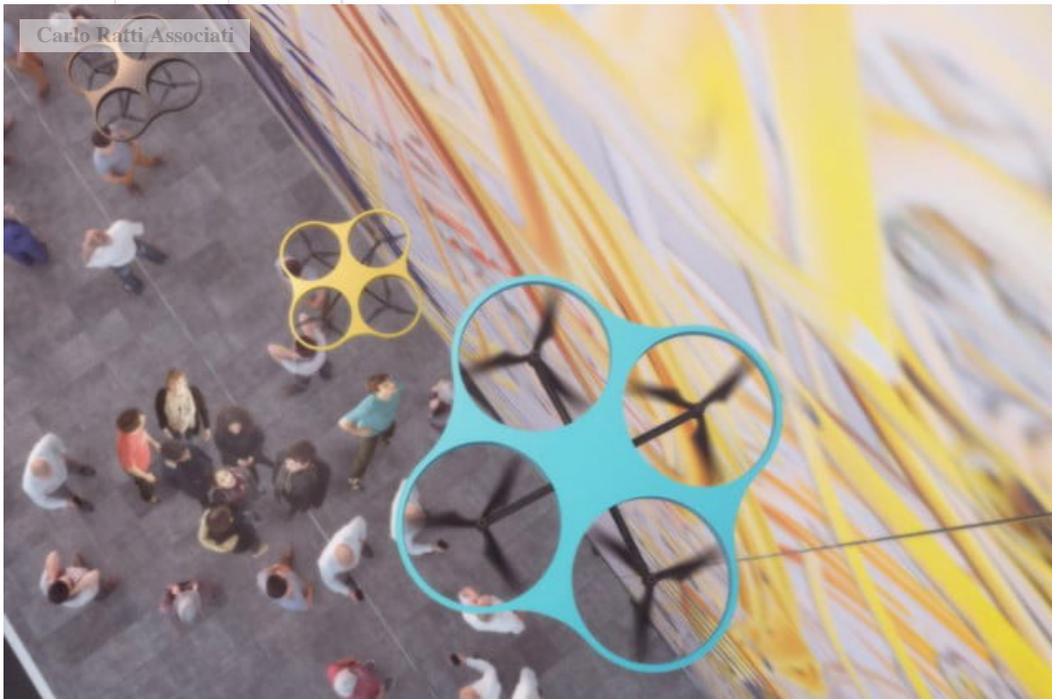


PRAY-PAINTING DRONES MAY SOON BEAUTIFY A CONSTRUCTION SITE NEAR YOU

By Dyllan Furness — Updated July 10, 2017 11:31 pm



WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU

As drones become more common, they may help beautify our cities, one construction site at a time.

Massive spray-painted murals are being planned for Berlin, Germany, and Turin, Italy. Rather than employ human interns to do the dirty work, it will be created by drones.

The aptly named [Paint By Drone](#) is the brainchild of Carlo Ratti, director of the MIT Senseable City Laboratory and founder of the [Carlo Ratti Associati](#) an innovation and design studio leading the project.

“Drones are becoming an increasingly common part of our everyday life,” Ratti told [Digital Trends](#). In the United States, the Federal Aviation Administration estimates that 1.3 million quadcopters will be in the skies by 2020. “Given this

evolving scenario, the idea of employing drones in different contexts is something that has accompanied us in several projects,” he added.

At the MIT Senseable City Laboratory, Ratti lead a project called [Skycall](#), which developed drones as tour guides around the university campus.

“With Skycall, we investigated two main development paths of UAV technology,” Ratti said, “a drone’s capacity to autonomously sense and perceive its environment, and its ability to interface and interact with people. Paint By Drone project represents a step forward in this research path.”

With Paint By Drone, Ratti hopes to take that research one step forward by bringing the UAVs into our public space, where humans can engage with them directly and the drones can hopefully beautify our surroundings.

Each drone will be equipped with CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Key) paints and spray as directed by digital submissions from an app.

“The great thing about this project is that the size of the canvas is not fixed,” Ratti said. “The city itself can be the canvas! For the first installations, we are focusing on using Paint By Drone for building sites and scaffold sheeting. However, over the next few months we are planning to develop a plug-and-play system that will allow the technology to be deployed in the blink of an eye on virtually any vertical surface.”

Ratti suggested that such measures could make it easier and safer to create public art. (To avoid accidents, a net will hang between the drones and the crowd.)

Of course, not everyone sees graffiti as a good thing so there will no doubt be backlash should Ratti try to roll out his idea on a citywide scale. But he’s nonetheless enthusiastic about the potential to engage the public.

“Paint By Drone offers a new perspective on street art and shows a new way to engage with the built environment,” he said. “What we call ‘phygital graffiti’ is the idea of leveraging drones and, more in general, digital technologies to create participatory works of public art.”