

# Andrew Edlin GALLERY

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to announce its representation of the Estate of Spain Rodriguez. Working closely with the artist's family, the gallery will present Rodriguez's groundbreaking graphic art at its space on the Bowery as well as selected art fairs. The first solo exhibition, *Spain Rodriguez: Working Class Hero*, opening January 28, 2022, will be curated by Dan Nadel and include seminal drawings from the 1960s through the 1990s alongside rarely seen 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.

Raised in Buffalo, where he became a member of the Road Vultures Motorcycle Club, he attended an art trade school for a few years before working a factory job for the first part of the 1960s, which provided him with comradeship and decades of material for his comics. Rodriguez moved to New York's East Village in the mid-1960s and began a run of publishing that was interrupted only by his passing. He became a staff cartoonist for the most celebrated of underground newspapers, the *East Village Other*, appearing alongside the likes of Ed Sanders and Allen Ginsberg. Rodriguez published one of the very first underground graphic novels, *Zodiac Mindwarp*, and introduced the world to *Trashman, Agent of the Sixth International*, a kind of urban Marxist James Bond.

In 1969, the artist moved to San Francisco, where he was invited to join Zap Comix by Robert Crumb, who remembers: "I first met Spain in New York in the fall of 1968. Spain had left Buffalo for good, left the world of outlaw bikers behind and embraced the East Village hippie scene, though there was a lot about the hippies that Spain didn't like. 'I ain't no hippie,' he used to say. His allegiance to radical left-wing politics and his proletarian class identity were stronger and clearer than most of the youths in the hippie subculture, the 'counter-culture,' as it was called. His politics were driven by genuine, authentic class anger, class hatred. I liked that about him. It was always clarifying, bracing, to discuss politics, social and cultural issues with him. Plus, he had a sharp sense of humor which leavened that anger." Rodriguez 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*. In the ensuing decades he published widely acclaimed memoirs, graphic non-fiction, erotic thrillers, and the ever-evolving story of *Trashman*.

His old friend and editor Art Spiegelman recalls: "I can't imagine two more different artists than Spain and James Joyce, but I remembered something that Richard Ellmann wrote about Joyce: 'The function of literature, as Joyce and his hero Stephen Dedalus both define it with unaccustomed fervor, is the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man, suffering and rollicking. We can shed what he called 'laughtears' as his writings confront us with this spectacle.' That's how I see the twin pillars of Spain's life and art — suffering and rollicking, full of 'laughtears.'"

Spain Rodriguez is the subject of the *documentary Bad Attitude: The Art of Spain Rodriguez*, directed by his wife, the Emmy nominated filmmaker Susan Stern, now playing film festivals internationally. <https://www.badattitudemovie.com/>. He was the subject of a 2012 retrospective at Buffalo State College's Burchfield Penney Art Center, *Spain: Rock Roll Rumbles Rebels & Revolution*. His books include *Trashman Lives!*, *My True Story*, *Cruisin' with the Hound*, *She Comics*, and *Che: A Graphic Biography*. His life and work are the subject of a planned five-volume set of books edited by Patrick Rosenkranz, and published by Fantagraphics, three of which have been released thus far: *Street Fighting Men*, *Warrior Women*, and *My Life & Times*.