

TITTIAN

Lady in White





TITIAN

Lady in White

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Andreas Henning

A Vision of Absolute Beauty Titian's "Lady in White" in Dresden

Titian was one of the most prominent portrait artists in Renaissance Venice. In addition to a large number of historical and altar paintings, he created many portraits in which he captured emperors, doges, princes, members of the aristocracy, scholars and merchants on his canvases. At first glance, it also appears that the picture of the lady in her white clothes could also be a portrait (frontispiece).¹ The young woman is shown in half figure in front of a diffuse dark background and the clothing of silk satin and her light skin-color rise dazzlingly out of it. The white pearls she wears as a necklace, earrings and as ornaments in her hair coordinate perfectly with the color of her robe. The flag fan in her right hand continues with these variations in white. Flag fans of this kind, which were already known in the Mediterranean region in ancient times, developed into extravagant fashion accessories in Venice in the 16th century. The fan shown here is a luxury article; threads of gold, with a precious stone in the center of each lozenge, are wound around its silver-coated handle. The fan leaf itself has a diagonal woven pattern. Additional accents of color, provided by the golden bracelets, ruby ring and ornamental girdle, flatter the tone of her blond hair – it is well known that, after the middle of the cinquecento, it became fashionable for Venetian women to dye their hair to give it the color of gold. After the restoration carried out by Günter Ohlhoff from the Painting Restoration Studio of the State Art Collections Dresden in the year 2007, the viewer once again became able to fully experience the artistic refinement with which Titian executed this late work, the exquisitely balanced nuances of the white palette, the pasty, confident brushstrokes, as well as the effective suggestion of the various materials in the picture.

The clothing and jewelry show that the person portrayed was extremely well-off and, for this reason, it could easily be assumed that she belonged to one of the Venetian upper-classes, the *cittadini* (wealthy merchants, high state officials, doctors, lawyers, etc.) or *nobili* (nobility). However, the question of whether

this is actually a portrait needs to be asked. First doubts arise when one considers that the female figure Titian used for his portrayal of the "Lady in White" can be found in several works in the artist's oeuvre. This fact would seem to indicate that he did not perceive the protagonist as a concrete person but, much more, conceived her as a super-personal ideal. A tradition of depicting ideal beauty had become established in Venice in the early 16th century when Giorgione painted the first *belle donne veneziane*. It seems most likely that the Dresden painting belongs to this genre.

However, people in Dresden were originally certain that the lady dressed in white must have been Titian's lover. The first printed catalog of the Royal Picture Gallery, which was published in 1765, therefore describes the work as the "Portrait of Titian's Mistress, capped with hair & dressed in white, holding a kind of fan; the figure half-length."² In the meantime, this rather romantic interpretation as the artist's lover has become obsolete, but it characterized the history of the picture for a long period. And, there are still conflicting ideas about who the woman with the fan in her hand actually is today. She is thought to be a courtesan, Titian's daughter Lavinia, an illegitimate child or the ideal portrayal of beauty, in turn.

The painting has been in Dresden since 1746 when Friedrich August II, Elector of Saxony – who was also King of Poland as August III – purchased the work from the Este Collection in Modena. There is broad consensus among scholars that a connection exists between the painting in Dresden and a letter that Titian sent to Alfonso II d'Este, Count of Ferrara, in 1561. The letter itself has been lost, but it is paraphrased by Francesco Scannelli in his treatise on Venetian painting. According to this, Titian assured the ruler of Ferrara that he would send him a portrait of a person who was dearest to him.³ Scannelli continued that nobody could doubt that this was one of the artist's finest works. The young lady was portrayed "in a graceful pose and, in a becoming manner, shows

Ill. 1
Titian
"Girl with Fruit Bowl"
c. 1560, Staatliche Museen
zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

more than half her face; she looks delightful with a fan in her hand.”⁴ Scannelli, who saw the portrait in the Ducal Gallery in Modena after the Este Collection had been moved there following the loss of Ferrara in 1598, described it as a “completely truthful picture of Titian’s lover”.⁵

Titian had already used a similar formulation two years before this letter Scannelli passed on to posterity. Accompanied by the words that it showed the “absolute mistress of my soul”, the artist sent a portrait to the Spanish King Philipp II on September 22, 1559. He also made the following comment on the portrayal: “Dressed in yellow: in truth, although it is only painted, I could not send you anything more charming and valuable”.⁶ The portrait that Titian sent along with this letter has been lost. It was possibly destroyed in the blaze at the Alcázar in Madrid in 1734. Although an envoy of the Spanish regent assumed that it was a depiction of a Turkish or Persian woman,⁷ it was probably identical with the portrait of a woman with a fan in her hand that the Flemish Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens copied – in all likelihood, in Madrid in 1628/29 (ill. 2).⁸ It shows the same person as the work in Dresden although there are some differences in the decoration of the dress and accessories. Rubens also did not show a “Lady in Yellow”, as one would suspect from Titian’s letter, but also a person dressed in white. It seems likely that the term “in giallo” did not refer to the color of the clothing but the embroidery. An entry in the inventory of the Alcázar from 1636 describing Titian’s painting as a “Venetian woman in white satin with golden embroidery, a palm-leaf fan in her right hand, the tip of a green leaf on her breast [...]” seems to substantiate this.⁹

Speculations on the identity of the portrayed person

The formulations Titian used in his letters – such as “absolute mistress of my soul” and “most valuable being on earth” – quite obviously demanded that speculations on the identity of the person shown be made. The “Lady in White” is listed as Titian’s lover in the Modena inventory of 1663 as it also is in the description of this collection of paintings made by Pietro Ercole Gherardi in 1744.¹⁰ In contrast, the list of the one hundred masterworks from Modena sold to August III mentions it neutrally as “Portrait of a Young Woman with a Fan”.¹¹ The formulation in the first inventory of the painting in Dresden is more cautious where it is stated that the woman portrayed with the fan in her hand is “known as” Titian’s lover.¹²

However, the Gallery Inspector Pietro Maria Guarenti, who was responsible for the hanging of the paintings in the so-called Inner Gallery of the Royal Painting Collection in the former stables at Jüdenhof that had been specially adapted for the purpose, states in the handwritten “catalogo” he sent to Friedrich August II in 1750 that Titian had painted the work for his lover.¹³ The entry in the first catalog of the Picture Collection mentioned previously that identified the portrayed woman as “Maitresse du Titien”¹⁴ adhered to this description, as did other gallery catalogs. It was not until 1826 that this classification was questioned and the reference was done away with completely twelve years later.¹⁵

Julius Hübner, Director of the Picture Gallery at the Zwinger that was built following plans by the architect Gottfried Semper, cataloged the artworks with new historical understanding. The entries were extended to include information on provenience and restoration. In the case of the “Lady in White”, Hübner not only made reference to the immediate source of the painting in Modena and the canvas doubling carried out by Palmaroli in 1827, but also to the first owner “Painted for Alphons I [sic!] of Ferrara as Titian’s lover”.¹⁶ With art history’s growing establishment and recognition as a historical (auxiliary) science in the second half of the 19th century, documents took on a major role in argumentation. Karl Woermann, the first art historian to head the Dresden Picture Gallery, discussed Titian’s portrait in the light of the most recent research. In this way, he did away with the myth of the painting that was “formerly, erroneously described as Titian’s lover”.¹⁷ Instead, Woermann followed the newest findings of a number of specialists in the field who had concluded that this was actually a portrait of Titian’s daughter Lavinia.

The basis for the identification with Lavinia was a reference made by Carlo Ridolfi who recognized Titian’s daughter in two paintings – including one in Berlin today (ill. 1) – in 1648.¹⁸ Crowe and Cavalcaselle promptly correlated this with the “Lady in White” and were the first to place this in the context of Titian’s letters to Philipp II and the Duke of Ferrara.¹⁹ When Giovanni Morelli published the marriage contract drawn up between Lavinia and Cornelio Sarcinelli on March 20, 1555²⁰ in 1880, the Dresden painting became encumbered with another burden: From then on, the wedding not only came to be authoritative for the dating of the picture, but also for specifying the subject of the painting; namely, “Titian’s Daughter Lavinia as a recently Married Woman”.²¹ Morelli and Woermann then identified the small flag fan as a type

Ill. 2
Peter Paul Rubens after Titian
“Girl with a Fan”
1628/29, Vienna,
Kunsthistorisches Museum



that would only be carried by freshly-wed women and others decided that the pearl necklace must have been part of her dowry. In addition, the white dress was identified as a bridal gown; however, this is not undisputed when one considers that a bride was expected to wear her hair loose.²²

Hans Posse, a gallery director, was the first to reject identifying the woman by name: “Formerly, erroneously described as Titian’s daughter Lavinia”.²³ As a consequence, he retitled the painting: “Portrait of a Lady in White”.²⁴ However, this anonymisation was not to be the final word in the history of the picture’s attribution. Recently, attention has been drawn to the interpretation as a courtesan. The catalog of Titian’s oeuvre also reconsiders the identification with Lavinia – albeit with a question mark.²⁵ In this case, reference was once again made to the portrait of Lavinia that appears to verify the portrayed woman with an inscription (Ill. 3). Although it is uncertain whether the inscription is original, traces of aging indicate that the letters were at least added at an earlier stage in the history of the painting. This would indicate that – even if the inscription is not autographical – it does pass on earlier historical knowledge.²⁶

Facts about the “Lady in White”

Titian was married twice.²⁷ He had two sons, Pomponio and Orazio, with his first wife Cecilia. They were born out of wedlock but were legitimized with their parents’ marriage in November 1525. Cecilia passed away only a few years later in 1530. Seeing that Lavinia did not marry until 1555, it would mean that she would have had to have been at least 25 years old if she sprang from Titian’s marriage to Cecilia. There is no mention of a daughter in the preserved documents on this union and marrying in one’s mid-twenties was a very unusual affair in those days – especially, when a large dowry of 1400 ducats was involved. This indicates that Lavinia was born during Titian’s second marriage.

In keeping with the date of the wedding with Cornelio Sarcinella (1555), a wealthy member of the lower nobility from Serravalle, that has been passed on to us, Cornelia must have been born sometime between 1535 and 1540. The date of her death is unknown. The last available record that was created during her lifetime dates from the beginning of 1573. She is documented as being dead in 1577; it is possible that – like her father, Titian – she perished during the year of the plague 1576.

The portrait by Titian in the Old Master Gallery in Dresden mentioned above is generally considered to be of his daughter Lavinia (Ill. 3). It probably shows her as she looked in the mid-1560s.²⁸ Her strong facial features, round head and sturdy body, as well as the horizontal shoulder area, show no similarity to the “Lady in White”. The differences could definitely not only be due to the fact that Lavinia is said to have given birth to five or six children between the two portrait sittings.²⁹ Even Hadeln had rejected any kind of similitude between the two persons.³⁰ This means that we must assume that the woman dressed in white depicts a considerably younger woman than Lavinia.

Charles Hope proposed the fascinating thesis that the young woman in the “Lady in White” is not Lavinia but another one of Titian’s daughters.³¹ Her name was Emilia and she married the grain dealer Andrea Dossena in 1568. Her dowry was only 750 ducats – barely half the amount Titian had given to Lavinia. This would indicate that she was of illegitimate birth. The fact that Lavinia’s husband attempted to claim the artist’s total inheritance after the death of his wife and Titian’s two sons in 1577 implies that Emilia had been born out of wedlock. We have very little information on her life. It seems that she was born in the early 1550s; there is proof that she had three children and died in 1582. However, she is much more present visually – if one accepts the identification as founded. There are several paintings in Titian’s oeuvre for which she seems to have stood model. For example, the previously mentioned allegorical depiction of the “Maiden with the Bowl of Fruit”, which is in Berlin today, shows a similarly slender, blond type of woman with long facial features, clearly cut eyes and a pointed nose (Ill. 1). This painting goes beyond the borders of portraiture if one interprets the woman with her precious clothing as Pomona, the Roman goddess of spring. Titian had the same model, with the same gesture, appear as “Salome” in a painting that is located in Madrid today – however, this time not shown in a concrete space but in front of a diffuse dark background and, in this case, holding the large embossed platter with the head of John the Baptist in it up in her hands.³²

However, there is no documented evidence for the identification of Emilia as the model in the paintings in Dresden, Berlin and Madrid. We also know of no authenticated portrait of this daughter of Titian’s. Nevertheless, in keeping with the time, the statements made by the artist in his letters that the woman

Ill. 3
Titian
“Portrait of Lavinia”
c. 1565, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister





Ill. 1
Titian
“Emperor Charles V with a Dog”
1533, Madrid,
Museo Nacional del Prado

Jutta Charlotte
von Bloh

Youth, Beauty, Virtue? What does the Costume in Titian’s “Lady in White” tell us?

There can be no doubt that the painter’s loving look at his model – a shy young woman, still unaware of her feminine charms and her future – guided the artist’s hand to a certain extent. Her youth and beauty, together with her personal demureness, appear before our eyes in such a manner that can only be described as being full of charm and grace (frontispiece). The captivating portrait has given rise to many speculations among art historians about the person portrayed. It was variously assumed that she was Titian’s beloved daughter Lavinia from his second marriage, Emilia the product of a liaison out of wedlock, or even a courtesan. The white robe was usually interpreted as that of a Venetian bride.

In the year 1561, Titian sent a letter to Alfonso II d’Este informing him about the portrait of a person “who was the most priceless in the world”. Not only its provenience makes it clear that this corresponds with the female portrait that Scannelli described with such enthusiasm in the year 1565 – “in a graceful pose and the appropriate dignity[...]with a charming gaze and a fan in her hand” – that was then purchased from Modena for Dresden in 1746, but also how the artist himself was so successful in conveying the image of his most precious being – quite simply, with charm and dignity – in the “Lady in White”.¹ The color white played in key role in achieving this. Its use in Italy in the early modern period evaded any kind of arbitrariness and fortuity. Here, sacral, civilizatory and socio-esthetic aspects interact with each other.

In the discourse on artistic mastery of his time, it was recognized that Titian had an exceptional command of color – meaning of paint application – expressive brushstrokes and of his choice of colors.² A “liberation and increase in importance” of color had become possible in the age of humanism and, with it, color became legitimized as a means of depiction and interpretation of human life.³

The Christian color canon of the Medieval period remained alive in its symbolic content; this applied especially to the color white on the grounds of the

continuing liturgical practice in Catholic church services and, not least, in the rebellion of the counter reformation. White, understood as the embodiment of godly light and the sum of all colors, had the highest level of significance in the Christian tradition. It represented the divine universe and the infinite love of God, stood for perfection and enlightenment, and finally – in Marian devotion – purity and innocence. In the Roman Catholic Church, its use was restricted to the highest holidays and – going even further – reserved for the Pope as a liturgical color.

The white soutane distinguished the Pope as the highest-ranking priest in the Roman church.⁴ Pope Paul III (reign: 1534–1549) was painted by Titian wearing a white soutane (*sottane*) and short red cape (*mozzetta*), as were other pontiffs.⁵ In 1465, Gentile Bellini – Titian’s teacher – portrayed the first Patriarch of Venice, Laurentius Justinianus (1381–1455; beatified 1524; canonized 1690), as an overpowering figure dressed completely in white.⁶ The doges of Venice wore white clothing on special religious holidays. For example, Cesare Vecellio reported that Doge Lorenzo Celsi (reign: 1361–1365) always dressed in white and that this was generally recognized as being a visible sign of the utmost piety.⁷ Doge Leonardo Loredan (reign: 1501–1521) had Bellini show him in white vestments in his official portrait. Later, the portraits of the doges depicted them in crimson red garments with an ermine collar, which was as big as the papal mozzetta, or in golden regalia.

White, gold and crimson were the principle colors of the doge’s garments. The color and value were determined in keeping with the significance and specific character of the different state events. Christian symbolism considered white and gold to be equal and they occupied the top position in the color hierarchy. In the representation of the Republic of Venice, they pick up the thread of the myth of the foundation of the Serenissima in which the personified Venezia is depicted as a queen, conceived of God in the womb of Mary, born in the Adriatic Sea and destined to become the bride of Christ. As a result, the allegorical



figure of Venezia in the main paintings in the Doge's Palace is shown as a queen or bride dressed in white and gold. This also explains the special cult surrounding the white dress as festive clothing worn by young noblewomen at special ceremonies and at their own wedding.⁸

The Christian connotation of the color white as a symbol of purity and chastity was given broad, extremely subtle, scope in the works of Titian and other painters of the Venetian school in their depiction of biblical subjects and votive pictures. In Titian's painting "Noli me tangere / Don't Touch Me", the sinning Mary Magdalene stretches her hand out towards Christ.⁹ Her dress is red and white. Chastity and the desire for love symbolically come together in these colors. As penitent and saint, Titian clothes her in a white dress in the later painting "Madonna with Child and Saints John the Baptist, Paul, Jerome and Mary Magdalene" (c. 1516/19).¹⁰ Creating a connection with her mystical marriage to God, Veronese shows Saint Catherine as a bride in a white dress with flowing blond hair and a golden crown in his painting "Mary with Child, Saints Lucia, Catherine, and Two Nuns as Donors".¹¹ In his painting "Moses Saved from the Waters", Veronese shows the daughter of the Egyptian king, who adopted Moses, in a white

robe similar to that worn by wealthy Venetian women of the period, standing out like a dazzling light from the other persons shown in the picture.¹² In "Esther before Ahasver", the protagonist begging for her Jewish people also appears in a robe of this kind.¹³

Just as here the color white is used to introduce worldly aspects into the depiction of religious contents, the two painters transfer the Christian significance of white to worldly subjects in other works. In his painting "Sacred and Profane Love" (1514/15), Titian adopts the topos of innocence in the ideal conception of a normalized marriage intended to unite the bride's chaste and sensual love (ill. 3).¹⁴ The figure of sacred, chaste love is dressed in white silk satin and assisted by the seductive naked figure of Venus, the goddess of love of ancient Rome. The red silk satin cloak draped sideward over her left arm is quoted in the red sleeves of the figure symbolizing sacred love. Their physiognomy shows that the two women are represented as sisters – or even twins. In the right background, a shepherd tends his sheep, hares hop around and a loving couple can be seen in a stormy embrace while two white rabbits graze peacefully in the left background.

This painting was created on the occasion of the marriage between Nicolò Aurelio, secretary in the "Council of Ten" and subsequently Grand Chancellor of the City of Venice, and Laura Bagarotto on May 17, 1514.¹⁵ The subject of the ideal marriage was already widely spread in the 15th century in the decoration of the *cassoni*, the chests containing the bride's dowry that were exhibited during wedding processions in Florence and Siena. The painted sides of the chests with their historical depictions and mythological scenes from ancient Rome not only emphasized the ideal of the woman but also that of the man including his role as protector of his wife.¹⁶

In his painting the "Allegory of Virtue and Vice", Veronese places particular emphasis on the perfection of the man, which obviously still needs to be attained (ill. 2).¹⁷ Hercules at the crossroads turns towards the female figure of virtue or wisdom, which is indicated her clothing, leaving the seductive figure of vice behind him, while his gaze remains focused on an imaginary viewer. The scenery is, on the whole, antique. However, the virtuous hero in his fashionable Renaissance outfit is clearly one of the artist's contemporaries. His robe of white silk satin with gold trimmings creates an association with the clothing worn by a bridegroom.

Ill. 2
Paolo Veronese
"Allegory of Virtue and Vice"
c. 1580, New York, Frick Collection



Ill. 3
Titian
"Sacred and Profane Love"
c. 1514/15, Rome, Galleria Borghese

The propagandistic depiction of the theme of marriage and love in the garb of ancient Rome increased greatly in importance in the 16th century. As a result of the Italianization that took place in the German-speaking world, it also reached Dresden. In 1582, on the occasion of the marriage of the Saxon Elector Prince Christian I, Perseus and Andromeda were listed in a tournament procession in which the Prince Elector himself, dressed in white and gold, took on the role of the hero who slays the dragon and marries the rescued virgin.¹⁸

A connection to the Christian significance of the color white is evident in the pictorial examples presented here. It continues with the practice introduced at the Spanish-Burgundian court, which then gradually spread to other European royal circles, of dressing the bride and groom in white when they wed. Margaret of York wore a white silk satin robe when she married Charles the Bold in the year 1468. Charles the Bold's daughter, Maria, wore a white silk damask robe with golden embroidery and a short jacket of similar material trimmed with ermine when she married the future Emperor Maximilian I in 1477. There are records of white clothing for brides and grooms at the Saxon Electoral court as of 1548 and 1604 (ill. 4).¹⁹

Silver symbolically forms the counterpart to white in royal wedding apparel. The amount of gold and colored embellishments was always subordinate to the main color – white. First of all among the nobility, and in parallel to white wedding apparel, white developed into the representative color for children's clothing, from babies to youths, for boys and girls, as a symbol of their childish and youthful innocence. We encounter this in many portraits – especially of members of the House of Habsburg and those close to them, as well as Italian nobles, as seen in the portraits of the later Emperor, Archduke Maximilian II,²⁰ his brothers Archduke Wenzel and Archduke Albrecht (both c. 1573) by Alonso Sánchez Coello²¹, and Alessandro Farnese the Younger at the age of 13 or 14 by Anthonis Mor.²² Among the early examples showing girls, particular attention should be drawn to the portrait of Bia de' Medici (1542) by Agnolo Bronzino,²³ as well as that of the two-year-old Clarissa Strozzi (1542) by Titian (ill. p. 37). In these two works, as well as "Infant in a Crib" (c. 1583) by Lavinia Fontana,²⁴ the child is not only garbed in white but also wears a long string of pearls as an indication that the picture is of a girl from an affluent house. As with a bride, the string of pearls underlines the Christian connotation of the significance of white.

In the process of civilization throughout Europe – and, once again, beginning in Burgundy – the color white was cultivated as a sign of purity in the full sense of the word – meaning, not soiled or blemished.

Snow-white sheets and pillows, dish cloths, handkerchiefs, shirts, collars and cuffs – and, last but not least, white skin – were symbols of a more sophisticated culture through which the aristocracy elevated themselves above other social classes.

The cultivation of the color white eventually made its way from ostentatious courtly events to clothing in general. A simultaneous image depicting a rustic festivity at the court of Duke Philipp the Good (1396–1467) showing the various pleasures such as dining, games, dancing and falconry, depicts the entire aristocratic society in a series of graceful poses and movements dressed completely in white garments.²⁵ Under Emperor Charles V, the Spanish court etiquette elevated white clothing to the highest level alongside black. In keeping with this, the Emperor had himself portrayed by Titian in 1533 dressed in silver, white and gold (ill. 1).²⁶ Various other rulers followed his example: Philipp II of Spain was portrayed by Titian wearing the crown (c. 1550/51)²⁷ and dressed in armor (1553).²⁸ Others who followed this trend included Emperor Maximilian II and his wife Maria of Spain in their family portrait (1553)²⁹ and Duke Alessandro Farnese in the portrait painted by Alonso Sánchez Coello (c. 1560).³⁰ Among the items Prince Elector Moritz of Saxony lists in the inventory of his estate are “a white silk shirt with white trousers and stockings” as knit silk apparel.³¹ Knit white silk stockings, which particularly highlighted the elegance of the leg movement, were an absolute necessity in the world of European royal fashion until well past the 16th century. Eleonora of Toledo, who can be considered a female fashion icon of the cinquecento, had herself painted by Agnolo Bronzino in a representative silk velvet dress with gold and black silk ornaments (c. 1545) and by Giulio Clovio wearing an unpretentious white silk dress similar to that of the “Lady in White”.³²

If one considers the use of the color white in the clothing in the examples dealt with in order to make a contemporary evaluation of the costume of the “Lady in White”, this appears on a higher level of significance – especially with the proposed dating of around 1561. The white costume in which the robe, pearls and fan correspond and harmonize with each other bears overlapping significances that make us want to see her as a refined young lady, even a bride, within it. A closer look at the clothing practice and fashion in Venice at the time can broaden our view even further.

Let us start with the robe. It is made of a white, slightly shining cloth that is usually thought to be silk satin. However, the gleam is not quite as perfect as in Titian’s depiction of the allegorical figure of sacred love (ill. 3) mentioned above for example. Silk satin (*raso*) was available in a wide range of qualities; however, we should bear in mind that mixed fabrics in which good silk was used for the warp thread and lower-quality silk, scrap silk, flax or wool used for the weft had become so widely spread among the Venetian nobility and citizenry that it ultimately had to be allowed to manufacture them in Venice itself – previously, only the production of luxury products had been permitted in the lagoon city’s silk industry – in order to avoid imports.³³ What we see here could possibly be one of these fabrics; for example, one made of silk and fine wool in a satin weave (*rasetto*). However, the folds of fabrics of this type have a less voluminous and elegant fall and not as much gleam as can be recognized in the “Lady in White”.

The gown is composed of several individual pieces. The close-fitting, slightly stiff, bodice that is tapered towards the waist (*busto*) has a lace fastening in the front, the silk cord (*cordelino*) of which is only suggested by Titian. A covered row of holes or eyelets has been sewn in on both sides of the bodice. A stiffening bone has probably been inserted into the overlap to keep the entire construction in the vertical. The rather taut lacing actually produces undesired wrinkles. The tightly pleated delicate chemise emerges as a ruche above the upper edge of the lacing. The long, slender sleeves (*baragoni, brodoni*) are slit at the upper arm and puffed with a crinkled very fine silk fabric (*buratto*) and sewn to the bodice at the armpit. The effect made by the distinctive ornamentation of shoulder rolls (*bracciali*), jagged tips and sleeve ruffles is increased further with strings of pearls, colorful gold roses and golden, jeweled wristbands.

Ill. 4
Men's dress
1604, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
Dresden, Rüstammer





Tristan Weddigen
Gregor J.M. Weber

The Alchemy of Colors Titian Portrays his Pigment Merchant Alvise “dai colori” dalla Scala

The imposing appearance of a bearded man in his full maturity looms up in front of us and looks slightly down on the viewer from out of the picture (ill. 1). The portrayed man is wearing the long toga of black velvet (*vesta*) over a white shirt and blue silk gown that makes him recognizable as a citizen (*cittadino*) of Venice of the early modern era. He has placed his right hand on a stole (*beco*) that he has befittingly thrown over his left shoulder. The wide sleeves (*dogalina*) of the arm resting on a piece of furniture reveal the lining (*zendado*) of black silk that was worn in Venice during the warm months of the year.¹ He is also holding a dark green palm leaf that rises up over his shoulder and stands out against the brown-green wall behind him.

On the left, a narrow, framed window shines like a prismatic crack of light and offers a view of the landscape. Using a broad brush and dry color, the artist actually needs very little to capture an ephemeral evening mood. Dark brown trees tower up above the low, misty horizon and appear like silhouettes against the yellow, ochre-colored clouds glowing from the last rays of the sun reaching them. Higher up, rosy reflexes mix with dark blue and black-gray clouds. The crescent of the waning moon shines through the clouds. There is a gold casket, separated into several compartments in which ten various-colored powders are heaped, lying on the windowsill. A spoon-like, two-sided metal spatula lies diagonally across the casket and juts out into the freely painted landscape. Above this, in the shadow, we discover a painted inscription.

The composition is dominated by the light yellow sections of the sky, the glowing hands and the hieratic face of the bald-headed man. The head, which stands out vividly against the dark background on the left is shadowed on the right in front of the brightened surface. The static arrangement is broken rhythmically and invested with a feeling of vitality through the colorfulness of the landscape and incarnate areas. The plastic presence of the portrayed person is brought together in his fixating gaze that produces

an interplay between the immediate effect on the viewer and his esthetic experience. We are confronted with a masterful portrait created out of the material of color.

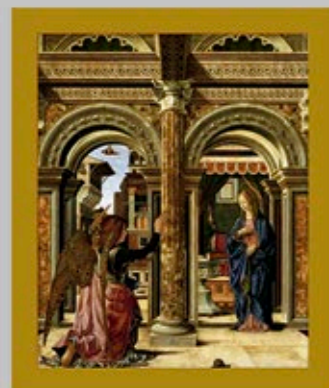
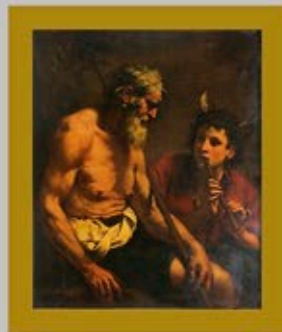
Pietro Aretino, poet and martyr of morals?

The portrait of a man, whose old attribution to Titian has remained unquestioned, was listed for the first time among those works that the former Italian gallery inspector Pietro Maria Guarienti and other agents had purchased for the Dresden art collection of August II in Venice and Bologna in 1748/49 in the agenda of an inventory begun in 1747.² Most of the numerous new acquisitions were hung provisionally in the Inner Gallery of the royal-electoral painting collection at Jüdenhof or stored in the not-yet-furnished Outer Gallery.

Shortly thereafter, Guarienti's new inventory documented that the painting was at the top of one of the pilasters in the Inner Gallery on which new acquisitions, as well as lesser works, were placed (ill. 2). In his *catalogo*, Guarienti claims that the portrait shows the man of letters Pietro Aretino and was formerly in the possession of the noble Venetian Marcello family.³ Guarienti positioned the newly purchased painting on the pilaster accordingly: The portrait of the infamous polygraph and pornographer Aretino found itself in the company of the almost-as-large luxurious portrait of a Venetian woman attributed to Giovanni Antonio Fasolo, which was also said to have come from a noble Venetian collection, as the appropriate female accompaniment. He also squeezed Willem Drost's "Mercury Putting Argus to Sleep with his Stories" in between the two as a comment on the rhetorical potency of the poet.⁴

It is hard to determine which branch of the *casa Marcello* is meant seeing that Guarienti's information on the painting's provenience remained a singular case and was possibly only intended to invest the man – who only had the half-bald head in common with Aretino – with a sound family tree. Of course, it could have been that family whose collection the art

Ill. 1
Titian, "Portrait of the Pigment Merchant Alvise dalla Scala"
1561/62, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister



connoisseur Marcantino Michiel inspected in the year 1525: There was an important collection of paintings in the house of the diplomat Girolamo Marcello in San Tomà that also included a portrait of Girolamo's brother Cristoforo, the Archbishop of Corfu, by Titian.⁵ It seems unlikely that the painting being discussed could have immortalized a later member of the Marcello family as the descendants would have hardly been prepared to hand over such an impressive visual documentation of their noble origin.

This portrait of a man was moved to another, more important, pilaster in the Inner Gallery where it hung opposite Veronese's "Madonna with the Cuccina Family" and Raphael's "Sistine Madonna", which had been recently purchased, from 1754 to 1771.⁶ In the first two catalogs of the Dresden gallery, published in 1765 and 1771, the painting is still listed as the "Portrait of Petrus Aretinus with Bare Head and Tile Beard, Dressed in Black, and with a Palm Leaf in his Hand".⁷ Incidentally, the portrait must have stood in a competitive relationship with the supposed portrait of Aretino by Titian that Matthias Oesterreich, the former inspector of the Dresden Gallery who had "defected" and entered into Prussian service, cataloged in Sans Souci in 1764 where it adorned the Italian wall of the royal painting gallery and was reproduced as a copperplate engraving in 1766.⁸

As the *Neue Sach- und Ortsverzeichnis* of 1817 shows, Titian's male portrait in the Dresden gallery received even more attention at the beginning of the 19th century.⁹ Not only was the signature and year of its creation "MDLXI" mentioned, but also the painted inscription "Inm. Petrus Aretinus, aetatis sua XXXXVI" that established the identification of the portrayed person at the time. Seeing that Aretino had died in 1556, the portrait of the forty six year old poet, which was dated with 1561, could have only been painted *in memoriam* ("INM."), meaning *post mortem* – if at all.

The wall sections described in the 1826 catalog (ill. 3) and the only known view of the interior of the Dresden gallery (ill. 4) show that Titian's male portrait was presented at the viewer's eye level in the flight of rooms in the west wing of the Inner Gallery until around 1830.¹⁰ Hung together with Titian's "Lady in White" and "Young Woman with a Vase" (ill. p. 21), which was attributed to him at the time, Fasolo's "Lady", who has now been identified as Maria de' Medici, a portrait of a doge by Leandro Bassano, and – first and foremost – Veronese's male portrait that was thought to show the face of the art connoisseur Daniele Barbaro (ill. p. 6), Titian's "Aretino" took its

Ill. 2
Digital reconstruction
of the hanging of Titian's
"Portrait of the Pigment Merchant
Alvise dalla Scala"
in the Inner Gallery of the Dresden
Picture Gallery in 1750
(Visualized with Gallery Creator)

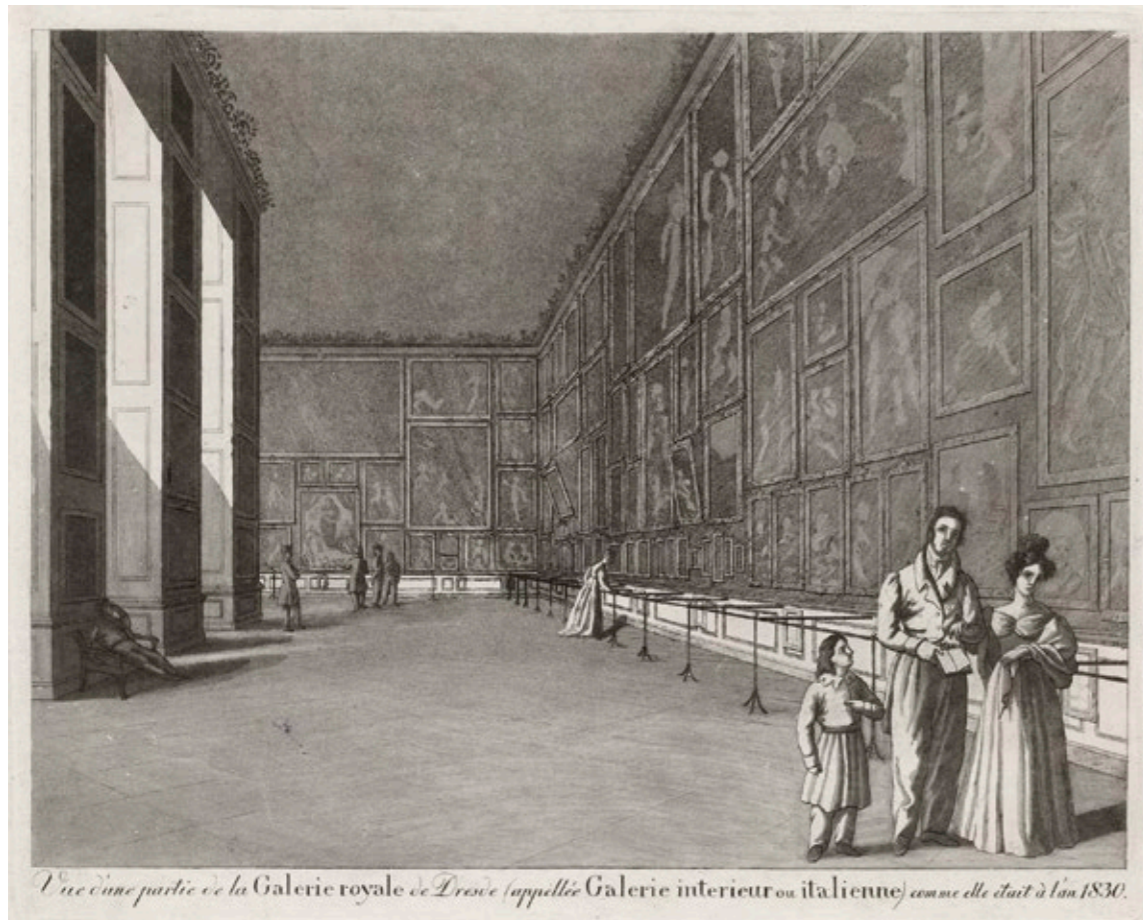


Ill. 3
Digital reconstruction of the
hanging of Titian's
"Portrait of the Pigment
Merchant Alvise dalla Scala"
in the Inner Gallery of the
Dresden Picture Gallery in 1825
(Visualized with Gallery Creator)

place in a prominent group of worldly, Venetian donor-like auxiliary figures evoking a social context of clients, friends and lovers of the man from Cadore.¹¹ As if to confirm the triumph of Roman instantiated *disegno* over Venetian *colore*, these paintings seem to turn towards Raphael's "Sistine Madonna" that, as a result of the classicist reception and early-romantic admiration, had developed into one of the main works in the gallery and was hung in a correspondingly prominent position immediately next to the large, syncretistic works of Annibale Carracci, as well as Correggio's popular "Mary Magdalene".¹²

When the Inner Gallery was reorganized according to art-historical principles of chronology and artistic geography in 1831/32, Titian's "Aretino" was finally removed from this pseudo-iconological presentational context and hung together with its counterpart – Veronese's "Barbaro" – in the room reserved for Venetian art.¹³

As early as in 1856 – the year after the inauguration of the new Semper Gallery – doubts arose about the traditional identification of the portrayed person; this can be seen as a symptom of the development of the picture gallery from a regal, representative collection to a public museum as a place of art-historical debate.



Ill. 4
Anonymous
“View of the Inner Gallery of the Dresden Picture Gallery”, 1830
 Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
 Dresden, Kupferstich Kabinett

While Martin Bernhard Lindau and Julius Hübner merely put a question mark behind the portrait of the “licentious poet”, Johann Gottlob von Quandt considered Titian’s portrait “most peculiar”: It was unlike other portraits of Aretino; the Christian victory palm of martyrdom was “not a suitable attribute for the lascivious poet or the feared satirist” and the inscription was probably forged.¹⁴ In spite of these obvious doubts, Wilhelm Schäfer stuck with the traditional identification in 1860 by referring to the older printed reproductions although they showed completely different portraits of Aretino. He went as far as to interpret the palm leaf as a symbol of self-glorification on the part of the immoral writer who saw himself as persecuted and martyred by the moralists.¹⁵

An unknown pharmacist or the artist Antonio Palma?

It was not until 1877 that Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle rejected – once and for all – the traditional identification of the man shown as Aretino on grounds of the lack of any physiognomic similarity. They also reported on a recent cleaning that – as Quandt had previously suspected – exposed the second and third lines of the inscription as a forgery that had probably been undertaken after 1867 to counter the doubts that had arisen about the identity of the man in the painting.¹⁶ An older inscription had come to light beneath this one but the difference in color and graphology showed that this was also not original:

MDLXI
 ANNO .. I. APF.. A. NATVS
 ÆTATIS SVAE XLVI
 TITIANVS PICTOR ET
 ÆQVES CÆSARIS.

Crowe and Cavalcaselle euphemistically state that: “The original beauty of the painting tempted people to attach a name to the person shown” seeing that Guarienti, painter, restorer, dealer and curator in one person, seemed to have been taken in by a retrospective written valorization of an unknown portrayed person – if he had not provided it himself.¹⁷ It was similar with a painting of a man in the Dresden Picture Gallery that was formerly attributed to Giorgione and today to Paris Bordone and whose inscription presented the portrayed person as Aretino.¹⁸ The newly revealed inscription indicated that the man in the painting had been born in the year 1515 which contradicted with the actual year of Aretino’s birth.¹⁹

While Crowe and Cavalcaselle made no attempt to classify the box and spatula in the middle ground, Giovanni Morelli noted the following in 1880: “A box of paint can be seen on the windowsill behind the man.”²⁰ However, in 1901, Karl Tscheuschner protested against the assumption that it showed a painter’s equipment and was therefore a portrait of an artist that had existed since that time. He was correct in his observation that the spoon-shaped spatula could not have been used to apply paint to the surface of the picture like a modern flat spatula but resembled a pharmacist’s powder spatula.²¹

The “powder box” also seemed to be more of an indication that the portrayed person was active in the medical or pharmacy profession.²² We know of rectangular and round medicine boxes and spice tins with cavities and lids, as well as spoon-like spatulas, from the early modern age.²³ The boxes were usually used by spice merchants and apothecaries to display the wares they were trying to market to their clients. They are therefore the attributes of the two doctor Saints Cosmas and Damian.²⁴ One recognizes a box and spatula similar to the objects in Titian’s portrait of a gentleman as attributes of the saints in an “Assunta” by the Tintoretto workshop from the 1570s in the Venetian Church of San Polo.²⁵

Crowe and Cavalcaselle were the first to believe that they had noticed an old overpainting that had been cleaned away and would explain the later addition of the palm leaf: “Around the head, now only shining indistinctly beneath the overpainted ground, one sees the line of a round nimbus.”²⁶ The transformation of worldly portraits into those of saints could seem to be absolutely plausible not only on account of the practice of sacred identification portraits, but also those repaintings that were sometimes undertaken to upgrade unknown portrayed persons to saints.²⁷ At the time, the Dresden Picture Gallery also

had a portrait of a young man, attributed to Parmigianino, who had later been decked out with a halo, palm and stones to become Saint Stephen.²⁸

Tscheuschner thought that his belief that he could see traces of an aureole had been confirmed when the painting was analyzed in the restoration workshop of the Dresden Gallery; he reinterpreted the work as the portrait of a doctor or apothecary “who had been portrayed by Titian as a saint of his profession” – as Cosmas or Damien.²⁹ However, art-technological investigations carried out in 1967 ruled out that a halo had been eliminated.³⁰ It seemed much more likely that they were traces of intensive painting work on the head of the portrayed person carried out by the artist himself around which the rest of the painting was created with rapid brushstrokes.

Tscheuschner’s theory met with opposition in 1905 when Herbert Cook argued that the palm leaf – *palma* in Italian – in the hand of the man, together with the “paint box” must have been an allusion to the family name and profession of the little known artist Antonio Palma, the nephew of Jacopo *il Vecchio* and father of the *Giovane* whose year of birth was probably 1515.³¹ Karl Woerlmann concurred with this identification in his official gallery inventory in 1908 and the painting has been considered a portrait of Palma to this day.³² However, more recent research sometimes adds a question mark to the name seeing that no verified portrait of Palma that could be used as a comparison has been preserved and his birthdate is also uncertain.³³ In turn, the incorrect identification of the male portrait in Dresden with Palma has led to his birthdate now being erroneously given as 1515.³⁴

Alvise dalla Scala, Deacon of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco

The infrared reflectographic examination of Titian’s male portrait, performed together with Christoph Schölzel in 1994, revealed the following inscription (ill. 5):

M·D·LXI·
 ANNO · SVÍ · VARDÍANATVS
 ÆTATÍS · SUÆ · XLVI.
 TITÍANVS PÍCTOR ET
 ÆQVES CÆSARIS.



Ill. 1
Condition before restoration

In the year 1561, Titian sent the painting "Portrait of a Lady in White" to Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio. It made its way to Dresden in 1746 as one of the hundred pictures from the Este Collection purchased by August III, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. We have no information about the state of the portrait's preservation at the time of the purchase. The painting was taken into the gallery and – like the other pictures from Modena – given a so-called "Dresden Gallery frame" with the insignia of the royal collector immediately thereafter.

It is documented that the Italian Pietro Palmaroli, who was active in Dresden at the time, restored our painting along with more than fifty other works in 1826/27.¹ It is likely that Palmaroli provided the "Lady in White" with a so-called "doublierung" or lining – he strengthened the original canvas by gluing a second canvas to its back – as he did with other paintings in those years. A mixture of natural glue and starch paste was used as the adhesive to bind the original and lining canvas; this is customarily known as a glue lining. However, it is not possible to determine if this was the first lining of the canvas painting, whether the lining on the painting today is Palmaroli's work or if it was replaced by a new one, also made using glue, at a later date. However, the state of aging of the canvas glued to the back of the painting makes it seem likely that it could actually be the lining carried out by Palmaroli.

The next record of further work being carried out on the painting can be found in the files of the Picture Gallery dated August 5, 1910. Titian's "Lady in White" is mentioned as one of those paintings "that are to be cleaned, rejuvenated (regenerated) or varnished [...]". At this time, Court Counselor Prof. Paul Kiessling officially handed over the painting to the restoration workshop under Theodor Krause and, after the successful completion of the work, took it back on May 31, 1911.²

After the end of the Second World War, the Dresden paintings were sequestered and transported to the Soviet Union where a first appraisal and conservation care were undertaken by the Soviet side.

Those paintings that were in a particularly precarious condition were given conservation treatment with the appropriate safeguard measures to prevent any further damage occurring to them. A committee of experts checked every single work when it was returned in 1955. The Moscow condition protocol of September 30, 1955 makes the following note on the condition of the "Lady in White" when it arrived in the USSR: "An old crack in the ground layer at the lower left in the background. Old losses to the ground on the lower right border. Blanching of the varnish appeared to the left of the fan." The same protocol records: "Was not restored." Before the painting was returned to Dresden, the condition of the painting was evaluated once again: "Condition, good. No changes in the condition."³

There are records of frequent, minor conservation measures being taken since the painting's return to Dresden: In 1968, blanching within the varnish was partially addressed;⁴ treatment of paint flaking on the lower edge was noted in 1971.⁵ A wax-resin mixture had been ironed in-between the original and lining canvas, in localized areas on the back of the painting, to improve adhesion. It was also necessary to exercise various protective measures with this painting when it was occasionally loaned.⁶

Not only the necessity to consolidate the paint-film, but also the poor overall aesthetic impression, led to the extensive work that was carried out on this painting in the years 2006 and 2007. The thick, strongly yellowed, layers of varnish had compromised many of the subtleties within the picture. It was no longer possible to recognize the "Lady in White" of the painting's title (Ill. 1).

The long-standing interest to restore this painting was given priority when a loan request for the work was received from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, which was preparing the exhibition "The Late Titian and the Sensuality of Painting" (2007/2008). The Viennese painting gallery has a "Young Woman with a Fan" by Peter Paul Rubens – a copy of a lost painting by Titian that the Venetian master painted for Philipp II two years before the Dresden version –

in its holdings (ill. p. 12).⁷ Making a comparative study of the two paintings quite obviously suggested itself. All of these factors provided additional support for the decision to carry out the restoration treatment.

Condition of the painting before the restoration

The painting was covered with a strongly-yellowed, uneven layer of varnish with deposits within the interstices of the canvas texture. Especially in the areas of the flesh tones, the paint and ground layers revealed a fine craquelure with a tendency towards cupping. Minor losses could be seen along the network of cracking. Extensive retouching, extending over the entire surface, especially in the form of excessive glazing within the flesh tones, had darkened considerably (ill. 3).

Areas of broken fills were apparent both in the figure itself and in the background. Considerable abrasion was found within the passages of the head and costume as well as along the edges of the painting. The abrasion extended to the raw canvas in localized areas.

The background was completely overpainted with a dark-brown layer of paint in order to mask the extensive abrasion to this area. This overpaint to the background partially extended onto, and over the original paint passages within the figure and fan.

It was clear that the decision to remove the older layers of varnish would reveal damage from the past as well as restorations that had taken place previ-



Ill. 3
Reverse with ironed-in spot of wax

ously. A plan and procedure would be necessary to reintegrate these losses.

As mentioned previously, the original canvas support was glue/paste lined and further consolidated with a wax mixture for strengthening. As the canvas support proved stable it was decided to leave the structure intact (ill. 3).

Preliminary investigations

On the painting construction

The original linen canvas is constructed using a simple tabby weave. The thread count is $11 \times 11/\text{cm}^2$. The first layer of priming, pure calcium sulfate, is very rich in binding medium and appears slightly swollen. It was possible to identify drying oils as the binding medium.⁸ The calcium sulfate ground was subsequently coated with two additional priming layers in a light, warm grey tone.

Remains of the ground and paint film found on the tacking edges suggest that the painting might have been strung into a larger working frame during the painting process. Only later was the final format defined, most likely by the artist himself. This would be supported by the c. 1 cm. wide black border, painted over the background and along all four sides of the painting.

Radio diagnostic investigations

Infrared reflectography

Examination using infrared reflectography did not reveal a carbon containing (black) under-drawing. It must therefore be assumed that Titian used another drawing material to define the composition, very likely a sketch with brush and reddish-brown color that he integrated into the following underpainting process. Support for this is provided by the reddish-brown lines, applied with a brush that, on closer inspection, can be seen with the naked eye as boundaries to the left arm, on the shoulder, the waist and skirt section of the robe.

X-ray investigations

The X-ray image (ill. 4) revealed a very loose form of underpainting, without any significant corrections, which is consistent with Titian's late work.⁹ In this initial design, the face is rounder, the mouth – as well as the nose – more voluminous so that the overall



Ill. 2 (left)
UV fluorescence before the restoration

Ill. 4 (right)
X-ray image



impression is coarser. The fine, graceful facial expression seen in the final version was only created during the painting process. We can identify a small change in the curvature of the string of pearls on the right side of the neck and shoulder and a correction was also made to the form of the fan.

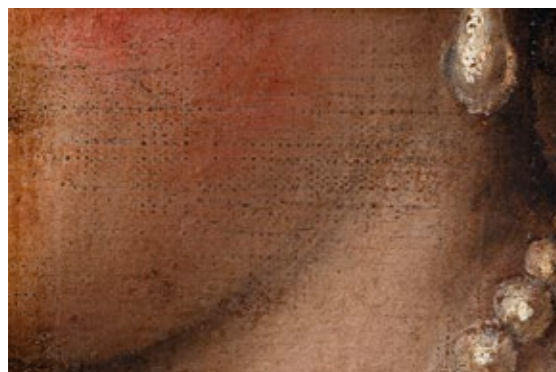
The lead-white underpainting in the dress was executed with extreme ease and does not make it possible to recognize much of the later, distinct construction of the folds. The dress is only developed into its final form through the use of multiple dark-gray passages of various intensities. Important to note is how the artist allows the lighter warm-grey tone of the ground to shine through the layers which define the dress and enhance the impression of depth, form and surface quality. The same process/approach applies to the left hand reaching into the robe's skirt. Abrasion, from previous cleaning attempts, is quite apparent in the face, where the application of lead white is correspondingly thinner. Here the tips of the canvas weave have become exposed.

Damage of varying degrees, in the form of tears within the canvas, loose paint, abrasion and solvent damage are noticeable over the entire surface of the painting. There is a significant concentration of damage within the lower portion of the sitter's dress. (ill. 6).

Preliminary microscopic investigations and analysis of the cross sections

The flesh tone areas

As previously mentioned, solvent damage from over-zealous cleaning attempts have left much of the paint film abraded, particularly at the tips of the canvas weave. Investigation of the paint cross-sections reveals how indistinct the borders are between the individual paint layer applications. In fact, the paint film(s) (as a whole) appear to be mixed into one-another, as it is possible to find paint material from / or close to the surface / within the lower area of the paint strata. This could suggest a migration of paint material¹⁰ through excessive exposure to solvents. In addition, one should note the extensive use of over-glazing to tone down the strong abrasion within the flesh tone. (ill. 7).



Ill. 5
Sample window with partial removal of the varnish and overpainting

Ill. 6
Large damage within the dress with remains of earlier reconstructions of the folds

Ill. 7
Condition during the removal of the varnish and overpainting within the face. Remnants of the background overpainting below the chin and neck

Ills. 8–9 (upper right)

Cross sections (QS)

QS 9267, Incident light
Image width corresponds to 0.54mm
LB 35/06, sample 8
Photo 09/07-25

QS 9267, UV fluorescence (Filter block A)
Image width corresponds to 0.54mm
LB 35/06, sample 8
Photo 48/06-3

Ills. 10–11 (lower right)

Cross sections (QS)

QS 9288, Incident light,
Image width corresponds to 0.54 mm
LB 20/06, sample 4
Photo 31/06-11

QS 9228, UV fluorescence (Filter block A)
Image width corresponds to 0.54 mm
LB 20/06, sample 4



Ill. 12
The fan was omitted from the background overpainting. Rhombic-shaped ornaments only fragmentarily preserved due to improper cleaning attempt.

Cross section of flesh tone passage (breast area) (ills. 8–9):

1. Bright, medium rich layer (ground 1)
2. Bright, warm-gray layer (ground 2)
3. Lead-white pigmented layer with red pigments (flesh tone, painting surface)
4. Lead-white pigmented layer with few red pigments, cooler than 3. (flesh tone, painting surface)
5. Light-yellow layer with lead-white, yellow and few red pigments (overpainting)
6. Lead-white pigmented layer with individual, fine red pigments (overpainting)

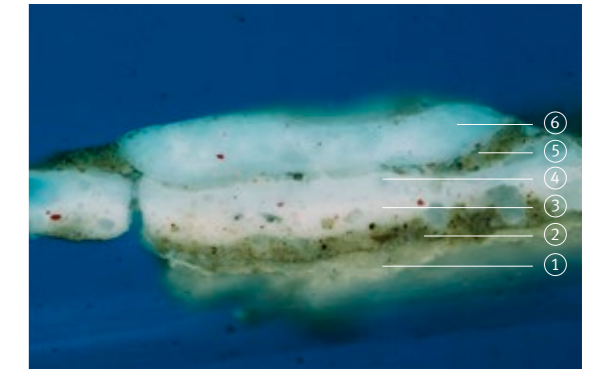


The white dress

The white dress is executed in an stong painterly fashion – almost *alla prima* – as one recognizes from the X-ray image. A distinctive quality in the surface structure reveals an old retouching, showing the reconstruction of the folds in the skirt section of the dress. These soft-edged cracks extend only to underlying gesso-fill, that compensates for a former – relatively large – loss.

Cross section, white dress (ills. 10–11):

1. Medium-rich, non-homogeneous layer (ground 1)
2. Light, warm-gray layer (ground 2)
3. Lead-white pigmented layer with blue and black pigments
4. Varnish

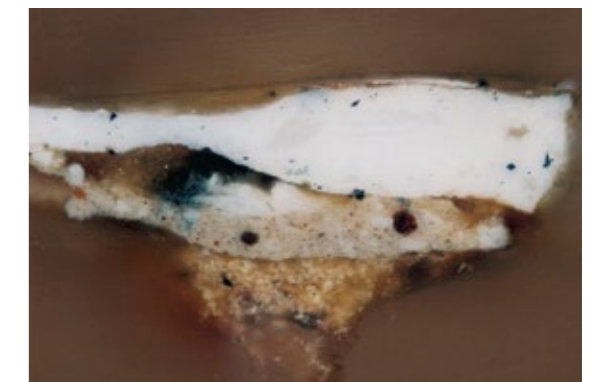


The fan

The rhombic-shaped ornaments, within the fan, have only partially survived and lack form and definition. Thick, yellowed layers of varnish masked the actual state of preservation within this passage. Once again, previous cleaning attempts are likely the reason for the work's present condition (ill. 12).

The background

The cracking pattern within the – rather dense – paint film (composing the background) clearly shows a different quality of craquelure than that of the original paint film – an indication of overpaint. These types of cracks had only formed in this overlying, more recent layer. If one follows how far this layer extends, it becomes apparent that the figure of the young lady was consciously omitted and that, along the contours of the figure, one can see a slight encroachment of the overpaint into the body of the sitter. The examination of a cross-section from the background reveals a dark





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