

FOR THE "MONTENAPOLEONE CHINESE NEW YEAR" THE CAMOUFLAGE ART OF LIU BOLIN

On invitation by the MonteNapoleone District to create his first event to celebrate the Chinese New Year, the famous contemporary Chinese artist Liu Bolin camouflaged himself, in Milan and Rome, among the masterpieces of the Galleria Borghese and Michelangelo's Pietà Rondanini at the Castello Sforzesco. From the live performances come two new works of art signed by The Invisible Man.

Liu Bolin's live performance yesterday in Michelangelo's Museo della Pietà Rondanini inside the Castello Sforzesco closed the first "MonteNapoleone Chinese New Year", the event conceived by the MonteNapoleone District to celebrate the Chinese New Year. The district is home to the most prestigious Global Luxury Brands in the world, taking up the streets Montenapoleone, Verri, Sant'Andrea, Santo Spirito, Gesù, Borgospesso and Bagutta. The artist, also known as The Invisible Man, was invited to exhibit his photography simultaneously in Milan and Rome. The exhibition "LIU BOLIN. HIDING IN THE FASHION DISTRICTS", was created with the sponsorship of the Chinese Embassy and the City of Milan, thanks to the support of Boxart, the Verona gallery that represents Bolin in Italy.

Born in Shandong in 1973, Liu Bolin combines different techniques such as performance and photography in his installations. Through a meticulous body painting process carried out by two assistants, he blends into the environment to analyse the tension that exists between the individual and society. In the Milanese performance, Liu Bolin engaged with the genius of Renaissance sculpture, Michelangelo, camouflaging himself with the last of the masterpieces by the Tuscan master, the Pietà Rondanini. In Rome, he made himself "disappear" among the painted masterpieces of the Galleria Borghese. In both cases, measuring himself against the masterpieces of two of the greatest exponents of Italian art, the Chinese artist has again exalted our country's beauties, so that thanks to his international reach, a vast cosmopolitan audience can appreciate them. In fact, the two performances resulted in two new works by the artist, included in the famous series Hiding in Italy: "We are filled with pride for having collaborated with two of our countries' excellent cultural institutions", commented Beatrice Benedetti, artistic director of Boxart. To reward this synergy in small part, in addition to the usual limited edition of photographic prints, we will be working with the artist to produce a special format in a single piece that will be donated to the permanent collections of Galleria Borghese and Castello Sforzesco".

The event dedicated to the Chinese New Year took place simultaneously in Milan, with the exhibition all along Via Montenapoleone, and in Rome, in the boutiques of some of the most prestigious luxury brands. It retraced the artist's poetics, the result of more than ten years of work. From the first pieces in the Hiding in the City series in 2005 to present day, it is an ideal journey between China - with its famous buildings and myths - and the "Grand Tour" of the last seven years in our country, from 2012 to today, during which Liu Bolin steeped himself in Italy's symbolic places, from Milan to Verona, going from Venice to Rome to the Reggio di Caserta. His chameleon-like portraits are achieved through meticulous body painting and plays in perspective, where art unequivocally imitates life and universal truths are (un)clothed in their garb, which becomes confused with reality. Liu Bolin confirms this himself: "The shots I conceived for the first time in 2005 (when Suojia, the village of artists where Liu Bolin lived was razed to the ground) lend themselves to a double critical interpretation. On the one hand, it is the modern world that deprives man of physical and mental space. But it's also true that in most of my photos the subject is me. In fact, I myself choose to appear in that particular context, immersing myself in it". When the Beijing administration ordered the demolition of the neighbourhood where Liu Bolin, an emerging artist, resided, he decided to camouflage himself with the rubble of his studio. He had himself photographed, beginning a silent testimonial to the historic moment he was leaving behind, and at the same time achieving an unexpected success. This was how an extraordinary career began for one of the most talented and interesting contemporary artists, capable of hiding strong social messages through seemingly simple and even humorous images. Over time, Liu Bolin has been photographed in front of the world's most important monuments, bookstores, supermarket shelves, works of art, mountains of waste and in the midst of masses of immigrants; his fame

has grown to the point that his images have become an icon for the great fashion brands such as Lanvin, Jean Paul Gaultier, Moncler, Tod's, Missoni or cars like Ferrari, and the recent collaboration with Champagne Ruinart. The ultimate aim, also in the case of the fashion industry "know-how" that colours Bolin's shots, is always to bring contemporary man back from the challenges of globalisation to a more human dimension of existence.

The connection with the world of fashion has been rekindled thanks to the event organised by Guglielmo Miani, president of the MonteNapoleone District: "We are very honoured, on the occasion of the Chinese New Year festivities, to have involved such a world renowned artist as Liu Bolin and to have contributed to the inception of two new works, one of which will become part of our city's heritage. The idea of an event dedicated to China has proved to be successful from different points of view. We will continue to consolidate our relationships of mutual exchange not only culturally, but also economically, with a country where we have planned for the coming months successful activities for MonteNapoleone District such as La Vendemmia".

The "MonteNapoleone Chinese New Year" was also an opportunity to take stock of the Chinese market in the retail sector, given the strong boost to consumption that also comes with the increase in foreign travel by the Chinese people, who in recent years have had a strong impact in terms of sales outside China. Some interesting ideas for operators came out of the round table named: "Consumi, turismo, lusso: i driver dell'economia cinese all'epoca di Xi Jinping [Consumption, tourism, luxury: the drivers of the Chinese economy in the era of Xi Jinping]" held Wednesday, 6 February at ConfCommercio Milan, organised in collaboration with the Fondazione Italia Cina and with the participation of Class Editori, Global Blue and Tencent IBG/Digital Retex.

Thanks to the agreement with Digital Retex, WeChat, the most popular service platform in China with 1 billion active users per month, today it represents a strategic channel for dialogue with Chinese consumers, who show a growing enthusiasm for Italian shopping. The MonteNapoleone District, which to date is the only luxury district in Europe to have an official WeChat account for the development of Chinese tourism on target, promoted the "MonteNapoleone Chinese New Year" through Shopping Tags and QR codes, enhancing the activities organised at the associative level. For the first Chinese New Year in the Fashion 'Quadrangle', not only were there themed showcases in the participating boutiques, with clothing, jewellery, accessories and veritable capsule collections to celebrate the holiday, but also a series of services specifically dedicated to Chinese customers. They were welcomed by the MonteNapoleone VIP Lounge, which originated with a MonteNapoleone District project, with the participation of Global Blue - partner with which the "Global Blue Suite" exclusive welcome and refund space was created - Planet, Tax Refund and Ferrari Tax Free For You. A range of benefits and unique and personalised experiences was also offered to them. The access voucher provided an exclusive concierge service and the transportation of their luggage and purchases to the departure airport. Thanks to the lounge's partners, non-EU tourists received assistance in completing all tax refund formalities without stress or line-ups.