



# National Gallery of Art

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**VIEWS OF VENICE BY CANALETTO AND HIS RIVALS IN LANDMARK EXHIBITION  
AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, THE SOLE U.S. VENUE  
February 20–May 30, 2011**

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art, Washington, will present 21 of Canaletto's finest paintings of Venice with 34 by his most important contemporaries, including Gaspar Vanvitelli, Luca Carlevarijs, Michele Marieschi, Bernardo Bellotto, and Francesco Guardi, in ***Venice: Canaletto and His Rivals***, on view from February 20 through May 30, 2011, in the East Building. These dazzling cityscapes represent the best view painters of Venice—each responding to the city in his own way, and each competing in a market driven largely by the British Grand Tour, at its height during the 18th century.

"Unlike previous exhibitions on Venice or Canaletto, this one focuses on rivalries that pitted the artist against his fellow painters. Visitors to the show will have the opportunity to compare their differing portrayals of the same or similar sites or monuments. We are deeply grateful to our supporters for making this landmark show possible," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

The entrance to the exhibition will feature a 35-foot-long gondola that once belonged to the American painter Thomas Moran and is now in the collection of the Mariners' Museum, Newport News, VA. One of the world's oldest gondolas, it will visually "transport" visitors to the lagoon city celebrated in the views of Canaletto and his rivals.

The convergence of art and science will be represented in a monumental first edition of *Iconografica Rappresentazione della Inclita Città di Venezia* (1729), one of the greatest printed maps of cities, and two 18th-century examples of the camera obscura, an optical device likely to have been used by the view painters.

### **Exhibition Organization and Support**

***Venice: Canaletto and His Rivals*** is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the sole U.S. venue for the show, and the National Gallery, London, where it is on view through January 16, 2011.

The exhibition in Washington is made possible by the Bracco Foundation, which promotes cultural, scientific, and artistic expressions to improve the quality of life.

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"The Bracco Foundation is honored to support this extraordinary exhibition of Venetian view paintings, which reproduce all of the landscape details so accurately, they evoke the presumed use of the camera obscura," said Diana Bracco, president of the Bracco Foundation. "Combining art and science as two related facets of seeing and understanding, this project represents a continuation of our support of the artistic and cultural heritage of Italy, and our mission to spread the knowledge and appreciation of art, culture and science throughout the world."

It is also made possible through the generous support of the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation.

Additional support is kindly provided by Sally Engelhard Pingree and The Charles Engelhard Foundation.

It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

### Celebrating Italy

The exhibition is part of [\*ITALY@150\*](#), a series of activities in Washington, DC, and throughout the United States, that celebrate the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy and the long-lasting friendship between the two countries.

From March 1 to May 30, Washington DC will honor Italian culture with ***La Dolce DC***, a citywide celebration of all things Italian, timed to coincide with the opening of ***Venice: Canaletto and His Rivals***. In addition to this landmark exhibition and the outstanding Italian masterpieces in the permanent collection, the Gallery will present an array of offerings celebrating Italian culture, including lectures, film programs, concerts, Gallery Talks, and Garden Café Italia.

### The Exhibition

Europe has many beautiful cities, but only Venice inspired a school of view painters who depicted the city, stone by stone and canal by canal, capturing views that are still recognizable today. The genre of *vedute* (view paintings) culminated in Venice in the 18th century with Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697–1768), known as Canaletto.

In 1719 Canaletto, who was trained as a painter of theatrical scenery, visited Rome where he was inspired to begin view painting. In the late 1720s, in response to market demand, he began to replace the somberness of his earlier works with views drenched in sunlight. Within a decade, Canaletto dominated the genre and the exhibition will include many of his greatest masterpieces, from such prestigious collections as that of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the National Gallery, London.

Throughout the exhibition Canaletto's major works will be juxtaposed with those of his rivals to illuminate their complex relationships. Organized chronologically, the exhibition includes a pivotal work by Gaspar Vanvitelli (1653–1736), Canaletto's precursor and the founding father of Italian view painting, titled *The Molo from the Bacino di San Marco* (1697). Trained in the Netherlands and based mostly in Rome, Vanvitelli depicted a Venice distinctly calm in comparison to the work of Canaletto and his contemporaries who followed.

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### Canaletto...3-3-3

One of Vanvitelli's successors and the first view painter in Venice to depend on foreign patronage was Luca Carlevarijs (1663–1729), an artist Canaletto soon eclipsed. Visitors to the Gallery will see important early works by Canaletto, such as *The Piazza San Marco, Looking East* (1723), on view next to similar subjects by Carlevarijs.

The festivals, regattas, and ceremonies of Venice will be showcased in the exhibition through several important works, including Canaletto's *The Molo from the Bacino di San Marco on Ascension Day* (c. 1733–1734). Historical events of the city were also recorded by the view painters, such as in Carlevarijs' pioneering composition *The Reception of the British Ambassador Charles Montagu, 4th Earl of Manchester, at the Doge's Palace, 22 September 1707* (c. 1707–1708).

Canaletto's closest competitor was the short-lived but highly original Michele Marieschi (1710–1743), the most spontaneous of the view painters. Marieschi employed characteristically broad brushstrokes that come to light in *The Bacino di San Marco* (about 1739–1740).

At the height of Canaletto's fame, his workshop offered the finest training a view painter could receive. He taught his nephew Bernardo Bellotto (1721–1780), whose views are sometimes confused with those of his uncle. A unique characteristic of Bellotto's style is his vibrant blue sky, seen most dramatically in *The Piazzetta, Looking North* (c. 1743).

The development of Venetian view painting culminated with Francesco Guardi (1712–1793), whose works close the exhibition. A rival who appeared during the final decade of Canaletto's life, Guardi anticipated the rise of romanticism in the 19th century, and emphasized the fragility of Venice rather than its permanence. In *San Giorgio Maggiore and the Giudecca* (about 1780), Guardi depicts a gentle, poetic impression of the city.

View painters prized topographical accuracy in their work. A tool they may have used to construct their views is the camera obscura—an optical device that helped painters project, invert, and trace the buildings and vistas of Venice. Two 18th-century examples of the camera obscura will be on view, providing an opportunity for visitors to learn more about this scientific tool.

The map entitled *Iconografica Rappresentazione della Inclita Città di Venezia* (1729), a recent acquisition of the National Gallery of Art, combines the talents of the leading Venetian figure painter of the decade, Sebastiano Ricci (1659–1734), and the leading Venetian printmaker in the 1720s and early 1730s, Giovanni Antonio Faldoni (c. 1690–c. 1770), with views by Francesco Zucchi (1692–1764), mostly after Luca Carlevarijs. Using groundbreaking surveying tools and mathematics of the day, Lodovico Ughi (active 1710–1730) prepared precise measurements of buildings, streets, canals, and gardens, making this map—measuring approximately 60 x 72 inches—authoritative for more than a century.

### Curators and Catalogue

The exhibition is curated by Charles Beddington, a leading specialist on Canaletto. It is coordinated at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, by David Alan Brown, curator of Italian and Spanish paintings.

Canaletto...4-4-4

Published by the National Gallery Company, London, and distributed by Yale University Press, the exhibition catalogue includes essays by Beddington and Amanda Bradley, assistant curator of pictures and sculpture, The National Trust. Biographies for each artist are followed by short introductions to the works, which are grouped chronologically by artist. The 192-page catalogue includes 130 color illustrations and is available for purchase in the Gallery Shops in hardcover and softcover. To order, please visit our Web site at [shop.nga.gov](http://shop.nga.gov); call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

### **General Information**

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](https://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](https://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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