

Galerie Canesso

Tableaux anciens

MARCO DI PAOLO VENEZIANO

The Virgin and Child

tempera on wood panel, gold ground, 35 x 22 cm



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

PROVENANCE

1928-1933, London, with Agnew's; sold on 3 March 1933 to Captain Norman R. Colville (1893-1974);

London, private collection.

LITERATURE

Cristina Guarnieri, “Per un corpus della pittura veneziana del Trecento al tempo di Lorenzo”, *Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell’Arte*, 30, 2006, p. 54, fig. 18.

A beautiful example of Venetian painting from the second half of the fourteenth century, this small-scale panel was used for private devotion, and still retains part of its original framing tabernacle. The half-length figure of the Virgin Mary wears a precious crown adorned with gems and an elegant purple-red dress with gold trim under a glowing blue robe with a green lining. Held in his mother’s arms, the Christ Child is dressed in a priestly tunic gathered at the waist with a simple cord; he has a solemn pose, blessing with his left hand and holding an open book on his knee with his right.

The painting was first published by Cristina Guarnieri, who attributed it to Marco di Paolo Veneziano¹. The linear fall of late Gothic drapery and a brilliant chromatic range are typical of Marco, who (as underlined by the Italian scholar) recalls the style of Lorenzo Veneziano, the most influential painter active in Venice during the second half of the fourteenth century². Lorenzo’s influence and inspiration are also present in other works by Marco, such as the *Virgin and Child Enthroned with a Donor* (Greenville, South Carolina, Bob Jones University Museum & Gallery, inv. 1957.113; fig. 1) and the polyptychs in Salò Cathedral (fig. 2) and the Diocesan Museum in Fermo (fig. 3). The rare petal motif used in the engraving of the halos and found in some small-format panels painted in the celebrated painter’s workshop, is also derived from Lorenzo³.

The picture reiterates a typical motif of some of the mature works by Paolo Veneziano, Marco’s father, which feature a lively interaction between the Madonna and her divine son, for example the *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Angels* of 1340 (Milan, Crespi Collection; fig. 4), the *Virgin and Child Enthroned* (Pasadena, Norton Simon Museum, inv. F.1973.24.P; fig. 5) and the *Maestà with Angels* of 1347 (Cesena, Diocesan Museum). The painter follows this approach, executing it with greater attention to natural poses and adherence to reality.

As regards iconography, Marco combines the Gothic theme of the Madonna as Queen of Heaven with the Byzantine tradition of Jesus held by his mother (*Hodegetria dexiokratousa*), a blend of Western and Eastern motifs that were widespread in fourteenth-century Venice. The composition of the painting is also very similar to Jacobello di Bonomo’s *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints*, the central panel of the polyptych of 1385 in Sant’Arcangelo di Romagna (Museo Storico e Archeologico).

Marco was the son of the painter Paolo Veneziano and brother of Luca and Giovanni, and began his career in his father’s workshop. He is first documented in Venice in 1362, and was based in Padua between 1372 and 1390, although he never broke his ties with the Serenissima, where he is recorded in 1377. Our reconstruction of the artist’s scarce oeuvre is based on the *Madonna of Humility* in Kyiv (Museum of Western Art, now Khanenko Museum), signed “MARCUS FILIUS Q[UONDAM] MAGISTRI PAULI PINCXIT OHC OPUS”. Marco di Paolo’s paintings, assembled through the scholarship of Andrea De Marchi⁴ and Cristina Guarnieri⁵, reveal how his early work, around 1350, was closely associated with that of his father Paolo, before he evolved towards a greater openness to the Gothic idiom of Lorenzo Veneziano. The last mention of the artist dates from 1393, when he is documented in Treviso, both in the Cathedral and the Dominican monastery of San Paolo.

Notes:

- 1 – Cristina Guarnieri, “Per un corpus della pittura veneziana del Trecento al tempo di Lorenzo”, *Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell’Arte*, 30, 2006, p. 54.
- 2 – Written communication from Cristina Guarnieri, September 2025.
- 3 – Cristina Guarnieri, *Lorenzo Veneziano*, Milan 2006, pp. 215-217.
- 4 – Andrea De Marchi, “Una tavola nella Narodna Galerija di Ljubljana e una proposta per Marco di Paolo Veneziano”, in *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana 1995, pp. 241-256.
- 5 – Cristina Guarnieri, “Per un corpus...”, cit.