

Cultural Context:

Lavinia Fontana, like many female artists during the Renaissance, was the daughter of another painter, Prospero Fontana. This nude is a somewhat groundbreaking piece for a woman in this era. As previously discussed, women were not generally permitted to study the nude form, and therefore, nudes were not as prevalent in women's artwork as they were in men's works. This painting is an example of the widespread popularity of Greek and Roman myth as the subject matter of Renaissance Art.

Analysis:

Minerva in Roman mythology is the virgin goddess of wisdom, commerce, poetry, medicine, magic, weaving and crafts as well as the inventor of music. Minerva must have been a figure of great interest for Fontana due to the importance of many of Minerva's mythological functions in Fontana's life. This painting, in many ways is symbolic of Lavinia Fontana's confidence in her accomplishments as an artist. The fact that Minerva is the goddess of several things involving creativity as well as wisdom and commerce, qualities integral to career or occupation makes her a perfect heroine in women's art. The knowing look on Minerva's face in this painting seems to convey more modern sentiments like "You go, girl." Or "We can do it." Additionally, by painting a full-length female nude, Fontana is telling the viewer that women are equally as capable as men of learning and conveying the human form.



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Minerva Dressing

Lavinia Fontana

1613

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