

**NUES International Festival - Comics and Cartoons in the Mediterranean  
ON THE WINGS OF THE IMAGINARY  
7<sup>th</sup> Edition**

**Art direction: Bepi Vigna**

**Organizational direction: Susanna Puddu**

**Premise**

The seventh edition of NUES International Festival of Comics and Cartoons in the Mediterranean will travel on the wings of the imaginary.

“Heritage of symbols and concepts”<sup>1</sup>, our personal imaginary is nourished and grows through experience, it draws on the collective imaginary, but at the same time it helps to build it.

The term may refer to the “prevailing myths of an era, of a culture, of a nation, of a generation, of a social class”, but also “to the imaginary dimension of another society/world... to Utopias, millenarianisms, ideologies and beliefs”, as well as, in everyday life, “to entertainment, to games”<sup>2</sup>. Whatever the meaning we may give to this word, it is art that represents the men's and communities' desire to “give body” to different imaginaries; this expression sounds oxymoronic, as it renders explicit how the creative power is inherent in the artistic act.

Myths, religious beliefs, literature, cinema, comics, games, video games (the latter especially for younger generations), act powerfully on different areas of life, of individuals and peoples, and they represent that sort of “transcendental imaginary, of which one cannot do without”<sup>3</sup>, because it fulfills “inseparable needs of human nature”<sup>4</sup>, criss-crossing real life and going beyond it.

At a time when the use of culture is radically changing and one can get information, read and watch films, play, thanks to state-of-the-art but easy-to-use technological tools that are more popular than television itself, one wonders what imaginary - or imaginaries - we are choosing to adopt or to suffer; what imaginaries we are helping to build and whether it is possible to act on them in order to change their twisted logics and anachronisms.

1 *Treccani Encyclopedic Dictionary* - 2015

2 Marina D'Amato - *I teleroi. I personaggi, le storie, i miti della tv dei ragazzi*, 1999

3 Marina D'Amato - *Telefantasie. Nuovi paradigmi dell'immaginario*, 2007

4 Edgar Morin - *Culture et barbarie européennes*, 2006

New media and their specific languages help to transform the imaginary, by “bombarding” users with content that is consumed and replaced quickly and disseminated in an increasingly global way. On the one hand, this fact can result in an impoverishment of meaning and homogenization; on the other hand, it may lead to interfusion, openness and discovery of the new and the different.

**Themes and Purposes of Nues Festival 2016**

As is the custom for Nues Festival, the theme chosen each year aims at grasping the current affairs on the European and, in particular, on the Mediterranean historical/cultural scene. If in the 2015 edition we wanted to trace a path investigating the concept of conflict, starting from the concreteness of historical data – the centenary of the Great War and the Sassari Brigade –, this year we have decided to combine reading promotion, which has always been a fundamental goal of Nues, with the theme of the imaginary, a perhaps more transcendental theme, whose consequences on human life are real, tangible, but also changeable and elusive, especially in an era of changes that society is not always ready to receive (just to mention some examples, think about the ideas of “Europe” or “family” and their break-up/evolution that we are witnessing on a daily basis).

Therefore, the theme of the imaginary, in this historical period, that is strongly characterized by clashes between ideologies and civilizations, appears as a particularly significant one. Moreover, it seems appropriate to capture the fluidity of an era that could, and should, be reaching out to change, but that barely manages to move towards a multicultural vision: possibly because, although “collective imaginaries” are different, beliefs and stereotypes are still deeply rooted in them and we are not able to overcome these, but it is imperative to work on them with all the creative means at our disposal.

Exhibitions, presentations and meetings, events: with a transversality of artistic languages and, in particular, by means of comics, which represent a hybrid code, the seventh edition of Nues aims at investigating different areas and meanings of the imaginary, by exploring that heritage of “concepts and symbols” related to Sardinia, as a starting point through which to discover apparently distant cultures of the world, with a special focus on the Mediterranean region.

The seventh edition of Nues will be divided into different thematic sections.

1) **“Il Cielo sopra Cagliari” (The Sky Above Cagliari)** will tell the angelic imaginary linked to the capital city of Sardinia: the heart of the section will be the legend of the Gulf of the Angels and the Devil's Saddle, according to which, after a furious battle waged by angels and demons for the possession of the Gulf of Cagliari, the divine army managed to defeat Lucifer's demons. The latter, in a rage, left his saddle on the battle field, which, with time, ended up becoming the impressive promontory known as “The Devil's Saddle”, a characteristic spot of Cagliari skyline.

The legend will become the subject of a **comic** - screenplay by *Bepi Vigna*, drawings by *Stefania Costa* and *Laura Congiu* – aimed at enhancing and disseminating, also outside Sardinia, the heritage of myths and beliefs related to Cagliari territory, to which this section of Nues will be especially linked: in fact, the bibliographical and urban itineraries **“Le vie degli Angeli” (The Paths of the Angels)** will offer citizens and tourists, as well as Internet users, a series of “paths” in order to discover publications, sites and monuments of the city linked to the figure of angels. Moreover, through book **presentations** and **meetings** with experts, the role of the mythical angelic creatures in different religious and artistic traditions will also be examined, while the **exhibition *Il cielo sopra Cagliari (The Sky Above Cagliari)*** will highlight, in particular, how the angelic imaginary has been translated into the world of comics and it will see the participation of some of the most important authors of comics on the national scene, such as *Roberto De Angelis*, *Romeo Toffanetti*, *Leo Ortolani*, and *Otto Gabos*.

2) **“Mediterraneo Immaginario” (Imaginary Mediterranean)** will offer an insight into the Spanish production of comics, in line with one of the main purposes that have characterized the Nues Festival since its first edition: recounting the evolution of Mediterranean cultural history by means of a guest country, that will be Spain in 2016, that will talk about itself from Sardinia through speech bubbles. On another Mediterranean shore, Nues will land at Tétouan in **Morocco**: in fact, through a cultural exchange with the tenth edition of the “International Comics Forum of Tétouan”, the comics festival organized by the Chouf Association and the Institute of Fine Arts of Tétouan, Nues will bring to Sardinia some of the authors belonging to the Moroccan scene, witnessing a culturally vibrant reality, rich in tradition, yet full of emerging authors wishing to tell the contemporaneity of their country through the language of comics.

3) With **“Immaginaria mente” (Imaginary Minds)** Nues will explore the imaginary linked to mental health problems. In collaboration with the International School of Comics of Turin, the publication “Pazzi per il fumetto” (Crazy for Comics) will be presented in Cagliari. Young emerging artists have faced this sensitive topic through short comic stories, which will become the subject of an **exhibition**: to get to know realities that are too often neglected and to overcome prejudices, the language of “speech bubbles”, with the interaction between text and image, is a useful tool, able to tell us about special and poetic personalities, protagonists of stories of mental distress – in a simple and immediate way.

4) The **“Donna, immagina!” (Women! Imagine!)** section, dedicated to women's imaginary, is an opportunity to reflect on the concept of woman and femininity, as well as on gender stereotypes, which are widespread in heterogeneous environments. The aim of this section is to help to build a new female imaginary, where women are the protagonists, not just passive spectators, by presenting new models, or simply rediscovering forgotten characters, through literature, cinema and comics. This section will take place over a single day of study, among comics presentations, screenings and debates, and it will be the subject of a **“live sketching”** session, with artists of the Cagliari Centre for Comics who will illustrate the impressions of the meetings with their live works.

5) **“Immaginario sostenibile” (Sustainable imaginary)** will address the theme of the imaginary linked to the concept of landscape, with the aim of grasping its changes and raising the awareness of adults and children to the respect of the environment, through comics and illustration. In this section, in collaboration with the *Sustainable Happiness* association, environment-friendly, eco-comics will be presented. Some illustration workshops by bicycle will take place. They are aimed at exploring and drawing some views of Cagliari, discovering how it has changed and how the landscape, with its most poetic views but also with its injuries, can influence citizens' lives.