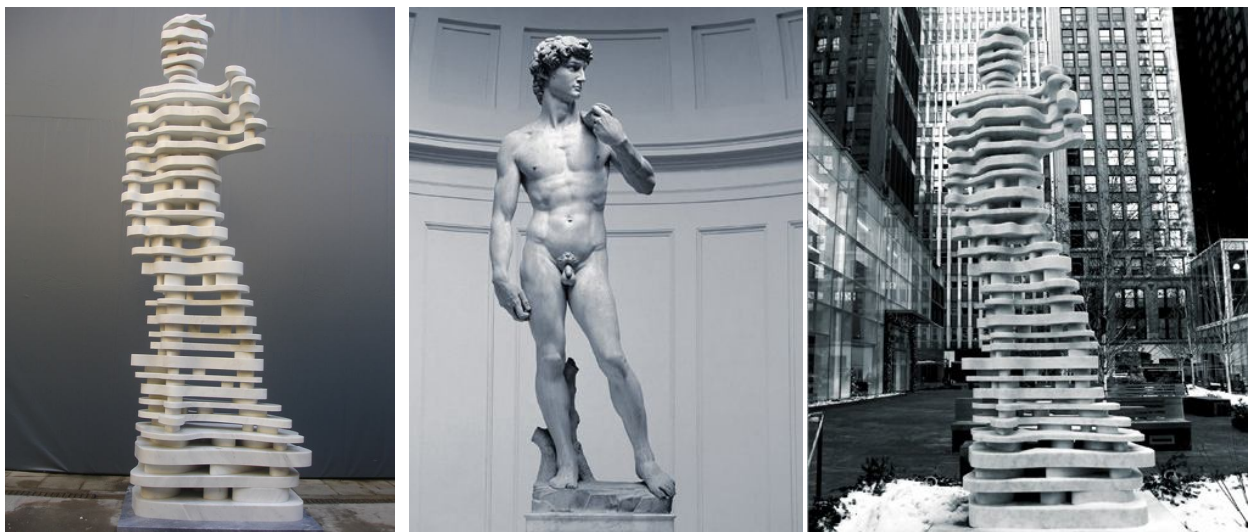


For Immediate Release:

HERO for Florence
Homage to David: Saracino interprets Michelangelo

**NEW EDITION OF BRYANT PARK'S "HERO"
BY ITALIAN ARCHITECT/DESIGNER ANTONIO PIO SARACINO
COMMISSIONED BY NEW YORK-BASED GLOBAL EMERGING MARKETS GROUP
(GEM) TO BE UNVEILED AND EXHIBITED
AT ACCADEMIA GALLERY, FLORENCE MAY 4 – SEPTEMBER 20, 2015**



Florence, May 4, 2015 - "Hero", a public sculpture at Three Bryant Park, New York by acclaimed Italian architect and designer Antonio Pio Saracino, was commissioned in 2013 as a gift by the Italian government and Eni to symbolize friendship between Italy and the United States. "Hero", inspired by Michelangelo's "David" is one of two works Saracino designed as a pairing (the other work is entitled "Superhero") known as "The Guardians: Hero and Superhero." The project, on view indefinitely was organized by the Cultural Attachè of the Embassy of Italy Washington DC, Renato Miracco and New York/Milan based curator Helen Varola.

A new edition of Saracino's "Hero," will be on display at the Accademia Gallery, Florence during Expo Milano 2015, the global exhibition that Italy hosts from May 1 to October 31, 2015. "Hero," addressing Michelangelo's "David," which has been selected to represent the Italian Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015 as an historic symbol of Italian excellence, is being promoted by the Accademia Gallery in Florence, the Italian Embassy in Washington DC and PMG Italia.

The new Italian edition of "Hero," specially commissioned by New York-based Global Emerging Markets Group (GEM) and to be exhibited at the Accademia Gallery,

Florence, will be larger than the Bryant Park 'Hero' – standing as tall as the original *David* 17ft / 5,2m. The 11,000 lb marble "Hero" will be created in Carrara, Italy with the same stone Michelangelo used to create "David." "Hero" will be exhibited in the courtyard of the Accademia Gallery, Florence, just a few meters from Michelangelo's *David* from May through September 2015. The Accademia Gallery welcomes 1.3 million visitors per year (only second to the Uffizi Gallery).

Antonio Pio Saracino is an acclaimed Italian architect and designer based in New York City. Saracino has designed buildings, monuments and products and several of his designs are part of the permanent collections of museums such as the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Art and Design in New York City. Saracino's work has been exhibited internationally in galleries, museums and prominent exhibitions that include the Venice Biennale.

Ambassador of Italy to the United States, Claudio Bisogniero states: "*David*: such a strong symbol of Italian heritage, and now a Guardian of the friendship between our two countries. The year of Italian Culture in the US couldn't have left a better legacy."

Director of the Accademia Gallery, Florence, Angelo Tartuferi states "Antonio Pio Saracino has revived the matter of "David," the white Carrara marble, for a modern reinterpretation of the sculpture, designed not for a museum or an art gallery, but for a public space in Manhattan, thus placing itself even in this respect on the trail of the original intention by Michelangelo. The best hope is that the "Hero" can represent, in the eyes of the men of our day, the same values of freedom, justice and civic pride realized by Florentines at the height of the Renaissance by Michelangelo's "David." The Accademia Gallery in Florence, along the Italian Embassy in Washington, is pleased to present the work of Antonio Pio Saracino, which qualifies as one of the most intelligent, modern and qualitatively most significant interpretations in terms of the execution of one of the highest signs of Western culture."

Cultural Attachè, Embassy of Italy Washington DC, Renato Miracco adds: "The iconographic value of Michelangelo's "David" in all various interpretations throughout history becomes a symbol of multiple meanings. Antonio Pio Saracino's "Hero" draws inspiration from the "David" and becomes symbol of friendship between two countries. The Embassy of Italy in DC has been promoting from long times those values."

Peter de Svastich, Managing Director, GEM GROUP states: "GEM is very proud to be involved with this wonderful art project that unites the timeless qualities of one of the great works of art in Western Civilization (Michelangelo's "David") with a brilliant modern sculpture that echoes the finest traditions of Italian craftsmanship and blends them with a more contemporary artistic vision. GEM considers it an honor to have worked with Antonio Pio Saracino, the Galleria dell' Accademia, the Curators of this amazing art collection that surrounds this unique venue, the Italian Embassy in Washington D.C."

Anna Santucci, Director of PMG Italia states: "'Hero for Florence' project born taking a coffee in Bryant Park with the artist and a mutual friends. Staring at such an evocative Michelangelo's masterpiece reinterpretation, i felt a real, strong emotion".

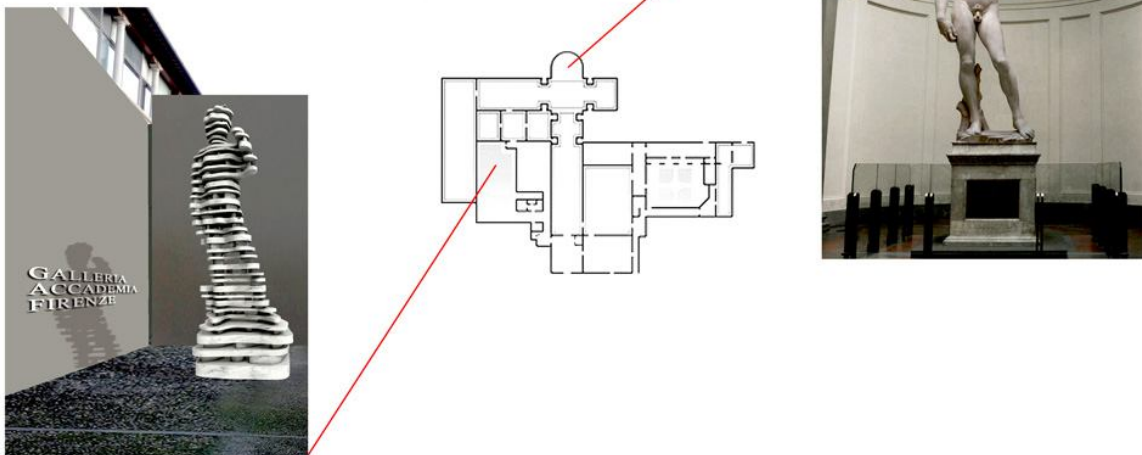
Helen Varola, Curator, "The Guardians: Hero and Superhero", New York states: "Saracino's new edition of "Hero" nods to Michelangelo's "David," defender of the city of Florence as a contemporary civic champion who offers protection and surveillance, also suggests a long history of vulnerability spanning centuries, politics, and cultures."

Saracino states, “I never would have expected, two years later, to receive the great honor to see a new edition of “Hero” in the Accademia of Florence, in the same place as Michelangelo’s “David.” With the New York “Hero,” I wanted to create a symbolic protector of New York City, as “David” was intended as protector of Florence. The statue celebrates the superhuman and the inspiration that it channels. The anthropomorphic layered architectural constructions display the universal ability of mankind to cement its own presence in the world with its perennial construction skills.”

Opening Date: May 4th 6pm

Press Conference May 4th 11am under the Statue of the *David* in the Museum of the Academy

Speakers: **Angelo Tartuferi**, Director Gallery of the Academy; **Renato Miracco**, Cultural Attachè Embassy of Italy Washington DC; **Antonio Pio Saracino**; **Peter de Svastich**, Director GEM; **Helen Varola**, New York based art curator; **Matteo Innocenti**, Florence based art curator.



About Antonio Pio Saracino:

Antonio Pio Saracino is a New York-based Designer and Italian Architect. Saracino has designed buildings, monuments and products. His work is in museum collections internationally including the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Art and Design in New York City and the PowerHouse Museum in Sydney. He participated in the 54th edition

of the Venice Biennale and has won numerous awards among which two American Architecture Awards from the Chicago Museum of Architecture and two Best of the Year Award by Interior Design Magazine. He was named one of the world's 25 most interesting trendsetters by ARTnews magazine and recognized as one of the Top Ten Italian Architects under 36 by the New Italian Blood award. Saracino has exhibited his design work with Industry gallery in Washington D.C., Los Angeles and Dubai, as well as other galleries and museums internationally. His work has been reviewed internationally in publications such as The New York Times, Architectural Digest, Interior Design, Wallpaper. Vogue named Saracino 'among the most prolific Italian designers abroad.'

Among Saracino's past public projects are GATE 150 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy for the Caraffa Museum in Cordoba Argentina and the MuBE Museum in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the 2010-12 Formula 1 World Championship trophy for ENI and as winner of Brussel's Agorafolly competition, a public installation to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the European Union. In 2003, Saracino graduated cum laude with a Master's Degree in Architecture at 'La Sapienza' University of Architecture in Rome, where he worked as assistant professor of architectural design.

Statements about Saracino's "Hero":

Angelo Tartuferi, Director, Accademia Gallery, Florence:

"Countless artists, in the broadest sense of the term (painters, engravers, sculptors, graphic artists, photographers and so on), have found the courage to confront Michelangelo's masterpiece, with results that have had very different outcomes: from grotesque to heroic. Antonio Pio Saracino has revived the matter of "David," the white Carrara marble, for a modern reinterpretation of the sculpture, designed not for a museum or an art gallery, but for a public space in Manhattan, thus placing itself even in this respect on the trail of the original intention by Michelangelo. The best hope is that the Hero can represent, in the eyes of the men of our day, the same values of freedom, justice and civic pride realized by Florentines at the height of the Renaissance by Michelangelo's David. The Accademia Gallery in Florence, along the Italian Embassy in Washington, is pleased to present the work of Antonio Pio Saracino, which qualifies as one of the most intelligent, modern and qualitatively most significant interpretations in terms of the execution of one of the highest signs of Western culture."

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Renato Miracco, Cultural Attachè, Embassy of Italy, Washington DC:

“The iconographic value of Michelangelo’s “David” in all various interpretations throughout history becomes a symbol of multiple meanings. Antonio Pio Saracino’s “Hero” draws inspiration from the “David” and becomes symbol of friendship between two countries. The Embassy of Italy in DC has been promoting from long times those values. This archaic dimension of culture finds its correspondence in the archetypal “self.” And I am truly proud that this David, in the center of America, represents Italy and that it stands as a testament and as a symbol of our long-standing friendship. And here we come to the value of works of art in public venues. In the 20th century, works of art situated in public venues lost some of the characteristics, which had, previously, defined them historically. Originally, the sculptures which beautified public squares were created to celebrate the community’s memory and roots by depicting the “heroes” who had contributed to the community’s birth. Today the social context is radically different. The use of public squares, of Malls (a nod to American customs), has a different dimension and value, which needs yet to be identified and “uncovered”. Art is social, and it is the mirror and the expression of the society which it expresses. “Public art” today could be described precisely as the need to leave the museum’s traditional white walls behind in order to embrace the outside and to stimulate the public towards a “new knowledge” and contextual understanding of Art. And this is what Antonio Pio Saracino’s re-visitation does. What underlies the very essence of today’s two works of art is the artist’s understanding that the poetic-evocative language of a people is founded on the impulses of the primordial unconscious being, and that its logic is subordinated to deep human roots. The poetic side, be it in a sculpture or in painting, is based on the attempt to achieve the purest contact possible with what Jung called the “primordial collective unconscious”. Culture is expression and the cultural expression is the value of humanity. This value represented by the David goes beyond history and its meaning is part of our daily life and our collective global imagination.”

Helen Varola, Curatorial Advisor, “The Guardians,” New York City:

“Joseph Beuys tagged the newly completed Twin Towers with the names of the early Christian physicians and martyrs Cosmas and Damian. These two saints refused to accept money for their services and from the 4th century on the cult of Cosmas & Damian spread and they became the patron saints of the Medici family. *Cosimo* and *Damiano* were called upon to heal all manner of spiritual maladies arising from the pursuit and exercise of power and their images are found throughout Italian Renaissance art in works by Michelangelo, Donatello, Fra Angelico, Fra Lippo Lippi and Botticelli.

Joseph Beuys’ attempt to heal global wounds by renaming the towers after Cosmas and Damian finds resurgence in post 9-11 New York, in a tactical doubling of forms located in the heart of Manhattan at Bryant Park. This new monumental venture is found in Antonio Pio Saracino’s *The Guardians: Hero and Superhero*.

Positioned at both ends of the public garden space at 3 Bryant Park between 41st and 42nd Streets like two Renaissance sculptures flanking a Medici chapel, they radiate a contemporary *sacra conversazione* with the island of Manhattan. *Hero* nods to Michelangelo’s *David*, defender of the city of Florence and likewise to New York City.

Superhero, donning a cape, is recognizably America's (and Gotham's) mythic watchdog. These civic champions offer protection and surveillance that suggests vulnerability spanning centuries, politics, and cultures. This politico-geographic pageant receives further amplification considering *Hero* is a commissioned gift from the Italian government on the occasion of *The Year of Italian Culture 2013*.

Hero and *Superhero* soar upward through a skillfully designed digitally-generated system of stacked repeated planes of marble and polished stainless steel through which we witness the spectacular hegemonic language of skyscraper architecture. Their bodies come to life as they meld into the mystery, power and energy of Manhattan".

Utilities

HERO for Florence

Homage to David: Saracino interprets Michelangelo

From 5 May until 20 September 2015, from Tuesday to Sunday from 8.15 to 18.50.

The ticket costs € 12,50 (full price) and € 6.25 (reduced); reservations at number 055-294883 Florence Museums.

With the price of admission to the museum will be visible the large sculpture of Saracino and the temporary exhibition "The Art of Francis. Masterpieces of Italian art and lands of Asia from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century".

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Credit: 'Hero' by Antonio Pio Saracino © Alexo Wandael Photos