



THE PRECIOUS JOURNEY OF DANTE

The Divine Comedy in the jewels of Percossi Papi

Sofia, 30 March 2022 – The spring of 2022 will witness the blooming of tiaras and precious stones. On the occasion of the seven hundredth anniversary of Dante's death, indeed, the **Italian Embassy of Sofia** and the **Italian Institute of Culture**, in collaboration with the **National Gallery** – Former Royal Palace, present for the first time in Bulgaria the works of the Roman jeweller, currently Honorary Academician of the Pontifical Academy of Virtuosi at Pantheon and Master goldsmith of the University and Noble College of St. Eligio, **Diego Percossi Papi**.



The National Gallery joins the celebration of Dante's death with an extraordinary exhibition.

The idea of the initiative belongs to the Embassy of the Italian Republic and H.E. Ambassador **Giuseppina Zarra**.

The latter also thanked the **Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences**, for having kindly lent rare editions of the Divine Comedy in Bulgarian and Italian, and the **ICE**.

Through designer jewels, the well-known atelier pays homage to the Supreme Poet, narrating, with precious stones and works of art, the purifying journey undertaken in the Divine Comedy. The world premiere of the exhibition was inaugurated in Alexander I Square, in the ballroom of the Former Royal Palace and the exhibition entitled *The Precious Way of Dante. The Divine Comedy* - will be held from 24 March to 30 April.

Over the centuries, the *Comedy* has been the subject of countless interpretations in several artistic fields. Paintings, sculptures, essays, exhibitions and representations have been dedicated to the work. The art of jewellery is no different. **Diego Percossi Papi** and his atelier have created an original exhibition proposal. The photographic panels on display-through an admirable knowledge of the goldsmith's art- aim to arouse in the visitor the same emotions described by the Supreme Poet and connote the lights and colours in the exact setting of the poem, creating countless parallels between Dante's triplets and the jewels. Three emblematic figures open the way: Charon, who introduces the exhibition and the room dedicated to hell, the Erinni and the Minotaur who act as "guardian" to the second room dedicated to Purgatory and in the third, Beatrice, the angel woman who invites visitors to the third room of Paradise. As a backdrop to these 'thematic totems', we find the illustrative panels, which explain the symbolic link between the creations of the atelier Percossi Papi and the work.

The exhibition, first programmed for last November, delayed due to the pandemic, and it is not by chance that it has been scheduled in the month of the Italian *Design Day 2022*, promoted by the entire Italian diplomatic-consular network.

There's no doubt that the aim of the exhibition is the export abroad of Italian artistic and cultural heritage, the result of a refined and harmonious relationship between history, culture, art and craftsmanship of the highest level. Through the jewels, faithfully reproduced with particular care of colours and enamels, Diego Percossi Papi makes the greatest tribute to Dante's work. Creativity, goldsmith mastery, sense of beauty, culture, love for his work and for his city, for his millennial history and his art, ancient wisdom and great curiosity, make Diego Percossi Papi a modern artist and his workshop a place of irresistible charm.

Very close to his family atelier, he declared: *"I thank my wife Maria Teresa, without whose help I certainly would not be here today. In addition, my daughter Valeria, author of all the photos in the catalogue and my son Giuliano, Master of Laboratory, who has realized all the installations you are going to view"*.



The Italian ambassador in Bulgaria, **Giuseppina Zarra**, who strongly wanted this exhibition despite the difficulties related to the pandemic, masterfully guided the realization of the shows, collaborating closely with Diego and the atelier, with which he shares the attention to detail and the love for Italian beauty and with the Italian Bulgarian curator of the exhibition **Irina Dilkova**.

Dante's work, as well as the products of Percossi Papi, are unique pieces, initially designed and produced for artists and intellectuals, but enjoyable by everybody. The viewer is guided-as happens to the Poet- in his precious journey by panels with large iconographic reproductions of Gustave Dorè and lively details of the jewels on display.

Hence, thanks to the atelier Percossi Papi, Giuseppina Zarra, the Galleria Nazionale, the director **Iara Boubnova**, the Italian Institute of Culture in Sofia will be able to admire for over a month this artistic union between literature and precious stones.



The exhibition ideally concludes the year of Dante 700 years after his death, because as reported by the Ambassador Giuseppina Zarra *"is symbolically enclosed the Italian genius, made of intuition, original ideas, ancient wisdom, culture and experiments, love for beauty and great craftsmanship."* And he concludes *"the Divine Comedy represents a challenge for all"* quoting Leonardo: *"For once you have tasted flight, you will walk on earth with your eyes turned to heaven because you have been there and you will ardently desire them to return".*

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