

New Rooms at the Accademia Galleries: Palladio Wing project

DEAR FRIEND AND SUPPORTER Venice in the eighteenth century was the pleasure capital of Europe. Metropolis of a state which had lost most of its power and influence, living on memories of its former grandeur, it became a recreational focus for international tourists in search of entertainment, spectacle and indulgence of the senses. When the young aristocrat in Alexander Pope's satirical mock-epic 'The Dunciad' (1728) sets off for Italy on the Grand Tour, he lingers longest with La Serenissima:

her shrine where naked Venus keeps And Cupids ride the Lyon of the Deeps; Where, eas'd of Fleets, the Adriatic main Wafts the smooth Eunuch and enamour'd Swain

Amid the enticements of the carnival, the opera house and the gambling room, Grand Tourists found time to patronize some of the painters who sustained Venice's reputation as an art city, encouraged by Britain's resident consul Joseph Smith.

This Venice 'seen from abroad' forms the theme of a new set of rooms to be opened by the Accademia Galleries, culminating in the so-called Tablino, one of the earliest works of Andrea Palladio. Part of his design, for the original monastery of Lateran Canons, this elegant space became part of the Accademia delle Belle Arti, which moved here in 1807. The Empire-style table and chair created for the Accademia by Giuseppe Borsato, around 1810-20, for its first president Leopoldo Cicognara are currently the subject of a Venice in Peril Fund conservation project. These and other exhibits will show the international reach of the nineteenth century Academicians as they built

up the public gallery and their connections with the other European academies.

Now, reflecting this earlier collaboration, we have embarked on a joint project, with the Venice International Foundation, to fund the final hang and fit out of these rooms in the Palladio wing, which will also accommodate works by Antonio Canova, including some earlier Venice in Peril Fund projects. The rooms will display paintings by artists particularly favoured and admired by Grand Tour patrons. Several such painters, Sebastiano Ricci, Jacopo Amigoni and of course Canaletto himself, actually visited England and figure in country house collections, as Helen Ghosh reminded us in the Kirker lecture in May. Others, such as Francesco Guardi, preferred to remain in Venice, capturing the fugitive moods of the lagoon. In addition, we will be able to enjoy the deftness and subtlety of Rosalba Carriera's pastel portraits, whole dramatis personae of eighteenth-century Venice, including senators, actresses, musicians, foreign noblemen, clerics and children, together with a strikingly pitiless self-portrait by the elderly artist.

We are really excited by the opportunity presented by this project, part of a major re-hang and expansion at the Accademia (reported in Summer 2014 Newsletter) and we hope that you will want to contribute to help us reach the £75,000 target. It forms another link in the long and valuable association between Britain and Venice, reaching well beyond the days when cupids were riding the lion of the deeps and Consul Smith was buying his Canalettos.

JONATHAN KEATES
Chairman of Venice in Peril Fund



Girl with a doughnut by Rosalba Carriera and the Institution of the Eucharist by G.D. Tiepolo on the cover will be hung in the new rooms of the Accademia © Archivio fotografico – Polo Museale del Veneto

Join us in raising £75,000 for the Palladio Wing Rooms

The Society of Dilettanti – originally founded in the 1730s by young men returning from the Grand Tour – has got the appeal under way with a generous donation. Please help us to reach our target by making a donation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- The seven rooms in the Palladio wing of the Accademia Galleries are due to open to the public in late 2015.
- The Venice International Foundation www.venicefoundation.org with whom we have joined forces for this project, is one of the 24 Private Committees working in Venice. It focuses on working in support of the Fondazione Musei Civici Veneziani.

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AUTUMN LECTURE SERIES NOW



We would like to thank all our donors especially those listed below and others who wish to remain anonymous for their generous support and commitment to the conservation work of Venice in Peril Fund in the last year.

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And the Fine Art Society and Charles Beddington for hosting our Friends' Summer Party

Winged Figure with Elephant: Some Questions Answered

A S SOON AS the Winged Figure with Elephant was adopted in 2013 it attracted lots of interest and suggestions – from among Friends of the Fund, Trustees and scholars. What did it symbolise and where did it come from?

So it was exciting to receive Monica de Vincenti's historical report – carried out alongside conservation treatment - which looked again at the iconography relating it to representations of Victory and Virtue. The mystery is still not entirely solved –because the figure is likely to be a new invention by someone drawing on a variety of literary and artistic sources possibly to create a new representation. She suggests that on stylistic grounds the figure is probably by Giambattista Albanese (1573-1630) who came from a family of sculptors in Vicenza.

He and his brother belonged to the entourage of the noble Gualdo family and worked with Vincenzo Scamozzi sculpting garden statuary for the Veneto villas including the Villa Rotonda. The Nymphaeum at the Villa Rinaldi Barbini at Casella d'Asolo, which was inspired by the gardens at the Villa Barbaro at Maser and the Villa Cornaro at Castelfranco Veneto, is attributed to them. The learning and literary interests of these patrons appears to have extended the repertoire of figures chosen to ornament their gardens. Giambattista was responsible for the six mythological deities now in the garden of the Villa Fietta at Altivole, although their original provenance is unknown.

Amongst his Venetian commissions were the four warrior saints on the facade of the basilica of San Marco (sculpted in 1618 to replace the four figures that had fallen during an earthquake in 1511) and the five statues crowning the facade of San Giorgio Maggiore, as well as two angels and other figures inside the church. His early Mannerist style developed



Winged Figure with Elephant

to become more fluid and early Baroque in character with naturalistic modelling and substantial volume, which allowed for striking chiaroscuro light effects. He was the most distinguished artist in his family and died of the plague in 1630.

The Winged Figure would appear to date from about 1610-20, on the basis of its affinities with the San Marco figures, which have the same richly rendered curling hair, lion faces on the sandals and scrolling on the armour.

The San Giorgio angels are even closer, sharing the same vigorous movement, the emphatic *contrapposto* as well as the facial



Venus with Cupid by G. Albanese, Villa Fietta Altivole © Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Atlante della statuaria da giardino

details, the spreading drapery, the solidity and volume, the careful detailing of wings and sleeve revers. Another close analogy is provided by the angels in the relief of the Pietà in the church of San Vicenzo, Vicenza. Finally De Vincenti suggests that the face of the Venus with Cupid at villa Fietta, Altivole, is almost identical to our Winged Figure.

Ducale Restauro's detailed illustrated technical report described the three main elements of the project, the removal of the green algae, investigation and consolidation of visible cracks and old repairs, conservation and protection against future damage.



Angel by G. Albanese, S. Giorgio Maggiore © Monica de Vincenti

The biggest cracks ran down the right side of the elephant's head while another affected the statue's left shoulder and arm. These were related to the weight of these parts of the object.

Throughout the project tests were carried out by the Laboratorio Analisi di Materiali Antichi (set up in 1993 and part of the Venice University IUAV), which worked with Ducale and the Soprintendenza to establish what previous treatments had been used and to inform the course of the project. Fuller technical details and illustrations are available on request.

New Projects for 2015–16: Music and the Museo Archaeologico

CHOIR BOOKS AT SAN MARCO

Visiting Venice in 1645, the diarist John Evelyn had his first encounter with opera, which he famously described as 'one of the most magnificent and expensive diversions the wit of man can invent'. The work performed that evening was by Giovanni Rovetta, whose sacred music forms part of the historic choir books of the Basilica of San Marco. The Archive of the Patriarchate of Venice recently identified eighteen important music manuscripts in the collection of the basilica, eleven of which were conserved last year with funding from Save Venice and the Swiss Committee.

As a homage to the Renaissance and Baroque city's vibrant musical life, Venice in Peril Fund is sponsoring conservation of seven of these precious scores at a cost of £3500. They include works by Antonio Lotti, a major Venetian composer of the eighteenth century who befriended Handel and Bach and influenced them both. We hope to organize performances of some of the pieces contained in the choir books once the conservation work is complete.



Manuscript with a setting of the Magnificat by Antonio Lotti © Basilica Cattedrale di San Marco

MUSEO ARCHAEOLOGICO – BURSARY

A major strategy to open up the Museo Archaeologico is under way and Venice in Peril is to fund a bursary which will enable Dr. Giorgia Bonesso to reorder the museum's deposits. She will be using a new methodology, RE-ORG, that she developed with the backing of ICCROM and UNESCO.

At the heart of the Museo Archaeologico is one of the oldest public museums in Europe, the Statuario Pubblico, given to the Republic by the Grimani family between 1523 and 1587. A few years ago Venice in Peril Fund financed three bursaries for study of the acquisition of the collection, its display in Palazzo Grimani and its donation to the Republic. Links between the Museo Archaeologico and Palazzo Grimani will be reinforced as part of the reorganisation.

Project Updates:

CATTEDRA CICOGNARA

In June the contract for the project to restore this Empire style official chair and table designed by Giuseppe Borsato for the President of the Accademia in 1810-20, was awarded to the Milan firm of Luca Quartana. It will be installed in the Tablino in the Palladian wing of the Accademia Galleries.

WW1 MEMORIAL DOORS ST GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

Restoration of the memorial bronze doors can now go ahead. Contributions from Venice in Peril Fund, Venice city council, the battlefield village of Calvene and from supporters, particularly those who attend services when they are in Venice, have made it possible.

A Venetian Trio at the National Trust: 2015 Kirker Lecture by Helen Ghosh

RELEN GHOSH, Director General of the National Trust, has visited Venice over many years. For the Kirker lecture in May—summarised here - she picked out the fascinating and very different Venetian stories of three people whose lives and tastes are reflected in houses now owned by the National Trust.

The first of these was Samuel Egerton, a second son, from Tatton Park, in Cheshire who went to Venice to make a career for himself as a merchant in the early 18th century. He worked for Consul Joseph Smith the collector and art agent for Canaletto, and commissioned two pictures from Canaletto on behalf of his uncle. These pictures are still at Tatton which Samuel inherited in 1738 and where he built a library which includes Italian and specifically Venetian books probably collected by Samuel.

The second figure chosen, was William Bankes, of Kingston Lacy, Dorset, a pioneer Egyptologist and widely travelled collector who stayed with Byron in Venice in 1819. He was prevented from returning to England in the last 20 years of his life for fear of imprisonment, for homosexual activity, but this did not stop him from carrying out an extensive programme of closely planned decoration of his house Kingston Lacy. He collected paintings, including Titian's portrait of Nicolo Zen and a Tintoretto ceiling painting showing Apollo Crowning a Poet, but his knowledge and love of materials and craftsmanship also led him to buy gilded leather wall coverings – a Venetian speciality - and commission work in Italy, such as the boxwood Dining Room doors carved with subjects from Donatello's High Altar in the basilica known as the Santo in Padua. He died in Venice in 1855.

The last of the trio was Teresa Hulton. whose mother was Venetian and whose father was the English artist William Hulton. friend of Sickert and Singer Sargent. She grew up in Venice as part of the artistic expatriate community and lived in Palazzo Donà overlooking Campo San Giovanni e Paolo. Teresa worked for the Red Cross on the Italian front during the First World War and married Thomas Noel-Hill, 8th Lord Berwick in 1919 at St George's Anglican Church in Venice. She played an important role at their home, Attingham Park, Shropshire undertaking repairs and conserving its collections. These included the largest collection of Italian white and gold furniture acquired by an earlier Lord Berwick in Genoa between 1814-1824. Poignantly her Venetian lace wedding gloves and a blue stencilled Fortuny coat in which she was painted by Sir Gerard Kelly are still at Attingham.

As a postscript to the lecture Helen added that Clandon Park in Surrey which suffered a devastating fire on April 29 was built by the Venetian architect Giacomo Leoni in the 1720s. Its Marble Hall and Saloon off which other rooms lead is based on a Venetian plan. Venetian lanterns and a set of Venetian 18th century armchairs were among the furniture rescued. The National Trust has since announced that Clandon will be rebuilt 'in some shape or form'.

These stories give just a flavour of the variety of Venetian connections in UK collections.
Look out for others when visiting National
Trust properties. Its online collection database responds with over 2000 items to a search for 'Venice' or 'Venetian'.

WWW.NATIONALTRUSTCOLLECTIONS.ORG.UK

Autumn 2015 Lecture Series

All lectures will be held at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, W1J oBE

Doors open at 6.30, lectures begin at 6.45pm. Drinks will be after the lecture until 8.30pm. Tickets (see details below) are £15 for members and £18 for non-members except for the Ashley Clarke Memorial Lecture – £25 for members and £30 for non-members (to include a short reception).

21 SEPTEMBER

HEIKE ZECH, Senior Curator of the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Venetian mosaics in Victorian London: eternal pictures for a modern age'

12 OCTOBER

PETER FRANKOPAN, Senior Research Fellow at Worcester College, and Director of the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research, 'Venice, the Adriatic and Asia: connections across the Silk Roads'

9 NOVEMBER

DONAL COOPER, Lecturer in Italian Renaissance art at Cambridge University and a Fellow of Jesus College, 'The Frari Revisited: The Experience of Sacred Art in Renaissance Venice'

STUDY DAY

14 NOVEMBER

'A Ferret in the Archives: Rawdon Brown and the Anglo-Venetian Relationship'. This Study Day is in collaboration with the British Italian Society and the Friends of the National Archives, Kew and will take place at the NAK from 10am until 5pm. Further details will be available nearer the time but if you would like to register your interest please contact us at info@veniceinperil.com

TICKETS FOR ALL THESE EVENTS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE, BY POST AND BY TELEPHONE (SEE BELOW)

If you would like to know more about our projects or how you can donate please contact us at

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