

9th Biennial International Festival of Underwater Photography 30 January - 1st February 2003, Congress Palace in Lugano

Visitors to the Biennial's 9th edition found themselves immersed between reality and fiction, between monsters (real or imaginary) and legends linked to the sea and water.

In the Congress Palace entrance hall, visitors were welcomed by an enormous "viper fish" head rising out in front of a blue "wall of water", whose reflections perhaps held fleeting images of octopus tentacles or mythical creatures.

The show started on Thursday evening, with the very interesting **conferences** held: the first by Dr. Carlo Nike Bianchi on the theme "[Depths in shallow waters](#): affinities and parallels between underwater caves and deep environments" and the second by Dr. Maurizio Mosca with a talk on "[Sea Monsters](#): on the trace of the large sea serpent and the giant octopus, between reality and fantasy".

Visitors to the **two exhibitions** set-up in the entrance hall, were able to see details and images of some of the aspects of the two themes discussed by the speakers.

"[Depths](#)" the reconstruction of underwater sea beds presented by the **Genoa Aquarium**, had a great impact on the public, showing luminescent fish, tiny but fierce looking fish, and the strange creatures which live around the deep hot water springs.

The exhibition on [monstrous creatures](#) set-up for the Biennial by the **Milan Aquarium** was detailed and magnificently illustrated: a walk through mainly present day monsters, some of which were revealed to be completely real.

(Both exhibitions can be seen at the Cantonal Natural History Museum from the 10th February until the 29th March 2003)

There were three chosen points chosen to underline the ONU declaration that 2003 is the

Freshwater year:

- The **HADES group** from Berne University, with their large and fascinating [Hydrological Atlas](#) of Switzerland and [rain cycles](#), reproduced through an interesting plexiglass structure;
 - The **Helvetas** Association for international co-operation, with their programme "[Water for all](#)"
 - A display of [underwater photographs](#), [the clear and splendid waters of the Ticino](#), presented by two local photographers: Mauro Bernasconi and Matthias Blättler.
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Of great aesthetic value and biological interest were the **photographs of tropical sea environments** by Jean Claude Tarlé (F) and Mario Marzorati (I).

At the end of this stimulating tour the heart of the exhibitions were reached:

The **DIAPORAMA** slide shows. It may be necessary to spend some words on this subject, as many people have no understanding of it.

They are short (3-8 minutes) but very intense slide shows: splendid images are projected using a disolvency technique, with different timings, and a special attention to colours and graphics, and can therefore create new pictures, called third images.

The sequences are scored by musical pieces, sometimes accompanied by poetic quotations or real stories, which all serve to enrapture the audience.

Numerous comments received from the public of all ages were clear: the show was [a spectacle of rare beauty and stirred up deep emotions](#).

Among the already famous names: **Renza and Pierfranco Dilenge** (I) with their new work on underwater caves; **Lionel Pozzoli** (F) who brought us face to face with the great white sharks of South Africa and **Tally Pozzoli** (F) who allowed us to dream again with images of that gentle giant the humpback whale.

New and exciting work from some new authors were seen: **Fulvia and Pierluigi Bortoletto** (I) with a fascinating look at the Mediterranean and a lively kaleidoscope of tropical images; **Angelika and Albert Honsbeek** (NL) took us back to the Egyptian temples and the splendid depths of the Red Sea; **Steve Duchesne** (F) brought us frank and vivid images of the dangers which whales are still up against, due to intensive fishing; **Guido Pfeiffer** documented the surprising riches of the Mediterranean; while **Mauro and Franca Bernasconi** (CH) offered us once again the mythical legend of "Colapesce" and presented a new diaporama story "The wave and his star". They also contributed to the Freshwater year celebrations with a spectacular [multivision show on alpine lakes and rivers of the Ticino, the southern part of Switzerland](#).

Scattered through the projection programmes [our guest-of-honour Mike Valentine](#) brought us some lively and fun moments and some great cinema with his video-shows, providing the public with a behind-the-scenes look at underwater filming during the latest action movies, some of which have not yet been seen in cinemas. We learnt that the underwater scenes in the next Harry Potter film will be keeping him busy.

Interesting **videos** (some in the competition) were shown during the afternoons and evenings in the Theatre, including one from the BBC making up part of a trilogy called the Blue Planet, "[The Deep](#)" which takes the audience into the depths, showing the strangest creatures – sometimes indistinct, sometimes threatening – which live there.

A detailed exhibition on the **Old story of the Sea**, the **Genoa deep sea divers association** led us back the area in front of the Congress Hall for a close-up look at their [dives in a swimming pool](#). We could take part in the complex dressing in a special range of equipment and clothes, some of which are extremely heavy, and see how they end up carrying around 70kgs.

Their shoes alone weigh 10kgs each! Although these men do not practice the profession, they want to keep it alive and explain to children the hard, but fascinating origins of diving which led to the much easier dives of the present day, and which bring an important contribution to our current knowledge of sectors ranging from technique to biology.

A special [projection](#) programme was set-up on Friday morning, for **Junior Schools** who took part with around 1000 children (while over 400 children could not participate due to lack of space). Due to the interest shown by schools, the organisers are thinking of adding another session on Friday afternoon for the next edition.

A conference by Dr. Giulio Melegari was brought to **High Schools**: "[Hydrospace: beyond the liquid frontier](#)" illustrating how underwater activities developed fairly recently despite having roots in many centuries of all types of experiments, attempts and failures. The determining factor in development was the need of the Hydrocarbon industry, which after the second world war led to men reaching depths unthinkable only a few years previously.

Saturday afternoon saw the awarding of the **Hermann Heberlein Prize** to the winners of the three competitions :

- underwater diaporama :
 1. Mariano Fiore (I)
 2. Salvina Montalto and Luca Ravelli (I)
 3. draw Luigi Bellifemine (I) and Enzo Bandera (I)
 - underwater slide series :
 1. Matthias Blättler (CH)
 2. Niki Weidinger (A)
 3. Pasqualino Trotta (CH)
 - underwater video
 1. Osvaldo Ballabio (I)
 2. Leandro Blanco (E)
 3. Daniele Iop e Massimo Boyer (I)
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The 9th edition of the Biennial took place thanks to the financial support of it's main sponsors: **The Ticino Cantonal Territorial and Education, Culture and Sport Departments, Swisslos, The City of Lugano, Casinò Lugano, Lugano Tourism, Fondazione Ing. Pasquale Lucchini, Coop Cultura, Lido Seegarten Hotel, Dante Lugano Hotel**, as well as **numerous other contributions**, whose help in the smaller details allowed the programme to take place.