

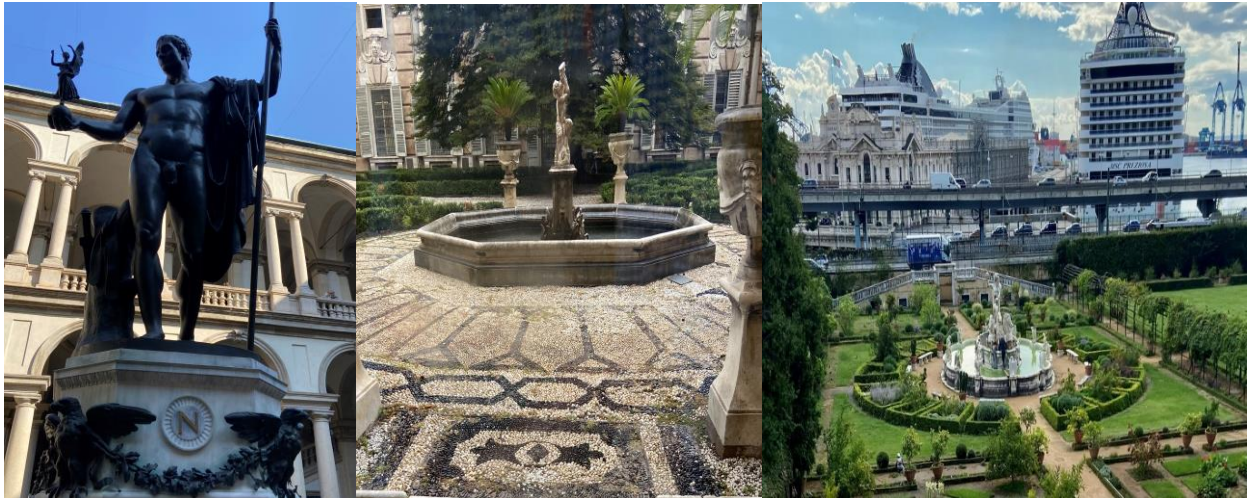
Trip to Italy Oct 2 to Oct 17 with the Decorative Arts Trust



Chrissy, Callen and I arrived at Milan at 8:30 AM and found our way to the Marriott/Sheraton hotel. It is huge hotel with 300 rooms but thanks to Covid, largely empty. We were allowed to go directly to our room, requiring 500 foot walk down an endless corridor. Slept until 2:00 AM (wake up time in New York). Callen has planter fasciitis and had to limp. I went to the food court in the airport and got fruit and Greek yogurt for Chrissy and Callen. The pool was not accessible, but the main restaurant was a delightful place for us to have dinner. The restaurant was filled with plants and Italian design featuring slanted pillar lamps with flowing skirts and metal mesh screens that looked like distressed wood. Wonderful food. I had pasta with prawns and Chrissy and Callen had fish.

We slept the next morning until 7:00 AM (2:00 AM NYC) and then met Nick Vincent, Christina De Leon, and Carrie Greif for the trip to Genoa. Milan is on the fertile plane, but to get to the Mediterranean we had to cross steep hills. We met Gray and Mary Kay Parker from New Orleans on the way down. At 4:00 we enjoyed a slide show about the history of Genova and learned about the Islamic influences among the Genovese traders. Five course dinner with much wine and happy conversation lasted for almost four hours. We met scholar Yao Fen You, Keith and Janet Lindgren. The Hotel Bistol was welcoming and conveniently close to our walks along the Genoa's famous arcades.





We walked the Via Garibaldi, a successful 15th century housing development. We found a statue of Napoleon minimizing lady liberty and exhibiting his own hunky self. We saw black and white pebble designs in gardens and amazing stone floors and sidewalks. From a palace we could see fantastic gardens, and the waterfront marred by two monstrous tour vessels. Followed by a wonderful lunch with Tom O'Connor and Susan Coffin on the waterfront area designed by Renzo Piano. The waterfront still needs to be better integrated with the rest of the town. We then met for cocktails at a wonderful home of Lumellino family. They are intensely supportive of the Lourdes foundation, and providing help for poor people at the seaport.



The next day we visited the tombs of the cathedral San Lorenzo in whose basement we found beautifully carved religious objects in 15th century silver, and a carved relief of the last supper.

There were many statues of horses. A battle horse from the 17th century with horse hair over wood, and statue of Garibaldi who unified Italy in the middle of the 19th century.



The final night in Genoa featured a lovely if lengthy dinner at the Whist club, a men's sporting club. The Whist club has around 700 members. It is supported by the rents from the high-end stores in the arcade below the club. It is huge, ornate, cultural, and historical. Puts American men's clubs to shame. Italy has not done what Brittan or the US did to limit the inherited wealth from great families. It appears to be governed by around 1000 families that compete with each other, work together to do business, and celebrate with their art, gardens and beautiful homes.

The trip from Genova to Turin began with a 2-hour bus trip from Genoa to Gavi where we visited Tenuta La Marchesa, a vineyard with over 200 acres of grapes with pomegranates, pears and fruits. The wine is light and relatively free from sulfides or oak barreling. They fed us wonderful food, which we relished in a warm comfortable setting. The owner remarked that the main problem with farming is making any money. They have an 8-room guest house that then rent to groups and large families. However, it is not close to town and would be hard to reach.



We travelled to Castello di Montaldeo, a high Piedmont castle owned by the Giulini family. Wonderful lunch and views of the valleys below. Met the 25 year old daughter who manages a contemporary art gallery in Milan, whom we hoped to visit at when we return to Milan.



On Saturday, we went to the Palazzo Real in Turin and marveled at the state and opulence in their golden century under the Savoy in the 16th century. Napoleon initiated city plans that generated an attractive and successful city, one that also built Fiat cars and was heavily bombed in WW2.



Then we visited the Egyptian Museum which features outstanding artifacts from the Italian explorers in the 19th century. The images below show a priest dominating over a ruler and a happy husband and wife pair.

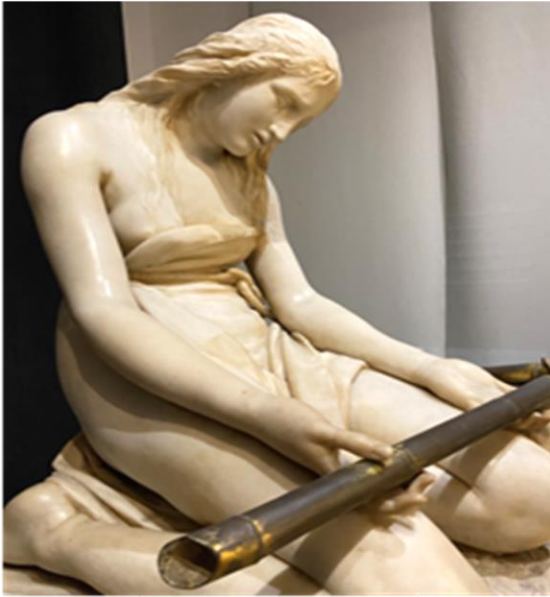
We were inspired by military might, and amused by dancers in a 19 century dance hall. Joel and Chrissy are the photographers caught by a mirror in the latter picture.



The complex brick frieze below, celebrates the victory of French soldiers over the Iroquois in 17th century Americas. A much later statue in white and black marble reenacts Solomon's threat to cut the disputed baby in two.



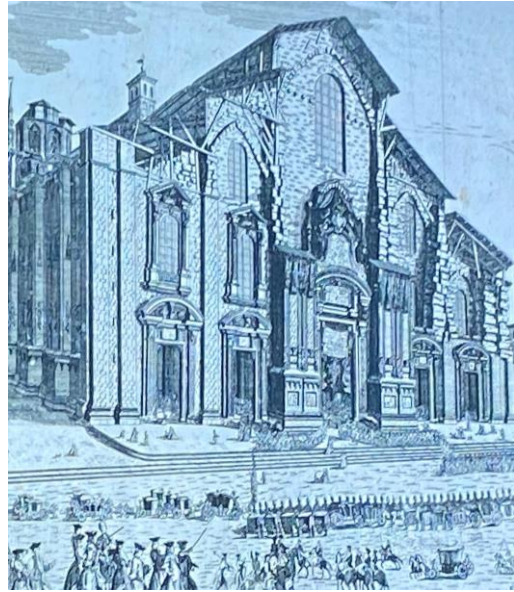
Palazzo Reale featured a da Vinci's last supper in a church whose front nave was changed from gothic and Romanesque style to that of renaissance focus on clean lines, perspectives geometric beauty. We were moved by compelling sculptures of Mary Magdalene mourning the death of Jesus and the Virgin Mother holding his body following his crucifixion



From Turin, we bussed to the industrial city of Milan. Milan is a huge central city, with a heavily built central area and narrow streets that were originally canals. We stayed at the Four Seasons, over-the-top with space, features and prices. The first day we walked to LaScala Theater, and the entrance to the grand Galleria, which was mobbed and where people had difficulty finding rest rooms.



In the central square we visited the Duomo, whose interior was too grand for human scale or the images within. We agreed with Jefferson who found it in 1880 to be even then an enormous cost in resources that could have been better used to improve the city.



We sympathized with Mothers trying to train unruly children



We saw prayers for the crusades and Dante with his muses Mathelde and Beatrice



We witnessed devotion, a scandalous kiss and mourning for a lost husband

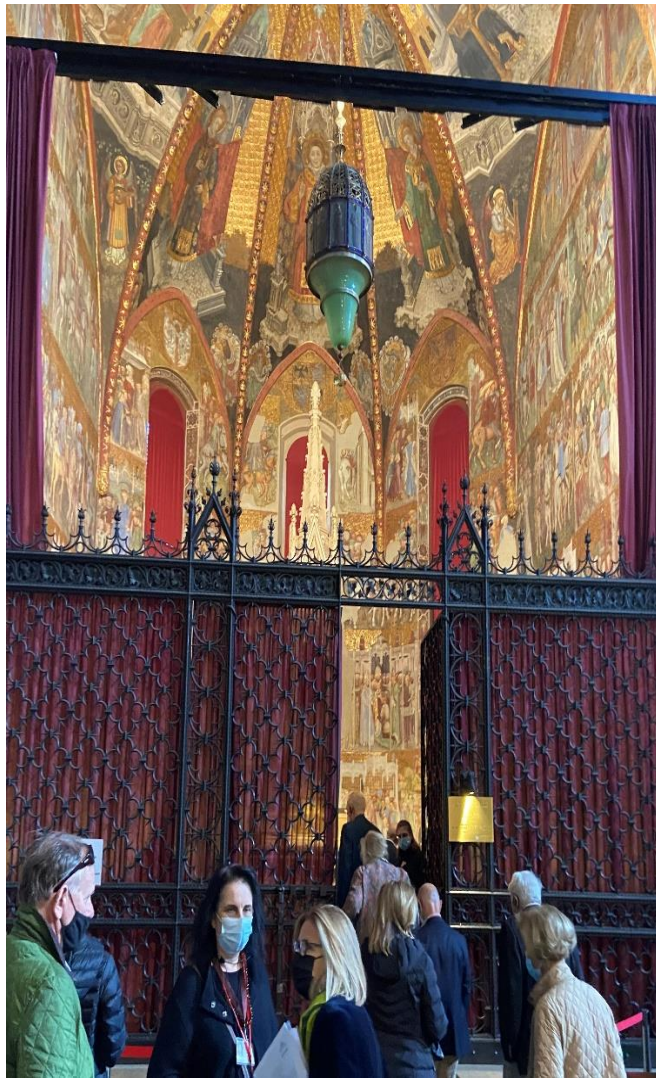


Then we went shopping for cashmere inspiring Callen and Chrissy to have a luxurious but vigorous swim in the Four Season Pool.



Finally, Inspired by a queen's setting Chrissy and I had our own delightful and reasonably priced dinner right across from Four Seasons with Tom O'Connor, Sarah Coffin, and Callen McJunkin.

The first day of the extension we traveled from Milan to Monza where we marveled at the 5th century chapel of Thoedelinda, a very important leader who married two different men and set the family structure for future generations.



Following that, we went to the Villa Medici Giulini where we had a lovely lunch and then music, from a collection of 100 keyboards, culminating in a joint singing of the national anthem and a Marx brothers' silent film with a live piano. Their garden defines grand visual paths from the villa.



We then traveled to Como. The Villa Flori has small rooms that open with balconies onto extraordinary views of Lake Como. Our dinner there was OK, and breakfast was limited but fast.



The next day we bussed to Bergamo and rode a funicular rail to admire a contemporary lectern in the Basilica Santa Maria



In the Piazza del Duomo we had hot chocolate on a cold morning and later marveled at the heavenly rooms of the Colleoni Chapel



Then we had a delightful lunch at Palazzo Agliardi built on the southern exposure of the Bergamo hill. Dinner that night was at the hotel.

The last day we took a boat to the Villa Balbianello. The micro climate caused by the lake assures that summers are cool, winters warm and always moist. The climbing figs are trained to provide rococo design that contrasts with the softness of evergreen oaks and conifers.



The last owner of Balbianello was Count Monzina, an explorer, cartographer and collector. He climbed Everest and went to the North Pole, collected native sculpture, bought ancient Tang and Ming dynasty horses. No time for a wife so he left the home to the Italian Trust, it is used extravagant weddings and extraordinary tours.



We then returned by boat to Bellagio, Lake Como's well-stocked tourist trap. Chrissy bought clothes for our grandchildren. Then followed a lovely walk through the gardens of Villa Pisani with trees from elsewhere like a cedar of Lebanon, a Mexican pine, and evergreen oaks. We ended in the embrace of an intimate marble burial chapel.



After returning by boat to the hotel we rode Mercedes limousines up a torturous winding hill road to the Villa Dosso Pisani for an unforgettable final dinner. Built at the end of the 19th century, this concrete and steel structure melded classic revival, modern, and art deco styles. The result was massive, eccentric, with decorations that appeared unfinished, featuring snakes appearing in surprising places. The owner reveled in the central symbol of the thistle that combined sharp danger with purple flowers. The furnishings often displayed comfortable Macintosh modern designs. This experience helped prepared us for modernism and our flights home the next morning.



