

WHO THE HELL IS THIS GUY?

well , carry on and read my story then
It's entertaining (I promise)



FROM ITALY...

I was born and raised in a small town in the northern part of Italy. Why do Italians tend to be quite creative people? Well, first of all, we are surrounded by a strong artistic history and an inspiring landscape that you can feel almost everywhere in Italy, but, most importantly, nothing really works there. So since early in life, we have to think strategically, creating, almost daily, a series of “what if” scenarios. It’s a good training environment to develop imagination, but a bit frustrating to live in (Germans, on the other side, find it quite ‘pittoresque’, I still think it sucks).

High school. I don’t know exactly why, but I chose one of the toughest high schools in Italy: Scientific Lyceum. By U.S. standards it’s actually a Junior College, it’s one of the oldest schools with a Greek/Roman approach. As the name suggests, it addresses mostly scientific courses (like math, physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) but integrated with humanistic courses, such as philosophy, Latin, history, Italian and English literature, history of arts, etc.

After I finished high school, I decided to study architecture in Milan (Politecnico). It did seem at that time a logical choice: combining rationality, design, technology and artistic expression.

I was captivated by the topics: conceptual, functional, cultural, historical, expressive. At the same time I started developing interests in music and performing arts. I was part of an artistic collective (parallel dimensions), mixing live audio-video performances with art installations.

During my studies in Milan, in 1990 I was living in an apartment together with a friend. He introduced me to a very exotic machine: the Macintosh. I never really used a professional computer before, and I was floored: I’m a fast learner and, in few months, I was getting very proficient in graphic, 3D, CAD, music, video and multimedia softwares.

And I started to develop a deep love for graphic design and visual communication. I had the passion, I had the imagination and the intuition, I was beginning to master the technique, but I didn’t have the culture. The faculty of architecture was giving me a design sense, the functionality of space, the colour sensibility, but it wasn’t specific on visual communication.

I started buying a lot of books on different topics: packaging, layout, typography, color theory, branding, advertising, marketing and biographies of the masters; I wanted to learn everything. I wanted to know what makes great design great. I wanted to be good.

I dropped university (before last exams) and I started working in a multidisciplinary studio as visual designer, creating multimedia CDs, architectures presentations, visual identities, catalogues, logos and such for different brands like Trussardi and Swarovski. I was lucky: at that time I had the chance to work with Renzo Castiglioni, an old-school art director. He has been art director for Armani in New York and, later, editorial art director for Amica, Centocose and Casa Vogue. He was an inspirational figure and (who I like to consider) my first mentor.

After 4 years there I needed a change. I needed to know more, to learn more. I was hired as art director, in a communication and advertising agency in Milan, working with brands like San Pellegrino, Feletti and Domino. The creative director there was an insane perfectionist. She was shouting at the smallest mistake and she was pushing me so hard. But I was learning, a lot. In retrospect, I thank her for that. During the same period, I applied for a grant for an international Master Course in graphic design applied to products. I wanted to do this course, but it was very expensive and exclusive: only 12 people would be admitted at the course and only 1 of them with a grant. I didn’t have that kind of money and my only chance was to get it for free:

200 people applied for the same grant. Two weeks later, I received a call: I was one of the 15 selected people to have an interview with the master course director for that grant. I was so happy, I literally started jumping around the office: to me it was already an astonishing result. I had the interview and, a week later, I received a second call: “the grant is yours, do you want it?”

The first day of the master. People started introducing themselves: “I’m the senior art director for Gucci London”, “I’m the senior designer for Electrolux in Milan”, a Korean award-winning art director and so on, and I was thinking “...what the hell am I doing amongst these awesome people?..”

But I soon realised that my work was on par with theirs. It was a pivotal moment: I could do this job, properly. I became unstoppable.

I won a second grant for the University of the Image (founded by the international fashion photographer Fabrizio Ferri) and I was selected to participate to the David Carson’s workshop “behind the seen”.

...TO CHINA

My girlfriend was working between Italy and China, and we could barely see each other. So, one day, we sat around our dining table: “what are we going to do? this situation is unacceptable. Or you leave your job and find something to do in Italy or we both move to China”. We decided for the latter option.

In 2004 we arrived in Shanghai and I started sending CVs around: A german design studio offered me a well paid job, but, after the interview, while I was walking around the area, I saw a very strange looking office: It was a small australian visual communication and advertising agency. In the moment I entered the space I said to myself: “This is one of the coolest places I’ve ever seen, I wanna work here”. It happened they were actually looking for a senior art director / design director.

Their portfolio was really nice and they liked mine too. Salary wasn’t as good as the german studio but I didn’t care.

During 2 and 1/2 years I remained in REDdot, we pushed hard: we won an award and we’ve been published 6 times on Media Magazine. We were working on different kind of projects for ClubMed, WWF, BMW, Le Royal Meridien, Hilton to name a few. It was hard but very rewarding... and incredibly fun.

If it was so nice why did I leave then? Well, the agency became famous and a group from London, Profero, made an offer to buy REDdot. And they accepted it.

At the beginning I thought it was actually a good thing: our salaries jumped up and we had now a very strong digital and marketing side. Sadly though, the atmosphere changed, the objectives changed, and they also started cutting off most of our clients in favour of Profero’s ones (more profitable?).

I was very frustrated with the situation, also, the working relation with the new boss wasn’t that great. After 6 months I couldn’t see any value in it and I decided to resign. One by one all my designers eventually left the agency as well.

I worked then for 2 years as freelance art director for different agencies (especially Interbrand) and clients on a variety of communication projects. For a while I also worked as associate creative director in Identica (a canadian/HK agency), but it didn’t work out.

In 2009, after a couple of freelance works for them, I joined a singaporean agency, Ortus Group Eight as associate creative director. What intrigued me was the nice people and the fact that was an integrated marketing

agency (I could learn something there). I worked on specific projects only. In 2010, after the completion of those projects, I was freelancing again. But at the end of the same year, Ortus offered me a position of group creative director of the entire agency. The main reason was that they really wanted to produce a much higher standard of work.

And so I began a new adventure. The very first project was for a huge B2B event for Coca-Cola. It was one of the most complex project I was ever involved in. It included theatrical scripts, scenography, environmental graphics, 3D and 2D animations, a full VI, marketing strategies, an insane quantity of collaterals, space design, presentation design, events design, digital apps and websites, etc. But it was a smashing success. Even the Global CEO of Coca-Cola complimented us: “the best event in Asia ever done”.

In the meanwhile also Starbucks came on board, and the agency profits grew 12% in just one year.

I hired some good art directors and designers and I defined the hierarchy and structure of the creative teams.

In the meanwhile we were also working with old agency’s clients as well, which are mostly

hi-end properties developers. After that powerful and demanding year, little by little, issues started to emerge: work was often rejected mostly because of inaccurate briefs from account side, or inability to properly manage the client. This was causing an overlapping of tasks resulting in long overtime hours for the creative team (and accounting as well), misscommunications, lack of organization, the inability to have quality time to invest into the projects, poor quality and tired and frustrated people. I tried to address the problems, proposing also internal workshops to educate accountants how to write a proper brief and how to sell a creative product. But the rhythm was so high, and projects still coming in, that it seemed impossible to find the time for these things. All of that was counterbalanced by the great people working there. But after other 2 years working in “emergency mode”, I gave up.

I had a long holiday in UK, now I’m back in Shanghai, I’m planning and audio-video performance, I’m rested and re-energized, ready for a place where I can use my talents.

Will it be yours?

*I love what I do.
To be a designer is hard.
To be a good designer
is even harder.
Sometimes I'd like to be a musician.
Trust in a brand is like falling in love:
I like to be a cupid;
sometimes a makeup artist.
Brands are like people,
they have their own personality and they are
not perfect.
Design is bones not skin.
Everyone can have good ideas but design is not
democratic.
I love learning, I'm still learning.
Visual communication is
a point of view.
Rules can be broken,
but first you have to know them very well.
When marketing is well done
is an outstanding art,
but thank God I'm a designer.*

**Faculty of architecture and industrial design
Master with grant in graphic design for product design
Grant for University of the Image by Fabrizio Ferri
Selected for David Carson's workshop "behind the seen"**

MIRKO ADAMI

(compact version)

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During the last 16 years (6 years in Italy + 10 years in China), I worked on a wide variety of design and communication projects, as art director and creative director, including:

Visual Identities, Branding, Advertising, Ux & Ui design, Colour Design, Editorial Design, Environmental Graphics, Event Design, Concepts Generation & Presentation, Packaging, Conceptual Arts & Installations, Storyboard & Moodboard Design, Integrated Marketing,

for clients such as:

ACL, THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, APPLE, AUCHAN, AUDEMARS PIGUET, BACARDI, BAYER, BMW, CHERY, CLUBMED, COCA-COLA, DOMINO ZETA, ELECTRONIC ARTS, FELETTI, FISSLER, GENERAL CABLE, GENERAL MOTORS, GILERA, GOMAN, GUOCOLAND, HAUSBRANDT, HENNESSY, IFC, INFOCUS, INLINGUA, KEPPEL, THE LION'S CLUB, LU-ONE, NIPPON, NORTEL, PEPSICOLA, QUICKSILVER, RAFFLES CITY, ROCKBUND (Rockfeller Group), ROSSIGNOL, LE ROYAL MERIDIEN, ROXY, SAN PELLEGRINO, SHANGHAI RAQUET CLUB, SHANGHAI LIBRARY, SIEMENS, SOLID VODKA, SONY, STARBUCKS, SWAROVSKI, TRINASOLAR, TRUSSARDI, TSINDAO, VANKE, VILLAMODA, VIVO CITY, WATSON, 1000 MIGLIA, 1933, amongst many others.

BORN IN ITALY - 31/07/1970
LANGUAGES: ITALIAN, ENGLISH.
LIVING IN: SHANGHAI

Studio RODIGHIERO, BC & NMB,
REDdot, PROFERO, INTERBRAND,
IDENTICA, ORTUS GROUP.