

**Guide to the Principal Pictures  
in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice**

John Ruskin



**Figure 18**  
Doorway of the *Accademia di Belle Arti* with reliefs of the Virgin and Child, St Leonard and St Christopher. 14th century

## [Part I]

---

In the first place, if the weather is fine, go outside the gate you have just come in at [fig. 18], and look above it.<sup>1</sup> Over this door are three of the most precious pieces of sculpture in Venice; her native work, dated; and belonging to the school of severe Gothic which indicates the beginning of her Christian life in understanding of its real claims upon her.<sup>2</sup>

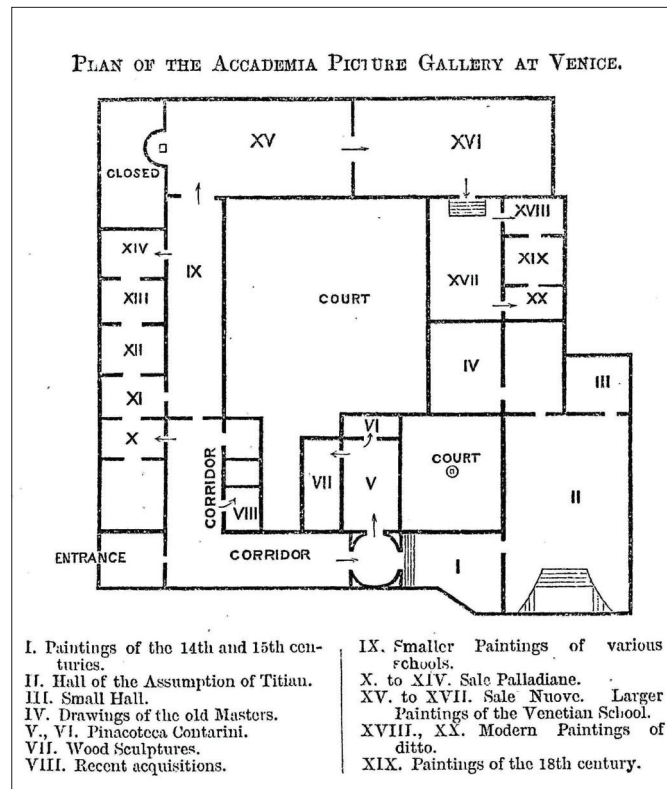
St. Leonard on the left, St. Christopher on the right, under Gothic cusped niches. The Madonna in the centre [fig. 19], under a simple gable;<sup>3</sup> the piece of sculpture itself engaged in a rectangular panel, which is the persistent sign of the Greek schools; descending from the Metopes of the Parthenon.<sup>4</sup>

You see the infant sprawls on her knee in an ungainly manner: – she herself sits with quiet maiden dignity,<sup>5</sup> but in no manner of sentimental adoration.<sup>6</sup>

That is Venetian naturalism; showing their henceforward steady desire to represent things as they really (according to the workman's notions) might have existed. It begins first in this century separating itself from the Byzantine formalism, – the movement being the same which was led by Giotto in Florence fifty years earlier. These sculptures are the result of his influence, from Padua, and other such Gothic power, rousing Venice to do and think for herself, instead of letting her Greek subjects do all for her. This is one of her first performances, independently of them. She has not yet the least notion of making anybody stand rightly on their feet; you see how St. Leonard and St. Christopher point their toes.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, until we know how to do better than this, in perspective and such matters,



**Figure 19** Relief of *The Virgin and Child* over the doorway of the Accademia di Belle Arti. 14th century



**Figure 20** Plan of the Gallerie dell'Accademia. 1877

our painting cannot come to much.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, all the Venetian painting of any importance you are now to see in the Academy is subsequent to these sculptures.<sup>9</sup> But these are, fortunately, dated - 1378 and 1379.<sup>10</sup> Twenty years more will bring us out of the fourteenth century. And therefore, broadly, all the painter's art of Venice begins in the fifteenth; and we may as well at once take note that it ends with the sixteenth.<sup>11</sup> There are only these two hundred years of painting in Venice. Now,

without much pause in the corridor, though the old well in the cortile has its notabilities if one had time,<sup>12</sup> - up the spiral stairs, and when you have entered the gallery and got your admission tickets - (quite a proper arrangement that you should pay for them,<sup>13</sup> - if I were a Venetian prefect, you should pay a good deal more for leave to come to Venice at all, that I might be sure you cared to come,) - walk straight forward till you descend the steps into the first room in the arrangement of the





**Figure 21**  
Stefano "Plebanus"  
of S. Agnese, *The Coronation  
of the Virgin*. 1381



**Figure 22** Bartolomeo Vivarini, polyptych with the Virgin and Child; St Andrew; St John the Baptist; St Dominic; St Peter. 1464

Academy Catalogue [fig. 20].<sup>14</sup> On your right, at the bottom of the steps, you see a large picture (16) in a series of compartments, of which the central one, the Crowning of the Virgin, was painted by a Venetian vicar (vicar of St. Agnes,) in 1380 [fig. 21].<sup>15</sup> A happy, faithful, cheerful vicar he must have been; and any vicar, rector, or bishop who could do such a thing now, would be a blessing to his parish, and delight to his diocese. Symmetrical, orderly, gay, and in the heart of it nobly grave, this work of the old Plebanus<sup>16</sup> has much in it of the future methods of

Venetian composition. The two angels peeping over the arms of the throne may remind you to look at its cusped arches, for we are here in central Gothic time; thirty years after the sea-façade of the Ducal Palace had been built.

Now, on the opposite side of the room, over the door leading into the next room, you see (1) in the Academy Catalogue [fig. 22], “The work of Bartholomew Vivarini of Murano, 1464”,<sup>17</sup> showing you what advance had been made in eighty years. The figures still hard in outline, – thin, (except the Madonna’s throat, which always,





**Figure 23**  
Giovanni Bellini,  
*S. Giobbe* altarpiece.  
c. 1478



**Figure 24**  
Titian, *The Assumption*. 1516-18



in Venice, is strong as a pillar,<sup>18</sup> and much marked in sinew and bone, (studied from life, mind you, not by dissection);<sup>19</sup> exquisitely delicate and careful in pure colour; – in character, portraits of holy men and women, such as then were. There is no idealism here whatever. Monks and nuns had indeed faces and mien like these saints, when they desired to have the saints painted for them.

A noble picture; not of any supreme genius, but completely containing the essence of Venetian art.

Next, going under it, through the door, you find yourself in the principal room of the Academy,<sup>20</sup> which please cross quietly to the window opposite, on the left of which hangs a large picture<sup>21</sup> [fig. 23] which you will have great difficulty in seeing at all, hung as it is against the light; and which, in any of its finer qualities, you absolutely cannot see; but may yet perceive what they are, latent in that darkness, which is all the honour that the kings, nobles, and artists of Europe care to bestow on one of the greatest pictures ever painted by Christendom in her central art-power.<sup>22</sup> Alone worth an entire modern exhibition-building, hired fiddlers, and all; here you have it jammed on a back wall, utterly unserviceable to human kind, the little angels of it fiddling unseen, unheard by anybody's heart.<sup>23</sup> It is the best John Bellini in the Academy of Venice; the third best in Venice, and probably in the world.<sup>24</sup> Repainted, the right-hand angel, and somewhat elsewhere;<sup>25</sup> but on the whole perfect; unspeakably good, and right in all ways. Not inspired with any high religious passion; a good man's work, not an enthusiast's. It is, in principle, merely the perfecting of Vivarini's; the saints, mere portraits of existing men and women; the Madonna, idealized only in that squareness of face and throat, not in anywise the prettier for it, otherwise a quite commonplace Venetian woman. Such, and far lovelier, you may see living to-day, if you can see – and may make manifest, if you can paint.

And now, you may look to the far end of the room,

where Titian's 'Assumption' [fig. 24] has the chairs put before it;<sup>26</sup> everybody being expected to sit down, and for once, without asking what o'clock it is at the railroad station, reposefully admire.

Of which, hear first what I wrote, very rightly, a quarter of a century ago.

"The traveller is generally too much struck by Titian's great picture of 'The Assumption' to be able to pay proper attention to the other works in this gallery.<sup>27</sup> Let him, however, ask himself candidly how much of his admiration is dependent merely on the picture's being larger than any other in the room, and having bright masses of red and blue in it; let him be assured that the picture is in reality not one whit the better either for being large or gaudy in colour, and he will then be better disposed to give the pains necessary to discover the merit of the more profound works of Bellini and Tintoret."<sup>28</sup>

I wrote this, I have said, *very* rightly, not *quite* rightly. For if a picture is good, it *is* better for being large, because it is more difficult to paint large than small; and if colour is good, it *may* be better for being bright.

Nay, the fault of this picture, as I read it now, is in not being bright enough. A large piece of scarlet, two large pieces of crimson, and some very beautiful blue, occupy about a fifth part of it; but the rest is mostly fox colour or dark brown: majority of the apostles under total eclipse of brown. St. John, there being nobody else handsome to look at, is therefore seen to advantage; also St. Peter and his beard; but the rest of the lower canvas is filled with little more than flourishings of arms and flingings of cloaks, in shadow and light.

However, as a piece of oil painting, and what artists call 'composition', with entire grasp and knowledge of the action of the human body, the perspectives of the human face, and the relations of shade to colour in expressing form, the picture is deservedly held unsurpassable. Enjoy of it what you can; but of its place in the history of Venetian art observe these three following points:–

I. The throned Madonnas of Vivarini and Bellini were to Venice what the statue of Athena in the Brazen House was to Athens.<sup>29</sup> Not at all supposed to *be* Athena, or to *be* Madonnas; but symbols, by help of which they conceived the presence with them of a real Goddess. But this picture of Titian's does not profess to symbolize any Virgin here with us, but only to show how the Virgin was taken away from us a long time ago. And professing to represent this, he does not in the least believe his own representation, nor expect anybody else to believe it. He does not, in his heart, believe the Assumption ever took place at all. He is merely putting together a stage decoration of clouds, little boys, with wings stuck into them, and pantomime actors, in studied positions, to amuse his Venice and himself.

II. Though desirous of nothing but amusement, he is not, at heart, half so much amused by his work as John Bellini, or the quarter so much amused as the innocent old vicar.<sup>30</sup> On the contrary, a strange gloom has been cast over him, he knows not why; but he likes all his colours dark, and puts great spaces of brown, and crimson passing into black, where the older painters would have made all lively. Painters call this 'chiaroscuro'. So also they may call a thunder-cloud in the sky of spring: but it means more than light and shade.

III. You see that in all the three earlier pictures everybody is quiet. Here, everybody is in a bustle. If you like to look at my pamphlet on the relation of Tintoret to Michael Angelo, you will see how this comes to pass, and what it means.<sup>31</sup> And that is all I care for your noticing in the Assumption, just now.

Next, look on right and left of it at the two dark pictures over the doors (63, 25) [fig. 25].<sup>32</sup>

Darkness visible,<sup>33</sup> with flashes of lightning through it. The thunder-cloud upon us, rent with fire.

Those are Tintorets; finest possible Tintorets; best possible examples of what, in absolute power of painting, is supremest work, so far as I know, in all the world.

Nothing comes near Tintoret for colossal painter's power, as such.<sup>34</sup> But you need not think to get any good of these pictures: it would take you twenty years' work to understand the fineness of them as painting; and for the rest, there is little good in them to be got. Adam and Eve no more sat in that warm-weather picnic manner, helping each other politely to apples, on the occasion of their fall, than the Madonna went up all bending about in her red and blue cloak on the occasion of her Assumption. But of the wrong, and the truth, the error, and the glory of these pictures, I have no time to speak now; nor you to hear. All that you have to notice is that painting has now become a dark instead of bright art,<sup>35</sup> and in many ways a frightful and unpleasant art, or else I will add once for all, referring you for proof of it to the general examples of Venetian work at this late epoch, supplied as a luxury to foreign courts, a lascivious art.<sup>a</sup><sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless up to the time when Tintoret painted the Crucifixion in the Scuola di San Rocco,<sup>37</sup> Venice had not in heart abjured her religion. The time when the last chord of its faith gives way cannot be discerned, to day and hour; but in that day and hour of which, for external sign, we may best take the death of Tintoret in 1594, the Arts of Venice are at an end.

I have therefore now shown you the complete course of their power, from 1380 at the Academy gates, to 1594 – say, broadly, two centuries, (her previous art being only architectural, mosaic, or decorative sculpture).

<sup>a</sup> One copy of Titian's work bearing such commercial value, and showing what was briefly the Gospel preached by Missionary Venice to foreign nations in the sixteenth century, you will find presently in the narrow corridor, No. 347 [Room IX (1877), cat. 340 (MM 1962, 181): Giovanni Contarini (attr.), *Venus*, canvas]: on which you will usually also find some modern copyist employed, for missionary purposes; but never on a Vivarini. And in thus becoming dark, terrific, and sensual, Venetian art led the way to the mere naturalism and various baseness of following European art with the rubbish of which that corridor (Sala ix., Numbers 276 to 353,) is mostly filled.



**Figure 25** Jacopo Tintoretto, *Adam and Eve*. 1550-53





**Figure 26** Andrea Mantegna, *St George*. c. 1460

We will now go through the rooms, noticing what is best worth notice, in each of the epochs defined; essentially, you observe, three. The first we may call the Vivarini epoch, bright, innocent, more or less elementary, entirely religious art, – reaching from 1400 to 1480; the second, (which for reasons presently to be shown, we will call the Carpaccian epoch,) sometimes classic and mythic as well as religious, 1480-1520; the third, supremely powerful art corrupted by taint of death, 1520-1600, which we will call the Tintoret epoch.

Of course the lives of the painters run in and out across these limits; yet if you fasten these firmly in your mind, – 80, 40, 80, – you will find you have an immense advantage and easy grip of the whole history of Venetian art.<sup>38</sup>

In the first epoch, however, I do not mean to detain you; but the room you first entered,<sup>39</sup> into which I will now ask you to return, is full of pictures which you will find interesting if you have time to decipher them, and care for Christianity and its expressions. One only I will ask you to look at, after Titian's *Assumption*, the little *Ascension* by Nicolò Semitecolo, low down, on the right of the vicar's picture in Number 16.<sup>40</sup> For that *Ascension* is painted in real belief that the *Ascension* *did* take place; and its sincerity ought to be pleasant to you, after Titian's pretence.

Now, returning up the steps, and taking the corridor to your right, opposite the porter's table, enter the little room through the first door on your right;<sup>41</sup> and therein, just on your left<sup>42</sup> as you go in, is Mantegna's *St. George*, No. 273 [fig. 26].<sup>43</sup> To which, give ten minutes quietly, and examine it with a magnifying glass of considerable power. For in that you have a perfect type of the Italian methods of execution corresponding to the finish of the Dutch painters in the north; but far more intellectual and skilful. You cannot see more wonderful work, in minute drawing with the point of the brush;<sup>44</sup> the virtue of it being that not only every touch is microscopically minute, but that, in this minuteness, every touch is





**Figure 27**  
Vittore Carpaccio,  
*The Presentation of Christ*  
*in the Temple*. 1510

considered, and every touch right. It is to be regarded, however, only as a piece of workmanship. It is wholly without sentiment, though the distant landscape becomes affecting through its detailed truth, – the winding road under the rocks, and the towered city, being as full of little pretty things to be searched out as a natural scene would be.

And I have brought you first, in our now more complete review, to this picture, because it shows more clearly than any other through what tremendous work the Italian masters obtained their power.

Without the inherited strength won by this precision of drawing in the earlier masters, neither Titian nor Tintoret could have existed.

Return into the corridor, and walk along it to the end<sup>45</sup> without wasting time; – there is a Bonifazio, No. 326,<sup>46</sup> worth a painter's while to stop at, but in general mere Dutch rubbish.<sup>47</sup> Walk straight on, and go in at the last door on the left,<sup>48</sup> within which you will find

456, Cima da Conegliano.<sup>49</sup> An entirely sincere and noble picture of the central epoch. Not supreme in any artistic quality, but good and praiseworthy in all; and, as a conception of its subject, the most beautiful you will find in Venice. Grudge no time upon it; but look at nothing else here; return into the corridor, and proceed by it into the great room.<sup>50</sup>

Opposite you is Titian's great 'Presentation of the Virgin',<sup>51</sup> interesting to artists, and an unusually large specimen of Titian's rough work. To me, simply the most stupid and uninteresting picture ever painted by him; – if you can find anything to enjoy in it, you are very welcome: I have nothing more to say of it, except that the colour of the landscape is as false as a piece of common blue tapestry, and that the 'celebrated' old woman with her basket of eggs is as dismally ugly and vulgar a filling of spare corner as was ever daubed on a side-scene in a hurry at Drury Lane.<sup>52</sup>

On the other side of the room, 543,<sup>53</sup> is another wide waste of canvas; miserable example of the work subsequent to Paul Veronese; doubly and trebly mischievous in caricaturing and defiling all that in the master himself is noble: to look long at such a thing is enough to make the truest lovers of Venetian art ashamed of Venice, and of themselves. It ought to be taken down and burned.

Turn your back to it, in the centre of the room; and make up your mind for a long stand; for opposite you, so standing, is a Veronese indeed, of the most instructive and noble kind (489);<sup>54</sup> and beneath it, the best picture in the Academy of Venice, Carpaccio's 'Presentation' (488).<sup>55</sup>

Of the Veronese, I will say nothing but that the main instructiveness of it is in the exhibition of his acquired and inevitable faults (the infection of his æra), with his own quietest and best virtues. It is an artist's picture, and even, only to be rightly felt by very good artists; the aerial perspectives in it being extremely subtle, and rare, to equal degree, in the painter's work. To the general spectator, I will only observe that he has free leave to consider the figure of the Virgin execrable; but that I hope, if he has a good opera-glass, he will find something to please him in the little rose-bush in the glass vase on the balustrade. I would myself give all the bushes – not to say all the trees – and all the seas, of Claude and Poussin, in one bunch and one deluge – for this little rose-bush and its bottle.

488. 'The Presentation in the Temple'. Signed 'Victor Carpaccio, 1510'. From the Church of St. Job [fig. 27].

You have no similar leave, however, good general spectator, to find fault with anything *here*! You may measure yourself, outside and in, – your religion, your taste, your knowledge of art, your knowledge of men and things, – by the quantity of admiration which honestly, after due time given, you can feel for this picture.

You are not required to think the Madonna pretty, or to receive the same religious delight from the conception of the scene, which you would rightly receive from Angelico, Filippo Lippi, or Perugino. This is essentially Venetian, – prosaic, matter of fact, – retaining its supreme common-sense through all enthusiasm.

Nor are you required to think this a first-rate work in Venetian colour. This is the best picture in the Academy precisely because it is *not* the best piece of colour there; – because the great master has subdued his own main passion, and restrained his colour-faculty, though the best in Venice, that you might *not* say the moment you came before the picture, as you do of the Paris Bordone (492),<sup>56</sup> ‘What a piece of colour!’

To Paris, the Duke, the Senate, and the Miracle are all merely vehicles for flashes of scarlet and gold on marble and silk; but Carpaccio, in this picture of the Presentation, does not want you to think of *his* colour, but of *your* Christ.

To whom the Madonna also is subjected; – to whom all is subjected: you will not find such another Infant Christ in Venice; (but always look carefully at Paul Veronese’s, for it is one of the most singular points in the character of this usually decorative and inexpressive painter, that his Infant Christs are always beautiful).<sup>57</sup>

For the rest, I am not going to praise Carpaccio’s work. Give time to it; and if you don’t delight in it – the essential faculty of enjoying good art is wanting in you, and I can’t give it you by ten minutes’ talk; but if you begin really to feel the picture, observe that its supreme merit is in the exactly just balance of all virtue; – detail perfect, yet inconspicuous; composition intricate and severe, but concealed under apparent simplicity; and painter’s faculty of the supremest, used nevertheless with entire subjection of it to intellectual purpose. Titian, compared to Carpaccio,<sup>58</sup> paints as a circus-rider rides, – there is nothing to be thought of in him but his riding. But Carpaccio paints as a good knight rides; his riding is the least of him; and to himself – unconscious in its ease.<sup>59</sup>



**Figure 28** Charles Fairfax Murray, after Vittore Carpaccio, *The Fall of the Rebel Army* (from Simeon’s cope in *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*). 1877



When you have seen all you can of the picture as a whole, go near, and make out the little pictures on the edge of St. Simeon's robe; four quite lovely ones; the lowest admitting, to make the whole perfect, delightful grotesque of fairy angels within a heavenly castle wall, thrusting down a troop of supine devils to the deep [fig. 28]. The other three, more beautiful in their mystery of shade; but I have not made them out yet. There is one solemn piece of charge to a spirit folding its arms in obedience; and I think the others must be myths of creation, but can't tell yet,<sup>60</sup> and must now go on quickly to note merely the pictures you should look at, reserving talk of them for a second number of this Guide.

483, 500, 524,<sup>61</sup> containing all you need study in Bonifazio. In 500,<sup>62</sup> he is natural, and does his best; in 483,<sup>63</sup> he pretends to religion, which he has not; in 524,<sup>64</sup> to art, which he has not. The last is a monstrous example of the apathy with which the later Italian artists, led by Raphael, used this horrible subject to exhibit their ingenuity in anatomical posture, and excite the feeble interest of vulgar spectators.<sup>65</sup>

503.<sup>66</sup> Quiet Tintoret; very noble in senators, poor in Madonna.

519.<sup>67</sup> Quiet Paul Veronese; very noble in St. Jerome's robe and Lion, and in little St. John's back. Not particularly so in anybody's front, but a first-rate picture in the picture-way.

507.<sup>68</sup> Dashing Tintoret: fearfully repainted, but grand yet in the lighter figures of background.

496-502.<sup>69</sup> Dashing Paul Veronese – splendid in art; in conception of Evangelists – all that Venice wanted of them,

at that day. You must always, however, judge her as you would a sailor, – what would be ridiculous or bombastic in others has often some honesty in it with *her*. Think of these Evangelists as a kind of figure-heads of ships.<sup>70</sup>

Enter now the great room with the Veronese at the end of it,<sup>71</sup> for which the painter (quite rightly) was summoned before the Inquisition of State: you will find his examination, translated by a friend to whom I owe much in my old Venetian days, in the Appendix to my second Guide;<sup>72</sup> but you must not stop now at this picture, if you are in a hurry, for you can see the like of it, and better, in Paris;<sup>73</sup> but you can see nothing in all the world, out of Venice, like certain other pictures in this room.

Glancing round it, you see it may be generally described as full of pictures of street architecture, with various more or less interesting transactions going on in the streets. Large Canalettos, in fact; only with the figures a little more interesting than Canaletto's figures; and the buildings, on the whole, red and white or brown and white, instead of, as with Canaletto, black and white. And on consideration, and observation, you will perceive, if you *have* any perception of colour, that Venetian buildings, and most others, being really red and white or brown and white,<sup>74</sup> not black and white, this is really the right manner of painting them, and these are true and sufficient representations of streets, of landscapes, and of interiors of houses, with the people, as I said, either in St. Mark's Place, 555,<sup>75</sup> or at Grand Cairo, 540,<sup>76</sup> or before the Castle of St. Angelo at Rome, 546 [fig. 29],<sup>77</sup> or by the old Rialto here, 564,<sup>78</sup> being themselves also more or less interesting, if you will observe them, first in their dresses, which are very curious and pretty, and afterwards in many other particulars, of which for the present I must leave you to make out what you can; for of the pictures by Carpaccio in this room I must write an entirely separate account, (begun already for one





**Figure 29** Vittore Carpaccio, *The Reception of St Ursula and the Pilgrims by the Pope in Rome*. c. 1494-95









**Figure 30**  
Gentile Bellini,  
*Procession and  
Miracle of a Relic  
of the True Cross  
in St Mark's Square.*  
1496



of them only, the Dream of St. Orsola,<sup>79</sup> 533,) <sup>b</sup><sup>80</sup> and of the Gentile Bellini you can only know the value after good study of St. Mark's itself.<sup>81</sup> Observe, however, at least in this, and in 548<sup>82</sup> and 564, the perfectly true representation of what the Architecture of Venice was in her glorious time; trim, dainty, – red and white like the blossom of a carnation, – touched with gold like a peacock's plumes, and frescoed, even to its chimneypots, with fairest arabesque, – its inhabitants, and it together, one harmony of work and life, – all of a piece, you see them, in the wonderful palace-perspective on the left in 548, with everybody looking out of their windows. And in this picture of St. Mark's, painted by John Bellini's good brother [fig. 30], true as he could, hue for hue, and ray for ray, you see that all the tossing of its *now* white marble foliage against the sky, which in my old book on Venice I compared to the tossed spray of sea waves,<sup>83</sup> (believing then, as I do still, that the Venetians in their living and breathing days of art were always influenced in their choice of guiding lines of sculpture by their sense of the action of wind or sea,) <sup>84</sup> were not, at all events, meant to be like sea foam white in anger, but like light spray in morning sunshine. They were all overlaid with gold.<sup>85</sup>

Not yet in vicious luxury. Those porches of St. Mark's, so please you, English friends, were not thus gilt for the wedding of Miss Kilmansegg,<sup>86</sup> nor are those pictures on the vaults, advertisements, like yours in your railway stations; – all the arts of England bent on recommending you cheap bathing machines and painless pills.<sup>87</sup> Here are purer baths and medicines told of; here have been more ingenious engineers. From the Sinai desert, from the Sion rock, from the defiles of Lebanon, met here the ghosts of ancient builders to oversee the work, – of dead nations, to inspire it: Bezaleel and the maids of Israel who gave him their jewels;<sup>88</sup> Hiram and his forgers

in the vale of Siddim<sup>89</sup> – his woodmen of the Syrian forests;<sup>90</sup> – David the lord of war, and his son the Lord of Peace,<sup>91</sup> and the multitudes that kept holyday when the cloud filled the house they had built for the Lord of All;<sup>92</sup> – these, in their myriads stood by, to watch, to guide; – it might have been, had Venice willed, to bless.

Literally so, mind you. The wreathen work of the lily capitals and their archivolts,<sup>93</sup> the glass that keeps unfaded their colour – the design of that colour itself, and the stories that are told in the glow of it,<sup>94</sup> – all these were brought by the Jew or the Tyrian, bringing also the treasures of Persia and Egypt; and with these, labouring beside them as one brought up with them, stood the Athena of Corinth, and the Sophia of Byzantium.<sup>95</sup>

Not in vicious luxury these, yet – though in Tyrian splendour glows St. Mark's; – nor those quiet and trim little houses on the right, joining the Campanile.<sup>96</sup> You are standing, (the work is so completely done that you may soon fancy yourself so,) in old St. Mark's Place, at the far end of it, before it was enlarged; you may find the stone marking the whole length of it in the pavement, just opposite the easternmost door of the Café Florian.<sup>97</sup> And there were none of those pompous loggie then, where you walk up and down before the café,<sup>98</sup> but these trim, dainty, happily inhabited houses, mostly in white marble and gold, with disks of porphyry; – and look at the procession coming towards you underneath them [fig. 31] – what a bed of moving flowers it is!<sup>99</sup> Not Birnam wood coming,<sup>100</sup> gloomy and terrible, but a very bloom and garland of good and knightly manhood – its Doge walking in the midst of it – simple, valiant, actual, beneficent, magnificent king. Do you see better sights than this in St. Mark's Place now, in your days of progress?

Now, just to get some little notion how the figures are 'put in' by these scrupulous old formalists, take the

<sup>b</sup> Of which, with her legend, if you care to hear more, you will find more in the three numbers of 'Fors Clavigera' now purchaseable of my agent in Venice.





**Figure 31** Charles H. Moore and John Ruskin, after Gentile Bellini, *Reduced Study of a Distant Effect of a Portion of the "Procession and Miraculous Cure in the Piazza di San Marco" in the Academy, Venice. 1876-77*

pains to look closely at the first you come upon, of the procession on the extreme left, – the three musicians, namely, with the harp, violin, and lute. Look at them as portraits only: you will not find more interesting ones in

all the rooms. And then you will do well to consider the picture as a reality for a little while, and so leave the Academy with a vision of living Venice in your heart. We will look at no more painting, to-day.

## Notes

- 1 In Ruskin 1877 I<sup>c</sup> the visitor is spared this opening provocation; see “Editions of the *Guide*”, Table 1 and the “Introduction”, 33.
- 2 The door in question, between the fifteenth-century church building and the neo-classical façade, was the entrance to the *Accademia* proper, i.e. the art school, but also the usual point of access to the gallery at this time (compare *Accademia* 1875 and Murray 1877). In SV III (1853) Ruskin had included the moulding of the door itself among the “Gothic Archivolts” given in Pl. IX, while in VIndex he had drawn attention to the sculptures’ “rude cutting”, remarkable “at so late a date, 1377” (*Works*, 11: 361; Quill 2015, 100; Quill 2018, 114). This seems to echo Selvatico, Lazari [1852], 239 (“tutte rozze opere del 1377”), a guide Ruskin knew and used (see below nn. 5 and 93), or else the official catalogue of the *Accademia*, the successive editions of which replicated this judgment. Only the relief to the left of the door (representing St Leonard with two cowed members of the *Scuola Grande della Carità* kneeling at his feet) is dated 1377, in the underlying inscription recalling the founding of the Confraternity on this saint’s feast-day in 1260 (Tassini 1876b, 115). The inscription underlying the relief to the right (*St Christopher Bearing the Christ Child*) is less well preserved: Tassini (1876, 12: 115) transcribes the date “MCC...XXXIII”, while Modesti 2005 (25) gives 1384 (compare n. 10). The central panel with the *Virgin and Child* is dated 1345; for its inscription see “Part II”, 103.
- 3 See “Editions of the *Guide*”, Table 1 for text inserted here in Ruskin 1877 I<sup>c</sup>.
- 4 The marble reliefs set in the frieze decorating the temple to Athena on the Acropolis in Athens, fifteen of which were among the sculptures removed by Lord Elgin and sold to the British government in 1816, when they were placed on display in the British Museum. In SV Ruskin had endorsed the popular characterization of Greek as lintel architecture, citing the Parthenon as its most refined type (*Works*, 10: 252).
- 5 Ruskin’s phrase may be corrective of one in Cicognara 1823-24, 3: 351 noting the figure’s “matron dignity” (*compostezza matronale*), quoted in Selvatico 1847 (104) (see nn. 2, 93 here).
- 6 For further criticism of the central relief, see n. 93.
- 7 Compare the description in *SMR* (*Works*, 24: 247) of the feet of the Byzantine relief of St George on the west front of St Mark’s, “pointed down all their length”.
- 8 Selvatico 1847 (104) had stressed the poverty of the central panel, which in his view, had it not been dated, might have been taken for work of the twelfth century and showed that in Venice sculpture never attained the perfection of the Tuscan school.
- 9 Compare NLVS, probably part of a planned chapter on the *Accademia* in *SMR* (see the “Introduction”, n. 149): “First, look carefully at the sculptures over the entrance; quite among the most important monuments in Venice [...] they are among the earliest pieces of real Venetian sculpture extant. Venetian, native, observe; not Greek imported. And they are as good as, at this time, Venice could do. Very rude and comic, you think. They are so. But Venice in the mid-fourteenth century had no better sculpture in her than that, and (because the art

of sculpture always precedes that of painting) she had no painting in her at all! While already, in France and England, the great thirteenth-century schools of sculpture were on *the decline*, and while Niccola and Giovanni Pisano were dead, in Florence; while Giotto’s day of work was over, Orcagna’s in its full prime. And this is all we have to boast of in poor Venice” (*Works*, 24: 436).

10 Corrected to “1378 and 1384” in Ruskin 1877 I<sup>c</sup> (see “Editions of the *Guide*”, Table 1).

11 i.e. with the death in 1594 of Tintoretto, seen since *RMAT* (1871) as marking the close both of “the sixteenth century, and the great arts of the world” (*Works*, 22: 82); see the “Introduction”, 26, 36; nn. 19 and 38 here; “Part II”, n. 96 and Tucker 2020a. In *SMR* Ruskin conceded that the intellectual history of Venice came to an end with the seventeenth century, adding however, “we shall not ourselves follow it even so far” (*Works*, 24: 251). Ruskin’s refusal to do so was a cause of friction with Rawdon Brown. Around the time he was writing the *Guide* Ruskin suggested his friend might write a history of Venice to complement his own, which would stop at 1520 and “be unfair [...] to those high-heeled people” of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (J. Ruskin to R. Brown, 14 February 1877, BL Add. 36304 ff. 107-8; TS, BodL MSS Eng. lett. c. 41, 218).

12 For the well-head, see “Part II”, 105.

13 The requirement of an entrance fee is taken for granted in “A Museum or Picture Gallery” (1880) (*Works*, 34: 250). By contrast, there was no entrance fee to St George’s Museum at Walkley (*Works*, 28: 449).

14 *Accademia* 1875, 5. Built in 1384 over the “gate” described above, Room I (1877) had been the *Sala dell’Albergo* – meeting-room, archive and treasury – of the *Scuola Grande della Carità*. As the *Sala delle antiche pitture* it now contained “23 specimens of the early Venetian school, of great interest in the history of art” (Murray 1877, 385), of which, as pointed out in the “Introduction” (33), the *Coronation of the Virgin* next noticed was the earliest bearing a date.

15 Cat. 21 (MM 1955, 21): Stefano “Plebanus” of *S. Agnese*, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, panel, signed and dated “MCCCLXXXI”. In the early 1830s the panel had been adapted to complete a polyptych by Paolo Veneziano then ascribed to Niccolò Semitecolo (cat. 21 [MM 1955, 12]; see above, 78), the central panel of which, also representing the *Coronation*, had been detached and sent to the Brera Gallery in Milan in 1808. It would be reunited with the polyptych in 1950. A sketch in watercolour of the *Coronation*, once in the possession of Ruskin (RL 1996P0007) has been ascribed to his Venetian pupil Angelo Alessandri (see the “Introduction”, n. 212), but was attributed by the present editor to Charles Fairfax Murray in 2012.

16 The incumbent of a *pieve* or parish church. Though Ruskin had consulted Rawdon Brown as to its correct translation (see the “Introduction”, 44), the term remained untranslated here and in *SMR* (*Works*, 24: 236).



**17** Cat. 615 (MM 1955, 179): Bartolomeo Vivarini, *The Virgin and Child; St Andrew; St John the Baptist; St Dominic; St Peter*, five panels, signed and dated “MCCCCLXIII”.

**18** Compare MPV (*Works*, 7: 282) on Venetian “respect for the whole human body” and on the robust type of human beauty taught Venetian painters by “the sweeping glory of the sea”.

**19** An overriding concern with anatomical structure, at the expense of “mental interest” and facial expression, was a major aspect of the “deadly change” in art which set in at the Renaissance (see the “Introduction”, 26, 36; 78 and n. 11 here; “Part II”, n. 96 and Tucker 2020a). In Part I of *LF*, published later in 1877, Ruskin warns the student, “Do not think, by learning the nature or structure of a thing, that you can learn to draw it. Anatomy is necessary in the education of surgeons; botany in that of apothecaries; and geology in that of miners. But none of the three will enable you to draw a man, a flower, or a mountain. You can learn to do that only by looking at them; not by cutting them to pieces” (*Works*, 15: 360). Compare the “Introduction”, 27. In noting Vivarini’s attention to the underlying structure of sinew and bone, Ruskin may have been mindful of one of his Christmas lessons (see the “Introduction”, 31). In work on his copy of the head of the saint in Carpaccio’s *Dream of St Ursula* (see the “Introduction”, 27), an attitude of “true humility and desire to do right” had led him to see, for the first time, an “exquisite curve crossing the brown line of the brows”. He had been mortified to discover, given his repeated, violent affirmation that “the study of anatomy is destructive to art” (*Works*, 22: 121), that the curve now revealed to him was that of the skull (J. Ruskin to J. Severn, 10 January [1877] [Burd 1990, 235]). Melius 2015 (93) seems not to discern the nature of and reason for Ruskin’s mortification.

**20** Room II (1877), the state room of the *Accademia*, formerly the main hall of the *Scuola Grande della Carità*. The painting by Giuseppe Borsato, reproduced here [fig. 11], shows the room on the occasion of the Commemoration of Canova in 1822, with the pictures already arranged as Ruskin describes them: Titian’s *Assumption* dominant on the end wall, Tintoretto’s *Cain and Abel* and *Adam and Eve* either side of it, and Bellini’s *S. Giobbe* altarpiece immediately to the left of the near window. Confusingly, Ruskin also refers to Room XVI (1877) as the “principal” or “great” room (see the “Introduction”, 22 and “Part II”, 99).

**21** Cat. 38 (MM 1955, 68): Giovanni Bellini, *The Virgin and Child Enthroned with St Francis, St John the Baptist, Job, St Dominic, St Sebastian and St Louis* (*S. Giobbe* altarpiece), panel, signed.

**22** See Sdegno 2019 (95) on “invisibility” here as “the halo surrounding neglected and valuable works”.

**23** Compare Ruskin’s remark on Fra Angelico’s *Last Judgment*, seen in Florence in 1845: “the picture ought to be in a room by itself & considered, as a day’s work, alone” (Ruskin 2003, p. 99) and his letter in the *Artist and Amateur’s Magazine* the previous year (*Works*, 3: 645–55), where, with specific reference to the paintings of Turner, he writes, “It is a strange thing that the public never seems to suspect that there may be a poetry in painting, to meet which, some preparation of sympathy, some harmony of circumstance, is required; and that it is just as impossible to see half-a-dozen great pictures as to read half-a-dozen great poems at the same time, if their tendencies or their tones

of feeling be contrary or discordant”. In the later 1840s and 1850s such remarks would be developed in a series of public statements on the proper mode of displaying paintings in galleries, which repeatedly stressed the principle that every picture “should be perfectly seen”, hence hung ‘on the line’ (*Works*, 12: 402–3). In a letter to his father of 1 January 1852 (*Works*, 13: xxviii–xxix), in which he sketches his ideal of a picture gallery, Ruskin suggests this principle might also warrant the physical isolation of one painting from another: “Each picture with its light properly disposed for it alone – in its little recess or chamber”.

**24** In *VIndex* Ruskin had declared “the most finished and delicate example” of Bellini’s work in Venice to be his triptych of the *Virgin and Child Enthroned and Saints* in the church of the *Frari* (*Works*, 11: 379). Elsewhere in *VIndex*, however, “the best John Bellini in Venice” was held the *St Jerome, St Christopher and St Louis* in *S. Giovanni Crisostomo*, ranked moreover “one of the most precious pictures in Italy, and among the most perfect in the world” (*Works*, 11: 387). Second only to this was another *Virgin and Child Enthroned and Saints*, in *S. Zaccaria* (*Works*, 11: 436). In 1871, the *Frari* and *S. Zaccaria* altarpieces were again declared centrally representative of the art of Bellini (*Works*, 22: 83). Yet around this time a new contender was a *Virgin and Child with Four Saints* now attributed to Marco Bello (MLM). Ruskin placed a photograph of this painting in his teaching collection in Oxford, describing it in the *Catalogue of Examples* (1870) as “the most accurate type I can find of the best that has yet been done by man in art; – the best, that is to say, counting by the sum of qualities in perfect balance; and ranking errorless workmanship as the first of virtues [...] This picture has no fault, as far as I can judge. It is deeply, rationally, unaffectedly devotional, with the temper of religion which is eternal in high humanity. It has all the great and grave qualities of art, and all the delicate and childish ones. Few pictures are more sublime, and none more precise” (*Works*, 21: 3–14). In lecturing on the *Discourses* of Reynolds in 1875, Ruskin reverted to the view that the “best pure oil picture in the world without use of gold” was Bellini’s *Frari* triptych (*Works*, 22: 501).

**25** The panel had been restored by C. Corniani in 1833 (Goffen, Nepi Scirè 2000, 129). Crowe, Cavalcaselle 1871 (1: 163) states, “A part of the blue mantle of the Virgin and the left leg of St Sebastian are retouched and injured”.

**26** Painted for the high altar of the *Frari*, the *Assumption* had been removed to the *Accademia* in 1816. Between 1883 and 1886 a new room was created, behind Room II (1877), especially for its display (MM 1962, xxiii). The painting was returned to its original location in 1923. In his copy of Ruskin 1877 I<sup>b</sup>, now in the Print Room, AM (Ruskin I C. 32), Ruskin’s editor E.T. Cook noted, “There are now 2 chairs in front of the Bellini. 2 agst 10”.

**27** For this same reason it had been decided in 1824 to screen the painting off by means of a silk curtain. The arrangement had clearly been abandoned by 1877 (MM 1955, xix; Modesti 2005, 25) [fig. 2].

**28** *Works*, 11: 361.

**29** Ruskin refers to the bronze statue in the sanctuary of *Athena Chalkioikos* (‘of the brazen house’) on the Acropolis of Sparta, not Athens (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 3.17). For further comparison

to Athena of the *Virgin* over the entrance to the *Accademia*, see “Part II”, 103. These references to Athena acquire piquancy not only from Ruskin’s stress on the sculptures’ *native* (non-Greek) character, but also from the presence at that time atop the neo-classical façade of an ‘official’ statue of Minerva as patroness of the Arts, imposed by Vienna (Modesti 2005, 25) [fig. 2].

**30** See the “Introduction”, 13 and compare “Editions of the *Guide*”, Table 1 for subsequent correction of the text here.

**31** The pamphlet was on sale at the *Accademia* (see the “Introduction”, 32). Adducing the altarpieces by Bellini in the *Frari* and in *S. Zaccaria* (see n. 24), Ruskin there states that the “two first attributes of the best art” are “[f]aultless workmanship, and perfect serenity; a continuous, not momentary, action, or entire inaction. You are to be interested in the living creatures; not in what is happening to them” (*Works*, 22: 84-5).

**32** Cats 41, 43 (MM 1962: 398, 397): Jacopo Tintoretto, *Cain and Abel*; *Adam and Eve*, canvas. In *MP I* Ruskin had classed these paintings “among the most noble works of this or any other master, whether for preciousness of colour or energy of thought” (*Works*, 3: 173n; see also *Works*, 11: 375). He had further cited them (*Works* 3: 509, 583) in illustration of the principle that license may be admirable if used with imaginative intent. For instance, in *Adam and Eve* the angel seen driving the pair from Paradise, though “wrapt in an orb of light [...] casts a SHADOW before him”. Vindex had described *Cain and Abel* as “[o]ne of the most wonderful works in the whole gallery”, and its companion as “hardly inferior” (*Works*, 11: 361). See the “Introduction”, 34.

**33** John Milton, *Paradise Lost* I, vv. 59-69.

**34** Ruskin had discovered the “gigantic power” of Tintoretto in Venice in 1845 (*Works*, 29: 87). He had written to his father at the time, “As for *painting*, I think I didn’t know what it meant until today – the fellow outlines you your figure with ten strokes, and colours it with as many more” (Shapiro 1972, 212).

**35** Compare CA (1865), with its critique of the “peculiar gloom” characteristic of “modern rapid work” in etching, traced by Ruskin to the “foul and vicious” conditions of modern metropolitan life (*Works*, 19: 114). These remarks on Titian also foreshadow BA (1888), one of Ruskin’s last publications, which reflects on the aesthetic and moral consequences, “for the people of our great cities”, of unlimited “wonderful displays of etchings and engravings and photographs”. The effects of “all this literally ‘black art’” is explored in terms both of line, to whose power it blinds, and colour, whose interest it occludes (*Works*, 14: 357-64).

**36** Room IX (1877) contained smaller paintings of the Italian, French, German and Flemish schools, largely (but not exclusively) of the seventeenth century. Compare the reference to “Dutch rubbish” below (80). Ruskin’s disgust may have prevented him from noticing the earlier Venetian pictures displayed here, and in particular cat. 91 (MM 1955, 107): *The Apparition of the Ten Thousand Martyrs of Mount Ararat in the Church of S. Antonio di Castello*, canvas, already at this date attributed to Carpaccio.

**37** For Ruskin’s celebrated early account of the painting see *MP II* (*Works*, 4: 270).

**38** Ruskin’s lectures and writings of the 1870s contain many such mnemonic games with chronology. For example, the following passage from *RMAT* (*Works*, 22: 82) aimed to help commit to memory that of the fateful “change” of art at the Renaissance (see the “Introduction”, 26, 36; nn. 11, 19 here; “Part II”, n. 96 and Tucker 2020a): “Recollect, first, the great year 1480. Twice four’s eight – you can’t mistake it. In that year Michael Angelo was five years old; Titian, three years old; Raphael, within three years of being born. So see how easily it comes. Michael Angelo five years old – and you divide six between Titian and Raphael, – three on each side of your standard year, 1480. Then add to 1480, forty years – an easy number to recollect, surely; and you get the exact year of Raphael’s death, 1520. In that forty years all the new effort and deadly catastrophe took place. 1480 to 1520. Now, you have only to fasten to those forty years, the life of Bellini, who represents the best art before them, and of Tintoret, who represents the best art after them.” In *AF* the mnemonics took visual form through the use of diagrams, designed to show how the lives of a select group of artists “run in and out across” the divisions 1300, 1400 and 1500 (*Works*, 22: 331-4). On 13 February 1877 Ruskin instructed his assistant and publisher George Allen to “order a certain number of the Second Ariadne with the artist’s [sic] diagrams to be bound in red, like the Walks [i.e. Mornings] in Florence, to be sold separately” in Venice by “a man who keeps a stall at the academy door” (TS, BodL MSS Eng. lett. c. 41, 216) (see the “Introduction”, 32 and Tucker 2020a).

**39** Room I (1877).

**40** Cat. 21 (MM 1955, 12): Paolo Veneziano (formerly N. Semitecolo), Polyptych with *The Coronation of the Virgin* and *Episodes from the Life of Christ*, panel. For the central panel, see n. 15.

**41** Room VIII (1877), containing paintings from the Manfrin collection, acquired in 1856. Among these was the view of *Rio dei Mendicanti and the Scuola Grande di S. Marco* by “Canaletto” (now Bernardo Bellotto; cat. 494 [MM 1970, 7]), the picture “against” which Ruskin drew his own view of the *Scuola Grande di S. Marco* in the autumn of 1876 (*Works*, II: frontispiece; present location unknown; see Wildman 2009, 333-4).

**42** Corrected to “right” in Ruskin 1877 I<sup>c</sup> (see “Editions of the *Guide*”, Table 1).

**43** Cat. 588 (MM 1955, 148): Andrea Mantegna, *St George*, panel.

**44** The technical specification relates to a recent novelty in Ruskin’s method of teaching drawing, introduced after taking up the Slade Professorship at Oxford in 1870. In his initial series of lectures, he had told prospective practical students, “from the very beginning (though carrying on at the same time an incidental practice with crayon and lead pencil), you shall try to draw a line of absolute correctness with the point, not of pen or crayon, but of the brush, as Apelles did, and as all coloured lines are drawn on Greek vases” (*Works*, 20: 132); see Levi, Tucker 1999, 105.

**45** i.e. into, and to the end of, Room IX (1877).

**46** Cat. 269 (MM 1962, 112): Workshop of Bonifacio de’ Pitati, *The Virgin and Child with St John the Baptist, St Jerome, St Joseph, St Barbara and St Catherine*, panel.

**47** In the corridor were hung pictures ascribed to the Dutch painters Melchior de Hondecoeter (*Hen and Chicks*, cat. 344 [MM 1970, 364]; *The Victorious Cock*, cat. 345 [MM 1970, 365]) and Cornelis Engelbrechtsz (*Crucifixion*, cat. 189 [MM 1955, 207: copy after Hans Memling]), as well as others then ascribed to Anton Van Dyck (*Portrait of a Boy*, cat. 173 [MM 1970, 358: style of Van Dyck]; *Sleeping Boy*, cat. 174 [MM 1970, 359: style of Van Dyck]). Compare Ruskin's note on the contents of the corridor, 76.

**48** Room XIV (1877).

**49** Cat. 611 (MM 1955, 115): Cima da Conegliano, *The Incredulity of St Thomas*, with *St Magnus*, panel.

**50** Room XV (1877).

**51** Cat. 626 (MM 1962, 451): Titian, *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, canvas, painted for the *Sala dell'Albergo*, to which it was returned in 1895.

**52** The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in Covent Garden, London. During his Christmas Eve visit to the *Accademia* Ruskin had decided that the painting was "entirely unworthy of" Titian "and wrong for such subject, and foolish", though he "had never yet felt the conditions of power in some of the heads" (Ruskin 1956-59, 3: 922). Since the 1840s Ruskin had held that the Titian suffered from comparison with Tintoretto's *Presentation in S. Maria dell'Orto*. In *VIndex* (*Works*, 11: 396-7) he had advised the reader to compare especially their respective representations of the "little Madonna": "I prefer Tintoret's infinitely; and note how much finer is the feeling with which Tintoret has relieved the glory round her head against the pure sky, than that which influenced Titian in encumbering his distance with architecture". For further comparison, taken from his architectural notebook of 1846 (RM), see *Works*, 11: 396n. The phrase "common blue tapestry" may allude to the increasing use of vivid synthetic dyes in the production of textiles, especially following the discovery and development of aniline pigments in the later 1850s. My thanks to Rachel Dickinson for this suggestion.

**53** Apparently an error for '513', i.e. cat. 1017 (MM 1962, 159): Workshop of Paolo Veronese, *The Feast in the House of Levi*, canvas, from the convent of S. Giacomo, Giudecca (now on loan to the municipality of Verona and displayed there in Palazzo Barbieri). *Accademia* 1875 and Murray 1877 both list under the number 513 and among the pictures in Room XV (1877) a painting by the "heirs of Paolo" from the convent of S. Jacopo (i.e. S. Giacomo), Giudecca, of the same dimensions and representing an analogous subject, *Christ at Supper in the House of the Pharisee*.

**54** Cat. 260 (MM 1962, 144): Paolo Veronese, *The Annunciation*, canvas.

**55** Cat. 44 (MM 1955, 104): Vittore Carpaccio, *The Presentation in the Temple*, panel, signed and dated "M.D. X.". This had entered the *Accademia* in 1815 (Bellin, Catra 2020, 202).

**56** Cat. 320 (MM 1962, 117): Paris Bordone, *The Fisherman Returns St Mark's Ring to the Doge*, then also in Room XV (1877).

**57** In Ruskin 1877 I<sup>a</sup> (see "Editions of the Guide", Table 1) Ruskin instances as "next best" among Infant Christs that in cat. 37 (MM 1962, 135), noticed below (82). It is not clear why he should have cancelled the reference, unless the figure he intended was not in fact the Infant Christ but the rather more prominent infant St John the Baptist, to whom he

later draws attention. During his visit to Dresden in 1859 Ruskin had been particularly struck by the infant Christ in Veronese's *Adoration of the Magi* in the Gallery there (*Works*, 7: li).

**58** The comparison was a pertinent and pressing one. Carpaccio represented a new inflection of the "balanced" perfection previously attributed to Titian, e.g. in *TP* (*Works*, 16: 298): "in that restrained harmony of his strength there are indeed depths of each balanced power more wonderful than all those separate manifestations in inferior painters [...] there is a softness more exquisite than Correggio's, a purity loftier than Leonardo's, a force mightier than Rembrandt's, a sanctity more solemn even than Raphael's".

**59** Compare *GWP* (1853-60): "the more I see of living artists, and learn of departed ones, the more I am convinced that the highest strength of genius is generally marked by strange unconsciousness of its own modes of operation, and often by no small scorn of the best results of its exertion" (*Works*, 24: 21).

**60** Six studies of these "little Pictures" were made for Ruskin by Charles Fairfax Murray (see the "Introduction", 44). Taking them in the order in which Carpaccio placed the subjects (starting from the highest) and in which Murray copied them, in CGSG the drawings bear the following titles: *The Separation of Light from Darkness and Land from Water* (00355); *The Making of the Sun, Moon and Stars* (00362); *The Making of the Trees* (00356); *Ordaining the Day of Rest* (Ruskin's "solemn piece of charge to a spirit folding its arms in obedience"), of which Murray seems to have made two drawings (00363, 00370), and *The Fall of the Rebel Army* (00764) [fig. 28]. In 1880 Ruskin also acquired from Murray a copy of the detail with the three angels playing musical instruments, a subject perhaps suggested to Murray by Ruskin's remarks above on the similar trio in Bellini's *S. Giobbe* altarpiece (see above, 75). In 1894 the Trustees of the Guild Copying Fund commissioned a copy of the entire altarpiece from Angelo Alessandri (CGSG 00260; Morley 1984, catalogue, 22).

**61** All in Room XV (1877).

**62** Cat. 291 (MM 1962, 60): Bonifacio de' Pitati, *The Rich Man and Lazarus*, canvas.

**63** Cat. 325 (MM 1962, 116: Bonifacio and Jacopo Pisbolica [?]): Bonifacio de' Pitati (attr.), *The Virgin in Glory and Five Saints*, canvas, currently (March 2013) in the church of S. *Giobbe*, Venice.

**64** Cat. 319 (MM 1962, 62): Bonifacio de' Pitati, *The Massacre of the Innocents*, canvas.

**65** See *MP II* for a comparison of Tintoretto's *Massacre of the Innocents* in the *Scuola di S. Rocco* - "the only true, real, heartfelt representation of the being and actuality of the subject in existence" - with its treatment by other artists, and for criticism in particular of "Raphael"s, in a cartoon (attributed to Giulio Romano by Crowe and Cavalcaselle) belonging to the Foundling Hospital in London and at the time Ruskin was writing on loan to the National Gallery (*Works*, 4: 204, 272-4).

**66** Cat. 243 (MM 1962, 402): Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Virgin and Child and Four Senators*, canvas.

**67** Cat. 37 (MM 1962, 135): Paolo Veronese, *The Virgin and Child with St Joseph, St John the Baptist, St Jerome, St Justina and St Francis*, canvas.



**68** Cat. 221 (MM 1962, 415): Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Virgin and Child in Glory, with St Cecilia, St Marina, St Theodore, St Cosmas and St Damian*, canvas, then displayed in Room XV (1877). Extensive repainting was removed when the painting was restored by Mauro Pelliccioli in 1959 (MM 1962, 241).

**69** Cats 256, 261 (MM 1962, 141d): Paolo Veronese, *The Four Evangelists: Matthew and Luke; Mark and John*, four canvases, originally forming part (together with cats 759, 661 and 833 [MM 1962, 141a-c]) of the ceiling decoration in the church of S. Nicolò della Lattuga and then displayed in Room XV (1877). In 1929 the *Four Evangelists* (together with cat. 759 [MM 1962, 141a], *The Adoration of the Magi*) were inserted into the ceiling of the *Cappella del Rosario* in SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Venice.

**70** Compare MP V (*Works*, 7: 279-89) on the importance of Venice's "wave training" for her art and religion, and on the difficulty, "for persons, accustomed to receive, without questioning, the modern English idea of religion", of understanding "the temper of the Venetian Catholics". Compare the "Introduction", 20 and 88 here.

**71** Room XVI (1877). The reference is to cat. 203 (MM 1962, 137): Paolo Veronese, *The Feast in the House of Levi*, canvas, inscribed with the date "A. D. MDLXXIII - DIE. XX. APR."

**72** See 125-30.

**73** Ruskin probably refers to two large paintings by Veronese formerly both in the Louvre, *The Marriage at Cana* and *Christ at Supper in the House of Simon the Pharisee* (now at Versailles). In a series of visits to that collection in the summer of 1844, crucial for his appreciation of the earlier Italian schools of painting, Ruskin had carefully considered these works, contrasting "their manly, fearless, fresco-like attainment of vast effect, in spite of details" with "Landseer's, or any other of our best manipulators' paltry dwelling upon them" (*Works*, 12: 451). In another visit to the museum five years later *The Marriage at Cana* was again the focus of his critical attention, this time as a lesson in the "entire superiority of Painting to Literature as a test, expression, and record of human intellect" (*Works*, 12: 456-7).

**74** Compare SV III (*Works*, 11: 29): "The whole front of a Gothic palace in Venice may, therefore, be simply described as a field of subdued russet, quartered with broad sculptured masses of white and gold; these latter being relieved by smaller inlaid fragments of blue, purple, and deep green" (Ruskin's emphases, added in the Travellers' Edition of 1879-81). In his Preface to *Zorzi* 1877 (see the "Introduction", n. 16) Ruskin deplored the anonymous "sandy or muddy brown stone" used in the recent controversial restoration of St Mark's, citing once more the work of these painters: "nor can I understand how the Venetian people can bear to look at such colour, while the pictures of Carpaccio and Gentile Bellini show the beautiful warm red which, as you so rightly observe, was everywhere used on house fronts in those days of perfect art, giving the name of 'Venetian' red to that colour, all over Europe" (*Works*, 24: 408). Compare also "From 'Collected Notes on Some of the Pictures in the St George's Museum Sheffield'" ("Supplementary Texts").

**75** Cat. 567 (MM 1955, 62): Gentile Bellini, *A Procession and Miracle of a Relic of the True Cross in St Mark's Square*, panel, signed and dated "MCCCCLXXXVI", painted for the *Scuola di S. Giovanni Evangelista*

as part of a series illustrating miracles worked through a relic preserved there.

**76** Cat. 571 (MM 1955, 145): Giovanni Mansueti, *Episodes from the Life of St Mark*, canvas.

**77** Cat. 577 (MM 1955, 99): Vittore Carpaccio, *The Reception of St Ursula and the Pilgrims by the Pope in Rome*, canvas, signed, one of the series illustrating the life of St Ursula painted for the *Scuola di S. Orsola*. See the "Introduction", 47 and "From 'The Shrine of the Slaves', First Supplement (ch. 10.), *St Mark's Rest* (December 1877)" ("Supplementary Texts").

**78** Cat. 566 (MM 1955, 94): Vittore Carpaccio, *A Miracle of a Relic of the True Cross*, canvas, another of the paintings illustrating miracles worked through the relic preserved in the *Scuola Grande di S. Giovanni Evangelista*.

**79** Corrected to "Ursula" in Ruskin 1882-83 I (see "Editions of the Guide", Table 1). The painting is cat. 578 (MM 1955, 100): Vittore Carpaccio, *The Dream of St Ursula*, canvas, also from the series painted for the *Scuola di S. Orsola* (see the "Introduction", 25-32) and the "account" is that given in *FC* Letters 20 and 71 (see the "Supplementary Texts" and the next note here).

**80** For the emendation of his note in Ruskin 1877 I<sup>c</sup>, see "Editions of the Guide", Table 1. The three numbers of *FC* purchasable in Venice must have been Letters 20, 71 and 75 (not Letters 71, 72, and 73 as stated in Ruskin 1891, 21n and in *Works*, 24: 163n). The inference is licensed in part by the foregoing text, but also by Ruskin's instructions, in a letter to G. Allen of 1 April 1877 (TS, BodL MSS Eng. lett. c. 41, 252-3), to have "a hundred of each of the Fors's referred to in my new Venice Guide, bound as you have done the *Ariadne* [AF; see n. 38], but lettered outside in gold, one Fors Clavigera No - The Legend of St Ursula [= Letter 71]. The second Fors Clavigera No [blank], the Legend of St Theodore [= Letter 75], and the Third, Fors Clavigera, No [blank], Notes on the Dream of St Ursula [= Letter 20]". The inference is confirmed, in part, by Bunney's account book for the sale of Ruskin's books in Venice in 1877 (collection of S.E. Bunney), which lists Letters 20, 71 and 71 [sic] among the titles available. For Bunney see the "Introduction", n. 101. A letter published in the *Boston Daily Evening Traveller* for 14 September 1880, describing a visit to his studio in search of the publications referred to in Ruskin's footnote, is quoted in Bunney 2009-10, 113.

**81** Around two months later, in early May 1877, as the campaign of protest against the restoration of St Mark's led by Alvise Piero Zorzi gathered momentum (see the "Introduction", n. 16), Ruskin announced in *FC* that he was sending four photographs of the west front to St George's Museum in Sheffield, together with one of the relevant portion of Gentile Bellini's painting for comparison (Letter 78 [June 1877; dated 9 May], *Works*, 29: 130-1).

**82** Cat. 564 (MM 1955, 139): Giovanni Mansueti, *A Miracle of a Relic of the True Cross in Campo S. Lio*, canvas, another of the series originally painted for the *Scuola di S. Giovanni Evangelista*. JWB 21 February 1877 records Bunney's having pointed out the picture to Ruskin, "he never having looked at it before" (compare "Part II", 99).

**83** At the climax of the famous description of the front of St Mark's in SV II (*Works*, 10: 83): "until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of

the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst". If "tossing" is not a misprint for "tossings", Ruskin seems to have been misled by recall (or perhaps, in an earlier version, actual citation) of the passage, with its topicalization of the "crests", into combining a singular subject with a verb in the plural ("all the tossing [...] were [...] meant").

**84** See 84 and n. 70 here.

**85** In a notebook of 1846 (RM), Ruskin had written of this painting, "the Pinnacles are entirely gilded, while the statues below have only hems of garments. All the flourished work round the arches & the little statues therein gilded, & all the open work gilded". In the third edition (1846) of *MP I* (*Works*, 3: 209-10) he duly stressed the value of the work of Gentile Bellini and Carpaccio as "architectural evidence [...] all the gilded parts being gilt in the picture, so that there can be no mistake or confusion of them with yellow colour on light, and all the frescoes or mosaics given with the most absolute precision and fidelity". Though far from perfect in point of architectural drawing – it was held deficient in light and shade, "thoughtful observance of temporary effect" and aerial perspective – Gentile Bellini's *Procession* was accounted "the best Church of St Mark's that has ever been painted, so far as I know". Moreover, it posed a valid artistic problem, yet to be solved, regarding "the reconciliation of true aerial perspective and chiaroscuro with the splendour and dignity obtained by the real gilding and elaborate detail".

**86** Ruskin refers to *Miss Kilmansegg and her Precious Leg*, a satirical poem by Thomas Hood (1799-1845). The reference was perhaps suggested by the ironical subtitle (*A Golden Legend*) of a recent illustrated edition (Hood 1870). Ruskin gave an unidentified edition of the poem to Whitelands in 1886 (Dearden 2012, 164). The heroine is a rich heiress who has a leg amputated after a riding accident and insists the proxy be made of gold. Resulting notoriety leads to a fabulously ostentatious marriage with an adventurer posing as a foreign count. On discovering the truth about him, she destroys her will, thinking to cheat her deceiver of her most valuable asset, only to be clubbed to death with it. Ruskin had referred to the poem three years earlier in *FC* (*Works*, 28: 183) and would do so again in the catalogue to the "little autobiography of drawings" exhibited at the Fine Art Society in 1878 (*Works*, 13: 520).

**87** See *FC* Letter 78 (*Works*, 29: 131-2) for transcripts of the notices and advertisements pasted on the paling set around the south porch of St Mark's in March 1877: "Such are the modern sacred inscriptions and divine instructions presented to the Venetian people by their church of St. Mark. What its ancient inscriptions and perennial advertisements were, you shall read in *St. Mark's Rest*, if you will, with other matters appertaining to ancient times".

**88** Bezalel, the divinely appointed artificer of the tent-shrine or Tabernacle that accompanied the Israelites in their Exodus through and beyond the "Sinai desert" (Exodus 35-6).

**89** Hiram, "filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass", was summoned by Solomon to work on the Temple in Jerusalem (the "Sion rock") (1 Kings 7.14-51). The "Vale of Siddim" is first mentioned in Genesis 14.3, where it is significantly (given

the present context) equated with "the salt sea". The name is thought to refer to the fertile plains located in the area now corresponding to the southern extremity of the Dead Sea and traditionally identified as the cradle of Phoenician civilization.

**90** Hiram, King of Tyre, supplied Solomon with cedar and fir wood (from the "defiles of Lebanon") and also carpenters and masons for the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Hiram's woodmen were the Sidonians, whose skill as hewers of timber Solomon emphasized when he "sent to Hiram" (1 Kings 5).

**91** Solomon, but perhaps also Christ, the "son of David" (Matthew 21.9) and messianic "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9.6-7) (but see "Editions of the *Guide*", Table 1).

**92** The text combines references to Psalms 42.4 ("for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day") and 1 Kings 8.10 ("when the priests were come out of the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the Lord"). The second passage recounts the ceremony ordered by Solomon, on completion of the Temple, to mark the placing of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

**93** The "lily capitals" surmount the free-standing lower-storey pillars of the north- and south-west porticoes of St Mark's (*Works*, 10: Pl. IX; Quill 2015, 59; Quill 2018, 74). The name alludes to the flower carved on the capitals' four faces. In *SV*, Ruskin rated these capitals "without exception the most subtle pieces of composition in broad contour which I have ever met with in architecture" (*Works*, 10: 164), while in *EAV* they were accounted "the most interesting pieces of Byzantine work" in the city (*Works*, 11: 331-2, Pls. 6, 7). The expression "wreathen work" refers to the "braided or chequered" (*Works*, 10: 160) ornamentation characterizing a family of Byzantine capitals of which these are signal examples. In *SV* Ruskin twice cites with approval the conjecture advanced in Selvatico 1847 that the "reticulated veil" within which the lily-flowers are carved was "intended for an imitation of the capitals of the temple of Solomon, which Hiram [the Tyrian craftsman just mentioned in the text] made, with 'nets of checker work, and wreaths of chain work for the chapters that were on the top of the pillars [...] and the chapters that were upon the top of the pillars were of lily work in the porch.' (1 Kings 7.17,19.)" (*Works*, 11: 386-7; see also *Works*, 10: 164-5).

**94** The reference is presumably to the glass *tesserae* in the mosaics of St Mark's.

**95** *Athena Chalinitis* (glossed by Ruskin as "Restrainer" or "Bridler"), who in her temple at Corinth appeared to Bellerophon and gave him the golden bridle that enabled him to capture the winged horse Pegasus. Ruskin had discussed her in connection with Greek myths of storm in *QA*. His invocation of the goddess of wisdom here, along with her Christian manifestation as Sophia – Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and St Mark's being the two supreme examples, in the East and in the West, of the Byzantine central-plan form – is clarified by reflections in *Proserpina* and in a related fragment, written for inclusion in *SMR*, on the moral symbolism of the acanthus plant and its transfiguration in the Corinthian capital (*Works*, 24: 279-80, 280n). Ruskin there reads the legendary origins of the Corinthian order – in the chance sight of an acanthus growing through an abandoned votive basket – in

terms of the “relation of weeds to corn, or of the adverse powers of nature to the beneficent ones”, associating the basket motif with the bread offerings carried by the *Kanephoroi* (“basket-bearers”) of the Panathenaic processions, and the entire form – re-elaborated in the Byzantine “basket-work capital” and supremely in the “lily capitals” (see n. 93) – with Athena’s wise restraint of the “fountain of life”. The mention of Corinth also perhaps recalls St Paul’s mission there, when he took up his old profession of tentmaker (Acts 18.3), and thus connects with the theme of the desert Tabernacle, alluded to in the previous paragraph. Ruskin is perhaps elaborating on Samuel Rogers’ lines on this “spot of earth” in “St. Mark’s Place in Italy”: “Assembling in St. Mark’s | All Nations met as on enchanted ground” (Rogers 1823, 84). The passage in the *Guide* is paralleled by one in *MF* treating of that other centre of late Ruskinian topography, the “spot of ground” between the *campanile* of Giotto and the Baptistery in Florence: “For there the traditions of faith and hope, of both the Gentile and Jewish races, met for their beautiful labour” (*Works*, 23: 413).

**96** They included the *Ospizio Orseolo*, which hosted pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land. The buildings were demolished in 1582, when work began on the construction of the *Procuratie Nuove* (see n. 98).

**97** By “enlarged” Ruskin evidently does not, as he should, mean “widened”, in the building of the *Procuratie Nuove* (see the next note). For, as his placing of the spectator “at the far end of” the square and the expression “the whole length of it” indicate, he has confused this later development with the extension of the *piazza* in the twelfth century, following the demolition and rebuilding, further back, of S. *Geminiano*. This is the ‘enlargement’ (“fu ampliata la piazza”) recorded in the inscription on the “stone” referred to.

**98** The *Procuratie Nuove*, constructed between the late sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries, by Vincenzo Scamozzi, followed by Baldassare Longhena. The *Procuratie Vecchie* on the opposite side of the square are also later in date than Gentile’s painting.

**99** JWBj 17 January 1877 records Ruskin’s appreciative comments that day on the procession in Gentile Bellini’s painting: “he had never looked carefully at it before except as an architectural picture, but was amazed at its wonderful groupings of colour especially in those of the Doge and Nobles coming from the Palace” (Bunney 2007, 33). A watercolour sketch by Charles Moore of this very portion, made during his stay in Venice in the winter of 1876-77, is in FM (1926.33.23) [fig. 31]. A description of the drawing in JWBj 11 March 1877 (Bunney found it “wanting in clearness & strength”) indicates that the sketches in the margins are by Ruskin: “in it Mr Ruskin had made a rough sketch of colour to shew him how it should be done – but it was not good because he had not kept the proper relation between the parts and the drawing of the doge was very bad, ungraceful & out of proportion”. Bunney expressed his desire “to paint the church nearly as large as that in its present state”, and this led to the commission, on behalf of St George’s Company, of his large oil painting of the west front (CGSG 00780). A little under half the size of the Bellini, this was begun that spring and completed in 1881, just over a year before the artist’s death on 23 September 1882 (Bunney 2007, 2008).

**100** In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* one of the apparitions summoned by the witches for the future king assures him safety “until | Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane hill | Shall come against him” (IV.i.92-3). Later, the army led by Malcolm and Macduff and their English allies approaches Macbeth’s castle at Dunsinane bearing boughs cut from trees in Birnam Wood, thus negatively fulfilling the prophecy.