



2. Bernardo Bellotto  
*View of Piazzetta Looking towards  
 the Library*  
 1740–1741

CASTLE HOWARD COLLECTION, YORK

(*View of the Piazzetta with the Doge's Palace; View of the Piazzetta Looking towards the Library*, FIG. 2), as well as less frequented squares and alleys, where one can find equally interesting public buildings and churches (*View of Rio dei Mendicanti and Scuola di San Marco, View of the Church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli and the Apse of the Church of Santa Maria Nova, View of the Church and Square of Santa Maria Formosa, View of Campo Santi Giovanni e Paolo*).

Like other Venetian artists, Bellotto documented special feasts and the official ceremonies in Serenissima. In the years 1739–1740, the artist commemorated the visit to the Republic by Frederick Christian, son of the King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, Augustus III Wettin, who came to Italy to attend the marriage of his sister Maria Amalia to the king of Naples, Sicily and Spain, Charles III of Bourbon, by painting the regatta organized to honour the prince (in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm).<sup>11</sup>

During the years of working in Canal's workshop, Bernardo's duties included making replicas of his uncle's paintings. This copying of original compositions was connected with the growing interest in Venetian *vedute*,

<sup>11</sup> Henning 2011, p. 107. See also: Kozakiewicz 1972, vol. 1, p. 27 (here incorrect information about King Augustus III visiting Venice).

especially among tourists flocking to the city in large numbers from almost every corner of Europe. Among these a large group were art lovers from England, their numbers increasing significantly in the first half of the 1730s. Henry Howard, 4th Earl of Carlisle, during his stay in Venice in 1738–1739, commissioned a considerable number of *vedute* from Canal for Howard Castle in Yorkshire. As is supposed, young Bellotto may have been involved in completing even as many as several dozen of them.<sup>12</sup> The title of the most important collector of Venetian art went to Joseph Smith – an English banker and trader, in 1744 appointed British consul to Venice. He was to buy over 50 paintings and almost 150 drawings from Antonio Canal alone.<sup>13</sup>

Paintings from his adolescence show how much Bellotto learned from his uncle – to convey “the depth of shadows and flashes of light in architecture, the cracks and colour variations in walls, the precision of architectural design, and the sparkle and constant movement of water.”<sup>14</sup> As Bożena Anna Kowalczyk noted, Bellotto relied on his uncle’s compositions, but was more rigorous in his treatment of their perspective, thanks to which his works gained the impression of greater depth.<sup>15</sup>

One’s attention is drawn to the dazzling white facades of the palaces in the paintings from the Venetian period. Experts on the subject emphasize that compared to Canal’s paintings, Bellotto’s works reveal greater colour sensitivity and an ability to more boldly manipulate light.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to the use of a broad range of colours, the artist also often hides buildings and their inhabitants in a silvery glow. This skill in capturing the richness of colours is also visible in the way water is rendered, which often has an emerald shade with a sparkling glow, while at other times, waves are almost black and reflections of warm sunlight can be seen only on their edges.<sup>17</sup> While one can often see white added to the paints on his uncle’s canvases, along with a tendency to use pastel colours, Bellotto was more willing to use deep green, browns and red.<sup>18</sup> In some of the paintings, a cold light – typical of Canal’s paintings from the 1730s – is accompanied by a highly detailed rendering of such surfaces as water and walls.<sup>19</sup> Dario Succi, analysing the artist’s own replica of the 1743 *View of Campo Santi Giovanni e Paolo* (National Gallery of Art in Washington; **FIG. 3**), in which patches of deep shadow contrast sharply with the dazzling white facades of houses, wrote that the atmosphere of the painting was a herald of the mood we would see in the views of Gazzada made the following year.<sup>20</sup> The young artist’s individual style is also expressed in the way he shows human figures. In Bellotto’s paintings they are treated very synthetically – we see them as slender and tall, with small heads.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Venice–Houston 2001, p. 50 (B.A. Kowalczyk).

<sup>13</sup> Kozakiewicz 1972, p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Kowalczyk 2001, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Venice–Houston 2001, p. 54 (B.A. Kowalczyk).

<sup>16</sup> See Kowalczyk 2001, pp. 5–7.

<sup>17</sup> Venice–Houston 2001, p. 64 (B.A. Kowalczyk).

<sup>18</sup> Kozakiewicz 1972, vol. 1, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Venice–Houston 2001, p. 78 (Ch. Beddington).

<sup>20</sup> Succi 2011, p. 23. See also: Venice–Houston 2001, p. 60 (B.A. Kowalczyk).

<sup>21</sup> Kozakiewicz 1972, vol. 1, p. 25.



3. Bernardo Bellotto  
*View of Campo Santi  
Giovanni e Paolo*  
1743

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART,  
WASHINGTON, WIDENER COLLECTION

Regarding his painting technique, it should be noted that in Bernardo's works, impasto application of paints can be found much more often than in Canal's paintings.

At the end of 1740 or early 1741, Bellotto went with his uncle to Padua. The result of this trip was, among other things, a series of etchings with the most characteristic views and monuments of that city.<sup>22</sup> In addition to these realistic representations, the artist also composed architectural fantasies – capriccios – in the form of both etchings and paintings. The two painted capriccios in the collection of Museo Civico in Asolo (cat. nos. 6, 7)<sup>23</sup> are dominated by the ruins of ancient buildings depicted in the foreground: the triumphal arch of a portico and the portico of a church, located on the seashore. In the background we can admire magnificent domed churches, inspired by the architecture of Venice's Santa Maria della Salute. His *Capriccio with a View of the Venetian Lagoon* and *Capriccio with the Tower of Marghera* (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery in Bristol; cat. nos. 8, 9) both feature

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23. Drawing studies for some of the etchings preserved in Darmstadt.

<sup>23</sup> Palucchini 1946, pp. 188–189; Kozakiewicz 1972, vol. 1, p. 23; Succi 2001, p. 41.

a particularly unusual atmosphere.<sup>24</sup> These canvases are brightly coloured, filled with a view of broad expanses of water and sky, with just a few slightly hazy figures of fishermen in boats or single silhouettes of people staring out to sea, more reminiscent of dream visions than actual landscapes.

In 1740, Bellotto went to Florence for the first time, where he executed several views of the city at the request of the Marquis Andrea Gerini. *View of the Arno from Vaga Loggia, with the Church of San Frediano in Cestello* and *The Arno Seen from Tiratoio Looking towards Ponte Vecchio* (both in private collections) attributed to the artist by Kowalczyk,<sup>25</sup> show extensive panoramas of the city from different angles. Noteworthy is the *View of Piazza della Signoria* (Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest). This painting shows in detail the surface of the square and the northern and eastern frontages – with the dominant building of Palazzo Vecchio. The painter observed the square from a vantage point in deep shadow at the junction of the western and northern frontages, and was in no way bothered by the fact that the shadow formed a strip – a kind of border at the bottom edge of the painting. A similar deep shadow at the bottom edge had already appeared in Bellotto's earlier work – in his depiction of Venice's Campo Santi Giovanni e Paolo. While painting *View of Piazza della Signoria*, Bellotto did not forego including the scene of the puppet show being performed in the foreground, even though the actors had their backs to the viewer. This is a consequence of the painter's genuine interest in the life of the city, as opposed to simply a desire to present unobstructed streets and buildings, visible in optimal lighting.<sup>26</sup>

In November 1741, Bellotto married Maria Elisabetta Pizzorno (Pizzorni).<sup>27</sup> The following spring, Canal and Bellotto travelled along the River Brenta, executing both sketches and paintings, including views of Mestre and Padua.<sup>28</sup> *View of the Mills in Dolo on the Brenta* (formerly in the Dickinson Gallery in London – New York)<sup>29</sup> is one of those paintings proving that Bellotto was quickly becoming weary of depicting the same places – illuminated Venetian churches and palaces in front of which strolled elegantly dressed dignitaries or foreigners. This time he could devote most of his attention to devices: the sluice and the mills adjacent to it. The artist very accurately depicted the sluice gates, water wheels, and even old mill wheels lying abandoned beneath a wall. Some of the people immortalized here include the personnel working the lock, and millers. Visible in the background are gondolas that could bring tourists interested in this unusual sight. The colour palette is limited, dominated by so-called earth tones. But the lower, whitewashed parts of the modest houses – shown on the left – glow white. It is impossible not to notice that two thirds of the canvas' surface are taken up by a sky full of cirrus clouds and two brightly lit cumulus clouds that are just in the process of forming.

In 1742, Bernardo again visited Florence, this time in the company of his younger brother Pietro, also a painter. Two views, the result of his next visit to the city in 1743, preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge,

<sup>24</sup> See also: Turin 2008, p. 180.

<sup>25</sup> Kowalczyk 2019, particularly pp. 21, 56–60.

<sup>26</sup> See Venice–Houston 2001, p. 86 (B.A. Kowalczyk).

<sup>27</sup> Concerning the circumstances surrounding the marriage – Rottermund 2021, p. 243 (including earlier literature).

<sup>28</sup> Succi 2011, p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> See Venice–Houston 2001, p. 80 (B.A. Kowalczyk).

complement each other: one depicts the river and quays looking towards Ponte Vecchio, and on the other, the opposite direction – towards Ponte alla Carraia (see cat. nos. 10, 11). With characteristic precision, the painter captures the appearance of the town houses with their characteristic bay windows or loggias overlooking the river. But no less impressive is the way he shows the reflection of these buildings on the surface of the water.<sup>30</sup> It is these Florentine *vedute* that reflect the change in Bellotto's presentation of water. While in almost all the views of Venice (where the Grand Canal is visible), as well as in the first view of the Arno (*View of the Arno Looking towards Ponte Santa Trinita*, 1740, Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest), the water's surface is covered with stylized, decorative wavelets, in the aforementioned views from Cambridge, long streaks of light and dark can be seen on the Arno, reflecting more realistically the river's currents and the refraction of light on its surface.

Stefan Kozakiewicz, the artist's biographer, believed that the creation of such a greater number of views of the Tuscan capital was probably influenced by the fact that the local river Arno reminded the painter of Venice's Grand Canal and Canale di Santa Chiara.<sup>31</sup> In the 1740 *View of Piazza San Martino with the Cathedral* (York Art Gallery in York) painted in Lucca, similarly as in the view of the main square in Florence, we can see at the bottom edge a strip of deep shadow. However, the tone of this painting is much brighter. When in the Florentine *vedute* we are shown buildings enveloped in the warm light of the setting sun, the dominating colour here is the white of the stone from which the cathedral was constructed (with the sun illuminating the upper part of its facade) and the plaster covering the buildings on either side.

In May 1742, Bellotto arrived in Rome. It is worth noting that the painting of *vedute* had been popular here since the previous century, and the most famous representatives of the genre were Gaspare Vanvitelli and Giovanni Paolo Pannini. The short time that the artist spent on the Tiber only allowed him to make sketches, on the basis of which he later prepared 20 canvases depicting the monuments of the Eternal City. When painting views of Rome, Bellotto also relied on his uncle's numerous drawings, made during his stay on the Tiber more than two decades earlier. He was no doubt also guided by Canal's tips and advice.<sup>32</sup> It is also assumed that Bellotto used earlier etchings reflecting the topography of the city, e.g. by Hieronymus Cock, Antoine Lafrery, Stefano della Bella, Giovanni Battista Falda, Alessandro Specchi and others.<sup>33</sup>

Bellotto's large format Roman *vedute*, all measuring approximately 86 × 148 cm, were most likely painted in pairs. To the four *vedute* discussed earlier by Kozakiewicz and Bowron<sup>34</sup>: *Piazza Navona* (in a private collection), *The Tiber with Castel Sant'Angelo* (Detroit Institute of Arts in Detroit), *Tiber with Castel Sant'Angelo and the Church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini* (Toledo Museum of Art in Toledo, USA) and *The Capitol with the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli* (Petworth House in Sussex) Carl Villis also added: *Forum Romanum with the Temple of Castor and Pollux* (National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne), *Piazza del Quirinale* (a painting destroyed in a fire in the

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 88, 90 (B.A. Kowalczyk).

<sup>31</sup> Kozakiewicz 1972, vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> See Levey 1991, p. 14. Canal's drawings were published in Baetjer, Links 1989.

<sup>33</sup> Kozakiewicz 1972, vol. 1, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, cat. nos. 64, 65, 77, 79; Bowron 1994, pp. 26–32.