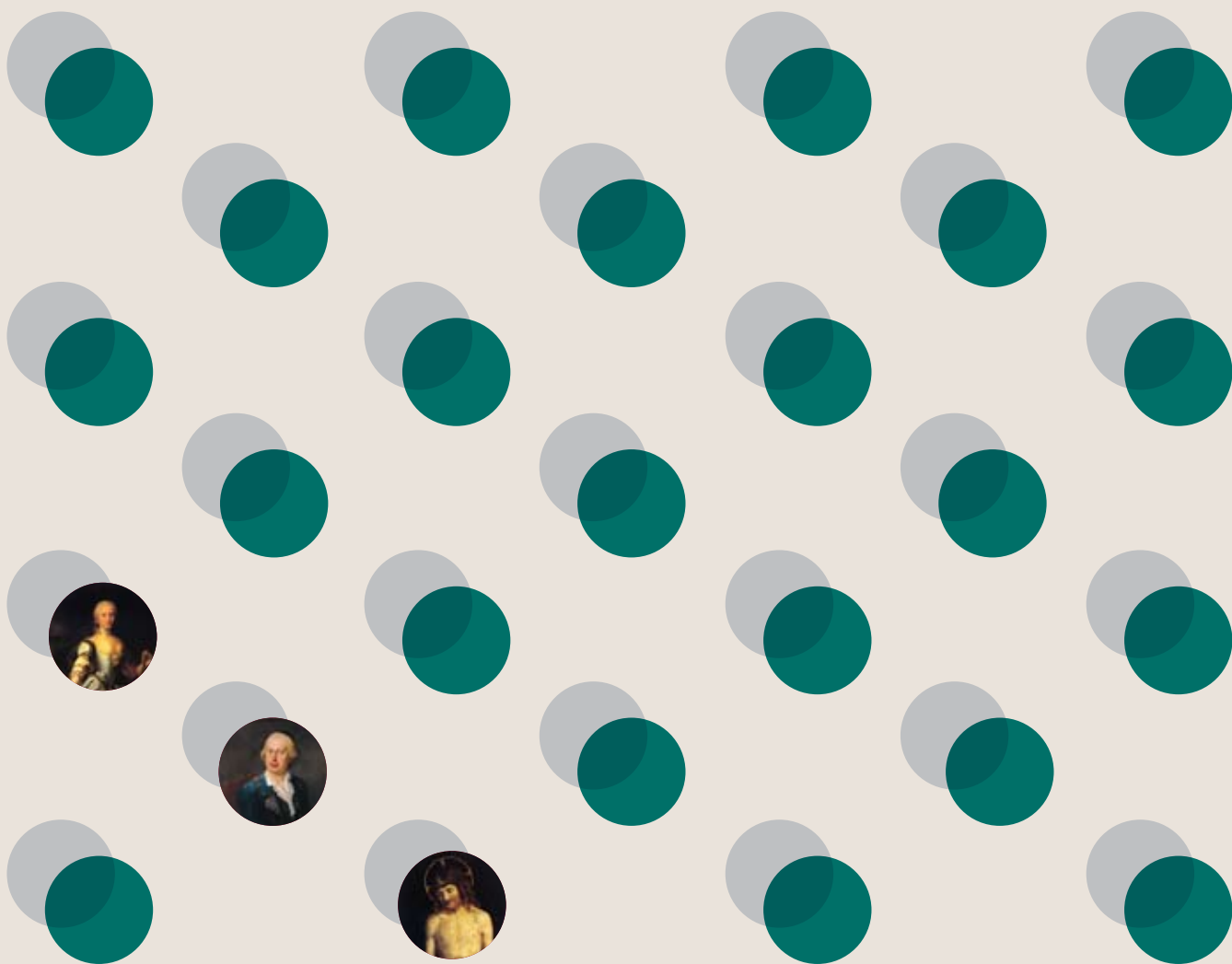


Fondazione
Musei
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di Venezia



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Ca' Rezzonico / Mestrovich Collection



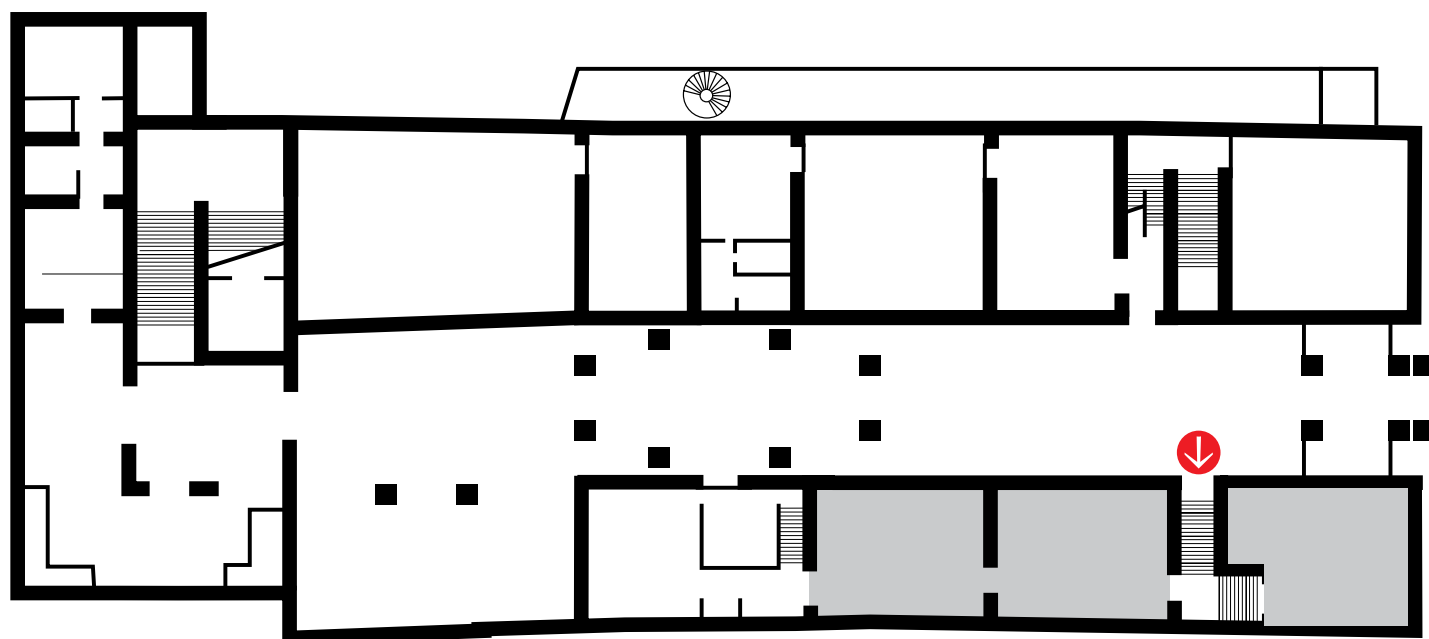
MEZZANINO BROWNING / THE FERRUCCIO MESTROVICH COLLECTION

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.

Ferruccio
Mestrovich Collection



ITINERARY AND WORKS OF ART

1. **Benedetto Diana** (Venice, 1460 ca. – 1525) *Christ Benedictory* (oil on wood, 60 x 52,5 cm)

It's a very interesting work of art which highlights how the young painter had carefully considered the most recent innovations of the Venetian painting: he works of Bellini, obviously, but also those of Antonello da Messina and Carpaccio. In this sense, a very interesting comparison may be made with the signed image of Christ Benedictory painted by Diana at the end of the century and now in the National Gallery, London: there are significant similarities in the arrangement of the figures – evidently derived from the layout popularised in Venice by Antonello, in the attention to the precise rendering of every detail according to northern traditions; and in the use of a low light similar to that of Carpaccio and Bellini.

2. **Benedetto Carpaccio** (Venice, ante 1500 – Capodistria, post 1560) *Announcing Angel and Announced Virgin* (oil on canvas, 99 x 103 cm each)

The close reference to the stylistic and figurative models of his father (Vittore Carpaccio) are evident in these paintings: in particular, the figure of the Announced Virgin derives from a pictorial model by Vittore, also used by Palma il Vecchio in the panel now in Berlin. The chromatic range played out on dark tones is also noteworthy, along with the use of low lighting which enhances the clarity of the figure and of the clothing.

3. **Giambattista Cima da Conegliano** (Conegliano, 1459/60 – 1517) *Dead Christ* (oil on wood, 22 x 15,5 cm)

This small painting in oil on wood was originally the tabernacle shutter for an altar in an unknown church. Small images of religious subjects are not rare in Giambattista Cima's pictorial catalogue; the theme of Dead Christ in particular was attempted several times by the painter. The pictorial characteristics of the small work are of a notable level. The comparison with another work of the same subject painted by Giambattista that is decisive in attributing the Mestrovich panel to his catalogue: the central

section of the polyptych frieze in the San Francesco convent church in Miglionico, near Matera, taken there at the end of the 16th century after being purchased in Venice by Don Marcantonio Mizzoni. Indeed, the correspondence between the pictorial writing, the modelling of the slumped body and even the face and thick head of hair are quite astounding. The polyptych was painted in 1499, as shown by the date inscribed next to the painter's signature on the base of the central panel, and the perfect similarity of style in the two works allows the Venetian panel to be confidently dated to the same period.

4. **Bonifacio De' Pitati** (Verona, 1487 – Venice, 1553) *Holy Conversation* (oil on wood, 86 x 139 cm)

The holy conversation was one of Bonifacio's favourite themes and one he repeated several times: in all these paintings the characters, typologically clearly defined, are always portrayed in a calm, serene atmosphere, engrossed in a silent conversation of gestures and looks which enhances the mysticism of the figuration. The painter achieves this tranquil world by highly personal formal means, through a simple but fairly lively play of colours and perfectly balanced composition.

5. **Jacopo Tintoretto** (Venice, 1519 – 1594) *Christ taken down from the Cross supported by St John and Mary Magdalene in the presence of two Donors* (oil on arched canvas, 140 x 70 cm)

The altarpiece was evidently intended for the small private chapel of a family whose members are shown in the painting. It is important to underline the exceptional quality of the pictorial execution and the stupendously effective portrayal of sentiment. Jacopo is extremely skilled in overcoming the restrictions created by the forced dimensions of the painting. He here gives particular relevance to the now lifeless body of Christ, slumped forward, almost on the diagonal, and this allows him to insert the figures of the donors and that of the Magdalene on the right, offering excellent proof of his splendid portraitist skills.



Giambattista Cima da Conegliano, *Dead Christ*, oil on wood



Jacopo Tintoretto, *Portrait of Francesco Gherardini*, oil on canvas



Francesco Beccaruzzi, *St Francis*, oil on canvas



Lelio Orsi, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, oil on wood

6. Jacopo Tintoretto
(Venice, 1519 – 1594)
Portrait of Francesco Gherardini
(oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm)

Gherardini is shown at a later stage of life, at the age of 70, in the Mestrovich portrait. The still imposing figure, dressed in black velvet with crease-edges defined by brisk highlights of whitening, emerges with great vividness and firm plasticity from the neutral background in keeping with Jacopo's typical portrait style, particularly that of the 7th and 8th decades. The description of the features on the contemplative face are meticulously precise and rendered with a warm colouring, underscored and highlighted by the 'appeal' of the white pleated collar emerging from the dark clothes.

7. Francesco Beccaruzzi
(Conegliano 1492 ca. – 1563)
St. Francis
(oil on canvas, 192 x 125 cm)

Nothing is known about the origin of this altarpiece, which was part of the rich collection belonging to the Caregiani family of Venice ab antiquo. Attribution of this fine example of expressive precision to Francesco Beccaruzzi is based on the similarity of stylistic features to other works unanimously referred to the Treviso painter. More simple comparisons between the pictorial execution of the Mestrovich altarpiece and that in Conegliano (alxay belonging to Beccaruzzi) are also significant and absolutely compelling: the lengthened unfolding of St. Francis' habit is repeated almost exactly in that of St. Antony. Despite being caught from opposing views, these two figures can be virtually superimposed. In both paintings the sky is crossed by thin, fairly bright, horizontally-moving clouds, while the treatment of the foliage is identical.

8. Lelio Orsi
(Novellara, 1508 ca. – 1587)
Adoration of the Shepherds
(oil on wood, 52,5 x 35,5 cm)

The quality of the painting is intensified by the brilliant chromatism that almost makes the figures – most of which are caught in Manneristically dynamic poses – leap out, with a recurring use of 'contrast' with the 'false night' setting.

9. Jacopo Amigoni
(Venice, 1682 – Madrid, 1752)
Portrait of a Young Woman
(the "debutante")
(oil on canvas, 108,5 x 84 cm)

10. Jacopo Amigoni
(Venice, 1682 – Madrid, 1752)
Portrait of Lady
(oil on canvas, 109 x 85,5 cm)

These two paintings of the same size and stylistic character were formerly part of a private Tuscan collection. Only one of them – that of the younger lady – is mentioned in literature, having been published by G.M. Pilo in 1958 with the title 'Portrait of a Debutante'; And it goes without saying that this must also be extended to its pendant, which has identical qualities.

11. Alessandro Longhi
(Venice, 1733 – 1813)
Portrait of Giuseppe Chiribiri
(Cherubini)
(oil on canvas, 83,5 x 65 cm)

The portrait carries an 18th century inscription on the back of the original canvas ('Ritratto dell' Ab.e / Giuseppe Di / Cherubini / Alessandro Longhi / Agosto 1779') which, beyond the quite convincing stylistic evidence, certifies the identity of both artist and subject, and the date of the work. The portrait of Giuseppe Chiribiri, with its exceptional pictorial quality, is marked by the brightness and richness of the colour and the elegance of the conformation.

12. Francesco Guardi
(Venice, 1712 – 1793)
Madonna vestita
(oil on canvas, 100 x 82 cm)

The painting by Francesco Guardi portrays a Madonna, richly dressed in 18th century fashion, crowned and carrying a rosary in her left hand. The Child, also carrying a rosary, is similarly crowned and dressed as a young scion of the highest Venetian society of the time. The pictorial quality of the canvas is considerable, most of all the painting of the details of the rosaries is particularly exquisite, done with the brush tip using very bright paint, in a style reminiscent particularly of Francesco's elder brother, Antonio, his early teacher.



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



Alessandro Longhi, *Portrait of Giuseppe Chiribiri (Cherubini)*, oil on canvas

13. Ubaldo Gandolfi

(San Matteo della Decima, 1728 – Ravenna, 1781)

St. Jerome meditating on the Crucifix (oil on canvas, 117 x 96,5 cm)

The iconographic elements typical of the saint are reduced to the minimum in this canvas: the cardinal's hat and the lion, the usual symbols in the current iconography are both missing. What remains is the Cross, on which Jerome is meditating, and the stone, with which he strikes himself for purification from the sins of the flesh. The presence of the small landscape section at top left is significant: some foreshortened buildings are just outlined on the crest of an incline, and are probably a church and an obelisk. These are the symbols of eternal salvation, which man may only reach by overcoming the weakness of the flesh, via an extremely difficult path.

14. Paolo Scorzia

Board for the 'royal game' (oil on canvas, 86,5 x 105 cm)

The Venetian propensity for gambling is well known, and not a few family fortunes were lost at the Ridotto in Palazzo Dandolo at San Moisè, at the private casinos of the nobility or, more simply, in the bars and on the street. The royal game was a kind of lottery: it required a board and a dice cup of tokens carrying the same numbers and designs as those shown on the board. The board in the Mestrovich collection is divided into 90 boxes, each one bearing a different picture: of men and women, of noble coats of arms, animals, flowers and fruit. At the top it has a brief summary of the rules of the game: 'SE GIOCATO NON RIAVETE I DENARI, NON PUOI A ORO COPERTO, NON SI PAGA SE AVETE BARATO / GIOCANDO A LA BASETTA LE OTTO FACIE CIOUE' N. 1,9,31,33,19,51,82,90 SONO DEL BANCO' (If you don't win, you can't play on credit, payment is not made if you've cheated / in the game of basetta, the 8 numbers 1,9,31,33,19,51,82,90 are the bank's); on both sides it has boxes for bets on groups of numbers ('DENTRO / PARO / DISPARO / FUORI') ('IN / EVEN / ODD / OUT'). The significance of this particular board is that it is the only one not painted anonymously: the signature 'Paulus Scortia fecit', appears in a scroll in box number 4, under a noble coat of arms that is presumably invented, given that it has

no reference to Veneto nobility. This is an otherwise unknown artist, but one who was certainly gifted with a delightful popular streak and pleasant colouring skills.

The donation was expanded on October 2009 with an additional 14 outstanding paintings, of different periods and subjects, from the late Sixteenth century to today.

Carletto Caliarì (1570 – 1596)
Annunciazione

Giovan Francesco Barbieri detto il Guercino (1591-1666)
Jaele e Sisara

Girolamo Forabosco (1604/5 – 1679)
Ritratto del doge Domenico II Contarini

Sebastiano Ricci (1659 – 1734)
Susanna e i vecchioni

Antonio Balestra (1666 – 1740)
Agar e Ismaele nel deserto

Antonio Guardi (1699 – 1760)
Lot e le figlie

Giuseppe Abbati (1836 – 1868)
Marina di Vada

Federico Zandomeneghi (1841 – 1917)
Donna con bambino seduti in un bosco

Egisto Lancerotto (1847 – 1916)
Nudo di donna

Egisto Lancerotto (1847 – 1916)
Giovane donna in piedi

Egisto Lancerotto (1847 – 1916)
Ritratto di giovane donna con rosa sui capelli

Alessandro Milesi (1856 – 1945)
Fanciulla con bambino in braccio

Emma Ciardi (1879 – 1933)
Veduta del bacino di San Marco

Pietro Marusig (1879 – 1937)
Natura morta