

TRINITY FINE ART



VITTORIO ZECCHIN

(Murano 1878-1947)

Landscape (Annunciation), 1918

Oil on canvas, 36.2 x 36.4 cm; 14.2 x 14.3 in

Signed below right: VZ

Provenance:

Private Collection, Italy

Bibliography:

Il wagnerismo nelle arti visive in Italia, exh. cat. (Venice, 8 December 2012 - 8 April 2013), ed. P. Bolpagni, Milan 2012, n. IV.19, p. 143 (Illustrating a second identical composition);

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M. Finazzi in *Liberty in Italia. Artisti alla ricerca del moderno*, exh. cat. (Reggio Emilia, 5 November 2016 - 14 February 2017), ed. F. Parisi, A. Villari, Cinisello Balsamo 2016, n. 286, p. 295.

Exhibitions:

Mostra di bozzetti di pittura e scultura, indetta dal Gruppo femminile dell'Associazione Trento, Lido di Venezia, 1919;

Artisti alla ricerca del moderno (5 November 2016 - 14 February 2017), ed. F. Parisi, A. Villari; *Maria Monaci Gallenga. Arte e moda tra le due guerre* (Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, 17 April - 3 June 2018), ed. I. de Guttry, M.P. Maino with G. Raimondi and G. Tarquini.

Vittorio Zecchin (May 21, 1878 Murano, Italy - April 15, 1947) was an influential Italian painter, tapestry maker, furniture designer, and glass designer who may rightly be said to have both renewed and revolutionised all of these areas, bringing new ideas about composition, colour and form which revitalised stagnant industries in Venice and contributed to making it once again into a centre of innovation, experimentation and design. In 1896 he enrolled in Venice's Accademia di Belle Arti, where his teacher Augusto Sezanne, a painter close to the artistic circles of Munich who was himself influenced by the work of Böcklin and Von Stuck, played a decisive formative role. However, after five years of study there, Zecchin experienced an existential crisis due to the differing paths he and his professors wished to take artistically, with the former insisting rigidly on a very narrow traditional view of art, so Zecchin decided that his only option was to leave.

His disillusion was such that he initially gave up on being an artist believing that the conservative Venetian establishment would not understand or accept his work and spent eight long years firstly as a civil servant, then as a glass blower in Murano. After a couple of years in the wilderness, his artistic vocation started to re-emerge, and he began to engage with Venetian artistic circles, with frequent visits to the Venice Biennales which allowed him to immerse himself in the latest European artistic currents of the time. At the 1905 Venice Biennale, Zecchin

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was particularly impressed by the Symbolist style in the works of the Dutch-Indonesian painter Jan Toorop whose rhythmically undulating lines and the flat, angular profiles provided to be influential in forming his pictorial language. In 1909, he became involved in the transformation of the former palace of Ca' Pesaro into a modern art museum. At this time Ca' Pesaro became a focus of the Venetian avant-garde and a source of ideas and inspiration which allowed and inspired Zecchin to fully immerse himself in his artistic career, creating small representative paintings incorporating the colours and shapes that he had become highly familiar with at the glass workshops, alongside other young artists such as Amedeo Modigliani, Umberto Boccioni, and Teodoro Wolf Ferrari. Moreover in 1910, he became familiar with the Secessionist movement through a decisive encounter with the work of Gustav Klimt which was shown that year at the Wiener Werkstätte in Venice, an event that was to leave a lasting impression on Zecchin's life and work. Through the dedication and resources of its benefactor, Countess Felicitá Bevilacqua, Ca' Pesaro became an influential modern art museum, and Venice was transformed into one of the most vibrant and cultural cities in Europe at that time.

Zecchin exhibited at the Roman Secessions (1913, 1914 and 1915), as well as in Munich (1913), and in 1914, realized the perhaps most famous and important work of his career, the series of panels depicting the *One Thousand and One Nights* for a room of the Hotel Terminus in Venice which was a synthesis and crystallisation of all the influences received from the secessionist movement beyond the Alps.

Ca'Pesaro played a pivotal role in Zecchin's career since not only did he come into contact there with the Venetian secessionist movement, but he also met Teodoro Wolf-Ferrari (1878-1945), with whom he formed a lasting artistic partnership and who was also much influenced by Viennese Secessionism. In the present work *Annunciation*, we can glimpse echoes of the influence of Wolf-Ferrari's symbolist landscapes, characterized by a linear simplification of natural geometry as it appears in the landscape. This simplification of line spilled over into Zecchin's glass designs especially in the translations that he would make from painting into glass, with a distinctive personal pictorial language of strong linear silhouettes, classical proportions and intense shades of yellow, green, blue and amethyst combined with an ethereal delicacy. As in the works of Wolf-Ferrari, in this painting there seem to be elements that are

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influenced by the work of the Nabis group in France, most notably that of Maurice Denis, with characteristic flat patches of colour, bold contours and simplified drawing.

The *Annunciation*, which was probably conceived as a sketch for a larger decorative panel or tapestry, has a strongly two-dimensional conception of space with a juxtaposition of *à plat* geometric elements, all overlaid by the quintessentially Venetian, almost transparent colours, in a harmony played out in shades of green, blue and pink, which anticipate those he later used for the glass that he designed for Vetri Soffiati Muranesi Cappellin Venini & C from 1921 onwards. In the same manner that Cappellin and Venini's vases represent some of the most elegant and successful aspects of Italian art déco, so this canvas anticipates the geometrical compositions and sharp outlines characteristically encountered in the decorative taste of the inter-war period (particularly noticeable in the silhouettes of the trees and in the two thin daisies that refer to the title of the painting, *Annunciation*) of which Zecchin was an important protagonist.

Zecchin maintained a very close and valuable collaboration with the collector and textile designer, Maria Monaci Gallenga, who was both friend and supporter of the artist and his work. This support would prove to be central to his career during this period, reaching its zenith with his participation to the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* of 1925. Indeed on the occasion of his exhibition at the 1919 *Mostra di bozzetti di pittura e scultura* at the Venice Lido, Maria purchased the present work, almost as if sanctioning the beginning of their partnership. Two versions of the painting are known, the present one and another in the Collezione F.B. collection in Rome, identical in every aspect, including the technical details of canvas and frame. Recently the F.B. copy was displayed at the exhibition dedicated to Maria Monaci Gallenga at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of Rome.