

Inaugural Exhibition — Fondazione Maddalena Di Giacomo
Vernissage by invitation May 21, 2026 — Palazzo Valier, Venice

Opening on May 21, 2026, the Fondazione Maddalena Di Giacomo inaugurates its programme with *La Nota Mancante*, an exhibition conceived as a meditation on memory and on the subtle sensory traces through which memory continues to inhabit the present.

Memory rarely survives as a complete image; rather, it returns in fragments through atmospheres, sensations, and fleeting impressions that resist language. A scent remembered but impossible to name, a sound that lingers in the mind, the emotional residue of a gesture or a face: *La Nota Mancante* begins from this condition, from the awareness that what is missing often resonates more deeply than what is fully present.

Since the earliest civilizations, art has offered humanity a subtle passage beyond the visible world, a kind of secret threshold, not unlike the elusive elixirs once pursued by alchemists. Through it, we momentarily step outside the confines of ordinary perception and enter a dimension where memory, imagination, and sensation intertwine, where absence itself may acquire form and resonance. In this sense, art is never merely ornament or diversion; it is a quiet companion in the human search for meaning, a balm for the restless spirit, and an invitation to cultivate a deeper attentiveness to the invisible textures of experience.

Set within the piano nobile of Palazzo Valier, the exhibition unfolds as a multisensory journey exploring the paradox through which absence may become one of the most powerful forms of presence. It draws inspiration from what might be described as the “music of silence”, echoing the poetic intuition of Isabella d’Este’s *Impresa delle Pause*, in which pauses and intervals carry meaning equal to that of sound itself. The “missing note” thus becomes a metaphor for that which remains unresolved, suspended between disappearance and recollection, much like a taste or a fragrance that can no longer be clearly identified yet persists vividly in the mind.

At the heart of the project lies a dialogue between visual art and sensory research. The exhibition is informed by the work of art historian and sensory curator Caro Verbeek, whose research has explored the historical and perceptual role of scent in the experience of art, and by a collaboration with International Flavours & Fragrances (IFF), under the creative direction of Bernardo Fleming. Through this collaboration, a series of fragrances has been developed in response to selected works and spaces within the Fondazione, creating an invisible sensory layer that accompanies the visitor throughout the exhibition.

Rather than functioning as a supplementary device, fragrance becomes a central element of the exhibition’s language, a vehicle of memory capable of bridging the intimate and the historical, the personal and the collective. Alongside touch, sound, and taste, it contributes to an expanded museum experience in which perception moves

beyond the purely visual and opens toward a more intimate and embodied encounter with the work.

The exhibition begins in a threshold space dedicated to desire, *The Wish*, where a selection from the Fondazione's perfume flacons collection is presented as a time capsule of memory. Here scent becomes both archive and emotional trigger, inviting visitors to enter a reflective state before the exhibition unfolds. Within this space appears Tiffany Bouelle's experiential work *It's My Party and I'll Cry If I Want To*, which introduces the emotional tone of the Fondazione: vulnerability, transformation, and the generative force of fragility.

The journey then opens into the room *Le Jour et la Nuit*, dedicated to the theme of vanitas and to the tension between light and darkness. Here works by masters such as Jacob Marrel, Vittorio Matteo Corcos, and Vilhelm Hammershøi enter into dialogue with contemporary artists including Fatima Ronquillo, Kenne Gregoire, and Riikka Sormunen, creating a layered reflection on time, mortality, and the persistence of beauty.

The path continues into *Between Two Trees*, inspired by the generative force of nature and by the poetic idea of encounter. In this space works by Sally J. Han and Clémentine De Chabaneix enter into conversation with the sculptural language of Claude Lalanne, exploring the delicate boundary between dream, nature, and imagination.

The exhibition culminates in *Jeux d'Eau*, inspired by the fluid musical language of Maurice Ravel. Here the immersive installation by Peter De Cupere reflects on time, femininity, and the theme of levitation, unfolding in dialogue with delicate female figures by Marie Laurencin, Vivian Maier, and Carl Holsøe, whose works overlook the luminous view of the Grand Canal.

The final chapter of the exhibition is presented in the Fondazione's Chemical Lab, where an extraordinary porcelain bouquet by the sculptor Anna Volkova appears alongside part of the historic Lalique perfume bottle collection, extending the exhibition's meditation on scent as both material presence and vessel of memory.

The exhibition unfolds through a dialogue between historical works and contemporary artistic practices, bringing into conversation paintings and artefacts from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries with works by contemporary artists whose research engages with perception and the language of the senses. Yet *La Nota Mancante* is not conceived as a sequence of isolated displays. Instead, its works are interwoven throughout the Fondazione with the permanent collection assembled by Maddalena Di Giacomo and her family, creating a continuous dialogue across centuries.

For the first time, the rooms of the permanent collection open to the public on the occasion of the launch of *La Nota Mancante*. Here, within the two red damask rooms dedicated to *L'Amitié* to the portrait miniature scholar Michele Bernardi, women artists and female portraiture emerge as the central protagonists, with masterpieces by Thérèse Schwartze, Marie-Gabrielle Capet, Anne Mee, and Eugénie Servières. Across both large-scale paintings and intimate miniature formats, the female subject emerges as a central icon of memory, identity, and representation.

At the heart of this dialogue lies the collection that Maddalena Di Giacomo conceived as part of her lifelong vision for a *Petit Musée de la Femme*: a remarkable nucleus of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century portrait miniatures and sentimental jewellery that functions as an eternal token of Love and Friendship. Through these intimate objects — miniature portraits, mourning jewels, Lover's Eyes, and rebus rings — portraiture becomes intertwined with works by masters such as Jan van Ravesteyn and Alessandro Turchi, establishing a poetic dialogue across time with contemporary artistic practices.

Among the highlights of the permanent collection is the miniature portrait represented by artists such as John Smart, Anne Mee, Jeremiah Meyer, Jean Antoine Laurent, Louis Périn Salbreux, George Engleheart, Samuel Shelley, Richard Crosse, and Andrew Plimer, alongside rare Georgian and French sentimental jewels and portrait rings.

In this way, *La Nota Mancante* activates the *Fondazione* as a whole. Rather than separating past and present, permanent collection and temporary display, the visitor moves through a layered environment in which echoes of a sentimental narrative and intimate correspondences naturally emerge between works from different centuries. Memory appears here not as a fixed archive but as a living field, unstable, sensorial, and continually reshaped by perception.

Bringing together artists from different geographies and artistic traditions, *La Nota Mancante* reflects the cosmopolitan spirit of Venice, a city historically shaped by encounters, exchanges, and transformations. At the same time, the exhibition articulates the founding vision of the *Fondazione Maddalena Di Giacomo*: a space in which art, memory, and the senses converge to create a deeper and more emotional encounter with the work, gradually establishing the *Fondazione* as a living house of intangible heritage, a place where even absence may become a form of presence.

Catalogue

Curated by Alexandra Mazzanti, *La Nota Mancante* will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue raisonné, edited by Alexandra Mazzanti Baldi and Giovanni Argan, conceived as an essential extension of the exhibition and of the broader research programme of the *Fondazione Maddalena Di Giacomo*.

Conceived as both a scholarly publication and a narrative companion to the *Fondazione* itself, the catalogue will deepen the themes at the heart of *La Nota Mancante*, memory, sensory perception, portraiture, femininity, olfactory culture, and the dialogue between historical and contemporary art, while also offering a broader reflection on the cultural legacy of Maddalena Di Giacomo and the intellectual foundations of the institution.

The volume will bring together newly commissioned essays by an international group of contributors from the fields of art history, literature, cultural theory, jewellery studies, perfumery and science. Among them are Caro Verbeek, Rebecca Birrell, Thomas Helm, Vincenzo Susca, Jean Marie Martin Hattemberg, Attilio Scarpellini, Emma Rutherford, and Lara Fenyar,. The publication will also include essays by Alexandra Mazzanti as curator

and by Giovanni Argan as Scientific Director, together with a contribution by Garnt Dijksterhuis, whose research explores the relationship between art, perception, and neurodivergence, expanding the dialogue between artistic practice and cognitive science.

Through critical essays, thematic studies, and selected object entries, the catalogue will offer a lasting framework through which to approach the Fondazione's collections, curatorial vision, and interdisciplinary research.

Contemporary Artists

Jennybird Alcantara / Esao Andrews / Ben Ashton / Elen Bezhen / Tiffany Bouelle / Lindsay Carr / Peter Chan / Lo Chan Peng / Clémentine De Chabaneix / Peter De Cupere / Tara Fallaux / Alex Face / Matthew Grabelsky / Kenne Gregoire / Ai Habara / Sally J. Han / Alice Herbst / Amy Hill / Olivia Kemp / Brad Kunkle / Andrzej Kulig / Millo / Moe Nakamura / Shigeo Otake / Marion Peck / Arash Radpour / Andrey Remnev / Cindy Rizza / Mark Ryden / Afarin Sajedi / Juli About / Riikka Sormunen / Kazuki Takamatsu / Nozomi Tojinbara / Kazuhiro Uno / Yosuke Ueno / Jonathan Viner / Anna Volkova / Isabella Watling / Masao Yamamoto / Mayuka Yamamoto / Fatima Ronquillo / Seth

Historical and Modern Masters in the Exhibition

Anita Brown / Ugo Celada da Virgilio / Vittorio Matteo Corcos / Carl Holsøe / Vilhelm Hammershøi / Else Kalshoven-Biermans / Bernadette Kelly / Claude Lalanne / Marie Laurencin / Jacob Marrel / Alexis Joseph Mazerolle / Clémentine Martin-Buchere / Vivian Maier / Jean Baptiste Soyer / Cornelis van Spaendonck / Jacoba Surie / Virgilio Ripari / Henrik Bos / Sarah Biffen

Masterworks on Display from the Permanent Collection

Alessandro Turchi (L'Orbetto) / Amedee Bourson / Andrew Plimer / Anne Mee / Arnauld Jurine / Charles Frédéric Lauth / Eugénie Servières / George Engleheart / Gustave Jean Jacquet / Hugh de Twenebrokes Glazebrook / Jan van Ravesteyn / Jean Antoine Laurent / Jean-Pierre Frédéric Barrois / Jeremiah Meyer / Bernhard Seibert / John Smart / Louis Périn-Salbreux / Marie Gabrielle Capet / Nazario Nazari / Pierre Louis Bouvier / Samuel Shelley / Thérèse Schwartze / Vincenzo Caprile

Special Collections

Alongside the artworks, the exhibition also presents selected objects from the Foundation's historical collections, including rare perfume flacons — among them works by René Lalique — tracing the history of perfumery, as well as a remarkable group of

sentimental jewellery, including 18th-century Rebus Rings and Georgian Lover's Eye miniatures, intimate tokens of affection and memory.

The exhibition will be open to the public from 22 May until 4 November 2026, by appointment, with an admission fee of €25.

Website: <https://www.fondazionemaddalenadigiaco.org/>

Email: fondazione.mdg@gmail.com

director@fondazionemaddalenadigiaco.org

Instagram: [@fondazione_maddalenadigiaco](https://www.instagram.com/fondazione_maddalenadigiaco)

Fondazione Maddalena Di Giacomo is registered as a non-profit organisation within the Italian National Third Sector Register (RUNTS), and operates through a fully self-funded model.

Any donations, which are tax-deductible, are warmly welcomed and play an important role in supporting the Foundation's cultural programme and long-term mission.