

PALAZZO ZORZI ACCORDING TO WHISTLER

Extract related to pages 148-149 of "North and East of the Grand Canal", Whistler's Venice, Yale Univ Pr, 2000.

Whistler seemed to have been particularly attracted by building of the early Renaissance. He made a chalk and pastel drawing of the early Renaissance courtyard of the Palazzo Zorzi on the Rio de San Severo, about 300 yards west of the Palazzo Contarini della Porta di Ferro. The site is not named in the drawing's title which is simply *Venetian Courtyard* (fig.186)



The '**Lombardesque**' Palazzo Zorzi is mentioned with admiration in several nineteenth-century guidebooks (fig. 184). Ruskin condemned as 'utterly worthless in ever respect'. Now it is attributed to the architect Mauro Codussi (c.1440-1504), one of the quite recently rediscovered heroes of the early Renaissance in Venice. It is doubtful that Whistler would have heard of him but today he is credited not only with the design of the façade of San Michele in Isola, shown in the pastel *The Cemetery* but also with two fine palaces on the Grand Canal, two churches, staircases at two of the major scuole, the Torre dell'Orologio and parts of other important buildings. The courtyard of Palazzo Zorzi has a delicate ground-floor loggia, with slender columns with Corinthian capitals, surmounted by elegant biforate windows, an architectural motif of which Codussi was very fond.

Whistler made his drawing looking over an octagonal well towards a corner of the courtyard, and he focused on the loggia, two of the biforate windows and a first floor balcony at the left over which a woman has hung washing. He showed that Codussi's design had been severely tampered with on the first floor where the biforate windows had been blocked up and smaller windows inserted haphazardly.

The palace underwent restoration after standing empty and unsafe for many years.

The **courtyard** of the Palazzo Zorzi is an exceptional piece of architecture.

186. Whistler, *Venetian Courtyard*, chalk and pastel on brown paper, 29.8x20.1cm. Dr and Mrs John E. Larkin, Jr 184. Late nineteenth-century photograph of the Palazzo Zorzi, Castello

