

Pick of the week

The online display that has impressed me most—so far—is the first number of 'Looking closer' by Robilant+Voena (www.robilantvoena.com), dealer in Old Masters and Modern art, with galleries in London, Milan and St Moritz. Its focus is one of the paintings in a virtual exhibition, 'Painting in the Shadow of the Plague: Considering Art in 17th-century Lombardy'. This is the striking 21¼in by 16½in *Portrait of a Physician* by Fede Galizia (1578–1630). Between 1629 and 1631, Northern Italy suffered a worse plague than we are experiencing today—Galiza probably died of it in Milan—that made its mark on religious painting and also on portraits such as this, which display 'the elegance and defiance' of those who faced it. The doctor is thought to have been Ludovico Settala. In his great 1827 romantic novel *I Promessi Sposi* (*The Betrothed*), Alessandro Manzoni described him as 'one of the most active and intrepid doctors' fighting the plague.

'Looking closer' not only gives us the painting, but excerpts from the novel, an art historian's thoughts on the plague and a recording of Verdi's *Requiem*, composed in memory of his friend Manzoni.

