

Painters of Interest to Docents for the Cathedral

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Pietro Perugino (Pietro Vannucci) was active mainly in Perugia from which his nickname derives. In 1472 he and Leonardo da Vinci, with whom he trained, enrolled as painters in the fraternity of St Luke in Florence but by 1475 he was back in Perugia.



By 1481 he was sufficiently well known to be commissioned to paint frescos on the walls of the newly built Sistine Chapel, Rome, along with

Pietro Perugino (Pietro Vannucci), Italian painter, (b. 1450, d. 1523)

Botticelli, His main work there is *Christ Delivering the Keys to St Peter*, he also did the frescoed altarpiece, but this was destroyed to make way for Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*.

Perugino was a fine portraitist as well as a fresco painter, but today he is best known for his altarpieces, which are usually gentle, pious, and rather sentimental in manner. A mature masterpiece by the artist who would become the teacher of Raphael, The *Resurrection Panel* painted in 1499 shows the risen Christ, floating above an open tomb. Two angels flank him while the guards at the sepulcher sleep. One guard, awake, recoils in shock at the vision.



In a clever play of perspectives, the sarcophagus becomes a focal point for the viewer. The coffin recedes backward into space, with the black opening reminding the viewer of the chapel's funerary function as well as his own mortality. The brilliant purple-toned color of Christ's robe emphasizes his triumph over death.



Fra Angelico entered a Dominican convent in Fiesole in 1418 and became a friar using the name Giovanni da Fiesole. He began his career as an illuminator of missals and other religious books. He began to paint altarpieces and other panels; among his important early works are the Madonna of the Star and *Christ in Glory Surrounded by Saints and Angels*.



Fra Angelico
Florentine
painter and
Dominican friar,
b. 1400, d. 1455

In 1436 some of the Dominican friars of Fiesole moved to the convent of San Marco in Florence where he, sometimes aided by assistants, painted many frescoes for the cloister, chapter house, and entrances. The most impressive of these are *The Crucifixion*, *Christ as a Pilgrim*, and *Transfiguration*.



In 1445 Angelico was summoned to Rome by Pope Eugenius IV to paint frescoes for the now destroyed Chapel of the Sacrament in the Vatican. His last important works, frescoes for the chapel of Pope Nicholas in the Vatican, are *Scenes from the Lives of Saints Stephen and Lawrence* (1447-1449), probably painted from his designs by assistants.

Angelico combined the influence of the elegantly decorative International Gothic style with the more realistic style of the Renaissance masters. Angelico's representation of devout facial expressions and his use of color to heighten emotion are particularly effective. His skill in creating monumental figures, representing motion, and suggesting deep space through the use of linear perspective, especially in the Roman frescoes, mark him as one of the foremost painters of the Renaissance.



Filippo Lippi was brought up as an unwanted child in the Carmelite friary of the Carmine, where he took his vows in 1421. However, Lippi was a reluctant friar and had a scandalous love affair with a nun, Lucrezia Buti, who bore his son Filippino and a daughter Alessandra. The couple was released from their vows and allowed to marry."

In 1432 Lippi probably painted a fresco in the cloister of Santa Maria del Carmine and in the same year he apparently left the convent permanently.

Fra. Filippo LIPPI
Florentine painter and
reluctant friar
(b. 1406, d. 1469)

In 1442, with Medici support, Pope Eugenius IV awarded him an important benefice which financed the painting of *St Bernard's Vision of the Virgin and Coronation of the Virgin*



From about 1440, however, his style changed direction, becoming more linear and preoccupied with decorative motifs - thin, fluttering draperies, brocades, etc. Fra Filippo began to fresco the enormous choir of the Cathedral of Prato in 1452 (after Fra Angelico had turned down the assignment). As a fresco painter Lippi's finest achievement is this cycle on the lives of *Sts Stephen and John the Baptist* (1452-65)

Filippo Lippi was not dedicated to the study of nature firsthand; instead, he depended largely upon painted and sculptured prototypes, and his figures are often inorganic and unanatomical, rendered without an ultimate conviction for their three-dimensional presence. For the most part his painted architecture, the buildings he invented, cannot even vaguely be reconstructed. Lippi was highly regarded in his day (he was patronized by the Medici, who came to his aid when he was imprisoned and tortured for alleged fraud) and his influence is seen in the work of numerous artists, most notably Botticelli, who was probably his pupil. Four centuries later he was one of the major sources for the second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism.



RAFFAELLO Sanzio
(b. 1483, d. 1520) Italian painter and architect of the Italian High Renaissance

Raphael is best known for his Madonnas and for his large figure compositions in the Vatican in Rome. Raphael was first drawn to Florence by accounts of the work that Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were undertaking in that city.

Many of the works that Raphael executed in the years between 1505 and 1507, most notably a great series of Madonnas including the *Madonna of the Goldfinch*, the *Madonna del Prato* and *La Belle Jardinière* are marked by the influence of Leonardo. Raphael learned the Florentine method of building up his composition in depth with pyramidal figure masses; the figures are grouped as a single unit, but each retains its own individuality and shape. Raphael also owed much to Leonardo's lighting techniques; he made moderate use of Leonardo's chiaroscuro (i.e., strong contrast between light and dark), and he was especially influenced by his sfumato (i.e., use of extremely fine, soft shading instead of line to delineate forms and features). Raphael went beyond Leonardo, however, in creating new figure types whose round, gentle faces reveal uncomplicated and typically human sentiments but raised to a sublime perfection and serenity.

Toward the end of 1508 Pope Julius II called Raphael to Rome. At this time Raphael was little known in Rome, but the young man soon made a deep impression on the volatile Julius and the papal court, and his authority as a master grew day by day. Raphael was endowed with a handsome appearance and great personal charm in addition to his prodigious artistic talents, and he eventually became so popular that he was called "the prince of painters."

Raphael spent the last 12 years of his short life in Rome. They were years of feverish activity and successive masterpieces. The



Madonnas that Raphael painted in Rome show him turning away from the serenity and gentleness of his earlier works in order to emphasize qualities of energetic movement and grandeur.

The *Sistine Madonna* shows both the richness of color and new boldness in compositional invention typical of Raphael's Roman period. Besides his other accomplishments, Raphael became the most important portraitist in Rome during the first two decades of the 16th century. Leo X commissioned Raphael to design 10 large tapestries to hang on the walls of the Sistine Chapel.



Raphael's last masterpiece is the *Transfiguration* (commissioned in 1517), an enormous altarpiece that was unfinished at his death and completed by his assistant Giulio Romano. It now hangs in the Vatican Museum. Raphael died on his 37th birthday. His funeral mass was celebrated at the Vatican, his *Transfiguration* was placed at the head of the bier, and his body was buried in the Pantheon in Rome.



Outstanding as a painter, sculptor, and architect, Giotto (full name: Giotto di Bondone) was recognized as the first genius of art in the Italian Renaissance. Giotto lived and worked at a time when people's minds and talents were first being freed from the shackles of medieval restraint.

Giotto was short and homely, and he was a great wit and practical joker. He was married and left six children at his death. Unlike many of his fellow artists, he saved his money and was accounted a rich man. He was on familiar terms with the pope, and King Robert of Naples called him a good friend.

GIOTTO di Bondone
(b. 1267, d. 1337)
Florentine painter and
architect

In 1334 the city of Florence honored Giotto with the title of Magnus Magister (Great Master) and appointed him city architect and superintendent of public works. In this capacity he designed the famous Campanile (bell tower). He died in 1337, before the work was finished.

In common with other artists of his day, Giotto lacked the technical knowledge of anatomy and perspective that later painters learned but is regarded as the founder of the central tradition of Western painting because his work broke free from the stylizations of Byzantine art, introducing new ideals of naturalism and creating a convincing sense of pictorial space.



In spite of his fame and the demand for his services, no surviving painting is documented as being by him, but it is universally agreed that the fresco cycle in the Arena Chapel at Padua is by Giotto, and it forms the starting-point for any consideration of his work. The other major fresco cycle associated with Giotto's name is that on the *Life of St Francis* in the Upper Church of S. Francesco at Assisi controversy.

Several panel paintings bear Giotto's signature, among them a number of *Madonna and Child* renditions, but it is generally agreed that the signature is a trademark showing that the works came from Giotto's shop rather than an indication of his personal workmanship.

On the other hand, the *Ognissanti Madonna* is neither signed nor firmly documented, but is a work of such grandeur and humanity that it is universally accepted as Giotto's.

