

PRESS RELEASE

from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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TIEPOLO IN MILAN: THE LOST FRESCOES OF PALAZZO ARCHINTO

PREPARATORY WORKS REUNITED FOR THE FIRST TIME

April 16 through July 14, 2019



Giambattista Tiepolo, *Perseus and Andromeda*, ca. 1730–31, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York; photo Michael Bodycomb

This spring and summer, The Frick Collection presents paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs related to Giambattista Tiepolo's (1696–1770) first significant project outside of Venice, a series of ceiling frescoes painted in 1730–31 for Palazzo Archinto in Milan. Commissioned by Count Carlo Archinto, one of the city's most influential patrons and intellectuals, the frescoes were tragically destroyed when the palazzo was bombed by the Allies during World War II. *Tiepolo in Milan: The Lost Frescoes of Palazzo Archinto* brings together more than fifty works from collections in the United States and Europe to tell the story of this important commission. Five preparatory paintings and drawings are featured, among them the oil sketch *Perseus and Andromeda*, acquired by Henry Clay Frick in 1916. As the Frick does not loan objects purchased by the institution's founder, the New York museum is the only place where these works can be displayed together. Several complementary drawings and books illustrated by Tiepolo are

included, alongside documentary photographs, taken between 1897 and the early 1940s, which are the only surviving records of the finished frescoes. The exhibition is organized by The Frick Collection in collaboration with the Azienda di Servizi alla Persona Golgi-Redaelli, Milan, and curated by Xavier F. Salomon, the Frick's Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator, with Andrea Tomezzoli, Professor at the University of Padua, and Denis Ton, Curator of the Musei Civici in Belluno.

Comments Salomon, “At a moment in history when wars are destroying art and culture in many parts of the world, it is worth pausing to consider, through an exhibition like this, the tragic, irreparable effects caused by violence throughout the centuries on great works of human creativity.”

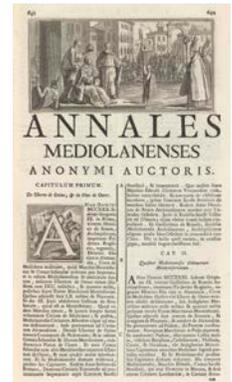
TIEPOLO AND THE ARCHINTO FAMILY



Vincenzo Aragozzini, *Facade of Palazzo Archinto*, 1934, photograph. Azienda di Servizi alla Persona Golgi-Redaelli, Milan; photo: Su autorizzazione dell’Azienda di Servizi alla Persona Golgi-Redaelli di Milano

Palazzo Archinto belonged to one of Milan’s most prominent aristocratic families, documented in the city since at least the twelfth century. In the eighteenth century, the Archinto were described as one of those Milanese families who had always owned “highly admired treasures.” In addition to Tiepolo’s frescoes, the palazzo contained extensive collections of artworks and a renowned library. Carlo Archinto (1670–1732), Tiepolo’s patron, was at the center of Milan’s intellectual circles and was especially recognized for his interest in philosophy, mathematics, and science. During the mid-eighteenth century, he lived in the family palazzo, located on Via Olmetto, near Porta Ticinese, in one of the oldest parts of the city.

The palazzo’s library, overseen by librarian Filippo Argelati, filled five rooms and was open to scholars. Together with Carlo Archinto and other patrons, Argelati founded the Società Palatina, a publishing enterprise. Between 1723 and 1751, the Società published Ludovico Antonio Muratori’s *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*. Archinto financed the project and contributed notes to one of the volumes. Tiepolo provided a number of designs for books published by the Società Palatina (five are included in the exhibition) and thus became acquainted with the aristocratic family. About 1730, when Archinto decided to redecorate his palazzo, he commissioned eight frescoed ceilings: five from Tiepolo and three from the Bolognese painter Vittorio Maria Bigari (1692–1776).



Francesco Zucchi after Giambattista Tiepolo, *The Coronation of Henry VII in Milan in 1311*, from Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (Milan, 1723–51), Columbia University Libraries, Columbia University in the City of New York

THE COMMISSION

The substantial commission was Tiepolo’s first outside the Veneto, and it marked the beginning of his international career. According to the Tiepolo scholar, Michael Levey, the frescoes at Palazzo Archinto “must have been sumptuously rich and impressive. Tiepolo never received a commission for a private palace of comparable extent and rarely of such splendour.” The ceilings, in part to celebrate the wedding of Carlo’s son Filippo to Giulia Borromeo, were meant to underscore the status of the Archinto family and were Carlo’s spiritual and visual testament, blending allegorical and mythological scenes.

Of the preparatory works that survive from the commission, three painted sketches on canvas provide the most important visual record of the lost frescoes: *Triumph of Arts and Sciences* (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon), *Perseus and Andromeda* (The Frick Collection), and *Apollo and Phaëton* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art).

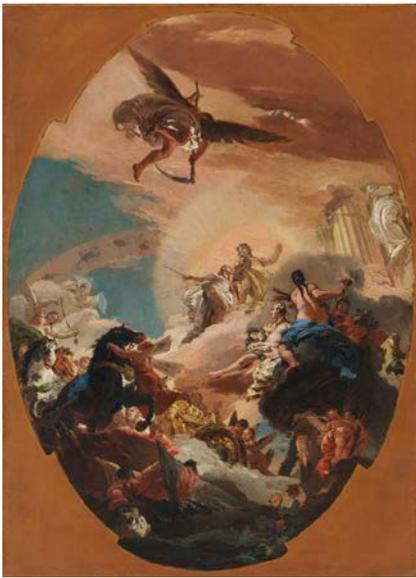
The largest and most elaborate fresco at Palazzo Archinto was the *Triumph of the Arts and Sciences*, which decorated one of the main rooms on the palace's principal floor, or *piano nobile*. In it, Tiepolo depicted a resplendent sky with an assembly of allegorical figures, including Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Music, and Mathematics, under the aegis of Apollo and Minerva. The ceiling's decoration surely related to Carlo's intellectual pursuits and to his library. When Tiepolo created the sketch (*modello*) for the ceiling, the fictive architectural scheme (*quadratura*) that was to frame the fresco had not yet been finalized; he therefore depicted his figures hovering in a cloudy sky, surrounded only by an area of brown ochre. In preparation for his fresco cycles, Tiepolo executed numerous drawings. Two surviving drawings related to *Triumph of the Arts and Sciences* are included in the exhibition, together with the related Lisbon *modello* and black-and-white photographs of the finished fresco in situ.



Giambattista Tiepolo, *Triumph of the Arts and Sciences*, ca. 1730–31, oil on canvas, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon; photo: © Direção-Geral do Património Cultural / Arquivo de Documentação Fotográfica (DGPC/ADF) / Luísa Oliveira

The fresco of *Perseus and Andromeda* was likely envisioned as a celebration of the wedding of Filippo Archinto and Giulia Borromeo. Book IV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* recounts the tale of the young and beautiful Andromeda, daughter of the Aethiopian king Cepheus and Cassiopeia. Boasting that Andromeda is more beautiful than the Nereids, Cassiopeia angers Neptune, who, in revenge, sends a monster to ravage the coast of Aethiopia. Told that the only way to save their country is to sacrifice their daughter to the monster, Andromeda's parents chain her to a rock by the sea. The hero Perseus, son of Jupiter and Danaë, sees Andromeda while flying over Aethiopia and falls in love with her. He asks her parents for permission to marry her if he is able to save her; he subsequently kills the sea monster and rescues Andromeda. Tiepolo took liberties with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in showing Perseus riding the winged horse Pegasus instead of flying by way of a pair of winged sandals. As evidenced in the archival photographs, the overall configuration of the *Perseus and Andromeda* fresco in Palazzo Archinto was almost identical to the one visible in the oil sketch (page one), which was likely presented to Carlo Archinto for approval.

Tiepolo faithfully followed another passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the fresco depicting Phaëton, the son of Apollo and Clymene. Uncertain about his divine origins, the youth questions Clymene about the identity of his father, and Clymene encourages him to visit Apollo in his heavenly palace. To prove his paternity, Apollo grants Phaëton a single wish, which is to drive the sun god's chariot for a day. Apollo provides the exact course he should take across the sky and warns his son about the dangers of such a trip, particularly from specific constellations such



Giambattista Tiepolo, *Apollo and Phaëton*, ca. 1730–31, oil on canvas, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Gift of The Ahmanson Foundation

as Scorpio. Once guiding the chariot, however, Phaëton is terrified by Scorpio and quickly loses control. Despite Apollo’s instructions and warnings, Phaëton flies too close to earth and scorches it. Incensed, Jupiter hits him with a thunderbolt, hurling him out of the chariot and to his death in the river Po. In the *modello* for the fresco, the artist set the scene in the dwelling of the Sun, described by Ovid as decorated with columns and bathed in golden light. Carlo’s choice of this father-son myth as the fresco’s subject may have been meant to serve as a warning to his children—Filippo especially—about life’s dangers. The exhibition provides a unique opportunity to compare the Los Angeles *modello* and related archival photographs of the original fresco with three other works previously associated with Palazzo Archinto: two paintings by Tiepolo (now at the Akademie in Vienna and the Bowes Museum) and a drawing from the British Museum, all of which depict *Apollo and Phaëton*.

Tiepolo’s other two ceilings in the palazzo represented *Juno, Venus, and Fortune*, probably painted for Giulia Borromeo’s private apartments, and an allegory of *Nobility*, which most likely decorated the ceiling of a relatively small room. Unfortunately, no related preparatory drawings or *modelli* have been identified. The two frescoes are represented in the exhibition by archival photographs.

THE FATE OF PALAZZO ARCHINTO

The palazzo belonged to the Archinto family for more than a century, until 1825, when the family sold it. In 1853, it was purchased by the current owner, Luoghi Pii Elemosinieri, a charitable institution (now called the Azienda di Servizi alla Persona Golgi-Redaelli). On the night of August 13, 1943, Allied bombs hit Palazzo Archinto, destroying its interior, including Tiepolo’s frescoes. (The interior was rebuilt between 1955 and 1967, following the general structure of its previous architectural form.) During World War II, sixty-five percent of Milan’s historic monuments were damaged or destroyed. Tiepolo’s frescoes at Palazzo Archinto were among the most tragic losses.



Unknown photographer, *Palazzo Archinto after bombing in August 1943*, 1948, photograph, Azienda di Servizi alla Persona Golgi-Redaelli, Milan; photo: Su autorizzazione dell’Azienda di Servizi alla Persona Golgi-Redaelli di Milano

Fortunately, a number of black-and-white photographs were taken in Palazzo Archinto at different points before 1943. In 1897, Attilio Centelli and Gerardo Molfese published a large volume dedicated to Tiepolo’s frescoes in Lombardy. The book includes a series of fifty photographs of frescoes by—or attributed at the time to—Tiepolo. These photographs are the oldest surviving images of the Palazzo Archinto frescoes and remain vital documents of

their original appearance. Only three copies of the book survive (one in Milan, one in Rome, and one in Venice). The Milan copy is preserved, unbound, in the archive of the Azienda di Servizi alla Persona Golgi-Redaelli. The exhibition includes ten plates from this copy, as well as twenty photographs documenting the palace before the war, Tiepolo's finished frescoes, and the ruins of the palace after 1943.

Major support for the exhibition is provided by an anonymous gift in memory of Melvin R. Seiden and by Margot and Jerry Bogert. Additional funding is generously provided by the David L. Klein, Jr. Foundation, Julie and David Tobey, an anonymous gift in memory of Charles Ryskamp, Dr. Tai-Heng Cheng and Cole Harrell, Mr. and Mrs. Hubert L. Goldschmidt, and The Krugman Family Foundation.

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION



The Frick Collection, in association with Paul Holberton Publishing, has produced a fully illustrated catalogue to accompany the exhibition. Included are essays about Tiepolo's work in Palazzo Archinto (Xavier F. Salomon), the architectural history of the palace (Alessandra Kluzer), the role of the Archinto frescoes in Tiepolo's career (Andrea Tomezzoli), and the intellectual world of the Archinto family (Denis Ton). The book is available in the Museum Shop or can be ordered on the Frick's Web site (frick.org) or by phone at (212) 547-6848 (224 pages, 75 color illustrations; hardcover \$50, member price \$45; softcover \$30, member price \$27).

INTERACT

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BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: (212) 288-0700

Web site: www.frick.org

Building project: www.frickfuture.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

App: frick.org/app

Museum address: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue

Hours: Open six days a week: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day

Admission: \$22; senior citizens \$17; students \$12; Pay-what-you-wish hours on Wednesdays from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the museum

First Fridays: Museum admission and gallery programs are free from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. on the first Friday evening of the month (except January and September)

Subway: #6 local to 68th Street station; #Q to 72nd Street station; Bus: M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: Included in the price of museum admission is an Acoustiguide Audio Tour of the permanent collection. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Shop: The shop is open the same days as the museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Museum Visits: Please call (212) 288-0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is available online

Library address: 10 East 71st Street, near Fifth Avenue

Hours: www.frick.org/visit/library/hours

Admission: Open to the public free of charge

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