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Introduction

The so-called *Italian sketchbook* by the Southern Netherlandish painter Anton van Dyck (1599-1641) includes a page entitled «In Roma le cose de titian»¹ where the Flemish artist lists paintings by the Venetian master Tiziano Vecellio (henceforward referred to as Titian) he could find in different locations in Rome. Van Dyck's sojourn in Italy from 1621 to 1627 allowed him to see and record more than a hundred works of art by Titian. "Titianus", "Titiano", "Titian", "Titia": all the variations of the Venetian artist's name are mentioned sixty-six times in this precious booklet. The sustained interest that van Dyck shows in Titian easily outnumbers his records of any other Italian and Northern artists.² Of course, van Dyck is clearly an outstanding example of Titian's Netherlandish reception, but it is far from an isolated case. During the XVIth and the XVIIth centuries and beyond, Titian's art had a great resonance throughout Europe, to an extent that still is not fully understood or even quantified.³ This research aims to retrace the reception of the art of Titian in the Southern Netherlands from about 1550, when his fame reached its peak at Brussels court, to about 1600, before the developments of the XVIIth century that led to van Dyck's sketchbook and to a sort of Europeanisation of Venetian art.⁴

The phenomenon that internationalised the Renaissance Venetian art, and especially Titian's, in the XVIIth century, was shaped by the hands, the selections and the aspirations of a series of artists, and endorsed by the propaganda of intellectuals and art theorists.⁵ The figurative victory of Venice over Florence, of *colore* over *disegno*,

¹ Anton van Dyck, *Italian sketchbook*, London, British Museum (BM), 1957,1214.207.120, fol. 120 *recto*, pen and ink, 197x157 mm. Published by ADRIANI 1940, pp. 80-81.

² In the sketchbook there are drawings after works by Leonardo, Raphael, Parmigianino, Orazio Gentileschi, Sebastiano del Piombo, Giorgione, Palma il Vecchio, Jacopo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, Guercino, Annibale Carracci, Dürer and Rubens, but their number is meaningfully smaller.

³ An interesting overview of the topic that considers a broad, European context can be found in TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 335-387, 411-426.

⁴ LAUTS 1956, pp. 70-80.

⁵ The XVIth and the XVIIth centuries saw the emergence of art theory in literature. In particular, at the beginning of the XVIIth century, it was concretised a phenomenon of "crystallization" which led to the establishment of the artistic canon, namely the description of sets of characteristics ultimately defining the style and the *persona* of an artist.

the change of course of the Vasarian view of art that saw the absolute triumph of Michelangelo, was fully reached in the XVIIth century.⁶ Neo-Venetianism, as it has been called, interested numerous artists, and focused not only on the art of Titian but on the Venetian painters of the previous century.⁷ The master of van Dyck, the utterly famous Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), is the Southern Netherlandish artist whose dialogical relationship with Titian's art and themes became paradigmatic in the history of his reception and emulation.⁸ Apart from the aforementioned artists, the literature has stressed the role in this phenomenon of the French Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), the Spanish Diego Velázquez (1599-1660) and the Netherlandish Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669).

The final chapter of *Le botteghe di Tiziano* (2009) is devoted to Titian and the formation of the artistic canon in the XVIIth century.⁹ It deals with the transformation of Titian the artist into “*Tiziano*”, which might be described as a sort of standardization and branding of his artistic *persona*. This process is described as complex and working on many levels, but the concept that seems to be the most comprehensive is one of the “historicization of Titian” (“*tizianizzazione di Tiziano*”).¹⁰ Through this process, which had begun under the direction of Titian himself but was also shaped by many factors typical of the XVIIth century art production and art criticism, the “idea of Titian” was set. But is it possible to identify a homogeneous and unequivocal “idea”, or “image”, of Titian?

⁶ For a general introduction, see URQUÍZAR-CÁMARA 2012, esp. pp. 273-323.

⁷ The retrospective approach to the XVIth century art of the Serenissima interested artists from Veneto who “remade” the art of the past leading painters of their city. Among them, it is worth to mention Alessandro Varotari called Padovanino (1688-1649) and Pietro della Vecchia (1603-1678). On Padovanino, RUGGERI 1993; LOH 2007; on Pietro della Vecchia see AIKEMA 1990; DAL POZZOLO 2011.

⁸ Essential on this topic are the studies JAFFÉ 1977; CAVALLI-BJÖRKMAN 1987; MADRID 1987; BOSTON 1998; MADRID 2002-2003; BAUMSTARK 2009, pp. 83-115; WOOD J. 2010.

⁹ TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 411-426; on this long-lasting phenomenon see also ROSSI BORTOLATTO-PILO 1991; BANTA 2016. However, most of the studies that are dealing with the historicization of Titian and his “artistic image” are included in the literature concerning the aforementioned artists.

¹⁰ TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 412-414.

By analysing the approach of the single artists who consciously decided to refer to the Venetian artist in their art, it seems obvious that the answer to the question must be negative. However, the changes in the approaches might depend on the different intentions of the artists and still indicate an image that is not completely fixed but presents a series of recursive features.

Studying the “image” of Titian, or indeed any famous artist, is inherently exposed to the risk of anachronism. Our current “idea of Titian”, as retrospectively shaped by the art historical process, is more similar to the idea of Rubens and his contemporaries than to one of Titian’s contemporaries. This is true for different reasons. It surely depends on the fact that we rely on the same basis of historicization - above all, the omnipresent and long-lasting influence of Vasari on the Western historiography of art -, and on the fundamental contribution of that XVIIth-century generation to the crystallization of the Titianesque ideal.

This poses a methodological problem that might be summarised as follows: to guard against anachronism and the superimposition of a canonised image of the artist on a fluid process, it is fundamental to remember that the reception of Titian during the XVIth century developed adjacent to and relatively independently of the contemporary art theoretical discourse. Art theory and art practice are indeed two worlds that are connected but do not coincide, and this is especially important to consider when the subject of the research is a high-profile artist.

Thus, whereas there are indeed a series of different approaches to the art of the Venetian, the multiple angles from which to look at the artistic production of a master of the Renaissance had been established by literature, collecting tendencies, and “repetition”, a process that Maria Loh had recently discussed in relation to Titian. The repetition of an invention, for instance, the sleeping reclined female nude or the *Venus with a musician*, reinforces its authorship. According to Loh:

«[...] the construction of a certain idea of “Titian” and the Titianesque was made possible by the phenomenon of multiple original from within the artist’s workshop and of reproductions made beyond the artist’s immediate authority».¹¹

¹¹ LOH 2007, p. 44.

This process of selection started under the control of the master himself, as lucidly expressed in *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, and was determined by various factors.¹² One of these, and the most relevant in this study, is the prestige granted to him by being the favourite painter of Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) and his son, King Philip II of Spain (1527-1598). It was thanks to his role as the artist of the powerful Habsburg dynasty that he became associated with certain genres, themes, and compositions that he had produced for them. The distinctive character of Titian's late-career was characterised by the multiplication of versions of the same inventions to respond to the higher demand.¹³ The creation of replicas became therefore part of a marketing strategy integrated into complex mechanisms of imitation and emulation that were part of the courtly environment. The court was the social organism that organised the power dynamics in Europe in the XVIth, XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries. Therefore, the artists, subjects, and inventions that entered these virtuous circles thanks to the Princes or influential members had the chance to be adopted as *status symbols* and to massively impact the artistic production of their time.¹⁴

This mechanism of repetition through consolidation of inventions related to “*Tiziano*” could happen in different contexts and through different means. As we have said, it was set into motion by the master himself within the limits of the workshop, but it was also a process happening outside the boundaries of his control. Titian was surely remarkably self-aware of his artistic persona, as evidenced by his collaboration with literates like Pietro Aretino (1492-1556) or Lodovico Dolce (1508-1568),¹⁵ and

¹² The analysis of the organization of Titian's workshop and the development of serial production in the last years of the “bottega” is illustrated throughout the whole book. On the serialization and repetition within the workshop's limits, see TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 223-273. Another essential work on this topic is, DAL POZZOLO 2006, pp. 53-98.

¹³ TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 223.

¹⁴ Norbert Elias has analysed the entities of the courts from a sociological point of view in his classic study *The court society* (1969). Here, he identified the phenomenon that he calls “the ethos of status-consumption”: the members of the court showed their power through the acquisition of “prestige fetishes”, namely objects that were collectively recognised as symbols of status. Collecting artworks was also subject to these rules. See ELIAS 1983, pp. 45-157.

¹⁵ These literates were also likely responsible for writing Titian's correspondence to high-calibre patrons such as Charles V, Philip II, Federico II Gonzaga (1500-1540). This thesis was introduced by

his interest in the medium of print to divulge and control his inventions.¹⁶ However, he obviously was not the only actor in the process. The repetition that developed outside of the workshop was governed sometimes by the same processes set in motion by Titian - the selection of models and subjects, their meaning and targeted audience - , but it often took different paths in relation to the necessities of the patrons, the artists and the broader audience. To discuss the reception and use of Titian's models in the Southern Netherlands from about 1550 to 1600, it is fundamental to analyse the contexts in which these cultural transfers were taking place and to fully understand the reasons that led to the selection and repetition of certain inventions and themes instead of others. These two concepts, the "reception" and the "cultural transfer", constitute the backbone of the methodology that guided this research, and must be further explained.

Reception and cultural transfer: a framework

First, the choice of the term reception is not coincidental. When we discuss how an artist - or his persona - is perceived and how his art is used by people external to his direct control, the main risk is to imply an inherent power unbalance in the process. Terms like "influence" or "impact" had been almost ostracized by the recent art history because of their implicit unidirectionality and because they suggest that an artistic exchange (or borrowing) happens between an active agent and a passive receiver.¹⁷ The different approach characterising the modern theory is that: "followers were now accorded agency and the emphasis fell on 'uses' or 'responses' viewed from the side of the recipient".¹⁸ Reception is indeed directly related to acknowledging the agency of the artists who consciously decided to use models from another artist to pursue their

TIETZE-CONRAT 1944, and discussed by HOPE 2012A, pp. 345-349. The collaboration with the literates of his time does not limit to this, but it is a fairly complicated phenomenon connected to the developments of art theory in the XVIth century. On Pietro Aretino, see at least GREGORI 1978, pp. 271-306; on a more general discussion on Venetian art theory, see PUTTFARKEN 1991, pp. 75-99.

¹⁶ In this context took place the episode in which Titian asked the Council of Ten for the "*privilegio*" of engraving and distributing prints after his own inventions.

¹⁷ The history of the concept of reception has been summarised by BURKE P. 2013, pp. 21-37. A classical study that deals with the issue of influence and reception is BAXANDALL 1985.

¹⁸ BURKE P. 2013, pp. 23-24.

intentions. In the course of this research, it appeared methodologically relevant to focus on the agency of the Southern Netherlandish artists and to avoid any reference to the idea of “general fascination” whenever the roots of the phenomenon cannot be traced.

The theory of cultural transfer originated in the mid-1980s in the work of Michele Espagne and Michael Werner.¹⁹ Coined in the field of cultural history and comparative studies, this concept has been adopted also by art historians, especially in the approach of the so-called “geography of art” that extends the domain of art historical methodology to include geographical considerations.²⁰ The main idea of this approach is that objects and knowledge do not circulate as they are, but they move between “cultural zones” through their reinterpretation, rethinking and re-signification.²¹ To understand that, it is fundamental to identify and analyse socio-economical contexts, networks and vectors of exchanges. In this case, the socio-economical contexts that are meaningful to study the reception of Titian’s art are the court of Brussels or, more broadly, the Netherlandish courts gravitating around the Habsburg orbit - which includes some excursus in Philip II’s Spanish court -, and the artistic panorama of the city of Antwerp, with particular emphasis on the development of the free art market where to sell on spec, and on the commerce with foreign countries.

The choice of Brussels was obvious. The patronage of Charles V was essential to directing the development of Titian’s art in the Southern Netherlands through the process of repetition and emulation. However, the key figures who were responsible for the artistic splendour and the artistic centrality of the Brussels court in general and the role of Titian in particular, were surely Mary of Hungary (1505-1558), sister of the Emperor and Governor of the Low Countries, and Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1518-1586), secretary of state for Charles V and Philip II. Titian’s work for the Habsburgs and their *entourage* allowed his art to become renowned in the Netherlands

¹⁹ ESPAGNE-WERNER 1985, pp. 502-510.

²⁰ The scholar who proposed this methodology and who most thoroughly used this approach in his studies is Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann. See KAUFMANN 2004. Examples of the concept of cultural transfer applied in the field of art history had been recently gathered and discussed in KAUFMANN-DOSSIN-JOYEUX-PRUNEL 2015, esp. pp. 1-22, 97-112.

²¹ The concept of “cultural zones” substitutes the one of “nation” or “country” according to Michel Espagne.

and to gain a reputation that led patrons to desire Titianesque works, and artists connected to the court to react to these requests.

The second choice, namely the focus on Antwerp, was dictated by different factors. Some of these characterise the timeframe investigated here: the artistic decline of the court and the economic boom of the city due to international trade that caused many painters to establish there their workshops. An additional but not secondary factor is more pragmatic, namely the presence of extensive studies on the inventories of the citizens, which facilitates the identification and the quantitative analysis of Titian's and Titianesque paintings.²²

Once Philip II decided to leave the Low Countries for Spain in 1559, a series of Regents followed one after the other. The political instability due to religious tensions had its outburst in the Dutch revolt (1566-1648) and the iconoclastic fury known as the *Beeldenstorm* (1566) and the *Stille Beeldenstorm* (1581). After Margaret of Parma (1522-1586), who ruled over the territories until 1567, the other Regents appointed by Philip II were generals chosen to deal with the rebels more than to take care of a courtly environment. Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, third Duke of Alba (1507-1582) – also infamously known as the “Iron Duke” – was succeeded by Luis de Requesens y Zúñiga (1528-1576), former Governor of the Duchy of Milan, who was followed by John of Austria (1547-1578) and Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma (1545-1592), who were all generals of the Spanish army. This caused a change in the priorities of the court of Brussels, which was less inclined to invest in art.

In parallel to these political developments, during the XVIth century, the city of Antwerp was growing economically. The most influential artists of their generation

²² Art historical studies on the XVIth century Low Countries tend to focus on the city of Antwerp. In the XVth century, the main artistic centres of the territory were Bruges, Ghent, Mechelen and Brussels, but many of the masters of the following century had their workshops in Antwerp. The print industry also flourished, which in the second half of the century was led by Hieronymus Cock (1518-1570) and his publishing house *Aux Quatre Vents*. Some recent studies devoted to the artistic development of Antwerp are STOCK 1993; VERMEYLEN 2003, JONCKHEERE 2012A; LAMPO 2017; BLONDÉ-PUTTEVILS 2020A.

had their workshops in the city and joined the Guild of Saint Luke.²³ The economic structure of the art market offered different possibilities that drastically changed over the years. Whereas the first half of the XVIth century was dominated by ecclesiastic commissions, religious artworks ordered by the powerful guilds and the patronage of the aristocrats related to the court, the second half of the century saw the establishment of the free market where one could sell paintings on spec, and an increment of the international trade.²⁴ Burgers and merchants owned an increasing number of paintings and, together with the artists themselves, could have been part of networks connected to humanists and literates.²⁵ This socio-economic environment presents interesting peculiarities that can shed some light on the reception of Titian's art outside the direct influence of the Habsburgs and throughout the mediation of other actors - artists, collectors, and humanists.

Brussels and Antwerp are therefore the primary geographical areas investigated here. However, it is impossible to enclose these artistic zones and separate them from the rest of the Netherlandish territories while discussing cultural transfers through the geography of art. Contacts and exchanges were granted by the exponential increase of mobility of people and goods that characterised the XVIth century Europe. Not only the movement of artists and artworks - the latter also through the medium of the increasingly important industry of print -, but also of patrons and intellectuals contributed to the circulation of artistic languages among different cultural zones.

²³ Artists like Jan Gossaert (c. 1478-1532), the members of Pourbus family, the Massys father and son, Willem Key (1516-1568), Frans Floris (1517-1570), Anthonis Mor (1519-1575), Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525/30-1569), Maarten de Vos (1531/32-1603), Gillis Coignet (1538-1599) had their workshops in Antwerp.

²⁴ In 1540 was established the so-called *Schilderpand*, a market that, unlike *Our Lady's pand*, was not under ecclesiastic control, but was ruled by the city's government and the artists. The number of artists inscribed in the Guild of Saint Luke constantly increased in the XVIth century, even in periods of crisis such as the years after 1566 and 1581-1585. See PEETERS 2009, pp. 136-163.

²⁵ An example is the one of the painter Frans Floris, who was part of a circle including the painter and poet Lucas d'Heere (1534-1584), the humanists Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) and Dominicus Lampsonius (1532-1599), the publishers Christopher Plantin (c. 1520-1589) and Hieronymus Cock (1518-1570). Some of these illustrious characters were connected to the Guild of Our Lady's Praise members', to rich merchants and also collectors.

It is always problematic to discuss the circulation of artistic ideas in Renaissance Europe. Though the concept of “reception” guards against the risk of reducing cultural transfers to active agents and passive recipients, identifying “centres” and “peripheries” surreptitiously risks reintroducing unidirectionality in the analysis, much like the unidirectionality implied in the concept of “influence”.²⁶ Here too, then, should we avoid the canonical focus on a Florentine-centric and more broadly Italian vision, and attempt to take something of a “European” point of view on Renaissance art.

Bernard Aikema, in his recent book *I Rinascimenti in Europa: 1480-1620*, elaborates a poignant examination of the post-Vasarian approaches to the study of Renaissance art and offers such a European point of view of what he provocatively calls “the Renaissances”.²⁷ He analyses the formation of national artistic idioms not as the fruit of the adaptation of central and authoritative models, but as a series of multidirectional dynamic processes.²⁸ This method seems to organically combine the approaches that we have discussed before - cultural transfer, geography of art, and reception of models - and acknowledges the fundamental role of mobility in artistic developments of Europe.

Mobility is a key point in this study for more than one reason: the movement of Titian’s paintings to the Low Countries and then outside of the territory, primarily to Spain; the movement of Flemish painters to other countries - not only to Italy but also to Spain, France, Germany - and their return; the movement of artworks and/or of their image through prints, drawings, copies; the movement of artists leaving their homes for never coming back, fleeing in search of better luck.

²⁶ The idea of the Renaissance as the propagation of the rediscovered classical language and culture from Italy to the rest of Europe was surely promulgated by Vasari in his *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (1550 and 1568). This model was entirely or partially embraced by modern art historians like Jacob Burckhardt in his *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien. Ein Versuch* (1860) and Erwin Panofsky in *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (1944), and it still appears as a watermark of most Renaissance studies. See PANOFSKY 1971; BURCKHARDT 2000.

²⁷ See AIKEMA 2021, *passim*, esp. pp. 9-19.

²⁸ This approach can be compared to the one applied in the pivotal study by Peter Burke, *The European Renaissance: Centres and Peripheries* (1998). In this multidisciplinary study, Burke analyses the process of revival of classical antiquity throughout Europe by focusing on the conduits of these ideas and on the imitation and the stylistic reception of art. See also BURKE P. 2009.

Bearing these concepts in mind, we might finally outline how the methodology followed in this study of Titian's reception situates it in relation to the previous literature that specifically dealt with this topic.

Literature review

The short text entitled *Aspetti dell'influsso di Tiziano nei Paesi Bassi* written by Giorgio Faggini in 1964 is very often referred to as a starting point for these studies.²⁹ Even though he does not claim to give an exhaustive explanation of this phenomenon, Faggini gathers some artworks which present indubitable aspects of so-called Titianism and briefly discusses their authors. The idea of this essay is to introduce interesting and unknown examples of copies and borrowings from Titian's art and to open a discussion that does not find space in the text. All the paintings are displayed as "curiosities", often *unica* in the production of the artists discussed, and the interest in the inventions of the Venetian is presented as a given fact. The concept of "influence" and the focus on Flemish artists "learning the lessons" of the antiques and the Italian masters permeate the discourse. Despite having the merit of bringing these examples to the attention of Italian Titianesque studies, this text lacks any attempt to find out specific reasons for repeating or reworking Titian's models except for an obvious acknowledgement of the quality of his art.³⁰

Moving on, a scholar who we cannot fail to mention in a discussion of the artistic relationship between Venice and the Low Countries is Bert Meijer. For the seminal 1999 exhibition *Renaissance Venice and the North: crosscurrents in the time of Bellini, Dürer and Titian*, curated by Bernard Aikema and Beverly Louise Brown, Meijer wrote an essay entitled *Titian and the North*.³¹ In this case, the scholar describes Titianism more broadly

²⁹ See FAGGIN 1964, pp. 46-54.

³⁰ For instance, the copies of the *Ecce homo* and the *Mater Dolorosa* attributed to Willem Key (1516-1568) are presented in the sphere of Key's adhesion to Renaissance ideals. The selection of the model seems not to deserve an explanation and it is not related in any way to the same selection operated by Maarten de Vos (1532-1603) when he adapted the same *Ecce homo* now in Sint-Jakobskerk, Antwerp. See FAGGIN 1964, pp. 49-52.

³¹ This exhibition is credited with providing a wider and more complex perspective of the cultural exchanges between Venice and the "North", intended not as a singular entity but as a series of cultural

as a phenomenon in the “North”, which means more generally that territory beyond the Alps, focusing on Germany, the Northern and Southern Netherlands. In a few pages, Meijer builds an intricate network of artists and works of art by focusing on archival material and painters who travelled to Venice or had direct contact with Titian’s art.³² This study originates from a series of articles with a monographic approach that the scholar had published in the previous years - and that he would continue to write afterwards - on Netherlandish and German artists who moved to Venice or who had worked in Titian’s workshop.³³ Apart from the extensive information and the interesting overview of artists’ mobility, a fundamental aspect of this research is the stress on the role played by the original Titian paintings at the Brussels court in spreading the art of the Venetian master.³⁴ Meijer’s attentive analysis of the actual visual sources and their availability for the artists who had produced Titianesque artworks are a fundamental model to develop the method used in the present research.

The book providing the starting point for this study, is the aforementioned *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, by Giorgio Tagliaferro, Bernard Aikema, Matteo Mancini and Andrew John Martin. The chapter *L’officina tizianesca e l’Europa: fra imitatio ed aemulatio*, presents many of the ideas that are developed and further researched here.³⁵ It is important to start with a clarification: the authors deal with the European diffusion of Titian’s models from different angles and aim to present a very broad picture of the

and political areas, each one with its distinctiveness. See VENICE 1999; MEIJER in VENICE 1999, pp. 498-505.

³² These pages are rich in references to inventories, documents and reports related to the presence and the relocation of Titian’s artworks in the Imperial collections. The information here gathered provides a solid base for the collecting and the “first” reception of the art of the Venetian.

³³ It is important to mention at least some of these studies: the general introduction on Flemish artists in Venice, MEIJER in BRESCIA-FRANKFURT 1990, pp.78-86; on Paolo Fiammingo (1540-1596), MEIJER 1983, pp. 20-32; on Ludovico Pozzoserrato (1550-1604/5), MEIJER 1988B, pp. 109-124; on Dirck Barendsz (1534-1592), MEIJER 1988A, pp. 141-154; on Jan van Scorel (1495-1562), MEIJER 1992, pp. 1-19; on Christoph Schwarz (1548-1592), MEIJER 1999, pp. 127-156.

³⁴ MEIJER in VENICE 1999, p. 502.

³⁵ This chapter will be discussed and quoted on different occasions in the course of the dissertation. The concepts elaborated there have been embraced, further developed or refused, but always taken into account. See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 335-387.

phenomenon, which is absolutely not limited to the Southern Netherlands. It starts with an overview of artists who had been - or were supposed to have been - in the sphere of Titian's workshop or in Venice, and afterwards it moves to an analysis of the European Titianism divided into thematic sections: portraiture, mythological subjects, the representation of female nudes, and the religious paintings. This subdivision and organisation of the works have been partially adopted in the present research, but with some reserve. In fact, this approach implies that certain themes and subjects were perceived by contemporaries as Titianesque. It is important to exercise caution in this respect because we are often not dealing with artworks that can be judged "unquestionably related" to Titian's models. Therefore, apart from copies and evident variations, the risk is to consider almost any female reclined nude Titianesque *a priori*. For this reason, the core question of the research gravitates around the "idea" or "ideas" of Titian and their genesis in the course of the XVIth century: since we are analysing a process from its end, retrospectively, it is fundamental to consider evaluate all of the steps composing it and the different context in which they were generated.³⁶

Among the themes explored in *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, landscape is hardly mentioned. However, Titian's depiction of landscapes, in his own paintings but also in prints, set an example for Flemish painters of the XVIth century.³⁷ Flemish artists had the reputation of being specialised in painting detailed and beautiful landscapes. Their leadership seemed to have been challenged by Titian's representation of nature, which entered as *paradigma* for the *genre* in the artistic literature and was important for artists such as Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1528-1569).³⁸ This topic does not find place in the

³⁶ The examples discussed in TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009 are usually copies and adaptations of Titian's paintings or artworks dated around the end of the century, after the death of the master and in the crucial years of the establishment of the artistic canon related to his art.

³⁷ The topic of Titian and the landscape painting, or, more broadly, his representation of nature, is complex and yet to be fully explored. It has been the protagonist of the catalogues: LONDON 2012; MILAN 2012. It is important to mention the role of engravers like the Netherlandish Cornelis Cort (1533-1578), and in particular of the Paduan Giulio Campagnola (1482-1515) and the Venetian Domenico Campagnola (1500-1564) in elaborating and popularising a certain depiction of landscape that was associated to the name of Titian.

³⁸ Some interesting insights on the judgments expressed by literates on Titian as a landscape painter can be found in GROSSO 2019, pp. 191-2015.

aforementioned chapter about the European reception of Titian's art, and, in the same way, it will not be developed in this study. The subject was left out of this research for its vastness and because the themes investigated here are the ones which especially encountered the favour of the Habsburgs and their courtiers. These mostly included portraits, mythological subjects, female reclined nudes, devotional and religious artworks.

As mentioned above, the artists discussed in *Le botteghe di Tiziano* came from - or were connected to - different geographic zones, such as the German and the Dutch-speaking territories, with some excursus to Spain in other chapters of the book. In short, the focus mostly stays on the lands controlled by the Habsburgs. In fact, as stated in a fundamental passage of the chapter:

«Non vi è dubbio, per prima cosa, che l'*auctoritas* degli Asburgo fosse il fattore decisivo del successo e della disseminazione delle varie tipologie inaugurate dal maestro [...]. Quei modelli venivano distribuiti fra le varie corti asburgiche - Vienna, Madrid, Bruxelles - e diligentemente replicati. Ma altri pittori preferivano ispirarsi a quegli esempi autorevoli per trasformarli a modo loro, ognuno a seconda del proprio talento e delle proprie esigenze contestuali». ³⁹

Stating the Habsburg *auctoritas* as one fundamental driving force for the adoption of Titianesque language in Europe and, in our case, in the Southern Netherlands, is not an innovative idea. However, in *Le botteghe di Tiziano* the constant entanglements of the social necessities of the *élites* with the marketing of the Titian's "brand" and the fortune of specific models are expressed in an exemplary way. This concept of *auctoritas* seems valid for what concerns the "centrifugal movement" of the inventions for the Habsburgs to a wider public in need of emulation, but it needs to be questioned in other environments. It is always necessary to keep into account the singular intentions of the artists and the context of the production of artwork to determine whether a Titianesque model was perceived as a "*Tiziano*" or as something different.

Another aspect pointed out by the authors and that has a great resonance in this study is the problem of style, or technique. It was duly noted that, when the Northern artists were emulating and adapting the inventions of the Venetian, they were not trying

³⁹ TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 358.

to imitate his famous pictorial technique.⁴⁰ This observation is also related to the changes in the approach to Titian's art by the painters working in the XVIIth century: Rubens and van Dyck experimented with the artist's painterly style, not necessarily by copying, but by studying and adapting it. The same considerations are expressed by Miguel Falomir in his essay on the copies after the inventions of Titian in the Spanish royal collection.⁴¹ Falomir notices that copies made by the court painters between the end of the XVIth and the beginning of the XVIIth century did not dialogue with the originals but maintained the style of the single artists. It was just when Rubens copied Titian that he used this experience to learn his technique and further develop his own, while we have to wait until the 1630s to see Spanish artists who started systematically imitating the style of Titian.⁴²

The general lack of interest or even the refusal showed by Southern Netherlandish painters of Titian's loose and painterly technique - sometimes also of his paradigmatic *colore* -, and some likely or presumed early experiments by artists, constitute one of the cornerstones of this research. In fact, this problem of style is directly related to another one, namely the gap, or the mismatch, between the "idea of Titian" that we can reconstruct from his reception by the artists, and the literary "idea of Titian", fruit of different processes, intentions and translations.⁴³

This is likely one of the most innovative and recurrent themes analysed in this dissertation: to revise the reception of the literary "idea of Titian" absorbed and elaborated by the early Netherlandish art theorists in the light of the practical use of his *maniera*.⁴⁴ This gap opens methodological issues and questions the approach of scholars who had interpreted the reception of Titian through the lens of his

⁴⁰ See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 368, 376, 381.

⁴¹ See FALOMIR 2021, pp. 64-75.

⁴² These developments in the Spanish painting are related to the experience and the impact of Diego Velázquez, who came back from his Italian sojourn in 1629. See FALOMIR 2021, p. 74.

⁴³ We have anticipated how Titian cooperated with literates for his self-fashioning and marketing. But it is worth mentioning that his figurative election as the "prince of painters" and the greatest expression of the values of Venetian art was also functional to the *disegno/colore* debate.

⁴⁴ In the Netherlands the art theory found its place in the literature later than in Italy, and it has been noticed that the works by Italian authors like the utterly famous Giorgio Vasari served as models for the development of a local art theory. This topic had been analysed especially in MELION 1991.

biographers without a proper visual comparison. When the humanist Dominicus Lampsonius (1532-1599) wrote to Titian, was he referring to his own experience or was he re-using rhetorical images and *topoi* from Vasari and Dolce?⁴⁵ Were the judgements expressed by Lampsonius and by the painter and biographer Karel van Mander (1548-1606) indicative of the experiences of artists and should they be used in this respect? Can we consider the “pittura di macchia”, which was described by Vasari as the distinctive trait of Titian’s late production, as common visual knowledge of Southern Netherlandish painters?

For this reason, it is fundamental to discuss these texts *vis-à-vis* the visual documents and to avoid retroactive and decontextualised judgements. In this respect, although this study requires empirical historical research to reconstruct movements of artists and artworks, it rests on a firm art historical foundation.

Structure of the argument

The dissertation consists of five chapters followed by a conclusion, each of which presents a partially chronological structure and partially thematical.

The first chapter recounts the state of the art of the relationship between Titian and his Habsburg patrons, starting from the portraits for Charles V and finishing with the *Persens and Andromeda*, the *poesia* sent to Philip II in 1556. This is necessary to set a context and a starting point for the entire research since it was through the Emperor and the court of Brussels that most of Titian’s paintings arrived in the Netherlands. What was the artistic and cultural background of the patrons of Titian at the court of Brussels - namely Charles V, Mary of Hungary, Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle and Philip II -, and how did their intentions, political and not, direct the outputs of the artists? What was the “idea of Titian” conveyed through the selection of his art and style by these influential patrons? And what were the consequences of that on Titian’s reception? To answer these questions, it is necessary, on the one hand, through an analysis of documents, letters and inventories, to trace the history of the single works and evaluate their chance of leaving a mark or even of being accessible to other artists.

⁴⁵ The famous letter written by Lampsonius to Titian has been recently discussed. However, these studies focus more on the networks of the humanist in Italy and abroad and the analysis of his literary models. See GROSSO 2018, pp. 241-299; GROSSO 2019, pp. 191-215.

On the other hand, the chapter examines which artworks were replicated in the court environment and traces the background and the networks of the artists - especially court painters -, who were involved in these operations. These considerations appear inescapable to build a reference point for the entire research. In fact, it allows having a clear image of “a Titian”, one of the 1540s and 1550s, not to be mistaken with the canon “*Tiziano*”.

The second chapter deals with the artist Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592), another court painter of the Habsburgs whose dialogue with the art of Titian has never been thoroughly investigated. In a certain sense, Coxcie appears like the Flemish counterpart of the Venetian master. From inventorial pieces of evidence and records, we know that his artworks had been paired with Titian’s in eminent locations such as the *grande salle* of the castle of Binche, a place of representation for the Habsburgs, or in the monastery of Yuste, where Charles V retired after abdicating the throne. Here, it is important to question the meaning of these pairings both for the reception of Titian by the artist himself, but also for revealing the perception of Titian in the court. Moreover, this chapter investigates the production of Coxcie for traces of borrowings and adaptations from Titian and offers explanations for these selections.

The third chapter starts from the analysis of the work of another court painter, Anthonis Mor van Dashorst (1520-1577), but concerns more broadly the theme of portraiture. This artist is after all considered the one who popularised a codified version of Titian’s portraiture for the Habsburgs, particularly the full-length and the three-quarter formats. This aspect has been discussed in *Le botteghe di Tiziano* with the hypothesis that Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, right-arm of the Imperial dynasty, had pushed the artist to learn from Titian with the intent to create in Brussels a workshop based on his model of portraiture.⁴⁶ Whereas the adaptation of Titian’s model is evident in the construction of Mor’s specialization in portraying the *élite*, the problems investigated here are both the style in relation to the practices of portraiture in the courts of Spain and Brussels and the question of the *status* of the artist. Why did Mor and the other court painters who specialised in portraiture - for instance the Spanish Alonso Sánchez Coello (1531-1558) and Juan Pantoja de la Cruz (1553-1608) - use an extremely detailed and polished style of paintings? Why did this particular style become

⁴⁶ See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 337-339.

the standard for portraits, and not Titian's? The issue of the *status* is relevant in relation to the figure of Mor. It was recognised that he had modelled his artistic persona on the one of Titian, probably because he was aspiring to his *status* in the court.⁴⁷ It is important to further expand upon this aspect because this idea of self-fashioning over the image and the biography of a master characterises artists like Rubens, van Dyck, Velazquez and Rembrandt.

After focusing on the court environment under the direct influence of the Habsburgs in the first three chapters, the perspective for the remaining two shifts to the artistic production of the city of Antwerp. It examines the role of painters and models mostly unrelated to the court in shaping an image of Titian, by way of two macro-themes: the religious paintings and the mythological subjects with the copious display of sensual naked women.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the reception of the religious inventions by Titian, and it presents a double methodological approach. So far, the paintings studied were the copies and adaptations produced in the context of the Brussels court, in particular after the versions of the *Mater Dolorosa* and the *Ecce Homo* painted for Charles V. This chapter broadens the research on painters unrelated to the court to evaluate the diffusion of these models and the reasons of their fortune. Another problematic aspect to deal with is the adoption of models unrelated to the court. In a time and place characterised by a strong religious debate, the choice of specific religious iconographies cannot be separated from this context. For this reason, this section adds to the formal analysis a particular attention to the iconological approach, when discussing the adoption of Titian's models to represent the theme known as the "adoration of the shepherds".

The fifth and last chapter studies the reception of the mythological paintings by Titian and of the "Titianesque" mythological themes related to the fame of his *poesie* for Philip II. This might appear the chapter with the strongest foundations in the pre-existent literature, but treating the topic thoroughly, in fact, requires a synthesis of insights paired with new research. Much of the extant literature deals with single and isolated cases or adopts a broad perspective that allows identifying long waves of Titianesque themes. The topic of the reception of mythologies was only studied

⁴⁷ See in particular BODART 2013, pp. 131-162.

sporadically and superficially. Therefore, this chapter needs to answer multiple questions. First, what was the consideration of mythological painting in the Netherlands and how was it different in Italy? Second, were mythologies marketable, and, if they were, which artists specialised in their production? and for what kind of audience? Third, were these artists unquestionably referring to Titian when depicting a “Titianesque” theme? And which were their intentions in showing/hiding the models? To solve all these issues, it is important to examine the topic from many angles: the socio-economical context, namely the change of the necessities of the clientele and the establishment of new markets; the single interests and strategies of the artists; and how the image debate and the religious tensions influenced all these aspects. At the same time, this analysis needs to constantly ascertain the availability of sources and the alternative means of communication that might have acted as mediators between Titian’s inventions and their receptions.

In the conclusion, all of the insights of the sections are brought together to express the results of the study clearly and briefly. In particular, this final part allows us to discuss the validity of the methodology and its possible use in further research.

1. The Habsburgs and Titian

Starting from the first portraits for Charles V, Titian became one of the favourite painters of the Habsburgs. This relationship of patronage lasted until the death of the artist and included different branches of the imperial family. The preferences, selections and intentions of the rulers shaped the first “idea of Titian” - or experience of Titian - in the Southern Netherlands. An unprecedented series of paintings by the Venetian artist arrived at the court, constituting the main visual reference and first-hand interaction that Netherlandish painters, patrons and public had with Titian’s art. It is the purpose of this chapter to outline from scratch the specific aspects of the artist’s production for the Habsburgs, to compare it to the experiments in Titian’s art in the 1540s and 1550s and to contextualise it in the cultural and political *milieu* of the Low Countries.

As anticipated in the introduction, the following pages intend to avoid referring to the image of the “historicized” Titian in order to analyse the phenomenon of reception from a different perspective, and especially to cast a critical eye over the sometimes overstated “impact” of his art on the Netherlandish painters.

1.1 Titian as Apelles for Charles V

In the XVIth century, the Habsburgs were the most powerful and influential dynasty in Europe, with Charles V of Habsburg ruling over «the empire on which the sun never sets».⁴⁸ On 10 May 1533, the Emperor himself made Titian knight of the Golden Spur and count Palatine.⁴⁹ More importantly, he gave Titian the honour to be the only person allowed to portray him.⁵⁰ Charles V found his court painter in the

⁴⁸ This definition of the Holy Roman Empire is ascribed to Fray Francisco de Ugaldá and was especially used to describe Philip II’s reign.

⁴⁹ The document is preserved in Titian’s house in Pieve di Cadore, and was published by RIDOLFI 1648, I, pp. 180-182 with a mistake in the transcription, dating the document to 1553; see CADORIN 1850.

⁵⁰ This was true in theory, but in practice, other painters continued producing images of the Emperor in different media such as prints and sculptures. An example is a spectacular statue made by Leone Leoni (1509-1590) and Pompeo Leoni (1533-1608) and now at the Prado Museum, the so-called *Emperor Charles V and the Fury* (1551-1555).

successful Venetian artist as Alexander the Great had discovered Apelles. This comparison is explicitly written in the *Diploma* that ratifies Titian's titles:

«[...] a quella tua squisita arte di pingere e ritrarre al vivo le persone, nella qual arte tale a Noi li mostrasti, che meriti veramente d'essere chiamato l'Apelle di questo secolo; e seguendo l'esempio dei Nostri predecessori Alessandro Magno ed Ottaviano Augusto, dei quali il primo voleva essere dipinto dal solo Apelle, il secondo da eccellenti maestri soltanto, provvedendo prudentemente che dal difetto d'inesperti pittori, e da brutta e mostruosa pittura non venisse scemata la gloria loro appo i posterì, ci lasciammo dipingere da te [...]».⁵¹

While Titian is compared to the legendary successful painter, Charles V is linked to Alexander the Great and Augustus. Titian is praised especially for his abilities as a portraitist with the expression “ritrarre *al vivo* le persone”,⁵² and he is presented as the only artist capable of giving to the image of the Emperor its deserved dignity. The *topos* used to describe this patron-artist relationship was not merely an exercise in rhetoric and a humanistic fashion but carried a more complicated meaning.⁵³ Besides comparing Charles V with the greatest monarchs of the classical world, this *Diploma* served also to make Titian the Habsburg's court painter. Sure, Titian made about hundred and fifty paintings for the Habsburgs and their ministers and after 1550 his fortune stayed inextricably related to that court. However, the relationship between the Venetian master and his imperial patron was discontinuous and complicated from both sides.

On the one hand, Titian kept a special *status* of autonomy for an artist so close to rulers and powerful courtiers. He had always tried to balance his interests with the necessities of the courts, avoiding being subjugated to a single prince's demands and forced to leave his beloved Venice, where no court was present.⁵⁴ On the other hand, it is worth to mention that the relevance and the intimacy of Charles V connection

⁵¹ CADORIN 1850, p. 17.

⁵² The italic is mine.

⁵³ For an extensive analysis of the use of this rhetoric in Charles V and Titian case, see BODART 2011, pp. 35-50, 199-274.

⁵⁴ The complex relation between Titian and the European courts is briefly treated in HOPE 1979, pp. 7-10. For a more general view, see CHECA CREMADES 2013.

with the painter was questioned especially by Miguel Falomir, who stressed the role of Francisco de los Cobos, secretary of the Emperor, in the choice of Titian at first place.⁵⁵ Titian was a painter connected to some of the most flourishing courts in Italy, and his status played a major role in drawing the attention of los Cobos, and subsequently of the Emperor.⁵⁶ This aspect is essential to understand Charles V's (and his counsellors) choice in favour of the Venetian painter and the importance of his ability as portraitist in this artistic transaction.⁵⁷

Anyway, the esteem accorded to the painter by the Emperor became the subject of many anecdotes, the most famous of which is reported by Ridolfi. The Italian writer describes in his *Vite* how Charles picked up the paintbrush dropped by the painter, replying to Titian's amazed reaction: «è degno Tiziano essere servito da Cesare»⁵⁸. The biographies of the painter report different legends and stories following the Alexander-*Apelles topos*, which magnified the relationship between Charles V and Titian.⁵⁹

These were the premises of the artist's employment in the complex system of the Habsburg court, a system which's rules and dynamics Titian had to adapt to maintain his role and to take advantage of the benefits coming with it.

⁵⁵ FALOMIR 2010, pp. 41-53; FALOMIR 2013, pp. 131-149. For the political aspect, see KENISTON 1960.

⁵⁶ Federico Gonzaga, Duke of Matua and head of a powerful princely family, commissioned from Titian a portrait for Francisco de los Cobos, of which the secretary was particularly satisfied. The Duke of Mantua, as we will discuss, had an important role in recommending Titian to Charles V, in this case through the secretary of the Emperor. See FALOMIR 2013, pp. 134-136.

⁵⁷ See at least WETHEY 1969-75, II; FLETCHER in LONDON 2003, pp. 29-42; NAPLES 2006.

⁵⁸ RIDOLFI 1648, I, p. 162.

⁵⁹ A part of the construction of the "legend" and the propagandistic use of the idea of intimacy expressed by the biographies, there are also reliable sources that suggest how the painter had a privileged position in the eyes of the Emperor. Both a letter from Melanchton to Camerarius quoted by TIETZE (1936, I, p. 180) and one from Gian Giacomo Leonardi to Guidobaldo della Rovere quoted by GRONAU (1936, p. 98) underline with a certain surprise the location of Titian's room, very close to the Emperor's, and the many opportunities they had to talk to each other. See also HOPE 1979, p. 7; MANCINI 2000, pp. 221-234.

1.1.1 Titian as court portraitist: steppingstone and boundary

In the *Diploma* his ability as portraitist is considered the main reason for giving the Venetian master the knightship, while the comparison with Alexander the Great and Augustus (not mentioned by chance!) enhances the role of Titian as the favourite and unique - in theory - perpetrator of the image of the Emperor. Also the anecdote related to the Cesar picking up the brush is set during the creation of a portrait.

Vasari remembers that «un bellissimo ritratto di Sua Maestà tutto armato»⁶⁰ was realized in Bologna in 1530, as the result of the first meeting between the artist and the Emperor, but the documents tell a different story.⁶¹ Federico II Gonzaga (1500-1540), Titian's patron and duke of Mantua, knew in advance about the passage of Charles V through the city and summoned Titian with a letter dated 10 October 1529.⁶² In the letter, he specifically asks the artist to come for painting the Emperor's portrait, in the tradition of the diplomatic gift addressed to earn the Habsburg's *benevolentia*.⁶³ It is still debated if the painting was made on that occasion. It is possible that Titian and Charles V were introduced by the duke of Mantua in Parma or Bologna, in a brief trip in 1529, or maybe in the latter in the years 1532-33. Pietro Aretino, close friend of Titian and promoter of his art,⁶⁴ wrote to Charles V's wife, Isabella of Portugal:

«Tiziano [...], infiammato dal desiderio di mostrare per virtù de le sue mani Cesare istesso a Cesare proprio, fece sì, con gran favor de l'esempio, in cui respire il dipinto duca di Mantova, che, nel vederlo, l'altissimo Carlo consenti che rassemplasse la fatale effigie sua».⁶⁵

⁶⁰ VASARI 1568, II, p. 810.

⁶¹ The first meetings between Charles V and Titian are discussed in HOPE 1977, pp. 551-552; BODART 1998, pp. 55-70; BODART 2011, pp. 42-49; SASSU 2012; SASSU 2017, pp. 299-312, with further bibliography; and the recent MUNARI 2019, pp. 39-41.

⁶² Transcribed in BODART 1998, p. 262.

⁶³ For this use of the gift, see BODART 1998, pp. 21-28.

⁶⁴ The literature about the relationship between the painter and the so-called "*flagello de' principî*" is extended. Here is indicated just the fundamental GREGORI 1978, pp. 271-306; FREEDMAN 1995 and the more recent WADDINGTON 2018.

⁶⁵ ARETINO 1960, pp. 398-399.

In this letter dated 18 December 1537, Aretino recalls how the Emperor decided to be portrayed by the Venetian painter just after he had the opportunity to see an effigy of the duke of Mantua, Federico II. This anecdote enforces the hypothesis that Charles V must have been in Mantua before the commission of his own portrait by the hand of Titian, and moreover suggests the Emperor was particularly interested in the artist's talent as a portraitist.⁶⁶

In spite of the doubts regarding the precise date, is it sure that Titian painted one or more portraits of Charles V in this period, that are now lost.

The "ritratto di Sua Maestà tutto armato" is usually identified with the *Charles V with drawn sword*, known through copies by several artists among whom Rubens (*Figure 1*);⁶⁷ an anonymous Italian copy from XVIth century in the Montagu Collection in London;⁶⁸ and the prints by Giovanni Britto and Agostino Veneziano.⁶⁹ The other portrait related to these first meetings is *Charles V with a dog*, now in the Prado Museum (*Figure 2*),⁷⁰ which is probably the earliest portrait of Charles V by Titian still preserved. This full-length effigy is related to the one by the Austrian painter Jakob Seisenegger, court painter of the Emperor's brother, Ferdinand I, also representing Charles V with a dog (*Figure 3*).⁷¹ The two paintings clearly share a common model, being almost identical in the general composition, the pose and the clothing of the Emperor, and the presence of the impressive hound at his side. So, which is the original and which is the copy? While the portrait by Seisenegger's is signed with the date 1532, the one by the Italian master is commonly dated slightly later, to 1533, during the Emperor's

⁶⁶ See SASSU 2017, pp. 301-302.

⁶⁷ Peter Paul Rubens after Titian; *Charles V with a drawn sword*; 1600-1605; 119x93 cm; oil on canvas; collection of Lord Mountgarret, Nidd Hall; Yorkshire. See MÜLLER HOFSTEDE 1967, pp. 38-47; HUMFREY 2007, p. 144; WOOD J. 2010, I, pp. 225-233.

⁶⁸ SASSU 2007, pp. 145-147; SASSU 2017, pp. 305-306.

⁶⁹ WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 191-193. See also BODART 2011, pp. 61-67; FALOMIR 2010, pp. 41-53; SASSU 2017, pp. 299-312.

⁷⁰ Titian; *Charles V with a dog*; 1533; 194x112,7 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See PANOFKY 1969, pp. 182-184; WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 85-87; FERINO-PAGDEN 2000, pp. 64-75; KUSCHE 2004, pp. 267-280; FERINO PAGDEN-BEYER 2005, MADRID-LONDON 2008-2009, pp. 505-506; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 335-339.

⁷¹ Jacob Seisenegger; *Charles V with a dog*; 1532; 205x123 cm; oil on canvas; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna.

visit to Bologna. Wethey underlined that the dog and the clothing had been described in Sanuto's *Diarii* related to the Emperor's visits in Verona and Bassano in early November 1532,⁷² and that Titian didn't arrive in Bologna before January of the following year. However, the radiographic analysis made on the Prado painting in 2000 revealed a *pentimento* that brings into question whether Titian could have made such changes while copying Seisenegger's portrait.

Leaving aside these philological discussions, what is relevant, as pointed out by Tagliaferro, is that we are not witnessing a simple matter of "artistic influence", because both of them, in their artistic dialogue, contributed to give a turn to the *élite's* portraiture.⁷³ The debate goes beyond the scope of this study. What is significant in this context is the fortune of Titian's *exempla* and his role in shaping the typology of the *state-portrait*.⁷⁴

Therefore, the Venetian master entered an international stage and was praised for his ability, linking himself to the most powerful dynasty of his time because of his portraits.

It is not coincidental that Titian earned his privileges and his *Diploma* in 1533, after renewing the public image of Charles V, until then very much connected with the typology of the half-bust inherited from German and Flemish tradition. Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen, Barthel Beham and Christoph Amberger, all painters related with the Habsburg court, realized Emperor's effigies around 1530.⁷⁵

An account of Titian's success at the court can be exemplified by the diplomatic correspondence aimed to bring the Venetian to Spain in order to portray the Emperor and his wife Isabella against the will of the Serenissima Repubblica. Lope de Soria, the Habsburg's ambassador in Venice, wrote to the Doge Andrea Gritti under the advice of Cobos asking to grant Titian the permission to leave Venice. A letter dated

⁷² WETHEY 1969-75, II, p. 86. The hound is described accompanying the Emperor during his visit to Verona, 7 November 1532: SANUTO, LVII, col. 217: «Veniva sopra uno caro con uno grande cane corso, quale se diceva lo imperator farlo cussi portar». The costume is also present in SANUTO LVII, col. 194: «Soa Maestà vene vestita di sagio et robon di brocato d'arzeno, fodrato di zebellini et calzato, li bolzegini bianchi».

⁷³ TAGLIAFERRO ET AL 2009, pp. 335-337.

⁷⁴ "Exemplum" is a word particularly suitable for describing this first portrait by Titian in the context of the standardization of the *state-portrait* as deeply discussed in BODART 2011.

⁷⁵ See BODART 2011, pp. 71-80.

September 1533 records this debate. There, Lope de Soria asserted that many other painters could have replaced Titian in conceiving and executing the canvas for the *Maggior Consiglio*, but Charles V and Isabella demanded his presence: «si no para hazer retratos». ⁷⁶ The idea that a painter like Titian could have been easily substituted for the decoration of Palazzo Ducale but not for the creation of a portrait seems quite logic, as it would need the physical presence of the artist to render the sitter as *lifelike* as possible. But it is also important to consider some other elements. On the one hand, this claim of the services of the painter served to assert the authority of the Emperor over Titian and his priorities. On the other hand, this event underlines once again that the artist was particularly valued for this skill of painting portraits which were true to life. The same Lope de Soria gives a perfect definition of how Titian was perceived in another letter addressed to Ferdinand I the following year, defining the Venetian master as: «el primero para sacar al natural». ⁷⁷ In a well-known letter by Ferrante Gonzaga to the duke of Mantua dated 14 January 1533, the writer informs that: «Maestro Tiziano ha fatto lo Imperatore tanto naturale che tutti quelli lo vedono hano da dirne». ⁷⁸ What is pointed out is the *natural appearance* of the Emperor in the portrait, whether is referring to *Charles V with drawn sword* or *Charles V with the dog*. ⁷⁹ These images were combining the Northern tradition with a more classical approach and the “*maniera veneta*”. ⁸⁰

The preference for this kind of natural representation can be ascertained by the scarce success earned by the portrait made by Parmigianino. ⁸¹ As recorded by Vasari: «[...] fece senza ritrarlo l'immagine di esso Cesare a olio in un quadro grandissimo, et in

⁷⁶ MANCINI 1998, pp. 18-20, n. 5 p. 136.

⁷⁷ MANCINI 1998, n. 9 p. 140.

⁷⁸ Transcribed by BODART 1998, p. 262.

⁷⁹ The praises for the *naturalezza* and lifelikeness of the sitter were not a simple matter of resemblance, but they were related to a system of conventions. Letters, poems and art treatises from the XVth and the XVIth centuries insist on the idea of the portraits looking like they were alive. See CRANSTON 2000, pp. 145-147.

⁸⁰ CHECA CREMADES 2013, p. 206.

⁸¹ A copy of this painting, for a long time considered the original, is preserved in the private collection Rosenberg & Stibel, New York. For the reception of this painting by the Habsburg court, see CHECA CREMADES 2002A, pp. 357-359; BODART 2011, pp. 56-61; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 202-205.

quello dipinse la Fama che lo coronava di lauro et un fanciullo in forma d'un Ercole piccolino che gli porgeva il mondo quasi dandogliene il dominio». ⁸² This iconography was too complicated and too full of symbolic elements, to such an extent that it never became an official image. Charles V showed a strong aversion towards allegorical representations likely due to the austere tradition of the Burgundian portraits and to his education. Erasmus of Rotterdam, who had been Charles' adviser when he was a young prince, warned him against the dangers of portraits, too often related to the practice of adulation. ⁸³ Erasmus suggested the prince should have been portrayed in an "instructive" way, or «engaged in something that benefits the republic» ⁸⁴ as an example of good governing. ⁸⁵

Therefore, the *naturalis* for which Titian was praised was not enough if he could not use it as an expression of imperial *decorum*. In fact, because Charles V was about to be crowned in Bologna as Emperor, it became all the more urgent that his physical image should correspond with his majesty *status*. So, these years between 1530 and 1533 were a period of experiments in an iconographical point of view. ⁸⁶ In those crucial years the Venetian master produced portraits in which he "corrected" the protruding lower jaw of the monarch, maintaining this way the likeness of the Emperor in a more idealized version. This practice can be related to the rhetorical figure of *dissimulation* discussed by Pliny and Quintilian, according to which «realism must be subjected to *decorum*». ⁸⁷

It is self-evident that the full-length portrait by Seisenegger and the detailed and traditional images painted by Amberger and the other painters gravitating around the

⁸² VASARI 1568, II, p. 235.

⁸³ ERASMUS (1516) 1996, pp. 90-91. See also MADRID 2001, pp. 71-79.

⁸⁴ About the education of the Emperor and his role in dictating the fashion of court portraiture, see FALOMIR 2008, pp. 66-79, quote at p. 71.

⁸⁵ For the importance of the rhetorical construction of the royal portraits, see JOHANNESSON 1998, pp. 11-36.

⁸⁶ An extended analysis of this process can be found in BODART 2011, pp. 93-144.

⁸⁷ FALOMIR 2008, p. 72; BODART 2011, pp. 121-127. The main classical sources are PLINIO IL VECCHIO, *Naturalis Historia*, XXXV, 36-90; QUINTILIANO, *Institutio Oratoria*, II, 14-17. The concept of *dissimulatio* was also related to the anecdote of Apelles portraying in profile the disfigured King Antigonus by Quintiliano. An interesting summary of the concept of *decorum* in portraiture is JONCKHEERE 2016, pp. 37-40.

court were complemented by Titian's canvases, which carefully combined Flemish and German models and a concept of *decorum* rooted in classicism.

Portraiture and *status* were the key elements for the choice of Titian since the very beginning. This we must keep in mind to trace and evaluate the reception of his art and the fortune of his models in the court.

1.1.2 Widening the commissions: self-promotion and variety

As mentioned before, Titian was not new to the court environment. He worked for Alfonso d'Este (1476-1534), duke of Ferrara,⁸⁸ Francesco Maria della Rovere (1490-1538), duke of Urbino,⁸⁹ and for Federico Gonzaga,⁹⁰ who also introduced him to the Habsburgs. But, after 1533, Titian's role as the Emperor's court painter was not as fruitful as he probably hoped.

As a court painter, Titian was employed especially as a portraitist, but that was not his only task. Alfonso d'Este, Federico Gonzaga and Francesco Maria della Rovere, among others, commissioned also mythological and religious paintings. Charles V, on the other hand, was initially not showing interest for other painterly genres. In 1537, the Venetian painter, advised by Pietro Aretino,⁹¹ sent to Isabella of Portugal an *Annunciation* he had painted for the cloister of Santa Maria degli Angeli, in Murano, which was refused by the nuns for its high price.⁹² This was, of course, an intelligent strategy of marketing: this "gift" was generously paid by the empress, allowing Titian to reinforce his connection with the Habsburg court in a moment of scarcity of commissions, and giving him the chance to prove himself in a different category of painting. In the letter that Pietro Aretino sent to Titian in that occasion there is an interesting passage about the portraits:

⁸⁸ For further bibliography see WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 143-153; CHECA CREMADES 2005A, pp. 41-72; HOPE 2012B; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 59-114.

⁸⁹ See GRONAU 1936; URBINO 2004; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 136-170; PAOLI-SPIKE 2019

⁹⁰ This long and fruitful patronage has been treated by a vast bibliography. See BODART 1998; ZEITZ 2000; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 114-135.

⁹¹ ARETINO-VASARI 2008, pp. 11-12. We have an interesting example of ekphrasis of a lost Titian's painting in this letter.

⁹² The painting, now lost, is known through print by Jacopo Caraglio dated 1537. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, p. 71; FRASCAROLO-PELLEGRINI 2013, pp. 93-106.

«[...] per fare invidia a coloro che, non potendo negare il vostro ingegno, danno a voi la palma nel ritratto».⁹³

Aretino is pointing at the problem that Titian, in the Tuscan intellectual and artistic environment, was praised only for his ability as portraitist.⁹⁴ The writer refers to the problematic debate about *disegno* and *colorito*, the contraposition between Tuscan and Venetian art that would exclude Titian from the first edition of the *Vite* by Giorgio Vasari in 1550.⁹⁵ This statement also suggests that the exclusive role of portraitist did not completely satisfy Titian, also in relation to the secondary position held by the portraits in the hierarchy of pictorial genres.⁹⁶

Unfortunately, the gift of the *Annunciation* did not bring new significant commissions. It is true that Titian found excuses to avoid travelling to Spain and worked mostly from Venice, but his main task at that point was the production of portraits for various members of the Habsburg court, and especially copies after his

⁹³ ARETINO-VASARI 2008, p. 12.

⁹⁴ FREEDMAN 1995, pp. 14-15. The author points out that Aretino must have sensed the danger of promoting Titian only as a portraitist. This passage is also reported by FALOMIR 2013, p. 139 as an example of Aretino's frustration for being labelled just as a satirical poet associated with the labelling of Titian as a portraitist.

⁹⁵ The theoretical debate on *disegno* and *colore* characterised the artistic and intellectual fields well beyond the XVIth century. This complex and multi-faceted topic, as well as the discussions over the so-called *paragone* between painting and sculpture, will be referred to in the course of the study, but it cannot be thoroughly analysed here. See ROSKILL 1968; FREEDBERG S. 1980, II, pp. 309-322; ROSAND 1982B, pp. 15-26; POIRIER 1987, pp. 52-86; PUTTFARKEN 1991, pp. 75-77; HALL 1992; GOFFEN 2002, pp. 265-338; ROSEN 2001, pp. 422-433; HOCHMANN 2004; FAIETTI in OXFORD 2015-2016, pp. 39-49.

⁹⁶ As clearly summarized by BASS L. 2008, p. 36: «[...] the requirement of resemblance is what accounts for the subordination of portrait to history painting in the hierarchy of genres as established in sixteenth-century Italian art theory, with his distinction between *imitare*, understood as the intellectual application of art to render visible the universal essence of things, and *ritrarre*, considered a mechanical copying of particular appearances». It is a complex and important topic for art theory during Renaissance. Leon Battista Alberti, in his *De pictura* (1441) states that the history painting was the noblest and most difficult kind of painting because the artist had to use his intellect. In brief, BLUNT 1940, pp. 11-12; LEE 1967.

own models.⁹⁷ Therefore, in the 1540s the artist managed to find an entrance into the papal court, where he encountered the favour of Pope Paolo III and his grandson Alessandro Farnese.⁹⁸ Although the Venetian master was at the same time patronized by two of the most important men of Europe, not everything went according to plans. In 1543, pope Paolo III summoned him in Bologna to paint his portrait, that became one of Titian's masterpieces, but the artist couldn't get the benefice for his son Pomponio.⁹⁹ In the same year, the only new commission he received from the Emperor was the posthumous portrait of Isabella, which he painted in 1545, five years after her death in 1539.¹⁰⁰ In this case, Titian had to realize this painting after an unknown model, that Aretino described as «molto simile al vero pero di trivial pennello».¹⁰¹ This task was quite challenging, and Titian almost completely satisfied the expectation of the monarch.

The letter that Titian sent to the Emperor from Rome in 1545 exemplifies his strategy of self-promotion.¹⁰² The entire text is a grandiose self-advertisement from the part of the artist. Titian starts remembering the Emperor that he had sent him the portrait of his wife, thus emphasizing that this painting was the last commission of Charles V (and also the first one after the Diploma in 1533) and announces that he spontaneously had done a *Venus* for him. A painting, he writes: «[...] La qual figura ho Speranza che farà chiara fede quanto la mia arte avanzi se stessa in adoperarsi per la Maestà Vostra».¹⁰³ Titian proposed to the Emperor one of his *pièces de resistance*: a naked female nude in the guise of a mythological character. In line with the Alexander-Apelles *topos*, Titian was an active promoter of his comparison to the Greek painter. In her essay, Luba Freedman suggests that the Venetian painter was well aware of the history

⁹⁷ An example is a portrait, now lost, of the Emperor sent to Charles V's chancellor Nicolas Perrenot de Granvelle, remembered by Lope de Soria in a letter dated 26 August 1533 (MANCINI 1998, n. 4, p. 135). See WETHEY 1969-71, II, pp. 176-177.

⁹⁸ See ZAPPERI 1990; ZAPPERI 2006, pp. 51-56; HALL 2011, pp. 145-151; PADUA 2012; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 228-246.

⁹⁹ WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 122-124.

¹⁰⁰ The painting was lost in the fire that destroyed the royal palace of El Pardo in 1604, like many other Titian's masterpieces. WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 200-201.

¹⁰¹ ARETINO 1957, II, pp. 9-11

¹⁰² MANCINI 1998, pp. 164-165.

¹⁰³ MANCINI 1998, p. 164.

of Apelles as depicted by Pliny, who described the portraiture and the representation of a naked female figure as the genres that were most beautifully mastered by the famous painter.¹⁰⁴ The perfect subject for the representation of the sensual female body was surely Venus, goddess of beauty and love. But the goddess could also carry political connotations due to her role as progenitress of Julius Caesar. The choice of a naked woman seemed appropriate, considering the success obtained by the *Danae* for the cardinal Alessandro Farnese in the same years.¹⁰⁵ But, in this case, the identity of the woman as Venus, is more meaningful. Titian wanted to enforce his role as Apelles recalling the most important achievements of the Greek artist and reaffirming the parallel between Charles V and Alexander.¹⁰⁶ But Titian went even further, suggesting that the sojourn in Rome was enhancing his artistic skills in such way that: «l'arte mia divenghi degna di pingere le vittorie che Nostro Signore Dio parepara a Vostra Maestà in oriente».¹⁰⁷ Proposing to paint Charles V's "victories" sounds like the perfect conclusion for a letter in which Titian uses his versatility and his improvements as the ultimate weapons to really exploit his connection to the Habsburg court.

The Emperor seemed impervious to these suggestions and renewed his requests of Titian's work just in relation to Isabella's portrait. The following Empress was presented in a black dress, with flowers on her lap and the imperial crown behind her. Unfortunately, the portrait was lost, like many others, in the fire that consumed the palace of El Pardo in 1604.¹⁰⁸ Charles V complained about the likeness of the Empress' nose in a letter to Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, his diplomatic in Venice, expressing

¹⁰⁴ FREEDMAN 2004, pp. 195-199.

¹⁰⁵ See ZAPPERI 1991, pp. 159-171.

¹⁰⁶ The famous Apelles' painting of Venus is called *Venus Anadyomene*, and Pliny writes that it was bought by Augustus. Apelles used the appearance of Campaspe, the beautiful lover of Alexander the Great as the model for his iconic painting. The parallel between Charles V and Alexander could then also be extended to Augustus, remembering that the Habsburgs traced their genealogy to Julius Cesar (FREEDMAN 2004, p. 198).

¹⁰⁷ MANCINI 1998, p. 164.

¹⁰⁸ WETHEY, 1969-75, II, pp. 200-201. The appearance of the painting is preserved by a print by Peter de Jode after a lost copy by Rubens.

his desire that Titian could correct it.¹⁰⁹ It is also possible that this solicitation for Isabella's "rhinoplasty" could be the official form that the desire of Charles V of having Titian at court took. He mentioned this problem again in 1547, exhorting Titian to reach him to the Diet of Augsburg,¹¹⁰ and in the following months, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza had to reassure the Emperor that the painter would have departed soon.¹¹¹

To sum up, the ability of Titian as portraitist and his reputation of an artist that could reproduce the *naturalissima* of the human figure, combined with the backing of Federico II Gonzaga and Francisco de los Cobos, brought the Venetian master to the attention of Charles V. When the artist had to prove himself, he cleverly manipulated German and Flemish models that were traditionally related to the Burgundian dynasty in his personal style, offering an alternative more suitable to the imperial *decorum*.¹¹² Earning the knightship and the privilege of being responsible of the official image of the Emperor, put Titian in a wider, European network. Titian spent the following fifteen years manoeuvring between all of the Habsburgs various court and Venetian commissions, maintaining a privileged but not so prolific position with the Emperor and, at the same time, trying to sell himself also as an history painter.

All of these events and mutual solicitations, triggered by Federico Gonzaga's invitation in 1529, led to a key moment for what concerns this study and the reception of Titian's art in a European *paonrama*: the two Augsburg's sojourns.

1.2 Titian and the centrality of the Brussels' court

Titian became the Habsburgs Apelles. What did this title entail, and which expectations did it raise for the artist? Many actors were involved in the direction and in the selection of Titian's subjects and compositions in the Netherlandish court of

¹⁰⁹ MANCINI 1998, n. 41, pp. 162-163. Letter dated 30 October 1545: «Solo una cosa nos paresce que se deberá aderezar un poco, en la nariz, pero, porque en lo que Ticiano ha puesto la mano no la ha de puener otro, le havemos guardar y llevaremos para que, quando passaremos por Italia, él mismo lo adereze».

¹¹⁰ MANCINI 1998, n. 44, p. 165.

¹¹¹ MANCINI 1998, n. 45-47, pp. 166-167; MARTIN 2006, p. 99.

¹¹² An interesting and perspective-shifting study on the Burgundian dynasty and its importance in the European artistic dynamics is BELOZERSKAYA 2002.

Brussels. It is important to hereby assess the importance of the court in establishing which images arrived in the Low Countries and whether they would become relevant to the Flemish artists directly involved in the courtly environment.

1.2.1 The imperial Diet at Augsburg in 1548

It is somewhat paradoxical to talk about a Habsburg's court as a fixed idea. The scattered territory included the Holy Roman Empire, from Germany to northern Italy, from the Austrian lands to the Burgundian Low Countries; the Spanish kingdom, with the south of Italy and the islands; the colonies in America, Asia and Africa. Charles V spent most of his life travelling from region to region, and his court was, *ipso facto*, as itinerant as he was.¹¹³ As anticipated, the Emperor gave Titian honour and glory, associating the artist with his eminent name and reinforcing his position as the favourite painter of the “crowned heads” outside of Venice. But, on the other hand, Charles V showed that his interest in art was merely functional, as illustrated by his commissions to the Venetian master: portraits of himself and his wife. Then, what did change? And why is it meaningful to focus on Brussels?

A precise outline of Titian's production in 1548 is difficult to reconstruct. In the first place, because the artist did not work just for the Habsburgs, but also for different families related to the court or that hosted the painter and his companions during the voyage, and this circumstance scatters the material and makes it heterogeneous.¹¹⁴ But the most problematic aspect is that the number of paintings that survived up to the present day is very scarce.¹¹⁵ However, what is relevant for this research is to analyse which paintings arrived at the court of Brussels, and how they were received and assimilated as an example of the art of Titian in the Netherlands.

¹¹³ Artists could follow the court and also become itinerants. See HAND 2011, pp. 9-17.

¹¹⁴ TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 136-137. Titian started at least two portraits for the Fuggers, including the *Charles V seated* now at the Alte Pinakothek of Munich, one or two paintings for Otto Truchsess von Waldburg, who hosted him in Füssen. The role of collaborators seems to be predominant in many of these works.

¹¹⁵ A conspicuous number of the paintings realized for the Habsburg family, especially portraits, perished in 1604 because of the fire that consumed the palace of El Pardo in Madrid, and in the fire that destroyed the Royal Alcázar of Madrid in 1734.

For a start, it is worth remembering how meagre the output had been of the fifteen years between Titian's designation as the Apelles of the Habsburgs and the convocation to Augsburg had been, both economically and in terms of artistic achievements.¹¹⁶

Charles V had granted an annual salary of 100 *scudi* to the Venetian master in 1541, which was payable in the city of Milan.¹¹⁷ This pension was a consequence of the honorific titles given to Titian by the *Diploma* of 1533 and served also as a recompense for the aforementioned *Annunciation* sent as a gift to Isabella in 1537. However, the Duchy of Milan negated the payment of the due *scudi*,¹¹⁸ forcing Titian to take some action. Moreover, the only painting commissioned directly by Charles V - as far as we know - was the posthumous effigy of Isabella, and nothing else. Therefore, it is not surprising that the invitation of the Emperor was finally accepted in January 1548, in a moment when Titian needed a chance to redefine his "absent presence" at the court and Charles V could make the best of his court portraitist.¹¹⁹

As previously mentioned, the artist was already in the middle of a strategic campaign designed to make his title of Apelles finally worthwhile. The 1st of September 1548, Titian wrote from Augsburg to Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1517-1586), Bishop of Arras and statesman of Charles V, mentioning that he had brought the two paintings from Venice to please the Emperor¹²⁰. Together with the *Venus* he had anticipated in a letter from 1545 while he was in Rome, Titian brought to Augsburg an *Ecce Homo* on slate, now at the Prado Museum in Madrid.

It is difficult to draw conclusions on the *Venus*, because it was not mentioned in the Emperor's inventories and is now lost. This painting must have been a medium

¹¹⁶ As pointed out especially by FALOMIR 2013, pp. 131-149.

¹¹⁷ For a recent discussion of Titian's pensions, see CORSATO 2016, pp. 99-109. The document referring to this annual payment is published in PUPPI 2012, pp. 104-105.

¹¹⁸ See CHABOD 1961, p. 360. The crisis of the Duchy of Milan forced the nobility to beg Charles V to reduce the donations to non-taxpayer of the Milanese territories.

¹¹⁹ For the concept of the "presenza assente" of Titian at the court, see MANCINI 2005, pp. 135-146; MANCINI 2019A, pp. 35-38.

¹²⁰ MANCINI 1998, pp. 170-172. This is the first time the two paintings are mentioned together as a gift for Charles V: «[...] e condurli in su una carretta di qui in Augusta il quadro del Cristo e de la Venere, come me fu comandato per nome sua Maestà».

size canvas, not too big for the transport, showing in all of its sensuality the female body *par excellence*, the one of the goddess of love. Many hypotheses have been formulated about the composition of this image: was it more similar to the typology of the *Sleeping Venus* in a landscape, like the Giorgione prototype,¹²¹ the *Venus and the musician*,¹²² or the *Venus at the mirror*?¹²³ Recently, Peter Humfrey suggested that the *Venus* for Charles V should have been a *Venus at the mirror*,¹²⁴ recognizable in the painting mentioned in the 1552-53 inventory of his son Philip's painting at the Pardo palace.¹²⁵ If we follow this hypothesis, then it would mean that it was the first mythological subject for Charles V that had been copied by Rubens in 1628-29 (*Figure 4*).¹²⁶ Therefore, this copy would give us a precise idea of the appearance of the painting that Titian announced to the Emperor since 1545, when he was in Rome. Humfrey observes that the *contrapposto* of the body in the Ruben's copy seems more accentuated and sculptural than the one of Titian's *Venus with the mirror* of Washington (*Figure 5*), the only surviving autograph version of this invention.¹²⁷ This, plus the architectural pedestal decorated with an antique frieze, and the style that matches with the other painting produced for Charles V - less pictorial, more plastic -, would indicate a

¹²¹ The reference is to the so-called *Sleeping Venus* in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister of Dresden, a painting attributed to Giorgio da Castelfranco (Giorgione). Most scholars agree that Titian finished the painting around 1510, especially in the landscape. This painting is considered to have been very influential, creating a subgenre at first in Venetian art and subsequently in Europe. Titian's *Venus of Urbino* at the Uffizi was part of this tradition. See HEINZE 2016.

¹²² That the *Venus* for Charles V was part of this typology was argued also by WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 63-68. For a general introduction, see also SEEBASS 2002, pp. 21-33; CHECA CREMADES 2005B, pp. 83-97; GENTILI 2012, pp. 248-256.

¹²³ The invention had been replicated many times during the late career of Titian, and in POGLAYEN-NEUWALL 1934, pp. 358-384, are listed at least 30 versions of it. This typology is discussed in WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 68-70; MADRID 2002.

¹²⁴ HUMFREY 2015, pp. 222-232.

¹²⁵ The inventory is published in KUSCHE 1991B, pp. 261-292, as: «Una venere que se esta mirando en un espejo que lo tiene Cupido».

¹²⁶ Peter Paul Rubens; *Venus with a mirror*, 1606-11 or 1628-29; 137x111 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. See WOOD J. 2010, I, pp. 190-197.

¹²⁷ Titian; *Venus with a mirror*, 1555 c.; 124,5x105,5 cm; oil on canvas; National Gallery of Art, Washington. WETHEY, 1969-75, III, pp. 200-201; MADRID 2002; HUMFREY 2007, p. 260; ROSAND 2009A, pp. 184-186; HUMFREY 2015, pp. 222-232.

complete adherence to the manner of the Roman years. What we can extrapolate from the XVIIth-century copy, is a painting that shows a precise awareness of classicism, and that could have been stimulated by the Roman antiquities, as Titian himself anticipates in his letter.¹²⁸ In fact, it is difficult not to see a link between the canvas of Titian and the well-known classical statue of the *Venus pudica*, which shows the goddess in the gesture of covering her breasts and pubic area.¹²⁹ Another element that can support Humfrey's reasoning is the presence of a *Venus at the mirror* in the collection of Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle.¹³⁰ He had been Charles V and Philip II's secretary of state, and commissioned many copies and replicas after paintings owned by the Emperor and his son, as a result of courtier admiration.¹³¹

The *Ecce Homo*¹³² (Figure 6) seems to have been truly appreciated by Charles V, who brought the painting with him when he retired to the monastery of Yuste.¹³³ This painting is meaningful for discussing the reception of the art of Titian, because of its success that generated a remarkable request of copies and

The fortune of the painting at the court of Brussels had been interpreted in different ways by the secondary literature. Hope identifies in the pietistic tone a Spanish accent that would have later on determined its success as a perfect expression of a Counter-Reformation painting;¹³⁴ Nichols prefers to connect the Prado painting to simple devotional half-length images inspired to Flemish models;¹³⁵ Mancini stresses the aspect of "humanization";¹³⁶ Harth argues that there were the material and

¹²⁸ These considerations are also in MADRID 2002, pp. 25-26.

¹²⁹ This type of Venus was attributed to the Greek sculptor Praxiteles, and it was known in many versions, becoming an important reference for artists at the beginning of the XVIth century.

¹³⁰ «169. Una femme devant un miroir tenu par l'Amour» in GAUTHIER 1901, p. 339.

¹³¹ For a discussion on imitative behaviour in the court environment, on the strategies of self-fashion to strengthen the group identity and on the concept of "status consumption", see the classic ELIAS 1983.

¹³² Titian; *Ecce homo*; 1548; 69x56; oil on slate; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 86-87; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 251-253; NYGREN 2017, pp. 36-66.

¹³³ «la resablance de Jésus-Christ sur pierre, comme il fust flagellé [...] faicte par Tisiane», in GACHARD 1855, p. 91.

¹³⁴ See HOPE 2003, p. 125.

¹³⁵ See NICHOLS 2013B, pp. 127-131.

¹³⁶ See MANCINI 2009, p. 335.

technical properties of the painting on stone that made the fortune of the *Ecce Homo* at the eyes of the Emperor.¹³⁷ To avoid going through the entire debate, we mainly need to remember that this representation of the Man of Sorrow was esteemed by the Emperor to the extent that he had ordered copies after this image and he had used it for his personal devotion.

Two *Ecce Homo* predate Charles V's, both lost: one for Federico Gonzaga, painted in 1535, and one for Pope Paul III dated 1546.¹³⁸ Apart from those, the *Ecce Homo* has its first surviving autograph antecedent in the painting with the same subject painted in 1543 for the Flemish merchant based in Venice Giovanni d'Anna (????-1567).¹³⁹ This large canvas (*Figure 7*), more an historical than a devotional painting, is antithetical to the one for Charles V. The horizontal composition is structured by the architecture, whose classical language is underlined by the nude statues in the niches and the grotesque friezes on the column and on the pillar closer to the figure of Jesus. The scene is crowded by many characters, from the Turkish man on the horse to the foreshortened guard standing at the bottom of the stairs; from the girl in white who is almost looking outside of the painting, to Ponzio Pilato represented with the physiognomy of Pietro Aretino. A narrative painting, that leads the spectator from right to left through the pointing hands of the characters, full of descriptive details. The Emperor's artwork, to the contrary, is a close-up. The image of Christ is isolated and standing on a dark and monochromatic background in order to enhance the pathos of the subject and the intimacy with the observer. It is simple, clear, almost minimalist in the way it shows the suffering of the Son of God. Another element that is necessary to point out, is the peculiar support of the work, which is painted on slate. The technical use of this support and the possible theoretical and expressive meanings are analysed in the recent study of Astrid Hart and in an article by Christopher J. Nygren.¹⁴⁰ The latter stresses that this seems to have been, as far as we know, the only painting on this support ever made by Titian, and that his motivations could have been

¹³⁷ See HARTH 2021B, pp. 95-104.

¹³⁸ WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 86-89.

¹³⁹ Titian; *Ecce homo*; 1543; 242x361 cm; oil on canvas; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 86-87; POLIGNANO 1992, pp. 7-54; HUMFREY 2007, pp. 192-193; GENTILI 2014, pp. 166-171; LUCHS 2017, pp. 33-51.

¹⁴⁰ HART 2021B, pp. 67-104; NYGREN 2017, pp. 36-66

multiple. He relates Titian's choice to the idea of *paragone* between painting and sculpture; to the painter's contact, while he was in Rome, with Sebastiano del Piombo (1485-1547), who was the leading authority in the techniques of painting on stone; and to the Byzantine icon type of the *Imago pietatis* he had seen in the Eternal City, which constituted a "prototype" for the representation of Christ.¹⁴¹ All of these hypotheses might be true at the same time, but what is relevant in this context is Titian's deliberate use of elements of his Roman experience for a painting that he intended to bring the Emperor of his own volition.

In relation to this point and for the sake of the following discussion on Titian's style for the *Ecce Homo* and the *Mater Dolorosas*, we must open a brief parenthesis. In her recent study on the commission and the technical issues connected to the *Ecce Homo* for Charles V, Astrid Harth suggested that this painting was in fact not a spontaneous gift but a direct commission of the Emperor.¹⁴² She argues that the patron had a specific taste for Titian's style and for the technique of oil on stone that Sebastiano del Piombo and others were perfecting in Rome. This suggestion is interesting but also questionable. The reasons that Harth gives to support her thesis are mainly two: the interpretation of the correspondence between Titian and the Emperor - or of his secretaries -, and the interest showed by Charles V in the production of the following *Mater Dolorosas* and copies or variations of the *Ecce Homo*, that we will elaborate later, which would show the Emperor's preference for the style and the technique employed by Titian.

Whereas the letters might be subject to interpretation, there is actually no evident proof of a commission that predates the delivery of the *Ecce Homo* and the *Venus* in 1548. Moreover, apart from the effigies of Isabella of Portugal, there is no trace that Charles V, in the 1540s, had been commissioning paintings different than portraits from Titian. In the end, the interest of the Emperor in the subject and the materiality of the *Ecce Homo* as much as his request for pairings, copies and variations, could have

¹⁴¹ This is a brief summary of the main reasons identified and analysed in the article to explain Titian's choice of this peculiar medium and technique for the Emperor's *Ecce Homo*. We use here the term "prototype" with the meaning of the true likeness of Christ. See NYGREN 2017, pp. 36-66.

¹⁴² See HARTH 2021B, pp. 95-104.

been easily the consequence of appreciating Titian's devotional painting on stone, and not the cause for commissioning it.

What is sure is that Titian did announce that he was painting the *Venus* while he was in Rome and that both the paintings that he had brought to Augsburg share profound connections to Titian's Roman sojourn. Not only in the selection of the subjects - the *Ecce Homo* already gifted to Pope Paul III, the *Venus*, a mythological female nude, close to the *Danae* painted for the Cardinal Alessandro Farnese-, but also in the attention to classical antiquities, in the plastic modelling of the bodies and in the smooth brushstrokes.

In fact, stylistically the *Ecce Homo* is modelled by a strong *chiaroscuro*, with almost invisible brushstrokes and a very statuary aspect of the figure,¹⁴³ a choice probably influenced by the specific characteristics of the support, very different from the canvas in the final effect.

These gifts - a female nude and a devotional painting - could appear out of place considering that Titian's task in Augsburg would have been mostly to portray the members of the Habsburg family, their ministers, diplomats and military commanders, and even Protestant prisoners.¹⁴⁴ Aware of the enormous amount of work, the painter travelled with some collaborators, probably his son Orazio, his far cousin Cesare Vecellio, and the German Lambert Sustris.¹⁴⁵ In the letter dated 1st September 1548, the Venetian painter lists the paintings that he had finished and left to the Fuggers, a wealthy and powerful family of banker merchants that gave residence to Charles V and his court during the Diet. The list starts with the *Ecce Homo* and the *Venus*, adding: «[...] la imperatrize sola. Et puoi quello che sono sua maestà et la emperatrize, et puoi quello grande di sua cesarea maestà a cavallo».¹⁴⁶ The paintings he refers to are the portrait of *Isabella of Portugal* now in the Prado,¹⁴⁷ the double portrait of *Charles V and Isabella of Portugal*, known just through the copy by Rubens now in the collection of the

¹⁴³ This «inspiración miguelangelesca» of the *torso* was also stressed by MANCINI 2009, p. 332; CHECA CREMADES 2013, p. 251.

¹⁴⁴ See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 133-149.

¹⁴⁵ MARTIN 2006, pp. 99-108.

¹⁴⁶ MANCINI 1998, pp. 170-172.

¹⁴⁷ WETHEY 1969-75, pp. 110-111; CLOULAS 1979, pp. 56-68; MADRID 1998, pp. 286-287; MADRID 2003, p. 208.

Duke of Alba,¹⁴⁸ and the renowned masterpiece *Charles V at Mühlberg*, also at the Prado (Figure 8).¹⁴⁹ The painter and his entourage left Augsburg the 16 of September, right after he finished the equestrian portrait of the Emperor, moving through Füssen¹⁵⁰ and then to Innsbruck.¹⁵¹

A general record of the paintings that arrived in Brussels these years - mostly three-quarter length portraits - can be retraced in the inventories of the assets that Charles V and Mary of Hungary brought along to Spain in 1556, and in the post-mortem inventory of 1558.

Titian came back to Venice in November 1548, with a supplement of 100 *scudi* to his annual pension,¹⁵² with many portraits to finish in his workshop and to be sent around Europe, and with a reaffirmed and strengthened position as the “court painter” of Charles V and his family.

In this context of patronage consolidation, the court of Brussels started to have a central role because of three key figures that headed the reception of Titian’s works: Mary of Hungary, Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle and, to a different extent, Philip II, King of Spain. Focusing on these patrons of Titian is central in the investigation of his reception in the Low Countries through the court of Brussels. Mary of Hungary and Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle were not just patron and collectors. They exemplify a changing cultural *milieu* where the visual language of classicism and Italian Renaissance were starting to find fertile ground.

¹⁴⁸ WETHEY 1969-75, pp. 194-195; WOOD J. 2010, pp. 219-225. Rubens copied most of the portraits that Titian had made for the Habsburgs, and he used them as models for his own portraits. For an introduction to this topic, see BODART 2017, pp. 66-74.

¹⁴⁹ Titian; *Charles V at Mühlberg*; 1548; 335x283 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. The equestrian portrait of Charles V boasts an extended bibliography for its role in the standardization of the so-called *state-portrait* (see BODART 2011). I will here condense its essentials and most recent contributions: PANOFKY 1969, pp. 84-87; WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 87-90; MADRID 1998, pp. 283-285; CHECA CREMADES 2001; MADRID 2001; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 253-268; OLIVATO 2017, pp. 281-288.

¹⁵⁰ MANCINI 1998, pp. 173-174.

¹⁵¹ MANCINI 1998, p. 179.

¹⁵² See CORSATO 2016, pp. 99-102. Despite the personal intervention of the Emperor with Ferrante Gonzaga, Governor of Milan, he had to wait until 1559 to be finally paid.

In the following paragraphs we will attempt to answer these questions: what were the cultural and artistic tendencies of these patrons? How did Titian's art fit in the pattern of their expectations? And in which ways did the Habsburgs selections direct the reception of Titian in the Netherlands?

1.2.2 Mary of Hungary and the power of her artistic judgement at the court of Brussels

Widow of King Louis II of Hungary and Bohemia, Mary of Hungary (1505-1558) had been the Regent of her husband's lands in the name of King Ferdinand I, until her elder brother, Charles V, made her Governor of the Netherlands in 1531, a task that she held until 1555, when she resigned.¹⁵³ During these years, the Emperor designated Brussels as the headquarters of the institutions of the central government of the Low Countries, and the court became more and more influential, both from a political and from an artistic perspective.

As stated before, the court of Charles V was mostly itinerant. The Emperor was travelling with different members of the court, moving from city to city and from palace to palace. Titian had mostly met him in different cities, typically surrounded by courtiers and hosted by prestigious families and princes. In fact, they met probably in Parma in 1529, in Bologna in 1532, in Asti in 1536, briefly in Milan in 1541, in Busseto in 1543 and finally in Augsburg in 1548 and 1550-51.¹⁵⁴ However, in the end, most of the art pieces were sent to the Netherlands where they were meant to be displayed.¹⁵⁵ There the court was stable, lively, and artistically stimulating.

The famous *Charles V at Mühlberg* (Figure 8), a painting that is considered of seminal importance for the typology of the *equestrian-portrait*, was in Brussels, among the

¹⁵³ The fascinating figure of Mary of Hungary as Governor, collector and for her role in introducing the language of Italian Renaissance, still needs to be thoroughly studied. For an introduction, see 'SHERTEGENBOSCH 1993; TISCHER 1994; FEDERINOV AND DOCQUIER 2008; KERKHOFF 2008.

¹⁵⁴ See HOPE 1988, p. 49.

¹⁵⁵ As evidenced by the inventories drafted in Brussels in 1556.

possessions of Mary of Hungary listed in 1556.¹⁵⁶ The sister of the Emperor owned at least twenty portraits by Titian, most of them started during his sojourn in 1548, and sent or personally delivered in the following years. As is well summarized in Wetthey's catalogue,¹⁵⁷ in *Le botteghe di Tiziano*¹⁵⁸ and in *Tiziano y las cortes del Renacimiento*,¹⁵⁹ the inventory includes portraits of royals and nobles at service of the Habsburgs. The names that appear after the equestrian portrait, in order, are: *Philip II* (lost), likely a replica of the painting now at the Prado; the same *Mary of Hungary* (lost); *Christina duchess of Milan and of Lorraine* (lost); *Marie of Baden-Sponheim duchess of Bavaria* (lost); *Johann Friedrich of Saxony in armour* and without armour, when he was prisoner;¹⁶⁰ *Maurice duke of Saxony armed* (lost); *Dorothea countess Palatine* sister of the duchess of Lorraine (lost); *Emperor Ferdinand I in armour* (lost); *Anna of Austria duchess of Bavaria* and daughter of Ferdinand I (lost); *Archduke Maximilian II of Bohemia*, son of Ferdinand I (lost); *Philibert-Manuel Duke of Savoy* (lost); *Charles V in armour with a baton* (lost); *Archduke Ferdinand II*, son of Ferdinand I (lost); *Ferdinando Álvarez of Toledo the duke of Alba*, in armour (lost); four daughters of the Emperor Ferdinand I (lost).

Apart from the portraits, Mary of Hungary was also the most significant patron of Titian's mythological paintings in the Low Countries, the so-called *Condemned*, or *Furiae*, which will be discussed later. This series of paintings was part of an ambitious artistic project, which included statues, frescoes and tapestries, that represented the expression and the establishment of the political aims of the imperial power. The interest of Mary of Hungary in mythological subjects was not shared by Charles V, who found the religious *Ecce Homo* more appealing than the *Venus*. For these reasons, her role in the education of Charles V's heir to the crown of Spain, Philip II, appears fundamental to

¹⁵⁶ «Yten un rretrato grande del Emperador don Carlos nuestro señor, à cavallo, armado con un morrion en la cabeça y descubierto el rostro. Esta de la suerte que yba contra los rrebeldes, quando prendio al duque de Sajonya. La qual esta en un lienço grande metido en una caxa larga rredonda. Hecho el dicho rretrato por Tiçiano». CHECA CREMADES 2010, III, p. 2913.

¹⁵⁷ WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 202-203.

¹⁵⁸ TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 139-142.

¹⁵⁹ CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 283-288.

¹⁶⁰ The portraits of Johann Friedrich of Saxony survived to the present day. The one with the armour (1548) is preserved at the Museo Nacional del Prado; the one without the armour (1550-51) is currently at the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna.

explain his regard to Italian classicism and his patronage of Titian's mythological artworks.¹⁶¹

However, Mary of Hungary's patronage of Titian, the Apelles of the Emperor with a great reputation among the Italian courts and the European rulers, needs to be more thoroughly contextualized. For that purpose, it is worthwhile to analyse the cultural background of the Governor of the Low Countries, her main examples concerning artistic collections, her choices regarding the visual language in the court and her political purposes.

1.2.2.1 The example of Margaret of Austria: portraits, politics and the Italian Renaissance

Like her brothers and sisters, Mary of Hungary was raised and educated in Mechelen,¹⁶² at the court of their aunt Margaret of Austria (1480-1530). From 1506 to 1515, Margaret had been the Regent of the Habsburg Low Countries and guardian of her nephew Charles V at the behest of her father, the Emperor Maximilian I. After that, she became Governor of the territories from 1519 to her death in 1530, ruling over a flourishing court. The Regent and Governor of the Netherlands became one of the most influential collectors in the Low Countries. She gathered French, German, Italian, Spanish and Netherlandish paintings, sculptures, medals, and a huge assortment of books and tapestries.¹⁶³ Her taste in art and dedication to commissions with strong political ends was comparable to that of her father's Maximilian I.¹⁶⁴ In fact, Margaret was not only an example of a refined and discerning collector but she developed an idea of art patronage that was functional to achieve dynastic profits, especially thorough portraiture. As Dagmar Eichberger and Lisa Beaven reconstructed,

¹⁶¹ The role of Mary of Hungary in the education of Philip II had been discussed, among others, in MANCINI 2009, pp. 245-274; GENTILI 2012, pp. 240-245; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 282-297.

¹⁶² Mary of Hungary was born in Brussels in 1505 and was educated in Mechelen and Buda until 1514. Then she was sent to Vienna, where she started having her first independent household. See RÉTHELYI 2010, pp. 70-76.

¹⁶³ For Margaret of Austria as patron of arts, see EICHBERGER-BEAVEN 1995, pp. 225-248; EICHBERGER 1996, pp. 259-279; EICHBERGER 2012, pp. 571-584; EICHBERGER 2013, pp. 71-80.

¹⁶⁴ They were both interested in genealogies, dynastic portraiture, printing enterprises aiming to consolidate their power or strengthen alliances. EICHBERGER 2012, pp. 578-583.

Margaret of Austria owned almost one hundred portraits displayed in different rooms of the palace of Mechelen, which formed an impressive “gallery of portraits” which would become a model for the future development of this custom among the crowned heads of Europe.¹⁶⁵

Another aspect of Margaret’s patronage was her interest in the art of Italian Renaissance, a trend that was starting to grow among the members of the Habsburg family. It is noteworthy that in the different Habsburg courts they were exploring the possibilities offered by this language, mostly in shaping a powerful and Roman imperial political message.¹⁶⁶

Many Italians were involved in Margaret’s court, starting from the Venetian painter Jacopo de’ Barbari (1450-1516) to the Florentine sculptor Pietro Torrigiani (1472-1528), to the presence at the palace of Mechelen of an entire “microcosm” of Italian merchants and intellectuals.¹⁶⁷ Even her court painter Bernard van Orley (c. 1488-1541), while not having been to Italy himself, studied the art of Raphael and showed a deep knowledge of Italian paintings and tapestries.¹⁶⁸

Mary of Hungary modelled many of her interests and behaviours on her aunt’s, especially for what concerns the relevance and the use of art in her political means, the predominance of portraits and the Italianate style.¹⁶⁹

She was not only the “successor” of Margaret as Governor of the Habsburg’s Netherlands, but she also inherited most of the art collection of Mechelen,¹⁷⁰ and she continued making use of Bernard van Orley and Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen (c. 1500-1559), her aunt’s court painters, as her own, after she installed herself in the palace of

¹⁶⁵ EICHBERGER-BEAVEN 1995, p. 226.

¹⁶⁶ See DANDELET 2014, pp. 18-73.

¹⁶⁷ On the Italian *milieu* at the court, see DUVERGER 1980, pp. 127-142; EICHBERGER 2002, pp. 279-323; VERATELLI 2012, pp. 61-73.

¹⁶⁸ Bernard van Orley studied Raphael’s cartoons in Brussels, where they had been sent to woven, between 1516 and 1520. The artist used often motives from Raphael’s designs, especially when he decided to dedicate himself just to cartoons for tapestries and projects for stained glasses. DACOS 1987, I, pp. 611-623.

¹⁶⁹ A good summary of the origin of the Habsburg interest in art and the development of its specific features is CHECA CREMADES 2017, pp. 21-24.

¹⁷⁰ EICHBERGER 2010, pp. 2351-2363. The inventory of Margaret of Austria was also published in MICHELANT 1870.

Coudenberg, the Burgundian ducal palace of Brussels. Both painters had been employed as portraitists by Margaret of Austria¹⁷¹ and, in 1530, Jan Vermeyen was specifically sent to Augsburg and Innsbruck to portray her nephew Ferdinand I and other family members.¹⁷² The two Governors of the Netherlands also shared an interest in portrait sculptures, especially in the shape of busts. Portrait busts, as Eichberger points out, had been introduced in the North by Italian artists like Pietro Torrigiani who worked for Margaret of Austria between 1509-10.¹⁷³ She commissioned her own portrait and the one of her second husband Philibert of Savoy, both in a marble and in a wood version, to her court artist Conrad Meit (1480-1551).¹⁷⁴ Her influence manifested itself not just on her niece, but also on her nephew Charles V. Both Mary and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire commissioned and owned a large number of portrait sculptures, and both of them favoured Leone Leoni as their portraitist.¹⁷⁵

The attention that Mary of Hungary paid to Italian art is comparable to, if not even more remarkable than Margaret's, and for sure it was superior to that of her brother Charles V, who showed interest in art just and only when it could be used for political and religious purposes.

1.2.2.2 Italian classicism

It is obvious that Margaret's inclinations towards the innovations of the Italian classicism was part (both consequence and to an extent cause) of the wider phenomenon of the reception of classical antiquity and Italian Renaissance in the Low Countries. This topic has been studied especially in relation to Netherlandish artists' journey to Rome and their role in introducing the Greek-Roman model and the pictorial tradition of Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) and Raffaello Sanzio, from

¹⁷¹ EICHBERGER-BEAVEN 1995, p. 228. For instance, Bernard van Orley was responsible for the official representation of Margaret of Austria and painted at least twelve versions of it.

¹⁷² HORN 1989, I, pp. 7-9.

¹⁷³ EICHBERGER 1996, p. 266.

¹⁷⁴ For Margaret of Austria portrait busts, see BURK 2005, pp. 277-284.

¹⁷⁵ SEE S'HERTEGENBOSCH 1993, pp. 287-289, 344-346; ESTELLA MARCOS 2000, pp. 283-321; HELMSTUTLER DI DIO 2011, pp. 1-69, *passim*; CUPPERI 2014, pp. 173-199.

now on referred to as Raphael (1483-1520), to the North.¹⁷⁶ This narrative usually starts with Jan Gossaert, alias Mabuse (c. 1472-1532), as the first painter who undertook the trip to the Eternal City in 1508 and introduced the classicism in his visual language.¹⁷⁷ The second artist who is mentioned in this respect is Gossaert's pupil Jan van Scorel (1495-1562), who spent the years from 1522 to 1524 in Rome. He was characterized by the Flemish biographer of Northern painters Karel van Mander (1548-1606) as the first Netherlandish artist who considered the trip to Italy as fundamental for the artist's education.¹⁷⁸ In fact, his workshop in Utrecht became a point of reference for the assimilation of the antiquity.¹⁷⁹ The same would be the case with Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574), a painter from Haarlem and pupil of Jan van Scorel, who had been travelling to Rome in 1534 and filling sketchbooks and albums with drawings after the antique, including detailed statues and topographical views.¹⁸⁰ Another of these travellers often cited by the literature is the painter, draughtsman and architect Lambert Lombard (1505/06-1566), who accompanied the English Cardinal Reginald Pole on a journey to Rome in 1537. When Lombard came back to Liège, he formed in his workshop the most important artists of the following generation, like Frans Floris (1517-1570) and Willem Key (c. 1515-1568).¹⁸¹ These painters and their pupils constitute the "hard core" of the so-called Romanists,¹⁸² and they are the litmus test of a wider cultural transformation: the introduction of aspects of classicism in the already flourishing Netherlandish visual tradition.

Regarding Mary of Hungary's fascination for the Italian *all'antica* idiom, much attention had been given to her literary and architectural enterprises. Around the 1540s

¹⁷⁶ On this topic, in general, see BRUSSELS-ROME 1995; VENICE 1999; DACOS 1999; DACOS 2001; DACOS 2012. A brief summary can be found in HAARLEM-LONDON 2015, pp. 34-41, with further bibliography.

¹⁷⁷ Mabuse worked mostly for Philip of Burgundy (1464-1532), the illegitimate son of Philip the Good (1396-1467), but he also received some commissions from Margaret of Austria. See BASS M. 2016.

¹⁷⁸ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, pp. 194-205.

¹⁷⁹ See DACOS 1999, pp. 19-20; DACOS 2001, pp. 23-34.

¹⁸⁰ The Italian drawings of the artist were discussed in BARTSCH-SEILER 2012.

¹⁸¹ See mainly DENHAENE 1990 and the recent BRUSSELS 2006.

¹⁸² The name was coined by Eugène Fromentin in his book *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* (1876), discussed in DACOS 2012, pp. 219-225.

and the 1550s, she played a leading role in changing the architectural idiom in the Netherlands and she became an example of the culture of collecting antiquities and copies from the antique in the North.

Instances of her architectural patronage are the construction of the long gallery to expand the Coudenberg palace, the construction of the palace of Binche and the hunting pavilion of Mariemont.¹⁸³ The Governor of the Low Countries found the perfect interpreter of her ambitions in the artist Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550), and in the sculptor and architect Jacques de Broeucq (c. 1505-c. 1584). The first had travelled to Constantinople via Italy and he was referred to as «expert in the antique in the court accounts of 1538-40».¹⁸⁴ Because of his education and theoretical interests, he published an excerpt from Vitruvius entitled *Die Inventie der colommen*, and he translated the *Book IV* of Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554).¹⁸⁵ The book was published in French (1542) with a dedication to Mary of Hungary, which praised her as a lover of «choses antiques et authentiques».¹⁸⁶ The architect Jacques de Broeucq was supposed to have travelled to Italy as well. At least, he was exceptionally well informed about the formal innovations developed in Rome and at the court of Fontainebleau.¹⁸⁷

It is important, at this point, to briefly point out the significance of the project of Fontainebleau, that was supposed to become the “nuova Roma”.¹⁸⁸ The patronage of the King of France Francis I (1494-1547) in the design and decoration of the palace,

¹⁸³ For a general introduction of Mary of Hungary’s architectural and sculptural enterprises and their impact on the Low Countries, see CUPPERI 2004A, pp. 98-116, 2004b, pp. 159-176; JONGE 2005A, pp. 45-57; JONGE 2008, pp. 124-139.

¹⁸⁴ JONGE 2009, p. 115.

¹⁸⁵ The *Inventie* was published in Antwerp in 1539 and became an important theoretical reference for Flemish architects, such as Serlio’s. For the first, see HOFFERHAUS 1988, pp. 443-452; JONGE 2004, pp. 480-481. For the latter, see the recent HERINGUEZ 2013, pp. 45-52.

¹⁸⁶ JONGE 2008, p. 124.

¹⁸⁷ For the relation with Fontainebleau, see JONGE 1998, pp. 161-187. Du Broeucq’s role as court painter for Mary of Hungary was discussed in JONGE 2005B, pp. 1-15.

¹⁸⁸ VASARI 1568, II, p. 799. The writer describes the court of Fontainebleau in the lives of Rosso Fiorentino and Francesco Primaticcio. Vasari remembers the bronze statues that were realized under the supervision of Primaticcio, who went personally to Rome to obtain the moulds from ancient sculptures like the *Laocoonte*. In that passage, the writer asserts that the king of France was transforming that place *almost* into a new Rome.

and the synthesis of the current Italian artistic language developed by the so-called “school of Fontainebleau”, are vast and complex topics that we cannot thoroughly analyse. In this context it is relevant to underline two aspects of this ambitious project. On one hand, the primary role in Fontainebleau of classicism and Central-Italian art, imported by Rosso Fiorentino in 1530 and Francesco Primaticcio in 1532. These painters were creating a new artistic language based on that of Michelangelo, Raphael, Giulio Romano and Parmigianino.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, it is important to point out that Fontainebleau became a landmark for Northern courts, especially for that of Mary of Hungary’s.¹⁹⁰

For the Governor of the Netherlands the connection to the French court was not only a political matter, but also familial, since her sister Eleanor of Austria (1498-1558) was the wife of Francis I. Therefore, it doesn’t come as a surprise that artists travelled between the two courts. A telling example that shows the artistic dialogue among these architectural and decorative projects, and also Mary’s interest in copies after the antique is the event that sees Leone Leoni travelling to Fontainebleau in 1549.¹⁹¹ Mary of Hungary had commissioned him to select for Binche some moulds that Francesco Primaticcio had cast in Rome around 1540. The copies in *stucco* of the Vatican *Ariadne* and *Nile* were afterwards executed by the Italian sculptor Luca Lancia (active 1536-1553) between 1550 and 1553, who was sent by Primaticcio to Binche to take care of the project.¹⁹²

The castle of Binche, unfortunately destroyed by the French army in 1554,¹⁹³ presented all the features discussed above. It is possible reconstruct the original

¹⁸⁹ See the fundamental ZERNER 1996.

¹⁹⁰ JONGE 2008, pp. 135-139.

¹⁹¹ See BOUCHER 1981; CUPPERI 2004B, pp. 159-176; CUPPERI 2010, pp. 81-98, with further bibliography.

¹⁹² The role of Luca Lancia as delegate from Primaticcio and his identity as helper of Jacopo Sansovino on the first marble tribune and its bronze reliefs for S. Marco in 1536-7 was reconstructed by CUPPERI 2004b, pp. 160-162.

¹⁹³ For a historical and political explanation, see FEDERINOV 2008, pp. 80-89.

appearance from the accounts of visitors¹⁹⁴ and in the surviving drawing of the *grande salle*¹⁹⁵ (Figure 9) of the palace: the architectural language that combined Italian forms with the Central-Italian idiom mediated by Fontainebleau, the attention to the antique embodied by the collection both of originals and copies.¹⁹⁶ This drawing is also a precious document for reconstructing the interior pictorial decoration, as we will see later.

To grasp a comprehensive idea of Mary of Hungary's preferences in paintings, is a more complex matter. She acquired the famous *Descent from the Cross* by Rogier van der Weyden (1399-1464) for the chapel of Binche,¹⁹⁷ she admired the *Arnolfini portrait* by Jan van Eyck (active 1422-1441), a picture she inherited from her aunt, and she wanted to buy the *Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele*, from the same artist.¹⁹⁸ Her proven interest in the Flemish old masters was suitable for the Burgundian and local tradition, but it did not limit and direct her subsequent collecting habits.¹⁹⁹

As previously mentioned regarding Margaret of Austria, the Habsburg rulers were expanding their artistic preference for the Flemish-Brabantian tradition to the Graeco-Roman classicism, in order to use the most updated visual language of political power and propaganda. The nomination of her court painters appears to be consistent with this inclination and with her architectural efforts. First, she employed Bernard van

¹⁹⁴ Many visitors left accounts of the celebrations that happened in Binche in 1549, for the visit of Philip II. The most important are by Jean de Vandenesse (published by Louis-Prosper Gachard in 1874), Juan Cristóbal Calvete de Estrella (1552), Vicente Álvarez (1551), Hieronymo Caballinas (1549). See JONGE 1998, pp. 161-162.

¹⁹⁵ The drawing is preserved in the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) in Brussels: *The great hall of the castle of Binche*, 1549; 395x374 mm; pen and brown ink, grey-brown wash, watercolour, bodycolor and gold paint; Royal library of Belgium (KBR); Brussels. PUT 1965; BOOGERT in S'HERTEGENBOSCH 1993, pp. 310-311; MADRID 1998-9, pp. 338-350.

¹⁹⁶ In the *grande salle* were displayed Roman busts portraying Emperor Cesar and Emperor Adrian as part of the iconographic program. Buying original ancient statues was a difficult and expensive deal, and Mary of Hungary soon decided to commission her artists copies instead, as discussed above.

¹⁹⁷ The painting had been originally displayed in the Chapel of Our Lady Outside the Walls at Leuven, and when Mary bought it she also commissioned a copy substitute the original. BOOGERT in S'HERTEGENBOSCH 1993, pp. 285-286; SUYKERBUYK 2014, pp. 10-12.

¹⁹⁸ PARMENTIER 1926, pp. 388-9.

¹⁹⁹ For the interest of Mary of Hungary in Flemish old masters, see DUVERGER 1972, pp. 719-720; BOOGERT 1993 in S'HERTEGENBOSCH, pp. 285-286.

Orley, her aunt's painter that combined the manners of Flemish old masters with models from Raphael and the antique, and when he died in 1541, his pupil Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592) became, between 1543 and 1546, the new official court painter.²⁰⁰

Michiel Coxcie became one of Mary's favourite artists, and she entrusted him with nothing less than the pictorial decoration of Binche, both the frescoes and some important paintings joining Titian's mythological series. It is not coincidental that this artist is acknowledged by scholars as a key figure of the reception of classical antiquity in the Low Countries.²⁰¹ In fact, Coxcie had had first-hand contact with antiquities during the long years he had spent in Rome, from about 1527-1530 to about 1539.²⁰² A long stay, during which he worked for important members of the Curia²⁰³ and entered in the local guild of Saint Luke.²⁰⁴ It was probably because of this trip that he was chosen as court artist, a role that he shared with Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Jacques de Broeucq, both specialists in the idiom of Italian classicism.

To sum up, the court of Mary of Hungary was characterised by the formal use of classical architecture, sometimes even quoting archaeological elements - like the door in the garden of Binche that recalled the *Porta Maggiore* in Rome -;²⁰⁵ by the collection of antique busts and statues, or the copies after original antiquities that were not available on the market; by the selection of Netherlandish painters that were following

²⁰⁰ JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 32. In 1546 he was referred as «Master Michiel, painter to His Royal Majesty», but it is not clear if he was Charles V's or Mary of Hungary's.

²⁰¹ Coxcie was not the first Netherlandish artist who stayed to Rome and started introducing a classicizing language in his paintings. For the Netherlandish painters in Rome, see DACOS 1964; DACOS 1999; Dacos 2001; DACOS 2012.

²⁰² About the stay in Italy, see DACOS 1964, pp. 24-30; LEUSCHNER in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 50-63; JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 26-29.

²⁰³ The most important was the Netherlandish Cardinal Willem van Enckevoirt (1464-1534), who commissioned Coxcie the frescoes in the church of Santa Maria dell'Anima. It is telling that Coxcie had to be trained in Italy to learn the frescoes technique, a technique that was not used in the Low Countries and that he would have imported when he returned to Brussels, as discussed in LEUSCHNER in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 50-63. About the Cardinal van Enckevoirt, see GNANN 2010A, pp. 149-160.

²⁰⁴ JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK in LEUVEN 2013-2014b, pp. 26-29.

²⁰⁵ The door was represented in the *Epigrammata antiquae urbis* by Jacopo Mazzocchi (1521) and in other treatises of classical architecture present in the library of Mary of Hungary. See JONGE 2008, pp. 133-134.

the style of the Romanists; and by the commissions of busts and medals from Italian artists like Leone Leoni who was embracing the Tuscan and Roman tradition. These are all specific aspects that we should bear in mind when considering Titian's production for the Habsburg patrons.

1.2.3 Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle: statesman and art advisor

The son of Nicolas Perrenot de Granvelle (1484–1550), who had been chancellor of the empire under Charles V,²⁰⁶ Antoine took benefits from the privileged position and the career of his father, becoming a key figure in the politics of Charles V and Philip II²⁰⁷. The Granvelle family can be considered one of the most appreciated and well rewarded by the Spanish Habsburgs, a family that in the person of Nicolas and Antoine was practically ruling over a region of the Low Countries, namely the French-Comté.

Like Mary of Hungary, Antoine gives the image of a knowledgeable collector who was particularly attentive to the language of classicism and the latest productions of the Italian Renaissance. In fact, he was involved in many of the communications related to Charles V and Mary of Hungary's commissions to Titian, and he was also the perfect intermediary for economical-related matters, such as the artist's complaints about his pension.²⁰⁸ Granvelle was also a patron of Titian, since the latter's sojourn in Augsburg in 1548. Three portraits of his family were very likely painted around that year: *Nicolas Perrenot de Granvelle*,²⁰⁹ now at the Musée du Temps of Besançon, the lost

²⁰⁶ On Nicolas Perrenot de Granvelle and his political role, see in particular DOOLEY 1973; ANTONY 2006.

²⁰⁷ Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle received much attention by the scholars not only because of his preeminent position in the European political panorama, but also in relation to his art and book collection. For the political aspect, see especially DURME 1957; JONNEKIN 1989; DURME 2000 pp. 11-82; LEGNANI 2013; BESANÇON 2017.

²⁰⁸ For the epistolary exchange between Granvelle and Titian, see GREPPI-FERRARINO 1977, pp. 15-42; D'AMICO 1996 pp. 352-357; MANCINI 1998, *passim*.

²⁰⁹ WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 176-177.

Nicole Bonvalot,²¹⁰ wife of the Bishop, and *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle*,²¹¹ preserved in Kansas City (*Figure 10*). The three-quarter length of the portrait, the monochrome background and the relaxed position of the body, inevitably showing a precious book in his left hand, all this combined with a diffused light, are characteristic of the typology of portraits that Titian was producing for the Habsburgs and their court. In the following years, the Bishop of Arras commissioned other works to the Venetian artist, mostly replicas after paintings owned by the Emperor and the portrait of the Prince Philip II.²¹²

Antoine's education was very important both for his career and his artistic interests, since he started his acquaintance with Italy in the 1530s, when he was studying law in the university of Padua.²¹³ There, he got connected with eminent humanists like Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), literary figures like Agostino Ricchi (1512-1564), protégé of Pietro Aretino,²¹⁴ and artists like Leone Leoni.²¹⁵ He finished his studies in theology at the university of Leuven and became Bishop of Arras in 1540, when he was barely twenty-two years old. His choice to live in Brussels, very close to the epicentre of the political life, instead of residing in the episcopal city, suggests an interest in succeeding the position of his father as one of the most trustworthy men of Charles V. A strategy that certainly worked, considering all of the diplomatic offices and enterprises he undertook during his life. Antoine de Granvelle attended different imperial diets, participated to the preparations of the Council of Trent on behalf of the

²¹⁰ WETHEY 1969-75, II, p. 199.

²¹¹ Titian; *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle*; 1548; 111.3 x 88.27 cm; oil on canvas; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; Kansas City. See WETHEY 1969-75, II, p. 126; HOPE 1980, pp. 113-114; CAMPBELL L. 1990, pp. 124, 236, 238-239; CURIE 1996, pp. 162-166; MADRID 1998, pp. 328-329; VENICE 1999, pp. 548-549; WOODALL 2007, pp. 137-138, 148, 157, 159-160, 170, 172.

²¹² In 1549 Granvelle asked Titian a copy after his portrait of Prince Philip II, painted in Milan. Letter is published in GREPPI-FERRARINO 1977, pp. 27-29.

²¹³ See ANTONY 1984, pp. 37-57; ANTONY 1986, pp. 79-121.

²¹⁴ An extended discussion about Antoine Granvelle and his epistolary relation with Italian intellectuals can be found in D'AMICO 1996, pp. 191-224. It was probably Agostino Ricchi who suggested Pietro Aretino to contact Granvelle in order to get the favours of the Emperor. The communications between the two are important both for the social climb of the writer and for the promotion of Titian's interests among the Habsburgs.

²¹⁵ DURME 1949, pp. 653-678; HELMSTUTLER DI DIO 2011, pp. 5, 46-48.

Emperor, and, in the end, he obtained the title of Chancellor at the imperial court of Charles V. After the abdication of the Holy Roman Emperor, he continued his career as minister at the service of Philip II, becoming his representant in the Netherlands.

In parallel to his political achievements, Antoine played a fundamental part in advising the rulers about art and artists.²¹⁶

As previously mentioned while discussing the palace of Binche, different elements of a new classicism, were introduced during this period in the Netherlands, especially at the court of Brussels in relation to the architect Jacques de Broeucq and the artist Pieter Coecke van Aelst.²¹⁷ The palace that Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle decided to build in Brussels, not far from the Habsburg's castle of Coudenberg, was part of this same classicist turn. Plus, indeed, it was one of the first architectural examples of the Roman Renaissance in the Low Countries. This can be demonstrated in the façade, which was based on that of Palazzo Farnese in Rome, designed by Antonio da Sangallo (1484-1546) and completed by Michelangelo.²¹⁸ From 1551, Granvelle's palace in Brussels was also provided with an inner court and a "*galerie*" to show his collection of antiquities and artworks.²¹⁹ In relation to this, Walter Cupperi stresses the role of the Bishop of Arras as a protagonist of the process that imported the innovations of the Italian Renaissance, which has often been neglected in favour of the activities in this field by Mary of Hungary and Francis I.²²⁰

Granvelle's attention to copies and moulds from antique sculptures was even prior to the aforementioned deal between the Governor of Low Countries and Primaticcio. In fact, in 1541, he had received from Marco Mantova Benavides (1486-1582), humanist who taught law at the university of Padova, "*dodici ritratti di Cesari imitate*

²¹⁶ The rulers are of course Charles V and Philip II, but Granvelle, as we will discuss later, can be considered also an important advisor of Mary of Hungary, involved in many of her artistic choices.

²¹⁷ It is important to mention the Imperial door (1542), the new fortified gate of Antwerp, designed by the imperial engineer Donato de' Boni Pellizuoli from Bergamo, that is considered the first "Italian" architecture in the Low Countries, as discussed in JONGE 1994, pp. 363-383; JONGE 2000, n. 57.

²¹⁸ As argued by Krista De Jonge in her 2000 essay (p. 368): «Le vocabulaire architectural peut en effet être qualifié de romain, voire même de farnésien par sa fidélité au modèle principal, le palais Farnèse de Rome». About the Granvelle palace in Brussels, see: HOUDMONT 1999, pp. 7-50; JONGE 2000, pp. 341-387.

²¹⁹ See WOUK 2015-16, p. 34, with further bibliography.

²²⁰ CUPPERI 2016, pp. 49-80.

dall'antico".²²¹ After that episode, Granvelle ordered, especially from Primaticcio, different moulds²²² and free copies not only from ancient statues, but also from the so-called "gran cavallo" by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519).²²³ It is possible that these acquisitions made by the Bishop of Arras influenced Mary of Hungary's desire of having the moulds by Primaticcio to decorate her own palaces.

This aspect of Granvelle's collecting effort had been often overshadowed by his patronage of court artists like Titian, Antonis Mor and Leone Leoni, but it provides important evidence for a specific *cultural* milieu that was developing in the Netherlands around the middle of the XVIth century. Another field where Granvelle showed his prominent interest in the Roman innovations, was the patronage of printmaking.

1.2.3.1 Roman ruins, Michelangelo, Raphael: travelling North through prints and drawings

In the XVIth century, prints were among the most versatile *media* for disseminating visual innovations: affordable, easy to transport and to send, often used to reproduce many copies of originals that were renowned but not easily accessible. And, when prints were not available, this function was provided by drawings after these original masterpieces.

Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, as discussed before, was an eager collector of every art form, including prints and drawings. However, a peculiar aspect of his patronage was the promotion both of printmaking and print publishing, exemplified by his support of Hieronymus Cock (1510-1570) and his publishing house, *Aux Quatre Vents*.²²⁴ We might look into some of his most important commissions, in order to substantiate that the Bishop of Arras was mainly interested in Roman classicism and

²²¹ CUPPERI 2016, p. 60.

²²² In the letters are mentioned moulds from Antinoo del Belvedere, Apollo del Belvedere, Venere pudica del Belvedere, Bacco di Aspra-Guisa.

²²³ CUPPERI 2016, p. 62.

²²⁴ As discussed in WOUK 2015-16, pp. 31-61. In this essay, Wouk argues that Granvelle's support of the *Aux Quatre Vents* was essential for the rise of a new mode of printmaking in the North, producing: «sophisticated etchings and engravings reinterpreting some of the most intellectually and spiritually sacred objects of his time, thereby fostering an image of his knowledge and power in print.» (p. 60).

Central-Italian art, and that his role in spreading this visual culture in the North was as relevant as that of the Habsburgs.

First of all, we should consider his portraits engraved by the Liègeois Lambert Suavius (1510-1567) in 1554²²⁵ and 1556,²²⁶ effigies which clearly convey the image of himself that Granvelle wanted to be associated to.²²⁷ The first of these (*Figure 11*), Suavius has set the effigy of the Bishop in front of a vault which reminds of Raphael's *School of Athens* (1509-11) at the Vatican Museums, and is completed by an inscription that defines him as "Maecenas", a classical reminder identifying him as a wealthy patron who was connected with the imperial power. The two columns might allude to the columns of Hercules in the Habsburg *impresa*,²²⁸ and the architectural elements like the statues, the frieze and the *metope*, are a clear sign of his antiquarian connoisseurship.²²⁹ In the print of 1556 (*Figure 12*), the architecture is simplified, it appears less antiquarian and more similar to a Renaissance *villa*, and the main focus is the luxurious book that the Bishop is holding in his hand, presenting a Venetian binding from the publisher Aldo Manuzio (1449/52-1515).²³⁰ Antiquarian, humanist, patron of the arts, conscious of the power of the print: this was the image that Granvelle was promoting through these portraits, using the appropriate language of Italian classicism.

Secondly, most of the eight prints series that *Aux Quatre Vents* dedicated to Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle between 1551 and 1562²³¹ had as their subject ancient Roman ruins and Italian Renaissance art. The ones representing ruins were the *Praecipua aliquot Romanae antiquitatis ruinarum monimenta* in 1551; the *Baths of Diocletian* in 1558, two sets of architectural views after Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1609), in

²²⁵ Lambert Suavius; *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle*; 1554; 33,7x23,8 cm; engraving; The British Museum; London.

²²⁶ Lambert Suavius; *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle*; 1556; 40,6x28,7 cm; engraving; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

²²⁷ The portraits of Granvelle in different media had been estimated around 600 by SMOLDEREN 2000, pp. 293-320. About the portraits, see CURIE 1996, pp. 159-174; WOUK 2015-16, pp. 34-37; MUCCIARELLI-RÉGNIER in BESANÇON 2017-2018, pp. 55-67.

²²⁸ See ROSENTHAL 1971, pp. 204-228.

²²⁹ HOLLSTEIN 1980, vol. 28, p. 187.

²³⁰ On the collection of Italian books owned by Granvelle, see CHATELAIN 1996, pp. 79-94. The print is published in HOLLSTEIN 1980, vol. 28, p. 188.

²³¹ See WOUK 2015-16, p. 31 for further bibliography about the single prints.

1560 and 1562; whereas the print from Italian Renaissance models was by Giorgio Ghisi (1520-1582), namely the *Disputa* after Raphael, published in 1552. The remaining series were a map of the Duchy of Milan and prints after Lambert Lombard's *Last supper* (1551) and after Frans Floris' *Brazen serpent* (1555), both Flemish artists who travelled to Italy and imported the language of classicism in the Low Countries.

A very similar preference is recognisable in the epistolary exchange occurred around 1547 between Granvelle and Giovanni Battista Scultori (1503-1575), an engraver from Mantua.²³² Pupil of Giulio Romano (1499-1546), the most prominent apprentice and collaborator of Raphael in his Roman workshop, Scultori worked with his master in the decoration of the Gonzaga's suburban villa, known as Palazzo Te.²³³ The Bishop of Arras asked him drawings after the *Battle of the Amazons* and the *Fall of the Giants* by Giulio Romano, and even fifty-nine drawings after the *Last Judgment* by Michelangelo, probably with the idea of having them printed.²³⁴ However, Scultori's copies after the Sistine Chapel didn't satisfy the taste of Granvelle, and the project was never brought to an end.²³⁵

But the Bishop's interest in Michelangelo's great fresco must have continued in the following years. He received from Giovannantonio de Tassis (1510-1580), postmaster of Rome who was also working as an agent for Granvelle, a *Last Judgment* engraved by the Mantuan Giorgio Ghisi in 1561, and in 1566 negotiated to buy the painted copy from the same fresco by Marcello Venusti (1510-1579).²³⁶ The same *Brazen serpent* by Frans Floris, printed by *Aux Quatre Vent* and dedicated to the Bishop, as pointed out by Wouk, represented the encounter of the Flemish painter with the art

²³² On Giovanni Battista Scultori, see GREPPI-FERRARINO 1977; MASSARI 1980, *passim*; CUPPERI 2016, p. 56 (in the text the name of Giovanni Battista Scultori is confused with that of the engraver Giorgio Ghisi); WOUK 2015-16, pp. 38-41.

²³³ Palazzo Te in Mantua is the masterpiece of the artist Giulio Romano, who designed the architecture and most of the pictorial decoration of the villa for his patron Federico Gonzaga. The work of this artist was important in the transmission of Roman art and architecture across Italy and Europe, especially at the court of Francis I in Fontainebleau through his pupil Primaticcio. See BÉGUIN 1991, pp. 45-74; ZERNER 1996, pp. 106-121.

²³⁴ Letters published in GREPPI-FERRARINO 1977, pp. 45-48.

²³⁵ Letters dated 15 June, 24 August and 27 September 1547 in GREPPI-FERRARINO 1977, pp. 45-47.

²³⁶ VAN DURME 1957, p. 289.

of Michelangelo in Rome, citing not only the *Last Judgment* and the monumental tomb of pope Julius II, but also the ancient sculptures that served as model to Michelangelo himself.²³⁷

1.3 After Augsburg: consolidating the patronage

The long absence of Titian from the city of Venice gave to young emerging artists the opportunity to consolidate their reputation among the local patrons. Jacopo Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese found their ways in the most prestigious and institutional commissions of the Serenissima, while the great Titian spent years widening and strengthening his connections with the papal court and the Habsburgs.²³⁸ The downside of this international strategy was a more modest role in the public stage of his city. Therefore, it was essential for the old master to adjust his strategy of self-promotion, in order to get the most out of his role of Apelles, both in Venice and abroad.²³⁹

For this reason, it is not surprising that Titian promptly responded to the request of the son of Charles V, Philip, to meet in Milan as soon as possible. The Prince was travelling through the various regions of the Empire (including Italy, Germany and the Low Countries), in a long formative and political journey known as *Felicísimo viaje* because of the chronicles compiled by Juan Cristóbal Calvete de Estrella (c. 1520-1593) and published in 1552.²⁴⁰ Once in Genova, in December 1548, the Prince wrote to Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador in Venice, that he wanted to find Titian in Milan once he would have arrived in the city.²⁴¹ The artist immediately took

²³⁷ WOUK 2015-16, p. 52.

²³⁸ About the absence of Titian from the Venetian scene, see GENTILI 2012, pp. 210-245. On the affirmation of the aforementioned artists on the artistic stage of the city and their strategies, see BOSTON 2009.

²³⁹ For a brief summary of Titian's strategy in these years of his career, see MANCINI 2019A, pp. 39-44.

²⁴⁰ Calvete de Estrella (1552) 2001.

²⁴¹ «Y porqué holgaríamos de hallar ahí en Milán a Ticiano cuando llegásemos, os encargamos mucho que vos escribáis de manera que venga luego a esa Ciudad, que en ello me haréis un mucio servicio», MANCINI 1998, p. 182.

the opportunity to meet the young Prince, as he wrote to Granvelle on 17 December.²⁴² The future King of Spain could have granted him to keep his position as imperial court painter in the future, and a trip to Milan was always useful for checking the situation of his pensions.

1.3.1 The portraits of Philip and the invisible journey

Philip ordered that Titian should have received thousand gold *scudi* because of “ciertos retratos” that the artist must have at least sketched during his stay in Milan.²⁴³ One of these portraits of the Prince was sent to Philip in July 1549, as recorded by Juan Hurtado de Mendoza.²⁴⁴ From the correspondence, we know that the painting was famous even before being finished, because both Granvelle and Mary of Hungary were already expecting a replica of it. The Bishop of Arras wrote to the artist on April 28:

«Io desiderarei haver un ritratto del Prencipe Nostro Signore, che faceste a Milano. Di gratia, signor Titiano, se ne havete ritenuto alcuno disegno, fatemene haver un estratto della perfettione ch'io lo spero della eccellente vostra mano [...]».²⁴⁵

And again, on June 21:

«Ho anchor gran contentamento che habbiate dato principio al mio Principe di Spagna, et vi prego farmi tanto piacere che venghi vivo, o al manco non sii superato da quello della regina (Mary of Hungary)».²⁴⁶

Part of the fame of this effigy of the Prince was surely due to the literary promotion made by Pietro Aretino, who often used his ekphrasis to glorify Titian's paintings.²⁴⁷ In February 1549, the poet attached a sonnet dedicated to this painting to a letter

²⁴² MANCINI 1998, pp. 184-185.

²⁴³ MANCINI 1998, p. 186.

²⁴⁴ MANCINI 1998, pp. 194-195.

²⁴⁵ MANCINI 1998, pp. 187-188; PUPPI 2012 p. 176.

²⁴⁶ MANCINI 1998, pp. 191-192; PUPPI 2012, p. 179.

²⁴⁷ See FREEDMAN 1995, pp. 9-33.

addressed to Philip.²⁴⁸ The sonnet pays little attention to visual details, instead stressing the artist's ability in the depiction of the flesh, that appears "alive",²⁴⁹ and mentioning the grand gesture of regal majesty that characterises the figure of the prince.²⁵⁰

In relation to this trip to Milan, Matteo Mancini has recently discovered a document that could rewrite the dynamics of Philip's patronage, casting new light on the commission of the famous *poesie*. The scholar found possible references to Titian in the expense account of the Prince during the *Felicissimo viage*, from 9 January to at least 21 February 1549.²⁵¹ According to these annotations, Titian and some other members of his workshop (probably the well-known "*sette bocche da sfamare*") joined the Prince in his journey to the Low Countries. The artist would have travelled with Philip and his court from the town of Pizzighettone to Augsburg, where the mention of Titian in the account ceased, and it was substituted by the name of Leone Leoni.²⁵² Mancini argues that these months were essential to lay the foundation for the privileged relation between the artist and the patron that would culminate in the production of the series of the *poesie*.²⁵³ The discovery of this document and the analysis of the consequences of the artist's presence during part of the *Felicissimo viage* is surely interesting, but it is far from being exhaustive. For instance, the author does not consider the sonnet by Aretino mentioned above, where he praised the perfection of Philip's portrait by Titian. If the painter was far from Venice from December until at least the end of February, how could Aretino have seen the portrait before sending the

²⁴⁸ ARETINO 1997-2002, V, p. 147.

²⁴⁹ «Quel proprio in carne di color vitale, Tiziano esprime [...]», *ivi*.

²⁵⁰ This portrait of 1548 is supposed to be the one that was sent in 1553 to the future wife of the Prince, the English Queen Mary Tudor (1516-1558), as stated by WETHEY 1969-75, II, p. 42. The scholar considers a letter that Mary of Hungary wrote to Mary Tudor in which she informs the Queen that she was about to send a portrait of Philip by Titian that was made three years earlier. See HOPE 1990, pp. 53-66.

²⁵¹ MANCINI 2019A, pp. 62-82.

²⁵² The sculptor Leone Leoni also travelled with the Prince, but his name was recorded in the expense account just when Titian stopped being mentioned. The sculptor, then, went directly from Ulm to Brussels, to serve the Emperor. It is curious that both Titian and Leone were not mentioned by the accurate chronicles of the journey. MANCINI 2019A, pp. 24-82.

²⁵³ About the series of the *poesie*, with an extended bibliography and the transcription of the correspondence related to them, see the catalogue of the recent exhibition LONDON 2020.

letter and the sonnet to the Prince in February? Titian might have sent it to Venice with a courier or a member of his workshop at a certain point, but why would he have sent a portrait of the Prince to his studio if he was travelling with him? Titian would probably not send a finished painting back to Venice. Then could it have been an unfinished painting, completed in very short time Titian's collaborators in the absence of the master, that was so lauded by Aretino? It is still possible that Pietro Aretino bluffed. It would not be surprising. Knowing in advance Titian's style, it would not have been too difficult for him to make up a plausible praise. After all, the lifelikeness and the expression of majesty were common attributes for Titian's portraits. However, if the painting was with the Prince, it would have been easy to call the bluff. Then why bluffing? These questions must be added to the many doubts that still exist about this "invisible journey", as Mancini has called it, so strangely unmentioned nor by Titian, nor by the chronicles of the time.

1.3.1.1 The "hasty execution": a matter of artistic education, style or visual readability?

Much can be said about the portraits of Prince Philip. First, that the urgent request he did to Titian to meet him in Milan to be portrayed can be considered a rhetorical expedient, part of the politics of succession started by Charles V. The Emperor desired to legitimate the future role of Philip as heir of his reign in opposition to the revindication of the crown of the Holy Roman Empire made by Ferdinand of Habsburg, brother of Charles V.²⁵⁴ For that reason, it was important for Philip to be painted by Titian, the court artist of his father (virtually the only artist that was legitimated to portray the Emperor), and the main responsible of the state image of Charles V with the paintings of the 1530 and his masterpiece *Charles V at Mühlberg*. Secondly, it is likely that at least one of the portraits, maybe the one that was celebrated since an early stage, was a full-length effigy of the Prince with an armour, like the one of his father painted in 1548. The portrait of Charles V, now lost, is known through

²⁵⁴ For these political strategies of succession and the role of the *Felicissimo viaje*, see RODRIGUEZ-SALGADO 2020, pp. 61-78.

the copy of the Spanish painter Juan Pantoja de la Cruz (1553-1608),²⁵⁵ and represents the moment in which the Emperor had his public image translated by Titian in an updated language (*Figure 13*), together with the *Charles V at Mühlberg*. A full-length portrait with and armour of Prince Philip would have visually underlined the continuity of the dynasty from father to son, and it would have called to mind heroic and classical references.²⁵⁶ Other portraits of Philip were painted in the following years, starting from the one made during the second sojourn of Titian in Augsburg.²⁵⁷

The most impressive full-length portrait is the *Philip II with an armour*, at the Prado Museum (*Figure 14*).²⁵⁸ It is still problematic to exactly identify which of the aforementioned portraits is the one now in Madrid, especially in relation to a letter wrote by Philip to his aunt Mary of Hungary in 1551. In a well-known passage, Philip seems to complain about the appearance of his portrait with an armour that he is sending to his aunt in Brussels. He writes: «Al mío armado se le parece bien la priesa con que le ha hecho y si hubiera mas tiempo yo se le hiciera tornar hazer».²⁵⁹ The Prince uses a word that can be translated as “haste” to express his complaint about the painting, even adding that he would have asked to the artist to paint it again, if only there was more time. The Prado canvas had been traditionally recognised as the one mentioned in this letter, and dated to Titian’s second trip to Augsburg, in 1550-1551. However, Hope argues that the quality of the *Philip II with an armour* could not have been described as “hasty” and considers this painting as a survived version of the 1548 canvas.²⁶⁰ Falomir, by contrast, asserts that the Prado canvas corresponds to the one painted in 1551, and that the letter from Philip to Mary of Hungary referred instead to the replica made for his aunt. The existence of a replica of *Philip II with an armour* is

²⁵⁵ Juan Pantoja de la Cruz; *Charles V in armour with a baton*; 1548; 183x110 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See KUSCHE 2007, pp. 156-157.

²⁵⁶ See CHECA CREMADES 2017, pp. 41-44.

²⁵⁷ WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 41-45 lists at least other five portraits of the Prince by the hand of Titian.

²⁵⁸ Titian; *Philip II with an armour*; c. 1551; 193 x 111 cm; oil on canvas; Museo del Prado, Madrid. WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 126-128; KUSCHE 1991b, pp. 261-292; MADRID 1999, p. 364; HOPE 2005, 127-148; HUMFREY 2007, p. 248; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 331-337.

²⁵⁹ MANCINI 1998, p. 211 reports two different versions of the letter, but this one is the most acknowledged by the literature.

²⁶⁰ See HOPE 2005, pp. 127-148.

attested by the presence of two canvases with the same description both in the inventory of Philip in 1553 and in the one of Mary of Hungary in 1556-1558.²⁶¹

Either way, the portraits of 1548 surely left a mark on the young Prince Philip, and the Prado painting embodies one of the epitomes of the *state portrait*, the perfect expression of the international court culture promoted by the Habsburgs. The figure seen in three-quarter looks elegant, nonchalant in his heavy and precious armour, his right hand on the helmet, the left one at the flamboyant sword. The dark background enhances the softly enlightened skin of the Prince and the rough strokes of light on the metal. The only intense colour in the composition is the red velvet that covers the table where the helmet and the armour glove lie. The column in the background probably refers to emblem of the Habsburgs, as previously mentioned regarding the use of this motive in the portrait of *Charles V seated* and in the printed effigies of Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle.

Is this the hastily executed painting mentioned by Philip in his letter? It is difficult to assert, because the words used by the Prince can be interpreted in different ways. Scholars often cite this anecdote to make a statement about the artistic education of the young Philip.²⁶² The common narrative asserts that the Prince's eye was not yet trained understand the looseness of Titian's virtuoso brushwork, while his father Charles V, his refined aunt Mary of Hungary and the "artistic advisor" Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, all of them responsible of the development of his artistic education, already held the manner of the Venetian in high esteem. But then the Prince, opportunely guided, would start to appreciate Titian's art, becoming one of his most important patrons from about 1550 to the death of the painter. There are, however, some other elements that are contradicting or, at least, complicating, this narrative.

Philip was certainly an art connoisseur, and his judgment had been traditionally related to a canvas presenting an unpolished and loose style of painting. It is difficult to assess, from our perspective, whether he would have judged the Prado portrait too sketchy and the brushstrokes too loose. To make a comparison, let's consider that in the same years another memorable effigy of the Prince was painted by the Flemish artist Antonis Mor (c. 1517-1576). The *Philip II*, now at the Museo de Bellas Artes of

²⁶¹ See FALOMIR 2008, pp. 139-145; MELBOURNE 2014, p.78.

²⁶² PUTTFARKEN 2005, p. 79; CHECA 2013, pp. 332-335.

Bilbao,²⁶³ is a three-quarter length portrait of the Prince wearing sumptuous clothes and showing the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece at his neck (*Figure 15*). Whereas the composition of the painting corresponds with the model of the court portraits developed by Titian in the previous years, characterized by the natural size of the figure, by the representation at three-quarter length, by the dark background with few decorative elements that focuses the attention on the subject, and by an aura of *maiestas*, the pictorial style is purely Flemish. The severe and rigid expression, the attention to details, the polished brushstrokes, even the use of the panel support instead of a canvas, contribute to create the sense of *gravitas* of the entire figure.²⁶⁴ Was this the type of portrait, characterised by polished painting and attentive to an exact record of the physiognomic features, that was the opposite of an “hasty” one?

It is perhaps impossible to answer this question, but there are some elements to consider in the attempt of clarifying some aspects of the problem. Antonis Mor had started his career with the help of another patron of Titian, Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle,²⁶⁵ and he had officially entered the service of Philip in 1554, with a salary of 300 *scudi*.²⁶⁶ Mor's portraits had a great fortune at the court of Philip, and his travels across Europe to depict kings, queens and other members of the Habsburg family increased his fame as the official portraitist of the future King of Spain.²⁶⁷ An indication of the preference for this kind of portraiture is also the choice of the Portuguese artist Alonso Sánchez Coello (1531-1588), Antonis Mor pupil, as the new chamber painter of Philip II in 1560.²⁶⁸ Coello was specialised in portraits, and he

²⁶³ Antonis Mor; *Portrait of Philip II in black and white*, c. 1549-1550; 107,5x83,3 cm; oil on oak panel; Museo de Bellas Artes; Bilbao. See WOODALL 1992, pp. 11-18; MADRID 1999, p. 282; WOODALL 2007, pp. 182-184.

²⁶⁴ BODART 2013, pp. 147-149, juxtaposes the concept of *gratia*, princely virtue par excellence in the Italian context, expressed by the imprecise and vibrant brushstrokes of Titian, to the one of *gravitas*, typical of the Spanish monarchy.

²⁶⁵ See WOODALL 2007, pp. 135-180.

²⁶⁶ WOODALL 2007, p. 261; BODART 2013, pp. 150-151.

²⁶⁷ In 1550, Mary of Hungary sent Mor to Portugal to paint the effigies of the Portuguese branch of the family, and in 1553 he was sent to England to portray the future wife of Philip, the Queen Mary Tudor. See especially WOODALL 2007, *passim*.

²⁶⁸ For an introduction to the life and the work of the artist, see BREUER-HERMANN 1990, pp. 14-35.

followed the model developed by his master.²⁶⁹ Even though the portraits that Coello produced for the court of Philip cannot be separated from Titian's original, his style is quintessentially Flemish. The Portuguese artist approached the Venetian models through the lens of Antonis Mor mediation, opting for a precise and detailed representation of the subjects, with particular attention to elements of clothing and jewellery. In her analysis of Antonis Mor's career, Diane Bodart takes into consideration that this descriptive aspect of the portraits is related both to necessity of the subject to be perfectly identifiable - also in his social status -, and to the desire of proximity that the spectator had with the person portrayed.²⁷⁰ The works of Titian, on the other hand, were made to be looked at from a certain distance, according to the instructions that Mary of Hungary gave to Simon Renard, imperial ambassador at the English court, in 1553. Writing about the shipment of the portrait of Philip to Mary Tudor, the Governor of the Netherland asserts that the canvas was very lifelike, but then she points out: «la voyant à son jour et de loing, comme sont toutes poinctures dudict Titian que de près ne se recognoissent».²⁷¹ Mary of Hungary suggests looking at the painting with a proper light and from distance, because all Titian's paintings «can't be recognised from close by».²⁷² This remark shows both the concern about the capacity of Mary Tudor, more used to the detailed and polished portraits by the German Hans Holbein (1497/8-1543) and the Flemish William Scrots (active 1537-1553),²⁷³ to approach a painting by Titian, and also her visual experience as art collector.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ On the Portuguese painter, see MADRID 1990; JORDAN GSCHWEND 1994; KUSCHE 2003.

²⁷⁰ This was not just a conceptual matter, but it was also related to the practical fruition of the artworks, which were supposed to be closely observed. BODART 2013, p. 153. For an analysis of the phenomenon and the meanings of portraiture at the court of Philip II, see FALOMIR in MADRID 1998-1999, pp. 203-227; MULCAHY 2000, pp. 473-496.

²⁷¹ WEISS 1841-43, IV, p. 150.

²⁷² For the English transcription, see HOPE in VENICE-WASHINGTON 1990-1991, p. 53.

²⁷³ William Scrots had been court painter of Mary of Hungary in 1537, before becoming the new English King's painter in 1546. Both the German and the Flemish adopted an accurate and precise style of painting, very different from Titian's.

²⁷⁴ BODART 2013, pp. 153-155.

Bodart relates Mary of Hungary's advice to the judgement that Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) would give about the mature painting by Titian,²⁷⁵ in the biography of the painter published in his 1568 edition of *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*. Vasari describes the style of the early works of Titian as refined and diligent, explaining that they might be looked at from close by and from the distance, but then he adds that in the latest paintings the artist changed his manner. To his judgement, these late works were made just to be looked at from the proper distance.²⁷⁶ However, Vasari's statement describes them as: «condotte di colpi, tirate via di grosso e con macchie»,²⁷⁷ therefore rough, sketchy and fragmented, using stains more than brushstrokes.²⁷⁸ This description does not fit, as we will further analyse, the artworks made for Charles V or his sister Mary of Hungary, nor Titian's production in the 1540s and the first years of the 1550s.

The aforementioned assertions are not referring to the same objects or the same period of time, and they are also addressing a very different audience: whereas Vasari is writing to intentionally analyse the transformations of the style of the painters in his treatise, Mary of Hungary is trying to make the figure of the Prince as recognizable and as remarkable as possible in a context dominated by a style of portraits that she knows perfectly, namely the Flemish and German manner of the English court. The first referred to Titian's mythologies in an attempt to justify the "sketchy" late style of the painter as a matter of expression of *sprezzatura* which would dignify the difficult readability of the artworks. The latter, instead, gave practical instruction for the actual readability of the portrait because she knew the visual habits of Mary Tudor.

To sum up, certainly the type of portraits elaborated by Titian represented a milestone and a fundamental passage for the invention and subsequent homogenization of the *court portrait* and the *state portrait*. However, the Flemish

²⁷⁵ BODART 2013, pp. 153-154.

²⁷⁶ «Ma è ben vero che il modo di fare che tenne in queste ultime è assai diferente dal fare suo da giovane. Conciò sia che le prime son condotte con una certa finezza e diligenza incredibile e da essere vedute da presso e da lontano, e queste ultime, condotte di colpi, tirate via di grosso e con macchie, di maniera che da presso non si possono vedere e di lontano appariscono perfette»; VASARI 1568, II, p. 815.

²⁷⁷ VASARI 1568, II, p. 815.

²⁷⁸ For a translation of the passage, see ROSAND 1982A, p. 22.

reception and transformation had a fundamental impact on its standardization. In this process, Antonis Mor had a leading role, lucidly summarised by Falomir:

«Through a sort of abstraction of Titianesque models, Mor made them more accessible to other painters and thus court portraitist of the second half of the sixteenth century were more indebted to Mor than to Titian».²⁷⁹

After the second visit to Augsburg in 1550-51, Titian ceased painting portraits for the Habsburg Prince, except for some replicas, but these paintings continued to be copied and spread through the European courts.²⁸⁰ Through Mor's elaboration, many different artists approached the Venetian master's inventions merging them with detailed record of the subject's appearance and a severe sense of *magnificentia* as we will discuss in depth in the following chapters.²⁸¹

Bearing this in mind, we might say that the remark of Prince Philip was not just related to a *painting* by Titian, but to a *portrait* by Titian. The concern would have been justified by the expectations related to the function of the portrait to record and bequeath the likeness and the *status* of the sitter.²⁸² The suggestion sent from Mary of Hungary to the future wife of her nephew was also related to a portrait, a portrait that was part in important marital negotiations.

²⁷⁹ FALOMIR 2008, p. 78. About the role of Mor in the standardization of the court portrait starting from Titian's models and the possible part played by Granvelle in arranging a Flemish workshop specialised in portraits that could compete with the Venetian's, see TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 339-340.

²⁸⁰ Some examples are Alonso Sánchez Coello, Rolan de Moys and Juan Pantoja de la Cruz in Spain, Arcimboldo at the court of Vienna, Hans von Aachen in Prague, Scipione Pulzone in Rome, Willem Key, Adriaen Thomasz Key and Frans Pourbus the Younger in the Low Countries.

²⁸¹ These court portraits had been named as "senza tempo" (timeless) by ZERI 1957. The scholar argues that this international kind of portraiture had its origin in the paintings of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden, and then found its specific elaboration in Antonis Mor, that merged the Flemish and Italian tradition. Zeri, however, doesn't recognize the primary role of Titian and the Habsburgs in this process, as also noticed by FALOMIR 2008, p. 76.

²⁸² Portraits had many different purposes during the Renaissance, even though the main one was to commemorate the sitter. However, as the ones of Prince Philip, they were also used for political propaganda and as a substitute of the absent sitter. About uses and functions of portraits, see CAMPBELL L. 1990, pp. 193-225.

The interest about paintings carrying a precise likeness of the sitter, related to the importance of the Flemish and German tradition of portraiture that, it is important to remember, was also a significant source for Titian himself, put these judgements under a different light. It would be misleading to confuse these statements on portraits with a more general understanding of Titian's art, and especially to compare the idea of an "unpolished painting" to the "pittura a macchia" discussed by Vasari.²⁸³

There is, indeed, an ulterior problem that needs to be addressed as a recurrent theme of this study. And it is that of the retrospective reading of sources, both material and literary. By comparing Vasari's judgement on Titian's art to other unrelated sources previous to it, scholars might fall into the trap of trying to fit every source in a prefixed narrative. Moreover, by following this narrative mostly built upon literary sources, it is easy to ignore or overlook certain aspects of Titian's production, and therefore their reception.

As mentioned above, the works of art that the Venetian painted for the Habsburgs between the 1540s and the second sojourn in Augsburg, were particularly polished, plastic and sculptural, much different from the outcomes of the following years. In order to examine the features of this group of paintings, their relationship with the other production of the painter and the impact that they might had on the image of Titian in the Netherlands, it is necessary to discuss the series of the *Condemned* commissioned by Mary of Hungary for the castle of Binche.

1.3.2 The *Condemned* for Mary of Hungary

In his pivotal work on the complete *corpus* of Titian's paintings, Harold Wethey grouped the specific production of artworks after the trip to Rome under the header «Michelangelesque Interlude».²⁸⁴ The series of the four *Condemned* is described as the epitome of this tendency showed by the Venetian artist since the time of the Farnese *Danae*, the painting that had been described by Giorgio Vasari as the core of the famous

²⁸³ For the analysis of the concept of non-finito, sketchy execution and the proper distance from which to look at a painting in Vasari's writings, see BAROCCHI 1958, pp. 221-235; SOHM 1991, pp. 43-53.

²⁸⁴ WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 61.

anecdote of the meeting between Titian and Michelangelo.²⁸⁵ In this passage, Vasari expresses through the voice of Michelangelo his judgment of Venetian art, and the superiority of the Florentine *disegno* over the mere imitation of nature. The author of the *Vite* corroborates the lively theoretical debate among these approaches to the depiction of nature, writing:

«[...] chi non ha disegnato assai e studiato cose scelte, antiche o moderne, non può fare bene di pratica da sé né aiutare le cose che si ritranno dal vivo, dando loro quella grazia e perfezione che dà l'arte fuori dell'ordine della natura, la quale fa ordinariamente alcune parti che non son belle».²⁸⁶

However, before this consideration, both Michelangelo and Vasari complimented the Venetian master for his work, and Michelangelo praised Titian for his *colorito* and *maniera*.

Wethey's periodization thus is part of a long tradition of scholars interpreting the *Danae* as Titian's answer to Michelangelo's art.²⁸⁷ They recognize a dialogue of the *Danae* with the lost *Leda* by Michelangelo, painted in 1530 and known especially from drawings and from the copy by Rosso Fiorentino at the National Gallery of London (Figure 17,²⁸⁸ and the sculpture of the *Night* for the tomb of Giuliano de' Medici in Florence. It is tempting thus to simplify the meaning of this painting and the ones that will follow to the epic competition between these great artists. Among the other sources for this painting it is possible to identify the *Danae* (Figure 18) by the Emilian painter Antonio Allegri, called Correggio (c. 1489-1534),²⁸⁹ or the *Danae* painted by Francesco Primaticcio for Francis I at Fontainebleau (Figure 19),²⁹⁰ that Titian probably

²⁸⁵ Titian; *Danae*; c. 1545; 120x172 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nazionale di Capidimonte; Naples. The discussion is reported in VASARI 1568, II, p. 813.

²⁸⁶ VASARI 1568, II, p. 813.

²⁸⁷ Or even as: «[...] his declaration of art war with Michelangelo»; GOFFEN 2002, p. 335.

²⁸⁸ Rosso Fiorentino; *Leda and the swan*; after 1530; 105,4x141 cm; oil on canvas; National Gallery; London.

²⁸⁹ Correggio; *Danae*; c. 1531-32; 161x193 cm; oil on canvas; Galleria Borghese; Rome. See GOULD 1976, pp. 270-271; FABIANSKI 1996, pp. 99-107. For the reception of the series of the "Loves of Jupiter", see HOENINGER 2001, pp. 191-197.

²⁹⁰ Francesco Primaticcio; *Danae*; c. 1535-39; fresco; Gallery of Francis I; Fontainebleau.

knew from the print by Léon Davent.²⁹¹ Titian elaborated these and other sources from antiquity through the lens of his previous production, especially the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* now at the Prado Museum (1523-26) and the *Venus of Urbino* at the Uffizi (1538). All of the elements were translated to a sensuous scene, where the body of the woman is the absolute protagonist. As this painting had been related to Titian's reaction to Michelangelo or, in a broader sense, to the Tuscan-Roman tradition, because of Vasari's account, of its Roman execution and its models, also the series of the *Condemned* offers several insights about the problem of the use of Central-Italian and classical sources.

Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle provides the first record of the paintings in his letter to Titian dated 21 June 1549:

«la quale [Mary of Hungary] mi mostrò li giorni passata le due pitture vostre delle pene infernali, che in vero sono eccellenti. E come a me ne dimandò il giudizio, io non mancai di scrivervi come merita il divino vostro pennello, e veramente sono tali chef anno stupir li maestri».²⁹²

In addition to the information that the first two paintings of the series, probably the *Tityus* and the *Sisyphus*, had been delivered to the Governor of the Low Countries, the Bishop of Arras is also keen to stress his position at the court as expert in art matters and the benefits of his friendship. No documents have been discovered yet to shed light on the mind (or minds) behind the choice of the subject of this series, very unusual in the Netherlands and unprecedented in Titian's production. It is tempting to imagine that it was the artist himself who proposed the mythological themes, as he would do with Philip's *poesie*, some years later.²⁹³ However, the series was not at all an isolated production, but it was part of a bigger and more complex iconographical programme, in which paintings, frescoes, sculptures and tapestries had a precise and

²⁹¹ PANOFSKY 1969, pp. 144ff; VENICE-WASHINGTON 1990, pp. 267-269; GOFFEN 2002, pp. 334-338; MADRID 2003, pp. 202-203. Against this interpretation, see especially GENTILI 1988, pp. 162ff; and ZAPPERI 1991, pp. 159-171; HOPE 2003, pp. 188-189, who considers the 1531-2 *Danae* by Correggio in the Galleria Borghese as the main visual reference for Titian, and KAHR 1978, pp. 47-48, PALLUCCHINI in VENICE 1981, p. 20. For the engraving by Davent, see JENKINS 2017, II, pp. 20-21.

²⁹² MANCINI 1998, p. 192.

²⁹³ Also discussed in PUTTFARKEN 2005, pp. 81-88

coherent role in the setting of the palace of Binche.²⁹⁴ Therefore, it is unlikely that Titian had the freedom to choose the subjects or even the formats of the paintings of the series. The subjects, the *Great Sinners*, were part of a broader mythological episode that described the battle between the giants and the gods, the so-called *Gigantomachia*. The representation of this theme was popular in Italy during the Renaissance as a general allegory of the contrast between order and chaos, or in a more political sense.²⁹⁵ This allegory had been already used in reference to Charles V by Pietro Aretino, friend and promoter of Titian, in a letter of 1536,²⁹⁶ but his not exactly friendly correspondence with Mary of Hungary discourages the idea that he was directly involved in the process.²⁹⁷ As previously mentioned, Granvelle had already showed his interest in the topic of the *Gigantomachia*,²⁹⁸ and the well-cultured Mary of Hungary and her entourage, probably with his contribution, were responsible for the conception of the entire programme.

Calvete de Estrella, in his chronicles of the *Felicissimo viaje*, describes a *Prometheus* and a *Sisyphus* by Titian, with the addition of a *Tantalus* by Coxcie.²⁹⁹ Ludovico Dolce, in 1557, mentions:

²⁹⁴ The most recent e complete work about the series MADRID 2014.

²⁹⁵ A discussion of the most important examples of Gigantomachia in the Italian art and the political allegory of the *Condemned* as part of this mythological episode can be found in MADRID 2014, pp. 160-161.

²⁹⁶ Referring to Swiss, Italians, Frenches and Turks, he writes: «Mentre che essi minacciano contra dell'Imperadore, il qual non si move, e tiengli indietro, paiono giganti stolti che posero i monti sopra i monti [...], riguardato che ebbe alla temerarietà della loro superbia, gli disperse con quei folgori che tiene ascosi frag li artigli l'aquila che diede Giove ad Augusto» in ARETINO 1864, pp. 152-153.

²⁹⁷ In a letter dated May 1547, Pietro Aretino shows all of his disappointment in not receiving any “curtesy” from Mary of Hungary, despite his numerous attempts to draw the attention of the sister of the Emperor. See ARETINO 1550, p.81.

²⁹⁸ He asked Giovanni Battista Scultori for some drawings from Giulio Romano's *Fall of the Giants*, and Ludovico Dolce dedicated to him the translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, called *Le trasformazioni* (1554). See MADRID 2014, p. 36.

²⁹⁹ CALVETE DE ESTRELLA (1552) 2001, p. 316.

«[...] delle molte pitture da lui fatte a Cesare et al re d’Inghilterra: come del quadro della Trinità, della Madonna che piange, del Tizio, del Tantalo, del Sisifo, di Andromeda e dell’Adone».³⁰⁰

Vasari, instead, records a *Prometheus*, a *Sisyphus*, a *Tityus* and a *Tantalus* made for Mary of Hungary.³⁰¹ The problem of the composition of the series, and especially the confusion concerning the *Tityus* and the *Prometheus*, was discussed by Mancini, who believes that there was a clear distinction between the original series of Binche and its following relocation and display at the Alcázar made by Philip II.³⁰² His thesis develops around the concept that, in the iconographic programme, the «classicist language was predominant».³⁰³

As mentioned, Mary of Hungary had a role in associating classicism to the well-established language of the Habsburg’s power. It does not surprise that the festivities of Binche, one of the most important stops of Philip’s *Felicísimo viaje*, were combining the Burgundian-style ceremonies with the mythological allegory that involved the decoration of the hall.³⁰⁴ The main elements of the iconographic programme can be reconstructed combining the drawing preserved in the Royal Library of Brussels with the literary descriptions of the *grande salle*, and they were: a series of tapestries representing the deadly sins from the design of Pieter Coecke van Aelst; at the north wall, over the fireplace, the relief medallion of the Roman Emperor *Hadrian* and the canvas of the *Musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas* by Michel Coxcie; at the south wall, the relief of *Cesar and Apollo flaying Marsyas*, also by Coxcie: next to the north fireplace, a canopy where Mary of Hungary, Charles V, Eleanor of Austria and Philip took place during the festivities, that was decorated with the *Fall of Phaeton*.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁰ DOLCE 1557, p. 205.

³⁰¹ VASARI 1568, II, p. 814.

³⁰² The line of thinking is too articulate to be summarized here, see MANCINI 2009, pp. 253-274; MANCINI 2011, pp. 71-92.

³⁰³ MANCINI 2011, p. 71.

³⁰⁴ For the Burgundian-style ceremonies, see PETERS 1998, pp. 11-35; JONGE-GARCÍA-ESTEBAN ESTRÍNGANA 2010. For the mythological iconography, see TISCHER 1994; PUTTFARKEN 2005, pp. 77-96; CARRASCO FERRER 2011, pp. 69-91; MANCINI 2011, pp. 71-92; MADRID 2014, pp. 25-62.

³⁰⁵ A complete reconstruction of the decorative elements can be found in CARRASCO FERRER 2011, pp. 69-91; CARRASCO FERRER 2013, pp. 175-201.

The whole display acquires meaning in the light of the defeat of the Schmalkaldic League of Protestant princes, whose rebellion against the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, was suppressed in the battle of Mühlberg. Therefore, the iconographic programme can be interpreted as a reference to the rightful punishment that is reserved for those who decide to rebel against the order, whether it is established by the gods or by the legitimate ruler.

Among the sources for these mythological figures there were not only classical texts like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Odyssey*, but they had been also commented by some of the most important Italian writers of all time, Dante and Boccaccio,³⁰⁶ and by Erasmus from Rotterdam (1466-1536) author that was connected to the environment of the Habsburg's court.

Mythology, then, was used at the service of an allegory with political and moralising meanings, expressed through a classical language.

Titian's cycle had to harmonize with the rest and was subject to the patterns of expectations of *decorum*. This context is necessary to analyse the *Tityus* and the *Sisyphus* as the epitome of the so-called «Michelangesque Interlude» of the Venetian.

1.3.2.1 Re-evaluating the so-called “Mannerist-crisis” in light of the Habsburg's artistic preferences

The paintings for the church of Santo Spirito in Isola can be considered as a stylistic and compositional antecedent for the *Condemned*. Painted either right before or right after his return from Rome,³⁰⁷ these scenes from the Old Testament were originally commissioned to Giorgio Vasari, as he also remembered in his *Vite*.³⁰⁸ This

³⁰⁶ Especially MANCINI 2009, pp. 258-259 considers Boccaccio as one of the major sources for the choice of these subjects.

³⁰⁷ Titian started a lawsuit against the friars of the church of Santo Spirito in 1544, and this is the date that is usually accepted by most scholars, see VENICE-WASHINGTON 1990-1991, pp. 255-258; GENTILI 2012, p. 189. Dated to 1546 by HUMFREY 2007, pp. 237-241 and to 1552 by Charles Hope in MADRID 2003, p. 305.

³⁰⁸ «L'anno medesimo, essendo stato il Vasari in Vinezia tredici mesi a fare, come s'è detto, un palco a messer Giovanni Cornaro et alcune cose per la Compagnia della Calza, il Sansovino, che guidava la fabrica di Santo Spirito, gli aveva fatto fare disegni per tre quadri grandi a olio che andavano nel palco,

series was Titian's first approach to ceiling painting. He followed the model of Vasari's canvases for Palazzo Corner-Spinelli, one of the first examples of «sistemi decorativi aperti nei soffitti che si vedevano a Venezia».³⁰⁹ The paintings depict *Cain slaying Abel* (Figure 20), *Abraham sacrificing Isaac* (Figure 21) and *David and Goliath* (Figure 22), and they focus on the representation of foreshortened male bodies, monumental anatomies that call to mind antique statues and a more Central-Italian visual language.³¹⁰ Pallucchini cites these elements as evidence of a so-called “Mannerist crisis”.³¹¹ Titian was supposedly dialoguing with the paintings by Giulio Romano and the presence of Florentine artists like Francesco Salviati and Giorgio Vasari at the beginning of the 1540s.³¹² However, as the scholar highlights, these “Mannerist” experiments can be traced earlier, to 1536-40 *Portraits of the Caesars*,³¹³ surely related to the example of Giulio Romano, or to 1542-43 *Crowning with thorns* (Figure 23), where the body of Christ is deeply indebted to the statue of the *Laocoon* as “*exemplum doloris*”.³¹⁴

But is it correct to call these experiments with the Central-Italian visual language a “Mannerist crisis”? Apart from the problems in defining univocally the phenomenon of the so-called Mannerism, the focus on its language and style, would not be enough

acciò gli conducesse di pittura; ma essendosi poi partito il Vasari, furono i detti tre quadri allogati a Tiziano, che gli condusse bellissimi, per avere atteso con molt'arte a fare scortare le figure al disotto in su.», in VASARI 1568, II, p. 812.

³⁰⁹ PALLUCCHINI in VENICE 1981, p. 17. See also ROMANELLI 1999, pp. 48-53.

³¹⁰ Titian; *Cain slaying Abel*; c. 1546; 298x282 cm; oil on canvas; Santa Maria della Salute; Venice. *Abraham sacrificing Isaac*; c. 1546; 328x285 cm; oil on canvas; Santa Maria della Salute; Venice. *David and Goliath*; c. 1546; 300x285 cm; oil on canvas; Santa Maria della Salute; Venice. WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 120-121; HUMFREY 2007, pp. 238-241.

³¹¹ On the so-called “Mannerist crisis” see VALCANOVER 1984, pp. 167-188.

³¹² PALLUCCHINI in VENICE 1981, pp. 19-20.

³¹³ The eleven portraits of the Caesars were commissioned by Federico II, Duke of Mantua, for the Palazzo Ducale. Therefore, the reference to the art of Giulio Romano was not coincidental, but functional to the patron's preferences. After they had been sold to King Charles I of England in 1627-28 and afterwards to Philip IV of Spain in 1651, they were unfortunately lost during a fire at the Alcazar of Madrid in 1734, their appearance is preserved by drawings and especially by a series of prints by the Flemish artist Aegidius Sadeler (1570–1629). See WETHEY 1969-75, p. 488; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 125-136

³¹⁴ Titian; *Crowning with thorns*; 1542-43; 303x181cm; oil on panel; Musée du Louvre; Paris. WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 82-83; CASINI 1993, pp. 97-118; HUMFREY 2007, p. 181; GENTILI 2014, pp. 177-184

to explain all of the aspects of Titian's production of these years, and the concept of "crisis" can't be generally applied on the recurring application of a Tuscan-Roman and classical visual vocabulary, just sporadically mediated by Mannerist painters.

Paul Joannides, for instance, anticipates the beginning of Titian's interest in Michelangelo's art to 1511, with the frescoes of Padua representing the *Miracles of Saint Anthony*.³¹⁵ In contrast to Pallucchini, he does not interpret this aspect of Titian's art as the reaction against the current of Mannerism with all of its ideological and stylistic implications. In his analysis, he includes Titian's attention to Michelangelo and even the Mannerist painters in a wider phenomenon that he calls "borrowings from Central Italian and antique art".³¹⁶

Even more clear is the position of the scholar Michael Bierwirth in his discussion on the supposed Mannerism of the *Holy Trinity* (1551-54), extended to the Santo Spirito paintings and the *Condemned*. In his opinion, Titian used a powerful formal language when it was required by the theme or, as it is argued here, by the context, in order to create a more suitable "heroic" style.³¹⁷

If we contest the idea of a "crisis" it is possible to put aside the problem of the Venetian master embracing or not the *idioma* of Mannerism, and focus instead on the contextual motivations that required him to experiment on those sources, often so various and so well merged together that is almost impossible to say which prevails on the others.

Listing all the paintings in which these borrowings can be identified would go beyond the scope of this discussion, but some of them are worth to mentioning. The *Danae*, as previously discussed, is the perfect example of an accurate use of the Tuscan-Roman tradition through the mediation of Giulio Romano, master of Primaticcio, and Michelangelo, in a context where Titian, far from Venice and eager to gain the favour of the papal court, could not ignore these prototypes. As for the decoration of Santo

³¹⁵ JOANNIDES 1990, pp. 21-45; PASSAVANT 1991, pp. 85-114, with further bibliography on Titian's borrowings from non-Venetian art. Even though we recount here the expression used by Joannides, the word "borrowings" does not seem pertinent to describe the operations made by Titian in his use of the antique and Central-Italian sources. We would prefer to describe them as "adaptations".

³¹⁶ For Titian's borrowings from ancient art and his interest in Greek-Roman and contemporary sculpture, see SUTHERLAND 2008, pp. 205-237; KOERING 2009, p. 177-196.

³¹⁷ See BIERWIRTH 2002, pp. 118-119.

Spirito in Isola, this was first commissioned from Vasari and, to a certain extent, it can be considered indebted to his work for the ceiling of Palazzo Corner-Spinelli. Here Titian had to deal with a problem that was new for himself and relatively new for the Venetian art: interlocking compartments that should create a unitary and illusionistic system.³¹⁸ The Augustinian canons of the church assigned to the Florentine Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570), escaped from Rome during the Sacco of 1527, the renovation of the façade,³¹⁹ while Vasari, Titian and Giuseppe Porta (1520-1575), also known as Salviati, were appointed to take care of the pictorial decoration. Giuseppe Porta, pupil of the Florentine painter Francesco Salviati (1510-1563), worked with his master in Rome, absorbing elements of the art of Michelangelo and Raphael through the manner of his master, before his arrival in Venice in 1539. He was one of the importers of the Tuscan-Roman tradition in the Serenissima, especially in a post-Raphaellesque version, but he also merged this language with the Venetian manner.³²⁰ He made the organ shutters with the *Triumph of David after Slaying Goliath* and the *Revenge of Saul against David*, the canvases of the refectory representing the *Last Supper*, and paintings of the ceiling with *Elijah Nourished by the Angel*, the *Fall of Manna*, and the *Prophet Habbakuk Comforts Daniël in the Lair of the Lions*.³²¹ The *Fall of Manna*, a circular painting now in the church of Santa Maria della Salute (Figure 24), is a clear example of a spatial composition based on the monumentality of human bodies standing out against the emptiness of the sky.³²² It is impossible not to notice the similarities with Titian's paintings for the same church. This *tondo* has an uncertain date of execution, usually based upon a supposed derivative correlation to the series by Titian.³²³ Both artists had clearly considered Giulio Romano's work in Palazzo Te, Michelangelo's Sistine chapel and the works by Pordenone and Correggio as examples of how to deal with the decoration of a

³¹⁸ SCHULZ 1968, p. 120.

³¹⁹ HOWARD 1975, pp. 74-76.

³²⁰ See PALLUCCHINI in VENICE 1981, pp. 17-19.

³²¹ See SAVY 2015, pp. 95-105.

³²² The appearance of this composition is more clearly readable in the print: Andrea Zucchi after Giuseppe Porta (Salviati); *Fall of Manna*; 1720; 476x482 mm; etching; British Museum; London.

³²³ The date of execution is considered posterior to 1544, after the completion of Titian's series, just because of their similarity regarding the spatial organization and the plastic Michelangelesque bodies. VENICE 1981, pp. 94-95.

ceiling.³²⁴ It would be tempting to hold the great Venetian as responsible for interpreting these models and to consider Giuseppe Porta just as a follower of his example. It is more likely that they both had to take into account the Central-Italian origin of the commission (Sansovino, Vasari, Salviati) and the fact that the reference models for the decoration of big and articulated *soffitti* were mostly by Tuscan-Roman painters, like Vasari in Venice, or the aforementioned Giulio Romano, Michelangelo, and the Friulan Giovanni Antonio de' Sacchis, known as Pordenone (1483-1539). The latter is also considered to have travelled to Rome in the last 1510s, as suggested by his artistic production of the 1520s, strongly indebted to the Raphaellesque tradition.³²⁵ For the ceiling of Santo Spirito, Titian had to consider all of these contextual factors, and because the themes from the Old Testament were new to him, he decided that their violent and heroic meaning could have been conveyed better by a more dramatic and monumental style.³²⁶ Even the pictorial technique, attentive to return the plastic value of the human figures and draperies, and the chromatic choice conform to the models he is looking at.

The execution of the *Condemned*, a series of paintings representing single mythological figures which theme was new to Titian and that was also part of a bigger and articulated iconographic programme, present a situation similar to the one of Santo Spirito. Plus, we have to take into account the quite evident Central-Italian and classical taste discussed before in relation to Mary of Hungary and Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle.

Michelangelo's art is considered the main source for these paintings. Scholars often discuss its relevance, as if this aspect could or could not undermine the authority

³²⁴ The role of Tuscan-Roman and Emilian painters in the development of the peculiar elements that will characterize Venetian *soffitti* in the second half of the XVIth century, is clearly summarised by SCHULZ 1968, pp. 3-21.

³²⁵ For Pordenone in Rome, see FURLAN 1985; HOCHMANN in PORDENONE 2019, pp. 77-91.

³²⁶ «The requirements of the iconographic programme of the ceiling paintings for Santo Spirito, a commentary on Sacrifice reflecting St. Augustine's text and expressing the mood of a defeated and despairing Venice, were admirably met by experimentation along the lines of development for which the Central-Italian painting was at this time greatly admired», KAHR 1966, pp. 193-205 (p. 205); see also GOFFEN 2002, pp. 227-229, even though the scholar focuses mostly on the Michelangelesque sources and leads all these Titian's experimentation back to his rivalry with Michelangelo.

of Titian as one of the most important artists of the Italian Renaissance and “champion” of the Venetian art. As summarised by Falomir in the exhibition of 2014, the debate tries to fit these paintings - including the series painted for Santo Spirito and, eventually, the ceiling of the Scuola of Saint John the Evangelist in Venice - into the *corpus* of Titian.³²⁷ Either the paintings are justified as coherent with Titian’s art development, or the impact of the work of Michelangelo is drastically downplayed, underlining that:

«the presence or absence of Michelangelo’s influence in this set of paintings has become the benchmark for evaluating them, rather as though a Titian containing a certain amount of Michelangelo were somehow “less” of a Titian».³²⁸

That said, it is not necessary to stress an aspect of competition to explain the “Michelangesque Interlude” if we consider that the Central-Italian example was mostly functional to achieve the requirements of the commission and to satisfy the desire of the patron.

The canvases for Binche were about the same size of the ones for Santo Spirito, and their monumentality derives from the focus on a human body that occupies most of the space. But whereas in the Old Testament cycle the foreshortening of the figures was enhanced by the big portion of sky that occupied almost half of the compositions, the figures of the *Condemned* are filling almost the entire painting, leaving very little space for other details. The attention on human bodies is almost statuesque, due to their primary role to vehiculate the message of extreme suffering and pain expected for who challenges the natural order. The *Sisyphus*,³²⁹ the only painting of the original

³²⁷ VENICE-WASHINGTON 1990-1991, pp. 272-274; C.

³²⁸ MADRID 2014, p. 165. There the author summarises the *status questionis*, remembering the long critical story of the cycle, that related the *Condemned* to Michelangelo since a very early stage, when Venturino da Fabriano visited the Alcazar in 1571. Falomir asserts that is impossible to understand the series of Binche without the art of Michelangelo and Titian’s stay in Rome, but he also points out the importance of the use of classical statue as sources, first of all, the group of the *Laocoon*.

³²⁹ Titian; *Sisyphus*; 1548-49; 237x216 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 156-160; HUMFREY 2007, pp. 233-234; FALOMIR in MADRID 2014, pp. 25-62; GENTILI 2014, pp. 240-245.

series that is supposed to have survived,³³⁰ shows a plastic depiction of the human figure, where the chiaroscuro is carefully used to underline the sculptural values (*Figure 25*). This style of painting, already present in the Santo Spirito decoration, is even more accentuated by the absolute centrality of the overgrown figures. The stylistic difference with the *Tityus* made Miguel Falomir question whether it belongs to the same series. The open brushstrokes, the use of more diluted oil and the monochrome effect of the colours, would have made this painting out of place at the side of the other. The scholar excludes the usual explanation that involves a massive intervention of assistants, and he identifies the *Tityus* now at the Prado as the one painted for Íñigo López de Mendoza, fifth duke of Infantado (1536-1601) and cited in the inventory of the palace of Guadalajara in 1601, among other paintings recalling Titian's compositions.³³¹ Therefore, the painting would resemble the style of later works by Titian because it was, in fact, painted around the 1560s.³³²

Following this line of reasoning, the *Tityus* that belonged to the duke of Infantado was switched by King Philip IV with the one in his possession in 1626, because his version was described as old and deteriorated since the 1556 inventory of Mary of Hungary, which seems not to be the case for the version now at the Prado Museum.³³³ About the formal sources, the *Sisyphus* was mainly related to figures of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel,³³⁴ however, a visual reference that appears to be of primary importance for this sinner, is the ancient statue known as the *Belvedere Torso*, greatly renowned

³³⁰ As discussed in FALOMIR 2007, pp. 29-36.

³³¹ *Lucretia, Diana and Actaeon, Venus and Adonis, Venus and Cupid, Perseus and Andromeda*, probably copies after Titian's paintings made by Francisco de Cleves (c. 1562-1611), Flemish painter that worked for the most important ducal houses of his day: Infantado and Pastrana, in FALOMIR 2007, p. 32.

³³² Falomir suggested 1566 as date *post quem* (FALOMIR 2007, p. 32).

³³³ In the inventory, the *Tityus* and the *Sisyphus* are not explicitly mentioned, and the *Ixion* and *Tantalus* are the ones described as ruined and in poor condition. However, the actual state of the *Sisyphus* and other contextual elements make more logical to assume that the series was all in the same state (FALOMIR 2007, p. 30).

³³⁴ In particular a man carrying a heavy burden in the image of the Flood, JOANNIDES 2004, pp. 140-142.

among the Renaissance artists (*Figure 26*).³³⁵ The arched position, the tense shoulders and the extreme attention to the depiction of the muscles of the male body, are elements common to both, the painting and the ancient marble.

On the other hand, in spite of likely not being part of the original series, the *Tityus*³³⁶ gives interesting and largely discussed insights about the composition (*Figure 27*), also known through the engraving made by the Dutch artist Cornelis Cort (1530-1578) in 1566. The most famous antecedent for the iconography of Tityus was certainly Michelangelo's drawing for Tommaso de' Cavalieri, dated 1532 (*Figure 28*).³³⁷ Except for some echoes in the composition - the isolation of the figure, the context suggested just through the rocks and the dead stump, the diagonal position of the body - the element that connects the two drawings is the use of an eagle instead of a vulture as the tormenter of Tityus.³³⁸ This substitution caused the confusion about the identity of the condemned, often referred to as Prometheus already in contemporary sources.³³⁹

In this case too, Titian's experience with Greek and Roman antiquities, both first-hand and through drawings and prints, was fundamental. The group of the *Laocoon* (*Figure 29*), that had an immense fame and impact on the artists of the XVIth century since its discovery in 1506,³⁴⁰ was a primary source for the figure of the tortured *Great Sinner*.³⁴¹

³³⁵ Apollonius of Athens; *Belvedere torso*; I BC; 159 cm; marble; Vatican Museums; Vatican City. See CARRASCO FERRER 2011, p. 76. For the reception of the *Belvedere Torso* in the Renaissance, see BOBER-RUBINSTEIN 2010, pp. 166-168.

³³⁶ Titian; *Tityus*; c. 1565; 253x217 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 156-160; FALOMIR 2007, pp. 29-36. HUMFREY 2007, pp. 233,235; FALOMIR in MADRID 2014, pp. 25-62; GENTILI 2014, pp. 240-245.

³³⁷ Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The punishment of Tityus*; 1532; 19x33 cm; black chalk on paper; Royal Collection Trust; Windsor Castle. See GNANN 2010B, pp. 272-275.

³³⁸ MADRID 2014, pp. 164-165. Another explanation is offered by Gentili (2012, pp. 242-243) writes that the two birds were interchangeable in the antique sources, and that Titian started with a Prometheus and changed it in a Tityus at the last moment to make it fit in the allegory.

³³⁹ Matteo Mancini suggests that the painting was originally conceived as a Prometheus when it was part of the cycle in Binche, but that its subject was changed when it became part of Philip II collection (2011, pp. 71-92).

³⁴⁰ Anonymous; *Laocoon group*; I BC; 208 cm; marble; Vatican Museums; Vatican City. For a summary, see BOBER-RUBINSTEIN 2010, pp. 152-155.

³⁴¹ This aspect was commented by different scholars, for a general analysis, see SUTHERLAND 2008, pp. 206-212.

As argued by Michel Hochmann, the Venetian artist referred to the sculpture in different artworks, since his early career: the 1516 woodcut of *Saint Jerome*, Christ in the *Averoldi Polyptich* in 1522, the already mentioned *Crowning with thorns*, the Abraham in the ceiling of Santo Spirito, and even the parodistic print known as the *Ape Laocoon*.³⁴² In the sculpture, the right arm of the main figure was originally missing, as recorded by the 1515-27 print by Marco Dente (active 1515-1527). The outstretched arm of the *Tityus* can be compared to the one made by Giovanni Montorsoli (1507-1563) and commissioned by the Pope Clemente VII in 1532-33.³⁴³

The appearance of the *Tantalus* painted by Coxcie as temporary replacement for the one that Titian still had to complete, is still unknown. What is certain is that Mary of Hungary solicited the delivery of the painting in a letter dated 28 August 1553³⁴⁴, and that this is mentioned in the inventory of 1558, together with the version by Coxcie. The *Tantalus* by Titian is also lost, but its semblance survives through the print by Giulio Sanuto (active 1540-1588), dated after 1553 (*Figure 30*).³⁴⁵ As the other two *Great Condemned*, the fundamental formal source for the depiction of mythological figure is another classical statue, the *Falling Gaul* (*Figure 31*)³⁴⁶ that belonged to the Cardinal Domenico Grimani (1461-1523).³⁴⁷ The hand on the ground that is supporting the body, the tension on the shoulder and the face turned upward to grasp the view of something desired, are all elements that also characterise the *Tantalus*. It is not very likely that the print had been conceived as the perfect reproduction of the painting by Titian. First of all, because Giulio Sanuto might not have seen the original, but a replica or a drawing that stayed in the workshop, secondly, because the

³⁴² AIKEMA 2001, pp. 25-27, HOCHMANN 2003, pp. 91-103. For a more general discussion about the impact of the *Laocoon* in the art of Veneto, see FAVARETTO 1982-83, pp. 75-92.

³⁴³ For a study on the restorations of the group of the *Laocoon*, see REBAUDO 2007.

³⁴⁴ MANCINI 1998, p. 225.

³⁴⁵ Giulio Sanuto, after Titian; *Tantalus*; post 1553; 44,9x35,3 cm; engraving; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam. See LÜDEMANN 2016, p. 186, with further bibliography.

³⁴⁶ Anonymous; *Falling Gaul*; c. I BC-I AC; 74 cm; marble; National Archaeological Museum; Venice. The resemblance, now generally accepted, was first recognized by BRENDEL 1955, p. 122. For the different representations of this statue and its impact on the Italian artists, see BOBERT-RUBINSTEIN 2010, pp. 184-185.

³⁴⁷ At his death Domenico Grimani left his collection, including this statue, to the Republic of Venice, asking that it should have been displayed. See PERRY 1978, pp. 215-244.

background with architectural elements appears to be out of place if compared to the emptiness of the other paintings of the cycle.³⁴⁸ However, the main male figure in a contorted position, which draws all the attention on its powerful and accurate anatomy, fits perfectly the composition and the language of the surviving sinners. At this point, can we suppose that the Tantalus by Coxcie might have been also in harmony with the other canvases of the cycle? Considering his pictorial production of the 1540s, this seems very likely.

1.3.2.2 Coherence in the *grande salle* of Binche: common sources, common results

The *David and Goliath* now at the Escorial (Figure 32) provides a suitable example of a painting that presents many of the features that also characterize Titian's *Condemned*.³⁴⁹ The two male figures, although fully clothed, are depicted with particular attention for the anatomy. The space of the panel is mostly occupied by their two statuary bodies, leaving the space just for some rocks, a couple of trees and a glimpse of the cloudy sky. The composition suggests that the painting should have been hanged slightly higher than the viewer because of the emphasis on the foreshortened figure of Goliath and the overhead David, pressing the sword on the neck of the giant. The monumental body of Goliath represented in *raccourci*, (foreshortened), incorporates the embryonic elements of a type of figure that will become recurrent in the art of the painter.³⁵⁰ Although seems natural to compare the *David and Goliath* to Titian's painting with the same subject for Santo Spirito, Coxcie's panel can't be dated precisely, and it would be too contrived to suppose a direct connection between the two. It is more logic to consider that both painters, for different reasons, were referring to the Central-Italian visual models, and that the subject itself, religious and heroic, would benefit from this language that had had its maximum expression in the art of Michelangelo. We also

³⁴⁸ See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 409.

³⁴⁹ Michiel Coxcie; *David and Goliath*; c. 1540; 139x106 cm; oil on panel; Patrimonio Nacional del Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Madrid. See JONCKHEERE in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 94-95.

³⁵⁰ PEETERS 2012, pp. 29-41. The scholar identifies the use of *raccourci* figures, male bodies presented in the foreground, lying on their back, as a recurrent visual expedient during the artist's entire career. Another recurrent element is the reference to the *Laocoon* as model for many male characters.

need to remember that Coxcie's painting was among the possessions of Mary of Hungary when she died in 1558, together with all of the works by Titian.³⁵¹

Nonetheless, it could be interesting to draw attention on another fundamental work by Michiel Coxcie, that represents a complex *compendium* of visual references to the Roman art of the time, the *Triptych with the Holy Kinship* (Figure 33).³⁵² The altarpiece was painted after his return from Italy, probably commissioned for the Antwerp's Church of Our Lady, and it was fundamental for introducing motives, architectures and models that were characterizing the language of the Italian Roman Renaissance.³⁵³ On the foreground of the left wing, a bearded man is on the floor partially sitting, unbalanced, almost supporting his weight with his right hand. The left leg extended upward, giving the impression that the man just fell. His right leg is out of frame, but we cannot but think his foot is resting on the ground so as to support his body in this position. This figure clearly recalls the *Falling Gaul* (Figure 31), the same antique statue used by Titian as model for his *Tantalus* (Figure 30).³⁵⁴ That the visual source for this figure is a classical model is confirmed by the nature of the Triptych, in which numerous references to antiquity, Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci can be retraced, sometimes literally quoted.³⁵⁵ In addition, Coxcie seems to have referred to the same statue other times, the first of which was probably during his stay in Italy, in the painting representing the *Plato's Cave* (Figure 34).³⁵⁶

The art of Coxcie had its strength in a harmonious combination of classical elements, motives from the most important contemporary masters of the Tuscan-Roman school, a style “*all'antica*” carefully merged with the traditional Netherlandish background that made him deserve the title of “the Flemish Raphael”. It was probably

³⁵¹ «Yten una tabla quadrada grande, y en ella rretratado, o pintado, quando David cortaba la cabeça a Golias, hecha por maese Myguel, con sus molduras de por sí, de madera blanca.» in CHECA CREMADES 2010, III, p. 2914.

³⁵² Michiel Coxcie; *Miracle of the poisoned chalice*; left wing of the *Triptych with the Holy Kinship*; 1540; 245x95,5 cm; oil on panel; Benediktinerstift, Stiftsammlungen; Kremsmünster. See JONCKHEERE in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 79-86.

³⁵³ JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK in LEUVEN 2013-2014b, p. 29.

³⁵⁴ See JONCKHEERE in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 73.

³⁵⁵ LOINIG 1995, pp. 113-128.

³⁵⁶ Attributed to Michiel Coxcie; *Plato's Cave*; c. 1530-39; oil on panel, 131x174 cm; Musée de la Chartreuse; Douai. See JONCKHEERE in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 73-79.

for his ability of being an interpreter of this language that he became the court painter of Mary of Hungary, whose attention to classical visual idiom we mentioned already.

Michiel Coxcie had an important role in the decoration of the *grande salle* of Binche, painting the frescoes above the mantelpieces and the windows.³⁵⁷ None of them survived, but they were an integral part of the decoration and the political allegory expressed in the great hall of the palace. It is not coincidental that the two painters were referring to the same models, and it is also not coincidental that their visual language and, on a certain extent, their plastic pictorial style, are comparable if not even compatible.

At least few words should be spent on the tapestries that were adorning the walls of the *grande salle*, and especially on their artist, the aforementioned Pieter Coecke van Aelst. This Flemish artist worked as court painter for Charles V and Mary of Hungary, especially designing series of tapestries. There is no archival evidence that can ascertain his journeys, but generally the scholars agree on the possibility that he had travelled to Italy and Constantinople.³⁵⁸ The change in his technique and the new references in his designs suggest that he had visited Italy, especially Rome and Mantua, after 1533, returning from Turkey. Anyway, his acquaintance with original works of Raphael, Giulio Romano and other Italian artists would have been guaranteed by the presence of full-sized cartoons and *petits patrons* sent to tapestry weavers in Brussels.³⁵⁹ The series of the *Deadly Sins* was initially designed around 1533, and reproduced at least five times, including the set for Mary of Hungary.³⁶⁰ Every tapestry presents a procession of sins and sinners going from left to right based on the *Triumphs* by Petrarch (1304-1374),³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ See HEDICKE 1911–12, pp. 410–411; JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 33.

³⁵⁸ NEW YORK 2014-15, pp. 12-13; GODFRIND-BORN 2018, pp. 89-141.

³⁵⁹ A *petit patron* is a detailed drawing of the composition, that contains all of the elements of the finished product, but in a smaller size. The drawing had subsequently to be copied onto a sheet of paper or a piece of cloth that was the same size of the tapestry's size.

³⁶⁰ NEW YORK 2014-15, pp. 193-197.

³⁶¹ A series of poems by the Tuscan writer Francesco Petrarca, each of them describing a procession of allegorical figures evoking the antique practice of the imperial triumphs, see CARRASCO FERRER 2011, p. 83.

in a parody of the Roman triumphs.³⁶² The style merges models that remind of Giulio Romano's Palazzo Te and the crowded and dynamic composition of Raphael's *Fire in the Borgo* in the Stanze Vaticane, with fantastic creatures recording Medieval traditions and some Flemish courtly elements. On a side note, it is interesting to remember that Pieter Coecke van Aelst was also the designer of a series of prints depicting the *Revolt of the Giants* and the *Fall of the Giants*, which were engraved in 1540-44 by the northern Netherlandish artist Cornelis Bos (c. 1515-1556).³⁶³ These prints are evidently based on the fresco by Giulio Romano in Palazzo Te, and they are an example of the assimilation of the lesson of Raphael through the art of one of his most talented pupils. In the *Revolt of the Giants*,³⁶⁴ much attention is given to figures carrying large stones on their shoulders while climbing up the mountain, bent under the huge weight (*Figure 35*). In particular, three of them in the lower part of the print, seem almost to be the same figure seen from different angles. The second engraving (*Figure 36*), that depicts the fall of the rebels crushed by the justice of the gods,³⁶⁵ is a collection of lying bodies, some of them leaning on their backs and stretching their arms in the desperate attempt to protect themselves from the rocks that are falling from the sky. Looking at these prints, it seems obvious to associate the figures carrying the rocks with Titian's *Sisyphus* (*Figure 25*) and the others lying on the ground with the *Tityus* (*Figure 27*) and the *Tantalus*. Suggesting a direct relation would be forced and unlikely, especially considering that Titian had access to the original work of Giulio Romano, the main visual reference also for Pieter Coecke van Aelst. These similarities reveal how a conscious use of the same sources, both in the formal reference to classicism to follow the preferences of

³⁶² This iconography was often used in the political propaganda. The political message could be vehiculated referring to triumphs of the Caesars during the Roman Empire, as in the case of the renowned *Triumphs of Caesar* (c. 1495) painted by Mantegna for the Gonzaga in Mantua or incarnating the virtues and the right to reign of the ancient Emperors in the person of the ruler. This is the case of the print *Great triumphal car* (1522) designed by Albrecht Dürer for the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. See SILVER 1990, pp. 292-331.

³⁶³ NEW YORK 2014-15, pp. 94-98.

³⁶⁴ Cornelis Bos after Pieter Coecke van Aelst; *The revolt of the Giants*; 1540-44; 31,9x41,6 cm; engraving; Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam.

³⁶⁵ Cornelis Bos after Pieter Coecke van Aelst; *The fall of the Giants*; 1540-44; 31,8x41,8 cm; engraving; Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam.

the Habsburgs, and in the major iconographical model that was popular at the time, can lead to coherent and similar results.³⁶⁶

To sum up, the “Michelangelesque Interlude” or the “Mannerist crisis” are expressions coined to describe a precise moment within the entire artistic production of the Venetian painter. A moment in which Titian was experimenting with the Central-Italian art and confronting himself with Michelangelo. This attitude was not only stimulated by his own stay in Rome, but also by the presence of Mannerist artists in Mantua and in Venice.

However, at the light of the previous discussion about the Roman-centric taste developed in the Habsburg’s court and about the preference for a more classical and Central-Italian visual language, these controversial expressions appear inadequate to describe the phenomenon, because they start from a different premise. They try to collocate the art of the 1540s, culminating in the series of the *Condemned*, as a part of the development of the art of Titian, creating the narrative of a coherent “evolution” and discarding or diminishing elements that seem not to fit into this story.

Instead of discussing on whether these works are coherent with the art of Titian and his “temperament”³⁶⁷ or not, what matters is whether or not they were coherent to their context, their final destination. Of course, this sounds redundant to repeat, and it was thoroughly analysed in the essay by Falomir in the 2014 exhibition,³⁶⁸ nevertheless it is important to reaffirm that the first and most coherent idea of Titian that was received in the Netherlands art had been shaped and influenced by the expectations of the Habsburgs, and it presented many aspects that are usually considered inherently Central-Italian.

³⁶⁶ A similar case was described in the catalogue of the 2014 exhibition, in relation to the work of Maarten van Heemskerck. The series of prints depicting the parable of the Good Samaritan and in the engraving entitled *The dangers of human ambitions* (engraved by Dirck Volkertsz Coornhert on van Heemskerck’s drawing), both dated 1549, appears to share “formal and conceptual resemblance to the *furias*” (p. 176). Their derivation from Titian’s *Condemned* is questionable. First of all, the date of 1549 seems to be too tight for the series of Binche to have become a reference model. Secondly, we have seen other examples of works of art anterior to Titian’s that were engaging both with the subject and the formal sources. See MADRID 2014, pp. 176-187.

³⁶⁷ PUTTFARKEN 2005, p. 86.

³⁶⁸ Again MADRID 2014, pp. 159-170.

1.4 The outcomes of the last travel (1550-1551)

Unlike the first Titian's sojourn of 1548, the months spent by the Venetian in the imperial city between 1550 and 1551 were mostly wanted by prince Philip. After he had convoked the painter in Milan, Philip expressed again the desire of meeting Titian in Augsburg, as recorded in a letter that the Prince wrote in July 1550 to Juan Hurtado de Mendoza.³⁶⁹ Apart from the personal interest showed by Philip for the art of Titian, embodied by the commission of the *poesie*, this shift from father to son was also meaningful in relation to Charles V politics of succession. With the Pragmatic Sanction of 1549, the Emperor reorganized the Seventeen Provinces, unifying them under one Habsburg ruler. This political decision was taken in order to keep the Low Countries united and to ensure the hereditary rights to his son Philip. During the 1550 Diet of Augsburg, together with the discussions about the Lutherans, the main debate concerned Charles V's decision of appointing Philip as the successor of Ferdinand as King of Romans instead of the latter's son Maximilian. This would have made Philip his direct successor as Holy Roman Emperor. This tense political situation inside the Habsburg's family was solved also thanks to the presence of Mary of Hungary, who supported the claims of her brother Charles.³⁷⁰

This was the context in which Titian was summoned to work, between November 1550 and August 1551.³⁷¹ Even though it was Prince Philip who expressed the desire of having the Venetian painter in Augsburg, the major commissions came from the Emperor himself and from his sister Mary of Hungary. In fact, Charles V developed

³⁶⁹ Philip not only asks to Juan Hurtado de Mendoza to invite the painter to Augsburg, but he also commands him to remember the painter to bring a painting that he was supposed to have started, probably a portrait: «Lo que agora se offriesce que deziros es que holgaría mucho de que Ticiano viniesse a Augusta [...]. Yo os ruego mucho que se lo digais y encarguéis de mí parte y le dispongáis a ello como vos lo sabéis bien hazer y él encomendéis que traiga con sigo la obra que tiene allá mía [...]»; MANCINI 1998, pp. 203-204.

³⁷⁰ For a summary, see KAMEN 1997, pp. 40-47; MOUT 2012, pp. 203-215; PARKER 2014, pp. 108-116

³⁷¹ MANCINI 1998, p. 36. The scholar suggests these dates in contrast to the traditional notion that Titian came back from Augsburg in May 1551; WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 127. The recent PUPPI 2012 doesn't take a stand on the matter.

his interest in Titian's religious works by commissioning the first canvas that was not a portrait, the so-called *Holy Trinity*,³⁷² and two other devotional paintings representing the *Mater Dolorosa*.³⁷³

1.4.1 Combining “heroic” and evanescent figures in the *Holy Trinity*

The *Holy Trinity* had been mentioned for the first time in June 1553, in a letter that Francisco de Vargas wrote to Charles V (*Figure 37*). The ambassador calls it «quadro de la Trinidad», and describes it as «obra degna déb», reassuring the Emperor that the painting would be finished within September.³⁷⁴ The painting was instead shipped in October 1554, together with others destined to Philip and Antone Perrenot de Granvelle. Vargas, again, expresses his admiration for the *Holy Trinity*, writing: «El cuadro principal pienso que es una de las mejores cosa que Ticiano ha hecho [...]».³⁷⁵ Whereas there are documents about its execution and shipping, few information is known about the commission. However, due to the nature not only devotional but also political and dynastic of the work, the circumstances and the motivations behind the commission are even more significant to understand its meaning and its formal choices.

The only document comes from the pen of Titian himself, in the letter of 1567 that he wrote to the Cardinal Alessandro Farnese about the print after the *Holy Trinity* he was about to send him. There, Titian reveals that Charles V commissioned the devotional painting sixteen years earlier (1551), and that he was planning to take it with him to the monastery where he was going to retire.³⁷⁶ If we combine this information with the tensions related to succession matters, it is easy to imagine how important this spectacular canvas was for the Emperor. The complexity of the religious iconography, thoroughly investigated by Erwin Panofsky in his pivotal analysis of the

³⁷² Titian; *Holy Trinity*; 1551-1554; 346x240 cm; oil on canvas; Museo del Prado; Madrid. See WETHEY 1969, pp. 165-167; BIERWIRTH 2002; FINALDI 2005, pp. 115-125; MUNARI 2019.

³⁷³ The two paintings, the *Mater Dolorosa with clasped hands* and the *Mater Dolorosa with her hands apart*, are now at the Prado, and they will be discussed later.

³⁷⁴ MANCINI 1998, p. 223.

³⁷⁵ MANCINI 1998, p. 233.

³⁷⁶ PUPPI 2012, pp. 285-286.

painting,³⁷⁷ and then further developed by scholars like Fernando Checa Cremades,³⁷⁸ Augusto Gentili,³⁷⁹ Michael Bierwirth³⁸⁰ and the recent monographic study by Isabella Munari,³⁸¹ implies the participation of some theologians or humanists of the court to be elaborated.

In fact, the main literary source for the *Holy Trinity* was the book *De civitate Dei* written by the Church Father Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430). In this text is described how the blessed souls will experience a double resurrection: the first one at the moment of the death, when they will have a supreme vision of the Trinity, and the second one during the Last Judgement. In the canvas we can find many elements that are directly related to Saint Augustine's vision. First of all, the presence of the portraits of Charles V and other members of his family, all kneeling, wrapped in humble white shrouds in front of the holy vision. On the right, we can recognize the profile of the Emperor, reverently looking at the blinding golden light that radiates from the Trinity. At his side, accompanied by an angel, the Empress Isabella of Portugal, the only depicted family member who was already deceased when the painting was commissioned. Her son Philip follows her, portrayed in three-quarter profile,³⁸² while on a lower level we find Mary of Hungary, her hair covered by the usual veil. Next to her, other two female figures that are more difficult to identify. They are usually thought to be the portraits of Joanna of Austria (1535-1573), daughter of Charles and Isabella, and Eleanor of Austria, the other sister of the Emperor and Queen of France.³⁸³ It is interesting to mention the presence of the portrait of Francisco Vargas,

³⁷⁷ PANOFSKY 1969, pp. 64-71.

³⁷⁸ CHECA CREMADES 1994, pp. 60-67; CHECA CREMADES 2007, pp. 135-162; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 303-326.

³⁷⁹ GENTILI 2012, pp. 274-278.

³⁸⁰ BIERWIRTH 2002.

³⁸¹ MUNARI 2019.

³⁸² Isabella Munari argues that the portrait of the Prince was originally conceived in profile, like it has been recorded by the print by Cornelis Cort of 1566, and that it was subsequently overpainted when Philip owned the canvas. This change might have been decided to give more importance to his image, differentiating himself from the other family members. See MUNARI 2019, p. 65.

³⁸³ GENTILI 2012, p. 2015; MUNARI 2019, p. 66.

the ambassador in Venice, who asked the artist to be included in the painting,³⁸⁴ and the profile of Titian himself, unmistakably recognizable. Another element is the clear distinction between the lower section, with a landscape populated by small figures, that represents the Earthly City, and the community of the blessed, embodied by figures from the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*, the souls of the Emperor and his family.³⁸⁵

This is not the place to discuss the different interpretations of this problematic work and the several implications that they have on the idea of Titian as the interpreter of the counter-reformation religious art. The *Holy Trinity* represents the most complex painting required from Titian by Charles V, both iconographically and visually, and again the artist had to face the challenges of the Habsburg commissions.

Here, too, the monumentality of the figures in the foreground strikes the viewer, bearing to mind the heroic nudes of Michelangelo. This aspect, combined to the theme of the painting, an *Adoration of the Holy Trinity* but also a *Judgement*,³⁸⁶ might suggest that the painting was conceived as an “answer” to Michelangelo’s *Last Judgement*.³⁸⁷ There is no doubt that when dealing with this vertical composition based on figures disposed on many levels, going from a terrestrial to a celestial vision, Titian had in mind the

³⁸⁴ As documented by the letter wrote by Titian to Charles V in September 1554, in which the artist seems to refuse to take responsibility for the decision to include Vargas in the devotional painting, adding that every painter could cover his face, if the Emperor disliked it; MANCINI 1998, pp. 229-23.

³⁸⁵ The same visual expedient was used by Albrecht Dürer in his *Landauer Altarpiece* (1511) now at the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna. The iconography of the painting for the merchant Matthäus Landauer had been also connected to the text *De civitate Dei* by Erwin Panofsky, who used the comparison between the *Holy Trinity* and the *Landauer Altarpiece* to analyse the meaning of Titian’s canvas. See PANOFSKY 1969, pp. 66-67.

³⁸⁶ Not the *Last Judgement*, as it was referred to in the Emperor’s codicil of 1558 (MUNARI 2019, p. 255), but the personal judgment of Charles V, already depicted among the blessed in the hope of salvation.

³⁸⁷ This desire of measuring himself with Michelangelo on a similar subject would be also the result of the polemic related to Titian’s omission from the first edition of Vasari’s *Vite* (1550). See CHECA CREMADES 2013, p. 305. The idea of antagonism or a polemical response is not convincing. The reference to Michelangelo for the theme was likely unescapable, being the Sistine *Last Judgement* a benchmark for the representation of this subject. Titian was working for the most powerful Emperor of the continent, and we might want to downsize the interpretation of his choices as strategies to prove himself in opposition to Central-Italian art and art theory.

inescapable example of the Sistine Chapel or, on a wider extent, the theme of the *Last Judgement*. However, in his analysis of the *Holy Trinity*, Panofsky compares the painting to Albrecht Dürer's *Landauer Altarpiece* (Figure 38), which also shares compositional elements and depicts concepts expressed in *De civitate Dei*.³⁸⁸ Through this comparison, it is possible to relate Titian's *Holy Trinity* to a tradition of the representation of the community of blessed adoring the Trinity, or the Holy Lamb. The scholar refers to the central panel of the *Ghent Altarpiece*, or to other interpretations of the theme of the *Paradise* by Stephan Lochner and Rogier van der Weyden, or the *Kassel Altarpiece* by Jacob Cornelisz. van Oostsanen.³⁸⁹ On the other hand, Titian's visual references are not to be searched that far, according to the study of Michael Bierwirth.³⁹⁰ Following his line of reasoning, Titian could use as model paintings that belonged to the Venetian tradition of the representation of Paradise, among which the most important and commonly known was the fresco by Guariento Guarienti (1310-1370) in the Palazzo Ducale of Venice.³⁹¹ Moving on to a more philological study of Titian's visual sources, most of the literature focused on the impressive figures in the foreground that appear, as we mentioned already, as the most heroic and Michelangelesque.

Starting from the lower left corner, seen from the back while is leaning on an eagle, we can identify the prophet Ezekiel. In this figure Panofsky recognised a similarity with the man at the extreme right in Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* (Figure 39).³⁹² The second male figure is Moses, as the tablets of the laws and the rays of light in the shape of horns indicate. Moses, whose position recalls that of the *Falling Gaul*,³⁹³ not by chance reminds us of the *Tantalus*, at the point that it could be just a different point of view of

³⁸⁸ Albrecht Dürer; *Landauer Altarpiece*; 1511; 135x123 cm; oil on panel; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna. See PANOFSKY 1955, p. 125-131.

³⁸⁹ PANOFSKY 1969, p. 70.

³⁹⁰ BIERWIRTH 2002; the aspect of the relation to the Venetian tradition is summarized in MUNARI 2019, pp. 94-97.

³⁹¹ BIERWIRTH 2002, p. 96.

³⁹² The *Battle of Cascina* was project for a fresco in Palazzo Vecchio in Florence that was never executed. However, the lost preparatory drawing (1505-6) became well-known along with the increasing fame of Michelangelo, and many copies and prints after it survived. Aristotele da Sangallo after Michelangelo; *Battle of Cascina*; 1542; 78,7x129 cm; oil on panel; Holkham Hall; Norfolk. PANOFSKY 1969, p. 65.

³⁹³ Similarity recognised by PANOFSKY 1969, p. 65.

the same figure. It follows Noah, carrying the Ark above his head, and a female figure dressed in iridescent green. The woman has been identified as the personification of the Catholic Church or Mary Magdalen, but it seems more likely to be the Eritrean Sibyl.³⁹⁴ Joannides sees this figure as a clear figural reference to the woman raising her hands in despair at the centre of Raphael's *Fire in the Borgo* in the Stanze Vaticane (Figure 40).³⁹⁵ Panofsky, on the contrary, believes that Titian modelled her on a figure of the *Last Judgement*, loosely inspired by the *Niobids Group*.³⁹⁶ The figure on the far right, probably the one painted in the most sculptural style, clearly refers to the *Laocoon*, especially in the intense expression and the position of the head (Figure 29).³⁹⁷ The sitting position accompanied with the torsion of the body and the outstanding physicality of David, are all conceptually very close to Michelangelo's prophets in the Sistine Chapel, but we cannot find a direct quote from one or more of them.

Bierwirth notes a change of style - but we could also say of sources - that goes accordingly to the subjects represented.³⁹⁸ The more "heroic" figures from the Old Testament, Michelangesque and classical, painted with a strong sense of plasticity, are accompanied by the group of portraits, less corporeal and more traditional, showed predominantly in profile like Roman emperors on coins. At the top, eroded by the holy light that is almost dissolving the translucent bodies, the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost appears in their mystical intangibility.

The *Holy Trinity* is a *unicum* in the production for the Habsburgs until that moment. It is a devotional painting that incorporates effigies of the patron and his family, and a iconographically and stylistically complex artwork that blends different visual languages and reveals an uneven quality of execution. Nonetheless, once again, Roman and classical art remains the main sources of the Venetian master when he had to deal with figures from the Old Testament, like he had done with the ceiling canvases for

³⁹⁴ For the different interpretations, see MUNARI 2019, p. 58.

³⁹⁵ Raphael; *Fire in the Borgo*; 1514-17; 500x670 cm; fresco; Vatican Museums; Vatican City. JOANNIDES 1990, pp. 34-35; JOANNIDES 2004, p. 138.

³⁹⁶ PANOFSKY 1969, p. 65.

³⁹⁷ That Titian used classical statues as models for the figures in the foreground, and especially for the David, was recognised since the description by Carlo Ridolfi in 1648. See RIDOLFI (1648) 1835-7, I, p. 241.

³⁹⁸ BIERWIRTH 2002, p. 119.

Santo Spirito, and especially in a court environment in which the imperial political message was delivered through a rhetoric that referred to classical antiquity.

1.4.2 Images of devotion: pairing the *Ecce Homo* and the *Dolorosa*

Charles V appears to have appreciated the *Ecce Homo* that Titian gave him as a present at the time of his first stay in Augsburg (*Figure 6*), as attested by his desire to have the right *Mater Dolorosa* to pair it with. In contrast to the indifference and the silence that he reserved to the *Venus* he received in the same circumstance, the interest of the Emperor in this subject is evident in a certain number of letters.

The first of the Virgins can be identified with the *Mater Dolorosa with clasped hands*, now at the Prado Museum (*Figure 41*).³⁹⁹ The painting is on panel, not a common support in Titian's production, probably to create the effect of a levigated surface similar to the one of the *Ecce Homo*, painted on stone. In the document that probably refers to this work, Francisco de Vargas writes: «El otro Quadro dize que una table de Nuestra Señora igual del Ecce homo que Vuestra Magestad tiene [...]».⁴⁰⁰ It is clear that the *Mater Dolorosa* was supposed to be seen in couple with the *Ecce Homo*, as can be also deduced by a further comment, about the size of the panel, which appeared to have been incorrect. The diptych of an *Ecce Homo* paired with a *Mater Dolorosa*, the Virgin crying for the suffering son, was a traditional Flemish typology of painting, very popular since the XVth century.⁴⁰¹ In the Netherlands, the artist Dieric Bouts (1415-

³⁹⁹ Titian; *Mater Dolorosa with clasped hands*; 1554; 68x61 cm; oil on panel; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. On this *Mater Dolorosa* and the other one dated 1555 at the Prado, see WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 115-116; CHECA CREMADES 1994, pp. 249-250; MADRID 1998-1999, pp. 444-445; MADRID 2003, pp. 385-386; HOPE 2003, pp. 136-138; NIETO ALCAIDE 2005, pp. 103-113; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 314, ff; NICHOLS 2013B, pp. 128-131; GENTILI 2014, pp. 278-280; HARTH 2021a, pp. 111-112.

⁴⁰⁰ MANCINI 1998, p. 223.

⁴⁰¹ The diptychs of the Man of Sorrows with the *Mater Dolorosa* developed from the iconography of the Christ of Piety as an evolution of the Byzantine icons. In fact, icons were often considered “prototypes” of the real likeness of Christ and the Virgin, a feature that would guarantee the religious authority of these models. Some scholars argue that this type was imported through Venice to the Low Countries. An important step in this transformation was the combination of the Virgin and Christ in the various *Lamentation* by Giovanni Bellini (1433-1516), spread across Europe through prints. See NICHOLS 2013B, pp. 60-64; BORCHERT 2017, pp. 28-49.

1475) is considered to have popularized this typology, which combined earlier prototypes with the concept of Flemish portraits.⁴⁰² An explicatory example of this typology is the diptych now at the Groeningemuseum of Bruges, painted in the last quarter of XVth century by an anonymous master (*Figure 42*).⁴⁰³

Compared to Flemish and Bellini's examples, Titian's Virgin appears more natural. Her hands are spasmodically entwined, her profile recalls a classical statue in its canonical construction, and the folds of her robe, painted in precious *lapislazuli*, are particularly sculptural. Apart from the details of teary eyes and the cyanotic lips, which appear in the art of Titian for the first time, this Virgin does not evoke the extreme piety of the Flemish devotional paintings. In her study, Harth describes Titian's approach in this *Mater Dolorosa* as "naturalistic" and "reminiscent of the art of Giorgione".⁴⁰⁴ This way of painting was, in her opinion, among the reasons that made Charles V commission the devotional Man and Our Lady of Sorrow from Titian instead that from a Netherlandish artist. The production of the second *Mater Dolorosa* and its stronger Flemish appearance, might suggest that Titian's style did not cause Charles V's commission, and reinforces the idea that the *Ecce Homo* was a present, and not an early example of the Emperor's fondness in the Venetian's art. His preference, as we are arguing, was for the Flemish pietistic aesthetic and for the peculiarity of the stone support.

The first *Dolorosa* was sent in 1554,⁴⁰⁵ but the Emperor immediately commissioned another painting from Titian, this time on marble and after a model (a drawing) that he had purposely sent him. This painting had been identified with the *Mater Dolorosa with her hands apart* at the Prado Museum (*Figure 43*).⁴⁰⁶ Vargas records this exchange in a letter dated March 1555:

⁴⁰² For the reception and use of byzantine icons in Flemish art, see AINSWORTH in NEW YORK 2004, pp. 544-555; HENDRIKS 2016, pp. 27-42; BORCHERT 2017, p. 38.

⁴⁰³ Anonymous master of Brussels; *Diptych of the Man of Sorrows and the Mater Dolorosa*; 1475-99; 44x61 cm; oil on panel; Groeningemuseum; Bruges.

⁴⁰⁴ See HARTH 2021B, pp. 100-101.

⁴⁰⁵ The paintings were sent in October of that year, and they arrived in Brussels in January 1555. MANCINI 1998, p. 232, 235.

⁴⁰⁶ Titian; *Mater Dolorosa with her hands apart*; 1555; 68x53 cm; oil on marble; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See footnote 397.

«[...] entenderá luego en el hazer el Quadro de Nuestra Señora de la manera que Vuestra Magestad dessea [...]. Tiene por dificultoso hallar piedra, pero hazerse ha toda diligencia possible y si no, se hallaré será en table. Spero que con la voluntad que tiene de server a Vuestra Magestad y con el desegno que se embió hará el quadro que satisfaga a Vuestra Magestad.»⁴⁰⁷

Charles V wanted a *Mater Dolorosa* that could match his *Ecce Homo* also in its material values, so he asked for a slab of stone as support, even though Titian was having troubles in finding the right one.⁴⁰⁸ Moreover, the Emperor sent to Titian, the great Venetian master, a drawing to use as model for his painting,⁴⁰⁹ as recorded in a letter dated 31 May 1555.⁴¹⁰ It is unknown after which painting this drawing has been done, but the model was likely Flemish.⁴¹¹ The three-quarter face, slightly inclined, the shape of the veil that is completely covering the hair, the red and pathetic eyes and the illusionistic teardrops, are all elements that are very common in the Flemish appearance of a *Mater Dolorosa*. Comparing the two paintings, it is easy to argue that the second one, painted on marble, was more fitting in the Flemish tradition, both compositionally and in the less sculptural treatment of the human body. Also, the words of Vargas are

⁴⁰⁷ MANCINI 1998, p. 236,

⁴⁰⁸ A more semantic explanation for the use of stone as support for the painting of the *Dolorosa* is the possible relation to the text by Pietro Aretino named *Umanità di Cristo* (1535) in which he describes the shock of the Virgin before the dead body of her son as if it transformed her in a statue of marble. MANCINI 2009, p. 340; GENTILI 2012, p. 278.

⁴⁰⁹ This was not the first time, if we consider that Charles V had sent a portrait of his wife Isabella in order to give a model of her likeness to Titian back in 1545. In that case, however, the dispatch of a model was necessary because the Empress died years earlier and the portrait had to be identifiable. Here the Emperor shows again his lack of interest in the artistic creativity of his works of art, and his attention mostly on their functions, especially on political and devotional meaning. As Charles Hope put it: «the Flemish original presumably aroused his piety, so he saw nothing incongruous in asking his favourite painter to reproduce it»; HOPE 2003, p. 138. About the control of Charles V over the artistic process of Titian, see MANCINI 2009, pp. 341-342.

⁴¹⁰ «Presto se enviará a Ticiano el Patrón de la imagen de Nuestra Señora [...]»; MANCINI 1998, p. 239.

⁴¹¹ Charles Hope argues that the drawing might have been after a work by Rogier van der Weyden or one of his followers (2003, p. 138), while Miguel Falomir suggests some work by Quinten (1466-1530) or Jan Massys (1509-1573) because Charles V owned some of their paintings (MADRID 2003, p. 385).

so much stressing the concept of Titian following the instructions of the Emperor, specifically using the expression “a painting that can satisfy His Majesty”, that we can imagine it was not just the wrong size that caused the commission of the second *Dolorosa*.⁴¹²

As mentioned above, these bust-length devotional paintings represent a specific group in Titian’s production, appreciated especially but not exclusively by the Habsburgs and the Spanish court. The isolation of the figure against a neutral background elaborates the model of “pre-Renaissance icon religious painting”,⁴¹³ generating sentiments of piety and allowing the meditations on Christ’s sufferings.⁴¹⁴

The emphasis on these elements of strong emotionality was generally linked to Flemish devotional art, and it was strongly criticized by the Portuguese artist and intellectual Francisco de Holanda (1517-1585). In his treatise, named *De pintura antigua* (1548), he uses Michelangelo to give voice to his ideas about the art in Flanders, asserting that this painting is brilliant in its colours but just aimed to move to compassion, suitable for clerics and women, the very young and the very old.⁴¹⁵ As argued by Nichols, it seems not so plausible that Titian knew this text and decided to take a position against a supposed opinion by Michelangelo through these pietistic works. However, the scholar stresses the idea of a «revival of a Flemish type that was the very antithesis of the complex sophistications of ultra-classical *maniera* painting in mid-sixteenth-century Florence or Rome»⁴¹⁶. This interpretation risks to end up in an attempt to fit all the choices of the master’s production into the dynamics of an ideological declaration against Central-Italian art, whilst, as we have seen, the *Ecce Homo* was in Titian’s repertoire since the lost paintings of 1535 and 1546, and these last

⁴¹² Mancini argues that the two *Dolorosa* had complementary roles in the process of *imitatio Christi* and the search for redemption that Charles V wanted to pursue when he retired to Yuste (MANCINI 2009, p. 343). This thesis does not contrast with the idea that the Emperor asked for the second painting because he desired a painting that could fit better his pietistic taste shaped by Flemish models.

⁴¹³ NICHOLS 2013B, p. 130.

⁴¹⁴ On these devotional practices in the Netherlands and especially related to the figure of Charles V, see SCHULER 1992, pp. 5-28; BAKER-BATES 2013, pp. 427-445.

⁴¹⁵ MADRID 2003, p. 385; NICHOLS 2013B, p. 130. On de Holanda’s translation of Italian art theory, see CALVILLO 2015, pp. 175-197; CALVILLO 2018, pp. 112-145.

⁴¹⁶ NICHOLS 2013B, p. 130.

paintings of the *Dolorosas* were clearly following precise instructions of the Emperor. These choices were therefore contextual to the commissions. In elaborating Charles V's models, Titian surely transformed them, both by changing the format the of close-ups from half-bust to bust-length, and by treating the human figure in a more idealistic than naturalistic manner, but he always had to compromise with the desires of the patron. The result was a successful composition that was copied and reinvented not just in Flanders and Spain, but also in Venice.

The *Mater Dolorosa with her hands apart* was the last work of art that the Emperor commissioned from the artist. And yet, the inventories can give us some other insights into Titian's religious production for Charles V, and even in their reception.

In his book on Titian and the Renaissance courts, Fernando Checa summarizes the contradictions of the inventories in listing and pairing not only the *Ecce Homo* and the various *Dolorosas*, but also other devotional paintings.⁴¹⁷ In the 1556 inventory drafted in Brussels before the paintings left to Spain,⁴¹⁸ we can find the *Ecce Homo* on slate paired with a *Mater Dolorosa* on panel by Titian, which are the Christ and the Virgin with clasped hands at the Prado; another image of Christ on panel, paired with a *Mater Dolorosa* on stone, both attributed to Titian, which can be an unknown painting portraying the Saviour and the Virgin with her hands apart at the Prado; a *Mater Dolorosa* on panel, also unknown and attributed to Titian; and finally a Virgin carrying Christ in her arms on canvas, attributed to Titian, that could represent a Madonna with the Child or a Pietà. Of this group, an *Ecce Homo* and a *Mater Dolorosa* on panel and a *Virgin carrying Christ* on canvas were not mentioned in the correspondence and have not yet been identified among Titian's works. Together with them, is listed a *Christ carrying the cross* on panel, painted by Michel Coxcie and generally identified as the painting at the Prado (*Figure 44*).⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 321-322.

⁴¹⁸ CHECA CREMADES 2010, I, p. 266.

⁴¹⁹ Michiel Coxcie; *Christ carrying the cross*; c. 1555; 81x50 cm; oil on panel; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. It is not sure that the painting now at the Prado is the one mentioned in the inventory. The size of this panel, in fact, is ten centimetre taller than the *Mater Dolorosa with her hands apart*, painting which it was supposedly paired with. See BOOGERT 1993, p. 327; MADRID 1998-1999, p. 350; LEUVEN 2013-2014A, p. 117.

Things gets more complicated in the *postmortem* inventory dated 1558.⁴²⁰ Here the *Ecce Homo* on slate by Titian is paired with a *Mater Dolorosa* on panel by Coxcie; the Prado *Mater Dolorosa* on stone by Titian is paired with the aforementioned *Christ carrying the cross* by Coxcie; the *Mater Dolorosa with clasped hands* by Titian is mentioned alone; and then there is again the *Virgin carrying Christ* on canvas. It is curious to notice that the 1556 Titian's unknown Christ - never mentioned as *Ecce Homo* - disappears, substituted by Coxcie's panel, and the unknown *Dolorosa* by the Venetian becomes an unknown *Dolorosa* by Coxcie.

It is possible to situate the origin of these pairings between paintings by Titian and Coxcie during Charles V's retirement to the monastery of Yuste. This attitude is in line with the one that the Emperor has always showed towards art in general and the art of Titian in particular. As he had sent a drawing after a Flemish model to the artist in order to get exactly the devotional image that he needed, he could also assemble the diptychs according to their function for his personal use and salvation.⁴²¹ Connecting together a *Mater Dolorosa* to a *Christ carrying the cross* could not alter the message of extreme sufferance of the Saviour, nor the meditation that the contemplation of this sufferance must have raised in the viewer.

That being said, it is necessary to spend a few words on Coxcie's works that Charles V decided to bring to Yuste and to combine with Titian's. Even though his *Mater Dolorosa* which was paired with the *Ecce Homo* on slate is lost, we might grasp some stylistic and compositional aspects from the *Christ carrying the cross* from the Prado. The figure of the Saviour, isolated on a neutral dark background, is very likely modelled on the example of the same subject repeatedly painted by Sebastiano del Piombo (1485-1547). The earliest composition, now at the Prado Museum, belonged to the Spanish ambassador in Rome Jerónimo Vich y Valterra (1439-1535), and it was probably executed around 1516. In this canvas Sebastiano represented Christ in the foreground, massively filling the space, followed by two bulky figures. On the right side, framed within the cross and the arm of Christ, we can see a landscape with a group of people leaving Jerusalem, immersed in the flaming light of the sunset.

⁴²⁰ CHECA CREMADES 2010, I, p. 299.

⁴²¹ About the personal devotion of the Emperor and its expression through this artistic choices, see MANCINI 2009, pp. 311-346.

However, the other variations of this theme completely isolate the figure of Christ, suggesting that it was particularly appreciated. Especially the work now at the Hermitage, dated 1537,⁴²² seems to be the comparable to the atmosphere and the strong pietistic tone of the one made by Coxcie (*Figure 45*). It is not accidental the Flemish painter looked at this invention by Sebastiano that recalls a specific monumentality that was associated to the figures of Michelangelo. As we have discussed before, the Habsburgs manifested on many occasions a preference for Central-Italian art that also Titian had to please. The plasticity and monumentality of his *Ecce Homo* depended on the same visual models used by Coxcie, who dealt both with the requests of the court and to Titian's example to paint his works.

Therefore, even though these pairings certainly present some formal and stylistic incongruences, their correlation cannot be limited to their devotional means as argued by Matteo Mancini and Fernando Checa Cremades.⁴²³ If it sounds discordant to picture together a *Titian* and a *Coxcie* work, it is not that disconcerting to see *these specific* works in pair, as it was likely suitable the to hang Titian's and Coxcie's *Condemned* next to each other on the walls of Binche. This idea does not invalidate the concept that very different and dissonant Flemish and Venetian art could live side by side in collections or public spaces, like the paintings by Hieronymus Bosch in the Palazzo Ducale in Venice.⁴²⁴ However it is important to stress this aspect: the two painters, directly or indirectly, dialogued in a need of satisfy the expectations of their patrons.

In his *Road to Calvary*,⁴²⁵ one of Coxcie's earliest works that was also brought by the Emperor from Brussels to Yuste, the painter combines many different sources (*Figure 46*). The figure of Christ is a direct quote of the same character in the print engraved by the German artist Martin Schongauer (1435/50-1491), representing the

⁴²² Sebastiano del Piombo; *Christ carrying the cross*; c. 1537; 104,5x74,5 cm; oil on slate; Hermitage Museum; Saint Petersburg. See HIRST 1981, pp. 133-135.

⁴²³ In the scholars' opinion, Charles V valued the devotional meaning and practical function of the more than their artistic and aesthetic value. See MANCINI 2007, pp. 170-172; CHECA CREMADES 2010, I, p. 68.

⁴²⁴ See VENICE 2017.

⁴²⁵ Michiel Coxcie: *Road to Calvary*; c. 1530s; 207x143 cm; oil on panel; Patrimonio Nacional, Real Monasterio de El Escorial; Madrid.

same subject in a larger composition (Figure 47).⁴²⁶ In the upper-right corner we see a group of three figures - saint John, the Virgin and Mary Magdalen - that recalls very clearly a lost *Lamentation* by Hugo van der Goes (c. 1440-1482) known through many copies. To have an idea of how it would have appeared, we can consider the painting now at the Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Ghent (Figure 49).⁴²⁷ Looking closer at the sorrowful Virgin in Coxcie's painting (Figure 48), it is possible to notice that it shares some similarities with Titian's *Mater Dolorosa with her hands apart* (Figure 43). The inclination of the face, the shape of the veil, and even the cleft chin, appear very much alike. Nonetheless, a direct relation between the two paintings is out of the question. We might suggest that the similarities depend on that was Coxcie who had sent the drawings Titian had used for his *Mater Dolorosa*. Or, instead of looking for a unidirectional relationship between these painters, we can argue that these similarities are the result of the elaboration of the same range of models, that are the Flemish representations of the Mater Dolorosa in pair with an Ecce Homo. Hence, Titian's *Dolorosa* (Figure 43) would resemble in his composition and features the sorrowful Virgin by Coxcie because it was based on Flemish models but painted through the lens of an early interest in the Central-Italian manner. In light of this, it is safe to suggest that the lost *Mater Dolorosa* by Coxcie could not appear that dissonant if paired with the *Ecce Homo* by the Venetian artist.⁴²⁸

It is relevant to remember that Coxcie had also painted another diptych with the same subjects, which was listed in the 1556 inventory of Mary of Hungary.⁴²⁹ On this occasion, the artist decided - or more likely was asked - to depict an *Ecce Homo* and a *Mater Dolorosa* on stone, matching the material properties of Titian's paintings for

⁴²⁶ Martin Schongauer; *Christ carrying the cross*; 1475-80; 28,9x42,9 cm; engraving; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York. See BOORSCH-ORENSTEIN 1997, p. 17; MILAN 2018, p. 320.

⁴²⁷ Anonymous after Hugo van der Goes; *Lamentation*; c. 1500; 43,6x53,5 cm; oil on canvas; Museum voor Schone Kunsten (MSK); Ghent.

⁴²⁸ And it seems not hazardous to suggest that Coxcie might have been the artist whose drawing was sent to Titian as the model for his second *Mater Dolorosa*.

⁴²⁹ «Yten dos tablas quadradas, grandes, de piedras, en la una de ellas un Eçe Homo y, en la otra, Nuestra Señora, con sus molduras doradas e sus cobertores de madera, hechas por maese Myguel»; CHECA CREMADES 2010, III, p. 2915. This passage was brought to the attention by HARTH 2021B, p. 85.

Charles V.⁴³⁰ The inventorial record does not give extra information on these works, and it is unclear whether or not they were copies after the Man and the Our Lady of Sorrow on slate and marble made for the Emperor. However, this information reveals an ulterior level of acquaintance with Titian's work, even if it was limited to the technical aspects.

To conclude, the religious half-length paintings that Titian made for the Emperor are, of course, his own creations, but we need to take into account their dialogical relation not only to the Flemish models, but also to the interest for Central-Italian art expressed by the Habsburg's court. It is in the juncture between these tendencies that the devotional paintings of the *Ecce Homo* and the *Mater Dolorosa* should be located, and for this reason their pairing with Coxcie is not to be considered surprising or contradictory on an aesthetic level.

1.4.3 The last mythological and religious works for Mary of Hungary

On August 1553, Mary of Hungary still had to receive the *Tantalus* that Titian had promised her for the *grande salle* of Binche. In the letter addressed to the ambassador in Venice Francisco de Vargas, she suggests him to solicit the delivery of the *Condemned* and the portraits of the seven children of the King of Romans, her brother Ferdinand I⁴³¹. Two months later, Vargas answers that four of the portraits of Ferdinand's children and a painting depicting a Mary Magdalen would be soon delivered, and that the *Tantalus* was not yet finished.⁴³² The mythological painting must have reached Brussels before 1556, because it is listed with an *Ixion* by the same author and another *Tantalus* by Coxcie in the inventory of the paintings that Mary of Hungary brought to Spain.⁴³³

⁴³⁰ On the thesis that Coxcie had learned this technique during his Roman sojourn in connection to the work of Sebastiano del Piombo, see HARTH 2021B, pp. 84-95.

⁴³¹ MANCINI 1998, p. 225.

⁴³² MANCINI 1998, p. 226.

⁴³³ «Yten otro lienços pintados de mano de Tiçian con un Ygion pintado y el otro Tantalo, viejas y gastadas [...] Yten otro lienço pintado en el un Tantalo de mano de maestre Myguel»; CHECA CREMADES 2010, III, p. 2914

In that inventory, among other paintings by Titian, we find the canvas described as follows:

«un lienço grande y en el pintada la diosa Benus, e Cupido detras della, quando Siches se presentava ante Benus, con sus molduras enrrededor doradas, hecho por Tiçiano».⁴³⁴

This painting it is said to depict Psyche presented to Venus, while Cupid stands behind the goddess.⁴³⁵ This painting is now lost, but it might be interesting to present here a hypothesis about its appearance and its possible models.

The description of Cupid standing behind his mother while another woman is approaching them, perfectly matches a well-known composition by Titian, the so-called *Venus blindfolding Cupid* now at Galleria Borghese in Rome (*Figure 50*).⁴³⁶ Apart from this similarity, other elements exclude that this painting might have had a connection to Mary of Hungary's work. It is not even certain that the woman on the left, with a precious tiara and fully dressed, can be identified with Venus.⁴³⁷ The scholar Augusto Gentili describes the painting more like a beautiful *pastiche* of different hands and concepts based on the composition known as the *Conjugal allegory* of the Louvre, dated 1530-40.⁴³⁸ This invention seems to have had a certain fortune because it can be related to a large group of artworks. They share a squared or developed in horizontal format, and a series of characters cut more or less at the height of their knees.⁴³⁹ Among a

⁴³⁴ CHECA CREMADES 2010, III, p. 2914.

⁴³⁵ See WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 242.

⁴³⁶ Titian; *Venus blindfolding Cupid*; c. 1565; 116x184 cm; oil on canvas; Galleria Borghese; Rome. See PANOFSKY 1969, pp. 129-137; WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 131-132; HERRMANN-FIORE 1995, pp. 389-409; MADRID 2003, pp. 264-265; VENICE-VIENNA 2007-2008, pp. 208-210.

⁴³⁷ Augusto Gentili suggests a revision of the interpretation of the painting, identifying the figure on the left as a "spouse" blindfolding Eros and accompanied by Anteros leaning on her shoulder. The other two women are the goddesses Venus and Diana, there to give to the spouse their examples of sensuality and chastity. GENTILI 2012, pp. 255-256.

⁴³⁸ See WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 127-129; GRABSKI 1980, pp. 43-61.

⁴³⁹ The two "poles" for these kinds of compositions are considered the *Conjugal allegory* at the Louvre and the *Venus blindfolding Cupid* at Galleria Borghese. The analysis of this group in TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. (2009, pp. 91-94) concludes that they cannot be part of a coherent and homogeneous sequence,

series of elements often of obscure meaning, what recurs is the presence of two women: one sitting on the left side and one arriving from the right side. The latter's figure appears lower than the other, like she is kneeling in front of the first. A series of men, putti, servants and fauns are gravitating around the two women, in different appearance and attitudes, like different are the objects carried by the sitting woman, or the gesture that she is performing.

When Wethey catalogued the lost painting from Mary of Hungary's collection, he referred to a variation on this theme now in the Alte Pinakothek of Munich (*Figure 51*),⁴⁴⁰ but this suggestion is not explained.⁴⁴¹ In this canvas elements from both the aforementioned paintings are merged. We can see the same Cupid of the Borghese version leaning on the shoulder of the woman on the left. The latter belongs to the typology of the Louvre picture, but she is holding an object that looks like a veiled urn, or statue. In her study on the group of paintings, Kristina Herrmann-Fiore remembers that the *Venus blindfolding Cupid* had already been related to the theme of Cupid and Psyche by the literature,⁴⁴² but it was refused by Panofsky because Cupid is presented as a child and not as an adult, as in most representations of Apuleius' story.⁴⁴³ This postulate is not always true, as in the series of prints published by Antonio Salamanca on the design of Michiel Coxcie.⁴⁴⁴ Herrmann-Fiore takes as a starting point the version of the theme preserved in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna,⁴⁴⁵ usually attributed to Alessandro Varotari known as Padovanino (1588-1649), to argue that the female figure on the right, always present in these compositions, can be identified with

but it is an example of the recombination of single elements from an appreciated composition, rearranged in new forms and meanings.

⁴⁴⁰ Workshop of Titian; *Conjugal allegory* or *Venus Bacchus and Ceres*; 1550-1560; 115x132 cm; oil on canvas; Alte Pinakothek; Munich. WETHEY 1969-75, p. 128.

⁴⁴¹ WETHEY 1969-1975, III, p. 128.

⁴⁴² VENTURI 1925-34, III, p. 525; TIETZE 1936, p. 241.

⁴⁴³ PANOFSKY 1969, pp. 129-136.

⁴⁴⁴ Vasari mentions Coxcie as the author of the drawings for this series of prints 1568 edition of the *Vite*, in the life of Marcantonio Raimondi (1568, II, p. 309). These 33 prints represent the story of Cupid and Psyche as narrated in the *Golden ass* by Apuleio, partly engraved by the Master of the Die and partly by Agostino Veneziano. Most scholars agree with Vasari in giving to Coxcie the paternity of the designs, which appear very Raphaelesque. See GRIEKEN in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 159-162.

⁴⁴⁵ WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 129; RUGGERI 1993, p. 84.

Psyche.⁴⁴⁶ Setting aside the interpretation that the scholar gives of the whole composition, not so relevant in this discussion and too specific to be generalised to the entire group of paintings, it is interesting to pinpoint that she relates the objects carried by Venus, urns or vessels, to a precise episode of the story.

Psyche had to prove herself worthy by overcoming some trials. One of them consisted in bringing to Venus the water of the river Styx, water that could have been carried in a vessel or symbolised by a funerary urn. But this is not the only object required by Venus. The goddess of love asked Psyche to descent to the Underworld for getting the beauty elixir from Proserpina. The most famous Renaissance artwork that represented the moment in which Psyche stands before Venus delivering the beauty elixir, is Raphael's *fresco* in the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche of Villa Farnesina (*Figure 52*).⁴⁴⁷ Here we can see Psyche kneeling in front of the goddess, the left hand on her heart in a gesture of repentance and submission, and the right carrying a vessel, proof of her success. It is evident that this *fresco* does not represent a precise model for the aforementioned compositions, but it is likely an antecedent for the theme, especially if we compare the eloquent gesture of Psyche to the one of the woman in Titian's paintings, who is often touching her chest. A rather stimulating comparison can be proposed between Titian's group, especially the versions of Munich and Vienna, and a *fresco* by Giulio Romano at Palazzo Te. This lunette,⁴⁴⁸ located in the Room of Cupid and Psyche, represents the episode in which Psyche is begging Proserpina to give her the beauty elixir (*Figure 53*). Apart from the presence of demonic figures around them, the general composition of the two women, one sitting and the other kneeling, can be easily compared to Titian's. Even though there is an evident similarity between Giulio Romano's invention and Titian's group of paintings, especially in the spatial arrangement, the presence of the vessel and even the ajar lips of the woman on the right, their connection is not sure. It is beyond doubt that Titian knew the decoration

⁴⁴⁶ HERRMANN-FIORE 1995, pp. 417-418.

⁴⁴⁷ Raphael Sanzio; *Venus and Psyche*; c. 1518; fresco; Villa Farnesina; Rome. See GÜNTHER 2001, pp. 149-166; VAROLI-PIAZZA 2002, with further bibliography.

⁴⁴⁸ Giulio Romano; *Psyche receives the beauty elixir from Proserpina*; 1530; fresco; Palazzo Te, Mantua. On this pictorial cycle, see BAZZOTTI-CIVITARESE-VENTURINI 2018.

of Palazzo Te since he worked for the duke of Mantua Federico II Gonzaga.⁴⁴⁹ However, both of them could have used as visual reference an attic funerary stele, also representing figures in a similar spatial composition, often in profile. Examples of these reliefs were kept in the collection of antiquities of the Gonzaga and in the famous Grimani collection.⁴⁵⁰

However, in support the relation to Giulio Romano's *fresco*, we should underline some facts. Firstly, that there is a similarity of subjects between them, because they both represent an episode of the story of Psyche involving the delivery of a vessel to a goddess. Secondly, that Titian painted the lost *Psyche presented to Venus* for Mary of Hungary, who had manifested before her interest in the theme of the *Fall of the giants* and that was promoting the use of a Central-Italian language in her court.

The Venetian painter had already proved his ability in satisfying his Habsburg patrons while adapting his style and finding the appropriate models. We can conclude that he chose a malleable composition that referred stylistically and compositionally to a classical model and subject, mediated or not by Giulio Romano, and he used it to please one of his most important patrons at international level. A document that can support that the original aspect of the painting might have been similar to the typology discussed above, is a canvas mentioned in the inventory of the Palace of the Alcázar. This is described as «otra pintura de la Diosa Ceres que le ofrezcan diferentes frutas, y Venus tapando los ojos a Cupido».⁴⁵¹ As it has been argued, the description fits to a combination between the *Conjugal Allegory* and the *Venus blindfolding Cupid* that should correspond with the mythological painting that Mary of Hungary brought to Spain in 1556.⁴⁵² The different identification of the subject is due to the ambiguity of the

⁴⁴⁹ For Federico II Gonzaga as patron of Titian, see BODART 1998; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 114-136.

⁴⁵⁰ See HERRMANN-FIORE 1995, p. 415.

⁴⁵¹ BOTTINEAU 1958, p. 324; CHECA CREMADES 1994, p. 316.

⁴⁵² After the redaction of this paragraph which hypothesised the possible reconstruction of the models and the appearance of the *Venus and Psyche* for Mary of Hungary, Miguel Falomir published an essay devoted to the same topic. It is interesting to notice that the scholar draws very similar conclusions on the appearance of the painting made for Mary of Hungary, even though he followed a different line of reasoning. We agree on the scene represented, namely the moment in which Psyche presents herself

composition, that was also printed by the Dutch artist Jacob Matham (1571-1631) with the inscription: «Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus».⁴⁵³

Falomir has recently discussed the possible reasons behind the choice of this subject by Mary of Hungary.⁴⁵⁴ A sign of her fascination to the myth of Psyche might be the presence of twelve tapestries depicting this subject in her inventory. Moreover, her court painter Michiel Coxcie had designed a series of thirty-two prints illustrating this story during his Roman sojourn, and this might have sparked her interest. Another element to consider is the spiritual meaning of the myth, reinterpreted in a Neoplatonic and moralising light in the XVIth century. A connection between widowed women of the Habsburgs dynasty and this myth with a moralised connotation is the epithet of “Portuguese Psyche” given to Philip II’s sister Juana of Austria.⁴⁵⁵

Concerning the religious paintings, in the inventory is listed a *Noli me tangere* by the hand of Titian.⁴⁵⁶ This canvas is remembered, once again, in the survived correspondence, starting from a letter dated 30 June 1553. There Francisco de Vargas, apart from reassuring the Emperor about the state of progress of the *Holy Trinity*, mentions «un quadro que tiene al cabo para la Serenísima Reina Maria de la Aparición en el huerto a la Magdalena».⁴⁵⁷ Titian had probably some trouble in finishing this painting in time, because, more than one year later, he wrote to Jean Benavides that he was going to send very soon a “Divozione” for Mary of Hungary, apologising for the

to Venus with the water of the river Styx and we both identify Giulio Romano’s fresco as one of the main sources for Titian’s composition. The main points of interest that distinguish Falomir’s study are the following: he traces more accurate descriptions of the canvas in some XVIIth century inventories; and he identifies a replica of the painting in the depiction of *Sight* (1617) by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder, now at the Prado. See FALOMIR 2020, pp. 97-108.

⁴⁵³ This expression comes from the *Eunuch*, a comedy by the ancient Roman writer Publius Terentius Afer (Terence). The problem of the interpretation of this print in relation to the group of paintings by Titian is discussed in ROME 1995, pp. 435-436.

⁴⁵⁴ See FALOMIR 2020, pp. 106-108.

⁴⁵⁵ GONZALO SÁNCHEZ-MOLERO 2009, pp. 1643-1684.

⁴⁵⁶ «Yten un lienço grande y en el pintado a Cristo, nuestro rredentor, y a la Madalena quando dixo nole my tangere, hecho por Tiçiano»; CHECA CREMADES 2010, III, p. 2914.

⁴⁵⁷ MANCINI 1998, p. 223. Falomir suggests that Mary of Hungary might have commissioned this painting during Titian’s second stay in Augsburg, in 1550-1551. See FALOMIR 2020, pp. 99-100.

delay.⁴⁵⁸ What remains of the *Noli me tangere* is just the fragment representing the head of Christ (Figure 54), cut around 1566 by order of Philip II, before it was sent to the Escorial in 1574.⁴⁵⁹ The original appearance of the canvas is preserved in a copy by Alonso Sánchez Coello, now at the Monasterio del Escorial (Figure 55).⁴⁶⁰ It is hard to say how much the copy is faithful to the original, especially if we compare Coello's painting to the other *Noli me tangere* known by Titian, the one painted in his early career and now at the National Gallery of London.⁴⁶¹ However, if we compare the Spanish copy to Titian's most important religious painting of the same years and for the same family, the *Holy Trinity*, it is possible to find many common elements (Figure 37). One example is the monumentality of the human figures that are dominating the space and subtracting importance to the background.⁴⁶² The Christ in the painting for Mary of Hungary appears more massive than sinuous, and the steady figure of Mary Magdalen reminds the one of the Eritrean Sibyl from the *Holy Trinity*. Christ, especially, recalls a classical statue with his solemn austerity, or a work by Michelangelo such as the figure of resurrected Jesus for the church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva.⁴⁶³ Although the quality of the painting cannot be fully grasped, the fragment preserves bright colours and attention to the effects of the light that we observed in the *Holy Trinity*.

Mary of Hungary seems to have owned another religious painting by Titian, a *Saint Margaret* that curiously doesn't appear in the inventories. The document that attests the

⁴⁵⁸ PUPPI 2012, pp. 210-211. Falomir suggests that the "divozione" to which Titian was referring might have instead been the depiction of *Saint Margaret* that we will discuss later. See FALOMIR 2020, pp. 101-102.

⁴⁵⁹ Titian; *Head of Christ fragment of a Noli me tangere*; 1553-4; 68x62 cm; oil on canvas; Museo del Prado; Madrid. WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 119-120; CHECA CREMADES 1994, p. 249; HUMFREY 2007, p. 261.

⁴⁶⁰ Alonso Sánchez Coello after Titian; *Noli me tangere*; c. 1566; 231x224 cm; oil on canvas; Monasterio del Escorial; El Escorial. MADRID 1990, p. 156.

⁴⁶¹ Titian; *Noli me tangere*; c. 1514; 110,5x91,9 cm; oil on canvas; National Gallery; London. WETHEY 1969-75, I, p. 119; HUMFREY 2007, p. 74.

⁴⁶² Marsel Grosso considers the *Noli me tangere* and the *Resurrected Christ appears to the Virgin* (1554, Chiesa dell'Assunzione della Beata Vergine Maria, Medole, Mantua) two examples of the monumental compositions and expressive language that has its epitome in the *Holy Trinity* for Charles V. See GROSSO 2015, pp. 63-65.

⁴⁶³ See GROSSO 2015, p. 65.

existence and the ownership of this painting is the print by Luca Bertelli (active 1564-1589). The inscription on the engraving reads: «Titiani Veccelei aequitis Cae Reginae Mariae Imp. Caroli V. Sororis Opus», identifying Mary of Hungary as the beneficiary of the painting. We know that Titian had sent another *Saint Margaret* to Philip II, as recorded in the letters exchanged in 1552 between the artist, Prince Philip and the ambassador Francisco de Vargas.⁴⁶⁴ This latter painting is usually identified with the one now at the Monasterio del Escorial (*Figure 56*),⁴⁶⁵ while the one for Mary of Hungary is recognised in *Saint Margaret* at the Prado (*Figure 57*).⁴⁶⁶

The main issue for identifying in the Prado painting the *Saint Margaret* for Mary of Hungary is a stylistic inconsistency with the other paintings of the same years and especially addressed to this patron.⁴⁶⁷ As mentioned above, the artworks that Titian had been painted for the Habsburgs in the 1540s and early 1550s were showing a peculiar attention to the Central-Italian language, and the plastic rendering of the human bodies related to a conspicuous use of sculptural models was a common feature of this production. The Prado version appears on the limit, if compared to a painting like the *Holy Trinity*: the figure of Margaret, more finished and corporeal, recalls the one of the Eritrean Sybil even in the brilliant green vest, but the rest of the composition, from the blurred rocks to the shivering city on fire, are very far from what it had been sent to the Habsburgs those same years.

Apart from the stylistic matters, if we analyse the visual models that Titian decided to interpret for this composition, we notice that they follow the pattern recognised so far. In all of the versions it is easy to recognise a reference to the well-known canvas

⁴⁶⁴ Titian lists a «ritratto di Santa Margarita» in his letter dated 11 October 1552, that was dispatched in December of the same year. MANCINI 1998, pp. 214-216.

⁴⁶⁵ Titian; *Saint Margaret*; 1552; 210x170 cm; oil on canvas; Monasterio del Escorial; El Escorial. WETHEY 1969-75, I, p. 141; JUNQUERA 1951, pp. 67-72; CHECA CREMADES 1994, pp. 248-249; HUMFREY 2007, p. 253.

⁴⁶⁶ Titian; *Saint Margaret*; 1550-60; 211x182 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. Among the scholars that agree on this, see HOPE 1980, p. 123; PEDROCCO 2001, pp. 246-247; MADRID 2003, pp. 258-259; HUMFREY 2007, p. 355. See also VENICE-VIENNA 2007-2008, pp. 250-253.

⁴⁶⁷ Other scholars dated the painting later due to stylistic reasons, amongst them WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 141-142; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 463-465. The technical analysis performed during the restoration of the Prado painting collocates the execution in the late 1560s; IGLESIAS DIAZ 1999, pp. 67-72.

depicting the same subject by Raphael, that at the time was in the Grimani collection in Venice (*Figure 58*).⁴⁶⁸ But, if we compare Raphael's composition to the others, it is clear that the saint in a simple chiton standing among the coils of the serpentine dragon, in front of a rocky background that shows just a little portion of the sky in the corner, is closer to the version of the Escorial. The Prado canvas, on the other side, gives more space to the composition, opening on the background that shows the lagoon of Venice, and the figure of the saint acquires an iridescent green vest and long loose hair.

In the end, the print that should have been made after the *Saint Margaret* for the sister of the Emperor doesn't exactly coincide to any of the aforementioned versions. Augusto Gentili suggests another hypothesis, namely that the print was not related to one of the two paintings, but that records an intermediate version.⁴⁶⁹

It is likely that the painting for Mary of Hungary would have followed the same trend as the other religious and mythological paintings that she had received in the years from Titian. Hence we should exclude that the Prado version was the one made for the Governor of the Low Countries, as it was commonly argued by the literature.

1.4.4 Philip II's commissions and their relevance in shaping the idea of Titian

The *Felicissimo viaje* was meant to educate Prince Philip as heir of the Emperor, introducing him to the vast territories over which his father reigned. Another purpose was to strengthen his position in the Low Countries with a view to ensuring his succession as ruler of the Netherlands. Between 1548 and 1551, during his European travel, Philip sojourned twice in the Netherlands, at the court of his aunt Mary of Hungary, and attended to the Diets of Augsburg, where he met Titian. After these years of travelling, the Prince returned to Spain, and in 1554 moved to England to marry the Queen Mary Tudor, becoming King of England and Ireland for the time of their marriage. In August 1555, Philip was convoked in Brussels where, on 25 October of the same year, Charles V abdicated and transferred to the son his titles and

⁴⁶⁸ Raphael; *Saint Margaret and the dragon*; 1518; 191,3x123 cm; oil on panel; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna.

⁴⁶⁹ He suggests that the print could have been made after a drawing, a version "in progress" between the Escorial and the Prado one; GENTILI 2012, pp. 291-292.

territories in the Low Countries. The following year, on 16 January 1556, Philip finally obtained from his father also the title of King of Spain.

Before the year 1559, when he moved permanently back to Spain, Philip II spent his time between Brussels, where the court was set; England for his conjugal duties before the death of Mary Tudor in 17 November 1558; and the priory of Groenendael, a monastery not far from Brussels, where he often retired to grieve for the death of his father, his wife and his aunt.⁴⁷⁰ At the same time, he had to face the threat of French armies in the Spanish Naples and at the border between France and the Low Countries. The Spanish victories in the battle of Saint Quintin in 1557, and in the battle of Gravelines in 1558, would lead to the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis. These two treaties signed by the four monarchs that were ruling over Europe, ended the Habsburg-Valois conflict, establishing new international balances.

During these turbulent years, it is complicated to establish which paintings arrived in Brussels, and especially to evaluate their accessibility and their interest for the local artists.

In the letter dated 12 December 1552,⁴⁷¹ Philip confirms he had received the paintings that de Vargas had sent with the Bishop of Segovia, namely a “paesaggio”⁴⁷² and the *Saint Margaret*, but not the “Regina di Persia” that Titian had anticipated.⁴⁷³ Whereas it seems likely that the “Regina di Persia” never made it to the Spanish collections, the *Saint Margaret* arrived instead at the Escorial. The “paesaggio” has a more complex story. The scholars have divided in those who believe that it was an actual landscape, or a painting set in the open air with little or marginal presence of human figures,⁴⁷⁴ and those who identify the “paesaggio” with the so-called *Pardo Venus* now at the Louvre.⁴⁷⁵ The first time that the *Pardo Venus* was surely mentioned in a document, as «La nuda con il paese con il satiro», was in the list of paintings that

⁴⁷⁰ PARKER 2014, pp. 127-138.

⁴⁷¹ MANCINI 1998, p. 217.

⁴⁷² See WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 233.

⁴⁷³ The paintings were mentioned by Titian in his letter dated 11 October 1552. See MANCINI 1998, pp. 214-215; PUPPI 2012, pp. 198-199.

⁴⁷⁴ GENTILI 1980, pp. 93-107; JOANNIDES 2011, p. 71.

⁴⁷⁵ The first to suggest this identification was Charles Hope (1988, pp. 61-62). See also WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 161-162; CHECA CREMADES 1994, p. 262; HABERT 2005, pp. 67-72

had been sent to the King, retrospectively compiled by Titian in 1574.⁴⁷⁶ It is not sure that the *Pardo Venus* coincides with the 1552 “paesaggio” but, as in the case of the *Saint Margaret*, it would have been very likely sent to Spain.

The inventory of 1554⁴⁷⁷ lists the assets owned by Prince Philip in Spain before he embarked on his journey to England. In this document we can find 23 paintings, among which 17 portraits, two religious paintings, three mythological subjects and three “profane” subjects. Most of these works are now lost, and some of them are known just through copies. We can find three portraits of Philip, including the *Philip II with an armour* that might be identified with the one at the Prado (*Figure 14*), and the lost *Self-portrait of Titian holding a small image of Philip*.⁴⁷⁸ The religious paintings, only a couple in the entire amount, are an *Ecce Homo with three figures*⁴⁷⁹ and the *Saint Margaret* mentioned in the letter of 1552 that we have discussed above. The mythologic canvases include the *Venus at the mirror*, now lost, the *Danae*, the first of the *poesie* that was sent to Philip, and the *Girl in a fur*, probably the painting now at the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna. This document is of primary importance in the study of Philip’s patronage before he gets completely out of the shade of his father and his aunt, and it provides information about his interest in Titian’s art. However, these works had short or non-existent life in the Netherlands. Even the *Danae*, a painting that had an immense fortune as part of the tradition of the reclined naked women, and the first of the so-called *poesie* for Philip II,⁴⁸⁰ had most likely been dispatched directly to Valladolid or Madrid in summer 1553.

⁴⁷⁶ PUPPI 2012, pp. 336-337.

⁴⁷⁷ Titian’s entries in the inventory are listed and discussed by CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 337-341.

⁴⁷⁸ WETHEY 1969-75, II, p. 205.

⁴⁷⁹ Checa mentions an *Ecce homo* at the Escorial that could be attributed to Titian’s workshop, even though it was usually given to Jacopo Tintoretto. See CHECA CREMADES 1994, p. 260; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 340-341.

⁴⁸⁰ The literature regarding the *poesie* is immensely vast. This subject is of key importance not only in the study of Titian’s career, but in the history of art in general. Topics like the relationship between artist and patron, the artistic freedom and awareness of the painter and the interpretation of classical and contemporary literary sources, are consistently present in the related literature. The recent exhibition in London gives interesting insights on the complex matter, and provides an extensive bibliography (LONDON 2020, p. 208).

Traditionally identified with the painting now at the Prado (*Figure 59*),⁴⁸¹ it has been recently argued that the painting that was originally sent to Prince Philip might have been the one now in the Wellington Collection (*Figure 60*).⁴⁸² Among the various reasons that the scholars presented to support this thesis, we find the stylistic incompatibility with the other *poesia* that have been painted and sent in the same years, the *Venus and Adonis*, and with other contemporary paintings.⁴⁸³ In fact, the Wellington's more polished and sculptural treatment of the female figure matches more with Titian's production for Charles V and Mary of Hungary that we have discussed so far. In fact, for the Wellington painting are valid the same observations forwarded in the analysis of the Farnese *Danae*: the use of classical and Central-Italian models, with particular attention on Michelangelo and Francesco Primaticcio, and a peculiar attention to sensuality and female beauty.

This is not the place to discuss the ongoing *querelle* debating which one between the Wellington and the Prado version was the original one sent in 1553. However, it is worth mentioning the problem because, as for the case of the *Tityus* evidenced by Falomir, the loose and pictorial style of the 1550s paintings for the Habsburg is used in a precise narrative. This narrative depicts Titian as the champion of the Venetian *colore*, always ahead of his times, experimenting since an early stage and sort of "challenging" his patrons. Philip, also following this narrative, appears as the Prince who starts from a more conservative position and then finally accepts the genius of the master. Once these later paintings are returned to their contexts, this narrative reveals its weakness.

The second of the *poesie*, the *Venus and Adonis* (*Figure 61*), was designed as a pendant for the *Danae*, and it was sent between 15 October and 6 December 1554 to London,

⁴⁸¹ Titian; *Danae*; 1553 or 1560-65; 129,8x181,2 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado: Madrid.

⁴⁸² Titian; *Danae*; 1551-523; 114,6x192,5 cm; oil on canvas; Wellington Collection, Apsley House; London. See the recent FALOMIR-JOANNIDES 2016, pp. 415-419; WIVEL in LONDON 2020, pp. 16, 99-120.

⁴⁸³ It is interesting that Charles Hope's main comparison to support the identification of the Prado *Danae* as the original sent to Philip in 1553, is the one with Titian's *Tityus* also at the Prado (HOPE 2015, pp. 672-677). In fact, the *Tityus* was proven by Falomir to be a copy from the 1560s (FALOMIR 2007, pp. 29-36). This would make the stylistic similarities claimed by Hope support the later dating. WIVEL in LONDON 2020, pp. 114-115.

where the Prince was staying for his marital duties.⁴⁸⁴ This version, usually identified with the one now at the Prado,⁴⁸⁵ originates from a composition developed in 1520s, likely for Alfonso d'Este, the famous patron of the *Bacchanals*,⁴⁸⁶ and proposed again in 1547-49 for Ottavio Farnese (1524-1586) or his brother, the Cardinal Alessandro.⁴⁸⁷ So, the first two *poesie*, that were conceived to be seen together as recorded by the well-known letter of 1554,⁴⁸⁸ would both rework the sensual paintings made some years earlier for the Farnese. The models recalled in the *Venus and Adonis* for Philip II, then, had been elaborated in two circumstances in which Titian was particularly driven to an accurate use of classical inspirations.⁴⁸⁹ In the first case, in relation to the execution of the mythological series of the *Bacchanals* for Alfonso d'Este, in the second case, in his attempt to conquer the Roman patrons during and around his 1545 stay in Rome. It is not an accident that this model had been chosen to be a *poesia* for the future Emperor. Apart from the subject from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the common theme of all the *poesie*, also the reference to classical antiquity was an element of continuity with the other paintings destined to the Habsburgs in the same years.

⁴⁸⁴ See MANCINI 1998, pp. 232, 234.

⁴⁸⁵ Titian; *Venus and Adonis*; 1553-54; 186x207; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 188-190; REARICK 1996, pp. 24-44; ROSAND 2005, pp. 205-225; FALOMIR-JOANNIDES-MORA 2014, pp. 17-51; DALLA COSTA 2019; WIVEL in LONDON 2020, pp. 123-131.

⁴⁸⁶ About the 1520s version, see FALOMIR-JOANNIDES-MORA 2014, pp. 38-51; TURNER-JOANNIDES 2016, pp. 48-76; DALLA COSTA 2019, pp. 50-54; WIVEL in LONDON 2020, pp. 127-130.

⁴⁸⁷ Alessandro Farnese was the famous addressee of the aforementioned *Danae*, that was the antecedent of the first of the *poesie* for Prince Philip. The information was recorded by Carlo Ridolfi (1594-1658) in his 1648 book *Le maraviglie dell'arte*, and it is strengthened by the presence of a matching canvas in the XVIIth-century inventories of the Farnese family. WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 241-242; DALLA COSTA 2019, pp. 57-74, with further bibliography.

⁴⁸⁸ «E perché la Danae che io mandai già a Vostra Maestà, si vedeva tutta la parte dinanzi, ho voluto in quest'altra poesia variare e farle mostrare la contraria parte, acciocché riesca il camerino, dove hanno da stare, più grazioso alla vista»; PUPPI 2012, pp. 213-214.

⁴⁸⁹ The main model for the composition of the figures might be the candelabrum base from the Grimani collection, representing a very similar embrace (BRENDAL 1955, p. 122), and the so-called *Bed of Polyclitus* (ROSAND 1975, pp. 242-245).

The third of the *poesie*, the *Perseus and Andromeda*,⁴⁹⁰ is the only one that might have been shipped to Gent, among the paintings received by Philip II on 7 September 1556.⁴⁹¹

The King of Spain wanted the canvases to arrive in Brussels before his departure for England, as he recommended to Francisco de Vargas in a letter dated 10 August 1556,⁴⁹² and he seemed to have been satisfied. The *Perseus and Andromeda* (Figure 62), as the previous *poesie*, was supposed to have a pair. In this case it was the *Medea and Jason*,⁴⁹³ as written by Titian in the letter that announced their release to Philip.⁴⁹⁴ *Perseus and Andromeda*, unlike the previous *poesie*, was not based on a pre-existent model, and Titian had to deal with the subject from scratch. Well, not exactly from scratch, if we consider that the 1501 edition of Giovanni di Bonsignori's *Ovidio Metamorphoseos vulgare*⁴⁹⁵ was accompanied by woodcuts that illustrated the different episodes, included the one of Perseus and Andromeda. Titian considerably re-elaborated the printed example, obtaining a new and peculiar effect. It does not surprise that the composition of this painting underwent many changes and adjustments, as highlighted by the technical analysis on the canvas.⁴⁹⁶ On a sombre background of marine landscape, in which the damaged colours tend now to a monochromatic effect, the naked body of the chained Andromeda stands out in the brightness of her soft skin. The figure's serpentine *contrapposto* recalls some sculptures by the Florentine Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571), in particular a bronze bas-relief depicting the same subject and the statue of the *Ganymede*

⁴⁹⁰ Titian; *Perseus and Andromeda*; 1554-56; 183,3x199,3 cm; oil on canvas; The Wallace Collection; London. WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 169-172; HOSONO 2004, pp. 35-122; OST 2006, pp. 129-146; PACKER in LONDON 2020, pp. 133-145.

⁴⁹¹ The letter is published in MANCINI 1998, pp. 242-243. The following year Lodovico Dolce recorded the *Perseus and Andromeda* among the mythologies that Titian had painted for Philip, confirming this hypothesis. See ROSKILL 1968, pp. 192-193.

⁴⁹² MANCINI 1998, p. 242.

⁴⁹³ The painting was probably never realised because the subject was not suitable for Philip's needs of representation anymore. About this change of subject, see MANCINI 2009, pp. 288-292.

⁴⁹⁴ «Tosto le manderò la poesia di Perseo e Andromeda, che avrà un'altra vista diversa da queste, e così Medea e Jasone [...]». See PUPPI 2012, pp. 213-214.

⁴⁹⁵ See GUTHMÜLLER 1981.

⁴⁹⁶ For instance, the figure of Andromeda went through many small changes, especially in the pose of the arms, initially above her head. See DUNKERTON ET AL. in LONDON 2020, pp. 67-71.

(Figure 63),⁴⁹⁷ but also classical statues had been proposed as sources.⁴⁹⁸ At the same time, the flying Perseus challenges the pyrotechnical effect of Tintoretto's *Miracle of St Mark freeing the slave*, painted for the Scuola Grande of San Marco in 1548 (Figure 64).⁴⁹⁹ The poor condition of the canvas makes difficult to analyse the technical values of the painting, but the brushstrokes appears to be bolder and freer if compared to the first two *poesie*.⁵⁰⁰ This canvas is surely a turning point in Titian's production for the new King of Spain, and it seems to coincide with the moment when Philip is no longer subjected to the authority of his father and the cumbersome presence of his aunt as the ruler of the court of Brussels.

In the same letter forwarding the *Perseus and Andromeda*, Titian mentions «a most devout work, which I have held on to for ten years already».⁵⁰¹ This painting was suggested by Charles Hope to be recognized in the *Crucifixion* now at El Escorial,⁵⁰² but this thesis was not generally accepted due to stylistic inconsistency.

This does not claim to be an exhaustive and final list of the paintings owned by Philip II during his years in the Netherlands. But it is important to underline that even the most renowned paintings, the ones such as the *poesie* that will have a long-lasting impact on European history of art, did not physically arrive to the court of Brussels, unlike Mary of Hungary's and Charles V's commissions.

In 1559, Philip II appointed Margaret of Parma (1522-1586), natural daughter of Charles V and wife of the Duke of Parma Ottavio Farnese, as Governor of the Low Countries, and he returned to his beloved Spain, where his court -and his collection- were waiting for him.

⁴⁹⁷ Benvenuto Cellini; *Ganymede*; 1540; 106 cm; marble; Museo Nazionale del Bargello; Florence. See PACKER in LONDON 2020, pp. 139-140.

⁴⁹⁸ See WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 169.

⁴⁹⁹ Jacopo Tintoretto; *Miracle of the slave*; 1548; 416x544 cm; oil on canvas; Gallerie dell'Accademia; Venice. See PACKER in LONDON 2020, p. 140.

⁵⁰⁰ See DUNKERTON ET AL. in LONDON 2020, p. 71.

⁵⁰¹ LONDON 2020, p. 195. See also PUPPI 2012, pp. 213-214.

⁵⁰² LONDON 1983-1984, pp. 227-228.

1.5 What remains of Titian

From the first meeting with the Emperor, Titian, slowly at first but then exponentially, conquered the commissions of the Habsburgs. This was the most powerful dynasty in Europe, and the Venetian artist had a primary role as court painter for many years. At first mostly relegated to the production of portraits, an activity that he would extensively carry on for his Habsburg's patrons, Titian proposed himself as a painter of devotional images and heroic and erotic mythologies, consolidating his fame at an international level. We focused on the court of Brussels as an artistic centre, where Charles V, Mary of Hungary, Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle and the young Prince Philip selected and directed Titian's international production, consequently shaping its immediate and long-term reception in the Netherlands. But, as a matter of fact, what remains of Titian's artworks in those territories?

The post-mortem inventory of Mary of Hungary records the assets that she had brought to Spain in 1556.⁵⁰³ The list includes an important number of Titian's entries, such as twenty portraits (sixteen plus four of the daughters of Ferdinand I), one religious painting, namely the *Noli me tangere*, and three mythologies: the *Tantalus*, the *Ixion* and the *Psyche presented to Venus*. The *Sisyphus* is not mentioned in this inventory, but Harold Wethey found out that Joanna of Austria (1535-1573), daughter of Charles V, inherited many of her aunt's items, and she immediately gave away to Philip II an *Ixion*, a *Prometheus (Tityus)*, a *Tantalus* and a *Sisyphus*, which evidently were previously in Mary of Hungary's possession.⁵⁰⁴ We can assume that all of the documented paintings that Titian made for the Governor of the Low Countries arrived in Spain once she left.⁵⁰⁵

Except for the *Annunciation* that Titian did send to Isabella of Portugal back in 1537, the other artworks commissioned from Titian by Charles V followed him first to Brussels and then to Spain, where most of them had the honour of following the

⁵⁰³ CHECA CREMADES 2010, III, pp. 2841-2960.

⁵⁰⁴ WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 158.

⁵⁰⁵ Apart from the aforementioned *Saint Margaret* documented by the print of Luca Bertelli, that is not listed in the inventories.

former Emperor during his final retire at the Monastery of Yuste.⁵⁰⁶ The portraits chosen by Charles V were the double portrait of himself and his wife, the *Charles V with an armour* and the portrait of *Isabella of Portugal*. All of the devotional paintings - the *Ecce Homos*, the *Dolorosas*, the *Holy Trinity* - left Brussels with the man who used to be the Emperor.

It is difficult to exactly reconstruct what was left behind, because the documented paintings, many of them now lost, in 1556 followed their owners to Spain. Philip II, Charles V's successor, did the same, and after 1559 virtually none of the masterpieces that made Titian the Emperor's Apelles were available in the Netherlands anymore.⁵⁰⁷

Titian, like many other great masters of his age, was not just an artist who painted and delivered his works to patrons. He took part in a rhetorical and social discourse, somewhat created externally and discussed on a more intellectual level, and somewhat carefully driven by himself. It is a known fact that he was extremely aware of his image as an artist and as a man of his time. We need only to recall that to nurture his public image, he confided in the advice of brilliant Pietro Aretino, who likely even loaned his pen and rhetorical prowess to promote Titian among the princes.⁵⁰⁸ Likewise, Titian's

⁵⁰⁶ For the retirement of Charles V to Yuste, see GARCÍA S. 1995. It is famous the passage in which father José de Sigüenza, prior of the monastery, librarian and historian, describes the death of Charles V, recording that, on his deathbed, the former Emperor wanted to look at the portrait of Isabella by Titian, a panel representing the *Agony on the garden* and, in the end, the *Holy Trinity*, also by Titian. See SIGÜENZA (1605) 2000, II, pp.171-172.

⁵⁰⁷ The only doubt regards the series of the *Condemned*. In fact, in the 1556 inventory of Mary of Hungary, it is mentioned the *Tantalus*, together with the one by Coxcie, and the *Ixion*, but not the *Tityus* and the *Sisyphus*. The same is repeated in the 1558 inventory in Cigales. In another inventory dated 1558 are listed *Prometheus*, *Sisyphus* and two versions of *Tantalus*. It is difficult to ascertain which paintings were referred to in the two inventories, because of the confusion in the sources about the identity of the *Condemned*. A series of five paintings is finally mentioned by the poet Juan de Mal Lara (1524-1571), who saw them hanging on the walls of the Alcázar of Madrid. He records the presence of *Prometheus*, *Sisyphus*, *Tityus*, *Ixion* and *Tantalus*. We do not exactly know when did these paintings arrive, if they were all Titian's and if they all came from Binche. Therefore, it is possible that two unknown *Condemned* somehow stayed in Brussels for some years, but it seems very unlikely. See MANCINI 2011, pp. 75-76.

⁵⁰⁸ Pietro Aretino surely was a fundamental element in Titian's self-promotional strategy, as pinpointed by GREGORI 1978, pp. 271-306; FREEDMAN 1995; MANCINI 2009, pp. 57-120. Another intellectual that actively wrote in defence of Titian's art and, by synecdoche, of the Venetian *colore*, was

desire to supervise and control the transposition of his paintings into prints, led him to appeal to the Venetian Senate for an exclusive printing privilege over his own inventions.⁵⁰⁹ This awareness and Titian's active role in creating his own image and his own "myth" was thoroughly analysed in the 2009 book *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, a pivotal study on the organization of his workshops, his marketing strategies and his impact on European art.⁵¹⁰ In the chapter devoted to the latter topic, *L'officina tizianesca e l'Europa: fra imitatio ed aemulatio*, we read that are not the Michelangelesque and herculean sinners for Binche to determine the image of Titian, but the portraits and the dramatic and erotic themes, and that it is from these subjects that develops the phenomenon of the «tizianizzazione di Tiziano».⁵¹¹ However, as it has been discussed so far, the paintings that made it to the court of Brussels and to Flanders, were neither dramatic nor erotic themes, but the Michelangelesque - or, we should better say, Central-Italian, based on *all'antica* models and heroic - subjects, the devotional half-busts with a pietistic tone and, obviously, the portraits.

The selection of Titian's art that was made and displayed by the Habsburg's in Brussels, does not exactly match with the idea of the Venetian painter carried on by the literature since Vasari, the one of the champions of Venetian's *colorito* supported by the intellectuals of his time. Moreover, the prestige earned in that court by Titian, due

Lodovico Dolce (1508/10-1568), who also edited some of the letters by the Venetian in the book *Lettere di diversi* published in 1554 and 1555, as discussed by ARROYO 2011, pp. 41-56; MANCINI 2018, pp. 29-52. Dolce probably cooperated with the artist, as the literates Pietro Aretino and Giovanni Mario Verdizzotti (1537/40-1604/7), to edit the correspondence to his most important patrons. See PADOAN in VENICE-WASHINGTON 1990-1991, pp. 43-52; PUPPI 2012, pp. 345-349; DALLA COSTA in LONDON 2020, p. 193.

⁵⁰⁹ The famous *supplica* of 1566 documents Titian's concerns about plagiarism and negative advertising of his artworks as a consequence of circulations of poorly engraved prints. His awareness of the importance of the See MANCINI 2009, pp. 121-158; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 389-409; LÜDEMANN 2016, pp. 169-217.

⁵¹⁰ Tagliaferro et al. 2009.

⁵¹¹ This phenomenon is described as «una serie di operazioni condotte a più livelli, che in un modo o nell'altro mirano a presentare l'arte del cadorino in termini diversi e aggiornati, accentuandone alcuni aspetti e tralasciandone altri, per rispondere al dettato dei nuovi gusti e dei nuovi bisogni critici, sempre in rapporto dialettico con un mercato artistico nazionale e internazionale in rapida espansione»; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 367.

to his relationship with the Emperor and his sister and magnified through unlikely anecdotes, was closely linked to the artworks of imperial patronage, which had an unusually short life in Flanders. So, this process of “tizianizzazione di Tiziano” appears even more diversified because it had to face, in the Netherlands, a substantial difference from what we art historian, by analysing retroactively the career of Titian, would expect to find.

To ask what remains of Titian, once that most of his art is out of the picture, means to deal with our expectations on how the art the painter was popularized, which characteristics were inextricably associated with his art in relation to its availability and different contexts and necessities.

To discuss the factual reception of his inventions and of his *persona*, we will start from the Flemish artists that could experience first-hand the art of Titian, mostly the ones related to the court. Michel Coxcie, Pieter Coecke van Aelst, Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen and Antonis Mor, were painters that in certain circumstances chose or were asked to dialogue with his themes and compositions. Through their selection of specific aspects of Titian’s works and style, they contributed to the creation of his “idea” in the Southern Netherlands of the late XVIth century.

2. Michiel Coxcie the “Pictor Regis”

It is well known that Charles V, in his final retirement, brought to the monastery of Yuste most of the paintings that Titian had made under his patronage. Father José de Sigüenza recorded the final moments of the man that once was the Emperor. He recalls him observing the portrait of his beloved wife and then meditating on the *Holy Trinity* by the Venetian master. This anecdote reinforces the special relationship between Charles V and Titian, much promoted by the artist’s biographers and by the advocates of Venetian painting. Conversely, the presence of an important number of religious paintings by Coxcie in the selection of Charles V was usually omitted.

The aforementioned *Road to the Calvary*, now at the Escorial, was hanging in the monastery below a *Crucifixion* by the same painter, now lost. Additionally, the pairing between Titian and Coxcie’s *Mater Dolorosas* and *Ecce Homos*, discussed in the first chapter, is supposed to have happened during the time in Yuste. This adds the *Christ carrying the cross* of the Prado and a lost *Mater Dolorosa* to the list of devotional paintings by Coxcie on which Charles V decided to meditate in his final years.

From the *Tantalus* commissioned by Mary of Hungary to replace the one not yet finished by Titian, hanging together with the other *Condemned*, to the devotional pairings of the suffering Mother and Son, Titian and Coxcie shared both the preference of the Habsburgs and the physical relation of their paintings. Despite their involvement in same or similar projects and their titles of court painters, carried on through different rulers,⁵¹² the artistic dialogue between Coxcie and Titian is a topic that have been overlooked by literature.⁵¹³

To start, it is important to stress that Coxcie was favoured by the Habsburgs with many different roles and positions. As copyist, he reproduced for Mary of Hungary the *Descent from the cross* by Rogier van der Weyden.⁵¹⁴ The copy was placed in the church

⁵¹² From 1540 Coxcie started working for the Emperor, he was a court painter of May of Hungary from about 1543 a and member of her household from 1548 to 1551. Afterwards, he entered the service of Philip II and he was recorded as “painter to the King of England”. See PÉREZ DE TUDELA in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 100-115.

⁵¹³ A recent discussion on the theme of the artistic relationship between Coxcie and Titian in the depiction of the *Mater Dolorosas* and the *Ecce Homos* is HARTH 2021B, pp. 67-104.

⁵¹⁴ For Coxcie as a copyist, see in general SUYKERBUYCK 2013-14, pp. 5-24.

of Our Lady Outside the Walls, allowing Mary of Hungary to purchase the original for the chapel of Binche, where it was recorded in 1549 by Vincente Álvarez, in the chronicles of Philip II's journey in the Low Countries.⁵¹⁵ Astrid Harth has recently examined the presence of two more copies that Michiel Coxcie seems to have realised for Mary of Hungary, namely the *Mater Dolorosa* and the *Ecce Homo* after Titian's paintings for Charles V. The two works, singularly depicted on stone, are listed in the 1558 inventory of the Regent of the Low Countries.⁵¹⁶ Years later, Philip II ordered Coxcie to copy the *Ghent altarpiece* by Hubert and Jan van Eyck, a unique masterpiece that he was not allowed to buy from the cathedral of Saint Bavo.⁵¹⁷ These commissions can already exemplify how the house of Habsburg trusted Coxcie's talent, but he was also involved in other projects.

As summarized by Pérez de Tudela in his chapter about Coxcie as court painter, he worked to decorate the castle of Binche, painting the frescoes and designing the windows and the chimneys. He also collaborated with Bernard van Orley, his mentor, in the making of the cartoons for tapestries, until he was made supervisor of the tapestry-makers in Brussels, and he was responsible for designing the stained-glass windows for the church of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula, also in Brussels.⁵¹⁸ These designs were meant to create artworks set up in public spaces or in places of representation of the Habsburgs political power.

In connection with this, it is also worth to mention that the artist worked as a portraitist for Mary of Hungary, painting effigies that were probably intended to join the number of the "gallery of portraits", together with Titian's. Coxcie painted the portraits of Christina of Denmark, Charles V, Empress Isabella, Eleanor of Austria,

⁵¹⁵ ALVÁREZ 1964, pp. 95-96. In 1570 Johannes Molanus confirmed Coxcie as the author of the copy and Mary of Hungary as the commissioner, see SUYKERBUYK 2013-14, p. 11.

⁵¹⁶ «Yten dos tablas quadradas, grandes, de piedras, en la vna de ellas vn Eçe Homo y, en la otra, Nuestra Senora, con sus molduras doradas e sus cobertos de maderas, hechas por maese Myguel», in CHECA CREMADES 2010, III, p. 2915. See HARTH 2021B, pp. 83-104.

⁵¹⁷ The copy was made between 1556 and 1558, and it was paid 4000 guilders, an incredibly large amount of money for the time, SUYKERBUYK 2013-14, pp. 6-7.

⁵¹⁸ See BOOGERT 1992, pp. 57-80; REINTJENS in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 140-155.

and Mary of Hungary herself.⁵¹⁹ Portraying family members of the Habsburg house was a common task for the court painter, and he was paid 35 *scudi* for each of them, for a total of 170, as recorded in 1554.⁵²⁰

Coxcie was entrusted with the production and the design of tapestries and stained glasses, which manufacture was much more expensive than paintings.⁵²¹ In copying paintings by the most celebrated Flemish masters, he proved his talent in mastering a traditional pictorial technique. He could take advantage of his knowledge of the fresco painting that he had practised in Rome, in the decoration of Saint Barbara chapel in Santa Maria dell'Anima, when Mary of Hungary commissioned from him the frescoes in the castle of Binche. The depiction of copies on stone after Titian's *Ecce Homo* and *Mater Dolorosa* suggests that he had also learned the practice of painting on this complex and unusual support.⁵²² His technical skills were combined with the first-hand knowledge and study of classical models and the reworking of Tuscan-Roman prototypes.

Coxcie was favoured not only by the ruling family,⁵²³ but also by the powerful Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle and by the following Governors of the Low Countries.

For instance, in a document from 1587, Coxcie petitioned Governor Alessandro Farnese to ask for some money he was still waiting to receive from the States of

⁵¹⁹ All of these paintings are lost except to the portrait of Christine of Denmark, painted in 1545 and now at the Allen Memorial Art Museum (Oberlin, Ohio). The payment of the other portraits is recorded in Mary of Hungary's accounts dated 1554. PÉREZ DE TUDELA in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 100.

⁵²⁰ FINOT 1885, V, pp. 173-174.

⁵²¹ For a general introduction to the use and production of tapestries in the Renaissance, see New York 2002. A focus on the prominent role of tapestries in showing the magnificence of the Habsburg courts is discussed in CLELAND 2014; BUCHANAN 2015. See also BOOGERT 1992, pp. 57-80; REINTJENS in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 140-155 to deepen some aspects of the political importance of the stained glasses designed by Coxcie for the church of Saints Michael and Gudula in Brussels.

⁵²² Astrid Harth argues that Coxcie might have learned this technique during his sojourn in Rome (1530-1539) from the example of Sebastiano del Piombo, who specialised in painting small-scale devotional artworks or portraits on stone. See HARTH 2021, pp. 88-95.

⁵²³ In 1574 he was even recorded working on an unknown commission for the "princess of Bavaria", probably Anne of Austria, the daughter of Ferdinand I, who in 1546 married Duke Albert V of Bavaria. See JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 42.

Brabant, from the time he worked as court painter for Charles V and also Margaret of Parma, who was Governor from 1559 to 1567.⁵²⁴ Granvelle, on the other hand, likely played a fundamental role in suggesting Coxcie to Philip II, as it had to be expected from his role of art advisor who have also mediated between artists such as Leone Leoni, Antonis Mor, Titian and the Habsburgs. Granvelle wrote to Gonzalo Pérez, secretary of the King, to inform him about a painting of the *Descent from the cross* that he had seen in the workshop of Coxcie, praising him as: «[...] el mesmo pintor que copio la table de gante [...]»⁵²⁵. In the letter, the Cardinal offered to negotiate himself for the delivery of the painting to Spain.

On a different occasion, he also bought from a church in Alseberg an early *Crucifixion* by Coxcie,⁵²⁶ and the painting was then sent to Spain to expand the collection of the King.⁵²⁷ The Cardinal probably bought some paintings also for himself, as suggested by an unspecified portrait and a *Venus and Adonis* by Coxcie that were listed in the 1607 inventory of the palace of Besançon.⁵²⁸ It is interesting to underline that we can find very few mythological subjects in the collection gathered by the Granvelle family. Except for the ones by Titian (*Venus and Cupid with a mirror, Danae or the golden rain*), there are listed *Venus* by the artist from Treviso Paris Bordone (1500-1571), a *Menelaus* by Friedrich Sustris (1540-1599), a *Venus with Cupid and a satyr* and a *Venus with Mercury* by Correggio (1489-1534). It is also interesting to point out that the only mythology painted by Coxcie present in the Granvelle collection was indeed a *Venus and Adonis*, a subject that seems easy to link to the famous canvas made by Titian for Philip II. As exemplified before, Cardinal Granvelle had showed his eagerness to emulate the Habsburgs commissions, and it wouldn't surprise if he chose the subject and the painter for this reason. However, the loss of the painting and the lack of

⁵²⁴ BOOGERT 1992, p. 124; WOOLLETT 2012, p. 78.

⁵²⁵ For the transcription of the letter, see PÉREZ TUDELA in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 114-115.

⁵²⁶ Karel van Mander, in his *Schilderboek*, mentioned a merchant from Brussels named Thomas Werry, who was involved in this and other transactions. MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 293.

⁵²⁷ The *Crucifixion* was identified as the one now in the cathedral of Valladolid, but it could be a Flemish copy after the original. The painting is also known through a print by Petrus Furnius, dated about 1560. OLLERO BUTLER 1975, pp. 189-190; VAN GRIEKEN in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 176-179.

⁵²⁸ See CASTAN 1867, pp. 37-67. We should mention that the subject of Venus and Adonis was particularly unusual in the XVIth century Netherlands and in the production of Coxcie.

information about it don't allow us to indulge in further speculations. Moreover, the depiction of a theme that Titian had treated in his *poesie* does not at all prove Coxcie's reference to his inventions, as we will elaborate in the chapter devoted to the reception of the mythological paintings.

Granvelle showed his appreciation for the court painter on other situations. For instance, in 1564 asked him to take as pupil his protégée Pierre d'Argent (1510-1608),⁵²⁹ a painter from Besançon that the Cardinal was sponsoring and that he probably had also sent to Italy for educational purposes.⁵³⁰

Other aspects of Coxcie's privileged relationship with the Habsburgs and their court are discussed by Victor Fernández Soriano, who rightfully refers to the artist as “pintor grato a la casa de Habsburgo”.⁵³¹ The author focuses on the personal favours accorded to Michiel Coxcie in the event of the juridical problems faced by his son Willem Coxcie during his travel to Italy, in 1564. The son of the painter was arrested in Rome, accused of being a Protestant and sentenced to ten years of service on the galleys of Andrea Doria.⁵³² Granvelle, who was in Rome, interceded for him to reduce the punishment to five years. Eventually, Philip II himself, begged by the painter, entrusted Granvelle with the task of obtaining complete pardon for young Willem. In 1570, the son of Michiel Coxcie was set free and continued his education in Rome, studying the ancient marbles and the most important paintings.

Many other events could be presented as examples but for the sake of this argument it is especially meaningful to remember that the King of Spain expressed his concern over the finances of his court painter. In 1589, Coxcie was 90 years old when Philip II wrote to Alessandro Farnese, who was at the time the Governor of the Low Countries, to ask about his economic situation.⁵³³ That same year, King Philip II appointed him an annuity of 2500 *fiorini*, an important amount of money for an old painter that could not work as he did before.

⁵²⁹ We also have to remember that he asked the same favour from Willem Key and Frans Floris, two pupils of Lambert Lombard who were very successful painters in Antwerp at the time. PÉREZ DE TUDELA in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 110; WOUK 2018, p. 323.

⁵³⁰ See BRUNE 1912, p. 5.

⁵³¹ FERNÁNDEZ SORIANO 2008, pp. 191-196.

⁵³² FERNÁNDEZ SORIANO 2008, p. 194.

⁵³³ FERNÁNDEZ SORIANO 2008, p. 195.

Even the commissions that followed the death of the painter, that Philip II assigned to his firstborn son Rafael Coxcie, symbolize the gratitude of the Habsburg for the lifelong work of his court painter in Flanders.⁵³⁴

This introduction about Michiel Coxcie, the “pictor regis”, as he often signed his paintings, aims to remember that the favour of the Habsburgs was not at all limited to Titian. The Venetian artist was indeed appointed with the title of Apelles, he received a pension of 100 scudi per year, raised to 200 in 1548⁵³⁵, and painted an impressive number of canvases for the ruling family from 1530s until his death, but it is important to highlight that Titian was part of a system in which Coxcie and many other Flemish artists were involved as well.

In this complex system, Michiel Coxcie was an outstanding element, a court painter who managed to work for powerful patrons up until his death. This “pictor regis” who inextricably linked his name to the Habsburgs and his court, had indeed an important role in importing in the Low Countries the classical models and the Tuscan-Roman Renaissance art.⁵³⁶ However, his name is not as famous as Titian’s or as other of his Flemish colleagues.

In his *Schilderboek*, van Mander wrote that Coxcie became upset when Hieronymus Cock printed Giorgio Ghisi’s engravings after the *School of Athens* by Raphael, revealing his sources.⁵³⁷ The writer implied that Coxcie wanted to hide and dissimulate his borrowings and adaptations from Italian masters. However, the very common practice of copying for educational purposes, together with the Renaissance rhetoric concept

⁵³⁴ After 1596 Philip II commissioned Rafael Coxcie for portraits of Isabella Clara Eugenia, Isabella of Valois, the Queen of England, possibly Mary Tudor, and the Queen of Portugal, possibly Anna of Austria. See FERNÁNDEZ SORIANO 2008, p. 196.

⁵³⁵ Antonis Mor, when he entered the service of Philip II in 1554, got a salary of 300 *scudi* per year, three times the pension of Titian.

⁵³⁶ In the 2013 catalogue of the monographic exhibition on Coxcie, Jonckheere writes: «He had acquired skills that his contemporaries in the Low Countries did not possess, but above all he brought with him a new pictorial vocabulary that had previously only been seen in the collections of the Habsburgs and their court circles. It was this new style that he presented to a wide public – in altarpieces, of course, but also in stained-glass windows and print series»; JONCKHEERE in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 71-72.

⁵³⁷ «He was not copious in his composition and in fact made use of Italian designs now and then»; MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 293.

of *imitatio*, *aemulatio* and *superatio*,⁵³⁸ seem to contradict or, at least, to mitigate van Mander's criticism. A criticism, nonetheless, that would have marked the reputation and the critical fortune of the artist for a long time.⁵³⁹

When van Mander openly criticizes Coxcie's borrowings from Raphael and his use of Italian compositions as sources, he is actually describing a process that is fundamental in his art. Coxcie was a master in re-elaborating and combining not only models -Italian, *all'antica* and Flemish- but also different media and compositions. This working process is the key to understand his reception and use of Titian's paintings in his art, that was broader and more complex than it was hitherto assumed.

2.1. Titian among the others: combining models

Not long after the return from his long stay in Italy, Coxcie painted the triptych of the *Holy Kinship*, an altarpiece that exemplifies and, maybe, overstates, the use of Italian High Renaissance and *all'antica* models in the art of the painter (*Figure 65*).⁵⁴⁰

As analysed many times since the study of Loinig,⁵⁴¹ these panels condense a series of models from Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and references to classical sculpture and architecture.⁵⁴² The references range from the direct quote of an antique source,

⁵³⁸ The idea of imitation and emulation are key concepts in the Renaissance. There is plenty of literature about it from a literary and poetic point of view like the fundamental PIGMAN 1980, pp. 1-32. More strictly related to visual art, we can mention IRLE 1997; POCHAT 2001, pp. 363-419; ACKERMAN 2002, pp. 125-142. The literature that refers to Netherlandish art is scarcer, and mostly focused on painters of the XVIIth century like Rubens, but some relevant examples are MULLER 1982, pp. 229-247; MEADOW 1997, pp. 180-205; MELION 2007, pp. 379-426; ILSINK 2009; VELDMAN 2019, pp. 171-208.

⁵³⁹ The first monographic exhibition on the painter was held in Leuven in 2013-2014 and it was accompanied by a catalogue that tried to take stock of the situation of the artist's critical fortune and to re-evaluate his oeuvre beyond the simplistic and belittling image that Karel van Mander had set in 1604. See LEUVEN 2013-2014A; LEUVEN 2013-2014B.

⁵⁴⁰ The central panel represents the *familia Christi*, while the external wings, depicting the *Miracle of the poisoned chalice* and the *Ascension of Saint John*, are now combined in a single panel. Michiel Coxcie; *Triptych of the Holy Kinship*; c. 1540; 245x382 cm; oil on panel; Benediktinerstift Stiftssammlungen; Kremsmünster.

⁵⁴¹ LOINIG 1995, pp. 113-128.

⁵⁴² For a more recent analysis, see JONCKHEERE in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 79-83.

such as the statue known as *Thusnelda*, in the Roman collection of Della Valle Capranica,⁵⁴³ to the almost identical depiction of the Virgin leaning forward from Leonardo's *Virgin and the Child with saint Anne* (Figure 66),⁵⁴⁴ to a more general interpretation of the architectures painted by Raphael in the *Stanze Vaticane*. The monumentality of the human bodies within a plastic and solid architectural frame relates Coxcie's artwork with Roman prototypes. However, his refined and detailed technique, the bright colours and even the choice of the subject, way more common in the North than in Italy, make clear that his approach to Italian models was not slavish or imitative.⁵⁴⁵

Coxcie updated his visual tradition by integrating elements from the language that was becoming fashionable in the European courts, as we discussed in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, his references to Titian's inventions are perfectly fitting this attitude towards other Italian and classical sources.

Triptych with the *Life of the Virgin*

When he wanted to shame Coxcie for his borrowings from Raphael's *School of Athens*, Karel van Mander specified that it was an artwork: «after which he had worked and from which he had used a great deal for the altarpiece with the *Death of Mary* [...]».⁵⁴⁶ The writer referred to the altarpiece of the *Life of the Virgin*, a triptych made for the church of Saints Michael and Gudula, in Brussels, that was then sold to Spain (Figure 67).⁵⁴⁷ The panels, now at the Prado, hardly strike us for their debt to the *School*

⁵⁴³ This statue is known in the Netherlands also thanks to Maarten van Heemskerck, after whose drawing this statue and the other sculptures of the collections were engraved and printed. See JONCKHEERE in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 79.

⁵⁴⁴ Leonardo da Vinci; *Virgin and the Child with saint Anne*; c. 1503; 168x130 cm; oil on panel; Musée du Louvre; Paris.

⁵⁴⁵ For instance, the *Saint Anne triptych* painted by Quentin Massys (1465/66-1530) painted in 1507 for the Confraternity of Saint Anne in Leuven, now at the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels.

⁵⁴⁶ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, pp. 293-294.

⁵⁴⁷ Michiel Coxcie; *Triptych of the life of the Virgin*; 1550; central 208x182 cm, wings 208x77 cm; oil on panel; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.

of *Athens* by Raphael,⁵⁴⁸ nor the original, nor the printed version by Giorgio Ghisi date 1549-50.

By comparing Coxcie's painting to Raphael's invention, it is possible to imagine that van Mander might have referred mostly to the architectonic organization of the space. The central panel, the one depicting the death and the assumption of the Virgin, sets the scene in a building that is clearly *all'antica*. As in the *School of Athens*, the central perspective is delineated and enhanced by the architectural lines of the diagonal arched walls, converging to a double portal. The architectural language, however, appears very different. Whereas Raphael is showing a selection of white, cream and ivory, Coxcie plays with different kinds of stones, with a huge component of red marble. While Raphael's setting is open, bright and solid at the same time, the Flemish painter gives the idea of a more narrow and dark space, almost fragile in the accurate description of all the details of the walls, the columns, the chiselled balustrade.⁵⁴⁹

In the left panel, the one of the presentation to the temple, the focus of the perspective is outside the image, and the architecture can be compared to the one of the great barrel-vault in the *School of Athens*, with the pillars, the protruding *cornice* and the frieze. Again, Coxcie paints different marbles and shows his attention to decorative details -friezes, bas-reliefs, metope and Corinthian pillars- surely related to the different size of the painting, the support and the technique used. In this wing we can actually identify a group of men that might show a stronger connection to Raphael's painting, namely the ones lined between the two columns, headed by the old man in a golden and red robe. The pose of this man, seen in profile and bringing the right hand to his chest, can recall the one of the bald philosophers in a bright orange robe, who is also heading a line of men that are adding depth to the composition. Beside the general use of this visual *escamotage*, Coxcie introduced so many variations that it is difficult to imagine he could have been ashamed for the publication of the Ghisi's print. The triptych indeed presents many different references to works of Italian artists and, among them, Titian stands out.

⁵⁴⁸ Raphael; *School of Athens*; 1509-11; 500x770 cm; fresco; Vatican Museums; Vatican City.

⁵⁴⁹ The architecture has been described as Albertian but with many echoes of the best van Eyck's paintings by OLLERO BUTLER 1975, p. 194.

First of all, we should remember that the painting was made for the cathedral of Brussels, dedicated to Saints Michael and Gudula. This triptych arrived at the Escorial in 1586, as recorded in the fifth “entrega”, but the name of the artist was not mentioned.⁵⁵⁰ It was likely bought by Philip II, perhaps through the merchant Thomas Werry, and donated to the Escorial, where many other Coxcie’s paintings arrived during those years. About this transaction, van Mander underlines that the painting was undersold in Brussels and then overpriced in Spain. This refers to a wider phenomenon of the aggressive purchase of Flemish masters’ paintings by foreign patrons.⁵⁵¹ He also underlines that it was one of the most important works of the painter, even in spite of - or maybe because of - the multiple Italian references.

In his study published in 1993, Domenico Laurenza, describes the composition as “raphaélo-michelangélesque”, and compares the style and the concept of the image to the *Annunciation to Zachariah* by Jacopino del Conte (1510-1598), pupil of the Florentine painter Andrea del Sarto (1486-1530).⁵⁵² The author uses this comparison to explain and validate the parallels between Coxcie’s triptych and the monochrome fresco series made by Andrea del Sarto for the Chiostro dello Scalzo, in Florence.⁵⁵³

If we compare the *Nativity of saint John the Baptist* by Andrea del Sarto (*Figure 68*) to the *Nativity of the Virgin* by Coxcie (*Figure 67*), it is easy to find correspondences.⁵⁵⁴ The

⁵⁵⁰ ZARCO CUEVAS 1930A, p. 663.

⁵⁵¹ Other works by Coxcie followed the same fate, especially bought by Philip II for the decoration of the Escorial. Another example is the altarpiece from Saint Rombouts in Mechelen, that was sold in 1580 by Archduke Matthias of Austria (1557-1619) to Prague. The triptych was commissioned by the Guild of Saint Luke and painted by Jan Gossaert (central panel) and Michiel Coxcie (wings), and it is now at the Národní galerie in Prague. See WOOLLETT 2012, p. 80.

⁵⁵² Jacopino del Conte (1515-1598) was a Florentine painter who moved to Rome around 1535. There, he was strongly influenced by the work of Raphael and Michelangelo. The *Annunciation to Zachariah* was painted in 1536 for the Oratory of San Giovanni Decollato, in Rome. LAURENZA 1993, p. 102.

⁵⁵³ Andrea del Sarto worked on the twelve scenes from the life of saint John the Baptist from about 1508 to 1526. This series is considered the expression of most “purist” classicism in the production of Andrea del Sarto in Florence. See SHEARMAN 1965, pp. 52-74, 294-307; and the monographic study by HIRDT 2006.

⁵⁵⁴ Andrea del Sarto; *Nativity of saint John the Baptist*; 1526; 194x313 cm; fresco; Chiostro dello Scalzo; Florence.

women at the left side of the bed, who are carrying a tray in Coxcie's painting and a vessel in Andrea del Sarto's, not only are in a very similar position, but they also share the hairstyle and the shape of the vaporous textile folded on their back. The woman in the background of the Flemish panel, the one looking outside the painting, resembles in the aspect and in the purpose the one of the fresco and, to complete the comparison, is it possible to recognise some similarities between the old woman, sitting at the extreme left of Andrea del Sarto's composition, and the woman kneeling in the foreground of the *Presentation of the Virgin Mary to the temple* (Figure 67).

In his analysis Laurenza points out the importance of the art of Andrea del Sarto, but he does not mention a very striking reference. The protagonist of Coxcie's triptych, the Virgin of the assumption, resembles evidently the one painted by Andrea del Sarto in 1526-28, also known as the *Assunta Passerini* (Figure 69).⁵⁵⁵ In his version, Coxcie does not exactly copy the position of the Virgin. As we have seen so far, he recreates the idea of the pose - the knees, one higher and one lower, the feet seen one in front and one from the side, the bust just slightly rotated, the hands joined in prayer - but he adjusts it to his own necessities. Coxcie's Virgin is represented with his typical female physiognomy and very different clothes, both in the paler colours and in the greater attention to the details and the folding of the textile.

Going back to the "raphaélo-michelangélesque" essence of this triptych, we can find one of the most direct quotes that Coxcie had made of a work by Michelangelo, namely the *Persian Sibyl* painted on the vault of the Sistine Chapel. The reading old woman in the *Nativity*, who is sitting in the middle ground of the composition, closely reminds of the Michelangelo's Sibyl in the clothing, the pose, the detail of the veil covering her head and the thick and rigid cape on her shoulders. Just the position of the legs slightly differs, and we can start to notice that, even in the most explicit quotes of famous models, Coxcie tends to introduce variations not just in the style, but also in the composition, while maintaining the general visual reference.

⁵⁵⁵ Andrea del Sarto, *Assunta Passerini*, 1526-28; 377x222 cm; oil on panel; Palazzo Pitti; Florence. The altarpiece was commissioned by Margherita Passerini for the main altar of the church of Santa Maria dei Servi, in Cortona. We have no documents suggesting that Michiel Coxcie had visited Cortona. However, as for the frescoes by Andrea del Sarto in Florence, he could have known the composition thank to the Florentine artistic *milieu* he had been associated with while in Rome.

The choice to start the analysis of the problem concerning Coxcie and Titian with this triptych, is not arbitrary. As discussed earlier, van Mander mentions it as the example of the painter's extensive use of Raphaelesque motifs and compositions which, as we have evidenced, are not as fundamental as he portrays them. So, this is just one example of misconception that the artistic literature can create or carry on about an artist. This idea had been so deep-rooted in art history, that very little scholars noticed the use of Titianesque models in this altarpiece.

Laurenza's essay lays the foundations for a further analysis of this phenomenon. The scholar points out that the art of Titian would leave a mark on Coxcie's paintings from 1550 onwards and identifies some of the models he used in the altarpiece of the *Life of the Virgin*.⁵⁵⁶ First of all, in the central panel depicting the *Assumption*, the Flemish painter loosely refers to the apostles painted by Titian in his most celebrated *Assumption of the Virgin* at the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, in Venice (*Figure 70*).⁵⁵⁷ Again, Coxcie took some elements and ignored others. The apostle on the right of the painting, the one with a pink vest who is looking up towards the Virgin, shares the same pose, especially the way of pushing the elbow outwards and grabbing the robe on his side, with the apostle in emerald green in Titian's altarpiece.⁵⁵⁸ Another apostle, the one at the far right who raising his arms above the head and with the hands joined in prayer, resembles the one that Titian had painted at the far left of his composition. We can also find an echo of the apostle sitting on the sarcophagus, identified as saint Peter, in the figure that Coxcie had placed behind the angel, at the left of the Virgin's deathbed.

⁵⁵⁶ LAURENZA 1993, pp. 108-117.

⁵⁵⁷ Titian; *Assumption of the Virgin*; 1516-18; 690x360 cm; oil on panel; Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari; Venice. The literature on this ground-breaking painting is vast and not particularly relevant in this context. See the summary in WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 74-76; ROSAND 1988, pp. 4-23.

⁵⁵⁸ Ollero Butler compares the pose of this apostle to the one in the foreground of the *Sacrifice after the flood*, a tapestry that was part of the series of the *History of Noah*. So, it is very likely that Coxcie had reused that model on different occasions and in different *media*. See OLLERO BUTLER 1975, p. 194. Philip II had purchased this series and brought it to Spain when he left the Low Countries in 1559, but most of it was lost during the transportation. He then commissioned another series from Willem de Pannemaker (1512-1581). See BUCHANAN 2006, pp. 405-415.

Even though some of the colours, in their spatial distribution, have such a similar impact that we could imagine so, it is difficult to assess that Michiel Coxcie had the opportunity to see the original painting at the Frari.⁵⁵⁹ It is more likely that he had studied it after a drawing, or a print. Also, we should emphasize that the Flemish artist selected just some of the figures, he reassembled them in the space, and what he really evokes from Titian's *Assumption* is the variation of poses and feelings expressed, together with a sense of movement in the middle ground of the composition.

However, the most interesting example of Titianism is located on the verso of the wings, that are decorated with *grisailles* of religious subjects. The left wing is painted with an *Annunciation* in the upper part, and with an *Adoration of the shepherds* in the predella (Figure 71), while the right one represents a *Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth* and an *Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 73).⁵⁶⁰ The *Adoration of the shepherds* is a horizontal composition that closely recalls the print by Giovanni Britto (active 1530-1550) after the Titian's painting with the same subject now at Palazzo Pitti (Figure 72).⁵⁶¹ If we compare carefully Coxcie's *grisaille* to the print, it is possible to notice that the Flemish painter disassembled the composition, separating different groups of characters, then he reassembled them while inserting some new elements. The main group includes the Virgin with the Child, the shepherd who is kneeling down and the two children carrying a candle. This group is reversed in comparison to the print, but the positions are almost identical, with just few changes. The clothing is simplified, the basket on

⁵⁵⁹ It is especially noticeable in the important role of scarlet areas of colour in the foreground and in the distribution of areas of emerald-green in the upper-right and lower-left corners.

⁵⁶⁰ The verso of the wings of this triptych are understudied, and even pictures of them are difficult to find. The *grisaille* technique, namely the use of shades of grey to give the painting a monochrome aspect that can resemble a statue, or a bas-relief, had an important tradition in the Low Countries. Jan van Eyck, the most renowned Flemish painter of the XVth century, frequently used this technique, especially to depict the verso of the wings of polyptychs such as the illustrious *Ghent Altarpiece*. This technique was still used by Flemish painters in the XVIth century. See GRAMS-THIEME 1988; GREUB-FRĄCZ 2014; SLIWÖA 2017.

⁵⁶¹ The painting was commissioned from Titian by Francesco Maria I della Rovere in 1533, in the occasion of the birth of his son Giulio Maria della Rovere. The first mention of this similarity can be found in LAURENZA 1993, pp. 108-111. For the print: Giovanni Britto after Titian; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 412x517 mm; woodcut; National Gallery of Art; Washington. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 117-118.

which Christ is laying is not made of intertwined branches, the lamb from Titian's invention disappears, replaced with a step. The only character that is in the same direction of the print is saint Joseph, who is leaning on a pillar and was moved from the centre of the Holy Family to a more secluded position, in the background. The adding of a praying angel next to Christ and two shepherds arriving from the right side, approaching the scene from behind the Virgin, not from the front, concludes the rearrangement of the image.

It is interesting to underline that Coxcie's *grisaille* was based on a print after Titian, and not on a painting. To achieve a compact composition with a clear and simplified distribution of lights and shadows, it was surely easier to start from a print, in which this process of adaptation from the painting had already been finalised. Moreover, prints after Titian's inventions were easier to find and to collect, and they could become part of an artist's archive of images and models.

On the verso of the right wing, the *Adoration of the Magi* painted in the predella shows a very similar solution (*Figure 73*). The Virgin is presenting the Child, who is sitting on her lap, to the approaching Kings. One of them is kneeling and interacting with Christ, the second one is offering a gift while the third one stands more aside. Saint Joseph appears from the right side of the painting, peeping over the shoulder of Mary. This kind of composition was common on both sides of the Alps, even though Flemish artists often preferred a more central composition, with the Virgin seen from the front or three quarters.⁵⁶² We might be tempted to compare this panel to Titian's *Adoration of the Magi*, whose invention is known through different replicas (*Figure 74*).⁵⁶³ Nonetheless, this kind of composition was too widespread and common to identify Titian as the source and, if we take into account more likely and available models, we

⁵⁶² For instance, the paintings with the same subjects by Hans Memling, Hugo van der Goes, Jan Gossaert, Jan van Scorel, Joos van Cleve.

⁵⁶³ The main versions of this invention are the one at the Prado (*Adoration of the Magi*; c. 1550; 141x219 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid), the one at the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana (*Adoration of the Magi*; 1557-50; 120x223; oil on canvas; Pinacoteca Ambrosiana; Milan) and the one at the Cleveland Museum of Art (*Adoration of the Magi*; c. 1550; 135,5x217 cm; oil on canvas; Cleveland Museum of Art; Cleveland). See WETHEY 1569-75, I, pp. 66-68.

should consider a painting by his master Bernard van Orley.⁵⁶⁴ In this small panel with the *Adoration of the Magi*, the Virgin is sitting on the stairs of a temple, and Christ is touching the forehead of the King kneeling in front of him (*Figure 75*). This specific gesture of blessing is quite uncommon for the subject and, even though Coxcie's painting appears more classical, the composition of his master unmistakably had a role in the elaboration of this iconography.

A series of elements in this predella are explicitly referring to classical language. The body of the Virgin has the aspect of a sculpture, and the position of the legs and the feet clearly resembles the work of Central-Italian artists imbued with antique models. For instance, Giulio Romano often used this specific pose of the crossed ankles, almost surely extrapolated from a bas-relief, as with the figure of Proserpina in the decoration of Palazzo Te in Mantua,⁵⁶⁵ or the recently discovered *Mystic marriage of saint Catherine*, in a private collection.⁵⁶⁶ The latter was almost literally copied by Titian in his *grisaille* fresco above the tomb of Luigi Trevisano († 1526) in the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice. The fresco is now lost, but its appearance was recorded in a contemporary woodcut by Niccolò Boldrini (*Figure 76*).⁵⁶⁷ In his analysis, Joannides states that the borrowing from Giulio Romano can justify a composition that doesn't fit in Titian's production.⁵⁶⁸ These kind of judgments are a sign of the necessity for a different perspective in the study of the phenomenon of reception. By considering more or less "Titianesque" a painting by the artist and by looking for necessary explanations to deprive him of his responsibilities, we endorse the tendency to retrospectively evaluate an artist from the point of view of his canonised image.

⁵⁶⁴ Bernard van Orley; *Adoration of the Magi*; 1533; 32,5x45 cm; oil on panel; Yale University Art Gallery; New Haven. See FARMER 1981, p. 268.

⁵⁶⁵ It is the same lunette with *Psyche receives the beauty elixir from Proserpina* that Titian took as model for his paintings of Psyche, as discussed in the first chapter.

⁵⁶⁶ The painting is considered of good quality, probably dated around 1526-27 for its resemblance with works of his early time in Mantua. Joannides points out the strong Raphaelesque aspect of the composition and its frieze-like appearance. RICCÒMINI 2009, pp. 83-84; JOANNIDES 2015, pp. 13-17.

⁵⁶⁷ Niccolò Boldrini after Titian; *Mystic marriage of saint Catherine*; 1528-32; 330x457 mm; woodcut; Collezione Remondini; Bassano del Grappa. See VENICE 1976, pp. 112-113.

⁵⁶⁸ JOANNIDES 2015, p. 13.

Even though the fresco might have seemed particularly Raphaelesque in the arrangement of the figures and Central-Italian in the pose and construction of the bodies, Titian often dialogued with this tradition, and especially with Giulio Romano, Raphael and Michelangelo, in this moment of his career.

That Boldrini's print after Titian was likely one of the models for the predella with the *Adoration of the Magi*, can be evidenced by the use of the figure of Mary in another part of the triptych, namely the *Nativity of the Virgin* (Figure 67).⁵⁶⁹ Already noted by Laurenza, the resemblance between the Virgin holding the Child and the servant, probably the wet nurse, holding Mary in the foreground of the Nativity is uncanny.⁵⁷⁰ The exact position of the foot, the folding of the vest around the legs, the physiognomy of the profile and the shape of the veil on the head are matching almost perfectly. Therefore, it was likely that Coxcie used the same model, with some adjustments, for the Virgin in the *Adoration of the Magi*.

Another element that is evidently *all'antica* is the King in the background, the one who is holding an urn. His very short hair and prominent forehead, but even more the clothing, consisting in a muscle cuirass and a sort of chiton, closely remind the features of the statue of a Roman Emperor such as Caesar or Augustus.

In the triptych Coxcie managed a cohesive adaptation of many different sources on several levels: general composition, elements of spatial distribution, single figures, poses, direct quotes, variations. The sources themselves, although being elaborated from different media - frescoes, paintings on canvas and panel, prints, drawings -, they all respond to a visual language that depends on Central-Italian prototypes emulating the antique. Titian's sources are not an exception to this, and they are used, as the others, coherently to a precise and detailed pictorial technique that focuses on the depiction of the different materials.

⁵⁶⁹ It is worth pointing out that in the environment of Fontainebleau was produced an etching after Giulio Romano's painting that served as a model for Titian's *grisaille*. This etching goes under the name I♀V and reproduces Romano's invention faithfully except for the background. See JENKINS 2017, III, pp. 10-13.

⁵⁷⁰ LAURENZA 1993, p. 11.

Triptych of the *Last supper* for Saints Michael and Gudula

The relics of saint Gudula, patron saint of Brussels together with saint Michael, remained in the church of Saints Michael and Gudula from the XI century until 1566, when they were destroyed by the Calvinists.⁵⁷¹ In that occasion, the iconoclastic fury ravaged the art of the church, shattering or looting paintings and statues. It became necessary to redecorate the empty altars, and Coxcie was tasked with painting the triptych of the *Last supper* for the altar of the Miraculous Sacrament chapel (Figure 77), that he delivered in 1567, just one year after the *Beeldenstorm*.⁵⁷² The panels represent three episodes from the New Testament and one from the Old Testament. At the centre, the *Last supper*, in the left wing is depicted *Christ washing the disciple's feet*, and on the right wing we can find the *Agony in the garden*.⁵⁷³ Once closed, on the verso of the wings is visible a painting of *Elijah in the wilderness*.

It is relevant to emphasize that the church of Saints Michael and Gudula was one of the most important in the Low Countries, and moreover that it was the church of the Habsburgs, close to the palace of Coudenberg and serving as the court church.⁵⁷⁴ The windows of the church are an evident example of this strong connection between the ruling family and the chapter. We can find stained-glass windows donated by Margaret of Austria between 1516 and 1527, the ones representing Charles V and Isabel of Portugal installed in 1537, followed by the ones portraying Mary of Hungary and Louis II, dated 1538.⁵⁷⁵

The same chapel of the Miraculous Sacrament was the recipient of a series of donations of stained-glass windows from Emperor Charles V, followed by a series of

⁵⁷¹ VAN YPERSELE DE STRIHOU 2000.

⁵⁷² The central panel is signed and dated: «MICHEL. D COXCIE/1567».

⁵⁷³ Michiel Coxcie; *Triptych of the last supper*, 1567; central 279x250 cm, wings 277x102 cm; oil on panel; Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; Brussels.

⁵⁷⁴ The chapter of Saint Michael and Gudula in Brussels had been related for long time to the Dukes of Burgundy, and Philip the Good (1430-1464) used its canonries to reward his own secretaries and counsellors, and the same would do Philip's descendants. From 1494, when Philip the Handsome of Habsburg (1478-1506) inherited the throne of the Burgundian lands, the chapter was inextricably related to the Habsburg family. There, Charles V was proclaimed King of Spain in 1516 and he and his son Philip II would donate the famous stained-glass windows. See HOFSTRAETEN 2013, pp. 735-759.

⁵⁷⁵ For the stained-glass windows in the cathedral, see HELBIG 1942; LECOCQ 2005.

other donations from other European princes. The design of the windows was at first commissioned to Bernard van Orley. After his death in 1541, the task passed to his pupil Michiel Coxcie, who provided the cartoons for the windows of John II of Portugal (1502-1557) in 1542, Charles V, Ferdinand I in 1546, Mary of Hungary in 1547, Philip II in 1550, Maximilian II in 1556.⁵⁷⁶

It is not a coincidence that, in the church of the Habsburgs, in the chapel that had been decorated for years with the donations of the family, Michiel Coxcie was appointed to refurbish the altar with a triptych. And neither that this happened just after the Iconoclasm had given voice to the tensions of the Protestants in the Low Countries against their Catholic King Philip II, and the Governor Margaret of Parma. The commission of this painting to Coxcie, “one of the most fanatical Catholics”⁵⁷⁷ in the Guild of Saint Luke harmonized perfectly with the desire of restoration of the Catholic doctrine.⁵⁷⁸

After this premise, it is worth to pay more attention to the models and the language that Coxcie chose to represent these delicate subjects, starting from the *Last supper*.

The diagonal composition of this scene was quite uncommon in Flanders, and also peculiar is the natural perspective of the table. The most frequent visual solution was to show the table, and especially what was on it, the bread and the wine, from a higher point of view, in a forced perspective.⁵⁷⁹ Another aspect that characterise not only this work but the general production of Coxcie, is the peculiar attention that he pays to the classical architecture of the buildings in which he sets his subjects. This choice of a setting purely *all'antica* was new in Flanders, and it conveyed a political message, referring to the language that the Habsburgs used to distinguish themselves.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁶ For a good summary, see REINTJENS in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 140-155.

⁵⁷⁷ See JONCKHEERE 2012A, p. 276.

⁵⁷⁸ Michiel Coxcie has been described as the first painter of the Counter-Reformation, and the triptych of the *Last supper* can be considered a pivotal example of the artist's response to the Iconoclasm, as argued by JONCKHEERE 2012A, pp. 240-256; JONCKHEERE in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 127-129.

⁵⁷⁹ Apart from the examples from the late XVth and early XVIth centuries, an almost contemporary painting showing both a central composition and a raised point of view on the table is the one by Willem Key for the chapel of St. John the Evangelist of the Grote Kerk in Dordrecht.

⁵⁸⁰ Jonckheere argues that, by setting his paintings, and especially this *Last supper*, in classical ruins, Coxcie was explicitly suggesting an association with classical Habsburg's buildings, early Counter-Reformational rood screens, and even Rome. See JONCKHEERE 2012A, pp. 244-245.

Moving back to the diagonal composition, we can mention that Titian adopted a very similar solution in 1542-44, when he painted his *Last supper* on a standard for the confraternity of *Corpus Domini* in the city of Urbino (*Figure 78*).⁵⁸¹ This comparison seems interesting because of the angle of the table, the position of Christ at three-quarter of the image, right next to the centre, and because of the collected gesture that Jesus addresses to his Disciples. However, this specific painting by Titian was not very well known at the time, and it is impossible to prove that Coxcie could have seen a drawing or a print after the original, even though the singularity of the two compositions might indicate that. We should also mention that Titian's painting is supposed to have had an impact on Jacopo Tintoretto who, from the 1560s, started painting his depictions of the *Last supper* with a diagonal composition, a visual solution that he will lead to its extreme consequence in his large canvases for the churches of Venice.⁵⁸² It is difficult to ascertain which links could there have been between these actors - paintings and painters -, but the peculiarity of the composition in those years is suspicious and worth to be mentioned.

This is not the only use of Titian's models in the *Last supper*. In fact, the face of Christ directly resembles the one painted by the Venetian master in the *Noli me tangere* for Mary of Hungary (*Figure 54*). The painting was donated by Titian to the Governor of the Low Countries around 1553. Unlike the aforementioned *Last supper* of Urbino, Coxcie could have easily seen the painting while it was in Brussels, before Mary of Hungary moved all of her collection to Spain in 1556. Unfortunately, the canvas arrived in Spain in a poor state so, in 1556, it had been cut, and just Christ's head is now preserved in the Prado Museum.

The physiognomy of the two heads is so similar -the thick eyelids, the regular and thin nose, the hair perfectly parted in the middle- and the pose is so coincidental, that in analysing the drawing of an head of Christ at the British Museum, we could get

⁵⁸¹ Titian; *Last supper*; 1542-44; 163x104; oil on canvas; Galleria Nazionale delle Marche; Urbino. The standard was painted on both sides, representing the *Last supper* and the *Resurrection of Christ*. They have been separated into two paintings by the artist Pietro Viti (???) and they were hanged in the church of Santa Maria di Pian di Mercato, in Urbino, in 1545. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 95-96; HUMFREY 2007, pp. 190-191.

⁵⁸² See PERIA 1997, pp. 79-139.

confused (*Figure 79*).⁵⁸³ If it weren't for the other heads represented on the sheet of paper, clearly after Coxcie's panel, this anonymous Netherlandish drawing could with no doubt be related to Titian's *Noli me tangere*.

This similarity was also noticed in the study of two series of paintings for the cathedral of Funchal, in Madeira, that we will discuss later. There, the altarpiece dedicated to saint Anthony is decorated with four panels that had been recently attributed to Michiel Coxcie: *Saint Jerome*, *Saint Lawrence*, *Saint Francis receiving the stigmata* and the *Calling of saint Matthew*.⁵⁸⁴ The head of Christ in the *Calling of saint Matthew* was compared to the one in the *Last supper* from Saints Michael and Gudula, and it was recognised that both of them derived from the same source, Titian's *Noli me tangere*.⁵⁸⁵

Next to Titian's head of Christ, Coxcie introduces faces or, more specifically, attitudes, modelled after the apostles of the most famous *Lasts supper*, the one by Leonardo da Vinci (*Figure 80*).⁵⁸⁶ We have already mentioned that Coxcie was acquainted with the work of the artist, and he quoted more or less directly his figures. However, in this case, he seems more interested in the variety of attitudes that characterises the apostles. At the extreme right, behind the man with the blue robe, two apostles are discussing showing eloquent gestures with their hands. These two are mimicking the couple of discussing disciples, also at the far right of the table, in Leonardo's invention. In particular, the man with long hair and a grey beard, long as well, also reflects the facial type of the apostle dressed in yellow painted by da Vinci. The same is true for the disciple at the right of Christ, who is pointing at himself and is stretching his neck towards the Saviour, recalling the apostle with a red robe and blue sleeves, also pointing at himself.

At the extreme left of Coxcie's table, the group of four men -the first two in profile, the third raising his hand in front of his chest, the fourth leaning towards the

⁵⁸³ Anonymous Netherlandish; *Heads of Christ and Apostles*; late XVIth century; 267x195 mm; pen and brown ink and grey wash on paper; British Museum; London.

⁵⁸⁴ SANTA CLARA 2018, pp. 89-99

⁵⁸⁵ In the text, the author describes the model as surely Italian, suggesting Titian as the likely source. But the evident similarities, the availability and the reiteration of the model lead us to assert that the *Noli me tangere* for Mary of Hungary was unmistakably the primary model. See SANTA CLARA 2018, p. 91.

⁵⁸⁶ Leonardo da Vinci; *Last supper*; 1494-98; 460x880 cm; dry wall-painting; Santa Maria delle Grazie; Milan.

centre, with shorter grey hair and beard- re-elaborates the same group at the left of Leonardo's table, in a subtle game of change of perspective: whereas the Italian was showing all of his characters from a frontal position, Coxcie is moving the same group in diagonal, changing their places but not their relations.

The nocturnal *Agony in the garden* in the triptych also presents compositive solutions that can be related to Titian's work. While the vertical development of the image is not new in the depiction of the subject, nor in the Italian art, with early examples from Pietro Perugino(1446-1523), Sandro Botticelli (1444/5-1510), Vittore Carpaccio (1465-1525/26),⁵⁸⁷ nor in the Northern art, with the many versions produced by the workshop of the German painter Lucas Cranach (1472-1553),⁵⁸⁸ and the prints by Albrecht Dürer, especially the one from the series of the *Great Passion* (Figure 81).⁵⁸⁹ Among the Flemish illustrations, it is worth to mention the beautiful nocturne painting by Jan Gossaert, the panel by Pieter Coecke van Aelst and the print after Maarten van Heemskerck's design published in the series of *The fall and salvation of mankind through the Life and Passion of Christ* (Figure 82, 83, 84).⁵⁹⁰

Michiel Coxcie was likely aware of these models when he painted his version of the subject, but there are yet other sources that can better explain his compositional choices.

First of all, the space is horizontally divided in two, with the lower-level presenting, in foreground, the figures of the sleeping apostles, and the superior level showing Christ praying in the garden of Gethsemane. The figure of the Saviour is in the background, smaller than the bulky bodies of the disciples, who are crowding the

⁵⁸⁷ We refer to Pietro Perugino's *Agony in the garden* (1483-95) now at the Uffizi, Sandro Botticelli's one dated 1490-93, now at Museo de los Reyes Católicos in Granada and the painting by Vittore, dated 1502, painted for the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, in Venice.

⁵⁸⁸ One among the many examples is Lucas Cranach's *Agony in the garden* (1518) at the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo.

⁵⁸⁹ A series of eleven woodcuts plus the frontispiece produced between 1497 and 1510, the year in which they were published. Albrecht Dürer; *Agony in the garden*; 1497; 391x178 mm; woodcut; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.

⁵⁹⁰ Jan Gossaert; *Agony in the garden*; 1510; 85x63 cm; oil on panel; Staatliche Museen; Berlin. Pieter Coecke van Aelst; *Agony in the Garden*; 1527-30; 83x57 cm; oil on panel; Hermitage; St Petersburg. Dirk Volkerstz Coornhert after Maarten van Heemskerck; *Agony in the garden*; 1548; 250x190 mm; engraving and etching; British Museum; London.

narrow space. Christ is kneeling in front of the warm glow of the angel, on the raise of a rocky hill. At his right side, a forked tree separates the rocky and cloudy scenery from an opening that allows us to see a view on a distant and dark landscape.

All of these aspects, and especially the organisation of the space and the relationships among the elements, are the same occurring in Titian's *Agony in the garden*, in the version now at the Escorial (*Figure 85*).⁵⁹¹ A canvas representing this subject was sent to Philip II, in 1562, as recorded by García Hernández,⁵⁹² Spanish ambassador in Venice, and by Titian himself.⁵⁹³ However, in 1574, two paintings representing an *Agony in the garden* were listed in the inventory of the Escorial:⁵⁹⁴ the aforementioned version, and the painting now at the Prado, in which the figures of the sleeping apostles is substituted with the ones of the soldiers carrying an ominous lantern.⁵⁹⁵ It is uncertain which of the two paintings is the one mentioned in Philip II and Titian's correspondence, but the version of the Escorial had been translated into print by Giulio Bonasone (active 1531-1574), an Emilian engraver that had worked after paintings by Raphael, Michelangelo, Giulio Romano and Titian,⁵⁹⁶ and by Luca Bertelli,⁵⁹⁷ the artist that had already engraved the *Saint Margaret* for Mary of Hungary.

⁵⁹¹ Titian; *Agony in the garden*; 1562-63; 185x172 cm; oil on canvas; Monasterio de El Escorial; El Escorial. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 68-69; CHECA CREMADES 1994, p. 255; TAGLIAFERRO 2015, pp. 1-20.

⁵⁹² The ambassador informs the King that: «Los quadros que Ticiano ha hecho de Cristo en la oración y la Europa» had left Venice and were heading to Genoa, See MANCINI 1998, p. 287.

⁵⁹³ The painting was first mentioned in 1559, in a letter from Titian to Philip II. After that mention, King Philip II often returned on the topic, urging Titian to finish and dispatch the painting. In the letter of 1562, Titian finally informs his patron writing: «Ho finalmente con l'aiuto della divina bontà condotto a fine le due pitture ch'io cominciai per la Catholica Maestà Vostra: l'una è il Cristo che ora nell'orto: l'altra la poesia di Europa portata dal Toro, le quali io le mando». MANCINI 1998, p. 289.

⁵⁹⁴ CHECA CREMADES 1994, p. 255; TAGLIAFERRO 2015, p. 6.

⁵⁹⁵ Titian; *Agony in the garden*; 1558-62; 176x136 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 68; CHECA CREMADES 1994, p. 254; BELLUNO 2007, pp. 379-380; TAGLIAFERRO 2015, pp. 1-20

⁵⁹⁶ See MASSARI 1983, I, p. 102; THE ILLUSTRATED BARTSCH 1978-, XXVIII, p. 248; WIVEL 2014, pp. 318-326.

⁵⁹⁷ For the engraving by Luca Bertelli after Titian (1560s), see THE ILLUSTRATED BARTSCH 1978-, XXIX, p. 262.

This invention was particularly appreciated, and recently another replica of the Escorial version was found by Tagliaferro in a private collection in the United States.⁵⁹⁸

For his *Agony in the garden*, Titian looked at different models such as Carpaccio and Dürer, for the vertical composition, but he also elaborated on the painting by Correggio, dated around 1524, a well-known artwork that was praised by Vasari, Lomazzo and many other artists.⁵⁹⁹

Coxcie seems to have referred Titian's invention, as we can argue from the similarities in the organisation of the elements, but also for the detail of the forked tree, that shares with the Venetian's one not just the peculiar shape, but also the position and the function of the opening on the landscape.

It would be difficult to state if Coxcie had seen the original painting, considering that both versions arrived in Spain between 1562 and 1574. Nonetheless, the Flemish artist could have easily seen or owned one of the two printed versions. As we have established before, Coxcie's knowledge and use prints after Titian's art was documented and rather common in his work.

In this triptych, usually discussed and analysed for its response to the problem of the Iconoclasm, Michiel Coxcie associates the setting *all'antica* with Italian models, merging Leonardo and Titian as they were part of the same *milieu*, functional to guarantee his compliance with an artistic language suited to the Habsburgs.

Paintings that Philip II purchased for Spain

That the King Philip II still wanted to use the services of Michiel Coxcie after he left Flanders forever, it is proved by the negotiations he engaged to make him move to Spain. In 1563, Jean de Vandenesse, chamberlain of the King, was organizing the details of the moving not only of Michiel Coxcie, but also Anthonis Mor and the architect Cornelis Floris (1514-1575), brother of the famous painter from Antwerp

⁵⁹⁸ The canvas was restored in 2011, and the analysis performed on that occasion showed the high quality of the painting, which is in a better state than the one now at the Escorial. TAGLIAFERRO 2015, pp. 1-20.

⁵⁹⁹ The small painting was in Reggio Emilia, owned by Francesco Maria Signoretti, until 1584, when it was sold to Pirro Visconti, in Milan. For the fortune of the painting, see SPAGNOLO 2002, pp. 37-51.

Frans Floris.⁶⁰⁰ In the end, the artists never moved, but they continued to serve the King of Spain.

Philip II was already the owner of some paintings by Michiel Coxcie, inherited from his aunt and his father⁶⁰¹, he had commissioned the copy after the *Ghent altarpiece* by Hugo and Jan van Eyck, and he continued acquiring his paintings in the following years.

We have already examined the triptych with the *Life of the Virgin* that he had bought after the revolt, as van Mander recorded, and it is also worth to mention the paintings of *Saint Cecilia* and the *Descent from the Cross*⁶⁰² that he had instructed the Duke of Alba to pay on his behalf in 1569.⁶⁰³ However, the original artworks by Michiel Coxcie that were purchased from Philip II with the intention of decorating Spanish churches and altars, are more relevant to this analysis.

A triptych of the *Adoration of the Magi* was mentioned in the 1584 delivery to the Monasterio de El Escorial, omitting the name of the painter.⁶⁰⁴ After that document, there are no other references to the painting until the one by Fray Andrés Ximénez in his 1764 description of the Escorial, also without naming the artist.⁶⁰⁵ Ollero Butler asserts that the attribution of this triptych to Coxcie might be traced back to Poleró.⁶⁰⁶ Since the central panel is now lost, it is impossible to state if the attribution was made in relation to a signature or just stylistically, which wouldn't be too surprising

⁶⁰⁰ PÉREZ DE TUDELA in LEUVEN 2013-2014b, pp. 104-105.

⁶⁰¹ The 1574 “entrega” of the Monasterio del Escorial, namely the delivery of art object sponsored by Philip II, includes the *Christ carrying the cross* and the *Mater Dolorosa* from Charles V, and the *David and Goliath* that belonged to Mary of Hungary.

⁶⁰² This could be the copy after the *Descent from the cross* by Rogier van der Weyden that was in the convent of Los Ángeles in Madrid and that is now at the Prado Museum. See BERMEJO MARTÍNEZ, 1980-82, I, pp. 106-107; FERNÁNDEZ SORIANO 2008, p. 192.

⁶⁰³ Philip II to the Duke of Alba, letter date 18 November 1569: «Miguel de Coixte, mi pintor, questa os dará, me embió los días pasados un quadro del Descendimiento de la Cruz de Christo, nuestro redemptor, y otro de Sancta Cecilia, tan ben acabados, que me han satisfecho mucho [...] se le den por ellos dozientos y veinte escudos de á la quarenta placas, por una vez.»; BERWICK Y DE ALBA 1981, p. 168.

⁶⁰⁴ ZARCO CUEVAS 1930B, p. 53.

⁶⁰⁵ XIMÉNEZ 1764, p. 156.

⁶⁰⁶ POLERÓ 1857, pp. 104-105; OLLERO BUTLER 1975, pp. 182-183.

considering the elevated number of paintings by Coxcie that were available at the Escorial, and that could have provided a comparison.

The two wings that survived represent an *Adoration of the shepherds* and an *Annunciation* (Figure 86). On the *verso*, the first has *grisailles* of *Saint John the Evangelist* with the *Vision of saint Eustace* on the predella, and the latter depicts *Saint James* with *Saint James Matamoros* on the predella.⁶⁰⁷

It is the left wing, the one with the *Annunciation*, that seems to be the most interesting in this context. The composition of this painting is unquestionably taken from Titian's *Annunciation* that he had sent as a gift to Isabel of Portugal back in 1537. While the original painting is lost, and it was probably inaccessible to the artist because it had been in Spain since the day of its delivery, the appearance of the *Annunciation* was recorded in a contemporary print by Jacopo Caraglio, surely more available (Figure 87).⁶⁰⁸

Coxcie adapted the wider Titian's composition to the narrow wing, and to do so he eliminated the figure of the announcing angel, and he gave the identity of Gabriel to another angel, the one at the top-left. To achieve this switch of character - this upgrade -, Coxcie provided him of a lily, typical attribute of the archangel, but he did not change the position of the hand, that appears clumsier if compared to the finger pointing at the heavens of Titian's character. In his tension to verticality, the Flemish painter moved all the angels in the glowing clouds from the side to the top of the composition, where they carry bigger and heavier columns with the phrase "ave/gratia/plena" in substitution to "plus/ultra", the motto of the Habsburgs.

The Flemish painter kept other elements of the composition, such as the steps in the foreground, the basket with the sewing instruments, but he sets the scene in a smaller room, painted with extreme attention to the architecture. The centrality of the light in the Venetian painting, translated in print with the expedient of the lumbering rays emanated from the dove of the Holy Ghost, gets lost in Coxcie's solution. The

⁶⁰⁷ Michiel Coxcie; *Annunciation and adoration of the shepherds*; post 1554; left and right wings 263x62,7 cm; oil on panel; Patrimonio Nacional, Real Monasterio de El Escorial; El Escorial. See LEUVEN 2013-2014A, p. 87.

⁶⁰⁸ Jacopo Caraglio after Titian; *Annunciation*; c. 1537; 455x344 mm; engraving; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, p. 71; FRASCAROLO-PELLEGRINI 2013, pp. 93-106.

light is confined in the golden clouds instead of filling the space and showering the figure of the Virgin. Instead, it is the head of the announced Mary that is surrounded by thin lines representing rays of light in a sort of traditional aureole, typical of the van Eyck's generation.

In the wing with the *Adoration of the shepherds* (Figure 86), the Flemish aspect is more present. An extreme attention is paid to the still life elements of the composition, starting from the broken column and the vegetation in the foreground, to the hay in the crib if Christ, and from the naturalistic animals to the dilapidated shack. However, an evident quote from Agnolo Bronzino (1503-1572) recalls Coxcie's Tuscan-Roman sources. As it was recognised by Ollero Butler,⁶⁰⁹ the group of angels flying over the scene comes directly from the *Adoration of the shepherds* painted by the Florentine artist in 1539-40, and now in Budapest (Figure 88).⁶¹⁰ While Coxcie was already back to Flanders when Bronzino delivered the panel, the composition must have been available from 1553, the year in which Giorgio Ghisi engraved it for the publisher Hieronymus Cock.⁶¹¹ In Coxcie's work the angels are specular if compared to the original painting, and they follow the orientation of the print. Just the last angel of the group, at the extreme left in the original, is missing due to the narrower space.

Alongside the Flemish setting and the Tuscan quote from a print, we can also notice that the figure of Mary recalls the one in the aforementioned predella with the same subject, on the verso of the *Life of the Virgin*. A figure that, as we discussed, derives from Titian's print. This relation is not as striking as the *Annunciation* one, but shows that the models of Titian are recurring, even though they are not always too evident.

It is unknown if Philip II commissioned the triptych from Coxcie or he bought it from its original location. The lack of documents and, especially, of the central panel, makes difficult to determine which was the original destination of this artwork. On the

⁶⁰⁹ OLLERO BUTLER 1975, p. 183.

⁶¹⁰ Agnolo Bronzino; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1539-40; 65,7x47,1 cm; oil on panel; Szépművészeti Múzeum; Budapest. See BACCHESCHI 1973, p. 89; BROCK 2002, pp. 241-244.

⁶¹¹ In 1550 Giorgio Ghisi went to Antwerp to collaborate with the publisher Hieronymus Cock, and there he made five large engravings. This one reproduces the painting of Bronzino almost in the same size of the original painting. Giorgio Ghisi after Agnolo Bronzino; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1553; 2 sheets for a total of 637x436 mm; engraving; Art Gallery of New South Wales; Sydney. See LEWIS 1985, p. 71; BELLINI 1998, p. 111.

one hand, there is no reason to think that this triptych, that matches the paradigms of Coxcie's artworks appreciated by the King, would not have been directly commissioned. The choice of saint James, the patron of Spain, for the verso of the *Annunciation* and the reference to the columns, one of the Habsburg symbols, might support the idea of this commission. On the other hand, the painting could have easily travelled to Spain, sold after the outburst of the Iconoclasm in 1566 like many others.⁶¹² To support this thesis, the change of subject on the *verso* of the *Adoration of the shepherds* discovered during the 2006 restoration. The saint John the Evangelist was originally a saint Julian the Hospitaller and the vision of saint Eustace represented, instead, the scene of hunt in which a stag prophesied saint Julian that he would have killed his parents. This change might have been wanted by Philip II to cover a subject that was not compatible with the doctrine of the Counter-Reformation.⁶¹³

In the same "entrega"⁶¹⁴ that had registered the arrive at the Escorial of the *Adoration of the Magi*, we can also find the *Death of Abel*,⁶¹⁵ a painting that reminds of the monumental Michelangelesque body-types that we have discussed in the decoration of Binche (*Figure 89*). For this reason, Miguel Falomir dated the *Death of Abel* after 1548, considering it as an answer to Titian's series of the *Condemned for Mary of Hungary*.⁶¹⁶

Looking at the corpse laying on the foreground, majestic in its classical and statuary beauty, it is difficult not to think about the *Tityus* (*Figure 27*) and the *Sisyphus* (*Figure 25*), muscular male figures that were the absolute protagonists of their pictorial spaces. Here, even though Cain and God appear as part of the narration, all of the attention is drawn by the perfection of Abel's body, the body of the favourite brother.

⁶¹² According to Ana Diéguez-Rodríguez, many paintings that were thought to have been destroyed by the rioters were instead sold to Spain. See DIÉGUEZ-RODRÍGUEZ 2019, pp. 15-16.

⁶¹³ The hagiography of saint Julian the Hospitaller belongs to the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacopo da Varazze (1228-1298), a medieval text that was a popular source for the artists. However, in the XVIth century, with the critical scrutiny by scholars and humanists and especially in the light of the Counter-Reformation, this text was discredited and was not part of the Catholic doctrine anymore. SEE PÉREZ DE TUDELA in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, pp. 106-108.

⁶¹⁴ ZARCO CUEVAS 1930B, pp. 143-144.

⁶¹⁵ Michiel Coxcie; *Death of Abel*; post 1539; 151x125 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.

⁶¹⁶ MADRID 2014, p. 176.

The interest for the art of Michelangelo clearly stated by quotes or adaptations of its models, as discussed by Christopher Atkins,⁶¹⁷ also supports a date around the decoration of Binche. The scholar argues that the figure of God elaborates on Michelangelo's *Creation of the sun and the moon* (Figure 90), the body of Cain merges Adam from the *Expulsion from Eden* (Figure 91) and the statue of the *Dying slave* (Figure 92), while Abel derives from the risen Christ from the *Last Judgement* and the renowned sculpture of *David*.⁶¹⁸ It is surely interesting this reading of the image as an elaboration of multiple sources, all of them Michelangelesque, to show how: «in his individual quotations and in the cumulative effect of the varied references assembled together, Coxcie created a wholly new and original work of art».⁶¹⁹ And it definitely corresponds to our previous and further analysis, the definition of Coxcie's process as a «deliberate and thoughtful appropriation and implementation of carefully selected visual material».⁶²⁰ Nonetheless, it seems somehow forced that Atkins connects all of the figures to Michelangelo's sources, even when some of them need a strong exercise of imagination, as in the case of Abel himself. To rotate the *David*, or Christ from the *Last judgement*, to change the position of arms and legs, to modify completely the perspective, these are of course elaborations that Coxcie could have made - we have discussed about his change of perspective in the quote of Leonardo's apostles in the *Last supper* -, but this study seems to overlook that there are other versions of this figure that are not supporting the idea of the Michelangelesque model.

The composition of the Prado panel is very close to the design for the tapestry with the same subject for the series with the *Stories of the First Parents*, purchased in the 1550s by King Sigismund II Augustus (1520-1572) of Poland.⁶²¹ In this tapestry,

⁶¹⁷ ATKINS 2017, pp. 111-122.

⁶¹⁸ Michelangelo; *Creation of the sun and the moon*; 1511-12; 280x570 cm; fresco; Sistine Chapel; Vatican City. Michelangelo; *Expulsion from Eden*; 1509-10; 280x570 cm; fresco; Sistine Chapel; Vatican City. Michelangelo; *Dying slave*; 1513; 229 cm; marble; Musée du Louvre; Paris. Michelangelo; *Last judgement*; 1536-41; 13,7x12 m; fresco; Sistine Chapel; Vatican City. Michelangelo; *David*; 1501-4; 517 cm; marble; Gallerie dell'Accademia; Florence. For more references, see ZÖLLNER 2014.

⁶¹⁹ ATKINS 2017, p. 116.

⁶²⁰ ATKINS 2017, p. 116.

⁶²¹ King Sigismund I and his son Sigismund II Augustus purchased hundreds of tapestries from the Netherlandish manufactories between the 1520s and the 1550s. Many of these tapestries still survive in the collection of Wawel Castle, in Krakow. See PIWOCKA 2007.

composition of the painting appears specular (*Figure 93*).⁶²² Two characters are added in the centre, and many elements are slightly changed, moved, rotated, but the general layout remains. The body of Abel, in particular, is more diagonal, but it keeps the position with one arm above the head and the other by his side, the legs slightly apart, the face turned in the opposite direction to the raised arm. The same kind of changes is evident in the body of Cain, whose torso is more rotated if compared to the painting, and the position of the legs is more dynamic.

The figure of Abel from the tapestry can be also found in a drawing attributed to Coxcie representing the *Brazen serpent* now in a private collection (*Figure 94*),⁶²³ that is related to the central panel of the triptych of the *Adoration of the brazen serpent* now in the Maagdenhuis Museum in Antwerp, dated 1554 (*Figure 96*).⁶²⁴ This painting and, indirectly, the drawing, are analysed by Natasja Peeters in her study on the introduction of *raccourci* in the Southern Netherlands.⁶²⁵ The scholar traces back all of these foreshortened figures in the foreground of Coxcie's paintings, tapestries and drawings to a meditation and a re-elaboration of the majestic *Laocoon*. The other suggested connections, such as the *Tityus* by Michelangelo,⁶²⁶ or Titian's *Tityus* for the castle of Binche,⁶²⁷ are reduced to a "referentially complex synthesis of already related figures".⁶²⁸

As we have already argued in the first chapter, the paintings produced by Titian for the series of the *Condemned* shared the same models as the ones painted by Coxcie or other artists related to the Habsburgs court. In this respect, considering the attention paid to classical models by the Renaissance painters and the fame of the Tuscan-Roman masters that were making good use of those prototypes, this concept of

⁶²² Pieter van Edigen van Aelst II (weaver) after Michiel Coxcie; *Death of Abel*; c. 1550; unknown measures; wool, silk and gilt-metal wrapped thread; Wawel Royal Castle; Krakow.

⁶²³ Michiel Coxcie; *Brazen serpent*; 1540-50; 386x273 mm; pen and brown ink and brown wash on paper; private collection Antwerp. See JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 27.

⁶²⁴ Michiel Coxcie; *Adoration of the brazen serpent* (central panel); 1554; 184x148,5; oil on panel; Maagdenhuis Museum; Anwerp. See LAURENZA 1993, p. 115; PEETERS 2012, pp. 29-41.

⁶²⁵ PEETERS 2012, pp. 29-41.

⁶²⁶ For the use of Michelangelo's *Tityus* in Coxcie's works, see LAURENZA 1994, pp. 30-35.

⁶²⁷ See LAURENZA 1993, p. 115.

⁶²⁸ Natasja Peeters quotes a sentence from Shearman that refers to Titian, Leonardo and Michelangelo, arguing that this applies also to Coxcie. SHEARMAN 1995, p. 251; PEETERS 2012, p. 40.

“synthesis of already related figures” might be considered as a general statement. However, if we devalue the importance of the mediators, of the intermediate steps, we can end up ignoring contextual elements which can get lost in the generalization of a concept.

Therefore, it is true that Coxcie reiterates the use of a foreshortened and naked male body in his paintings and tapestries, but these abandoned corpses lack the physical tension and the intense drama typical of the *Laocoon*, his main features of *exemplum doloris*. Both the pose and the looseness of the limbs are similar when we compare the dead body of Abel to the fallen naked soldier of Titian’s *Battle of Cadore*. They present the same position of the arms, a comparable foreshortening of the body and a strong similarity in the angle of the head, despite of its rotation in the opposite direction.

The painting, a large canvas made to be hanged in Palazzo Ducale in Venice, was finished around 1538, and it was destroyed by the fire that raged the palace in 1577.⁶²⁹ In his paper, Lionello Puppi reminds of the different visual records of this painting: the autograph drawing at the Louvre, three other studies, the engraving by Giulio Fontana (*Figure 95*), an anonymous print now at the Albertina and a painted copy at the Uffizi.⁶³⁰ The print by Giulio Fontana that Bartsch said to bear the date 1569, a date that was not to be found in any of the known editions, is the most reliable visual source, and can be compared to Coxcie’s figure.⁶³¹

Unlike other prints after Titian’s art, in this case the engraving by Giulio Fontana does not seem to have had a wide circulation, and the date, even though it is just an unfounded indication, might suggest that Coxcie had found his model for the figure of Abel elsewhere. The resemblance, however, should raise some questions both on a mistake in the date of the print and on a possible different transmission medium of the design.

As we have seen before, Coxcie knew and probably owned prints after Titian’s compositions, and the use of a single figure, the slight modifications in the shapes

⁶²⁹ The Battle of Cadore was first commissioned to Titian in 1513, but it was delivered just in 1538, as testified by a letter from Titian to Federico Gonzaga. See LUZIO 1890, p. 209.

⁶³⁰ PUPPI 2010, p. 193.

⁶³¹ Giulio Fontana after Titian; *Battle of Cadore*; c. 1569; 420x555 mm; engraving; British Museum; London. See BARTSCH 1802-21, XVI, p. 214.

while keeping the function of the image, would perfectly coincide with Coxcie's *modus operandi*. It is possible, of course, that both artists, the Venetian and the Flemish, had drawn from the same source, likely a classical bas-relief, to elaborate this dramatic foreshortened figure. However, their close resemblance seems to contradict that they both elaborated the *Laocoon*, a standing statue characterised by pathos and dynamic tension, to have, as result, a lifeless and foreshortened corpse.

To conclude this paragraph, another *raccourci* figure that was related by Peeters to a rework of the *Laocoon* through Michelangelo's musculature and Titian's *Saint Sebastian*,⁶³² that also rephrased the ancient statue, is in the triptych of *The martyrdom of saint Sebastian*, in the cathedral of Saint Rumbold (Figure 97).⁶³³ In the right wing, the saint lays on his back, looking up at the executioner and stretching his arm as a gesture of acceptance of his destiny. The resemblance with the *Condemned* by Titian is so blatant that the reference to the Averoldi Sebastian and to the *Laocoon* appears of minor relevance. In this case, we see almost a direct quote of *Tityus'* torso (Figure 27), with the same face, angle of the body, physical exaggeration in the depiction of the head sunk between the shoulders, while the legs recall the position of the Abel from the tapestries and the body from the *Brazen serpent* (Figure 96). The same reference to Titian's *Condemned* can be found in the so-called *Hosden triptych* (Figure 98), which was painted by Coxcie in 1571.⁶³⁴ The thief at the left of Christ is a clear quote of the *Tityus*. This suggests that the Flemish painter had this figure in his *repertoire* and he was employing it when in need for a suffering and contorted position, like the *Laocoon* was used as *exemplum doloris*.

For his foreshortened figures Michiel Coxcie referred to multiple models. The artist knew Titian's *Tityus* as he knew the *Laocoon*, he was familiar with Michelangelo's emulation of the antique and with the masters of Renaissance Roman art. Coxcie was able to copy, adapt or completely rework them according to his own style and intentions. It would be misleading to assert that the artist had a specific interest in

⁶³² Peeters refers to the saint Sebastian in the so-called *Averoldi Polyptych*, a painting now in the church of Santi Nazaro e Celso in Brescia. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 127-128.

⁶³³ Michiel Coxcie; *Martyrdom of saint Sebastian*; 1587; unknown measures; oil on panel; cathedral of Saint Rumbold; Mechelen.

⁶³⁴ Michiel Coxcie; *Hosden triptych*; 1571; 198x498,8 cm; oil on panel; M-Museum; Leuven. See LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 192.

Titian's art that was mirrored by his paintings, as well as it seems preposterous connecting all of the foreshortened figures to Michelangelesque models, even by forcing the similarities.

Coxcie was directly involved in the decoration of Binche, he had to paint a provisory substitution for Titian's *Tantalus* that could fit in with the rest of the series. His dialogue with the art of the Venetian was circumstantial and does not reveal a preference. However, Coxcie introduced, kept and reused some of Titian's motives in his artistic vocabulary, as we will discuss in the next paragraph.

The series for the cathedral of Funchal

When in 1581 Philip II was also crowned King Philip I of Portugal, he started to rule over the vast Portuguese possessions. Among these, the archipelago of Madeira, off the coast of Africa. The capital of this region of Portugal, Funchal, preserves in its cathedral two series of religious paintings that had been recently added to the *corpus* of Coxcie.⁶³⁵

During a restoration of the altarpiece of Our Lord Jesus, in 1997, the signature «Michael de Coxcyen/pictor Regius pinxit/Anº MDLXXXI» was found on the panel representing the *Flight into Egypt*. Other panels of the polyptych altarpiece appear to be stylistically relatable to the signed one, representing the *Meeting of Anne and Joachim at the Golden Gate*, the *Adoration of the Magi* and the *Circumcision of Jesus*.

In the same church, but in the altar dedicated to saint Anthony, were located four more panels attributed to Michiel Coxcie,⁶³⁶ and among them there is the *Calling of saint Matthew*, mentioned earlier regarding the reuse of the appearance of Titian's Christ. This cycle is rather traditional in its treatment of the subjects and is not going to be analysed in this context.

About the altarpiece of Our Lord Jesus, whereas its golden architectural frame is dated 1677, and the three paintings in the upper part were also made in the late XVIIth century, the series of four panels in the lower register appears to be older, and it was painted by the Flemish Michiel Coxcie. Fernando António Baptista Pereira suggests

⁶³⁵ The series of paintings that are stylistically attributable to Coxcie were recently studied by MARTENS-SANTA CLARA 2012, pp. 71-113; SANTA CLARA 2018, pp. 107-129.

⁶³⁶ See SANTA CLARA 2018, pp. 123-127.

that these paintings were donated by Philip II to emulate his grandfather Manuel I of Portugal (1469-1521), who also made donations to the cathedral of Funchal⁶³⁷.

The *Flight to Egypt* is the most traditional in the composition and the most Flemish of the four paintings (Figure 99).⁶³⁸ The group in the front, according to Santa Clara, recalls the examples of German prints such as the one by Martin Schongauer and Albrecht Dürer.⁶³⁹ In the landscape, extremely rich and detailed, it is possible to recognise that the painting is representing the apocryphal episode of the miracle of the wheat field, an iconography that was more common in the previous generation.⁶⁴⁰

Beneath the previous panel we can find a squared painting, in the form of a predella, with the *Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 100).⁶⁴¹ In this case, the shape and the composition of the artwork can remind the *grisaille* with the same subject, on the verso of the triptych with the *Life of the Virgin* (Figure 73). The position of the Virgin is more central and more frontal, while the Kings are surrounding her from both sides. At the left side of the painting, saint Joseph is leaning on a low stone-wall. The same figure appears in the Adoration of the shepherds, the *grisaille* that is also on the verso of the same triptych and that, as previously analysed, derives directly from the print by Giovanni Britto after Titian. Therefore, years after finishing the altarpiece for the church of Saints Michael and Gudula, Coxcie keeps reusing the same models, merging and reorganizing them, extrapolating a particular figure and changing its context.

⁶³⁷ PEREIRA 1997, pp. 2-4.

⁶³⁸ Michiel Coxcie; *Flight into Egypt*; 1581; 180x90 cm; oil on panel; Sé Catedral de Funchal; Funchal.

⁶³⁹ See MARTENS-SANTA CLARA 2012, pp. 84-85. The scholar refers to the engraving by Martin Schongauer from his series of *The life of the Virgin* (1470-45) and to Albrecht Dürer's woodcut of the *Flight into Egypt* (1504).

⁶⁴⁰ The medieval legend narrates that the Holy Family passed a newly sown field of wheat while fleeing, and it miraculously grew to full height. Later, when Herod's soldiers inquired the farmer to know when the travellers had passed, he truthfully replied that he saw them when the wheat was planted. Convinced that they were too late to catch them, the soldiers turned back. This iconography was particularly represented in Medieval illuminated books and it became popular in XVth-century Flemish art.

⁶⁴¹ Michiel Coxcie; *Adoration of the Magi*; 1581; 90x100 cm; oil on panel; Sé Catedral de Funchal; Funchal.

Another visual example of this process can be found in the panel of the *Meeting of Anne and Joachim* (Figure 101).⁶⁴² In front of the marble door evidently *all'antica*, Joachim and Mary meet in a symmetric opposition. Through the door, a vast landscape that fades on the horizon, as detailed as the one on the background of the *Flight into Egypt*. But the most interesting figure is the one of the angel, who is flying above the heads of the main characters and who is pointing at the Golden Gate. This figure is the reversed version of the archangel Gabriel in the aforementioned Coxcie's *Annunciation*, who in turn was almost a copy after the invention of Titian translated into print by Jacopo Caraglio (Figure 85).

In the scene of the *Circumcision*,⁶⁴³ that works as a predella for the *Meeting*, the Child is laying on a round table, surrounded by the priests of the temple (Figure 102). A female figure, probably the Virgin, hands a small wooden box where to put the holy prepuce. The composition is simple, and it matches the features of the rest of the series: architecture *all'antica*, a balanced disposition of the figures and references to the Flemish tradition. In this case, the round table covered with a white cloth at the centre of the composition is typical of the depiction of this subject in the artworks by Pieter Coecke van Aelst.⁶⁴⁴ Furthermore, as in the other panels, we recognise a reversed quote from an Italian model, the well-known *Persian Sibyl* by Michelangelo that Coxcie had used already in the *Nativity of Mary* in the triptych of the *Life of the Virgin*, around 1550 (Figure 84).⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴² Michiel Coxcie; *Meeting of Anne and Joachim at the Golden Gate*; 1581; 180x90 cm; oil on panel; Sé Catedral de Funchal; Funchal

⁶⁴³ Michiel Coxcie; *Circumcision of Jesus*; 1581; 90x100 cm; oil on panel; Sé Catedral de Funchal; Funchal.

⁶⁴⁴ A series of triptychs attributed to the workshop of Pieter Coecke van Aelst and dated within the first half of the XVIth century are documented in the photo archive of the RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History.

⁶⁴⁵ Santa Clara gives two different explanations for the presence of the *Persian Sibyl* by Michelangelo in the painting. The Sibyl could have been used as a model for the Prophetess Anna, who was mentioned in the Gospel of Luke as participating in the presentation of Jesus at the temple, or Coxcie could have represented the Persian Sibyl herself because she prophesied on the triumph of the Virgin. See SANTA CLARA 2018, p. 122.

The *Crucifixion* identified by Nicole Dacos

In her paper for the 1992 conference on Michael Coxcie, Nicole Dacos suggested a series of comparisons between the art of the Flemish painter and the artists that worked in Rome, especially Raphael, Sebastiano del Piombo, Francesco Salviati and Baldassarre Peruzzi.⁶⁴⁶ The scholar also proposed to give to Coxcie an unpublished *Crucifixion* now in a private collection in Barcelona, that she said signed by the artist (*Figure 103*).⁶⁴⁷

Dacos supports the attribution to Coxcie by relating the *Crucifixion* to artworks painted by Bernard van Orley, the master of Coxcie, Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Pieter de Kempeneer (1503-1580), Romanist painters who also travelled to Italy. Moreover, it is easy to compare this panel to other works by Coxcie, such as the *Crucifixion* in Valladolid and the one now at the M-Museum in Leuven, for the figures of Christ and the thieves, whereas the image of the suffering Mother reminds of her version on a deathbed in the triptych of the *Life of the Virgin* now at the Prado (*Figure 67*).

Unfortunately, it was impossible to retrace the painting or to obtain a better-quality picture of it, but we can definitely read, as Nicole Dacos did, some quotes from the art of Titian. First of all, Mary Magdalen, who is kneeling in front of the cross, her arms outstretched and the hair softly loose on her back, is modelled over the Magdalene in Titian's *Noli me tangere*, the famous painting for Mary of Hungary which appearance is known through a copy made by Alonso Sanchez Coello (*Figure 55*). The female figure by Coxcie is a mirror image of the one by Titian, and it differs also for a slight rotation of the torso towards the cross and the position of the right arm. The clothing, especially the large sleeves, the double layered skirt, and the folding of the robe, are almost identical. This is not the only time that Coxcie had used this model, also present in the poorly preserved *Crucifixion* dated 1579 now in the church of Saint James in Ghent (*Figure 104*).⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ DACOS 1993, pp. 55-92.

⁶⁴⁷ Michiel Coxcie; *Crucifixion*; 1554-56.; 132x107 cm; oil on panel; private collection; Barcelona. In the lower-right corner, Dacos reads: «MICHEL D COXCIE FECIT». See DACOS 1993, p. 81.

⁶⁴⁸ Michiel Coxcie; *Crucifixion*; 1579; unknown measures; oil on panel; church of Saint James; Ghent. See DACOS 1993, p. 89.

The second quote appears more difficult to explain, and it is very peculiar. In the background, but in a prominent position at the side of the cross, we find a knight on his white horse. The light colour of the horse, linked to the sort of isolation of this character from the surrounding crowd, draws the attention of the viewer. His spear seems to point at the nail that is piercing Christ's feet, underlining the sufferings of the Saviour on the cross. This character closely resembles the equestrian portrait of *Charles V at Mühlberg* (Figure 8), painted by Titian in 1548 and part of the collection of Mary of Hungary. The position of the man, and even some details from the armour, are very much alike, and for these reasons DACOS suggests that Coxcie must have sketched the painting while it was in Brussels.⁶⁴⁹

Now, it is surely curious that Coxcie had used one of the most well-known portraits of his patron, the Emperor, as a model for a character in the background, where usually we find Roman soldiers and knights with turbans, Jewish high priests who came to witness the punishment of the Messiah. There is another painting in which Coxcie included a knight that might resemble the equestrian portrait of Charles V, and this is the central panel of the triptych of the *Martyrdom of saint Sebastian*, now in Antwerp (Figure 105).⁶⁵⁰ However, in this case Coxcie reused just the pose for the armoured man, he gave him Eastern connotations, with a long beard and an orange turban, and he collocated him in a secondary position, close to the frame.

Therefore, we can consider two options for the quote of Charles V in the *Crucifixion* from Barcelona: or the court painter, likely in the years in which the Emperor was still alive, decided to use his portrait as a model for a minor character standing in the background of a painting, or he purposely painted the effigy of Charles V inside the *Crucifixion*. In the latter case, the gesture of pointing at the sufferance of Christ with the spear would be meaningful, becoming an element that connected the Emperor to the supreme symbol of Christianity.

Titian's portrait of Charles V had been already interpreted as the representation of the *Miles Christianus* as described by Erasmus of Rotterdam.⁶⁵¹ The choice of the spear

⁶⁴⁹ DACOS 1993, p. 81.

⁶⁵⁰ The artwork is signed and dated: « MICHEL D. COXSCYIN AETATIS SUAE 76 FECIT 1575». Michiel Coxcie; *Martyrdom of saint Sebastian*; 1575; 265x235,5 cm; oil on panel; Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen (KMSKA); Antwerp.

⁶⁵¹ PANOFSKY 1969, pp. 85-87.

as its attribute - instead of a sword, a baton, or a sceptre -, connects him to the tradition of the Roman Emperors, of which Charles V was the heir and successor. But the spear could be also an allusion to Longinus, the Roman soldier that pierced the side of Jesus with the “Holy Lance”, spilling some blood from his body that healed him from blindness.

It is complicated to assert that this knight can actually be identified as Charles V, present in the moment of the crucifixion as Longinus and as *Miles Christianus par-excellence*. However, this would not be the first time that the Emperor appears in a religious painting. In the *Holy Trinity* by Titian, him and all of his family were present in front of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost to be judged and go to heaven.

If this is the correct interpretation of the figure, then it would be difficult to imagine that the painting would have been commissioned by someone else than Charles V himself. If so, can this Crucifixion be related to the one that Charles V had brought to Yuste in his final meditation, now lost?

2.2 From court painter to court painter

For his entire life, Michiel Coxcie had been the painter of the Habsburgs and their court. He served not only the Emperor and the King, but he had a privileged relationship with all of the Governors of the Low Countries, from Mary of Hungary to Margaret of Parma, also to the Duke of Alba, who also exonerated him from lodging soldiers in his house in Mechelen during the rebellions⁶⁵². The very last panel that the ninety-two years old had painted is the triptych with the *Legend of saint Gudula* for the cathedral of Brussels, in which he portrays Philip II, his King and patron (*Figure 106*).⁶⁵³

The exterior wings of the triptych represent a procession heading to the church of Saints Michael and Gudula. In the left wing, among the participants in the foreground, we observe Philip II, in a red robe with ermine fur and a golden chain, probably the

⁶⁵² Mechelen was one of the bastions of the revolt in the Low Countries, and the fact that Coxcie was exempted from this civic duty is a sign of his special connection to the court. See FERNÁNDEZ SORIANO 2008, p. 195; PÉREZ DE TUDELA in LEUVEN 2013-2014B, p. 111.

⁶⁵³ Michiel Coxcie; *Legend of saint Gudula*; 1592; central 294x227 cm; wings 294x89 cm; oil on panel; cathedral of Saints Michael and Gudula; Brussels. See YPERSELE DE STRIHOU 2000, pp. 28-29; JONCKHEERE 2012A, pp. 176-178.

one of the Order of the Golden Fleece. The King is gazing outside of the painting, and he seems younger than he would look in 1592, at the age of sixty-five. His appearance surely derives from a state-portrait or a printed effigy of the monarch, and his presence is quite atypical. As Jonckheere pointed out, in this triptych are brought to focus two practices that were fundamental for the Catholic Church and condemned by the Protestants, namely the veneration of relics through the processions and the devotions of images.⁶⁵⁴ The actual presence of the King, even though he had been absent from the Netherlands since 1559, reinforces the rightfulness of these practices and underlines his role in their restoration.

Therefore, until his death, Coxcie continued to be the visual interpreter of the Habsburgs and the Counter-Reformation, while putting his skills at the service of the development - and the continuation - of their language of expression.

Even when he worked for others, Coxcie was usually associating himself to patrons who were loyal to King Philip II and his emissaries. In fact, the painter had privileged connections with the members of the *schuttersgilden*, the armed guilds of the cities of Brussels, Antwerp and Mechelen.⁶⁵⁵ After 1566, they were ensuring him a number of commissions for altarpieces to replace the ones damaged or lost during the *Beeldenstorm*, probably because of his service to the court, which: «ensured the new altar decorations would meet the high standards of artistic expression and deter scrutiny».⁶⁵⁶

For his entire career, Coxcie used an *all'antica* idiom - usually through the example of works of Renaissance Italian masters which had emulated antiquity - as distinctive elements of his artistic identity at the service of the Habsburgs, and he also integrated Titian's models among the others. The Venetian artist was filling his same role as court painter for the same patrons, and they had collaborated, directly or indirectly, in the decoration of Binche. It is very meaningful, in fact, that their paintings were hanging side by side. Coxcie confronted himself with the "Habsburg Titian", the one that was experimenting on his same models - Raphael, Michelangelo, Giulio Romano - and

⁶⁵⁴ These concepts are recurring in the central panel of the artwork, in which saint Gudula prays in front of a statue of Christ. She shows her devotion and adoration to the image of the Saviour, depicting the correct behaviour of a Catholic in front of the image of a saint. JONCKHEERE 2012A, p. 178.

⁶⁵⁵ For the commissions that Coxcie had received from the *schuttersgilden* and the reasons of his favoured relationship with them, see WOOLLETT 2012, pp. 84-87.

⁶⁵⁶ WOOLLETT 2012, p. 85.

dealing with similar issues. Therefore, in Coxcie's working process, the art of Titian was speaking the same language as his fellow Italians, and together with them it could be merged to create something new.

The selection made by Coxcie follows the one made *a priori* by Charles V, Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle and Mary of Hungary for the court of Brussels. The artist used figures and compositions mostly from paintings that he had the chance to see in person or prints and drawings that reproduced inventions of the same period or even an earlier production, such as the *Assumption of the Virgin* of the Frari or the *Mystic marriage of saint Catherine*.

On the stylistic point of view, it was mentioned already that Coxcie did experiment with the pictorial technique. He could put to use the expertise of the *fresco* that he had learnt in Rome as well as the knowledge of painting on stone that allowed him to copy or to produce a different version of Titian's *Ecce Homo* and *Mater Dolorosa*. His skills as copyist of the works by the van Eycks and Rogier van der Weyden demonstrate a profound understanding of the traditional Flemish oil painting, and his refined style and bright colours show his elaboration of Renaissance Roman examples. Coxcie mastered a wide range of styles and techniques and he skilfully employed them in the most appropriate contexts, sometimes merging them together to achieve a specific result, sometimes focusing on a particular one. Did Coxcie also experiment with a Titianesque technique? If we follow up the aforementioned discussion on the Tantalus and the pairings between Titian's and Coxcie's devotional paintings, there are two different opinions. Some scholars like Mancini and Checa believe that the two painters' works were aesthetically too distant, whereas here it has been stated that, for different reasons related to Titian's adaptation to the Habsburgs commissions and to Coxcie's dialogue with the Venetian, their pairings would have likely fit together. It is likely that Coxcie, among all of the other Netherlandish painters working in the same years in the Low Countries, was the artist who had the most contact with Titian's original works, and he was also the one who had been entrusted with the most commissions to "complete" Titian's series or diptychs. This led Bob van den Boogert to suppose that it was his talent in emulating the manner of Titian that determined his fortune as court painter for the Habsburgs.⁶⁵⁷ This statement seems problematic on different levels.

⁶⁵⁷ See BOOGERT 1993, p. 137.

First, Michiel Coxcie had started to work for Mary of Hungary around 1541, which was before Titian started receiving consistent commissions from the Habsburgs. Secondly, his skills as copyist seem to predate the depiction of the *Condemned* and of the *Ecce Homo* and *Dolorosas*, because his copy after Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition* must have been finished before 1549 and sent to Leuven to replace the original, because Vicente Álvarez recorded that the latter was in Binche during the celebrations for the *Felicissimo viaje*.⁶⁵⁸ Moreover, Coxcie was appointed between 1548 and 1549 to designing the frescoes that decorated the palace of Binche, a commission that imply a certain degree of trust and appreciation.⁶⁵⁹ Surely the Habsburgs were fond of his wide range of talents and ability to adapt different styles and techniques, and it would be misleading to limit the interest of the powerful patrons to Coxcie's ability in emulating Titian's manner. However, it was pointed out by Jonckheere that the court painter had indeed experimented on Titian's style in some of his works.⁶⁶⁰ A major example of this approach is the *Death of Abel* of the Prado (*Figure 89*). Not only the chromatic choices - oriented to earthly tones - but also the passages in which the oil is particularly diluted, and the smoothly blurred rendering of the human muscles, resemble the *Sisyphus* from the series of the *Condemned* (*Figure 25*). In other cases, it is more difficult to judge, but it would be productive, for future research, to gather some more material and perform technical analysis on Coxcie's heterogeneous production.

It is evident that some paintings show some degrees of experimentation with the style of Titian, as we might expect from an artist who demonstrated his technical skills of imitation on many occasions, and who had the means and the opportunity of closely study the art of the Venetian.

Drawing some conclusions, Michiel Coxcie continued to use a limited number of Titian's models and compositions for his all career, but he did never update the knowledge of his works. The Flemish perpetuated the image of Titian of the 1530s and 1540s, the one that was appropriate to his Central-Italian formation, and he just rarely implemented some inventions from later prints. We might argue that the interest

⁶⁵⁸ See SUYKERBUYK 2013-2014, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁵⁹ See BOOGERT 1993, pp. 127-133.

⁶⁶⁰ This idea has not been developed in the catalogue of the exhibition on Coxcie (LEUVEN 2013-2014B), but professor Jonckheere shared with me many interesting insights on this theme.

that Coxcie had showed towards the art of Titian was strictly functional and contextual. Functional for the selections of prints and drawings that were suitable for his artistic needs, such as the use of the composition of a woodcut for a *grisaille* painting or for the reuse of motive from artworks that were available to him. Contextual, because it was required from his patrons and the specific commissions, and because those models were expressing the language of the Habsburgs as much as he was. And for Coxcie, the court painter to the core, who continued to address his art to this family and to the ones loyal to them, Titian was just one among many visual references that allowed him to maintain his privileged relationships and his *status*. Coxcie and Titian were peers for what concerns the Habsburg court, and the Flemish painter did not need to appeal to the authority of the Venetian as Apelles, the interpreter of the preferences and the language of the Imperial family. On this respect, the statement that Titian's models were referred to because of his connection to the Habsburgs *auctoritas* does not apply, because Coxcie had a role of his own in developing the same language as Titian's.

3. Anthonis Mor: the standardization of court portraiture and its relevance in the Southern Netherlands

As we have said, Titian perfected a type of portrait that was inextricably connected to the image of Charles V and, therefore, this became not only an image of artistic preference, but also an expression of political values and dynastic ambitions. However, as suggested by different scholars and cogently outlined in *Le botteghe di Tiziano*:

«Non è, pertanto, l'officina di Tiziano a stabilire il modello semantico del ritratto europeo: è semmai la ricetta propagata dalla “ditta” di Anthonis Mor [...] ad assumersi quel ruolo, sulla falsariga di una formula che combina efficacemente elementi naturalistici, minuziosamente osservati, di ascendenza nord-europea con soluzioni tipologiche italiane, tizianesche».⁶⁶¹

It was Anthonis Mor, pupil of Jan van Scorel then taken under the wing of the omnipresent Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle,⁶⁶² bishop of Arras, artist who significantly contributed to the popularization of Titian's type of portrait. Therefore, it does not surprise that, in the artistic literature, the name of Anthonis Mor van Dashorst is inextricably related to two elements: portraiture, and Titian. As underlined by Diane Bodart in a seminal essay for understanding Mor's reception of Titian - and not only his art, as we will discuss later -, his role as court portraitist of the Habsburg would have led him to an unavoidable comparison with the Emperor's Apelles.⁶⁶³

3.1 Self-portraits and self-representation at El Pardo Palace

The two painters often portrayed the same sitters and, as for Coxcie's *Tantalus* and *Mater Dolorosas*, their artworks were hanging next to each other in the same space. It is crucial to mention the case of El Pardo palace, a hunting lodge not far from Madrid, where Philip II created his gallery of portraits. Unfortunately, the palace was destroyed

⁶⁶¹ See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 340.

⁶⁶² WOODALL 2007, pp. 135-139;

⁶⁶³ See BODART 2013, pp. 131-162.

in a fire in 1604, but in this gallery Titian and Anthonis Mor were the absolute protagonists, together with Mor's pupil, Alonso Sánchez Coello. In fact, the historical reconstruction based on the contemporary source of the *Libro dela Monteria*, published by the Spanish humanist Gonzalo Argote de Molina (1548-1596) in 1582, lists fifteen portraits by Mor, eleven by Titian,⁶⁶⁴ nine by Coello, two by the Flemish Lucas de Heere (1534-1584), one by the Italian Sofonisba Anguissola (1531-1625) and six by an unnamed German painter.⁶⁶⁵

That Titian and Mor had a preeminent position in the hierarchy of court painters is proven by the presence in the gallery, alongside the Habsburgs family members, of the self-portraits of the two artists. As correctly observed by Joanna Woodall, the two self-portraits were facing one another, Titian at the end of the wall including images related to Austria, Germany, and northern Italy; Mor on the side of the gallery connected with Portugal, England, Spain, and the Netherlands.⁶⁶⁶ Argote de Molina himself, in mentioning the self-portraits of the artists, underlines their nationalities, namely Venice and Utrecht. Their presence in those specific positions might have had a symbolic meaning, as they were representing Italian and Netherlandish art, and Philip II's dominion over these traditions.⁶⁶⁷

In the view of this gallery as a sort of "mirror of princes", the presence of these illustrious men aimed to celebrate the artistic taste of their patron and the fact that they did put their genius at Philip II's service. While Titian had been appointed Charles V's Apelles, the King of Spain favoured Mor as his portraitist. Their presence in such honorary space, close to the extended family of the King, also suggests a sense of continuity of artistic patronage in which the Flemish painter had an important role.

⁶⁶⁴ Checa argues that in the gallery were hanging eighteen paintings by Titian, in CHECA CREMADES 1992, p. 143.

⁶⁶⁵ The most relevant reconstructions of the portrait gallery and the El Pardo palace, that provide also documents and transcriptions, are WOODALL 1989, I, pp. 275-326; KUSCHE 1991A, pp. 1-28; KUSCHE 1991B, pp. 261-292; KUSCHE 1992, pp. 1-36; CHECA CREMADES 1992, pp. 142-144.

⁶⁶⁶ WOODALL 1995, pp. 73-74.

⁶⁶⁷ Joanna Woodall argues that Titian represents just the Venetian visual tradition. However, considering that Philip II's reign and political influence was extended to the vast majority of Italy, this concept would be too narrow. Even though Philip II manifested a preference for Titian's art there is not particular evidence that he would consider it as representative of Venetian art. See WOODALL 1995, p. 74.

Apart from their possible symbolic function, it is interesting to stress how different these two portraits must have looked like.

The Venetian represented himself while holding a portrait of Philip II. The painting, lost in the fire, was likely sent in 1552, as recorded by a letter sent to the Prince by Francisco de Vargas.⁶⁶⁸ The two other known self-portraits of Titian, the earliest one dated 1546-7, now in Berlin, and the later one dated around 1562, now at the Prado, show a rough and sketchy style, and a discontinuous quality of the brushstrokes.

The first one, partially unfinished (*Figure 107*), was considered by Falomir a *ricordo* of the original that was sold to the Italian historian and biographer Paolo Giovio (1483-1552).⁶⁶⁹ The pictorial style, with visible brushstrokes and thick stains of light, generated some disagreements about the date, which might be postponed until 1562.⁶⁷⁰

The second self-portrait⁶⁷¹ represents the artist in profile, wearing serious black clothes, a black hat and the golden chain that identifies him as a Knight of the Golden Spur (*Figure 108*).⁶⁷² The decision to portray himself in profile was unusual on many levels. First of all, we do not know many examples of profile portraits in the XVIth century. Secondly, it was even more uncommon for an artist to paint this kind of self-portrait, for the simple reason that it was unpractical to look at himself in profile while painting. However, Titian was acquainted with the profile portraiture of numismatic and medals because he had been already portrayed in these media by Leone Leoni in 1537 and by the sculptor Pastorino dei Pastorini (1508-1592) in 1546.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁸ See WETHEY 1969-75, II, p. 205; MANCINI 1998, pp. 2015-216.

⁶⁶⁹ Titian; *Self-portrait*; 1546-7; 96x75 cm; oil on canvas; Staatliche Museen; Berlin. See WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 143-144; HUMFREY 2007, p. 315; VENICE-VIENNA 2007-2008, pp. 173-174.

⁶⁷⁰ Some scholars argued that this could be the portrait mentioned by Vasari, the one that he saw in the house of Titian. See PEDROCCO 2001, p. 272.

⁶⁷¹ Titian; *Self-portrait*; 1562; 86x65 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See WETHEY 1969-75, II, p. 144; HUMFREY 2007, p. 316; VENICE 2008, pp. 176-178; ROSAND 2009B, pp. 65-71; NICHOLS 2013A, pp. 219-238; WOODS-MARSDEN in VENICE 2014, pp. 86-117.

⁶⁷² The Italian humanist Baldassarre Castiglione (1478-1529), in his well-known book *Il Cortegiano* (1528), suggests black as the perfect colour for a nobleman to wear. Titian followed this suggestion, and added the symbol of the appreciation of the Emperor Charles V. See FALOMIR in VENICE 2008, pp. 176-178.

⁶⁷³ VENICE-VIENNA 2007-2008 p. 176.

Joanna Woodall mentioned a medal, attributed to Agostino Ardeni (active 1550-1570), the composition of which might resemble the one of the painting that Titian had sent to the King of Spain (*Figure 109*).⁶⁷⁴ In this medal, the artist is represented in profile, as in the Prado painting, and he is holding a portrait. The small painting, decorated by a rich frame, depicts a man also in profile, identified by the inscription as his son Orazio.⁶⁷⁵ Joanna Woods-Marsden contests this hypothesis, because a painting in which the image of the King was so much smaller and less important than the one of the painter would have challenged the concept of *decorum*.⁶⁷⁶ Although this is an understandable point, we have to remember that Titian was the subject of the self-portrait. Then, the image of the King should have served as a statement that the artist had put his genius at service of Philip II, and not as a self-standing portrait.

It is difficult to ascertain whether this medal was somehow related to the aforementioned portrait, but the concept must have been similar: the artist was not caught in the act of painting, but he was perpetually relating himself to his patron.

With regard to the style, the self-portrait for El Pardo might have been comparable to the *Philip II in an armour* in Madrid (*Figure 14*), instead of to the one had he used for his Prado self-portrait, dated ten years later. That said, we can confidently assert that the self-image of Titian would have appeared looked distinct from the one of Mor.

The Flemish artist's self-portrait has been usually considered to resemble the one now at the Uffizi (*Figure 110*).⁶⁷⁷ In the painting, he is dressed as a gentleman, with a satin doublet decorated by velvet insets and lined with fur. The artist is sitting in front of his easel, he holds the tools of his work, brushes, colours, and palette, and he turns towards the viewer, with his right hand nonchalantly resting on his thigh. He looks directly outside of the painting, the face and the torso in three-quarter. This attitude

⁶⁷⁴ Agostino Ardeni; *Titian holding a portrait*; c. 1563; 10,3 cm; medal in lead; Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Brunswick. See WOODALL 1989, p. 282; WOODS-MARSDEN in VENICE 2014, pp. 87-117.

⁶⁷⁵ «TTTTANI PICTORIS EXIMII*EFFIGIESI*A e HORATIVS FIL», as transcribed by WOODS-MARSDEN in VENICE 2014, p. 90.

⁶⁷⁶ WOODS-MARSDEN in VENICE 2014, p. 91.

⁶⁷⁷ Anthonis Mor; *Self-portrait*; 1558; 113x87 cm; oil on panel; Gallerie degli Uffizi; Florence. WOODALL 2007, pp. 9-21, 27-29, 30-36; STIGHELEN 2008, pp. 73-74; BRUSSELS 2015, pp. 152-153.

appears to be opposite to the one of Titian who, in both the known self-portraits, is not looking at the viewer.

At the height of Mor's eyes, a sheet of paper is pinned on the panel. There we can clearly read the Greek verses that the humanist Dominicus Lampsonius had dedicated to the artist:

«By Jove, of whom is this painting? Of the best among painters. Who, above Apelles and Zeuxis, And all the other ancient and moderns, Has obtained mastery by means of his art. Yes, he has made this portrait of himself. He painted it with his own skilled hand. He studied himself on a metal, In front of the mirror. Oh, what an excellent artist! The counterfeit Mor which now you behold, Mor,... presently speak!»⁶⁷⁸

Mor chose to link his image of artist to the erudite words of Lampsonius. The self-portrait showed his technical abilities, but his social role was described mostly by his courtier attitude and the Greek poem. The comparison to Apelles, the greatest painter of the classical tradition and the archetype for court portraitist, was specifically expressing the reason why his self-portrait belonged to El Pardo gallery of portraits. He was, like Titian, a genius at service of the King, a man of his court, and a *pictor doctus*.

It is problematic to compare two lost paintings, even though there are possible copies or variations of them. What we might assert with a certain degree of confidence, is that both of them seems to have stressed - with the clothing and the accessories, or by resorting to literary references - that they were more than artists.⁶⁷⁹ They were educated gentlemen, courtiers, trustful members of the King's *entourage*.

Their correlations, epitomized by them sharing the same space and position at the El Pardo palace through their eloquent portraits, appear clear in recent literature. As for contemporary sources, the connections between the artists are less clear, and often implicit. However, the parallels between Mor and Titian are often used specifically to

⁶⁷⁸ Transcribed and translated by WOODALL 1990, p. 83.

⁶⁷⁹ The process of emancipation of the artists from the role of artisans to acknowledged members of the intellectual elite, and the parallel development of art treatises supporting these social claims, had a different path in Italy and in the Netherlands. For a comparison, see FILIPCZAK 1987, pp. 11-45; for a more general discussion, see BARKER 1999, *passim*.

state the role of the Flemish artist as a portraitist privileged by the King of Spain and the court of Brussels, both by contemporary sources and secondary literature.

3.2 Van Mander, Lampsonius, Vasari and Granvelle: around Mor and Titian

Karel van Mander, in the biography of the artist published in his *Schilderboek*, underlines that he had made portraits of many nobles, and he had been well-paid for them.⁶⁸⁰ However, the only mention of a possible relationship with the art of Titian is a reference to a copy of the *Danae* that he had allegedly made for King Philip II, a copy “which he painted wonderfully well”.⁶⁸¹ We have no clue if this copy actually existed and, if so, how did it look like.⁶⁸² The painting is just listed by van Mander among the very few works that were not portraits, together with a *Resurrection* now at Condé Museum⁶⁸³ and a *Circumcision of Christ* for the church of Our Lady in Antwerp.⁶⁸⁴

The Brugeois humanist Dominicus Lampsonius (1532-1599), contemporary of the artist and admirer of Titian, also wrote about Anthonis Mor. The intellectual and the artist did likely meet in England, where Lampsonius stayed from 1554 to 1558 in the entourage of cardinal Reginald Pole (1500-1558),⁶⁸⁵ and where Mor was sent to portray Mary Tudor in occasion of the marital negotiations with Philip II, between 1554 and 1555.⁶⁸⁶ Lampsonius showed his appreciation for Mor’s portraits in Greek and Latin epigrams that celebrated the self-portrait of the artis, the effigy of the musician Jean

⁶⁸⁰ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, pp. 181-185.

⁶⁸¹ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 185.

⁶⁸² In the recent exhibition on Titian’s *poesie* (London 2020) a Netherlandish copy of the *Danae* was presented and discussed. This painting is supposed to have been made in the Netherlands, probably a copy of a copy, and it might have been made after the one by Anthonis Mor. LONDON 2020, p. 212.

⁶⁸³ See WOODALL 2007, pp. 295-306.

⁶⁸⁴ Van Mander writes that Mor died while painting this work and that this would have been very important, if finished. MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 185.

⁶⁸⁵ For the life and the writings of Dominicus Lampsonius, see SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, pp. 7-27 *passim*.

⁶⁸⁶ On this portrait and the context of its commission and depiction, see WOODALL 2007, pp. 261-293.

Lecocq, signed and dated 1559, and the portrait of the same Lampsonius, now lost.⁶⁸⁷ He also composed the Latin inscription that accompanied Mor's printed portrait in the *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniæ Inferioris effigies*.⁶⁸⁸

While the text exalts mostly the success that Mor enjoyed during his career, enhancing the preference accorded to the artist by the Emperor and his successor,⁶⁸⁹ the etching made by Simon Frisius (Figure 111) was interpreted by Diane Bodart as a direct reference to the art and the "persona" of Titian.⁶⁹⁰

In fact, Mor is represented on the background of Utrecht, his hometown, while portraying Charles V, as if he was face to face with the model. However, we have no trace that such painting had been made. Instead, the panel on which Mor is working in the print, resembles the one of Charles V with an armour that Titian painted in 1548, now lost but known through copies.⁶⁹¹ While illustrating the artist from Utrecht as he was painting the famous Titian's portrait, Simon Frisius or, more likely, Lampsonius, was creating a parallel between the two artists, representing Moa as the "Flemish Titian".⁶⁹²

Lampsonius was also in contact with Giorgio Vasari and was mentioned as his informant in the redaction of the *Vite*. It was the same Lampsonius who wrote to him about Flemish artists, including Mor. He praised Anthonis Mor as portraitist, especially for his ability to paint his subjects so naturally that they could challenge nature and fool the eyes.⁶⁹³ These comments on the "natural appearance" of the portrayed and to the illusionistic quality of the painting, recall the judgements expressed over Titian's portraiture by the contemporary Italian treatises,⁶⁹⁴ but they were also the main *topoi* for

⁶⁸⁷ Lampsonius also praised the aforementioned *Resurrection of Christ* and a lost *Last judgement*. For the transcriptions, see PURAYE 1949, pp. 175-183.

⁶⁸⁸ The book was printed in two editions. The first, containing just twenty-two portraits, was published in 1572 in Antwerp by Volcxken Dierckx, the widow of Hieronymus Cock, while the second edition, published by Henrick Hondius in The Hague in 1610, consists of sixty-eight portraits. The effigy of Anthonis Mor is included in the second edition. See WOODALL-PORRAS 2015.

⁶⁸⁹ See <<https://sites.courtauld.ac.uk/netherlandish-canon/artist/79-anthonis-mor/>>.

⁶⁹⁰ Simon Frisius; *Anthonis Mor*; c. 1610; 210x122 mm; etching; British Museum; London.

⁶⁹¹ WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 193-194; BODART 2011, pp. 210-218.

⁶⁹² As argued by BODART 2013, pp. 132-135.

⁶⁹³ VASARI 1568, II, p. 859.

⁶⁹⁴ See FLETCHER in NAPLES 2006, pp. 36-49.

acclaiming artists who achieved remarkable results in portraiture, therefore they are not evidential of a reference to Titian. Lampsonius would directly compare Mor to the Venetian master just in a letter sent to Giulio Clovio in 1570. Here, writing about his own portrait by the hand of Mor, he celebrates the art of the Flemish painter as equal to Titian.⁶⁹⁵

But it was Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, patron of Mor and responsible of introducing him to the Habsburgs, the one who first compared his *protégé* to Titian. In fact, in 1549-51, he wrote to don Martín de Gurrea y Aragón (1525-1581), duke of Villahermosa, that Mor was the best in painting portraits, after Titian or, as he argues afterwards, maybe even better than Titian.⁶⁹⁶

If we assume that Granvelle was trying to promote Mor as court painter for Charles V and his son, this exaltation of his talent and the comparison to Titian, who was the official portraitist of the Emperor, seem highly strategic. Granvelle, as discussed in the first chapter, played an important role as artistic advisor for the Habsburgs, introducing and supporting artists to the imperial family.

In his artistic promotion of Mor, he succeeded in his endeavour.⁶⁹⁷ In November 1553, the artist could call himself painter of “His Imperial Majesty Charles V”.⁶⁹⁸ But it was when Philip commissioned Mor to come to London, in November 1554, to

⁶⁹⁵ «Questo ho messo sopra un mio ogni modo eccellentissimo ritratto, del quale il detto Moro mi ha voluto far favore, ella quale opera in questo genere, con tutto ch'io abbia visto molti bellissimi ritratti di Tiziano, il quale è stimato in questa parte come un Dio, et meritamente, io non vidi mai meglio», in SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, p. 133.

⁶⁹⁶ Mor was described as: «El major que jo haya visto para retratos después del Tiziano» and «porque con un pintor que aquí he hallado los mandaría sacar Quizá mejor que del Tyciano», in BODART 2013, p. 135.

⁶⁹⁷ Mary of Hungary, sister of Charles V and Governor of the Low Countries, had already used the services of Mor, when she sent the artist in Spain and Portugal to portray her family members in 1550-1553. Four portraits by Mor, portraying the Portuguese branch of the family, are listed in 1558, namely King John III of Portugal, his wife Catherine of Austria, their son don João Manuel, Prince of Portugal and Maria of Portugal, Duchess of Viseu and daughter of Eleanor of Austria. See TUDELA 2016, pp. 424-426.

⁶⁹⁸ WOODALL 1990, p. 71.

paint his wife Queen Mary Tudor,⁶⁹⁹ that he started his successful career. This painting is an absolute masterpiece in the genre of portraiture (*Figure 112*). The precise and detailed brushwork could compete with that of Hans Holbein.⁷⁰⁰ The German artist was the portraitist of the monarchs of England from 1532 to his death, in 1543, and his art was very influential for the development of the English portraiture, as we have discussed in the first chapter.⁷⁰¹

After this commission, Mor became officially the painter of King Philip II, as documented by a royal order dated 20 December 1554.⁷⁰² For his service, Mor received an annual salary of 300 scudi plus the payment for the works that Philip II commissioned him to paint.⁷⁰³ From that moment onward, the artist was part of the King's household. During the following years, he briefly accompanied his patron to Spain, between 1559 and 1560, and then moved back to the Netherlands, where he worked first for the Governor Margaret of Parma, and then for the Duke of Alva. He never went to Spain again, but he was still referred to as King Philip II's court painter in 1573.

As discussed previously, Mor was indebted to Titian for the model of the so-called *court portrait*, or *state portrait*, a model he would further develop and contribute to standardize in Europe. Writers and patrons of the time recognised Mor's achievements in the genre of portrait, praising and promoting him. However, the comparison to Titian remains problematic. Sometimes it is considered implicit, such as speaking of portraits meant necessarily to refer to Titian as a milestone for the genre. Nevertheless, his portraiture had specific characteristics that differentiate it from the Venetian. In the end, it was Mor's version of portraiture which became trendsetting in the second half of the XVIth century, and not specifically Titian's, even though the Venetian is generally the only one credited for it.

⁶⁹⁹ Anthonis Mor; *Mary Tudor, Queen of England*; 1554; 109x84 cm; oil on panel; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.

⁷⁰⁰ As argued by FALOMIR in MADRID-LONDON 2008-2009, pp. 509-10.

⁷⁰¹ See FOISTER 2004, *passim* and esp. pp. 263-270; LONDON 2006-2007, *passim* and esp. pp. 113-124.

⁷⁰² See WOODALL 2007, p. 261.

⁷⁰³ It is usually overlooked that Anthonis Mor's salary was higher than the one accorded to Titian, who started with 100 and was raised to 200 in 1548.

3.3 Dependence and independence: how to generalise a *formula*

The public image of Charles V, developed through a series of portraits realised by Titian between the 1530s and the 1540s, became a benchmark for the European rulers. As previously introduced, the Venetian painter elaborated the full-length model first introduced in German portraiture,⁷⁰⁴ synthetising its austerity and naturalism with dignity and a new sense of *decorum*. The vibrant brushstrokes were at service both of a lively appearance and a dissimulation - the Latin concept of *dissimulatio* described by Pliny and Quintilianus -⁷⁰⁵ of the Emperor's protruding jaw. The lost *Charles V in armour with a baton* was essential for this process. Checa underlines how this representation referred both to the Germanic iconography of the Holy Roman Empire and to the classicism of ancient Roman Emperors.⁷⁰⁶

The full-length effigy of Charles V in an armour and the equestrian portrait after the battle of Mühlberg became, for reasons derived from the importance of the sitter and its expression of *magnificentia* and *dignitas*, a milestone in the elaboration not only of the *state portrait*, but also of the court portraiture in Europe.⁷⁰⁷

In his essay on court portraiture, Miguel Falomir follows the development of this typology during the Renaissance, and he underlines its progressive homogenisation in the second half of the XVIth century.⁷⁰⁸ For explaining this phenomenon, Falomir starts from the ideas expressed by Federico Zeri in *Pittura e controriforma*.⁷⁰⁹ In this book, the scholar coined the concept of “timeless” portraits, a kind of portraiture: «in which the painter repressed his own artistic personality and placed all the emphasis on

⁷⁰⁴ The famous portrait by the Austrian painter Jacob Seisenegger, the main model for Titian's *Charles V with a dog* at the Prado, belongs to the tradition of Lucas Cranach and Hans Holbein, painters of the German rulers. See CAMPBELL L. 1990, p. 236.

⁷⁰⁵ To adapt the real appearance to the dignity and majesty of the subject, especially in the case of Governors and rulers.

⁷⁰⁶ The Empire of Charles V leaned its iconographic values on the elaboration of Dürer's models for Maximilian I, justified by an Erasmian philosophy of power. See CHECA CREMADES 2017, p. 41.

⁷⁰⁷ CAMPBELL L. 1990, pp. 234-246; FALOMIR in MADRID 1998-1999, pp. 203-227; FLETCHER in NAPLES 2006, pp. 36-50; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 335-387, *passim*.

⁷⁰⁸ FALOMIR in LONDON 2008-2009, pp. 66-79.

⁷⁰⁹ ZERI 1998.

technical aspects».⁷¹⁰ Focused on recording the appearance of the sitter in the detail, and on building an image of aulic detachment in which the attributes of the social status have a fundamental role, this widespread and international style of portraiture takes its cue from the work of Anthonis Mor.⁷¹¹

As synthesised by Zeri and elaborated in *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, many artists who referred to Mor successfully exported the model throughout Europe: Sánchez Coello, Rolan de Moys (c. 1520-1593), Juan Pantoja de la Cruz (1553-1608) in Spain and Portugal; Martino Rota (c. 1520-1583) and Arcimboldo (1527-1593) at the court of Vienna; Hans von Aachen (1552-1615) and Joseph Heintz the Elder (1564-1609) in Prague; Scipione Pulzone (1540/42-1598) in Rome; Christoph Amberger (1505-1562) in the Holy Roman Empire; and the Flemish Willem Key (c. 1515-1568), Frans Pourbus the Younger (1569-1622) in the Low Countries and in Italy.⁷¹²

But, as correctly criticized by Falomir, Zeri does not stress the role of the work of Titian in this process. The scholar acknowledges his part in “exporting” a certain model of Italian portraiture, but not in its elaboration.⁷¹³ Likewise, Zeri also overlooked the fundamental contribution of the Habsburgs in the diffusion and success of this “international” model of *élite* portraiture.

The authority of the Habsburgs in influencing and addressing the visual culture on such a vast scale, is still to be fully studied and understood.⁷¹⁴ However, that must be the starting point to explain the immense fortune of Mor’s standardisation of Titian’s *formula*, namely the full-length or three-quarter length portrait with a neutral background, the focus of which was the lifelikeness of the subject and the *naturalezza* of the pose.

In fact, as rulers of a vast part of Europe, the dynasty imposed its artistic preferences across the regions, from the itinerant court of Charles V to the Spain and Portugal of Philip II, from the Holy Roman court of Vienna under the reign of

⁷¹⁰ FALOMIR in LONDON 2008-2009, p. 76.

⁷¹¹ ZERI 1998, pp. 12-15.

⁷¹² TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 335-340.

⁷¹³ ZERI 1998, p. 14; FALOMIR in LONDON 2008-2009, pp. 76-78.

⁷¹⁴ A recent and attentive analysis of the phenomenon can be found in AIKEMA 2021, pp. 65-126.

Ferdinand I and Maximilian II, to the Prague of Rudolf II.⁷¹⁵ Not to mention the members of the Habsburg households and their allies, often expressing their loyalty through the practice of imitation.

This attitude towards the Princes is well exemplified by the artistic requests of Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle. We have already mentioned that Granvelle, in 1548, commissioned from Titian an *Ecce Homo* like the one that he had painted for Charles V, and that, the following year, he asked the artist to paint for him a copy of the portrait of Philip II that the Venetian had made in Milan, not inferior in quality to the one that he was already painting for Mary of Hungary, as he had specified in a letter.⁷¹⁶

If the emulation of the artistic preferences of the Prince was an important aspect of the courtesan culture, the systematic copy and trade of portraits of the Sovereign and his family was functional to the exercise of power. The political use of portraiture in the XVIth century is a vast topic.⁷¹⁷ In many circumstances, effigies of Princes and Princesses were made for a specific function - like the exchange of portraits when a marriage between princes was negotiated - or played a political role. Portraits were displayed at ceremonies and processions, were designed for propaganda purposes, accumulated in dynastic galleries such as the one of Margaret of Austria, Mary of Hungary and Catherine of Austria, Queen of Portugal (1507-1578), and they were even used in substitution of the physical presence of the sitter.

It does not surprise that one of the most important tasks carried out by court artists - not only painters, but also sculptors, goldsmiths, illuminators - was to copy, again and again, the effigies of the Prince. The importance of copies in spreading and standardizing the model of court portraiture across Europe, must not be overlooked.

⁷¹⁵ For a discussion on the artistic *milieu* of the Habsburgs, see the recent MANCINI-PASCUAL CHENEL 2019; MÍNGUEZ CORNELLES-RODRÍGUEZ MOYA 2020; the different courts and households of the Habsburgs are presented and analysed in VERMEIR-RAEYMAEKERS-HORTAL MUÑOZ 2014.

⁷¹⁶ Letter from Granvelle to Titian: «Ho ancor gran contento che habbate dato principio al mio Principe di Spagna, e vi prego farmi tanto piacere che venghi vivo, o manco non sii superato da quello della regina [...]». See MANCINI 1998, pp. 191-192.

⁷¹⁷ For a general introduction, see CAMPBELL L. 1990, pp. 193-225; WOODALL 1997, *passim*; BODART 2011, pp. 9-32; to focus on the portraiture at the court of Philip II, see FALOMIR in MADRID 1998-1999, pp. 203-227.

3.3.1 The portraits of Philip II in comparison

To fully understand the concept of *formula*, we should compare the solutions implemented by the artists to portray similar subjects in analogous circumstances, starting from the portraits of Philip II.

Woodall compared *Philip II in black and white*, a three-quarter portrait of the Prince painted by Mor (Figure 15), and the well-known *Philip II with an armour* by Titian (Figure 14), that we have discussed in the previous chapter.⁷¹⁸

Both portraits were painted in the same period, the years of the *Felicissimo viaje*. At the time, Charles V was pulling strings to place his son in the line of succession for the imperial throne. In this context, Philip's decision to be portrayed by Titian, the Emperor's Apelles, was also related to a specific strategy. It was fundamental to associate his image to the one of his father, to ensure the legitimacy of his succession as sovereign of the whole Habsburg territories.⁷¹⁹

In relation to these claims, Prince Philip, born and educated in Spain, had to present himself as the rightful heir of the Netherlands through a process of "Burgundianization".⁷²⁰ As Woodall argues, while Titian's painting was exemplifying the chivalric *mores* of the Burgundian court, Mor's polished technique created a continuity with the visual traditions established by Jan van Eyck.⁷²¹ But we will come back to that later.

The meetings between Titian and Prince Philip resulted in at least two type of portraits, the full-length figure with an armour, and the three-quarter depiction of the Prince (Figure 113). The canvas that seems to be the most relatable to Mor's portrait from

⁷¹⁸ See WOODALL 1992, pp. 11-18; MATTHEWS 2000, pp. 16-18; WOODALL 2007, pp. 183-232.

⁷¹⁹ For a discussion on the artistic and iconographical aspect of the succession, see CHECA CREMADES 2017, pp. 38-44.

⁷²⁰ MEADOW 1998, pp. 38-40; PETERS 1998, pp. 21-23; BELOZERSKAYA 2002, *passim*; WOODALL 2007, p. 191.

⁷²¹ The relation with van Eyck's visual tradition and his style is mentioned in WOODALL 2007, p. 191.

1549-50 belongs to this second type, and represents Philip II with an ermine cape, his hand resting on a table covered with a red velvety cloth.⁷²²

If we compare this painting to Mor's three-quarter portrait (*Figure 15*), it is difficult to ignore strong similarities between the two artworks. The hand on the table, nonchalantly gripping its edge; the other hand, clasping the sword in the Venetian version, brown leather gloves in the Flemish one. Even though the two Philip are facing opposite directions, they share the same pose. The main difference - except for the style of the two painters - is that Mor's Prince Philip is looking straight at the viewer, while Titian's is gazing somewhere else. In both cases, they appear aristocratic, superior, detached. But Mor achieved this effect with an intense and severe look, the look of a sovereign imposing his wish upon the public, and Titian with a gaze in the distance. Philip does not appear lost in thoughts, but contemplating an idea, decisive and confident in himself.

It was mentioned on many occasions that the portrait with an ermine cape, is peculiar for Titian's production. The pictorial style is particularly detailed and austere, and different scholars suggested the intervention of Northern collaborators of the painter, like the Dutch Dirck Barendsz (1534-1592) or an unnamed German assistant.⁷²³ If, as suggested by Wethey, this portrait is the one mentioned by Titian in his letter dated 23 March 1553, then Philip's comments on the painting would strengthen this hypothesis.⁷²⁴ The same letter was quoted by Diane Bodart, who also underlines how the Prince described the portrait "as if it was made by the hand" of Titian. A compliment, indeed, that suggests that the artist somehow communicated the involvement of a collaborator in the making. But Bodart also interprets Titian's use of a "German" assistant as a reaction to the criticism that Philip had made on the

⁷²² Titian; *Philip II*; 1549-50; 103x82 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 131-132; CHECA CREMADES 1994, p. 276; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 361-362; BODART 2013, p. 152.

⁷²³ WETHEY (1969-75, II, p. 131) generally suggests a German assistant, but he doesn't specify which one.

⁷²⁴ «Con el dicho Ortiz recibimos el retrato que nos embió Ticio que es como de su mano, y aunque yo le scrivo todavía le dareis las gracias de nostra parte por el servicio que en esto nos ha hecho» in MANCINI 1998, p. 221; «[...] y el retrato que con él nos embiaste que es como de vuestra mano, y por el cuidado que tuvistes dello os damos muchas gracias» in MANCINI 1998, p. 222.

previous portrait with an armour. This reasoning seems rather questionable. First, as discussed in the first chapter, it is difficult to ascertain if the criticized portrait is the one now at the Prado (*Figure 14*), and what was the exact meaning of “hasty execution”. Secondly, we have no reason to believe that Titian was informed of this criticism or that he was asked to change his way of painting. In fact, Philip II was more concerned about the good state of the paintings and the damages they could have suffered during their shipping, as he expressed on different occasions.⁷²⁵ Moreover, in his following artistic creations for Philip II, the *poesie*, Titian experimented more and more with an open, tonal painting, soft and embroidered with light, in a way that would not have been possible without the support or the condescendence of his patron.

Moving on to the analysis of the portraits, one of Mor’s most successful masterpieces was the artwork depicting *Philip II in armour on Saint Quentin’s day* (*Figure 114*).⁷²⁶ If we consider its political meaning, this painting has the same role as *Charles V at Mühlberg*. It is a commemoration for an important victory, in this case the Habsburg’s victory over the Valois France in 1557, which inaugurated an era of peace between the two dynasties and reaffirmed the presence of the Sovereign during this fundamental event.

Anthonis Mor, however, does not represent Philip II as a commander during a battle - he was not present on the battlefield -⁷²⁷, but as a man of the court, elegant and nonchalant. In this case, more than the equestrian portrait, the Flemish artist had clearly in mind the lost full-length painting of *Charles V in armour with a baton* and the *Philip II in an armour*. These examples were obviously part of Mor’s vocabulary since his portrait of *Maximilian II*, dated 1550 (*Figure 115*).⁷²⁸

⁷²⁵ An example is the letter sent by Philip II to Titian on 13 July 1559 regarding the shipment of *Diana and Actaeon* and the *Diana and Callisto*. Here the King expresses his concern about the packaging of the paintings to avoid them to be damaged during the long and perilous trip. See MANCINI 1998, p. 252.

⁷²⁶ Anthonis Mor; *Philip II in an armour on Saint Quentin’s day*; 1560; 200x103 cm; oil on canvas; El Escorial; Madrid. WOODALL 2007, pp. 339-367; MADRID 2013, pp. 149-153.

⁷²⁷ See WOODALL 2007, p. 350.

⁷²⁸ Anthonis Mor; *Maximilian II*; 1550; 184x100 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See CHECA CREMADES 1992, p. 104; WOODALL 2007, pp. 203-213; TAGLIAFERRO et al. 2009, pp. 359-361; BODART 2013, p. 149.

Comparing Mor's portrait to the *Philip II in an armour* (Figure 14), we observe that, while the position of the body, emerging from the dark background and creating a connection with the viewer, and the political meaning of the elements depicted -the baton, the armour, the spurs- almost coincide, what always differs is the style of painting.

To give a clear example, let's examine how Titian painted the shine of light on the armour of Philip: thick brushstrokes, with overlapping touches of white and wheat colour, creating a rather milky shine on the metal, like a trembling candle. Mor, on the other hand, obtained the effect of a colour gradient, moving from grey to cold white, in an attempt of rendering the exact appearance of the material. We can say that Titian achieves the *impression* of the shine, Mor, instead, achieves the *appearance* of the shine.

Another difference is related to the proportion of the body. If we overlap the two paintings, it is possible to notice that Mor gives emphasis to the head, that appears slightly bigger than the one painted by the Venetian. While the legs maintain the same proportion, the upper body is more expanded, the arms longer and the face strongly emerges from the bulky shoulders. The general impression is that, for the sake of recognizability, the point of view was moved somewhat higher, and with an angle inclined towards the subject. Where Titian was trying to capture the young Prince as an elegant albeit powerful gentleman, maybe sacrificing the details for an overall view of the majestic presence, Mor seems to respond to different needs, as he was addressing a different system of values.

In conclusion, there is another artwork that is worth to discuss at this point: the *Allegorical portrait of Philip II*, now at the Prado (Figure 116).⁷²⁹ This painting is unusual, to say the least, in the production of Titian's portraiture. First, it is an *allegorical portrait*, a type of effigy that we can find sporadically among his works, except for the so-called *Allegory of prudence*, now at the National Gallery of London.⁷³⁰ The canvas was designed

⁷²⁹ Titian; *Allegorical portrait of Philip II*; 1573-75; 335x273 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado. See PANOFKY 1969, pp. 72-74; WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 132-133; CHECA CREMADES 1994, pp. 53-55, 274; KOLRUD 2008, pp. 57-68; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 275-284.

⁷³⁰ This controversial painting has been interpreted in quite different ways: three male heads (possibly portraits of Titian, his son Orazio and his nephew Marco Vecellio) associated to three animal heads (a wolf, a lion and a dog) bearing the Latin inscription «EX PRÆTE/RITO//PRÆSENS

as an ex-voto to thank God for two major events that Philip II wanted to celebrate: the victory against the Turks during the famous battle of Lepanto, which took place on 7 October 1571, and the birth of his heir, Ferdinand of Austria (1571-1578). The required iconography was very likely communicated beforehand to Titian. In fact, the same iconographical elements appear in the programme elaborated by the Spanish humanist Juan López de Hoyos (1511-1583) for Anne of Austria's triumphal entry in Madrid in 1570 to wed Philip II.⁷³¹

As recorded by the artist and intellectual Jusepe Martínez (c. 1600-1682) in 1675.⁷³² Titian received a drawing of Philip II's head, looking up and slightly turned, and a general composition for the scene by the hand of Alonso Sánchez Coello, court painter of the King and pupil of Anthonis Mor.

An unusual canvas, so peculiar that did not enter the group of the over-copied portraits of the King. It is curious that Philip II commissioned this portrait to Titian. It surely was easier to use one of his many court artists, especially the painters that had worked on the gallery of portraits at El Pardo palace, ten years earlier. Instead, the King decided to ask the portrait - a portrait that could not have been *al naturale*, one of the most important requirements for a lively portrait - to the old Venetian master, whose very slow and tactile way of working was going under some criticism.

A poignant example to this criticism is the dialogue between Diego Guzmán de Silva (1520-1577), the Spanish ambassador in Venice, and Antonio de Guzmán de Ayamonte (1514-1580), the Governor of Milan.⁷³³ In spite of the reiterate negotiations for the acquisition of Titian's devotional paintings, the artist was criticised for the uncertainty of his hand. Ayamonte wrote that the quality of the recent works was lower than the most recent ones, expressing an opinion in line with the one stated by Vasari in 1568. But the same Ayamonte also stated that the old Venetian master mostly painted using «borrones»,⁷³⁴ thick traces like rough stains, but through these he could

PRVDEN/TER AGIT//NI FVTVRA/ACTIONĒ DE/TVRPET». Since the topic is too wide and not relevant in this analysis, see GENTILI 1998, pp. 26-29; CAMPBELL E. 2003, pp. 261-270; GENTILI 2006, pp. 122-134.

⁷³¹ As summarized by MULCAHY 2006, pp. 2-15.

⁷³² See WETHEY 1969-75, II, p. 132.

⁷³³ For a summary, see MANCINI 1998, pp. 81-87, 378-424; BODART 2013, pp. 233-235.

⁷³⁴ MANCINI 1998, p. 414.

still achieve the essential: the soul that gives life to the painting.⁷³⁵ In this combination of devotion to Titian and the harsh criticism against the lack of finishing and the style of the late paintings, it is possible to gain an impression of the complex reception and judgement over his art and style. Sometimes, it is hard to distinguish where the personal taste ends and the literary idea of the artist, with all of its social implications, starts. This theme is a recurrent topic in this study, and it will be further explored in the following chapters.

As Mancini suggested in his analysis of the correspondence between de Silva and Ayamonte, the latter was insistently negotiating to buy a painting by the hand of Titian mostly for political reasons.⁷³⁶ The Venetian had been the Apelles of Charles V, the favourite painter of Philip II, and he had portrayed the most important personalities on the political scene of Europe. The art of Titian had become by then, as a matter of fact, a *status symbol*.⁷³⁷ It is significant that Ayamonte was not just interested in a canvas by Titian to increase his prestige, but he was also planning to take the painting with himself once he would have retired to private life. This is but one example of the imitation of what Charles V had done when he retired to Yuste.⁷³⁸

As correctly argued by Diane Bodart, Philip II continued his fruitful relationship of patronage with Titian, appreciating the *poesie* or devotional paintings such as the *Martyrdom of saint Lawrence*. However, with regard to the portraits, he preferred artists who painted polished and detailed artworks, allowing the viewer to appreciate a closer inspection.⁷³⁹ This is demonstrated by the employment of Anthonis Mor, his pupil Alonso Sánchez Coello, the pupil of Coello Juan Pantoja de la Cruz and the Flemish

⁷³⁵ This description of Titian's late art might precede the rhetorical parallel between his way of painting and the divine creation, a parallel used by the artist Jacopo Palma il Giovane and by the Venetian writer Marco Boschini (1602-1681) in his *Carta del navegar pitoresco* (1660). See SOHM 1991, *passim*.

⁷³⁶ MANCINI 1998, pp. 89-109.

⁷³⁷ As perfectly phrased by Maria Loh in her study on Titian and Padovanino: « Surely the use value of a Titian was determined to a larger extent by its exhibition as a "Titian" rather than the inverse»; LOH 2007, p. 44.

⁷³⁸ Mancini (1998, pp. 105-106) adds that Ayamonte had also other reasons to invest in a painting by Titian. Being the Governor of Milan, many of his predecessors had been in contact with the artist or his workshop, and some of them had even been portrayed by him (i.e. the Duke of Alba); and Titian was economically tied to the treasure of Milan.

⁷³⁹ BODART 2013, pp. 235-241.

artist Rolan de Moys in the production of portraits for the Spanish and Portuguese nobility.

Yet, the King of Spain, to celebrate the victory against the Turks and the birth of his heir, wanted Titian himself. It was a complex painting, expressing a difficult iconographic programme, and merging portraiture with devotional art. It has been said that just Titian colours and fiery atmosphere could just disguise the weakness of the composition, which appears unbalanced and dull. Whether or not this had been designed by Sánchez Coello, it was Titian - old, slow, maybe not as good as he used to be - that Philip II wanted for his ex-voto, a painting with a strong political value and, again, referring to the matter of succession. As he wanted to be portrayed by his father's Apelles when they were planning to claim Philip's succession over the Holy Roman Empire, he also chose Titian to portray himself with his heir, in a perpetual display of the persistence of the Habsburg dynasty.

This was a "unique" portrait by Titian. It was likely meaningful, as we have argued, for its being "*Tiziano*". But most of the portraits at the court were replicable, and the ones by the Venetian were no exception. The practice of copy is fundamental to trace some aspects of the process of standardisation and internationalisation of a certain type of portraiture.

3.3.2 Copies, reproductions, variations at the court of Philip II

For what reason, to describe the phenomenon of the reception of Titian art in the Southern Netherlands, are we mainly lingering over the Spanish court? King Philip II of Spain ruled over those territories through a series of Governors and Regents, supported by secretaries that were a direct reflection of the central power. Since Charles V and Mary of Hungary left Brussels, the continuous changes in administration and the political and religious tensions led to the rebellions of the 1560s and to the Dutch Revolt in 1566. In the absence of a steady central court on the territory, Madrid and the figure of Philip II were the most influential reference point for the development and the standardization of the *state portrait* that then would, through artists like Anthonis Mor and other contingencies, affirm itself in the Southern Netherlands. The painter in fact, after his service at the court of the King in Spain,

returned to the Netherlands,⁷⁴⁰ where he was again in close contact with his patron Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, and portrayed Margaret of Parma, Regent of the Low Countries from 1559 to 1567, demonstrating his constant connection with the court.⁷⁴¹

Having said that, it is time to discuss how copies were involved in this process of standardization. Between the XVth and the XVIth century, court portraiture in the Netherlands was characterized by the use of replicas and copies after an original model. The Burgundian dukes, in particular Philip the Good (1396-1467), required a large number of copies that were repeating an “authorised” image of the sitter, an image that would have established the standard and most recognizable type.⁷⁴² This practice, and its consequence in the matter of qualitative statements related to copies and still-life representation, are also extensively documented in Spain, and the example of Alonso Sánchez Coello, together with his pupil Juan Pantoja de la Cruz, might raise some poignant questions on the reception of Titian’s art in a court environment.

The quantity and the variety of copies after Titian that this artist painted for his royal patrons, could suggest the idea of a sort of “backup saving” of the works of the master.⁷⁴³ And, in some cases, it is because of those copies that the posterity could grasp an idea of the lost originals’ appearance. Falomir suggests that Philip II expressed his interest in art in a form of “cumulative collecting”,⁷⁴⁴ the same way as his obsessive gathering of relics and religious paintings.⁷⁴⁵ The King of Spain also ordered copies of

⁷⁴⁰ Van Mander reported that Mor returned to the Netherlands because of an accident that happened with the King. After this event, he was informed that the Spanish Inquisition was worried about his privileged position, which was considered too close to the King. For this reason, Mor left Spain to never come back. See MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 231. See also BODART 2013, pp. 156-158.

⁷⁴¹ Margaret of Parma was the most artistically active regent of the Low Countries until the sovereign of the Archduke Albert of Austria (1559-1621) and his consort Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566-1633), who ruled over the Spanish Netherlands from 1598 to 1621. Her portrait by Anthonis Mor is now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

⁷⁴² For copies and replicas in the Netherlandish early modern portraiture, see COMBLEN-SONKES 1969; MAASTRICHT 1973, *passim*, esp. pp. 18-19; EICHBERGER 1995, pp. 226-228.

⁷⁴³ The production of copies had also a very practical reason. Titian’s paintings often arrived in Spain in a poor state, damaged during the travel. Many are the letters in which Philip II complains about the state of the paintings, and copying them would have been an insurance to preserve their appearance.

⁷⁴⁴ FALOMIR 2021, p. 65.

⁷⁴⁵ For the concept of cumulative devotion, see GONZÁLEZ GARCÍA 2001, pp. 445-466.

paintings that he considered valuable and that he wanted to be in different places at the same time. This is the case of the aforementioned *Descent from the cross* by Rogier van der Weyden, that was supposed to be both at El Pardo and at El Escorial, and the *Holy Trinity* by Titian. The original would have followed the remains of Charles V at El Escorial, and the copy by Antonio Segura (†1605) was destined to the monastery of Yuste.⁷⁴⁶ In 1598, when Philip II died, it was redacted an inventory that also listed an important number of copies. Falomir records two *Saint Margaret*, two *Entombment of Christ*, two *Mater dolorosa with clasped hands*, two *Ecce Homo* and two *Agony in the garden*, all after Titian's originals.⁷⁴⁷

As it was mentioned in the first chapter, Coello copied the *Noli me tangere*, a canvas that Titian had painted for Mary of Hungary in 1553, but this was just the tip of the iceberg. Coello copied almost every canvas of the Venetian, from religious subjects to the series of the *Condemned*, but especially the portraits.⁷⁴⁸

He did copy Titian's portraits from the collection of Mary of Hungary for the gallery of Catherine of Austria,⁷⁴⁹ he was appointed to repair and restore all of the paintings by the hand of the master and he had a crucial role in the design and practicalities related to the Gallery of portraits at the El Pardo palace.⁷⁵⁰

Coello had to retouch the nineteen portraits by Titian from the collection of Mary of Hungary and, according to Argote de Molina⁷⁵¹ he copied an original by Titian or Seisenegger and integrated the series with the portrait of Ferdinand I of Habsburg (1503-1564). He had to adapt from full-length to three-quarter the portraits of Charles V and Philip II, the most important pieces of the collection.

⁷⁴⁶ The *Holy Trinity* for the monastery of Yuste is discussed in MORÁN CABRÉ 2003, pp. 53-80.

⁷⁴⁷ FALOMIR 2021, p. 66.

⁷⁴⁸ PALOMINO (1724, III, p. 261) recorded that there were different copies of the *Condemned* by the hand of Coello: the full-size copies of the *Sisyphus* and the *Tityus*, and the copies of the whole series, smaller than the originals, that were painted in 1554. De KUSCHE 2003, pp. 89-91.

⁷⁴⁹ KUSCHE 2003, p. 87.

⁷⁵⁰ Titian referred directly to Coello in his letters to Philip II, expressing his trust in the painter as the only one who could retouch his work. See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 318-20; PUPPI 2012, pp. 117, 341.

⁷⁵¹ KUSCHE 1991A, pp. 15-17.

It seems meaningful that, although other portraits could have been easily replaced by copies, for the effigies of the Emperor and the King it was important that they were by the hand of Titian, the prince of painters.⁷⁵² On this occasion, Coello also copied paintings by Mor, Sofonisba Anguissola and others, in the attempt to create a certain homogeneity in the artworks presented in the gallery: full-length, busts and close-ups all became three-quarters effigies.

The fire that destroyed the gallery turned the copies of Coello to ashes, but there are at least two examples that can give us some ideas of his approach to the reproduction of Titian's portraiture. The first, is the effigy of *Fernando I*, that Coello had copied from the original in the collection of Mary of Hungary for the gallery of Joanna of Austria, Princess of Portugal (1535-1573).⁷⁵³ The second and more interesting is a copy (*Figure 117*) after the *Charles V at Mühlberg* (*Figure 8*) now in Toledo, that Maria Kusche had identified as the one that Coello had made for Juan of Austria (1547-1578).⁷⁵⁴

Here, we can compare the paintings and see which were the most important changes that Coello decided to make in the copy -or, we should say, the adaptation- of Titian's masterpiece. The painting is smaller than the original, 25 centimetres shorter and 34 centimetres narrower. The artist decided to focus the attention on the figure of the Emperor, which, consequently, appears expanded. The atmosphere and the integration of the figure in the pictorial space are diminished to give more relevance to the physiognomy of Charles V. His head is less sunken into his shoulders, slightly bigger, and the entire figure is more uniformly illuminated. While the entire figure underwent a process of translation to a Flemish style, the rest of the composition had been simplified. The burning sky, the vibrant leaves on the trees, the soft fading of the horizon, they all lose details and consistence, so much that the figure of the Emperor seems to float in front of a fake background. However, we can see that Coello gave a

⁷⁵² This specific instance is discussed by KUSCHE (2003, p. 166) but is related to the complex issue of the value of copies, replicas, and variations in the XVIth-century.

⁷⁵³ The painting, dated after 1560, is now located in the monastery of Las Descalzas Reales, in Madrid. See KUSCHE 2003, p. 344.

⁷⁵⁴ Alonso Sánchez Coello; *Charles V at Mühlberg*; 1575; 307x245 cm; oil on canvas; Fundación Medinaceli; Toledo. See KUSCHE 2003, pp. 345, 359-361.

lot of attention to Titian's chromatic values, and that he put to practice the lesson of Venetian *colore* but without the implementation of tonal painting.

The proliferation of copies in an environment of which social interactions were becoming even more shaped by the concept of *imitation*, it is not surprising. Royalty, nobility, and courtiers were satisfied of repetitive patterns, because they were the expression of the rigid rituals of the court. More than innovations, the painters were required to make clear the identity of the sitters, and their belonging to the social system.⁷⁵⁵

According to these necessities, the main aspects of Coello's adaptations of Titian's portraiture can be summarised as a major focus on the face of the sitter, the simplification of every element that does not characterize his appearance and his *status*, and a crisp, polished pictorial technique. This attitude towards the art of the Venetian master mirrors the approach of Anthonis Mor, although lacking the extreme mirror-like quality of his portraits.

We can draw similar considerations if we analyse the work of Juan Pantoja de la Cruz. His copies after Titian's *Charles V in an armour with a baton* are the most important documents recording its original appearance.⁷⁵⁶ Two full-length copy of the portrait are known, one at the Prado and one at El Escorial, that were painted after the fire had destroyed the gallery of El Pardo in 1604.⁷⁵⁷ Pantoja signed this portrait specifying his role as "*traductor*" of the painting, namely the *translator* of the original in a copy, and in doing so he acknowledged the authority of the original painting, tragically lost.

Visually speaking, the canvas by Pantoja has more in common with examples of Mor and Coello than with Titian's. The appearance is clear and chiselled, the

⁷⁵⁵ The fundamental study on the social organization of the court and its internal power dynamics is ELIAS 1983.

⁷⁵⁶ The Escorial preserves a three-quarter copy of Titian's portrait of the Emperor, painted in 1599 for the so-called Iglesia Vieja del Escorial. In this case, Pantoja changed the format of the painting, translating the rectangular original in a squared composition. Charles V I is standing behind a green-marbled balustrade, in a sort of room with a big window opening on a hilly landscape. This can be considered, together with the one by Rubens, the most faithful copy of Titian's model. See KUSCHE 2007, pp. 86-88.

⁷⁵⁷ See KUSCHE 2007, pp. 134-136; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 145; FALOMIR 2021, p. 67. The copy at El Escorial is dated 1608, and the image of the Emperor looks even more polished and crisp than the one painted in 1605. See also KUSCHE 2007, p. 135.

proportion of the body recalls the one of Anthonis Mor's *Philip II in an armour on Saint Quentin's day*, from 1560, instead of the full-length versions by the Venetian. Again, the face seems to be the focus of the attention, and it has to be slightly bigger and almost fully in the light.

The type of portrait, even though perfected and brought to the attention of the Habsburg dynasty and, consequently, to a European success, by Titian, goes through a process of *adaptation* in which Anthonis Mor had a primary role. An adaptation that fundamentally altered not only the construction of the viewpoint, but especially the pictorial style of the original portraits. Likewise, the Flemish copies and adaptations after religious and mythological paintings that we have analysed so far, namely the *Noli me tangere* and the works of Coxcie, underwent a similar process.

At this point, what is possible to say about the reception of the style of Titian in the portraits?

3.3.3 The hand of the painter and the patron's identity

If we consider the known portraits for the Habsburgs, Titian's style was not polished. It was also not "sketchy" or "hasty", as we have analysed in the first chapter in relation to *Philip II in an armour* (Figure 14). This judgement might seem controversial, because most of those portraits were destroyed in the fire of El Pardo, occurred in 1604, and their appearance is not possible to unmistakably reconstruct. Nonetheless, we can use as benchmark the effigies that survived until now, such as the Charles V and the Philip II's, the portraits for the Holy Emperor Ferdinand I, for patrons connected to the Habsburgs, such as the Gonzagas. We should also consider the general evolution of Titian's style in the 1540s and the 1550s to get a more precise idea of the appearance of the lost canvases. Anyway, even in his early works, it could not have been comparable to the extreme precision, the attention to details and the brilliance typical of Flemish portraiture. While both Titian and Mor show Philip as a handsome young man, natural in the posture but also confident, the most striking difference between them is the presence of the artist's hand. Whereas Titian creates a pictorial surface, "artistically crafted",⁷⁵⁸ which makes the contribution of the artist to

⁷⁵⁸ The idea, briefly introduced in WOODALL 2007, will be expanded in this chapter.

the representation of the subject explicit, Mor's mirror-like work emphasizes the resemblance between father and son.⁷⁵⁹ As we have said before, the image of Philip was built in relationship to the authority of the Emperor, in an attempt to give more credit to Charles V claims and focus on their legitimacy. And while on the one hand Titian's authorship was reinforcing these allegations, for Mor the most suitable means to achieve the same purpose, appears to be the refuse of using any "artistic filter" in order to represent Philip's likeness as precise as possible.

Or, we should specify, he avoided any "visible" filter. To prevent any misunderstanding, speaking of a "realistic representation" does not imply a slavish imitation of nature, sin of which the Northern tradition had been repeatedly accused.

Campbell, in his lucid analysis of the evolution of portraiture and the connections between Italy and "the North",⁷⁶⁰ states that Mor's portraits are less "factual" than Titian's, because the Flemish artist used to «distort natural appearance for an artistic effect».⁷⁶¹ In this case, Campbell refers to the rigid geometrical pattern in which the image of the sitter was embedded, analysing the examples of the portrait of Granvelle, or the aforementioned *Philip II in an armour on Saint Quentin's day* (Figure 114). The point is not a contraposition between pure realism and artistic intervention, but the decision to explicitly show the object as a painted surface and, consequently, strictly dependent on the hand and the authorship of the artist.

When Philip II, after years in which he had not relied on Titian for portraits, asked for an allegorical effigy as an ex-voto for the victory of Lepanto, he was invoking the authority of the artist and his handcraft. His "recognizability", so to speak. The same kind of authority sought by other personalities from the European scene that were connected to the Habsburgs. In fact, in certain environments the authorship of Titian seems to have been related more to a political statement than to a matter of collectors' taste. The aforementioned case of Ayamonte, who clearly stated his dissatisfaction with Titian's late style but insisted on buying his works, is an example of a purchase likely made to imitate the King's preferences and to show his political loyalty.

⁷⁵⁹ Again, the image of Philip was built in relationship to the authority of the Emperor, in an attempt to give more credit to Charles V claims and focus on their legitimacy.

⁷⁶⁰ See CAMPBELL L. 1990, pp. 227-274.

⁷⁶¹ CAMPBELL L. 1990, p. 239.

There are different reasons why it was Mor's translation of the model - and all of the different variations on the main theme - to be adopted on a wide, European scale, and the matter of style is one of them.

The tradition of the "Northern" portraiture was dominant in Europe since the XVth century. Painters like Jan van Eyck (c. 1390-1441), Hans Memling (1436-1494), or Hans Holbein (1497/8-1543), had a great influence on the development of the type of the three-quarter half-bust portrait. In the XVIth century, the interest towards the outcomes of Italian art slowly shifted the attention on the peninsular experiments on the theme of portraits. Nonetheless, the most important courts of Europe maintained at least part of their costumes related to rituals and self-representation, of which Northern and Netherlandish portraits were a fundamental part.⁷⁶²

In the XVth and XVIth centuries, it was common to associate portraits with the Netherlands, where many of the court painters - the first specialised category of artists - came from or had been trained. These artists were working for the Spanish monarchs, especially since the Habsburg King Philip the Fair (1478-1506); for the court of France where Joos van Cleve and the Clouet family took the lead in the matter of state portraiture with Francis I (1494-1547) and Henry II (1519-1559); for the English royalty, the Flemish William Scrots (active 1537-1553) and Lucas de Heere (1534-1584), and the German Hans Holbein.

When Charles V made Titian his personal Apelles, he had already been portrayed by a number of German and Netherlandish painters, who continued working with many members of the family and the courts.⁷⁶³ It does not surprise that the habit and the visual tradition won over the novelties of Titian's work. As extensively elaborated in *Le botteghe di Tiziano*, there was a process of selection on the model, that passed through adopting some strategies and discarding others in the perspective of the traditions and necessities of the patrons and the expectations of the public.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶² See NUTTALL 2004, pp. 209-210; FALOMIR in MADRID 2004-2005, pp. 74-75; FALOMIR 2008, pp. 69-70.

⁷⁶³ Examples of portraits by the Flemish Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen, Bernard van Orley, or the German Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), Christoph Amberger (c. 1505-1561) and the aforementioned Jakob Seisenegger, not to mention an entire plethora of anonymous Northern artists, can be found in many art collections.

⁷⁶⁴ See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, *passim*, esp. pp. 340, 358.

For instance, instead of reading the aforementioned letter sent by Mary of Hungary to his ambassador in England just as a sign of her connoisseurship of the Venetian art,⁷⁶⁵ we might also consider it as a document of visual habits of a certain cultural *milieu*. The precise indication to watch the portrait from afar suggests that it was an uncommon practice related to portraits. And this appears obvious when we consider the most disseminated tradition of portraiture was, as anticipated, the Northern one, therefore precise and suitable to a closer inspection.⁷⁶⁶ While in Italy, in the first decades of the XVIth century, the meticulous representation of nature in painting started to lose value at the eyes of the public, in the 1550s the quantity of details was still a mark of quality in the Northern countries, including Spain. These were all characteristics totally foreign to Titian's portraiture of the time.

It is important to specify of which moment of the production of the master we are discussing. Changes of style, chromatism, technique, composition and themes are common in the lifetime of an artist, but Titian can be considered an emblematic case. Not only because of the peculiar evolution of his style, but because of the early development of a literary critique and discussion around it. While in his youth he was considered to have painted works that could have appeared perfect from close by and from the distance, his later paintings could be appreciated just from a proper distance.⁷⁶⁷

Another element to keep in mind in this context is the growing popularity of galleries of portraits in the court environment, the most relevant antecedents of which were developed in the environment of the Habsburg's women.⁷⁶⁸ Philip II followed the footsteps of his family when he invested in his own portrait gallery at El Pardo.

Following the reconstruction of Kusche and Woodall, the portraits were adapted in order to display a certain degree of uniformity. Some of them were cut to conform

⁷⁶⁵ As richly developed by BODARDT 2011, pp. 207-210.

⁷⁶⁶ For a general discussion about the importance of the distance in the reception of the painting, see ARASSE 2008, *passim*; and for this specific topic, see BODART 2011, pp. 199-210.

⁷⁶⁷ VASARI 1568, II, p. 815.

⁷⁶⁸ We have already mentioned the portrait gallery of Margaret of Austria in Mechelen (EICHBERGER 1995, pp. 225-248), followed by the one of Mary of Hungary in Coudenberg (S'HERTEGENBOSCH 1993, pp. 281-284) and Catherine of Austria in Portugal (INNSBRUCK, SCHLOSS, AMBRAS 2018).

to the three-quarter length, some were purposely painted or repainted to adapt the image to the selected type. The paintings were grouped not only following an ideal division of the Habsburg dominions (Austria, Germany, and northern Italy on one side, Portugal, England, Spain, and the Netherlands on the other), but also according to the authorship.⁷⁶⁹ In fact, most of Titian's works were displayed on the southern wall and Mor's on the northern.⁷⁷⁰ Beside the ideological motives that we have already mentioned, it is difficult to exclude that the organization also followed some rules of visual harmony and, considering the surviving examples of the art of the painters involved in the project, Titian's portraits would have been not completely fitting with the rest. Again, we are not talking about the famous "borrones" yet, but a less crystalline and mirror-like representation of reality and human bodies.

In the perspective of a display of the portraits in a gallery, in which a homogeneous type, format, size and style were fundamental for the general *coup d'œil*, a standardization in the direction of the most common and functional pictorial technique for portraiture seems perfectly logic. Even though Titian's type was the most popular, his Venetian *colorito* and painterly *sprezzatura* were still an exception.

3.4 A model of *status*: Mor and the return to Brussels

Court artists were the ones mostly involved in portraiture for the *élite*; they were part of the household and were on the royal payroll, even though the payments were not always regular. Their name was directly connected to the ruler, and they played a central role in emanating the *magnificentia* of the central power. This position allowed them to reach a degree of intimacy with the patron, a one-to-one relationship that was seen as a desirable achievement.

⁷⁶⁹ The design of the gallery of portraits following a specific dynastic and iconographic programme, asserting the Habsburg's territorial and cultural authority, is extensively discussed in WOODALL 1995, pp. 53-103.

⁷⁷⁰ I thank Jonckheere for noticing that Titian's works on the southern wall would have probably not received direct sunlight, while Mor's paintings on the northern wall were fully lit by the sunlight. This remains an assumption, but it would be an interesting point to explore. Would Philip II have decided the location of the paintings accordingly to their pictorial style?

It is not coincidental that Titian was almost unanimously considered the most skilled portraitist: he had had a personal relationship with Charles V and Philip II. He had portrayed mostly honourable men - which was an important topic the debate around portraiture.⁷⁷¹ He was also an acclaimed artist of history paintings and, an aspect that is always important to remember, he received the support and the promotion of different literates and intellectuals such as Pietro Aretino and Lodovico Dolce.⁷⁷²

In his treatise, that was specifically devoted to portraiture, Francisco De Holanda (1517-1585) mentions Titian as the most eminent portraitist.⁷⁷³ The manuscript, entitled *Do tirar polo natural*, was completed by the Portuguese artist and intellectual in 1549. This text became part of the extended work entitled *Da pintura antiga*, in which De Holanda collected different works related to the nature of art, Classicism and the ideas he developed in Rome, in the circle of Vittoria Colonna.⁷⁷⁴

De Holanda's work on portraiture was the first autonomous western treatise on this topic.⁷⁷⁵ *Do tirar polo natural* was published just after the author's death, a fact limiting its circulation in the years that we are discussing. However, it was likely expressing ideas and concepts that were developing in his cultural *milieu*. Humanist of Netherlandish origin, De Holanda shaped his thought mostly in two environments: the Rome of Michelangelo and Classicism - milestone for Flemish artists who were travelling to Italy -, and the court of the King of Portugal, connected to the Habsburgs and their artistic preferences.⁷⁷⁶

Moving back to our topic, while Titian is broadly praised by de Holanda, Mor does not receive the same judgement. Even though Woodall suggests that Mor could have

⁷⁷¹ This discussion was summarised by Francisco de Holanda in his treatise on portraiture when he writes: «An excellent painter [...] should only paint very few persons and those most carefully chosen». See DESWARTE-ROSA in LISBON 2018, p. 20.

⁷⁷² See JACOBS 2000, pp. 51-67.

⁷⁷³ DE HOLANDA (1549) 1921, p. 282.

⁷⁷⁴ For De Holanda's stay in Rome, his sources, and his contacts with the local intellectual *élite*, see DESWARTE-ROSA 1992, pp. 55-122.

⁷⁷⁵ In general, see DESWARTE-ROSA in LISBON 2018, pp. 18-35.

⁷⁷⁶ In this respect it is important to include the treatise in the discussion or, as stated by Woodall, we need to start «a conversation between a text on portraiture and contemporary portraits, both produced by elite ultramontane artists with humanist interests in Habsburg-dominated courts», in WOODALL 2007, p. 236.

met him when he visited Portugal in 1551-52⁷⁷⁷ - at the time, the Portuguese artist was working for the Aviz family, that ruled over Portugal -⁷⁷⁸, the Flemish painter was never mentioned in his text.

As Woodall and Bodart made clear in their studies, Mor's struggle towards a better social and artistic status followed the footsteps - and was moulded on - Titian's success.⁷⁷⁹ Apelles, Knight of the Golden Spur, intimate with Emperors, Kings and Popes, these attainments were partially due to portraiture, and set an illustrious precedent for ambitious court artists.

We started this chapter by showing how the self-representation of Anthonis Mor was also related to the involvement of a literate, Dominicus Lampsonius, who used the same *topoi* and language that Italian writers used to describe Titian's portraiture.⁷⁸⁰

In contrast to Coxcie, also court painter and also artist of the Habsburg household, Anthonis Mor dealt with Titian's authority in the field of portraiture emulating his strategy and using his type of representation of the ruler class for the sake of his social climb. It was observed that in the following generations Peter Paul Rubens and Antoon van Dyck might have also followed the example of Titian in relation to achieving social prestige.⁷⁸¹ They did so through the connection with the court and especially by using the portraiture to introduce themselves into the social environment and affirm their role. Therefore, their act of emulation was not limited to the artistic values of the Venetian master, but it also included a series of strategies related to marketing and *status*. Calling yourself, or being called, the "new Titian" allowed to a form of prestige that was widely acknowledged in the XVIIth century.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁷ The scholar underlines that there is no evidence that the two artists had met before this occasion. However, their sojourns in Rome between the late 1530s and the early 1540s show similar "ultramontane perspectives". WOODALL 2007, p. 235.

⁷⁷⁸ At the time, De Holanda was receiving commissions from the Cardinal-Archbishop of Évora, and from King John III (1521-1557).

⁷⁷⁹ See WOODALL 1990, pp. 69-89; BODART 2013, pp. 131-162.

⁷⁸⁰ For instance, the verisimilitude of painting, the fact that the viewer was deceived by the portrait, brought to think he is looking at the person and not at a canvas. See BODART 2013, pp. 135-137.

⁷⁸¹ See on this topic, with a focus on Rubens as diplomatic, see FREEDBERG 1998, pp. 29-60.

⁷⁸² Rubens was called "el nuevo Ticiano" by the poet Lope de Vega in order to state the authority of the Netherlandish painter through the connection with Titian. See BAUMSTARK 2009, pp. 83-105.

Unfortunately, Mor could not pursue his ambitions. After his return to the Netherlands, unlike Titian did with Charles V, he did not manage to continue his role of personal portraitist of Philip II from the distance. Nonetheless, the artist kept a special relation with the following Regents of the Low Countries, first of all Margaret of Parma.⁷⁸³

Already at the end of the 1550s the idea that Margaret could take on the regency was in the air, and to those years belong the full-size portraits of her son Alessandro Farnese (1545-1592) and of Margaret herself, which established Mor's connection to his future patron (*Figure 118, 119, 120*).⁷⁸⁴ In fact, he would produce the most representative portrait of the Regent around 1562, when he was in touch with the court of Brussels and when Margaret of Parma probably needed a new political image.⁷⁸⁵ This three-quarter effigy of Margaret can easily evoke *Philip II in black and white* for the position, the point of view and the detailed representation of the clothing (*Figure 15*), but Margaret appears less rigid. The colour palette is warmer, the attention towards the representation of the flesh is less pedantic and more natural. This is one of the cases in which it is really possible to highlight the assimilation of some Venetian pictorial values, however, without compromising on the hidden brushstroke and the Flemish clarity.

It is difficult to explain why Mor decided to experiment specifically with this painting, what appears clear is that Margaret of Parma, to assert her power as Regent and to claim a continuity with Charles V and the Spanish Habsburgs, appealed to the same visual schemes, and the same artist. Apart from Titian, Mor was the painter who, at the court of Brussels, could boast of being the artist closest to Philip II.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸³ For an analysis of Mor's portraiture for the regent of the Netherlands, especially the series of canvases portraying her three-quarter, see WOODALL 2007, pp. 388-409.

⁷⁸⁴ Anthonis Mor; *Alessandro Farnese*; 1557; 155x95 cm; oil on canvas; Galleria Nazionale; Parma. Anthonis Mor; *Margaret of Parma in a pink dress*; c. 1557; 214x148 cm; oil on canvas; present location unknown; and Anthonis Mor; *Margaret of Parma in black and cream*; c. 1559; 98x72 cm; oil on canvas; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Philadelphia. See WOODALL 2007, pp. 390-391.

⁷⁸⁵ Anthonis Mor; *Margaret of Parma in black and red*; c. 1562; 106x76 cm; oil on canvas; Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz; Berlin.

⁷⁸⁶ There is some information about a portrait of Margaret of Austria and one of Alessandro Farnese, both lost, but it is not sure whether they were made by Titian, or in which circumstances. See WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 197, 201-202.

It is worth to remember that, while Mor was working for Margaret of Parma as court portraitist, also Titian was trying not to loosen his grip on the Habsburgs, or the Netherlands. In fact, after having it engraved by the talented artist Cornelis Cort in 1566, he did send prints after the *Holy Trinity* to Philip II, Margaret of Parma, Dominicus Lampsonius and the cardinal Alessandro Farnese.⁷⁸⁷ In the letter that the old master sent to Margaret on 15 June 1567, we can read:

«La quale io supplico riverentemente Vostra Altezza a degnarsi di accettar così benignamente, come merita d'essere accettata cosa la quale contenga l'effigie di così glorioso imperatore et tanto difensor della Santa Chiesa di Dio. Il che son sicurissimo che Vostra Altezza farà, essendo ella non meno benigna in accettar qual si sia minimo dono da servo devotissimo presentato, *si come era il santissimo Imperator suo padre*, che valorosa nel governo [...]».⁷⁸⁸

It is not coincidental that Titian first mentioned Charles V as his patron for the *Holy Trinity*, present in the print with his own portrait, and then made a parallel between Margaret of Parma and the Emperor, suggesting her to continue with the traditions of the father - for instance, keeping him on her payroll.

We might think that Margaret of Parma would have benefited of being associated to Titian's *authority*, the one emanated by his association with the Emperor. However, it seems that the Regent did not have a relationship of patronage with the Venetian. Mor, on the other hand, was available, fast (if compared to Titian), physically present for portraying her. And portraiture was an immediate and powerful means of communication in a time of crisis. The Regent seemed to have shaped her artistic commissions mostly on their political impact over her reign. For instance, she ordered a series of prints illustrating the *Pompa funebris* organized in Brussels for the death of Charles V in 1558, and she chose *Aux Quatre Vents* for this monumental operation. The publishing house in Antwerp, guided by Hieronimus Cock, was the most important of the Low Countries at the time. Margaret also commissioned a new stained-glass window for the church of Saint John in Gouda, probably because the

⁷⁸⁷ See OLIVATO 1979, pp. 50-52; FABBRO 1977, p. 245; LONDON 2001, p. 92; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 399.

⁷⁸⁸ The italic is mine. PUPPI 2012, p. 296.

donation of stained-glass windows was a tradition of the Habsburg-Burgundian rulers, and it served different purposes: commemoration, devotion, and proclamation of power. The decoration, in fact, included the portrait of the donor in relation to his or her dynasty, and also inscriptions establishing territorial claims.⁷⁸⁹

3.5 Portraiture in the Spanish Netherlands in the second half of the XVIth century

3.5.1 Titian, Anthonis Mor and Willem Key: setting models for the élite

After Margaret of Parma had resigned her office and the Duke of Alva was sent by Philip II to substitute her in the government of the Netherlands, in 1567, Mor portrayed the new Regent.

The artist had already painted the Iron Duke in 1549 (*Figure 121*),⁷⁹⁰ right after Titian's effigy of the sitter. Unluckily, the Venetian painting is now lost, and we only know it from the words of Pietro Aretino, who described it as: «L'immagine tremenda della guerra».⁷⁹¹ It is impossible to compare the version of Mor with the one by Titian, but they likely had some resemblances. This case is similar to the one discussed before of the three-quarter effigies of *Philip II* and *Philip II in black and white*, and also to another circumstance in which both artists painted a fundamental personality on the political scene, Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle.⁷⁹²

These two portraits are close in time and there is good reason to believe that Mor (*Figure 122*) looked very carefully at Titian's version (*Figure 10*). In this case, Granvelle is also wearing the same clothes, holding the same gloves, showing the same rings on the left hand. However, it is not easy to understand that these paintings represent the same person. Apart from the difference in the style - clearly visible in the material rendering of the satin vest, or in this sort of glow irradiated by the figure itself in Titian's version

⁷⁸⁹ For Margaret of Parma's artistic commissions, see MEIJER 1988C, pp. 117-152; for the donation of the stained-glass windows, see ECK X. 2012, pp. 66-84.

⁷⁹⁰ Anthonis Mor; *Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba*; 1549; 108x84 cm; oil on panel; The Hispanic Society of America; New York.

⁷⁹¹ ARETINO 1930, II, p. 239.

⁷⁹² Anthonis Mor; *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle*; 1549; 124x99 cm; oil on panel; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna. See CURIE 1996, pp. 162-163; WOODALL 2007, pp. 157-161, 173-180.

-, we can recognize the roots of the already discussed change of angle and perspective that enhances the face of the sitter.

But Granvelle, like the Duke of Alva and members of the political *élite*, were also depicted by other artists active in the Netherlands in the second half of the XVIth century, artists who sometimes had specialized in portraiture.

We have mentioned some examples of the so-called Flemish Primitives to introduce the aspects of portraiture in the Netherlands. Jan van Eyck (1390-1441), Dieric Bouts (c. 1415-1475), Hans Memling (1430-1494), Quentin Massys (1466-1530), Michael Sittow (1469-1525), Joos van Cleve (1485-1540) and many others produced a large number of effigies.⁷⁹³

Around the mid-XVIth century, at the Habsburg court, working for Margaret of Austria, Mary of Hungary, Charles V, and Philip II we find especially the artists Bernard van Orley, Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen and, of course, Titian and Mor. After 1559, when Philip II left the Low Countries and moved all of the remains of Titian's art, Mor followed him to Spain. It was the moment for other artists to fill the gap.

Since portraiture was not uniquely associated with the court, and the state portrait was not the only type, we have to make a distinction: apart from few examples, we will mostly consider artists that worked with the Netherlandish *élite*, portraits that are relatable to the models of the Venetian master, and we will identify the features of the bourgeoisie portraiture.

First of all, we should mention Willem Key (1516-1568).⁷⁹⁴ Lampsonius, a great admirer of Mor, wrote that, in the art of portraiture, Willem Key was second only to the artist from Utrecht.⁷⁹⁵ Moreover, in Lampsonius' *Pictorum Aliquot Celebrium Germaniae Inferioris Effigies*, the print portrait of Key echoed the *Self-portrait* of Anthonis Mor, creating a parallel between the two.⁷⁹⁶ Trained in Antwerp under Pieter Coecke van Aelst, who would eventually be appointed court painter of Charles V, and in Liège

⁷⁹³ Recently summarized by BORCHERT in BRUSSELS 2015, pp. 24-31.

⁷⁹⁴ For Key's biography and social milieu, see JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 15-21.

⁷⁹⁵ Lampsonius writes: «De Gvillielmo caio Bredano Pictore. Quas hominum facies, ut eos te cernere credas/expreBit caij pingere docta manus,/(si tamen excipias unum, me iudice, Morum)/culpari Belgae nullius arte timent» in JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 230

⁷⁹⁶ As pointed out in WOODALL 2007, pp. 146-148.

under the Romanist artist and intellectual Lambert Lombard (1505-1566), Willem Key moved among the *élite* of Antwerp, and was sought after for his exquisite portraits.

He did, in fact, portray *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle in his cardinal vest*,⁷⁹⁷ as documented by van Mander in his *Schilder-Boeck*, probably around 1561 (Figure 123).⁷⁹⁸ Key seems to bear in mind the examples by Titian and Mor, maintaining the details of the book and the clock on the table, but he updated the image of the cardinal looking for models that were more suitable to his *status*. While Raphael had set a standard with his portraits of cardinal Bibbiena, now at Palazzo Pitti, the so-called *The Cardinal*, preserved in the Prado Museum, or even the outstanding *Portrait of pope Leo X*, at the Uffizi (Figure 124),⁷⁹⁹ Titian also had his share of cardinals and popes, from Pietro Bembo to Alessandro Farnese, not to mention the intense *Portrait of pope Paul III* (Figure 125).⁸⁰⁰ It is difficult to trace a direct dependence of Key's work from these models, but it is obvious that they must have played a role in its genesis, especially if we consider Granvelle's taste for centre-Italian art, and his commissions from the Venetian.

The base of the column, behind Granvelle's shoulders, could be a reference to Charles V, whom he had served well, and to Titian's portrait of *Charles V seated*. The cardinal had already used the device in his portraits engraved by Lambert Suavius in the 1550s, therefore the visual connection to the Habsburgs seems very likely even though, as noticed by Jonckheere, Key had already included the element of the column in two 1543 pendant portraits.⁸⁰¹ In this case, the base of the column derived from the

⁷⁹⁷ Willem Key; *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle in his cardinal vest*; 1561; 114x88 cm; oil on panel; Klassik Stiftung Weimar aus Schloß Sondershausen; Weimar. See WOODALL 2007, pp. 142, 150; JONCKEERE 2011, pp. 104-106; MUCCIARELLI-RÉGNIER in BESANÇON 2017-2018, pp. 64-65.

⁷⁹⁸ Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle was created cardinal in 1561 by pope Pius V, therefore the portrait must be dated that year or shortly after, because the growing hostility towards his politics forced him to move first to Franche-Comté and then to Italy after 1564. MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 182.

⁷⁹⁹ Raphael; *Pope Leo X with his cousins*; 1518-1519; 154x119 cm; oil on panel; Gallerie degli Uffizi; Florence.

⁸⁰⁰ Titian; *Pope Paul III*; 1543; 113,7x88,8 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte; Naples. WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 122-124; HUMFREY 2007, p. 189; GENTILI 2014, pp. 214-220.

⁸⁰¹ These are the *Portrait of a man aged 59*, now at KMSKA in Antwerp, and the *Portrait of a lady aged 36*, now in the Staatliche Museen of Berlin. A peculiarity is that, if they are hung next to each other, the two half of the column base form a unity, even though they differ for their decoration. These appears

aforementioned Serlio's treatise, translated into Dutch by Pieter Coecke van Aelst, and probably symbolised the virtue of *fortitudo*, suitable for a matrimonial portrait.

It is meaningful in this context to point out that the portrait of Granvelle had been previously attributed to Anthonis Mor.⁸⁰² The two most popular portraitists of the Habsburg Netherlands, especially when working for the political *élite*, the artists more attentive to the costumes and the rigid rules of the court, could appear, somehow, interchangeable. We cannot ignore that these similarities were also due to the fact that both painters were probably relying on previous effigies of the cardinal painted by Titian.

To confirm Key's connection to the ruling class, it is documented that he did also portray Margaret of Parma, albeit this portrait has never been identified, and the Duke of Alva.⁸⁰³ On an interesting note, also the half-length effigy of Fernando Álvarez de Toledo (*Figure 126*) preserved in the collection of the Dukes of Alva in Palazzo de Liria, had been attributed, alternatively, to Titian, Mor and Key.⁸⁰⁴ This is not coincidental, considering that all of these artists had worked for Alva, and that they all referred to the same visual tradition, in a game of cross-references. Wethey, followed by most of the scholars, doubted that Titian could have been the author of this Flemish and sharp painting, and he gave it to the circle of Key because of the similarities shared with the version of the Alva collection in Palacio de las Dueñas.⁸⁰⁵

While the most important reference seems to be the concept of the portrait of *Charles V with a baton*, or the 1549 portrait made by Mor, this version of the Duke of Alva's effigy differs in the fundamental idea of the composition. First of all, the three-quarter position of the bust and the face is less accentuated, so that he appears more frontal, in a way that reminds closely Titian's 1548 portrait of Granvelle. However, Key used to paint his subject in a wider spectrum of angles, even though there are not many other comparisons to portraits for members of this political class. This slight frontality

to be the first example of portraits with a column in the Netherlands, even prior to *Charles V seated*, dated 1548. See JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 57-61, 106.

⁸⁰² See CURIE 1996, p. 164; WOODALL 2007, p. 148; JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 104.

⁸⁰³ See JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 213.

⁸⁰⁴ Willem Key; *Portrait of don Fernando Álvarez de Toledo*; 1568; 99x81 cm; oil on canvas; Palacio de Liria, Dukes of Alva Collection; Madrid. JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 107-110.

⁸⁰⁵ See WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 151-152.

was also typical of some paintings made by Mor, such as the portrait of Margaret of Parma dated around 1562, an aspect that could have played a role in the misguided attribution of the painting. A second element that makes this painting difficult to associate to Titian and Mor's, is the red balustrade in front of the subject.

There are at least two more copies of this portrait attributed to Willem Key with the intervention of Adriaen Thomasz Key, both close-ups from the same model, one half-bust and one including just head and shoulders of the Duke.⁸⁰⁶ These paintings were probably finished by Key's pupil, Adriaen Thomasz, because of the sudden death of the artist in 1568.⁸⁰⁷ It is common to identify different formats of the same portrait, copies after a main model usually made in the same workshop.

Apart from his connections to the models by Titian and Mor - or Titian through Mor - Willem Key had a fundamental role in the development of a portrait model in the Netherlands, a model that would remain popular to the time of Rubens and van Dyck. However, more than to the state portrait, he contributed to the standardization of bourgeois portraiture. Burgers depicted while standing or sitting in front of a dark, empty background, the eyes in the eyes of the viewer, usually half or three-quarter figures showing a certain degree of nonchalance. In the painting, everything aims to an elegant sobriety: the dark clothing, the polished representation of the physiognomy, the absence of every other element that can distract from the figure of the sitter. These iconographical and stylistic choices have been related by Jonckheere to the debate on art that characterized the XVIth century.⁸⁰⁸

If we compare his *Portrait of a man aged 43* (Figure 127),⁸⁰⁹ dated 1556, to the portrait of *Joris van de Heede* from around the same year (Figure 128), painted by Pieter Pourbus

⁸⁰⁶ See JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 107-110.

⁸⁰⁷ Van Mander reports a pretty curious anecdote about the death of the painter, who, while he was working on his portrait, overheard the plotting of the Duke of Alva and the Council of Blood for the assassination of two important statesmen: Lamoraal van Gavere, Count of Egmont, and Filips van Montmorency, Count of Horne. When they were executed in Brussels in 1568, the shock killed the painter the same day. See MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 189.

⁸⁰⁸ For a discussion on sobriety in portraiture in relation to the debate on image in the context of Iconoclasm, see JONCKHEERE 2011B pp. 28-30.

⁸⁰⁹ Willem Key; *Portrait of a man aged 43*; 1556; 81x62 cm; oil on panel; Museo di Castelvecchio; Verona. See JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 74.

(1523-1584),⁸¹⁰ it is easy to notice how different they appear. Even though they are both on panel, a support that enhances the translucent and glazed effect of the painting, Key reaches a degree of spontaneity which appears more analogous to Titian than to Pourbus. The so-called *Portrait of a young Englishman* (Figure 129) painted by the Venetian in the 1540s, expresses a similar nonchalance, a more relaxed pose, with his hand on the hip, the head rotated opposite to the bust, the slightly asymmetrical golden chain on the chest.⁸¹¹ *Joris van de Heede*, on the other side, is rigid in his pose. The hand holding the gloves appears unnatural, and the background, on the tones of olive-green, flattens the entire composition. Even though, stylistically speaking, the Flemish artists have more in common - see the extreme precision in the depiction of the face and the facial hair - we can suggest that, for the bourgeoisie portraiture, Key gave a glazed and photographic effect to the natural appearance that had been typical of some Italian portraiture. In a way, he was closer to the developments of the Lombard exquisite portraitist Giovan Battista Moroni (1520/24-1578), whose adherence to extreme naturalism was related to Mor's influence and to some extent also to the debate on image.⁸¹²

In general, considering Willem Key's *oeuvre*, it is possible to compare his achievements in the art of portraiture with Coxcie's religious paintings. As perfectly summarized by Jonckheere in his monographic study:

«Key was the first to succeed in reconciling the objective physiognomic rigidity of Netherlandish portraiture with the monumentality of Italian portraits from chiefly Rome and Venice [...] He was one of the very few artists before Anthonis Mor to do this successfully without devaluing such typical Netherlandish qualities as sobriety and a meticulous objective naturalism».⁸¹³

⁸¹⁰ Pieter Pourbus; *Joris van de Heede*, c. 1555; 64x46,5 cm; oil on panel; Museum Boymans-van-Beuningen; Rotterdam. See BRUGES 1984, pp. 217-218.

⁸¹¹ Titian; *Portrait of a young Englishman*; 1540-45; 111x93 cm; oil on canvas; Palazzo Pitti; Florence. WETHEY 1969-75, II, pp. 148-149; HUMFREY 2007, p. 184.

⁸¹² It is not coincidental that Key's portrait in Castelvecchio had been attributed both to Moroni and to Anthonis Mor by different scholars. See JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 74.

⁸¹³ JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 25-26.

3.5.2 Portraits of burghers and portraits of friends: some experiments in style

Native of Gouda, Pieter Pourbus (1523-1584), his son Frans Pourbus the Elder and his grandson Frans Pourbus the Younger (1569-1622), imposed themselves as masters in the genre of portraiture.

Frans Pourbus the Elder (1545-1581), son of Pieter Pourbus, followed a path that brought him to have common less in common with his father's portraiture - for instance the *Joris van de Heede* (Figure 128) that we have mentioned before - and more with Willem and Adriaen Thomasz Key and the late Anthonis Mor.

After training with his father in Bruges, he moved to the centre of Flemish art, Antwerp, and more precisely to the workshop of Frans Floris, in 1565.⁸¹⁴ He was considered by Van Mander the best pupil of Floris, and they collaborated in the painting of many altarpieces. In specializing on burghers' portraits, he started by imitating the art of his father, but he then integrated the latest achievements of Willem Key, who also portrayed members of the minor nobility and rich merchants.

It is interesting to notice that for this reason Key's portraits have been often attributed to Frans Pourbus. This seems to be a general issue about bourgeoisie portraiture in the Netherlands, especially in the years from the 1560s to the 1580s. Many portraits have been assigned on different moments to Willem Key, Adriaen Thomasz Key, Frans Pourbus and the old Anthonis Mor, demonstrating the degree of the standardization of portraiture, in composition, iconography and style.⁸¹⁵ This interchangeability is also comparable to the one characterizing the portraits of the *élite*. The reasons might have been somehow different, but they might have followed similar processes, too complex to discuss as a side note of this study.

The reason to focus on Frans Pourbus, is especially to draw to the attention to some experiments in style for what concerns portraiture. In some cases, Pourbus and Mor seem to have also tested a different technique, showing a freer manner and a looser brushstroke that is usually considered to distinguish Venetian art.

⁸¹⁴ VAN DE VELDE 1995, pp. 10-17.

⁸¹⁵ It is common to find these multiple attributions in monographic studies, online databases (the RKD, for instance, records many of these portraits) and auction houses catalogues.

In the painting that was considered Pourbus' *Self-portrait*, dated between 1570 and 1579, we see a very painterly style (*Figure 130*).⁸¹⁶ White and visible brushstrokes give light to the rich silky *chemise* and the ruff. The hands and the palette can appear even sketchy, while the face has a certain degree of polish. Since this work differs from the majority of his production, it has been considered somehow as an attempt of the painter to show his skills in imitating the Italian - or, even better, Venetian - style. It is interesting to notice that the support, itself, canvas instead of wood panel, was suitable to this kind of experiment.

In this same group we can list Frans Pourbus' portrait of Abraham Grapheus (c. 1545-1624), Antwerpian painter part of the Guild of Saint Luke.⁸¹⁷ Depicting his fellow artist (*Figure 131*), who would eventually become, in his old age, a model, for many other painters because of his peculiar features,⁸¹⁸ Pourbus employed a looser and vibrant brushstroke.

It is interesting to notice that also Anthonis Mor, who was famous for his mirror-like technique, shows a freer style when portraying Hubert Goltzius (1526-1583), Southern Netherlandish engraver and numismatic, cousin of the much more famous Hendrik Goltzius (*Figure 132*).⁸¹⁹ Hubert Goltzius was part of the humanistic circle that also included Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598), and received this portrait from Mor as a gift.⁸²⁰ We cannot describe Mor's style here as exactly "loose", but it is surely different from the aspect of his general production. It is beyond the scope of this research to identify and analyse all of the portraits which present a more painterly style.

By taking these examples into account we aim to point out that Netherlandish portraiture was not impervious to experiments, but these were not necessarily due to Titian's example. In fact, it is interesting to notice that in all of the aforementioned

⁸¹⁶ Frans Pourbus the Elder; *Self-portrait or portrait of Cornelis van Harleem*; 1570-79; 80,5x64 cm; oil on canvas private collection; Antwerp. See BRUGES 2017-2018, pp. 322-323.

⁸¹⁷ Frans Pourbus the Elder; *Abraham Grapheus*; c. 1572-81; 42,9x34,3 cm; oil on panel; Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco; San Francisco. See BRUGES 2017-2018, pp. 324-325.

⁸¹⁸ In the XVIIth century Jacob Joordaens (1593-1678) and Anthon van Dyck painted several studies of his head (*tronies*) which they employed in larger works.

⁸¹⁹ Anthonis Mor; *Hubert Goltzius*; 1576; 66x50 cm; oil on panel; Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; Brussels. WOODALL 2007, pp. 26-27.

⁸²⁰ See WOODALL 2007, p. 421.

cases the sitter was an artist, usually a friend. This might not be coincidental. A hypothesis that we might suggest is that, in portraits destined to painters, the artist might have stressed his role of creator through a more evident handicraft, in a sort of *paragone*, allowing himself to a greater degree of freedom. Or, to keep the explanation on a more practical and economical level, if the paintings were gifts or self-portraits, it might have been more productive to save time and resources in depicting them. Were these experiments determined by a visual strategy connected to artistic theory or was the lack of polish determined by the function of the painting? This is not the context to answer the question, but to stress a specific concept: the so-called “painterly brush” of Titian is not the only point of reference for these artists, and surely not the only explanation for the existence of these paintings.

To sum up, what was the actual reception of Titian’s portraiture in the Netherlands and to which necessities of which social classes was it appealing?

Referring to the aforementioned standardization of portraiture, we can say that Titian’s models of portraiture were involved in the process. For the ruling *élite*, it was most likely a matter of authority, imitation, dynastic validation, in a dichotomy between *having* a Titian - for the ruling class - and referring to an affirmed visual tradition.

As for the patricians, minor nobility, and bourgeoisie, the “authority of Titian” was not actually addressed to, in the genre of portraiture. It is possible to identify some similarities between this type and Titian’s early portraits, as the aforementioned *Young Englishman*, the *Portrait of Andreas Vesalius*, or the *Benedetto Varchi*. However, it would be incautious to assert that these Netherlandish patrons had an interest in a correlation with the Venetian for his “authority”, or that these models were of primary relevance in their visual culture. And it seems also unlikely that the aforementioned artists, who belonged and seem to embrace a specifically Flemish and widely accepted tradition, would get any particular benefit from referring to Titian’s models.

In conclusion, from Spain to the Spanish Netherlands, Anthonis Mor found fertile soil for his adaptation of Titian’s type of state portrait and the full and three-quarter length that expressed the dignity and the *magnificentia* of the *élite*. The popularity of these formats was facilitated by many factors, social but also pragmatic, such as the production of copies. Moreover, Mor’s choice of using models associated to Titian is not limited to the artistic aspect. To elevate his status, the Flemish painter followed the footsteps of the Venetian in order to emulate his self-promotion. At the same time,

other painters were affirming themselves in the field of portraiture, assimilating Titian through Mor for the state portrait, but finding a different way to please their diverse clientele, in years of religious turmoil and violent debate on very foundations of art. Despite of that, both Mor's concept of state portrait and the patrician portraiture - developed in his environment and not foreign to his example -, imposed themselves on Europe for the following decades.

It is noteworthy that neither Coxcie with his collage of references, neither Mor, his pupil or other painters that became famous portraitists, consistently experimented with the most recognizable and discussed, sometimes positively by literature and sometimes negatively by patrons, characteristic of the art of the Venetian painter: the painterly style, the loose brushstrokes. So far, the few instances that we have investigated reflect different intentions and necessities, and they do not appeal to Titian as an example to follow, stylistically and technically speaking. In the next chapters we will deal with issues of style and "Titianesque" themes in relation to the judgements of Italian, but especially Netherlandish, artistic literature. Because, as it has emerged from the analysis of Coxcie and Mor's reception of Titian's art, the connection between literature and practice is often labile and misleading.

4. From Brussels to Antwerp in an age of turmoil: the reception of Titian's religious painting

The influence of politics in artistic matters, from the choice of an artist to the use of a visual language instead of another, had been discussed in the analysis of Titian's work for the Habsburgs, their allies, supporters, and courtesans. These same factors were also fundamental in the process of selection of the models for artists directly involved with the court, namely Michiel Coxcie and Anthonis Mor. Together with the political and ideological aspects, it was also important to consider the role of these and other artists in shaping a language that integrated Italian and Netherlandish idioms, and to determine their personal ambitions to reach a specific *status*.

We will now focus on the use of Titian's models for the religious and the mythological subjects, and to do so we will start from Brussels and the environment of the court to expand to a wider context. This includes cities like Bruges, Ghent, Mechelen, but it will mostly focus on Antwerp, for the following socio-economic reasons.

The painter Michiel Coxcie was a key-figure in the art of Brussels that was revolving around the Habsburg court. Mary of Hungary, Charles V and Philip II had been his most prestigious patrons and his relationship with the Habsburg family lasted for his entire life, until he died in 1592. However, after Philip II had left the city in 1559 to never return, the importance and the centrality of the Brussels court in the artistic life of the country started to fade. At the same time, throughout the XVIth century, the city of Antwerp imposed itself as a centre of artistic entrepreneurship, becoming an "economic capital" of the Netherlands.⁸²¹ The city on the river Scheldt took advantage of its strategic position for commerce - Antwerp in the XVIth century was the most prominent harbour in western Europe - and created a wide network of

⁸²¹ The socio-economical rise of the city of Antwerp during the XVIth century and the changes in its artistic market are topics that interested many different scholars in recent years. Whereas the peak of Antwerp's importance on the artistic scene of Europe was located in the first decades of the XVIIth century, the international reputation of the city was built during the previous century with the commercial success of specific artistic products. For the economic and artistic developments of the XVIth century, which commonly starts from about the 1540s, see VERMEYLEN 2003; ANTWERP 2005; SILVER 2006; STIGHELEN 2006, pp. 188-208; BLONDÉ-PUTTEVILS 2020A.

export of goods among which luxury items and art objects had a prominent role.⁸²² While cities like Bruges, Mechelen, Ghent or Brussels had already an established pictorial tradition, the Antwerp school of painting was virtually non-existent during the XVth century. But, in the first decades of the of the XVIth century, there were established types of product destined to export: the wooden carved retables and panels in the style of the Antwerp Mannerists.⁸²³ This economic boost allowed the fast development of a rich and heterogeneous artistic life, that it was referred to as the “stylistic Babylon of Antwerp”.⁸²⁴ The following generations of Antwerpian artists introduced some traits that would become distinctive of the culture of the city: the development of the printmaking industry - for instance with the opening of the printmaking workshop *Aux Quatre Vents* by Hieronymus Cock (1518-1570) -,⁸²⁵ the experiments with new genres and iconographies, and the factory-like organization of workshops to meet the new necessities of the market. In fact, the periodic markets were abandoned to a form of a permanent market of the city, transforming Antwerp into a prosperous trading centre specialized in exporting goods.⁸²⁶ This progress affected the economic growth of the city and had an impact on the artists’ work: the aforementioned innovation of the themes and iconographies, the mass-production of copies and the attention to new and also foreign markets.⁸²⁷

⁸²² VERMEYLEN 2003, pp. 79-100; BLONDÉ-PUTTEVILS 2020B, pp. 1-28.

⁸²³ A series of mostly anonymous painters who produced works in the style of the previous generation of Netherlandish artists. These “*formulae*” were repeated almost identical numerous times and became a commercial success. See ANTWERP-MAASTRICHT 2005-2006, *passim*; GODFRIND-BORN in ANTWERP-MAASTRICHT 2005-2006, pp. 10-29.

⁸²⁴ See JONCKHEERE 2020A, p. 267.

⁸²⁵ See STOCK 1998.

⁸²⁶ The main markets of the city had been for a long time the Dominican *Pand*, founded in 1445 and *Onser Liever Vrouwen Pand*, founded in 1460. These markets were organized by the Church. In 1540 was founded the first non-ecclesiastic market, the so-called *Schilderspand*, or the painters’ market. See VERMEYLEN 2003.

⁸²⁷ Summarized in JONCKHEERE 2011A, pp. 25-27; JONCKHEERE 2020A, pp. 277-288; for an in-depth discussion of the causes and consequences of a permanent art market, see VERMEYLEN 2003, pp. 35-108.

To these socio-economic aspects it is necessary to add up the impact of relevant historical events that affected the whole territory, and Antwerp in particular, and that deeply influenced the artistic production of the time.

The revolt of the Seventeen Provinces against Philip II, or the Dutch Revolt, started in 1566 after years of socio-political and religious tensions. One key-episode that derived from the aforementioned tensions - and that caused even more tensions - was surely the outbreak of destruction of religious images led by the Protestants community in the Low Countries, widely known as the *Beeldenstorm*.⁸²⁸ This iconoclastic fury spread from the Southern Netherlands, where the attacks focused especially on Antwerp and Ghent, and then moved to the provinces of the north, reaching Amsterdam and many other cities. A consequence of these attacks was Philip II's decision to send, in 1567, the Duke of Alva with an army on 10,000 men to sedate the rebellion, decision that exacerbated the already compromised situation. After an initial success, the devastations of the so-called "Spanish fury"⁸²⁹ caused Antwerp to become more engaged in the rebellion against the Habsburg King, at the point that the city in 1579 joined the Union of Utrecht and became the capital of the Dutch Revolt until 1585, when it was definitively reconquered by the Spanish troops. The 1585 reconquest considerably crippled the commercial expansion of Antwerp because the Dutch Republic closed the Scheldt - the main trading route of the city - and moved the trade to the ports of Amsterdam and Middelburg.⁸³⁰

The consequences of the *Beeldenstorm* and of the controversy on images on the artistic life of the Low Countries cannot be overstated. The years between 1566 and

⁸²⁸ The literature on the phenomenon of Iconoclasm is vast. Fundamental studies on this topic in relation to the Netherlands are FREEDBERG 1988; SCHEERDER 1998; ARNADE 2008; and the recent BRUAENE-JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK 2016. On the problem of image debate in the Low Countries before 1566, see MOXEY 1977, pp. 148-162.

⁸²⁹ The "Spanish Fury" was a series of sackings and devastations of cities in the Low Countries committed by the Spanish troops between 1572 and 1579, the same troops that Philip II had sent to pacificate the region. The lootings were likely caused by delays in payments to the soldiers. The most infamous event was the so-called "Sack of Antwerp", in 1576. These three days of looting and pillaging worsened the hate against the Spanish Habsburg monarchy even from the Catholic side of the population. See LAMPO 2017.

⁸³⁰ For the history of the long-term impact of closing the river Scheldt on the city of Antwerp and for the rise of the city of Amsterdam, see ENTHOVEN 1996; DAMME 2010, pp. 486-503.

1609, year in which the so-called “Twelve Years’ Truce” stated the cessation of hostilities between the Southern Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, have been a period of great experimentation in the figurative arts. In fact, as analysed in Jonckheere’s book on the Flemish art after the Iconoclasm, a subject that had been usually neglected by the historians,⁸³¹ artists were confronted with new problems and they adopted new solutions.⁸³² The religious discourse on images was directly threatening their means of sustain, and they had to find different approaches to continue performing their work without being accused by neither of the factions involved: the Counter-reformed Catholics and the Protestants. These circumstances brought to stylistic and iconographic innovations, the result of the work of artists who “experimented deliberately with decorum in an attempt to develop a new, ecumenical, idiom”.⁸³³

This general introduction aims to contextualize the current and the following chapters on the use of Titian’s models each of them devoted to a category of artistic subjects: the religious and the mythological paintings.

The first theme that will be addressed here is the reception of Titian’s religious inventions in the context of the Southern Netherlands, with particular attention to the artistic scene Brussels and Antwerp, for the aforementioned explanations. This topic can be challenging for different reasons.

First of all, the idea of reception as intended here, namely a conscious act of selection and reinterpretation of models, led to very different outputs. Charles V sought after copies of devotional paintings by his Apelles and commissioned them from painters of his entourage. Mary of Hungary and Philip II did the same, as in the case of Michiel Coxcie’s copies of the *Ecce Homo* and the *Mater Dolorosa* or the reproduction of almost all of the Titian’s paintings that arrived in Spain, at the court of Madrid. Copying and adapting are fundamental in the process of reception. To mention Coxcie again, his reiterated use of Titian’s religious models throughout his career was not limited to copies, but he handled the originals with different purposes and achieving a series of different results. On the basis of what has emerged in the

⁸³¹ A summary of the state of the art of this topic can be found in FREEDBERG 2012, pp. 21-49.

⁸³² See JONCKHEERE 2012A.

⁸³³ JONCKHEERE 2012A, p. 10.

analysis of Coxcie and Mor's reception, it will be possible to further develop and better delineate these processes in the first, introductory paragraph.

Secondly, for the case study selected for this chapter, it will be necessary to add another layer of approach and to change the perspective from formal issues to iconographic matters. To analyse the reception of Titian's *Adoration of the shepherds*, it is fundamental to consider a series of theological connotations carried by the subject. These aspects cannot be ignored in a time and a territory in which the religious discourse reached such levels of impact on the visual arts. For the reception of this subject in the way that Titian had elaborated it, we first need to clarify some overlooked aspects of this iconography and their possible literary sources. This will come in handy once considering how the propagation of the model among Netherlandish artists did not just rely on compositional and formal aspects but on theological implications.

4.1 Experimenting beyond the model: between copying and adapting religious paintings

Discussing about copies is always problematic. In fact, a copy is an object that is difficult to classify. There are different terms that have been used to describe the nuances and aspects of a copy, according to its materiality, function, value or relation to the original, and scholars do not usually agree on their use. How to precisely describe the operations on the models made by the artists that we have analysed so far?

Michiel Coxcie was judged a good copyist. As mentioned above, both Mary of Hungary and Philip II entrusted him with the reproduction of artworks that were considered masterpieces, the *Descent from the cross* by Rogier van der Weyden and the *Ghent altarpiece* by Hubert and Jan van Eyck. These copies were meant to replace the originals: the first one in its original location, the second one in Philip's collection, since it was impossible to purchase and move the majestic work of the van Eyck's brothers.

Especially in the case of the *Ghent altarpiece*, the copy by Coxcie for the King of Spain directly based on the original,⁸³⁴ but at the same time «resonant with the new

⁸³⁴ See SUYKERBUYK 2013, pp. 5-24.

standards for pictorial effects and beauty matching other works in his collections». ⁸³⁵ In fact, it was to describe this very reproduction that the artist and literate Lucas de Heere (1534-1584) introduced the term “*kopie*” in the artistic vocabulary of the Low Countries. ⁸³⁶ This term derives from the French “*copie*” and seems to have had a different meaning from the Dutch “*counterfeit*”, because de Heere wanted to emphasise that Coxcie had an active and not a slavish role in the process. As phrased by Wouk:

«[...] ‘copying’ the van Eycks was a performative act of interpretation that involved adopting a distinctly Eyckian manner of painting in homage to the source while also introducing important stylistic and iconographic modifications that signalled the distance from this ‘ancient’ prototype». ⁸³⁷

If we follow the terminology defined by H el ene Mund, ⁸³⁸ we can consider these as “exact copies”, because they were supposed to record the appearance of the originals and to substitute them in a different location. This differs from the concept of “replica” because of its production and its purpose. A replica was painted after the “*principaal*”, or the original, in the context of the workshop of the artist, who was supervising the process. However, the idea of “exact copies” could be misleading because the copies were not necessarily duplicating the original. For instance, Coxcie

⁸³⁵ WOUK 2019A, p. 233.

⁸³⁶ The term *kopie* was used by de Heere in his c. 1559 *Ode* to the *Ghent altarpiece*, in which he celebrated the original work and the copy that was made by Coxcie. See WOUK 2019A, pp. 223-242. For his role in the development of the Netherlandish art theory, see BECKER 1972-73, pp. 113-127; MELION 1991, pp. 129-142.

⁸³⁷ WOUK 2019A, p. 234.

⁸³⁸ The literature discussing the phenomenon of copy in the Renaissance is vast and complex. What is meaningful in this context is to establish the vocabulary to identify the main different type of copies. On this regard, H el ene Mund did analyse the different uses of the terminology in the previous literature and defined a glossary. MUND 1983, pp. 19-31. A recent contribute on the issue of copy can be found in NAGEL-WOOD 2010, esp. pp. 265-299. For some interesting insights on the practice of copy in the Flemish and Spanish environment, see BELLAVITIS 2018; LAMAS-GARC IA 2021.

made some important changes in the *Ghent altarpiece*, but this does not undermine the substitutive purpose of the painting and its claim for authenticity.⁸³⁹

To record - or document - an esteemed piece of art was a common practice. As we have mentioned before, Alonso Sánchez Coello copied for Philip II most of Titian's and Mor's paintings and, as far as we can infer from the artworks that have survived until the present day, they were mostly what Mund would define exact copies. All the changes introduced by the artist - the different scale, the focus on certain elements at the expense of others, the reluctance to adapt the pictorial technique - were nevertheless preserving the composition and the appearance of the original.⁸⁴⁰ Ultimately, these copies were not attempting to deceive the viewers with perfect resemblance. On the one hand, they avoided the accusation of forgery,⁸⁴¹ on the other hand they maintained their value of devotional objects.

However, this is not the most common use of a model. In fact, the art of the Renaissance was inherently imitative on various aspects. On a more theoretical level, it followed the precepts of the *imitatio*, *aemulatio* and *superatio* derived from the classical rhetoric, that we have previously mentioned. On a more practical one, models were

⁸³⁹ One of the most notable changes is the addition of the portraits of Charles V and Philip II among the Christian Knights. The copy preserved the original for the city of Ghent, where it is today, and is somehow updated for the patron, who became part of the history of this document of artistic heritage. See SUYKERBUYK 2017, pp. 71-83. About the issue of authenticity of the religious paintings as objects of devotion that were reproducing a "prototype" (the original and authoritative likeness of a devotional image), Coxcie's copy after the *Ghent altarpiece* had been studied from this perspective by HARTH 2021B, pp. 116-137.

⁸⁴⁰ A theoretical antecedent for this practice of copying while preserving the devotional value of the original was elaborated by Francisco de Holanda in his *De la pintura antigua*. When called to paint a copy of Christ's image in the Papal's Palace Sancta Sanctorum, he asserted that it was possible to paint a copy of the original in his own technique. In fact, since he was mastering the art of *disegno* (here it clearly appears his Roman art theoretical formation), he was able: «to work in different artistic media, scales and manners but above all to imitate everything that God had invented and created faithfully»; HARTH 2021B, p. 123. See HOLANDA 2013, pp. 147-148, 220-221.

⁸⁴¹ The issue of forgery in Renaissance art, especially in relation to the concept of the "hand of the master" as a matter of economical and qualitative value, is particularly poignant and problematic. For a general introduction, see MULLER 1989, pp. 141-149; SPEAR 1989, pp. 97-99; JONES 1992, pp. 7-14; PARSHALL 1993, pp. 554-579; WOOD C. 2008, *passim*; NAGEL-WOOD 2010, pp. 265-299; DAL POZZOLO 2011, esp. pp. 12-13.

related to the procedures of the workshops - teaching through copy, reusing models, varying on the same theme. Most of the example here analysed, belong instead to the category of the “free copy” or “creative copy”. Even though, in many cases, the term “copy” seems not to fully cover the process. These complex operations might be better described as “adaptations”.

Both Coxcie and Mor selected specific aspects of Titian’s art, and they skilfully used them to achieve their own goals. And whereas Mor’s reference to the portraiture developed for the Habsburgs by the Emperor’s Apelles was a meaningful choice for his career, Coxcie almost never acknowledged his sources clearly. His use of Titian’s works was bounded to his interest towards Italian art as the expression of *all’antica* formal values. Therefore, the Venetian was one of the many artists who he dialogued with to fully achieve the understanding of Roman and Greek art.

Apart from the issue of copying, there are other aspects that must be addressed. For the XVIIth century onward audience, the canonised and literary “idea of Titian” as an artist was not just linked to his models, but also to specific themes that he had painted for an international *élite*. He was the painter of the *poesie*, namely the sensuous mythologies that could compete with literary poems, of the naked flesh and the intense religious scenes bathed in shivering light. Some subjects are still inextricably connected to the name of the Venetian master. However, how correct was this statement in the XVIth-century Netherlands? Which inventions and themes by Titian had a factual reception, and how were they treated?

These are the questions that we should bear in mind while discussing the wide range of approaches to the art of Titian by Flemish artists.

4.1.1 The many lives of the *Ecce Homo* and the *Mater dolorosa*

When, in 1555, Charles V commissioned a copy of Titian’s *Ecce Homo* (Figure 6), that was destined to the chapel of Coudenberg palace, in Brussels, he probably just aimed to have a piece that functioned *in loco* of another.⁸⁴² The task was entrusted to Jan

⁸⁴² «[...] pour avoir fait ung pourtraict d’ung Dieu de pitié semblable à autre fait de la main de Tysian, painctre de Venise, avecq la grandeur des bordures y servans, et, après avoir fait ung quartier desdictes bourdures et le monstré à sa Majesté, icelle le vollut avoir fait en quareure de mesure juste,

Cornelisz Vermeyen, who had been court painter of Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary and who accompanied the Emperor in his conquest of Tunis in 1535.⁸⁴³ As we have already mentioned, he had been sent by Mary of Hungary to Innsbruck and Augsburg to portray family members, and a large number of his known works are portraits. Again, we can reiterate the idea of the court artist who handled a series of operations: to portray, to replicate the portraits (many of them came from his workshop), and to copy paintings. For these artists it was fundamental the practice of producing a number of copies of the same object, with the different intentions of spreading, multiplying, or preserving the original. Unluckily, this copy was lost, like many others recorded in Habsburgs documents and inventories.⁸⁴⁴ However, we know two elements that might reveal the nature of this copy.

First of all, we have a precise idea of his art style. As pupil of Jan Gossaert, one of the first so-called Romanist painters who worked with the *all'antica* idiom in the Netherlands, his figures are dominated by a certain Central-Italian plasticism and a strong contrast between light and shadows.⁸⁴⁵ An exemplar painting for his approach to religious subjects is the panel depicting the *Holy family at the fire*, dated 1532 or 1533 and now at the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna (*Figure 133*).⁸⁴⁶

ce que icelluy maistre Jehan a fait en diligence à perfection, livré et tyré en couleurs», in HORN 1989, I, pp. 38, 98; see also HARTH 2021A, pp. 101-112. On the Coudenberg palace, see ANAGNOSTOPOULOS-HOUSSIAU 2006.

⁸⁴³ To celebrate this important victory, in 1546 Mary of Hungary and Charles V commissioned the artist a series of twelve tapestries glorifying the recapture of Tunis from the Turks. See HORN 1989. The commission of the copy after Titian's *Ecce Homo* from Vermeyen had been recently studied by HARTH 2021B, pp. 67-84.

⁸⁴⁴ For the documents about Vermeyen's copy, see PINCHART 1856, p. 138; HORN 1989, I, p. 38. See the example of the inventory redacted after the death of Philip II, listing two versions of many religious subjects by the Venetian, or the copies that Rudolph II asked for his own collection, probably made by Alonso Sánchez Coello. The copies are listed in the 1621 inventory, and they are all lost. It is challenging to identify these copies unless they remained in their original locations or collections. For the copies in the inventory of Philip II see FALOMIR 2021, pp. 64-75. For Rudolph II, see ZIMMERMANN 1905, pp. XLV, XLVI.

⁸⁴⁵ For an analysis of the role of Gossaert in importing and developing a language *all'antica* in the Netherlands, see the recent BASS M. 2016.

⁸⁴⁶ Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen; *Holy family at the fire*; 1532/33; 66,5x50,5 cm; oil on panel; Kusthistorisches Museum; Vienna. See HORN 1989, I, pp. 10-12.

Secondly, Charles V had a particular interest for these subjects. He did send a painted model of a *Mater dolorosa* to Titian in order to have an image that could fit his devotional expectations, he commissioned Michiel Coxcie to paint an *Ecce Homo* and a *Mater dolorosa* to pair with Titian's, and he made Vermeyen copy the figure of Christ for the chapel of his own palace, the historical residence of the Burgundians. Charles V's attention for this copy as substitute for Titian's original is demonstrated by a document in which the Emperor resolves the payment for this work to his court painter.⁸⁴⁷ In few sentences we notice that Charles V underlines the resemblance to the original and especially that Vermeyen had made it with the right measures. Therefore, we might assume that the Emperor cared mostly for the function of these paintings as "devotional tools", placed in relevant representative and personal locations. Knowing these two elements, we can assume with a certain degree of confidence that Vermeyen's copy was reproducing the theme, the composition, but not the technical qualities.

It is necessary to repeat, in order not to lose sight of our line of argument, that the Titian of the *Ecce Homo* on slate and of the *Mater Dolorosas* was the artist who experimented with models and language from Central-Italy, and not the famous Venetian master of the "late manner". Christ was modelled though the chiaroscuro, his muscles and skin capturing the light like a statue,⁸⁴⁸ and the subject, in diptych with the *Mater Dolorosa*, was particularly popular in the Netherlands and appealing for the devote Charles V, who personally commissioned copies and variations on the theme. Even though we are not referring to the painterly and visible brushwork that would become the signature style of the master, but to a more concise and plastic pictorial effect, it is not likely that Vermeyen would have tried to reproduce exactly the original, and in particular not in the technique.

There is another painting that has always been related to Titian's *Ecce Homo*, and it is a panel of the same subject by the hand of the painter Maerten de Vos (1532-1603). Now in the church of Saint Jacob, in Antwerp, it bears the signature of the artist and

⁸⁴⁷ «[...] icelle (Charles V) le vollut avoir faict en quareure de mesure juste, ce que icelluy maistre Jehan a faict en diligence à perfection, livré et tiré en couleurs [...]»; PINCHART 1856, p. 138.

⁸⁴⁸ This effect also depends on the material of the support, black slate, that influences the quality and the expressivity of the pictorial surface. See NYGREN 2017, pp. 36-66.

the date 1562 (*Figure 134*).⁸⁴⁹ As recorded by Karel van Mander in the *Schilderboek*, the artist from Antwerp had travelled to Italy, stopping in Rome, Venice and other cities, before he became part of his hometown guild in 1559.⁸⁵⁰ It is widely accepted that, in Venice, he was employed in the workshop of the painter Jacopo Tintoretto (1518-1594), but none of his Italian works had been surely identified.⁸⁵¹ In the art of Maerten de Vos after the return to Antwerp, different scholars have identified motives, gestures and poses that might recall Tintoretto's works.

In spite of this acknowledged "Venetianism", a reference to Titian's models appears rather unique in the art of Maerten de Vos. As noticed by Zweite,⁸⁵² the Saint Jacob's panel resembles the *Ecce Homo* now in Dublin,⁸⁵³ a late painting dated around 1560 (*Figure 135*), more than the version made in 1548 for Charles V. In fact, the frontality of the body and the position of the head coincide. However, the resemblances could be circumstantial. This representation of Christ - frontal, his wrists crossed almost at the centre of the bust, with the *pallium* on the shoulders, a cloth around his waist and the head slightly inclined - was particularly common in Italy and across the Alps. One example is the *Ecce Homo* by Quinten Massys (1456/66-1530) at the Doge's palace in Venice (*Figure 136*), a panel that might have been at the origin of Titian's iconography.⁸⁵⁴ But the theme of the suffering Son of God, in an isolated half-figure showing the signs of the Passion on his tortured body, was also particularly developed in Lombardy in the first decades of the century, especially in the work of Andrea Solario (c. 1465-

⁸⁴⁹ Maerten de Vos; *Ecce homo*; 1562; 76x64 cm; oil on panel; Saint-Jacob; Antwerp. See FAGGIN 1964, pp. 51-52; ZWEITE 1980, pp. 38-43, 262; MEIJER in VENICE 1999, pp. 502-503; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 355.

⁸⁵⁰ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, pp. 317-318.

⁸⁵¹ For Maerten de Vos and Tintoretto or, more generally, Venice, see LIMENTANI VIRDIS 1977, pp. 3-14; LIMENTANI VIRDIS 1996, pp. 139-143; MEIJER in VENICE 1999, pp. 137-138; HOCHMANN 2009, pp. 63-75.

⁸⁵² ZWEITE 1980, pp. 38-42.

⁸⁵³ Titian; *Ecce homo*; c. 1560; 73,4x56 cm; oil on canvas; National Gallery of Ireland; Dublin, See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 87-88; VENICE 1999, pp. 520-521; HUMFREY 2007, p. 221; VENICE-VIENNA 2008, pp. 263-265.

⁸⁵⁴ Quinten Massys, *Ecce homo*; c. 1520; 95x74 cm; oil on panel; Doge's Palace; Venice. See VENICE 1999, pp. 518, 520; for an analysis of the iconography between Venetian and Flemish models, see BELLAVITIS 2011, pp. 263-269, 362-365.

1524).⁸⁵⁵ The artist from Milan produced many different variations on this subject, slightly changing the pose, the format and the attributes of Christ. The one that seems to be more relatable to de Vos' is the version of the Indianapolis Museum of Art,⁸⁵⁶ which is known through different replicas (*Figure 137*). It is necessary to keep in mind these models, even though they are not fully matching the work by de Vos, because the comparison with Titian's Dublin version of the subject appears unsatisfying.

However, since the chromatism, the use of light and, on certain regards, the lively brushstrokes, might still point towards the Venetian, we cannot exclude a correlation with a different *Ecce Homo* by his hand. First of all, there was at least another version that was sent to the Low Countries in the 1550s, namely the aforementioned one or two *Ecce Homos* for Antoine Perrenot the Granvelle, now lost.⁸⁵⁷ Secondly, we should consider the work after which the print by Lucas Vorsterman II (1624-1666) was made (*Figure 138*).⁸⁵⁸ This was considered to have been engraved after the *Ecce Homo* owned by Anton van Dyck.⁸⁵⁹ This suggestion was not accepted by Wood who, in his study over the so-called "*Cabinet de Titien*", argues that the version in van Dyck's collection must have been instead very close to the one now in the Brukenthal National Museum of Sibiu.⁸⁶⁰ Therefore, the print by Vorsterman should have been after another version

⁸⁵⁵ Zweite underlines that the *Ecce homo* by de Vos has many traits in common with the hieratic figures of XVth century, and in particular the ones by Solario. ZWEITE 1980, p. 40.

⁸⁵⁶ Andrea Solario; *Ecce homo*; c. 1509; 59,7x41,4 cm; oil on panel; Indianapolis Museum of Art; Indianapolis.

⁸⁵⁷ The commission of replicas of the *Ecce homo* from Titian by Granvelle was part of the strategy of emulation that characterised the mechanics of the court. See SCHWEIKHART 1997, p. 24. For Titian's replicas of this subject, see JOANNIDES 2019, pp. 82-95.

⁸⁵⁸ Lucas Vorsterman II after Titian; *Ecce homo*; c. 1640-60; 229x152 mm; National Gallery of Ireland; Dublin. See HOLLSTEIN 1993, XLII, p. 92.

⁸⁵⁹ Wetthey thought that the print was made after the *Ecce Homo* in Dublin, therefore it might have been from the personal collection of Anton van Dyck, who purchased a canvas of this same subject. WETHEY 1969-75, I, p. 88.

⁸⁶⁰ The *Ecce homo* owned by van Dyck was most likely the one that he had recorded in his *Italian sketchbook*, which is similar to the one in Sibiu except for the presence of the Jew at the left of Christ. The Sibiu painting is likely the one originally in the collection of the Venetian Barolomeo della Nave (????-1636), then in the gallery of Coudenberg palace at the time of Archduke Leopold Willhelm (1614-1662). The artwork was also recorded in the 1651 painting by David Teners II (1610-1690) portraying

and, even though this engraving presents many similarities with the *Ecce Homo* in Dublin (Figure 135), the *pallium* on both shoulders of Christ suggests that the model might have been yet another version of the *Ecce Homo*.⁸⁶¹

In this crowd of replicas and variations, there is one more print that is worth to mention, namely the *Ecce Homo* (Figure 139) engraved by the Flemish Jan Sadeler the Elder (1550-1600) after a work of the German artist Christoph Schwartz (1548-1592).⁸⁶² The biographer Carlo Ridolfi (1594-1658), in *Le Maraviglie dell'arte*, wrote that Schwartz had worked in Titian's workshop, likely between the 1550s and 1560s.⁸⁶³ Despite the lack of documents to prove this statement, a certain number of his paintings show a Venetian inspiration and some elements of Titianism that suggest the accuracy of Ridolfi's words.⁸⁶⁴

Moving back to the engraving, it is interesting to notice that there are many elements in common with the painting by Maerten de Vos. In the two images, the *pallium* is on both shoulders, tied with a knot showing a small loop - a loop that is repeated also in the rope around the wrists -, the cane in Christ's hand follows the line of his arm and presents leaves. Apart from these similarities, we should also mention that the position of the body is not exactly the same, and we cannot demonstrate that there is a direct relation, nor between de Vos and Schwarz's painting or drawing, nor between the *Ecce Homo* by Schwartz and a possible lost model by Titian, one of the many.

In all of these examples we were looking for a perfect fitting, even when we ignore the extent of the models' diffusion (i. e. the Dublin *Ecce Homo*) or the appearance of the model itself, supposing the existence of a different lost one every time that the differences are difficult to explain. This way of proceeding, however, does not consider

the *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm and the artist in the archducal picture gallery in Brussels*, at the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna. For the van Dyck's collection, see WOOD J. 1990, pp. 680-695; for the provenience of the Sibiu painting, see DĂMBOIU 2017, pp. 197-219.

⁸⁶¹ See VENICE 1999, p. 520.

⁸⁶² Jan Sadeler I after Christoph Schwarz; *Ecce homo*; 1579-1597; 196x123 mm; engraving; British Museum; London. HOLLSTEIN 1980, XXI, p. 118.

⁸⁶³ RIDOLFI 1648, I, p. 225.

⁸⁶⁴ On Christoph Schwartz and his relation to Venice and the Veneto, see MEIJER in VENICE 1999, p. 503; MEIJER 1999, pp. 127-156.

the aforementioned concept of *aemulatio*, but just the one of copy, when both of these precepts were equally valid in the XVIth- century art of the Low Countries, and they were at the origin of inventions, copies and variants.⁸⁶⁵ A couple of examples which had been related to Willem Key might give some relevant insights on the application of these precepts and the afterlife of the *Ecce Homo* and *Mater Dolorosa* in the Netherlands.

Giorgio Faggini, in his classical essay on the impact of Titian in the Low Countries, published two paintings, an *Ecce Homo* and a *Mater Dolorosa*, from a private collection in Amsterdam and a Cologne auction house (*Figure 140*), and he attributed them to Willem Key, but this attribution has been recently disputed.⁸⁶⁶ The first is very close to the painting for Charles V. The general physicality of the statuary tormented Christ is here less bulky, slenderer and more elongated, and we can fully see his hands. And while even the knots seem to overlap, the right hand of Christ, partly cut in the original, appears clumsy and not well executed, like it was unsuccessfully designed *ex-novo* to fill the gap. The quality of the picture does not allow to comment on the technique, but we can imagine this as the kind of copy Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen must have painted.

The discussion is different for the *Mater Dolorosa*. The figure does not coincide with the two ones that Titian had sent to Brussels in 1554 and 1555. The position of the hands, brought to the chest in a gesture that expresses humble and constraint affliction, changes the attitude of the Virgin. The body is leaning forward, diagonally, towards the position where Christ is supposed to be, the face appears somehow softer, and the tears less evident on the pearlescent complexion. Is there an original by Titian for this painting of the Virgin? Should we suggest, instead, that the painter might have copied the lost *Mater Dolorosa* by Michael Coxcie, the one that was supposed to pair with the *Ecce Homo* of the Prado in the 1558 inventory of Charles V?

It is surely fascinating to look for a precise model, and to precisely reconstruct the appearances of lost paintings, but it is also utterly simplifying. In this regard, we can consider another painting including the same subjects of the Virgin and suffering

⁸⁶⁵ See JONCKHEERE 2012A, pp. 7-19.

⁸⁶⁶ Willem Key (?); *Ecce homo and Mater Dolorosa*; c. 1550; 65x52 cm each; oil on panel. The *Ecce homo* was in the private collection of doctor H. Wezlar in Amsterdam, while the *Mater Dolorosa* appeared on the art market in the Kunsthau Lempertz (lot 45, 21 November 2020). See FAGGIN 1964, p. 50. Jonckheere argues that the attribution to Key is unsustainable, see JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 157.

Christ (*Figure 141*), also attributed to Willem Key.⁸⁶⁷ This artwork presents a peculiar concept: it reunites in the same pictorial space two icon-like figures that were usually isolated, each of them suspended in their sort of non-space.⁸⁶⁸ The two parts of the diptych are merged into one, in an uncommon but not unprecedented solution for this iconography (*Figure 142*).⁸⁶⁹ The painting seems to be an adaptation of Titian's paintings for Charles V into a new artwork.

The half-figure of Christ painted by Key maintains the general idea of the one by the Venetian. A great attention is given to the body, to the muscles under the skin, so much that it resembles a statue in flesh. Again, the body is not bulky, but wiry and elongated. As noted by Jonckheere, also the features of the face are very different from the one by Titian. In general, Christ is more elegant, in a way that resembles the *Ecce Homo* by Maerten de Vos.

For the Virgin, the model might be the *Mater Dolorosa with clasped hands*, at the Prado (*Figure 41*), the first one that Titian had sent to the Emperor, but her relation to the space and to Christ appears completely different. She turns her body toward the one of her son, the hands clasped not tightly and the face on a different angle, three-quarter but slightly inclined. The clothing is more simple, even essential, if compared to the transparent veil and the three colours of the textiles present in Titian's *Dolorosa*. As for Christ, the likeness of the face does not resemble the model at all.

⁸⁶⁷ Willem Key; *Ecce homo and Mater Dolorosa*, 1555-1560; 74x100 cm; oil on panel; private collection. See JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 155-157; JONCKHEERE 2020B, p. 164.

⁸⁶⁸ The source for this iconography had been identified in the tradition of the *Imago Pietatis*, originated by the mosaic icon in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, in Rome. For further bibliography, see NYGREN 2017, pp. 36-66; for a more general discussion on the iconography of the Man of Sorrows, see PUGLISI-BARCHAM 2013.

⁸⁶⁹ An example of the *Ecce homo* and the *Mater Dolorosa* in the same space, next to each other, is the panel by the Netherlandish painter Adriaen Isenbrandt (c. 1490-1551). In this painting, dated c. 1530-40, the two figures are located in an architectural frame that opens on the view of a city in the background. A column is separating them, and they are not interacting, even though their sufferings are related to the one of the other. Key's work is conceptually different because he maintained the dark and neutral background, suspending the two figures in a space for meditation. Adriaen Isenbrandt; *Christ crowned with thorns and the mourning Virgin*; c. 1530-40; 104,4x92,7 cm; oil on canvas transferred from panel; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.

Apart from reinforcing the idea that Key might have been welcome enough in the court environment to visit the Habsburg palace, where the paintings by Titian were held until 1556,⁸⁷⁰ this painting also raises questions on the artist's interest in Titian. So far, the artists that we have been discussing were directly related to the Habsburgs, or to the court. And Key would fit in the group. Willem Key was at first trained by Pieter Coecke van Aelst, from 1529 to about 1535.⁸⁷¹ Coecke was considered an expert in the Italian idiom, and he had a prominent role as a court artist under the rule of Mary of Hungary and Charles V. His workshop was one of the most important of Antwerp at the time,⁸⁷² and it allowed Key to get acquainted with paintings of the Habsburg's collection and to tie connections with court-related patrons.⁸⁷³ Between 1538-39 and 1542, Key finished his apprenticeship in the workshop of Lambert Lombard, in Liège, when also Frans Floris was training there.

Lambert Lombard was part of the group of Netherlandish artists who went to Rome for their training, and after that they imported and elaborated both the *all'antica* language and the imagery of the Italian Renaissance. Lombard did not limit his efforts to a merely artistic point of view, but he was interested in the Italian art theory - he did read and study the writings by Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) -, and he reflected on the issue of the social *status* of the artist in the Netherlands.⁸⁷⁴ Lombard founded in Liège what can be considered the first "artists' academy" of the Low Countries, where his students used his drawings as models to copy, following the example of Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Raphael.⁸⁷⁵ For Lombard, drawing was the most important practice to achieve artistic

⁸⁷⁰ Jonckheere argues that visits to the Habsburg palaces would explain the presence of specific architectural elements in Key's paintings, such as the one on the background of his *Last supper* in Dordecht. See JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 157.

⁸⁷¹ FRIEDLÄNDER 1967-76, XIII, p. 51.

⁸⁷² See JANSEN 2007, pp. 83-104.

⁸⁷³ Jonckheere underlines that his connections can be testified by his portraits of members of the court's entourage, such as Granvelle, the Duke of Alva, and even the regent Margaret of Parma. See JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 16.

⁸⁷⁴ The literature on Lombard is particularly vast, but a pivotal study is the one by DENHAENE 1990. For a recent and relevant essay on the role of Lombard in shaping the social status of artists in the Low Countries, see WOUK 2012, pp. 35-65.

⁸⁷⁵ WOUK 2019B, p. 114.

perfection, to find out and learn the fundamental rules of art, which he meaningfully called “*grammatica*”.⁸⁷⁶ It is interesting to point out that, in his artistic process, Lombard was both copying the sources - we are mostly talking about Roman antiquities - and also going through a series of adjustments, corrections and variations. This process, especially evident in his study-drawings, can be associated to the rhetoric concept of *aemulatio*.⁸⁷⁷

Due to his training in Lombard’s workshop, Key was likely educated in this theoretical *milieu*. His approach to sources - not just the classical ones, but also the contemporary ones, Lombard included - was not to imitate them, but to use them to achieve new and better solutions. In other words, as Jonckheere argues, the fact that the specific sources are not so evident, might reveal that he had really applied Lombard’s idea of emulation.⁸⁷⁸

There is another painting by Key that had been related to Titian’s *Mater Dolorosa*, namely his *Pietà* (Figure 143).⁸⁷⁹ This is one of the most famous works by the painter, and it is known in many replicas and variations made by him and his assistants⁸⁸⁰. The composition of the panel relies on traditional Flemish sources, in particular the *Pietà* by Quinten Massys and works by Rogier van der Weyden and Gerard David.⁸⁸¹ In spite of its “Flemishness”, the painting shows an assimilation of Italian models, such as the classical torso of Christ and the atmospheric landscape. Jonckheere argues that the face of the suffering Virgin appears different from the “facial type” used by the artist in his religious paintings, and that it resembles closely the likeness of Titian’s *Mater Dolorosa with her hands apart* (Figure 43).⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁶ The term *grammatica* derives from the *trivium* of the liberal arts (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic), and it is used by Lombard to describe a set of “firm rules” that underlie artistic production. This conception of grammar meant to elevate art to the level of liberal arts, and it was described by Lampsonius as «a more certain, infallible science, free of criticism». See WOUK 2019B, pp. 101-135.

⁸⁷⁷ WOUK 2019B, p. 115.

⁸⁷⁸ This concept is discussed in JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 16-17, *passim*.

⁸⁷⁹ Willem Key; *Pietà*; c. 1550; 112x103 cm; oil on panel; Alte Pinakothek, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen; Munich. See FRIEDLÄNDER 1967-76, XIII, p. 52; JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 163-167.

⁸⁸⁰ See JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 181-182.

⁸⁸¹ JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 164-165.

⁸⁸² JONCKHEERE 2011b, p. 165.

Even though the two Virgins resemble each other, there is an issue to address. First, Titian's *Dolorosa* is a painting that was made after a Flemish model, as we have mentioned before. The model was chosen by Charles V, and it might have been painted or drawn by a court artist, likely Michiel Coxcie for stylistic reasons. Since this specific work had to meet the Flemish-oriented preferences of the Emperor in matter of devotional paintings, we can see that many elements in Titian's *Dolorosa* - the shape of the veil, the rigid posture, the *trompe-l'oeil* tears - had been elaborated from the model. Therefore, we cannot give for granted that Key's and Titian's representation of the Virgin are directly related, because they might both refer to the same sources. However, Key's adaptation of Titian's *Ecce Homo* and *Mater Dolorosa*, suggests that he was well aware of these inventions, and that he knew how to use them through a creative process of adaptation.

To conclude the analysis of Key's religious paintings derived from Titian's models, we should mention a *Holy family* that had been recently passed on the art-market (*Figure 144*), and that was attributed to the Flemish artist.⁸⁸³ This panel, in fact, appears extremely relatable to Titian's art under many points of view. The attribution was made due to similarities with another *Holy family* by the artist - a more complex composition including saint John the Baptist, the lamb and an angel crowning the Virgin with a flower garland - which was signed by the artist and dated 1551 (*Figure 145*).⁸⁸⁴ To strengthen the connection, we might add to the group another *Holy family* (*Figure 146*).⁸⁸⁵ This one includes just the Virgin, the Child and saint Joseph, and has a lot in common with both the aforementioned paintings: with the signed version it shares the pose of the Madonna, with her eyes gazing down and the hand reaching for the grape, the ruins in the background and Jesus playing with an apple; while it is comparable to the Titianesque one for the Virgin's clothing and veil, the spatial composition and the relationship between the figures. Another recurring element in the three paintings is

⁸⁸³ Willem Key (attributed to); *Holy family*; 89x76 cm; c. 1550; oil on panel; Bernaerts, Antwerp; 12.09.2019, lot 68. JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 172.

⁸⁸⁴ Willem Key; *Holy family*; 1551; 129,7x99,3 cm; oil on panel; Christie's, London; 9.12. 1988, lot 46. FRIEDLÄNDER 1967-76, XIII, pp. 52-53; JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 154-155.

⁸⁸⁵ Willem Key (attributed to); *Holy family*; 61,5x66,5 cm; oil on panel; Sotheby's, London; 7.06.1988, lot 223. JONCKHEERE 2011B, p. 173.

the centrality of the purple grapes, as a prefiguration of the last supper and the passion of Christ, and the apple that refers to the original sin.⁸⁸⁶

Unfortunately, the whereabouts of the two other paintings are unknown, therefore it is difficult to judge, for the comparative works, the aspect of the style and the chromatism. However, for what concerns the *Holy family* that was recently on the market (Figure 144), the style, the colour-palette and even the face-type of the Virgin, can be easily relate to Titian's models. We use the term "model" and not "original", because the painting does not replicate a specific known work but conveys elements that recall certain art of the Venetian. Elements that seem more fitting the widely accepted and easily recognizable idea of "Titianesque features".⁸⁸⁷

The face of the Virgin recalls Titianesque features in the dark and narrow eyebrows, the big round eyes, the heart-shaped lips. This face-type can be found in mythological inventions such as the *Flora* or the *Venus with a musician*, in portraits - or pseudo-portraits - like *La Bella*, or religious works like a *Virgin with the Child and saints* from the 1520s and 1530s. However, the warm and earthy tones of the painting, not only in the figures but also in the flaming sunset that is glimmering in the background, recalls later works, like the 1550s *Danae* or the *poesie*. In the work, in addition to these Titian-like elements, Jonckheere identified the use of another source, namely a statue by Michelangelo, the so-called *Bruges Madonna* (Figure 147).⁸⁸⁸ This combination of different Italian elements in the same painting, as we have seen, also characterized Michiel Coxcié's use of the models of the Venetian.

An additional aspect to analyse is the style. This Key's *Holy family* shows an unusually rough pictorial technique and a particularly soft render of the skin. It is interesting to notice the bold touches of white on the red sleeve of the Virgin and on the transparent veil on her head and chest. The neck of the mother seems as velvety

⁸⁸⁶ JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 154-155.

⁸⁸⁷ If we compare the *Ecce Homo* and the *Mater Dolorosa* by Titian to Key's *Holy family*, the latter seems more "Venetian", in the sense that presents a series of features that have been associated with the XVIth-century Venetian school by the artistic literature from Vasari onward: the attention to the colour and the tonal painting, the loose and quick brushstrokes, the atmospheric sky.

⁸⁸⁸ Michelangelo Buonarroti; *Bruges Madonna*; c. 1503-1505; 128 cm; marble; Church of Our Lady; Bruges. See MANCUSI-UNGARO 1971.

as the chubby body of the son, while the reddish and tanned skin of saint Joseph appears a bit sketchy, if compared to his other religious works.

As for the more experimental portraits by Frans Pourbus the Elder and Anthonis Mor, also the style of the *Holy family* is an almost isolated case, as far as we know. Apart from the *Ecce Homo* and the *Mater Dolorosa*, which were devotional paintings directly connected to the Habsburgs preferences in general and to Charles V in particular, not many other Titian's compositions left an early mark on the artistic production of the Spanish Netherlands, generating such a number of copies, adaptations, and reworks.

For these reasons it is meaningful to analyse the impact of Titian's *Adoration of the shepherds* among the Flemish painters in the second half of the XVIth century, a theme the reception of which had been so far overlooked by the scholars.

4.1.2 Unveiling the body of Christ in the *Adoration of the shepherds*

That the print by Giovanni Britto was widely known is witnessed also by the famous letter that Dominicus Lampsonius had sent to Titian in 1567. In this text, Lampsonius urges the Venetian to make Cornelis Cort, a talented artist who had collaborated with Titian between 1565 and 1566, the only engraver authorized to translate his compositions into prints. He listed six prints that, in his humble opinion, would benefit from being remade by Cort: the *Triumph of Christ*, the *Conversion of saint Paul*, the *Nativity of our Lord*, the *Samson*, the *Mystical marriage of Saint Catherine*, and the *Annunciation*.⁸⁸⁹ The one referred to as the *Nativity of our Lord* is usually identified as Britto's print after the *Adoration of the shepherds*, a painting that Titian had made in 1532-1533 for the Duke of Urbino.⁸⁹⁰ The original was dubiously recognized in the poorly preserved panel now in the Pitti Gallery (*Figure 148*) while a copy, also in a wrecked state, is located in Christ Church, Oxford (*Figure 149*).⁸⁹¹

The print by Giovanni Britto (*Figure 72*) had been mentioned already in the chapter on Coxcie, as his primary source for the *grisaille* predella in the triptych with the *Life of*

⁸⁸⁹ For the letter and the identification of every single print, see SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, pp. 118-119.

⁸⁹⁰ See WETHEY 1969-2975, I, pp. 117-118.

⁸⁹¹ Titian; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1532-33; 93x113 cm; oil on panel; Pitti Gallery; Florence, and Titian; *Adoration of the shepherds*; after 1533; 93,7x112 cm; oil on panel; Christ Church; University of Oxford. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 117-119; HUMFREY 2007, p. 154.

the Virgin dated about 1550 (Figure 71). After that, another artist, the painter from Gouda Pieter Pourbus, selected elements from the same print to paint the predella of the triptych of the *Crucifixion* now at the Groeningemuseum (Figure 150).⁸⁹²

This triptych is peculiar because it is one of the few altarpieces entirely painted in *grisaille*, a technique that was usually limited to the outside part of the shutters and the predella, and because it is the only painting on canvas survived by the hand of the artist.⁸⁹³ The central and the side panels represent *Christ carrying the cross*, the *Descent from the cross* and the *Resurrection*.⁸⁹⁴ In all of them we can identify adaptations from different sources.⁸⁹⁵ The *Descent* derives from a composition by Jan Gossaert,⁸⁹⁶ from which Pourbus has copied some elements, but shows also echoes from Raphael and a print by Giulio Bonasone (Figure 151).⁸⁹⁷ It is interesting to notice that many of the models that Pourbus had used in this *grisaille* derived from prints. He combined two prints by Dürer depicting the same subject for the *Christ carrying the cross*, one from the *Great Passion* and one from the *Small Passion*.⁸⁹⁸ For the panel of the *Resurrection* he looked again at Dürer, namely at *Resurrection* from the *Great Passion*, at Raphael's *Heliodorus* through a print by Andrea Medolla⁸⁹⁹ (Figure 152) and at Giorgio Ghisi's *Resurrection* after Giulio Romano,⁹⁰⁰ especially in the figure protecting his eyes with the shield (Figure 153).

⁸⁹² Pieter Pourbus; *Triptych of the Crucifixion*; 1570; 100,5x105,5 cm central, 103x48,5 cm sides, 20x149 cm predella; oil on canvas glued on panel; Groeningemuseum; Bruges. See BRUGES 1984, pp. 183-188; BRUGES 2017-2018, pp. 240-245.

⁸⁹³ See BRUGES 2017-2018, p. 241.

⁸⁹⁴ The choice of the subjects was related to the Bruges tradition of the altarpieces, exemplified by the c. 1515 *Passietaferelen* in the cathedral of Saint Salvator. BRUGES 1984, p 183.

⁸⁹⁵ As analysed in BRUGES 1984, pp. 183-188.

⁸⁹⁶ The *Descent* by Gossaert is now at the Hermitage of Saint Petersburg.

⁸⁹⁷ Giulio Bonasone; *Descent from the cross*; c. 1550; 103x101 mm; etching and engraving; Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna; Bologna. See THE ILLUSTRATED BARTSCH 1978-, XXVIII, p 118.

⁸⁹⁸ The two series of prints by Dürer became benchmarks for the depiction of themes from the Passion of Christ. The Great passion is composed by eleven woodcuts plus a frontispiece, made between 1497 and 1510; the Small Passion is a series of thirty-six woodcuts and a frontispiece produced in 1511. See MILAN 2018, pp. 368-370.

⁸⁹⁹ Andrea Meldolla after Raphael; *Heliodorus expelled from the temple*; after 1512; 214x314 mm; etching; Royal Collection Trust; London.

⁹⁰⁰ Giorgio Ghisi after Giulio Romano; *Resurrection of Christ*; 1578-80; 262x178 mm; engraving; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen; Rotterdam.

Among the printed sources, Pourbus referred also to well-known engravings after Titian: the *Adoration of the shepherds* by Giovanni Britto and the *Annunciation* by Jacopo Caraglio. Both of these prints had been used as models by Coxcie in a similar contexts, namely the aforementioned triptych with the *Life of the Virgin* and the triptych with the *Adoration of the Magi* now at the Escorial.

For the *Annunciation* depicted in the small *predella* (Figure 154) in the left side of the triptych, Pourbus borrowed the figure of the Virgin directly from Caraglio's print after Titian (Figure 85).⁹⁰¹ The resemblance between the two is evident in the elegant pose of the body, with the arms crossed and the head graciously turning towards the angel, in the eyes gazing at the floor to express the humility Mary while receiving the visit of the angel. However, the figure appears more elongated, and many details in the drapery of the robe and the veil are different. Moreover, it appears "simplified" and less vibrant in the use of the lights and the shadows, like a polished statue. Whereas the print conveyed through its black and white the effect of a glimmering light, Pourbus created a bas-relief in which the monochrome is functional to render the surface of a stone.

We cannot be sure that Pourbus has seen the print or Coxcie's adaptation of it, but some elements might point at the printed source. The kneeling table, absent in the *Annunciation* by Coxcie, is instead present in Pourbus' *predella*, and also the position of the dove resembles more the one in the print. Apart from these visual correlations, we should also consider that Pourbus knew at least another print after Titian, namely the *Adoration of the shepherds* (Figure 72).⁹⁰²

In the central *predella* of the triptych (Figure 155), Pieter Pourbus represented the *Adoration* in a horizontal composition. The scene is crowded, we can see many angels flying or kneeling around the Child, while seven shepherds are arriving from both sides of the scene. The Flemish artist isolated two figures from Titian's invention and he collocated them in the new composition. The first, at the very centre of the scene, is the Virgin who kneels in front of a wooden manger filled with straw. She is uncovering the body of the naked Christ from the swaddling clothes, a gesture that, as we will explain, was not common in the Netherlandish visual tradition. The second figure is the one of the man coming from the right, the left arm raised in the gesture of

⁹⁰¹ See BRUGES 1984, pp. 186-187.

⁹⁰² See BRUGES 1984, p. 187.

respectfully taking off his hat. The position of the body could overlap the one of the shepherd in Titian's artwork, and even the fingers of the left hand grasping the brim of the hat coincide. The only difference is the age of the shepherd represented: a bearded and scruffy mature man in the print by Britto; a young smooth-skinned young man in the Flemish *grisaille*.

If we compare the 1550 adaptation of the Venetian model by Coxcie to the one by Pourbus we can draw a series of conclusions. Both artists decided to refer to a printed source in order to paint a *grisaille*. Even though this is not a rule - most painters used prints as models for polychromous works -, it is noteworthy that they might have found more functional to start from images that focused on merely lights and shadows, making simpler to translate the original into a monochrome painting. Moreover, they also referred to the prototype in a similar way: they isolated single figures and then moved or flipped them to adapt to the new composition and format.

At this point, the recurrent question arises: were these models used because of their authorship or was this aspect merely coincidental?

It seems that neither Coxcie nor Pourbus specifically and meaningfully quoted these artworks because they were Titian's. Both of them merged many different sources in their compositions, which appear equated and not as part of a hierarchy of importance. The rework of Titian's inventions to fit them in the new compositions makes it difficult to discern the models and to even identify an unquestionable and deliberated relation with the original models.

In this context, the merging of these multiple prototypes should not be considered eclectic, for a series of reasons. We must not apply on the Netherlandish artists the same structural system that it was been shaped in the XVIth century Italian artistic theory, namely the distinction between the so-called Florentine (or Tuscan-Roman) and Venetian traditions. In the Italian artistic literature, the dispute between the Central-Italian art and the Venetian was fuelled by the identification of the inherent features of the pictorial currents. The polarization of the concepts of *disegno* and *colore* allowed the intellectuals to argument the superiority of the one over the other. These theoretical discussions based on Italian regionalism were not relevant for the artists from the Low Countries that we have discussed so far, in fact they did not hesitate to combine different models together. This attitude towards the use of Italian models

further demonstrates that is always fundamental to consider the distance between theory and practice of art while studying the phenomenon of reception.

There is another aspect of the problem that is worth to mention in this context, and it is the iconographical one. In fact, the painting by Titian for the Duke of Urbino shows some peculiarities that have passed unnoticed, and that are relevant to carry on with the analysis.

The iconography of the *Adoration of the shepherds* and saint Bridget's *Revelations*

The subject of the “Adoration of the shepherds”, as part of the scenes of the “Nativity”, was represented quite late in the figurative art, in fact it appeared for the first time beyond the Alps at the end of the XVth century.⁹⁰³

The episode is described very briefly in the Gospel of Luke.⁹⁰⁴ After the announcement of the angels, the shepherds found Mary and Joseph, and the Child lying in a manger. This scene was usually represented as the *pendant* of the “Adoration of the Magi”: while the Magi symbolized the spread of Christianity throughout the Gentiles, the shepherds were the first locals, therefore Jews, to worship the Son of God. In the most common iconography, the event takes set in a stable or in the ruins of a temple, where three or more shepherds approach the Holy Family bringing humble gifts. Instead of gold, incense, and myrrh, they carry a lamb that prefigures the sacrifice of Christ, eggs, or they play musical instruments. In this scene the Child is represented as a new-born, placed on the ground - mostly on a hem of the Virgin's robe, on a heap of straw or in a manger.

The painting by Hugo van der Goes, the so-called *Portinari altarpiece* at the Uffizi (*Figure 156*), offers a paradigmatic example of this iconography.⁹⁰⁵ The Child, on the

⁹⁰³ See RÉAU 1955-59, II, p. 233-236; LEXIKON 1968-76, II, pp. 103-119. A study that summarises the development of the iconographic theme of the “Adoration of the shepherds” is MONTE ET AL. 2007, pp. 123-165.

⁹⁰⁴ LUKE 2:8.

⁹⁰⁵ Hugo van der Goes; *Portinari Altarpiece*, 1477-78; 263x608 cm; oil on panel; Museo degli Uffizi; Florence. See ATANÁZIO 1989; KOSTER 2000; KOSTER 2007, *passim*.

naked ground, emanates rays of light and is surrounded by the Virgin, saint Joseph, a number of angels and the shepherds, all of them in an act of adoration.

The painting by Titian, as we have seen, presents some peculiar elements. The first and most important is the gesture of the Virgin, who is uncovering the naked body of the Child from the swaddling clothes and showing it to the shepherds. This fact is not described in the Gospels, but it appears particularly relevant in the composition.

The second element is the singular presence of the two children holding a candle. They are climbing the ruins of the stable and observing the scene with surprised expressions. These two details had been overlooked by the scholars, but they might reveal something more about the literary source of this image.

To depict the “Adoration of the shepherds”, most of the XVth and early XVIth centuries artists started from the visual tradition of the “Nativity” and then built on that by adding elements. In the Venetian *milieu* close to Titian, we can consider as a significant example the *Adoration of the shepherds* by Giorgione (*Figure 157*), painted at the very beginning of the XVIth century.⁹⁰⁶ This work and the one by van der Goes present a similar scene: the Child on the ground, the shepherds humbly paying their respect, the Virgin and Joseph kneeling and praying. Most of the *Adorations* painted between the XVth and the first half of the XVIth century - in Central-Italy, in Venice, beyond the Alps - maintain the same elements and the same attitudes.

The main literary source for this representation of the scene can be recognized in the *Revelations* of saint Bridget.⁹⁰⁷ The saint describes her visions of the nativity in these words:

⁹⁰⁶ Giorgione; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1505-10; 90,8x110,5 cm; oil on panel; National Gallery of Art; Washington. See TIETZE 1949, pp. 11-20; FREEDBERG S. 1993, pp. 51-71. For a study focused on the theme of the “Adoration of the shepherds”, its origin, iconography and visual tradition in Venice, see MONTE ET AL. 2007, pp. 123-175.

⁹⁰⁷ Bridget of Sweden (c. 1303-1373) was a Swedish mystic and saint who founded the order of the Bridgettines nuns and monks. Since the age of ten, she received visions that she would record in her *Revelationes coelestes*. The text was translated into Latin by her confessor Peter Olafsson, prior of Alvastrå, and Matthias, the canon Linköping, in 1373. This collection of visions became popular in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance. For a study of the life of the saint, see BUTKOVICH 1973; for its representations in art, see SVANBERG 2009, pp. 161-169.

«But yet, at once, I saw that glorious infant lying on the earth, naked and glowing in the greatest of neatness. His flesh was most clean of all filth and uncleanness. [...] When therefore the Virgin felt that she had now given birth, at once, having bowed her head and joined her hands, with great dignity and reverence she adored the boy and said to him: “Welcome, my God, my Lord, and my Son!”».⁹⁰⁸

We can find all of the visual references: the Child on the ground, naked, the light irradiating from his body and the worshipping posture of the Holy Family.⁹⁰⁹ As we have anticipated, this same iconography of the nativity was often applied to the depiction of the adoration of the shepherds. But the *Revelations* of saint Bridget also describes the very moment of the shepherds visit to the new-born Saviour.

In her study, Vida Hull comments on the book *The sexuality of Christ in Renaissance art and in modern oblivion* by Leo Steinberg arguing that the work of saint Bridget popularized the image of the nudity of the Child more than the scholar had recognized.⁹¹⁰

In fact, the *Revelations* contains a passage that in her opinion has been overlooked by the literature, namely the moment in which the shepherds observe the infant to determine its gender:

⁹⁰⁸ BRIGITTA (1373) 2006-15, III, p. 250-251.

⁹⁰⁹ This characteristic would become predominant in the nocturne *Nativities*. To enhance the supernatural glow of the body of Christ, the scene was set in the night. This kind of representation would become more and more popular during the XVIth and the XVIIth century. Among the most exquisite examples we might mention the early *Nativity* by Geertgen tot Sint Jans (c. 1465-c. 1495), dated 1490 and now at the National Gallery of London, the one by Gerard David at the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna (c. 1495), the so-called *Night* by Correggio at the Gemäldegalerie of Dresden (1525-30). It is also worth to mention the works of Hugo van der Goes. Besides his masterpiece at the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, an *Adoration of the shepherds* (c. 1480) depicted with a “day-for-night” effect, he was supposed to have painted night scenes of the *Nativity*, but they are mostly copies or doubtful attributions such as the anonymous *Nativity at night* (c. 1500) at the National Trust or the *Nativity at night* (1520-30) at the National Gallery of London. See STEINHARDT-HIRSCH 2008, pp. 131-141.

⁹¹⁰ While Steinberg claims that the nudity of Christ had a theological meaning and expressed the devotional emphasis on his humanity, Hull proposes the *Revelations* as the major source for referring to the genitals of the Son of God. See STEINBERG 1983; HULL 1993, pp. 77-112.

«At the same place where the Virgin Mary and Joseph were adoring the boy in the cradle, I also saw the shepherds, who had been watching their flocks, coming so they could look at the child and adore it. When they saw the child, they first wanted to find out if it was a male or a female, for the angels had announced to them that the saviour of the world had been born, and they had not said that it was a savioress. Then the Virgin Mary showed to them the nature and the male sex of the child. At once they adored him with great awe and joy. Afterward they returned, praising and glorifying God for all they had heard and seen»⁹¹¹

The emphasis on the gender of the Child is visually represented by the gesture of “unveiling” his naked body in front of the shepherds. It would go beyond the means of this study to reconstruct the development of the iconography of the “unveiling” - or, we might argue, the “revealing” - of Christ, which is more problematic and complex than we might expect. In fact, is argued by Hull: «artists transferred the image of the revelation of the sex of the saviour from the Brigittine context of Christ’s Nativity and the Adoration of the Shepherds to other contexts, such as Adoration of the Magi, devotional images of the Madonna and Child, or sacred conversations».⁹¹²

But asserting that all of the images including the Virgin who is uncovering the body of her Child derived from that specific description means to ignore the existence of at least another category of images in which the gesture seems not be related to the *Revelations*. The so-called *Madonna of the veil* by Raphael - known in different copies and variations - is the most renowned example of an iconography in which the act of unveiling has been interpreted with a different meaning, completely separated from the episode of the shepherds. In fact, when the Virgin is uncovering - or covering? -

⁹¹¹ BRIGITTA (1373) 2006-15, III, p. 253.

⁹¹² This act is represented in scenes with the “Holy Family” such as Raphael’s *Madonna of Loreto* or *Madonna of the veil* (1511-2), known in many versions, Sebastiano del Piombo’s *Madonna of the veil* (1533-35) at the Capodimonte Museum, or Lorenzo Lotto’s *Holy Family with saint Catherine* (1533) at the Accademia Carrara; in scenes with the “Adoration of the Magi” like the one dated at the end of XVth century and questionably attributed to Hugo van der Goes, now at the Victoria Art Gallery, the *Adoration of the kings* (1490-95) by Gerard David at the Alte Pinakothek of Munich or the popular variations on the theme painted by the Bassano family in the second half of the XVIth century. See HULL 1993, p. 98, *passim*.

Christ with the veil, this is gesture appears as a foreshadowing of the death shroud.⁹¹³ This argument is supported by the variation on the theme in which the mother is lifting the veil above the sleeping Child, a common prefiguration of his Passion and his death. We can consider this as a parallel development of the motive in question, a different iconography with different theological implications.

For what concerns the actual representations of the scene in which the shepherds control the gender of the Child described in the *Revelations*, we must acknowledge that they appear sporadically both in Italy and in Flanders. Hull gathered some early Italian examples of this iconography, but she did not mention Titian's invention for the Duke of Urbino.⁹¹⁴ However, we should recognize that this iconography - or one derived from it - had a particular outburst in the Venetian art and became, at the end of the XVIth century, the most represented.⁹¹⁵ Regarding this, we must mention the remarkable fortune of this type of representation in the Bassano's family production.

Bassano's workshop was highly specialized in certain scenes of a pastoral atmosphere, and the "Adoration of the shepherds" was one of the most popular. In the many variations on the theme, painted mostly in the second half of the XVIth century, we see the recurrent motive of the Virgin unveiling Christ. This motive was often combined with the night setting and the glow emanated by the body of the Child, usually the only source of light for the scene.

Regarding our topic, we must focus on the earliest *Adorations* painted by Jacopo Bassano, which show a particular attention to Titian's invention from 1532-33. For instance, the *Adoration* dated 1546 and now part of the Royal Collection Trust borrows some exact motives (*Figure 158*), such as the shepherd who is removing his hat or the

⁹¹³ See PARIS 1983-84, pp. 124-125; BELLAVITIS 2009, pp. 123-124.

⁹¹⁴ Among these, we should mention the *Adoration of the shepherds* (1511-12) painted by Sebastiano del Piombo preserved at the Fitzwilliam Museum; the drawing by Domenico Campagnola (1500-1564) at the Louvre, showing the Virgin uncovering Christ with both hands; the engraving by Giulio Bonasone after Giulio Romano dated between 1531 and 1576; the illumination of the so-called *Farnese Hours* manuscript (1546) created by Giulio Clovio (1498-1578) for Giulio Farnese and now at the Morgan Library & Museum.

⁹¹⁵ There are examples by Bonifacio de' Pitati (1487-1553); Andrea Schiavone (c. 1520-1563); Lambert Sustris (c. 1515-1584), Dutch artist who worked with Titian; Jacopo Tintoretto (1518-1594); Paolo Veronese (1528-1588); the Greek painter El Greco (1541-1614), who studied and absorbed the art of Titian, Tintoretto and Bassano.

dilapidated thatch of the stable, and adapts others, like the Madonna unwrapping the Child from the swaddling clothes, the kneeling man holding the legs of the lamb, and the other shepherd who is arriving from the extreme right of the composition, who is looking back over his shoulder.⁹¹⁶ The painting contains also other references, among which Dürer's prints and a fresco by Pordenone, but Titian was undoubtedly the main source. Moreover, the *Adoration* at the Gallerie dell'Accademia of Venice (*Figure 159*), dated 1548, might be related to Titian's invention for the general composition and the return of some key elements: the unveiling Madonna, the shepherd removing his hat in sign of respect, the setting that merges the decrepit stable and sole classical ruins, but especially the figures of the donkey and the ox entering the scene from the right.⁹¹⁷ We can affirm that, in the genesis of his widely appreciated composition, Bassano relied on the work of Titian and its popularization via the print by Giovanni Britto.

But there is another element of Titian's invention that might be related to the *Revelations* and that would strengthen the correlation between the print by Britto and the *predella* by Pourbus. In fact, in the visions of saint Bridget, the one related to the birth of Jesus describes another detail:

«When they had entered the cave, and after the ox and the ass had been tied to the manger, the old man went outside and brought to the Virgin a lighted candle and fixed it in the wall and went outside in order not to be personally present at the birth. [...] And while she was thus in prayer, I saw the One lying in her womb then move; and then and there, in a moment and the twinkling of an eye, she gave birth to a Son, from whom there went out such great and ineffable light and splendour that the sun could not be compared to it. Nor did that candle that the old man had put in place give light at all because that divine splendour totally annihilated the material splendour of the candle».⁹¹⁸

In this passage the light of the material world, represented by the fire of the candle, is obliterated by the shine of the celestial glow of the body of the Son of God. A candle,

⁹¹⁶ Jacopo Bassano; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1546; 139,1x218,5 cm; oil on canvas; Royal Collection Trust; London. See MONTE ET AL. 2007, pp. 145-146.

⁹¹⁷ Jacopo Bassano; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1548; 96x141 cm; oil on canvas; Gallerie dell'Accademia; Venice. See MONTE ET AL. 2007, pp. 145-146.

⁹¹⁸ BRIGITTA (1373) 2006-15, III, p. 251.

helpful tool at night, in the stable where the Virgin was going to give birth, becomes completely useless.⁹¹⁹ This episode from the *Revelations* could explain why, in Titian's invention, the two boys who are curiously observing the scene hold a candle.⁹²⁰ Even though the image does not fit the text exactly, it is the combination of the many elements together that suggests the reference to the aforementioned text. In the *predella* by Pourbus the connection to the visions of saint Bridget is even more explicit, since it is indeed the figure of Joseph the one who is arriving in the stable from the extreme right of the painting while carrying a burning candle. This compresence of the unveiling Madonna showing the body of the Saviour to the shepherds and the candle might imply that Pourbus had referred to the print after Titian with a precise awareness of its iconography and literary source.

Before moving back to the context of Southern Netherlands, it is due to spend some more words on Bassano. It is very common that, in the nocturnal *Adorations*, there is someone, usually a boy, holding a burning candle or blowing on an ember which fire pales in comparison to the light of the Infant.⁹²¹ This motive, that is almost a trademark of the Bassanos *Adorations* and therefore had a great circulation in the European courts of the XVIIth century, might be rooted in the art of Titian adapting the writings of saint Bridget.

⁹¹⁹ A candle or a lantern is often present in the Northern-European "Nativities". These objects show the disproportion between the terrestrial light and the real *lux mundi* brought by Christ to the world. The stress on the different kinds of lights does not appear just in saint Bridget's *Revelations*. The splendour of the holy light is described in the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (13:2). See MONTE ET AL. 2007, p. 153.

⁹²⁰ The dilapidated state of the Pitti and the Oxford versions prevents an in-depth analysis of the use of light in the paintings. In fact, it is not clear whether or not Titian gave some emphasis to the light surrounding the Child.

⁹²¹ The list is too long, but here a couple of examples in which the correlation is particularly strong: two boys who are climbing up the wrecked stable are holding and blowing on a candle in the *Adoration of the shepherds* non the church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice (1590-91); and in Leandro Bassano's *Adoration* now at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (1592-94) we see both the climbing boy who holds a candle and a kneeling boy, in the corner, blowing on an ember.

Examples of *Adorations of the shepherds*: different traditions, different translations

Apart for some scattered examples, we can argue that this motive was not part of the Flemish visual tradition, especially in relation to the theme of the “Adoration of the shepherds”.

An almost unique instance in the Netherlandish painting of the first half of the XVIth century is the *Adoration of the shepherds* by Bernard van Orley (*Figure 160*),⁹²² court painter of Mary of Hungary and master of Michiel Coxcie. On the perspective of a classical gallery, the Virgin, in profile, lifts with two hands a white sheet, uncovering the naked Child lying on the manger. Two shepherds enter from the left with the ox and the donkey, and they bend over Jesus, observing him and pointing at him. A third shepherd, or maybe Joseph, arrives from the right of the scene and bends the knee in front of the miracle.

It seems that van Orley’s painting might have been an early representation of the scene from the *Revelations*, if we consider the close inspection that the shepherds are performing on the body and the genitals of Christ. However, this early depiction of the subject does not depend on Titian’s invention. This gesture of lifting the sheet - or the veil - with both hands and to hold the cloth in front of the viewer finds a meaningful antecedent in the well-known *Madonna of the veil* by Raphael (*Figure 161*).⁹²³ This iconography had an important impact on the artists who were working in Rome and Florence such as the aforementioned Sebastiano del Piombo, Giorgio Vasari,⁹²⁴ or the engravers Giulio Bonasone (1498-1576) and Battista Franco (1510-1561).

Therefore, van Orley seemed to have adopted the Raphaelesque motive to represent the moment in which the shepherds were verifying the gender of the Saviour. Conversely, even though the art of Raphael has always been important to his artistic

⁹²² Bernard van Orley; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1525; 100x170,5 cm; oil on panel; Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; Brussels. Listed in the catalogue of the paintings by van Orley by FRIEDLÄNDER 1967-76, VIII, p. 105.

⁹²³ Raphael; *Madonna of the veil*; 1511-12; 120x90 cm; oil on panel; Musée Condé; Chantilly. For the painting and its numerous replicas and variations, see the recent LORETO 2021.

⁹²⁴ For instance, the *Adoration of the shepherds* at Galleria Borghese in Rome, dated c. 1550.

development, Michiel Coxcie opted for the print after Titian, and this composition seems to have had more fortune.

For instance, we can find an identical copy of a poor quality in the cloister of Saint Barbara of Ghent, from an unknown painter and dated to the end of the XVIth century (*Figure 162*),⁹²⁵ and a peculiar painting in the church of Saint Pancras in the city of Sterrebeek (*Figure 163*).⁹²⁶ In the latter, the painter did not refer to the print after Titian, but to the adaptation made by Coxcie in 1550 (*Figure 71*). The unknown artist disassembled various elements of Coxcie's *grisaille* and rearranged them in his composition: he resized the kneeling man on the right, he flipped and moved to the centre the figure of Joseph, he kept the Child and the manger, but he did put the Virgin on the left, in prayer and not in the act of unveiling Jesus. These examples show that the iconography was circulating both through the engraving after Titian and the adaptation by Coxcie - and probably, by others.

In order to discuss the different uses of this model, we should move back to Pieter Pourbus. In 1564, six years before he finished the *predella*, Pourbus likely painted the so-called *Polyptych of Hemelsdale*, now in the church of Saint Giles in Bruges (*Figure 164*).⁹²⁷ This problematic work was traditionally attributed both to Frans and to Pieter Pourbus, and the scholars are still divided about the authorship, especially because of the many restorations.⁹²⁸ In general, it can be said that this work was created in Pieter Pourbus' workshop, with a high likelihood that Frans the Elder had a considerable share in it. Anyway, the central panel represents an *Adoration of the shepherds* with a vertical composition, in which the Virgin unveils the Child and brings the other hand to her chest. The donkey and the ox are bending the necks over the head of Jesus, and a group of four shepherds are bringing humble gifts - a basket of eggs, a lamb - and carrying musical instruments. The Holy Family stands next to a dilapidated stable,

⁹²⁵ Anonymous after Titian; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1590; 59,5x84,5 cm; oil on panel; Sint-Barbaraklooster; Ghent.

⁹²⁶ Anonymous; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1551-1600; 229x197 cm; oil on panel; Sint-Pancratiuskerk; Sterrebeek.

⁹²⁷ Pieter Pourbus; *Polyptych of Hemelsdale*; 1564; 162x516 cm in total; oil on panel; Sint-Gilliskerk; Bruges. See BRUGES 1984, pp. 170-176.

⁹²⁸ Carl van de Velde opted for a hybrid composition and the collaboration between Pieter and Frans Pourbus. VELDE 1975, I, p. 113.

while in the background we can see a series of classical ruins. In this case, even though the act of unveiling is present, there are no traces of Titian's model. The verticality of the format and the composition in which the figures are positioned in half-circle around Christ, with a strong disproportion between the shepherds closer to the viewer and the ones further, differentiates the invention from the one by the Venetian.

As we have mentioned in regard to the example of van Orley, there were surely different visual sources for the unveiling of Christ, whether or not it was used to directly represent the scene from the *Revelations*. However, after the *Adoration* of 1564, Pourbus found a different source for his *predella*. It is difficult to understand the reasons for this choice. It is possible that, since the 1570 *grisaille* was supposed to represent specifically the scene from the *Revelations*, as demonstrated by the presence of the Joseph with the candle, Pourbus opted for a model that was depicting the same theme, even though he did not follow the invention of the boys holding the candle.

Nonetheless, the artist reused Britto's print when he painted one of his masterpieces: the so-called *Dambouder triptych* at the church of Our Lady in Bruges (*Figure 165*).⁹²⁹ The devotional triptych was commissioned to the painter by Joos de Damhouder (1507-1581), jurist and one of the most influent citizens from Bruges. Made member of the Council of Finance in 1552 by Mary of Hungary, de Damhouder sided with the Spanish monarchy and with the Catholics, also becoming counsellor of Charles V and Philip II. The central panel of the triptych represents an *Adoration of the shepherds* in which the figure of the Virgin reiterates almost identically the one of the *predella*, therefore the print after Titian. Other elements from the *predella* are repeated, such as the ox bending the knee and the long-eared donkey, and the two shepherds coming in from the background carrying long sticks (probably farmer's tools) and pointing at the Child. Even though the figure of Joseph in the work by Pourbus does not coincide with the one in the print, we can spot many similarities: the body leaning on the right arm, the diagonal position, but especially the pensive and worried attitude.

Pourbus took distance from his model. He reorganized the figures and the composition in a new artwork that preserves just what he found most interesting and

⁹²⁹ Pieter Pourbus; *Dambouder triptych*; 1574; 143x204,5 cm in total; oil on panel; Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk; Bruges. See BRUGES 1984, pp. 198-202.

useful: the unveiling Madonna. We are about to analyse which other painters explored this motive, and how.

As we have already introduced with the case of Bernard van Orley, Titian's model was not the only one that was considered to depict the "Adoration of the shepherds", with or without a reference to the *Revelations*. And not in every case the unveiling of Christ had its antecedent in the invention of the Venetian.

Some important interpretations of the *Adoration of the shepherds* were painted by Frans Floris, who created a crowded composition in which the Virgin kneels behind the manger surrounded by shepherds and shepherdesses. Instead of a horizontal or a vertical composition, the ones painted by Floris develop in depth, with many layers of characters positioned un half-circle around the Holy Family. In one early version of this subject, dated about 1560 and now in Prague (*Figure 166*),⁹³⁰ the Virgin is presented in the act of adoring the Child, who is wrapped in swaddling clothes. But the most interesting *Adoration* for the present discussion is the one dated 1568 and commissioned for the Antwerp cathedral by the Guild of Gardeners, Fruiterers and Basket Weavers (*Figure 167*).⁹³¹ The structure of the composition recalls the one that he had already experimented in the Prague panel but, in this case, there are two meaningful differences: the scene is set in a sort of classical ruin converted into a stable;⁹³² and the Virgin is uncovering the body of Christ while bringing the other hand to her chest. In his analysis of the painting, Wouk writes that the gesture of lifting the cloth, that would become an important iconography in the Counter Reformation, was introduced by Floris in the Netherlandish art.⁹³³ This statement does not correspond with the analysis of the examples we have listed so far. One might argue that it was the privileged position of the painting on one altars in the Antwerp cathedral to make it so important for the development of this motive in Flemish art. Even though the painting was removed from its location less than one year after it was installed because

⁹³⁰ Frans Floris; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1560; 130,5x159 cm; oil on panel; Národní Galerie; Prague. See WOUK 2018, pp. 524-525.

⁹³¹ Frans Floris; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1568; 249x193 cm; oil on panel; KMSKA; Antwerp. See WOUK 2018, pp. 522-532.

⁹³² The the arcades and the bricks that structure the architecture might recall the Basilica of Maxentius, one of the biggest ruins in Rome, or the Baths of Caracalla.

⁹³³ WOUK 2018, p. 522.

of the Iconoclasm, it was re-installed on the main altar of the same church in 1585, after the Catholic reconquest of Antwerp.⁹³⁴ However, it remains debatable both that the unveiling gesture was introduced by Floris, and that this altar had a meaningful impact during the time we are considering here.

In anticipation to the analysis that we will later on develop on Floris' "painterly" style, it is worth to mention some formal characteristics of this *Adoration of the shepherds*. The colour palette is oriented towards earthy tones, dominated by browns and oranges. Surrounded by warm colours, the cold paleness of the Child and the greyish vest of the Virgin look even more transcendent. The brushstrokes appear visible and bold, "among the loosest in Floris's oeuvre",⁹³⁵ and this sense of roughness was explained as appropriate to the pastoral tone of the scene, dominated by an atmosphere of humility. Giving up the meticulous, glazed surface typical of the Netherlandish art, Floris brings the material values of the painting to the attention of the viewer while adopting a technique that appears innovative in the environment of the churches of Antwerp. Is it Titianesque though? We will discuss on this aspect later when we will focus on Floris' mythologies.

Another artist who showed an interest in the gesture of the unveiling of Christ in his *Adoration of the shepherds* and who represented this theme on different occasions is the painter Maerten de Vos, who we have mentioned in relation to Titian's *Ecce Homo*.

Unlike the Flemish artists that we have mentioned before, Maerten de Vos chose the night setting for some of his *Adorations*. This option was not fairly uncommon in the Low Countries during the second half of the XVIth century, while in Italy it was often adopted, especially by the Bassano family and after the example of Correggio.⁹³⁶ According to Zweite, de Vos did not rely on Italian models to paint his nocturnal scenes, but he tied to the tradition founded by the generation of Hugo van der Goes. Among his versions of the *Adoration*, he used the motive of the unveiling of Christ in different occasions: the central panel of the triptych in the cathedral of Tournai (*ante*

⁹³⁴ The reason of this choice is unknown, but the painting, part of a triptych, had been removed from the chapel on 22 June 1568. It was reinstalled in the cathedral, on the main altar in 1585, after the Catholic reconquest of Antwerp. See WOUK 2018, pp. 528-531.

⁹³⁵ WOUK 2018, p. 524.

⁹³⁶ ZWEITE 1980, p. 315.

1582),⁹³⁷ the *Adoration of the shepherds* in a private collection, signed and dated 1593,⁹³⁸ and the *Nativity* now at the KMSKA (c. 1600) (*Figure 168, 169, 170*).⁹³⁹ The latter is the painting in which the night-setting is expressed by an intense *chiaroscuro*, and not by a “day-for-night” solution. Here, the glow of the body of Christ is one of the two sources of light in the scene, and it is the angel the character who lifts the veil.

These inventions were replicated in engravings by Jan Sadeler I, but another interesting addition to the group is the engraving by Jan Collaert II (*Figure 171*) after a design by Maerten de Vos.⁹⁴⁰ This print does not coincide with the aforementioned inventions. In fact, this is a horizontal composition set in front of a classical building that we have partially seen in other works by de Vos.⁹⁴¹ In this engraving it is interesting to notice the presence of the shepherd arriving from the right and taking off his hat, which was one of the most popular and reused elements of Titian’s invention. While the figure does not exactly coincide with the Venetian’s, its position in the space and the tension of the gesture - the legs depicted in the act of walking, the hand dynamically removing the hat - seems to be reminiscent of the Venetian motive, probably through the adaptation of other Flemish painters.

To end this showcase of *Adorations*, in the church of Saint John the Baptist at the Béguinage in Brussels there is a painting,⁹⁴² doubtfully attributed to Adam van Noort (1562-1641), that seems to connect different inventions into one, maintaining as the centre of the composition the unveiling Virgin (*Figure 172*).

While the general composition derives from the 1598 print after Maerten de Vos, all of the characters are slightly moved around and changed, even though the elements

⁹³⁷ Maerten de Vos; *Triptych with the Adoration of the shepherds*; ante 1582; 225x290 cm in total; oil on panel; Tournai cathedral; Tournai. See ZWEITE p. 309.

⁹³⁸ Maerten de Vos; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1593; 98x66 cm; oil on panel; private collection. See ZWEITE 1980, p. 299.

⁹³⁹ Maerten de Vos; *Nativity*; c. 1600; 262x211,5 cm; oil on panel; KMSKA; Antwerp. See ZWEITE 1980, pp. 314-315.

⁹⁴⁰ Jan Collaert II; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1598; 179x215 mm; engraving; british Museum; London.

⁹⁴¹ The coffered barrel-vault is the same represented in the 1600 *Adoration* at the KMSKA, while the structure divided in three of the building recurs also in the Tournai version.

⁹⁴² Adam van Noort (?); *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1591-1600; 76x106 cm; oil on panel; Sint-Jan-Baptistkerk; Brussels.

are the same: saint Joseph on the left, the three angels around the manger, the two shepherds arriving with their tools transformed in two shepherdess, the man with a dog who is taking off his hat in respect to the Child. The only additions are the kneeling man, who has a lot in common with Titian's hat-shepherd - the position of the legs repositioned into kneeling, the physiognomy, the small barrel at the belt (*gourde de berger*) -, and the scene of the "Annunciation to the Virgin" at the top-left corner, a sort of counterpart to the "Annunciation to the shepherds" at the top-right. This composition (Figure 173) is obviously modelled on the print by Jacopo Caraglio after Titian's *Annunciation* (Figure 85).⁹⁴³ It is an extreme simplification of the Venetian's explosion of light and holy appearance of angels to surprise the humble Virgin during his prayers. The painter kept the figure of the Virgin and the one of the angel, slightly changing the position of their arms but not their relation or their attitudes towards the space.

A similar approach of extreme reduction and simplification is not unusual in the copies after prints. We might mention the *grisaille* adaptation made by Coxcie after the *Adoration of the shepherds*, or the panel with the *Annunciation* now at the Escorial. An interesting and so-far unrecognized example of this procedure is the panel with *The miracle of Lepanto: the vision of pope Pius V*,⁹⁴⁴ painted by Pierre d'Argent (1546-1620), painter and copyist at service of Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, great collector of Titian's art.⁹⁴⁵ On the verso of the painting, we can find an *Annunciation to the Virgin* (Figure 174), a *grisaille* in which just the flesh is painted in skin-tones.⁹⁴⁶ The composition copies the one painted by Titian for the church of San Salvador between 1559 and

⁹⁴³ The print had been also recorded in the list of famous engravings after Titian's works redacted by Dominicus Lampsonius in his aforementioned letter.

⁹⁴⁴ Pierre d'Argent; *The miracle of Lepanto: the vision of pope Pius V*; 1575-80: 202x128 cm; oil on panel; Eglise Saint-Matthias; Cromary. See BESANÇON 2017-2018, pp. 170-171.

⁹⁴⁵ Pierre d'Argent worked for his palace in Besançon and in the gallery there were four portraits by his hand. Frans Floris, Michiel Coxcie and Willelm Key refused to admit the Burgundian painter in their workshops when Granvelle's secretary Antoine Morillon attempted to negotiate a place in the studios. See WOUK 2018: pp. 184, 325

⁹⁴⁶ This solution was not uncommon. Gerard David left a beautiful example of this tradition in the panels representing the *Archangel Gabriel* and the *Virgin Annunciate* (c. 1510) now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

1564 and translated into print by Cornelis Cort in 1565-66 (*Figure 175*).⁹⁴⁷ D'Argent eliminated the crowd of festive angels bursting from the clouds and transformed the background opening on a landscape into a closed room fading in the dark. While the Virgin and Gabriel are copied almost manically in all of the folds of their clothing, all of the rest is flattened and minimalist. The painter, mostly a copyist, was faithful to the source to the limits of his craftsmanship and the painting's function, namely the *grisaille verso* of a diptych.

4.1.3 The unveiling of Christ and the role of the Virgin: a theme of the Counter-Reformation?

This case-study on the *Adorations* sheds some light both on aspects of Titian's reception in the Southern Netherlands and on the problem of the reiteration of a motive until it loses its original meaning.

First of all, the religious works by Titian were copied or incorporated in the artists' vocabulary mostly through prints. As we have discussed, around 1559 all of the documented paintings that Titian had produced for the Habsburgs were moved to Spain, and the artists who had access to the original were likely the court painters like Coxcie or Anthonis Mor. In fact, both of them showed a deep knowledge of the originals and decided to approach the art of the Venetian with different intentions. Once we move further from the court of Brussels, the knowledge of the originals and the incentive to look at Titian's art lessened. Under the reign of Margaret of Parma and the generals Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, also known as Duke of Alva, and Alexander Farnese (1545-1592), Duke of Parma, the splendour and the centrality of the court diminished drastically. Artists like Pieter Pourbus, Frans Floris and Maerten de Vos were working for a more diverse clientele, especially wealthy merchants, guilds, and the clergy.⁹⁴⁸ Therefore, when they use prints after Titian's invention, we should

⁹⁴⁷ Cornelis Cort after Titian; *Annunciation*; c. 1566; 419x276 mm; engraving; British Museum; London. See THE ILLUSTRATED BARTSCH 1978-, LII, p. 31; THE NEW HOLLISTEIN 2000, part I, pp. 48-52; LÜDEMANN 2016, pp. 202-203.

⁹⁴⁸ However, we should remember that one of the most influent patrons of Frans Floris was the cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, also patron of Titian.

not consider it as the sign of the interest in the artist himself. This approach rather shows a peculiar attention towards a certain type of Italian art, the one that was most efficiently incorporating and translating the *all'antica* models, but also the one that was accessible through printed sources.

Therefore, Titian's art was merged together with Raphael's, Michelangelo's and many other Central Italian artists - as in the case of Coxcie -, and his most popular prints around the mid-XVIth century were the ones derived from models of the 1530s and 1540s, the years in which he was experimenting with classical models in the least subtle way.

Concerning the unveiling of Christ and the *Revelations*, Coxcie and Pourbus seem to have consciously chosen Britto's print after Titian in order to represent this specific episode of the popular book by saint Bridget. The presence of the elements described in the account of the nativity and of the inquiry on the Child's gender demonstrate that the print was indeed selected for that reason. We must also consider that, before Coxcie's and Pourbus' depictions of the scene, Netherlandish *Adoration of the shepherds* did not typically include the act of unveiling the Child. But, in the course of the XVIth century, this gesture would start being inherently associated to this episode to the point that, in the XVIIth century, it became part of the iconography for most of the painters of the Low Countries.⁹⁴⁹

This motive, however, seems to have lost its original meaning and iconographic reference, or to have been incorporated in another one, to adapt to different necessities. Apart from the prefiguration of the shroud related to the Raphaelesque tradition, which was probably an important symbolic reference, we must introduce some issues related to the image debate and suggest another possible meaning for this kind of representation in the context of the Counter-Reformation.

There is a specific criticism that can be applied to these representations of the "Adoration of the shepherds. As we will discuss more in detail in the following chapter, whereas protestants were doubting the legitimacy of the religious images themselves, the Catholics were aiming to purge them from whatever heresy or indecorous element. Joannes Molanus (1533-1585), a Leuven Catholic theologian who wrote an influential

⁹⁴⁹ We might consider the *Adorations* made by Peter Paul Rubens such as the one at Sint-Pauluskerk, Antwerp (1608), or by Gerard Seghers, Jacob Jordaens, Gaspar de Crayer and many others.

treatise on images in 1570, expressed his criticism on the representation of nudity, included children nudity.⁹⁵⁰ In his book, he writes:

«It is well known that artists often paint or sculpt the infant Jesus naked; but for this they are widely criticized by men of no little piety and wisdom. For what sort of edification can there be in this nakedness? All one can hope is that children are not endangered by this or little ones brought to harm. [...] Certainly, if these painters should look at the work of past time, they would soon observe that the boy Jesus was decently and modestly portrayed then, and realize how far they have degenerated from the simplicity of their ancestors».⁹⁵¹

When he was illustrating representations of naked Jesus as harmful, he probably did have some paintings of the “Nativity” in mind. The Child’s nudity was to Molanus as dangerous for the children as naked women’s bodies were dangerous for the adult Catholic believer. His condemn of licentious paintings was published in 1570, therefore after the various depictions by Coxcie, Pourbous and Floris, but before Maerten de Vos’ variations on the theme, dated to the 1580s and 1590s. We must say that, even though the Child is stripped from his swaddling clothes, his genitals often result hidden by the position of the legs or by a carefully placed veil or piece of cloth. It is always difficult to ascertain the exact impact of this kind of religious debate on art - except for the cases of destruction of images. We will analyse, in the chapter on mythological paintings, how this discussion brought the artists to experiment with the concept of *decorum* in order to avoid criticism and “save” their professions.⁹⁵² It seems safe to suggest that the artists who introduced the gesture of unveiling the Child had reasons to doing so and found some visual expedients to avoid being accused of indecorous representation of religious subjects by Catholics.⁹⁵³

⁹⁵⁰ On this topic, see FREEDBERG 1988; JONCKHEERE 2012A.

⁹⁵¹ This translation can be found in FREEDBERG 1971, p. 239.

⁹⁵² Widely discussed in JONCKHEERE 2012A; JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK 2012B.

⁹⁵³ One example is analysed by Karolien de Clippel in her study of the representation of the nude in Antwerp between 1563 and 1585. Frans Floris’ *Fall of the rebel angels* (1554, KMSKA) appears more daring than his later *Last judgements*, dated after 1565. In those years the Council of Trent condemned Michelangelo’s *Last judgement* for obscenity, and this condemnation had an impact on the depiction of religious scenes in the Catholic territories. See CLIPPEL 2012, pp. 53-64.

However, on the other hand, the scene of the “Nativity” was important for the Catholics on different levels, and the Virgin’s gesture might have carried a more profound meaning. The scene described in Luke’s Gospel t was used by the Counter-Reformation theologians to justify the representation of Christ, who was made flesh and to God’s “image and likeness”; and the act of unveiling the body of the Saviour might have become a symbol of *revelatio* in relation to the Virgin Mary, as we are going to briefly suggest.

The image of taking off the veil from something was used in the Bible to mean the revelation of a higher truth. In this case, the New Gospel in the figure of Jesus.⁹⁵⁴ It is meaningful that Mary was the one appointed to reveal the body of Christ in its humanity, because of her role of *mediatrix* between the believer and God, a role that was refused by the Protestant doctrine.⁹⁵⁵

It would take further research to fully demonstrate the idea that the unveiling of Christ by the Virgin served the purpose to reaffirm a Catholic dogma in the turbulent religious context of the Southern Netherlands of the end of the century. For instance, if we consider the religion of the painters, we notice that Pieter Pourbus seems to have been Catholic until 1578, when Bruges became Calvinist and he probably converted, like his son, to this denomination.⁹⁵⁶ His depictions of the *Adoration of the shepherds* with the “revealing” Madonna predate this supposed conversion, but it is not enough to draw some conclusions. While Floris has been Catholic all of his life, Maerten de Vos was notoriously a Protestant who converted to Catholicism after Antwerp surrendered to the Spanish authorities in 1585.⁹⁵⁷ Apart from the *Adoration* of Tournai, which was stylistically dated *ante* 1582 by Zweite,⁹⁵⁸ the other paintings seem to be posterior to his conversion.

Thus, whereas the nudity of the Child was considered indecorous by Catholic theologians, it served the purpose of illustrating the scene of the *Revelations* and, in combination with the unveiling Virgin, might have had a dogmatic and purely Catholic meaning.

⁹⁵⁴ Some exsmple of these biblical references are mentioned in BELLAVITIS 2009, p. 125.

⁹⁵⁵ See KREITZER 2003, pp. 249-266.

⁹⁵⁶ See BRUGES 1984.

⁹⁵⁷ See ZWEITE 1980.

⁹⁵⁸ ZWEITE 1980, I, p. 309.

This is certainly an interesting topic that deserves further developments but, for what concerns the reception of Titian's *Adoration of the shepherds*, it is possible to propose the following thoughts. Surely the print after Titian's invention had a role in introducing this motive and in anticipating its future fortune, because, as we have argued, it became a benchmark for the artists who would represent the "Adoration of the shepherds" with the motive of the unveiling Virgin, directly or indirectly. We cannot exclude that other sources, such as the well-known Raphaelesque prints circulating - the case of Giulio Bonasone's etching of the subject (*Figure 176*) presents some similarities with Frans Floris' composition -,⁹⁵⁹ might have concurred to spread this motive, but we should recognize that both in Italy with the Bassano's mass production and in the Southern Netherlands, Titian's print had an unexpected and so-far neglected importance.⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵⁹ Giulio Bonasone after Raphael; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1530-60; 290x149 mm; etching; British Museum; London. See MASSARI 1983, p. 167.

⁹⁶⁰ The importance of the Bassanos in spreading certain subjects and compositions in the Netherlands and in Europe was discussed in AIKEMA 2011, pp. 101-138.

5. Mythological painting and Titian in the Southern Netherlands before the age of Rubens

Whereas the *Adoration of the shepherds* is not usually considered a characteristic Titianesque theme, mythological paintings crowded with sensual female nudes are easily linked with the art of the Venetian master. Titian was the painter of the *poesie* for Philip II, a group of masterworks that would become a benchmark for the representation of the Ovidian fables, but also of the mythologies for Alfonso I d'Este - the *Bacchanal of the Andrii*, the *Worship of Venus* and the *Bacchus and Ariadne*, illustrating Philostratus *Eikones*⁹⁶¹ - and of the popular reclined Venus or Danae.⁹⁶²

In retrospect, it seems almost natural to discern an echo of Titian in every painting in which a naked woman is languidly lying on a bed or in a landscape, especially when she is a Venus and she is represented with tactile and flourishing skin. But, as we have said before, the development of the “idea of Titian” as we perceive it was moulded by a long historical process, and it is necessary to analyse every step of it, guarding ourselves against the temptation of anachronistic interpretations.

In the first decades of the XVIIth century, Peter Paul Rubens became the star of the Southern Netherlands' artistic scene. From the 1630s, his profound interest in Titian's art, and particularly in his mythological paintings, was part of his success. He had carefully studied the works of the Venetian through a series of copies in which he challenged himself not just with Titian's compositions but also with his pictorial technique and chromatic values.⁹⁶³ While the copies showed an unprecedented resemblance to the models - even though the hand of Rubens is always visible -, his original mythological paintings also clearly emulated and dialogued with Titian's inventions. For example, the *Venus at the mirror* (1613-14), now at the Liechtenstein

⁹⁶¹ On the relation between the *Bacchanals* and their literary sources, see CAVALLI-BJÖRKMAN 1987, *passim*.

⁹⁶² Apart from the *Danae* that we have discussed already in the first chapter, there is another series of variations on the theme that had a particular fortune, namely the five paintings depicting *Venus and the musician*. See GIORGI 1990; SEEBASS 2002, pp. 21-33.

⁹⁶³ This topic was thoroughly discussed in WOOD J. 2010.

Museum of Vienna,⁹⁶⁴ shows a sensuous woman with golden hair and a lower back so plump and palpable that invites the viewer to touch it. The painting is not conceivable without taking into consideration the painting of a Venus that Titian had sent to Charles V, an invention that had an immense fortune and that was replicated and copied numerous times.⁹⁶⁵ However, it would be misleading to consider Rubens' "idea of Titian" similar to that of any of the Flemish painters working in the second half of the XVIth century. This chapter aims to trace the change of perception and approach to Titian's model in the Southern Netherlands from the XVIth to the XVIIth century, through the bias of the representation of nudity - in particular of *female* nudity - and mythological subjects in the Habsburgs Netherlands. How was this representation of female and mythological nudity shaped by intellectual debates on *images*, and more prosaically, by the peculiar features of the Netherlandish art market?

5.1 The biblical heroines and the pagan goddesses: nudity between religious debate and humanistic claims

The depiction of nudity was already part of the artistic visual tradition of the Netherlands, especially the religious one. In the XVth century, subjects such as "Adam and Eve", the "Last judgement", the "Baptism of Christ" and many scenes of martyrdom included naked figures, whose nudity was justified by the Biblical narration. Since the advent of the XVIth century, the culture of the antique which had started to interest many artists from the Low Countries led to particular attention to the anatomy of the body and the study of the nude according to the canons of *ideal beauty*.⁹⁶⁶ In experimenting with the art of the Italian Renaissance, Flemish painters dealt with new styles and subjects in different ways, and these innovations were directly relevant to contemporary religious debate. The lasciviousness of the representation of the naked

⁹⁶⁴ Peter Paul Rubens; *Venus at the mirror*, 1613-1614; 123x98 cm; oil on panel; Lichtenstein Museum; Vienna. See MADRID 2002-2003, *passim*; WOOD J. 2010, I, pp. 190-197.

⁹⁶⁵ For the discussion on which painting of *Venus* Charles V had received from Titian in 1545, see first chapter. At least thirty variants executed by Titian and his workshop were listed by POGLAYEN-NEUWALL 1934, pp. 358-384.

⁹⁶⁶ See CLIPPEL-CAUTEREN-STIGHELEN 2011, *passim*.

body and the emergence of mythological subjects with erotic and moral connotations were important issues in the XVIth century dispute on images.

In the dispute on the images that characterized the intellectual and the religious life during the XVIth century, nudity was condemned by all the factions involved. Naked figures, especially women, were inherently lascivious and could arouse feelings of lust in the viewer.⁹⁶⁷ The fear of carnality was certainly a fundamental reason for criticizing the representation of nudity, but we need to make some distinctions related to the subjects and the functions of the paintings or, more generally, the artworks.

Religious works were usually the main target of blame, and theologians expressed their concerns on the dangers of sacred images on different levels: while Protestants focused their attention on the way images reduced the Divine to a terrestrial object, both Catholics and their opponents accused indecorous images of perverting the viewer by transforming faith into carnal desire. These concepts are embodied by Protestants in the metaphor of the idol-prostitute, present in the Old Testament and popularized in their writings.⁹⁶⁸ However, for Protestants, the images and their authorship were just part of the problem. The lasciviousness of images and their misrepresentation of the sacred could have been problems created by the artists, but the *abuse* of these images, the idolatry of “inanimate pieces of wood and stone” instead of the Word of God, were perversions of the believers encouraged by the Catholic Church.⁹⁶⁹

These issues were particularly relevant for the nudes presented in a public space, especially the ecclesiastic one, where they were accessible to a wide number of citizens. The most cited controversy about a great display of naked religious figures in an ecclesiastic space is the one regarding the *Last judgement* by Michelangelo in the Sistine

⁹⁶⁷ For the religious debate on the dangers of lustful images, see at least FREEDBERG 1971, pp. 229-245; FREEDBERG 1982, pp. 133-153; DEKONINCK 2011, pp. 109-115.

⁹⁶⁸ In the Old Testament the idols are often described as obscene, and this obscenity was linked to the concept of prostitution. Idols induced to fornication and to “adultery” against the Alliance made with God. See WÉNIN 2005.

⁹⁶⁹ The theological discussion is too complex and long to summarize, but Catholics were defending the cult of images because the veneration passed from the images to the subject that they represented, which were worth to adore. This concept derived from a famous passage by Saint Basil, see LADNER 1953, pp. 1-34.

Chapel, which became subject to censorship from the Church during the Counter-Reformation in the 1560s.⁹⁷⁰ Michelangelo's masterpiece had a great impact on the art of the XVIth century, and the many *Last judgements* which were painted in the Low Countries later on dialogued with the fresco of the Florentine artist.⁹⁷¹ Large panels by Frans Floris, Pieter Pourbus, Christijn van der Broeck (c. 1530- c.1591), Maarten de Vos or Jacob de Backer (1540/1555-c. 1591) ornated churches with crowds of naked bodies in poses that emulated the ones of classical statues and examples from the Renaissance Italian art. This is not the place to discuss in depth the impact of the devastations of the 1566 *Beeldenstorm* and the application of the decrees of the Council of Trent on sacred images,⁹⁷² but we must at least mention that there were substantial differences between altarpieces painted before and after the Iconoclasm.⁹⁷³ Some of them concerned the representation of nude figures - especially the dissimulation of genitals - and others were related to specific iconographic changes meant to avoid misinterpretation of the Holy Scriptures and heresy. Restrictions on what could and couldn't be represented derived from the widely discussed notion of *decorum*, and therefore didn't only concern lasciviousness and nudity, but also a whole range of elements and details that didn't suit biblical characters, as they blurred the boundaries of profane and the sacred.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁷⁰ This fresco was celebrated for its artistic quality and condemned for its lack of *decorum* in shamelessly exhibiting a plethora of genitals. See SCHLITT 2005, pp. 113-149; DEPASQUALE in LOS ANGELES-LONDON 2018-2019, pp. 365-373. For a general view on the topic of the art and Counter-Reformation in Italy, see NAGEL 2005, pp. 385-409.

⁹⁷¹ Paintings of the *Last judgement* were already depicted in Flanders in the XVth century, and they displayed a great number of nude figures, although they were not represented according to the classical anatomic canon. A great example is Hans Memling's monumental triptych with the Last judgement (1467-71) now in National Museum in Gdańsk, Poland. On the fortune of this subject in the XVIth century Low Countries, see HARBISON 1976; CLIPPEL 2012, pp. 53-64

⁹⁷² The subject was addressed in the *De invocatione, veneratione et reliquiis sanctorum et de sacris imaginibus* (Sessio XXV, 3-4 dec. 1563). See the recent SALVIUCCI INSOLERA 2016, *passim*.

⁹⁷³ On the specific topic of the developments of art in the Habsburg Netherlands after the Iconoclasm, see FREEDBERG 1988; JONCKHEERE 2012A; JONCKHEERE-SUYKERBUYK 2012; BLONDÉ-PUTTEVILS 2020A, *passim*.

⁹⁷⁴ For the concept of *decorum* and its importance in the XVIth-century Netherlandish art, see JONCKHEERE 2012A.

However, Counter-Reformation and Protestant discourse on indecorous religious imagery were not restricted to images in public, ecclesiastical spaces. Thus Johannes Molanus expressed the ideas of the most radical Counter-Reformation and denounced religious paintings' indecency in his book *De picturis et imaginibus sacris* (published in Leuven in 1570)⁹⁷⁵ and took aim at indecent paintings in private spaces. To Molanus, artists were guilty of depicting sacred scenes in an indecorous manner, but also of choosing to represent subjects such as "Susanna spied by the elders", "Bathsheba at her bath" or "Mary Magdalen before her conversion", which were in themselves unnecessarily malicious.⁹⁷⁶ This discourse responded to the popularity of paintings portraying seductive and almost naked biblical heroines, a typology in which the Antwerpian artist Jan Matsys (1510-1575) specialized in the 1550s and the 1560s.⁹⁷⁷ The *David and Bathsheba* dated 1562 and now in Paris (*Figure 177*) is a perfect example of a sacred *historia* turned by the painter into an object of desire and lust.⁹⁷⁸ The beautiful body of the heroine is ostentatiously placed in the centre of the composition. The arched pose enhances the perfection of the body, the porcelain-like skin catches the gaze of the viewer, the jewellery and the alternation between the transparent air-thin veils and the richly decorated clothes draped on her legs show an aesthetically titillating intention more than a strict narration. This kind of representation could have been easily attacked on the grounds that the "artistic treatment" was more important than the decency of the subject. Such reprimands were commonly addressed to artists who were considered to be looking for glory and admiration of their paintings rather than putting their art at the service of religious purposes.⁹⁷⁹ Giorgio Vasari referred to this issue in his *Vite*. He defended the innocence of "good art", art that was imitating the

⁹⁷⁵ See FREEDBERG 1971, pp. 229-245.

⁹⁷⁶ See FREEDBERG 1982, p. 135.

⁹⁷⁷ On the painter, see BUIJNSTERS-SMETS 1995; GALASSI 2015, pp. 162-181.

⁹⁷⁸ Jan Massys; *David and Bathsheba*; 1562; 162x197; oil on panel; Louvre Museum; Paris. See BUIJNSTERS-SMETS 1995, pp. 199-200.

⁹⁷⁹ From the arguments of the German Hugo von Hohenladenbergh (c. 1467-1532), Catholic bishop of Konstanz, to the accusations of the display of an "excess of art" in Michelangelo's *Last judgement*, and also to the comments of the Italian Counter-reformist Giovanni Andrea Gilio (1544-1584), artists were pointed out as guilty of deforming the purity of the subjects to adapt them to the beauty of art. See DEKONINCK 2011, pp. 112-113.

beauty and perfection of God's creation, arguing that obscenity was in the eyes of the viewer.⁹⁸⁰ Of course, with these words, Vasari was defending the interests of the artists, their role as creators - as the supreme creator, God - and their *status*. It is important to underline that the debate was not just in the hands of theologians and ecclesiastic institutions, and it was not limited to the intellectual and theoretical fields: artists responded to their critics through their art, by experimenting, dialoguing, and pushing the boundaries of interdictions and new norms.⁹⁸¹

In contrast to their Catholic peers, the depiction of "pagan" subjects caused less concern in the ranks of the Protestants. They cared above all for a clear distinction between sacred and profane art. Apart from a general condemnation of the images' lascivious content, pagan "stories" which were represented with the formal language of pagan antiquity, appeared way less dangerous because they were maintaining the "polarity of the sacred and non-sacred".⁹⁸² Catholic theologians and writers used these ideas against their opponents, accusing them of harshly criticising devote artworks while accepting the depiction of immoral stories and scenes which were infesting the houses of the citizens while corrupting their morality.⁹⁸³

5.1.1 The first steps of mythological painting in the Netherlands: becoming Apelles

Moreover, we have to consider that, in the Netherlands, the practice of depicting mythological subjects was relatively new by the time the image debate erupted. In contrast to Italian art, in which mythologies were an important portion of the "*pittura*

⁹⁸⁰ VASARI 1568, I, p. 362.

⁹⁸¹ While the result of the Protestant propaganda was the Iconoclasm, the Catholic prohibitions did not sort such an immediate and explosive effect. For the reasons of ineffectiveness of these interdictions, see FREEDBERG 1982, pp. 136-139.

⁹⁸² See FREEDBERG 1982, p. 138.

⁹⁸³ The criticism against licentious images in private households had been popular especially since the writings of Erasmus (*Christiani matrimonii institutio*, 1526). The idea that an obscene image could have induced to imitation of immoral actions and influence the owner's mind was used in the debate also by Johannes Molanus. See FREEDBERG 1971, p. 241.

di historia” since the XVth century,⁹⁸⁴ the artists of the Low Countries did not show an early and consistent interest in mythology.⁹⁸⁵ Traditionally, the artist considered the first to have painted a “classical” subject by using an *all’antica* idiom, is Jan Gossaert van Mabuse. He was described by Karel van Mander as having brought from Italy: “the correct manner of composing and making pictures full of nudes and all kinds of allegories [...], which things were not so common in our country before this time”,⁹⁸⁶ his large-scale nudes of classical deities were regarded as an absolute innovation. *Neptune and Amphitrite* and *Hercules and Deianira*, two paintings commissioned in 1516 to decorate the residences of Philip of Burgundy (1464-1524), the illegitimate son of Duke Philip the Good and future bishop of Utrecht,⁹⁸⁷ are the most striking early examples of artworks that glorified the sovereign through mythological references and *all’antica* language in the Netherlands.⁹⁸⁸

It is difficult not to notice how the relationship between the patron and the painter, who worked in his court between 1516 and 1521, followed the well-known Alexander-Apelles *topos*.⁹⁸⁹ In the humanist court of Philip of Burgundy, it was almost obvious to

⁹⁸⁴ This topic is too vast to be treated here in any detail, even for a summary. See at least the pivotal LEE 1940, pp. 197-269; the recent AMES-LEWIS 2000; KING 2007.

⁹⁸⁵ About the resistance of the Southern Netherlands to the introduction of mythological subjects in the pictorial tradition of the XVth and XVIth century, see HEALY 2000, pp. 73-96. For a general analysis of the developments of mythological painting, printing, and drawing in the Low Countries, see BOSQUE 1985.

⁹⁸⁶ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 161.

⁹⁸⁷ About Gossaert as the initiator of large-scale mythological paintings in which he combined classical style and classical subjects, see SLUIJTER in ATHENS-DORDRECHT 2000-2001 pp. 35-38. On *Neptune and Amphitrite* and a general interpretation of Gossaert’s works for Philip of Burgundy, see BASS M. 2011, pp. 61-83.

⁹⁸⁸ We have already discussed in the first chapter how with the reign of Charles V the classical idiom and the references to the history and the myths of the ancient Roman Empire started to take hold alongside the Burgundian customs as the language of power in the Netherlands, adopted on different levels: political propaganda, architecture, and artistic patronage. It is interesting to identify such an early use of the same language by the Netherlandish Duke. In his commissions to Gossaert, he displayed an early and sophisticated humanism and interests in eroticism. See STERK 1980, *passim*; SCHRADER in NEW YORK 2010-2011, pp. 57-67.

⁹⁸⁹ See BASS M. 2016, pp. 42, 57, 142.

call Jan Gossaert “the Apelles of the century”.⁹⁹⁰ The Flemish artist also painted some titillating goddesses, full-length and completely naked, among which a *Venus and Cupid* that was in Philip’s private study. The panel was described in the 1529 inventory as covered by a curtain, indicating that the subject was not appropriate for all viewers.⁹⁹¹ Depicting a naked Venus for his most renowned patron was meaningful for a court painter in a humanist *milieu*. The literary *topos* of Apelles’ painting of Aphrodite for Alexander the Great, modelled on the features of the latter’s mistress Campaspe, drove many Renaissance artists to challenge themselves with the representation of the goddess and, more broadly, with the seductiveness of the womanly body. That the portrayal of feminine beauty was possibly the highest achievement for an artist and an essential skill to whoever aspired to be called the Apelles of their times, was already discussed when we mentioned Titian’s gift of a *Venus* to Charles V.

Whereas in Italy a court environment where the “Prince” embraced the culture of humanism and showed a strong fascination with the art of the antiques, and where the social *status* of an artist was measured by his embrace of literary *topoi* and his aspirations to be considered the new Apelles was the norm, we cannot say the same for the XVIth-century Netherlands. Filipczak, in her study on Antwerp’s art, focuses on the social role of the artists, in particular painters, between 1550 and 1600.⁹⁹² She describes that the idea of painting as a liberal art, which had been progressively accepted in Italy between the XVth and the XVIth century, was still far from being widely recognized. This was a fundamental step for the artists to change the way their profession was perceived and to reach a superior and more respected *status*.

To understand the production and the reception of mythological subjects painted in an *all’antica* manner and the role of Titian’s models in this process, it is, therefore, necessary to keep in mind, on the one hand, the issue of the Iconoclasm and the image debate permeating the XVIth century life, and, on the other side, the connection of the mythological subjects to a humanist environment imbued with Italianism, to the social claims and aspirations of the artists and to a renewing *status* of the art itself.

⁹⁹⁰ The court humanist Gerrit Geldenhouer, also known as Noviomagus (????-1542), wrote these words in a poem dedicated to Philip of Burgundy’s painter. See STERK 1980, p. 111.

⁹⁹¹ See STERK 1980, pp. 56, 137, 227, 285.

⁹⁹² FILIPCZAK 1987, pp. 11-46.

5.1.2 Historie and *poesie*

Lodovico Guicciardini, an Italian historiographer and merchant who spent most of his life in Antwerp, wrote in his *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* (1567) that Gossaert was the artist who brought to the Netherlands “historie & poesie con figure nude”.⁹⁹³ While *historie* was usually associated with episodes from the Bible and classical antiquity, *poesie* was used to describe the depiction of poetic narration, mostly of subjects taken from classical mythology.⁹⁹⁴ *Poesia* and *favola* were words with precise connotations in Italy. At the end of the XVth century, the term *poesia* could describe a painting conceived to “delight the senses”. In Venice, these words had been used since the beginning of the XVIth century in relation to paintings derived from poetic literary sources, but Giorgio Vasari popularized the plural in his *Vite*, by defining the mythological paintings as “*poesie*”.⁹⁹⁵

It is important to remember that by calling a painting a “poem”, artists and writers were evidently referring to the famous dictum by the Roman poet Horace (65-8 BC): *ut pictura poesis*.⁹⁹⁶ This idea of *paragone* between painting and literature was one of the key arguments for the recognition of painting as a liberal art in a humanist background. In fact, it implied that artists were able to transfer the aesthetic qualities of poetry to painting, achieving *de facto* a poetic rather than a literal effect.⁹⁹⁷ The general tendency of Italian artistic treatise, from Leon Battista Alberti onward, was to elevate the act of pictorial invention from a mere illustration of a text to a poetic process.⁹⁹⁸ An evocative

⁹⁹³ GUICCIARDINI 1567, p. 98. For a general introduction on Guicciardini and his importance together with Vasari and van Mander in the elaboration of the Netherlandish art theory, see FRATINI 2016, pp. 249-256.

⁹⁹⁴ In the Netherlandish inventories and literature, these mythologic histories were also called “heydensche fabulen” (pagan fables), “fabulen der houden” (fables of old), “poëterijen” (poetic fables) and “poetsche versieringen” (poetic inventions). See SLUIJTER 2000, pp. 14-15, 185-187; SLUIJTER in ATHENS-DORDRECHT 2000-2001, p. 35.

⁹⁹⁵ For a summary, see FALOMIR in MADRID 2021, p. 16.

⁹⁹⁶ See the fundamental LEE 1967.

⁹⁹⁷ Summarized by SOHM 1991, pp. 19-24.

⁹⁹⁸ The concept of *poesie* in relation to mythology and its importance in the process of self-determination of Netherlandish artists, in particular Frans Floris, see FIORENZA 2016, pp. 229-244.

example is the one expressed by Paolo Pino in his *Dialogo di pittura* (1548), who wrote: “la pittura è propria poesia, cioè invenzione”.⁹⁹⁹

When we mention the word *poesie*, it is almost impossible not to think about Titian. The series’ literary fortune and its impact on the developments of mythological painting attest to which extent this commission became a benchmark both for its artistic achievements and for the emblematic relation between the patron and his favourite painter, which became a *topos* to emulate for the following centuries. The series of mythologies that Titian had painted between 1551 and 1562 for his prestigious patron Philip II was defined *poesie* by the artist himself, demonstrating his awareness of the contemporary intellectual discourse around art and his ambition not just to be part of it, but to have a role in its development.¹⁰⁰⁰ By writing in 1553 to King Philip II that he was finishing the *poesie* for him,¹⁰⁰¹ Titian was likely stressing his role not as a mere executor of the paintings, but as the one responsible for their invention, entrusted by the most powerful monarch of the day to be his painter “poet”. This operation was supported by the writings produced by the intellectual circles related to the artist, in particular the aforementioned Pietro Aretino and Lodovico Dolce (1508/10-1568), and took place in the broader context of a Venetian theoretical answer to Vasari’s publication of the *Vite*, a series of biographies of the greatest artists of his time - excluding Titian - that endorsed a Florentine-centric idea of art.¹⁰⁰²

Essentially, as impeccably phrased by Falomir: «The *poesie* in fact marked the culmination of an association between mythological painting and the court context

⁹⁹⁹ PINO 1548, I, p. 115.

¹⁰⁰⁰ On Titian’s *poesie*, the literature is immense. The most recent exhibitions on this series LONDON 2020 and MADRID 2021. More specifically, for the *poesie* in relation to the concept of *ut pictura poesis* and its use in the self-determination of the status of the artist through his alliance with writers, intellectuals, and circles of humanists, see especially ROSAND 1972, pp. 527-546; MANCINI 2009, pp. 57-200; and the recent contributions by WIVEL in LONDON 2020, pp. 13-31; CARVALHO 2021, pp. 50-93; FALOMIR in MADRID 2021, pp. 14-39; CHECA CREMADES 2021.

¹⁰⁰¹ See MANCINI 1998, p. 218; PUPPI 2012, pp. 200-201; LONDON 2020 p. 194.

¹⁰⁰² On Dolce and his impact on the Venetian art theory of the XVIth century, see ROSKILL 1968. For more specific studies on Titian and Dolce, see PUTTFARKEN 1991, pp. 75-99; ROGERS 1992, pp. 22-35; ARROYO 2011, pp. 41-56; ARROYO 2016.

that began in Italy around 1500 [...]»¹⁰⁰³ and Titian's name became inextricably related to the concepts that we have discussed before.

As we have said in relation to Gossaert, the court *milieu* was fertile ground for these ideas and artistic aspirations. However, we need to remember that both Gossaert and his patron had travelled to Italy and that they had consciously decided to adopt these cultural ideals derived from Renaissance humanism.¹⁰⁰⁴ When Titian worked for the King of Spain, his role as Apelles and his position as court artist who had the privilege of freely painting mythological subjects that could aspire to the *status* of “painted poetry”, became paradigmatic. But is it correct to assert that the ambition of the painters who specialized in mythological subjects in the Netherlands was to paint “*poesie*” in the sense of Titian and the Italian art theory? And, if so, how were they adjusting their intentions and their outputs to the context in which they were operating and to the shifts which characterized the Netherlandish market in the second half of the XVIth century?

5.2 Mythologies between market fluctuations and problems of international patronage

After this general introduction to the religious debate and the discussion on intellectual and social implications of painting mythologies for court artists, it seems obvious that the Habsburgs and the nobles gravitating around them had at first leading role in sponsoring antique themes in an *all'antica* style. We have ascertained that most of the series of mythologies - such as Titian's *Condemned for Mary of Hungary* - were part of iconographic programs aimed to express a political message and serve the “propaganda machine” of the sovereign. This is also evidenced by the pre-eminence of mythological subjects in the so-called “joyous entries” of the Habsburg rulers.¹⁰⁰⁵ After 1559, once the centre of power moved to Spain and the following Regents did not invest the same money and interest in the artistic splendour of Brussels' or

¹⁰⁰³ FALOMIR in MADRID 2021, p. 15.

¹⁰⁰⁴ SILVER 1986, pp. 1-40; BASS M. 2016, pp. 46-58.

¹⁰⁰⁵ On the Habsburg's role in introducing and standardizing the language of the Italian High Renaissance in the Low countries, see the first chapter and BOOGERT 1998. For the joyous entries, especially Philip II's entry in Antwerp in 1549, see BUSSELS 2012.

Mechelen's court. We have already mentioned the example of Margaret of Parma, Regent of the Low Countries from 1559 to 1567 and co-Regent of her son Alessandro Farnese (1545-1592) from 1578 to 1582, who established her residence in Mechelen and seemed more interested in commissions aimed to efficiently consolidate her political position, such as celebratory prints and stained glasses in important locations, than in an active patronage for the *magnificentia* of the court. Nevertheless, in the second half of the XVIth century, mythological paintings represented a not indifferent share of the market.

Of course, there is a great difference between a series of mythological works - "works" because they were by no means restricted to paintings - which were conceived for public spaces and celebrations, and the so-called mythological "easel paintings", which were commonly displayed in private settings.¹⁰⁰⁶ What factors were determinative for the production of the latter? Who were the artists responsible? What were the subjects and stylistic properties of these mythological paintings?

Before the 1540s, Antwerp artists were not consistently painting mythological subjects and especially not in the style of the Italian High Renaissance. Only from the 1540s Flemish painters introduced sizeable panel paintings side to side with "Italianate, large, life-sized nudes" of both goddesses and biblical heroines.¹⁰⁰⁷ Although we can partly explain this change by way of an increased interest in Italian art and *all'antica* style and subjects due to different reasons, among which the travels of Netherlandish artists to Italy, Jonckheere invites us to consider changes in the art market. The establishment of the *Schilderspand* in the 1540s, run by the painters themselves and not by the ecclesiastic authority, likely allowed the number of "indecent" artworks, crowded with nudes, to rise.¹⁰⁰⁸ The large quantity of paintings produced - with many replicas and variants of the same originals - suggests that they were destined for the open market and produced on spec.

¹⁰⁰⁶ The series of the *poesie* for Philip II, for instance, was probably located close to the gardens of the Alcázar palace. Under Philip III (1578-1621) they were hid for reasons of "modesty", while Philip IV (1605-1665) displayed them in his summer apartments, facing the gardens. Therefore, the private display of these erotic mythologies suggests a more aesthetic and poetic value instead of a political one. See FALOMIR 2021, pp. 26-27.

¹⁰⁰⁷ JONCKHEERE 2011A, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰⁸ JONCKHEERE 2011A, pp. 25-36. This study relies on the work of VERMEYLEN 2003.

Among the artists of this generation, we can cite the aforementioned Willem Key and Frans Floris, but also Vincent Sellaer (c. 1490-after 1544) and the Master of the Prodigal Son (active 1535-1560). These painters produced mythological works representing naked figures, especially sensual women, mostly following their Italianate education: Lambert Lombard trained Key and Floris - the latter surely travelled to Italy -, Sellaer emulated aspects of the Lombardian and the Florentine schools, and the Master of the Prodigal Son became an important Flemish interpreter of Italian Mannerism.

A comparison of the paintings with mythological subjects that these artists produced around the middle of the XVIth century, shows how some themes and typologies were more recurrent than others.¹⁰⁰⁹ The predominant subject was the depiction of Venus. Reclined, sitting, or standing, usually accompanied by Cupid or Mars, the goddess of beauty and love seemed to have been particularly suitable for the market. And, among them, the reclined Venus was top ranking. An example is Willem Key's *Venus and Cupid* made in the 1550s (*Figure 178*), in which the sensual goddess lies on a bed while in the background is visible the fire consuming the city of Troy.¹⁰¹⁰ We should notice that, in this case, Venus is positioned diagonally, and that the space is divided by diagonal lines: the frame of the bed, the marble balcony, and the arrow that Venus is pointing over her shoulder. This compositional solution diverges from the usual representation of a reclined woman in a landscape, namely the one modelled on the Venetian and German type and already explored in the Netherlands by artists like

¹⁰⁰⁹ This estimate started from the analysis of the mythological paintings edited in monographic studies on the artists - when there were any -, and on images databases such as the RKD. It is interesting to notice that many of these paintings had been attributed to different artists of this group or to painters of the following generation, in particular to Jacob de Backer and Gillis Coignet, whose artworks we will discuss later. The estimate has been confirmed by the work on Antwerpian inventories between 1532-48 and 1566-1567 carried out by Maximiliaan Martens and Natasja Peeters, where we see that "Venus and Cupid" together with "Nude figure(s)" have the highest numbers in the inventories researched. The theme named "poetica" could have included Ovidian poetry as well as allegories, therefore it cannot be considered to estimate the numbers of a precise theme or subject. See MARTENS-PEETERS 2006, pp. 46-50.

¹⁰¹⁰ Willem Key; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1550; 95,2x129,5 cm; oil on panel; present whereabouts unknown. It is known at least one workshop replica of the painting, now at the Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig. See JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 174-175.

Jan van Scorel and Maarten van Heemskerck. In fact, the *Dying of Cleopatra* (Figure 179) by van Scorel (1520-24),¹⁰¹¹ and van Heemskerck's Michelangelesque *Venus and Cupid* dated 1545 (Figure 180),¹⁰¹² show the body of the female protagonists lying parallel to the surface of the painting, while in the background we can see a landscape with some signs of civilization - buildings, ruins, caves -, accordingly to the tradition. Key's inclination of the bed to change the view on the body of Venus is considered to be a Netherlandish innovation on the theme.¹⁰¹³ Around the time when Titian's mythologies for the Habsburgs arrived at the court, in particular the *Venus at the mirror* and the series of the *Condemned*, some subjects elaborated in the Venetian environment were already explored and adapted, like in the case of Key's *Venus and Cupid*.¹⁰¹⁴

Two subjects - both including Venus as the protagonist - gained particular popularity: *Venus and Mars surprised by Vulcan* and the *Judgement of Paris*. These scenes focused on the narrative aspect of the event instead of portraying the characters while emphasizing the eroticism and the fashionable *all'antica* style.¹⁰¹⁵ These iconographies were painted in different replicas and variations by the painters, but it is interesting to notice that they present many similarities, both in composition and in style, enough to create confusion with their attribution to a precise artist.¹⁰¹⁶ While the common thread for the depictions of Venus and Mars interrupted by Vulcan and the gods was identified in van Heemskerck's panel with the same subject painted in 1536 (Figure 181)

¹⁰¹¹ Jan van Scorel; *Dying of Cleopatra*; c. 1520-24; 36,3x61,3 cm; oil on panel; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam. See VENICE 1999, pp. 494-495.

¹⁰¹² Maarten van Heemskerck; *Venus and Cupid*; 1545; 108x157,5 cm; oil on panel; Musée Wallraf Richartz; Cologne. See BLISNIEWSKI 2003, pp. 4-16.

¹⁰¹³ See HEINZE 2016, p. 162.

¹⁰¹⁴ We should mention that the representation of the sleeping Venus in a landscape, probably elaborated from the iconography of the sleeping Nymph described in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), had parallel early developments in Veneto, with Giorgione, Giulio Campagnola (1482-1515), Jacopo Palma the Elder (c. 1480-1528), and also in Germany, especially in the works of Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), who depicted the subject at least fourteen times after 1518. See HEINZE 2016.

¹⁰¹⁵ About the different non-narrative and narrative approaches to mythological paintings through the Southern Netherlands XVIth century, see HEALY 2000, pp. 73-96.

¹⁰¹⁶ For instance, Vincent Sellaer's *Mars and Venus surprised by Vulcan* (1540-1550) now at the Rubenshuis in Antwerp, was previously attributed to Frans Floris. A study on the fortune of this theme in the XVIth century Netherlands and of its erotic connotation in UCHAZ 2016, pp. 245-270.

and engraved by Cornelis Bos (c. 1515-1556),¹⁰¹⁷ the different versions of *Judgement of Paris* seems to have started from Marcantonio Raimondi's engraving based on a design by Raphael around 1510-20 (*Figure 182*),¹⁰¹⁸ one of the most popular prints on this subject and which influence is recognizable at least in Floris, Key and probably also van Heemskerck.¹⁰¹⁹

As recognized by Healy, the number of non-narrative paintings with a focus on eroticism and a moralising message was higher and gained popularity during the XVIth century, while mythologies which presented narrative aspects were less common until the works by Floris in the Southern Netherlands and by van Heemskerck in the Northern.¹⁰²⁰

To sum up, after the opening of the *Schilderspand* the number of mythological paintings with naked figures significantly increased and some of the most renowned painters of the Low Countries - painters who travelled to Italy or showed an interest in Italianism - started to produce different versions and replicas of themes like the reclined Venus and ancient myths, but different factors added up to a change of the market in the following decades.

First of all, starting from the 1560s, the rebellions of the Seventeen Provinces against Philip II led in 1588 to the separation of the Northern United Provinces of the Netherlands from the Southern Spanish Netherlands. At the same time, in direct correlation to these upheavals, we must remember the *Beeldenstorm* of 1566 and its consequences on the artistic scene, as we have mentioned in the previous chapter. In

¹⁰¹⁷ Maarten van Heemskerck; *Venus and Mars surprised by Vulkan*; 1536; 96x99 cm; oil on panel; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. See VELDMAN 1977, pp. 21-34. For the comparison between the works and the hypothesis that van Heemskerck might have been the main visual source, see HEALY 2000, pp. 84-86; JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 176-177.

¹⁰¹⁸ Marcantonio Raimondi; *Judgment of Paris*; c. 1510-20; 291x437 mm; engraving; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York. See NEW HAVEN 1999-2000, p. 78.

¹⁰¹⁹ Frans Floris painted at least two versions, one at the Staatliche Gemälderie Alte Meister in Kassel (c. 1548) and one at the Hermitage of St. Petersburg (c.1559); Key's *Judgment of Paris*, which previously had been given to Gillis Coignet, is dated around 1540 but its present location is unknown. Jonckheere suggests that van Heemskerck's painting with the same theme (Christie's, London, 21/04/2004, Lot. 48) might have been a source for both the painters. See HEALY 2000, pp. 78-80; JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 178-179.

¹⁰²⁰ HEALY 2000, pp. 75-80.

an age permeated by religious conflicts and secessionism, the image debate escalated within the Counter-Reformation and was carried out in a series of writings that followed the Council of Trent. From Giovanni Andrea Gilio (1541-1584), who published his *Dialogo degli errori de' pittori* already in 1564, to the aforementioned Johannes Molanus and his investigation of provocative paintings in the notable *De picturis et imaginibus sacris*, edited in 1570, to Gabriele Paleotti's (1522-1597) *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane diuiso in cinque libri*, dated 1582, to the 1584 *Il riposo* by Raffaello Borghini (1541-1588), a dialogue-treatise in which the author tried to elaborate norms for a decorous representation of religious *historie*.¹⁰²¹

In the chapter on religious painting, we have already outlined how the image debate and the socio-political alterations from the 1560s onward had relevant consequences on the artistic scene of the Low Countries. In this context, Karolien de Clippel focused on the study of the nude in Netherlandish art between 1563 and 1585, two meaningful dates: the end of the Council of Trent and the Fall of Antwerp resulting also in the closing of the river Scheldt. She recognized a different attitude towards the representation of nude bodies, especially after 1570, exemplified not just in religious paintings but in pagan representations such as the mythological allegories used in the joyous entries organized between 1566 and 1585, which appeared more chaste than the previous ones.¹⁰²² This display of conservatism in the public sphere might have been, in her opinion, “an answer to regulations issued by the Catholic elite”.¹⁰²³

A numerical analysis brings further insights. Compared with other categories such as religious paintings and portraits, the number of mythological and allegorical scenes was quite low for most of the XVIth century. From the analysis of Antwerpian inventories, Martens and Peeters concluded that, between the years 1532-1548 and

¹⁰²¹ On Gilio's writings, see BURY 2018, pp. 5-44. For Molanus and the impact of his writings in the Netherlands, see FREEDBERG 1971, pp. 229-245. Paleotti's ideas on art and the Counter-Reformation had been analysed in PRODI 1965, pp. 121-212; BIANCHI 2008. For an introduction on Raffaello Borghini, see LINGO 2013, pp. 113-135.

¹⁰²² In particular, Karolien de Clippel compares the 1549 joyous entry for Philip II to the one for the Duke of Anjou dated 1582. In the latter, female personifications such as nymphs and sybils were fully clothed, and the rare nude figures usually had negative connotations. See CLIPPEL 2012, pp. 51-73.

¹⁰²³ CLIPPEL 2012, p. 62.

1566-1567, the presence of these themes doubled from 2,6 to 5,1 percent.¹⁰²⁴ If we consider the database made by Bert Hendrickx, in which he listed 145 inventories of burgers living in Antwerp and dated between 1565 and 1600,¹⁰²⁵ we can still notice that the number of artworks with mythological themes was very low: on a total number of 1.289 paintings of which the subject is known, just sixty-six represented a pagan history, which was most likely a nude, representing the 5,3 percent of the total.¹⁰²⁶ Of course, the numbers and the percentages of these two studies cannot be compared accurately, because of the differences in the databases and the methodologies, but we can picture that the initial growth was somehow slowed down.

Another peculiarity of the distribution of mythological paintings is the high concentration of such works in the homes of certain collectors, usually prominent members of the Antwerp mercantile community, some of which are worth mentioning in this discussion. The tapestry dealer Joris Vezeleer (c. 1493-1570), a merchant of luxury items who furnished the King of France and head of the Mint in 1545, owned eleven of the sixty-six mythologies listed in the 1565-1600 inventories, including two paintings attributed to Anthonis Mor, namely a naked *Mars* and a naked *Venus*.¹⁰²⁷ These panels remind us of the famous *Danae* recorded by van Mander as one of the most beautiful paintings by the artist, showing a side of the artist's production that is, nowadays, unknown. Well-known is the case of the wealthy merchant and financier Nicolaes Jonghelinck (1517-1570), who displayed in his suburban home a cycle of ten

¹⁰²⁴ The study compared the content of 415 Antwerp judicial inventories of confiscated goods for the years 1532-1536, 1540-1548, and 1566-1567. See MARTENS-PEETERS 2006, p. 47.

¹⁰²⁵ HENDRICKX 1997.

¹⁰²⁶ Vermeylen summarised the database, elaborating the composition of median painting ownership according to their subject. See VERMEYLEN 2003, pp. 148-149.

¹⁰²⁷ There are listed a *Bacchus*, a *Pomona*, a *Venus and Mars* by Gossaert, a *Narvisus*, a "stuck of poetry" depicting *Jupiter* by Pieter Coecke van Aelst, a *Flora*, a "naecte" *Venus* and a "naecte" *Mars* by Anthonis Mor, a *Mars and Venus*, an *Orpheus*. It is unclear to me which painting in the list might be the eleventh mythology. I can assume that the object listed as: "Eenen saeyer met een schuytje op pannel" might have referred to a version of the *Icarus* (c. 1558) by Pieter Bruegel, now at the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique of Brussels. See DENUNCÉ 1932, pp. 6-7.

canvases representing *Labours of Hercules*, eight of the *Seven Liberal Arts*,¹⁰²⁸ a *Banquet of the Sea Gods* and a *Judgement* and a *Triumph of Paris*, all by the hand of Frans Floris.¹⁰²⁹ The master of the Mint Jean Noirot (????-1572), in whose inventory dated 1572 we can find a *Cleopatra and Cupid* - more likely a *Venus* -, an *Actaeon*, a *Judgment of Paris* and many different “*tronies*”¹⁰³⁰ which seemed to have portrayed *all’antica* figures, mostly goddesses.

Niclaes Jonghelinck surely was one of the most interesting merchant collectors in Antwerp. Wouk suggested that he had an important role in shaping trends in collecting among his peers, such as his associate Jean Noirot and likely also Vezeleer.¹⁰³¹ In fact, all these families had some ties with the Mint of the city and with the artists Frans Floris and Pieter Bruegel. The brother of Niclaes was the sculptor Jacques Jonghelinck (1530-1606), the artist who likely accompanied Pieter Bruegel on his trip to Italy. His statues often represented cycles of mythological subjects and could be compared to Floris’ approach to the classical nude.¹⁰³² He became master of the Mint after the death of Noirot, in 1572. Joris Vezeleer had also some connections with Niclaes Jonghelinck because they both were members of the guild of Our Lady’s Praise.¹⁰³³ This network is usually studied concerning the patronage and the collecting of Pieter Bruegel’s works, or because of the connection with humanists such as Goropius Becanus (1519-

¹⁰²⁸ They are referred to as “acht stucken van de slapende Conste”. Since the Liberal Arts are just seven, the “slapende Conste” could have been a painting representing the Awakening of the arts (c. 1559) now in Puerto Rico. See BERGMANS 1964, pp. 178-179; WOUK 2018, pp. 344-352.

¹⁰²⁹ The relationship of patronage between Jongelinck and Floris and its importance in the self-fashioning process of the merchant to change his status, see WOUK 2018, pp. 328-380. For the transcription of the 1566 document in which he pledged his paintings as guarantee against his tax debt, see DENUNCÉ 1932, p. 5.

¹⁰³⁰ “*Tronie*” is a word used to describe a head study produced in the workshop of an artist, or more broadly an expressive pseudo-portrait. These “heads” represented a particular expression or a so-called *affetto dell’animo*, and they were used to build a stock of physiognomic studies that the artist and his collaborators could use. For a general introduction to this artistic practice, see GOTTWALD 2011. For Floris’ practice of painting and using *tronies*, see WOUK 2018, pp. 219-261.

¹⁰³¹ See WOUK 2018, p. 333.

¹⁰³² On the artist, see MEIJER 1979, pp. 116-135; BUCHANAN 1990, pp. 102-113; SMOLDEREN 1996; and the recent PAPPOT 2017, pp. 69-82.

¹⁰³³ See MUYLLE 2020, pp. 29-48.

1573) or Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) but it is also relevant to outline aspects of the collection of mythologies during the second half of the century.¹⁰³⁴

Returning to the analysis by Karolien de Clippel, she also argues that during the 1570s and the 1580s, few artists were painting mythologies with nude figures in Antwerp, and just as significantly, most of these subjects were destined for the foreign buyers.¹⁰³⁵ As we have discussed before, the humanist courts were the perfect soil for the nude mythological painting to grow and prosper, and the court ruled by the Habsburg Rudolph II (1552-1612), Holy Roman Emperor from 1576 to his death, was no exception. His renowned court in Prague was the destination not only of many Flemish paintings with mythological subjects but also of Flemish artists like the Antwerpian Bartholomeus Spranger (1546-1611), who first worked in Rome and then became *Kammermaler* for Rudolph II in 1581.¹⁰³⁶ The court of Spain was likewise a suitable market for the aforementioned artworks, considering Philip II's pre-existent relationship with Flemish artists and his well-known interest in mythological and erotic art. It is important to include France in the list of markets that Karolien de Clippel discussed. Apart from a general increase of the art dealers' attention towards the cities like Paris and Lyon,¹⁰³⁷ one of the artists who specialised in the production of mythological and allegorical paintings with a great display of naked women and goddesses, the Antwerpian Jacob de Backer (c. 1555-1585), is recorded by van Mander to have exported many of his paintings to France through the artist and dealer Antonio Palermo (c. 1503/13-c. 1589).¹⁰³⁸

Open to selling to international markets might have been determined by many factors. It was a strategy to overcome the local lack of demand for mythological

¹⁰³⁴ The erudite network of Abraham Ortelius in relation to Netherlandish antiquarianism and artists like Pieter Bruegel, Frans Floris, Maarten de Vos and Otto van Veen (1556-1629), one of the teachers of Rubens, was investigated by MEGANCK 2017.

¹⁰³⁵ She refers primarily to the market of the nude, and she operates a distinction between public and private use. See especially CLIPPEL 2012, pp. 66-70; see also HEALY 2000, p. 81-82.

¹⁰³⁶ For the mythological collection of Rudolph II, see KAUFMANN 1985, pp. 29-46. For the art of Spranger and his role in shaping the taste of the Emperor and his court, see NEW YORK 2014-2015.

¹⁰³⁷ French started to be particularly interested in Netherlandish painting in the 1570s, due to a network of Flemish artists in Paris reconstructed and analysed by SZANTO 2002, pp. 149-185.

¹⁰³⁸ «Palermo made good profits through the work of Jacques and sent much of it to France, where he sold it for good money», in MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 185.

paintings and allegorical nudes, and it was the result of a growing foreign demand of art. The years after de *Beeldenstorm* were also characterized by a high rate of emigration of artists from the vexed Southern Netherlands. Vermeulen described two waves of migration, the first from 1567 to 1572, and the second starting in the early 1580s and becoming, after the Catholic reconquest of Antwerp in 1585, a real exodus of Protestant painters.¹⁰³⁹ The artists moved mainly to the Northern Provinces or to German lands, where they could find already established Flemish communities. This large-scale migration to the North gave an important boost to the rising Dutch art and impoverished the Habsburg Netherlands of a great number of skilled professionals.

In this context of changes and turns, how were Titian's mythological inventions received by the artists who were struggling to reshape the boundaries of their art?

5.3 Frans Floris: reaching for an elitist clientele

If we consider the strategies of Netherlandish artists' self-fashioning, Frans Floris surely represents an exemplary case. The decoration of his house - his *paleys* (palace) -¹⁰⁴⁰ finished in 1565 was designed to directly engage with the art theoretical discussion of his time.¹⁰⁴¹ The façade showed an alliance between intellectual and mechanical activities, claiming a place for sculptors, architects, and painters among the liberal artists. It is not coincidental that, in the same year 1565, the first books on Netherlandish art had been published.¹⁰⁴² The Latin biography of Lambert Lombard, master of Floris, from the pen of Dominicus Lampsonius, and also the collection of verses entitled *Den Hof en Boomgaard der Poesiën* (*The court and orchard of poems*) by Floris' pupil Lucas d'Heere (1534-1584), containing a sonnet in which the author glorifies his master and a poem that contraposes Floris and Bruegel's art.¹⁰⁴³

¹⁰³⁹ See VERMEYLEN 2012, pp. 95-108.

¹⁰⁴⁰ This is how it was referred to by van Mander in his biography of the artist.

¹⁰⁴¹ The decoration of Floris' house and especially of the façade is a crucial point in the process of emancipation of Netherlandish artists from craftsmen to liberal artists. See VELDE 1975, I, pp. 34-36, 308-312; VELDE 1985, pp. 127-134; FILIPCZAK 1987, pp. 31-39; WOUK 2018, pp. 467-501.

¹⁰⁴² For the development of the theoretical discourse on art in the Netherlandish literature in relation to the Italian art theory, see MELION 1991, esp. pp. 129-159.

¹⁰⁴³ As Titian, he was called "Apelles" in the poem by Lucas D'Heere, because it was the "highest title to a painter". Transcribed in WOUK 2018, pp. 542-543.

As Titian, Floris was well-aware of the current intellectual debate on art; he was part of a network of artists, intellectuals, and humanists who were shaping the artistic canon of their times and promoting a specific image of Floris himself;¹⁰⁴⁴ and he was, essentially, actively participating in the process of emancipation of the Netherlandish artists.

Even though we can draw some parallels between the strategy of Titian and the one used by Floris - which we will discuss later in-depth -, it is evident that the artist had shaped his artistic identity on the one of Raphael. Vasari, in his 1568 edition of the *Vite*, called him the “Raffaello Fiammingo” referring to the fame he had in the Low Countries and most likely to an indication of Dominicus Lampsonius,¹⁰⁴⁵ and Floris himself alluded in the decoration of his house to Raphael’s designs for the façade of Palazzo Braconio dell’Aquila.¹⁰⁴⁶

Floris was one of the few painters who produced a conspicuous number of mythological subjects and nudes *all’antica*. This choice was definitely fitting for an artist who had studied with Lambert Lombard and who had travelled to Italy between 1541 and 1545. His engagement in elevating the *status* of his category of art practitioners is also usually attributed to his Italian experience, but in doing so, he was also working hard to establish his own *status* and to ensure his artistic legacy. For this reason, his palace was an expression of humanist and artistic propaganda, visited by eminent members of the society, as recorded by van Mander, like the Counts of Egmont and

¹⁰⁴⁴ He was part of a circle of humanists including Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598), the publishers Christoper Plantin (c. 1520-1589) and Hieronymus Cock (1518-1570), the aforementioned Lucas d’Heere and Dominicus Lampsonius.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Lampsonius was an important source of information for Giorgio Vasari when he was writing on Northern artists. Their correspondence just partially survived, but on the basis of the letters we can argue that his title of Flemish Raphael derived from Lampsonius. VASARI 1568, p. 585.

¹⁰⁴⁶ The palace had been for years mistakenly considered the house of Raphael, and it was particularly renowned in the Netherlands. See WOUK 2018, pp. 477-479.

Horn, or the Prince William of Orange (1533-1584).¹⁰⁴⁷ He also actively engaged with the court of Margaret of Parma, who he had also portrayed in the 1560s.¹⁰⁴⁸

We have mentioned that after his early *Venus and Mars surprised by the gods* dated 1547, Floris continued to paint mythological subjects. This aspect of his production became even more important when the number of commissions of altarpieces dropped in the 1560s, and he dedicated himself to the growing market of private collectors and smaller formats. In the 1550s and the early 1560s, we find the *Banquet of the gods* (Figure 183)¹⁰⁴⁹ and the *Banquet of the sea gods* (Figure 184),¹⁰⁵⁰ and different *Judgement of Paris* (Figure 185) among his themes.¹⁰⁵¹ These paintings present a numerous group of characters, usually *all'antica* nudes quoting classical and Central Italian sources. There is almost no space for the landscape because the bodies are positioned creating a sort of “wall” that reduces the sense of the depth of the image.

Since he devoted his work mostly to secular painting, he experimented with a more sensuous treatment of the bodies. Important visual sources for his “international and elegant style” were Italian and French prints, especially related to the school of Fontainebleau.¹⁰⁵² Among these prints, Floris might have found some inventions by Titian, inventions that had been popularized through the collaboration between the

¹⁰⁴⁷ Van Mander writes that Floris’ house hosted eminent guests in his palace, that became a place for gathering and discuss on religion and philosophy. Since the Counts of Egmont and Horn, and the Prince d’Orange were leading figures of the Dutch resistance, it has been discussed whether Floris had shared his political opinions. See MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 222.

¹⁰⁴⁸ VELDE 1975, I, p. 166; WOUK 2018, pp. 387-388.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Two beautiful examples are: Frans Floris; *Banquet of the Gods*; 1550; 150x198 cm; oil on panel; Royal Museum of Fine Arts; Antwerp. And also, the painting for Nicolaes Jonghelinck: Frans Floris; *Banquet of the gods*; c. 1557; 116,5x165,5 cm; oil on panel; Universalmuseum Joanneum; Graz.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Frans Floris; *Banquet of the sea gods*; 1561; 126x226 cm; oil on panel; Nationalmuseum; Stockholm.

¹⁰⁵¹ The earliest one: Frans Floris; *Judgement of Paris*; c. 1548; 120x159,5 cm; oil on panel; Staatliche Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister; Kassel. And the painting for Nicolaes Jonghelinck: Frans Floris; *Judgement of Paris*; c. 1559; 135x188 cm; oil on panel; Hermitage; Saint Petersburg.

¹⁰⁵² On the topic of Floris and the mythologies, or *poesie*, the most important reference for this study is the chapter of the book on the painter by Edward Wouk. His approach on the problem of Floris’ mythological painting focuses on his response to Titian, therefore it will be discussed thoroughly in the following paragraph. See WOUK 2018, pp. 417-465.

Venetian master and a series of artists who adapted his inventions into engravings.¹⁰⁵³ Among these, it is fundamental to mention the fruitful artistic relationship between the painter and the Flemish engraver Cornelis Cort, one of the leading propagators of Titian's art in the Netherlands.¹⁰⁵⁴

5.3.1 Sources of inspiration: printed mythologies and what else?

When Dominicus Lampsonius wrote to Titian in 1567, he thanked him for sending six prints engraved by Cornelis Cort after his inventions.¹⁰⁵⁵ These were the fruit of the first collaboration between the two artists, which took place between 1565 and 1566, and they included two mythological subjects: *Tityus*, or the *Condemned* for Mary of Hungary, and *Diana and Callisto*, the *poesia* for Philip II.¹⁰⁵⁶ Lampsonius also warmly suggested Titian to have Cort make an engraving after the *Venus and Adonis*, because the prints which were circulating after this *poesia* were not of good quality.¹⁰⁵⁷ In their second collaboration, around 1571, the Flemish artist translated into print the *Vulcan's forge*, after one of the three *Allegories of Brescia* that Titian had painted for the ceiling of

¹⁰⁵³ Titian is known for his active collaboration with the artists who were adapting his paintings into prints. He was aware of the importance of prints for spreading his inventions, and he decided to be in control of the image of his art and his persona that these engravings were conveying. For this reason, in 1567 he asked and obtained from the Council of Ten the "privilegio" of engraving and distributing the prints from his own invention. On the issue of print in Titian's workshop, see LÜDEMANN 2016, *passim*. For a more precise approach on the role of prints in Titian's self-fashioning strategy, see MANCINI 2008, pp. 121-158; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 289-409; MANCINI 2019B, pp. 205-232.

¹⁰⁵⁴ On Cornelis Cort, see SELLINK 1994; BOREA 1999, pp. 215-220.

¹⁰⁵⁵ For the letter from Lampsonius to Titian, see SCIOLLA 2001, pp. 117-120.

¹⁰⁵⁶ The *Tityus* was also engraved by Martino Rota a few years later, in 1570. Cornelis Cort after Titian; *Tityus*; 1566; 388x316 mm; engraving; British Museum; London. And also: Cornelis Cort after Titian; *Diana and Callisto*; 1566; 432x361 mm; engraving; British Museum; London.

¹⁰⁵⁷ He was probably referring to the ones engraved by Giulio Sanuto and Martino Rota. In his opinion, Cort was the only artist who could translate the pictorial values of Titian in the medium of print. However, this letter also demonstrates that the invention for Philip II was already well-known through prints, even though they might have been considered to be not up to the mark. Giulio Sanuto after Titian; *Venus and Adonis*; c. 1559; 538x415 mm; engraving; British Museum; London.

the Palazzo Comunale of the city in 1568, destroyed by a fire in 1575.¹⁰⁵⁸ We should also mention here two subjects that are not exactly mythological, but which refer to secular sources and pay particular attention to the beauty of the naked female protagonists: *Roger and Angelica*, dated 1565, and *Tarquinius and Lucretia*, produced during the years 1571-1572.¹⁰⁵⁹ Some other mythologies had been printed in the years 1550s, when Giulio Sanuto engraved the *Perseus and Andromeda* after Philip II's *poesia* and the *Tantalus* from the series of the *Condemned*,¹⁰⁶⁰ and in the 1570s, when an artist usually identified with the German Melchior Meier (active c. 1572-1582) produced a print after the Vienna version of Titian's *Danae*.¹⁰⁶¹

This premise is fundamental to start discussing the possible impact of Titian's compositions on Floris. In fact, it is very difficult to ascertain if Floris had experienced first-hand the paintings of the Venetian and, if he did, which ones. Unlike Coxcie and Mor, Floris was not a court artist, and his contacts with this environment are not documented before the time he portrayed Margaret of Parma, who was Governor of the Low Countries just before 1559, when Philip II arranged the moving of all of the Titian's masterpieces to Spain. Wouk argues that many of Titian's paintings had remained in Coudenberg palace after being moved from Binche and that Margaret of Parma displayed earlier works by Titian and commissioned new ones to reinforce her

¹⁰⁵⁸ Cornelis Cort after Titian; *Vulcan's forge*; 1572; 410x392 mm; engraving; British Museum; London.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Cornelis Cort after Titian; *Roger and Angelica*; 1565; 305x405 mm; engraving; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam. And also: Cornelis Cort after Titian; *Tarquinius and Lucretia*; 1565; 372x279 mm; engraving; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam

¹⁰⁶⁰ Giulio Sanuto after Titian; *Perseus and Andromeda*; 1550-1550; 380x511 mm; engraving; British Museum; London. And also: Giulio Sanuto after Titian; *Tantalus*; 1550-1560; 447x350 mm; engraving; British Museum; London. For the production of reproductive prints in the workshop of the painter and outside between the 1550s and the 1580s, see LÜDEMANN 2016, pp. 169-217.

¹⁰⁶¹ Melchior Meier after Titian; *Danae*; c. 1570; 257x308 mm; engraving; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam.

authority by linking herself to the imperial artist.¹⁰⁶² However, these statements are not supported by evidence and they are therefore mere speculations.¹⁰⁶³

In fact, the richest known collection of Titian's paintings in Brussels was the one of Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle. From the letters exchanged between the artist and the Bishop of Arras, we know that he had commissioned and received his own portrait, the one of his wife and of his father, an *Ecce Homo* similar to the one he had made in Rome,¹⁰⁶⁴ a copy of the portrait of Philip II that he had made in Milan,¹⁰⁶⁵ and a *Magdalene*.¹⁰⁶⁶ We have already discussed the presence of mythological paintings in the collection of Granvelle too, documented by a 1607 inventory in his palace in Besançon. The inventory lists two famous mythologies by Titian: *Venus before a mirror held by Cupid* and *Danae and the shower of gold*.¹⁰⁶⁷ Plus, there are two more paintings attributed to the Venetian which might have been in the Granvelle collection, but which are not mentioned in the 1607 inventory, namely a *Venus on a bed with an organist* and a *Sleeping Venus and a hidden satyr*. These paintings were sold by Francois Perrenot de Granvelle (1567-1607), grandchild of Antoine, to Emperor Rudolph II, as recorded in a letter dated 24 July 1600.¹⁰⁶⁸ Were such paintings accessible for an artist like Frans Floris?

Granvelle was a prominent patron of the art of Floris. He owned different heads studies by his hand (some with mythological connotations), but he mostly

¹⁰⁶² WOUK 2018, p. 436.

¹⁰⁶³ In the first chapter we have discussed how the documented paintings which Titian had sent to the Habsburgs all moved to Spain within 1559, therefore their presence in Coudenberg seems unlikely at best. Plus, it was Titian who sent prints to Margaret of Parma to remind her his privileged relationship with his father the Emperor, but we have no clues of commissions made by Margaret while she was Regent of the Low Countries.

¹⁰⁶⁴ The *Ecce homo* and other paintings, likely the portraits of Granvelle's wife and father, were mentioned in the letter that Titian had sent to his patron in 1548. MANCINI 1998, p. 171; PUPPI 2012, p. 155.

¹⁰⁶⁵ MANCINI 1998, p. 188; PUPPI 2012, pp. 175-176.

¹⁰⁶⁶ MANCINI 1998, p. 230-231; PUPPI 2012, p. 232.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Venus before a mirror held by Cupid* (p. 46), *Danae and the shower of gold* (p. 55), in Castan 1867.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Titian's paintings are listed among the thirty-two works of art selected by Rudolph II from the Granvelle collection. The entire lot was paid by the Emperor 13.000 "talari". See ZIMMERMAN 1888, p. LII.

commissioned religious paintings.¹⁰⁶⁹ However, other evidence suggests that the possibilities that Floris saw the Titian's paintings in the collection owned by Granvelle were very low. First of all, except for the paintings that Antoine Granvelle had bought directly from Titian, we cannot know if the ones listed in the 1607 inventory had been collected by him or by his heirs. If we also consider that Francois Perrenot de Granvelle had been the ambassador of Rudolph II in Venice,¹⁰⁷⁰ he likely had the chance to enrich his collection of Venetian paintings after the death of his grandfather and Floris himself. Secondly, we have no evidence whether these paintings were kept in his palace in Brussels or if they were hanging in Besançon. Even if they had been in the Low Countries, they likely left Brussels around 1564, when Antoine Granvelle retired to Franche-Comté following the suggestion of Philip II, due to his growing unpopularity.

Of course, Frans Floris likely had contact with the art of the Venetian during his stay in Italy, even though this does not shine through his sketchbooks, which were mostly devoted to drawings from the antique.¹⁰⁷¹ Also, his sojourn in Italy had happened in the 1540s, when the most important mythologies made by Titian were the ones painted for the *camerini d'alabastro* of Alfonso I d'Este and his Roman *Danae*. Wouk writes: "Floris's 'turn' to Titian later in his career is widely discussed but little understood."¹⁰⁷² Quite apart from the question of *why* Floris turned to Titian, however, we might also ponder the material question of *how*, given the scarcity of paintings available as models. In contrast to what has been supposed, in fact, the presence of first-hand sources of Titian's art cannot be given for granted, especially regarding paintings of Titian's late style.

¹⁰⁶⁹ On Granvelle and Floris, see WOUK 2018, pp. 286-298.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See GACHARD 1863, p. 71.

¹⁰⁷¹ There are different groups of sheets that attributed with a different degree of confidence to Frans Floris' sketchbooks: the so-called Roman Sketchbook, now in Basel, and the Album Dansaert, now lost. See VELDE 1969, pp. 255-286; WOUK 2018, pp. 77-108.

¹⁰⁷² WOUK 2018, p. 435.

5.3.2 Engaging with style and themes: the literary judgment

To add another layer to our understanding of Floris' dialogue with Titian, we have to open a parenthesis on the development of an "idea of Titian" in Netherlandish art theory, which had started to appropriate and echo concepts and discussions from Italian authors.

In his biography of Lambert Lombard edited in 1565, Lampsonius lists the best Italian painters of his time.¹⁰⁷³ He states that Michelangelo Buonarroti and Baccio Bandinelli (1488-1560) from Florence, Raphael from Urbino, Titian from Venice were the artists who were most inspired by the antiques and who imitated nature.¹⁰⁷⁴ After that, Lampsonius mentions Titian several times, focusing on the aspect that characterized the most the Italian artistic discussion around the Venetian, namely the splendour of his *colore*, that so powerfully imitated nature.¹⁰⁷⁵ The artist is called upon for technical issues like the perfection in the depiction of the flesh and is referred to as the source of the rich and vivid *colorito* of Lombard's paintings.¹⁰⁷⁶ But Lampsonius also contraposes Titian's *colore* to the "*intelligentia*" of Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), Michelangelo and Baccio, somehow alluding to the popular Italian debate on the dichotomy *disegno/colore*.¹⁰⁷⁷

That Titian was cast as the Venetian champion of the *colore*, is evident also in the aforementioned letter that Lampsonius addressed to the artist in 1567. He writes:

¹⁰⁷³ For a study focused on Lampsonius and Titian with emphasis also on the figure of Lambert Lombard and on the literary context underlying the art-theoretical discussion, see GROSSO 2018, pp. 241-299.

¹⁰⁷⁴ SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁷⁵ In the letter addressed to Giulio Clovio, Lampsonius refers to Titian calling him "*divin coloritore*", showing his knowledge of the 1557 book named *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Areino* by Lodovico Dolce (1508/10-1568), in which Titian is often called with the epithet "*divin*". See SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, p. 127; GROSSO 2018, pp. 256-258.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, pp. 50, 51, 55, 56.

¹⁰⁷⁷ In particular, for the defence of the *colore* and the primacy of Titian as the *summa* of the values named *invenzione*, *disegno* and *colorito*, we should consider the aforementioned *Dialogo* by Lodovico Dolce as one of the main sources for Lampsonius. However, we must not forget that he was in contact with the most strenuous advocate of Florentine *disegno*, Giorgio Vasari. See SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, pp. 43-60; GROSSO 2018, pp. 256-259; WOUK 2018, pp. 436-437.

«[...] dovunque mette V. S. la sua divina mano dà vita et spirito ad ogni cosa, [...] a tale che i vostri colori pareno non già solamente naturali, ma anco non so che di più divino, augusto et immortale»¹⁰⁷⁸

This concept would be central also in the biography of Titian published by Vasari in the re-edition of his *Vite* - the so-called “*edizione giuntina*” - published in 1568.¹⁰⁷⁹

While we are discussing Lampsonius’ idea of Titian - an idea that he had probably formed and shared with his circle of friends, artists and intellectuals -, it is worth mentioning an important topic that does not find space in the present study. Lampsonius, in the same letter, praises the artist for his painted landscapes, stating that Titian took over the leadership from the Flemish painters in this field.¹⁰⁸⁰ The high regard for the Venetian’s depiction of “*paesaggi*” is shared and carried on by Karel van Mander in his *Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const* (1604), a sort of introduction to the *Schilderboek* in which the author lists the fundamental elements of the art of painting, including the landscape.¹⁰⁸¹ This subject, in relation to the impact of Titian’s landscape - in paint and print -, on the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the Netherlandish art has yet to be fully investigated.¹⁰⁸²

Moving back to Lampsonius’ praise of Titian, he seems to have been particularly impressed by his *colore*, his imitation of nature in depicting flesh and, maybe surprisingly for a Flemish, by his ability in depicting landscapes. Considering his eagerness to receive more of Titian’s compositions through the medium of print, it is likely that he also admired his talent in the aspects of *inventio* and *dispositio*. Floris, on the other hand, had not been particularly admired for his colours.¹⁰⁸³ On the contrary, his strong points were the *inventione* and the *disegno* with which he adapted *all’antica* models as

¹⁰⁷⁸ SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, p. 119.

¹⁰⁷⁹ See HOPE in BELLUNO 2007-2008, pp. 37-41; FAIETTI in OXFORD 2015-2016, pp. 39-49.

¹⁰⁸⁰ SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001 p. 119. On this topic, see GROSSO 2019, pp. 191-215.

¹⁰⁸¹ MANDER (1604) 2009, pp. 125-137.

¹⁰⁸² I want to thank Manfred Sellink for the indication and for the interesting opening to further research.

¹⁰⁸³ One exception is the Latin dedication to Nicolaes Jonghelinck on Hieronymus Cock’s publication of the *Labors of Hercules* (1563), in which Lampsonius writes that Cock was able to transpose the lively colours of Floris paintings into print. However, this refers more to the *topos* on the ability of the engraver than to a real praise of Floris’ *colorito*. The transcription in Wouk 2018, pp. 540-542.

remembered by Lodovico Guicciardini, who also gives him the credit for having introduced in Flanders from Italy: «la maestria nel far' muscoli & scorci naturali & maravigliosi».¹⁰⁸⁴ In his 1568 *Vite*, Vasari expressed enthusiastic comments on Floris' beautiful and bizarre inventions that he knew through prints.¹⁰⁸⁵

But Lampsonius did not spare criticism for Floris in the collection of Latin epigrams named *Pictorium aliquot celebrium Germaniae Inferioris effigies*, published in 1572 after the death of the painter. The author writes:

«If you, as painter, Floris, had acquired for yourself as much skill in art as you bestowed on you by nature - since you prefer to paint much above making work of paintings, and find no pleasure in spending time on the proper use of the file and hard work - then I would cry: yield, painters, whether you were brought forth by our fathers of our forefathers.»¹⁰⁸⁶

This posthumous epigram shows Floris as a “missed opportunity”, a talented artist who wasted his skills, probably referring to his last problematic years.¹⁰⁸⁷ He had somehow failed his adhesion to the Netherlandish tradition, to the Eyckian oil painting technique, and he had lost the chance to be an artist second to none. Apparently, with the Horatian polishing the work with the file, Lampsonius was criticizing the looseness and sketchiness of the Floris technique, a looseness that was analysed by Wouk as part of the artist's dialogue with the figure of Titian.¹⁰⁸⁸

It is striking to compare van Mander's description of Floris' paintings from the years 1560s to the one that Vasari had made of Titian's late style. Van Mander writes:

¹⁰⁸⁴ Transcribed and translated in WOUK 2018, p. 245.

¹⁰⁸⁵ VASARI 1568, V, p. 441; VII, pp. 584-585, 589. The reliability of Vasari's information is questionable, in particular to what concerns the foreign artists. It was hypothesized by Charles Hope that Vasari mostly based his comments on letters he had received. See HOPE 1995, pp. 10-13.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Translation by WOUK 2018, pp. 547-548.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Van Mander wrote that in his last years Floris had become a drunk and had accumulated debts. See VELDE 1975, I, pp. 46-47.

¹⁰⁸⁸ The analysis of the style of Floris as a response to Titian is an interesting topic, especially considering that this aspect of his technique had been overlooked. However, Wouk's conclusions are dealing only with some problems and excluding others, as we will discuss. See WOUK 2018, pp. 435-449.

«For it looks as if a lot of time and labour has been put into the faces and the nude parts of the body, especially if one stands at some distance; then things are revealed which are not apparent close to: or rather one sees things which are not there».¹⁰⁸⁹

In this case, the criticism of Lampsonius becomes praise for Floris' ability to merge a Central-Italian and a Venetian depiction of the body through a reference to the description of Titian's late manner made by Vasari and quoted in van Mander's biography of the Venetian.¹⁰⁹⁰ In fact, Vasari writes:

«Conciò sia che le prime son condotte con una certa finezza e diligenza incredibile e da essere vedute da presso e da lontano, e queste ultime, condotte di colpi, tirate via di grosso e con macchie, di maniera che da presso non si possono vedere e di lontano appariscono perfette».¹⁰⁹¹

We have already analysed this famous quote from Vasari in the first chapter, in relation to the comments expressed by Philip II and Mary of Hungary on the painting technique of Titian and on the "right distance" to fully appreciate his paintings. But, in this context, can we interpret the criticism of Lampsonius retrospectively and through the lens of van Mander's direct connection between Floris and the Venetian - or the Venetians?

The answer to this question is obviously negative. The lack of polish, the looseness identified in the late art of Floris, is interpreted by Lampsonius as a downgrade of his Flemishness instead of an improvement towards a style characterized by the Italian concept of *sprezzatura* of which Titian was the absolute artistic benchmark. Put in these terms, it seems that Lampsonius was criticizing Floris for the same aspects which were fundamental and appreciated in the art of Titian, namely his way of avoiding too much

¹⁰⁸⁹ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 225.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Walter Melion compared the *veerdicheyt* (facility) with which van Mander describes Floris' art with the *lichtveerdicheyt* (quick, light and secure move of the brush) of Titian's so-called "second manner". See MELION 1991, pp. 123-124.

¹⁰⁹¹ VASARI 1568, II, 815.

polish in favour of a light hand.¹⁰⁹² But we must be careful in drawing these conclusions from the judgment of Lampsonius.

First of all, the humanist primarily reveals his admiration for Titian's *colore* and *naturalezza*. As we have discussed in the chapter on portraiture, the Venetian was brought as the major example of a painter who could "imitate the nature" and present the subjects of his paintings as they were alive. He was praised for his depiction of the skin, the trembling flesh, and not specifically for his loose brushwork.¹⁰⁹³ But Melion, in his analysis of Lombard's biography written by Lampsonius, interprets the words of the author on the painter's celerity and concision of the line as if he preferred an agile brush, showing *facilità* (maybe also related to the *sprezzatura*?), instead of a "licked clean" pictorial surface.¹⁰⁹⁴ Lampsonius would not have described enthusiastically the *sprezzatura* of Lombard's brush in connection to Titian just to criticize it in the epigram dedicated to Floris. We should probably operate a distinction between the concept of *sprezzatura* in painting, namely a looseness in handling the brush which appeared effortless, and the painting "condotte di colpi, tirate via di grosso e con macchie" typical of Titian's late style.

This is definitely a complex topic to address.¹⁰⁹⁵ Within the limits of this dissertation, it suffices to raise some questions on the reception of these concepts in the Netherlands, focused on the years before van Mander. If Lampsonius used the

¹⁰⁹² The connection between Titian and the concept of *sprezzatura* was for the first time expressed in Dolce's *Dialogo della pittura*. The Venetian was a master in not indulging in an excess of polish in order to achieve a seemingly effortless execution of the painted surface. DOLCE 1557, fol. 40 *verso*.

¹⁰⁹³ As we have discussed in the first chapter and in the chapter on portraiture, the comments of Philip II and Mary of Hungary should not be interpreted as the acknowledgement of what Vasari would call "late style" but as the expression of a visual culture used to the extreme polish of the Netherlandish paintings and portraits.

¹⁰⁹⁴ See MELION 1991, pp. 165-166.

¹⁰⁹⁵ For instance, it is improper and somehow reductive to talk about a homogenous "late style", considering that some of the paintings by the Venetian from the 1550s, and most of the ones of the 1560s and the 1570s, present various degrees of sketchiness and completion. On the topic of Titian's late style and its ideological and technical interpretations there is a vast literature. Here, some selected authors and texts: HOPE 2003; SOHM 1991, pp. 25-62; GENTILI 1992, pp. 93-127 and in BELLUNO 2007, pp. 135-243; BOHDE 2002; ROSEN 2001; AIKEMA in VENICE-VIENNA 2007-2008, pp. 88-99; CHECA CREMADES in VENICE-VIENNA 2007-2008, pp. 63-69; GENTILI in BELLUNO 2007-2008, pp. 135-143.

Dialogo by Dolce as a source, then he was aware of the latter's analysis of Titian's *colorito*: Dolce was not only referring to the choice of colours, but to the correct passage from light to shadow, which had to blend smoothly and softly while avoiding marked outlines.¹⁰⁹⁶ Checa pinpoints in this passage the description of what might be considered the first stage of the change that would bring to what Vasari called the "late style" and the technique of the "pittura a macchie".¹⁰⁹⁷ Vasari, on the other hand, seems to refer to some paintings realized between 1550 and 1566, mostly for Philip II, when he mentions the artworks that should be looked at from afar, and not the most radical examples of the late style, which were indicated with the expression "non finito".¹⁰⁹⁸

It is safe to suggest that the art of Titian celebrated by Lampsonius and referred to by the Netherlandish artists that we have analysed so far was further from the idea of the "non finito", and closer to the concept of *sprezzatura*, or *facilità*, which did not necessarily imply a sketchy brushstroke.

In this regard, it is interesting to notice how in XVIIth century Dutch there was a linguistic difference between Titian's "pittura a macchia", known as *ruw* (rough) and used for instance to describe the sketchy and impastoed paint handling of Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669); and the word *lossigheid* (looseness), which translated the Italian concept of *sprezzatura* as the dexterity of hand which dissimulated the effort. Pousão-Smith analysed these differences in the artistic vocabulary, concluding that the concept

¹⁰⁹⁶ «È la principal parte del colorito il contendimento che fa il lume con l'ombra: a che si dà un mezzo, che unisce l'un contrario con l'altro e fa parere le figure tonde, e più e meno, secondo il bisogno, distanti, dovendo il pittore avvertire che, nel collocarle, elle non facciano confusione. [...] Ma bisogna aver sempre l'occhio intento alle tinte, principalmente delle carni, et alla morbidezza; [...] Ora, bisogna che la mescolanza de' colori sia sfumata et unita di modo che rappresenti il naturale e non resti cosa che offenda gli occhi: come sono le linee de' contorni, le quali si debbono fuggire, che la natura non le fa, e la negrezza ch'io dico dell'ombre fiere e disunite. Questi lumi et ombre, posti con giudicio et arte, fanno tondeggjar le figure e danno loro il rilievo che si ricerca; del qual rilievo le figure che sono prive, paiono, come ben diceste, dipinte, perciocché resta la superficie piana» in DOLCE 1557, pp. 183-184.

¹⁰⁹⁷ See CHECA CREMADES in VENICE-VIENNA 2007-2008, p. 63.

¹⁰⁹⁸ In some of his late paintings, Titian gave up to the vivid chromatism for a monochrome approach. We should mention his famous *Flying of Maryas* (1570-76) now at Kroměříž, or the *Pietà* (1575-75) at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice.

of *lossigheid* in physical terms was most likely linked to the fine and detailed painting, called *net* (neat, polished), instead of the *ruw* style.¹⁰⁹⁹

It is important to somehow mitigate and contextualize the experience of Lampsonius, who likely had his most relevant encounter with Titian's art in London, where he was between 1554 and 1558 and where the *Venus and Adonis* was sent in the same years, and who demonstrated his assimilation of concepts derived from Italian art theory.¹¹⁰⁰ A similar point might be made for the artists like Frans Floris - but also Michiel Coxcie, Anthonis Mor and others - for many reasons: the years of Titian's extreme experimentation were yet to come, the selection of his paintings made by the Habsburgs in the Netherlands followed a taste that evaluated Central Italian and *all'antica* aspects, the prints were more available than the original artworks.

After this long and complex premise, we must return to the subject of Floris' increasingly visible brushwork in some paintings of the 1560s. Wouk discussed the comparison between Vasari's description of the late style of Titian and van Mander's comment on Floris and also hypothesised that the artist's looser and painterly manner was a precise choice in dialogue with the Venetian, which: «may have also been calculated to reflect the shifting tastes of his Antwerp clientele».¹¹⁰¹

If we want to prove the validity of this assumption, it seems insufficient to focus on the issue of the style. A looser and less detailed manner of painting might hardly have a meaning in itself, unrelated to the form, the iconography, and the context.

Moreover, the same scholar identifies another shift in the style of the artist, to which he gives a different reading. Floris apparently moved from the so-called “relief-style” of his early religious paintings, namely the one standardized by Raphael and his followers through the medium of print, to a style characterized by visible brushstrokes and an “impasto-like” rendering of the pictorial surface.¹¹⁰² Examples of this shift in

¹⁰⁹⁹ See POUSSÃO-SMITH 2003, pp. 258-279.

¹¹⁰⁰ See GROSSO 2018, pp. 256-263.

¹¹⁰¹ See WOUK 2018, pp. 447-449.

¹¹⁰² It is curious that Wouk discusses the issue of style in the art of Floris in two separate chapters and that he does not relate the two interpretations whatsoever. The style shift in the religious paintings is related to adhesion to the religious movement of the *Devotio Moderna*, while the mythological themes it is directly connected to dialoguing with Titian's artistic persona. See WOUK 2018, pp. 263-325, esp. 276-283.

the religious painting are the 1555 *Christ carrying the cross with Mary and Simon of Cyrene* (Figure 186), the *Head of Christ* (Figure 187), which is probably a study, and a second *Christ carrying the cross* (Figure 188) dated about 1560.¹¹⁰³ In these cases, the loose brushstrokes are explained by Wouk as the artist taking distance from what he calls an elitist style whose goal was to educate the audience, to one aimed to move the viewer emotionally, in the spirit of the *Devotio Moderna*. To achieve that, Floris carefully drew from the Netherlandish tradition of the dramatic close-up of scenes from the Passion and his Italianism, painting idealised bodies from Michelangelo's statues, merging, form, and style to convey an emotional message.¹¹⁰⁴ Another painting that is usually brought as an example of this loose style, but which is not discussed by Wouk in the chapter on experiments on religious art, is the *Adoration of the shepherds* that we have analysed in the previous chapter, dated 1568.

Did Floris experiment with this style in the emulation of Titian to attract courtly patrons who would have appreciated the reference? This is a recursive question we have dealt with many times concerning different Netherlandish artists. However, it seems more difficult to give a straight answer in this case. First of all, the analysis of the sources, visual and literary, shows a problematic image of Titian, which did not exactly coincide with the one developed in the Italian art theory. Secondly, while Coxcie, Mor, and the other painters mentioned did adapt Titian's models more or less

¹¹⁰³ Since this chapter does not focus on religious painting, the topic is not going to be analysed in-depth here. The paintings mentioned in the text are: Frans Floris; *Christ carrying the cross with Mary and Simon of Cyrene*, c. 1555; 114x81 cm; oil on panel; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna. The second is: Frans Floris; *Head of Christ*, c. 1553-54; 48x34 cm; oil on panel; Staatliches Museum; Schwerin. And finally: Frans Floris; *Christ carrying the cross*, c. 1560; 74,5x47 cm; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna.

¹¹⁰⁴ In the 1560 painting of *Christ carrying the cross*, the body of the Saviour quotes Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* in Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, dated 1519-20. Floris does a clever operation in this panel: he uses an extremely renowned statue and transforms the stone into a different material. The skin appears tactile in the medium of paint, fragile and in the process of falling apart. This approach is interesting both in relation to the problem of the "image-ness" of the artworks (to evidence their materiality and artistry) and in relation to the theoretical discussion on the imitation of the antique sources, which will be addressed among others by Rubens in his *De imitatione statuarum*. See WOUK 2018, pp. 282-283. On Rubens and his contribution to art theory, see in particular MULLER 1982, pp. 229-247.

subtly, but in an often-recognizable way, Frans Floris seems to avoid directly referring to his compositions, although he demonstrates knowledge of them.

We will now analyse a series of paintings by Floris that have been considered dependant from Titianesque models on different levels: the style, the composition, the theme, or a combination of them.

Diana and her nymphs surprised by Actaeon

In the 1560s, Floris focused his production on mythologies, and he also confronted himself with Ovidian themes which had been made popular by the series of the *poesie* by Titian for Philip II. The literary discourse around them, which we have already mentioned, referred to the *paragone* between poetry and painting, and to the claim that the latter could achieve the same poetic expression as the first. We are referring to a layered and nuanced relationship between image and literature, painting and words, that preoccupied many artists, including Frans Floris.

The aforementioned decoration of Floris' house, his experience with Lambert Lombard and his humanist friends, and the artistic partnership with Jonghelinck and his circle, corroborate the image of an artist who was consciously deciding to approach these themes. In fact, he would paint *Diana and her nymphs surprised by Actaeon*, a subject revitalized by Titian in 1559 when he sent it to the King of Spain (*Figure 189*).¹¹⁰⁵ The original painting is now lost, but its appearance is preserved by a photograph, an oil sketch (*Figure 190*), and an engraving (*Figure 191*) by Frans Menton (c. 1550-1615), all of which show different aspects of his composition.¹¹⁰⁶

There are some minor changes between the photographed painting and the oil sketch. The composition and the distribution of the elements in the space coincide

¹¹⁰⁵ Titian; *Diana and Actaeon*; 1556-59; 184,5x202,2 cm; oil on canvas; National Galleries of Scotland; Edinburgh. See WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 73-74, 138-141; and the recent WESTON-LEWIS in LONDON 2020, pp. 147-155.

¹¹⁰⁶ The photography records the painting when it was in the collection of Lord Middleton (Wollanton Hall, Nottingham) and bears the measures 170x257 cm. The oil sketch: Frans Floris; *Diana and her nymphs surprised by Actaeon*; c. 1565; 415x485 mm; pen and brush in brown with oil and white heightening on parchment on panel; Christ Church Picture Gallery; Oxford. The print: Frans Menton after Frans Floris; *Diana and her nymphs surprised by Actaeon*; c. 1566; 220x290 mm; engraving; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam.

but, in the painting, one of the nymphs who is standing behind Diana is missing, and another shows her shock touching her head, Actaeon points at the goddess instead of raising his hand in a gesture of surprise, and the nymph at the extreme left, caught in her act of running away, moves forth her right foot instead of the left one. There are other minor changes in the pose of the nymphs, and we can see Diana's clothes (probably part of her chest plate) lying next to the fountain.

More relevant alterations are present if we compare these painted versions to the print engraved by Menton. In fact, here some elements had been isolated and re-arranged. It seems like the left side of the painting had been cut, mirrored, and pasted at the tight of the composition. In this way, Diana had become the centre of the composition, and the two nymphs are now running on the right side. Most of the postures had been slightly moved, but some had been visibly changed, namely the pose of the nymph who is running with her arms stretched and the one of the nymph who is untying Diana's sandals. While the first recalls an escaping Daphne or one of the women depicted in the representations of the "Massacre of the innocents", the second reminds of a pose used by Floris for his *Venus and Cupid* at the Louvre, dated about 1569 (*Figure 192*).¹¹⁰⁷

As noticed by Wouk, Floris interprets the Ovidian text pretty literally, even more than Titian. We see the nymphs taking care of the goddess, removing her sandals, taking the weapons away - a detail present in the lost painting, but not in the engraving or in the oil sketch -, and bringing her water.¹¹⁰⁸ Here, it is one of Diana's companions who immediately tries to cover the goddess with a cloth, and not the goddess herself. Another narrative component which Titian ignores is the act of Diana spraying water at the hunter Actaeon. However, the Venetian focuses more on the rendering of the element of the water, which is particularly relevant in the original story. In the lost painting, Floris had also included a spring of water next to the fountain, but this had been excluded from the engraving and the oil sketch. Therefore, or both Titian and Floris show different degrees of freedom from the literary source, or they might have used a different one.

¹¹⁰⁷ Frans Floris; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1569; 103x132 cm; oil on panel; Louvre Museum; Paris.

¹¹⁰⁸ See WOUK 2018, pp. 439-441.

But was Floris re-elaborating Titian's work? Wouk writes of a synthesis between two *poesie* by Titian, the aforementioned *Diana and Actaeon* (Figure 189) and *Diana and Callisto* (Figure 193), two paintings for Philip II which had been conceived together and which were sent to Spain in 1560.¹¹⁰⁹ The elements borrowed from *Diana and Callisto* seem to be the nymphs turning away from the central action, the naked body of the goddess and the figure of the crouched dog. These would be, if isolated, labile connections. But other elements might demonstrate Floris' knowledge of the *poesie*. For instance, the hairstyle of Titian's goddess, with pearls and the crescent moon, was used by Floris in other representations of Diana (Figure 194).¹¹¹⁰ Sure, the crescent moon was a typical attribute of the goddess, but this similarity might strengthen the connection.

However, the most evident visual source of Floris' *Diana and Actaeon* is identified in a print after Francesco Primaticcio representing *Venus attired by the Graces* (Figure 195).¹¹¹¹ This invention was probably related to the context of the decoration of Fontainebleau, and this is not surprising if we consider that Floris had already interpreted models by Francesco Primaticcio and Luca Penni (c. 1500/04-1556/57), two artists who worked for Francis I and were exponents of the so-called "school of Fontainebleau".¹¹¹² Except for the goddess herself, the nymph who is styling her hair and the one with the bowl closely resemble the two corresponding Graces in the print after Primaticcio. This adaptation of the model appears way more straightforward than the previous ones of Titian. It is so evident that it almost looks like a citation.

¹¹⁰⁹ Titian; *Diana and Callisto*; 1556-59; 184,5x202,2 cm; oil on canvas; National Gallery; London. See WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 142-143; and the recent WIVEL in LONDON 2020, pp. 158-165. For the discussion on Titian's *poesie* and Floris' invention, see WOUK 2018, pp. 438-439.

¹¹¹⁰ Frans Floris; *Diana*; c. 1555; 42x33 cm; oil on panel; present location unknown. We know that many "heads" of gods and goddesses were produced in Floris' workshop and likely sold on the free market. Granvelle, in his collection, had a head of Bacchus and a head of Ceres by the artist listed in his 1607 inventory. See CASTAN 1867, p. 45.

¹¹¹¹ This connection was identified by Carl van de Velde (1975, I, pp. 383-384). Anonymous after Francesco Primaticcio; *Venus attired by the Graces*; 1540/50; 304x250 mm; etching; British Museum; London.

¹¹¹² The influence of the Fontainebleau school was pointed out by KAUFFMANN 1943, pp. 133-157. The multiplicity of Italian and French sources used by Floris in the treatment of the female body was identified by JOST 1960, pp. 53-55.

Moreover, Penni designed a few prints depicting women at the bath in the context of the school of Fontainebleau (Figure 196, 197), which might have offered some suggestions to Floris for his depiction of the sensuous and intimate moment in which the women were exposing their bodies before being interrupted by Actaeon.¹¹¹³

The only element of the composition that seems to have a strong connection with Titian's models is the body of Diana, very similar to the same one in *Diana and Callisto*. Another element in this respect might be, in the foreground, the presence of a nymph sitting and showing her naked and plump butt to the viewer. This motive would become recurrent in the scenes of Diana bathing with her nymphs, but it is difficult to locate the origin of this connection. Understandably, a scene with many naked women was the perfect pretext for showing them from every angle, a multiplicity of points of view that also Titian researched when he sent Philip II the *Venus and Adonis*, in which the goddess was seen from the back.¹¹¹⁴

We have not yet mentioned the style because the original painting was lost, but the oil sketch reveals a particular attention to the fleshiness of the bodies and the smooth and blended passage from light to shadow. The rapid touch was obviously related to the typology of the work, which was not a finished painting but a preparatory study. The pictorial abbreviations and the few touches of white, together with the softness of the skin, recall Titian's works more than any other painting of the artist. However, we cannot separate the style of the oil sketch from his "work-in-progress" nature, and we cannot safely assume that this looseness might have been the means for engaging with a specific clientele.

¹¹¹³ The theme of the bathing women was a typical output of the court of Fontainebleau. Almost all of the artists connected to that environment produced at least one artwork representing this sensual subject. See Zerner 1996, pp. 204-225. Two examples of this theme are Jean Mignon (active 1535-1555) after Luca Penni; *Venus bathing attended by her nymphs*; 1543-45; 527x431 mm; etching; British Museum; London. Jean Mignon after Luca Penni; *Women bathing*; 1545-55; 332x502 mm; etching; British Museum; London. See JENKINS 2017, II, pp. 300-301, 316-317.

¹¹¹⁴ The idea of the variety of poses, related to the discussed theme of *paragone*, was expressed in the letter from Titian to Philip II. Here Titian gives some indication about how the paintings would have been positioned in the King's *camerino*, and he clearly states that he had painted Venus seen from the back because the *Danae* was seen from the front, and he wanted to vary. See PUPPI 2012, pp. 213-214.

At this point, it is necessary to draw some conclusions. When Wouk writes that *Diana and Actaeon*: «demonstrates both his direct knowledge of Titian's approach to the subject and his self-conscious distance from it»,¹¹¹⁵ he makes an interesting statement. Floris approached a theme that was popularised by Titian in those years, which was characterized by a strong eroticism and the claim of poetic value, but he avoided the direct comparison. On the one hand, this reminds the approach that we have interpreted as the *modus operandi* of Willem Key in his adaptation of the *Ecce Homo and Mater Dolorosa*. Being both pupils of Lombard, we might deduce that they studied the models and then adapted them similarly, namely through a process of *aemulatio* aimed at finding better solutions without exactly copying the constitutive elements of the original. On the other hand, his references to Primaticcio, the school of Fontainebleau or, in other circumstances painters like Raphael, Giulio Romano, Francesco Salviati (1510-1563) or Giorgio Vasari - the Central Italian examples -, were often more explicit.¹¹¹⁶

It seems very unlikely that Floris was unaware of Titian's models, but the evidence suggests that he knew *Diana and Callisto*, which was also more easily available through Cort's engraving, and that he did not have *Diana and Actaeon* as a visual source. First, all the references that we have found connect Floris' painting to the first canvas and not to the second. Second, the many details from the Ovidian text of the *Metamorphosis* suggest that the Netherlandish artist looked at the literary source directly, and this might have been related to the fact that he was visually integrating subjects different from the one he was representing, and he needed narrative details.

It is difficult to deduce something about a possible commission, even though the painting was listed in the inventory of the collection of the Duke Charles de Croÿ of Aerschot (1560-1612) at Beaumont. The Dukes of Aerschot had strong bonds with Emperor Charles V first and with King Philip II after. Faithful to Catholicism and the Habsburgs, Philippe de Croÿ (1526-1595) refused to join William of Orange in the rebellion, was made Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece by Philip II and was

¹¹¹⁵ WOUK 2018, p. 438.

¹¹¹⁶ The important role of the print medium in disseminating the language of the school of Fontainebleau among collectors might have been relevant for the issue of recognizability. For the role of print, see ZERNER 1996, pp. 125-145

appointed Stadtholder of Flanders. His son Charles followed a different path: at first, he abandoned his Catholic faith and his loyalty to the King and became Stadtholder of Flanders for the Protestant rebels, but after the reconquest of Antwerp in 1585 he converted again to Catholicism and swore to be loyal to Spain again. In his 1612 inventory are listed many mythological paintings, among which some of the themes of Titian's *poesie*. However, conversely to what is indicated by Wouk, there are no paintings by the Venetian or somehow referred to him.¹¹¹⁷ In fact, his name is not mentioned once, while Paolo Veronese is present with many religious paintings. Floris is present with some subjects arguably Titianesque, like a *Sleeping Venus crowned with flowers and naked Cupid*, or *Venus and Cupid mourning the death of Adonis*.¹¹¹⁸ But, if this is the most relevant source to argue a Titianesque switch of Floris in the 1560s, it appears insufficient.

We can endorse that Floris knew Titian's sources, but not as much as it was suggested by the literature. Even though we cannot reject the idea that there were some copies or replicas in Flemish collections, this is just an assumption. And it would be necessary to add another layer to this hypothesis by assuming that artists would have had access to these collections. Prints are the safest option if we evaluate Titianesque sources after 1559, and they were likely collected together with other prints and mixed in the same way that Michiel Coxcié was doing in those years.

Danae and the golden rain

The first of the *poesie* was the depiction of *Danae*, finished and dispatched to the then Prince Philip II in 1553.¹¹¹⁹ This extremely erotic painting was repeating the one with the same subject executed for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in 1545, an invention

¹¹¹⁷ Wouk mistakenly records a large number of Titian paintings or copies of his inventions. The only anonymous painting that might have been Titian's is «une Vénus nue, deboute, les cheveux pendant, et le Cupidon nudz, eslez, aussy debout à ces pieds». But it seems unlikely because the description fits the type but not the composition. PINCHART 1860, p. 162.

¹¹¹⁸ PINCHART 1860, pp. 160, 166.

¹¹¹⁹ In chapter one we mentioned the discussion on which version of *Danae* was sent to Philip II if it was the Prado or the Wellington one. Since it is not so relevant for the following argument, here are listed both of them with the dates proposed in LONDON 2020.

that we have previously discussed for its re-elaboration of models in particular by Michelangelo and Primaticcio, and also for its importance in the theoretical debate about *disegno* and *colore* in Vasari's *Vite*. In the Low Countries, the illustrious antecedent was the lavish *Danae* by Jan Gossaert, dated 1527 and presenting the woman sitting in front of a rich architectural background merging gothic and *all'antica* elements (*Figure 198*).¹¹²⁰ Apart from the sensuality of the woman, Titian's painting and Gossaert's are as different as they can be in their interpretation of the subject.

The only trace that Floris measured himself with this mythology is a print after his design engraved again by Frans Menton, dated about 1566 (*Figure 199*).¹¹²¹ This print deserves to be carefully observed and analysed not just for its composition and references, but for its interpretation as part of a possible dialogue of Floris with the art of the Venetian.

The elements of the engraving resemble closely the ones in Titian's invention (*Figure 59, 60*). Completely naked, Danae is lying on the bed in the foreground, her back sustained by thick pillows. A curtain hangs above her head like a canopy, precluding half of the background from the view. A beam of light points at the woman's genitals while the old maid is watching the scene.

Even though the presence of the maid had been considered as a confirmation that Floris knew the *Danae* for Philip II (*Figure 60*),¹¹²² this figure already appeared in previous sources, since the illuminations of Raoul Lefèvre (active in the second half of the XVth century),¹¹²³ but the most relevant antecedent for her representation in the scene is the fresco by Primaticcio for Francis I at Fontainebleau (*Figure 19*), translated into print by Lèon Davent between 1542 and 1547 (*Figure 200*).¹¹²⁴ The strongest links between the compositions of Floris seem instead to be the arrangement of the image and the pose

¹¹²⁰ Jan Gossaert; *Danae*; 1527; 177,2x161,8; oil on panel; Alte Pinakothek; Munich. See in particular SLUIJTER 1999, pp. 4-45; BASS M. 2016, pp. 116-130.

¹¹²¹ Frans Menton after Frans Floris; *Danae and the golden ruin*; c. 1566; 214x264 mm; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam. See VELDE 1975, I, p. 406; WOUK 2018, pp. 442-447.

¹¹²² WOUK 2018, pp. 443-444.

¹¹²³ For an analysis of the sources and an interpretation of the presence of the nurse as a representation of greed in opposition to the purity of Danae, see TANNER 2018, pp. 34-44.

¹¹²⁴ Lèon Davent after Primaticcio; *Danae*; c. 1542-47; 233x296 mm; engraving; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York. See JENKINS 2017, II, pp. 20-21.

of the woman. In fact, Floris might have known the composition through copies such as the one made by Anthonis Mor and recorded by Vasari, or replicas like the aforementioned *Danae* attributed to Titian and listed in Granvelle's inventory dated 1607.

But we have to consider that, again, what could have been an evident quotation of Titian's renowned invention, shows instead many other references and sources of inspiration. It is interesting to notice that the bed is positioned diagonally, in a way that recalls - even though it is not as much accentuated - Key's depiction of *Venus and Cupid*. Other resemblances to this painting are the peculiar ribbons creating a pattern in the blanket that is sliding on the floor, and the background with a detailed city which is never present in Titian's depictions of the subject.

The pose of Danae, which is so peculiar in the Venetian painting, as we have previously discussed emulated and adapted models like Michelangelo's *Leda and Night*, or the two interpretations of the subject made by Correggio and Primaticcio. However, Floris makes some decisive changes to the position of the torso, arms and legs, and he shows her face in profile. These alterations make Danae resemble more closely the one of *Venus and Cupid* by Primaticcio engraved again by Lèon Davent (*Figure 201*).¹¹²⁵ Floris likely knew this source and he had adapted it on other occasions.¹¹²⁶ Danae and Venus both stretch the leg closer to the viewer - it is almost possible to superimpose them - and bend the other one, and they rotate the hips and the torso to show even more clearly the pubic area and the breasts.

While it is difficult to imagine that Floris would have opted for these visual solutions without at least a description of Titian's *Danae*, we must notice again that he employed many other sources, making them particularly recognizable to a public who might have been acquainted with prints from the school of Fontainebleau.

¹¹²⁵ Lèon Davent after Primaticcio; *Venus and Cupid from the series of twelve muses and goddess*; c. 1540-56; 226x170 mm; etching; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York. See ZERNER 1996, pp. 116-117; JENKINS 2017, II, p. 45.

¹¹²⁶ The goddess in *Venus, Mars and Cupid surprised by the gods* (c. 1562) now in the Brukenthal National Museum in Sibiu is considered to be a creative adaptation of Primaticcio's invention. See WOUK 2018, pp. 420-421.

Reclined Venus with Cupid

It seems like the depiction of “Venus and Cupid” was a must-have in almost all of the inventories which list several mythological paintings. Sometimes alone, sometimes with a Satyr or Mars, the goddess was the most popular subject, for the reasons we have already discussed. In many cases, the author of the painting was not transcribed in the inventories, some other times it was. The name Floris appeared in the inventories in relation to this subject, together with other names that we will cover later.

It is common to find panels with this theme, especially with a reclined Venus resembling the ones of the Venetian tradition but painted in the Flemish manner, attributed to these artists, and also to Floris. The *Venus and Cupid* (c. 1560) from the Hallwyl Museum of Stockholm (*Figure 202*) was attributed to Frans Floris by the museum, the same as another *Venus and Cupid* now at the Uffizi (*Figure 203*), but they were both rejected by the recent literature.¹¹²⁷ However, even though the attributions are doubtful, these paintings might be an interesting starting point to discuss the following artists and the issues related to their production.

The first painting (*Figure 202*) is surely the most Titianesque. Again, Venus is completely naked, her pubes covered and underlined by a transparent veil. She lies on her side, offering a full view of her body to the viewer. A green and velvety curtain creates the illusion of intimacy, while the messy bedsheets allude to sexual activity. She holds an arrow and gazes down at Cupid, who is stretching his bow. A landscape with a city appears on the right corner and it fades in the distance. The pose of Venus is frontal and recalls a type that had been frequently depicted by Venetian painters like Jacopo Palma the Elder (1480-1528), Paris Bordone (1500-1571) and Titian himself, especially in the theme of *Venus and a musician*, that he would paint in about five different versions.¹¹²⁸ These paintings are often studied to better understand the

¹¹²⁷ Frans Floris (?); *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1560; 295x420 cm; oil on panel; Hallwyl Museum; Stockholm. Frans Floris (?); *Venus and Cupid*; 1550-60; 121x156 cm; oil on canvas; Galleria degli Uffizi; Florence. The paintings are not mentioned in the monography by VELDE 1975 or in the extensive study by WOUK 2018.

¹¹²⁸ The development of different types of reclined nude female figures in the Venetian area, focusing on Giorgione, Titian, Palma the Elder, Paris Bordone and also Giovanni Cariani (1490-1547),

production process of Titian's workshop, especially what concerns the genesis of replicas and variations which started from the original invention and then were adapted to different patrons or markets.¹¹²⁹ Panofsky suggested that the earliest of these canvases was the one now in Berlin, and that the features of the organ player resemble the ones of Philip II, concluding that he likely was the patron who commissioned this artwork.¹¹³⁰ If so, the series would have had its origin in the Habsburgs context.

The face and expression of the woman looking down bring to mind Titian's *Venus with an organist and a dog* from the Prado, dated about 1550 (Figure 204).¹¹³¹ The angle of the face, the round chin and the small heart-shaped lips closely resemble each other. The same is true for the soft belly, fleshy and trembling, and the small breasts. We know that one of the versions painted by Titian was in the Granvelle collection in Besançon and subsequently sold to Rudolph II, recorded as "Venere in sul letto con un organista", but it was more likely a different one.¹¹³²

While the likenesses are pretty strong, we also have to consider the Flemish sources for this painting. Vincent Sellaer used a very similar pose - except for the arms - and face in his two representations of *Jupiter as a Satyr and Antiope with their children*, painted in the 1540s (Figure 205).¹¹³³ The hairstyle with braids and jewels seems also closer to Sellaer's depiction. The gesture of pointing the arrow at herself and looking at Cupid who is handling his bow is also relatable to a Netherlandish model, the aforementioned *Venus and Cupid* by Willem Key (Figure 178). While the gesture in Key's painting alluded to the dangers of love, represented by the city of Troy burning in the background, in

Bonifacio de' Pitati (1487-1553), Girolamo da Treviso (1508-1544) and Lorenzo Lotto (1480-1556/7), was analysed in HEINZE 2016, pp. 87-95, 113-125. For the theme of *Venus and the musician*, see GIORGI 1990; SEEBASS 2002, pp. 21-33; CHECA CREMADES 2005B, pp. 83-97; GENTILI 2012, pp. 248-256.

¹¹²⁹ See TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 225-231.

¹¹³⁰ See PANOFKY 1969, p. 122; GENTILI 2012, p. 248.

¹¹³¹ Titian; *Venus with an organist and a dog*; c. 1550; 138x224 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 200; MADRID 2003, pp. 248-251; CHECA CREMADES 2005B, p. 87; EBERHART 2012, pp. 79-95; GENTILI 2014, pp. 248-253; BURKE J. 2016, p. 32.

¹¹³² The painting mentioned in the 1600 letter to Rudolph II is usually considered to be *Venus with an organist and Cupid* (c. 1550-1555) at the Prado. See PANOFKY 1969, pp. 122-123.

¹¹³³ Vincent Sellaer; *Jupiter as a Satyr and Antiope with their children*; c. 1540; 100x130,6 cm; oil on panel; Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; Brussels. See HEINZE 2016, p. 158.

the other case Venus seems more relaxed and playful, and there is no trace of the moralizing intent that was usually the trademark of Netherlandish nudes.¹¹³⁴

Moving on to the second painting, *Venus and Cupid* now at the Uffizi (Figure 203), it appears so different not just from the previous one, but from the Floris' entire *oeuvre*, that it is difficult to agree with this attribution. However, this example is interesting and necessary to introduce a fortunate category of painting in the Netherlands in the second half of the XVIth century: the allegorical mythologies.

In the case of Titian's variations on the theme of *Venus and a musician*, there are generally two schools of thought: the "pin-up" interpretation, which considers the images as purely erotic,¹¹³⁵ and the symbolic reading. The latter considers the paintings as a complex system of references, especially to the five senses in a neo-Platonic view.¹¹³⁶ This duplicity derives from a precise level of verisimilitude of the images, which appear to imitate nature while hinting at the compresence of various layers of meanings. But this is not the case with the Uffizi *Venus and Cupid* attributed to Floris: here we witness an overload of symbolic elements, whose presence is so overwhelming to remove all doubt about the verisimilitude of the representation. The two doves are the only attribute that we would expect to see in Titian and in Floris. But in the foreground are laying three masks, jewels and coins, flowers, a parrot and what seems to be the famous Golden Apple of Discord from the judgment of Paris. In the background, many other birds, flowers, and even a smaller scene, maybe the moment of the judgment itself. This attention to detail, the dissemination of objects, animals and figures, and the accurate treatment of the natural landscape are very uncharacteristic of the work of Floris, and they confirm the inconsistency of the attribution.

¹¹³⁴ Typical of the mythological painting developed in the Low Countries in the XVIth century is the absence of a real narration to focus on the erotic aspects infused with a moralising message. For these reasons, the most popular themes were the ones regarding adultery (Venus and Mars surprised by the gods) or the dangers of beauty and sensuality (Judgment of Paris). See HEALY 2000, pp. 73-96; HEINZE 2016, pp. 155-162.

¹¹³⁵ A pivotal example is the work of HOPE 1980, pp. 111-124.

¹¹³⁶ See PANOFSKY 1969, pp. 109-138; ROSAND 1980, pp. 375-381; GOFFEN 1997, pp. 159-169; EBERHART 2012, pp. 79-95.

Many of these elements are present in a painting by Jacopo Carucci known as Pontormo (1494-1557) after a lost drawing or cartoon by Michelangelo, the famous *Venus and Cupid* (Figure 206).¹¹³⁷ The cartoon and the painting were so popular that they had been copied and adapted on many different occasions. A Florentine artist who showed a particular interest in this and other Michelangelesque inventions, re-laborating them by adding many symbolic elements, was Michele Tosini (1503-1577) also known as Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio. While his *Venus and Cupid* is just a copy of the model by Pontormo, the adaptation of Michelangelo's *Night* starts from the statue by the artist and adds masks, a lantern, an hourglass, an owl, all details to enhance the allegorical aspect of the image.¹¹³⁸

Another artist who similarly approached the theme is the Florentine Agnolo Bronzino (1503-1572), when he painted *Venus, Cupid and Jealousy* now in Budapest and the 1545 *Allegory with Venus and Cupid* at the National Gallery of London (Figure 207).¹¹³⁹ The latter, like Michelangelo's invention, is of particular interest in relation to the Uffizi painting. While there are no compositional or stylistic resemblances, all works present similar allegoric references. The gesture of Venus and Cupid kissing, with the little god sensually grabbing his mother, the masks, the flowers. Plus, the Uffizi painting shares with Bronzino's the doves, the Golden Apple and the rich jewels worn by the goddess. It is not relevant to the means of this study to discuss the multi-layered themes, symbols, and allegories of these paintings. Here it is important to underline that the work of Bronzino, like the one of Pontormo, was the expression of a very sophisticated and erudite courtly art.¹¹⁴⁰ In the painting, the flawless and marble-like pictorial surface serves the unnatural elegance of the bodies and the artificial system of moral messages.

¹¹³⁷ Jacopo Pontormo; *Venus and Cupid*; 1533; 128x194 cm; oil on panel; Gallerie dell'Accademia; Florence. See FALLETTI 2002, *passim*.

¹¹³⁸ On these copies and adaptations by the artist Michele Tosini, see NEGRO 2001.

¹¹³⁹ Agnolo Bronzino; *Venus, Cupid and Jealousy*; c. 1550; 175,5x142 cm; oil on panel; Museum Of Fine Arts; Budapest. Agnolo Bronzino; *Allegory with Venus and Cupid*; c. 1545; 145,1x116,2 cm; oil on panel; National Gallery; London. Both paintings have been thoroughly discussed in relation to the Florentine court by BROCK 2002, pp. 213-237.

¹¹⁴⁰ For the context of the Florentine court of the mid-XVIth century and the role of Agnolo Bronzino as court painter for the Medici family, see FALCIANI 2010; GÁLDY 2013; FLORENCE 2017; GAMBERINI 2022.

This system of values and symbols must have been shared with the French court, where this painting was very likely sent as a diplomatic gift from Cosimo I de' Medici (1519-1574) to King Francis I.¹¹⁴¹

A similar taste for elegance and the abundance of allegorical references is present in the Uffizi painting. Even though it might seem incompatible with the mythological painting that we have seen so far, and especially far from the production of Frans Floris, this type of representation had a particular fortune. And this fortune was somehow connected to French art and the schools of Fontainebleau.

These two reclined Venus exemplify two attitudes for what concerns the representation of non-narrative mythological subjects with an erotic component. The first case re-elaborates models from Italy and the school of Fontainebleau through the lens of Flemish adaptations, implying a correlation to Titian's themes and inventions without clarifying it. The suggestion of a moral sub-text is evident and sometimes even made explicit by an epigraph. The second shows a taste for erudition through an entire series of allegorical references, together with an attention to detail that combines the Flemish eye with Central Italian forms and concepts.

As we have deduced, the importance of the art of Fontainebleau needs to be further explored to understand the choices of the artists working in the Spanish Netherlands who specialized in mythologies.

5.4 Mythological painting and the development of an international style in Antwerp

The latter *Venus and Cupid*, less oriented to naturalism and more to an elegant expression of Mannerisms from different international sources, was not alone in the artistic *panorama* of the Low Countries. In fact, to better understand this type of mythological painting and its fortune at the end of the century, we must first discuss the role of Jan Massys in shaping and spreading it. His erotic depictions of women based on the elaboration of Italian and French models painted with glazed

¹¹⁴¹ This was recorded in Giorgio Vasari's *Vite*: «Fece un quadro di singolare bellezza, che fu mandato in Francia al re Francesco, dentro al quale era una Venere ignuda con Cupido che la baciava, et il Piacere da un lato e il Giuoco con altri Amori, e dall'altro la Fraude, la Gelosia et altre passioni d'amore». VASARI 1568, II, p. 864.

Netherlandish brushwork, surely set the trends of the mythological painting for the following generation. This generation was even more compelled to sell abroad and to private collectors, and they carefully merged the Mannerism of Florence and Fontainebleau, the models of Raphael, the ways of the followers of Leonardo, and the subjects and inventions of Titian. Jacob de Backer and to some extent, Maerten de Vos, elaborated or used what we might define as an “international style” to conquer a greater share of the market.

5.4.1 The elegance of Jan Massys between the Italian peninsula and Fontainebleau

We have already mentioned Jan Massys, who became master in the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke from 1531, son of the well-known painter Quinten Massys (1466-1530).¹¹⁴² Forced to leave the city in 1544, he travelled abroad until 1555, when he was allowed to return. In these years, he surely spent some time in Genoa, and he likely visited Germany and Fontainebleau. The trace of these travels and contacts with Italian and French art is visible in the elaboration of a specific type of erotic paintings with female subjects from the Old Testament and mythology. In these works, Massys shows a frontal naked woman, sometimes covered with a veil or partially open clothes to reveal her breasts and shapes, whose identity of goddess or biblical heroine seems just pretextual to represent a beautiful and elegant figure on the background of a detailed and meticulous landscape. These high-quality paintings were likely sold to wealthy citizens and foreign princes.¹¹⁴³

Everything, in these paintings, is represented with extreme elegance and grace, and with a taste for the refined traditional oil technique that characterized the old Flemish masters. Poses and body types, on the other hand, recall examples from Lombard art, such as the reclined naked women in a landscape by the Leonardesque Bernardino Luini (1481-1532),¹¹⁴⁴ Florentine examples like the aforementioned Bronzino, and

¹¹⁴² For this painter, see BUIJNSTERS-SMETS 1995.

¹¹⁴³ We find the paintings by Jan Massys in the collections of Rudolph II and, at a later time, of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria (1614-1662). See CLIPPEL 2012, pp. 64-65.

¹¹⁴⁴ For instance, the *Venus* dated 1530 and now at the National Gallery of Art in Washington can be recognised as one of the sources for elaborating his female type, BUIJNSTERS-SMETS, 1995, p. 58.

models from the school of Fontainebleau.¹¹⁴⁵ Friedländer describes with these words the characteristics of Massys' works that might have been related to the court of Fontainebleau: «the same chilly sensuality, the pleasure in the bath and feminine vanity, in smooth marble»,¹¹⁴⁶ words that, as we will discuss, are suitable also to the art of Jacob de Backer.

It is debatable whether Massys visited Fontainebleau, or he entered into contact with this art through prints and through the Florentine models which inspired the French style.¹¹⁴⁷ In any case, the impact of Florentine-Fontainebleau subjects and forms has been widely accepted by scholars. On the other hand, possible interest in - or use of - Titian's models has been understandably overlooked. Understandably, because the aspect of his paintings is so close to Florentine and French Mannerism that a link to the Venetian sounds conflicting. However, there are a couple of examples of works attributed to Massys that might suggest the use, among the others, of Titian's models.

A *Venus and Cupid*, dated about 1559 and now in Krakow (Figure 208), had been related to Titian's inventions.¹¹⁴⁸ The goddess lies in a partially upright position on a red sheet, her elbow supported by a gold-embroidered pillow. Behind her back, the sheet is tied to the branches of a tree, creating the illusion of a canopy. She caresses a placid dog with her left hand, while she embraces Cupid with her right arm. The god of love climbs his mother's hip, he holds her face and lovingly gazes in her direction, approaching for a kiss. The landscape represents a city on a gulf, ships on the sea and a mountain in the background. All of these elements are depicted with extreme

¹¹⁴⁵ The so-called *Nymph of Fontainebleau* by the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571), made in 1542-43 for King Francis I; goddesses and allegorical figures designed by Primaticcio and then etched or engraved by Léon Davent. A painting that had been directly related to the production of this type is the 1550 *Eva Prima Pandora* by Jan Cousin (1490-1560), now at the Louvre. See BUIJNSTERS-SMETS, 1995, pp. 56-57.

¹¹⁴⁶ On the hypothesis of the Fontainebleau sojourn, see FRIEDLÄNDER 1967-76, XIII, pp. 17-22, esp. p. 18.

¹¹⁴⁷ Maria Grazia Galassi questions the Fontainebleau stay by finding alternative Italian and printed sources for the usually mentioned Fontainebleau models. See GALASSI 2015, pp. 167-179.

¹¹⁴⁸ Jan Massys; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1558; 94x132 cm; oil on panel; Muzeum Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego; Krakow. The relation between this painting and Titian's invention had been pointed out in her analysis of Massys' Italian sources by GALASSI 2015, pp. 177-179.

attention to detail, and we can see people walking or riding horses in the distance and shepherds with their flock of sheep.

Galassi related the painting to Titian's *Venus and Cupid with a dog* now at the Uffizi,¹¹⁴⁹ a painting connected to the aforementioned group depicting Venus with a musician (*Figure 209*). This type of Venus in a landscape, however, has a long tradition in Veneto, and even though there are some compositional elements in common with Titian's work at the Uffizi, or in general with this invention, the connection seems pretty weak. Nude women in a landscape by Jacopo Palma the Elder or Paris Bordone might be an equally suitable source of inspiration. The comparison with Luini's *Venus in a landscape* (*Figure 210*) seems more convincing, and for many reasons.¹¹⁵⁰ As we have said before, the body type, which is less soft and more statuary, is way closer to the Lombard than to the Venetian. Secondly, the organization of the space, with the landscape showing a city on the sea, mountains in the distance, the inclusion of small figures of peasants for a sense of liveliness and the attention to natural elements, are all features similarly developed in both paintings.

Although this striking similarity, we cannot limit the sources to Luini and exclude that Massys considered Titian's models to elaborate this work and maybe the type of erotic paintings. In fact, the compresence of Cupid, who is trying to draw the attention of his mother, and the dog, similar to the one in the so-called *Venus of Urbino*, might be elements that he had carefully selected from Titian. In fact, as Galassi summarised: «Jan Massys used models taken from Italian painting in various personal ways: here in a manifest and clear manner and elsewhere in a more cryptic way».¹¹⁵¹

Another example is the peculiar painting now at the Louvre, usually considered by the “circle of Massys”, and almost unstudied.¹¹⁵² This work's subject is described as “Venus and Psyche or women with flowers” (*Figure 211*). The composition and the

¹¹⁴⁹ Titian; *Venus and Cupid with a dog*; c. 1550-60; 139,2x195,5 cm; oil on canvas; Gallerie degli Uffizi; Florence. See WETHEY 1969-75, III, p. 199; HUMFREY 2007, p. 307; VENICE 2007-2007, pp. 391-392; GENTILI 2014, pp. 248-253.

¹¹⁵⁰ Bernardino Luini; *Venus in a landscape*; c. 1530; 106,7x135,9 cm; oil on panel; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.

¹¹⁵¹ GALASSI 2015, p. 178.

¹¹⁵² It seems to have been mentioned just in the catalogue of the museum. Jan Massys (circle of); *Venus and Psyche or women with flowers*; XVIth century; 131x114 cm; oil on panel; Louvre Museum; Paris.

woman on the right directly recall an invention by Titian that we have discussed in the first chapter, namely the “Psyche presented to Venus, while Cupid stands behind the goddess”. The work, now lost, was present in the inventory of Mary of Hungary. We have hypothesized that the painting might be the composition existing in many variations and replicas which was interpreted as representing Venus, Bacchus and Ceres (*Figure 51*).

Comparing the painting attributed to Massys and Titian’s version now in Munich, we have no doubt that the Venetian canvas was the main source for the composition. It appears obvious in the figure of Psyche, represented in profile with bare breast and putting her right hand on the chest, the hair styled in braids caressing her neck, and in the arrangement of Venus and Cupid. Cupid, behind the back of her mother, puts one hand on her shoulder and with the other grasps the side of her neck. The peculiar expression of the goddess, with heavy eyelids and a sort of suspicious look, is also common in both paintings. This kind of unmistakable quote is not unusual for the work of Massys but it seems to be the only time in which he cites Titian. It is also interesting to suggest that the painting he is actually taking as a model, namely the one in possession of Mary of Hungary, might have had a bigger impact than it was considered by the literature.¹¹⁵³

That said, why mention Jan Massys if the connections with the art of Titian are so tenuous? Because the mix of visual sources and inspirations that he shows in his work and the way he elaborates them together is not so distant from the approach of Floris, which is meaningful to outline the way Titian’s art was absorbed and not separate from the other sources; and because both artists had a great impact on the mythological painting of the following generation, who also aimed for a more international market.

5.4.2 The de Backer group: great colourist conquering the French market

Jacob de Backer, an Antwerp-based painter of the following generation of Jan Massys, can be somehow considered his successor in what concerns themes, style and

¹¹⁵³ We should point out that, in the art market, it is common to find copies of Titian’s inventions in XVIth and XVIIth century Flemish styles. They are usually attributed to Southern Netherlandish artists. For instance, there is a version of *Sine Cerere et Bacchus friget Venus* circulating on the art market under the name of Frans Floris, another under Jacob de Backer.

visual models.¹¹⁵⁴ First of all, we should point out that there are not many known paintings or drawings bearing his signature, and none of his works mentioned in the *Schilderboek* has been traced so far.¹¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the de Backer name had been applied by the art market to a series of paintings of heterogeneous quality presenting the same set of features: marble-like figures recalling Florentine Mannerism - Bronzino, Vasari, Pontormo, Andrea del Sarto -; erotic scenes expressing a moralising message through allegorical references; elegant and refined style. Therefore, recent studies started to refer to these works as attributed to the “de Backer group” and not to the persona of a single artist.¹¹⁵⁶ Most of the paintings attributed to de Backer appear to be replicas and variations of inventions, and many paintings, except for the altarpieces, were in a small format. These are signs of a production model aiming at “economical flexibility” built on “large workshops, outsourcing, product differentiation” and the use of a cheaper medium, the canvas.¹¹⁵⁷ The buyers for these products were private collectors, usually foreign, but also locals who were informed of the trends in French and Italian art.¹¹⁵⁸

By reading van Mander we find important information on this painter, his acquaintances - which are relevant in this context - and his pictorial style.¹¹⁵⁹ His master was Anthonis Palermo (1513-1589), a history painter and art dealer. There is no painting today that can be attributed to him, but we have some knowledge of his life through documents. Likely of Italian origin, he was a master in the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke from 1545 and he had a prominent role in this institution, being appointed

¹¹⁵⁴ On this artist, see MÜLLER HOFSTEDE 1973, pp. 227-260; Huet 1989; LEUSCHNER 1994 pp. 51-63; LEUSCHNER 1996, pp. 5-21; LEUSCHNER 2001, pp. 167-192; LEUSCHNER 2008, pp. 99-110.

¹¹⁵⁵ LEUSCHNER 2001, pp. 167-168.

¹¹⁵⁶ See LEUSCHNER 2001, pp. 167-191; LEUSCHNER 2008, pp. 99-100; JONCKHEERE 2020A, pp. 289-290.

¹¹⁵⁷ The productive methods reconstructed for the “de Backer group” are interesting to understand the highly developed manufacturing culture that was becoming prevalent in Antwerp in the second half of the XVIth century. The “industrial” and specialised production has been compared to the printmaking industry. JONCKHEERE 2020A, p. 289.

¹¹⁵⁸ On the target of the de Backer’s small mythological and religious paintings with erotic content, see LEUSCHNER 2001, p. 173.

¹¹⁵⁹ The life of the painter is recorded in MANDER (1604) 1994-1999, III, pp. 335-339.

Dean five times between 1555 and 1571.¹¹⁶⁰ Van Mander records that Palermo sold many of de Backer's paintings on the French market and that he made a good profit out of it.¹¹⁶¹

Moving back to the scarce but relevant information that we find in van Mander, this is how the Dutch writer describes his painting technique:

«[...] he is one of the best *colourists* that Antwerp had known: he had a fleshy manner of painting because he highlighted not just with white but with flesh colour».¹¹⁶²

De Backer was praised for his technique of colouring, a technique that is even explained in detail as the use of “flesh colour” for highlighting. This same way of painting, namely the use of flesh-coloured lights and darks, was suggested by van Mander as the correct technique for the artists who wanted to avoid ruining their paintings with the use of pure white.¹¹⁶³ This was essential to obtain the “*vleesachtich[heyt]*” (fleshiness) that, together with the aforementioned “*lichtveerdic[heyt]*” (facility of execution), were considered the greatest achievements of Titian's *colorito*.¹¹⁶⁴ It is interesting to notice that, in the same pages in which van Mander discusses the correct use of colour, he lauds the Italians and strongly criticises his compatriots who, even when they think they are painting flesh, are actually achieving just fish or stone-like bodies.¹¹⁶⁵ Similar reasoning was present also in Lampsonius' *Vita Lombardi*. In fact, the danger of painting too uniformly and giving the impression of seeing wood or stone had to be solved by using colours different from black for the shadows and

¹¹⁶⁰ See CIULISOVÁ 2012, pp. 82-83.

¹¹⁶¹ MANDER (1604) 1994-1999, I, p. 185.

¹¹⁶² The italic is mine. MANDER (1604) 1994-1999, I, p. 186.

¹¹⁶³ There is an entire chapter devoted to how to apply the colours in *Den Grondt*, the introductory practical treatise on art written by Karel van Mander. MANDER (1604) 2009, pp. 177-178.

¹¹⁶⁴ Of course, van Mander elaborated these concepts starting from Vasari's *Vite* and, to some extent, he was repeating his judgment towards Venetian art in opposition to the Florentine tradition. See MELION 1991, pp. 104-106.

¹¹⁶⁵ MANDER (1604) 2009, p. 178.

white for the lights. Moreover, the representation of flesh colours was possible just by using pigments with a certain degree of graininess, to imitate the pores of the skin.¹¹⁶⁶

We have already described the bodies in works attributed to the de Backer group as “marble-like” and painted with refined “Florentine” colours,¹¹⁶⁷ which seems to contradict the words of van Mander: if Titian was brought as exemplary of good colouring, how could de Backer, who shows a completely different technique, have been one of the best colourists? This is a question difficult to answer, and for many reasons. This somehow also connects to the issues related to Floris’ criticism. There seems to be an unresolved tension between the *netticheyt* (neatness, diligence) of the Flemish masters, above all Jan van Eyck, which was related to the observation of nature (*naar het leven*), and the paintings of Titian’s late manner, also *net* because of the intense work behind it and the fine result from the distance, and also brilliantly imitating nature.¹¹⁶⁸ If we consider the *lossigheid* not as the product of *sprezzatura*, but as the *sprezzatura* itself, as suggested by Melion and further argued by Pousão-Smith,¹¹⁶⁹ it becomes more complex, focusing on the Netherlandish art theoretical context of the XVIth century, to understand to what extent Titian’s *colorito* and late style were actually known and appreciated, and to what extent they were used in broader discourse to establish the position of the Netherlandish art in the European *panorama*.

Moving back to de Backer, if we consider one of the few paintings that are unmistakably attributed to him, namely the *Last judgement* signed and dated 1571 now in Antwerp (*Figure 212*), it is possible to understand van Mander’s statement about the

¹¹⁶⁶ See SCIOLLA-VOLPI 2001, pp. 54-55. On the use of coarsely grained pigments to reproduce a more realistic and natural skin in the paintings and a more general discussion on the “body colour” in workshop practice and art theory focused on the ideas of Northern authors, see LEHMANN 2008, pp. 87-109.

¹¹⁶⁷ See LEUSCHNER 2001, p. 169.

¹¹⁶⁸ See MELION 1991, pp. 104-108.

¹¹⁶⁹ Melion writes that the van Mander related the late manner of Titian to Netherlandish *netticheyt* by suggesting the filiation of the early and late works, which share the same meticulous work and the same fine result (one from close, one from afar). Pousão-Smith, as we have said, goes further, demonstrating the distinction between *lossigheid* (*sprezzatura*, light and confident handiness) and *ruw* (rough, loose painting). See MELION 1991, p. 107; POUÇÃO-SMITH 2003, pp. 258-279.

ability of this painter in using colours.¹¹⁷⁰ The softness of the skin is achieved through the use of green and brown shadows, while the healthy glow of the youth appears through the skilful use of carmine and ochre. However, this depiction of the flesh appears not comparable to Titian's and is surely closer to the Central-Italian manner. The slight roughness of the painting seems to depend on the deterioration of the painting and the emergence of the canvas support, and it does not matter in the judgment of the pictorial style.¹¹⁷¹ If we consider other paintings included in the de Backer *corpus*, this aspect does not change, showing that one of the best colourists of the Low Countries was, indeed, painting with Florentine colours and Flemish *netticheyt*.

All information point to an interest in the international market for de Backer: the collaboration with Antonis Palermo, the “industrial” production with the features we have already mentioned, the Italianate style and the focus on erotic themes -both sacred and profane - with an allegoric twist, which seem to follow the same path of Jan Massys.¹¹⁷² But this is not an isolated phenomenon. It is important to underline that the increasing internationalisation of the art market, the eased circulation of artists and works, and the artistic renovation of powerful European courts, especially the one of Rudolph II in Prague, set new waves of trends yet to be fully understood.

5.4.2.1 The international panorama: Prague, Paris and Antwerp

The last decades of the XVIth century were characterised by a series of contingencies that facilitated the emergence of an “international” style that brought together artistic features established all around Europe which go under the name of

¹¹⁷⁰ Jacob de Backer; *Last judgement*; 1571; 164x198 cm; oil on canvas; Royal Museum of Fine Arts; Antwerp. See HUET 1989, p. 52; LEUSCHNER 2001, pp. 168-169.

¹¹⁷¹ This is one of the first examples of painting on canvas that we have analysed so far. The use of this cheaper and easy-to-transport material and the small dimension, peculiar for a subject like *the Last judgement*, seem to be typical of the De Backer's group “industrial” production.

¹¹⁷² Alongside the erotic paintings, de Backer also produced a great number of religious works, usually many variations and replicas after a precise invention. Apart from the many *Last judgement*, we know a number of *Madonna with the Child* and representations of the *Virtues* like *Charity*.

Mannerism.¹¹⁷³ The increasing circulation of people and objects, and especially the flood of prints that invaded the art market, allowed ideas, styles and compositions to travel and mutually influence each other. Fontainebleau in France, Vienna first and Prague after for the German court of Rudolph II, the Italian artistic centres like Florence, Rome and Venice, Antwerp in the Southern Netherlands and Haarlem in the Northern, shared an intensive economical and artistic exchange.¹¹⁷⁴ In most of these cities, artists who had been trained in Antwerp had a prominent role, like Hieronymus Franken in France, and Bartholomeus Spranger (1546-1611) in Prague, Paolo Fiammingo (c. 1540-1596) in Venice. The importance of the court of Rudolph II in Prague to establish and direct the international developments of art has been discussed in the literature.¹¹⁷⁵ But while Spranger, after his travels to Italy where he studied Raphael and the Roman Mannerists, was elaborating on his erotic subjects for Rudolph II, de Backer was also developing similar themes. They surely both looked at Fontainebleau for subjects and forms, but Spranger, as the other leading artists working in Prague - Hans von Aachen (1552-1615), Joseph Heintz the Elder (1564-1609), Hans Rottenhammer (1564-1625) - had a solid Venetian formation. Rudolph II, in fact, favoured the art of Titian, Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese, and the so-called “Rudolfine art” was fundamentally Venetian and Paduan in its beginnings, except then to focus more on the art of Parma, Bologna and Rome.¹¹⁷⁶ Conversely, de Backer, who was also adopting elongated and elegant figures, erotic subjects and elements to please an audience with humanist interests, had a strategy that did not privilege Venetian, but especially Titianesque, sources. His strategy, together with Anthonis Palermo, was to sell mainly in France.

¹¹⁷³ The use of this term is always problematic. We are hereby following the definition that John Shearman gave of his phenomenon, namely as an art of the *maniera*, an artificial art for connoisseurs born from the classical form. Naming this artistic style “Northern Mannerism” might be problematic for reasons that go beyond the limit of this study, therefore we will refer to Bialostocki and Kaufmann on this topic. See SHEARMAN 1967; BIALOSTOCKI 1970, pp.105-109; KAUFMANN 1980, pp. 89-107.

¹¹⁷⁴ On the cultural and artistic exchanges between the German-speaking territories and Venice, see MARTIN in VENICE 1999, pp. 614-621.

¹¹⁷⁵ The literature on this topic is vast. See at least FUČÍKOVÁ 1988; KAUFMANN 1988; PRAGUE 1997; KONEČNÝ-BUKOVINSKÁ 1998. For a focus on the Netherlandish Mannerism, see CAVALLI-BJÖRKMAN 1985.

¹¹⁷⁶ See MARTIN in VENICE 1999, pp. 615-616

Aiming for a broader market abroad was a common choice for Antwerpian artists at the end of the century. The drastic decrease of church and state commissions in the years of Iconoclasm and political instability, the impact of the art debate, especially after the publication in 1570 of the treatise on the sacred images by the Catholic Molanus and the consequences of the Counter-Reformation on Michelangelo's Sistine chapel, shook the very foundations of the traditional artmaking.

France had a long-lasting story of artistic exchange with the Netherlands.¹¹⁷⁷ Flemish artists worked on the decoration of Fontainebleau, and in the 1560s some pupils of Frans Floris were documented as involved in this great project.¹¹⁷⁸ There were established networks between Antwerp and the French market.¹¹⁷⁹ Archival documents revealed that some relatives of Anthonis Palermo, namely his son Scipio and his son-in-law Peeter Goetinkt (1539/40-1583), were art dealers in Paris in the 1570s, confirming the information recorded by van Mander.¹¹⁸⁰ The ties with Paris, and especially with the Saint Germain fair, grew stronger in the XVIIth century when Antwerp obtained a monopoly on the Paris market of paintings.¹¹⁸¹ Ciulisová hypothesised Palermo, because of his strong connections with the French market, might have directed the production of the painters collaborating with him to meet the demands of French collectors.¹¹⁸² Remarkably, other artists who were in contact and worked together with Anthonis Palermo were Bernaert de Rijckere (c. 1535-1590) and Gillis Coignet (c. 1542-1599). Bernaert de Rijckere, master of the Guild of Saint Luke from 1561, presents many visual connections to the art of Floris and Jacob de Backer. De Rijckere is known as a copyist of works by Frans Floris, Maerten de Vos, Jan van Cleve, and Willem Key, but he also produced mythological paintings with themes such

¹¹⁷⁷ On this topic, see JESTAZ 1975, pp. 75-84; BÉGUIN 1999, pp. 231-246; MAËS 2010, *passim*; FAGNART-LECOCQ 2017, *passim*.

¹¹⁷⁸ One of these artists, Hieronymus Franken I (1540-1610) was likely an art dealer in France after leaving his master's workshop in 1566. See PEETERS 2010, pp. 117-128.

¹¹⁷⁹ These connections in the 1570s are explored in RAUX 2014, pp. 93-122.

¹¹⁸⁰ See SZANTO 2002, pp. 149-185; CIULISOVÁ 2012, pp. 84-85.

¹¹⁸¹ See SZANTO 2006, pp. 328-342.

¹¹⁸² See CIULISOVÁ 2012, pp. 82-90.

as the so-called “Feast of gods”, a speciality of Frans Floris, and *Diana and Actaeon*.¹¹⁸³ This subject seems to have been particularly suitable for him because he made different versions of this Ovidian story.¹¹⁸⁴ For these compositions, de Rijckere shows an approach similar to Floris, while his elegance and marble-like painting suggest an interest in the same sources that de Backer was emulating. The discussion on Gillis Coignet is more articulated, and it will be the subject of the last section of this chapter.

Moving back to Ciulisová’s theses, the taste for Central-Italian art and its Mannerist derivations was defined by the French court through the employment of the aforementioned Francesco Primaticcio, Rosso Fiorentino as head decorators of Fontainebleau. Likely, Bronzino’s paintings were also decorating the royal palace, as it has been argued for the *Allegory with Venus and Cupid* now at the National Gallery of London (*Figure 207*), and King Francis I commissioned artworks from the Florentine painter Andrea del Sarto (1486-1530). Not coincidentally these are among the favourite sources for Jacob de Backer’s inventions.

Reclined nudes and the *Five Senses*

Venus and Paris, a medium-sized canvas with a gorgeous nude now in Meiningen (*Figure 213*), might exemplify what we have said so far.¹¹⁸⁵ We see again the semi-uplifted frontal position of the body of the *Eva prima Pandora* and the Fontainebleau school, of Jan Massys’s *Venus*, and the various *Venus and a musician* by Titian. The diagonal composition recalls Key’s *Venus and Cupid* and also Floris with his *Danae*, which seems to have been a Netherlandish variation on the theme. The body of the goddess recalls the one of a classical statue, not only for the paleness and the use of cold colours, but especially for its extreme smoothness and the delineation of the muscles. The golden

¹¹⁸³ This artist has not been extensively researched yet, but some information can be found in BOON 1977, pp. 109-131; KREIDL 1979, pp. 47-51; KONEČNÝ 1985, pp. 37-46; BENESZ 1997, pp. 1-12. An interesting *Feast of gods* in which de Rijckere elaborated Floris and Primaticcio’s models is now at Musée des Beaux Arts in Rennes, see CASSEL 2010-2011, pp. 100-101.

¹¹⁸⁴ See KREIDL 1979, pp. 47-51; BENESZ 1997, pp. 2-5.

¹¹⁸⁵ De Backer Group; *Venus and Paris*; c. 1585; 145x188 cm; oil on canvas; Maininger Museen; Meiningen. See HEALY 2000, pp. 76-77.

tiara and the pearls in her hair are not new to the theme, but they are painted with a particular taste for detail. What is new is the layered iconography represented.

Paris enters the bedchamber of the goddess, is struck by the arrow of Cupid and accepts a chalice containing a skull hidden behind the mask of a beautiful woman. Since Paris, according to textual sources, never entered the chamber of Venus, but he entered that of Helena, Healy suggests that the viewer is encouraged to identify both women in the one laying on the bed.¹¹⁸⁶ In the background, a city, probably Troy, is on fire, showing the disastrous consequences of succumbing to lust and especially of committing adultery. We have seen a similar solution in Key's *Venus and Cupid* but, in this case, there is a more explicit but somehow also a more convoluted representation of the same concept. The elements of the skull and the mask would not have found a place in Titian's representations of reclined nudes, but they would fit in the context of *Eva prima Pandora* by Jan Cousin, or the allegories by Bronzino and the paintings after Michelangelo's cartoon of *Venus and Cupid*. Masks are present in de Backer's *Venus and Cupid* (Figure 214) now in Berlin and also in the standing *Venus and Cupid* at Écouen (Figure 215).¹¹⁸⁷

Another reclined nude can be found in *Paris being admitted to the bedchamber of Helen*, a painting currently at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (Figure 216).¹¹⁸⁸ Many of the observations we made for the previous painting are also valid in this case, from the diagonal bed to the statuesque body. However, this painting lacks the abundance of allegorical elements and shows just a few characters in a sober composition. The pose of the woman elaborates on the renowned antique statue known as *Sleeping Ariadne* (Figure 217), known in different copies, and used as a model by many Renaissance

¹¹⁸⁶ HEALY 2000, pp. 76-77.

¹¹⁸⁷ De Backer Group; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1580; 73x52 cm; oil on panel; Gemäldegalerie; Berlin. This is considered to be an adaptation of Vasari and Bronzino's models. De Backer Group; *Venus*; c. 1580; 108x76 cm; oil on panel; Musée National de la Renaissance; Écouen. The Venus was part of a group of three paintings representing the goddesses who were judged by Paris, all of which show the use of a series of models from print, especially French. See LEUSCHNER 2001, pp. 169, 175-179; CASSEL 2010-2011, pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁸⁸ De Backer Group; *Paris being admitted to the bedchamber of Helen*; 1585/90; 119,4x171,5 cm; oil on canvas; Getty Museum; Los Angeles.

artists.¹¹⁸⁹ This same statue was likely the model for the sleeping nymph in Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (Figure 218) for Alfonso I d'Este,¹¹⁹⁰ and also the woman on the left side of Floris' *Awakening of the arts* (Figure 219),¹¹⁹¹ the one dressed in pink who is raising the bent right arm above her head, or Bronzino's *Venus, Cupid and Satyr* (1553-55) from Palazzo Colonna (Figure 220), adapt the same antique source.¹¹⁹² On the other hand, the two characters emerging from the dark background have *serpentine* and elongated figures that recall Manneristic solutions.

The last reclined nude we might mention here is the etching (Figure 221) after the invention of Jacob de Backer representing the *Sense of sight*, of which a painted version is known in Budapest (Figure 222).¹¹⁹³ This closely resembles the *Venus and Paris* of the same author in the composition and the pose of the female figure, but the quality of the painting here seems inferior. As we have established, de Backer reused and reworked the same models, but the discontinuous results suggest a big workshop for a differentiated market of private collectors from different backgrounds and with different economic possibilities.

Danae and the golden rain

De Backer has in his corpus several *grisaille* paintings that seem to have been produced as finished works for the collector's market.¹¹⁹⁴ The number eighty listed in

¹¹⁸⁹ Anonymous; *Sleeping Ariadne*; II century AD; 226x129x103 cm; marble; Uffizi; Florence. See HASKELL 1981, pp.184-187.

¹¹⁹⁰ Titian; *Bacchanal of the Andrians*; 1523-26; 175x193 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid. See WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 143-145; HOPE 1987, pp. 25-42; BOSTON 2009, pp. 294-317; CHECA CREMADES 2013, pp. 96-103.

¹¹⁹¹ Frans Floris; *Awakening of the Arts*; c. 1559; 157x238 cm; oil on canvas; Museo de arte de Ponce; Puerto Rico.

¹¹⁹² Bronzino; *Venus, Cupid and Satyr*; c. 1553-56; 135x231; oil on panel; Palazzo Colonna; Rome. See BROCK 2002, pp. 234-235.

¹¹⁹³ Jan Meyssens (1608-1651) after Jacob de Backer; *Sight from the series of the Five senses*; c. 1640; 152x198 mm; etching; British Museum; London. The painted version: De Backer Group; *Sense of sight*; before 1600; 48,3x64 cm; oil on panel; Museum of Fine Arts; Budapest. See CZOBOR 1972, pp. 317-327.

¹¹⁹⁴ See LEUSCHNER 2008, p. 102.

the 1652 inventory of the Flemish artist and dealer Victor Wolfvoet the Younger (1612-1652), is described as “a golden rain by Jackques de Backer in black and white without a frame”.¹¹⁹⁵ The painting was recognized in the work now in Vienna and attributed to the de Backer group.¹¹⁹⁶

It is worth mentioning this *Danae* (Figure 223) because it seems completely unaware of Primaticcio’s example (Figure 19) and Titian’s invention (Figure 59, 60) which would become the benchmark for this subject in the XVIIth century. De Backer turns instead to Correggio, emulating the sitting position of Danae and her low and malicious gaze, and quoting the two little cupids who are sharpening the arrow (Figure 18).¹¹⁹⁷ De Backer adds the third cupid between them and depicts them while they are intently checking some golden coins which are alluding to the golden rain. Other artists were opting for a seated solution, among which there is the 1570 canvas by Tintoretto (Figure 224), which was sold to France and afterwards travelled through noteworthy European collections before ending in Lyon.¹¹⁹⁸

The choice of a theme that went down in history as Titianesque does not imply that an artist would necessarily consider his model. And whereas in some cases it seems logical that a painter would consciously avoid making his reference explicit but at the same time he would also suggest that he is well aware of it, this does not seem the case. De Backer intentionally chose Correggio as a model for this “Titianesque” subject, and he does it to appeal to the public he targeted.

Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus

This subject had success in the Netherlands between the end of the XVIth and the first decades of the XVIIth century, particularly in the circle of Mannerist artists gravitating around the court of Rudolph II. We have already mentioned the engraving by Jacob Matham after Titian, which bears the inscription from the Roman comedian

¹¹⁹⁵ See LEUSCHNER 2008, p. 103.

¹¹⁹⁶ De Backer Group; *Danae and the golden rain*; 1560s; 62x46 cm; oil on canvas; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna.

¹¹⁹⁷ The painting was part of a series with the loves of Jupiter commissioned to the artist by Federico II Gonzaga probably for Charles V.

¹¹⁹⁸ Tintoretto; *Danae*; c. 1570; 142x182 cm; oil on canvas; Musée des Beaux-Arts; Lyon.

Terence, but this motto had been already represented in emblem books such as Barthélemy Aneau's (1505/10-1561) *Picta Poesis*, published in Lyon in 1552.¹¹⁹⁹

At the Louvre is now preserved a painting attributed to Jacob de Backer representing this same subject (*Figure 225*).¹²⁰⁰ A naked Venus catches the attention of the viewer, her pale and perfect body completely visible except for a cloth barely hiding her genitals and covering her right leg against which Cupid leans his chest. The sensuous figure is balanced by Ceres, fully clothed, who sits on a bale of hay and looks at Bacchus. The god raises a bunch of grapes above the head of Ceres, followed in the distance by grotesque satyrs. Whereas the figure of Venus, according to Müller Hofstede, seems to rework the same one in the aforementioned Bronzino's *Venus, Cupid and Jealousy* from Budapest, we might consider a different source for Ceres.¹²⁰¹ The goddess profile, in fact, closely resembles the one in Titian's invention known as *Venus, Bacchus and Ceres*, known in many variations (*Figure 51*). This would not be enough to connect de Backer's painting to Titian's. However, there are more elements to consider. First, the invention of the Venetian, at least in some of its variants, was also considered to represent the same subject. Secondly, the presence behind the goddess of the monstrous satyrs carrying fruits above their heads. Altogether, these similarities show the knowledge of Titian's work, likely as a representation of the famous motto, and a predilection for the figure in profile, the same adapted by Jan Massys in his *Venus and Psyche or women with flowers* at the Louvre Museum (*Figure 211*). It would go beyond the means of this study to assess the impact of Titian's invention on artworks representing this motto produced in the Dutch Republic and at the court of Rudolph II, but it is worth mentioning this issue. Anyhow, both paintings by Massys and de Backer, produced in the Southern Netherlands, are now in French collections, like many others by the two artists.

¹¹⁹⁹ The development of this subject in Dutch art, especially for what concerns the production of Hendrik Goltzius, was likely related to the taste of wealthy and educated Dutch brewers. MAMBRO SANTOS 2012, pp. 35-62.

¹²⁰⁰ De Backer Group; *Venus, Bacchus and Ceres*; before 1600; 125x96 cm; oil on panel; Louvre Museum; Paris. See MÜLLER HOFSTEDÉ 1973, pp. 247-248.

¹²⁰¹ See MÜLLER HOFSTEDÉ 1973, pp. 247.

5.5 Gillis Coignet fills the gap: looking at Titian with different eyes

To finally analyse the art of Coignet, an Antwerpian painter whose work presents some innovative approaches to the art of Titian, we must start by recapitulating what had been discussed so far in the chapter.

There are a series of issues to consider once we analyse the developments of mythological painting in the Low Countries. The first is one of the sources. The scarcity of antiquities, some of which had become available in the court environment thank to collectors like Mary of Hungary, was overcome by travelling to Italy and bringing back drawings and prints, or by looking at the work of Renaissance artists who emulated classical models. They were examples of compositions in which the content (myths) coincided with the form (*all'antica*), and they could be found not just in Italy, but in other cultural centres that developed their own style and characteristics, such as Fontainebleau from the 1530s and Vienna and Prague in the second half of the XVIth century. The second issue regards the image debate, which from the 1560s had an impact not only on religious paintings but also on all of the art that could have been considered licentious, particularly the depiction of nudity. Feminine nudity and eroticism were central in the representation of mythological subjects as it was established by antiquity and by Italian art, therefore this became problematic in a territory lacerated by religious tensions where the iconoclastic fury had demonstrated how art was not safe from violence and destruction. Artists dealt with this upheaval by making changes in their choices of subjects and models, or with drastic solutions, like emigration or aiming to foreign markets. And here comes the issue of the art market. The establishment in the 1540s of a market managed by the artists and not by the church encouraged the production of mythologies on spec, and this same trend remained in the 1560s, but was targeted to local private collectors and especially foreign buyers because of the uncertainties that followed the *Beeldenstorm*.

In this context, few artists specialised in mythological painting. Frans Floris used these erudite subjects to attract and satisfy a specific clientele of private collectors who almost monopolised the ownership of these themes in Antwerp. He developed a Romanist style and mixed classicist Central-Italian models with the ones of the school of Fontainebleau divulged by the prints and Titianesque themes. Jan Massys first and Jacob de Backer (or the so-called de Backer Group) after, widened their sources and

their market by elaborating erotic compositions with an elegant and erudite taste that were easy to replicate and serialize. De Backer adopted a style that can be defined as “international” because many of its aspects were shared by the painters working in the most prominent artistic centres of Europe. Because he collaborated with Anthonis Palermo, the efforts of the artist aimed for conquering the French market, but the court of Rudolph II was also suitable for these kinds of subjects and styles, which implemented a wider range of Mannerist models.

These painters referred sporadically to Titian’s models and themes. The court painters of Charles V and Philip II, namely Michiel Coxcie and Anthonis Mor, made use of the inventions of the Venetian master because it was part of their courtly duties, for achieving a better status or just for their connection to the Habsburgs. Conversely, Antwerpian artists who were not directly involved with the Habsburgs referred to the themes popularised by Titian for various reasons, but they rarely manifested that he was a source. The Central-Italian and French references were more relevant and, if they looked at Venice, they preferred the elegant works of Paolo Veronese and the elongated bodies in diagonal compositions by Tintoretto.¹²⁰² None of these artists employed Titian’s pictorial technique. The colours of the Venetian, his *sprezzatura*, the late style that allowed to see the images in their splendour just from afar, had more space in the books than in the artistic practice.

For these reasons Gillis Coignet needs to be discussed here: he was the first Antwerpian artist who consistently experimented with Titian’s technique and colour palette, and who explicitly adapted his models into new compositions. His approach to Titian’s late style anticipates the investigative eye of Rubens’ generation.

¹²⁰² The works by the most influential artists at the court of Rudolph II (Hans von Aachen, Hans Rottenhammer, Bartolomeus Spranger, Joseph Heintz) share many similarities with the Venetian artists who elaborated the language of the *maniera* in the treatment of the human figures and in the composition. See MARTIN in VENICE 1999, pp. 614-659.

5.5.1 The travelling artist

Recorded as the apprentice of the little known artist Lambrecht Wenslyns in 1555, Coignet became master in the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke in 1561.¹²⁰³ Van Mander records that he did spend some time in the house of Anthonis Palermo, probably producing paintings for his art trade, and that soon after he travelled to Italy, first to Naples and Sicily and then to Terni, where he worked on frescos with a painter named Stello.¹²⁰⁴ This painter was identified by Nicole Dacos as a member of the Stellaert family. They were both employed at Palazzo Giocosi, in Terni, for painting the grotesque, and their names are documented close to Rome in the *équipe* Federico Zuccaro (1539-1609) for the decoration of Villa d'Este, the palace of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este (1509-1572) in Tivoli.¹²⁰⁵ He is also recorded in 1568 as a member of the Accademia in Florence.¹²⁰⁶ He returned to Antwerp after 1570, and there he opened a workshop with many apprentices.¹²⁰⁷ After the Catholic reconquest of Antwerp in 1585, his Lutheran faith probably became an issue, and Coignet moved to Amsterdam in 1586, where he had great success.¹²⁰⁸ He spent his last years in Hamburg, from about 1593 to 1599, the year of his death.

¹²⁰³ Most of the biographical information on this painter was presented by MESKENS 1996, pp. 142-144. This artist still needs to be fully researched and put into context, and the corpus of his paintings is constantly updated with new attributions from the art market. An almost complete bibliography includes OLLERO BUTLER 1989, pp. 97-102; MIEDEMA 1994, pp. 79-86; MIEDEMA 1995, pp. 143-151; BÉGUIN 1999, pp. 240-244; PUELINGS 1999; CIULISOVÁ 2001, pp. 246-251; MIEDEMA 2005, pp. 113-120; SEIFERTOVÁ 2009, pp. 135-141; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 351-352; MIDDELKOOP 2010; CIULISOVÁ 2012, pp. 28-90; UPPENKAMP 2015, pp. 55-77.

¹²⁰⁴ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 306.

¹²⁰⁵ See DACOS 1999, p. 157.

¹²⁰⁶ He is mentioned as “Giulio Cognietta fiamingo P(ictor)”, see ORBAAN 903, p. 163.

¹²⁰⁷ According to van Mander, Cornelis van Haarlem (1562-1638), prominent member of the Mannerist school of Haarlem, was his pupil. It is interesting to mention this information because the school of Haarlem, influenced by the Mannerism of Spranger and the court of Rudolph II, elaborated and adapted many of Titian's models. See MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, pp. 426-433.

¹²⁰⁸ Other Lutheran artists remained in Antwerp or converted to Catholicism after the reconquest, like Maarten de Vos. On the artists' strategies after 1585, see LINDEN 2015, pp. 18-54.

His Italian travels were not unusual at the time.¹²⁰⁹ Many artists from the Netherlands in those years worked in the main Italian artistic centres. They preferred Rome, Florence, Genoa and Venice, but they did not limit their presence in these cities. Coignet entered mainly in contact with artists and contexts of Southern and Central Italy, being exposed to the High Renaissance art and the tendencies of the *maniera*. These possible aspects of his production were completely ignored by van Mander, who praised him for his night scenes and his natural rendering of the effect of flames and lanterns, which were glowing with golden lights.¹²¹⁰ A signed and dated work that is exemplary of this type of painting is the night scene *Amsterdam lottery of 1592*, now at the Historisch Museum in Amsterdam.¹²¹¹ Nonetheless, he has been defined by scholars as “a major disseminator of Italianate, especially Titianesque models in the North before 1600”.¹²¹²

We have no documentary evidence that Coignet had been to Venice, but his works prove that he had first-hand experience with many of Titian’s paintings, especially from the 1560s. Just a personal knowledge of the inventions and the so-called late style of the Venetian master can justify the compositional solutions, colour palette and pictorial technique of Coignet’s paintings after his return to Antwerp, in 1570.

Since this painter showed a comprehensive approach to the art of Titian, we will not limit the analysis to mythological themes, but we will also mention other works which include direct quotes or copies after Titian’s inventions, and which show some experiments in style.

¹²⁰⁹ Interesting and broad studies on the presence of Flemish artists in Italy, especially in Rome, are BRUSSELS 1995; DACOS 1999; SAPORI 2007. A summary of the main studies on this topic is MEIJER 2015, pp. 155-175.

¹²¹⁰ MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 306.

¹²¹¹ Miedema attributed to Coignet a series of paintings with similar themes and style, recognizing the specificity of this production and relating it to the description of van Mander. See MIEDEMA 1995, pp. 143-151; MIDDLEKOOP 2010.

¹²¹² UPPENKAMP 2015, p. 55.

5.5.2 Patrons and markets

Since van Mander recorded that Coignet lived in the house of the art dealer Anthonis Palermo, it is straightforward to presume that the painter was involved with his business. Ciulisová compares some works by Coignet to the ones by de Backer, assuming that they both followed examples developed between Florence and the court of Fontainebleau to sell their paintings to France through the contacts of Palermo.¹²¹³ Her main example is Coignet's use of a model by Andrea del Sarto, the monochrome *Caritas* in Chiostro degli Scalzi, Florence, to depict his painting with the same subject recognised by Seifertová in Prague.¹²¹⁴ This same model, or the version realised for Francis I in 1518, was the main visual source for de Backer's series of replicas and variations on the theme.¹²¹⁵ However, the use of the same models related to Fontainebleau was just an aspect of the problem. Paintings like the *Allegory of Time revealing the Truth* (1596) or the two *Allegory of Vanitas* (1595 and c. 1599) were painted later when Coignet was in Hamburg, but they share some of the features of de Backer's production.¹²¹⁶ They are, in fact, erotic paintings with a nude woman - or at least showing her breast -, with allegoric elements carefully depicted which are recalling humanist themes and popular printed sources like the emblem books. It is important to notice that in these cases he was not painting for the French market but for wealthy Lutheran and Calvi expatriates in Hamburg.¹²¹⁷ The attention to the precise depiction of objects reveals a taste for still-life elements that were not present in de Backer, and

¹²¹³ See CIULISOVÁ 2012, pp. 82-87.

¹²¹⁴ See SEIFERTO VÁ 2009, pp. 135-141.

¹²¹⁵ See LEUSCHNER 2008, pp. 99-109.

¹²¹⁶ Gillis Coignet; *Allegory of Time revealing Truth*; 1596; 181x141 cm; oil on canvas; private collection. Gillis Coignet and Georg Flegel; *Allegory of Vanity*; 200x158 cm; 1595; oil on canvas; Musée Baron Gérard; Bayeux. Gillis Coignet and Georg Flegel; *Allegory of Vanitas: Luxuria and the Downfall of Mankind*; c. 1599; 82.5x124.5 cm; oil on panel; Collection Lingenauber et des Amis; Monaco. These paintings and their allegoric references are discussed in MIEDEMA 2005, pp. 113- 120.

¹²¹⁷ Hamburg hosted a large community of wealthy Netherlandish immigrants who had a notoriously opulent lifestyle. Coignet was likely part of a group of artists who emigrated, and he found his place among the Protestant networks. See UPPENKAMP 2015, pp. 55-77.

that was added to make the paintings more desirable for the Netherlandish merchants.¹²¹⁸

Moving back to his life in Antwerp, Coignet was surely well-connected. After offering to paint for the Catholic Duke of Alva in 1571,¹²¹⁹ the artist had much work in the years 1576 to 1585, during the Protestant administration of Antwerp. He was in contact with different Guilds and most of his signed and dated paintings can be related to this period. In 1581 he was commissioned by the Guild of the *Jonge Voetboog* (???) to paint a *Saint George and the dragon*, now in Antwerp (Figure 226Figure 224),¹²²⁰ and he also painted the famous portrait of *Pierson la Hues*, drummer of the Guild of the *Oude Handboog* (old archers), also in the same museum (Figure 227).¹²²¹ His *Dido Rediviva* is dated 1583, and it was ordered by the Guild of the *Vier Gekroonden* (masons and stonemasons).¹²²²

In Amsterdam, he became a representative of the Lutheran community and van Mander refers that he had an important role in the artistic scene.¹²²³ These were the years of the *Amsterdam lottery of 1592* and probably other night scenes of this type. He likely adjusted his production to please the class of rich merchants and the members of his community by introducing the aforementioned still-life elements and implementing the moralising aspect of his themes. All these aspects would become central in his Hamburg production, as discussed above.

Coignet surely was a successful artist. He was a Lutheran, and he worked very little in the field of religious paintings, usually introducing some changes to transform them into more secular depictions.¹²²⁴ Nonetheless, he varied his outputs, he worked in

¹²¹⁸ For this reason, he cooperated with the artist Georg Flegel (1563-1638), a pupil of Lucas van Valckenborch (c. 1535-1597) and who was specialised in the depiction of still-life, in Frankfurt. See UPPENKAMP 2015, p. 62.

¹²¹⁹ Documentos de la Casa de Alba 1891, pp. 106-107.

¹²²⁰ Gillis Coignet; *Saint George and the dragon*; 1581; 193x225 cm; oil on panel; Royal Museum of Fine Arts; Antwerp. See PUELINGS 1999 pp. 55-58.

¹²²¹ Gillis Coignet; *Pierson la Hues*; 1581; 170x130 cm; oil on panel; Royal Museum of Fine Arts; Antwerp. See PUELINGS 1999, pp. 59-62.

¹²²² On this painting, see MIEDEMA 1994, pp. 79-86.

¹²²³ See BRIELS 1985, p. 17; MIEDEMA 1995, p. 149.

¹²²⁴ Unlike other Lutheran and Calvinist painters, like Maarten de Vos, who were employed to paint the altars to substitute the ones that had been destroyed during the *Beeldenstorm*.

different contexts and for many audiences, targeting an unusual number of markets. Many of his inventions were also translated into prints by Philip Galle (1537-1612), Jan and Raphael Sadeler, Johannes Wierix (1549-1620), and Harmen Jansz Muller (1538-1617).

That said, it is important to analyse in which ways he implemented Titian's models in his art. Which aspects did he find interesting and functional? How did they contribute to his success? And in which ways is his approach new if compared to one of the artists we have analysed so far?

Variations of the theme of *Venus at the mirror*

We have no documents so far proving a sojourn of Coignet in Venice, but his copy after a version of Titian's *Venus at the mirror* (Figure 228) proves beyond doubt that the artist had a first-hand experience of the original - or the originals. The painting signed and dated 1579, is the earliest known copy after Titian from this painter.¹²²⁵ The representation of the so-called "Toilet of Venus", together with the "Reclined female nude in a landscape", was one of the themes revived and popularised in the Venetian art of the XVIth century.¹²²⁶ We have discussed in the first chapter that this was likely the Venus sent to Charles V in 1545, and we know that a *Venus before a mirror held by Cupid* was listed in Granvelle's collection in 1607. This invention is known in dozens of replicas, copies and variations, most of which just stay anonymous.¹²²⁷ The only version that is considered entirely by the hand of Titian is the one now in Washington, whose quality is indisputable.¹²²⁸ Coignet's copy presents many differences, some

¹²²⁵ Gillis Coignet; *Venus at the mirror with a putto*; 1579; 139x96 cm; oil on panel; last known location Staatliche Museen; Kassel. See POGLAYE-NEUWALL 1943, pp. 365-366; PUELINGS 1999, pp. 51-54; CIULISOVÁ 2001, pp. 246-250; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, p. 351.

¹²²⁶ The protagonists of the artistic scene of Venice measured themselves with this theme: Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), Titian, Tintoretto, and Paolo Veronese among others. This theme was known in the Netherlands before but it became particularly popular in the XVIIth century through the emulation of the Venetian examples. On the elaboration of this theme, see CHECA CREMADES 2002B.

¹²²⁷ Many are listed by POGLAYE-NEUWALL 1943, pp. 358-384.

¹²²⁸ This painting remained in his studio until his death in 1576, and it was bought from Titian's son Pomponio Vecellio (c. 1529-post 1594) by Cristoforo Barbarigo (1544-1614). See WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 200-201.

compositional, like the absence of the second putto or the putto holding the mirror looking at the viewer, and some more related to details, like the use of a striped pattern for the bordure of the goddess' robe instead of the complex golden and silver embroidery. The other version closest to Coignet's is the Hermitage version (*Figure 229*), which is considered to be a workshop copy of the so-called Crasso-type, namely the painting described by Ridolfi in the collection of the Venetian jurist Nicolò Crasso (1585-1656).¹²²⁹ The Hermitage version and the one by Coignet share the same striped pattern and the putto looking at the viewer instead of gazing at Venus. But the Netherlandish copy does not include the second putto, nor the window and the curtain in the background or the bow and arrows in the foreground. Coignet seems to have copied another version because all of these changes are not his invention. They all coincide with changes that can be found in other variations on the theme. It is interesting to notice that the painting that resembles the most Coignet's work is a close-up now in the Royal Collection trust (*Figure 230*).¹²³⁰ This painting is now assigned to an anonymous Dutch painter, but it bears a former attribution to the German artist Hans Rottenhammer, who worked in Venice from 1596 to 1606. Their similarity suggests a common source or maybe a derivation of the anonymous artwork from the depiction by Coignet.

Whether this is the case or not, there are some considerations to make before proceeding. Coignet showed his interest in Titian's paintings already in Antwerp. We have ascertained that, in the city of the 1560s and the 1570s, it was rare to find original artworks by the Venetian and even artists who would openly copy a quote from his models. Coignet, who came back from Italy almost ten years earlier, painted and signed an identical copy after Titian's invention. This approach was not new, but also not common. Since we know the painting just from a black and white picture, it is difficult to judge if his copy was also an attempt of reproducing Titian's style. However, this seems likely.

¹²²⁹ After Titian; *Venus with two cupids in front of a mirror*; 1560s; 130x 105 cm; oil on canvas; Hermitage Museum; Moskow.

¹²³⁰ Dutch school after Titian; *Venus at the mirror*; c. 1550-1720; 107,9x86 cm; oil on panel; Royal Collection Trust; London.

That this is an identical copy and not an adaptation of the model is also evident if we analyse actual adaptations that Coignet had made from the same model or, more broadly, from the same invention.

Recently a *Vanitas* from the Slovak National Gallery of Bratislava (Figure 231) has been correctly attributed by Ciulisová to Coignet for stylistic and compositional reasons.¹²³¹ Without entering into detail, the *Vanitas* fits in the artist's production of the 1580s, and the connection to first-hand experience of Titian's *Venus with the mirror* is an ulterior reason to give the Bratislava panel to Coignet. In fact, this *Vanitas* is undoubtedly an adaptation of the work of Titian, as Ciulisová argued.

For this comparison, we will consider the Washington painting (Figure 5), namely the one whose pictorial quality matches the *Vanitas* of Bratislava. Even before the pose, or the subject, what immediately catches the eye is the resemblance of the colour scheme and the painterly style. Coignet replicates the vibrant red and the velvety texture of the robe, the specific green of the curtain, and the shine of the gold. The skin does not reach the palpable effect and the inner glow of the Venetian, because the layering appears less rich, the shadows are just transparent, and they do not model the fleshiness of the figure. Nonetheless, there is an evident attempt of reproducing a type of skin different from the glazed or "marble-like" effect that characterised the production of most painters in Antwerp.

The pose, on the other hand, seems to manipulate the classical steadiness of Titian's *Venus* - which was emulating the antique type of the *Venus pudica* - by twisting and stretching the body to a position that would become a sort of trademark of Coignet's female figures. The s-shape of the body with the arm stretched across the bust and the hand close to the hip is present in the 1581 *Saint George with the dragon* (Figure 226), in the 1595 *Vanitas* from Bayeux, in the *Death of Dido* recently appeared on the market (Figure 232),¹²³² and even in the male figure at the centre of the *Allegory of the Christian life* (Figure 233).¹²³³ It is very likely that, in his re-elaboration of the *Venus*, Coignet

¹²³¹ Gillis Coignet; *Vanitas or Mary Magdalen*; c. 1580; 123x94 cm; oil on panel; Slovak National Gallery; Bratislava. The attribution is explained in CIULISOVÁ 2001, pp. 246-250.

¹²³² Gillis Coignet (?); *Death of Dido*; c. 1580; 123x106 cm; oil on canvas; Dorotheum, Old Master Paintings 09-06-2020, lot. 41.

¹²³³ The painting is signed "G. Congnet fecit" and is dated 1589. Gillis Coignet (?); *Allegory of the Christian life*; 1589; 96,8x129,5 cm; oil on panel; Dorotheum, Old Master Paintings 21-04-2015, lot. 337.

had also in mind the renowned *Triumph of Galatea* by Raphael in Villa Farnesina (Figure 234).¹²³⁴ This elongated s-shaped position is also typical of a type of *Penitent Mary Magdalene* that was associated with the artist Adriaen Thomasz. Key and that is known in many versions.¹²³⁵ This depiction of Mary Magdalene shares with the *Vanitas* also the pow position of the drapery on the pubis.

Anyway, the link with Titian remains the most relevant and impressive. The details on the shoulder of the robe, the pearls at the woman's ears, the ring on the little finger, the soft fur covering the turn-up the velvety textile are all so precise that they make clear which is the most important model for the artist, despite the multiplicity of sources. And it is superfluous to find ulterior connections with Titian's art, like the detail of the basket that Ciulisová relates to the one in the *Madonna of the rabbit*, to assert that.¹²³⁶

Coignet translated the subject of the "Toilet of Venus" into a more allegorical and moralising image. We have discussed below how mythological themes acquired or reinforced their moralising meaning in the Netherlands. If "Venus and Mars surprised by the gods" warned of the dangers of seduction and adultery, Venus looking at herself in the mirror naturally became an image of the vanity of life, an allegory that Coignet would illustrate on more than one occasion. The woman is not a goddess anymore, she is just fascinated by ephemeral terrestrial beauties.

The subject that he had copied in 1579 remained a fecund source for new interpretations, and the next adaptation of the model of *Venus at the mirror* by Coignet is even more interesting.

¹²³⁴ Raphael; *Triumph of Galatea*; c. 1512; 295x225 cm; fresco; Villa Farnesina; Rome. The composition was also known through a print by Marcantonio Raimondi dated 1515-20 and it was also engraved again by Hendrick Goltzius in 1592.

¹²³⁵ This composition is considered the most successful by Adriaen Thomasz. Key. A series of these Magdalene can be found on the art market with attributions to different Southern Netherlandish artists of the XVIth century, including Frans Floris and Michiel Coxcie. See JONCKHEERE 2011B, pp. 289-293

¹²³⁶ See CIULISOVÁ 2001, pp. 247-248.

A beautiful *Mary Magdalene* signed by the artist (Figure 235) recently appeared on the art market is clearly indebted to Titian's invention (Figure 5),¹²³⁷ and it carefully merges this model with that of another of the Venetian's successful compositions, namely the *Penitent Mary Magdalen* (Figure 236).¹²³⁸ Coignet had both images in mind when he elaborated his artwork. For this *Magdalene*, he is using the body and even the clothes of the goddess, a vermillion robe lined with fur, golden decorations and elaborated sleeves. He repeated the pose and the colour palette of *Venus*, but he introduced the bipartite background of Titian's *Mary Magdalene*. Behind the saint, on the left, we see a rocky conformation with some vegetation, and on the right, the view opens on a landscape bathed in the light of the sunset. From the *Magdalene*, Coignet also borrowed the detail of the book opened on a skull and the long golden hair, so typical of the representation of the saint, which sensually covers her shoulders and chest.

Stylistically, this painting shows different approaches. The background, especially the effect of the glimmering light, recalls some Venetian solutions, and the quick brushstrokes on the red robe, the hair and the face seem to attempt a "Titianesque" effect. However, the depiction of the skin appears particularly smooth, in a sort of limbo between a polished surface and the vibrant flesh of Titian's works.

To conclude the story of these variations on the theme of *Venus at the mirror*, it is interesting to mention the afterlife of Coignet's copy after Titian. When Cornelis van Haarlem, who is traditionally considered the most successful of the pupils of the artist, decided to paint the same subject (Figure 237), he very likely knew and referred to the 1579 copy of his master. The painting, now in Braunschweig, was completed in 1610, and it clearly depends on Titian's model.¹²³⁹ Cornelis moved the body of the goddess,

¹²³⁷ Gillis Coignet; *Mary Magdalene*, 1580-90; 127x92,5 cm; oil on panel; Dorotheum, Old Master Paintings, 06-10-2009, lot. 29. See JONCKHEERE 2012B, pp. 11-12.

¹²³⁸ There are many versions of this invention. The first is also the more lascivious because Magdalene is represented completely naked, covered just by her long hair, and is the one now at the Uffizi. Other versions present the saint clothed. For the comparison with Coignet's *Magdalene*, it is interesting to consider the paintings now in Capodimonte, one of the most famous versions of the subject. Titian; *Penitent Mary Magdalene*, c. 1550; 122x 94 cm; oil on panel; Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte; Naples. See WETHEY 1969-75, I, pp. 146-147.

¹²³⁹ Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem; *Venus at the mirror*, 1610; 109,5x85,5 cm; oil on panel; Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum; Braunschweig. See THIEL 1999, p. 365.

who is now frontal, but the general idea of the composition does not change: as Coignet, he shows a “very unambiguous artistic relationship”¹²⁴⁰ with Titian, though feeling free of changing the original.

Variations on the theme of *Venus and the musician*

On the art market passed under the name of Gillis Coignet a *Venus and Cupid with military attributes* (Figure 238) probably derived from the aforementioned *Venus and Cupid* by Titian at the Uffizi (Figure 209).¹²⁴¹ It is difficult to judge the paternity of the painting, which looks of lesser quality than the others analysed so far, but this painting surely presents some similarities with Coignet’s emulation and adaptation of Titian’s models.

The goddess is copied almost identically, with particular attention to the soft folds of the skin and the position of the body. Cupid, who is hugging her from behind, looks suspiciously at the viewer instead of observing his mother in the eyes. What really changes is the setting, and therefore the meaning of the painting. Venus is not laying on a bed in a chamber from whose window we see just a beautiful landscape, she leans instead on pillows of what seems to be a military camp. She is completely surrounded by the armour and the weapons of his lover Mars, who is absent but somehow present in the violent scene in the background, where some people are attacking and setting a boat on fire. An ominous light shines in the sky like a sort of godly punishment.

The theme of Venus and Mars was very popular in the Low Countries. We have seen that depictions of many variations on this subject were realised by Antwerpian painters. Healy argues that the representation of the love between the two gods could have had a positive meaning, because Venus, distracting Mars from war, ensured peace.¹²⁴² However, in this case, the iconography suggests a more negative message. The violence and destruction in the background remind what we have encountered in Willem Key’s *Venus and Cupid* (Figure 178) or Jacob de Backer’s *Venus and Paris* (Figure 211). The burning city acts as a reminder of the dangers of the seductive pleasure offered by the lascivious goddess.

¹²⁴⁰ This concept is very important for our discourse. See JONCKHEERE 2012B, p. 12.

¹²⁴¹ Gillis Coignet (?); *Venus and Cupid with military attributes*; 1570-90; 112x162 cm; oil on canvas; Artcurial, Old Masters and 19th Century Sculptures, 14-12-2009, lot. 3.

¹²⁴² See HEALY 2000, pp. 84-87.

The adaptation of the subject *Mars plays the virginal for Venus* from the Kunstsalon Franke in Leipzig (*Figure 239*) was apparently signed and dated 1590.¹²⁴³ This version is mirrored, which, unlike the aforementioned case, suggests the employment of a printed source. Here it is repeated the same idea of the previous painting, but the execution appears more convoluted, opulent and somehow clumsy. The goddess appears fully clothed, and her body seems to levitate in the air because it is not well integrated with the background. The face in profile is not particularly attractive, and her bulky body clashes with the elegance of the slender hands and feet. The little Cupid on her shoulder looks outside like the one we discussed earlier. It is worth mentioning that this detail differs from all the known versions of the theme painted by Titian, and it is curious that the change occurs both in *Venus and Cupid with military attributes* and in the Leipzig panel. The presence of Mars as a musician, sitting on a war drum and playing the virginal, recalls the two paintings by Titian now at the Prado. Again, Venus is surrounded by parts of armours and weapons, and, in the background, we clearly see a military camp with tents and soldiers on horses. The compresence of love and war is here repeated, and the presence of a negative message, of a warning, is reinforced by the still-life at the centre of the painting. The goddess is affectedly holding a chalice of wine - there are two demijohns on the floor - and she is probably going to eat some food from the table positioned between her and Mars.

The introduction of this element in images from his repertoire reflects the “increasing urbanization of Dutch and Flemish society, which brought with it an emphasis on the home and personal possessions, commerce, trade, learning”.¹²⁴⁴ It seems likely that Coignet collaborated in Amsterdam with a painter specialising in the representation of still-life, as he would do with George Flegel for his paintings in Hamburg. The need of the Protestants for art forms that were adapted to their view of the world and interests was surely the main reason behind the focus on still-life. As noticed by Puelings, the presence of sweets and delicious food might have a moralising

¹²⁴³ Gillis Coignet; *Mars plays the virginal for Venus*; 1590; 145x220 cm; oil on panel; private collection. See PUELINGS 1999, pp. 67-69; TAGLIAFERRO ET AL. 2009, pp. 351-352.

¹²⁴⁴ LIEDTKE 2003. The introduction and the development of certain “pictorial genres” in the Northern Netherlands as an elaboration of Southern Netherlandish themes as a consequence of the massive immigration of the last decades of the XVIth century are discussed in BRIELS 1985; BRIELS 1987.

meaning appreciated by the Calvinist burgers of Amsterdam, reminding of the temptations and the fast decay of terrestrial pleasures, together with the introduction of music references.¹²⁴⁵ Music, in fact, had traditionally different connotations in Italy and the Low Countries. In the XVIth century Veneto, the theme of the concerto had become very popular among painters and collectors.¹²⁴⁶ This iconography was usually associated with the concept of harmony, therefore a positive meaning derived from the humanist culture and the courtly education.¹²⁴⁷ In the Low Countries, while the practice of music might have been encouraged,¹²⁴⁸ its representation had different meanings: it could have been part of some series representing the “Liberal Arts” or the “Five Senses”, or it was included in subjects to contribute to their negative significance. In the Dutch Republic, music started to be associated with the allegory of vanitas, and Coignet’s works were not an exception.¹²⁴⁹

The artist repeated the same composition and revived the same allegorical concepts in a second *Mars plays the virginal for Venus* now in Saintes (Figure 240), signed and dated 1598.¹²⁵⁰ This second attempt corrects some clumsy solutions of the previous one. Venus is now naked, and the model for her body is surely Titian - notice the pearl necklace and earrings, the golden bracelet and the peculiar position of the fingers -, but her elongated body reveals a Manneristic approach. The slender legs and

¹²⁴⁵ PUELINGS 1999, p. 68.

¹²⁴⁶ Titian himself contributed to the development of this subject and its fortune with paintings like the *Concert* (1507-08) in Florence, the bucolic *Pastoral concert* (1509-10) now at the Louvre, the uncertain *Music lesson* (c. 1535) at the National Gallery of London and all of the *Venus and a musician*. See EGAN 1961, pp. 184-195.

¹²⁴⁷ Music and harmony were the centre of philosophical discussions during the Renaissance. Based on mathematic proportions and intervals, the harmony of music mirrored the *harmonia mundi*, the balance of every element of the Creation. As part of the Liberal Arts, its study was necessary for humanists and it was part of the education of the perfect courtesan, as stated by Castiglione in his *Cortegiano* (1528). See LUCH 2003; CRISTIANI-PANTI-PERILLO 2005.

¹²⁴⁸ Group portraits with musical instruments played by the members of the family showed the wealth and the social ambitions of the portrayed. An example is the 1561 family portrait attributed in different moments to Pieter Pourbus or Frans Floris, now in the Stedelijk Museum Wuyts-Van Campen en Baron Caroly, in Lier.

¹²⁴⁹ On this topic, see FISCHER 1972, pp. 34-46, 52-97.

¹²⁵⁰ Gillis Coignet; *Mars plays the virginal for Venus*; 1598; 113x182 cm; oil on panel; Musée du Presidial, Saintes. See MESKENS 1998, pp. 32-33, 173; PUELINGS 1999, pp. 80-81.

long fingers echo the results of the school of Prague, such as the 1597 *Venus and Adonis* by Bartholomeus Spranger. Mars looks almost the same, except for his eyes, once gazing at the face of her lover and now attracted by other sensual parts of her body. Also in Titian's paintings, some of the musicians are looking at the face of the goddess, others are wandering around in some lower areas. The element of the still-life is repeated here, but it is less incoherent with the space and more discrete, while, conversely, the chalice of wine grew in volume. We see again a military camp in the background, but this time the violence is even more evident because we can observe cannons bombarding a city in the distance. On the musical instrument played by Mars, we see a scene of a party in a courtly environment. It is difficult to interpret the presence of this "scene in the scene", but it might have served as a contraposition for the bloody battle. The adulterous relationship between Mars and Venus, evidently, does not guarantee peace, and the pleasures of food, wine and lust are not associated with higher values, but with precarity and violence.

Adapting the *poesie*

Gillis Coignet was experienced with Titian's art, and he did not miss the opportunity to confront the themes that lifted the name of the Venetian to the Olympus of mythological painting. Three artworks can be related to the noteworthy Titianesque inventions, and all of them deal with the model in different ways.

The first is a panel in version poor state that has been recently attributed to Coignet, which represents *Leda and the swan* (Figure 241).¹²⁵¹ Of course, Leda is not a theme that was part of the *poesie*, but this painting is a direct copy of Titian's *Danae* (Figure 59, 60). The artist cut the figure of the woman from the model and limited himself to adding the elements to transform the original iconography into another: the swan and a little child that might be identified as Cupid, always present when love and lust were presented as misleading characters from the antiquity. The close-up of the image and the position of the swan between the legs of the woman make it likely that the painter knew Michelangelo's composition of the subject. Whereas the particular use of the

¹²⁵¹ Gillis Coignet (?); *Leda and the swan*; 1570-90; 96,2x126 cm; oil on panel; Sotheby's, London, Old Masters Paintings, 02-05-2018, lot. 103.

model, namely copying just the body of the protagonist and putting it in a different context, changing the subject, reminds the operation made by Coignet when he transformed *Venus at the mirror* into *Mary Magdalene*, the execution appears mediocre. Van Mander wrote that Coignet used to put his name on the works of his apprentices after adding a couple of brushstrokes, which would justify the discontinuous quality of his paintings.¹²⁵² In this case, the painting is not signed, and it seems unconvincing that Coignet had painted a panel after Titian in a Flemish and polished style, which does not happen in any other works of this kind. Even though the attribution is doubtful, it is interesting to discuss it here for two reasons. The first is the tendency to give to Coignet paintings of the XVIth and XVIIth Southern Netherlands with some Titian-like features, and the second is the repetition of a process of isolation of figures and change of subject that Coignet was definitely employing in his artworks.

The next painting represents *Diana and Callisto* and is now in Budapest (Figure 242).¹²⁵³ As was observed by Meijer, this work is mostly the combination of two prints: *Diana and Callisto* engraved by Cornelis Cort after Titian (Figure 193), and Marcantonio Raimondi's *Judgment of Paris* after Raphael (Figure 182). From the latter, Coignet takes just the horizontal format and the figure of the woman seen from the back. This figure had been also associated by Meijer with de Backer's *Minerva*,¹²⁵⁴ known both in a painted and in a printed version. From the first Coignet borrows and adapted more. The haughty Diana recalls the figure in Titian's work. But where the Venetian gave the goddess an elegant but realistic pose, Coignet accentuated it enough to become completely unnatural. It would not surprise if, in his Mannerist approach to the painting, Coignet used the figure of Michelangelo's Adam from the Sistine chapel. But this elongated body and pose also recalls the etching of *Venus and Cupid* after Primaticcio from the school of Fontainebleau (Figure 199), which had been emulated also in Floris' *Danae*. In the end, Coignet might have just stretched Titian's Diana to a more

¹²⁵² MANDER (1604) 1994-99, I, p. 306.

¹²⁵³ This canvas had been attributed to the Netherlandish artist Anthonie Blocklandt van Montfoort (1533-34-1583), who studied with Floris and went to Italy in the 1570s. He was one of the leading artists of the Mannerism in Utrecht in the 1590s. Gillis Coignet; *Diana and Callisto*; 1580-90; 103x174 cm; oil on canvas; Museum of Fine Arts; Budapest. See BRUSSELS-ROME 1995, pp. 159-161; PUELINGS 1999, pp. 95-98.

¹²⁵⁴ See LEUSCHNER 2001, pp. 178-179.

suitable position for his horizontal composition, an operation that he would also do in the adaptation of *Venus at the mirror* into *Vanitas*.

None of the nymphs coincides with the ones depicted by Titian. Their poses differ, the only similarity is their attitude and the dramatic discovery of the pregnancy of Callisto. She cannot stay on her legs; she is dragged by the other nymphs who are mercilessly uncovering her shame in front of a disgusted and severe Diana. The scene depends on Titian's invention but there is no attempt of copying it. Different sources are merged, and the theme is depicted with a style that is very far from what we might call the "Titianesque and Venetian experiments". For this reason, Meijer dated the painting to the earliest production of Coignet, before his 1581 portrait of *Pierson la Hues* (Figure 227), which is considered to be the first coherent painting employing a Titian-like pictorial style of Coignet's production.¹²⁵⁵

The last work of this section is the *Rape of Europa*, a panel which also recently appeared on the art market (Figure 243).¹²⁵⁶ Titian sent to King Philip II a canvas representing the abduction of Europa by Jupiter transformed into a bull in 1562 (Figure 244).¹²⁵⁷ The innovation of this *poesia* was the dramatic representation of the scene. Europa does not appear in a side-saddle pose, but she is precariously lying on the back of the bull, who is forcefully dragging her far from the land. On the contrary, Coignet's painting does not share the same intensity, because Europa sits on the beast melancholically looking toward the shore like she had already accepted her destiny. Her pose and the general composition recall more the Netherlandish example of Maarten de Vos, namely the *Rape of Europa* now in Bilbao (Figure 245).¹²⁵⁸ This elegant and refined nude had been dated to the 1570s for stylistic reasons, and it is also an exemplar of an artwork that engages with the Titianesque theme.

On a side note, Maarten de Vos is an artist who also dealt with mythological subjects and the depiction of the naked bodies of goddesses, biblical heroines and

¹²⁵⁵ See BRUSSELS-ROME 1995, pp. 159-161.

¹²⁵⁶ Gillis Coignet; *Rape of Europa*; c. 1580-85; 74,4x96,5 cm; oil on panel; Sotheby's New York, Master Paintings & Sculpture Day Sale, 29-01-2016, lot. 537.

¹²⁵⁷ Titian; *Rape of Europa*; 1559-62; 178x205 cm; oil on canvas; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Boston. See WETHEY 1969-75, III, pp. 172-175; SILVER in LONDON 2020, pp. 167-175.

¹²⁵⁸ Maarten de Vos; *Rape of Europa*; c. 1570; 133,7x174,5 cm; oil on panel; Bilbao Fine Arts Museum; Bilbao. See NIJKAMP 2015, pp. 73-109.

allegorical personifications. The reason why he has not been discussed in depth so far is that there is little to say about his relationship with the art of Titian. Van Mander records his travels to Rome, Venice and other cities which, according to the research of Zweite, might have been Florence and Bologna.¹²⁵⁹ Ridolfi, in his 1648 biography of the Venetian painters, collocates him in the workshop of Tintoretto as a landscape painter.¹²⁶⁰ Some documents suggest that he travelled to Rome with Pieter Bruegel the Elder in 1552 and that he did return to Antwerp before 1558 when he was registered as a master in the Guild of Saint Luke.¹²⁶¹ Once he was back in his city, he employed models derived from Venetian and Central-Italian examples with a predilection for the *maniera*, thus always looking at the developments of the Antwerpian art. The contemporary artist whose influence most impacted de Vos was surely Frans Floris. Stylistically, de Vos shows smooth and polished modelling of the human bodies, counterposed to vibrant backgrounds and colour schemes that might be related to Venetian sources. In this respect, his approach resembles the one of Floris and somehow also of Jacob de Backer.

Has been already noticed by Nijkamp that Coignet's Rape of Europa is more indebted to de Vos than to Titian. The pose of the arm grabbing the head of the bull and covering Europa's breasts echoes in counterpart the one of Bilbao. The body, arched by the effort of looking back at the shore, is less tense and stretched than the one of de Vos, looking for a more natural pose. The detail of the mantle flying in the wind and forming an arch above the head of the woman is also common in both paintings, and it might have origin in antique sources.¹²⁶² Coignet, however, simplifies the composition, eliminating all of the elements that in de Vos' artwork were recalling a more Netherlandish tradition, like the detailed flowers garlands on the head of the bull and the clear landscape with realistic depictions of animals. Also, the quotations that de Vos had made from printed sources, such as the Mercury from the series of prints after Coxcie's inventions of *Cupid and Psyche*,¹²⁶³ are eliminated to focus purely

¹²⁵⁹ See ZWEITE 1974, p. 27.

¹²⁶⁰ RIDOLFI (1648) 1914-24, II, pp. 81-83-84. On the Flemish and Ditch painters working in the workshop of Tintoretto, see MEIJER in VENICE 1999, pp. 133-143.

¹²⁶¹ See ZWEITE 1980, pp. 21-22.

¹²⁶² An example is the mosaic now in the National Museum of Beirut, dated III BC.

¹²⁶³ See NIJKAMP 2015, pp. 12-15.

on the suggestions of the colours. Colours are indeed the most impressive element of Coignet's interpretation.

We cannot argue that he had copied or even seen Titian's *Rape of Europa*, which was painted and shipped to Spain before he went to Italy. None of the two painters seems to have directly known the painting, but they had likely seen some sketches or read some descriptions. However, whereas Maarten de Vos, obtained an elegant result, clearly Netherlandish in its approach and Mannerist in its refinement, Coignet started from this interpretation and elaborated it in a different direction. The woman looks sad and her eyes teary, her foot is tense in the direction of the viewer. The bull looks ominously at her prey and the faceless small people, so far on the shore, seem just helpless spectators of the tragedy. But the main dramatic effect is produced by the colours of the background: the metallic blue of the sea waters slowly becomes the brown-ochre of the sky and the mountains in the distance. There is no distinction between the sea and the glowing sky, except for the faded line of the horizon. Every person, architecture or natural element ad lost its original colour to be submerged by the light. Just Europa and her kidnapper are subtracted from this enchantment. This experiment on the effect of light bears to mind Titian's late solutions, but it does not achieve the same vibrant and glistening results. Coignet's painting remains smooth and lacks the texture that characterises Titian's late art. Nonetheless, Gillis Coignet is surely the Southern Netherlandish artist who shows the most consistent adaptation of Titianesque themes, compositions, and stylistic solutions. His way of looking at Titian's paintings differs from one of his compatriots and introduced some novelties in the artistic panorama. Some aspects of Titianism were already visible in his early works in Antwerp, as we have observed. These aspects, especially the Venetian chromatism and the pulsating brushstroke, appeared in paintings commissioned by important guilds of the city, such as the vibrant portrait of *Pierson la Hues*, but they appear to not have been received by his fellow contemporaries. This lack of interest might have been related to the necessities of art market, or even by his emigration to the Northern Provinces. For sure, if his early adaptations of the Venetian's late style had some impact on other artists, this was obscured by the role of the raising-star of the artis who would be

associated with the Europeanization, together with the Spanish Velazquez and the Dutch Rembrandt, of Titian's style, namely Peter Paul Rubens.¹²⁶⁴

¹²⁶⁴ The reign of Albert and Isabella as Archdukes of the Habsburg Netherlands brought a new centrality to the court of Brussels and to a renovated interest in the art of Titian from a court perspective. This phenomenon certainly had an impact on the artistic choices of Rubens. For studies on the Netherlands of Albert and Isabella, see TREVOR-ROPER 1976, pp. 127-164; WERNER-DUERLOO 1998; BANZ 2000; SPRANG 2005; DUERLOO 2012; DUERLOO-SMUSTS 2016; PAOLINI 2019.

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, the problem that set everything to motion is the question about the “idea of Titian” and its developments in the framework of the second half of the XVIth century Habsburg Netherlands. “Developments”, plural, and not “evolution” because Vasari’s narrative does not guide our steps, and because each “idea of Titian” cannot be judged for its adherence to its post-historicized version but needs to be acknowledged as part of a constant process of re-consideration and re-edition.

We started with Titian working for the Habsburgs, we went through the moving of almost all of his artworks to Spain, the creation of partial and accidental copies, borrowings and adaptations of different aspects of his art, and we finished the story with Coignet’s conscious and “evident” reception of “*a Titian*” that is more similar to our “*Tiziano*”. Even though this might appear like the squaring of the circle, is not the focal point nor the aspect of innovation of this project.

Thereafter will be discussed the results of the present study. First, it will be summarised how in the single chapters it was possible or not to answer the questions raised in the introduction. Secondly, we will identify and give some final thoughts on the most relevant recurrent issues. The end will be the place for proposing an opening to further research and evaluate the efficiency of the methodology.

The first chapter contextualised the occurrences that determined the choice of Titian as the imperial Apelles and the arrival of a great number of his paintings in Brussels. It was ascertained that Charles V, Mary of Hungary and Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle selected and directed Titian’s production for the court of Brussels. The élite’s political necessities, artistic taste, and their subscription to a language of power that was oriented towards an *all’antica* idiom, shaped the early “idea of Titian” in the Netherlands. This idea was inherently classical. Instead of the so-called “Mannerist crisis” we must consider the experiments of these years as a strategy related not only to Titian’s desire to curry favour with the papal court but also as fundamental for his self-promotion to the imperial court. Around the 1540s and the early 1550s, Titian showed an interest in Roman art, especially Michelangelo’s, he painted foreshortened figures and sculptural bodies like in the case of the *Condemned*. He also employed a neat painting style that was maybe far from the glazed and polished one of the Flemish

masters, but it was also not yet the “*pittura a macchia*” that Giorgio Vasari would describe in 1568. In fact, the sketchy and painterly *Titius* of the series of the *Condemned* has been identified as a later replica (Figure 27), and it was recently debated whether it was also the case for the flamboyant *Danae* at the Prado, because neither of them matches the contemporary outputs of the artist. These adjustments to the perception of the stylistic coherence of Titian’s early works for the Habsburgs might already shake the foundations of some studies on the topic. In particular, it questions issues like the interpretation of the overquoted Philip II’s letter about the “hasty execution” and of the letter from Mary of Hungary to Simon Renard where she suggests looking at Titian’s paintings from afar. Instead of retrospectively using Vasari’s judgment to read these documents, it is more insightful to reflect on the artistic background of the actors and to carefully evaluate their experience of Titian’s art.

These convergent reasons might partly explain why, in the second half of the XVIth century, many Flemish artists related to the court were not interested in Titian’s pictorial technique: they had no real first-hand experience of it. And, in addition to this, almost all of the paintings by the Venetian owned by the Habsburgs left the Low Countries within 1559. This caused the artists who wanted to grasp how did a Titian painting looked like to go through the mediation of Netherlandish copies or different media like prints and drawings.

The second and the third chapters discussed two Netherlandish artists who had a direct relation to the Habsburgs, being both court painters for Charles V first and for Philip II after, and to Titian’s original paintings.

The first, Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592), specialised in altarpieces and religious works following the novelties of Roman art, in particular Raphael’s. His relationship with the art of Titian appears to be even more rich and nuanced than it has been suggested by previous literature, and it questions the idea of the *auctoritas* as the motor of it. The interest of Coxcie in the Venetian was not based on a sentiment of admiration for his art, nor did the Flemish appear look up to Titian in any way. Being one of the favourite artists of the Brussels court, Coxcie was Titian’s peer, and many of their works were hanging next to each other in the Habsburgs palaces. This physical closeness shows both the high regard in which Coxcie was held and also that the painters were referring to the same models and producing outputs that did not appear incoherent to the patrons. Coxcie combined a great number of sources in his

compositions, and he consistently used and re-used specific motives by Titian together with the Flemish, German and Central-Italian, with no distinction. The motives selected could derive indiscriminately from prints or from the paintings. As they entered his vocabulary, they were turned, stretched, and mirrored when needed. Coxie represents the perfect example of an artist who adapted the inventions of the Venetian in the context of the Brussels court with no sign of interest in Titian's particular *auctoritas*, but because he was an exponent of his pool of Italian Renaissance artists, selected primarily for of their privileged relationship with the antique.

The third chapter revolved around Anthonis Mor (1520-1577), also Habsburg's court painter who specialised in portraiture. He adapted the full-length type of portrait that Titian had developed for the Habsburgs for the Flemish-oriented taste of the Netherlandish, German, British and Spanish aristocracy. His adaptation is usually recognised to have led to the standardisation of this Titianesque type in Europe as the most popular and long-lasting expression of power through portraiture. We might assert that Mor developed his own *auctoritas* starting from Titian's artistic achievements: he aspired to the same *status* and he obtained the role of Apelles of Philip II. It is important to remember that the two artists shared the same position, physically and figuratively in the gallery of portraits at El Pardo palace.

Anthonis Mor's conscious choice of a polished and detailed style instead of the vibrant and (almost) universally praised Titian's technique, was functional on many levels. First, it matched the necessities of representation of the Northern European *élite*. The XVth century visual tradition based on Flemish polished and precise portraiture had left its mark on the aristocracy, and the extreme attention to detail increased the preciousness of the piece of art and of the symbols of wealth that it represented. Secondly, it was coherent with the consolidated practices of copying and reproducing portraits at the courts by specialised artists. An excursus on the Madrid court painter Alonso Sánchez Coello showed the same attitude in copying and adapting Titian's portraiture by repeating the shapes and avoiding emulating the brushstrokes. Through the chapter, it is endorsed the idea that an artistically crafted surface that conveyed the specific *maniera* of the painter, could drive the attention away from the precise physiognomic reproduction to the benefit of the artist's identity. However, in some cases, the identity of the artist was meaningful for the patron to express his *status*. To summarise, the recognizability of Titian's style was desirable because of his *auctoritas*

- yes, in this case it is fundamental - to distinguish his patrons from the others, but it was also not applicable outside of his production, or else the “originals” would have lost their distinctiveness.

As explained in the introduction, the last two chapters shift the focus from the court to the artistic scene of Antwerp and they change the approach from mostly monographic to thematic.

The fourth chapter offered some new and unpredicted insights on the reception of Titian's religious inventions. This issue had to be contextualised in the ferments of the religious debate. Both Protestants and Catholics expressed their concerns about images, and after the *Beeldenstorm* (1566) the Netherlandish artists had to experiment and test the boundaries of *decorum* to secure themselves a place in the market. Some inventions by the Venetian had fortune because of their connection with the Habsburgs, such as copies and adaptations of *Ecce Homo* and *Mater Dolorosa*, but it is debatable whether they were directly or indirectly appealing to the concept of *auctoritas*. In fact, some of the examples identified, like the *Ecce Homo and Mater Dolorosa* (c. 1550) by Willem Key, cannot be considered indubitably related to the model. It is also difficult to ascertain whether, outside the circles of the court, the patrons or the buyers of these religious paintings would have found the reference to Titian as a desirable trait. Of course, repetition is a fundamental element in the process of creation of an artist's *canone*, but is this type of repetition, one that does not acknowledge the model, relevant in this respect?

A new finding discussed in the chapter regards a particular composition whose success had been overlooked by the scholars, probably because of its apparent “non-Titianism” and lack of connections with the *élite*. The fact that this specific invention, which is not a royal portrait, a reclined nude, or a variation on the theme of the *poesie*, had been ignored, confirms that the doubts expressed in the introduction are grounded. We should recognise some biases in Titian's studies that might lead to ignoring or underestimating the role of some inventions in the reception of Titian in favour of others.

This composition under review, namely the engraving of the *Adoration of the shepherds* (1533) after the painting realised by Titian for Francesco Maria I della Rovere, appears, in fact, more Bassanesque even though it precedes Bassano's variations on the theme. In this chapter, it was suggested that the invention had been adapted by

painters for its theological implications. In fact, the element of the model that had been borrowed and adapted more consistently by the artists is the gesture performed by the Virgin Mary of the unveiling of the body of Christ. The iconographic source of this gesture for the painting of Titian and also for the first adaptations by Michiel Coxie and Pieter Pourbus was identified in an episode of the *Revelations* of saint Bridget, namely the moment in which the Virgin shows the shepherds the gender of the Saviour. There are different copies after Titian's invention, but the most interesting process is the assimilation of this "unveiling" in the iconography of the "Adoration of the shepherds" by important painters on the scene of Antwerp, such as Frans Floris and Maarten de Vos. In the years of experiments on *decorum*, when new iconographies were introduced - especially with the medium of print - and others disappeared, it is meaningful that this particular invention of Titian served as an iconographic renovation, giving to the Virgin a central role accordingly to the Catholic dogma. This is another case in which Titian's authorship did not matter in itself, and the artists who adapted his model and translated the gesture into their works were likely more concerned about the theological implications than the *auctoritas* of the model.

The fifth chapter, which topic was the reception of the mythological paintings by Titian and the "Titianesque" mythological themes, was the most ground-breaking. The fortune of mythological subjects appeared to have been subjected to many different factors. We can recognise that, as for Italy, in the Netherlandish humanist environments the depiction of myths with formal reference to antiquity was part of the process of self-fashioning of the artists aimed to improve their *status*. Being an Apelles literally meant emulating the *topoi* connected to this artist; emancipating from the role of artisans passed also through embracing the humanistic structure of the Liberal Arts. But these developments took different paths and progressed with a different pace, and they were not the only important factor at work. The consequences of the image debate were not limited to religious paintings. After the Council of Trent, the Catholic Counter-Reformation theologians unleashed their criticism against lasciviousness in painting and especially the representation of the nude. Johannes Molanus' *De picturis et imaginibus sacri*, published in 1570 surely had an impact on the production of sensuous art, including mythological subjects. This cultural context affected the art market of Antwerp, a city subjected to shifts from Catholic to Protestant administration until the Catholic reconquest of 1585. From the analysis of

XVIth century inventories of the citizens, we ascertained that the depiction of mythologies was not particularly popular in the decades from the 1560s to the 1590s, and few painters specialised in these themes. The artists selected as case studies for this chapter are Jan Massys, Frans Floris, Jacob de Backer, Maarten de Vos and Gillis Coignet. These painters worked for circles of rich merchants who collected especially mythological artworks and sold them abroad on the French market and to foreign Princes like Rudolph II and Philip II. The approaches of these painters to Titian's art were very sporadic and sometimes too much emphasized by the scholars. Here it comes in handy the carefulness adopted in regarding as quintessentially Titianesque some themes and types without considering more plausible sources. For instance, Frans Floris' mythological paintings such as *Danae* and *Diana and Actaeon* had been related to Titian's *poesie* regardless of the difficult and unsubstantiated availability of the models and ignoring the most obvious importance of Florentine and Roman Mannerism, in particular the one mediated by the artists who worked at the court of Fontainebleau from the 1530s. Anyhow, these artists contributed to the process of assimilation of certain mythological themes and compositions into the pictorial language at the end of the century, and they need to be mentioned also to dispel doubts about the supposed absolute centrality of Titian's models also outside the Habsburg circles. Gillis Coignet was in fact the first Netherlandish painter who consistently adapted Titian's inventions in the Southern Netherlands, and also the first who experimented with the renowned pictorial technique of the Venetian master, so praised by the literature but great absence in factual artistic reception.

After this brief but dense summary, we might finally discuss the most innovative issues that have come to light through the research and the methodology here applied.

First, it appeared that the idea expressed in the majority of Titian's studies, that of the *auctoritas* as the reason for using Titianesque models, needs to be partly revised. In the context of the Southern Netherlands, this *auctoritas* derived from the privileged relationship between Titian and the Habsburgs was subject to fluctuations. In fact, the reference to the art of the Habsburg's Apelles was meaningful just when artists were targeting an audience who would have been able to understand this reference and consider that as an added value. And the particular situation of the Brussels court environment in the second half of the century - characterised by the lack of a unifying

political and artistic centre -, together with the economic shift for the Antwerpian artists toward a different burgers' clientele mostly unaware of what "a Titian" might have looked like, brought many artists not to consider a "Titianesque mark" as a desirable feature. Even an artist like Michiel Coxcie, a court painter directly involved in the Habsburg cultural *milieu*, regarded Titian as "one among the others". A peer of his, a good source for his *disegno*. In this context, Titian was primarily an Italian painter, not a Venetian, and surely not the artist who was considered the champion of the *colore*.

The second issue is the one of style, which is directly related to the problem of the mismatch between the "idea" of the painter advocated by literature and the one grounded in the practical use of his art. The extremely rare cases in which artists seemed to have experimented with Titian's style and technique are not unambiguously recognisable and, even if they were proven to be so, they would not be particularly meaningful. In fact, the absence of these experiments is more significant than these few examples. Explained on many levels - from the lack of late paintings by the artist present on the territory between 1559 and 1615, to the use of prints as main sources for Titian's inventions, and to the adhesion to a visual tradition rooted in the polished and neat appearance of the pictorial surface -, this disinterested at best and refusal at worst of Titian's late style does not find a confirm in the artistic literature. From Lampsonius to van Mander, the praises of Titian's *sprezzatura*, for his rapid brushstroke and ability in creating paintings that appeared perfect "from afar", were recurrent themes. However, as we have stressed on different occasions, these ideas were adapted from Italian art theory and translated by following different processes. The so-called *lossigheid*, the Dutch term for *sprezzatura*, was not related to a loose pictorial technique but to the security and the lightness of the touch: bodily confidence more than the description of a pictorial effect. In the end, it is very difficult to ascertain whether the "pittura di macchia" that characterised Titian's late style was actually appreciated by Southern Netherlandish artists *and* intellectuals, or if their judgements were part of the rhetoric of the emerging artistic theory. Lampsonius' criticism to Floris and his looser brushstroke in the 1560s paintings had been "corrected" by van Mander recurring to the image depicted by Vasari for Titian: his paintings appear perfect from afar. It is sure that, from the XVIIth century, this Titianesque late style meant something else, something that has been not set into motion by the artists themselves - at least not in the framework studied here.

Last, but not less relevant, is the acknowledgement of the limits and the dangers of researching the reception of an artist through the lens of his canonised idea. It is fundamental to thoroughly reconstruct the visual experience of the artists by focusing on the sources, documentary and material, and especially on the formal analysis of the survived artworks. The availability of the models and the necessities of the artists involved in the process of borrowing, copying, and adapting, determined their selection and their use, whether or not they went down in history as quintessentially Titianesque.

This research downsizes some ideas on the impact of Titian's art on the Netherlandish painters and reveals the coexistence of different "ideas of Titian" instead of an unambiguous and coherent "Titianism". Downsizing and pluralizing "Titianism" also entail casting a light on the processes of mediation which led from models to the singular artworks. Such mediation involved the artists' intentions but equally the vagaries of the art market and the taste of courts, courtiers, patrons and collectors. Thus, autonomous mechanics were put into play in which the name and reputation of Titian were far from the only or even determining factors.

This dissertation necessarily emphasized certain topics at the expense of others. As remarked upon in the introduction, Titian's landscapes in relation to Netherlandish art have not been discussed. This complex and thus far understudied topic deserves the undivided attention of its own project since it would necessitate exploring a whole other cast of artists and contexts. Such research could provide a useful point of comparison, as it can be expected that different mediators played a role in shaping yet another facet of "Titianism". Another fruitful comparison for the present research could be that between Titian's reception and the reception of other major Italian Renaissance artists in the Netherlands. The reception of the School of Rafael (especially through the cartoons of tapestries) and other Venetian masters such as Tintoretto or Paolo Veronese, spring to mind as useful points of departure for a more encompassing study of processes of canonization and exchange between the Italian and Low Countries contexts. Hopefully, such studies can draw on the present inquiry for context and comparison.

As promised, the study closes before Rubens left for Italy in the year 1600. The choice of this date as the end of the framework investigated might appear somehow symbolic. It represents the beginning of the new century and the start of the formative

eight years trip that would train the Southern Netherlandish rising star in the ways of Italian and Titianesque art. However, there is an ulterior reason for ending this study at the end of the XVIth century, and that is the appointment of Albert VII of Austria (1559-1621) and Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566-1633), daughter of Philip II, as sovereign of the Habsburg Netherland in 1598. Under their reign, also in relation to the Twelve years truce (1609-1621) that interrupted the hostilities between the Spanish rulers, the Southern Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, the court of Brussels flourished again. This context, together with Albert's relationship of emulation with his brother Rudolph II, a great estimator of Titian and whose collection would partly join the Brussels one after his death, created a new and different phenomenon in the reception of the art of the Venetian master.

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Belgium (KBR);



F

cm;
Art;

Figure 14



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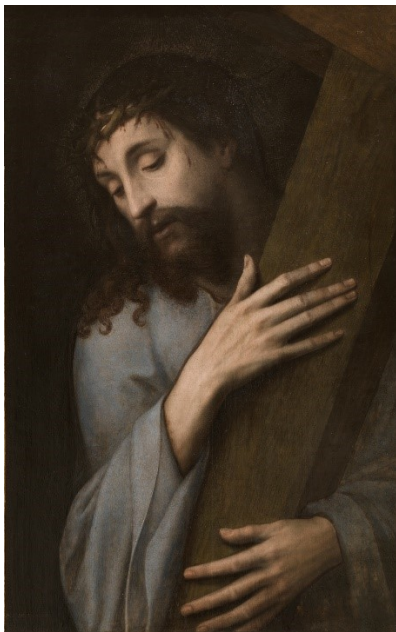


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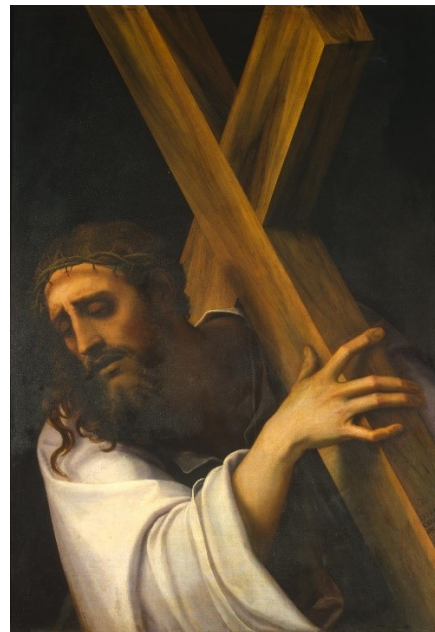


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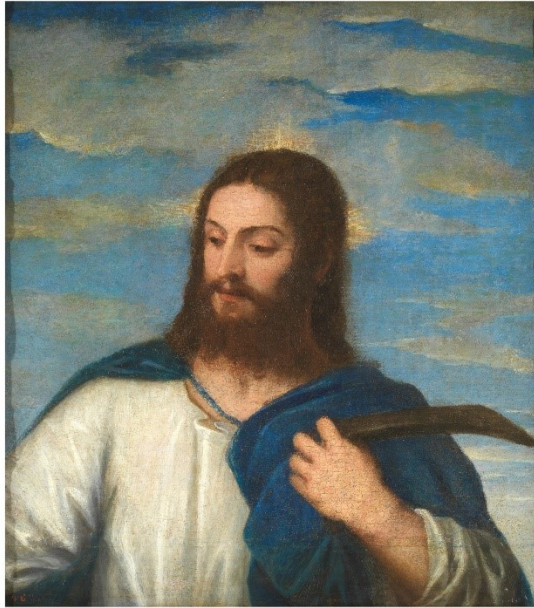


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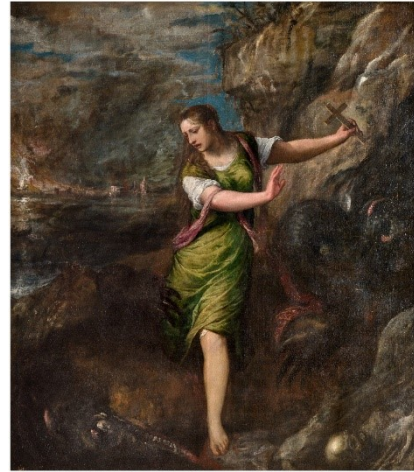


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Figure 79

Anonymous Netherlandish; *Heads of Christ and Apostles*; late XVIth century; 267x195 mm; pen and brown ink and grey wash on paper; British Museum; London.

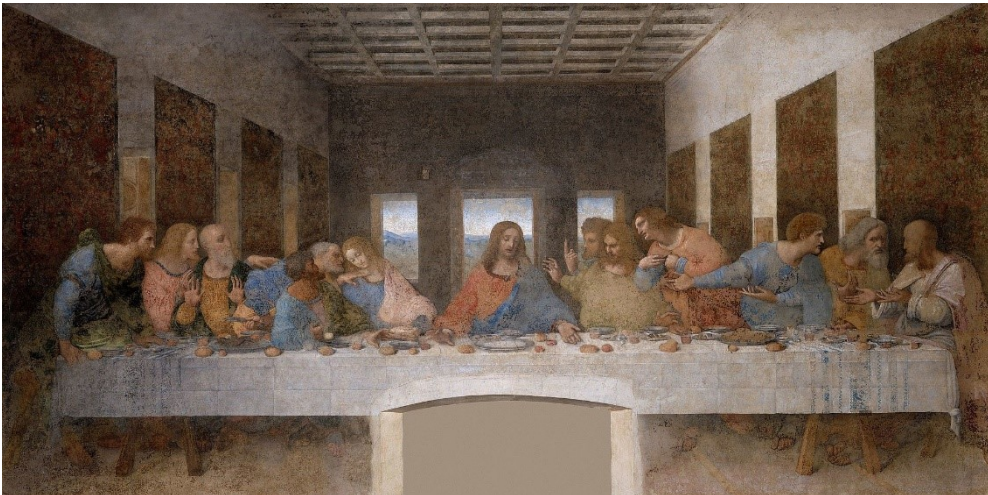


Figure 80

Leonardo da Vinci; *Last supper*; 1494-98; 460x880 cm; dry wall-painting; Santa Maria delle Grazie; Milan.



Figure 81

Albrecht Dürer; *Agony in the garden*; 1497; 391x178 mm; woodcut; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.

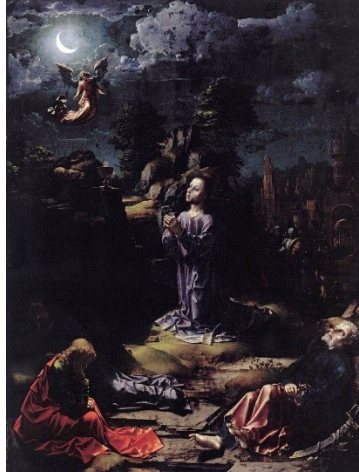


Figure 82

Jan Gossaert; *Agony in the garden*; 1510; 85x63 cm; oil on panel; Staatliche Museen; Berlin.



Figure 83

Pieter Coecke van Aelst; *Agony in the Garden*; 1527-30; 83x57 cm; oil on panel; Hermitage; St Petersburg.



Figure 84

Dirk Volkerstz Coornhert after Maarten van Heemskerck; *Agony in the garden*; 1548; 250x190 mm; engraving and etching; British Museum; London

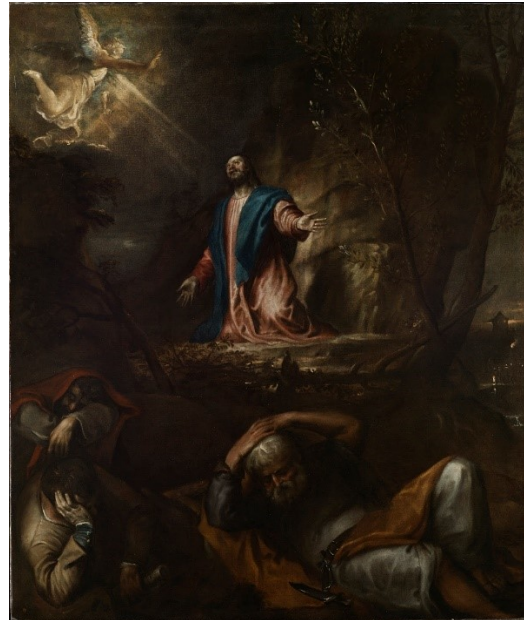


Figure 85

Titian; *Agony in the garden*; 1562-63; 185x172 cm; oil on canvas; Monasterio de El Escorial; El Escorial.



Figure 86

Michiel Coxie; *Annunciation and adoration of the shepherds*; post 1554; left and right wings 263x62,7 cm; oil on panel; Patrimonio Nacional, Real Monasterio de El Escorial; El Escorial



Figure 87

Jacopo Caraglio after Titian; *Annunciation*; c. 1537; 455x344 mm; engraving; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.



Figure 88

Agnolo Bronzino; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1539-40; 65,7x47,1 cm; oil on panel; Szépművészeti Múzeum; Budapest.



Figure 89

Michiel Coxcië; *Death of Abel*; post 1539; 151x125 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.



Figure 91

Michelangelo; *Dying slave*, 1513; 229 cm; marble; Musée du Louvre; Paris.



Figure 90

Michelangelo; *Creation of the sun and the moon*; 1511-12; 280x570 cm; fresco; Sistine Chapel; Vatican City.



Figure 92

Michelangelo; *Expulsion from Eden*; 1509-10; 280x570 cm; fresco; Sistine Chapel; Vatican City.



Figure 93

Pieter van Edigen van Aelst II (weaver) after Michiel Coxcie; *Death of Abel*; c. 1550; unknown measures; wool, silk and gilt-metal wrapped thread; Wawel Royal Castle; Krakow.



Figure 94

Michiel Coxcie; *Brazen serpent*; 1540-50; 386x273 mm; pen and brown ink and brown wash on paper; private collection Antwerp.



Figure 95

Giulio Fontana after Titian; *Battle of Cadore*, detail; c. 1569; 420x555 mm; engraving; British Museum; London.



Figure 96

Michiel Coxcie; *Adoration of the brazen serpent* (central panel); 1554; 184x148,5; oil on panel; Maagdenhuis Museum; Anwerp.



Figure 97

Michiel Coxcie; *Martyrdom of saint Sebastian*; 1587; unknown measures; oil on panel; cathedral of Saint Rumbold; Mechelen.



Figure 98

Michiel Coxcie; *Hosden triptych*; 1571; 198x498,8 cm; oil on panel; M-Museum; Leuven.



Figure 99

Michiel Coxcie; *Flight into Egypt*; 1581; 180x90 cm; oil on panel; Sé Catedral de Funchal; Funchal.



Figure 100

Michiel Coxcie; *Adoration of the Magi*; 1581; 90x100 cm; oil on panel; Sé Catedral de Funchal; Funchal.



Figure 101

Michiel Coxcie; *Meeting of Anne and Joachim at the Golden Gate*; 1581; 180x90 cm; oil on panel; Sé Catedral de Funchal; Funchal.



Figure 102

Michiel Coxcie; *Circumcision of Jesus*; 1581; 90x100 cm; oil on panel; Sé Catedral de Funchal; Funchal.

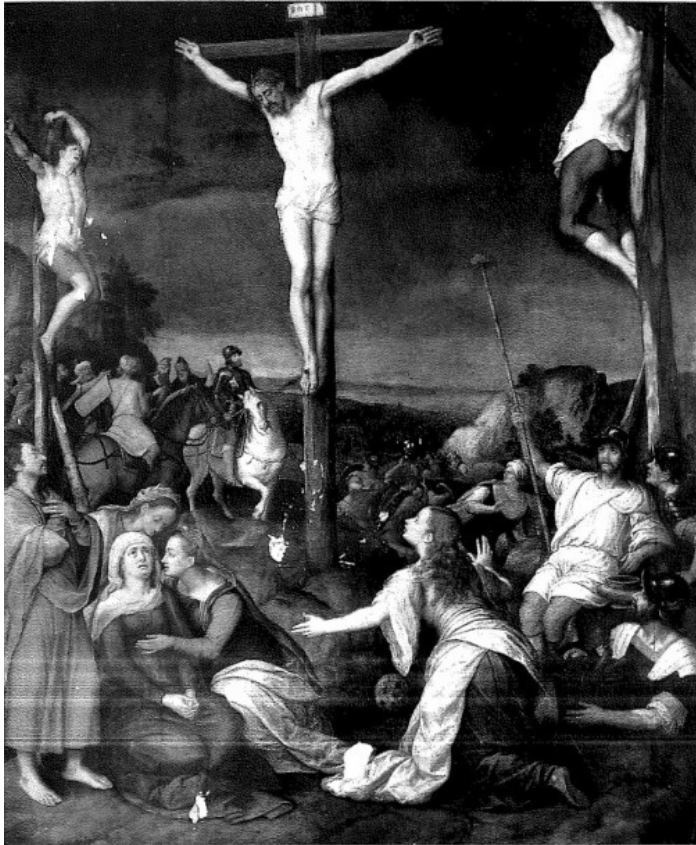


Figure 103

Michiel Coxcie; *Crucifixion*; 1554-56.; 132x107 cm; oil on panel; private collection; Barcelona.

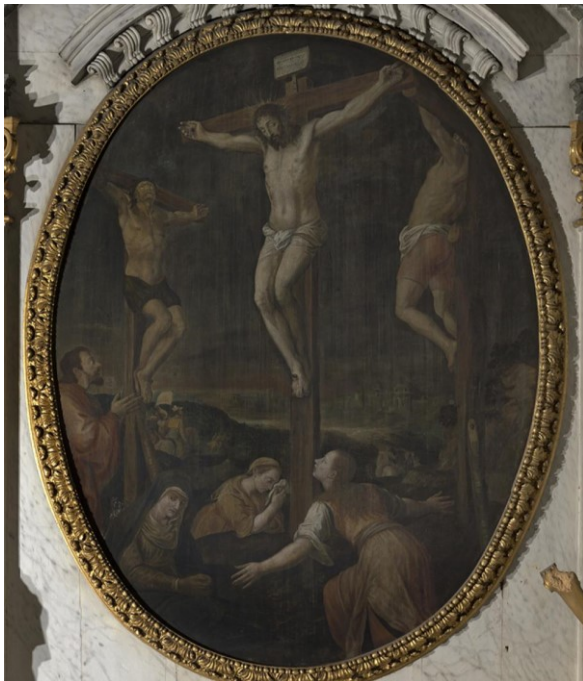


Figure 104

Michiel Coxcie; *Crucifixion*; 1579; unknown measures; oil on panel; church of Saint James; Ghent



Figure 105

Michiel Coxcie; *Martyrdom of saint Sebastian*; 1575; 265x235,5 cm; oil on panel; KMSKA; Antwerp.



Figure 106

Michiel Coxcie; *Legend of saint Gudula*; 1592; central 294x227 cm; wings 294x89 cm; oil on panel; cathedral of Saints Michael and Gudula; Brussels.



Figure 107

Titian; *Self-portrait*; 1546-7; 96x75 cm; oil on canvas; Staatliche Museen; Berlin.



Figure 108

Titian; *Self-portrait*; 1562; 86x65 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.



Figure 109

Agostino Ardeni; *Titian holding a portrait*; c. 1563; 10,3 cm; medal in lead; Bowdoin College Museum of Art; Brunswick.



Figure 110

Anthonis Mor; *Self-portrait*; 1558; 113x87 cm; oil on panel; Gallerie degli Uffizi; Florence.



Figure 111

Simon Frisius; *Anthonis Mor*; 1610 ca.; 210x122 mm; etching; British Museum; London



Figure 112

Anthonis Mor; *Mary Tudor, Queen of England*; 1554; 109x84 cm; oil on panel; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.

Figure 113

Titian; *Philip II*; 1549-50; 103x82 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.





Figure 114

Anthonis Mor; *Philip II in an armour on Saint Quentin's day*; 1560; 200x103 cm; oil on canvas; El Escorial; Madrid.



Figure 115

Anthonis Mor; *Maximilian II*; 1550; 184x100 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.



Figure 116

Titian; *Allegorical portrait of Philip II*; 1573-75; 335x273 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado.



Figure 117

Alonso Sánchez Coello; *Charles V at Mühlberg*; 1575; 307x245 cm; oil on canvas; Fundación Medinaceli; Toledo.



Figure 118

Anthonis Mor; *Alessandro Farnese*, 1557; 155x95 cm; oil on canvas; Galleria Nazionale; Parma.



Figure 119

Anthonis Mor; *Margaret of Parma in black and cream*, c. 1559; 98x72 cm; oil on canvas; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Philadelphia.



Figure 120

Anthonis Mor; *Margaret of Parma in black and red*, c. 1562; 106x76 cm; oil on canvas; Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz; Berlin.



Figure 121

Anthonis Mor; *Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba*; 1549; 108x84 cm; oil on panel; The Hispanic Society of America; New York.



Figure 122

Titian; *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle*; 1548; 11,3x88,2 cm; oil on canvas; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; Kansas City.



Figure 123

Willem Key; *Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle in his cardinal vest*; 1561; 114x88 cm; oil on panel; Klassik Stiftung Weimar aus Schloß Sondershausen; Weimar.

Figure 124

Raphael; *Pope Leo X with his cousins*; 1518-1519; 154x119 cm; oil on panel; Gallerie degli Uffizi; Florence.



Figure 125

Titian; *Pope Paul III*; 1543; 113,7x88,8 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte; Naples.



Figure 126

Willem Key; *Portrait of don Fernando Álvarez de Toledo*; 1568; 99x81 cm; oil on canvas; Palacio de Liria, Dukes of Alva Collection; Madrid.



Figure 127

Willem Key; *Portrait of a man aged 43*; 1556; 81x62 cm; oil on panel; Museo di Castelvecchio; Verona.



Figure 128

Pieter Pourbus; *Joris van de Heede*, c. 1555; 64x46,5 cm; oil on panel; Museum Boymans-van-Beuningen; Rotterdam.



Figure 129

Titian; *Portrait of a young Englishman*; 1540-45; 111x93 cm; oil on canvas; Palazzo Pitti; Florence.



Figure 130

Frans Pourbus the Elder; *Self-portrait or portrait of Cornelis van Harleem*; 1570-79; 80,5x64 cm; oil on canvas private collection; Antwerp

Figure 131

Frans Pourbus the Elder; *Abraham Grapheus*; c. 1572-81; 42,9x34,3 cm; oil on panel; Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco; San Francisco.



Figure 132

Anthony Mor; *Hubert Goltzius*; 1576; 66x50 cm; oil on panel; Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; Brussels.



Figure 133

Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen; *Holy family at the fire*; 1532/33; 66,5x50,5 cm; oil on panel; Kusthistorisches Museum; Vienna.

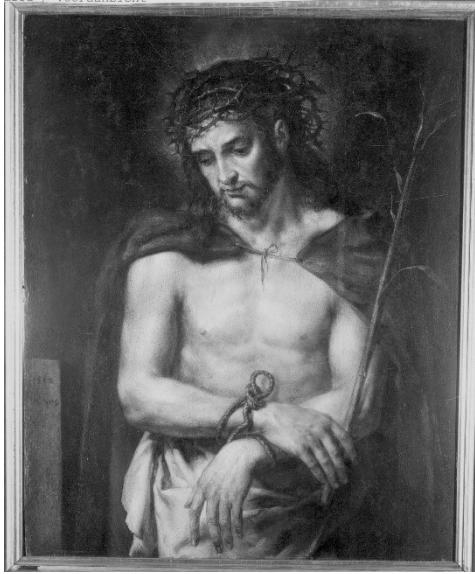


Figure 134

Maerten de Vos; *Ecce homo*; 1562; 76x64 cm; oil on panel; Saint-Jacob; Antwerp.



Figure 135

Titian; *Ecce homo*; c. 1560; 73,4x56 cm; oil on canvas; National Gallery of Ireland; Dublin,



Figure 136

Quinten Massys; *Ecce homo*; c. 1520; 95x74 cm; oil on panel; Doge's Palace; Venice.



Figure 137

Andrea Solario; *Ecce homo*; c. 1509; 59,7x41,4 cm; oil on panel; Indianapolis Museum of Art; Indianapolis.



ECCE HOMO
 Ludibria, inuidiaq; Deus, probra omnia, et, insons
 Humani generis male decepta, femina soluit.
 (Clementino Ornatiq; Dno L. Sessorii Bap. Franco. libereq; Arbitrio, amatori hoc munusculum
 D.D.C. Lucas Vorsterman junior. Titian)

Figure 138

Lucas Vorsterman II after Titian; *Ecce homo*; c. 1640-60; 229x152 mm; National Gallery of Ireland; Dublin.



ECCE HOMO
 SERENISS. BAVARIE DUC. GUILIELMI V. A CONS.
 ET MED. D. JO. HENR. MÜNZINGERO. IN GRATUL.
 recuperati visus Christoph. Schwarz. pix. J. Sadeler sculpsit. excud.

Figure 139

Jan Sadeler I after Christoph Schwarz; *Ecce homo*; 1579-1597; 196x123 mm; engraving; British Museum; London.

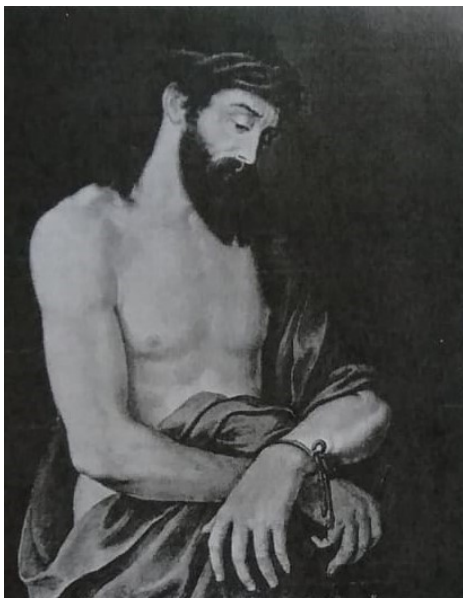


Figure 140



Willem Key (?); *Ecce homo and Mater Dolorosa*; c. 1550; 65x52 cm each; oil on panel.



Figure 141

Willem Key; *Ecce homo and Mater Dolorosa*; 1555-1560; 74x100 cm; oil on panel; private collection.



Figure 142

Adriaen Isenbrandt; *Christ crowned with thorns and the mourning Virgin*; c. 1530-40; 104,4x92,7 cm; oil on canvas transferred from panel; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.



Figure 143

Willem Key; *Pietà*; c. 1550; 112x103 cm; oil on panel; Alte Pinakothek, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen; Munich.



Figure 144

Willem Key (attributed to); *Holy family*; 89x76 cm; c. 1550; oil on panel; Bernaerts, Antwerp; 12.09.2019, lot 68.



Figure 145

Willem Key; *Holy family*; 1551; 129,7x99,3 cm; oil on panel; Christie's, London; 9.12. 1988, lot 46.



Figure 146

Willem Key (attributed to); *Holy family*; 61,5x66,5 cm; oil on panel; Sotheby's, London; 7.06.1988, lot 223.



Figure 147

Michelangelo Buonarroti; *Bruges Madonna*; c. 1503-1505; 128 cm; marble; Church of Our Lady; Bruges.



Figure 148

Titian; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1532-33; 93x113 cm; oil on panel; Pitti Gallery; Florence.



Figure 149

Titian; *Adoration of the shepherds*; after 1533; 93,7x112 cm; oil on panel; Christ Church; University of Oxford.



Figure 150

Pieter Pourbus; *Triptych of the Crucifixion*; 1570; 100,5x105,5 cm central, 103x48,5 cm sides, 20x149 cm predella; oil on canvas glued on panel; Groeningemuseum; Bruges



Figure 151

Giulio Bonasone; *Descent from the cross*; c. 1550; 103x101 mm; etching and engraving; Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna; Bologna.



Figure 152

Andrea Meldolla after Raphael; *Heliodorus expelled from the temple*; after 1512; 214x314 mm; etching; Royal Collection Trust; London.



Figure 153

Giorgio Ghisi after Giulio Romano; *Resurrection of Christ*; 1578-80; 262x178 mm; engraving; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen; Rotterdam.



Figure 154

Pieter Pourbus; *Triptych of the Crucifixion*, detail of the predella with the *Annunciation*



Figure 155

Pieter Pourbus; *Triptych of the Crucifixion*, detail of the predella with the *Adoration of the shepherds*



Figure 156

Hugo van der Goes; *Portinari Altarpiece*, 1477-78; 263x608 cm; oil on panel; Museo degli Uffizi; Florence.



Figure 157

Giorgione; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1505-10; 90,8x110,5 cm; oil on panel; National Gallery of Art; Washington.



Figure 158

Jacopo Bassano; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1546; 139,1x218,5 cm; oil on canvas; Royal Collection Trust; London.



Figure 159

Jacopo Bassano; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1548; 96x141 cm; oil on canvas; Gallerie dell'Accademia; Venice.



Figure 160

Bernard van Orley; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1525; 100x170,5 cm; oil on panel; Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; Brussels.



Figure 161

Raphael; *Madonna of the veil*; 1511-12; 120x90 cm; oil on panel; Musée Condé; Chantilly.



Figure 162

Anonymous after Titian; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1590; 59,5x84,5 cm; oil on panel; Sint-Barbaraklooster; Ghent.



Figure 163

Anonymous; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1551-1600; 229x197 cm; oil on panel; Sint-Pancratiuskerk; Sterrebeek.



Figure 164

Pieter Pourbus; *Polyptych of Hemelsdale*; 1564; 162x516 cm in total; oil on panel; Sint-Gilliskerk; Bruges.



Figure 165

Pieter Pourbus; *Damhouder triptych*; 1574; 143x204,5 cm in total; oil on panel; Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk; Bruges.



Figure 166

Frans Floris; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1560; 130,5x159 cm; oil on panel; Národní Galerie; Prague.



Figure 167

Frans Floris; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1568; 249x193 cm; oil on panel; KMSKA; Antwerp.



Figure 168

Maerten de Vos; *Triptych with the Adoration of the sheperds*; ante 1582; 225x290 cm in total; oil on panel; Tournai cathedral; Tournai.

Figure 169

Maerten de Vos; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1593; 98x66 cm; oil on panel; private collection



Figure 170

Maerten de Vos; *Nativity*; c. 1600; 262x211,5 cm; oil on panel; KMSKA; Antwerp.





Figure 171

Jan Collaert II; *Adoration of the shepherds*; c. 1598; 179x215 mm; engraving; British Museum; London.



Figure 172

Adam van Noort (?); *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1591-1600; 76x106 cm; oil on panel; Sint-Jan-Baptistkerk; Brussels.



Figure 173

Adam van Noort (?); *Adoration of the shepherds*, detail of the *Annunciation*



Figure 174

Pierre d'Argent; *The miracle of Lepanto: the vision of pope Pius V*; 1575-80; 202x128 cm; oil on panel; Eglise Saint-Matthias; Cromary.



Figure 175

Cornelis Cort after Titian; *Annunciation*; c. 1566; 419x276 mm; engraving; British Museum; London.



Figure 176

Giulio Bonasone after Raphael; *Adoration of the shepherds*; 1530-60; 290x149 mm; etching; British Museum; London.



Figure 177

Jan Massys; *David and Bathsheba*; 1562; 162x197; oil on panel; Louvre Museum; Paris.



Figure 178

Willem Key; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1550; 95,2x129,5 cm; oil on panel; present whereabouts unknown



Figure 179

Jan van Scorel; *Dying of Cleopatra*; c. 1520-24; 36,3x61,3 cm; oil on panel; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam.



Figure 180

Maarten van Heemskerck; *Venus and Cupid*; 1545; 108x157,5 cm; oil on panel; Musée Wallraf Richartz; Cologne.



Figure 181

Maarten van Heemskerck; *Venus and Mars surprised by Vulcan*; 1536; 96x99 cm; oil on panel; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 182

Marcantonio Raimondi; *Judgment of Paris*; c. 1510-20; 291x437 mm; engraving; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.



Figure 183

Frans Floris; *Banquet of the gods*; c. 1557; 116,5x165,5 cm; oil on panel; Universalmuseum Joanneum; Graz.



Figure 184

Frans Floris; *Banquet of the sea gods*; 1561; 126x226 cm; oil on panel; Nationalmuseum; Stockholm.



Figure 185

Frans Floris; *Judgement of Paris*; c. 1559; 135x188 cm; oil on panel; Hermitage; Saint Petersburg.

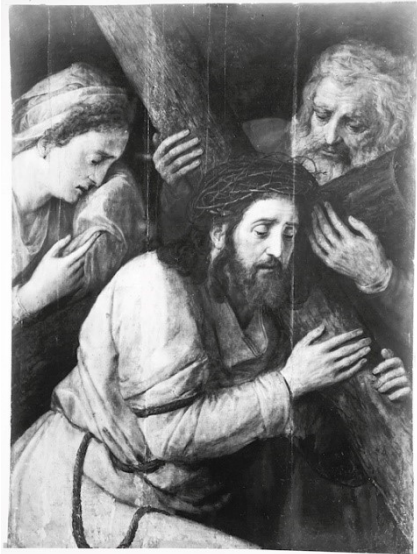


Figure 186

Frans Floris; *Christ carrying the cross with Mary and Simon of Cyrene*; c. 1555; 114x81 cm; oil on panel; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna.

Figure 187

Frans Floris; *Head of Christ*; c. 1553-54; 48x34 cm; oil on panel; Staatliches Museum; Schwerin.



Figure 188

Frans Floris; *Christ carrying the cross*; c. 1560; 74,5x47 cm; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna.



Figure 189

Titian; *Diana and Actaeon*; 1556-59; 184,5x202,2 cm; oil on canvas; National Galleries of Scotland; Edinburgh.



Figure 190

Frans Floris; *Diana and her nymphs surprised by Actaeon*; c. 1565; 415x485 mm; pen and brush in brown with oil and white heightening on parchment on panel; Christ Church Picture Gallery; Oxford.



Figure 191

Frans Menton after Frans Floris; *Diana and her nymphs surprised by Actaeon*; c. 1566; 220x290 mm; engraving; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam.



Figure 192

Frans Floris; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1569; 103x132 cm; oil on panel; Louvre Museum; Paris.



Figure 193

Titian; *Diana and Callisto*; 1556-59; 184,5x202,2 cm; oil on canvas; National Gallery; London.



Figure 194

Frans Floris; *Diana*; c. 1555; 42x33 cm; oil on panel; present location unknown.



Figure 195

Anonymous after Francesco Primaticcio; *Venus attired by the Graces*; 1540/50; 304x250 mm; etching; British Museum; London.

Figure 196

Jean Mignon (active 1535-1555) after Luca Penni; *Venus bathing attended by her nymphs*; 1543-45; 527x431 mm; etching; British Museum; London.



Figure 197

Jean Mignon after Luca Penni; *Women bathing*; 1545-55; 332x502 mm; etching; British Museum; London.



Figure 198

Jan Gossaert; *Danae*, 1527; 177,2x161,8; oil on panel; Alte Pinakothek; Munich.



Figure 199

Frans Menton after Frans Floris; *Danae and the golden rain*; c. 1566; 214x264 mm; Rijksmuseum; Amsterdam.



Figure 200

Lèon Davent after Primaticcio; *Danae*; c. 1542-47; 233x296 mm; engraving; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.



Figure 201

Lèon Davent after Primaticcio; *Venus and Cupid* from the series of twelve muses and goddesses; c. 1540-56; 226x170 mm; etching; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.



Figure 202

Frans Floris (?); *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1560; 295x420 cm; oil on panel; Hallwyl Museum; Stockholm.



Figure 203

Frans Floris (?); *Venus and Cupid*; 1550-60; 121x156 cm; oil on canvas; Galleria degli Uffizi; Florence.



Figure 204

Titian; *Venus with an organist and a dog*; c. 1550; 138x224 cm; oil on canvas; Museo Nacional del Prado; Madrid.



Figure 205

Vincent Sellaer; *Jupiter as a Satyr and Antiope with their children*; c. 1540; 100x130,6 cm; oil on panel; Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; Brussels.

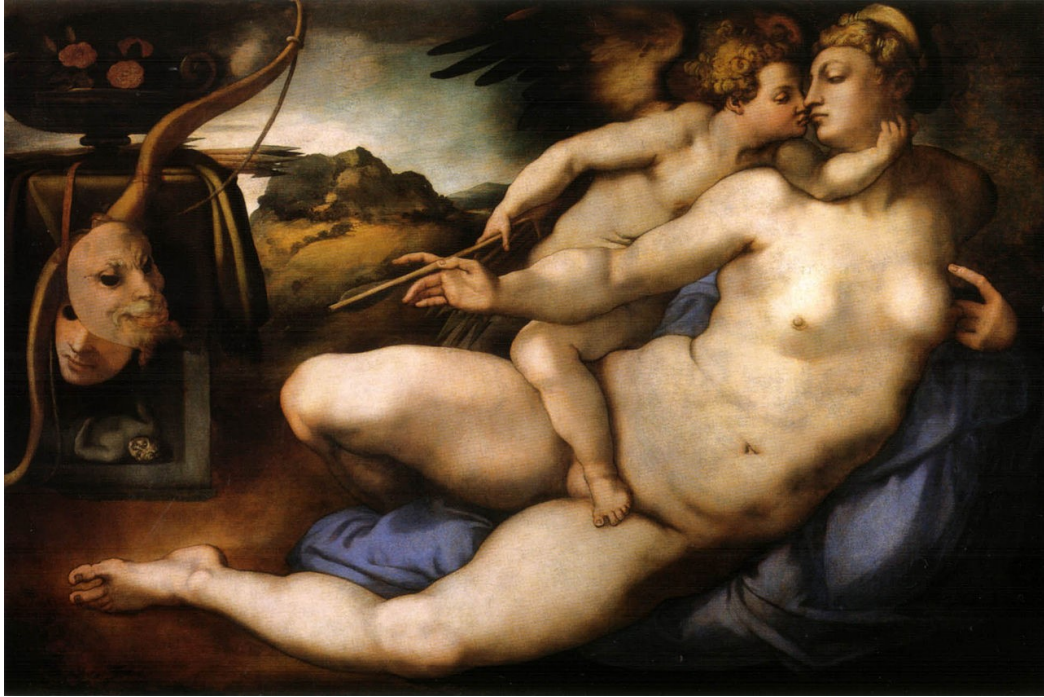


Figure 206

Jacopo Pontormo; *Venus and Cupid*, 1533; 128x194 cm; oil on panel; Gallerie dell'Accademia; Florence.



Figure 207

Agnolo Bronzino; *Allegory with Venus and Cupid*, c. 1545; 145,1x116,2 cm; oil on panel; National Gallery; London.



Figure 208

Jan Massys; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1558; 94x132 cm; oil on panel; Muzeum Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego; Krakow.



Figure 209

Titian; *Venus and Cupid with a dog*; c. 1550-60; 139,2x195,5 cm; oil on canvas; Gallerie degli Uffizi; Florence.



Figure 210

Bernardino Luini; *Venus in a landscape*; c. 1530; 106,7x135,9 cm; oil on panel; Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York.



Figure 211

Jan Massys (circle of); *Venus and Psyche or women with flowers*; XVIth century; 131x114 cm; oil on panel; Louvre Museum; Paris.



Figure 212

Jacob de Backer; *Last judgement*; 1571; 164x198 cm; oil on canvas; Royal Museum of Fine Arts; Antwerp.



Figure 213

De Backer Group; *Venus and Paris*; c. 1585; 145x188 cm; oil on canvas; Maininger Museen; Meiningen.



Figure 214

De Backer Group; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1580; 73x52 cm; oil on panel; Gemäldegalerie; Berlin.



Figure 215

De Backer Group; *Venus and Cupid*; c. 1580; 108x76 cm; oil on panel; Musée National de la Renaissance; Écouen.



Figure 216

De Backer Group; *Paris being admitted to the bedchamber of Helen*; 1585/90; 119,4x171,5 cm; oil on canvas; Getty Museum; Los Angeles.



Figure 217

Anonymous; *Sleeping Ariadne*; II century AD; 226x129x103 cm; marble; Uffizi; Florence.



Figure 218

Titian; *Bacchanal of the Andrians*; detail



Figure 219

Frans Floris; *Awakening of the Arts*; detail



Figure 220

Bronzino; *Venus, Cupid and Satyr*; c. 1553-56; 135x231; oil on panel; Palazzo Colonna; Rome.



Figure 221

Jan Meyssens (1608-1651) after Jacob de Backer; *Sight from the series of the Five senses*; c. 1640; 152x198 mm; etching; British Museum; London.



Figure 222

De Backer Group; *Sense of sight*; before 1600; 48,3x64 cm; oil on panel; Museum of Fine Arts; Budapest.



Figure 223

De Backer Group; *Danae and the golden rain*; 1560s; 62x46 cm; oil on canvas; Kunsthistorisches Museum; Vienna.



Figure 224

Tintoretto; *Danae*; c. 1570; 142x182 cm; oil on canvas; Musée des Beaux-Arts; Lyon.



Figure 225

De Backer Group; *Venus, Bacchus and Ceres*; before 1600; 125x96 cm; oil on panel; Louvre Museum; Paris.



Figure 226

Gillis Coignet; *Saint George and the dragon*; 1581; 193x225 cm; oil on panel; Royal Museum of Fine Arts; Antwerp.



Figure 227

Gillis Coignet; *Pierson la Hues*; 1581; 170x130 cm; oil on panel; Royal Museum of Fine Arts; Antwerp.



Figure 228

Gillis Coignet; *Venus at the mirror with a putto*; 1579; 139x96 cm; oil on panel; last known location Staatliche Museen; Kassel.

Figure 229

After Titian; *Venus with two cupids in front of a mirror*; 1560s; 130x 105 cm; oil on canvas; Hermitage Museum; Moskow.

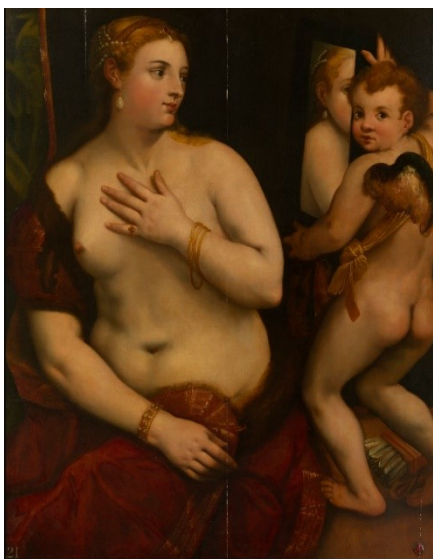


Figure 230

Dutch school after Titian; *Venus at the mirror*; c. 1550-1720; 107,9x86 cm; oil on panel; Royal Collection Trust; London.

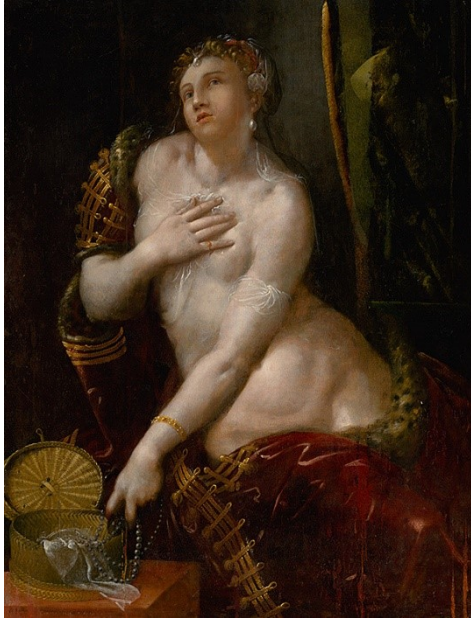


Figure 231

Gillis Coignet; *Vanitas or Mary Magdalen*; c. 1580; 123x94 cm; oil on panel; Slovak National Gallery; Bratislava.



Figure 232

Gillis Coignet (?); *Death of Dido*; c. 1580; 123x106 cm; oil on canvas; Dorotheum, Old Master Paintings 09-06-2020, lot. 41.



Figure 233

Gillis Coignet (?); *Allegory of the Christian life*; 1589; 96,8x129,5 cm; oil on panel; Dorotheum, Old Master Paintings 21-04-2015, lot. 337.



Figure 234

Raphael; *Triumph of Galatea*; c. 1512; 295x225 cm; fresco; Villa Farnesina; Rome.



Figure 235

Gillis Coignet; *Mary Magdalene*; 1580-90; 127x92,5 cm; oil on panel; Dorotheum, Old Master Paintings, 06-10-2009, lot. 29.

Figure 236

Titian; *Penitent Mary Magdalene*; c. 1550; 122x 94 cm; oil on panel; Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte; Naples.

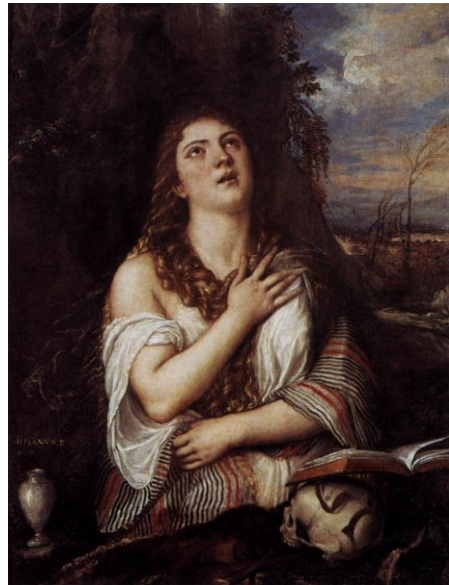


Figure 237

Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem; *Venus at the mirror*; 1610; 109,5x85,5 cm; oil on panel; Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum; Braunschweig.



Figure 238

Gillis Coignet (?); *Venus and Cupid with military attributes*; 1570-90; 112x162 cm; oil on canvas; Artcurial, Old Masters and 19th Century Sculptures, 14-12-2009, lot. 3.



Figure 239

Gillis Coignet; *Mars plays the virginal for Venus*; 1590; 145x220 cm; oil on panel; private collection.



Figure 240

Gillis Coignet; *Mars plays the virginal for Venus*; 1598; 113x182 cm; oil on panel; Musée du Presidial, Saintes.



Figure 241

Gillis Coignet (?); *Leda and the swan*; 1570-90; 96,2x126 cm; oil on panel; Sotheby's, London, Old Masters Paintings, 02-05-2018, lot. 103.



Figure 242

Gillis Coignet; *Diana and Callisto*; 1580-90; 103x174 cm; oil on canvas; Museum of Fine Arts; Budapest.



Figure 243

Gillis Coignet; *Rape of Europa*; c. 1580-85; 74,4x96,5 cm; oil on panel; Sotheby's New York, Master Paintings & Sculpture Day Sale, 29-01-2016, lot. 537.



Figure 244

Titian; *Rape of Europa*; 1559-62; 178x205 cm; oil on canvas; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Boston.



Figure 245

Maarten de Vos; *Rape of Europa*; c. 1570; 133,7x174,5 cm; oil on panel; Bilbao Fine Arts Museum; Bilbao.