

Renaissance in Northern Europe

14

TIME PERIOD: 1400-1600

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Modern European art emerges from an interaction with cultures on a global scale. Prior studies highlighted a more narrow geographic or chronological approach.

Essential Knowledge:

- Western Europe and the American colonies are at the center of Renaissance and Baroque studies.
- Europe and the Americas are brought into closer alignment with this new course of study. One is not considered more important than the other.
- Europeans brought goods and culture to the Western hemisphere with their trade and conquest.
- Europeans began to collect and organize knowledge from their various expansions around the globe. European influence is on the rise at home and abroad.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: There is an interest in returning to classical ideals in the fifteenth century, with a greater emphasis on formal education and artistic training.

Essential Knowledge:

- There is a greater exploration of the formal elements of painting, like perspective, composition, and color.
- Artistic training is enhanced by the birth of academies.
- The display of artwork often meant a glorification of the patron.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: The Reformation and Counter-Reformation caused a rift in Christian art of Western Europe.

Essential Knowledge:

- In Northern Europe there was an emphasis on non-religious subjects, like portraits, genre paintings, and still lifes. In Southern Europe there was an emphasis on religious subjects with much more active and dynamic compositions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The prosperous commercial and mercantile interests in the affluent trading towns of Flanders stimulated interest in the arts. Emerging capitalism was visible everywhere, from the first stock exchange established in Antwerp in 1460 to the marketing and trading of works of art. Cities vied with one another for the most sumptuously designed cathedrals, town halls, and altarpieces—in short, the best Europe had to offer.

Political and religious turmoil began with the Reformation, which is traditionally dated to 1517 when a German monk and scholar named Martin Luther nailed a list of his complaints to the doors of All Saints Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Perhaps unknowingly, he began one of the greatest upheavals in European history, causing a split in the Christian faith and political turmoil that would last for centuries. Those countries that were Christian the shortest period of time (Germany, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands) became Protestant. Those with longer Christian traditions (Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Poland) remained Catholic.

With a Protestant wave of anti-Catholic feeling came an iconoclastic movement attacking paintings and sculptures of holy figures, which only a short while before were considered sacred. Calvinists, in particular, were staunchly opposed to what they saw as blasphemous and idolatrous images; they spearheaded the iconoclastic movement.

Patronage and Artistic Life

The conflict between Protestant iconoclasm and Catholic images put artists squarely in the middle. On the one hand, the Church was an excellent source of employment; on the other, what if the contentions of the Protestants were true?

Many, like **Dürer**, tried to resolve the issue by either turning to other types of painting, like portraits, or by seeking a middle road by playing down religious ecstasies or the lives of the saints. Protestants thought that God could be reached directly through human intercession, so paintings of Jesus, when permitted, were direct and forceful. Catholics wanted intermediaries, such as Mary, the saints, or the priesthood to direct their thoughts, so these images were more permissible to them. However, Catholics always insisted that a sculpture of Mary was just a reminder of the figure one was praying to. Idolatry was not endorsed by either.

The Northern European economy can be characterized by a capitalist market system that flourished due to expansive trade across the Atlantic. This brought with it a parallel emphasis on buying and selling works of art as commodities. New technologies in printmaking made artists internationally popular, and more courted than ever before.

NORTHERN RENAISSANCE PAINTING

One of the most important inventions in the last thousand years, if not history, is the development of movable type by Johann Gutenberg. The impact was enormous. This device could mass produce books, make them available to almost anyone, and have them circulated on a wide scale.

However, mechanically printed books looked cheap and artificial to those who were used to having their books handmade over the course of years, as the *Golden Haggadah* (Figure 12.10) did for the super-wealthy patrons. Gutenberg's first book, *The Bible*, was printed mechanically, but the decorative flourishes—mostly initial letters before each chapter—were hand painted by calligraphers. Meanwhile, a similar mechanical process gave birth to the print, first as a **woodcut**, then as an **engraving**, and later as an **etching**. Prints were mass pro-

duced and relatively inexpensive, since the artist made a prototype that was reprinted many times. Although individually cheaper than a painting, the artist made his profit on the number of reproductions. Indeed, fame could spread more quickly with prints, because these products went everywhere, whereas paintings were in the hands of single owners.

The second important development in the fifteenth century was the widespread use of oil paint. Prior to this, wall paintings were done in fresco and panel paintings in tempera. Oil paint was developed as an alternative in a part of Europe in which fresco was never that popular.

Oil paint produces exceptionally rich colors, having the notable ability to accurately imitate natural hues and tones. It can generate enamel-like surfaces and sharp details. It also preserves well in wet climates, retaining its luster for a long time. Unlike tempera and fresco, oil paint is not quick drying and requires time to set properly, thereby allowing artists to make changes onto what they previously painted. With all these advantages, oil paint has emerged as the medium of choice for most artists since its development in Flanders in the early Renaissance.

The great painted altarpieces of medieval art were the pride of accomplished painters whose works were on public view in the most conspicuous locations. Italian altarpieces from the age of Giotto tend to be flat paintings that stand directly behind an altar, often with gabled tops.

Alternatively, Northern European altarpieces are cupboards rather than screens, with wings that open and close, folding neatly into one another. The large central scene is the most important, sometimes carved rather than painted; sculpture was considered a higher art form. Small paintings such as *The Mérode Triptych* of 1425–1428 (Figure 14.1) were designed for portability. Larger works were meant to be housed in an elaborate Gothic frame that enclosed the main scenes. Sometimes the frame alluded to the architecture of the building in which the painting resided.

Altarpieces usually have a scene painted on the outside, visible during the week. On Sundays, during key services, the interior of the altarpiece is exposed to view. Particularly elaborate altarpieces may have had a third view for holidays.

Northern European artists were heavily influenced by International Gothic Painting, a courtly elegant art form, begun by Italian artists such as Simone Martini in the fourteenth century. This style of painting features thin, graceful figures that usually have an S-shaped curve as does Late Gothic sculpture. Natural details abound in small bits of reality that are carefully rendered. Costumes are splendidly depicted with the latest fashions and most stylish fabrics. Gold is used in abundance to indicate the wealth of the figures and the patrons who sponsored these works. Architecture is carefully rendered, frequently with the walls of buildings opened up so that the viewer can look into the interior. International Gothic paintings often have elaborate frames that match the sumptuous painting style.

Regardless of whether artists worked in the International Gothic tradition, Northern European painters generally continued the practice of opening up wall spaces to see into rooms as in *The Mérode Triptych* (Figure 14.1). Typically, figures are encased in the rooms they occupy, rather than being proportional to their surroundings. Ground lines tilt up dramatically, as do table tops and virtually any flat surface. High horizons are the norm. Although symbolism can be seen in virtually any work of art in any art historical period, it seems to be particularly a part of the fabric of Northern European painting. Items that appear casually placed as a bit of naturalism can be construed as part of a symbolic network of interpretations existing on several important levels. Scholars have spilled a great deal of ink in decoding possible readings of important works.

Northern European art during the sixteenth century is characterized by the assimilation of Italian Renaissance ideas into a Northern European context. Michelangelo was enormously popular in Northern Europe, even though he never went there, and only one of his works did. However, many other Italian artists made the journey, including the elderly Leonardo da Vinci.

Northern European painting had a fondness for nature unknown in Italian art—whether it is seen in sweeping Alpine landscape views or the study of a rabbit or even a clump of earth. Landscapes, no matter how purely represented, generally have a trace of human involvement, sometimes shown by the presence of buildings or farms, or the rendering of small people in an overwhelming setting.

Northern artists continued to use high horizon lines that enabled a large area of the canvas to be filled with earthbound details. In general, there is a reluctance to use linear perspective in paintings, although atmospheric perspective is featured in landscapes.



Figure 14.1: Robert Campin (?) or workshop, *The Annunciation Triptych* (also called *The Merode Altarpiece*), 1425–1428, oil on wood, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Robert Campin (?) or workshop, *The Annunciation Triptych* (also called *The Merode Altarpiece*), 1425–1428, oil on wood, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Figure 14.1)

- Left panel: donors, middle-class people kneeling before the holy scene; wife added later perhaps because of the donor's marriage
- Center panel: Annunciation taking place in an everyday Flemish interior
- Humanization of traditional themes: no halos, domestic interiors, view into a Flemish cityscape

■ Symbolism:

- Towels and water stand for Mary's purity; water is a baptism symbol
- Flowers have three buds symbolizing the Trinity; unopened bud is the unborn Jesus; lilies also symbolize Mary's purity
- Mary seated on floor symbolizing her humility
- Mary blocks the fireplace, or the entrance to hell
- Candlestick: Mary holds Christ in the womb
- Figure with a cross comes in through the window: the divine birth

- Right panel: Joseph in his carpentry workshop; mousetrap symbolizes the capturing of the devil
- Meticulous handling of paint; intricate details
- Steeply rising ground line; figures too large for the architecture they sit in

Jan van Eyck, *Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on wood, National Gallery, London (Figure 14.2)



Figure 14.2: Jan van Eyck, *Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on wood, National Gallery, London

■ Many theories as to the meaning of the work:

- Traditionally assumed to be wedding portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife
- Theory that it is a memorial to a dead wife
- Theory that it represents a betrothal
- Theory that Arnolfini is conferring legal and business privileges on his wife during an absence

- Symbols of weddings:
 - Custom of burning a candle on the first night of a wedding
 - Shoes cast off indicates they are standing on holy ground
 - Prayerful promising pose of a groom
 - Dog symbolizes fidelity
- Two witnesses in the convex mirror; perhaps the artist himself, since the inscription reads “Jan van Eyck was here 1434”
- Wife pulls up dress to symbolize childbirth, although she is not pregnant
- Statue of Saint Margaret, patron of childbirth, appears on the bedpost
- Man appears near the window symbolizing his role as someone who makes his way in the outside world; the woman appears farther in the room to emphasize her role as a homemaker
- Meticulous handling of paint; great concentration of minute details
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Couples in Art**
 - *Menkaura and His Queen* (Figure 3.7)
 - Veranda post (Figure 27.14)
 - *Justinian and Attendants* and *Theodora and Attendants* (Figures 8.5 and 8.6)

Albrecht Dürer, *Adam and Eve*, 1504, engraving, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Figure 14.3)

- Influenced by classical sculpture; Adam looks like the ancient Greek sculpture called *The Apollo Belvedere*; Eve like *Medici Venus*; Italian massing of forms
- Ideal image of humans before the Fall of Man
- Contrapposto of figures from the Italian Renaissance
- Four humors are represented in the animals below: cat (choleric or angry), rabbit (sanguine or energetic), elk (melancholic or sad), ox (phlegmatic or lethargic); four humors were kept in balance before the Fall of Man
- Mouse represents Satan
- Parrot a symbol of cleverness
- Adam tries to dissuade Eve; he grasps the mountain ash, a tree from which snakes recoil
- Northern European devotion to detailed paintings
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: The Human Figure**
 - Polykleitos, *Spear Bearer* (Figure 4.3)
 - Botticelli, *Birth of Venus* (Figure 15.4)
 - Braque, *Portuguese* (Figure 22.6)



Figure 14.3: Albrecht Dürer, *Adam and Eve*, 1504, engraving, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Matthias Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece*, 1512–1516, oil on panel, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar (Figures 14.4a and 14.4b)

- Placed in a monastery hospital where people were treated for “Saint Anthony’s Fire,” or ergotism—a disease caused by eating a fungus that grows on rye flour
- St. Anthony’s Fire explains the presence of St. Anthony on the first and third views

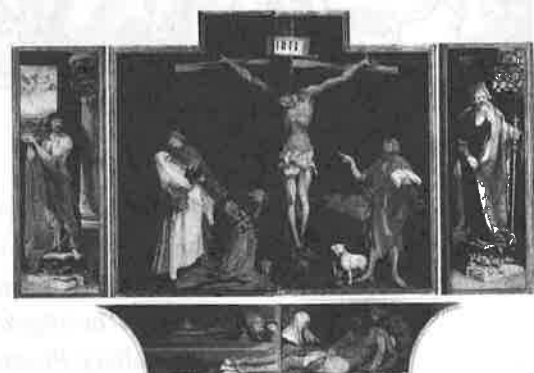


Figure 14.4a: Matthias Grünewald, first view, *Isenheim Altarpiece*, 1510–1515, oil on panel, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar



Figure 14.4b: Matthias Grünewald, Isenheim Altarpiece, second view, 1512-1516, oil on panel, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar

- Ergotism causes convulsions and gangrene
- *First view:*
 - Crucifixion: dark background
 - dead, decomposing flesh
 - arms almost torn from sockets
 - lashed and whipped body
 - agony of the body unflinchingly shown
 - symbolizes the agony of ergotism
 - swooning Mary dressed like the nuns who worked in the hospital
 - when panels open to reveal next scene, Christ is amputated as patients suffering ergotism would be
 - same true in the predella: Christ's legs seem amputated below the kneecaps

- *Second view:*
 - Marian symbols: the enclosed garden, closed gate, rosebush, rosary
 - Christ rises from the dead on right—his rags changed to glorious robes, showing his wounds, which do not harm him now
 - message to patients is that earthly diseases will vanish in the next world
- *Third view:* symbols of ergotism: oozing boils, withered arm, distended stomach (not illustrated)
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Pathos**
 - *Seated Boxer* (Figure 4.10)
 - Munch, *The Scream* (Figure 21.11)
 - Kollwitz, *Memorial Sheet for Karl Liebknecht* (Figure 22.4)



Figure 14.5: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Allegory of Law and Grace*, c. 1530, woodcut

Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Allegory of Law and Grace*, c. 1530, woodcut (Figure 14.5)

- Protestantism: faithful achieve salvation by God's grace; guidance can be achieved using the Bible
- Done in consultation with Martin Luther, a leader in the Protestant movement
- Left: Last Judgment
 - Moses holds Ten Commandments
 - Ten Commandments represents the Old Law, Catholicism
 - Law of Moses not enough; not enough to live a good life
 - Skeleton chases a person into Hell
- Right: Figure bathed in Christ's blood
 - Faith in Christ alone is needed for salvation
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Ideas and Rebellion**
 - Lawrence, *The Migration of the Negro, Panel no. 49* (Figure 22.19)
 - Michel Tuffery, *Pisupo Lua Afe* (Figure 29.16)
 - Neshat, *Rebellious Silence* (Figure 29.14)

Pieter Bruegel, *Return of the Hunters*, 1565, oil on wood panel, Art History Museum, Vienna (Figure 14.6)

- One of a series of paintings representing the months—this is November/December
- Alpine landscape, winter scene
- Strong diagonals lead the eye deeper into the painting
- Figures are peasant types, not individuals
- Landscape has high horizon line, a Northern European tradition
- Many details; nothing is static
- Hunters have had little success in the winter hunt; dogs are skinny and hang their heads
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Hardship**
 - Turner, *The Slave Ship* (Figure 20.5)
 - Neshat, *Rebellious Silence* (Figure 29.14)
 - Stieglitz, *Steerage* (Figure 22.8)



Figure 14.6: Pieter Bruegel, *Return of the Hunters*, 1565, oil on wood panel, Art History Museum, Vienna

VOCABULARY

Altarpiece: a painted or sculpted panel set on an altar of a church (Figure 14.1)

Annunciation: in Christianity, an episode in the Book of Luke 1:26–38 in which Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she would be the Virgin Mother of Jesus (Figure 14.1)

Donor: a patron of a work of art, who is often seen in that work (Figure 14.1 left panel)

Engraving: a printmaking process in which a tool called a **burin** is used to carve into a metal plate, causing impressions to be made in the surface. Ink is passed into the crevices of the plate and paper is applied. The result is a print with remarkable details and finely shaded contours (Figure 14.3)

Etching: a printmaking process in which a metal plate is covered with a ground made of wax. The artist uses a tool to cut into the wax to leave the plate exposed. The plate is then submerged into an acid bath, which eats away at the exposed portions of the plate. The plate is removed from the acid, cleaned, and ink is filled into the crevices caused by the acid. Paper is applied and an impression is made. Etching produces the finest detail of the three types of early prints

Oil paint: a paint in which pigments are suspended in an oil-based medium. Oil dries slowly allowing for corrections or additions; also allows for a great range of luster and minute details

Polyptych: a many-paneled altarpiece

Triptych: a three-paneled painting or sculpture (Figure 14.1)

Woodcut: a printmaking process by which a wooden tablet is carved into with a tool, leaving the design raised and the background cut away (very much as how a rubber stamp looks). Ink is rolled onto the raised portions, and an impression is made when paper is applied to the surface. Woodcuts have strong angular surfaces with sharply delineated lines. (Figure 14.5)

SUMMARY

Northern European art from the fifteenth century is dominated by monumental altarpieces prominently erected in great cathedrals. Flemish artists delight in symbolically rich compositions that evoke a visually enticing experience along with a religiously sincere and intellectually challenging interpretation. Flemish emphasis on minute details does not minimize the total effect. The introduction of oil paint provides a new luminous glow to Northern European works.

The invention of movable type brought about a revolution in the art world. Instead of producing individual items, artists could now make multiple images whose portability and affordability would ensure their widespread fame.

The achievements of Italian Renaissance painters had a profound effect on their Northern European counterparts in the sixteenth century. The monumentality of forms, particularly in the works of Michelangelo, were of great interest to Northern European artists, who traveled to Italy in great numbers. Even so, most Northern painters continued their own tradition of meticulously painting details, high horizon lines, and colorful surfaces that characterize their art.

The civil unrest that was an outgrowth of the Reformation caused many churches to be violated as works of art were smashed and destroyed because they were thought to be pagan. Protestants in general sought more austere church interiors in reaction against the perceived lavishness of their Catholic counterparts.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Multiple-Choice

Questions 1 and 2 refer to this image.



1. This work is both signed and dated, showing the growing status of artists. Which of the following works are also signed?
 - (A) *Basin (Baptistère de St. Louis)*
 - (B) *Virgin and Child with Saints Theodore and George*
 - (C) *Lamentation* by Giotto
 - (D) *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci

2. This painting has been traditionally thought of as a wedding portrait. All of the following have been interpreted as wedding symbols EXCEPT

- (A) the burning candle, a custom on the first night of a wedding
- (B) the shoes cast off, indicating they are standing on holy ground
- (C) the prayerful promising pose of the groom
- (D) the convex mirror, which reflects God's blessing on this event

3. Traditions of double portraits are common in all of the following cultures EXCEPT

- (A) Etruscan
- (B) Egyptian
- (C) Baroque
- (D) Romanesque

4. Woodcuts, such as Cranach's *Allegory of Law and Grace*, enabled

- (A) the artist to reach a wider audience with his ability to mass produce images
- (B) the collector to display works that were resistant to fading and peeling
- (C) the artist to use color in printmaking; before, only black and white was possible
- (D) the artist for the first time to represent a scene three-dimensionally

5. Albrecht Dürer's engraving of *Adam and Eve* references works of classical art for the forms of the two figures because it shows them as

- (A) pagan and corrupt
- (B) idealized before the Fall of Man
- (C) saintly and holy
- (D) concerned only about their physical appearance

Short Essay

Attribute this painting to the artist who painted it.



Identify a painting by the same artist in the art history curriculum using the title, artist, date, and medium.

Using specific details, justify your attribution by comparing the two works.

How do both works reflect the artist's rejection of classical models?

ANSWER KEY

1. **A** 2. **D** 3. **D** 4. **A** 5. **B**

ANSWERS EXPLAINED

Multiple-Choice

1. **(A)** The Basin (*Baptistère de St. Louis*) is signed (six times!) by Muhammad ibn al-Zain.
2. **(D)** There are indeed things reflected in the convex mirror between the two main figures, but God is not one of them.
3. **(D)** Etruscan: *Sarcophagus of the Spouses*; Egyptian: *Menkaura and His Queen*; Baroque: Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Saskia*. There is no tradition of double portraits in Romanesque art that have come down to us.
4. **(A)** Woodcuts made cheap mass-produced images available for a fraction of the cost of paintings. This enabled an artist's reputation to spread very quickly.
5. **(B)** Dürer is representing people before the Fall of Man, and therefore perfect as God originally created them. It was after they sinned that their bodies became mortal and corruptible.

Short-Essay Rubric

Question	Points	Key Points in a Good Response
Attribute this painting to the artist who painted it.	1	Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Identify a painting by the same artist in the art history curriculum using the title, artist, date, and medium.	1	<i>Hunters in the Snow</i>, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1565, oil on wood
Using specific details, justify your attribution by comparing the two works.	2	Answers could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Peasants in everyday activities ■ Very detailed paintings ■ Strong receding diagonals ■ Gruff but picturesque view of country life ■ No central focus
How do both works reflect the artist's rejection of classical models?	1	Answers could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not interested in symmetry and balance ■ Gives the impression of the immediate and spontaneous; moment in time ■ No classical idealization of forms ■ Avoiding nudity

Early Renaissance in Italy: Fifteenth Century

15

TIME PERIOD: 1400–1500

The early Renaissance takes place in the courts of Italian city-states:
Ferrara, Florence, Mantua, Naples, Rome, Venice, and so on.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Modern European art emerges from an interaction with cultures on a global scale. Prior studies highlighted a more narrow geographic or chronological approach.

Essential Knowledge:

- Western Europe and the American colonies are at the center of Renaissance and Baroque studies.
- Europe and the Americas are brought into closer alignment with this new course of study. One is not considered more important than the other.
- Europeans brought goods and culture to the Western hemisphere with their trade and conquest.
- Europeans began to collect and organize knowledge from their various expansions around the globe. European influence is on the rise at home and abroad.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: There is an interest in returning to classical ideals in the fifteenth century, with a greater emphasis on formal education and artistic training.

Essential Knowledge:

- There is a greater exploration of the formal elements of painting, like perspective, composition, and color.
- Artistic training is enhanced by the birth of academies.
- The display of artwork often meant a glorification of the patron.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: The Reformation and Counter-Reformation caused a rift in Christian art of Western Europe.

Essential Knowledge:

- In Northern Europe there was an emphasis on non-religious subjects, like portraits, genre paintings, and still lifes. In Southern Europe there was an emphasis on religious subjects with much more active and dynamic compositions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Italian city-states were controlled by ruling families who dominated politics throughout the fifteenth century. These princes were lavish spenders on the arts, and great connoisseurs of cutting-edge movements in painting and sculpture. Indeed, they embellished their palaces with the latest innovative paintings by artists such as **Lippi** and **Botticelli**. They commissioned architectural works from the most pioneering architects of the day. Competition among families and city-states encouraged a competition in the arts, each state and family seeking to outdo the other.

Princely courts gradually turned their attention away from religious subjects to more secular concerns, in a spirit today defined as **humanism**. It became acceptable, in fact encouraged, to explore Italy's pagan past as a way of shedding light on contemporary life. The exploration of new worlds, epitomized by the great European explorers, was mirrored in a new growth and appreciation of the sciences, as well as the arts.

Patronage and Artistic Life

The influence of the patrons of this period can be seen in a number of ways, including such things as specifying the amount of gold lavished on an altarpiece or which family members the artist was required to prominently place in the foreground of a painting. It was also customary for great families to have a private chapel in the local church dedicated to their use. Artists would often be asked to paint murals in these chapels to enhance the spirituality of the location.

EARLY RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE

Renaissance architecture depends on order, clarity, and light. The darkness and mystery, indeed the sacred sense of Gothic cathedrals, was deemed barbaric. In its place were created buildings with wide window spaces, limited stained glass, and vivid wall paintings.

Although all buildings need mathematics to sustain the engineering principles inherent in their design, Renaissance buildings seem to stress geometric designs more demonstrably than most. Harmonies were achieved by a system of ideal proportions learned from an architectural treatise by the Roman Vitruvius. The ratios and proportions of various elements of the interior of Florentine Renaissance churches were interpreted as expressions of humanistic ideals. The Early Christian past was recalled in the use of unvaulted naves with coffered ceilings.

Thus, the crossing is twice the size of the nave bays, the nave twice the width of the side aisles, and the side aisles twice the size of side chapels. Arches and columns take up two-thirds of the height of the nave, and so on. This logical expression is often strongly delineated by the floor patterns in the nave, in which white and grey marble lines demarcate the spaces, as at Brunelleschi's **Pazzi Chapel** (Figures 15.1a and 15.1b).

Florentine palaces, such as Alberti's **Palazzo Rucellai** (Figure 15.2), have austere dominating façades that rise three stories from street level. Usually the first floor is reserved as public areas; business is regularly transacted here. The second floor rises in lightness, with a strong stringcourse marking the ceiling of one story and the floor of another. Here is where the family gathered in their private quarters. The third floor is capped by a heavy cornice in the style of a number of Roman temples.

Filippo Brunelleschi, Pazzi Chapel, designed 1423, built 1429–1461, masonry, Florence, Italy (Figures 15.1a and 15.1b)

- Rectangular chapel attached to the church of Santa Croce, Florence
- Two barrel vaults on the interior, small dome over crossing
- Interior has a restrained sense of color, muted tones, punctuated by glazed terra-cotta tiles
- Chapter House: a meeting place for the Franciscan monks
- Attribution to Brunelleschi has been questioned
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Personal Sacred Spaces**
 - Bernini, Cornaro Chapel (Figures 17.4a, 17.4b)
 - Giotto, Arena Chapel (Figures 13.1a, 13.1b, 13.1c)
 - Ryoan-ji (Figures 25.2a, 25.2b)



Figure 15.1a: Filippo Brunelleschi, Pazzi Chapel, 1429–1461, masonry, Florence



Figure 15.1b: Filippo Brunelleschi, Pazzi Chapel interior, 1429–1461, Florence

Leon Battista Alberti, Palazzo Rucellai, c. 1450, stone, masonry, Florence (Figure 15.2)

- Three horizontal floors of equal height separated by a strongly articulated stringcourse
- Pilasters rise vertically and divide the spaces into squarish shapes
- Strong classical cornice caps the building
- Rejects rustication of earlier Renaissance palaces; instead used beveled masonry joints
- First floor pilasters are Tuscan (derived from Doric); second are Alberti's own invention (derived from Ionic); third are Corinthian
- Friezes contain Rucellai family symbols: billowing sails
- Square windows on the first floor; windows with mullions on second and third floors
- Original building had five bays on the left, with a central door; second doorway bay and right bay added later; eighth bay fragmentary: owners of house next door refused to sell
- Patron was Giovanni Rucellai, a wealthy merchant
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: City Buildings**
 - Gehry, Guggenheim Bilbao (Figures 29.1a, 29.1b)
 - Sullivan, Carson Pirie Scott building (Figure 21.14a)
 - Trajan's Market (Figure 6.10a)

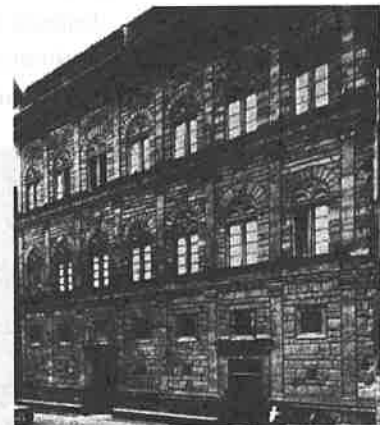


Figure 15.2: Leon Battista Alberti, Palazzo Rucellai, c. 1450, stone, masonry, Florence

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

The most characteristic development of Italian Renaissance painting is the use of linear perspective, a technique some scholars say was known to the Romans. Other scholars have attributed its revitalization, if not invention, to **Filippo Brunelleschi**, who developed perspective while drawing the Florence Cathedral Baptistry in the early fifteenth century. Some artists were fascinated with perspective, showing objects and people in proportion with one another, unlike medieval art which has people dominating compositions. Artists who were trained prior to this tradition were quick to see the advantages to linear perspective and incorporated it into their later works.

Later in the century, perspective becomes an instrument that some artists would use, or exploit, to create different artistic effects. The use of perspective to intentionally fool the eye, the **tromp l'oeil technique**, is an outgrowth of the ability of later fifteenth-century painters who employed it as one tool in an arsenal of techniques.

In the early part of the fifteenth century, religious paintings dominated, but by the end of the century, portraits and mythological scenes proliferated, reflecting humanist ideals and aspirations.

Interest in humanism and the rebirth of Greco-Roman classics also spurs an interest in authentic Greek and Roman sculptures. The ancients gloried in the nude form in a way that was interpreted by medieval artists as pagan. The revival of nudity in life-size sculpture is begun in Florence with **Donatello's David** (Figure 15.5), and continued throughout the century.

Nudity is one manifestation of an increased study of human anatomy. Drawings of people with heroic bodies are sketched in the nude and transferred into stone and bronze. Some artists show the intense physical interaction of forms in the twisting gestures and straining muscles of their works.

Fra Filippo Lippi, *Madonna and Child with Two Angels*, c. 1465, tempera on wood, Uffizi, Florence (Figure 15.3)



Figure 15.3: Fra Filippo Lippi, *Madonna and Child with Two Angels*, c. 1465, tempera on wood, Uffizi, Florence

- Mary seen as a young mother
- Model may have been the artist's lover
- Landscape inspired by Flemish painting
- Symbolic landscape
 - Rock formations indicate the Church
 - City near the Madonna's head is the Heavenly Jerusalem
- Motif of a pearl: seen in headdress and pillow as products of the sea (in upper left corner)
- Pearls used as symbols in scenes of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the Incarnation of Christ
- Scene depicted as if in a window in a Florentine home
- Humanization of a sacred theme
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Virgin Mary**
 - *Notre Dame de la Belle Verriere* (Figure 12.8)
 - *Röttgen Pietá* (Figure 12.7)
 - Miguel González, *Virgin of Guadalupe* (Figure 18.4)

Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, c. 1484–1486, tempera on canvas, Uffizi, Florence (Figure 15.4)

- Venus emerges fully grown from the foam of the sea; faraway look in her eyes
- Roses scattered before her; roses created at the same time as Venus, symbolizing that love can be painful
- Left: zephyr (west wind) and chloris (nymph)
- Right: handmaiden rushes to clothe her
- Figures float, not anchored to the ground
- Crisply drawn figures; pale colors
- Landscape flat and unrealistic, simple V-shaped waves
- A Medici commission
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Classical References**
 - David, *The Oath of the Horatii* (Figure 19.6)
 - Raphael, *School of Athens* (Figure 16.3)
 - Dürer, *Adam and Eve* (Figure 14.3)



Figure 15.4: Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, c. 1484–1486, tempera on canvas, Uffizi, Florence

Donatello, *David*, c. 1440–1460, bronze, National Museum, Bargello, Florence (Figure 15.5)

- First large bronze nude since antiquity
- Exaggerated contrapposto of the body
- Life-size work probably meant to be housed in the Medici Palace, not for public viewing
- Androgynous figure
- Stance: nonchalance, contemplating the victory over Goliath—Goliath's head at David's feet; David's head is lowered to suggest humility
- Laurel on hat indicates David was a poet; hat a foppish Renaissance design
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Nudity**
 - Female Deity from Nukuoro (Figure 28.2)
 - *Seated Boxer* (Figure 4.10)
 - Ingres, *The Grand Odalisque* (Figure 20.3)



Figure 15.5: Donatello, *David*, c. 1440–1460, bronze, National Museum, Bargello, Florence

VOCABULARY

Bottega: the studio of an Italian artist

Chapter House: a building next to a church used for meetings

Humanism: an intellectual movement in the Renaissance that emphasized the secular alongside the religious. Humanists were greatly attracted to the achievements of the classical past, and stressed the study of classical literature, history, philosophy, and art

Madonna: the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ (Figure 15.3)

Mullion: a central post or column that is a support element in a window or a door (Figure 15.2)

Orthogonal: lines that appear to recede toward a vanishing point in a painting with linear perspective

Pilaster: a flattened column attached to a wall with a capital, a shaft, and a base (Figure 15.2)

Quattrocento: the 1400s, or fifteenth century, in Italian art

Trompe l'oeil: (French, meaning “fools the eye”) a form of painting that attempts to represent an object as existing in three dimensions, and therefore resembles the real thing

SUMMARY

Humanist courts of Renaissance Italy patronized artists who rendered both religious compositions and secular works. After 1450 it is common to see contemporary events, ancient mythology, or portraits of significant people take their place side by side with scenes of the Annunciation and Crucifixion.

Brunelleschi's development of one-point perspective revolutionized Italian painting. At first, artists faithfully used the formula in their compositions, creating realistic three-dimensional spaces on their surfaces. Later, painters used perspective as a tool to manipulate the viewer's impression of a particular scene.

Sculptors competed with the glory of ancient artists by creating monumental figures and equestrian images, and revived antiquity's interest in nudity and idealized human proportion.

Architecture was dominated by spatial harmony and light interiors that contrasted markedly with the mystical stained glass-filled Gothic buildings.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Multiple-Choice

1. Leon Battista Alberti's architectural style represents a scholarly interpretation of classical elements seen in buildings such as
 - (A) the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut
 - (B) the Parthenon
 - (C) the Forum of Trajan
 - (D) the Colosseum

Questions 2–4 refer to the following picture.



2. The nudity in Donatello's *David*
 - (A) would have been considered heroic in Islamic art
 - (B) is inspired by Gothic portal sculpture
 - (C) references the ideal human proportions expressed in Polykleitos's canon
 - (D) recalls the nudity of public sculptures from the ancient Mediterranean

3. The laurel wreath on the head of the *David* refers to his
- (A) oneness with nature
 - (B) victory over Goliath
 - (C) role as a shepherd
 - (D) author of a book in the Bible
4. Before the creation of Donatello's *David*, nude sculptures were not executed because
- (A) they represented the pagan world of mythological gods
 - (B) artists were influenced by a general ban on images in Jewish art
 - (C) they showed man in a primitive and bestial state
 - (D) they were not suitable for churches
-
5. Fra Filippo Lippi's *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* reflects the Renaissance's attitude toward a more
- (A) ethereal and heavenly vision of Mary and Jesus
 - (B) formal and forbidding image of divine figures
 - (C) human and approachable interpretation of heavenly figures
 - (D) pagan and mythological approach to Christian imagery

SHORT ESSAY

This work is Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. The work references a mythological story cast in a Renaissance light.



Describe the mythological story occurring in this painting.

Who were the patrons of this work?

What is this painting based on?

What symbolism did Botticelli use to convey the meaning of this story?

ANSWER KEY

1. **D** 2. **D** 3. **D** 4. **A** 5. **C**

ANSWERS EXPLAINED

Multiple-Choice

1. **(D)** The three floors with rounded arches interspersed by columns recalls an arrangement on the Colosseum in Rome.
2. **(D)** Greek and Roman cities are often characterized by a preponderance of large-scale heroic nude figures. Islamic art would have considered nudes as blasphemous and debasing. Gothic portal sculptures are typically entirely covered by drapery except for the extremities. This work does not have the ideal human proportions expressed by Polykleitos.
3. **(D)** David was a poet. The Book of Psalms is ascribed to his authorship.
4. **(A)** Nudity was associated with the pagan world; Christians sought to avoid association with pagan gods.
5. **(C)** The Renaissance was mostly interested in making human the divine image. This painting has a particularly affectionate view of a young mother as Mary, and a suitably human child accompanied by impish angels.

Short-Essay Rubric

Question	Points	Key Points in a Good Response
Describe the mythological story occurring in this painting.	1	Venus' father, Cronos (or Saturn) casts his genitals into the sea, from which Venus is born, fully grown.
Who were the patrons of this work?	1	The Medici were the patrons of this work.
What is this painting based on?	1	The painting is based on a popular court poem by the writer Poliziano.
What symbolism did Botticelli use to convey the meaning of this story?	2	<p>The symbols to be mentioned include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Roses were created at the same time as Venus, and symbolize beauty. ■ Roses have thorns, and are symbols that love can be painful. ■ Venus is modest, and therefore is immediately covered up. ■ The wind god blows at Venus and gently propels her to shore.

High Renaissance and Mannerism

16

**TIME PERIOD: HIGH RENAISSANCE: 1495–1520,
ROME, FLORENCE, VENICE
MANNERISM: 1520–1600, ITALY**

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Modern European art emerges from an interaction with cultures on a global scale. Prior studies highlighted a more narrow geographic or chronological approach.

Essential Knowledge:

- Western Europe and the American colonies are at the center of Renaissance and Baroque studies.
- Europe and the Americas are brought into closer alignment with this new course of study. One is not considered more important than the other.
- Europeans brought goods and culture to the Western hemisphere with their trade and conquest.
- Europeans began to collect and organize knowledge from their various expansions around the globe. European influence is on the rise at home and abroad.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: The Reformation and Counter-Reformation caused a rift in Christian art of Western Europe.

Essential Knowledge:

- In Northern Europe there was an emphasis on non-religious subjects, like portraits, genre paintings, and still lifes. In Southern Europe there was an emphasis on religious subjects with much more active and dynamic compositions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Italian city-states with their large bankrolls and small populations were easy pickings for Spain and France, as they began their advances over the Italian peninsula. Venice alone remained an independent power, with its incomparable fleet bringing goods and profits around the Mediterranean.

The High Renaissance flourished in the cultivated courts of princes, doges, and popes—each wanting to make his city-state greater than his neighbor's. Unfortunately, most of this came to a temporary halt with the sack of Rome in 1527—a six-month rape of the city that did much to undo the achievements of one of the most creative moments in art history. What emerged from the ruins of Rome was a new period, Mannerism, which took art on a different path.

When Martin Luther nailed his theses to the doors of a church in Wittenberg, Germany in 1517, he touched off a religious and political upheaval that had long-lasting repercussions throughout Europe. Even if this movement, called the Protestant Reformation, was treated as a heresy in Italy, it had a dramatic impact on Italian art. No longer was the High Renaissance sense of perfection a representation of the world as it is, or could ever be. Mannerist distortions were more appropriate in this highly contentious period. Indeed, the basic tenets of Mannerism concern the tension between the ideal, the natural, and the symmetrical against the real, the artificial, and the unbalanced.

The schism that the Reformation caused was met by a Catholic response, framed at the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and later termed the Counter-Reformation. At the Council a new order of priests was created, called the Jesuits, whose missionary activity and commitment to education is still visible around the world today. The Jesuits quickly saw the power of art as a teaching tool and a religious statement, and became great patrons of the arts.

The religious and political upheaval that characterized the sixteenth century was exemplified by the sacking of the city of Rome in 1527. The unpaid army of the Holy Roman Empire, after defeating the French troops in Italy, sought restitution in looting and pillaging the holy city. The desecration of Rome shook all Christendom, especially since it proved that its chief holy place could so easily fall victim to the undisciplined and the greedy.

Patronage and Artistic Life

Most Renaissance artists came from humble origins, although some like **Titian** and **Michelangelo** came from families of limited influence. Every artist had to join a trade guild, which sometimes made them seem equivalent to house painters or carpenters. Even so, artists could achieve great fame, so great that monarchs competed to have them in their employ. Francis I of France is said to have held the dying **Leonardo da Vinci** in his arms, Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire lavished praise upon **Titian**, and **Michelangelo** was called “divino” by his biographers.

The dominant patron of the era was Pope Julius II, a powerful force in European religion and politics. It was Julius’s ambition that transformed the rather ramshackle medieval town of Rome into an artistic center and capital of the Renaissance. It was Julius’s devotion to the arts that inspired **Raphael** and **Michelangelo** to do their greatest work.

The first permanent painting academy was established by Cosimo I of Florence in 1563; its function was to train artists and improve their status in society. The best artists, however, did not need academies, nor did they need patrons. Although some preferred to work for a duke and stay in his graces, the reality was that a duke usually did not have enough commissions to keep a painter occupied. Famous artists did not need this security, and most achieved success by keeping their important patrons satisfied. Michelangelo’s relationship with Pope Julius II was successful in part because Julius became his preferred, although by no means his only, customer. Mannerist painters saw nothing about this situation worth changing.

HIGH RENAISSANCE PAINTING

Northern European artists discovered the durability and portability of canvas as a painting surface. This was immediately taken up in Venice, where the former backing of choice—wood—would often warp in damp climate. Since canvas is a material with a grainy texture, great care was made to prepare it in such a way as to minimize the effect the cloth would have on the paint. Canvas, therefore, had to be primed properly to make it resemble the enamel-

- Various reactions on the faces of the apostles: surprise, fear, anger, denial, suspicion; anguish on the face of Jesus
- Judas falls back clutching his bag of coins, face in darkness
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Composition**
 - Justinian and Theodora (Figures 8.5, 8.6)
 - Basquiat, *Horn Players* (Figure 29.5)
 - Niobid Krater (Figure 4.19)



Figure 16.2a: Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, 1508–1512, fresco, Vatican City, Italy

Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel Ceiling, 1508–1512, fresco, Vatican City, Italy (Figures 16.2a and 16.2d)

- Sistine Chapel erected in 1472 and painted by quattrocento masters including Botticelli and Perugino, as well as Michelangelo's teacher Ghirlandaio
- Function of Sistine Chapel: the place where new popes are elected
- Michelangelo chose a complicated arrangement of figures for the ceiling, broadly illustrating the first few chapters of Genesis, with accompanying Old Testament figures and antique sibyls—many based on antique sculptures



Figure 16.2d: Sistine Chapel, begun 1472, Vatican City, Italy

- Three hundred figures on ceiling, no two in the same pose; Michelangelo's lifelong preoccupation with the male nude in motion
- Enormous variety of expression
- Painted cornices frame groupings of figures in a highly organized way
- Many figures, like the Ignudi, are done for artistic expression rather than to enhance the narrative
- Acorns are a motif on the ceiling, inspired by the crest of the patron, Pope Julius II

Michelangelo, Delphic Sybil, c. 1508–1512, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, Italy (Figure 16.2b)



Figure 16.2b: Michelangelo, *Delphic Sybil*, c. 1508–1512, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, Italy

- One of five sibyls (prophetesses) on the ceiling
- Greco-Roman figures whom Christians felt foretold the coming of Jesus Christ
- Wears a Greek style turban
- Turns head as if listening
- Expression seems sorrowful
- Contrapposto of the body
- Holds the scroll containing her prophecy
- Combination of Christian religious and pagan mythological imagery
- **Cross-Cultural Connections: Time and Memory**
 - Calendar Stone (Figure 26.5c)
 - Lukasa Memory Board (Figure 27.11)
 - Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Figures 29.4a, 29.4b)

like surface of wood. In modern art, the grainy texture is often maintained for the earthy feel it lends a painting.

Leonardo da Vinci used a painting technique known as **sfumato**; in which he rendered forms in a subtly soft way to create a misty effect across the painted surface. Sfumato has the effect of distancing the viewer from the subject by placing the subject in a hazy world removed from us.

Artists also employed **chiaroscuro**, which provides soft transitions between light and dark. Chiaroscuro often heightens modeling effects in a work by having the light define the forms.

Venetian artists, particularly **Titian**, increased the richness of oil-painted surfaces by applying **glazes**. Glazes had been used on pottery since ancient times, when they were applied to ceramics to give them a highly polished sheen. In painting, as in pottery, glazes are transparent so that the painted surface shows through. However, glazes subtly change colors by brightening them, much as varnish brightens wood.

In portrait painting, instead of profiles, which were popular in the quattrocento, three-quarter views became fashionable. This view obscures facial defects that profiles enhance. With Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, portraits become psychological paintings. It was not enough for artists to capture likenesses; artists were expected to express the character of the sitter.

The idealization that characterizes **Raphael's** work becomes the standard High Renaissance expression. Raphael specialized in balanced compositions, warm colors, and ideally proportioned figures. He favored a triangular composition: The heavy bottom anchors forms securely and then yields to a lighter touch as the viewer's eye ascends.

Works like **Leonardo da Vinci's** *The Last Supper* (Figure 16.1) show a High Renaissance composition, with the key figure, in this case Jesus, in the center of the work, alone and highlighted by the window behind. The twelve apostles are grouped in threes, symmetrically balanced around Jesus, who is the focal point of the orthogonals. Even so, the work's formal structure does not dominate because the Biblical drama is rendered so effectively on the faces of the individuals.

Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, 1494–1498, tempera and oil, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan (Figure 16.1)

- Commissioned by the Sforza of Milan for the refectory, or dining hall, of a Dominican abbey
- Relationship between the friars eating and a Biblical meal
- Only Leonardo work remaining *in situ*
- Linear perspective; orthogonals of ceiling and floor point to Jesus
- Apostles in groupings of three; Jesus is alone but before a group of three windows symbolizing the Trinity
- Leonardo used an experimental combination of paints to yield a greater chiaroscuro; however, the paints began to peel off the wall in Leonardo's lifetime. As a result, the painting has been restored many times.
- Great drama of the moment: Jesus says, "One of you will betray me." (Matthew 26:21)

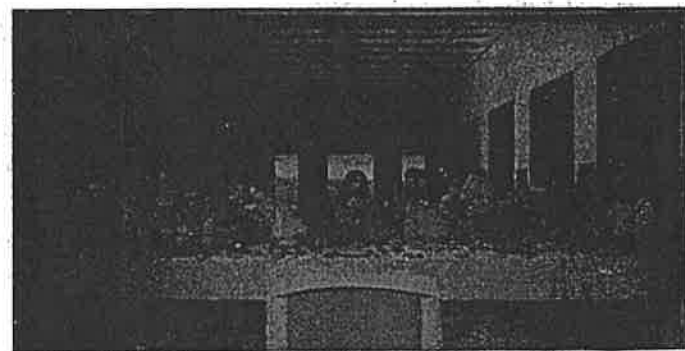


Figure 16.1: Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, 1494–1498, tempera and oil, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan

Michelangelo, *The Flood*, c. 1508–1512, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, Italy (Figure 16.2c)

- Story details Noah and his family's escape of rising flood waters as told in Genesis 7
- Few remaining survivors cling to mountain tops
- Man carrying drowned son to safety, will only meet his son's fate
- Over 60 figures; crowded composition
- Sculptural intensity of the figure style
- Ark in background is the only safe haven



Figure 16.2c: Michelangelo, *The Flood*, c. 1508–1512, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, Italy

Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, 1536–1541, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, Italy (Figure 16.2e)

- In contrast to the ceiling, there are no cornice divisions; it is one large space with figures more casually grouped
- Mannerism shown in the distortions of the body, elongations, crowded groups
- Four broad horizontal bands act as the unifying element:
 1. Bottom: left: dead rising, right: the mouth of hell
 2. Second level: ascending elect, descending sinners, trumpeting angels
 3. Third level: those rising to heaven gathered around Jesus
 4. Top lunettes: angels carrying the Cross and the Column, instruments used at Christ's death
- Christ in center and gestures defiantly with right hand; complex pose
- Justice is delivered: the good rise, the evil fall
- Lower right-hand corner has figures from Dante's *Inferno*: Minos and Charon
- Saint Bartholomew's face is modeled on a contemporary critic. Saint Bartholomew holds his skin, a symbol of his martyrdom, but the skin's face is Michelangelo's. An oblique remark about critics who skin him alive with their criticism
- Spiraling composition is a reaction against the High Renaissance harmony of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and reflects the disunity of Christendom caused by the Reformation
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Group Compositions**
 - Leonardo DaVinci, *Last Supper* (Figure 16.1)
 - Rivera, *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon* (Figure 22.20)
 - Lam, *The Jungle* (Figure 22.12)



Figure 16.2e: Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, fresco from the Sistine Chapel, 1536–1541, Vatican City, Italy

Raphael, *School of Athens*, 1509–1511, fresco, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City, Italy (Figure 16.3)

- Commissioned by Pope Julius II to decorate his library
- Painting originally called "Philosophy" because the pope's philosophy books were meant to be housed on shelving below
- One painting in a complex program of works that illustrates the vastness and variety of the papal library
- Open, clear light uniformly spread throughout composition



Figure 16.3: Raphael, *School of Athens*, 1509–1511, fresco, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City, Italy

- Nobility and monumentality of forms parallel to the greatness of the figures represented; figures gesture to indicate their philosophical thought
- Building behind might reflect Bramante's plan for Saint Peter's
- In center are the two greatest figures in ancient Greek thought: Plato (with the features of Leonardo on left, pointing up) and Aristotle
- Bramante, the Pope's architect, is the bald figure of Euclid on the lower right
- Raphael is in the corner at extreme right
- Michelangelo resting on the stone block writing a poem
- Raphael's overall composition influenced by Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* (Figure 16.1)

VENETIAN HIGH RENAISSANCE PAINTING

In contrast to the Florentines and Romans, whose paintings valued line and contour, the Venetians bathed their figures in a soft atmospheric ambiance highlighted by a gently modulated use of light. Bodies are sensuously rendered. While Florentines and Venetians both paint religious scenes, Florentines choose to see them as heroic accomplishments, whereas Venetians imbue their saints with a more human touch, setting them in bucolic environments that show a genuine interest in the beauty of the natural world. This natural setting is often called **Arcadian**.

The damp Venetian climate caused wooden paintings to warp and crack, frescoes to peel and flake. Artists opted for **canvas**, a more secure and lightweight surface that could maintain the integrity of a work for an indefinite period.



Figure 16.4: Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538, oil on canvas, Uffizi, Florence

Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538, oil on canvas, Uffizi, Florence (Figure 16.4)

- May not have been a Venus, may have been a courtesan
- Sensuous delight in the skin tones
- Looks at us directly
- Complex spatial environment: figure placed forward on the picture plane, servants in middle space; open window with plants in background
- Roses contribute to the floral motif carried throughout the work
- Dog perhaps symbolizes faithfulness
- Cassoni: trunks intended for storage of clothing for a wife's trousseau
- Patron Guildobaldo della Rovere of Urbino
- Painting became a standard for future reclining female nudes, cf. Ingres, *The Grand Odalisque* (Figure 20.3); Manet, *Olympia* (Figure 21.3)

MANNERIST PAINTING

Typical High Renaissance paintings have a perspective grid on a plaza that leads the eye to a central point (cf. *School of Athens*) (Figure 16.3). Mannerists chose to discard conventional theories of perspective by having the eye wander around a picture plane—as in **Pontormo**

(Figure 16.5)—or use perspective to create an interesting illusion. Although heavily indebted to High Renaissance forms, the Mannerist uses these as starting points to freely vary the ideals of the previous generation. It is the ability of the Mannerists to defy the conventional classical order and rationality that gives the style much of its appeal.

A new artistic subject, the **still life**, is born in the Mannerist period. Although understood as the lowest form of painting, it gradually becomes an accepted art form in seventeenth-century Holland. **Genre** paintings are introduced as scenes of everyday life become acceptable in finished works of art.

For many years scholars saw the demanding compositions of Mannerist paintings as crude reflections of High Renaissance art—the aftermath of a great period. But scholars have slowly come to realize that the unusual complexities and ambiguous spaces—the artifice—of Mannerist art is its most endearing quality. This is an intensely intellectual art form that is deliberately complex, seeking refinement in unusual compositions and contrived settings. The irrational spatial effects rely on an exaggeration of forms, obscure imagery, and symbolic enigmas whose consequence is puzzling, stimulating, and challenging. It is the calculated ambiguity of Mannerist painting that gives it its enduring value.

Jacopo da Pontormo, *Entombment of Christ*, 1525–1528, oil on wood, Santa Felicità, Florence (Figure 16.5)

- Center of the circular composition is a grouping of hands
- Elongation of bodies
- High-keyed colors, perhaps taking into account the darkness of the chapel it is placed in
- No ground line for many figures; what is Mary sitting on?
- Hands seem disembodied
- Some androgynous figures
- No weeping, just yearning
- Linear bodies twisting around one another
- Anti-classical composition
- The painting is called *Entombment of Christ*, although there is no tomb, just the carrying of Jesus' lifeless body
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Composition**
 - Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Figure 22.5)
 - Bichitr, *Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Sheikh to Kings* (Figure 23.9)
 - Neshat, *Rebellious Silence* (Figure 29.14)

MANNERIST ARCHITECTURE

Mannerist architecture invites us to question the use of classical vocabulary on a sixteenth-century building. Drawing on a wealth of antique elements, the Mannerist architect playfully engages the viewer in the reuse of these elements independent of their original function. These are commonly seen in works in which a bold interlocking of classical forms is arranged in a way to make us ponder the significance of ancient architecture in the Renaissance.



Figure 16.5: Jacopo da Pontormo, *Entombment of Christ*, 1525–1528, oil on wood, Santa Felicità, Florence



Figure 16.6a: Giacomo della Porta, Il Gesù façade, 1575–1584, brick and marble, Rome



Figure 16.6b: Giacomo da Vignola, Il Gesù nave, sixteenth century, Rome, Italy

Giacomo della Porta, Il Gesù façade, 1575–1584, brick and marble, Rome (Figure 16.6a); nave by Giacomo da Vignola, sixteenth century

- Principal church of the Jesuit order
- Column groupings emphasize central doorway
- Tympana and pediment over central door
- Slight crescendo of forms toward the center
- Two stories separated by cornice; united by scrolls
- Framing niche acts as a unifying device
- Interior has no aisles, meant for grand ceremonies

VOCABULARY

Arcadian: a simple rural and rustic setting used especially in Venetian paintings of the High Renaissance; named after Arcadia, a district in Greece to which poets and painters have attributed a rural simplicity and an idyllically untroubled world

Canvas: a heavy woven material used as the surface of a painting; first widely used in Venice (Figure 16.4)

Cassone: (plural: **cassoni**): a trunk intended for storage of clothing for a wife's trousseau (Figure 16.4)

Chiaroscuro: a gradual transition from light to dark in a painting. Forms are not determined by sharp outlines, but by the meeting of lighter and darker areas (Figure 16.1)

Cinquecento: the 1500s, or sixteenth century, in Italian art

Entombment: a painting or sculpture depicting Jesus Christ's burial after his crucifixion (Figure 16.5)

Flood Story: as told in Genesis 7 of the Bible, Noah and his family escape rising waters by building an ark and placing two of every animal aboard

Genre painting: painting in which scenes of everyday life are depicted

Glazes: thin transparent layers put over a painting to alter the color and build up a rich sonorous effect

Ignudi: nude corner figures on the Sistine Chapel ceiling (Figure 16.2c)

Last Supper: a meal shared by Jesus Christ with his apostles the night before his death by Crucifixion (Figure 16.1)

Sfumato: a smoke-light or hazy effect that distances the viewer from the subject of a painting (Figure 16.1)

Sibyl: a Greco-Roman prophetess whom Christians saw as prefiguring the coming of Jesus Christ (Figure 16.2b)

Still Life: a painting of a grouping of inanimate objects, such as flowers or fruit

SUMMARY

The Papal Court of Julius II commissioned some of the greatest works of Renaissance art to beautify the Vatican, including starting construction on the new Saint Peter's. Artists sought to rival the ancients with their accomplishments, often doing heroic feats like carving monumental sculptures from a single block of marble, or painting vast walls in fresco.

The Venetian School of painting was at its height during this period, realizing works that have a soft, sensuous surface texture layered with glazes. Sfumato and chiaroscuro are widely used to enhance this sensuous effect.

Mannerist artists broke the conventional representations of Italian Renaissance art by introducing intentionally distorted figures, acidic colors, and unusual compositions to create evocative and highly intellectual works of art that challenge the viewer's perceptions and ideals. Perspective was used as a tool to manipulate a composition into intriguing arrangements of spatial forms.

The questioning of artistic values extends to the types of paintings as well. Still lifes and genre paintings, long considered too low for sophisticated artists, make their first appearance.

Mannerist architects seek to combine conventional architectural elements in a refined and challenging interplay of forms. It is this ambiguity that gives Mannerism a fascination today.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Multiple-Choice

Questions 1–3 refer to the image below.



1. The literary source for this work is

- (A) The New Testament
- (B) *The Odyssey*
- (C) The Qur'an
- (D) *The Metamorphosis*

2. This type of painting is a departure from High Renaissance painting in that it

- (A) relies on symbolism to convey its meaning
- (B) has exaggerated and elongated figures
- (C) is painted with a quick and visible brushstroke
- (D) is meant for private viewing rather than public display

3. Paintings from this period are often seen as all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) satiric and filled with contemporary commentary
 - (B) coded in layers of meaning defying one simple explanation
 - (C) intentionally confusing in order to create a sense of imbalance
 - (D) highly intellectual and deliberately complex
-
4. The Venetian High Renaissance differs from the Florentine High Renaissance in its great emphasis on
- (A) foreshortening
 - (B) chiaroscuro
 - (C) warm and rich colors
 - (D) mythological scenes
5. Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper* provided a general inspiration for Raphael's *School of Athens*. This can be particularly seen in their use of
- (A) strict symmetry, which adds balance to the composition
 - (B) self-portraits in discreet locations
 - (C) linear perspective, which creates a unified architectural framework
 - (D) contemporary faces placed on people from the past

Short Essay

This work is the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, painted by Michelangelo from 1508–1512.



What is the subject of the ceiling painting?

Who was the patron for this painting?

Why was this subject chosen for the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel?

How does the painting reflect the ambitions of the patron?

Answer Key

1. **A** 2. **B** 3. **A** 4. **C** 5. **C**

ANSWERS EXPLAINED

Multiple-Choice

1. **(A)** This painting is Pontormo's *Entombment of Christ*, a scene taken from the New Testament.
2. **(B)** This painting is different from High Renaissance art in that it shows a Mannerist delight in "mannered" figure styles: exaggerated and elongated poses.
3. **(A)** Mannerist paintings are highly intellectual exercises that enjoy creating imbalances and layers of meaning. They are not satiric commentaries on the contemporary world.
4. **(C)** Venetian High Renaissance paintings, like those by Titian, are often painted in warm and rich colors.
5. **(C)** All of these characteristics are true of one or the other painting, but the only one that characterizes both works is the unified architectural setting based on linear perspective.

Short-Essay Rubric

Question	Points	Key Points in a Good Response
What is the subject of the ceiling painting?	1	The subject is the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis.
Who was the patron for this painting?	1	Pope Julius II
Why was this subject chosen for the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel?	1	The walls of the chapel were already painted with scenes from the life of Christ and the life of Moses. It was natural, then, to fill the ceiling with other Biblical narratives, the most dramatic involving the creation story.
How does the painting reflect the ambitions of the patron?	2	Answers could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Pope Julius II wanted to revive Rome; this was part of a grand scheme to fill the city with great projects.■ Julius II is named after Julius Caesar, reviving imperial visions.■ The Ceiling is a heroic, grand painting of huge dimensions, meant to glorify its patron.■ Acorns from the crest of Julius II are placed on the ceiling as a motif.

