

## Pictorial Graffiti in Padua

We recently spent a delightful two weeks in Padua, home of the University of Padua, established in 1222 and the 6th oldest university in the world, with some 70,000 students. Padua is also replete with religious frescoes, most notably those in the Scrovegni Chapel painted by Giotto between 1303 and 1305, whose bold use of color, perspective, and volumetric forms to express human emotions gave birth to Renaissance art.

After many neck-craning days of looking at Padovan frescoes (we went to the Scrovegni three times, as well as visiting the Padua Baptistery, with its cycle of frescoes painted by Giusto de' Menabuoi between 1375 and 1376, and twice going to the Palazzo della Ragione near to where we were staying, photographing each of the fresco panels painted between 1425 and 1440 on the 210 meters of the interior walls of this grand covered building), I had had it with frescoes and started to pay more attention to the graffiti art visible at a more comfortable eye-level all over the city.

Padua is full of street art,<sup>1</sup> much of it clearly inspired by Banksy.



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<sup>1</sup> See Laura Teso, "Street Art in Padua," [mycornerofitaly.com](http://mycornerofitaly.com) and Rob and Clare Wood, "Hunting Graffiti in Padua," [This Travel Life—The Woods Around the World](http://thistravelife.com), May 20, 2017. A good resource for the street art of Padua is Daniela and Carlo Silvestrin's [Studio CD d'Arte](http://studiocdarte.com); the Silvestrins organize the SUPERWALLS Biennale Street Art in Padua that have transformed the city into an open-air art gallery.



One Padovan street artist, who goes by the tag name EvyRein—a *nome de plume* [*nome de bombe aérosol?*] evoking a famous French video game from a few years ago—has left his stamp throughout the old city center (above, upper left). EvyRein’s graffitis, composed of stenciled sheets applied to walls, include wild-haired self portraits, images of a man and a kid drinking, and a politically charged picture of a cop wielding a club and holding a bunch of flowers.





[I was particularly sorry not to have seen EvyRein’s controversial “Elon Mask” graffiti that he posted on the night of 25 January, 2025, on a pillar right in front of the AirBnB where we were staying. By the time that we arrived in early April, the graffiti sheet had been removed and the “Elon Mask” painted over.]



(Photo on left by Martevanni, Wikimedia Commons)





The Padovan artist Frederica Andreazzo, who paints under the *nome de plume* of LaFede, has posted a number of painted graffiti and stenciled sheets of women in the city center that have a distinctly feminist message.



The Florentine artist who goes by the name C. Ska has posted several painted graffiti and stenciled sheets of women in the city, some of which have a strong feminist message, such as one of an apparently Palestinian resistance fighter.



Another Padovan graffiti with a feminist message is one by an artist who signs their work “CHR DRN”. Here the stenciled image is accompanied by the phrase “La psicologa mi dice ‘lasciatí andare’” (“The psychologist told me ‘let yourself go’”).



The prolific Padovan street artist Alessio B has posted a series of graffitis of children, several of a young girl in gray. One shows a child hugging herself and crying red tears, accompanied by the phrase “*Esse quam videri*” (“To be, rather than to seem”, a Latin phrase that Cicero used in his essay *de Amicitia*). Another shows a seated gray girl from behind, in front of a big red heart surrounded by butterflies.





In the nearby village of Arquà Petrarca a reverse image of Alessio B's butterfly heart girl appears on a wall that has become a mecca for lovers to scratch their names/initials within a heart.



And love certainly seems to be one of the main themes for the graffiti artists of Padua —something that is not surprising in a city full of university students. [We have been struck by how many of the people we see on the streets of Padua are laughing. Padovans seem to be

a happy and friendly lot. And, unlike in our home city of Oviedo, Spain, passersby in Padua look at you right in the eye and smile.]



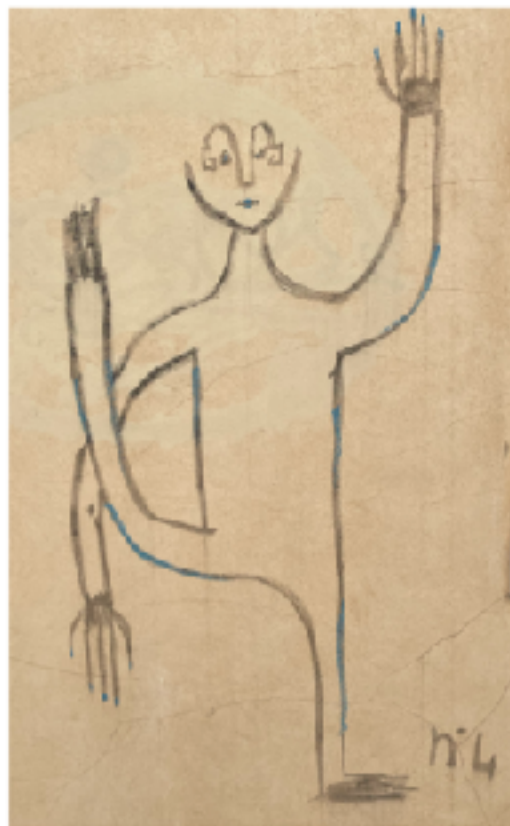
Allusions to love abound in Padovan graffiti, from the Classical god Eros, to a graffiti of a bust of a woman with a heart mounted on a herm filled with the words “Love”, to the heart-shaped stenciled sheet graffiti by the Padovan artist Zero Mentale (Manrico Baldo) with a kissing couple that everyone in Italy would recognize as the comic book characters Eva Kant and Diabolik.

And a lot of Padua’s graffiti are just plain fun.





The Padovan street artist Shife (a distortion of the English word “sheaf”) combines stenciled phrases with cute images to make us smile.



Another Padovan graffiti artist has put stenciled silly dancing ducks on various spots in the city. Others have painted silly figures with elongated arms and legs, one shown smoking something.



As with so many other cities, garage doorway shutters in Padua are fair game for graffitiers. One shows a devil eating a cross (which someone else has written—in English!—"Not mine!"). Another garage doorway has a silly floating ghost.



Silly creatures also appear in the graffitis of Padua, such as with a stenciled sheet by C. Ska of an armored toucan with the hand-written phrase "se non guardi in profondita non e moi cosi male" ("if you don't look too closely, I'm not that bad"), a fierce rhinoceros, and an alligator seated amid flowers labeled (again, in English!) "The Garbage Kid."





And on the streets of Padua one can find a graffiti of a small Alice in Wonderland amid the grass and a tender chalk drawing of a bearded shepherd next to flowers.



Of course Padua, like most other cities of the modern Western world, is full of disfiguring tagging that has given graffiti such a bad reputation; some tagging even mars legitimate street art.





And, being a university town, much of the tagging in the city is political, with anti-Nazi, pro-Palestinian, and pro-LGBTQ rights prominently tagged.



And, naturally, like the tagging in most other cities, one finds many silly faces on the walls of Padua.



And, as Chaucer said “every thing hath ende,” and when the time came for us to say *addio* to Padua, my wife took a final photo of me and my little dog in front of the graffiti “Forever Love” by the artist ANY (“About New York”).