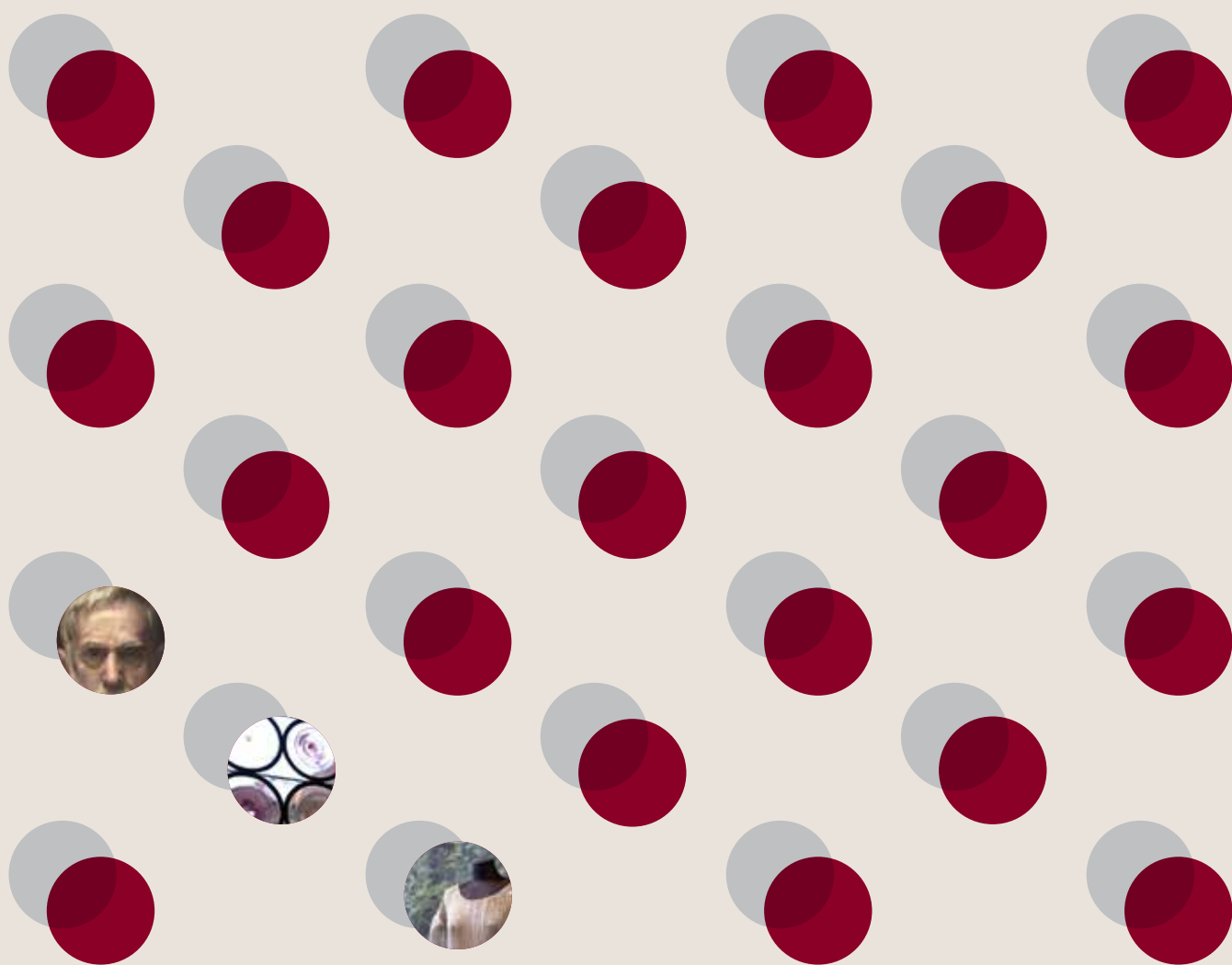


Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

—
Mariano Fortuny
and his Palace



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Palazzo Fortuny

Palazzo Fortuny, built for Benedetto Pesaro from the mid-fifteenth century and already known as Palazzo Pesaro degli Orfei, is nowadays a massive building boasting two imposing facades, one overlooking the Ca' Michiel canal and the larger one - among the most complex examples of Venetian Gothic - facing Campo San Beneto.

The architectural structure of the house fully reflects the Venetian tradition and offers several solutions of significant value, like the two seven-light pointed arch windows on the first and second floor, and the unusual length of the rooms that span the entire width of the building from facade to facade.

The interiors display particularly refined and relevant architectural features, such as the wooden architraves and sculptured marble pillars of the first floor.

Erected on a previous building constructed with the characteristics of a commercial *fondaco*, the typical Venetian trading house and warehouse, it was later enlarged with the addition of the rooms and storerooms along the axis that connects the canal-side entrance to the landward entrance, the *portego*.

It was in a state of total neglect and decay when in 1898, attracted by its architectural beauty, Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo took over the huge room located in the attic of the building, establishing his own studio in the loft. Here he worked on his renowned artistic experiments and stage set designs.

Over the years, Fortuny acquired the other parts of the property, and began to gradually restore the building, bringing balance and proportion back to the house. Fortuny eventually chose Palazzo Pesaro Orfei as his permanent home and in 1907, together with his wife and muse Henriette Nigrin, he set up a small workshop of fabric printing.

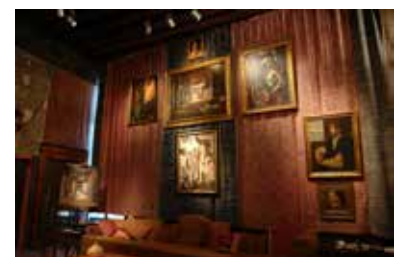
In a few years, two entire floors of the building were occupied by his extraordinary atelier for the creation of distinctive dresses and silk and velvet printed fabrics. In 1956, after Fortuny's death (1949), the building was donated to the City of Venice to be "perpetually used as a center of culture in relation to the arts."



Palazzo Fortuny, side facing Campo San Beneto



Palazzo Fortuny, inner courtyard



Palazzo Fortuny, first floor

The city administration came into full possession of the building in 1965, at Henriette's death and, in 1975, the doors of this unique house-cum-museum were opened to the public.

Over the years, the Palazzo Fortuny Museum has always been considered as a centre set for exhibitions focused on visual arts, keeping, though, the typical features of Mariano Fortuny's atelier.

The space, structured like the wings of a theatre stage, houses a rich collection of works of art demonstrating Mariano's different fields of investigation and experimentation: painting, photography, drawing, engraving, sculpture, technical and furnishing lamps, theatre models, printed fabrics and clothes, from the famous *Delphos* to theatre costumes.

The source of inspiration of this eclectic artist can be found even today in his extraordinary private library, on the second floor, rich with furnishings, objects of art and rare art and technique volumes.

Nowadays, Palazzo Fortuny still testifies Mariano's brilliant capability of re-elaborating, experimenting and renovating, together with his impact on the international artistic and intellectual scene between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.



Elevation of the facade of Palazzo Fortuny on Campo San Beneto



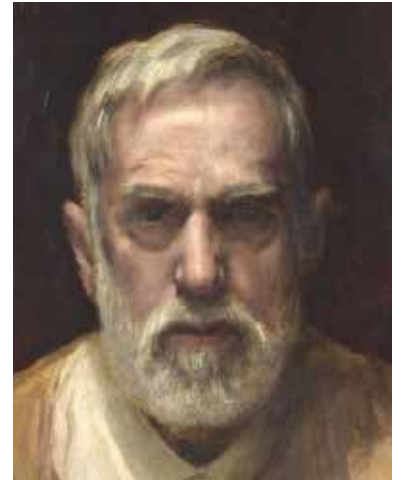
Palazzo Fortuny, first floor

Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo

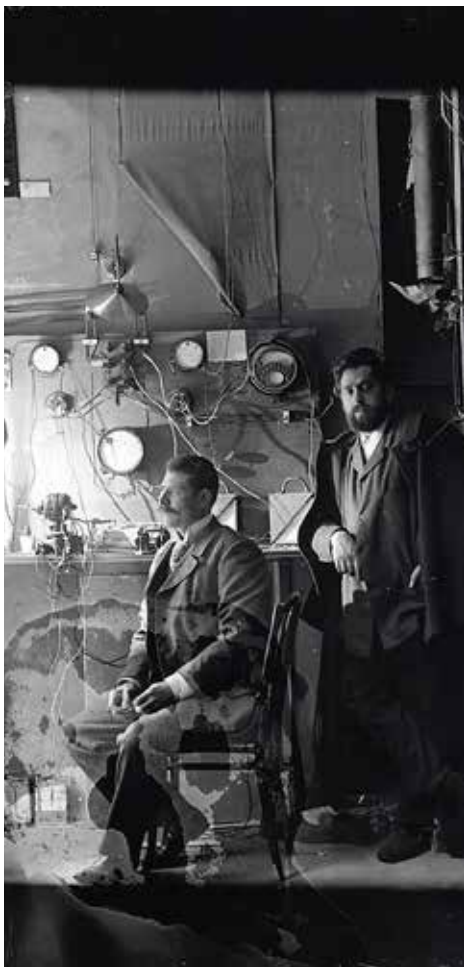
Born in Granada in 1871, Mariano Fortuny was himself the son of an artist and quickly found a place within the art and social world of Paris, the city in which he completed his studies as a painter.

At 18 he moved to Venice, where he attended international artistic circles and would soon have figures such as Gabriele D'Annunzio, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Marchesa Casati, Eleonora Duse and Prinz Fritz Hohenlohe-Waldenburg amongst his friends.

A visit to Bayreuth and encounter with Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk [total work of art] had a profound effect upon him, and his interest shifted from painting to set design and stage lighting; his goal was to achieve total union of music, drama and visual presentation.



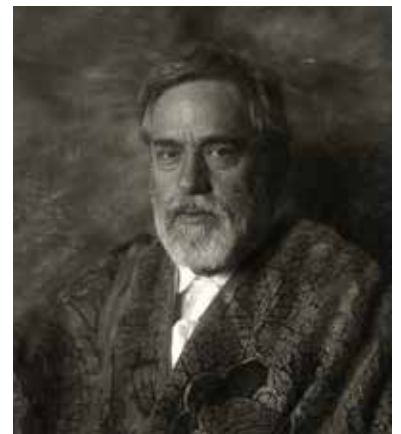
Mariano Fortuny,
Self-Portrait, 1947



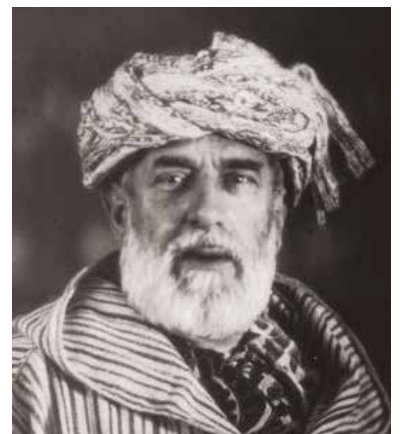
Mariano Fortuny with Electrician
Vittorio Giacchetti in Paris, 1906



Mariano Fortuny,
Youthful Self-Portrait, 1890



Mariano Fortuny,
Self-Portrait, 1930



Mariano Fortuny,
Self-Portrait, 1935 ca.

At the beginning of the 20th century he would design sets for the Italian premiere of *Tristan and Isolde* at the Scala in Milan.

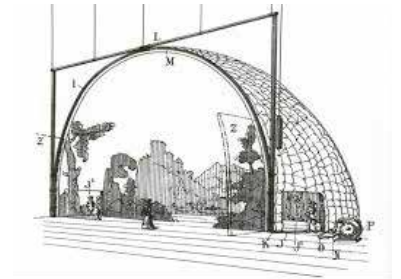
Meanwhile, he began to develop his idea for the 'cupola' – that is, a system of stage-lighting that would use indirect, diffuse illumination to free set design from the restrictions of traditional lighting.

When he began to enjoy the patronage of the Comtesse de Bearn, Fortuny's revolutionary set designs could be put into full effect: between 1903 and 1906 the countess's private theatre was equipped with a fully updated 'cupola' system.

As a result of the fame this brought, Fortuny's system was then produced in Berlin by AEG and adopted by major theatres throughout Europe.



Mariano Fortuny, Drawings for the "Fortuny Cupola" Stage Device, 1902



Mariano Fortuny, Description of the system for Creating a Concave Wall using an Infatable Structure, 1904



Mariano Fortuny, Mode for the "Teatro delle Feste", 1912



Mariano Fortuny, Construction of the Model for the Theatre in Bayreuth, 1903



Mariano Fortuny, Paris. Private event, 1906



Theater Costume, 1935



Theater Costumes, 1930

But Mariano Fortuny was now searching out new creative stimuli: he began to produce fabrics and printed textiles, in partnership with Henriette Nigrin, who would become his wife in 1924; together they created the plissé silk dress known as the *Delphos* which made Fortuny famous throughout the world.

Even in these years of intense activity there was no drop in the number of commissions he received for work in set and theatre design.

The 1930s would see Fortuny make other innovations – for example, “Tempera Fortuny”, coloured photographic paper – and work on the illumination of some of the great cycles of paintings to be seen in Venetian scuole (for example, Tintoretto’s work at the San Rocco and Capriccio’s at San Giorgio degli Schiavoni).

Towards the end of the 1930s Mariano Fortuny retired to his magnificent home in the San Beneto district of Venice, where he once more took up painting and began to put together a record of his very varied career.

He died in 1949, and is buried at Verano in Rome alongside his famous father.



Mariano Fortuny,
Henriette, 1910 ca.



Mariano Fortuny,
Delphos Dress, detail



Shop on Rue Pierre Charron,
Paris, 1937



Mariano Fortuny, *Preparatory Drawing for Advertisement Poster*, 1915

< Mariano Fortuny in his library in Palazzo Fortuny, 1940 ca.

The collections

The collections within the museum comprise an extensive number of pieces and materials which reflect the various fields investigated in the artist's work. These are organised under certain specific headings: painting, light, photography, textiles and grand garments.

The painting collection

The collection contains some 150 paintings by Mariano Fortuny, which illustrate the various phases in this aspect of his career as an artist.

The Wagnerian period, up until 1899, holds a central place. This meeting and blissful balance of painting and theatre mark an intimate understanding of the dream and myth that thrilled Europe at the end of the nineteenth century.

Equally fascinating, for other reasons, are the portraits, in which the family, and particularly his wife Henriette, play a fundamental role.

The *Study of the Female Nude* (1888) made when he was just seventeen years old is the first pictorial attempt known by the young Mariano.

This theme, which he continued referring back to, became the palimpsest of techniques and styles interwoven even through his photographic work.

Another major themes are the still lifes which seem to be the fruit of a crossover between Fortuny's education and his original compositional ability.



Mariano Fortuny, *Portrait of Henriette Fortuny*, 1915



Mariano Fortuny, *Study of the Female Nude*, 1888



Mariano Fortuny, *Reclining Female Nude*, 1946



Mariano Fortuny, *Wagner Cycle (The Valkyrie) - Wotan strikes the rock*, 1890



Mariano Fortuny, *Wagner Cycle (Parsifal) - The Flowers Maidens*, 1896



Mariano Fortuny, *Still Life*, 1939

Light

The main driving force and real heart of Fortuny's work is light: perfectly identified with the creation of the celebrated theatre dome.

The same light is found in his assiduous chromatic studies, in his dying of textiles, his shot fabrics and, consequently, in many objects designed for furnishing.

A notable example is the large ivory, silk gauze curtain, printed in black with oriental motifs, all played out on the transparency of the silky material and on the graphic contrast of the design which increases and expands light throughout the entire space.

The extraordinary lamps and chandeliers, all in the same stamped and painted material, follow the same line of study.

These almost immaterial objects, derived from various subjects and references, such as the *Saracen* shield, with exotic names (*Sherazade*), or inspired by the celestial world (*Saturn*), evoke atmosphere and splendour in rooms where light and design constitute an inseparable singularity.

With their solid, metal construction and clean lines, the Fortuny diffuser lamps are absolutely practical and functional for the specific lighting of various types of room, works of art and architecture, while still representing the best that has been conceived for the use of diffuse and indirect light.



Mariano Fortuny,
Sherazade Lamp, dopo il 1909



Mariano Fortuny,
Scudo Saraceno Lamp, 1920



Mariano Fortuny,
Polyhedral lamps, 1920



Mariano Fortuny, Lamps for Diffused and indirect Light



Photographs

The core of photographs collected at Palazzo Fortuny are taken from either the collection left by Mariano Fortuny or from the rich collection of the Musei Civici di Venezia, both of which are now undergoing full re-organisation within the Fortuny Museum itself. The entire collection comprises works from 1850 to the Second World War, with a rich variety of styles, techniques and historic images.

Mariano Fortuny photographer

As a photographer, Mariano Fortuny is in many ways different to the retiring star of fashion and art. Though even here one can see his command of the medium and his capacity to move the viewer, there is no doubt that Fortuny neither was – nor aimed to be – a professional photographer; as is well known, he used the camera mainly as an tool for his work as a scenographer and textile designer. Nevertheless, even here he inevitably reveals his eye as an artist: in the private shots and the pictures taken as an aide-memoire, he certainly achieved results that bear comparison with those of the more famous photographers amongst his contemporaries.

The photographs of Mariano collected at Palazzo Fortuny, show family groups, friends and the famous celebrities who formed part of Fortuny's social circle, travel notes, interior shots, self-portraits and images of the less well-known corners of Venice.



Mariano Fortuny, *Portrait of Henriette*, 1905



Mariano Fortuny within the Temple of Medinet Habu, Egypt, 1938



Mariano Fortuny with his mother Cecilia at Palazzo Martinengo, 1900 ca.



Mariano Fortuny, Venice. Ponte del Piovan, 1908 ca.



Mariano Fortuny, Venice. S. Pietro di Castello, 1908 ca



Mariano Fortuny, *The Marchesa Casati at Ca' Venier dei Leoni*, 1913 ca.

Fabrics

The Fortuny Museum's collection of clothes, fabrics, trial prints, materials and ornamental clothes of one type or another make up a rich sample of Fortuny's extraordinary work in the field of fabrics and fashion design, in which the artist took old ornamental motifs and reinterpreted them in a very "modern" decorative style.

The fabrics range from the simple diagonal-striped cotton cloth to velvets of silk and cotton (the perfect material for the famous polychrome printing, which was used mainly for furnishing fabrics).

The satin, the taffeta, the silk gauze and the velvets constitute the material for the *Delphos*, the surcoats, the sumptuous cloaks and capes, all imbued with infinite chromatic blendings and historical references.

Fortuny drew decorative models and designs from precious Renaissance velvets and from fabrics from distant, exotic cultures which, once printed, imitated and reinvented the original handicraft, thanks to a highly personal system of printing with inimitable material and three dimensional results.



Printed silk velvet, 1909



Machine for printing on textile, 1915



Matrix for printing textiles



Print samples, 1907-1910



Tunic, 1915/1925



Print sample, 1906 ca.

The Delphos

The greatest success of Mariano Fortuny's workshop was the creation, in 1909, of the Delphos, the iconic simple monochrome gown that took inspiration from the greek myths.

In terms of style, the dress was mainly inspired by the Hellenistic classical sculpture of the Charioteer of Delphi, discovered in 1896.

With an autograph note written in the margin of the patent, Fortuny recognises that the true creator of the Delphos was Henriette.

Some models, introduced in the market in the 1920s and commercialised under the name of Peplos, included a section of cloth, known in ancient Greece as the apodygma, that was folded to cover the torso for about a third of the length of the upper side of the gown.

The Delphos, was a monochrome gown of a simple, essential form, a sort of cylinder initially consisting of four pieces of fabric (which by 1919–20 had become five) made in satin or silk taffeta sewn along the long sides in a vertical sequence and continuing to form short sleeves.

The gown, shaped by internal tapes arranged at an angle from the armpit to the shoulder to define the armhole, rested on the shoulders and fell freely down to the feet. The neckline and the sleeves were adjustable thanks to drawstrings in silk cord, embellished with beads of Murano glass paste.

The most important feature of the gown is the pleating. At first, it was done manually using the fingernail of the thumb, then firmed with sewing and pressed. The dense vertical waves on each panel that made the vest could reach up to 450 foldings.

The pleating, realised only in the longitudinal direction, could be enriched with a tranverse wave motion, obtained with the aid of copper tubes or heated ceramic.

The tones of the fabric varied from more muted and neutral colours, such as apricot, mauve, pearl grey or



Delphos dress, 1909



Greek inspiration - Delphes - Grèce.
Musée, L'Aurige, by Fratelli Alinari



Model wearing a Peplos dress, 1920



Delphos dress, detail, 1909

pink, to bright colours like coral red, ultramarine blue, or Veronese green, to produce iridescent shades resulting from the silk and the movement of the pleats.

A number of femmes fatales established the trend for this refined and long-lasting fashion, with the Delphos gown being immediately recognised. The Delphos got to be worn by the famous aristocratic ladies and international nobility, as well as divine dancers and actresses, wore this revolutionary piece of clothing casually.

Il Delphos fu indossato da famose dame dell'aristocrazia e della nobiltà internazionale, così come da divine danzatrici e attrici, che ne sancirono il successo mondiale.

The Marchesa Luisa Casati was the first one to purchase a Delphos Dress in September 1909.

The Delphos dress was usually worn with a belt in printed silk satin or taffeta; it could be matched with other Fortuny creations like the Knossos shawl or surcoats in silk gauze with or without sleeves, or jackets, tunics or capes of silk or printed velvet.



Delphos dresses



Delphos dress with surcoat, detail, 1920



Printed silk tunic over a Delphos dress, 1909



Delphos dress, 1910

General Information

Venue

Palazzo Fortuny

San Marco 3958, 30124 Venice

Entrance on Campo San Beneto

How to get there

Vaporetto

Line 1, Sant'Angelo stop,
Line 2, San Samuele stop



Scan the **QR Code** and
discover our map

Opening Hours and Tickets

For ticket information and opening hours
please consult the website: **www.fortuny.visitmuve.it**


Bookings

- on-line: **www.fortuny.visitmuve.it**
- calling the call center: **848082000** (from Italy); **+39 041 42730892** (only from abroad)
from Monday to Friday, excluding holidays, from 09:00 to 13:00

The booking office will also reply to customers through the e-mail address prenotazionivenezia@coopculture.it

Reservation is not mandatory and it is not necessary in case of free tickets.

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