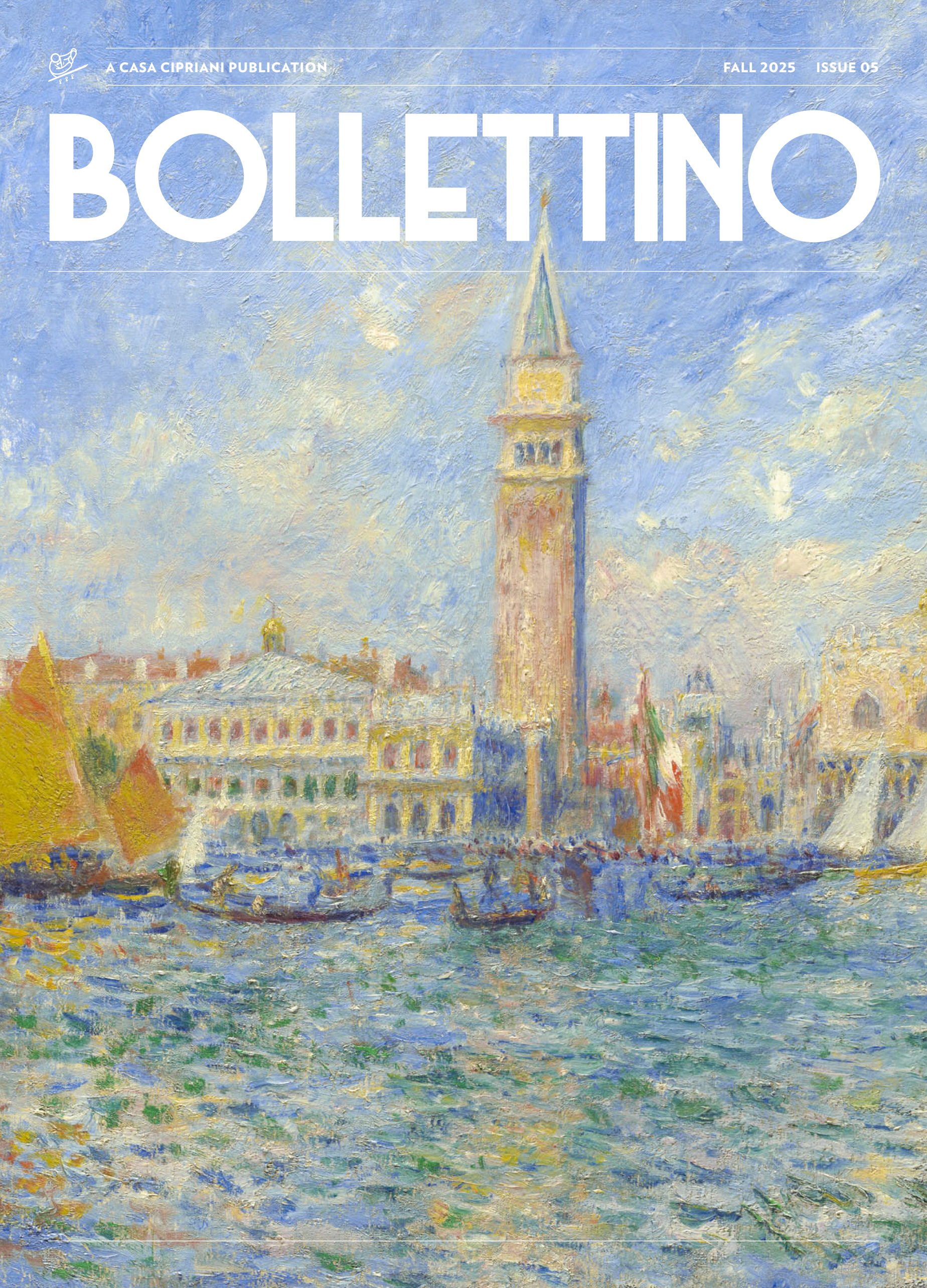




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BOLLETTINO





Basilica di San Vitale, courtesy of Opera di Religione della Diocesi di Ravenna

RAVENNA: AN INSIDER'S

FEDERICO MARCHETTI, RAVENNA NATIVE
AND CREATOR OF YOOX NET-A-PORTER
GROUP, REVEALS THE CITY'S HIDDEN LAYERS
WHERE MOSAICS, HISTORY AND DAILY LIFE
CONVERGE.



Photography by
David Needleman

Ravenna is a city that quietly holds centuries within its streets; a place where the serene Adriatic meets the weight of history, where vibrant contemporary life moves among ancient wonders. Famous for its dazzling mosaics, it offers more than mere beauty: Ravenna is a crossroads, a layered tapestry of cultures, artistry, and intrigue. Once the last capital of the Western Roman Empire, Ravenna carries a profound historical significance that continues to resonate.

*To truly appreciate Ravenna, one benefits from the perspective of someone intimately familiar with its character. Federico Marchetti, a native of Ravenna, Chair of King Charles III's SMI Fashion Task Force, and author of the upcoming autobiographical book, *The Geek of Chic: An American Dream Italian Style*, offers unique insights into this city's extraordinary legacy.*

“RAVENNA IS A PLACE by the sea, a junction, a town of great beauty. Ravenna holds some of the most extraordinary mosaics in the history of art...in 2009, when

I saw Karl Lagerfeld stretched out on the floor of the basilica of San Vitale looking with meticulous care at the mosaics that would inspire his Chanel Paris-Byzance collection, I became deeply aware of

how amazing and invaluable they could be for a creative”, writes Marchetti in his book, *The Geek of Chic: An American Dream Italian Style*.

The air in Ravenna carries whispers of ancient stories—of empires and poets, artists and conquerors. Walking its quiet streets, you sense its rich past in every step, a pulse of history that never quite fades. The mosaics here, brilliantly vivid, glow with a timeless radiance. Crafted meticulously from fragments of marble, shells, glass, and mother-of-pearl, each piece tells its story, revealing intricate puzzles that have captivated anyone who passes through for centuries.

Begin your journey at the Basilica di San Vitale, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where the mosaics, once admired by emperors and fashion icons alike, blaze brilliantly. Not far from there stands the Mausole-



MAR - Museo d'Arte della Città di Ravenna, Archivio Fotografico Comune di Ravenna



Glimpse of the Basilica of San Vitale (UNESCO World Heritage List, 1996), Ravenna, Emilia-Romagna. Detail. Italy, 6th century. (Photo by DeAgostini/Getty Images)

um of Galla Placidia, its modest exterior giving way to a breathtaking celestial ceiling—deep blue and flecked with golden stars, eternally mesmerizing.

Nearby is the Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, where scenes of biblical grandeur stretch along its walls, each mosaic alive with vivid expression. And then there's Dante's Tomb, a quiet monument to literature's immortal poet, whose spirit lingers profoundly within Ravenna's cultural heart.

Indeed, the nearby woods of Classe, the ancient port of Ravenna, provided deep inspiration for Dante Alighieri himself, who famously wrote, "Midway upon the journey of our life, I found myself within a forest dark, for the straightforward pathway had been lost." These landscapes, both mysterious and compelling, echo through the poet's enduring works.

Further into the city, the bustling Piazza del Popolo embodies Ravenna's living charm—cafés buzzing with conversation, locals moving unhurriedly beneath historic facades. Here, you experience the seamless blend of ancient and modern, where tradition meets the gentle rhythm of daily life.

Outside the historic center, nature and history converge once more. At Classe, the Basilica di Sant'Apol-

linare rises impressively amid serene landscapes, its mosaics reflecting an endless dialogue between earth and sky, past and present.

Yet Ravenna's magic extends beyond its famed monuments. The nearby Rubicon River, more modest stream than mighty waterway, evokes a profound moment in history when Julius Caesar decisively marched toward destiny, giving rise to the expression "crossing the Rubicon"—a lasting metaphor for irreversible choices and daring journeys into the unknown.

Evenings in Ravenna are meant for quiet discovery. Trattorias and cafés along Via Mentana serve authentic Romagnolo dishes in a cozy atmosphere, where the warmth of regional cuisine complements the charm of local hospitality.

The mosaics of Ravenna are a metaphor for the city itself—a beautiful assembly of different fragments, never uniform yet harmonious. Federico Marchetti reflects this eloquently in his latest book, "The Geek of Chic": "The Ravenna mosaics are like puzzles. Their wonderful workmanship is carried out by fragmentation and reassembly of the material from which they are made—tiny squares that together create beauty admired by everyone." ●



Pineta di Classe, Archivio Fotografico Città di Ravenna

"A forest dense, alive with green, so pure and tempered by eternal spring, that never was there mortal who had seen so fair a sight."

—Purgatorio,
Canto XXVIII, lines 2–5



Mausoleo di Galla Placidia, courtesy of Opera di Religione della Diocesi di Ravenna