

Fondazione  
Musei  
Civici  
di Venezia



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The Imperial Apartments  
of the Princess Sissi



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# The Imperial Apartments of the Princess

## The itinerary

Open to the public in July 2012 the new itinerary of the Imperial Rooms of the Royal Palace in Venice: a complex project, ended with the acquisition and the restoration of nine rooms, before occupied by public offices. This project is realized by the Comité Français pour la Sauvegarde de Venise and the collaboration of the Ministero per i Beni e le attività Culturali and of the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia.

The decoration of these rooms goes back to the Hapsburg period, although some valuable elements from the Napoleonic age have remained. It took place in two stages: the first 1836/38 prior to the arrival of Emperor Ferdinand I, who stayed here when he was crowned King of Lombardy-Venetia in September 1838 in Milan; the second 1854/56, before the state visit of the young sovereigns Franz Joseph and Elisabeth, "Sissi", which lasted thirty-eight days between November 1856 and January 1857. The Empress was then to live here for another seven months between October 1861 and May 1862.

### Dining-room for week-day lunches

Next to the large room of honour, this room had two functions: a dining-room for non-official occasions such as daily 'work' meetings of the Government cabinet, and as an antechamber to the following Lombardy-Venetia Throne Room. It was rebuilt as a Reception Hall in 1836. Designed and carried out by Giuseppe Borsato in the same year, its decorations are among the most successful in the palace and are testimony to the continuation of the neoclassical style long after the Napoleonic age. On the walls exquisite multicoloured candelabra-shaped frescoes are framed by marmorino (a particular kind of Venetian plaster) inlays in delicate grey-viola and green-gold hues, with winged relief figures in gilded stucco in between. The vaulted ceiling with its 'grotesque' decorations rests on a frieze along the walls depicting the figures of marine divinities. Of interest is not only the original neoclassical furniture, but also the lavish French table centre piece in gilded bronze (not originally from the palace).



Dining-room for week-day lunches



Lombardy-Venetian Throne Room

### Lombardy-Venetian Throne Room

The decorations in this room were also by Giuseppe Borsato and were carried out in 1838 prior to the arrival of Emperor Ferdinand I, as the King of Lombardy-Venetia. Designed as the Throne Room, over the years it actually had different functions. In particular, it was used as a waiting room when the next, larger room was used for private audiences first by the emperor or viceroy, and then by Empress Elisabeth. At the base of the ceiling vault with trompe l'oeil architectural elements in chiaroscuro, there are panels with classical arms and two coats of arms of the Lombard-Venetia kingdom, with the Biscione (grass snake) of the Milanese Visconti family and the Venetian lion of St. Mark's while above is the Iron Crown of Lombardy supported by pairs of allegorical figures.

The red and gold wall hanging (Rubelli, Venice) is a faithful reproduction of the one that was placed here in 1854 (probably French) and preserved under today's. The elegant imperial furniture is all original. The large glass chandelier with multicoloured flowers was made on Murano in the eighteenth century.



Audience Room

## Audience Room

This corner room is one of the last 'public' rooms and is adjacent to Sissi's private apartment. It was here that the empress would receive individuals or small groups of accredited people during her stays in Venice in 1856/57 and 1861/62.

The ceiling decorations are highly elegant but simple, with background paintings in delicately coloured stucco and a broad fascia with plant motifs and classical griffons in gilded stucco against a green background. It is probably datable to the end of the eighteenth century and therefore still during the Venetian Republic, when these rooms were used by the Procurators of Saint Mark's.

The wooden floor and the red and cream coloured hangings in the rooms were renovated between 1854 and 1856, before Sissi and Franz Joseph's visit. The ten large eighteenth century engraved, gilded Venetian armchairs in the room still have their original velvet brocades. The engraved gilded large mirror over the fireplace (nineteenth century), is a valuable revival of the baroque Venetian style. The painting with a Historical Venetian subject (*The swearing-in ceremony of the first Doge*, Paolo Anafesto) is by Paolo Menegatti (1845). Also the large glass chandelier from Murano dates from the nineteenth century.

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## The Empress' Bathroom

This small room was once a bathroom. There used to be a marble tub that was discretely hidden by silk curtains that created a small pavilion around it. The decoration is simple, with cream-coloured marmorino inlays and dainty classical-Renaissance motifs. The chandelier dating from the end of the eighteenth century with cut crystal pendants is probably from central Europe.

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## The Empress' Study

Formerly used by the Vice-Queen of Lombardy-Venetia, this room was also used by Sissi as a private study for reading and writing. The decoration dates from different interventions. The light fake marble wainscoting on the walls with panels above probably goes back to the Napoleonic period. On the shorter walls, in the corners and to the sides of the doors there are coloured paintings of figures and motifs of classical-Renaissance inspiration against a light background. When renovation was carried out in 1854-1856 the decorations were also retouched, partially replaced and modified by the decorator Giovanni Rossi who added groups of allegorical figures on the walls, albeit not with great success. After 1866 the Italian Savoy court made further changes, such as covering the largest panels on the walls and ceiling with the dense green shade you can see today. A large piece of furniture in neo-baroque style stands out in the room. It dates from the mid nineteenth century and is a revival of different Venetian handcrafts (intaglio, inlay work, lacque, painted mirror etc.). The early nineteenth century Muranese chandelier with blown glass drops is of particular interest as it was the Venetian response to the Bohemian crystals chandeliers that were so fashionable at that time.

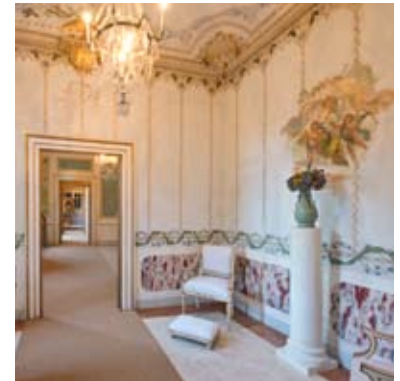
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## The Empress' Boudoir

This small "dressing room" was for young Elisabeth and part of the work carried out in 1854 with new decorations by Giovanni Rossi. The walls and ceiling are all in an extraordinary grey-blue marmorino with shining micro-crystals. There are light garlands and 'capricious' motifs around it created by the interweaving of slender white stuccoes, coloured or gold

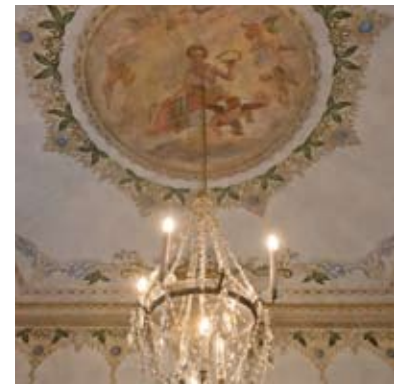


The Empress' Study



The Empress' Boudoir

decorations in slight relief and, above all, various small multicoloured flowers. Amongst them are lilies of the valley and corn flowers – a clear homage to Sissi's favourite flowers. There are also gilded metal lilies of the valley interwoven with the stuccoes in the corners of the ceiling and between the inlays of the buonagrazia canopy. At the height of the door on the cornice stucco eagles are supporting the coats of arms of the kingdoms of Austria and Bavaria. Unfortunately the figurative parts in oil are now in poor condition: in the medallion in the centre of the ceiling is *The Protective Goddess of the Arts* (her features are similar to those of the Empress) whilst on the wall is *The Toilet of Venus*. The 'bell-shaped' chandelier with Bohemian cut crystal is from the early nineteenth century.



The Empress' Boudoir

### **The Empress' Bed chamber**

From 1856 on this spacious room was used as Empress Elisabeth's bed chamber. As there was no fireplace, there used to be a large 'column-shaped' majolica stove to heat the room.

The neoclassical decoration on the ceiling vault is from the Napoleonic period and was completed around 1810. The geometrical panels, possibly by Giuseppe Borsato, are interspersed with frescoed figures by Giovanni Bevilacqua in pleasant soft colours (*Venus and Peristera with Cupid, Venus before Jupiter, The Toilet of Venus, Judgement of Paris*).

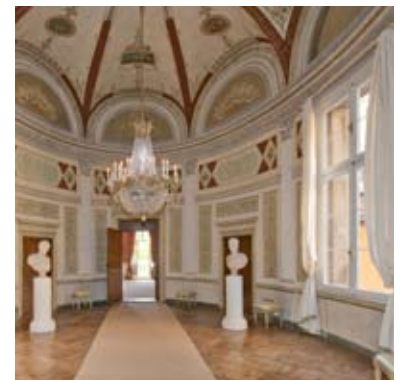
The lavish neo-Baroque hangings in blue and light gold were added in 1854, when renovation was carried out. Once again, the original is preserved under the one you can see, which is an accurate reproduction (Rubelli – Venice).



The Empress' Bed chamber

Although no longer present, we know that the empress' bed was in the rococo style, surrounded by curtains hanging from a metal baldachin; today an outstanding piece of historical furniture commemorates the function of this room: the pure imperial style bed of Napoleon's step-son, Eugene Beauharnais (his initials can be seen on it), viceroy of the short-lived Kingdom of Italy founded by Bonaparte between 1806 and 1814. This dormeuse is one of the few pieces of furniture from the Napoleonic period to have remained in the palace. The other pieces in the room are from the same period and in the same style. The neoclassical gilded bronze chandelier is of great elegance.

The painting between the windows is an altar piece by Carlo Caliari, the son of the celebrated sixteenth century painter Paolo Veronese. It was originally made for a church in northern Veneto (Belluno) and requisitioned during the Napoleonic period. Then it was placed in the altar of the Chapel of the Royal Palace.



Everyday Dining-room

### **Antechamber of the apartments**

This room was the private passageway that went from the rooms of Empress Elisabeth, "Sissi", and those of Emperor Franz Joseph. The balcony offers a breath-taking view of the Royal Gardens, looking towards the Basin of St. Mark's and the nearby island of San Giorgio.

The vault in this room is from the Napoleonic period (1810-1811). With a regular geometrical pattern in large fake coffers with tondos and octagons, the remarkably neoclassical decoration is a work of Giuseppe Borsato. In the octagons, against a delicate green background are small figurative mythological groups inspired by the Roman paintings of Ercolano. Added in 1854, the red hanging is preserved under a reproduction. The neoclassical chandelier is in gilded bronze.



## Oval Room (Everyday Dining-room)

This harmonious oval-shaped neoclassical room was the junction between the 'public' rooms of the palace overlooking St. Mark's square and the royal apartments, along the side overlooking the gardens and Basin. Furthermore, various 'secret' passageways intersected here, created to avoid going through the living quarters and rooms for staff. When Franz Joseph and Elisabeth were staying there, the imperial couple would also have their breakfast, lunch or dinner here.

The neoclassical room was designed and decorated for the Napoleonic court by Giuseppe Borsato in 1810-1811. In 1854-1856 slight changes were made, also to the colours, perhaps by Giovanni Rossi. The 'umbrella' vault created by the combination of eight semicircular veils is airy; the decorations are inspired by Pompeii, with slender stylised racemes, plaques and medallions with birds and divinities (Neptune, Apollo, Juno, and Apis). With fake half columns in stucco, the walls are decorated with geometrical panels with golden ornamentation in slight relief, in chiaroscuro, and with multicoloured flowers. The remarkable marble busts are the portraits of Napoleon Bonaparte and of his second wife, Marie-Louise of Austria. They are works by the sculptor Luigi Pizzi (1810 ca.).



Portrait of the Empress Sissi

# General information

## Venue

**Correr Museum, St. Mark's Square, Venice**

## Vaporetto

Line 1, Vallarosso or San Zaccaria stop

Line 2 Giardinetti stop

Line 5.1 / 5.2 / 4.1, San Zaccaria stop

## Opening Hours

April 1<sup>st</sup> > October 31<sup>st</sup>

10 am – 7 pm (ticket office 10 am – 6 pm)

November 1<sup>st</sup> > March 31<sup>st</sup>

10 am – 5 pm (ticket office 10 am – 4 pm)

Closed December 25<sup>th</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup>

## Tickets

Single ticket to the **Museums of St. Mark's Square**, valid for Palazzo Ducale, Museo Correr, National Archeological Museum, Monumental Rooms of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. *Valid 3 months and grants one single admission to the Doge's Palace and the combined itinerary.*

**Full price > € 18**

**Reduced\* > € 11**

Children aged from 6 to 14; students aged from 15 to 25; coordinators (max. 2) for groups of children or students (min. 10); citizens over 65; staff of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo (MiBACT); holders of the Rolling Venice Card; FAI members.

## Free\*

Venetian citizens and residents; children aged from 0 to 5; disabled people with helper; authorized guides and interpreters accompanying groups or individual visitors; for groups of at least 15 people, 1 free entrance (only with prior booking); accompanying teachers of school groups (up to 2 teachers per group); ICOM members; MUVE ordinary partners; Servizio Civile volunteers; MUVE Friend Card holders, holders of "The Cultivist" card (plus three guests).

## Family Offer

Reduced ticket for all the family members, for families of two adults and at least one child (aged 6 to 14).

## School Offer > € 5,50 per person

(Valid from September 1<sup>st</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>) for students of all schools levels accompanied by their teachers; a list of the students' names must be provided by the school.

\*ID required

## Booking

Call center **848082000**

*From Monday to Friday, from 9 am to 1 pm and from 2 pm to 6 pm.*

*Saturday, from 9 am to 2 pm. Closed on Sundays and holidays.*

from abroad **++39 041 42730892**

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