

Renaissance Art at the time of Raphael

Please search the sections in Red as you read this piece, as it will give a greater feel for the whole period.

The Renaissance period started in Florence between the 14th and 16th centuries, with the High Period being the 15th – 16th centuries. Italy was divided into independent states, each with a different form of government, all of whom vied with each other in securing the services of the greatest artists to beautify their buildings and create works of art, thus making their state superior in architecture, sculpture and painting. Florence was an independent republic and extremely rich. It had a cultural history where wealthy citizens could afford to support budding artists. The Medicis played a major part in this, as they were rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

The first of the great Florentine artists was Giotto (1266 – 1337), who rediscovered the art of creating the illusion of depth on a flat surface. Prior to that, in the Middle Ages, painting had been very two-dimensional. *If you Google 13th century art you will see a whole series of art works from that period, all of which have a distinctly two-dimensional appearance. Then search 14th century art in Florence; the differences are amazing. To see Giotto's work, click here: ['The Mourning of Christ' \(Lamentation\)](#).* This began the revolution in which artists everywhere began to experiment and to search for new and startling effects. By the 15th century (High Renaissance), there was a spirit of adventure that made the real break with the Middle Ages. Events of the period ultimately led to advances that changed the way people understood and interpreted the world around them.

The system of schooling young budding artists was to apprentice them to a Leading Master who usually housed them, and they were expected to learn painting, sculpture, architecture, mathematics and science. These were all fused seamlessly together. They did this in very practical ways by copying their masters. Thus the Masters had a great influence on them. This system produced many great artists. Perhaps the most well-known was Leonardo da Vinci, who was apprenticed to Verrocchio; Raphael who was apprenticed to Perugino and Michelangelo to Ghirlandaio. The Masters of these artists had large staffs of skilled apprentices. According to Vasari, Verrocchio gave up painting in disgust over the superiority of his pupil when he asked Leonardo to paint one of the angels in his work of 'The Baptism of Christ'. *Click on this link ['Baptism of Christ'](#) to see by Verrocchio's work; Leonardo's angel, bottom left, is the one shown in profile.* These artists were themselves ambitious and competed against each other. They turned to mathematics to study the laws of perspective and to anatomy to study the structure of the human body. *Google Anatomical Studies by Leonardo, to see the lengths to which they went to understand the human body.* The Anatomical Studies of Leonardo are part of the Queen's Collection at Windsor Castle. Through these discoveries the artists' horizons widened. They were masters in their own right and could choose the kind of commission they preferred.

Art in this period was characterised by realism and naturalism. They showed people and objects in a true-to-life way using techniques such as perspective, foreshortening, shadows, light, depth, texture, the illusion of space and the placing of figures in a clear design. As an example [click on the following link for Mabuse's 'St Luke painting the Virgin'](#). The Renaissance may have started in Florence, but it spread over the whole of Europe. Mabuse was born in France but lived and worked in the Netherlands; here he is showing all his knowledge of the Italian achievements. Emotion was another quality that artists used in their work. Artists continuously experimented to solve problems; for example, the use of oil to paint, which allowed the reworking of a painting, unlike frescos that did not.