



GIOVANNI  
BELLINI  
(c. 1430-1516)



ANDREA  
MANTEGNA  
(c. 1431-1506)

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- Today I will tell you about two artists, born just a year apart but with very different upbringings.
- Giovanni Bellini was born into the leading family of artists in Venice. His father Jacopo Bellini was a famous and innovative artist. Giovanni went on to revolutionise Venetian painting and Giorgione and Titian were his apprentices.
- On the other hand, Andrea Mantegna (pronounced 'mahnt-EHNG-nah') was born outside Padua to a poor family, his father was a carpenter. He demonstrated his artistic abilities at an early age and Jacopo Bellini got to hear of his talent and arranged for him to marry his daughter Nicolosia (in 1453) when Mantegna was just 21. He therefore became brother-in-law to Bellini at an early stage of his career.

## **NOTES**

- This talk compares the lives of the two artists and their relationship as described in the literature and in Alistair Smith, *Andrea Mantegna and Giovanni Bellini* (1975, Themes and Painters in the National Gallery, Number 12).
- Central to the comparison are two pairs of work—Mantegna's and Bellini's depictions of 'The Agony in the Garden', and their versions of 'The Presentation at the Temple' – Mantegna's from the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin and Bellini's from the Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice.

## **SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY EXHIBITION**

- An 18 minute film begins the exhibition.

- Bellini was born into the leading family of artists in Venice. His father Jacopo Bellini was a leading figure and an innovative artist. Mantegna was born outside Padua to a poor family, his father was a carpenter. He demonstrated his artistic abilities at an early age and Jacopo Bellini got to hear of his talent and arranged for him to marry his daughter Nicolosia in 1453 when Mantegna was 21. He therefore became brother-in-law to Bellini at an early stage of his career. Venice was one of the great centres of the world in the fifteenth century both in terms of its wealth through trade and as the spiritual centre through its links to the old Byzantine Empire. The Bellini family painted mostly religious pictures and portraits of wealthy, conservative patrons. Although poor Mantegna grew up in a city with ancient classical associations, a Roman city which had one of the leading universities in Europe. Padua university lectures were conducted in Latin and it was famous for its teaching of medicine and the human body. Bellini was younger than Mantegna and early on was very impressed by his brother-in-law's skill. Bellini's early drawing of the crucifixion shows elongated figures and is Mantegnesque in style.
- Comparing early drawing by both artists of the pieta shows Bellini's nervous, emotional line compared with Mantegna's firm, bold and strong line. Comparing *Agony in the Garden* shows Mantegna's concentration on the architecture. In the distance we see Rome, with the Coliseum, Trajan's column and what look like an Islamic crescent. His foreshortening is a tour-de-force. Bellini's was painted later and is superficially similar but with a greater feeling for landscape and light to convey emotion but his foreshortening is weaker.
- In 1460 Mantegna left Padua for Mantua and his defining work is the *Camera degli Sposi* in the Ducal Palace. It includes a self-portrait in the grotesque work and elements of humour such as the putti seen from below. It is 'Baroque' almost 200 years before the baroque period started.
- Bellini spent his life in Venice and his masterpiece is the altarpiece in S. Zaccaria. Its colour, light and harmony sums up his life and his ability to create a divine but believable world we can enter. His paintings of Venice define the way we now see Venice but before Bellini no one painted it in this way.
- When Mantegna died he left his commission at the Cornaro Palace in Venice unfinished. Bellini agreed to finish his brother-in-law's work and although they were rivals and competitors all their lives he went out of his

way to emulate his brother-in-law's style. In the end he was family and an artist to be honoured.

- Room 1 – Beginnings
  - *Presentation of Christ in the Garden* was first painted by Mantegna and two decades later by Bellini who traced the original and added two figures. One of the additional figures on the right is a man looking out at us who may be a member of the family.
  - Mantegna, *St. Jerome*, 1448-51
  - Bellini, *St. Jerome*, 1453-55, one of his earliest known works.
  - Mantegna, *St. Mark the Evangelist* 1448, one of his earliest known paintings.
- Room 2 – Coming Together, Growing Apart
  - Mantegna, *Saint Sebastian*, 1149-60
  - Bellini, *Christ's Descent into Limbo*, 1475-80. Based on a Mantegna invention and his drawing of 1465-70 of the same scene. Mantegna produced a different painting of the Descent in 1492.
  - Bellini, *Virgin and Child, Davis Madonna*
  - Mantegna and Bellini, *Crucifixion*, Mantegna 1465-69, Bellini 1465
  - *The Agony in the Garden*, Mantegna 1455-56, Bellini 1448-60. The first version of this subject in Western art.
- Room 3 – The Pieta
  - *Drawing Mantegna 1455-65, Bellini 1465-70*
  - Donatello, *Dead Christ Attended by Angels*, 1430-35
- Room 4 – Antiquity
  - No artist tried as hard to recreate the ancient world as Mantegna especially once he arrived in the Gonzaga Ducal Palace in Mantua where classical learning was prized. However, Mantegna did not actually visit Rome until 1488. The *Triumph* panels are from 1490 after he had returned from Rome.
  - Mantegna, three panels from the *Triumph of Caesar*
  - Bellini, *Contenance of Scipio*, 1506-08
  - Mantegna, *The Introduction of the Cult of Cybele at Rome*, 1505-06, NG
  - Bellini, *Feast of the Gods*

- Bellini, *Drunkenness of Noah*. To Renaissance minds the events of the Old testament were a historic record that described events in the classical world. The work shows Bellini's continued inventiveness in old age.
- Room 5 – Landscape
  - Landscape painting was new in Italy and was inspired by Jacopo and by Northern European artists such as van Eyck. Landscape provides both a sense of place and a range of emotions.
  - Bellini, *Assassination of St. Peter Martyr*, 1505-06, recently restored.
  - Bellini, *Madonna of the Meadow*, 1500-05, NG. The black bird in the tree is a motif we find in Mantegna's *Agony in the Garden*.
  - Bellini, *Ressurrection of Christ*, 1475-79
  - Mantegna, *Minerva Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue*, 1500-02. The complex iconography was specified by Isabella d'Este his most demanding patron at Mantua.
- Room 6 – Portraits and Private Devotion
  - Bellini, *Doge Leonardo Loredan*. Who was both a magistrate and the Doge and the lighting suggest the brightly lit, stern face of justice and the shadowy, softer face of mercy. It was a private commission so Bellini had more freedom than usual. The painting looks tight but there is a great freedom of brushwork used to create the fabric.
  - Mantegna, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1495-05
  - Bellini, *Portrait of Fra Teodoro of Urbino as Saint Dominic*, 1515
  - Bellini, *Virgin and Child with Sts. Catherine and Mary Magdalene*, 1490
  - Bellini, *Portrait of a Humanist*, It has been speculated that it is a portrait of Mantegna.
  - Mantegna, *Cardinal Ludovico Trevisan*, 1459-60. One of the first three-quarters view in Western art.
  - Mantegna, *Virgin and Child, Simon Madonna*, 1465. Shows that Mantegna was capable of great tenderness, not the fingers of the Christ child.

## REFERENCES

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Giovanni Bellini (circa 1430–1516), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1500, 34 × 26 cm, Capitoline Museums



Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, detail, probably a self-portrait of Mantegna, 1465–1466, 86 × 67 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

Giovanni Bellini (circa 1430–1516), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1500, 34 × 26 cm, Capitoline Museums

Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, probably a self-portrait of Mantegna, 1465–1466, 86 × 67 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

- **They were very different artistically, Giovanni Bellini** (c. 1430-1516, aged 86) **was a restrained person who produced emotional art and Andrea Mantegna** (c. 1432-1506, aged 74) **was an emotional person who produced restrained art.**
- Bellini was **happy to follow in the style of his father Jacopo** yet his later work is uniquely his own. He was deeply and emotionally affected by the **Christian message** and his images were designed to have a **direct emotional impact**. When he makes reference to classical antiquity **it is unconvincing and virtually meaningless** as it means nothing to him. He was a **modest, reticent character** who **was happy to remain in Venice all his life, in peace**, painting in its churches and running the family business. He was happy to allow his elder brother Gentile to become the main artist in the public's eye.
- On the other hand, Mantegna was gifted from an early age and was **precocious** and intellectually self-sufficient. He studied archaeology and took a **deep interest in the classical**. His work was always **extremely detailed** and can be examined with a magnifying glass and the brushstrokes still cannot be seen. Despite the **apparent lack of emotion in his art** he was an extremely

emotional. One observer noted in 1474 that “**There is not a single person in the vicinity with whom he agrees**”. He was famous for his **ferocious vocabulary and his aggression** sometimes went beyond verbal abuse. The Pope criticized him for insisting on payments due and Federigo Gonzaga described him as ‘**capricious**’. He was an ‘**angry young man**’, very sure of himself and followed no one **yet his painting** belie this aggression with their **cool, intellectual, careful and controlled style**. His intellectual approach combined a detailed knowledge of antiquity with a rational yet expressive approach to Christianity. He was always looking for **new styles** and experiences and **travelled all over Italy** to meet new artists and find new techniques.

## **NOTES**

- Mantegna's influence on the style and trends of his age was very marked over Italian art generally. Giovanni Bellini, in his earlier works, obviously followed the lead of his brother-in-law Andrea. Albrecht Dürer was influenced by his style during his two trips in Italy, reproducing several of his engravings. Leonardo da Vinci took from Mantegna the use of decorations with festoons and fruit.
- Mantegna's main legacy is considered the introduction of spatial illusionism, both in frescoes and in sacra conversazione paintings and his tradition of ceiling decoration was followed for almost three centuries.

## **BIO:BELLINI**

- Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516) was born in **Venice** and lived and worked there **all his long life**. He became one of the **most influential Venetian artists alongside his pupils Giorgione and Titian** and is considered the **father of the Venetian Renaissance** with its emphasis on **colour and emotion**. In many of his pictures he removes all traces of narrative in order to make a bold emotional statement that is not tainted by any intellectual discourse. He does not try to persuade by logic but overcome by emotion.
- He was the son of the famous Venetian artist **Jacopo Bellini** (c. 1400- c. 1470) and brother of **Gentile**. Jacopo was a pupil of Gentile de Fabriano a leading artist of the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and Jacopo introduced the techniques of the Florentine school to Venice. Giovanni's earliest paintings were influenced by his father's graceful style and the severe Paduan style of his brother-in-law Andrea Mantegna. They include a **Madonna and Child, Dead Christ Supported by Angels**, four triptychs in the Venice Accademia,

and two Pietàs in Milan. His early work is well exemplified in two beautiful paintings, ***The Blood of the Redeemer*** and ***The Agony in the Garden***.

- Bellini was brought up in his father house where he lived and worked closely with his brother Gentile. His father, Jacopo was one of the founders of the Renaissance style of painting in Venice. Giovanni's early work is in egg tempera and all of his work has a depth of religious feeling and sentiment. A prime example of his early work is ***St. Jerome in the Desert*** which is still very similar to his father's and his brother's work. Like Mantegna he started to employ foreshortening as he experimented with the possibilities of unusual perspective views and their emotional impact.
- His Madonnas exhibit a sweetness derived from his father's work but he adds a decorative richness drawn from nature. His work is mainly linear, that is forms are created using lines rather than by defining mass which is derived from the Florentine tradition and from Mantegna. However, his line is less obvious than in Mantegna's work and his forms are softer.
- In 1470 he received a commission to paint a major work in the Scuola di San Marco but this and other early works have not survived. After 1479–1480 much of Giovanni's time was taken by his duties as conservator of the paintings in the great hall of the Doge's Palace. He was commissioned to paint six or seven new works but they did not survive the fire of 1577. However, many of his altarpieces and other devotional works have survived. These works show him gradually moving **away from the old style of his father and exploiting the exciting possibilities of oil paint** which were first introduced into Venice by **Antonello da Messina in 1473**. Antonello da Messina was a Sicilian artist who had worked in Northern Europe where he learned the use of oil painting **from Jan van Eyck** and others. Bellini's keen eye for colour and light found its medium in the new oil paints which allowed his work to blossom.
- Towards the mid-1470s he painted the composite altarpiece of Saints Giovanni e Paolo in Venice which shows that his style had changed little over the previous ten years. Shortly after he took a trip down the Adriatic and his *Coronation of the Virgin* at Pesaro shows the influence of Piero della Francesca. At this time he also met Antonello da Messina who travelled to Venice in 1475 and his change in style from his earlier Mantegnesque style is seen in the **San Giobbe altarpiece** (now in the Accademia Gallery in Venice).
- His **brother Gentile** was chosen by the Venetian government to paint the



great historical scenes in the **Great Council room in Venice**. At the time Gentile was considered the greater painter but when Gentile was sent on a mission to Constantinople Giovanni took his place. The six or seven new canvases he painted in 1479-80 were his greatest work but they were destroyed by fire in 1577.

- For the first twenty years he devoted himself to Madonnas, Pietas and Crucifixions but towards the end of the century he painted a wider range of subjects and **became one of the greatest landscape painters**. His study of outdoor light means that one can deduce the season and even the time of day.
- For the **St. Francis in Ecstasy** of the Frick Collection or the **St. Jerome at His Meditations**, painted for the high altar of Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Venice, the details of the earth are studied as carefully as the human figures. The purpose of his naturalism is to achieve a realism that adds strength to the idealism of the religious subject. In the landscape **Sacred Allegory**, now in the Uffizi, he created the first of the dreamy enigmatic scenes for which **Giorgione**, his pupil, was to become famous. The same quality of idealism is to be found in his portraiture. His **Doge Leonardo Loredan** in the National Gallery, London, has all the wise and kindly firmness of the perfect head of state, and his **Portrait of a Young Man** (c. 1505; thought to be a likeness of the Venetian writer and humanist Pietro Bembo) in the British royal collection portrays all the sensitivity of a poet.
- A comparison of the San Giobbe Altarpiece and the San Zaccaria Altarpiece painted many years later shows how his style developed over the years. The early work appears harsh and in high contrast compared to the softer later work. His use of oil colours has matured in San Zaccaria and the figures appear suspended in a still, rarefied atmosphere.
- **Albrecht Dürer**, visiting Venice for a second time in 1506, describes Giovanni Bellini as **still the best painter in the city**, and as full of all courtesy and generosity towards foreign brethren of the brush.
- **Bellini painted actively up until his death** at the age of almost 90 in 1516. During the last fifteen years of his life, he was **inundated with commissions** to paint altarpieces, portraits and mythologies - all with careful attention to landscape detail. Although considered the master painter of Venice at the time he was always interested in learning new techniques and styles from younger painters. Many of his later works are secular images of mythology and landscapes rather than the religious works of his youth and he

experimented with a more atmospheric style. His skill is shown in the life-like image of **Doge Leonardo Loredan** with his shimmering silk clothing and austere appearance.

- **Giovanni Bellini life was successful, serene and prosperous and his school of painting dominated Venetian art.** Two of his pupils, Giorgione and Titian surpassed their master in world fame. We know little of what he was like as a man except from a letter written by Albrecht Durer, "Everyone tells me what an upright man he is, so that I am really fond of him. He is very old, and still he is the best painter of them all."

### **BIO:MANTEGNA**

- **Andrea Mantegna** (c. 1431-1506) was an Italian painter, a student of Roman archaeology, and **son-in-law of Jacopo Bellini**. Like other artists of the time, Mantegna **experimented with perspective**, e.g. by lowering the horizon in order to create a sense of greater monumentality and he was the first to create a total painted environment. His **hard, metallic landscapes and stony figures** demonstrate his **sculptural approach to painting**. He also led a workshop that was the leading producer of prints in Venice before 1500.
- He was **born near Padua**, the son of a carpenter. He became an apprentice painter when he was eleven to the leading artist **Francesco Squarcione** (c.1395-1468), founder of the Paduan school. Mantegna's innate ability led to him being formally adopted by Squarcione but Mantegna set up his own workshop when he was just 17 complaining that Squarcione had not compensated him sufficiently. His ability is demonstrated by a commission to paint an altarpiece for the church in **Santa Sofia** the same year (1448), **now lost**.
- **Mantegna lived in Padua from the age of 10 to the age of 30** and the city exerted a strong influence on his life and work. **Padua University was founded in 1222** and was one of the first and most important universities in Europe and it offered a wider range of subjects than any other university. The city was **multicultural** as it attracted scholars from all over Europe and there was a widespread and intense **interest in antiquity**. At this time most artists were considered to be **craftsmen but Mantegna** mixed with the **humanists, antiquarians and professors** and was therefore one of the first artists to **elevate the profession** to the highest levels of academic status. Mantegna pursued a thorough understanding of the Roman world including

Roman architecture and sculpture as well as the political realities of the harsh totalitarian regime and its cultural clash with the new Christian religion centred on the salvation of the individual.

- In this period Italy was not a unified country but a collection of competing city states. In the art world **Padua was 'ruled' by Squarcione and Venice by the Bellini family**. In 1453 Mantegna married **Nicolosia**, daughter of **Jacopo Bellini** and sister of Giovanni and Gentile Bellini. It is likely that Jacopo Bellini saw the marriage as a way of weakening Padua's control of the arts and strengthening that of Venice. However, Mantegna did not join the Bellini workshop but used the dowry to establish his own powerful artistic centre in Padua. Mantegna may have been influenced by the sculptural power of the Florentine sculpture Donatello who had completed the high altar of San Antonio, Padua, by 1450. Until the 1490s Mantegna's painting reflected the hard, grey surfaces of sculpture in many of his human forms.
- In 1459 Mantegna painted the **San Zeno altarpiece in Verona**. The same year he **lost his independence** by entering the service of **Ludovico Gonzaga in Mantua** although he was allowed to travel to Florence and Pisa in 1466-67. The patronage guaranteed a fixed income (although he was sometimes not paid) and the opportunity to create one of his best known works, the **Camera degli Sposi** in the **Palazzo Ducale in Mantua**. Previously painters had created a rectangular area containing an imaginary space behind the frame. Mantegna created a convincing three-dimensional environment that encloses the viewer on all sides and transforms the small room into an elegant open-air pavilion containing the characters that must have also occupied the real space of the room, the Gonzaga court. The flat ceiling appears concave and contains what appears to be a circular oculus opening onto a blue sky. Around the oculus is a balustrade on and over which we see foreshortened putti, women, birds and plants. This became the most influential *di sotto in su* ceiling decoration of the early Renaissance although many of his ideas were not fully taken up until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mantegna had a uniquely close relationship with Ludovico Gonzaga who rescued him from disputes with his neighbours suggesting a contentious or arrogant personality.
- In 1478 **Ludovico died** followed shortly after by Mantegna's son who had been expected to continue the family tradition. By 1484 **Mantegna's financial situation was so bad** he was forced to ask for help from Lorenzo

de'Medici in Florence. Mantegna thought of moving to Florence but Ludovico's son died and with the accession of **Francesco II in 1484 his financial situation improved**. Many of his works for Francesco are now lost but one that does survive is the ***Triumph of Caesar*** at **Hampton Court, begun about 1486**. It may be because of this demonstration of his ability to recreate the splendour and ancient Rome that Pope Innocent VIII commissioned him to decorate his private chapel in the Belvedere Palace in Rome (destroyed 1780) which he worked on from 1488 to 1490.

- In the 1490s he continued to work hard despite ill health and completed many works including the ***Madonna of the Victory (1496)*** to commemorate his supposed victory at the Battle of Fornovo, ***Parnassus (1497)***, a picture celebrating the marriage of Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga in 1490, and ***Wisdom Overcoming the Vices (1502)*** for Isabella's studiolo (a small room in the Gonzaga palace at Mantua).

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Andrea Mantegna (c. 1432-1506), *St. James led to His Execution*, 1453-55, formerly Padua, destroyed in 1944 by bombing



Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431-1506), *St. James led to His Execution*, 1453-55, formerly Padua, destroyed in 1944 by bombing, showing his mastery of *di sotto in su* (from below to above) perspective and his understanding of Roman architecture

- **Mantegna** painted this when he was about 22 the same year he married into the famous Bellini family of Venice.
- In 1460, **he moved to Mantua** where he became court painter to the ruling **Gonzaga family** until his death in 1506 aged 75. **Giovanni Bellini** (c. 1430-1516, aged 86), who was about the same age **spent his entire career in Republican Venice**. Despite the distance between them, their work provides evidence of a continuing artistic exchange that continued for all their long lives.
- We can begin by considering a description of **Mantegna's work by John Ruskin**, "... give ten minutes [to it] quietly, and examine it with a magnifying glass of considerable power ... You cannot see more wonderful work, in minute drawing with the point of the brush ; the virtue of it being that not only every touch is microscopically minute, but that, in this minuteness, **every touch is considered and every touch right. It is to be regarded, however, only as a piece of workmanship. It is wholly without sentiment**".
- We can see Ruskin's prejudice immediately but as we shall see there is considerable sentiment of Mantegna's work but it is held within a rigorous control and precision. His brushstrokes cannot be seen and every detail is clearly delineated, every pebble and every leaf. He also explores the

possibilities of the new discovery of perspective by **adopting exciting viewpoints** as we see here. His interest and **love of the classical period** can be seen in much of his work and he combines it with his representation of Christian subjects.

## **NOTES**

- Giovanni Bellini's **father was Jacopo Bellini**, his **brother was Gentile Bellini** (who was more highly regarded than Giovanni during his lifetime, although the reverse is true today), and, as mentioned, his **brother-in-law was Andrea Mantegna**. He is considered to be the founder of the Venetian school of painting with its emphasis on colour rather than line. Through the use of clear, slow-drying oil paints, Giovanni created deep, rich tints and detailed shadings. His sumptuous colouring and fluent, atmospheric landscapes had a great effect on the Venetian painting school, especially on his pupils Giorgione and Titian.

## **REFERENCES**

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Andrea Mantegna (c. 1430-1506), *The Agony in the Garden*, 1458-60, tempera on wood, 62.9 x 80 cm, National Gallery



Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431-1506), *The Agony in the Garden*, 1458-60, tempera on wood, 62.9 x 80 cm, National Gallery

- The Agony in the Garden refers to the events in the life of Jesus between the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest. According to all four Gospels, immediately after the Last Supper, Jesus took a walk to pray (John 18:1). Matthew and Mark identify this place of prayer as Gethsemane. Jesus was accompanied by **St. Peter, St. John and St. James the Greater**, whom he asked to stay awake and pray. He moved "a stone's throw away" from them and prayed there times. Each time he checked on the three apostles, and **found them asleep**. He said: "**The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak**" and an angel came from heaven to strengthen him.
- In the background Judas is coming with soldiers to arrest him. The dead tree and the vulture symbolise death and we will see the vulture again in the last painting I show you today by Bellini. Jerusalem (which is represented here as a walled city), and which was then under Roman rule, includes an equestrian statue, a column with relief sculpture, and a theatre like the Colosseum, all inspired by monuments surviving in Rome.
- The **rabbit is a symbol of rebirth and resurrection** and this ancient symbolism explains the connection between Easter, the resurrection of Christ and the **Easter Bunny**. Three hares together is a symbol of **the Trinity**
- Note Mantegna's painting style which is **hard-edged with dark contrasts of strong colours**.

## NOTES

- *The Agony in the Garden* refers to the events in the life of Jesus between the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest. According to all four Gospels, immediately after the Last Supper, Jesus took a walk to pray (John 18:1). Matthew and Mark identify this place of prayer as Gethsemane. Jesus was accompanied by **St. Peter, St. John and St. James the Greater**, whom he asked to stay awake and pray. He moved "a stone's throw away" from them, where he felt overwhelming sadness and anguish, and said "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it." Then, a little while later, He said, "If this cup cannot pass by, but I must drink it, your will be done!" (Matthew 26:42). He said this prayer three times, checking on the three apostles, between each prayer and **finding them asleep**. He comments: "**The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak**". An angel came from heaven to strengthen him.
- "Angels bearing the Instruments of the Passion appear to Christ at prayer. The disciples sleep. In the background Judas comes with soldiers to arrest Christ. The dead tree and vulture may indicate death. New growth and the pelicans are perhaps hopeful signs for the future. Jerusalem (which is represented here as a walled city), and which was then under Roman rule, includes an equestrian statue, a column with relief sculpture, and a theatre like the Colosseum, all inspired by monuments surviving in Rome. The other version of this picture by Mantegna is in Tours (Musée des Beaux-Arts) and is firmly dated to 1457-9, although the composition is in reverse, and the disciples differently arranged. The National Gallery picture is probably a little later in date. It is more fluent as a composition and more dramatic in presentation, with a more effective relationship between figures and landscape. The picture may be related to a drawing by Jacopo Bellini (London, British Museum). There is also a version (in the National Gallery Collection, 'The Agony in the Garden') by Giovanni Bellini which is influenced by Mantegna's picture." (National Gallery)
- The **rabbit is a symbol of rebirth and resurrection** and this ancient symbolism explains the connection between Easter, the resurrection of Christ and the **Easter Bunny**. Three hares together is a symbol of **the Trinity** and is found in Albrecht Dürer's woodcut, *The Holy Family with the Three Hares* (1497) although it might also refer to the three apostles that accompany Jesus, St. Peter, St. John and St. James the Greater.



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Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516)  
*The Agony in the Garden*, about 1465, 81.3 x 127 cm, National Gallery

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *The Agony in the Garden*, about 1465, 81.3 x 127 cm, National Gallery

- This is Bellini's version. It is **softer and more human**. The forms are **modelled by light and their edges softened** by atmosphere. This style was to become the basis of what we call the Venetian style. Bellini may have been the first artist to capture dawn in a painting and it gives the painting a unearthly, magical atmosphere. We see him experimenting with foreshortening to provide impact and accuracy. The horizon is high creating a deep wide landscape that works with the figures to create the atmosphere. The dawn light fills the landscape which is the first of the great Venetian landscapes that were to develop over the next century or more.

## NOTES

- The painting was owned by Consul Smith in Venice and was bought by William Beckford at the Joshua Reynolds sale in 1796 for £5. Beckford sold it and later bought it back along with the Mantegna version for £52 10s. The National Gallery bought it in 1863 for £630, by then a low price.
- "Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane while three of his disciples – Peter, James. and John – sleep. An angel reveals a cup and a paten, symbols of his impending sacrifice. In the background, Judas approaches with the Roman soldiers who will arrest Jesus (New Testament, Mark 14: 32-43). This painting is closely related to *The Agony in the Garden* (probably slightly earlier in date, by

Bellini's brother-in-law, Andrea Mantegna, which is also in the collection). The two pictures both probably derive from a drawing by Giovanni's father, Jacopo Bellini. In Giovanni Bellini's version, the treatment of the dawn light is particularly noteworthy." (National Gallery)

## **REFERENCES**

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/giovanni-bellini-the-agony-in-the-garden>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agony\\_in\\_the\\_Garden\\_\(Bellini\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agony_in_the_Garden_(Bellini))



Andrea Mantegna (c. 1430-1506), *The Agony in the Garden*, 1458-60, tempera on wood, 62.9 x 80 cm, National Gallery



Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516) *The Agony in the Garden*, about 1465, 81.3 x 127 cm, National Gallery

Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431-1506), *The Agony in the Garden*, 1458-60, tempera on wood, 62.9 x 80 cm, National Gallery

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *The Agony in the Garden*, about 1465, 81.3 x 127 cm, National Gallery

- I am showing the two side-by-side so you can compare the two approaches. The restrained, hard-edged Mantegna on the left and the softer, more emotional and atmospheric Bellini on the right. The perspective in Mantegna's painting is more accurate.

Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431-1506),  
*Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1455,  
68.9 x 86.3 cm, Gemäldegalerie,  
Berlin



Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431-1506), *Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1455, 68.9 x 86.3 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

- The date of the painting is unknown, but it belongs to the painter's youth in Padua. Date ranges from 1453, when Mantegna married Nicolosia Bellini (daughter Jacapo Bellini painter and the sister of Giovanni and Gentile, both painters as their father), and **1460 when he left for Mantua**. The scene is set **within a marble frame**. The **cushion** on which the Child lies stands on it and **partially juts out**.
- The Virgin Mary, in the foreground, is holding the Child while a **bearded priest** is near her. At the centre, in the shade, is **Joseph with a halo**. Also in the background, at the sides, **two spectators** without haloes have been identified as **possibly Mantegna's self-portrait and a portrait of his wife**.

## REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presentation\\_at\\_the\\_Temple\\_\(Mantegna\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presentation_at_the_Temple_(Mantegna))

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1460, 80 x 105 cm, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice



Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1460, tempera on panel, 80 x 105 cm, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice

- This slightly later work by **Bellini** was explicitly inspired by Mantegna's.
- The dating of the work is uncertain, though it is usually considered to be **later than** *Presentation at the Temple* by Andrea Mantegna (Berlin, c. 1455), from which Bellini took a very similar placement of the figures.
- The commission of the two works is unknown and it has been suggested that the figures are members of the Mantegna and Bellini families.
- The main characters are nearly the same as those in Mantegna's work: the Virgin is holding the Child, whose feet are lying on a cushion, while the **bearded figure of Simeon** is coming to take him. In the **front is Saint Joseph**, which, according to some scholars, would be a portrait of **Bellini's father, Jacopo**. On the sides the painter added two further figures, which make the picture rather crowded. Apart his father, other identifications include **the author's self-portrait and Mantegna** (or his brother Gentile Bellini) for the **two men on the right**; and **Nicolosia**, sister of Giovanni and Gentile, and **wife of Mantegna**, together with their **mother Anna** for the **women on the left**.
- Bellini also replaced Mantegna's bronze frame with a parapet, making the characters nearer to the observer, and omitted their haloes.

## REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presentation\\_at\\_the\\_Temple\\_\(Bellini\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presentation_at_the_Temple_(Bellini))



Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431-1506), *Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1455, 68.9 x 86.3 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin



Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1460, 80 x 105 cm, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice

Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431-1506), *Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1455, 68.9 x 86.3 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Presentation at the Temple*, c. 1460, tempera on panel, 80 x 105 cm, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice

- This is the last time I will be doing a side-by-side comparison. But again you can compare the hard-edged Mantegna with the softer more emotional Bellini. The figure on the right of the Mantegna is regarded by some as a self-portrait and is the one I used at the beginning.

Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506),  
*Madonna della Vittoria*, 1495-  
96, tempera on canvas, 280 ×  
166 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris



Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *Madonna della Vittoria*, 1495-96, tempera on canvas, 280 × 166 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris

- This is an altarpiece in **Mantegna's mature style** commissioned for a chapel in Mantua.
- The full story of the commission is involved. When Francesco II Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua, was away fighting a Jewish banker called Daniele da Norsa, bought a house and replaced an image of the Virgin Mary with his own coat of arms. The citizens of Mantua were incensed and destroyed his house. When Francesco returned he forced Norsa to fund a chapel and this devotional painting executed by his court painter Mantegna. The work was placed in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, which had been constructed over the ruins of Daniele da Norsa's house. Later, this painting was one of the works looted by the French during the Napoleonic invasion of Italy, and by 1798 was being exhibited in the Louvre. The painting was never returned; the reason given by the Louvre over the last two hundred years is that its large size makes transport difficult.
- The characters are:
  - On the left foreground, Francesco Gonzaga paying homage to Mary who sits on a high throne with Jesus on her lap.
  - The child standing to her left is John the Baptist holding a sign saying, translated, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world".



- Further right and kneeling is John the Baptist's mother, St. Elizabeth, protector of Isabella d'Este, wife of Francesco Gonzaga. The choice of St. Elizabeth in the place of Isabella d'Este may have been a message to Norsa who was made to pay for the work. St. Elizabeth is shown as a Jewess indicated by the yellow turban, and she was said to be the first to recognise the sanctity of the Virgin Mary whose image Norsa had destroyed.
- On the left is the archangel St. Michael with a sword and on the right St. Longinus with a broken spear.
- On the left at the back is St. Andrew, patron saint of Mantua, with a long stick with the cross and on the right St. George with a helmet and a long red lance.

## **NOTES**

- The medallion below the throne reads, translated, "Queen of heaven, rejoice, Alleluia".
- There is red coral hanging above the Virgin Mary. In Italy and Northern Europe during the Middle Ages red coral was believed to have magical powers and was seen to represent Christ's blood shed to redeem mankind and its hardness and tree-like shape symbolised the tree of life and so made it a symbol of life, rebirth and immortality.
- Longinus is the name given in Christian mythology to the unnamed Roman soldier who pierced Jesus in his side with a lance and who in medieval and some modern Christian traditions is described as a convert to Christianity.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madonna\\_della\\_Vittoria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madonna_della_Vittoria)

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516),  
*San Giobbe Altarpiece*, c. 1487,  
471 × 258 cm, Gallerie  
dell'Accademia, Venice



Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *San Giobbe (Saint Job) Altarpiece*, c. 1487, 471 × 258 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

- This is a spectacular work in the Accademia in Venice although the small crowded room it is in reduces its power. **One of the masterpieces of Bellini's mature style.** It is **painted using oils** rather than tempera and oil paint provides richer colours and tones and this laid the foundation of the whole Venetian school.
- The date is uncertain as some associate it with the plague year 1487 and others refer to the statement by Jacopo Sansovino in 1581 that it was his first use of oil painting which place it in the 1470s. The altarpiece remained in the church until 1814-18 and is now in the Accademia in Venice.
- **It is an example of a Sacre Conversazione** (Sacred Conversation). The essential elements of this innovative arrangement are a central Mary holding the Christ Child surrounded by an informal grouping of saints in a unified space with a strong sense of perspective that creates a space in which we feel we are present and therefore involved.
- In this case there are three musicians below Mary's throne and on the left Sts. Francis, John the Baptist and Job and on the right Sts. Dominic, Sebastian and Louis of Toulouse (known for feeding the poor and neglecting his own needs). The pillars are copies of the real ones of the original altar and in the half cupola is a gold mosaic in the old Venetian style which adds to the feeling that we are part of the same space.

## **REFERENCES**

<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/page/Renaissance-Paragone-Disegno-and-Colore>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Giobbe\\_Altarpiece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Giobbe_Altarpiece)

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516),  
*Altarpiece San Zaccaria*, 1505,  
oil on canvas, transferred from  
wood, 402 x 273 cm, Venice



Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Altarpiece San Zaccaria*, 1505, oil on canvas, transferred from wood, 402 x 273 cm, Venice

Sacred conversation by Giovanni Bellini, first figure from the left is Saint Peter with his attributes key and book, first figure from the right is Saint Jerome; left from Saint Mary is Saint Catherine from Alexandria with the palm of martyrdom and the broken wheel.

- This is another example of Bellini's mature style and I include it because the historian Simon Schema regards it as his finest work and the only work he mentioned in his discussion on colour and Bellini as the founder of the Venetian colour tradition.
- I have mentioned that Bellini was the founder of the **Venetian colour tradition** but I need to explain more fully its importance.
- During the Renaissance many debates took place comparing one medium or style with another. These were known as **paragoni or comparisons**. One such *paragoni* was the debate about whether sculpture or painting was the higher art. Another debate, relevant here, concerned the two rival aesthetic approaches to painting, referred to as **colore or colorito (colour) and disegno (design or drawing)**.
- **The Florentine school of art taught drawing as the key central skill.** Good draftsmanship was regarded as essential to seeing the world accurately and truthfully and as the beginning of good painting. So apprentices were taught anatomy and perspective and drawings themselves were increasingly regarded

as valuable records for pattern books and the source of creative ideas. Drawing was regarded as the intellectual, rational approach to painting which linked it to other intellectual activities and to classical studies.

- **The alternative approach was taught in Venice**, a city associated with San Marco and its brilliant mosaics in richly coloured marbles. The watery and often foggy atmosphere of Venice combines with these rich colours to enhance their effect through the cities often reflected, diffused or hazy light. The humid atmosphere made fresco painting impractical as the plaster deteriorated and so Venetian artists **quickly embraced oil painting when it arrived**. Oil paintings are durable and oil paints **provide rich colours and allow naturalistic effects**. As oil dries slowly, unlike tempera, it is **much more flexible and this allows changes and spontaneous composition** whereas fresco and tempera require careful preparation. Some Venetian artists, such as **Titian**, painted directly on the canvas with **very little underdrawing**. The effect is more emotional, more sensuous and more spontaneous. **Bellini was the founder of the Venetian colour tradition**.
- So the Venetian colour tradition was a philosophy, a way of life and an approach to the world and to art.

### **DISEGNO (DESIGN OR DRAWING) AND COLORITO (COLOUR)**

- Drawings became valued in their own right and were collected as they were thought to show the inner workings of the artist's mind. Leonardo even exhibited his drawing of *Virgin and Child with St Anne* to admiring crowds in Florence in 1501. In a finished painting this approach to art can be seen in terms of a well defined form constrained by line.
- The overall debate is similar to the eighteenth century debate between sense and sensibility although in the Renaissance the relationship with classical antiquity was more important. The debate was therefore also between a more classical and intellectual approach and a more sensuous, naturalistic and emotional approach.
- The debate continued into the seventeenth century with the contrast between the drawing style of the Carracci family, particularly Annibale and the colorito of Caravaggio and later between the classical lines of Nicolas Poussin and the painterly style of Peter Paul Rubens.

### **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Zaccaria\\_Altarpiece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Zaccaria_Altarpiece)



Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *Stories of St. James*, 1447-56, fresco, Cappella Ovetari, Church of the Eremitani, Padua, destroyed by bombing and reconstructed from multiple colour photographs

Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *Stories of St. James*, 1447-56, fresco, Cappella Ovetari, Church of the Eremitani, Padua, destroyed by bombing and reconstructed from multiple colour photographs

- This fresco cycle was in the Ovetari Chapel in Padua but was destroyed by Allied bombing in 1944, only two scenes and fragments survive which have been restored in 2006. The fresco is known from black and white photographs.
- Antonio Ovetari was a Paduan notary who, on his death, left a large sum for the decoration of the family chapel in the Eremitani Church. In 1448, his widow commissioned Mantegna, who was then only 17, and three other artists to decorate the chapel. Mantegna was accused of arguing and interfering and in due course halted work. Between 1453 and 1456/7 Mantegna returned to complete the work and the other artists had died or moved on. On completion the widow sued Mantegna for only painting eight apostles instead of twelve but two independent artists were called in and justified Mantegna's decision due to lack of space. In 1880 two scenes were removed from the wall and stored separately so they avoided being damaged by the bombing.

## NOTES

- The chapel was dedicated to saints James and Christopher. The six scenes on the northern wall were painted entirely by Mantegna. They are,
  - Vocation of the Saints James and John
  - St. James Preaching

- St. James Baptizes Hermogenes
  - Judgement of St. James
  - Miracle of St. James
  - Martyrdom of St. James
- The illusionistic frame appears to exist in our world and it creates a link between our space and that of the space depicted.

## **REFERENCE**

<https://arsartisticadventureofmankind.wordpress.com/tag/mantegnas-fresco-cycle-with-the-stories-of-st-james/>



Andrea Mantegna  
(c. 1432-1506),  
*Adoration of the  
Shepherds*, 1456, 40  
x 55.6 cm,  
Metropolitan  
Museum of Art

Andrea Mantegna (c. 1432-1506), *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1456, 40 x 55.6 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art

- The scene is set in an open space, with the Madonna in the middle, adoring the Child while kneeling on a stone step, while to her right St. Joseph is sleeping, and to her left two shepherds pray. St. Joseph's sleep may hint at his role as mere guardian of the Virgin and the Child. The tree stump on which he leans has born fruit on a single branch and this is usually interpreted as the mystic renewal of Nature under the new dispensation. There is also an ox, a traditional mute witness of the Nativity. On the right is a wide landscape and in the foreground two shepherds.
- Painted when the artist was probably in his **early twenties**, the picture is notable for its **exquisite detail**. It may have been commissioned by Borso d'Este, the duke of Ferrara, and its style seems to be a response to the **vogue there for Netherlandish painting** which Mantegna could study in the Este family collection, perhaps through a direct knowledge of Rogier van der Weyden. The grotesque portraits of the shepherds, such as their wrinkles and other realistic details, show the influence of northern European examples.
- There are some mistakes in the perspective which have led some historians to assign it an early date near that of the first frescoes executed by Mantegna in the Ovetari Chapel, in particular to the first scenes of the *Life of St. James* (1447-1456) that we have just seen, in other words as early as 1447. As always I go with the date assigned by the gallery in which it is displayed.



## **REFERENCES**

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436966>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoration\\_of\\_the\\_Shepherds\\_\(Mantegna\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoration_of_the_Shepherds_(Mantegna))



Andrea Mantegna (c. 1432-1506), Camera degli Sposi ('Bridal Chamber'), 1465-74, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, view of the west and north walls, walnut oil on plaster, north wall showing the court of Gonzaga of the west and north walls

Andrea Mantegna (c. 1432-1506), Camera degli Sposi ('Bridal Chamber'), 1465-74, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, view of the west and north walls, walnut oil on plaster, north wall showing the court of Gonzaga

- Commissioned by Ludovico Gonzaga for his palace in Mantua. The rooms are noted for their illusionistic detail and their **di sotto in su** ('seen from below') ceiling. It shows his skill with perspective and as a portraitist. **It took nearly ten years to complete and was his most important commission.** It shows the Marchese and his consort, Barbara of Brandenburg, together with their children, friends, courtiers and animals engaged in professional and leisurely pursuits, illustrating the present successes and alluding to the future ambitions of the Gonzaga dynasty.
- (CLICK) This **Court Scene** on the north wall shows Ludovico Gonzaga, dressed informally, with his wife Barbara von Hohenzollern-Brandenburg. They are seated with their relatives, while a group of courtiers fill the rest of the wall. The Marchese is shown in conversation with his secretary, Marsilio Andreasi, while his dog Rubino rests comfortably under his chair.
- Gonzaga turns to the side to speak with a man who has just entered from the left. Barbara von Brandenburg, is surrounded by her sons and daughters, a nurse, and a female dwarf. The girls are her two daughters Paola and Barbara. Beneath the right arcade, which is closed by a curtain that is drawn aside only slightly at the outside corner, stand a number of noblemen in elegant and colourful costumes. This procession of courtiers, identified by the colours of

their leggings as adherents of the Gonzaga, is led by a young blond man who, like the presumed secretary at the left edge of the picture, stands in front of the painted pilaster. He is flanked by associates who are in part obscured by the same pilaster. The blond youth with a dagger at his waist was identified as Rodolfo Gonzaga.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera\\_degli\\_Sposi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera_degli_Sposi)



Andrea Mantegna (c. 1432-1506), Camera degli Sposi, 1465-74, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, view of the west wall, *The Meeting*, walnut oil on plaster

Detail, possibly Frederick III of Hapsburg and Christian I of Denmark (detail, possibly self-portrait Mantegna, right, and Leon Battista Alberti, left)

- On the north wall is the **Meeting scene**. This fresco shows Ludovico in official robes on the right in an meeting with his son cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III and Christian I of Denmark. Although it has historically been regarded as representing a particular historic event recent scholarship has pointed out the lack of evidence and has suggested it is a generic scene. The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III never visited Mantua, and Christian I, King of Denmark and brother-in-law of Barbara of Brandenburg, did not visit until 1474 and we know from a report that this wall was finished in 1470.
- Above the doorway the putti hold an inscribed stone slab in which Mantegna dedicated 'this slight work' (OPVS HOC TENVE) to Ludovico and Barbara. It is dated 1474. Despite the proclaimed modesty, Mantegna was doubtless counting on the viewer's awareness that 'tenue' could also mean 'subtle' or 'fine'. (The Grove Dictionary of Art)

## REFERENCES

<http://www.travelingintuscany.com/art/andreamantegna/cameradeglisposi.htm>



Camera degli Sposi, 1465-74,  
Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, ceiling  
oculus, walnut oil on plaster

Camera degli Sposi, 1465-74, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, ceiling oculus, walnut oil on plaster

- This is looking up at the ceiling on which Mantegna has playfully painted an oculus that illusionistically opens into a blue sky, with foreshortened putti playfully frolicking around a balustrade. This was one of the earliest **di sotto in su** ceiling paintings.
- The ceiling is a brilliant tour de force that engages every viewer. The potted plant balanced on a thin wooden support looks ready to fall and the putti look precariously balanced all done to entertain the viewer with the then modern miracle of perspective.



Andrea Mantegna (c. 1432-1506),  
*The Triumphs of Caesar*, 1484-  
92, Hampton Court Palace, Royal  
Collection

- 1: The Trumpeters
- 2: The Statue Bearers
- 3: The Trophy Bearers
- 4: The Vase Bearers
- 5: The Elephants
- 6: The Corselet Bearers
- 7: The Captives
- 8: The Musicians
- 9: The Caesar on his Chariot

Andrea Mantegna (c. 1432-1506), *The Triumphs of Caesar*, 1484-92, Hampton Court Palace, part of the Royal Collection

The Triumphs of Caesar 1: The Trumpeters, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

The Triumphs of Caesar 2: The Statue Bearers, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

The Triumphs of Caesar 3: The Trophy Bearers, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

The Triumphs of Caesar 4: The Vase Bearers, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

The Triumphs of Caesar 5: The Elephants, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

The Triumphs of Caesar 6: The Corselet Bearers, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

The Triumphs of Caesar 7: The Captives, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

The Triumphs of Caesar 8: The Musicians, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

The Triumphs of Caesar 9: The Caesar on his Chariot, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, c. 1485-1506

- We now come to one of the great masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance. It is

enormous and now occupies a long gallery at Hampton Court Palace to the west of London. However, check before visiting as currently six of the nine are on display at the national Gallery while the Hampton Court gallery is being refurbished.

- There are nine canvases and each one is about 2.8 metres, nine feet long, so the complete work which has a pediment between each painting is about 90 feet or over 27 metres long.
- It is known as the *Triumphs of Caesar* as it illustrates one long procession culminating on the right with the arrival of Julius Caesar. It was commissioned by Francesco II Gonzaga (1466-1519). It was acquired by Charles I of Britain in 1629 and has been hung at Hampton Court Palace since then.
- (CLICK) 1. The first scene shows the Trumpeters leading the procession. It is painted in tempera not oils and the colours have faded over time. Note the level of detail and the accuracy of the representation of ancient Rome.
- (CLICK) 2. These are the statue bearers showing some of the spoils of war. The banner describes Julius Caesar's triumphant victory over the Gauls although it is not a particular victory being celebrated but a combination of the descriptions of various triumphs of Caesar by Roman writers.
- (CLICK) 3. These are the trophy bearers with parts of suits of armour taken from the enemy.
- (CLICK) 4. The vase bearers show more spoils associated with the name of Julius Caesar on banners tied to the trumpets.
- (CLICK) 5. Exotic animals, these are elephants captured from the enemy. Gonzaga was a successful soldier who no doubt commissioned this work to associate himself with one of the great soldiers of ancient Rome.
- (CLICK) 6. Known as the corselet bearers. A corselet is a piece of armour covering the chest.
- (CLICK) 7. Here we see captured slaves, men, women and children of all ages destined to be sold at the slave market and enter a Roman household as a commodity or sent to the mines where conditions were so hard that the average survival was five years. Rome's extensive mining operations consumed thousands of slaves and being sent was essentially a death sentence.
- (CLICK) The musicians add to the noise of the procession which was to announce and celebrate the victories of Caesar.

- (CLICK) Finally, we see Caesar seated on a chariot holding a victors palm. In the background is a triumphal arch which were built as a lasting reminder of Roman victories.
- (CLICK) In the later Italian Renaissance, this piece was extremely influential for its representation of ancient Rome, hailed by Giorgio Vasari in his celebrated *Lives of the Artists* as Mantegna's best work.

## **NOTES**

- This painting is one of nine canvases known as The Triumphs of Caesar, which can be counted amongst the finest achievements in Italian Renaissance art. They were probably painted for Francesco II Gonzaga (1466-1519), who became the 4th Marquis of Mantua in 1484. The nine paintings form a sequence, which should really be called the 'Triumph of Caesar', because it depicts a single procession, culminating in this final episode - the arrival of Julius Caesar borne on a chariot passing in front of a triumphal arch. The procession cannot be connected with a particular campaign, which is probably why it was seen more generally to celebrate the triumphs of Julius Caesar (c.102-44 BC), an ancient Roman soldier, statesman and historian revered during the Renaissance.
- Mantegna could have consulted a number of writers, such as Suetonius, Plutarch and Appian, all of whom include descriptions of triumphs and were available during the Renaissance in manuscript or printed forms. He would have also referred to Roman antiquities, particularly monumental arches and columns, which he would have known through drawn sources.
- Triumphs of Caesar were acquired by Charles I in 1629 when he purchased a large part of the collections formed by the Gonzaga family. They were clearly then considered to be the masterpiece of the collection. The canvases have been hung at Hampton Court since the probable date of their arrival in England in 1630, and tapestries based on some of the scenes were woven at the Mortlake factory. (Royal Collection website).

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triumphs\\_of\\_Caesar\\_\(Mantegna\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triumphs_of_Caesar_(Mantegna))

<https://www.theartstory.org/artist/mantegna-andrea/>

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/403958/the-triumphs-of-caesar-1-the-trumpeters>





Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, c. 1490, 68 x 81 cm, Pinacoteca di Brera

Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, c. 1490, tempera on canvas, 68 x 81 cm, Pinacoteca di Brera

- **This view of Christ was daringly original** as it shows a corpse without the heroism and nobleness normally associated with Christ. It is a dead body on a mortuary slab with a pair of feet thrust towards us. We are trapped with him in a small, tomb-like space with three mourners pressing into the corner of the picture. The limited palette he used suggest death and the darkness of a tomb.
- The date of the painting is debated and dates from c. 1457 to 1501 have been suggested. The work was kept by Mantegna in his studio and shown at the head of his coffin when he died.

## NOTES

- “Mantegna's realism prevails over any aesthetic indulgence that might result from an over-refined lingering over the material aspects of his subject. His realism is in turn dominated by an exalted poetic feeling for suffering and Christian resignation. Mantegna's creative power lies in his own interpretation of the "historic," his feeling for spectacle on a small as well as a large scale. Beyond his apparent coldness and studied detachment, Mantegna's feelings are those of a historian, and like all great historians he is full of humanity. He has a tragic sense of the history and destiny of man, and of the problems of good and evil, life and death.” (Web Gallery of Art)

## REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamentation\\_of\\_Christ\\_\(Mantegna\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamentation_of_Christ_(Mantegna))



Apollo Belvedere, after Leochares, c. 120–140; copy of bronze original of c. 350–325 BC, white marble, 224 cm, Vatican Museums



Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene*, c. 1495, 139.1 x 116.8 cm, National Gallery

Acquired 1855

Apollo Belvedere, after Leochares, c. 120–140; copy of bronze original of c. 350–325 BC, white marble, 224 cm, Vatican Museums

- It may be wondered how Mantegna and the scholars of the period **equated their love of pagan antiquity with Christianity**. The gods and goddesses of the ancient world were never considered as a religious alternative but they provided a rich source of exciting, sexual and illuminating myths. Knowledge of antiquity was the province of the few who were wealthy enough to afford a classical education or mix in circles where such things were admired. It was **to some extent a fashion** but one associated with **new ideas in philosophy and practical knowledge**. The rediscovery of the **power and beauty of ancient Rome** also provided an intellectual underpinning to the political aims and ambitions of the rulers of the Renaissance city states.
- In this work Mantegna brings a new treatment to the figure of baby Jesus. The difficulty of combining the form of a baby with the attributes of God has already been mentioned. Jesus raises his hand in benediction, an adult gesture. His wistful expression conveys a great maturity and his strong legs provide a balance that is devoid of strain. The subtle twist of the infant's body was new to Mantegna's work and derives from classical statues including the **Apollo Belvedere** which was unearthed in 1490. The weight is placed on one leg, the

other leg is slightly raised with the toe touching the ground and the hips and upper body are twisted away from the weight-bearing leg. **The pose is now known as contrapposto** from the Italian meaning 'place against' or 'counterpoise' and it gives the figure both a more dynamic and a more relaxed appearance. Mantegna has made the figures of the saints less dynamic by positioning their upper body in line with their weight-bearing leg although Mary Magdalene's head is turned away.

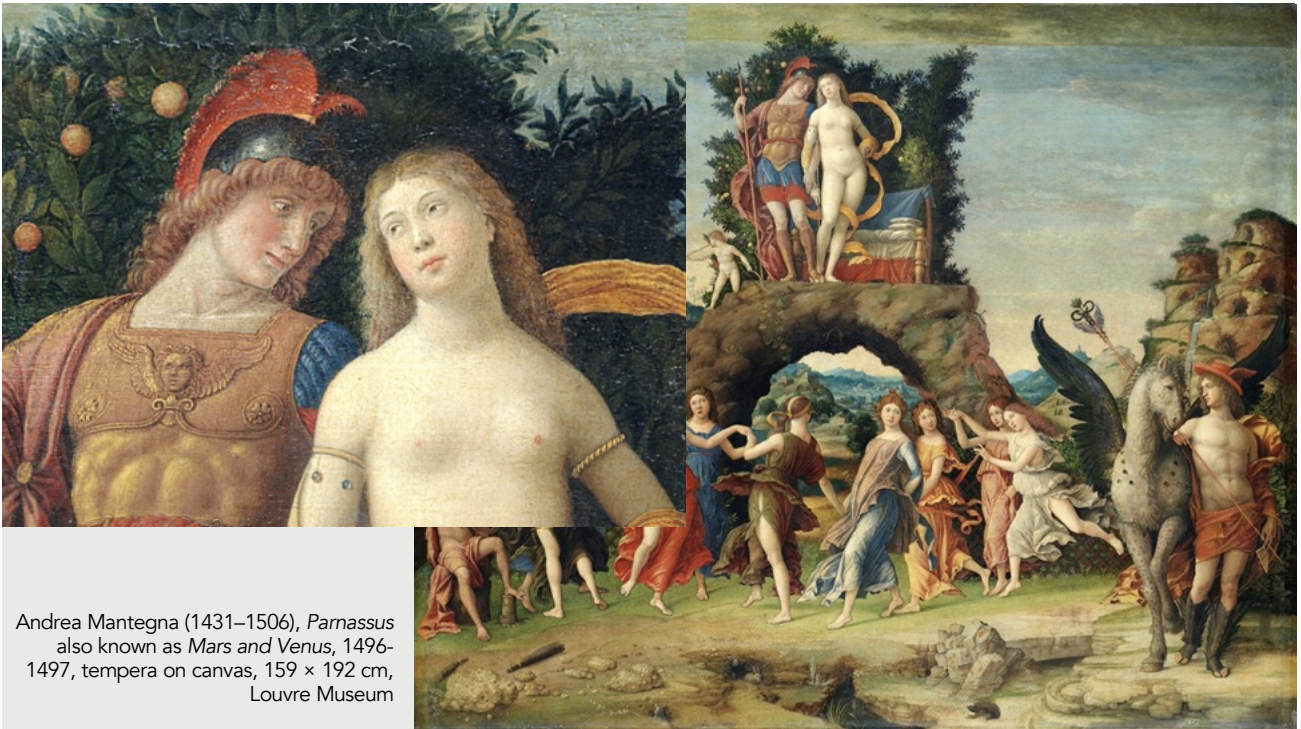
- The *Apollo Belvedere*, so called because it was displayed in the Belvedere courtyard of the Vatican, caused a sensation when it was discovered and was regarded as one of the wonders of the ancient world. By the eighteenth century it was regarded as the greatest ancient sculpture. The link between his representation of Christ and the *Apollo Belvedere* would have been clear to contemporaries. Apollo was the son of Zeus and was the god of the sun as well as being associated with health, music, truth and prophecy. Mantegna is fusing Christ and Apollo and rather than oppose Christianity and pagan antiquity he combines them and shows Christ as heir to the classical tradition.

## **NOTES**

- "It is not known for which church this altarpiece was made. Since it is on canvas it could easily have been sent from Mantua, where Mantegna was court artist, to a church elsewhere, and is in fact first recorded in Milan. The scroll of the Baptist, around his cross, is inscribed with the familiar Latin text, partially visible, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'. On the other side of the scroll is the artist's name '**Andreas Mantinia C.P.F...**' - the F for fecit (made this) and the C.P. perhaps for Comes Palatinus, a knighthood given to Mantegna in 1469." (National Gallery website)

## **REFERENCES**

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Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *Parnassus* also known as *Mars and Venus*, 1496-1497, tempera on canvas, 159 × 192 cm, Louvre Museum

- The Parnassus was the first picture painted by Mantegna for Isabella d'Este's studiolo (cabinet) in the Ducal Palace of Mantua and the theme of the Victory of Virtues over Vices, was suggested by the court poet (Paride da Ceresara). The traditional interpretation of the work is based on a late 15th-century poem by Battista Fiera, which identified it as a representation of Mount Parnassus, culminating in the allegory of Isabella as Venus and Francesco II Gonzaga as Mars.
- (CLICK) The two gods are shown on the arch of rocks in front a symbolic bed. They are accompanied by Anteros representing love and he has a blowpipe which aims at the genitals of Vulcan, Venus' husband, portrayed in his workshop in a grotto.
- In a clearing under the arch is Apollo playing a lyre. Nine Muses are dancing, in an allegory of universal harmony. According to ancient mythology, her chant could generate earthquakes and other catastrophes, symbolized by the crumbling mountains in the upper left. Such disasters could be cared by Pegasus' hoof: the horse indeed appears in the right foreground. The touch of his hoof could also generate the spring which fed the falls of Mount Helicon, which can be seen in the background.
- Near Pegasus is Mercury, with his traditional winged hat, caduceus (the winged staff with entwined snakes), and messenger shoes. He is present to protect the

two adulterers. (Wikipedia)

- She entrusted Mantegna with the first two canvases of the cycle, *Parnassus* (1497) and *Minerva* (1502), but considering his work out-of-date, she turned to the most famous painters of the new generation. In vain she solicited Giovanni Bellini, Leonardo da Vinci and Francesco Francia but, in 1505, she obtained only the disappointing painting by Perugino. Lorenzo Costa, appointed court painter at Mantegna's death (1506), completed the decoration with two canvases delivered between 1506 and 1511.

## **NOTES**

- After Mantegna's death in 1506, the work was partially repainted to update it to the oil technique which had become predominant.
- Together with the other paintings in the studiolo, it was given to Cardinal Richelieu by Duke Charles I of Mantua in 1627, entering the royal collections with Louis XIV of France. Later it became part of the Louvre Museum.
- The fashion of studioli, or private studies, small rooms reserved for intellectual activities, spread in the 15th century in the Italian courts, bathed in Humanist culture. Isabella d'Este, who married Francesco II in 1490, rapidly decided to create a studiolo in a tower of the old Castello di San Giorgio. The work on this project lasted more than twenty years.
- The *Parnassus* and *Minerva* were painted by Mantegna to be placed opposite each other, as demonstrated by the fact that the light comes from the left in the first painting and from the right in the second.
- A year after her husband's death (1519), Isabella transferred her studiolo to the ground floor of the Corte Vecchia. In her new apartment, she added two *Allegories* executed circa 1530 by Correggio to the old series of paintings.

## **MANTEGNA AND THE THEMES OF THE STUDILO**

- The five canvases of the first Studiolo, in the Castello di San Giorgio, all treat the theme of the Victory of Virtues over Vices, but we ignore whether they were part of a general iconographical program fixed from the beginning.
- The first picture, commissioned by the Marchesa and completed in 1497, already contains in embryonic form the themes to be developed in the other paintings, namely the triumph of spiritual over earthly love and the celebration of the Arts at the Court of Mantua. The evocation of the

amorous relationship of Mars and Venus could be interpreted as an allusion to the couple formed by Francesco II and Isabella, patron and protector of the Muses.

- The fact that the second painting, *Minerva Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue*, completed in 1502, contains ideas and motifs that had obsessed the artist from his beginnings, nonetheless leads one to consider that the artist played a determining role in its conception: the theme of Ignorance as enemy of Virtue, numerous inscriptions in different alphabets, clouds and a tree in human form, or the grotesque personifications of the Vices, chased by the dynamic and majestic warrior goddess." (The Louvre)

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Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), *The Introduction of the Cult of Cybele at Rome*, 1505-6, 76.5 x 273 cm, National Gallery, purchased 1873

Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1429–1498) and Piero del Pollaiuolo (1443–1496), *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, 1475, 292 × 203 cm, National Gallery

- This is *The Introduction of the Cult of Cybele* (pronounced 'sib-u-lee') at Rome by Mantegna in the National Gallery.
- In 204 BC the Romans brought the cult of Cybele, the eastern goddess of victory, from Pessina, Asia Minor, to Rome. Mantegna has combined the accounts of Ovid, Livy and Appian.
- At first glance, it might easily be overlooked as its colours are drab and the event appears obscure. However, there is an important early Renaissance dialogue embedded in the poses. I wanted to focus on them to bring out the subtlety of the work.
- (CLICK) Let us start with this **seemingly unconnected** painting by the brothers **Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo** (pronounced 'polli-u-olo'). It is *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* and what I want to discuss are the poses of the archers around the saint. Notice that there are three pairs of poses, the pair behind, the outside pair and the inner pair. Each pair shows the same pose from the front and the back, or at the back from one side and then the other. Even the white horses in the background show front and back views. The overall effect, however, is a loss of fluidity. The figures appear staged and rigid and their motion frozen.
- Let us see the **subtle way Mantegna** handles multiple poses thirty years later.



He uses a restricted palette to simulate stone with a red mottled background of the underlying layer of stone.

- (CLICK) The figure on the left carrying a branch of laurel has his left leg and right arm forward whereas the Asian eunuch at the head of the litter has his right leg and left arm forward. The next figure to the right mirrors the pose of the laurel bearer and his pose links to the excited figure welcoming the bust of the goddess Cybele (the mother of the gods).
- (CLICK) The organiser is the figure clasping his toga at the shoulder a gesture signifying he is a civic orator. There are then three standing figures each standing in contrapposto with one foot gracefully on tip-toe. The effect is dynamic with one figure appearing to slowly revolve into the next.
- These subtle relationship between the forms of the figures supports and enhances the subject matter of the painting. It was probably commissioned by Francesco Cornaro and like many wealthy Renaissance families they wished to link their name back to a famous Roman hero. In this case the Roman family of the Cornelli who played a role in the transportation of the image of Cybele from Crete to its temple in Rome.
- Ovid tells us that the male priests of the cult of Cybele entered an hysterical trance and castrated themselves in emulation of Cybele's lover Attis. Attis castrated himself and died when he first saw Cybele but she took pity on him and his body never decayed.
- So, the four figures on the left are the emotional Eastern devotees and the figures on the right are the cool, rational Roman citizens exemplifying Western thought and philosophy.
- Mantegna has invoked the distant past and brought it to life with dynamic movement while preserving a respectful distance by the use of a monochrome style that invokes a sculptural relief. He has created ghosts of the past that appear to come to life and link the past with the present thus enhancing the reputation of his wealthy patron.

## **NOTES**

- The bust of Cybele is on a litter draped with a carpet decorated with a labyrinth containing a confusing tangle of impossible special constructions that defy Western logical thought.
- The ancient world was known for its sculpture and a debate raged during the Renaissance about what was the most important art form, painting or

sculpture. One of the things in the sculptors favour was that the viewer could walk round the work and see it from many angles whereas painting was a single view. Michelangelo wrote in 1540, "It seems to me that the nearer painting approaches sculpture the better it is".

- "In 204 BC the Romans brought the cult of Cybele, the eastern goddess of victory, from Pessina, Asia Minor, to Rome. Mantegna has combined the accounts of Ovid, Livy and Appian. Cybele is represented by her sacred stone - 'she fell to earth as a meteor' - and as a bust with a mural crown (associating her with a city state). According to Juvenal, Cornelius Scipio (probably in profile gesturing with his right hand) was the most worthy Roman citizen to receive Cybele. This is one of four pictures commissioned in 1505 by Francesco Cornaro a Venetian nobleman, who claimed descent from the ancient Cornelii family (prominent in the picture). Mantegna only completed one before his death and Bellini supplied another (Washington, National Gallery)." (National Gallery)

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Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516),  
*Madonna Adoring the Sleeping  
Child*, early 1460s, tempera on  
panel, 72 x 46 cm, Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, New York



Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Madonna Adoring the Sleeping Child*, early 1460s, tempera on panel, 72 x 46 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (not currently on view)

- I now try to Bellini with this important early work. It can be dated to the mid-1460s and its hard, linear quality is indebted to the example of his brother-in-law, Andrea Mantegna, as well as to the sculpture of Donatello, which Bellini studied in Padua. The sleeping child is a reminder of Christ's death and sacrifice.
- Part of the reason for the hard surface is that the painting has suffered from strong, abrasive cleaning at some point. (Met)
- Why don't representations of Christ look like real babies. It is because the artist is struggling to combine a realistic baby with the representation of God on Earth. The baby has to have the innocence of a child combined with the wisdom and maturity of God on Earth.

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Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *St Francis in Ecstasy*, 1480-85, 120 x 137 cm, Frick Collection, New York

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *St Francis in Ecstasy*, 1480-85, 120 x 137 cm, Frick Collection, New York

- This is a representation of St Francis of Assisi (1181/82–1226) receiving or about to receive the stigmata, that is the wounds of Christ on his hands, feet and side. He is believed to have received them in 1224 during a retreat on Mount Alverna in the Apennines.
- Moses was seen by the Franciscans as their spiritual ancestor and the water trickling from the spout on the left reflects the miraculous fountain Moses brought forth from the rocks on Mount Horeb. The empty sandals behind the barefoot saint recall God's command to Moses to "put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The heron is a symbol of solitude and contemplation and St. Francis is known for his love of animals and nature. The donkey symbolises humility and patient, two virtues associated with St. Francis.
- Bellini has combined nature with a generic Italian hill town in the background and imbued it all with a radiant glow that gives the painting a magical feeling of a special event taking place in the midst of the ordinary.

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Giovanni Bellini (circa 1430–1516), *Sacred Allegory*, c. 1490, 73 × 119 cm, Uffizi Gallery

Giovanni Bellini (circa 1430–1516), *Sacred Allegory*, c. 1490, 73 × 119 cm, Uffizi Gallery

- This allegorical painting has been the subject of many interpretations such as a vision of Paradise. One more specific interpretation is that the painting represents the journey of the soul's purification as described in a 14<sup>th</sup> century French poem *Le Pèlerinage de l'Âme* (English: *The Pilgrimage of the Soul*).
- The other side of the lake is a hermit shepherd who could be St. Anthony on a spiritual path inspired to the first hermit, St. Paul, and overcoming several obstacles including the centaur which waits for him at the end of the staircase. The terrace in the foreground represents Paradise, where the souls in Purgatory, symbolised by the children, wait before they are admitted to heaven. Mary, on the left, advocate of the men before God, judges the souls with the help of the crowned figure of Justice. The two saints, Job and St. Sebastian, standing on the right would represent the patrons who commissioned the work and the two behind the parapet are St. Paul with the sword and possibly St. Peter guarding the entrance to Paradise.
- The children are collecting and playing with silver fruit possibly from the Tree of Knowledge but there is no serpent so it could be the Tree of Life and symbolise eternal life and divine wisdom.
- It is a significant painting in the development of Venetian art as it represents a shift towards a poetic and dreamlike style paving the way to similar work produced later by Giorgione.

## **NOTES**

- There is a wide terrace overlooking a lake. On the left is Mary enthroned under a baldachin with four steps. On the side is the myth of Marsyas interpreted as a symbol of Christ's passion. There are two female figures near Mary who could be saints or virtues. One appears to be floating but this might be because the colour of her legs and feet has been lost. In the middle of the scene are four children playing with a small tree and its silver fruits, perhaps a symbol of the knowledge tree, a symbol of life and wisdom. On the right are Job and St. Sebastian. Outside the parapet, are St. Joseph (or St. Peter) and St. Paul, the latter with his attribute of a sword. He is advancing to the left, where a man with a turban perhaps symbolizes an infidel. In the background, beyond a large lake, is a landscape with rocky spurs with men and animals. On the shores are a shepherd in a grotto, and a centaur.
- According to other scholars, the painting would represent a common holy conversation or a vision of the Paradise. Some see Jesus in the children on the cushion, giving to the work the meaning of a meditation about incarnation and redemption.
- The painting was originally attributed to Giorgione and today some believe it was by Marco Basaiti.
- What is the river Lethe

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Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1505, 43.8 x 35.2 cm, oil on panel  
Royal Collection

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1505, oil on panel, 43.8 x 35.2 cm, Royal Collection

- This is Bellini's last surviving portrait and the only one with a landscape background. Bellini followed the example of Netherlandish portraits which increasingly persuaded him to abandon egg tempera in favour of oils.
- After 1500 Bellini gradually developed a broader, simplified style, losing the need to specify details. Here sitter and landscape are painted as a unity, both lit by a soft golden light, outlines blurred. Infra-red reflectography reveals very little underdrawing, which is typical of Bellini's late technique. The modelling of the man's face is extremely subtle and in places insubstantial so that the shadow where his lips press together is created by one line.
- The subject wears the black biretta and robe of a Venetian cittadino, the social group below the patrician class. It has been suggested that he may be the Venetian writer and humanist Pietro Bembo (1470-1547). Bembo was born in Venice but lived at the courts of Urbino, Ferrara and Rome, where he became Papal Secretary in 1513 and Cardinal in 1538. The date of this picture (c.1505) means that Pietro Bembo would here be aged about 35, which is plausible.

## **REFERENCES**

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Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *The Feast of the Gods*, 1514 (Titian's additions in 1529), 170 × 188 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *The Feast of the Gods*, 1514 (Titian's additions in 1529), 170 × 188 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

- This is one of a small number of secular paintings Bellini produced towards the end of his life. It is a complicated composition showing a scene from Ovid when some seventeen figures feast in the forest.
- It was commissioned by the Duke of Ferrara for his study and it contains many examples of sexuality. Many goddesses and nymphs have their breast exposed. The man in green on the right is Priapus, the protector of male genitals who is depicted with an oversized permanent erection. He is pulling up the skirt of the sleeping nymph Lotis. The story is that Priapus tried to rape her when she was asleep but she was awoken by the cry of Silenus's donkey and ran off leaving an embarrassed Priapus as everyone suddenly became aware of his intentions.
- The man in the centre with his hand between the thighs of the woman next to him is thought to be the Duke and his wife.
- The Duke asked Dosso Dossi (c. 1489-1542) to make changes to the painting after Bellini died and in 1529 Titian made changes to the landscape but left the figures unaltered.

## NOTES

- Dosso Dossi (c. 1489-1542) was born in Dosso in Mantua and is School of Ferrara and painted in the style of Giorgione and Titian. From 1514 to his death he worked in the court of the Dukes of Ferrara and Modena.

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Giovanni Bellini (c.1430–1516),  
*Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan*, after 1501,  
oil on poplar wood, 61.6 × 45.1  
cm, National Gallery



Giovanni Bellini (c.1430–1516), *Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan*, after 1501, oil on poplar wood, 61.4 × 44.5 cm, National Gallery

- One of Bellini's most famous works *Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan*. He was the Doge of Venice from 1501-21 and is shown here wearing his robes of state for this formal portrait. The hat and ornate buttons are part of the official wardrobe.
- Venice had a tradition of painting formal portraits of its rulers dressed in state robes. This work is painted in the style of the sculpted portrait busts popular at the time. These were often inspired by Roman sculpture. Bellini signed his name in its Latin form on the cartellino, or 'small paper', on the parapet. He was famous for his portraiture and helped make this art form especially popular in Venice. (National Gallery website)
- The painting was originally in **Venice** but **looted by Napoleon**, then **bought by Thomas Beckford** for 13 guineas in 1807 and **sold to the National Gallery** in 1844 for £630

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Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Madonna of the Meadow*, c. 1500, 67.3 x 86.4 cm, National Gallery

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), *Madonna of the Meadow*, c. 1500, 67.3 x 86.4 cm, National Gallery, acquired 1858

- When I was at school our art teacher would show us famous works of art and this is one of the few I remember after all those years.
- “‘The Madonna of the Meadow’ shows Jesus sleeping in the Virgin’s lap. It is a natural pose yet anticipates the Pietà, in which his dead body is laid across his mother’s lap. The landscape shows the farmland and fortified hills of the mainland provinces of Venice. To the left of the Virgin a wading bird, possibly a crane, attacks a snake. This may be intended to symbolise the struggle of good and evil. The **vulture in the tree may be symbolic of death**. The painting has been transferred from panel to canvas and is damaged in places.” (National Gallery website)
- A divine light fills the painting and an emphasis is placed on the natural landscape. This emphasis reflected the teachings of the Franciscans who taught that all of nature is sacred. The mother and child are separate from the landscape rather than being part of it.

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GIOVANNI  
BELLINI  
(c. 1430-1516)



ANDREA  
MANTEGNA  
(c. 1431-1506)

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- Giovanni Bellini and Andrea Mantegna (c. 1432-1506, aged 74, pronounced 'mahnt-EHNG-nah') were born just a year apart but with very different backgrounds. However, his artistic genius led to Mantegna's marriage to Nicosia Bellini and the two artists were then related by marriage and worked closely together but in different styles.
- Bellini was a restrained person who produced emotional art and Mantegna was an emotional person who produced restrained art. Bellini ran the families large workshop in Venice and Giorgione and Titian were both apprentices in his workshop. Titian went on to become the leading artist in Venice eclipsing Bellini's fame.
- Thank you for your time and attention and I look forward to researching my next talk.