

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

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CONTACT: Hamlet Paoletti  
Liz Kimball  
(202) 842-6353

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART TO PRESENT MAJOR  
RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF TITIAN PAINTINGS

Washington, D.C., October 1, 1990 -- The first exhibition in more than a half-century to cover Titian's long and influential career will be presented in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art, October 28, 1990 through January 27, 1991.

Titian, Prince of Painters commemorates the 500th anniversary of the Venetian Renaissance master's birth, which is accepted by a majority of scholars as 1490. In addition to nearly 50 of his works, the exhibition includes three of Titian's ceilings, one of which will be mounted with 19 panels that originally surrounded it.

The exhibition premiered in June at its only other venue, the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, to critical and popular acclaim. National Gallery director J. Carter Brown, who attended the opening in Venice, commented, "The National Gallery of Art, which has the largest collection of Titian's works in the United States, is looking forward to mounting the only major exhibition of the artist's paintings ever to be held in this country. It will be a marvelous opportunity for Americans to see an extraordinary range of work by this artistic genius."

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This exhibition has been organized by the Comune di Venezia, Assessorato alla Cultura; the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, Soprintendenza ai Beni Artistici e Storici di Venezia; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington; with Galileo Industrie Ottiche, Venezia. The exhibition is also made possible by Silvio Berlusconi Communications.

Masterpieces were gathered from all over the world for Titian, Prince of Painters, which is the largest Titian exhibition since the one held at Ca' Pesaro, Venice, in 1935. Among the works to be exhibited are six from the National Gallery of Art, Washington; ten from Venice; six from the Museo del Prado, Madrid; and two from rarely seen private collections. Also among these loans will be works from the Musée du Louvre, Paris; the Galleria degli Uffizi and the Palazzo Pitti, Florence; the National Gallery, London; and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The exhibition curator in Washington is David Alan Brown, curator of Italian Renaissance painting, National Gallery of Art.

Professor Francesco Valcanover, head of the international scientific committee charged with selecting the show and preparing the text for the catalogue, said the exhibition provides "a new, critical reading of Titian's work." Thirteen paintings were recently cleaned and restored, in some cases, expressly for the exhibition. These include two portraits from the Uffizi, Eleonora Gonzaga and Francesco Maria della Rovere, and the National Gallery's Feast of the Gods, a painting by Bellini with important landscape additions by Titian.

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Juxtaposed with his other works, the restored paintings will also provide scholars with the opportunity to draw new analogies and conclusions regarding the artist's painting technique, his use of color, and some aspects of his life and work about which relatively little is known.

Tiziano Vecellio (in English, Titian) was barely in his early twenties when he astonished Venice with his self-assurance and bold manner of painting. Throughout his life, until he died in 1576 at the age of 86, he painted for emperors, popes, and many of the most powerful people in Europe.

Side by side with his portraits, mythologies, and religious compositions, three of Titian's ceilings will also be included in the exhibition. Saint John the Evangelist on Patmos, from the National Gallery's collection, will be reunited with 19 of the 20 original surrounding decorative panels, lent by Venice, in a reconstruction of a typical Renaissance coffered ceiling.

The National Gallery exhibition will be enriched by several important loans not included in the Italian showing: the Venus and Adonis from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Madonna and Child with Saints and Donor from the Magnani Foundation in Parma, Italy, the Tarquin and Lucretia from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England, and the Portrait of Philip II from the Cincinnati Art Museum. Some works which cannot travel, including large altarpieces, and a group of prints and drawings, several of which have been seen in a Titian graphics show at the National Gallery, will not be shown in Washington.

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A fully illustrated scholarly catalogue of the exhibition includes essays on Titian's life, his painting technique, politics in Venice during Titian's lifetime, and the critical judgment his art has received.

An international meeting of scholars, hosted by the National Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA), will take place in conjunction with the exhibition, October 25 through 27, 1990. Made possible in part by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the three-day meeting will provide a forum for renowned Titian experts to exchange information and present the results of their recent studies and investigations.

Titian, Prince of Painters is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

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# National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C.

## TITIAN, A CHRONOLOGY

(based on a comparative chronology compiled by  
professor Francesco Valcanover  
and published in the exhibition catalogue)

1490/1500 -- Tiziano Vecellio (in English, Titian) is born on the eve of a century that will be as full of radical discoveries and political maneuverings as his own life. Most scholars now place his birth in 1490, at the small town of Pieve di Cadore, in the Veneto region of Northeastern Italy.

Chroniclers of the time speak of Venice as "the most beautiful, glorious, and triumphant city of the Western world." In reality, the "Most Serene" republic has just passed its prime, and its key role in international trade, together with its accompanying political influence, is being challenged in the West by Iberian navigators and in the East by Turkish conquerors. All along, the Republic of Saint Mark is also involved in endless battles, alliances and disputes with its close neighbors France, Spain, the Hapsburgs, and the papal state.

1501/1510 -- By his late teens Titian has moved to Venice, where he is found painting frescoes, under the tutelage of Giorgione. By the end of the decade, he has witnessed his grandfather, Count Vecellio, leading Venetian troops against enemy armies, the death of his master Giorgione, and the spread of plague in Venice. The city now numbers 115,000 inhabitants.

1511/1520 -- Despite an invitation to go to the papal court in Rome, Titian opts to offer his services to the Venetian Republic. All he asks is to be granted the first "senseria" (broker's license) that becomes available, with the same benefits as those enjoyed by Giovanni Bellini.

During this time, Titian begins his contacts with the Este court, in nearby Ferrara, where Bellini has just finished The Feast of the Gods for the "camerino d'alabastro" of Alfonso I d'Este. In 1517, a few months after Bellini's death, Titian is awarded Bellini's old "senseria." It means tax exemption, 100 ducats annually, and 25 ducats for each official portrait of the new doge. Later in the year, Titian receives 65 ducats for a fresco for the Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento, in Treviso.

By the end of the decade, as Titian accepts more and more new commissions, he starts to fall behind in his schedule. When Alfonso I d'Este insists on having his paintings delivered, Titian offers to send instead the Saint Sebastian he has been painting for the papal legate. Afraid of possibly offending the powerful papal legate, Alfonso I declines.

1521/1530 -- Throughout the decade, Venice continues enmeshed in battles, alliances, invasions, and peace treaties. In 1523, the "Collegio" sits to hear a report on the first voyage around the world.

Titian continues stretching himself, working in Vicenza, Brescia, Ferrara, Mantua, and Parma, and painting frescos over the altars and on the walls of the Ducal Palace, in Venice. At one point, he is told to complete a battle scene in the Ducal Palace, under the threat of losing all of his benefits.

In 1525, Titian marries Cecilia, by whom he already has two sons. The same year, Doge Gritti nominates Titian's father, Gregorio Vecellio, Vicar of the Mines, and the artist's brother-in-law is named "Cancelliere" of Feltre. Five years later, Cecilia dies after giving birth to Lavinia.

1531/1540 -- Titian now has his studio in a house near the edge of the lagoon, not far from his close friend, the poet Aretino. He will use this studio until his death.

For a portrait of Charles V, Titian receives 500 ducats and, upon the emperor's return to his court in Madrid, is named Count of the Lateran Palace, of the Consiglio Aulico and of the Concistorio, with the title of Count Palatine, as well as Knight of the Golden Spur, with the right of access to the court. Titian's sons are granted the title of noble of the empire, with the privileges of those who have held such titles for four generations. But Titian is "so enamoured and in love with his city" that he refuses all invitations to go to Madrid.

By mid-decade, while Venice faces another burst of plague, Titian is painting the portraits of Isabella d'Este, Eleonora Gonzaga, Francesco Maria della Rovere, and Cardinal Pietro Bembo. A large canvas for the Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Carità, which was to be painted by 1534, is delivered in 1539. And due to his blatant delays, Titian does not receive the commission of the large canvas next to his Battle in the Ducal Palace. It goes instead to Pordenone.

1541/1550 -- Venice goes through a construction boom, with almost 200 structures built in just a few years. A peace treaty is signed with Turkish Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, which will last until 1570. Courtesans are forbidden to wear silk dresses, jewels, gold, and silver.

Titian continues to travel frequently to several European courts and to produce masterpieces. He finishes the portraits of Daniele Barbaro, of the pope's nephew Ranuccio Farnese, and on his trip to Bussetto, Titian paints the portrait of Pope Paul III himself. In 1545 he goes to Pesaro and Urbino, ending his trip in Rome, where he calls on Michelangelo with whom he admires the ancient monuments, writing to Charles V, "I go about learning, among these marvelous antique stones."

After receiving Roman citizenship Titian returns to Venice, having unsuccessfully offered his services to Cosimo de Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Before being sent to Augsburg by Charles V late in the decade, Titian and his workshop finish the decoration of the ceiling of the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista. The main canvas of St. John the Evangelist on Patmos is accompanied by 20 panels depicting Symbols of the Evangelists, Cherubs, Satyrs, and Female Heads.

1551/1560 -- The new decade finds Titian engaged in an intensive correspondence with Prince Philip, son of Charles V. The august patron, soon to be Philip II, will ask for increasing numbers of new paintings; Titian will ask to be paid. Among the many paintings Titian does for his new patron is the Venus and Adonis, which is to be sent to Philip in London.

In 1555, Titian gives his daughter Lavinia in marriage, with a dowry of 1400 "scudi." A year later, he mourns the death of his friend Pietro Aretino. The following year a serious plague strikes Venice in December.

By 1559, Titian's Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence is in place on the altar of Crociferi at the Church of the Jesuits, in Venice. Commissioned in 1548, it had not been delivered by 1557.

1561/1570 -- The population of Venice is now just under 169,000. Among the newcomers is Domenico Theotokopulos, known as El Greco. By the decade's end, El Greco will be in Rome where he will be recommended to Alessandro Farnese as "the young Cretan pupil of Titian."

Titian has to renounce the pension in grain conceded to him by Charles V because, according to a chronicler, "he can't remember, being extremely old, where he put the receipt." A visitor to Titian's studio notes many unfinished works, among them a large Crucifixion, a Madonna and Child, and a Self-Portrait.

In 1566 Titian is elected a member of the Accademia del Disegno, in Florence, together with Tintoretto. Two years later, however, the emperor Maximilian II, given the opportunity to acquire seven Titian "fables", expresses his fears that Titian, in his advanced years, can no longer paint as he used to.

1571/1580 -- The decade opens victoriously for Venice, with the Christian fleet, under Doge Vernier, decisively defeating the Turkish fleet at Lepanto.

But by 1575 a new and terrible plague strikes the city, lasting until the summer of the following year. From a population of 175,000, it claims 50,000 victims, among them Titian. He is solemnly buried in the Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. He had spent his last couple of years sending new paintings, and letters demanding payment for the paintings, to the court of Philip II, in Madrid.

Two devastating fires in the Ducal Palace (1574, 1577) destroy several famous paintings by Bellini, Vivarini, Carpaccio, Veronese, Tintoretto, and Titian.

After Titian's death, and that of his son Orazio, his house, full of precious objects and paintings, is looted.

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