

A Sketch of Venetian History

Sarah Pierroz

Sarah Pierroz, Illustrator

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A thorough history accompanied by intricate illustrations, Sarah Pierroz's *A Sketch of Venetian History* is a must for any person interested in the city's gripping past.

This in-depth historical review begins in 4000 BCE, when Venice was only a mudbank dotted with islands. It stretches into the present day, revealing a metropolis booming with tourism, commerce, and industry. In the process, it covers Venice's place on the world stage, including through figures of high import, like Christopher Columbus, Antonio Vivaldi, Lord Byron, Dante Alighieri, and Galileo Galilei, who impacted art, science, and society both within Venice and beyond, to the *terra firma* of Europe.

The work is divided into six thematic periods; here, history is consolidated through the lens of Venice's tenacity. Despite millennia of actions and decisions that nearly lead Venice to ruin, it perseveres. The book ends with a powerful note about Venice's vulnerabilities, including its potential demise from ecological disaster, and its weakened cultural identity from the plethora of tourists that visit the city each day. However, hope prevails, given Venice's unflappable ability to find new, unique ways to be preserved.

Stunning post-modern baroque sketches populate every page, interacting with history to an almost unsettling effect. This is captured in a sketch of a businessman in the present-day section of the book, who is depicted with rounded, erratic lines, his neck bent upward as if he's trying to keep his head out of the water. In his hair, a tree sprouts, along with electrical lines that symbolize both Venice's roots and modernity. This image is interposed between two columns of text discussing Venice's *acqua alta*, or flooding, and other modern issues.

An informative look into all that makes a nation tick, *A Sketch of Venetian History* brings Venice's past to life.

GEORGE HAJJAR (November / December 2021)

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