

Les Deux Canaletto – Octave Uzanne
Paris, 1907

Les deux Canaletto

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Published **1907** by [H. Laurens](#) in [Paris](#) .

Written in [French / français](#)

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Bellotto wasted no time in making the generous Brühl his friend and protector. The minister employed him to decorate the prince's galleries but, having a very refined taste himself, never missed the opportunity to collect, among the artist's architectural works, canvasses where gratitude had stimulated his brush, but for which payment remained delayed year after year.

This was the period when in all senses Bellotto roamed Dresden of former times, largely disappeared today [1907], but seen again in the evocative pictures which so notably enrich galleries in Germany.

Whether rich neighbourhoods ornamented by palaces, or poor neighbourhoods overshadowed by their finely trimmed steeples, Bellotto painted them all with a facility that was a credit to his spirit as an artist; he was a master of technique and an apostle of his art.

Sometimes the memory of his Venetian birthplace haunted him. He took the opportunity to monetize the precision of his memory. He composed canvasses where, before his eyes in his voluntary exile, the beauty of his homeland lived again.

Maybe some preserved sketches helped him, or earlier etchings, or even etchings made after works by his uncle. The fact remains that, even though these were studio works, the canvasses that resulted from this Venetian nostalgia are worthy of high regard and render the truth of the layout and colouration with almost rigorous precision. From time to time, if only slightly, a façade may be wider in the picture than it is in reality, an island moved slightly to the left, an arm of the Canal broadened (1).¹ Bernardo Bellotto, a citizen of Dresden by choice, remained Venetian at heart.

Moreover, you only have to look at the skies of Germany to see again the undeniable reflection of great swathes of light which, on bright days, pour over the lagoon and its horizons. And it was not only the facades of those German palaces, where the cool tonalities of Venetian marble reappear, that opened his eyes to the splendour of art.

¹ *La Piazzetta* – Musée de Lille.