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Pilgrims of Beauty: Art and Inspiration in 19th Century Italy

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PILGRIMS OF BEAUTY

ART AND INSPIRATION IN 19TH-CENTURY ITALY





fig. 1
THOMAS ROWLANDSON
English, ca. 1756/57–1827
A Meeting of Cognoscenti,
ca. 1790–1800
Pen and ink and watercolor
over graphite on paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke
20.504

PILGRIMS OF BEAUTY

ART AND INSPIRATION IN 19TH-CENTURY ITALY

CRAWFORD ALEXANDER MANN III

*Ye Pilgrims of Beauty, from barbarous lands,
Behold where the model of loveliness stands;
Go, kneel by the marble, if marble it seem,
And Love, with its torch, will illumine your dream.*

Anonymous (signed "H."), "The Italian Exile."
The New-England Magazine (July 1831)

In the 19th century Italy was the most desirable destination for travelers from every corner of Europe and beyond. Thousands crossed mountains, even oceans, to go there, leaving their "barbarous" homelands to study and admire Italy's unsurpassed aesthetic and cultural riches. A poem in the *New-England Magazine* in 1831 described the goals and ideals of visiting Italy on a European Grand Tour, calling those who did so "pilgrims of beauty." Like religious pilgrims of centuries past, these lovers of art participated in a ritual journey, a powerful shared experience of Italy's magnificent landscape, history, architecture, and museums.

In response to everything seen, felt, and imagined while exploring Italy, 19th-century artists and tourists created and purchased a variety of new works of art. Many visited repeatedly or settled for extended stays in Rome, Florence, Naples, and Venice, making Italy an important meeting point for artists and patrons. The vibrant atmosphere enriched the careers of many of the era's great artists. This exhibition presents the vast array of media and materials in which they worked, including paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs, furniture, and jewelry. Furthermore, the diversity of themes and styles among these objects, from Neoclassicism through Post-Impressionism,

demonstrates that Italy remained an important center for artistic training and a consistent source of inspiration throughout a century of revolutionary changes in the worlds of politics, science, and art.

REDEFINING THE GRAND TOUR

To reach Italy, 19th-century tourists and artists traveled a well-worn path. The roads to Rome had accommodated steady streams of Christian pilgrims for centuries. By the Renaissance, the ranks of travelers included artists, eager to admire and learn from the growing collections of ancient sculpture on display in the Vatican and other Roman palaces. Others looked to Italy's ruin-studded countryside as a setting for poetic subjects both grand and humble. Artists in the 19th century could boast of following in the footsteps of generations of kings and clerics, as well as those of Dürer, Rubens, Poussin, Reynolds, and countless other professional ancestors. They recognized that the benefits of this journey included not only training in esteemed artistic subject matter but also an introduction to a valuable network of colleagues and patrons.

During the 19th century the demographic character of the Grand Tour changed dramatically. Distance and expense had restricted earlier travel to the wealthy, and foreign artists had difficulty visiting Rome or Venice without upper-class patronage or government sponsorship. But with the invention of faster and cheaper means of travel such as steamships and railroads, the community of visitors and expatriate residents in Italy swelled. By the mid-19th century Italy was accessible and affordable to middle-class tourists from a broad array of nations. Greater numbers of artists likewise



fig. 2
Unknown artist, Italian,
AFTER ANTONIO CANOVA
Italian, 1757–1822
*Cameo Brooch: The Three
Graces Dancing*, after 1798
Shell, gold, pearl, and
enamel
Gift of Mrs. John Carter
Brown 09.074x

found the means to study and work there, some armed with private commissions and others arriving with little more than ambition and talent. The artwork produced and collected in 19th-century Italy reflects this growing social and cultural diversity among travelers.

English artist Thomas Rowlandson witnessed the beginnings of the Grand Tour's transformation during his travels through Europe in the early 1790s. In his drawing *A Meeting of Cognoscenti*, ca. 1790–1800 (fig. 1), he pokes fun at the older generation of late 18th-century elite who fancied themselves seasoned connoisseurs thanks to their visits to Italy. Vases, paintings, and statues—the spoils of the journey—fill the luxurious parlor in which these *cognoscenti* (those “in-the-know”) gather under the pretense of studying artifacts and works of art. Rowlandson's comic exaggeration of the gentlemen's facial features disrupts the atmosphere of refinement, suggesting that their intellectual interest in antiquity is more social performance than genuine scholarly pursuit. For this generation the Grand Tour was an exclusive yet familiar routine, but in the coming decades new generations of travelers would rewrite and reinvigorate this long-revered artistic itinerary.

As Rowlandson's depiction of statues and pictures indicates, Grand Tourists were keen to purchase works of art and souvenirs commemorating their travels to Italy. Greek vases, Roman portrait busts, and Renaissance paintings were the most prized trophies, but the size, expense, and rarity of such objects made this pattern of collecting increasingly difficult in the 19th century. Tourists therefore turned more frequently to contemporary artists and craftsmen, seeking mementos that could represent their individual tastes and travel experiences. Artists, in turn, catered to the diversified interests of this growing pool of clients.

PATTERNS FROM THE PAST

Ruins and artifacts of Ancient Rome remained one of Italy's chief attractions throughout the 19th century, and this ongoing interest in the past sustained Neoclassicism as an artistic style. Architects and painters sketched the arches and columns in the Roman Forum and recently excavated sites like Pompeii, while the sculpture collections of the Vatican, Capitoline, and other museums provided artists in all fields with examples of ideal beauty, perfect proportion, and refined artistic themes. Many sculptors who traveled to Italy began their careers by making and selling replicas of ancient works. They learned to model in plaster or wax and carve in marble, eventually combining these skills with their own powers of invention to design new compositions similar in style and theme.

The most revered among Neoclassical sculptors was the Italian Antonio Canova, who carved mythological and allegorical figures, as well as portraits, in the finest quality white marble. Canova's renown and influence were vast, as is evident in the RISD Museum's cameo-shell copy of his *The Three Graces Dancing*, carved after 1798 and set in an elaborate gold brooch (fig. 2). Canova explored this design first as a painting and then as a bas-relief, emulating the stylized designs of Pompeiian wall frescoes. The maker of this cameo adapted Canova's interpretations of ancient art to his materials, emphasizing the lightness and translucency of the goddesses'



fig. 3
 Unknown artist, Italian,
*Micro-mosaic Table Top: Nine
 Views of Rome*, ca. 1830s–40s
 Marble, mosaic, lapis lazuli,
 and malachite
 Gift of the estate of Richard
 B. Harrington 1990.060

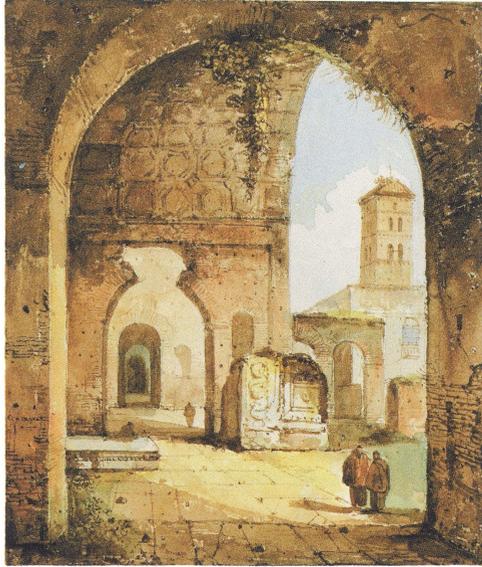
robes in the bright white layer of shell upon a pink shell ground. Tourists recognized this fine workmanship and valued its combination with a classical subject reminiscent of the art seen in Italy.

Historic architecture was as interesting as Neoclassical sculpture to 19th-century travelers, and many purchased paintings and prints depicting Italy's most-visited monuments and ruins. Images of familiar façades decorated jewelry and other elaborate souvenir objects, such as the RISD Museum's micro-mosaic table top (fig. 3). Probably made in Rome in the 1840s, it shows nine of the Eternal City's chief attractions, with St. Peter's Basilica, the culmination of both religious and artistic pilgrim-

ages, filling the central vignette. Surrounding it are the Colosseum, Pantheon, Castel Sant'Angelo, Arch of Titus, and other significant sites. Each micro-mosaic vignette is composed of remarkably thin rods of brightly colored glass (*smalti filati*) cut into tiny pieces. Borders of malachite and lapis lazuli complete the composition, and the rich colors of these semi-precious stones designate this as a luxury object whose craftsmanship and subject matter demonstrate the owner's wealth and travels. Back at home, those who had once walked throughout the Papal capital to admire these structures could repeat the journey in their own parlors, offering commentary or anecdotes while circling the table.

fig. 4

FRANÇOIS-MARIUS GRANET
French, 1775–1849
*View of the Basilica of
Constantine*, ca. 1802–1824
Brush and watercolor and
pen and ink over graphite
on paper
Museum Works of Art Fund
68.034



Within Italy's growing souvenir industry, smaller and less-detailed micro-mosaic images of the same monuments decorated brooches, bracelets, and even buttons. Such micro-mosaics functioned as an extension of the 18th-century Grand Tour tradition, confirming a scripted tourist route. The appeal of souvenirs like these lay in their subject matter being recognizable, rather than in artistic originality—an appeal that both channeled and challenged the work of 19th-century artists.

SPACES FOR SELF-DISCOVERY

As the advent of mass tourism democratized the Grand Tour and opened up Italy to new and larger audiences, many travelers continued to use scripted itineraries along 18th-century models as tools for education and definition of social class. Others diverged from the familiar routes, approaching Italian travel as an opportunity for adventure and self-discovery. The great apostle of this dynamic and personal mode of tourism was the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose *Italian Journeys* (written 1786–87, published 1816–17) established a new genre of travel writing as a record of feelings and responses, rather than a list of places and activities. Goethe described his first impressions of the city of Rome as having been conditioned by visual foreknowledge of its chief attractions, so that his familiarity with the city's sites and architecture freed him to use the journey as an opportunity for introspection. His descriptions focused on unique or unexpected experiences,

those for which guidebooks had not prepared him, or those he expected friends and fellow travelers not to have seen.

Many young artists of Goethe's time and succeeding generations shared this desire, which dovetailed with the Romantic movement's emphasis on individuality and originality. Landscape painters looked beyond the familiar views and vantage points depicted in micro-mosaic tabletops to find less recognizable subjects, such as the shadowy arcade pictured in François-Marius Granet's small watercolor *View of the Basilica of Constantine*, ca. 1802–1824 (fig. 4). Granet's view diverges from the usual tourist paths and offers minimal architectural cues to location. It is topographically accurate, with the Church of Santa Francesca Romana in the distance, but its primary subject is the sequence of light and dark spaces along a corridor. The progression of arches and hints of architectural detail overgrown with greenery invite contemplation of the layers of history, culture, architecture, and religions that overlap in this quiet corner of the ancient Roman Forum. The monks in the lower right contribute to the spiritual character of the space, while perhaps also functioning as surrogates for the viewer or artist.

Granet's divergence from customary views corresponds to changes in artists' lifestyles in 19th-century Italy. Granet worked in Italy for more than twenty years, but unlike earlier French artists who traveled to Rome, he did not have a stipend to live and work as a *pensionnaire* at the French Academy in the Villa Medici. He worked instead at his own expense, building an artistic identity around quiet, meditative works of this type and selling his paintings and watercolors to tourists. Given its small size, this work would likely have been stored or pasted in an album and rarely viewed by more than one or two people at a time. Whether passing through the arches of the Basilica in real life or turning the pages of such an album, 19th-century artists and tourists created distinctive new itineraries through Italy defined by individual, often solitary, meditation and art-viewing.



fig. 5
THOMAS JONES
Welsh, 1742–1803
*In the Road to Santa Maria
de' Monti by Naples, 1781*
Watercolor and graphite
on paper
Anonymous Gift 71.153.13

fig. 6

LOUISE BATHILDE GIRARD
French, 1787–after 1850
AFTER JEAN-AUGUSTE-
DOMINIQUE INGRES
French, 1780–1867
*Portraits of Achille-François-
René Leclère and Jean-Louis
Provost, 1850*
Stipple engraving on paper
Gift of Smith College
Museum of Art 50.059



IN DIALOGUE WITH THE OLD MASTERS

The Romantic call for originality challenged artists working in Italy to develop new styles and subjects while also negotiating their relations with earlier artists, particularly the Old Masters. Viewing and copying the work of the likes of Michelangelo and Raphael was of utmost importance to travelers and artists, and artists frequently debated the relative merits of the heroes of the High Renaissance over drinks at the Caffè Greco in Rome, the Caffè Florian in Venice, and other popular gathering points for expatriates. Artists learned about their professional ancestors not only by viewing their works firsthand but also through a growing body of biographies and art-historical literature that supplemented travel guides. The lives of past artists became popular subjects for history paintings, while subtle quotations and references appear in countless other works.

Earlier traditions and associations were central to the Italian landscape paintings of the Welsh artist Thomas Jones, particularly to such watercolors as *On the Road to Santa Maria de' Monti by Naples*, 1781 (fig. 5). During his six-year stay in Italy, Jones often roamed the countryside, making detailed sketches that capture the transient qualities of light and color at specific times of day. This winding country road outside Naples was a favorite destination, and the artist so delighted in the character of this area that he took others, including William

Pars and Francis Towne, to sketch with him on this very site. The landscape inspired these Englishmen not through monuments, specific geological features, or any famous event that happened here, but due to a general visual character that recalled an earlier painterly genius, the great Baroque landscapist Salvator Rosa. Jones wrote in his diary: "Here may visibly be traced the Scenery that Salvator Rosa formed himself upon... Every hundred yards presents you with a new and perfect composition of that Master." (Oppé, p. 115)

CREATING IN COMMUNITY

For many young artists, being in Italy fostered an essential aspect of art-making—working in a community. Some artists established informal friendships and shared experiences across boundaries of nationality, language, religion, politics, and class. Others declared their social ties more explicitly. The community of French artists resident at the Villa Medici inspired groups from other regions to pool their resources and use national and ideological affiliation as a means of mutual support and encouragement. For example, devout German-speaking artists formed the Brotherhood of St. Luke and lived together in Rome in a decommissioned monastery.

Artists in Italy frequently exchanged works of art, among them the *Freundschaftsbild*, or friendship picture, a new genre of artwork that embodied artistic connections. Such portrait sketches, usually very small graphite drawings, were created from life by one artist and given to the sitter as a trophy of the bond between the two. They might commemorate a new friendship made in Italy by two artists from different parts of the world, or perhaps the deepening of a friendship developed elsewhere but strengthened by this context, as in the case of the *Portraits of Achille-François-René Leclère and Jean-Louis Provost*, 1850 (fig. 6), two French architects. These young men first met as students in the Paris atelier of Charles Percier, then again in Rome as *pensionnaires* at the French Academy. The double portrait commemorates their friendship, as well as

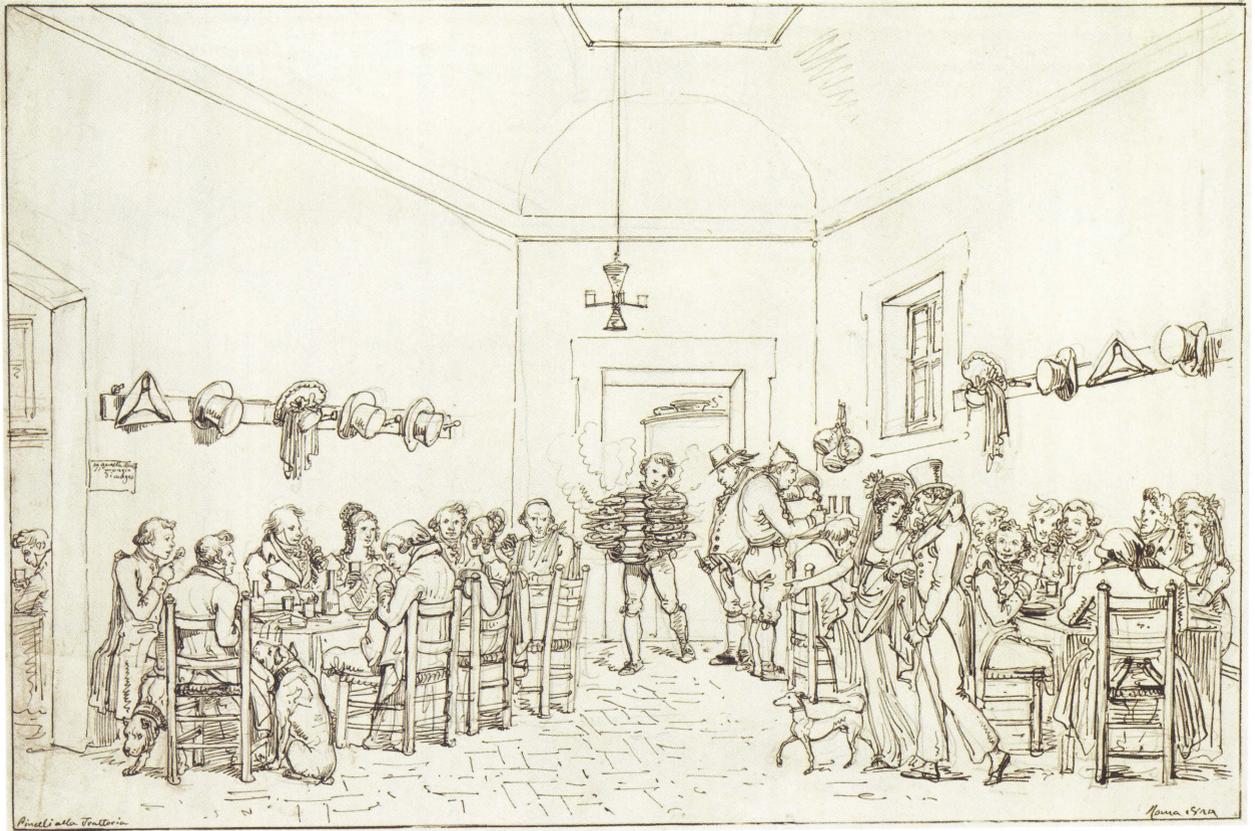


fig. 7
BARTOLOMEO PINELLI
Italian, 1781–1835
Pinelli at the Trattoria, 1824
Ink on paper
Museum Works of Art Fund
59.026

fig. 8

JEAN-PIERRE-MARIE JAZET
French, 1788–1871
AFTER HORACE VERNET
French, 1789–1863
The Race of the Horses in Rome,
1820
Aquatint on paper
INV2008.30



their new acquaintance in Italy with Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, the original author of this image, created in 1812. Much later, in 1850, after all three parties had achieved considerable fame and success, Ingres's drawing was adapted by the print-maker Louise Girard and published as this stipple engraving. Thus the work reveals not only the importance of communal art-making to the experience of travel in Italy, but also the career-building networks that grew out of these communities.

COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS

For some travelers and artists in Italy, the most exciting new subject matter was the everyday life of the country and its people. While political reforms and the Industrial Revolution had radically changed urban and rural life in Northern Europe and America during the early 19th century, Italy's economy and class structure remained largely agrarian and feudal. Various foreign governments controlled large portions of the Italian peninsula in these decades, further accentuating the differences

between the wealthy ruling classes and majority of the population. Artists explored these social realities through direct observation of their surroundings. Among the most colorful markers of Italian culture visible to tourists were the elaborate costumes worn by Italian tradespeople and farmers. The design, colors, style, and accessories of these costumes differed among trades, from village to village throughout the countryside, and often between neighborhoods within larger cities like Rome. The variety and complexity of native clothing, as well as its novelty in comparison to everyday dress in London, Paris, Berlin, or Boston, generated a market for "costume pictures." Just as a tourist might learn the architectural history of St. Peter's Basilica while traveling then recite this knowledge with aid of a picture, purchasers of costume pictures (whether prints, drawings, or paintings) valued their easily conveyed legibility and abundance of detail.

Foreigners comprised the vast majority of makers and consumers of costume pictures, but

the most prolific and successful artist in this field was the Italian painter and printmaker Bartolomeo Pinelli. Pinelli produced dozens of prints of single figures, recording the attire characteristic of various villages and trades, as well as more complex genre scenes illustrating folk customs, games, and everyday activities. Though Pinelli was himself a native of the working-class neighborhood of Trastevere in Rome, he understood the tastes of his international clientele and did not hesitate to poke fun at his fellow countrymen, capitalizing on all manner of stereotypes of Italian culture to satisfy demand. The appeal of Pinelli's work rested not only in its accuracy and attention to costume detail, but also in his spare and linear drawing style, which lent dignity and idealized beauty to some figures and heightened the humor and caricature of others.

The tourists who delighted in observing the curious attire of the working classes were equally recognizable to local Italians through differences in their own costumes. In the drawing *Pinelli at the Trattoria*, 1824 (fig. 7), Pinelli wittily notes the ubiquitous presence of tourists within the social fabric of everyday life in 19th-century Italy. This typical restaurant scene features an adept waiter emerging from the kitchen while balancing an impossibly tall stack of plates of spaghetti, destined for two long tables of wealthy guests. The international diversity of the group is suggested by the variety of hats and bonnets hanging on the walls above. Pinelli moved between the native and foreign worlds with ease, and he depicts himself within this scene, seated at the head of the table to the left, accompanied by his pet mastiffs.

Other 19th-century artists portrayed not only the costumes and everyday activities around Italy but also the major religious and public festivals. Tourists timed their travels to witness the most famous of these, such as Easter Day in Rome or the Feast of San Gennaro in Naples. Carnival season offered a variety of pageantry and spectacles in every city, and Horace Vernet's monumental *The Race of the Horses in Rome*, 1820 (fig. 8), illustrates the diverse audience attracted to this annual event.



fig. 9
VINCENZO GEMITO
Italian, 1852–1929
The Water Carrier,
modeled 1880–1881
Bronze
Bequest of Miss Ellen D.
Sharpe 54.147.23

At the center of the image skilled, muscular horse-trainers wrestle with wild steeds from the Roman Campagna, who will soon be set loose to charge down the long, straight via del Corso (“the street of the race”). Crowds filling the surrounding bleachers to watch this heroic struggle between man and beast include aristocrats in comfortable box seats, locals in carnival masks, and, high on the right, a group of young men in top hats, probably foreign artists. Vernet had been a *pensionnaire* at the French Academy in the Villa Medici, whose twin-towered façade appears atop the Pincian Hill in the distance. He depicts the race with both the detail of a costume picture and the grandeur and complexity of a monumental history or battle scene, honoring its fame and significance within tourists’ itineraries. The painting was quickly reproduced as a large aquatint by the Parisian printmaker Jean-Pierre-Marie Jazet, thus making this impressive spectacle available to a broad international audience.

THE NEW FACES OF ITALY

While Vernet, Pinelli, and other artists portrayed the spectacles and people of Italy through a nostalgic, whimsical, or idealizing lens, artists in the second half of the 19th century looked at these same subjects in light of the wars and political changes sweeping through the peninsula. Admiration for



fig. 10
ADOLPH MENZEL
German, 1815–1905
Head Studies, ca. 1882–1884
Crayon on paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke
28.114

Italy's artistic heritage and natural beauty inspired widespread sympathy for the local people among foreigners. Many supported the efforts of Garibaldi and other Risorgimento leaders to unify the Italian states under a central republican government. These changes were difficult and violent, however, and their visible impact on the Italian landscape and life forced artists to increasingly choose between direct observation of modern Italy and a focus on the classical past.

This tension between the contemporary and the classical pervades the work of the Italian sculptor Vincenzo Gemito, particularly in *The Water Carrier*, modeled in 1880–1881 (fig. 9). Unlike Neoclassical sculpture, which followed strict codes of balance and decorum, Gemito's statue opens up the body language of his subject, presenting an arresting, laughing face and a dynamic, almost awkward posture. The informality of the pose and the subtle details of the folds of flesh hint that Gemito's model may have been a simple Neapolitan street urchin. The boy's nudity, perhaps a result of his poverty, further supports this suggestion, while also recalling classical sculpture. Gemito, born an orphan in a poor district of Naples, understood the harsh economic realities of daily life in Italy, and his sympathetic and engaging depictions of working-class subjects received international acclaim and patronage.

One finds a similarly direct, often poignant engagement with working-class subjects in the paintings of the German Realist Adolph Menzel, who made several trips to Italy in the early 1880s. Soon after, he began a massive painting of Verona's

central market square, completed in 1884. Like Vernet in his presentation of the via del Corso during Carnival, Menzel explored the spectrum of classes, types, and nationalities to be found in the public space of one of Italy's most popular tourist destinations. Menzel's painting, now in the collection of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, is a composite of hundreds of individual sketches for each character, among them his *Head Studies*, ca. 1882–1884 (fig. 10). Working with Italian models both in Verona and in Berlin, the artist paid attention to the costume of this fruit vendor, but his main interest was clearly her personality and character. The sketch reveals a sympathy for this woman's individuality and humanity that contrasts with the picturesque costume studies made in Italy a few decades earlier.

MODERN ITALY AND MODERN ART

By the 1880s Paris had eclipsed Rome as Europe's foremost destination for artistic training, but artists continued to visit Italy and to admire its history and beauty. Artists with vastly disparate thematic and technical concerns understood that Italy could still provide equally powerful inspiration and instruction. Some, like Menzel, adapted their signature styles to Italian subject matter, while others used the journey as an opportunity to experiment with new materials and directions.

The lights and colors of Venice were especially captivating to artists at the turn of the 20th century, as seen in John Singer Sargent's large watercolor *Rio di Santa Maria Formosa, Venice*, 1905 (fig. 11). Here Sargent worked from a gondola to create an unusual and dynamic composition, looking under the arch of a bridge and down one of the city's narrow back canals. A gondolier's pole divides the center of the composition, while the boat rocks just slightly to the left under the weight of its passengers. Despite their size and complexity, all of Sargent's Venetian watercolors were private exercises, not painted for exhibition or sale. They provided an escape from the portraitist's endless commissions for the likenesses of the rich and

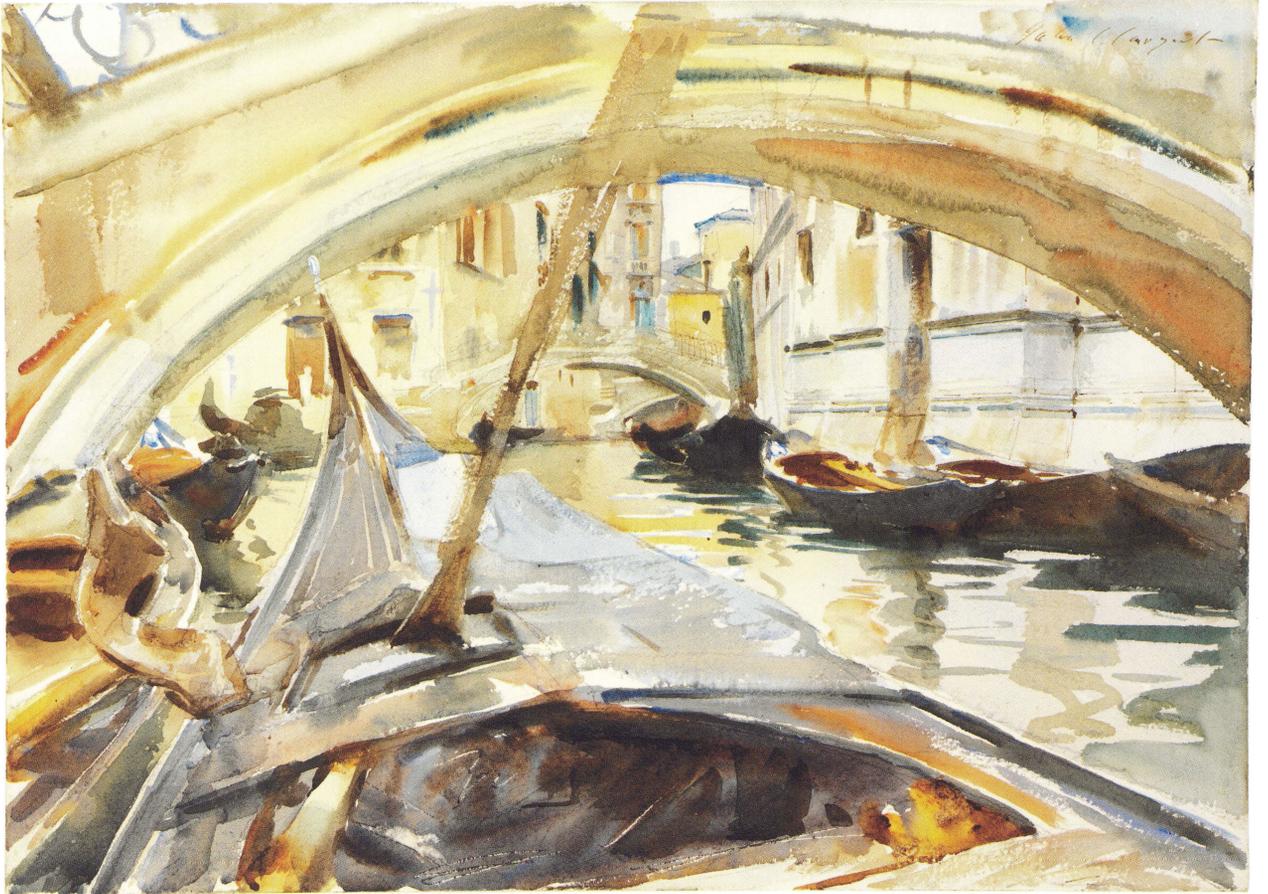


fig. 11
JOHN SINGER SARGENT
American, 1856–1925
Rio di Santa Maria Formosa,
Venice, 1905
Watercolor over graphite
on paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S.
Danforth 42.223



fig. 12
 JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER
 American, 1834–1903
The Piazzetta, from the
Second Venice Set, 1879–1880
 Etching and drypoint
 on paper
 Gift of the Fazzano Brothers
 84.198.19

famous. Studying the light and shadows, the bright tones and patterns of reflections, and the geometry of buildings along the winding waterways was a source of artistic rejuvenation for Sargent, who visited Italy regularly throughout his life.

Another American, James McNeill Whistler, made only one visit to Italy, staying in Venice between 1879 and 1880, but the trip was one of the most creative and fruitful periods of his career. While there he produced numerous sketches, pastels, small paintings, and, most significantly, two sets of prints that were later published in London. *The Piazzetta*, 1879–1880 (fig. 12), is typical of Whistler's Italian etchings, with its dense clusters of short lines conveying the energy of the city's busy central square. The façade and domes of the Church of San Marco appear on the left, partially obscured by a large column, so that the focus of the image becomes the swarms of pigeons, beggars, and tourists that animate the space. Whistler worked outdoors, drawing directly onto his copper etching plates. His style inspired other artists to seek out unconventional corners of Venice and to work with line and plate tone in creative ways. Absent from his work is the architectural clarity and historical narrative central to art of the previous century. Instead, his images imply a correlation between the artist's style and his immediate experience of light, color, smell, and sound.

Like Sargent and Whistler, the French Neo-Impressionist Paul Signac often painted outdoors from a gondola, producing small watercolors like *Venetian Scene*, 1919 (fig. 13), a view of the church and bell tower of San Giorgio Maggiore, with the city across the lagoon on the horizon. He called such works "notations," painted on the spot for use later in his studio to inspire large, finished works on canvas. Both in watercolor and on canvas Signac broke from the spontaneity and freedom of Sargent and Whistler's Venetian subjects, employing the *divisionist* style pioneered by Georges Seurat. In *Venetian Scene*, he used individual strokes of bold color applied with control and rarely overlapping, so that the viewer's eye must resolve discrete dots

of paint into an image. However, despite his commitment to this modern and distinctly Parisian technique, Signac's Venetian views also look to the grand optical effects of earlier painters who worked there, particularly J.M.W. Turner. Thus, in traveling to Italy, Signac participated in the foremost debates about modern art while situating his works within a long and illustrious artistic tradition.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Venice continued to enchant artists like Signac and Sargent with its beautiful and slowly crumbling architecture, providing a valuable but increasingly rare link to the past. Elsewhere in Italy, however, the physical and cultural landscape was rapidly changing as the unified nation embraced the modern world. Cities grew, requiring new housing blocks to be constructed, streetcars installed, and boulevards cut through medieval city centers. Tourism reached new peaks, and an industry of hotels, restaurants, and railways transformed once-lengthy itineraries into a series of simple day-trips. The picturesque Italy of peasants and gondolas became difficult to find, and in many cases, enterprising locals staged familiar scenes and subjects for the benefit of tourists and artists. Just as 18th-century collectors avoided forgeries when acquiring antique artifacts or historic paintings, their 19th-century successors began to question the authenticity of the most famous sites and experiences. Photographic reproductions of Italy's art collections and monuments circulated in libraries and living rooms around the world, even as the collections were sold and

scattered and the ruins altered by restorations or new construction adjacent. The Grand Tour had changed yet again.

Nonetheless, Italy remained a fertile training ground for artists and a promising market in which to sell their creations. Despite the influence of schools and exhibitions in Paris, many foreigners continued to visit Rome, Florence, and Venice. By 1902, the governments of Spain, Germany, Britain, Belgium, and the United States had all founded formal institutes for artistic or historical study in Rome, following the pattern of the French Academy. Through these institutions, the pilgrimages continued, and the international character of Italy's arts community lives on to this day (including RISD's Honors Program at the Palazetto Cenci in Rome, founded in 1960). Nonetheless, within the long and illustrious tradition of travel to the Mediterranean, the generations of artists who visited between the Napoleonic Wars and World War I saw Italy in a period of exceptional breadth and richness. The works of these artists capture the visual range of 19th-century Italy's beauty, as well as the diversity of nationalities and personalities that traveled to admire, study, and depict this land.

Pilgrims of Beauty was curated by Crawford Alexander Mann III, the RISD Museum's Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow in the Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, 2009-2011, now Joan and Macon Brock Curator of American Art at the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, VA.

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PILGRIMS OF BEAUTY
ART AND INSPIRATION IN 19TH-CENTURY ITALY

fig. 13
PAUL SIGNAC
French, 1863–1935
Venetian Scene, 1919
Watercolor on paper
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers
84.198.1080

COVER: Detail of
FRANÇOIS-MARIUS GRANET
(fig. 4)



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