

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **TITIAN AND THE RENAISSANCE IN VENICE**

**13 FEBRUARY TO 26 MAY 2019**

**Städel Museum, Exhibition Annex**

**Frankfurt, 19 December 2018.** Starting on 13 February 2019, the Städel Museum will devote a major special exhibition to one of the most momentous chapters in the history of European art: Venetian painting of the Renaissance. Entitled “Titian and the Renaissance in Venice”, the show unites more than a hundred masterpieces – In the early sixteenth century, artists of the “City of Water” developed an independent strain of the Renaissance relying on purely painterly means and the impact of light and colour. One of their most important exponents was Titian (ca. 1488/90–1576), who would hold the key position in the Venetian art scene all his life. The Frankfurt show assembles more than twenty examples by Titian alone – and thus the most extensive selection of his works ever before on display in Germany. It will also present paintings and drawings by Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1435–1516), Jacopo Palma il Vecchio (1479/80–1528), Sebastiano del Piombo (ca. 1485–1547), Lorenzo Lotto (ca. 1480–1556/57), Jacopo Tintoretto (ca. 1518/19–1594), Jacopo Bassano (ca. 1510–1592), Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) and others. These works will offer comprehensive insights into the artistic and thematic breadth of the Renaissance in Venice and elucidate why artists of later centuries looked back to the art of this time and place again and again for orientation. The exhibition introduces selected aspects of Venetian cinquecento painting in eight sections: for example its atmospherically charged landscape depictions, its ideal likenesses of beautiful women (the so-called “belle donne”), or the importance of colour. The thematically oriented chapters will together form a systematic panorama of the extensive material. Apart from the Venetian holdings in the Städel collection – including, Titian’s *Portrait of a Young Man* (ca. 1510) – the show brings together superb loans from more than sixty national and international museums.

The exhibition was made possible by support from the Dagmar-Westberg-Stiftung and the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain gGmbH.

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“This powerful theme – an art-historical classic – has recently come more strongly into focus in German museums. It gives us great pleasure to be able to present such a comprehensive, thematically structured panorama of Venetian painting of the Renaissance for the first time ever in Germany here in Frankfurt”, comments Städel director Philipp Demandt.

Titian’s contemporaries, for example Sebastiano del Piombo or Lorenzo Lotto, were soon spreading the innovations beyond the watery confines of Venice as well. The 1540s saw the emergence of a new generation of highly gifted artists, among them Jacopo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese and Jacopo Bassano, who now likewise competed for commissions. It was Titian, however, who set the standards for his rivals and admirers alike. “Hardly any epoch of art history has known such continual reception. And within that context, Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese have been accorded the admiration otherwise reserved solely for Michelangelo and Raphael”, exhibition curator Bastian Eclercy emphasizes.

### **A Tour of the Exhibition**

The exhibition begins by taking visitors on a representative tour of sixteenth-century Venice. In the giant woodcut *View of Venice* (1498–1500; Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum) based on a design by Jacopo de’ Barbari and published by Anton Kolb, the unusual bird’s-eye perspective provides an astoundingly precise impression of the “Serenissima’s” unique topography.

The prominently placed, large-scale *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (ca. 1572; Sarasota, FL, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art) by Paolo Veronese ushers visitors directly into the first section of the show, introducing a typically Venetian variation on the depiction of the Madonna, a dominant theme in Italy. In its painterly execution, this exotic altarpiece is considered a magnum opus of the Venetian Renaissance; it also marks both the end and the culmination of the development of a pictorial genre known as the “Sacra Conversazione” (“sacred conversation”). Over the course of the sixteenth century, the motif had been invested with ever greater vividness and interaction between the figures. And particularly in Venice, the traditional subject of the Virgin and Child was often expanded to include further protagonists.

From depictions of the Virgin Mary set in luxurious landscapes, the focus shifts to the genre of landscape painting proper – one of the great achievements of the Venetian Renaissance. Even if it is initially still linked with a figural narrative, landscape now takes centre stage as a signifier of mood. This chapter of the exhibition highlights both the lyrical natural sceneries by the early Titian and the dramatically charged ones by such artists as Veronese or Bassano. Over time, these works would come to serve as the foundation for the establishment of the landscape as a genre in its own

right. Especially in their mythological compositions, the painters breathed new life into the idea of Arcadia romanticized by the poets of antiquity as an ideal environment.

At this juncture, the exhibition rooms open onto an architecture traversed by arcades. Artistic compositions inspired by poetry – already alluded to in the previous section – are featured here as an independent genre. Sixteenth-century Venetian painters of mythological scenes were no longer content with merely illustrating the literary material, but now laid claim to equal rights in the poetic license of invention. Among the examples representing this development are Titian's *Boy with Dogs in a Landscape* (ca. 1570–76; Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen) and Veronese's *Cupid with Two Dogs* (ca. 1580; Munich, Alte Pinakothek), which bears a resemblance to the Titian work. Both paintings have continued to defy interpretation to this day.

The final section of this first part of the exhibition is like a return to reality – but only at first sight. That is because true-to-life likenesses of women were rare in Venice, whereas “ideal portraits” of beautiful ladies were quite common. Even if they are often classified as portrait paintings, the “belle donne” depicted in these works were presumably not real persons, but poetic ideals of feminine beauty. Within the context of this exhibition, a new interpretation of Sebastiano del Piombo's fascinating *Woman in Blue with Incense Burner* (ca. 1510/11; Washington, National Gallery of Art) has led to its identification as an early example of this genre. It exhibits the typical features of the ideal of beauty prevailing in the period in question: a roundish face, voluptuous lips, an enigmatic gaze and dark blond hair. An excursus in this section, based on the costume book *De gli habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo* (1590; Of Ancient and Modern Dress of Diverse Parts of the World) by Cesare Vecellio, a cousin of Titian's, is devoted to contemporary fashions in Venice and beyond.

Now the tour continues on the first floor of the exhibition annex. Taking its starting point in the Frankfurt portrait of a young man from Titian's early period, this chapter explores how the Venetian male portrait came to flourish in the cinquecento – and to exert a lasting influence on European portrait painting. Characteristic examples here are the portraits of casually elegant young men in black, for example by Titian or Tintoretto, based on Baldassare Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano* (1528; The Book of the Courtier). Yet expensively dressed wearers of ermine and portraits of the doges – the chief magistrates of the Republic of Venice – also contributed to shaping the image of the era. At the centre of the room, visitors encounter three depictions of men in splendid armour. The special degree of mastery such paintings required of their makers is evident, for example, in Sebastiano del Piombo's *Man in Armour* (ca. 1511/12; Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art) or Titian's *Portrait of*

*Alfonso d'Avalos* (ca. 1533; Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum). With their depictions of the gleaming metallic surfaces, the artists achieved a highly realistic impression of light.

Colour and effects – Unlike the painting of Florence and Rome, which was based more strongly on drawing, the Venetian Renaissance is distinguished above all by the art of colour, called “colorito”. The fact that Venice was a centre of the paint trade will surely have played a role in this phenomenon. The Venetian palette ranged from berry red to gloomy black, from chiaroscuro to brilliant polychromy. Whereas the Florentines favoured smooth, porcelain-like surfaces, the Venetians often left the brushstroke clearly visible as a testimony to the act of painting.

The second-to-last chapter of the show takes a look at the reception of Florentine art in the Venetian cinquecento. It was particularly the depiction of muscular male nudes as perfected by Michelangelo that impressed the Venetians in the art of Florence. Nude males such as Titian’s Frankfurt *Study of St Sebastian* (ca. 1520) and his *St John the Baptist* (ca. 1530–33; Venice, Gallerie dell’Accademia), or Tintoretto’s *St Jerome* (ca. 1571/72; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) bear witness to an in-depth artistic study of the great Florentine master’s work and to a reciprocal influence.

The final section of the exhibition will feature a number of works representing the long history of its influence. Many of the most prominent artists have schooled themselves on this powerfully colourful painting and exported it – in the case of El Greco, for example, to Spain. The great French painters of the nineteenth century, for instance Théodore Géricault, were likewise among those to learn from Titian and Veronese. And most recently, Thomas Struth made the contemporary musealization of Venetian painting the subject of his photographs, reversing the relationship in the process: in his pictures, the viewers of pictures are now themselves viewed. In this case by the visitors of the Frankfurt Städel.

## **TITIAN AND THE RENAISSANCE IN VENICE**

**Curator:** Dr. Bastian Eclercy, Head of Italian, French and Spanish Paintings before 1800, Städel Museum

**Scholarly advice:** Prof. Dr. Hans Aurenhammer, Kunstgeschichtliches Institut, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

**Project management:** Adela Kutschke, research assistant, Städel Museum

**Exhibition dates:** 13 February to 26 May 2019

**Press preview:** Tuesday, 12 February 2019, 11 am

**Information:** [www.staedelmuseum.de](http://www.staedelmuseum.de)

**Visitor services and guided tours:** +49(0)69-605098-200, [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

**Location:** Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

**Opening hours:** Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun + holidays 10 am – 6 pm, Thu + Fri 10 am – 9 pm

**Special opening hours (10 am – 6 pm):** 19, 21 and 22 April, 1 May

**Admission:** Sat, Sun + holidays 16 EUR, reduced 14 EUR; Tue – Fri 14 EUR, reduced 12 EUR; families 24 EUR; admission free for children under 12; groups of at least 10 persons who would normally be charged the full admission fee: reduced admission fee per person. Groups are required to book in advance: please call +49(0)69-605098-200 or contact [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

**Early Bird Ticket:** 12 EUR (limited offer before the exhibition opening)

**General guided tours of the exhibition:** Tue 3.00 pm, Wed 1.00 pm, Thu 6.30 pm, Fri 6.00 pm, Sat 4.00 pm, Sun 12.00 noon, also Fri, 19 Apr and Mon, 22 Apr at 4.00 pm on both days. The number of participants is limited. Tickets for the guided tours are available in advance for 5 EUR online at [shop.staedelmuseum.de](http://shop.staedelmuseum.de) or starting two hours before the tour at the cashier's desk.

**Advance ticket sales online at:** [shop.staedelmuseum.de](http://shop.staedelmuseum.de)

### **Framework programme:**

**Standpoints on Art:** Thu, 28 Feb, 7.00 pm: Prof. Peter Humfrey (University of St Andrews), "Exhibiting Titian". Lecture in English. Admission is included in museum admission fee; for booking: +49(0)69-605098-200, [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

Thu, 2 May, 7.00 pm: Prof. Dr. Hans Aurenhammer (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main), "Allzu menschliche Götter? Parodistisches in venezianischen Mythologien von Bellini bis Tintoretto". Lecture in German. Admission is included in museum admission fee; for booking: +49(0)69-605098-200, [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

**The exhibition will be accompanied by an extensive framework programme. For up-to-date information, please consult [www.staedelmuseum.de](http://www.staedelmuseum.de).**

**Catalogue:** A comprehensive catalogue edited by Bastian Eclercy and Hans Aurenhammer and published by the Prestel Verlag will accompany the exhibition. With a foreword by Philipp Demandt and contributions by Maria Aresin, Hans Aurenhammer, Andrea Bayer, Anne Bloemacher, Daniela Bohde, Beverly Louise Brown, Stefanie Cossalter-Dallmann, Benjamin Couilleaux, Heiko Damm, Rita Delhées, Jill Dunkerton, Bastian Eclercy, Martina Fleischer, Iris Hasler, Frederick Ilchman, Roland

Krischel, Ann Kathrin Kubitz, Adela Kutschke, Sofia Magnaguagno, Tom Nichols, Tobias Benjamin Nickel, Susanne Pollack, Volker Reinhardt, Julia Saviello, Francesca Del Torre Scheuch, Catherine Whistler and Matthias Wivel. German edition, 272 pages, 39.90 EUR (museum edition), English edition, 272 pages, 49 EUR (bookshop price).

**Exhibition booklet:** A booklet in German will be forthcoming to accompany the exhibition; 7.50 EUR.

**Digitorial®:** The digitorial is being made possibly by the Fazit Stiftung. It will be available at [tizian.staedelmuseum.de](http://tizian.staedelmuseum.de) from 23 January 2019.

**Audio tour:** The guided audio tour of the exhibition will be available in German and English. The German version is narrated by the TV, movie and stage actress Julia Jäger, who plays in the crime series “Donna Leon” (as Paola Brunetti) and in the Oscar-winning short film “Spielzeugland”. The tour is available free of charge as an app for iOS and Android and can be conveniently downloaded onto your smartphone wherever you have Internet. On site at the museum, the audio guide is available for rental for 4.50 EUR (8 EUR for two audio guides).

**Social Media:** The Städel Museum is communicating the exhibition on social media with the hashtags #tizian, #renaissance and #venedig.

**Supported by:** Dagmar-Westberg-Stiftung, Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain gGmbH

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