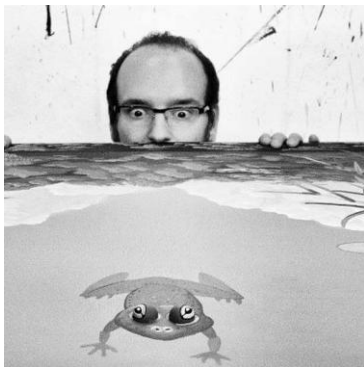




One of Pao's famous penguins | 2001



Arcimboldo | Pao, 2012



Pao in 2012



Efferato Delitto | Pao, 2001



Armadillo | Pao, 2011



Evoluzione | Pao, 2011



Campbell | Pao, 2002



Spongebob | Pao, 2012

Pao Brings the Gift of Street Art

What happens when Pao, a young theater technician working with Italian comedy genius Dario Fo and the La Scala Opera house, sets out to bring a bit of fun to the streets of Milan? Penguins. Lots of penguins. On traffic markers, on walls, on rusty pipes.

Years before the term “Street Art” was being used in Italy, Pao’s penguins were populating the streets of Milan with their happy cartoon presence. Their purpose was to transform a city “full of smog, cars and unwanted billboards” through the gift of street art. Today that goal has become a design studio, Paopao, which serves clients such as Motta, Nescafé, and the City of Milan. While you can still see Pao’s penguins on the streets of Italy, you can also find them in art galleries and museums around the world.

When and how did you discover your passion for street art?

I started painting in the streets in 2000 when I was 23. In the beginning it was just a fun game. Every night I went around painting odd penguins on the urban fixtures of Milan. Soon, I understood that people loved my works and it became a passion. Milan was full of graffiti, but street art was just starting. In a short period I met the other pioneers of Italian street art and began a period full of adventure.

What was your first creation?

My first street creation was a penguin on a bollard, the posts that block cars from pedestrian zones ... At that time I was working on a simple comic strip about a funny character with big head, small body and short legs. One day I saw a colored bollard and a lightbulb went on in my head. I went home and, when I started sketching, a penguin appeared. Some nights later that penguin was born on a sidewalk.

Do you identify with the term “Street Art” or would you describe yourself in another way?

In the beginning the media referred to my work and to that of others as “graffiti” ... I prefer “Street Art” to “Graffiti Writing” because even if they have a lot in common they come from different histories.

Every definition is a simplification, I make street art when I paint in the street, but if I paint on canvas in my studio? I love to explore and contaminate ... a static definition is a boundary that I don’t like very much. I believe there is a big flow from the underground that goes from Graffiti to Street Art, from Pop Surrealism to Japanese Superflat, from comics to tattoos, and that influences mainstream culture.

If you didn’t have to think about time or money what project would you most like to pursue?

Ahahah, maybe I would sleep a lot more ... I think I would pursue bigger projects and more street art around the world. I started painting on canvas because it let me explore new roads, but also because it is a good way to gain some money from my art. Money is a need, and so often I must find a compromise between time, research and selling. Anyway, a need is a good motor to push your limits.

What experiences have most influenced your style?

My style is influenced from the manga, anime, cartoons and videogames of my childhood, from the art books I found in my father's bookcase and from my experiences. I lived in London for a year in '99, where I became interested in public space. When I came back I started working in theatre as a technician, first in the company of Nobel Prize winner Dario Fo and in 2003 in the Teatro alla Scala. I learned a lot about art and "stealing" information. Another important school was the road. Painting with other artists is the best way to learn.

Is there any style of art or artist you wouldn't hang on your walls even if someone paid you to do it?

I've found a lot of rubbish at Art Fairs, often with impressive prices. I don't like Conceptual art and when I understand the meaning I find it sterile, emotionless and distant.

A work I would never have in my home? Grassello by Joseph Beys, It is a wooden box, full of quicklime, that he used to make his house in Germany. If I were to put it in my home, everybody would ask me when the work on my house will be done!

http://english.mart.trento.it/gallery.jsp?hostmatch=true&area=42&ID_LINK=96&id_context=1450 - grassello

GIULIA ZOCCA 2012 - <http://www.ganzomag.com/pao-street-art-interview.html#comment-16309>