

## ***View of the Grand Canal and the Dogana, Bernardo Bellotto***

Bernardo Bellotto  
Italian, about 1740  
Oil on canvas, 53 1/4 x 91 1/4 in.  
91.PA.73



### **Background Information**

Bernardo Bellotto was the nephew of Canaletto, a painter renowned for his idealized views of Venice. Together they produced many painted vistas for tourists who stopped in Venice on their Grand Tour of Italy. Grand tourists would have purchased these types of paintings as souvenirs and reflections of their cultural sophistication.

In this architectural record of Venice and the Grand Canal, Bellotto presented a cross-section of Venetian society going about business on a sunny morning. Light from the east falls upon the Palazzo Pisani-Grutti with its arched windows and painted façade. A Venetian devotional box housing various types of religious icons hangs below the arcade of windows of the building at the left. Such boxes were usually placed on a building right next to the canal so that passers-by could pause for a moment of prayer upon leaving or arriving.

Its image reflected in the canal, the dome of the Baroque church of Santa Maria della Salute dominates the right bank. Next to it, behind a shadowy row of houses, stands the Gothic façade of the Abbey of San Gregorio. On the far right is the Dogana or customs building. Gondolas and ferries, modes of transportation still in use today, traverse the water between the two banks. The mouth of the canal, where seafaring vessels leave or enter the city, is visible in the distance.

### **About the Artist**

Bernardo Bellotto (Italian, 1721–1780)

Bernardo Bellotto's work sometimes has been mistaken for that of his famous uncle Canaletto; the native Venetian spent most of his life outside Italy and signed his works abroad *de Canaletto*. Bellotto employed cooler colors than Canaletto, however, and showed a stronger feeling for landscape and sky in his *vedute*, or views. Inducted into the Venetian painters' guild at the early age of seventeen, Bellotto had an influential backer in his uncle Canaletto, who probably needed help to satisfy the great demand for his cityscapes.

Traveling to Rome and northern Italy in the 1740s, Bellotto painted his first *vedute ideale*, or imaginary views. Always maintaining his appreciation of architectural form and the varying tones of differing skies, Bellotto's compositions evolved from sparsely populated, evocative stillness to foregrounds of milling crowds and hustle-bustle. In 1747, he moved to Dresden, becoming the Saxon court's highest paid artist. With the Prussian occupation of Dresden in 1756, Bellotto worked in Vienna and Munich. In 1768, Bellotto became court painter in Warsaw. His

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topographically accurate *vedute*, valuable as both art and history, were used to reconstruct Warsaw after the Second World War.

### **Questions for Teaching**

Take the time to look closely at the reproduction of the painting.

Describe the painting. What do you see?

Would you want to visit this place? What would you do?

Using the “Architecture Vocabulary”, what architectural elements can you identify? (See the Getty website at [http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom\\_resources/curricula/art\\_architecture/arch\\_vocabulary.pdf](http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/art_architecture/arch_vocabulary.pdf).) What architectural elements stand out to you?

The vantage point is the place where the artist was sitting or standing when he or she made the painting. What vantage point did Bellotto use?

(If it is helpful, prompt students to compare different vantage points. Pick a space on axis, have some students stand on axis, others to either side. Have students describe what they can see from their particular vantage point.

Using the “Elements of Art” handout as reference (see the Getty website at [http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building\\_lessons/elements\\_art.pdf](http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements_art.pdf)), have a class discussion about how two-dimensional **shapes** (circles, triangles, squares) can be transformed into three-dimensional **forms** (spheres, pyramids, cubes).

Discuss Bellotto’s methods for representing a three-dimensional (3-D) building in a two-dimensional (2-D) painting. How successful was he?

Compare Bellotto’s painting with *The Interior of St. Bavo, Haarlem* by Pieter Jansz. Saenredam. Discuss how each artist used architectural elements—in an indoor space (Saenredam) vs. outdoor space (Bellotto).