

The Renaissance began in Italy during the 1400s, a period of time called the Quattrocento. During the Quattrocento, in the town of Florence, poets, painters, sculptors, and architects achieved some prominence, especially because of the patronage they received from the town's wealthy. Those people considered wealthy descended from respected soldiers (called condottieri), natural leaders, or wealthy ancestors. Florence's greatest economic success came from its part in the wool trade, which was imported from England, and spun into cloth around the Florentine countryside, and sold universally. In addition to this industry, Florence rose to prominence for three other reasons- the political structure in Italy, the Medicis, and the series of local artisans and writers that called the city home.

Italy at this time was made up of five separate states, each vying with their neighbors for control over the countryside. Florence was able to remain neutral from many of these conflicts, yet engaged in combat when it was necessary.

Cosimo de Medici was able to end most of the conflict in 1454 through The Peace of Lodi. This truce ended a war between Milan, Florence, and Venice. Establishing alliances within the trio created trust, and because Florence, Naples, and Milan had previously worked together, and Venice had a similar arrangement with the Papal States, Italy was able to enjoy a relatively peaceful existence until 1494. (Chambers, et.al, 451) Medici oversaw Florence from 1434 to 1464, by trade a banker and merchant with strong European connections. His associations with sculptors and architects aided their careers, and his support of the arts strongly boosted their prominence. Medici encouraged art and learning, and founded the first public library in Europe. One of his aspirations was to found a Platonic Academy to study and deliberate much in the style of Socrates. Although his ambition would not come in his lifetime, his grandson would later establish such an academy. Medici's wealth continued to support arts and learning even after his death through the efforts of his children and grandchildren.

As was the case with most of Europe, in Florence, the guild structure was very important to practitioners of art and culture. Guilds guarded the standards established to ensure quality and beauty, and one could not expect to be hired as a master of a trade until apprenticeships were over and guilds' acceptance won. Florence boasted many noted figures in the creative arts during this time, including the writers Dante and Boccaccio, and the poet Petrarch. The noted St. Francis de Assisi also was born nearby. Later, Michelangelo was born in Florence in the year 1475.

Girolamo Savonarola came to power in Florence in 1490. Savonarola agitated against the Medicis as Florence's rulers, despite the efforts of Lorenzo to maintain a friendship, even allowing the monk to live in the palace. The monk predicted universal doom, and called upon the people to destroy their books, valuables, and fine clothes in a huge bonfire held in the city square. Medici died in 1492, leaving Savonarola in sole power, before the Pope had him and two of his followers crucified in the town square in 1498. Savonarola died having ended Florence's era of greatness in eight short years (Kielty 46)

## Art in the 1400s

One of the first sculptors to study the human form, with its myriad of muscles and tissues being purposely included was Donatello. Donatello departed from traditional medieval sculpture, which had used

rounded curves and shapes rather than the realism he created. The sculptor also carved expressions onto his subjects that mirrored their setting. He worked in Florence, and was supported by the Medicis.

Masaccio sought to use realistic human forms beneath the clothing and draperies he painted, and also was one of the first painters to use the perspective view, as in his painting, The Holy Trinity.

Sandro Botticelli enjoyed the friendship of the Medici family, especially Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent. Lorenzo attracted and gathered poets, painters, and scholars to the Medici Palace, and together they would write poetry, read, debate, and learn. Botticelli was also commissioned to paint private rooms in the Palace. Many of his paintings reflect a yearning for the past, a sense of melancholy. One of his most famous paintings was The Birth of Venus, whose model was a cousin to Amerigo Vespucci. The painter was influenced by the teachings of Girolamo Savonarola in his later years, and his products were noticeably less inspired by grace and beauty.

Rome regained her power and prestige in the years of the High Renaissance, the 1500s, or cinquecento. Attracted by the power of the Catholic Church and reborn strength of the Roman elite, artisans flocked to work in the capital. Politics remained the supreme interest of the Romans, but they still sought to have the best art that could be produced.

#### Art in the 1500s

Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452 between Florence and Pisa. Leonardo's brilliance as a true Renaissance man is unparalleled. To achieve true accuracy for his work and his interests, Leonardo studied the ways in which the human body worked by dissection, and his scientific drawings of the inner workings of the body were extremely accurate. Besides painting, Leonardo also designed flying machines, a parachute, a helicopter, and other concepts unknown in his day, and unrealized until this century. Encouraged from an early age, he studied for ten years with a master sculptor, and was visited often by Botticelli. His career took him into the service of the Duke of Milan, where he painted The Last Supper for three years. He played the lute for the duke, and also designed fortifications against attacks from the French. Leonardo then went to Rome, where he created mechanical animals for the enjoyment of Pope Leo X. He painted the Mona Lisa before moving to France at the invitation of King Francis I. Leonardo died in France in 1519, leaving behind only 20 paintings, but thousands of sketches in his notebooks.

Michelangelo was born in Florence in 1475, and while growing up, admired the ancient statues the Medicis displayed at their palace grounds. When Lorenzo discovered the boy's talent, he undertook the completion of the boy's education and training. His exposure to the leading artisans of the day was a great influence, and by the age of 21 he had sculpted his classical Pieta. With the downfall of the Medicis at the end of the 1400s, Michelangelo fled to Bologna, before moving to Rome in 1503 at the request of newly elected Pope Julius II. Originally asked to design and build the world's most beautiful tomb, Julius insulted the sculptor by choosing another architect to create the new St. Peter's Cathedral. Although insulted, Michelangelo could not stand up to the extremely powerful pope, who then ordered him to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, a task which took the sculptor-turned-

painter four years. Here he painted The Creation of Man, and other notable paintings. After his death in 1564, he was buried in his hometown of Florence.

Raphael's personality was between his contemporaries da Vinci and Michelangelo. Also called upon by the Pope to render his services, Raphael's reputation came from his beautiful paintings of the Madonna. The Pope commissioned him to paint four rooms of the Vatican, in which he detailed life before the Renaissance, which included The School of Athens.

After the death of Pope Julius II, artistic leadership was assumed by Venice, its characteristics being less reliant upon form than that of light and color. Titian painted most of the nobility and royalty of the day, as well as The Assumption of the Madonna. He painted until his death in the Plague at age 99.

The Flemish painters used a different style of painting beginning in the 1500s. Using oil as their base, the rich paintings of the Flemish artists have lasted far better than their Italian counterparts.

Emperor Charles V and King Philip II of Spain attempted to keep Holland and Flanders in the Catholic Church, appointing the Spanish Duke of Alba as governor. Between 1566 and 1572, he hanged and beheaded 18,600 inhabitants, destroying Bruges and Ghent. (Kielty 82)

#### The Baroque Period (1700s)

The Baroque Period called for oversize everything. There is Baroque art, architecture, and music. The word itself means "movement, intensity, force." Buildings from this time "are enormous, Baroque paintings are vast, with figures that swirl onward and upward. In music the organ is definitely Baroque with its vibrancy and multiplicity of overtones...painters preferred tumult and passion to order and harmony." (Kielty 82)

The War of Spanish Succession pitted Spain and France versus Austria, Britain, and others.

When it came to supplying labor for the growing colonies and their associated profits, the Dutch, Portuguese, French and English were the most active in the booming trade in African slavery, with the Spanish only getting involved in the late 18th century. Altogether, these European nations were responsible for the enslavement of 60,000 slaves annually from the years 1740-1810. Most of these captives (approximately 80%) were sold off by fellow Africans as prisoners of war, or were debtors, murderers, thieves, or were guilty of crimes such as treason. (C. Palmer 67)

As a result of the Treaty of Utrecht, England received the right to a monopoly supplying slaves to Spanish colonies in 1713. This contributed to the emergence of London, Liverpool, and Bristol as homeports for many slave ships, and Liverpool itself was home to over half of the English slave fleet. Slavers were involved in what was known as the "triangular trade," a series of stops in ports that brought huge profits for investors. In one leg, ships would load with rum to trade with slave traders in Africa and possibly some goods such as lumber, fish or grain for European ports, followed by a sail to Africa. There, the rum would be traded for new slaves, which were taken to the huge slave markets of the West Indies, where locally-produced molasses

was exchanged, and then brought to American distilleries for rum production. English taxes on the trade brought in 40,000 pounds annually.

Dutch art is significant for its lack of Christian references. Because Holland is primarily Protestant, Christlike imagery was not needed to reinforce art owner's need to feel closely linked to God through common motifs.

The Spanish governor of Florida offered freedom to slaves in English colonies in 1738, hoping to weaken them prior to an oncoming war with England. (Hoftstadter 128)

The French and Indian War, known in Europe as the Seven Years' War, began in 1754 when English commanders sought to drive the French out of contested territory and were routed. Commanding general Edward Braddock, with 22-year-old George Washington as an aide, had planned to capture four French outposts, yet found over 1000 Indians allied with the encamped French and French Canadian militias ready to defend them. Unused to the fighting style of the Indians and French forces that had adopted similar procedures, the British/American forces were decimated. Of the 1459 troops under Braddock, 977 casualties were suffered. Braddock was one of those killed.

Resulting battles seesawed between British and French forces. The Indian allies of the French were unleashed upon the frontier, and havoc ensued. Austria and Sweden joined the French out of desire to cripple British ally Prussia. (Morison, Vol I, 224) Britain was forced to use troops in other parts of Europe, forcing more and more of the fighting on the shoulders of the colonial militias.

The arrival of William Pitt as British prime minister changed the misfortunes suffered thus far. Although unpopular in America at first for approving forced impressment into the army, the quartering of troops in private homes, and seizure of needed private property, these measures were ended following colonial protest. Colonial governments were given responsibility for raising funds, supplies, and troops, and compensation was stipulated for losses. In 1758 Scottish, English, and American soldiers captured the key French fort of Louisbourg. During the following year, Montreal and Quebec were also taken.

At the conclusion of the war, Spain gave Florida to Great Britain in return for La Habana, Cuba and the Philippines. France vacated India forever. France ceded Canada to the British, and Louisiana and New Orleans.

As a result of this costly war, the British treasury was lower than desired, and the way to replenish it was seen in the pockets of those inhabiting the place it all began-- in America.