

## Where have we come to?

We have come to you!

Marco Cavallo's first journey through Slovenia – a herald of deinstitutionalisation

8–13 June 2025

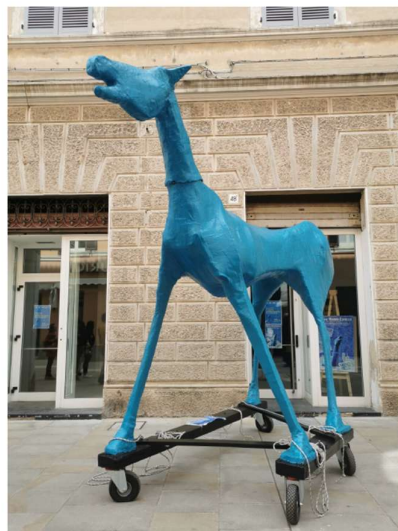
### The story of Marco Cavallo

Once upon a time there was a horse called Marco who worked for many years in the San Giovanni psychiatric hospital in Trieste, transporting food and laundry around the hospital grounds. As his term of service drew to a close, he was threatened with inevitable slaughter. But in 1972, the patients saved him by writing a letter to the president of the province, M. Zanetti, in which they asked for the horse to be pardoned.

Zanetti granted their wish and handed the now “retired” horse to their care. This was the first official recognition of the dignity of the people who had been living in the hospital in prison-like conditions.

Franco Basaglia, a progressive psychiatrist who played a key role in transforming the psychiatric care system in the 1970s, passionately opposed the oppression of people in Italian psychiatric hospitals. In the movement led by Basaglia to dissolve the institution in Trieste, the horse Marco was chosen as a symbol of liberation and the breaking down of walls.

A sculpture of a blue horse was created, whose belly the patients filled with their dreams and wishes. On 25 February 1973, when the institution officially closed, they took the blue horse out into the world — as a symbol of freedom, into the community, among the people.



## The Blue Horse visits the European Capital of Culture 2025

Even after more than 50 years, the Blue Horse remains an inspiration, a symbol of freedom and an independent life for all. This year, on the 101st anniversary of the birth of Franco Basaglia, he will be travelling from Trieste to the east, where the Museum of Madness operates in the only institution in Slovenia that has ever been closed. Along the way, the horse will stop at Dom na Krasu and the Hrastovec Social Welfare Centre, where people are permanently housed even though they have the right to live in the community according to European and UN conventions. The horse will also stop in the Slovenian capital, where the decision-makers sit, and pass by the largest psychiatric institution in Slovenia to hear the wishes of the people behind the walls.

On its return to the European Capital of Culture, the horse will take the messages and wishes of the journey with it to the towns of Nova Gorica and Gorizia, which have dedicated the year to Basaglia.

