

Hard-Ass Friday Nite: The Art of Spain Rodriguez

Curated by Dan Nadel

February 12 – April 2, 2022

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to announce *Hard-Ass Friday Nite: The Art Spain Rodriguez*, its first show for the artist since announcing its representation of the estate. Curated by Dan Nadel, this career-spanning retrospective will include unique drawings for comics from the 1960s through the 1990s alongside sketchbooks, paintings, and ephemera.

Spain Rodriguez (1940-2012), called the “socialist soul” of the 1960s underground comics movement, combined leftist politics, outlaw biker adventure, and science fiction in dynamically drawn stories. He was a natural yarn spinner with an entertainer’s flair for dramatic staging, noir cityscapes, and striking figures. Robert Crumb, who has called Spain a mentor, said recently, “His politics were driven by genuine, authentic class anger, class hatred. It was always clarifying, bracing, to discuss politics, social and cultural issues with him.”

Raised in Buffalo, New York, he attended an art trade school for a few years before working a factory job for the first part of the 1960s. In Buffalo he became a member of the Road Vultures Motorcycle Club, which offered him comradery and decades of material. When Spain moved to New York’s East Village in the mid-1960s, he began a nearly fifty-year run of publishing that ended with his passing. He became a staff cartoonist for the most renowned of the underground newspapers, the *East Village Other*, appearing alongside the likes of Ed Sanders and Allen Ginsberg. There he introduced the world to *Trashman*, *Agent of the 6th International*, a kind of urban Marxist James Bond, and the corrupt cop *Manning*. Original drawings from both series will be on view for the first time in decades. *Trashman*, in all his class-warrior glory, is further represented by individual drawings and complete stories from the 1960s through the 1980s. Two of his autobiographical comic book epics, originally published in *Zap Comix* in 1975 and 1982, will be exhibited in their entirety, as well as a painting made in honor of the motorcycle club.

In 1969 Spain moved to San Francisco, where he was invited to join *Zap Comix* by Robert Crumb. Two intensely detailed collaborative “jam” drawings for *Zap* by Spain, Crumb, Robert Williams, Victor Moscoso, and S. Clay Wilson will be on view. Spain went on to either found or contribute to many of the most important underground comics, including his own *Subvert Comics*, *Insect Fear Comics*, and the seminal anthologies *Arcade* and *Weirdo*. Rare editions of these comic books, as well as underground newspapers, flyers, sketchbooks, and art from Spain’s personal collection by the likes of Robert Crumb, Gilbert Shelton, Willy Mendes, and Johnny Craig will offer historical and visual context for Spain’s life and work.

Spain Rodriguez is the subject of the documentary *Bad Attitude: The Art of Spain Rodriguez*, now playing film festivals internationally. He was the subject of a 2012 retrospective at Buffalo State College's Burchfield Penny Art Center, *Spain: Rock Roll Rumbles Rebels & Revolution*. His books include *Trashman Lives! My True Story*, *Cruisin' with the Hounds*, *She*, and *Che: A Graphic Biography*. His life and work are the subject of a five-volume set of books edited by Patrick Rosenkranz and published by Fantagraphics Books, three of which have been released thus far: *Streeting Fighting Men*, *Warrior Women*, and *My Life & Times*.

Dan Nadel is currently a Fellow at the Leon Levy Center for Biography at the Graduate Center, CUNY, where he is completing his forthcoming biography of Robert Crumb (Scribner, 2024). His books include *Peter Saul: Professional Artist Correspondence*, *The Collected Hairy Who Publications*, and most recently *It's Life as I See It: Black Cartoonists in Chicago, 1940-1980*. As the curator at large for the Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at UC Davis, he has organized exhibitions on Kathy Butterly, Mary Heilmann and William T. Wiley. His other recent exhibition projects include *What Nerve! Alternative Figures in American Art: 1960 to the Present* at the RISD Museum, Providence; *Gertrude Abercrombie* at Karma, New York; and for Andrew Edlin Gallery, *Victor Moscoso: Psychedelic Drawings*. Dan most recently organized *Chicago Comics, 1960s to Now* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

Exhibition Events

Opening Reception

February 12, 3–7pm at Andrew Edlin Gallery

R. Crumb and Aline Kominsky in conversation with exhibition curator Dan Nadel

February 24, 1pm EST on Zoom

Bad Attitude: The Art of Spain Rodriguez film screening with dir. Susan Stern and Kim Deitch

March 24, 6:30pm at Andrew Edlin Gallery

For more information, please visit edlingallery.com or email info@edlingallery.com.