

An Introduction to the Virtues in Art

(Compiled for Intermediate/Secondary Students)

By Stephanie Korczynski

Visual art has always been an important means for communicating values. This is especially true with values related to faith. Artists can use their talents to help people think deeply and pray. Art can inspire people's minds and hearts to greater love of God and neighbour. Being an artist has always been a great responsibility.

In 16th century Italy, the Painters' Guild in Siena summarized their responsibilities as artists in the opening of their statutes saying,

As by the grace of God we are able to reveal to the uneducated and
literate the miraculous things achieved by virtue and in virtue of our Holy
Faith...

The belief that art was a powerful tool that could be used to educate the masses is a primary motivator in much of Medieval and Renaissance art. This conviction was based on a statement by Pope Gregory the Great in the sixth century that images should be encouraged by the Church because "in pictures, they who know no letters may yet read." It offered a powerful motivator for those who could create such images in paintings and other forms (drawings, prints, sculpture etc).

The Theological and Cardinal and Virtues proved to be popular subject matter in the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods of Western Art. Most people who could afford art were Christian. Many believed the more they did on earth to pay tribute to God, the better their chances to get into heaven. Therefore, they paid to have large projects carried out to honour God. These persons were known as *patrons*. The virtues were chosen as a subject because they demonstrated a patron's understanding of how one should live one's life.

Many depictions of virtues rely on *attributes* as a means to relay what is being symbolized.

What is an Attribute?

In art, an *attribute* is another word for symbol. It is an object selected by an Artist with a specific purpose in mind. The persons to see the art work would find their attention directed towards the object. They would instantly recognize the ideas and events that the object or *attribute* represented.

When looking at the works selected, the ability to recognize attributes and hypothesize reasons for their inclusion is very important.



Title: Faith (from the series 'The World of Seven Virtues')

Artist: Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525-69)

Date: 1559

Technique/Medium: engraving

Location: completed in the Netherlands.

The Artist and Artwork

Pieter Bruegel (circa 1525-69), is most commonly known as Pieter (Peter) Bruegel the Elder to distinguish him from his eldest son, Peter. Peter Bruegel the Elder was the first

in a family of Flemish painters. He is considered by many art historians to be one of the greatest Flemish painters of the 16th century, one of the finest engraving designers the world has ever seen, and is by far the most important member of the family. He was born in an area called Brabant, which is in modern day The Netherlands. Like many artists of his time he was apprenticed to an Antwerp artist, Coecke van Aelst. Van Aelst was a sculptor, architect and designer of tapestry and stained glass and Bruegel learned a great deal under his instruction. Bruegel also travelled to Italy as a way to see works of art and learn from other masters. He returned home and spent the duration of his career in Antwerp, followed by Brussels.

He developed an original style that relays its meaning and morals though narrative, or story-telling. In subject matter he ranged widely, from conventional Biblical scenes and parables of Christ to mythological and religious allegories and social satires. He is renowned for his painted scenes from peasant life. He painted peasants merrymaking, feasting, and working. He is best known for these rollicking paintings of Flemish life and his paintings often stress the absurd and vulgar, yet are full of zest and fine detail. They also expose human weaknesses and follies.

Engraving is a method of printmaking. The engraver cuts a design into a metal plate with a cutting tool called a burin. The burin is a steel rod with a square or ring-shaped section at the end and a slightly bent shank. The cutting is done by pushing the burin into the metal plate. The deeper it penetrates into the metal, the wider the line in the print; different line depths create the character of the engraved line. Then ink is placed on the metal plate, then the paper (a ground of some sort) is laid on top of the plate to absorb the ink. Line engraving is another term for this process. The name *line engraving* comes from the fact that this technique only reproduces marks in the form of lines. Tone and shading, however, can be suggested by making parallel lines or by crosshatching.

Engraving originated independently in the Rhine valley in Germany and in northern Italy about the middle of the 15th century. It seems to have been first developed by German goldsmiths. In later years engraving became the most well known way to copy a painting. Because many prints could be made it allowed people from all over Europe to have an idea of what a painting looked like from a print. This work is not from a painting but it is part of a series that would have been sold together so people would be able to look at the seven virtues and reflect on them.

Faith- The Image

This image is taken from Bruegel's series of "The World of Seven Virtues." Unlike most personifications and representations of the virtues, where a figure appears in relative isolation, here we are confronted with an action packed scene. The inscription FIDES is included as a part of the scene along with an inscription in the lower margin reads: FIDES MAXIMÈ À NOBIS CONSERVANDA EST PRAECIPVE IN RELIGIONEM, | QVIA DEVS PRIOR ET POTENTIOR EST QVAN HOMO. (Above all we must keep faith, particularly in respect to religion, for God comes before all, and is mightier than man). Look closely to see how Bruegel has illustrated this belief.

The setting is clearly a church interior. What can we learn about church interiors at this time? What is different from your parish church?

- (Simultaneous action, multiple side chapels with different functions, priest speaking from a pulpit in the middle of the church, kneeling to receive communion etc.)

One figure in this engraving is the personification of Faith. Where is she?

- (Front of the scene, to the right of the ladder with FIDES inscribed below her)

What is she represented as?

What is she holding?

What objects surround her?

- Faith is portrayed as a nun, standing on an open tomb representing the resurrection of Christ surrounded by imagery of Christ and the Crucifixion. Also on her head are the tablets of the Law of Moses, indicative of the Old Testament and in her hand a representation of the New Testament. This is done as a way of recognizing the authority of the Gospels.

Make a list of all the objects (mementos and symbols) you see which come from the Passion narrative. These objects are present to symbolize true and valid faith.

- From the Crucifixion narrative we see for example the cloth of Veronica, crown of thorns, ladder, crucifix, the nails, hammer, whip, a broken column, a rooster, ointment jars, a lantern, a lance etc.

It is a crowded scene and we are presented with a series of vignettes scattered throughout the composition. Can you identify any of the smaller groupings?

- (Hint: think about the sacraments)
- In the upper left there is a baptism taking place; below them we see the rite of communion being given; along the right margin in the background a marriage is taking place.

Bruegel's signature is inscribed in the lower right.

Extension/Discussion:

Bruegel often turned his drawings into either engravings or paintings. Would this work, originally from a drawing, have made a good painted composition?

Many art historians look at works of Bruegel and praise him for the way in which he organized his pictures so they do not look crowded or confusing. Would you agree with this when looking at this engraving? Is it successful in representing Faith?

This work has been labeled by some as being satirical. Where can you find evidence of this? Consider the religious climate when this was being produced as being far from simple or placid.





Title: Hope
Artist: Donatello
Date: 1427-29
Technique/Medium: Bronze
Location: Siena Baptistry, Italy

The Artist and Artwork

Donatello (name at birth was Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; c. 1386 – December 13, 1466) is a towering figure in the history of western art. Donatello was an Italian sculptor of the Early Renaissance. His work is seen as a bridge from classic to modern art. Donatello was educated in the house of the Martelli family. He was then trained in Florence with Lorenzo Ghiberti, and began working on his own in 1408. A student of antiquity and master craftsman, Donatello is considered one of the founders of modern sculpture because of the realistic human expressions and stressed action and character, as we see in this figure of Hope. He is famous for his use of perspectives, including physical distortions for dramatic effect, and was a master craftsman with a flair for invention. He is considered the first sculptor since antiquity to create free-standing statues (separate from an architectural framework), and his life-size bronze equestrian portrait of Gattamelata is said to be the first since ancient Rome. His other famous works are the monument to the antipope John XXIII and his bronze statue of David.

The Siena Baptistry was built between 1316 and 1325, under the direction of Camaino di Crescentino to serve as the city's baptismal church. Its structure extends under the final bays of the choir of the cathedral and is distinguished by the tall Gothic façade initiated in 1355 by Domenico d'Agostino and left unfinished when work was interrupted in 1382. The interior, divided into a nave and two side aisles under a Gothic vaulted ceiling, is an outstanding example of fifteenth-century Sienese art. The ceiling and walls are covered with frescoes by Benvenuto di Giovanni (Miracles by Saint Anthony of Padua, 1460), Pietro degli Orioli (Christ Washing the Apostles' Feet), and Lorenzo di Pietro, better known as "Vecchietta" (the ceiling frescoes of Articles of the Apostles' Creed, 1447-1450). The centre of the church is dominated by a magnificent Baptismal Font made of marble, bronze, and enamel between 1417 and 1431 by the leading sculptors of the period, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Donatello, Jacopo della Quercia, and Giovanni di Turino. It is a small hexagonal shrine surmounted by a statue of St John the Baptist. In the actual font below, six bronze panels narrate the story of St John the Baptist. Donatello made the panel portraying the Feast of Herod in 1427. Surrounding these relief panels is where we find the figure of Hope.

Bronze is ideal for casting art works; it flows into all crevices of a mold, thus perfectly reproducing every detail of the most delicately modeled sculpture. It is malleable beneath the graver's tool and allows polish and detail to be worked out more easily than with other materials (i.e., marble). Making bronzes is highly skilled work, and a number of distinct casting processes may be employed, including lost-wax casting. In lost-wax casting, the artist starts with a full-sized model of the sculpture, usually a non-drying oil-based clay model for smaller sculptures. A mold is made from the clay pattern, often from plaster. Such a plaster is a means of preserving the artwork until a patron may be found to finance a bronze casting, either from the original molds or from a new mold made from the refined plaster. Once a mold is obtained, a wax is then cast. The

complete wax structure is then invested in another kind of mold or shell, which is heated in a kiln until the wax runs out and all free moisture is removed. The cast is then soon filled with molten bronze. Early medieval bronzes consisted mainly of utensils and domestic and ecclesiastical ornaments. During the Renaissance, Italian sculptors wrought magnificent bronzes of many sorts.

Hope- The Image:

As mentioned above, the Baptistry contains multiple works of art by an array of artists. The works of art directly involved with the baptismal font and their creators are the following:

- *The Annunciation of the Birth of John, the Baptist* by Siena's master sculptor, Jacopo della Quercia;
- *The Birth of John the Baptist* and *Preaching of John the Baptist*, by Giovanni di Turino;
- *Baptism of Christ, St. John in Prison* by Lorenzo Ghiberti, the same artist who made the Baptistry door in the Florence Duomo, and
- *Herod's Feast*, the most beautiful of the bronze panels are by Donatello;

These panels are flanked on the corners by six figures - *Faith* and *Hope*, by Donatello; *Justice, Prudence* and *Charity* by Giovanni di Turino; and *Fortitude* by Goro di Ser Neroccio. How are the virtues related to the narrative scenes they flank?

In 1427 Donatello executed *Herod's Banquet*, in bronze relief, for the Baptismal Font. He also executed two small statues of *Faith* and *Hope*, for the corner of the Font. These statues show a lyrical grace that is different from the relief of the *Herod's Banquet*, suggesting that his temporary collaboration with Ghiberti on the decoration of the Font may have caused Donatello to return to earlier methods of expression that had long been abandoned.

Describe Donatello's *Hope*

- (female, winged figure, gazing towards heaven, flowing drapery, etc)

Hope's immediate object is union with God in heaven. For this reason some artists found it difficult to portray as being distinct from scenes of Christ in heaven. It is common to see the figure of hope gazing up towards heaven and reaching for a crown.

How does gazing towards heaven represent Hope?

- As the hope of future glory, or being welcomed into the Kingdom of God.

There is an active sculpture. How is action showed and does this help to confirm her identity as Hope?

- She is about to join her hands in prayer as her raised eyes seek out heavenly intervention.

What role do the virtues have in connection with baptism?

Hope is flanking the scene of the *Arrest of John the Baptist/John the Baptist in Prison* by Ghiberti. How is hope relevant for this event in the life of John the Baptist?

Extension/Discussion:

As a viewer in the Renaissance, in the absence of inscriptions or attributes how could one determine that this figure is Hope? (Consider the wider context: Who else is present? Where is the work located? What is the function of the font?)

When looking at a sculpture, the artist has different ways to express himself/herself and different elements of art and design to consider. How do texture and scale, for example, aid Donatello in his depiction of Hope?

These panels are flanked on the corners by six figures (*Faith and Hope*, by Donatello; *Justice, Prudence* and *Charity* by Giovanni di Turino; and *Fortitude* by Goro di Ser Neroccio), meaning that Temperance is omitted. If you had six corners to fill would you have made the same artistic decision? Is Temperance any less relevant for the theme of Baptism?

More information and images are available at the Official website: Opera della Metropolitana:

<http://www.operaduomo.siena.it/english/index.html>

In depth presentation on the baptistry (with video and 3D tour):

<http://www.operaduomo.siena.it/english/battistero05.htm>



Title: Charity

Artist: Bartolomeo Schedoni

Date: 1611

Technique/Medium: oil on panel

Location: Naples, Italy (today in the Museo di Capodimonte)

The Artist and Artwork

Bartolomeo Schedoni (1578-1615) was an Italian early Baroque painter. He was born in Modena, but moved to Parma with his father. Soon he was sent to be apprenticed under Federico Zuccari in Rome after 1598, with the sponsorship of Ranuccio I Farnese, Duke of Parma. He soon returned to Parma. His painting shows knowledge of Caravaggio's work.

In the arts, the Baroque was a Western cultural period, starting roughly at the beginning of the 17th century in Rome, Italy. It was exemplified by drama and grandeur in sculpture, painting, literature, dance, and music. Bartolomeo Schedoni was in Rome as these changes were taking place and is responsible for taking the characteristic of Baroque art with him upon his return to Parma. The popularity and success of the Baroque style was encouraged by the Roman Catholic Church, which had decided at the time of the Council of Trent (1545–63) that the arts should communicate religious themes in direct and emotional involvement. The Council of Trent addressed representational arts by demanding that paintings and sculptures in church contexts should speak to the illiterate rather than solely to the well-informed or highly educated. This need to communicate is seen as the inspiration of much Baroque art, which appeared a generation later.

The appeal of Baroque style turned consciously from the witty, intellectual qualities of 16th century Mannerist art to a visceral appeal aimed at the senses. It employed an iconography that was direct, simple, obvious, and dramatic. The intensity and immediacy of Baroque art and its individualism and detail, observed in such things as the convincing rendering of cloth and skin textures, make it one of the most compelling periods of Western art.

Charity- The Image

Describe this image. How does it convey Love/Charity?

- (What is in the woman's hand (bread); she is handing it to a beggar who is leading a blind man; the young child is only partially clothed; none of the figures seeking the mercy of the woman are wearing shoes)

The Church taught that charity was both a love of God (amor dei) and at the same time a love of one's neighbour (amor proximi) and that the second was of no real worth without the first. This image therefore has aspects of both, although it directly illustrates love of one's neighbour. The seven corporal works of mercy were commonly portrayed. How many works of mercy are depicted here? (The corporal works of mercy - tending the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner Matt. 25:35-37, and burying the dead).

Baroque art is characterized by works which convey emotions. Consider which emotions this work evokes. How do you feel towards the main characters? How are they feeling?

Why has the artist chosen children as the main subjects seeking the charity of the woman? Would the painting be as emotionally appealing if they were all adults? What are the reasons for this?

This is a single panel painting. Where would an appropriate location for it be?

Extension/Discussion:

Baroque art was often looked at as having a stage-like quality. Can you think of other characters and arrangements which would portray Charity in a similar fashion?

If this scene were to be modernized, who would the main characters/roles be?

There is a piece of paper mounted to the wall with writing on it. What do you think the message might say?

The desire to bring about emotional states by appealing to the senses – often in dramatic ways – underlies expressions of Baroque art. Some of the qualities most frequently associated with the Baroque are grandeur, sensuous richness, drama, vitality, movement, tension, emotional exuberance, and a tendency to blur distinctions between the various arts. How are these used to convey the virtue of Love/Charity?

The Council of Trent had a direct effect on artistic production. Explore how their decisions impacted the commissions for artists in the Catholic world.

For more on baroque art see http://history-world.org/baroque_era.htm





Title: Justice

Artist: Raphael

Date: 1509-11

Technique/Medium: Fresco (Ceiling tondo)

Location: Stanza della Segnatura, Palazzi Pontifici, Vatican.

The Artist and Art Work

In Italian, Raffaello Sanzio (b. April 6, 1483, Urbino - d. April 6, 1520, Rome) is commonly known as Raphael and is even better known for being one of the greatest painters of the High Renaissance period. Tragically, he died young, and so naturally people wonder what he would have accomplished if he had lived into his old age, as the Master Michelangelo did. Raphael had a remarkable, although brief career in Rome. The credit for having recognized and fostered his talent is shared by two popes: Julius II of the della Rovere family, and his immediate successor Leo X, a Medici. The two popes differed in their character, taste, culture, and political program. Yet they had a common goal: to restore ancient Rome's cultural and political importance under papal leadership.

Reconstructions and extensions were a constant reality of Vatican property under their oversight, and it was towards the end of 1507 that Julius II decided to refurbish the second floor, the so-called Stanze (rooms), because he no longer wished to live in the apartments occupied by his predecessor. The artists whom Julius II commissioned to paint frescoes in the new apartments included Perugino and Sodoma. Raphael took over this work on his arrival in Rome in 1509. The first of Pope Julius II's rooms in the papal apartments to be decorated with Raphael's frescoes was the study in which the "Signatura gratiae" tribunal was originally located (Stanza della Segnatura). The Stanza della segnatura ("Room of the Signatura") was the first to be decorated by Raphael's frescoes. It was the study housing the library of Julius II, in which the Signatura of grace tribunal was originally located. The artist's concept brings into harmony the spirits of Antiquity and Christianity and reflects the contents of the pope's library with themes of theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, and the poetic arts, represented in tondi (circular format) above the lunettes of the walls. The rooms (four in total) when taken together are known as the Raphael Rooms. Together with Michelangelo's ceiling frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, these are the grand fresco sequences that mark the High Renaissance in Rome.

Justice- The Image

Raphael's design for the ceiling was outlined by an intricate pattern of elaborate, illusionary tromp l'oeil ("fool the eye") frames into which he set his figural representations-- the allegorical personifications of Justice, Theology, Poetry, and Philosophy. The personification of Justice is holding, as her symbols, weighing scales and a sword. Her eyes are directed at the fresco below, The Virtues, in which Fortitude, Wisdom, and Temperance are portrayed in the form of three women. Taken together, all four personifications represent the Cardinal Virtues. Justice's prominent position is explained by the fact that Justice was said by Plato to play a decisive role among the virtues. Two putti are holding the inscription with the words of Emperor Justinian, "She gives Justice to all."

What are scales used for?

- Scales are used to weigh things.
- They are used in images of justice because scales are symbolic of impartial judgment and may be used to represent the final judgment at the Lord's return (connected with the responsibility of weighing the souls of the departed). The archangel Michael is often shown with scales, weighing the good things we

have done in life against the bad things and this allows him to see how virtuous a life we have led.

- Scales are also a reminder of when we weigh out our options; consider issues and sides of an argument, trying to get information in order to make a good decision.
- She is holding a sword as the sword is a symbol of power and authority.
- People often expect Justice to be blindfolded, however in antiquity Justice was known for clear-sightedness, meaning a blindfold would imply an absence of judgment and would contradict understanding during the renaissance.

Extensions/Discussion:

Raphael's *Justice* was selected for a ceiling fresco, while the three remaining cardinal virtues were relegated to the wall about the door. Is the placement of Justice appropriate for a ceiling? Why? The ceiling also dictated the round composition. Does this format add to the effectiveness of the image?

Using sources such as the ones listed below, explore the entire room. Knowing that Justice, Poetry, Philosophy and Theology are all contained within the ceiling roundels, can you then match up and explain which wall frescos they align with? Do you see deeper meaning hidden in Raphael's plans?

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/r/raphael/4stanze/1segnatu/5/index.html>

http://employees.oneonta.edu/farberas/arth/arth213/stanza_segnatura.html

<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/stanzas/S2-Segnatura.html>

By the time Raphael began his work here, there was already a tradition in Renaissance fresco cycle painting known as *uomini famosi*, that is, *famous men*. In keeping with that tradition, depicted in the frescoes on the walls of the Stanza della Segnatura are many historical figures whose writings were held in the Pope's collection. Take a closer look. Who can you identify? What historic and contemporary (to the time they were completed) figures are present and what is their relationship to the location?



Title: Prudence
Artist: Giovanni Di Balduccio
Date: 1339
Technique/Medium:
 marble
Location: Detail from the
 tomb of Peter of Verona in
 the Portinari Chapel in the
 Church of Sant'Eustorgio in
 Milan (Italy).



The Artist and Art Work

Giovanni di Balduccio (born c. 1290 – dies after 1339) was an Italian sculptor of the Medieval period. He was born in Pisa, and likely did not train directly with the famous Pisan sculptor Andrea Pisano. However links have been made to Giovanni Pisano. He travelled to Milan to help sculpt the arc of St. Peter Martyr for the church of San Eustorgio, where we find the figure of Prudence alongside other personifications of the virtues. The work is signed and dated 1339. Opposite the ruins of medieval city walls in the heart of Milan there is the Church of Saint Eustorgio, the one of the most picturesque churches of Milan. For many years this church was an important centre for pilgrims on their journey to Rome or the Holy Land, because it was the site of the tomb of the Three Magi or Three Kings (which were later taken to Cologne).

The Portinari Chapel, housed within this larger basilica contains many treasures. The Portinari Chapel was commissioned by the rich Florentine banker Pigello di Folco Portinari (1421 - 1468) as his family burial chapel. Pigello Portinari was a rich branch manager of the Medici bank in Milan during Piero di Cosimo de Medici time (1416 - 1469). Located in the center of the Portinari chapel is the shrine/arc for the body of Dominican Saint Peter Martyr (was killed in 1252). He was canonized in 1253 by Innocent IV and he became the patron of Inquisitors. Balduccio's composition was commissioned by Azzone Visconti (1302 - 1339, from 1329 Lord of Milan). The saint's tomb primary located in the left nave of Basilica was moved to the Portinari chapel in 1774. During this event some of the panels were lost and sold outside Italy (for example St. Peter Martyr with donors that can be seen in Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection in New York, USA). The tomb consists of an elaborate white marble coffin supported by eight statues of Virtues. The bas-relief sculptures on the coffin show the scenes from the saint's life.

Prudence- The Image

Prudence is supporting/holding up something (all seven virtues appear as part of a tomb), supporting the sarcophagus.

Signifying wise conduct and not caution, Prudence is often personified with a snake and a mirror. Here we see a new development in the iconography of Prudence linked with the allegory of Prudence with three faces. The belief that a prudent act combined memory, intelligence and foresight produces an iconography that is threefold. As such, representing Prudence with a triple head developed. Commonly a young, middle aged and older face (to represent past, present and future) is used. By being aware of the past, present and future, a person should learn from the past how to conduct themselves properly in the present and how to prosper in the future.

Can you tell if that is how the artist has depicted the three faces on this tomb monument? Do they represent the past, present and future?

Extension/Discussion:

As you can see from the larger view there are eight figures holding up the tomb. The seven virtues are represented with an eighth figure. If you were the artist who would you

personify and why? How do they fit in with the scheme and Christian belief at the time of construction? [*in reality the eighth figure is that of Obedience*]

For a complete set of images of the entire Portinari chapel and details of the tomb see:
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:G.dallorto/Cappella Portinari \(Milan\)](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:G.dallorto/Cappella_Portinari_(Milan))

Prudence is one of the figures placed at a corner. Is this an accidental placement? What might be symbolic of the position she is holding?

How are the themes of death and commemoration explored through this work?

It was mentioned by historians that when the arc was moved, some of the panels were lost and sold outside Italy (for example St. Peter Martyr with donors that can be seen in Metropolitan Museum of Art). How do you feel about a gallery owning a work of art that once belonged in a church? Should the panel be returned to Milan?

The three faces have been equated with certain animals (wolf, lion and dog). A famous painting by Titian now in the National Gallery, London represents the allegory of prudence using men's faces as well as animals. How does this image relate to the Christian understanding of prudence?

For information on this work go to <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/cgi-bin/WebObjects.dll/CollectionPublisher.woa/wa/work?workNumber=NG6376>

Additional Resource:

What is sculpture? See for yourself!

This is a wonderful online resource with videos teaching about the elements of design, the ability to click on and instantly compare and contrast sculptures, a kids' gallery with ideas for art projects and an accompanying teacher's guide.

<http://www.stlouis.art.museum/sfysculpture/index.html>



Title: Temperance /Temperantia

Artist: Sir Edward Burne-Jones

Date: 1872

Technique/Medium: Watercolour

Location: Private collection

The Artists and Artwork

Edward Coley Burne-Jones was born in Birmingham in 1833, son of a gilder and framemaker. An only son, he was educated at King Edward's school, Birmingham, and destined for the Church. He retained through life an interest in classical studies, but it was the mythology of the classics which fascinated him. He went into residence as a scholar at Exeter College, Oxford, in January 1853. On the same day William Morris entered the college, having also the intention of taking orders. The two were thrown together, and grew to become close friends. Both intended to enter the Church, but

having visited northern French cathedrals in 1855, they decided to become artists. Their similar tastes and enthusiasms were mutually stimulated. Burne-Jones resumed his early love of drawing and designing.

Edward Coley Burne-Jones is most commonly associated with Pre-Raphaelite Art. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (also known as the Pre-Raphaelites) was a group of English painters, poets, and critics, founded in 1848 by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, John Everett Millais, Frederic George Stephens, Thomas Woolner and William Holman Hunt.

The group's intention was to reform art by rejecting what they considered to be the mechanistic approach first adopted by the Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo. They believed that the Classical poses and elegant compositions of Raphael in particular had been a corrupting influence on the academic teaching of art. Hence the name "Pre-Raphaelite". The Pre-Raphaelites have been considered the first avant-garde movement in art, though they have also been denied that status, because they continued to accept both the concepts of history painting and of mimesis, or imitation of nature, as central to the purpose of art. However, the Pre-Raphaelites undoubtedly defined themselves as a reform-movement, creating a distinct name for their form of art.

Watercolour painting is a painting method in which the paints are made of pigments suspended in a water soluble vehicle. The traditional and most common support for watercolour paintings is paper; other supports include papyrus, bark papers, plastics, vellum or leather, fabric, wood, and canvas. Watercolour painting is extremely old, dating perhaps to the cave paintings of paleolithic Europe, and has been used for manuscript illumination since at least Egyptian times but especially in the European Middle Ages. Its continuous history as an art medium begins in the Renaissance. Despite this early start, watercolours were generally used by Baroque easel painters only for sketches, copies or cartoons (small scale design drawings). By the 19th century its availability and cost made it ideal for finished works of art as well. Today watercolour is a medium employed by many artists for their finished works and is no longer seen as simply for preparatory works.

Temperance- The Image

To the Middle ages temperance often signifies, as it may today, abstinence from liquor, and hence was represented by a woman pouring liquid from one vessel to another- diluting wine with water. This type continued into the Renaissance and onwards. Here we do not have a woman dumping water from one vessel to another; rather she is emptying water onto flames. What might this be symbolic of?

The presence of water and flame, in which the water is extinguishing the flame in an active manner as it is her with pitcher being emptied suggests sexual moderation and chastity – water to put out the fires of lust.

Temperantia (Temperance) was a companion painting to Fides and Spes (Faith and Hope). It was commissioned by Frederick Startridge Ellis, a bookseller and author.

Is the inscription helpful? Would you expect to find a personification of a virtue painted in 1872, in England?

Extension/Discussion:

This is one of the few images we find in the 19th century of the virtues, why do you think this is?

Does the figure of Temperance she look like she is from 19th century England? What might Burne-Jones sources be? Which artists from the past could he have looked at (we know he went to Italy) and modelled his Temperance on?

Were the Pre- Raphaelites a very religious group of artists? What connections do we know Burne-Jones had with the Church.

Additional Resource

From the Victoria and Albert Museum, on watercolour painting

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/paintings/galleries/materials/watercolour/index.html>

Designed for teachers by UK gallery – The Pre-Raph Pack

<http://pre-raphs.bmag.org.uk/>





Detail: Looking towards the altar.



Title: Courage/Fortitude

Artist: Giotto di Bondone

Date: c.1303-05

Technique/Medium: monochrome (grisaille) fresco (wall painting)

Location: Cappella Scrovegni (Arena Chapel), Padua

Detail: Looking towards Last Judgement fresco above entrance.

The Artist and Artwork

Giotto di Bondone, called Giotto, was born in Colle di Vespignano, a village near Florence, in 1267 or 1276, depending on the source. He was most surely an apprentice of Cimabue, the most celebrated painter of the preceding generation. He is most famous for the fresco decorations he and his workshop did in the Scrovegni Chapel in the city of Padua.

The Scrovegni Chapel, dedicated to St. Mary of the Charity was frescoed between 1303 and 1305, upon the commission of Enrico degli Scrovegni. It is one of the most important masterpieces of Western art. The frescoes, which narrate events in the lives of the Virgin Mary and Christ, cover the entire walls. On the wall opposite the altar is the grandiose Universal Judgement, which concludes the story of human salvation. Among the multi-coloured, painted marble slabs of the lower level are illusionistically depicted niches in which Giotto has painted, as stone statues, the Virtues on one side of the chapel and the Vices on the other. It is here we find the figure of Hope.

His work is seen as an enormous breakthrough. He is regarded as the father of modern painting because of his introduction of a number of innovations. Where human figures previously were painted 'flat' and without expression, he succeeded in picturing people in a natural way and in expressing human emotions.

The technique- Fresco- Painting with pigments dissolved in water on freshly laid plaster. As both plaster and paint dry, they become completely integrated. Known as the "true" fresco, this technique was most popular from the late thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries. Fresco painting is laborious and requires great skill, but because its materials are inexpensive, it is far more affordable than any other type of decoration.

A fresco cycle is a series of paintings, all usually narrating various parts of one or more stories. It is this type of cycle that represents the quintessential Renaissance work of art. Renaissance society expected fresco painters to fashion comprehensible images and stories(cycles) that would educate, inspire, and give pleasure to the eye. Giotto could not have painted the Scrovegni's Arena Chapel alone. The number of frescoes and the complexity of the medium made this impossible. He must have employed assistants, probably young apprentices from his own workshop. Giotto and his assistants painted from top to bottom. Since the painting was executed *allfresco*, moist plaster had to be applied only to a surface of sufficient size to be decorated in one day. Giotto conceived every fresco and drew all the plan drawings on the wall. His helpers must have helped in the painting process. Young artists of the Renaissance were taught to imitate their master's style faithfully, so large scale collaborative works such as the Arena Chapel are remarkably uniform in style

Courage- The Image

Describe the image.

- (The Lion on the column; she is wearing armour; weapon wielded in an active manner)

To people of the renaissance courage/fortitude also signified endurance and also strength. How are these aspects of the virtue illustrated by Giotto?

- Courage/Fortitude is often represented as a warrior, as is true here.

How does the artist denote she is a warrior?

- Helmet, shield, armour

Were there woman warriors in Renaissance Italy?

- No, therefore this is a clear allusion to classical times and to the fact that it is an allegory

What is the helmet made to look like? (lions head) Where else do we see the lion? (on the shield) The lion itself is a symbol of courage and is a common attribute. Often the lion alludes to the stories of Samson (Biblical) or Hercules (Classical). If the figure of fortitude is wrestling a lion, forcing its jaws apart it is the archetypal image of the god or hero performing a feat of strength and courage.

Extension/Discussion:

Courage/Fortitude is often shown wielding a weapon in Renaissance images. This is in large part due to the reality of feudal and constant wars over territory. Can you think of alternative ways to show courage/fortitude? In our society where war still rages in many parts of the world, would there be alternatives to the warrior figure as being the sole personification of courage? Who/what might you suggest?

In Giotto's chapel the virtues are paired with their vice in the scheme of the decoration. Does having a vice present to be compared to each virtue make the message clearer? Stronger? More complicated? (see images below)

There are many websites with images of the chapel. Below is the official website, in English.

http://www.cappelladegliscrovegni.it/eng/index_e.htm