

Tiepolo

DELPHI  CLASSICS

Masters of Art

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo

(1696-1770)



Contents

The Highlights

Scipio Africanus Freeing Massiva (c. 1720)
Allegory of the Power of Eloquence (c. 1725)
Frescoes for the Archbishop's Palace, Udine (c. 1726)
The Education of the Virgin (1732)
The Virgin in Glory with Saints (1734)
Jupiter and Danaë (1736)
Saint Clement Adoring the Trinity (1736)
The Institution of the Rosary (c. 1739)
Armida Encounters the Sleeping Rinaldo (1742)
The Transportation of the Holy House of Loreto (1744)
The Banquet of Cleopatra (1744)
Allegory of the Planets and Continents (c. 1753)
The Death of Hyacinth (1753)
Young Lady in a Tricorn Hat (c. 1760)
Apollo Pursuing Daphne (c. 1760)
The Apotheosis of Aeneas (1766)
The Rest on the Flight into Egypt (c. 1770)

The Paintings

The Collected Paintings
Alphabetical List of Paintings

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

G. TIEPOLO F.

© *Delphi Classics* 2023
Version 1

Masters of Art Series

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo



By Delphi Classics, 2023

COPYRIGHT

Masters of Art - Giovanni Battista Tiepolo



First published in the United Kingdom in 2023 by Delphi Classics.

© Delphi Classics, 2023.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form other than that in which it is published.

ISBN: 978 1 80170 121 1

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd

Hastings, East Sussex

United Kingdom

Contact: sales@delphiclassics.com

DELPHI  CLASSICS

www.delphiclassics.com

The Highlights



Venice — Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's birthplace



Venice in the eighteenth century by Canaletto, c. 1740

The Highlights



In this section, a sample of Tiepolo's most celebrated works is provided, with concise introductions, special 'detail' reproductions and additional biographical images.

Scipio Africanus Freeing Massiva (c. 1720)



The last great artist of the Baroque era, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo was born in Venice in 1696. His father, a shipping merchant, died the following year, leaving his wife and five children in comfortable circumstances. His mother entrusted the young Tiepolo to Gregorio Lazzarini, a painter of decorative and academic taste, who taught him the basic techniques of the profession. Lazzarini would have instructed his pupils in the study of the artistic heritage of Renaissance Venice, particularly the masterpieces of Jacopo Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese and Palma il Giovane, Titian's last important follower. In his studies Tiepolo leaned towards a melancholic style, employing strong contrasts of light and shade, *chiaroscuro*, that was typical of the Baroque period. Strong shadings of light and dark, enhanced with a sense of the monumental, are evident in his first public work, *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (1716), completed for the church of Sta. Maria dei Derelitti.

Tiepolo's name as an independent painter first appears on the lists of the Venetian painters' guild the following year, at the tender age of twenty-one. By all accounts he was a precocious talent and his studio was already thriving by this time, as attested by his marriage to Cecilia Guardi, a sister of the painters Gianantonio and Francesco. The newlyweds settled in a house near S. Francesco della Vigna. In later years, they moved across the Grand Canal, to enjoy domestic comfort in a house near Santa Fosca, a church in the sestiere of Cannaregio. It appears that their long marriage was a happy one and decades later, when the elderly artist worked in Madrid, far from Venice, he is recorded as having sent her pearls and lingerie embroidered with lace.

His artistic education was complex and varied: he explored the works of both Venetian and foreign contemporaries and he studied older painters as well, as revealed by his large production of etchings after sixteenth-century subjects. During this formative period, he was influenced by the vigorous plastic modelling of his Venetian contemporary Giovanni Battista Piazzetta (1683-1754), which he employed for his impressive early history painting *Scipio Africanus Freeing Massiva* (c. 1720). It depicts a scene from Roman history involving the legendary general Scipio Africanus after the Battle of Baecula (209 BC) in present-day Spain, where he defeated the Carthaginians, capturing their Iberian and North African allies. The painting illustrates the dramatic moment when one of the captured Africans is brought before Scipio, who recognises him to be Massiva, the nephew of a chieftain of Eastern Numidia. Scipio reportedly frees Massiva, sending him home to his uncle laden with gifts and so winning their loyalty for Rome.

Tiepolo's handling of oil is impressive. The bright pearlescent colours, with vibrant reds and blues in the important areas, draw our attention away from the subdued orange and yellow tones of the rest of the composition. As few of the tones are highly saturated, the strong red at the centre leads us directly to Scipio on top of the central dais. The general's outstretched arm guides the viewer's focus around the painting to the right. This sight line is the basis of a pyramidal structure, as the eye is drawn to the left along the base of the painting by the sweeping curve of the dais. The rich blue in the foreground in the costume of the standard bearer leads the viewer back to the top of the dais along the diagonal lines of his body. The figures to the right are depicted in bright light, strongly contrasting the deep shadows and dark tones of

the left. The painting is separated into three sections by the dais at the base and the architectural feature towards the top, both of which employ strong horizontal lines to create a defined central area. The colours and figures are confined to the central section, where their diagonal and open stances evoke a sense of dynamism. The lower sections are dominated by layered horizontal and vertical lines, in the floor tiles and the architectural features in the upper section give depth to the scene. Tiepolo also employs foreshortening — a painterly skill he would rely on much for his later ceiling frescoes — in the delineation of his figures, capturing the illusion of depth.

We know little of the original commission for this painting, which is now held in The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. The decision to depict the general Scipio Africanus may perhaps give a clue to the artist's intentions. Scipio had achieved fame through his exploration and conquering of areas of Africa for the Roman Republic. Here he is depicted as the benevolent and powerful vanquisher, towering over the other figures. The fact that he is the only form in the upper third of the painting draws our attention to his greater status. Surely Scipio's success as the conqueror of a continent is being used to draw comparisons with the unknown patron's achievements. Some art historians argue that it was commissioned by the Cornaro family, who were among the wealthiest of the Venetian nobles. They traced their ancestry back to Scipio and other members of the Cornelia line among the Roman elite. Moreover, during this period the patrician family were heavily engaged in large-scale renovations, employing numerous artisans across the city.

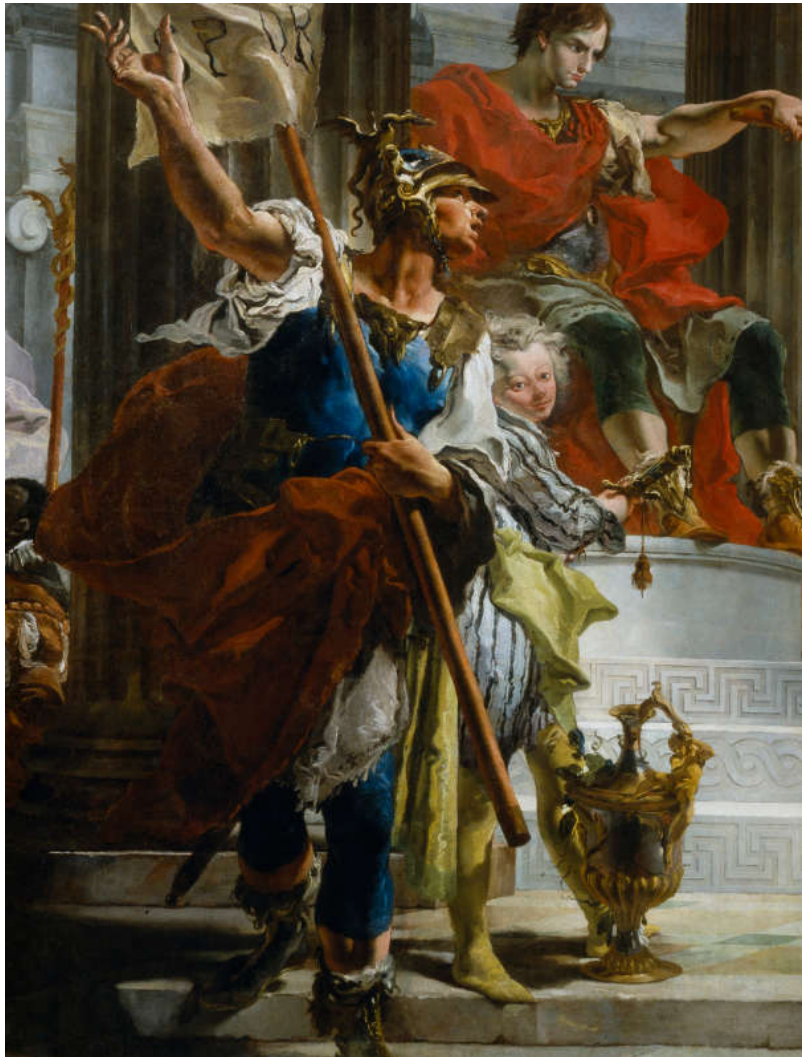




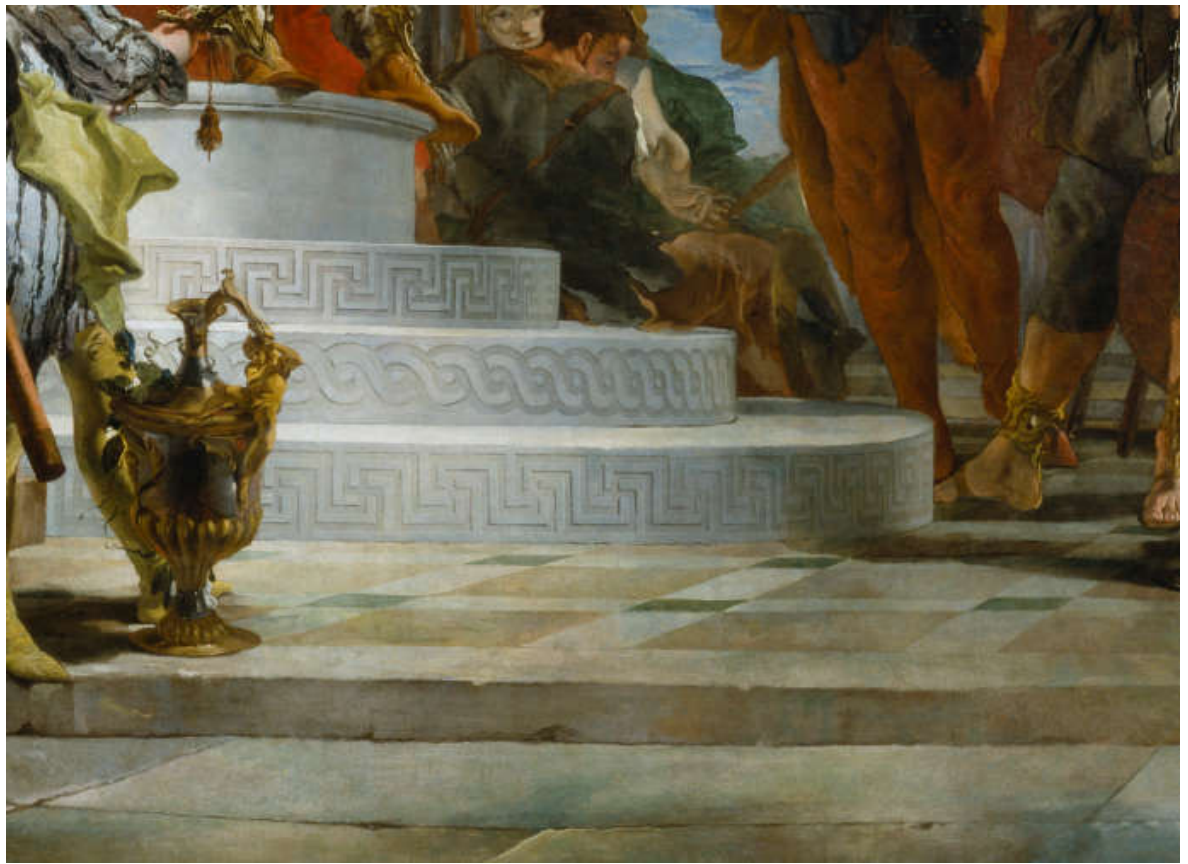
Detail



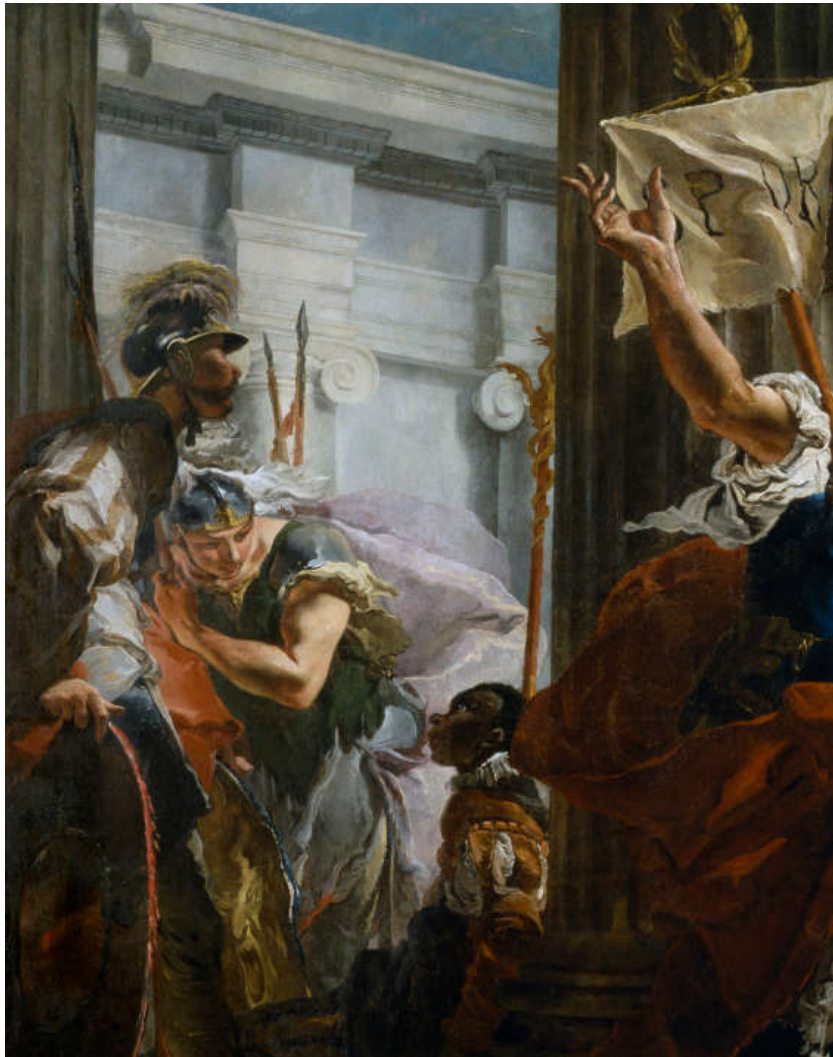
Detail



Detail



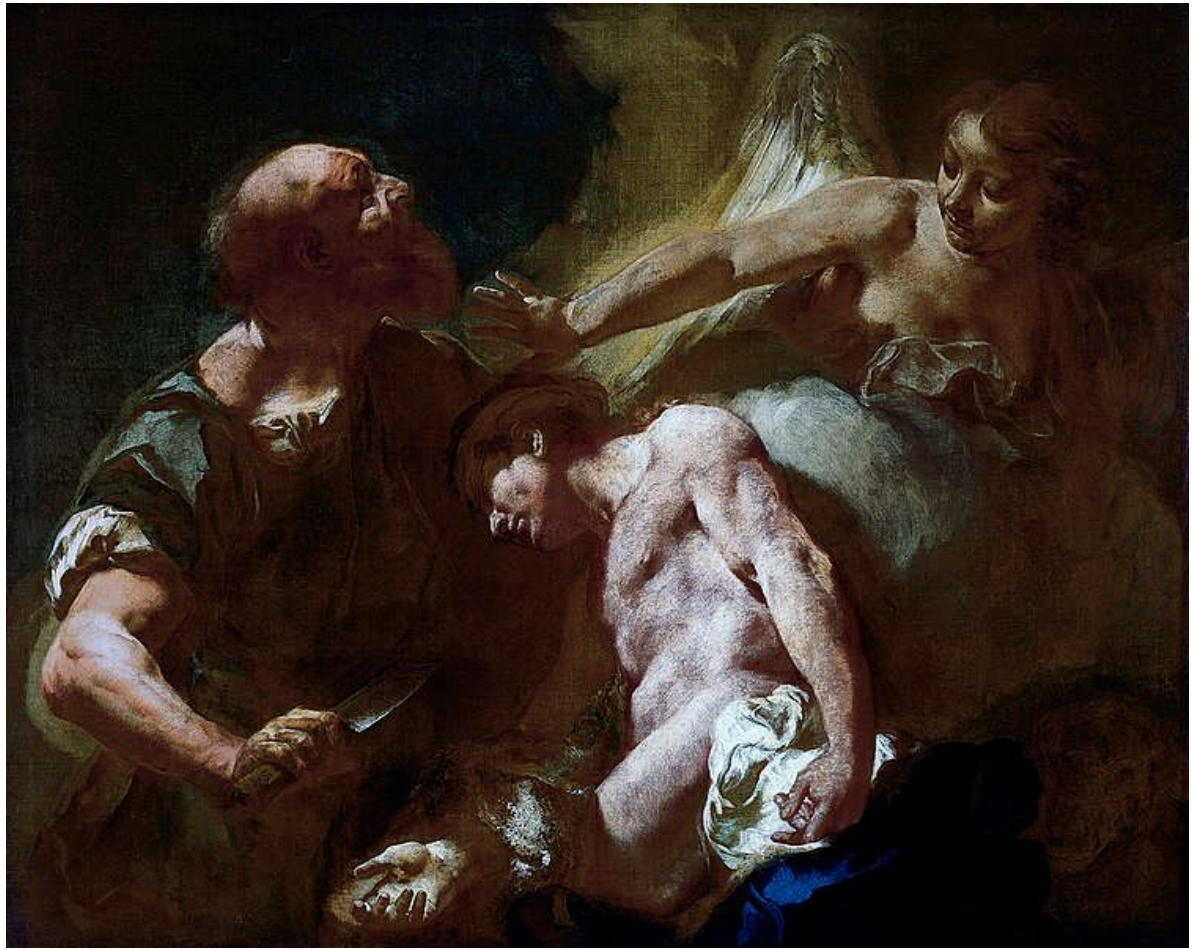
Detail



Detail



Giovanni Battista Piazzetta's self portrait, charcoal heightened with white on green-grey paper, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, c. 1730



A likely source of inspiration: 'The Sacrifice of Isaac' by Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection Foundation, Barcelona, c. 1715

Allegory of the Power of Eloquence (c. 1725)



Tiepolo's achievements in fresco painting are surprising when considering how the medium had been all but abandoned by patrons in Venice. Due to the city's humidity and the irregular flooding of ground floor rooms, with moisture rising up through the walls, frescoes were doomed to a short life. Patrons had grown to learn how unlikely it was for a painting on plaster to survive. Great masterpieces of the medium from the early Renaissance were now but humble echoes of their former greatness. Giorgione's celebrated figures on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, a warehouse for German merchants, were now shadows of their original appearance. In truth, fresco painting was only a practical option on the Venetian mainland, and during the later Renaissance, artists like Veronese and his circle opted for the medium when decorating the interiors of patrician villas. In the capital itself, large canvases painted in oil were usually the preferred means of covering walls and decorating ceilings. However, all this was about to change.

Tiepolo's earliest frescoes, *The Assumption of the Virgin* in Biadene and *The Glory of Saint Lucy* in Vascon, were not threatened by the climatic conditions since they were painted on the mainland. They reveal the young artist's competent use of foreshortening, representing figures that are elegantly attenuated, with thin limbs and small heads. Yet, the figures are limp and lifeless, while the space and overall structure of the compositions lack drama. Tiepolo developed an interest in the work of the Baroque master Tintoretto, whose highly dramatic scenes inspired him to hone and perfect his own vision of monumental subjects. He strove to capture intense drama, while simplifying the space and number of figures. He also altered the proportions, fashioning more supple and elegant figures.

An example of this new approach can be seen in a ceiling fresco completed in c. 1725 for Tommaso Sandi's newly built palace, near the Grand Canal, in the parish of S. Angelo. *Allegory of the Power of Eloquence* was Tiepolo's first secular fresco scene to be painted in a noble Venetian palace and it was likely his first fresco in the city. In preparation he drew on the ideas of the Italian theorist Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) about history and law, which is appropriate, since the patron was a lawyer. The fresco depicts four tales from Greek mythology, lionising the virtues of valor and eloquence. The goddess Minerva is seated and dressed in brilliantly-lit lavender garments, while Mercury hovers nearby, looking down at the viewer from the ceiling's centre. Along the cornice facing the entrance, the mythical hero Amphion builds the walls of Thebes with the music of his lyre. On another side, Hercules clad in the Nemean lion skin, pulls the thieving Cercopes in chains, while directly above the entry wall, Orpheus looks back at the three-headed Cerberus, startling his wife Eurydice, who must now return to Hades. And, over the wall to the left of the entrance, the hero Bellerophon rides the winged Pegasus, fighting the fabled monster the Chimaera.

An extant oil sketch, now held in London's Courtauld Institute, differs considerably from the final fresco. Tiepolo had originally intended to depict the tales of Hercules and Amphion opposite each other, rather than over adjacent walls. For the fresco the artist shifted the elements so that the long sides of the rectangular ceiling are occupied by Orpheus with his violin and Amphion with his lyre, while the short

sides feature the less complex scenes of Bellerophon and Hercules. This change allowed Tiepolo to clarify the ceiling's theme of valor conquering evil, as well as suggesting that music has magical powers that can move the gods and the earth itself.

Working on this commission, Tiepolo had inadvertently created a new kind of Venetian ceiling painting. In previous renditions, figures either fly through space or stand on a rostrum filling the centre of the fresco. Yet, in this fresco, facing the challenge of portraying four unrelated narratives, the artist uses the cornice as a stage of sorts, supporting each scene like a pedimental sculpture from ancient times. Although he still connects the four scenes with the central figures Minerva and Mercury, he is also able to stress their independence, separating the forms with the resplendent depiction of the sky and heavens. This encouraged the viewers below to walk around the salon, viewing the different scenes from different angles, interacting with the artwork in a new way. They are challenged to identify the different stories and yet always reminded how they are linked to the same theme of the hovering deities of Minerva and Mercury.





Detail



Minerva and Mercury



Orpheus and Eurydice



Hercules



Detail



Bellerophon rides winged Pegasus, fighting the Chimera



Amphion builds the walls of Thebes



Hades



Tiepolo's oil sketch for the fresco, The Courtauld, London, c. 1725



Palazzo Sandi-Porto, home to Tiepolo's first fresco in Venice

Frescoes for the Archbishop's Palace, Udine (c. 1726)



Tiepolo's first large-scale masterpieces were not produced at home in Venice, but in Udine, a city in the middle of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region, between the Adriatic Sea and the Alps. The commission came from Dionisio Dolfin, a member of an old patrician family, who had been named patriarch of Aquileia in 1699. In the Archbishop's Palace, on the stairwell vault and on the walls and ceilings of the Patriarchal Gallery and the Ecclesiastical Gallery, the artist was commissioned to paint several Old Testament figures and narratives, portraying a program that responded to the grave political threat from Emperor Charles VI of Austria, then troubling the ancient patriarchy. Tiepolo's frescoes for the Palazzo Arcivescovile, executed at c. 1726, when he was aged 30, reveal how he had now reached his full maturity of expression. He abandons the *chiaroscuro* of his early works and favours a brightly coloured palette, while still preserving form, narrating biblical episodes of varying complexity with bold brush play. These frescoes demonstrate Tiepolo's ability to portray dramatic confrontations between antagonists, while depicting lyrical apparitions of the divine, materialising before humble humanity. The artist's dexterity is underlined by the impressive foreshortening and innovative colour combinations dominating the frescoes.

In the centre of the stairwell ceiling, Tiepolo represents *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, which he surrounds with eight monochrome scenes from the book of Genesis. Next he frescoed the Gallery, the 'Red Room', the seat of the ecclesiastical tribunal and the Throne Room, illustrating scenes from the lives of the Old Testament patriarchs, also inspired by Genesis. The three principal subjects are *The Three Angels appearing to Abraham*, *Rachel Hiding the Idols from her Father Laban* and *The Angel appearing to Sarah*, each portrayed with a stunning *trompe-l'oeil* frame. They are hung alternately with monochrome portraits of prophetesses, creating the illusion of statues in niches along the walls. On the ceiling, an interpretation of *The Sacrifice of Isaac* is the centre scene, supported by smaller oval compartments portraying *Hagar in the Wilderness* and *Jacob's Dream*.

The ceiling of the 'Red Room' features *The Judgement of Solomon*, surrounded by portraits of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel — an apposite theme for a room used both as a civil and ecclesiastical tribunal. Finally, there are portraits of Old Testament patriarchs in the Throne Room, though these have deteriorated badly and only some are believed to be works completed by Tiepolo.

The ambitious pictorial programme of the overall decoration was likely conceived by the patron Dolfin himself, with the help of his theological advisers, including Francesco Florio, his vicar-general. The subjects were intended to reinforce the legitimacy of the ruling patriarchy, which at that time found itself at the centre of a fierce politico-ecclesiastical struggle between Venice and Vienna. The decoration of the Patriarchal Palace in Udine indisputably reveals the high point of Tiepolo's early career. By portraying figures in sixteenth century dress, placing them in landscapes bathed in sunlight, the frescoes recall Veronese's marvellously staged scenes of pomp and splendour, created almost 200 years before. The theatrical element of Tiepolo's work is especially prominent, as the respective subject matter of each scene is presented with a sense of the dramatic and monumental. Each figure is assigned a

primary or secondary role and the relationships between the protagonists are emphasised through the careful handling of colour. At that time Venice was undergoing a great revival of Veronese's art, and Tiepolo's frescoes at Udine caught the imagination of his fellow citizens, constructing a pictorial language that would confirm his own reputation as a leading exponent of the Venetian tradition. His championing of Veronese's style helped breathe new life into the illusionism of Venetian Renaissance art.



'The Sacrifice of Isaac', the central ceiling painting in the Gallery



Detail



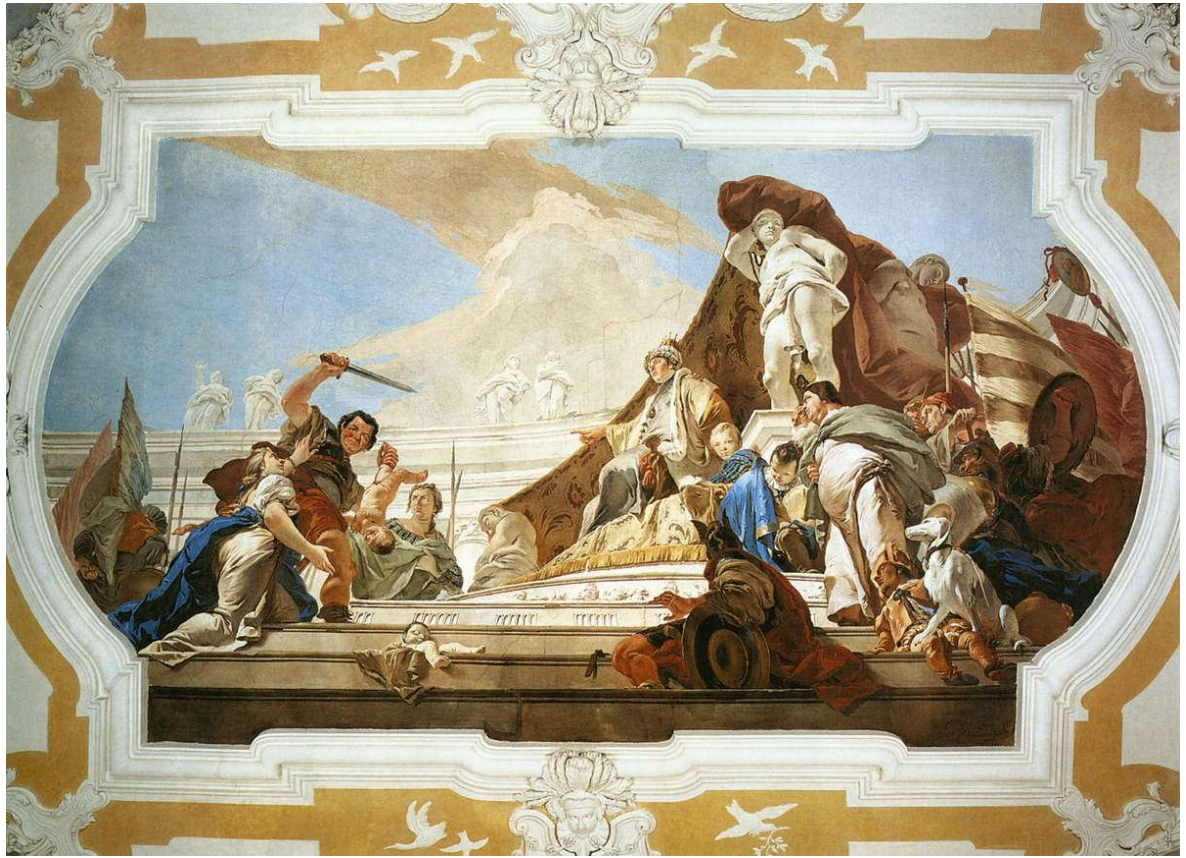
Detail



'Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness' one of the two outer scenes on the ceiling of the Gallery



'Jacob's Dream' the other outer scene on the ceiling of the Gallery



'The Judgment of Solomon' occupies the centre of the ceiling of the 'Red Room'.



Detail



'Sarah and the Angel', represented in one of the narrow wall panels in the Gallery



Detail



'Rachel Hiding the Idols from Her Father Laban', the centre scene on the wall of the Gallery.



Detail



Detail



Detail



The ceiling decoration of the stairwell in the Palazzo Patriarcale



The Archiepiscopal Palace at Udine



View of the Gallery



Self portrait of Paolo Veronese, Hermitage Museum, c. 1563. Veronese (1528-1588) was celebrated for extremely large history paintings. Included with Titian, a generation older, and Tintoretto, a decade his senior, Veronese is one of the “great trio that dominated Venetian painting of the cinquecento”.



Veronese's renowned 'The Wedding at Cana', Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1562-1563

The Education of the Virgin (1732)



Throughout the early 1730's Tiepolo started to work outside the confines of the Venetian Republic, now that his reputation had spread across the Italian peninsula. He even won a commission to paint a series of important frescoes of mythical scenes for the Palazzo Archinto in Milan, which was destroyed by bombing in World War II. Then, in 1732 he won the prestigious commission to fresco three lunettes in the Colleoni Chapel in Bergamo, illustrating stories from the life of John the Baptist, into which he introduced airy landscape backgrounds that marked an innovation in his style.

Around this time he produced the impressive altarpiece *The Education of the Virgin* (1732) for the Santa Maria della Fava, a new Oratorian church dedicated to the Virgin, situated in the sestiere of Castello in Venice, where the painting remains to this day. Completed when he was about thirty-six years old, it was Tiepolo's first altarpiece in his home city. The large canvas stands above the altar of the first chapel to the right, while in the chapel to the left there is Giambattista Piazzetta's *The Virgin and Child Appearing to Saint Philip Neri* — Saint Philip being the founder of the Oratorian order.

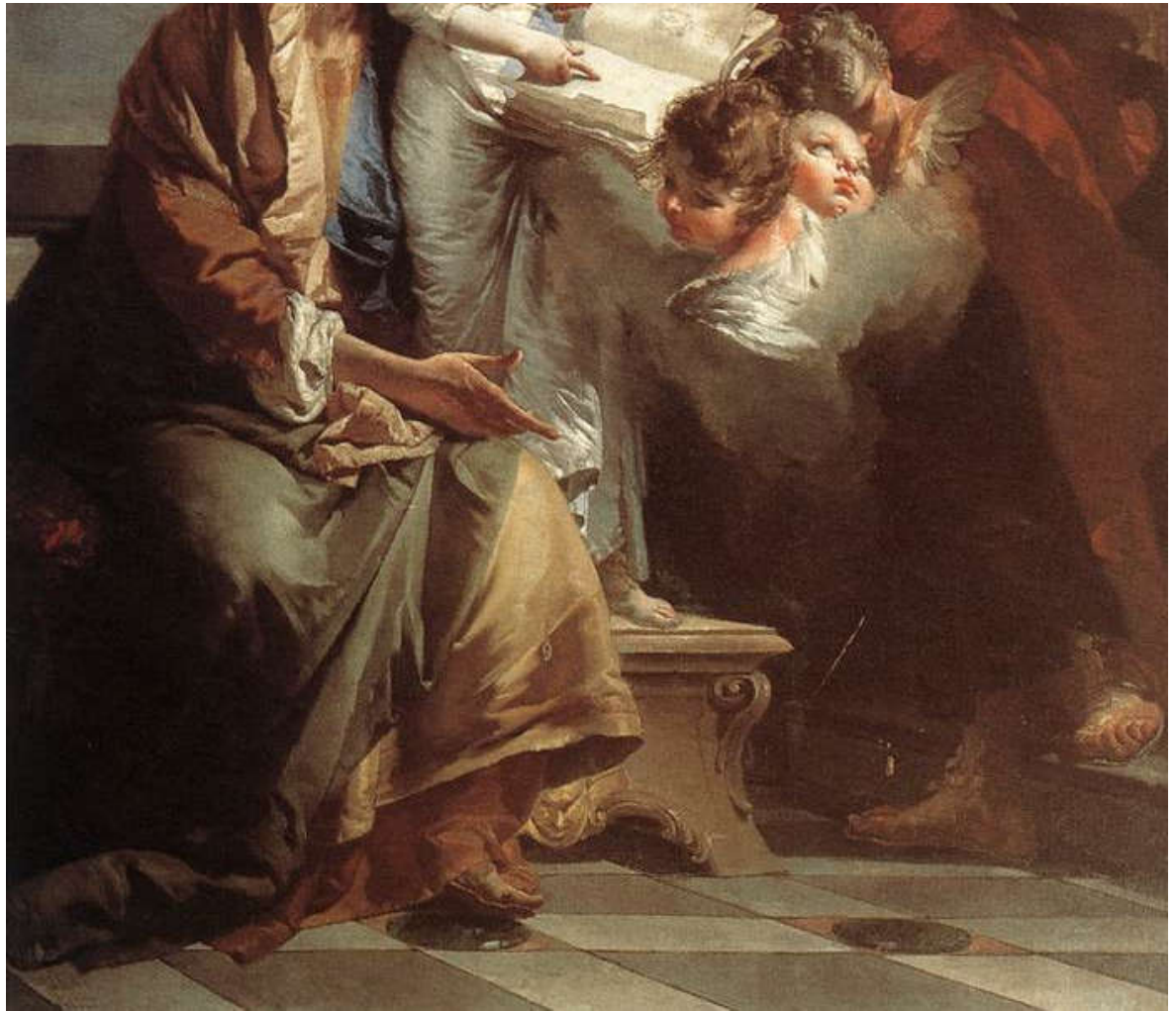
The altarpiece is formed of radiant blues, reds, greens and golds, characteristic of this period of Tiepolo's work, while the multi-coloured forms are etched with dark chiaroscuro. Positioned on a gracefully carved stool and adorned in pure white robes, Mary is presented as the Immaculate Virgin. Divine light penetrates the scene, illuminating the Virgin and the Holy Book. Mary appears as a young girl, reading from an open book, being instructed by her mother, seated next to her. Saint Anne is given a special distinction since the church was believed to own one of her holy relics. Sitting to the left, Anne's strong and elderly profile is juxtaposed to Mary's youthful features. Her father Joachim stands in shadow, deep in prayer, with eyes raised to Heaven, as his vertical position is echoed by an Ionic column behind, signifying the strength of his character. This pictorial device for male figures was a popular choice for the artist in his altarpieces. There are also three angels that dominate the upper section of the canvas, as they peer down at the family below.

The Education of the Virgin is notable for representing the figures as personages in a historical painting, rather than as divine saints. Their forms combine true pathos with elegant sensuality, while retaining a strong sense of their mortal nature, as indicated by the naturalistic details. Note the parents' elderly visages, Joachim's contemporary looking clothes, the naturalistic depiction of the stool and the intricate play of light across the folds of Anne's garments. Another striking element of the canvas is Tiepolo's use of a diagonal line running from the three angels' heads beneath the book to the three large angels above Mary, symbolising the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. To a contemporary viewer of the canvas, this hint of attainable salvation must have been deeply inspiring.

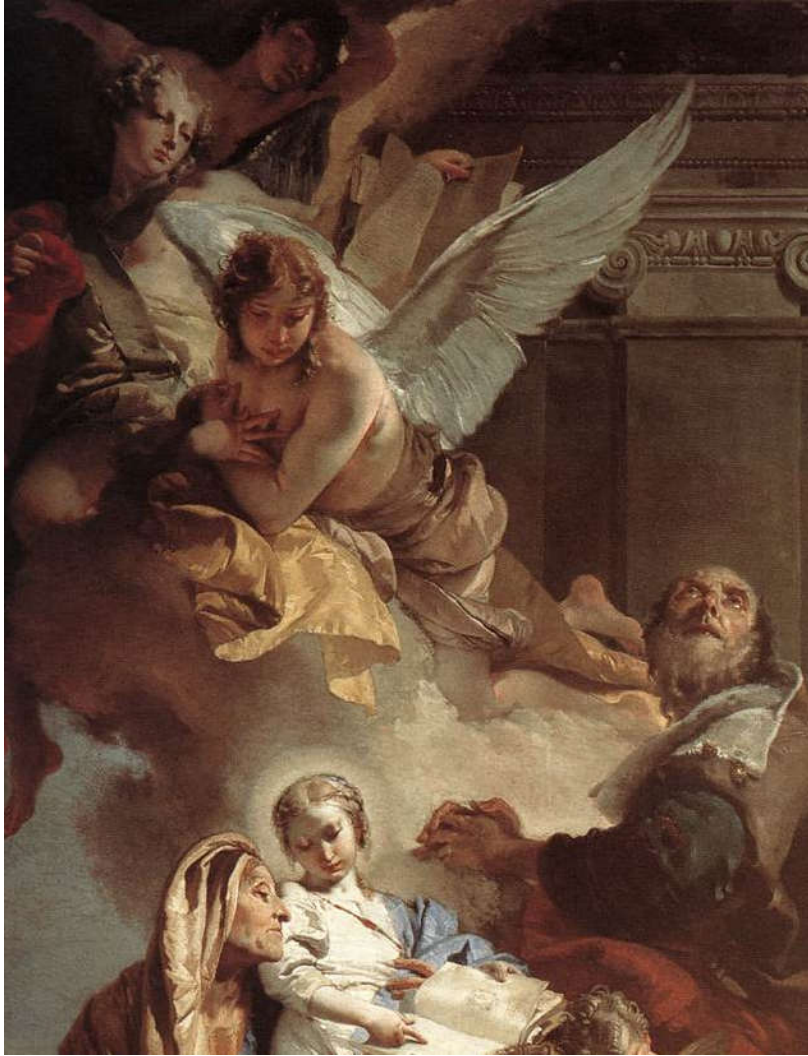




Detail



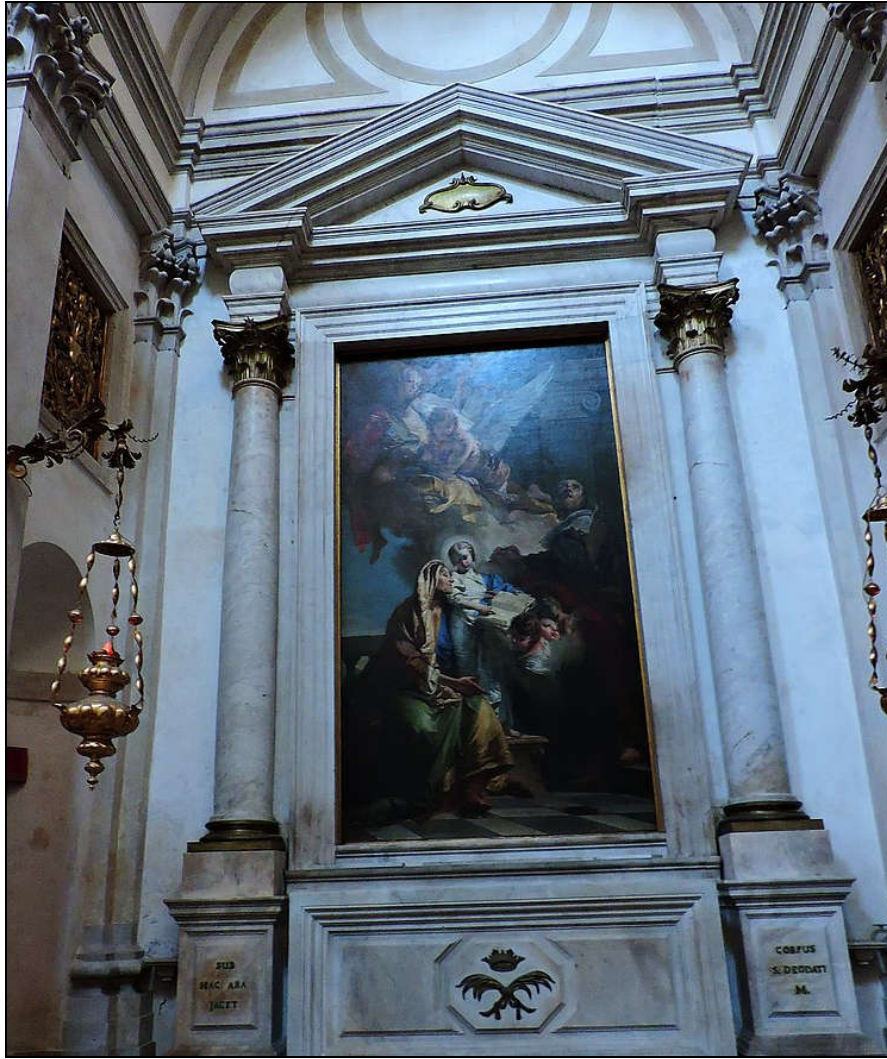
Detail



Detail



Santa Maria della Fava, Venice



The altarpiece in situ

DELPHI  CLASSICS

End of Sample