

Il 18° Convegno C.D.O.

by *Jeremy Shafer*

The C.D.O (Centro Diffusione Origami) Convention took place the weekend of December 8th -10th at the Hotel delle Terme in Castel San Pietro near Bologna. I arrived at the hotel Friday around 3pm, and the convention was already in full swing. Everyone was gathered in one big room sitting at tables folding and it reminded me of the hospitality room at the OrigamiUSA convention – I was clearly in my element. There were just over 150 attendees but here I was definitely not the only foreigner; almost a third of the attendees were from other countries including nine from the States. In addition, there were only nine *Bolognini* – everyone else came from out of town.



The C.D.O convention carries quite a reputation, and well deserved I must say, even just considering the impressive presence of famous folders: **Kunihiko Kasahara** (Japan), **Eric Joisel** (France), **David Brill** (England), **Vincente Palacios** (Spain), **Peter Budai** (Hungary), **Heinz Stroeble** (Germany), **Herman Van Goubergen** (Belgium), **Edwin Corrie** (Switzerland) **Pasquale D'Auria** and **David Derudas** (Italy), and **Jan Polish** and **Jonathan Baxter** (USA). So although Kunihiko, Eric Joisel and myself were officially the honored guests, it felt like we were really just the lucky members of a gang of folders, each of which deserved as much to be honored.

The classes, which all took place in the main room, were taught spur of the moment, which for me was less stressful. There was no model menu, no ticketing, and I didn't even need to decide which particular models I was going to teach until it was time to teach. On Saturday, I taught two classes, one on envelopes and cards, and the other on action models. While teaching, I got plenty of practice speaking Italian and several times needed to be reminded by the people who did not understand Italian to translate what I was saying into English. My personal feeling is that language really plays only a small part in the teaching of origami. My classes could have just as easily been taught silently, but that wouldn't be as much fun, especially for me who was thoroughly enjoying getting a private Italian lesson from twenty Italian professors! Hah, and they thought it was an origami class!

Saturday evening was my big chance to perform. I did my whole act in Italian and to open I recited an Italian tongue twister that I learned in my phrase book. They seemed to really like that. Then I did some three-ball juggling with sound effects. I finished my ball juggling 5, 6, 7, 8, and finally 9 balls. On my fifth unsuccessful attempt to catch all nine balls, one of the dropped balls decided to hide itself in the foliage and I was unable to find it. The audience got a kick out of that – as if I wasn't having enough trouble already. Luckily I had a spare ball which I used to finally



catch all nine balls. Then, after handwhistling, showing some origami, singing an Italian aria, and juggling glowballs, I took everyone outside for my long awaited fire act. Out of convenience or maybe fear, they all decided to watch from up on the balcony, which felt slightly strange to me (perhaps overly safe). Anyway, the flaming crane, torches, fireballs, fire eating, and flaming unicycle all went smoothly, but tragically, my precious new bronze flaming flasher got fatally torn in my haste to extinguish it. But at least it was spectacular while it lasted, and I can guarantee, that my obsessive pursuit to make the perfect Flaming Flasher is not over with yet!



Up to this point, I had been having a great time at the convention, but so far there wasn't anything too out of the ordinary. But all that would change in the next seven hours. I was to discover what really makes the Italian convention so unique... The night time activities! After my performance, many people hung out in the main room and folded, but a core group of Italians (and me) took to the hallway and spent the next four hours singing and strumming to their hearts content, surprisingly, mostly songs in English – Beatles, Elvis and Frank Sinatra, Broadway

musicals, etc. I found myself quite embarrassed that they knew more words of the songs than I did! No wonder so many Italians speak English. In addition to singing, I handwhistled and had many chances to dance, in particular with **Barbara Leonardi** who happened to be an excellent salsa dancer. This marathon of music and dance was exhilarating and unlike anything I had encountered at other conventions.

Finally at about 3AM we were asked by people trying to sleep to quit making such a racket. So we relocated to the main room. All of a sudden I found myself in a bizarre deep philosophical discussion in English with Judit Barta (from Hungary) and two other Italians over the meaning of art and it's relation to origami. That lasted for over an hour, but it finally deteriorated into a discussion on the meaning of love, which quickly came to a close because we all agreed that we knew nothing on the subject.



So then we decided to join the other night owls in playing silly group games that had little to do with origami, but, I'm embarrassed to admit, this for me was the highlight of the convention... in particular, the kissing game!!! Imagine... twenty-five people seated in a circle, boy-girl-boy-girl-boy-boy-boy-girl (there was a shortage of girls!). A sheet of origami paper is held in the puckered lips of the first person who is sucking in to keep it from falling. Then in kissing fashion (often melodramatic), the paper is passed to the lips of the next person and so on. The paper is passed from lips to lips, kiss to kiss, around and around the circle until someone drops it and is therefore eliminated, or until the paper becomes so wet that people demand a new sheet. To make it more difficult, each new paper is progressively smaller than the one before. So, why for me was this game the highlight of the convention?

Well, for one, I felt it was a brilliant use of origami paper. But really I was having such a great time largely because I happened to be sitting next to Judit Barta, who I dare say is quite attractive. So I was trying extra hard to not get

eliminated, and to my delight, both Judit and I made it to the final four. We must have shared at least twenty "safe" kisses, but on the next round, naughty little me was planning to accidentally suck the paper into my mouth thereby making the final kiss for real! But alas they stopped the game! I protested loudly yelling, "What kind of game is this?! Four winners? I'm an American -- I need to know who THE winner is!!" But to no avail.

They made us move on to the next game which wasn't nearly as exciting – something about slapping knees around in a circle. I managed to make the final four in that game too (possibly because I was the most sober), but this time I really didn't mind that they ended with four winners – "Let's move on already, it's the Italian way!" . Finally we played a cooperative group game known in the States as "Human Knot." To make the knot, we all clumped together, and with eyes closed, grabbed any two hands. The object was to untangle the knot. After playing a few rounds our energy finally fizzled and so we sat down and started talking in Italian.



Since it was already 7AM, I took this opportunity to escape to my room to grab a couple hours of sleep. But the fifteen or so folders that remained (all were Italians) never did go to sleep until the following night. Sara Giarrusso told me that it's a C.D.O Convention tradition to stay up for 36 hours straight. She reminisced that last year, the convention zombies made an origami movie using models in the exhibition, and, the year before, they set up an elaborate origami nativity scene on the steps of the cathedral in Bologna.

All day Sunday was extra laid back. I taught a couple very informal classes in the morning, but after lunch most people hung out in the hotel lobby being social and saying farewell to each other over and over, perhaps each time in a different language! Several folders including me stayed over another night, and we spent that evening folding, and dancing to music I had brought. Once again I was in my element, getting to dance salsa and merengue with all seven women in the room. I was particularly impressed while dancing with June Sakamoto, who was no doubt a very accomplished ballroom/latin dancer.

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