

Betty Gilson
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The High Renaissance

The sixteenth century, also called the Age of Exploration and Expansion; the Golden Age; and the Age of the High Renaissance, the “collective identity which still lingered in the early Renaissance had been decisively abandoned” (Wood, 137). Important discoveries were made by Columbus, Vespucci, Magellan and Copernicus. Legendary artists like Leonardo, Michelangelo, Rafael, Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese “changed not only the direction of Western art but established the modern concept of the artist” (Wood, 138).

Leonardo da Vinci was a great artist, inventor and scientist. Da Vinci was dedicated to discovery of truth and the mysteries of nature, and his insightful contributions to science and technology are famous. Because of his contributions, Leonardo is today well-known as an inventor, scientist, engineer, architect, painter, sculptor, musician, mathematician, anatomist, astronomer, geologist, biologist, and philosopher.

Ever the perfectionist, Leonardo turned to science in the quest to improve his artwork. His study of nature and anatomy emerged in his stunningly realistic paintings, and his dissections of the human body paved the way for remarkably accurate figures. He was the first artist to study the physical proportions of the human body.

Even today some of his invention amazes us, and his paintings, although not many, capture our attention with their beauty and mystical aura. Mona Lisa's mysterious smile even today intrigues the observer, who can not unlock the secret of this secular woman. Leonardo's "Last Supper," even though didn't preserve well, demonstrates the artist's technique in chiaroscuro, perspective and the great representation of the human expression. "If Leonardo is viewed as the paradigm of the Renaissance man, then Michelangelo surely has come down as the acknowledged paradigm of the Renaissance artist....Michelangelo was nevertheless, tortured by his muse..." (Stewart et. al., 96).

Michelangelo was only 23 when he finished "Pieta." This marvelous work proved beyond doubt that Michelangelo had surpassed any contemporary sculptor and was to be compared to the great masters of the ancient times. The seated eternally young Madonna is holding the lifeless body of Christ. Her face is young beyond time. The dead body of Christ shows the perfection of anatomical research in every muscle, vein, nerve and bone. It is so lifelike that one forgets the figures are actually cold marble.

At the age of 29, Michelangelo completed "David." David was the symbol and guardian of Florentine liberty. The citizens of the Republic were to defend their city's freedom, just as David had done when he defeated Goliath and his enemies.

"If Michelangelo suffered torments of doubt and his long career traces both his triumphs and failures, Raphael, his younger rival, was his opposite both in temperament and in style. While Michelangelo struggled, Raphael produced with ease. Michelangelo clung stubbornly to his own

inner vision, while Raphael managed to please his patrons without sacrificing any integrity” (Stewart et. al., 103). Masterpieces like “Deposition of Christ (1507) and “School of Athens (c. 1511) allow the “spectator” to witness his great talent.

Another important Florentine figure was Bramante, who started as a painter but became a reputable architect. Along with Leonardo, Michelangelo and Rafael, he was one of the figures who dared to rival Venice. Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, and Palladio are only a few of the very talented Venetian artists, who measured up to the Florentine standards.

Venice is one of my favorite cities, if not the most favorite one. The art is so powerful here that one feels overwhelmed. Centuries of history unravel in front of you, letting you witness the breathtaking architectural details. Just by being there, you fully understand and appreciate the beauty of this city. You don't have to be an expert to realize that you're witnessing a miracle: the miracle of art.

The Library of San Marco is one of the great Venetian symbols. The Library of San Marco (1537-1588) was built by Jacopo Sansovino. The Library's long, rectangular facade matches the Doge's Palace and is highly ornamented in the classical style with Doric columns supporting Ionic columns, and decorative sculptures.

Titian was one of the many talented Venetian Renaissance artists. “Titian had revolutionized European painting and delineated the boundaries of both form and subject within which artists were to work for the next several centuries” (Wood, 151). Masterpieces like “Pesaro Altarpiece

(1519-1526), “Venus of Urbino (1538) and so many other great paintings are only a few examples of his great work.

Great artist like Tintoretto, Veronese, and Palladio will also influence the European art. They complete the Venitian gallery of great artists.

The High Renaissance brought us the titans, the great masters of the 16th century, who—through their revolutionary vision—“forever altered the course of the Western art” (Stewart et. al., 117).

Works Cited

Stewart, Andrew et. al. *Art of the Western World: Study Guide*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1989.

Wood, Michael, Bruce Cole and Adelheid Gealt. *Art of the Western World: From Ancient Greece to Post-Modernism*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.