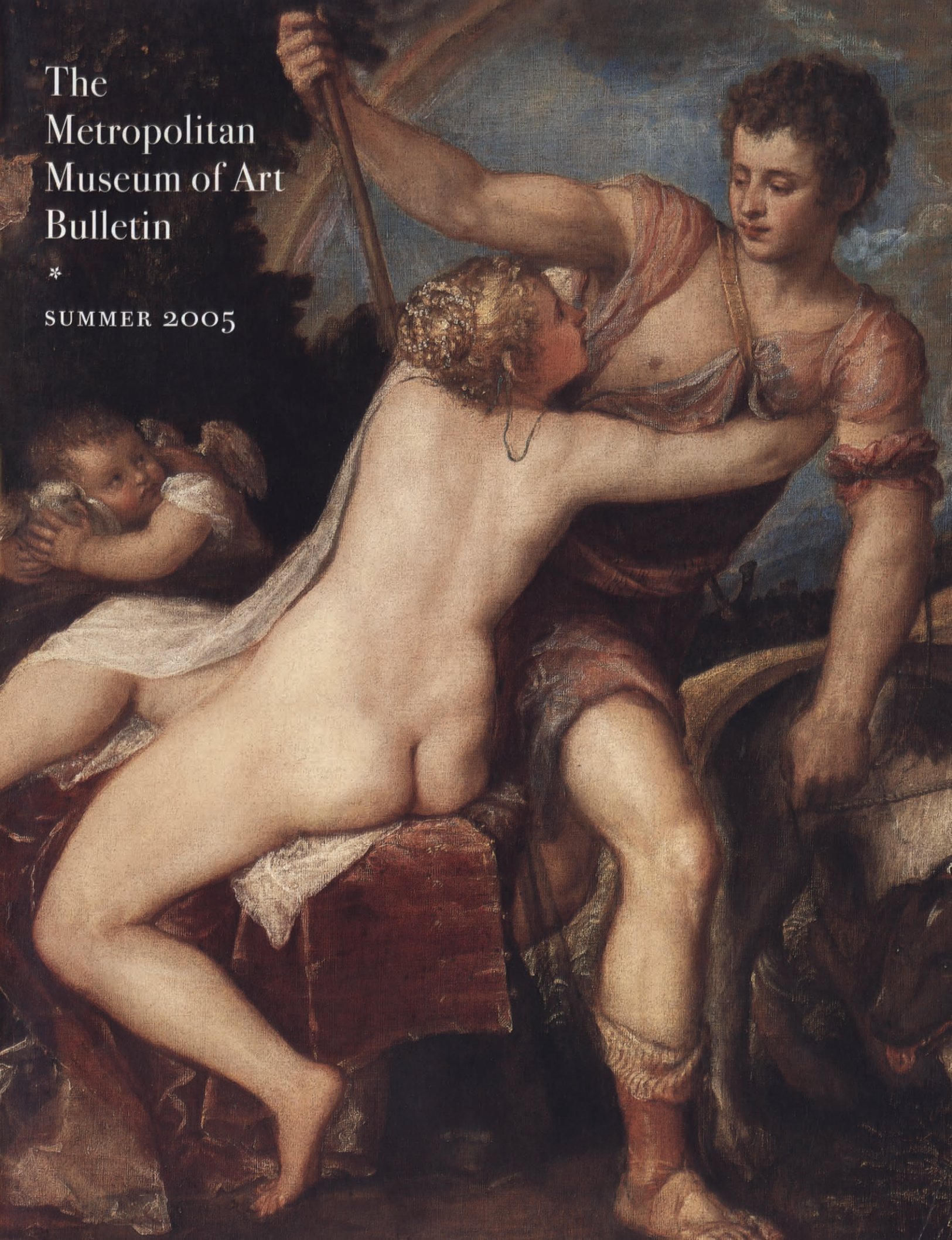

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

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SUMMER 2005

North of the Apennines

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Sixteenth-Century Italian Painting in Venice and the Veneto

Andrea Bayer

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Director's Note

THIS VOLUME OF THE *Bulletin* is the second in which Andrea Bayer, associate curator in the Department of European Paintings, offers our readers a sweeping view of the principal artists and themes of sixteenth-century painting in northern Italy—north of the Apennines—as seen in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Having introduced the painters active in the western and central regions of Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna in a *Bulletin* published in the spring of 2003, she now turns her attention to Venice and the *terraferma,* its mainland dominions. Often known as the Serenissima (Most Serene), the Venetian Republic at the beginning of the sixteenth century enjoyed enormous wealth and power, with a maritime empire that spread to the east and a landed empire to the west that stretched close to the city of Milan. Venice was to be put to the test, however, especially in the first decades of the century, by the other major powers interested in dominating the peninsula, including the Papal States, France, and Spain. Remarkably, Venice managed to hold on to most of its territories and continued to present itself internationally as the prime example of a justly ruled, peaceful republic.

Universally beloved for its unique setting atop and amid a lagoon, with winding canals lined by palaces and *campi* bordered by sumptuous churches, Venice has long been home to a thriving community of extraordinary artists working in diverse media. In the sixteenth century they were to enrich their environs with paintings, on the order of Titian's *Assunta* in the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, as well as with architecture and sculpture, such as Jacopo Sansovino's richly ornamented Zecca (mint), Library, and Loggetta, which transformed the Piazza San Marco. As one author has noted, by the 1530s the Venetian Senate considered their city a "Utopia realized," reporting that it had long ago left its primitive state as a "wild and uncultivated refuge" and had "grown, been ornamented and constructed so as to become the most beautiful and illustrious city which at present exists in the world."

Venice's greatest painters enjoyed international reputations during their lifetimes, and from their day to ours the works of Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, and many others have been avidly collected. From its earliest years the Metropolitan Museum has sought to enrich its holdings of paintings by Venetian masters; in fact, several of the most important works discussed in this *Bulletin* were already hanging here by 1910. Others arrived as gifts from some of our most discerning benefactors, including Benjamin Altman and Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer. Among the more recent additions are such seminal works as Lorenzo Lotto's marvelous *Venus and Cupid,* in 1986, and Veronese's electrifying *Saint Catherine of Alexandria in Prison,* an anonymous gift in 1999.

Philippe de Montebello
Director

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Front cover: Detail of *Venus and Adonis,* by Titian (see fig. 11).

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Introduction

VITAL, INSPIRATIONAL, ENDURING—it is almost impossible to overstate the impact of sixteenth-century Venetian painting on European art. An account of artists whose styles or approaches were literally transformed by the example of Titian or Veronese would comprise a veritable "who's who" of the seventeenth century and beyond, to Reynolds and Delacroix. This trend of influence began as early as the 1580s, when Agostino, Ludovico, and Annibale Carracci traversed northern and central Italy to view works by older artists that they believed were crucial to their own program of artistic reforms, ultimately the foundation of Baroque style. In the process they devoted much of their energy to the study and emulation of Titian and Veronese, the latter still active in Venice. Such was the fervor of their admiration that they angrily took the contemporary Florentine biographer Giorgio Vasari to task over what they considered his fundamental misunderstanding and lack of esteem for Venetian artists vis-à-vis those of central Italy. In pungent marginalia scrawled in their copy of his *Lives of the Artists* (1550, 1568), they expressed their obvious irritation, one commenting that "because he [Titian] did not avail himself of the odious rules of the Florentine painters Vasari thumbs his nose at him. . . ."

Forty years later, when the brilliant young Frenchman Nicolas Poussin arrived in Rome, he, like the Carracci before him, fell under Titian's spell, admiring particularly the three great Bacchanals painted for Duke Alfonso I d'Este's *camerino* in Ferrara (which by that time were in Rome, first in the Aldobrandini collection and then in the villa of Cardinal Ludovisi). Poussin biographer Giovanni Pietro Bellori tells us that the artist and his roommate, the sculptor François Duquesnoy, assiduously studied *The Worship of Venus* (fig. 1), copying the picture's delightful *putti* in paint and making

1.
Titian (Tiziano Vecellio; Venetian, ca. 1488–1576). *The Worship of Venus,* 1518–19. Oil on canvas, 67¾ x 68⅞ in. (172 x 175 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photograph: Scala/Art Resource, NY

2.
Nicolas Poussin
(French, 1594–1665).
Midas Washing at the Source of the Pactolus,
1624. Oil on canvas,
38⅜ x 28⅝ in. (97.5 x 72.7 cm). Purchase, 1871 (71.56)

bas-relief models of them. For Poussin this veneration translated into his own paintings of bacchanals, nymphs in landscapes, and other arcadian themes (including depictions of the Flight into Egypt), all executed with a pictorial quality of sketchy brushstrokes that his contemporaries recognized as decidedly "Venetian" (fig. 2).

Peter Paul Rubens, too, was captivated by Titian's Bacchanals. He made spectacular free copies of *The Andrians* and *The Worship of Venus* (now in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm) that remained in his studio until his death in 1640. The painterliness of Rubens's copies suggests they were carried out rather late in his career, but it is possible that he had seen Titian's originals much earlier, while he was in Rome in the first decade of the seventeenth century, raising the question of whether he worked from drawings he had made years before. We know that Rubens did return to Titian time and again, making copies of great works such as *Diana and Callisto* and *Diana and Actaeon,* both of which sold for high prices after the Flemish master's death. Among Northern artists only Anthony van Dyck was as similarly drawn to Titian, whom, as one critic has noted, van Dyck believed to be the greatest "earlier painter," bar none.

In 1638 two of Titian's Bacchanals left Rome for Spain as a gift from the Ludovisi to King Philip IV. There they joined the awe-inspiring collection of Titian's works that had been assembled by his greatest patrons, Emperors Charles V and Philip II. Velázquez spent his entire career at the Spanish court in active colloquy with these paintings. Put in charge of "the arrangement of His Majesty's Quarters," he rotated groups of Titians, Veroneses, and Tintorettos throughout Philip IV's rooms in the Alcázar and the Escorial. Between 1626 and 1636 Velázquez saw to it that the summer quarters of the Alcázar were rearranged so that the Retiring Room, where the king sat following his meals, was decorated with the great mythologies Titian had sent from Venice. Later, in his role as *ayuda de cámara,* Velázquez rehung the sacristy of the Escorial with a stunning group of canvases by Venetian artists, including four by Veronese. Of the twelve paintings he selected for the reading room known as the Aullila, nine were by Venetians.

Perhaps nowhere is Velázquez's enthusiasm for the Venetian masters given more vivid expression than in his own *Fable of Arachne* (fig. 3), in which the tapestry being judged on the back wall depicts Titian's iconic *Rape of Europa* (then in the Alcázar and now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston). In the contest between the goddess Minerva and the mortal weaver Arachne, Titian's dramatic and sensual image is called upon to represent no less than the power of great art. In short, the inclusion of Titian's mythology in Velázquez's masterpiece reflects the astonishing reputation the sixteenth-century Venetian masters long enjoyed as the standard-bearers of an approach that was at once painterly, affective, and steeped in the primacy of color—*colore*—as its guiding principle.

3.
Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (Spanish, 1599–1660). *The Fable of Arachne* or *The Spinners,* 1657. Oil on canvas, 86⅝ x 113¾ in. (220 x 289 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

The Triumvirate: Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto

Of the three painters who dominated Venetian art in the sixteenth century, Titian (Tiziano Vecellio, ca. 1488–1576) was by far the oldest. Universally admired, even by Vasari, despite the latter's bias against *colore* in favor of *disegno* (drawing), he was the first Italian artist to garner a truly international reputation, becoming the chosen painter of a papal family and two emperors. And yet Titian began his career firmly rooted in the thriving local scene. The Metropolitan has two damaged but beautiful early Titians that introduce us directly to the exciting changes occurring in Venetian painting in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Both show Titian's immediate grasp of the unique qualities in the paintings of Giovanni Bellini and Giorgione, his teacher and collaborator, respectively, as well as the preeminent artists working in Venice when the young Titian arrived in the city from Pieve di Cadore, his provincial hometown in the Dolomites. The first is a *Madonna and Child* (fig. 4) set in a landscape, a popular theme among this group of painters. The boldness of

4.
Titian. *Madonna and Child,* ca. 1510. Oil on wood, overall 18 x 22 in. (45.7 x 55.9 cm). The Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.15)

5.
Infrared reflectogram of Titian's *Madonna and Child*

6. *(below)*
Giovanni Bellini (Venetian, active by 1459, d. 1516). *Madonna and Child,* probably late 1480s. Oil on wood, 35 x 28 in. (88.9 x 71.1 cm). Rogers Fund, 1908 (08.183.1)

the colors, the pyramidal arrangement centered on the Madonna's broad lap, and the trees rising up from behind (a motif also found in some of his early drawings) are all characteristic of the works with which Titian made his reputation about 1510. The thoughtful but assured manner in which the artist considered his composition is evident in the energetic underdrawing, revealed by infrared reflectography (fig. 5). First Titian brushed in the Madonna and Child sitting in an upright posture, with the baby's chubby body seen clearly at right. His original idea was thus similar to many such compositions by Bellini, including the Metropolitan's *Madonna and Child* (fig. 6) from the 1480s. Titian then shifted the Child to the left, into a reclining position, with the Virgin bent over him in a tender gesture. At this stage the two gazed at each other, and the Virgin wore a higher-cut gown. In the composition as finally painted, though, the baby is looking away from his mother, which somewhat lessens the affective connection between them, and the artist has also lowered the bodice of her gown and tucked a diaphanous veil into it.

8.
Titian. *A Man with a Quilted Sleeve,* ca. 1510. Oil on canvas, 32 x 26⅛ in. (81.2 x 66.3 cm). National Gallery, London; Bought with a special grant and contributions from Lord Iveagh Waldorf Astor, Pierpont Morgan, Alfred Beit, Lady Wantage and Lord Burton, 1904 (NG1944)

7. *(opposite)*
Titian. *Portrait of a Man,* ca. 1515. Oil on canvas, 19¾ x 17¾ in. (50.2 x 45.1 cm). Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 (14.40.640)

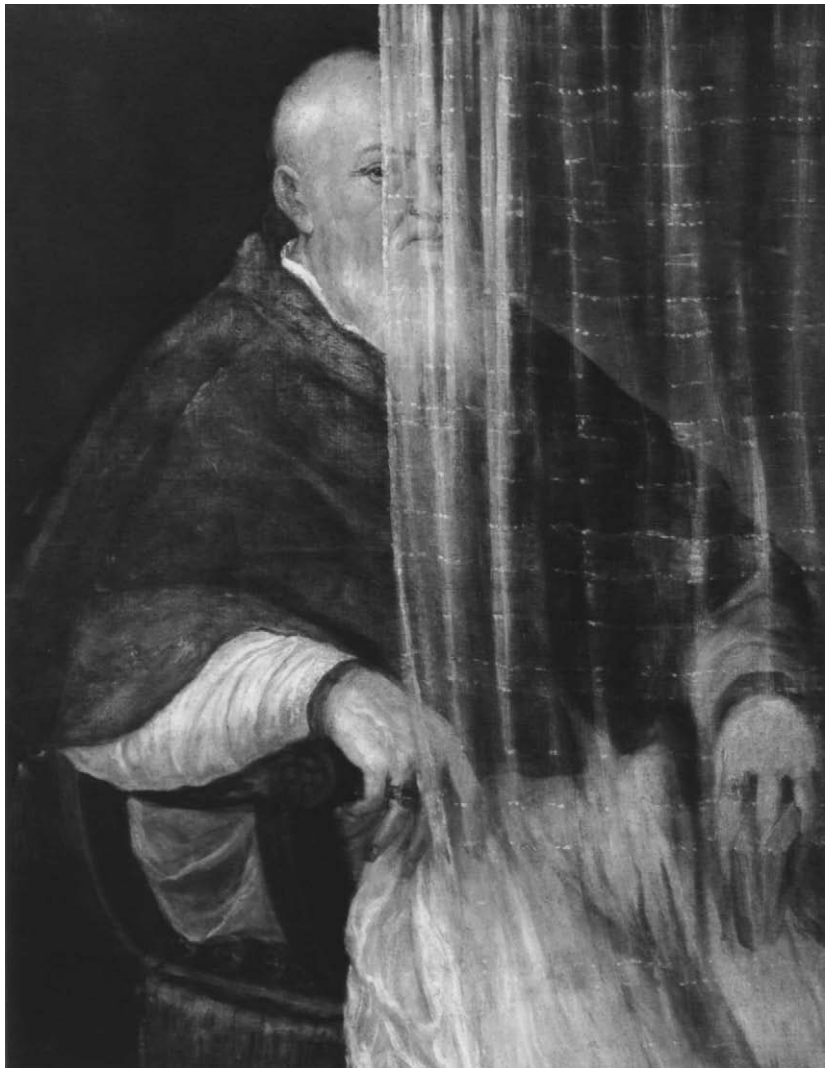
The second early Titian, *Portrait of a Man* (fig. 7), remains a haunting image even though it has been cut down at the bottom and its surface is abraded (visible in the thin, poorly defined areas of the beard, hair, and gloved hand). The connoisseur Bernard Berenson was a great advocate of the picture when he examined it in 1912, but he attributed it to Giorgione (1477?-1510), the short-lived, somewhat enigmatic artist who, according to Vasari, brought Venice into the most modern phase of art with his subtle, tonal approach. Writing to the art dealer Joseph Duveen, Berenson was unequivocal: "I know [the painting is by Giorgione] quite as well, and am quite as ready to prove it as that I am ready to prove that you are Joe Duveen." He based his opinion on comparisons with a group of known portraits by Giorgione— such as the *Portrait of a Young Man* in Budapest (Szépművészeti Múzeum)—that exude the same poetic melancholia that suffuses the Metropolitan's canvas. These portraits seem to express something about the state of the sitter's soul—perhaps his longings for love, friendship, or poetry?—and in so doing diverge from what had been, up to that time, the genre's more strictly commemorative function and appearance.

Although the consensus among art historians today is that the Metropolitan's *Portrait of a Man* is by Titian, the artist's first portraits were undoubtedly inspired by Giorgione's remarkably innovative approach to the genre (which in turn was most likely indebted to Leonardo and his own groundbreaking works). The painting fits in comfortably among a group of outstanding portraits—really his bread-and-butter commissions—Titian undertook in the second decade of the sixteenth century, in which he carried forward Giorgione's ideas. Men are typically shown to the elbow or waist (originally our portrait probably included the sitter's right arm), they often wear or hold gloves, and they are set against neutral backgrounds. With rare exceptions, their clothing is subdued in color but rich in fabric detail, including delicately painted white chemises about the neck. Here the sitter is presented from the side, as in the famous *Man with a Quilted Sleeve* (the so-called *Ariosto*) (fig. 8). In that portrait the young man stares boldly out from this pose at the viewer, but in the Metropolitan's painting, as in most of Titian's other early portraits, his gaze is averted, resulting in an

introspective quality remarked upon by many viewers. Although none of the sitters can be identified, their shared youth and elegance, and the fact that they appear to be about Titian's age at the time they would have sat for him, have led some scholars to speculate that they were all part of the same social set and were perhaps personally known to the artist.

Titian's reputation spread so quickly that by the 1520s he was being awarded the most prestigious commissions not only in Venice but elsewhere in northern Italy, including the Ferrara mythologies discussed earlier. However, it was the favor he found at the Hapsburg courts of Emperors Charles V (r. 1519–56) and his successor, Philip II (r. 1556–98), that catapulted him into a uniquely privileged position beginning in the 1530s. From that time on his portraits are principally of distinguished citizens, who are thus more readily identified. A fascinating example involves two portraits of the Milanese prelate Filippo Archinto (ca. 1500–1558) (figs. 9, 10). Both canvases remained with the Archinto family in Milan until 1863, when they were sold in Paris and were first described as being by Titian. The two are distinguished by the transparent white veil (or curtain) that obscures much of Archinto's face and body in the Philadelphia version (fig. 10), an exceedingly odd detail that echoes the unusual circumstances of Archinto's life and career.

Born into Milanese nobility, Archinto received a doctorate in law and later carried out diplomatic missions from Milan to the Hapsburg court. On the strength of Archinto's skills and political connections, Pope Paul III (r. 1534–49) made him governor and then vicar-general of Rome and, in 1536, bishop of Borgo San Sepolcro. Archinto became a deeply engaged ecclesiastic; he took part in the Council of Trent as a member



10.
Titian. *Portrait of Cardinal Filippo Archinto,* 1558. Oil on canvas, 45¼ x 35 in. (114.9 x 88.9 cm). The John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Photograph: Graydon Wood

9. *(opposite)*
Titian. *Filippo Archinto (born ca. 1500, died 1558), Archbishop of Milan,* mid-1550s. Oil on canvas, 46½ x 37 in. (118.1 x 94 cm). Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 (14.40.650)

of the papal delegation and was a strong advocate of the Jesuit order. His "troubles" began after Paul III's successor, Pope Julius III (r. 1550–55), dispatched him as papal nuncio to Venice in 1553. Two years later, Julius's successor, Paul IV (r. 1555–59), became infuriated over what he saw as Archinto's inappropriate bestowal of a benefice and had him removed. Even without the necessary authority Archinto continued to prosecute heretics around Venice, so his nomination as the archbishop of Milan in 1556 came as no small surprise (it has been speculated that Paul wanted to keep him as far from Rome as possible). The Milanese, delighted at the elevation of their native son, petitioned Philip II (as ruler of Milan and Lombardy) for his approval, which arrived only in 1558, after being bogged down in the Spanish bureaucracy. What followed reduced Archinto's turn of fortune almost to farce.

Philip's belated sanction reached Milan when the governor was away from the city, and the man called upon to enforce the nomination in his absence, Marc'Antonio Pattanella, was the administrator of the church and hence also the acting archbishop. Pattanella and Milan's vicar-general (whom he had appointed) were both determined to protect their positions from the reform-minded Archinto, and they helped persuade the Milanese governor to exile the prelate. In March 1558 Paul IV sent Archinto the pallium, the cloth that symbolized his episcopal authority, but Archinto died in the neighboring city of Bergamo later that spring without ever having occupied his office.

The veil in the Philadelphia portrait is most likely a reference to these machinations. As the scholar Richard Betts has astutely observed, it probably alludes to a passage from Saint Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which the zealous apostle, distrusted by the community, becomes all the more determined to preach the truth to them: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel . . ." (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). This interpretation could date the Philadelphia portrait to 1558 or later, under the assumption that Archinto's family or supporters commissioned it following his death, but the exact relationship between the two versions, as well as their authorship and sequence, has been the subject of much debate.

The quality and care with which the Metropolitan's portrait was painted favor that canvas as Titian's first depiction of Archinto. If this is the case, it was probably executed while the latter was in Venice, between 1553 and 1556 (we are not sure when he left), and could have presumably sat for the artist. The basic pose derives from Titian's 1543 portrait of Paul III (Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples), while the brilliantly sketchy treatment of the white gown, the textures of Archinto's *mozzetto,* or cape, and the subtle modeling of the head and hands can be likened to Titian's important Venetian altarpiece *Saint John the Almsgiver* (San Giovanni Elemosinario), now usually dated to about 1550. This sequence of events is important because it might account for the less refined appearance and somewhat rougher, even cruder technique of the veiled version. We can imagine, for example, Titian returning to the subject some years after first having painted Archinto's likeness. Now, though, he is concerned above all with the visual challenges of depicting half of the prelate's body as if seen through translucent fabric—and indeed that area is where the most successful aspects of the Philadelphia painting are—and thus he perhaps leaves the less novel portions for studio assistants to finish.

Titian's crowning achievements were, arguably, the great mythologies of his later career, some of which he referred to as his *"poesie."* They were conceived for his grandest patrons, including members of the Farnese family and the Hapsburg court, but versions of them found fascinating afterlife on the open market. These are the masterpieces whose hold on our imagination has continued unbroken and unabated for centuries, exemplified by Velázquez's quotation from the *Rape of Europa*. The Metropolitan owns two important *poesie,* one depicting Venus and her lover, Adonis, and the other showing the same goddess reclining before a lute player.

In the Metropolitan's *Venus and Adonis* (fig. 11), we see the goddess implore the mortal Adonis not to go off to the hunt, where, she dreads, he will be killed by wild animals. Titian depicts their final, lingering embrace, as Adonis breaks away from Venus and departs with his dogs for his certain death. The story of the doomed couple is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* but the classical text evidently was not Titian's immediate inspiration since it does not include a precise moment when the two lovers are

11.
Titian. *Venus and Adonis.* Oil on canvas, 42 x 52½ in. (106.7 x 133.4 cm). The Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.16)

12.
Titian. *Venus and Adonis,* 1554. Oil on canvas, 73¼ x 81½ in. (186 x 207 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photograph: Scala/Art Resource, NY

together and Adonis defies the goddess. Instead, the artist may have turned to a recent retelling of the tale by the Spanish writer Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1503–1575) called the *Fable of Adonis, Hippomenes and Atalanta*, published in Venice in 1553, which captured in verse the poignancy of the moment of departure and Venus's desperate pleas for her lover to stay by her side.

In a 1554 letter to Philip II, Titian discussed his representation of the Venus and Adonis myth in a manner that implies the subject held no specific erudite significance for him. Referring to the canvas he had just sent to Madrid (fig. 12)—a *Venus and Adonis* closely related to the Metropolitan's version—he emphasized its formal qualities, particularly the ways these attributes were meant to delight the viewer. The delivery of that canvas had followed hard upon that of another mythology, *Danaë* (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid), which shows the daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos, reclining in her bed under a shower of gold. Comparing the two, Titian justified his decision to reverse one of the female nudes, stressing that he intended for Danaë to be seen from the front and Venus from the back: "I wanted in this other 'poesia' to vary [the pose] and show it from the other side." That point raises several issues of artistic skill. The most interesting relates to the much-discussed Renaissance notion of *paragone*, or the comparison of the relative merits of painting and sculpture. Inherent to Titian's strategy is the debate over whether painting could give as complete an experience "in the round" as sculpture, and the attendant challenge to the artist's ability to present his protagonist from the back in a visually satisfying manner. In his appraisal of the work, the dramatist and theorist Lodovico Dolce (a friend and admirer of the artist) wrote that Titian's Venus, whose figure he found to be of unsurpassable beauty, seemed almost alive:

"There is no-one, however acute of sight and judgment, who would not think it alive; no-one so enfeebled by the years, or of such stony character, that all the blood in their veins would not be set alight, melted and moved." Other contemporaries, struck by the luster of Venus's back and her passionate embrace of the young Adonis, generally agreed that this was the most erotic of Titian's *poesie.* The Spanish ambassador to Venice, Francisco de Vargas, pronounced it beautiful but "too lascivious."

Titian may have invented the basic composition of Venus and Adonis in a painting for the Farnese family (now lost), but in later renditions (at least eight more emerged from his studio) he employed two slightly different arrangements. The Prado's *Venus and Adonis* (the one painted for Philip II) is rather square; Cupid lies asleep at left, there is an overturned bronze jug in the lower left corner, and Adonis restrains three dogs on leashes. The Metropolitan's more rectangular canvas is akin to the *Venus and Adonis* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., with its pair of dogs and lively Cupid holding a dove, but no two versions are exactly alike. Key details such as the drape of Adonis's tunic and the surrounding landscape have been rethought and quietly reconfigured in each one. These paintings bring us into the world of Titian's thriving studio in the later decades of his career. Having invented a brilliant and clearly very popular image, he was loath to use it only once. Even if a work was first conceived for a particularly important commission, variations on it could be sold later, even to other noble patrons.

The extant variations on the Venus and Adonis theme also reflect different degrees of participation by the master. We can surmise that the basic composition was transferred from one canvas to another using as a reference a squared drawing or painting that had stayed in the workshop (or, possibly, it was transferred mechanically using a cartoon). Then, to a greater or lesser degree, the master himself worked on the surface, striving for certain effects. In the Prado's painting, for example, the Venus is notably sculptural in appearance—in fact, her figure is based on a Roman relief Titian would have known—and the work as a whole is rather tightly painted. In the Metropolitan's canvas Titian achieved just the opposite outcome; his brush moved swiftly across the surface, especially in the grass and the foliage, defining the highlighted edges of the drapery and the fur of the dogs. Most striking is the tender depiction of Adonis's face and curls as he glances back at his beloved. In some of the other versions the character of this exchange is comparatively mechanical, a distinction that helps to separate works painted with assistance from the studio from those that more fully engaged the master's attention.

When the Museum's second *poesie, Venus and the Lute Player* (fig. 13)—known as the Holkham *Venus* after the stately home in England where it had hung since the eighteenth century—first came to the Metropolitan in 1936, it entered the collection as one of Titian's most famous creations. The director of the Museum, H. B. Wehle, lauded it as possibly the most important object ever purchased by the institution. It shows a sensuous blond Venus reclining on a couch or bed, crowned by Cupid and serenaded by a courtier plucking a lute. The recorder held by the goddess in her left hand, the viola da gamba propped against the couch at right, and the sheet music scattered about evoke their music-making and, possibly, the implied presence of another performer. An expansive and luxuriant landscape with a satyr playing the bagpipes and a circle of dancers extends behind her.

Like Venus and Adonis, this composition is known in numerous versions, in this case five. In each of them, Venus reclines in the same position; tracings made of the surfaces of three of the known versions show that the silhouettes of her lower torso and legs are almost identical. The musician is positioned at left in all five paintings; in three he is an organist, and in two he is a lute player (the other *Lute Player* [fig. 14], now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, has an equally illustrious provenance). They were probably executed over a long period of time and possibly derive from a *Venus* that Titian sent to Charles V in 1545 (now lost). The *Venus with an Organist and a Dog* now in the Prado (fig. 15) may have been commissioned on the occasion of a wedding, given that Venus wears a wedding ring and the suitor figure (the musician) seems to be an individualized portrait. Whatever its exact origin, the imagery became associated with Titian's studio and subsequently enjoyed broad appeal among his clients.

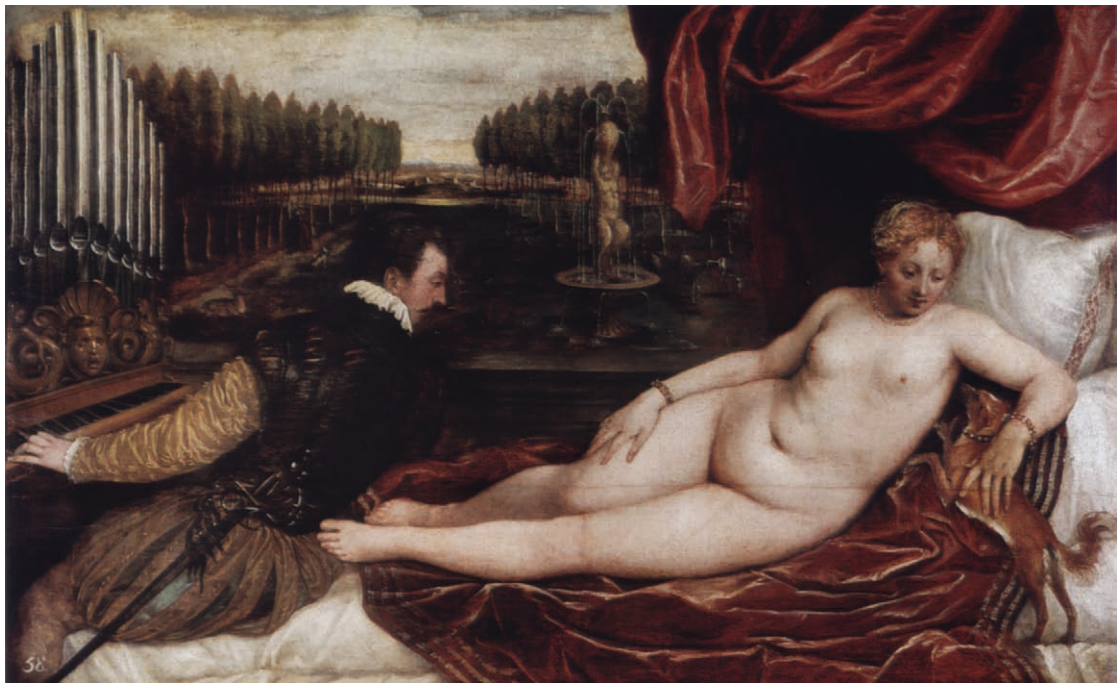
Numerous attempts to interpret the imagery of these voluptuous paintings have reached widely varying conclusions. Where some see unalloyed eroticism, others see a chaste

13.
Titian and Workshop.
Venus and the Lute Player, ca. 1565–70.
Oil on canvas, 65 x 82½ in. (165.1 x 209.6 cm). Munsey Fund, 1936 (36.29)

14.
Titian. *Venus and Cupid, with Man Playing a Lute,* ca. 1550–65. Oil on canvas, 59¼ x 77½ in. (150.5 x 196.8 cm). Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Neoplatonic allegory. As scholars have rightly pointed out, the addition of a musician to the earlier theme of Venus and Cupid opens up important narrative considerations of love, music, and the power of the suitor's gaze. No one doubts that the musician is enamored of Venus's beauty, but what, exactly, is the quality of his love—is it profane or spiritual? Contemporary love poetry as well as the more abstract philosophy of the period stressed that Beauty was best understood through two senses: sight and sound. The Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino distinguished between two kinds of love, one of earthly beauty and the other of heavenly beauty, with the latter best intuited through those two senses. Even as worldly a writer as Baldassare Castiglione, author of the widely read *Courtier* (1528), could talk of the soul feeding on the sweetest food provided by the eyes and ears. And yet it seems oddly apparent to a modern viewer that Titian's lover is Petrarchan, not Platonic—he is using music to woo his beloved, and he hopes that his feelings will be requited. Indeed, the seductive power of music is itself a principal theme of the picture, a reading reinforced by the satyr in the background accompanying his merry dancing fellows on the pipes. We should consider, then, what art historian David Rosand has been right to emphasize: that the two aspects of love were not always mutually exclusive, the very point being made by the interlocutor in Castiglione's *Courtier* who remarks, "the soul cannot be separated from the body."

As with the Venus and Adonis group, the degree and intensity of Titian's personal participation in these paintings varied. It is worthwhile recalling a description of the master's studio practice related by his younger contemporary Palma il Giovane (ca. 1548–1628) recorded in a 1660 treatise by the Venetian painter and historian Marco Boschini (1613–1678). According to Palma, Titian first blocked in his composition in broad masses (Vasari said he seemed to use brushes as big as brooms at this stage). Then, Boschini adds, "Having constructed these precious foundations he used to turn his pictures to the wall and leave them there without looking at them, sometimes for several months. When he wanted to apply his brush again he would examine them with the utmost rigor, as if they were his mortal enemies, to see if he could find any faults; and if he discovered anything that did not



15.
Titian. *Venus with an Organist and a Dog*, ca. 1550. Oil on canvas, 53½ x 86⅝ in. (136 x 220 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photograph: Scala/Art Resource, NY

fully conform to his intentions he would treat his picture like a good surgeon would his patient. . . . Thus he gradually covered those quintessential forms with living flesh, bringing them by many stages to a state in which they lacked only the breath of life. He never painted a figure all at once. . . . And as Palma himself informed me, it is true to say that in the last stages he painted more with his fingers than his brushes."

This passage provides some critical insights into the appearance of the Metropolitan's *Venus and the Lute Player*. Again, we can imagine Titian in his studio blocking in the basic composition (or, in this case, more likely a studio assistant using an existing cartoon to delineate the positions of the figures). The canvas is then turned toward the wall. When it is eventually turned back around, Titian begins to make changes and to work up the surface of the painting. X-radiography reveals, for example, that at this stage of the *Venus* now in Cambridge (fig. 14), he changed the positions of both Venus's and Cupid's heads. In the Holkham *Venus*, he must have paid particular attention to the subtle modeling of the nude goddess's flesh, the head of the lute player, and the landscape, all vibrant and luminous passages that clearly show the effects of those final finger strokes praised by Palma.

At the same time, other areas of the painting were clearly never finished, or at least did not benefit from the same scrutiny. These include the viola da gamba, left as an essentially flat shape; the drapery beneath Venus, on which she "floats" rather than weightily reclines; and the noteless sheets of music. Even more out of character, and so discordant with the painterly rest of the picture, is the punctilious description of the heads of both Venus and Cupid. Indeed, X-radiography shows that Venus's head, down to the string of pearls, was executed with a different preparation and technique. This odd discrepancy has led some scholars to conclude that the painting was worked over for a number of years by the master, was left incomplete at his death, and was finished by another hand—a person who completed only those areas absolutely necessary for its sale. The painting is thus paradigmatic of Titian's technique in his later years, both as a *pittura di macchia*—a work painted with bold, dashed-off strokes that were meant to be read from a distance—and as proof of the painstaking effort required to bring these seemingly spontaneous pictures to fruition.

16.
Paolo Veronese (Paolo Caliari; Venetian, 1528–1588). *Studies for the Allegories of Love.* Pen and brown ink, brush and brown wash, 12⅝ x 8¾ in. (32 x 22.2 cm). Harry G. Sperling Fund, 1975 (1975.150)

During Titian's enormously long working life, which began about 1508 and continued until his death in 1576, he helped establish possibilities for an artistic vocation that would have once been thought impossible. As his career came to an end, these particular shoes as a painter of international repute—and above all as the esteemed recipient of grand commissions from foreign princes—were filled in part by Paolo Veronese (1528–1588), that unique colorist whose works were by that time filling churches and villas throughout the Veneto. Leaving his native Verona between 1553 and 1555, Veronese had little trouble finding civic and ecclesiastical commissions in Venice. He was so successful that two decades later, when Rudolf II, the Hapsburg emperor in Prague, wished to commission mythological paintings that could rival those by Titian in his uncle Philip's collection in Madrid, Veronese was the natural choice. Rudolf may have ordered, possibly through an imperial agent active in Venice, a series of four ceiling paintings (the evidence for the commission is inconclusive). The resulting allegories of Love and Marriage (National Gallery, London) illustrate the brilliant illusionism and steep foreshortening that by the mid-1570s were considered Veronese's greatest strengths. Veronese studied his approach to the difficult site in a fluid pen, ink, and wash sketch (fig. 16), a bravura demonstration of each of these signature effects. The figures move in and out of space along

diagonals that would ultimately organize the space of the paintings. At the upper left of the sheet are repeated studies for the nude reclining man being chastised by Cupid from the painting known as *Scorn*; his head projects toward the viewer as his foreshortened torso and legs rapidly recede into depth. These are followed, in a clockwise movement, by compositional ideas for *Happy Union*, *Unfaithfulness*, and *Respect*.

Beginning about 1576, the year of Rudolf's coronation as emperor, and continuing for the next six years or so, Veronese sent mythological paintings to Prague. Several early sources mention a "Venus and Mars," but the first sure notice of the Metropolitan's breathtaking *Mars and Venus United by Love* (fig. 17) is a 1621 inventory of the imperial holdings. Like so many paintings from that great collection, it was removed from Prague by the Swedish army when it sacked the city in 1648, and by 1652 it was the property of Queen Christina of Sweden, who lived in Rome. After passing through several Roman collections the painting eventually made its way to the Orléans collection before coming to England in 1798 and, later, to New York. Two majestic allegories by Veronese that are now in the Frick Collection were also sent to Rudolf, as was a *Hermes, Herse and Aglauros* (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) that is sometimes considered a pendant to the Metropolitan's canvas.

At once sumptuous and refined, *Mars and Venus United by Love* displays Veronese's expert use of color in its almost dazzling luminosity. The basic subject seems clear enough: Cupid is tying the plump white leg of the goddess of love to that of the god of war, thus "uniting" them in love, a state of affairs also implied by the fact that the pair is either disrobed (Venus's delicate white chemise is slung over the wall behind her) or disrobing (Mars, although helmetless, is in full dress armor, with a blue garment caught on his wrist). Further interpretations of the scene have been based on some of its interesting details. For example, another Cupid, viewed from above by a herm in the form of a grinning satyr, restrains Mars's steed with the god's own sword. Perhaps the oddest detail is the drop of milk Venus conspicuously presses from her breast. Fifty years ago the scholar Edgar Wind proposed that the horse being held back is Passion Restrained and that the drop of milk may be an allusion to Chastity transformed by Love into Charity (often symbolized by the *lactans* motif). Whether or not Wind's readings are precisely correct, it does seem certain that the composition's principal theme is the transformative power of love, which calms the usually belligerent Mars (so evident in his virile facial features), joins man to woman, and leads to harmony and goodwill. Above all, however, the painting extols the sensual. At the very center is Mars's lavish satin cloak, shimmering in the light, and behind it the tour-de-force depiction of the satyr supporting a broken entablature. Although nude, Venus sets off her beauty by wearing jewelry—strands of pearls in her hair and around her throat, with pearl earrings, too; exquisite gold bracelets; and a slender cinched belt draped across her chest that resembles the strap of a quiver. The foliage is luxuriant, and billowy clouds race across a blue-green sky. No matter how grand the scale or opulent the detail, though, Veronese's attention to beauty delights rather than awes.

Veronese was adept at all of the principal genres of painting, and his portraits benefit from this skilled restraint. A particularly effective example is his portrait of Alessandro Vittoria (fig. 18), one of Venice's greatest sculptors and Veronese's collaborator in several major commissions. An avid collector, Vittoria (1525–1608) had portraits of himself made at various periods in his life. Five of them—two large portraits and three smaller ones, done at different times and by different hands, but all by the most eminent portraitists of the time—were recorded in the inventory of his house and studio made after his death. Hung in the "room beside the small studio toward the garden," they can almost be considered "public relations" images, as each one that has come down to us shows the committed artist cradling a piece of his own sculpture. In an early example by Giovanni Battista Moroni (fig. 19), purchased by the collector Bartolomeo Della Nave from Vittoria's estate, we see a young Vittoria (he seems to be in his twenties) holding a modeled torso; the artist has rolled back his sleeves, obviously ready for work. Veronese's portrait, in contrast, depicts a decidedly older man in a less workmanlike attitude. Muted and subdued in tone, the painting likely dates to the latter portion of Veronese's career, perhaps about 1580, when the artist seems to have been influenced by the sober portraits of Jacopo Bassano (ca. 1510–1592) and when the sitter would have been fifty-five. Set before Vittoria on

17. *(opposite)* Veronese. *Mars and Venus United by Love.* Oil on canvas, 81 x 63⅜ in. (205.7 x 161 cm). John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1910 (10.189)


PAVLVS VERONENSIS F

19.
Giovanni Battista Moroni (Albinese, 1520/24–1578). *Portrait of Alessandro Vittoria*, ca. 1552. Oil on canvas, 32½ x 25⅜ in. (82.5 x 64.6 cm). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

20.
Alessandro Vittoria (Venetian, 1525–1608). *Saint Sebastian,* 1566. Bronze, H. 21¼ in. (54 cm). Samuel D. Lee Fund, 1940 (40.24)

a carpet-covered table is a model of one of his most famous inventions, the serpentine "Saint Sebastian." This refined figure first appeared as an element of an altarpiece in the Venetian church of San Francesco della Vigna in 1563–64; it was cast as an independent bronze (fig. 20) in 1566 and was cast again about nine years later. The convincing resemblance of the gesso statuette in the portrait to the famous bronze should settle any doubts about the sitter's identity, which has been questioned by some recent authors. More puzzling is the unidentified but probably antique fragmentary sculpture of a torso at left. Rendered in carefully modulated shades of grays, it is shown on its side, with the truncated neck aimed out toward the viewer. Other notable Venetian portraits of sculptors and collectors, such as Lorenzo Lotto's *Andrea Odoni* (Hampton Court, Surrey) or Titian's

18. *(opposite)*
Veronese. *Alessandro Vittoria (1524/25–1608),* ca. 1570 (?). Oil on canvas, 43½ x 32¼ in. (110.5 x 81.9 cm). Gwynne Andrews Fund, 1946 (46.31)

21.
Veronese. *Boy with a Greyhound,* possibly 1570s. Oil on canvas, 68⅜ x 40⅛ in. (173.7 x 101.9 cm). H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929 (29.100.105)

Jacopo Strada (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), contain similar fragments, but rarely do they assert such a strong physical or compositional presence.

Veronese reached the height of his illusionistic brilliance and inventiveness in his fresco decorations for the villas of the Veneto. In *Boy with a Greyhound* (fig. 21), a full-length portrait given to the Museum by the esteemed collectors Louisine and H. O. Havemeyer, we glimpse a similar feat of visual legerdemain. The young man—tentatively identified as a member of the Colleoni family who married into one of the twelve branches of the Martinengos, a sprawling noble clan of Brescia—is shown in front of a wall that opens onto a landscape with a river and a bridge. The illusionism of the image, which invites the viewer to step into the scene and walk by the boy's side through to the river beyond, can be compared to Veronese's famous frescoes in Palladio's Villa Barbaro at Maser, near Treviso, where children seem to peek out from behind doors and women to peer down from balconies. A similar fresco, probably by a follower of Veronese, in the Villa Lambert (formerly Chiericati) in Longa, near Vicenza, depicts a young man with a hunting dog illusionistically stepping through a door to greet the viewer.

The Metropolitan's portrait of the young nobleman may originally have hung (perhaps across from a pendant) to the side of a door or some other architectural element that would have heightened the feigned three-dimensionality. Restoration undertaken in the 1980s has revealed how Veronese's adroit handling of paint simulates the fall of light across the striped doublet and the sinewy modeling of the canine musculature (X-radiography also shows how Veronese, who was partial to dogs, rethought the position of this handsome beast). The graying of the once blue sky is the unfortunate effect of using smalt, a fugitive pigment. The faded color actually recalls the poignant story of the painting's acquisition, related by Louisine Havemeyer in her *Memoirs* (1961). When she and her husband first visited the decrepit Martinengo villa outside Brescia, she recalled, they were initially disappointed but later came around to buy the picture for a small sum. In the end they were quite satisfied with their purchase. "The gray villa will grow grayer," wrote Louisine, "its walls will crumble and even the gates may fall from their hinges, but its art will ever survive. Veronese's 'Boy and Dog' is one of my most admired pictures."

One of the Museum's most significant recent additions in Italian painting is a late religious work by Veronese, *Saint Catherine of Alexandria in Prison, the Holy Ghost Above* (fig. 22). When the young Princess Catherine confounded the Roman emperor Maxentius (r. 306-12) and his philosophers with her arguments in favor of Christianity, Maxentius condemned her to twelve starving days in prison. In her isolation she was comforted by the empress and by a white dove, sent by Christ to bring her celestial food. Her later martyrdom by beheading followed an unsuccessful attempt to break her body over knife-studded wheels. Here we see Catherine in the darkness of her prison cell, with fragments of the wheel, her attribute, under her feet. One hand already holds the palm of martyrdom, while the other reaches up to the celestial dove. The painting makes an immediate visual impact with its flash of supernatural light zigzagging over the brocade of Catherine's gown and the beautifully foreshortened, tender dove about to alight. This nocturnal scene, recently rediscovered, was painted in the 1580s, late in Veronese's life. It joins a handful of other sacred works by the artist in which darkness is pierced by a sudden electric light, such as the 1584 masterpiece *Christ in the Garden Supported by Two Angels* (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan). In its dark, dramatic tension, this painting stands apart from Veronese's playful mythologies and brilliantly rounds off the Metropolitan's collection of works by this preeminent artist.

22. *(overleaf)*
Veronese. *Saint Catherine of Alexandria in Prison, the Holy Ghost Above*, ca. 1580–85. Oil on canvas, 45¾ x 33 in. (116.2 x 83.8 cm). Anonymous Gift, 1999 (1999.225)

Francesco Montemezzano (Venetian, ca. 1540–after 1602). *Portrait of a Woman.* Oil on canvas, 46¾ x 39 in. (118.7 x 99.1 cm). H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929 (29.100.104)

The rather stern and fleshy middle-aged woman portrayed here was once thought to be Paolo Veronese's wife, who was presumed to have sat for her husband. The portrait is the subject of one of Louisine Havemeyer's most evocative anecdotes, in which she describes first seeing it along with her husband, her sister, and the American Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt: "My sister, who thought beauty essential in a portrait, did not like it and made fun of the full chest and tightly drawn bodice, while my husband seemed inclined to share her views; nevertheless Miss Cassatt held firmly to her opinion and studied the picture carefully; she knew a work of art demanded truth as well as beauty." Cassatt argued that they should look past the woman's plainness to the pictorial qualities of the brocade and lace, and to the painter's consummate understanding of light and shadow. She was persuasive, and the Havemeyers made the purchase. Soon, however, critics began to suggest that the work lacked Veronese's usual refinement and that it was actually by Montemezzano, a gifted follower of the master and a fellow native of Verona.

Among the supreme triumvirate of painters active in Venice in the sixteenth century, Jacopo Robusti, known as Tintoretto (1518–1594), stimulated the most controversy and came in for the most criticism from his peers. His strikingly rapid, seemingly spontaneous brushwork and the occasional looseness of his compositions prompted Vasari's stinging rebukes that his work was "done more by chance and vehemence than with judgment and design" and that he had the habit of "working haphazardly and without design." The latter accusation was particularly unjust; in fact, Tintoretto studied his compositions carefully by staging them in miniature, first making wax and clay figurines of the protagonists and then placing them in a box and lighting it to observe various effects of chiaroscuro. He was also an ardent student of Michelangelo's work and collected casts after his sculpture (see fig. 26). We know that Tintoretto wanted to combine Michelangelo's *disegno* with Titian's *colore,* but in the end it was the quality of *prestezza,* or quickness, in his work that was most admired by those contemporaries who were receptive to his unique style.

Tintoretto, who never traveled, was tied to Venice and the types of commissions the city could offer him: altarpieces and other sacred subjects for churches and confraternity halls (known in Venice as *scuole*), civic projects and mythologies, and portraits. The Metropolitan has fine examples of most of these categories, affording the visitor a good perspective on Tintoretto's broad range and highly individual character. The grandest of them, at more than thirteen feet long, is surely *The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes* (fig. 23), which depicts the Gospel story of Christ feeding a multitude in the desert. This is how the central episode of the miracle, which follows a moment of skepticism on the part of the apostles, is related in Matthew (14:17–19): "They said to him, 'We have only five loaves here and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds." The large and long horizontal canvas Tintoretto worked on is characteristic of the *laterali* used to decorate Venetian chapels, especially those maintained by confraternities devoted to the Eucharist, known as Scuole del Sacramento. A view of one such chapel in the church of San Trovaso (fig. 24) shows two similar canvases lining the lateral walls of the narrow,

23.
Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti; Venetian, 1518–1594). *The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes,* ca. 1545–50. Oil on canvas, 61 x 160½ in. (154.9 x 407.7 cm). Francis L. Leland Fund, 1913 (13.75)

24. *(right)*
View of chapel in the church of San Trovaso, Venice. Reproduced from Jill Dunkerton, Susan Foister, and Nicholas Penny, *Dürer to Veronese: Sixteenth-Century Painting in the National Gallery* (New Haven, 1999), p. 15.

25.
Tintoretto. *Christ Washing His Disciples' Feet,* ca. 1550. Oil on canvas, 61 x 160½ in. (154.9 x 407.7 cm). Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Gift by general subscription, 1959 (58/51)

deep space. We do not know the original location of Tintoretto's *Miracle*, but it may have been owned by Sir Joshua Reynolds along with an identically sized *Christ Washing His Disciples' Feet* (fig. 25) now in the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (one of a number of versions of this subject, the finest of which is now in the Prado, Madrid). The two were paired from at least the mid-nineteenth century, suggesting that they once faced each other across a chapel. Both subjects clearly allude to the sacrament of the Eucharist, the *Miracle* with its loaves of bread and the *Washing* as a symbol of purification before taking communion. However, in his *Life of Tintoretto* (1642), the seventeenth-century artist and writer Carlo Ridolfi mentions Tintoretto paintings on these very subjects hanging in the patrician house of Senators Carlo and Domenico Ruzini, and the Ruzini family still owned works on the same subjects (presumably the same paintings) in 1787. Thus there is a possibility that the two hung in a grand palace rather than in a church.

Tintoretto's composition of the *Miracle* can almost be described as balletic (one critic has written of the *senso chorale* of his works from the 1550s). Christ and his disciple, at the center, sway in opposite directions as they distribute

26.
Tintoretto. *Study after Michelangelo's "Giorno."* Black and white chalk on blue paper, 13¾ x 19⅞ in. (35 x 50.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1954 (54.125)

the loaves. They are ringed by a group of seated or reclining men and women with children (with many more people moving toward them from the rear). The figures sit or stand in exaggerated poses—bending, twisting, and leaning on their arms—that were perhaps inspired by Tintoretto's study of Michelangelo, as evidenced in his drawings after the master (fig. 26), but Tintoretto has made them more elastic and less muscle-bound. The combination of the ethereal crowds, women with towering pearl headdresses, and loosely articulated figures recalls Tintoretto's *Moses Drawing Water from a Rock* (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt), a similar painting and the likely recipient of Lodovico Dolce's comments in his *Dialogo* of 1557 criticizing the artist's inaccurate portrayal of the desert locale in the service of his desire for an aesthetically pleasing setting. Both paintings were probably quite recent at the time, a period when Tintoretto's workshop was busily engaged with official and ecclesiastical commissions alike.

Far more intimate in scale, and probably later in date (perhaps about 1570) is *The Finding of Moses* (fig. 27). The painting is so sketchy—the very embodiment of *prestezza*—that a debate has raged since the nineteenth century as to whether or not the canvas is actually finished. Writing in 1859, one of its earlier owners, George D. Leslie, R.A., mentions that both Sir Charles Eastlake (first director of the National Gallery, London) and the artist Sir Edwin Landseer admired it enormously: "Whether the picture is unfinished or not must remain a matter of interesting discussion. Many pictures by him are 'unfinished' judging by academic standards, but Tintoretto was not an academic artist." Other critics have pondered whether the unusual style is an indication that the painting is actually by the artist's son, Domenico (1560–1635). The striking "drawn" quality of the pharaoh's daughter's legs, for example, is very close to that of the ambitious *modelli* the younger artist made for some of his complex narratives (fig. 28). But Domenico, alas, was rarely able to translate the spontaneity of his chalk and gouache works on paper to his larger-scale paintings, which typically appear more finished and finicky.

Questions about the unfinishedness of *The Finding of Moses* have been followed by doubts about the subject matter. Most renderings of the familiar biblical story (Exodus 2:1-10) show the baby Moses, secreted in an ark of bulrushes, being discovered by pharaoh's daughter and her maid. Here we must be witnessing a moment further on

in the text, when a nurse is found for the child (actually his own mother) and Moses is given to her. The background hunting scenes, painted with such brio, have no doubt contributed to the confusion surrounding the central subject, but they can perhaps be explained by a Venetian tradition that allowed for—or seemed to demand—the inclusion of secondary figures to enliven the composition. Veronese's several canvases on the same theme also include hunters, hunting dogs, jesters, and other possible members of the royal entourage, while Tiepolo, in his grand development of the story (ca. 1736–38, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh), continues the tradition by including

27.
Tintoretto. *The Finding of Moses.* Oil on canvas, 30½ x 52¾ in. (77.5 x 134 cm). Gwynne Andrews Fund, 1939 (39.55)

28.
Domenico Tintoretto (Venetian, 1560–1635). *The Mocking of Christ.* Black chalk, brush and brown ink, gray and white oil paint, on blue paper; squared in black chalk, 9⅜ x 16 in. (23.7 x 40.6 cm). Harry G. Sperling Fund, 1994 (1994.266)

halberdiers, dogs, and other marginal characters. One mythological alternative to the biblical reading of the Metropolitan's painting is that it depicts the rescue of the newborn Jupiter from infanticide by nymphs devoted to his mother, Rhea (these nymphs, usually called the Corybantes, could thus be the figures at left carrying spears). Another similarly composed painting by Tintoretto (known only through photographs) has been identified as a depiction of that myth, but the theory falters in both cases because the goat Amalthea, almost always shown nursing the god, is absent. On balance, the unusual aspects of the imagery from Exodus are probably the outcome of Tintoretto's characteristically undogmatic approach.

Arguably the most engaging work by Tintoretto in the Museum's collection is *Doge Alvise Mocenigo (1507–77) Presented to the Redeemer* (fig. 29), a large *modello* for a votive painting in the Sala del Collegio in the Doge's Palace (one of the artist's major civic commissions). According to the sixteenth-century writer Francesco Sansovino, who penned several successful guides to Venice, a variety of meetings was held in this crucial *sala,* covering anything to do with "the sea, peace and war; correspondence with foreign sovereigns and relations with their ambassadors." Destroyed by fire in 1574, the chamber was refurbished with an orchestrated program of political imagery alluding to various aspects of Venetian power and prestige.

Alvise Mocenigo (r. 1570–77) was doge of Venice at a crucial juncture in the city's history,

29.
Tintoretto. *Doge Alvise Mocenigo (1507–77) Presented to the Redeemer,* probably 1577. Oil on canvas, 38¼ x 78 in. (97.2 x 198.1 cm). John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1910 (10.206)

during the Battle of Lepanto in October 1571—an important naval victory celebrated in a painting by Veronese hung above the doge's throne—through the virulent plague of 1576 that killed scores of the Venetian citizenry, including Titian. It was Mocenigo who vowed that when the pestilence had finally abated he would build a church on the Giudecca dedicated to the Redeemer, which we know today as Palladio's majestic Redentore. Tintoretto's votive painting is almost certainly an allusion to both of these prominent events in Mocenigo's tenure. It shows the doge kneeling on steps in front of several intercessory saints. In the distance behind them we glimpse the *piazzetta,* with the ducal palace and Jacopo Sansovino's magnificent Library, along with a number of ships, a reference to the crucial naval battle.

Tintoretto rarely made sketch models in oil such as the Metropolitan's *modello*, but in this case—as brought to light by years of technical examination—the format served him well as a means to finesse compositional possibilities.

30.
Tintoretto's *Doge Alvise Mocenigo (1507–77) Presented to the Redeemer* before restoration

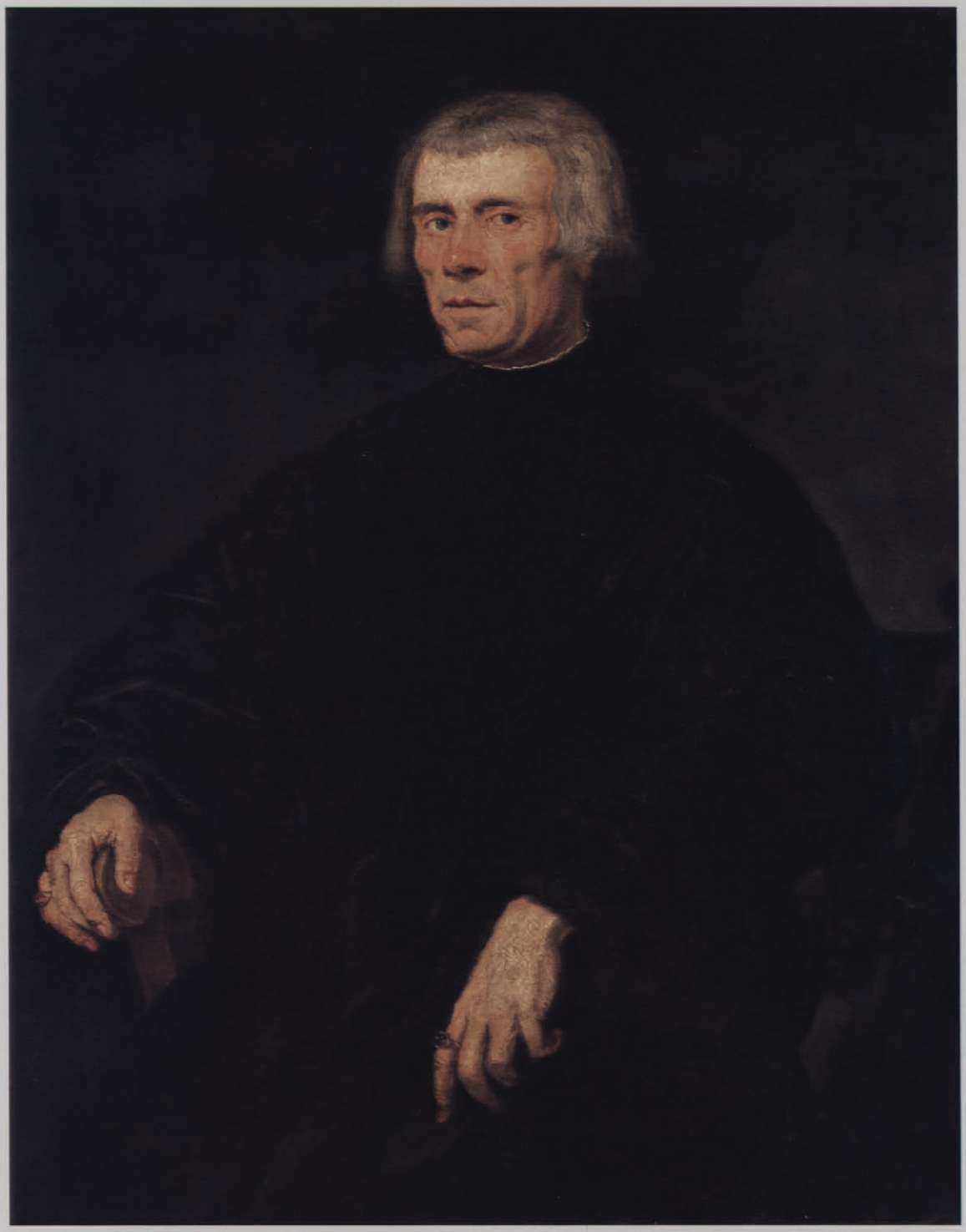
31.
X-radiograph of Tintoretto's *Doge Alvise Mocenigo (1507–77) Presented to the Redeemer*

32. *(below)*
Tintoretto's final work in the Doge's Palace, Venice. Reproduced from Staale Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall* (Rome, 1974), pl. XIX.

When the painting entered the Museum's collection in 1910, the area to the left of the kneeling doge was thought to be inexplicably bare (fig. 30), and by the 1940s X-radiography had revealed several abandoned figures of other saints underneath the paint layer in this area, including Mark, the patron saint of Venice (fig. 31); one of them, viewed entirely from the rear, is moving up the steps toward the doge. These would have been presenting the doge to Christ, seen soaring in from the left.

Thirty years ago Metropolitan conservator Hubert von Sonnenberg undertook another technical examination of the painting and eventually carried out a restoration that yielded rather dramatic results. It uncovered the two partially painted figures seen in the X-radiograph floating above the doge (one still in the schematic form of a wax or clay model, which would seem to corroborate Ridolfi's account of the artist's working process). Clearly Tintoretto had struggled to position these figures so that they would not overwhelm the central protagonist, an issue he resolved in the final work (fig. 32) by raising the figure of Christ so that there is a natural progression of movement upward from the doge, through the saint, to the Redeemer. As von Sonnenberg discerningly observed, the confidence and élan of certain areas of the sketch—especially the underpainting of the figures seen in the X-radiograph, the painted figure of Christ and the music-making angel, and other details such as the crozier held aloft at right—proclaim Tintoretto's direct involvement, but other passages, such as the rather dull architecture or even the charmless heads of the figures at right, may have been finished by a studio assistant.

The vibrancy of the preparation in those figures that *were* worked up by the master is what connects this odd but fascinating canvas to the more intimate *Finding of Moses.* Both paintings belonged to English collectors in the mid-nineteenth century, and both appealed to a similar sensibility. The *modello,* in fact, was once the property of the great writer and art historian John Ruskin, who, despite an occasional criticism of Tintoretto (like Michelangelo, he wrote, Tintoretto painted figures that were always "flying, falling, sinking, or biting"), admired the artist enormously and owned five paintings by him. He bought this one in Venice in 1853 and treasured it as an elderly man at his home in Brentwood, England.



Tintoretto. *Portrait of a Man,* ca. 1540 (?). Oil on canvas, 44⅜ x 35 in. (112.7 x 88.9 cm). Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.12)

Tintoretto's finest portraits are gripping presentations of Venetian patricians and statesmen. This older gentleman, his face somewhat lined and his hair gray, looks out with his blue eyes in a penetrating stare. Although critics such as Bernard Berenson, followed by Federico Zeri, believed this work was painted rather early in Tintoretto's career, it may be one of a number of extraordinary likenesses he executed about 1560, including the Portrait of Alvise Cornaro *(Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence), which also shows an elderly man, and the* Portrait of Giovanni Paolo Cornaro *(Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent), dated 1561. In terms of the subtle torsions of pose and the carefully worked fall of light across the hands, faces, and dark garb of these sitters, they all reflect an awareness of Titian's later portraiture.*

Beyond the Triumvirate: The Genius of Venice

Throughout the sixteenth century many gifted, even brilliant artists struggled to compete with these three giants and their prodigious workshops. None could avoid their influence entirely, but many devised strategies for distinguishing their own production, often by looking beyond Venice for new ideas. The Dalmatian artist Andrea Schiavone (1522?–1563), who settled in Venice early in his life, scrutinized paintings and prints from central and northern Italy for inspiration, particularly the fluent, unlabored etchings of the Emilian mannerist Parmigianino (1503–1540). In Schiavone's *Marriage of Cupid and Psyche* (fig. 33), for example, the vibrant Venetian color and sketchlike technique meld around the languid Psyche at center, who is based on the figure of Circe conceived by Parmigianino that appears in more than one print after him (with the figure reversed), such as those by Antonio da Trento (Bartsch XVI, 6) and Ugo da Carpi (or Giuseppe Niccolò Vicentino) (Bartsch XII, 7–8). (A similar female figure reappears in Schiavone's etching of *The Finding of*

33. *(opposite)* Andrea Schiavone (Andrea Medulich or Meldolla; Venetian, 1522?–1563). *Marriage of Cupid and Psyche,* ca. 1550. Oil on wood, overall, with corners made up, 51½ x 61⅞ in. (130.8 x 157.2 cm). Purchase, Gift of Mary V. T. Eberstadt, by exchange, 1973 (1973.116)

34. Schiavone. *Cupid Presenting Psyche to the Gods.* Pen and brown ink, brown wash, highlighted with white, over traces of black chalk, on brown-washed paper, 14¾ x 23¾ in. (37.4 x 60.3 cm). Rogers Fund, 1963 (63.93)

Moses [Bartsch XVI, 2].) Schiavone's contemporaries generally admired these compositions, but opinions on their technique differed. The satirist and professional provocateur Pietro Aretino, in one of his famous *lettere,* lamented the lack of "finish" in Schiavone's work but also noted that Titian expressed grudging admiration "at the technique you demonstrate in setting down the sketches of stories." It was presumably that quality that made Schiavone an important example for Tintoretto (the two may have collaborated about 1540), who was demonstrably impressed by the painterliness of the somewhat older artist's work.

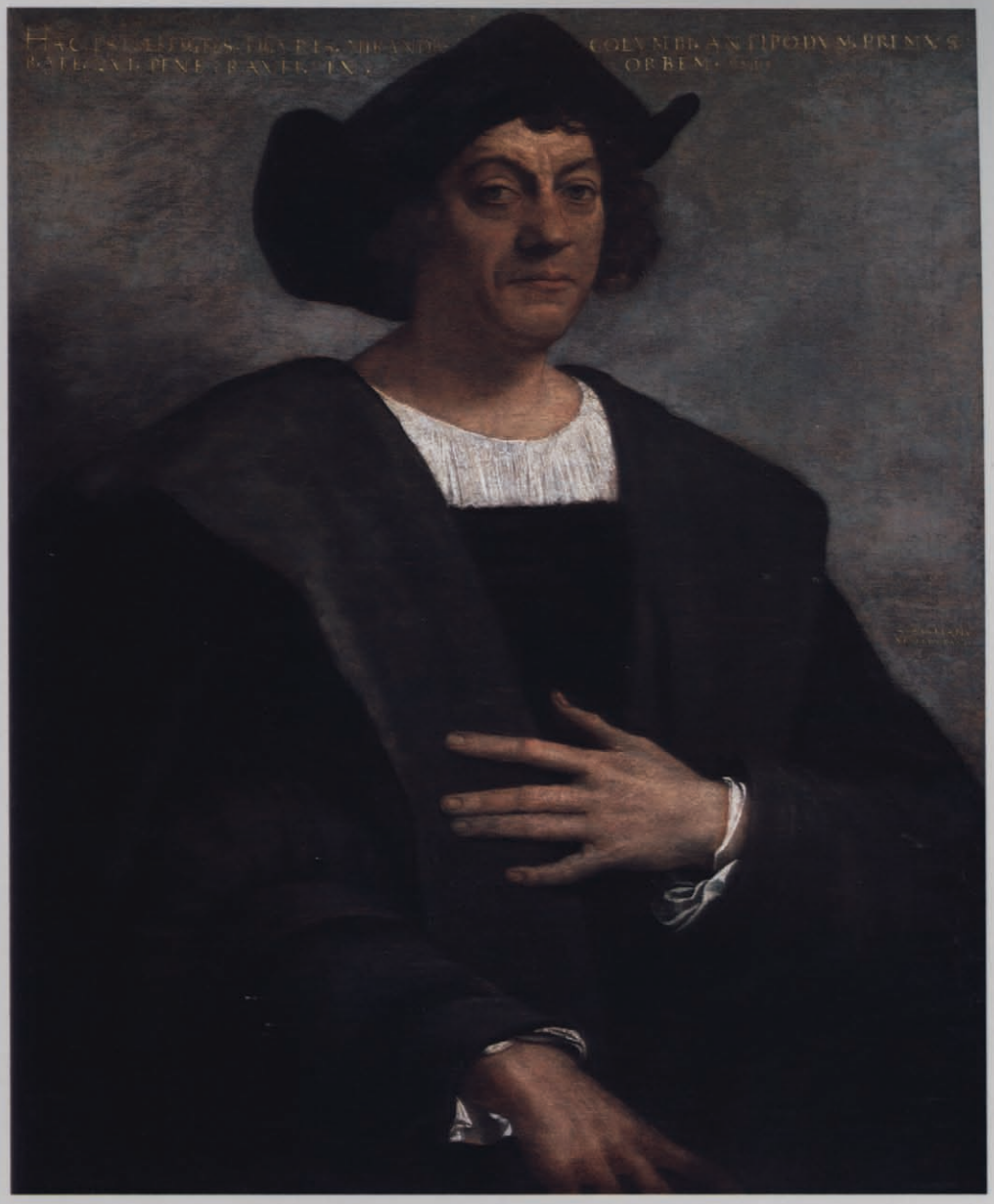
The wedding of Cupid and Psyche is the culmination of the complex late antique tale, as told in Apuleius's *Golden Ass,* of the two young lovers' many travails. Schiavone's depiction of their nuptials in the company of the gods was almost certainly painted about 1550 for the ceiling of a room in the Castello di San Salvatore, between the towns of Susegana and Collalto, on the Venetian mainland. The tale was also the subject of one of Giulio Romano's most astonishing rooms in the Palazzo Te in Mantua, painted two decades earlier, an almost inescapable source of inspiration for Schiavone and his patron. Carlo Ridolfi (*Delle Maraviglie,* 1648) describes several ceilings by Schiavone for the castle of the counts of Collalto. The Cupid and Psyche story was apparently used for one of the smaller chambers, and the marriage scene, Ridolfi tells us, "with its truly gracious figures," was the center compartment. Painted on wood, it was originally octagonal in shape—the corners are later additions—and was surrounded by several smaller illustrations of episodes from the narrative. It is probably one of these peripheral compartments that is depicted in the Metropolitan's finished drawing *Cupid Presenting Psyche to the Gods* (fig. 34), whose lozenge shape could have easily conformed to one of the four side compartments. Worked up in pen and ink, wash, and heightened with white, the drawing shows a great crowd of gods gathered around a comparably sinuous Psyche. Here, too, the exaggerated *grazia* (grace) of the bodies recalls Parmigianino, while the relieflike composition reflects the strong influence of Raphael's ceiling for the Loggia di Psyche in the Villa Farnesina, Rome. Schiavone made no secret of his interests in art outside of Venice—he pointedly declared it. His sources, though, such as the ceiling by Raphael, painted some thirty-five years before that at Collalto, were hardly *le dernier cri.* Schiavone remained grounded throughout his career in the techniques and coloristic virtuosity of Venetian painting.

Bonifazio Veronese (Bonifazio de' Pitati; Venetian, 1487–1553). *Madonna and Child with Saints.* Oil on wood, 32½ x 50 in. (82.6 x 127 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin L. Weisl Jr., in memory of Sir John Pope-Hennessy, 1995 (1995.536)

Like Paolo Veronese, his brilliant younger contemporary, Bonifazio was born in Verona. He came to Venice between 1505 and 1515 and quickly familiarized himself with the work of the city's principal painters, beginning with the elderly Giovanni Bellini and moving on to Giorgione, Titian, and, especially, Palma il Vecchio. Here he has created a lively sacra conversazione*—reminiscent of the serene yet sumptuous examples by Palma—in which the young Christ, balancing on his mother's hand, holds a globe and blesses Saint John the Baptist; surrounding him are John's parents, Elizabeth and Zaccarias, and Saints Joseph and Catherine of Alexandria. Bonifazio was renowned for such compositions of the Madonna and Child with saints. The satisfying amplitude of these figures and the wonderful color harmonies of greens, reds, and blues, so like early Titian, make this painting a particularly attractive example of the genre.*

Attributed to Sebastiano del Piombo (Sebastiano Luciani; Venetian, ca. 1485–1547). *The Holy Family with Saints and Donors*, ca. 1507. Oil on wood, 26½ x 40½ in. (67.3 x 102.9 cm) overall. Bequest of Josephine Bieber, in memory of her husband, Siegfried Bieber, 1970 (1973.155.5)

This handsome sacra conversazione *has recently been attributed to Sebastiano del Piombo, one of the finest Venetian painters of the sixteenth century. Because Sebastiano left the city definitively for Rome in 1510, his Venetian oeuvre is fairly small in number. Nonetheless, the works he made there, inspired by Giorgione, were widely admired and imitated. If the attribution is correct, this is one of his earliest paintings, and it is still somewhat awkward. Even so, the genesis of many of his better-known compositions can be glimpsed here, for example, in the pure profile of the female saint at right, the tonal painting of the heads, and the beautiful color harmonies of the Virgin's sleeves and gown. Saint Jerome's gesture of putting his hands on the donor's shoulder is remarkable, as is that of the Christ Child, who squirms in his mother's arms as he reaches out toward the donor to bless him.*



Sebastiano del Piombo. *Portrait of a Man, Said to be Christopher Columbus (born about 1446, died 1506)*, 1519. Oil on canvas, 42 x 34¾ in. (106.7 x 88.3 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1900 (00.18.2)

The Latin inscription—which is not in the artist's hand—across the top of the portrait tells us that it depicts "the Ligurian Columbus, the first to enter by ship into the world of the Antipodes, 1519." If indeed Sebastiano painted it in 1519, he had already left Venice and had been active in Rome for the better part of a decade (it is possible that the date in the inscription is incorrect and that the painting was executed up to ten years later). Columbus was already dead by that time, so the artist would have had to work from an existing drawing or painting. There is much interest and debate among historians about purported portraits of Columbus, and this likeness—called the Talleyrand version because it was exhibited at the Palais Royal, Paris, in 1814 when it was part of the prince's collection—is sometimes considered the most likely reflection of the great explorer's physiognomy. By the end of the sixteenth century this depiction had garnered enough credibility as a true image of Columbus that Theodor de Bry used it as the basis of an engraved portrait in his renowned book of illustrated voyages, Collectiones Peregrinationum . . . (1590–1634). *According to some sources, the same image was later reproduced on a five-lire banknote issued by King Victor Emmanuel II in the nineteenth century.*

Several of the other extant images of Columbus are related to this one, either based on it or sharing with it a now lost prototype. A different type of Columbus portrait, said to derive from a contemporary drawing of him, was copied for Paolo Giovio's famous portrait gallery in Como and, like this painting, lived on in later images.

Paris Bordon (1500–1571) was born in Treviso on the *terraferma* but moved to Venice with his mother when he was eight. Vasari knew Bordon well; he visited the artist during a trip to Venice in 1566 to collect information for his *Lives*, in which he relates many details of Bordon's biography. According to Vasari, Bordon went into Titian's workshop for a brief period, following earlier studies that included music and grammar. Bordon told Vasari that he had left Titian quickly because the great master had little time for his pupils, but Vasari cites another incident that suggests Titian had grown hostile toward the young man because of his considerable talent. Evidently Bordon endured similar bouts of professional envy and petty squabbles with other artists throughout his career, a factor, so he claimed, in his eventual retirement.

From Vasari we also know that Bordon traveled extensively, often outside Italy—another popular strategy for those artists trying to escape Titian's immediate (and in Bordon's case onerous) influence. According to Vasari Bordon was in Fontainebleau rather early in his career (1538), but it is possible he went there later, about 1560. Bordon also traveled to Augsburg to work for the Fugger family, was active in Lombardy as well as Venice, and spent part of the 1540s in Milan, where he may have painted the Metropolitan's *Portrait of a Man in Armor with Two Pages* (fig. 35).

Although known primarily as a painter of mythologies and other subjects with beautiful young women, whose clothes and hair typically shine with metallic brilliance, Bordon could also make sensitively rendered altarpieces and portraits, as we see here. The middle-aged officer, of a rather melancholy mien, is being helped with his armor by two pages in colorful livery (the young black boy at right was called a "moor" by one seventeenth-century author). The trio stands in an open space, with woods

35.
Paris Bordon (Venetian, 1500–1571). *Portrait of a Man in Armor with Two Pages.* Oil on canvas, 46 x 62 in. (116.8 x 157.5 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1973 (1973.311.1)

and foliage (characteristic of the artist) at left and a massing army in the background. As Metropolitan curator Everett Fahy has noted, there are visual precedents for this type of scene (a partially armed soldier accompanied by a page), most especially in a composition by Titian known only in a copy, but also in the so-called *Gattamelata* often attributed to Giorgione (ca. 1500–1505, Uffizi, Florence). The subject was later developed by Caravaggio in his *Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt* (ca. 1607–8, Musée du Louvre, Paris). Bordon's painting is described admiringly in the verses of Marco Boschini's polemic on Venetian painting, *La Carta del Navegar Pitoresco* (1660), which records it in the home of Paolo del Sera, a Florentine resident in Venice from 1640 to 1672. (Carlo Ridolfi had earlier seen a similar picture answering to much the same description in another Venetian collection, that of Bernardo Trincavella.) Del Sera, who was in Venice scouting paintings for the Medici collections, sent several of Bordon's works back to Florence, including a pastoral *Virgin and Child with Saints* that was sold to Cardinal Giovan Carlo de' Medici (Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow) and a *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* that became part of the collection of Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici. Somehow this portrait, too, must have made its way to Florence and become part of an illustrious grand-ducal collection. The physician and connoisseur Francesco Scanelli may have seen it there as early as 1657, and it was still in Florence when Sir Charles Eastlake saw it in 1861, shortly before it was moved (by 1866) to Eastnor Castle in England, home of Philip Reginald Cocks, 5th Baron Somers (1815–1899).

The formidable provenance of Bordon's picture gives us a good idea of the esteem in which it has long been held, but ironically we have yet to identify the sitter. He was once tentatively suggested to be Carlo da Rho (d. 1559), the artist's most important Milanese patron, who without a doubt *did* commission a portrait from Bordon; recent research, however, has shown that da Rho was not a military man. Whoever he is, the sitter and his two young pages were portrayed by Bordon with an almost palpable empathy. The older man, his hair and beard grizzled, his eyes deeply set, gazes abstractedly to the side as one page, with a fresh, lively expression, adjusts his arm plate. The other boy, who has a more serious expression and subtly defined features, holds the officer's helmet. The turret of a castle rises above the trees at left, and the threateningly gray storm clouds and smoke above convey the imminence of war with as much subtle force as the ghostly mass of soldiers at right. The horizontal format, with its insinuations of narrative, and the plainly somber mood are both strong indications that Bordon was aware of the groundbreaking portraits being painted by another Venetian, Lorenzo Lotto (ca. 1480–1556), which Bordon could have seen in either Lombardy or Venice. A comparable strain of melancholy is particularly evident in Lotto's portraits of the 1540s and early 1550s. Earlier still (from the late 1520s) Lotto had exploited a horizontal field to expand on a narrative thread, as in the brilliant *Portrait of a Woman as Lucretia* (National Gallery, London). Knowledge of Lotto's innovations would no doubt have considerably enriched Bordon's portraiture, but Bordon's own contributions, especially his lush landscapes and unusual, slightly acidic palette, are formidable in their own right.

Lorenzo Lotto, one of the great artists of the Renaissance in Italy, is of course the "missing link" in our discussion of Venetian painting. Like Bordon, Lotto chose, or perhaps resigned himself to, a peripatetic lifestyle (but within Italy) partly owing to difficulties securing commissions in Venice. Prodigiously gifted, thoughtful, and experimental, he enjoyed an extraordinary career that took him from Venice to Treviso and Bergamo in the Veneto, to Rome, and to various towns in the Marches. He ended his life in the pilgrimage town of Loreto. As an artist he was highly attuned to the work of his contemporaries, including the older Giovanni Bellini and the German Albrecht Dürer, who made two trips to Venice and whose prints were collected widely throughout northern Italy. Lotto was also acutely aware of painting in Milan and other Lombard cities. Although he returned to Venice for several long stays, first from 1525 to 1533 and then sporadically during the following decade, the paintings Lotto made there were received coolly by some critics, and he was never quite comfortable in the Venetian context.

The Metropolitan owns two works by Lotto; they occupy opposite ends of his wide spectrum of subject matter and thematic interests. One is the glorious *Venus and Cupid* (fig. 36), a rare excursion for Lotto into secular mythology that was probably painted for a sophisticated client

36.
Lorenzo Lotto (Venetian, ca. 1480–1556). *Venus and Cupid,* late 1520s. Oil on canvas, 36⅜ x 43⅞ in. (92.4 x 111.4 cm). Purchase, Mrs. Charles Wrightsman Gift, in honor of Marietta Tree, 1986 (1986.138)

of notably humanist sympathies. The other is the portrait *Brother Gregorio Belo of Vicenza* (fig. 37), a painting that was commissioned by a devout friar and one that reflects the fervent religious convictions not only of the sitter but, in all likelihood, the artist as well. *Venus and Cupid* is elegant and witty, with a refined technique and a gemlike palette. The later portrait is rougher, more painterly, and has a distinctly darker palette; instead of playfulness we sense its profound devotional intensity.

The *Venus and Cupid* may have been painted soon after Lotto returned to Venice from Bergamo, where he had lived and enjoyed considerable success from 1513 to 1525. A visually compelling and somewhat startling image, it has many qualities in common with paintings from the artist's final years in Bergamo, especially the meticulous attention he pays to the beauty of the material world (jewels, flower petals, and leaves) and his obvious fascination with esoteric symbols. (The latter are found throughout his designs for a monumental set of intarsia panels for the choir stalls of Santa Maria Maggiore, which were begun in Bergamo but carried forward from Venice.) At the same time, the patron of this worldly, some would say erotic, work was most likely in cosmopolitan Venice rather than in sleepy, conservative Bergamo.

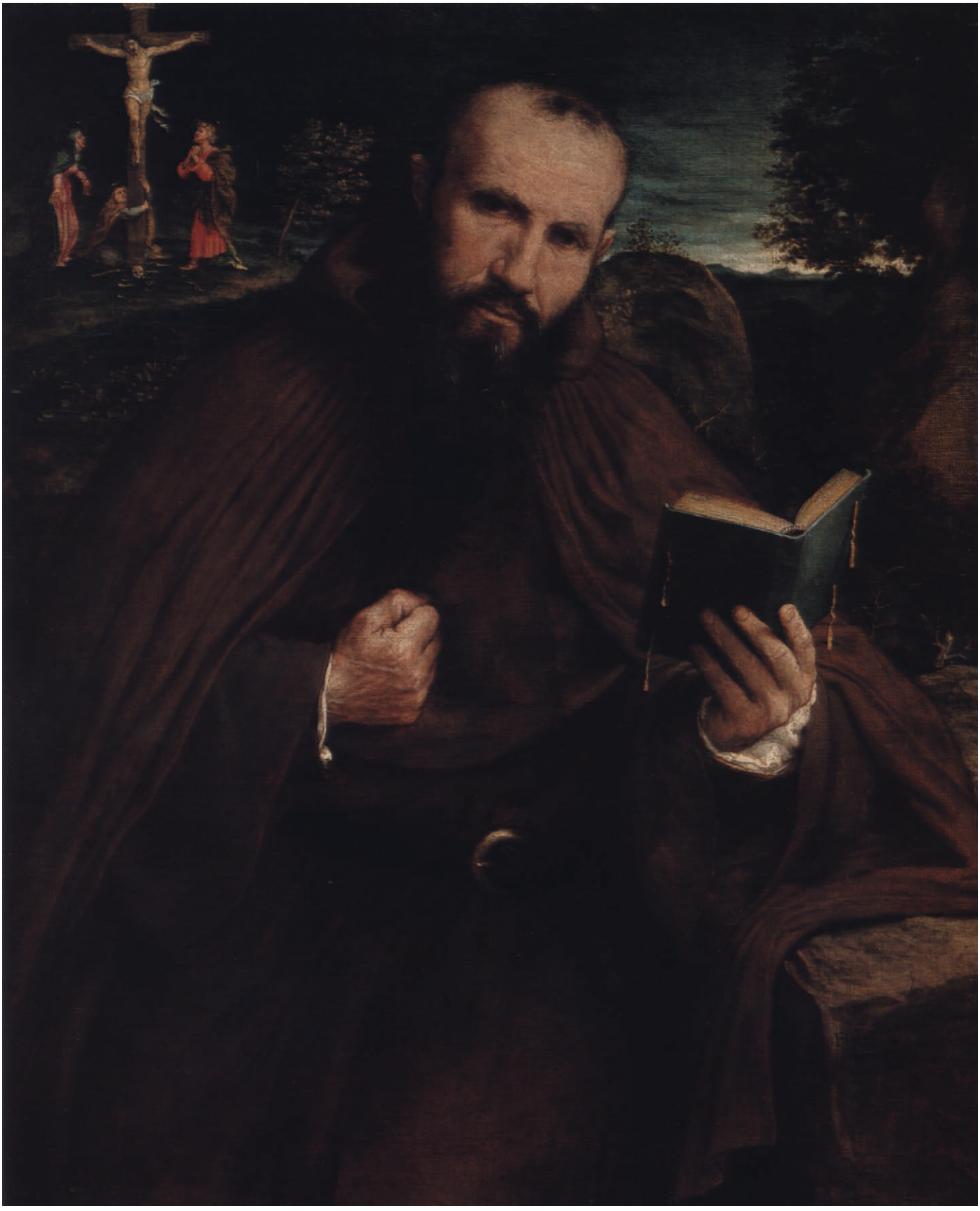
As we have learned from Metropolitan curator Keith Christiansen's exacting research, the *Venus and Cupid* was probably executed on the occasion of a marriage, and it is possible that the highly individualized facial features of the woman represent a portrait of a historical bride. (An overzealous restorer idealized them at some point in the past, but their original appearance, along with key details such as Cupid's arching spray of urine, were recovered when the painting came to the Museum in 1986.) It seems quite likely, in fact, that Lotto's "portrait" commemorated a specific wedding, as it is truly a painted epithalamium, the classical term for verses written to celebrate matrimony, such as those by the Roman poets Catullus, Statius, and Claudian. The form had been revived during the Renaissance (Lodovico Dolce translated one by Catullus for a wedding in 1538), and knowledge of the originals was widespread in Lotto's day. Epithalamia usually begin with Cupid announcing the impending wedding to his mother, the goddess Venus, and encouraging her to leave her bower to attend. She obliges him by leaping from her couch and dashing off, breasts uncovered. The bride and groom are then extolled, with wishes made for their prosperity and fecundity.

Much of the imagery in this marvelous scene can be linked directly to details commonly found in these wedding poems, which often describe myrtle wreaths adorning portals, Love and Grace scattering countless blossoms, scarlet cloth decking the bridal chamber, and ivy clinging to trees. Here Venus is shown reclining in her bower wearing a jewel-encrusted headdress with a veil and one earring; a transparent cloth is bound beneath her breasts, and rose petals are sprinkled on her lap. She leans against the trunk of a tree entwined with ivy, with a shell (always associated with Venus) and a dramatic scarlet cloth hanging from its boughs. Cupid wears one myrtle wreath on his head and holds another, with a censer suspended from it, in his hand. He approaches Venus jovially, smiling like an imp as he urinates on her in a precise stream of gold and silver (an augur of fertility and prosperity). The same motif can be found on the trays that Italians traditionally presented to mothers on the birth of a child. Some of the imagery is more specifically Venetian, including the marriage crown and veil worn by Venetian brides. The rod and the serpent introduce a more sinister note. Cupid, whose actions were often construed as mischievous, was beaten with a rod in certain tales, and the snake is surely meant to suggest the possibly painful outcome of love.

The learned aspects of Lotto's *Venus and Cupid* manage not to overwhelm the viewer; as one critic recently ventured, the painting is instead a triumph of delectation. Hanging, perhaps, in the private quarters of a newly married couple, its bold but carefully considered palette and refined, thoughtful details would have been admired by intimates both for its ties to the classical world and for its earthier provocations. It ranks alongside the greatest Venetian nudes, such as Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (Uffizi, Florence), but it also enriches the genre by virtue of Lotto's individual wit and his insistence on representing a real woman, with warm brown eyes, a longish nose, and a tender half-smile.

Brother Gregorio Belo of Vicenza presents an altogether different type of protagonist. The inscription in the lower right corner tells us that Fra Gregorio was a hermit in the Hieronymite order of Blessed Fra Pietro of Pisa and that Lotto's portrait of him was painted in 1547,

37. *(opposite)* Lotto. *Brother Gregorio Belo of Vicenza,* 1547. Oil on canvas, 34⅜ x 28 in. (87.3 x 71.1 cm). Rogers Fund, 1965 (65.117)



when the monk was fifty-five. In Lotto's indispensable account book, or *libro di spese*, this commission is fully documented between December 1546 and October 1547. In the first of six entries concerning the piece, Lotto records that he is painting a "portrait from life . . . with a crucifix, the Madonna, St. John and the Magdalen" for "Fra Gregorio of Vicenza of the friars of San Sebastiano of Venice." The church of San Sebastiano was the principal center in Venice of an ascetic and contemplative order known as the Poor Hermits of Saint Jerome. Founded in the fourteenth century in the Marches by Pietro de' Gambacorti of Pisa, the order quickly spread to the north. Lotto portrayed Fra Gregorio in the order's dark brown habit, with its distinctive girdle and hood, and in a pose reminiscent of the Penitence of Saint Jerome, with his fist clenched at his chest. He reads Saint Gregory the Great's homilies, which, given the monk's name, is perhaps a visual indication that he was particularly devoted to this doctor of the church.

In spite of what the account book tells us, Gregorio may not have been resident in Venice after all. Lotto may have been using the reference to the church of San Sebastiano only to designate the sitter's affiliation with the order. According to recent research, Fra Gregorio was a rather important member of the group, but he was active mostly outside Venice, first in Padua and Cremona and later in Treviso. This seemingly incidental piece of information is actually an important clue to the painting's meaning and appearance, and to a circle of people in Treviso in the mid-1540s who proved important to Lotto. It also sheds some light on the substance and tenor of Lotto's religiosity, which has been the subject of enormous scholarly debate. This was, after all, an artist who claimed that his faith was fundamental to his life, writing that he was "Christian by nature and religion," and who in his later years sought out various groups that shared his devotion, as made clear by his final retreat to the pilgrimage town of Loreto.

Fra Gregorio was elected *rettore,* or rector, of Santa Maria Maddalena, the order's church in Treviso, in 1549, succeeding a certain Fra Bernardo di Biliolis. Fra Bernardo had commissioned a small altarpiece from Lotto in 1544 and was intimate enough with the artist to be named his *confessore* in Lotto's will drawn up in 1546. Fra Bernardo was also connected to some goldsmiths in Treviso—one of them may be the sitter in Lotto's brilliant *Portrait of a Goldsmith in Three Positions,* now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna—who were deeply concerned with the future of the Catholic Church and its reform in the face of the expansion of Protestantism, a concern shared by Lotto himself. (It is not surprising to learn that Fra Bernardo was rewriting his order's constitution in 1549.) These men had assisted Lotto during his sojourn in Treviso from 1542 to 1545 and continued to help him afterward in Venice.

Fra Bernardo's 1544 commission was not completed swiftly, and in 1547 Lotto agreed to add two new figures to the altarpiece and to renegotiate the price. The mediator for this renegotiation, which most likely took place in Treviso, was Fra Gregorio, and it seems clear now that it was Lotto's long-standing connection to this group of friars that led directly to the commission for the Museum's portrait. The resulting work is best understood in this context, both for the artist's discernible empathy for the strong-featured friar and for the manifest fervor of Fra Gregorio's devotion. Reading the homilies has exhorted the monk to reflect on the Passion of Christ, specifically the Crucifixion—which is depicted in the rear with all the expressivity of a German painting—and these inner thoughts, or *orazione mentale,* as a contemporary would have called them, are the basis for the violent atmosphere of the setting, with its darkened sky and windblown trees. Thus is Fra Gregorio's spiritual agitation, along with the rigor of his penitence, made physical and visible. Paintings like this one led Bernard Berenson, who was deeply interested in the psychology of Lotto's oeuvre, to label the Venetian "perhaps the most interesting Italian portrait painter of his time."

While there can be no greater pleasure than to see Venetian paintings in the grand setting of the city itself (fig. 38), their unique luster persists wherever they might be viewed. Henry James expressed this very sentiment in his travel essay "Italian Hours" (1909), writing that "Veronese may be seen and measured in other places; he is most splendid in Venice, but he shines in Paris and in Dresden. You may walk out of the noon-day dusk of Trafalgar Square in November, and in one of the chambers of the

National Gallery see the family of Darius rustling and pleading and weeping at the feet of Alexander. Alexander is a beautiful young Venetian in crimson pantaloons, and the picture sends a glow into the cold London twilight. You may sit before it for an hour and dream you are floating to the water-gate of the Ducal Palace . . . ."

The same experience is also available to visitors of the Metropolitan Museum, who, having left a bustling New York avenue, can survey in a single gallery the goddess Venus as conceived by Titian, Veronese, and Lotto, or enter into the world of the Venetian patrician, craftsman, or friar through their persuasive portraiture.

38.
Venice. Photograph
© Cameraphoto Arte,
Venice

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