The social lives of paintings in Sixteenth-Century Venice

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Introduction

We think of paintings as objects quietly hanging on the walls of our homes and offices, waiting patiently for someone to throw a glance at them. Or we think of them as artworks on show in galleries and museums, inspiring learned conversations and aesthetic praise. Yet we hardly consider paintings as active participants in social events; as persons we can talk to when they come visit.

In sixteenth-century Venice, however, the situation was altogether different. In June 1586 a painted portrait of Bianca Capello, daughter of a Venetian patrician and grand duchess of Tuscany, visited the Doge (fig. 1, colour plate 4). At two o'clock on a Monday afternoon the owner of the portrait, a certain Francesco Bembo, took it to the Doge's Palace to show it to his head of state. All through the Palace it went, until it reached the Doge's apartments. Once the portrait of Bianca had arrived, it received lavish praise from all people present; and first and foremost from the Doge himself. When the Doge and his guests went to table, the portrait joined them, and throughout the meal Bianca was on everyone's lips. After the meal, the old Doge went to rest a bit and took the portrait with him, deciding to install it on a little table where he usually kept nothing but a little box, his *corno* or ceremonial hat, and a crucifix. Later that day, the portrait moved to another room in the Palace, where it received visits by several dignitaries, among whom the pow-

erful *procuratore* Giacomo Emo, the bishop of Brescia Gianfrancesco Morosini, and Alfonso II d'Este, duke of Ferrara. When these men were alone with the portrait, Francesco Bembo overheard them, and heard his head of state say to Emo, his confidant: '*io son innamorato, guardate!*'[1] And the visit ended with Bembo leaving the Palace without his portrait; he had to acquiesce in the Doge's wish to keep it in the Doge's Palace for one night.[2]

This anecdote may seem strange to us, readers in the twenty-first century. It strongly suggests that, in the eyes of contemporaries, the Venetian portrait of Bianca Capello kept up a social life. The portrait circulated; it was entertained by the Venetian Doge and his guests; and it spent the night in the Doge's apartments. Yet such a view, that paintings had social lives, is hardly compatible with our modern-day ideas about their nature. Therefore we may ask: how can we understand such an anecdote? And are our current ways of thinking about painting really adequate when applied to societies of the past like sixteenth-century Venice?

Nowadays we do not easily think of paintings as living objects, which move around and act upon human beings; we have a very different notion of what paintings are and should be. As I set out to demonstrate in this thesis, this has long made us indifferent to the ways paintings functioned in their original social contexts; and it has detached us from the riches of materials still to be found in the archives. The vast correspondence of Bianca Capello, which is the main source for the anecdote above, has been known to scholars for some time; yet up to now its true value was never recognized. Yet if we do take such material into account, it will affect the way we think about painting, still the principal model for how we think about art in the Western world, and have major implications for the way we practice art history.

[1] 'I am in love, look!'

[2] For records of the visit of the portrait of Bianca Capello to the Doge, see letters written by Francesco Bembo and by one Mazzino Ebreo to Bianca Capello herself, which are preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Mediceo del Principato* 5942, c. 649r-650r (Bembo) and c. 663r-v (Ebreo). See also Karla Langedijk, *The Portraits of the Medici: 15th - 18th Centuries*, vol. I, Florence 1981, p. 321. For a full analysis of what happened with the Venetian portrait of Bianca Capello, I refer to Chapter Four.

The Paintings in the Doge's Palace

The visit of Bianca's portrait to the Doge has brought us right into the heart of the Venetian Republic, and in connection with that, into the heart of Venetian painting. For the Doge's Palace was not only the centre of the Venetian state and its administration, the residence of the Doge and the court of law; it was also the place where countless paintings, made by the best painters of the Republic, celebrated the glory of Venice. Nowhere else in Venice or on Venetian territory can we find painted decorations on such a scale; no other paintings have such a general relevance for the way the Venetians thought about themselves; or were accessible to such a large part of the Republic's elite.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the paintings of the Doge's Palace figure in many ancient texts, in which they evoke a large amount of responses. This wealth of available source material has not, however, resulted in a comparable amount of art-historical scholarship. The paintings of the Doge's Palace have hardly found their way into the modern 'canon' of Venetian art, despite the existence of a few specialized studies.[3] These studies for their part tend to overlook the importance of contemporary responses; or they confine themselves to the analysis of a single literary genre. Yet if we want to know how people originally interacted with these paintings, sources in a variety of genres should be taken into account. This, then, is what we will do over the following pages; based on the premise that the paintings of the Doge's Palace may offer us a first indication of how to study the social lives of Venetian paintings.

[3] See especially Staale Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall: Studies in the Religious Iconography of the Venetian Republic*, Rome 1974; Wolfgang Wolters, *Der Bilderschmuck des Dogenpalastes: Untersuchungen zur Selbstdarstellung der Republik Venedig im 16. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 1983; Patricia Fortini Brown, 'Painting and History in Renaissance Venice', *Art History* 7 (1984), pp. 263-94; Filippo de Vivo, 'Historical Justifications of Venetian Power in the Adriatic', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2003), pp. 159-76. The paintings' relative neglect by academic art historians may also have to do with the limited artistic quality of the ensembles nowadays on view, which are replacements of works by such venerated masters as Giovanni Bellini and Titian, which were lost earlier in the sixteenth century.

The Sala del Maggior Consiglio

For a long time the most spacious hall of Europe, the Sala del Maggior Consiglio or Great Council Hall offered ample space for pictorial decorations (fig. 2). These decorations have always consisted of a mixture of genres: civic history, allegory, portraiture, and religious scenes together form a programme that celebrates the glory of the city-state. Besides the narrative scenes on the hall's northern, western and southern walls, depicting episodes from the Republic's illustrious past, there is a frieze with the portraits of the first seventy-six doges, ordered chronologically all around the room; a ceiling showing virtuous deeds by virtuous men, while the three central canvases contain allegories demonstrating Venice's good government; and, at the eastern end of the room, where the Doge and his advisors were usually sitting, is the coronation of Mary in heaven, also known as the *Paradiso*.

This was the room where the so-called Great Council gathered; the largest body of the Venetian government, which consisted of all male members of the Venetian nobility – some two thousand persons in the sixteenth century.[4]

Paintings as Proof

Of the paintings with historical subject matter, certainly the most important are those representing the so-called Peace of Venice, that is, the series of events resulting in the peace treaty between the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and Pope Alexander III on Venetian territory in the year 1177 (for examples see figs. 3 and 4).[5] The story is, indeed, one of the principal components of the so-called Myth of Venice. As we know now, Venice did not participate in the conflict, which was the very reason why the parties chose its grounds as the place to make peace. In the centuries following the events, however, the Republic managed to blow up its own role to legendary proportions. Gradually it came to represent itself as the saviour of the Pope and Christianity at large; as the bringer of peace to Italy and the world; and

[4] For the history of the room and its decorations, see Wolters, *Der Bilderschmuck des Dogenpalastes*; for a catalogue of the all the paintings, see Umberto Franzoi, *Storia e leggenda del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia*, Venice 1982.
[5] De Vivo, 'Historical Justifications of Venetian Power', *passim*; also for further literature.

thus, the story was used to legitimize Venice's power in the Eastern Mediterranean and Adriatic seas, which, especially during the sixteenth century, was anything but unchallenged.

When during this period voices from outside Venice, mostly historians working for the Vatican, persistently contested the Venetian interpretation of events, Venetian historians used the paintings in the Doge's Palace in defence of the Republic, pointing to their supposed evidential value.[6] Marin Sanudo (1466-1536), the famous Venetian chronicler, concisely summarized their principal argument: 'If it had not been true, our Venetians would never have had it painted.'[7] As Filippo de Vivo has noted, the Venetian state even instructed its ambassadors abroad to look for painted records of the Peace of Venice in their cities of residence; in this way, they effectively deflected attention from the story of 1177, focusing instead on the story's material representations.[8] What support for their cause did the Venetians hope to find in paintings?

We find their principal ideas summarized by Fortunato Olmo, an erudite monk who in the 1630s was one of the last to make a significant contribution to the debate. Olmo's was by far the largest compilation of material supporting the Venetian cause: he managed to fill seven manuscript volumes.[9] The following comes from an earlier work of his, published in 1629:

> Because [the paintings] have been made on command of many illustrious persons, who were entrusted with the government of the Republic, it is intoler-

[6] De Vivo, 'Historical Justifications of Venetian Power', p. 168 and further.

[7] '… si la non fusse sta vera, li nostri Venitiani non la ariano fata mai dipenzer.' Quoted after Brown, 'Painting and History', p. 269 and n. 41.

[8] De Vivo, 'Historical Justifications', p. 171. Indeed, the story had found its way to other countries; most prominently to the Vatican. The very climax of the whole episode, the moment when the Emperor kneels in front of the Pope and asks him for forgiveness, was depicted in 1563-1564 on a wall of the newly built Sala Regia, the audience hall of the Popes. It was commissioned by the Venetian Cardinal Marcantonio da Mula from his fellow countryman Giuseppe Salviati. Its historical truth increasingly questioned, in the seventeenth century the painting would come to stand at the centre of a severe diplomatic conflict between Venice and the Pope. See Jan L. de Jong, 'Propagating Venice's Finest Hour: Vicissitudes of Giuseppe Porta Salviati's Painting of Pope Alexander III and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in the Sala Regia of the Vatican Palace', in: Annette de Vries (ed.), *Cultural Mediators: Artists and Writers at the Crossroads of Tradition, Innovation and Reception in the Low Countries and Italy 1450-1650*, Leuven 2008, pp. 109-26.

[9] De Vivo, 'Historical Justifications', p. 171.

able to hear our opponents say that they are a caprice of the painter. They are relying on the verses of Horace, "Painters and poets always had the same power to dare all things conceivable," as if in a city hall it could happen that a painter's hand would be so daring as to express fully to his own liking a falsification unjustified by fact. But the fact is that the licence of painters is not as big as that.[10]

Olmo puts forward two arguments. First, he appeals to the authority of the illustrious patrons who commissioned the paintings, virtuous and exemplary men. Secondly, he downplays the licence of painters to invent: both painters and patrons are bound to what actually was in the world, he argues, to what actually happened (*il fatto*). In a public place, there is no room for images showing things that never happened, paintings without prototypes, so to say.[11] Paintings had to be true.

The monk and historian *fra* Girolamo Bardi (c. 1544-1594) came with similar arguments. Bardi, originally a Florentine, was one of the three members of a committee that devised a new decorative programme for the two largest rooms of the Palace after they were lost in a disastrous fire (1577).[12] Not only did he refer to existing paintings as evidence for historical events; he also mentioned paintings that had long since disappeared. In other words,

[10] 'Perilche essendo queste state fatte per comandamento di molte persone Illustri, a'quali era raddomandato il governo della Republica, e intolerabile l'udirsi dire da gli Avversari, che questo fosse un capriccio del pittore. Inducendosi da loro gli versi di Oratio, che *Pictoribus atque Poetis // Quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas*, quasi che in un palazzo publico possa darsi, che senza esser preceduto il fatto, vi fosse mano di pittore tanto ardita, che anzi esprimesse il falso a pieno arbitrio. [...] Ma il fatto non ista, che la licenza de'pittori sia tanta.' Fortunato Olmo, *Historia della venuta a Venetia occultamente nel 1177 di Papa Alessandro III e della vittoria ottenuta da Sebastiano Ziani Doge* (Venice, 1629), pp. 16-17.

[11] Similar arguments may be found in earlier treatises on painting written in other areas of Italy, such as Giovanni Andrea Gilio's well-known *Dialogo nella quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'istorie* (1564). See the edition by Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento*, vol. II, Bari 1961, p. 39: '… 'l pittore istorico altro non è che un traslatore, che porti l'istoria da una lingua in un'altra, e questi da la penna al pennello, da la scrittura a la pittura.'

[12] Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven and Londen 2007, p. 328; De Vivo, 'Historical Justifications', p. 168; Wolters, *Der Bilderschmuck des Dogenpalastes*, pp. 32-33; and for Bardi in the context of Italian historiography in general, Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*, Chicago 1981, pp. 379-380. The text that may be identified with this programme was discovered by Wolfgang Wolters (see Wolfgang Wolters, 'Der Programmentwurf zur Dekoration des Dogenpalastes nach dem Brand vom 20. Dezember 1577', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 12 (1966), pp. 271-318).

Bardi tried to provide the paintings with a pseudo-genealogy. For he reported that when he visited the burnt remains of the Great Council Hall, he found traces of much earlier paintings, executed in the Greek style (*in maniera greca*), which allegedly had been started in 1226, that is, we may infer, when some of the eyewitnesses of the events of 1177 were still alive.[13] Bardi wrote: 'Many years ago [the story] was painted on the walls of the Great Council Hall, as is shown by the epitaphs and by the manner in which they were represented, with the crudeness of the art of that time.'[14] In response to the opponents of the Venetian cause, Bardi reconstructed a partially fictive genealogy of the paintings and their authorship.[15]

In this way, the Venetian reading of the past was legitimized and authenticated, for Bardi made it look as if from their historical origins to the author's present, the story of the Peace of Venice had been directly transmitted in paint.[16] Underlying his argument is the assumption we already found in a slightly different form in the work of Marin Sanudo and Fortunato Olmo, which can be traced in practically all other writings having anything to do with this debate: that these paintings have evidential value.

It will come as no surprise, however, that opponents of Venice took a different view on the matter. The papal historian Cesare Baronio (1538-1607), most prominently, refuted much of the evidence the Venetians had brought

[13] See Brown, 'Painting and History', pp. 270-71.

[14] '… et molti anni prima fu dipinta ne muri della Sala del maggior Consiglio, come gli Epitassii, et gli habiti con iquali furono rappresentati dalla rozzezza dell'arte di quel tempo…' Girolamo Bardi, *Vittoria navale ottenuta dalla republica venetiana contra Othone, figliuolo di Federico, primo imperadore, per la restitutione di Alessandro terzo, pontefice massimo* (Venice, 1584), p. 65.

[15] In Bardi's account, the earlier paintings were to be used as models for the new paintings after the fire: '… il detto Francesco Barbaro […] volse, che io cavassi in scrittura tutto quello, che si conteneva ne' quadri dipinti del Gran Consiglio, affine, che dovendosi ridipingere si fatta Historia, vi si ritornassero le medesime cose di prima.' Bardi, *Vittoria navale ottenuta dalla republica venetiana*, p. 64.

[16] In her seminal work on the painted decorations of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Patricia Fortini Brown has shown that there were great similarities between the historical scenes in the subsequent stages of the decorations. Comparing the extant paintings with drawings related to the earlier versions of the scenes and with descriptions of the paintings in the hall before the 1577 fire, she concludes that the narrative cores of the scenes usually remained fairly consistent (Brown, 'Painting and History', p. 273 and further). Although the Venetians several times completely substituted old paintings for new ones, they preferred to talk of 'restoration' (*ristaurare*) or 'renovation' (*rinovare*), and thus stressed continuity rather than change. See Erika Tietze-Conrat, 'Decorative Paintings of the Venetian Renaissance Reconstructed from Drawings', *Art Quarterly* 3 (1940), pp. 15-39, here pp. 15-16.

forward and instead turned toward documents contemporary to the Peace written by eyewitnesses. He laughed at the idea that paintings could serve as historical evidence. Yet, Baronio's position regarding the question was far from consistent: when earlier in his career the ancient Christian catacombs of Rome were discovered, and in them early Christian art was found, Baronio used it in a similar, 'Venetian' way.[17] This suggests that a person's view on the functions and effects of paintings was not necessarily constant: it could change along with one's political, religious, or social agenda. This means that 'function' was something altogether fluid: depending on the circumstances, one painting could play various roles – just like human beings, we might say.

Paintings as Presence

The next example will make this even more clear. For, as we are about to see, the very same paintings that the Venetians used as historical evidence, at the same time were seen as a memorial to illustrious fellow citizens. Many paintings in the Doge's Palace contained human figures, often bystanders, who had the facial features of prominent men in Venetian public life. People wrote about these portraits as if the paintings and portrayed men were one and the same thing; as if the paintings in the rooms of the Palace actually made the portrayed men present. This reminds us of the treatment received by the portrait of Bianca Capello, which travelled through the very rooms of which we are speaking here: she must have come face to face with her painted fellow countrymen. Yet unlike Bianca, these portrayed men did not come on their own: a single canvas often contained many portraits at one time, and these only formed a part of the larger historical scene (for example, fig. 3).

This may be the reason why the phenomenon has received so little attention in art-historical literature: Venetian painting was exceptional in the

[17] De Vivo, 'Historical Justifications', p. 166; Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, New Haven and London 1993, pp. 102-104. See also Ingo Herklotz, '*Historia sacra* und mittelalterliche Kunst während der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts in Rom', in: Romeo de Maio (ed.), *Baronio e l'arte*, Sora 1985, pp. 21-74, here pp. 65-66. For Baronio and the discovery of the catacombs in their wider tridentine context, see also Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular*, Cambridge 1995, particularly p. 85 and further.

amount of portraits it contained, but why and to what purpose has not been satisfactorily explained.[18] Again, this seems to have to do with modern ways of looking and thinking. The paintings of the Doge's Palace do not comply with later ideas of painterly genres.[19] Whether they are characterized as narrative scenes, *historie*, portraits, or cityscapes (many contain elaborate architectural backgrounds), they will always be wronged. And the way these paintings were received in their own time only seems to reflect the plurality of their contents.

In his guidebook to the city of Venice, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare* (1581), Francesco Sansovino (1521-1586) diligently described all the paintings in the Doge's Palace, with special attention for those in the largest room of the building. These, we may remember, had only recently been consumed by fire, which urged Sansovino to record them faithfully together with the inscriptions that had explained their contents. He discussed the many portraits that had embellished these paintings separately. His account starts like this: 'In all these pictures were various portraits of Senators and illustrious men, painted over time by various excellent Masters.'[20] Subsequently, he needs no less than four densely printed pages to name them all.[21] This is a truly remarkable document of who counted as important in late sixteenth-century Venice, but also a testimonial to the love a man like Sansovino felt for his exemplary ancestors.

The character of the men recited by Sansovino is diverse: he mentions procurators and senators, cardinals, painters and architects, scholars, poets, and men of arms, not all of whom had necessarily lived in the same age. Thus we encounter 'in the picture in which the Pope conferred the indulgence, with various Cardinals on the right and on the left,' 'almost all Venetian Cardinals

[18] For anachronic elements also in paintings from other parts of Italy, from Germany, and the Netherlands, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York 2010.

[19] There is not much theoretical literature on the notion of genre in the art of painting; see, however, Carolyn Wilde, 'Introduction: Alberti and the Formation of Modern Art Theory', p. 14, and Paul Duro, 'Academic Theory 1550-1800', pp. 93-95, in: Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (eds.), *A Companion to Art Theory*, Oxford 2002.

[20] 'Ne quali tutti quadri erano diversi ritratti di Senatori et huomini illustri, dipinti di tempo in tempo da diversi eccellenti Maestri.' Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare descritta in XIV libri*, Bergamo: Leading 2002 (photomechanical reprint of the 1581 edition), p. 130v.

[21] For the whole section see pp. 130v-132v.

that had existed until this time, that is Angelo Correr who was later Gregory XII; Francesco Lando, Pietro Barbo, who when made Pope was called Paul II,' and so the list continues; we find Pietro Bembo and Fra Giocondo, 'architect from Verona,' Gentile Bellini, Emmanuel Chrysoloras, Ermolao Barbaro, Lodovico Ariosto, and Agostino Barbarigo 'who died in the battle of '71' (the Battle of Lepanto), to name just a few.[22] It is clear that in these paintings men from different periods had anachronically been placed next to each other. Sansovino arranged the names according to the paintings in which the men were portrayed; he mentions their positions and achievements, and their relations to family members who have also been honoured with a portrait on these walls. He finds it worth noting when portraits are done from life, like the one by Tintoretto of Stefano Tiepolo *procuratore di San Marco*. Or when the portraits are otherwise painted very lively: 'And there, over a balcony, were portrayed Andrea Gradenigo, father of Luigi, with Senatorial clothes on, and Giovanni Battista Ramusio, Secretary of the Council of Ten, who was the father of Paolo, the two of whom seemed to be talking to each other.'[23] And therefore, Sansovino concludes, the destruction of the portraits means a great loss: 'That all these things were consumed by the fire of 1577 gave the whole universe great sorrow, because of the loss of the features (*fatture*) of so many valuable men, and of the memory of so many excellent persons, which the world only rarely possesses in abundance.'[24] Most of the men in his survey had died long before Sansovino was writing; but what he is suggesting is that their real, or at least second death took place with the fire: it was only then that their faces disappeared and the memory of their great deeds was wiped out. His lengthy enumeration could therefore be understood as an attempt to undo this second death and to revive the mem-

[22] 'Et piu oltre, nel quadro dove il Papa co[n]cedeva l'indulge[n]tia con diversi Cardinali dalla destra, et dalla sinistra, si vedevano espressi mirabilme[n]te quasi tutti i Cardinali Vinitiani, ch'erano stati fino a quei tempi, cioè Angelo Corero che fu poi Gregorio XII. Francesco Lando, Pietro Barbo, che poi fatto Papa fu detto Paolo Secondo […].' Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima*, p. 131r. The 'battle (*giornata*) of '71,' in which Agostino Barbarigo passed away, is the Battle of Lepanto, fought in 1571.

[23] 'Et ivi sopra un poggiuolo erano ritratti Andrea Gradenigo padre di Luigi con veste Senatoria, et Giovanni Battista Ramusio Secretario del Consiglio de Dieci, che fu padre di Paolo, i quali pareva che ragionassero insieme.' Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima*, p. 132v.

[24] 'Le quali tutte cose consumate dal fuoco del 1577. apportarono gran dispiacere a tutto l'universale, per la perdita delle fatture di tanti valentihuomini, et delle memorie di tanti personaggi eccellenti, de quali il mondo è rare volte copioso.' Ibid., p. 132v.

ory of Venice's *huomini virtuosi*. As if it were a *messa dei defunti*, his recital of these names is almost a religious ritual.[25]

So although we are still concerned with the same paintings in the Doge's Palace, Sansovino confronts us with a completely different view. Writing about the portraits, he is not interested in historical proof, or whether paintings tell the truth or not: what he is after is the ability of paintings to make people present, while they are in fact absent. Are these two very different approaches in any way compatible? And how do they relate to our modern notion of genre – if at all?

Sansovino's account raises more questions. What about the viewers of these portraits? Much is expected of them. The enumeration of portraits hints at the existence of a public that shared Sansovino's veneration for the sitters. There must have been viewers and users of the paintings in the Doge's Palace who knew who these men were and what status they had; but we seem to have problems getting these viewers in front of the lens. In other words, Sansovino's account presupposes a social network of which the viewers, the portraits, and their sitters were a part. But what do we know of this social network?

Paintings as Prodigies – The Praise of Venetian Art

The notion of the social network was also at the basis of the following description of a painting, a battle scene once again located in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio (fig. 5):

> And on the other side of this same Sala [Titian] did a battle scene, in which there appear soldiers and horses in a variety of forms, and other extremely notable features. The latter include a young woman who has fallen into a ditch and is climbing out: she uses the bank for support with a stretch of the

[25] For the medieval memory cult, see Arnold Angenendt, 'Theologie und Liturgie der mittelalterlichen Toten-Memoria', in: Karl Schmidt and Joachim Wollasch (eds.), *Memoria: Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, Munich 1984, pp. 79-199, here pp. 188 and further.

leg which is highly natural, and the leg gives the impression not of painting, but of actual flesh.[26]

The author of this passage is Lodovico Dolce (1508-1568), a professional writer or *poligrafo* befriended to Titian, who is well-known for his *Dialogue on painting* (1557). Dolce's words on Titian's battle contain a number of striking features. He does not say anything about the painting's subject matter but that it is a battle. He does not mention the history to which this painting referred, nor does he mention the supposedly evidential value of this painting. His interest clearly lies with other things. For him, this painting of a battle scene is first and foremost an index of the painterly genius of its maker, Titian. The artist has succeeded in making a painting that no longer looks like a painting: the young woman's leg seems to be made of flesh, not paint.

The same painting was also described by Francesco Sansovino. He, too, knew Titian personally; his father Jacopo Sansovino, the sculptor-architect, was a close friend of the painter.

In the fifth [painting], made by Titian with incredible industry and artistry, was represented the battle of Spoleto in Umbria. There, in addition to the other noble things that appeared, a captain showed himself to the eyes of the viewers, and, in order to be ready for the fight, had himself armed by a boy, on the breast of whose armour gleamed with incredible mastery the brilliancy, the lights, and the reflections of the weapons and the robes in which the boy was dressed.[27]

Like Dolce, Sansovino had noticed the young woman at the bottom of the painting (fig. 6): 'Likewise there was a horse of extreme beauty, and a young

[26] '… e dall'altra parte della detta Sala una battaglia; ove ci sono diverse forme di soldati, cavalli, & altre cose notabilissime, e fra le altre una giovane, che essendo caduta in un fosso, uscendo si attiene alla sponda con una isporger di gamba naturalissimo, e la gamba non par, che sia Pittura, ma carne istessa.' Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura*, ed. Mark Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (reprint of the 1968 ed.), Toronto 2000, p. 190.

[27] 'Nel quinto fatto da Titiano con incredibile industria et arte, si rappresentava la giornata di Spoleti nell'Umbria, Dove, oltre alle cose nobili che vi apparivano, si mostrava a gli occhi de riguarda[n]ti un Capitano ch'essendo desto al romore d'una zuffa si faceva armare da un ragazzo, nel petto della cui corazza, risplendevano co[n] incredibil magistero, i lustri, i chiari, et i reverberi dell'armi, et de panni, de quali era vestito il ragazzo.' Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima*, p. 125v.

woman who, climbing out of a ditch, showed great fear on her face.'[28] In his ekphrastic prose, the author is not so much concerned with giving a faithful and complete description of the painting; rather, he is trying to approach the effects the painting has on its viewers. He is making it visible even for those who could not see it.[29]

Both Dolce and Sansovino praise Titian's battle painting, which was lost in the fire of 1577, as a virtuous imitation of nature by an ingenious Venetian artist. This may be the type of response to early modern Italian painting we are most familiar with: praise for an artist's skills in lifelike imitation. In art-historical writing, the conventional character of such responses all too often becomes an excuse for dismissing them as meaningless *topoi*; at other times, they are treated as if occurring in an autonomous art world, apparently cut loose from the troubles of daily life.[30] Yet no such autonomous art world existed in sixteenth-century Venice.[31]

We may therefore very well wonder whether the topos of lifelike representation, as practiced by Dolce and Sansovino, did not actually function in a network of exchanges in which paintings, painters, prototypes, viewers, and their responses interacted with each other; in other words, whether the responses of Dolce and Sansovino were not in fact grounded in social reality. Not only was the upcoming genre of art criticism, to which, we might say, their texts belong, a thoroughly social genre, being an interaction with the artwork, fellow viewers, and readers; we should also take seriously the ques-

[28] 'Vi era parimente un cavallo di estrema bellezza, et una giovane che uscendo di una fossa, et salendo di sopra, mostrava nel volto, una gran paura.' Ibid., p. 125v.

[29] This effect of lively text and speech is known as the rhetorical figure of *enargeia*. See Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2007, p. 7; Valeska von Rosen, 'Die Enargeia des Gemaldes. Zu einem vergessenen Inhalt des Ut-pictura-poesis und seiner Relevanz fur das cinquecenteske Bildkonzept', *Marburger Jahrbuch fur Kunstwissenschaft* 27 (2000), pp. 171-208; John Shearman, *Only Connect… : Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, Princeton 1992, chapter five.

[30] See, for example, Norman E. Land, *The Viewer as Poet: The Renaissance Response to Art*, University Park 1994, and, more recently, Valeska von Rosen, *Mimesis und Selbstbezüglichkeit in Werken Tizians: Studien zum venezianischen Malereidiskurs*, Emsdetten 2001.

[31] For the rise of the concept of autonomous art at the turn of the nineteenth century, see for example Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, New Haven and London 1982, in particular pp. 5-8.

tion what their remarks on the lifelikeness of Venetian paintings, conventional as they may be, are meant to convey.[32]

On the preceding pages, we have encountered a variety of approaches to the paintings of the Doge's Palace, all in contemporary texts. So here we have a body of responses reflecting on the most important painted decorations of the Venetian republic; what they communicate to us is, to say the least, a mixed message. As it turns out, firstly, these paintings had a variety of functions and effects, and thereby defy our modern-day notion of fixed genres. We need new concepts which may help us understand how paintings in Venice actually worked. Secondly, these paintings seem to have functioned in social networks, but what did these networks look like; and how did paintings and people embedded in such networks interact? Thirdly, many sources stress the remarkable degree of lifelikeness accomplished by the artists. How are we to understand the claim made by these sources that these paintings are somehow 'alive'? And, finally, how does their having artistic lifelikeness relate to the paintings' social lives?

Objectives

The objective of this study therefore is to map the social lives of selected sixteenth-century Venetian paintings, by means of a detailed reconstruction of the networks in which paintings were embedded and of how these developed over time. My final aim is to arrive at a new understanding of what paintings were in sixteenth-century Venice, and how they functioned as 'living objects'. Thus, this thesis seeks to understand the 'lives' of works of art in a very different direction than, to name an example, Fredrika Jacobs' *The Living Image in Renaissance Italy* (2005), which discusses the 'lifelikeness' and 'aliveness' of art mainly from the point of view of the contemporary natural sciences.[33] Nor is this a study of sixteenth-century art criticism and theory; thinking and writing about art are relevant to the extent that they are *social* activities. For I believe that the lives of artworks cannot be fully understood

[32] Caroline van Eck, 'Living Statues: Alfred Gell's Art and Agency, Living Presence Response and the Sublime', *Art History* 33 (2010), pp. 642-659, here p. 649.
[33] Fredrika H. Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art*, Cambridge 2005.

without taking the social dimension into account. How are we going to achieve this?

The idea that paintings are parts of social networks in which they interact with human beings has a double foundation: it is inspired by recent anthropological theory as well as grounded in historical thought. To start with anthropology, over the last decades art and artefacts have become an increasingly important topic of analysis in the field. Perhaps the single most influential voice has been the British anthropologist Alfred Gell, who in his posthumously published book *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (1998) proposed that artefacts are 'social agents', just like human beings; and that these 'social agents' are embedded in networks – the 'art nexus' – which basically consist of four players: the prototype or thing or person represented; the index, which is Gell's name for the art object; the artist; and the recipient (who may be the patron). According to Gell, art objects confer agency upon the other players in the art nexus. As it is agency that characterizes personhood, according to Gell, his anthropological theory of art approaches art objects as person-like.[34] What it comes down to is that the concept of the art nexus may serve as a means to reconstruct a painting's social life.

[34] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford 1998, p. 5: '… a species of anthropological theory in which persons or 'social agents' are, in certain contexts, substituted for by art objects'; ibidem, p. 96: '… works of art, images, icons, and the like have to be treated, in the context of an anthropological theory, as person-like; that is, sources of, and targets for, social agency.' For critical assessments of Gell's theory and its implications for art history see Caroline van Eck, 'Living Statues'; Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner (eds.), *Art's Agency and Art History*, Oxford 2006; Matthew Rampley, 'Art History and Cultural Difference: Alfred Gell's Anthropology of Art', *Art History* 28 (2005), pp. 524-551; Robert Layton, 'Art and Agency: A Reassessment', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9 (N.S.) (2003), pp. 447-464. Another important contribution has been Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge 1986.
In his introductory essay to the volume (here in particular pp. 4-5), Appadurai argues that in order to understand the concrete, historical circulation of things, we have to let go of our contemporary Western common sense that things are just things and instead become 'methodological fetishists'. While for Appadurai, this is merely the starting point for an investigation of one particular phase of a thing's social life, namely the 'commodity situation', in which 'its exchangeability […] for some other thing is its socially relevant factor,' (p. 13) – he is thus mainly concerned with matters of value, exchange, and economy – my objective is to examine the social life of a particular group of things in its broadest sense, in fact to examine the notion of the social life itself, for which I find Gell's concept of agency more useful. Finally, it needs to be said that the title of this thesis was conceived independently of Appadurai's work, and is therefore not necessarily an allusion to that work.

More in general, the advantage of an anthropological approach to European art of the past – as opposed to, say, an aesthetic or semiotic approach – is that it asks for a fully contextual, synchronic analysis, independent of modern Western conceptions of art, which indeed only crystallized during the nineteenth century. Designed as a framework with global scope, Gell's theory is particularly apt to be applied to art of the premodern West, in which modern notions of what art is, did not yet count; and it removes the emphasis from the work of art itself to the producing culture as a whole.[35]

In the case of sixteenth-century Venice, this culture had itself a truly social understanding of personhood; which is another reason why anthropology can so fruitfully be put to the task. As Peter Burke explains, the Italy of the large cities was a 'theatre society', in which everyone had a social role which needed to be played with style (*fare bella figura*).[36] Peoples' concerns were not with sincerity – which other cultures, like our own, tend to value more – but with the inherently social factors of appearance and honour. It was all about giving a convincing performance of one's role to one's public. In this theatrical society, art objects became instruments with which one could enhance one's public appearance. This may sound like a familiar idea in the study of art and culture known as conspicuous consumption; yet what I would like to propose is a much more far-reaching thought: that in this culture of role-playing and conventions, with this truly social understanding of personhood, art objects could under certain circumstances play the role of human beings; they could become *personae*.[37] We only need to think back to the example of Bianca Capello's portrait, visiting the Doge and his friends, to grasp what all

[35] See also Howard Morphy and Morgan Perkins, 'The Anthropology of Art: A Reflection on its History and Contemporary Practice', in: idem (eds.), *The Anthropology of Art: A Reader*, Oxford 2006, pp. 1-26. There is a strong parallel here with discussions of non-western living objects or 'object-beings' (in the words of the American ritual theorist Ronald Grimes) in the field of museum studies: see Moira Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era*, London 1996, p. 196, who refers to Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in its Practice, Essays on its Theory*, Columbia, S.C. 1990, p. 254. I return to this in my conclusion.

[36] Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthopology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication*, Cambridge 1987, p. 10. For the theatricality and rituality of life in Venice, see, among others, Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, Princeton 1981, and Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*.

[37] The concept of conspicuous consumption was introduced by the economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen in his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, first published in New York in 1899.

this role-playing could lead to: the adoration of a portrait as if it were the sitter herself.

The idea that Italian society was theatrical in character was not only expressed in texts – the best known example of textual sources surely being Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528). Paintings also reflected on their own abilities to take up person-like qualities. Certain figures from Paolo Veronese's famous fresco decorations of the Villa Barbaro in Maser, for example, seem to suggest that the most important spectacle is not the painting, but the viewer standing in the room, for all to see: the painting itself has turned into the audience (fig. 7).[38] In art-historical literature, the so-called theatricality of Venetian sixteenth-century painting has received ample attention, but scholars have analyzed it mostly as a formal phenomenon: many similarities have been pointed out between architectural backgrounds, clothing, and composition in paintings on the one hand; and stage designs on the other.[39] Yet that paintings, just like any human being, were members of society, a society that was theatrical, has not often been noticed.

Venice

Sixteenth-century Venice makes for a particularly interesting case study. Its economy resting on international trade, Venice was engaged in all kinds of exchanges with other parts of Italy and the world, but at the same time Venetians typically liked to present themselves as literally and figuratively isolated. To achieve such an image, a possible means were the arts, which during the *Cinquecento* were practiced on a heretofore unknown level. Especially with regard to the art of painting this period was considered a milestone, not in the last place by the Venetians themselves. It was also during this period that Venice developed from a maritime power or *stato da mar* to a mainland

[38] See also Caroline van Eck and Stijn Bussels, 'The Visual Arts and the Theatre in Early Modern Europe', *Art History* 33 (2010), pp. 208-223, and further articles in the same issue.

[39] The most important studies in this direction are Marc Bayard, 'La théatralité picturale dans l'art italien de la Renaissance', *Studiolo* 3 (2005), pp. 39-57; David Rosand, 'Theater and Structure in the Art of Paolo Veronese', *The Art Bulletin* 55 (1973), pp. 217-239; also Rosand's *Painting in Cinquecento Venice: Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto*, New Haven and London 1982, later revised as *Painting in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto*, Cambridge 1997; Michelangelo Muraro, 'Vittore Carpaccio o il teatro in pittura', in: Maria Teresa Muraro (ed.), *Studi sul teatro veneto fra rinascimento e età barocca*, Florence 1971, pp. 7-19.

state or *stato da tera*. For the Venetian nobility this meant a need to adapt, which potentially included a different kind of artistic patronage.

In the field of social history, sixteenth-century Venice has lately received considerable attention. With their valuable studies of Venetian civic ritual, Edward Muir and Iain Fenlon have done work without which this thesis would not have been possible.[40] The study of Venetian art, too, in particular Venetian painting, has expanded enormously over the past decades; and its popularity is still growing, judging from the surprising number of blockbuster exhibitions dedicated to sixteenth-century Venetian painting over the last years.[41] This thesis has benefited greatly from all this scholarship; yet at the same time it goes beyond it in the sense that it aims to make a real connection between Venetian painting and Venetian life, with a study like Manfredo Tafuri's *Venezia e il rinascimento* (1985) as an important source of inspiration because of the way it synthesizes archival materials, analyses of form and cultural and intellectual contexts into a nuanced and vivacious image of a period.[42]

To study sixteenth-century Venetian paintings in the context of the culture that produced them, and to reconstruct the social networks in which they were embedded, historical sources are needed. In general, the value of historical sources depends on the questions historians pose to them. While one would perhaps expect every period source regarding Titian and his fellow Venetian artists to have become familiar to scholars by now, this turns out not to be the case. New questions lead to a new appreciation of the avail-

[40] Muir, *Civic Ritual*; Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*.

[41] *Giorgione*, Castelfranco Veneto, Museo Casa Giorgione, 12 December 2009 – 11 April 2010; *Titien, Tintoret, Véronèse: rivalités à Venise*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, 17 September 2009 – 4 January 2010 / *Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese: rivals in Renaissance Venice*, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 15 March – 16 August 2009; *Giovanni Bellini*, Rome, Palazzo del Quirinale, 30 September 2008 – 11 January 2009; *L'ultimo Tiziano e la sensualità della pittura*, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia, 26 January – 20 April 2008 / *Der späte Tizian und die Sinnlichkeit der Malerei*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 18 October 2007 – 6 January 2008; *Tiziano: l'ultimo atto*, Belluno, Palazzo Crepadona, and Pieve di Cadore, Palazzo della Magnifica Comunità, 15 September 2007 – 6 January 2008; *Tintoretto*, Madrid, Museo del Prado, 30 January – 13 May 2007; *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian and the Renaissance of Venetian painting*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 17 October 2006 – 7 January 2007 / Washington, National Gallery of Art, 18 June – 17 September 2006.

[42] Manfredo Tafuri, *Venezia e il rinascimento: religione, scienza, architettura*, Turin 1985; in the rest of this thesis, I refer to the English-language paperback edition: *Venice and the Renaissance*, translated by Jessica Levine, Cambridge, Mass. 1995.

able sources; new questions lead to discoveries. This thesis uses a wide range of contemporary sources; from letters, diaries, and poems to chronicles, treatises, diplomatic messages, miracle books, and judicial documents. These are sources that would be of interest to social historians, historians of literature, of ideas, of politics, religion, and of law, which makes this study, although it has a strong basis in art history, truly interdisciplinary in character. What is more, much of the material under discussion has not earlier been used to answer the kind of questions that are posed here; and a substantial amount has remained unknown and unpublished up to this day.

The main body of this thesis consists of four well documented and elaborately analyzed case studies of paintings that have elicited a large amount of responses and maintained a variety of social lives. The benefit of this approach, which we may even characterize as a type of microhistory, is that it offers the possibility to study the interactions of paintings and people to the greatest degree of detail; and it is in small details that we will find the answers to large questions.[43] This is an advantage of my thesis over existing studies in the field. In *The Power of Images* (1989), David Freedberg gathered an enormous amount of examples of images that, throughout history, were treated not as lifeless objects but as somehow living beings.[44] Although Freedberg's study served as an impetus for much further research, a detailed analysis of the way the lives of artworks come into being and develop is still much needed.[45] We may say that also Fenlon's work on Venetian civic ritual suffers a bit from its own vast scope; as Filippo de Vivo argued, it tends to overstress cultural homogeneity and harmony at the cost of situations of conflict and tension.[46] While paintings in Venice were certainly used to help create the appearance

[43] I here loosely paraphrase Charles Joyner, *Shared traditions: Southern history and folk culture*, Urbana 1999, p. 1. Renowned microhistorians such as Carlo Ginzburg, Guido Ruggiero, and Edward Muir have very fruitfully worked on Venice and the Veneto and Friuli regions. With the notable exception of Ginzburg – I think in particular of his essay 'Tiziano, Ovidio e i codici della figurazione erotica nel Cinquecento', originally published in *Paragone. Arte* 29, no. 339 (1978), pp. 3-24 – their work does not contain many references to art.

[44] David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago and Londen 1989.

[45] For a critical response to Freedberg's seminal work, see, among others, Arthur C. Danto, *The Art Bulletin* 72 (1990), pp. 341-432.

[46] Filippo de Vivo, 'Review of: Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven and Londen 2007', *European History Quarterly* 40 (2010), pp. 324-326.

of a glorious and harmonious society, as is for example the case in the Doge's Palace, as often they were involved in conflicts and political and religious strife, as we will see.

While it does not attempt to be exhaustive, this thesis more or less covers the period of a man's life, as befits a study with an anthropological basis. It starts in a time of crisis, the second decade of the sixteenth century, when Venice was slowly recovering from its almost fatal defeat in the battle of Agnadello (1509), when the plague hit the city, and when, in Europe, the Reformation took off. Thus, our narrative begins where Hans Belting's *Bild und Kult* (1990) comes to an end.[47] Belting's work on medieval images and the powers ascribed to them argued that in the time before the Reformation, God was perceived to be present in religious images; while the period we are concerned with here saw the dawn of the so-called 'era of art'. In what follows, however, I will show that in sixteenth-century Venice there was no such thing as an era of art; the changes that took place in the ways images interacted with their surroundings were rather gradual than in kind.

Our story ends some seventy years later, when Venice was again in crisis. In the early 1580s, thanks to the faction of the so-called *giovani*, the ever increasing power of the Council of Ten, one of the most powerful bodies of the Venetian state, came under attack and as a result was seriously restrained. The opposing faction of the *vecchi* would lose political dominance for time to come. As Tafuri has demonstrated, the divide between the *giovani* and *vecchi* was not only political, but also religious and cultural. As I will show as well, it were the *vecchi*, those families with the strongest ties to the Holy See, who were particularly interested in the visual arts. Thus the end of our narrative in the 1580s marks the defeat of an especially art-loving group and throws light on the role played by paintings in its struggle for power.

[47] Originally published as *Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Munich 1990; the edition referred to in the rest of this study is *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Chicago 1994. For a recent assessment of Belting's influential work, see Jeffrey Hamburger, 'Art history reviewed XI: Hans Belting's "Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst", 1990', *The Burlington Magazine* 153 (2011), pp. 40-45.

Set Up of the Book

How is this thesis set up? Each of the four chapters of this study tells the story of a single painting (or in the case of chapter three, two intimately connected paintings) that had a particularly pregnant social life. Each chapter unravels an art nexus, to speak with Gell, and focuses on another element of that nexus; but as it will turn out, all nexuses are also connected, as some artists, patrons, and prototypes turn up again and again. The book is more or less structured chronologically, but now and then we will have to look forward or backwards; for in the course of the century, the social lives of paintings were subject to change; change that needs to be accounted for.

Chapters One and Two have as their subjects paintings that we would normally characterize as religious; yet as we will see, non-religious motives and effects were at least as important for the ways people interacted with these paintings. The first chapter is about the so-called *Christ Carrying the Cross*, owned by one of the largest lay confraternities or *Scuole* of the city, which from about 1520 onwards was believed to be capable of miraculously healing people. Nowadays alternatively ascribed to Giorgione or to Titian, this miraculous painting was originally venerated for whom it depicted and for the beneficent effects it had on people's health. As this chapter will show, it was only in the second half of the century that the role of the artist became fully acknowledged and that the painting started its second life as the 'miraculous' product of Titian's hand. Chapter Two tells the troubled early history of Titian's *Annunciation* altarpiece in the Cathedral of Treviso. Shortly after the installation, the donor portrait in this altarpiece was violently attacked with pitch by an anonymous assailant. This part of the book not only sheds light on the way inhabitants of the Venetian provinces dealt with art, but also analyzes the downside of the power of images: they may invoke negative responses and even destruction. Believed to offer immediate access to their prototypes, paintings in Venice and the Veneto were sometimes attacked to harm the people depicted in them. Could this practice be similar to voodoo or volt sorcery?

In Chapters Three and Four we will instead focus on paintings that do not have religious subject-matter; nevertheless, we will see that people found inspiration in religious habits and rites for the ways they interacted with these paintings. Chapter Three recounts the younger years of Irene and Emilia di

Spilimbergo and their painted portraits. The two sisters, noblewomen from Friuli, lived in Venice when one of them, Irene, suddenly died. We will investigate how their family tried to cope with this loss and the role played in this process by the painted portraits of the two young women. This part of the book will also deal with the contemporary poetic response to painting; for Irene's premature end led to a remarkable production of lyrical poetry reflecting on the power of painting to overcome death. In the fourth and last chapter, we will return to the portrait of Bianca Capello. Inside the *studiolo* of Francesco Bembo, this painting entered into a romantic relationship with its owner; but as a stand-in for the grand duchess herself, it also became involved in Venetian and Italian politics. With an analysis of this remarkable double life, we will attempt to pull everything together: the role of the artist and his design; the relation between a painting and its prototype; and the interaction between the painting and its patron and other viewers.

In this thesis, I will try to restore to these paintings the life that in our age may seem so distant, so dim. Or does it? Sometimes, academic art historians show themselves very well aware of the life power inherent in Venetian paintings. In an essay on the famous *Venus of Urbino* (fig. 8), renowned art historian David Rosand responded very critically to a colleague who in his view had reduced Titian's masterpiece to a mere prostitute: 'To call these images "mere pin-ups" can only strike us as a rather perverse form of Venus envy. […] To deny a Renaissance picture of a nude woman her mythological garb is to turn her out into the streets.'[48] Even nowadays, so much is clear, the *Venus of Urbino* is still very much alive.[49] Let us hope the same for the paintings studied over the following pages.

[48] David Rosand, 'So-And-So Reclining on Her Couch', in: Rona Goffen (ed.), *Titian's "Venus of Urbino"*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 37-62, here pp. 49-50.

[49] There are other intriguing examples of art historians enlivening paintings by practising their *métier*. See, for example, the case of Bernard Berenson, signaled by Frank Fehrenbach in '"Du lebst und thust mir nichts": Aby Warburg und die Lebendigkeit der Kunst', in: Hartmut Böhme and Johannes Endres (eds.), *Der Code der Leidenschaften: Fetischismus in den Künsten*, Paderborn 2010, pp. 124-145.