

NEWSLETTER
Summer 2021



VENICE IN
PERIL

PROJECT UPDATE: TABLINO AND OVAL STAIRCASE, ACCADEMIA GALLERIES

Repair of 2019 flood damage, a remarkable discovery and a new view



*Uncovering Canova's cast of Paris in the Tablino, Gallerie dell' Accademia
Photo: Joan Porcel and courtesy UNISVE/MiBACT/G.A.V.E.*

The Tablino hall and Oval staircase next to it, designed by Andrea Palladio in 1560 for the Convent of the Carità, have been the focus of a Venice in Peril project to fund repair of damage caused by the exceptionally high tides of November 2019. The work, undertaken by the Venice conservation firm UNISVE includes restoration of sections of the marmorino plaster wall-covering and the terracotta-tiled floor and repairs to the metal bases supporting plaster casts of sculptures by Antonio Canova.

To prevent flood damage in the future a new drainage solution was required and since a pump could not be installed in the Tablino it was decided to open up a bricked doorway onto the magnificent spiral staircase next door. Excavation here revealed that the original floor of the stairwell continued the slope of

the stairs and led to a cavity, covered by a recycled 15th-century tombstone, against the outside wall. At first it was thought to be a latrine, but further investigation has revealed a much bigger, vaulted recess. It was probably one of the cisterns which Palladio, in the Quattro Libri, says he intended to provide in the Convento della Carità.

The pump will be placed in a steel container in the mouth of the cistern, specially designed so that the cistern is protected from any floodwater but can be accessed in the future.

From the visitor's point of view an added benefit of the project will be the newly revealed view from the Tablino through to the stairwell, as Palladio intended.

The conservation work is scheduled to finish by the end of June.

DEAR FRIEND AND SUPPORTER

Under normal circumstances (my heart sinks at the sound of that cliché) Venice in Peril would be in the midst of a planned series of celebrations throughout 2021 to mark our 50th anniversary. The pandemic having written us all a different scenario, it now looks as if the various beanos, junketings and red-letter days will have to be shuffled around.

We survive however and our work goes on, as vital as it was when in 1971 that group of choice spirits led by Ashley and Frances Clarke established Venice in Peril. Their splendid initiative was soon followed by others, so that 27 international heritage organizations now form part of the Association of Private Committees, dedicated to funding and nurturing the specialist talents which sustain Venice's built environment and rich artistic narrative.

In the wider environmental context of a fragile ecosystem across the surrounding lagoon, many fundamental challenges for the city as a living entity remain as daunting as ever. How can we stop its population haemorrhaging and keep resident communities alive? What will thwart sleazy manoeuvres by short-term financial operators or the drive to turn Venice into a cross between a theme park and an open-air museum? Who issues the ultimate 'Stop!' to saturation tourism, *grandi navi* and yet more hotel and holiday rental accommodation?

Against this dangerously volatile background Venice in Peril has carried on its remarkable rescue operation through a half-century of existence. Our approach has been unfairly

dismissed as 'sticking-plaster'. It isn't. Allowing the city itself to collapse into its canals doubtless holds a certain cheaply sophisticated allure, but this devalues the achievement of the very first Venetians and all those who have kept its unique flame burning for 1,600 years (another anniversary for 2021). As our own founders understood, Venice encapsulates all the finest impulses of our shared humanity, those redemptive inspirations that have drawn such a generous response from friends, donors and supporters since our foundation. You can continue this by contributing to the £100,000 conservation of the magnificent Trinity wellhead, our 50th Anniversary project launched here, and you can join our new Patron scheme for munificent supporters.

We're still here, still busy, but as always we need your help, so go out and bring us more friends to help celebrate this act of faith in an enduring Venice. Thank you.

Jonathan Keates
Chairman



50TH ANNIVERSARY
APPEAL FOR THE TRINITY WELLHEAD

Since 1971 Venice in Peril has completed more than 75 projects, working closely with Venetians to help with the huge task of protecting the city's world-famous heritage.

To mark the half century we are launching a 50th Anniversary Appeal for £100,000, to fund the conservation of the early 18th-century 'Trinità' wellhead in the great cloister of the Archivio di Stato, formerly the convent of the Frari.

It will be the first wellhead adopted by Venice in Peril and provides an opportunity to learn about the work of Francesco Penso, known as Cabianca (1665-1737), who sculpted the Trinity

group, set among billowing clouds and angels and mounted on an imposing arch above the well.

This campaign comes in the context of a big state-funded project to extend access to the Archivio. There will be a new public entrance, an adapted water-gate now accessed from a filled-in canal or Rio Terà, and the conversion of the monastery kitchens to reception rooms. The adjacent winter refectory whose portal is being restored with funds from the Fondation Jean-Barthélemy will become an auditorium for lectures and conferences.

Please help us raise the £100,000 needed to carry out the conservation.

“The figure group of the Holy Trinity, in the Frari's Trinità courtyard, is an astonishing sight. With his carved angels flying as if in a frescoed sky, Francesco Cabianca's statues perch on marble clouds on a lofty early 18th-century well-head, to be seen against the real skies of his native Venice.”

*Opposite: Trinity Group surmounting the Wellhead
Photo: Matteo de Fina*



**PLEASE DONATE TO THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
APPEAL. CONSERVATION TODAY IS A GIFT FOR
FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

You can donate online at veniceinperil.org, by cheque made payable to Venice in Peril Fund/50AA, by tel. 020 7736 6891 or by BACS transfer using these details:

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Please email info@veniceinperil.org if this is the first time you have made a donation to Venice in Peril.

THANK YOU

TIME TRAVEL IN THE ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI VENEZIA

Deborah Howard shares her experiences of undertaking archive research alongside the Trinity cloister

Among the documents in the Archives from the star-shaped fortified town of Palmanova around 1595, I found a recipe for a 'torta rossa'. Made without flour (which was in very short supply on the building site), this cake was obviously a delicacy for the military engineers, rather than a meal for the hungry labourers. The ingredients are listed:

½ lb ground almonds
½ lb sugar
½ oz cinnamon
4 cloves
A few spices
8 eggs
A pinch of salt
4 spoonfuls of milk.

The recipe adds that a 'torta bianca' may be made the same way, except that the spices are replaced by a few drops of rose water for flavouring (presumably instead of some of the milk), being sure to use a clean bowl. I made both cakes, and they were delicious – but I warn you not to overdo the rose-water.

The thrill of archival research lies in chance discoveries such as these. Archives help you to get to know the people as individuals. You discover a magistrate who suffers from gout which makes him tetchy or meet an impoverished noblewoman whose clothes are so old and tatty that she is ashamed to go out except to take communion at Easter. In your own bare hand, you can hold testaments drawn up in Damascus or Alexandria, or read secret dispatches in code, or parchment decrees a thousand years old. The sheet may be stained with tears or wine, or splashed with sea water, betraying the emotions and adventures of long ago.

The Archivio di Stato di Venezia lies alongside the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. Established in 1815 in the former Franciscan friary in the wake of the convent's Napoleonic suppression, the vast collection of records includes official documentation from the whole history of the Venetian Republic, as well as notarial archives, family papers, maps, and ecclesiastical material.

Interior view of one of the document repositories, Archivio di Stato, Photo: Vicky Avery



I first began working in the Venetian archives more than fifty years ago, and very quickly became hooked - much to my own surprise, as I had always found published documents terribly dull. In the early 1970s readers used an upstairs room over the canal. This study room was so cold in winter that I wore a crocheted poncho over my clothes, poking my pen out through the holes. Those who arrived at 8.30 on the dot could claim the seats with the best daylight, and frequent visits to the bar for hot chocolate were essential.

Later the *sala di lettura* moved to the former refectory of the Franciscans, a large, vaulted hall with Gothic clerestory windows – and heating! This beautiful space holds many cherished memories for me. I almost want to caress the tall marble columns that run down the centre of the room. In winter, the volumes feel cold to the touch, brought straight from the unheated stores. In high summer, the doors in the centre of the room are opened up to admit the faintest whiff of hot humid air. Outside is the large cloister with its dramatic baroque well-head, soon to be restored by Venice in Peril.

Each day in the archives I feel a deep sense of privilege, as well as anticipation. Will the material I ordered contain anything exciting? Or even useful? Readers are allowed only a very small number of requests per day – between one and three items, depending on resources. Disappointments abound: sometimes sheets are missing, or the paper

is too damaged to be discernible – and occasionally the pages even disintegrate in the hand. Sometimes the handwriting is so untidy or shaky that it is hardly legible, or the ink has faded, or the script on the back of the page has bitten through the paper. Rules and regulations proliferate and change all the time. At one point it was decreed that it was dangerous for the staff to climb ladders, so for a while material from high shelves was inaccessible. Under the present coronavirus restrictions there is a two-month wait for appointments. But the chance discoveries of new and exciting material more than make up for the frustrations. I am just one of many researchers who have found their life's work on the shelves of the Venetian state archives.



CABIANCA – SCULPTOR OF THE TRINITÀ WELLHEAD

Where else can you see his work in Venice?

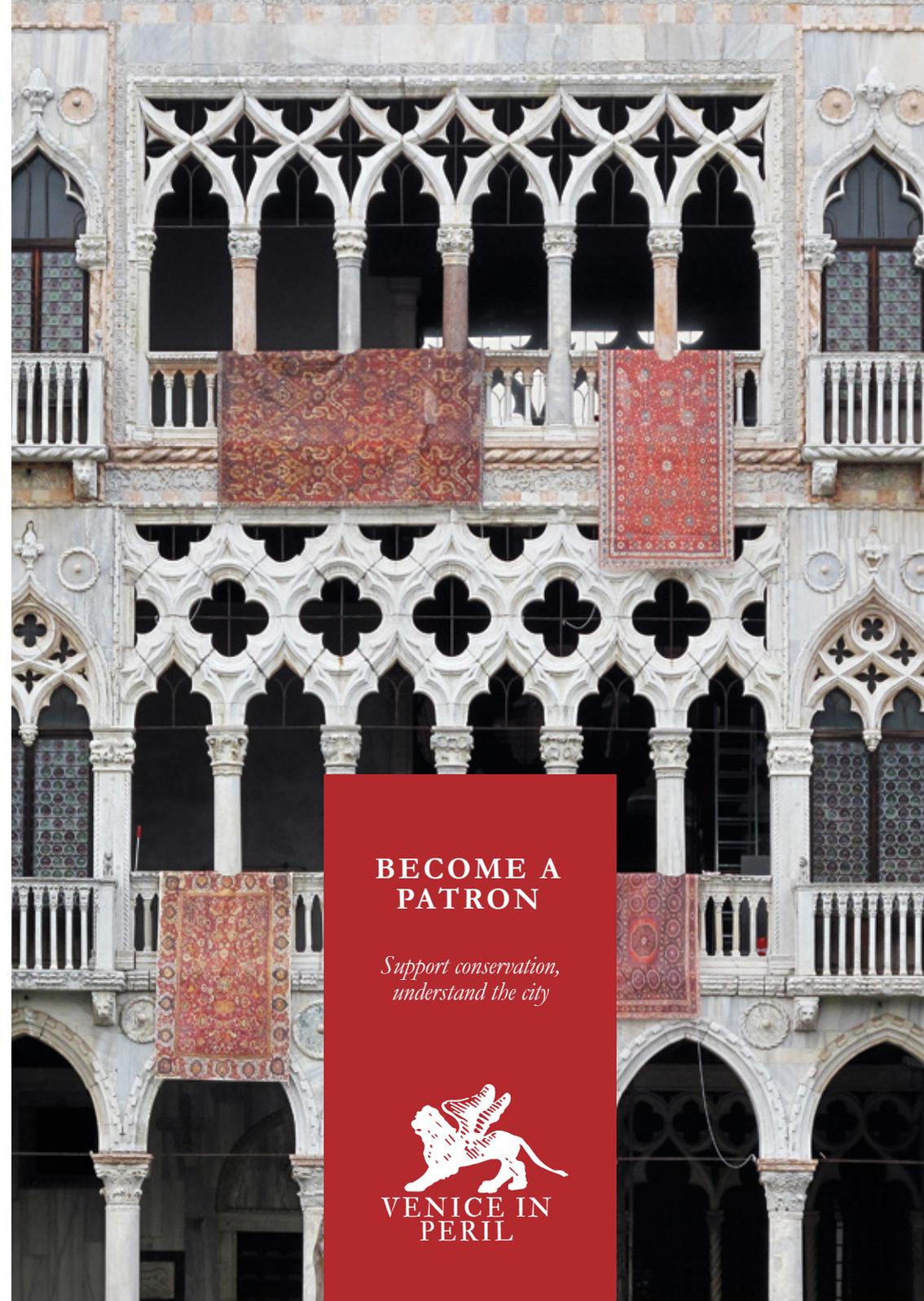
Visitors to the Frari church are overwhelmed by the impacted beauty of its works of art, embodying the entire Venetian narrative from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. We come in search of such masterpieces as Titian's Assumption, Donatello's Saint John the Baptist, the marble choir screen by Pietro Lombardo and of course the dramatic Canova monument currently being restored with funding from Venice in Peril.



Early in the 18th century a splendid altar was raised in the Frari's sacristy to create a shrine for the Franciscan fathers' collection of holy relics. To its two airborne angels by wizard wood-carver Andrea Brustolon were added three scenes from Christ's Passion, carved in exquisite marble high relief by the sculptor Francesco Penso, known as Cabianca, in around 1712.

What do we know of Cabianca? From the evidence of these gorgeous panels he was an exceptionally gifted craftsman, a late Baroque master whose feeling for drama is matched by arresting compositional fluency. In Venice he created statues for the façade of the Gesuiti church and for San Simeone Piccolo, as well as the wonderfully truculent, don't-mess-with-me image of war goddess Bellona on the grand gateway to the Arsenal.

Because of the historic significance of the Archivio di Stato, housed in the Franciscan convent next to the Frari, and because of plans to open up more of the site to the public, Venice in Peril has chosen a work here by Cabianca, the imposing cloister wellhead representing the Holy Trinity, with its arch and flanking statues, as our 50th anniversary project. When the city arose on its lagoon islets there were no immediate fresh water sources, so the sinking of wells was essential. Thus, the *vera da pozzo*, the decorated wellhead, embodies Venice's living spirit and Cabianca's essay in the form, like a scene from a Baroque oratorio, is a marvellous example.



**BECOME A
PATRON**

*Support conservation,
understand the city*


**VENICE IN
PERIL**

BECOME A PATRON OF VENICE IN PERIL

We invite you to become a Patron of Venice in Peril Fund: a new tier of support that we are introducing in our 50th Anniversary year as part of plans to lay the groundwork for the growth of the Fund into the future.

Conservation is becoming ever more expensive and there are many projects that we are unable to take on because of lack of funds.

Become a Patron by making a suggested minimum donation of £500 annually.

In addition to the benefits enjoyed by Friends of Venice in Peril, Patrons will be able, where it is practical and possible, to request occasional visits to see our conservation work in progress in Venice.

To become a Patron please complete and return the form.

Already a Friend of Venice in Peril?

If you are already a Friend of Venice in Peril but would like to become a Patron you can use this form to set up a new Standing Order. If you require any assistance setting up payments please email info@veniceinperil.org

I am already a Friend of Venice in Peril but would like to become a Patron

In support of its conservation work, Venice in Peril Fund promotes a deeper understanding of Venice, its complex history, the contribution it has made to world culture and the challenges it faces today, to encourage responsible and informed engagement with the city.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- I/we would like my/our names to be acknowledged in any relevant donor lists
- I/we wish to remain anonymous

Image on previous page: Ca' d'Oro, façade detail. Photograph ©Sarah Quill

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Standing orders cost less to administer and regular giving supports future planning. Please return this form indicating EITHER

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I enclose a cheque made payable to Venice in Peril Fund (Patron)

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For credit card payments, telephone +44 (0) 20 7736 6891 in office hours.

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I wish to gift aid

Multiple donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to Venice in Peril

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of gift aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

1 – The charity will claim 25p on every £1 that I give.

2 – Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or address or no longer pay sufficient tax.

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Venice in Peril Fund, Hurlingham Studios, Ranelagh Gardens, London SW6 3PA +44 (0)20 7736 6891,
info@veniceinperil.org, www.veniceinperil.org, Venice in Peril Fund CIO No. 1186770
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THE VENICE GLASS WEEK

#VivaVetro!

Glass has been produced in the Venetian Lagoon for over 1000 years, and thanks to the knowledge and skills that have been handed down and evolved over the centuries, it continues to be one of the city's most famous and celebrated exports. In recent decades however, the Murano glass industry has been confronted with a number of serious challenges, including the widespread influx of cheap replica glass produced in China, as well as the great floods of November 2019 which caused severe damage to many furnaces and ateliers. With the arrival of Covid-19 in 2020, the industry was forced to grind to a complete halt for months, and many businesses are only just starting to reopen, as tourism gradually returns.

As a counterpoint to the crisis, this autumn a major international glass festival will take place around the city, with the aim of helping to showcase, support and sustain the art of glassmaking in Venice. Founded in 2017

by former Venice in Peril Trustee David Landau, and coordinated by former Venice in Peril Project Coordinator Camilla Purdon, *The Venice Glass Week* is now in its fifth edition.

Promoted by an Organising Committee made up of some of the city's leading cultural institutions together with the city council and Murano Glass Consortium, this year's festival programme includes more than 200 initiatives relating to both historic and contemporary artistic glass. Events will range from exhibitions and installations to expert-led guided tours, workshops, demonstrations, film screenings, performances and much more, staged in around 100 venues including museums, galleries, private palaces, glass factories, outdoor auditoriums and beyond: last year's festival even featured a 'floating furnace' which travelled on the Grand Canal offering outdoor demonstrations by some of Murano's most talented glassblowers.



Events are aimed at a wide spectrum of local and international audiences, ranging from connoisseurs and collectors to industry professionals and academics, as well as students, families and children. For those unable to visit Venice in person this year, the festival will also include a series of online initiatives including virtual tours and demonstrations, plus a series of online panel discussions on a spread of glass-related topics.

The title of the 2021 festival is #VivaVetro!, intended to convey a message of positivity, fortitude and support for the sector, especially in light of the challenges of recent months. The event is aiming to build on the success of previous editions such as the 2019 festival which attracted 103,000

visitors from Venice, elsewhere in Italy and abroad. It will also build on what was achieved last year when, in spite of the considerable challenges caused by the pandemic, the Organising Committee and participants managed to deliver a programme of over 200 events for an audience of more than 62,000 visitors: an encouraging sign of the resilience, dynamism and vitality of Venice's cultural sector, and a strong indication of the ever-increasing local and international interest in the field of glass.

Camilla Purdon

For more information about the fifth edition of The Venice Glass Week, #VivaVetro! visit www.theveniceglassweek.com which runs from 4th – 17th September 2021

*The Venice Glass Week HUB, Palazzo Franchetti, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti Photo: op.fot.com
OPPOSITE: Mauro Bonaventura & Simone Crestani, The Venice Glass Week, Photo: op.fot.com*

EXHIBITION REVIEW

Canaletto: Painting Venice - Holburne Museum, Bath until 5th September

This exhibition provides a unique opportunity to see at close quarters all but one of the paintings from the exceptional set of Venetian views by Canaletto, which belong to the collection of the Dukes of Bedford at Woburn Abbey. The largest set of paintings which the artist ever produced, and by far the largest to survive intact, it consists of twenty-two of the same size and two much larger (one of which is absent, on loan to the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich). While they are well known for their setting in the Dining Room at Woburn, the paintings themselves are surprisingly little known, since they hang three high, very rarely have any been lent to exhibitions, and some had until recently never been photographed in colour. Originally hung, until around 1792, in two different Dining Rooms in Bedford House in Bloomsbury, the circumstances of their commission are unusually well documented. Lord John Russell, who succeeded as 4th Duke of Bedford in 1732, was in Venice in May 1731, and three surviving invoices from Joseph Smith, Canaletto's agent, confirm that the paintings were delivered in batches between then and 1736. It is a fortunate coincidence that Canaletto's only surviving complete sketchbook includes *plein air* studies for thirteen components of the set. In the first half of the 1730s Canaletto's abilities and ambition were at their peak. The Woburn series includes versions of most of his most celebrated compositions, which were rarely to be revisited with the same freshness and precision of touch. For those suffering in the present travel restrictions, the Bath exhibition surely offers the best possible alternative.

Charles Beddington



Canaletto, Ascension Day, 1731-1740, © From the Woburn Abbey Collection

NEW PROJECT

Training bursary for a conservation scientist at the Laboratorio della Misericordia

Lucia Giorgi decided to become a conservation scientist when, on a school trip to Assisi, she first saw Cimabue's Crucifixion in the transept of the Upper Basilica. Its original colouring had been lost while the areas of damaging lead white paint, reapplied over the years, stood out, making it look like a photographic negative.

After studying conservation science at La Sapienza University in Rome and writing her thesis on the ancient Roman stucchi in the House of Augustus on the Palatine, she moved to Venice to Ca' Foscari University. A collaboration between the university and MUVE (the umbrella organisation for Venice's civic museums) enabled her to work on ten paintings in the Museum of Modern Art at Ca' Pesaro, by the Venetian artist Alessandro Milesi (1856-1945) – little known in the UK but much loved by Venetians.

Later she worked at Rome's famous Istituto Centrale per il Restauro. Its first director was Cesare Brandi, the art historian and conservation-restoration theorist, who laid the basis for Italian restoration theory in the post-war years.

Lucia's experience made her the successful applicant when a new traineeship bursary in Venice was recently proposed. The Accademia Galleries is the only state museum in Italy with its own laboratory offering the full range of diagnostics to complement conservation treatments. It has been based since 1982 in the vast Scuola della Misericordia in Cannaregio which can accommodate very large works and its combined facilities cater not only to the Accademia's collections but also to artworks from across the Veneto region.

Over the last year, eleven major works of art have undergone treatment at the Misericordia, some funded by the Accademia Galleries, others by different private international committees working in Venice. The Bellini Nativity Triptych funded by Venice in Peril is currently undergoing treatment there.

In 2019 the only conservation scientist at the Misericordia, Stefano Volpin, was approaching retirement and there was an urgent need to train up an assistant – indeed the laboratory should operate with a team of four scientists. To plug the gap Giulio Manieri Elia, the director of the Accademia Galleries, with whom Venice in Peril has collaborated on several projects in recent years, suggested a new traineeship bursary as a solution. Venice in Peril has funded similar schemes before to help build capacity for the enormous task of maintaining artworks and monuments in Venice, whilst the Misericordia itself has supported young trainees in the past.

Lucia is now working closely with the conservators at the Misericordia, including Milena Dean who is leading the conservation of the Bellini Nativity Triptych.

This bursary will run for three years at a cost of €12,000 per year. The costs for half this period have now been covered, shared between Venice in Peril Fund which has provided €12,000, SAVE Venice and Pro Venezia Sweden.

If you would like to contribute to this initiative, which will make it possible for many more works of art from Venetian museums and churches to be maintained and treated in the future, please contact us.

VENICE IN PERIL AT 50: A NEW FILM

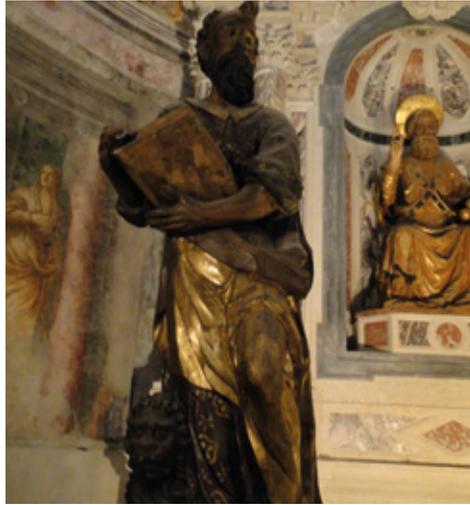
Behind the scenes with the conservators



Last autumn film maker Kate Herron visited Venice to interview conservators working on Venice in Peril projects. The resulting half-hour film, narrated by Samuel West, showcases the expertise and dedication needed to maintain and restore Venice's treasures, from the colourful marionettes at Ca' Goldoni to

the new flood defences at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli. The film will be launched in London this autumn. Made to mark the 50th Anniversary, it aims to connect our Friends and donors more directly with the work their generosity has enabled, and to draw in new supporters to take the campaign for conservation into the future.





FRANCES CLARKE AT 90

Marking a birthday milestone with a restoration project at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli

On 10 July 2021 our much-loved President, Frances Clarke, wife of the founder of Venice in Peril, Sir Ashley Clarke, celebrates her 90th birthday! To mark this personal milestone a 16th-century polychrome and gilded wooden statue of St Mark from the high altar of San Nicolò Mendicoli will be restored with a donation from long-

term supporter Philippe Velay and his family's Fondation Jean-Barthélemy. If you would like to fund a conservation to mark a special occasion, please contact us.

*St Mark, 16th-century gilded wooden statue before conservation, San Nicolò dei Mendicoli
Photo: MAUVE Conservators, Venice*

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, Geri Della Rocca de Candal

NEW TRUSTEE

We are delighted that Nicholas Chandler will be joining us as a Trustee. Nick is a commercial solicitor based in London who has been an active volunteer with Venice in Peril for a number of years. He studied Classics and Law at the University of Melbourne and has a passionate interest in Venetian art, history and culture, as well the history of the Mediterranean.

PROJECT UPDATES

New flood defences at San Nicolò dei Mendicoli

Funds raised from the Acqua Alta 2019 Appeal made it possible to update flood defences with new drainage channels in the sanctuary, pumps and higher, lighter

door barriers at this parish church in Dorsoduro. Work is scheduled to be finished in time for the Acqua Alta season in the autumn.



Interior of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli, Photo: Matteo de Fina

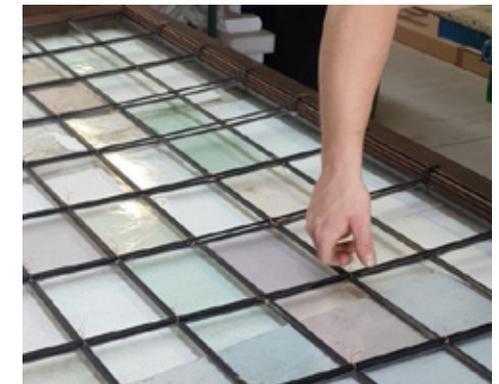
Canova Monument

Preparations being made for the main project to restore the Canova Monument. The work to be undertaken by Ottorino Nonfarmale is starting now.



Organ Gallery windows at St George's Church

Two windows damaged in the autumn storms of 2019 have been restored by Vetro Arredamento. See more of their work on Instagram @vetroarredamento



AUTUMN 2021

Event series

We are planning to combine a return to live events at the Society of Antiquaries alongside online talks. The best way to keep abreast of our programme is to sign up for e-news at www.veniceinperil.org

20 SEPTEMBER

Planned Live event at Society of Antiquaries, tickets £40

Premiere of our film about Venice in Peril Fund conservation projects and launch of 50th Anniversary Appeal for the Trinity Wellhead

With an introductory talk on Cabianca, sculptor of the Trinity wellhead and its statuary, by Jeremy Warren, Honorary Curator of Sculpture, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and Sculpture Research Curator, The National Trust

18 OCTOBER, *Online talk - £10*

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Adventures in Venice
Jo Willett

In 1739 the fifty-year-old Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had made secret plans to start a new life in Venice with her twenty-seven-year-old lover, Francesco Algarotti. But he remained stubbornly absent from the city of his birth. Without him, she immediately fell deeply in love with all things Venetian. Jo Willett has been an award-winning TV drama and comedy producer all her working life & has recently published a biography of 'The Pioneering Life of Mary Wortley Montagu.'

15 NOVEMBER

Planned Live event at the Society of Antiquaries, £40 and £45

Ashley Clarke Memorial Lecture: 'Sketchbooks: why I always have mine with me'
Matthew Rice

Matthew Rice, painter and illustrator, will talk about the sketchbook as a tool and a resource, drawing on his and his father, stage designer Peter Rice's sketchbooks, the earliest of which date from the 1940s. Matthew has been going to Venice every year since 1981 when he was a theatre design student at the Central School of Art. Since then, he has designed 300 mugs for Emma Bridgewater, furniture for David Linley and written and illustrated six books on architecture. Matthew's richly illustrated guide to Venice for Penguin will be published in the spring.

To find out more about our projects and how you can donate please contact Venice in Peril Fund, Hurlingham Studios, Ranelagh Gardens, London SW6 3PA. +44 (0) 20 7736 6891 info@veniceinperil.org www.veniceinperil.org Venice in Peril Fund CIO No. 1186770