heirloom and countess ways, and Cardinal Alessandro (or Titian) found it prudent to transform the all-too-contemporary courtesan into a mythological figure whose nudity was sanctioned by classical precedent. Accordingly, the little dog and the necklace were in the background in the x-radiograph were replaced by the god of love. The comfortably furnished interior in the first version became the tower in which Danaë, according to legend, had been confined by her father, the king of Argos, to fulfill a prophecy that she would be killed by any son of hers. (However, Danaë’s son by Jupiter, did eventually kill the king.)

In handling his subject matter, discretion was required, so not only the composition but also the subject of the picture was altered to excise the woman’s nudity. (Not long afterward the nude in Michelangelo’s Last Judgment was discreetly draped so as not to offend public morality.) Further ensuring the respectability of Titian’s Danaë, the figure also had a classical source—an ancient cameo (fig. 1) once owned by an earlier pope and now in the Vatican collections. 

Fig. 7 Third-century AD. Leda and the Swan, cameo, National Archaeological Museum, Naples.

Naples, this precious object, depicting the related theme of Leda seduced by Jupiter in the form of a swan, was also known to Michelangelo (1475–1564); his last painting of the reference Leda was familiar to Titian and other Venetian artists in the form of copies (fig. 5), including several that Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) made and brought to Venice in 1548. The reclining position of Michelangelo’s and Titian’s protagonists and their contexts remain as closely related.

Before Titian personally delivered the Danaë in Rome at the end of 1557, Michelangelo wanted to see the newly created masterpiece in the painter’s studio in the Vatican. As reported in a famous passage in Giorgio Vasari’s Lives of the Artists (1568), the great Florentine painter, sculptor, and architect praised his rival’s gift as a colorist—but not of color, complained that Titian and his fellow Venetian “had never learned how to draw!” For Michelangelo, Titian’s figure, however lovely, lacked the basis in disegno—a kind of perverse tribute to its enduring beauty, the painting was looted by German troops on behalf of Field Marshal Hermann Göring during the Second World War and was discovered afterward in the Austrian salt mine at Alt-Aussee. The canvas was brought to the Munich Central Collecting Point by the so-called Monuments Men in 1945 and returned to the Italian government two years later. Its presentation in Washington marks its second appearance at the National Gallery of Art, where the Danaë was exhibited in the Titian retrospective of 1959–1960. Since that time its position has been changed and restored to splended effect.

Fig. 8 After Michelangelo, Leda and the Swan, after 1557, in an easel, National Gallery, London, Presented by the Duke of Northumberland, 1938.

Fig. 9 Five Old Style, nine Old Style, Alt-Aussee, Austria, 1945.


Credit: Courtesy of the Photograph Department of the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage for the City and the Museums of Naples and the Royal Palace of Caserta/Orbis Vanezzas, Fabio Speranza; fig. 9: Scala/Mondadori Portfolio / © Emilio de la Cuadra cultural art Resources, NY; fig. 4: National Gallery, London/Art Resource, NY; fig. 5: © Makro, Museo Nazionale del Prado. © Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

Photography Credits: Daniela Balad and detail, fig. 3 from Courtesy of the Photograph Department of the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage for the City and the Museums of Naples and the Royal Palace of Caserta/Castellani Benaglia, Fabio Speranza; fig. 9: Scala/Mondadori Portfolio / © Emilio de la Cuadra cultural art Resources, NY; fig. 4: National Gallery, London/Art Resource, NY; fig. 5: © Makro, Museo Nazionale del Prado.

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The Farnese Collection came to Naples following the turbulent dynastic succession of the Duchy of Parma, the northern Italian city ruled by the Farnese. To prevent a potential succession crisis, the leading artists of the time, including Michelangelo’s cartoon for the _Burning Bush_ and Raphael’s School of Athens X-radiograph, were acquired into the Farnese gallery. And, in fact, x-rays in the letter is the famous _Danaë_ (fig. 6), painted by Titian in 1553–56 for the Guelfs of Urbino, now in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Raphael’s _Allegory of the Seven Arts_ (fig. 5) have demonstrated that Titian’s original concept for the Danaë placed the subject in a comparable domestic setting with a landscape view out a window, as in the Uffizi picture. At the time, scansion everywhere was under fire for their portrayal of the boy, also now in the National Gallery of Art, marks the beginning of his portrait of the boy, also now in the National Gallery of Art, marks the beginning of his

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new dimension to his art; the loves of the eighteenth century by the Farnese family, which acquired existing works and commissioned new ones from the greatest artists of the time. The collection is very extensive, spanning all of the arts. Of great note are many revered masterpieces, including Titian’s Venus of Urbino, placed the original concept for the Donor placed the subject in a comparable domestic setting with a landscape view out a window, as in the Uffizi picture. At the time,ascimento everywhere were under fees for their portraits of the boy, also now in the National Gallery of Art, marked the beginning of his association with the powerful Farnese clan, whose patronage rivaled in variety of portraits of the pope, his family, and their circle. The Donor was already underway in September 1528, when it was mentioned in an amusing letter written to the cardinal by the papal legate to Venice, Giovanni della Casa. Della Casa describes the painting as so shocking it would “make the nude visible to Titian’s interests. The poet Pietro Aretino had urged his friend Titian to paint Alessandro’s younger son Ranuccio, Titian’s charming depiction of Danaë, turning away at her feet. Commissioned by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (fig. 3), grandson of Pope Paul III, the Donor was completed during a visit Titian made to Rome in 1525–1526 in order to obtain a lucrative benefice for his son, Pope Paul’s favorite nephew. Alessandro Farnese was both a distinguished patron of the arts and a notorious womanizer. Three years earlier the poet Pietro Aretino had urged his friend Titian to paint Alessandro’s younger brother Ranuccio (fig. 4), a scandal at the University of Padua. Titian’s charming portrait of the boy, also now in the National Gallery of Art, marked the beginning of his association with the powerful Farnese clan, whose patronage rivaled in variety of portraits of the pope, his family, and their circle. 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heaviness and curvilinear ways, and Cardinal Alessandro (or Titian) found it prudent to transform the all-too-contemporary contours into a mythological figure whose nudity was suggested by classical precedent. Accordingly, the little dog and the bather were both in the background in the x-radiograph were replaced by the god of love. The comfortably furnished interior in the first version became the tower in which Danaë, according to legend, had been confined by her father, the king of Argos, to feel a prophecy that she would be killed by any son of hers. (Rembrandt’s Danaë’s son by Jupiter, did eventually kill the king.)

In handling subject matter, discretion was required, so not only the composition but also the subject of the picture was altered to excuse the woman’s nudity. Not long afterward the icon in Michelangelo’s Leda Last Judgment frescoes was discreetly draped as a woman to afford public morality. Further ensuring the decorum of Titian’s Danaë, the figure also had a classical source—an ancient cameo (fig. 5) once owned by an earlier pope. In a similar position, but, out of earshot, complained that Titian and his fellow Venetians “had never learned how to paint figures, however lovely, lacked the hand in drapery, or staging, that underpinned all the arts. And yet, the Danaë, no doubt with a nod to Michelangelo, has a sculptural solidity quite different from the painterly freedoms

created masterpiece in the painter’s studio in the Vatican. As reported in a famous passage in Giorgio Vasari’s Lives of the Artists (1997), the great Florentine painter, sculptor, and architect praised his rival’s gift in a scolding—but, out of earshot, complained that Titian and his fellow Venetians “had never learned how to paint figures, however lovely, lacked the hand in drapery, or staging, that underpinned all the arts. And yet, the Danaë, no doubt with a nod to Michelangelo, has a sculptural solidity quite different from the painterly freedoms

Photography Credits: Daniel C. cat and detail, fig. 3; v-i: Courtesy of the Photograph Department of the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage for the City and the Museums of Naples and the Royal Palace of Capodimonte-Museo Benaki, Fabio Ermolli; 5 & 6: Scala/Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali/Art Resource, NY; fig. 8: Alinari/Art Resource, NY; fig. 11: National Gallery, London/Reuther Resource, NY; fig. 12: Maillol, Museo Nacional del Prado. Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, This loan was written by David A. Huyvetter and produced by the department of exhibition production and the publishing office.

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The exhibition celebrates the occasion of Italy’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July through December, 2014. It is organized by the National Gallery of Art and the Embassy of Italy, Washington, together with the Capodimonte Museums, Naples, and the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage for the City and the Museums of Naples and the Royal Palace of Caserta.

Generous support is provided by INTESA SANPAOLO.

Additional support is provided by Ferrero.

Naples, this precious object, depicting the related theme of Leda solicited by Jupiter in the form of a swan, was also known to Michelangelo (1475–1564), his lost painting of the recumbent Leda was familiar to Titian and other Venetian artists in the form of a cameo (fig. 4), including several that Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) made and brought to Venice in 1541. The reclining position of Michelangelo’s and Titian’s protagonists and their contorted torsos are all closely related. Before Titian personally delivered the Danaë to Rome at the end of 1557, Michelangelo wanted to see the newly

Fig. 7. Third-century AD, Leda and the Swan, cameo, National Archaeological Museum, Naples.

Fig. 8. Titian, Danaë and the Shower of Gold, 1556–1560, oil on canvas, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Caserta.
Michelangelo went to see the newly created masterpiece in the painter’s studio in the Vatican. As reported in a famous passage in Giorgio Vasari’s Lives of the Artists (1969), the great Florentine painter, sculptor, and architect praised his rival’s gifts in a scathing—yet, hail, of masterful, complained that Titian and his fellow Venetians “had never learned how to draw!” For Michelangelo, Titian’s figure, however, lacked the due in drawing, that underpinned all the arts. And yet, the Danae, no doubt with a nod to Michelangelo, has a sculptural nobility quite different from the painterly freedom of persue traits to its enduring beauty, the painting was toasted by German troops on behalf of Paul Marshal Hermann Göring during the Second World War and was discovered afterward in the Austrian salt mine at Alm-Atus. The canvas was brought to the Munich Central Collecting Point by the so-called Monuments Men in 1945 and returned to the Italian government two years later. Its presentation in Washington marks its second appearance at the National Gallery of Art, where the Danae was exhibited in the Titian retrospective of 1940–1941. Since then the painting has been cleaned and restored to splendid effect.
Commissioned by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (fig. 3), grandson of Pope Paul III, the Danae was completed during a visit Titian made to Rome in 1547–1548 in order to obtain a lucrative brief for his patron, the pope. Pope Paul, a connoisseur and lover of art, took particular interest in the portraits of the Farnese family and in the arts of the region, especially the paintings of their relative, Sebastiano del Piombo. The portrait of the boy, also now in the National Gallery of Art, marks the beginning of the association with the powerful Farnese clan, whose patronage resulted in a variety of portraits of the pope, his family, and their circle. The Danae was already underway in September 1546, when it was mentioned in an amusing letter written to the cardinal by the papal legate to Venice, Giovanni della Casa. Della Casa describes the painting as so shocking it would make “the heel of Venus rise up to the brim of the jar of Ulysses in Pearns look like a man by comparison.” His further jokes that Titian will paint in the face of the Farnese mistress’s (a courtesan named Angelica) of the patron so desires.

The second female nude referred to in the letter is the famous Danae of Titian (fig. 4), painted by Titian in 1549–1550 for Gabrielle d’Estrees, now in the Uffizi Gallery. In the catalogue raisonné [4] have demonstrated that Titian’s original concept for the Danae placed the subject in a comparable domestic setting with a landscape view out a window, as in the Uffizi picture. At the time, such paintings everywhere were under fire for their

in Europe. The museums itself was a considerable pursuit inherited either from the eighteenth century to the first decade of the sixteenth century. Capodimonte took on national status only in 1717 and is now home to, among much else, a rich collection of Napoleonic paintings from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, brought together from local churches, the collection of the Bourbon rulers of Naples; and contemporary works by artists from the eighteenth century. The collection is very extensive, spanning all of the arts. Of great note are many revered masterpieces, including Michelangelo’s cartoon for the Cappella Paolina including Michelangelo’s cartoon for the Cappella Paolina, Raphael’s School of Athens, and Titian’s Venus of Urbino, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel Henry Kress Collection.

The Farnese Collection came to Naples following the turbulent dynastic succession of the Duchy of Parma, the northern Italian state that was the period of courtly and literary life in the eighteenth century by the counts and marchers of the house of Bourbon, the son of Elisabetta Farnese, the daughter of Francis I, king of France.

The founder of the Farnese Collection was the nobleman Alessandro Farnese (1520–1592), better known as the Pope Paul III, who acquired existing works and commissioned new ones from the greatest artists of the time. The collection is very extensive, spanning all of the arts. Of great note are many revered masterpieces, including Michelangelo’s cartoon for the Cappella Paolina, Raphael’s School of Athens, and Titian’s Venus of Urbino, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel Henry Kress Collection.

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