Venus of Urbino by Titian

This work, completed in 1538 for the Duke of Urbino Guidobaldo II Della Rovere, is very interesting for its many hidden meanings.

It was a gift from the Duke to his young wife. The painting represents the allegory of marriage and was a “teaching” model to Giulia Varano, the young wife, of eroticism, fidelity and motherhood.

The evident eroticism of the painting, in fact, reminded the woman of the marital obligations she would have to fulfill to her husband. The erotic allegory is evident in the representation of Venus, the goddess of love, as a sensual and delectable woman staring at the viewer who could not ignore her beauty. The light and warm color of her body is in contrast to the dark background, bringing out her eroticism.

The dog at the feet of the woman is the symbol of marital fidelity while, in the background, the house maid looking down at the young girl as she rummages in a chest symbolizes motherhood.
The strong sensuality of this painting was therefore consistent with its private, domestic purpose, as a gift from husband to wife.

The pose of the nude is certainly a tribute to his friend-master Giorgione, who in 1510 had painted a very similar subject, the *Sleeping Venus*.

Thanks to the wise use of color and its contrasts, as well as the subtle meanings and allusions, Titian achieves the goal of representing the perfect Renaissance woman who, just like Venus, becomes the symbol of love, beauty and fertility.