



Exxxtraman: a Superhero for Italy's Immigrants!

Sara Capraro (April 30, 2009)



Sanjii is a superhero who protects immigrants that live in Rome. When they get in trouble, he transforms himself into Exxxtraman and fights to defend peace. We interviewed the creator of the cartoon, Jeffrey Andreoni

Immigrants in Italy are often victims of persecutions and discrimination. When it is hard to help them out in the real world, at least we might try to do it creating a parallel, fantastic dimension, showing them our solidarity.

This is what Jeffrey Andreoni did by creating the character of Exxxtraman

Jeffrey studied at Moscow State University, La Sapienza University of Rome, and The University of Rhode Island.



He started his career in Rome where he designed banners and campaign flyers for both right and left wing political parties at the same time. His photography, film, graphics, and poetry (written in Italian or English) have been exhibited both in Europe and the United States.

He is the founder of Bezdomny Collective, an international group of independent artists, and the creator of the bilingual immigrant superhero cartoon series, Exxxtraman.

Exxxtraman is a Roman superhero that "works" only in the city metro area. The son of Ganesh e Lakshmi, he was born to defend justice in Rome. When he came to light, his parents realized right away that he was not an ordinary kid and that he had supernatural powers that allowed him to use ordinary objects in an extraordinary way.

Since he does not want to be recognized when he wanders the city, he dresses as a hawker.

When immigrants in Rome have a problem, Exxxtraman intervenes and fights to defend peace. However, his life a super hero is not as easy as it might seem: he has the same problems and needs ordinary people have. For instance, he does not have a residence permit to stay in Italy.

Jeffrey Andreoni gave us further interesting details about his life as a 'Bezdomny' (Russian word that means "homeless"), and about Exxxtraman, the "Super-Comunitario" hero.

The Adventures of Exxxtraman (Part 1) The Adventures of Exxxtraman (Part 2)

The Adventures of Exxxtraman (Part 3)

The Adventures of Exxxtraman (Part 4)

The Adventures of Exxxtraman (Part 5)

Jeffrey, tell us about your cartoon on the adventures of the Roman superhero Sanjay EXXXTRAMAN the "Super-Comunitario"...

Sanjay is an Immigrant super hero who was born with special powers that he uses to fight crime. He is the lovechild of the Hindu gods Lakshmi and Ganesh and was born far, far away in the Bollyverse. When Sanjay was old enough to migrate, his parents sent him to Italy so that he could use his special powers to fight for justice on the streets of Rome.

Sanjay normally poses as an ordinary street vendor, but when disaster strikes, he quickly transforms into EXXXTRAMAN the "Super-Comunitario" while using his innocent looking gadgets as tools to fight crime.

What do you want to communicate through the adventures of your superhero? Why did you choose YouTube to introduce it to the great public?

Sanjay doesn't have an exact message, he only wishes to fight injustice and keep everyone in Rome safe from inequality.

Originally Sanjay made his debut at private screenings around Rome, but as his popularity grew I was urged to put the videos on Youtube and release a DVD while can be ordered through my website, bezdomny.org.

There are also T-shirts available with the EXXXTRAMAN logo on them. I hope to eventually make a feature length animated film about Sanjay which will reach a wider audience.



As every superhero, Exxxtraman must have his weak spot. What is it?

Sanjay's only weakness is his missing "Permesso" or working papers. This is his kryptonite so to speak. Everytime he is fighting crime he must beware of the police, otherwise they might release the criminal and imprison Sanjay instead

Why does Sanjay curse sometime? Is it a sort of provocation?

Sanjay doesn't himself curse. I can testify to the fact that he has excellent manners. Sanjay also speaks 3 languages and is very sensitive to foreign cultures. I think you might be referring to his sidekick Milos who does tend to curse quite often. You must forgive Milos, he is from the village of Vlentichka where cursing is actually quite common. Sometimes he has troubles adjusting to European standards and runs off at mouth when he shouldn't, but he really doesn't mean to offend anyone, he is just speaking impulsively.

Can we define Sanjay as your alter ego?

I would say that I am Sanjay's alter ego. Sanjay is doing his best to survive and help others to achieve more. Sanjay is my role model and I hope someday to be more like him. He teaches me a lot.

Since you live in both Rome and United States you must know pretty well the contemporary problems and difficulties connected to the issue of immigration. How do you think your message will be perceived in these two different places? Do you aspect different reactions?

As a performance artist a lot of my work is focused on social issues. I have done live installations in Italy and America to this effect. Exxxtraman is just another facet of this preoccupation with civil rights and equality. I hold citizenship in both countries and at home in either, therefore I permit myself to express my views on the issues that I hold dear to my heart

You define yourself as a 'Bezdomny', a Russian word that means 'homeless'. Why? Where are you now?

One day I was reading one of those free newspapers on the subway and I showed my friend an article that said, "Three die in fire, one German, one Alabnian, and one 'Homeless'." We marveled at the fact that the writer did not give the homeless person a nationality, and I realized that the only way to be truly international these days is to be homeless. Without a job or a passport you are truly free from restrictions or borders, and I wish to keep the same freedom not only for my body but for my mind as well.

Besides being a cartoon author, you are also involved in the project 'Participatory Art', a series of art installations displayed in both Rome and United States. Tell us about your artistic career and the way your continuous moves throughout the world affects it....

Participatory Art is a piece that liberates an artwork from the restrictions of galleries and allows for a wider array of people to interact with the work; in fact the people are what completes a participatory artwork. Some of my artwork has been on CNN (i.e.: Kinesthetic Polling Station) and it is sometimes the subject of academic debate (ArtWorld).

It is art without a pedestal or stage: both audience and performer are on equal ground; neither can exist without the other. The audience is an integral part of the performance and the performance cannot occur without the audience's participation. One completes the other.

I have performed these works between Europe and the US over the past several years and I hope to expand my range to the Middle East as well. I would like for the entire world to envision art as medium of social integration.



The adventures of Exxxtraman, posted on YouTube, are at their 5th episode. Tell us something about what will happen next.

In the sixth episode of EXXXTRAMAN, Sanjay decides to retire from the street vendor business. His plan is to sell over a million counterfeit Rolex watches in less than a month. But there is problem with his plan: the leader of the Sausage Party, Pussylini, wants to deport everyone who practices Tantric sex from Italy. Despite warning from his friends, Sanjay decides to remain in Italy to realize his dream of buying a villa in Sardegna.

The Sausage Party gets even more power in Rome and the only person who can save Italy is EXXXTRAMAN, he comes up with way to remove the Sausage Party from power. Be sure to watch the next episode so you can see how he does it. If you like EXXXTRAMAN, you can become his fan on Facebook by visiting EXXXTRAMAN.COM

Jeffrey Andreoni is currently producing a series of performance pieces concerned with police states and neuropsychology. He is also in the process of founding the world's first Nation Of Art. Jeffrey spends his time equally between the US and Europe, though his whereabouts at any given moment are largely unknown.

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