

Antonio Pio Saracino: Universal and Timeless

Susan Powell (May 13, 2016)



Named one of the ten most promising Italian architects in the United States, Antonio Pio Saracino kicked off 2016 with public art projects across the globe, in Dubai, Los Angeles, Paris and, naturally, New York. Over coffee, we talk about Italy's contributions to the design world in the U.S.

Elegance, sharp lines, strips of light cutting across geometrical shapes. Looking at the work of [Antonio Pio Saracino](#) [2]—Pugliese by blood, now living between Rome and New York—you can't help but think about how the artist marries urban space and nature.

No matter whether it's a piece of furniture, a sculpture or a building, nature remains fundamental to Saracino's work.

A consummate multi-tasker, he is one of the most prolific and creative architects of his generation, having successfully collaborated with prestigious entities such as the New York Times, the Wall



Street Journal, Architectural Digest, Interior Design, Vanity Fair, Wallpaper and Vogue. Some of his work belongs to the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Art and Design in New York, and the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

Italy in New York

Among Saracino's monuments belonging to the city is an imposing set of sculptures in Bryant Park called "The Guardians: Hero and Superhero." The twelve-foot tall marble and steel sculptures, inspired by Michelangelo's David, were made for the Year of Italian Culture in the U.S. with the support of the Italian government and ENI, a multinational energy company. (There isn't an Italian alive who doesn't recognize [ENI](#) [3]'s logo, a six-legged dog who spits fire; the logo was created by [Luigi Broggin](#) [4] and later refined by Saracino himself.)

Without knowing it, passersby become part of his work, making Saracino's art, despite its complexity, accessible to a wider public, a means for residents to interact with the space they inhabit. "Design is nature," says the architect.

"In past centuries, nature was a source of inspiration for architects and designers. Its forms, its structures, its organizing principles. Architecture and design objects are made with materials extracted from nature. Design represents a continuation of that via its constructive capacities. Our pursuits are made using a natural "product": humanity. The objects we create imbue our surroundings with the greatest and most sophisticated meaning." New York has been Saracino's creative and professional home for over ten years. He loves the city for its ability to blend artistic ambitions, functional demands and multicultural groups.

"New York is the place where the idea of living together, of uniting different cultures, is a reality. The idea of integration and respect is the most powerful force we have in this city, and it makes me so proud to be a resident. I find it very inspiring to connect with so many different cultures every day and figure out how to create signs and designs for a world that is beginning to bring people and cultures together in a universal vision, in continuity with nature."

Architecture/Design

Saracino's style is a hybrid of experimental design grounded in a solid architectural background, and Americans have admired his combination of traditional Italian design and manufacturing skills. Furthermore, the development of new digital technologies and the parametric approach have made it possible to re-envision objects and create new designs & The Lanciano Building architectural forms of "artificial paradises" in a post-natural world. "Artists have become architects and sculptors engineers," says Saracino. "In our age we are experiencing the same redefinition where a more fluid culture is allowing us to explore new ideas and build a new reality." Design, therefore, is a synthesis of functionality and beauty. It establishes a bond between those interacting with it that is both aesthetic and emotional.

Italian Heritage, International Presence

Despite his flair for the contemporary, Saracino makes a point of reiterating how much Italian history and cultural has influenced him. "[In Italy] I studied the importance of design to a culture's identification and evolution, how crucial it is for design and architecture to instill in a city's residents a sense of belonging, happiness and pride. Certainly my Italian heritage is an important part of my design vision." Saracino has continued to work in Italy.

He is currently completing a building in [Lanciano](#) [5], Abruzzo, and new projects in Florence and Puglia are in the works. Honored, he informs us that a project underway in the French city of [Carcassonne](#) [6] has just been acquired by the [Centre Pompidou](#) [7], one of the most important cultural institutions in France and Europe; that he is also at work on new monuments in Los Angeles and New York; and that he has recently finished architectural projects for Dubai's new district, d3, as well as the design for a Museum in Dubai.

And he is now working on two sculptures that will be unveiled in the coming months for Manhattan's New York- Presbyterian Hospital? "The project, Life, was commissioned by an anonymous donor for the historic entrance to the New York-Presbyterian Hospital on 68th street, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan," Saracino reveals. New York Presbyterian is one of the top-ranked clinical and medical research centers in the United States. Their motto, "Amazing things are happening here," reflects each life they have saved and the progress that their school of research has achieved. Saracino's



Life consists of two sculptures, each composed of a series of twin polished, stainless steel rings of different heights and radiuses assembled on top of each other and shifted from their vertical axis to create two dynamic, iconic figures.

"The 'Life' sculptures are visually unstable at the same time that they maintain an internal stability," he explains. "Life is fragile and vulnerable yet life is strong and resilient. Life is about finding that unique balance between inner and outer forces that unfold during our existence. The visual unbalance, contrasted with the structural stability of the sculptures, asks viewers to reflect on the balance that one must strive to achieve in nearly all aspects of life, as well as the fine line between strength and fragility. They remind us that life is a treasure, something to be preserved and cherished." Pedestrians take note: in cities around the world you might find yourself admiring, perhaps by chance, one of Antonio Pio Saracino's works.

If you are in New York don't miss the exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Design of Saracino current work for an extended celebration of New York Design Week. The artist will present 'DIGITAL CITIES' light tapestry by Rubelli and 'LIFE' drawings for a new Monument at NY-Presbyterian Hospital to be installed in Summer 2016.

To see the Making of the Guardians >>> [8]

Next event: May 19, 10AM-4PM at [Museum of Arts and Design](#) [9], 2 Columbus Circle, 7th Floor

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