



**Bernardo Bellotto, born in Venice on the 20 May 1722, is one of the greatest protagonists of the European artistic life of the XVIII century.** Nephew and pupil of Antonio Canal, known as Canaletto (Venice 1697-1768), he learned to paint views at the age of sixteen, becoming the alter ego of his master and uncle. When he was just eighteen years old, surpassing the skills of his master, commissions from the most relevant Italian courts, brought him to **Florence, Lucca, Rome, Milan, Turin and Verona.** **He definitively left Venice in 1747, invited to Dresden** at the court of **Augustus III, king of Poland,** elector of Saxony. During the Seven Years War, the first *European war*, Bellotto took refuge in **Königstein, Wien and Munich,** to serve *the* respective monarchies: the empress of the Austro-Hungarian empire, **Maria Theresa of Austria,** and the king **Maximilian Joseph III.** The beauty of European capitals are immortalized in its monumental paintings, now exposed in the main museums around the world.

Bellotto loved to portray not only landscapes, he was furthermore attracted by the everyday life in such detail, that he left not only masterpieces of Art, but also precious narrative documents of those times. Obsessed by finding the right point of view with his "camera obscura", he was a sort of film director *ante-litteram*. We discover the narrative power of his paintings, giving a voice to the secret world of the many characters of his paintings, like in a Tolstoy tale.

**Following his journey through Europe, we also explore the most important European architectural and artistic heritage memorialized in his paintings and we find out that many places didn't change at all:** the Zwinger Palace in Dresden, the Bevedere and Schonbrunn Palaces in Austria, the places portrayed in Venice, Rome, Florence and Munich. The last stop of his endless European trip, **was Warsaw,** where he arrived in the winter of 1767, after the destruction of Dresden. The meeting with the last Polish king **Stanislaw August Poniatowski,** enlightened patron of foreign artists, will enhance him to stay in Warsaw until his death on November 1780. Bellotto, as court painter, observes the last years of Polish history, praising the beauty of nature and landscapes and documenting the Baroque Warsaw with a series of twenty-two extraordinary views of the city and four of Wilanów, Poland's national treasures conserved in the *Royal Castle and in the National Museum of Warsaw.* Those paintings have a dramatic history: brought to Russia by *Tsar Nicholas I,* carried back in 1922, miraculously saved during the fire of the Royal Castle in September 1939, the paintings were stolen by the German Gestapo in 1940 and returned only in 1945, just in time to help for the **reconstruction of the cities of Warsaw and**

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BELLOTTO, CALLED "CANALETTO"  
from Venice to the rest of Europe  
*Elena de Varda*

**Dresden, completely destroyed during WWII.**

**On May 2022, the anniversary of the 300 years of the birth of Bellotto, is a great opportunity to rediscover him** on the background of European history and artistic heritage, of which he was a precious witness. We will use the best photographic technology to explore the paintings, revealing details otherwise difficult to perceive. We will give voice to many of his highly defined characters who populate his paintings highlighting the narrative power of his paintings, visual stories of those times. Scientific curator will be Bożena Anna Kowalczyk, one of the major international scholars of Bellotto and Canaletto.

### **DIRECTOR NOTES**

The main goal is to allow the viewer to enjoy the paintings of Bellotto in an absolutely new and original way: thanks to the best and most advanced shooting technology the viewer will be plunged in the world of Bellotto's paintings observing such marvelous details, otherwise difficult to notice, at first sight. I will use computerized motion control when we will shoot in some special environments, such as in the Royal Castle in Warsaw or in the Gemälde Galerie in Dresden, to obtain a fluid and perfect camera movement.

Taking inspiration from the great art historian Roberto Longhi, who compares Bellotto's views to Tolstoy's narrative stories, I will give a special life of sound to the paintings, as if they were great narrative works. One of the best Polish sound designers will collaborate with me revealing the richness of sound details in such representations.

Bellotto will transform himself into a film director of narrative scenes: the myriad of characters that Bellotto documents, in different attitudes and costumes, will acquire voice and sound through a very high definition audio, interpreted and dubbed by professional actors. Some of those characters will come out from the picture, becoming real, a surrealistic effect.

Through the participation of a reconstruction group, specialized in the seventeenth century in Warsaw, directed by the Italian actor Alberto Macchi, I will have the opportunity to recreate some costume scenes, though perhaps too expensive.

Those reconstruction and fiction scenes are important to immerse ourselves in that historical time and lets us understand deeply the life, the character and the technique of Bellotto.

I will use the development of time to make a detailed iconographic research of places around Europe, immortalized by Bellotto, to understand how to connect the images and the storytelling of the paintings with the contemporary world. Some places in Florence, Venice, Dresden, Monachium (is this Munich?), Vienna and Warsaw have remained almost identical, while others have changed a lot. I would like to outline the beauty of the architectural European Heritage of the eighteenth century, comparing the paintings with the contemporary world and finding the same shooting angle of the views of Bellotto,

For years I have been dealing with films related to art, having graduated in Painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow and later in History and Philosophy from the State University of Milan. Over the years I have developed a deep sensitivity on painting and colour. My latest documentary fiction, "Artists on strike", enhances the role of important Polish artists during the historical process of freedom from the Soviet dictatorship.

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The participation of Bellotto's greatest expert in the world is essential to guarantee not only the historical artistic truth of the film, but its distribution in the major museums of the world, which sometimes are equipped with internal cinemas.

A peculiar role will have also the element of water: the small paper boat is a metaphor of the artist's journey; the water could also be used to investigate in some peculiar reflexes of light.

*Elena de Varda*