

Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

— Ca' Rezzonico



The Palace.

HISTORY

This magnificent palace, now Museum of 18th century Venice, was designed by the greatest Baroque architect of the city, Baldassare Longhena for the aristocratic Bon family, and works began in 1649. Longhena's death in 1682, almost at the same time as that of his noble client, together with the financial problems of the Bon family, brought work to a halt, leaving the palace incomplete.

In the meantime, the Rezzonico family – originally from Lombardy – moved to Venice and purchased a title in 1687. Giambattista Rezzonico, merchant and banker, bought the palace in 1751 and appointed Giorgio Massari, one of the most highly esteemed and eclectic artists of the day, to complete the works, which proceeded rapidly and in 1756 the building was finished. While the magnificent facade on the Grand Canal and the second floor followed Longhena's original project, Massari was responsible for the audacious inventions towards the rear of the palace: the sumptuous land-entrance, the ceremonial staircase and the unusual grandiose ballroom obtained by eliminating the second floor in this portion of the building. As soon as the building was completed, the most important painters in Venice were called upon to decorate it: Giambattista Crosato, who painted the frescoes in the ballroom together with the trompe l'oeil painter Pietro Visconti; Giambattista Tiepolo, who painted two ceilings in celebration of the marriage between Ludovico Rezzonico and Faustina Savorgnan; the young Jacopo Guarana and Gaspare Diziani.

The building was fully complete by 1758, when Giambattista Rezzonico's younger brother, Carlo, Bishop of Padua, was elected Pope under the name Clement XIII: this was the peak of the family's fortunes and the palace at San Barnaba celebrated the event in grand style. But by 1810 no family members were left. For the palace and its great heritage of art and history this was the beginning of a long, troubled period of sales and dispersions. Stripped of its furnishings, which were subdivided among the heirs and then sold, the palace passed through the hands of various owners in the 19th century; purchased by the English painter, Robert Barrett ("Pen") Browning, it was used as a residence by his father, the writer Robert Browning, who died there. It was subsequently taken over by

Count Lionello Hirschell de Minerbi, a member of the Italian Parliament, who, after lengthy and complex negotiations, sold it to the Venice Town Council in 1935.

Museum of the 18th Century Venice

After some restoration work, the palace was adapted to serve as the museum of 18th century Venice and opened to the public on April 25th 1936. The designers of the museum layout, Nino Barbantini and Giulio Lorenzetti, aimed to exploit the character of Ca' Rezzonico, arranging the works as if they were the palace's original furnishings. To achieve this result, numerous 18th century works that belonged to the other museums of Venice were moved to Ca' Rezzonico, together with paintings, furnitures, and frescoes from other civic-owned buildings and many works purchased for the occasion. The final effect was undeniably striking; the quality of the numerous works exhibited, together with the extraordinary quality of the architecture and the setting, made Ca' Rezzonico a veritable temple of the Venetian 18th century: an age of splendour, dissipation, and decadence, but undoubtedly one of the most lively and fertile seasons of modern art in Europe.



Baldassare Longhena, *Ca' Rezzonico*
Facade

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BROWNING MEZZANINE



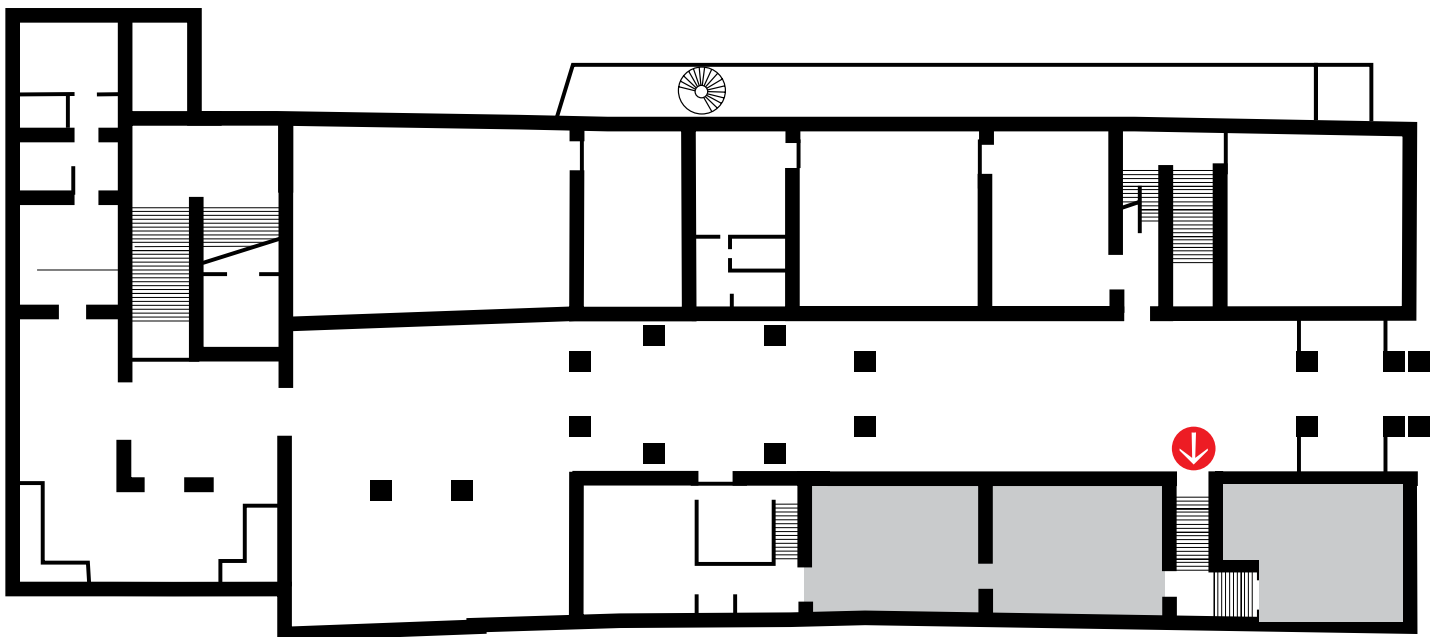
Jacopo Amigoni, *Portrait of a Young Woman (the 'debutante')*, oil on canvas

Ferruccio
Mestrovich Collection

Ferruccio Mestrovich Collection

The collection contains a nucleus of sixteen paintings, all of high quality. There are two major works by Jacopo Tintoretto, an altar-piece of striking intensity and an austere portrait. Particularly noteworthy is a glowing and intimate "Sacra Conversazione" by Bonifacio de' Pitati; in addition, there are other works by Benedetto Diana, Lelio Orsi, Jacopo Amigoni, Francesco Guardi and Alessandro Longhi, two "soprarchi" (paintings above an arch) by Benedetto Carpaccio, son and follower of Vittore and a small panel by Cima da Conegliano. The Mestrovichs belong to an ancient Dalmatian family originally from Zara and have lived in Venice since 1945. The head of the family, Aldo (1885-1969) was persecuted during the Austrian rule for his Italian patriotism; his assets were confiscated by the Yugoslav government and never returned. His son Audace worked for many years in Venice as a lawyer. His youngest son, Ferruccio, a passionate scholar of early Veneto painting, is the donor of this collection: the attributions of the

paintings are the result of his research and studies; indeed, his suggestions and indications have assisted several scholars on many occasions in the publication of his paintings and other collections.



1. FIRST FLOOR

Primo piano

1. Ballroom
2. Nuptial Allegory Room
3. Chapel
4. The Pastel Room
5. Tapestry Room
6. Throne Room
7. Tiepolo Room
8. Passage-way
9. Library
10. Lazzarini Room
11. Brustolon Room
12. Portego

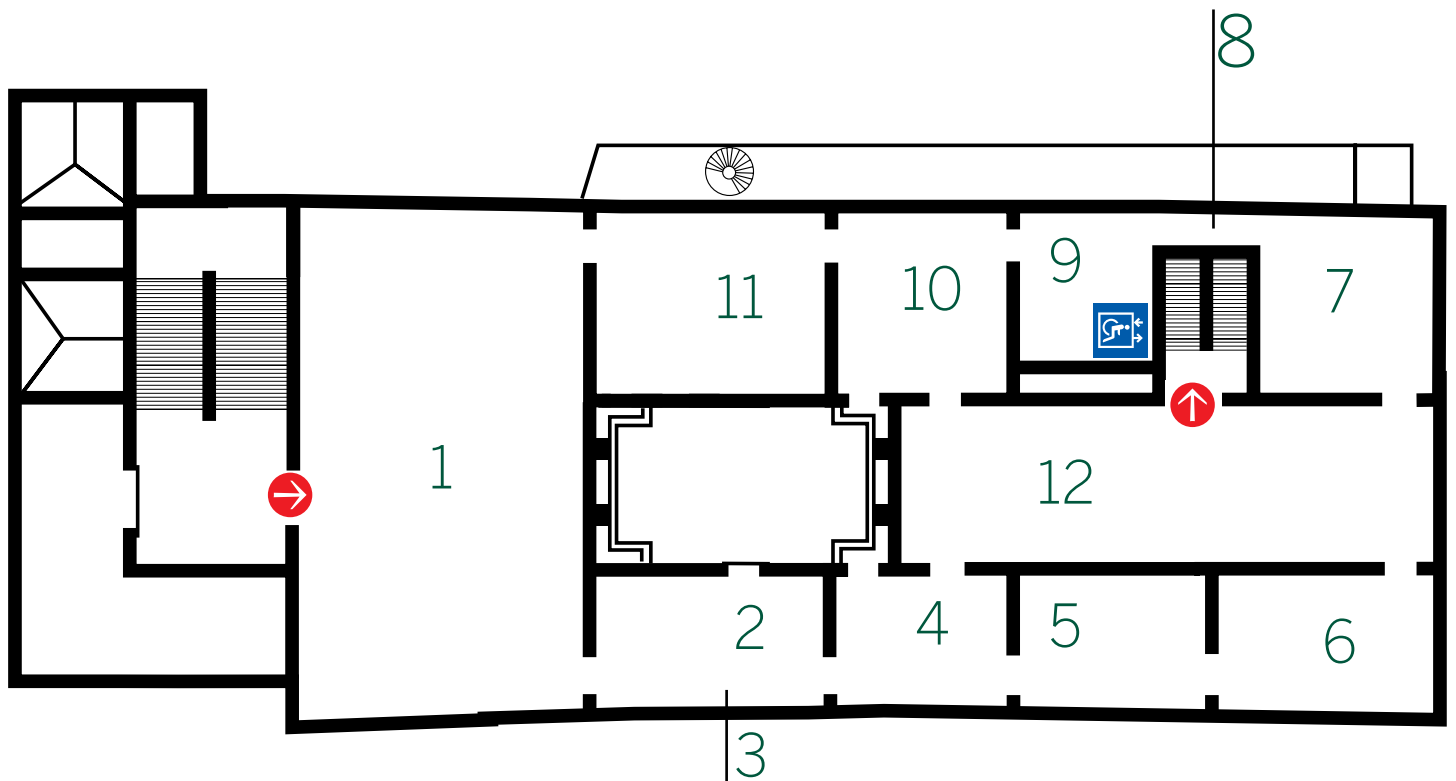
Ballroom

The grand ballroom of Palazzo Rezzonico is markedly original with respect to other Venetian buildings. Massari created it by eliminating the floor of the upper piano nobile and closing an order of windows, thus doubling the height of the room; it gives the palace a truly “regal” effect, and expresses the spirit of the mid-18th century. The room itself gives the illusion of being the centre of a much larger space that can be glimpsed beyond the trompe l’oeil architecture painted on the walls. These illusionistic effects were created by Pietro Visconti, a Lombard artist who specialized in such works and collaborated with the most famous Venetian “figure” painters of the day; the ceiling fresco is by Giovanni Battista Crosato and represents the chariot of Phoebus with Europe, Asia, America and Africa on the four sides. All of these decorations – fully restored in 2000-2001 – refer to allegorical and celebratory themes linked with Apollonian myths: a kind of figurative poem in honour of the Rezzonico family, whose coat-of-

arms appears in the gilded drapes at the centre of the main wall. The two grandiose chandeliers in gilded wood and metal with floral motifs were part of the original furnishings of the palace. Along the walls there are some of the works that the sculptor Andrea Brustolon produced for the Venier family in the early years of the 18th century. Among these works you find the so-called Ethiopian Warriors, imposing nudes armed with heavy clubs and shown with vividly staring eyes in white glass paste; at the feet of each there is a horse’s head. Perhaps the series – most of the statues are in the room 10, which is named after the sculptor – was inspired by the Egyptian statues in porphyry and basalt that Brustolon saw during his time in Rome.

Nuptial Allegory Room

On the ceiling there is the great fresco that gives the room its name. It was painted in the winter of 1757 by Giambattista Tiepolo, together with his son Giandomenico and the trompe l’oeil painter Gerolamo





Ballroom



Rosalba Carriera, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, pastel on paper

Mengozzi Colonna, on the occasion of the wedding between Ludovico Rezzonico and Faustina Savorgnan. Against a brilliant sky that opens up beyond the false balustrade, four impetuous white horses are pulling Apollo's chariot, which bears the two spouses preceded by the blindfolded Cupid and surrounded by allegorical figures. These are Fame, the three Graces and Wisdom. A bearded old man crowned with laurel (Merit), with a Lion at his feet, symbol of the city, is holding a sceptre and a banner with the coats-of-arms of the two families. The solar quality of the light, the stupendous symphony of colours and the dynamic vigour of the figures make this fresco, one of the last works painted by Tiepolo in Venice, one of his greatest masterpieces. The furniture in the room comprises carved and gilded pieces that date from the early 18th century. The walls are hung in modern red damask and above the table you can find a portrait of Francesco Falier in the robes of a Procurator da Mar; it was painted by Bernardino Castelli in 1786, the year in which the nobleman was elected to this important office. Opposite hangs a small painting by Pietro Longhi which shows Pope Clement XIII (Carlo Rezzonico) granting an audience to his nephews Carlo and Lodovico and his niece Faustina. On the easel another portrait of the same pope stands. This has recently be recognised as one of the earliest that the German neoclassical artist Anton Raphael Mengs painted of Clement XIII; it was produced in the period July-December 1758, in the months immediately after the pope's election (on July 16).

Chapel

On the right wall, which runs alongside the San Barnaba canal, there is a small chapel commissioned in the second half of the eighteenth century, either by Aurelio Rezzonico or by cardinal Cardinal Carlo Rezzonico, the nephew of pope Clement XIII. The sole survivor of the original interior is the elegant gilded stuccowork against a white background; the small painting of Madonna and Saints is by Francesco Zugno, a pupil of Giambattista Tiepolo. The elegant prie-dieu in walnut is a fine example of inventive Venetian furniture making; it dates from the middle of the eighteenth century and is unusual in that it can be 'raised' to form a seat.

The Pastel Room

The ceiling-fresco, by the Belluno painter Gaspare Diziani, dates from 1757 and represents Poetry surrounded by Painting, Architecture, Music and Sculpture, while a putto, armed with a torch, is casting out ignorance. On the walls are numerous portraits in pastel, a technique in which Venetian painters excelled, especially Rosalba Carriera, who taught the skill to French artists during her stay in Paris, 1720-1721. Her activity is represented in this room by works of high quality, created during the 1830s, when Rosalba, in addition to her capacity to investigate the psychology of her subjects, revealed all her artistic delicacy and refinement, enlivened by a scintillating skill in colours. She also painted the two small miniatures on ivory, remarkable examples of a kind of work to which she devoted herself assiduously during the early years of the century. The room also contains works by other painters: Gian Antonio Lazzari, traditionally considered Rosalba's first master, Marianna Carlevarijs, daughter of the Friulan view-painter Luca, and Lorenzo Tiepolo, who painted the fine portrait of Cecilia Guardi Tiepolo (Giambattista Tiepolo's wife and sister of Antonio and Francesco Guardi), painted in 1757. The room contains carved and gilded furniture of Venetian workmanship, dating from the middle years of the century. The boisierie, like the fine sixteen-candle Murano chandelier, dates from the second half of the century.

Tapestry Room

The fresco on the ceiling was painted by Jacopo Guarana in 1757 and represents the Triumph of the Virtues. The room takes its name from the three large Flemish wall-tapestries from the late 17th century which narrate episodes from the Biblical story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Like the carved and gilded furniture, they come from Palazzo Balbi Valier at Santa Maria Formosa. The fine workmanship, the graceful lines and the quality of the gilding make this one of the most remarkable suites of furniture in the Venetian Rococo style to have survived complete. The yellow lacquered door with chinoiserie, which is original to the room, is worth attention. Each side of the door is divided into two



Throne, Corradini atelier



Giambattista Tiepolo, *The Nobility and Virtue overthrowing Perfidy*, oil on canvas

compartments, each one containing an oriental scene, painted in gold and brown. It is a very rare example, dating from around 1760; it is quite possible that the designs were provided by Giambattista or Giandomenico Tiepolo, working at the time on the frescoes in the palace.

Throne Room

The ceiling is occupied by a large fresco, painted by Giambattista Tiepolo during the period he was working on the Nuptial Allegory, together with his collaborator, the trompe l'oeil artist, Gerolamo Mengozzi Colonna. It represents an Allegory of Merit, depicted as a bearded old man, crowned with laurel, rising to the Temple of Glory, accompanied by Nobility (the winged figure holding a spear) and by Virtue (the figure to the right of the old man, in rich vestments), while Fame blows her trumpet. The link with the Rezzonico family is supplied by the winged putto beneath the figure of Merit, who holds the Golden Book of the Venetian Nobility, to which they had been admitted in 1687. It is a work of superb quality, marked by a dazzling play of colours and compositional ingenuity. The rich gilded furniture is worthy of note. It originally belonged to the Barbarigo family, and subsequently passed, by line of inheritance, to the Donà delle Rose family. It also includes an imposing picture-frame (now containing the Portrait of Pietro Barbarigo by Bernardino Castelli), with exuberant allegorical decoration, whose complex iconography is designed to exalt the virtues of the Barbarigo family. Traditionally, this set of furniture is attributed to Antonio Corradini, a sculptor from Este active in Venice up to the 1720s. The throne, which gives the room its name, is of different provenance but nonetheless is undoubtedly a creation of the same workshop. Crossing the portego, one passes to the Tiepolo room.

Tiepolo Room

Here one can admire the third of Giambattista Tiepolo's four ceilings in Ca' Rezzonico: this is a modelled canvas representing Nobility and Virtue Defeating Perfidy. Unlike the frescoes in the other rooms of the lower piano nobile, this work was not painted for the palace, but was created between 1744 and 1745 for Pietro Barbarigo; it was then inherited by the

Donà delle Rose family and in 1934 was purchased by the Venice Town Council to be exhibited in this room. The splendid figures of Nobility and Virtue in rich robes stand out against the bright sky; they are surrounded by the usual cohort of exquisite winged putti, together with two elegant pages as train-bearers. Perfidy, dressed in grey tones, is tumbling downwards followed by a bat that a putto has caught on a string. The page is depicted with a delicate attention to detail and appears to have the artist's child, Giuseppe Maria, as a model. Other paintings adorn the walls, while the furniture is of various provenance and high quality: the impressive bureau in walnut-root is perhaps original to the palace; in its size, workmanship and state of conservation, it is a unique example of its kind, dating from the mid-18th century. Particularly noteworthy is the large table in the centre of the room, with its eight carved legs. It is a fine example of Venetian baroque furniture, probably dating from the end of the 17th or early 18th century. On the wall to the left of the entrance is a cabinet adapted to serve as a coffer, a work of the German school (Augsburg) of the 17th century; it is placed on a table with baroque scrolls of a later period.

Passage-way and Library

The doors of this narrow passageway through to the Library are in 18th century embossed leatherwork and come from Palazzo Carminati at San Stae. The tempera-decorated display cases are also of the same period and contain pieces from the museum's rich collection of 18th century porcelain. The first contains work produced by the Venetian Giovanni Vezzi, who is to be credited with having brought to the city the secret of porcelain manufacture, a chemical process developed by Johann Friedrich Böttger, an alchemist at the service of the royal court in Dresden. In the brief period that Vezzi's porcelain factory was in operation – from 1720 to 1727 – it produced a sizeable quantity of works, primarily tea services but also more limited numbers of vases, plates and coffee pots. Amongst the works on display note the elegant bell-shaped cups decorated in iron-based red, blue and gold with various mythological scenes, and the splendid round tea-pot decorated with plum blossom, again in iron-based red. The second display case contains various



Antonio Corradini, *Bust of a Lady "La Velata"*, marble



Geminiano Cozzi atelier, *Blue and gold decorated Tray*, porcelain

works produced at the factory of the Modena-born Geminiano Cozzi, which opened in 1764 and was in operation until the early years of the 19th century. One of its early products was the splendid coffee service donated to Ca' Rezzonico in 1938 by Umberto di Savoia. The other pieces – some decorated with chinoiserie designs – date from later. Between the windows of the wall opposite there is a small painting of *The Martyrdom of Saint Eurosia*. Part of the Gatti Casazza collection, it was donated to the museum in 1962; at the time it was attributed to Giambattista Piazzetta, but it is now recognised as the work of Giulia Lama.

This reconstruction of a Library of the period contains display-cases with the interesting collection of 18th and 19th century glass objects that was donated to the museum in 1962 by Gatti Casazza. The fine lectern and the leather chests on display within the cases also came from the same collection. The splendid marble bust of a Veiled Woman is the work of the Este-born sculptor Antonio Corradini and is probably an allegory of Purity. The extraordinary technical mastery of the artist is clear in his rendering of the transparent veil and the details of the face beneath. The furnishings of the room are completed by simple chairs upholstered in gilded leather painted with floral motifs – typical examples of Venetian cuoridoro work – and a large early 18th century grandfather clock by the London clockmaker Williamson. The ceiling is now adorned with a painting of *An Allegory of Triumph*, an early work by the Baroque painter-decorator Mattia Bortoloni.

Lazzarini Room

The ceiling consists of five ovals, a work by the seventeenth-century painter Francesco Maffei from Vicenza: in the centre is *Prometheus with the Mirror and the Eagle*, on the sides *Daedalus and Icarus*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *Perseus with the Head of Medusa* and *Andromeda Tied to the Rock*. Painted around 1657-1658, they are perhaps the artist's greatest masterpiece. This ceiling was not part of the original decorations of Ca' Rezzonico; it comes, together with the one now in the Brustolon room, from Palazzo Nani on the Cannaregio Canal. The room owes its name to the 19th century attribution of the

three large canvases on mythological subjects on the walls, believed to be by Gregorio Lazzarini, a Venetian painter, who was Giambattista Tiepolo's first teacher. Later studies have revealed that the only one by Lazzarini is *Orpheus Massacred by the Bacchantes*, on the left, painted in 1698. These three paintings, equal in height, were originally part of the furnishings of the San Stae home of Abbot Teodoro Correr, whose bequest to the city constituted the original nucleus of the collections of the Musei Civici Veneziani. At the centre of the room stands a splendid desk of precious woods with ivory inlays and gilded bronze rods. Signed and dated 1741, it is the work of the Turin-born cabinet-maker Pietro Piffetti. Among the furniture in this room, you notice the six chairs upholstered in leather painted with allegorical figures.

Brustolon Room

The ceiling-decoration consists of eleven canvases of various shapes and sizes. Together with the five in the Lazzarini Room, they were originally part of a decorative complex painted by Francesco Maffei for a country villa that belonged to the Nani family, later divided up and placed in two different rooms of the family's principal town-palace in Cannaregio. The four monochrome tondi at the corners of the ceiling are by a different hand: they also come from Palazzo Nani and are by Gerolamo Brusaferrò. The room takes its name from the furnishings carved by Andrea Brustolon, the ebonist from Belluno; this set of works, a portion of which we have already seen in the ballroom, is the greatest example of early 18th century woodcarving in the Veneto. It consists of large chairs, vase-stands and statues in ebony and boxwood carved for the Venier family before 1706. There are as many as 40 items; the most famous piece is undoubtedly the console-cum-vase-stand, the lower part of which represents an *Allegory of Strength*, personified by Hercules. The work – like the others in the series – is highly imaginative in conception and meticulous in execution. The chromatic contrast between the different components is exploited to the full: the gleaming, almost metallic black of the ebony, the warm reddish-brown of the boxwood and the splendidly luminous white of the oriental porcelain vases, decorated



Lazzarini Room



Andrea Brustolon, *Ethiopian Warrior* (detail), engraved and carved ebony



Portego

with airy chinoiserie patterns. The same virtuosity can be appreciated in the other pieces that complete the splendid series of vase-stands. They are 25 items, all different from one another: blackamoors, putti, caryatids in ebony with vitreous-paste eyes, allegories of the four Seasons and the five Elements. There are also a number of interesting paintings, all from the 17th or early 18th century. In the middle of the room the superb chandelier in polychrome glass hangs, with twenty candle-holders in two orders; it was produced around 1730 by the Murano factory of Giuseppe Briati, undoubtedly the most extraordinary example of its kind to survive intact.

Portego

The “portego de mezo” is the wide atrium which, on the ground floor of Venetian palaces, usually links the canal entrance with the land-entrance; it is repeated on the floors above, providing access to all the side-rooms. Traditionally the portego is decorated with frescoes or large canvases in stucco frames: the portego of Ca' Rezzonico had the same characteristics but the original paintings were dispersed in the nineteenth century and the stucco deteriorated; during the restoration-work before the museum was opened in 1936 the appearance of the room was changed, the walls being coated with false pink marble, which survives today. The decoration consists of a group of 18th century marble busts, portraits or allegorical figures, some of them by the sculptor, Orazio Marinali, from Bassano. The furnishings are completed by four large divans “da portego” and a gilded sedan-chair, upholstered in red silk. On the easel stands the altarpiece of Mary Magdalene at the Foot of the Cross, painted for the Church of the Terese in 1663-1664 by Giambattista

Langetti. This is one of the first works produced in Venice by the Genoese-born artist, who would subsequently become the leading figure of the so-called Tenebrosi. The doorway to the staircase to the second floor has the form of a triumphal arch and at the top bears the coat-of-arms of the Rezzonico family. It undoubtedly derives from an invention of Giorgio Massari and dates from the years when he was completing the palace. On either side of the doorway there are two vigorous sculptures by the 16th century artist Alessandro Vittoria.

2.

SECOND FLOOR

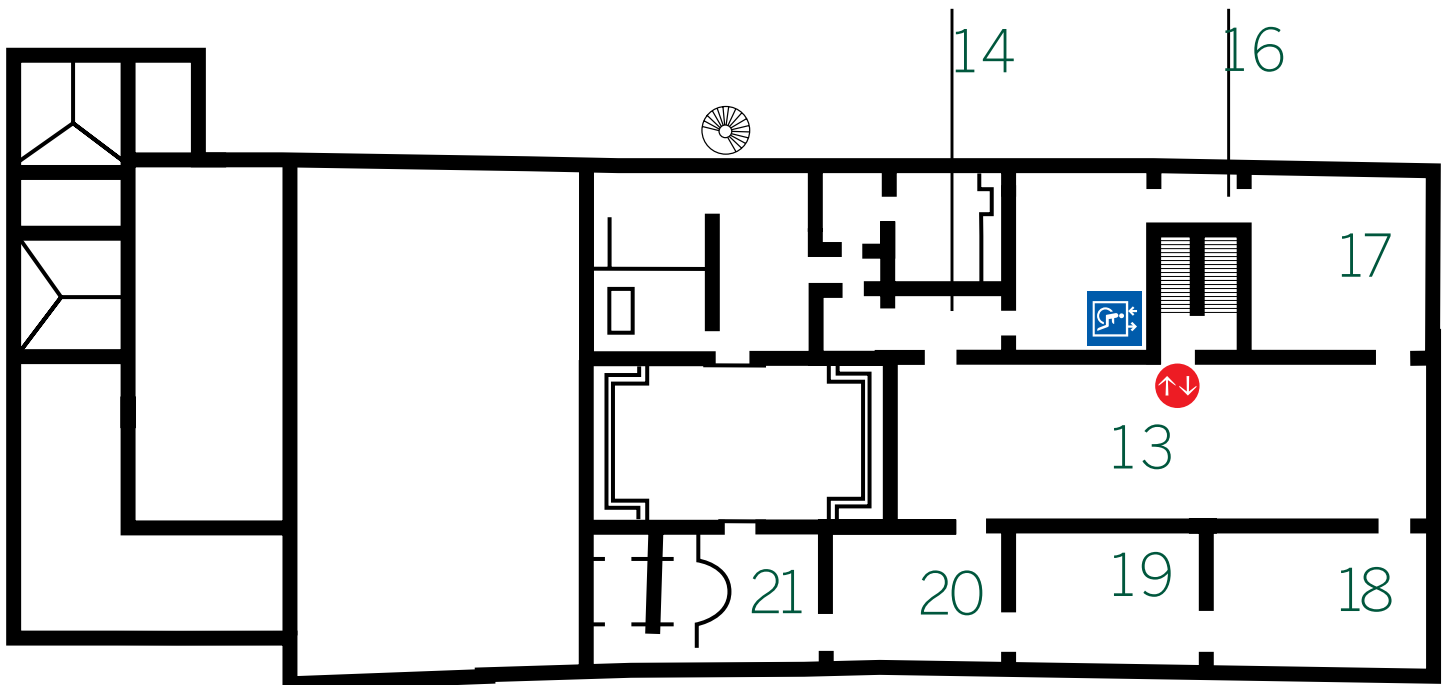
Secondo Piano

- 13. Picture gallery Portego
- 14. Giandomenico Tiepolo's Frescoes from the Villa at Zianigo
- 15. Spinet Room
- 16. Passage-way
- 17. Room of the 'Parlour'
- 18. Longhi Room
- 19. Green Lacquer Room
- 20. Guardi Room
- 21. Alcove

Picture-gallery Portego

The second floor Portego acts as the traditional Venetian "quadreria", containing the most important paintings of the museum. The tour follows a clockwise direction, from the left of the entrance. The first painting is an imaginary view by Luca Carlevarijs, dating from the early years of the 18th century, rich in scenographic effects and Roman features. Next to it there is an Architectural Caprice, an autograph replica of the one that Canaletto donated to the Venetian Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1765. The next painting shows a Diplomatic Congress, a youthful work by Francesco Guardi. On the wall opposite, on the left, there is the Portrait of Marshal Matthias von Schulenburg, by Antonio Guardi, who worked for many years for the commander of the Venetian land-troops, a great art-collector; the work was done between 1737 and 1742. Beside it, the large canvas by Giambattista Piazzetta, painted around 1746 for the salon of Palazzo

Pisani Moretta at San Polo, is one of his masterpieces in the historical genre to which the artist devoted himself especially in his late years. Gian Antonio Pellegrini's painting of Muzius Scaevola and Porsenna, painted between 1706 and 1708, is a fine example of this rococo artist's mature style. The next stretch of wall is devoted to two youthful masterpieces by Canaletto, the View of the Rio dei Mendicanti and The Grand Canal from Ca' Balbi Looking towards Rialto, recently acquired by the Venice Town Council (1983), the only view-paintings by the artist in the city's public collections. Together with two paintings that were originally part of the same series and are now in the Thyssen collection in Madrid, there are the finest works of his youthful period, around the 1720s, when he decided to abandon the practice of theatrical scenography, which he had been engaged on till then in his father's employment, in order to devote himself to view-painting. Beyond the door there are a few works by pupils of Piazzetta, while three





Antonio da Canal known as Canaletto, *Rio dei Mendicanti*, oil on canvas



Giandomenico Tiepolo, *Mondo Novo* (detail), fresco

notable 17th century portraits occupy the corresponding wall opposite. The next area is devoted to an important collection of works by the most important landscape-painters active in the Veneto during the 18th century. The “founder” of Venetian landscape-painting is unanimously considered to be Marco Ricci from Belluno; two small early works are displayed here, painted between the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. Half a century later, in a different cultural context, dominated by the poetics of Arcadia, the Tuscan artist Francesco Zuccarelli led the field, with highly refined works, rich in surface vibrancy; his large Pastoral Scene hangs here, together with four *Landscapes with Peasants* by Giuseppe Zais from Agordo (near Belluno), a more spontaneous and realistic artist. The stucco-framed oval paintings above the doors that lead into the rooms off the portego are also of interest. Above the door into the so-called Longhi Room is Nicolò Cassana’s *Portrait of a Gentleman in Red*; above that into the Sala del Ridotto, a *Portrait of the Senator Giacomo Correr*, again dating from the early 18th century but of uncertain attribution; above that leading into the reconstructed interior of Villa di Zianigo, there is a painting of an elegant noblewoman who has been identified as Renier Donà delle Rose, the work of the Brescian artist Lodovico Gallina, who is said to have produced the painting ‘from memory’ some thirty years after the woman’s death in 1751; finally, above the door in the Guardi Room there is a *Portrait of the Senator Giovanni Correr*, attributed to Antonio Bellucci. The furniture in the portego comprises four simple sofas in walnut, some ‘Indian wickerwork’ chairs, four stands and an elegantly-shaped sideboard in walnut. From the picture-gallery portego one enters the corridor which leads to the superb collection of dazzling frescoes from the Villa Tiepolo at Zianigo.

Giandomenico Tiepolo’s Frescoes from the Villa at Zianigo.

From this point on, starting with the scenes of Rinaldo Abandoning the Garden of Armida and the Falcon, one enters the area of the museum devoted to the recomposition of the cycle of frescoes by Giandomenico Tiepolo, painted from 1759 to 1797 for his villa which still exists at Zianigo,

a small village near Mirano, in the countryside to the west of Venice. Almost all of them were removed in 1906 in order to be sold in France; but their exportation was blocked by the Ministry of Education and the works were purchased by the Venice Town Council and by the Italian State. They were transferred in 1936 to Ca’ Rezzonico, using a layout that attempted to reconstruct – although with a few differences and superimpositions – the original arrangement. The frescoes – restored in 1999 by Ottorino Nonfarmale thanks to the generous contribution of the members of the Venice International Foundation – are some of the most fascinating and striking works in Ca’ Rezzonico – indeed, of the second half of the century.

The corridor

In the entrance-corridor is the scene from Tasso’s poem, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, with Rinaldo abandoning the garden of Armida, originally situated on the ground-floor of the villa of Zianigo; it can be dated in 1770. On the far wall is the scene of the Falcon swooping down on a flock of fleeing sparrows: almost a snapshot for its immediacy and realism. In the villa this fresco was in a small room together with the splendid image of the Parrot now in the next corridor. The elegant figure of Abundance on the right-hand side of the corridor probably dates from 1771; it was originally on the staircase-landing in the villa of Zianigo.

The portego

The next room is the largest, reproducing the decorations of the ground-floor salon of the villa with some of the most famous works of the cycle. On the longest wall is the *New World*, signed and dated 1791. The scene is a striking one: it represents, seen from the rear, a small crowd waiting to peer into a kind of “cosmorama” or “diorama” to see pictures and scenes of a distant world. To modern eyes the painting has an unsettling power: the air of expectation, the lack of faces, the metaphysical simplicity of the landscape and the huckster’s booth all make this painting an emblematic and moving testimony to a state of foreboding, mingled with curiosity and amazement aroused by a new world still unknown. Some have recognised,



Giandomenico Tiepolo, *Pulcinella and the acrobats*, fresco



Giandomenico Tiepolo, *Pulcinella's Swing*, fresco

in the two figures in profile on the right, Giambattista Tiepolo, with folded arms and, further back, Giandomenico with the eyeglass. Opposite the New World are two contemporary works: the *Minuet at the Villa* strikes one by its ironic attitude towards ridiculous and vacuous formalities and all the most ephemeral aspects of fashion and behaviour; the *Promenade* suggests a stage-exit, a formal farewell. The ceiling with the *Triumph of the Arts* is a much earlier work, which can be dated before 1762. The four monochrome *sovraporte* (decorations over the doors) in green appear to be contemporary with the *New World*, although thematically linked with the ceiling (*Astronomy*, *The Faun's Family*, *Pagan Sacrifice*, *Bonfire*).

The Punchinello Room

The next room contains frescoes with scenes from the life of Punchinello or Punch ("Pulcinella" in Italian): *Punchinello and the Tumblers*, *Punchinello in Love*, *Punchinellos Carousing* (1797); on the ceiling is the famous oval with *Punchinellos on a Swing* (1793). The smaller chiaroscuro paintings also contain scenes with Punchinello. In the end the *Punchinellos* dominate Giandomenico Tiepolo's human comedy at Zianigo: they seem to turn up gradually in all the scenes, slowly taking over every role, substituting every individual. The timeless story of Punchinello reached its epilogue and its apex simultaneously. A *via crucis* that is blasphemous but also tragic and dolorous; a heroic poem and an obscene quip; a heartfelt prayer or a novel, a portrait, a curse.

The Chapel

Return to the portego of the *New World* and take the door on the left into the Chapel of Zianigo. The frescoes that decorate this small room were probably the first ones Giandomenico painted in the villa in 1759. The altar-painting bears a delicate image of the *Virgin and Child Adored by St. Jerome Miani* and by *St. James the Apostle*; on the sides, above the doors, are two Old Testament scenes in monochrome representing the *Sacrifice of Melchisedech* and *Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law*. Two splendid monochromes with *St. Jerome Miani Causing Water to Gush from a Rock* and *St. Jerome Miani*

Reciting the *Rosary* in front of a group of young people gathered in prayer. *St. Jerome Miani* is also the subject of the curved canvas (IRE deposit), while all the other furnishings of the chapel are Venetian workmanship of the 18th century. Crossing the portego again to the left, one enters the *Room of the Centaurs*.

Room of the Centaurs

On the ceiling is an image in red monochrome of a *Rhapsody* (maybe a *Homage to Homer*) signed and dated 1791; the numerous tondi in grey monochrome date from about twenty years earlier; they show episodes from the lives of centaurs and satyresses; of the same period is a tondo with a *Pagan Sacrifice*.

Room of the Satyrs

On the ceiling is the large rectangular frieze with *Scenes from Roman History* dated 1759, while the other monochrome scenes date from 1771. The two other monochrome works on the walls represent *Satyrs on a Swing* (the scene anticipates the one painted twenty years later with the *Punchinellos*) and *A Centaur Bearing off a Satyress*; the decorations over the door, which have large lion-heads in stucco, also bear images of *Satyrs and Satyresses*. From the area devoted to the Villa of Zianigo one passes to the *Spinet Room*.

Spinet Room and passage-way

This room reproduces the atmosphere of the country-villas in which the rich Venetian families spent their leisure-time. The wardrobes and doors come from Villa Mattarello at Arzignano near Vicenza. The two large wardrobes, with double-doors, have tempera paintings in chiaroscuro on pink tonalities representing *Allegories of the Four Seasons*; the style recalls that of Giuseppe Nogari; the doors to the room have views with rustic and hunting scenes, also painted in tempera on the same tonalities. The elegant furnishings also include a rare example of early eighteenth-century spinet, with richly carved and gilded legs; the decoration on the sides is in "sham lacquer". The room also contains two interesting paintings. The first, *The Banquet of Abigail and Nabal*, is one of the numerous results of the collaboration between the



Pietro Longhi, *Conversation between dominoes*, oil on canvas



Giambattista Tiepolo, *The Triumph of Zephyrus and Flora*, oil on canvas

figure-painter Francesco Zugno and the perspective-painter Francesco Battaglioli; the second – the work of Gaspare Dizioni, born in Belluno – is a devotional work that frames a 16th century icon; this earlier image appears crowned by the figures of St. Joseph and St. John between cherubs. From the Spinet Room one enters the small passageway leading into the Room of the “Parlour”. Here are a few small paintings of great value, works by Pietro Longhi, Francesco Guardi and Giuseppe Zais; in addition, in the niche, is a splendid Torch-Holder in Murano glass (donated by Gatti Casazza), probably from Giuseppe Briati’s factory.

Room of the “Parlour”

On the ceiling is a fresco from Palazzo Nani in Cannaregio, placed there in the 1930s; it represents Conjugial Harmony crowned by the Virtues in the presence of Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fame, Abundance and Divinity. On the walls are two of the most famous paintings by Francesco Guardi, *The Nuns’ Parlour at San Zaccaria* and the *Ridotto of Palazzo Dandolo at San Moisè*, painted in the second half of the 1740s. They are two “interior views” which anticipate the views of the city that Francesco would begin to produce around the end of the following decade: note the liveliness of the miniature figures, which have the same freshness of touch and the same lightness of colour as those in his innumerable views of Venice. In addition to these two masterpieces, there are other paintings of great interest. The Parlour is flanked by two late portraits by Pietro Longhi, while the ones on either side of the mirror are youthful works. Next to the Ridotto are two sketches, one by Giambattista Tiepolo and the other by Bartolomeo Nazari. Notice the furniture in green-yellow lacquer with floral patterns, from Palazzo Calbo Crotta at the Scalzi.

Longhi Room

The room provides an interesting chance to compare two different spirits of the Venetian Settecento: the lively, sensuous rococo of Giambattista Tiepolo’s allegorical-mythological works, represented in the canvas on the ceiling with Zephyr and Flora, and the keenly ironic and critical spirit of the Venetian Enlightenment in Pietro

Longhi’s “genre” pictures, on the walls. On the ceiling, the canvas by Tiepolo comes from Ca’ Pesaro and belongs to an early phase of the artist’s career, in the 1730s. The combined presence of Zephyr – one of the four winds – and the goddess of flowers alludes to spring and thus to fecundity. The colours are brilliant and transparent; the virtuoso skill of the brushwork brings out the sensuous flesh-tones and emphasises pleasing contrasts in the colour effects. The series of paintings by Pietro Longhi on the walls presents amorous encounters and scenes from everyday life: he shows us patricians and peasants, a visit to the painter’s study, a barber at work, scenes of domestic conversation, “exotic and monstrous” curiosities, family-groups and concerts; a whole repertoire of ordinary situations, events and entertainments. In them, Longhi’s investigative eye seeks out the modes and manners of a highly cultivated civilisation but is far from being indulgent with the world he represents: he almost ruthlessly dissects the empty customs and pompous foibles of his characters and their world. He excels above all in domestic interiors, as lucid and rational in their own way as Canaletto’s exterior views. The fine furniture in the room in yellow lacquer with patterns of flowers and red curls comes from Palazzo Calbo Crotta.

Green Lacquer Room

On the ceiling is a fresco with the Triumph of Diana by Antonio Guardi, from Palazzo Barbarigo-Dabalà at the Angelo Raffaele, which was mounted on a canvas after removal. This allegorical-mythological work is a fine example of the painter’s skill in the typically Venetian rocaille style of airy, refined fantasy; it dates from a late stage of his career, in the 1750s. On the walls are views and landscapes, but the most striking feature in the room is undoubtedly the furniture in dark green lacquer with decorative elements in gilded pastiglia from Palazzo Calbo Crotta in Cannaregio. It is a suite of furniture of a single design, finely decorated in the taste of the 1750s, when chinoiserie were very appreciated. The tiny polychrome figures of Chinamen with moving heads are in lacquered papier-maché; they are 18th century oriental works.



Chest of drawers, Green Laquer room



Antonio Guardi, *Minerva*, fresco



Rosalba Carriera, *Madonna*, pastel on paper

Guardi Room

Three more frescoes by Antonio Guardi from Palazzetto Dabalà, formerly Barbarigo, are on the wall here, part of the same series as the ceiling in the Green Lacquer Room. Although in a precarious state on account of their removal, these works – the only examples of frescoes by Antonio Guardi known to us – still reveal the artist's lively skill in decoration. The room contains furniture in green lacquer with polychrome flower patterns, a bequest of the Savorgnan Brazzà family. The furnishings are completed by the fireplace in red Verona marble, from Palazzo Carminati at San Stae, whose hood bears the original stucco-work, with delicate chromatic tones: in the centre, within an oval, is a figure of Abundance. The fine chandelier with faceted crystal drops is a Murano work of the second half of the 18th century, in imitation of similar Bohemian products.

Alcove

In this room, and in the small ones beyond, an 18th century bedchamber has been reproduced with its dressing-rooms, wardrobe-room and boudoir. The alcove comes from Palazzo Carminati at San Stae and dates from the second half of the 18th century. In the centre of the headboard is a Holy Family with St. Anne and the Infant St. John. Above, in the beautiful, original gilded frame is a Madonna in pastel by Rosalba Carriera, dating from the late 1720s. On the ceiling is a small round canvas, an anonymous work, with the Virgin and Child. Outside the alcove

the furnishings consist of a chest with lid (*bureau-trumeau*), probably of Lombard origin, and a lacquered cradle with neo-classical decorations. On either side of the bed, two small doors lead to parallel corridors: the one on the right has a door opening onto the alcove and, at the far end, is a show-case containing the fine toilette-set formerly of the Pisani family, consisting of 58 silver items, finely gilded and chased, inset with onyx. The coffer on the lower shelf of the show-case bears the twinned crests of the Pisani and Grimani families, which suggests that the set was a wedding-present for a marriage between these two families. It is a work by the celebrated craftsmen of Augsburg and dates from the end of the 17th century: it includes all the toilette-items a lady could need. The door to the left of the alcove gives onto another narrow passageway, which, after passing through the wardrobe, leads into the intimate Stucco Chamber, transferred here from Palazzo Calbo Crotta. This is an octagonal room, whose walls are coated in the original 18th century polychrome stucco. On the ceiling are illusionist frescoes by Jacopo Guarana.

3.

THIRD FLOOR



The Egidio Martini Collection

Third floor

■ The Egidio Martini Picture Gallery

22. The Ai do San Marchi Pharmacy

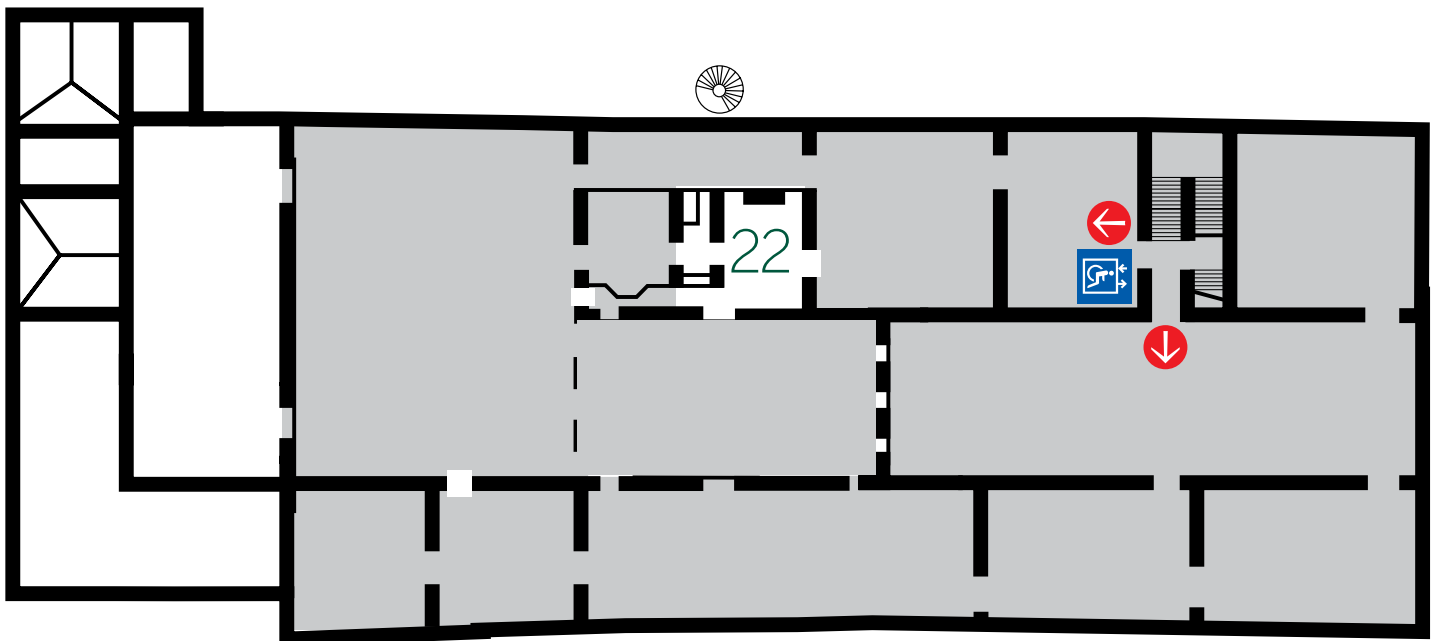
The Ai do San Marchi Pharmacy

Until 1908 the pharmacy was in Campo San Stin in Venice, in the building on the corner of Calle Donà. The furnishings, most of the majolica vases and the objects in exquisite Murano glass all date from the mid-18th century. In 1908 the furnishings of the pharmacy were bought by a Parisian antiquarian, who then chose to donate them to the Musei Civici di Venezia. In 1936 the furniture and the objects were transferred to the third floor of Ca' Rezzonico. The pharmacy consists of three intercommunicating rooms. The first one is the shop itself and has 183 vases in decorated majolica, coming from the Venetian Cozzi factory. The two largest vases, placed symmetrically in the corners of the far wall, bear the sign of the pharmacy: two facing lions holding the open Gospel, symbol of the protector of Venice, St. Mark the Evangelist. Notice the elegant desk with exquisite curved lines. The second room contains the laboratory, with a fire-place and stove, in addition

to alembics in fine glass, from the Murano furnaces. Beyond is the back-room of the pharmacy. Its walls are completely covered by a boiserie in painted fir-wood, enriched with carved capitols and other decorative features. Its original colours have been restored thanks to the recent restoration sponsored by the French association Rallye San Marco. On the shelves are vases in majolica and glass in addition to two large mortars, used for grinding the raw materials.

Egidio Martini Picture Gallery

Egidio Martini's donation is the most important that has been made to the city of Venice since the beginning of the 20th century, for the number of works, their high quality and their philological and historical importance. It is a collection of paintings, almost all of the Venetian school, ranging from the 15th century to the beginning of the 20th. It includes works by important masters as well as paintings by artists who owe their place in the history of Venetian art to the studies





The Pharmacy

of Martini himself. Egidio Martini, an eclectic scholar, began his activity of restoring ancient paintings in the 1940s. He discovered works by artists not fully appreciated by the critics or by the market, identifying and re-evaluating their role. At the same time, with great acumen and many personal sacrifices, he began to assemble a collection of works which made a major contribution to our understanding of 17th and 18th century painting in the Veneto. His gallery faithfully reflects his work as a critic. It throws an entirely new light on many aspects, episodes and protagonists of Venetian art. The range of works is very wide genre-scenes, mythological works, marine landscapes, portraits, religious subjects and allegories – and it includes a number of highly significant masterpieces. The names represent the very best of Venetian art over a prolific period, which starts well before the 17th century and concludes long afterwards. They include Cima da Conegliano, Alvise Vivarini, Bonifacio de' Pitati; Tintoretto, Schiavone, Bassano, Paolo Fiammingo, Sustris; Padovanino and Carpioni, Pietra Vecchia and Giovanni Segala, Palma il Giovane, Bernardo Strozzi, Francesco Maffei, Langetti, Pietro Liberi; Balestra, Niccolò Bambini and on up to Piazzetta, Nicola Grassi, the Tiepolo family, Longhi, Rosalba, Sebastiano and Marco Ricci, Pellegrini, Amigoni, Diziani, Antonio Marini, Zuccarelli and Zais. After the 18th century we come to Giuseppe

Bernardino Bison, Natale Schiavoni, Ippolito Caffi, Mancini, Emma Ciardi: but this is only a partial list of the artists represented in the gallery. The collection had become an important reference-point for scholars when Martini conceived the idea of donating it to the city. The Picture Gallery, thanks to this enlightened and generous gesture, is now open to the public and offers a fascinating itinerary to round off the panorama of Veneto painting offered by the other museums in the city.
