

## Venice, a hundred times more

Venice is so unique that there are more than a hundred in the world. It is so unrepeatable that they have made replicas of its canals, gondolas and gondoliers. They've even cloned its heart: the Doge's Palace, the bell tower and Rialto. But more often they have simply adopted the name and nothing else: Venezia, Venecia, Veneza, Venetia and so on. They did it mostly for sentimental reasons. But sometimes more trivially for money.

121 islands and islets, 417 bridges, more than 150 canals in a vast lagoon, Venice has always aroused admiration and curiosity for its majestic and mysterious uniqueness. "Ah, Venice! Magnificent city! A city that irresistibly fascinates cultured people, both for its history and for its current attractions," wrote Thomas Mann, at the beginning of the 20th century, when tourism was still for the few. After the two wars, "the bewitching and ambiguous beauty" of Venice, to quote Mann again, would attract increasing numbers of visitors, now in the millions. And it would also become the most imitated, copied and replicated place in the world: the city, its name, its architectural styles, its symbols and icons. The gondola first of all. Its places, Rialto above all.

Years ago, in 2007, a multi-author book - Welcome to Venice - was dedicated to the "hundred Venetias" that have sprung up here and there in the world, especially in the twentieth century and especially in the two Americas, to which, since then, have been added places of entertainment, theme parks, tacky replicas of Venice, such as the grandiose The Venetian in Las Vegas. In recent years, this phenomenon has been especially successful in the Far East, with the construction in Macao of a "twin" of The Venetian in Las Vegas and two theme parks in China and South Korea, to which must be added, in the Gulf, a floating city in Dubai, inspired by Venice. The gondola, on the other hand, can be found in the most diverse places in the world, on all continents.

Welcome to Venice (texts by Judith Stiles, Guido Moltedo, Alessandro Carrera, Rita Ciresi, Carlo Benucci, Elza Maria Das Neves Fraga, Enrique M. Butti, edited by Guido Moltedo) is now available in pdf on our magazine. It can be downloaded for free.

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