

CODEx

SERAPHINIANUS



Who is Luigi Serafini?

Luigi Serafini is an Italian artist, born in Rome, 1949. Originally, he was an architect and designer who expanded his art practice into illustrative works and book arts.

Codex Seraphinianus was his first artist book, written between 1976 and 1979.

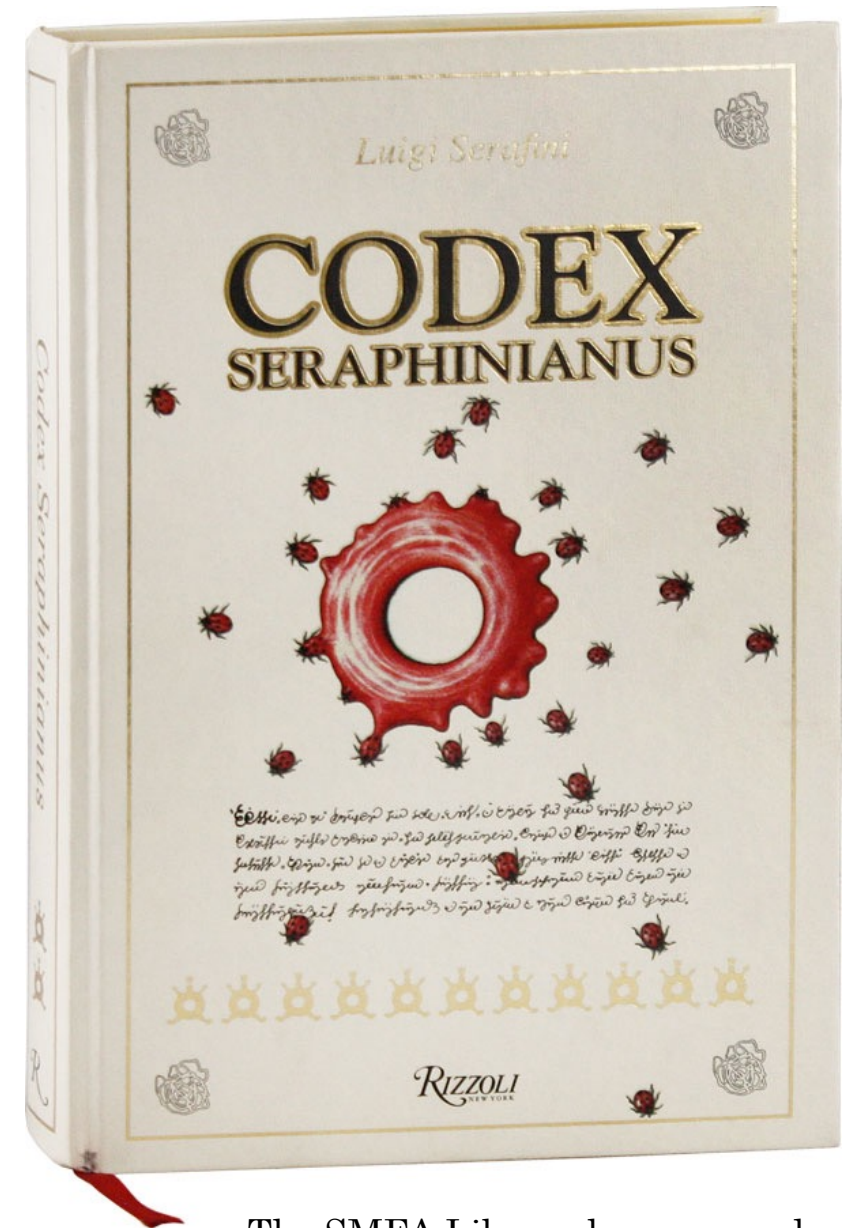
He claims that the book was transmitted to him by a stray cat that he took in, and that the cat is the true author.

“I am obsessed with knowledge. It’s the same type of research you do on the Internet with Wikipedia. Books like the *Codex* or *Nature Stories* are meant to collect and share things, places, stories and personal experiences. Just like a social network.” –Luigi Serafini in an interview with Wired Italy

The sheer size of the book makes it stand out. The first edition of the book comes in two volumes, another scientific trend that implies the volume of information is so great, it must be split in two.



All versions of the cover display illustrations from the inside of the book as well as gold serif font titles, and a short passage of the unreadable text. The covers are designed to be elegant but not too flashy, which works well with the aesthetic of the inside of the book, while maintaining the encyclopedic look.



The SMFA Library has a second revised edition presented as one volume.

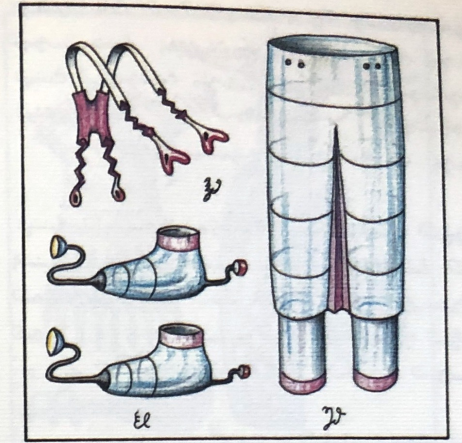
The goals of Codex Seraphinianus are not obvious. The book is not satirical, nor is it completely serious. The book brings up a lot of questions with little to no answers. Even the Decodex in the back does not answer all of the questions. However, I think the book is successful in creating curiosity and pushing the imagination. The book format is very mature, but the content is very childlike in its boldness. It draws in interest, and invites the reader to share content with others, even just to say, "what the hell is that??" facilitating the exchange of ideas, and inspiring creation in others. In that way, it succeeds.

Personally, I think this book is a fantastic example of world building. The images alone tell a story of a strange world that we can partially relate to but includes elements that are beyond comprehension. The inclusion of false writing elevates the book beyond a collection of wacky drawings. It suggests understanding of complex systems, histories, and life, even if we do not understand any of it. The academic style format is also a very nice choice because it forces you to fill in the blanks of the narrative. As a storyteller, I find it incredibly inspirational to see how Serafini has created language and narratives in such an indirect manor. Not to mention, the colored pencil drawings are beautiful to look at. They beg you to picture yourself within the universe of Codex, which creatures would be your friends, which would be scary. It draws the imagination on and on.

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