



DEPT. OF CULTURE

## Federico Marchetti Adds Art to Yoox's Oeuvre

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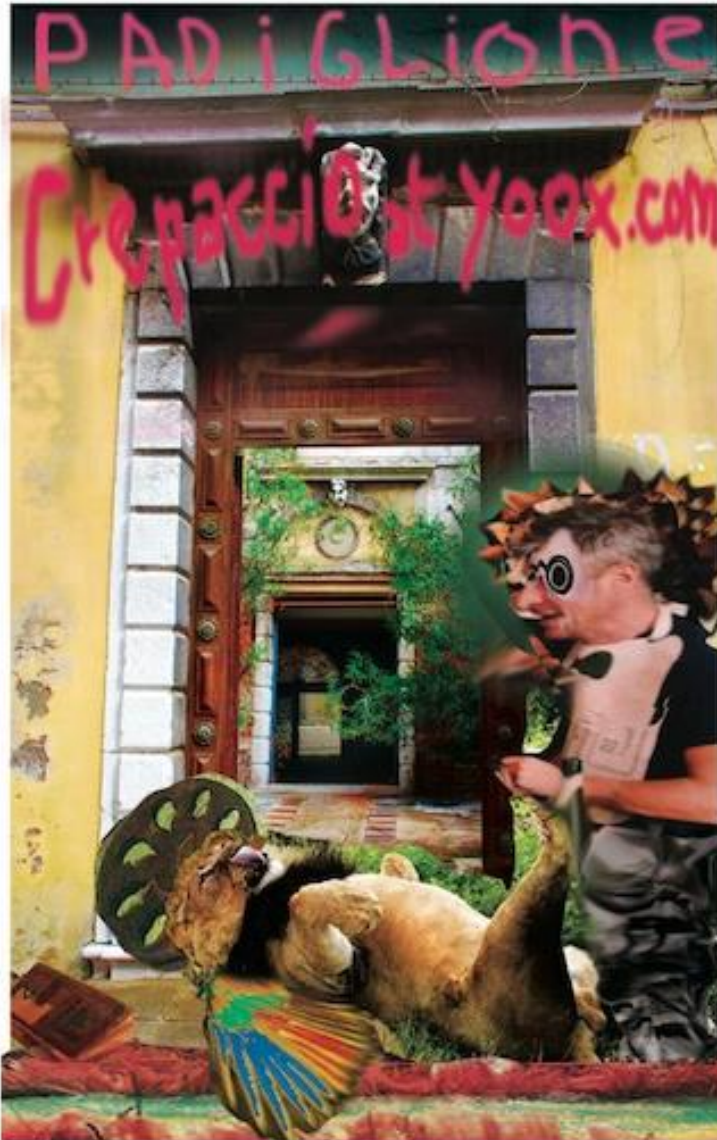


The impressive second-quarter results posted recently by the Yoox Group, Italy's e-commerce giant, was further proof that the future of high fashion lies online. But can CEO Federico Marchetti (*left*) work the same magic with fine art? It has been on his mind since he launched Yoox fourteen years ago. "I've always had the notion of the one-stop shop, with a mixture of modern and vintage, clothes and furniture," he says. "The art component is the one that closes the circle."

Marchetti tested the waters last October with Damien Hirst, Grayson Perry, and the first-ever edition by Italy's top Pop artist Francesco Vezzoli. "He did it to help earthquake

relief in Emilia-Romagna, where I'm from," explains Marchetti. "We did an edition of 399 priced at 399 euros, dollars, or pounds." Yoox is now providing corporate sponsorship for Vezzoli's *Trinity*, a series of three exhibitions in three cities, the first in Rome now until November 24, the second opening at New York's MoMA PS1 in the fall, and the third at the Museum of Contemporary Art in L.A. in early winter.

But any multimillion-dollar business can cough up sponsorship dollars. It was Padiglione Crepaccio (*below*), the much humbler Yoox initiative during the opening days of the Venice Biennale, which cast a more interesting light on Marchetti's intentions in the art world. Curator Caroline Corbetta assembled work by ten Venetian artists under 30—the sort of creative types who are usually overlooked when the Biennale's grand caravan rolls into town every two years—and exhibited the result in the house where three of them live. (A very nice piece of old Venice it was, too, calculated to make starving artists everywhere else in the world utterly puce with envy.) The twist was that the exhibition preview was online. "Like Saatchi, but in reverse," says Marchetti. "Everyone else got to see it online before the art-world elite got there." Which didn't stop heavy hitters like Vezzoli, Diesel's Renzo Rosso, and cherished art-world provocateur Maurizio Cattelan (a patron saint to young Italian artists) from showing up in person at the opening.



With his Acne jeans and his Lobb shoes, Marchetti is *almost* correct when he describes himself as the Yoox customer. And he was setting a good example by shopping for art at Padiglione Crepaccio. (In keeping with the initiative, it was only possible to buy the pieces on the iPads provided, even if you were standing right in front of the art and the artist). Right now, Marchetti is picturing art on Yoox as “something like a TV talent show, 99 percent talent, 1 percent the special X factor.” But going forward, he imagines people picking up “a pair of jeans and a painting” when they visit the site. “It’s part of the plan to make [yoox.com](http://yoox.com) a playful lifestyle,” he adds. “But playful in a serious way. It’s not the Amazon approach. We’re serious about collaboration.” Serious

enough, in fact, to partner with the legendary photo agency Magnum—its first venture into e-commerce—and Hirst’s publishing company, Other Criteria.

But when Marchetti insists, “Surprise is the beauty of Yoox,” I flip back to the young artists in Venice, in particular a painter called Thomas Braida. With talent like his in the equation, people are going to be picking up way more than one painting with their pair of jeans.

—Tim Blanks