Patrick Bade | Venetian Painting

- Okay, well, welcome everybody. It's great to have you back with us, and I'm happy to be back here with all of you. And Patrick, thanks so much. I'm going to hand over to you whenever you're ready, you know?

- Good.

Visual slides are displayed throughout the lecture.

- Thanks Wendy. And welcome everybody. And as you can see from the image of the screen, it's a map of Venice in the 16th century. So we've arrived at the third of the great art centres of the Italian Renaissance after Florence and Rome. And if we're just strictly talking about painting, you could claim, I think that Venice is the greatest of all. It's a completely astonishing city like no other. In terms of the Mediterranean, of course, it's quite a new city. It didn't exist in the ancient world. It was created nearly middle ages by refugees fleeing from the Germanic hoards who invaded Italy. And they settled this little group of islands in the Venetian lagoon, 118 islands, separated by canals and linked by literally hundreds of bridges. Of course, the Grand Canal is, I suppose, the most spectacular high street of any city in the world. It is completely heart-stopping to travel up and down it in a boat and pass by all the Palazzi, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque palaces.

But Venice reached its height economically and politically in the 14th, 15th century, became a real, as Florence did too, a great economic powerhouse, great commercial centre, really the gateway to the east, to Asia. And it built up an empire. So certainly the eastern half of the Mediterranean was effectively a Venetian lake. In fact, the great age of Venetian art just gets going when Venice was about to be eclipsed. And two things led to the Eclipse of Venice. One was the opening up of Atlantic trade route, so that meant that the land roots across the Middle East and across the Mediterranean were really bypassed. And the other thing that clipped Venice's wings was the expansion of the Ottoman Empire after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. So the great age of Florentine painting begins in the 1420s.

So it's almost a half a century later that Venetian art really gets going. And the founding father, in a way, the important figure in the creation of a distinctive Venetian school is Giovanni Bellini, who's born in 1430, is born into a family of artists. And this is an early work dating from the 1460s as yet apart, perhaps, from the background on the left hand side. There's not much to indicate the direction in which he was going to go and take Venetian art with him. Still very quattrocento, quattrocento means just 15th century. But this hard linearity, the figures, this is actually a tempera, so it's an egg paint, it's egg based paint on panel. And it's very linear, it's very drawn. And it's very similar to, oh, here's a detail of the Pieta where you can see how sharply linear the definition of the facial features is. And here a comparison with Andrea Mantegna who's an exact contemporary and was in fact Giovanni Bellini's brother-in-law. So both of these artists at this point, using a rather hard unpainted linear technique. We see the first

hints of a divergence between them in these two paintings of the same subject.

The Agony in the Garden from the Christian New Testament. It's Mantegna top left, it's thought to be the first of the two, painted 1458 to '60. And very soon after Bellini painted his version of the subject. And it's wonderful that these two paintings both belong to the National Gallery in London. So you can see them side by side. Compare and contrast, of course, is one of the key methods of art history. And so I used to greatly enjoy taking my students to look at these two paintings. And I would get them to use their eyes. I didn't tell 'em anything. I just asked them one after another, what's similar and what's dissimilar in these two paintings. So we have Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. His agony as he faces the prospect of crucifixion. And we're just outside Jerusalem. Now, Mantegna, he was famous as a very learned artist. He'd studied everything he could about the ancient world.

And he knew, of course, that Christ lived under the Roman Empire. And I suppose he imagined that Jerusalem would've looked like a Roman city, which it probably did to some extent in the year dot. And so here we've got these, it's the backgrounds of these two pictures that actually show, as I said, the divergence between the two artists that however incorrect it may be, Mantegna's imagined Jerusalem is based on learning. And he's shown it as a walled city, which of course it was. And with incredible detail. And you can see it's a city which has obviously recently suffered a siege. And there's been, there are repairs to the damage in the walls of the city. And we see buildings that look like Roman buildings. We also see buildings that look sort of strangely Venetian. So whereas Bellini on the right hand side has been out in the hills in northern Italy, and he's seen a little Italian hill town. And that's what he's painted. He's painted Jerusalem as an Italian hill town. And the other thing that hints, I think at his future development is the exquisite rendering of a dawn sky. The pinkness in the sky, tinging the clouds.

So he's an artist who's, he's more based on observation of nature. He's responding to what the eye sees rather than painting what he knows. Here's a larger detail of the little Italian hill town and the wonderful cloudy, rosy, tinted sky. Now, see, early paintings of Bellini are, as I said, they're egg tempera and the technique of oil painting, of which of course the Venetians became the great masters of oil painting. They explored all the techniques, all the things you can do with oil. This was introduced to Venice in 1473 by an artist called Antonello da Messina. Now, the techniques of all painting were first developed in the north of Europe. And I'm going to be talking about that next week. When I look at Flemish painting. Oil has very different properties from egg. Egg, you have to work very, very quickly. It dries very quickly. And I can tell you, it smells terrible. I remember at my boarding school had a little cubicle and I was painting in egg paints in it. And I became very unpopular with the other pupils at my school because of the terrible smell emanating from my cubicle. It's, so, you work relatively quickly, 'cause as I said, it dries very quickly and it's opaque. So oil dries much more slowly.

You can work much more slowly. You can do much more detail. And if you want it to be, oil can be transparent. So you can build up layers of transparent colour. You can get very rich colour effects with oil, very sumptuous. And you can get incredibly subtle gradations of tone. And we'll

talk about all of this in the context of Flemish painting next week. Now, of course, Venice is right at the top of Italy. It's just beneath the Alps. And the obvious way for Flemish techniques to arrive there would be to come down from the north. So it's rather curious that we have a Sicilian artist, Antonello da Messina who apparently came across a Flemish artist in Naples, and he learnt these Flemish techniques in Naples. Then he arrives in Venice in 1473. This is a very famous painting by Antonello da Messina again it's in London at St. Jerome in his study. And it's a wonderful fusion actually, of northern techniques and stylistic trays and Florentine ones. The Florentine element, of course, is in the very correct use of linear perspective, mathematical perspective. So you really feel you can walk into this painting. No Flemish artist of this date would've had that command of perspective. And the Flemish element is in the minute detail and the miraculous, marvellous rendering of light, of which no other Italian artists would've been capable in the 1470s.

Now, in the early 19th century, the experts actually attributed this painting to van Eyck. It was thought to be a Flemish painting, not Italian. One here is, it's a small picture. Here's a detail of Saint Jerome. And you can see the sharpness of detail is almost as extraordinary as that of van Eyck. And you know, just as van Eyck can, you know, if you think of the marriage of Arnolfini, you've got that wonderful passage of light across the wall at the back of the painting. Look at the light on the floor here and these exquisite jewel, like brilliant, luminous landscapes seen in the background and this tiny, tiny detail. And we're looking at, you know, a couple of square centimetres here. So this miraculously sharp jewel like detail, all the objects, of course, everything having some kind of symbolic meaning. So Antonello also introduces Flemish types of portraiture. Most portraiture in Italy in the first half of the 15th century were either in profile or frontal, particularly profile, of course inspired by ancient coins. It's the northern artist who developed this format of three quarter view bust or half length.

And you've got Van Eyck on the right hand side, and you have an an Antonello da Messina on the left. These are so wonderful, these Antonello portraits of, you know, so incredibly sharply individualised. These are all people, of course, I always say would look at a portrait. Would you recognise this guy on a bus? Yes, you surely would recognise this one. Look at this and look at his stubble. This, of course is very like van Eyck who in his self-portrait, the National Gallery. You've got a two or three day growth of stubble with every little bristle painted individually, all eyelashes and the hairs and the eyebrow all lovingly, individually. And look at these wonderful types, real mafiosi, straight out of the godfather, so slightly sinister. And so Giovanni Bellini picks up this format of the three quarter view bust length. This is an early portrait from about 1480 on the left. And his very famous portrait of Doge Loredan dating from 1501 one on the right hand side. Now, do I have a detail of this? No, I don't. Maybe there's one coming later.

The other quality of oil paint is that you can, as I said, you can use it in what are called glazes, where you superimpose thin layers of transparent colour. But you can also use it as impasto that's thick and it's opaque. And I think Giovanni Bellini is the first artist to begin to exploit these very possibilities. And it's very hard to get this across to you in the form of a PowerPoint. You really need to go and see the painting itself. So those of you in England, or those of you in

London who can get to National Gallery, go and have a look at this picture of those Doge Loredan and wonder at the marvellous way that Bellini has painted this very richly textured silk damask of the Doge's robe. If you get really close to it, you'll see little tiny blobs of impasta paint. So he's actually using this possibility to create texture. So you really feel that you could stroke this robe and you would know exactly what it would feel like. So here we are, this is a very famous painting. I'm afraid this is not particularly, this is a slightly blurred reproduction. I searched on the internet, I couldn't find a better one.

But this is the Ecstasy of St. Francis painted 1475 to 80. It's in the Frick collection. I'm sure many of you've seen it there. And it's 'cause the figure of St. Francis is quite small in relation to the overall panel. And the wonder of this picture is really in this almost ecstatic observation of nature, of pebbles, and plants and animals. It is a completely mesmerising picture when you see it in reality, I'm afraid. But with Venetian painting, you really do want to see the real thing more than you do, I would say with Florentine or Roman painting. So I hope I'm just going to encourage you to go to your nearest big museum where you can see Venetian paintings and stand close to them and stand back from them and really enjoy the amazing surfaces of these pictures. This is a painting of Saint Jerome in the desert.

Of course, I don't suppose Italians, north Italians, anyway, in the 15th century, had much idea of what a desert really looks like, is rather lush looking desert. But again, you can see this almost ecstatic response to nature, to plants and animals and little bunny rabbits and squirrels and the birds and so on. This is, again, a somewhat later painting round about 1500 is the detail of the Madonna of the Meadow. And you can see how much of the picture is taken up with this really ecstatic response to nature. Now, another very active artist in Venice who's actually younger. He's a good generation, younger than Bellini but in some ways more old fashioned. He doesn't really follow Bellini very much in this melting of the hard linearity. And there's a certain, although the detail here is actually classical in this interior, this is St. Augustine, the Vision of St. Augustine. You can see that, you know, the architectural details in the background here, pilasters and tablatures and so on. It's all classical.

But in a way there's a hangover of the gothic in his love of the decorative and the sort of a certain clutter of detail that these are most delightful painting. How about this, this is the dream of St. Ursula. I just think this is the most enchanting, enchanting picture. It's an Ursula asleep in bed and the angel coming with a vision and actually very beautiful rendering of the light coming in behind the angel and all these, this is clearly a very fashionable Venetian interior homes and gardens, interior of around 15 or 1490. Well, these two panels are very intriguing. The one on the left is in the Correr Museum in Venice, and the one on the right is in the Getty in California. And you wouldn't think they had any connection, but some bright person decided to examine them in a laboratory. And it turned out that they are parts of the same panel that at some point somebody cut in half and sold as two pictures. But I'll show you what the whole thing would've looked like in a minute. And the painting on the left was, was very famous in the 19th century. And if you look, you see illustrating old art books, it says it's a portrait of two courtesans.

'Cause the courtesans Venice was the pleasure capital of Europe until, I suppose Paris took over that role in the 19th century. And it was very famous for its courtesans, for its naughty ladies. And the most desired or desirable Venetian courtesans were blondes. It's a Venetian blonde as a very particular type of blonde. It's a sort of honey blonde. But it's now thought that no, these are not courtesans. And in fact, the fact that there are doves in the picture and lilies, which are symbols of virtue and purity rather goes against the idea that these ladies might be courtesans. They're probably noble ladies who are waiting for their husbands to come back from hunting duck on the Venetian lagoon. I think of course, the clue that alerted the experts that these two pictures are from the same panel is the lily. You know, the bottom part for lily is in the vase top left. And the top part of the lily, as you can see, intrudes rather strangely. I mean that that would be not at all a renaissance's way of composing a picture.

It's rather Japanese or late 19th century to have a flower. You know, Clint would do something like that, but no renaissance artist would do it. And here we see if you could put the two pictures back together, what it would look like with the flower in the lower panel intruding into the upper one. This is a picture I see very often and I really love it by Bellini. I see it often because it's in the Jacquemart-André Museum in Paris. And I go there, it's always said to be the Frick or the Wallace Collection or Paris. And I go there very often with groups. And this was bought by Nellie Jacquemart, you know, the Jacquemart Andre was a married couple. He was much older than her. And it was rumoured at the time that it wasn't really a sexual relationship. I think their relationship was built on shopping, really a mutual passion for connecting. And his taste was rather conventional for the late, 19th century wealthy person. It was what they called Goût Rothschild, everything rather blingy.

Her taste was for the Renaissance. And she obviously had a fantastic eye because she bought a Giotto without any kind of attribution and she bought this painting. It was also an at the time it wasn't attributed to anybody. It's now thought to be a late work of Bellini. And it is so gorgeous, this image. Well, it's a good quality colour reproduction, it doesn't give you the sense, I always feel this is a painting you could eat with a spoon. It's this wonderful saturated pinks and blues and yellows, but melting soft, like almost like sorbet, it's like it's painting in the sorbet, really is the most gorgeous picture. So Giovanni Bellini is a very long lived artist by the standards of the time, born in 1430, dying in 1516 and active to the last. And he's, whereas Carpaccio, who I've just shown you, delightful artist, I suppose a lesser artist who established his style and sticks to it and doesn't really change. But Giovanni Bellini has a really extraordinary development. This is the San Giobbe Alta that was painted for the Church of San Giobbe in the late 1480s in Venice. You would never think that this was by the same artist who painted the first pictures by Bellini that I showed you in this talk.

So he was obviously somebody who could absorb new ideas and develop new ideas and really move on in the way that say Picasso did in the 20th century. And here he's clearly absorbed ideas from Florence. If you remember the very first picture that I showed you in this course was the Masaccio Trinity, which creates an illusionistic space that's meant to look like an extension of the building you are in. And this is an idea that that Bellini has taken up in this picture. And

this is what is called a Sacra Conversazione, a sacred conversation where you have the virgin and child and they are surrounded by saints. So you've got let me see on her, on the Christ child side, you've got St. Francis and John the Baptist and San Giobbe. He's the one who's nude, et cetera, of lonicloth on the left. And on the right hand side, you have St. Dominic and St. Sebastian. And here they are in a detail, very serene, very beautiful, since Sebastian, very different from the way he might have been painted in northern Europe where there'd be much more emphasis, or in Germany for instance, there'd be much more emphasis on the wounds and the gruesome side of the martyrdom and a cute angel at the bottom playing a beautiful loot with a rather Islamic looking pattern on the front of it. And his final great religious masterpiece is the San Zaccario Altarpiece. And this is about 1505.

And so as he's 75, no great age today, but a great age in the the 16th century. And he's really taking on board here, lessons from the high Renaissance. Well, in fact, he's even ahead. Perhaps this is 'cause Rafael hasn't done anything like this at this point in 1505 so, but you think perhaps he is aware of Michaelangelo, certainly aware of Leonard La Vinci. And the figures have a monumentality, a breadth and a gravitas, which is something entirely new and would've been very, very modern in the early 16th century. Again, it's a Sacra Conversazione. You've got all the saints identifiable by their attributes, St. Peter with his keys, St. Catherine, she's holding a broken wheel, St. Lucy and Saint Jerome. And St. Catherine, of course has the palm of martyrdom and so does St. Lucy, who's the patron saint of eyesight because she was martyred by having her eyes put out. And she's often shown with a little dish, with two eyes in it. And again, the musical element of this, and look at how this is of course of quite a high quality colory production. And you can see what I mean about these wonderful saturated colours. We do this by layering the paint, transparent layers of paint, superimposed what are called glazes. And that's how you can get these wonderful singing, glowing, extraordinary colours.

Now we don't have as detailed information about the Venetian artists as we have about the Florentines. I mean our source for all these artists, of course is Vasari, that Vasari was Florentine, he wasn't Venetian, he had a certain prejudice against Venetian art and he clearly didn't know really as much about the Venetian artist as he did about the Florentines. So we have very little information about this artist. This is Giorgione. Vasari said he's a pupil of Titian and that is, sorry, no, he's a pupil of Bellini and that is very likely, and this softening, this sfumato that we've seen in the late work of Bellini becomes a particular feature of Giorgione journey. And he takes it further. This is his first major masterpiece. It's the Castelfranco Madonna in the dorm of Castelfranco. And I'm showing you here a comparison Giorgione on the left Bellini on the right. And you can see very obvious debt that Giorgione has to Bellini. This is a Predella Panel that's in London in the National Gallery that this extremely elongated format shows that it would've run along the bottom of a polyptych, a mini panelled altarpiece. The rest of the altarpiece has not survived. This shows the Adoration of the Magi. And again, you've got these lovely, gorgeous, luscious saturated colours. It's a very odd image.

I'll never forget many years ago, standing in front of it at the National Gallery and watching a nun look at this picture. And she started off on the left hand side. I could see a beatific smile on

her face as she looked at the Virgin and Charles. And then she slowly looked along the panel and she caught sight of this young man who seems to be slightly embarrassed about what looks like a burgeoning erection. And I could see a look of shock come off across her face. And she moved on very quickly to the next picture in the National Gallery. I can't really explain this, it is very strange, isn't it? And of course, very prominent pod pieces were fashionable attire in the early 16th century. But the pose here also suggests a certain consciousness or embarrassment. This is Giorgione's most famous picture. It's called the Tempest Star painted shortly before his early death from the plague in 1510. And of course, oceans of ink have been spilled on this picture. People are trying to interpret it, trying to, what is going on here?

Well I think we'll never know this. It's all speculation and it just has, you know, with the thundery sky and the lightning and who are these people? What are they doing in this landscape? Is there some kind of narrative here that is lost to us? But I think part of the fascination of the picture is its ambiguity and the fact that we can't really read what is going on in it. Here's a detail of the background with the flash of lightning and another picture, which is very hard to interpret what is going on here with these two couples at the making of music suggests that there is love in the air, but you've got two gorgeous naked women, but the two young men seem strangely, rather more interested in each other than they are in the gorgeous naked women. And once again, it's a picture where there's no clear narrative, no clear symbols. You can't, you know, read it detail by detail. You have to speculate what is happening in this picture. And also the other mystery with this picture is who painted it? When I was a student, of course we're talking half a century ago, it was attributed to Giorgione.

And in the Louvre it was labelled Giorgione. And one of my first trips taking people to Paris, I took them to the Louvre and I said, oh, let's go and see the wonderful Giorgione. And I turned out in front of it and the label had changed, been changed by the Louvre from Giorgione to Lu Titian and I wouldn't be surprised if it goes back again. And I don't think there's any real consensus about who painted this or it could possibly have been started by Giorgione and finished by Titian. Although there are some people who think it's entirely by Titian. We know that certainly when Giorgione died very young in his early thirties, that Titian took over his workshop and completed certain works. This is another mystery work. It's a gorgeous painting. I love it. It's in Glasgow in the Kelvingrove Gallery and it's the woman taken in adultery. And it's Giorgionesque you know, I mean it's all, I suppose you could say late Bellini is again a big influence here, but it's taken rather further. These painterly qualities, no consensus about who painted this. If somebody incredibly talented painted it, it's a masterpiece.

Could it be Giorgione could it be Titian? I had a colleague, Christie, who was a Renaissance expert who was convinced it was by an artist called Sebastiano del Piombo, who I've mentioned. He started off in Venice and went down to Rome and fell under the influence of Michelangelo. It's a painting which has been cut down and this is the main part but there's also a fragment that survives. But I want to show you the detail here of this chain across the man's hips. This is really interesting because your, this is, I'm using this very heavily in inverted commerce here. One of the earliest examples in western art of a kind of impressionism. Of

course it's nothing to do with the 19th century art movement, but the fact that the artist is giving you an impression of a gold chain, he's not describing it. He's not drawing it. Underneath we've got a detail from Bronzino which I showed you last time. And Bronzino is a very linear artist. He explains to you how that chain is made.

You've got all the information there of how that you haven't got the information with this Venetian painting. We've just got an impression of light catching one side of each link in the chain. And if you half close your eyes or you move back to the right distance, you just have an impression of a gold chain shimmering in the light. It's not actually there, it's not actually described in any detail. Now we come to the greatest of all the Venetian artists. And this is Titian, Tiziano Vecellio born in the foothills of the Alps. Very long lived artist. We don't know for sure when he was born 'cause he became so old that everybody forgot, probably 1488, which would mean that he was 90 when he died in 1578. And painting very vigorously and marvellously to the end. So, 1480 he is, I suppose he's a contemporary of Raphael, a little bit younger than Raphael and a bit younger still, of course than Michelangelo and Leonardo. But with those three artists, he becomes incredibly celebrated. And he is the artist that every crown head in Europe wants to work for them. And he perhaps even more than Leonardo and Rafael or even Michelangelo, he enhances the dignity and the status of artists.

He's the very first artist in history to be ennobled. He was made a knight of the golden fleece by the emperor Charles the fifth. There's a story that Massari tells how the emperor went to Titian's studio to watch him painting. Titian was very absorbed in what he was doing and he dropped a brush and the emperor, the holy Roman emperor scooped to pick up the brush and hand it to the artist. 'Cause all the courtiers ere absolutely horrified and gobsmacked that the most powerful man in the world would stoop to pick up something for somebody who earned his living with his hands. It was an incredible moment. And when he was in ennobled he was given, he was made a knight of the order of the golden fleece. And he was given a gold chain by Charles the fifth. And you can see in these two self-portraits, he's very proudly showing the gold chain that the emperor gave him. Now, his first really major princely commission comes from Alfonso d'Este, who was the Duke of Ferrara, whose portrait he painted. You can see that here. And here is the Este castle in Ferrara. And all these little principalities, these dukedoms, Audino, Mantua, Parma, Ferrara and so on, they're all very much in competition with one another. And their patronage of the arts was a very important prestige thing.

And Alfonso wanted to have a studiolo. This is a room decorated with mythological paintings, classical subjects based very often on Ovids metamorphosis and with very elaborate, very learned programmes that would be devised by court humanists. So the paintings that are Alfonso d'Este commissioned have been dispersed around the world in the great museums of the world. But this is, well, we don't know exactly what the room looked like, but this is a reconstruction of the bringing together, the paintings in his studiolo. Now he was of course the brother of Isabella d'Este, and she had her studiolo, which was in Mantua. Again, the paintings actually the most of the paintings were that are in the Louvre in Paris and thereby Mantegna, by Lorenzo Costa, by Perugino and so on, leading artists of the day. And again, there are

mythological subjects with incredibly elaborate iconographic programmes. So I said everybody, all these printers had their studiolo, I think everybody should have a studiolo. I have two. The left is my studiolo in Paris, which some of our wonderful lockdown alumni came to see, came to visit me at the weekend to see this. And on the right is my studiolo with mythological paintings in my house, my council house in London. Not many council houses have studiolo. So back to Alfonso d'Este. And his original idea was that each panel would be by a different artist and he wanted to bring together all the great artists of the age.

And he approached Bartolomeo and he approached Raphael's commission paintings, but they both died before they could produce them. That and the first of the series was by Bellini. And it's the last great masterpiece of Bellini, it's the Feast of the Gods, which is in the National Gallery in Washington. Based on Ovid metamorphoses, which I think I've recommended to you as a wonderful book as a holiday read, very racy stuff, lots of sex and violence to keep you amused. And it's the story of Priapus who tries to rape the nymph Lotis. Appropriately, you can see the disturbance in the front of Priapus drapery. You can see that he's very excited and Lotis is, he attempts to rape her in her sleep, but she wakes up and all the god's wake up and he is thwarted in his evil intentions. So this painting was completed by Bellini but he then died before he could produce any others. And Titian was commissioned to take over and he painted the other paintings in the series. And he's also thought to have repainted parts of this picture to make it match his own. Particularly the background.

This is the Bacchus and Ariadne, which is in the National Gallery in London. So it's the one of the series that I know the best 'cause I've stood in front of it on hundreds of occasions. And it tells the story of Ariadne, she was the Princess of Crete. And she helps Theseus kill the Minotaur. She gives him the ball of string so that he's able to get to the centre of the labyrinth, kill the Minotaur and find his way out again. And she leaves Crete with him to go back to Athens. And he's a kind of a love rat, he dumps her on the island of Naxos and left. You can just see the sail of Theseus's ship who's sailed off without her. And she's distraught with grief until the youthful Bacchus, God of wine arrives on the island. And this is the moment of the coup de foudre where Bacchus and Ariadne kept sight of one another and fall in love with one another. And all the merry throng on the right hand side, the maenads and selenes all the drunken wild followers of Bacchus. I've always thought that maybe this was a metaphor for taking to the bottle. Now it's a sumptuous coloured painting with really striking, this amazing red sash and of course the singing blue and wonderful orangey yellow. It's a painting which was cleaned by the National Gallery, I think it must have been in the 1960s.

Very controversially and kind of indirectly I got caught up in the fallout from that when I was a student. I was a student at the Courtauld Institute. And at that point there were only two really major top restoration laboratories in Britain. One was the National Gallery that carried out the restoration on this. And the other one was at the Courtauld Institute. And various experts from the Courtauld Institute, they excoriated this, the cleaning of this picture. They said it was an absolute disaster because Titian used as a major element in his work, glazes. I've already mentioned that's transparent layers of colour that would modify the transition from one colour to

another. And do I have a detail? Yes. So it was claimed by the Courtauld told experts that, that the painting was overscrubbed and that Titian's glazes had been rubbed off in the cleaning. I'm simply not informed enough about this really to have a strong opinion. I'd like to see to 'cause it's incredibly dangerous, incredibly difficult to clean a Titian. But I have to say, when you see Titian's say the Titians in the Louvre which are not cleaned 'cause the Louvre haven't dare to do it. I think after all this controversy between the National Gallery and the Courtauld Institute, there was total no speaks, you know, no non cooperation for throughout the 1970s.

Certainly when I was at the Courtauld between the National Gallery and the Courtauld and the Louvre had not dared to do that. So in fact, of course the paintings of Titian's in the Louvre are extremely dirty and dark and difficult to appreciate. This is also from the series for Alfonso d'Este. This is the Bacchanal of the Andrians, and it's in the Prado in Madrid and it's a recreation as many renaissance paintings are, of a painting that was very famous in antiquity. Of course they were all lost so far, none seem to have survived by the great masters like Abeilles. All we have are verbal descriptions. And so this painting is Titian trying to reconstruct a very famous painting of antiquity. Wait, whoops, what's happened to my thing? Oh, I think that's probably my last painting. In fact I ran out of time. So I will continue with...is that really my last? Yes, it does seem to be. No, no it isn't. These are more details. Oh yes it is. So I will stop here now and see if there are any questions or comments. And I will continue with Titian and Venetian painting in my next session, which will be on Sunday.

So let's look at the question and answer, you know, thank you Jennifer.

Q&A and Comments:

But you know, I have very mixed feelings about my many years at Christie's. It's awful in a way to be a kind of corporate slave, but Christie's education had something very special. Which was different when we were linked with Glasgow University, but everything we did was object based. And so I learned a lot by teaching there with those methods. And I strongly believe, you know, when I go around museums with people and when I give lectures, I really want people to look, I want them to use their eyes and that's why I never used to let my students take notes in a museum. And it's why I don't put any labelling on images and lectures. 'Cause the important thing is to use your eye, to train your eye.

The skull in St. Francis painting is so contradictory to the subject. Is it? I suppose skull is there as a reminder of death. It's I suppose a common image in old master paintings. Who's the artist of the old-fashioned interiors? Yeah, it's on your list. It's Vittore Carpaccio. Did I not mention his name? Anyway, it's on the list. A very delightful if minor artist. Who is the face in the last painting? I'm not sure I know what you are asking me there. You say those of us who are not Christian, may not know about Saint. Please tell us which group they are patrons saints for. Well, yes, 'cause Protestants wouldn't necessarily, yes, who are Christians probably wouldn't know about the Saints either.

I think I did identify the saints in those sacra conversazione and I don't really want to get into too much detail 'cause I think that would be quite a distraction if I really went into the lives of the Saints. You know, it's interesting, this is a comment that comes up very, very often, not just about baby Jesus. I mean I haven't got any children so I haven't had close contact with babies. My sister would be able to give you probably a much more informed answer about the representation of babies in old master paintings. But it does seem to bother a lot of people and I have had that question many, many times over the years. Right.

What Titian's, of course the most wonderful Titian of the late, I'll get to that next week of course 'cause I'll be getting to late Titian. The Isabella Stewart Gardner has one of the greatest of all which is the Rape of Persephone. Fantastic amazing picture which was turned down. It was offered to National Gallery in London and they turned it down 'cause it was too sexy. But Isabella Stewart Gardner, of course she was an amazing woman and she wasn't going to be put off by that and clever her, she bought the picture. Manet's Olympia of course, Manet was looking back very much to Titian. I'll probably mention that more on Sunday.

Two paintings which are connected by the Lilly. Is the depiction of the canal meant to be a painting on the wall where the people... No, I don't think so. I think it's meant to look real. I think they're meant to be, it's a bit strange. I think probably that the lower panel has been altered and the water painted out. But I think you are actually meant to be looking out onto Lagoon. Yeah, to me it was infuriating. I never liked it. If I see people's, when I'm taking tourists around, of course I can't tell them what to do. But to me it's crazy to go to a museum and have your head buried in a notebook. You really should be looking at the objects.

What is the link to opera Ariadne auf Naxos? Well it's the same legend of course, but Ariadne auf Naxos by Strauss, is a very complicated opera 'cause it's an opera within an opera. But the opera within the opera is based on the same myth as the Titian painting. Bella Garbo is saying, Jesus, Joseph, Mary were Middle Easterners and therefore would not be blonde and blue eyed, yes, that's perfectly true. I think, well you know, as I said, Italian artists, they hadn't been to the Middle East. They didn't know what it looked like. So even Mantegna who was educated, informed, he has to imagine what the Middle East looked like. 'Cause when you think of the history of Christian antisemitism, it is so extraordinary that Jesus and Mary were Jews.

And I think the only artist to actually acknowledge that and realise that they wouldn't look like Northern Europeans before the 19th century was of course Rembrandt. Despite all the effort capturing bodies accurately, babies in these religious pictures always look unrealistic in proportion. I believe you Judy. I'm not going to comment on that though. The face in the pit with the two Venetian ladies. I'd have to go back and have a look at the picture. I'm not sure again what you are asking.

Q: Titian's blue so vivid. Was it new at the time?

A: No it wasn't 'cause it's lapis blue. 'Cause whether a colour looks vivid or whether a colour

looks vivid or not depends what's around it. It's not just the colour itself, it's what's next to it that makes it look so vivid.

Jennifer, I'm very glad that you're- loving great art and great music is among the greatest joys you can have in life. That's all I can say to that. Rape of Europa. You're quite right. Yes, not Rape of Persephone. Sorry, senior moment there. Anyway, it's a fantastic picture. Yes. That pic, that exhibition that's of Titian, I think it's the one that was in London of those late Titian mythological paintings painted for Philip II. Carpaccio's Scuola di San Giorgio degli schiavoni, yes, that's right. It's one of the jewels of Venice. Is the composer of Vincenzo Bellini of the same family? No. 'Cause he's from the other end of Italy. He was Sicilian and so I don't think there's any chance them being related. Carol who's seen that. It was a wonderful show, wasn't it? I saw it twice in London at the height of the, sadly because of the pandemic. Not as many people saw that show. Using eggs in painting.

Tempera, I mean most and the mediaeval paint panel paintings and Italian ones up till the second half of the 15th century is the egg, is the medium as it's used as oil would be to, you know, the pigment is mixed with the egg. You can use it either with the white of the egg or with the yellow of the egg, but not with both. I seem to remember from my efforts at painting in tempera. Thank you Patricia. That's it, and Jennifer agreeing with me. Thank you. About art and music. There was another Titian painting, the National Gallery that was cleaned in the seventies. The Diana and Actaeon. I mean, yeah. I mean the National Gallery's policy for cleaning paintings has been considered reckless by many people. I'm sure you all remembered Brian Shul of Blessed Memory and he was always carrying on about how the National Gallery was full of over cleaned, ruined pictures. It's very difficult thing.

I generally like pictures when they're cleaned, but you know, the danger is that you make the picture look like you want it to look like. Right. I think that's it. I seem to have got to the end and so I'll take up the story of the rest of Titian's career on Sunday. And thank you all as always for your very nice comments and interesting questions. Bye-bye.