolo. I reached out to her, in short, I called her.

She answered, and I decided to go to Turin.

There, she welcomed me to her "house museum" in Palazzo Chiabrese. The authorities had closed her museum due to new safety regulations. Maria Adriana Prolo was almost 80 years old with a contagious passion.

The visit to the Museum, accompanied by her narrative, was a unique and immersive experience: stories of objects and lives. Listening to her was a profound pleasure. In the end, I gifted her one of my reproductions of the film machines. Astonishingly, not only did she thank me, but she also displayed my copy alongside the original 1800s pieces!

She wanted me to become a member of the Cinema Museum Association, and so, with membership card No. 57 (the same as my birth year!), I entered this new world.

After this magical encounter, the definitive version of the exhibition was born. Painted panels, optical games made of wood and iron. All reproductions.

All made by me, involving a myriad of people with my enthusiasm: yes, those bank customers, the Enel employee, the one from FS, the hardware store owner... and even my father.

The exhibition toured all of Italy and was a guest at the first European Children's Film Festival in Hannover in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the meantime, the Cinema Museum was searching for a new home, and the prestigious idea of relocating to the Mole Antonelliana began to circulate. But on February 20, 1991, Dr. Prolo passed away.

She, who had her house museum in Palazzo Chiabrese, might have wondered if her research, the treasure she had gathered, would ultimately return there, where it all began.

Unfortunately for me, during those years of reorganization, the endorsement for my activities was not renewed, even though the Cinema Museum Association, of which I was a part, was the lender of the collection on display.

Well, they said they needed to start from scratch to understand and begin anew. Honestly, I never understood why. Meanwhile, my interests were shifting elsewhere.

But then, a few years later, I returned to Turin.

In 2001, I had a sort of vindication: Alberto Quercetti, whom I've mentioned before, had not yet visited the Museum. Why? He wanted me, whom he saw as a knowledgeable and prepared guide, to accompany him.

Then, in 2019, I was once again in Turin, styled as the "Donkey among Doctors" (as Maurizio Cattelan once described himself when he was awarded an honorary degree from the University of Trento).

I was on the Scientific Committee of MUSLI, the Museum of Schools and Children's Books, a foundation named Tancredi di Barolo.

The Director, Pompeo Vagliani, who founded it and dedicated his life to it (much like Prolo did for the Cinema Museum), always passionate about childhood images, probably sensed in another enthusiast's handshake the same fervor. It only took him a few moments to realize that we shared, with the same intensity, a mutual passion for pop-up.

I like people like him, people who don't assume that your explosive behavior hides some ulterior motive, but understand that you might be constantly driven by a genuinely sincere motive.

As with photography, where I met Gilardi, in my pre-cinema journey I had also met, besides Maria Adriana Prolo, other important figures.

Among them was Professor Virgilio Tosi from the Experimental Film Center in Rome. He was a real "scientist of moving images," precise, meticulous, and timely.

From what I gathered, having interacted with him for several years, he embodies the true and authentic researcher. One who isn't satisfied with just gathering information but delves deeper, studies, experiments, and contributes to what has been before, after, alongside, and from others, without undermining what you yourself have researched and shared.

That's intellectual honesty.

I'd like to think that in universities and research institutions everywhere, everyone is like him. It's a world that attracts me.

I remember sending him models of pre-cinema optical games made with Meccano. Little gadgets.

At that time, he was also collaborating with the University of Gottingen on a European production about pre-cinema. He was interviewed by Dutch television. On the table, as a small set decoration, he placed the games I had prepared for him and made sure to have my name credited as the creator of these games in the show's end credits.

We became passionate.

We decided to co-write a book about my experiences.

One evening, over dinner, he spoke very "profoundly" and suddenly asked if I had read his latest book. He looked at me, then turned to the other diner with us and posed the same question, smiling, "I should've asked you this question. We know that Missiroli only looks at the pictures."

Well, he wasn't entirely wrong.

But, from pictures, I learn a lot.



A for Arbasino and Augias, B for Baricco, and under the letter M, among the 100 authors of that edition, there's Missiroli. Knowing I don't read much, at the Mantova Literature Festival, in the realm of word books, they ask me to talk less and do more. Do what? Pop-up workshops for kids. And I don't do half bad. There are so many sign-ups for my workshops that they ask if I'm willing to double the sessions. Why not? It can be done. Why disappoint the kids?



I even dared to wear this t-shirt to the bank. Well, half dared, because I wore a denim shirt over it, which only slightly revealed the Che's portrait and quote.

The quote attributed to him after Fidel made him the general director of Banco Nacional reads, "In a year at Banco Nacional, I can say I've learned nothing about banking."

Bravo, Comrade Guevara, I've been there for 43 years, and I can tell you that even 43 years don't help if you don't have that mindset.

You did well to resign.

Chapter 21

Robert becomes Sabuda

Book Fair, April 1994.

A blonde young man with glasses, looking a bit lost, wanders around the Fair. He has a trolley with him.

He stops to look at the pop-ups at my stand.

I recognize him: it's Robert Sabuda.

I recognize him because we both worked for the same packager: Compass Production of Long Beach.

I had seen his picture in his author profile.

The only difference was that he had published a few small pop-ups, and I hadn't yet.

As a collector, I had noticed in his simple folds an absolutely innovative paper technique.

I'm not sure what happened with the Compass executives, but in his last book, he hadn't authorized them to use his name, so it was published under a pseudonym. However, I had recognized his talent. He confirmed it to me. Only I and a few others know which book it is.

As soon as I recognize him, I say, "Are you the famous Sabuda? I'm a fan of yours." And he responds, "Famous? Fan? Nobody knows me, not even in the United States where I come from."

I invited him into the booth.

I kept an eye on his trolley for the four days of the Fair, and we spent a lot of time together.

He showed me the first draft of his *The Christmas Alphabet*.

He was trying to sell it. He had designed it thinking of the snow in his hometown in Utah, but nobody wanted to buy a pop-up book with entirely white structures.

As I flipped through the prototype, I realized I had a revolution in global paper engineering in front of my eyes.

Every so often, Robert would say something like, "For me, paper is like clay, and there are no folds."

The day before the Fair closed, he showed the alphabet book to his friend Jim Roger Diaz, who had founded the White Heat production company.

Jim sold the book to Orchard USA, which marketed it the following December.

800,000 copies sold in the first edition.

A success!

And Robert became Robert Sabuda, the most talented pop-up designer in the contemporary history of three-dimensional books.

He signed with Little Simon, and using the same technique, two more books came out the following year.

Robert came back to visit me at the fair in 1995. And in 1996.

Now he was famous to everyone else too!

And he was signing autographs!

Among collectors, of course, signed pop-ups are worth more.

But there are countless ways to increase the value of a copy: fabric covers, special pop-up inserts, numbered copies, "first edition"...

For *The Christmas Alphabet*, Sabuda had set aside 26 numbered copies marked with the letters of the English alphabet, each signed with a dedication.

For his friend Massimo, in the copies he gifted me, he reserved the letter "I" (could it be because I'm his Italian friend?).



In this picture, I might look a bit stiff, but standing next to the two most talented and innovative pop-up designers of the moment made me overwhelmed.

That year, they were in Bologna because they were vacationing in Europe and only appeared one day at the Fair.

For half an hour at their publisher's booth and the rest of the time in mine.

Outside my booth, there were dozens of curious onlookers, collectors, and even publishers whom my friends kept at bay: I felt both envied and privileged.

Chapter 22

Television

From 1994 onwards, many become interested in pop-ups.

Several journalists interview me. My mail-order sales catalog circulates, and I become known as the pop-up man.

One day I arrive home after my bank job and listen to the messages on my answering machine.

There are two.

The first:

"Good morning, we are from the editorial team of 'Un Sabato in Famiglia,' the Rai 1 (public Network) program hosted by Guardì. We would like to have you as a guest on our show. Please call us..."

I think it's a joke.

I listen to the second:

"Good morning, we are from the editorial team of BIM BUM BAM on Italia Uno. We wanted to know if you are willing to come and record with us in Cologno."

Okay, two pranks.

The next day I call, and indeed it's the editorial teams of the two shows.

RAI invites me for the following Saturday. The Saturday morning program has up to 8,000,000 viewers, with a very high share.

I will have 10 minutes all to myself at 8 in the morning. I'll be the featured guest of the day: "The Neighbor Doing Things" if I recall the segment's title.

I go to Rome, treated with the utmost respect.

At 7:30 am, I'm in the studio and am made to sit in the chairs reserved for guests. Guardì enters, and I look at him with admiration. He's really a big deal. I measure his fame by the number of cellphones he has. They had just come on the market, and he had two.

I sit next to a gentleman who looks familiar, but I'm a bit dazed.

He greets me and shakes my hand (another one for my handshake collection): it's Paolo Crepet!

Crepet introduces me to his assistant. I know her too!

I genuinely know her. She's from Forlì and was my best friend's girlfriend when we were young.

My ten minutes fly by. From the control room, Guardì prompts me to talk and show the pop-ups. Fake applause in the background. I'm allowed to stay and watch the show. Meanwhile, a magician is getting ready to perform around noon. He's very nervous. He has to thrust a sword into a box where his assistant is lying. His hands tremble from the excitement. He fears making a mistake.

In less than 5 seconds, Guardì changes the schedule. He asks me if I have more pop-ups to show, and I make a second appearance. The second segment goes very well, and Guardì himself comes over to shake my hand (another one for my handshake collection). In the following days, I enjoyed a bit of fame in my city. Some greeted me on the street, and even at the supermarket, the cashier recognized me and said, "Aren't you that famous guy from TV?" We don't realize the impact. 20 minutes on a show had done that for me. What about those who appear every day?

At Bim Bum Bam, I'm there for an entire week. Well, figuratively speaking. Because in just one day, we record all five episodes where I appear for ten minutes each day. A delightful experience.



I adore cats. Ever since I was a child. Here's my kitty, my princess, and also my only model (over 3,000 photos and videos in her first 8 years). Her name is Lilli, but also Milli, or Lilli Milli, or even Piccina, Puccina, or simply Gattina!

I registered on Instagram (where I have zero posts) not to showcase my work, but to follow 340 "Cat lovers" profiles! Every day I look at more cat pictures and videos than people.

Chapter 23

Me and... The Pooh

I have already spoken, or will speak (I can't quite remember), about the requests I've received to design pop-ups. This one is curious, because it took me back in time.

May 1979.

I was returning from Monza where I had attended a course as a cashier for Credito Italiano. Back then, I had a second-hand Dyane that consumed more oil than gasoline.

I stopped at a gas station near Milan. On the seat of my car, a cassette recorder was blaring. It was playing Inti Illimani's "El pueblo unido," which I loved singing at the top of my lungs when I was alone in the car.

Behind me, a long white car, almost as long as the gas station itself, pulled up.

A few young men got out; they seemed slightly older than me.

The gas station attendant was taking his time, and my recorder was flooding the station with the notes of the Chilean band.

It was just me and the gentlemen behind me.

We exchanged several glances.

Then, a visual memory clicked: they were the Pooh!

Worlds away from the music I was listening to, but icons of Italian pop music.

The attendant finally came over; we refueled, and before I even started my Dyane, their torpedo-like car was already on the highway.

Back then, I didn't even know what a pop-up was.

Fast forward 32 years, fate had us cross paths again, and I designed the pop-up stage for their boxed set "Dove comincia il sole," the best-selling album in Italy in 2011.

Red Canzian showcased my pop-up in various interviews, and sometimes he spoke more about it than the songs on the CD.

He must have really liked it.



Me and... Agostino Traini and... the "Mucca Moka" cow pop-up

Chapter 24

A unique banker?

For twenty years in the bank, I was a trainer and supported the newly hired.

Oddly enough, the bank seemed to trust me a lot.

I was a good cashier, loved the customers, and viewed my job more as a service to them than to the bank.

Every year, in May, bankers received their report card (I don't know if it's still the practice).

It wasn't tied to any financial reward based on the rating; however, being deemed "insufficient" was always unpleasant.

I always received an EXCELLENT rating (I'd say an academic A+). Only one year was I rated DISTINGUISHED with the following reason: "Missiroli, you are too much on the side of the clients."

Whose side was I supposed to be on?

After all, they were the ones providing me with work.

I took that DISTINGUISHED rating in stride, which became EXCELLENT again the following year. Not because my way of operating had changed, but perhaps because there was a change in the head of personnel.

Who knows...

During my time as a banker, I was moved to the financial product sales sector for a year.

I warned in advance those who were changing my role and responsibilities.

I was not skilled at selling.

Selling is a professional skill that I don't possess.

Never had it.

In a year, I never sold anything.

Because for every product I "had to" sell, I would first read and explain the tiny-print clauses, and then I would talk about interest rates.

You know when you go to the counter and the cashier asks, more or less subtly, if you need that particular service the bank offers?

Such torment and annoyance.

This was the reality of universal banks that in those years became commercial banks. You go to the bank to cash a check and come out with a credit card.

Then you wonder at home... will I really need it? Why did I say yes to the cashier offering it to me?

But the most beautiful thing was this. (The story is left hanging, awaiting continuation...)

In those years, to motivate employees, the bank occasionally recognized the "most commercially skilled" cashiers with a sort of "ranking".

When the ranking for cashiers in Emilia-Romagna was announced, I was at the very bottom.

Completely unskilled.

With me, you could comfortably cash a check and leave without having a credit card.

I would offer, the customer would hesitate, and I... why push?

How would you like the check's amount? Are 20s okay?

Goodbye, and maybe think about the credit card, it might be useful... perhaps we'll discuss it again next time.

The bank asked me for explanations.

I was doing my job honestly. I proposed, but I never triggered that mechanism that ultimately convinced the customer.

Honest and sincere motivations.

So, they took me to the personnel manager on the third floor, and I was told his "reprimands" could be heard on the ground floor. What angered him the most was when I responded that in every ranking, there always has to be someone in the last place.

I shouldn't have said that.

But it's true.

In the end, I must say, I have always been grateful for my job at the bank.

The job, the "real" one, has always essentially remained the banking job.

The cashier job, which I never disliked.

One day, unintentionally, I overheard an exchange between my cashier colleague and a customer cashing a check.

To identify him, he asked for an ID card.

Upon reaching the profession line, he read: "Poet".

He looked up at the customer, stared at him, and asked: "And your real job, the one with which you pay rent and bills?"

That's what I mean by a "real" job.

Everything else was a hobby, professionalized, but still a hobby.

There might be contracts, but there might also not be any.

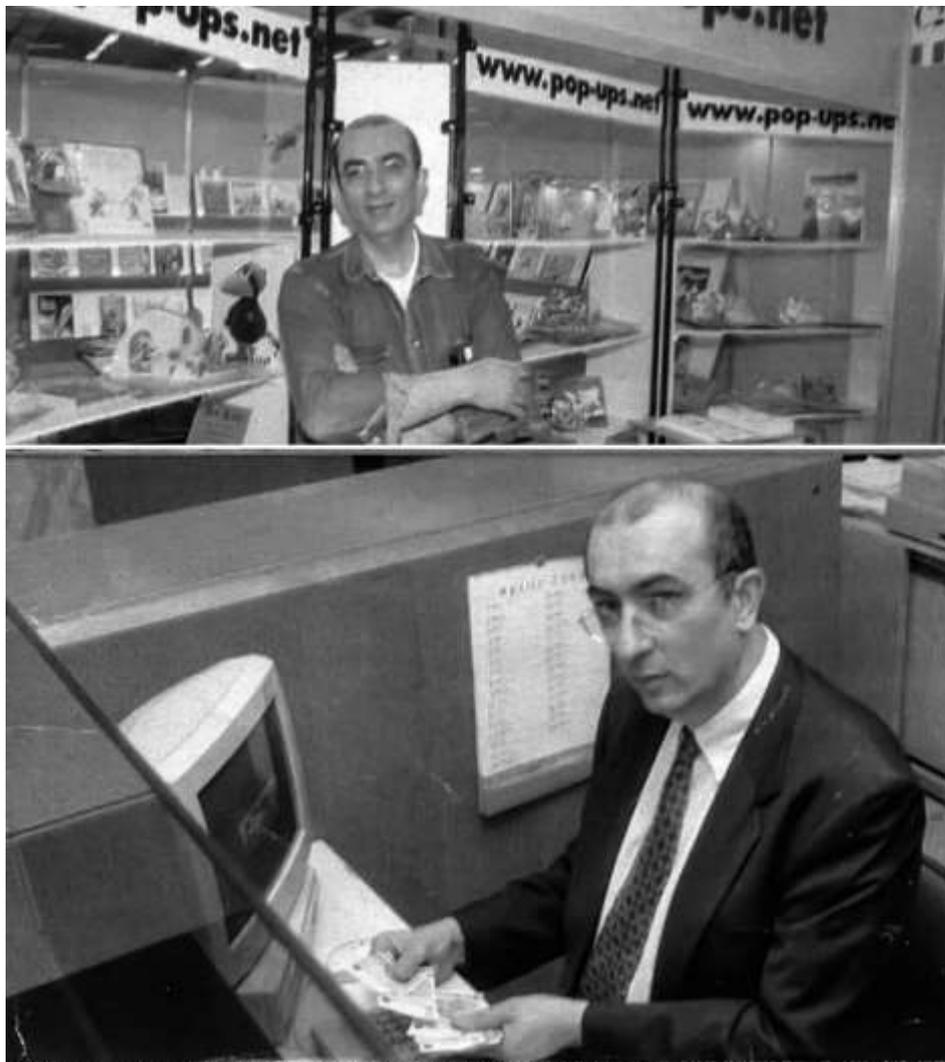
It wasn't the primary motivation that made me want to work on an editorial project.

What's the difference?

In publishing, even now as a self-publisher, I did absolutely everything I wanted, with no constraints.

When I was asked to do something I wasn't interested in, I declined within seconds.

I find that a significant distinction.



Journalist Renata Maderna wrote an article for Famiglia Cristiana.

Interviewers always seem intrigued by the contrast between my life as a bank teller in the morning and a pop-up designer in the afternoon.

But I'm not a downtrodden Fantozzi at the bank.

You've understood that, right?

I'm happy doing both jobs.

However, I play along when they suggest emphasizing the two lives by photographing me dressed differently.

So, I accept the contrast.

In jeans at the Book Fair for Children and in a strict "suit and tie" in the bank cashier's booth.

The Famiglia Cristiana editorial team asks permission to enter the bank after 5 pm for some photos in the cashier area.

I have my shirt, but I lack a jacket, so a colleague lends me his, and another lends his tie. Now, I look exactly like a cashier, and they take pictures.

Never dressed like this at the bank.

After the photographer leaves, the bank manager approaches me and says, "Missiroli, you see, you look good in a suit and tie, why don't you dress like that tomorrow as well?"

Chapter 25

The flea markets

I've hardly ever bought pop-up books at flea markets.

For one simple reason.

If I see a pop-up book I like, I start exclaiming, "I want it! I want it! I want it!" And if that book costs ten euros, by the third "I want it," the price has already gone up to 50.

So, I had found another way.

A colleague of mine, who collected postcards, visited all the flea markets in Romagna.

If he came across a pop-up, he'd look for the nearest phone booth (smartphones weren't a thing yet) and call me. After reading me the title and describing the book, he'd ask me over the phone how much it might be worth and how much he could haggle down the price.

He was brilliant. In this way, he bought my first antique books at the right price.

The same thing happened when he went to antique dealers.

One day, he got a tip.

He saw some cut-out engravings and didn't know what they were used for. But he was intrigued.

I knew, and I told him.

They could be plates for an optical theater.

But to be sure, I had to go to that shop myself and hold back my exclamations.

He gave me the address of the antique dealer.

It was in Bologna.

The plates were just thrown there, on a table among many other engraving plates.

Here's how it went.

Do you have any antique prints?

Yes, of course, look on that table.

How curious, there are some plates with holes in them.

Did you notice? All cut out in the middle. What's the point?

They ruined the beauty of these engravings. I wonder what was drawn in the center.

Look at the back: the backing is definitely 18th-century paper.

Are you selling them?

I should throw them away, but if you want them...

I like them, but they're pierced. How many are there?

There are six; give me a Bernini (remember the "old coinage"?)

I'm a bit embarrassed to ask for so much.

He had just sold me a series of engravings for a theatrical diorama.

All'amico Massimo "Missile" Missiroli
che sfreccia nella terza dimensione
Agostino



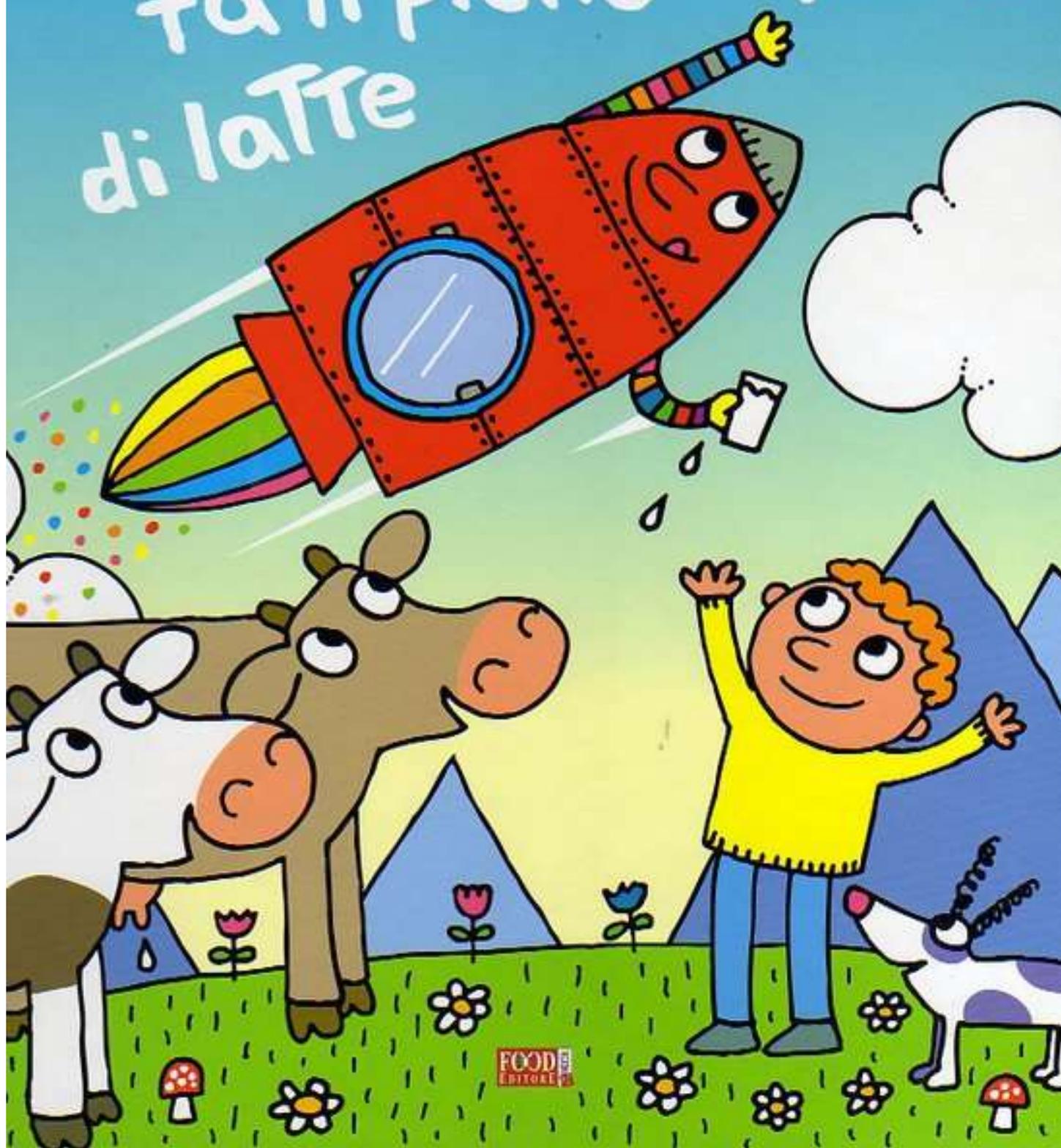
*To my friend Massimo "Missile" Missiroli who zooms into the third dimension
Agostino*

When Agostino Traini told me I'd become a character in one of his children's books, I thought: has he turned me into a knight? Or a charming prince? Or a magician? No, I was a Missile (Missile rhymes with Missiroli) and in the initial drafts, I held a pair of scissors in one hand and a glue stick in the other. Which then became a glass of milk in the final version of: "Massimo Missile fuels up on milk" (Food Publisher). A missile that doesn't pollute with fuel because his tank is filled with milk. What a wonderful gift you gave me, Ago! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Massimo Missile fa il pieno di latte



Agostino Traini



Chapter 26

Me and... David A. Carter

As long as I was a collector, I chased pop-up designers who were at the Bologna Children's Book Fair to get their autograph in the book. Even better, a dedication along with the autograph.

Then in the '90s, I began to create books myself, and from that moment on, even if I wasn't among the most skilled, the other authors and I exchanged books with dedications and autographs (I probably made books for this reason as well). So, when the book "Le sculture da viaggio di Munari," created for Corraini by David A. Carter, was published, the publishing house called me.

"Missiroli, we have a book for you. There's a dedication for you."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"We want to send it to you."

"Ma'am, don't bother. There's the Fair in Bologna next week. Bring it to me there. We even have stands close to each other."

"But it has a dedication, Missiroli. David A. Carter asked us to send it to you."

I received the book.

I look for the dedication and signature. I have other books signed by David; he writes in big letters with a thick-tipped marker.

I flip through the book and then go back through it again.

Where's the dedication?

And the autograph?

Nothing.

I can't find either the dedication or the signature.

I call back Corraini Publishing House.

"Ma'am, I've received the book."

"Well, are you happy?"

"Ma'am, I think you sent me the wrong book because there's no dedication."

"What, you didn't see it?"

"Ma'am, I've looked carefully, but I can't find it. It's not there."

"Missiroli, look at the colophon."

I can't believe it!

He hadn't given me a dedication: he had dedicated the entire book to me!

David, what a wonderful gift you gave me!

David A. Carter
Le sculture da viaggio di Munari

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I dedicated the book to you as my way of saying thank you for the positive work you do for pop-ups. So thank you:)

Chapter 27

Me and... Disney

Let's turn the page and go back to 1993, to the Bologna Children's Book Fair: I wasn't yet known in the pop-up designer community or at least, I was semi-known.

In short, I had a stand from the previous year: but I was still just a collector.

I needed something to make me memorable.

If you have only a few seconds to introduce yourself to a manager, what can you do to impress them?

Create for them, whether him or her, the most "personal" item in paper manufacturing: a pop-up business card with their name, the publisher's logo, and some paper mechanics idea.

The approach worked with some large corporations, who then contacted me.

But my ultimate goal was American Disney.

Because, come on, whatever you may think, Disney is Disney.

I prepare a business card with Mickey Mouse's ears and write on it the name of Thea, the General Manager of Disney Press.

In October, I'm in Frankfurt for the Buchmesse.

Together with Claudio, a friend who shares my passion for Disney productions.

As always, Disney's booth is tightly secured.

You could only enter with Harry Potter's invisibility cloak, but it isn't on the market yet.

I try to get in multiple times, but sadly my approaches aren't successful.

It's the last day of the Fair.

I haven't made it.

I encounter a 3-meter tall Mickey and Minnie. Giant mascots that roam the fair distributing flyers.

I gift the business card to Minnie.

She thanks me in some manner; understandably, from inside that massive costume.

I go home disappointed.

I postpone my foray until the next year's Bologna fair.

But... a DHL express package from New York arrives at home.

It doesn't have pop-up ears, but there are certainly ears on the envelope.

Inside, I find one of those artistic books that only Hyperion knew how to print and a letter.

"A colleague handed me this card. Truly ingenious. I will certainly print it."
Fantastic!

If someone appreciates what I do, I press on and raise the bar each time.

As Christmas approaches, I decide I can make a lovely pop-up cardboard box with many images of Disney characters. Inside, I put plastic straw to protect my gift to Ms. Thea.

Lindor chocolate balls.

But with a small addition.

All of them have grown Mickey Mouse ears.

The exchange of packages continues, and in the second thank you, there's also an invitation to meet at the Bologna Book Fair.

In Bologna, as in all fairs I believe, those who have an interest turn to those who can provide an answer.

And so, on the first day of the Fair, the executive team of American Disney Press enters my modest stand.

It's not just about prestige, mind you.

I give it my all.

The meeting lasts the typical half hour.

I make them laugh.

They can't believe that I work as a bank cashier. And in any case, they tell me that even if I were a gigolo, I am so skilled at handling cardstock with folds and counter-folds that they are interested in my ideas.

They bid me farewell with this request: I should create for them a very important book, the story of Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse in pop-up version.

Projected prints: not just many... a huge amount, and in almost 30 different countries as co-editions.

This was the only time in my life when I imagined a rain of dollars falling on me as if I were Scrooge McDuck in his money bin.

We said our goodbyes.

I was so determined that in less than a week, the working copy of the book was already in New York.

After a short time, I receive a response, from Ms. Thea herself: the book is spectacular!

How did it end?

Everything was ready to go to print.

However, as a freelancer, I had yet to receive the pre-contract, nor even a gentlemen's agreement.

And on a Friday evening, I experienced first-hand the saying: fired on a Friday evening for the following Monday.

The news came to me via fax.

Mr. Roy Disney had restructured the company, Ms. Thea no longer worked for Disney Press, and so, that evening, all my work was lost within American Disney. And I wasn't even able to retrieve the draft of my book, lost in the Disney studios...

During those years, this wasn't my only contact with Disney.

I also did projects for Eurodisney and for Disney Italy which, uniquely in my history as an author, paid me for the work even though they never printed the book.



Me and Steve. I consider him the true model of a publisher (for the idea I have of what it means to be a publisher).

How fortunate to have met him.

Chapter 28

Esslinger: round trip

Years later, I had already published my first pop-up books.

It was a Tuesday in July. The Schreiber publishing house wrote to me, proposing that I create another book for them.

If I had accepted, they would have sent me the book to work on during the week, and I could have delivered the first draft by November, after about five months.

I accepted.

The DHL express package arrived the following Friday morning.

I quickly glanced through the book.

Before leaving the bank that evening, I requested three days off for the following week.

I would start working on it the next day.

By Saturday morning, in less than four hours, the book was finished.

And then what? Wait until November? But it was only July 7th.

Since it was Saturday, I could still call the editor of the publishing house. I had her personal number.

Luckily, she spoke Italian because her grandparents were from Parma.

I asked her if I could go to Esslinger to deliver the draft.

She couldn't believe that I already had a copy ready and said, "It just arrived yesterday! Alright, we'll expect you in Esslinger on Monday morning."

We packed our bags and planned our departure. Two stops. The first in Vipiteno, and the next day, we set off for Germany.

The entire editorial staff was waiting for me. I opened my backpack and pulled out the dummy book.

I handed it to the editorial director who began to leaf through it.

Silence.

He finished browsing and smiled, saying, "Perfekt! Das ist gut." (Perfect! It's good as it is).

And we signed the contract.



Shanghai. International Children's Book Fair.

The Popupshow exhibit is the guest of honor. A success!

One of the executives of the Chinese Communist Party arrives from Beijing.

With him, the mayor of Shanghai and Donna Chai, the General Manager of the Fair.

What a thrill!

Another handshake for my collection. No, this one doesn't count because it was photographed. My collection consists only of personal handshakes, not public ones.

Chapter 29

Me and... Mauricio de Sousa

Every year, at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, in the publisher/exhibitor kit, there were also bookmarks that could be inserted into new book releases. They had printed on them the YEAR, the word "NOVITA" (new), and the phrase "NEW TITLES."

Since I didn't always have new books, I used these materials to present myself as a new editorial feature, because every year I always had something new to offer to publishers. I would stick the "NOVITA" bookmark onto my denim shirt with double-sided tape.

In 1998, Mauricio de Sousa also attended.

He was in Italy to kick off a massive Rai-Rete/Globo production with his animated characters. Monica is one of them, perhaps the most well-known. In Brazil, Mauricio de Sousa is more famous than Disney, much more so. I was told that back in those years, I don't know about now, there were no Disneyland parks in Brazil, only theme parks featuring Monica and entertainment related to her.

Every child in Brazil reads his stories.

A Brazilian friend of mine saw the evening news and called me, begging me to ask De Sousa for a drawing of Monica with a dedication.

The next morning, I approached, but his stand was heavily guarded.

De Sousa approached me and smiled, looking at my "novelty" badge.

He spoke Portuguese, I spoke Italian; we kind of understood each other.

He asked why I was considered a novelty, and I told him about pop-ups.

He was unfamiliar with them.

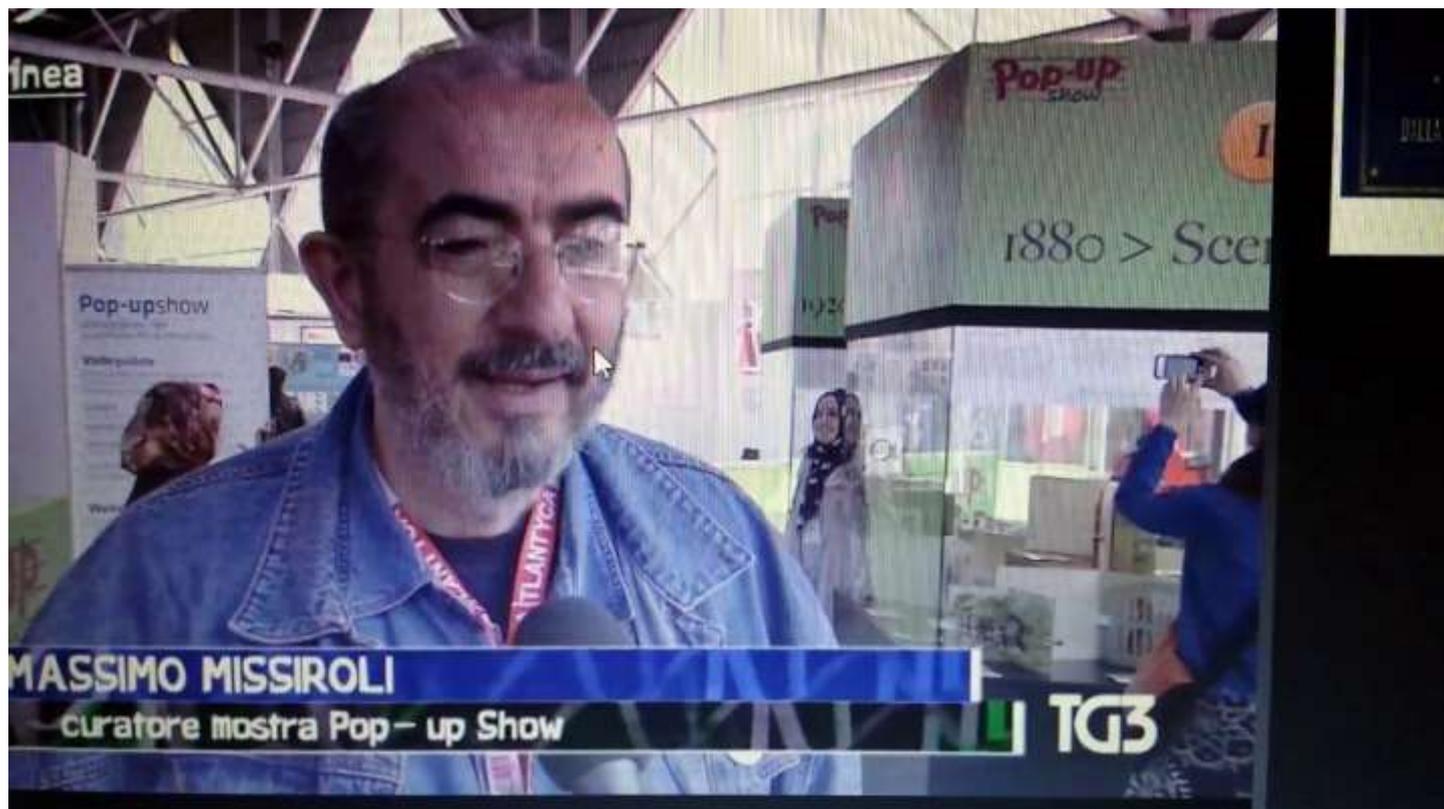
He asked to see some. I took him to my stand. He was very curious. As soon as he began looking at them, I could tell he was thinking of something beyond just those books.

He gave me a drawing of Monica and a dedication on a piece of cardboard I just happened to have in my stand.

The next day he returned with some managers from his publishing house.

He asked me to create a line of pop-up cards featuring his characters to be sold in the shops of his theme parks. I prepared them for him. They turned out quite nice.

Not all projects turn into actual editorial products, but I did manage to produce something. I learned a lot, and I earned a handshake (for my collection).



In this interview on TG 3 (National network), I present the exhibition "Pop-up Show", during the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 2017.

I display some of the most interesting books from my collection.

However, it was hard selecting only 150 / 200 out of 5,000.

For me, they are not just books because most are tied to a memory from one of my past lives.

I will never stop thanking the Bologna Children's Book Fair, especially the General Manager Elena Pasoli, for this opportunity and for inaugurating this new adventure.

Chapter 30

To me, she's just Giovanna

Giovanna Casotto became famous after appearing several times on the "Maurizio Costanzo Show". She tells her story as a woman who, abandoned by her husband with two daughters, works as a cleaning lady during the day and attends a comic book course in the evening, discovering she has an immense talent. Even before she finishes the course, her first book is published, selling thousands of copies worldwide.

She isn't just a beautiful woman. In the eyes of her readers, she transforms into a rebellious pin-up who draws erotic comics. This image couldn't be further from who she truly is.

How do I know her?

I hardly ever watch TV, and rarely do I watch the Fininvest channels, but I do watch "Mai dire gol". By pure chance, the TV was left on and a program hosted by Enrico Ruggeri, "IL BIVIO", started.

There's usually a moderately famous guest. They introduce and interview him or her. Then, an even more famous person enters and makes a proposal—hence the "crossroads" or "bivio".

That evening, Giovanna Casotto was the guest, and the person offering the "crossroads" was Tinto Brass. He proposed she stops drawing erotic comics and instead stars as the lead actress in his next films. Apparently, Tinto Brass had drawn inspiration from some of her comics. Giovanna declined, deciding to continue her work in comics. I became curious.

I searched on Google.

I wanted to meet her.

I found the contact details of her agent. I randomly chose 3-4 illustrations and that very evening, I prepared their pop-up versions. I sent everything to her agent who replied a few days later, informing me that Ms. Casotto liked them and wanted to meet me.

Great, I'd go to Milan.

There I was, seated at a three-meter-long table, with Giovanna Casotto far across from me. In between us sat her agent. He excused himself for just a moment, and in that brief interlude, Giovanna and I exchanged smiles and phone numbers. When he returned, Giovanna and I reverted to our formal interactions.

I have been a guest at her home on the outskirts of Milan.

I was introduced to her new husband, whom she adores, and her daughters, the only reason for her living. Together, we built the website to promote her work. She provided the guidance, and I, having knowledge of web programming, executed it. And I assure you, placing a drawing of a gang-bang on the homepage and then seeing her in slippers, wearing baggy sweatpants and a sweater, with no makeup and her hair pulled up haphazardly while preparing a meal, truly makes you realize the disparity between who you are and who others perceive you to be.

And as she has me taste a Milanese cutlet, she uses the same tone of voice to ask, "Massimo, do you think it's cooked right?" The same tone she employs to suggest, "Should we put a nice drawing of a super-sized bosom or a nice derrière here?" I love contrasts. Provocations. Perhaps that's why I'm so fond of Maurizio's works. They say, "artists provoke." I'm not an artist, but I do like to provoke occasionally. One year, I sent all my American friends a video of that unfortunate Iraqi whom American soldiers made mimic a Christmas tree in the Abu Ghraib prison, with Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" playing in the background. It was the year of the American tortures of innocent Iraqis in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. Many didn't take it well. Had I been an artist, perhaps...

Sooner or later, Giovanna and I will produce a book together; it's just that neither of us has been able to convince the other. I'd like to make a book on Marilyn Monroe, while she's keen on the very sexy pin-up, Bettie Page. Maybe in the end, we'll compromise and create a book that's half and half, focused solely on pin-ups. For years she's been exclusively creating watercolors and pencil drawings, but for everyone, she remains the sexy illustrator who sketches in the nude. Such is the power of marketing and how you can sell what the public wants.

She once told me something quite wonderful: "Massimo, if instead of Tinto Brass, it had been you on that show offering me a 'crossroad' to start making pop-ups, I would have said YES!"



My avatar interviewed by Rai on "Le Parole per dirlo", a program about the Italian language aired on Sunday mornings on Rai Tre.

Chapter 31

To America and back

2007: another fair, another rush.

That time too, I hadn't managed to prepare promotional material to distribute during the Fair. So, I had set up a photocopier at the booth.

The booth assigned to me that year was in the American publishers' pavilion, and many passed by my stand every morning, greeting me. Among them was the new staff of White Heat, from which Jim Roger Diaz had departed.

That morning they stopped by, handed me some illustrated sheets, and asked to see how I could transform them into pop-ups. They didn't specify a deadline for return, so I handed them back their 3D illustrations that very evening.

I sensed their interest. They invited me to work with them in the United States.

We would finalize things the next day.

Up until that point, the worlds of banking and books had moved parallel to one another, without intersecting.

Now they were about to converge.

But I wasn't aware yet.

I had invited the head of HR from the regional bank office, as I had always done since I had the booth at the Fair, but no one had ever shown up.

This time, however, the HR chief accepted.

We spent the entire afternoon together, I introduced him to many friends.

He enjoyed this unfamiliar world.

That evening, I mentioned to him the job offer to work in Texas for a few months, and he assured me, "I'll do everything to get you the leave of absence."

The parallel worlds had drawn closer but did not clash.

I pondered all night. Yes, I'll give it a shot.

I would work in the US for a few months.

I won't detail all the forms, declarations, and scout promises you must go through to get the visa.

Because it wasn't the standard 90-day tourist visa.

It was a nine-month work visa.

I approached the American consulate in Milan.

Everything was set for departure, including my flight ticket.

I understood the difference between an American and an Italian worker (at least for certain categories).

I would have lived in Allen, near Dallas,

It was supposed to be like a job internship.

I would have learned and, importantly, at the end of that period, I could continue working from Forlì, what we would now call remotely.

A perfect arrangement for someone like me who didn't want to relocate.

At the consulate, not everyone seemed friendly.

They ushered us into a large hall where they called us up to grant our visas.

A guy beside me reassured me, saying it's just a formality.

He had been shuttling between Milan and Miami for years.

"Missiroli!"

It was my turn. I approached the counter.

An official, who strongly reminded me of Sergeant Hartman from Full Metal Jacket, looked at me. I didn't dare meet his gaze.

I sensed what was about to happen.

He grabbed a pen, holding it as if ready to slash the car of his worst enemy.

He drew a giant "X" across my application and said: visa denied. I would only see their country through postcards!

On my way back, I tried to sort everything out. The HR chief canceled the leave of absence. It was a close call. The request was ready to be dispatched.

It wasn't meant for work. I create children's books.

A thousand thoughts swirled in my mind.

But I like to think that among those denied US visas were Che (when he made the 1964 speech at the UN), Fidel Castro, and Charlie Chaplin.

I felt in good company.

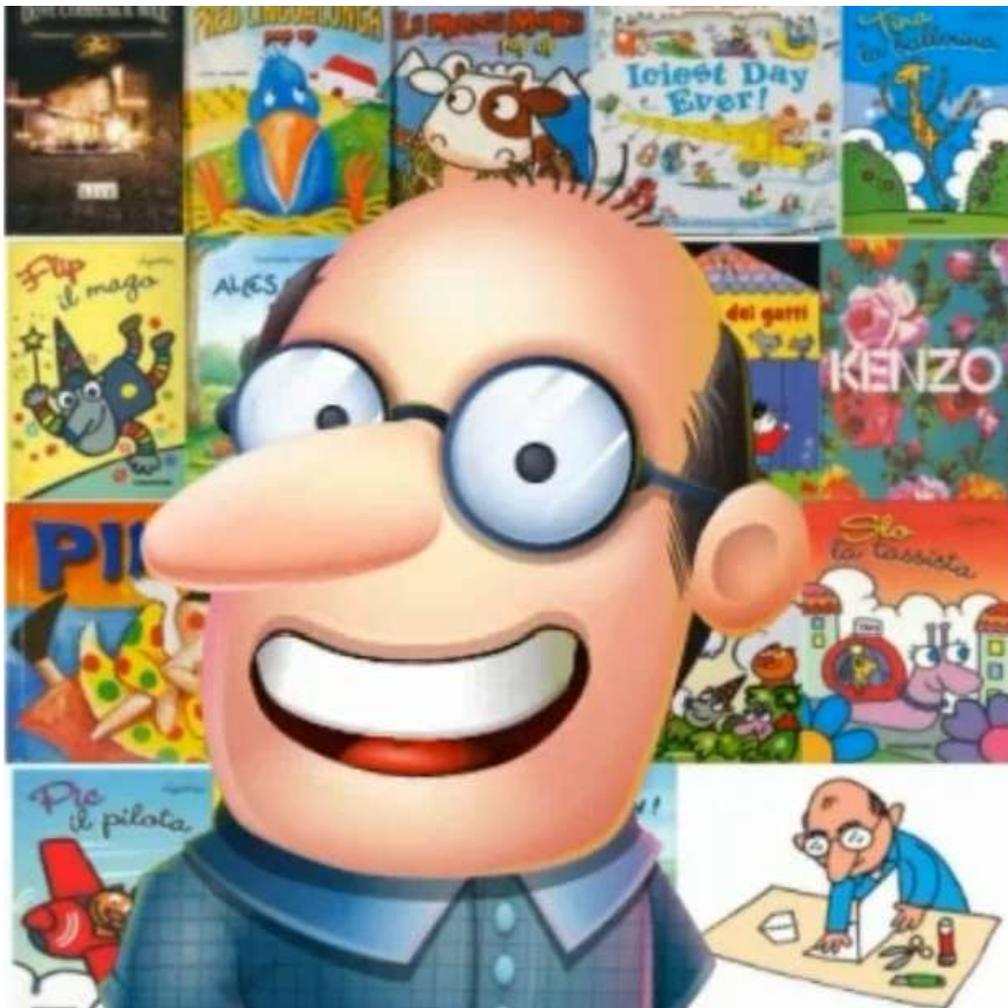
I would never be able to enter the U.S., and I'd never know the reason for my visa denial.

In 2022, after creating a book with Che's daughter titled "Che Guevara Explained to Children", the American Embassy in Rome denied my visa for the second time.

Who knows...

I also made a movie with Chaplin, whom Senator McCarthy no longer wanted in the U.S.

I certainly do everything to not get that visa.



My animated avatar. This is an electronic puppet made for me by an animation studio.

I used it for a while during interviews.

The electronic puppet is a cartoon that mimics exactly what I do in front of a camera.

This cartoon-making technique is called: "real animation."

This animated character can speak with my voice or a synthetic voice generated by an artificial intelligence program.

Chapter 32

Me and... Kenzo

Around 2010: I was approached by an advertising agency from Milan working for Antonio Marras, the artistic director of the fashion house Kenzo.

It was the 40th anniversary of the maison, and a grand fashion show was in the works.

They inquired if I felt up to creating a pop-up invitation for VIPs based on some sketches by Kenzo.

I agreed, and the drafts arrived: Japan in Paris.

A fan bearing the Japanese flag, set as a backdrop to the Eiffel Tower, surrounded by many flowers.

My pop-up was sent to Paris and was well-received. However, they wanted it bigger - as large as the book that Skira, Rizzoli International, and Rizzoli USA were about to publish.

A massive 400-page book showcasing the most beautiful shots captured by renowned photographers at his fashion shows over forty years.

Kenzo specifically designed all the fabric patterns for the flowers that would be incorporated into the book.

He envisioned a large pop-up to be embedded within the book, and so it was.

Once the work was completed, they gifted me one of the extra-special VIP copies prepared for the fashion show, which even came with a unique fabric tote bag.

From then on, the "Kenzo" book was dubbed "Kenzo pop-up".

Don't believe me? Try typing it into Google.

A few years later, executives from the MoMA's bookstore wanted to produce a breakfast tray featuring a shot of the pop-up.

Thus, I made an entry into MoMA with a pop-up. However, it wasn't truly "mine" as the colophon only listed the name of the agency that oversaw the entire production and design.

Absent was the customary line in a pop-up book where the name of the pop-up designer should be.

Such a shame!



The MOMA Museum of Modern Art in New York made, with the photo of the pop-up I designed for the Kenzo book, a breakfast placemat that was sold in the museum's bookstore: in this way, I somehow also entered the temple of Art.

Chapter 33

Massimo Missiroli, Pop-Up Publisher

In 2020, like the rest of the world, I found myself confined to my home. With me, my projects remained at a standstill.

In recent years, I had showcased my collection in an exhibition, curated with my friend Matteo Faglia. The books we chose traveled to places as diverse as Shanghai and the United Arab Emirates, among many others.

Remember those months, right? Frozen in time, only able to leave home for work, grocery shopping, or doctor visits. Yet, I couldn't stand still and my imagination persisted.

This confinement spurred me to fulfill another dream: establishing my own publishing house to bring my projects to life.

Massimo Missiroli Editore: It has a certain ring to it, reminiscent of Arnoldo Mondadori Editore or Silvio Berlusconi Editore. Who would guess it's a one-man show? Just the publisher, and that's it. Now, I've adopted a new title: "Massimo Missiroli, pop-up publisher."

Massimo Missiroli Editore signifies a new beginning for me, a fresh chapter in my life.

I've crafted six books in two years, virtually single-handedly (excluding the actual printing, of course).

It's important to note, for those unfamiliar with the industry, that producing a pop-up book is a Herculean endeavor. It demands a dedicated team, and in Italy, it's a challenge to find publishing houses equipped for such a task.

Need proof? Browse the colophon of numerous pop-ups. Only one or two will be produced in Italy by Italian authors. The majority are manufactured in the USA, with Italian publishers merely translating and printing the localized version.

This new chapter in my life has led me to numerous acquaintances.

I crafted a book with Che Guevara's daughter (and then wonder why the U.S. denied my visa), and later a pop-up featuring scenes from "The Great Dictator," collaborating with the Chaplin family. I was even granted permission to include Chaplin's moving speech from the film's conclusion. By scanning a QR code, one can view that iconic scene. This venture sparked a partnership with the Chaplin Foundation and the global Chaplin museum in Corsier-sur-Vevey. Together, we're already brainstorming our next project centered on the beloved Tramp character.

In my book "Buon Natale," renowned Russian pianist Lola Astanova graciously allowed me to feature her Christmas medley. And in "Le parole della Pace," the artist Maurizio Cattelan illustrated the cover's dove.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Arman Atoyan, CEO of Arloopa Inc., who granted me the rights to incorporate augmented reality markers into my pop-ups. As a result, readers can discover multimedia content within the pages of my books, all since 2020.

For my pop-up rendition of The Divine Comedy - Inferno, my friend Marco Sabiu composed a soundtrack, which readers can experience via their smartphones while browsing the book. Additionally, you can watch scenes from two 1910 Italian films, which drew inspiration from Dorè's illustrations. In my other books, readers can enjoy musical pieces, cartoons, or footage.

I believe this melding of paper and augmented reality will usher the publishing world of the third millennium into a new era.

And in this evolution, I proudly see myself as a trailblazer.



È domenica PAPA 

Rai.it 

Me and... Armando Traverso (famous italian anchorman)

I participate in the special Easter episode of "È domenica Papà," broadcast from the Antoniano of Bologna.

Chapter 34

For important people

If you write a book and wish to send it to significant figures (you'll determine who's important to you), don't hesitate. Do it. The worst that can happen? They might discard it and not respond. I had never done it for any of my books before, but last year I decided to give it a shot.

And the addresses? Simple.

The President of the Republic?

Quirinale.

Pope Francis?

Vatican.

They are prominent figures; you don't need to provide detailed addresses to get a book to them. Trust me, they'll receive it.

And so, I head to the post office. I have about ten envelopes, each containing a book. I don't recognize the postal worker. Each package reads "registered book parcel." The worker starts processing the packages.

The postal worker reads the first address and probably thinks, "Sending a book to the Minister of Culture makes sense. I wonder what book it is?"

Second envelope: "Oh, he's writing to the Foreign Affairs Minister as well."

Third envelope: "To the Esteemed President of the Republic."

The worker's curiosity begins to pique.

The fourth envelope is addressed to the Holy Father.

At this point, the clerk probably thinks, "This has to be some sort of prank."

But he remains silent, retaining his composure and playing along.

Fifth envelope... To the President of France.

"Why would he care about receiving a book in Italian?"

Sixth envelope... Directed to the President of the European Central Bank.

Who knows what was running through the mind of that postal worker?

He probably expected me to suddenly show him a sign reading: "Smile, you're on a prank show!"

But nothing. All the envelopes are processed.

I pay and bid him goodbye.

Every single one of them responded and expressed their gratitude.

Incredible, isn't it?



Behind me is the caricature that has accompanied me for over 20 years, made by my friend Agostino Traini.



A page from the Korean edition of the book on jobs written and illustrated by Agostino Traini and published by Editoriale Scienza - Trieste.

The two translated cartoons:

- Who is this person?
- He makes pop-ups!

Chapter 35

Cattelan can't be here with us

I hadn't mentioned Maurizio Cattelan for a while, but we remained friends.

When we were seeing each other, he was already an artist, and I, on the other hand, had my crafts. I made flip books (and taught him to create one) and pop-ups. I also gave him some technical advice on making a pop-up of one of his works, the RAUSS! immigrant team.

Maurizio had invented a soccer team, for which he designed a uniform that he had Senegalese workers from Amadori wear. Yes, the one known for chicken. He then brought them to Arte Fiera in Bologna, and his team played against the Cesena youth team, using a foosball table with 11 handles against 11 handles.

That year, it seemed that art critic Barilli stated that the only artwork worth seeing at Arte Fiera was Cattelan's 22-handle foosball table. Maurizio is often invited to receive awards, but sometimes he prefers not to attend in person.

In April 2012, he won two awards. One to be collected at the Maxxi in Rome and another at Sasso Marconi, in the villa that belonged to Guglielmo, known for the first radio transmission. Maurizio asked both Elio (yes, Elio from "Elio e le Storie Tese") and me to receive them on his behalf. Elio, always the character, went to the Maxxi in Rome, impersonated Cattelan for those unfamiliar with him, and even signed autographs. I, on the other hand, went to Sasso Marconi.

In a front-row seat was a sign reading: "Reserved for Maurizio Cattelan." The assumption was that whoever sat there was him. Beside it, another seat with "Reserved for Princess Elettra Marconi."

I can proudly say I've met and spent an entire day with a real princess, and for the first time, not within the pages of a fairy tale.

I was called onto the stage to receive the prestigious "Guglielmo Marconi" award. It was time for the thank you speech. I had the script in my pocket, previously agreed upon with Maurizio. Climbing the stage, I was incredibly nervous. My voice broke when I read that Cattelan "couldn't be with us." I reached for my handkerchief because, given the context and my emotions – after all, I'm a banker, not Cattelan – I was deeply moved. The next day, both La

Repubblica and Il Corriere della Sera would refer to me as a seasoned actor. While in my younger years, I wanted to be a theater actor and even took some courses with Dario Fo and later with the Daggide company, I had never imagined being called a "seasoned actor."

Some thought Cattelan was ill or even dead. Gallery owners and journalists in the audience began pulling out tablets and smartphones to confirm the news. The Foundation's president hugged me, whispering, "Had we known, we would've organized this event behind closed doors." Overwhelmed, I struggled to speak, almost breaking down in tears. This indirectly confirmed the sad rumor. But after regaining my composure, I clarified the misunderstanding and finished my speech.

The day continued, with many attendees approaching me with questions about Maurizio's artistic life. I could confidently answer because I knew so much about him. And so it went on until evening. I had "almost" been Cattelan for a day.

Yet, the true satisfaction came from Maurizio himself: he said the real award for him was my thank-you speech.



*When I collected the "Marconi Award" on behalf of Maurizio Cattelan, I met **a real princess**. Maria Elettra Marconi, daughter of Guglielmo Marconi. Here we pose for the present journalists.*

Chapter 36

Who killed grandma?

One day, a bank colleague of mine, aware that I work with children, asked for my help.

His daughter Anna is deeply attached to her paternal grandmother. She wants to visit her every day after leaving preschool. At the age of four, Anna has a small room at her grandmother's house, filled with toys just for her.

Unfortunately, the grandmother suddenly passes away.

My colleague doesn't know how to break the news to his daughter.

He is uncertain about what words to use with a 4-year-old when a family member dies. But that's not his immediate concern as he continues his tale.

He grapples with the situation on his own, thinking it over for days.

In the meantime, days go by and Anna wishes to visit her grandmother.

However, her grandmother isn't there. She's "on vacation."

Eventually, he picks Anna up, addresses the matter and says, "You see, Anna, grandma isn't here anymore; she's now watching over us from the sky. Grandma has passed away."

Curiously, Anna asks, "Who killed her?"

Now, it's where I come into the picture. Can I assist?

I'm also at a loss for words.

I ponder the thought that perhaps, given the considerable amount of TV she watches, this young girl believes people only die if someone kills them.

In the end, I create a simple three-double-page pop-up book for her, featuring three stories.

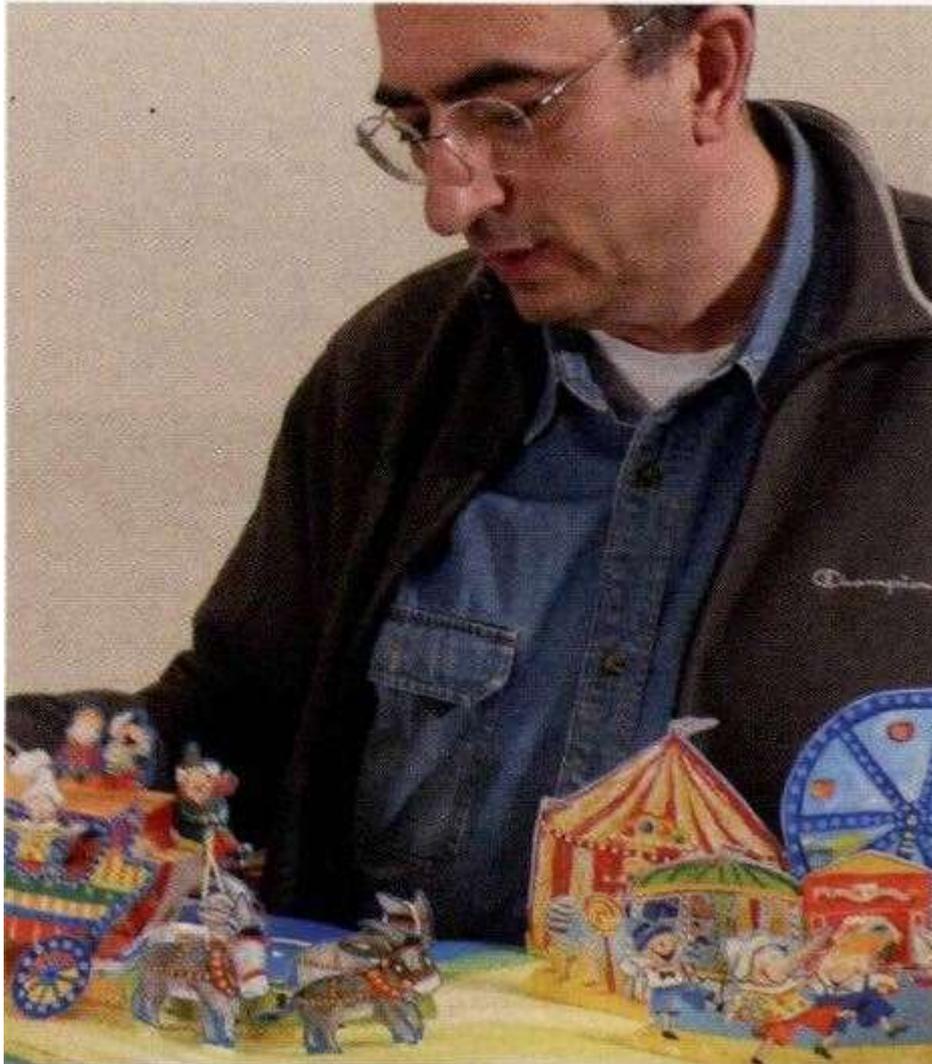
"You see, Anna, it might seem that Sleeping Beauty is dead, but the prince awakens her. Snow White isn't dead either, even if she's depicted lying in a glass coffin with the seven dwarves mourning her. The queen didn't kill her with the poisoned apple. A prince will save her."

Anna responds, "I understand, but what about Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother?"

I reply, "Look, Anna, on this last page we see Red Riding Hood's grandmother. She was swallowed by the wolf but didn't die. Later, the hunter rescues her, pulling her out alive from the wolf's belly. We don't even know if the wolf dies, since he later visits the three little pigs. In fairy tales, in stories, in books, characters aren't killed as they are on TV. Because in every book there's an encounter, a discovery, something that accompanies you."

Mind you, I've never read a book myself.

Massimo.



Me and my pop-up Pinocchio, illustrated by Lucia Salemi and published in 2002 by Emme edizioni - Trieste.

This is the first book I designed (designer's work) and for which I was also the paper-engineer.

At Intervisual, it was like this.

Expert paper engineers became designers and when they got a book request, they knew how to distribute story, text, and design across the typical six double pages.

It was then the paper engineer who created the paper constructions.

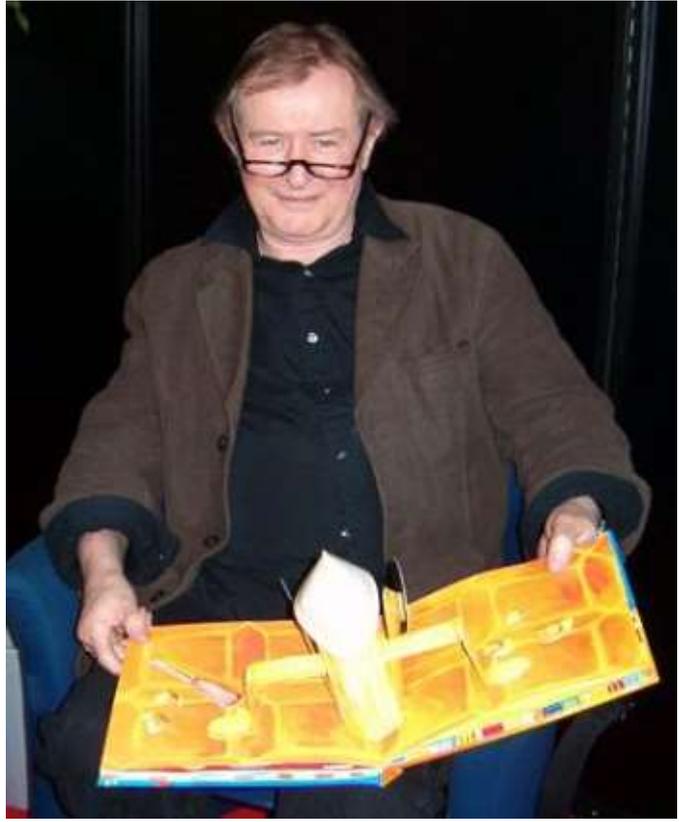
Somewhat like the architect and the engineer who design a house, and the master builder who constructs it.

The book received a Nomination for the Oscar of the most beautiful pop-up in the world for 2002-2003, the Meggendorfer Prize. The award every pop-up designer would want to win.

But from which side do you look?



David A. Carter



David Pelham



That morning, for two hours, I taught at the University, at the State University of Milan.

Me, who in 1979 had voted for DP (Proletarian Democracy), and with my vote had helped him get elected to the European Parliament, tried to breathe in the scent of student revolts with Capanna leading the rebels.

My story doesn't end here, but I choose to end it here.

I want to take this moment to extend special thanks to my friend Genny: without her, the pop-ups from my publishing house would have remained mere dummies.

I have omitted numerous anecdotes that perhaps could have been included. I could regale you with countless other tales that transpired while I was writing the book I co-authored with Aleida Guevara, those tied to the creation of the "The Great Dictator" pop-up book. I could tell you about my correspondence with the great-grandson of Sitting Bull.

But I could also speak of Elena and Marzia from the Bologna Children's Book Fair; Arusik, Deborah, Emma, Paolo, Guan, Monica, Matteo, Marco, Patrizia; the incredible Antonio who introduced me to Aleida and many places of commitment, courage, and wisdom; of Claudio, who dubbed me a "pop-uppist" (a pop-up artist) and wondered if his ideas were "pop-uppable" (could be transformed into pop-ups). With him, I shared a passion for illustrations and the beginnings of my life as a pop-up designer and publisher.

I could talk about all the people I have met over the past fifty years and with whom I have journeyed through the paths of my multiple lives, but for now, I'll stop here.

Later, I'd also like to discuss the audio CDs I produced under "Music in the Book." Or delve into augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and my virtual assistant Chat GPT (who wanted to contribute to the back cover of this book).

Each one represents a new life I'm currently living and that will lead me: "To infinity and beyond," as Buzz Lightyear famously proclaimed in Toy Story.

But this journey of tales and adventures is only a fraction of what life has presented to me. The chapters of my existence are filled with not just my experiences but also the countless interactions, emotions, and lessons learned from others.

Reflecting on it, life seems like a colossal pop-up book. Each page turn reveals a new dimension, an unexpected twist, or a hidden lesson that pops out, waiting to be discovered and appreciated. Sometimes, these pop-ups are straightforward, and other times they require a closer look to understand the intricate details and underlying meanings.

Just as in any pop-up book, there are delicate folds, fragile tabs, and complex layers that need careful handling. They represent the fragile moments of our lives, the intricate decisions we make, and the multi-faceted relationships we maintain.

My gratitude is boundless for everyone who has become a part of my story, even if just for a chapter or a fleeting paragraph. Your imprints have shaped the pages of my life, making each one rich, colorful, and unique.

As I look ahead, I know that many more pop-ups await, waiting for the right moment to spring into action. With anticipation and hope, I'm ready to turn the next page, embracing whatever surprises life has in store.

After all, isn't life the most beautiful pop-up book ever written? And just like any good story, it deserves to be shared, celebrated, and passed on.

Thank you for being a part of my narrative. I hope that in sharing my journey, I have added a little magic to yours. Here's to many more pages, many more pop-ups, and countless more adventures together!



Why to the cat Maru and not to me?

So: I don't have my own page on Wikipedia.

Wiki doesn't accept autobiographies. Because it has to be written by someone else, it has to be justified... in short, someone tried to propose it, but it's not there.

I'm a little disappointed by this, but there are criteria, and it's fine by me (I support Wikipedia, even financially. You should too, even if there's no page about your favorite pop-up designer).

But Wikipedia has a page on Maru.

Maru, that beautiful big cat who lives in Japan, is the most famous scottish straight on the web.

The cat that just acts like a cat without realizing that his videos are watched by millions of followers, with hundreds of millions of views every year.

What does Maru do? He eats, sleeps, and fits himself into every box in the house (he's very charming, though).

I am not at all envious of Maru.

I'm an avid follower of his on his YouTube channel, on his Instagram profile, and we're friends on Facebook.

Since I'm not on Wikipedia, I decided to write a series of anecdotes and memories from my life.

But me, who has never read a book, can only fold in books and doesn't know how to use words.

So I asked my friend Beniamino Sidoti to help me.

And Beniamino reads, cuts, pastes, lengthens, and shortens, and chooses.

We've come to this: it's what you've read.

And I will continue to write, to speak.

Look for me online. Meow

"Let's keep in touch!"

massimo.missiroli@gmail.com

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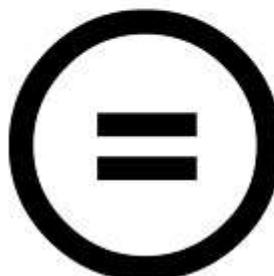
Compulsory - Must always **credit** me.

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Use it but don't make **money**

Non-Derivatives



Your version must **equal** mine - no changes

Share alike



If I allow you to change it, **repeat** my CC **licence**



AI Chat

Ciao ChatGPT, ho scritto un libro con la storia di una persona che non ha mai letto un libro. Che slogan potrebbe invogliare le persone a leggere un libro come questo?

"Scopri la magia della lettura con la storia di chi non ha mai aperto un libro prima d'ora!"

ChatGPT



Hi Chat GPT, I've written a book about the story of someone who has never read a book. What slogan might entice people to read a book like this?

"Discover the magic of reading with the story of someone who's never opened a book before!"