

The Eighteenth Century

2. Italy

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Venice dominates the story of Italian art of the 18th century, but two provincial artists exerted some influence. In frescoes Luca Giordano [see 17th century Italy] was emulated by **Francesco Solimena (1657 – 1747)** – the same swirling figures in complicated compositions. Solimena settled in Naples as a teenager and never left, keeping busy throughout his career with commissions for frescoes and easel paintings. He retired very wealthy.

His frescoes were darker than Giordano's and this tendency was more noticeable in his paintings, as Caravaggio's *chiaroscuro* lived on longer in Naples than elsewhere in Italy. Solimena painted many mythological scenes featuring just a couple of figures, often lovers: Venus and Vulcan, Dido and Aeneas and here, *Diana and Endymion*. In Greek mythology Selene drives her moon chariot across the night sky, her horses can be seen in the background. Romans gave Diana the attributes of Selene. In these paintings, Solimena's liking for *tenebroso* is evident.



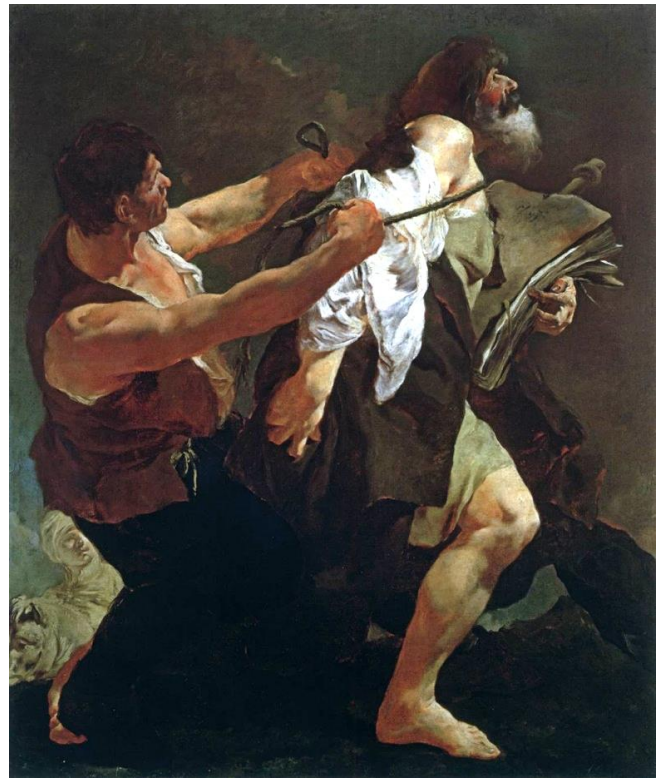
Francesco Solimena, *The Fall of Simon Magus*, 1690



Francesco Solimena, *Diana and Endymion*, 1705-1710

Giambattista Piazzetta (1682/3 – 1754) was the leading painter of Venice in the early decades. He was a slow and patient worker who favoured sculptural figures and chiaroscuro over the light and vibrant palettes that were beginning to be used in the city. These aspects of Piazzetta's art culminate in the *Martyrdom of St James*. A ruffian tries to prevent James from following the light of the Lord. A Venetian nobleman, Andrea Stazio, bequeathed on his death in 1722 the funds for a series of paintings on the Apostles for the Church of Saint Eustace. Twelve artists were chosen, each painting a canvas of similar size. Among the other eleven were Sebastiano Ricci and Giambattista Tiepolo, whom we shall meet soon.

The *Glory of Saint Dominic* (oil on canvas) installed as the ceiling for a chapel in one of the largest churches in Venice shows Piazzetta's skill with a lighter palette. The composition sweeps from the borders to the luminous centre as Saint Dominic is borne aloft by a host of angels. The flower basket at the bottom is a touch of *trompe l'oeil*. It is surprising that *Saint Dominic* is Piazzetta's only decorative work. Perhaps his slow pace was not suited to such large images with a diverse medley of figures and he preferred smaller commissions?



Giambattista Piazzetta, *Martyrdom of Saint James*, 1722



Giambattista Piazzetta, *Glory of Saint Dominic*, 1727 (Ceiling of the Chapel of St Dominic in Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice)

Sebastiano Ricci (1659 – 1734)

Two decades before *Saint Dominic* Sebastiano Ricci had used light airy colours in frescoes. Ricci served his apprenticeship in Venice. In 1678 was charged with trying to poison a young woman whom he had got pregnant. His release from prison was secured by the intervention of the Venetian nobility, and he left the city for Bologna, where the woman and baby later joined him. Ricci then ran off to Milan with the daughter of a painter. He was imprisoned again and apparently nearly executed. This time his release was obtained by the Duke of Parma, who employed him and arranged for work in Rome. After the duke died, Ricci left Rome and slowly made his way back to Venice – having married the mother of his child. He was greatly influenced by Veronese, as the *Continnence of Scipio* demonstrates. Scipio refuses to hold a woman as a captive of war, instead returning her to her fiancé, shown kneeling beside her. The head of Scipio and that of the old man standing behind the girl are far too small, but our focus is on her: “*the brilliantly-clad blonde heroine who actually does nothing but merely touches the emotions as she waits hopefully (Levey).*”



Sebastiano Ricci, *The Continnence of Scipio*, c 1706

Ricci's fresco style can be seen in *The Apotheosis of Hercules* in the Palazzo Marucelli in Florence, which has the same steep climb into the sky as Correggio's *Assumption of the Virgin* in the dome of Parma Cathedral [see 16th Century Italy]. There are far fewer figures, which creates an airy and light atmosphere.



Sebastiano Ricci, *The Apotheosis of Hercules*, 1706-7 (ceiling fresco Palazzo Marucelli, Florence)

Ricci was called to Florence to decorate Prince Ferdinand Medici's Pitti Palace. The frescos mirrored the light-hearted Medici court. The ceiling of *Venus and Adonis* is full of sun and air with pink clouds on which Venus who entreats Adonis not to leave with his dogs for the hunt. Everything is painted with a fluent panache – a style totally new to Florence. The frescoes delighted the city and many commissions followed for more and also for canvases (notably the *Labours of Hercules*).

Ricci's fame spread because of his Florentine works. He went to England in 1713 where Lord Portland commissioned pictures for his London townhouse and the chapel of his country estate, Bulstrode Park in Buckinghamshire. Within a few months of arriving, Ricci was commissioned by Lord Burlington, the most influential patron of the arts in England to produce history paintings for Burlington's great mansion in Piccadilly (now home to the Royal Academy).

For Lady Juliana, Dowager Countess of Burlington, Ricci painted scenes on the theme of love, including *Cupid before Jupiter*. Jupiter (who put it about quite a bit in various guises) sits enthroned on Mount Olympus while other gods assemble around him in the clouds. Paris looks down to us holding the golden apple and Neptune is seated with his trident. Dressed in a red cloak, Cupid entreats Jupiter to allow him to marry his mortal lover Psyche.

Ricci soon had many enthusiastic patrons among the English nobility. Before leaving England in 1716 he painted a fresco of *The Resurrection* in the chapel of the Royal Chelsea Hospital. Here Ricci uses more figures. Perhaps he felt religious works should be more sombre and substantial than mythological scenes? Of course, *The Resurrection* is an image of God's power and so deserves a more tumultuous composition.



Sebastiano Ricci, *Venus and Adonis*, 1705-6 (ceiling fresco, Palazzo Pitti)



Sebastiano Ricci, *Cupid before Jupiter*, 1713-15, Chiswick



Sebastiano Ricci, *The Resurrection*, 1714-16 (ceiling fresco), Royal Chelsea Hospital

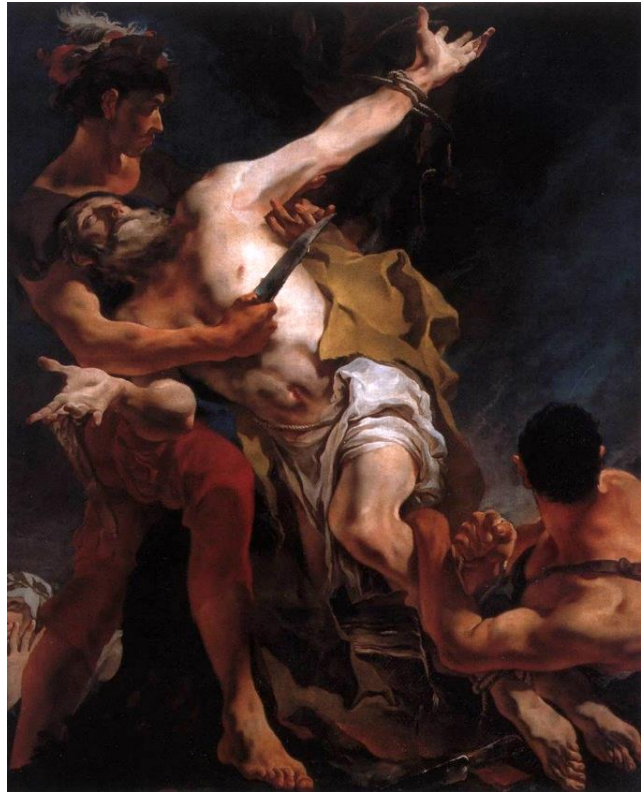
Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696 – 1770)

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo produced exhilarating compositions formed from his wonderful imagination and his brilliant draughtsmanship. “*Tiepolo’s feeling for strength, for movement and for colour was great enough to give a new impulse to art (Berenson).*” He was hard-working and amiable, never daunted by his illustrious patrons nor aspiring to any place in society.

Tiepolo loved his art, and simply wanted reasonable prosperity and a happy family. These traits originate in his childhood. Although the family bore the name of one of the twelve original Venetian patrician families (dating from 697), they were not direct ancestors. Yet Tiepolo’s father, a minor shipping merchant, was on such good terms with many patricians that five families agreed to be godparents to his children (the Dona being Giovanni Battista’s). These worthies did not daunt the young boy. Tiepolo, the youngest of six children, lost his father before his first birthday and grew up in straitened circumstances.

He began his artistic training in 1710, becoming an independent artist in 1717. Despite the brilliance of Ricci, initially Tiepolo was drawn to Piazzetta. His *Saint Bartholomew* is similar in style to, and repeats the figure (from the rear) in, the older artist’s *Saint James* [above] in the Church of Saint Eustace commission.

Tiepolo moved away from Piazzetta’s style and soon fell under the spell (as we all do) of Veronese, as can be seen by the background on the left of *Apelles painting Campaspe*.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, 1722



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Apelles painting Campaspe before Alexander*, 1725-6

In this painting Tiepolo is Apelles and Campaspe is his wife, Cecilia, the sister of the Guardi artists, whom he married on 21st November 1719. Campaspe posed naked for Apelles. Modestly, Tiepolo does not ask his wife to do this, but shows Apelles' brush resting on her nipple. The newly-weds had suffered terribly during the smallpox outbreak two years before this work was painted. They lost a three-month-old baby son and within ten days of that, their three-year-old daughter Elena died from the disease. *Apelles* includes a negro page boy, repeated in several later works and who Levey thinks was probably a domestic servant of Tiepolo and Cecilia. The painting is the debut of Tiepolo's imperious blonde. She will become more regal with time. That she should be based on his wife, Cecilia, is utterly charming. Just before painting *Apelles*, Tiepolo had finished another work which was to prove a prototype, the ceiling fresco *Allegory of the Power of Eloquence*.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Allegory of the Power of Eloquence*, 1725-6 (ceiling fresco, Palazzo Sandi)

Tiepolo painted an airy sky with the central figures far away and a scene, in triangular form, along each edge. This formula would be repeated in later works. Here the four scenes celebrate the power of sound: at the bottom, Orpheus with violin (instead of his usual lute) leads Eurydice past Cerberus; on the left, Hercules Gallicus enchains people by the sound of his tongue; on the right, Bellerophon on Pegasus slays the Chimera; and, at the top Amphion by the power of his lyre builds the walls of Thebes. The central figures are Minerva (who helped Bellerophon and Hercules) and Mercury (inventor of the lyre). Amphion was intended to be the tour de force and is seen most easily when entering the room.



This is the first ceiling fresco of Tiepolo's which survives, "one of the most brilliant, well-preserved and yet least known ... in some senses it is the freshest of all (Levey)." As the Amphion scene makes evident, Tiepolo's draughtsmanship and colour have tremendous flair and dash.

Veronese and Tintoretto had painted works celebrating Venice but in Tiepolo's day the republic's power had waned. She had lost many of her overseas possessions and when Corfu was besieged by the Turks in 1716 Venice only just prevailed. Trade declined and the weak republic was forced into a policy of neutrality in European struggles to avoid being attacked. Her influence withered away. Venice, yearning for past glories, settled into the role of whore: attracting rich tourists by her gaiety, parades, entertainment and courtesans. Despite the poverty of the republic, the patrician families were as rich as ever. Indeed, new families had paid to join the patriarchy in the middle of the 17th century and by the start of the 18th had settled on ostentation as a means of asserting their status. They became the leading patrons for art.

Power of Eloquence was painted for the Sandi who had been ennobled only in 1685. They were the first patrician family to employ Tiepolo and, naturally, the rest were quick to follow. The Zenobio, the richest family in the city, commissioned Tiepolo to decorate their new palace with mythological scenes and the story of the life of the Palmyrene Queen Zenobia. Patriarch Dolfin commissioned Tiepolo to fresco a gallery in his palace at Udine with scenes from the first patriarchs of all, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Here Tiepolo showed his ability to marry his paintings with architecture. Tiepolo filled the largest space with *Rachel* using a vast curtain to create a theatrical effect as though the framework formed a stage.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Rachel hiding the idols from her father Laban*, 1725-7 (fresco, Palazzo Patriarcale, Udine)

Cecilia is again the model for the blonde heroine. Rachel might be sitting on a bale of hay in the countryside but she has the air of a princess. The flowers and jewels adorning her hair and her blue dress are executed with rapid touches. Rachel's sister Leah looks on solemnly, wearing a turban. Tiepolo is faithful to Genesis which describes Leah as tender-eyed, but Rachel as "*beautiful and well-favoured.*" Rachel is gentle in the role of Tiepolo's blonde heroine - apologetic for upsetting her father. Her successors were haughty and regal. Salome, all self-importance and impatience, gestures as if to say, "*don't stand staring at it, man - put the head on the damned platter!*" ...



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Beheading of St John the Baptist*, 1732-3 (fresco, Colleoni Chapel Bergamo)

... and Scipio's young female prisoner is clearly more imperious than he is. She looks at her captor with disdain. As Levey remarks, "*before her allure and her effortless air of superiority, it is Scipio who yields, as much under her spell as is patently her fiancé.*" One of the attendant women has clearly learned from her mistress.

The *Contenance of Scipio* is one of the frescoes Tiepolo painted for the distinguished Venetian lawyer Carlo Cordellina, who starting building in 1735 a grand villa in the countryside at Montecchio Maggiore. Cordellina was not from the patrician families, but his business depended on their patronage. He needed to show that he shared their wealth and taste. Employing Tiepolo did that. Tiepolo re-affirms his adherence to Veronese in *Scipio* who is flanked by statues of Minerva and Apollo, copied from Raphael's *School of Athens*.





Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Continnence of Scipio*, 1744 (fresco)

Tiepolo continued his tributes to Veronese with *Banquet of Cleopatra and Antony*, completed in the same year. Cleopatra wagered she would give the most costly banquet ever and won by dissolving one of her highly valued pearl ear-rings in vinegar. The bearded Oriental is supposed to be the Roman Lucius Plancus who judged the outcome of the bet. On Cleopatra's lap is the same dog who was earlier pestering Salome. Who the painting was for is not clear, but Tiepolo sold it to Augustus of Saxony.

A couple of years later Tiepolo frescoed a different version of the banquet for the Labia patrician family. Having arrived from Catalan they became immensely rich from textile trading and bought themselves into the Venetian nobility 1646. Maria Labia, the doyenne, owned famous jewels and had no difficulty identifying with Cleopatra. The Labia were lavish. Their reputation was established when after a grand banquet they threw the gold dinner service on which it had been served into the canal. Links notes the rumour that they had deployed a net below the surface of the water to catch the gold plate.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Banquet of Cleopatra and Antony*, 1744 (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne)

Tiepolo's version of *Banquet* in Palazzo Labia [no good copy available] is less lavish. Cleopatra and Antony have switched places and there are fewer attendants. Their expressions are poor – she stares as though hypnotised and he looks like a corpse. Perhaps Tiepolo was rushed? He was responsible for all frescoes in the Labia palace and worked there for seven years. Hopefully, he was well fed.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *St Dominic distributing the Rosary*, 1738-9 (fresco, I Gesuati)

Tiepolo's first major commission for a ceiling fresco in a church came five years afterwards from the Dominicans. Tiepolo shows the Virgin appearing to Saint Dominic to give him the rosary as a new form of prayer: angels fly down from Mary carrying rosaries to him. Saint Dominic then made sure rosaries were given to everyone: to the Doge, Christian laity, clerics and an oriental. The power of prayer through the rosary is shown overthrowing heresy: writhing bodies are sent flying at the sight of it. Dominic's robe of black and white contrasts with colours around him. He, and the rosary he holds, are emphasised by the line running up the halberdier's pike. On the left rests a white muscular dog: a reference to the Dominicans from whose name came the wordplay *Domini cani* – God's Hounds. Tiepolo's composition is spacious, and seems to contrast the clutter and disorder of earthly life with the purity and simplicity of Heaven.

Other religious commissions came to Tiepolo. The most important was the decoration from 1739 to 1749 of the building belonging to the Confraternity of the Scuola di San Maria del Carmelo. The central ceiling piece in the main hall repeats the format of *The Rosary*, but because the ceiling is much lower the composition is simpler and the main characters more prominent. Mary is made very much more august compared to the Virgin of *The Rosary* – undoubtedly the Queen of Heaven. She has "almost insolent grace (Levey)", negligently resting her hand on the head of an angel for balance and effortlessly holding the baby Jesus while looking at Simon rather like Salome stared at the executioner.

Tiepolo's audacious compositions were popular with religious orders and the new patrician families, and his fame blazed in Venice. Older members of the nobility whose palaces were already decorated and who appreciated the realism of portraits regarded Tiepolo with some reserve. Perhaps in their eyes he was as much of a parvenu as the young aristos?

The courts of Germany, Milan (under the Austrians), Stockholm and Madrid had no such reservations and showered him with offers. In 1749 Karl Philipp von Greiffenklau succeeded to the Prince-Bishopric of Wurzburg. Tiepolo's work at the Confraternity had just finished. The coincidence led to his most famous works. Karl Philipp had a magnificent palace, the Residenz, built by the brilliant architect Balthasar Neumann and was looking for a painter to decorate the imperial hall (*Kaizersaal*). At enormous expense Karl Philipp convinced Tiepolo to travel to Wurzburg to take on the job.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Our Lady of Carmel giving the scapular to St Simon Stock*, 1740s

Arriving at the palace in December 1750 with his two sons and a servant, Tiepolo got his first sight of the hall. It was an exuberant room filled with coloured marble and stucco decorations designed by Antonio Bosso. On the walls there were two vacant spaces, one at each end, which Carl Philipp wanted Tiepolo to fresco. They are an awkward shape, triangular and bordered by huge curtains moulded from plaster and painted blue and gold.

Wurzburg had had a bishop since 743. In 1168 Emperor Frederick Barbarossa conferred on Herold von Hochheim, the then Bishop of Wurzburg, the title of Duke of Franconia. This event, from which Karl Philipp derived his titles was depicted by Tiepolo in one of the spaces. The Emperor sits on his golden throne and holds his sceptre out to the kneeling Bishop who touches it to take the investiture oath. Tiepolo's fresco is shown below. He skilfully unified his painting with the architecture, which creates an illusion of space, helped by the figures spilling into the room and a dog standing guard.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Bishop Herold von Hochheim being invested with the principedom by the Emperor in 1163, 1751* (fresco)

The other two scenes in the hall concentrate on the marriage of Frederick Barbarossa and Beatrice of Burgundy which took place in 1156. In 1155 Frederick had been crowned emperor of Germany by Pope Hadrian IV in Rome. Beatrice was the daughter of Count Raynald III who through military endeavours had enlarged his territory from the small town of Macon in Burgundy into what is known today as French-Comte. Beatrice was rich and by marrying her Frederick gained control of the whole of northern Burgundy, thereby strengthening his hold over the German states.

On the ceiling Apollo guides the chariot carrying Beatrice to the wedding. In the other space on the wall of the hall, the marriage is blessed by the Bishop of Wurzburg (Herold von Hocheim's predecessor's predecessor).

Tiepolo's usual blonde, now in the form of Beatrice is *"aloof and intensely regal eclipsing in splendour even Tiepolo's Cleopatra. In white dress and ruff, and trailing a white lined blue robe, she could stand for the heroine of some northern folk or fairy tale, compacted of sky and snow (Levey)."*

Beatrice and her train are emphasised (as if she needed that) and mirrored by the column running up from her head and the arch flowing from that. The Emperor is reduced to the role and status of a page in comparison.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Marriage of Frederick Barbarossa and Beatrice of Burgundy*, 1751 (fresco)

Balthasar Neumann was a wizard with staircases. In the early 1730s he designed “the crown jewel of Baroque staircases” to solve a very tricky situation at Schloss Bruchsal. As architect for the entire Residenz, he left himself plenty of space for another marvellous staircase, above which Tiepolo produced a famous masterpiece. Originally Karl Philipp wanted the ceiling (at 30.5 x 19 metres almost a fifth again the size of that of the Sistine Chapel) to be decorated with scenes of importance his family, but Tiepolo instead produced *Apollo and the Continents*, which fitted Neumann’s staircase perfectly.



Tiepolo’s work has Apollo in the centre and round the edges (much like the *Allegory of the Power of Eloquence*) are images of Europe, America, Asia and Africa. Europe can be seen here, replete with symbols of the arts, architecture and music (just in case anyone was unsure about where World culture resides!). At the intermediate landing the staircase splits, climbing one way brings Asia into view, riding a splendid elephant.



The ceiling is far too large and detailed for a good reproduction – one must go and see it - but the distorted perspective at the edges in the image below shows what Tiepolo had to do so that the scenes would appear natural as one walked up the parts of the staircase. America, a native Indian on a crocodile, can be seen at the bottom. She is seen when one starts to climb the staircase.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Apollo and the Continents*, 1752-3 (fresco)

Tiepolo left Würzburg in November 1753 and returned to Venice to be inundated with commissions. In many of these he repeated his earlier compositions. *The Marriage Allegory of the Rezzonico Family* (1758) repeats Apollo with chariot and horses, this time bringing the groom as well as the bride to the wedding. *The Triumph of Faith* (1754-5) has the steep perspective which is repeated in the *Apotheosis of the Pisani Family* (1762).

Patrician families Grassi, Widmann, Giustiniani and Soderini commissioned Tiepolo for apotheoses so they “could look up at the ceilings of their state rooms and see their virtues of constancy, strength and justice trumpeted (Haskell).” Tiepolo stuck to his formula for them.

“Only rarely did Tiepolo stray from dreams of grandeur to pure enchantment. The most striking instance is beautiful series of frescoes illustrating romantic scenes from Homer, Virgil, Tasso and Ariosto for the Valmarana family in Vicenza in 1757 (Haskell)”. Tiepolo was commissioned to decorate the hall and four smaller rooms of their villa. The main fresco shows Rinaldo reluctantly leaving the sorceress, Armida.



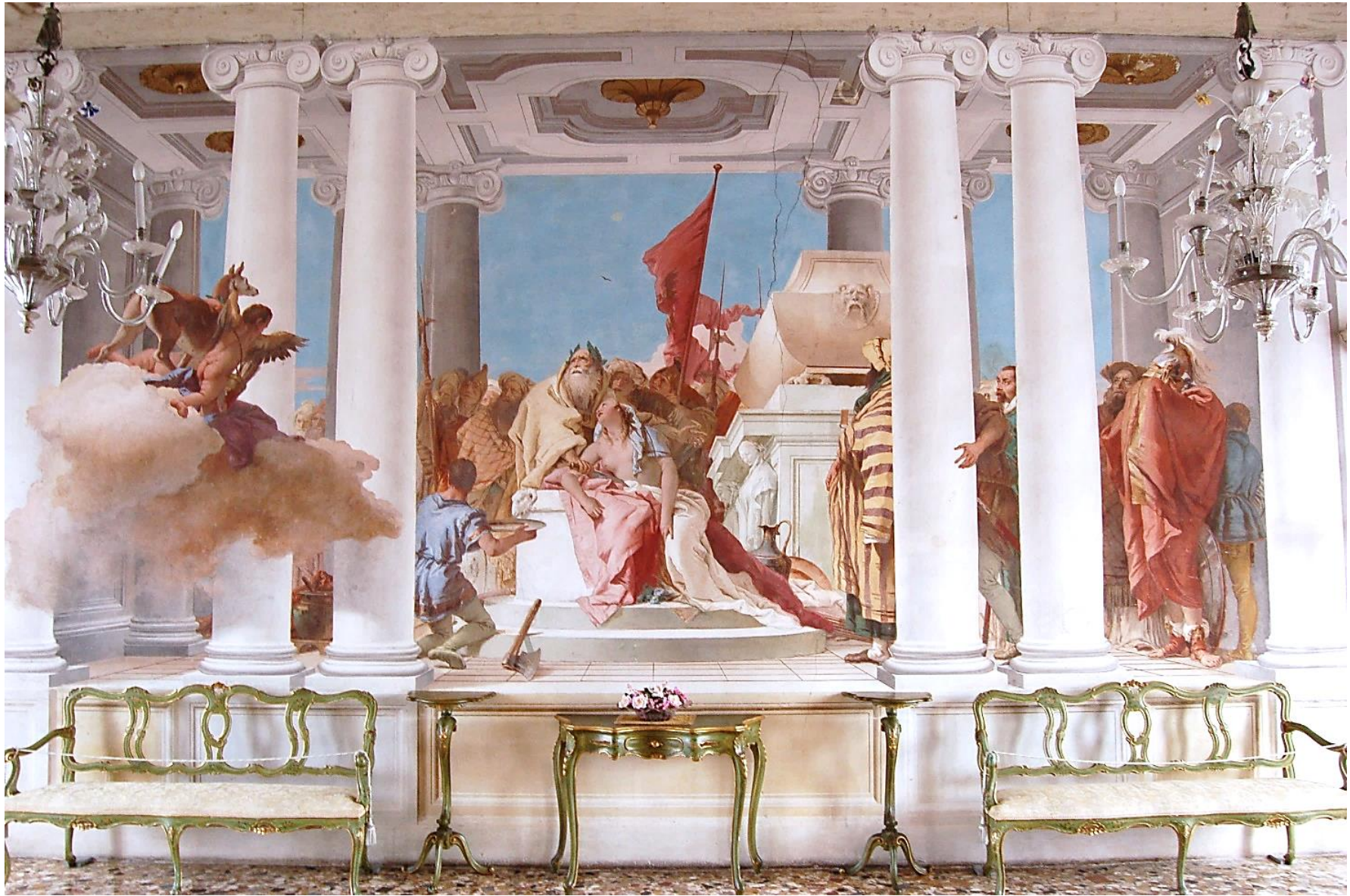
The frescoes for the Valmarana are notable for the illusions which carry on the action into the real world. In the Iliad Room, Achilles is angry with King Agamemnon for abducting his beloved Briseis: the king and his soldier in blue seem as though they have just stepped from the room to greet Briseis, and in the other panel he and Achilles (restrained from attack by Minerva) appear destined to tumble into the furniture.



This illusory effect is heightened in Tiepolo's creations in the hall. The main scene depicts the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*. This is the original version of the *Sacrifice of Isaac*: a father compelled by divine command to kill his beloved child. Here, Agamemnon is preparing his Greek fleet to sail from Aulis to Troy. The goddess Artemis is angry at the prospect of war and the inevitable loss of so many young lives. She rains misfortunes on Agamemnon at Aulis: plague and the lack of wind prevent his forces sailing to battle. The seer Calchas pronounces that Artemis can be propitiated only if Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter.

Tiepolo shows Calchas holding the knife with which he intends to kill Iphigenia. There is the illusion that the white columns are part of the architecture of the room seeming also to support the cornice, an effect strengthened by the hand of one spectator. Agamemnon, on the far right with his head buried in his cloak to avoid watching the deed to which he has assented, looks as though he might escape the nightmare by stepping into the actual room.

Tiepolo breaks the barrier between art and reality in other ways too. The seer and the girl look up towards the ceiling. There Tiepolo frescoed Diana who with a strong gesture commands the priest to drop the knife. This action unites the wall and the ceiling, with the spectator in the middle able to look up and across. The effect is completed by the hind, accompanied by two cherubs, on the cloud sent by Diana to replace Iphigenia as the sacrifice. They seem to be in the room. On the wall behind, Tiepolo painted Aeolus, the god and keeper of the winds beginning to exhale so the Greek fleet can leave; the flags in front of us are already beginning to flutter.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, 1757 (fresco)

Tiepolo's time in Venice was soon to end: Charles III of Spain decided Tiepolo should travel to Madrid to decorate the royal palace. Charles had no appreciation of the arts, but felt a monarch should encourage them and Tiepolo was the best European artist. Tiepolo's two great ceiling frescoes were the *Triumph of Spain* and the *Apotheosis of the Spanish Monarchy*. The latter is the best of his works in the palace.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Apotheosis of the Spanish Monarchy*, 1762-6 (fresco)

Roughly in the centre the personification of the Spanish Monarchy is borne by clouds, about to be crowned by Mercury approaching from the left and hailed by Apollo with his chariot to the right above her. Far above them presides Jupiter on his throne. Below her, an old woman, the personification of ancient Castille, looks up from next to her tower. Below Castille are Venus and Mars. Across from them appears Hercules, the traditional protector of Spain, with the pillars which from antiquity flanked the Strait of Gibraltar, entrance to the Mediterranean.

Charles III decided to build a new church and convent at Aranjuez and gave Tiepolo the commission for the altarpieces "to occupy his time" while he remained in Spain. The king was indifferent and showed his lamentable taste in November 1770 by deciding that Tiepolo's paintings should be replaced by some by Mengs. Thankfully, *The Immaculate Conception* survived Charles' barbarism. Mary is the Queen of Heaven: trampling on the serpent which led Eve astray, thereby eradicating original sin. Tiepolo's masterpiece vies with Raphael's *Alba Madonna* as **the** image of our powerful and reliable Intercessor.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Immaculate Conception*, 1767-69 (Prado)

Apparently, Charles III objected to the painterly style of Tiepolo, preferring instead the highly-finished but largely characterless works of Mengs (which often seem like cartoons). This is surprising in a monarch whose country is blessed with so many luminous works by El Greco and which was soon to marvel at the wizardry of Goya. There's no doubt that later in his career Tiepolo, like Titian (who also had a late altarpiece rejected), used an abbreviated style which required some delicacy of taste. Tiepolo's *The Flight into Egypt*, also painted in Madrid and a finished work, carries on this technique in a composition with a daring use of empty space and plunging diagonal composition. The Holy Family, having just crossed the Nile (the boat appears in the background), are greeted by their guardian angel. To the end Tiepolo keeps his spots: the man subservient in the shadow of the powerful woman.



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Flight into Egypt*, 1767-70 (Met)

Tiepolo did not witness the debacle over the Aranjuez paintings. Without any warning and with no preliminary illness he died on 27 March 1770, so suddenly that there was no time for him to receive the sacraments. He was buried in his local parish church of San Martin in Madrid, but the Spanish had no interest in preserving his tomb and it disappeared long ago.

Tiepolo had tremendous energy and an acute feeling for splendour (Berenson) and is unchallenged as a painter of frescoes, *“communicating a sense of excitement and exhilaration that first unites us and then makes us want to cheer.”* He had a superb ability to decorate in harmony with the architecture, but it is his imagination which separates him from other earlier Italian fresco painters; *“the confidence exhaled by his persons and echoed on the very clouds on which they often recline, is the artist’s confidence in his own powers; it is typical that one of his ceilings should include an elephant among the clouds.”* (Levey: *Major Trends*). Levey (in *Tiepolo*) calls him the last great religious painter of Italy, but Berenson sees Tiepolo’s influence on the future: *“At times he seems not so much the last of the old masters as the first of the new. The works he left in Spain do more than a little to explain the revival of painting in that country under Goya, and Goya, in his turn, had a great influence upon many of the best French artists of recent times.”*

Giovanni Antonio Canal “Canaletto” (1697 – 1768)

Tiepolo believed painters should produce grand works capable of pleasing “*the nobility and the rich*” for it is they who make artists’ fortunes and not others “*who cannot buy paintings of much value.*” Canaletto certainly followed this prescription. His career was dominated by the market created for him among aristocratic Grand Tourists. Such was the demand his art degenerated to a production line. He became known as a painter “*whom the English have spoilt.*”

Canaletto was born close to the Rialto Bridge – then the only footway across the Grand Canal - and was christened in the church of San Lio. His father, Bernard Canal, was a successful designer and scene painter for the theatre. Bernard was highly regarded. His name often got more prominence than the composer’s in notices for operas (Baker) and he was called to Rome in 1718 to decorate two operas by Scarlatti. Both Bernard’s sons joined him in his work, but after the trip to Rome, Canaletto tired of theatre work and joined the Venetian painters’ guild in 1720. He had been attracted by painted scenes of Rome (‘view paintings’). The market for them in Venice was started by **Caspar van Wittel (1652/3 – 1736)**, who came to Italy in 1672. He worked in Rome (mainly) and Naples, painting wide scenes.



Caspar van Wittel, *The Darsena, Naples*, 1700s (172 x 74 cm)



Caspar van Wittel, *From the eastern entrance to the Grand Canal: Santa Maria della Salute*, 1714 (75 x 44 cm)

Casper came to Venice in the 1690s and drew views of the city which he later worked up in oil. By then view paintings of Venice were firmly the province of the slightly younger Italian artist **Luca Carlevaris (1660 -1730)**, who had been inspired by Casper's paintings during a visit to Rome. Luca's paintings and views of Venice were published in 1703. From them demand blossomed: ambassadors began employing Luca to record their arrival in Venice in huge, detailed paintings.

Canaletto studied Luca's works and by the middle of the 1720s, Canaletto was also getting commissions from ambassadors. His scene (right) of *The Reception of the French ambassador Comte de Gergy (1726-1727)*, is even larger: 260 by 181 cm. The work, pretty much the same format as Luca's (below), gives a hint of Canaletto's future. He has increased the height of the canvas just enough to fit the entire façade of the Palazzo Ducale into the painting, and has brought the viewpoint back to include the bridge and canal, which makes the foreground (and so the entire painting) livelier.





Luca Carlevaris, *Entry of the French Ambassador to Venice in 1706*, 1706-8 (255 x 129 cm)

These modifications mark Canaletto as an artist and not a straightforward topographical view painter. As Links points out “*Accuracy*” and “*Reality*” were words applied to Canaletto’s work during his lifetime and “*Photographic*” is used today. None of these labels is correct: Canaletto included several different viewpoints in the same painting, moving left or right, nearer or farther in separate sections of the work; buildings would be changed in dimension, even turned round; columns of statues would be moved; the curves of the Grand Canal altered; rooflines changed. His use of these adjustments was not consistent, but whichever combination he chose his concern was always to create a work of art.

More important than works for ambassadors, Canaletto painted a few scenes of Venice in the early 1720s. In these he employed these adjustments. Saint Mark’s campanile is pushed farther back and shortened significantly so it will just fit onto the canvas. Canaletto also made it slimmer and tapered it more at the top. These changes, combined with an increase in the height of St Mark’s, allow Canaletto to create a better balance between the two most notable buildings of the piazza.



Canaletto, *The Piazza San Marco in Venice: Looking East*, 1723-4 (205 v 142 cm)

San Marco was laid in brick but in 1723 work began on the present white marble surface. The ground cleared of brick and with the new marble pavement is shown on the right. Canaletto contrasts the vast expense of that enterprise with the shabbiness of the neighbouring buildings; the façade of the one needs extensive work, sun-blinds are falling apart, coarse sailcloth is being used to create shade, washing is hanging out to dry. This is a painting of Venice applying an expensive marble facelift to distract from the wrinkled body: the reputation for grandeur must be maintained. Affluent Grand Tourists must continue to stream to the city to see art and watch the elaborate processions and events held in St Mark's Square.

This is not a view for the tourist, but the work caught the eye of the British Consul to Venice, Joseph Smith. Smith had been in Venice since 1700, heading a successful merchant bank. Smith was an avid collector of art, and commissioned six paintings from Canaletto of St Mark's Square. These were "bold, free and almost impressionistic (Haskell)" and in them Canaletto continued the use of adjustments to improve the scene.



Canaletto, *Entrance to the Grand Canal from the Piazzetta*, c 1727 (134 x 170 cm)

This is one of two vertical compositions, the view being from the two columns in the ambassador paintings looking towards Santa Maria della Salute at the eastern entrance to the Grand Canal. On the right are the corner of the Library of St Mark and the Column of St Theodore. Canaletto has reduced the height of the latter so that St Theo is highlighted against the white colonnade of the library's roof, and has moved the column back and to the right – in reality, it would obscure the dome of the Salute. The bridge has been brought forward – the steps filling a compositional gap and neatly linking background to foreground. St Mark's Lion column (which can be seen in the ambassador pictures) should be in the left foreground and, indeed, is in Canaletto's sketch for the painting. But it closed in the left side too much so Canaletto ignored it and used the white sail as a steelyard balance for the composition. The boat, much smaller than St Mark's Lion column would have been, opens up the sky. A white cloud produces an arch to the colonnade. As a result, Canaletto has transformed a scene into a brilliant work of art.

The figures – much larger than the norm for him – and mirroring the shape of the distant church allow Canaletto to introduce patches of colour which enliven the scene. He does the same in the other vertical composition of Smith's Six, which is supposedly the view if one turned right and moved backwards to look between the Library and St Theo. The true relative size of them can be seen in this painting. St Theo has been moved again: above he was pushed closer to the library; here he is moved farther away. He should be in the centre but that would obscure the distant clocktower, the subject of the painting. Canaletto has shortened the campanile again and moved it left so as not to disrupt the perspective line along the side of the library which runs to the clocktower. A line he reinforced by moving the three flagpoles. The equivalent perspective line on the right has been created by grossly elongating St Mark's, thereby eliminating completely the Palazzo Ducale.



Canaletto, *The Piazzetta looking North*, c 1725 (135 x 172 cm)

Smith's Six paintings were completed by 1729. Smith had connections with the English aristocracy and Grand Tourists would usually call on him in Venice. He scented a market and evidently sold the idea to Canaletto. Smith commissioned 14 paintings of the Grand Canal from Canaletto. Twelve were done from 1726 to 1730 and are the same size. The last two, of regattas, were painted from 1732 to 1734 and are larger than the original dozen. All these works are spacious compared to Smith's Six.

Smith then paid Antonio Visentini to make engravings after these 14 paintings and in 1735 published *Prospectus Magni Canalis Venetiarum*, a book of 14 prints from the engravings. The book was distributed in England and served as a catalogue. Those English visitors to Venice who could not afford the £10 to £20 for an original oil could order prints. Grand Tourists in funds could visit Smith's house to see the original paintings and order new originals of scenes they liked best.

The venture was extraordinarily successful for Smith, who acted virtually as a sole agent, and Canaletto. Aside from visitors to Venice commissioning one or two works, rich aristocrats in England ordered in bulk. In the second half of the 1730s, Canaletto painted 20 views for the Duke of Bedford, 20 for Sir Robert Hervey and 17 for the Earl of Carlisle alone. Faced with such great demand Canaletto raised his prices and turned over to his studio requests from Grand Tourists who could no longer afford an autograph original. However, as Haskell notes, in those 50-odd works for the august;

"we first notice the mannerisms, the harshness, the signs of studio assistance, all the deterioration that was to become characteristic of a painter 'whom the English have spoilt' ... who turned so soon from gazing with steady penetration at the backwaters of his native city to stereotyping shorthand versions of the familiar views to tourists."

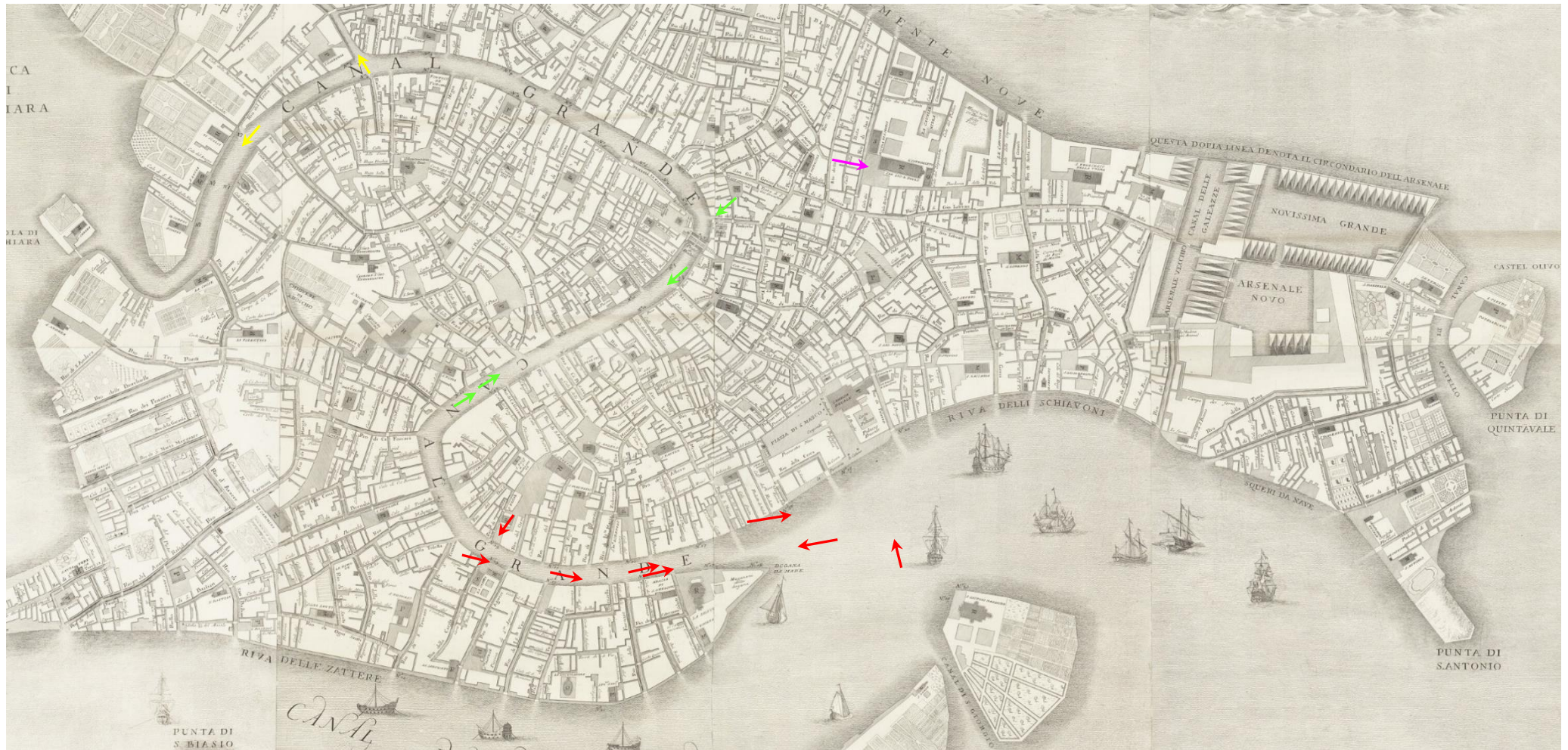
Haskell's verdict mirrors the opinions of 18th century art experts. Eventually Smith's Six and the 14 original paintings for the *Prospectus* were sold to George III in 1762 (and are still in the Royal Collection). Art historian Horace Walpole, youngest son of the first British Prime Minister Sir Robert, saw Smith's Six paintings in the hall of Buckingham House in 1780. By then Horace had seen lots of Canalettos in the country houses of England, and described Smith's Six as, "*bolder, stronger and far superior to the artist's common works.*"

Artists usually develop and produce masterpieces in their maturity (unless they are outrageously talented like Raphael and create masterworks immediately).

"Canaletto was rather perverse in this respect, because many see his greatest pictures as being among his first paintings. They are characterised by moody skylscapes, a sense of foreboding and an eye for the picturesque qualities of crumbling architecture (Baker)."

By consensus, Canaletto's best works of the Grand Canal are those which feature in the *Prospectus*, together with some earlier works. Not all of these are going to be shown below, but those that are will take us on a journey along the Grand Canal from west to east. To aid navigation, Canaletto's viewpoints are shown on the map.

Grand Canal



Ludovico Ughi, *Iconografica rappresentazione della inclita citta di Venezia* (detail), 1729 (engraving)



Canaletto, *Grand Canal looking west with the Scalzi and San Simeon Piccolo*, 1726-7 (80 x 48)

To the right is church of Santa Maria di Nazareth, known as the Scalzi ("shoeless") as it was church of barefoot Carmelites. The layout of the baroque façade, added from 1672 to 1680, is captured by Canaletto but the gesturing statues bear no resemblance to those on the church. In the distance on the left is the pitched roof of the church of Santa Croce. Closer, with prominent dome, is San Simeon Piccolo, built on a circular plan between 1718 and 1738.

Canaletto reduced the depth by halving the number of buildings between Simeon and Croce and by narrowing the canal. The two sides of composition were studied separately; the right half is lower than left. The buildings beyond the Scalzi were demolished in 1861 for the railway station. Canaletto's view anticipates that to be had from the Ponte degli Scalzi (built in 1858).



Just in the top right corner of this photograph can be seen a large tower. This is the 12th century belltower of San Geremia, one of the oldest in the city. The church it serves has been rebuilt many times: the present edition (in the photograph to the right) was built in 1753. Canaletto's painting (below) brings the belltower closer to the Grand Canal. He pushes out the line of buildings on the right of the small canal to give a clear view of Ponte delle Guglie (Bridge of the Obelisks). Ponte delle Guglie is made very large so as to form the centre of the composition.

Next to the belltower is Palazzo Labia. So, Canaletto shows the canal into which the matriarch of the family, Maria, allegedly had thrown the golden dinner service after a banquet (see Tiepolo above).





Canaletto, *Grand Canal: to San Geremia and the entrance to the Cannaregio*, c 1726-7 (79 x 47)

Purple View

Painted later than the works in the *Prospectus* was a view of one of Venice's largest churches. In 1246 Doge Jacopo Tiepolo (no relation) donated some swampland to the Dominican Order after dreaming of a flock of white doves flying over it. The first church was demolished in 1333. Although work on the present church was started then, it was not completed until almost a century later. Since then, the funerals of all the doges have been held there and more than two dozen of them are buried in the church.



Canaletto, *Campo Santi Giovanni e Paolo*, 1735-38 (78 x 47 cm)

A decade elapsed between the original dozen of Smith's *Prospectus* paintings and the completion of this one. In that time the change in Canaletto is clear by comparing this work with the two yellow views: the paintwork is much smoother; the buildings' facades have become uniform and their surfaces less worn; the figures seem more static. Canaletto still arranges things masterfully. The shadows (although not at the same angle) neatly meet the vanishing line of pavement in depth. He used a compass on wet paint for the rose and two adjacent windows of the church. In the shadows, Canaletto used a ruler and sharp point on dried paint to cut to the pale grey underpaint in the windows and pilasters.

In the foreground a column supports the bronze sculpture designed by the Florentine artist Andrea del Verrocchio of Bartolomeo Colleoni, the captain-general of the republic in the 15th century. Colleoni had captured many towns and districts for Venice from their great rivals Milan. He bequeathed part of his wealth to the Venetian state on condition that a monument was erected to him in Piazza San Marco, in front of the Basilica. The Venetians took the money. However, monuments in piazza were not permitted, so it was erected in front of the (appropriately-named) Scuola Grande di San Marco (to the left of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in the painting above), the wealthiest of the six major philanthropic confraternities in the city.

Green Group



Canaletto, *Rialto Bridge from the North*, 1726-7 (80 x 48 cm)

Canaletto repeated the trick of opening up the line of buildings on the right in his view of the Rialto Bridge. A wooden bridge was raised here in the 12th century. The present structure was built in 1590 and included two rows of workshops. Rialto was the first part of the city to be settled and has always been the commercial heart. On the left Canaletto shows the German traders' offices and warehouse, the belltower spire of San Bartolomeo just poking above them. The building just to the right of the bridge housed the financial inspectors of Venice, with merchants' offices and workshops next door.

The first view in the *Prospectus* was from the other side of the Rialto Bridge. The building in the far distance with three lines of dense windows, Palazzo Forscari, is on the bend of the Grand Canal as it turns left to head south. It now houses the University of Venice, a public university opened in 1868 which (in keeping with city's history) is the most prestigious higher education institution in Italy for commerce. This is considered one of the best views in the *Prospectus*: "the painting is richer and more dramatic in lighting than most of the Grand Canal series (Baker); "this view is probably unsurpassed in the prospectus, but the figures tend to be better with later entries (Binks)."



Canaletto, *Grand Canal: looking S-W from the Rialto Bridge to the Palazzo Foscari*, c 1727 (78 x 47 cm)

Sunlight reveals the variety of surfaces - stucco, brick, marble – of Venice’s buildings. Rigging and the lowered sails of barges and craft reveal Canaletto’s understanding of nautical matters. The shops on the right each have an awning, shown in a range of angles, to protect window shoppers. The wooden hut on the left is probably for the sale of lottery tickets.

Moving now to Palazzo Foscari and looking back up the canal to the Rialto Bridge, are the next two views. They are virtually the same scene, and it is hard to imagine they were produced by the same painter. The first is one of Canaletto’s earliest works; the second, one of the two works added to the original dozen.



Canaletto, *Grand Canal: looking North-East from the Palazzo Balbi to Rialto Bridge*, before 1723 (207 x 144 cm)

The Grand Canal was used for races held annually since 1315 on the feast of the Purification of the Virgin on 2nd February. Canaletto shows the boatmen in the middle of the 8-km course racing up the Grand Canal. They will pass the points we have seen in paintings so far and, just before the western entrance to the canal, will cut left along a small canal to the finishing line in front of Palazzo Foscari – marked by the canopied structure on the bottom left from which someone looks out at us.



Canaletto, *A Regatta on the Grand Canal*, 1733-4 (126 x 77 cm)

These two works contrast Canaletto as a Venetian painter showing his city in a way understood and appreciated by its inhabitants, and Canaletto as a painter for Grand Tourists. A decade separated these two works. The next two show the same contrast, but were painted within a few years of each other. The first has the smoothness seen previously in the doge's burial church.

Red Group



Canaletto, *Grand Canal from Santa Maria della Carita to the Bacino di San Marco*, early 1730s (80 x 48 cm)

Santa Maria della Carita was in disrepair; only one of statues at top remained in Canaletto's time. Worse was to come as the belltower collapsed in 1744. In the far distance, left of centre are the dome and belltower of San Pietro di Castello. The pointed tower of San Biagio in the centre on the skyline was demolished soon after this painting was done when church was rebuilt. Canaletto's subtle colours contrast the powder blue sky with green water and the tan and orange brickwork. His composition continues brilliant: showing the elaborate tower of the Scuola Grande della Carita which is almost wholly out of the picture as a shadow on the Carita, which also helps to highlight the two sunlit figures in the foreground. The towers of the Scuola can be seen looking back from across the Grand Canal from *The Stonemason's Yard*.



Canaletto, *The Stonemason's Yard*, c 1728 (163 x 124 cm)

This work was not in the *Prospectus* and might have been painted for Canaletto's own enjoyment. This is an area where Venetians live and work, and Canaletto revels in the variety of life. A cock crows on a window-sill to the lower left. The domestic buildings are generally in poor repair, with typical Venetian flared chimney-pots. Laundry hangs from many of the windows, and potted plants stand on several balconies. On the balcony to the right a woman is spinning thread, another draws water from a well, whose head is shaped like the capital of a column. Three stonemasons can be seen at work. One the left a mother cries in alarm as her young child falls over.

Back to the Grand Canal travelling east, and another early Canaletto: a stormy sky seemingly a common motif. Canaletto would paint this view more than 15 times over his career. While the woman on the balcony usually appears in the other versions, this is the only one with a cartoon of a boat on the wall beneath her. The building still exists, but without the balcony. Behind this building can be seen the main dome of Santa Maria della Salute ("Saint Mary of Health").



Canaletto, *Grand Canal: looking East from Campo San Vio*, c 1725 (98 x 66 cm)

The Salute was built in thanksgiving for the end of the plague of 1630-1 which killed almost 50,000 Venetians. The Salute is the masterpiece of Baldassare Longhena. His design won an open competition judged by the Venetian Senate (66 of the 91 senators voting in favour of Longhena). The church has a subsidiary dome and a belltower behind the main dome and was completed in 1681 (a year before Longhena's death) and consecrated in 1687. The Salute became an emblem of the city and a great attraction: Turner, Monet and Singer Sergeant were some of the bees drawn to its honey-coloured stone.



Canaletto, *Grand Canal with Santa Maria della Salute looking towards the Riva degli Schiavoni*, 1729-30 (80 x 48 cm).

Canaletto eliminated lots of buildings on the other side of the Grand Canal from the Salute to bring San Marco much closer. The Libreria, St Mark's Lion column and the Doge's Palace, apparently almost across the canal, are much further away. He also changed the perspective of the church. The drum and dome should be strongly foreshortened from below. We've completed the journey down the Grand Canal, and as we turn back we can see the domes and belltower of the Salute.



Canaletto, *The Mouth of the Grand Canal looking west towards the Carita*, 1729-30 (80 x 48 cm).

On the left is Dogana da Mar, the customs house built by Guiseppe Benon as work on the Salute reached completion. On its tower is a bronze sculpture by Bernardo Falcone of male nudes supporting a gilded globe surmounted by an allegorical figure of Fortune holding a sail. Merchant ships arriving in Venice docked at this point and were inspected by customs officials from the beginning of the 15th century. As the canal turns right in the far distance can be seen the belltower and pinnacles of the Carita, now completely without statues.

Commissioning works through Smith guaranteed they were by Canaletto, rather than by studio hands, and that the artist spent due time on them. Paintings ordered through Smith are of a *“markedly higher standard than the average Canaletto which appears in salesrooms (Binks).”* Naturally, Smith charged a hefty premium. The Earl of Carlisle tried to avoid this by commissioning Canaletto’s studio directly. Consequently, many works supposedly signature are not: the three remaining at Castle Howard are by Canaletto’s nephew Bernardo Bellotto. Nevertheless, the earl managed to acquire *“three good Canaletto’s”*, including the masterpiece; *“perhaps Canaletto’s most endearing response to the multifarious shipping and the shimmering light which every 18th century visitor to Venice must have carried in his mind’s eye for the rest of his life (Binks)”* which allows us to look out into the basin from Dogana da Mar.



Canaletto, *Bacino di San Marco: looking East*, c 1738 (204 x 125 cm)

Canaletto allows sunlight to pick out the church of San Giorgio Maggiore on Island of San Giorgio. The Benedictine order established a home there in 982 and their church was rebuilt several times. In 1565 Andrea Palladio presented a model for the present version. Much of it was completed before Andrea's death in 1580, but façade was not begun until 1599 and it is not clear how faithful it is to Andrea's design. On the left we can see buildings around St Mark's, and these introduce the final painting of Venice – the 14th view in the *Prospectus* and the second later Regatta scene.



Canaletto, *The Bucintoro at the Molo on Ascension Day*, c 1732 (126 x 77 cm)

Canaletto continues his tricks: St Mark's campanile is shortened considerably to fit in; the domes of St Mark's are rotated and the clocktower is shifted so they can be seen. The naval victory in May 1000 in which the doge rescued Dalmatia from the Slavs, thus extending Venice's influence into the Adriatic, is celebrated on Ascension Day by the *Marriage of the Sea* ceremony. The Doge travels in the *Bucintoro*, the golden barge, out into the Lido to cast a ring into the sea; symbol of the union between city and sea. The *Bucintoro* has just returned, marked by a brilliant orange flag against the blue sky. After the fall of Venice to Napoleon in 1797 the upper part of the *Bucintoro* was burnt to recover the gold. Moored just to the left of *Bucintoro* is Doge's usual conveyance, the *fusta*, a single-masted galleon, shown covered with tarpaulin and with oars raised. Canaletto painted another version of Ascension Day around 1740, now in the National Gallery.

The war of the Austrian Succession began in 1740 and stopped Grand Tourists travelling. Deprived of visitors to Venice, Canaletto went to England. There was a new bridge at Westminster, which must need an artist to depict it in a view. Canaletto got to London by May 1746. The previous month, the last arch but two was finished and the timber frame for that arch remained in place until the whole bridge was completed.



Canaletto, *London: seen through an Arch of Westminster Bridge*, 1746-7 (95 x 57 cm)

Canaletto's view is probably through the fourth arch from Lambeth side which still had its timber centre in April 1747. He depicted the Thames in a similar way to the Grand Canal: "*his London is generally a city of brilliant blue skies unfamiliar to its population (Baker).*" The arch is just off centre and the view is at a slight angle which avoids symmetry and allows the lighter-toned St Paul's to balance the larger and darker left foreground mass of bridge, boats and people. The bucket is a touch of genius.

In England Canaletto found new clients beginning with the Duke of Richmond, who introduced him to the Duke of Northumberland. Canaletto moved "*throughout the land painting a series of London views and country houses [including Warwick Castle] for dukes (Clayton).*" After four years, there was a definite falling-off of commissions and Canaletto returned to Venice. He didn't get much work there either, and returned to London in the mid-1750s, placing an advertisement inviting gentlemen to come to his studio to see some paintings. He didn't attract many new patrons, but engravers were interested. Canaletto did get one notable commission on his return. Thomas Hollis, a rich eccentric who had met Smith in Venice, ordered six paintings. One is an enchanting picture of Old Walton Bridge which crossed the Thames some 25 miles upstream from Westminster. Thomas Hollis is included as a portrait and to the right of him is Thomas Brand who inherited the painting. Canaletto shows the bridge curved and wider in the centre; old plans show it to have been straight and the road across it of uniform width. The fantasy works, however, adding considerable charm. Of great interest are the trees: Canaletto didn't get much practise at them in Venice! Yet, the one on the right, particularly, is marvellous.

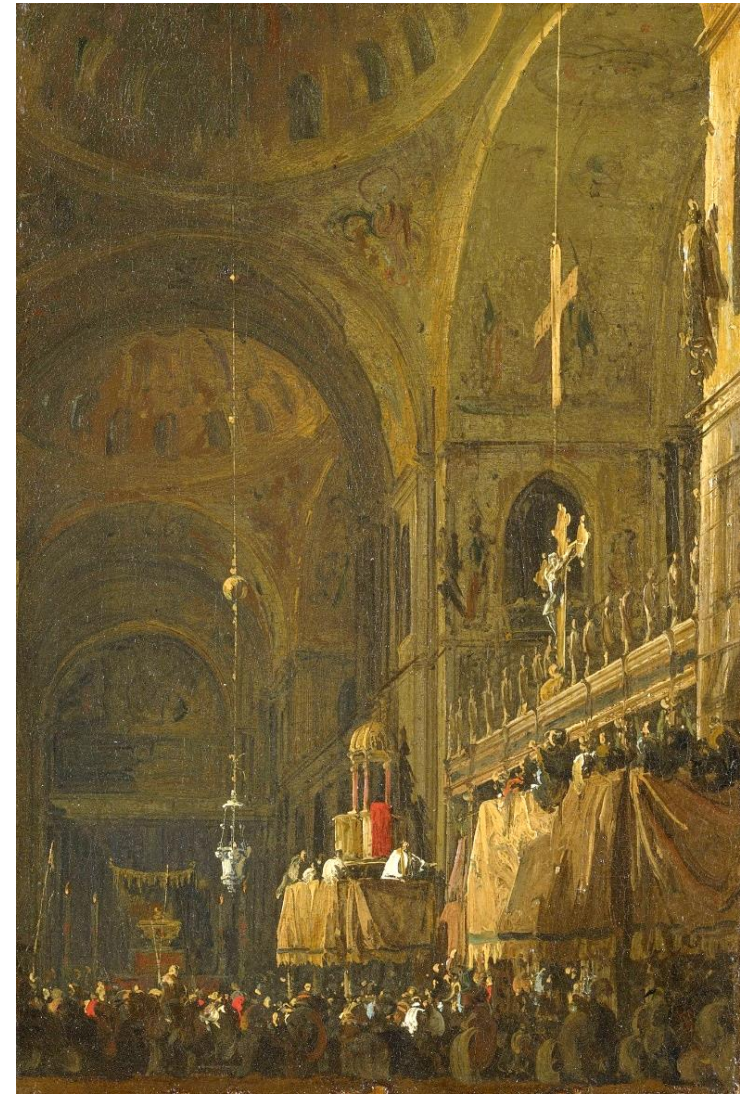


Canaletto, *Old Walton Bridge*, 1754 (75 x 47 cm)

Soon after this work, Canaletto decided that enough was enough. He was now 60 and had been in England for nine years and “*these years had neither made his fortune nor enhanced the very great reputation he had had when he arrived.*” Back in Venice, Canaletto was reunited with Smith, and painted an interior for him. Among the various figures scattered dots are used for highlights, a method also evident in *Old Walton Bridge*. Canaletto took great liberties in depicting the mosaics. The work contrasts with the much earlier interior – also for Smith – which has an intensity of feeling and the atmosphere of his greatest masterpieces.



Canaletto, *San Marco: the Interior*, c 1755 (34 x 37 cm)



Canaletto, *San Marco: An Evening Service*, 1730, perhaps earlier (20 x 29 cm)

From 1763 there seem to have been no more paintings. Not much is known about the last five years of Canaletto's life. He produced his largest and grandest *caprice* - one of his most accomplished drawings. The lady and gentleman seem about to descend a staircase which somehow meets another which will take them up to highly decorated loggia. The shield on the upper corner bears Canaletto's chevron. In the distance are suggestions of the Dogana and the Salute.



Canaletto, *Capriccio: Terrace and Loggia of a Palace on the Lagoon*, c 1763, (pen and ink with washes, 53 x 36 cm)

A final drawing bears the inscription, "*I Zuane Antonio da Canal, made the present drawing of the musicians who sing in the ducal church of San Marco at the age of 68, without spectacles, in the year 1766.*" Canaletto contracted an inflammation in his bladder, and he died from the fever on the 10th April 1768. He was buried in the church in which he had been baptised. All he left his sisters were his old clothes and bed, a modest property which he bought in 1750 and 28 unsold pictures. Canaletto thus joins a long list of distinguished artists who at their death were much poorer than expected.

In the following century Ruskin, never one to see much grey in the world, was unstinting in his damnation of Canaletto "*professing the most servile and mindless imitation ... a little and bad painter.*" A more balanced opinion came from Turner, who saw much he admired and painted a tribute to him: *The Bridge of Sighs, Doge's Palace and Customs House, Venice: Canaletto Painting* (Tate, exhibited 1833). Indeed, Canaletto seemed to be painters' painter not a critics' hero. Manet and Whistler admired him, the latter after having arrived at National Gallery went "*at once to almost smell the Canalettos* (Baker)."



Francesco Guardi (1712 – 1793)

Francesco Guardi was born into an artistic family of the nobility. His father, Domenico, had a studio registered with the Painters' Guild in Venice which, when Domenico died in 1716, his eldest son, Gian Antonio (then aged 17), inherited. Francesco was trained in the studio. When he was 23 he went to work with Michele Marieschi for eight years, and from him developed a taste for views of Venice. He then worked in his brother's studio, producing some religious works but mainly copying old masters from engravings. All their works bore Gian Antonio's name as studio head. When his brother died in 1760, Francesco concentrated on painting scenes of Venice.



Francesco Guardi, *San Marco*, c 1760 (119 x 72 cm) (National Gallery)

Francesco's first views of Venice were reminiscent of Canaletto's in the early 1720s. But a comparison of *San Marco* with Canaletto's same view of 1723-4 shows that from the start Francesco's brushwork was looser. They shared a love of details of ordinary Venetian life. These are clearly inhabitants of the city enjoying the temporary booths in front of St Mark's and the Campanile. Mirroring Canaletto, Francesco shows a variety of awnings and washing in the sunlight. Despite a more relaxed technique, Francesco's figures are more convincing, even than Canaletto's larger ones in *Smith's Six*.

Francesco developed his technique, "*subtly evoking the shimmer and luminosity of the Venetian scene, the association of water and building materials and sunlight, that eventually captivated Venice-lovers ... the Doge's Palace and the Molo from the Bacino has Guardi's vibrant light and architecture at its best (Binks).*"



Francesco Guardi, *Venice: Doge's Palace and the Molo from the Bacino*, c 1770

Francesco's career as a painter lasted for 30 years after the death of Gian Antonio. He produced many more paintings in this period than Canaletto did in a 50-year career. Yet in his lifetime he had hardly any success at all. He sold his works to small dealers and middle-class Italians and was unknown to the English. The Englishmen on their Grand Tour who saw Guardi's paintings "*were apt to distrust the atmospheric evanescence which is now so much admired.*" Even the Venetian Academy struggled to accept Francesco, labelling him a "*painter of perspective views*" and not admitting him as a member until 1784 when he was 72.

Francesco became the master of the imaginary view; a ruined arch by the Lagoon with all manner of folk became a favourite theme. *Fantastic Landscape*, a huge canvas, is one of two in the Met originally painted for a decorative panel in a castle near Udine, north-east of Venice. In this scene recurs Francesco's usual framing device of a large foreground ship, the sail of which usually reaches the same height as the main piece of architecture (the ruined arch here; St Mark's campanile above) and so balances the composition.



Francesco Guardi, *Fantastic Landscape*, c 1765 (273 x 156 cm)

Some of his *capricci* were not set by water, but all had a variety of life. His small square seems to summarize Venice – grand architecture, statues, columns, arches, domes watch over the mundane life of the majority of the city's inhabitants. Francesco's paintings also make clear that Venice was a place of dogs as much as doges.



Francesco Guardi, *Capriccio view of a Venetian Campo*, c 1780

Francesco Guardi is the last classical Venetian painter. His views of Venice “beautifully capture the sparkle of sunshine on domes and towers and the eerie mystery of its dark canals and passages,” say Honour and Fleming. “Under the lightning brilliance of Guardi’s flicks and dabs of colour, buildings, gondolas, sailing ships, men and women in flurrying cloaks, all seem to dissolve into aerial fantasies.”



Francesco Guardi, *Venice: Punta della Dogana and SM della Salute*, c 1770 (76 x 56 cm) (National Gallery)

The political power of Venice dissolved when Napoleon arrived, and Rome was not far behind. The Enlightenment was slow to make an impression on Italy. As late as 1737 the pope tried to prevent the erection of a mausoleum to Galileo in the Florentine church of Santa Croce and his *Dialogue* of 1632 could not be published until 1744. The end of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748 marked a change. Voltaire commented in 1766 on the great intellectual revival in Italy and suggested it had been going on for about 20 years. However, the desire of Venice's aristocracy to continue the illusion of power dominated art patronage. That brought us the great art of Tiepolo, for which eternal thanks.

Untouched by changes in society and intellectual thought, the leading artists of Venice and Rome worked for (or aspired to work for) the church and the nobility. This contrasted with the other main centres of European art. In France, particularly, and eventually England, painting in the 18th century “took on a new and more glorious lease of life with the decline of the Church and the feudal aristocracy [as had art in the Dutch Republic in the 17th century] (Haskell).” Watteau and Chardin, Hogarth and Wright of Derby found patrons among merchants and artisans. Italian artists were unable to make this shift and the fall of Venice marked the end of Italian supremacy (Wittkower).

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