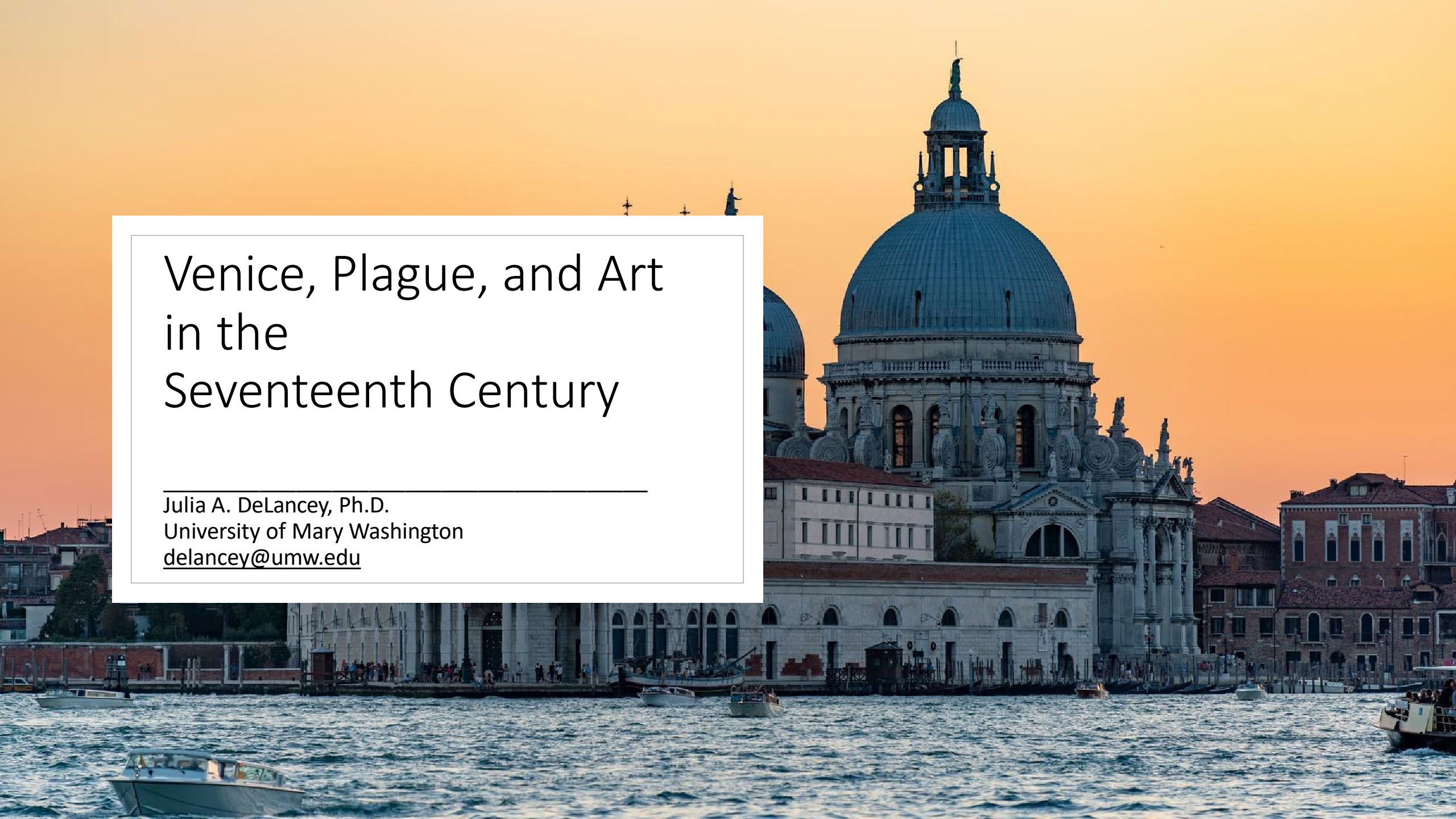


Venice, Plague, and Art in the Seventeenth Century

Julia A. DeLancey, Ph.D.
University of Mary Washington
delancey@umw.edu



Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal)

Entrance to the Grand Canal from the Molo, Venice

1742/1744

Oil on canvas | 114.5 x 153.5 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington
D.C.

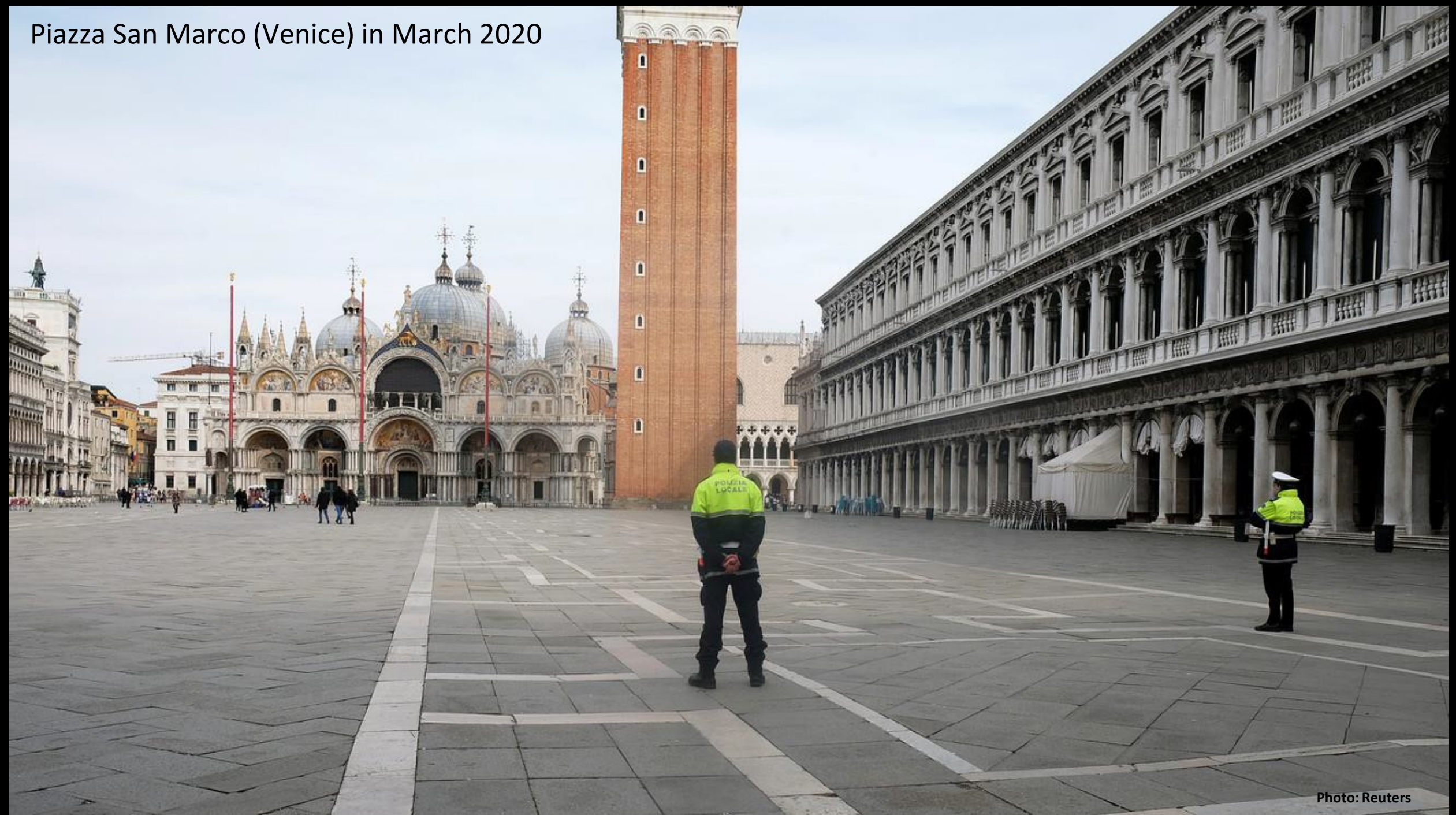




Photo: Henrique Ferreira via Unsplash

Italy and COVID-19

Piazza San Marco (Venice) in March 2020





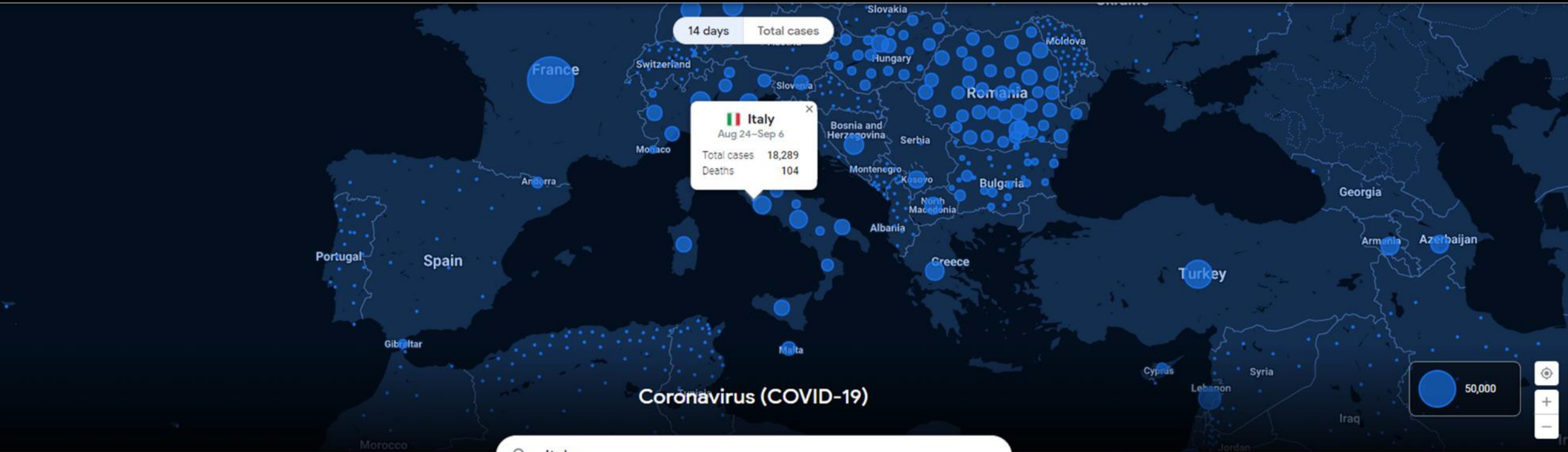
June 2019



September 2020



Information from Google, September 7 2020



Italy

Total cases

278,784

Reported yesterday: +1,296

New cases (14 days)



Aug 24–Sep 6: +18,289

Deaths

35,553

Reported yesterday: +7

Updated less than 45 minutes ago • Source: [Wikipedia](#)



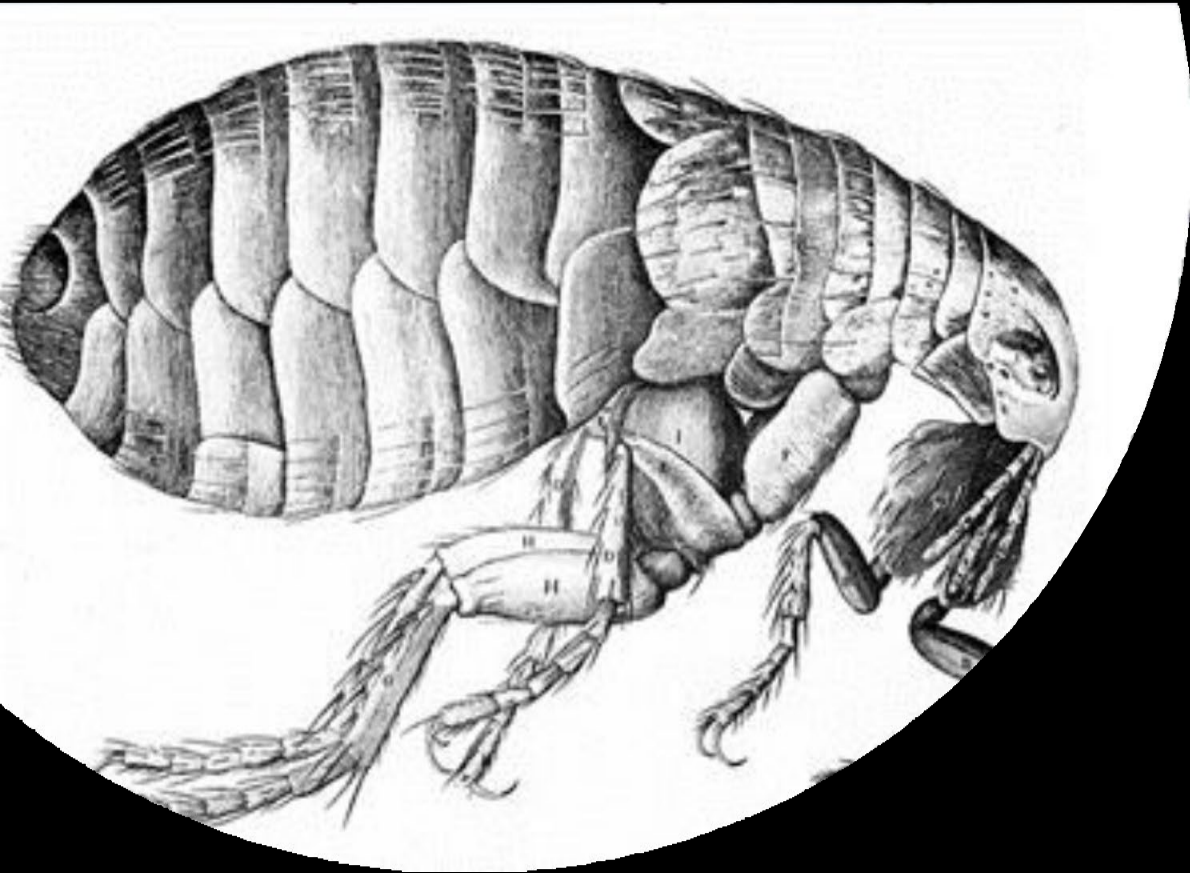


Photo: ABC News

Venice and the Bubonic Plague (Black Death) in the Seventeenth Century

Venice and the Bubonic Plague:

What is the plague? And how bad was it in the seventeenth century?



Yersinia pestis (bacterium) lives in infected rodents. Fleas (*Zenopsylla cheopis*) living on those rodents can then pass that bacterium on to humans.

That bacterium in the human body then causes the plague.
(disease; bubonic; bubo; lymph node)



Credit:
Science Artwork/Science Source
NPR/ Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (London 1665)

Jacopo Tintoretto

St. Roch Healing Plague Victims

1549

oil on canvas | 48.9 x 117.5 cm(?)

Choir, Church of San Rocco (St. Roch), Venice

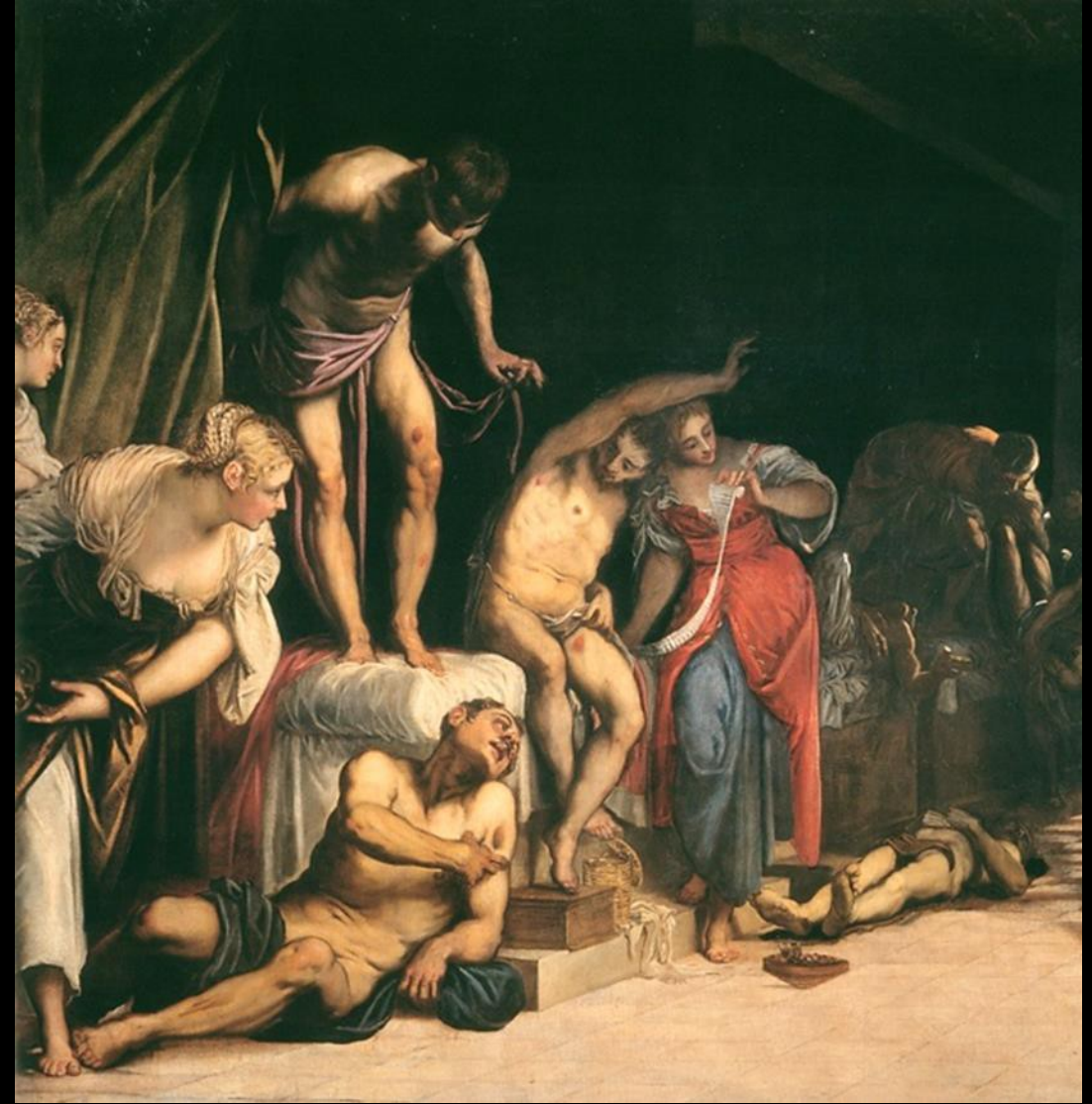


Jacopo Tintoretto

Detail of *St. Roch Healing Plague Victims*
1549

oil on canvas | 48.9 x 117.5 cm(?)

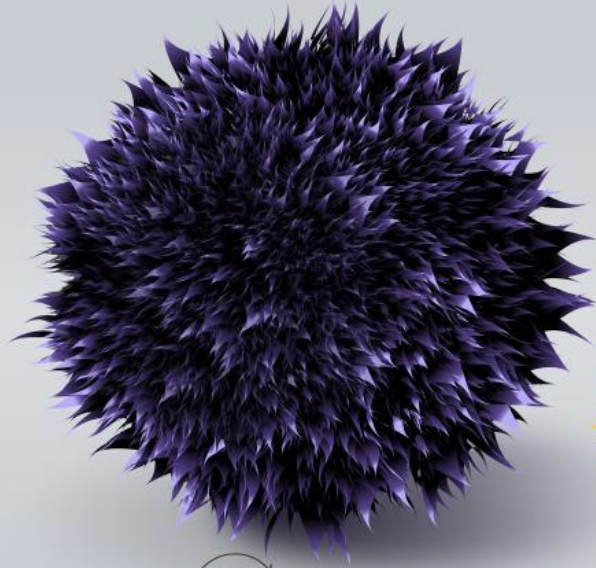
Choir, Church of San Rocco (St. Roch), Venice



DEATH TOLL

[HIGHEST TO LOWEST]

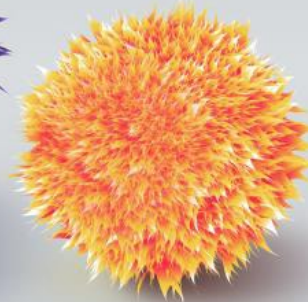
200M
Black Death (Bubonic Plague)
1347-1351



The plague originated in rats and spread to humans via infected fleas.

The outbreak wiped out 30-50% of Europe's population. It took more than 200 years for the continent's population to recover.

56M
Smallpox
1520



Smallpox killed an estimated 90% of Native Americans. In Europe during the 1800s, an estimated 400,000 people were being killed by smallpox annually. The first ever vaccine was created to ward off smallpox.

40-50M
Spanish Flu
1918-1919



30-50M
Plague of Justinian
541-542



The death toll of this plague is still under debate as new evidence is uncovered, but many think it may have helped hasten the fall of the Roman Empire.



25-35M
HIV/AIDS
1981-PRESENT



12M
The Third Plague
1855



5M
Antonine Plague
165-180



3M
17th Century Great Plagues
1600



1.1M
Asian Flu
1957-1958



1M
Russian Flu
1889-1890



1M
Hong Kong Flu
1968-1970



1M
Cholera 6 outbreak
1817-1923

A series of **Cholera** outbreaks spread around the world in the 1800s killing millions of people. There is no solid consensus on death tolls.



Josse Lieferinxe

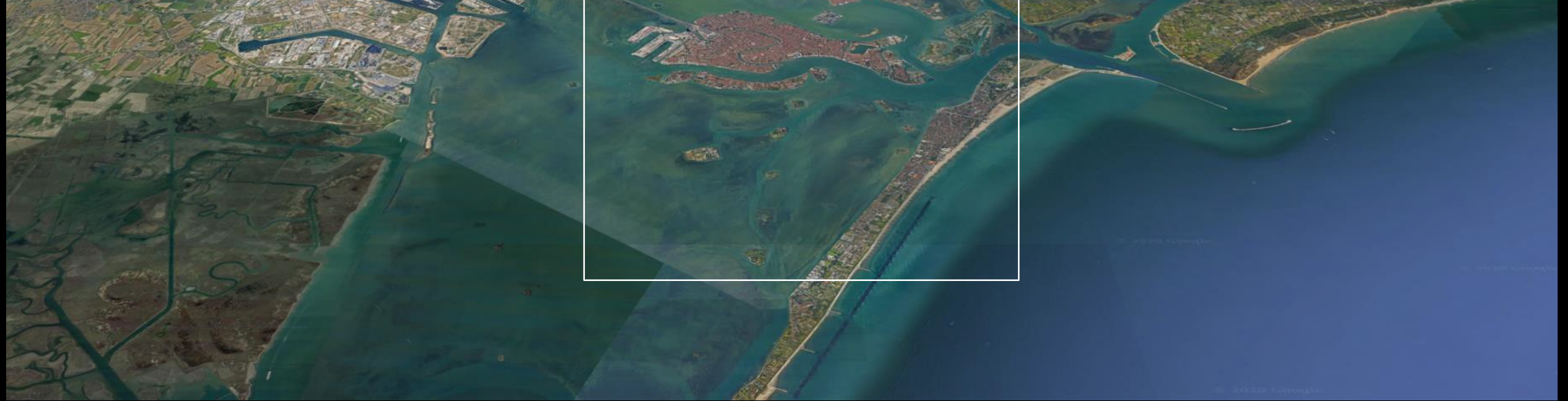
St. Sebastian Interceding for the Plague Stricken

1497 – 99

Oil on wood | 81.8 x 55.4 cm

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

Venice and the Bubonic Plague: The Venetians in Particular



Bubonic Plague in Venice

1348

First outbreak of the bubonic plague in western Europe

Fifteenth century

Outbreaks of the plague roughly once per decade

Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Outbreaks continue and are less frequent but larger in scale



Venice (and surrounding islands)



mainland (*terra ferma*)

Adriatic Sea

1630 – 31 outbreak of the bubonic plague in Venice

- 46,490 deaths out of a population of c. 141,625* (about 33% of the population in one year)
- An equivalent death rate in New York City today would involve the deaths of close to 3 million people

Source:

Jane Stevens Crawshaw,, *Plague Hospitals: Public Health for the City in Early modern Venice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 10.

Photo: Libro di Morti recording 260 deaths in Venice on 3 August 1564 (Archivio di Stato, Venice)

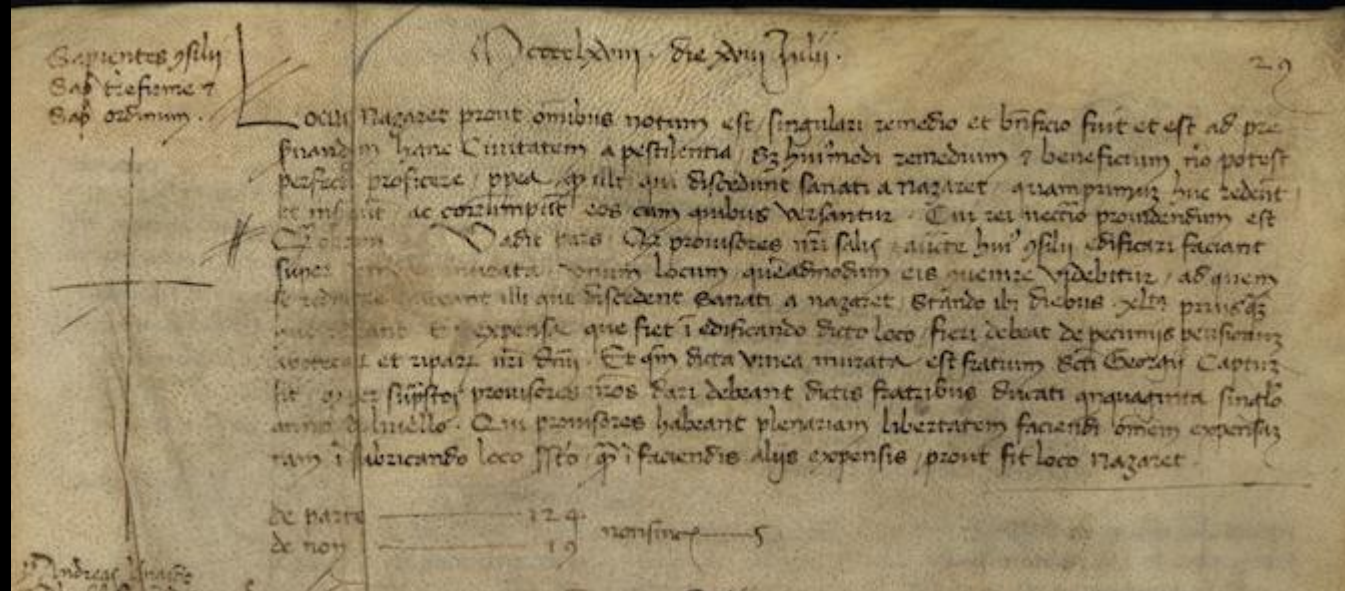


(an aside on the Venetians, power, and record keeping)

- Strong emphasis on stability in government and on ensuring the persistence of the Venetian Republic (1297 – 1797)
- Balance in Venice between control and permissiveness
- As in the rest of early modern Italy, structure and record-keeping was one of the central mechanisms



Venice and the Bubonic Plague:
1. containment/quarantine

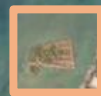


Venetian Senate document creating the *Lazzaretto Nuovo*, July 18, 1468

Lazzaretto Nuovo (New Plague Hospital)



Lazzaretto Vecchio (Old Plague Hospital)





Lazzaretto Vecchio

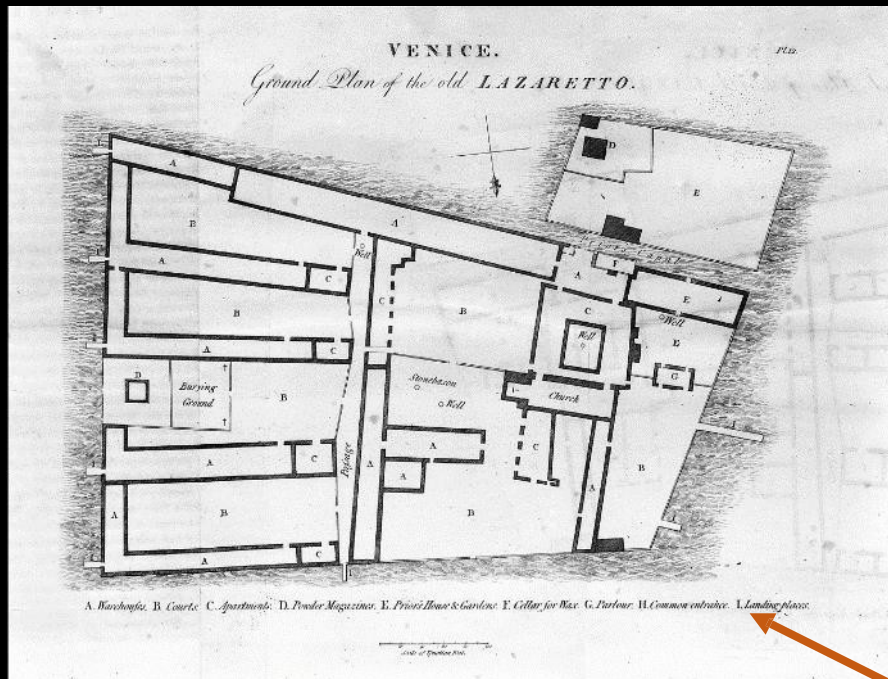


Lazzaretto Nuovo





Giuseppe Filosi(?)
Isola del Lazaretto Vecchio
 Eighteenth century
 ink on paper | width 126 mm
 Museo Correr, Venice



John Howard
Venice. Ground Plan of the Old Lazaretto
 Late eighteenth century
 n.a. | n.a.
 Wellcome Collection, London

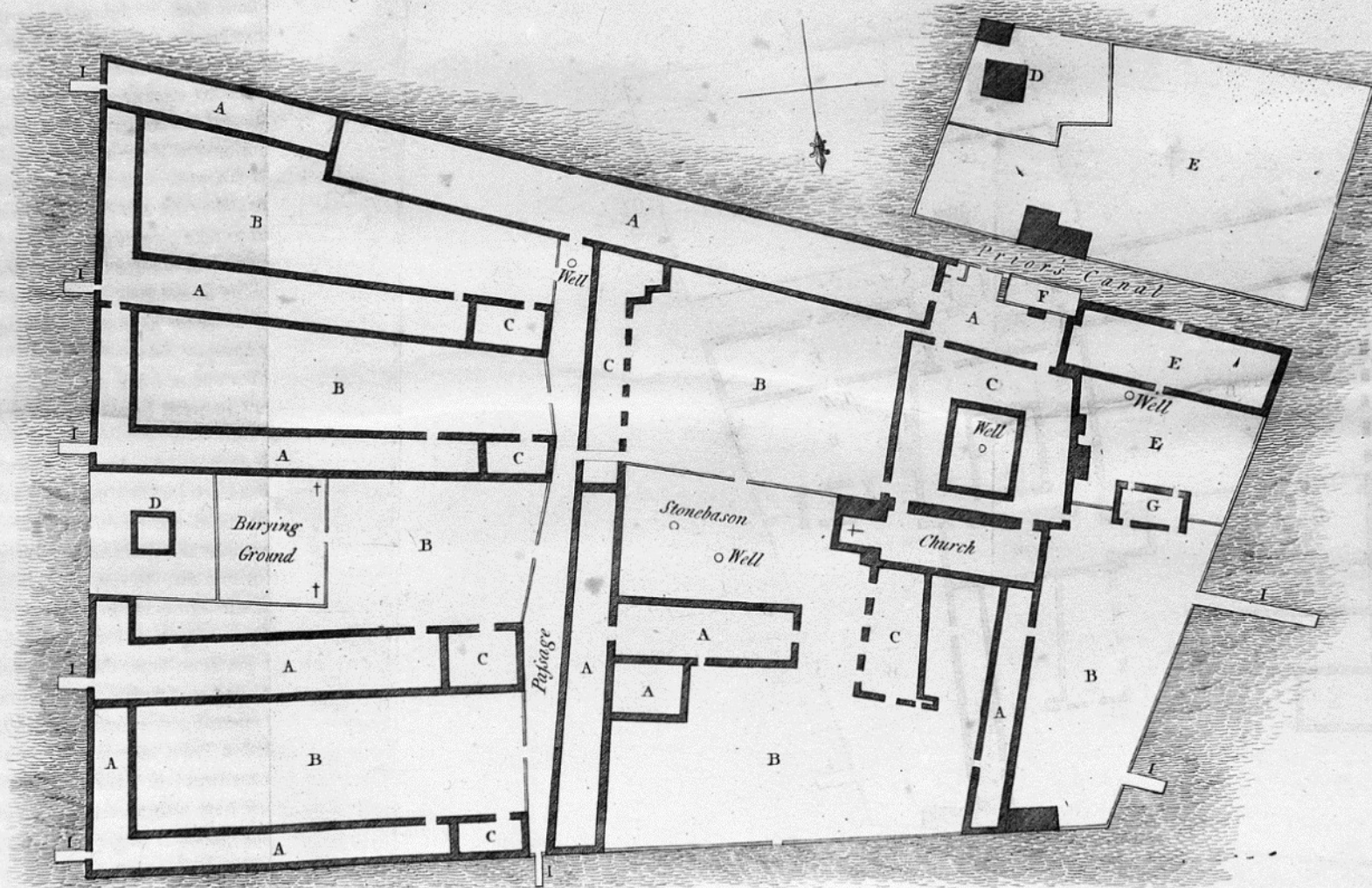


Francesco Guardi
The Island of Lazzaretto Vecchio
 Late eighteenth/early nineteenth century
 Oil on panel | 17.3 x 24.4 cm.
 Private Collection (sold at auction, Christie's (New York) 31 October 2017)

VENICE.

Pl. 12.

Ground Plan of the old LAZARETTO.



A. Warehouses. B. Courts. C. Apartments. D. Powder Magazines. E. Prior's House & Gardens. F. Cellar for Wax. G. Parlour. H. Common entrance. I. Landing places.

Scale of English Feet.



Adam Elsheimer

St. Elizabeth of Hungary bringing food to
a patient in a hospital in Marburg,
Germany

c. 1598

Oil on copper | 27.8 x W 20 cm

Wellcome Collection, London





Francesco Guardi
*The Island of Lazzaretto
Vecchio*
Late eighteenth/early
nineteenth century
Oil on panel | 17.3 x 24.4 cm.
Private Collection (sold at auction,
Christie's (New York) 31 October 2017)



Giacomo Guardi
Lazzaretto Nuovo
Late eighteenth/early
nineteenth century
Oil on panel | 16.5 x 23 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Photo: Museum of Fine Arts,
Budapest

Venice and the Bubonic Plague:
2. gratitude and thanksgiving



Baldassare Longhena

Santa Maria della Salute

Consecrated 1681

Venice

Photo: Murray Foubister / CC BY-SA



Piazza San Marco and Doge's Palace
(seat of government and religion)



Santa Maria della Salute
(St. Mary of Health)



Redentore (Church of the Redeemer)



Rialto (market and trade)





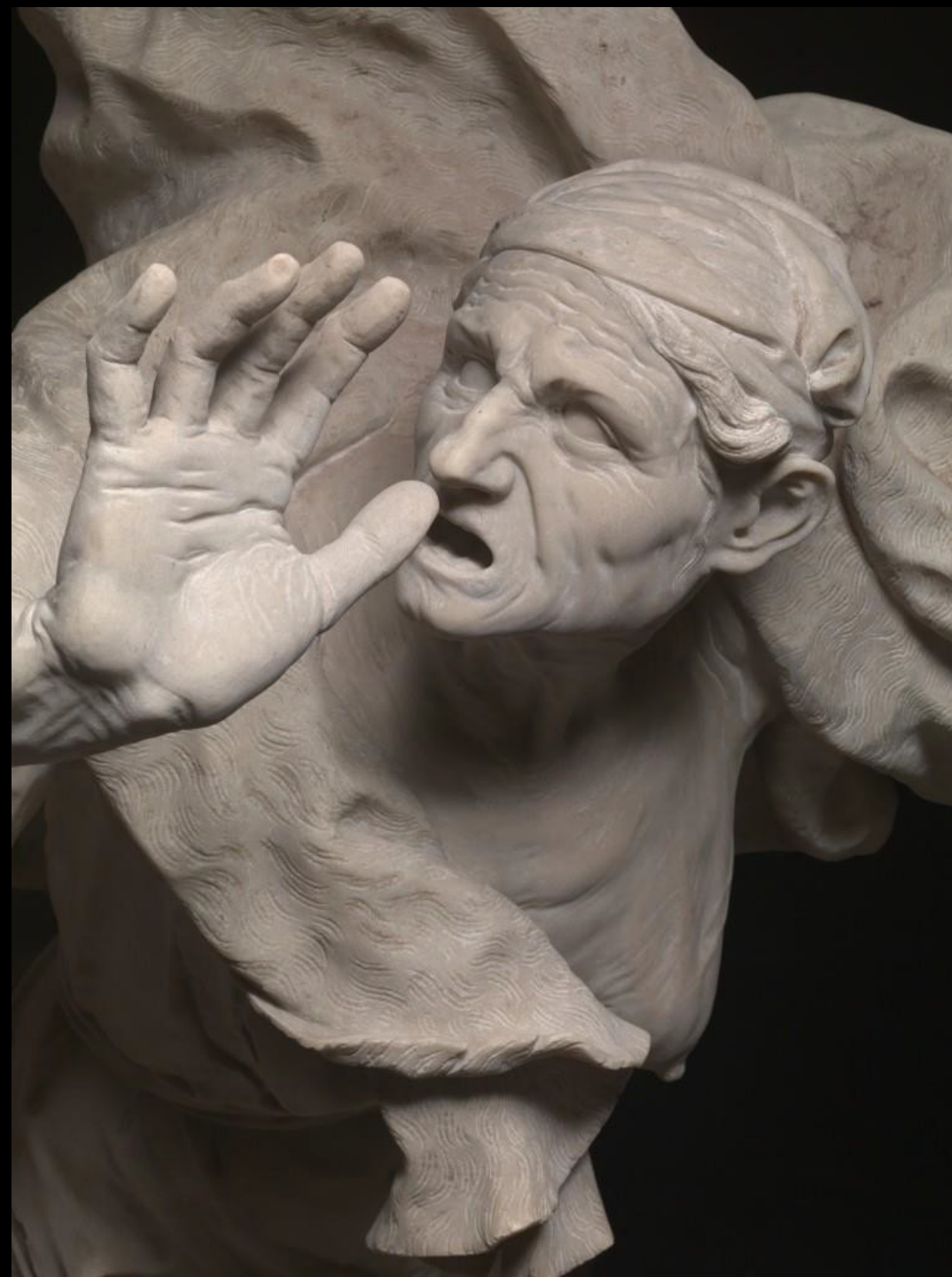
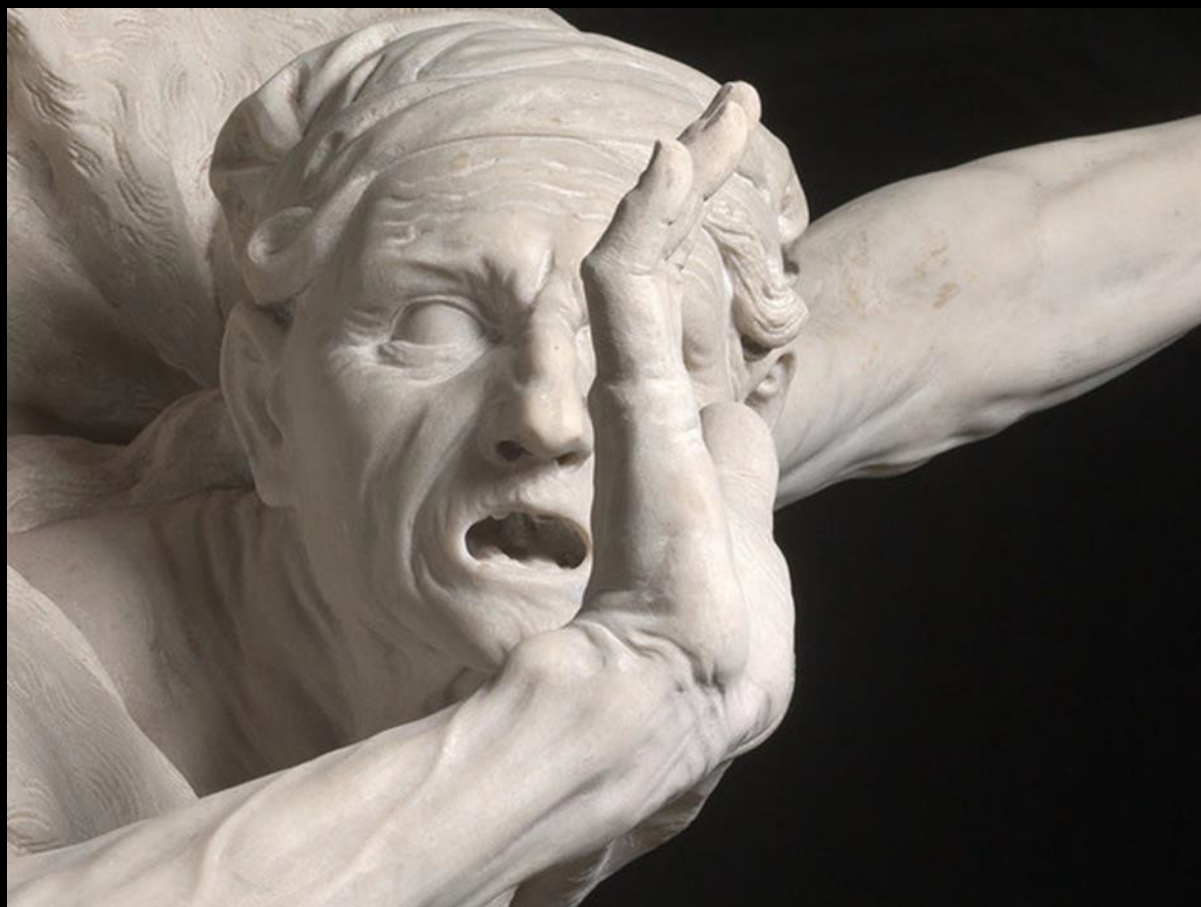


Giusto Le Cort
Queen of Heaven (Mary) Expelling the Plague
1679

Marble | height not available
Santa Maria della Salute, Venice



Photo: Didier Descouens



Photos: Marco Furio Magliani

Canaletto (Giovanni
Antonio Canal)
*Entrance to the Grand
Canal from the Molo,
Venice*

1742/1744

Oil on canvas | 114.5 x 153.5 cm
National Gallery of Art,
Washington D.C.



Books

Crawshaw, Jane Stevens. *Plague Hospitals: public health for the city in early modern Venice*. London: Ashgate, 2012.

Henderson, John. *Florence Under Siege: Surviving Plague in an Early Modern City*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

Boeckl, Christine M. *Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology. Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*. Kirksville MO: Truman State University Press, 2001.

Website

- [Venetian Lazzaretti](#) (once you enter, you can select “English” in the upper right)

Videos and Audio

- Jane Stevens Crawshaw, [“Fight Against the Plague in Early Modern Europe”](#) (audio)
- John Henderson, [“Religion, Medicine and Art in the Time of Plague: Florence 1630 – 33”](#) (video)
- Alessandra Schiavon and Giovanni Caniato, [Peste e Lazzaretti](#) (Plague and Plague Hospitals) (in Italian but you