



Circle of Tintoretto  
Anonymous Artist

Tintoretto  
Italian

# *Lamentation*

1580s

oil on canvas

overall: 65 x 65.7 cm (25 9/16 x 25 7/8 in.)

original canvas: 61 x 61 cm (24 x 24 in.)

Timken Collection 1960.6.37

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## ENTRY

The image of the dead Christ lying in the lap of the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross, surrounded by mourners, was a well-established subject in Venetian painting by the second half of the 16th century. [1] The chief mourners are usually Saint John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalene. Others often depicted include Mary Cleophas and the two followers who took Christ's body down from the cross and bore it to the tomb, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; of the two men, the rich Joseph is typically the elder and better dressed. Thus, the protagonists in the Gallery's painting might tentatively be identified as Saint John, the Virgin, Mary Magdalene (usually dressed in red, and thus more likely to be the woman in the background), Mary Cleophas (in the foreground), and Joseph of Arimathea. The evidence in the x-radiographs of other figures, including a turbaned head directly above the Virgin, silhouetted against the cross, indicates that the composition was originally somewhat different, and may have included additional mourners.

The Gallery's picture—specifically the poses of Saint John and Mary Magdalene—dimly reflects Jacopo Tintoretto's *Deposition* from around 1562 (originally in the church of the Umiltà, Venice; now Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice), although that painting, with its depiction of the fainting Virgin, has a greater narrative emphasis. [2] The overall style and figure types in the Gallery's picture are also generically in the vein of Tintoretto, although weak even by the exceedingly loose standards of the artist's studio in his later years. Perhaps the closest comparison among works that can definitively be linked to the Tintoretto studio is the cycle of paintings on the life of Saint Catherine, originally painted for the church in the convent of Santa Caterina (now in the Palazzo Patriarcale, Venice). A few of the paintings in that cycle show sufficient compositional imagination to be plausibly linked to compositional sketches by Jacopo Tintoretto, while several show the unmistakable figure types of his son Domenico. [3] Other parts of the cycle show awkward compositions and limp and inexpressive figures similar to those in the *Lamentation*. Indeed, several of the figures in the *Lamentation* find counterparts in the cycle; for example, all three executioners to the left and the face of the saint herself in *The Scourging of Saint Catherine* [fig. 1]. [4]

Adolfo Venturi identified the hand of Jacopo Tintoretto in two paintings in the Santa Caterina cycle, attributing the remaining four to Domenico and another hand, whose figures he characterized as having a puppetlike quality. The latter, he hypothesized, could be Tintoretto's son Marco (circa 1560–1637), whom he assumed to be a member of the studio but less favored and less talented than Domenico. [5] Venturi assembled a small proposed oeuvre for Marco based on similarities to the Santa Caterina paintings; among them is the Gallery's *Lamentation*. However, Venturi's proposal, based on the leap of faith that the weak hand in the Santa Caterina cycle must be Marco's, is fundamentally lacking in substance and has failed to find favor. [6]

The decorative approach and small scale of the *Lamentation* suggest the work of a Venetian *madonnaio*, a painter who made and sold images of the Madonna for ordinary households. While the similarities to a documented Tintoretto commission (that is, the Santa Caterina cycle) suggest that the artist may have painted in the Tintoretto studio, the *Lamentation* is so distant from the works of Jacopo Tintoretto himself that an attribution only to the Circle of Jacopo Tintoretto is warranted. The Gallery adopted this attribution in 2018. The details of Tintoretto's studio organization remain unknown; however, the profusion of derivative works that

include references to studio types and figures from Tintoretto's paintings, yet are manifestly by different hands, raises the possibility that there may have been semi-independent painters associated with the bottega, subject to little in the way of quality control, producing pictures that did not meet the standard of the "house style." On the other hand, Tintoretto may have hired assistants to work on an occasional basis on projects such as the Santa Caterina cycle, and these painters may have had their own separate businesses executing works like the *Lamentation* that aped Tintoretto's style. Pictures associated with Tintoretto that seem to be related to the *Lamentation*, with similar figure types but of marginally higher quality, include a *Descent from the Cross*, *Christ among the Doctors*, and *Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, all recently on the art market. [7]

The relationship to the Santa Caterina cycle, which is not documented but datable to the 1580s, provides an approximate dating for the *Lamentation*. [8]

Robert Echols

March 21, 2019

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## COMPARATIVE FIGURES



**fig. 1** Workshop of Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Scourging of Saint Catherine*, 1580s, oil on canvas, Seminario Patriarcale, Venice. © Cameraphoto Arte, Venezia

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## NOTES

- [1] The painting's title was changed from *Pietà* to *Lamentation* in 1989 to reflect the fact that the term *pietà* usually refers to depictions of Christ and the Virgin alone, without surrounding mourners.
- [2] Rodolfo Pallucchini and Paola Rossi, *Tintoretto: Le opere sacre e profane* (Venice, 1982), 1: cat. no. 227; 2: fig. 297; Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, "Toward a New Tintoretto Catalogue, with a Checklist of Revised Attributions and a New Chronology," in *Jacopo Tintoretto: Actas del congreso internacional/Proceedings of the International Symposium, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, February 26–27, 2007* (Madrid, 2009), no. 66; Frederick Ilchman et al., *Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese: Rivals in Renaissance Venice* (Boston, 2009), cat. no. 18. A date of circa 1562 seems likely, based on new documentary evidence found by Paola Benussi of the Archivio di Stato, Venice, discussed by Peter Humfrey in *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*, ed. Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman (New Haven, 2018), 254.
- [3] On the Santa Caterina cycle, see Rodolfo Pallucchini and Paola Rossi, *Tintoretto: Le opere sacre e profane* (Venice, 1982), 1: cat. nos. 426–431, figs. 543–549; Giovanna Nepi Sciré and Francesca Zennaro, in *Tintoretto: Il Ciclo di Santa Caterina e la quadreria del Palazzo Patriarcale*, ed. Giammatteo Caputo (Milan, 2005), 88–111, cat. nos. 29–34. On the dating and attribution of the cycle, see Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, "Toward a New Tintoretto Catalogue, with a Checklist of Revised Attributions and a New Chronology," in *Jacopo Tintoretto: Actas del congreso internacional/Proceedings of the International Symposium, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, February 26–27, 2007* (Madrid, 2009), 122, 133–134, nos. 273–278.
- [4] Other comparable figures include the kneeling man in a red bonnet in *Saint Catherine before the Emperor* and the Empress in *Saint Catherine in Prison*.
- [5] Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. 9, pt. 4, *La pittura del Cinquecento* (Milan, 1929), 678.
- [6] Hans Tietze and Erika Tietze-Conrat, *The Drawings of the Venetian Painters in the 15th and 16th Centuries* (New York, 1944), 294–295, have also proposed an oeuvre for Marco. Melania G. Mazzucco, *Jacomo Tintoretto e i suoi figli: Storia di una famiglia veneziana* (Milan, 2009), 576–601, raises the question of whether Marco actually worked for any significant time as a painter. She notes that no contemporary or 17th-century sources refer to Marco as a painter and that he was never enrolled in the *fraglia dei pittori*, the painter's guild. He spent at least some time working with a group of actors. Although Jacopo Tintoretto's will expresses hope that Marco will not fail to apply himself to the profession he shared with his father and will join

Domenico in the studio, there is no documentation that he actually did so.

- [7] *Descent from the Cross*, in Thos. Agnew & Sons, *Agnew's 175th Anniversary: A Catalogue to Celebrate Our Anniversary Depicting 50 Items* . . . (London, June 9 to July 4, 1992), cat. no 3, repro.; *Christ among the Doctors*, sold Christie's, New York, January 11, 1991, lot 13; *Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, offered Christie's, New York, May 31, 1991, lot 62. See Rodolfo Pallucchini and Paola Rossi, *Tintoretto: Le opere sacre e profane* (Venice, 1982), 1: cat. nos. 196, 197, and 198; Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, "Toward a New Tintoretto Catalogue, with a Checklist of Revised Attributions and a New Chronology," in *Jacopo Tintoretto: Actas del congreso internacional/Proceedings of the International Symposium, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, February 26–27, 2007* (Madrid, 2009), nos. 79, 80, and 81.
- [8] On the dating of the Santa Caterina cycle, see Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, "Toward a New Tintoretto Catalogue, with a Checklist of Revised Attributions and a New Chronology," in *Jacopo Tintoretto: Actas del congreso internacional/Proceedings of the International Symposium, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, February 26–27, 2007* (Madrid, 2009), nos. 273–278.
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## TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The original support is a fine, plain-weave canvas. It has been lined and enlarged. The thinly applied ground on the original canvas is off-white. Infrared reflectography at 1.5 to 1.8 microns reveals that underdrawing was initially laid out in broad strokes of black paint and stiff strokes of white paint. [1] The x-radiographs reveal various changes in the composition: Christ's forearm was originally wider, three or possibly four more figures were originally planned, the Virgin's foot protruded from beneath her robe, the figure to the right of the Virgin originally gazed upward at her, and the horizontal arms of the cross were visible. The paint layer consists of glazes on top of the white underpainting in the clothing and background, and thick, blended layers of paint in the figures.

At some point after the painting was completed it was enlarged from its original size of approximately 61 × 61 centimeters (24 × 24 inches). X-radiography reveals that cusping is present along all four edges of the original canvas. The left and right tacking margins were opened up and incorporated into the composition, and slightly coarser fabric additions were attached to the top and bottom edges. These additions to the paint surface were coated with lead white paint, which extends



over a portion of the original paint layers, and overpainted. The paint surface is abraded and the overpainting around the edges has discolored. Small areas of retouching in the figures are also evident. The thick natural resin varnish has yellowed.

Robert Echols and Joanna Dunn based on the examination report by Ann Hoenigswald

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### TECHNICAL NOTES

[1] Infrared reflectography was performed with a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with an H astronomy filter.

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### PROVENANCE

(Benedict & Co., Berlin);[1] probably from whom acquired by William R. Timken [1866-1949], New York, by 1928;[2] by inheritance to his widow, Lillian Guyer Timken [1881-1959], New York; bequest 1960 to NGA.

[1] According to A. Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, Volume 9, pt. 4, 1929: 677.

[2] The painting was lent by the Timkens in 1928 to an exhibition at the Reinhardt Galleries in New York.

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### EXHIBITION HISTORY

1928 Loan Exhibition of Paintings From Memling, Holbein and Titian to Renoir and Picasso, Reinhardt Galleries, New York, 1928, no. 7.

1929 The Art of the Golden Age of Venetian Painting, Van Diemen Galleries, New York, 1929.

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*Italian Paintings of the Sixteenth Century*

1967 The Art of Venice: An Exhibition of Five Works of Venetian Masters on extended loan from The Lending Collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Tampa Bay Art Center, University of Tampa, Florida, 1967-1969, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

1969 Loan to display with permanent collection, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida, 1969-1970.

1993 Loan to display with permanent collection, Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, 1993-1996.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1901 Venturi, Adolfo. *Storia dell'arte italiana*. 11 vols. Milan, 1901-1940: 9, part 4(1929):678, fig. 483.
- 1965 *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings and Sculpture*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1965: 129, as *Pietà*.
- 1968 *European Paintings and Sculpture, Illustrations*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1968: 116, repro., as *Pietà*.
- 1975 *European Paintings: An Illustrated Summary Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1975: 344, repro., as *Pietà*.
- 1979 Shapley, Fern Rusk. *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*. 2 vols. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1979: I:475-476, II:pl. 340, as *Pietà*.
- 1985 *European Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1985: 394, repro., as *Pietà*.
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