

Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1697-1768), *The Entrance to the Grand Canal, Venice*, c. 1730, 49.6 × 73.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

- Today is not so much about Venetian artists but about Venice as illustrated by their work. Venice is relatively small, **about two and a half miles by just over one mile** so it can be walked across in an hour as long as you avoid tourist times and don't get lost which is very easy even if you think you know Venice well. It is a maze of backstreets, dead ends and similar looking alleyways. I have been to Venice about a dozen times but I am still finding new places every time I go.
- Venice is unique. It was founded in the **sixth or seventh century** in the middle of a lagoon in order to protect the inhabitants from **marauding Huns** yet, despite these humble beginnings, by the late medieval period it had become **the greatest seaport in Europe**. For over a **thousand years** it was the centre of an ever **expanding trading empire** but in **1797 Napoleon Bonaparte** conquered the city and then Austria took control and in 1866 it became part of the newly created kingdom of Italy (the Risorgimento, the Resurgence, was 17 March 1861).
- Venice is known as "Serenissima (The Most Serene)," "Queen of the Adriatic," "City of Masks," "City of Bridges," "City of Canals," and "City of Water," which is the title I have taken for today's talk. My talk is not so much a history of Venetian painters but a history of Venice as told through paintings of its architecture and canals.
- Let me start with a quote by the Russian author **Ivan Turgenev** (pronounced 'e-VAN tur-GAY-neff'),
  - **"Like spring, the beauty of Venice excites and arouses our softest desires; it animates and stirs the unspoiled heart like the promise of some near, undefined, mysterious pleasure" (Ivan Sergeevič Turgenev - Novel "On the Eve", 1860)**
- Let us explore those mysterious pleasures...

#### BRIEF HISTORY

- Venice was founded in the sixth or seventh century by Romans fleeing from the Germanic invasion. The lagoon provided a safe haven as it was difficult to attack across the marches. It became one of the richest merchant republics in Europe with a fleet that dominated the mediterranean and land routes to Asia. It owned lands across Europe and was known for its glass works and shipbuilding as well as its exciting culture.
- It sacked Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, in 1204 and carried away many treasures to Venice.
- It was a republic ruled by an oligarchy of merchants who elected a leader for life known as the Doge. The Doge lived in the Palazzo Ducale.
- Its decline began in 1453 when Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks. In addition Portuguese sailors had rounded Africa and found an alternative route to the far East avoiding the Silk Road.
- The Venetian Republic ended in 1797 when Napoleon

conquered it and installed a new pro-French government, looting the city of its artworks. When Napoleon fell it was put under Austrian rule.

- In 1846 the rail link to the mainland opened and the number of tourists began to exceed the population. In the 1860s it became part of the new Kingdom of Italy.

#### QUOTES

- "Venice is a city built on water. It is preposterous. If you couldn't see it with your own eyes and touch it with your fingers, you would think it was some poetic fancy. It really shouldn't be there at all. But it is. And it is beautiful beyond words." Restaurant owner, broadcaster and writer of a book on Venetian cooking, Russell Norman.
- "No one forgets the first glimpse of Venice. Whether arriving by plane, boat, train, or car, there is that startling moment when one looks across the waves and finds what should not be there – stone towers, rich churches, and packed buildings rising out of the sea. The extraordinary beauty of Venice only adds to its improbability. How does such a city exist?", Thomas F Madden, American historian.
- "'In the winter, Venice is like an abandoned theatre. The play is finished, but the echoes remain.' The Lithuanian-Jewish artist and sculptor Arbit Blatas (1908-1999).

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North portal, west façade (detail), 1270-75, mosaic, Basilica di San Marco, Venice

North portal, west façade (detail), 1270-75, mosaic, Basilica di San Marco, Venice

- This is one of the earliest representations of Venice. It is a 13th century mosaic in one of the lunettes of St Mark's Basilica showing St. Mark's Basilica. Note the four bronze horse on second-storey terrace that were taken from Constantinople in 1204 (the Sack of Constantinople). The ones there today are copies and the originals are inside the basilica.
- However, there is no water, the very essence of Venice.



Oldest known city view of Venice, 14th century, from a manuscript containing the travel account of Niccolò da Poggibonsi

Oldest known city view of Venice, 14th century, from a manuscript containing the travel account of Niccolò da Poggibonsi

- **This is the earliest known view of Venice.** It is from a manuscript containing the travel account of Niccolò da Poggibonsi (pronounced 'podgy-bonzee'), an Italian pilgrim who travelled to Jerusalem in 1346-1350. The manuscript was likely made shortly after he returned to Italy in 1350. During his pilgrimage, Niccolò passed through Venice and his description of the city is accompanied by a pen drawing of Venice.

#### NOTES

- Poggibonsi went on a **pilgrimage to Jerusalem that lasted five years**. He travelled initially **with seven others**, six of whom returned. He started in Venice and visited Cyprus, Jafa, Jerusalem, Damascus, Beirut, Alexandria, New Cairo, Gaza, Cyprus again, Tripoli, Proreç where he was captured by brigands, Venice, Ferrara, where he was detained for a year and finally home. On his return he wrote a book about his journey describing the sights, distances and tolls. His descriptions are unusually detailed.
- Poggibonsi is a town near Siena.
- "The church in the right background, defined by several large arches and an oversized bell in the campanile, is likely to represent San Marco. In 1346 the rebuilding of the south wing of the Palazzo Ducale had only recently begun, but the tall crenellated towers in the centre background may belong to the previous palace on the site. The church on the water in the left middle-ground may be San Giorgio Maggiore, which Fra Niccolò probably visited on his tour of the city's relics, and the rest of the foreground could show either the Giudecca or the Lido. But it was the port that remained in his memory most clearly. The most prominent feature is the broad quay across the centre of the drawing, with its long jetties giving access to the two oversized ships, providing a vivid impression of the **Riva degli Schiavoni** [the waterfront outside the Doge's Palace] where pilgrims embarked for the Holy Land." [1]
- **Riva degli Schiavoni is pronounced 'reeva deli ski-a-vonee'**.
- There is a 12th century map redrawn in 1346 the year

Poggibonsi left.

#### REFERENCES

[1] <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/oldest-drawing-venice-niccolo-da-poggibonsi/>



Marco Polo Leaving Venice from Marco Polo's *Travels* in 1271, 14th century

- **This is one of the earliest detailed views of Venice showing the Grand Canal and the Molo.** The Molo was the main entrance to and exit from Venice and is the area around the two granite columns that are still there today.
- The picture is from a **14th century story of Marco Polo's 13th century journey to the Far East.**
- In the **foreground we see the lands they will visit and some strange sights.** Marco Polo and his uncles set off in 1271 and it took him three years to journey **down the Silk Road to the court of Kubla Kahn.** They stayed **17 years in China** before returning to Venice in 1295. Having survived such an arduous journey he was **captured by the Genoese** for which we should be grateful because in prison he wrote the story of his journey.
- In the background we see St Mark's with its **four bronze horse which were stolen during the Sack of Constantinople in 1204** at the end of the Fourth Crusade. Possibly as revenge for the Massacre of Latins (i.e. Roman Catholics) twenty-two years previously (in 1182).

#### NOTES

- "Marco Polo, Venetian merchant and explorer, 14th century. Marco Polo (1254-1324) setting out with his uncles from Venice for the Far East. In the foreground are lands they will visit and strange things they will see. The Polos set off from Venice for Asia in 1271, travelling the Silk Road and arriving at the court of Kublai Khan some three years later. They spent 17 years in China before returning home, arriving back in Italy in 1295. Marco Polo was imprisoned by the Genoese, writing an account of his travels, *Il Milione* whilst in captivity." [1]
- "This magnificent painting illustrates the opening of Marco Polo's *Travels*, and shows Marco, his father and his uncle on the brink of their departure from Venice in 1271, bound for Kublai Khan's Xanadu. In the bottom left exotic creatures evoke the marvellous lands for which they are headed. The painting not only celebrates the Polos' adventurousness, but the imperialist ambitions, wealth and extravagance for

which Venice was famed." [2]

- Although this is the most detailed early view of Venice there is another work that is believed to be the earliest view of Venice ...

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[1] <https://www.sciencephoto.com/media/1002166/view/marco-polo-venetian-merchant-and-explorer-14th-century>

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Bird's-eye View of Venice, 1572, Braun & Hogenberg's City Atlas. Volume 5

Bird's-eye View of Venice, 1572, Braun & Hogenberg's City Atlas. Volume 5  
Venetia // Civitates orbis terrarum / [Georgius Bruin, Franciscus Hogenbergius]. - Colonia Agrippinae [Köln], MDLXXVII [1577]. - fol. 43

- **This is one of the most magnificent of the early maps** and it was published in Cologne in 1572. All the famous landmarks can be seen many similar to the way they are today.
- **The city was the capital of the Republic of Venice for one thousand one hundred years, from 697 to 1797.** It became a **very wealthy city, a major financial and sea power** during the Middle Ages and Renaissance and an **important center of commerce**—especially silk, grain, and spice. From the 13th century to the end of the 17th it was **one of the most important centres of Italian art**. It was an **important stop on the Grand Tour** and was known by British aristocrats as the "**locus of decadent Italianate allure**" (Bruce Redford, Venice and the Grand Tour, Yale University Press: 1996, p. 6).

#### NOTES

- 'We can view all islands in the Venetian Lagoon and the city's architectural landmarks. St. Mark's Square and Basilica, the Old Library and Doge's Palace stand out at the heart of Venice. The numerous ship-building facilities are visible on the right. Small islands around the city are also shown and labeled. Notable among them are San Giorgio, home to a beautiful Palladian church and monastery, and the island of Murano, a renowned center for the local glass industry. The Grand Canal and harbour are embellished with ships, boats and gondolas.' [1].

#### REFERENCES

[1] <https://expositions.nlr.ru/ve/RA4544/maps-of-venice>





Bird's-eye View of Venice, 1572, Braun & Hogenberg's City Atlas. Volume 5

Bird's-eye View of Venice, 1572, Braun & Hogenberg's City Atlas. Volume 5  
 Venetia // Civitates orbis terrarum / [Georgius Bruin, Franciscus Hogenbergius]. - Colonia Agrippinae [Köln], MDLXXVII [1577]. – fol. 43

- I will use this map to provide you with a quick guide to the landmarks of modern Venice. It is a city of 118 small islands joined by over 400 bridges.
- We see the six districts of Venice called the **sestieri**. You might count seven but Giudecca is part of Dorsoduro.
- The **Grand Canal snaking down past the railway station and under the Rialto bridge to St Mark's Square**.
- The Arsenale, the ship-building facilities are visible on the right.
- (CLICK) Let's look at a painting made a bit before this map of the old Rialto Bridge...

#### REFERENCES

[1] <https://expositions.nlr.ru/ve/RA4544/maps-of-venice>



Vittore Carpaccio (1465–1526), *Miracle of the Holy Cross at the Rialto Bridge*, c. 1496, 371 × 392 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

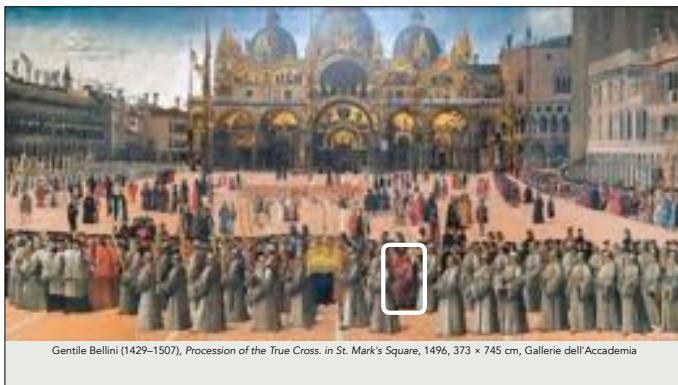
Vittore Carpaccio (1465–1526), *Miracle of the Holy Cross at the Rialto Bridge*, c. 1496, 371 × 392 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

- **It was also a religious city.** This is the *Miracle of the Holy Cross at the Rialto Bridge* by **Vittore Carpaccio** (pronounced 'vi-tory car-patch-o'). The action is taking place on the left on the **loggia of a palace**. It celebrates a miracle concerning the **healing of a madman possessed by the devil**. The devil is driven from the man by Francesco Querini, the Patriarch of Grado, **using a fragment of the Holy Cross** in his palace near the Rialto.
- It was one of **nine large canvasses** commissioned by the **Grand Hall of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista** (one of five Scuola Grande, Christian organisations for laypeople that gave to charity and sponsored the arts), by prominent artists of the time, including Gentile Bellini, Perugino and Vittore Carpaccio. The commission was to celebrate the donation of a fragment of the true cross and its associated miracles. The Scuola Grande was one of five in Venice. They were a form of men's club with charitable aims and which supported the arts.
- **The bridge depicted is the one built in 1458 which collapsed 66 years later** (in 1524). It was made of wood and like the **current version (dating from 1591)** it had a **double row of shops at the sides** and, at the top, a movable boardwalk needed to allow the passage of the taller vessels.

- (CLICK) If we look in detail we see the **everyday life of fifteenth century Venice**. Numerous **foreigners** mingle with the locals, **women cleaning and workers moving barrels**.
- The **peculiar chimneys** have a purpose. They were designed to **stop sparks** from setting the wooden buildings on fire by **whirling the air around** and **cooling the sparks**.

#### NOTES

- Grado is a town on an island between Venice and Trieste.
- In the late 13th century a major fire resulted in all the glassmaking workshops and furnaces being moved to Murano.
- The scuola, piccole and grande, were confraternities for both men and women. They prayed for the souls of deceased members, supported members who were ill or went into poverty and provided an honourable funeral. They pursued social and charitable aims and called each other 'brother' and 'sister'. They prayed and sang, in some scuola did penitence by flagellation and cared for the poor. Women were excluded from administrative and organizational roles. Women were also excluded from meetings and processions and could not join flagellant scuola (except for one case in 16th century Perugia). In Venice women had limited property rights and were excluded from politics, administration and long distance trade but men and women were regarded as spiritually equal.



Gentile Bellini (1429–1507), *Procession of the True Cross. in St. Mark's Square*, 1496, 373 × 745 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia

Gentile Bellini (1429–1507), *Procession of the True Cross. in St. Mark's Square*, 1496, 373 × 745 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

- This is another of the nine canvases commissioned by the Scuola, this one by **Gentile Bellini**. The canvas shows an event that took place about 50 years earlier, on 25 April **1444**: while the members of the Scuola were processing the fragment of the **true cross through the Piazza San Marco** (the square of St. Mark's), Jacopo de' Salis, **a tradesman from Brescia** (about 100 miles from Venice), knelt before the relic in prayer that his **dying son might recover**. When he returned home, he discovered that **the boy was completely well** again.
- (CLICK) The confraternity of the Scuola Grande wear white robes and the Brescian merchant is hardly visible in the crowd: **he kneels in red robes**, immediately to the right of the last two canopy-bearers.(CLICK)
- This is the main square of Venice, called **Piazza San Marco**, St. Mark's Square. Napoleon called it the "**drawing room of Europe**". It is dominated at the far end by St Mark's Basilica.
- **The Basilica was built around 836 to house the relics of St. Mark which were stolen from Alexandria in 828-9**. The original **patron saint of Venice was St Theodore but it became St Mark** with the arrival of the relics.
- The three flagpoles were originally ships' masts and represent the three kingdoms conquered by Venice:

**Crete, Cyprus and the Peloponnese** (southern Greece today). Nowadays, they fly the flag of the Republic of Venice, the Italian flag and the European flag.

- **Let us look at a very different aspect of Venice. One that attracted the British aristocracy on their Grand Tours...**

#### REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Procession\\_in\\_St.\\_Mark%27s\\_Square](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Procession_in_St._Mark%27s_Square)



Titian (c. 1488/90-1576), *Venus of Urbino*, begun 1532 or 1534, completed 1534, sold 1538, 119 × 165 cm, Uffizi, Florence

- This is Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, thought to portray his companion Angela del Moro, a Venetian courtesan which reminds us of **another important aspect of Venice**.
- **In 1348 the Black Death is thought to have killed half of Venice's population and the city faced a crisis. Women were in short supply and the church believed Italian men were struck by a sin they considered worse than death—same sex attraction.** Italian cities decided to **legalise prostitution and Venice did so in 1358** and set up the **first brothel in the Rialto area**. It was considered the lesser of two evils. Dowries became inflated and **over 50% of wealthy Italian men never married**. Venice became known throughout Europe and Russia, for its **beautiful and exotic prostitutes**.
- From the **13th century to the end of the 17th** is was one of the most important **centres of Italian art** and it became an important **stop on the Grand Tour** for its art and because it was known by British aristocrats as the "**locus of decadent Italianate allure**" (Bruce Redford, *Venice and the Grand Tour*, Yale University Press: 1996, p. 6). One diarist (Sir James Hall) confided, "**The shameless women of Venice made it unusual, in its own way ... [I saw] more handsome women this day than I ever saw in my life ... how flattering Venetian dress [was] — or perhaps the lack of it**" (Iain Gordon Brown, "Water, Windows, and Women: The Significance of Venice for Scots in the Age of the Grand Tour," *Eighteenth-Century Life*, November 07, 2006, <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/205844>).

#### NOTES

- The young nude woman is traditionally identified as Venus. The figure's pose is based on the Dresden Venus, attributed to Giorgione but which it is believed Titian completed. In this painting, Titian has moved Venus indoors, shown her engaging with the viewer, and making her sensuality explicit. It has been seen either as a portrait of a courtesan, perhaps Angela del Moro, or Angela Zaffetta, or as a painting celebrating the marriage of its first owner (who according to some may not have commissioned it). If it is intended to be



Venus she does not have any classical or allegorical attributes of the goddess she is supposed to represent – the painting is sensual and unapologetically erotic. Recent analysis concludes that it might be simply “a representation of a beautiful nude woman on a bed, devoid of classical or even allegorical content”.

- It is believed to have been painted, possibly commissioned for a Medici cardinal who died before seeing it. It was bought by Guidobaldo II della Rovere, later the Duke of Urbino, which accounts for its title. It may have been commissioned by Guidobaldo possibly to celebrate his marriage in 1534 to the 10 year-old Giulia Varano, or its consummation a few years later.
- The two maids in the background are looking in a cassone, a chest where clothes were kept particularly a marriage trousseau. The dog represents fidelity or possibly the della Rovere home where its quietness indicates the viewer is her husband.
- Mark Twain called the Venus of Urbino "the foulest, the vilest, the obscenest picture the world possesses". He proposed that "it was painted for a bagnio[brothel], and it was probably refused because it was a trifle too strong", adding humorously that "in truth, it is a trifle too strong for any place but a public art gallery". use it was a trifle too strong", adding humorously that "in truth, it is a trifle too strong for any place but a public art gallery".

#### REFERENCES

<https://imagesofvenice.com/prostitutes-and-courtesans/>



Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727–1804), *Carnival Scene (The Minuet)*, 1754-5, 81 × 105 cm, Louvre Museum

Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727–1804), *Carnival Scene (The Minuet)*, 1754-5, 81 × 105 cm, Louvre Museum

- **The other great Venetian tradition was the carnival.** It is thought to have started **as long ago as the 12th century to celebrate the victory** over Aquileia in 1162. It was **outlawed in 1797** when Venice was ruled by the Holy Roman Emperor, Francis II and the use of masks was banned. It was occasionally held in the nineteenth century but it was not until 1979 that it was reinstated in order to increase tourist revenues. Now some three million visitors a year come for the carnival.

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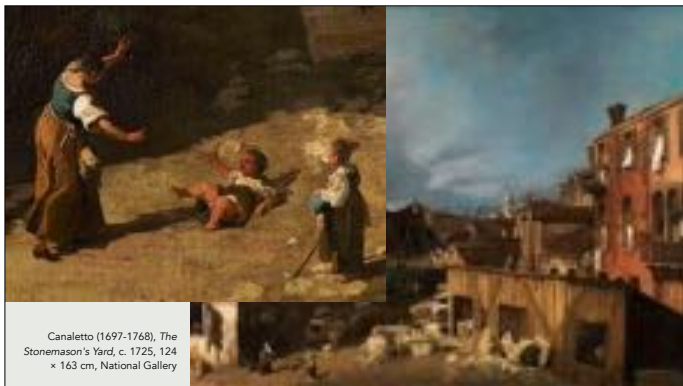


- If you visit Venice you will find many shops selling masks. There are several types:
  - **Bauta** (pronounced 'bow-oo-ta'), which is white or gilded (originally always stark white). It covers the face completely and the beak-like chin enables the wearer to eat and drink. It was originally only worn by men and one use was to enable men to vote in secret in public.
  - **Medico della Pesete** (The Plague Doctor) has a long beak and was not a carnival mask. It was worn by doctors and they filled it with sweet smelling flowers which they thought would prevent them catching the plague.
  - **Moretta** (dark one) a round black velvet mask with eyeholes but no mouth hole. It was worn by women and originally was held in place by the wearer biting on a button which prevented the wearer from speaking.
  - **Volta** (face) or **Larva** (ghost) is the typical modern Venetian mask. It is white porcelain or plastic and frequently gilded or decoration and worn with a tricorn hat and cloak. It covers the whole face, is typically worn by women and prevents drinking and eating.

### Based on the Commedia dell'Arte Characters

- **Colombina** is a half-mask covering the eyes and nose worn by women. It is a modern creation and is not seen in any historic paintings.
- **Pantalone** is a half-mask worn by men that represents a sad old man with a large nose like a beak and slanting eyes (signifying intelligence). It is a character from the Italian stage and its popularity has declined.
- **Arlecchino** meaning harlequin, a zanny character from the Italian stage representing a type of noble savage. It is a black, half-mask with a short, blunt nose, arching eyebrows and a rounded beard. There is always a bump on the forehead signifying devil's horns.
- **Zanni** is another classic stage character signifying stupidity. It is a half mask in leather, with a low forehead, bulging eyebrows and a very long nose with a reverse curve at the end. The longer the nose, the more stupid the

character.



Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1697-1768), *The Stonemason's Yard*, c. 1725, 124 × 163 cm, National Gallery

- **We return to the city** and perhaps **the most famous Venetian artists who specialised in views of Venice**—Canaletto. This is *The Stonemason's Yard* of 1725.
- The area is looking across to Camp San Vidal and **today it is the Academia bridge** and the stonecutter's yard is replaced by shops but many of the buildings remain the same as 300 years ago.
- "This square – the **Campo San Vidal** [still there but now used for chamber music recitals] – was **not usually a mason's yard**: it appears to have been temporarily transformed into a workshop while **repairs** are done to the **nearby church of San Vidal**.
- On the far side of the Grand Canal is the **church of Santa Maria della Carità** [pronounced 'ca-ri-ta', Saint Mary of Charity, **now the Academy**] and its campanile (bell tower) [now gone]." [1]
- (CLICK) In the yard a **child is weeing** on the ground while a woman moves in, typical of Canaletto's humorous representation of everyday life.

#### NOTES

- The **church tower** on the right is a monastery on the **Fondamenta Ognissanti** (pronounced on-yee-santi, the All Saints Foundation) founded by nuns in 1472. In 1500 some nuns had children by a priest that attended the monastery. The convent was reformed and later fourteen nuns were named for their exemplary behaviour.

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[1] <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/canaletto-the-stonemasons-yard>

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Canaletto (1697–1768), *The Entrance to the Grand Canal, Venice*, c. 1730, 49.6 × 73.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1697-1768), *The Entrance to the Grand Canal, Venice*, c. 1730, 49.6 × 73.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

- **Why did Canaletto paint so many views of Venice?** It was because by this period many wealthy British aristocrats were visiting Venice for its notorious vices. These **Grand Tourists** would have purchased these types of painting, known as **vedute or 'views' as souvenirs** and reflections of their cultural sophistication. However, this was not the only reason they came.
- Even by the seventeenth century Venice had become less dependent on trade and **increasingly dependent on the tax revenue from gambling and prostitution**. Venice was renowned throughout Europe for a special type of **refined and cultivated prostitute known as a courtesan** (literally "woman of the court", a mocking term or a euphemism). One writer estimated there "**at the least twenty thousand**, whereof many are esteemed so loose that they are said to **open their quivers to every arrow**." (Thomas Coryate, 'Coryate's Crudities'). He describes their work as a '**most ungodly thing**' but says **he felt obliged to visit them in order to write accurately about them** and he then spends ten pages describing them and ends "if thou dost linger with them thou wilt find their poison to be more pernicious than that of the scorpion".
- But I digress, this painting shows the entrance to the **Grand Canal with the Santa Maria della Salute** (Saint Mary of Health, completed 1687) on the left, the beginning of the Dogana ('a' as in 'are') or customs house and a jostling, jumble of boats in the foreground. We can see the tower from the previous painting.

#### NOTES

- "Painted views of towns and landscapes were enormously popular in the 18th century. Traveler's to Italy eagerly sought accurate and detailed records of their visits to Rome, Florence, Venice, and Naples. Canaletto was the most famous painter of vedute (Italian for "views"). His ability to capture the light, life, buildings, and expanse of Venice established his reputation as one of the greatest topographical painters of all time." (MFA, Houston)

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Canaletto (1697–1768),  
The Entrance to the  
Grand Canal, Venice, c.  
1730, 49.6 × 73.6 cm,  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Houston

Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1697-1768),  
*Bucentaur's Return to the Pier by the Palazzo Ducale*,  
from 1727 until 1729, 182 × 259 cm, Pushkin Museum of  
Fine Arts

- Canaletto was the most renowned Venetian landscape painter of his time. This painting made between 1729 and 1732 depicts **the return of the Bucintoro** (Italian, pronounced '**butch-in-toro**', Venetian Bucentaur 'bew-SEN-tor', the word derives from '**golden bull**'). This boat went out to open sea once every year for a ceremony that **symbolically wedded Venice to the sea**. The Doge's throne was in the stern and the figure of Justice on the prow. The ship was **destroyed by Napoleon in 1798** to represent his conquest of Venice. **In 2008 200 craftsmen started to build a replica**. It was reported to take two years but it is still not completed.
- We can clearly see the Doge's Palace, the **Molo with its granite columns**, the campanile on the left with the **Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana** (pronounced '**MAR-chi-are-na**', National Library of St Mark, built in 1468 by **Jacopo Sansovino**) in front of it. Sansovino's Library has been described as "**one of the most satisfying structures in Italian architectural history**".
- **St Mark's Campanile was reconstructed in 1912 as it collapsed in 1902**. It was originally intended as a watchtower to look out for approaching ships and as a landmark for those ships. It was first begun in the early tenth century and slowly increased in height over the years reaching its full height in 1514. In the 14th century to tower was gilded to make it more visible.

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Canaletto (1697–1768), *View of the Entrance to the Arsenal*, c. 1732, 47 × 78.8 cm, private collection

Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1697-1768), , *View of the Entrance to the Arsenal*, c. 1732, 47 × 78.8 cm, private collection

- This is the **entrance to the Arsenal** (in Italian 'Arsinale') hidden away from the tourist routes to the east of St. Mark's Square.
- Venice was a great naval power which depended on its ability to build state-of-the-art warships. The Arsenal is a **massive shipyard owned by the state** which was responsible for Venice's naval power from the Middle Ages to the the fall of Venice to Napoleon's army in 1797.
- It is one of the **earliest large-scale industrial**



**production lines and the largest in Europe.** At its peak it **could produce and fit out a fully equipped merchant or naval vessel at the rate of one per day.** In the rest of Europe this would take months and involve slow, inefficient guild-based hand crafted components. **Venice invented an almost production line process** based on standard components and a new design of keel. The vessel was moved down a canal as if on a modern production line so the ships were taken to the specialist workers rather than the workers taking it in turns to go to the ship.

- Construction of the Arsenal began in 1104, early in Venice's history and it was rebuilt in 1320 to increase and streamline production. By 1450, over 3,000



Bernardo Bellotto (1722–1780), *View of the Grand Canal: Santa Maria della Salute and the Dogana from Campo Santa Maria Zobenigo*, c. 1743, 139.1 × 236.9 cm, Getty Center

Bernardo Bellotto (1722–1780), *View of the Grand Canal: Santa Maria della Salute and the Dogana from Campo Santa Maria Zobenigo*, c. 1743, 139.1 × 236.9 cm, Getty Center

- This is by **Bernardo Bellotto** the **nephew of Canaletto** and together they produced many painted vistas for tourists who stopped in Venice on their Grand Tour of Italy.
- Here Bellotto presents a cross-section of Venetian society going about business on a sunny morning. Light from the east falls upon the **Palazzo Pisani-Gritti** with its arched windows and painted façade. A Venetian **devotional box that would have housed a religious icon** hangs below the arched windows of the building at the left. Such boxes were usually placed on a building right next to the canal so that passers-by could pause for a moment of prayer upon leaving or arriving.
- Opposite is the **Baroque church of Santa Maria della Salute** which dominates the right bank. Next to it, behind a shadowy row of houses, stands the **Gothic façade of the Abbey of San Gregorio**. At the center with its **copper globe is the Dogana or customs building**. Gondolas and ferries, modes of transportation still in use today, traverse the water between the two banks. The mouth of the canal, where seafaring vessels leave or enter the city, is visible in the distance.

#### NOTES

- The view is from Campo Santa Maria Zobenigo which is next to the Chiesa di Santa Maria Zobenigo, named after the family that founded it in the 9th century. The church is also known as Chiesa di Santa Maria del Giglio (Saint Mary of the Lily referring to the lily presented by the Angel Gabriel during the Annunciation),

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Giovanni Antonio Canal, called Canaletto (1697-1768), Venice, a View of the Grand canal Looking North Towards the Rialto Bridge, 55 by 72.3 cm. sold by Sotheby's for \$4,225,000 in 2020.

- Painted at the height of his career this sunlit view of the **Rialto Bridge was painted around 1729**. He is in a raised position above the Riva del Ferro which **today is a ferry terminal and packed with tourists**. The area round the Rialto was the main commercial area of Venice, **the market is to the left** of the bridge.
- The Rialto Bridge was among the most commonly depicted monuments in eighteenth-century view painting; Canaletto and Francesco Guardi all depicted it numerous times from both the west and east. Lined with shops, this bridge stood at the center of the city's commercial district and joined the markets located on both sides of the Grand Canal.
- This was a natural subject for Canaletto as by the 1720s international tourists on the Grand Tour wanted pictures of the most famous sites of the city.
- Canaletto has captured all the day-to-day detail of the city. **Gondoliers** take their fares down the Grand canal, **a dog growls at a man on a bench** while at the foot of the bridge **a man reliefs himself**. A man on the right is outside a **wig shop powdering a wig on a stand**.

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Francesco Guardi (1712-1793), Venice: the Grand Canal with the Riva del Vin and the Rialto Bridge, c. 1770, 68.5 x 91.5 cm, **Wallace Collection, London**

- Francesco Guardi depicted the Rialto Bridge from the east numerous times throughout his career and seems to have **favoured a viewpoint at about this distance** down the Grand Canal
- "The Riva del Vin (the paved street that runs along the Grand Canal from the Rialto Bridge to the church of San Silvestro) is shown on the left. The previously home to **Venice's German merchants**, can be seen beyond the bridge on the right. [It is now an upmarket department store with good views of Venice from the

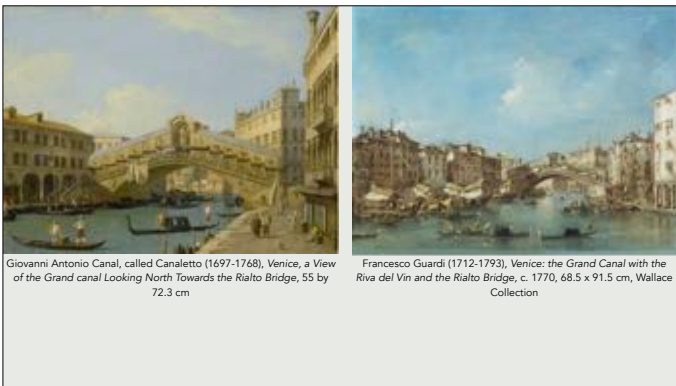
roof] ...

- Guardi's view of the Rialto, in contrast to **Canaletto's meticulous approach**, captures the **picturesque possibilities** afforded by Venice's untidiness. The rooftops, boats, oars and figures have been delineated with a flickering scrawl of the paintbrush and the overall effect is arguably more **stylised and atmospheric.**" [1]

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Giovanni Antonio Canal, called Canaletto (1697-1768), Venice, a View of the Grand canal Looking North Towards the Rialto Bridge, 55 by 72.3 cm

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Francesco Guardi (1712-1793), Venice: the Grand Canal with the Riva del Vin and the Rialto Bridge, c. 1770, 68.5 x 91.5 cm, Wallace Collection

- It is interesting to **compare the technique of the two artists, Canaletto and Guardi** using views of the same location, the Rialto Bridge. **Guardi has a looser, more atmospheric style** and Canaletto feels more **precise and architectural.**

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Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom-House, Venice: Canaletti Painting, exhibited 1833, 51.1 x 81.6 cm, Tate

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom-House, Venice: Canaletti Painting*, exhibited 1833, 51.1 x 81.6 cm, Tate

- We have reached the period of **that other great painter of Venice, Turner**. This is **Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom-House, Venice: Canaletti Painting** and Turner shows Canaletto in the left foreground, working at an easel.
- "This was Turner's **first view in oils of the city of Venice**. He exhibited it at the Royal Academy in 1833, more than a decade after he had been in Venice. The painting is less a response to the city itself, than **an act of homage to the greatest painter of Venice,**

**Antonio Canaletto**, who had lived in the early part of the previous century."

- The **Bridge of Sighs** was built in 1600 by the **nephew** (Antonio Contino) of the **designer of Rialto Bridge** (Antonio da Ponte). The bridge connected the new prison to the interrogation that is **torture rooms**. The bridge's English name was **given by Lord Byron** as a translation from the Italian "Ponte dei sospiri" (Bridge of Sighs). The name comes from the idea that prisoners would sigh at their final view of beautiful Venice through the window before being taken down to their cells.

#### REFERENCES



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *The Dogano, San Giorgio, Citella, from the Steps of the Europa* exhibited 1842, 61.6 × 92.7 cm, Tate

- "When a critic saw this picture at the Royal Academy in 1842, he said, '**Venice was surely built to be painted by Turner**'. Turner was attracted to how **water, light, sky and grand architecture interacted** in the city. Here he captures the reflections of the churches of **San Giorgio Maggiore** and Santa Maria della Presentazione, known as the 'Zitelle' (or Citella). He painted this scene from his hotel, The Europa, at the mouth of the Grand Canal." [1]

#### NOTES

- San Giorgio Maggiore is on an island at the eastern end of the Giudecca Canal and south of the main island group. By 829 there was a church consecrated to St. George. In 982 the Doge donated the whole island to the church to build a monastery. The church was designed by Palladio and was begun in 1566. It is now the home of an arts centre, an open-air theatre and two harbours.
- Zitelle means 'young maiden' and the church and complex gave shelter to young maidens who did not have a dowry and therefore could not marry. It is attributed to Andrea Palladio, the original design dates to 1579–80 and the construction to 1586, a year after his death.

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Joseph Mallord  
William Turner  
(1775-1851), *The Sun  
of Venice Going to  
Sea*, 1843, 61.6 ×  
92.1 cm, Tate

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *The Sun of Venice Going to Sea*, 1843, 61.6 × 92.1 cm, Tate

- This is ***The Sun of Venice Going to Sea***. The 'Sun of Venice' is the name of the fishing boat and it is going out fishing early one morning. On the **canvas sail of the ship is a painted sun which stands in front of the real sun of the painting**. Turner is cleverly drawing our attention to the process of painting by showing how his canvases include a representation of the sun on canvas here hidden by his representation of a canvas sail with a painted sun on it. The buildings in the distance are the **ducal palace, the dome of St Mark's**, and on the extreme left, the tower of San Giorgio Maggiore.

- Many critics at the time saw it as simply a jolly fishing boat going out to sea, but this idyllic scene of Venice is more pessimistic than it looks. **Turner added four lines of a poem** in the Royal Academy catalogue,

*'Fair Shines the morn, and soft  
the zephyrs blow,*

*Venezia's fisher spreads his  
painted sail so gay,*

*Nor heeds **the demon that in  
grim repose***

***expects his  
evening prey**.'*

- These lines refer to the fall of Venice, once a great power it is now a shadow of its former self. This could be seen as a self-portrait of Turner, who loved fishing, aware that as he gets older the grim reaper waits.
- This painting was one of the favourites of Turner's great supporter the pre-eminent Victorian art critic John Ruskin. **Ruskin was thrown out of the Royal Academy for making a pencil sketch of this painting**, a practice which was strictly forbidden. He was taken aback when **a year later when he went out on the lagoon and saw in the early sunlight a fishing boat in full sail that looked exactly like the 'Sun of Venice'**.
- So, there is a **darker meaning to the painting**. Perhaps it is a storm that will drown the sailors or perhaps, more broadly, it refers to the **evening of Venice** and how it fell from being a once great empire to a tourist attraction.
- One critic decried what he called these 'wretched verses' and their effect on Turner's mind and wished he would 'go back to nature'. He went on to make an interesting comment. He said that **most celebrated artists are ahead of their time but in time the world catches up with them, but Turner was so 'far out of sight ... he cannot hope to be even overtaken by distant posterity'**. How astute the observation but how wrong the conclusion.

#### **NOTES**

- Tate display caption, 'Steering through the glassy waters in this picture is a 'bragozzo', a characteristic Venetian fishing boat. The name emblazoned on the sail is the 'Sol di Venezia', or 'Sun of Venice' and, laid out in a shimmering haze of colour in the distance beyond, is the city itself. Those who read Turner's accompanying poem in the Royal Academy catalogue



of 1843 would have found an unexpected premonition of doom contained therein. According to his verses a 'demon in grim repose' lay in wait for the boat. Even the temperate waters of the lagoon contained dangers for those who ventured afloat.'

- The verse in the catalogue was changed by Turner but one version was,

*Fair Shines the morn, and soft the  
zephyrs blow,*

*Venezia's fisher spreads his painted sail  
so gay,*

*Nor heeds the demon that in grim  
repose*

*Expects his evening prey.*

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Edward Pritchett (fl. 1828-1864), *The Church of the Salute Venice*

- There were a **group of lesser known British artists who devoted themselves to scenes of Italy**. **Edward Pritchett** (c. 1828-1864) is described as a **man of mystery** but we know **he lived and worked for thirty years in Venice**. He **exhibited at the Royal Academy** between 1828 and 1864. He may have died in 1879. He knew Venice so well that his paintings are not only topographically accurate but reflect the atmosphere of Venice with its crumbling masonry and bustling locals.
- This is another view of the Customs House with the Salute behind it. Santa Maria della Salute (English: Saint Mary of Health), commonly known simply as the **Salute** was started in the 1630s as an offering to Our Lady of Health (the Virgin Mary) **following a devastating outbreak of the plague**. The architect was designed in the fashionable Baroque style by **Baldassare Longhena**. The dome became a symbol of Venice and we see it in works by locals such as Canaletto and Francesco Guardi, and visitors, such as J. M. W. Turner and John Singer Sargent.
- On the right is the end of the **Grand Canal** and on the left the **Giudecca Canal** which separates the central islands from the island called Giudecca. Originally it contained large gardens and palaces but in the early 20th century it was covered in **shipyards and factories**. It housed a **gigantic flour mill called the Molino Stucky** which was converted to a **Hilton Hotel** and

conference centre.

#### NOTES

- Sold by Sotheby's in 2007 for £98,400.
- Note 'fl.' Is an abbreviation of the Latin 'floruit' meaning 'flourished'. The floruit date refers to the time when the person was known to be active, and an exact birth or death date isn't known

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James Holland (1799-1870), *The Grand Canal Venice*, 1835-55, 41.6 × 74.2 cm, Tate

James Holland (1799-1870), *The Grand Canal Venice*, 1835-55, oil on board, 41.6 × 74.2 cm, Tate

- **James Holland was an English painter of flowers, landscapes, architecture and marine subjects, and book illustrator.** He worked in both oils and watercolours and was a member of the **Royal Watercolour Society**. Holland did a great deal of drawing for the **illustrated annuals of the day**, and for this purpose visited Venice, Milan, Geneva, and Paris in 1836, and Portugal in 1837. He visited Venice again in 1857.
- Although generally considered a watercolour artist he was equally skilled in oils as we see here. His paintings, although often neglected in his lifetime became sought after following his death, especially those of Venice.
- In the painting we see the end of the Grand Canal and the Customs House, on the left. We can see the two Atlas's holding up a globe surmounted by Fortuna.
- To its right we see the **Campanile or bell tower in St Mark's Square. Surprisingly, it collapsed in 1902 and so we see the original tower rather than the one we see today which was rebuilt in 1912.** It was rebuilt using as many of the original materials as possible and to the original design although the foundations were built more securely to ensure it does not collapse again. It was originally a watch tower and a landmark for approaching ships. Originally in the 14th century it was gilded to make it even more visible but in 1514 it was rebuilt and the belfry and spire added.
- Beneath it is the **Library designed by Jacopo Sansovino** in the sixteenth century and to the right we see the **Molo, the water entrance to Venice**.
- There are two granite columns, the leftmost is surmounted by Saint **Theodore**, who was the patron saint of the city before **St Mark**, holding a spear and with a crocodile to represent the dragon which he was said to have slain. The second column has a creature representing a winged lion — the Lion of Venice — which is the symbol of St Mark. This has a long history, probably starting as a winged lion-griffin on a monument to the god Sandon at Tarsus in Cilicia (Southern Turkey) about 300 BC.
- The columns are now thought to have been erected about **1268**, when the water was closer and they would

have been on the edge of the lagoon, framing the entry to the city from the sea. **Gambling was permitted** in the space between the columns and this right was said to have been granted as a reward to the man who first raised the columns. **Public executions also took place between the columns.** Death sentences were announced by the Doge from between the two pink columns, representing blood, of the Doge's Palace. The person to be executed stood between the columns and could see the clock on the opposite side of the square. **Venetians think it unlucky to walk between the columns because of its history.** St Mark's Clocktower was built in in the last decade of the fifteenth century.

- To their right is the **Doge's Palace** with its Gothic arcades at ground level and a loggia on the floor above.

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James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *The Doorway*, First Venice Set, "Venice: Twelve Etchings," 1880, plate 29.2 x 20 cm

- **James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), one of the most renowned artists of the 19th century, was one of the great draftsmen and engravers.**
- Some of you will know of the trial when Whistler **sued the art critic John Ruskin for libel.** Whistler won the case but was **awarded damages of one farthing (about one tenth of a modern day penny) and no costs.** This **bankrupted** him but he was rescued by the Fine Art Society of London which ironically spoke against him at the trial but funded him on a visit to Venice in order to **illustrate Ruskin's book *The Stones of Venice*.**
- Whistler went to Venice with his girlfriend Maud and **shared a dilapidated palazzo with John Singer Sargeant.** The original planned three-month trip turned into **fourteen months** but he finished over fifty etchings, several nocturnes, some watercolours, and over 100 pastels—illustrating both the moods of Venice and its fine architectural details as we see here.
- **Back in London his worked sold well and he joked, "They are not as good as I supposed. They are selling!"**
- This etching belongs to his "First Venice Set" and **the doorway is on the Rio de la Fava east of the Rialto.** Notice the way Whistler has manipulated the tones to create the effect of depth in the water. Whistler is one

of the great etchers alongside Rembrandt and Durer.

#### NOTES

- The great engravers are the great German printmaker Albrecht Dürer (1471 - 1528), the highly experimental printmaker Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 - 1669), the Spanish artist Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746 - 1828) and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903).
- Etching uses an etching needle to scratch through wax on a metal plate to form the image. The metal plate is then put in acid (called the mordant) which eats lines into the metal where the wax has been scored. The wax is then washed off and ink rolled over the plate. The ink is wiped off leaving it in the lines created by the acid so that when a piece of paper is pressed hard against the plate the ink transfers from the lines onto the paper, creating an etching.
- Engraving consists in incising lines into a metal plate using a sharp tool called a burin instead of using acid. Glass and metals can be engraved with a visible design and deep cuts into a metal plate can be used to produce a print using a similar technique to etching. Engraving is a general term that is sometimes used to include etching. It is also sometimes called intaglio as opposed to relief printing. In relief printing the ink sits on the plate and does not go into the lines.
- There are three periods when Whistler focused on etching and engraving:
  - French Set, as a student in Paris, absorbing the lessons of his Realist contemporaries and the



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne*, from the First Venice Set, 1879-80, etching and drypoint on wove paper, Yale University Art Gallery

James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne*, from the First Venice Set, 1879-80, etching and drypoint on wove paper, Yale University Art Gallery

- Here he has **manipulated the tones to suggest night falling**. It is St. Mark's Basin (the Bacino, the area facing the Doge's Palace) and we are looking towards the entrance of the Giudecca Canal at a large sailing ship to the left of San Giorgio Maggiore. As in most of his etchings **the view is reversed**.
- This was **one of the first plates he produced** after he arrived and is one of a series of twelve etchings making up the First Venice Set. It was published by the Fine Art Society in 1880 the year after he arrived.

#### NOTES

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James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Blue and Silver The Lagoon Venice*, 1879-80, 50.2 x 65.4 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

- Whistler **only visited Venice once but the mystery of Venice suited his style.** He preferred to paint mood and atmosphere rather than meticulous detail. He likened his work to music and as here he described them as **nocturnes and symphonies.**
- In this painting he has reduced the sparkling colours of Venice to ethereal blue and greyish silver. In the background looms San Giorgio Maggiore and in the distance we see the flickering lights of the Lido. Whistler has captured Venice in the way the poet Lord Byron had described it—a “**fairy city of the heart.**” (Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto 4, stanza 18)

#### NOTES

- It was **Ruskin who claimed that his vision of Venice had mostly been created by Byron**, and it was Byron, who in the words of Childe Harold, claimed “**I loved her from my boyhood: she to me | Was as a fairy city of the heart.**” (Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto 4, stanza 18)

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Claude Monet (1840-1926), *San Giorgio Maggiore at Dusk*, 1908, 65.2 x 92.4 cm, National Museum, Cardiff

- **In 1908 Monet made his only visit to Venice** and painted a series of works. He said that Venice was a city “**too beautiful to be painted**” and he sent many of his paintings **back to his home in Giverny unfinished.** After his wife **Alice died in 1911 he worked on the Venetian scenes at home** and held an exhibition of the works in 1912.
- This is the version of San Giorgio Maggiore in **Cardiff.** The building on the left is San Giorgio Maggiore with its bell tower and on the right is the Santa Maria della Salute and the start of the Grand canal. It was painted in the autumn 1908 and was bought in Paris by a Welsh



art collector and bequeathed to the museum.

- Monet eyesight was starting to deteriorate as he **suffered from grey cataracts** but the disability seemed to spur him to create some of his **greatest works such as this vibrant sunset**.
- He painted this church in **six different lighting conditions** and was particularly impressed by the sunsets, "**these splendid sunsets which are unique in the world**".

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Claude Monet  
(1840-1926), *Grand Canal Venice*, 1908,  
92.4 × 73.7 cm,  
Boston Museum

Claude Monet (1840-1926), *Grand Canal Venice*, 1908, 92.4 × 73.7 cm, Boston Museum

- This is **another of his Venetian paintings**, one of six looking down the Grand Canal towards the Salute. It is painted from his hotel, the Palazzo Barbaro as **he disliked painting in public**. Note he has concentrated on depicting the light and in his series of paintings he avoided painting people and water traffic.
- He and his wife were **invited to Venice by an American friend of his wife**. He was 68 at the time and was **not keen to travel** but eventually relented. He drove down with his wife in a chauffeur driven car. He stayed three months and painted 37 works.
- This painting was sold for \$35 million in 2015 at Sotheby's and is now in Boston.

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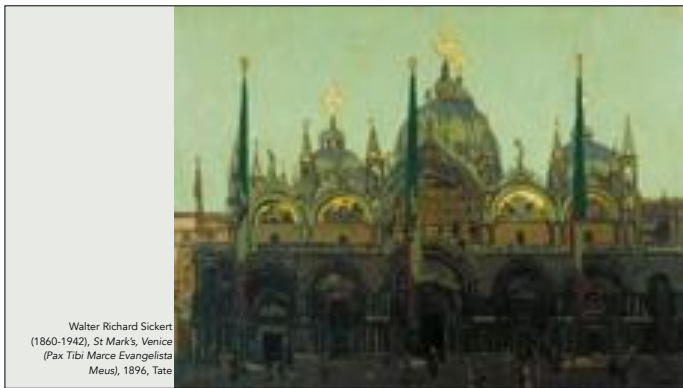


Walter Richard Sickert  
(1860-1942),  
*Venice, la Salute*, c.1901,  
45.1 × 69.2 cm,  
Tate

Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), *Venice, la Salute*, c.1901, 45.1 × 69.2 cm, Tate

- This is **Walter Sickert's view of the Salute** painted about the same time as Monet and Signac. Sickert visited Venice several times and painted a series of works. He became interested in **painting close up and capturing the forms and masses of the architecture**. Here, unusually, he has avoided painting the complete building with its famous dome and has focused on the side and the adjacent building. He has also painted a building in shadow rather than the usual contrasts of a sunlit facade.

#### REFERENCES



Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), *St Mark's, Venice (Pax Tibi Marce Evangelista Meus)*, 1896, Tate

- This is one of **his most famous views of Venice**, St. Mark's that he painted a few years earlier. He painted St. Marks several times under different conditions but **unlike Monet he was more interested in the form** of the building rather than the light.
- The title includes the Latin motto of the city '**Peace be unto to you, Mark, my Evangelist**'.
- Sickert is the artist who **most clearly shows how far English art had moved away from French Impressionism** as just illustrated in Monet's work. He has been described as the '**father of Modern British Art**'.

#### NOTES

- "Sickert first visited Venice in 1895. He painted St Mark's basilica several times under different conditions, possibly inspired by Monet's paintings of Rouen Cathedral, which he had seen in Paris. However, unlike Monet, he was not concerned with fleeting effects of light. Instead, he concentrated on the structure and mosaics, using the light to accentuate the sparkling gold pinnacles and to emphasise the spirituality of the basilica. This is Sickert's largest and most elaborate depiction of the front elevation. The title includes the Latin motto of the city: 'Peace be unto to you, Mark, my Evangelist'. The picture was first exhibited at the New English Art Club in 1897." [1]
- Sickert is the artist who most clearly shows how far English art had moved away from French Impressionism is Walter Sickert. He has been described as the 'father of Modern British Art'. Most of his work is of interiors, such as music halls and seedy boarding rooms. He focused on street scenes in Dieppe and Venice and between 1894 and 1904 he made a series of visits to Venice. John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (1851-3) had made the city very popular and built a passion for all things Venetian.
- The painter Alfred Thornton's recollection that Sickert worked 'early and late' bears out this timing. But it seems likely that a canvas of this size and complexity, with a carefully built up paint surface where each layer of paint has been allowed to dry fully, would **more likely have been one that Sickert worked on after his**

**return to London in the summer of 1896.** He had a large amount of reference material on which to base such pictures, including both photographs and drawings. Indeed, Sickert's full-frontal, planar approach to St Mark's, Venice, with the building occupying almost all the picture space and the foreground reduced to a minimum, is like an illustration in a guidebook.

- Sickert wrote to his friend Philip Wilson Steer:
  - **'Venice is really first-rate for work ... and I am getting some things done. It is mostly sunny and warmish and on cold days I do interiors in St Mark's ... St Mark's is engrossing and the Ducal Palace and 2 or 3 Renaissance gems, the Miracoli and S. Zaccharia and the Scuola di San Marco. Of course one gets familiar with Tintoretto and Titian and Veronese ... The more one sees of them ... the more preposterous is the pessimistic contention that we who live now should not paint. We aim at and achieve totally different results, results that they neither dreamt of nor could compass. A fine Whistler or Degas or Monet could hang with any of them. It would be intrinsically every bit as good, and for us have the added sparkle and charm of novelty.'**

#### REFERENCES

[1] <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sickert-st-marks-venice-pax-tibi-marce-evangelista-meus-n05914>



John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), *Santa Maria Della Salute, Venice*, c. 1880-1920, watercolor on paper, 45.7 × 30.5 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum

- **John Singer Sargent has here painted another unusual view of the Salute this time hidden by ships.**
- Sargent was born in Florence, the only son of an American surgeon, FitzWilliam Sargent. His childhood was spent **touring Europe**, mainly in Italy, France, Switzerland and Germany.
- Sargent became the leading portrait painter internationally in the 1890s and early 1900s. **By 1910 he had given up all but the occasional portrait** and devoted himself to landscape. He disliked having to chat to the people he was painting. He wrote, **"I abhor and abjure them and hope never to do another especially of the Upper Classes"**.
- Sargent first visited Venice in the early 1880s, and made it a regular stop on his itinerary between 1898 and 1913.

#### REFERENCES

See <https://www.tuttartpitturasculturapoesiamusica.com/2019/11/Venice-paintings-Turgenev.html> for many nineteenth century paintings of Venice

<https://www.artistsnetwork.com/art-history/john-singer-sargent-venice/>



John Singer Sargent, *Venetian Canal*, 1913, watercolour and graphite on paper, 40 × 53.5 cm, Metropolitan Museum

- Here he is painting a view of **11th century tower of the Church of San Barnaba** (in Dorsoduro, it now holds a Da Vinci exhibition and is a few streets away from the Accademia). It is a good illustration of his **watercolour technique which combines spontaneity with strict technical control**. His watercolour captures to water of Venice typically under a clear blue sky.
- His technical control is demonstrated by the way he paints the buildings on the left compared with those on the right. Those on the left are in full sunlight and to capture the **hard edged outlines** of the brightly lit building he uses **wet-on-dry**, that is he allows the first coat to dry before adding the next. On the right he paints **wet-on-wet** so that the two colours run into each other and create the **smudgy, less well-defined edges** we see in the shadows of the buildings.
- San Barnaba is in the Dorsoduro and is now famous for appearing in the movie "**Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade**". The church is plain inside but its bell tower is one of the oldest in Venice. The church now houses a Leonardo da Vinci exhibition aimed at tourists.

#### REFERENCES

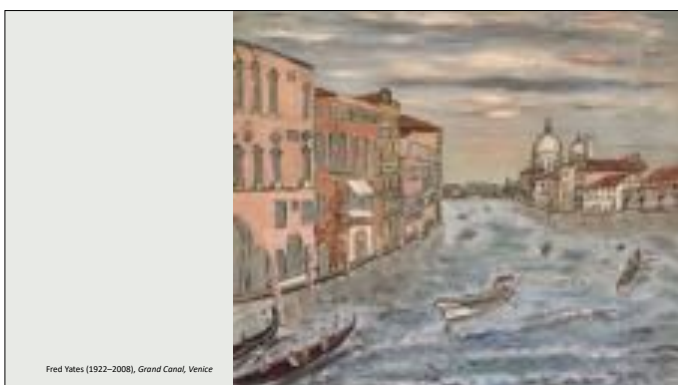
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/12457>



John Singer Sargent, *Venetian Canal*, 1913, watercolour and graphite on paper, 40 × 53.5 cm, Metropolitan Museum

- Just briefly I thought I would show you a **photograph of the same view** or a similar view. We are looking towards the Grand Canal and **the bridge is the Ponte dei Pugni (Bridge of Fists)**, famous for fist fights. There are four footprints on the bridge marking the starting positions for the fighters. Rival clans would fight and try to **throw each other into the canal**. The 14th century tradition **ended in 1705 when there was a bloodbath involving knives and stones**.

#### REFERENCES

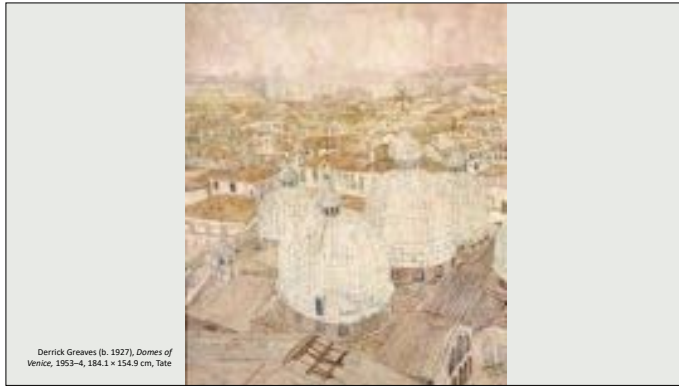


Fred Yates (1922–2008), *Grand Canal, Venice*

- Fred Yates is one of the best-known recent 'naïve' artists—he was self-taught, lived alone and painted in isolation, like artists Alfred Wallis and L.S. Lowry.

#### REFERENCES

<https://somersetandwood.com/fred-yates-grand-canal-venice-original-mid-20th-century-oil-painting-je-763>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred\\_Yates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Yates)



Derrick Greaves (b. 1927), *Domes of Venice*, 1953–4, 184.1 × 154.9 cm, Tate

- Painted in London from drawings and studies made from the top of the Campanile in the Piazza San Marco during the artist's stay in Venice in January–February 1953, while on a two years' scholarship in Italy. The artist wrote (2 December 1955): 'There was another version of this painting, similar size - now destroyed.'

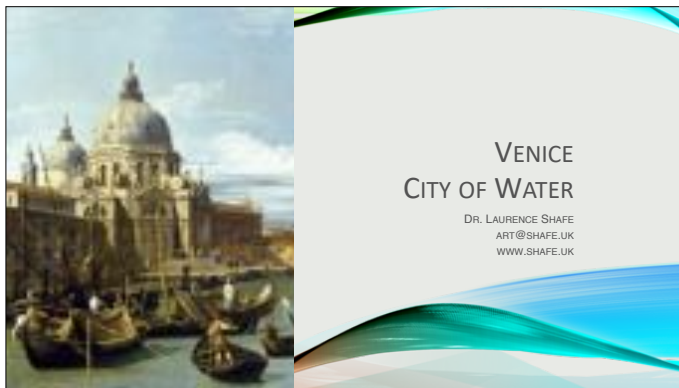
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/greaves-domes-of-venice-t00033>



Eugenio Benvenuti (1881-1959), *Venice*, watercolour, 39.5 x 67cm

- Benvenuti is an Italian artist born in 1881 who has painted many views of Venice. This one that sold at Bonhams auctioneers in 2012 for £350. So affordable pictures of Venice are available.
- Benvenuti has sold works at Christie's and Sotheby's and the most expensive sold was just under \$4,000.

<https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/19903/lot/702/>



- **Venice is unique.** It was built in the **middle of a lagoon** to protect the inhabitants from marauding Huns and it **became the greatest seaport in late medieval Europe**. For a thousand years it was the **centre of an ever expanding trading empire** but in 1797 Napoleon Bonaparte conquered the city and Austria took control. In 1866 it became part of the newly created kingdom of Italy.
- I will end with a quote by Mary Shelley, "**There is something so different in Venice from any other place in the world that you leave at once all accustomed habits and everyday sights to enter an enchanted garden.**"
- I hope I have given you a taste of that enchanted