

Domenico Morelli. Immaginare cose non viste

Curated by
Chiara Stefani
with Luisa Martorelli

Press preview
Monday 21 November 2022
12 noon

Opening
Monday 21 November 2022
6 pm

Opening to the public
22 November 2022
— 29 January 2023

On Monday 21 November, the **Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** launches the exhibition ***Domenico Morelli. Imagining the Unseen***, curated by Chiara Stefani with Luisa Martorelli.

"Morelli was as the true artist must be, that is, he knew what he did not know, and could see what he had never seen". This is how the painter Eduardo Dalbono remembered him shortly after his death, referring to *The Temptations of St. Anthony* as a masterly example of the artist's 'intuitive and divinatory' abilities.

After almost seventy years since the Exhibition of drawings set up in 1955 by Palma Bucarelli in Valle Giulia, Domenico Morelli (Naples, 1823-1901) returns as a protagonist in the Via Gramsci rooms of the Galleria Nazionale, just as he had been in 1907. The collection consisting of graphic works, cartoons, sketches and paintings that had remained in the artist's studio at the time of his death and had been purchased by the State had just been transferred from Naples to Rome: Francesco Jacovacci, the then Director of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, had partially set it up in four rooms in the Palazzo delle Belle Arti in Via Nazionale.

The exhibition offers an opportunity to see a large part of the artist's very rich and heterogeneous collection in conjunction with other works coming from other public institutions as well as private collections. On display are some **thirty paintings and nine sketches, nine sculptures**, a corpus of **48 oil on wood panels** with landscape paintings executed on the coast south of Naples, a large mixed technique cartoon and a conspicuous selection of **160 works on paper**, out of the more than 800 sheets from the Morelli archive held by the Galleria Nazionale.

The gestation of Domenico Morelli's paintings is a process of constant rethinking of compositional solutions devised after a careful study of the Real, whose individual elements are analysed several times

before achieving what is considered to be the optimal rendition. While the assortment of techniques employed by the artist on paper ranges from the use of graphite, charcoal, sanguine and pastel – accompanied in various cases by white lead highlights, as well as brown ink, often abundantly washed in watercolour – to watercolour and tempera in various tones, sometimes on pencil tracings, the use of colour in the sketches overrides the careful graphic study of each preparatory sheet.

The unfinished painting *The troubadour among the nuns*, that at the time was much coveted by the French merchant Jean-Baptiste Michel Adolphe Goupil and also subject to a special conservation intervention by the students of the Central Institute for Restoration, is being shown to the public for the first time since the beginning of the last century. After being cleaned, the precious frames of the paintings reveal the variety of their techniques: carved and decorated with pure gold leaf and meccato (gilded) silver, to which was added, in one particular case, the application of a strip of fabric on the wooden surface.

A series of sculptures in marble, bronze and terracotta by artists of the time – such as Alfonso Balzico, Adriano Cecioni, Giovanni Focardi, Giacomo Ginotti, Achille D'Orsi, Vincenzo Gemito, Domenico Trentacoste, Giuseppe Renda and Mario Rutelli – are displayed alongside Morelli's paintings, in order to show the relationship with them and in some cases to attest his influence. Various works on canvas by other painters – Gioacchino Toma, Eduardo Dalbono, Achille Talarico, Gaetano Previati, Paolo Vetri – and a pastel by Francesco Paolo Michetti, entertain a dialogue with Morelli's compositional solutions. Dalbono's painting *The Legend of the Sirens* is exhibited for the first time alongside a replica from a private collection, which presents an interesting variation in the background palette.

From the psychological introspection of the portraits and the figures inspired by European Romantic literature – *Count Lara*, *Lady Godiva*, *Torquato Tasso reading Gerusalemme Liberata to Eleonora d'Este* – to the pained meditations on themes steeped in the Christian religion – *The Obsessed*, *The Corpse of St. Mary of Egypt Found by Angels*, and *The Monks (or Good Friday)* –, Morelli moves on to the airy compositions wrapped in an aura of silent mystery of the canvases of the last decade of the 19th century: *Christ in the Desert*, *The Pater Noster (or The Sermon on the Mount)* and *The Loves of Angels*. At the same time, the increasingly painterly solutions of some of his graphic works document how his gaze gradually turns more and more towards the East – which Morelli never visited – showing a particular interest in its customs and in the practices related to the Muslim religion.

The painting with the *Embalming of Christ* anticipates, towards the end of the seventh decade of the 19th century, the arid and desolate scenarios of *The Maries Watching the Crucifixion of Jesus from afar* (c. 1898), of *Judas sees Christ Arrested in Gethsemane* (1900), and of *Christ Watching the Apostles* (1900): metaphors of physical weakness and human loneliness, as well as prefigurations of a contemporary existential condition.

Public Info

**Galleria Nazionale d'Arte
Moderna e Contemporanea**
viale delle Belle Arti 131
Rome

Accessible Entrance
via Gramsci 71

Opening Hours
Tuesday to Sunday
9.00 am – 7.00 pm
last entry 45 minutes
before closing time

Tickets
full price: € 10.00
concession: € 2.00

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Press Info

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List of Works

<i>Cosarella (Ritratto di Anna Cutulo)</i> 1870 Collezione privata, Napoli	<i>Gli amori degli Angeli</i> 1892 Courtesy Galleria Bottegantica, Milano	<i>I Monaci (Venerdi Santo)</i> 1880 <i>Giuda vede Cristo arrestato a Getsemani</i> 1900 <i>Lady Godiva</i> 1856–1860 <i>Tentazioni di Sant'Antonio (bozzetto)</i> 1877–1878
<i>I vinti rigettati da tutti, financo dalla Chiesa (dai Vespri siciliani)</i> 1864 Collezione privata, Napoli	<i>Mater Purissima</i> 1879–1880 <i>Il conte Lara</i> 1861	<i>La sposa di Abydo (o Paesaggio)</i> 1870 <i>Il Cantico dei Cantici</i> 1890–1895
<i>Ritratto di bambina</i> 1850–1852 Galleria Carlo Virgilio & C., Roma	<i>Ritratto di Gaetano Filangeri</i> 1887 ca.	<i>Gesù cammina sulle acque</i> 1866–1867 <i>Pater Noster o Il discorso della montagna (bozzetto)</i> 1895 ca.
<i>Autoritratto</i> 1880–1885	<i>Torquato Tasso legge la Gerusalemme Liberata a Eleonora d'Este</i> 1865	<i>Cristo chiama a sé i figli di Zebedeo (bozzetto)</i> 1893 ca.
<i>Le tentazioni di Sant'Antonio</i> 1878	<i>Torquato Tasso legge la Gerusalemme Liberata a Eleonora d'Este (bozzetto)</i> 1865	<i>Gli Ossessi (bozzetto)</i> 1873–1876
<i>La buona novella</i> 1873–1876	<i>Ritratto di donna in rosso</i> 1855 ca.	<i>Ritratto di Virginia Villari</i> 1882
<i>Cristo nel deserto</i> 1895	<i>Ritratto di bambina</i> 1850–1852 Galleria Carlo Virgilio & C., Roma	<i>Il trovatore fra le monache (bozzetto)</i> 1875–1877
<i>Pater Noster (Il discorso della montagna)</i> 1895 ca.	<i>Il Triclinio dopo l'orgia</i> 1860–1862	<i>Il trovatore fra le monache (dipinto non finito)</i> 1875–1877
<i>Il cadavere di Santa Maria Egiziaca rinvenuto dagli angeli</i> 1875 ca.	<i>Imbalsamazione di Cristo</i> 1867	
<i>Testa d'angelo</i> 1895	<i>Le Marie che da lontano assistono alla Crocifissione di Gesù</i> 1898 ca.	
<i>Gli ossessi</i> 1873–1876 Casa di Riposo per Musicisti - Fondazione Giuseppe Verdi, Milano	<i>Cristo che veglia gli Apostoli</i> 1900	

I Monaci o Venerdì Santo
(bozzetto)
1880

**Paintings and sculptures by
other artists**

Alfonso Balzico
La sposa dei Cantici
1865–1870

Adriano Cecioni
La gravida dormiente
1866 ca.
Museo e Real Bosco di
Capodimonte, Napoli

Eduardo Dalbono
La leggenda delle sirene
1871
Accademia di Belle Arti, Napoli

Eduardo Dalbono
La leggenda delle sirene
1873
Courtesy Berardi Galleria d'Arte

Achille D'Orsi
A Frisio
1883

Giovanni Focardi
Sweet Rest
1884

Vincenzo Gemito
Acquaiole
1880–1881

Vincenzo Gemito
Bruto
1871

Giacomo Ginotti
La schiava
1877 ca.
GAM – Galleria Civica d'Arte
Moderna e Contemporanea,
Torino

Francesco Paolo Michetti
Gambe nude di figura prostrata
(studio per *Il Voto*)
1883 ca.

Gaetano Previati
Spasimo
1901

Giuseppe Renda
Ondina
1898

Mario Rutelli
*Ritratto di Domenico
Morelli*
1893 ca.

Achille Talarico
Ricordi
1885–1890

Gioacchino Toma
Il romanzo nel convento
1888

Domenico Trentacoste
Nudo di donna
1910

Paolo Vetri
Fanciulla con ventaglio
1875
Collezione privata, Napoli