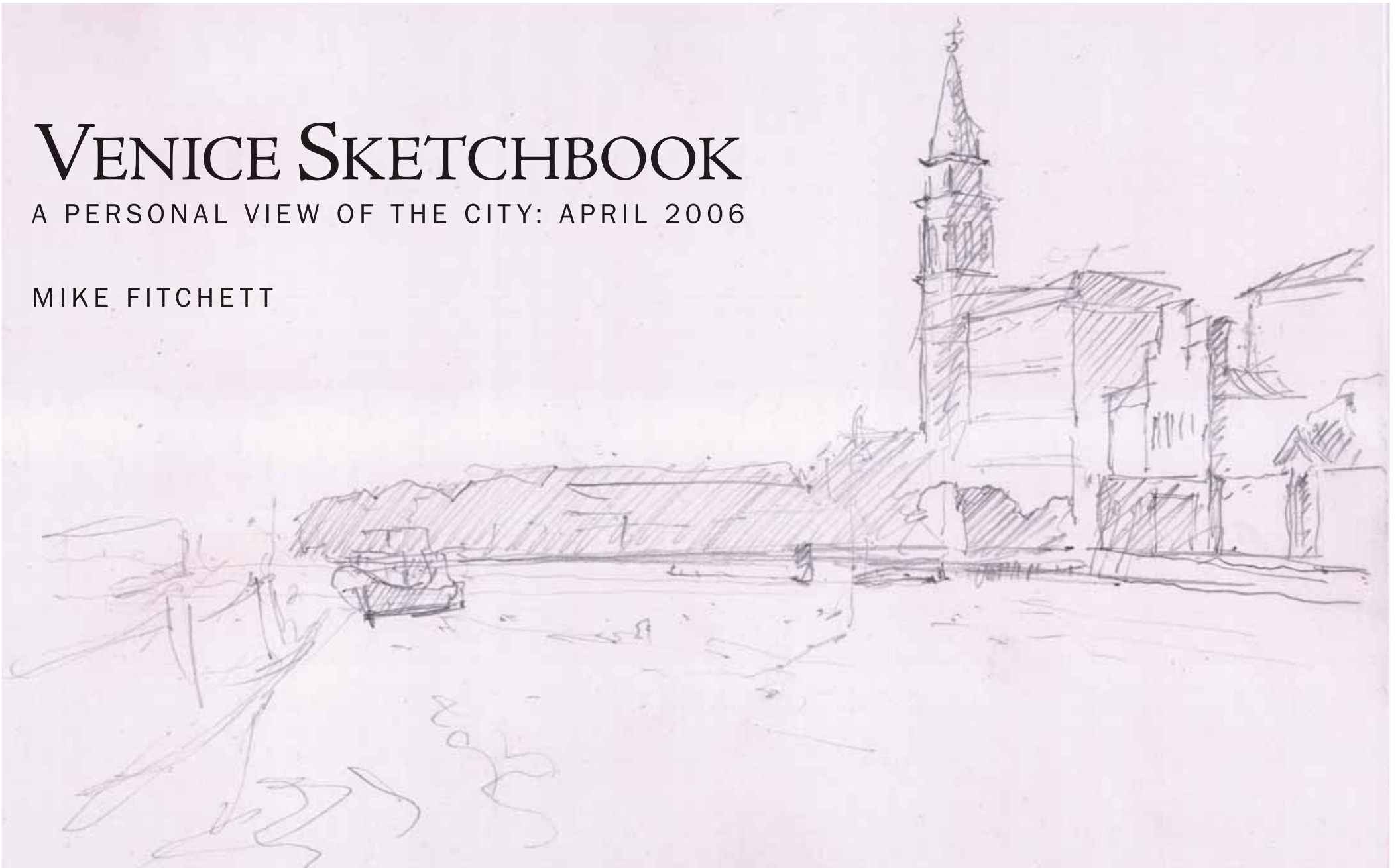


# VENICE SKETCHBOOK

A PERSONAL VIEW OF THE CITY: APRIL 2006

MIKE FITCHETT





## INTRODUCTION

This is a personal record of just one week in a city with potential for a lifetime of artistic exploration.

Venice is a city like nowhere else on the planet. It is a city that charms, intrigues, delights and infuriates. Once hooked by its unique architecture and character, it is of little surprise that it has given birth to and attracted so many artists over the centuries.

The inevitable sense of having just scratched the surface of pictorial potential remains, despite this not being my first visit. This is definitely a sketchbook of “work in progress”.



## ARCHED PASSAGES

Covered thoroughfares provide enclosed spaces which give a framed view of bridges, buildings and reflections. They heighten the already sharp sense of perspective.





## SANTA MARIA DEI MIRACOLI

A remarkable church of glistening marble, which despite being virtually hidden has a wide variety of interesting viewpoints.



## MIRACOLI, EARLY MORNING LIGHT

Viewed from the bridge approaching from Calle Larga Giacinto Gallina. People hurry to work along the shadowed street as the angle described by the sunlight arcs across the facade of the jewel-box church.

Pastel, begun on location, completed in the studio.





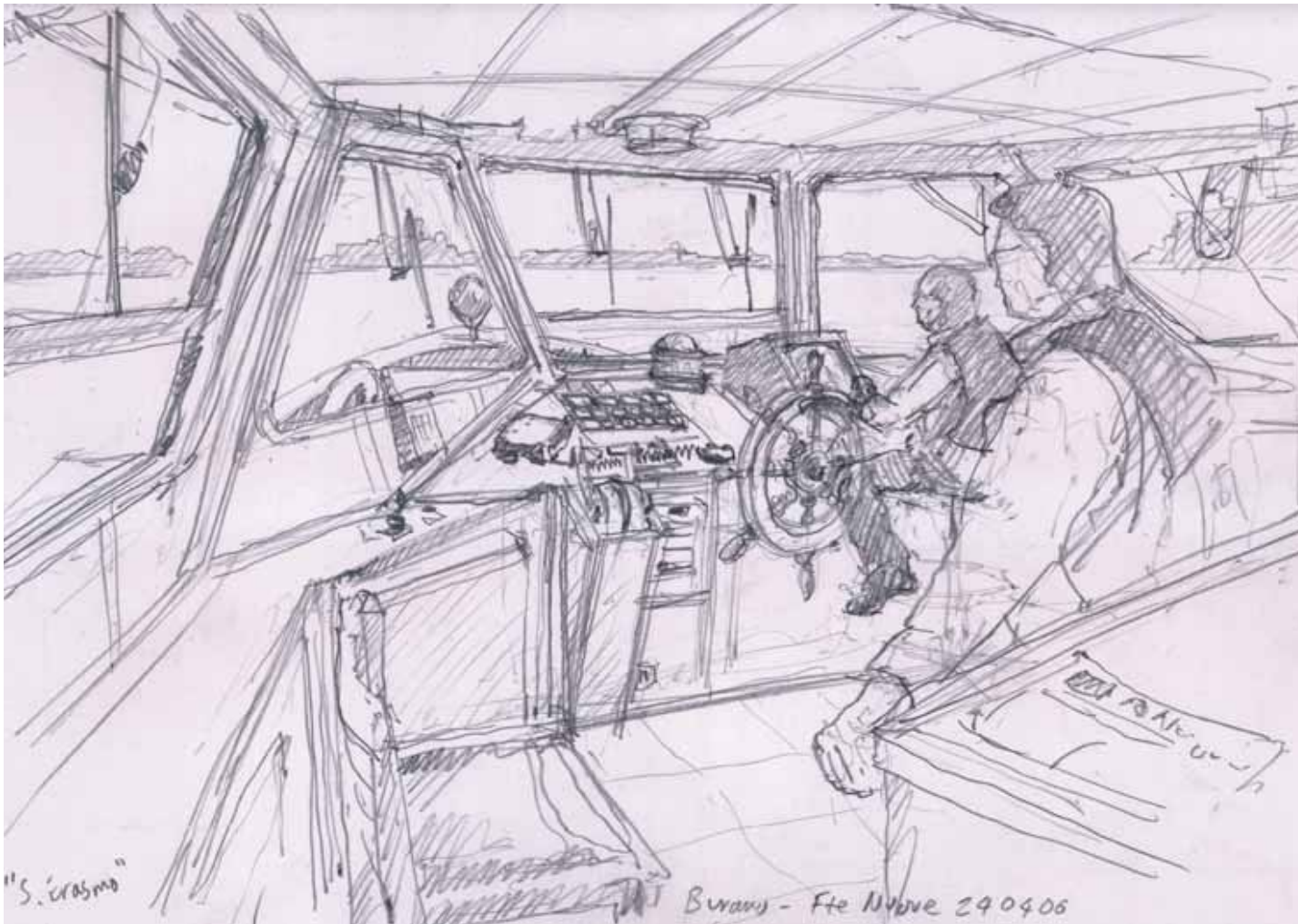
## FACADES

Even if hardly visible, there are palaces and churches where no expense has been spared on the architectural decoration.

Hiding within a maze of streets and canals, the Palazzo Baglioni is one example. It is visible as a ribbon of exuberant carving caked with a substantial black crust when one approaches via the narrow chimney of an alley.

From the nearest canal bridge the prospect of the “front” door is no better.





## VAPORETTO

A forty minute journey gave ample opportunity to sketch the inside of the bridge, to the mild interest of the crew.

Vessels with an open area at the front are much appreciated by sightseers.

An 82 calls at S. Georgio, whilst another boat enjoys an honourable retirement as a workshop/houseboat on Guidecca.





## WAITING FOR THE VAPORETTO

People are seated but edgily restless. There was just time to do a sketch before the boat is due, but as the scheduled departure time neared, there became too many people crowding the shelter.

A long wait for the N (night service) after midnight yielded a pencil sketch, printed reversed-out.

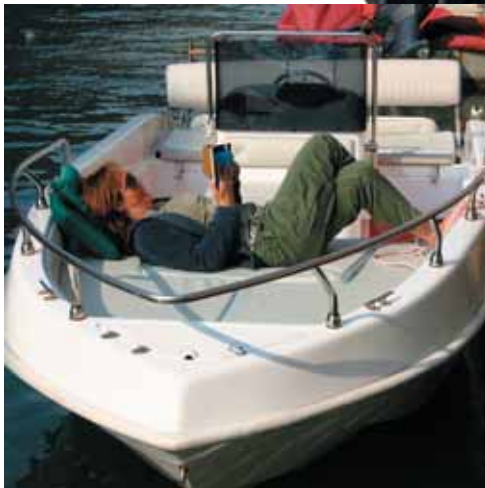




## LIONS

The symbol of Venice, and used extensively as door furniture as well as featuring at carnival time.





## PEOPLE

Relaxed, excited, bemused, fascinated, confused, exhausted. Most of the visitors to the city might only be staying for two or three days.

A Saturday crowd of family, tourists and local residents pauses to witness a bride arriving by gondola.

The extensive paved square of SS. Giovanni e Paolo makes a great playground.





## FRUIT AND VEGETABLE MARKET

Markets have been located by the Rialto for centuries. Residents take an early advantage before the invasion of visitors.





## FISH MARKET

The viewpoint for this sketch was chosen to depict the architectural setting.

Coloured screens over the archways are brightly backlit from outside.

Shimmering silvers of fish, stalls and puddles on the floor all catch the light.





## SCULPTURE

From plaster to marble, three dimensional artform is the timeless essence of Venice.





## REFLECTIONS

The entire city is mirrored, somewhere or other, even away from the canals.

High water adds a further dimension.

Murano glass in a shop window forms an eyeball containing the image of the sunlit building opposite.





## LUNCHTIME AT CAMPO DEI SS. APOSTOLI

Out of the endless procession of people, some settling for a short interval, others moving on, appeared a lady from Tennessee who, having sat beside us and watched me drawing for a while, took out her sketch pad and pen.

She had come to Venice alone, intending to draw, but had not had the courage to do so in public until seeing me.

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## MORNING LIGHT ON THE GRAND CANAL

Drawn at eight-thirty to capture the angle of the April sunlight. Screened scaffolding on the building adjacent to the church provided an interesting challenge as it filtered the slanting shafts of light.





## GONDOLAS

Living history for the twenty-first century consumer. Part of the Venice experience, an obligatory rite of passage for the visitor.

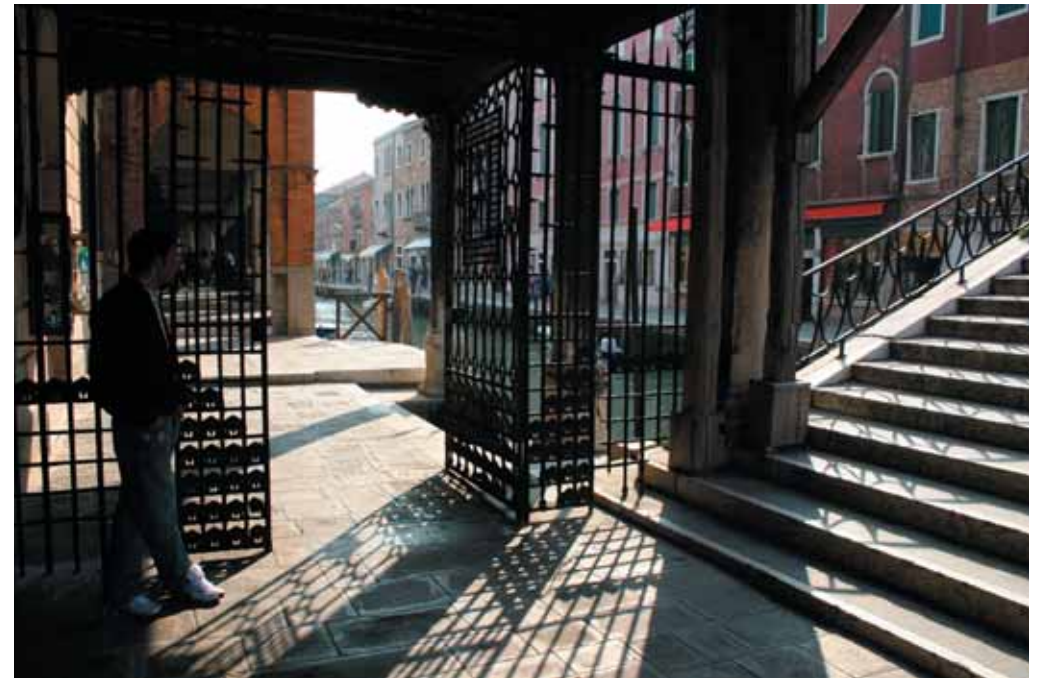




## VIEW FROM ACCADEMIA BRIDGE

Possibly the classic Venice view, here with the early morning light behind the domes of Santa Maria Della Salute.

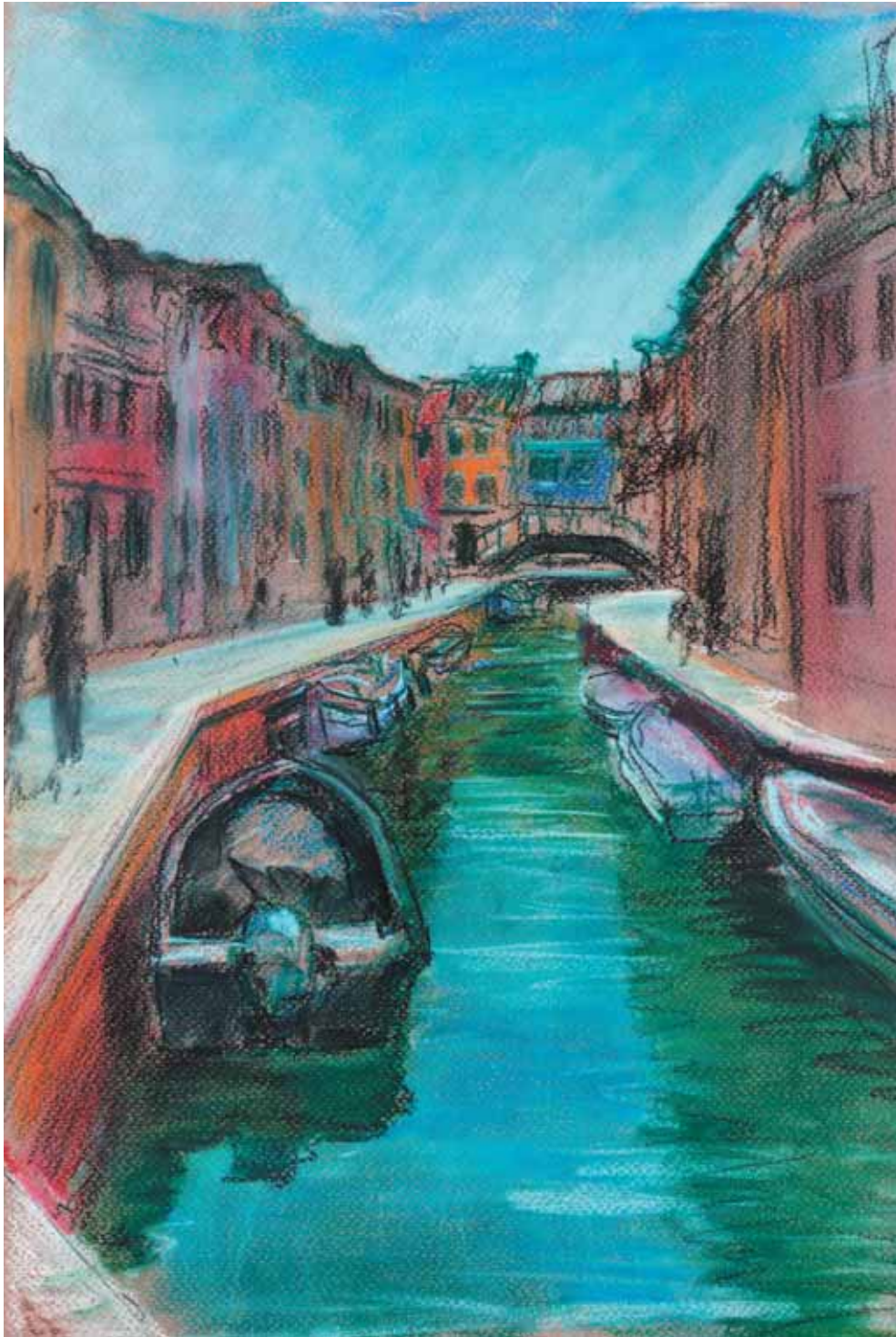




## MURANO

Wrought iron gates at the entrance to what was probably a glass factory or warehouse, and now a shopping mall. The perspective of shadows moved like multiple fingers on the face of a clock as I attempted to record the detail of the scrollwork.

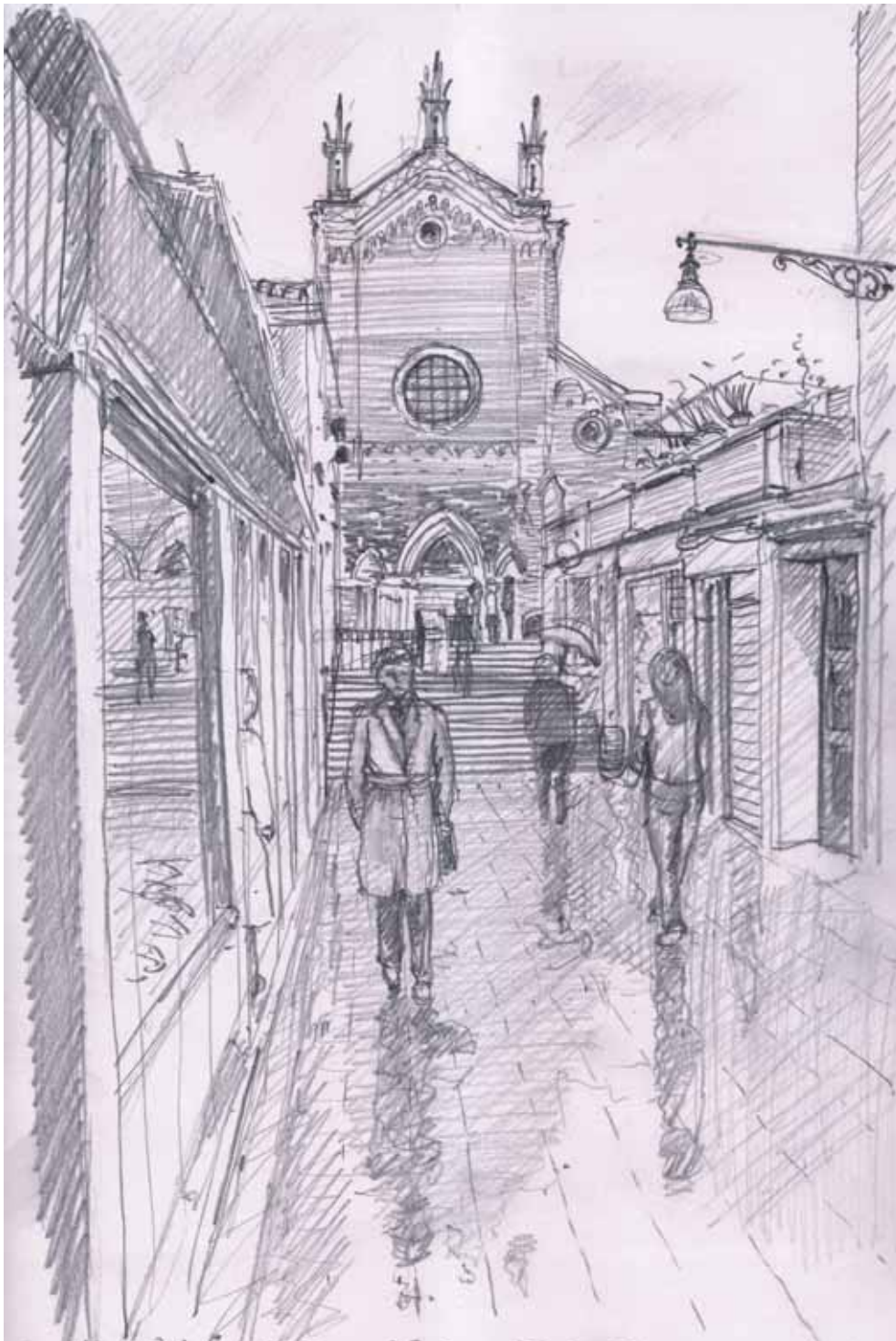




## BURANO

A world apart from the main island, apart from the throngs of tourists. Just beyond the shops, canalside houses glow confidently with brilliant colour.





## RAIN

The massive bulk of SS. Giovanni e Paolo looms beyond the bridge, as the weather urges morning commuters to a faster than usual pace.

There are two reflections, the second in the shop window which through concentrating on the image mirrored in the path, I nearly missed. To emphasise the transient presence of the people, they were drawn over the scene, the background purposely not completely eliminated with an eraser.

Wet flagstones take a new depth from the reflected sky funnelling between the buildings.





## SS. GIOVANNI E PAOLO INTERIOR

The largest of all Venice churches, a masterpiece of brick as well as stone work. A network of massive beams link the arches inside the building, giving a little help with the tricky perspective.





## OSPEDALE

A weekend delivery of laundry is unloaded from the Rio De Mendicanti. Reflections shimmer in the water and sit glass still in the puddle left by the outgoing high water.

On the Fondamente Nuove, brilliant yellow of the ambulance livery and uniform glows in the morning sun.





## CAMPO DI SS. GIOVANNI E PAOLO

An endless variety of colour, texture and shadow patterns depending on the time of day and the weather. The effect never seems to be quite the same on each visit.





## CHIESA DI SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE

Two perspectives: on the one hand the classical facade of the church rising proudly from the wide quayside, and on the other the panorama of Dosoduro and Castello, the tower in Piazza San Marco taking centre stage.





## STUDIO INTERIOR

An artists studio with space for both work and relaxation. Skylights create pools of light, and between the exposed roof rafters the under layer of roof tiles can be seen.





## COLOURS AND GLASS

Murano glass comes in every tempting hue, giving an amazing patchwork of pattern.

Carnival costumes shine iridescent in shop windows at night.

Powder colour is available by weight from hardware stores.

Stained glass is definitely not confined to churches.





## PONTE DELLA TETTE

Been there, done that, got the teeshirt.

"Bridge of the tits" was once the way to the red light district. Prostitutes would encourage business by displaying their charms, topless. This practice was not opposed by the authorities, owing to the need to reduce the amount of sodomy which once took place.

The window of a nearby restaurant provides a reminder of this historical gem.

The ladies of our party were quite happy to pose provided they remained fully clothed.





## VENICE BY NIGHT

Buildings stand ghost like in the floodlighting.

There was just sufficient light to attempt reading an almost worn out inscription on a pillar.





## MARCO POLO AIRPORT

The entrance to Departures, where people lean on baggage trolleys whilst deciphering the flights information display.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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