

# GIACOMO CANEVA



Presence of Caneva. Detail of n°7

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Piazza del Popolo. Detail of n°3

### **Giacomo Caneva (1813-1865), Italian photographer and painter**

Giacomo Caneva was born at Padua on the 4th of July 1813 of Giuseppe Caneva and Anna Pavan. There were four other children, Antonio, Giovanni, Camillo and Teresa, who died as a child. The father was well-to-do, and was the owner of the "Albergo al Principe Carlo" in Prato della Valle. Caneva left Padua on the 12th of November 1834 to register at the Regia Accademia di Belle Arti at Venice (Royal Academy of Fine Arts) where, in particular, he followed the School of the Perspective of Tranquillo Orsi. Here he qualified as a "perspective painter" and widened his knowledge of the camera obscura, which he used in his paintings.

In 1840, Caneva moved to Rome with Giuseppe Jappelli (1783-1851), called by Prince Alessandro Torlonia for the arrangement of greenery in the southern area of Villa Torlonia in Rome.

The e-bulletins present articles as well as selections of books, albums, photographs and documents as they have been handed down to the actual owners by their creators and by amateurs from past generations.

The seven salted prints are part of a private collection

**N°27-2018. GIACOMO CANEVA**

Caneva successfully superintended the works carried out at the Villa Torlonia as a couple of contemporary chronicles attest his presence at Rome and mention him as being ingenious, enterprising, and interested in new things (N. Pietrucci, 1858; N. Roncalli. 1844-1870).

Some of his paintings survive from this early period: two canvases painted at Rome, which today are in the Museo Civico at Padua (a view of the Pantheon, commissioned by Jacopo Treves in 1843. and a view of the temple of Vesta in 1844), and a canvas in a private collection representing the Prato della Valle of Padua.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1847 he went up in a balloon with François Arban. who had come to Rome that year after making several ascents in Italy and other parts of Europe. In a letter to friends, Caneva recounts his ascent and gives a marvellous description of the panorama of Rome and the surrounding countryside. He went up again two months latter from the Villa Borghese with Arban and the Venetian painter Ippolito Caffi.

His innate inclination for novelty awakened an interest in photography immediately after its invention. He began his photographic career as a daguerreotypist, according to notes left by his friend Tommaso Cuccioni, who later became a photographer himself. However, as things stand at present, his daguerreotypes cannot be individualized. He is recorded in the famous list of artists' addresses which was begun at the Caffé Greco in 1845: "G. Caneva. Painter and Photographer, Via Sistina 100," and then, "Via del Corso 446. near S. Carlo."

The daguerreotype process now seemed to him to be superseded by the calotype process. Paper photography is then described in all its variations: the method of W.H. Fox-Talbot, the improvements of Blanquart-Evrard, Gustave Le Gray, Humbert de Molard, Guillot Saguez, and those of Stephane Geoffray. The greater part of Caneva's photographs that have survived are calotypes. The main collection is the ICCD, Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione at Rome, consisting of 131 calotypes attributable to Caneva, arrived with the Tuminello Fund, the first acquisition made by the *Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale* in the era of its foundation by Giovanni Gargioli (1906).

Quite early on, Caneva combined practice with theory, and in 1855 wrote "*Della fotografia, trattato pratico di Giacomo Caneva, Pittore prospettico*" (A practical Treatise on Photography by Giacomo Caneva, Perspective Painter"), in which he reveals a detailed knowledge of techniques such as the calotype process.



Cloaca Massima, detail of n°4

In his treatise of 1855, Caneva shows his acquaintance with the albumen process on glass invented by A. Niepce de Saint Victor, and the damp collodion process on glass invented by F. Scott Archer. In the same year he diffused an album *Vedute di Roma e dei contorni in fotografia* (Photographic Views of Rome and Surroundings). He also took many important photographs around Naples, which show stupendous panoramas of the sea, Vesuvius and the ruins at Pompeii.



Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Instantanné, 1859, courtesy Giuseppe Vanzela, Treviso

The magazine *L'Artista*, published in Milan in 1859 by Luigi Sacchi, one of the foremost photographers from the beginning, gives details of a grand enterprise in which Caneva took part, a journey to India and China. The "famous Caneva of Rome," was the photographer chosen by the silk producers Castellani and Freschi to participate in an expedition to seek new silkworms untouched by disease. The aim was to select and bring to Europe a massive quantity of silkworm eggs in order to stem the epidemic of "pebrina" which had been devastating the cocoon harvests of Mediterranean Europe for some years and to restart production.

Of the pictures he took on this expedition there, it was believed only remained a few engravings taken from the photographs, a salted paper in the collection of Piero Becchetti at Rome, and the relative calotype in the ICCD at Rome, some salt prints in the Getty Research Center until was recently found a new group.

In 1859 two important Italian silk expeditions left for China, one of which led by two Friulian notables, Gherardo Freschi and Giovan Battista Castellani. Despite the efforts made, the results were very disappointing, but on a scientific and cognitive level a very important result was achieved. Castellani, in fact, to respond to the concerns of Europeans on the adaptability of Chinese silkworms to our climates and farming techniques, went to the heart of the most listed district of China for quality production and resided there for over six weeks, carrying out two series of comparative farms, one Italian and the other Chinese. Castellani kept an accurate diary of this experiment, enriched by dozens and dozens of notes on practices, customs, habits and peculiarities of the local sericulture. The study was published on his return, in 1860, under the title "*The breeding of silkworms in China, made and observed on the spot*", a text of over 200 pages with eight engraved plates, some of which were taken from original photographs taken by Giacomo Caneva from Padua, one of the greatest Italian photographers of the mid-nineteenth century who had participated in the expedition.

A copy of Castellani's text was presented and described in 2012 to the Director of the China National Silk Museum in Hangzhou, Dr. Zhao Feng, who immediately appreciated its importance, especially with regard to the minute knowledge of past sericultural practices in such an important area. It was therefore decided, in collaboration with the Department of Historical, Geographical and Antiquity Sciences of the University of Padua, to proceed with the translation of the text into English and Chinese, under the supervision of Professor Claudio Zanier of the University of Pisa.

Meanwhile, by an extraordinary coincidence, some dozens of original photos of Caneva, taken during his trip to China, have appeared on the market of antiques photos, which were believed to be completely lost. Most of them were purchased by the Treviso collector Giuseppe Vanzella and have been generously made available for inclusion in the volume. Now they will be presented for the first time in the exhibition at "La Vigna", which will accompany the presentation of the volume of Castellani in the Sino-English version, appeared in spring 2016, published by one of the major university publishers in China, the Zhejiang University Press, which, in turn, will be presented to the Italian public for the first time in Vicenza. All this is enriched by an exhibition of volumes on silk belonging to the rich heritage of the Library.

**Return from China, late years and posterity**

In 1864 Caneva was paid to revise the inventory of the photographic material in the studio of his friend Tommaso Cuccioni, who had died a short time before. None of his photographs is known to have been taken after his return from China in 1860, and nothing is known of his last years. He died in Rome on the 29th of March 1865 and is buried in the cemetery at Campo Verano.

Many calotypes of Giacomo Caneva were printed after his death by his friend Ludovico Tuminello who returned to Rome in 1869 after a long exile. Tuminello wrote captions on Caneva's paper negatives and sold albumen prints with his own captions and name and this, before it was understood, created considerable confusion in the recent years.

His activities at Rome are bound up with the "*Roman School of Photography*", the photographic circle that emerged at the Caffè Greco in Via Condotti shortly before 1850. Other members were Frédéric Flachéron, Eugene Constant and, for a short time, the goldsmith Augusto Castellani and Ludovico Tuminello. Caneva has the merit of having taken the first calotype to attest the activity of this Roman circle, view of the piazza Bocca della Verità, signed and dated "*Gi. Caneva 1847.*"

From the beginning he and other Roman friends devoted themselves to taking photographs of the monuments of Rome, using the knowledge they had acquired in their studies of design and perspective. These views reveal their confident mastery of the calotype technique, following first Flacheron process inspired by woman photographer Amélie Saguez, later the method of Gustave Le Gray, and after 1852, he systematically took photographs for artists. His studies of nature are the first examples of the genre and thus precede the later popularity of such views, which spread throughout Europe. The extremely high quality that he achieved is due to the use of very large apparatus instead of the daguerreotype machines that he had at the beginning of his career. The continuing refinement of expression, obtained through his increasing mastery of the medium, and his continual updating of technical equipment gave him at the height of his career results of great originality, in which the determining role was played by his own creative gifts and his previous training as an artist.

(Main excerpts from the *Encyclopedia of 19<sup>th</sup> Century photography*, ICCD notices and *Luminous Lint*)



Weekly Drawing by Théophile Bouchet: "Meeting at the Caffè Greco"



**Giacomo Caneva (1813-1865). La Crescenza, detta Valle del Poussin, c. 1850**

*Salt paper print from paper negative (calotype), 175x235 mm, vintage paper mount with Italian caption, possibly in the artist or his assistant's hand: "Valle del Poussin a la Crescenza", pencil.*



**Giacomo Caneva (1813-1865). Via Appia Antica, Rome, c. 1850**

*Salt paper print from paper negative (calotype), 175x235 mm, vintage paper mount with Italian caption: "Via Appia a 5 miglia da Roma", pencil.*



**Giacomo Caneva (1813-1865). Piazza del Popolo, Rome, c. 1850**

*Salt paper print from paper negative (calotype), 175x235 mm, vintage paper mount with Italian caption: "Veduta della Piazza del Popolo vista dal Monte Pincio", pencil.*



**Giacomo Caneva (1813-1865). Cloaca Massima, Rome, c. 1850**

*Salt paper print from paper negative (calotype), 175x235 mm, vintage paper mount with Italian caption: "Tempio di Vesta, Cloaca Massima", pencil.*



**Giacomo Caneva (1813-1865). Piazza Navona, Rome, c. 1850**

*Salt paper print from paper negative (calotype), 175x235 mm, vintage paper mount with Italian caption: "Antico Circo Agonale, ora Piazza Navona", pencil.*



**Giacomo Caneva (1813-1865). Fontana di Trevi, Rome, c. 1850**

*Salt paper print from paper negative (calotype), 175x235 mm, vintage paper mount with Italian caption: "Acqua Vergine, Fontana di Trevi", pencil.*



**Giacomo Caneva (1813-1865). Cloisters, St. Paul's outside the Walls, Rome, c. 1850**

*Salt paper print from paper negative (calotype), 175x235 mm, vintage paper mount with English caption: "Cloisters Basilica of St Paul", pencil.*

### **Giacomo Caneva (Padoue, 1813-Rome, 1865)**

*“Après s’être formé à l’Accademia de Venise, il s’installe à Rome en 1838 pour se spécialiser en peinture et bien vite, parallèlement à son activité de védutiste, après les travaux menés sur le chantier de Villa Torlonia (1839-1840), il entreprend une activité de photographe. Employé aussi dès ses débuts comme daguerréotypiste, il réalise en 1847 son premier calotype daté et, comme l’attestent certains livres comptables du marchand d’estampes Tommaso Cuccioni, il cède en 1849 plusieurs de ses daguerréotypes à ce dernier, qui deviendra lui-même photographe par la suite et qui, selon toute vraisemblance, distribuait aussi à l’époque ses photographies. Mentionné comme « peintre photographe » dans le registre des habitués du Caffè Greco (Rome, à partir de 1845), à l’adresse via Sistina 100, puis via del Corso presso San Carlo 446, il est signalé par les guides de Rome, à partir de 1855, à l’adresse via del Babuino 68, comme « peintre de perspectives et photographe », et, dans l’Almanacco de 1858, sous la rubrique « objets de galvanoplastique ». Figure en vue du monde artistique romain, il compte parmi les animateurs du Circolo Fotografico du Caffè Greco et publie en 1855 un manuel pratique de photographie où il se montre particulièrement expert et bien informé sur les différentes techniques en usage les plus récentes, de la daguerréotypie au collodion aux diverses variantes de la pratique du calotype. Il participe à quelques-unes des premières expositions photographiques internationales, à Londres (Society of Arts, 1852 ; Photographic Institution, 1853) et à Édimbourg (Photographic Society of Scotland, 1856, où il présente, entre autres, des images d’animaux reprises au collodion).*

*Outre ses nombreuses photographies ayant pour sujet les principaux monuments de Rome et les lieux les plus visités de la campagne romaine, ses figures en costume, ses photographies de genre et ses études d’après nature, réalisés surtout pour servir de modèles aux artistes, sont elles aussi restées célèbres. De plus, sa précoce campagne photographique menée sur les sculptures des Musées du Vatican et du Capitole (vers 1848-1852) revêt une importance particulière. Parmi les différentes entreprises où il joua un rôle de premier plan, on retiendra l’expédition lancée en 1859 par Giovanni Battista Castellani et par le comte Gherardo Freschi en direction de l’Inde et de la Chine, à la recherche d’un ver à soie indemne de toute maladie, rappelée à l’époque également par Luigi Sacchi et dont on a récemment découvert quelques rares images dans une collection privée.*

*Après la mort de Caneva (1865), Lodovico Tuminello continua, dans les années 1870 et 1880, à imprimer des tirages à partir de certains de ses négatifs et à les distribuer ; grâce à lui, ils rejoignirent les collections de l’Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione di Roma (acquisition de 1906). En outre, plusieurs collections publiques et privées conservent d’importantes séries de tirages, provenant souvent d’ensembles constitués par des artistes contemporains de Caneva (Charles Garnier, Bernardino Montañés, Vittorio Avondo, Alessandro Prampolini, Edmond Lebel, etc.) ou par des voyageurs aristocratiques cultivés (la duchesse de Berry) ; parmi les corpus les plus consistants, on appellera ceux de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France (don de la baronne Salomon de Rothschild), de la Fondazione Torino Musei (fonds Avondo), des Raccolte Museali Fratelli Alinari (dont certains proviennent de l’ancienne collection Becchetti), de Marco Antonetto (Lugano), d’Orsola et Filippo Maggia (en dépôt auprès du Fotomuseo de Modène) et de Dietmar Siegert (Munich).” (Notice de Maria-Francesca Bonetti, *Éloge du Négatif*, Petit Palais, 2010).*

Sources : Thomas 1852 ; Almanacco 1855, p. 287 ; Caneva 1855 ; Indicatore 1855, p. 135 ; Almanacco 1858, p. 286 ; Pietrucci 1858, p. 68-69 ; Sacchi 1859 d ; Celentano 1883, p. 79-81, 83, 520, 525.

## **PROGRAMMA SUMMER SCHOOL PIEVE TESINO 16 – 21 luglio 2018**

**Organizzata da SISF - Società Italiana per lo Studio della Fotografia  
Fotografia e artificazione. Pratiche artistiche, musei, archivi, collezioni e mercati.**

### **lunedì 16 luglio**

**ore 14,30 – 15,00 Benvenuto e introduzione**  
**ore 15,00 – 17,00 Mario Cresci / “Forse fotografia”.**  
**ore 17, 00 – 19,00 Francesco Faeta / L'invenzione della fotografia...**

### **martedì 17 luglio**

**ore 9,00 – 11,00 Gabi Scardi / La fotografia come oggetto d'arte: quali criteri?**  
**ore 11,00 – 12,30 Monica Maffioli / Il collezionismo fotografico in Italia.**  
**ore 15,00 – 17,00 Francesca Bonetti e Francesca Fabiani / Patrimonializzazione ...**  
**ore 17,00 – 18,30 Francesco Zanot / La pratica curatoriale...**

### **mercoledì 18 luglio**

**ore 9,00 – 10,30 Manuela Fugenzi / L'artificazione del fotogiornalismo.**  
**Ore 10,30 – 12,00 Roberta Valtorta / La fotografia di paesaggio...**  
**15,30 MART di Rovereto per incontro con i curatori degli archivi...**  
**ore 18,00 MAG di Riva del Garda per visita mostra Paolo Ventura**

### **giovedì 19 luglio**

**ore 9,00 – 10,30 Serge Plantureux / Il mercato della fotografia storica.**  
**ore 10,30 – 12,00 Massimo Minini / L'esperienza di una galleria d'arte.**  
**12,00 – 13,30 Guido Bertero / Il punto di vista di un collezionista.**  
**ore 15,00 – 17,00 Sergio Giusti / Pratiche social e legittimazione estetica.**  
**ore 17,00 – 18,30 Luca Pitoni / Modalità di esposizione dell'opera fotografica.**  
**0re 21,30 Giovanna Calvenzi/ Luca Pitoni / Disamina di una mostra**

### **venerdì 20 luglio**

**ore 9,00 – 10,30 Lucia Miodini / Dal Museo all'archivio, il CSAC.**  
**Ore 10,30 - 11,30 Luigi Avantaggiato: il caso Roberto Bossaglia.**  
**ore 11,30 – 12,30 Michele Smargiassi / Vivian Maier e altri miti.**  
**ore 15,00 – 17,00 Silvio Wolf / Fotografia: Arte e Vita.**  
**0re 17,00 – 19,00 Conclusioni e verifiche sulla Summer School SISF 2018.**  
**Ore 21,30 Roberto Masotti / Winterreise.**



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