

Development, Progress, and Theme of Renaissance Art

The term Renaissance, indicating the period from the late 14th to the late 16th century, comes from the French word for rebirth, refers to a revival of the values and artistic styles of ancient Greece and Rome. The movement started in Italy. Italian scholars and critics of this period proclaimed that their age had progressed beyond the barbarism of the Middle Ages. Initially Florence was the center for Renaissance Art.

It is best seen in the architecture. Classical buildings are clearly different from the Gothic of the later Middle Ages. *Brunelleschi* was the first architect to work in a style that can be called Renaissance. In the architecture we notice the more peaceful and balanced beauty of the classical architecture compared with the chaotic excitement of Gothic art. Rounded Roman arches replace the pointed Gothic ones; restful and calmer horizontal lines replace the vertical lines of Gothic architecture. Brunelleschi designed the Florence cathedral. The St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome is also built in the Renaissance style.

The sculptor *Donatello* was the first sculptor to make statues in the spirit of the ancient sculpture, rather than just borrowing motifs from it. He was eager to picture the spirit of adventure and freedom, the same spirit that built new cities, discovered a new continent, and probed the secrets of the universe. His statue of "David" is graceful, youthful, and elegant, and comparable to Greek sculpture.

Masaccio is called the father of Renaissance painters. Masaccio could not look directly to models for his paintings, since very few Roman painting had survived. He knew that ancient painters tried to paint true to nature. His use of light and shadow, the solidity and realism of his

figures, and the use of the perspective in his paintings were entirely different from the work of the medieval and late Gothic artists who preceded him. The feeling of space and depth found in his frescoes and the naturalness and humanity of the religious figures he painted greatly influenced the Renaissance painters who followed him. Masaccio's most famous work, 'The Tribute Money', is found in the frescoes for the Brancacci Chapel in the Church of the Carmine in Florence.

Florence continued to be the center of Renaissance art throughout the 15th century. Several great artists worked there during this period such as *Botticelli*, *Piero della Francesca*, and *Uccello*.

Roma and Venice begin to rival Florence in the 1500s. Renaissance ideas were spread by traveling artists, by wealthy people commissioning works by foreign artists, and by the invention of engravings. Albrecht Durer was the first to represent the richness of the Italian Renaissance in engravings.

The period from 1500 through 1520 was called the High Renaissance. During these years Renaissance art reached its peak. The main artists were *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Michelangelo*, and *Raphael*. Leonardo da Vinci was not only one of the greatest artists of the 16th century, But he was a great experimenter too. He carried on fifteenth century experiments by studying everything. Leonardo stressed the need to advance beyond realism and initiated the high renaissance's preoccupation with the idealization of nature, or the attempt to generalize from the portrayal to an ideal form.

Raphael was a man of sunny and genial disposition who in his paintings created a world of nobility and harmony. He is especially known for his paintings of the Madonna and Child. Our concept of the Mother of Jesus is largely based on the type, which Raphael created. He was well known for his frescos and blossomed at an early stage. He was one of Italy's best painters.

Michelangelo was a great sculpture painter and architect. He worked with great passion and energy on numerous projects at one time. Neoplatonism influenced him. He showed this on one of his best works on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. He painted bodies to perfect proportions, making the human body look more like God like figures. Another one of Michelangelo's great work of art is his statue of David. He created a 14-foot high statue out of a 50-year-old piece of marble. Michelangelo's David proudly proclaims the beauty of the human body and the glory of the human being.

Architecture was also evident during the High Middle Ages. Donato Bramante created the great architecture design of the Tempietto, of (little temple). A dome to form a monumental and harmonious whole enclosed the temple columns surrounding a sanctuary.

As the fifteenth century came to an end such individuals as *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Michelangelo*, and *Raphael* were no longer seen as artists. They were seen as artistic geniuses, they were the heroes, which were praised for their creativity. As the society valued their creative geniuses, the artists of the High Renaissance were the first to become known as the modern concept of the artist.

