

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



DOMENICO ROBUSTI, called  
DOMENICO TINTORETTO

(Venice 1560-1635)

*PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN, HALF-LENGTH,  
WEARING A PEARL NECKLACE  
AND EARRINGS*

oil on canvas

60 x 48.7 cm; 23 2/3 x 19 1/8 in.

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## Provenance

(Sale, Finarte, Rome, 26 September 1995, lot 284 (as Domenico Tintoretto);  
Sale, Pandolfini Casa d'Aste, Florence, 1 March 2022, lot 152 (as Marietta Robusti)).

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Est. 1760

*We are grateful to Dr Peter Humfrey for tentatively endorsing an attribution to Domenico Tintoretto following first-hand inspection of the painting.*

This portrait, dating to the last decade of the sixteenth or first decade of the seventeenth century, depicts a woman of striking appearance, marked by a fashionable horned hairstyle that elevates her high forehead, a beauty ideal of the time. Her face, framed by full, rosy cheeks, is both serene and engaging, with her direct gaze capturing the viewer's attention in a manner that is both commanding and intimate. Her skin is pale, apart from her cheeks, full lips, and the nipples of her exposed breasts. Adorned with a pearl necklace and earrings, the subject exudes a sense of refined elegance, further accentuated by the delicate transparency of a veil that drapes over her chest. This veil, caught as if in a gentle breeze, adds a dynamic quality to the portrait, enhancing the sense of immediacy and presence. Despite the sitter's distinctive features, she is unknown and clearly falls within the *Belle* tradition established in Venice at the beginning of the sixteenth century by artists such as Giorgione and Titian. Art historical debates on *Belle* portraits reveal their complexity, with interpretations varying from celebrations of chastity and feminine purity, to critiques of sensuality and commodification of beauty, to depictions of brides blending allure with matrimony's moral expectations. No single interpretation fits all, underscoring the paintings' versatility and their capacity for multiple meanings, engaging viewers in interpretive dialogue and reflecting the artists' unique visions.<sup>1</sup>

The present portrait stands out not only for its artistic merit but also for the intriguing characteristic of its subjects, traits that beckon closer examination within the *oeuvre* of Domenico Tintoretto. Attributing works to Domenico, particularly female portraits, poses a significant challenge due to the scarcity of confirmed examples. However, the stylistic elements and thematic nuances of this portrait bear a remarkable resemblance to a female portrait housed in the Prado Museum, also attributed to Domenico Tintoretto (**Fig.1**). The similarities in technique and the distinctive portrayal of the female subject suggest a close connection between the two works.

Domenico Tintoretto, born in 1560 as the eldest son of the renowned Venetian painter Jacopo Tintoretto, embarked on his artistic journey from a young age, training in his father's studio. By the age of seventeen, he had already made a significant mark, being admitted to the Venetian painters' guild. His career initially flourished alongside his father, assisting in prestigious commissions for the Doge's Palace in Venice, where he contributed to the execution of paintings for the Sala del Collegio and Sala del Senato. This early exposure not only honed his skills but also set the stage for his evolution into a master portraitist.

Under the influence of his father's workshop, which increasingly relied on portraiture as a vital source of income, Domenico developed a keen expertise in the genre. His talent in capturing the essence of his subjects was so profound that he began signing his own portraits while

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the various hypotheses, see L. Syson, 'Belle. Picturing beautiful women', in *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat. New York and Fort Worth (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Kimbell Art Museum) 2008, pp. 246-54.

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Est. 1760

Jacopo was still alive, a testament to his emerging distinction in the Venetian art scene.<sup>2</sup> His works were characterised by a bold engagement with the viewer and a unique blend of his father's influence with his own distinct preferences for colour and detail. This style was further enriched by the influences of Giovanni Battista Moroni and Annibale Carracci, allowing Domenico to craft portraits that were not only visually striking but also imbued with character and humour.

Some of his most impressive civic portraits were painted in the last decade of the sixteenth century, such as that of *Doge Marino Grimani* (fig. 2). His services also became sought after from the elite abroad. In 1592, he travelled to Ferrara to paint Margaret of Austria, and in 1595, he was invited to Mantua by Vincenzo I Gonzaga, 4th Duke of Mantua, to undertake portrait commissions. These ventures outside Venice underscored his status as a leading portraitist of his time. Beyond portraiture, Domenico was versatile, engaging in history painting, mythological, and religious subjects, showcasing the breadth of his artistic capability. His contributions to the *Second Conquest of Constantinople* and other independent commissions at the Doge's Palace highlight his talent in narrative art. Though his father's influence is discernible in his works, Domenico's drawings and paintings exhibit a personal flair and originality that set him apart.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Falomir, "Tintoretto's Portraiture", in *Tintoretto*, exh. cat. Madrid (Museo Nacional del Prado) 2007, pp. 110-12.



# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



**Fig. 1.** Domenico Tintoretto, *Flora*, ca. 1590, oil on canvas, 61 x 55cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.



# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



**Fig. 2.** Domenico Tintoretto, *Portrait of Doge Marino Grimani*, oil on canvas, 119.4 x 108.6cm, Ohio, Cincinnati Art Museum.

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