

PRESS RELEASE

BELLOTTO AND CANALETTO Wonder and Light

Gallerie d'Italia – Piazza Scala
Intesa Sanpaolo Museum, Milan
25 November 2016 – 5 March 2017

Exhibition curated by Bożena Anna Kowalczyk

Milan, 24 November 2016. Today **Intesa Sanpaolo's** museum and cultural pole "**Gallerie d'Italia**" presents the magnificent exhibition **Bellotto and Canaletto. Wonder and Light**, at the museum situated in Piazza Scala. This is the first exhibition project dedicated by Milan to the pictorial genius and creative intelligence of two leading artists of the **European 18th century**, Antonio Canal, known as "Canaletto" (Venice, 1697-1768), and his nephew Bernardo Bellotto (Venice, 1722-Warsaw, 1780).

The exhibition, which will remain open to the public **from 25 November to 5 March 2017**, is organised by Intesa Sanpaolo, curated by Bożena Anna Kowalczyk and coordinated by Gianfranco Brunelli in partnership with leading European museums that preserve the works of the two artists, namely the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden, the Zamek Królewski (Royal Castle) in Warsaw, and the Sforza Castle in Milan.

Under the patronage of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, and of the Milan Municipality, the exhibition is organised with the cooperation of prestigious private institutions and public museums, both Italian and international, including the Brera Art Gallery, the Capodimonte Museum, the Correr Museum in Venice, The Royal Collection, which leads the ranks of British loaners of works that have never been exhibited in Italy before, the Thyssen Bornemisza Museum in Madrid, the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and The National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne.

Comprising 100 works, including paintings (overall 72, counting 10 by Canaletto and 62 by Bellotto), 14 drawings (2 by Canaletto and 12 by Bellotto) and 14 etchings (2 by Canaletto, 9 by Bellotto and 3 by Fabio Berardi), the exhibition track is studied to illustrate one of the most fascinating episodes of European painting, **Venetian Vedutismo (landscape painting)**, through the works of two

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artists who, bound by family ties, expertly transformed this particular genre into the avant-garde current that was so typical of the 1700s. Bellotto and Canaletto, painters whose talent far surpasses that of the landscape artists who anticipated them, achieve the highest standards of this artistic genre.

Several reasons make this exhibition a must see event. It is a unique opportunity to admire many of Bellotto's masterpieces **displayed side by side**, works that were otherwise preserved in private institutions and residences located in three continents. **One third of the works**, particularly of the early period of the younger of the two landscape artists, is displayed in Italy **for the first time ever**.

The exhibition has especially offered the occasion to precisely define the attribution process of the two painters' works, a topic that has deeply absorbed scholars of Venetian art in recent decades, with many exceptional findings that have been traced to Bellotto and have never been exhibited to the public. *Il molo verso ovest con la colonna di San Teodoro* (*The western waterfront with the column of St. Theodore*), purchased in London on 15 October 2016 by a Spanish collector, is compared for the first time with the namesake work by Canaletto, on loan from the Sforza Castle's Art Gallery in Milan. Another masterpiece that has recently been re-attributed to Bellotto is *Il Canal Grande verso est dal Palazzo Loredan Cini nel Campo San Vio* (*The Grand Canal to the East of Palace Loredan Cini in San Vio Square*), purchased many years ago as a Canaletto by the former owner. We must also mention *St. Mark's Square* on loan from the Cleveland Museum of Art and its companion work *The Grand Canal with Santa Maria della Salute, view from Santa Maria del Giglio Square* on loan from the Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Mistaken for two Canaletto's works for centuries, they were displayed in the same British house and auctioned in 1961. Many scholars followed the attribution process of the two masterpieces with enthusiasm, and now it has been ascertained that the two works are by Bellotto. The exhibition presents them in the same room with two Canaletto's works, thus underscoring the differences between the two artists in terms of technique and style.

Among the works that have never been displayed in Italy before, we must mention the first of the three versions of the *Fantasia architettonica con autoritratto* (*Architectural Fantasy with Self-Portrait*) by Bellotto. It was sold to the Agnes Etherington Art Centre Queen's University by a famous antique dealer in New York a few months ago.

The two etchings by Canaletto are remarkable. They are both from the Central Graphics Institute, precisely *Il carro che passa sul ponte* (*Cart crossing the bridge*), a rare first phase of which we only know the one preserved in the royal British collections, and *Il portico con la lanterna* (*Portico with lantern*) of which only other three etchings are known. They were once acknowledged as the precursors of photography, but this exhibition, instead, underscores their affinity to the art of cinema, considering the combined use of manual sketches and preparatory drawings produced using the dark room, thus anticipating the creation of the photogram.

Many are the differences between the two artists who dialogue today along an **exhibition track** structured in ten sections laid out **thematically** rather than **chronologically** to highlight the core interests of Bellotto, compared to those of Canaletto. While the latter met with success on the European scene by exploiting particular procedures of composition resulting from the rationalism of Enlightenment and from modern research on optics (the exhibition also includes the "optical chamber" he perfected and used for his creations), Bellotto understood his technical secrets and then developed his own original contribution according to his personal interpretation. Indeed, the nephew distinguishes himself from his uncle in many aspects: he initially followed him, and then found his personal vision of reality. Despite remaining within Canaletto's schemas of composition, he changes the light and the technique with a more impressive effect. His shadows are deeper, he enhances the silver hue of light, and pays more attention to details and daily life.

In Canaletto's workshop, artistic production was based on organising views and sketches to create replicas and repetitions of the scenes depicted. Though Bellotto's early works follow his uncle's trend, he does

not copy the compositions but, instead, starts from documental sketches to achieve a result that is ever different but similar to Canaletto's.

The comparison of their pictorial solutions offers the opportunity to perceive an eloquent view of cultured Europe at the time and of its leading social class, members of which competed with each other to commission the paintings of the two famous Venetians. The artistic journey commenced in Venice and reached Rome, Florence, Verona, Turin, Milan and its territory, with Vaprio and Gazzada, where Bellotto applied Canaletto's teachings to his views and landscapes that feature magnificent modern traits. He then moved on to Europe, with portraits of London, Dresda, Warsaw or Wilanów, reaching both fantastic and imaginary locations that he depicted in his memorable *Capricci*.

It was in Milan that Bellotto won the appreciation of the enlightened Milanese collectors who welcomed him. This is where he became "the most European of landscape painters", as defined by the curator of the exhibition. In barely one year spent in the capital city of Lombardy, the Italian European city *par excellence*, he produced about ten important paintings, including some of his masterpieces.

The exhibition at Gallerie d'Italia is also enriched by the study conducted on the inventory of Bellotto's collection of books, which was destroyed by Prussian bombs in Dresda in July 1760. The original inventory is displayed along with a selection of 28 books in the same editions that belonged to Bellotto, thus recreating the extraordinary collection the artist had in his house in Dresda. It is most likely one of the **most extraordinary book collections of an artist in all of history**, counting over one thousand titles, an amazing number, considering the painter's young age (36 years). The books centred on totally unpredictable topics, spanning classical works by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Pausanias, Plautus, Terence, Caesar, Cicero and Horace, and modern works by Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Machiavelli, Aretino and Tasso, without forgetting to mention the much loved Boccaccio. The collection also included philosophical works by Agrippa of Nettesheim, Erasmus, Montaigne, Tesauro, Hume, Newton, Berkeley and Montesquieu, even surprisingly comprising anti-clerical works by Gregory Leti and Paolo Sarpi.

A rediscovery that further reveals Bellotto's personality. He had a complex and often stormy character, which rightfully places him among the most fervid supporters of extreme Enlightenment that later led to the French Revolution in 1789.

"For many years Intesa Sanpaolo has actively and practically committed to a specific social responsibility in the field of art and culture", says Gian Maria Gros-Pietro, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Intesa Sanpaolo. "To this end, we exploit all our professional skills by directly designing and implementing our cultural initiatives. Hence, we are not a sponsor; instead, we organise and follow all the phases of our exhibitions by also making use of partnerships with public and private institutions, both Italian and international, within a system of profitable synergies and common values. By organising exhibitions, such as the one on Bellotto and Canaletto that is presented today at the Gallerie di Piazza Scala, we wish to offer not a mere display of artistic works but an opportunity to further explore Italian history and art. At the Gallerie d'Italia we shall continue scheduling initiatives that represent the key moments of Italy's heritage, even historical, firmly convinced that culture is a crucial factor for collective growth, innovation and wellbeing".

"The leading exhibitions organised in 2016 at the fascinating Piazza Scala Museum associate Milan with Italy and Europe in an international perspective. They also offer an original contribution for detailed study as they are curated by renowned scholars and specialists on the subject", says Giovanni Bazoli, President Emeritus of Intesa Sanpaolo. "The new exhibition in Piazza Scala illustrates the original contribution of Bellotto, nephew and student of Giovanni Antonio Canal (known as Canaletto), to European painting in the 1700s through a comparative study of his youth production with his uncle's works, and by underscoring their different interpretations of Italian and European capital cities. With this exhibition, the first dedicated by Milan to the two leading Venetian artists, Intesa Sanpaolo confirms its close bond with this city by enhancing the value of the historical city centre, as proven by the conversion of the offices in Piazza Scala into a museum and site for culture activities, and by the recent renovation of Manzoni's house, and by

organising initiatives that underscore the crucial role always played by the capital city of Lombardy in the artistic and cultural history of our country”.

The exhibition is completed with a multimedia section that encourages the visitor to explore *Vedutismo* (Landscape Paintings) movement, Venice and the 1700s in Europe. This section can also be accessed from the website www.ilbookshopdellemeraviglie.it.

The exhibition catalogue, published by **Silvana Editoriale** in two editions, Italian and English, contains essays by Bożena Anna Kowalczyk and Sergio Marinelli on both artists, on the new historical and archive-centred research, and on the results of the innovative technical analyses that have allowed a comparative study of the two artists.

PRESS MATERIALS AND PHOTOS CAN BE ACCESSED AT THE LINK:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2mm2lqmd90b94va/AABYxDrteZf4YmEgF9kgJDJga?dl=0>

Information about the exhibition

25 November 2016 – 05 March 2017

Gallerie d'Italia – Piazza della Scala 6, Milan

Opening hours

Tuesday - Sunday 9.30 a.m.-7.30 p.m. (last entrance 6.30 p.m.)

Thursday 9.30 a.m.-10.30 p.m. (last entrance 9.30 p.m.)

Closed on Mondays

Special Openings

8 and 26 December 2016, 1 January 2017 (free admission 2.30 pm 7.30 pm, with last entrance at 6.30 pm),
6 January 2017

Closure

On 7 December the museum closes early at 2.30 p.m. (last entrance 1.30 p.m.)

24, 25 and 31 December 2016

Tickets

Full € 10, reductions € 8, special reductions € 5

Free for youngsters under 18s, schools and on the first Sunday of every month

Information for the public

Toll-free number 800.167619; info@gallerieditalia.com; www.gallerieditalia.com

Information for the Press

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