

CALL FOR PAPERS

TINTORETTO AND LANDSCAPE: THEMES AND CONTEXTS

International Study Conference, Venice - October 4-6, 2023

The Venetian Institute of Sciences, Arts and Letters and the Scuola Grande di San Rocco are promoting an interdisciplinary conference on Jacopo Tintoretto and the theme of landscape. The latest of a series of calls aimed at reassessing the painter's work, this project starts from the acknowledgment that the role of landscape in Tintoretto's painting, as well as its critical reception, have not yet received adequate attention. In fact, while Tintoretto's urban scenes and urban landscapes have been repeatedly investigated, the painter has been almost completely excluded from the numerous recent reflections and surveys on 16th-century Venetian and Veneto landscape painting.

Although this issue has been raised at times by the critics, insights appear to be de-contextualised and have not led to in-depth analyses and discussions. This applies, to mention but a few aspects, to the theme of the garden, to the question of Tintoretto's Flemish collaborators, to the hypothesis that rather than painting, Tintoretto "drew with the paintbrush", producing strokes reminiscent of the Danubian School, or even to the *paysage moralisé*. Studies have not reached a synthesis on the various spatial contexts – in the different interplay between natural and anthropic elements – through which Tintoretto organises his narratives. Moreover, Tintoretto's landscape is characterised by extensive generality and complexity. This implies the fact that the environment that inspires his narratives can be considered in relation to both rural and urban contexts. Throughout the *Cinquecento*, a period characterised by profound transformations of the natural landscape, the questions of the perception of these changes, and the relationship between Venice and the mainland, need to be integrated into art-historical reflections.

Ever since J.M.W. Turner's journeys to Italy, British culture has showed an interest in Tintoretto and his rendering of natural elements, an interest that from the late 1840s has developed into an art critical discourse largely indebted to John Ruskin's articulate readings of Tintoretto's works mostly in *Modern Painters 2* (1846) and in the "Venetian Index" of the *Stones of Venice* (1853). Ruskin's views would be later challenged by a line of thought that is well expressed by Ernst Zimmermann's words: "It is quite incomprehensible to me how Ruskin can assert Tintoretto's superiority over Titian in landscape painting. Anyone who has this conception of art would do better not to write about art" (*Die Landschaft in der venezianischen Malerei - bis zum Tode Tizians*, 1893). Exploring these paths may help identify the features and the originality of Tintoretto's vision of landscape, as well as the reasons for this enduring neglect.

This call for papers invites transdisciplinary dialogue and is open to research contributions in the fields of art history and architecture, history, geography, botany, zoology, agronomy, literature, philosophical and religious sciences. Proposals may consider the following lines of research:

1. The mainland and Tintoretto

It has been ascertained that Tintoretto spent most of his time in the city of Venice. However, as an investment, the painter bought some land and a house on the mainland, which may point to his particular attitude towards the countryside, and its spaces and transformations. Therefore, a series of questions arise concerning the way such a point of view affected his representation of the Venetian countryside, and the relationship between cartographic knowledge and landscape painting. Moreover, the relationship that existed between Tintoretto and the world of the *proti* – the architects appointed by the *Procuratori* of the Serenissima – deserves exploring.

2. The Flemish collaborators in Tintoretto's workshop

Like many 16th-century Venetian painters, Tintoretto also had collaborators coming from the North of the Alps. What was their role and how did his workshop contribute to the execution of the landscapes in his paintings in the different periods of the painter's life (including the great work at the Doge's Palaces in Venice and Mantua)?

3. The role of water in Tintoretto's paintings

The element of water occupies a prominent place in Tintoretto's pictorial compositions, and plays an important role even in contexts that do not strictly evoke the lagoon. Water is depicted as moving and shimmering, often lapping against figures and transforming what is 'normally' a path leading the viewer deep into the painting into a flow of water advancing towards the viewer. Is it possible to recognise in this movement an allusion to the Venice lagoon, towards which the rivers of the mainland naturally flow? Within this context, the role of water can be read in relation to historical cartography and in the context of the debate on the lagoon and on river diversion. Animals (fish and birds) are an integral part of the life of the lagoon, which Tintoretto depicts with realism.

4. The construction of space and light – a comparison between urban and rural landscapes

Tintoretto constructs the space of his narrative by often associating heterogeneous natural and anthropic elements. What sort of repertoires does he draw on? What is the role of the ruins that appear in Tintoretto's landscapes, and which sources does he use? How does the narrative relationship between characters and natural space unfold?

5. The theological significance of Tintoretto's landscape

In the rhetorical strategy of Tintoretto's paintings, the theological meaning is always of fundamental importance. By placing sacred scenes in natural settings, Tintoretto interweaves different semantic levels through evocations and symbolic mechanisms, making landscape an essential element to decrypt the painting's theological content. How is this narrative solution actually obtained? Which religious themes are entrusted to the depiction of landscape?

6. Tintoretto and Turner

The influence that the encounter with Tintoretto's paintings had on J.M.W. Turner's work during his trip to Venice requires an in-depth study, following Ruskin's insights set out in the "Venetian Index" of the *Stones of Venice*, which are corroborated by the recent publication of the notebooks of Turner's trip to Rome in 1819 (Moorby, *Copies of Paintings in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, 2010).

7. Tintoretto in the critical literature of the late 19th- and early 20th centuries

The numerous studies on Tintoretto published in the English-speaking world from the end of the 19th century to the first decades of the 20th could not ignore Ruskin's work on the painter. A study of this corpus – possibly including travel literature (from guidebooks to travel fiction and nonfiction) – will help to ascertain the extent of the critic's influence on later criticism, also helping clarify the terms of Ernst Zimmermann's critique that led to the marginalization of Tintoretto in favour of Titian.

Deadlines

- The conference includes papers and posters. Proposals must be sent by **October 15th, 2022** to: **sebastiano.pedrocco@istitutoveneto.it**

Proposals, accompanied by two relevant images and a short bio-bibliographical note, can be written in Italian or English. Maximum length: 500 words.

- Notification of acceptance of proposals: by November 30th, 2022.
- As for the publication of the conference proceedings, texts of a maximum length of 30,000 characters (including spaces and footnotes) must be delivered by October 1st, 2023. The final version must be delivered by November 30th, 2023.

Languages of the conference: Italian and English.