The Transformational Magic of Lucca Comics and Games

Laura Necco & Reinel Cañizares

Five days each fall, reality stops in Lucca as hundreds of thousands of people dressed in elaborate costumes descend upon the city. In herds they move through the streets and around the Wall, leaving no part of the city untouched. What some see as an inconvenience many others see as a chance to admire the creativity, spirit, dedication, and artistic talent shining in a setting unlike many others in the world. This is **Lucca Comics and Games**, now one of the largest comics and games events in the world.

Bibbidi, Bobbidi, Boo!

For weeks the city transforms from a medieval Italian city into a sea of white tents. Instead of the usual music or city noise there is the sound of drills, hammers, and clanging metal. The conversion is astonishing, but not as much as the alteration of everyday people into any and all characters you can imagine from film, television, comics, cartoons, anima, manga and games. Behind the scenes, attendees work throughout the year designing, and creating their costumes. These cosplayers – people who dress and act as characters from one of the aforementioned genres – study their characters, practice their mannerisms, collaborate with each other, and then prepare for hours each day of the event to transform themselves into the character of their choice.

On Facebook, tens of thousands of people gather in groups like *Lucca Comics – Tutte Le Foto* to share photos, find inspiration, or get advice. The groups form communities, everyone helping each person become one of the players in this massive event. The camaraderie is the same there as it is on the streets of Lucca during the event. They are there to help each other be the best.

Marco Carpentieri & Laura Necco

Laura Necco, one of the members of the *Lucca Comics-Tutte Le Foto* group, explained to me that the participants feel the events are *joyful days, truly the happiest days of the year. It is when reality becomes something else. Something beautiful*. For three years Laura and her husband Reinel Cañizares have each spent two hours every morning of the event with their make-up artist Marco Carpentieri. They begin around 6a.m., with make-up and costuming, giving life to the ideas they have been working on all year. While it is hard work for Marco, a wedding make-up artist, he says he loves the opportunity because *In*

Laura with Zazà

this kind of make-up you are free to be fantastical. In beauty make-up you have to follow the rules. Together he and Laura have combined her two favorite things, Sugar Skulls and Steampunk, into one amazing costume. Even though they are not allowed to compete because their outfits are a combination of styles, Laura and Reinel are garnering a great deal of attention. In, fact both genres are taking notice and it seems there may be more of a combination of these genres this year.

For Laura and Marco this is quite a feat. Steampunk is one of the largest genres at **Lucca Comics and Games**. Inspired by Jules Verne in the 1970s, the combination of Victorian dress mixed with trademarks of the Industrial Age – like the goggles that are iconic parts of the costumes – allows people the freedom to express themselves with very few limitations. Laura told me that the concept is, *The past if the future had come along earlier*. She says that the approach to **Comics** is that *it's a different world, where anything can be real for a day.* What better place for anything to real for a day than in a city like Lucca!

The participants show a great deal of pride as they act out their fantasy characters. They love to take photos with people and of people. Admiring and being admired is part of the joy of **Comics**. Laura recommends attending, even if not in costume, and losing yourself in the magic. *Walk everywhere. Start early and move with the crowd. Walk on the Wall and see the artists. Leave no corner unexplored.*

This year I think that is exactly what I shall do: enjoy the magic, creativity, and talent that overtake reality in the already magical city of Lucca.

– by Sheri Doyle
– photos by Thomas S. England

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