



MARCO TOSO BORELLA

BIOGRAPHY
OF AN ARTIST

1

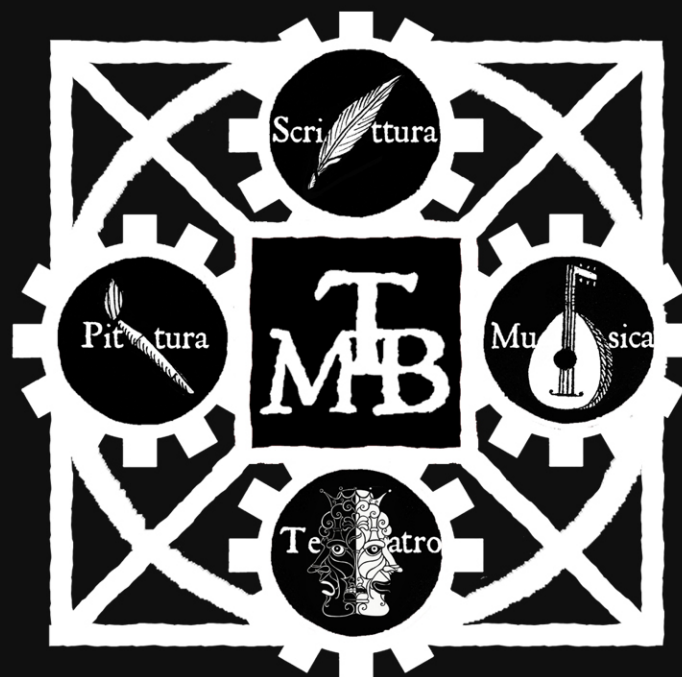
MASTER
MARCO
TOSO
BORELLA

p. 4

2

MARCO
TOSO
BORELLA
PAINTER

p. 16



3

MARCO
TOSO
BORELLA
WRITER

p. 54

4

MARCO
TOSO
BORELLA
MUSICIAN

p. 62

MASTER MARCO TOSO BORELLA

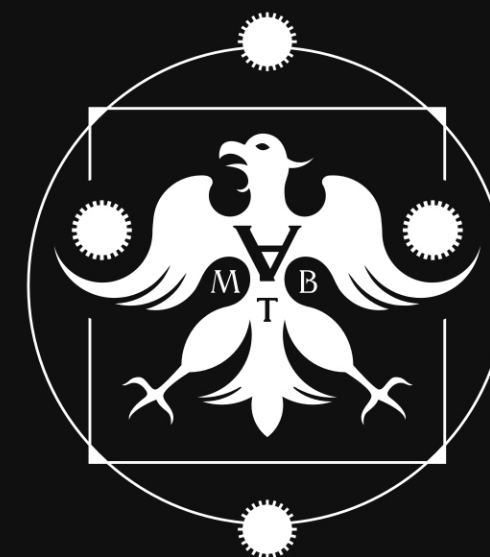
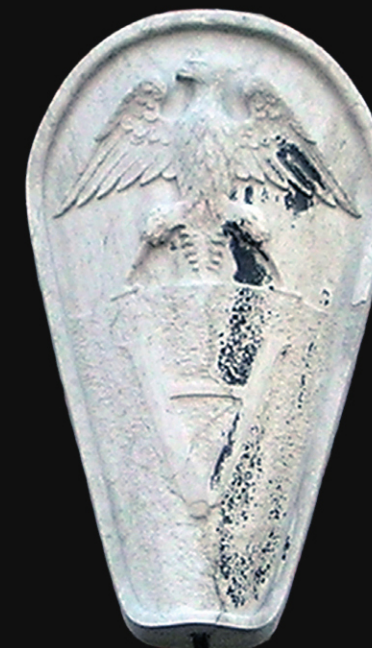
Marco Toso Borella is a 360-degree venetian artist: painter, writer, musician and popularizer historian. He was born and still lives in Murano, where as a "master glassmaker" he works as a painter on Murano glass in the continuity of ancient family traditions (more than 6 generations).

He is a composer, arranger, singer and director of the largest choir in Italy (and in Europe), counting more than 250 members. He is a writer of historical essays and novels, and a maximum expert of the history and art of his island. He is known by the nickname of "Leonardo of Venice" for the multiplicity of art forms in which he excels.



THE HISTORY OF THE TOSO BORELLA FAMILY FROM MURANO

The ancient Toso family (or Tosi: in ancient Venice, the surname was often "pluralized" or "feminized", as in Donna Tosa, *Lady Tosa*) has been present in Murano since the mid-14th century and is included in the "Libro d'Oro", or "Golden Book", the official register of the original families of the island, at the beginning of the 17th century.



Ancient Toso family
coats of arms



BELONGING TO THE NOBLE REGISTER WAS CONSIDERED A HIGHLY COVETED PRIVILEGE, SINCE IT ALLOWED THOSE WHO WERE REGISTERED THERE TO OFFICIALLY BELONG TO THE CITIZENSHIP OF MURANO, AND THUS BE ABLE TO EXCLUSIVELY EXERCISE THE ART OF GLASSMAKING, AS WELL AS PARTICIPATE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MAGNIFICENT COMMUNITY OF MURANO.

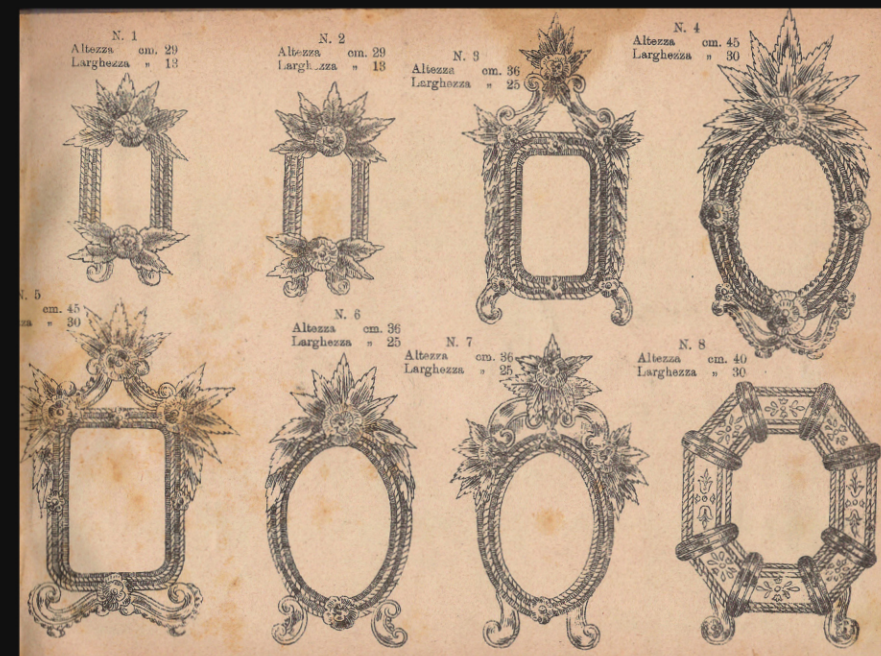
The Toso family distinguished itself in the public and artistic life of the city, offering valuable and prominent personalities to hold positions of responsibility, also in the ecclesiastical sphere. This is the case of Giovanbattista Toso, the priest of the parish of San Donato since the end of the 18th century.

The massive presence of the Toso, or Tosi, in such a small area as Murano, led to the birth of numerous and often colourful nicknames, in order to differentiate the various branches of the family. "Borella" is one of them.



Giovanbattista Toso

THE TOSO BORELLAS DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES IN THE ART OF PAINTING ON GLASS AND IN THE MANUFACTURE OF THE ELABORATE FRAMES OF THE FAMOUS VENETIAN MIRRORS.



Taken from
the mirror catalogue
by Angelo Toso
Borella (1844 - 1920)

Towards the end of the 19th century, there was the rebirth of the Murano glassmaking art, which declined considerably after the Napoleonic and Habsburg dominions. Several Murano masters dedicated themselves to the re-discovery of the technique of the enamel decoration on glass, such as Giovanni Albertini, Leopoldo Bearzotti, Antonio Tosi. Among them, Francesco Toso Borella (1846-1905) deserves a prominent place.

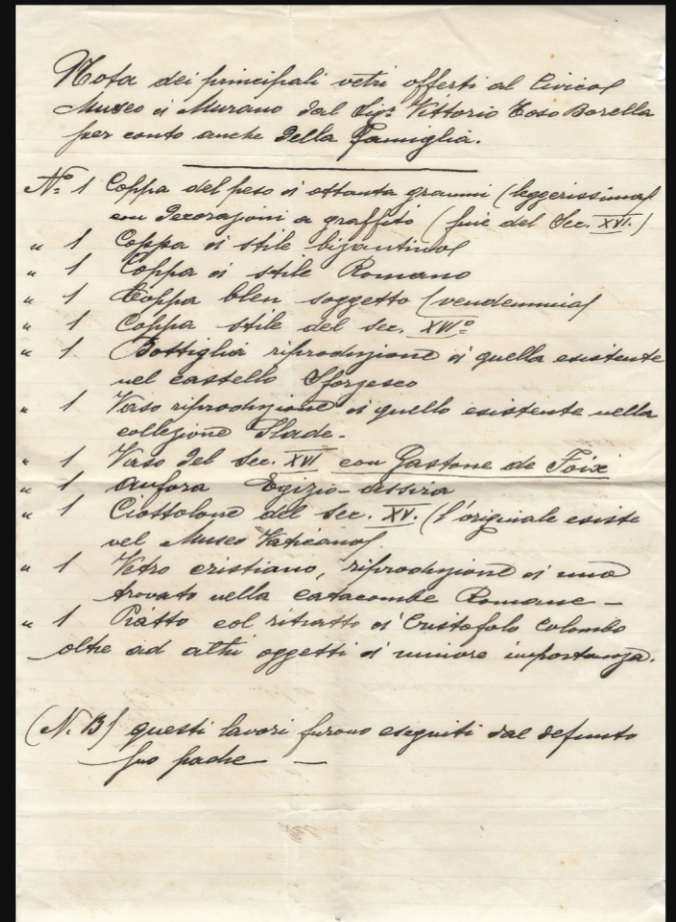
Francesco, self-taught, in 1873 donated to the Glass Museum a wonderful plate decorated with enamels. From 1888, he collected international awards and rewards and created on his island perhaps the most beautiful decorated glass of his time. In this context should be mentioned some red-violet cups decorated with enamels and gold leaf graffiti, two of which are still preserved at the Murano Glass Museum. They are signed following the typical style of the Toso Borella family: with the artist's initials F(rancesco). T(oso). B(orella).

In 1900, Francesco participated in the Universal Exposition in Paris, gaining a recognition that earned him fame and honours. His masterpieces were appreciated all over the world, on par with those of the great Galles, Daum and Lalique.

In 1901, he decorated for the Royal House of Savoy 1100 glasses in a floral style that, in honour of the client, will forever be called "Regina Margherita" (*Queen Margherita*, with "margherita" meaning "daisy" in Italian). Thanks to the fame of the family, the highest authorities started to commission to the Toso Borellas works of great prestige. The typical style of Francesco's decoration differed from the contemporary ones in the great refinement of the colours and the delicacy of the lines. Francesco reproduced a decorated medieval cup found in pieces among the rubble of the St. Mark bell tower collapsed in 1902, which was presented at the World Exhibition of St. Louis, U.S.A., in 1903.

It was Vittorio (1878–1915) who worthily followed his father's footsteps. In fact, he was an highly appreciated creator of vases and glasses in the Art Nouveau style, which he continued to sign with the initials V. T. B. or V. T. Borella.

The glass "Regina Margherita di Savoia" (Francesco Toso Borella) and on the right the portrait of Vittorio Toso Borella (1878 - 1915)



THE FAME OF THE TOSO BORELLA FAMILY BROUGHT CARICATURES, ARTICLES AND PORTRAITS IN THE NEWSPAPERS OF THE TIME, TOGETHER WITH SEVERAL ADVERTISEMENTS OF THE "VITTORIO TOSO BORELLA" COMPANY.



Above: "Glass of the Bell Tower" (probably Vittorio Toso Borella)



We must not forget Rosalia, Linda, Alice and Amalia Toso Borella, Vittorio's sisters, skilled painters who also distinguished themselves in the glassmaking art of the family.



Vetri dipinti in smalto

≡ Vittorio Toso-Borella ≡

MURANO

MASSIME ONORIFICENZE A TUTTE LE
ESPOSIZIONI MONDIALI E NAZIONALI

SPECIALITÀ:

SERVIZI DA TAVOLA ORNATI
CON QUALSIASI STEMMA O CIFRA

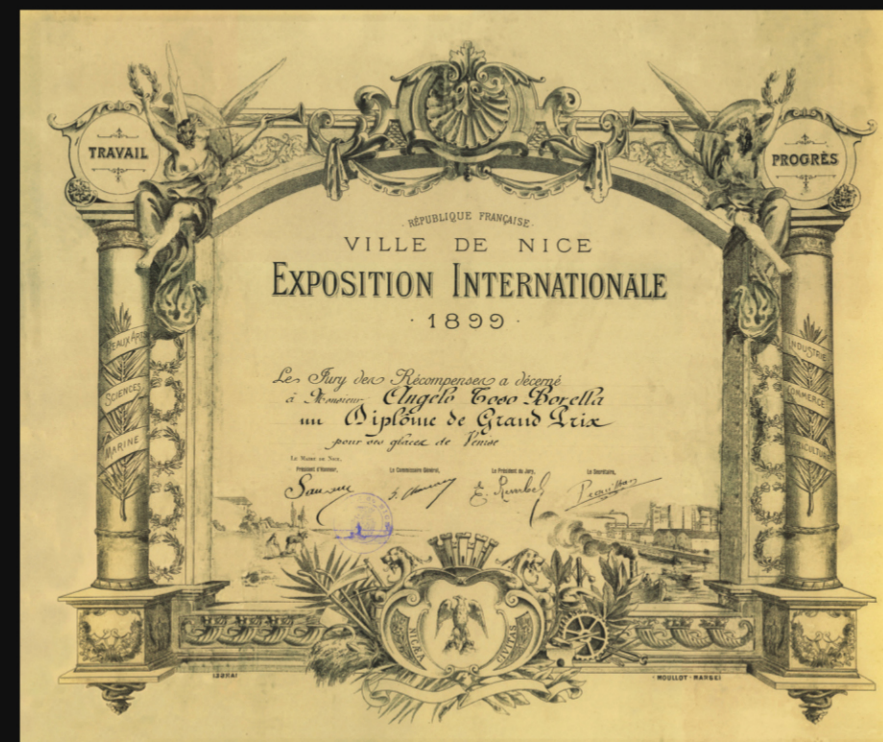
DA ALMANACCO VENETO ANNO 1914
VENEZIA TIPOGRAFIA DEL GAZZETTINO PP. 158-159



Above:
Portrait of Giosuè
Carducci made of gold
and enamels on glass
plate, work of V.T.B.;
advertising of V.T.B.
Company. On the left:
Venice Pavilion at the
Ethnographic Exhibition
in Rome in 1911;
caricature of Vittorio T.B
from the magazine "Sior
Tonin Bonagrazia"



After the second World War, the Toso Borella family's artistic glass vein seems to weaken in favour of the family's other distinctive feature: the art of carpenters, or "marangoni" in the Venetian language. The activity is therefore more pragmatically oriented toward the construction of packaging and wooden mirror frames, which also received international awards.



Francesco Toso-Borella, vivente. Artista eccezionale sotto ogni aspetto. Fece risorgere l'arte del grafito d'oro sul vetro



Francesco Toso-Borella.

e delle decorazioni in smalti. Le sue opere adornano le tavole e i salotti dei personaggi più eminenti e dei palazzi più sontuosi



Diplomas and Italian pavilions in international exhibitions where the Toso Borellas were celebrated



On the left:
"Alexander
and Hiddenburg"

MARCO TOSO BORELLA PAINTER

MARCO TOSO BORELLA, BORN IN MURANO IN 1962, IS THE WORTHY HEIR OF THE FAMILY TRADITION IN THE FIELD OF GLASS PAINTING.

From a very young age he showed a particular talent in drawing, his real passion. After he became aware of the family's artistic tradition, he soon felt the need to apply his skills to glass, a material that fascinated him and that he learned to know closely, even working in a furnace. He thus began to study, self-taught, the techniques of applying glass enamels and especially the one of engraving the 24 K gold leaf, soon becoming, despite his young age, a true master and an authoritative professional of the art of Murano.

Today he is internationally considered the greatest exponent of the ancient artistic technique of graffiti on gold leaf applied to Murano glass, for which he is also mentioned in the volume "Artists techniques and Materials" published in 2006 by the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the only living artist of the book, alongside the likes of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Giotto.

His works are preserved in private collections all over the world and also on display in the Murano Glass Museum.

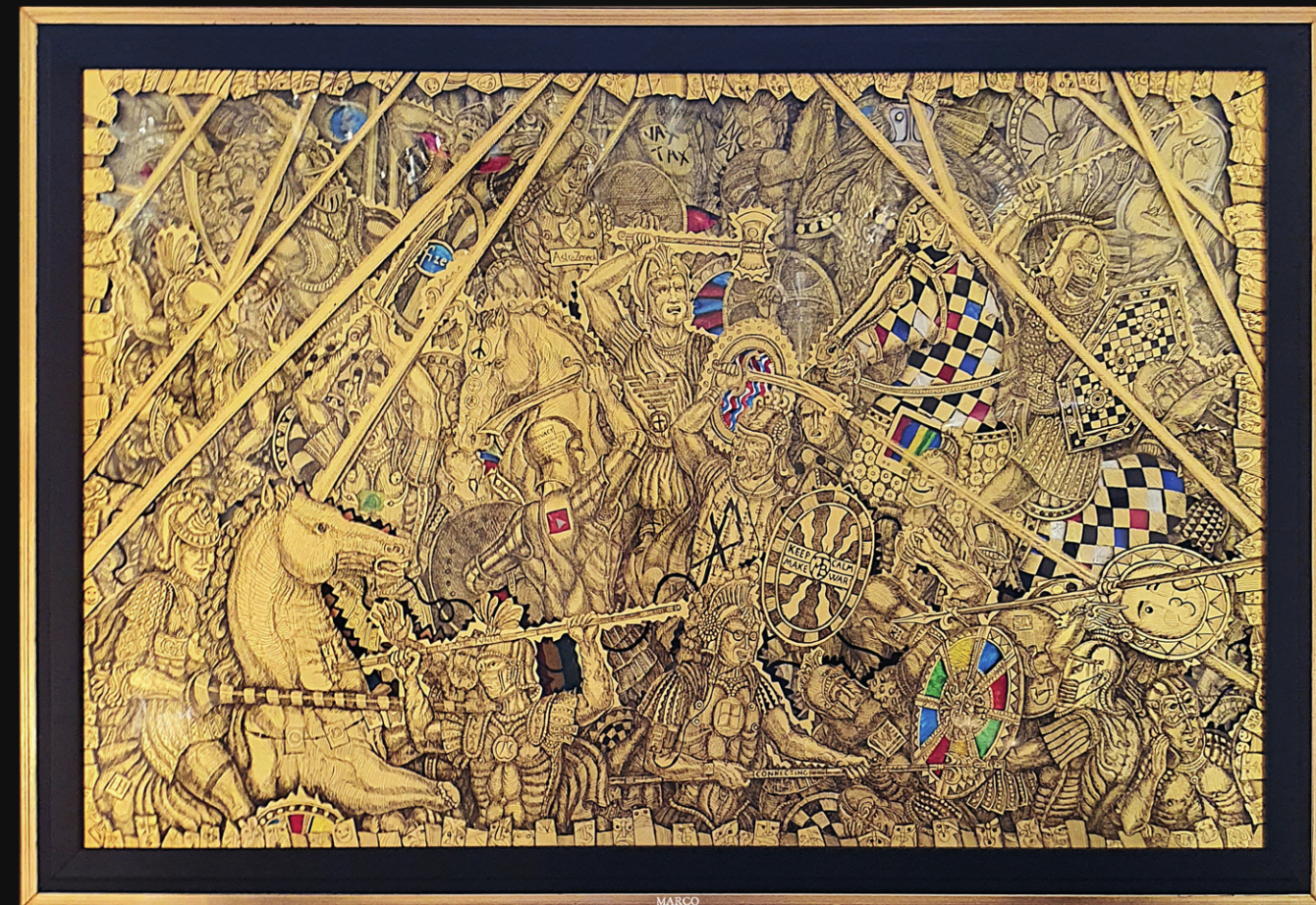
On the right:
"Kaos"

WITH HIS CREATIVITY
AND TALENT, MARCO
TOSO BORELLA HAS
BEEN ABLE TO GIVE
AN ANCIENT ART
A CONTEMPORARY



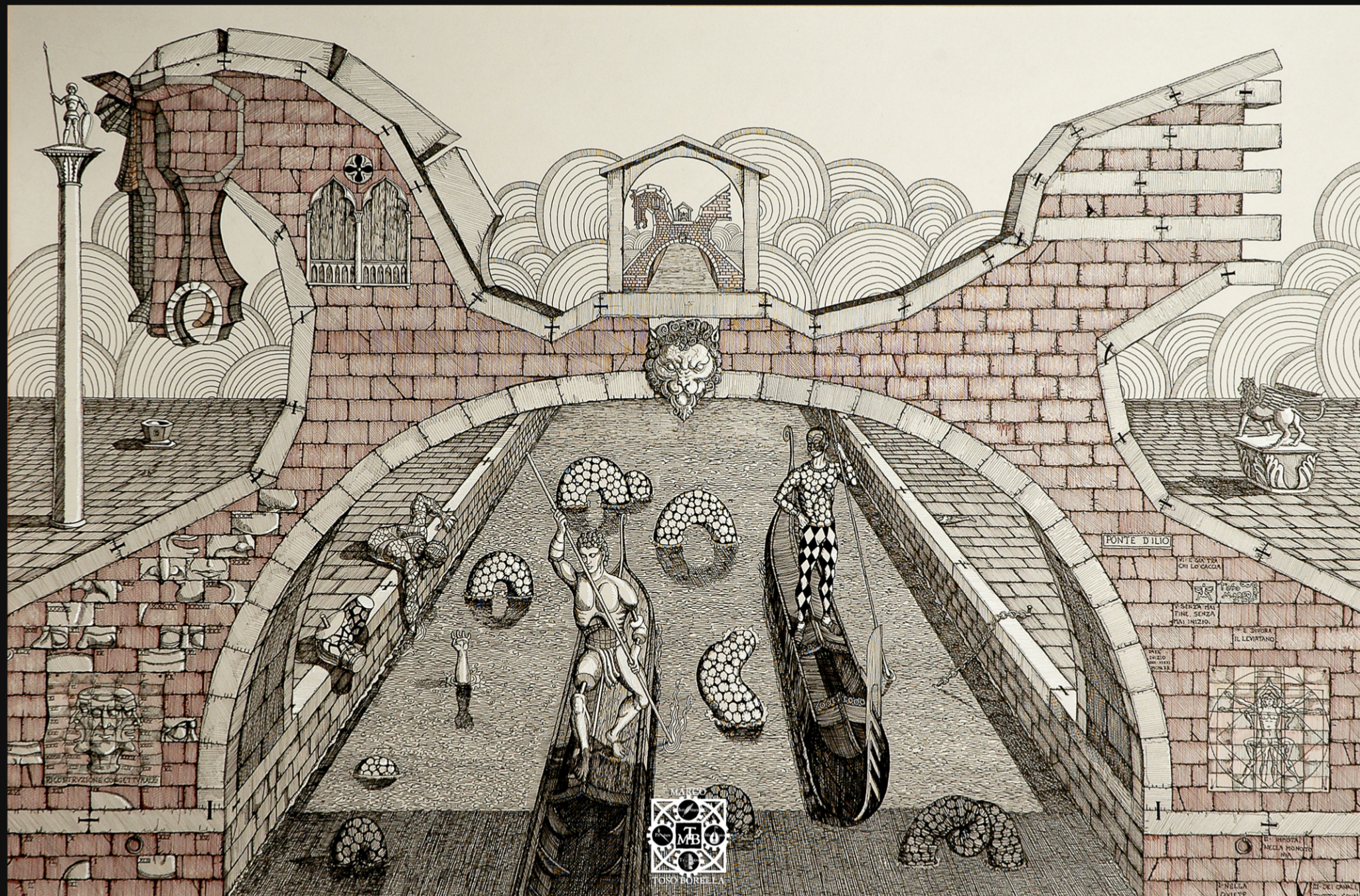
CONNOTATION
THAT IS COMPLETELY
NEW AND UNIQUE
IN ITS KIND.





"Conessioni"





"Elementi"



"Fra(m)menti"



"Idealicaro"



"Costruzione
di Adamo"

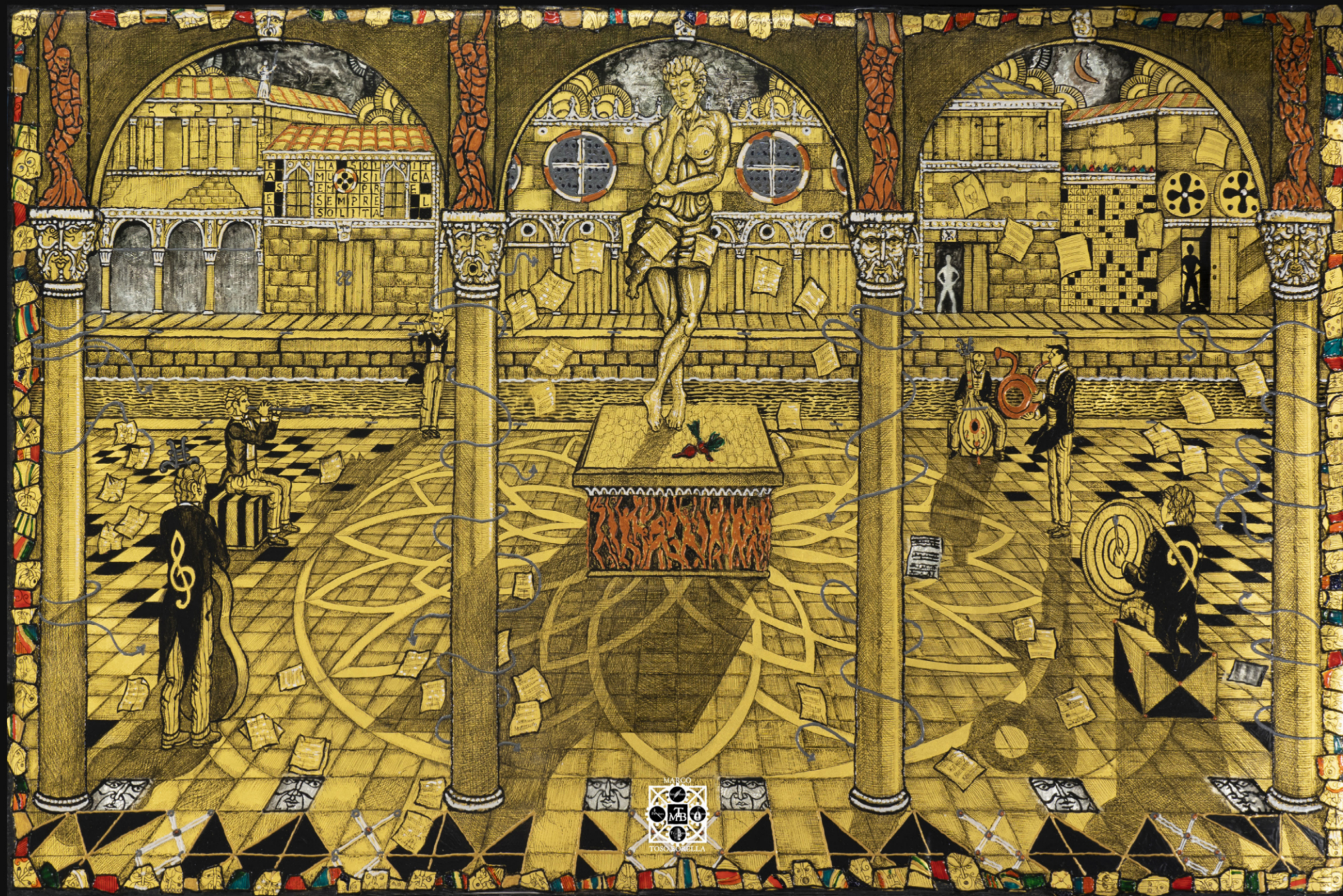




"Atlantide"



"Concerto
di Immacolato
Concetto"





"Ascesa"

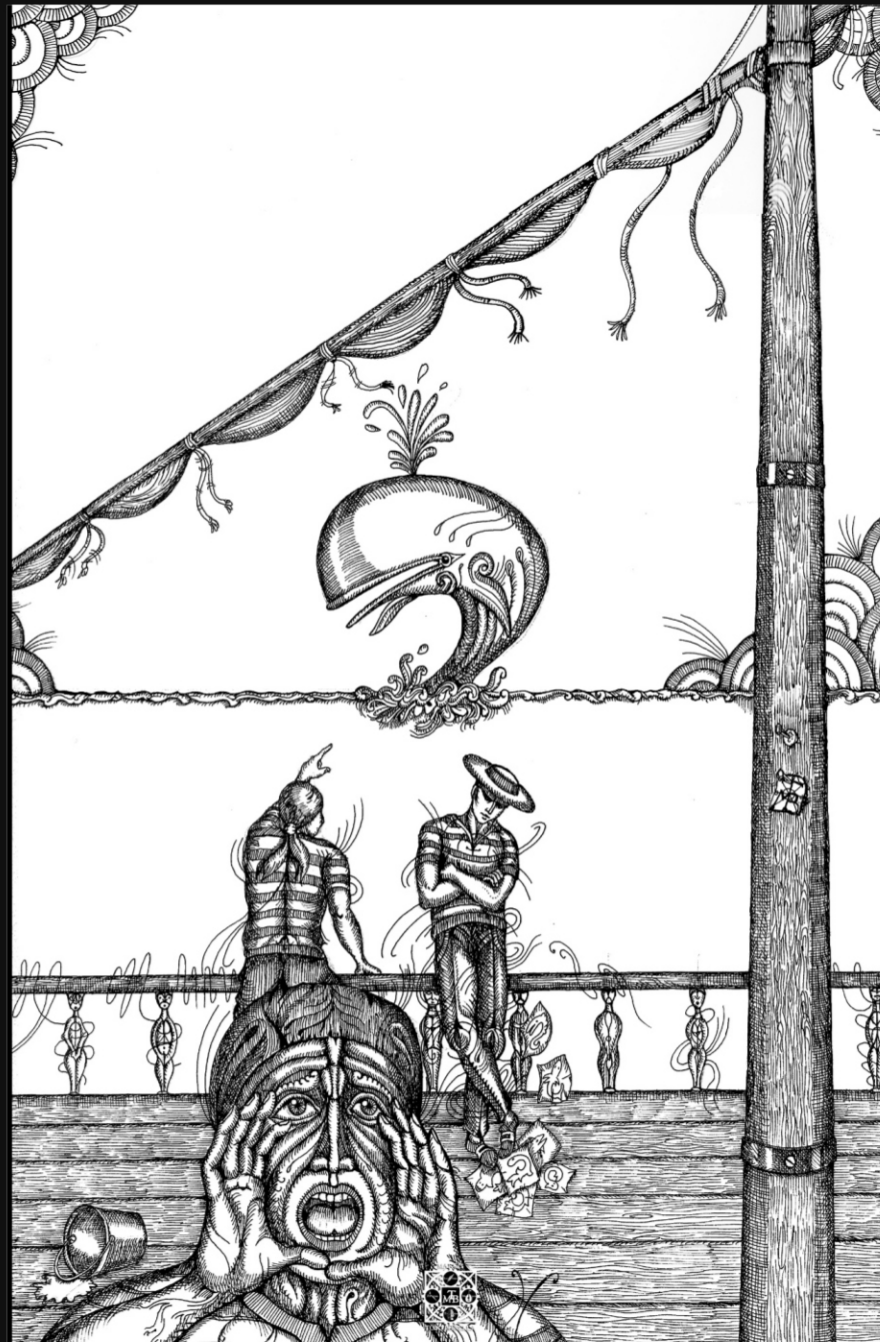




"Fase Zero"

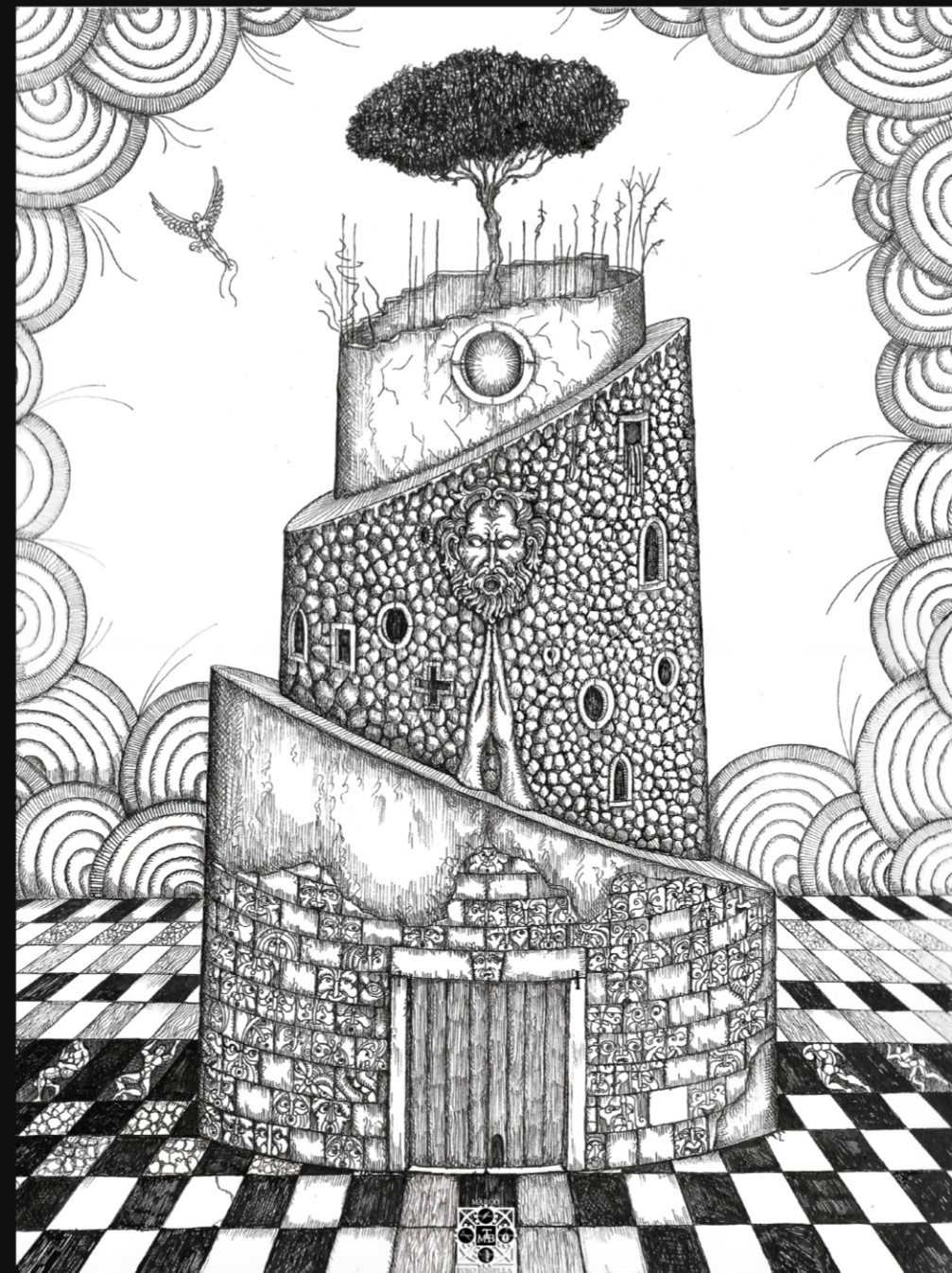
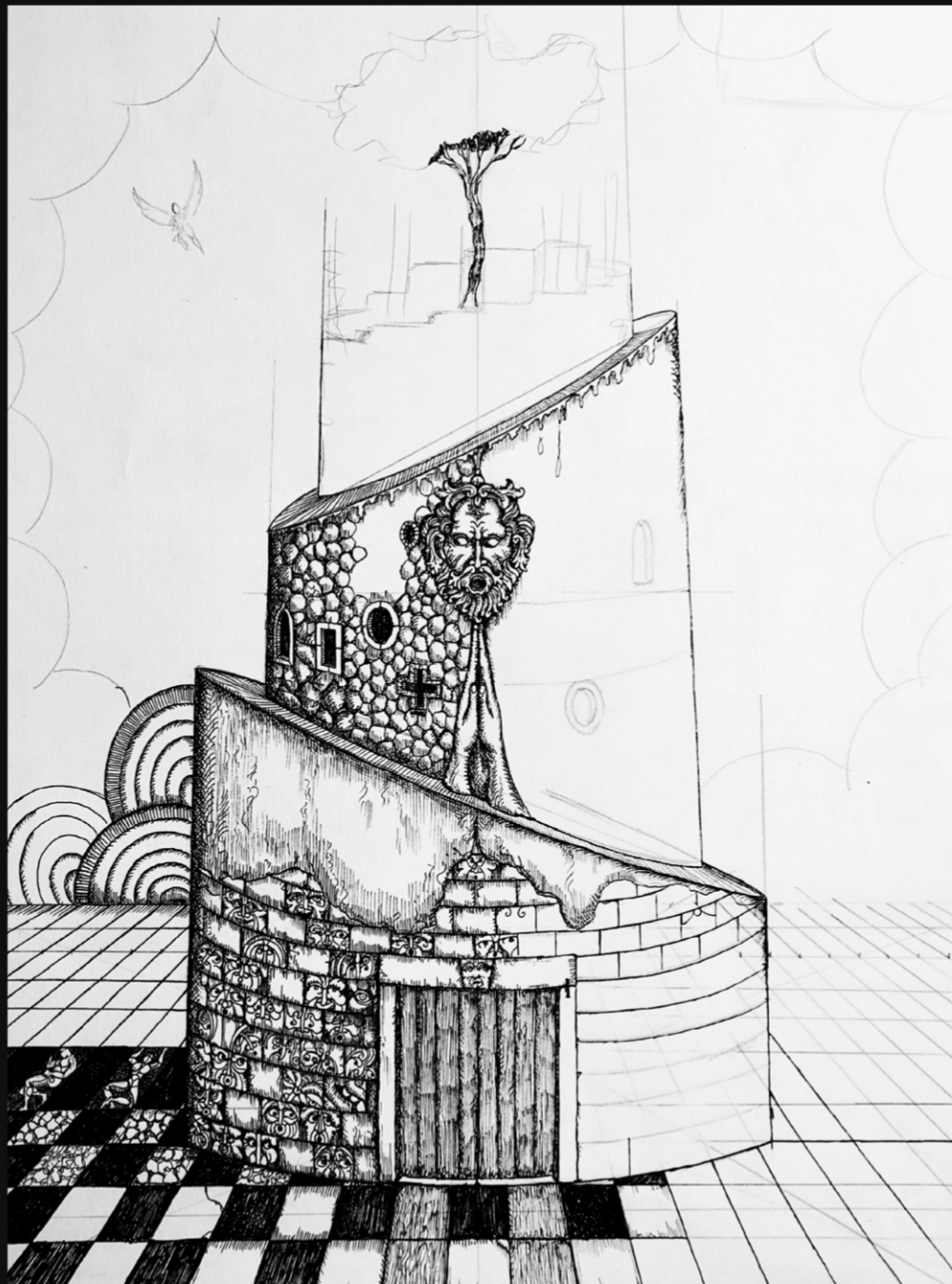


"Scacchi
- Cavalli e Alferi"

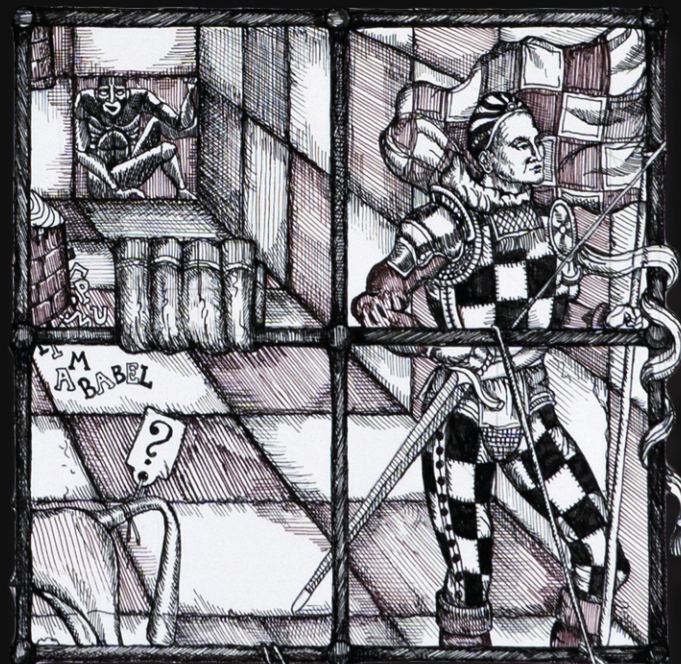


"Looking
for Moby"

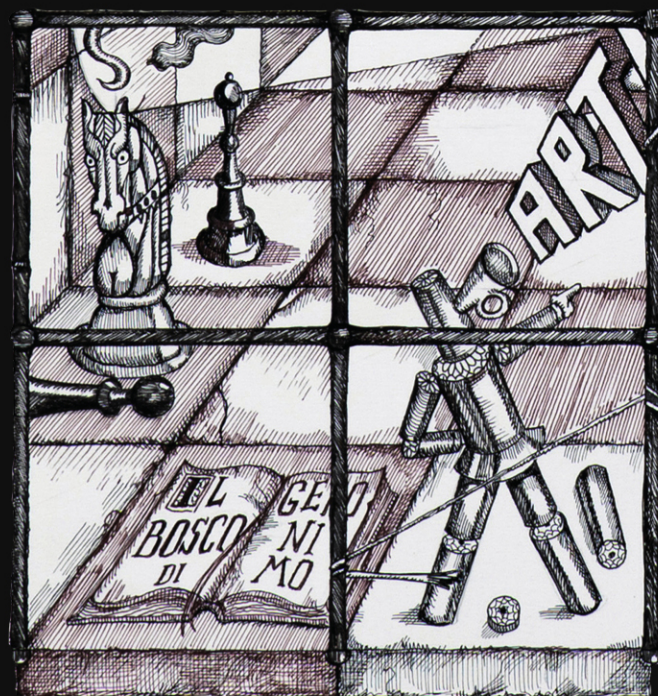




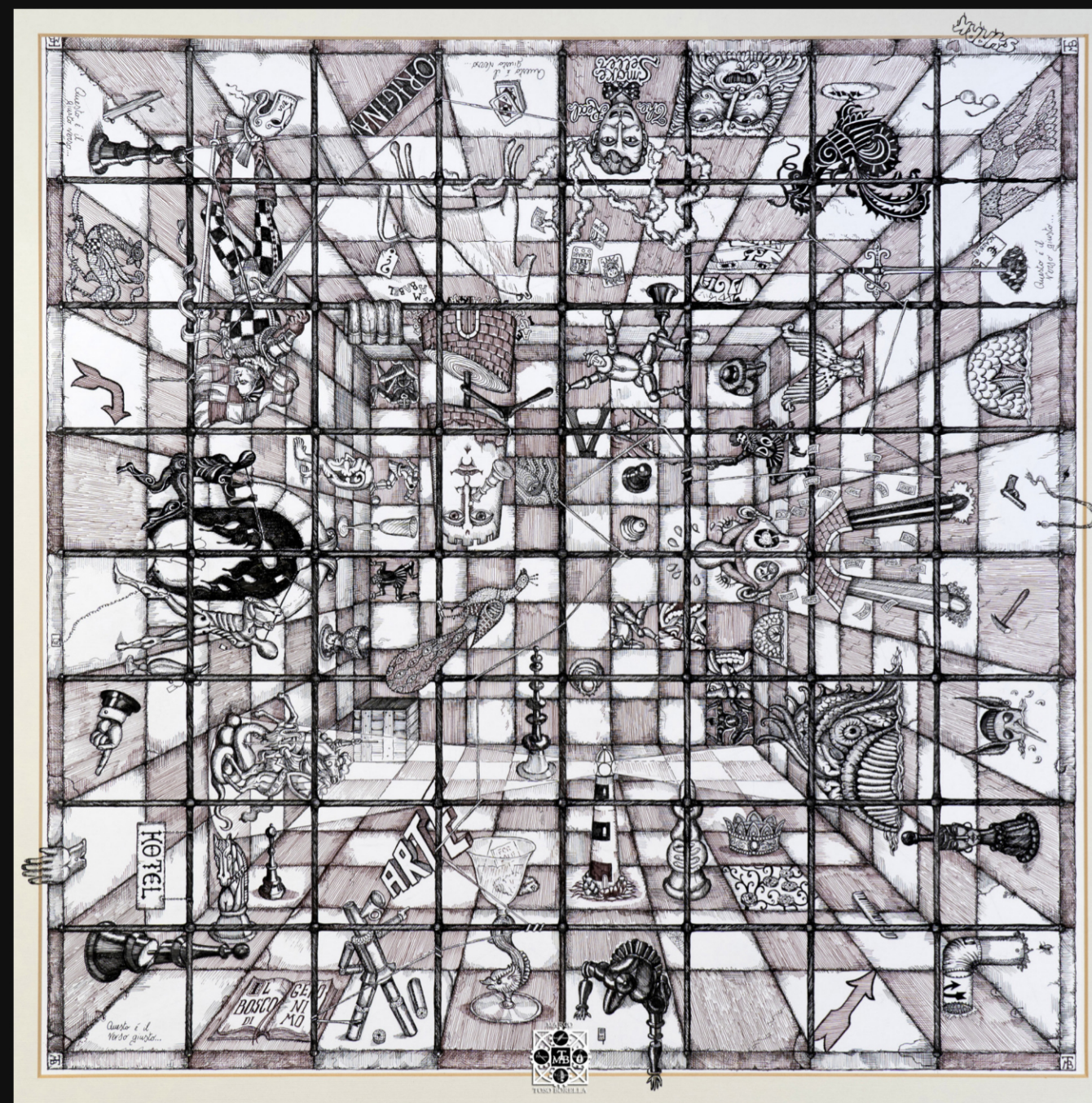
"Babel"



Details
of "Il Bosco
di Geronimo"



On the right
"Il Bosco
di Geronimo"

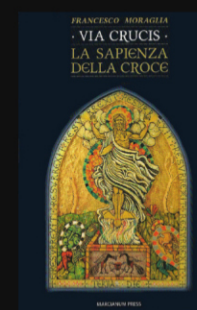


Photos of the
Way of the Cross





Since November 2016, in the Basilica of Santa Maria and San Donato in the island of Murano, is on display his **Way of the Cross** in glass, a masterpiece that is the only one of its kind in the world, consisting of 15 glass icons decorated with graffiti on gold leaf and enamels, depicting the 14 traditional stations of the Cross plus a fifteenth depicting the Resurrection.

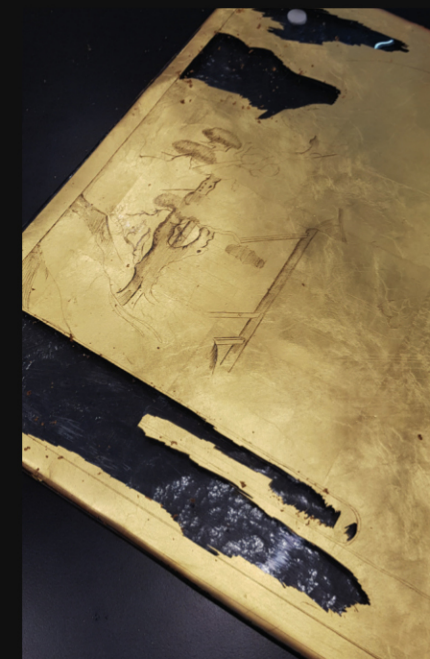


The images of the Way of the Cross in Murano Glass were chosen by the Patriarch of Venice Francesco Moraglia to illustrate his publication "Via Crucis. La sapienza della croce" (Way of the Cross: the wisdom of the cross) (Marcianum Press, 2019).



During Lent of 2021, his stations of the Cross accompanied a weekly broadcast of the Way of the Cross on TV2000, the television of the Italian Episcopal Conference, from the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Holy Stairs in Rome.





For a Japanese private client, he created a majestic artwork, the **Kansai Project**, consisting of 20 Murano glass plates, measuring 75 x 50 cm (29,5 x 19,5 inches), decorated according to the ancient technique of graffiti on gold leaf, and faithfully reproducing an ancient Japanese work of the 10th century inspired by "The Tale of the bamboo cutter", which is considered the oldest Japanese fairy tale.



MARCO TOSO BORELLA WRITER

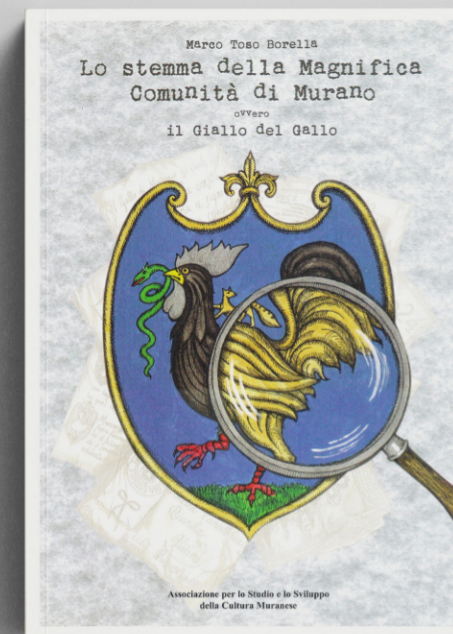
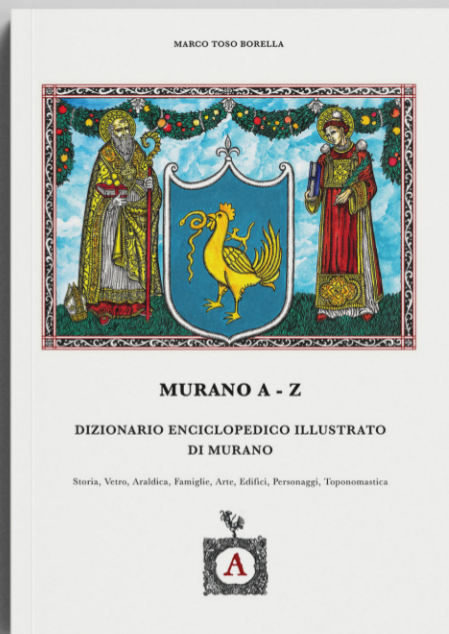
AS A WRITER AND SCHOLAR, HE HAS PUBLISHED HISTORICAL ESSAYS, SHORT STORIES AND NOVELS ACCOMPANIED BY A SPECIALLY DESIGNED GRAPHIC PART.

Among his most appreciated creations are two narrative works: the collection of short stories inspired by the world of chess **“Padroni e Pedine (scacchi a chi?)”** (Masters and pawns - chess to who?) (Ed. Supernova 2005), from which was taken a theatrical performance in which the author interprets the different stories that constitutes the volume, and the very successful uchronia novel **“Venezia impossibile 1989: il Serenissimo Principe fa sapere che...”**, (Ed. Supernova 2003), now in its third reprint, translated into English (“Impossible Venice - 1989: The Most Serene Prince Lets It Be Known That...”) and which was made into the movie “Venezia Impossibile”, presented at the Venice International Film Festival in 2013.

In 2020, he published **“#FASEZERO. Tutta la Verità su Venezia in nove capitoli”** (“PhaseZero: all the truth on Venice in nine chapters”) (Ed Supernova), a provocative and disenchanted political pamphlet on post-covid Venice.

His passion for the study of the sources and his activity as a historical analyst led him to hold cycles of thematic conferences in collaboration with the City of Venice and to publish essays and monographs such as **“Stemmi di Famiglie Muranesi”**, **“Lo Stemma della magnifica comunità di Murano”** which are about the coats of arms of original families from the island of Murano, and **“I Dossali di San Zuanne... a percorrere la meraviglia”**.

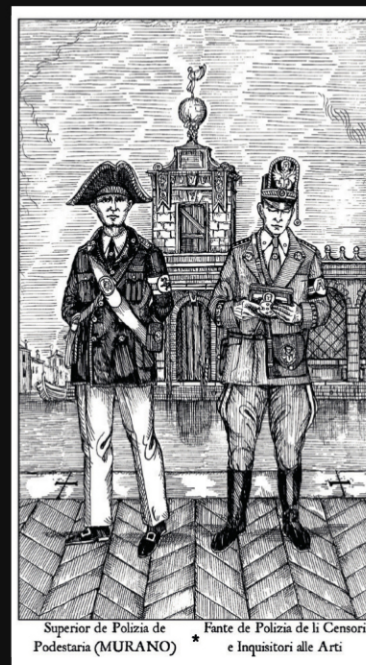






★ Il Serenissimo Principe del Veneto Dominio, Doge
ANSELMO BIABERINI - CXXXIII ★

As an illustrator he has collaborated in the publications of famous Italian authors such as “Le aventure de Pinocchio a Venexia in venexian” by Piero Zanotto, (“Pinocchio’s adventures in Venice in the venetian dialect”) (ed. Helvetia 2001), the novel “Un elefante a Venezia” (“An elephant in Venice”) by Luigi Rizzo (ed. Helvetia 2002), and “I muranesi nel settecento” (“The people from Murano in 1700”) by Silvano Tagliapietra.

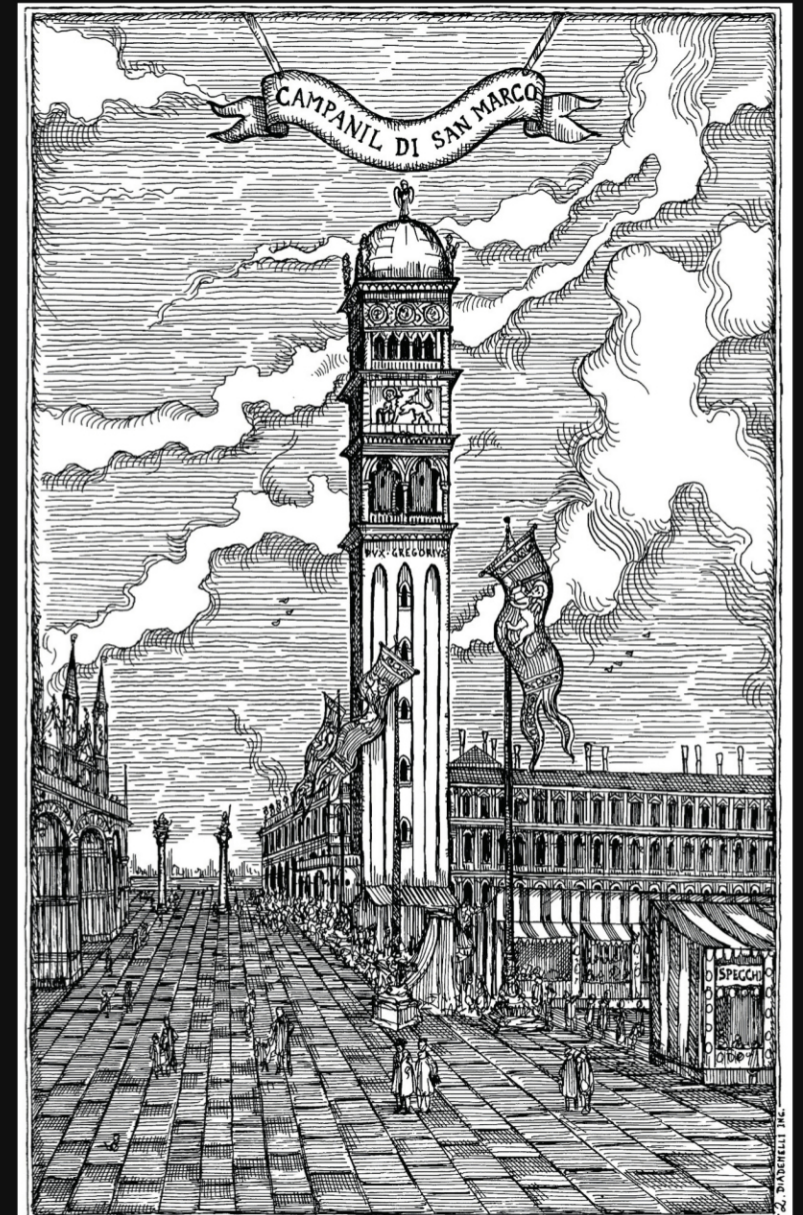


Superior de Polizia de
Podestaria (MURANO) *
Fante de Polizia de li Censori
e Inquisitori alle Arti

In 2022 he presented the publication of the first volume of “Murano A-Z. Dizionario Enciclopedico Illustrato di Murano” (Encyclopedic illustrated Dictionary of Murano”), a veritable encyclopedia on the history, the glass, the heraldry, the families, the art, the

buildings, the characters and the toponymy relating to the island of Murano with researches, texts, reconstructions, maps and illustrations curated and made entirely by Marco Toso Borella, who represents in this context the maximum expert of the history and the art of his native island.

He is often engaged in public lectures and presentations in which he talks about of the lost artistic and cultural heritage of Venice and in particular of Murano, such as the **Scuola Grande San Giovanni Battista di Murano**, which is now lost and of which only some fragments remain.



VENETIA • CAMPANIL DELLA CHIESA DVCAL DI S.MARCO • TAV. II

MARCO TOSO BORELLA MUSICIAN

HE HAS SUNG WITH SEVERAL POLYPHONIC ENSEMBLES AND CURRENTLY CONDUCTS THE TWO MOST FAMOUS CHORAL ENSEMBLES OF THE VENETIAN TERRITORY: THE VOCAL SKYLINE AND THE BIG VOCAL ORCHESTRA.





The Big Vocal Orchestra is the largest vocal orchestra in Europe with more than 200 members, for which he manages not only the direction but also the staging, the lyrics, the vocal arrangements and the choreography.

Both ensembles have performed in the most prestigious theatres and churches of the Veneto region, offering performances of voices, music, lights and movements that are regularly sold out. Among all, it is worth mentioning the concert-show with a public of more than 5000 people, in which the 300 voices of the Big Vocal Orchestra, based on the Maestro's idea, performed in St. Mark's square, exceptionally standing in the Loggia and under the portico of the Ducal Palace (28th of December 2019).

In 2019, following the **exceptional high tide that hit Venice on November 12th**, he composed a piece of music entitled "Mermaids" inspired by the sound of the sirens ("sirena" in Italian means both "siren" and "mermaid") that in the city of Venice announce the imminent arrival of the high tide, the "acqua alta".



During the lockdown of spring 2020, he made with Vocal Skyline an interpretation of the song "Do you hear the people sing" from the musical "Les Miserables", assembling the voices of the choir members who sang each from their home and offering a tribute to the city of Venice.

Since September 2020, he conceived for his choral ensembles, Big Vocal Orchestra and Vocal Skyline, a unique online rehearsal system, through which, during the pandemic, he trained remotely his more than 200 choristers. Since 2021, he is a member of the National Association of Italian Choir Directors (ANCDI, Associazione Nazionale Direttori di Coro Italiani).

On April 25th 2022, two years after the last official performance on the stage of the Goldoni Theatre in Venice, he proposed, for the first time ever in that prestigious location, a concert concept belonging to the **ancient Venetian tradition of the "flying choirs"**, a duet between two choirs, with the simultaneous participation of both his choral formations, the Vocal Skyline and the Big Vocal Orchestra, part on stage and part in the gallery, thus offering a new contemporary post-covid interpretation of this ancient tradition.

He is the creator and artistic director of the event La Voce Grande di Venezia (The Big Voice of Venice), which on the 25th of April 2023 performed a concert with over 200 voices from the Big Vocal

Orchestra and Vocal Skyline, distributed in 10 stages in 10 Scuole Grandi of Venice (prestigious historic buildings that were the location of ancient confraternities or sodality institutions),

which for the first time in history, were involved together in a single artistic and cultural initiative that allowed more than a thousand spectators to access these places in an exceptional way.



AS A CITIZEN, HE IS COMMITTED TO THE PROMOTION OF THE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF VENICE AND MURANO WITH SEVERAL ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS TRANSVERSAL TO THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF ART THAT HE MASTERS. THE RESULT IS A CONTINUOUS DIALOG BETWEEN THE PUBLIC, THE INSTITUTIONS, THE PLACES AND THE MEMORY IN WHICH HIS ART REPRESENTS A “LOFT” WITHOUT DEFINED BOUNDARIES OR LIMITATIONS.

The Toso Family is registered
in the "Golden Book of Murano" since 1605



www.facebook.com/MarcoTosoBorella
www.instagram.com/marcotosoborella/
<https://www.youtube.com/@marcotosoborella9392>

www.marcotosoborella.it