

# KALEIDOSCOPE

SEASON SS20



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in Italy: 1966–1977 from *Mondo Beat* Edited by Emanuele De Donno and Amedeo Martegani and published by ViaIndustriae, Yes Yes Yes investigates the alternative press scene in Italy from 1966–1977.

to *Zut* (2020), once again edited by VIAINDUSTRIAE and curated by Dallas studio (Francesco Valtolina and Kevin Pedron). Through careful digging into the curators' collections, this volume tells the story of the Italian alternative and revolutionary press at a time in which, especially in Italy, many battles were being fought in the pursuit of a definition of “country.” These were years where, as the book reads, a “fervent typographic activity meets a tightly sealed politico-ideological, antagonistic and counter-cultural one-of-a-time of fight, seizing of ‘civil’ spaces, areas of freedom and social creativity”; a loose decade which was, as Valtolina tells me, “really hardcore, as you can tell through the pages of the book.”

In surveying this new volume, it becomes clear how, after a short Beat/Situationist phase, Italy’s “alternative press” emerged largely from far-leftist political circles, from worker’s rights movements and student riots. Nearly a quarter of the book is dedicated to publications on street rioting, factory strikes or armed fighting that borrow from the Bakuninist, Marxist or Maoist lexicons and carry titles like *Hammer and Sickle*, *Mass Line*, *The Left*, *Red Flag*, *Soviet* and, perhaps the most renowned, *Continuous Struggle* and *Worker’s Power*. As Valtolina explains: “Compared to the American and European realities, where at the time the alternative press was mainly coming to life thanks to an urge for aesthetic and cultural research, it’s obvious that, even on a purely graphic level, Italian press is born from a need to convey clear political messages.”

This doesn’t mean that *Revolutionary Press* is merely an overview of cyclostyles and stern fonts screaming “Repression is a Paper Tiger” (the debut title for *Compagni* in April 1970). Organized in themed and semantic areas, the book allows for a familiarization with fanzines and magazines that, starting from the late ‘60s, began hybridizing the specificity of the Italian context with the jargon of the international vanguards of graphics, thought, costume and alternative comics. *Re Nudo*, for example, starts in Milan in 1970 and follows a fundamental line of work in the spreading of alternative subjects around Italy—not only to the mainstream, but even to the more orthodox and politicized wings of the Student Movement. The same was true for lesser-known publications like *Roman High Roman*, *King Kong International*, *Food* and *UBU*, magazines and fanzine inserts of an international web of “countercultural media” that did much to bypass the census imposed by the “DC regime” during those years of great cultural friction.

Like the publications it features, *Revolutionary Press* is a crucial work of propagation for exogenous spores, extending a legacy that converged into works that together formed the history of Italian independent publishing, from *Pogo* to *Cannibal*. Founded in Rome in 1977 by Massimo Mattioli and Stefano Tamburini, *Cannibal* was a real lab in which nearly all the masters of the golden age of Italian alternative comics cut their teeth: from Andrea Paziienza to Tanino Liberatore, Filippo Scòzzari to Vincenzo Sparagna. But this, as they say, is another story.

## YES YES YES

### REVOLUTIONARY PRESS IN ITALY

words by Cesare Alemanni

In retrospect, it seems clear how the mid-’60s and late ’70s have been a decisive time in the ultimate quest to define what “contemporary” is. From the revolutionary movement of ’68 to economic deregulation, from the energy crisis of ’73 to identity politics, from the birth of the “California ideology” to that of urban culture: globally, we are still living in the shadow of the phenomenon of that time frame, so short yet so influential.

This was also the period when the borders of the realms of subcultures and the underground, now more blurred than ever due to the digital ecosystem, were first being outlined. Born in the midst of new political and expressive issues, the circulation of subcultural semiotics was coming to life, especially due to the so-called “alternative press.” Some short-lived, others destined to define an era, these years saw an immensity of publications which, in their entirety, exemplify the subterranean flow of socio-cultural transformations that so directly informed the aesthetic of those years.

Drawing from the rich personal archives of curators Andrea De Donno and Amedeo Martegani, *YES YES YES Alternative Press: ‘66–’77 from Provo to Punk* (2014) documented the evolution of the international alternative press. Beginning with the anarcho-dada approaches of the Dutch collective Provo in creating the first punk, post-situationist fanzine, the project mapped a journey that unraveled through beatnik publications and alternative American comics, Black Panther and feminist flyers, the first porno magazines and LSD aesthetics.

Six years later, De Donno and Martegani are making a comeback with a new book: *YES YES YES Revolutionary Press*

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MARIO AYALA

interview by Katja Horvat

FAMILIAR AND OVERWHELMED



Image courtesy of the artist and Loyal Gallery, Stockholm.

**KH** Where does the process begin for you? How long does it take to fully develop an idea?

**MA** Usually I'm sorting through folders of images and other things I archive. Sometimes I'll revisit some phrase or a word I've written down and expand on that. It can take a while, though, as I like to leave some space for the painting to evolve a bit on its own.

**KH** How do you know when work is finished?

**MA** It's a feeling. That said, some compositions are more figured out than others, I guess.

**KH** Do you ever think about your work in terms of whether it is easy to live with or not? Some pieces are so grand you can't wrap your head around them, but to be able to live with such "loud" works is an entirely different thing, while others are so simple that you might underappreciate them, but then they become the best to have around in a living area.

**MA** I do, but I wouldn't say it dictates any of my decisions when making a painting. Some works end up being more livable, and some just don't.

**KH** What kind of reaction do you hope to get from people?

**MA** I'd like to evoke several reactions out of people. A reaction that's both overwhelmed and familiar, maybe.

**KH** When it comes to influences, are you more of an emotional, "live by the moment" type of artist, or is there a steady ground and inspiration from which you always source?

**MA** I think there's a streamline pattern of thoughts that travel throughout the work, sort of symbiotically. Lately, I've been thinking about the work as a compilation mix someone gives you. I like to make YouTube playlists of my own when working on a new series. Sometimes a track I'm stuck on will even end up in a painting somewhere.

**KH** Where are we genre-wise? Do you change genres with each project, or do you stay in any particular lanes?

**MA** It can be totally random. Right now, 3 February 2020 at 10:11 PM, I am onto The Flamingos' "Love Walked In" and Soda Stereo's "Cuando Pase el Temblor".

**KH** So when you paint faces, are those real people, people you know? I mean, you've painted musicians before, too!

**MA** I source faces from lots of places. Many times I've used myself, my family and friends, but like you mentioned, there've been occasions where I painted more recognizable faces, like 2Pac, Nate Dogg, etc.

**KH** If I'm not mistaken, your dad is the one who got you into this whole thing, right?

**MA** I'm very close to my Pops—and yes, he actually introduced me to drawing. He's been a trucker for over twenty-five years, and grew up interested in cars and motorcycles. We share a lot of interests in similar things, which probably has a lot to do with the fact that he brought me around a lot as a kid.

**KH** So how does your family feel about the work you make? Do you seek their advice?

**MA** I'd like to think that they like it, and I actually really enjoy it when they want to talk about the work I make. I'm fortunate to have the people in my life that I do, so they play a significant role in the work I make, as does the way I was raised and the experiences I had with those around me growing up.

**KH** What did you want to be growing up?

**MA** I wanted to be a cartoonist for the Sunday paper and a veterinarian. I guess I'm not that far off: I still draw, and I have two pups and a snake.

Mario Ayala (American, b.1991, lives and works in Los Angeles) works with vernacular imagery associated with the representation of brownness and Latinx identity.