

SERENISSIME TRAME between Brescia and Venice

Carpets from the Zaleski collection

curated by Moshe Tabibnia and Francesca Fiorentino

RIDOTTO DEL TEATRO GRANDE

Brescia

15 April - 4 June 2017

press preview: 13 April, 5 pm

opening: 13 April, 6 pm

The Fondazione Tassara in association with the Fondazione del Teatro Grande of Brescia is staging the *SERENISSIME TRAME between Brescia and Venice. Carpets from the Zaleski collection* exhibition from 15 April to 4 June at the Ridotto del Teatro Grande. The opening will take place - by invitation only - on Thursday 13 April at 6pm at the Ridotto del Teatro Grande (press preview at 5pm). The exhibition will be presented by the chairman of the Fondazione del Teatro Grande Emilio Del Bono, the superintendent of the Teatro Grande Umberto Angelini, the collector Romain Zaleski for the Fondazione Tassara and the exhibition curators Moshe Tabibnia and Francesca Fiorentino.

The Zaleski family's donation of a collection of 1325 ancient carpets to the Fondazione Tassara offers Brescia, venue of artistic and cultural events of an international range, a chance to share the extraordinary nature of this collection, the largest, most important and most complete in the world in private hands. So there will be numerous reverberations from the presence of a unique and fascinating wealth of art like that of the carpets and infinite historical implications offered to the cultural development of the community: the carpet is in itself an extraordinary vehicle of knowledge for all at many levels.

The exhibition presents eighteen precious 'Transylvanian' carpets from the Zaleski collection for the first time in Italy, in an evocative staging in the Brescian theatre's sumptuous Rococo Ridotto. This type, dating from the end of the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century, is the largest group of Anatolian carpets to have survived in the European region of Transylvania, which from the mid-sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth was an autonomous Ottoman principality; carpets that are now a national heritage held in churches and museums.

This event is connected to the important exhibition under way in Venice in the extraordinary late-Gothic Ca' d'Oro - produced by the Polo museale del Veneto and the Fondazione Tassara, curated by Claudia Cremonini, Moshe Tabibnia and Giovanni Valagussa – featuring 26 ancient carpets from the same Zaleski collection, absolute masterpieces of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from the trade routes with the East, accompanied by three examples from the Franchetti collection and six rare paintings from museums portraying Italian Renaissance carpets.

The exhibition at the Ridotto has an absolutely unique value. It offers an ideal historical-artistic journey from fifteenth-century Venice through sixteenth-century Brescia and on to the European Balkan regions of the seventeenth century. The carpets draped on Venetian *palazzi*, as Carpaccio's brush describes, came to the noble Brescian *palazzi* to reinforce an image of status, as narrated by the frescoes in the Palazzo Martinengo-Salvadego, and finally reached the regions of Transylvania. The historic links with the Ottoman Empire are not enough to explain the extensive distribution of these Anatolian carpets, and the use that allowed their conservation as ceremonial vestments in the local churches is quite extraordinary. The precious examples in the Zaleski collection set in the magnificent frescoed architecture of the Ridotto offer an unparalleled chance to recall these fundamental stages in the history of the carpet in a place whose motto 'non errat errando' seems coined for the occasion, and whose founders, the 'Erranti', would have enthusiastically welcomed this new journey in time and space.

The 'Transylvanians' are Anatolian carpets with a single decoration, a highly original filiation of the Ottoman court carpets in the second half of the sixteenth century. They represent the theme of the niche in various inflexions, single, double, with or without columns, which was extremely important in all ancient societies as the main place for manifesting the sacred and majestic and one of the most appropriate for the actual function of the carpet with ancient peoples, where it represented a space reserved for the exceptional.

The European connoisseurs of this kind of product, starting from the fourteenth century, had understood its powerful symbolic power such as to display them on the most important sacred and profane occasions. In particular, this precious nucleus of carpets had entered all folds of Eastern European society: from princes to the middle class, from churches to municipalities. A symbol of power and prestige never separated from its powerful aesthetic and metaphorical charge, it had become the preferred ornament in the reformed Lutheran churches, which had adopted a strict white in their interiors: hung from the women's galleries, laid on the stalls, precious knotted 'frescoes' in the niches of the apse.

Already the object of refined collecting in the seventeenth century among the Hungarian and Transylvanian nobility, they were jealously safeguarded and kept in the local Lutheran churches. 'Rediscovered' and studied from the end of the nineteenth century, they were closely given close attention by scholars, who wrote numerous essays on them. Their beauty, preciousness and uniqueness made them once again the object of collecting in the twentieth century, while their category represents one of the historic stages of the Anatolian carpet in which much of the Ottoman history, tradition and art of the seventeenth century can be read. The exhibition will be open from 15 April to 4 June on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am to 9 pm. Closed on 16 and 22 April. Special opening on Monday 17 April from 10 am to 9 pm. Free entrance.

www.serenissimetrame.it

www.teatrogrande.it

TEATRO GRANDE

Valentina Molinari, Communication and Institutional Relations Manager

Tel 030 2979311, comunicazione@teatrogrande.it

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Alessandra Santerini, cell +39 335 6853767, alessandrasanterini@gmail.com