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# PRIVATE AIR

## LUXURY HOMES

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*Revealed*





Peggy Guggenheim in the dining room of Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, Venice, 1960s. On the wall (left to right) Marcel Duchamp, *Nude (Study)*, *Sad Young Man on a Train* (1911-12 PGC), Vasily Kandinsky, *Landscape with Red Spots, No. 2* (1913, PGC), Georges Braque, *The Clarinet* (1912, PGC); in the foreground, on the table, Jean Arp, *Head and Shell* (1933, PGC).

# Art of This Century

## The Peggy Guggenheim Collection

### Venice, Italy

By Pamela Hughes

My latest trip to Venice was more than magical, it was surreal. Being the third in a series of visits over many years, I was somewhat familiar with the faded grandeur of this remarkable place, or at least I thought I was. However, really getting to know Venice can be an entrancing lifetime endeavor, in

terms of its history, architecture and art, not to mention its regional wines and foods.

On previous trips, I found my way over the bridges, some rustic and some elaborate, and through the narrow streets and still narrower alleys. On this trip, I marveled at the many

different periods of architectural styles, studied how the early inhabitants of Venice lived and moved about the lagoons, and was fascinated by the stories of those who called Venice home in the 20th Century.

One of those people was Peggy Guggenheim.

Peggy Guggenheim must have been an incredible woman, living in often momentous times and creating momentum and excitement of her own. Born into wealth and art as the daughter of Solomon R. Guggenheim, Peggy's career changed the course of post-war art in Europe and America. She opened her first gallery in London in 1938, giving exhibitions to somewhat unknown, young American artists such as Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell.

A strong and determined woman, Peggy pledged "to buy a picture a day" in 1939, being oblivious to the approaching war, at least in that regard. She continued to buy Braque, Dali and Mondrian during that time despite the chaos in Europe. Only when the Germans invaded Paris did Peggy return to New York, opening a gallery there.

Calling her gallery "Art of This Century", she promoted Abstract, Surrealist and Cubist art, and was a leader in the contemporary art field.

In 1949, she moved to Venice, purchasing Palazzo Venier dei Leoni on the Grand Canal, where she lived, entertained and encouraged more new artists of the 20th Century. She became a prominent collector of works we know now by such renowned names as Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Robert Delaunay and Frederick Leger, but who were somewhat obscure at the time.

Also included in her collection are numerous works from Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Mark Chagall and Vasily Kandinsky. She truly had an incomparable talent for identifying emerging artists and for setting trends for the new art of her time.

Her interests extended to sculpture as well, buying works from Constantin Brancusi, Alexander Calder and Alberto Giacometti, among others.

Walking through her beautiful palazzo and the stunning sculpture garden behind it was an amazing treat. It was a gorgeous Venice day with a clear blue sky and a light breeze.

I could just imagine what a cocktail party must have been like at Peggy's house, probably to introduce a new artist to other collectors and friends from around the world. How fun and fascinating!

Peggy led a good life (though not without some difficult times), and had a good start for sure, but she also did something wonderful with her blessings and good fortune. She created an entrancing small museum in a spectacular setting, she helped young artists become successful, and she donated it all to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation so millions of visitors per year may enjoy the same art that she loved.

An afternoon at Peggy's palazzo while in Venice is a must for anyone interested in 20th Century art, as well as for those just wanting to spend time in beautiful surroundings accompanied by a rich history and an intriguing personal story.

It is truly one of the finest small museums of modern art in the world.



1 The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Jackson Pollock room.



2 The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Peggy's room. From left to right: A. Calder, Silver Bedhead, 1945-46; C. Pollock, Chapala 3, 1956; C. Still, Jamais, 1944; A. Calder, Mobile, 1934

3 The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Gianni Mattioli Collection.



About Pamela Hughes:

Pamela Hughes is an international designer whose firm, Hughes Design Associates, designs distinctive interiors for private residences and estates throughout North America, the Caribbean and the Bahamas. The firm's portfolio includes styling vocabulary from cutting edge contemporary, to classic modern, to historical and traditional design. Pamela and her firm have been featured in Architectural Digest, Veranda, Washington Life and other fine publications. In addition, HGTV produced a one hour special on Pamela and her work showcasing a grand home in Chicago and the Four Seasons Hotel in Philadelphia.

Images courtesy of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Photos by Andrea Sant'I/CAST/1466