





**Emilio Isgrò**  
*"Unequivocal Sign"*

by Giorgia Mauri

**Il Seme dell'Altissimo, 2015**

white marble Altissimo

environmental dimensions

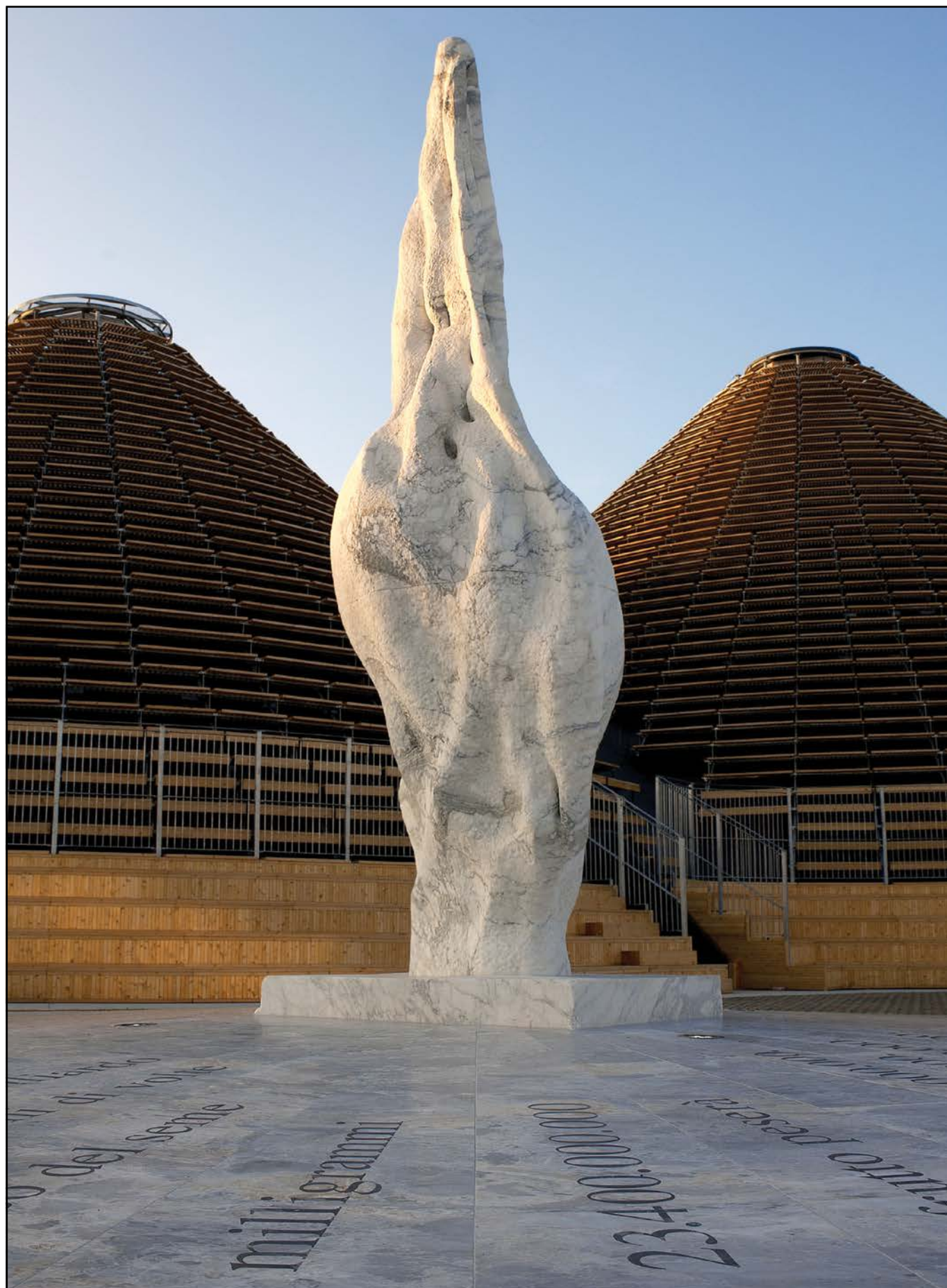
Inscription on marble stairs

**Orange seed enlarged 1 billion 500 million times.**

**Weight of the seed 23,400,000,000 milligrammes.**

**The fruit will weigh 23,400,000,000,000,000,000,000,000... tonnes**





Il Seme dell'Altissimo (The Seed of the Altissimo Mountain) is the representative sculpture by Emilio Isgrò of the Expo Milano 2015 and of its core theme: Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life.

It symbolizes the life and the hope for the development of humanity and is embodied in an orange seed that has been enlarged 1.5 billion times.

"I chose the Seed as a symbol of the Expo Milano 2015. Indeed it is a global idea more and before than to be only a symbol. Everybody all over the world knows the orange fruit, it immediately recalls the Mediterranean Sea and our Land."

As it has been turned by the artist into a universal icon of nourishment, The Seed of the Altissimo Mountain is placed at the Main Entrance of Expo Center, West Gate, a privileged transit for million of visitors which are attending the fair and will do within the end of October 2015.

"Even if the title can remind of an ascetic meaning, the Seed of the Altissimo Mountain has the laical vocation which lets Art exist."

The sculpture has been made by the specialized artisan workers of Henraux Spa from the design project by Isgrò. It is made of the precious Calacta white marble extracted from the Altissimo mountain near Lucca in Tuscany. Its origin gave the inspiration to the title of the artwork,

il Seme dell'Altissimo, The Seed of the Altissimo Mountain.

A seven meters high orange seed, far from the standards of beauty, "not perfect, sweetly ugly and extremely big" as Emilio Isgrò loves defining it.

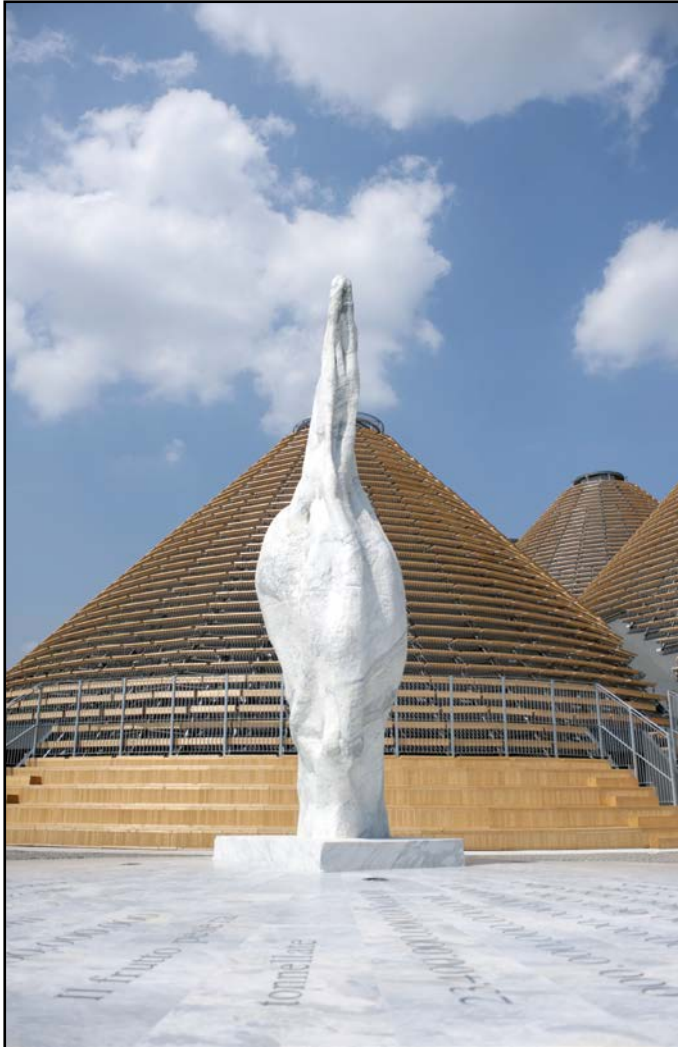
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Emilio Isgrò





Il Seme dell'Altissimo (The Seed of the Altissimo Mountain)  
Expo 2015. Photo: Andrea Valentini.

"This seed (the seed of the art, the seed of life, the seed that you like) contains in itself the theory of what it is or may become.

In 1998 I was asked by the city of my birth, Barcellona in Sicily, to come up with something which might express a strong, unmistakably constructive spirit of my land. What I proposed was a seed. Or rather, an Orange Seed, as symbol of a continental island, Sicily, open to all history and all stories, impossible to be reduced to a single cultural model. It is certainly not by chance

that my choice fell on a tiny orange pip instead of on one of the much more recognizable and acclaimed symbol of modern post-consumer society. That society was, and still is now, too strong to need help from art.

I did not work on cloning the planet representing what is already in itself too visible as it doesn't need further representations. I, more modestly, represented the invisible.

The seed that one cannot see. But which is there."

This is the story of the Orange Seed, the Proto-Seed by Emilio Isgrò, which has inspired The Seed of the Altissimo Mountain.

"Art can give its results only when it is validated by the concrete interests of the society which needs art as it needs food and air to breath.

That's why I enthusiastically devoted myself to the creation of the Altissimo Mountain for Milan, for the Universal Exposition first and then for the city, mindful of the Orange Seed made many years ago."

"All of my work has been born under the sign of the possible and of necessity. What we need now are poets, not "intellectuals". **An artist is responsible for what he does, not what he says.**

Where an artist, at Expo, in the heart of an Italy that is changing, dares to implant a Seed seven meters high, probably at that point, soon or later, somewhere close by, someone decides to implant a new fabric, a company capable to produce something that the world urgently needs but of which no one has never thought.

For this one needs art: to give courage to the brave ones, not to look at themselves in the mirror.

The Orange Seed remains the most global symbol because everybody knows it: chinese people, americans, indians, japanese people the same way.

Somebody asked me why I chose to work on enlarging a tiny seed only few millimeters large, almost invisible, instead of concentrating myself on italic symbols already famous and bigger, like Colosseum or Pisa Tower. The reason suggests the meaning of italian way: taking small things and turn them into something bigger."

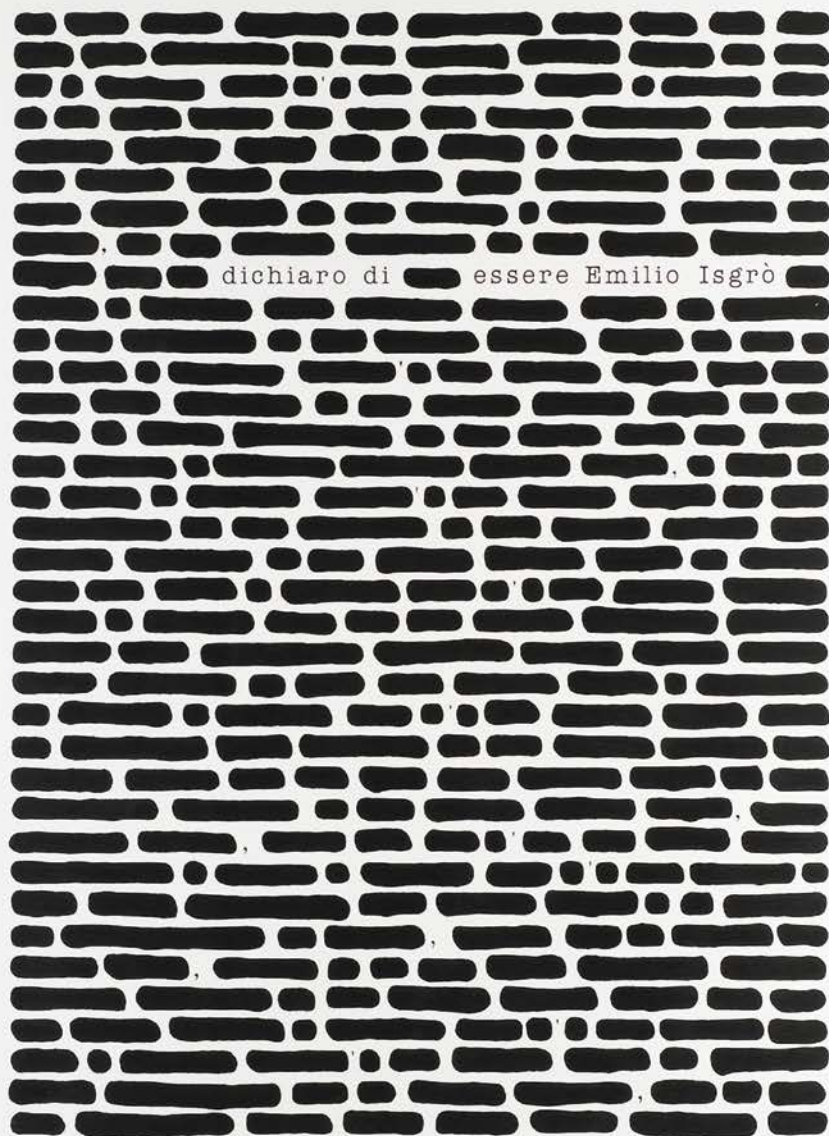


by Giorgia Mauri

Expo Milano 2015 provides an opportunity to reflect upon, and seek solutions to, the contradictions of our world. On the one hand, there are still the hungry (approximately 870 million people were undernourished in the period 2010-2012) and, on the other, there are those who die from ailments linked to poor nutrition or too much food (approximately 2.8 million deaths from diseases related to obesity or to being overweight in the same period). In addition, about 1.3 billion tons of foods are wasted every year. For these reasons, we need to make conscious political choices, develop sustainable lifestyles and use the best technology to create a balance between the availability and the consumption of resources.

Art is an expression of uniqueness, a common language for describing a country's identity. That is why artists from around the world have come to the Universal Exposition in Milan with all the works that best describe their era and their society, intent on sharing the message that life is beautiful.





## EMILIO ISGRÒ: WHO IS HIM

Conceptual artist and painter, poet, writer, playwright and director – Emilio Isgrò (Barcellona in Sicily, 1937) is definitely one of the most famous and prestigious Italian artists at international level. Isgrò has given life to the revolutionary and original artworks in the limit of the so called second Avantgarde of the seventies, that has gained him the participation to different editions of the Biennale of Venice (1972, 1978, 1986, 1993), the first prize of the Biennale of San Paolo (1977), the participation to such important shows as for example the one at the MoMA in New York in 1992, at the Peggy Guggenheim Foundation of Venice in 1994, at the anthologies in the Pecci Museum of Prato in 2008 and at the National Gallery of Modern Art in 2013. From 1956 to today he has been living and working in Milan, except for a short period in Venice (1960-1967).

Emilio Isgrò was one of the initiators of the **erasures** (cancellature) of texts, applicated to encyclopedias, handwritings, books, maps and also to cinematic films.

“The erasure, says the artist, is not a banal negation but moreover the affirmation of new means: it is the transformation of a negative sign in a positive way. It was probably a gesture only at the beginning, one of the many gestures an artist made to leave a personal mark in life and in the world...As a matter of fact I saw it changing in the process of making it, year after year, minute after minute, and it bent to my artistic wishes better than I wanted or expected.”



As a sculptor, in 1998, he has idealized and realized an Orange Seed for the city of his birth, situated in front of the ex-station of Barcellona in Sicily, starting point of the couriers of oranges towards the north of Italy and Europe during the years of the exportation.

His artwork The Seed of the Altissimo Mountain, inspired by the Orange Seed in Sicily, is its monumental sculpture proposed as universal symbol of the Expo Milano 2015 core theme: **Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life**. After the end of the Universal Exposition the artwork will be donated by the artist to the city of Milan and it will be placed inside the Sempione Park in the center of the city as a permanent **emblem of hope for humanity**.



Tre semi d'arancia, 2007  
(Three orange seeds)



Modello Italia, 2012  
(Model Italy)  
Csac, University of Parma, Art Section



In the early sixties Emilio Isgrò started creating his **cancellature** (deletions or erasure), that means working by acting on texts and manually covering some parts of them. Words are deleted with heavy marks which leave only small fragments of sentences still readable.

In 1964 Emilio Isgrò made his first works by making interventions on text-books, and on pages in particular: he manually covered most of them. The words were erased with thick marks, and only small fragments of written sentences, or even a word only, were left to be read.

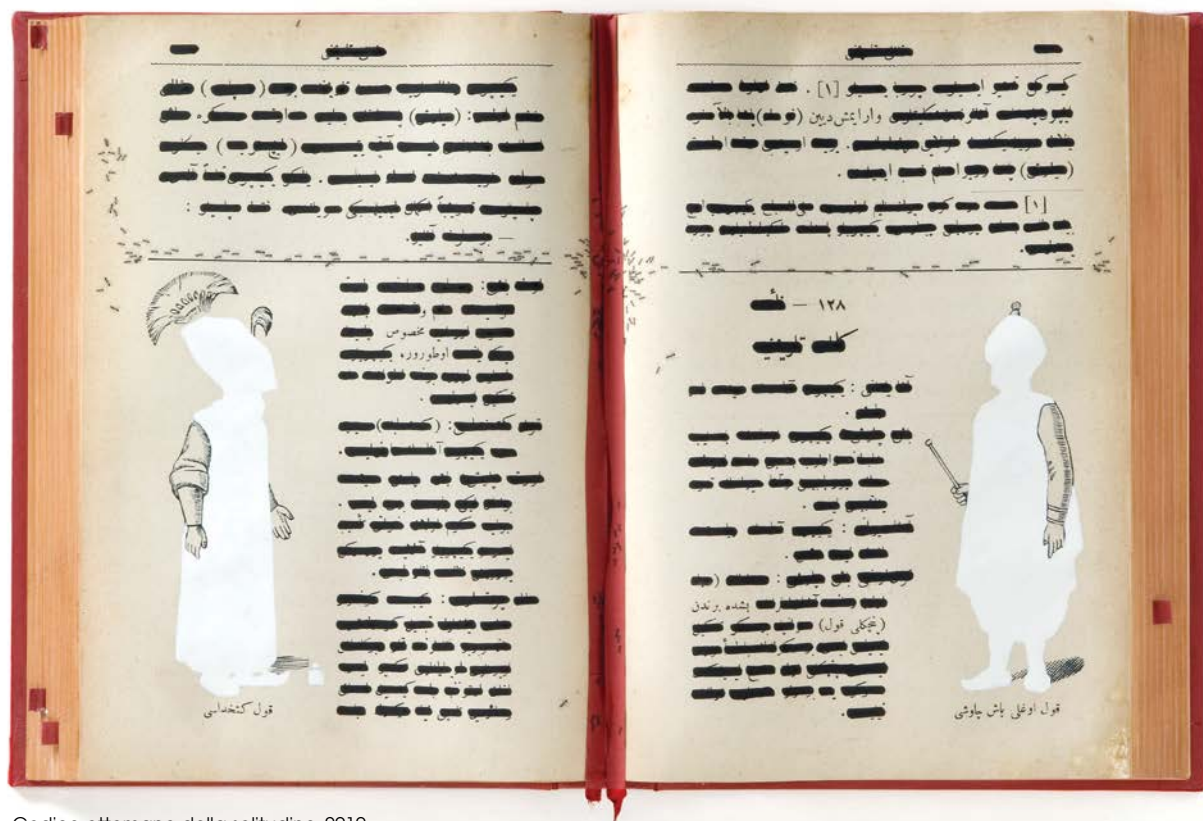
Over time, that mark was made on maps, telex, cinema, sheet music. It anticipated the most typical expressions of conceptual art.



Algebra, 2010



Russland, 2007



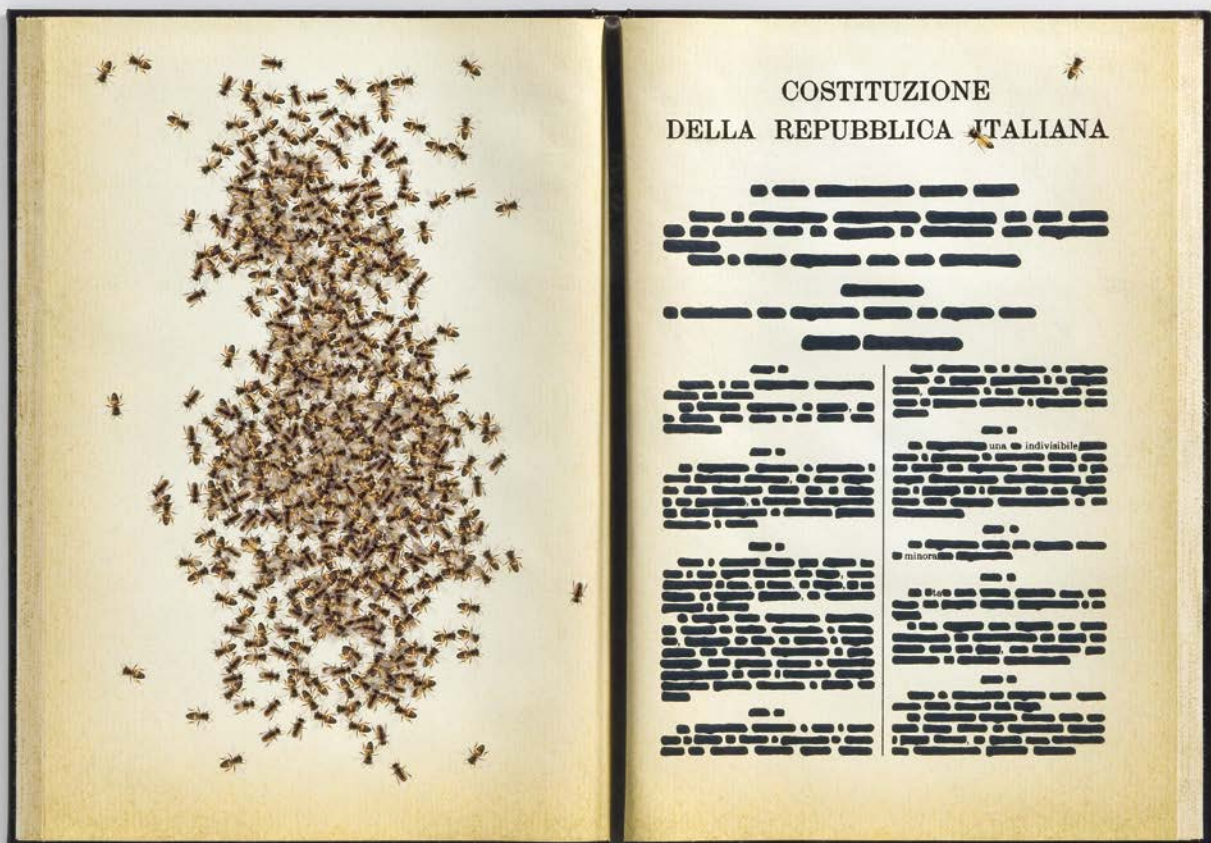
Codice ottomano della solitudine, 2010  
(The ottoman code of the loneliness)



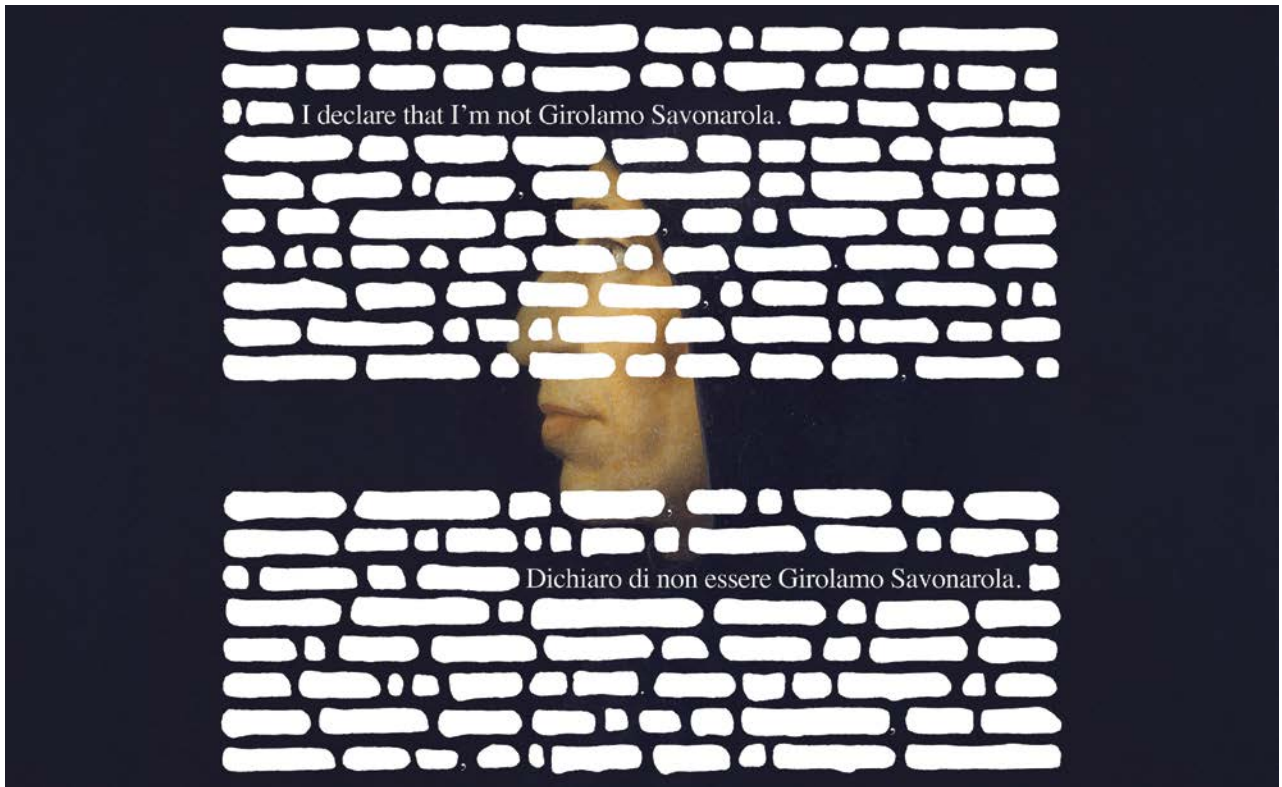
"Erasing is a contradictory gesture lying between destruction and reconstruction. The words, and the images after them, are not offended by the erasures, which on the contrary nourish with new lifeblood a signifier that carries many meanings: the prime essence of every art work. **The erasure explains more than it says.** "Erasure" is not a method of destruction or removal, but can instead be a moment of revelation, to highlight what is concealed. I delete words to safeguard them, it is a gesture of salvation.

The text is hidden, but it is there, though illegible.

The erasure certainly serves to create an absence and to start the viewer's brain working, always wanting to know 'what lies beneath'. But at the same time (and this function is much more important) it is a specific, unequivocal linguistic sign. The language element and visual perception interact, the viewer is induced to make an ideological and interpretative reflection on the subject."



Una indivisibile minorata, 2010  
(A disabled indivisible)



Girolamo Savonarola, 2014



Wunderkammer, 2013