

# The Legacy of Renaissance Art

# The European Renaissance (c. 1400-1600)

## Seeds of Change

With the rise of secular humanism and the importance of man there came a revival of Greek Classicism with its interest in ancient learning, celebration of the human body, and the resurgence of the arts.

Economic changes in trade (Venice) and banking (Florence) created a wealthy class who could both commission and buy art, which meant the church was no longer the only patron of the arts.

The arts flourished especially in Italy, and the Renaissance artists gave the world not only unsurpassed objects of sublime beauty but also ways of expression never before examined.



# Medieval Paint

Artists in the 14<sup>th</sup> century were using tempera, but because it dries quickly and cannot be mixed, modeling and shading are extremely difficult. However, painters such as Agnolo Gaddi (1350-1393) used layers of tempera to approximate color mixing in order to relieve the pictorial flatness of earlier art, as in his *St. Ursula* in the Santa Barbara Museum of Art collection.

Agnolo Gaddi, Italian (ca. 1350-1396)  
*St. Ursula*, c. 1388-1393  
Tempera on panel  
27¼ x 16¼ in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art



# Renaissance Oil Paint

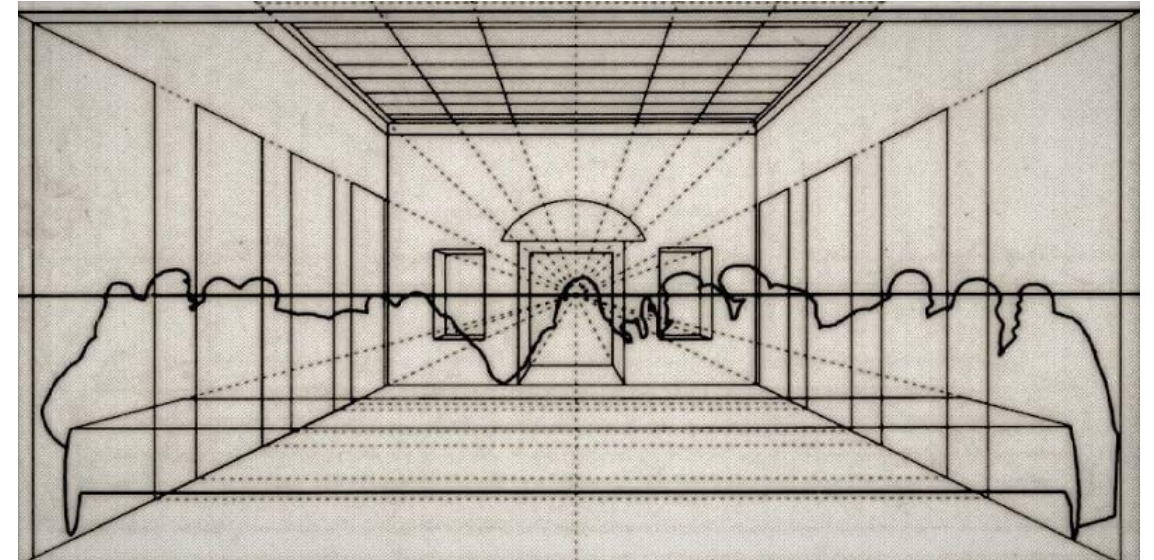
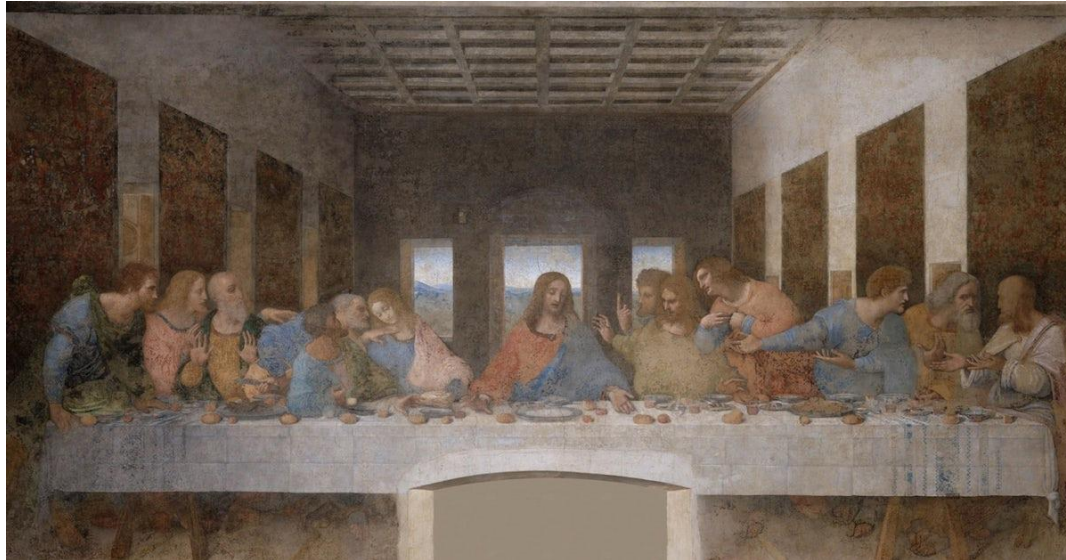
Picturing faces and bodies with paint became easier in the 15<sup>th</sup> century following developments in oil paints. With the versatility and accessibility of oil paint and the discovery of canvas as a support (popularized in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Venice), many new art techniques were developed by the Renaissance painters to enable them to reproduce their visions more accurately and expressively.

Raphael (1483-1520)  
*Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*, 1514-1515  
Oil on canvas  
32 x 26 in.  
Louvre Museum

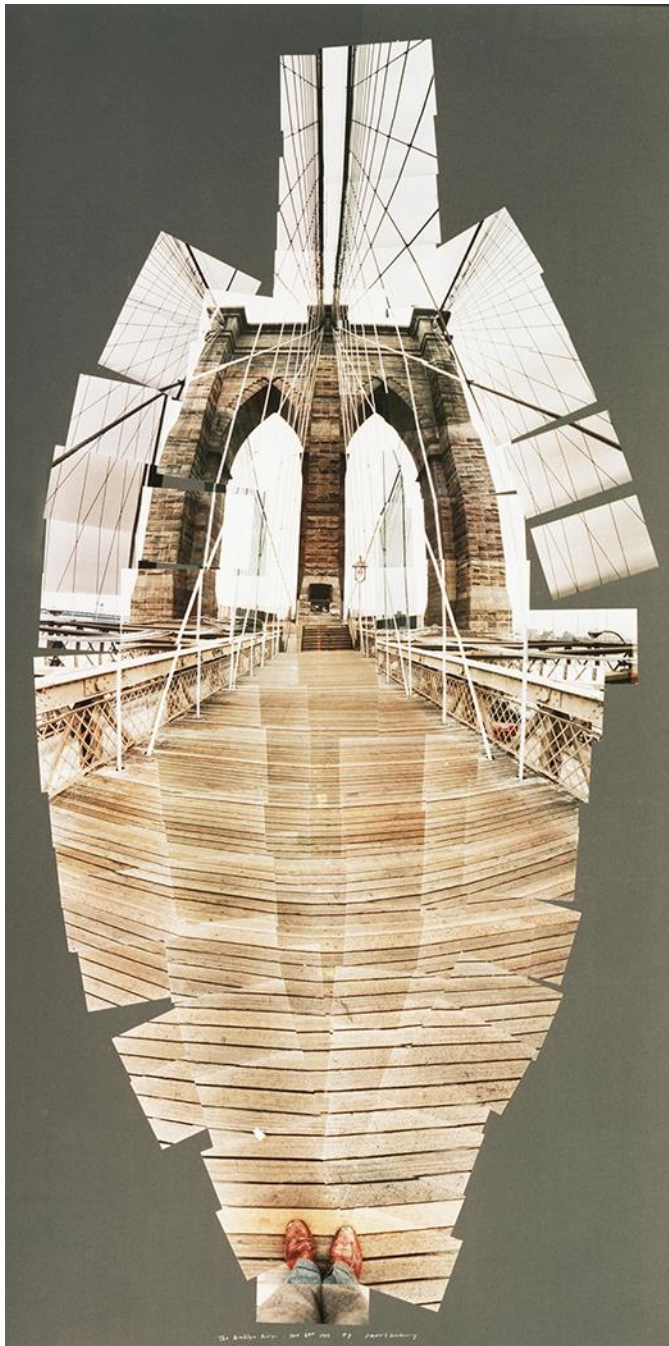


# Linear Perspective

Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72) published *On Painting* in 1435 and offered the first explanation of what we call linear perspective. The basic concept to change a two-dimensional perspective to a three-dimensional perspective is that converging lines meet at a single vanishing point, and all shapes get smaller in all dimensions with increasing distance from the eye.



Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). *The Last Supper*, c. 1495-1496. Tempera and gesso. 15'1" x 20'0". Santa Maria della Grazie, Milan



David Hockney (1938- )  
*Brooklyn Bridge: #7, 1983*  
Chromogenic print  
109 x 57-7/8 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art

## Linear Perspective

Linear perspective has appeared in all artistic periods since the Renaissance, as demonstrated by two contemporary works.



Anthony Hernandez (1947- )  
*Rome #17, 1999*  
Inkjet print  
36 x 36 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art

# Foreshortening

Foreshortening gives depth to an object or figure in the composition that is projecting towards the viewer. The right arm of the Child in Giovanni Bellini's *Virgin and Child* is an example of the artist establishing perspective within a very short span, the length of an arm.

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1435/38-1516)  
*Virgin and Child*, c. 1480-1485  
Tempera and oil on panel  
24½ x 18 in.  
Glasgow Museums



# Foreshortening



On a larger scale Andrea Mantegna's *Lamentation of Christ* is a superb example of the Renaissance artist's mastery of the technique.

Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506)  
*Lamentation of Christ*. c. 1475-1501  
Tempera on canvas  
2'3" x 2'8"  
Pinocoteca di Brera, Milan



# Foreshortening



George Wesley Bellows (1882-1925). *Steaming Streets*, 1908. Oil on canvas. 38 3/8 x 30 1/4 in. Santa Barbara Museum of Art

George Bellows similarly uses the Renaissance development in the active horse and the arm of the horseman in *Steaming Streets* (1908).

Wayne Thiebaud gives us a different, foreshortened perspective on an everyday stapler



Wayne Thiebaud (1920- ). *Desk Set*, 1971. Oil on canvas. 18 x 22 in. Santa Barbara Museum of Art

# Foreshortening

Other contemporary examples are not difficult to find.



James Montgomery Flagg (1877-1960). *I Want You*. 1917. Lithograph. 102.3 x 75.5 cm. ed. c. 500,000



Superman (1938- ). Movie poster (Christopher Reeve), c. 1978-1987, Warner Bros.



Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)  
*Mona Lisa*, 1503  
Oil on panel  
30 x 21 in.  
Louvre Museum

## Sfumato

*Sfumato* (Italian *fumo*, 'smoke') is a painting technique in which lines are intentionally blurred and given what is best described as a fuzzy appearance. It often is most notable on the contours of faces and hands.

Several Renaissance masters employed *sfumato*, especially Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Giorgione (c. 1477-1510). Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (1503-06) has facial features and hands which lack sharp details and evoke in the viewer that ethereal, enigmatic response which so often characterizes descriptions of the image.

# Sfumato

Leonardo described *sfumato* as a blending of colors "without lines or borders, in the manner of *smoke*."

In Giorgione's *Young Man with Arrow* note the blending of the cheeks with the hair and the treatment of the fingers next to the red cloth. The figure itself seems to blend with the dark background.

Giorgione (1478-1510)  
*Young Man with Arrow*, c. 1505  
Oil on wood  
35.3 × 48.1 × 2.5 in.  
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



# Sfumato

A more recent example is SBMA's *Woman in a White Slip* [*Femme à la Chemise Blanche*] by Auguste Renoir in which the painter adds softness and mystery to the woman's portrait by the use of *sfumato*.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919)  
*Women in a White Chemise (Femme a la Chemise Blanche)*, c. 1900  
oil on canvas  
16 1/8 x 13 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art

# Chiaroscuro



Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)  
*Virgin of the Rocks*, 1495-1508  
Oil on Panel.  
74.6 x 47.25 in.  
National Gallery, London

*Chiaroscuro* (Italian, 'light-dark') refers to manipulating lights and shadows to create intense, almost black areas of a painting in contrast with other very bright areas usually from a single light source. It was used to suggest the volume and modeling of the subjects depicted, as in Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* at the National Gallery, London, or to use contrast for the sake of drama, in many of Caravaggio's paintings.



Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio  
(1571-1610)  
*Judith Beheading Holofernes*, c. 1598-1599  
Oil on canvas  
57 x 77 in.  
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica at  
Palazzo Barberini, Rome

# Chiaroscuro

17<sup>th</sup>- century and 19<sup>th</sup>-  
century examples of the  
use of chiaroscuro for  
its dramatic effect.



Georges de la Tour (1593-1652)  
*The Magdalen with the Smoking Flame*, c. 1638–40  
Oil on canvas  
50 x 37 in.  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Jules Breton, 1827-1906  
*The Pardon*, 1872  
oil on canvas  
47 5/8 x 34 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art

# Chiaroscuro

20<sup>th</sup>-century portraits using chiaroscuro for its volume and modeling effect.



Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889–1946)  
*Self-Portrait*, 1915  
oil on canvas  
24 x 18 1/8 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art



William Merritt Chase (1849-1916)  
*Lydia Field Emmet*, 1900  
oil on canvas  
24 x 20"  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art



# Landscape



Andrea Bonaiuti, called Andrea da Firenze (1343-1379)  
*Path to Salvation*, ca. 1365-1367  
Fresco  
31.5 ft. wide  
Santa Maria Novella, Florence  
Chapter House (Spanish Chapel)



Limbourg Brothers (d. 1416?)  
*May*, from  
*Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, ca. 1415  
Ink on vellum  
12 x 8½ in.  
Musée Condé, Chantilly

Before the Renaissance landscape was generally used as a backdrop in front of which the figures were placed. Even in the Late Medieval/Early Renaissance periods the role of landscape was secondary to the figures.

# *Landscape*

Giorgione's *The Tempest* was germinal for the great landscapes which followed. He developed the landscape to play a major role in the painting by enveloping the figures in it. Landscape was no longer merely decorative.

While the meaning of the work has been debated for centuries, Giorgione has always been admired for his use of the landscape to create the lyrical and atmospheric power of the painting.

Giorgione (1478-1510)  
*The Tempest*, 1506-1508  
Oil on canvas  
32 x 28 in.  
Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice



# *Landscape*

And the landscape model set by Giorgione continues....

Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884)  
*The Ripened Wheat*, 1884  
Oil on canvas  
37 x 43 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art



# Competing Styles

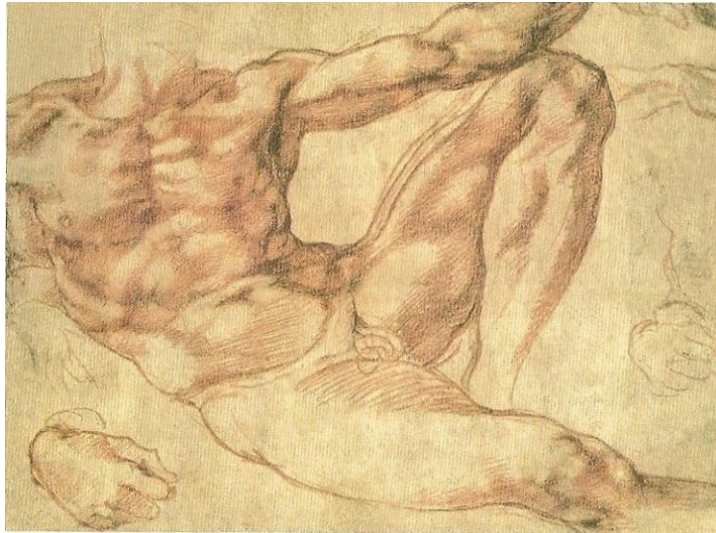
Throughout the Renaissance period a competition existed between Venice with its commanding naval strength and the trading wealth of its merchants and Florence with the political power and banking wealth, epitomized by the House of Medici. These two independent republics also shared competing painting styles—*disegno* (Italian, ‘drawing’ or ‘design’) favored by the Florentine artists and *colorito* (Italian, ‘color’) by the artists of Venice.

*Disegno* was originally associated with Florentine artists Botticelli, da Vinci, and Michelangelo, who used drawing as the basis for the composition of a work, a style resulting from years of copying models and developing an eye for detail.

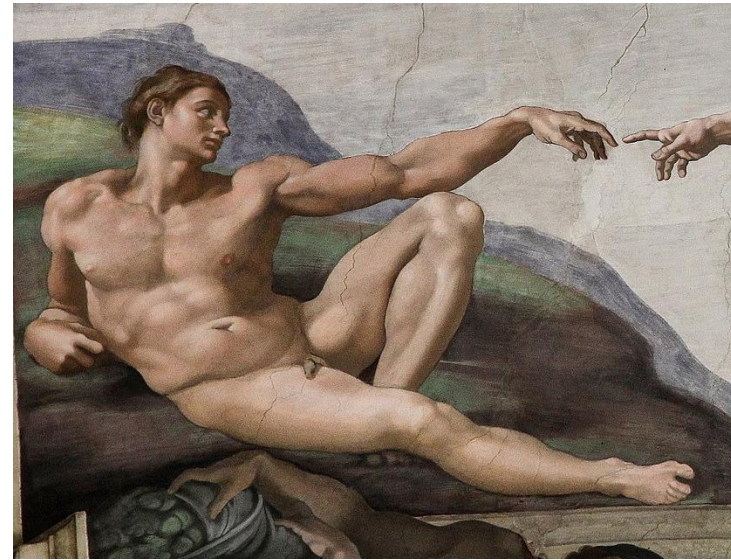
*Colorito* was adopted by the Venetian painters, including Giorgione and Titian, who composed their work by the direct application of color onto the canvas or panel without first drawing the design.

# *Disegno*

Michelangelo was an artist of exactitude, creating many drawings prior to executing a painting or sculpture. He called the use of oil paint “lazy” Venetian art and is quoted by Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors & Architects* (1550) as saying “it was a pity that in Venice men did not learn to draw well from the beginning”.



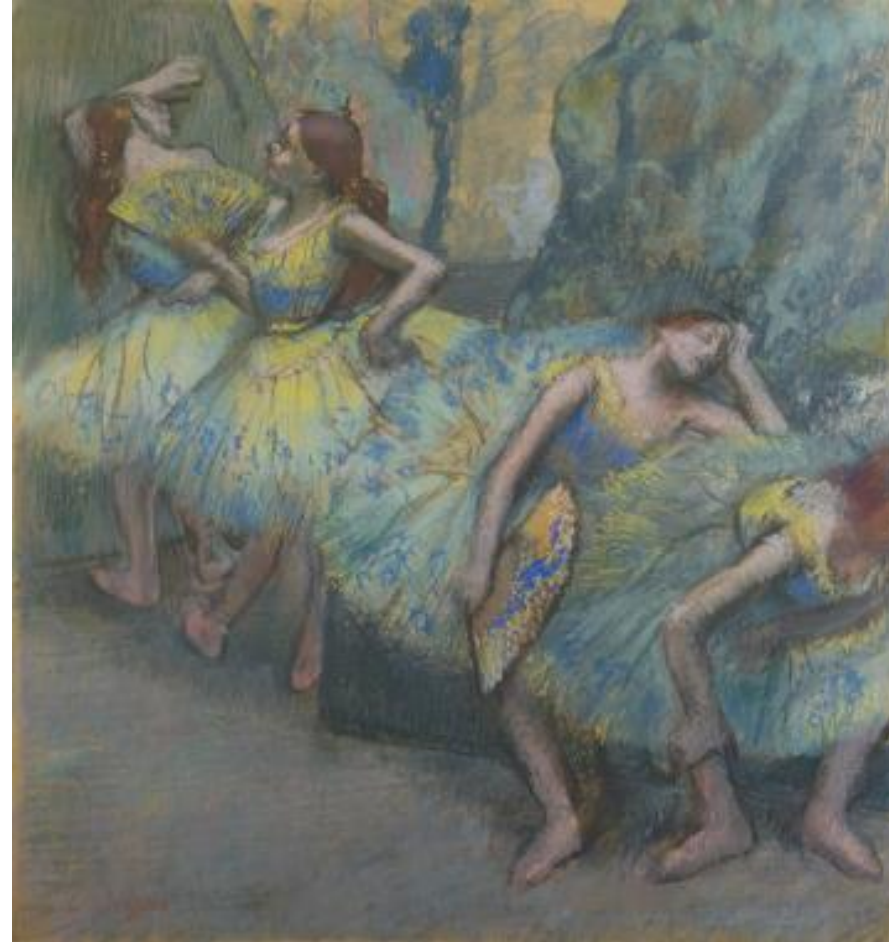
Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475-1564) *Study for Adam*, 1511. 193 x 259 mm. Red chalk on paper. British Museum



Michelangelo, *Creation of Adam*, c. 1510. Plaster, fresco. 9'2" x 18'8" Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

# Disegno

Edgar Degas, 1834-1917  
*Ballet Dancer Resting*, c. 1900-1905  
Charcoal on cardboard  
19 5/8 x 12 1/4 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art



Edgar Degas, 1834-1917  
*Ballet Dancers in the Wings*, c. 1890-1900  
Pastel on paper  
28 x 26 in.  
St. Louis Museum of Art

# *Colorito*

Titian learned drawing but studied with Giorgione and adopted his style. Vasari described Titian as “...holding it as certain that to paint with colors only, without the study of drawing on paper, was the true and best method of working, and the true design”. The result was an emphasis on creating a beautiful picture without concern for precise rendering and using color to create narrative and composition.

Tiziano Vecelli, called Titian (1490-1576)  
*Assumption of the Virgin*, 1516-1518  
Oil on panel  
22'8" x 11'10"

Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice



# Colorito

The flair of Berthe Morisot's *Portrait of Marthe Givaudon* or the sweep and spontaneity of Stuart Davis's brushwork display the same use of color as composition as Titian and his contemporaries.



Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895  
*Portrait of Marthe Givaudon*, 1892  
Oil stick and pastel on canvas  
25 5/8 x 21 1/4 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art



Stuart Davis, 1894-1964  
*Yellow Hills*, 1919  
Oil on canvas  
24 x 30 in.  
Santa Barbara Museum of art



# The Renaissance Legacy

Linear perspective, foreshadowing, *sfumato*, *chiaroscuro*, *disegno*, *colorato*, and so much more affirm the genius of the Renaissance artists.

The Renaissance debate over the merits of *disegno* or *colorito* were surely no more heated than those of the academics versus the impressionists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

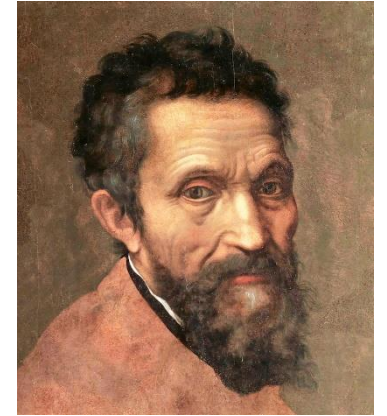
The winners of the debate are the artists who followed, for because of the inventiveness of both the Venetian and the Florentine painters, we better enjoy the variety and depths of art.



Leonardo da Vinci self-portrait



Titian self-portrait



Michelangelo by Jacopino del Conte



Georgione self-portrait



Bellini self-portrait



Raphael self-portrait