

# Veronese

Veronese (Paolo Calliari) 1528-1588

1528 – Born son of a stonecutter named Gabriele, and his wife Catherina in Parma.

c. 1542 – At the age of 14 apprenticed with the local master Antonio Badile, and perhaps with Giovanni Francesco Caroto. An altarpiece painted by Badile in 1543 includes striking passages that were most likely the work of his fifteen-year-old apprentice. Veronese's precocious gifts soon surpassed the level of the workshop, and by 1544 he was no longer residing with Badile. Though trained in the culture of Mannerism then popular in Parma, he soon developed his own preference for a more radiant palette.

1548 – Brief residence in Mantua where he paints frescos in the Duomo.

1553 – Arrival in Venice. His first official commission was for the paintings of the hall of the Council of Ten at the Doge's palace and that of the Sala dei Tre Capi and then the ceiling of the Church of San Sebastiano (the Story of Esther). He received a prize from Titian for his work at the Marciana Library and was acknowledged at this time as one of the great masters in the city.

1556 - Commissioned to paint the first of his monumental banquet scenes, the Feast in the House of Simon, finished in 1570. In the late 1550s, during a break in his work for San Sebastiano, Veronese decorated the Villa Barbaro in Maser, a newly-finished building by the architect Andrea Palladio. The frescoes were designed to unite humanistic culture with Christian spirituality; wall paintings included portraits of the Barbaro family, and the ceilings opened to blue skies and mythological figures. Veronese's decorations employed complex perspectives and delightful trompe l'oeil.

1562-63 - The Wedding at Cana, was also a collaboration with Palladio. It was commissioned by the Benedictine monks for the San Giorgio Maggiore Monastery, the small island across from Saint Mark's square in Venice. The contract insisted on the huge size (to cover 66 square meters), and that the quality of pigment and colors should be of premium quality. Blues were to contain the precious mineral lapis-lazuli. The contract also specified that the painting should include as many figures as possible. There are three hundred figures altogether (including portraits of Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese as the musicians in the foreground) set onto a canvas surface nearly ten metres wide.

1565 - Veronese married Elena Badile, the daughter of his first master by whom he would eventually have four sons and a daughter.

1573 - Veronese completed the painting which is now known as the Feast in the House of Levi for the rear wall of the refectory of the Basilica di Santi Giovanni e Paolo. The painting was originally intended as a depiction of the Last Supper, designed to replace a canvas by Titian destroyed in a fire. It measured more than five metres high and over twelve metres wide, depicted another Venetian celebration and was a culmination of his banquet scenes, which this time included not only the Last Supper, but also German soldiers, comic dwarves, and a variety of animals. In July Veronese was summoned to explain the inclusion of extraneous and indecorous details in the painting by the Inquisition. The tone of the hearing itself was cautionary rather than punitive; Veronese explained that "we painters take the same liberties as poets and madmen" and quoted an original passage in the gospel of Luke where publicans and sinners are mentioned in the presence of Christ who refers to them as sick men in need of healing. Rather than repaint the picture, he simply and pragmatically changed the title to the less sacred subject of the Feast in the House of Levi.

Veronese headed a family workshop, including his brother Benedetto, sons Carlo and Gabriele, that remained active after his death in Venice in 1588. Among his pupils were his contemporary Giovanni Battista Zelotti and later Giovanni Antonio Fasolo and Luigi Benfatto (also called dal Friso; 1559-1611)

In the 19th century Veronese was considered the greatest of the Venetian colorists.

The critic Théophile Gautier wrote in 1860, that Veronese was greater than Titian, Rubens, or Rembrandt because he established the harmony of natural tones in place of the modelling in dark and light which became the method of academic chiaroscuro. Delacroix wrote that Veronese made light without violent contrasts, "which we are always told is impossible," and maintained the strength of hue in shadow. He was also Renoir's favorite old master.