

My adventure with pop-ups

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ABSTRACT

The author describes his personal experience with pop-up books which began about 25 years ago. He explains how he became a pop-up collector and got involved with teachers and young children. In his talk he discusses how he designed his early pop-ups. His contacts with several publishers and paper engineers helped him develop his skills as a pop-up designer.

KEYWORDS

Pop-up collection; Animated Books; Pop-up designer

CITATION

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My name is Massimo Missiroli and I'm a pop-up designer. I'm 63 years old and I'm a retiree, I worked as a part-time cashier in a bank for 42 years. I was born in 1957, the same year David Carter and Ray Marshall were also born. I'm in good company! I think 1957 was a good year for paper-engineers.

Although I worked at the bank in the mornings, in my spare time I cultivated different passions: afternoons are long, as well as Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

I started collecting pop-up books at the age of 20 and I saw the pop-up book "I Gatti di Gattolica" an Italian edition of a famous classic of Nister (Mondadori 1984), this was the first three-dimensional page I saw in my life as a collector, I noticed it because this book was open in the window of a bookshop in my town. That's how pop-ups and I started our story. I don't know how many books I've collected in these 43 years. I think around 5,000; when I got to 3,000 I stopped counting them and never even catalogued them.

I remember them all and many of them are linked to many anecdotes of the paper-engineers I have known over the years.

In the 80's I taught photography to children and teachers, that rather strange photography, made with pinhole camera and shoe boxes. Then I taught how to make flip books and cartoons with precinema machines. Later I taught how to make video documentaries and then... one day, some teachers from a nursery school asked me to make a pop-up card with Santa Claus.

It was 1991. I didn't even know how to make a paper fold. I had a lot of pop-ups, but I never thought about making one.

Now, with the internet, anyone can learn all techniques with templates and tutorials.

I lived in Italy, far from the Los Angeles of Intervisual or the London of David Pelham. Those were other times, Kubasta was still alive, there was no Amazon, there was no Youtube.

So, peeking through tabs and folds I tried and tried again and made my first pop-up card. Honestly, the result was really mediocre but I had fun, the teachers had fun and, above all, the children had fun.

This first experiment stimulated me and I started making more and more.

But let's go back to the '80s.

In 1984 I founded an association that dealt with image education and during the days of the Book Fair, Bologna became my home.

I had started attending the International Children's Book Fair in Bologna when I was 18 years old, I have been visiting it for 45 years and I rented a booth for 25 years in a row.

Attending the Fair gave me the chance to see many pop-up books that I couldn't find in Italian bookstores, because there were not many translated books, but above all it allowed me to meet many of the people who, with Waldo Wally Hunt, contributed to the second golden age of pop-up books.

In 1992 I founded a Center for the diffusion and promotion of pop-up books, "Il libro ha tre dimensioni - The Book has Three Dimensions", and I started to organize exhibitions, workshops, various activities all related to pop-ups, activities that I still propose today with the project Popup Show, in collaboration with Matteo Faglia (<https://popupshow.net>).

In 2019 Popup Show was hosted at the Shanghai Book Fair where I met for the first time Mr. Guan Zhongping (Chongqing University of Education), one of the world's greatest experts of this kind of books. In 2021, thanks to the friendship with Guan at the MUSLI in Turin we realized the temporary exhibition "Made in China" with nineteen contemporary pop up books published in China and exhibited for the first time in Italy to get closer to the partly unknown world of Chinese artists, paper-engineers and publishers. Today, I also collaborate with the Museum of School and Children's Book, MUSLI, in Turin and I thank its Director, Professor Pompeo Vagliani for giving me the opportunity to work with them, especially as regards the project during the quarantine due to Coronavirus, that allowed many children to make many pop-up cards.



Going back to my projects as a pop-up designer I was very lucky because, after only three months, I signed my first contract with the company Compass Production of Arnold Shapiro, Pat Paris and Keith Moseley and the following year both Disney Press and Intervisual Communication tested some of my projects. A great result for a bank teller!

The first publication, however, came only after 6 years, in 1998 and it was produced by Intervisual for Little Simon and illustrated by Richard Scarry.

The same year I started working with the German publisher Schreiber Verlag, which had been the publishing house of Meggendorfer in the 19th century.

In my work as a pop-up designer I have published 18 books, some of them printed in various languages. My books are very simple, they are for children, and my cartography is very similar to the descriptive pop-ups of the 70s and 80s: the child plays with the pages, reads a few lines, then looks at the pop-up image or pulls the tabs.

So he is accompanied in the reading, that will always be a game and a happy moment for him.

I'm fond of all the books I've made, even the unpublished ones, but I really love some of them.

The first one is Pinocchio: for the first time I was a designer as well as a paper-engineer.



In 2004 this book received a nomination for the Meggendorfer Award. My Pinocchio pop-up arrived in bookstores on October 15th, 2002, exactly 70 years after Lentz's Pinocchio, the book for which the term pop-up was first used, on October 15th, 1932.

The second book I want to remember is the one I made on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Parisian headquarters of the fashion house Kenzo.



I am very happy because my pop-up realization of his drawing “Japan in Paris” has been chosen and it has been included in a book that collects the photographs of the most important photographers in the world who have documented his fashion shows.

The directors of the Museum of Modern Art in New York also liked this pop-up and printed a breakfast placemat with the picture of this pop-up.

Another particular book is the Nativity that I realized starting from a frame of a cartoon produced for our national TV network, RAI, by Studio Lastrego e Testa.

The pop-up was developed from a single frame, while in a cartoon we see 30 frames per second!

The book shows the Nativity designed by one of the most important Italian illustrators, Emanuele Luzzati, and can be kept open even before Christmas, because the Baby Jesus appears only when the comet rises. Then, on January 6th, the Three Wise Men also appear, pulling another tab.

The book has been reprinted for the fourth time and most likely will be printed again because it is sold out. And now the last pop-up I want to present to you: “Dante Inferno”.

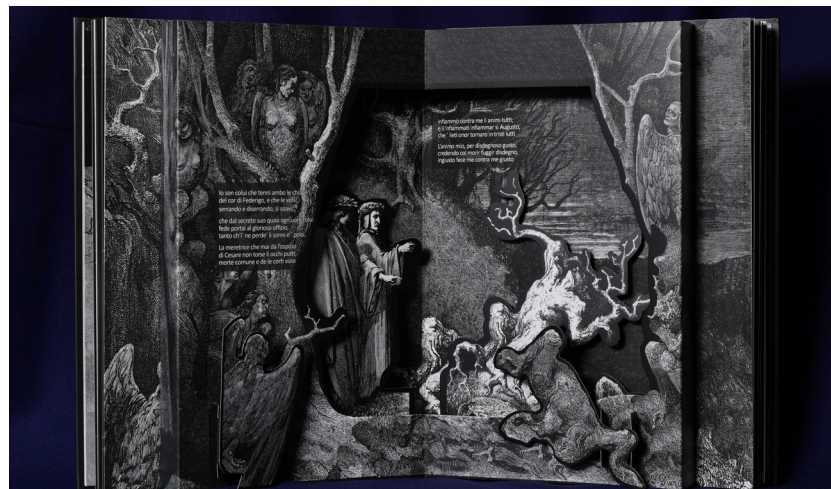
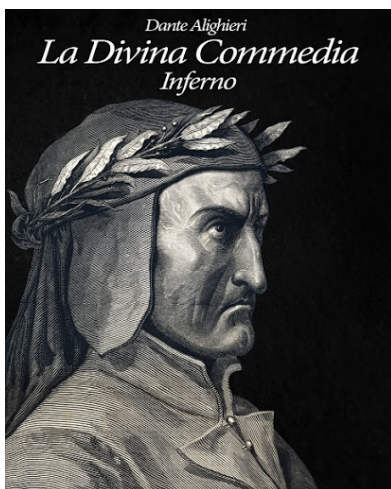
It was published in November 2020 and won the “Premio Andersen” in June 2021 (<https://www.andersen.it/premio-giuria-inferno/>). This pop-up book has several peculiarities.

The first one, it will be self-financed and printed in a few hundred copies, I couldn't find publishers so I became the publisher.

Actually, this was my first pop-up project: I had prepared the dummy a few months after I started making the first folds, in 1992, and it had been evaluated by Abrams publishing house, but they didn't print it.

Thirty years later, Professor Paolo Rambelli, from the University of Bologna, heard about this dummy and suggested that I should dust off the project. So we reviewed it together in view of the celebration of Dante's 700th anniversary, which took place during all of 2021.

A curious anecdote I was told, is that 160 years ago Doré did something similar to what I am doing today:



not finding publishers for his Inferno plates, which were too expensive, he accepted the suggestion of Hachette to market them, but he would have to bear the printing costs. Dorè believed in his book and had it printed at his own expense, and this was the right choice: the book was very successful, it sold out in a few days and Hachette reprinted it.

That's what Dorè did and that's what I decided to do, because Dante represents to me the possibility to express my idea of pop-up today and I found many collaborators to realize it.

A prestigious Italian musician, Marco Sabiu, has realized the soundtrack of the book, a soundtrack that will accompany the reader throughout the reading.

You can listen with smartphone or tablet in dolby surround, better in headphones to appreciate the audio effects.

While working on this project I learned that in 1911, in Italy, two films had been shot about Dante's Inferno, two colossal films for that time, and both directors were inspired by Gustave Dorè's illustrations.

One of these films is kept in the Vatican Film Library and I was allowed to include a few minutes of the film in the book.

Finally, the company Arloopa inc., specialized in augmented reality, realized the idea of a multimedia book.

I thank Mr. Arman Atoyan, CEO and co-founder, who helped and supported me and thanks to all the staff of ARLOOPA!

So, in Dante's Inferno you can go through the pop-up pages, you can read the commentary and several songs from the Divine Comedy, you can listen to an original soundtrack and you can watch fragments of two films that belong to the history of cinema.

I hope people like this project, I don't know of any other pop-ups with these characteristics...

My adventure with pop-ups was born about 25 years ago from an intuition that allowed me to teach pop-ups to over 8,000 students, including children and teachers! (<http://www.pop-ups.net>)