



NEWSLETTER

Winter 2018



VENICE IN
PERIL

JOHN JULIUS NORWICH MEMORIAL APPEAL

For the Iconostasis in Torcello Cathedral

In memory of Venice in Peril's much-loved and celebrated Chairman, John Julius Norwich, an appeal for **£100,000** has been launched to conserve the iconostasis in the cathedral of Torcello.

This project was chosen because it recalls his lifelong devotion to Venice and Byzantium. The iconostasis is a screen between the nave and the sanctuary. The earliest stonework dates from around 1100 with the 13 tempera panels of the apostles flanking the Virgin and Child, painted in the early 15C, probably by Zanino di Pietro. Both the structure and the painted panels are in need of conservation work.

This will be a joint project with SAVE Venice Inc, our sister organisation in the USA which is launching its own appeal.

Many Venice in Peril supporters will have personal memories of John Julius. Please share them with us - and thank you for your ongoing generosity.

Jonathan Keates
Chairman Venice in Peril

You can donate by sending a cheque made out to Venice in Peril (JJN) or online at www.veniceinperil.org or tel. 020 7736 6891



Above: The stonework structure and the 13 tempera panels of the Iconostasis will be conserved.
Cover: The central panel showing the Virgin and Child. Both reproduced by kind permission of the Patriarchate of Venice – Torcello Photo: Matteo De Fina

THE TORCELLO ICONOSTASIS

Many visitors to the great cathedral of Torcello - Santa Maria Assunta - are drawn there today because of the justly celebrated mosaics at both the east and west ends. For the medieval congregation, facing towards the altar, the visual focus of their attention would be the apse: here the patron of the church, the Virgin Hodegetria (the Mother of God gesturing towards the Christ-Child held in her left arm, depicted in the Byzantine manner), is shown with the twelve apostles. But the space immediately before the apse, the sanctuary or choir, was not for the laity, and was divided from the nave by a screen, known as the templon in Early Christian and Byzantine churches. The earliest examples were simple constructions, with low marble slabs and usually four or six columns supporting a plain epistyle or beam, and it was only at a later date that icons or narrative paintings came to be placed in this position - hence the word iconostasis.

The Torcello iconostasis is perhaps the most beautiful example, and is the quintessence of the sort of additive process seen so often in Venetian monuments. The earliest part consists of the marvellous marble closure slabs, carved with confronted peacocks and lions amongst foliate designs, which are probably of about 1100, and which show a clear debt to earlier Byzantine prototypes. These are of the first importance for the history of Venetian sculpture, illustrating the formal vocabulary that would dominate the relief sculpture of the city throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The feature that sets the Torcello iconostasis apart from its eastern cognates, however, is its superb painted image beam. Added probably around 1420-30, it has been convincingly



The Cathedral of Torcello Photo: ©Sarah Quill

attributed to Zanino di Pietro, one of the most accomplished Venetian painters of the first decades of the fifteenth century. Here, echoing the mosaic of the apse, are the Virgin and Child flanked by the twelve apostles, again paying homage to the dedication of the church. If the central figures give a clear indication of the quality of the painting - close to that of the more famous Gentile da Fabriano - those to the right and left have suffered from the effects of time and climate. It is a cause for rejoicing that Venice in Peril is supporting a campaign of conservation to give back to these paintings the attention they so richly deserve.

Paul Williamson
Keeper Emeritus and Honorary Senior
Research Fellow
Victoria and Albert Museum

EXHIBITION REVIEW

Il Giovane Tintoretto at Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice
Tintoretto 1519-1594 at Palazzo Ducale, Venice, until 6 January 2019;
and National Gallery Washington DC, 10 March - 7 July 2019

The prodigiously talented Venetian painter Tintoretto was “extravagant, capricious, fast and resolute, and the most fearsome brain that painting has ever known”, in the words of his contemporary, Giorgio Vasari. He painted so rapidly that he produced more works than any of his contemporaries. A map of Venice, available in the exhibitions, shows the churches and museums all over the city where his pictures may be seen (usefully adding the opening hours). Single-handedly Tintoretto decorated the Scuola Grande di San Rocco with canvases fizzing with energy and originality, and his great religious canvases in churches such as San Giorgio Maggiore and the Madonna dell'Orto are well known. These two exhibitions, however, offer a broader perspective of his whole career – as a draughtsman, painter of

religious and mythological scenes, and consummate portraitist.

The exhibition, *Il Giovane Tintoretto*, has been hung in the new exhibition spaces on the ground floor of the Gallerie dell'Accademia, adjoining the rooms recently restored with a contribution from Venice in Peril. The climax of this exhibition is the celebrated *Miracle of the Slave* of 1548, a canvas so large that it could not be transported to the other exhibition in the Palazzo Ducale. This display shows the young artist feeling his way, learning from – and often outclassed by – the artists around him. His early canvases are shown alongside works by Titian, Bonifacio de' Pitati, Paris Bordon, Pordenone and Schiavone, as well as Tuscan artists such as Francesco and Giuseppe Salviati and Giorgio Vasari. The comparisons show how Tintoretto picked up an eclectic range of



skills from those around him, studying fine draughtsmanship, dramatic foreshortening, virtuoso brushwork, a kaleidoscopic palette of colours, the depiction of nudes and the representation of movement. He even learned from Raphael and Michelangelo at second-hand. All these lessons reached their astounding synthesis in *The Miracle of the Slave*. Indeed, the variable quality of Tintoretto's work before this time only brings into sharper focus the amount of effort needed to reach this stage.

The exhibition of the work of the mature Tintoretto in the Palazzo Ducale shows his talent to brilliant effect. Newly restored paintings such as the *San Marziale* altarpiece (1549) are revelatory. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj5tgza71kE> Here the titular saint's pleated white robe seems to transmit the light of the Holy Spirit down its crinkly folds towards Saints Peter and Paul crouching below, unexpectedly portrayed as nearly nude. Hitches in patronage led to surprising results, as in the *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine* of 1545, where Tintoretto transformed the kneeling doge into St Catherine by simply repainting the head but leaving the ducal robes! The exhibition is beautifully hung and lit, with drawings interspersed with canvases of various sizes. The gallery of portraits is particularly striking and leaves beyond doubt the artist's supremacy in this genre. Above all, the visitor can admire from near and far the succulent paintwork and mastery of colour. The exhibition proves once and for all the error of Vasari's judgment that Tintoretto painted sketchily, too proud to make preparatory drawings or to apply good judgement. The virtuosity of both the drawings and paintings makes this a must-see exhibition.

Deborah Howard

Opposite: Robusti, Jacopo, called Tintoretto, *Miracle of the Slave*, oil on canvas, 416 x 544cm
Photo: Archivio fotografico G.A.V.E reproduced with kind permission of MiBACT. Museo Nazionale Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia.



Robusti, Jacopo, called Tintoretto, San Marziale, during conservation undertaken by Silvia Bonifacio and Giulio Bono, funded by SAVE Venice Inc.

Photo: Matteo De Fina

CATALOGUES:

Il Giovane Tintoretto, ed. by Roberta Battaglia, Paola Marini and Vittoria Romani, Venice: Marsilio/Milan: Electa, 2018.
ISBN 978-88-317-4341-9 €35.00.

Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice, ed. by Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2018. ISBN 978-0-300-23040-6 £50.00 (also available in paperback and hardcover published in Venice by Marsilio)

NEW PROJECT

Conservation of 14 volumes of the Dispatches of Francesco Morosini (1619-1694) in the Archivio di Stato - a joint project that marks the 400th anniversary of Morosini's birth

In the nave floor of the church of San Stefano you will find one of Venice's more unusual memorials to her doges. This is the massive decorated brass cartouche commemorating Francesco Morosini, who died at Nafplion in Greece on 9 January 1694. Known as 'Il Peloponnesiaco' from his successful campaigns against the Turks in the Peloponnese, Morosini was the last of the great Venetian doges.

Theoretically the highest office in the state was that of a mere figurehead, but several of those elected to it contrived to make their mark through sheer force of personality or by showing prowess in war and diplomacy. Francesco Morosini nearly ended up in prison for having, on his own initiative, concluded peace with the Turks, following his surrender of Candia (Heraklion) which ended Venice's long but fruitless struggle to hold on to the island of Crete. He had fought a tough campaign, so the Senate was persuaded to give him another chance to prove his generalship, in an invasion of Greece in 1684, resulting in a series of spectacular victories. One of these took place in Athens, where his Swedish artillery commander, Count Koenigsmark, fired the fatal cannon shot which blew up a powder magazine inside the Parthenon, dislodging its carved marble frieze now displayed in the British Museum.

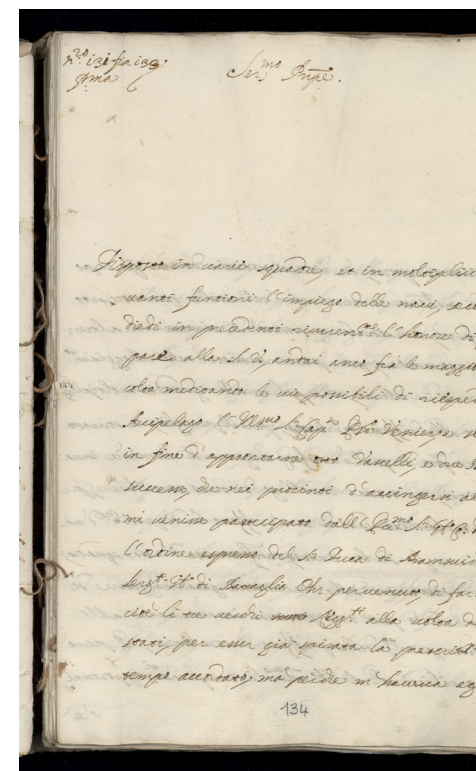
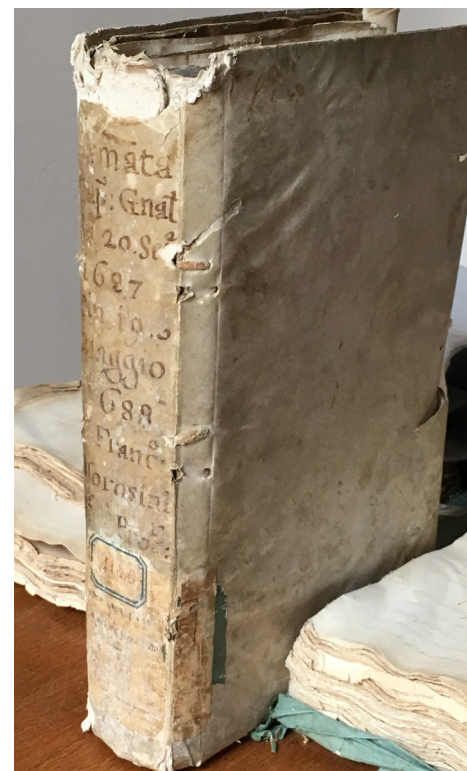
In 1688 Morosini was elected Doge of Venice, though without renouncing his role as triumphant restorer of military glory to La Serenissima. His dispatches from the battle front, now in the Archivio di Stato, are a major historical source, but their fourteen volumes are in a precarious state and have long been unavailable for consultation. In particular they appear to have suffered badly from rain damage in the 19th century as well as loss of

bindings and surface dirt. Also, after three and a half centuries the paper is now extremely fragile. Venice in Peril has responded to an appeal for the documents' conservation with a contribution of £10,000 towards the £25,000 needed. The project, supported jointly with the Austrian and Swiss committees (Venedig lebt and Fondazione Svizzera Pro Venezia), will involve conservation of the distinctive Venetian archive bindings and parchment covers, re-sewing of individual volumes, as well as the cleaning and de-acidification of their pages and the provision of conservation storage. The gallant Peloponnesiaco will come out fighting fit once again!

Jonathan Keates

[If you are interested in supporting this project please contact us.](#)

Opposite: A volume of Francesco Morosini's Dispatches dated September 1687 to May 1688 bound in the distinctive parchment and ties of the Venetian Republic's Archive and dispatch describing manoeuvres at sea.



CURRENT PROJECT

Luana Franceschet shares her experience of working on the sketchbooks of Ippolito Caffi (1809-1866)

The conservation of the first eight of the twenty sketchbooks from the Caffi bequest in the Correr Museum is now nearing completion in Stefania Moretto's studio at Mussolente in the Veneto. The first task was to remove the dust deposits accumulated on surfaces, page edges and bindings before repair to the pages could begin. After cleaning, the covers of the sketchbooks needed reinforcing at the corners and hinges, which was done with Japanese paper inserts coloured to match. Three of the books had had pages cut from them for exhibition display at the Italian Museum of the Risorgimento in the 1980s. The light exposure had caused the pages to darken but a decision was taken with the Correr to reassemble those books in their original order so that they can be understood in context. This involved taking apart the whole book, conserving the pages and resewing the volumes.

The covers and sizes of the books are different, some are half leather, others cloth or half cloth and the pages themselves are of different colours and thicknesses even within the same book. In contrast the way they are bound is similar, each with two hemp cord sewing supports. This suggests that Caffi bought the books as and when he needed them in different cities including Venice, Naples and Genoa, probably also according to whether he would use them for pencil, ink or watercolour.

Each of these small volumes is signed with a place and date, so they are full of history and it has been a delight and privilege to work so closely on them. One of the books which has different weighted papers may have been rebound after Caffi had finished with it and

some have the last pages torn out, suggesting perhaps an impulsive use of the loose sheet for writing or drawing on.

Conservation of the remaining 12 books may reveal more about Caffi's working methods and we look forward to sharing our findings with the supporters of Venice in Peril.



Opposite: Resewing a torn page.
Hemp cord sewing supports.

Photos: Luana Franceschet

Above: Hinge on single page.
Disbinding before restoring the original ordering of pages.

CURRENT PROJECT

Kyriale and Graduale from San Raffaele Arcangelo

Marta Filippini, a conservator specialising in illuminated manuscripts, has now finished work on the leather binding of the Graduale and its 60 rubricated initials (those decorated in red ink). Consolidation of the illumination on the first folio was the biggest challenge because of the danger of pigment flaking.

The Kyriale presented other problems. Apart from two illuminations which have been consolidated, its pages were compacted and separating them has been a long and painstaking job which is now almost done.

Deciding on a treatment for these extremely badly damaged parchment leaves has been difficult because successful methods are not fully evolved. So, in collaboration with the diagnostic laboratories of the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro del Patrimonio Archivistico e Librario in Rome a new experimental treatment

is being tested with nanostructured organic consolidant that could bring flexibility and firmness back to the parchment. If the results of tests are good, the treatment could allow a full recovery of the deteriorated parchments of the Kyriale.



One of 60 decorated initials in the Graduale that has been conserved.

VENETIAN BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Raise money for Venice in Peril Fund while doing your Christmas Book Shopping

One Venetian painter obviously takes pride of place this season, with *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice* (Yale) by Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, paying superb homage to his prolific genius. A fascinating footnote to his career comes with *Art, Faith and Medicine in Tintoretto's Venice* (Marsilio), a sumptuously-illustrated essay collection to accompany Save Venice's current exhibition at the Scuola Grande di San Marco. We'd also like to recommend *The Unfinished Palazzo* (Thames & Hudson) now in paperback, a thrilling episode in Venice's ongoing cultural drama by Judith Mackrell,

who is giving one of our Spring talks on 18 February. In the kitchen we have enjoyed *Venice: Four Seasons of Home Cooking* (Fig Tree) by Russell Norman, this year's very popular Kirker lecturer and *A Table in Venice – Recipes from my Home* (Bloomsbury) by Skye Macalpine. Finally, *Venice Stories* (Everyman) selected by our chairman Jonathan Keates, throwing everyone from Casanova and Trollope to Proust and Jeanette Winterson into a heady brew of Venetian dazzle and decadence. Have fun!

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NEW TREASURER AND TRUSTEE FOR VENICE IN PERIL

We are delighted to announce that Gaia Penteriani Cosulich is to be our new Hon Treasurer. Gaia's career has been in economic and strategy consulting. She studied at Bocconi and Boston universities and has recently completed an MA in History of Art at the University of London. She has strong family ties with Venice and the conservation of its heritage.

Also joining us as a Trustee is Geri della Rocca de Candali. Geri is an ERC Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Faculty of Medieval & Modern Languages and the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford. He is a member of the 15cBooktrade Project, studied in Milan and Oxford and is Treasurer of the Oxford Bibliographical Society and President of the Society for the Preservation of Rare Books. Many thanks are due to our wonderful outgoing Treasurer, Richard King, for his support and wisdom over the past five years.

IN MEMORY

Among longstanding supporters of Venice in Peril who have died recently we would like to pay a particular tribute to Rob van Mesdag whose championing of rowing in Venice and on the Thames was well known. He was a generous donor to Venice in Peril and a reliable source of tricky questions at our events, keeping our lecturers on their toes. We would also like to record our thanks for a legacy from the estate of Donald Pearse, a Friend and Donor for many years, to be used potentially for a commemorative project.

TRUSTEES

Lady Clarke CBE (Hon President), Lady Hale, Richard Haslam (Hon Secretary), Deborah Howard, Jonathan Keates (Chairman), Gaia Penteriani Cosulich (Hon Treasurer), John Millerchip, Marina Morrisson Atwater, Sarah Quill, Jon Rayman, Dr Geri della Rocca de Candali, Tim Sanderson

ACQUA ALTA - 29TH OCTOBER 2018

The news of a severe Acqua Alta which reached 156cm above mean sea water level on 29 October, evoked memories of the 1966 Acqua Granda when water levels reached 194cm and stayed for 36 hours. As many people in Venice have said, it is the exhausting work of cleaning up after the dirty salt water subsides that is the first challenge. Pictures of the Basilica in San Marco, which stands at the lowest point in Venice, flooded with water for 16 hours, were very distressing. The Cappella Zen to the right of the narthex was also flooded. It was here that VIP Trustee Marina Morrisson Atwater funded the conservation of a number of reliefs in 2013. Lead lining installed in the walls behind the reliefs protects them but the true extent of damage to the Basilica will not be known for some time and it will be difficult to tell what is a result of this flooding and what is a result of ongoing water penetration. Current work to stop tidal water entering through the rainwater dispersal system under the piazza is ongoing. Meanwhile the MOSE barriers have suffered operational difficulties and are not yet in use. The pictures looked dramatic but Venetians were prepared and as indomitable as ever. Further north vast areas of trees were destroyed with huge financial implications for the area. Elsewhere in Italy the weather caused the death of 17 people.

SPRING 2019

Event series

21 JANUARY

Reflections on Mantegna and Bellini

Caroline Campbell

Caroline Campbell, Director of Collections and Research at the National Gallery, and co-curator of *Mantegna and Bellini* will reflect on the experience of conceiving and mounting this exhibition, and the opportunities for different juxtapositions and confrontations provided by having two different venues for the show, in London and Berlin.

18 FEBRUARY

The Unfinished Palazzo - The Venetian Life of Luisa Casati, Doris Castlerosse and Peggy Guggenheim

Judith Mackrell

Judith Mackrell, author, broadcaster and dance critic, describes the lives of three chatelaines of the Palazzo Venier and the individual ways in which they made the so-called 'Unfinished Palazzo', one of the most notorious and brilliant destinations of 20th century Venice.

18 MARCH

Palladio's late style: the impact of Venice

Bruce Boucher

From the 1560s, Palladio's architectural career shifted more and more to Venice where he encountered new kinds of projects and challenges on a scale beyond his earlier, largely domestic architecture. Bruce Boucher, director of Sir John Soane's Museum, shows how Venice had a visible impact on Palladio's 'late style', an impact that began where the *Quattro Libri* left off.

At the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly W1J 0BE.

Tickets and timings: Doors open 6.30 for 6.45pm

£18 Friends, £20 Others - to include a glass of wine

From www.veniceinperil.org or 020 7736 6891

To find out more about our projects and how you can donate please contact
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