



Liceo scientifico
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• SAN VITO AL TAGLIAMENTO / PN

LE FILANDIERE

A short visit to the National Gallery
London
(from the Early Renaissance to the
Masters of the 16th Century)

Viaggio d'istruzione a Londra
a.s. 2016-2017
classi 4C e 4D





Madonna and Child enthroned
(later part of the 13th century)

Margaritone d'Arezzo

Room 51

Margaritone d'Arezzo was the first artist from Arezzo whose name we know and whose work survives. He was active during the middle decades of the 13th century. Margaritone's given name was Margarito, but it was transcribed erroneously by Vasari as "Margaritone". It is by this latter form that he is usually known today.

This is one of the earliest pictures in the National Gallery, dating from the later part of the 13th century. We can see the Virgin Mary seated on a throne decorated with lions' heads, and Christ enthroned in the lap of Mary.

They're both within an oval shape, called a 'Mandorla', which represents the heavenly realm, and which also contains a couple of angels swinging incense burners. Mary is wearing a crown typical of Byzantine art and, if you look at the Christ figure, although he's the size of a baby he's painted as a much older child, almost as a little man, and he is wearing scholars' robes and holds a scroll in his left hand. Again, these are ways of representing philosophers and men of wisdom in Byzantine and medieval Greek traditions. There's also a hint of a change from the perspective-less art of the Byzantine and that's with Mary's feet. They 'rest' on a frame and project into our space – a small sign of the way in which the visual language of painting will develop.

The Virgin and Child here are strictly frontal, remote, and hieratic. It is painted with egg tempera on wood. They are depicted using a limited range of colors and outlined by heavy contour lines. Around it are the symbols of the four evangelists – Matthew the angel, John the eagle, Mark the lion and Luke the bull. We then have eight panels in the earthly realm that contain scenes from the lives of various saints.

The eight background scenes show,

- in the top left, the nativity,
- next to it John the Evangelist being rescued by an angel from a vat of boiling oil.
- bottom left is St Catherine being beheaded and her body then carried by angels to Mount Sinai,
- then St Nicholas warning pilgrims that the devil has given them deadly oil
- on the right hand side, first of all there is St John again, raising Drusiana from the dead,
- in the top right corner, St Benedict fights the temptations of the flesh by rolling in thorn bushes .
- below that on the left is St Nicholas again, this time rescuing three young men from execution.
- in the bottom right hand corner we have St Margaret in prison, shown by the diagonal lines across the image, where she is eaten by a dragon, but emerges whole and alive from its belly

Each scene has a Latin caption above it, and Margarito has signed his name in Latin beneath the Virgin's feet. This is the earliest signed picture in the gallery, and we might see this as a move from paintings being done by anonymous craftsmen, to named artists.

The image and the composition look strange to those of us used to Western art, because they are heavily influenced by the Byzantine tradition . There's a lot of gold and the pictures lack perspective. Although there's a bit of depth created by the use of shadow and the folds of Mary's gown, on the whole these are 'flat' images.

Camilla Trevisan, Nicole Susana (4D)



A Pope (Saint Gregory?) and Saint Matthias
(about 1428-9)
Masolino da Panicale
Room 53

This painting is part of the group: Santa Maria Maggiore Altarpiece (Rome).

This picture and 'Saints Jerome and John the Baptist' are two sides of a single panel that was divided in two.

The panel had been part of a double-sided triptych in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.

The other side panel of the triptych, also sawn in half, showed Saints Peter and Paul on one side and Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Martin on the other.

One central panel was of the Assumption of the Virgin while the other showed the Miracle of the Snow, and the founding of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Masolino probably completed the altarpiece after Masaccio's death in Rome in 1428

Medium and support: Tempera grassa and oil on poplar, transferred to fibreboard

Nicolò Angeli, Alex Rizzetto (4C)



The Virgin and the Child

1426

Masaccio

Room 53

This is the central panel of a 19 pieces altarpiece commissioned by a Pisan notary, Ser Giuliano degli Scarsi, for the chapel of Saint Julian in Santa Maria del Carmine in Pisa. The altarpiece was part of a polyptych. Masaccio created "The Virgin and Child" in 1426 with egg tempera on wood.

In many ways the style of the painting is traditional; the expensive gold background and ultramarine draperies of the Virgin, her enlarged scale and her hierarchical presentation all fit within the late-medieval formulas for the representation of Mary and Jesus in glory. In other ways, however, the painting is a step away from International Gothic in the sense that Masaccio has created a more realistic approach to the subject: faces are more realistic.

The painting contains six figures: the Madonna and Child and four angels. The Madonna is the centre figure and is larger than any of the others to signify her importance. Mary's drapery has larger and more naturalistic folds that shape her body.

The Virgin looks sorrowfully at her child, as she also realises his fate, and she sits on a massive throne incorporating the three orders of columns of Roman architecture. The wavy pattern at the base is copied from Roman sarcophagi. Mary is dressed in a royal blue robe which, although faded with age, still captures the viewer's attention immediately.

The Child himself, naked and plump like a sculpted Roman putto, wears an elliptical halo on his head, which emphasises the three-dimensionalism of the Christ. The baby Jesus, who is less of a small man and more childlike, sits on his mother's lap and he is eating grapes offered to him by her. The grapes are a symbol of the blood shed on the cross, like the red wine of Last Supper, which indicates Christ's awareness of his eventual death.

The larger figures of the Virgin and Child present their far high status. This scale is emphasised by the composition of the painting, with the Virgin and Child raised above us on a throne, making us look up at them reverentially, something that would have been further highlighted by its being mounted in the altarpiece.

The author has used linear perspective and the vanishing point is at the child's foot. Another attempt at creating depth has been attempted by Masaccio's placement of the two background angels.

There are four young angels at the Virgin's feet. Two play music for her while the other two, at the sides of the throne, gaze at her in admiration with folded hands in prayer.

The lutes of the two angels at the Virgin's feet are demonstrations of the joint effect of foreshortening and directional illumination. His study of perspective was allied to an equally profound analysis of light. The peg box of the instrument on the right faces inwards, the other is turned towards us.

The strong light shining from the upper left helps define rounded and flat surfaces and right angles, and the shadows and penumbras cast by the angels' hands look so natural that we almost take them for granted. It is clearly visible as the light source is coming from the left of the painting.

The painting is in a very damaged state: the silver-leaf backing of the Virgin's red robe has tarnished, the red itself has darkened, and the paint surface is abraded and disfigured, revealing the green of the Virgin's face. Unfortunately, the painting's original frame was ruined when it was cut down at the base.



Saints Jerome and John the Baptist

1428/1429

Masaccio

Room 53

This picture and 'Pope Gregory the Great and Matthias' are two sides of a single panel that was divided in two. The panel had been one part of a double-sided triptych in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. The other side panel of the triptych, also sawn in half, showed Saints Peter and Paul on one side and John the Evangelist and Saint Martin on the other. One central panel was of the Assumption of the Virgin while the other showed the Miracle of the snow, and the founding of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Saints John's cross is unusual in that it is attached to a column. This may be a reference to the Colonna arms. Pope Martin V, who died in 1431, was a member of the Colonna family and he may be involved in the commission of this work.

Masolino probably completed the altarpiece after Masaccio's death in Rome in 1428.

Rebecca Iannelli, Alice Frighetto (4D)



The Baptism of Christ
1440-1460
Piero della Francesca

Room 54

Piero della Francesca was renowned in his times as an authority on perspective and geometry. He was born in Arezzo on 1415 and died on October 1492. His paintings were characterized by serene humanism, use of geometric forms and perspective.

The Baptism of Christ was finished around 1448–50.

Once, the altarpiece was in the chapel of Saint John the Baptist in the Camaldolese abbey (now cathedral) of Piero's native town, Borgo Sansepolcro. The town visible in the distance to the left of Christ, may be meant for Borgo Sansepolcro: the landscape certainly evokes the local area. The dove symbolises the Holy Spirit. It is foreshortened to form a shape like the clouds. God the Father, the third member of the Trinity, may originally have been represented in a roundel above this panel..... The painting illustrates Christ being baptized by John, and three angels are standing to the left of the tree, with hands held, symbolizing the unification of the Eastern and Western Church

Lorenzo Ceccon, Nicola Pizzolato (4D)



Saint George and the dragon

1470

Paolo Uccello

room 54

“Saint George and the dragon” is an oil on canvas of 55.6 x 74.2 cm painted by Paolo Uccello (1397-1475) in 1470.

This picture shows two episodes from the story of Saint George: his defeat of a plague-bearing dragon that had been terrorising a city; and the rescued princess bringing the dragon to heel (with her belt as a leash).

In the sky, a storm is gathering. The eye of the storm lines up with Saint George’s lance, suggesting that divine intervention has helped him to victory.

Uccello uses the lance to emphasise the angle from which Saint George attacks the dragon, helping to establish a three-dimensional space. The strange patches of grass illustrate Uccello’s obsessive concern with linear perspective and his tendency to create decorative pattern.

The story is from a popular collection of Saints’ lives written in the 13th century, called ‘The Golden Legend’.

An earlier less dramatic version of the same subject by Uccello is in the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris.

Tommaso Filippuzzi, Davide Trevisan (4C)



The Nativity

1470-75

Piero della Francesca

Room 54

This scene shows Mary kneeling in adoration before a newly-born Christ who is laid on her cloak. Five angels sing welcoming his birth - two of them play lutes. Beside them a donkey appears to bray, while an Ox peers down solemnly at Christ.

Two shepherds are present (their faces have lost detail, possibly through over-zealous cleaning by previous owners). One of the shepherds points heavenwards, clutching his staff like a sceptre. Joseph is shown in deep contemplation, with his leg crossed over his knee.

Each person, angel and animal shows a different attitude of reverence towards the infant Christ. Even the magpie, well-known in Piero's native Tuscany for its constant chatter, seems changed and looks to be struck silent.

Piero has added other touches from his native region - Bethlehem itself has a distinctly Tuscan feel. The flat land on top of the hill where they stand evokes Tuscany, as does the winding valley to the left. Meanwhile the skyline on the right, dominated by the basilica, could almost be the outskirts of Piero's home town Borgo Sansepolcro.

The influences here come from further a field than Tuscany. The painting shows the impact of Northern European painting. Piero painted with tempera early in his career, but for later works like this one, he began working in oil. Along with the use of brown under-painting for the figures, this shows a familiarity with Netherlandish and Flemish work. This is reinforced by the slim figure of Christ, who lacks the square muscularity of contemporary depictions from Italy, and is more reminiscent of paintings by artists like Hugo van der Goes.

Piero has also experimented with perspective. It is the only one of his works that shows a building askew from the rest of the composition: this is the simple shed, which reminds the viewer of Christ's humble beginnings.

It is possible that this panel was never completed. It has certainly been damaged, possibly by the work of a 19th-century restorer. Nevertheless, the painting holds more than enough detail to give a sense of a complete composition, one which is likely to have been among the last the artist created.

Irene Copat, Irene Ventoruzzo, Valentina Maranzan (4C)



The Battle of San Romano

1435-1460

Paolo Uccello

Room 54

The Battle of San Romano is a set of three paintings by the Florentine painter Paolo Uccello depicting events that took place at the Battle of San Romano between Florentine and Siennese forces in 1432. The paintings are in egg tempera on wooden panels, each over 3 metres long. The panels were commissioned by a member of the Bartolini Salimbeni family in Florence between 1435 and 1460. The paintings were much admired in the 15th century; Lorenzo de' Medici so coveted them that he purchased one and had the remaining two forcibly removed to the Palazzo Medici. They are now divided between three collections, the National Gallery, the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, and the Musée du Louvre, Paris. The sequence most widely agreed among art historians is: London, Uffizi, Louvre, although others have been proposed. They may represent different times of day: dawn (London), mid-day (Florence) and dusk (Paris) – the battle lasted eight hours. In the London painting, Niccolò da Tolentino, with his large gold and red patterned hat, is seen leading the Florentine cavalry. He had a reputation for recklessness, and doesn't even wear a helmet, though he sent two messengers (the departure of the two messengers, depicted centre, top) to tell his allied army of Attendolo to hurry to his aid as he is facing a superior force. In the foreground, broken lances and a dead soldier are carefully aligned into orthogonals, so as to create an impression of perspective. Similar to that of a tapestry, the landscape rises up in a picture plane as opposed to receding deeply into space. This illusion of a backdrop and a perspective themereseembling a stage, depicts the war as a theatrical ceremony. The three paintings were designed to be hung high on three different walls of a room, and the perspective designed with that height in mind, which accounts for many apparent anomalies in the perspective when seen in photos or at normal gallery height. Many areas of the paintings were covered with gold and silver leaf. While the gold leaf, such as that found on the decorations of the bridles, has remained bright, the silver leaf, found particularly on the armour of the soldiers, has oxidized to a dull grey or black. The original impression of the burnished silver would have been dazzling. All of the paintings, especially that in the Louvre, have suffered from time and early restoration, and many areas have lost their modelling.

Caterina Claut, Valentina Pitton (4D)



The Arnolfini Portrait

1434

Jan van Eyck

Room 56

The Arnolfini Portrait is a 1434 oil painting on oak panel by the Netherlandish painter Jan van Eyck. It is the oldest very famous panel painting to have been executed in oils rather than in tempera. The painting was bought by the National Gallery in London in 1842.

It depicts the Italian merchant Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini and his wife, presumably in their home in Bruges. It is not intended as a record of their wedding. His wife is not pregnant, as is often thought, but holding up her full-skirted dress in the contemporary fashion.

It is considered one of the most original and complex paintings in Western art, because of its beauty, complexity, geometric perspective, and expansion of the picture space with the use of a mirror. For the first time in history the artist became the perfect eye-witness in the truest sense of the term. In fact, it seems that the author stands between us and the painting.

Van Eyck created a painting with an intensity of both tone and colour. The glowing colours also help to highlight the realism. He also rendered the effects of both direct and diffuse light by showing the light from the window on the left reflected by various surfaces. It has been suggested that he used a magnifying glass in order to paint the minute details such as the individual highlights on each of the amber beads hanging beside the mirror.

The ornate Latin signature above the mirror translates as: "Jan van Eyck was here. 1434".

The wooden frame holding the mirror is decorated with glass panels depicting scenes from the Passion of Christ and could represent a promise of salvation to the couple.

A single candle in the chandelier could stand for the unity of the couple and at the same time could be symbolic of the all-seeing eye of God.

Oranges could be signaling the couples' affluence, as they were expensive at that time and region, but they are also universally recognized as symbols of fertility.

The bed was not used for sleeping but it was an ornament.

The sandals were a luxury and, like their clothes, were symbol of their wealth.

The small dog may simply be a pet, but it serves also as a symbol of fidelity, and its rare breed suggests wealth.

The mirror reflects two figures in the doorway. One may be the painter himself. Arnolfini raises his right hand as he faces them, perhaps as a greeting.



The adoration of the Kings

1470-1475

Sandro Botticelli

Room 57

Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510) painted this picture between 1470 and 1475. He chose to give the title of “the adoration of the kings” because it represents the visit of the Kings to the newborn Jesus. The painting is realized with tempera on poplar and the length of its diameter is 130.8 centimeters. The story of the Three Kings (or Magi) had great success in 15th-century Florence, in fact the painting was commissioned by the Pucci family, who came from Florence.

Botticelli chose the shape of the tondo to attract our attention in the centre of the painting, where there is the Child Jesus in the arms of the Virgin. Botticelli is among the first artists to centralise the subject of the Adoration.

The challenge of the tondo is to create a coherent composition in a circular space.

It celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany with spectacular processions about the city. The monumental building resembles a ruined Roman basilica, a building employed for the larger early Christian churches. A large central nave extends deep into the picture and its arches are supported by a series of tall rectangular piers. In the left side, some arches is all that remains of what may have been the arm of a transept, now reduced to a fragment. Upon closer inspection, a series of drawn arches under the paint surface can be seen to the right of the nave, mirroring those on the left. This reveals that Botticelli originally conceived his building with an entire transept but later decided to extend it just to one side, almost certainly in order to allow him to include a view of Jerusalem in the background. The piers create an enclosure around Mary, whose position renders her like an altar. The capitals are described with particular precision. There is also a tiled roof wedged into the nave and three walls of hefty stone blocks.

The ruinous state of this building and the wooden roof perched in the nave have a specific symbolic message, which alludes to the idea that with Christ's birth the Christian church rose out of the ruins of the old pagan religion. Above Mary, for example, a keystone slips precariously from an arch, looking as if it and the arch may crumble at any moment. With this particular element, Botticelli wanted to give us the sense of the effects of time's passage and the sense that time is still passing.

ΕΝ ΤΗΝ ΗΡΑΝΕΝ ΤΟ ΓΕΛΕΙΟΥ ΧΕΥΣΕΤΟΣ ΕΝ ΤΑΙΣ ΠΑΙ... ΤΗΣ ΤΑΥΤΑΣ ΑΛΛΑΝΑΡΩΣ ΕΙΘΕΝΤΕ ΟΜΕΤΑ ΧΑΡΟΝ ΟΝ ΗΜΙΚΡΟΣΟΦΗΤΑ ΟΝΤΑ ΔΑΙ...
ΑΤ ΝΤΧ ΑΠΕΡΟΝ ΝΝΥΟΝ ΙΟΛΑΡΚΑ ΑΥ ΕΟΞΕ ΟΥΑΙΕΝΤΗ ΑΥ ΣΕΠΟΝΙ ΑΗΜΙΥΕΤΟΝ ΤΣ ΔΙΑΡΩΝ ΕΡΗΤΑ ΑΕΝΜΑ ΟΗΣΙΤΑ ΕΝ ΤΟ ΗΣ ΚΑΙ
ΒΑΡΥΜΕΝΕΣ ΝΟΝ ΟΜΝΟΝ ΤΗ ΠΡΗΤΥ ΤΗ



The Mystic Nativity

1501

Sandro Botticelli

Room 57

The 'Mystic Nativity' shows angels and men celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. The Virgin Mary kneels in adoration before her infant son, watched by the ox and the ass at the manger. Mary's husband, Joseph, sleeps nearby. Shepherds and wise men have come to visit the new-born king. Angels in the heavens dance and sing hymns of praise. On earth they proclaim peace, joyfully embracing virtuous men while seven demons flee defeated to the underworld. Botticelli's picture has long been called the 'Mystic Nativity' because of its mysterious symbolism. It combines Christ's birth as told in the New Testament with a vision of his Second Coming as promised in the Book of Revelation. The Second Coming - Christ's return to earth - would herald the end of the world and the reconciliation of devout Christians with God.

The picture was painted a millennium and a half after the birth of Christ, when religious and political upheavals prompted prophetic warnings about the end of the world.

'The Mystic Nativity' was probably painted as a private devotional work for a Florentine patron.

Meanings :

Even in his early work what distinguishes Botticelli from the other artists of his generation is his spiritual tautness. While his colleagues were concerned with rendering the movement of the body, he always stressed several aspects of the human soul. The painter shared Savonarola's idea of puritanism, so he did not represent the physical beauty in a profane way. He accepted Savonarola's denunciation of realism, and drawn his Virgin and Child on a different scale from the subordinate figures, as a Byzantine painter would have done. He has made no attempt to create an illusion of depth, and has set the thatched penthouse in the centre of his scene, frontally to the spectator. The foreground figures have this same archaic flatness, as if to represent them in the round would be to introduce too strong a flavour of mortality.

Meghi Gregoris, Genny Morello, Francesca Trevisan (4C)



Venus and Mars

1483

Sandro Botticelli

Room 58

Mars and Venus is a c. 1483 painting by the Italian Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli. Mars, God of War, was one of the lovers of Venus, Goddess of Love. Here Mars is asleep and unarmed, while Venus is awake and alert. The meaning of the picture is that love conquers war, or love conquers all. The youthful and voluptuous couple recline in a forest setting, surrounded by playful satyrs. The painting is typically held as an ideal of sensuous love, of pleasure and play. In the painting Venus watches Mars asleep while two infant satyrs play, carrying his helmet and lance as another rests inside his breastplate under his arm. A lost Classical painting of the marriage of Alexander and Roxana was described by the 2nd-century Greek writer, Lucian. It showed cupids playing with Alexander's spear and armour. Botticelli's satyrs may refer to this. A fourth blows a small conch shell in his ear in an effort to wake him. The scene is set in a haunted forest, and the sense of perspective and horizon extremely tight and compact. The sea from which Venus emerged can be seen in the distant background. In the foreground, a swarm of wasps hovers around Mars' head, possibly as a symbol that love is often accompanied by pain.

This work was probably a piece of bedroom furniture, perhaps a bedhead or piece of wainscoting, most probably the 'spalliera' or backboard from a chest or day bed. The wasps ('vespe' in Italian) at the top right suggest a link with the Vespucci family, though they may be no more than a symbol of the stings of love.

Alessandra de Bosichi, Lauryn Moro (4C)



Portrait of a Young Man

1475-76

Sandro Botticelli

Room 58

The idea of the portrait was revolutionary when this was painted. Botticelli was one of the first Italian painters to depict anyone face-on: earlier portraits such as Pisanello's Leonello d'Este were in profile. Perhaps this isn't even a portrait so much as a delineation of the ideal. In Renaissance Florence the male form was celebrated as heroic and noble.

This portrait of a young man stands out sharply against a black background. His brown tunic matches his eyes and he wears a red hat known as a 'beretta'. You can tell he's a city dweller; he doesn't wear courtly clothes, just something simple. He's proud of his good looks, that flowing hair. His brown eyes fix us, giving nothing away, yet challenging us to understand. He's slightly less than life-size, a strange effect.

Amantia Priska, Lisa Campanerut, Hayk Nersisyan (4C)



St. Catherine of Alexandria

1507

Raffaello

Room 60

Raphael's depiction of the St. Catherine highlight characteristics of the High Renaissance which include a more naturalistic, anatomically accurate portrayal of the human form, weighty figures, definite light sources and emphasizing chiaroscuro, landscape background, and an increase in attention to personality and psychic state.

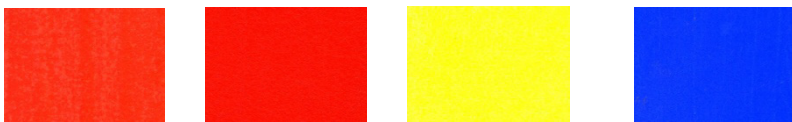
St. Catherine is believed to have been modeled after the figures of Leonardo Di Vinci which attest to Raphael's decision to position her body and depict her hands in the manner he did. The way in which the drapery falls around her body and the exaggerated contropasto give weight to St. Catherine's body.

Raphael paints the sun in the top corner of the painting and the rays of the sunlight penetrate the clouds and shine along her face and even seem to outline it almost creating a halo. The shadowing of Catherine's left hand and the side of her face (the chiaroscuro) that is away from the sun also help define this work as one of the High Renaissance. Raphael's use of a landscape background also helps make this distinction because this stylistic decision was a common one that accents the "Neo-Platonism"/humanist thought.

Lastly, the way in which St. Catherine looks towards the beaming light in ecstasy and leans on her wheel of martyrdom accentuates her psychic state. This piece is distinctive because it was painted in a transitional phase of Raphael shortly after his arrival in Florence. The fact that he depicts religious passion is evidence of his influence by Perugino while the contrapposto and bodily representation is influenced by Leonardo Di Vinci and is even believed to echo Di Vinci's painting Lena and the Swan. This portrait is very similar to Raphael's later works, Galatea & Baldassare Castiglione. Elements of the weighty figures, use of light, and the look toward the sky in joy are evident in the former while the emphasis on the psychic state and one's personality are evident in the latter.



Carmine Umber Brown ochre Lead white Red ochre Yellow ochre Azurite



Vermilion Madder lake Lead-tin yellow Ultramarine natural

Sara Del Rizzo, Valentina Fiorentin, Maria Diana Mangiaracina (4C)



Madonna of the Meadow

1500

Giovanni Bellini

Room 61

The painting presents a medieval iconography of the Virgin of humility seated before a full and shining rural panorama, with both the devotional aspect and the landscape aspect given equal prominence. Full of small details of everyday life, this landscape contributes to the intimate and familiar tone of the two figures. The vulture in the tree also possibly symbolizes death. 'The Madonna of the Meadow' shows Jesus sleeping in the Virgin's lap. It is a natural pose yet anticipates the Pietà, in which his dead body is laid across his mother's lap.

The landscape shows the farmland and fortified hills of the mainland provinces of Venice. To the left of the Virgin a wading bird, possibly a crane, attacks a snake. This may be intended to symbolize the struggle of good. The favorite theme from Bellini and developed with intimate aspects and daily in countless variations was the

Madonna and Child on the background of delicate rural landscapes. One of the nicest tables with this subject is the so-called Madonna of the meadow, modern interpretation of the iconography Madonna of humility;

The Virgin is seated on the ground with her Child; on background, a sunny countryside, with animals from symbolic meanings.

Some details allude to death and resurrection of Jesus: the position of the abandoned child, her pallor and her eyes closed; the raven on the upper left, bird often associated with the devil and wing corruption because you It feeds on carrion; the stork and the serpent below, recalling the first Passover, as symbol of new life, and according to the evil of original sin from which free the risen Christ. The figures are as merged with the landscape, through the harmony of the colors and the soft use of light and chiaroscuro: they are the principles underlying the tonal painting. and evil. The vulture in the tree may be symbolic of death.

Beatrice Lodi , Gjesica Jonuzi (4D)(4D)



The Introduction of the Cult of Cybele at Rome

1505

Andrea Mantegna

Room 61

This is one of four pictures commissioned in 1505 by Francesco Cornaro a Venetian nobleman, who claimed descent from the ancient Cornelli family. Mantegna, only completed one before his death and Bellini supplied another. Mantegna designed the painting thinking that it was going to be set over the door of Cornaro's bedroom where there was already an architectural framework so he didn't care about painting a frame. For this reason now museums have problems in displaying Mantegna's work.

This is a painting on linen and uses glue for support.

THE MYTH: In 204 BC the Romans brought the cult of Cybele, the eastern goddess of victory, from Asia Minor, to Rome. The myth states that at the end of the second Punic War, an oracle predicted to Scipio the African that the Roman victory would accelerate if they brought the foreign goddess Cybele to Rome. So in 204 BC, the Roman Senate decided that as the most distinguished of all the Romans, Scipio Nasica (cousin of Scipio the African) should receive the goddess and give her shelter in his house until a temple had been built.

DESCRIPTION: In this painting the figures seem to come out from the surface like pieces of sculpture. In fact they resemble stone in their colouring, this technique is called *grisaille* and was developed in the Renaissance.

From the left of the painting the priests in their exotic costumes (they evoke the world of Asia Minor) are carrying a bust of Cybele. She is wearing a mural crown, which represents her city state, which was Troy. Close to her there is a round stone. In fact she was worshipped in the form of a sacred round stone because the myth says that she fell to earth as a meteor. In the centre of the painting Scipio Nasica kneels and reaches out toward the holy litter. The senator that is pointing at him is probably Scipio the African and the man that is talking with him is probably the consul Licinius Crassus.

The angels and the other figures are important for creating a rhythm that encourages the eye to move across the surface from side to side and backwards and forwards.

Lucrezia Gregoris, Giulia Guy, Annalisa Siagri (4D)



St. Jerome in his studio

1460-1475

Antonello da Messina

Room 62

This painting, called “St. Jerome in his studio”, was painted by the Italian master Antonello da Messina, thought to have been completed around 1460–1475 during his Venetian sojourn.

In the 4th-century Saint Jerome was one of the four Fathers of the Church, but he is often represented in the Renaissance. This small picture shows St. Jerome working in his raised studio, a room with a kind of triumphal arch (probably within some church of Aragonese style). The saint is wearing a red tunic and a red hat and he is reading a book, which is his translation of the Bible into Latin, the Vulgate. Furthermore he is sitting on a chair without his shoes, which are near the stairs. In his studio, in the foreground there are two plants and a cat on the left, and in the background on the shelves there are a lot of books, some of which are open to give a sense of depth. The main scene is accompanied by a host of details, which have points of contact with the contemporary Flemish school: books, animals, objects, all painted with a magnificent taste for detail and “optical truth”. The light penetrates from the windows in the background and from the arch in the foreground. A Mediterranean landscape is hinted at through the windows opening on both sides of the studio. The scene is divided such that the light rays coincide with the perspective axes, centering on the saint’s bust and hands.

On the right of the studio there is a lion in the shadows, which is from a story about St. Jerome pulling a thorn out of a lion’s paws. In gratitude, the lion follows St. Jerome around for the rest of his life, like a house cat.

Other animals included are a partridge (*alectoris graeca*) and a peacock, in the foreground, both having symbolical meanings: the first is an ambivalent reference to truth and the second generally symbolizes immortality.

Sara Marcuzzi, Beatrice Morassut (4D)



The Agony in the Garden

1465

Giovanni Bellini

room 62

Religious scenes were a favorite of Bellini's and fifteenth century Italy presented him with a huge demand for works like this.

Agony in the Garden depicts the scene of Jesus praying late at night in the Garden of Gethsemane moments prior to his arrest. His disciples Peter, James and John are sleeping in the foreground while Judas, who had betrayed Jesus, can be seen leading Roman soldiers to the men's location. The soldiers will arrest Jesus and later crucify him.

Jesus knows of his looming death.

He had asked the three disciples to pray with him, but they are unable to stay awake. Instead, God sends an angel to comfort and strengthen Jesus, which can be seen near the top right-hand-side of the painting. The angel holds a cup to symbolize Jesus' impending sacrifice, while dawn's soft light suggests a hope for salvation.

Bellini was a man of religious fervor and quite possibly derived innate pleasure from expressing his faith through paint.

Composition:

Although the praying Jesus occupies the center of Agony in the Garden, the entire painting has almost a circular composition in which the eye is led from the Roman soldiers, to the sleeping disciples, back to the anguished Jesus, and finally to the angel in the sky and toward the lightening horizon.

Use of light:

The light of the dawn can be seen emerging in the distance in Bellini's Agony. In a somewhat different interpretation of the events, Bellini chooses to paint the sunrise and move beyond crucifixion toward eternal salvation while many other paintings depicting this scene emphasize the darkness and dread of Jesus' death.

Tone & emotion:

Bellini's work masterfully emits an overall tone of hope that cuts through the anguish that Christ's expression displays. He achieves this by incorporating light and placing side by side, the left side with the sleeping disciples, and the right side with Jesus and the angel depicting hope.

Technique:

Because he was strongly influenced by Mantegna, Bellini's early work, such as Agony, is very similar to his brother-in-law's. Bellini employs the use of strong contour lines and foreshortening of the sleeping figures perhaps as a means to practice this style of painting and ultimately develop his own style.



Doge Leonardo Loredan

1501-02

Giovanni Bellini

Room 62

The Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan is a painting by the Italian Renaissance master Giovanni Bellini, dating from 1501. It portrays Leonardo Loredan, Doge of Venice from 1501 to 1521, in his ceremonial garments with the corno worn over a linen cap, and is signed IOANNES BELLINVS on a cartellino.

Leonardo Loredan was the Doge of Venice from 1501–21. In Bellini's painting he is shown wearing his robes of state. The hat and ornate buttons are part of his official wardrobe. It is painted in the style of the sculpted portrait busts popular at the time. These were often inspired by Roman sculpture. Bellini signed his name in its Latin form, IOANNES BELLINVS on the cartellino, or “small paper”, on the parapet. The shape of the hat comes from the hood of a doublet. It is called as corno ducale and was a type of ducal hat, worn over a linen cap.

He managed to represent the doge in such realism with using three methods:

First, Bellini pays meticulous attention to the Doge's ceremonial outfit, especially the gold-threaded damask and patternwork of his brocaded silk jacket. His hat and buttons are also reproduced with great fidelity

Second, he gives the Doge a classical, assured pose, which lends him the sort of gravitas often seen in Roman Emperors and the like. His face is strikingly lifelike, and Bellini turns it towards the light, allowing us to see subtle traces of stubble as well as a range of facial wrinkles

Third, so as to compel us to focus on the sitter, Bellini eliminates any depth in the portrait by creating a flattened backdrop filled with a deep blue. In this way, he turns an irritable 65-year old Venetian politician into a solid symbol of Venetian power and authority.

John Pope-Hennessy described Bellini as “by far the greatest fifteenth-century official portraitist”, adding that “the tendency towards ideality that impairs his private portraits here stood him in good stead, and enabled him to codify, with unwavering conviction, the official personality”

Leonardo Lena, Giulia Moras (4D)



The Virgin and the Child, with S. Anne and the infant S. John Baptist

1499-1500

Leonardo da Vinci

Room 66

The drawing depicts the Virgin Mary sitting on her mother's Saint Anne lap and holding the Child Jesus while Saint John the Baptist, his cousin stands to the right. The scene is set in a wild mountainous landscape.

The large drawing is a cartoon that is a full-size preparatory study for a painting, made for a painting of the same scale.

Although it seems finished some areas have been left unfinished they are still outlined in rough outline. It belongs to one of the complex and atmospheric drawings of Leonardo da Vinci and was a big source of inspiration for many artists.

Symbolism:

In this drawing is represented one of Leonardo's main themes, the combination of the Human and the Divine. In fact the figures are represented in a humanly way but with subtle signs of spirituality. In the drawing emerges a big contrast between symbolism, and between the finished and the unfinished. On one hand we have the sense of ideal perfection which is a notion of the eternal spirituality while on the other hand we have the intimacy between the figures, respectively Anne and Mary, and, John and Christ. We can notice the symbiosis between Anne and Mary that recalls the classical structures. It gives us a sense of varied age that we can see between daughter and mother who looks slightly more older. For the second contrast we can see as an example Saint Anne's face and her hand, which show clearly the difference.

Her hand communicates the idea of this scene being a part of God's plan for the salvation of Mankind. In fact it points toward the sky and above, Heaven. So the idea of Jesus Christ's future sacrifice. The whole scene gives a great sense of movement which all leads to heaven, which is the very point of the drawing. So, the movement goes from both ways. It goes from Anne's face to Mary continuing down her shoulders, around her elbow and then up through Christ's arm and down to Saint John and the way back, giving us also a sense of unification. More specifically, (from the bottom) we have Saint John who's glancing up at Christ whose arm bends around his fingers in blessing, continued by Anne's fingers in a soft movement. Saint John is glancing up at Christ, moving up to Mary looking at Christ and then going back to Anne who's looking at Mary. It creates a passway for her eyes which again leads toward heaven.

Technique:

The construction of the figures in Leonardo's drawings is often simply done by using *chiaroscuro*, so by using light and shadow.

In this work he uses a particular technique called 'sfumato', that gives a soft and smoky effect, which he applies to the outlines of the drapery and of the human parts especially the faces, giving the whole a sense of realism. It goes through very slow graduations, from dark to light and moving back in to dark, giving a sense of three dimensionality. He also integrates the figures into a whole, forming some kind of pyramid.

Simona Colucci, Annalisa Zacà (4C)



The Virgin of the rocks

1506-1508

Leonardo Da Vinci

Room 66

The Virgin of the rocks is the name for two paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, one located in the National Gallery in London, and the other in the Louvre.

Both are painted in oil on wooden panel. The differences between the two paintings are in the lighting, flora and in the colors.

The history of the paintings are unknown but we know that the version of the Louvre is the earlier of the two.

The painting shows the Madonna and Child Jesus with the infant John the Baptist and an angel in a rocky setting which gives the name to the painting.

Normally the Virgin Mary is represented on a throne as the queen of heaven. But here Mary seats on the ground, referring to as the Madonna of Humility.

The Virgin has her right arm around the infant John the Baptist who is making a gesture of prayer to the Christ child. Christ in turn blesses Saint John and his mother's hand hovers over his head. An angel looks at Saint John.

The landscape is mystical and the rocks recall to the Dolomiti mountains in Italy.

Leonardo grouped the figures within a geometric shape of a pyramid instead of a triangle because the pyramid creates the illusion of three dimensional space. They are also gesturing and looking at each other, that is an important difference from the early Renaissance, where the figures were static and look separated from one another.

The perspective is created by the space between the near rocks and the mountains in the distance.



The Entombment

1500-01

Michelangelo

Room 8

The Entombment is a painting attributed to Michelangelo: it portrays the crucified Christ being hauled bodily up a flight of stone stairs to his tomb. The first aspect of the painting that strikes most viewers is the fact that it is unfinished – large parts of the painting are not just sketchy, but appear to be virtually blank.

Given that the Entombment concerns a seminal event in Christian tradition, it may be surprising to some that there is so much uncertainty about the identities, and even the gender, of some of the characters in the painting. It appears that the kneeling woman in the lower left of the painting, as the viewer sees it, is probably one of the Marys, contemplating something in her unfinished right hand. The massively-built bearer on the left is probably St. John the Evangelist, characterised by his orange-reddish robe and long hair. The older man at the back is possibly Joseph of Arimathaea, who had given up his own tomb for Christ. The woman on the far right may be Mary Salomé, or one of the other Marys. Ironically, the identity of the figure intended for the blank space on the lower right – the most unfinished part of the painting – is among the least contentious, as it is universally accepted as a kneeling Virgin Mary. Perhaps the most enigmatic figure is the bearer on the right. She (or he) is as tall and elongated as St John is massive, and is commonly identified as yet another of the Marys, typically Mary Magdalene. While it might be thought unlikely that a woman would be given this heavy task, Be that as it may, the bearer looks clearly to be female. Even this modest conclusion, however, has been challenged.

The facial expressions, or rather the lack of them, are rather puzzling. While the Mary on the far right looks a little sad, all the others look either neutral, self-absorbed or even a little bored.

The colour scheme of the painting is also quite disconcerting. It is hard to ignore St John's extraordinarily vivid robe; indeed it has been described as "nearly fluorescent". This stark contrast with the drab olive or brown of the women's robes, in conjunction with the unfinished state of the painting, contributes to the impression of a rather unreal lack of balance.

Over the centuries, most of the colours have altered to such an extent that "we are left with an entirely false view of the appearance of the painting". This, rather than any aberration by the artist, is why St John's robe now appears "obtrusively bright", and why the "once brilliant green" of the robe of the right bearer has become "sadly discoloured".

For many years, very little was known about the origin of the London Entombment. However, one clue was provided by some documentary evidence discovered in 1971. From this, we know that in 1500 Michelangelo was paid to paint a panel for the church of Sant'Agostino in Rome. We also know that Michelangelo did not deliver any such painting, and that he later paid back the full commission price. It is this unfulfilled commission which, it has been claimed, is the unfinished Entombment now held by the National Gallery.

Sofia Franchin, Jasmine Baradel (4D)

