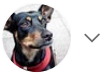




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# A Moving Experience: Italian versus American Psycho in business cards



CFlisi

5 min read · Just now





by C.Flisi

One of the most memorable scenes in *American Psycho* (maybe *THE* most memorable scene if you are not into blood and dismemberment) has nothing to do with murder. It's all about the swapping of business cards, and the one-upmanship between Patrick Bateman and his colleagues in a conference room. I was reminded of that scene when I went to pick up my new American business cards, including the homicidal impulses that thereto ensued.

It all started when I ran out of business cards after moving to the US two years ago. For the first few months, I used the ones left from my decades in Italy. Of course, I had to cross out my Italian phone numbers and manually write in my US replacements, which took time and looked sloppy. But I was fond of those cards. They had been the result of a lengthy back-and-forth between me and the Italian print shop, owned by a young husband and wife who seemed to care about doing a good job. The first time they printed the cards, they made a typo *after* I had approved the layout. Clearly their fault but they could have waffled. Instead, they reprinted all 300 cards at no extra charge, and then gave me the flawed cards as well as the corrected ones “just in case I might be able to make use of them.” I did because, frankly, business cards are awfully expensive to custom-print in Lombardia. I paid a hefty sum for this customized printing job when the order was ready for pick-up, but the cards were nice and served me well.

Only a few remained by the time I moved stateside. I wondered whether it made sense to print a new business card. After all, people were swapping contact information with Air Drop and similar digital contact tools. Or they simply took photos of other peoples' cards. Or they asked about my presence on LinkedIn or Instagram, from which — presumably — they

could find all the contact info they needed. Some of this was even beginning to happen at events in Milan before I moved.

But those thoughts went out the window once I began attending events in Washington, D.C. People were very aggressive about asking for business cards. I mean VERY aggressive and I mean PAPER cards. I don't remember such focus on exchanging little bits of paper in Italy, France, Spain, Switzerland, or anywhere else I have lived and worked. Not even in New York, where *American Psycho* takes place and where, presumably, the focus on such cards reaches maximum (read: murderous) levels of intensity.

People in DC want to know right away how useful you can be to them and a quick glance at a card can help in that determination. (Sure, that is true everywhere and in every industry, but it seems to be especially true in Washington, with its established hierarchy of government officials, lobbyists, NGOs, and press). In Milan, where you work, i.e., what your card says, is not nearly as important as the people you know, the all-powerful *raccomandazioni*. Consequently, a business card doesn't have the same value as it does in the U.S. capital.

By now aware of that value stateside, I decided to make the investment in card identity. Local contacts steered me to a print shop in the center of town with the promise of good service and a professional discount. The manager was eager and friendly in an unctuous hooray-new-customer kind of way. He expansively proposed a 10% discount, but quickly agreed to the 15% discount I'd been counseled to expect, and took my last old business card as a model for the new mock-up. He proposed a heavier paper than I'd had in Italy and said he wouldn't charge extra, as a "professional courtesy." He also

took a \$25 deposit for the layout, a separate charge from the price I'd been quoted.

A few days later the shop sent me a couple of proposed layouts. Neither one was remotely like the sample I'd provided — not in color, not in font, not in spacing — so I sent them back with my comments. A few more days and they sent me another two layouts, again, a far cry from what I had requested. Again I returned them with a reminder of what my original card had been.

On their third attempt, I began to wonder why a well-reputed print shop in the capital of the United States had more trouble doing a simple business card layout than a tiny little mom-and-pop storefront in a small town in Italy. To simplify matters, I removed everything from the front of the card but my name, designation, one phone number, one email, one website, and one X (formerly known as twitter) account.

The print shop sent me a layout a few days later, suggesting that I print a copy “to make sure everything was okay.” My printer was on the fritz at that point and out of ink besides, so I forewent that precaution. After all, wasn't I in the hands of experts doing hundreds of business cards a week? They wouldn't send me something that was completely out of whack after several weeks of back-and-forth.

Turns out they would, they could, and they did. When I picked up the cards, I was shocked to see how out-of-balance the graphics were, how illegible the final product was. I couldn't imagine my Italian print shop — or any reputable print shop in Italy for that matter — delivering such a terrible job.

To add insult to injury, they repropoed the 10% discount, conveniently forgetting the \$25 deposit I had made AND their agreement to a 15% discount. I sputtered loudly and they adjusted the final bill to our agreed-upon price.

So now I have hundreds of illegible business cards and no idea where to have them reprinted decently at a digestible price. Maybe I will wait till my next trip back to Italy and have them done by Mom-and-Pop. In eggshell of course . . . and perhaps this time I will request a watermark.

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Italy

USA

Business Cards

American Psycho

Culture



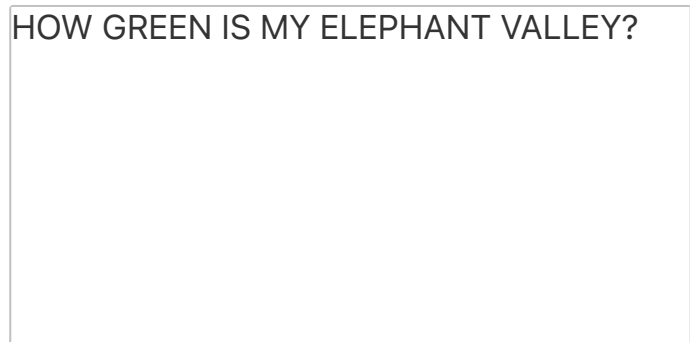
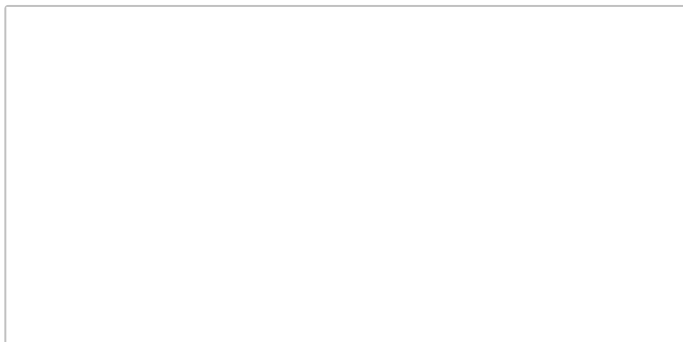
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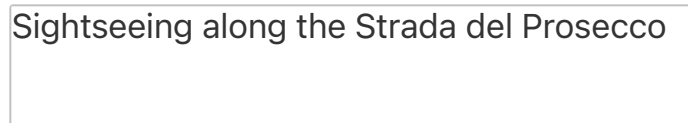
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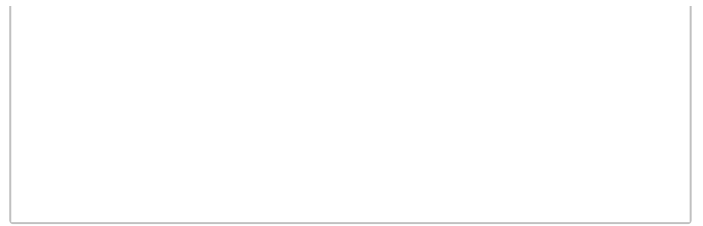
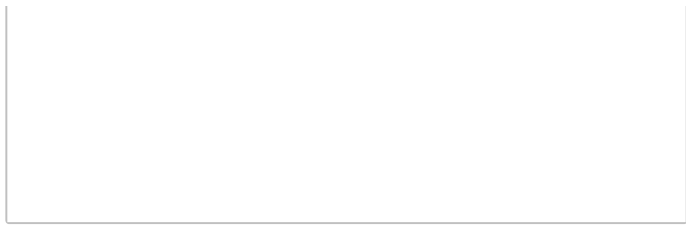
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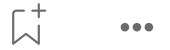
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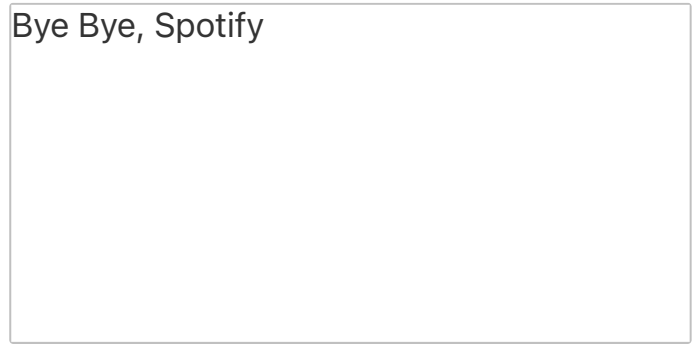
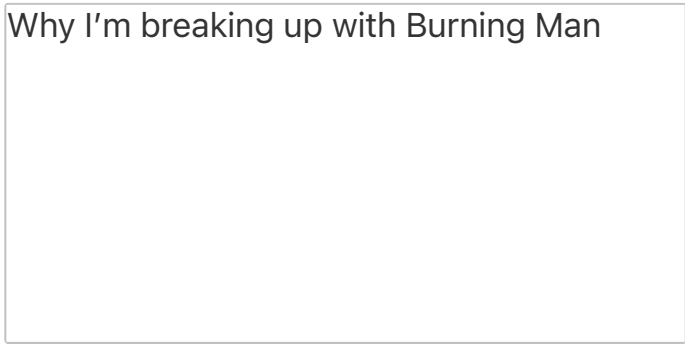
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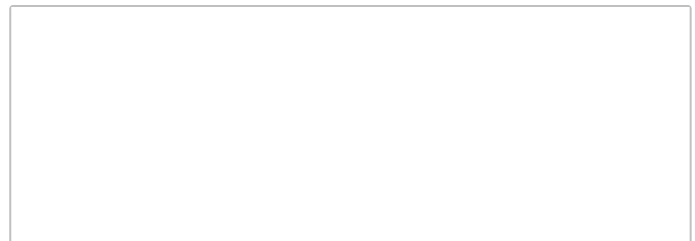
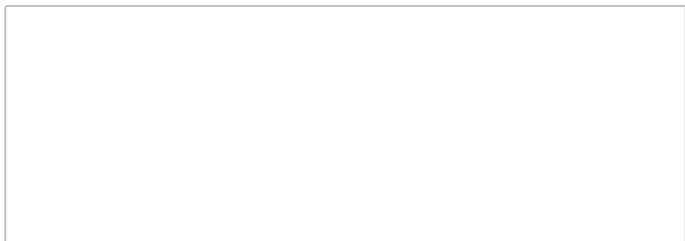
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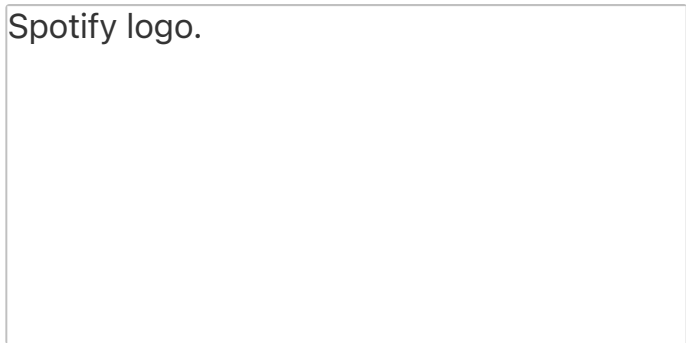
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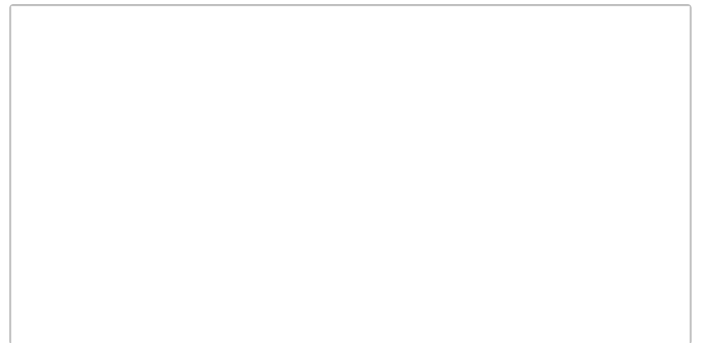
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