

SERENISSIME TRAME

Carpets from the Zaleski Collection and Renaissance Paintings

edited by Claudia Cremonini, Moshe Tabibnia, Giovanni Valagussa
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«A homecoming. This is certainly an extensive, major exhibition about and of Oriental rugs in the Serenissima. It is not, however, the first testament to a privileged relationship and deep love which, as such, has proved enduring, at times almost exclusive, passing through vicissitudes, jealousies and tiffs, with small infidelities, yet never growing tedious. [...] In this exhibition we will be following at least two lines of inquiry: carpets and Venice. What are these carpets? What do they look like? Why were they made? How were they perceived? And what made this city for several centuries the capital of the carpet trade, where they were treated as merchandise, certainly, but not just any merchandise?»

GIOVANNI CURATOLA

The catalogue of the exhibition, written in both Italian and English, offers a selection of 26 ancient carpets from the Middle East chosen from a large and valuable collection, maybe the most complete in the world: the Zaleski collection. In addition, there are also three other carpets from the Franchetti collection itself, usually kept in warehouses and restored for the occasion.

A number of rare carpets of the 15th and 16th centuries from the Zaleski collection has been selected. They are among the most highly valued and arrived in Venice along the trade routes from the East. They display extraordinary, colorful fabrics, elaborately woven, that carry a strong symbolic meaning. The comparison with some paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries from the territories of Venice, Lombardy and Ferrara, demonstrates the fortune of these luxury items, that are prominently and precisely represented in these pictures. Moreover, the catalogue documents the strong link between the Oriental production of luxury goods and Venetian trade, which paved the way to the spread of a collective imagination that influenced Western representation in arts.

Carpets are analyzed in four specialized essays as Oriental luxury goods capable of fascinating and inspiring, used in Venice in many fields and represented by painters and literates in their paintings, chronicles and literary narrations. Considerations on carpets revolve around the phenomenon of collecting, which triggered the circulation of both objects and decorative patterns from the East. This played a leading role in forming the collective imagination that reached us.

Contributions are signed by Claudia Cremonini, Giovanni Curatola, Moshe Tabibnia and Giovanni Valagussa. The first essay is by Curatola with *A Love Story: Venice and Oriental Carpets*, followed by Giovanni Valagussa, *The earliest depictions of carpets: from Giotto's cycle at Assisi to Vincenzo Foppa*, and Claudia Cremonini, *«Stretching out in front of the painting, amid that desolation, one or another of his precious Turkish rugs» Giorgio Franchetti and the oriental rugs of the Ca' d'Oro*. The last one is by Moshe Tabibnia with *The Zaleski Collection*.

The closing part of the volume includes the scientific details of each object of the exhibition (26 carpets of the Zaleski collection, 3 of the Franchetti collection and 6 paintings from different Italian museums). It illustrates and completes the historic and cultural *excursus* proposed by the catalogue.

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