



John Sigismund of Hungary with Suleiman the Magnificent in 1556 from Les Collections de l'Histoire. Les Turcs, October 2009 (artwork in public domain from Wikimedia Commons)



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CREMT

Center for Renaissance and Early Modern Thought



Decentering the Long
Renaissance. Knowledge and
Cross-Cultural Transfers in the
Early Modern Mediterranean

May 17, 2023

10.00-11.15 am EST

4.00-5.15 pm CET

Zoom

Organizer: **Maria Vittoria Comacchi**
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia –
Indiana University Bloomington

Link Zoom

<https://unive.zoom.us/j/85434577032>

ID meeting: 854 3457 7032

**Attendance is free.
All welcome.**

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Conversations on Christ, Empire, Fear, and Desire in Sixteenth-Century Venice

This paper is an interpretation of Titian's *Ecce Homo* finished in 1543 in Venice and presently preserved in the Kunsthistorische Museum of Vienna. Using literary, epistolary and art historical sources, I suggest several possible venues for understanding the painting and contextualizing it within the cultural moment in Venice, which was marked by an openness to the ideas of Erasmus of Rotterdam and an enduring hope for religious reform within Catholicism based on the simple and powerful message in Christ's exemplary life. As I hope to demonstrate in my presentation, we can interpret Titian's work as a celebration of the artist's patron Zuanne D'Anna's wealth and standing and/or as a defense of the value of their shared friend Pietro Aretino's religious writings, which were at the time under the suspicious glance of the rigidifying Catholic church in Rome. We can identify a disguised yet central reference to a saintly preacher and, for some, the sixteenth-century Savonarola, Bernardino

Ochino, who had recently fled to Geneva after another earthshaking sermon in Venice. We can argue that it is a friendly homage to both Titian and Aretino's former patron Federico Gonzaga, the late Duke of Mantua. We can also interpret it as a demonstration of the pride and ambitious vision of a group of successful emigrants to Venice, emigrants such as Titian, Pietro Aretino, and above all, the patron of the painting, Zuanne d'Anna. Curiously, the recognizable equestrian image of the magnificent Ottoman Sultan Süleyman that Titian painted at the central right part of the frame plays a significant role in each and all of these "readings," providing the painting with prestige and supporting the message(s) it communicates. Through the sultan's unexpected presence and the multiple possible meanings of this impressive feat of late Renaissance, it is possible to study the painting as a representation of discussions on faith and empire interwoven with both communal and personal interests.



This seminar is part of the project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska Curie grant agreement No. 101025084, "PostelEast"