

## **A che ora chiude Venezia**

Venice the city is open 24/7, bettering Disneyland as the always-on amusement park, ready to be brought back home in trinkets and pictures, ready to offer boutique hotels, pizza slices and kebabs. Churches readily dispense entrance tickets, gondolas their musical rides, and bridges are belvederes to snap made-in-China carnival masks. And, as in amusement parks the world over, at sunset you can hear the question buzzing in everyone's mind: what are the opening hours? At what time does everything close?

So, what happens to a city that has its inhabitants vacuumed out, and is injected with tourists? What is left of the public spaces? And what about the private, if houses are homes no more?

Venice is at the ghating line of Europe's displaced cities, of layered and historical communities whose centers have been joyfully popped out under the pressure of mobile wealth. Living cities that then become museums, shopping malls, grand hotels, and plastic mementoes.

If the call is for the kitsch, the exotic, and the picturesque, what is left of the soul, the character, and the identity of a city?

Capturing this transformation will capture the future of all our cities. This is why we juxtapose text and images – the language of literature and that of photography, to try to unveil the face behind the mask, here where it happens faster and first, here where the question, political more than geographical, is: Where am I?

I have worked together with Italian writer Caterina Serra on the idea of a city that is depopulated, closed off and reduced to an architectural landscape, without focusing, however, on the undeniable beauty of Venice, on the picture postcard we all recognize. The urban landscape that both the photos and the text speak of is one that depicts an absence of communities, of inhabitants, of used and shared public spaces. And it is a testament to the sense of emptiness and loss of an entire society. The question that most recurs in the streets is: "Where are we?" Not only geographically, but also philosophically, socially, politically