

Biography of Tiziano Vecellio (Titian)

"Titian is truly the most excellent of all painters ever: because his brushes always gave birth to expressions of life" (Marco Boschini, 1674).

Born in Pieve, in the province of Belluno, among the mountains of the Cadore range, between 1488 and 1490, Tiziano Vecellio belonged to an ancient family of a small alpine town. An extrovert, a tireless worker, Titian worked on his paintings without pause. His career was triumphant, his life long, if it is true that death overcame him when the painter had already surpassed the incredible age of eighty.

Still very young, he left the "magnificent Cadore community" to receive a suitable pictorial training. He thus reached Venice, where his first teachers were Gentile and Giovanni Bellini.

Between 1508 and 1509, he was by Giorgione's side working on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Only a year later, his fame was already so well established that he received commissions such as the Altar Pieces for San Marco and Santa Maria della Salute. In 1511 he frescoed the Scuola del Santo in Padova. Having obtained an official income from the Council of Ten, that was assigned to the most accomplished painters, in 1533 he became the official painter of the Venice Republic. His activity was frenetic: he accepted many commission from contemporary nobility, creating many works based on lay subjects.

In 1516 Alfonso I d'Este required his services and in 1518 commissioned him to decorate the "alabaster chamber". Between 1519 and 1526 he painted the Pesaro Altar Piece for the Friars, and the Averoldi Polyptych for the Santi Nazaro and Celso Church in Brescia.

Acclaimed as the most celebrated painter of his time, Titian's talents were vied for by the various Italian courts: he worked in Mantova for the Gonzaga's, and in Urbino for the Dukes. In 1542 he began his collaboration with Pope Paul III and his family; he soon moved to Rome where he remained until 1546. In the meantime, his very much appreciated portrait activity continued and he had the opportunity of portraying Charles V during his coronation in 1530. The emperor and his son Philip II, future King of Spain, made him their favourite painter. Titian worked for years at the service of the Hapsburg family. He died on the 27th of August 1576, when the plague was raging throughout Italy, leaving unfinished the work that he would have wished had been placed on his tomb: the "Pietà".