

## “Il Tintoretto”: Lineage and Legacy Symposium



Jacopo (and possibly Domenico) Tintoretto  
*The Miracle of Saint Mark Freeing the Slave*  
1548, Oil on canvas  
Pinoteca di Brera, Milan

### Overview

This interdisciplinary conference explores the relationships between a family of painters, their ancestral ties to the cloth dying industry in Venice, and their individual artistic practices. The family nickname “Tintoretto” (“the little dyer”) for the Robusti family is based on Giovanni Battista Robusti, a cloth dyer and father of the Renaissance painter, Jacopo Robusti. Since the organic lake colorants for textile dyes and paints are the same, the Tintoretto name shifted in significance from one generation to the next. Jacopo Tintoretto carried the family nickname to new heights with the help of his children, Domenico and Marietta, whom he employed as assistants for his many commissions. Jacopo’s preference for organic pigments has been well documented by technical analysis of his artworks. Yet to be considered are the social and familiar underpinnings of colorants used by the Robusti family and the materials and techniques employed by Domenico and Marietta. What is the nature of the Tintoretto legacy—which began with vats of dye and continued with strokes of paint—and how far did it extend?

## Objectives

- To highlight new technical analysis of *Tancred Baptizing Clorinda* undertaken by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
- To survey, evaluate, and build upon the large body of technical information on Jacopo Tintoretto assembled by an international group of curators, specialists in the history of art and textiles, conservators, and conservation scientists
- To promote new understanding of works attributed to Domenico and Marietta Tintoretto
- To begin to define the Tintoretto family artisans using innovative historical, cultural, and technological means

## Program Structure

Sessions could be focused on the following themes, with scholarly contributions relating but not limited to the points listed below.

1. Exploring the social, cultural, and economic climate that made the Tintoretto family possible
  - What is the likelihood of a family's expertise shifting from dyeing to painting at this time?
  - With how much certainty can Jacopo's preference for materials be traced to his ancestral ties to early-sixteenth-century textile production alone?
  - What was the nature of color suppliers' industry in sixteenth-century Venice and how did it develop during the course of the Giambattista's, Jacopo's, and Domenico's generations?
2. Relating artistic practices of Jacopo, Domenico, and Marietta
  - What does the recent analytical imaging of *Tancred Baptizing Clorinda* uncover about Domenico?
    - Does his practice appear to be in line with his father's based on this painting?
    - How do the materials and techniques indicated by the study of this painting compare to other works by Domenico?
    - Does the technical data suggest notions that might refute or confirm the current attribution of the Houston painting?
  - How strong (e.g. socially, iconographically, technically) was Jacopo's influence on his children?
  - Are the materials and processes indicated by paintings by Domenico that have been analyzed thus far consistent with the stylistic shift which occurred after his father's death as observed by art historians?
  - How does technical information on works attributed to Domenico and Marietta aid in future connoisseurship and interpretation?
  - How does technical analysis of *Tancred Baptizing Clorinda* compare to *Head of a Bearded Man*, which is currently attributed to Marietta and is also in the Kress Collection?

3. Comparing cloth dying and paint processes

- What are differences (e.g. chemical, physical) between cloth dyeing and painting with organic pigments?
- How prevalent and viable was the process of extracting lake pigments from cloth shearings during Tintoretto family's era?

**Resources**

Internet Resources:

[Video: "Cochineal Red: The Art History of a Color" Sunday at the Met lecture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Elena Phipp](#)

["Domenico Tintoretto Virtual Reconstruction" on the Kress Reconstruction Website](#)

Books and Articles:

Burmester, A., and C. Krekel. "“Ázurri oltramarini, laache et altri colori fini’: the quest for the lost colours.” In *Tintoretto: The Gonzaga Cycle*. C. Syre ed., 193-211. Munich: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2000.

Grundmann, Günter, Natalia Ivleva, Mark Richter, Heike Stege, and Christoph Haisch. "The Rediscovery of Sublimed Arsenic Sulphide Pigments in Painting and Polychromy: Applications of Raman Microspectroscopy." In *Studying Old Master Paintings: Technology and Practice: The National Gallery Technical Bulletin 30th Anniversary Conference Postprints*, Marika Spring ed., 269–276. London: Archetype Publications Ltd., 2011.

[Phipp, Elena. \*Cochineal Red: The Art History of a Color\*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010](#)

Plesters, Joyce. "Tintoretto's Paintings in the National Gallery. Part II. Materials and Techniques." *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 4 (1980): 32–47.

Plesters, Joyce, and Lorenzo Lazzarini. "Preliminary Observations on the Technique and Materials of Tintoretto." In *Conservation of Paintings and the Graphic Arts: Preprints of Contributions to the Lisbon Congress, 9-14 October 1972*, 153–180. London: International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1972.

Ridolfi, Carlo. *The Life of Tintoretto and of His Children Domenico and Marietta*. Translated by Catherine Enggass and Robert Enggass. University Park, Pa. and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1984.

[Saunders, David, and Jo Kirby. "Light-induced Colour Changes in Red and Yellow Lake Pigments." \*National Gallery Technical Bulletin\* 15 \(1994\): 79-97.](#)

Wilson, Carolyn C. "Domenico Tintoretto's *Tancred Baptizing Clorinda*: A Closer Look." *Venezia Cinquecento* 3, no. 6 (July-Dec 1993): 121-138.