

Proper Italian Ladies

Did Not Leave the House with Naked Heads (unless, of course, they were Venetian)

by Lady Genevieve de Valois



here are many styles of headwear available to the 16th Century Italian persona.

Several factors should be considered when choosing what style is most appropriate; including time period, region and social class.

Use the following pictures and descriptions as guidance and inspiration in search for the ultimate Italian headdress.

Braid Wraps

Braid wraps are primarily seen in the 15th century, but do carry on into the first 10-15 years of the 16th century. Some include coverings for the back of the head and others just cover the braid itself. They could be very plain or highly decorated with gems as seen in the following examples of each.



Braid Wrap



The Reta

The "Reta" is what we refer to as a hair net and is seen in many variations across Italy and throughout the century. While the hairnet sometimes provided the function of holding the hair in place, as seen in the image on the left (in the fresco with the braid wrap example), this was not always the case. Many times it served a purely decorative purpose. The two images above are examples of decorative hair nets, one loose and one structured.



Hair Nets - 'Reta'



The Scufia

The "Scufia" is sometimes referred to as a "Hair Bag". Its primary function is to hold the hair in place. It is similar to a Reta but is generally of solid fabric and not netting, and is always functional whereas the Reta was frequently just decorative. See examples on next page.

COSTUMING



Hair Bag - 'Scufia'



The Velo

The Velo is the common veil. It is seen throughout the period and most regions, but is mostly associated with mourning and extreme modesty. This style is very rarely seen in portraits of the time, but can be seen in other forms of painting and the period costume books.



Veil - 'Vela'



Hair Taping



Hair Taping and Decorative Braiding

Young, unmarried girls did not always cover their hair, yet they did feel the need to "accessorize" their hair. We see several examples of what is known as "Hair Taping," which refers to tying up the hair in ribbons. Similarly, in later period you can see portraits of young girls with elaborate braids that are decorated with inter-woven strands of pearls.

Balzo / Capigliara Hats

This style of hat is seen primarily in Venice, but was also popular in nearby regions. It could be as plain or as outrageously decorated as one wanted. There are a variety of spectacular examples in portraiture of the period. Typically, a woman would put her hair up in braids for wear around the house and then would cover her head with this style of hat when going outside, either in an act of modesty or to comply with local sumptuary laws.



Balzo Hats



Turban/Scarf Wraps

This style seems to be isolated to Florence in the period between 1500-1525. I have seen it worn in two styles-either worn as a turban with all ends tucked in around the head, or worn as a wrap with one end hanging out in the back. This end was usually done with decorative embroidery.

The Uncovered Head

Typically when you see pictures or portraits of Italian women with their hair down and uncovered they are being depicted in their homes. The one exception to this rule might be the Venetians. The



Turban (tucked)

Venetian women were famous for their vanity in regards to their hair and preferred any style that allowed their hair to be seen. Sumptuary laws endeavored to enforce modesty

on the Venetian women, but they frequently found ways to continue to display the magnificence of their hair. Having said that, the above listed headwear (except the turbans) have all been seen displayed on fashionable Venetian ladies in pictures and portraiture of the period.

Bibliography

Boucher, Francois. 20,000 Years of Fashion, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987.

Davenport, Milia. The Book of Costume. New York: Crown Publishers, 1976.

D'Onde, Maestra Damiana Illiara (Elizabeth Jones). "The Wonderful, Bulbous Balzo" C.2001. <http://home.earthlinknet/~lizjones429/lbalzo-new.htm>

Thompson, Jennifer. "Florentine Dress Images: 1500-1525" http://homepage.mac.com/festive_attyre/researchlindex.html

Thompson, Jennifer. "Florentine Dress Images: 1525-1550" http://homepage.mac.com/festive_attyre/researchlindex.html

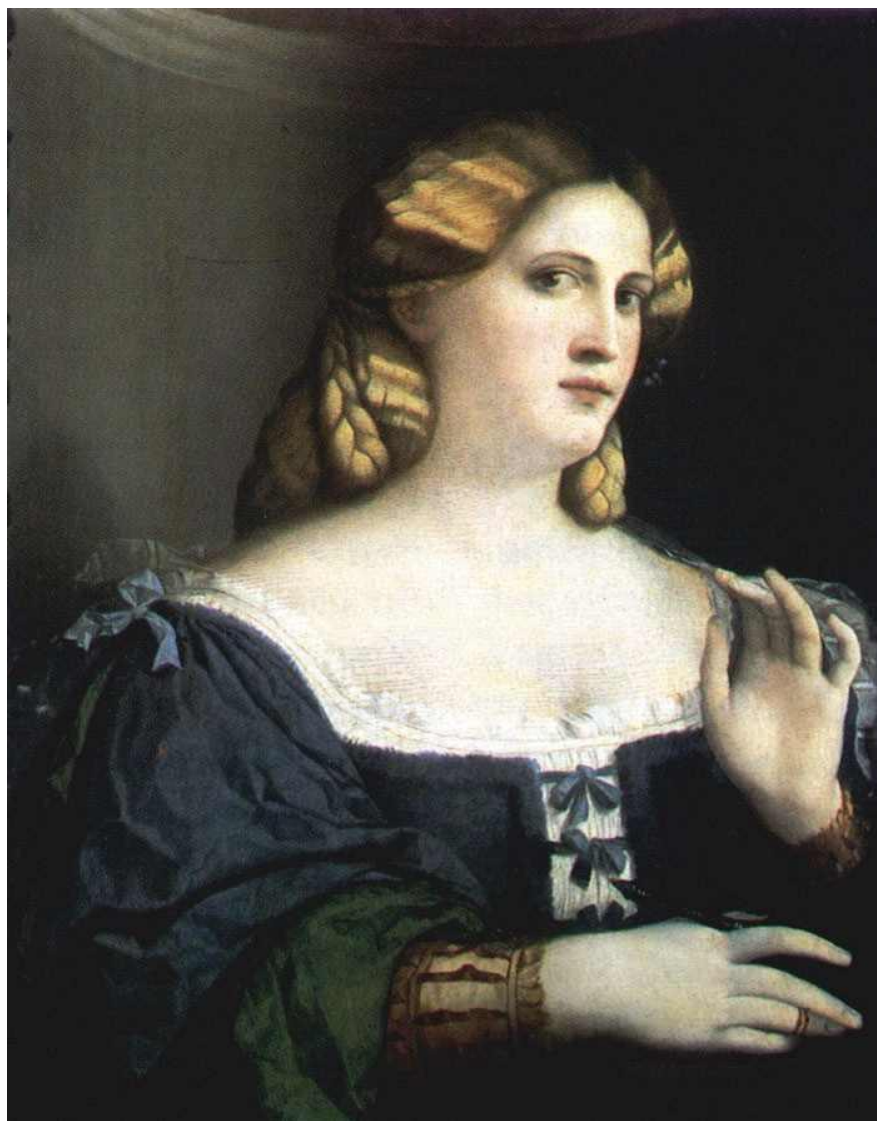
Wake, Annabelle, "A Crowning Glory: Hairstyles and Headwear in Venice," C,2003, <http://realmofvenus.renaissancewoman.net/adornedheadwear.htm>

PICTURE CREDITS IN ORDER:

1. Fresco (*detail*) at the Great Cloister of the Monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, 1505 by 'J' Sodoma' (Giovanni Antonio Bazzi)
- 2, Bianca Maria Sforza, by *Ambrogio de Predis*, c, 1493
3. Portrait of a Lady, 1525 by *Unknown Artist of the Venetian School*
- 4, Portrait of a Woman, 1490 by *Ambrogio De Predis*
5. Portrait of a Woman Known as La Schiavona 1511 by *Tiziano Vecellio (Titian)*
6. Portrait of a Woman, called "The Nun," 1506 by *Giuliano Bugiardini*
7. La Donna Velata ("the veiled woman"), 1516 by *Rafaello Sanzio*
9. Lucrezia Sommaria, 1530-1532 by *Ridolfo Ghirlandaio*
- 10, Portrait of a Lady, 1533 by *Bernardino Licinio*
- 11, Portrait of a Lady, 1530's By *Paolo Cavazzola*
12. The Artist's Wife, 1514 By *Andrea Del Sarto*
- 13, The Guisti Family of Verona 1520 Artist *Unknown*



Balzo / Capigliara Hats



Venice, The Republic of Venice
Palma Vecchio, 1520s: *Woman In Blue*
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum