

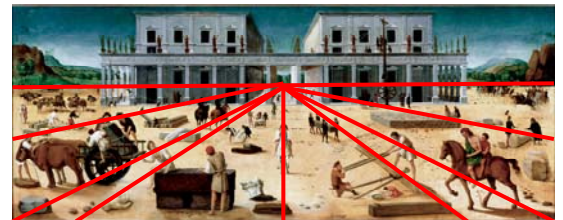
Gallery 4 – Art in Italy, 1350-1550

Main talking points – CHOOSE ONE OR TWO OF THE POINTS TO DISCUSS

- This gallery illustrates the evolution of painting between 1350s and 1550s, in particular the shift away from gold ground panel painting (del Biondo's *Virgin and Child* set in a "heavenly realm") to the naturalism of Renaissance art (Ferrari's *Holy Family* set in a recognizable landscape).
 - **Humanism** – A rediscovery and reinterpretation of classical (Greek and Roman) literature, history, and philosophy (ie: the 'humanities') as it related to exploration of the world and human social and moral values.
 - **Classicism** – The study of literary and artistic activities of antiquity, in particular the rediscovery of classical sculpture.
 - ie: Draw attention to the sculptural qualities of St. Sebastian and the Virgin and Child in Bernardino Luini's *Madonna of the Dragonfly*
 - ie: Point out the interest in classical architecture in Piero di Cosimo's *Building of a Palace*
 - **Individualism** – Along with the idea of humanism, there is a growing interest in the individual's importance within the world. Patronage is predominately religious with church men and wealthy laymen commissioning religious works of art. Wealthy patrons request recognizable portraits be included in religious commissions in an effort to advance their personal prestige and involve themselves directly in ecclesiastical events.
 - ie: Compare the stylized facial features of Giovanni del Biondo's *Virgin and Child* to more recognizably human faces of Gaudenzio Ferrari's *Holy Family*



- **Naturalism** – An approach to art in which objects are depicted by the artist as they are observed in the natural world.
 - **Linear Perspective** – The realistic depiction of three-dimensional space through an organized system of lines and planes. Perspective is based on the principle that objects closer to the viewer appear larger. Objects farther away from the viewer appear smaller.
 - ie: Piero di Cosimo's *Building of a Palace*
 - **Foreshortening** – The representation of an object receding into space.
 - ie: The figure on the white horse in the center of Piero di Cosimo's *Building of a Palace*



Text Panels – Gallery 4



Álvaro Pirez d'Évora

Portuguese, active 1411-1434 in Italy

The Angel of the Annunciation and The Virgin of the Annunciation, early 1420s

Tempera and gold on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 10 and SN 11

Heralding Christ's birth, the Archangel Gabriel appears to the Virgin. The figures' stylized poses and gestures, the textiles' decorative patterning, and the liberal use of bold colors and gold are longstanding conventions of early Italian painting. The figures' weightiness and their elegantly draped garments, however, demonstrate the artist's burgeoning modernity.

Observe, for example, the Archangel's robe falling in realistic yet gracefully curving folds over his solidly bended knee. These panels once crowned a large altarpiece, now dismembered and dispersed.

Giovanni del Biondo

Italian, active by 1356, died 1399, active in Florence

Virgin and Child with Saints Peter, Paul, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and Two Angels, c. 1385-90

Tempera and gold on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 6.a



In this opulent panel, the Virgin and the infant Christ commune with the saints in a *sacra conversazione*, or sacred conversation. Lavish quantities of gold, intricate punching and tooling used to articulate haloes and garments, and details like the saints' attributes create an overall effect of sumptuous complexity. These features celebrate the pictured holy figures, in whose honor the panel was painted. They also contribute to the impression of heaven as a distant, otherworldly, and unattainable realm, typical of paintings made in

fourteenth-century Italy. Indeed, the tender interaction between the Virgin and her Child is perhaps the only recognizably human element. This panel originally stood at the center of a larger altarpiece structure.

Bicci di Lorenzo

Italian, 1373-1452, active in Florence

Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata c. 1385-90

Tempera on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 6.b



In the early 1200s, Francis of Assisi founded a new monastic order which preached ideals of poverty and charity to the masses. Here, Francis is shown receiving the stigmata, perhaps the most important event in his legend. Francis was praying when an angel appeared, and he received wounds on his hands, feet, and side matching those Christ sustained at the Crucifixion. The artist followed a long artistic tradition of showing an angel shooting rays of light directly into the saint's body. The triangular, shelf-like console was designed to support a painted panel like the one now above it, although the present combination is not original.



Master of the Lathrop Tondo (Michelangelo di Pietro Mencherini)

Italian, active 1489-1521 in Florence and Lucca

Assumption of the Virgin with Saint Thomas,

c. 1500

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 19

According to Christian legend, the Virgin lowered her sash, or girdle, to Saint Thomas as she ascended to heaven. In the fifteenth century, Northern European paintings, which were renowned for their accuracy and charm in rendering landscape, facial features, and luxury goods like textiles, were prized by the Florentine elite. Here, the Virgin's brocaded dress, the saints' carefully individuated expressions and costumes, and the background vegetation demonstrate this Italian painter's interest in the naturalistic attention paid to detail by his Northern counterparts.

Bernardino Luini

Italian, c. 1480-c. 1532, active in Lombardy

The Madonna of the Dragonfly (Virgin and Child with Saints Sebastian and Roche),

c. 1520-22

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 37



In contrast with the grand thrones shown in other paintings in this gallery, here the majestic Virgin and Child are seated on a large rock. Their monumentality, white marble-like flesh, and the physique and pose of the semi-nude Saint Sebastian recall ancient statuary — an important hallmark of Renaissance painting. Saints Sebastian (left) and Roche (right) were usually invoked against the plague, suggesting that this altarpiece may have been painted and venerated during an outbreak of the disease. The dragonfly in the foreground has been interpreted in a number of ways, as perhaps representing Satan, evil in general, or the Orient, the plague's alleged place of origin.



Francesco Granacci

Italian, 1469-1543, active in Florence

The Assumption of the Virgin, c. 1515

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 24

According to Christian legend, the Virgin gave her belt, or girdle, to Saint Thomas upon her Assumption. Said to be housed in a chapel in the city of Prato, this holy relic was particularly popular in nearby Florence. This painting was commissioned for the family chapel of the Medici, the city's most powerful and prosperous clan, in the church of San Piero Maggiore, Florence. The work was extravagantly praised by the sixteenth-century critic Giorgio Vasari. He wrote that the figures of Saint Thomas and the Virgin were so full of grace that they were worthy of Michelangelo. Indeed, the poses of these figures recall the powerful, three-dimensional forms of Michelangelo's paintings.

Piero di Cosimo

Italian, 1462-1521, active in Florence

The Building of a Palace, c. 1515-20

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 22



An impressive, idealized edifice rises up out of an undeveloped landscape. Every aspect of the building process is detailed in the foreground, proceeding from left to right. Materials are brought to the building site using carts and animals; workmen cut and shape the materials under the supervision of masons and architects; and the materials are then used in the building's construction. The pictured palace cannot be connected to any real building project in Renaissance Florence. Yet, the image illustrates the Renaissance revival of classical styles in buildings, particularly the grand palaces of families like the Medici in prosperous cities like Florence.



Domenico Puligo

Italian, 1492-1527, active in Florence and Genoa

The Virgin and Child in Majesty with Saints Quentin and Placidus, c.

1521-22

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 28

Domenico Puligo was a follower of Raphael, known for his sweet-faced figures and exquisite sense of color. Here, the highly balanced, classical composition is enlivened by the figures' elegant poses and the brilliant, jewel-like intensity of the colors used. On the left, Saint Quentin (d. 287) holds the spits with which he was impaled at his martyrdom. On the right, Saint Placidus, a companion of Saint Benedict in the sixth century, wears the costume of a Benedictine monk.



Giovanni Antonio Amadeo and Workshop

Italian, 1447-1522, active in Lombardy

Cleric with Book (Saint Lawrence?) and Kneeling Cleric with Mitre

(*Saint Benedict?*), c. 1480

Marble

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 5358 and SN 5359

These *Clerics*, both beautifully carved, were once joined to a *Virgin and Child* now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Distinctive is their angular, energized drapery, sometimes described as "cartaceous" for its resemblance to crumpled paper. They may have originally been carved for the *Arc of the Persian Martyrs*, a sculptural complex in the church of San Lorenzo in Cremona made to house relics (parts of saint's bodies or objects with which they had contact).



Italian

16th century

Cassone, c. 1500

Wood

Gift of Barbara Lemonopoulos, 2000, TR 2000.2611



Benedetto da Maiano

Italian, 1442-1497, active in Florence, Rome, and Naples

Portrait Bust of Giovanni Giovano Pontano,

c. 1490

Stucco

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 5357

Benedetto da Maiano executed this stucco portrait bust of Giovanni Giovano Pontano in the late fifteenth century. Pontano was the private secretary of

Ferdinand I, King of Naples, a distinguished humanist and a central figure in the Neapolitan Academy. At the time this bust was made, Pontano was probably serving as the Neapolitan ambassador to Florence. Dressed in a Roman toga, his features grave and sober, Pontano is shown in the antique Roman Republican style favored in the Renaissance for the portrayal of important men.

Gaudenzio Ferrari

Italian, 1475/80-1546, active in and around Milan

The Holy Family with a Donor, c. 1520-25

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 41

Gaudenzio Ferrari was the principal painter in sixteenth-century Milan. He exhibited great talent for conveying emotion, reflecting Leonardo da Vinci's precept that gesture and expression reflect the soul.

Here, the dignified Mary gazes with infinite tenderness upon her Child.

Joseph, kneeling and touching his hat in a gesture of astonishment, seems to

have just become aware of his Son's holiness. The angels below reverentially coddle and adore Christ, while those above proclaim his divinity. The solemn figure on the left was probably the patron, who commissioned the artist to paint him as a cleric in perpetual prayer. Together, the figures engagingly portray a range of relationships and reactions to the divine Child.

