

The Renaissance

Revival of Classical Rome
in Italy 1400-1600s

LAST WEEK

Last class I talked about the beginning of the Christian Era. It began in the late Roman Empire (330 CE) when Constantine made Christianity the 'official' religion of the Roman Empire.

During the 1000+ years between the fall of Rome and the Early Renaissance Europe was rebuilding.

We looked at some of that artwork last week. No longer are there many gods and goddesses, there is one god.

Many say the Virgin Mary emerged because the people still needed a female deity. Regardless, she became a major figure of worship. The main other female image was Eve.



The female in Christian Art--- Saints or Sinners. We see many images of Eve and the Virgin Mary. Images of women and roles for women are limited.

THE MIDDLE AGES

During the Middle Ages The Catholic Church had enormous power. Almost all artwork was Christian that was commissioned by the Church.

The religious, social and political structures were God centered. It was believed that God was responsible for everything and the pope was his instrument on earth.

Many of the advances we saw in Greece and Rome (philosophy, mathematics, medical, etc.), the knowledge was kept alive in the Eastern part of the Empire but lost to the West.

Artwork focused on Church sanctioned Christian themes. It was often highly emotional.



Virgin with the Dead Christ (Röttgen Pietà), from the Rhineland, Germany, ca. 1300–1325. Painted wood, 2' 10 1/2" high. Rheinisches Landmuseum, Bonn.

THE RENAISSANCE

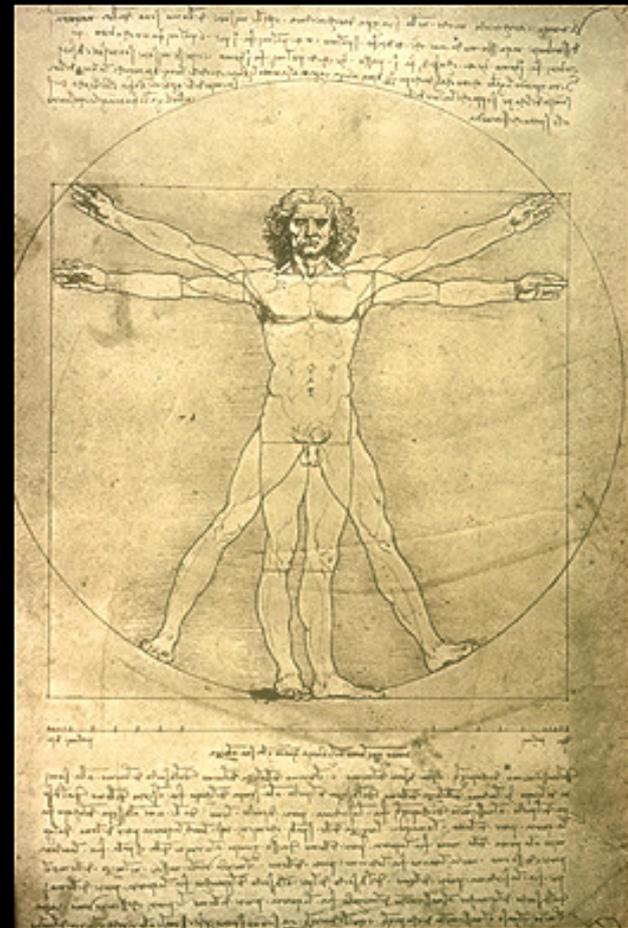
The Renaissance is a period in Western history that follows the Middle Ages.

We see a revival of interest in classical learning and ideas of ancient Greece and Rome.

In addition to revival of the humanities from Greece and Rome, the belief in, “the genius of man...the unique and extraordinary ability of the human mind”.

Artists developed the use of ‘linear perspective’ in painting to show depth and the illusion of 3 dimensional form.

Leonardo was considered the ultimate “Renaissance Man” as he studied a wide range of topics including anatomy, geology, botany, hydraulics, flight and weapons.



Vitruvian Man, Leonardo da Vinci, 1490. This drawing, based on the writing of Vitruvius, is Leonardo's representation of man at the center of the cosmos. In addition, it shows the perfection of human proportions as the man fits perfectly into a circle and square, symbols of mathematical perfection.

THE RENAISSANCE

The period between 1450 and 1650 was a time of revolutionary cultural change.

Religious change, the growth of empires, educational developments, social mobility, theater, art, the printing press and medical advances reshaped the history of the West.

In this lecture we look at artworks that highlight changes in thought about religion, sexuality and race.

Leonardo da Vinci did two versions of this painting, *The Madonna of the Rocks*. In this one, from 1483-6, Mary is shown with her arm around St. John the Baptist. The Christ child is blessing him while an angel points toward the child. Gone are the haloes and throne, Leonardo strived to show divinity through ideal grace and beauty.



Leonardo da Vinci is one of the most famous artists in Western history. We also know that he loved to surround himself with beautiful young men.

IMPORTANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

Things that happen in history are always complicated. The way we tell what happened must be simplified in order to get to the point.

Just know this as I speak about things that are influencing change.

Events that created significant change in Europe and especially Italy in the 1400s:

1. The Ottoman Turks officially ended the Byzantine Empire (late Roman) in 1453 with the conquest of Constantinople. Byzantine scholars, who had kept Greek and Roman knowledge alive, migrated West. They brought to Western Europe knowledge of Greek civilization which led to the Renaissance development of humanism and science.



Mosaic of the Byzantine Emperor Komnenos, 11th Century.

More events:

2. With the rebuilding of Rome people discovered and became entranced by the art and architecture of the Classical Greek and Roman civilizations.

3. A new class was emerging out of the Feudal Middle Ages, a merchant class, providing people with wealth and power who could rival the Church in the commissioning of art.

We see the development of other subjects in art besides just Christian ones.

Now we see portraits of wealthy people and artwork about Greek and Roman gods, goddesses and myth.



The Duchess Battista Sforza (Duchess of Urbino), Piero Della Francesca, 1465-1472

There is also a facing portrait of the Duke.

ITALY AROUND 1400

It's important to remember that Italy wasn't a unified country as it is now.

It was a collection of city states, often at war.

Florence, Rome, Milan and Venice were the most powerful.

Some of the earliest achievements of the Renaissance happened in Florence as a result of the patronage of the powerful Medici family.



Cosimo de Medici supported the arts and humanities in Florence. There were also four Medici popes.

Return to Classical Style

Donatello's bronze statue of David, was the first nude sculpture in the round since Classical Rome.

Revolutionary for its day, the statue reflected de' Medici taste for Greek and Roman art as well as Donatello's own sensibilities. While we have no record of Donatello's sexual preference, much attention is given to the sensuality of the young David.

In this biblical story of David and Goliath, David is no longer represented as a king but as an innocent, young man.

Notice the similarities and differences with the Greek statue.



POLYKLEITOS, (*Spear Bearer*). Roman marble copy from Pompeii, Italy, after a bronze original of ca. 450–440 BCE

DONATELLO, *David*, late 1420s – late 1450s. Bronze, 5' 2 ¼". Florence.

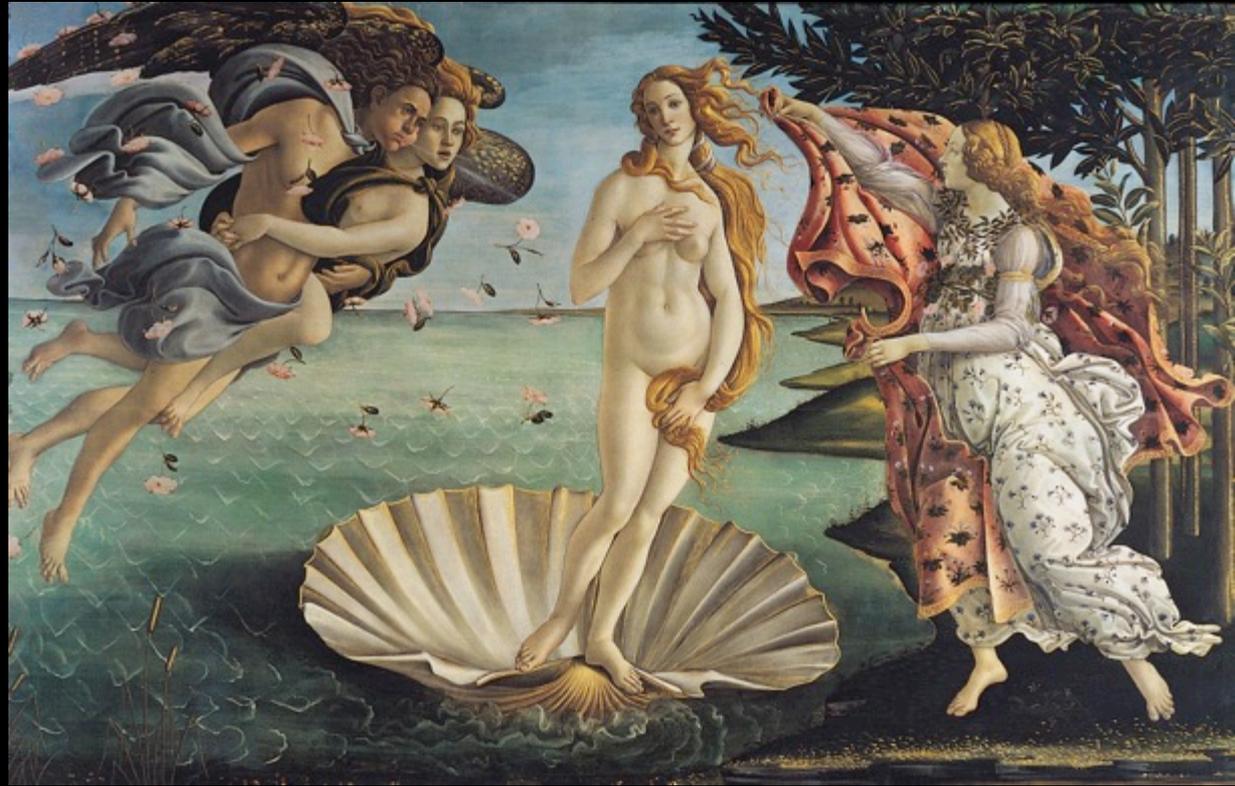


Mythology in Renaissance Art

Also commissioned by the Medici, the theme for this painting comes from the Roman poet, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The book contains over 250 myths and chronicles the history of the world from creation to the end of Julius Caesar's reign.

In this story Venus is being birthed from the sea. Standing on a sea shell, on the left the personification of wind blows her dry as a maiden waits to cover her body.

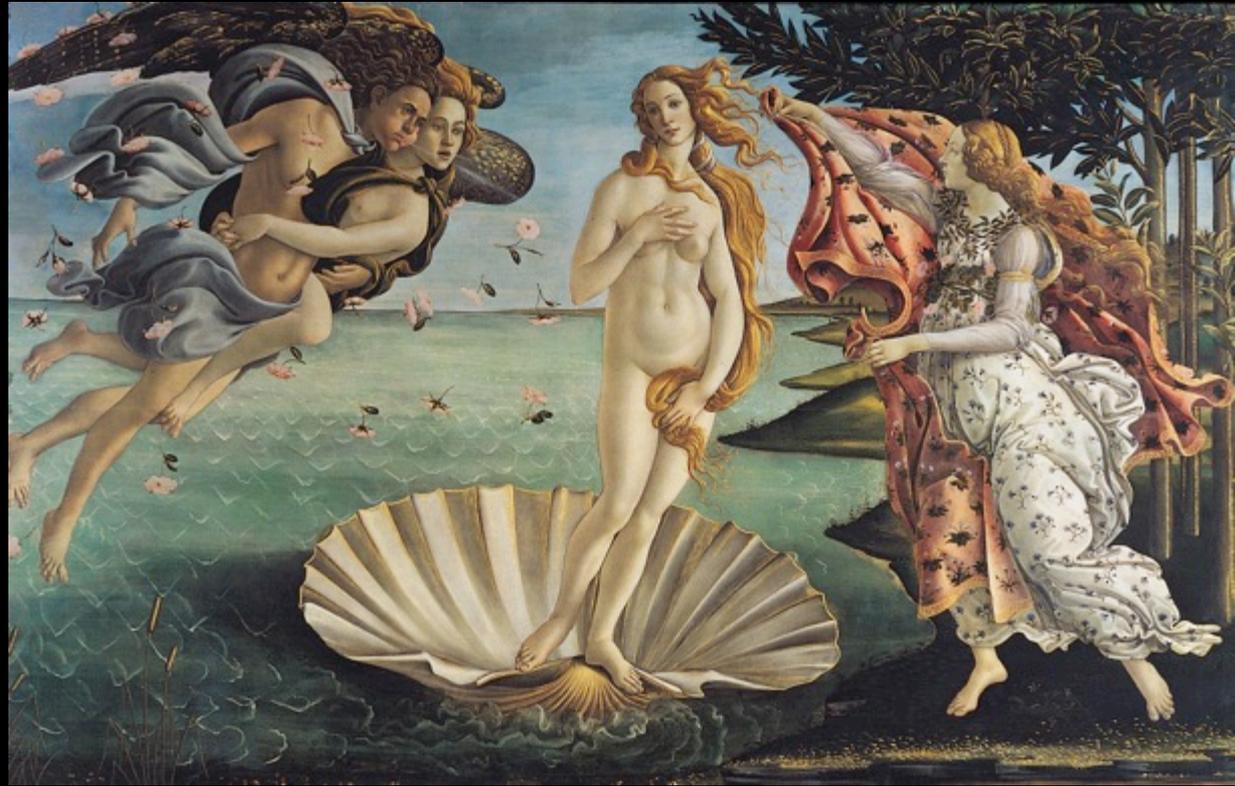


SANDRO BOTTICELLI, *Birth of Venus*, ca. 1482. Tempera on canvas, approx. 5' 8" x 9' 1". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Greek Mythology in Renaissance Art

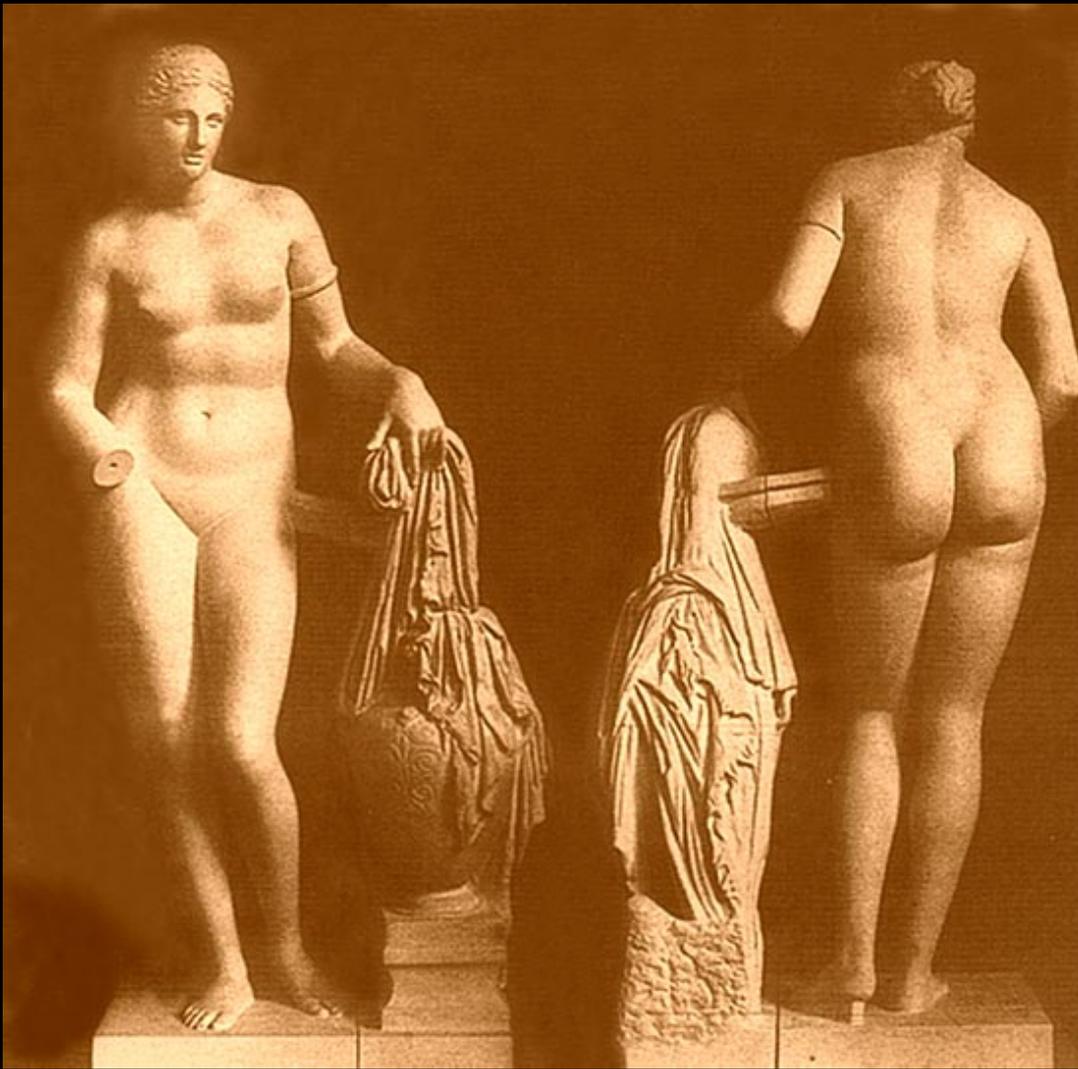
I hope you could already make the connection between the pose of the Venus in Botticelli's painting and the earlier Greek one.

The painting can also be seen as an ode to the wealthy Medici family.



SANDRO BOTTICELLI, Birth of Venus, ca. 1482. Tempera on canvas, approx. 5' 8" x 9' 1". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

And Roman copy of Greek statue of Venus. One very similar was owned by the Medici family .



As we have already studied, these Roman copies of Greek originals of Venus, the goddess of beauty were some of the first nude representations of women in Greek art since the Greeks did not consider the female body either beautiful or perfect in the way they viewed the male. These images however, became the model for representations of the female body in art.

Religion in Renaissance Art

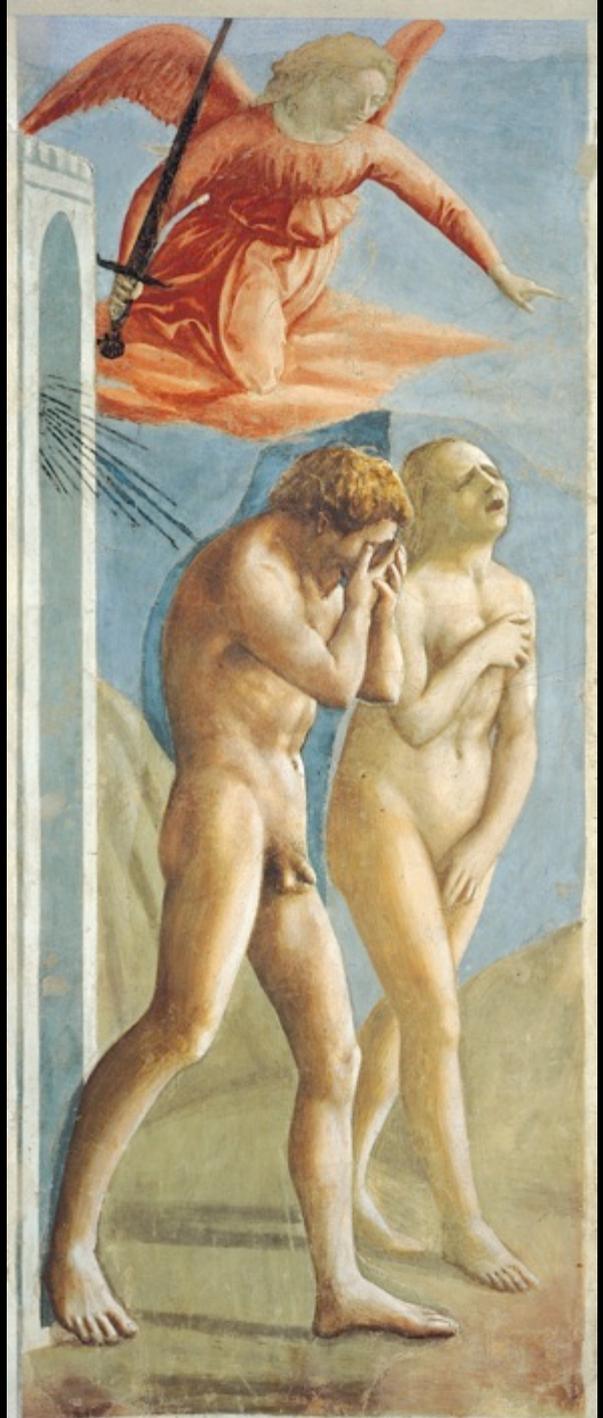
The Church was also commissioning art in the Renaissance. Even though Greek themes were pagan, the leaders appreciated the style. So we see similar nude bodies in Christian art.

The story of Adam and Eve continued to be highly represented as a reminder that a woman was responsible for 'original sin.'



Durer,,
*Adam and
Eve*, 1504,
engraving.

MASACCIO,
*Expulsion of Adam
and Eve from Eden*,
Brancacci Chapel,
Santa Maria del
Carmine, Florence,
Italy, ca. 1425.
Fresco, 7' x 2' 11"



Commissions and Meaning

This painting by Titian, was commissioned by the Duke of Urbino for his wife.

The title tells us she's Venus, a goddess. However, if we analyze the painting we see something new happening.

Titian was a very famous Venetian painter known for smooth brushwork and ability to create the illusion of life.

One of the ways Renaissance artists were able to create such sensitive illusions to real life was the invention of oil paint.



TITIAN, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538. Oil on canvas, approx. 4' x 5' 6". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

This painting is painted with oil paint. The earlier ones are either fresco (paint on plaster) or tempera (pigment in egg binder). They do not allow this much naturalism.

Commissions and Meaning

The earlier Greek statue is now reclining, with every aspect of her body, including symbols in the painting, about eroticism.

From this point forward we will see many many paintings with reclining nude female figures.

The “idealized” female body has become an object of male desire, a commodity, eroticized and objectified, and no one ever really talked about it in Art History until second wave feminism in the 1970s.



TITIAN, based his gesture on an earlier painting by his teacher, Giorgioni, which depicted Venus sleeping in a landscape.

The Church and Commissions

The Catholic Church was still commissioning a lot of artwork. In fact, they felt it enhanced their power to work with famous artists.

Many paintings of the Virgin Mary with Christ were commissioned as the Virgin never lost popularity.

But because of Humanism, the haloes begin to disappear. The Holy Family appears more like real people.

All paintings of the Madonna and Christ now follow the lead set by Leonardo as we saw earlier.

Represented more like a family, with human qualities and poses.



RAPHAEL, *Madonna in the Meadow*, 1505. Oil on panel, 3' 8 1/2" x 2' 10 1/4".
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

The Birth of the Artist

Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci began to seek higher social and cultural social status for their profession.

Leonardo argued that painting, sculpture and architecture required not just craft but intellectual knowledge-- Knowledge of anatomy, optics, mathematics.

He also equated art with a god-like act... like God creating the universe from the void, the artist invents a person or landscape out of nothing.

A truly blessed artist is a participant in the divine process of creation.



I'm mentioning this because this idea of the artist as genius-creator, inventing things out of nothing, follows us through history.

Importantly, until recently there was no room for women in this view of 'creation.'

Men were the active ones.

Women were passive.

Some of this is simply continuing Aristotle's ideas you looked at last week.

Renaissance to Baroque

Renaissance art was about reviving classical ideas and form. Rationality, order, logic were followed in all things.

As we move into Late Renaissance to Baroque Art styles become more emotional and more diverse subjects are depicted.

Baroque art is defined by it's use of light.

Because of the growth of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church encouraged visual art that would guide the faithful.

In order to more directly engage the viewer, powerful and dramatic realism, accentuating contrast of light and dark and tightly cropping compositions enhanced emotional impact.

Artwork should instruction and inspire.



Caravaggio, *The Crown of Thorns*, 1602

In 1517 Martin Luther attacked the Catholic Church for it's corruption, greed and abuse of power, and initiated a movement that transformed religious, political and art of Europe.

Protestants criticized Christian art for what they thought were cult images.

Women in Renaissance and Baroque Art

Before the 1970s there were no women artists mentioned in any Western Art History books. There were no people of color either but we'll get to that a bit later in the semester.

Empowered by the ideas of the Feminist Movement, female Art Historians began to challenge what was called "the canon."

The canon was at one time considered fixed. It was the body of artworks considered to be the best examples of a style or genre. The artworks in the canon were considered the 'masterpieces' and this is what was studied in art.

Questions about the canon led to discoveries of women artists in history who had never before been considered.



One of these female artists was, Artemisia Gentileschi.

Self-portrait as the Allegory of Painting, 1638-9 .

Women in Renaissance and Baroque Art

Artemisia Gentileschi was a painter who followed Caravaggio, a famous Baroque painter. Most of her paintings focus on heroines from the Bible.

In this painting, Judith, a traditional example of virtue and chastity, is shown decapitating Holofernes, who had planned to destroy her village.

She has seduced him and is now shown violently beheading him becoming the savior of her people.

This painting was probably commissioned by Cosimo II de' Medici but due to the violence it was placed in a dark corner of his Palace and Gentileschi was not paid until after his death.



Judith Beheading Holofernes,
Artemisia Gentileschi, 1614-20.

Women in Renaissance and Baroque Art

Gentileschi did different versions of the story.



Judith and her Maidservant

Women in Renaissance and Baroque Art

The story of Judith was very popular in art.

A lot of discussion has been given to the violence in Gentileschi's painting.

Her early training was from her father, a famous painter. When she was rejected from art academies she studied with Agostino Tassi, her father's friend.

In 1612, her father brought charges against Tassi for raping his daughter. A highly publicized trial ended with no conviction. However, this traumatic event is thought to have affected the tone of the painting.

These are two more paintings of the same theme by male artists Caravaggio and Philip van Dijk. Neither has the violence of Gentileschi.



Women in Renaissance and Baroque Art

Judith Leyster was influenced by the Dutch artist Frans Hals and much of her work had been attributed to him.

Most of her work was created before her marriage. In addition to raising her children she managed the family business and assisted with her husband's art.

A well-known artist in her lifetime, she was largely forgotten until 1893 when her initials were found under a false signature of "Frans Hals."

This led to renewed research on her as an artist.

At one time it was thought there were no women in the Art History Canon because there weren't any good ones. We have learned this was not the reason.



Self Portrait, Judith Leyster, 1630

How Women Represent Themes

Another issue that is discussed with regards to the gender of the artist is how male and female artists approach similar subjects.

We saw that with Gentileschi and let's look at it again.

This painting is one by a male artist van Baburen that represents another popular theme in Baroque art—brothel scenes.

It shows three figures, a prostitute on the left, the client in the middle and the procuress pointing to her palm to indicate expected payment. The client is holding a coin.

In this version, van Baburen depicts the prostitute as a temptress, her breasts prominent. She's in the process of seducing him.



Dirck van Baburen, *The Procuress*, 1622

Since religious art was not being produced in this Dutch country it is thought that genre scenes (scenes of everyday life), like this one served to instill morality.

How Women Represent Themes

This is a painting by Judith Leyster of a similar theme.

Here we have a richly dressed man offering coins to a woman who is quietly engaged in mending.

Instead of showing the woman as unrestrained and sinful, here she is hard at work, the model of virtue.



Judith Leyster, Man Offering Money to a Woman, or *The Proposition*, 1634

Race in European Renaissance

The Mediterranean was a cross-cultural and inter-ethnic area from the mid-15th century on.

Classical culture was partly revived by the ideas brought by Arabs and black Africans regularly, and in significant numbers entered Europe.

Intercontinental navigation helped reshape Europe's population.



The Supper at Emmaus, Venetian Artist, 1530-40.



Portrait of a Wealthy African, 1540

In this often represented event in the life of Christ we see the inclusion of a Black soldier, identified as Egyptian by his red hat. Most likely included to signify Christ's universal promise of salvation. He is also shown seated on the right side of Christ. A welcome guest.

Race in European Renaissance

St. Maurice was thought to have been a leader of the Roman army in the 3rd century. He was martyred for refusing to slaughter Christians.

Many paintings were done of him during the Renaissance.



Scholars are just beginning to research race relations in Renaissance times. It seems Ideas about race were not as clearly defined at that time.

St. Maurice, Luca Cranach the Elder, 1520-25s



St. Maurice, Matthias Grunewald, c. 1510

Race in European Renaissance

We see images of dark skinned people showing up in Religious paintings of this time with the same nobility as whites.

Before the mid-fifteenth century only a small percentage of slaves were African.

Freed slaves and free Africans were socially mobile and appeared in professional and creative positions in Europe.

Adoration of the Maji, Flemish Artist, 1599

By the 15th ad 16th centuries, thousands of images depicting Black (Moorish) kings who followed a star to witness the nativity (the Birth of Christ) were painted.

The youngest of the three wise men in the nativity story.



Race in European Renaissance

Through the images we can see that people of color were depicted in similar ways to Europeans. And while they were assimilated into European culture, were also thought to be 'behind' European civilization.



Adoration of the Maji, Flemish Artist, 1460-1523

Portrait of an African Slave Woman, Annibale Carracci, 1580

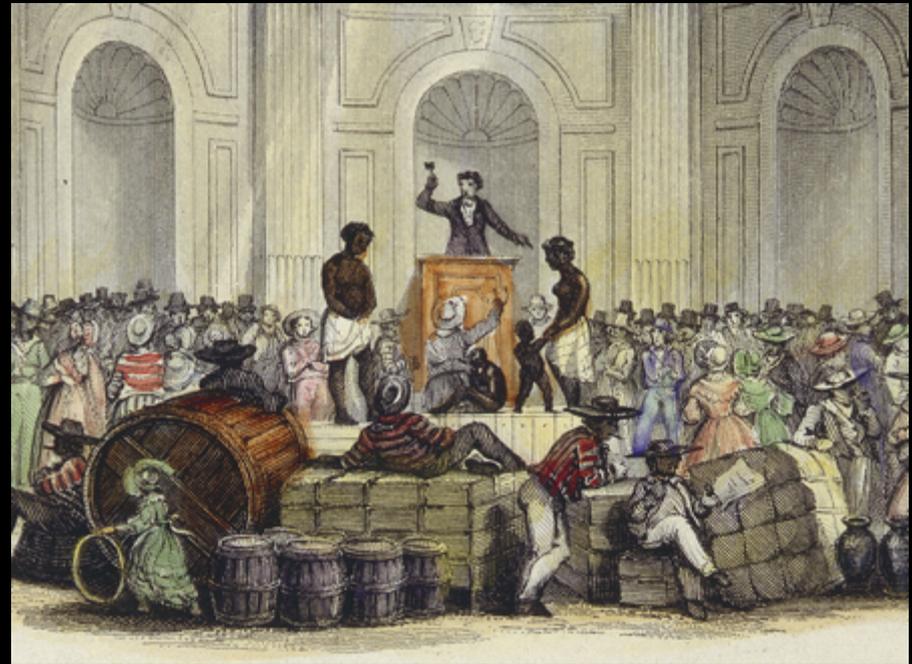
NEXT WEEK

In the 15th Century we see the rise of intercontinental navigation by sea. European countries begin sending ships around the world to explore and conquer.

Portuguese expeditions bring European ships in regular contact with Saharan Africa. They inaugurated the Atlantic slave trade, soon joined by Spain and Britain.

Christopher Columbus' conquest of the Caribbean virtually wiped out the indigenous cultures there.

Slavery has been around ever since civilizations began. However, after the 15th century Africans become the largest population of slaves.



More about this next week.

MAIN POINTS FOR THIS WEEK

- The Renaissance from about 1400-1600 is the revival of ideas and styles of Greece and Rome.
- The Catholic Church is still very powerful and there is much Christian art created.
- In addition, a rising merchant class with Classical taste, commission artwork with different themes, like mythology and portraits.
- Invention of oil paint allows more naturalism. In addition the development of linear perspective makes painting a strong illusion of the natural world.
- Paintings of the idealized female figure become undeniably eroticized.
- Women artists emerge.
- Racial diversity is represented in art.