Italian and High Renaissance

Italian Renaissance

1400 - 1600

Renaissance begins in Italy...Why?

- Florence: centre of trade with Middle East and Europe, manufacturing, and the arts.
- Thriving cities meant opportunities for education, scientific pursuits, and arts and leisure.
- A wealthy merchant middle class who became art patrons.

Florence, Italy today.
Birthplace of Italian Renaissance

What role did patrons of the arts play in the development of Renaissance ideas?

Wealthy patrons spent money to help artists and architects create works of genius.

Lorenzo de Medici - ruler of Florence and Art Patron 1449 - 1492 contributed more than anyone to the flowering of Florence's artistic genius in the late 15th century, supporting such giants as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.

Being a PATRON of the arts publicized one's social status, as well as political and spiritual values.

Patronage was competitive with the rich commissioning art for their own pleasure and to impress or out-do others.

WHAT: Revival /Rebirth and resurgence of Classical (Greek and Roman) learning in art, architecture, literature, sciences & philosophy

The 15th century was a time of great growth and discovery.

At this time we saw the spread of:

- Commerce
- Wealth
- Knowledge/Science
- The arts

Sometimes referred to as a return to Humanism

View of the human's role on earth changed from the Middle Age 'sinner' gaining salvation by centering life on Catholicism to the view that:

- Life was for the here & now and the appreciation of worldly pleasures
- The individual has dignity & worth and should have personal independence and individual expression
- The ideal life was no longer a monastic escape from society, but a full participation in rich and varied human relationships

"I think, therefore I am."

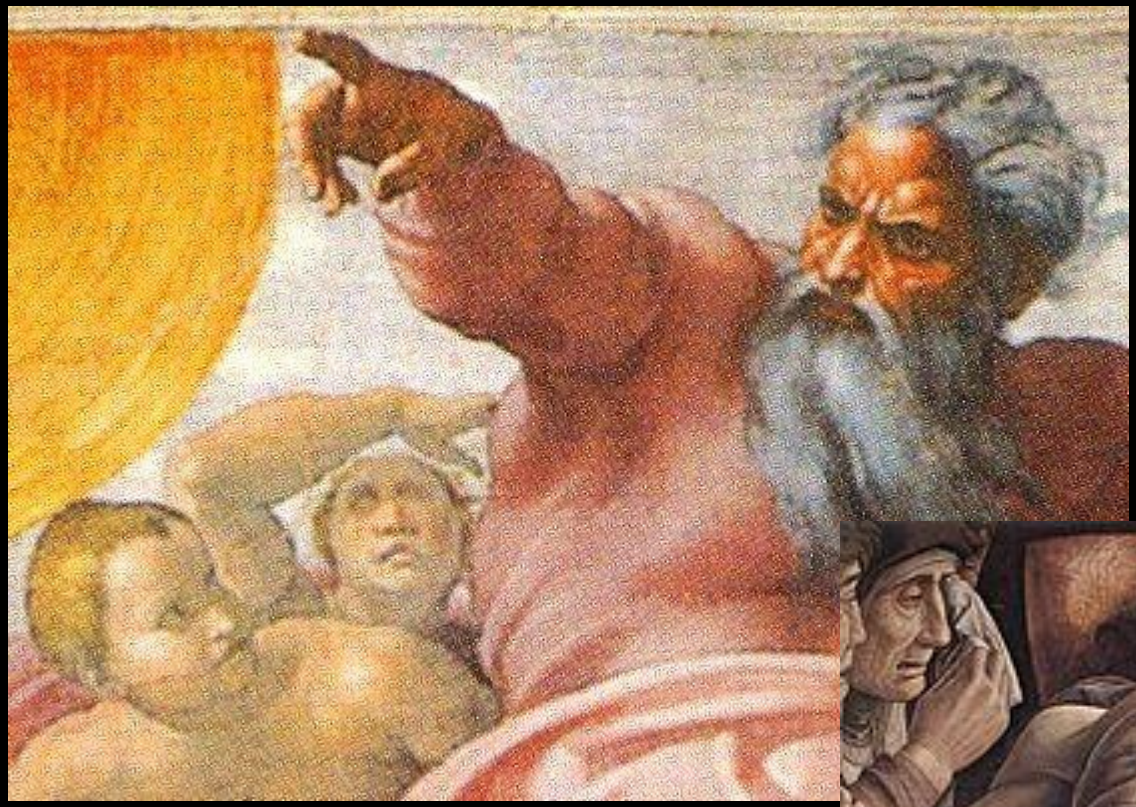
"Man is the measure of all things."

Renaissance Style Features

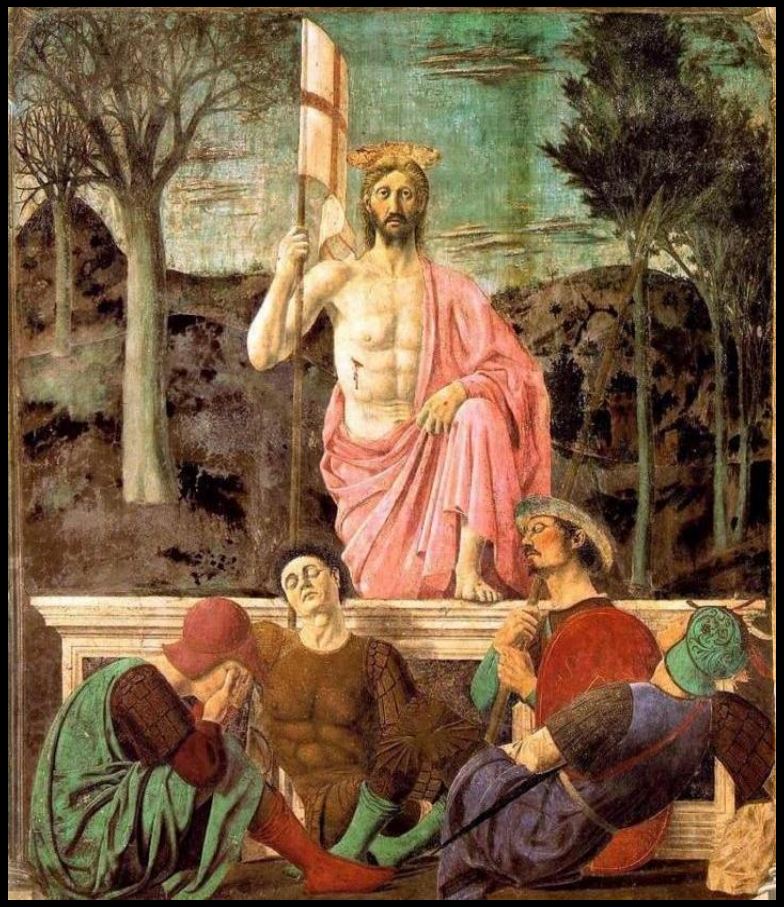
How was Renaissance Art different from that of the Middle Ages?

1. **Realism** (natural figure proportions)

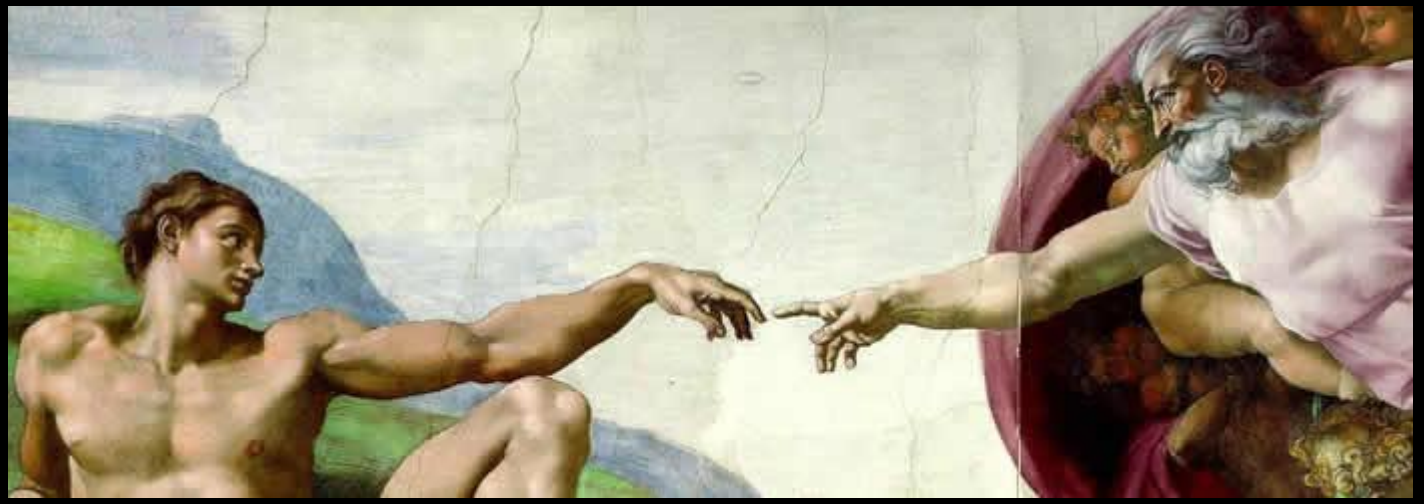
2. **Natural backgrounds** (landscape or architecture)
3. **Perspective:** linear & aerial and foreshortening



4. **Classical** (pagan) themes
5. **Geometrical arrangement** of figures (pyramidal composition)



6. Chiaroscuro: Shading to Create Form & Distance



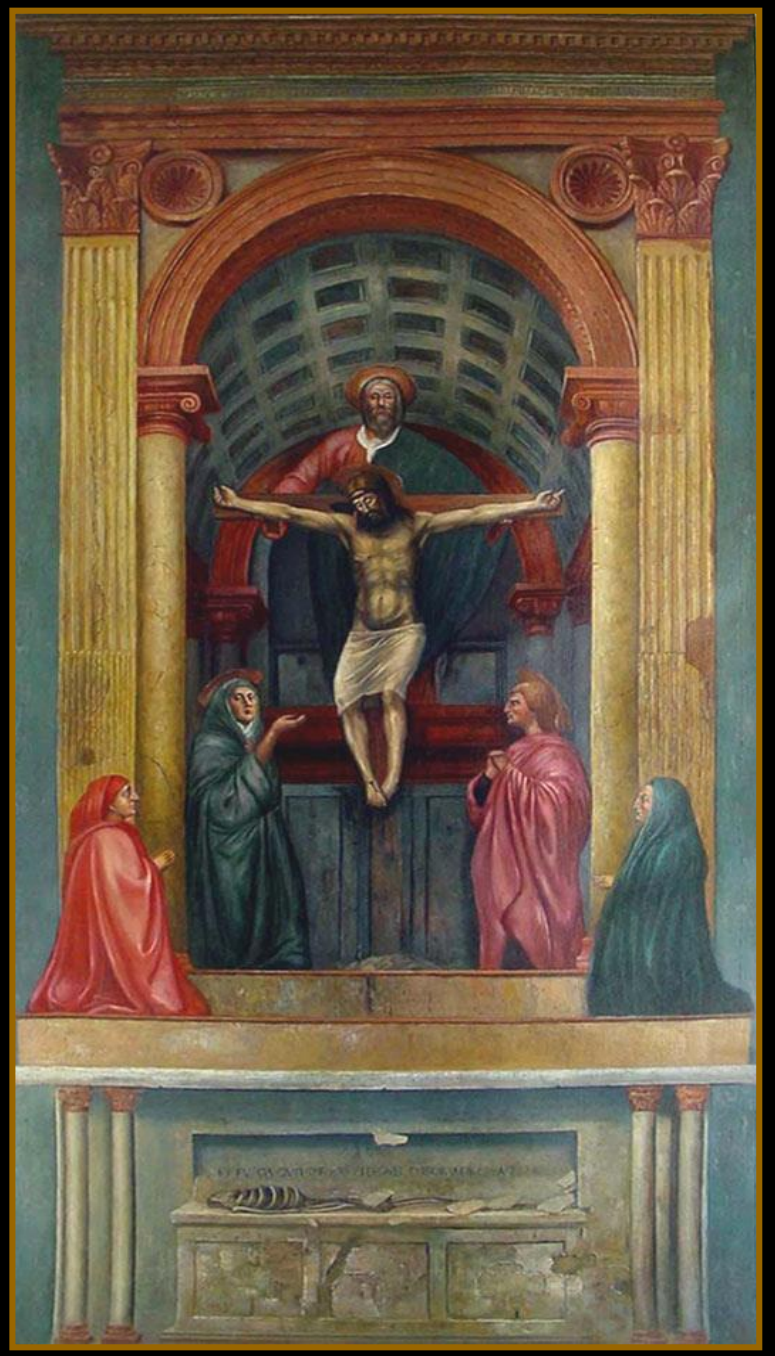
Early Renaissance

Masaccio: 1st Painter of the Italian Renaissance

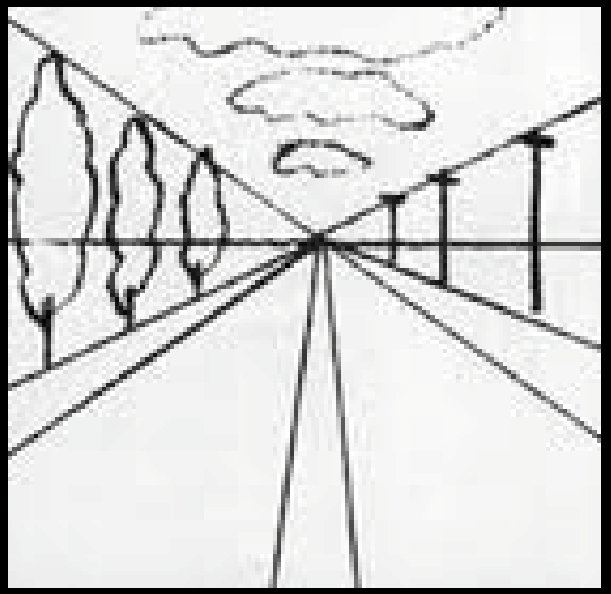
Masaccio (1401- 1428) was the one of the first artists to apply the new method of linear perspective as seen in his fresco of the ***Holy Trinity***.

Style Features

- Holy Trinity: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit (white dove above Jesus)
- St. John the Baptist (pink cloak) and Virgin Mary (dark cloak, presenting her son to us showing that Christ is path to salvation)
- Addition of two figures from the wealthy family that commissioned this piece (enhance the perspective)
- Exposed tomb below with skeleton = death is inevitable, this is what we all will be, reminder of death, prepare for eternity
- Accurate human anatomy
- Marriage between deep faithfulness and scientific observation
- Solid figures that look real
- Strong use of light and shadow
- Classical influences (barrel vaulting with coffers, arch, column, capital, pilasters)
- Linear perspective



Linear Perspective



Prior to the Holy Trinity, a man named Filippo Brunelleschi discovered linear perspective.

Linear Perspective: A graphic system that shows artists how to create the illusion of depth and volume on a flat surface.

This is accomplished by:
- Slanting lines to a vanishing point
- Making the size of objects get smaller as they recede further into the background
- Overlapping

Aerial/Atmospheric Perspective

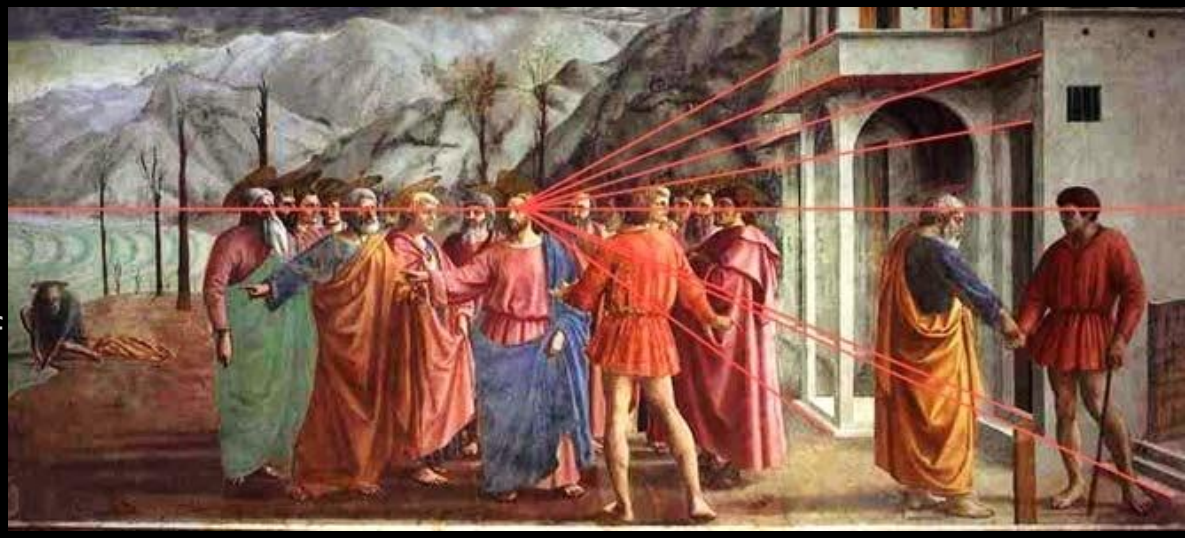
Definition: Uses hue, value and intensity to show distance in a painting.

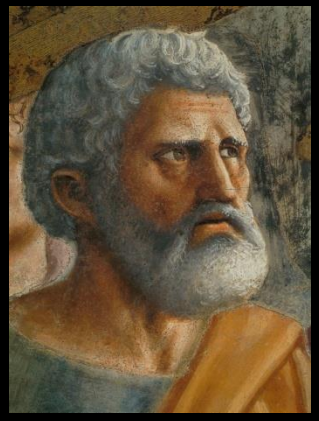
- Overlapping
- Slanting lines of buildings (leads eyes deep into the image)
- Distant objects are bluer, lighter and duller

The Tribute Money (1427) by Masaccio, fresco

- Tells of Christ being confronted by tax collector
- Problem = Christ and disciples have renounced all worldly possessions = no money to pay
- Tax collector – shorter garments, no halo, making gestures demanding money
- 3 scenes in one painting for different moments
- Christ directs St. Peter to go get money to pay the tax collector from the Sea of Galilee from the mouth of a fish = Christ performs a miracle
- Far left: Peter getting money
- Far right: Peter paying tax collector
- Christ is condoning civic responsibility to pay taxes

- Classical architecture
- Linear perspective – Christ's head is vanishing point
- All focus on Christ through figures and composition
- Aerial perspective (Illusion of endless space)
- Chiaroscuro
- Realistic cast shadows
- Single light source from right
- Sense of mass and volume through planted feet
- Foreshortening in halo and feet

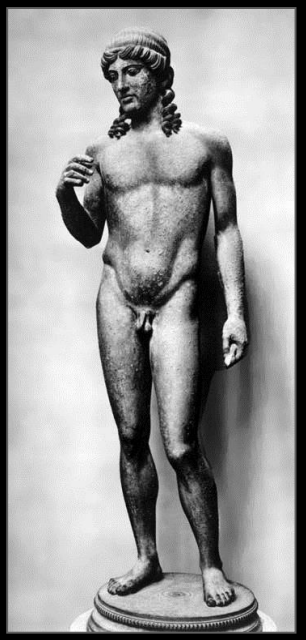




Donatello's David,
bronze, 1440's

Donatello
- About 5 ft tall
- First free-standing nude sculpture since Classical period = return to humanism and love for body
- Contropposto stance
- Realistic anatomy
- Story of David and Goliath (story of Philistines vs. Israelites)
- Young underdog (David) defeats his enemy (9 ft tall Goliath) against all odds with the help of God, using a slingshot
- Standing on severed head of Goliath
- Holds rock

EARLY RENAISSANCE SCULPTURE

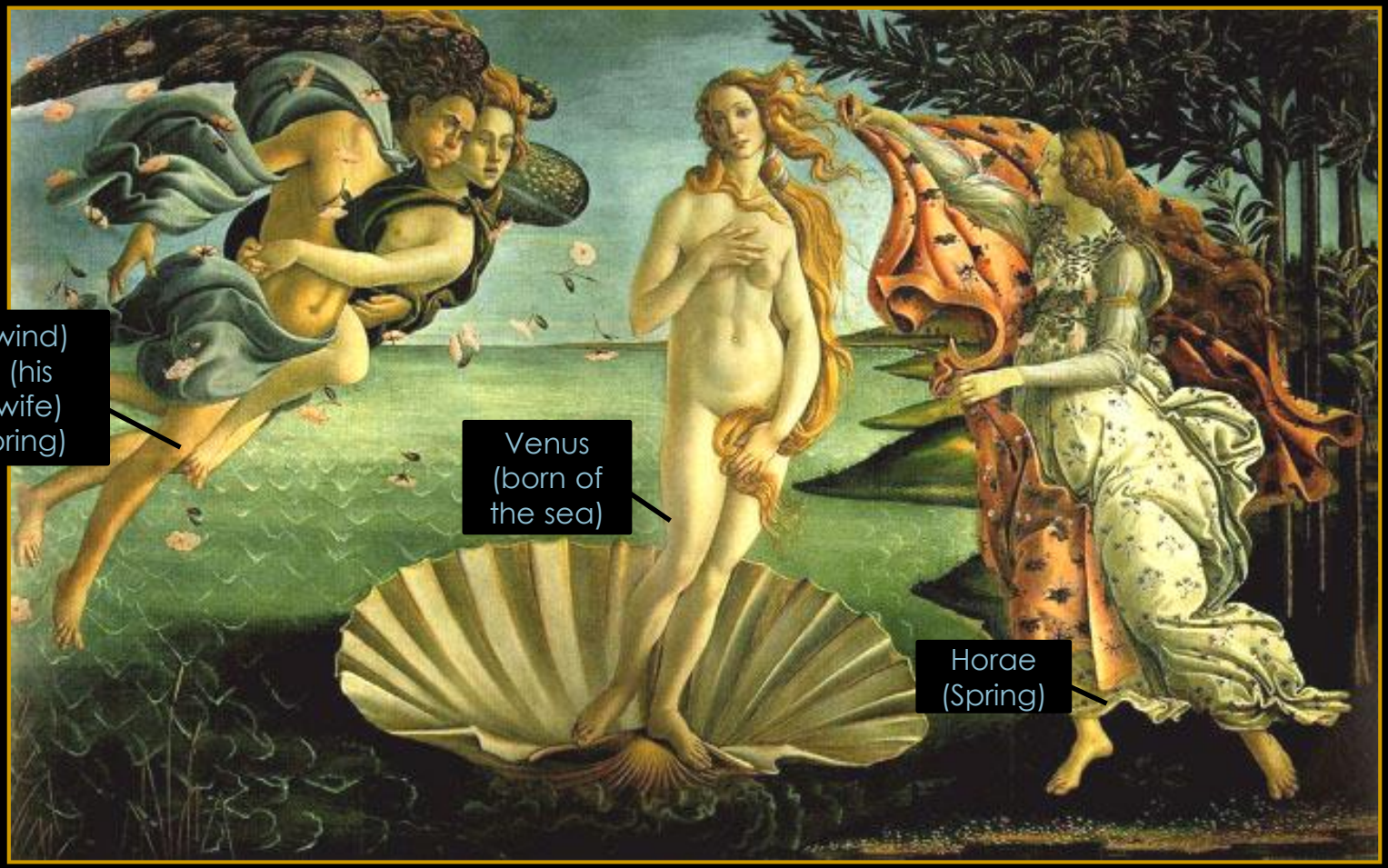


***Apollo*, ancient Greek**

Botticelli: *The Birth of Venus*, tempera on canvas, 1486, Florence, Italy

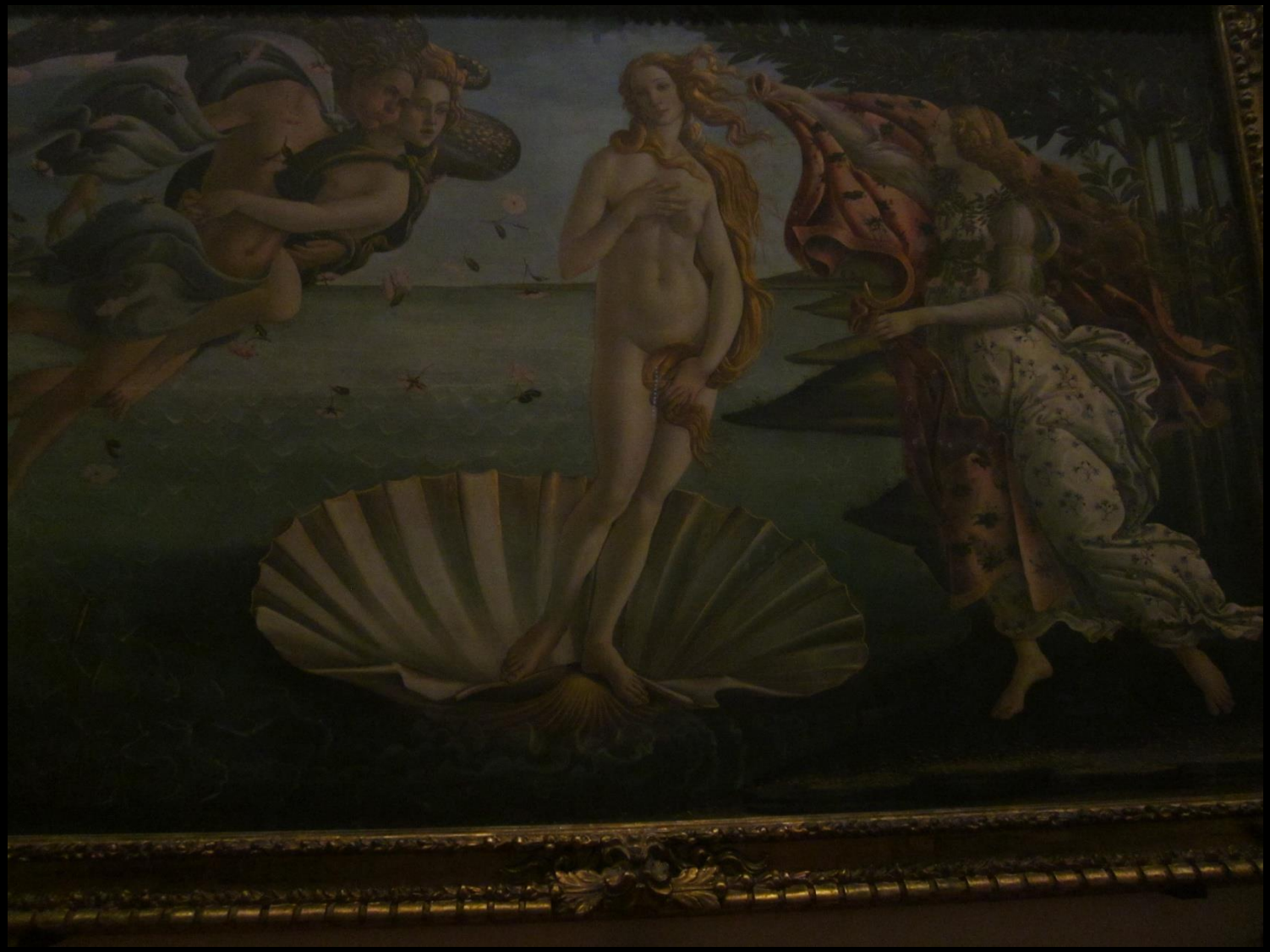
Classical Greek Venus

Botticelli was the first artist to paint a full-length female nude (other than Eve) in his Birth of Venus. The figure recalls the pose of an ancient Greek Venus.



- Rebirth of Greek and Roman themes.
- Beauty, gracefulness – as physical, sensual, erotic
- Contrapposto
- De-emphasis on deep space/perspective
- Pattern and decorative quality (repetition of flowers, lines in waves)

- Venus occupies the center of the canvas, traditionally reserved only for the Virgin Mary.
- Referring to classical mythology, this is perhaps the most pagan image of the entire Renaissance.
- Venus is seen as a source of 'divine love' like the Virgin Mary.
- The water, especially Venus' rising from it, symbolizes baptism & rebirth.



High Renaissance

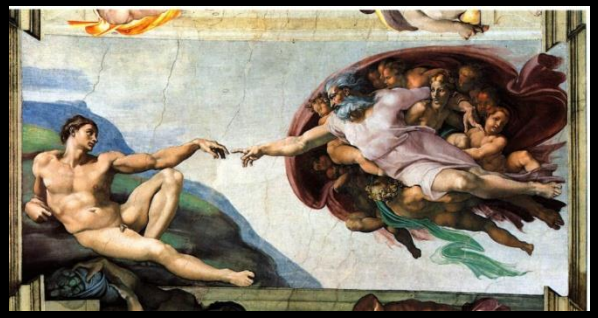
1495 - 1527

High Renaissance

During this time, Master artists like Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael created their timeless masterpieces.

All three lived in Italy and were commissioned by the popes of Rome to create ambitious artworks that glorified religious themes.

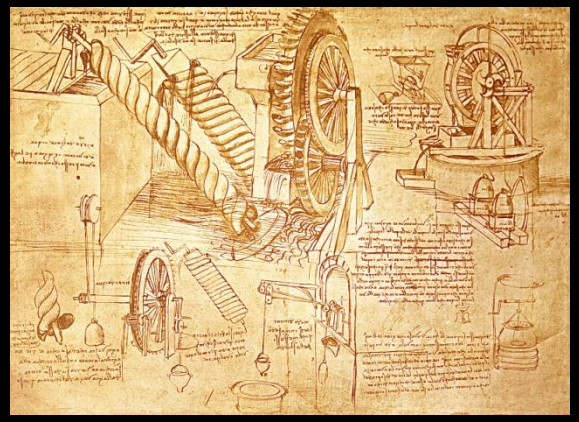
Never before had such a concentrated surge of creative energy occurred simultaneously on three fronts.



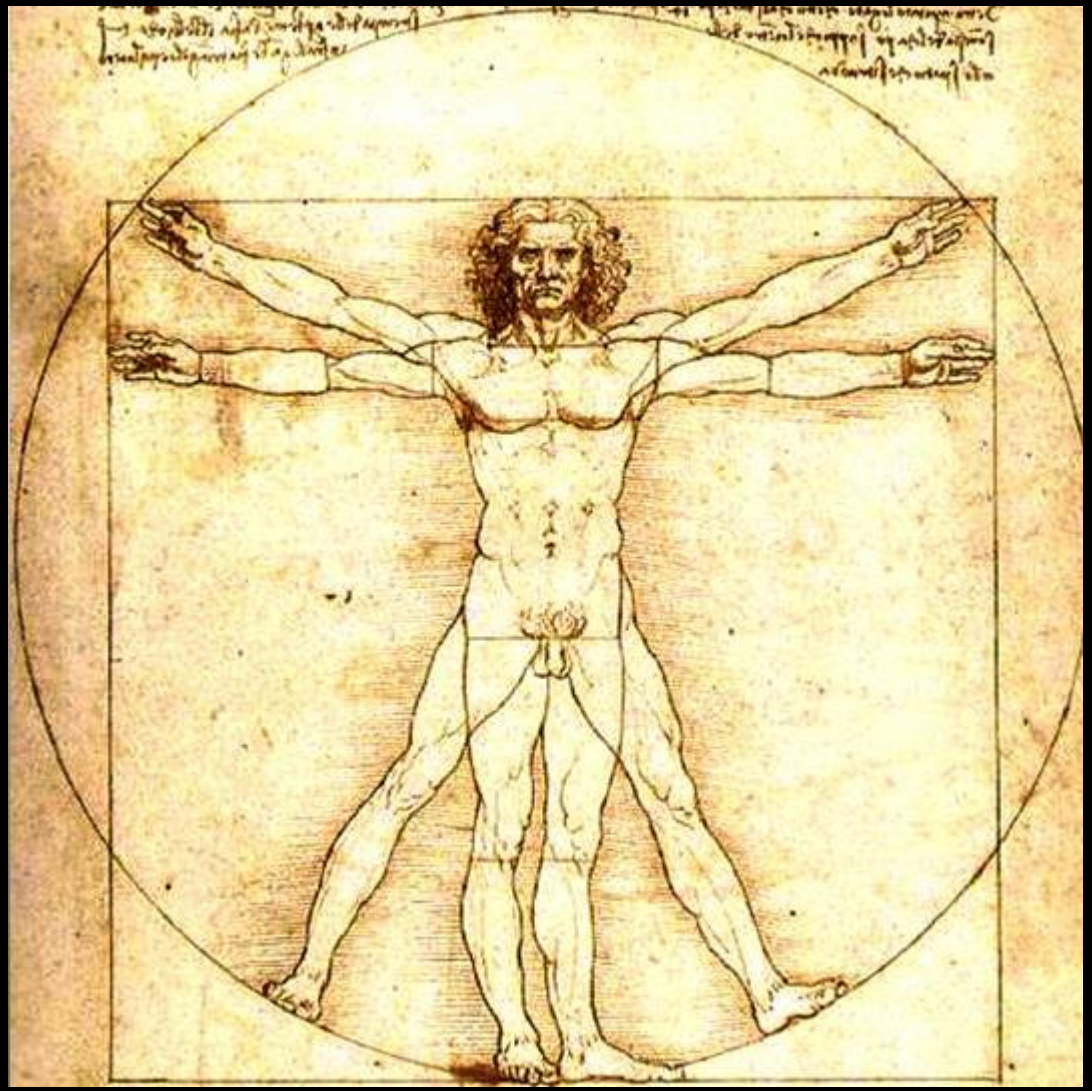
Leonardo da Vinci

His curiosity drove him to explore everything studying architecture, mathematics, sculpture, painting, anatomy, poetry, literature, music, geology, botany and hydraulics. It is estimated he created over 120 notebooks full of drawings.

He also dissected cadavers at a time when the practice was outlawed. This enabled him to learn how arms and legs bend and how muscles shift.

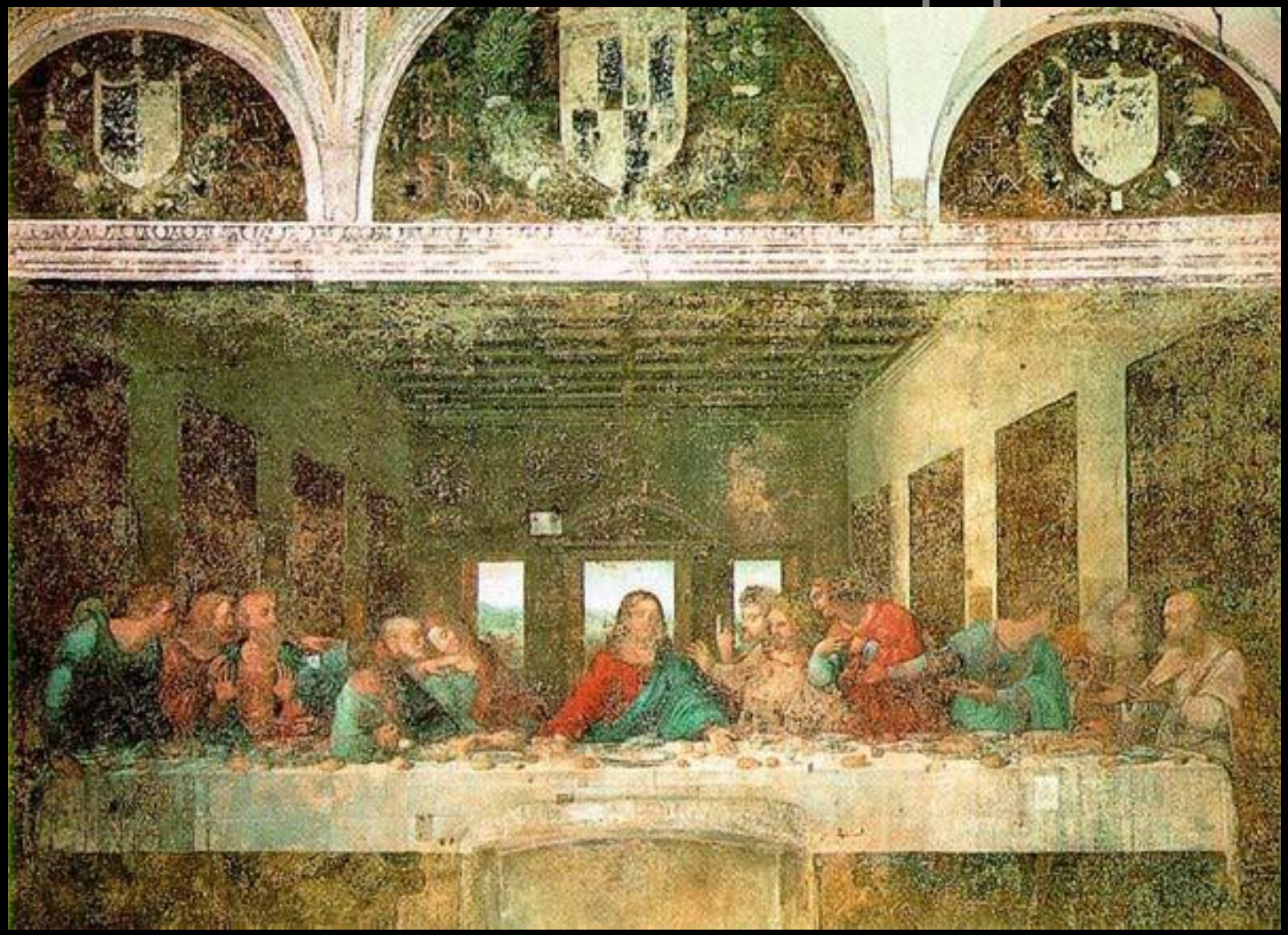


Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, 1490



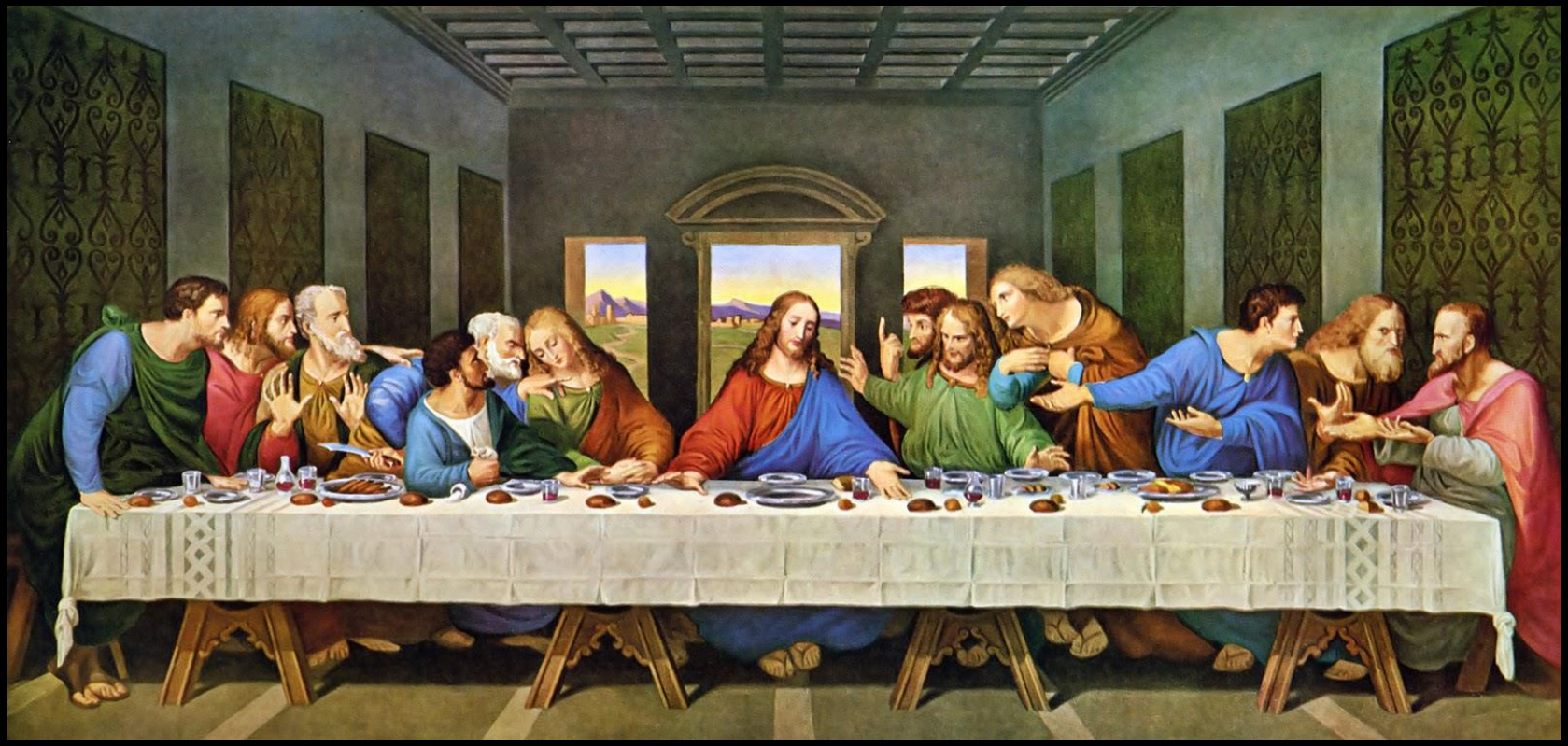
- Drawing of the perfection of human body
- Model of ideal proportions
- Man's arm span = his height

Da Vinci's The Last Supper, 1495 - 98

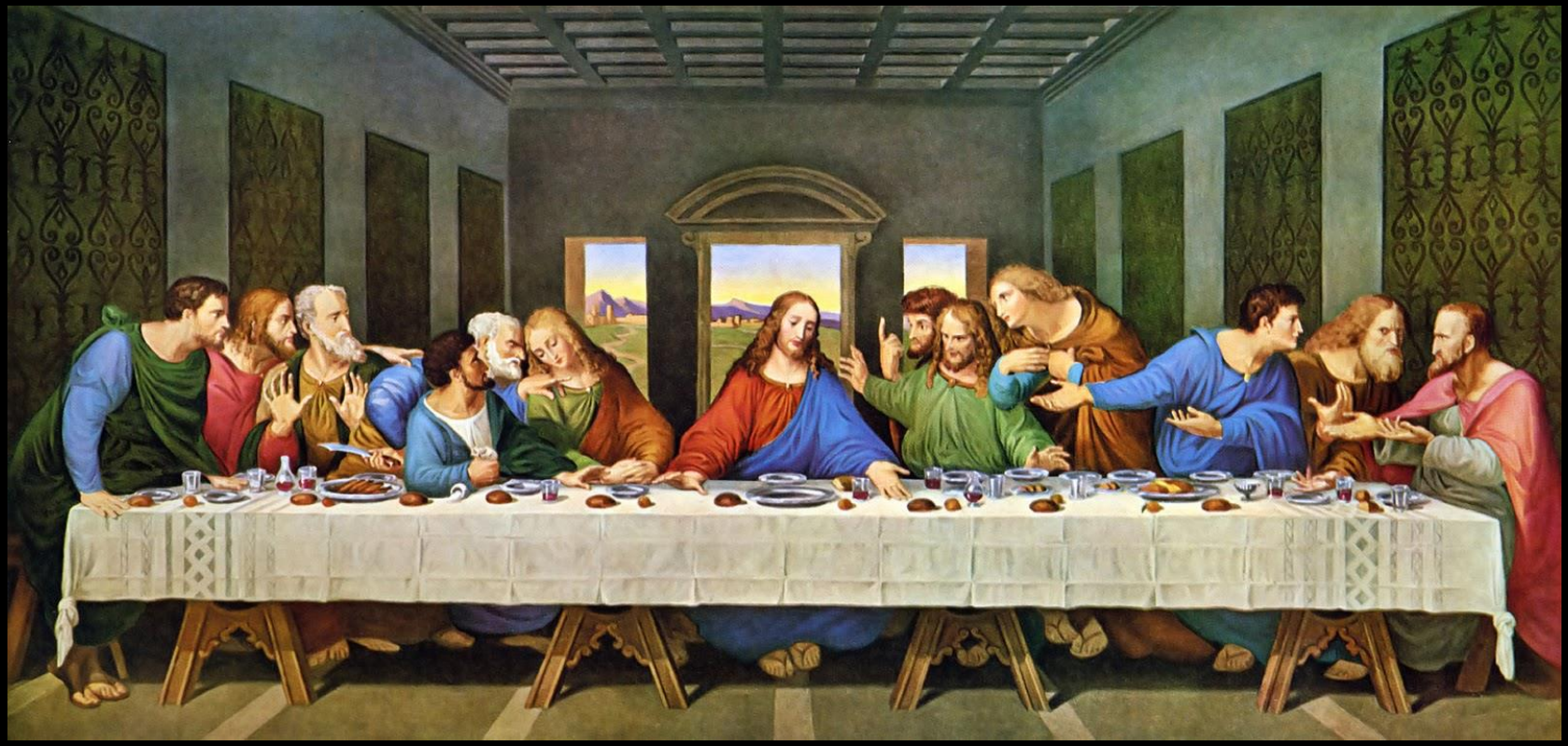


Fresco, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, Italy (in a monastery's dining room)
Considered a masterpiece and, yet, also a failure. Da Vinci hurried to complete this and experimented painting with oils on dry plaster. It began to flake off the wall shortly after it was applied.

1981, Leonardo's Last Supper, before restoration

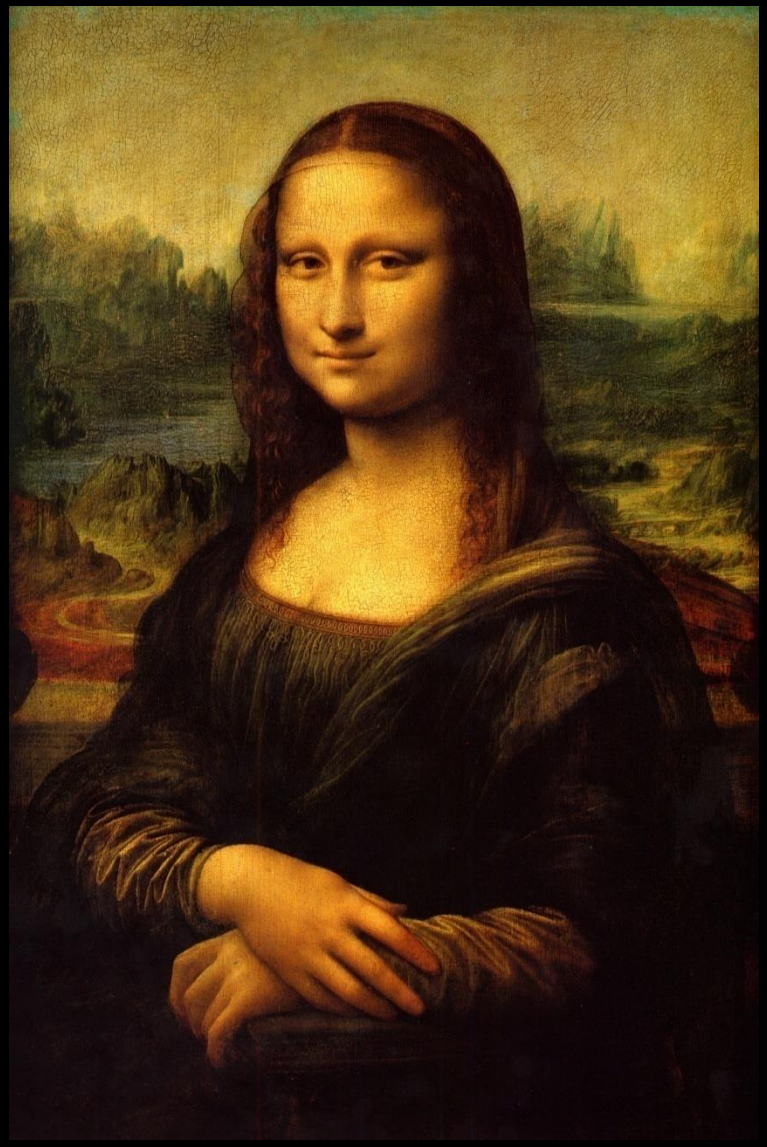


- Jesus has just announced that "One of you will betray me"
- The disciples react in a flurry, Christ is calm
- Disciples organized in 4 groups of 3
- Judas is the 3rd figure on Jesus' right, in shadow, looking upset, elbow on table, clutching bag of silver for betraying Christ
- First figure on Christ's right is St. John, often mistaken for Mary Magdalene, supposed wife of Jesus

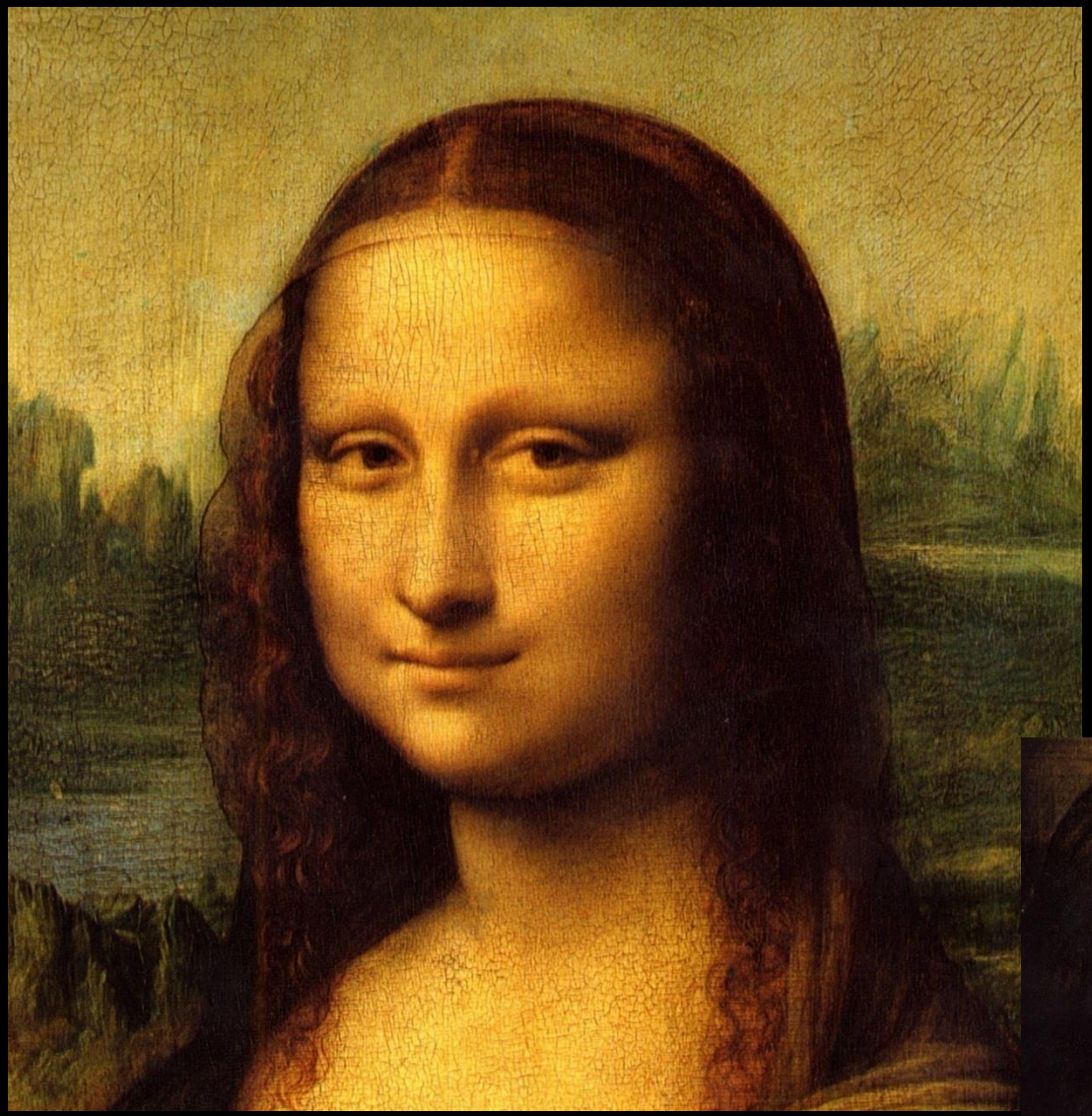


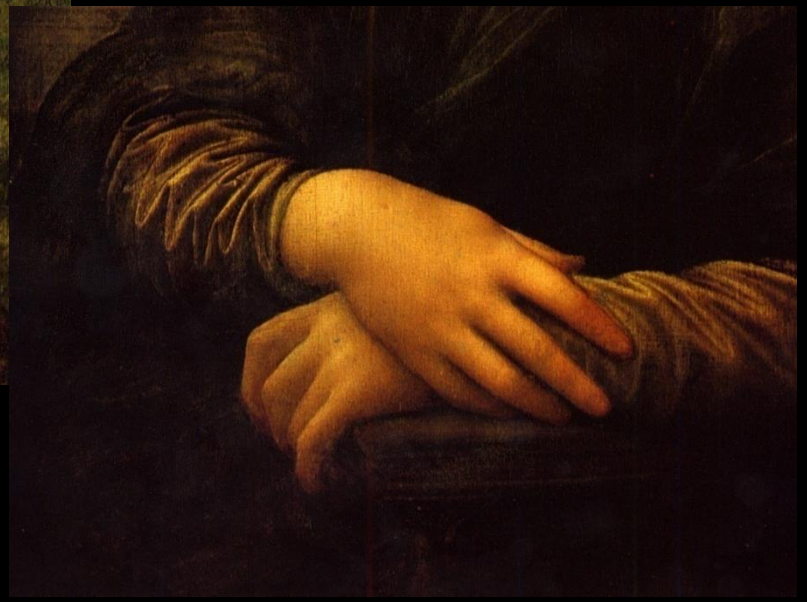
- Linear perspective to create an extended dining hall
- Christ is vanishing point and focal point
- Christ's head is the only one framed entirely by arch, window and light = halo, divine light
- Geometric organization/symmetry = divine order and purity (windows, tapestries, ceiling, table)
- Realism in bodies and still life
- Contrasting figures together to create sense of movement and variety (Judas moving away, Peter moving forward, John is calm)

Mona Lisa, 1503-06, Louvre, France

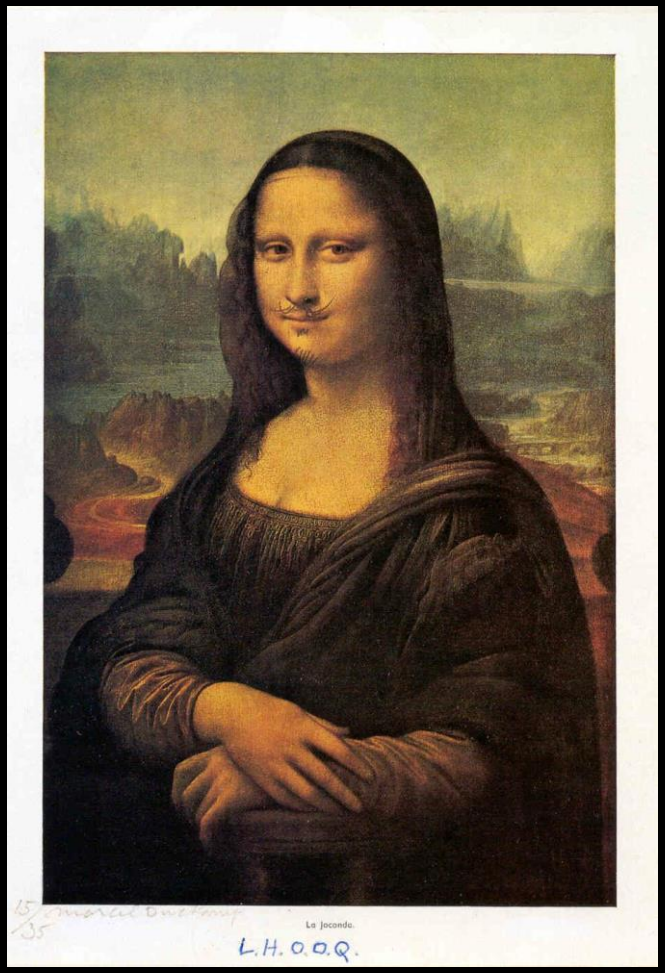


- 30" by 21"
- Mona = contraction of Madonna = M'lady
- Mysterious smile resides not in her eyes or mouth but the two together
- Relaxed three-quarter pose, this was revolutionary as prior portraits were stiff and contrived, and mainly consisted of profiles
- Pyramidal composition
- Sfumato painting technique: no harsh outlines (smoky)
- Layered translucent layers of colour to give appearance of depth (over 40 thin layers)
- Chiaroscuro



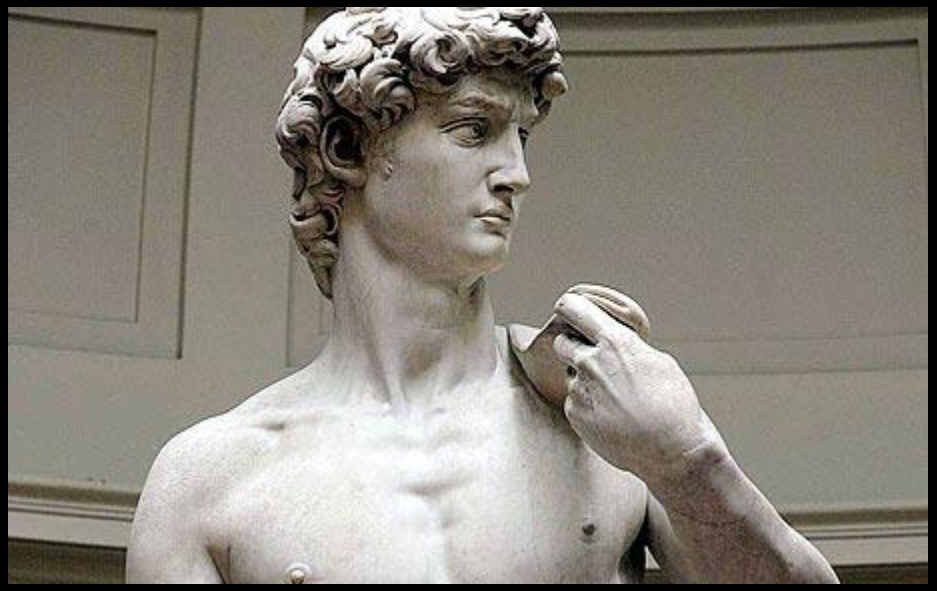


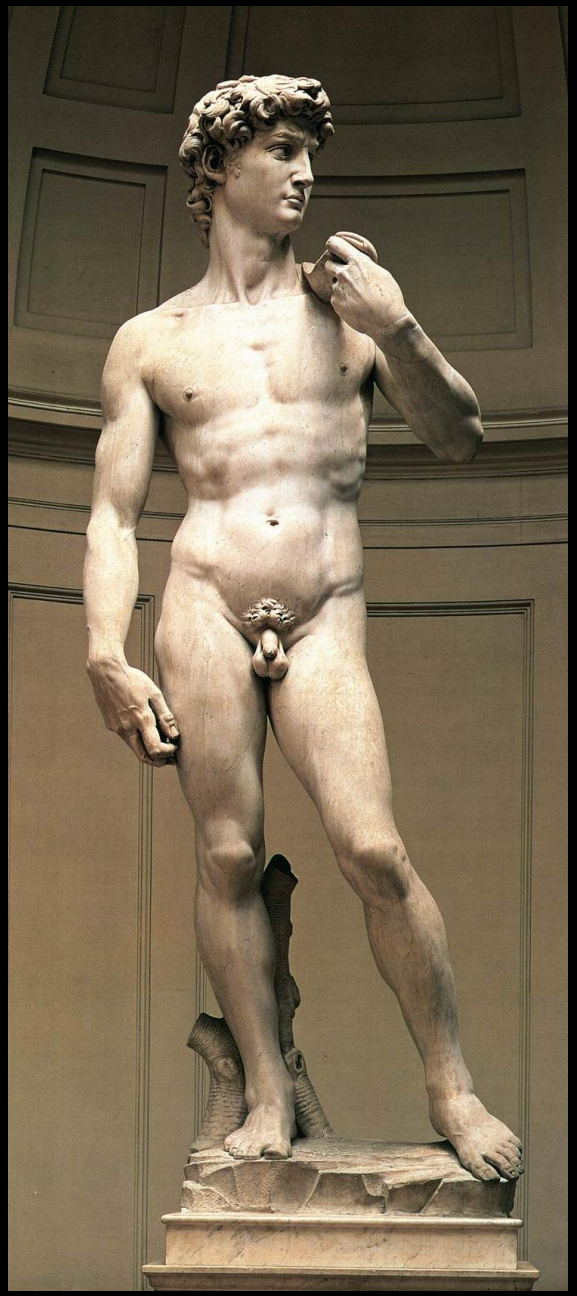
- Stolen from Louvre in 1911
- In 1919, the Dada artist Marcel Duchamp drew a mustache and goatee on a postcard of the Mona Lisa and printed L.H.O.O.Q.
- When sounded out in French is said "She has a hot ass"



Michelangelo's David, 1501-04 Academia Gallery, Florence, marble

- Approx. 12 feet tall
- Carved from a single block of marble
- Michelangelo believed figures were divinely created in the rock, he just needed to sculpt them out
- Story of David and Goliath before Goliath's slaying
- Biblical hero
- Ideal male form (reflection of internal state)
- Relaxed and mature confidence
- Detail in body
- Enlarged proportions – meant to stand on top of a building and viewed at from the ground
- Contrapposto
- Humanism (glorifying God by showing Him what man can do)





Compare

- High Renaissance vs. Early Renaissance
- Size: 12 ft vs 5 ft
- Material: marble vs bronze
- Story of David and Goliath
- Before the kill vs after the kill
- Contropposto
- Adult vs youthful
- Man vs boy
- Idealism vs. youthful/childlike
- Overall gesture of pose suggests satisfaction

Pieta

(1500) Marble, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

- Pieta: term for sculpture depicting Jesus on Mary's lap after crucifixion (pity)
- Carved while in his early twenties
- The only sculpture Michelangelo signed (on Mary's sash)
- Shows Mary mourning over the body of Christ
- Pyramidal composition
- Disproportioned – Mary is oversized to support Christ's body (fully grown man in a woman's lap)
- Michelangelo hides Mary's oversized body with full length drapery and folds

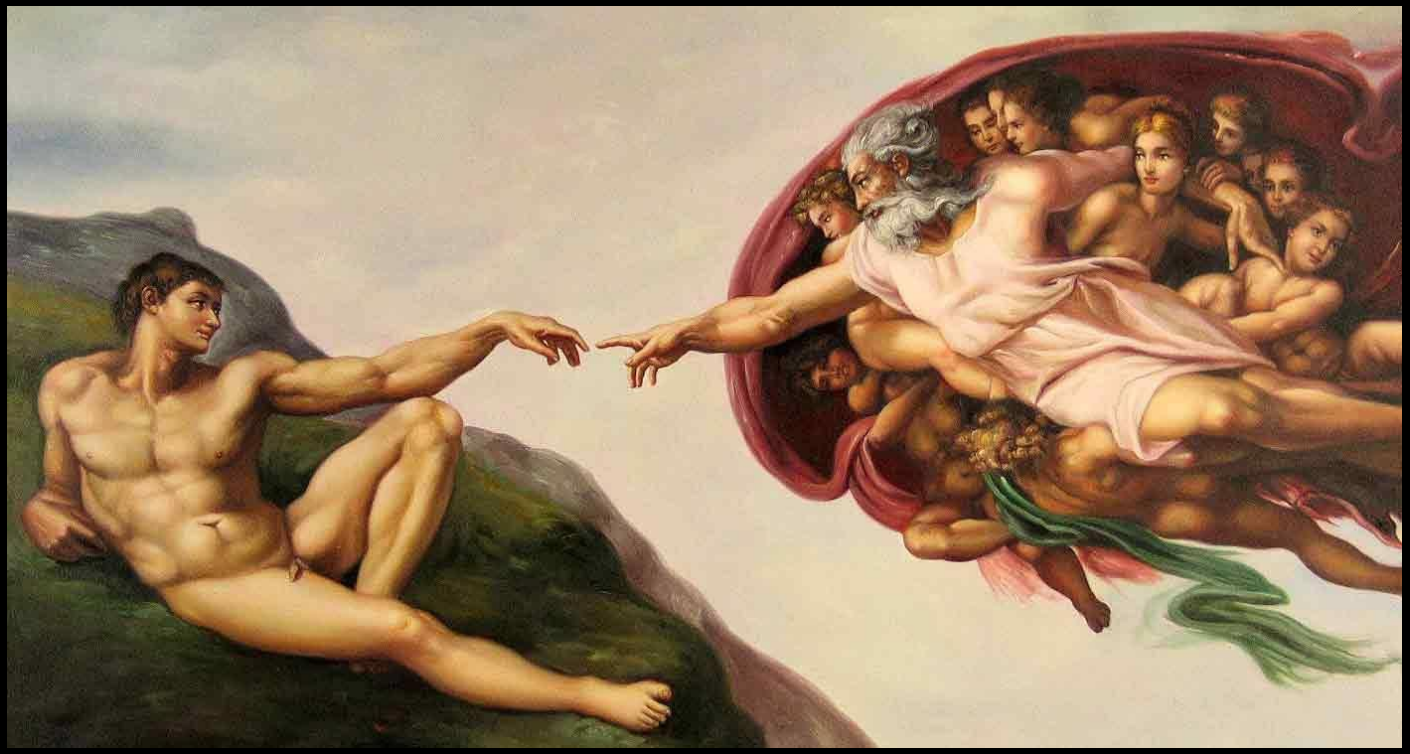
Pieta

- Mary is not depicted at her true age but a youthful, idealized figure = uncorruptable beauty, purity and service to God/Trinity (Jesus, the father)
- Realism in weight depiction of Christ (Mary pulling up his weight)
- Mary's hand held out – as if saying this is the path to salvation
- Does not give overwhelming feeling of suffering – no obvious expression of pain – less about death, more about loneliness

Sistine Chapel Ceiling

(1508 - 12) Fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City

- 40 ft wide, 133 ft long and rounded, 68 ft high
- Michelangelo saw himself as a sculptor not a painter
- Raphael's suggestion (thinking Michelangelo would fail)
- Commissioned by the Pope
- Painted laying on his back on a large scaffold
- Divided into 9 sections
- Tells the story of humanity from the Creation to the Flood
- Looks more like a sculpture than a painting
- Architecture is painted
- Strong values show solid forms
- Constant moving, twisting and turning
- Took over 4 years

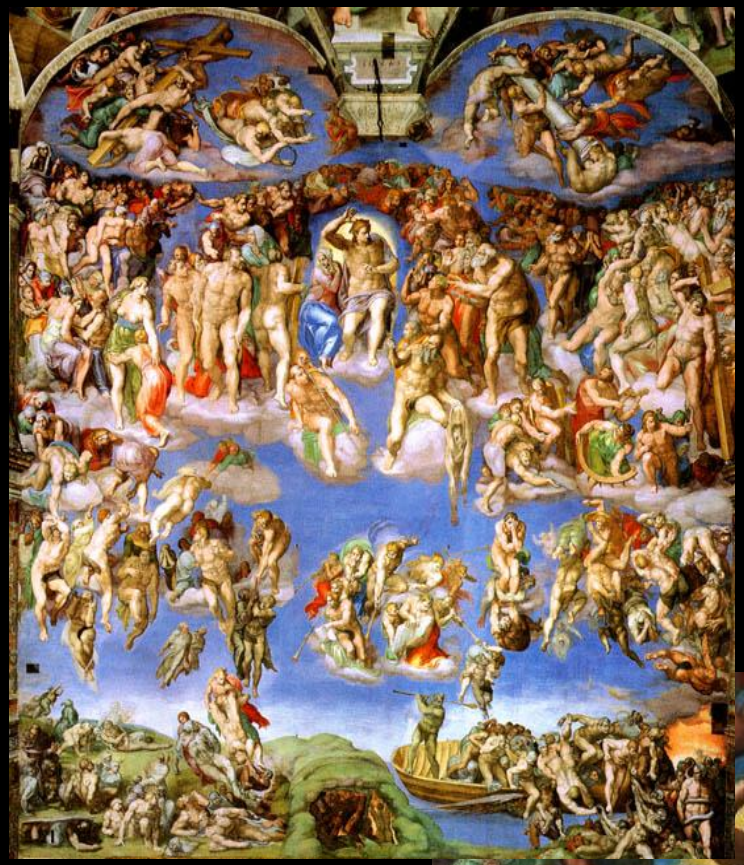


Creation of Adam

- 1511, Fresco, from Genesis (first book in Bible)
- Dramatic anticipation
- Reclining Adam with outstretched hand toward God about to be given the spark of life
- God surrounded by group of figures, angels
- Calm, passive, and stationary Adam vs. Active God in motion
- Red cloud= human brain giving Adam intelligence? heart? apple?
- Hillside = Adam (humanity) is bound to the earth while God is in the untouchable, infinite sky
- God's left arm around a figure = Eve (had not yet been created), plan in place or Mary?
- God's left hand is touching a child = Jesus (2 fingers similar to the 2 fingers a priest would use to hold up Eucharist)

The Last Judgment, **Michelangelo**, 1537-1541

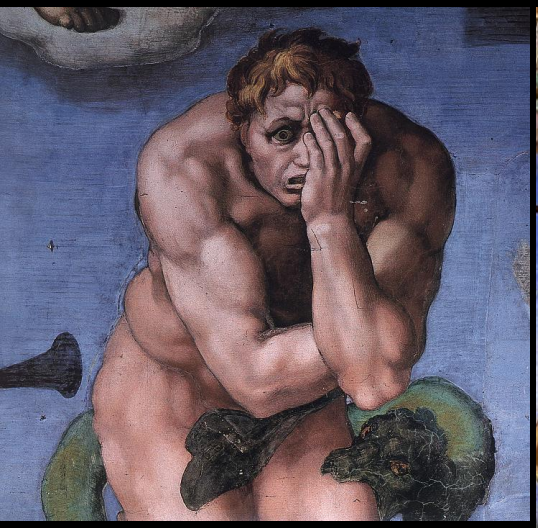
- Fresco
- Altar wall of Sistine Chapel
- Depiction of the second coming of Christ and the apocalypse
- Christ returns and judges all of mankind
- On His left = sinners going to hell
- On His right = blessed going to heaven

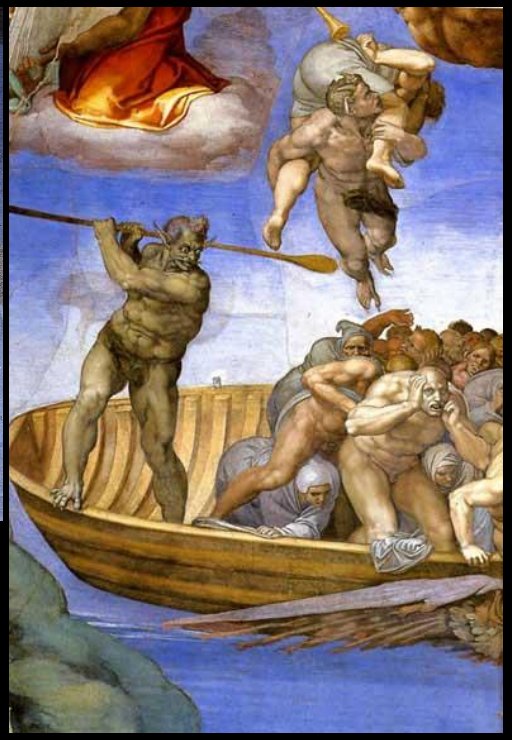


- Terrifying subject, good dose of fear
- Christ's attention not on the blessed but sinners, mid action
- St. Bartholomew – one of the most grotesque images – martyred saint who was skinned alive, holding his skin (theory that face is Michelangelo's self portrait, midway down, may just fall into boat of the damned = Michelangelo's uncertainty)

- Ideal beauty is gone
- No longer graceful, but violent/chaotic
- Almost deformed bodies
- Message is primary = sin and you will burn in hell
- Angels blowing trumpets (to awaken dead from graves)

•Literal rendering of raising of dead on left (angels pull up and help)
•On the right, angels push and punch down , sadness, fear, recognition of failings, devils, pitchforks, serpents





Raphael

Successful, wealthy and admired. As a child he apprenticed with a respected artist learning how to use soft colours, circular forms and landscapes. As he grew he studied Leonardo's and Michelangelo's works and combined their styles.

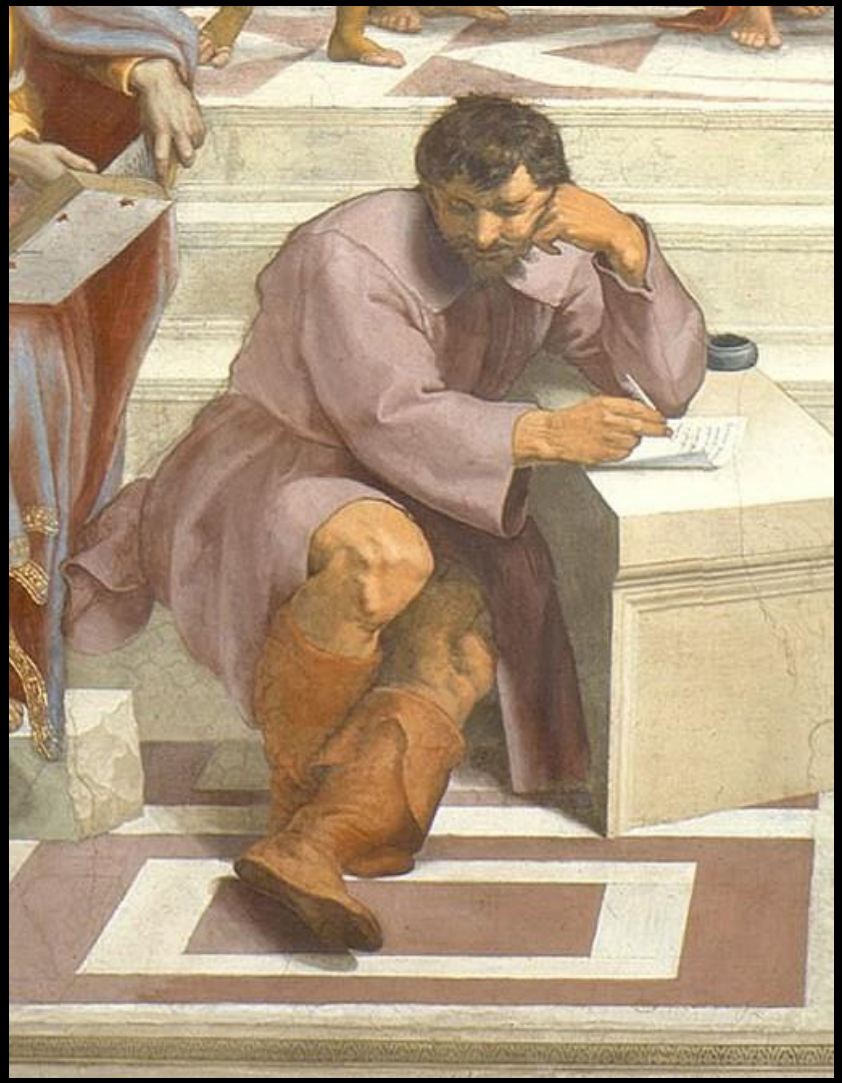
The School of Athens

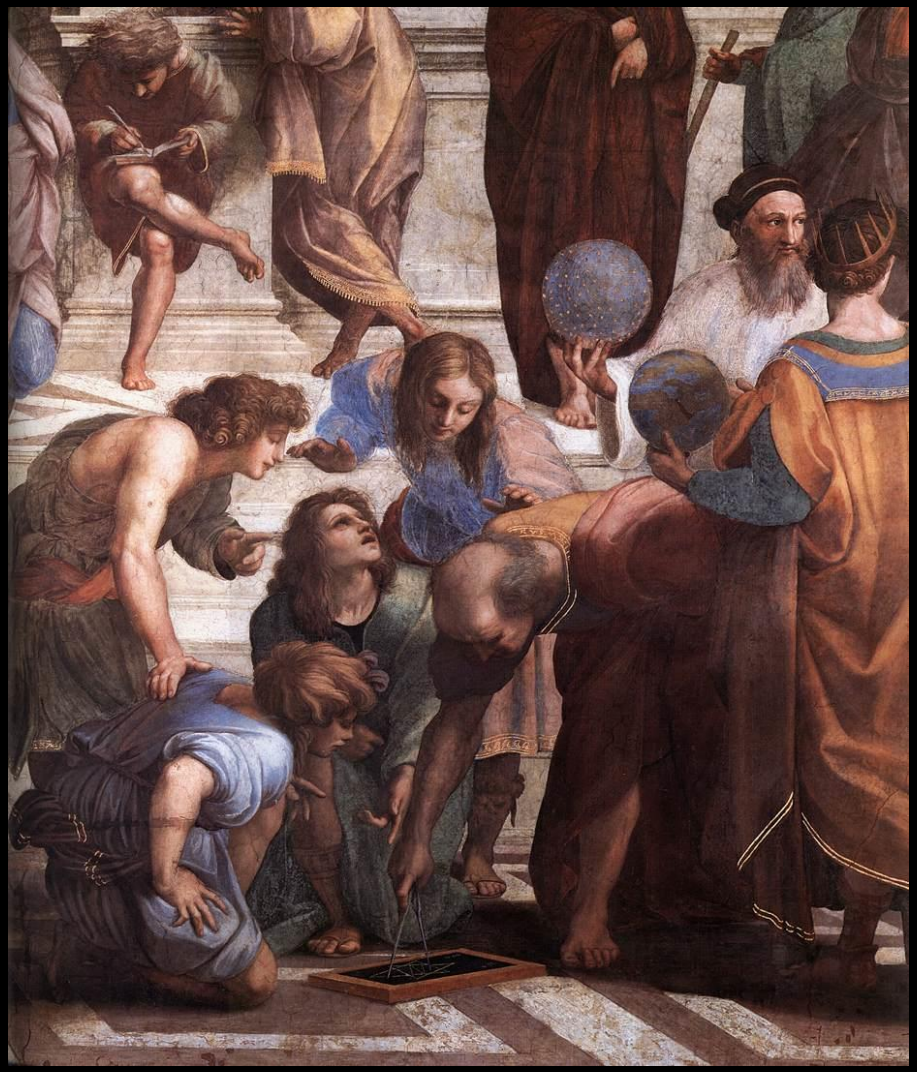
In the Papal Palace, Vatican City, 1509-1511

- Classical Roman architecture (arches, niches, Apollo, Athena)
- Linear perspective points to 2 key figures and 2 different schools of thought
- Plato and Aristotle = 2 sides of western thinking
- Plato (red): pointing upward, interested in the spiritual, non-tangible elements, looking for something greater
- Aristotle (blue): hand outward, interested in the tangible, physical and observable, making sense of the world we can see with our senses

- Composition divided into 2 sections
- Left = mathematicians, philosophers thinking about ideas not related to physical and actual
- Right = scientists, dealing with the physical, proving theories

- Massive seated figure, leaning and writing, philosopher Heraclitus, known for thinking about time as something constantly in flux (used Michelangelo as model)
- Figure on far left – bald and bearded, Pythagoras – Pythagorean Theorem, geometry, perfection, what is divine beauty





- Figures interacting and gesturing
- Raphael's self-portrait among astronomers

THE END!

"David,"
(rear view)

Review

Renaissance originated in:

Famous Art Patron:

Humanism:

Style Features:

Linear perspective:

Atmospheric Perspective:

Early Renaissance
Massacio
Donatello
Botticelli

High Renaissance
Leonardo
Michelangelo
Raphael