

# Venetian Painting

by Sophia



## WHAT'S COVERED

Venetian painting is known for its rich use of color by artists to define forms in their paintings. In this lesson, you will learn about:



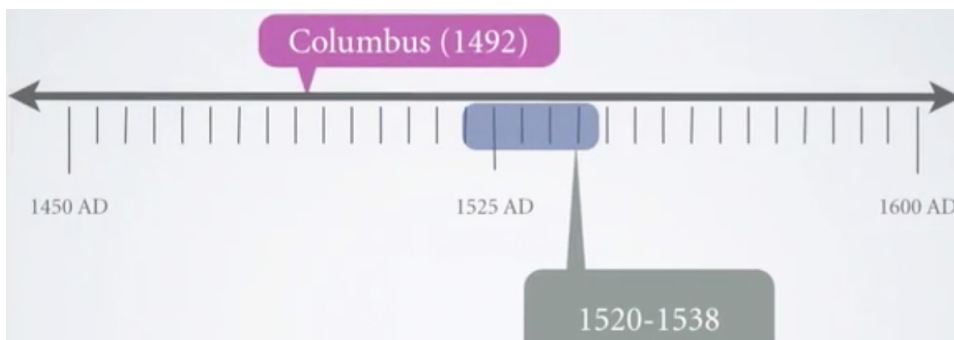
### BIG IDEA

Venetian painters, such as Titian, used color to define the forms of their paintings.

## 1. Period and Location: Venetian Painting

This lesson will cover the years 1520 to 1538 in Venice, Italy.

Below is a timeline highlighting the period covered in this lesson. Note that the voyage of Columbus in 1492 is also highlighted as a reference point.



## 2. Titian

Venice, like Florence, was a republic during this time. Because of its strategic location on the water, Venice was a major trading destination and naval force.

The use of color is something strongly associated with painters from this time and location. One of these painters was the artist Rona Goffen Titian. He created a body of work that defined this type of painting and established himself as one of the preeminent painters of the Italian Renaissance.

Titian's work is often categorized into one of three types:

- Portraits

- Religious
- Mythological

### 3. The “Bacchus & Ariadne”

Below is an example of a painting of Titian’s that would be categorized as mythological. This painting is titled “Meeting of Bacchus and Ariadne” and dates from 1520-1523.



**Meeting of Bacchus and Ariadne by Titian**

**1520-1523**

**Oil on canvas**

Notice how color is used to define the figures. Venetian painters differed from their Florentine counterparts in how they used color to define forms and create a sense of luminosity. In contrast, Florentine painters emphasized contour and contrast of light and shadow to define form.



#### THINK ABOUT IT

Some feel that the Venetian painters and their use of bright colors creates a more engaging composition.

Take a look again at the artwork above. Do you agree?

A sense of vibrancy exists due to the color and playfulness of the subject matter. In the above scene, Bacchus arrives on a leopard-drawn chariot. He appears to leap out of the chariot towards the figure of Ariadne in the

above painting. Notice how Titian uses color to create the extremely convincing satinesque sheen of Bacchus's robe. It draws your attention to the central character. The painting is full of playful imagery, such as the tiny fawn in the foreground and the advancing entourage behind Bacchus.

Titian includes a figure of a bearded man entwined in snakes, which you can see in the foreground right behind the fawn. This is a nod to the central figure of a statue recently rediscovered at that time. Originating in Hellenistic Greece, it is titled **"Laocoön and His Sons"**. It is shown below.



**Laocoön and His Sons**

1st century BC

Marble

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## 4. Isabella d'Este

Titian was in great demand as a portrait painter as well. The portrait shown below, titled "Isabella in Black," is of the prominent Renaissance woman Isabella d'Este, the daughter of the Duke of Ferrara.



Isabella d'Este by Titian

1535

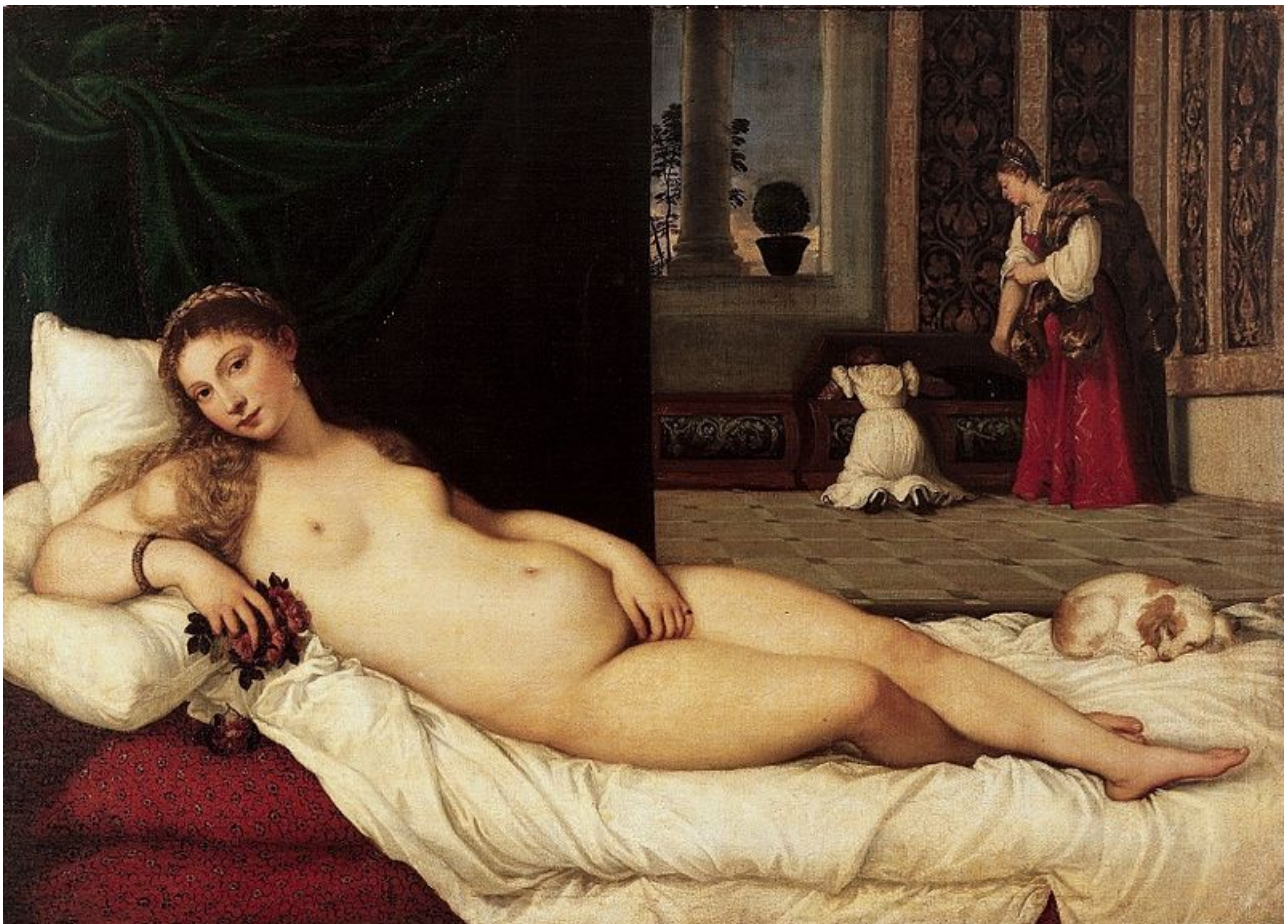
Oil on canvas

This portrait was actually painted when Isabella was in her 60s, but she's depicted as a youth in her 20s. Titian achieves a focus on her face and hands by blending the black of her clothing into the background. This technique enhances the luminosity of her face. The highly detailed sleeves of her clothing draw your attention to her hands. The entire composition evokes a sense of poise, the experience of age expressed in the body of a young woman.

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## 5. “Venus of Urbino”

This next painting, later titled “Venus of Urbino,” has come to define the category of the reclining nude female.



Venus of Urbino by Titian

1538

Oil on canvas

“Venus of Urbino” was a commission from the eventual Duke of Urbino for his own private enjoyment. Notice that her attendants are searching for clothing in the background. The seductive Venus, who is partially concealed by what appears to be a velvet curtain, makes eye contact with the viewer. Titian’s use of deep reds and ivories helps to enhance the impression of a pinkish hue emanating from her skin.

This painting was inspired by an earlier painting of a sleeping Venus (shown below) by the Venetian painter, Giorgione.



Sleeping Venus by Giorgione

1510

Oil on canvas



## SUMMARY

Artists of the Venetian period used color in their paintings to define forms. In this lesson, you learned about the **period of time and location of Venetian painting**.

**Titian** is a well-known painter from this period of time. He created artwork that defined this stylistic approach to using color, and established himself as one of the preeminent painters of the Italian Renaissance.

**“Bacchus & Ariadne”** is one of Titian’s works explored in this lesson. Color is used to define the figures in this painting. Titian also painted portraits, including one of **Isabella d’Este**. The techniques that Titian used evoke a sense of poise, the experience of age expressed in the body of a young woman. Finally, you looked at the painting **“Venus of Urbino”** by Titian. This painting was a commission from the eventual Duke of Urbino for his own private enjoyment, and the use of deep reds and ivories help to enhance the impression of a pinkish hue emanating from the central subject’s skin.

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR IAN MCCONNELL.