

Gallery

4

Late Gothic & Renaissance Art in Italy, 1350-1550

The art exhibited in this gallery originates from the leading artistic centers of Italy. The country was divided into a number of independently governed cities and states, an arrangement that favored a strong regional development of language, art, and culture. Art continued to be produced primarily in the service of the Catholic Church; however, patronage began to shift to wealthy families and individuals.

Many of the early gold-ground paintings in this gallery are fragments, once part of larger altarpieces known as triptychs or polyptychs. Towards the end of the 15th century, these separate panels began to be joined into unified compositions. Episodes from the Bible, the Golden Legend (a 13th-century manual on the lives of the saints and Christian faith), and the Apocryphal texts provided artists with a rich array of subjects and events to document.

Along with the important religious and social changes marking this period, the physical nature of painting underwent a major transformation. The use of oils and canvas supports eventually became widespread, largely replacing the egg tempera and gold-ground technique on wooden panels. Linked to these advances was the development of the printing press, leading to the broad dissemination of religious and political ideas, and greater accessibility to texts and images.



Giovanni del Biondo

Italian, active 1356, died 1399, active in Florence

Madonna and Child with Saints Peter, Paul, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and Two Angels, c. 1385-90

Tempera on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 6.a

The Madonna and infant Jesus are surrounded by saints in a *sacra conversazione*, or sacred conversation. Identifiable by their various attributes, the saints are painted with distinguishable facial features, exemplifying the trend toward greater naturalism. John the Baptist holds a staff; Peter displays a key; John the Evangelist bears a book and a cup; Paul grasps his trademark sword. The tender gaze between Mary and Christ also lightens the severity of the Gothic elements.

Bicci di Lorenzo

Italian, 1373-1452, active in Florence

Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata c. 1385-90

Tempera on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 6.b

This triangular, shelf-like console (meant to support a painted panel like the one above) bears the image of Saint Francis receiving the stigmata. Saint Francis was praying when an angel appeared, and he received wounds on his hands, feet, and side matching those Christ sustained at the Crucifixion. In this depiction of Saint Francis, Bicci di Lorenzo follows a long artistic tradition of showing an angel shooting rays of light directly into the saint's body. Working at time when painters were abandoning tempera on gold leaf backgrounds in favor oil on panel, Bicci preferred the flat texture of tempera and employed it in this work.



Mariotto di Nardo

Italian, active 1394-1424 in Florence

The Madonna and Child in Glory, c. 1400-10

Tempera on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 7

Mariotto di Nardo crafted this work only years before Masaccio and Donatello executed great experiments in volume and perspective. Though innovations in the realistic depictions of figures in three-dimensional space were occurring during Mariotto's lifetime, he did not embrace the style that characterized the art of the High Renaissance. The iconic gold background and vertical arrangement of the attending angels in space aligns this painting with late Gothic representational trends. The flat halos, unrealistic proportions, and fantastic angelic figures place the scene in an otherworldly realm.



French

Early 16th century

Gothic Chest, c. 1525

Walnut

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1065



Álvaro Pires de Évora

Portuguese, active 1411-1434 in Italy

***The Virgin Annunciate, The Archangel Gabriel*, c. 1420-25**

Tempera on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 10, SN 11

These two panels, originally pinnacles of a large polyptych in Volterra, show the Archangel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she will bear the Son of God. Though he employs the abstract gold background inspired by Byzantine icons and avoids realistic depiction of space, the artist gives the figures a sense of volume, as Gabriel's drapery seems to hang realistically across his bent knee. Álvaro was a Portuguese artist who lived and worked mainly in Italy. Although very few paintings by the artist are known, he is one of the oldest Portuguese painters with attributed works. The remarkable frames are original to the painted panels.



Giovanni di ser Giovanni Guidi, attributed to
Italian, 1406-1486, active in Florence

A Battle Between Romans and Gauls, c. 1450

15th century, Tempera on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 13

This panel, probably from a wedding chest, *cassone*, is typical of a type of ornate and expensive piece of furniture that was used to transport a bride's trousseau to her new home on the occasion of her marriage. The scene shows a battle between Romans (identified by their banners that bear the initials SPQR) and Frenchmen (or Gauls, whose banner sports a rooster). The white horse at the left of the painting bears the arms of a branch of the Medici family, renowned for their patronage of the arts.



Giovanni di ser Giovanni Guidi, attributed to
Italian, 1406-1486, active in Florence

The Triumph of Scipio Africanus, c. 1450

Tempera on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 14

This panel from a *cassone*, or wedding chest, depicts King Alfonso I's defeat of René of Anjou at Naples in 1443. Alfonso is in the center of the composition, while a scene of surrender follows on the right. The coats-of-arms are of the Ridolfi family, prominent Florentines who were perhaps part of Alfonso's retinue. It has been suggested that the panel was commissioned for the 1452 marriage of Jacopo de' Ridolfi and Alessandra de' Serristori. A filled white sail, another one of the devices of the Ridolfi, decorates the garments of several soldiers.



Jacopo del Sellaio

Italian, c. 1441-1493, active in Florence

***The Penitent Saint Jerome*, c. 1480-90**

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 17

St. Jerome kneels before a crucifix in a rocky wilderness, stone in hand and chest bared. He is guarded by a lion, his familiar attribute. In a cave behind him are visible a snake and a scorpion, as described in *The Golden Legend*, an authoritative volume on the lives of the saints that was popular during the Renaissance. A walled and turreted city lies in the distance. St. Jerome (d. 420) was a Bishop of Bethlehem who retired to live as a penitent in the desert. He was a popular figure in the 15th century, as he was patron of learning and scholarship. Lucas Cranach's painting in Gallery 3 represents a similar theme.



Spain (Manises)

15th century

***Charger with Bird*, c. 1425-30**

Tin-glazed earthenware

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN
7143



Master of the Lathrop Tondo

(Michelangelo di Pietro Mencherini)

Italian, active 1489-1521 in Florence and Lucca

Assumption of the Virgin with Saint Thomas,

c. 1500, Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 19

According to Christian legend, the Virgin lowered her sash, or girdle, to Saint Thomas as proof of her Assumption as she ascended to Heaven. The Virgin is seated in an almond-shaped mandorla of clouds, ringed by cherubs and surrounded by an angelic choir and two groupings of saints, who may represent Old Testament prophets and ancestors of Christ. Mencherini was heavily influenced by Flemish painting, as is evident in the Madonna's intricately detailed brocade.



Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop

Italian, 1449-1494, active in Florence and Rome

Madonna and Child with Saint John and Three Angels, c. 1490

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 20

Rather than clothing the Virgin Mary and the angels in more traditional antique drapery, Ghirlandaio cloaked them in contemporary costumes adorned with jewels and embroidery. Interestingly, the landscape in the background of this work is an accurate view of Venice. This unusual setting for a Tuscan painting suggests that the work may have been commissioned by a Venetian patron. The lilies in the foreground allude to the Resurrection, and Mary's downcast face and melancholy expression indicate her awareness of her son's fate.



Piero di Cosimo

Italian, 1462-1521, active in Florence

***The Building of a Palace*, c. 1515-20**

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 22

Scholars have connected this painting to a series of other works by Piero that depict important episodes from the early history of man, such as the discovery of fire. Whether or not it belongs to this particular series, this accomplished example of Renaissance perspective may represent the origins of architecture or an allegory of the art of building. The edifice, which has not been identified with a specific building, exemplifies the classical values of symmetry and balance, and it may also reference the Renaissance ideal of harmonious and prosperous cities ruled by great princes..



Raffaellino del Garbo

Italian, c. 1466-1524, active in Florence and Rome

***The Mass of Saint Gregory*, 1501**

Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 23

Saint Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) is known as one of the first Fathers of the Christian Church. His greatest contribution to religious history was the complete overhaul and restructuring of the early liturgy and music used in worship. He is the man behind the legacy of the Gregorian Chant. Along with initiating these reforms, he also reluctantly became pope in 590 and directly came into contact with the political and international aspects of the papacy. As a founding Church Father, he is prominently featured in the painting of *The Defenders of the Eucharist* in Peter Paul Rubens' *Triumph of the Eucharist* series in Gallery 2.



Italian

Early 16th century

***Madonna and Child with Saint Jerome, Saint Catherine, and Two Apostles*, c. 1525**

Reverse painting on glass (*verre églomisé*)

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1334



Francesco Granacci

Italian, 1469-1543, active in Florence

***The Assumption of the Virgin*, c. 1515**

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 24

According to Christian legend, the Virgin gave her belt, or girdle, to Saint Thomas upon her Assumption. Because this holy relic was housed in a chapel in the city of Prato, near Florence, the image of the *Madonna della Cintola*, or Madonna of the Girdle, was widely popular in Florentine art. This painting was commissioned for the Medici chapel in San Piero Maggiore, Florence, and was extravagantly praised by the 16th century critic Giorgio Vasari. He wrote that the figures of Saint Thomas and the Virgin were so full of grace that they were worthy of Granacci's friend, Michelangelo..



Italian

Early 16th century

***Perseus and Andromeda*, c. 1525**

Reverse painting on glass (*verre églomisé*)

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1335



Bernardino Luini

Italian, c. 1480-c. 1532, active in
Lombardy

***The Madonna of the Dragonfly (Madonna
and Child with Saints Sebastian and
Roche),***

c. 1520-22

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 37

Saints Sebastian and Roche were invoked against the plague, which occurred throughout the 14th and 15th centuries. Luini shows them pleading with the Virgin to intercede in the spread of the epidemic. A follower of Leonardo da Vinci, Luini employs a rocky landscape that echoes the works of his master. St. Roche was originally painted with an open sore on his exposed leg, symbolizing the ravages of the plague, but this detail was removed at a later date, perhaps for its indelicacy.



Filippo Mazzola

Italian, c. 1460-1505, active in Parma

The Madonna and Child, c. 1490

Oil on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 51



Andrea della Robbia

Italian, 1435-1525 or 1528, active in
Florence

***Madonna and Child*, c. 1490**

Glazed terracotta in a painted and gilded
frame

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1393



Northern France

16th Century

***Cupboard*, c. 1500-1550**

Walnut

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1067



Northern France
16th Century

Cupboard, c. 1500-1550
Walnut

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1068



Northern Italian (Lombard)
15th century

*Virgin Adoring the Child (in Landscape
in Architectural Tabernacolo)*
Polychromed and gilded wood

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1569



Antonio Rossellino, after
Italian, 1427-1479, active in Florence

Madonna and Child

Polychromed and gilded stucco relief in
frame

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1568



Italian (Gubbio)

First half of the 16th century

Plate with a Sleeping Putto, c. 1525

Tin-glazed earthenware

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 7022



Benedetto da Maiano

Italian, 1442-1497, active in Florence,
Rome, and Naples

***Portrait Bust of Giovanni Giovano
Pontano,***

c. 1490

Stucco

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN
5357

Benedetto da Maiano executed this stucco portrait bust of Giovanni Giovano Pontano in the late 15th century. Pontano was the private secretary of Ferdinand I, King of Naples, a distinguished humanist and a central figure in the Neapolitan Academy. He was probably serving as the Neapolitan ambassador to Florence when this bust was made. Garbed in a Roman toga, his features grave and sober, Pontano is shown in the antique Roman Republican style favored in the Renaissance for the portrayal of important men.



Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, attributed to
Italian, 1447-1522, active in Ferrara

Two Clerics, c. 1480
Marble

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 5358 and SN 5359



Spain (Manises)
15th century

Charger with Lion Rampant, c. 1425-
30
Tin-glazed earthenware

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN
7142



Andrea della Robbia, workshop of
Italian, 1435-1525 or 1528, active in
Florence

Head of Saint John the Baptist, c.
1490-1500
Glazed terracotta

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN
5378



Giovanni Bastianini, attributed to
Italian, 1830-1868, active in Florence

Bust of Young Saint John the Baptist
Polychromed terracotta

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN
5386



Spain
15th century

Pharmacy Jar (Albarello)
Tin-glazed earthenware

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 7039, SN 7040, SN 7042.a, SN 7042.b

This group of ceramic vessels would have been used by apothecaries to store ointments and dry substances, and hence their name. Made for use rather than for mere decoration, these jars feature curved, cylindrical bodies that made for easy grasping and large mouths that facilitated pouring and refilling. The stylized floral motifs are evidence of the strong Islamic presence in Spain; similarly decorated wares were also made in northern Africa and the Near East. The shape became popular in Italy in the 15th century, though it was prevalent in Egypt as early as the 11th century.



Spain (Manises)

15th century

***Charger with Bird*, c. 1425-30**

Tin-glazed earthenware

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN
7143



Guglielmo della Porta

Italian, born between 1500 and 1510,
died 1577, active in Genoa and Rome

***The Deposition*, c. 1555**

Gilded bronze

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN
7181

This is one of several bronze versions produced after a marble relief now in Milan. The design, based on a drawing by Guglielmo in Düsseldorf, may have been intended for a side altar in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, where the artist did most of his work. Guglielmo worked as a medalist as well as a painter, and a number of his moulds and medals were stolen by his son in 1585, presumably for re-use. It is possible that the Ringling Museum relief was made posthumously from the original marble, along with other casts now in museums in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Berlin, Germany.



Venetian School

14th century

Christ Crucified by the Virtues, c. 1340
Tempera on panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1

This altarpiece depicts the Virtues crucifying Christ, an unusual but not isolated theme in late Gothic Venetian art. At Christ's feet is Humility, while Obedience and Patience attend to his hands, with Charity supporting his head. Mary falls into the arms of her attendants to the left of Christ, while St. John, a centurion, and a servant stand to the right. On the second plane, allegories of the Church and the Synagogue flank Christ while a priest offers the Host. Created in the mid-13th century by a South German artist, the theme suggests that the Crucifixion symbolized Christian virtues.