

Artwork A, Renaissance Period: *Madonna and Child with Two Angels*, Filippo Lippi, Tempera on Panel, 1406 C.E.

Madonna and Child with Two Angels, by the Italian painter Filippo Lippi, shows Mary seated in an elegant, almost throne-like chair. Two angels hold her baby, Jesus, up to her. One of the angels, proud to be doing something so important, turns his head and looks out at the viewer with a smile. Mary holds her hands in a gesture of prayer before this special child and looks down with a solemn, almost worried expression, as though she knows what will eventually happen to him. The baby is fat and round and looks like a real baby. He reaches toward his mother with a gesture that is babyish but also seems mature, as if he wants to reassure her.



Lippi enjoyed creating complicated, beautiful patterns in his paintings that look convincingly real. Notice that your attention is drawn to Mary's face by the line of hands and feet, beginning with the baby's left foot and moving up to his right hand. This complexity is contained within a simple, smooth triangle that the whole group of figures creates. The figures are presented as if before a window that opens on a broad landscape extending far into the distance.

Artwork B, Classical Period: *Bathing Venus*, Unknown Roman Artist, Marble Sculpture, Original c. Third Century B.C.E.

This marble sculpture was made by a Roman artist as a copy of a third century B.C.E. Greek bronze statue. It represents a woman crouching as she bathes. She is probably Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, because no other woman, even another goddess, would have been shown in the nude by the Greeks. She is young and beautiful with a soft and shapely body. She holds her arms over her body, gracefully and modestly covering herself.



This sculpture expresses a serenity and balance that the ancient Greeks thought was ideal. Notice that the lines made by the parts of the woman's body all move inward and toward her. The shapes of the sculpture are soft and rounded, with a long, smooth line on one side and more complicated shapes on the other side. The outline of her whole body makes a simple shape.

Artwork C, Renaissance Period: *Primavera*, Sandro Botticelli, Tempera Paint on Wood Panel, c. 1482 c.E.

This painting depicts a mythological version of the coming of spring. (*Primavera* means “spring” in Italian.) The setting is a beautiful garden, with orange trees, golden fruit, and nine figures from ancient Greco-Roman mythology. On the far right, Zephyr, the wind god, pursues his nymph-bride, Chloris. As he touches her, she turns into Flora, the goddess of spring, a lovely maiden covered in fresh green and flowers. To the left are the three graces: Castitas (Chastity), Pulchritudo (Beauty), and Voluptus (Pleasure). They dance together, celebrating spring, and form the court of Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and love, who is shown at center. Above Aphrodite is her winged son, Eros, who aims an arrow (to kindle love) at Castitas. On the far left is Hermes, messenger of the gods, who looks upward and points at the clouds.



Botticelli painted this huge (6-by-10-foot) work on a wall in the home of a member of the Medici family. Even though it is painted on wood, it appears more like a medieval tapestry. Botticelli's pale, weightless figures, with their long limbs, translucent, flowing gowns, and gentle, graceful movements create a scene with a dreamlike quality.

Artwork D, Medieval Period: *Madonna and Child in Majesty*, Cimabue, Tempera Paint on Wood Panel, c. 1280 c.E.

This very large painting—over 12 feet in height—of Mary and Jesus was made by the Italian artist Cimabue to be placed on the altar of a church in Florence. The mother and child are sitting on a cushion on a large and elegant throne. Mary looks out at the viewer—who in the 13th century would have come to worship at the altar—and points to her son, who looks out with a gesture of blessing. She holds him tenderly, as you would a baby, though he looks older than a baby.



The delicate folds of clothing make an elegant pattern. They are edged with gold paint, which would gleam in the dim candlelight of the church and make the bodies look heavenly and not too rounded or real. The surrounding angels, and the shining background covered with gold leaf, tell us that this throne is not on Earth but in heaven. Four prophets look out from below the throne. They are smaller than the Madonna (Mary) and help make her look powerful.

**Artwork E, Classical Period: Grave Stele of Hegeso,
Unknown Greek Artist, Marble Sculpture, c. 400 B.C.E.**

This Greek marble sculpture decorates a stele, a tall stone that marks a grave. This was made for a woman's grave and shows an ordinary though wealthy woman in a scene from her daily life. She sits in a chair and examines a piece of jewelry she has chosen from the box her servant has brought her.

There is no suggestion of a background, and the carving is not very deep. Still, the sculptor has managed to make the scene convincing and realistic—so realistic that you do not notice at first how much larger the seated lady is than the standing one. The faces are smooth and calm, and the poses harmonious and balanced, yet the scene has a melancholy look, appropriate for its function.



**Artwork F, Renaissance Period: *Pieta*, Michelangelo,
Marble Sculpture, c. 1475 C.E.**

This masterpiece represents Mary holding Jesus in her lap after he has been crucified (killed). It was made by the Italian artist Michelangelo for the tomb of a cardinal (a high church official) in St. Peter's Church in Rome. Although Jesus is a grown man, Mary holds him in her lap as she did when he was a child. In real life, this would be difficult to do, but she makes it look effortless, using just one hand.

Mary looks delicate and tender, but she is a huge figure with an extremely wide lap. Both she and Jesus are young and beautiful, more like an ideal man and woman than an older woman and her dead son would really have looked. This helps to emphasize their meaning as eternal religious symbols. Michelangelo has carved great sweeping folds of drapery, making them look very convincing. The entire sculpture fits into a smooth, simple pyramid shape, although within that shape the lines are complicated. Throughout the work, Michelangelo combines opposites in this way, and as a result convinces the viewer that it is both real and ideal.

