

**Maria Mimita Lamberti**  
**International Exhibitions in Venice (1982)**

**Abstract**

“International Exhibitions in Venice” was written by Maria Mimita Lamberti in 1982 as part of a larger text “1870-1915: i mutamenti del mercato e le ricerche degli artisti” printed in Einaudi’s encyclopedic publication *Storia dell’arte italiana*. The text focuses its attention on the changes that occurred both in the art market system and in artistic expression between 1870 and 1915. Inserted in a companion volume on Italian twentieth-century art, it was intended to provide an understanding of the growing apparatus of exhibitions. The text’s precise use of archival documents combined with its original methodology has ensured that this excerpt continues to be used as a reference for those who study the Venice Biennale. Moreover, Lamberti approaches the Venice Biennale from multiple perspectives, highlighting the important fact that the Biennale is the result of many intercepting actors and forces in its history.

**Keywords**

Venice Biennale, Art Market, Corporazione, International Exhibitions, Critic’s Prize

**Translation from Italian by**

Sonia Hill

**Translator’s note**

To ensure that the text flows easily for non-native Italian speakers, translations have been added in parenthesis. All of the footnotes have been adapted to comply with the *OBOE Journal*’s stylesheet. In the case of archival documentation, the precise indication of boxes and folders has been omitted (as it was in the original text), as has other information, such as page numbers. However, we are able to confirm that all documentation references can be consulted at the Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts of the Venice Biennale (ASAC). References to artists and critics’ names have been maintained in accordance with the author’s style: with a surname and, where applicable, indicating only the initial letter of the first name.

# International Exhibitions in Venice

Maria Mimita Lamberti

## 1. The origins of the Venice Biennale

The idea of giving Venice a permanent exhibition facility originated in a municipal context due to concerns about the city's economy, essentially tied to the tourist industry, and in the awareness of the lagoon city's role as a centre of art and culture, with a colony of artists attracted by Venice's unique characteristics circulating around it.

The crisis regarding the role played by Venice, which suffered from more deterioration in its outlying areas than other cities, had an immediate effect on various layers of society, particularly the group of painters tied to the city by the characteristics of the Venetian school. This school was associated with views and genre scenes of an urban rather than a pastoral variety,<sup>1</sup> often coinciding with images – so successful on foreign markets – of past traditions or of the lively working-class life of the *rii* (small canals) and *calli* (streets) (Giacomo Favretto's successful artistic production is a great example in both cases).<sup>2</sup>

This led to a shared interest in relaunching the legend of Venice, incorporating opportunities for the new contemporary art market within the traditional antiquarian and artisanal fabric, with a view to establishing and motivating artists while also attracting a new form of discerning tourism.<sup>3</sup> As early as

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As a result, the choice of subjects based in Chioggia or the inland areas was seen as revolutionary. As in the case of Luigi Nono or the head of the Ciardi family, Guglielmo. See, *Mostra di Luigi Nono 1850-1918*, exh. cat., ed. Guido Perocco (Sacile: Palazzo Flangini-Biglia, August 1 – September 15, 1964); Guglielmo Ciardi 1842-1917, exh. cat., eds. Luigi Menegazzi and Elena Bassi (Treviso: Ca' da Noal, September 10 – November 6, 1977).

2

The combined presence of themes from modern life and eighteenth-century recollections in the canvases of Favretto, who died in 1887 and was celebrated with particular feeling due to his death coinciding with the national exhibition underway in Venice at the time, is apparent in Molmenti's description of his studio and the eulogy read by Domenico Morelli ("he made Venice admired [...] the Venetian life reflected in his imagination became entirely beautiful"), in Pompeo Molmenti, *Giacomo Favretto* (Rome: A. Malcotti e figlio, 1895).

3

The preface to the catalogue of the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale sums up the objective of the exhibition as follows: "... an international show should attract the public more with the fame of the illustrious foreigners who will be competing there, it will provide all intelligent people who are unable to set off on long journeys with an opportunity get to know and compare the most diverse artistic styles, and it will enrich the intellectual legacy of young local artists, whose minds will be expanded by the work of their fellow artists from other countries", *Prima Esposizione Internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia 1895*, exh. cat., (Venice: Giardini di Castello, April 22 - October 22, 1895), 4.

the Municipal Resolution of April 19, 1893, the project stood out from other similar Italian initiatives (such as the Triennali, held in Milan since 1891 and in Turin since 1896) that were built upon old systems in order to resolve the decline in the quality of the annual shows, held in frenetic succession throughout the peninsula. The promoters drew inspiration from the example set by Munich, which involved a mid-European cultural area that was both geographically and culturally close to that of Venice:

For many years, Munich became an active centre in the art trade thanks to its international exhibition; a centre and school for the numerous artists who set up home there [...]<sup>4</sup>

The exhibition had to capitalise on the incentives it offered artists, that is to say the prizes, which were really profitable investments:

[...] if major exhibitions, periodically repeated, have not always produced lasting advantages for the cities where they were held, that [...] only goes to show that without the enticement of appropriate and well-appointed prizes, upon which the artist can seriously count when embarking upon works worthy of recompense, there is no point hoping for the kind of progress that was once funded by patrons and rich corporations, who spent generously on the fine arts.<sup>5</sup>

Various municipal institutions must have responded generously to this appeal, not least the association of hoteliers,<sup>6</sup> while the consultation committee, composed

half by citizens known for their professed interest in art and for their extensive business experience and the other half by artists freely voted in by their colleagues living in Venice,<sup>7</sup>

came up with the suggestion of an international show (thrown into question by the flop in Rome in 1883), with a high-quality selection process to ensure the exemplary nature of the works on display:

[...] these exhibitions of ours also contribute to its [Venice's] financial growth by attracting many more foreigners and through their ability to gradually turn it [the city] into one of the most important centres in the art market. However, in order to achieve these results, it is important for the Venetian exhibition to have a stamp all of its own, something that makes it really

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Minutes of the Municipal Council of Venice, Resolution of April 19, 1893.

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Ibid.

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The international prizes for 1895 included a prize of 10,000 Lire allocated by the Municipality of Venice, three prizes of 5000 Lire from the government, the province and the Cassa di Risparmio, one prize of 2500 Lire from the Municipality of Murano, to which we can add two national prizes (5000 Lire from the municipalities of Veneto and 1600 Lire from the municipalities of the Province of Venice) and two reserved for Venetian artists (5000 Lire from Prince Giovannelli and 2500 Lire from the teachers' association).

7

Minutes of the Municipal Council of Venice, December 1, 1893. The committee, in addition to the secretary Fradeletto and various artists living in Venice (Bezzi, Dal Zotto, De Maria, Fragiaco, Laurenti, Marsili, Sezanne), also included scholars such as the novelist Castelnuovo, noblemen such as the Count and Senator Papadopoli and various businessmen.

stand out from all those that have followed on from each other in Italy so far. Let's be clear: the public is tired of the usual hodgepodge shows [...] it is indispensable that the sense of awe, exertion, and sometimes even tedium, produced by the jumble of works, is replaced by the firm sense of admiration that a careful and wise selection of exquisitely original works can trigger in us.

This led the committee to come up with two criteria: namely, that the most illustrious painters and sculptors would be directly invited to take part in the exhibition and that a section of it would be reserved for foreign artists.<sup>8</sup>

Having appointed the writer and Member of Parliament Antonio Fradeletto as secretary and Riccardo Selvatico, Mayor of Venice, as chairman, the new organising committee, made up entirely of artists from Venice and incorporating a number of members of the consultation committee,<sup>9</sup> did away with rumours of localism by excluding "artists from Venice, the Veneto or Italian artists living in Venice"<sup>10</sup> from direct invitation. These artists would instead be required to submit their works to the admissions jury. The idea of promoting the show as part of the celebrations to mark the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary of the Italian King and Queen testified to this ambition to make the exhibition a national event, ensuring the presence of the sovereigns in Venice at the height of the social calendar by means of successful publicity and a promotional stroke of genius (there were also plans for discounted railway tickets).

## 2. Venice 1895: the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale

The various sections of the patronage committee for the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale comprised "the most respected names on the European art scene,"<sup>11</sup> seeking a level of prestige that limited the official choice of works to be invited to Venice from the outset. This was also the case for the composition of the committee for the Italian section, whose eight members testified to an attempt to accompany the usual traditional names (Morelli, Maccari, Monteverde) with potential links with the northern European art world (Boldini and Pasini with their Parisian connections, Dell'Acqua who had now moved to Brussels), while Carcano and Michetti featured as the leaders of two

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From the committee report in the Minutes of the Municipal Council of Venice, March 30, 1894.

9

As well as the above mentioned Bezzi, Dal Zotto, Fragiaco, Marsili and Sezanne, the organising committee also included the painters G. Ciardi, L. Nono, Tito and Zezos.

10

See Article 5 of the regulation: "Because of a sentiment that will be easily appreciated, the organising committee is abstaining from sending special invitations to artists from Venice, the Veneto or Italian artists living in Venice, who will therefore have to subject themselves to the verdict of the Admissions Jury", *Prima Esposizione Internazionale*, 11. Despite this scruple, Venetian painters were always favoured both in the admissions process and in sales. For example, at the Biennale in 1899, 61% of the works sold were by Venetian artists, compared to 30% cent by Italian artists and 19% by foreigners, according to the data provided by Ugo Ojetti in "Le quattro esposizioni veneziane," *La Lettura*, I, no. 5 (May 1901): 383.

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Minutes of the Municipal Council of Venice, July 23, 1894. For example, the French section was patronised by Carolus-Duran, Dubois, Henner, Moreau and Puvis de Chavannes, just as the Dutch section included names such as Israels and Mesdag, the German section had Liebermann and Austria-Hungary had Munkácsy; the patronage committee occupied the place of honour in the catalogue, where each member had a photograph next to a brief introduction.

separate artistic areas: Lombardy and the South.<sup>12</sup> What's more, if we look at the geographical distribution of the selected artists, the importance of calibrating the committee according to regional divisions is apparent, despite being overlooked: a national painterly style was yet to arrive, nor did the need for comparison with established European trends raise the average standard much in Italian exhibitions.

As a result, the persistence of peasant scenes and landscapes painted from life dominated the Italian section. It also goes without saying that there were some clumsy attempts at "symbolic" art translated into images of cloying allusiveness: such as the *Parabola (Parable)* by Laurenti (a diptych that features figures representing the different phases of human life as they climb up to a balcony and then descend from it on the other side),<sup>13</sup> or *La Fortuna (Fortune)* by Ettore Tito, a fleshy and blindfolded woman pushing a colossal wheel, with a shabby old woman and a beautiful young mother having been bowled over by it and clinging on to its rim.<sup>14</sup> Giacomo Grosso's *Supremo Convegno (Last Meeting)* spiced up the meanings that could be attributed to an imaginative lament of lovers over the coffin of Don Giovanni with five female nudes in the style of the most risqué salon art, attracting the condemnation of the Patriarch of Venice and clamorous public success.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the popular vote for the conferral of the prize saw Grosso's large painting in first place with 547 votes (out of 2401), far ahead of the 185 votes for the second-place work by Michetti.<sup>16</sup> There were only a very small number of votes for Morbelli's *Per 80 Centesimi (For 80 Cents)*<sup>17</sup> and Segantini's *Ritorno al Paese Natio (Return to the Native Land)*,<sup>18</sup> which both used Divisionism and got two votes apiece,<sup>19</sup> while Previati's *Il Trasporto di una Vergine (Transport of a Virgin)* with its

12

The committee for promoting the Italian section maintained this composition, with the exception of Boldini, Dell'Acqua and Morelli, and with the addition of the sculptor Gallori for the two subsequent Biennali. Only in 1901 was more importance attributed to the admissions jury made up of members elected by the administration and by regional panels elected by the artists: for the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale, however, the admissions jury, with limited duties given the prevalence of invitations, was made up of the painters Carcano and Delleani and by the sculptor Rivalta.

13

The diptych by the painter from Ferrara can be seen in the centre of the room in the photo published in *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, October 13, 1895, no. 41, now photo n. 10 in Giandomenico Romanelli, *Ottant'anni di allestimenti alla Biennale* (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1977); the Latin motto *Celeres gaudentibus horae – afflictis lentae* (time passes slowly for those who are sad, but fast for those who are happy) on the gilded plinth transports the worldly scene into an idealised dimension.

14

The canvas, since destroyed, is described in great detail in the review by Mario Pilo, "L'arte odierna europea alla prima esposizione biennale di Venezia", *La Gazzetta Letteraria* (September 14, 1895): 4.

15

The painting, which was blasphemous because the scene unfolded in a church, led the Patriarch of Venice to ban his flock from visiting the exhibition, while a specific committee of scholars, including Antonio Fogazzaro, Panzacchi and Giacosa, was called upon to decide about the possibility of removing it from public view. For similar but opposing reasons, the canvas was purchased by an American company that intended to send it on a tour of the United States, with a commercial aim that was not unusual at the time. However, the work was lost forever during its long journey across the ocean.

16

F. P. Michetti presented *La figlia di Jorio (The Daughter of Jorio)*, which then went to the Nationalgalerie in Berlin. The subject matter was commented on in the catalogue by a short explanation of the meaning of the scene (the female sinner passing by the idlers as they mock and desire her), with the warning: "It's advisable for viewers to stand at a certain distance from the painting, to grasp the effects that the rough surface destroys entirely when seen close up".

17

Now in the Museo Borgogna, Vercelli.

18

East Berlin, Nationalgalerie.

19

The very interesting information on the counting of the votes can be deduced from the jury's report in *Risultato completo della votazione pel conferimento del premio popolare* (Venice, Archivi ASAC). As regards the popular vote, Grubicy quite rightly observed: "Meanwhile, the voting [...] far from being restricted to two or three days, should start when the exhibition opens, so as to gather many thousands of votes and not those few, easily alterable ones [...]. Notable significance would certainly be added to a work that received several thousand votes when seen by a large crowd of voters. Except that – let's be clear – a test such as this, rather than being considered a measure of the work's aesthetic value, with respect to art and its progressive evolution, should only serve to document the artistic taste of that particular public during the given period [...] The works chosen by the public, rather than being judged, would be converted, for the scholar and for history, into as many judges of public taste". Vittore Grubicy De Dragon, "La giuria e le premiazioni alla 1<sup>a</sup> Esposizione Internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia", *L'Idea Liberale*, no. 37 (1895).

overt idealism got just three votes,<sup>20</sup> as did Sartorio's scholastic tondo – more in the style of Rossetti than Botticelli – the *Madonna degli Angeli* (*Madonna of Angels*).<sup>21</sup> And yet, despite going unnoticed at the Biennale, art that followed the aristocratic line of thought was the only style to find an adequate comparison in a foreign section – the British one – with the works of Burne Jones, Leighton, Millais and Alma Tadema. This was also true of sculpture, both in the Renaissance-revival and academic sense of *Rinascita* (*Rebirth*) by Ximenes,<sup>22</sup> and in the Art Nouveau style of the *Bellezza della Morte* (*Beauty of Death*) by Bistolfi.<sup>23</sup>

Sartorio made the most of the opportunity to write a shrewd and informed review of painting in Britain, which was published in the *Convito*,<sup>24</sup> placing the Pre-Raphaelite movement at the origins of modern art and describing it as a reworking of the Italian formal legacy taken back to nature, within a repertoire leading all the way through to the Venetian sixteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Once again, this line of educated aestheticism and nationalism rooted in the museum, perpetuating the artistic values of tradition and race,<sup>26</sup> would resonate in the words of D'Annunzio, pronounced at the end of the Venetian event and then incorporated with transparent (and heroicising) autobiographism in *The Flame*.<sup>27</sup>

The jury responsible for awarding the prizes, on the other hand, was made up of five art critics, with the only Italian being Adolfo Venturi.<sup>28</sup>

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Better known by the title *I Funerali di una Vergine* (*Funeral of A Virgin*), the canvas, recorded in a Milanese collection in 1927, is reproduced under no. 825 in *Archivi del divisionismo*, ed. Teresa Fiori (Rome: Officina edizioni, 1968).

21

The tondo, reproduced in the catalogue, has a composition and certain iconographic details (such as the unusual age of the child, who is nude but very different from the usual putto) that Michetti perhaps recalls when placing his wife and son Sandro into poses as models for his *L'Offerta* (*The Offer*) of 1896: albeit in a rustic key, the small painting by Michetti responded to the celebratory need of an elegant milieu, catering to the court women who had commissioned it as a gift for Princess Elena. The re-reading of Sartorio's courtly archaism could therefore not be out of place, like certain polishes and small descriptive details similar in style to those of the Pre-Raphaelites (the olive branches, the rich frame of Savoy knots by the Florentine carver Frullini) that make it quite an atypical work for Michetti, placed between the *Daughter of Iorio* and *Gli Storpi* (*The Cripples*).

22

Now in Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna.

23

This plaster sculpture was from the group for the tomb of Ingegner Grandis, Borgo San Dalmazzo (Cuneo).

24

Giulio Aristide Sartorio, "Esposizione di Venezia. Nota sulla pittura in Inghilterra", *Il Convito*, II (1896): LVIII–LXIII.

25

"While Rossetti and Burne Jones immediately recall the Tuscan spirituals, or the classics, the symbolism of Watts appropriates the forms of Venetian decadence" *Ibid.*, LXIII.

26

Sartorio also wrote out an authentic programme: "The return started by the English to the forms of the Italian Renaissance, is logical in a modern way: through the great international exhibitions their collections shine with a light that is so spiritually ours, that we Italians truly have to remind ourselves that this treasure of light has not come from us [...] no moment was ever more propitious than this one to state two things about ourselves: our vitality and our sentiment of effective Italianicity". Giulio Aristide Sartorio, "Nota su D.G. Rossetti pittore", *Il Convito*, IV (1895): 285–286.

27

The discourse, pronounced in October 1895 at the end of the Biennale, was intended by the poet to focus on the work of Michetti, see the letter from D'Annunzio to Manzi transcribed in *Rassegna Italiana*, (June 1932): 500–501. Instead, perhaps influenced by the Venetian conversations with Angelo Conti, it became a hymn to the soul of Venice and the magnificence of its art comprised "between the youth of Giorgione and the old age of Tintoretto", in a symbolic and aestheticising key, as demonstrated by its first title, *L'Allegoria dell'Autunno. Omaggio offerto a Venezia* (*Allegory of the Autumn. Homage to Venice*), and even more so by the reworking of the text in the novel of 1898, where the main character Stelio Effredna improvises that same discourse in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, in the Palazzo Ducale, stating "the ascendant virtue of the ideals handed down from the fathers" before a crowd fascinated and seduced by the Great Creator.

28

In addition to Venturi, the members were Lange from Denmark, Muther from Germany, the art writer Robert de La Sizeranne, chaired by William M. Rossetti from Britain, brother of the Pre-Raphaelite painter. It was therefore a group of writers or art historians, "preferably those who combine a broad education with the most dynamic and lively sense of modernity", according to the memo sent from Fradeletto to the mayor of Venice, July 25, 1895 (Venice, ASAC).

It accepted an equal distribution, without technical preconceptions,<sup>29</sup> unanimously selecting Michetti's large tempera *La Figlia di Jorio* (*The Daughter of Iorio*) for the 10,000 Lire international prize from the Municipality of Venice and Segantini's *Il Ritorno al Paese Natio* for the government prize of 5000 Lire.<sup>30</sup> This rightly reiterated the European standard of these two artists, who had already made names for themselves abroad (it is significant that both canvases found buyers on the German market),<sup>31</sup> although the interpretation of the two works is very dated in Venturi's report. Indeed, the series of studies of heads and the very layout of Michetti's painting, which used photographic framing, revealed the artist's research into moving figures and the crisis taking place in painting, and was betrayed by the dry and thorny technique, which was new to the artist, going well beyond the "human drama rendered with sincerity and immense realistic power" mentioned by the jury.<sup>32</sup> While the report describes Segantini's painting as an "elegy for very tender simplicity" that "renders the nature of things with both care and vigour through its lines," moving away from painterly details towards an illusionistic rendering, moreover distorted by the poor positioning of the work,<sup>33</sup> Segantini on the other hand, in a letter to his wife, attributed an almost magical value to it, perceiving it as a necessary step between visual reality and ideal message, through the total engagement of the viewer.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. The critics' prize in 1897

The Venice Biennale's organising committee should be credited with modernising exhibition techniques, starting with the empiricism of the attempts to publicise the initiative year after year. While the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale attracted considerable numbers

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Grubicy defended the workings of the jury against the accusations made by Macchi, observing that the prizes as a whole did justice to the various contemporary technical trends, "to the detriment of the aesthetic criteria of the highest nature", Grubicy, *La giuria e le premiazioni*, 12.

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The other three international prizes went to a pastel by Liebermann, to the Danish Paulsen, and to Whistler for *The Little White Girl* of 1868. The two national prizes went to the marble *Derehitta* (*Destitute*) by Trentacoste (Trieste, Museo Revoltella) and to the *Ritratto della Signorina E. [rrazuriz]* (*Portrait of Miss E. [rrazuriz]*) by Boldini (Paris, formerly in the Collection of M. Rothschild) – Boldini actually refused the prize that was for just 1600 Lire. The Venetian artists picked by the jury were Fragiaco, with the painting *Tristezza* (*Sadness*), and Silvio Rotta, for *Morocomio* (*Madhouse*) (Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna).

31

*La Figlia di Jorio*, purchased by Count Blanc, German ambassador, for 22,222 Lire, was sent, according to Jacobitti, to Dusseldorf; it ultimately entered the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, before being returned to Italy during the Fascist era. It is now in the provincial council chamber of Pescara. The painting by Segantini, purchased by the Berlin businessman Koenigs for 10,000 Lire, entered the same German public collection in 1901.

32

See Marina Miraglia, *Francesco Paolo Michetti fotografo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975) plates 32–34, and in the text "[...] the main figure of the *Daughter of Iorio*, [...] that of Mila of Codro, whose first intuition was triggered by an instant camera, is checked photographically in the studio with a skilful recording operation that stops the movement of the walking figure, freezing it into a posed photograph", (29). Vittorio Pica also noticed, cursing it, the use of the instant camera for the "jumping movement of the feet" of Milan in the painting by Michetti, in Vittorio Pica, *L'arte europea a Venezia* (Naples: Pierrro, 1895), 150.

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Segantini complained of this in a letter to Pellizza (May 23, 1895): "I am on my way back from Venice, where I was able to observe the ugly trick played upon us with our keys of red and blue, and the unique placement in the exhibition, because of the light radiating on the painting and the lack of space to see", in *L'opera completa di Segantini*, eds. Francesco Arcangeli and Maria Cristina Gozzoli (Milan: Rizzoli, 1973), 188.

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From an undated letter to his wife, written before the painting was sent to Venice: "I believe that charm that I am trying to convey through the work, capturing the mind of the onlooker through the eyes, so that he no longer thinks of himself and his affairs, but stands there absorbed, thinking about ideals, can found here, more than in any of my earlier works, because I observed the effort made by those who saw it to tear their eyes away from it". Ibid.

of journalists,<sup>35</sup> the primary role played by the press as a means of advertising was recognised the following year by offering a prize for the best critical studies. The initiative, which led to articles and books being written on the Biennale, also helped to improve the quality of the contributions, resulting in the new figure of the contemporary art critic, until then recruited on an occasional basis from among reporters, scholars and those in the sector and employing a mixture of languages and judgements borrowed primarily from literary criticism.

The big names included in the jury of 1897, tasked with presenting a prize to contemporary art critics, reflected the disparity of interests to which the new discipline was to be linked: Corrado Ricci was a classical art historian, Enrico Panzacchi was a university professor of literature and Camillo Boito was a legend who had gone from architecture to defending the arts in the columns of the *Nuova Antologia* and in government committees. This authoritative and steady committee soon found that it was necessary to pinpoint exactly what should be expected of a critic, precisely because of the low standard of the journalism to be examined, the disparity of the judgements of taste and the sloppy style.<sup>36</sup> The ideal standard established by the jury countered all this with its theory of educated and balanced criticism, versed in good writing and aware of the educational objective. In fact, it recalled

that the most esteemed and widely read critics, both among us and abroad, have always been those who, not content purely with educating the eye, have succeeded in endowing themselves with a broad wealth of historical, philosophical and literary knowledge, so as to combine technical authority with the higher authority of thinkers and the more genial authority of writers.<sup>37</sup>

This strategy, modelled on the canons of good education,<sup>38</sup> revealed the rejection of all militant criticism that supported a specific school or artistic movement, thus targeting the very heart of the contemporary issue: critics should not side with artists or enter into disputes, but instead educate the public with calm and composed judgement, in keeping with great and noble principles. On the basis of these criteria, the prize went to Primo Levi who, writing under the transparent pseudonym, L'Italico, had sought to align the examination of schools of art with traditional characteristics of ethnic/historical culture, in an evident proposal of national and – in the case of Italy – regional values.<sup>39</sup> The younger Ojetti and Pica,

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According to the report produced by the press committee, the journalists present at the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale could be broken down as follows: 77 local reporters, 95 Italian and 28 foreign correspondents, 180 Italian journalists and 34 foreign journalists. These figures led to the conclusion: "There were therefore five hundred newspapers that covered the event, not just with brief mentions, but with repeated critical articles, written by competent authors" (Venice, ASAC).

36

"Reading such a large number of articles and books, not repaid on the majority of occasions by much novelty or sharpness of observation, proved long and tiresome, just as it was an arduous task to pick the candidates for the prize, as there was not a clear-cut difference between eminent critics and other mediocre and poor ones. The degrees of merit, which in some cases were very slight, meant that we were perplexed for some considerable time about the relative value of the best", *Relazione della giuria pel conferimento dei premi ai migliori studi critici sulla II Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia* (Jury's Report, Venice ASAC, 1897): 3.

37

Ibid.: 4.

38

"Nor, ultimately, have we overlooked one aspect of criticism itself, which can be described as *moral*, namely politeness. The shocking mockery for those who have worked albeit mediocrally, rude censorship, public offence for many artists who have applied themselves to the quest for an idea and a beauty that escaped them or have fallen before infinite difficulties, demonstrate a presumption to which we do not intend to acquiesce even indirectly [...] Even worse when discourtesy is used against artists who have managed, through long and conscientious work, to acquire great fame". Ibid.

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Primo Levi won the prize of 1500 Lire with the two introductory articles published in the *Tribuna di Roma* and with the reviews for the *Nazione di Firenze* and the *Giornale di Sicilia* of Palermo. Ibid., 8.

with their modernist tendencies, had to content themselves with joint second prize, although the jury acknowledged the former's pleasing style and "sense of modernity" in his interpretation of symbols and psychological aspects,<sup>40</sup> while in the case of the latter the prize was awarded for his accurate historical information.<sup>41</sup> However, Pica was stigmatised for his desire to place himself on the front line, following the northern European model of critics who took sides against the public and defended innovative artists such as the Impressionists (whom Pica himself would promote years later at the Biennale with persistent publicity, which was opposed and ignored).<sup>42</sup> This was precisely what he was reproached for in the name of a professor-like criticism, *au dessus de la mêlée*:

Pica has the aristocratic preconception, so to speak. He likes to feel he belongs to the "small number of art connoisseurs, so often destined to disagree with the majority of the public." This stripping of all value from the popular sentiment, generally loyal to styles from the past or those that have been in use for some time, is one of the causes of his excessive readiness to orient himself towards the most new and unexpected formulas. More than anything else, [he] is fascinated by attempts at novelty and daring [...] nor can we support him when he shows that he attributes no importance to the *novelistic, poignant, sentimental* subject, thus separating art excessively from life, almost always restricting himself to examining the way in which life is pictorially felt and represented. Let's be clear: criticism has to keep itself far removed from inopportune digressions and rhetoric, but it also has to show itself to be a work of art in some way.<sup>43</sup>

In reality, as well as a specific lack of preparation (as noted by the jury's spokesperson in 1899, Adolfo Venturi),<sup>44</sup> criticism also faced the problem of identifying a target audience to address, using less generic channels of information and adopting more accurate recording methods for verbal transpositions. A typical example of this new means of circulation in Italy was *Emporium* magazine (1895 onwards),

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The articles published by Ugo Ojetti in the *Resto del Carlino* were collected together in the book *L'arte moderna a Venezia*, Voghera 1897. *Ibid.*, 10.

41

"The reviews by Mr Vittorio Pica, which appeared in the *Marzocco di Firenze*, the *Pungolo parlamentare* of Naples and *La Vita Italiana* of Rome, and collected in the book *L'arte mondiale a Venezia* (Naples: Pierro, 1897), are generally sincere and coherent. He also shows himself, more than any other, accurate and orderly in his historical information". *Ibid.*, 11. A more hagiographical than critical profile for Pica was written by Ugo Piscopo, *Vittorio Pica. La proto avanguardia in Italia* (Naples: Cassitto, 1982).

42

The most widely discussed chapter in Pica's book is in fact the one entitled "Impressionists, Divisionists and Synthetists", which substantially reused a text from 1883, borrowed from Huysmans and Zola; for the account of Pica's promotion of French Impressionism see Maria Mimita Lamberti, "Vittorio Pica e l'impressionismo in Italia," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, series III, V, no. 3 (1975): 1149–1201.

43

Jury's Report: 11–12.

44

"But the lack of preparation is huge [...] as revealed by many erroneous references to art of the past and the inaccurate recollections of historical works. The primary foundations are therefore lacking, without which it is impossible to immediately grasp modern aspirations; one hears but does not understand the language of art. We say this because of the wish for critics to rise to the heights targeted by art, to accompany it fraternally and embrace it in an indissoluble bond with the public". *Relazione della Giuria pel conferimento dei premi ai migliori studi critici sulla III Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia* (Jury's Report, Venice, ASAC, 1899). The jury of 1899, made up of E. Ferrari, P. Molmenti and A. Venturi awarded first prize to Ugo Fleres, second to Diego Angeli and joint third prize to Ojetti, Pica and Thovez).

which entrusted the success of its educational formula to the excellent quality of its illustrations.<sup>45</sup> However the underlying problem of contemporary criticism regarded relations with artists who were aware of changes to the traditional structure (in which the critic, according to a text by Boito, had to put himself forward as a “middleman” between the artist-producer and the public-consumer).<sup>46</sup>

Precisely because of the growing importance of the different means of publicising figurative culture, the argument put forward by artists attacked critics as manipulators who built a barrier between artworks and the public, while their progressive change of role, from artisans to scholars, provided artists with the tools they needed to state their intentions themselves, drafting programmes and manifestos.

The risk faced by traditional critics, as interpreted by the Venetian jury, was one of effectively being superseded. Ugo Ojetti proposed responding to this in 1901, when he wrote his decalogue of the *Diritti e Doveri del Critico d'Arte Moderna (Rights and Duties of the Modern Art Critic)*:<sup>47</sup> illustrating the changing times, it is significant to note that this text, purged of the harshest attacks against artist-critics, also featured in the report on the critics' prize at the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennale, which was written by Ojetti himself in 1903. The mediation of critics, enriched by a psychological sensibility for the individual-artist, has to go beyond technical renewal, using “gentle affability” to convince the public of the need for art in society, “knowing that the notion of beauty is relative and necessary, not freely chosen.”<sup>48</sup> It has to guarantee the validity of figurative research on a social level, subtracting it from the autistic partiality of the specific language in a clear-cut break with common taste.

Artist-critics paradoxically recalled, in their most abstract structures, exponents of positivist criticism, from Pilo to Morasso,<sup>49</sup> as a means to immediately place their own work into a sociological background and historical perspective.<sup>50</sup>

45

On the success of *Emporium*, based on the British *The Studio*, one of the many accounts in a letter from the young Cena to the painter Anton Maria Mucchi, dated January 1896: “As regards the *Emporium*, it's a beautiful magazine. I bought several issues and I count on getting all of last year when I can. Beautiful reproductions of British painters”, Giovanni Cena, *Opere*, vol. V: “Lettere scelte” (Turin: Edizioni L'impronta, 1929), 27. Vittorio Pica became editor of *Emporium* in 1900, giving it a moderate modernist line with the notes entitled “Contemporary artists” and its interesting features on European graphics.

46

“[...] whereas in every kind of negotiation an understanding between two people – the producer and the consumer – is required, almost always involving a third party, the broker; whereas, in our case, the producer is the artist, the consumer the buyer, who is a member of the public, and the broker the critic, showing off the quality of the goods to the public; in consideration of all this, who is it who does not see how the disagreement of tendencies between the artist, critic and public must necessarily produce the effect of stagnation in the art trade”. Camillo Boito, “La mostra nazionale di Belle Arti in Venezia”, *Nuova Antologia*, series III, XII, no. 21 (November-December 1887): 53.

47

“The work of art today is, between the artist and the viewer, simply the needle on a set of scales: in one dish is everything that the artist has seen, felt, thought, wanted [...] in the other dish, that which the capable viewer sees, feels and thinks before that given work of art [...] The weight, the measurement, the needle on the set of scales do not indicate anything on their own: terms of comparison are required – that is to say the soul of the creator and the mind of the viewer. The basis of modern art criticism – from the sociological criticism of Taine and then of Guyau to the specifically psychological criticism of Hennequin – lies here”. Ugo Ojetti, “Diritti e doveri del critico d'arte moderna”, *Nuova Antologia*, series IV, XCI, no. 720 (December 16, 1901): 734.

48

From the *Relazione della Giuria pel conferimento dei premi ai migliori studi critici sulla V Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia* (Jury's Report 1903, Venice ASAC): 4. The jury was formed by Giacosa, Molmenti and Ojetti, and awarded the prizes to De Frenzi, Soulier and the young Sarfatti.

49

Mario Pilo, lecturer in aesthetics in Bologna and author of various positivist essays, reviewed the Biennale in the *Gazzetta Letteraria* but never wanted his essays to be included in the competition. Mario Morasso, mentioned in 1899 and winner of second place in 1901 behind Pica, collected his writings published in *Marzocco* in the book entitled *La Vita Moderna nell'Arte* (Turin: Fratelli Brocca Editore, 1904), applying an aesthetic theory that heroicised modernity to the Biennale of 1903.

50

The derivation of futurist dictates from Pilo and Morasso, primarily apparent in the writings of Boccioni, deserves a separate discourse, after the initial contributions from Sanguineti and Bergman; a useful contribution to this regard is Virgilio Vercelloni, *Macchinolatria and modernolatria di Mario Morasso* (Bologna: Centro Duchamp, 1972).

#### 4. The organisation of artists at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennale.

In 1897, the Venetian jury, accused by Segantini of being “falsely international”,<sup>51</sup> had multiplied the awards, splitting the large sums between several artists. However, given the lack of any works that really stood out, the joint prize proposed by Boldini had helped to keep a bigger number of competitors happy, with underlying favouritism for the Venetians who, on paper, had reserved only the Liebermann prize for themselves, unlike what had happened at the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale.<sup>52</sup> Competing against Italians and foreigners, the Venetians Tito, Milesi, Marsili and Zezzos (the latter two were also members of the exhibition organising committee) all won awards, as if to validate their qualification as a school on a European level.<sup>53</sup>

While such unanimity did not seem free from favouritism, the second suggestion from the prize jury, namely the conversion of the prizes into purchases “to the benefit of national and local art galleries,”<sup>54</sup> during the very year that Prince Giovannelli’s donation founded the Galleria d’Arte Contemporanea in Venice,<sup>55</sup> was destined to revive the dispute on the Italian art scene. Without this premise it is impossible to understand the changes in the Biennale’s regulations for 1899 and the entire matter of the *Corporazione dei Pittori e degli Scultori Italiani* (Guild of the Italian Painters and Sculptors), which exploded like a bomb in January of that year.<sup>56</sup>

After an underground intrigue, a certain number of Italian artists, concerned about the lack of international resonance being achieved by national representatives (especially because of imminent preparations for the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1900), formed an association complete with a statute containing fourteen articles, “for the purpose of giving more drive to the Italian art

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51

So claims the letter sent by Segantini to the Venetian committee and published in the *Gazzetta degli artisti* II, no. 34 (September 1, 1897), in the “Tribuna degli artisti” column; in the text, Segantini discussed the representative nature of the nominated artists M. Rico, Van der Stappen, Jerace and Boldini, particularly attacking the spokesperson, Marco Calderini.

52

In 1895, two prizes were awarded to Venetians: the 5000 Lire prize from Prince Giovannelli and the 2500 Lire prize from the teachers’ association, while the prize founded by the painter Liebermann for 1897 was for 2500 Lire.

53

The 10,000 Lire prize from the Municipality of Venice was split between Ettore Tito for *Sulla Laguna* (*On the Lagoon*) and Milesi for *Lo Sposalizio* (*The Marriage*), while the *Età Felice* (*Happy Age*) group by the sculptor Marsili shared the 5000 Lire government prize with Zorn. Zezzos was awarded the international prize of 2500 Lire from the Municipality of Murano. The Liebermann prize, reserved for Venetians, instead went to V. Bressanin. The only Italian prize winners from outside Venice that year were the sculptor Romagnoli (with half of the 5000 Lire from the Cassa di Risparmio) and the painter Antonio Mancini, who received 1600 Lire from the municipalities in the province of Venice (the same prize rejected by Boldini the previous year).

54

“The advisability of converting the form of recompense in the future, from a prize to a purchase, to the benefit of national and local art galleries, where the honour of the distinctions received would be much more lasting and ever more evident, while the juries would also be freed from the thankless task of establishing almost categories and degrees of merit”, specifying that “the Jury believes that this progress in the nature of the recompenses would also be in the interest of future shows, with many renowned artists perhaps being more inclined to take part, who currently abstain in consideration of the prizes themselves, not being willing to suffer the fate”. *Relazione della Giuria per le premiazioni*, (Jury’s Report, August 6, 1897, Venice, ASAC).

55

The letter with which Prince Giovannelli expressed his wish for the foundation of a contemporary art gallery in Venice, donating a collection of artworks to it, including *Fioritura Nuova* (*New Blossom*) by Laurenti, was published in the *Gazzetta degli artisti* I, no. 27 (May 15, 1897).

56

The entire affair of the *Corporazione*, which was almost an early trade union but run by a group of already established artists, has not yet been studied. The only source that sums up the matter is the anonymous article “L’arte italiana e la *Corporazione degli artisti*”, *Nuova Antologia*, 164, no. 653 (March 1899): 146–166.

movement and upholding the country's traditions."<sup>57</sup> The regulations tended to ensure a uniform public presence, while not aspiring to a school style, and included strict common rules about the registration of new members:<sup>58</sup> the association may have been inspired by the Secession<sup>59</sup> or the *Champ de Mars* exhibition organised by Meissonier as an antithesis to the Salon.<sup>60</sup> However, in addition to its typical mediaeval-style flavour,<sup>61</sup> the Italian *Corporazione* did not so much aspire to hold its own autonomous exhibitions as to exert an influence over public exhibitions, proposing its collective works as a unit and banning members from taking part in exhibitions that ruled out this request.<sup>62</sup> The first paragraph of the statute declared this intention:

The *Corporazione* participates collectively in all major exhibitions of fine arts held in Italy and outside, if the exhibition committees grant it all those moral and material facilitations that it will be opportune to request for the purpose of developing the restorative concept conceived by the *Corporazione*.<sup>63</sup>

The names of the first members, elected in an almost clandestine fashion from lists drawn up after the exhibition in Turin in 1898, also included numerous Venetians, while Venice was home to the central board (assigned to Bezzi, Tito and Marius

57

The statute was sent in the form of a press release to various newspapers; we find them, for example, published in their entirety by Guglielmo Ferrari, "Corporazioni dei pittori e degli scultori," *La Stampa*, January 11, 1899. Ferrari, who like most critics was hostile to the initiative, also criticised the "title page of the statute, printed with sixteenth-century affectation", while the anonymous article writer of the *Nuova Antologia* complained about the "heavy shower of apostrophes and ironies, that held nothing back, not even the beautiful etching reproducing the Leonardesque symbol of perfect balance, which acts as a frieze for the statute of the *Corporazione*, with a motto of resistance and battle *hostinato rigore*" (*L'arte italiana*, 147).

58

While the articles of the association underscored that "the *Corporazione* can, and indeed wishes, to increase the number of its members," the seventh paragraph specified "any artist who [...] with one or more works has demonstrated his unique artistic merit can aspire to join". The acceptance proposal had to be signed by three members and approved with 4/5 votes. An interesting example is the proposal put forward in 1900 by Bistolfi, delegate of the *Corporazione*, to Morbelli and Pellizza, who did not achieve membership (Fiori, *Archivi del divisionismo*, 159)

59

So much so that "the most authoritative artists of the German Secession, Liebermann, Stuck, Uhde", who "had perceived the similarity of the Italian movement with what had already taken place in their country, although they failed to discern all the mistakes that made ours less broad and less practical," sent a warm greeting to the *Corporazione* (*L'arte italiana*, 159).

60

The French example was cited in the letter of defence from Gustavo Uzielli, "La *Corporazione* dei Pittori e Scultori italiani", *Il Marzocco* III, no. 51 (January 22, 1899).

61

The example of the medieval guild, understood as a last supper of the pure, transpires in particular in the fifth paragraph of the statute: "If due to chance conditions of the spirit any member of the *Corporazione* should produce a work inferior to his own qualities and to his artistic means, it will be the duty of the other members to advise him, for his own dignity and for the good of the *Corporazione*, not to submit said work to the exhibition for which it was intended".

Thus it was realistically commented on in the *Nuova Antologia*, see *L'arte italiana*, 153–154: "Certainly whoever formulated or suggested the article, is not a vulgar spirit. Although dictated in an Italian that cannot exactly be described as fifteenth-century, it would seem to have been conceived by some amorous compulsive reader of the papers of the good century. That advice, sincerely given and docilely received, that presumed abdication to the most legitimate outpourings of love in obsequence to a common ideal, [...] recalls the heartfelt humility to which the articles of association of certain ancient brotherhoods aspired".

62

See Article 2 of the statute, in the unabridged text, published with great aplomb in a full page spread in the *Gazzetta degli artisti* IV, no. 84, (January 7, 1899).

63

Ibid.

Pictor):<sup>64</sup> hence the first discontent in the lagoon city, where those excluded from the *Corporazione* immediately founded an even more fleeting *Associazione degli Artisti Italiani* (Association of the Italian Artists).<sup>65</sup> It also led to concerns regarding a mafia-style manoeuvre designed to institutionalise national artistic supremacy in Venice.<sup>66</sup> The hostile response from Florentine artists published in the *Marzocco*, which even saw an open letter from V. Corcos to Minister Baccelli,<sup>67</sup> described the initiative as follows:

We believe this is the first time that some artists who declare themselves to be excellent have come together to form a league of resistance, like humble workers, not for the triumph of any particular ideal (because the names of the sect members indicate diverse and even opposing styles), but in order to exercise a kind of boycott on the exhibition market.<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, with the forced resignations of *Corporazione* members from the admissions jury,<sup>69</sup> the administration of the Biennale had to take responsibility for the exhibition, stating that not only the *Corporazione*, but also the Roman group *In Arte Libertas*, could exhibit in their own rooms with their own person in charge of the display.<sup>70</sup>

64

Alongside the entirely Venetian central council, the *Corporazione* delegates were Bistolfi, Boldini, Carcano, Morelli, Sartorio and Trentacoste. The list published as a note in the *Nuova Antologia* included thirty-four names of painters and sixteen of sculptors, all of a certain reputation but of very different styles, as demonstrated by the names of Signorini and Tito Lessi among the Tuscans. Twelve artists did not accept the nomination, while four, including Morelli, resigned after accepting it. The indecision of Segantini was significant, and after an acceptance snatched from him by Fradeletto (see the letter, December 31, 1898, in Fiori, *Archivi del divisionismo*, vol. I, 381–382), which came second to his various European commitments, he dissociated himself from the *Corporazione* with a letter published in the *Marzocco* where he compared the fears aroused in him by that enterprise with the hope for a different “impulse to unite strong and innovative souls,” calling upon “young brothers” from all over Italy who “in the sign of love and ideal brotherhood” given by the study of nature, would become “the primitive spirits of the new art” (Giovanni Segantini, “Una lettera”, *Il Marzocco*, III, no. 52, January 29, 1899).

65

The signatories of the circular of January 5, 1899, with which a permanent association for exhibitions was to be founded as opposed to the *Corporazione*, were all Venetians, from Bortoluzzi to Chitarin, Dal Zotto, U. Nono, see *Gazzetta degli artisti* IV, no. 84 (January 7, 1899): 2. The *Associazione* wrote its charter on January 12, emphasising its willingness to help “young people who have intellect and love of art” (no. 86, January 21, 1899), but ended up renouncing exhibiting in Venice in a separate room “thus putting itself on an equal footing with all Italian artists” (no. 87, January 28, 1899); linked to the contingent and functional occasion purely as a response to the *Corporazione*, the *Associazione* disappeared without a trace.

66

“The new Congregation may aim to obtain a good place at the next Exhibition in Venice to assert Italian art in the face of foreign art, and the Exhibition Committee will nod, but [...] thus] any other Exhibition in Italy will be demolished in order to concentrate all Italian artistic movement at the biennials [...] Now it seems to us that if Venice wanted the primacy of the arts, it could have obtained it with ordinary means [...]” (Ferrari, “Corporazioni”: 2). Stella, still in favour of the *Corporazione*, recalled instead how it had been “conceived by non-Venetian artists” after the Turin Exhibition of 1898, and how Venice found itself “occasionally, and for its next exhibition” to be “the field in which the battle has taken place” (*Gazzetta degli artisti*, IV, no. 86, January 21, 1899).

67

*Il Marzocco* III, no. 51 (January 22, 1899).

68

From the editorial “La *Corporazione* dissolvitrice”, *Il Marzocco*, no. 50 (January 15, 1899).

69

Resignations were handed in by Fragiaco, Rotta, De Stefani, Bezzi, Ciardi and Marsili, in compliance with a current of opinion set out in an editorial, “Per l’arte solo” (*Il Marzocco*, no. 52, January 29, 1899), with very explicit accents: “Much can be given to the malicious to quibble about when it is known that the great majority of the artists belonging to the Exhibition Organising Committee are members of the *Corporazione*, which was founded precisely the year in which the prizes were taken away, and those sums set aside for purchases [...] and that many members of the *Corporazione* and members of the Committee almost have the fate of the Exhibition in their hands because of having been abroad to invite the most illustrious artists, and therefore being in direct communication with them”.

70

As regards the complex structure of the display committee, the result of an evident compromise, see *Terza Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte della Città di Venezia. Catalogo illustrato*, exh. cat., (Venice: Giardini di Castello, April 22 - October 31, 1899).

The admissions jury, reduced to three foreign members,<sup>71</sup> therefore felt the need to explain its free and impartial workings in a letter dated April 7, published at the beginning of the catalogue: it referred to the new regulations, especially Article 11 that said the decision had to be based “never on the technical style of the work, but on its intrinsic value”. The works accepted by the jury (176 out of 571, that is to say around 31% of the works submitted) had to be marked by an asterisk in the catalogue to distinguish them from works by invited artists.<sup>72</sup> In actual fact, the *Corporazione*'s rooms did not stand out from the average production of the time, despite the ambitious statute seeming to oblige their members to produce masterpieces,<sup>73</sup> and especially because the most prestigious *Corporazione* members, such as Michetti and Sartorio, exhibited separately in the new “solo shows” established from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale onwards.

Alongside the Favretto retrospective and the room devoted to Lenbach, Michetti's solo show featured around 200 studies. With the exception of the painting *L'Offerta (The Offer)*,<sup>74</sup> these were all works that had been sold *en masse* to the German businessman Ernst Seeger<sup>75</sup> and already exhibited in Berlin and Vienna.<sup>76</sup> The collection testified to around twenty years of work by the painter who, having emptied his workshop for the sum of around 300,000 Lire so as to ensure his wealth,<sup>77</sup> ended up abandoning painting after the failure of the *Storpi (Cripples)* and the *Serpi (Serpents)*, prepared feverishly for the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900.<sup>78</sup> Michetti's exhibition could therefore not be anything other than a predictable success with the public and, if it was repetitive, it also marked the breaking point between one of the few internationally successful artists and the Italian system of the market and the institutions. This break was also marked by the absence of Segantini.

In the other Italian solo show, Sartorio (who also had two pastels in the In Arte Libertas room) presented forty-eight drawings and pastels, together with the triptych *Le Vergini Savie e le Vergini Stolte (The Wise Virgins and the Foolish Virgins)*<sup>79</sup> and the huge diptych *La Gorgone e gli Eroi. Diana d'Efeso e gli Schiavi (The Gorgon and the Heroes. Diana of Ephesus and the Slaves)*.<sup>80</sup> The triptych, in the elaborate carved frame, produced between 1891 and 1893 for Count Primoli,

71

C. Meunier from Belgium, J. Lavery from Great Britain and F. Thaulow from Norway.

72

See *Terza Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, 11–13.

73

So said the editorial of the *Gazzetta degli artisti* (IV, no. 94, March 18, 1899,) adding that “the *Corporazione*'s charter has remained a dead letter”. After the exhibition opened, the name changed to the less ambitious “*Corporazione di pittori e scultori italiani*” (Guild of (and not of the) Italian painters and sculptors), thereby doing away with the claim that it represented Italian art as a whole. The organisation gradually faded away, after refusing to exhibit at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900 and its lukewarm success at the exhibition in Munich (for which we know that Fattori also joined. See Gino Damerini, “La critica della critica”, *Gazzetta degli artisti* VI, no. 12 (July 30, 1900).

74

Owned by the princes of Naples, see footnote 21.

75

Ernst Seeger, a businessman from Berlin who had purchased all the material in Michetti's studio in 1896, enjoyed excellent relations with the Biennale, as demonstrated by the loan of his collection of Japanese objects exhibited in Venice in 1897 (*Catalogo illustrato*, 84–86).

76

See *Gemälde und Studien von Francesco Paolo Michetti*, exh. cat., (Berlin, December 21, 1898 – January 31, 1899) and with the same title, Vienna, February 12, 1899.

77

Its sale as a block for 300,000 Lire was commented on as follows by Michetti to Ojetti: “You will find there [in Berlin] all my work of twenty years. The walls, the crates, the tables of my studio are empty. *I'm starting again from scratch*”. Ugo Ojetti, *Francesco Paolo Michetti e la mostra di Berlino*, 518.

78

The two large temperas, painted over the course of one month, were not liked in Paris, although for reasons of opportunity Michetti won the gold medal (like Balestrieri, Joris, Morbelli, Morelli and Tito). On these two works see Michele Biancale, “*Le serpi e gli storpi* di Francesco Paolo Michetti”, *Bollettino d'arte del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione* (May 1927): 481–507.

79

Now in Rome, Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna. For a brief account of the painting see the catalogue *Da Canova a De Carolis* (Rome 1978), 79–80.

80

Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna.

marked a “farewell to the Pre-Raphaelite faith”,<sup>81</sup> as was also apparent in the elegant aristocratic *senhal* (various Roman noblewomen had posed for the painting, including Maria di Gallese D’Annunzio) and in the link with the sophisticated patron who had chosen the subject matter as a wedding gift. The diptych, on the other hand, was, as the artist later recalled, “the result of his duel with classical art”,<sup>82</sup> developed during his visits to European museums and completed in Weimar where Sartorio had taught for the last four years. “Fatally attracted by the forms of the Italian Renaissance”,<sup>83</sup> the author had

intended to mythically express two aspects of the profound vanity of human existence. On the one hand is the Gorgon, who has the captivating form of Beauty and is Life and Death at the same time, because she creates and beats heroes. On the other is Diana of Ephesus, of the hundred breasts, as the nourisher of men and their fantasies. “Men, says the poet, are made of the same substance as their dreams”, and they are represented here as sleeping, holding the symbols of their ambitions in their hands.<sup>84</sup>

The design was openly symbolist, aiming to propose a heroic myth in classical forms once again, looking to the Renaissance “in the same way that Renaissance artists were attracted by classical art”,<sup>85</sup> and that is to say with a strong contemporary presence (unlike Pre-Raphaelite nostalgia). While critics, from Pilo to Angelo Conti,<sup>86</sup> appreciated Sartorio’s extraordinary talent as a draughtsman but judged the work to be fragmented and blurred, praise instead came from the Superior Council of Fine Arts that purchased the painting and preparatory studies for the Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna in Rome, causing ripples. Partly because of the vast size of the two canvases, official favour for Sartorio’s new style seemed to lead to future government commissions, just as Conti had hoped that “in the future, for the chosen artists” there would not just be the usual exhibitions, “but commissions for large decorative art”.<sup>87</sup>

The subsequent large cycles by Sartorio, such as the decorations for the exhibitions in Milan and Venice<sup>88</sup> and the frieze in Parliament,<sup>89</sup> responded to this hope for a Renaissance revival (at least in intent) and for opportunity and patronage, making the artist the most “authentic interpreter” of that “D’Annunzian” world,<sup>90</sup> designed to give a classical dignity to the aspirations of the “Third Italy.”

81

To use Sartorio’s words commenting on his study of Dante Gabriele Rossetti, “Le confessioni e le battaglie di un artista”, *Il secolo xx*, VI, no. 8 (August 1907): 624.

82

Ibid.

83

Ibid.

84

From the introductory text in *Terza Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte*, 72.

85

Sartorio, *Le confessioni e le battaglie*, 624.

86

See Angelo Conti, “L’Esposizione di Venezia. Il dittico di Sartorio”, *Il Marzocco*, IV, no. 20 (June 18, 1899).

87

See Angelo Conti, “L’Esposizione di Venezia”, *Il Marzocco*, IV, no. 13 (April 30, 1899).

88

In 1906 at the Exhibition in Milan, Sartorio produced the frieze for the Lazio room, while the following year he painted the cycle *La Luce, Le Tenebre, L’Amore, La Morte* (*Light, Shadows, Love, Death*) for the central salon of the Biennale.

89

For the frieze ordered in 1908 and completed in 1912, see Luigi Serra, “Il fregio di G.A. Sartorio per la nuova aula del Parlamento”, *Emporium*, XXIX, no. 169 (January 1909): 71–76.

90

Fortunato Bellonzi, “Note sull’arte e sulla cultura di G.A. Sartorio”, *Studi Romani*, IX, no. 6 (November–December 1961): 657, reworking the ideas already present in Fortunato Bellonzi, “Sartorio e l’ultimo Ottocento romano”, *Notiziario d’arte*, no. 9–10 (September–October 1961): 126–129.

## 5. The Biennali from 1901 to 1907.

The real reasons that led Fradeletto to update the Italian section, establishing the regional rooms in 1901, derive from the lessons that had been learned and were linked to the failure of the attempted *Corporazione* (which was unifying in its own way). The reactions of those excluded from the self-appointed “national” group had amalgamated around the artistic circles, while the old academic centres and market places discussed the new primacy that Venice had brought to north-eastern Italy thanks to the exhibition. The idea of regional shows (guided by local juries, partly elected by the artists themselves)<sup>91</sup> silenced the adversaries, ensuring that the various groups were given equal dignity but also speculating upon the permanent validity of schools of nineteenth-century origin, decreeing their provincial dimension.

Fradeletto set matters out very plainly in the circular of 5 May 1900. The chosen exhibition formula for regional groups aimed to

- 1) support conciliation between the various groups of artists, preventing the revival of that friction that if it did not damage us, certainly made life more bitter last year,
  - 2) meet their legitimate need, taking into due consideration the rightful objections in opposing newspapers,
  - 3) demonstrate greater openness towards the other Italian regions, showing that our Exhibition is not, as was claimed, “Venetian” and “foreign” [...]
- I will briefly list the advantages of this proposal: Italy would finally feature more worthily and in all the variety of its artistic approaches. Each region would present itself with its own particular character, by now consecrated by local and historical traditions. All the regions would be treated equally.<sup>92</sup>

The official circular, signed by the administration, expanded upon these concepts, proposing to counter the foreign examples with the “spontaneous gifts of the race”:

The promoters of the Exhibition in Venice therefore intend to seek out and gather together the most dynamic elements of the country’s ingenuity; to inspire them to action; to shine an equal spotlight on that which our Art is organically capable of; to rouse the great natural and historical centres where it is traditionally present, to reaffirm themselves in the pertinacious and perhaps indelible variety of their approaches and characters.<sup>93</sup>

Critics responded enthusiastically to this line of thinking, anticipating the positive outcome of the possibility to assess the actual value of the regional groups during

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“The artists will be distributed in the following regional groups: Emilia, Lazio, Lombardy, Neapolitan, Piedmont, Sicily, Tuscany, Veneto. The works belonging to each of these groups will be examined respectively by juries made up of five members (artists and art critics), two of them will be elected by the artists of the region” *Regolamento per la costituzione e pel mandato delle Giurie (Regulation 1901, Venice, ASAC)*; those entitled to vote must have taken part in a national or international exhibition, a rule deriving from the regulations of the fleeting *Associazione* of 1899 (Cf. footnote 65).

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*Regulation 1901, Venice, ASAC.*

93

*Circular Agli Artisti Italiani (To the Italian Artists), Venice, ASAC.*

the exhibition. Mario Pilo,<sup>94</sup> and above all Ojetti, accepted the postulate that all dialects were of equal dignity:

As in literature, so in painting the ethnic differences between one region and the next remain alive among us and as typical as dialects. Between Laurenti and Esposito, between Calderini and Fragiaco, between Telemaco Signorini and Sartorio, between Michetti and Mentessi, between Bezzi and Morbelli there are deeper and more continuous differences than those that originate in individual temperaments. Truly the country and the race have shaped their souls, their vision and their technique, in such dissimilar ways that they seem, to those who do not read the names, painters from different countries.<sup>95</sup>

The report by the admissions jury was instead supposed to deal with the actual conditions. With the works in front of them, they were supposed to reconcile the regulations (“proceed with absolute and not relative severity”) with the opportunity for “inevitable participation” among all regional groups.<sup>96</sup>

The number of regional contributions was not only modest, but failed to live up to expectations, inasmuch as the few attempts at modernisation contradicted the physiognomy of the traditionally conservative regional school. Power was firmly in the hands of the local consortia, which survived in defence of their privileges, as claimed so emphatically by Giovanni Cena.<sup>97</sup> By continuing to feature regional rooms until 1910, the Venice Biennale contributed to freezing the contribution from Italian artists into a repetitive formula, rewarding the division into local schools of a nineteenth-century stamp and fostering continuity as compared to the innovative break that came in the international sections, whether for good or evil, due to Symbolism and “northern” Impressionism.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the solo

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Mario Pilo, ‘Di bene in meglio,’ *La Gazzetta Letteraria* (September 1, 1900): 4.

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Ugo Ojetti, “Le quattro esposizioni veneziane”: 397.

96

In its report, the jury, formed of P. Fragiaco, D. Trentacoste and P. Levi, justified its embarrassment as follows: “In short, we found ourselves faced with a situation that often differed according to the artistic virtue of the region and its capital, and, faced with the dilemma of ‘proceeding with absolute and not relative severity’ and of a decidedly unequal competition not just in terms of numbers but also of merit, we felt that instead of totally excluding this or that region we should favour the criterion of restricted, but inevitable participation [...] This explains that certain inequality of appreciation that can be attributed to our work [...]” (in *IV Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte della città di Venezia. Catalogo illustrato*, exh. cat., Venice: Giardini di Castello, April 24 - October 31, 1901, 13).

97

“Do we draw a different and original strength from the individual differences of our regions? This Exhibition does not prove it. In every region there are those who are worried about technical research, objective reproducers of external nature, restless people, thinkers: even the landscape artists are more likely to make a joint effort to conquer light and air than to portray the characteristics of the native soil. Artists migrate from region to region, they live in exile for some time. The various centres do not conserve special energies: they could be and were in fact for the elderly: no longer for the new generation. They were not even – and here lies the problem – closed and discordant provinces, promoters and protectors of rivalries. Every great centre has its artistic societies and local Circles and Administrations, intended solely to provide periodic subsidies to artists, on condition that they always remain the same, quiet, mediocre, alien to every revolution: the luckiest of these centres still enjoy purchases by the Government or the Royal Family. The artists thus receive their annual salary. A network of interests is formed. Innovators, alone for whom art is prevented from stagnating and rotting, are suppressed or banished – jealously kept in check even after death. Example: Fontanesi”. Giovanni Cena, “L’Esposizione veneziana,” *Nuova Antologia*, 179, no. 707 (June 1901): 505.

98

In his criticism of the regional division, Diego Angeli, when maintaining the need for schools to exhibit, as in the case of the Roman school in its quest for the sentiment of nature (“Le Regioni italiane,” *Il Marzocco*, VI, no. 21, May 26, 1901), had dismissed the two modernist temptations for our painters with the blunt statement: “the homeland of Mantegna and Tintoretto cannot see through the eyes of A. Bocklin or A. Zorn” (“L’Esposizione di Venezia: A. Fontanesi,” *Il Marzocco*, May 5, 1901).

exhibitions of 1901 repeated the warning of the “status quo”, flanking the Fontanesi retrospective with that of Domenico Morelli, and the two solo shows of Luigi Nono, the surviving champion of *favrettismo*,<sup>99</sup> and of Previati, an excessively fervent producer of symbolic suggestions, as Vittorio Pica noted in the presentation in the catalogue.<sup>100</sup>

During the next Biennale, in 1903, there was an opening for the decorative arts within the framework of regional divisions, with a plan for rooms that presented artworks and furnishings within a “harmonious and dynamic whole”, almost a “small Gallery of an intelligent collector”.<sup>101</sup> The results went down well with the public and heralded new commercial initiatives,<sup>102</sup> contributing to establishing the regional versions of the modern style as revivals of local traditions, in the Renaissance Revival style of the “*dolce stil novo*”.<sup>103</sup> The artist-decorators, in the introductions to the rooms, demonstrated that they had met the desires of the promoters who had granted them “total freedom”, simply warning them that

albeit in the certainty of the new, they did not remain deaf to the calls of tradition, because it is our belief that Art develops and changes with organic continuity and that in vain can one presume to revive it by ripping it with arbitrary violence from its age-old roots [...]<sup>104</sup>

The comparison with plant organisms, recurrent in the floral decorations of the rooms,<sup>105</sup> was here bent to the exercise of “decorative rhetoric” as Pica observed, in the recurrent “dream, so pernicious to our fathers and grandfathers, of Italian primacy”.<sup>106</sup>

Despite crystallising subjects into neo-traditional formulas, the interest in decorative art, in which Venice followed the example of the Turin Exhibition of 1902,<sup>107</sup> once again raised the question of professional outlets for artists during a period of crisis when they would attempt to identify new clients, diversifying the intended destinations of their products. While “the traditional barriers between what is on show and what acts as an ornament become increasingly weak and blurred [...] with ‘everything on sale’ [...],”<sup>108</sup> the easel painting suggests its placement in a busy setting, one that is also created to reiterate its prestige and emphasise its timeless qualities, turning to tradition and emblematic allusiveness (as demonstrated by the recurrent motif of laurel or the abuse of Latin mottos). In this

99

See the praise given by Antonio Stella, “Quarta esposizione internazionale della città di Venezia”, *Natura e Arte*, file 16 (1900–1901): 230.

100

*IV Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, 146–50.

101

“Mostre regionali d'arte pura e d'arte applicata,” *Quinta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia. Catalogo illustrato*, exh. cat., (Venice: Giardini di Castello, April 22 - October 31, 1903), 19.

102

A comparison of the sales catalogues shows that the increase in sales could primarily be attributed to the black and white sections, the medals and the furnishings.

103

See Rossana Bossaglia, *Il liberty in Italia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1968), 2–3.

104

*Quinta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, 21.

105

In the Piedmontese room, designed by Grosso, we find a frame and a plinth sculpted with pines and chestnuts, a motif of orchids in the Emilian room, ivy and oleanders for Lombardy, and also “the mild Tuscan olive,” “the fruitful orange groves so emblematic of the south of Italy”, *ibid.*

106

Vittorio Pica, “Rettorica decorativa,” *L'arte mondiale a Venezia nel 1903* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1903) and now in Paola Barocchi, *Testimonianze e polemiche figurative in Italia: L'ottocento dal Bello ideale al Preraffaellismo* (Florence: G. D'Anna Editore, 1972), 191–193.

107

For the decorative art show in Turin see Francesca R. Fratini ed., *Torino 1902, polemiche in Italia sull'arte nuova* (Turin: Martano, 1970).

108

Romanelli, *Ottant'anni di allestimenti*, 10.

light, the Sala del Ritratto Moderno (Modern Portrait Room) was very interesting, once again putting forward the primary task of the production of traditional images, which had been thrown into question by new methods of reproduction. Cesare Laurenti's idea to surround the room with a large ceramic frieze, from Nicola Pisano to Tiepolo, was rightly associated by Morasso with Leonardo, when, "to celebrate the virtue of painting, he compares the glorious duration of his figures with the rapid fading and disappearance of living beings."<sup>109</sup> In other words, tradition was used as a guarantee for the eternity of art, almost validating the quality of the contemporary product.

The other innovation at the 5<sup>th</sup> Biennale, the Reject Room, established due to the protests that followed the rejection of 823 out of 963 works, responded to a corporate demand (many names are the same as in previous Venetian disputes),<sup>110</sup> and not, as one might think from a more recent standpoint, to the needs of non-conformist movements. As De Carolis scornfully observed:

This year, after the exclusions, we witnessed a movement that I would describe as being of solidarity, something that resembles the league and announces the strike. Like workers, artists unite, form assemblies, promote uprisings, threaten a boycott. Here too we find ourselves faced with the weakness and impotence that seeks strength in numbers, and it would not be surprising to see the future organisers of exhibitions descend to agreements with organised masses of artists.<sup>111</sup>

The painter, writing these lines in *Leonardo*, kept with tradition in defending a different concept of art and self, as a depository of a knowledge "far from the common people", not to "be confused with all the other pointless things of our modern life", picking up the themes of the D'Annunzian bard in honour of whom he changed his signature to De Karolis. And yet even this defence of his role to the bitter end was affected by the same crisis behind the corporate initiatives of professional painters: just think of De Carolis's activity as an engraver and woodcut printmaker for literary works<sup>112</sup> and his activity as a fresco painter for public commissions (with visible gaps between the theory and practice of this difficult technique),<sup>113</sup> both alternative solutions to the hard-won outlets for easel paintings.

109

*Quinta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, 85.

110

In the report by the organising committee it is stressed "that while it is possible to succeed in discerning without hesitation the maximum and minimum values among hundreds of works, it becomes extremely difficult even for the most enlightened and experienced Jury when faced with intermediate values, however remarkable" (*ibid.*, 28). The high percentage of Venetian artists admitted in the second instance includes the names of Brass, Bortoluzzi, Castegnaro, Giuseppe Ciardi, Chitarin and G. Stella. The only work of a certain notoriety was *Il Suono del Ruscello* (*The Sound of the Stream*) by E. Longoni.

111

Adolfo De Karolis, "L'Esposizione di Venezia," *Leonardo*, I, no. 9 (May 10, 1903).

112

Above all, for the period 1901–1904, the illustration of the tragedies of D'Annunzio, *Francesca da Rimini*, *La figlia di Jorio* and *La fiaccola sotto il moggio*, see "Lettere inedite di Gabriele D'Annunzio al pittore Adolfo De Carolis", *Abruzzo*, II, file 2 (1964): 309–26, and Cornelio Di Marzo, "Lettere di D'Annunzio a De Carolis per le illustrazioni delle tragedie", *Rivista italiana del dramma*, no. 4 (July 1939): 3–11.

113

The decoration of the Salone del Consiglio Provinciale in Ascoli Piceno (1907) would be followed by that for the Aula Magna of the University of Pisa (1916–20) and the Salone del Podestà in Bologna (1921–28). Due to the decay of the frescoes, the decorations by De Carolis have been documented thanks to sketches and cartoons in the exhibition *Adolfo De Carolis in Pisa: studi e disegni per l'Aula Magna*, catalogue edited by R. Monti, Pisa 1977, and in *Adolfo De Carolis: la sintesi immaginaria*, edited by F. Solmi, Bologna 1979, alongside to the squares torn from the side walls and the corbels of the ceiling.

Average work returned to the room, aspiring to official recognition without questioning the judgement criteria, clearly encoded in Article 5 of the regulations that said to accept “every technique and every school”, rejecting however “all forms of vulgarity”.<sup>114</sup> The rules for the admissions jury were set out in detail in Article 10, which specified which works could not aspire to Venetian dignity:

Mere studies are therefore excluded, unless they serve to illustrate some important work on display – fragmentary and insignificant reproductions from life – also excluded are works that aim to draw attention with means extraneous to the nature and office of art – all those works in short that do not have either fullness of aesthetic value or, despite some deficiency, singular merits of research and originality.<sup>115</sup>

The innovations of subsequent exhibitions would not go beyond granting new spaces to decorations by Chini or Sartorio,<sup>116</sup> next to which they could admit collective exhibitions on a theme and hybrid displays such as the Stanza del Sogno (Dream Room) of 1907.<sup>117</sup> However, they still refused to admit new trends (a great example was the reluctance to accept the consolidated historical phenomenon of French Impressionism).<sup>118</sup> As a result, younger artists could recognise themselves in the criticism of the Biennale published from 1909 in the Florentine *La Voce*, where, attacking the art organisation system (and namely the exhibition as a moment of unity between official artists, critics and “excellent public”),<sup>119</sup> Soffici asked:

Why not abstain from taking part in the certain scandal of exhibitions [...] in order to restrict yourself to a friendly or sympathetic group and present yourself

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114

From the new regulations published in *Quinta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, 13–18.

115

Ibid., 14.

116

For Sartorio, see notes 88 and 89. Galileo Chini, designer of the Tuscan Rooms of 1903 and 1907, decorated the dome of the first room in 1909 with figures inspired by the “Matters of Art”, while for the central room of 1914 he developed Klimt’s lesson in kaleidoscopic panels with naturalistic and abstract motifs (now in Rome, Galleria d’Arte Moderna).

117

The international room named “Art of Dreams” was to feature works “that in some way expressed an ideal” and was entrusted to De Albertis, Nomellini, Previati and Chini, who also designed the exhibition. The sporadic foreign presence, from Crane to Stuck, was not enough to raise the tone of the room, where there was no adequate reflection on the great European moment of symbolism, leaving much room for the members of the Tuscan group “La Giovane Etruria” led by the creators of the room, Chini and Nomellini. An example of a negative judgment on the room can be seen in Arturo Lancellotti, *Le Biennali veneziane dell’anteguerra* (Alessandria: Casa d’Arte Ariel, 1926): 53–56. The young Boccioni instead judged it in his diary “the most interesting of the exhibition” (Umberto Boccioni, *Gli scritti editi e inediti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), 242.

118

After the sporadic presences of Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley and Raffaelli in 1903, in 1905 and before the Renoir exhibition of 1910, Vittorio Pica, when starting to publish his important studies on the Impressionists in the *Emporium*, complained about having “several times expressed the wish privately and publically that the executive committee of the Venice Biennali [...] would organise] a comprehensive French Impressionist exhibition [...] Unfortunately, material difficulties or prior engagements have thus far prevented my wish from coming true”, Vittorio Pica, “Auguste Renoir”, *Emporium*, XXIV, no. 144 (December 1906): 408.

119

Silvio Benco, “Il Giudizio del Piccolo della Sera di Trieste,” *La Voce*, I, no. 48 (November 11, 1909), seized “by the holy desire to punch someone”, attacks “the organisation of art”, “constituted by the official artists, old or new academicians; by the official critics, preservers of tradition, common places and consecrated glories; finally by the excellent public, happy to have signed an insurance contract of their taste with the company of official artists and official critics. When you hear people talk about ‘public taste’ don’t forget that this taste is subject to an administration...”

thus to the public that, only on the basis of this pact, will be able to take it in and – who knows? – perhaps understand? These and many other similar questions could be asked of the true artist, if it were necessary, but such an artist keeps himself to himself [...] and it rarely happens that one comes into contact with him talking about an exhibition, especially one such as this. Because the exhibition in Venice is one of the most unpleasant that you can see [...] the Exhibition, I say, is not and will never be other than a market—and one of the most repugnant kind—a duck market.<sup>120</sup>

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120

Ardengo Soffici, "L'Esposizione di Venezia", *La Voce*, no. 46 (October 28, 1909).

### Author's Biography

Maria Mimita Lamberti is an Italian art historian, curator and prolific author. She wrote and curated exhibitions on artists including Davide Calandra, Felice Casorati, Beppe Devalle, Piero Gobetti and Mario Sturani, but also about art critics such as Lionello Venturi. She curated the Italian edition of Vincent van Gogh's *Lettere ad un amico pittore* (Letters to a friend painter, 2006) and

translated Henri Matisse's *Scritti e pensieri sull'arte* (Writings and thoughts about art, 1979 and 2003). In 2006 she curated with Maria Grazia Messina, the exhibition *Metropolis: la città nell'immaginario delle avanguardie, 1910-1920*. She was Professor in History of Contemporary Art at the University of Torino.