

International Exhibitions | West and East, fine art at International Exhibitions | Historical revocations

Orientalism influenced paintings of historic and religious subjects.

During the romantic period, many artists attributed the qualities of civil liberties and a commitment to civil society to remote historical figures, often as the result of political submission. The subjects chosen frequently represented a glorious past, interwoven with heroic acts, and imbued with a symbolism that reminded viewers of their national identity. Besides “official” history paintings, other works, which were very well received by progressive groups in Europe, could also be found at International Exhibitions. Amidst a period when Orientalism in painting continued to establish itself by depicting both religious subjects and what might be termed “historical costume dramas”, and in the wake of an Orientalism that was finally split between realism and historical documentation—characteristic of the work of many artists who were attracted to learn through travel to the East—the large painting of Stephen Ussi appeared. The Ussi represents an interesting example of an important commission, awarded by the Viceroy of Egypt to a Western artist in 1869, on the occasion of the opening of the Suez Canal. It was exhibited at the Vienna Exhibition of 1873.



Working Number: IT2 104

Name: The Expulsion of the Duke of Athens

Holding Museum: National Gallery of Modern Art (GNAM)

Date: 1860

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: This work won the silver medal at the Paris exhibition of 1867. It represents the historical fall of Gualtieri di Brienne Duke of Athens and controversial tyrant of Florence (1342#3). This theme, which the artist had been studying since 1854, is a metaphorical representation of political ambition and national identity against foreign domination.



Working Number: IT2 018

Name: An Elephant; An indian Ox; An Antelope

Holding Museum: National Gallery of Modern Art (GNAM)

Date: 1853

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: Studies for After the Flood, commissioned by King Vittorio Emanuele II of Italy and shown at the Exhibition held in Paris in 1867, where it obtained the gold medal. In the final work, elements of the “exotic”, which the painter had probably witnessed in France, are integrated with a background story from the Bible.



Working Number: TR2 177

Name: Surre Procession

Holding Museum: The Painting Collection of the The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Vice Secretary General, National Palaces, Dolmabahçe Palace

Date: 1873

Materials: 1873

Curator Justification: Oil on canvas

This work (commissioned in 1869 to mark the opening of the Suez Canal) represents an interesting example of an Occidental artist commissioned by an Islamic patron. The huge painting, presented at exhibition held in Vienna in 1873, realistically depicts the religious procession carrying gifts from Cairo to the Ka'aba at Mecca.



Working Number: IT2 019

Name: The Temptations of Saint Antony

Holding Museum: National Gallery of Modern Art (GNAM)

Date: 1878

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: In this complex work by Morelli, exhibited at the exhibition held in Paris in 1878, the Orientalist component, linked with intense elements of verismo or realism, enhances a strong, mystic, but at the same time, erotic, tension of the hagiographic tale. The painting was probably inspired by Gustave Flaubert's 1874 La tentation de Saint-Antoine (The Temptation of Saint Anthony).



Working Number: RS 004

Name: Coronation Of Tsar Dušan

Holding Museum: The National Museum

Date: 1900

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: Commissioned by the Kingdom of Serbia and shown at the exhibition held in Paris in 1900, the painting won a gold medal. To prepare the historical subject, Jovanovic travelled for two years throughout Vienna, Constantinople, Venice, Skopje and in Kosovo and Metohija, and then used a plein air technique to depict this most epic historical landmark of the nation.



Working Number: RS 005

Name: Fall of Stala#

Holding Museum: The National Museum

Date: 1900

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: The painting, commissioned by King Aleksandar Obrenović for the Paris exhibition of 1900, represents the inevitable fall of the town which is under attack by the Ottoman Turks. While it was rejected beforehand by the exhibition committee on account of its excessively violent realism, a largely Serbian audience flocked in thousands to admire the work.