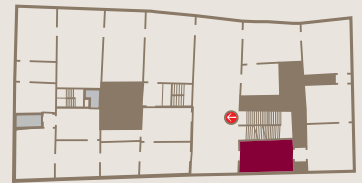


Clothes and textiles on display in the
Museum from the collections of the Study
Centre for the History of Textiles and
Costume at Palazzo Mocenigo

from July 2024





Clothes and fabrics

In the eighteenth century, Venetian patricians were less and less inclined to undertake any political activity and preferred to devote themselves to amusements. As early as 1638, the *Ridotto*, was established in Venice, the first public gambling house run directly by the Republic, which thus admitted its inability to curb this vice.

The *Ridotto* was located in San Moisè near Palazzo Dandolo. Strategically located near St. Mark's Square, it was open to all citizens and outsiders during the carnival, which stretched from St. Stephen's day on 26 December to Ash Wednesday. However, frequent licences extended the actual duration of its opening.

Its closure in 1774 did not extinguish the desire to gamble, which was compensated for by increasing the *ridotti*, also known as *casini*, set up to host private dance, conversation and gambling societies.

These differed in the type of public who frequented them, and in nature ranged from an intellectual salon to a gambling den for card sharps. Not all, therefore, were places for clandestine meetings or where entire fortunes were squandered.

They took the form of small rooms that were easily heated, and which satisfied the need for safety and intimacy. Here, gambling was regulated: croupiers all came from the patrician class, and were obliged to wear a wig and toga with uncovered faces, while players were required to wear a mask, called a *larva* or *volto*.

The coats of the two gamblers are evidence of the latest fashions that emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the fashions became simpler and the decorative motifs of the fabrics generally became smaller.

The first *marsina* (1) is made of *cannelé*, a fabric with a marked stripe, here studded with simple yellow flowers rigidly arranged in staggered stripes.

The second (2) is made of cut velvet in whose tiny geometric decoration, arranged in vertical lines, features tiny glimmers of colour created by the addition of a yellow weft and a purple warp.

1. Venetian manufacture

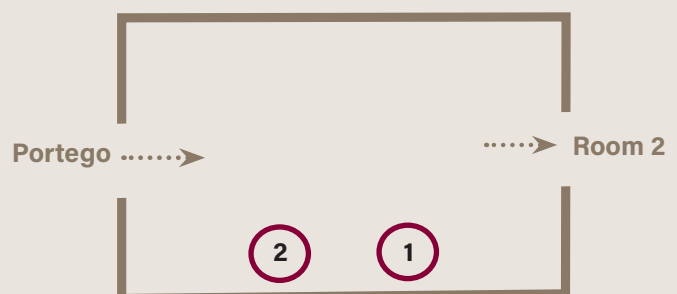
Coat

figured silk, c.1785-1790

2. Venetian manufacture

Coat

figured silk velvet, c.1785-1790





Clothes and fabrics

The term *andrienne*, *andriè* in Venetian, originated from the dress worn by the actress Marie-Thérèse Dancourt, the protagonist of Michel Baron's play, *Andrienne*, staged in Paris in 1704, as a remake of Terence's *Andria*. At first it was a comfortable robe that, as it stiffened and widened over time, became official court dress in the last quarter of the century.

Also known as *robe à la française* (1), its peculiarity lies in the pleated panel that runs down the back and dissolves into a train. The fabric is a brocaded gros de Tours, with bow trimmings and metal braid.

The *robe à l'anglaise* (2) differs in the absence of the back drape, replaced by a fitted bodice ending in a point. The model is in brocaded taffeta with a monochrome floral pattern on the bottom.

These two gowns testify to the characteristic meander decoration, a sinuous, vertical compositional pattern depicts mainly floral elements or simulating ribbons, lace borders and fur stripes, and is enriched along its undulating course by festoons and bouquets, sometimes by figurative elements such as architecture, chinoiserie or other Rococo frivolities.

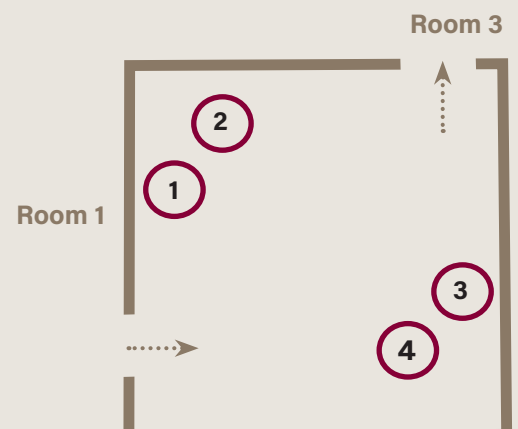
The second group is inspired by *La cioccolata del mattino* (*The Morning Chocolate*), a painting by Pietro Longhi from around 1775-80 conserved at Ca' Rezzonico. The scene in the museum shows a servant offering a patrician lady a cup of chocolate or Indian broth, a colonial drink that, together with coffee and tea, became a symbol of wealth and refinement. In this aristocratic breakfast, the livery (3) is of golden yellow damask, while the loom-worked decorative motif expresses a clear desire to imitate white lace, in terms also of colour. The patrician (4), on the other hand, wears a warm, quilted jacket made of green fabric with a dense floral pattern in polychrome silks, with an asymmetrical opening and curled ribbon trimming.

1. Venetian manufacture
Robe à la française (andrienne)
 figured silk, c. 1750-1760

2. Venetian manufacture
Robe à l'anglaise
 figured silk, c. 1750-1760

3. Venetian manufacture
Servant's livery
 figured silk, c. 1750-1760

4. Italian manufacture
Padded jacket
 figured silk, c. 1750-1760





Clothes and fabrics

In the eighteenth century, the Venetians' main meals consisted of a light *merenda*, served between eleven and midday, and *disnar*, which was more plentiful and put on the table at the *doge's hour*, that is, at five o'clock in the afternoon, when the doge finished his audiences and the state offices at the Doge's Palace closed. Then, late in the evening, dinner would be served.

Meals were not the same for everyone, because in Venice social differences were also emphasised at the table, especially in this century when patricians imitated the French nobility in everything, and not only in the way they dressed.

It was fashionable to have not only a French hairdresser, but also a cook of French origin. This feverish enthusiasm for all things French changed not only the dishes, but the very way they were served; soup, for instance, was now presented last instead of at the beginning of the meal to warm the stomach, according to Venetian custom.

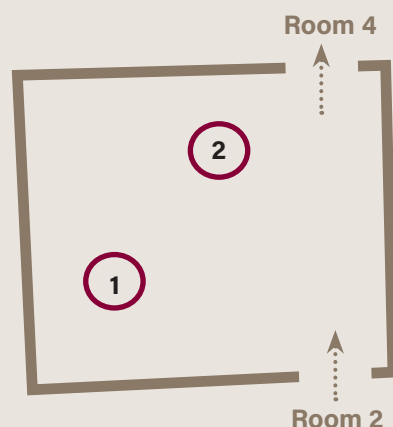
The pair of mannequins setting the banquet wear liveries made of *pékin*, a striped fabric formed by the alternation, in vertical stripes, of different *weaves*, a technical term indicating the different systems by which warp and weft threads are woven.

Here the decoration is composed of a *cannelé* that, combined with other warp and weft effects, imitates white and blue ribbons bordering satin-bottomed stripes, on which polychrome flower bouquets are scattered.

Liveries in the Middle Ages were garments with the colours and coat of arms of the lineage, provided by nobles and rulers to family members and entourage, or offered to people as a sign of homage or protection.

Produced in series, they visually signalled the role of a servant, while the richness of the materials and accessories with which they were made could provide, to the eye of a careful observer, clues as to the economic well-being of the family to which they belonged.

1. and 2. Venetian manufacture
Pair of servant's liveries
figured silk, c. 1780-1790





Clothes and fabrics

An eighteenth-century gentleman's attire consisted of a *marsina* (coat), *sottomarsina* (waistcoat) and *calzoni* (breeches), in Venice called *velada*, *camisiola* and *bragoni*. This outfit, completed by a shirt, tricorne, socks and shoes with buckles, first appeared in France during the reign of Louis XIV as a campaign suit, intended for a military enterprise. Becoming more refined in form, it became the civilian dress par excellence, informal but also courtly. The first suit (1) is in simple cut velvet, while the opulent undergarment, in *gros de Tours* with metallic wefts creating a scaled effect, is embroidered with yarns, tinsel and metallic sequins. The second suit (4), more slender and tapered, is in *cannelé* with rhythmic sprouted coffee bean decoration.

The fabric of the *andrienne* (2), which alternates pink satin stripes with green damask meandering bands, is decorated with an eccentrically shaped bow trimming called *sourcils de hanneton* (literally 'maybug antennae'). An unusual feature is the train, which could be lifted off the ground by pulling two small buttons placed at pelvis height and connected to a cord passing through rings fixed inside the skirt.

Counterbalancing this majestic garment are two more moderate outfits: the first (3), in satin decorated with meander pattern, is an interesting case because the skirt can be plain or draped; the second (5), with faceted steel buttons, is a *robe redingote* in light blue *gros de Tours* and yellow *droguet* silk trimmed with light blue taffeta, whose line is inspired by the English riding-coat, hence the name, from which it takes its cape-like neckline and long shaped sleeves, now *à la matelot* and no longer *à la pagode*, i.e. ending at the elbow. These new styles narrowed the gap between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie and are documented in the fashion figurines illustrating the periodicals published at the end of the century. In Venice, it is worth recalling a periodical published between 1786 and 1788: *La donna galante ed erudita. Giornale dedicato al bel sesso*, edited by Gioseffa Cornoldi Caminer.

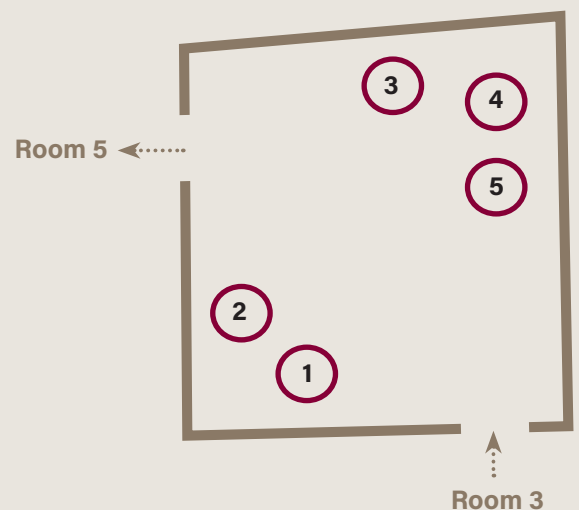
1. Venetian manufacture
Man's suit
silk velvet, figured and embroidered silk, c. 1770-1780

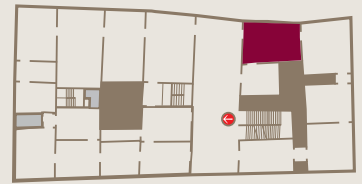
2. Venetian manufacture
Robe à la française (andrienne)
figured silk, c. 1775-1780

3. Venetian manufacture
Lady's dress
figured silk, c. 1785-1790

4. Venetian manufacture
Man's suit
figured silk and embroidery on silk, c. 1785-1790

5. Venetian manufacture
Robe redingote
figured silk, c. 1785-90





Clothes and fabrics

During the 18th century, the passion for embroidery was evident in men's clothing, as demonstrated by the satin suit embroidered in polychrome silks (1) and the one in white silk alone (3). *Sottomarsine*, or waistcoats, in particular, were masterpieces of the genre and, given their preciousness, were never discarded even though fashion called for ever more skimpy models; they would be simply shortened and the stitching concealed under the pocket flaps.

The St. Mark's Procurator's toga (2), made in Venice by specialised *ducal tailors* in crimson red silk damask with a solemn foliage decoration is of Renaissance origin; also known as a vesta, it is also characterised by its very wide dangling sleeves known as *alla dogalina* sleeves.

Worn over civilian clothes, it was the symbol of high-class dignity, derived from the courtly model of the Roman toga. It could be black, red, *pavonazzo* (dark purple) or violet depending on the rank or magistracy; those of the senators and procurators of St. Mark's were richest, whilst for other patricians they were unadorned.

Fashions, however, managed to undermine its inviolable style: as early as the seventeenth century, lace began to peep out at the wrists and neckline, while monumental curly wigs, following the new French fashion, crowned the wearers' heads.

It was accompanied by the stole in *controtagliato* velvet, that is, cut at two different heights, this being a textile speciality in crimson red dyed silk with majestic *a candelabra* decoration. The gentleman's suit (4) is made of *chiné-à-la-branche* taffeta, with warp threads that are dyed before weaving to create a flamed effect. Its peculiarity is the coat or double-breasted *flacco*, a coat without front quarters. The *sottomarsina*, on the other hand, is now a short waistcoat embellished with floral embroidery.

Finally, the lady's dress (5) in *gros de Tours* is essential in its tinsel-free line, rigorous when compared to the dresses of previous decades, simple and functional according to the new dictates imported from England via Paris.

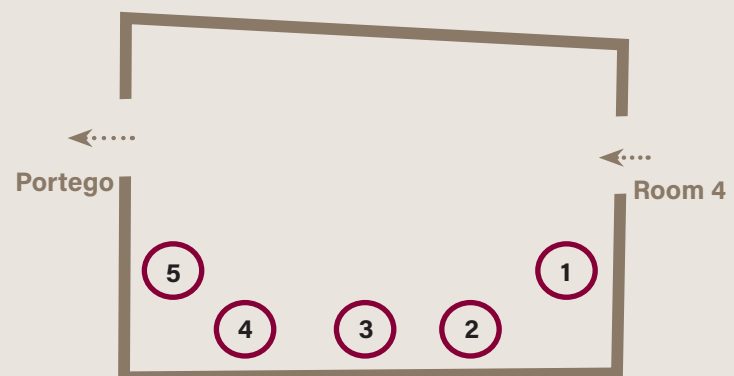
1. Venetian manufacture
Man's suit
 embroidered silk, c. 1780-1790

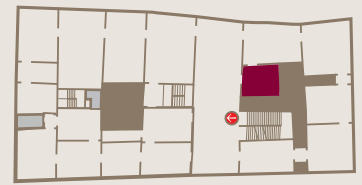
2. Venetian manufacture
St Mark's procurator's robe and stole
 figured silk and silk velvet, c. 1675-1700

3. Venetian manufacture
Man's suit
 embroidered silk, c. 1780-1790

4. Venetian manufacture
Man's suit
 silk and embroidery on silk, c. 1790-1795

5. Venetian manufacture
Lady's dress
 silk, c. 1790-1795





Clothes and fabrics

The room suggests a boudoir, the noble lady's private parlour used for private conversation and her *toilette*. On the lacquered console table there is a small, fine mirror surrounded by flasks, bottles and a snuff box, all eighteenth-century Venetian artefacts made of glass. The corset (3) on the seated manikin is made of ivory taffeta lined in cotton canvas, with suede piping. Entirely stiffened by inflexible splints enclosed by topstitching, it can be tightened at the back with strings. A curious detail is the presence of a breast pocket in the neckline, where, for example, a gallant love note could be concealed from prying eyes. As early as the eighteenth century, medical opinions, or at least scholarly disquisition, differed regarding the use of the corset, which custom prescribed from an early age. Over the corset, ladies wore bustles, a sort of wide cage called *cerchi* in Venice to structure and enlarge the skirt.

While this was worn between petticoat and gown, the two bodices on display here were worn exposed: the pink one (1), in taffeta with a polychrome polka dot and zigzag background design with brocaded floral twigs; the blue one (4), in fabric of similar stuff, decorated with slender floral shoots. Both are splinted and have sleeves fastened, but separated from the bust to facilitate arm movements.

The men's chamber robe (2), on the other hand, was an appropriate garment for attending events of a private nature or for intimate visits. Oriental in style, it is made of *gros de Tours* with tight meander decorations in silk and silver.

The matching headdress is made of *cannetillé* fabric that creates a very fine checkerboard background, enlivened by copious silk and silver inflorescences. Bizarre as it was, it was a useful accessory to counteract the cold in houses, especially for those who shaved their head to wear a wig, or were naturally bald.

1. Venetian manufacture

Bodice

figured silk, c. 1750-1760

2. Italian manufacturing

Chamber robe and headgear

figured silk, c. 1770 and c. 1750

3. Venetian manufacture

Bustier

silk and cotton, c. 1750-60

4. Venetian manufacture

Bodice

figured silk, c. 1750-1760

