

## Rock the Mafia, Andy Warhol Style

Elsa Bazzini (May 12, 2008)



Andy Warhol made some of the most recognizable art of the 20th century. Now two students from Palermo borrow his loud, colorful style to send a message about art and politics to their sleepy city

Who are Filippo Bartoli and Alessandro Giglio? They're two Sicilian architecture students from Palermo that decided to paint a pop-art-style graffiti mural depicting Matteo Messina Denaro, a fugitive mafia boss who is believed to have risen to the top of Cosa Nostra in Sicily and is famous for being a former Porsche-driving playboy who murdered a rival Trapani boss and strangled his three-months pregnant girlfriend.



The mural is in the style of Andy Warhol and calls to mind his iconic portraits of Marilyn Monroe. They were painted on the back wall of Palermo's cathedral and according to the artists they are "an artistic provocation to a city that is too silent and too immobile when it comes to art". The painting remained undiscovered for more than three months, when all of a sudden it was spotted by a local weekly that published pictures of the work along with an article about Messina Denaro. The national media then got their hands on the pictures and the mural was catapulted into the national and international spotlight. Even though, truth be told, pictures of the mural had first been taken in January, shortly after its completion, and published by a [Sicilian blog website](#) [2]. This on-the-fly publication suggests that citizen journalism is not only an interesting phenomenon, but also has the potential to anticipate the national news by several months.

When the story cracked, segments of the Italian national media and police thought the work was trying to celebrate organized crime. This pushed the authors to come out in the open and explain something that according to them "should not need explaining". In their words, "this was just an artistic gesture, and since when does an artist have to justify what he did?"



Another identical copy of the painting was made on a wall near the University of Palermo's law school, and a second copy was later painted at Catania's Bellini Theater. The Theater's director Antonio Fiumefreddo thanked the artists for the provocation.

These two young artists are rocking the Mafia right under their noses—in impeccable Warhol style no less!

**Source URL:** <http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/facts-stories/article/rock-mafia-andy-warhol-style>

### Links

[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/messinadenaro21210619579jpg>

[2] <http://palermo.blogolandia.it/2008/01/23/messina-denaro-lultimo/>