

MUSEO DI ROMA

CANOVA

ETERNA BELLEZZA

9 OTTOBRE 2019 - 15 MARZO 2020
MUSEO DI ROMA A PALAZZO BRASCHI

PRESS RELEASE

The 'Canova. Eternal Beauty' exhibition and event will be at the Museo di Roma from 9 October.

Featuring over 170 artworks and prestigious loans from major museums and Italian and foreign collections to tell the story of the artist's relationship with the city.

Rome, 8 October 2019 – **'Canova. Eternal Beauty'**, an exhibition and event devoted to the link between Canova and the city of Rome, the forge of his genius and a boundless source of inspiration in the 18th and 19th centuries, will open on 9 October 2019. The relationship between the sculptor and city emerges in a myriad of unique and unparalleled ways.

The 'Canova. Eternal Beauty' exhibition – with the patronage of the **Assessorato alla Crescita culturale di Roma Capitale**, produced by the **Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali** and **Arthemisia**, and organized with **Zètema Progetto Cultura** – is curated by **Giuseppe Pavanello** and will run until 15 March 2020 at the Museo di Roma. The exhibition has been developed in collaboration with the **Accademia Nazionale di San Luca** and the **Gypsotheca e Museo Antonio Canova in Possagno**.

Displayed in an exceptionally eye-catching setting, **more than 170 works** by Canova and a number of his contemporaries embellish the rooms of the Museo di Roma in Palazzo Braschi. The exhibition is divided into **thirteen sections** that illustrate Canova's art and the context he encountered upon arriving in Rome in 1779.

The warm torchlit atmosphere with which the artist used to welcome guests by night to his studio on Via delle Colonnate in the late 18th century is evoked throughout the exhibition thanks to advanced lighting solutions.

The story is enhanced by a number of prestigious loans from the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, the Musei Vaticani, the Gypsotheca e Museo Antonio Canova in Possagno, the Museo Civico in Bassano del Grappa, the Musei Capitolini, the Museo Correr in Venice, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, the Accademie di Belle Arti in Bologna, Carrara and Ravenna, the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, the Musée des Augustins in Toulouse, the Musei di Strada Nuova-Palazzo Tursi in Genoa and the Museo Civico in Asolo, among others.

THE EXHIBITION

Captivated by their beauty, the artist studied numerous artworks in great detail, including the treasures in the Musei Capitolini and Musei Vaticani, the Farnese and Ludovisi collections and the marble sculptures to be seen around the city at the time. They testified to and featured heavily in his close relationship with the city.

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The exhibition explores the paths trodden by the sculptor during his discovery of Rome, right from his very first visit. For example, he jotted down some surprising words of admiration in his *Travel Journals* upon seeing Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* at Villa Borghese.

It will also be possible to explore the artist's work for the great *Funerary Monuments to Clement XIV* and *Clement XIII*, and for the *Monument to the Last Stuarts*, thanks to the display of drawings, sketches, models and plaster casts, including a number of large pieces. Two of these that really stand out for their fine executive quality are the marble sculpture of the *Rezzonico Genius* on loan from the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg and the small model of the *Stuart Monument* from the Gypsotheca in Possagno.

SECTIONS

1. 1779: Canova in Rome
2. Birth of the New Tragic Style
3. Canova and the Roman Republic
4. Hercules and Lichas
5. The Pugilists
6. The Perfect Theorem: Ancient and Modern Compared
7. Canova and the Accademia di San Luca
8. CANOVA, Inspector of Fine Arts
9. Canova and the Pantheon Busts
10. Last works in Rome
11. Canova's Studio
12. The Dancer
13. Death and Glorification

NOT A COPY, BUT PURE AND INTRIGUING EMULATION

Canova's link with the classical world was deep and centred around a number of crucial issues, first and foremost the desire to bring the Ancient back to life within the Modern and to shape the Modern through the filter of the Ancient.

"You have to channel the Ancient into your blood, until it becomes as natural as life itself," to cite Canova.

For this reason too, the sculptor can be considered the last of the ancients and the first of the moderns: he always refused to make copies of classical sculptures, deeming it to be something unworthy of a creative artist, just as he never wanted to carry out restoration work on ancient sculptures, which were "untouchable" by definition.

The relationship between Ancient and Modern will be evoked in the exhibition by comparing Canova's marble sculptures – including the *Winged Cupid* from the Hermitage in St Petersburg – with ancient sculptures such as the *Eros Farnese* from the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples.

There will be a room focusing on the subject of Classical and Neoclassical, bringing together casts of famous ancient masterpieces with casts of Canovian statues made for Count Alessandro Papafava. The *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Borghese Gladiator* will be compared with the *Perseus with the Head of Medusa* and the *Pugilist Creugas* by Antonio Canova.

A SINGLE ITINERARY FOR SEEING ANCIENT ROME THROUGH THE EYES OF CANOVA

With the arrival of Canova, Rome confirmed its role as the centre of modern art. The *Monument to Clement XIV* erected in the basilica of the Santi Apostoli in 1787 was immediately acclaimed as a new example of classical perfection.

Visitors will have the opportunity to admire magnificent sculptures and numerous drawings at the Museo di Roma, testifying to the sculptor's graphic activity.

Canova's works will be displayed alongside by pieces by the greatest artists active in the city in the late 18th century: Gavin Hamilton, with his canvases of the *Stories of Paris*; Pompeo Batoni, who ran the life-drawing academy attended by Canova; Jean-François-Pierre Peyron, whose *Belisarius*

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Receiving Hospitality from a Peasant (Toulouse, Musée des Augustins) was much admired by the sculptor and whom the sculptor described as “the best of all”.

A CLOSE DIALOGUE WITH THE SCULPTORS OF THE TIME

Canova commissioned numerous busts from illustrious sculptors in order to make a substantial contribution to one of the most important projects of the age: the transformation of the Pantheon from a church dedicated to Santa Maria ad Martyres to a secular temple dedicated to artists. The *Bust of Domenico Cimarosa*, now in the Protomoteca Capitolina, and the *Bust of Pius VII* – two sculptures of extraordinary executive and interpretive quality – were both destined for the Pantheon and feature in this exhibition.

A major section will be dedicated to the fervid activity taking place at Canova’s studio on Via San Giacomo: an unparalleled workshop for its time. Terracotta models, small plaster sculptures, large models, marble sculptures and plaster casts of completed sculptures formed a sort of permanent ‘anthological’ exhibition of the great sculptor’s work. Canova’s workshop was an essential stopping place for artists, aristocrats, connoisseurs and travellers passing through the Eternal City.

CANOVA: LITERATURE AND POLITICS

The exhibition will also explore the relationship between the sculptor and the literature of his time. A small section will be devoted to the connection between Canova and Alfieri, whose tragedy *Antigone*, staged in Rome in 1782, presents more than one area for reflection with regard to Canova’s figurative revolution.

An episode from what Voltaire described as the most beautiful of the Greek myths will also feature in the exhibition (thanks to an institutional loan). *Cupid and Psyche*, a plaster sculpture by Canova, was a subject that attracted particular attention from numerous artists – painters first and foremost – at the end of the 18th century, but only Canova succeeded in reinventing it by giving it a philosophical meaning. His is a reworking of the myth in an eminently spiritual key, which transcends the senses.

Fiercely anti-Jacobin, Canova left Rome during the Republic in the late 18th century to seek refuge in his birthplace of Possagno. Paintings, sculptures, drawings and engravings document the moment that saw the temporary end of the papacy’s temporal power with the exile of Pope Pius VI. Canova was commissioned to sculpt the statue of Pius VI, which was initially to be placed beneath the altar of the Confession in the Vatican Basilica, but was then moved to the Grotte Vaticane. A small model of the monument will be on display in the exhibition, inside the palace built in the late 18th century for the pope’s nephews.

From 1802 onwards, Canova was the Inspector General of Fine Arts for the Papal State, a role that he also occupied during the second period of French domination in Rome (1809–14) and during the Restoration, when he was tasked with recovering the artworks taken by the French in the late 18th century. During this period, he also took the initiative of creating the statue of *Religion*, evoked in the exhibition with plaster models from the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca and the Musei Vaticani. They will be accompanied by pieces from the Museo di Roma, such as the *Self-portrait* in plaster and the terracotta models of the *Monument to George Washington* and the *Portrait of Leopoldina Esterhazy Liechtenstein*.

The last room in the exhibition will house one of Canova’s most extraordinary marble sculptures: the *Dancer with Her Hans on Her Hips*, on loan from St Petersburg. The sculpture will be displayed on a revolving base, just as Canova desired, in a room lined with mirrors. The myth of Pygmalion, who fell in love with his statue Galatea, who came to life, is repeated here: marble becomes flesh.

The exhibition will also be enhanced by brand-new multimedia installations created specifically for the event.

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AN EXHIBITION WITHIN AN EXHIBITION: CANOVIAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIMMO JODICE

Visitors can admire the sculptor's works as seen through the eyes of one of the great masters of photography thanks to around thirty images of Antonio Canova's marble sculptures by Mimmo Jodice. Jodice has succeeded in producing an unprecedented and surprising interpretation of them, creating a series of images that established themselves immediately as one of the most exciting expressions of contemporary photography. The images will form an exhibition within the exhibition, providing a unique opportunity to learn more about the sculptor, guided by the creativity of one of today's great artists.

CUPID AND PSYCHE | ART MEETS TECHNOLOGY

by Magister with Robotor

Magister presents the most contemporary life-size reproduction of Antonio Canova's sculpture *Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss*. Starting out with a **3D scan** of the preparatory plaster model for the sculpture now on display at the Louvre in Paris, **a robot sculptured a 10-tonne block of white Carrara marble non-stop for 270 hours**.

This stirring installation, thought-up by Magister and developed in partnership with Robotor, poses a new question regarding the reproduction of artworks. Indeed, reproduction should be interpreted as a form of respect for the artist's ideas and expresses the contemporary aspiration to make the most of this creative talent once again.

The installation will be accompanied by a **documentary on the creation of the work** and a **video telling the story of Cupid and Psyche as recounted by Apuleius**, combining entertainment and learning. The story was written by Giuliano Pisani, featuring the voice of Adriano Giannini, with original music by the cellist Giovanni Sollima.

The '**Canova. Eternal Beauty**' exhibition is sponsored by Generali Italia as part of its **Valore Cultura Project**, a programme for promoting art and culture across Italy and bringing a broad cross-section of the public – families, young people, clients and employees – closer to the world of art through subsidised tickets for exhibitions, plays, events and artistic/cultural events with a view to creating shared value.

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