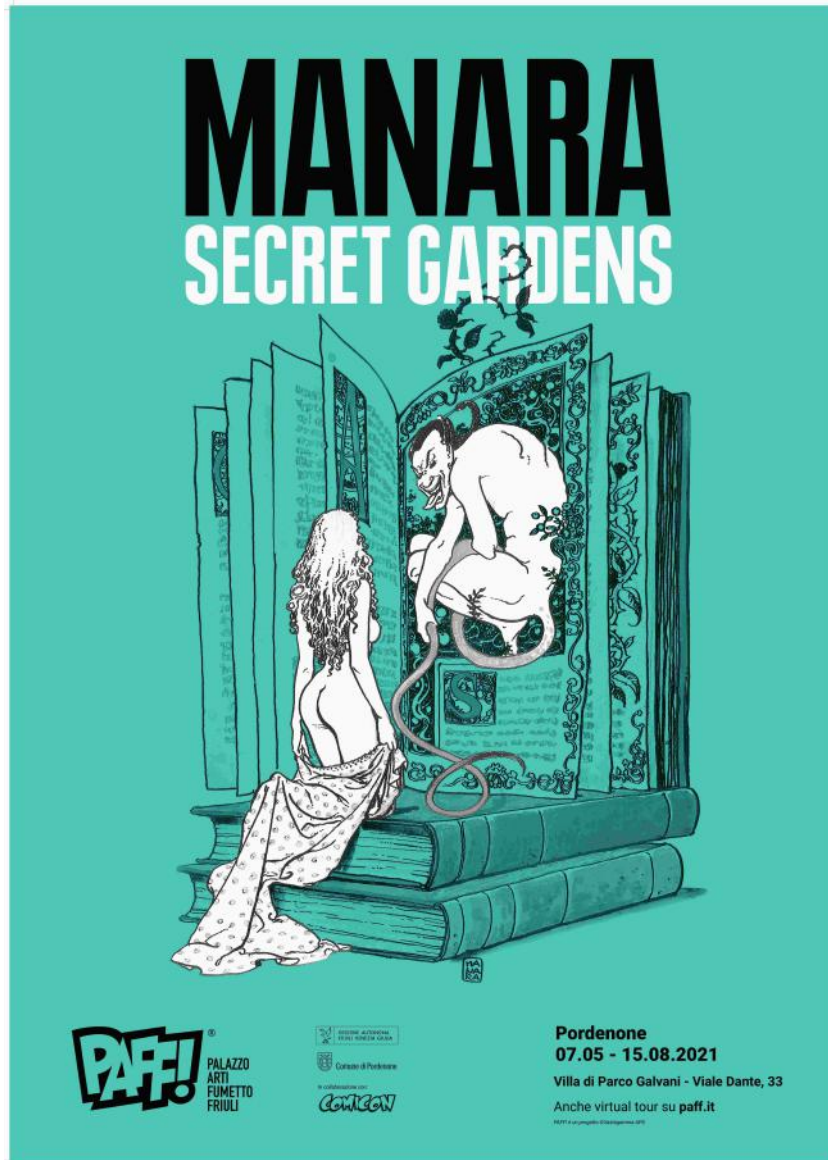


MANARA SECRET GARDENS
Palazzo Arti Fumetto Friuli, Pordenone



May 6th 2021, Pordenone - Discovering the artistic journey of Milo Manara, the many worlds he has visited, the depth of his aesthetic vision and the sensitivity that has made him the world's most influential comic artist, and not only in the field of eroticism. That is the focus of "Manara Secret Gardens", the exhibition held at **PAFF!** Palazzo Arti Fumetto Friuli, Pordenone, from 7 May to 15 August.

Milo Manara possesses the magic that is shared by all great artists: he can create worlds in which we can sense the smells, the sounds, the air, the vibrations, and everything that comes with them, such as the mysteriousness, the wonder, and the serenity of seeing. And he does all this without readers noticing, without delaying them, without holding them in a fluctuating emotion, an enchantment that flows and always leads you to what follows, to the next drawing.

After the solo exhibitions of Giorgio Cavazzano, Gradimir Smudja, Milton Caniff and DC/Marvel Superheroes, **PAFF!** Palazzo Arti Fumetto Friuli once again offers itself as a hive of cultural activities. Starting with the most prestigious names in international comics, the programme takes in all aspects of art and culture from Italy and around the world, and speaks to everyone with the immediacy and power of images.

“Manara Secret Gardens” is the first exhibition to bring to life the synergy forged just before the pandemic between the museum in Pordenone and Comicon Naples. The aim of the partnership is to create a national link between the two prestigious identities in the north and south of Italy, including through the organisation of ambitious international exhibitions. Hosted by **PAFF!** and curated by Claudio Curcio, Matteo Stefanelli, and alino di COMICON, with the contribution of the **Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia** at the **Villa Galvani** Gallery of Modern Art made available by the **Pordenone municipal council**, the exhibition celebrates the work of a great artist who has enchanted illustrious masters of the comic book like Hugo Pratt, and of cinema like Federico Fellini, and has worked with them and with other great names in entertainment and art like Alejandro Jodorowsky and Vincenzo Cerami, and great British and American comic book writers like Neil Gaiman and Chris Claremont.

The title of the exhibition is clearly inspired by Frances Hodgson Burnett's 1910 novel and is certainly allusive. At the same time it opens onto the various narrative, depictive and mental universes that the artist has explored during his long career, and underscores the aptness of the exhibition's venue amid the greenery of Galvani Park at **PAFF!**

The exhibition is a first-time exploration of the Veronese artist's eclecticism. It is centred around a dimension of his work that is both cross-cutting and subtle: an imagination towards the fantastic. This dimension has accompanied him since his first days in publishing and, not by chance, is the glue that holds together the kaleidoscope of genres, settings and stylistic registers that is his masterpiece *Giuseppe Bergman* (1978-2004), a condensed journey through the art of the comic book.

On display 90 originals by Manara including comic strips, drawings for advertising, illustrations, tributes, variant covers for Marvel Comics; 3 original drawings by Federico Fellini, personally donated by the director to Manara, 4 comic storyboards sketched by himself; an autograph letter and a watercolor layout for Hugo Pratt's "El Gaucho".

The selection also includes works rarely exhibited in the past, such as a panel from his early experimental work *Alessio* and three illustrations created for a special collection of Ulysse Nardin watches.

Of the original panels, some are of the wonderful *Caravaggio*, an impressive 2015 work in two volumes dedicated to the Baroque master and portrayed by Manara with the features of his friend and colleague Andrea Pazienza. In them he conveys all the splendour of Rome, her decadence and corruption, the dust, the bricks, the noise, the beauty, the immorality, the filth, and her magnificence. We also get a sense of the precariousness of empires, the transience of cultural models and, to some extent, the eternity of art.

Hosted in 4 rooms, the exhibition, designed by Corde Architetti (Venice), is likely to be one of the most evocative ever organised on the famous Veronese artist, an ambition that is enhanced by the presence of several experiential installations. Visitors can interact with them thanks to projections and audio-video content (anti-Covid regulations apply). The exhibition will be accompanied by a programme of engaging and original guided tours led by Roberto Fratantonio. Anyone unable to come in person can take part in a full online tour in high definition.

Manara manages to convey all of this with great mastery accompanied by his boundless love for the comic book genre, which he has always defended, held dear, studied and loved, even those aspects that define it as being "for the masses" and even at the most difficult times in its history. A true intellectual, Manara has always been able to explain the meaning of everything that comic books, and he with them, have achieved over the last, extraordinary, shocking, revolutionary decades of illustrated strips. An extraordinary, shocking, revolutionary story that his greatness has fed into.

"We are deeply satisfied that we have been able to keep the promise made to Manara three years ago when **PAFF!** first opened to dedicate a prestigious solo exhibition to him", says artistic director Giulio De Vita. "Milo brought good luck to the opening of Palazzo del Fumetto in Pordenone, an ambitious and difficult challenge. And today, with this exhibition, Milo has come back to get us off to a good start towards better times, after the oppression of the pandemic, and he does so with the lightness and elegance of his artistry, to soar beyond the tall hedges of secret gardens".

STATEMENTS

"It's beautiful news, once museums and cultural venues reopen, my exhibition at **PAFF!** will finally start, in a venue entirely dedicated to comic books and their forms of expression, which, finally, are starting to find a suitable home in Italy. Comic books are what I have tried to explore in my fifty-year career summed up in the itinerary of this particular exhibition, which has chosen an unusual way of presenting my work. I hope the audience will appreciate the design created by the curators and set designers to present my panels and illustrations, and hope to return to Pordenone in person, as soon as possible and before the end of the exhibition".

Milo Manara

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Giulio De Vita
Artistic director, PAFF!

"MiloManara's artistic career has been and still is one of a curious and eclectic *auteur*, albeit concentrated on a few key points. This exhibition bears witness to this, thanks to the originality of the point of view. Its nexus is the dimension of the fantastic, which enables us to travel through the entire fifty-year corpus of his artistic production, from the imagery of science fiction and fantasy to his dialogue with history and cinema. I believe this is an exciting opportunity, centred around unusual combinations and spaces designed to evoke the rich imagination of one of international comic art's leading figures".

Matteo Stefanelli
Comicon, Co-curator of the exhibition

"After months of forced closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic," remarks Tiziana Gibelli, Director of Culture for Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Council, "**PAFF!** is reopening with an international exhibition dedicated to the master of comic art, Milo Manara. The "Secret Gardens" exhibition retraces the great artist's career on a journey through the imagination and even through cinema with the section entitled *Fellini Fantasies*. It is an important exhibition that also has the capacity to attract visitors from abroad, and looks to the future with renewed optimism, in the hope that we can finally return to the normality that we have missed in recent times, including in the culture sector.

Tiziana Gibelli
Director of Culture for Friuli Venezia Giulia Council

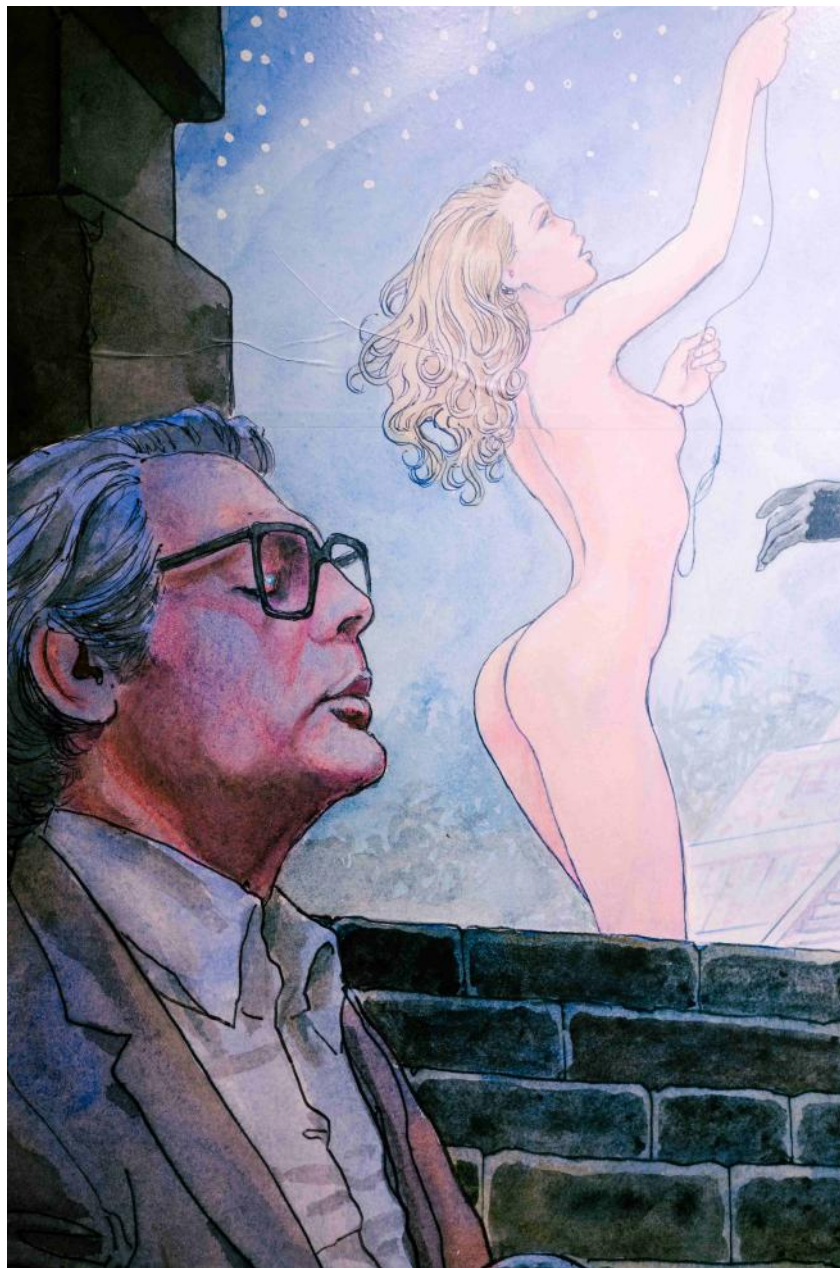
"Culture absolutely needs to get back to being enjoyed in person. And Pordenone is bouncing back with an exhibition of one of the world's most celebrated comic book artists. This reaffirms the city's status as one of Italy's most important cultural centres even in these difficult times. Despite the pandemic, **PAFF!** is a gamble that is paying off for its promoters and the municipality, who were strongly in favour of it. Rules permitting, we hope to receive visitors from outside the city, as this exhibition has the potential to attract people from all over Italy and abroad".

Alessandro Ciriani
Mayor of Pordenone

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