
A FAMILY

FOR
TUN
Y

STORY

FORTUNY

A FAMILY STORY —



Exhibition produced and organised by the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia in collaboration with the Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation

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—— The Discovery
of Venice by the
Fortunys (1873–1889)

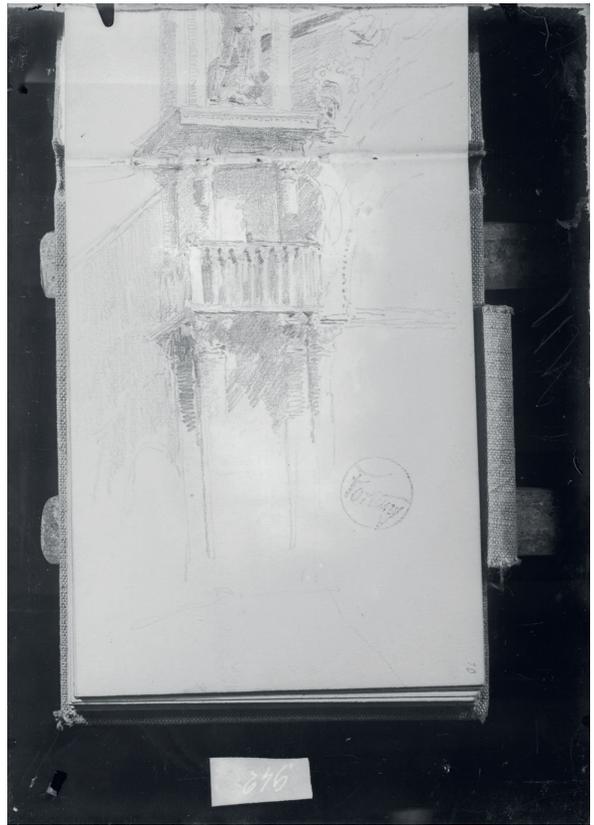
Emiliano Cano Díaz

Painter Mariano Fortuny y Marsal (1838–1874) reached Rome in 1858 as a fellow of the Diputació de Barcelona. There, he kept an atelier even during his long periods away – owing to his visits to North Africa or his stays in Madrid, Paris, Granada and Portici – and used it as headquarters from where to make excursions throughout the Italian territories – at that time in the midst of the unification process – visiting on several occasions the arts enclaves of Florence and Naples, as well as Siena, Genoa, Pisa, Leghorn and Turin. As for Venice, also a meeting point for artists especially during summer, there is only evidence of a short trip in 1873, where Fortuny, accompanied by his wife Cecilia de Madrazo (1846–1932), visited a good friend of his, the landscape painter Martín Rico (1833–1908), who had discovered the city and fallen in love with it that same year.

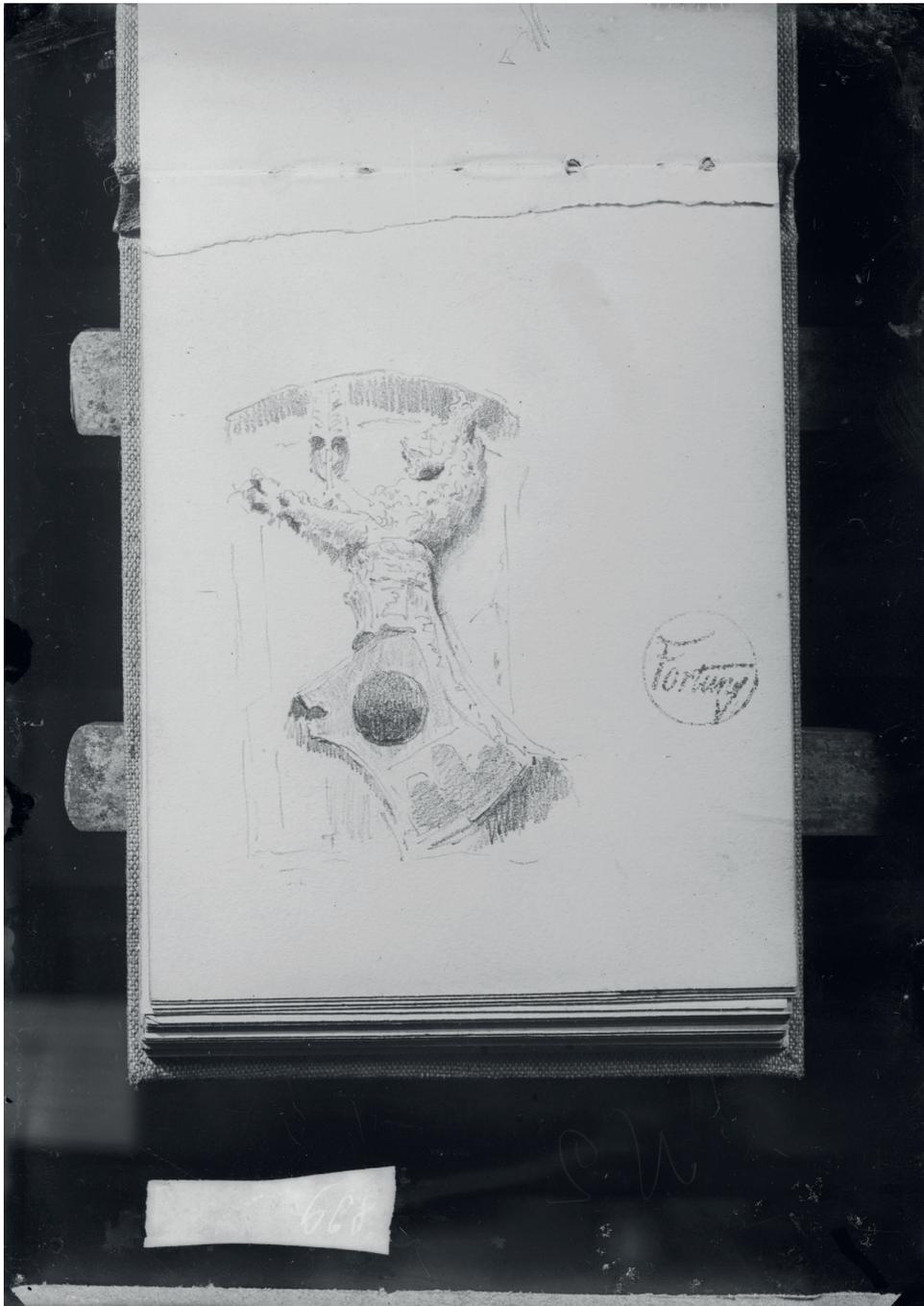
For this journey, Fortuny's original idea was to move to Venice from mid-June and work there during the summer at the figures of the painting *Repetition in the Garden* (whereabouts unknown), although the news of cholera in the city made him change his mind and stay with his family in Rome despite the hot weather. Finally, Mr and Mrs Fortuny visited Venice in mid-October (and not at the beginning of the month, as believed until now)¹ most likely staying next to the Ricos at Palazzo Gambarà, in 1056 Dorsoduro by the Grand Canal.

In his memoirs, Martín Rico recalled that in Venice, Fortuny “did almost nothing: [he realised only] two studies of the interior of the Basilica di San Marco, with some black and white marble columns and the golden ceiling, for the paintings he was making at that time.”² Indeed, a small sketchbook of Fortuny's drawings, kept at the British Museum in London,³ contains various studies of marble columns used as reference for the decoration of the columns of *The Choice of a Model* (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.), although it is possible that Rico was referring to oil painting studies, the whereabouts of which are unknown. Rico also added that Fortuny “painted nothing outdoors. He said: ‘This is your genre.’ I think he did not feel like it and that he wanted to relax”. Notwithstanding what Rico wrote, the above-mentioned sketchbook keeps a significant number of drawings made by Fortuny in the open air during that short Venetian stay, although in none of them the water of the canals appears, despite being the most picturesque element of the place and one of Rico's favourite “genres”. Perhaps the lack of experience in depicting water led Fortuny to exclaim in a letter addressed to his friend the following year: “I've started a marine painting!” – the unfinished *Beach at Portici* (Meadows Museum, Dallas) – and then to add, modestly: “I do not know what will come out of it.”⁴

Going back to the drawings of the sketchbook on Venice, which had never been studied before, a figure of *Saint Michael the Archangel with a Demon at His Feet* in one of the aediculae in the north facade of the Basilica di San Marco is worth mentioning first. The perspective of the drawing shows that it was made from the ground level, and exactly from the Piazzetta dei Leoncini where Fortuny also drew one of the small lions that give the place its name; while in front of the Palazzo Ducale, he focussed his attention on the column of San Tòdaro. The painter's interest in the coats of arms is also worth noting.



65-66. Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo
*Reproductions of the Sketch of the Shrine
with Saint Michael Archangel in Saint Mark's
Basilica in Venice from His Father's Sketchbook
Dated 1873, early 20th century*
Venice, Museo Fortuny



67. Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo
*Reproduction of the Sketch of the Coat
of Arms Callesella Rota in Venice
from His Father's Sketchbook Dated 1874,
early 20th century*
Venice, Museo Fortuny



He drew them with his usual precision, and this gave him the chance of including them later on as elements of pictorial virtuosity in his paintings: drawings of shields located at the beginning of Calle Sella Rota, at the entrance of Palazzo Molin in Calle dei Cuoridoro; in a palace next to Ponte Bernardo; or on the facade of a building in front of the Chiesa di San Trovaso in Fondamenta Nani.⁵ Several of these motifs, including the bronze bust *Portrait of a Boy* attributed to Andrea Riccio,⁶ also appear in Martín Rico's Venetian notebook (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid) – hence, it is highly probable that the two painters executed some of them simultaneously. Lastly, it is not surprising that, being Fortuny a great admirer of ancient weapons, he went to the Arsenale to draw in his sketchbook some copies of swords and that he also took the opportunity to share his views with Édouard de Beaumont, to whom he sent several sketches of individual pieces: “Do you not think that these old blades talk about the past better than a book? For me, they blabber even more so than the other.”⁷

After the Venetian getaway, Mr and Mrs Fortuny returned to Rome to reunite with their children María Luisa and Mariano, who were five and two years old respectively, and had been left in the care of their nanny, Sabina Bernardi, and their uncle Ricardo. They brought with them a gift by Martín Rico, the painting *Campo Santa Margherita* that can be spotted in a photograph of Fortuny's Roman atelier taken to-

68. Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo
Reproduction of the Painting Campo Santa Margherita by Martín Rico, 1873, circa 1945
 Venice, Museo Fortuny

wards the end of 1873. Rico's painting remained in Cecilia's collection after Fortuny's death and later in that of his son Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo (1871–1949); currently, it is in a private collection. Fortuny intended to return to Venice for a visit with the whole family the following year, but this plan was cut short by his long vacation in Portici, followed by his sudden death in Rome on 21 November 1874.

In February 1875 Cecilia de Madrazo⁸ moved to Paris with her children to live near her brother Raimundo de Madrazo (1841–1920), a painter specialised in portraits and charming representations of the Parisian world; while Ricardo de Madrazo (1852–1917), the youngest of the family, decided to spend that summer in Venice. For Ricardo, who had lived with the Fortunys since 1868, this stay, at the age of twenty-three, was his first independent experience from his family and from his family's arts as, until then, he had made drawings, water-colours or oil studies with his brother-in-law Fortuny but he had not dared to paint pictures yet. Thus, in Venice he made some "notes" he sent to his father Federico in Madrid and that would later be useful for him to complete the painting *A Well, in Venice*, dated 1878 and presented in Paris at the annual art exhibition that same year.

During this first Venetian stay, the young Ricardo appears repeatedly in the journals of Enid Layard (1843–1912), who was fond of painting and wife of the British diplomat Henry Layard, ambassador to Spain and owner at that time of Ca' Cappello, a palace on the Grand Canal. The Layards had met the Fortunys in Granada in 1871, where Enid became friends with Ricardo. According to her journals,⁹ he used to draw in a small square near Ca' Foscari (10 June) where he would take notes for the painting of the well, also known as *Campiello behind Palazzo Foscari in Venice*, and in various unspecified patios where they planned to work together (13, 19, 22 and 28 July).

In 1877, Cecilia de Madrazo decided too to spend a long time in Venice, in particular from May to November, which allowed her children María Luisa and Mariano to discover the city. Moreover, they had perfect knowledge of the Italian language, for having grown up in Italy and for keeping in Paris the Italian nanny mentioned before. They stayed at Casa Barbieri, at 705 Campo San Vio, very close to the Ponte dell'Accademia on the Grand Canal. They must have liked the experience so much that they repeated it in 1879, from June to November, and again in 1881, from August to the end of October, though staying at the Hotel de l'Univers, near the Ponte di Rialto¹⁰ – it could be said that, during those years, Venice was a second place of residence for the family.

For his part, Ricardo de Madrazo continued to travel and build his artistic personality, residing in Madrid, but spending long time in Paris, Tangier and London. In the summer of 1882, he returned to Venice, ready to benefit more from it than he did during his first visit, staying at the Palazzo Gritti on the Grand Canal with painter Martín Rico, who was in the city at that time.

Lady Layard visited them on 11 October and noted down her feelings on the paintings they were depicting: "Rico's are all various views – clever but too chique. The trees and water are all spotted in. They look well at a distance but do not bear close inspection. Ricardo is painting a

pretty scene of a girl swimming in the canal held by a rope by a woman. ... I think he has much more power than Rico and more finish".¹¹

Ricardo worked with enthusiasm, although his way of painting – based more on the development in his atelier than on the outdoor production – would force him to finish most of his paintings in Madrid in the following months or years. On the contrary, Rico only painted en plein air, and at the beginning of August, according to a letter from Ricardo to his sister Cecilia, he had already “five paintings almost finished”, adding then: “Not even with a machine!”¹² The comment – aside from the criticism – shows his lack of skills against Rico’s ability, who besides enjoying great prestige among the enthusiasts, he was able to complete thirteen Venetian landscapes during that summer, which yielded the sum of 50,500 francs.¹³

As for the subjects Ricardo dealt with, of that time are the works *A Venetian Woman* (Municipio de Alcoy), *Portrait of Meissonier Painting inside the Saint Mark’s Basilica* (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid), made in watercolour; the painting described by Lady Layard, *The Swimming Lesson* (private collection), executed in front of Palazzo Gussoni Algarotti in Rio de la Fava; and *Canal degli Albrizzi* (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid), acquired in 1886 on the proposal of Federico de Madrazo, who, besides being Ricardo’s father, was also the director of the museum.

In 1882 Cecilia de Madrazo and her children spent their summer in Biarritz with María Teresa de Madrazo, cousin and close friend of María Luisa. The Museo del Prado has a drawing by Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo, who was eleven years old at that time, portraying a friend of the same age, Louis Gayat, with the caption “À Marie Thérèse, portrait du petit Gayat, Mariano Fortuny”. In the same paper, his uncle Raimundo, who was visiting Biarritz, added “très ressemblant” (very resembling), which seems to indicate that, at that time, he was guiding his nephew’s steps as an artist.¹⁴ The following year, in September 1883, Cecilia settled with her children and Sabina in Madrid where they stayed for about six months; over there, Federico designed the training programme for his grandson, as specified in a letter addressed to his son Raimundo: “Marianito is very good: he works, drawing in my studio on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and at the museum on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays; and he makes progress, because he is clever and works very hard”.¹⁵ For his part, Ricardo de Madrazo took advantage of those months to make a portrait of the young Mariano, who is in turn portraying his late father taking his image from a visiting card shot by Bertall & Cie. For this portrait, Ricardo obtained the greatest artistic reward of his career, a second medal – heavily criticised in the press – at the Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes in Madrid in 1884.

In early 1885, Cecilia and her children returned to Madrid and when they went back to Paris, an article in *La Époque* echoed the artistic development of the young Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo: “At the age of twelve [actually fourteen], which he has now reached, he already makes copies of museum paintings, with an amazing composure. His passion is Velázquez, and in his painting room there are works that,



without being perfect, reveal the great temperament of Fortuny's son. We do not believe we are mistaken when we assure that within a few years we will hear about a second Fortuny, a daunting name that needs giant shoulders to carry it".¹⁶

In June 1887, Cecilia de Madrazo returned to Venice, settling in Ca' Dario, once again by the Grand Canal; for the first time there, she met her brother Ricardo who came to visit with his wife Ángeles and his two-year-old son Luis.¹⁷ On that occasion, Ricardo worked at the paintings *View of the Grand Canal* and *Calle Barbaro*, which participated at the 1888 Barcelona Universal Exposition; *The Church of La Salute*, *Greengrocer of Calle Vendramin* and *Venetian Chap*, which formed part of the *Exposición del Círculo de Bellas Artes de Madrid* in 1889; and *Bath Time* – very similar to *The Swimming Lesson* of 1882 –, presented at the

69. Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo
(after Velázquez)
Saints Anthony Abbot and
Paul the Hermit, n.d.
Venice, Museo Fortuny



70. Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo
The Courtyard of Palazzo Martinengo,
 circa 1895
 Venice, Museo Fortuny

Exposición de Bellas Artes in Barcelona in 1891. The references made by Federico de Madrazo to the financial help he gave his youngest son are constant in the letters he wrote in that period; in return, Ricardo helped his father with his commissioned portraits by imitating his style. However, when on his own, Ricardo painted works in which he would try to establish his own identity – an indispensable quality to succeed in the art market. In this regard, Raimundo de Madrazo offered advice to his brother in a letter, urging him to move away from Fortuny’s style, based on a technical virtuosity created on reworking what had already been painted: “Do not forget, however, that it is not in your nature to retouch. What you do first and immediately, be it watercolour or oil, is always much better. Put it in your head that you never have to retouch or trace over again”.¹⁸

Cecilia and her children stayed in Venice until early February 1888 and then made a brief return to Paris; in May they were already back in Venice, where they moved further away from the Grand Canal, in 3673 Fondamenta dei Felzi. At that time, Cecilia had already made the decision to settle permanently in the city of the canals, for a number of reasons that included the high price of rents in Paris and the search for a quiet place to keep her collection; and also, her children’s wishes, particularly Mariano’s, who at seventeen went regularly to night classes at the Accademia to study life drawing.¹⁹ Therefore, in February 1889, Cecilia bought Palazzo Martinengo, located by the Grand Canal in 178 Calle del Traghetto, in San Gregorio, for 55,000 francs. For the purchase, she had to borrow a certain amount of money from the inheritance her husband left to their daughter María Luisa, according to a document dated 1900: “I owe María Luisa 40,000 for 1889, which she was given as refunded bonds [of Chemins de Fer] du Nord. This money was used for the change of house and other expenses of that same year”.²⁰

After having done some work in the new palace, Cecilia and her family returned to their house in Paris for the last time at the end of June 1889. There, they could enjoy the Universal Exposition of 1889, which was for Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo one of “the main attractions of my childhood”.²¹ In addition, that summer they received the visit of Federico and Ricardo de Madrazo, the latter accompanied by his wife, as several pictures kept in the photographic archive of the Palazzo Fortuny show. There, when the family was almost complete for the last time, they celebrated the first-class medal obtained by Raimundo de Madrazo in the Fine Arts Section of the Universal Exposition for a set of eight female portraits, as well as a third-class medal granted to Ricardo for *Mariano Fortuny’s Last Painting*, a tribute to his late brother-in-law and mentor.

In October 1889, Cecilia de Madrazo and her children settled permanently in Venice, where they have lived for the rest of their lives. Their remains, however, rest alongside those of Mariano Fortuny y Marsal and those of Henriette Nigrin in the Cimitero del Verano in Rome.

- 1 "I received with great pleasure your little note dated 14 [October] in Venice". Letter from Federico de Madrazo to Cecilia de Madrazo; Madrid, 25 October 1873. Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, published in Cano 2018.
- 2 Rico 1906, p. 79.
- 3 British Museum, London inv. 1950,0520.22.
- 4 Rico 1906, p. 79.
- 5 The coats of arms are catalogued in Rizzi 1987 (DD 93, SM 96, SP 248, DD 100A-B).
- 6 The original bronze bust is currently kept at the Correr Museum in Venice; a copy is kept in the Fortuny Museum.
- 7 See Beaumont et al. 1875, p. 71.
- 8 For a biographical study see Gutiérrez Márquez 2017.
- 9 The *Journals of Mary Enid Evelyn Layard* are kept in the British Library (Add Mss. 46153-70), and can be consulted online at: <https://www.browningguide.org/lady-layards-journal/>.
- 10 See Federico de Madrazo's *Agendas de bolsillo* kept in the archive of the Museo del Prado; and also, Gutiérrez Márquez, Martínez Plaza 2017.
- 11 *Journals of Mary Enid Evelyn Layard*, 11 October 1882, op. cit..
- 12 Letter from Ricardo de Madrazo to Cecilia de Madrazo; Venice, 3 August 1882. Archive of the Museo del Prado, published in Gutiérrez Márquez, Martínez Plaza 2017, RI 101, p. 273.
- 13 Martín Rico's sales register was published in Barón 2012, pp. 270–280.
- 14 The drawing (Do7326), which was purchased in 2006 from a descendant of María Teresa de Madrazo, is currently attributed to Mariano Fortuny y Marsal and kept in the Museo del Prado.
- 15 Letter from Federico de Madrazo to Raimundo de Madrazo; Madrid, 5 November 1883. Archive of the Museo del Prado, published in *Federico de Madrazo* 1994, n. 435, p. 863.
- 16 Almaviva (Alfredo Escobar): "Los españoles en París", in *La Epoca*, Madrid, year XXXVII, 28 June 1885, n. 11835.
- 17 See letter from Federico de Madrazo to Raimundo de Madrazo; Madrid, 17 June 1887. Archive of the Prado National Museum, published in *Federico de Madrazo* 1994 n. 452, p. 888.
- 18 Letter from Raimundo de Madrazo to Ricardo de Madrazo; Paris, 10 February 1888. Archive of the Museo del Prado, published in Gutiérrez Márquez, Martínez Plaza 2017, RA 10, p. 322.
- 19 Letter from Cecilia de Madrazo to Federico de Madrazo; Venice, 1 February 1889. Archive of the Museo del Prado, published in Gutiérrez Márquez, Martínez Plaza 2017, CE 107, p. 124.
- 20 Biblioteca Marciana, Venice. Fondo Mariutti-Fortuny, M.9.4.6.
- 21 "Memoria autobiografica", in the Album *Descriptions et Illustrations*. Fortuny Palace, Venice, s.d., foglio 06, c. 02, inv. MFQ001.



71. Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo
View of the Central Salon on the First Floor
of Palazzo Martinengo, circa 1900
Venice, Museo Fortuny



72. Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo
Interior View of Palazzo Martinengo,
circa 1900
Venice, Museo Fortuny