

A street trader in a third world country calls out her sales pitch. And again. And again. Her vain attempts to interest passers-by in her lottery tickets become ever more plaintive as the same sequence loops to a soundtrack, over and over. Two old people are sitting in a plain white room. They are evidently watching TV but all we see is them and their reactions to the nameless on-screen drama. Tourists in a European city – Florence perhaps? – queue for some attraction or other as a pigeon attacks one of their number. These and other works form *Pastis*, the name given by brothers Marco and Saverio Lanza to an

ongoing series of projects that all share a common purpose – to put a frame around the world and create something new from what it captures. The two have successful solo careers in their native Italy. Marco is an advertising and editorial photographer of considerable renown, his work having appeared in galleries including the Metropolitan Museum in New York while *The Living Dead* (West Zone, 2000), his book on the Palermo catacombs, attracted much acclaim. Saverio, on the other hand, is a musician, composing soundtracks for films and ads as well as producing records for several major Italian artists. The brothers began working together three

years ago after finding out that they had been pursuing similar themes in their solo projects. Saverio had recorded an album of the voices and sounds of homeless people and migrants on the streets while Marco had been placing a backdrop in outdoor situations in order to take the language of the photographic studio into the open air. “The idea was to make something out of the confusion that we have around us,” says Marco. “To use something that already exists to make something new,” adds Saverio. “It’s a matter of framing what’s already there. A lot of visual art is already going this way,” he admits and indeed the topics and techniques of their films do seem reminiscent of

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The Lanza brothers: Putting a frame around the world

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a lot of contemporary video art. “There’s nothing new, but this is our way, our voice,” Saverio claims. The films are purposefully rough and ready, with little post-production or cleaning up. “We want them to look analogue,” says Marco. The pair had imagined that their work would best be viewed in the gallery (*Finale*, the film of the old couple, who are actually their parents, watching the World Cup final will be shown at Back Light, a triennial exhibition in Finland next year and in a forthcoming show in Korea) but they have been attracting major interest from advertising agencies. In CR July we reported on their talk at the Creative Social gathering earlier

this year at which they were the undoubted stars. There was something about not just the work, but also the relationship between the brothers themselves that seemed to charm the assembled creative directors from across Europe. As they presented their work, Marco and Saverio, the former, at 51, the older by some 13 years, bickered and joshed constantly. They finished each other’s sentences and constantly corrected each other’s English. “Marco knows it’s very difficult to work with him,” says Saverio, tongue firmly in cheek. “Everybody who works with him has many problems, I say this with love. I am the only one that can manage him.”

BELOW, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Yasuny Forest (Amazonia), Ecuador, March 2006; *La Sfilata*, Piazza del Duomo, Florence, September 2002; stills from *PASTIS/II* Les Mots Qui Vont Très Bien Ensemble, 25 October 2007, in which the brothers filmed themselves singing snatches of Beatles songs, badly; Yasuny Forest again

The relationship is also evident in one of their short films in which both sit listening to Beatles records with headphones on, every so often singing a line out loud and very much out of tune. The Creative Social crowd urged the brothers to put the films up on YouTube but they’re not keen – “they need some silence and attention to appreciate them,” says Saverio. Nevertheless, the pair have since had meetings at both Saatchi & Saatchi in Rome and M&C Saatchi in London with a view to using the films in commercials. But they are anxious to retain the qualities that made the films interesting in the first place. “We don’t want a major production,” says



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“Saverio. “If you go in with three cameramen, a pop and all that, everything changes. We just want it to be the two of us.” And they’re not too keen on working with storyboards. “We’d be no good doing that,” Saverio says. “Right now I’m working with a very famous singer in Italy. He wanted us to make videos for him in the normal way, but we said to the record label, ‘we don’t do that, we are not able to do that’. The best way is if people see one of our videos and find some way to use it.” After his experience with the music business, Saverio feels that advertising would be more sympathetic to the brothers’ preferred way of

working. “I think that, while a record label has to sell an artistic product in an industrial way, an advertising agency has to sell something industrial in an artistic way, so they understand us more.” But would they be comfortable having one of their very personal films pressed into the service of, say, some big beer brand? “In our other careers we are already used to working for things we don’t like. We’re prostitutes already, so it’s not a problem,” says Marco. “We need to find a way to get money to carry on making films and bring *Pastis* to the next level. Anyway, I don’t make any separation between advertising and ‘pure art’. The thing is how much you can recognise yourself in what you do and

BELOW: Marco Lanza takes his backdrop project to Miami, USA, December 2004

that’s the important thing for me.” “We don’t compartmentalise,” adds Saverio. “Ideas travel all around in every kind of field from ads to music and so on. There are no fences or limits. But of course every time you use your art for commercial gain you make a compromise. But if somebody gives us the opportunity to make a *Pastis* movie, why not? Nobody can say no.” From the reaction of the assembled creative directors at Creative Social, it won’t be long before somebody gives them that opportunity. ■

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