

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## The Surreal and Satirical World of Mr Thoms

Tod Hardin · Wednesday, July 16th, 2014

As is the case with professional athletes, filmmakers, novelists, poets, musicians, or just about any group of people with a discipline of skill, you tend to build your list of favorites. They are those that you seek out. Those that you go the extra mile for in order to see first-hand – or at least see the work they produce.



Mr Thoms at work in his Rome studio

For me, with street artists, it's all about the concept of being unique. So often I find that most of what I see looks the same, and the only thing that really discerns one stencil, mural, sticker or wheat paste from the other, is merely the signature that the artist places on the creation. What excites me, what makes me go that extra mile, is being able to instantly look at a creation and know who gave birth to it. In comparison, I would point to the filmmaking of Wes Anderson, the guitar playing of Django Reinhardt and the surreal landscapes of Salvador Dali. One look, or one listen, and you know who the artist is, even if you had never heard or seen that work of art previously.

One such street artist, and there are others, is Rome-based Diego Della Posta ... better known in street art circles as [Mr Thoms](#).

Interesting chosen name, to which I couldn't help but ask of its origin. From his studio in Rome, he offered that it's an onomatopoeic sound of something bouncing from one surface to another in a continuous motion. He continued on as follows:

"It's a dynamic, soft elasticity that allows it to move in many different places, but always maintaining a cadence and a pace that characterizes my style. It represents a trajectory always easily distinguishable yet versatile to the multiple contexts in which I find myself searching for that balance between mood and expressive concept."

Since 1996 he has been searching for that balance, with the street serving as his creative home, but certainly not his only domicile. He has worn the hat of filmmaker, writer, illustrator, cartoonist, graphic designer, sculptor, and set designer. A creative renaissance man, if you will. I asked him if any those roles were more difficult to practice than others. His responded with simple elegance:

"When a child is playing and having fun, there is nothing too hard for him to do."

Indeed, most seems to come naturally to him. Della Posta has no formal training, but he says that the street served as his training ground for becoming the artist that he is today.

“I started to play! I went to the abandoned factories and I enjoyed releasing my creativity and trying to restore life to those places that were once decadent,” he said.



*Le Clochard*, Agrigento, Sicily, 2013

Although blessed with multi-disciplinary talent, street art is the avenue through which he chose to most thoroughly pursue his creativity.

“I went the way of the street because I liked the idea that art and its expression could be a free demonstration, that everyone has an all-access pass to it. Gratis without limits!”

That last phrase could also apply to the imagination of Mr Thoms, as the characters he creates are not bound by any limitations. When I observe his work there are certain adjectives that instantly come to mind: whimsical, surreal, insane, satirical, fun, humorous, and colorful.



*Monster Artist Attack*, Fonte Nuova, Italy, 2012

“I am all of these moods together,” he says. “Once I create a new work, I try to put me in everything. It excites me.”

Within much of his work you are bound to find not just stunning imagery, but also a bit of social commentary and/or humor. The search for and discovery of those messages are part of what makes his work fun and worthwhile. Some are a bit more obvious, but equally fun, as you will see in this video time lapse of his most recent work *Like A Vision* – poking a little fun at those of us suffering from Facebook addiction:

[embedvideo id=”100174472? website=”vimeo”]

He shies away from trying to define his style too much, explaining in past interviews that once he is able to define it, he has nothing else to say. However, he did offer this: “It’s more about service to the idea, and never the opposite.”

A defining aspect of many Mr Thoms projects is that characteristics of the building, surface or surrounding environment are often implemented as part of the design. For example, a door might become an ear, a tunnel an open mouth, a window an eye, or as you see below, trees become hair. While not unique in and of itself, that combined with his artistic style are all signature features, and those that make his creations instantly identifiable.



*Haircut*, Conversano, Italy, 2014

When asked how he chooses a location for a new creation, he offered this:

“Try not looking and you’ll usually find what you are looking for. I only listen to it, then begin my dialogue with her.”

Della Posta typically scouts for new locations with his trusted sidekick Kijo, his beloved dog that he refers to as: “My great master, Splinter. Thanks to him I have learned many things.”

Once he finds a location that speaks to him, he photographs it and takes it back to his studio for further thought and observations, before then sketching out a design on top of the photo. From there it’s back to the location, with painting rig in hand, and thus the magic begins.



*Alive If you Are Burning*, Fonte Nuevo, Italy, 2012

As paint hits brick his imagination comes to life, revealing influences along the way.

“Over the years I’ve been and continue to be influenced by all forms of creative expression,” he said. “From painting to cinema, from cartoons to illustration, from music to literature – and I have been greatly influenced by the surrealist movement.”

And now he is influencing and inspiring a new generation of street artists, while he himself remains relevant as one of the most important figures in the street art movement. When asked what advice he would give to aspiring street artists, he one simple reply:

“Be yourself and have something to say.”

Which leaves me to say one simple thing about Mr. Della Posta and his work as Mr Thoms. Seek it out. Go the extra mile to do so – be it in-person or via images. It will not disappoint.

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