

**CON  
FIA**  
2019

7<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON  
ILLUSTRATION  
& ANIMATION  
**14-16 JUNE**  
VIANA DO CASTELO  
PORTUGAL





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## PREFACE

The 7th edition of CONFIA (International Conference of Illustration and Animation) will take place in Viana do Castelo, in the northwest of Portugal.

In this city, which expanded along the Lima River, we can admire different architectural styles, from “manuelino” to *Baroque*. The historic centre features narrow streets and alleys that form a circle outlined by the remains of the ancient walls. The main church (promoted to cathedral in 1977) goes back to the 15th century and is one of the most beloved monuments, along with Santa Luzia Hill, site of the Church of the *Sacred Heart of Jesus* (or Santa Luzia), inspired by the *Sacré-Coeur* in Paris. The hill gives visitors a breathtaking view of the city, the estuary of the Lima River and the ocean—the ocean that shares its scent with the city and provides sustenance to the Minho region.

CONFIA was created to provide an opportunity for students of the master’s in illustration and animation in the School of Design at the Polytechnic Institute of Cávado and Ave (IPCA) to hear from researchers and practitioners in the field and share their own research. Over time, it has increased in both size and recognition as an international conference known throughout all related fields—and we’re so proud. This edition benefits from the support of the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo, and the conference will take place in the grand Professor Lima de Carvalho Auditorium. With this in mind, we’d like to thank the governing body of the institution, an enthusiastic partner in this joint endeavor between polytechnic institutes.

We would like to give a big thank you to our keynote speakers for this edition, starting with Birgitta Hosea, artist, animated film director and researcher. She’s involved in *StoryFutures*, a research project on immersive technologies, and in the development of the archives on the history of British animation after 1960 housed at the Animation Research Centre at the University for the Creative Arts. We also appreciate our dear friend César Coelho, director and animator at *Campo 4* in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and cofounder of *Animamundi*, one of the most prestigious animation festivals in the world and the largest in Latin America. Thanks also go to Paola Vassalli, who has led the

Educational Department at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni and the Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome. She is an editor of *Educare all'arte (Electa)* and an artistic consultant for the Bologna Children's Book Fair and has designed libraries and curated exhibitions.

We'll also feature a book launch from our good friend Alan Male, who will present his latest book, a contemporary collection of philosophical, theoretical and practical methodologies around illustration.

We're quite excited about this 7th edition of the conference, which will impress with the excellence of the articles from around the world selected by our demanding Scientific Committee. We can't wait to join you all for two days of intense conversation and sharing ideas and experiences around illustration and animation in a beautiful setting on the coast of Viana do Castelo.

**Paula Tavares**  
General Chair

**Pedro Mota Teixeira**  
Organization Chair

# Índice / Contents

15

ARTISTS AND MASTERPIECES  
BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE USA  
**Paola Vassalli**

19

ILLUMINATING: MARK MAKING  
THROUGH PROJECTED LIGHT  
**Birgitta Hosea**

21

LIFE BETWEEN FRAMES  
**César Coelho**

23

BOOKS ABOUT ILLUSTRATION: CONCEPTION,  
AUTHORSHIP AND PUBLICATION  
**Alan Male**

---

27

[Animation / Animação]

DESCOBRIR, ATRAVÉS DA DESOCULTAÇÃO PELO SOM  
E PELA IMAGEM, DE UM IMAGINÁRIO PRÓPRIO  
NO FILME DE ANIMAÇÃO “THE FANTASTIC FLYING  
BOOKS OF MR. MORRIS LESSMORE”  
**Helena Maria da Silva Santana  
& Maria do Rosário da Silva Santana**

38

*MAHOU SHOUJO*: FROM JAPAN  
TO GLOBAL PHENOMENON  
**Catarina Vieira & Sahra Kunz**

50

CUT, DON'T CUT - MOVING THE VIEWER  
THROUGH A STORY IN ANIMATED VR  
**Gray Hodgkinson**

58

VINCENT: UM PESADELO  
EXPRESSIONISTA DE TIM BURTON  
**Marcelus Gaio S. de Senna, Nilton Gamba Junior, Miguel Carvalho**

68

MACHINIMA: EXPLORAÇÕES EM ANIMAÇÃO  
**Sofia Figueiredo**



**72**

TURNING POPULAR CULTURE INTO A CONTEMPORARY  
STORYTELLING TRANSMEDIA: YARN-CRAFTED PUPPETS  
IN STOP-MOTION ANIMATION

**Carolina Batista**

**86**

ANIMATED CINEMA AS A WAY TO SENSITIZE SOCIETY  
TOWARDS TRAGEDY: THE REALITY AND PERCEPTION  
OF FORESTALL WILDFIRES

**Susana Miguel, Luís Lima e Jorge T. Marques**

**102**

ISSUES IN DIGITAL AND ANIMATED PALIMPSEST

**Andrew Buchanan and Patrick Lichty**

**111**

THE BORDERS OF ANIMATION:  
DESIGNING IN TIME AND SPACE

**João Paulo Schlittler**

**122**

ANÁLISE DA LONGA-METRAGEM “INSIDE OUT”  
DA DISNEY/PIXAR: AS EMOÇÕES PRIMÁRIAS NA  
PERSONAGEM “ANGER”

**António Ferreira, Pedro Teixeira e Paulo Korpys**

**135**

BARREIRAS DE SILÊNCIO: UM OLHAR SOBRE  
A CURTA-METRAGEM *ALIKE*

**Paulo Korpys, Pedro Teixeira e António Ferreira**

**146**

DO FUNDO À FIGURA: UMA TIPOLOGIA  
DOS CENÁRIOS DE ANIMAÇÃO

**Lina Dantas, Pedro Mota Teixeira e Manuel Albino**

**161**

ESTEREÓTIPOS DE GÉNERO  
EM ANIMAÇÃO INFANTOJUVENIL

**Sara Covelo, Pedro Mota Teixeira e Paula Tavares**

**174**

ANIMATING HISTORY.  
A RESEARCH EXPLORATION ON THE  
INFORMATIVE *VOICES* OF ANIMATION

**Nicolò Ceccarelli and Marco Sironi**

---

181	[Animation / Animação]
<b>COLOR DIFFERENCES IN MALE AND FEMALE PROTAGONISTS OF MAINSTREAM ANIMATION FILM</b> <b>Gabriela Sá and Paula Tavares</b>	
<hr/>	
190	[Animation and Technology / Animação e Tecnologia]
<b>CRITIQUING THE SCREEN PRESENCE OF SYNTHESPIAN COUNTERPARTS</b> <b>Jason Kennedy</b>	
203	
<b>REDEFINING STORYTELLING: TOWARDS NARRATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR ANIMATION IN VR</b> <b>Hannes Rall, Elke Reinhuber, Wibke Weber</b>	
215	
<b>RUBBER HOSE FLAT DESIGN LIMBS – MAKING RETRO CHARACTERS THROUGH MATHEMATIC CURVES</b> <b>Raoni Xavier, Cristiana Serejo, Marcos Andruchak e Pedro Mota Teixeira</b>	
222	
<b>EXPLORING REAL-TIME AUTOMATIC TRANSPARENT SHADING OF MESHES OVERLAPPING AN EDITING OBJECT</b> <b>Pedro T. Bastos</b>	
229	
<b>POCKET SEVERA: O UNIVERSO MUSICAL DO FONOFILME “A SEVERA” NUMA APLICAÇÃO MOBILE</b> <b>Tânia Ribeiro, Silvino Martins, Fernando Sousa e Margarida I. Almeida</b>	
238	
<b>ANIMATING FOR A DIGITAL MANIPULATIVE: HOW TO CREATE RESTRICTED ACTION LIBRARIES WITHOUT RESTRICTING THE PLAYERS’ CREATIVITY</b> <b>Ana Paula Caruso, Cristina Sylla, Gabriela Sá and Paula Tavares</b>	
<hr/>	
247	[Animation and Installation / Animação e Instalação]
<b>BOUNDARY CROSSINGS: A PRACTICE-BASED INTENSIVE IN EXPANDED ANIMATION</b> <b>Rose Bond</b>	
<hr/>	
255	[Drawing / Desenho]
<b>NOTAÇÕES NA REPRESENTAÇÃO DA PAISAGEM. SINALÉTICA, PICTOGRAMAS E SILHUETAS</b> <b>Paulo Freire de Almeida</b>	

---

[Drawing / Desenho]

**265**

LEARNING FROM BY DRAWING. NATURE AS MODEL  
**Valentina Vezzani**

**275**

WHY COMICS ARE CHILDISH  
**Alejandro Ocaña S.**

**284**

PARA UMA ECONOMIA VISUAL DO PENSAMENTO:  
PIERRE KLOSSOWSKI E O DESENHO DO INVISÍVEL  
**Luís Filipe Monteiro Lima**

**294**

DRAWING FOR REPRODUCTION: TOWARD RECREATING  
SURFACE PREPARED PAPERS FOR MAKING  
PRINTS AND EXPLORING CREATIVE PRACTICE.  
**Graciela Machado & Marta Belkot**

---

[Drawing and Comics  
/ Desenho e Banda  
Desenhada]

**304**

THE WOMEN OF MILO MANARA. EROTICISM IN COMICS  
AS A WEAPON OF EMPOWERMENT  
**Olga Galeeva, Flavio Almeida e Teresa Lousa**

**316**

CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:  
HOW ARE COMICS MADE?  
**Alexandra Presser, Gilson Braviano and Eduardo Côte-Real**

**325**

A FIVE YEARS FOLLOW UP STUDY OF LITHUANIAN  
COMIC BOOK CULTURE AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT  
**Tomas Mitkus and Vaida Nedzinskaite-Mitke**

**336**

“THE KIDS JUST LIT UP”. MODE OF DEPICTION AND  
NUMBER OF PANELS MATTERS IN SERVICE  
DESIGN STORYBOARDS  
**Stuart Medley and Jethro Sercombe**

---

[Drawing and Video  
Games / Desenho e  
Videojogos]

**348**

VISUAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES  
FOR A MULTICULTURAL STORYTELLING TOOL  
**Gabriela Sá, Douglas Menegazzi,  
Ana Paula Caruso, and Cristina Sylla**

---

<b>359</b> THE UNCANNY VALLEY OR THE NOTION OF CORRUPTED BEING <b>Diogo Bessa</b>	[Drawing and Video Games / Desenho e Videojogos]
<b>368</b> A ESTÉTICA DA FIGURA HUMANA NO DESENHAR E ILUSTRAR CONTEMPORÂNEO: A LINHA DIVISÓRIA ENTRE A REALIDADE E A IMAGINAÇÃO <b>Jessica Dias Azeredo Gonçalves</b>	[Human Figure Drawing / Desenho de Figura Humana]
<b>380</b> UNMASKED BEHAVIOURS OF REPRESENTATION INTERPRETATION <b>Awoniyi Stephen</b>	[Drawing and Architecture / Desenho e Arquitetura]
<b>390</b> COMPOSIÇÃO EM PÁGINA DUPLA: DO CADERNO DE DESENHO AO LIVRO ILUSTRADO <b>Aléxia C. Brasil e Laís Guaraldo</b>	[Drawing and Illustration / Desenho e Ilustração]
<b>400</b> IN-BETWEEN: THE DIALOGIC PORTUGUESE ILLUSTRATION <b>Ana Isabel Albuquerque and Luís Nogueira</b>	[Illustration / Ilustração]
<b>412</b> OS PRIMÓRDIOS DA ILUSTRAÇÃO DO LIVRO EM PORTUGAL <b>Ana Filomena Curralo</b>	
<b>420</b> PERSONAGENS PARA CONSUMIR: UMA REVISÃO INTERDISCIPLINAR <b>Luiz Claudio Gonçalves Gomes</b>	
<b>427</b> «RIO ACIMA» – TRAVESSIAS DA ILUSTRAÇÃO NO LIVRO-ÁLBUM E ECOLITERACIA <b>Dulce Melão</b>	
<b>436</b> DARK DUALITIES, EMERGENCE AND ERUPTION: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SHADOW WITHIN CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATED NARRATIVES <b>Linda Scott</b>	

**449**

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN A MASTERS IN ILLUSTRATION:  
A CASE STUDY IN INTERNATIONALISATION**

**Brian Cairns**

**464**

**THE THREE LITTLE PIGS: CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE**

**Paul David Hardman and Ana Boavida**

**477**

**CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATIVE RESPONSES  
TO THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

**Desdemona McCannon & Andy R. Davies**

**489**

**A RELAÇÃO ENTRE TEXTO E IMAGEM NAS OBRAS  
“PSIQUÊ” E “O CÂNTICO DOS CÂNTICOS”**

**Larissa dos Anjos Camasão**

**495**

**AS ILUSTRAÇÕES DE ZÉ MANEL  
PARA AS NARRATIVAS DE LUÍSA DUCLA SOARES:  
INOVAÇÃO E EXPERIMENTALISMO**

**Sara Reis da Silva**

**504**

**UMA FERRAMENTA DE ANÁLISE DA INFLUÊNCIA  
DO PARADIGMA DIGITAL E PÓS-DIGITAL NO ÁLBUM  
ILUSTRADO CONTEMPORÂNEO**

**Rui Vitorino Santos**

**518**

**REORIENTED ILLUSTRATION:  
TOWARDS THE NETWORKED IMAGE**

**Vincent Larkin**

**528**

**O ÁLBUM ILUSTRADO INFANTIL  
NA COMUNICAÇÃO DA SAÚDE MENTAL**

**Catarina Ferreira, Marta Madureira and Luís Lima**

**538**

**JUST SO YOU KNOW: WHEN ILLUSTRATION  
CHALLENGES RAPE CULTURE**

**Dave Wood**

---

**546** [Graphics and  
Infographics /  
Grafismos e Infografia]  
PICTOGRAMAS INTERATIVOS PARA UMA  
APLICAÇÃO MÓVEL. UM ESTUDO DE CASO  
**Caroline Carvalho Barbosa, Ana Filomena Curralo e Sara Paiva**

**553**  
IS THERE SUCH A PLACE AS FAR AWAY?  
**Karenanne Knight**

**565**  
O USO DA INFOGRAFIA NA COMPREENSÃO  
DA DIVULGAÇÃO CIENTÍFICA  
**Marcela Gomes, Susana Loureiro e Fernando Correia**

**571**  
CLASSIFICAÇÃO DOS INFOGRÁFICOS  
**Ana Daniela Oliveira Lopes, Rute Sofia Pereira Bastardo  
e José Manuel Carvalho de Sousa**

---

**581** [Visual Arts / Artes  
Plásticas]  
ÀS VOLTAS COM ÁLVARO LAPA:  
DO MUSEU FICCIONAL AO AUTO(MUSEU)-RETRATO  
**Alexandra João Martins**





## The women of Milo Manara. Eroticism in comics as a weapon of empowerment

Olga Galeeva<sup>1</sup>, Flavio Almeida<sup>2</sup> e Teresa Lousa<sup>3</sup>

olga.olillia@gmail.com; flavio.almeida@universidadeeuropeia.pt; teresa.lousa@gmail.com

[Drawing and Comics / Desenho e Banda Desenhada]

### Keywords

Milo Manara, Women Representation, Feminist Issue, Objectification, Comic Books, The Click (Il Gioco).

### Abstract

The present paper is a part of our current thesis devoted to analysis of comic books, known in Italy as fumetti, of 1960s and 1980s era and depiction of female characters at the time of sexual liberation. It addresses the issue of women representation in the art of Italian cartoonist Milo Manara with special attention to different aspects of their visual and narrative presence.

The main focus of this paper, is to study the concept of women representation in comics with attention to different aspects of their visual and narrative presence and with the support of feminist and psychoanalytic issues to offer a new insight into the portrayal of women. The aim is to narrow the analysis to the artist's approach to female representation and empowerment issue in contemporary world and to explore whether women of Milo Manara were nothing more than fantasy from the artists mind, thought up by a man as sexual objects for other men or they were women empowered by their author, in strong female roles to make a statement about women in society. The paper will look at Claudia Cristiani, from the series "Il Gioco" ("The Click") that represent a revolutionary image of feminine beauty born in a conservative Italian society, and examine the ways in which this is accomplished through images and narrative.

### Introduction

Historically, the issues concerning women depiction in different media have been a controversial subject of discussion and within a comics genre it is not an exception. Comics with adult content have often encountered critical and academic attention and bound by current cultural and social taboos. Over the years, portrayal of women in graphic novels have changed dramatically. Although, women played a variety of roles in the genre, they were mostly subordinate figures in the background and a source of emotional support to an idealized male hero. The stereotypical gender roles were quite obvious: men were courageous and capable to succeed independently, occupying the position of the ideal subject. Women, on the other hand, were confined to secondary roles, and flat or frivolous personalities, representing idealized and sexualized object. If male characters were

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> UNIDCOM/IADE, IADE, Universidade Europeia, Laureate Universities, Lisbon, Portugal.

<sup>3</sup> FBAUL/ Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal



granted the role of what readers would like to be, the female characters represented what the male readers would like to possess.

Il Gioco<sup>4</sup> (The Click!) is the most popular graphic novel by Milo Manara, written and illustrated by the master. Initially published in Italy in “Playmen” and in France in “L’Écho des Savanes”, had an immediate incredible international success and was adapted into a film “Le Déclick” in 1985, starring Florence Guérin. Only in French edition “Le Déclick” more than one million copies were sold. The sequels then followed in 1991, 1994 and 2001. The story features an attractive woman, Ms. Claudia Cristiani, very prudish and passionless, who’s got a remote-controlled device that is surgically implanted into her brain, and can switch on and off her desires at the ‘click’ of a dial. An activation of the device sends signals to her brain, driving her into sexual cravings and making her sexually insatiable. Claudia, has a sensual and provocative look, and within the narrative, the character often appears with her head thrown back and hair blowing in the wind and her mouth have often a perfect O shape, symbolizing a state of orgasm. It is something that connects the art of Manara with psychoanalytical concept of famed psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. The latter insisted that sexuality and personality unfold in tandem, with much of that process occurring outside conscious awareness. Freud [1] called it repression. He believed that, humans repress some frightening or painful events and desires from their conscious minds, which are then banished to the unconscious mind. Those thoughts are not gone, however, but remain to affect the thoughts and actions of the conscious mind.

## 1. Adult comics & Eroticism in Art

Sexually explicit art is a polemical topic, that can say a lot about the culture and societies in which it is produced because visual imagery encodes ideas on class relationships, religion and social values. Comics described by Will Eisner with a term “sequential art” emerged as a powerful medium of communication to the masses. No other of fine arts has been so much censored and struggled against constituted norms. Nowadays, in the age of consumerism, sexual imagery is everywhere. Advertising, fashion, design and music industries are about sex. Sexy celebrities and politicians beat the less sexy ones. All along, sexuality has been a part of what makes people human. Sexual arousal in humans is a motivational state that drives them forward, reminds them they are made of flesh and blood and awakens the feeling of being alive. It is, naturally, a fundamental part of our private and public lives. Naturally, women portrayal in comics, and especially, objectification of women, is an important subject and the way women are portrayed in comics is a question that needs to be discussed. Female characters in comics are quite emblematic and represent social and gender roles for modern women.

According to Alyce Mahon [2] “erotic art both challenges and produces power. Artists turn to eroticism as means of exploring the nature and role in society of both sexual desire and art itself”. In today’s digital culture

*4 Il Gioco is the game” in Italian language*

saturated with sexually explicit images it's rather hard defining erotic art, and perhaps even harder, differing it from its counterpart – pornography. Levinson [3] claims that “erotic art not only aims at engaging the sexuality of the viewer, but typically also reflects that of the artist”. He [4] differentiates the three terms: erotica, erotic art and pornography. Defining erotic art, as containing images intended to sexually stimulate, but also to reward artistic interest; erotica, to involve images intended to sexually stimulate but not to reward artistic interest, and, pornography, to involve images intended to sexually arouse in the interests of sexual release. The difference between three is what they are meant to evoke in a viewer. Levinson, excludes pornography from the realm of art: “nothing can be both art and pornography” [4]. He even suggests that what pornographers produce has nothing to do with art, that it is impossible for them to create something that is pornography and art at the same time. Further, Mahon [2] posits, that erotic art is not about sexual arousal alone, but mostly about social conflict. At the same time, Paul van der Grijp [5], claims, that erotic art should be distinguished from pornography, because pornography is a means for sexual satisfaction with no other critical message and erotic art criticizes various aspects of social, religious and political control.

In Italy, dominated by patriarchal system for several centuries women were seen as inferior to men and a female body was seen as the object of the male gaze. Carla Lonzi [6] states, that the oppression of woman, not just started in historical times, but is “buried in the obscurity of human origins.” In fact, woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire [7].

The 1960s were years of profound change, social and Cultural Revolution, that has had an indelible effect on the art in general and comics industry in particular. If before the 1960s female figures in comics were quite scarce now they started becoming more prominent in this male dominated field. In fact, the world of comics has been often accused of sexism. Fumetti with a centralized figure of a woman came up as a reflection of culture and a reaction to radical changes the country was experiencing. Depicted in her contextual and visual extremes they had their own reasons for existing, beyond simply providing sexy characters for the pleasure of male viewer.

As French philosopher and existentialist Simone de Beauvoir in “Second Sex” explains that one is not born a woman, but, becomes one. She points out, that the pre-adolescent infants of both sexes are not very different: they have the same interests and pleasures. Commonly observed, women and men, are conditioned into gender roles by cultural conventions. Hence, behavioral traits associated with male and female sex are not caused by anatomy, psychic or economic factors, but culturally learned or acquired. The very concept of a “woman” according to De Beauvoir is that “for the woman there is, from the start, a conflict between her autonomous existence and her “beingtother”; she is taught that to please, must make herself object; she must therefore renounce her autonomy. The male is the “seer”: he is the subject and she the object – the meaning of what it is to be a woman is given by men She is treated like a living doll, and freedom

is denied her; thus a vicious circle is closed; for the less she exercises her freedom to understand, grasp, and discover the world around her, the less she will find its resources, and the less she will dare to affirm herself as subject [8] De Beauvoir equates the act of becoming a woman to the process of “becoming flesh” and talks about a fear of being sexually exposed to another’s gaze. At the same time, she explains, that to be a woman does not only mean to be seen as an object by others but to feel her own body as a subject of her own desires: “To make oneself object, to make oneself passive, is very different from being a passive object: a woman in love is neither asleep nor a corpse; there is a surge in her that ceaselessly falls and rises: it is this surge that creates the spell that perpetuates desire”.

Judith Butler [9], referring to Beauvoir states, that the gender is constructed under a social compulsion while the body is only a passive receiver of the cultural expression. Butler [10] argues, that, the body is a “material reality” which becomes a peculiar nexus of culture and choice, and “existing” one’s body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms. According to de Beauvoir [8]

Slovenian cultural philosopher Slavoj Žižek [11] suggests that women actively objectify themselves to seduce men. He argues, that “women dress provocatively to attract a male gaze, when they “objectify” themselves to seduce them, they don’t do it offering themselves as passive objects: they are the active agents of their own “objectification,” manipulating men, playing ambiguous games, including the full right to step out of the game at any moment even if, to the male gaze, this appears in contradiction with previous “signals” [12]. Also, Nancy Friday [13], an American feminist and researcher on female sexuality in her second book “Forbidden flowers” writes, that unlike men, women have been trained from birth to be exhibitionists. Friday says that both sexes are equally stimulated by reading and seeing sexual sights, but that women – “ladies” – have been culturally conditioned to deny it, even to themselves. Hence, following this theory, it is not by chance, that women characters, depicted by Manara tend to look at the reader and hence become spectators: even if a figure is turned to us with her back, a little bit of an eye remains.

Andi Zeisler in her book “Feminism and Pop-culture” focuses on women and explains how the pop culture effects the way women see themselves and engage with visual media. She explains the often-cited feminist term “the male gaze” by citing Berger’s “Ways of Seeing”: “Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of women in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight” [14] Her feelings, thoughts and her own sexual drives are less important than her being “framed” by male desire. It can, actually, transform into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms<sup>5</sup>, whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching. Further, Zeisler outlines Laura

5 Peeping Tom, is a 1960 British psychological horror-thriller film directed by Michael Powel.

Mulvey's [15] "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" idea of female "to-be-looked-at-ness". Woman is "spectacle", and man is "the bearer of the look". According to Zeisler the male gaze is the idea that when we look at images onscreen, we're seeing them the way men do - even if we are women (this is what Mulvey didn't suggest - because those images are constructed to be seen by men. "Without pop culture's limited images of women, many actual women in the real world might not have been inspired to fight for more and better representations of themselves [7].

Claudia Cristiani, a main character of *Il Gioco* is introduced to the reader as passionless, married to an older, wealthy man, and has a remote-control device implanted in her brain. Every time the device was activated, the prudish Claudia became insatiable and turn into a woman who deliberately plays with her sexual power. She is performing sexual acts on herself, other women, and men, suggesting that women are the only ones who are able to have total control over their bodies. Manara once said, that eroticism is an "engine of life" and something that has "a strong power of transgression" [16]. Naturally, to understand Manara's work, one has to consider the time in which *Il Gioco* was created. According to Zeisler [7], sexual imbalance around the world, and not only in Italy, was split pleasure in looking between active/male and passive/female and determining male gaze suggested to the female figures a sexualised way of looking so that they could be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Within the narrative, the character of Claudia is often shown as a passive and submissive object in relation to the other characters (especially male). She is concluding a series of outrageous episodes and attacking all levels of society. It is soon becomes clear that the chip is fake, and this is all a well elaborate sexual game between Fez and Claudia to try and cure her of her self-hatred. The artist enjoys the idea of male fantasy being able to switch on and off a woman's sexual appetite, but his purpose is not to objectify the heroine. Manara aimed to eliminate all the rules, create a bacchanalia, satirising at hypocritical conservative society and it's laws concerning ethics, property and fear of sex. Nancy Friday[13], explains that men could not accept the idea that there are women out there that enjoy sex unconditionally. The idea of a married woman, sexually satisfied by a beloved husband, having erotic pictures in mind - perhaps of another man, perhaps of ten other men - was totally foreign to male ideas of feminine "mental health. According to Freudian theory [1], people's sexual thoughts are repressed in order to meet the constraints imposed on them by society, but those thoughts are not gone, however, they remain to affect the thoughts and actions of the conscious mind.

In this contest, Claudia can be compared to Valentina, by Guido Crepax, whose stories often take place on three different narrative levels: reality, dream and memory happening at the same time. Manara's Claudia Cristiani is balancing between two states: reality and state of sexual arousal, which can be considered as dream-like. Valentina often drifts from reality into a dream, confusing and mixing them together. Her adventures are suspended between erotic sadomazochistic fantasies displaying sensual naked body (often in her fetishistic outfits) and a mysterious

surrealism. Manara often depicts situations a lot more explicit than those by Crepax, whom the artist considers one of the most influential figures in his biography, but they are filled with joy and lightness, something that is missing in Valentina's adventures. Compared to Guido Crepax, to whom the artist owes the idea of constructing a comics story around a central female character, Manara's drawings are more explicit but he avoids jumping the thin line between sensuality and pornography and even the hottest scenes are kinky, and never vulgar. Claudia is sexually active but not sexualized as it might seem at a first glance. She is not a mute passive object of an assumed male gaze but an active desiring sexual subject that choose to present herself in an objectified way because it suits her interests. She is not seeking for men's approval but pleasing herself and in doing so she becomes admired by men.

## 2. Fumetti – Italian trend

It is necessary to explain shortly the concept of Italian *fumetti neri*, (literally black comics), as they are an essential milestone in the context of adult comics in Italy. Italian comics historian Castaldi [17] calls them, “a vital link between popular art and the exponents of sanctioned cultural areas”. New trend towards female heroines as characters of their own started from the 1960s with the *fumetti neri*, when more and more attractive women started becoming protagonists.

Fumetti, officially appeared in Italy in 1908, with a creation of *Corriere dei Piccoli* (Children's Newspaper) and were exclusively seen as a juvenile form of entertainment and very much censored. With a great impact of American culture on Italian comics creators, the first modern female character, a Tarzan-like Pantera Bionda (The Blond Panther) was introduced to Italian audience. Created by Gian Giacomo Dalmassio and Enzo Magni (under pen name Ingam) in 1948, she was inspired by American jungle queen Sheena<sup>6</sup>. The comic book immediately gained huge success thanks to her costume – a leopard skin-top and a tiny bikini and self-affirmative sexuality. A major reason of the great success was According to Franco Fossati, cited by Guzzetta and Zaghini [18] despite the presence of her partner, a handsome American explorer Ted (or Fred in some versions) she didn't need any protection from men but found it useful to have a lover and admirer. Her independent attitudes caused increasing pressure from the conservative Italian establishment and Catholic Church. The publishers of the Blond Panther were subsequently dragged into court and forced to suspend publications. After eight month of life the heroine was legally required to wear more clothing. Her little skirt was eventually stretched to cover her below the knees, and her bra expanded to conceal her shoulders and torso.

Clearly, she didn't frighten the authorities with her nudity but with her total liberation and inability to accept a subordinate role in a male world. The idea that women might be strong fearless fighters who were not submissive to men, but equal, was a disturbing thought for the traditional

<sup>6</sup> Sheena, created by Will Eisner, was the first female comic book character to have her own series which debuted in spring 1942, preceding Wonder Woman which came out in summer the same year.

male-dominated society, and this attitude was not limited to Italy. The Blond Panther gave only the start of new era when men and women began to examine their roles and to question whether they might need to make a few adjustments in their thinking. In this regard, Carla Lonzi [6] points out, “What is meant by woman’s equality is usually her right to share in the exercise of power within society, once it is accepted that she is possessed of the same abilities as man.[...] Ex-isting as a woman does not imply participation in male power, but calls into question the very con-cept of power.”

No important changes happened in this field until the beginning of the 1960s, when the first comic book “Diabolik”, labelled “for adults only”, by sisters Angela and Luciana Guissani came out in 1962, giving birth to the *fumetti neri*. Featuring a super-criminal in many ways opposite to an American superhero, it offered a new genre and a new format. Diabolik, rapidly became a hit and was vastly superior to many imitations that followed. Since then Italian comics had forever lost their status of entertainment for a young audience only. Morals were changing and censorship loosening, hence, this was a perfect moment for a new trend. Diabolik still retains a large popularity and continues to be published even today. *Fumetti neri* exhausted their function and by the end of the 1960s their boom was over. The public was looking for something more explicit and many of the comic strips simply transformed into pornography. However, what makes something pornography is not easily agreed on. Hans-Jürgen Döpp [19] states that “pornography is a judgmental term used by those who remain closed to eroticism”. What differs eroticism from pornography will be explained further in this paper.

In the 1960s on the way of popularity of Pop Art, fumetto d’autore (auteur comics), pioneered by the magazine Linus, were born. This new type of comics became a symbol of intellectual fumetto. Those were years of profound change, that has had an indelible effect on the art in general and comics industry in particular. From the 1960s fumetti with a centralized figure of a woman came up as a reflection of culture and a reaction to radical changes the country was experiencing. As Natasha Walter [20], posits, this highly sexualized culture is often positively celebrated as a sign of women’s liberation and empowerment. The depiction of female heroines in fumetti, help examine the changing role of a woman in contemporary culture, because women were often portrayed in their contextual and visual extremes. According to Guzzetta and Zaghini [18] fumetto, naturally, gave way to eroticism in women’s struggle towards consciousness and autonomy.

### 3. Milo Manara

Maurilio Manara (known professionally as Milo Manara), famous for his brand of eroticism, is an Italian comic book writer and artist that has gained fame for his domination over the erotic medium and collaborations with such artists as Hugo Pratt, Federico Fellini, Perdo Almodóvar, and Alejandro Jodorowski. He was born on September 12, 1945 in Luson<sup>7</sup>, but has always lived in Verona. The name of Milo Manara is well known worldwide

<sup>7</sup> Luson - a small Italian town of Bolzano near the Austrian border

and evokes in a reader images of attractive and elegant young women in various states of consent and undress, wrapped in a sensual surrealism.

Manara became interested in comics in the late 1960s while working as an assistant to sculptors. By the time, he discovered fumetto d'arte and learned from graphical genius of Jean Giraud/ Moebius, Jean-Claud Forest<sup>8</sup>, Hugo Pratt, Guido Crepax. Young and eager to break into the industry he started his way in comics by drawing for the *fumetti neri*. It is only in Alter Linus, that Manara debuted into “fumetto d’ autore”. With Milo Manara erotic comics gained respectability, became liberating and joyful. It can be said, that erotic comics as we know them today were born under the pen of Milo Manara at the end of 1970s. The artist tends to empower his characters in strong female roles to make a statement about women in society. His purpose is not to objectify women, but to show how eroticism is primarily a matter of imagination and fantasy. His characters are rendered with exceptionally beautiful sexuality, with a focus on their facial expressions. (Fig.1.) Manara himself considers eroticism an “engine of life” and something that has “a strong power of transgression” [16].

Differently from Crepax and Pratt, Manara did not create one central character of his stories that would be developed through the years, but there is a term “Women of Manara”, or “Women Manara style”. The artist has often been accused, that most of his female characters are very similar to one another. Manara explains, that his depicted ladies are actresses, that are made of flesh and blood, and can play a variety of roles often different from their real personality [Ibid16]. Actually, Manara’s eroticism is quite problematic. It is placed in a centre frame and becomes an essential part of the discussion about social norms, sex, violence, and women objectification. The artist invites a reader for it and confronts him with complexity. As an example we can take a sequence from “Il Gioco” 2 (1992) (Fig.2), where a



Fig. 1. Women faces collage. Source: Le Déclic. L’intégrale [21].



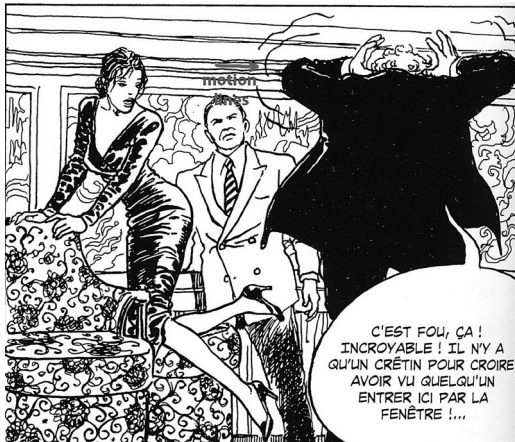
Fig. 2. Le Déclic. L’intégrale [21]

8 Jean-Claude Forest, a French cartoonist that created Barbarella, adapted then by Roger Vadim into a movie starring Jane Fonda.

high-society uncle aggressively whips his niece Claudia in front of another person in order to punish her for the undue behaviour.

While punishing the niece, an uncle experiences an excitement that might be interpreted as sexual arousal, which scares him greatly and, frightened, he continues with further violence. The reader too is shocked by the situation and probably the expression of fear on the uncle's face might be a projection of fear of the reader. Manara here is quite transgressive and upfront. He gives an uncle as a bad example, hidden under a hypocritical, "respectful", façade. As master of line-work and layout, the artist seems to know, what moment to pick out of a sequence to show. The narration tends to slow time down and relies on visual much more than the dialogues and the focus of the story stays close to the characters in motion that are posed to convey maximum narrative per panel. The panels of the story have the feel of animation, even when they are just singular cells, they reveal the complex context, in which the characters interact in the atmosphere of a conflict, making the audience feel the growing tension. Anxiety runs across the two pages to move the characters and the reader through time and space. The scene of punishment on one page gives way to aggression and violence on the second. However, with each panel the reader notices a troubling pattern, where bodies and facial expressions of the characters give rhythm to the sequence, making it quite filmic. Daniele Barbieri explains [22], that panels can be used

**Fig. 3.** Le Dédic.  
L'intégrale. [21]



to represent a duration, like in cinema, through various techniques, such as the use of motion lines, image repetitions, particular arrangements of the speech balloons, sound effects, etc. What differs comics from the cinema is not *what*, but *how* they represent it. For instance, on a panel 4 (Fig. 3) the artist uses "motion lines"<sup>9</sup> to accentuate the movement and brings focus to the figure of the uncle. The sequence depicts a conflict between characters of the scene as one progression of events. The author encloses the inexpressible and seeks to formalize it and to confer it to reality, constraining the reader to interiorize with the ugliness of violence.

But what counts more is Manara's line which is erotic in and of itself. It is interesting beyond just the technical aspects of Manara's craft, to examine the complete sexual anarchy that he's trying to play across his pages. Guzzetta and Zaghini [18] say about Manara, that his main objective is to demonstrate that «eroticism is a symbol of freedom, that brings light to our living especially, when it is accompanied by love, and that is why the artist has never been very much censored».

<sup>9</sup> Motion lines is a term by Neil Cohn "The visual language of comics".



#### 4. Claudia Cristiani, a woman of Manara

“Don’t blush when I look at you”- seem to tell to the reader women depicted by Manara. These women can never know the viewer, and he can never know them, or participate in anything unless they permit. It is the metaphysics of the artist’s line. Manara evokes the ideal of feminine beauty, slender figures and long hair. The artist worships the women’s sexuality, illustrates their feelings, and their orgasms. As Vincenzo Mollica says [23], they materialize on the pages, play with our fantasies and become part of our day – dreaming.

Laura Maggiore [Ibid24] compares Manara to Bertrand Morane, a character in Francois Truffaut’s “The Man who Loved Women”, for whom “women’s legs were the points of a compass, that bestride a terrestrial globe in all directions, giving it its equilibrium and its harmony”. But, Morane, as Ingram and Duncan say [25] is a classical male chauvinist, focused on parts of the body rather than the complete being, which is typical of the male gaze. Manara unlike Morane is not at all a chauvinist, he makes female body the centre of his world. Manara’s drawings of nude and semi-nude women in various sexual acts, might be seen as nothing more than fantasy from the artists mind— images created by a man, for other men and at first glance many of the cartoons may seem too sexually open and explicit. But, there’s always an underlying meaning in his art.

Finally, in a context of the feminist approach to analysing art of Milo Manara we can see unrealistically depicted beautiful women as a statement declaring that women are the reason everything in life exists. Manara puts the woman in the ultimate position of power, while mixing high and low art in depicting erotic fantasies, he is eventually makes a statement for women in society. As Friday [13] puts it, “women haven’t been brought up to enjoy sex ... women are by and large destitute of sexual fantasy.”

“Il Gioco”, to give it’s Italian title, is the Manara’s most famous work around the world and the most liberated of his works. Firstly, it manifests the changing of the drawing technique of Manara in a period when he abandoned the stylistic complexity, learned from Moebius and began using his elegant lines that would later become his sign of identity (Fig. 4.) Manara was very much inspired graphically by Giraud/Moebius<sup>10</sup> and respectfully took from Moebius a few graphic ideas, and reworked them in his elegant line-style.

“Il Gioco” features an attractive woman, Ms. Claudia Cristiani, beautiful but very prudish, who’s got a remote-controlled device that is surgically implanted into her brain by her psychiatrist, Dr. Fez, which was perturbed by her puritanical reactions to anything related to sex. The remote control can switch on and off her desires at the ‘click’ of a dial. An activation of the device sends signals to her brain, driving her into sexual cravings and making her sexually insatiable. It is a playful titillation, and a continuous game, where often absurd and embarrassing scenes put the protagonist in view of the public eyes. Beaty [26] claims that the connection between masculinity, wealth, and control is crucial to Manara’s work.

10 Giraud/Moebius - Henri Gaston Giraud (8 May 1938 – 10 March 2012) was a French artist, cartoonist and writer who worked in the Franco-Belgian bandes dessinées (BD) tradition. Giraud garnered worldwide acclaim under the pseudonym Moebius and was is often references, cited, acknowledged and copied.

“Il Gioco” is a “humoristic story, where paradox, parody and comedy are mixed together” [23], that draws attention to problematic aspects of the society. It is also full of citations and references, and in some aspects reminds a little bit Luis Bunuel’s film Louis Bunuel movie “Belle de jour”, that features a story of Severine, a beautiful bored young wife of a wealthy surgeon, who becomes a high-class prostitute working only in the afternoons, answering to the name Belle de jour and experiencing secret erotic fantasies (sometimes even masochistic).

## Conclusions

The main objective of this paper was to study a revolutionary female character Claudia that appeared in a male dominated world of comics. The aim here was to explore Claudia created by Milo Manara as an example of pioneering, progressive approach to female representation in Italian fumetti.

Claudia, whose seeking for pleasure was the primary focus of the both the visual and textual narrative, clearly established her as the central figure in Manara’s art. Eventually, we discovered that this extended scenes of explicit eroticism are Claudia’s fantasies, placed it within the realm of sexual dreaming. Claudia is the fantasizer, whose sexual passion is actually created and intensified arguably revealing either deep-seated fears or desires that once again create an intimacy between reader and character.

All along, films, books and other media about female sexuality often face censorship that prove their subversiveness. Usually, parents don’t want their kids discover erotic literature and husbands can’t accept the idea of their wives dreaming about sex. They hide erotic literature from their book-shelves, so, it remains hidden at the back of their bookshelves. As time passes, eroticism remains something impure, something secret that is to be hidden. Il Gioco is an attempt of Italian maestro to confront social hypocrisy from a feminist perspective and to return to women their humanity, which they lose while being defined as “the Other”. It also shows, that having erotic desires and fantasies is an important milestone of “becoming a woman.”

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