

Canova the Painter. Another Shade of the Genius

Tommaso Cartia (April 10, 2018)



Coincidentally, with the exhibition at the Frick Collection of Canova's plaster model of the George Washington Statue and the photographic show at the Consulate General of Italy "Antonio Canova," by Fabio Zonta, the Italian Cultural Institute in New York presents another face of the Italian artist identity; 16 rare tempera paintings. We talked about it with the Director of the Institute Giorgio Van Straten. The exhibition "Canova e la Danza" will be on until June 28th.

New Yorkers and tourists from all over the world have a unique chance this spring to appreciate the beauty of one of Italy's most iconic artists. [The Gypsoteca and Museo Canova in Possagno](#) [2], where the artist was born, gifted the city of New York with a series of incredible loans that is already becoming part of the history of art.

Canova e la Danza

The exhibition held at the [Italian Cultural Institute in New York](#) [3] shows an unpredictable face of the Italian Neoclassical artist, proposing 16 [tempera paintings](#) [4] completed between the years 1799



and 1806. Canova was not new at painting, he intermittently painted while crafting his sculptures, and his paintings were often studies related to the bigger scale projects. The paintings reveal all of the artist's passion for the human body and its rhythm, for the elegance and polishness of the lines interpreting the classical ideal of perfection in beauty.

Institutions United Under the Sign of Art

This enchanting exhibition was not only made possible by the hard work of the Gyspoteca and Museo Canova, but also by the excellent work of communication that Italian and American institutions are doing to preserve and exalt Italian art and culture in the US. In fact, all of the three exhibitions - [Frick Collection](#) [5], [Consulate General of Italy](#) [6], and Italian Cultural Institute - are endorsed by the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation](#) [7] in accordance with the [Italian Embassy in Washington](#) [8].

"The idea came about when I knew that the Frick Collection would have opened an exhibition dedicated to Canova's lost statue of George Washington." Explained to us Giorgio Van Straten, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute.

"I heard the news from [Franca Coin](#) [9], the [President of the Venice International Foundation](#) [9]. She told me that they had some beautiful and almost unknown Canova's tempera. I decided then to bring them to the Italian Cultural Institute at the same time that the Frick is showing its Canova's piece. I like the idea to create a link between such an important American institution like the Frick is. I did that in the past on the occasion of the [Guido Cagnacci](#) [10] exhibition. Nurture this relationship between Italian and American institutions is fundamental for our mission to exalt the Italian art and culture here in the US and internationally."

A Romantic Canova

When the Director saw the paintings he was absolutely stunned by them. He knew that their innate elegance fitted perfectly with the ambiance of the Institute and that they would have spoken about a trait of Canova's artistry not often discussed by critics and art historians.

"These are some extraordinary tempera. They show all of the fascination that Canova had for the past, he is indeed a neoclassical artist. But this pieces evoke also the Pompeian paintings, with their dark backgrounds. You can really tell through these paintings that Canova's artistic sensibility here it's already a romantic one, these are pieces in between two eras, neoclassicism and romanticism."

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[4] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tempera>

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