

Mary in Titian's *Annunciation* in San Domenico Maggiore of Naples

ティツィアーノ作《受胎告知》におけるマリアについて
(ナポリ、サン・ドメニコ・マッジョーレ聖堂)

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Abstract

Titian's *Annunciation* in San Domenico Maggiore of Naples indicates the artist's mature ideas for the Christian subject Annunciation and his understanding of the devotional needs from his patron. Nevertheless, studies on this work of art are insufficient. The contemporary scholar and writer Bartolomeo Maranta's *Discourse* attempts at an analytical critique on Titian's Naples *Annunciation*. However Maranta's *Discourse* readily focuses on Titian's masterly depiction of the archangel Gabriel, meanwhile the representation of Mary, the conventional major figure of the subject Annunciation, is less discussed. Despite that Gabriel in Titian's Naples *Annunciation* exhibits the artist's innovative conceptions and mature skills, the depiction of Mary does play an important role in the success of the Naples *Annunciation* as well. Titian depicts a type of Mary not only to underline the virtue of submission and humility but also to reveal the sophisticated social relationships. The fact that the humble Mary was favored by the Hapsburg royalties is preferred by the patron for his prestigious social status and promising political career. Such association can be detected from Titian's coherence of the representation of Mary in both the Naples *Annunciation* and an earlier piece of *Annunciation* finished around 1535, which was finally sent to the Emperor Charles V and then presented as a gift to the Empress Isabella. Titian's deliberation on portraying Mary can also be attested by two different copies after Titian's 1535 *Annunciation*, an engraving and a colored piece. Moreover, in the Naples *Annunciation*, Titian depicts a relief related to a certain Christian subject as a method to show the veneration of the Virgin. The utilization of combining the relief and the figure of Mary by the veil not only references from the multiple-layers of the religious connotations but also results from the cultural, economic and political contexts that the artist lives, which indicate the sixteenth century interactive circles between artists and patrons and disclose the sophisticated relationships of art, religion and politics.

Keywords: Titian, Annunciation, Mary, Veil, Naples

Part I Introduction

The *Annunciation* in San Domenico Maggiore of Naples was produced by Titian in the artist's late years, around 1562. (Fig.1) The modern scholarship on Titian's Naples *Annunciation* is handful, among which the art historian Luba Freedman's study on Maranta's *Discourse* is a specific literature that provides abundant, systematic and accurate records and documentary of the Naples *Annunciation* that allows a deeper and further research on this very work of art.¹

Fig. 1 *Annunciation* in 1562, oil on canvas, 232x190cm. San Domenico Maggiore, Naples.

Freedman puts up the contemporary sixteenth century scholar Bartolomeo Maranta's *Discourse* on Titian's *Annunciation* in Naples.² Regarded as the first known text on analyzing and criticizing a painting by a contemporary living artist, *Discourse* provides several topics including the Neapolitan patronage, the analysis on the figures' postures, gestures, colors, and then the parallel of painting to poetry, music, anatomy and physiognomy etc., including exploring the approaches to the interpretation of a work of art. According to *Discourse*, Maranta thinks highly of Titian's Naples *Annunciation*, especially Titian's depiction of the archangel Gabriel however the Virgin Mary is not much mentioned. As his own remarks: "It's not our intention to discuss the Madonna, but only the Angel".³ Then *Discourse* expands to the discussion of what are the proper ways to judge a painting and the criteria of what should be called aesthetics. In addition to defending the beauty of Titian's Gabriel in the Naples's *Annunciation*, Maranta puts up five conditions: proper proportion, proper quantity, appropriate vividness of colour, grace and posture, and those conditions also help to amplify the success of the figure of the archangel in this work of art.⁴



Despite Maranta's passion for Gabriel in Titian's Naples's *Annunciation* is understandable in considering of the broader contemporary humanists and literary background, as a matter of fact, the other figure Mary is to some degree overlooked in Maranta's *Discourse*. Although Mary is a principle figure of the Christian subject Annunciation, modern scholars rarely focus on the depiction of the Virgin in Titian's Naples *Annunciation*. Nevertheless, scholars on Titian provide general and thorough studies on Titian's styles, patrons and historical documentations.⁵ Anna Chiara Alabiso and Bruno Arciprete in the book *Tiziano per Napoli: l'Annunciazione di San Domenico Maggiore: vicende storico-artistiche, tecnica di esecuzione e restauro* state primarily the restoration of Titian's Naples *Annunciation* in the modern times, providing historical accounts related to the process of the restoration and discussing in detail Titian's signature for this work of art.⁶ Stephen J. Campbell mentions Titian's Naples Annunciation in his newly published *The endless periphery: Toward a geopolitics of art in Lorenzo Lotto's Italy* and summarizes Maranta's comment for Titian's Naples

piece as the “*metafora pitturale*” (pictorial metaphor) and relates Titian's such intention to the influences from Raphael and Michelangelo.⁷ Whereas, Studies on Naples *Annunciation* are still insufficient in many ways including the composition, style and the most important, the artist's ideas for such depiction. In this paper, I examine Titian's Naples *Annunciation*, and study the role of Mary that plays in the work of art. I suggest that Titian's portraiture of the Virgin Mary in his Naples *Annunciation* contributes to the great success of this painting significantly and the artist's ideas for the representation of Mary is not only narratively, religiously and politically associated, but also conventionally related to the multiple connotations of Incarnation. This paper firstly examines Mary and the work of art per se, then discusses its patrons of the work of art and lastly analyzes Mary's veil and crown.

Part II Mary in Titian's *Annunciation* in San Domenico Maggiore of Naples

Titian's Naples *Annunciation*, oil painting with a size of 232x192cm, was prepared and finished in 1557-1562, during the artist's late years. The work of art is finally installed at the Church of San Domenico Maggiore in Naples as an altarpiece. The famous religious subject Annunciation is one of the mostly frequently painted Christian subjects and the Naples *Annunciation* exhibits narratively the critical moment in Christianity when the archangel Gabriel descends from heaven, enters virgin Mary's chamber and passes God's message to Mary that she is about to carry Christ, the son of the Lord, in her womb with her virginity.

In the Naples *Annunciation*, pictorially, the archangel arrives from the left of the canvas and enters Mary's chamber. Gabriel's wings are closed, and the left leg is ahead of the right leg. Gabriel reaches out his right arm to Mary as if the holy message has been sent to the virgin through the line of his arm, and there is a bunch of lilies in his left arm. Mary, in a typically blue-red robe and a mantilla veil with a long headdress, occupies the right part of the canvas. She crosses her arms over her chest, lowers her head, and swings her body a little rightwards and bows. Mary's posture indicates that she understands and accepts the holy message in a humble manner. The artist shows the archangel's face in profile, in contrast, Mary's full face is depicted clearly and her look is peaceful and obedient. Putti and angels are in the air above and the dove, signifying the Holy Spirit, the dove, is in the centre of the upper part of the canvas. A bright light from the dove is casting toward Mary. The work of art perfectly represents the scene of Annunciation that Gabriel has accomplished the holy task that the holy message is delivered. At the same time, Mary accepts the arrangement of her future and carries the baby Christ simultaneously.

Maranta's praise of Titian's representation of Gabriel and focuses more on the figure of the archangel is obvious. In his *Discourse*, he explains in length the physical language of the pose of Gabriel. As Maranta states, a brief conversation was assumed to happen between Gabriel and Mary.

Gabriel greeted to Mary when finding himself in that way face to face with Mary. After having heard the expected answer “Quomodo fit istud” (How shall this be) (Luc 1, 34) from Mary, the angle is speaking his second and last words to Mary “Spiritus Sanctus Supervenient in te” (The holy spirit shall come upon you) (Luc 1, 35). His arm is depicted to be stretching out to Mary, which indicates the very moment of his act of the second speaking. And Mary was then assumed to respond after this. So Mary’s mouth is closed and her body shows a posture of humility in shape of a cross and bending deeply that indicates she is in the action of listening.⁸ Thus in the Naples *Annunciation*, Maranta interprets that the dynamic posture of Gabriel works to imply that the angel is speaking the message of great importance and presume Mary’s next action of responding. Again, it is evident to Maranta primarily discusses about Gabriel while Mary is less talked about.

However if we take a close look at the composition of the figures, Mary’s figure actually locates in the focus of the lower area of the work of art. Gabriel’s physical figure is formed by the wings, the body and primarily the right arm. As stated above, the archangel’s right arm is depicted as reaching out and pointing to Mary. Gabriel’s face is depicted in profile and the archangel is looking at Mary. So does the Holy Spirit. The dove’s head is facing the place where Mary occupies and the dove is casting the holy light exactly to Mary. All the three invisible lines, the arm line, the eyesight line and the line from the Holy Spirit are together leading the viewer’s attention to Mary so that Mary’s crossing-hands posture and the obedient look become the focus of the picture plane. Based on the formal composition Gabriel is functioned to lead the viewer’s eyesight to transit from left to right as the narrative goes on and then the gesture and posture of crossing-hands and the obedient look are the destination of both the narrative and the viewing. Therefore, from the perception of the formal composition, the depiction of the Virgin Mary in the Naples *Annunciation* can not be missed out, and, on the contrary, Mary occupies the central focus.

In effect Titian has good reasons to put Mary in such a subtle location of focus. The particular posture of Mary, likewise, indicates a particular type of Mary. M. Baxandall puts up the idea of five conditions of Virgin Mary in the visualization of Mary in *Annunciation* in the 15th century.⁹ The five conditions stand for five continuous reactions during Annunciation. Baxandall mentions Fra Roberto (who was a Franciscan friar, one of the most famous Italian preachers of his time) and discusses Fra Roberto’s analysis of St. Luke’s account of the dialog between Gabriel and Mary and lists the five laudable conditions.¹⁰

The first condition is *Conturbatio* (Disquiet). The scene described is most likely to be the first moment when Mary saw an archangel came into her chamber and was talking to her. It is natural that these words disquiet Mary and her reaction is astonished and amazed. The second condition is *Cogitatio* (Reflection). It describes Mary saw the archangel and heard the words, then

she was on deep reflection and speaks to herself in her mind.¹¹ The third condition is *Interrogatio* (Inquiry), explaining the moment when Mary is asking the archangel. The fourth condition is *Humiliatio* (Submission).

What tongue could ever describe, indeed, what mind could contemplate the movement and style with which she set on the ground her holy knees? Lowering her head she spoke : Behold the handmaid of the Lord. She did not say "Lady", she did not say "Queen". Oh profound humility! Oh extraordinary gentleness! Behold, she said ,the salve and servant of my Lord, and then lifting her eyes to heaven, and bring up her hands with her arms in the form of a cross, she ended as God, the Angels, and the holy Fathers desired: Be it unto me according to thy word.¹²

The fourth condition describes Mary's submission in response to the holy messenger's indication. Interpretations of the Submission indicates vividly Mary's good virtues and establishes an image of submissive and humble Mary. The last one of the five conditions is *Meritatio* (Merit). When she finished all the four above, that means after wondering, reflecting, inquiring, she showed her merit, her decisive mind and willingness by kneeling down and crossing her arms, Gabriel departed from her room and the Virgin at once had Christ, God incarnate in her womb.¹³

Baxandall's study of Annunciation implies Mary as the central figure in the narrative of Annunciation as a fifteenth century tradition. Different types of Mary exhibit various reactions from the narrative and also indicate varied virtues of Mary. Based on that, Titian clearly depicts a humble Mary (*Humiliatio*) for the Naples *Annunciation*. The utilization of the crossing-hands posture and obedient look is in line with the virtue of humble Mary. Moreover, Titian's depiction of the Naples Mary underlines the representation of the conventional image of the Virgin and such treatment of Mary has more complicated connotations.

Fig. 2 *Annunciation* in 1564. oil on canvas 403x235 cm
San Salvador Church, Venice.

In effect, the humble Mary has its conventional origins and Titian's depiction of the Naples Mary evokes the traditional image of the Virgin. In order to discuss the convention type of Mary that Titian depicted in the San Domenico Maggiore *Annunciation*, Titian's another *Annunciation* that was finished almost at the same time period can not be neglected.



Titian has produced an Annunciation for the church of San Salvador in Venice. The work of art was finished in 1564 and is Titian's last *Annunciation* in his life. (Fig. 2) The Naples *Annunciation* and Titian's San Salvador *Annunciation* look remarkably similar at the first glance: the composition of upper and lower areas, the color tones and even the depiction of Gabriel and Mary. However if we scrutinize two works of art carefully, they differ largely in many ways significantly.

Judging from the posture, the Virgin in the Venetian *Annunciation* is not the type of the humble Mary. The dynamic pose and dramatic look make the Venetian Mary suit an earlier phase of the Annunciation narrative and exhibit virtues other than humble. Particularly, the Venetian Mary underlines the sensuous body by strengthening the full breast and belly that are subtly implied by the folds of the robe. Art historian Rosand and Bohde links the sensuous depiction of the Virgin in the Venetian *Annunciation* to the materiality of Incarnation.¹⁴ Such sensuous treatment of Incarnation, however, can not be detected in the Naples *Annunciation*. In the Naples *Annunciation*, the Mary's body is not fully shown. The major portion of Mary's body is hidden by the Virgin's devoted posture of crossing hands upon her breast and the seemingly revealed portion of the body is covered by the robe and the veil. In another word, the Naples Annunciation exhibits a more conventional Incarnation.

Constable discusses the convention of Annunciation in his essay *A Florentine Annunciation* based on G. Millet's *L'Iconographie de L'Évangile* and D. M. Robb's *Iconography of the Annunciation in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*.¹⁵ The depiction of Mary with head bowed and hands crossed upon chest is mentioned and considered a traditional image of Mary that the body of Mary especially the breasts and belly are not significantly stressed. Clearly, albeit the striking similarity and same production time period, Titian intentions to put a Mary of conventional connotations in the Naples *Annunciation* and a material one in the Venetian version, to which purpose, Titian utilises the veil to block the Virgin's body. In effect, the representation of Mary and the religious reference of the veils in the Naples *Annunciation* are resulted from the artist's understanding of the patron's devoting need and piety that I discuss in the following parts respectively.

PART III The patron of Titian's Naples *Annunciation*

Titian's Naples *Annunciation* exhibits a humble and conventional Mary. It is reasonable to link Mary in the Naples *Annunciation* to the condition of submission in consideration of the patron of this Naples work of art. Freedman states that according to the contemporary scholar Bartolomeo Maranta's records, Titian was commissioned by Cosimo Pinelli to paint one *Annunciation* for the altar of the Pinelli chapel, which was a private chapel for the Pinelli family in the Neapolitan Catholic church of San Domenico Maggiore.¹⁶ Maranta states that Cosimo desires to have the *Annunciation* painted by the hand of Titian, and Cosimo's son Gian Vincenzo began the process of producing it for the chapel after his relocating to Padua around August 1558.¹⁷

Cosimo Pinelli, who was born in Genoa and from a noble Ligurian family, became a citizen of Naples by marriage and purchase of property. In 1530, Cosimo was appointed one of the governors of the Annunciate church. In *Discourse*, Cosimo is described as a deeply pious man,

devoted to the Virgin Mary, and as someone who appreciated art.¹⁸ Titian, the Christian subject *Annunciation* and the artist's traditional treatment of Mary as the central figure of *Annunciation*, all of these choices are perfect for the devout Cosimo.

Actually, Cosimo Pinelli's devotion to the Virgin Mary is not limited to his commission of Titian's *Annunciation*. In 1547, Cosimo bought a chapel in San Domenico Maggiore and obtained its consecration to the *Annunziata* at the same year. In effect, Cosimo assigned the chapel decoration to the care of Giovanni Bernardo Lama, who was a very famous painter in local Naples. The four ceiling pictures showing scenes from the Virgin's life commissioned to Lama, one of Cosimo's favored artists. Nevertheless, Titian is preferred to paint the altarpiece.¹⁹ The artist's premium status as an official painter to the new Emperor, Phillip II, King of Spain and also of Naples and Sicily in 1557, is probably a significant reason why Cosimo insisted that the altarpiece *Annunciation* should be by the hand of Titian. The relation to the Emperor makes Titian a perfect choice of artist to the church governor and Naples citizen Cosimo.

Fig. 3 Jacopo Caraglio *Annunciation*. c. 1538

Engraving after Titian 45.3x34.4 cm

As a matter of fact, Titian's close relationship with the Hapsburg royalties began from the previous Emperor Charles V, Phillip II's father. Before the Naples *Annunciation*, Titian has produced another *Annunciation* some time before 1537, probably in 1535. Although now the original work of art is lost, Jacopo Caraglio's engraving in 1537 after Titian resembles the original 1535 piece well. (Fig. 3) The



1562 Naples *Annunciation* and the 1535 *Annunciation* are extremely similar in many ways although. The representation of Gabriel has been altered and the revised version won the high praise from Maranta. On the other hand, Mary barely changes. Mary's posture of crossing-arms and submissive look are almost exactly same in two *Annunciations* although from different decades. Undoubtedly, Titian also puts a humble Mary in this earlier *Annunciation* of 1535 and the humble Mary in the Naples *Annunciation* follows the image of the humble Mary from the *Annunciation* of 1535 by Titian himself. It is assumable that the representation of Mary from the artist's earlier *Annunciation* of 1535 receives good reception in the 1530s and Titian confidently repeats the very humble Mary in his own work of art twenty more years later. Actually, the *Annunciation* of 1535 is a successful model for Titian's career and plays an important role.

According to Vasari, originally, Titian was commissioned to depict this early 1535 *Annunciation* by the nuns of Santa Maria deli Angeli of Murano, a small island in the Venetian lagoon around 1530s.²⁰ The church Santa Maria deli Angeli is dedicated to the Most Blessed Virgin

and all the Angels and Martyrs (*Beatissimae Virgini et omnium Angelorum et Martyrum*). That explains an *Annunciation* with a focus on Mary is reasonable to commission for a church that is dedicated to the Virgin. Nevertheless, when the lost *Annunciation* of 1535 was finished, the work of art was refused by the nuns because they thought Titian's price of 500 ducats was too high.²¹ Then in 1537, perhaps because of Aretino's promotion, Titian sent the painting to Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor at that period, and then as a gift for Empress Isabella, who is famous for her Catholic religious piety. Charles's appreciation of this 1535 version of *Annunciation* can be known by the fact that the Emperor generously paid the artist a considerable sum of 2000 scudi and the *Annunciation* remained in Spain afterwards until the early nineteenth century when it was probably destroyed during the French invasion.²²

The royal acceptance of Titian's *Annunciation*, the connection between the name Titian per se and the Emperor, both were of great importance to Cosimo, the Naples patron. In the year 1557, Cosimo was appointed by the King Phillip II, the son and successor of Charles V, to serve as Chancellor of the kingdom, and his first born son Galeazzo had been on several battlefield with imperial armies.²³ The Naples Mary inherited from the 1535 *Annunciation* is assumed to satisfy the patron in both religious devotion and political consideration. As a matter of fact, Cosimo was indeed satisfied with the final work of art and praised that "nothing can be added to it or taken away from it."²⁴ Vincenzo fulfilled his father's wish to have Titian's *Annunciation* for his family chapel. After Cosimo died in 1568, the Pinelli Chapel served as the burial place for the patron. The son Gian Vincenzo was also pleased with the painting as Maranta writes "that he likes the invention and the art and all that can be considered in this painting immensely."²⁵ It is presumable that Titian takes into consideration Cosimo's devotion to the Virgin and his eagerness to be close to the Hapsburg royalties' tastes and fondness. Because of such sophisticated connections and considerations, Titian's humble Mary occurs in the *Annunciation* of 1535 and then occurs again in the Naples *Annunciation*.

Part IV Mary's veil and crown

The repetition of Titian's Naples *Annunciation* and the artist's 1535 *Annunciation* indicates Titian's understanding of representing the conventions of Annunciation in the various contexts. Although the original piece of the 1535 *Annunciation* is lost, handful copies of the original work of art remain. A study of the nuances of those copies can articulate Titian's conception of the representation of Mary in the Naples *Annunciation*.

According to Aidan Weston-Lewis, except for the mostly known engraving copy from Jacopo Caraglio, another early color copy after Titian's *Annunciation* of 1535 exists.²⁶ The coloured *Annunciation* is currently in the Catholic church of Our Lady and St Andrew in Galashiels, the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh.²⁷ (Fig. 4) Despite no record of how and when the work

of art arrived there, Weston-Lewis states it is most probably produced by Titian's workshop before the original piece was sent out to Spain to Charles V since the workshop normally copies directly from Titian's original piece as a record.²⁸ Compared with the engraving piece, the composition of the color copy stays same while the interior, background and landscape differ largely.

Fig. 4 *Annunciation* after Titian, oil on canvas,

Church of Our Lady and St Andrew, Galashiels. Workshop of Titian

Such differentiation is understandable since the final patron for the *Annunciation* of 1535 is changed and the artist might modify the work of art for the actual patron and the new installation environment. Nevertheless, the depictions the figures of Mary in two copies are different. Albeit the same postures for the Virgin that indicates the humble Mary, the outfits are not all the same. In the engraving copy, Mary wears a mantilla veil over the head, while in the coloured piece, Mary's outfit does not have the head piece part. Weston-Lewis discusses about the possibility that the date of the colored piece might be earlier than the engraving copy, whereas, it still remains unknown which copy is more genuine to the original *Annunciation* of 1535. Notwithstanding, the existence of such nuance indicates Titian's pondering on how Mary should be portrayed for certain purposes and the artist has at least conceived of two versions of Mary as a result: a Mary wearing veils and a Mary not wearing veils. The final *Annunciation* of 1535 is not available to observe the image of Mary, however, it is evident that Mary in the Naples *Annunciation* in 1560s is depicted as wearing a long mantilla veil. Mary of the same period in the San Salvador *Annunciation* is also depicted with the veil despite of a different type. Titian's deliberation on Mary's veil, in effect, indicates the significance of the veil per se. The particular treatment of the veil is associated with the peculiar religious references.



Gertrud Schiller mentions Mary and the veil in *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst, Band I* generally.²⁹ Paul Hills studies Titian's utilisation of veils in his essay *Titian's veils* and points out that the veil signifies Christ's flesh.³⁰ Based on Christian legend, the true image of Christ's face was itself imprinted upon a veil: the *vera icon* or Veronica. Since then, veils continue to occur in the religious texts. The Exodus Chapter 26 of the Old Testament records how Moses makes the tabernacle under God's instructions:

'And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen . . . And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen...And bring the ark . . . in thither within the veil; and the veil shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy.'

“The High Priest had to pass through the veil and venture into the Holy of Holies. Once the ark received its fixed place within the temple in Jerusalem, this veil became the veil of the temple – the same veil that, according to St Mark’s gospel (15:38) was rent in two from top to bottom at the moment when Christ died on the Cross.”³¹ Also in St Paul’s exegesis, veil is linked with Christ’s flesh. “the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies was replaced by Christ, who was himself both priest and sacrifice: *‘Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.’*”³²

The Virgin Mary, as Hills states, “without whom Christ could not take on flesh, is the tabernacle of the New Covenant.”³³ Hence, metaphorically, Christ, Mary and veils are closely bonded.

The religious reference of the veil is linked to the birth and death of Christ, denoting the flesh of Christ. A Mary wearing veils undoubtedly enhances such connotations and the utilization of veils certainly indicates a more conventional image of Mary which probably explains Titian’s treatment of Mary in his Naples *Annunciation* as well as the one for Venetian piece. However, the different styles of veils are applied in those two works of art. The white long veil in the Naples *Annunciation* evidently resembles that one in the artist’s 1535 *Annunciation* and indicates an unusual role that the veil plays in the reference of a more complicated religious connotation.

Hills discusses Titian’s utilization of veils together with clouds and he links such veiling and clouding to revelation. In Titian’s paintings, the artist represents revelation or the opening of heaven to the eye of devotion by drawing apart clouds. Such treatment can be observed in Titian’s Naples *Annunciation*. The clouds are located within the upper area so that for the central area, the pillar and Mary’s white long veil are underlined. The whiteness and length of the veil imply a white cloth large enough for a winding sheet that is possibly related to death. More importantly, the relief on the pillar behind Mary’s veil is deliberately revealed. (Fig. 5) Although with vague to some extent, it can be observed that a crown is clearly painted and is held by a human-shape spirit with wings, which can be possibly assumed to a type of the angel. Behind the angel, it looks like another similar figure is painted and it could be possibly considered two angles are passing the crown towards Mary and about to put the crown on the Virgin’s head. There is almost no discussion or study on Titian’s unusual depiction of the relief in the Naples *Annunciation*. Normally, Mary is coronated after the scene of Assumption by Christ and the God father.³⁴ The depiction of Mary crowned by one or two angels is often seen in *Mary and Child* and such examples are not uncommon especially in the works of the Flemish and the German Gothic artists like Jan van Eyck and Dürer.

Whereas, there are handful examples depicting Mary is crowned by hovering angles and no presence of Gabriel or the Child Christ. Penny Howell Jolly discusses the depiction of Mary alone reading a book and two angles are crowning the Virgin in *On the Meaning of the "Virgin Mary Reading": Attributed to Antonello da Messina*. Jolly relates the portrait of the crowned Mary that could be possibly attributed to the Sicilian painter Antonello da Messina to Jan van Eyck's Mary wearing a crown and reading in the Ghent altarpiece and argues that the Reading Mary could be interpreted as an image of Rosary cult.³⁵ Considering da Messina's interests in Flemish paintings, such link could possibly be reasonable and the depiction of Mary crowned by angel(s) can be interpreted as an emphasis on the veneration of the Virgin. Nevertheless, the absence of Gabriel makes it inconvincible to be associated with Annunciation.

Fig. 5 Detail of *Annunciation* in 1562, oil on canvas, San Domenico Maggiore, Naples.



In fact, there are few Annunciations that depict Gabriel and Mary with that Mary is wearing a crown however no hovering angles at presence at the period of Renaissance. The legendary fresco Annunciation in Santissima Annunziata (*SS. Annunciation*) displays a Mary wearing a rich crown at the scene of Annunciation, with the presence of Gabriel while no hovering angles. The painting,

according to the legend, was produced by an angel's hands. (Fig 6) The *SS. Annunciation* is dated from the fourteenth century and Piero Medici then ordered a rich tabernacle to frame the fresco in 1448.³⁶ Numerous copies emerged around and after and most copies are more moderate that Mary is depicted without the crown. Miller and Taylor-Mitchell in *HUMILITY AND PIETY: THE "ANNUNCIATION" IN THE CHURCH OF OGNISSANTI IN FLORENCE* compare one of the copies the *Ognissanti Annunciation* with the original *SS. Annunciation* to analyze the differences of the depictions of Mary. They point out that Mary's humble pose in the *Ognissanti Annunciation* underlines the Virgin's virtue of humility and mentions "absolute iconographical hegemony, even tyranny" ascribed to the *SS. Annunciation*.³⁷ It is evident that the treatment of Mary wearing a crown in *SS. Annunciation* is possibly connected with the Medici family. Therefore it is not surprising that one copy of *SS. Annunciation* in which Mary wearing a crown (1580)³⁸ is from Alessandro Allori (the father) or Cristofano Allori (the son) who were closely related to the Medici family at the time period around later sixteenth and early seventeenth century. (Fig 7)

Fig 6. *SS. Annunciation* 14th century. Fresco. Santissima Annunziata.



Fig 7. Alessandro Allori or Cristofano Allori *Annunciation* 1580.



Fig 8. Piero del Donzello *Annunciation* about 1490. Santo Spirito



Another Annunciation that includes a crowned Mary is painted by the Florentine painter Piero del Donzello's for Santo Spirito in Florence about 1490.(Fig 8) This *Annunciation* is not completely connected to the *SS. Annunciation* and the painting takes in multiple traditions of Annunciations, the classical symmetry, the vase of flowers from Hugo Van der Goes, and Mary's robe from Leonardo.³⁹ Since Donzello was once working in Naples during the end of the fifteenth century, the idea of a crowned Mary in Annunciation could be possibly not new by then. The absence of the hovering angels and the gap of the years make the crowned Mary Annunciation less possible a direct source for Titian's Naples *Annunciation* however the famous legendary *SS. Annunciation* and various copies could possibly be some inspirations.

Notwithstanding, Elizabeth Valdez Del Alamo states a rare subject as Annunciation-Coronation that is mostly seen in Iberian peninsula and such combined subject is quite a localized

subject within Spain to show the veneration of the Virgin Mary during the early Christian and Byzantine.⁴⁰ Del Alamo points out the crown has various symbolic meanings as well as triumph which is the most commonly associated. In classical art, the crown is associated with victory or a signification of rulership. Also, the crown can be worn by bride and groom at weddings or considered a way to commemorate the deceased in funerary portraits.⁴¹ In Annunciation-Coronation, Mary is usually depicted as wearing the veil that signifies her perpetual virginity and the Virgin is coronated by the flying angels or standing the angels flanked. Gabriel is represented with a pose of kneeling to show reverence to the Regal Mary.⁴²

The Naples *Annunciation* does not fully resemble an Annunciation-Coronation. Nevertheless, the work of art does exhibit an actual figure a Mary with a white long veil and with the aid of the relief, which is just adjacent to Mary, the Virgin is to be coronated by two angels on the relief. I suggest such combination can not be considered a complete Annunciation-Coronation but an Annunciation with a relief of the prophecy of Coronation which is underlined by the white long veil. The multiple identities of Mary are not announced at the same moment of the Annunciation as expressed in Annunciation-Coronation, but two subjects are revealed with two different media, one is depicted via paint for the Annunciation that is happening now, and the other is implied via a more archaic medium, pillar relief, for the Coronation for it foresees the Virgin's destination after Annunciation-- that is being the holy Mother, the regal Mary. The multiple identities, from the Virgin Mary to the Crowned Mary, in the Naples *Annunciation*, is connected by her white long veil. The association between the veil and the shroud accentuates the nature of the transition of Mary's multiple identities, crossing the earthly and the unworldly. Hence, in the Naples *Annunciation*, the veil brings together birth and death, Annunciation and Coronation, the nature of Virgin Mary and the Christ flesh, which multiplies the complicated religious connotations of Incarnation.

Titian's utilisation of relief as a supplementary to the subject of the work of art is rare yet not exceptional. Although for most cases Titian painted floral reliefs in his works of art for the spatial coherence with the installation architectures, there are few examples the artist painted the reliefs to expand or deepen the subjects of the works of art. Titian's first Annunciation, the *Malchiostro Annunciation* in Treviso, includes a mysterious frieze with an indecipherable relief.⁴³ Although the relief looks like a frieze of putti yet still remains uninterpreted. Nevertheless it is evident that the patron's escutcheon and the initials B and M are clearly painted. (Fig 9) Another two examples are *St. Peter Enthroned, Adored by Pope Alexander VI and Jacopo Pesaro* (1512) with a classical relief in which Victory, Peace and Virture are observed and *St. Catherine of Alexandria in Prayer* (1568, possibly from Titian's workshop) with a relief of Entombment.⁴⁴ (Fig 10&11) Reliefs in all the other three works are obvious to observe while the relief in the Naples *Annunciation* is deliberately painted

with obscure. In fact, the crowned Mary is not only of heavenly connotations but also of social-political meanings. Considering the nature of the private commission from the noble patrons, a heavenly court and crown can be considered a mirror of the secular world in order to underline the veneration of the Virgin as well as the secular world rulers and nobles. Titan's treatment of the crown manifests the understanding of the patron's need and piety for the Naples *Annunciation*.

Fig 9 *Malchiostro Annunciation* 210x176cm, 1520. Cathedral of Treviso



Fig 10 *St. Peter Enthroned, Adored by Pope Alexander VI and Jacopo Pesaro*



Fig 11 *St. Catherine of Alexandria in Prayer*



Hills also links veils to the contemporary culture in the sixteenth century due to the flourish of the silk business in Venice.⁴⁵ The Venetian silk industry contributed a great deal to the Republic's economics and veils were a vital export commodity. Wearing veils evolved into a popular culture that reconciles the secular wealthy life and religious rituals. As a personal and precious item for a woman's outfit, veils were central to the gift-giving culture of entire Renaissance society in and outside Venice.⁴⁶ It would be more proper to draw an *Annunciation* that includes a Mary with mantilla veil for the Emperor as a gift to the Empress in the certain historical context when Titian produced the 1535 *Annunciation* and then repeated in later *Annunciations*. The Mary with long veil in the Naples *Annunciation* explicates the multiple layers of veils aesthetically, religiously and culturally. The representation of Mary indicates Titian's understanding of the significant place of Mary in conveying royal pious devotion and the mantilla veil in the Naples *Annunciation* indicates Titian's emphasis on the association between the humble Mary and representation of Incarnation. Such treatment of Mary in the Naples *Annunciation* reveals the interactions of conveying devotion by both the patrons and the artist.

Part V Conclusion

The interpretation of Titian's *Annunciation* in San Domenico Maggiore of Naples relies heavily on Bartolomeo Maranta's *Discourse*. Although Maranta provides sufficient records of the commission and systematic of methodologies of critiques, the analysis of the Naples *Annunciation* is still insufficient. Maranta's strong focus on Gabriel and lacking enough attention on Mary make it

necessary to re-think the work of art. Mary's traditional significant place in Titian's Naples *Annunciation* is articulated and emphasized. The royal connections are specially valued by the patron for the Naples piece. Such connections are visualized by the repeated representation of the humble Mary, the devoted postures and the specific utilization of the veil and relief depicting the angles at the action of crowning that references various religious connotations. Nevertheless, the unique combination of two subjects that occurred in Naples *Annunciation* is still in need of further studying.

Endnote

¹ Bartolomeo Maranta, Viviana Tonon and Luba Freedman "Bartolomeo Maranta's 'Discourse' on Titian's *Annunciation* in Naples: Translation," *Journal of Art Historiography*, 13 (Dec 2015), pp. 1-26; Luba Freedman, "Bartolomeo Maranta's 'Discourse' on Titian's *Annunciation* in Naples: introduction 1," *Journal of Art Historiography*, 13 (Dec 2015), pp. 1-48.

² Maranta and Freedman. (2015), p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-33.

⁵ See Arasse, Daniel. *L'Annonciation italienne une histoire de perspective*. Paris: Hazan, 2010; AA. VV., Da mercanti genovesi a baroni napoletani: i Pinelli e la loro cappella nella chiesa di San Domenico Maggiore, in *ESTRATEGIAS CULTURALES Y CIRCULACIÓN DE LA NUEVA NOBLEZA EN EUROPA (1570-1707)*, 2006, pp. 95-110, Aranjuez (Madrid); Hope, Charles. *Titian*. London: National Gallery, 2003; Humfrey, Peter, and Titian. *Titian*. London: Phaidon, 2007; Panofsky, E. *Problems in Titian: Mostly Iconographic*. New York, 1969. Rosand, David. *Painting in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Wethey, Harold E. *The Paintings of Titian Complete Edition : I : the Religious Paintings : II : the Portraits : III : the Mythological and Historical Paintings*. London: Phaidon, 1969. Cat. no.12.

⁶ See Alabiso, Annachiara. *Tiziano per Napoli: l'Annunciazione di San Domenico Maggiore : vicende storico-artistiche, tecnica di esecuzione e restauro*. Castellammare di Stabia (Napoli): N. Longobardi, 2010.

⁷ Stephen J. Campbell. *The Endless Periphery: Toward a Geopolitics of Art in Lorenzo Lotto's Italy*. (2019), 265.

⁸ Tonon Maranta and Freedman. (2015), pp. 17-18.

⁹ Michael Baxandall. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*. (Oxford [u.a.]: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 51.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁴ Daniela Bohde, 2007. "Corporeality and Materiality: Light, Colour and the Body in Titian's S. Salvatore *Annunciation* and Naples Danae". *Titian* / ed. by Joanna Woods-Marsden. Introd. by David Rosand. (2007), p. 24.

¹⁵ Constable, W. G. 1945. "A Florentine *Annunciation*". *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*. 43, no. 254: pp. 72-76.

¹⁶ Maranta and Freedman. (2015), p. 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

- ²⁰ Bruce Cole. *Titian and Venetian Painting, 1450-1590*. (Boulder, Colo: Icon Editions, 1999). pp.120-122.
- G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, Scultori ed architettori* (1568), ed. G Milanesi (Florence, 1878-1885), 2nd ed., with additions and corrections, 9 vol, Florence, 1906, vol. VII, p.441
- ²¹ Ibid. Titian had asked only 100 ducats for the Saint Peter Martyr altarpiece. The commission for a replacement was subsequently given to Pordenone, Titian's principle rival at the time.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Aidan Weston-Lewis. *Titian's Last Annunciation Altarpiece for Murano: An Early Copy*. (2013). pp. 55-59.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Gertrud Schiller. *Iconographie der christlichen Kunst, Band 1*.(Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Mohn, 1966). pp. 46-47.
- ³⁰ Paul Hills. "Titian's Veils" *Art History*. 29 (2006): pp. 771-774.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Philippe Verdier, *Le couronnement de la Vierge. Les origines et les premiers développements d'un thème iconographique*, (1980).
- ³⁵ Penny Howell Jolly. 1982. "On the Meaning of the 'Virgin Mary Reading'". *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery / Publ. by the Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery*. 25-35.
- ³⁶ Arasse (2010). pp. 110-113. Julia Miller and Laurie Taylor-Mitchell. "Humility and Piety: The Annunciation in the Church of Ognissanti in Florence". *Studies in Iconography* (Western Michigan University, 2009). pp.42-45.
- ³⁷ Miller and Taylor-Mitchell (2009). pp. 42-71. Also Arasse mentions that. Arasse (2010). pp. 110-115.
- ³⁸ Arasse mentions that. Arasse (2010). pp. 115.
- ³⁹ Arasse mentions that. Arasse (2010). pp. 249-251.
- ⁴⁰ Del Alamo, Elizabeth Valdez. 1990. "Triumphal Visions and Monastic Devotion: The Annunciation Relief of Santo Domingo De Silos". *Gesta*. 29 no. 2, pp.167-188.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, p. 171.
- ⁴² Ibid, p. 167-170.
- ⁴³ Wethey, (1969).I, pp.69-70.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 129. pp. 132.
- ⁴⁵ Hills, (2006). pp. 779-780.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.