

## Filippo Brunelleschi - Perspective In Art

Perspective Use of perspective in art finds its root in one man, Filippo Brunelleschi. Although we don't know for sure, it is likely that Brunelleschi also invented linear, or scientific perspective. Donatello's "The Feast of Herod" is the earliest surviving example of scientific perspective, which is established through the use of a "vanishing point", an imaginary single point on the page in which all the parallel lines meet. Donatello's Feast of Herod was a groundbreaking work by that day's standards, and a complete failure in the fulfillment of compositional requirements of traditional classical or medieval standards. The focal point of the piece, the presentation of St. John's head to Herod, is in the far left corner, and the crowd watching is clustered into the right corner. Upon examination of the action, however, Donatello's intention is clear; by placing the people in this way, the gesture and emotion of the scene is more implicit and effective. It is also more clearly established that the scene does not end at the focal point, it in fact continues off into every direction, an impression more clearly made with his use of scientific perspective. This "window" view into the scene was a radical step, and would influence how the picture plane was to be seen from that point on. Another important milestone in the history of perspective is Pietro Perudino's "The Delivery of the Keys". Painted in 1482, this work employs a grave, symmetrical structure, a tool he used to emphasize the importance of the scene being represented: The authority of St. Peter as the first pope, and all of his successors, rests on his having received the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven from Christ himself. The onlookers are all rendered with powerfully individualized faces. Equally powerful is the vast expanse of the almost surreal background. The spatial clarity, established by the use of mathematically precise perspective, is the influence of Brunelleschi. Andrea Mantegna was another 15th century painter. He was a prodigy that rendered in paint with skill from the age of 16 on. With the painting "St. James Led to His Execution" Mantegna established himself as a person who wasn't afraid to break with traditional painting techniques, and adds a daring touch by painting from a ground up view of the scene. This was used because the painting was hung so tha the bottom of the painting was at the viewer's eye level. Because of this the architecture looms intimidatingly, and is made more convincing by his use of scientific perspective. His desire for authenticity can be seen in every small detail, including the Roman soldiers' costumes. It even extends to the use of wet drapery patterns, an invention of classical Greek sculpture that was then passed onto the Romans. We can also find a reference to Donatello in Mantegna's rendering of the lean, tense bodies of the Roman soldiers. The intensity that Mantegna establishes by using these techniques hardly fits the subject matter, as the condemned saint, on the way to his execution, stops to bless a paralytic man and command him to walk. The onlookers facial expressions and gesture hint at how deeply this sight has stirred them. Mantegna has even painted a violent scene erupting off to the right as the crowd becomes agitated. In writing this paper, I assumed that you assigned the paintings in the Met because of their accessibility to engineering students who may not have any art books. I knew of these works as important stepping stones in the modern use of perspective, and I felt the need to write