Dear Friends,

As you may already know, Ursola Rimbotti succeeded Annabel Randall and Emma-Louise Bassett as Director of Venice in Peril this April. We wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to Emma and Annabel for their unwavering commitment and excellent leadership over the last decade. Venice in Peril welcomes Ursola, who brings with her a wealth of experience and a passion for our mission. We all look forward to an exciting new chapter for the charity.

Our meaningful work continues at a time when Venice faces endless conservation, environmental and social challenges. Among our recent achievements is the completion in January of the conservation of the baroque wellhead by Francesco Penso ‘Cabianca’ (1665-1737) in the Cloister of the Trinità in the Archivio di Stato. The project was extended to include the four archangels standing guard in the cloister’s corners – and this too is almost finished.

We recently approved the conservation of two Mariegole from the Scuola Grande della Misericordia and the Scuola Grande San Giovanni Evangelista at the Archivio di Stato. The dramatic recovery of these Mariegole, which were stolen and eventually rediscovered in the United States, is a story we look forward to sharing with you.

Our Trustees have also approved the conservation of the St. Sebastian Triptych by Giovanni Bellini and his workshop, which is due to be completed in the autumn and will be displayed in the upper gallery of what was the Church of the Carità at the Accademia alongside other altarpieces by the Bellini family. At the Marciana Library, we have agreed to restore another globe by Vincenzo Coronelli (1650-1718) – the restoration of his Terrestrial Globe will accompany our current restoration of his Celestial Globe. Finally, we will undertake the conservation of three paintings by Antonio Zanchi (1631-1722) in the Scuola Grande dei Carmini.

Turning to our activities in London, many of us enjoyed the Kirker Spring Lecture at the Royal Geographical Society, given by Dr Xavier Bray, Director of the Wallace Collection. His captivating talk illustrated the role and importance of Venetian works within the holdings of the Wallace Collection. Among the many fascinating surprises outlined in his talk, Bray discussed Rodin’s debt to the carvings on a Venetian bronze cannon as well as a possible new Canaletto (1697-1768) attribution.

A few of us also visited the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art and the British Museum. At the Estorick, we enjoyed an exhibition of paintings and works on paper by the influential modern artist Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964).

At the British Museum, Venice 1500: Jacopo de’ Barbari and the Rise of Printmaking enabled us to explore de’ Barbari’s exceptional map of Venice as well as the artist’s relationship with his contemporaries, such as Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Leonardo de Vinci (1452-1519). My most sincere thanks to our trustee Professor Emerita Deborah Howard and the Department’s Milein Cosman Curator, Grant Lewis, for an enthralling talk on this topic.

This October, a second trip to Venice is planned for our Major Donors and Patrons as a valuable opportunity to deepen our connection to the city’s art, history, and culture. There will be visits to San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, the Scuola Grande dei Carmini, the conservation workshops of the Accademia at the Misericordia, and the Cloister of the Trinità, as well as other exciting festivities and musical entertainments. Many of these sites have strong connections to the work of Venice in Peril, going back over the past 50 years.

I would like to express my gratitude to the J. Paul Getty Junior Charitable Trust for its most generous and unrestricted support of our conservation projects. As we continue our endeavours to protect Venice’s unique heritage, I also wish to extend our appreciation to all who support our work. Without your generosity and dedication, none of our accomplishments would be possible.

Guy Elliott, Chairman

Guy Elliott at the Cloister of the Trinità, Archivio di Stato, January 2023
We were delighted to welcome Dr Xavier Bray, Director of the Wallace Collection, to the 16th Kirker Spring Lecture at the Royal Geographical Society; an occasion which proved to be a resounding success. It was a warm evening, and during the prosecco reception many spilled out onto the terrace to enjoy the fine weather.

Bray gave a wide-ranging and compelling tour of the Wallace’s Venetian treasures, richly illustrated with many captivating details. He hailed the two famous vedute by Canaletto to be the finest in the land, disclosing his plan to re-hang this pair on opposite walls to recreate the experience of the view to the right and left from a gondola. Less well-known is the remarkable ceremonial cannon by Giovanni Mazzaroli (fl.1688-1754), cast in the Arsenale and illustrating Jupiter ejecting the Titans. Bray plausibly suggested the figures on the cannon were the model for Rodin’s unfinished masterwork The Gates of Hell (1880-1917), with excerpts from the museum’s visitors’ book to prove it.

Closer to the hearts of the Venice in Peril team, perhaps, was Bray’s entertaining reappraisal of the famous painting by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) in its time: The Execution of the Doge Marino Faliero from the 1820’s. This masterpiece, so often unnoticed by visitors, depicts an imaginary location in the Ducal Palace which includes in the background the Porta della Carta, in which the Doge is shown kneeling before the Lion of St. Mark. Venice in Peril Fund cleaned and restored this wonderful sculpture in situ in the 1970’s. Bray unravelled the painting’s complexities based on his research at the Louvre, as well as reading critical passages from Byron’s play on the subject, Delacroix’s original source of inspiration.

Finally, a particular Venetian painting was the recent impetus for the reinterpretation of the notoriously restrictive instructions left by Lady Wallace in her will. Bray found a way to lend Titian’s exquisite masterpiece Perseus and Andromeda (1554-56) to rejoin its sister poesie paintings for the first time since the 16th century, for the 2020 Titian: Love, Desire, Death exhibition at the National Gallery.

Bray’s enthusiasm and breadth of knowledge was astonishing, from Richard Parkes Bonington’s resplendent final watercolour of San Marco before his death at 26, to one of three remaining military helmets (cabasseti) illustrated with Venice’s lion and motto. He brought to life the connoisseurship of the remarkable Hertford family and the Venetian treasures in the Wallace Collection and we are grateful for his collaboration in making the evening so enjoyable.

A recording of the 2023 Kirker Lecture is available from our website: veniceinperil.org

Suzannah Dick
The important panel painting depicting Tobias and the Archangel Raphael (1512-14), known as the Tobioolo, held at the Gallerie dell’Accademia, has been reassessed as an early work by Titian (c. 1488-1576). For many years, following the 1664 attribution by the Italian painter Marco Boschini (1602-1681), it was attributed to the scarcely known late 16th century painter Sante Zago (active 1550). However, a century earlier, Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) had reported Titian’s own testimony that in 1508 ‘while the Emperor Maximilian was fighting against the Venetians,’ Titian had executed a painting representing Tobias and the Archangel Raphael – albeit that Vasari confused this work with another one of the same subject in a different church.

If the date of 1508 is accepted, the importance of the Tobioolo greatly increases, since it testifies to a precocious circulation of Michelangelo’s art and ideas in Venice. It appears evident that the powerful dynamism of the Archangel, as expressed in the gesture of the muscular arm, relies on the awareness of the preparatory studies for the Battle of Cascina, the impressive composition conceived by Michelangelo in 1504-05 for the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Florence’s Palazzo Vecchio. Alongside Leonardo’s Battle of Anghiari, included in the same decorative cycle, Michelangelo’s composition – although never transferred onto the wall – became, even in its preparatory stage as a cartoon, ‘the school of the world’ or la scuola del mondo, according to Benvenuto Cellini’s famous definition. The idea of mounting a dossier exhibition focused on the Tobioolo originates from the strong conviction that it is indeed a very early masterpiece by Titian which deserves to be re-evaluated by scholars and non-specialists alike, to regain its primary place in Venetian art history, at the dawn of the ‘modern manner’.

The collections of the Accademia are rich in paintings and other works from the same period that provide useful comparisons to the Tobioolo - starting with the components that are derived from Giorgione (1477-1510), Michelangelo (1475-1564) and Dürer (1471-1528), who was in Venice between 1505 and 1506. These comparisons will no doubt prove surprising. The Accademia’s Tobioolo represents one of the earliest achievements of the young Titian, who arrived in Venice from the mountain village of Cadore in the Dolomites ‘when he was not yet 20’ and who famously worked on the exterior frescoes of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in the summer of 1508. Unfortunately, these frescoes are now almost entirely lost, but they will be re-ekoved in the exhibition through fragments that were detached in the 19th century, and also engravings and watercolours after them. The exhibition will be structured around a selection of 25-30 works from the same period, which will offer a rich and compelling visual narrative, illustrating one of the most decisive moments for the development of Venetian art, as well as for Titian’s future career. This period was marked by a series of significant events. As well as the war of 1508 mentioned above, one should also remember that Giorgione’s death occurred on 17 September 1510. During the following year Titian was commissioned to paint frescoes for the Scoletta del Santo in Padova, around the same time Sebastiano del Piombo (1485-1547) left Venice for Rome. The year 1511 marks another important turning point, providing rich materials for the final segment of the exhibition, which focuses on Titian’s early career.

Dr Roberta Battaglia, Deputy Director, Accademia Galleries, Venice

Tobioolo or Tobias and the Archangel Raphael, 1512-14, Titian (1488-1576) © G.A.V.E Archivio fotografico by kind permission MiBACT – Gallerie dell’Accademia di Venezia
A new museum dedicated to Lord Byron will soon be inaugurated in Ravenna. It will be housed in Palazzo Guiccioli, where Byron lived for two years, after his departure from Venice in December 1819.

It was his love for the young Countess Teresa Guiccioli (née Gamba), married to the 58-year-old Count Guiccioli, that took him to Ravenna; the Count was accommodating enough to allow Byron to move into the palazzo. Palazzo Guiccioli was bought, after decades of neglect, by the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Ravenna in 2012. Since then, it has been under restoration, with the specific aim of making it the seat of the Museo di Lord Byron and the Museo del Risorgimento. This partnership is highly appropriate, since Byron, during his stay in Ravenna, became closely associated with the local Carbonari movement. The Gamba family were prominent members of this secret revolutionary society and Byron even went to the extent of concealing their weapons in the palazzo. Traces of Byron’s stay have been found in the palazzo, including a couple of frescoed copies of Titian paintings that Byron mentions in his journals. The museum will also display several items of memorabilia (including portrait busts, paintings, medallions, manuscripts, and even fragments of the poet’s sunburnt skin) that were devotedly preserved by Teresa Guiccioli. Until now these have been held in the Biblioteca Classense in Ravenna. The museum’s Steering Committee, which was set up in 2013, has collected other Byronic material over the last ten years, including valuable first editions, paintings, and manuscripts.

When Byron arrived in Ravenna, he was the most famous writer in Europe. His retirement to a small provincial town, to play the role of a cavalier servente (a semi-official escort or lover) to a local aristocrat’s wife would have appeared as a backward move. Nonetheless, he wrote some of his most important works here (including his two great Venetian dramas, Marino Faliero and The Two Foscari) and became increasingly involved with Italian revolutionary politics. The museum will analyse this crucial period in his career and help visitors to understand the enormous influence that Byron continued to exert on European culture, even from the seclusion of Ravenna.

It is to be hoped that the palazzo will become a major centre for the study of the Romantic movement throughout Europe. The Steering Committee has already established links with the Keats-Shelley House in Rome, and over the last five years Ravenna has hosted several important international conferences on Byron and Shelley, including their engagement with the works of the other major poet associated with the city, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321).

Gregory Dowling

Gregory Dowling will give an online talk on 17 October 2023.

SUPPORT VENICE IN PERIL FUND

By supporting Venice in Peril Fund, you will contribute to the conservation of many different monuments, works of art and buildings across the city of Venice and its islands. Your support will enable you to:

• Deepen your knowledge of Venice – its complex history, the contribution it has made to world culture and Western European Art, and the challenges it faces today.
• Learn about our charity’s conservation work.
• Access a popular and varied programme of expert but accessible talks.
• Receive our biannual Newsletter and regular e-bulletins covering our conservation projects and many other developments in Venice.
• Become part of a friendly network of individuals and organisations who share your love of Venice.

To become a friend please visit: https://www.veniceinperil.org/beacon-friend/

Major Donors and Patrons are also invited to curator-led, out of hours visits to a variety of museums and galleries here in the UK and to enjoy, at first hand, our conservation projects in Venice.

To become a Patron, please give a minimum annual donation of £500 per person. If you would like to know more please email info@veniceinperil.org or call 0207 736 6891.
Giovanni Bellini’s St Sebastian Triptych (1464-70)

New Project

Last October, a group of supporters and trustees visited the Accademia Galleries. Here, they admired Bellini’s recently conserved Nativity Triptych (1464-70), funded by Venice in Peril Fund in 2020, as well as the St Sebastian Triptych also by Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516) and his workshop. We are excited to announce that our Board of Trustees has agreed to fund this second important conservation treatment.

The St Sebastian Triptych is one of a set of four important altarpieces painted by the Bellini family for the Church of Santa Maria della Carità, which is now part of the Accademia. The intention is to hang the St Sebastian Triptych alongside the other three, to showcase the development of the altarpiece in 15th century Venice. The only other ensemble of 15th century altarpieces in Venice are the Vivarini polyptychs at San Zaccaria (1443), which instead represent the last flourish of the gothic style.

The proposed treatment will cost €75,000, take about nine months to complete and include:

- Remedial work to the panels and their supporting structures, reversing inappropriate earlier interventions.
- Replacement of the supporting crossbars with a new system similar to that already developed for the Nativity altarpiece.
- Replacement of the old cradling system of the large lunette with a new support - the current structure dates to the 19th century.
- Cleaning, to remove the old varnishes and adhesives which have hardened and are pulling at the paint layers, as well as the old re-touchings.
- Re-integration of the damaged areas, both to the figures and the gold backgrounds.
- Non-invasive lab analysis to identify the materials and techniques employed by the artist.
- Archival research to complement the conservation treatment.

The conservation of the St Sebastian Triptych and the creation of a special display precisely fit our mission; we would so appreciate your support.

St Sebastian Triptych, 1464-70
Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516)
© G.A.V.E Archivio fotografico by kind permission MiBACT – Gallerie dell’Accademia di Venezia
Twice a day the tidal waters of the Adriatic Sea flow through Venice, flushing out the canals and refreshing the water circulation. The city’s fate cannot therefore be separated from the environmental conditions of the whole Mediterranean basin.

The Mediterranean’s favourable climate is key to the region’s culture and civilisation and sustains the agriculture and fisheries that produce the ingredients of the healthy ‘Mediterranean diet’. Numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites surround the basin, yet all of these historic coastal settlements are threatened by the prospect of significant sea-level rise. Meanwhile, for every degree of global warming, rainfall in the basin decreases by around 4%. Indeed, the climate of the Mediterranean is changing from the traditional long rainy winter and shorter dry summer to a long period of drought of seven months or more each year. At the time of this conference the river Po was estimated to be 7 metres below its usual level. During dry spells water now has to be extracted from the ground, which is not a renewable source. We need to remember the danger of catastrophic floods, such as the recent inundations in the Po valley.

The speakers in the first panel highlighted the precarious ecology of the Mediterranean Sea, which is warming at an even faster rate than the world’s oceans. As early as 1985, Sir David Attenborough warned that ‘By the early 1970s it was clear that the Mediterranean was dying.’ A water temperature rise of between 3 and 8 degrees Celsius in the Mediterranean is predicted by the year 2100. In this scenario, the whole circulation of the basin will be altered, and the stabilising deep-water cold current under the sea from Europe to Africa will cease – or at least become much reduced. According to the First Report on Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin (2020), the Mediterranean is the ‘main hotspot in the world’ – indeed the Black Sea has already become anoxic.

Here Venice, highlighted the threat to the buildings caused by motorboats and spoke about the essential role of the lagoon marshes and wetlands in balancing the ecosystem.

The second panel on geopolitics pointed to the region’s growing instability caused by conflict, energy shortages, drought and migration. Whereas Europe and the Arab countries are united by their respective treaties and shared interests, no single political umbrella unifies the Mediterranean, and increasing inequalities exacerbate the tensions. Competing outside pressures from Russia, China and the United States further destabilise the region.

The aim of this symposium was to show how adaptation, cooperation and resilience will be needed to preserve the quality of life in settlements all around the Mediterranean.

Deborah Howard
We are pleased to announce the 2023 Venice in Peril Fund internship bursary winners, Carla Learoyd and Joshua Horsfall.

Created in 2009 as a partnership between Venice in Peril, San Giorgio Maggiore and the City & Guilds of London Art School, this internship enables BA Conservation Graduates to gain invaluable work experience in conservation maintenance in Venice.

Previous interns have worked on projects ranging from conserving the 14th century funerary sculpture of Capitano Pietro Civran to cleaning a series of stone sculptures found on the inner walls of one of the entrances in Palladio's church as well as undertaking work on individual altars and sculptures.

Joshua and Carla share a passion for conservation. Their commitment is demonstrated by their excellent academic achievements and impressive professional experiences.

With a background in furniture, Carla discovered an enthusiasm for working on stone, particularly decorative surfaces like gilding and polychrome, through her coursework. Meanwhile, Joshua's aspirations for conserving stone, wood, and decorative surfaces led him to dream of establishing his own practice. We look forward to hearing about their progress and wish them all the best.

Lucia Giorgi was awarded a traineeship bursary in Venice in 2021, partly funded by Venice in Peril. Giorgi has worked at the Misericordia Laboratory and Accademia Galleries, practising alongside art historians, conservators, and scientists to investigate the working methods of some of the great masterpieces of the Venetian tradition. Notably, she worked on Bellini’s Nativity Triptych (recently restored by Venice in Peril).

Art History students on a special visit to the Misericordia lab with restorers Cristiana Sburlino and Francesca Bartolomeoli
Photo: Susan Steer
Curated by British art historian Peter Humfrey, a leading authority on Venetian Renaissance painting, together with Andrea Bellieni, for the Venice Civic Museums, and Gretchen Hirschauer for the National Gallery of Art, Washington, this major exhibition delighted its visitors with the opportunity to see many lesser-known works by one of Venice’s most well-loved painters.

Although Vittore Carpaccio (c. 1460-1526) is best known for his narrative cycles, painted in a festive palette and populated with fairy-tale characters against fantastical cityscapes, he was also a painter of sacred images for private devotion, altarpieces, portraits, and a prolific practitioner of drawing.

The catalogue is the first major publication on Carpaccio in English since Patricia Fortini-Brown’s excellent 1989 Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio, which has, in any case, a different scope and focus. The catalogue includes an insightful essay on the architecture of Carpaccio’s paintings by Venice in Peril trustee Deborah Howard. It will remain an invaluable resource for scholars and non-specialists alike.

Several works travelled across the Atlantic, as the show was first at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, and others came from the other side of the Adriatic, from former Venetian territories which provided a fruitful market for artists of Carpaccio’s generation. The exhibition represented a unique opportunity to see the six canvasses of the Scuola degli Albanesi, which was disbanded in 1807 with its Carpaccio paintings dispersed around Italy. It united for the first time in over 20 years the two halves of a decorated door, the so-called Courtesans (c.1465-1526) of the Musei Civici with the Getty’s Hunting in the Lagoon (1490-1495).

Another treat were the works which had benefited from conservation and cleaning in preparation for this exhibition, interventions which returned brilliant colour to yellowed and grubby surfaces and which have been the occasion of new discoveries and even re-attributions.

To obviate unnecessary risks, the organisers avoided moving large canvasses across the city. The Venice cycles were however represented through preparatory drawings and visual and written information, and visitors were encouraged to head to the Scuola Dalmata (also known as San Giorgio degli Schiavoni), which is only a ten-minute walk from the Doge’s Palace and where the canvasses can still be seen in situ, if not in their original arrangement. There was some regret that the St Ursula Cycle (1495) and the Miracle at the Rialto (1495) were off-view but it should be remembered that the show was originally planned for an earlier date and had to be postponed due to the pandemic.

Dr Susan Steer, Venice Representative
Venice in Peril trustee Deborah Howard is one of the 30 winners of the 2023 Europa Nostra Awards. This is for her research on the architectural heritage of 16th century industrial development in the Veneto, which the judges described as 'unprecedented'. Deborah is Professor Emerita of Architectural History in the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art and a Fellow of St John’s College, Cambridge.

Her research sheds light on the merits of hydraulic power and its impact on industrial development. Delighted to receive the award, she emphasised the contributions of her research assistants, the Palladio Centre staff and the owners of around 90 former industrial sites who made her fieldwork possible.


The awards will be presented by Cecilia Bartoli at a ceremony in the Palazzo del Cinema at the Venice Lido in late September.

Venice in Peril trustee Deborah Howard in Italy with the book that resulted from her award-winning research © St John’s College, University of Cambridge

EUROPA NOstra AWARD

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Turner and Bonington: Watercolours from and at the Wallace Collection
20 September 2023 - 21 April 2024

La Serenissima: Drawing in 18th Century Venice at the Courtauld Gallery
14 October 2023 - 11 February 2024

Willem de Kooning at the Gallerie dell’Accademia
16 April 2024 - 15 September 2024

NEW BOOKS

Venice and the Doges: Six Hundred Years of Architecture, Monuments, and Sculpture
By Toto Bergamo Rossi, Rizzoli, 2023

Il Piede Destro di Byron
By Alberto Toso Fei, Libreria Feltrinelli, 2023

Graffiti of Venice
By Desi Marango and Alberto Toso Fei, Lineadacqua Edizioni, 2022

Venice: City of Pictures
By Martin Gayford, Thames & Hudson, 2023

ARTICLES AND DOCUMENTARIES

BBC Four, Saving Venice Documentary
22 May 2023

The Economist, Why Venetians are pondering raising their entire city
24 May 2023

The Art Newspaper, At last, Venice’s authorities admit the risk from sea-level rise
3 July 2023
AUTUMN 2023 EVENT SERIES

MONDAY 18 SEPTEMBER, 6.30-8PM
Bellini to Titian: Venetian Splendours At The National Gallery
Dr Maria Alambritis
The National Gallery’s Vivmar Curatorial Fellow

WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER – SATURDAY 14 OCTOBER
Trip to Venice
for Major Donors and Patrons

TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER
Byron & Venice
Professor Gregory Dowling
Professor of Anglo-American Literature at the Università Ca’ Foscari, Venice

MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER
Ashley Clarke Memorial Lecture
Spinning La Serenissima: The Changing Image of Venice Over the Ages
Jonathan Keates
Writer, biographer and author of La Serenissima: The Story of Venice as well as former Chairman of Venice in Peril Fund

TUESDAY 28 NOVEMBER
La Serenissima: Drawings in 18th century Venice
Dr Ketty Gottardo, Martin Halusa Curator of Drawings
A morning visit to the Courtauld Gallery
for Major Donors and Patrons

& SAVE THE DATE

MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2024, 6.30-8PM
Venice Biennale: A League of Nations
Andrea Rose OBE
Director of Visual Arts and Strategic Programmes at The British Council 1994-2014. A joint event with the British-Italian Society

TUESDAY 14 MAY 2024
Kirker Spring Lecture in Aid of Venice In Peril Fund
Dr Caroline Campbell
Director of the National Gallery of Ireland

Our events at the Society of Antiquaries are generously supported by The Elizabeth Cayzer Charitable Trust
Tickets are non-refundable and can be purchased from www.veniceinperil.org

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