

THE HEAVY MENTAL

MASTEQUOIA

INTERVIEW AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY GILDA ALOISI



01

Introduce yourself:

Mastequoia Activities is the sum of the artwork of Carlo Gabriele Tribbioli, Gabriele Silli and Giacomo Sponzilli. We were all born in Rome in 1982, we've known each other for a very long time, and we started working together as a group in late 2004. As of last year we began working in a new studio we got in Trastevere in the very center of the town.

Have you ever left Rome to work on your art?

Actually, from the start of our activity together, Giacomo Sponzilli never lived in Rome: he was in Holland for several years studying, and now he's working in Japan. On the other hand, Gabriele and I have never left Rome.

But the way we work as a group is a reflex of and shaped by this distance. We never quite work together, but we share the same *materiali immaginari*: characters, tools, formulas. The imaginary materials. One of us defines a process or an aim to work on and eventually others can join if that proposal moves something within them. When this happens, it gives birth to a work of the MASTEQUOIA activity.

Describe one of your last works:

To do that I will display a brief history of works produced and developed in different shapes and media, as well as the process we use, starting from one common imaginary tool:

the "Flower-Hammer" formula.

The "Flower-Hammer" is an image that has been used by Gabriele in the last year as an aesthetic guideline to combine, compose, and associate objects and images.

The first act of this work was a piece of mail that Gabriele sent to Giacomo in the Netherlands. That mail contained a group of drawings and directives intended as "free" parameters to be interpreted on how to build a "Flower-Hammer".





02

The answer that Giacomo gave us was to build an iron sculpture composed of a long and thin root-shaped piece that divides itself on top to hold a circular element. The object was then used as a prop for a set of black and white photographs that portrayed Giacomo playing or acting a certain character while holding the iron object. That was the first "Flower-Hammer" appearance as an object.

At the same time, Gabriele was developing a formula for using it in a different way: to build a book, constructed by gathering pages from several magazines (fashion, medical, scientific) and, following the "Flower-Hammer" principle of contrast and assonance, binding them together again and giving birth to a new object.





In my hands, the "Flower-Hammer" became a set of drawings, or specific images, turned into serigraphic marks that signed other pages which were produced and collected by Gabriele following other criteria, such as deterioration into acids and overlaying printings. The marks gather the many pages under one conception. These pages too, bound together, composed several other books.





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With all the materials (books, objects, drawings and such), we made an exhibition last spring in a gallery in Milan. We built a big concrete sculpture live during the exhibition. Following the same concept, we then designed the second Flower-Hammer sculpture, which is now in the middle of the studio.

What about the opening of the studio?

Last summer for the opening of the studio we challenged each other to a boxing match. We had four matches of 3 rounds each, MASTEQUOIA versus the ARTCOCK Art Collective, who share the space with us. Federico Lodoli and Samuel Lanz, friends and allies, joined our team.

We didn't have any preparation and wanted to fight ugly and roughly, as true as we could. We wanted it to be serious, with a judge and a referee. We weren't looking to do a punkish "fight club". We did that mostly to make fun of ourselves: inexperienced, goofy and completely out of training. But on the other hand, we took it seriously; doing the best we could, believing that it was a proper way to introduce ourselves as artists.





05

- 01 *The Group*
- 02 *flower hammer*
- 03 *sculpture*
- 04 *book layout*
- 05 *boxing*

We even conceived of it as a little ironic tribute to Arthur Cravan, the "*Boxing Poet*", one of the most radical Dadaists of the early twentieth century, who challenged the heavy weight champion of the world, Jack Johnson, in a legendary fight.

He went K.O. at sixth round. (That is a lot of time).

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