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CARLO SCARPA
VENICE, 1906 – SENDAI, 1978

EASEL

CONCEIVED CIRCA 1950-1955

Teak, ebonized wood, patinated steel, brass
Executed later by Zanon, Venice
260 x 74 x 64 cm

Provenance:
Private Collection, Italy

Related Literature:
R. McCarter, *Carlo Scarpa*, London, 2013, pp. 60, 155, 157.
A. McNay, *Carol Bove/Carlo Scarpa*, exh. cat., Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2015.

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One of the most iconic works by Italian architect Carlo Scarpa, the Easel was first designed on the occasion of the restyling of the Museo Correr in St Mark's Square, Venice, a project which would come to revolutionise the modes of museum display in Italy and beyond (fig. 1). Over the following years, it became arguably the element best symbolising Scarpa's quest for creating a heightened sense of communion between the work of art and the spectator. This was achieved through the employ of essential lines and materials such as high-quality timbers coupled with brass and patinated steel, thus accentuating the aesthetic, almost transcendental dimension of the experience and giving "a new sense of importance" to the artworks (McNay, *op. cit.*). Scarpa's organic approach to architecture and interior design is manifest in the correspondences to be observed between his furniture, especially museum-related designs such as the easel and his display cases or vitrines, and architectural details: "there should be no furnishings", the Venetian architect argued, "only significant presences."

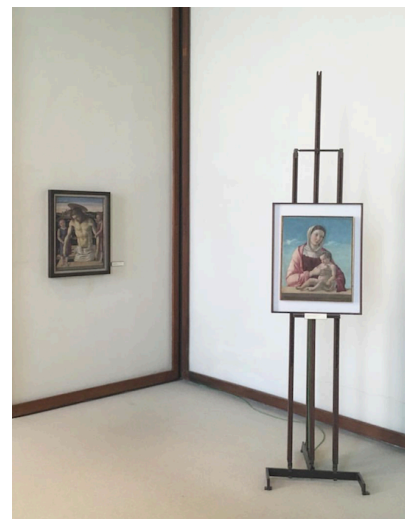


Fig. 1: Giovanni Bellini's *Virgin and Child* on Carlo Scarpa's Easel, Museo Correr, Venice.



Fig. 1: Carlo Scarpa, interior banister at Palazzo Querini Stampalia, Venice, metal and wood (1950s).

The same painstaking care for details, as well as the attention devoted to joints and brackets, is exemplified by the present Easel and finds striking echoes in structures ranging from the iconic Venice Biennale Ticket Booth (1951-52) to the Olivetti Showroom (1957-58) and apparently minor elements such as the banisters of Palazzo Querini Stampalia, also in Venice (fig. 2). The Easel was employed in all of the architect's most significant museum projects: the aforementioned Museo Correr and Fondazione Querini Stampalia, but also Palazzo Abatellis in Palermo (1953-54) and the Castelvecchio Museum in Verona (1957-75, fig. 3) where the vast majority of the circa thirty easels created is grouped.

The Easel is designed to be adaptable to its environment: the three feet can adjust to uneven floors, whilst the bracket can be arranged to different heights, according to the size of the painting or desired effect. The great importance given by Scarpa to the minutest detail of his projects naturally went hand in hand with a strong knowledge of craftsmanship and a close supervision of the actual production of the pieces designed. Each Easel was realised between the workshops of Saverio Anfodillo, the head of a Venetian family of cabinet-makers with whom Scarpa collaborated over thirty years, and the Zanon blacksmiths, both in Cannaregio.