

Venice mayor mocks billboard critics

VENICE, ITALY: See Venice and sigh... Why visit Venice - just look at some pictures...The city's mayor yesterday, 4 October 2010, mocked critics of the giant billboards that cover many of the city's historic monuments undergoing repair following an appeal by leading international museum directors and architects.

Giorgio Orsoni, speaking in a phone interview with AFP, advised disgruntled tourists to go home and look at photographs of the Bridge of Sighs or St. Mark's Square from the comfort of their own sofa.

"What difference does it make if the scaffolding shows a picture of the building underneath or an advert," Orsoni said.

"If people want to see the building they should go home and look at a picture of it in a book," he added.

Addressing his critics, Orsoni quoted a Venetian saying that translates as: "Before you speak, be quiet."

Pretty as a poster... or not

Growing anger over the huge, floodlit advertisements that obscure palaces up and down the Grand Canal drove art world figures to ask for tighter rules in an appeal to Venice's mayor published in The Art Newspaper on Sunday.

"We ask you to imagine the disappointment that the 17.5 million visitors to Venice this year will feel," read the plea.

"They come to this iconic city with an image of it in their mind's eye and instead they see its famous views grotesquely defaced," it said.

Sighs...

Buildings covered by billboards this year include the Palazzo Ducale in St. Mark's Square, the Santa Maria della Salute basilica and the Bridge of Sighs.

Signatories of the appeal included award-winning British architect Norman Foster, as well as the directors of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, London's British Museum and the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.

But Orsoni said the advertisements were necessary as they were helping to fund the renovation of buildings badly in need of repair.

"The only way to get around the problem would be to have a magic wand and repair all the buildings in Venice without

having to cover them up," he said.

"These days public money is tight. I would be very happy to accept donations...if they're willing to give them," he added.

Source: AFP

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