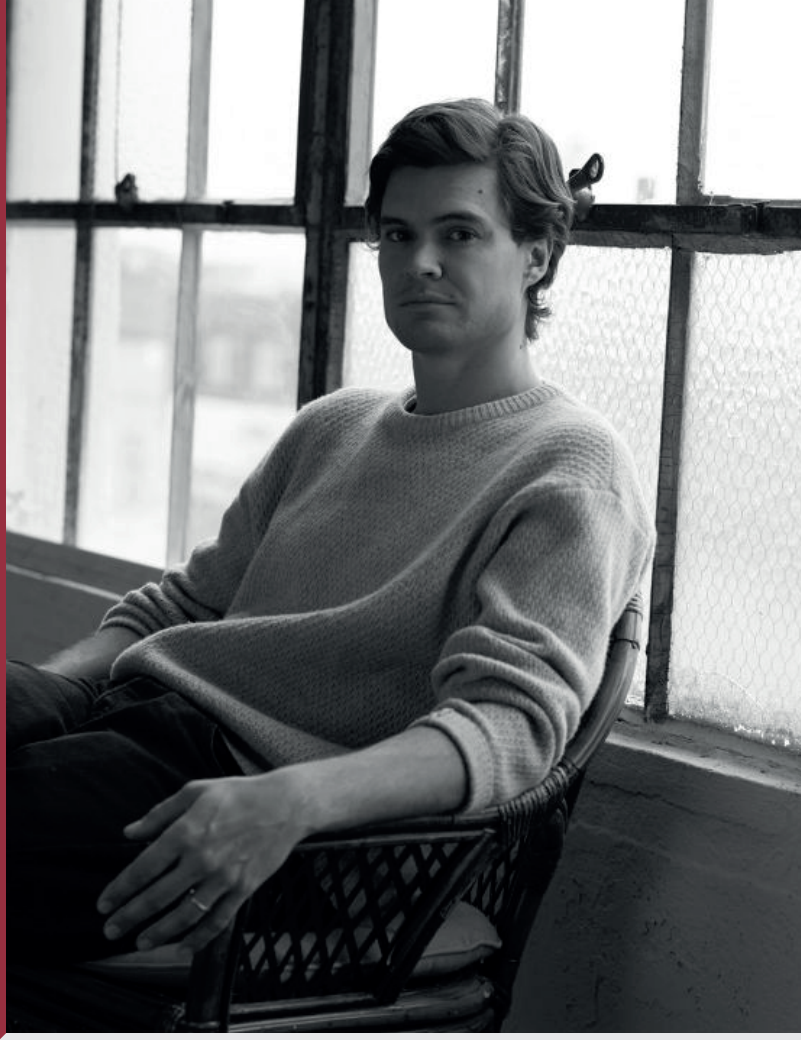
laboratorio d'arte
palazzo delle esposizioni



# activity for children

# AMEDEO POLAZZO

As you go up one of the two monumental staircases leading up to the second floor of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, you cannot miss the work of young artist Amedeo Polazzo: a large site-specific* painting designed and produced especially for the architectural space in which it sits.

Amedeo Polazzo was born in Germany in 1988 but he grew up in Vicenza, Italy. Today he lives and works in Los Angeles, in the United States of America.

His murals* are often the product of interaction with the environment for which they are designed, and in fact we can see that here too. Amedeo Polazzo studied the history and architecture of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni. His work incorporates some of the building's decorations and features, for example the false marble balcony built into the centre of the wall above, the stucco reliefs running horizontally around the edge of the monumental staircase, or the vertical pilasters surmounted by acanthus leaf capitals.

The work is inseparable from its context: the intervention cannot be repeated elsewhere and it would be difficult to buy or sell. Once the exhibition has been taken down, the painting is going to be erased and the walls are going to be restored to their original colour. The painting will live on as a memory in the minds of the people who have seen it and in the photographs and video footage that recorded the artist at work.



*Untitled, 2020*
Photograph by Roberto Apa

The temporary nature of Polazzo's work is emphasised by his use of delicate, transparent pastels diluted in water, by his flowing technique and by the care that he has taken in meticulously capturing detail, despite having to finish the work fairly fast.

What he paints is easily recognisable, and so when we look at the whole, we experience a kind of visual short-

*Observers can never quite work out whether they are observing an enclosed space or whether they themselves are enclosed in the space that they are observing.*

circuit full of inconsistencies. We see figures and glimpses of landscape set in geometrical boxes similar to windows flanked by brick walls, doors, metal grilles, gates and other dividing elements that hamper our view. Because of this, our gaze moves forward in depth but then immediately pulls back because it encounters a series of impediments preventing it from looking any further. There are also some unfinished parts, as though what we see were suspended midway between appearing and vanishing.

The work is a threshold, a boundary between indoors and outdoors, a meeting place between painted space and the observer's environment.

When we look at the work, we feel confused: the three arched windows upper right are blocked up and the wrought-iron grille, painted red, prevents anyone from getting through. The door upper right is closed by a handle. Above it, we can make out a staircase giving onto a large, dark hole that looks as though it has been dug out of the wall. The hole has been painted so accurately that it looks real.

The artist has also built into his painting a variety of natural elements such as roses, bamboo canes and leaves which direct our gaze and minds towards the great

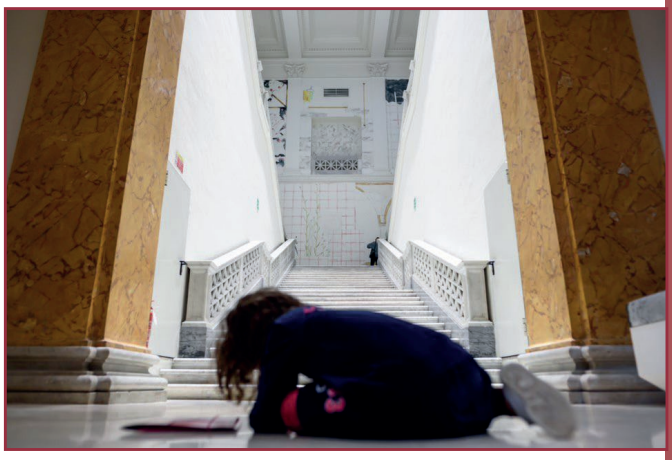




Photograph by
Roberto Apa

outdoors, towards places that have been abandoned or left to go to ruin, or else that are still being built. And there are also a number of everyday items which he used while creating the work, for instance the orange electric power cable or the clothes hanging out on coat hangers to dry. They may be humdrum items of little value but the artist has ennobled them by first using them as working tools and then building them into his painting.

Amedeo Polazzo worked on site for three weeks to complete the work in its entirety. He started painting from the bottom then reached the top by moving around on scaffolding. Even though he had sketched out his intervention on paper while devising the project, he allowed himself to be guided by the place itself, by his relationship with the space and by contact with the wall.



Animated tour of the exhibition *All Out!*
Photograph by Francesco Iovine

Send a photograph of your work to our e-mail address: **laboratoriodarte@palaexpo.it** and we'll publish it on the *Give Us a Sign* page on our website: **www.palazzoesposizioni.it**

## glossario

**SITE SPECIFIC** In art, the phrase "*site specific*" refers to a work associated with a specific place or environment in which the artist intervenes by creating an installation or painting specially designed with it in mind.

**MURAL** A "*mural*" is a large wall painting in which the paint is applied in such a way as to allow the surface on which the artist is painting to show through. It is a technique that usually requires a certain rapidity of execution.

You, too, can add your art to the walls of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni! Print out the sketch at the end of the file and discover some of the forms and features of the large space on which Amedeo Polazzo painted his work. Examine them carefully, then take a transparent acetate sheet to lay over the sketch, or else place the sketch in a transparent ring-folder pocket. Using an erasable felt-tip pen and the space below as a reference, draw things that divide space like doors or windows, or imagine holes in the wall, or else use your imagination to design boundaries that both can and cannot be crossed. You can mix indoor and outdoor space, you can invent openings and closures, and then you can reflect on the temporary nature of your graphic work compared to the imposing character of the building. Your work, just like Polazzo's, is not going to last for ever. You can erase it with a simple movement of your fingers on the acetate and start over again whenever you like!

## now you try!

