



FOR COLLECTORS OF THE FINE AND DECORATIVE ARTS

## The Impressionist Rolling Stone

**Latasia Brown**

Marco Sassone's artwork is like watching an intensely colored dream flood onto a canvas television screen, from the tumbling white clouds that halo the city in "Toronto 7" (2008) to the vibrating nocturnal streets of Toronto in "View from the Bellagio" (2008). Taught to craft his own voice and style in the ever-competing art world, Sassone has proven himself as one of today's most prominent impressionist painters. In addition to being showcased in countless exhibitions, solo and with other artists, Sassone has received praise from numerous critics.

Born in 1942 in the Tuscan village of Campi Bisenzio, Sassone created his own style with the encouragement of his teacher, painter Silvio Loffredo, who studied under the Austrian master Oskar Kokoschka and taught at the Academia in Florence. Sassone's earliest and most prominent influence is the Macchiaioli, a group of 19th century Tuscan painters—Giovanni Fattori, Vito D'Ancona and Silvestro Lega—who led the rebellion against academia-styled art and embraced the vivaciousness of color through natural light. They specialized in impressionist-style portraits, landscapes and genre scenes, which were non-idealized scenes that dealt with realities of daily life.



Marco Sassone, Emilia, 2008, oil on canvas, 60"x48"

His family moved to Florence in 1954, which was a more suitable place for the family during the postwar years. There was superior schooling for Sassone and his siblings, and his father was hired at the Florence City Hall, saving his family financially. When a flood devastated the region in 1967, Sassone began a 40-year journey, to places like Los Angeles, Laguna Beach and San Francisco, ending in Toronto, where his new exhibit, "Toronto," is featured from April 4 through 26 at Odon Wagner Gallery. Sassone's urban landscapes that show the gritty, dreamlike visual testimonies of the city's heart, will be on display.

Throughout his travels, Sassone submerges himself into each city and creates paintings, drawings and other work that reflect both the breathtaking and the heartbreaking. "When you move, there's always something with you—unsettledness—and from that I get to paint. I was attracted to the skyscrapers and industrial sites of Toronto." Sassone never planned on being an artist. He studied architectural drafting for several years and knew he had a knack for drawing and painting, but not until he studied with Loffredo did he "fall into art."

“I evolved in Florence, where I painted on plywood in the countryside,” says Sassone. “As the paintings got larger, the canvases got larger, with Macchiaioli help. They always painted with visions of colors, braking down the spectrum. [Hence], my work always has an individualistic effect that divides the colors.”

Unlike other artists of his genre, Sassone tends to paint unique points of view and chooses subjects and perspectives that are not usually explored, such as “Emilia,” a dusk setting with train tracks leading to a faint Toronto skyline. Sassone named the painting after his wife, who was instrumental in his move to Toronto. “It’s a personal thing in many ways. The train tracks are very faint at the end and you see the skyline of Toronto. It’s a personal struggle of the artist to reach a new space; that struggle reflects the journey of life.”

When choosing viewpoints and vanishing points for his work, Sassone finds that he obsesses over them. “I’ve always been fascinated with perspectives,” he says. “It’s a very personal, never-ending battle within the artist: who they are and where they are going in life.”

Where is Marco going next? It’s hard to say, as Sassone is not a planned traveler. “My moving has always been an instinctual reaction to the circumstances in which I was living at the time. Toronto is my current last arrival. It feels [like] the right place in many ways, but one never knows.”