

## **CDO Verbania December 2006**

Origami in Italy brings many happy memories for me: my first visit abroad to visit origami friends was to Florence in July 1977 where I met Roberto Morassi and Giovanni Maltagliati on their home territory. Together they founded the CDO the following year in 1978.

The CDO quickly established a reputation as a dynamic organisation, hosting meetings with Akira Yoshizawa, and on another occasion Toshie Takahama. Again in Florence, I attended the opening of a CDO sponsored exhibition of origami in 1983 featuring figures and scenes from Pinocchio on the centenary of the first publication of the children's story. Eric Kenneway and I made a trip to beautiful Tuscany in 1985 for an early CDO convention at Palazzo al Piano, near Siena, and it became clear to us shy and retiring Brits that the carefree and fun-loving character of Italian folders gave rise to a very different atmosphere to that which we had become accustomed at rather serious BOS events. Another memorable excursion was to the CDO 10th anniversary convention in 1988 in Verona: special guests then included Kunihiro Kasahara, Shuzo Fujimoto, Tomoko Fuse, and Hisashi Abe. Wow!

So an annual trip to the CDO annual convention, usually taking place in October or December has now become an essential fixture on my calendar. In early December 2006, following visits in the preceding years to Bologna, Florence and San Marino, the convention was held in Verbania Pallanza on the shores of Lake Maggiore in the north of Italy, bordering Switzerland. I reached the convention from Milan Malpensa airport, and then by a 1-hour train journey north towards the Italian Alps. Sadly (or maybe fortunately!) the weather was diabolical for the 3-day event between 8 and 10 December, so all were able to concentrate on folding tasks! 180 folders from home and abroad converged on the Hotel Castagnola where the programme was supervised by Roberto Gretter and Donatella Ghisi, in the adjoining conference centre which was a large college building.

Special guests in Verbania were Fernando Gilgado Gomez (Madrid) <http://www.pajarita.org/usuarios/gilgado/>  
and Ralf Conrad (Brandenburg near Berlin) <http://www.origami-online.de/>

Their respective displays showed a good range of their work, Gilgado combining humour and style with natural forms and human figures, and Conrad showing impeccable and unbelievable precision in his tessellation work, sometimes in miniature scale.

Other work which caught my eye included Paulo Bascetta's geometric tile variations using a one simple unit shape; a working harmonica by Pasquale D'Auria; beautiful cut and folded work by Alfredo Giunta; collapsing boxes and vases by Federico Scalambra; Dodecahedra by Silvana Betti Mamino; Tessellations by Eric Gjerde, figures and insects by Siphon Mabona; curved form unit designs by Natale Fietta; and

a new model called "Ships passing in the night" by Herman van Goubergen. A new design by Herman is always a thrill: this one is an action model with two ships simultaneously travelling in opposite directions while a pleated "sea" is gently manipulated.

Folding sessions took place continuously over the three day event: the two guests Ralf Conrad and Fernando Gilgado had their own classrooms, but all other teachers shared one large hall with about 6 tables of groups of folders folding, chatting or laughing together. In addition, former CDO president Luisa Canovi ran several classes in *suminagashi*. These were interesting parallels to the usual folding activities, and I was pleased to join one of the small groups in a quiet room, to meditate and contemplate while trying this Japanese art form, in wide contrast to the noisy and effervescent atmosphere elsewhere.

A large *mercato* (shop) gave delegates the chance to buy a very wide selection of books from many sources: there I was rather surprised to see a Korean reprint of Yoshizawa's *Sosaku Origami* (NHK1984) including some unfamiliar designs by a Korean folder... who authorised these?! Paper and past publications from CDO were also available, and the shop was always packed with customers.

A competition was held based on the theme of "Water". Very appropriate as the lake was close by, and rain was continuously falling from the heavens! Convention delegates cast their votes for their favourite three entries in order. Several ingenious entries appeared including a highly detailed toilet (!), and a fine action model by Siphon Mabona of a Puffer fish, using the increasingly popular tessellation style. But the deserved winner was Roberto Gretter's excellent "Drop" showing a drop falling into water and the ripples radiating around it.

Of course the folding and fun was punctuated by excellent meals in the hotel restaurant, which when populated by 180 hungry folders became a noisy and joyful space. As at the Spanish AEP conventions, hungry origami enthusiasts eating together is something to behold, and I recommend you try the experience!

I have visited many origami meetings and conventions in many countries where the atmosphere is frequently similar. The first CDO meetings I visited were free and informal, in contrast to the necessarily highly structured events staged by OUSA and JOAS with ticketing and model menus for classes. BOS events in England with which I have been involved are frequently much smaller with a maximum of 100 delegates. Now the CDO meetings has developed into much larger events and so tighter organisation in Verbania was evident. Classes were scheduled to start at specific times (though usually they were a bit delayed) and everyone knew what should have been happening and when.

The weather cleared after the close of the convention on Sunday December 10th, and so the next day Herman Van Goubergen, Assia Vely and I did a little sightseeing, and we took a ferry boat across the lake to the town of Stresa. A beautiful backdrop of

mountains with snowy peaks, and clear sky was further enhanced by the setting sun, painting a rosy hue to the sky and the landscape.

Watch out for the next CDO event in the autumn of 2007: I hope to see you there!