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Top 40 Under 40: Urban artist "Millo"

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The first time I fell for the work of Francesco Camillo Giorgino, a.k.a. "Millo," was the second I laid my eyes on one of his murals: a red-painted heart, amidst a surrounding black-and-white surface, that was being firmly hugged by a larger-than-life child-like figure.

After seeing Millo's name featured on The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) list, that celebrates the association's 40th Anniversary, I knew I wasn't the only one.

NIAF's 40 Under 40 wants to showcase top young Italian talents who have successfully emerged in the art, technology, culinary, fashion and many other fields.

Born in Mesagne, Italy, Millo is a street artist.

After winning the 2014 B.Art competition, the 36-year-old artist had access to paint alone 13 massive murals in the town of Turin. This was the turning point of Millo's passionate career.

"I have spent over two months suspended on the city," writes Millo. "From that time on I've been invited to various festivals around the globe such as in Casablanca, Minsk, Bialystok, Lisbon. Also, I've done different shows. It's a crazy wandering life!"

During our interview, Millo tells the story on how he first started as an architect to eventually become the artist that was inside of him ever since a child. "I could no longer ignore my real passion," he writes. Millo started working on small canvas, participating to shows and events to make a name for himself. And he did.

Lavinia Pisani: What does it mean for you to be a street-artist in a traditional and conservative country such as Italy?

Millo: It was a great surprise even for myself to discover I am a street artist. Italy is a traditional and conservative country, but at the same time it has always been a vanguard nation, just think about all of our artists, artisans, scientists and stylists. It is true that the Italian street art institution is still considered as an underground phenomenon, despite the daily sharing of wall pictures on social media by thousand of Italian young people. I believe things are changing already and they



The street art creations of Francesco Camillo Giorgino, a.k.a. "Millo"



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will even more.

L.P: What is the message you want to spread through your murals and in what way are you making a difference?

Millo: I do not have a specific message that I want to spread through my walls. Every single one of them shows a different story, depending on how I am living and feeling in that moment. My work should be read the way it is, from background to foreground, landscapes and characters. I cannot really tell what the most impor-

tant element is. Some people enjoy losing themselves in my cities, others looking only at my characters. It's impossible for me to disconnect the two things. My giant characters are probably the representation of myself, but even more, they could be seen as every single one of us. They are always doing something in this chaotic world reminding us of our childhood and also the contemporary lives we live. I don't have a real philosophy. I let everything inspire me, and that's why my works have all sorts of

meanings.

L.P: According to what criteria, or reason, are your murals displayed in one part of the city versus another?

Millo: In those last 50 years, due to the real estate speculation, our cities are now full of blind grey facades. So, whenever is possible, I prefer to realize my paintings in those areas. I like to consider myself as an enlightening pen. I've worked on a lot of projects in regard to urban regeneration. It has been inspiring for me to see how the human per-

ception of a degraded area changes after art intervention. I work on that and I love it.

L.P: Why are the people represented in your murals most of the time bigger than the environment surrounding them and how do you decide if something is going to appear in black-and-white, or colour?

Millo: Through my walls, I try to recreate the habitat as an anonymous urban area that can be easily associated with any city in the world. Also, I focus on the relationship between urban landscape and characters. My characters are always out of scale and a little clumsy. They act as if they wanted a painted world. Sometimes they are playing, other times they are dreaming and so on. My characters should be seen as the most pure part of ourselves. Not only as kids, but also as what we daily forget to be. I usually paint my walls in black and white, but colours help me sometime underline the message I feel like spreading in the moment and also guide viewers reading my work.

L.P: How long does it take for you to work on one mural? Please tell us about the process from beginning to end also mentioning some of the techniques you use.

Millo: Usually, it takes me about three days to complete, let's say a four floors wall. The higher the wall, the more work I have. Sometimes I do little sketches on paper of what will soon appear on the wall then I start painting freehand without any mark, or just a tiny one of the characters. In order to realize my walls, I always need a cherry picker and some buckets of paint. After that, there is only my imagination and the wall.

L.P: In what way does your craft influence your everyday life?

Millo: My girlfriend usually tells me that I should live with my head on the shoulder instead of having it on the clouds. Doing the job I do, a great part of my existence is spent in imagination. She loves me for the very same reason though.

L.P: Your work has been exhibited internationally such as in London, Rio de Janeiro, Chicago, Rome and more. Where would you like to be featured next and why?

Millo: I really would like to realize some walls in China in order to test my girlfriend's Chinese speaking and to see how it is to live in a big, growing reality.