Italian masters : educational project

Museum of Modern Art

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The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—from our founding in 1929 to the present—is available online. It includes exhibition catalogues, primary documents, installation views, and an index of participating artists.
Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian died four hundred years ago in Italy but their names are known today to millions of Americans. Through their painting and sculpture these artists are still so much alive that the Museum of Modern Art is delighted to be able to show their work, even though the Museum is first of all interested in the arts of our own time—houses, furniture, movies, photographs, as well as painting and sculpture. An exhibition of "Modern Masters" is in fact being shown on another floor of the Museum at the same time as the Italian Masters, while movies of historic importance are shown in the auditorium.

Next to this column is an historical chart showing where and when the artists in the exhibition lived and how the older artists passed on their ideas to their followers so that traditions were formed which have come right down through the years to us today. For instance, Picasso, the most famous living artist, was influenced by Ingres, Ingres by Raphael, (no. xx in "Italian Masters"), Raphael by Leonardo da Vinci, Leonardo by Verrocchio, (no. xx), and Verrocchio by Donatello (no. xx).

In the EARLY RENAISSANCE, about 1400 to 1500, artists were excited by new scientific researches in anatomy and movement (Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio), the expression of character (Donatello), of drama (Masaccio), detailed realism (the landscape in Mantegna's St. George). They were also deeply interested in new discoveries in Greek and Roman art and legend (Pollaiuolo, Botticelli).

During the HIGH RENAISSANCE, about 1510, detailed realism and youthful enthusiasm gave way to a new sense of maturity and grandeur such as we find in the work of Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian and Palma Vecchio. But the classic dignity, self-confidence and perfection of the High Renaissance "Grand Style" soon lost its balance and fell to pieces in a number of interesting ways which, taken together, are called MANNERISM. The intimate portraits of Lotto and Parmigianino, the elongated and twisted figures of Tintoretto show two very different aspects of Mannerist art.

A little before 1600 Caravaggio staged a one-man revolution in painting. He was hardboiled both in his art and his life. He painted sensationaly realistic pictures with melodramatic lighting and pretended to despise the classic art of both the Greeks and the Renaissance. He was the first great painter of the BAROQUE period, 1600-1750, and greatly influenced the Italians, Cavallino, Guercino, Gentileschi, (nos. xx, xx, xx) as well as far more famous foreign artists such as Rubens, Rembrandt and Velasquez. The foremost Baroque sculptor was the Italian Bernini (no. xx).

Italian Baroque Art died out in the 18th century but the great Italian traditions are carried on today by many of the best living artists, both European and American.
ITALIAN MASTERS

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

1. DONATELLO

Mantegna, Raphael. Titian died four hundred years ago is that their names are known today to billions of Americans. Though they painted and sculpted these works are still so much alive that the Museum of Modern Art is delighted to be able to show their work, even though the Museum is first and all interested in the arts of our own time—house, furniture, movies, photographs, as well as painting and sculpture. An exhibition of "Modern Masters" is in fact being shown on another floor of the Museum at the same time as the Italian Masters, while movies of historic importance are shown in the auditorium.

Next to this column is an historical chart showing where and when the artists in the exhibition lived and how the older artists passed on their ideas to their followers so that traditions were formed which have come right down through the years to us today. For instance, Florentine, the most famous living artist, was influenced by Ingres, Ingres by Raphael, Ingres by the Renaissance. He was the first great painter of the BAROQUE period, 1600-1750, so that traditions were formed which have come right down through the years to us today. For instance, Picasso, the most famous living artist, was influenced by the strong verticals of the chair and back of Madonna. Compare with Michelangelo's circular Madonna in marble.

Study the differences in spirit and feeling as well as in composition. Which do you prefer?

ITALIAN MASTERS

LENT TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 WEST 53rd STREET, NEW YORK, BY THE ROYAL ITALIAN GOVERNMENT JAN.-MAR. WEEKDAYS, 10 A.M. - 10 P.M.; SUNDAYS, NOON TO 10 P.M. REGARDING GROUP ADMISSIONS CALL MR. GRAHAM, Circle 5-8900

STUDENTS' GUIDE to the exhibition of ITALIAN MASTERS

2. FRA ANGELO

Lent 1945-50, THE HISTORY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. Painted about 1492. 3 FLORENTINE, 17½ x 10½ inches. Color print on cover of Catalog. The gray green garden scene, the graceful modeling of the faces and detail of flowers and birds. Donatello was a painter first in the mystery of brushwork (an Italian technique) and the necessity of classic forms to show the figures of the Evangelists. How strong, Leonardo, how strong in the portrayal of the Virgin.

3. MASACCIO

Masaccio,Italian, 1401-1428. The CIBORIUM. Installed in 1418. Panel 23 x 17½ inches. The strong verticals of the chair and back of Madonna. Compare, too, the sadness and pride of Michelangelo's Madonna with Raphael's obvious sweetness. The surface is completely finished and you can see the texture of the chalk, do you think his spells the beauty of the work?

4. POLLAIOLO

Pollaiuolo, Italian, 1431-1498. HERCULES AND ANTAEUS. Made about 1460. Bronze, height 17½ inches in diameter. Mother and child roughly compose a pyramid within a circle. surveying eyes of massive body, show and show contrast with rough textures. Pollaiuolo, the expression of character (Donatello), of drama (Masaccio), the detail in the landscape (in Mantegna's St. George.) They were also deeply interested in new discoveries in Greek and Roman art and legend (Pollaiuolo, Botticelli).

5. BOTTICELLI

Botticelli, Italian, 1444-1510. The birth of Venus. Oil on canvas. 90 x 57 inches. How light and dark. How light and dark are combined in the picture. Symmetrical composition. Compare, too, the sadness and pride of Michelangelo's Madonna with Raphael's obvious sweetness. The surface is completely finished and you can see the texture of the chalk, do you think his spells the beauty of the work?

6. MANTEGNA

Manetlan, Italian, 1431-1506. PORTRAIT OF A LADY. About 1495. Oil on canvas, 56 x 35½ inches. Sfumato, a method of painting (transferred from wall to canvas in modern times). Greatly the same expression of girl who looks straight at you, beautiful drawing of hands, rich subtle color.

7. LEONARDO DA VINCI

Leonardo da Vinci, Italian, 1452-1519. PORTRAIT OF A LADY. About 1480-90. Oil on canvas, 86 x 64½ inches. Sfumato, a method of painting (transferred from wall to canvas in modern times). Greatly the same expression of girl who looks straight at you, beautiful drawing of hands, rich subtle color.

8. CORREGGIO

Correggio, Italian, 1489-1534. MADONNA AND CHILD. Made about 1525. Circular enameled relief, 36½ inches in diameter, Mother and child roughly compose a pyramid within a circle. surveying eyes of massive body, show and show contrast with rough textures. Pollaiuolo, the expression of character (Donatello), of drama (Masaccio), the detail in the landscape (in Mantegna's St. George.) They were also deeply interested in new discoveries in Greek and Roman art and legend (Pollaiuolo, Botticelli).

9. MICHELANGELO

Michelangelo, Italian. Florentine, 1475-1564. MADONNA AND CHILD. Made about 1505. Circular enameled relief, 36½ inches in diameter, Mother and child roughly compose a pyramid within a circle. surveying eyes of massive body, show and show contrast with rough textures. Pollaiuolo, the expression of character (Donatello), of drama (Masaccio), the detail in the landscape (in Mantegna's St. George.) They were also deeply interested in new discoveries in Greek and Roman art and legend (Pollaiuolo, Botticelli).

10. RAPHAEL

Raphael, Italian, 1483-1520. MADONNA OF THE CHAIR. Painted about 1512. Circular panel, 26 inches in diameter. Sfumato solution of the difficulty problem of composing a group of figures within a circle. The circle and the stiff curves within it are established by the strong verticals of the chair and back of Madonna. Compare with Michelangelo's circular Madonna in marble.

Study the differences in spirit and feeling as well as in composition. Which do you prefer?