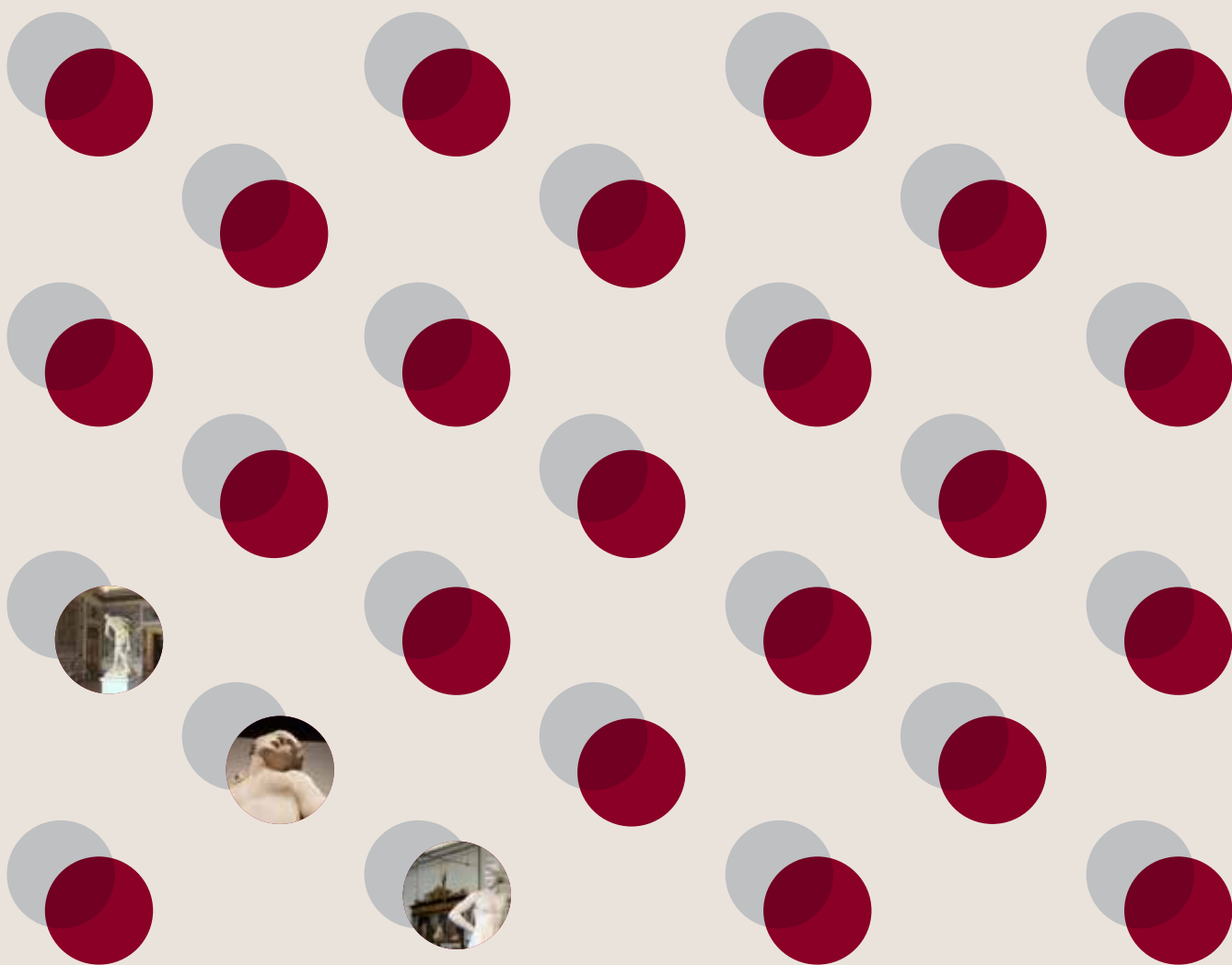


# Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia



The neo-classical rooms  
and the Canova collection

Museo Correr



# The neo-classical rooms and the Canova collection

The Correr Museum is laid out in various sections that offer a fascinating insight into the art and history of Venice.

The first section occupies the Napoleonic Wing, a 19th century kings and emperors' palace; here the sumptuous **Neoclassical Rooms** house a noteworthy **collection of works** by the great sculptor **Antonio Canova** (1757-1822).



Museo Correr  
Venice, St. Mark's Square

## LAYOUT AND COLLECTIONS

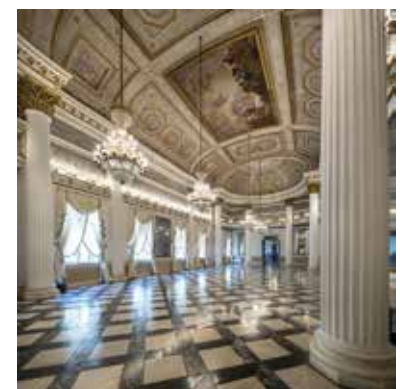
### BALLROOM

This sumptuous and opulent ballroom is unique in the palace for the thoroughness and refinement of its Empire-style decor. Lorenzo Santi began work on the design in 1822, and Giuseppe Borsato completed the decoration in 1837/38.

At either end, the room is bound by loggias intended to house the orchestra; above the gilded Corinthian capitals of these fluted columns in polished stucco are two small apses that make the upper area of the ballroom into an oval.

The centre of the ceiling is frescoed with *Peace surrounded by the Virtues and the Geni of Olympus*. Painted by Odorico Politi, the work is a clear reference to the restoration of the Hapsburgs after the period of Napoleon.

The door on the right at the end of the room leads to the beginning of the new itinerary of the Imperial rooms.



Ballroom  
Museo Correr

### ROOM I - CANOVA COLLECTION

#### **Canova, from the drawing to the model: from an idea to the form in space**

The museum houses a large nucleus of autograph drawings from the collections of illustrious figures that knew Canova (Leopoldo Cicognara, Bartolomeo Gamba, Francesco Aglietti etc.). Part of the first stage of his creative process, the drawings used two techniques that the sculptor chose depending on how satisfied he was with the 'idea': in pencil whilst studying the subject and composition and in ink with sure, subtle strokes for subjects that were mature in their gesture, pose and expression, but still had to be perfected, for example by comparing them with the real thing, with the model before him.



Room I, Canova collection  
Museo Correr

Some of the sheets depict works that became famous marbles ( *The Three Graces*, *The Boxers Creugante and Damosseno* ); others reached the model stage but were never completed in marble; the ones dedicated to his beloved theme of dance are particularly delightful.

The outstanding group of Canova's autograph models is a magnificent demonstration of his great inventive success and exceptional ability to conceive and concretise the form with immediacy, free in space.

In the sculptor's hands malleable materials such as wax and clay (either fired or left raw) either take on a concrete shape or substantiate the drawing in space, in particular in the case of articulate groups of figures.

Outstanding in this group is the terracotta model that conveys the initial idea of the famous marbles of *Love and Psyche* before it was changed, the small raw clay for the *Repentant Magdalene* , and the studies for the figures of what was to be the *Funerary Mausoleum for Maria Christina of Austria* in Vienna.

Of particular dramatic conception is the articulate group of numerous figures with *Hercules firing arrows at his children*, effectively portrayed in wax. The uncompleted project for the *Funerary Monument to Francesco Pesaro* is not a true model but a miniature in wood and wax.

## ROOM II - CANOVA COLLECTION

### Canova, his beginnings

Antonio Canova was born in Possagno in 1757, at the foot of the Treviso Prealps to a family of experienced stonecutters. He received his technical training from his grandfather and the workshops of skilled late Baroque sculptors between Asolo and Venice; it was not long before he met members of the more modern and influential circles of Venice and it was there that he began to develop his fundamental classicist direction and received his first commissions.

With *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1775-76) – statues in soft stone that were originally on the pillars of the villa gate belonging to Senator Giovanni Falier in Asolo – the sculptor barely eighteen years old, completed his first evocative large-dimensioned sculpture, revealing he was still under considerable influence from the painting style of the Eighteenth century.

This changed immediately with his first sensational masterpiece *Daedalus and Icarus* (1777-79) [in the next room III ], which enabled him to go to Rome and finish his training.

He made his name once and for all as the most advanced and skilled sculptor in Rome with the creation of the *Funerary Monuments to Popes Clement XIV* (Basilica dei SS. Apostoli, 1783-87) and *Clement XIII* (the Venetian Carlo Rezzonico in Saint Peter's, 1783-92).

On display here are the plaster casts of various parts: *Bust of Pope Clement XIII*; *Bust of Religion*; reliefs with *Charity and Hope*.



Room I, Canova collection  
Museo Correr



Antonio Canova  
*Love and Psyche*  
Study-model in terracotta for the  
marble group



Room II, Canova collection  
Museo Correr

While he was waiting for this last, extraordinary commission, as a personal artistic exercise Canova sculptured a series of Bas-reliefs in plaster (1787-92), inspired by episodes from the great Greek-Roman classical poems of Homer, Virgil, and by Socrates. What he portrays here is a synthesis inspired by both the Ancient and Donatello's Florentine Quattrocento: figures with clear profiles, few planes of depth scaled down parallel; the role of the pose line and the smooth background.

These were never completed in marble but reproduced in plaster several times, at times with slight variations, and were mainly given to the artist's friends, admirers and potential clients.

On display here are three of his most famous bas-reliefs: *The Death of Priam*; *The Dance of sons of Alcinous*; *Hecuba and the Trojans offer Pallas the Peplos*.

Together with other plasters these were sent to Venice in 1795-96 to the procurator Antonio Cappello, who immediately made them available to young Venetian artists in his apartment in this same building of the Procuratie Nuove.

It was especially with such innovative works that as early as the end of the eighteenth century Canova created and diffused a neo-classical canon that was destined to resounding international success.

### SALA III - CANOVA COLLECTION

#### **Canova and Venice : *Daedalus and Icarus*, first masterpiece**

In the centre of the magnificent 'Sala delle vedute' [Room of views] by the painter Giuseppe Borsato (1811 and later) – a successful Venetian interpreter of Percier and Fontaine's Napoleonic 'Empire Style' – is the marble group of *Daedalus and Icarus*, one of Antonio Canova's earliest masterpieces.

The work was commissioned by the procurator Pietro Vettor Pisani for his Palazzo Pisani Moretta overlooking the Grand Canal.

Just twenty years old, with amazing geniality here Canova achieved a suggestive contrast between the classical model (Icarus) and the characteristically Venetian particular eighteenth-century pictorial naturalism, inspired by Giambattista Piazzetta's 'heads' (Daedalus). This skilful composition links the two figures around an 'empty' void, enclosed circularly by the thread that goes from Daedalus' wing and hand.

Expressing a form of emotional and dramatic communication, with his face contracted by doubt, the father Daedalus is attaching the wings made of feathers held together by wax to the arms of his young son Icarus who is humouring him in all tranquillity, looking forward to the joy of the flight that will allow him to flee the labyrinth and the threat of the Minotaur.

The treatment of the marble surface is vibrant and still a long way away from the polished purity that was to become a characteristic of Canova. An eloquent trademark of the sculptor, the mallet and chisel lying at the feet of the elderly architect are placed in ideal continuity with the artifice Daedalus.



Antonio Canova  
*Orpheus and Eurydice*



Room III, Canova collection  
Museo Correr



Antonio Canova  
*Daedalus and Icarus*

Presented at the 'Fiera della Sensa' (Ascension) in 1777 where it met with resounding success, young Canova earned 100 gold zecchins for this work, which he used to travel to Rome for the very first time. It was there that his experience of the Ancient and the support of a variety of different people were to result in his decisive turn to the classical and his rise to international renown.

In the passage way towards the 'Oval Room' are two early Baroque *Fruit Baskets* (1774) in marble, done with great skill and sensitivity to decorate the balustrade of the staircase in Ca' Farsetti.



Antonio Canova  
*Fruit Basket*

## ROOM IV - CANOVA COLLECTION

### **Canova, the Empire, the Glory: creating the myth**

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, thanks to sublime creations such as *Cupid*, *Cupid and Psyche* (standing and lying down), *Hebe*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Hercules and Lichas*, *Repentant Magdalene*, etc. established himself as the 'new Phidias', renewer of the purest classical aesthetical or rather 'neo-classical' ideals. After working in Vienna on the *Funerary Monument for Maria Christina of Austria*, the sculptor began working in the Napoleonic field since the aesthetic ideals Canova was championing had been adopted by Napoleon as a symbol of the Empire.

The Bonaparte family commissioned him with numerous sculptures, including *Paris*, the plaster model (1807) of which is on display here. He also sculpted works that had become famous before he had even completed them in marble, some of which he repeated and varied: *Perseus*, *The Boxers*, *Venere Italica* and the *Dancers*, many funerary bas-reliefs, and the Monument to Vittorio Alfieri in Santa Croce in Florence.

Once the Napoleonic Empire had fallen, he returned to Paris in 1815 to reclaim all the art works that had been taken (including the *Horses of Saint Mark's* for Venice); once this task had been successfully completed – earning him the title of Marquis of Ischia di Castro from Pope Pius VII – he went to London, where he had a revelation of Phidian art whilst admiring the sculptures of the Parthenon. His late works included other renowned creations such as *Theseus and the Centaur*, *Mars and Venus*, and *Endymion*.

After 1818 he concentrated on the new church in his native town (Possagno Temple); here it was in the works that were destined for the church that he revealed a transformed sensitivity for regarding the romantic style. He died in Venice on 13 October in 1822 in the home of his friend cafe-owner 'Florian' Antonio Francesconi in Bacino Orseolo, just a stone's throw away from today's Correr Museum. The extraordinary and almost 'mythical' international renown that Canova enjoyed during his lifetime became a cult after his death; it lasted a considerably long time and united the value of art with the popular risorgimentale feeling of Italianism and national liberation he had expressed in his career, actions and evocative works.



Room IV, Canova collection  
Museo Correr



Antonio Canova  
*Paris*

Testimony to this is the exceptional *Canova Mobile* that was assembled by the wealthy Venetian merchant Domenico Zoppetti for his working tools, sketches, drawings (most of which were by his collaborators – facsimile here), autograph paintings (Canova loved painting and painted well for pleasure – facsimile here), personal keepsakes, portraits, nineteenth-century ‘Canova-mania’ objects. After having been the centre piece in the small museum Zoppetti created in his home in the Strada Nuova, the piece of furniture came to the Correr Museum collections in 1849; it was taken apart in 1952 and then reassembled with the integral recovery of the carved decorative parts (2015).



*Canova Mobile*  
Room IV, Canova collection  
Museo Correr

On display in the showcase is one of Canova’s valuable personal items: the *Breakfast service* in vermeil (five pieces in silver and gold), a masterpiece by the Parisian silversmith JeanBaptiste-Claude Odier (1810 ca.); in pure Empire style, it exalts the outstanding craftsmanship of the chiselled details and finishing in polished/ opaque old. It was a gift from Louise-Maximilienne de Stolberg, wife of Edward Stuart, the Countess of Albany, as thanks for his completion of the Monument to Vittorio Alfieri (Florence, Basilica di Santa Croce, 1810), who was her companion. [given to the Correr Museum by *Comité français pour la sauvegarde de Venise with the support of Compagnie Plastic Omnium* - 2015]



Canova’s *Breakfast service*  
Room IV, Canova collection  
Museo Correr

## ROOM V - CANOVA COLLECTION

### The “Napoleonic Gallery” in the Royal Palace

The Gallery that belongs to the so-called “Napoleonic wing” in the former Royal Palace in Venice is an outstanding structure, above all owing to the five large doorwindows that open up on to an unrivalled “sight”: Saint Mark’s Square. Between the wings of the Procuratie Vecchie (to the left) and the Procuratie Nuove (to the right), dominated by the majestic bell tower, the façade of the Basilica of Saint Mark sparkles, with its splendour of mosaics, the Gothic tracery of the cresting, and the soaring domes: it is one of the universally most recognised and famous ‘sights’ in the world.

Not originally part of the Napoleonic palace, the room was created when the adjacent ballroom was refurbished, following the wishes of the Hapsburg family in the eighteen thirties.

The decorations of the Gallery were never completed, and it is only on the ribbed vault that one can admire a chiaroscuro fresco decoration by Giuseppe Borsato – the ‘director’ of the entire neoclassical decorations of the palace – with figured bays (putti) by Giovanni Carlo Bevilacqua.

A noteworthy decoration made up of oil paintings on canvas-backed paper by the same authors as the vault was added to the austere marmorino stucco walls in 2016: panels with elegant neoclassical chiaroscuro decorations on a green-blue background by Giuseppe Borsato create the frame for three scenes by Giovanni Carlo Bevilacqua with the *Story of Telemachus on Calypso’s Island* that drew inspiration from the story of Homer’s *Odyssey*, in the Fénelon’s version, which was highly popular in the eighteenth century.



Room V, Canova collection  
Museo Correr

-to the left: *Telemachus tells Calypso and the nymphs about his adventures.*

-centre: *Telemachus, welcomed by the nymphs and Calypso; the nymph Eucari attracts his gaze, to the pleasure of Cupid and the worry to Mentor.*

-to the right: *Following a shipwreck Telemachus and Mentor reach the island, observed by the nymph Calypso .*

Completed in 1818, the panels come from a small 'drawing room' that was once in Palazzo Donà in San Stin, as were the four above the door with frescoed tondos ( *Stories of Roman Heroes* ) by Pietro Moro.

Restoration and installation of the works was made possible thanks to the support of *Comité Français pour la Sauvegarde de Venise* – 2016.



Room V, Canova collection  
Museo Correr

The Neoclassical Rooms and the Canova Collection are included in the 2015 restoration project “**Sublime Canova**”

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Venue

**Museo Correr,**  
Piazza San Marco,  
Venice

Entrance for the public: St. Mark's Square,  
Napoleonic Wing, Monumental Staircase

### How to get there

#### Vaporetto

Line 1, Vallaresso or San Zaccaria stop;  
Line 2 Giardinetti stop;  
Line 5.1 or Line 4.1, San Zaccaria stop

### Opening Hours and Tickets

For ticket information and opening hours please consult the website:  
**[www.correr.visitmuve.it](http://www.correr.visitmuve.it)**

### Bookings

- on-line: **[www.correr.visitmuve.it](http://www.correr.visitmuve.it)**  
- calling the call center: **848082000** (from Italy); **+39 041 42730892** (only from abroad)  
*from Monday to Friday, excluding holidays, from 09:00 to 13:00*

The booking office will also reply to customers through the e-mail address [prenotazionivenezia@coopculture.it](mailto:prenotazionivenezia@coopculture.it)

Reservation is not mandatory and it is not necessary in case of free tickets.



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