

Venetian Vistas of the Nineteenth Century
Italian Art Society Sponsored Session
Nineteenth Century Studies Association Annual Conference
13:40-15:00 Thursday, 15 March 2018
Session IV.17
Sonesta Rittenhouse, Philadelphia

Paper Abstracts:

Wendy Ligon Smith, PhD, independent scholar

'Clouds Over Venice: Fortuny's rooftop photographs' or 'Overshadowing Venice: Fortuny's cloud photographs'

The paper will very briefly introduce Fortuny's photography as a whole- using panoramas (new technique) and experimenting with and inventing other techniques, and using photography as a reference tool for his other artistic projects (painting, theatre, fashion). That last point will lead to his cloud study which was undertaken for his goal of being able to portray realistic landscapes with lighting for scenes in the theatre (particularly Wagnerian opera). The paper will link Fortuny's photographs to their painterly predecessors (Tiepolo's exquisite Venetian clouds) and consider the vantage point of Fortuny's images. I will explore what it means to have the city of Venice dwarfed by these enormous clouds that visually miniaturize the watery urban landscape.

Ashley Rye-Kopec, Curator of Education, University of Delaware Museums, Ph.D. Candidate in Art History, University of Delaware

From Vedute Painting to the Neo-Venetian School: Changing Views of Venice in the 19th Century

This paper examines how artists—both Italian and foreign—began to depict Venice in entirely new ways in the nineteenth century. The vedute, or view paintings, produced by Canaletto and his followers in the eighteenth century remained influential throughout the following century, as artists repeatedly turned to Venice's canals and cityscapes for subject matter. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, a reviewer in the periodical *The Academy* described a group of artists “which busies itself with the humanity and the outward aspects of modern Venice.” This new interest in depicting Venice's “humanity”—its people—did not replace the views of Venice's canals, cityscape, and landmarks, which continued to be produced throughout the century. Instead, it represented an alternate view of Venice, as well as a significant expansion of the ways in which artists depicted one of the world's most iconic cities. As I will argue, this new approach to depicting Venice can be traced to changes that occurred at the Accademia during the nineteenth century. However, it also represents a new form of engagement with Venetian subject matter, as foreign—particularly English-speaking—artists confronted Venice's changing political and social situation in the nineteenth century.

Adrian R. Duran, PhD, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Revolutionary Views: Ippolito Caffi's Risorgimento vedutismo

This paper will examine a discreet group of paintings by Ippolito Caffi in relation to the shifting fortunes of the Venetian city-state and its visual arts during the Risorgimento years of

the middle-1800s. Following absorption by Napoleon and, subsequently, Austrian rule, Venice shifted from centuries of colonial empire to a new existence as an occupied colonial territory and, later, a single region within the newly-unified Italian peninsula. The career of view painter Ippolito Caffi (1809-66) corresponds almost exactly to these decades of upheaval and reconfiguration. Unsurprisingly, his images of Venice, its civic rituals, and residents reflect the impact of these changes upon the daily life of the city. Local festivities, bombardments, and post-Republican self-determination all appear as central themes in his oeuvre. Caffi's works were further impacted by the emergence of new agendas in the visual arts, heralded by the emergence of pan-European avant-gardes during the mid-19th century. This research will position Caffi's images of Venice at the intersection of these discourses—socio-political and artistic—in an effort to articulate the principal characteristics of an emergent Venetian Modernism at exactly the moment when both Venice and Modernism were in the process of being (re)formed and (re)considered.

William C. McKeown, PhD, University of Memphis

“The Paradise of Cities” or “the channels of the dead”: the sublime and the apocalyptic in Ruskin's views of Venice

Although beloved by nineteenth-century British tourists and Romantic painters alike, the picturesque view or “veduta” of Venice is not commonly associated with the works of John Ruskin (1819-1900). In both his sketches and his textual analyses of Venetian architecture, Ruskin typically employed a much narrower framework, focusing his attention on ornamental details and fragments like cusps and moldings.

Nevertheless, Ruskin was fully aware of the picturesque tradition in landscape painting and travel literature, and sometimes deliberately evoked it. In *The Stones of Venice* and *Modern Painters*, Ruskin narrates journeys to Venice from the point of view of a gondola-passenger upon the lagoon, and he often painted watercolors from precisely such vantage points. From islands like Torcello and San Giorgio in Alga, the reader/viewer is presented with stunning, panoramic vistas of Venice reminiscent of the Romantic poetry of Samuel Rogers or the paintings of Turner.

As this paper will demonstrate, Ruskin's depictions of Venetian vistas (both textually and visually) complicate the picturesque tradition. In *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin presents the reader with the sublime spectacle of Venice rising from the waves, but then abruptly substitutes it with a more troubling image—the bright sun blotted out by black smoke rising from a church bell tower; the canals choked with the ashes of the dead. In other instances, Ruskin presents Venice and the lagoon (as seen in his watercolors and passages of *Modern Painters*) not in order to subvert their beauty, but in order to enrich it with the more detailed descriptions and architectural studies.