

Visitor information

Magical Venice

Venetian Vedute Pictures of the 18th Century

1st March to 6th December 2020

The Museum Langmatt collection contains a series of 13 Venetian vedute pictures painted in the mid-18th century. The artist's identity is unknown, and we do not know precisely when or how these panoramas reached Baden. It is believed that Sidney and Jenny Brown acquired them in Turin in the first half of the 1920s. Presenting them on coloured walls and accompanied by archive material allows a fresh perspective on these vedute pictures, offering a mental journey through La Serenissima. Countless bridges, winding alleyways, waterways with elegant gondolas, and the gleaming golden façades of the palazzi: for centuries, Venice's cityscape has exerted a positively magical attraction. In the 18th century in particular, painters specialised in depicting this historic city for the benefit of travellers to Italy. The term "vedute" (Italian: *veduta* = view, prospect) refers to the realistic depiction of a city or a landscape.

Corridor: Memories of Venice

In 1917, before these vedute pictures became part of the collection, Sidney and Jenny Brown acquired a picture called *Fischerboote. Erinnerung an Venedig (Fishing Boats: Memory of Venice)* by Odilon Redon (1840-1916) in the Neue Galerie Neupert in Zürich. The picture was exchanged for four other paintings from the collection, works by Ferdinand Hodler, Adolf Stäbli, Walter Püttner, and Rudolf Nissl. Redon's painting is compelling in its atmosphere, its luminosity, and its depth of colour. Light and dark areas depict the rapid changes in the weather over the lagoon. The sun and rain conflict in a constant interplay, providing a metaphor for light and dark moods. Redon visited Venice only twice: he visited the lagoon city for the first time in 1900, alongside Milan, Pisa, and Florence. He made a second journey to Ravenna and Venice in 1908. We know very little about this first trip to Venice. On the second journey, Redon was accompanied by his wife Camille, their eighteen-year-old son Ari, and his friend, the collector Arthur Fontaine. This small group spent barely two weeks in Venice. On his return to Paris, Redon set down his memories in paint and pastels. They sold very well. He had barely finished these artworks when he exhibited them in November 1908 in a solo exhibition in the Galerie Druet in Paris.

Rooms 1 to 3: Views of a City

The vedute in the Langmatt collection show various different views of Venice. The Browns displayed them in the "Venezianerzimmer" (the Venetian room) on the ground story. The hanging of the artworks in the exhibition creates a "stroll" through the city. The locations of the viewer are marked on a small map. The Langmatt vedute document more than just the citystate of Venice – they also speak of the beginnings of tourism, at that time the exclusive privilege of a prosperous social minority, mostly originating from England. In its time, the vedute (a manageable format) provided well-off travellers with the equivalent of a 20th-century postcard, or the "selfie" of today. Whilst the material form of the "souvenir" may have changed over the centuries, the human need to take away something of one's experience in a foreign land to display proudly at home remains the same. The 18th century is considered the era of *vedutismo*, of "view painting". Isolated depictions of the lagoon city existed prior to 1700. During the course of the 18th century, vedute painting experienced a golden age in Venice. The great masters were Canaletto (1697-1768) and Francesco Guardi (1712-1793), both born in Venice. Today, their works hang in the greatest museums of the worlds. Canaletto's works show a near photorealistic precision. His work was promoted by John Smith, the English consul in Vienna, who found him buyers among English aristocrats visiting Italy on the "Grand Tour", the traditional journey of cultural learning. As Canaletto's student, Guardi further developed Venetian vedute painting, heightening the light and colour effects to give them greater dynamic power. In so doing, he anticipated aspects that were to become central elements of French Impressionism around 100 years later.

Veranda: Reading Room

The veranda hosts diverse works of world literature which take Venice as their theme in a number of different ways and allow one to (re-)encounter the lagoon city in a different way.

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