

## Eight friends conquer Europe with a board game

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There is money involved, but the real victory is family prestige. This is the aim of the board game Aquileia which was created by eight fifty-year-old friends from Saronno, and which is being produced by the German company *Zoch* and by the Dutch company *999 game*. The group of friends, who began playing this unusual homemade board game ten years, call themselves "Cielo d'oro"; over these years, they have tested the rules and the aims with friends and relatives, at every opportunity. Now, they have won the coveted Archimede Award, which is sponsored by a number of board game manufacturers.

Today, Aquileia is on the shelves of stores throughout Europe. "It's set in the Roman town that gives its name to the game," explained Giorgio Villa, one of the creators. "There's a level for kids, and one for adults."

### How do you play?

"There are three to six players who are Roman noblemen, who have to earn points with various activities, like going to the market or organising a show in the arena. There are also fights which are decided with a roll of the dice. There is money, but it's only a means to winning, to achieving the prestige of the family. It's a very dynamic game and it lasts 60 to 90 minutes."

### Eight is a large number of friends to create a game ...

"We've known each other for decades, since we went to school. Today, we do different jobs, I have a consulting company, another friend is the head of social services in the council, another one is a surgeon, another one, a psychiatrist, one is a physiotherapist, and one of us has just retired. We have a wonderful friendship."

### How did you come up with the idea for ??Aquileia?

"We came up with the idea of inventing games ten years ago, when our children were little. Instead of buying games, we decided to invent them. We made a few inquiries, and discovered the German and north European markets. Then, rather ambitiously, we thought we could create a board game. Since then we've spent whole evenings trying."

### **And then what happened?**

"After years of trying, we took part in the Archimede game contest, which takes place every two years, in Venice. In 2009, we won the contest, with a prototype of Aquileia. One hundred and fifty inventors from all over the world took part, and the judges were the most important games manufacturers in the world. Immediately afterwards, we received a contract proposal, for distribution in Holland, Germany, Denmark and East Europe. In Italy, the game is produced by Giochi Riuniti, and is coming out in the next few days, in time for Christmas. And then, anyone who writes to [giorgiovilla@gmail.com](mailto:giorgiovilla@gmail.com) can have information about where to buy it.

### **At a time when people play a lot on their cellphones, is there still room for board games?**

"We think there is. The passion for board games is growing, and is coming back to Italy, too. Let's say that the great merit of board games is that they bring people together. Even our children, who were very sceptical about this passion of ours, have now even got their friends involved, they've had to change their minds. Now they meet up to play, maybe with a glass of beer, sure, but they get together and talk."

### **Do you still meet up to play together, or are you trying out something else?**

"We play a lot; with the games invented by others, we can follow the market, but we're also looking for new ideas. We're already looking at another game, set in Venice, and we're waiting for responses. At the same time, we're working on another creation, which is at the experimental phase. Our ambition is unlimited. After this initial success, we want try to consolidate our position in the market. It was difficult to get in, but the initial response to Aquileia seems to be good. Let's hope it's a good calling card for something else."

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